

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF

BRYNCARNAU GRASSLANDS, LLWYDCOED

Date of Notification: 1993

National Grid reference: SN995061

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160
1:25,000 Sheet number: SN90, SO 00

Site Area: 24.8 ha

Description:

Bryncarnau Grasslands are situated on a west-facing hillside at the head of the Cynon Valley, to the north of Aberdare. They range from 270 to 320m in altitude, and are bounded by small tributaries of the River Cynon which, towards the western end of the site, occupy deeply incised wooded valleys. The soils are derived from boulder clay over Coal Measures. The site represents a particularly good example of a gradation from lowland mesotrophic grassland to pasture of a more upland character. A range of plant communities are present and these include 2 of very high nature conservation value. A number of plants which are rare in the Glamorgans occur here.

The western part of the site and the isolated south western field both support a mosaic of lowland grassland types including plant communities typical of both well and poorly drained ground. The drier areas are typified by grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and red fescue *Festuca rubra* with a range of broad-leaved herbs including common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*. Other species which occur more locally in this community include smooth lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glabra*, common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and betony *Stachys officinalis*. The wetter areas include some which are dominated by rushes and others typified by meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. In terms of the National Vegetation Classification, most of the drier grassland may be ascribed to the *Centaurea nigra* - *Cynosurus cristatus* neutral grassland and substantial areas of the wetter ground to the *Molinia caerulea* - *Cirsium dissectum* fen meadow. The upper, eastern part of the site includes an extensive area of dry, acidic grassland typified by common bent and sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*. Also present is a smaller area of more poorly drained grassland dominated by purple moor-grass with tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*.

A number of unusual plants occur within the site. Greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and wood bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* both have a very restricted distribution in the dry neutral grassland within the site pale sedge *Carex pallescens* is more widely distributed in the same community. Springs and flushes areas towards the upper end of the site support round-leaved

sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, few-flowered spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora*, fen bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* and common butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*.

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