

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

CORNDON HILL

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1989
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SO 309966
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 137 1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 39
<u>Site Area:</u>	189 ha

Description:

Corndon Hill is an outcrop of igneous rock 500 metres high, situated in the extreme east of the county, near the Shropshire border. It is notable for its range of sub-montane grass and heath plant communities which have continental, oceanic and northern affinities. A number of uncommon plant species are present.

Large areas of the hill are dominated by sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, bents *Agrostis* spp. and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, with frequent heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and mat-grass *Nardus stricta*. This type of grassland has affinities with that found in the more oceanic areas of Wales, as does the more species-rich bent/fescue grassland and western gorse *Ulex gallii* scrub on the lower slopes of the south-western side of the hill. There are also extensive areas dominated by sheep's-fescue and bents with sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, heath bedstraw, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and wavy hair-grass. This type of continental grassland is more widespread in the Midlands and south-east England, as is the more open community developed around the old quarry workings, where wavy hair-grass, sheep's-fescue and bilberry are abundant with frequent heath bedstraw, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and lichens *Cladonia* spp.

On the eastern slopes of the hill there are areas where tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* is co-dominant with bents and fescues and where heath bedstraw is frequent. This type of grassland is more typical of Northern England and Scotland. Small areas of the hill-top are occupied by a rather unusual community dominated by fescues, bents and wavy hair-grass, with frequent heath bedstraw, bilberry and a variety of other herbs such as wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, heath milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia* and mountain pansy *Viola lutea*. Heather dominated communities are restricted to the northern slopes of the hill, bilberry and wavy hair-grass being locally abundant here. This type of heathland is most widespread in the Shropshire, Cheshire and south Pennine areas.

The plant communities associated with the numerous rock outcrops and screes are of particular interest. Bilberry is abundant on the eastern screes, along with a luxuriant growth of large ferns *Dryopteris* spp. Rock faces in this area support good populations of beech fern *Phegopteris connectilis*, another species characteristic of oceanic conditions. The screes on the south-western side of the hill support fescues, bilberry, wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, hair-mosses *Racomitrium* spp., oak fern *Gymnocarpium Dryopteris* and the locally uncommon parsley fern *Cryptogramma crispa*, an arctic/alpine fern found here at the extreme south-eastern known limit of its British range. A small shady outcrop at the foot of the hill supports the nationally uncommon rock stonecrop *Sedum forsterianum*. The lower slopes on the eastern side of the hill support a mosaic of dry heath, damp heath and grassland, with boggy flushes and extensive tracts of bracken and scrub on the drier ground.

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