

9. Taf Fechan

Merthyr Tydfil

Grid References	O.S. Explorer map 166 Rhondda and Merthyr Tydfil. Main entrance: SO037076, Site centre: SO035085
Status	Part of the Cwm Taff Fechan Woodlands SSSI, and a Local Nature Reserve.
Tenure	Acquired in February 1975, under a 99 year lease. The site is managed jointly by the Trust, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and a tenant farmer.
Size	42 ha (102.5 acres).
Location and Access Notes	Situated in the Taf Fechan valley, between the Old River Bridge at Cefn Coed y Cymmer and the river bridge at Pontsarn, it is about 2.5 km north of the centre of Merthyr Tydfil. Access is gained in three places, at the southern end of the site at Cefn Coed bridge (SO037076), in the middle by way of a footpath north of Trefechan village, and at the northern end by Pontsarn bridge at a car park and picnic site near the Blue Pool (SO045097). Not accessible to wheelchairs.
Public Transport	Train station at Merthyr Tydfil from where bus numbers 25 & 26 go to Cefn Coed y Cymmer and numbers 40, 33 & 24 go to Pontsarn.

Description: Ancient broadleaved woodlands, calcareous grasslands, river, and cliffs.

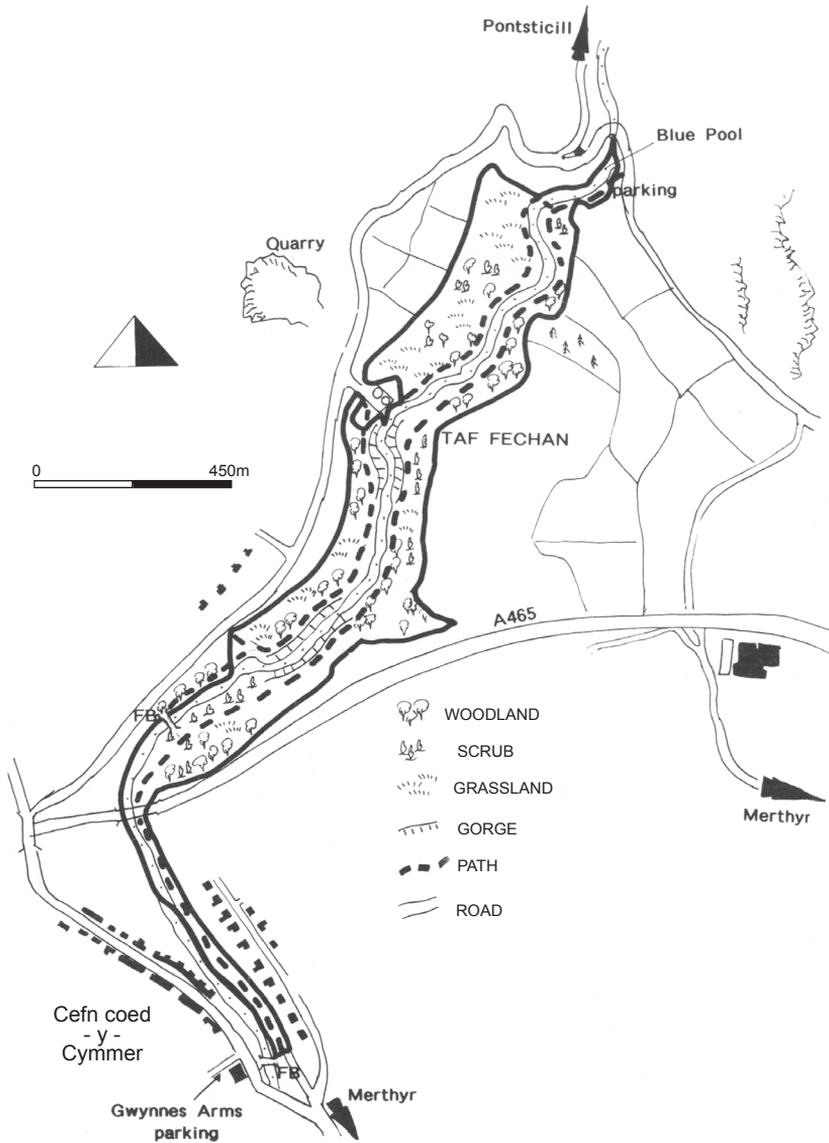
The Taf Fechan LNR comprises about 2.5 km of river with steep valley sides of Carboniferous limestone. The river has eroded the limestone into a narrow gorge in the centre of the site. A mosaic of deciduous woodland on the slopes with a canopy of Beech, Birch and Ash, gives way to Alder and Grey Willow closer to the river, together with Hawthorn scrub, calcareous grassland, heathland, wet flushes, and tufa formations. The valley is one of the best recorded sites for bryophytes in Glamorgan.

The area of grazed grassland to the south on the east bank of the river is particularly rich in flowers such as Wild Thyme (5-8), Common Spotted Orchid (6-8), Rough Hawkbit (6-9) and Mouse-ear Hawkweed (5-8). On the western bank, the limestone is overlain by acidic soils where heathland and Birch woodland is developing, and Bracken, Heather (7-9) and Small Scabious (7-9) occur.

The woodland attracts a variety of birds such as Tawny Owl, Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Nuthatch, and Treecreeper, while Dipper and Grey Wagtail are frequently seen, and breed, on the river Taff Fechan.

The grassland and heathland provide a habitat for butterflies such as Common Blue (4-9), Meadow Brown (6-9), Small Copper (5-9), and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (5-7).

Of archaeological interest are the old tramway to Cyfarthfa Ironworks, which makes up part of the footpath on the eastern bank, the feeder to the Cyfarthfa Park lake at the southern end of the site, and remains of fulling and corn mills on the river bank.



Management Objectives: To work with other partner organisations to maintain and enhance the diversity and special features of the site and to encourage appropriate public access.

Good times to visit

- Apr - Sept Woodland and grassland flowers
- Apr - Jul Breeding birds
- Sept - Oct Autumn colours
- Sept - Nov Fungi and bryophytes