

35A. Carmel

Carmel, Carmarthenshire

Grid	O.S Explorer map 178 Llanelli & Ammanford. Main entrances: SN584159, SN587163, SN588161, SN190158 and SN590157. Site centre: SN590162
References	
Status	Notified SSSI, NNR and SAC.
Tenure	Leased for 21 years from July 2013 from Natural Resources Wales
Size	50 ha (124 acres)
Location and Access Notes	Five miles south west of Llandeilo, straddling the A476 from Llandeilo to Cross Hands. Visitors can park in the dedicated layby on the east side of the A-road, indicated by the brown tourist 'nature reserve' sign. A kissing gate at the top of the layby leads into the southern part of the nature reserve. No wheelchair access (footpaths can be steep and muddy).
Public Transport	Train station at Llandeilo, on the Swansea to Shrewsbury line. Bus number 279 from Llandeilo to Carmarthen stops at Carmel village.

Description: Mosaic of unimproved and semi-improved grassland (both neutral and calcareous), marshy grassland, and broadleaf woodland with quarries and lime kilns.

Carmel comprises a mosaic of habitats with a distinct patchwork pattern of woodland blocks, with the intervening grassland rides kept open by grazing animals. Surrounding this grassland-woodland mosaic are a number of unimproved and semi-improved hay meadows which are also grazed after the hay crop is taken each summer.

The woodland is dominated by Ash with large amounts of coppiced Hazel, also Spindle and Hawthorn. There is a typical spring limestone ground flora including Bluebell, Dog's Mercury, Wood Anemone, Wild Garlic and Hart's-tongue Fern. Scarcer plants occurring here include Lily-of-the-valley and Herb Paris.

Parts of the reserve, particularly the western Pwll Edrychiad block, are covered in large areas of freely-draining species-rich neutral grassland which host different species including Common Knapweed, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Devil's-bit Scabious. The lower parts of this block also host marshy grassland and some of the upper limestone ridge is covered in a scrubby layer of Bracken and Gorse, which provides good habitat for reptiles.

Dormice have been discovered in the south western corner of the reserve in the well connected network of wooded patches and hedgerows. A wide range of birds use the varied habitats including Willow Tit, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker and many more.

The site has a fascinating cultural heritage. Quarrying of limestone reached a peak in the nineteenth century and two large quarries and several old lime kilns are still clearly visible on the reserve. Quarrying on this site is thought to have stopped around 1900. The woodland boundaries have probably changed relatively little since this time, remaining on the rockier outcrops whilst other trees were cleared to create pastures on the deeper soils.



A476 to Llandeilo



Management objectives: to maintain, extend and enhance the diversity of the open neutral and calcareous grasslands through scrub control, grazing and hay cuts, to restore coppice rotation of the woodlands and to enhance the populations of scarce species such as the Dormouse.

Good times to visit

Mar-Jul	Spring flowers in the woodland
May-Jul	Breeding birds
Sept-Nov	Woodland fungi
Dec-Feb	Lime kilns and geological features