

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

LLWYN-CUS

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1988
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SN 926506
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 147 1:25,000 Sheet number: SN 95
<u>Site Area:</u>	14.2 ha

Description:

A composite site displaying well the range of semi-natural wildlife habitats once common in north Brecknock, but now scarce due to post-war agricultural improvement. The site occupies the lower south-west facing sides of the Cammarch valley below Beulah.

Former courses of the river support tall-fen vegetation, dominated by lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis*. This community extends on to a wet, spring-fed river terrace where a large colony of purple smallreed *Calamagrostis canescens* is present in its only known mid-Wales locality. Grey willow *Salix cinerea* carr provides a canopy over part of the area, the trees supporting a rich epiphytic flora, including the liverworts *Lejeunea ulicina* and *Metzgeria temperata*, and the lichens *Micarea alabastrites*, *Bacidia vezdae* and *Porina borrieri*, scarce species in mid-Wales with a notably western distribution. The most southerly field is an unimproved pasture. The upper slopes are flushed with spring water from the wood above and support extensive small sedge-dominated communities. The abundance of tawny sedge *Carex hostiana* is a particularly notable feature, being one of the twelve species of sedge found here. Other old pasture species include meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor*. Similar wet flushes occur in the fields in the centre of the site amongst a mosaic of drier unimproved pasture types, some suffering bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* invasion, yet supporting good populations of the yellow hill ant, *Acanthomyops flavus*. The northerly end of the site, in contrast, consists of rough pasture dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. More acidic, it is less species-rich, with dwarf-shrubs such as petty whin *Genista anglica* and western gorse *Ulex gallii*, as well as flushes dominated by bog-mosses *Sphagnum* spp.

A lightly grazed sessile oak-birch woodland covers most of the steeper slopes throughout the site. The canopy is formed notably of mature to over-mature oak of large size. Much dead wood is present, an unusual feature in most mid-Wales woods, providing good nesting sites for birds such as green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, pied

flycatcher and a range of tit species. There is also an exceptional number of epiphytic lichens (82 species), including at least five ancient woodland indicator species, namely *Parmeliella triptophylla*, *Arthopyrenia ranunculospora*, *Dimerella lutea*, *Pannaria conoplea* and *Biatorina atropurpurea*. The shrub layer consists mostly of hazel *Coryllus avellana*, with hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* becoming abundant in glades. The ground layer is diverse, ranging from wet flushes (much used in winter by woodcock and snipe) with plants such as smooth-stalked sedge *Carex laevigata*, to drier banks with, notably, wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. Many of the larger mammals native to mid-Wales breed in the wood, or feed in the site at large.

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