

AFON RHONDDA

The Afon Rhondda is a historically significant river in South Wales, renowned for its contribution to the region's industrial development. Comprising two primary tributaries, the Rhondda Fawr (Big Rhondda) and the Rhondda Fach (Little Rhondda), the river originates in the steep, glacial valleys of the South Wales Coalfield.

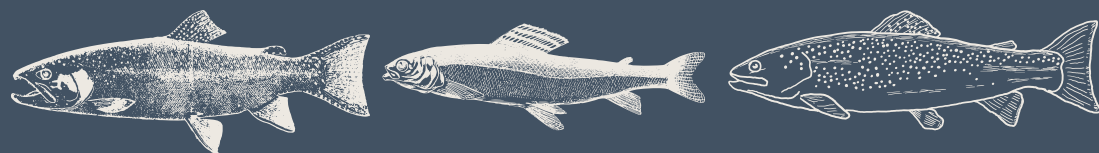
The Rhondda Fawr begins its journey on the South-eastern slopes of Craig-y-Llyn in the Ffynnon y Gwalciau spring. From here, the Rhondda Fawr descends sharply through a string of old mining settlements including Blaenrhondda, Treherbert, Treorchy and Tonypandy.

The Rhondda Fach rises 1 mile to the east from an upland marsh between Mynydd Beili-glas and Mynydd Bwllfa. Early in its course it is controlled by the Llest-wen Reservoir. From here, the Rhondda Fach flows southward through a narrower and more confined valley, passing through the communities of Maerdy, Ferndale, Tylorstown and Ynyshir.

The two tributaries converge at Porth, continuing as the River Rhondda before emptying into the River Taff at Pontypridd.

FISH SPECIES

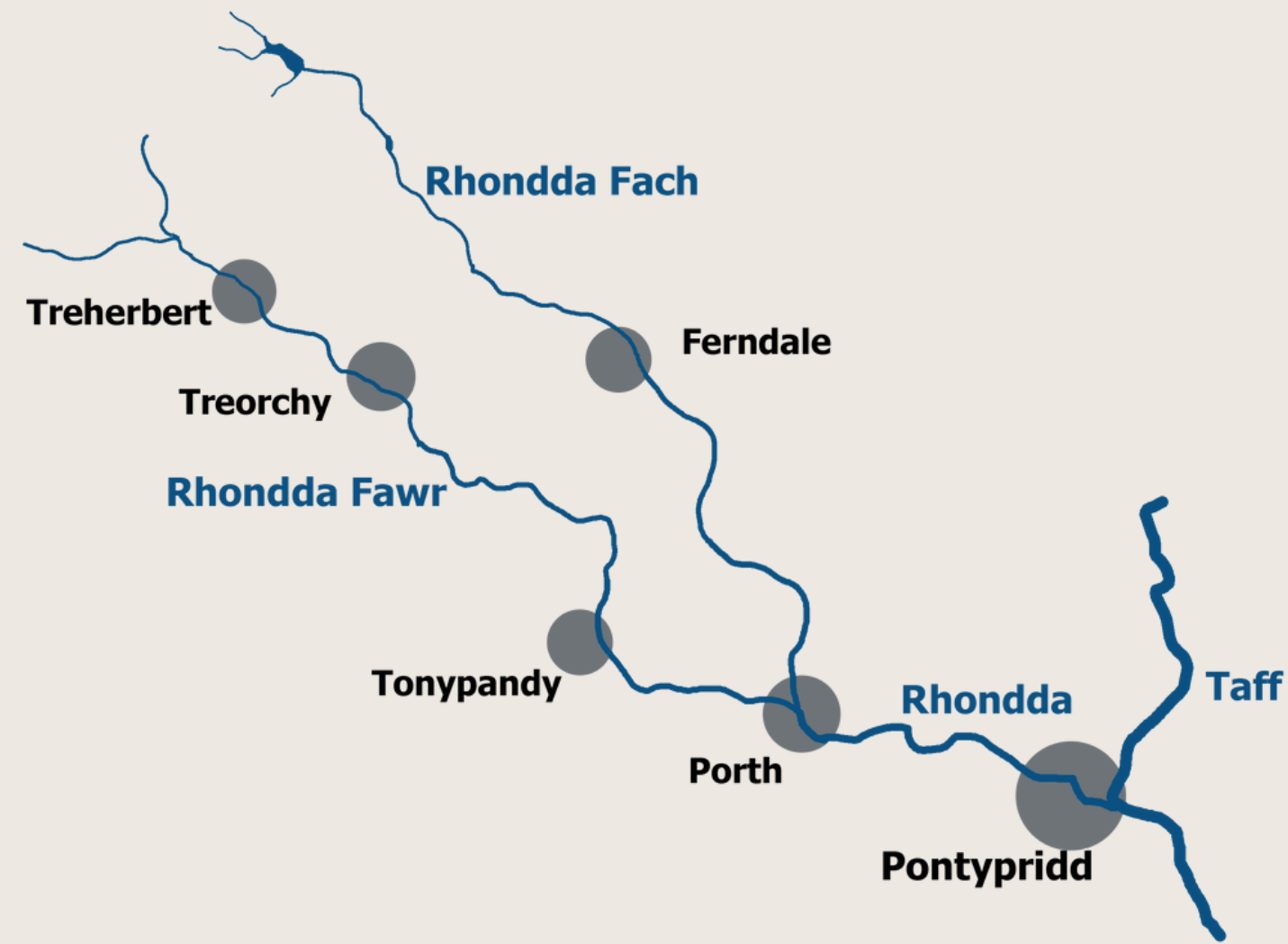
The Rhondda is a fast-flowing, often rocky river, that supports a healthy population of brown trout, occasional late-season Salmon, and a few grayling near its confluence with the Taff.



SALMON

GRAYLING

BROWN TROUT



CATCHMENT AREA
189 km²

LENGTH
26 km

RIVER SOURCE
Fawr: Craig-y-Llyn
Fach: Mynydd Beili-glas

AN INDUSTRIAL PAST

During the 19th and early 20th century, the River Rhondda suffered from significant industrial pollution. Local mines, metal works, and other industries produced vast quantities of wastewater, which they dumped into local watercourses.

Industrial effluent combined with waste from collieries, at Fernhill and Dinas, rendered the river 'unfit even for cattle to drink'.

However

The decline of these industries in the 20th century has led to an overall improvement in the state of the whole catchment, the water quality has improved and the ecology is becoming richer.

RIVER HEALTH TODAY

The health of our rivers is assessed using a range of ecological and chemical indicators. Under the Water Framework Directive, a river can be classified as High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad. High means close to natural conditions.

	Rhondda Fawr	Rhondda Fach
Cycle 1	Poor	Poor
Cycle 2	Good	Poor
Cycle 3	Good	Moderate

Since the early 1970s the river has been steadily improving in quality.

FLOOD RISK



The extraction of coal from underground mines can lead to:

Subsidence

Disruption of natural drainage patterns

In many areas of the Rhondda Valley, roads and houses have subsided below the level of the river due to the removal of the coal beneath, adding to the flood risk. Some streets have had substantial flood defences built, known locally as the "Rhondda Walls."



This river Factsheet was compiled by Afonydd Cymru with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

