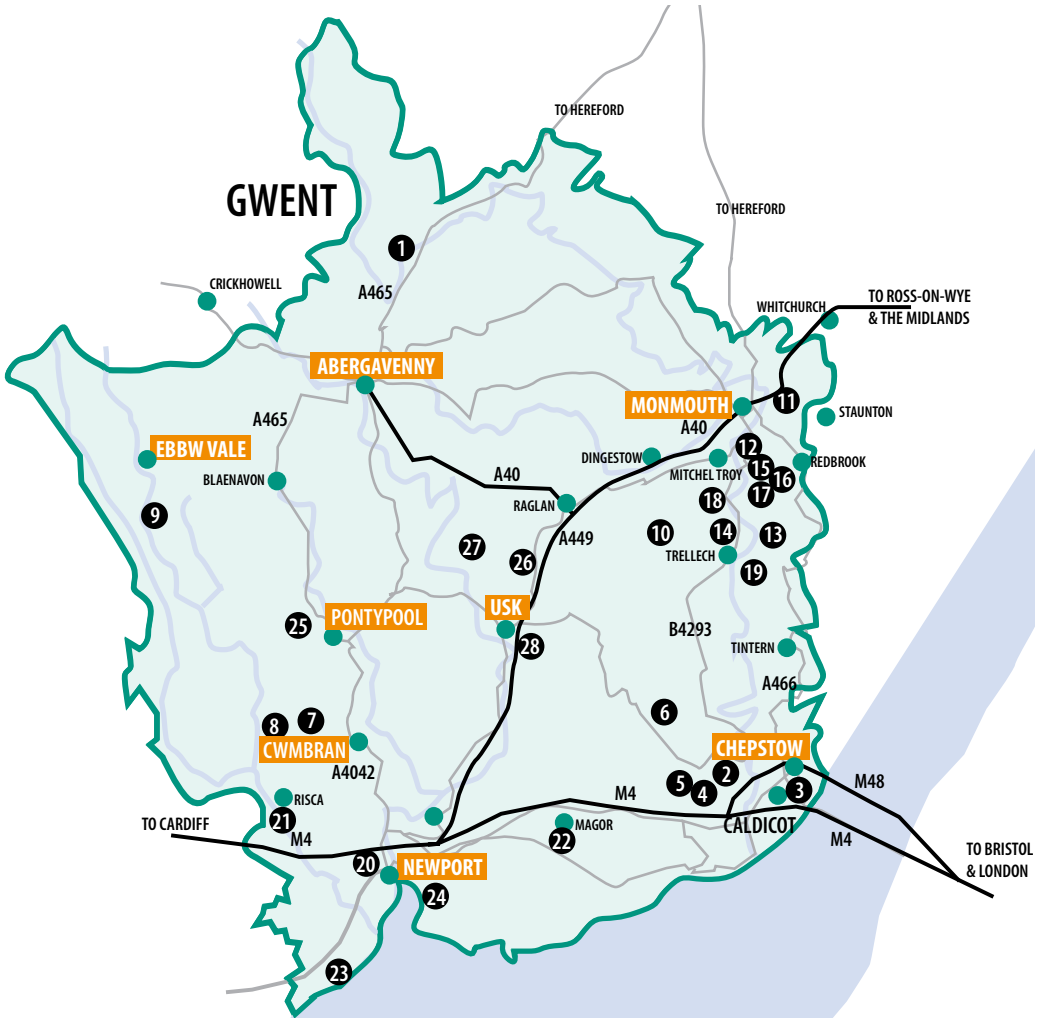


# GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST'S NATURE RESERVES



# LOCATION OF RESERVES



## Near ABERGAVENNY

1. Strawberry Cottage Wood

## Near CHEPSTOW

2. Brockwells Meadows
3. Caldicot Pill
4. Rogiet Poorland
5. Lower Minnetts Field
6. Cuhere Wood

## In/Near CWMBRAN

7. Coed Meyric Moel
8. Henllys Bog

## Near EBBW VALE

9. Silent Valley Local Nature Reserve

## In/Near MONMOUTH

10. Croes Robert Wood
11. Dixon Embankment
12. The Graig
13. Margaret's Wood
14. New Grove Meadows
15. Pentwyn Farm
16. Wyeswood Common
17. Prisk Wood
18. The Wern

## In/Near MONMOUTH

19. Beacon Hill

## In/Near NEWPORT

20. Allt-yr-Yn Local Nature Reserve
21. Dan-y-Graig
22. Magor Marsh
23. Peterstone Wentlooge Marshes
24. Solutia Meadows

## Near PONTYPOOL

25. Branches Fork Meadows

## Near USK

26. Kitty's Orchard
27. Priory Wood
28. Springdale Farm



Photograph © Russ Johnson Photography

## Foreword

I first came to live in Gwent in 2007. Through my work, I have been fortunate enough to travel all over the world and see so much amazing wildlife up close but there is something rather special about this corner of Wales which drew me to it. It is a truly beautiful county, absolutely teeming with wildlife and that's just one of the reasons why I came to live here. Gwent is a county of contrasts and its wildlife is just as diverse. The post industrial landscapes in the far west of the county, where the Ebbw Fawr river was once so polluted that it could run a different colour, day by day, is now home to dippers and otters: two iconic species which need particularly clear water to thrive. In the east, the rolling green hills above the Wye Valley are home to dormice, goshawks and many hundreds of scarce, unusual and beautiful plants. Between these two valleys, a mosaic of towns and villages, roads and fields, woodland and wetland, are home to a truly incredible diversity of plants and animals.

Gwent Wildlife Trust was established in 1963 when a handful of people got together to save a small piece of the Gwent Levels from development. Today, supported by more than 10,000 members, the Trust is an effective force, working hard to make the county a better place for people and wildlife. I am proud to be a member of my local Wildlife Trust and to support their work. I do hope you enjoy visiting the Trust reserves, taking part in its activities and learning about our local wildlife as much as I have.

Kate Humble,  
Gwent Wildlife Trust member  
No. 17796

## Introduction

The Trust's nature reserves offer a sanctuary for a range of plant and animal species that were once common throughout the county. The Trust cares for wetlands at Henllys Bog and Magor Marsh; limestone grasslands at Rogiet Poorland and Brockwells Meadows; woodlands at Silent Valley and Allt-yr-Yn and traditional hay meadows at Pentwyn Farm and Springdale Farm. In the future, these strongholds can provide a reservoir of species to colonise the wildlife habitat network that we feel needs recreating – and the rest of our wider countryside if farm management can provide a better balance between wildlife and food production.

This guide gives details of the Trust's thirty nature reserves. Directions are given to all our major reserves from the nearest large town or city in Gwent. Ordnance Survey

grid references are given for the entrances to all reserves (apart from those where there is currently limited or no public access). The Trust also hopes to acquire new reserves – members can find out about any new acquisitions from the Trust's magazine or website.

The guide only acts as a snapshot in time of the reserves as they are at the time of writing. Access arrangements, management and species change over time. Please refer to our website for the most up-to-date information about each reserve.

Visitors wanting to know more about the plants and animals mentioned here are recommended to take a good field guide on their visits. Ordnance Survey Landranger maps numbers 171, 161 and 162 cover Gwent.

Most reserves are open to the general public but please follow the Countryside Code.

Remember to:

- Leave gates as you find them, especially where livestock is present
- Keep to marked paths and trails
- Never pick or uproot plants
- Please keep dogs under control
- Please note that due to sensitive wildlife, dogs are not allowed at Magor Marsh

Thanks to all the volunteers and staff who helped with the creation of this guide. Special thanks to Julian Branscombe for his help with proof reading.

Edited by Gabi Horup



Fox - Mike Warburton

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NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL  
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significantly to this site.



# ALLT-YR-YN LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

in Newport

20 hectares



Kingfisher - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Earthstar - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

Allt-yr-Yn Reserve - Gabi Horup



**This reserve, which borders the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, contains a variety of habitats including streams, a series of ponds, ancient woodland and species-rich grassland. The diversity of habitats provides a haven for wildlife within the city of Newport.**

Located only 1km from Newport city centre, the reserve is of high amenity value and is enjoyed by many local people. Described as "a treasure within the city" by one visitor, the reserve is designated a Local Nature Reserve in recognition of its importance to the local community. The reserve is owned by Newport City

Council, with the Trust having a long association with the site's management.

### Species

Spring brings a good variety of woodland flowers, which range from snowdrops to opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage within the damper woodland. In summer, the south facing species-rich meadows are home to a

variety of interesting flowers including common spotted-orchid, meadow vetchling and oxeye daisy. This is the best time to see a vivid array of colour. Other interesting species on the reserve include broad-leaved helleborine and adder's-tongue fern.

The ponds, once used as a lido, are now full of insects such as water boatmen, beetles and pond skaters, whilst marsh-marigold grows around the pond edges. Amphibians such as frogs and smooth newts live on the reserve – a hibernaculum provides an additional safe haven for these species.

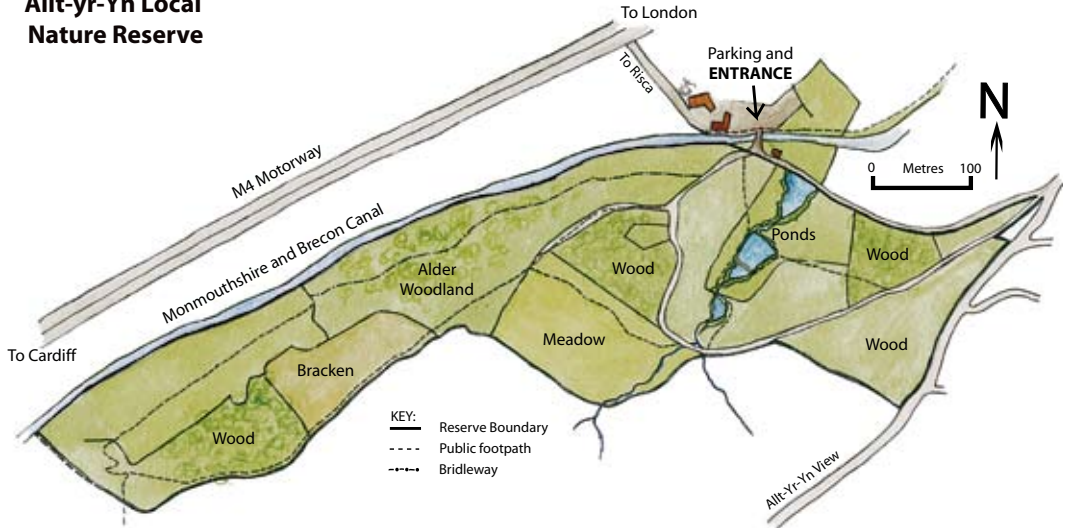
Autumn is the best time for a fungus foray. There is an impressive display of woodland fungi on the reserve, including the distinctive, bizarre looking earth star which resembles a mini spaceship! Brightly-coloured waxcaps can be found in the meadow. The reserve is also home to a good range of woodland and wetland birds such as woodpeckers, kingfishers, moorhen and warblers.



Common Newt - Mark Bissett

**The smooth or common newt spends most of the year on land, hiding by day under logs and stones. It breeds in water, wrapping its eggs in water plant leaves in spring.**

## Allt-yr-Yn Local Nature Reserve



### Access

The paths can be steep and muddy in places. There is one very steep flight of steps which should only be attempted by properly equipped walkers.

### Directions

From Junction 27 on the M4, follow the sign for Newport city centre on the B4591. After about 1km, turn left onto Ridgeway Avenue. Follow this road for 500 metres and then turn left onto Allt-yr-Yn View. After a further 500 metres, turn sharp left along a rough track towards Grove Farm. The reserve entrance is a short distance along the track before the farm. Car parking is limited to a small area outside the reserve (grid ref: ST 296 889).

### Nearby reserves

Solutia Meadows and Magor Marsh are a short trip away from the city. The Dan-y-Graig reserve at Risca is also easily accessible from Newport. Nearby coastal reserves include Peterstone Wentlooge.

### What to see locally

Tredegar House Country Park has one of Wales' finest country houses. Belle Vue Park, located within the city of Newport, is one of the oldest town parks in Britain. Newport Cemetery contains a wealth of wildlife and is the

oldest municipal cemetery in Britain. Newport is also host to a medieval cathedral and castle as well as excellent museums. Look out for the city's most famous landmark, The Transporter Bridge, which carries visitors by gondola over the river Usk.



Common Blue - Mike Warburton

# BEACON HILL

near Monmouth

28 hectares



Nightjar - Ray Armstrong

The nightjar arrives in Britain in May. Visit the reserve at dusk on a warm, still, summer evening, and you may be lucky enough to hear the churring 'song' of the male bird.

Beacon Hill - Ray Armstrong



Overlooking the picturesque village of Trellech, this reserve is a result of a heathland restoration project carried out by the Forestry Commission. The Trust is now managing the reserve to encourage the return of heathland species to secure the local future of this particularly threatened habitat.

Heathland once occupied extensive areas around Trellech, but clearance for agriculture and afforestation reduced virtually all of Gwent's lowland heath to small fragments along tracks in conifer plantations. However, the plantations which once covered Beacon Hill have been cleared to bring back heathland, dominated by plants and animals adapted to the conditions on these nutrient-poor, acidic soils.

Two ponds have been created on the reserve. They provide water for the Welsh mountain ponies that graze the site, and

will attract more wildlife as they become established.

## Species

The dry heath on Beacon Hill is dominated by ling heather with patches of bell heather and bilberry, along with heath bedstraw and lousewort. The heathland occurs as a mosaic with bracken along with gorse and other scrub.

The heathland attracts unusual birds such as the nightjar. Cuckoo, brambling, skylark and stonechat have also been recorded here.



Ling Heather - Gabi Horup

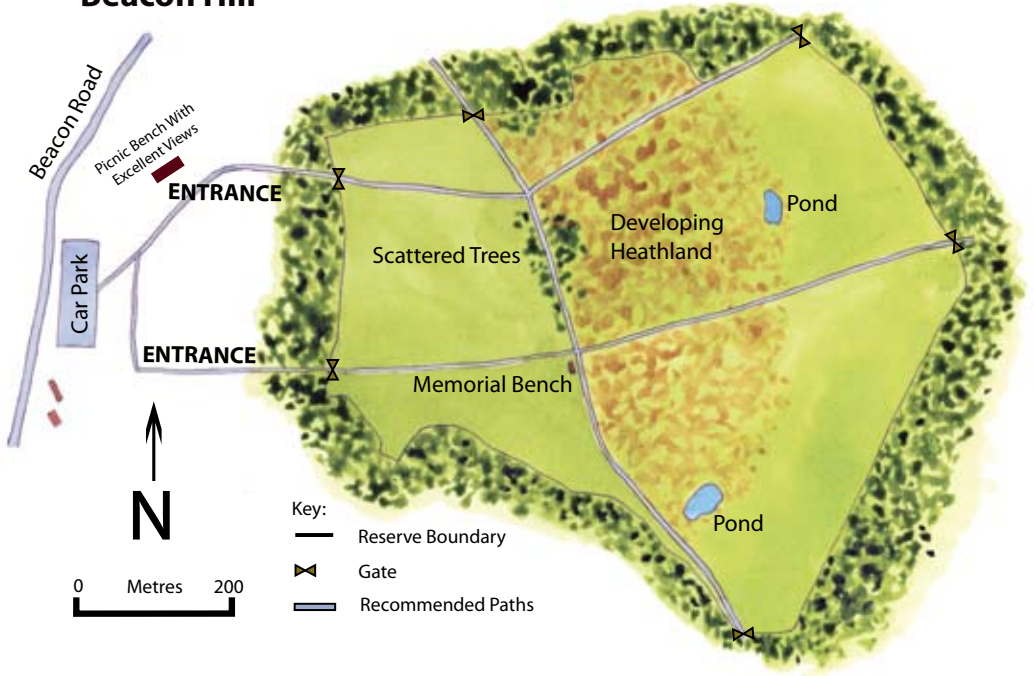
Ling heather is the most common species of heather – it is often the dominant plant on a heath. It is a tough, sprawling plant with tangled branches and stems.



Bell Heather - Gabi Horup

Bell heather tends to be less wiry and bushy. It displays purplish-red bell-shaped blooms. The flowers of both species of heather are rich in nectar and pollen, attracting a wealth of insects.

# Beacon Hill



## Access

The reserve is gently sloping and can be accessed from the main car park after a short uphill walk. Follow the circular trail around the reserve – a path provides good access but is uneven in places.

## Directions

Take the B4293 to the village of Trellech. Opposite the church in Trellech, take the turning for Greenway Lane (signposted Maryland and The Narth). Follow this lane out of the village for about 1.5km towards the woodland until you reach a turning on your right (no signposts). Take the right turn down Beacon Road for about 1km, then turn left up a slope towards Beacon View Car Park. Parking is available at the car park (grid ref: SO 510 052). A short path behind the car park leads you to the reserve (grid ref: SO 515 054). An interpretation board in the car park provides information about the area.

## Nearby reserves

Croes Robert Wood, New Grove Meadows and Margaret's Wood.



Cuckoo - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

## What to see locally

The village of Trellech – more information about Trellech is detailed in the Croes Robert Wood reserve section. Cleddon Bog is a SSSI and a remnant of Trellech Common. The picnic bench on the track outside the reserve offers spectacular views of Gwent's mountains – the Skirrid, the Black Mountains, the Blorenge and Sugarloaf.



Welsh Mountain Ponies - Gabi Horup



SPONSORED BY:

JULIAN BRANSCOMBE

# BRANCHES FORK MEADOWS

near Pontypool

2 hectares

The meadow brown is a familiar sight throughout the summer months on the reserve. A distinctive dark eyespot, more prominent on the female, is used to threaten predators.

Meadow Brown - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Golden-ringed Dragonfly - Richard Bakere

Branches Fork Meadows - Chris Jones



Branches Fork Meadows lies below the conifer plantation of Tranch Wood and along the Torfaen cycle path. This small reserve supports a variety of habitats including a pond, damp heathy grassland, willow scrub and young oak woodland.

## Species

Heather and devil's-bit scabious are prominent in the drier areas. Heath spotted-orchids can be found in the marshy areas amongst purple moorgrass and sharp-flowered rush. The young woodland is notable for alder buckthorn and a good range of mosses

and liverworts. Flowers such as St John's-wort and eyebright can be seen along the verges of the cycle path bordering the reserve.

The mix of habitats also makes the site very good for insects, from hoverflies to grasshoppers. On hot summer

days, dragonflies skim over the pond and butterflies such as small skipper, large skipper, meadow brown and small heath can be spotted in the grassland.

Goldcrest, long-tailed tit, bullfinch and tree creeper occur all year in the woodland. Siskin and redpoll are frequent in winter and crossbill have occasionally been recorded in the larch plantation next to the reserve. Summer visitors include willow warbler, blackcap and occasional wood warbler.



Goldcrest - Mike Warburton



The violet-blue button-like head of the devil's-bit scabious is made up of as many as 50 tiny individual flowers. This wild flower is locally common at Branches Fork Meadows.

Devil's-bit Scabious - Julie Smith

## Access

There is easy access along the adjacent cycle path. The reserve is on a moderate slope.

