

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

UPPER CHAPEL PASTURES

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1997
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SO 006411
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 147 1:10,000 Sheet number: SO 04 SW
<u>Site Area:</u>	2.2 ha

Description:

Upper Chapel Pastures is of special interest for its herb-rich neutral grassland that is characteristic of the upland fringe of mid-Wales, along with a mixture of fen-meadow plant communities. Such sites are becoming increasingly rare as a result of agricultural intensification.

The site is situated ten kilometres south of Builth Wells, on the edge of Mynydd Eppynt. It consists of two enclosures on a gently-sloping, south-facing hillside above the Afon Honddu. The altitude is approximately 290-300 metres, and drainage varies from free to impeded. The soil is clay, overlying Old Red Sandstone rock.

The northern enclosure comprises herb-rich dry grassland, characterised by common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and herbs such as bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*. Species characteristic of nutrient-poor and slightly more acidic soil conditions are well represented, such as heath grass *Danthonia decumbens*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*.

The southern enclosure consists largely of fen-meadow vegetation in which purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is a prominent component. Associated species include sweet vernal-grass, heath grass, tormentil and devil's-bit scabious. The vegetation has a heathy character towards the northern end of the enclosure with frequent heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Small areas within this enclosure have a different floristic character, with frequent meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*.

Occupying the zone between the two enclosures is a small area of wet ground containing plants such as soft rush *Juncus effusus*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, and

marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*, with occasional lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea* and common yellow sedge *Carex viridula oedocarpa*.

The enclosures are bordered by lines of willow *Salix* spp. and downy birch *Betula pubescens* and there is a small pocket of fen woodland in the area between the two enclosures.

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