

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: CITATION

NEATH PORT TALBOT

CILYBEBYLL

Date of Notification: 2000

National Grid Reference: SN 750053

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 70 NW

Site Area: 20.8 ha

Description:

Cilybebyll is of special interest for its species-rich grasslands and wet pastures, which are host to several uncommon plant species. Such vegetation is now increasingly scarce in the Welsh lowlands, most having been lost to agricultural improvement.

Cilybebyll is located to the north east of the village of Cilybebyll, near Pontardawe. It consists of seventeen enclosures on the eastern side of the Tawe valley with a westerly aspect, at an altitude of between 160 and 200 m. The underlying bedrock is sandstone of the Lower Pennant measures of the South Wales coalfield, overlain by brown podsols and pelo-stagnogley soils.

Most of the fields support dry, neutral grassland. Here, grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* occur, together with red clover *Trifolium Dratense*, cat's ear *Hypochoeris radicata*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. In fields where the soil is slightly more acidic in nature, plants such as tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa Dratensis* occur, whilst those with more neutral soils host composites such as rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*.

Wet pasture communities occur in fields where drainage is more impeded, characterised by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* together with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, and common cotton grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Where springs meet the surface, the vegetation is frequently dominated by mosses such as *Polytrichum commune*, *Sphagnum auriculatum*, *S. fimbriatum* and *S. papillosum*, as well as marsh violet *Viola palustris*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and soft rush *Juncus effusus*. There are also some areas of acid flush, scrub and bracken, which add to the structural and ecological diversity of the site.

Notable plant species recorded at Cilybebyll include greater burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, royal fern *Osmunda regalis*, adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, an Atlantic species characteristic of unimproved pastures in the South Wales coalfield.

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