## Directions

From Pontypool, take the A4043 north. Approximately 1km north of the town centre, as you approach Pontnewynydd, turn left up Merchants Hill (after the Texaco garage and just before the Baptist chapel). Turn right after 100 metres into Elled Road, just after the narrow bridge. After about 200 metres, just beyond the Little Crown pub, the road meets the well-marked cycle path. There is car parking next to the pub. Walk for 5 minutes out into the countryside along the cycle path, and the reserve entrance is on the left (grid ref: SO 269 015). Various bus services run within walking distance of the reserve.

## Nearby reserves

Henllys Bog and Coed Meyric Moel.

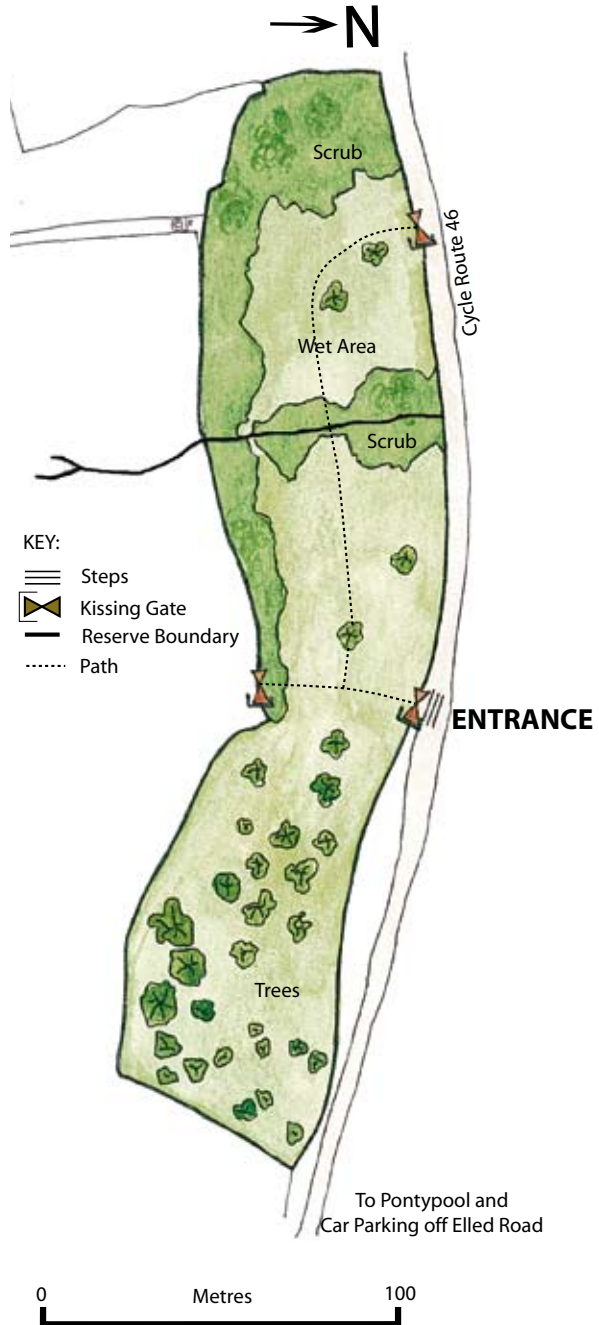
## What to see locally

Pontypool Park is considered to be one of Wales' finest parks. The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site covers the head of the valley. It includes Big Pit and the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway (the highest standard gauge railway in Wales). The nearby Brecon Beacons National Park is excellent walking country.



Comma Butterfly - Gabi Horup

# Branches Fork Meadows



SPONSORED BY:  
NOEL & LINDA BELLAMY,  
VAL JACKSON &  
COLIN TITCOMBE

# BROCKWELLS MEADOWS (SSSI)

near Chepstow

5 hectares

**Robber-flies are predatory, catching their prey in mid air. The hornet robber-fly is Britain's biggest fly. Its appearance mimics the hornet. Adults sit on sunny perches, lying in wait for large insects such as grasshoppers, beetles and dung-flies.**



*Hornet Robber-fly - Rob Bacon*

*Brockwells Meadows - Sorrel & Chris Jones*



**This reserve is made up of four meadows, three of which make up one of the best areas of limestone grassland in Gwent. The area also has a rich archaeological heritage – which includes evidence of activity from the Iron Age, Roman times and the medieval period.**

The lime-rich soil promotes a diversity of grassland flowers – over seventy species of plant have been recorded here. The meadows are managed using traditional farming practices to promote species diversity. Rotational cattle grazing is a feature of the management, with the cow pats being an important breeding site for the rare hornet robber-fly.

## Species

The meadows contain a rich limestone flora. Notable species include green-winged orchid, cowslip, large thyme, yellow-wort and salad burnet.



*Cowslip - Gabi Horup*

**Salad burnet has unusual green flowers – some male and some female – which form small ball-shaped clusters. When crushed, the leaves give off a distinctive cucumber-like smell.**

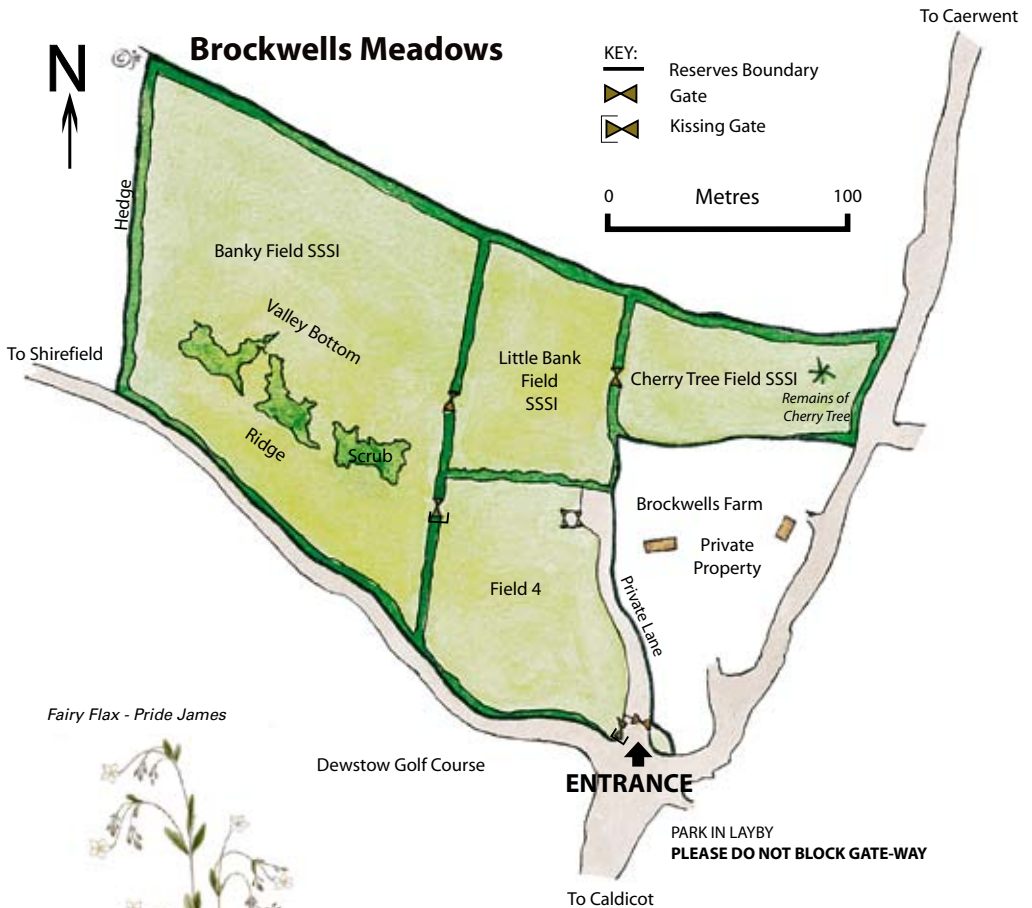


*Scabious - Barry Batchelor*

Many species of butterfly and moth are attracted to the diverse flora. A rare solitary bee is found on the reserve, which only feeds on field scabious flowers. In autumn, the meadows support large numbers of grassland fungi.



*Salad Burnet - Andrew Gagg - Plantlife*



Fairy Flax - Pride James



### Access

The reserve is made up of grassy fields. The terrain is steep and muddy in places. Cattle will be grazing the reserve.

### Directions

From Chepstow take the A48 towards Newport. After 3km, turn left onto the B4245 to Caldicot. Pass through Caldicot and then turn right onto the Dewstow Road, signposted Caerwent. Follow this road over the M4 for about 1.5km, then turn left for Shirefield, after Dewstow golf club. The reserve entrance is immediately on the right. There is parking for two cars by the gate (grid ref: ST 470 896).

### Nearby reserves

Rogiet Poorland, Caldicot Pill and Lower Minnetts Field.

### What to see locally

Woodland walks are located at Slade Woods, next to the Trust's Lower Minnetts Field reserve. Other nearby attractions include Caldicot Castle and Country Park and the Roman remains at Caerwent.

SPONSORED BY:  
THE MORGAN FAMILY

# CALDICOT PILL

near Chepstow

0.6 hectares



A freshly emerged marbled white is one of the most beautiful of British butterflies with its distinctive chequered pattern. This is easily remembered by insect-eating birds, and is probably a warning which advertises the toxic nature of the butterfly.

*Marbled White - Mark Bissett*

*Caldicot Pill - Gabi Horup*



**Caldicot Pill is formed from the lime-rich spoil heaps which date from the excavation of the Severn Railway Tunnel.**

The habitats on this reserve include a small area of lime-rich grassland and patches of scrub. It is located within a housing estate and offers local residents a great opportunity to see special wildlife on their doorstep.

## Species

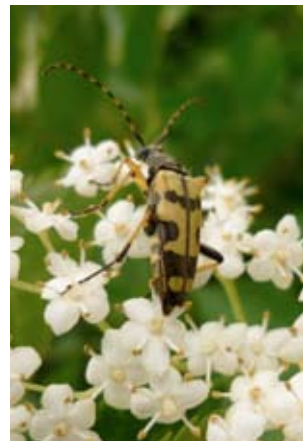
The species found here range from the commonplace to the more unusual. Plants that favour the lime-rich soil include common centaury with its pink flowers and the aromatic thyme, along with



*Fairy Flax - www.northeastwildlife.co.uk*

other species such as fairy flax and quaking-grass. In summer, it is possible to see a variety of butterfly including the marbled white.

Meadow ants have formed anthills across the site, and the day-flying burnet moths can be seen. Slow-worms are also found on the reserve.



*Longhorn Beetle - Gabi Horup*



**Slow-worms are legless lizards. The small tight-fitting scales along the body give the slow-worm its characteristic smooth appearance. They feed on slugs and worms.**

*Slow Worm - Mark Bissett*

## Access

This site is accessed by a gate at the entrance. There are rough, flat paths throughout and the whole of this small reserve takes only a short time to explore.

## Directions

From Chepstow, take the A48 towards Newport. After 3km, turn left onto the B4245 to Caldicot. On entering Caldicot, cross the roundabout, pass the Brooklands Motel and take the next left, Denny View, into a housing estate. Take the second right (signed Denny View Nos 22-32), follow this road round to the left and then right into Orchard Drive. The reserve entrance is at the end of this drive. There is parking for several cars along the street or by the entrance (grid ref: ST 486 876).

## Nearby reserves





Rogiet Poorland, Lower Minnetts Field and Brockwells Meadow – a visit to all four reserves can be easily combined in a day trip.

## What to see locally

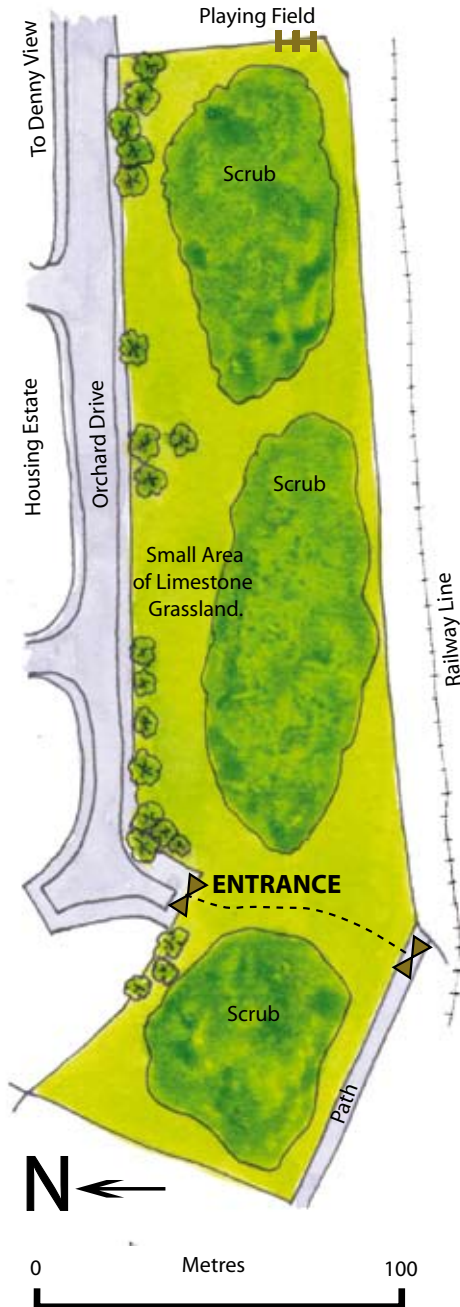
Forestry Commission woodland walks are located at Slade Woods, next to the Trust's Lower Minnetts Field reserve. Other nearby attractions includes Caldicot Castle and Country Park and the Roman remains at Caerwent.



Common Centaury - Pride James

- KEY:**
-  Reserve Boundary
  -  Gate
  -  Stile
  -  Public Right of Way

Parking is available alongside the reserve on Orchard Drive



SPONSORED BY:

ROGER JAMES in memory  
of grandfather Sion and  
father Bryn, of Cwmbran.

# COED MEYRIC MOEL

in Cwmbran

1 hectare



Siskin - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Common Knapweed - Barry Batchelor



Great Tit - Zsuzsanna Bird

Coed Meyric Moel - Sorrel & Chris Jones



**This small urban reserve comprises a meadow and a small area of oak woodland. It is a good site for birds, butterflies and other insects.**

The woodland is part of a larger block of woodland, the remainder of which is managed by the local authority. The woodland is ancient, a relict of the countryside that covered the area before the new town was built.

## Species

Flowers in the meadow include bird's-foot-trefoil and common knapweed. The common knapweed's purple blooms provide an important food source for nectar-feeding insects in summer. Butterflies such as meadow brown and small skipper can be seen, along with a range of beetles and hoverflies.

Around the edge of the meadow, planted species include dogwood, with its brilliant red stems providing a fine display in winter, and field maple. The meadow is fringed by tussocky grasses, creeping thistle and bramble. An annual hay cut keeps the coarser species in check, allowing more delicate grasses and flowers to survive.

The woodland includes oak, ash and some large birch trees. Resident birds include nuthatch and treecreeper. The blackcap's gorgeous song can be heard in spring, whilst the wood rings to the twittering and fluty whistling of siskin in winter.

**The treecreeper is a small, active woodland bird. Look out for it scurrying up tree trunks, searching the bark for insects and spiders. In the autumn and winter, it often joins flocks of tits and other small birds.**



Treecreeper - Neil Aldridge



Female Blackcap - Steve Waterhouse

### Access

The paths within the reserve are on flat, but uneven, ground. There is one flight of steps.

### Directions

From Cwmbran town centre (Sainsbury's roundabout), go south along the A4051, Cwmbran Drive, towards Newport. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> roundabout on Cwmbran Drive take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit, right onto Hollybush Way. At the next roundabout, turn left along Hollybush Way. Go straight across the next roundabout, onto Penylan Way. Coed Meyric Moel lies

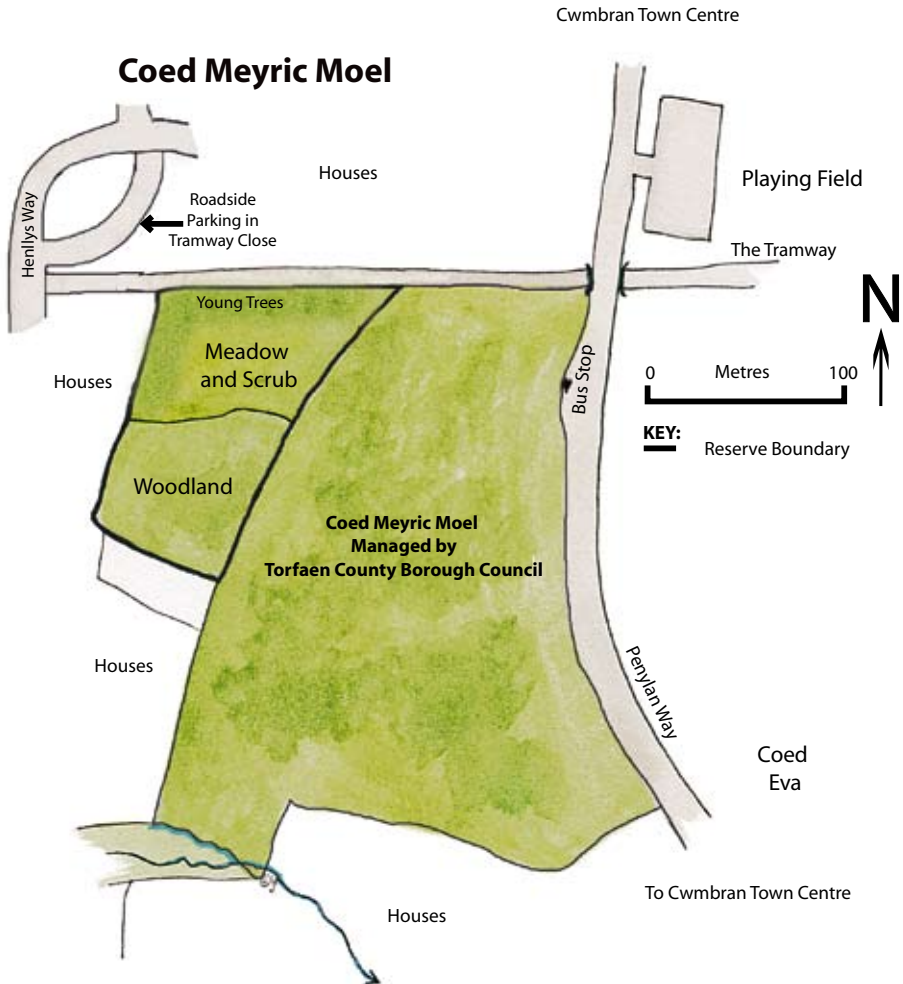
on the left hand side, about 600 metres along this road. To park, continue along Penylan Way past the wood to a roundabout and turn left onto Henllys Way. Then take the 2<sup>nd</sup> left at the brow of the hill to park in Tramway Close. The reserve is reached by joining the footpath (The Incline) on the right that runs along the northern side of the wood (grid ref: ST 271 941).

### Nearby reserves

Henllys Bog, Dan-y-Graig and Branches Fork Meadows.

