

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION**

**NEATH PORT TALBOT**

**GWRHYD MEADOWS**

<b><u>Date of Notification:</u></b>	1990
<b><u>National Grid Reference:</u></b>	SN 735 078
<b><u>O.S. Maps:</u></b>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 160 1:25,000 Sheet number: 60/70
<b><u>Site Area:</u></b>	63.2 ha

**Description:**

An extensive series of meadows and wet pastures situated on the south-east facing slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd some 4 km north of Pontardawe. Lying at an altitude of 110 - 250 metres, the site drains towards the Cwm Du River (a minor tributary of the Tawe) and is the largest area of traditionally managed enclosed grassland within the former county of West Glamorgan and the old Llanelli Borough. Following the losses caused by agricultural improvement, industrial development and afforestation, such sizeable tracts of grassland are now extremely uncommon within Wales as a whole.

A wide range of grassland and wetland communities occur within the forty one enclosures that make up the complete site. These include dry hay meadows, acid grasslands, rushy pastures with purple moor grass, as well as both base-poor and base-enriched wetlands. Small stands of wet heath occur in several fields along with occasional patches of bracken and broadleaved scrub. More extensive tracts of oak woodland occur towards the centre of the site and these are augmented by the numerous hedgerow trees that still remain on the upper slopes. Several small watercourses drain towards the adjacent river and provide additional habitat for birds and invertebrates.

Notable plant species recorded from Gwrhyd Meadows include whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, petty whin *Genista anglica*, dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, ivy-leaved bellflower *Wahlengbergia hederacea* common butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, autumn lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* and royal fern *Osmunda regalis*. The first five of the species listed occur in some considerable quantity across the site.

Amongst the birds recorded from Gwrhyd Meadows are the redstart, tree pipit, willow warbler, nuthatch, redpoll, siskin, meadow pipit, green woodpecker, cuckoo and buzzard. Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies *Boloria selene* are frequently found on the lower slopes in the southern part of the site. The dragonflies recorded from the area include the keeled skimmer *Orthetrum coerulescens*, the broad-bodied chaser *Libellula depressa* and the golden-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii*.