

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHSHIRE

CAEAU NANT GARENIG

Date of Notification: 1990

National Grid Reference: SN 673124

O.S. Maps: 1: 50,000 Sheet number: 159
1: 25,000 Sheet number: SN 61

Site Area: 11.2 ha

Description:

The site comprises a group of traditionally managed unimproved pastures and hay meadows occupying west-facing slopes which descend gently to a wooded stream. The herb-rich grasslands to be found here are typical of those which were once fairly widespread throughout the Carmarthen Coalfield, prior to losses caused by land improvement, opencast coal extraction and development of one kind or another. Much of the site supports the white umbelliferous plant, whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum* which in Britain appears to be most frequent in the Carmarthen Coalfield.

At this site the purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*- meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* fen-meadow community is well represented, occurring in several hay fields and pastures. At Nant Garenig the structure and detailed composition of this distinctive and nationally restricted community is rather variable, but essentially it consists of a sward dominated by purple moor-grass and other grasses and sedges, with frequent meadow thistle, whorled caraway, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. Some of the enclosures are regularly cut for hay, but others are horse or cattle grazed. More mesotrophic (neutral) grassland is also present, this time dominated by grasses such as sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* are both abundant, whilst great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, eyebright *Euphrasia* sp. and devil's-bit scabious are frequent. In one enclosure these plants are joined by burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, common restharrow *Ononis repens* and hairy lady's-mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis*. Other locally scarce species found in this mesotrophic grassland are greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, the latter growing on one dry bank only. Dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria* occurs very locally throughout.

The substantial areas of devil's-bit scabious support both the metallic gold sawfly *Abia sericea*, and the marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*, whose larvae feed on this plant. Another

local species is the marbled white butterfly *Melanargia galathea*, which occurs mainly on the more neutral pastures at Nant Garenig.

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