### What to see locally

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal runs south through Cwmbran, reaching the Fourteen Locks Canal Centre near the famous Cefn Flight of locks. The hills of the South Wales coalfield rise behind Cwmbran. They are rich in archaeology, from remains of recent coal mining and iron scouring, to the ruins of the Celtic chapel of Llanderfal and the Iron Age hill fort of Twmbarlwm.





SPONSORED BY:  
MANDARIN STONE  
proud sponsors of the  
Croes Robert dormouse and  
wildflower habitat.

# CROES ROBERT WOOD (SSSI)

near Monmouth

15 hectares

MANDARINSTONE



Fallow Deer - Gillian Day



Kilns for Charcoal Making - GWT

Croes Robert Wood - Jane Corey



**Croes Robert Wood is managed through coppicing to provide a habitat for one of Britain's most threatened species of mammal – the dormouse. The coppiced wood is then burned on-site in kilns to produce barbecue charcoal, which the Trust sells locally – an outstanding example of sustainable conservation in action!**

Croes Robert Wood is an ancient woodland and lies within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In 1982, before the Trust acquired the site, all its large timber trees were extracted. The site

contains many small streams and wet flushes, creating ideal conditions for golden-saxifrage and fern, along with the associated insects of mossy trickles.

## Species

In spring, bluebell, wood anemone and yellow archangel appear in the woodland. Lesser celandine grows along the paths and wood-sorrel brightens up shady corners. By May, herb-Paris is starting to come into flower.

Wood anemone is one of our first spring flowers. It spreads by means of a creeping root-stock which runs just below the surface, letting it form extensive carpets. It flowers from March to May, taking advantage of the early spring sun. Its flowering season ends once the woodland canopy comes into full leaf.

In the summer, common spotted-orchid flowers along the edge of the rides. In autumn there is a great variety of fungi. This is the best time to find the shells of hazel nuts showing the characteristic teeth marks of dormice.

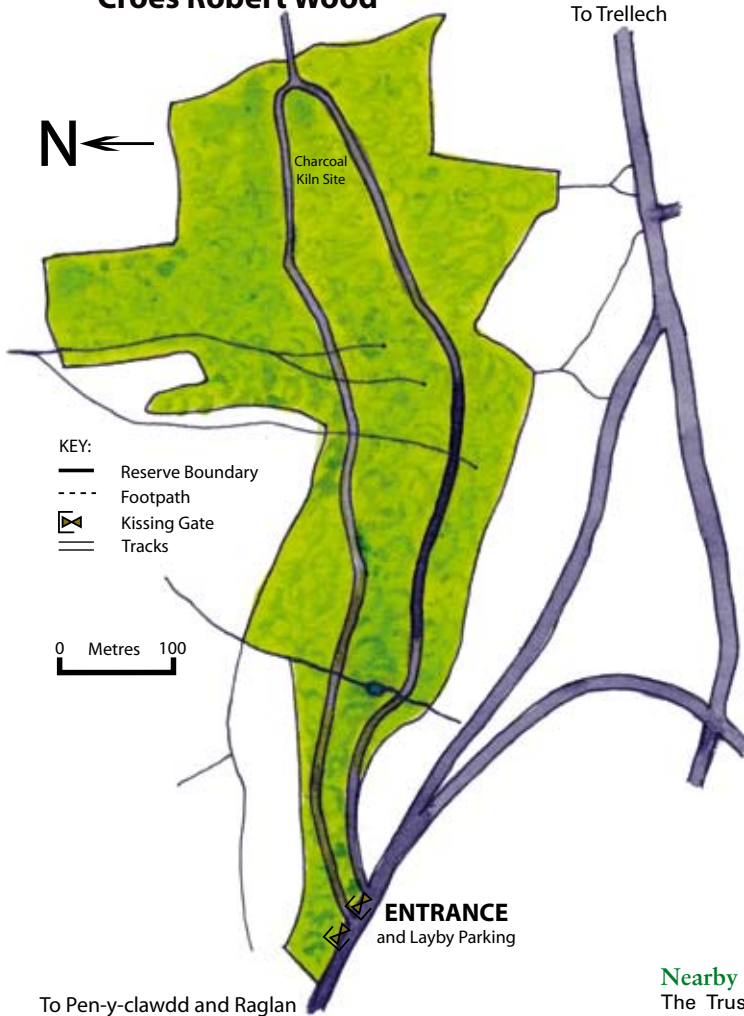
Birds recorded on the reserve include sparrowhawk, goshawk, great spotted-woodpecker and hawfinch. Mammals found in the wood include brown hare, fallow deer, badger and yellow-necked mouse. Harvest mice have been found along the woodland edge.

**The charismatic dormouse is infrequently seen owing to its rarity and nocturnal habits. The range and overall numbers of dormice in Britain has declined by at least half over the past century, but Croes Robert Wood has a thriving population which is closely monitored.**



Dormouse - Tom Chalmers

# Croes Robert Wood



## Access

The reserve is on a hillside with steep slopes and muddy paths. Croes Robert Wood is a working wood, and some of the paths are very rutted due to the vehicle access that is needed for charcoal production.

## Directions

From Monmouth, go south along the B4293 to Trellech. As you enter the village, take the right turn signposted

Cwmcarvan (near the entrance to the school). Follow this narrow road for 2km, and turn right down a lane also signed Cwmcarvan. Follow this lane steeply downhill for approximately 500 metres and look for a small, unpaved lay-by on the right. The entrance to the reserve is via a wooden gate at the lay-by. There is parking for five or six cars (grid ref: SO 475 059).

## Nearby reserves

The Trust also manages Wet Meadow Wood, adjacent to Croes Robert Wood, where dormice are also found. New Grove Meadows, just north of Trellech, is an example of a traditionally managed species-rich meadow.

## What to see locally

The historic village of Trellech includes attractions such as Harold's Stones – three prehistoric standing stones all over two metres high. Food and drinks can be purchased at The Lion Inn, Trellech.

# CUHERE WOOD

near Chipstow

10 hectares



Yew - Amy Lewis



Primrose - Gabi Horup



Mistletoe - Zsuzsanna Bird

Cuhere Wood - Gabi Horup



**Cuhere Wood has a rare and distinctive limestone flora. It lies in a secluded valley in a part of Monmouthshire well-known for its historic interest and natural beauty. Much of Cuhere Wood is dominated by planted conifers, but the western ten hectares is largely broad-leaved native trees. The reserve dates from 2008, when the Trust took over the management of part of this wood from the Forestry Commission.**

The reserve lies between the extensive woodland of Wentwood Forest and the well-wooded Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As such, it is an important stepping stone of woodland habitat in the wider landscape, as well as being a valuable reservoir of wildlife in its own right.

## Species

The lime-rich soils support a number of unusual plants including a large population of herb-Paris. Other specialities include spurge-laurel and

bird's-nest orchid. Unlike most flowering plants, bird's-nest orchid has no chlorophyll, and obtains all its energy from dead vegetation.

Common calamint can be found on the verge fringing the wood.

**Herb-Paris is an uncommon plant which is not closely related to any other British wildflower. Each plant produces a single, poisonous blueberry-like fruit.**

In the spring, the woodland flora includes swathes of bluebell with wood anemone, primrose and violet. The wood has a large population of mature ash, wild cherry and lime trees – in the summer these provide an impressive sight as the leaves fill the canopy. A prominent feature of the woodland is a scattering of large, mature yew trees. It is likely that these represent 19th Century plantings, possibly used as boundary markers.



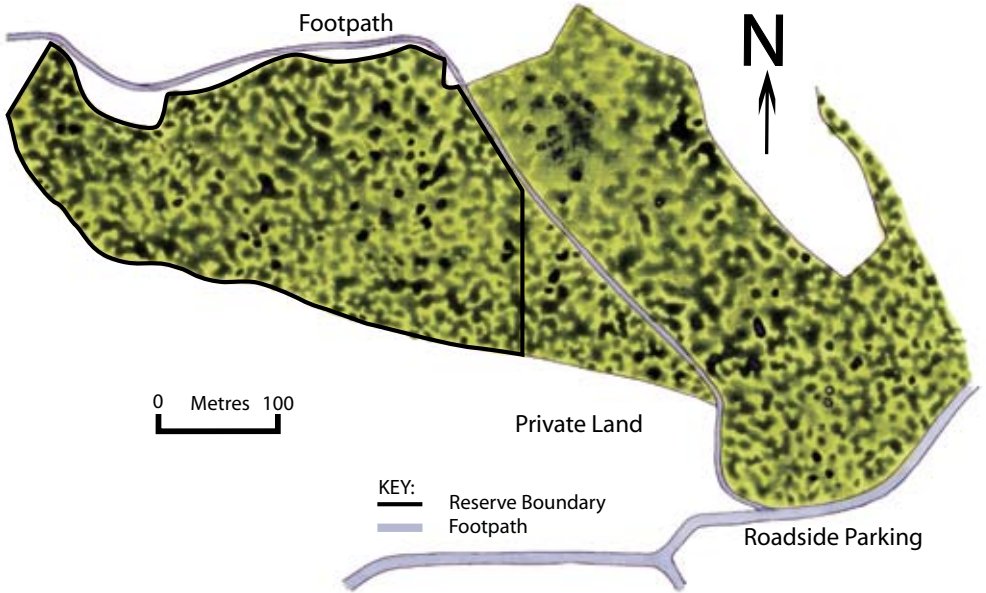
Wood Anemone - Gabi Horup

On-going restoration work will involve the creation of sunny glades to encourage more butterflies into the wood. This will also benefit dormice, which are known to use the reserve.



Herb-Paris - Lauri MacLean

# Cuhere Wood



## Access

At present there is no public access to this reserve as the Forestry Commission is carrying out work in the adjacent woodland (however a footpath does run through the woodland). Current access to the reserve is limited to volunteers and work tasks (November 2010). Updated access information is available from the Trust office or on our website.

## Nearby reserves

Magor Marsh – a remnant of the once extensive fenland of the Gwent Levels. Brockwells Meadow, Rogiet Poorland, Caldicot Pill and Lower Minnetts Field.

## What to see locally

Networks of footpaths are located in nearby Wentwood Forest, with Cadira Beeches being a good starting place for

woodland walks. Wentwood Reservoir is located south of the forest; above the reservoir stands Gray Hill, which offers fine views to the Severn Estuary, as well as being known for its standing stones. Cuhere Wood lies close to the picturesque village of Llanvair Discoed, with its St Mary's Church. Food and drinks are available at the Woodlands Tavern.



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GWT BLAENAU GWENT  
LOCAL GROUP

# DAN-Y-GRAIG

near Newport

1 hectare

**Water shrew are curious mammals that live in burrows along the banks of rivers and streams. Studies have suggested that they may have venomous saliva which helps to immobilise their prey.**



*Water Shrew - Ray Armstrong*

*Dan-y-Graig - GWT*



**Dan-y-Graig is located on a steep hillside above Risca. Although this is a small reserve, it contains a wide variety of habitats and supports many species of wildlife.**

Habitats in this small reserve range from young deciduous woodland and remnant limestone grassland to a pond fed by streams and boggy springs. Lead mining historically took place in the surrounding area.

## Species

There is a good display of primrose in spring, whilst sections of woodland are carpeted with ramson. Hart's-tongue and soft shield ferns can be found all year round. Hairy violet and wild strawberry grows in the small area of grassland. In the summer, mullein, hemp-agrimony and burnet-saxifrage can also be seen.

An additional feature of the grassland is its anthills. The disturbed soil on top of the anthills supports plants such as scarlet pimpernel and annual pearlwort. Common blue butterfly and burnet moth are attracted to the grassland flowers.

Ash and birch dominate the drier parts of the woodland, whilst willow frequents the damper spots overlying the underground streams. The lime-rich soil encourages a wide range of shrubs, including spindle and dogwood.

The pond, with its clear spring-fed water, is teeming with wildlife. It is thought to have been built to provide water for the copper works



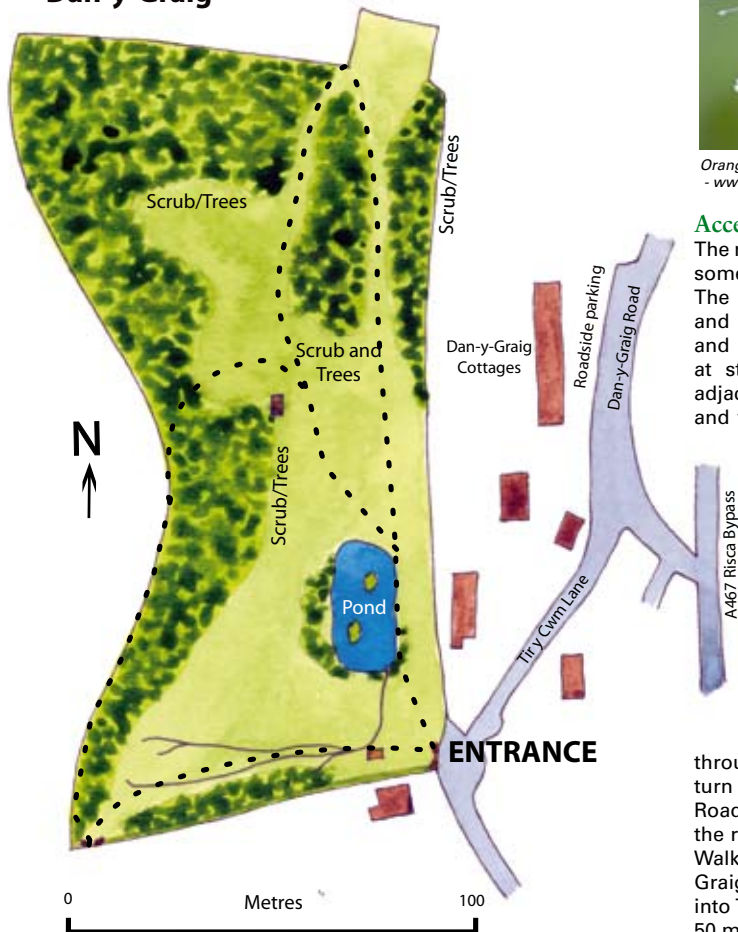
*Water Beetle - Richard Burkmar*

which stood on the site of the adjacent brickyard. The pond is now home to water shrew, minnow and dragonfly. On hot summer days, dragonfly patrol the pond, where three species of primitive horsetail – with their attractive whorls of branches – grow in and around the water. Marsh plants such as water mint and brooklime also appear in the damper areas.



*Common Blue -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)*

# Dan-y-Graig



Orange-tip Butterfly  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

## Access

The reserve is on a hillside with some steep flights of steps. The paths can be slippery and muddy in places. Bridges and steps have been built at strategic points. The path adjacent to the pond is firm and fairly flat. There is a short circular walk which passes a viewpoint overlooking Risca.

## Directions

From Newport take the M4 west (towards Cardiff). Leave the motorway at Junction 28 and follow signs for the A467 to Risca. Then turn off for Risca town centre. Heading north

through the centre of Risca, turn left down Dan-y-Graig Road. Cars can be parked on the road outside a brick works. Walking back down Dan-y-Graig Road, take the next right into Tir y Cwm Lane and then 50 metres up the incline on the right, go through a gate into the reserve (grid ref: ST 235 905).

## Nearby reserves

Allt-yr-Yn in Newport.

## What to see locally

There are good walks in the hills above the reserve including the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway footpath. The Sirhowy Valley Country Park lies to the west of Risca and is the starting point for the Ebbw Valley Walk. The Cwmcarn Forest Drive is a popular local attraction.

<b>KEY:</b>	Reserve Boundary	Gate	Bench
	Public Right of Way	Kissing Gate	Path



Small Copper - Barry Batchelor

SPONSORED BY:

for Peter and Jenny -  
born in the parish of Dixton.

# DIXTON EMBANKMENT

near Monmouth

1.5 hectares



Common Blue -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Buff-tailed Bumblebee -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Dingy Skipper -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

Dixton Embankment - Tim Green



Dixton Embankment is a flat, limestone grassland embankment notable for its orchids. It was created when the A40 dual carriageway was built, and it is managed by the Trust on behalf of the Highways Agency. The reserve crosses the border into Herefordshire, making it the only Gwent Wildlife Trust reserve which is partly in England.

The main habitat at Dixton Embankment is limestone grassland, but there is also some scrub and a small patch of woodland. The management of the site involves a late summer cut of the grassland

which promotes a diverse and interesting flora.

## Species

The unusual plants include pyramidal orchid, bee orchid, yellow-wort and ploughman's-



The deep pink blooms of the aptly-named pyramidal orchid are a distinctive species of calcareous grasslands. It is pollinated by insects such as skipper butterfly, six-spot burnet moth and buff-tailed bumblebee.

Pyramidal Orchid - Gabi Horup



Bee Orchid - Chris Deeney

spikenard. The young woodland, furthest from the entrance, supports a patch of wild daffodil, which make a delicate contrast to the mass planting of richly-coloured cultivated daffodil on the roadside above the reserve.

Dixton Embankment supports a rich diversity of insect life. The unusual white-legged damselfly, which visits the reserve from the River Wye below, can be seen in abundance. The site is sheltered and attracts many butterflies in early summer, including common blue, marbled white and the dingy skipper. Adder can sometimes be seen basking in the sun.

## Access

The reserve is flat grassland which is easily accessible down a short path from the main entrance gate.

## Directions

From Monmouth, take the A40 north to Ross-on-Wye. After 3km, leave the dual carriageway at the Ganarew Junction. Follow this road back over the dual carriageway bridge and rejoin the southbound A40. After just over 1km, turn left onto a small slip road (just before the A40 goes under a bridge) and park at the reserve entrance gate, taking care not to block the other gate (grid ref: SO 527 149). Take care, especially when leaving the reserve to rejoin the carriageway, because traffic on the dual carriageway can be very fast.

The reserve can also be reached on foot by taking the footpath marked "Wye Valley Walk" along the west bank of the river Wye from the Wye Bridge in Monmouth. Walk north for 1.5km and the reserve lies on the bank above the Wye Valley Walk, up a steep flight of steps.

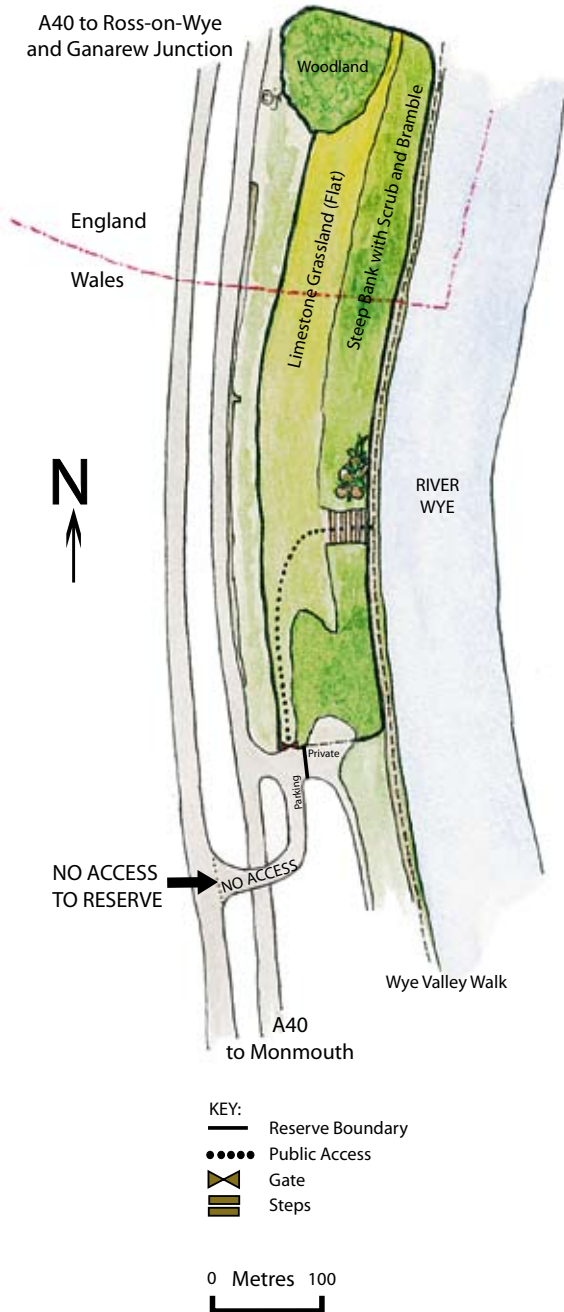
## Nearby reserves

Wyeswood Common and Pentwyn Farm reserves are located south of Monmouth.

