

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

BRIDGEND

PENYCASTELL, CEFN CRIBWR

Date of Notification: 2000

National Grid Reference: SS 843820

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 170
1:10,000 Sheet number: SS 88 SW

Site Area: 7.8 ha

Description:

Penycastell, Cefn Cribwr is of special interest for its marshy grassland and species-rich neutral grassland and for the association of these vegetation types with others including swamp, carr woodland and scrub.

The site comprises a series of fields grouped around a minor crossroads located to the south of Kenfig Hill, 5 km west of Bridgend. The land lies at an altitude of approximately 30 m and overlies Lower Lias limestones and mudstones of the Jurassic System and glacial deposits. Much of the site has poorly drained clayey soils of the Dyffryn Series. The wettest ground is in the western section, where base-enriched water emerges from a spring-head. This area of the site is partially scrubbed over by willow and alder.

Much of the marshy grassland has frequent to abundant purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, accompanied by carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and devil-s-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. Almost all of it includes base-demanding species such as meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and quaking grass *Briza media*, with tawny sedge *Carex hostiana* and flea sedge *Carex pulicaris* occurring more patchily. On the wettest ground species such as water mint *Mentha aquatica*, ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* are also present.

The rest of the marshy grassland is dominated by rushes. The rush-pasture around the spring-head in the west of the site has abundant blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, growing alongside marsh valerian, tawny sedge and bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*. Other stands occur on more acidic substrates and are typically dominated by sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, with associated herbs including common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre* and greater bird-s-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*. In the northern section of the site, where the ground is drier, rush-pasture with frequent hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, quaking grass, and much glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* is present. This community occurs in close association with neutral grassland, with which it intergrades.

Dry, neutral grassland is present on relatively free-draining ground in the northern field and in the eastern enclosure. It is characterised by grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and crested dog-s-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, together with broad-leaved

herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common birds-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and red clover *Trifolium pratense*. Glaucous sedge, quaking grass and common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* form a prominent floristic element of the more flushed neutral grassland in the northern part of the site.

Many of the plant communities are closely juxtaposed, with well displayed transitions between them. Other habitats present on the site include a swamp dominated by lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis* and willow and alder carr. These habitats add to the ecological and structural diversity of the site.

Of note are several uncommon plant species. Green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus* occur in the neutral grassland, while dyer=s greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, petty whin *Genista anglica* and narrow-leaved marsh-dandelion *Taraxacum palustre* are present in the purple moor-grass pasture. Blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, which is abundant in the base-rich rush-pasture is also notable, as is early marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata ssp. incarnata*, which is scattered through the base-enriched purple moor-grass and rush-pasture.

The south western fields support a population of the nationally scarce bog bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera*. The site provides suitable habitat for the marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia* and contributes to the area used by a metapopulation of this butterfly.

Remarks:

The site supports vegetation assignable to the *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils *Molinion caeruleae*. This is a habitat type listed on Annex I of the European Community=s Habitats and Species Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna).

The marsh fritillary is included on Annex IIa of the Habitats and Species Directive and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a Biodiversity Action Plan species.

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