

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

GWEUNYDD COCH-Y-DWST

Date of Notification: 1991

National Grid Reference: SO 055633

O.S. Maps: 1: 50,000 Sheet number: 147
1: 25,000 Sheet number: SO 06

Site Area: 10.9 ha

Description:

This site comprises a series of agriculturally unimproved fields lying in the valley of the River Ithon near Llanyre. Variations in drainage and base status have produced a range of different vegetation types which in turn support a great variety of plant species. Of particular interest are the extensive areas of grassland which appear to be intermediate in species composition between acidic and more neutral swards.

The drier ground in the western part of the site supports extensive areas of acidic grassland dominated by sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, with abundant sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, mat-grass *Nardus stricta*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, and a range of characteristic associates including harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, pill sedge *Carex pilulifera*, heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris* and white clover *Trifolium repens*. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella* occur locally along with clumps of western gorse *Ulex gallii*. This grassland grades into areas with similar, but more species-rich sward in which mat-grass is less prominent. Species that are characteristic of more mesotrophic conditions, such as glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, are common here. Dry hummocks within the north-western arm of the site support more typical examples of this vegetation type, in which heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and betony *Stachys officinalis* are frequent, along with species such as petty whin *Genista anglica*, dyer's greenweed *G. tinctoria*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*.

The south-western field supports extensive areas of mesotrophic grassland dominated by mixtures of common bent, sweet vernal-grass, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and fescues (*Festuca* spp.), with frequent heath-grass, common knapweed, common bird's-foot-trefoil, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, great burnet, devil's-bit scabious and red clover *Trifolium pratense*. Also present is a range of other associates, including hairy lady's-mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis*, quaking-grass *Briza media*, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, compact rush *J. conglomeratus*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, lousewort, burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, betony and six species of sedge *Carex* spp. Damp hollows within this

field support a community dominated by sharp-flowered rush, with frequent bents *Agrostis* spp., sweet vernal-grass, crested dog's-tail, meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*, Yorkshire-fog, carnation sedge, tormentil, great burnet and devil's-bit scabious. Meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* is locally frequent here and is also found elsewhere in the site, in association with purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, carnation sedge and a range of other grasses. Further patches of rush-pasture are scattered throughout the fields and are dominated by either sharp-flowered rush or soft rush *Juncus effusus*. Characteristic associates here include meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*.

Additional habitat diversity is provided by patches of scrub, dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and gorse *Ulex* spp., within the western part of the site.

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