

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

GWEUNYDD CAMNANT

Date of notification: 2005

National Grid Reference: SO 085832

OS Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 136
1:10,000 Sheet number: SO 08 SE

Site Area: 3.9 ha

Description:

The site is of special interest as an example of unimproved, herb-rich neutral grassland. This type of grassland is now very scarce in Powys and elsewhere in Wales. The special interest is enhanced by the presence of various types of marshy grassland, spring-fed mire and acid grassland vegetation, supporting a wide variety of typical plants, including several uncommon species.

The site, which adjoins the A483 trunk road, is located roughly half way between the villages of Dolfor and Llanbadarn Fynydd, south of Newtown. Situated at the confluence of two streams, the site stands on a series of silty-mudstones of the Silurian Wenlock Series, 'Wenlock Shale'. These rocks are associated with thin bentonite-clay bands, which were originally very fine volcanic ash deposits. The rocks of this area are folded and faulted which has given rise to the linear arrangement of ridges and troughs. The land is all rough pasture lying at an altitude of 335-350 metres and sloping down from the road in a generally south-westerly direction to the Camnant, a small tributary of the River Ithon. On the higher ground there are dry areas, but the lower lying land is wet, with natural springs in places.

The most notable vegetation type, found widely on the drier land, is characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red clover *Trifolium pratense* and common cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata*. Most of this grassland also supports plants that are typical of more acidic conditions, including autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and the locally uncommon great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* (a small fern). In some places small sedges are frequent, whilst in others mildly base-rich soils support plants such as lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, quaking-grass *Briza media* and glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*. There are also some small areas of species-rich acid grassland, which support plants such as betony *Stachys officinalis* and bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*.

The most abundant vegetation type, occurring on the wet low-lying ground, is dominated by sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, with frequent soft-rush *Juncus effusus*, common marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and grasses, including sweet vernal-grass, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, together with a variety of herbs like marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* and common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*. A few small hollows with standing water occur, within which marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* grows, and there is an area dominated by meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* along the stream that runs through the eastern field.

Also noteworthy are small patches of species-rich fen-meadow characterised by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, a scarce plant not recorded elsewhere in Montgomeryshire. These areas support a variety of small sedges, including flea sedge *Carex pulicaris* and tawny sedge *hostiana*, together with other typical plants, such as fen bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, marsh horsetail *Equisetum palustre*, common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, meadowsweet, quaking-grass, sharp-flowered rush and devil's-bit scabious.

The southern part of the site contains small areas of spring-fed mire, supporting an abundance of small sedges, including tawny sedge and glaucous sedge, a good variety of 'brown' mosses, including *Drepanocladus revolvens*, *Campylium stellatum*, *Ctenidium molluscum*, *Cratoneuron filicinum* and *Calliergon cuspidatum*, and plants such as marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustre*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, quaking-grass, marsh horsetail, common cottongrass and marsh valerian. This southern area also has what is perhaps the largest known population in Montgomeryshire of the southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*.

Other semi-natural habitats present at the site include gorse *Ulex spp.* and broom *Cytisus scoparius* scrub, species-poor neutral grassland, acid mire dominated by sharp-flowered rush, floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans* swamp and part of the Camnant brook.

Remarks:

Lowland meadows, purple moor-grass and rush pastures, lowland dry acid grassland and fens are UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats.

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