## What to see locally

The Wye Valley Walk runs past the reserve. This passes through a number of places of interest in the Wye Valley AONB including Severn Sisters Rocks and Symonds Yat. The historic town of Monmouth boasts The Castle and Regimental Museum, The Nelson Garden, Shire Hall and the fortified medieval bridge over the river Monnow.

# Dixton Embankment





SPONSORED BY:  
KEITH ALLEN  
dormousenut@virgin.net

# GRAIG WOOD

near Monmouth

0.6 hectares



*Dormouse - ICCE/Mammal Society*



*Badger - Jon Bowen*

*Graig Wood - Gabi Horup*



**This small reserve consists of an area of broad-leaved woodland. It is part of a much larger expanse of woodland overlooking Monmouth and the Black Mountains. Graig Wood is at its most impressive in the spring, when a blanket of snowdrops covers the ground.**

## Species

The dominant species of tree within the woodland are ash, sycamore and oak. There is also a scattering of ancient yew trees. Evidence of dormice has been found within the woodland. Hart's-tongue fern grows frequently across the reserve, whilst mosses and liverworts cover the ruins of two old cottages. These cottages provide a glimpse of the past, when many more families worked on the land, living in cottages scattered across the countryside.

## Access

There is currently no public access to this reserve because of safety concerns. A public footpath does run adjacent to the site.



*Snowdrops - Gabi Horup*

# HENLLYS BOG (SSSI)

near Cwmbran

1 hectare



Siskin - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Round-leaved Sundew -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Marsh Helleborine - Rebecca Price

Henlllys Bog - Rebecca Price



**Henlllys Bog is a small valley mire surrounded by wet woodland. Although small, this site boasts an impressive list of unusual wetland plants.**



Fragrant Orchid - Rebecca Price

Valley mires are areas of water-logged peat in valley bottoms, with characteristic plant communities. Many of these wildlife-rich habitats have been lost through drainage, and they have become very rare nationally. Of the handful of valley mires left in Gwent, Henlllys Bog is the best one for wildlife.

## Species

Purple moor-grass tussocks dominate the centre of the mire. In summer the striking deep pink spikes of purple-loosestrife are easily identified. Two unusual species of orchid are found on the reserve – the rare marsh helleborine and the

fragrant orchid with its delicate scent. Other uncommon species include the meadow thistle, dyer's greenweed, common butterwort, round-leaved sundew and broad-leaved cottongrass.

A fringe of wild angelica can be found in a fringe of alder-dominated woodland surrounds the mire. Patches of drier ground within the woodland are picked out by beech trees and sanicle. Birds that use the reserve include woodpecker, nuthatch, siskin, redpoll and woodcock. The site is rich in invertebrates, including the dark bush-cricket and rare spiders.

**The insectivorous common butterwort catches its prey using sticky glands found on its leaves. The trapped insect's soft parts are then slowly digested by the plant!**



Common Butterwort  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

### Access

Wet and boggy throughout the year. There is a short stretch of boardwalk at the entrance to the site.

### Directions

***This reserve is difficult to find, and we advise that you research your route on an Ordnance Survey map prior to visiting.***

From Cwmbran town centre (the Sainsbury's roundabout), go south along the A4051, Cwmbran Drive, towards Newport. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> roundabout, take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit right, onto Hollybush Way. At the next roundabout turn left to continue along Hollybush Way. At the next roundabout turn left onto Henllys Way.

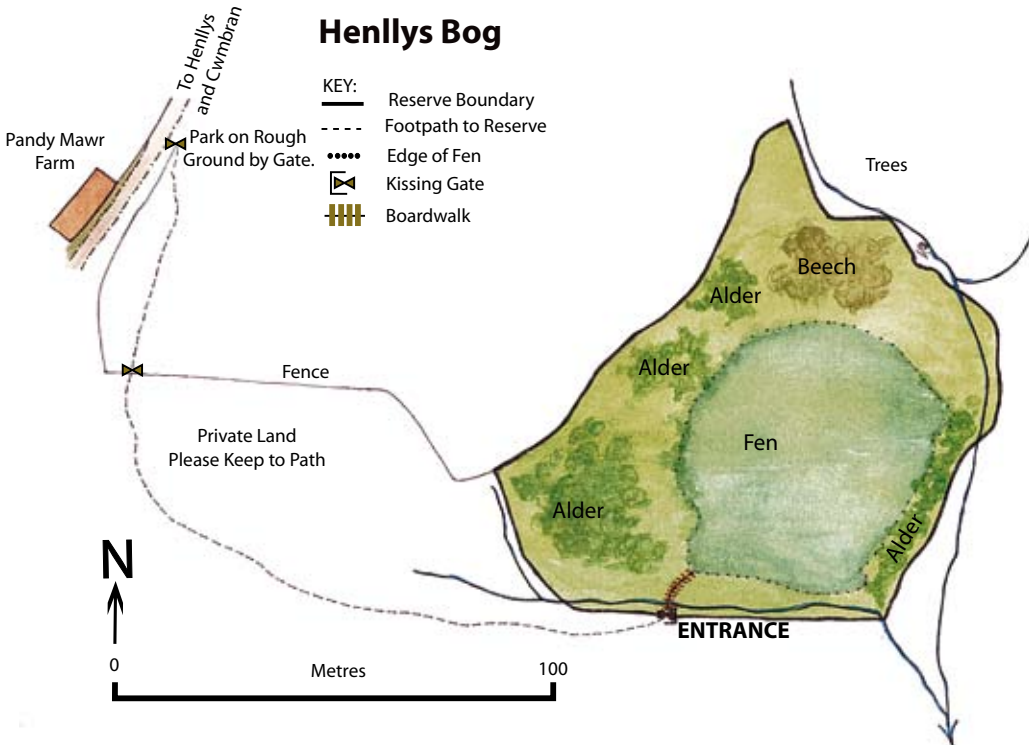
After about 1km, take a left turn into Henllys Lane (look for the sign to Henllys Village Nursery) and after 200 metres, take another left turn. Drive past the entrance to Pen-y-Werlod Farm, go 150 metres up the hill and turn left up a steep sunken lane. Drive for 1km along this lane, through the yard of Pensarn Farm and then down a hill to the end of the tarmac. Follow the road around to the right around a hairpin bend over the brow to Pandy Mawr Farm. Park on the left on rough ground just before the farm (grid ref: ST 263 926). Walk through the metal field gate and follow the green signs along the field edge. Once through second gate, turn left down the slope towards the block of alders which fringe the reserve.

### Nearby reserves

Branches Fork Meadows, Dan-y-Graig and Coed Meyric Moel.

### What to see locally

The hills of the South Wales coalfield rise behind Cwmbran. They are rich in archaeology, from remains of recent coal mining and iron scouring, to the ruins of the Celtic chapel of Llanderfal and the Iron Age hill fort of Twmbarlwm, which offers a good panorama of the Severn Estuary. Footpaths around the reserve link with the surrounding countryside.



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ED HEATH FENCING AND  
LANDSCAPING

# KITTY'S ORCHARD

near Usk

2 hectares



*Blossom - Sorrel & Chris Jones*

*Kitty's Orchard - Sorrel & Chris Jones*



**This reserve consists of a small area of young deciduous woodland and a hay meadow. There are good views across the valley to Wentwood Forest. A mature pear tree is a relic of the old orchard. The Trust has recently planted fruit trees to restore this habitat of high heritage and wildlife value.**

Evidence of what looks like horse stables and paddocks are shown in the meadow in the 1845 tithe map. It is thought that the name 'Kitty' refers to a horse, once stabled in the orchard.

## Species

The grassland is under traditional hay meadow management with a late summer hay cut followed by aftermath grazing. This encourages species such as yellow-rattle and common spotted-orchid to thrive. The meadow is bordered by mature

hedgerows with scattered large trees.

A small plantation woodland is located at the northern end of the reserve, with species such as lime, oak, ash and cherry. The woodland contains an open glade which provides a good habitat for butterflies. Broad-leaved helleborine, a species of orchid, has been found growing in the woodland.

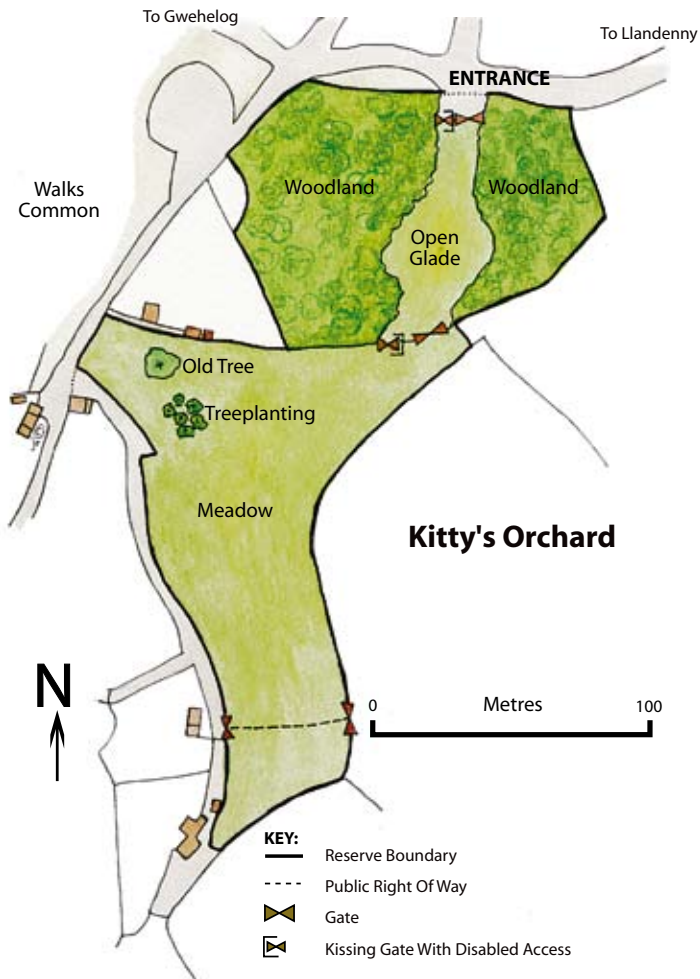


*Peacock Butterfly -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)*

Kitty's Orchard is an experimental site where the Trust is working to increase species diversity. Native bluebell seeds have been planted in the woodland, and grassland diversity is being restored through traditional management following strewing of green hay, taken from more flower-rich Trust reserves, at this site. Orchards are an important but declining wildlife habitat and a feature of the surrounding countryside.



*Song Thrush - Amy Lewis*



### Access

There is a flat, straight path that leads from the entrance gate through the woodland and into the meadow.

### Directions

From Usk town centre, follow the A472 west. Just before you leave the village, take the turning to the left signposted Gwehelog. Follow this road for about 4km until you reach the second crossroads. Take a right hand turn towards Llandenny. Follow this road for about 500 metres until you reach a crossroads. Go straight on, and very soon after the crossroads, you will see the reserve entrance (a wooden gate) on the right hand side, opposite the turning to Walks Mill Cyder Farm (grid ref: SO 400 045). There is parking for one car by the reserve entrance.

### Nearby reserves

Priory Wood and Springdale Farm.

### What to see locally

Raglan Castle is the finest medieval fortress-palace in Britain. The historic town of Usk contains the ruins of a Norman castle, 17<sup>th</sup> Century buildings, cobbled streets, and walks along the River Usk, which is a magnet for a wide range of wildlife.



Common Spotted-orchid - Rebecca Price



Spiderweb in the Grass - Zsuzsanna Bird

SPONSORED BY:

Lower Minnetts Field Reserve  
is proudly supported by  
Tarmac

# LOWER MINNETTS FIELD

near Chepstow

2 hectares



*Hedgerow - Sorrel & Chris Jones*

*Lower Minnetts Field - Lauri MacLean*



**This small reserve consists of a hay meadow, with a scrubby fringe linking the grassland to the surrounding woodland. The traditionally managed hay meadow is awash with colour in the summer when masses of oxeye daisy are in flower.**

## Species

In spring, cowslip appear across the site. In summer, oxeye daisy present a beautiful display along with species such as bird's-foot-trefoil, common knapweed and common spotted-orchid. Indicators of

calcareous grassland such as agrimony and lady's bedstraw are also present. More unusual plants include common broomrape and adder's-tongue fern, with common gromwell along the field margins.

**Common broomrape is a parasitic plant which feeds off the roots of host plants such as clover. It favours a wide range of grassy habitats where suitable host plants flourish.**



*Common Broomrape - Lauri MacLean*

The diversity of wildflowers attracts insects such as meadow brown and small tortoiseshell butterfly and the distinctive red and black six-spot burnet moth.

The woodland and scrub at the edge of the reserve provide an ideal habitat for birds including green woodpecker, spotted flycatcher and hawfinch. A reptile hibernaculum has been constructed to provide a place where species such as adder can safely over-winter.



*Adder's-tongue Fern - Tim Green*

The mature roadside hedgerow at Lower Minnetts Field has been recently laid using traditional methods. Hedge-laying was once a commonplace countryside skill, with styles distinct to different counties. Hedges were used as stock-proof barriers before the advent of fencing wire but this form of boundary management has largely disappeared from the countryside, along with some of the associated wildlife. The Trust, however, continues to practice traditional hedge-laying on many of its reserves.

## Access

The hay meadow is flat, but uneven in places. There is a gate at the road side entrance and a further gate allowing access from the meadow into Slade Woods.



Small Tortoiseshell  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Burnet Moth  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

## Directions

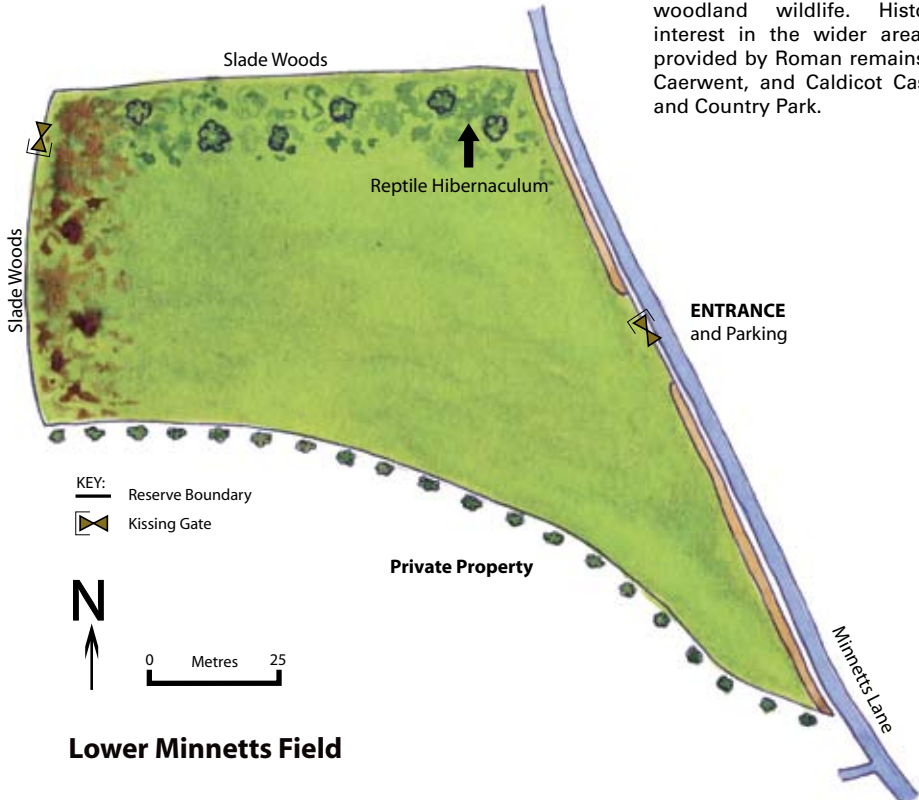
From the B4245 in Rogiet, turn into Minnetts Lane, opposite the Severn Tunnel Junction road. Pass under the motorway left along Minnetts Lane, going past Windmill Lane. The reserve entrance is 1km on the left, just before the Slade Woods car park. Access to the reserve is off Minnetts Lane. Car parking is available on the roadside or at the Slade Woods car park (grid ref: ST 449 888).

## Nearby reserves

Brockwells Meadows and Rogiet Poorland are located close to Lower Minnetts Field. Magor Marsh is a short journey from this reserve.

## What to see locally

The neighbouring Slade Woods contains a network of footpaths, and a very good diversity of woodland wildlife. Historic interest in the wider area is provided by Roman remains at Caerwent, and Caldicot Castle and Country Park.



**Lower Minnetts Field**

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Cymru,  
Casnewydd  
Ysgol Addysg  
Casnewydd

# MAGOR MARSH (SSSI)

near Newport

36 hectares



Ragged-robin - Lauri MacLean



Damselflies - Mike Warburton

Magor Marsh - Gabi Horup



**Magor Marsh is the last relatively natural area of fenland on the Gwent Levels. From the fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher, to the sight of colourful dragonflies darting over the reeds, this is an inspiring place to visit. In autumn and winter, the reserve is particularly attractive to birdwatchers, as the pond provides a sanctuary for wintering wildfowl and passing migrants.**

Magor Marsh holds a special place in the Trust's history. In 1963, threats to this fragment of wetland were felt so strongly by a small group of naturalists that they banded together to form what is now Gwent Wildlife Trust, securing this

as our first nature reserve. The reserve has recently been expanded to provide a larger haven for wetland wildlife.

Wetlands were once commonplace across Britain; however they are now one of

our most threatened habitats. Magor Marsh is particularly rich in wildlife because of the range of habitats present. These include damp hay meadows, sedge fen, reedbed, scrub, pollarded willows, wet woodland, a large pond and the numerous reens (drainage ditches).

## History

Magor Marsh is of historic importance and there have been several Iron Age, Roman and medieval discoveries near the reserve. The name Magor is a Welsh word Magwyr meaning 'wall' but this is interpreted in different ways. It could signify remains or ruins, but alternatively, a 'wall' could be a term for an embankment along a reen, serving a drainage function.

