

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHENSHIRE

RHÔSYDD CASTELL-DU
& PLAS-Y-BETTWS

Date of Notification: 1995

National Grid Reference: SN 655116

O.S. Maps: 1: 50,000 Sheet number: 159
1: 10,000 Sheet number: SN 61 SE, SN 61 SW

Site Area: 18 ha

Description:

The site is situated on the north-western flank of Mynydd y Betws, approximately 2½ km south-east of Ammanford, and slopes gently to the north-west on Coal Measure strata at an altitude of 145-200m. The four enclosures at Castell-du have impeded drainage, but there are also several drier areas of grassland. The site is of special importance for its large expanse of fen-meadow and drier, more neutral grassland, as well as several associated stands of damp acid grassland, rush pasture and wet heath. A strong population of the nationally-scarce soft-leaved sedge *Carex montana* also grows at this locality.

The fen-meadow community has frequent meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and also other species such as petty whin *Genista anglica*, creeping willow *Salix repens*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*. The neutral grassland is dominated by various grass species, including crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, together with common bird's-foot-trefoil, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

The north-eastern part of the site supports a wet, heathy vegetation characterised by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Other common species include devil's-bit scabious, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, heath milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*. Petty whin is locally frequent throughout.

Much of the western (Castell-du) part of the site is dominated by a grassy sward in which purple moor-grass, velvet bent *Agrostis canina*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea* are all represented. Whorled caraway, tormentil and greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus* are also regularly present. Rush-pasture with soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and sharp-flowered rush *J. acutiflorus* also occurs extensively.

A small area of dry acidic grassland is noteworthy as it supports a strong population of soft-leaved sedge and also a small population of the scarce wood bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus*.

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