

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

MONMOUTHSHIRE

GWENT LEVELS – MAGOR AND UNDY

Date of Notification: 1989

National Grid Reference: ST 440860

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 171
1:25,000 Sheet number: ST 48/58

Site Area: 586.6 ha

Description:

The Gwent Levels constitute the lowlands between Cardiff and Chepstow and are drained by an ordered network of drainage ditches. They are an example of one of the most extensive areas of reclaimed wet pasture in Great Britain which includes the Somerset Levels, Romney Marsh and the Pevensey Levels, and is the largest area of its kind in Wales. Together these Levels systems constitute a national series of sites each with its own special features.

The Gwent Levels reens are rich in plant species and communities, many of which are rare or absent in other Levels systems. This is due to the variety of reen types and their management regimes and the timing of the management which results in a staggered programme across the Levels. The regular maintenance of some reens provides conditions for submerged plant species such as hairlike pondweed *Potamogeton trichoides* and openwater emergents such as arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia* an opportunity to flourish. Others are less intensively managed and some have become completely overgrown by weeds and hedges.

The aquatic invertebrate fauna is very diverse and the Gwent Levels compares well with similar areas in Britain. Many nationally rare or notable species are present such as *Haliphus mucronatus* and *Hydrophilus piceus*. The area is important in the Welsh context for its snails and dragonflies and includes the species *Physa heterostropha* and *Brachytron pratense* respectively. The large number of hedgerows add to the diversity of the area and, together with the main reen banks, provide a habitat for nationally important assemblages of terrestrial invertebrates such as *Pipunculus fonscai* and *Tomosvaryella minima*.

The Magor and Undy area is the most easterly of the Gwent Levels sites supporting a total of 43 nationally rare and notable invertebrate species such as the soldier fly *Stratiomys furcata*, the snail killing fly *Pherbellia brunnipes* and the water beetle *Haliphus mucronatus*. This area also supports a number of rare and notable aquatic plant species including the pondweed *Potamogeton trichoides* and *P. berchtoldii* and the narrow-leaved water plantain *Alisma lanceolatum*.

The boundary of this site has been drawn to include the sea wall back ditch which contains brackish water fauna and flora such as the water beetle *Agabus conspersus* and the nationally rare brackish water crowfoot *Ranunculus baudotii*.

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