

Grey Hills Grassland, Ayrshire

Acquisition of 805-acre farm lying within one of the lowest serpentinite outcrops in Great Britain. 643 acres are SSSI land. Serpentinite is a remarkable mineral-rich rock which intruded into the surrounding sedimentary rocks from deep in the earth's mantle about 450 million years ago. This kind of rock intrusion is associated with major geological faults, in this case the Southern Midland Valley separating the Highlands from the Southern Uplands. Apart from small scattered outcrops, serpentinite rock is only found in four other localities in the British Isles; the Lizard in Cornwall being the most famous. Locally uncommon plants such as the fragrant orchid, early marsh orchid, spring Sandwort and grass of Parnassus are found growing on the Serpentinite. An unusual sight are the bonsai-like forms of juniper, shaped by grazing, growing on rocky outcrops east of Cairn Hill. On the higher plateaus, there are extensive grey sedge communities and the black bog-rush grows along the channels of base-rich water which flush this ground. At the east of the reserve is Loch Lochton, which is special in having a catchment area which is untouched by herbicides and fertilizers. Views up and down the Firth of Clyde including Ailsa Craig and the Isle of Arran. Loch Lochton has water lilies and rare sedges. It is an attractive feature of the landscape but just outside the reserve.

Region

Scotland

Grant awarded

£48,250

Year awarded

1990