

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF

LLANTRISANT COMMON AND PASTURES

Date of Notification:

2000

National Grid Reference:

ST 048845

O.S. Maps:

1:50,000 Sheet number: 170

1:10,000 Sheet number: ST 08 SE and SW

Site Area:

113.2 ha

Description:

Llantrisant Common and Pastures is of special interest for its extensive area of predominantly acidic marshy grassland in a lowland setting and for smaller areas of species-rich neutral and acidic grassland and soligenous flush. It is also of special interest for populations of one nationally rare and one nationally scarce plant species.

The site lies immediately to the north of the hill-top town of Llantrisant, which is situated approximately 15 km north-west of the centre of Cardiff. It comprises Cymdda Common (better known as Llantrisant Common) and a series of enclosed fields which abut its eastern margin. There is a gentle gradient from 125 m close to the town to the lowest point of approximately 75m. The site lies over coal measures and drains towards tributaries of the River Ely.

Extensive areas of the site support marshy grassland dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Much of this grassland is typified by plentiful tormentil *Potentilla erecta* together with species such as sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, mat grass *Nardus stricta* and heath rush *Juncus squarrosus*. In places, this grassland is slightly heathy, with frequent cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Elsewhere, grasses are more prominent. These include sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, velvet bent *Agrostis canina* and heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*. Occasional areas where the soil is slightly less acidic are distinguished by the presence of meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*.

Areas of acidic soligenous flush occur in association with the marshy grassland on the Common.

Here bog mosses *Sphagnum spp.* are conspicuous, and associated species include sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, star sedge *Carex echinata* and common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Also present is some marshy grassland dominated by rushes such as soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and sharp-flowered rush, alongside frequent common marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre* and greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*.

Drier grassland is represented by small areas of neutral grassland in the enclosed fields and acidic grassland on the Common. The neutral grassland is characterised by a range of grasses including common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, sweet vernal-grass and small amounts of crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* together with broad-leaved herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common birds-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, devil's-bit

scabious *Succisa pratensis* and tormentil. The acidic grassland is typified by common bent *Agrostis capillaris* with herbs such as heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, devil's-bit scabious and tormentil.

These plant communities occur in close juxtaposition, with well displayed transitions between them and to wet heath. Scattered patches of bracken, scrub and woodland are also present.

The presence of two plant species are of special interest. Cornish moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea* grows at the edge of drainage ditches and in marshy grassland on the common. It is nationally scarce and is here at the edge of its geographical range, having a south-western distribution in Britain. The nationally rare liverwort *Scapania paludicola*, which has been given the name bog earwort, is also associated with marshy grassland on the Common.

Also of note are ivy-leaved bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, another species associated with the edges of drainage ditches on the common, and royal fern *Osmunda regalis* which occurs in similar situations in the enclosed fields. The marshy grassland supports a strong population of petty whin *Genista anglica* and cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* occurs in one locality on the Common.

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