

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION**

**DENBIGHSHIRE**

**CAEAU PEN-Y-COED**

**Date of Notification:** 1999

**National Grid Reference:** SJ 223 417

**O.S. Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 117  
1:10,000 Sheet number: SJ 24 SE

**Site Area:** 11 ha

**Description:**

Caeau Pen-y-coed is of special interest for its unimproved neutral grassland which is associated with areas of acidic grassland and other habitats including mature woodland, scrub and bracken.

Caeau Pen-y-coed comprises of a series of 11 contiguous fields occupying the northern flank of a low hill approximately 1 km to the south east of the centre of Llangollen. The site ranges from 110 m to 200 m in altitude and overlooks the town, with urban housing to the north and the mixed coniferous and broadleaved woodland of Pen-y-coed to the south.

The solid geology of the site consists of calcareous shales (Silurian Period) that are overlain by well-drained slightly to very stony brown soils.

These circumneutral brown soils support areas of the now uncommon crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* grassland, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* sub-community. This community was the major grassland type of traditionally managed hay meadows and pastures throughout the lowlands of Britain. The grasses most commonly found are red fescue *Festuca rubra*, crested dog's tail, and common bent *Agrostis capillaris* along with sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*. Herbs present in the sward include those indicative of unimproved grassland such as common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* and meadow vetchling.

The site also supports areas of dry acidic (calcifugous) grassland and include small stands of the nationally uncommon bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, betony *Stachys betonica* sub-community of sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, common bent, heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* grassland. These are floristically similar to the adjacent areas of neutral grassland sharing several of its more prominent grasses and herbs, among them common bent, sweet vernal- grass, common knapweed and common bird's-foot trefoil, and are distinguished primarily by the presence and often abundance of sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, devils-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and bitter-vetch. Small areas of the more mesotrophic Yorkshire-fog - white clover *Trifolium repens* sub-community of this grassland are also present as well as patches dominated by wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, with frequent to abundant heath bedstraw and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*.

Caeau Pen-y-Coed includes associated stands of mature woodland, scrub and bracken which form an integral part of the site and add to the structural and ecological diversity of the habitat mosaic.

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