

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

CAEAU HIRNANT

Date of Notification: 1999

National Grid Reference: SN889701

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 147
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN87SE

Site Area: 6.9 ha

Description:

Caeau Hirnant is of special interest for its unimproved grassland, most of which is neutral in character. The site is situated in the Elan Valley, 8 km north-west of Rhayader, and consists of two gently sloping fields, lying at an altitude of between 350 and 390m above sea level. The soil is generally freely-draining, and overlies sedimentary rocks of Silurian age.

The dry neutral grassland, which is managed for hay, is characterised by meadow grasses such as red fescue *Festuca rubra*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, with lesser amounts of common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. Frequent associates include common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, and eyebright *Euphrasia sp*, along with occasional pignut *Conopodium majus*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*.

Scattered small rocky outcrops within the site support a short, open grassland type containing harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, early hair-grass *Aira praecox* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*. Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* has been recorded in the past. There is also a small area of marsh dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. These habitats, although of limited extent, contribute to the overall ecological and structural diversity of the site.

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