

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

WREXHAM

NANT-Y-BELAN AND PRYNELA WOODS

Date Of Notification: 1986

National Grid Reference: SJ305408

O.S. Maps: 1:50000 Sheet number: 117
1:25000 Sheet number: SJ34

Site Area: 35.5 ha

Description:

Botanical interest.

The largest and one of the best examples of a woodland type largely restricted to Wales and south-west England but also found in the Midlands and north-east England. In North Wales the majority of examples are in the former county of Clwyd, the remainder being in West Gwynedd.

The part of the Dee valley in which these woods lie is generally well wooded, but most of the woodland has been affected by large scale replanting with conifers and non-native hardwoods. Nant-y-Belan and Phrynela Woods thus represent a significant area of largely semi-natural woodland which occupies the northern slopes of the Dee valley and extends up tributary valleys.

The woods are very variable, the majority of the area being dominated by Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea*, with Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*. *Fraxinus excelsior* dominant in some areas with Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Beech *Fagus sylvatica* also in the canopy but, except in limited areas of the woods, the latter two non-native species are not a significant in the tree canopy. Yew *Taxus baccata* is widespread on rock outcrops in areas of woodland which have probably always remained unmanaged and Alder *Alnus glutinosa* forms dense stands in parts of tributary valleys and along the River Dee.

Lack of grazing has resulted in a well developed understorey with Hazel *Corylus avellana* the dominant scrub, together with Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* and the uncommon Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis*.

The herb layer is equally variable with areas on more acidic soils derived directly from the underlying sandstones supporting Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and Greater Woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*. Elsewhere deeper and more alkaline soils support a flora including Slender False-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Yellow pinpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, Wood Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*

and Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* forms extensive stands. There are extensive flush areas within the woods with large stands Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula*, Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, Meadow-sweet *Filipendula ulmaria*.

The uncommon Wild Daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* occurs in parts of Nant-y-belan Wood.

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