Clues to the past are provided by the vegetation on the reserve. A distinct line of willow (also called grey willow) is thought to have originated



**Look out for a winter spectacle on the reserve, when thousands of crows, jackdaws and rooks gather to roost overnight.**

Crows, Jackdaws & Rooks -  
Barry Batchelor



from willow branches laid as a primitive board walk between the church in Magor and the monastic Lower Grange Farm.

### Geology

The reserve is fed by underground springs which issue from limestone rock. The soil is mostly peat with patches of marine clays. The survival of peat soil (and its associated wildlife) relies on high water levels, which the Trust achieves through a system of sluices in the reens.



Marsh Marigolds - Lauri MacLean

### Species

In early spring, look out for the golden flowers of marsh-marigold along the reens and the mauve blooms of cuckoo flower in the meadows, and listen for the song of the Cetti's warbler. Other warblers and cuckoo appear later on in spring.

By early summer the hay meadows are a mass of wildflowers including ragged-robin, lesser spearwort, meadow thistle and tormentil. The reens are lined with yellow iris, hemlock water-dropwort and purple-loosestrife.

**Otters are playful semi-aquatic mammals, living in holts around the water's edge. They suffered a severe population decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century due to pollution and habitat loss, but the species is now recovering well. Look out for their tracks and spraints at Magor Marsh, where otters are now common – although very elusive!**



Common Blue Damselflies - Zsuzsanna Bird



Willow - Jane Corey



Swans at Magor - Jane Corey

A hide overlooking the pond provides a good vantage point for birdwatching. The reedbed provides nest sites for reed and sedge warblers, with Cetti's warbler nesting in nearby scrub. In summer, look out for hobby hawk after dragonflies. Other birds of prey recorded here include harriers and peregrine. Coot, moorhen, water rail and little egret occur all year-round. In spring and autumn, the pond occasionally attracts migrants such as garganey. A flock of teal spends the winter on the



Ruddy Darter - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

pool, sometimes joined by a few shoveler or gadwall. A kingfisher and sand martin bank has been built on the reserve to provide nesting sites for these species.

The reserve is one of the most important sites in Wales for aquatic invertebrates. It supports rarities such as the great silver beetle, soldierfly and the hairy dragonfly. Pollarded willow provide habitat for the musk beetle, which has larvae that burrow through the branches, feeding on the wood.



Otter - Elliot Smith

## Access

The reserve is flat, with a path and boardwalk allowing wheelchair users access as far as the bird hide (400 metres from the car park). There are steps and boggy, uneven ground in other parts of the reserve, whilst cattle or other livestock regularly graze some areas. Please note that due to sensitive wildlife, dogs are not allowed at Magor Marsh.

## Directions

Exit the M4 at Junction 23A and follow signs into Magor village on the B4245. On

entering Magor continue through the village and then take a turning on the right signposted Redwick. Follow the road round to the right soon afterwards (also signed Redwick), and then follow the road past the ruins of the Priory on your left and over a narrow railway bridge. Turn left immediately after the railway bridge and follow this road for about 400 metres, and the reserve entrance is on the right. Park in the small car park beside the Trust's Derek Upton Centre (grid ref: ST 428 866). This education centre is used by school groups during

term time, but it is not open to the general public except for special events.

From Newport there is a local bus service (Number 61) which stops directly outside the reserve. Other bus services run to Magor village.

## Nearby reserves

Towards Newport, Solutia Meadows is the Trust's other nature reserve on the Gwent Levels. Brockwells Meadows, Lower Minnetts Field and Rogiet Poorland sit on the low limestone ridge just north of Magor.

## Magor Marsh



## What to see locally

The village of Magor has two good local pubs and an attractive square. Redwick village is also nearby, with refreshments available at the Rose Inn, whilst the height of the water during the Great Flood of 1607 is marked on the wall of Church of St Thomas the Apostle.

SPONSORED BY:

MARGARET RENSHAW

How could I not support a wood with such a great name?

# MARGARET'S WOOD

near Monmouth

2 hectares



*Herb-Robert - Zsuzsanna Bird*



*Wild Daffodils - Rebecca Price*



*Moss Covered Wall - Sorrel & Chris Jones*

*Margaret's Wood - Lauri MacLean*



**This woodland reserve is situated on a steep hillside. Below the woodland, an open slope is an important refuge for native wild daffodils.**

the open areas below the woodland. The Wye Valley acts as a stronghold for this spring species which is absent from most other areas of Wales.

Margaret's Wood is a particularly good site for ferns – including populations of the rare oak fern. A rich variety of fungi can be found on the site in the autumn making it a good location for a fungus foray.

Woodland birds that can be seen throughout the year include marsh tit, woodpecker, nuthatch and treecreeper. Mammals such as fallow deer and dormice are also present.

Margaret's Wood is a beautiful woodland, situated on the lower slopes of the Whitebrook valley, in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The wood has some fine examples of mature oak and beech. Other species include cherry, yew, birch and holly.

## Species

March is a good time to see this reserve, when a mass of native wild daffodil carpet

The ruins of a small cottage, originating from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, are visible within the reserve. Small, solidly built cottages, sometimes with a very small window, would once have been a familiar sight in the Welsh countryside. Beech-lined boundary banks and the remains of old stone boundary walls, covered with mosses and ferns, are also present.



*Nuthatch - Neil Aldridge*

## Access

The reserve is on a hillside with access direct from the narrow country lane. The terrain is steep and there are steps.

## Directions

From Monmouth, leave south on the B4293. After approximately 1.5km, take the left fork signposted Trellech, Penallt and Chepstow. Continue up the hill along the B4293 then take the left turn to Whitebrook and The Narth. Go straight ahead, across the crossroads and after 2km the reserve entrance is on the right hand side just before The Crown

at Whitebrook. Parking for one car is available by the roadside (grid ref: SO 525 069). Further parking is available beyond the The Crown at Whitebrook, where the road is wider.

## Nearby reserves

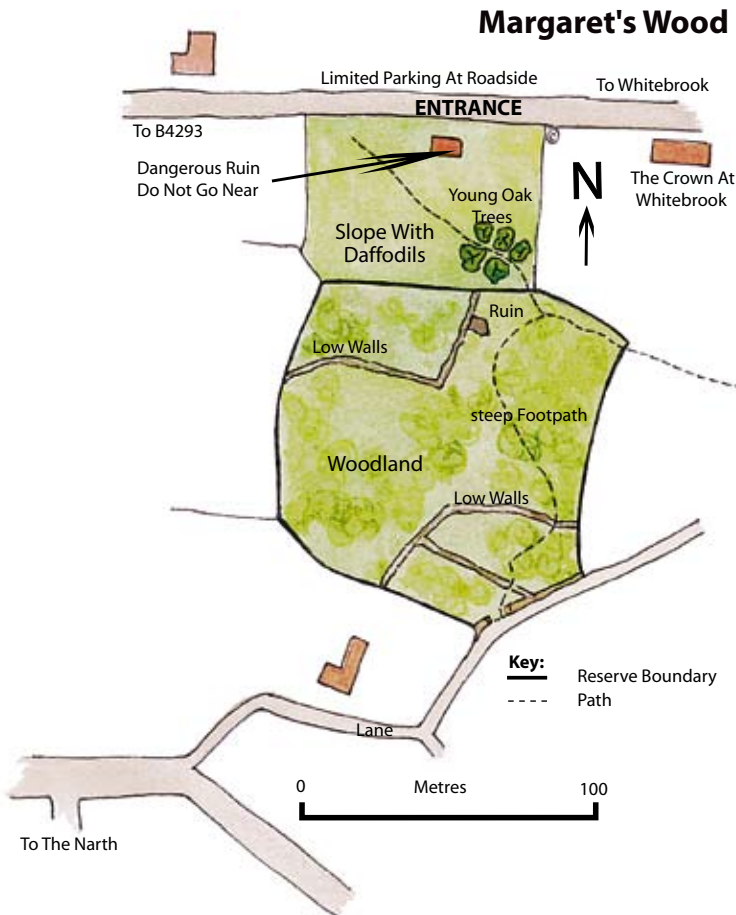
New Grove Meadows, Pentwyn Farm, Wyeswood Common and Prisk Wood.

## What to see locally

The reserve is very close to The Crown at Whitebrook and the Wye Valley Way.



Margaret's Wood - Sorrel & Chris Jones



SPONSORED BY:

**MOLLIE STROUD**

in memory of her husband,  
Don Stroud.

# NEW GROVE MEADOWS

near Monmouth

5 hectares



*Pink Waxcap - Gabi Horup*



*Red Waxcap - Lauri MacLean*



*Parrot Waxcap -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)*

*New Grove Meadows - Sorrel & Chris Jones*



**The New Grove Meadows reserve provides an unforgettable sight in May and June when thousands of orchid spikes, set against other wildflowers, give a wonderful display of colour. From the reserve, there are superb views across fine lowland scenery to the Great Skirrid and Sugar Loaf, which are backed by the full sweep of South Wales' other mountains.**

The reserve is made up of four adjacent meadows. The two northern meadows are amongst the best in Britain – the richness of their grassland flora is indicative of an unbroken history of traditional management.

They also support a large population of green-winged orchid. The two southern fields have been reseeded and fertilised in the past. However, the Trust's traditional management is steadily restoring their species diversity, and they now provide a superb display of colour each year.

The meadows receive an annual hay cut in July or August, followed by aftermath grazing. Mature hedgerows border the meadows – these offer food and shelter for many species of invertebrates, birds and small mammals.

## Species

In spring, the lemon-yellow flowers of cowslip and the subtle pale brown spikes of the spring sedge are the first to flower. In May, early-purple orchid is found at the field edges, and by the end of the month, the fields are dominated by large numbers of green-winged orchid. Heath spotted-orchid appear next,

and by mid June, common spotted-orchid follow. Other orchids include the common twayblade with its intricately-shaped green flowers.

Two tiny grassland ferns – moonwort and adder's-tongue fern – have been recorded within the meadows. Other flowers include meadow vetchling, rough hawkbit, common milkwort and common knapweed. The flora attracts a wide range of insects, including butterflies such as the dingy skipper.

Some of the most beautiful fungi, aptly named the grassland jewels, are the range of brightly-coloured waxcaps which grow in New Grove Meadows. In autumn, the two northern fields are particularly important for waxcaps, with swarms of yellow, red and green species, along with rarities such as the pink waxcap which is a gaudy candyfloss colour. Another rare grassland mushroom recorded here goes by the name of big blue pinkgill.

Dormice and harvest mice have been identified in the mature hedgerows.



*Honeysuckle - Sorrel & Chris Jones*

The green-winged orchid was once a common sight in Gwent. However, intensification of farming in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century resulted in its loss from nearly all the meadows where it once thrived.

*Green-winged Orchid*  
- Sorrel & Chris Jones



### Access

The reserve consists of four slightly sloping grassy fields – the ground is uneven in places. The access into the fields is through gates, which have sufficient space for a wheelchair.

### Directions

From Monmouth, go south on the B4293 (signposted Trellech and Mitchel Troy). About 1.5km from Monmouth, take the left fork, signposted Trellech, Penallt and Chepstow. Continue along the B4293 up the hill, past a turning for Whitebrook and The Narth on the left. On a straight section of the road look for a large Forestry Commission sign on the right, marked Wet Meadow Wood. Take this turning and park in the forestry car park at the junction of the forestry roads (grid ref: SO 501 066). Walk back along the access track and the entrance to the meadows is on the left.

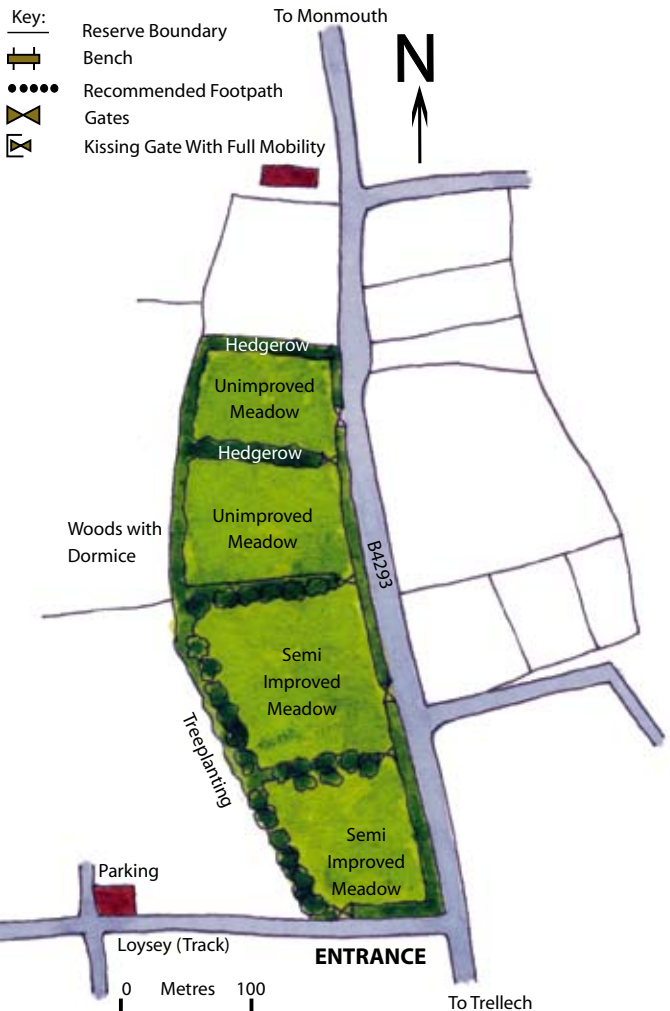
### Nearby reserves

Croes Robert Wood and Wet Meadow Woods can be reached on foot through the Forestry Commission plantations next to New Grove Meadows. Towards Penallt and The Narth lie the Margaret's Wood, Pentwyn Farm and Prisk Wood reserves.

### What to see locally

The historic village of Trellech is one of the most interesting villages in South Wales. There are walks across Trellech Common and the Whitebrook Valley. From Trellech you can also walk past Cleddon Hall, Llandogo, over Bigswier Bridge and up to the Hudnalls and St Briavels.

## New Grove Meadows



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WILDLIFE IN NEWPORT  
GROUP in memory of  
Martin Wragg

# PENTWYN FARM (SSSI)

near Monmouth

11 hectares



Medieval Barn - GWT



Brown Hare - Zsuzsanna Bird

Pentwyn Farm - GWT



**Pentwyn Farm has survived virtually unchanged for centuries. It includes one of the largest areas of flower-rich grassland remaining in Gwent and provides an opportunity to see hay meadows as they would have looked in the past, before the advent of intensive farming. In 2003, the Trust restored the farm's historic barn using traditional methods – oak timber was extracted by horse from the Priory Wood reserve to provide the green oak roof frame.**

Situated on the Trellech Ridge, Pentwyn Farm provides eye-catching views across the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The farm retains its traditional layout

of cottage, barn, green lanes and dry stone walls with distinctive stone stiles. The Trust's restoration of the barn and traditional management of the hay meadows and

hedges maintains an historic farm rich in wildlife.

Four meadows have always retained their historic wealth of flowers. In the late 1990s, the Trust acquired further meadows to restore them to their former wildflower glory. Green-winged orchid, yellow-rattle and bird's-foot-trefoil can now be seen where recently the fields only held grasses and white clover. A further enhancement by the Trust has been the creation of an orchard of a wide range of local fruit trees, which is to be found around the back of the Inn at Penallt.

Parts of the barn date back to medieval times, with the barn having been extended several times since. It is an impressive building, with its heavily buttressed walls. Some of the stone is finely dressed, and it has been suggested that it may have been stolen from Trellech Castle. It has also been suggested that the barn could have been to collect tithes for the Wye Valley

**The redwing is a winter visitor to Britain. Found in fields and hedgerows, it feeds on berries and worms. It has a distinctive creamy stripe above the eye and orange-red patches on its flanks.**

Redwing - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



monasteries, whilst the area became part of the estate of the Duke of Beaufort.

Mystery surrounds the purpose of a stepped well just beyond the old barn. Fed by a spring, it is likely to have been used for drinking water. However it could also have been a healing or holy well. There is a strong tradition of holy wells in the area, and Penallt is thought to have been on a medieval pilgrims' way.

### Species

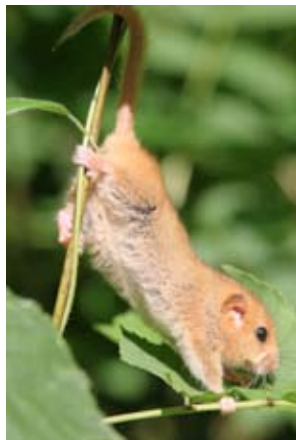
A visit to the reserve in spring presents a colourful display of

characteristic teeth-marks. The hedgerows also provide plentiful food supplies for overwintering flocks of fieldfare and redwing.

### Field boundaries

Pentwyn Farm contains a network of dry stone walls and ancient hedgerows. On-going restoration work means that these historic Welsh landscape features will be conserved for the future.

Traditional boundaries serve a multitude of purposes: they identify divisions between properties, protect livestock



Dormouse - Ian Pratt



Medieval Barn - GWT



Goldfinch - Amy Lewis

wildflowers such as cowslip and early-purple orchid. By late spring, thousands of spikes of green-winged orchid start to appear in the meadows.

The display continues into summer, when a variety of other orchids, such as greater butterfly-orchid, common spotted-orchid and common twayblade can be seen, amidst a carpet of common knapweed, oxeye daisy, yellow-rattle and eyebright.

The hedgerows provide an ideal habitat for dormice. In autumn, their presence is betrayed by hazelnuts bearing

and crops, and act as important wildlife corridors – offering a refuge for wildlife and providing habitat connections running through the countryside.



Oxeye Daisy - Sorrel & Chris Jones



Greater Butterfly-orchid - Rebecca Price



Orange-tip Butterfly  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



## Access

The reserve consists of gently-sloping grassland. There are footpaths by the field edges and gates have been installed. Car parking is provided adjacent to the modern barn and orchard next to the Inn at Penallt. For those with difficulties with mobility who want to see the Medieval Barn, the old hay meadows or Wyeswood Common, see below for directions to the limited closer car parking.

## Directions

From Monmouth, take the B4293 south signposted to Mitchel Troy and Trellech. About 1.5km from Monmouth, take the turning

that forks left for Penallt, Trellech and Chepstow. After approximately 3.2km, take the first turning to the left, signposted Penallt. On entering the village of Penallt (2.4km), turn left at the crossroads, then right just before the war memorial (follow signs for The Inn at Penallt).

Parking is available by the modern barn (grid ref: SO 522 092) adjacent to the Inn at Penallt, reached by driving through the pub car park. Additional parking for those with mobility difficulties is located at the end of the lane that runs through the village green, past the pub car park to the Medieval Barn (grid ref: SO 523 094). Do not park on the village green.

