

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHSHIRE

CAE BLAEN-DYFFRYN

Date of Notification: 1997

National Grid Reference: SN 605 443

O.S. Maps: 1: 50,000 Sheet number: 146
1: 25,000 Sheet number: SN 64 SW

Site Area: 3.7 ha

Description:

Cae Blaen-dyffryn is situated on the crest of a ridge at an altitude of between 300 and 340m, some 5km south-east of Lampeter. Lying alongside the A482, the field slopes to the south-east. The soil is a well drained fine loam, which is shallow in places, overlying rocks of Silurian age. The site is important for its unimproved species-rich grassland that was once widespread in this part of Wales, but which is becoming increasingly scarce due to agricultural improvement.

On the upper slopes of the field, the dry neutral grassland is dominated by grasses, including common-bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, together with a mix of herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and red clover *Trifolium pratense*. On the steeper slopes, the soils are more acidic, reflected in the presence of tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*. At the bottom of the slope, where drainage is impeded, a mire community has developed, characterised by abundant tussocks of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, with frequent tall herbs such as angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* and common valerian *Valeriana officinalis*. Other species present include sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and devil's-bit scabious. A few small areas of flushed vegetation are also present, with bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and bulbous rush *Juncus bulbosus*, together with sedges such as carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, star sedge *C. echinata* and common yellow-sedge *C. demissa* over a carpet of bog mosses, mainly *Sphagnum recurvum*, *S. subnitens* and *S. auriculatum*.

Several noteworthy plants are recorded at this site. Greater butterfly-orchid *Plantanthera chlorantha* and lesser butterfly-orchid *P. bifolia* are present together on the steeper slopes of the enclosure, whilst moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* is also locally frequent, forming one of the largest populations in Carmarthenshire.

There is also an assemblage of waxcap fungi of the genus *Hygrocybe*, including the local *H. calyptriformis*, together with *H. virginea*, *H. psittacina*, *H. pratensis* and *H. chlorophana*. Such fungi are likewise indicative of agriculturally unimproved grassland.

Small pearl-bordered fritillary *Bolloria selene* has been recorded and brown hare has been recorded regularly.

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