

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHENSHIRE

COEDYDD CAPEL DYDDGEN

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1999
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SN 467127
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 159 1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 41 SE
<u>Site Area:</u>	24.7 ha

Description:

Coedydd Capel Dyddgen comprises a mosaic of ash-hazel woodland, scrub and grassland located near the village of Crwbin on the outcrop of the Carboniferous Limestone on the northern edge of the South Wales coalfield. Revegetated old quarry workings and a cave system are also present. The site is of special interest principally for its ash-hazel woodland and unimproved neutral grassland but various mammal, invertebrate and plant species also contribute to the biological interest of the site.

The woodland at Coedydd Capel Dyddgen is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and hazel *Corylus avellana*, often with dense growths of blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and holly *Ilex aquifolium* at the woodland edges; much of the hazel being formerly coppiced. Wild cherry *Prunus avium* and spindle *Euonymus europeus* occur as occasional components of the tree and shrub layers. Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and ivy *Hedera helix* predominate in the ground flora, with the frequency of ivy reflecting both the youth of some of the wooded areas and the relatively oceanic influences prevailing in south-west Wales. Other species such as early dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana*, common dog-violet *V. riviniana*, lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum* and early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* colour the woodland floor in spring, whilst damper hollows are swathed in dense growths of ramsons *Allium ursinum*. Uncommon species include the late winter-flowering shrub mezereon *Daphne mezereum*, herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia* and toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*.

The neutral grassland areas are also of conservation interest, holding the only known example of slightly calcicolous neutral grassland in Carmarthenshire. This grassland, with species such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, crested dog-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*, supports a diverse mix of flowering plants. These include common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, betony *Betonica officinalis*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. The sedge *Carex flacca* is also abundant.

Between the woodland blocks, areas affected by past quarrying have been recolonized by an array of calcicolous ('lime-loving') plants. Here, an admixture of marjoram *Origanum vulgare*, thyme

Thymus vulgaris, salad burnet, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* and carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris* grow on the thinner soils, with oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*, burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and imperforate St. John's-wort *Hypericum maculatum* on deeper areas. Bare, damp, mossy areas on the old quarry floors support sporadic populations of autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*.

Several noteworthy invertebrates occur. The minute (3mm) woodlouse *Metatrichoniscoides celticus* and the harvestman *Sabacon viscyanum* are known from only a limited number of British sites, whilst the ancient woodland snails *Acicula fusca*, *Ena montana* and the calcareous grassland snail *Helicella itala* are all extremely localised in Carmarthenshire.

Greater horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* (and at least five other species of bat) utilise the large cave Ogof Capel Dyddgen and the adjoining mosaic of woodland and pasture provide important feeding areas for these species. Dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* also occur in the ash-hazel woodland and adjoining hedgerows.

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