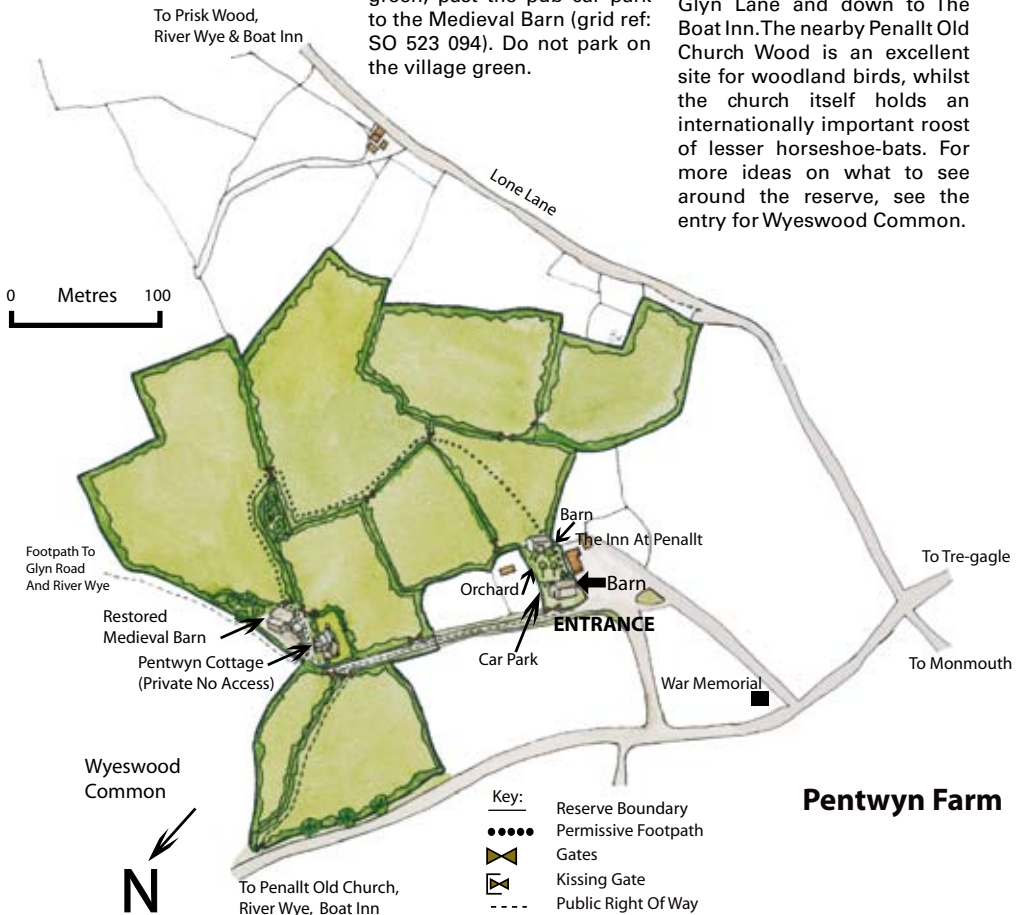
## Nearby reserves

Wyewood Common is located right next to Pentwyn Farm, and provides a visionary example of landscape-scale conservation in action.

The Prisk Wood and New Grove Meadows reserves are only slightly further afield.

## What to see locally

The Inn at Penallt is a traditional country pub and bed & breakfast, offering a wide range of real ales and bar food in the pub, and meals in the restaurant. The Wye Valley Way can be accessed by following the public footpath across Wyewood Common, onto Glyn Lane and down to The Boat Inn. The nearby Penallt Old Church Wood is an excellent site for woodland birds, whilst the church itself holds an internationally important roost of lesser horseshoe-bats. For more ideas on what to see around the reserve, see the entry for Wyewood Common.



SPONSORED BY:

GWENT  
ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# PETERSTONE WENTLOOGE MARSHES (SSSI)

near Newport



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
Registered Charity No: 1088830



Shelduck - Steve Waterhouse



Common Darter - Rachel Scopes

Peterstone Wentlooge Marshes - Gabi Horup



**This coastal reserve lies along the foreshore of the outer Severn Estuary. The path along the flood embankment affords excellent views of the tidal mudflats and saltmarsh, making this a good site for watching birds. The area is important during the spring and autumn migration of waders along the west coast of Britain, whilst offering a sanctuary for large numbers of birds in the winter.**

The Trust owns the fishing rights to approximately two square kilometres of the foreshore, and has an agreement with the Wentlooge Wildfowling and Conservation Association to have a no-shoot zone in an area on the west side of the mouth of the Peterstone Gout.

## Species

In winter, the site supports waders such as oystercatcher, curlew, dunlin, redshank and knot. Turnstone and grey plover are among the other waders that occur here in smaller numbers. The site also provides a good habitat

for different species of ducks including shelduck, teal, pintail and wigeon, and is one of the few coastal sites in Britain with regular numbers of shoveler. Lucky visitors may spot a short-eared owl quartering the saltmarsh, or a hunting peregrine or a merlin. Rarities spotted here include spotted crane, avocet and broad-billed sandpiper.

## Mudflats

The fragile mudflats found along the Severn Estuary are an important habitat supporting huge numbers of birds and fish. The sediments consist of silts, clays and organic matter.



Peregrine - Mike Warburton

They are teeming with aquatic invertebrates including tiny snails, crustaceans and worms and provide feeding and resting areas for internationally important populations of waders and waterfowl.

**The pintail is an unmistakably elegant and attractive duck. It winters on lakes, marshes and estuaries.**



Pintail - Dave Appleton



Curlew - Zsuzsanna Bird

### Access

Please keep off the foreshore at Peterstone Wentlooge Marshes. This habitat is of international importance, and the birds using the foreshore are very sensitive to disturbance, as well as mudflats being dangerous to walk on. Visitors must never go beyond the top of the sea wall, and must also avoid disturbance of birds on the mudflats. Towards high tide, when the birds are closer to the sea wall, keep to the landward side of the sea wall, doing no more than peering over the top to avoid scaring off the ducks and waders.

### Directions

Leave the M4 at Junction 28, taking the A48 towards Newport city centre at the roundabout, at the end of the slip road. At the next roundabout take the B4239 towards St Brides and Duffryn. At the mini roundabout, take the B4239 to St Brides. Follow this road past Duffryn High School, across the narrow railway bridge and out of the city for about 8km to reach the village of Peterstone Wentlooge. Park across the road from the church, and follow the path alongside the church signposted Sea Wall (grid ref: parking ST 268 802, reserve ST 269 799).

### Nearby reserves

The Allt-yr-Yn Local Nature Reserve is in Newport, with the Solutia Meadows and Magor Marsh reserves being on the Gwent Levels on the far side of Newport from Peterstone Wentlooge.

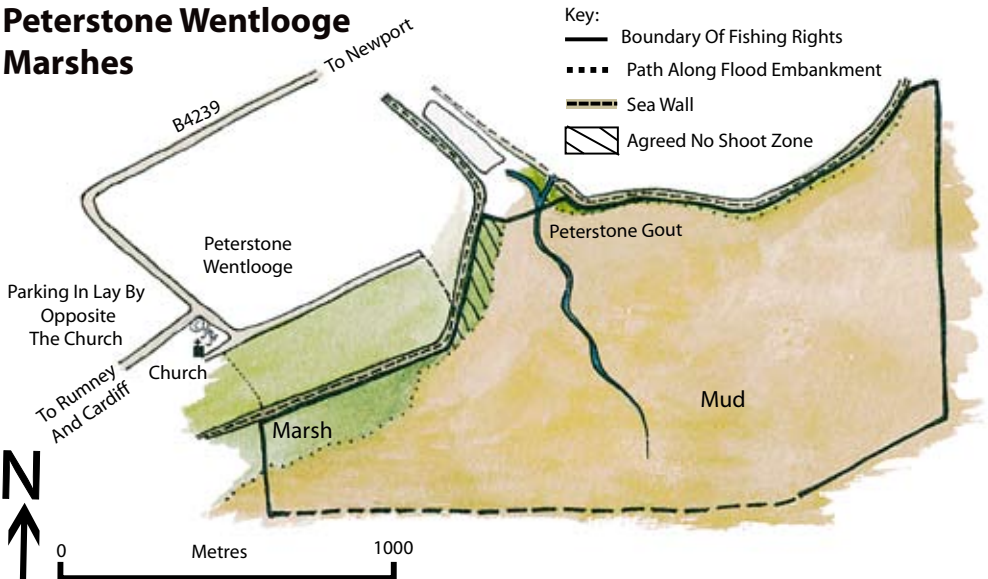
### What to see locally

Refreshments are available at the Six Bells Hotel in Peterstone Wentlooge. The West Usk Lighthouse is a well-known local bed and breakfast. The Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve lies to the south-east of Newport – an outstanding site for birdwatching.



Avocet - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

## Peterstone Wentlooge Marshes



# PRIORY WOOD (SSSI)

near Usk

5 hectares



Wood Sorrel - Gabi Horup



Speckled Wood -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

Priory Wood - Jane Corey



**Priory Wood is an enchanting ancient wood situated north of Usk. It sits in a quiet location at the heart of Gwent, where it teems with wildlife.**

This woodland is known for its cherry trees – towards the middle of the reserve there is a small area of almost pure cherry. Other tree species include oak, ash, birch, beech and yew.

In 2002, the Trust carefully felled four mature oak trees to open up the woodland canopy, thus promoting the ground flora and diversifying the wood. The timber was dragged out by horse to minimise impacts on the ground flora, and was then used for the restoration of the Medieval Barn at Pentwyn Farm.

## Species

In spring, a profusion of bluebells provides a striking sight. Other species include ramson, wood-sorrel and yellow archangel – all indicators of an ancient woodland that has been present for more than 400 years. There is a good variety of ferns including hard shield-fern and lady-fern.

The reserve supports many species of insects and fungi on the dead wood. During a survey carried out in 2005, a total of 283 species of invertebrates were recorded, including several rare species. Birds on the reserve include

**The hawfinch is Britain's largest finch. It has a powerful bill for cracking open the stones of fruits such as cherry or sloe to get at the edible kernel on which it feeds. Hawfinch favour woods like this which offer a wide range of seeds and fruit.**



Hawfinch - David Slater

spotted and pied flycatchers, sparrowhawk and woodcock, whilst hawfinch has also been recorded.

Noctule bats roost in holes in trees in and around Priory Wood. They are often seen before sunset flying strongly at treetop height in search of insects.

The bank next to the public road is rich in ground flora, and other interesting species such as spindle. To the south-east, along the boundary with the golf course, are the remains of an ancient hedge, lined by beech trees of a considerable size and age.



Greater-spotted Woodpecker  
- Mike Warburton

### Access

A circular path runs through the reserve. The path is steep in places and there are flights of steps.

### Directions

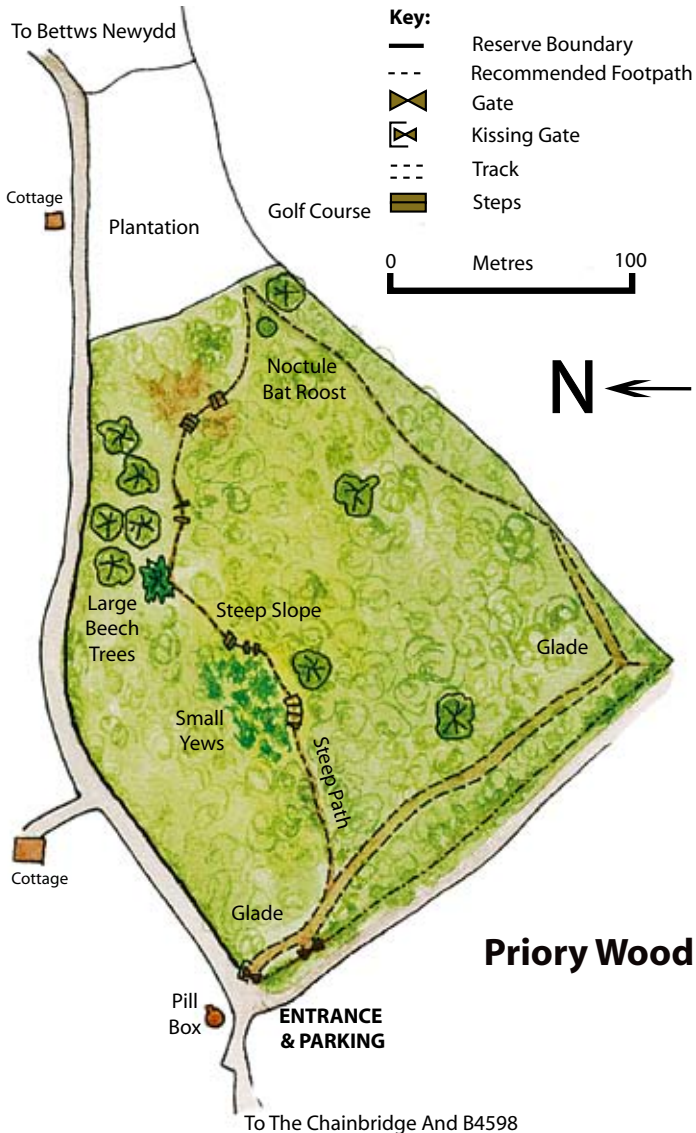
From Usk town centre, take the B4598 north signposted Abergavenny. After around 5km, take the turning to the right signposted Bettws Newydd (just before the B4598 crosses the River Usk at Chain Bridge). Follow the road for a short distance looking out for an old pill box in a field on the left. The reserve entrance is directly opposite. There is very limited parking at the reserve entrance, enough for one to two cars (grid ref: SO 353 058).

### Nearby reserves

The nearest reserves, on the western side of Usk, are Kitty's Orchard and Springdale Farm.

### What to see locally

The nearby Chainbridge Inn overlooks the River Usk. The Usk Valley Walk passes close to the reserve – this walk runs through the Vale of Usk between Caerleon and Brecon.



## Priory Wood



Beech-lined Boundary - GWT

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# PRISK WOOD (SSSI)

near Monmouth

6 hectares



Prisk Wood - Jane Corey



Long Tailed Tit - Amy Lewis

Prisk Wood - Jane Corey



**Prisk Wood is a very special ancient woodland, situated on a steep slope above the River Wye. A striking feature of the woodland is the mass of mosses, liverworts and ferns which carpet boulders, tree stumps and fallen tree trunks. The medley of small streams running through the woodland are favoured by a variety of unusual damp-loving species.**

Prisk Wood contains some interesting archaeological features, notably the remains from quarrying and manufacture of millstones. Millstones were cut out of the quartz conglomerate in the upper reaches of the wood and transported through what are now deep fern-clad valleys to the River Wye below. The stones of quartz conglomerate, known as pudding stone, were widely used for cider making and grinding corn. Today the reserve consists of derelict coppice with some large trees.

Pollarded lime trees appear to have been used as boundary markers. The Cadora Brook, a fast-flowing, precipitous stream, forms the southern boundary of the reserve as it approaches the River Wye to the east.

## Species

In spring, there is a stunning display of bluebells. Ramson, wood anemone and early-purple orchid are also on show. Other interesting plants include herb-Paris and yellow archangel. Opposite-leaved

golden-saxifrage lines the damper areas around the stream.

A rare crane-fly has been recorded for the first time in Wales at Prisk Wood. It is associated with the wet flushes in the woodland, which are thought to be its breeding ground.

As autumn progresses, a wonderful spectacle of colour illuminates the woodland. There is a good diversity of breeding birds, including all three British species of woodpecker. There are records of goshawk, woodcock, redstart, spotted flycatcher, pied flycatcher, hawfinch and marsh tit. There is evidence of dormice in the wood and fallow deer are often seen.

**Pied flycatcher normally breed in holes in trees but populations of these migrants from Africa have been increased by providing nest boxes in woods such as Prisk.**



Pied Flycatcher - Mike Warburton

### Access

There are rough paths in the woods. Care is needed as the ground is very uneven in the areas which have previously been quarried. The woodland is also very steep and wet in places. Sleeper bridges are located across the streams.

### Directions

For directions to Penallt village, see the Pentwyn Farm reserve. At the crossroads in Penallt village, go straight on, down Lone Lane. After about 1.5km, look for a yellow grit bin on the right, before the road bends round to the left near a house. Park here and enter the woods by the grit bin to reach the reserve. There is limited parking, for one car only, on the roadside (grid ref: SO 532 091). The reserve entrance can be reached by following the path for 40 metres into the wood.

As parking is limited, consider parking at Pentwyn Farm and walking down Lone Lane to the reserve. A path also runs between the reserves.

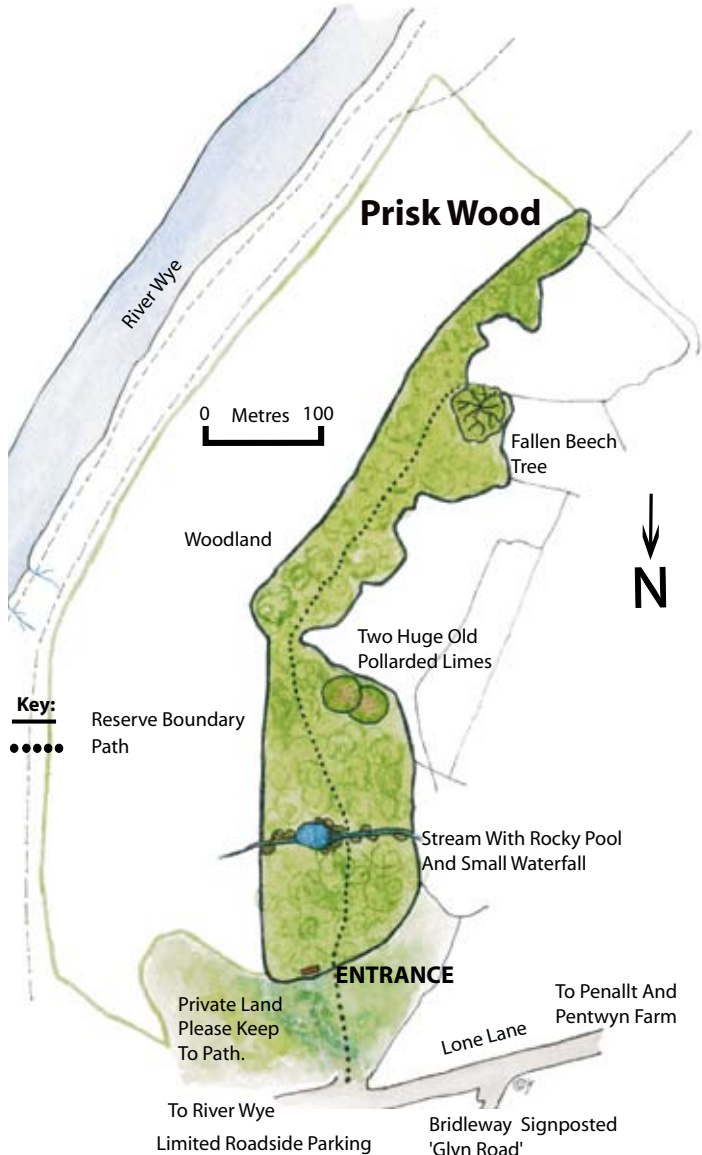
### Nearby reserves

Prisk Wood is very close to Pentwyn Farm and Wyeswood Common. New Grove Meadows lies slightly further west, and Margaret's Wood lies to the south.

### What to see locally

The Wye Valley is excellent walking country with plenty of public footpaths. The area is known for its picturesque villages with good country pubs and inns. Interesting species of plants can be found along the verges and

footpaths, which also abound with insects such as bees, butterflies and moths. For more information on the locality, see the entries for Wyeswood Common and Pentwyn Farm.



