

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

CAEAU NANT Y LLECHAU

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| <u>Date of Notification:</u> | 1976, 1988 |
| <u>National Grid Reference:</u> | SN902103 |
| <u>O.S. Maps:</u> | 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160 1:25,000 Sheet number: SN91 |
| <u>Site Area:</u> | 7.4 ha |

Description:

This is the largest area of traditional unimproved hay meadow known in Brecknock. The collection of gently sloping, south-east facing fields on the upper valley side of the Nedd support a wealth of plant species. Developed on boulder clay overlying millstone grit, flushed in part by springs and drained by a number of well wooded streams, the varying topography is reflected in the diverse flora, with over 110 species of higher plants recorded from the grassland areas.

The most notable communities are those of the traditionally managed hay meadows. Well-drained areas support many notable plant species, including wood bitter-vetch *Vicia Orobus*, restharrow *Ononis Repens*, greater butterfly-orchid *Plantanthera Chlorantha* and dyer's greenweed *Genista Tinctoria*. These plants are now scarce due to the ploughing, fertilising and reseeded of meadows and characterise an upland type of hay meadow. The more widespread species of these drier slopes include oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum Vulgare*, eyebright *Euphrasia sp.*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus Minor*, common knapweed *Centaurea Nigra*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus Montanus* and betony *Betonica Officinalis*.

On the stiffer, moister soils great burnet *Sanguisorba Officinalis*, centaury *Centaureum Erythraea*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa Pratensis* and common bistort *Polygonum Bistorta* are found, together with sedges such as pale sedge *Carex Pallescens* and oval sedge *Carex Ovalis*. In the wettest areas the soils become peaty and support wetland plants such as whorled caraway *Carum Verticillatum*, heath and common spotted orchids *Dactylorhiza Maculata* and *Dactylorhiza Fuchsii*, meadow thistle *Cirsium Dissectum*, bog asphodel *Narthecium Ossifragum* and ragged-robin *Lychnis Flos-cuculi*. Small areas of drier peaty soil are present and provide a habitat for a slightly different range of species, including petty whin *Genista Anglica*, saw-wort *Serratula Tinctoria* and lousewort *Pedicularis Sylvatica*.

The most southerly field is not cut for hay and provides a contrast with the hay meadows. Dyer's greenweed is frequent on the freely drained slopes, whilst flushes provide a range of habitats for

wetland species such as meadow thistle. Bracken *Pteridium Aquilinum* is encroaching on the drier parts of the field, threatening to shade some of the many mounds of the yellow hill ant.

The above plant communities have developed in response to a traditional form of management. The fields have been grazed in the spring, then shut up for hay from mid-June until often late-August when the hay was cut, or have in occasional years been grazed sufficiently lightly to permit most of the plants and flowers to seed. Fertiliser use has been minimal and confined to light applications of farmyard manure. There is no evidence of any recent ploughing.

Remarks:

The site is within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

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