

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

ALEXANDERSTONE MEADOWS

Date of Notification: 1988, 1991

National Grid Reference: SO082301, SO077306, SO071295

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 02, SO 03

Site Area: 22.7 ha

Description:

This site supports the largest known area in Brecknock of a nationally recognised type of unimproved pasture characterised by the presence of crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus Cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea Nigra*. The pastures, which have botanically rich wet flushes, are situated on heavy neutral clay and loam soils overlying Old Red Sandstone, the land sloping gently to the west and south-west. For many years the fields have been grazed by cattle or ponies during the summer months, and have received no artificial fertilizers. The site as a whole supports at least 200 species of higher plants, an exceptional number for its size.

The drier parts of the sward are dominated by herbs such as common knapweed, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa Pratensis*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus Corniculatus*, hawkbits *Leontodon spp.* and clovers *Trifolium spp.*. Pepper-saxifrage *Silaum Silaus*, a very scarce plant in Wales, is widespread in these parts and more common than in any other known site in Wales.

The wet flushes are frequent and add considerable diversity to the site. The largest examples have deposited peat and support a fen-type vegetation with abundant marsh-marigold *Caltha Palustris*, early marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza Incarnata*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin Palustris* and meadow thistle *Cirsium Dissectum*. Flushes on clay support common fleabane *Pulicaria Dysenterica*, meadowsweet *Filipendula Ulmaria*, pale sedge *Carex Pallescens* and hard rush *Juncus Inflexus*.

In places grazing has been sufficiently light to permit scrub growth, which grades into deciduous woodland. An interesting transition between meadow and woodland vegetation is displayed. Broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis Helleborine*, common twayblade *Listera Ovata* and early-purple orchid *Orchis Masculata* provide a notable woodland component and occur abundantly in places.

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