SPONSORED BY:

Midge.

# ROGIET POORLAND

near Chepstow

1 hectare



Eyebright - Gabi Horup

**Eyebright, with its attractive purple streaked flowers, is actually a parasite of plants such as clover and plantain, to which it attaches its roots.**



Brown Argus - Gabi Horup

Rogiet Poorland, Sorrel and Chris Jones



**Rogiet Poorland lies on raised ground near the edge of the Gwent Levels between Caldicot and Magor. The reserve includes a small area of remnant species-rich limestone grassland, along with woodland and scrub.**

The 'Poorland' was formed when an area of land was set aside in 1855 for the local labouring poor, when the rest of the land on the vast Tredegar Estate was enclosed. The land was farmed until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century but was then left derelict and used as a tip.

The Trust bought the site in 1991 and restored the area as a reserve for wildlife.

## Species

In spring there is a profusion of cowslip in the grassland, with early dog-violet also to be found. In summer, the grassland flora includes white campion, vervain, St John's-wort, lady's bedstraw and red bartsia.

In late summer, wild marjoram, eyebright and common centaury dominate. A number of butterfly use the reserve, such as the brown argus butterfly which are attracted to the grassland flowers.



Brimstone Butterfly - Amy Lewis

Parts of the reserve have been wooded for a long time which has enabled an interesting flora to develop. In the thickets and wood margins, look out for flowers such as red campion, bluebell, dog's mercury, lords-and-ladies, sweet violet and common gromwell.

Much of the wood and scrub on the reserve has developed from the ungrazed grassland, and a wide variety of shrubs and trees have colonised the area. These include aspen, ash, birch, blackthorn, dogwood and wild cherry. Spindle, with its amazing pink and orange fruit, adds to the wonderful display of colour in autumn.

**Adders breed on the reserve; they are most likely to be seen in spring and early summer basking in warm sunshine on the edge of scrub patches.**



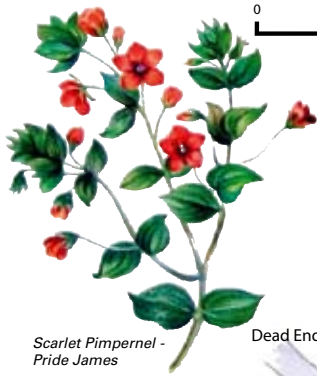
Adder - Neil Phillips



Wild Marjoram - Barry Batchelor



## Rogiet Poorland



Scarlet Pimpernel -  
Pride of James

0 Metres 100



- Key:
- Gate
  - Circular Walk
  - Reserve Boundary
  - Kissing Gate



### Access

There is a circular footpath around the reserve. The path is gently sloping in places and there are some steps.

### Directions

From the B4245 in Rogiet, turn into Minnetts Lane, opposite the Severn Tunnel Junction road. Follow the lane under the motorway and bear left (pass Windmill Lane).

The reserve entrance is another 1km on the right. There is parking for two cars at the reserve entrance (grid ref: ST 453 883).

### Nearby reserves

The Trust's Magor Marsh, Brockwells Meadows, Lower Minnetts Field and Caldicot Pill reserves are all nearby.

### What to see locally

The neighbouring Slade Woods contains a network of footpaths, and a very good diversity of woodland wildlife. Historic interest in the wider area is provided by Roman remains at Caerwent, and Caldicot Castle and Country Park.



Wren -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Hawthorn Blossom - Gabi Horup

SPONSORED BY:  
GWT Volunteers

# SILENT VALLEY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (SSSI)

near Ebbw Vale

46 hectares



Rosehips - Zsuzsanna Bird



Common Lizard - Philip Precey

Silent Valley - Jane Corey



**This beautiful woodland reserve has been designated a Local Nature Reserve in recognition of its importance to the local community as well as its precious wildlife. With far-reaching views across the Ebbw Valley, Silent Valley is constantly changing – it is a reserve that merits several visits throughout the year.**



Weasel - Elliot Smith

the ancient woodland have been colonised by heather, mosses, lichens, grasses, hawthorn and other small trees – transforming them into a surprising patchwork of wildlife-rich colour. This natural regeneration signifies the resilience of nature; this richness in wildlife can also help drive the social and economic future of the South Wales Coalfield.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
- Rebecca Price

**The small pearl-bordered fritillary is a charming butterfly found in discrete colonies. White spots, like a string of pearls, run along the outside edge of the underside of the hindwing. Its yellow-spined caterpillars feed on violet leaves; it is thought that this species favours marsh violet in damp sunny spots around the reserve.**

Silent Valley comprises mature woodland with dramatic veteran trees, bracken-covered slopes above, and areas of damp grassland. The Nant Merddog stream, a tributary of the River Ebbw, runs through the woodland. The woodland is the highest naturally occurring beech wood in Britain, and is at the western extremity of the natural range of the beech tree, which extends just into Glamorgan, near Merthyr Tydfil.

## History

The Welsh valleys have changed dramatically over the past 300 years. Parts of the reserve were once farmed – as evidenced by

the remains of drystone walls and grown-out hedgerows. In medieval times, it is likely that the woodland was worked for charcoal and iron production. When coal mining began in the valley at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the picturesque rural farmland was transformed into a thriving industrial centre. Colliery spoil tips were located along the valley side, and dramlines (the local name for a tramline) were created in the valley to remove the coal.

Industrialisation left a scarred landscape. However, wildlife is returning in abundance. Old spoil tips on the slope above



**A rare fungus species has been identified on a fallen beech tree at the reserve – the tiered tooth fungus – this appears to be the only record of this species in Wales.**

*Tiered Tooth Fungus - Jane Corey*

## Species

This reserve contains numerous habitats and plant communities including grasslands, wetlands, heaths and woodlands. In spring, an attractive display of woodland flowers includes species such as bluebell, lesser celandine, wood-sorrel and opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage.



*Hawthorn and Bluebells - Jane Corey*

**Silent Valley looks spectacular in spring when a wonderful woodland flora contrasts with hawthorn and crab apple blossom, whilst in the late summer, the heather-clad hilltops above provide a stunning purple bloom of colour.**

In late spring and summer, heath spotted-orchid and broad-leaved helleborine occur locally and the yellow flowers of the mouse-ear-hawkweed adorn the pit tips. Bats can be seen hunting in the summer evenings. Common lizard bask on the more open heath-covered spoil tips. Unusual butterfly include the small pearl-bordered fritillary.

The wetter areas of the reserve occur along ancient landslides and are colonised by alder trees, marsh thistle and wood horsetail, which are all visible from the path. Also look out for the greater tussock-sedge in the wet areas – the roots of this plant push further above ground each year, forming huge mounds.

In late summer and early autumn, the high slopes above the reserve are purple with heather.

There is also a good variety of fungi in the woodland at this time of the year, with damp autumn weather bringing a flush of toadstools and the pungent smell of stinkhorn fungus.



*Chaffinch - Zsuzsanna Bird*

In winter, flocks of tits and finches, including brambling and chaffinch, feed on the large supply of beech nuts in the woods. From January onwards, ravens tumble and display in the hills above the reserve. Breeding birds on the reserve include pied flycatcher, redstart and green woodpecker. Alder cones in the woodland form a valuable food supply for siskin and redpoll. Grey wagtail can be seen feeding along the stream.



*Willow Catkins - Zsuzsanna Bird*



*Grey Wagtail - Steve Waterhouse*

**The grey wagtail is more colourful than its name suggests, with its lemon yellow under-tail, and a strikingly long tail. It breeds along fast running rivers and streams, where it moves daintily along the water edge. Insects make up the bulk of its diet, along with the occasional minnow.**

# Silent Valley Local Nature Reserve

## Access

There are footpaths throughout the reserve. The paths are steep and narrow in places, and are slippery when wet. There are short sections of boardwalk, and steep flights of steps in places. Two walking trails are shown on the map:

1 - The blue trail is 3.5km long and takes approx one hour.

2 - The yellow trail is 500 metres long and takes approx 20 minutes.

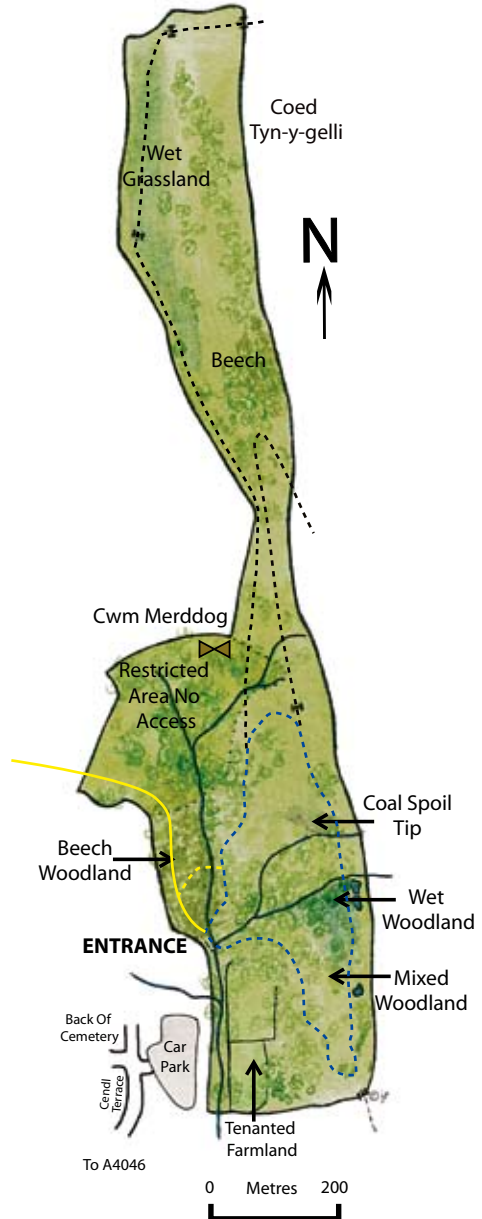
## Directions

From Ebbw Vale, take the A4046 south for about 3km towards the village of Cwm. At the start of the Cwm bypass, turn left off this road, following the signpost to Cwm. Continue down the hill (past a church on the left). After approx 800 metres turn left, following the brown nature reserve sign, into Cendl Terrace. Once you are in Cendl Terrace, drive to the top of the street and the nature reserve car park is on the right. Walk northwards along a rough track through a flat grassy area to get to the reserve entrance (grid ref: SO 187 062).

The reserve can also be easily reached from Newport by following the signs for the Festival Park Shopping Centre, until you reach the roundabout at the south end of Cwm. Rather than entering the village from the roundabout, it is easiest to drive past Cwm on the bypass until you see a further signpost to Cwm, and turn right here. The directions to the reserve from this north end of the bypass are given above.

## What to see locally

For the adventurous Rambler, walk East through the reserve, over the ridge and you will be rewarded with breathtaking views. Nearby long distance footpaths include the Ebbw Valley Walk and the Sirhowy Valley Walk. Parc Bryn Bach is situated just off the A465 in the heart of the South Wales Valleys – set in mixed grassland and woodland, a lake forms its focal point. Learn about Wales' industrial past with a trip to the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site. This includes the Big Pit museum, a great place to learn more about coal mining in the South Wales Valleys.



- Key:**
- Reserve Boundary
  - - - Path
  - + Stile
  - - - Blue Trail - 3.5km Takes Approx 1 Hour
  - - - Yellow Trail - 500m Takes Approx 20 Minutes
  - ⊕ Gate

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THE LATE OLWYN WHALE  
OF USK

# SPRINGDALE FARM

near Usk

45 hectares



Willow Warbler - Paul Thrush



British White Cattle - GWT



Redstart - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

Springdale Farm - GWT



**Springdale Farm was acquired for its grassland, particularly a superb set of hay meadows. Its woodland offers one of Wales' best displays of woodland flowers. The farm commands spectacular views of the surrounding landscape, including the Usk Valley, the Brecon Beacons and Wentwood Forest.**



Ringlet Butterfly - Rachel Scopes

with bracken, has been transformed into a mosaic of grassland, scrub and bracken, benefitting a range of flowers and the adder's-tongue fern.

A diverse range of habitats can be found on the farm, including flower-rich pastures and hay meadows, an impressive broad-leaved woodland, ponds and streams. It is the Trust's first working farm and is certified as organic. It is managed by tenants using traditional wildlife-friendly farming practices, including grazing with a herd of pedigree British White cattle – a breed which has been known for at least 800 years.

A restoration project has recently taken place within 'Miskey's Meadow'. This meadow, formerly covered

**A shrub like plant resembling a dwarf broom, dyer's greenweed, as its name suggests, was used in medieval times to dye cloth.**



Dyer's Greenweed - Jane Corey

## Species

In spring the display of woodland flowers is breathtaking. Violet, wood anemone, bluebell, early-purple orchid and moschatel are amongst some of the specialities. Listen out for birds such as blackcap, willow warbler, chiffchaff, pied flycatcher and redstart.

The meadows are at their most spectacular during the summer. The species at this time of year include common spotted-orchid, common knapweed, tormentil and pepper-saxifrage.

A small iris, called blue-eyed-grass, grows in wet rushy corners of the hay meadows. The presence of this species here, previously thought to be native no closer than western Ireland, is potentially the first native record for mainland Britain.



Springdale - Jane Corey

A thin band of limestone bedrock runs through the reserve and this provides the conditions for Gwent's largest population of dyer's greenweed.

The hay meadows support good populations of butterfly, such as marbled white, meadow brown, common blue and ringlet. There are also numerous day-flying moths such as Mother Shipton and the six-spot burnet.



Springdale - Jane Corey

A variety of mature trees and shrubs – including oak, ash, crab apple, hazel and beech – grow in the woodland. The woodland also boasts a captivating ground flora in the spring and early summer. The huge diversity of woodland flowers includes sweet woodruff, broad-leaved

saxifrage are located in the damper areas along the stream.

Interesting fungi species grow in the woodland in the autumn. The areas of short-grazed grassland support the elegant parasol fungi, whilst waxcaps are beginning to become more



Springdale - Jane Corey



Stump Puffball - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

helleborine and common twayblade, whilst clumps of opposite-leaved golden-

abundant as the fertility of the pastures drops.



Blue Tit - Zsuzsanna Bird

### Access

Please keep to the paths as livestock will be present in some fields. Parts of the reserve are located across steep terrain. Some of the lower slopes and woodland paths can be muddy, steep and slippery. There are steps in places.

### Directions

From the A472, turn into the square in Usk town centre. Leave the square on Priory Street, signposted to Llantrisant, following the road round to the right by the church and then turning left at a T-junction by a shop. Take this B road

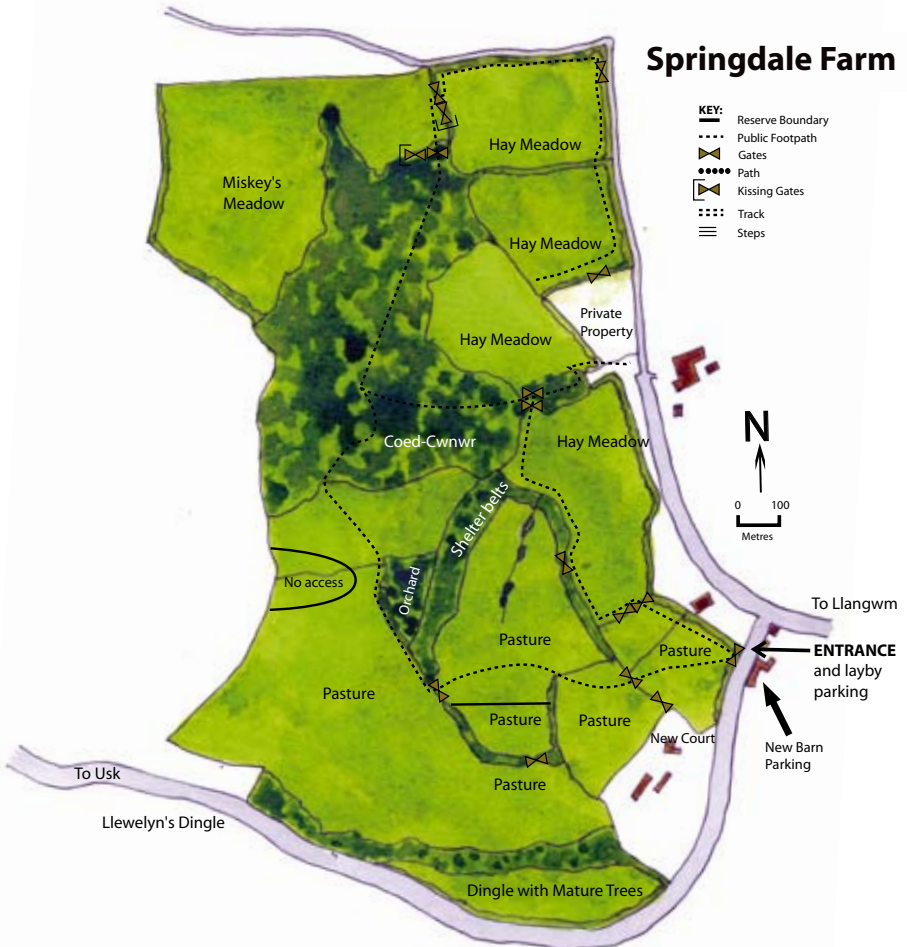
south towards Llanllowell, Llantrisant and Wentwood. Pass Usk Prison on the left and continue for 3km until the road passes under the A449 dual carriageway. Immediately turn sharp left and continue for 1.5km up the hill until you reach Almshouses on the right, just before a T-junction. The reserve entrance is on the left opposite the Almshouses. The car park has enough parking for five cars (grid ref: ST 410 991).

### Nearby reserves

Priory Wood and Kitty's Orchard lie to the west and north of Usk.

### What to see locally

The historic small country town of Usk has good pubs and restaurants. Other attractions include a ruined castle dating back to Norman times, and the Usk Rural Life Museum. There are good walks along the river Usk. The river has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation – the highest level of European protection – owing to its high ecological quality and the rare species it supports.



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SOLUTIA

# SOLUTIA MEADOWS (SSSI)



near Newport

31 hectares



Yellow-rattle  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Toad - Amy Lewis

Solutia Meadows - Gabi Horup



**This reserve, located on the Gwent Levels, is notable for its grasslands, crossed by a system of reens and grips (drainage features). It is an example of a type of landscape that has existed for hundreds of years on the Gwent Levels.**

The main habitat is grazing marsh, with associated reens and grips. Pollarded willows line many of the reens – another feature typical of the Gwent Levels. Thanks to the generous support of the landowner – Solutia (UK) Ltd – with further assistance from Newport City Council, the Trust conserves this traditional landscape for the benefit of people and wildlife.

## Species

The grazing marsh supports a diversity of plants including lesser spearwort, rushes and sedges in the damper areas. In the drier areas, meadow vetchling and yellow-rattle can be found, along with scarcer

plants such as southern marsh-orchid and grass vetchling. Summer is a good time of year to see this reserve when the hay meadows provide an impressive display of wildflowers.

The site provides a good habitat for birds such as reed bunting, sedge warbler and Cetti's warbler.

The densely shaded reens are being opened up to improve the area for wildlife, including otter and water vole. The fine-leaved water-dropwort, a rare relative of cow parsley, has also benefitted from this management.



