

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

NEATH PORT TALBOT

TAIRGWAITH

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	2003
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SN 715117
<u>O.S. Maps</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 160 1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 71 SW
<u>Site Area:</u>	4.5 ha

Description:

Tairgwaith is of special interest for its species-rich grasslands, which are host to several uncommon plant species. Such vegetation is now increasingly scarce in the Welsh lowlands, most having been lost to agricultural improvement.

The site is located to the south of the village of Tairgwaith, near Brynaman. It consists of four enclosures that lie on gently north-west and south-west facing slopes at an altitude of about 180m. Together they display a range of species-rich grasslands, and their transitions to wetter, marshy grassland

The westernmost field supports dry, neutral grassland. Here, grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* occur, together with red clover *Trifolium pratense*, cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. The soil in this field has a slightly acidic nature, indicated by species such as tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. Great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* also occurs here in profusion.

The easternmost enclosure supports similar grassland, but here there is no acidic element to the soil. Species such as tormentil and devil's-bit scabious are replaced by meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, ox - eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis* and rough hawkbit *L. hispidus*.

The central field also supports neutral grassland, but here it grades into fen-meadow and marshy grassland communities, characterised by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* together with meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, and sedges such as oval sedge *Carex ovalis* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. In places, a slightly base-rich nature to the soil is indicated by the presence of species such as quaking grass *Briza media*. Across the southern half of this field, where drainage is more impeded, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, and common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre* become prevalent.

Notable plant species recorded at Tairgwaith include greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera*

chlorantha. Up to eighty spikes of this species are present in the easternmost field, and it is also present in the central enclosure of the site. Whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, an Atlantic species characteristic of unimproved pastures in the South Wales coalfield, also occurs across much of the site.