

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHENSHIRE

CAEAU TIR- MAWR

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1984, 1998
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SN 649205
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1: 50,000 Sheet number: 159 1: 10,000 Sheet number: SN 62 SW and SN 62 SE
<u>Site Area:</u>	13.3 ha

Description:

Caeau Tir-mawr is of special interest for its unimproved, damp, heathy pasture. A variety of plant communities occur, of particular note being the fen meadow, wet heath and mire types. The site is situated to the north of the village of Trapp on the western edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It consists of five enclosures, forming one ecological unit of species-rich pasture.

Most of the site lies on gently sloping ground with a north-westerly aspect at an altitude of 170-200 m. The local superficial geology, salty mudstone and siltstone drift, has led to the development of seasonally waterlogged soils. In the wetter areas, a peaty surface layer to the soil has developed. These factors, alongside the past management, have all had an influence on the plant communities that are present.

The site comprises a varied assemblage of unimproved marshy grassland types. The main interest of the site is provided by a species-rich variety of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* dominated pasture. Other characteristic species present include tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and tawny sedge *Carex hostiana*. Further species of particular note that occur within these areas are whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, petty whin *Genista anglica* and lesser butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia*.

More heathy vegetation predominates in several areas of the site. Here, the plant community is characterised by species such as purple moor-grass, tormentil, cross-leaved heath, heather *Calluna vulgaris*, deer grass *Scirpus sespitosus*, common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* carnation sedge and devil's-bit scabious.

Further types of purple moor-grass dominated vegetation are characterised by tormentil, sweet vernal-grass, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, devil's-bit scabious and carnation sedge, with cross-leaved

heath locally prominent. Small areas along drainage ditches are dominated by sharp-flowered rush or by soft rush *Juncus effusus* and bog moss *Sphagnum* sp.

These plant communities support a population of the marshy fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*, a species that has declined dramatically with the loss of its marshy grassland habitat. The marbled white butterfly *Melanargia galathea*, an uncommon species in this part of Wales, also breeds on the site.

Remarks:

The site lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The colony of marsh fritillary butterflies exists at this site, a species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Schedule 5*(b)) and the European Habitats and Species Directive (Annex II).

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