

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

GWEUNYDD GER FRONHAUL

Date of notification: 1999

National grid reference: SJ 096088

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 125
1:10,000 Sheet number: SJ 00 NE

Site area: 6.6 ha

Description:

Gweunydd ger Fronhaul is of special interest for its unimproved lowland dry grassland and associated stands of rush pasture and woodland/scrub. The site is located in central Montgomeryshire some 2 km to the north of Llanfair Caereinion at an altitude of between 150 and 200 metres above sea level.

The site lies on the steeply south-eastward dipping limb of a major geological fold, which is faulted in a NE-SW direction. The underlying geology is complex, consisting of older Ashgill (Ordovician) mudstone to the north-west, with Llandovery fossiliferous rock and then Wenlock mudstone occurring progressively south-eastwards. The soils have developed on a mixture of head and alluvial deposits of varying thickness.

The stands of dry neutral grassland which occur on the steeper banks provide the principal focus of conservation interest. Here, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta* are prominent. In places more acidic conditions prevail and here the sward is characterised by the dominance of bents *Agrostis spp.* and fescues *Festuca spp.*, together with plants such as bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, betony *Stachys officinalis* and pignut *Conopodium majus*.

Devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* is also locally abundant. Other plant species indicative of agriculturally unmodified swards are present including adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, pale sedge *Carex pallescens* and greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*.

Stands of rush pasture are also present. Collectively, these areas are characterised by typical plant species such as common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, lesser spearwort

Ranunculus flammula, velvet bent *Agrostis canina* and sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*.

Areas of woodland, dense bracken, and scrub occur within the site boundary. These contribute to the ecological diversity of the site, providing complementary habitat for invertebrates and other animals. Areas of semi-improved grassland are also present. These are relatively species-rich and closely associated with the stands of unimproved grassland.

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