Reed Bunting - Amy Lewis

The management regime at this site involves an annual hay cut and low intensity aftermath sheep grazing. This is resulting in the grasslands slowly becoming more species-rich. There are areas of plantation around the site, and glades are being cut to provide sheltered sunny spots for insects.

**One of the UK's rarest bumblebees, the shrill carder-bee, has its main British stronghold on the Gwent Levels, where it occurs on three of the Trust's reserves including Solutia Meadows.**



Shrill Carder-bee  
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust



### Access

The reserve is flat grassland, which is wet in winter – and after rain at any time of year! A circular walk is signposted around the meadows at Solutia Meadows – this takes around 30 minutes to complete.

### Directions

Exit the M4 motorway at Junction 24. At the roundabout take the A455 past Ringland. Continue along the A455 until the 4th roundabout and take the first exit, left, along Queensway Meadows. At the next roundabout, take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit, right, along Meadows Road (industrial units are

located on both sides of the road). Carry on past Pye Corner (on your left) and follow the Goldcliff road looking out for a white house on your right called Fair Orchard. Drive on a bit further around the bend and the reserve entrance is a wooden gate on the right. There is parking for one car by the gate (grid ref: ST 346 843).

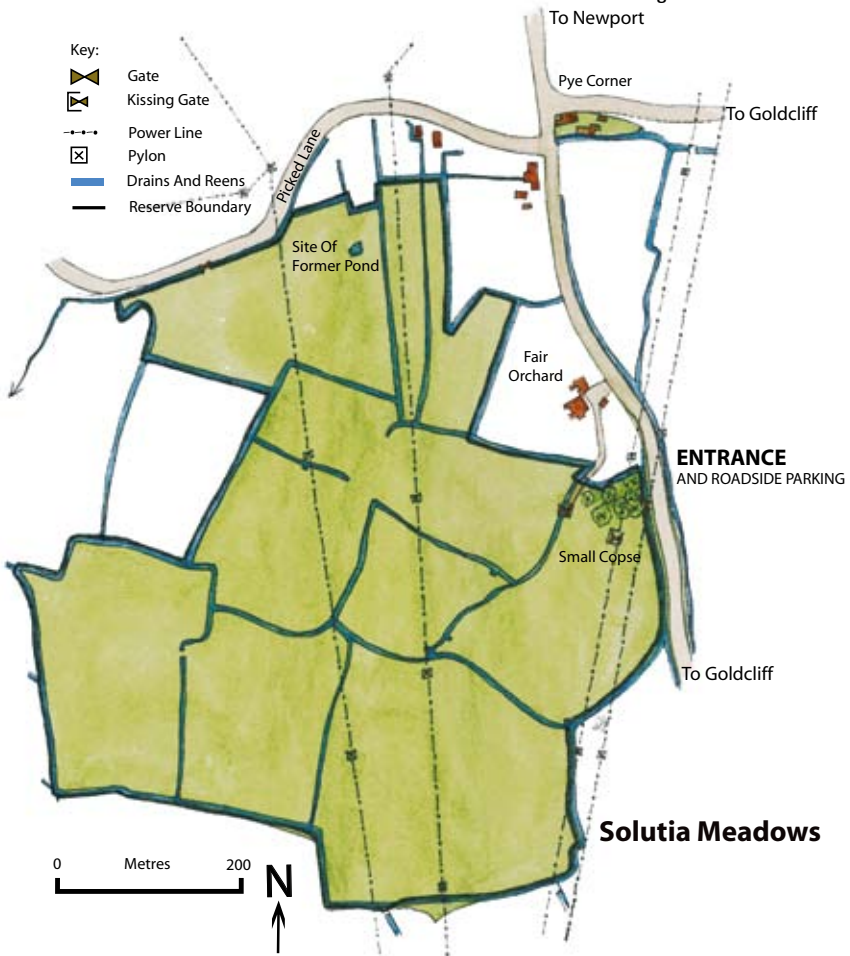
### Nearby reserves

Magor Marsh (to the east) and Peterstone Wentlooge (to the west) are the Trust's two other Gwent Levels reserves. The Allt-yr-Yn Local Nature Reserve is in Newport.

### What to see locally

Countryside Council for Wales' Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve is an excellent site for wetland and migrant birds. The main entrance can be accessed at Uskmouth on West Nash Road – follow the brown duck signs.

Magor Pill, near the villages of Redwick and Magor, is another good place to view the Severn Estuary and its wildlife. The Celtic Way Cycle Path can be accessed from the Goldcliff Road, near Pye Corner. Public footpaths link the reserve to the villages of Nash and Goldcliff – pubs are located in both villages.



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SOCIETY



THE GWENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
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# STRAWBERRY COTTAGE WOOD (SSSI)

near Abergavenny

6 hectares



Strawberry Cottage Wood - Gabi Horup



Slender St John's-wort  
- [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

Strawberry Cottage Wood - Gabi Horup



**This atmospheric oak woodland is located on a steep south-west facing slope of the River Honddu, within the Brecon Beacons National Park.**



Sparrowhawk -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

This ancient upland oak wood contains pockets of silver birch and a hazel understory. Lower down the slope, ash becomes more frequent, and there is a stand of large beech trees at one point, and a scatter of fine yew trees.

## Species

Oak woodlands represent one of the most wildlife-rich habitats found in Britain. The flora at Strawberry Cottage Wood includes slender St John's-wort, violet, yellow

archangel, meadowsweet and wood melick. In the summer the pale blue flowers of the nettle-leaved bellflower, with its toothed, heart-shaped leaves, can occasionally be found.

The reserve provides an ideal habitat for woodland birds including pied flycatcher, spotted flycatcher, redstart, woodcock and all three species of British woodpecker. Of these, the lesser spotted woodpecker is now a very uncommon species. You may be lucky enough to spot a sparrowhawk in pursuit of smaller birds. Grass snakes have been recorded on the reserve. Butterflies are particularly attracted to the brideway which passes through the site.

**Two mature specimens of one of Britain's rarest native trees, the wild service tree, are found on the reserve. This tree has maple-like leaves which turn red in the autumn, and white flowers which turn into brown leathery fruits. In the past, it was famous for its fruits, which could be made into sweets for children or alcoholic drinks for adults.**



Wild Service Tree - Deborah Morris

### Access

The reserve is reached by a footbridge. Some of the paths in the reserve are steep and they can be muddy.

### Directions

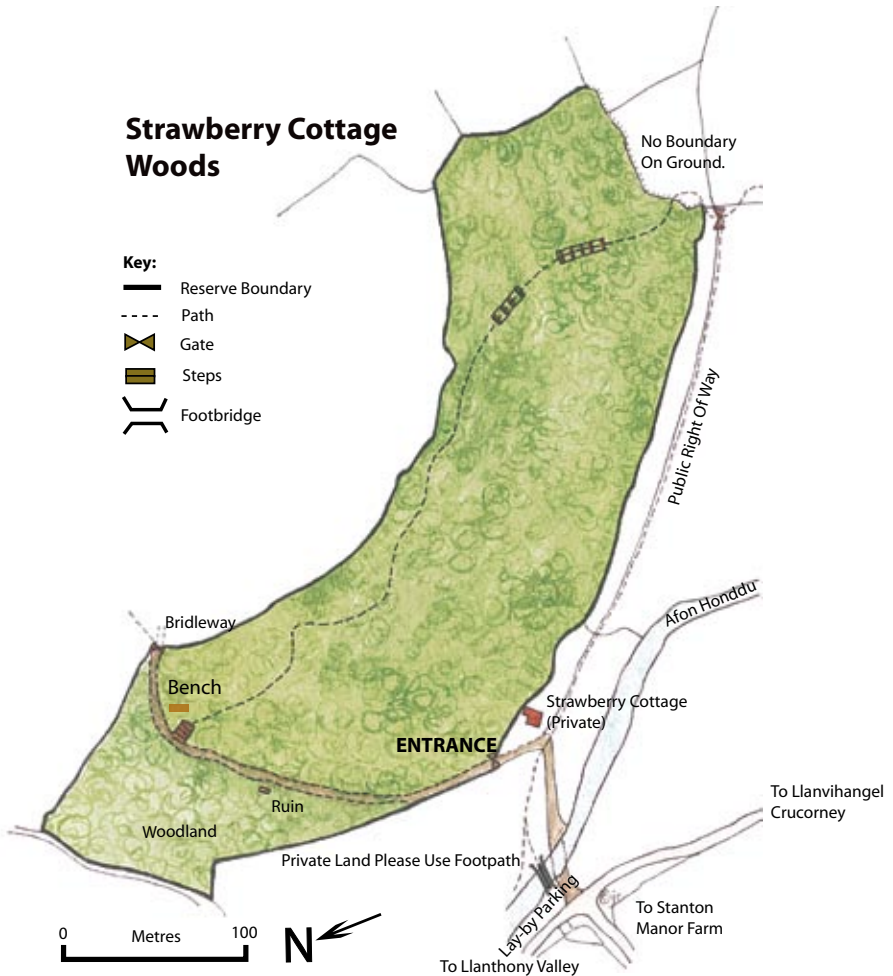
From Abergavenny, head north on the A465. After about 8km, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> left at Llanvihangel Crucorney. Continue on this road until reaching the Skirrid Inn. Turn immediately left onto the road signposted Cwmyoy and Llanthony. After about 1.5km, on the right hand side

(about 50 metres before the Stanton-Fforest Coal Pit turn-off), look out for a footbridge crossing the River Honddu. A footpath runs directly across a field from the bridge towards the wood and the reserve entrance. There is limited car parking in a small lay-by (grid ref: SO 312 215).

### What to see locally

The Skirrid Inn is reputed to be the oldest Public House in Wales, and its history can be traced back as far as the

Norman Conquest. Llanthony Priory is one of the earliest houses of Augustinian canons to be founded in Britain. There is excellent walking country in the Brecon Beacons National Park, whilst the reserve is also located close to the Offa's Dyke Path and the Three Castles Walk. Cwmyoy is a small village located on the River Honddu, famous for its medieval St Martin's Church with its leaning tower.



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CMC Partnership; Change,  
HR, Programme and Project  
Management Specialists.

[www.cmcpartnerships.com](http://www.cmcpartnerships.com)



# THE WERN

near Monmouth

3 hectares



*Autumn Leaves - Zsuzsanna Bird*

*The Wern - Gabi Horup*



**This reserve lies on a steep slope and offers fine views over Monmouth and the Monnow Valley from the hill top.**

The different habitats on the reserve include bracken-covered slopes, with areas of open woodland and scattered mature silver birch and yew trees. There is a small area of heathland, dominated by bilberry.

The Wern also contains some features of archaeological interest. What seems to be an old quarry lies within the reserve, whilst moss-covered dry stone walls with stone stiles form boundaries around the reserve. A millstone outcrop also lies within the reserve.

## Species

In the wooded area there are scattered patches of bluebell.

Other species include bilberry, heather and climbing corydalis, all of which indicate the acid nature of the soil. Mosses, liverworts and ferns can be found in abundance on the old stone boundary walls and on rocky outcrops within the reserve. Clumps of opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage can be seen growing in the marshy area beside the small stream.

## Access

The reserve lies on a steep slope. There are well used paths including a public footpath leading from the reserve entrance.

## Directions

Follow the B4293 south from Monmouth for approximately 4km. Take a right-turn, signposted Craig y Dorth, onto a road which goes steeply downhill. Continue down this road, passing the telephone box at Troy View Farm, and approximately 1km further on, opposite a right-hand turn just past Little Wern, you will reach a footpath sign on the left with a small lay-by where you can park. The entrance to the reserve is located here (grid ref: SO 485 087).

## Nearby reserves

New Grove Meadows, Pentwyn Farm, Wyeswood Common and Prisk Wood all lie to the north and west of the reserve.

## What to see locally

Public footpaths are located in the surrounding countryside.



*Hawthorn Shieldbug -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)*

SPONSORED BY:

Richard Waller of  
BROAD HORIZONS  
- Education Consultancy.

# WYESWOOD COMMON

near Monmouth

42 hectares



Hedgerow - Jane Corey

The Trust's flock of Hebridean sheep are grazing the pasture. These hardy sheep help produce a patchwork of short and tall grasses, ultimately encouraging a more diverse sward.



Hebridean Sheep - Annette Murray

Wyeswood Common - Jane Corey



In January 2008, the Trust embarked on an ambitious habitat restoration project at Wyeswood Common when it purchased 42 hectares of dairy pasture. Located next to the existing well-established Pentwyn Farm reserve, the project is transforming what was modern agricultural land – impoverished as far as wildlife was concerned – into an intricate mosaic of habitats rich in biodiversity. A couple of hundred years will be required for this vision to be fully achieved!

The reserve commands stunning views of the surrounding countryside, including the wooded valleys to the north and south. The habitats on the reserve include oak woodland, pasture, species-rich hedgerows and seasonal ponds. The fields are currently managed for hay and silage and as permanent pasture for sheep. Together with the adjacent Pentwyn Farm, this is the Trust's largest reserve.

The Trust is in the process of creating a species-rich habitat mosaic that will be managed as wood pasture by extensive grazing, reminiscent of the open forest of prehistoric Britain. This is being achieved by avoiding the use of fertiliser and by focusing on a number of management initiatives.

## Field margins

Uncultivated field-margins add to the site's diversity, by creating buffer zones between the fields

and hedgerows. The tussocky grasses and scrubbed-over corners create thickets which are ideal habitats for small mammals and birds.



Wyeswood - Annette Murray

## Woodland creation

Through tree planting and natural regeneration, new woodland is emerging. The species planted complement the neighbouring woodland and include sessile oak and ash with field maple, hazel, cherry, hawthorn and birch. Smaller blocks of trees, planted near Pentwyn Farm at lower stocking rates, allow for scrubby habitat to regenerate which is of particular value to bird life.



Garden Bumblebee - Rachel Scopes



Red Kite - Mike Warburton

### Hedgerow management

Mature hedgerows and thickets border the reserve and provide networks of habitats connecting to the surrounding countryside. The Trust is practising traditional hedge-laying and planting additional hedgerows to strengthen wildlife corridors between Wyeswood Common and Pentwyn Farm. Species-rich hedgerows provide a good source of berries, fruit and nuts for birds and small mammals such as dormice.

### Wetland creation

Restoring woodland ponds and creating new wet areas is attracting dragonflies, damselflies and amphibians to the site.

### Species

In the spring, you may be lucky enough to hear the sweet song

of the skylark. Other birds which become more active at this time of year include bullfinch and the occasional red kite. Yellowhammers are once again singing on the farm after many years of absence!

Autumn is a good time of year to experience the dramatic views of the Wye Valley woodlands and the vivid autumn colours. There is evidence that dormice are present in the species-rich hedgerows, feeding on the rich food supplies that the hedgerows provide at this time of year.

A wide range of other species are expected to colonise Wyeswood Common as the newly restored habitats become more established.



Skylark - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

**The skylark is a small brown bird renowned for its display flight and beautiful song. Skylark regularly nest in the fields of the reserve.**



Fly Agaric - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Robin - Gillian Day



Bullfinch - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Wyeswood - Jane Corey



Yellowhammer - Damian Waters

### Access

The reserve consists of gently-sloping grassland and woodland. The ground is uneven in places and there is a steep hill. It is important to keep to the footpath and way-marked trails as Wyewood Common is a working farm and machinery and livestock may be present. Please keep all dogs under close control when visiting the reserve.

### Directions

For directions to Wyewood Common, see Pentwyn Farm – the two reserves are adjacent to each other and share the same car park. The main entrance to Wyewood Common is from the car park by Pentwyn Farm's Medieval Barn.

### Nearby reserves

Pentwyn Farm is located next to Wyewood Common. Prisk Wood and New Grove Meadows are also close by.

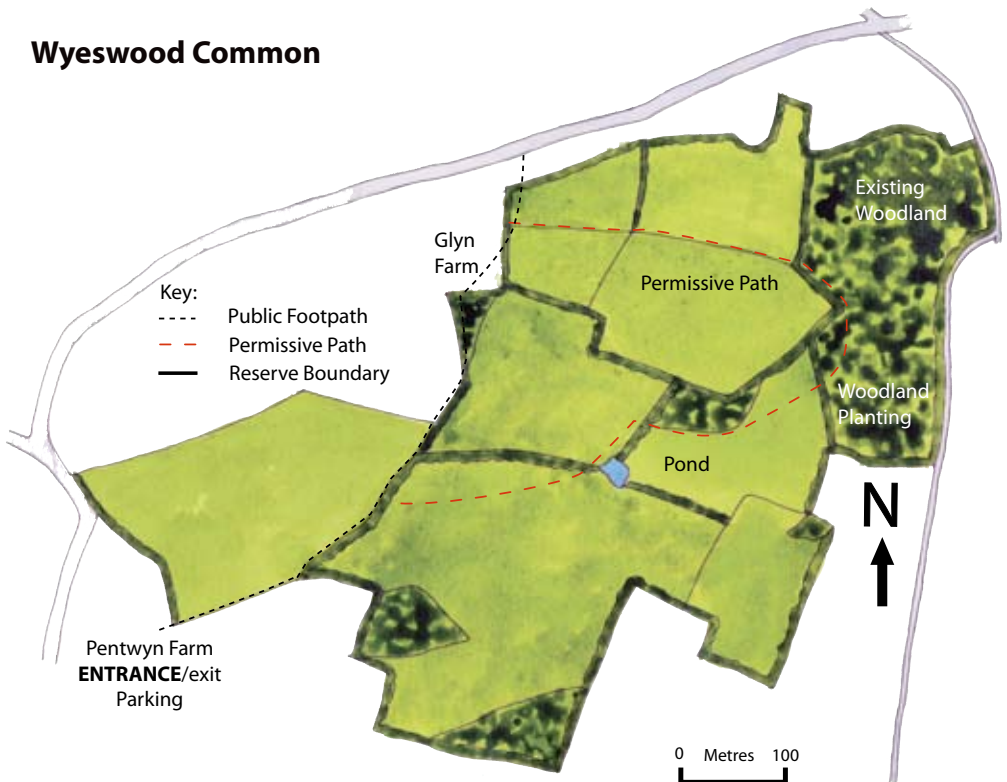
### What to see locally

Venture into England across the River Wye to enjoy some lovely walks including the Offa's Dyke Path, which can be reached by crossing the old railway bridge on foot. For more ideas on what to see around the reserve, see the entry for Pentwyn Farm, or for features of interest slightly further afield, look up the entry for New Grove Meadows.



Small White - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

## Wyewood Common



# GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST



Stonechat - Steven Waterhouse



Marbled White -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Common Newt - Mark Bissett



Wood Anemone - Gabi Horup

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[www.gwentwildlife.org](http://www.gwentwildlife.org)



Early Purple Orchid - Jane Corey



Bee Orchid - Chris Deeney



Earthstar Fungi -  
[www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)



Carder Bee - Rachel Scopes

Registered Charity Number 242619

Gwent Wildlife Trust is a member of The Wildlife Trusts, a partnership of 47 County Trusts who work together for the benefit of wildlife.

Map Illustrations: Jessica Rabjohns and Rick Park  
Design and Production: Platform One, Monmouth  
Publication Project Manager: Gabi Horup