SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: O'DONNELL'S ROCK WOOD

SITE CODE: 001418

This site is situated 3.5km south of Manorhamilton in Co. Leitrim, on a west-facing slope of a limestone hill. In 1978 An Foras Forbartha gave the following description of the woodland. Three main habitat types were identified within the site.

The lower parts of the wood have developed over clayey soils, on a slope of about 45^0 below a limestone cliff. This area was once part of an estate woodland which has been mostly felled in the past. A few trees remain from this time and include Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and exotic species such as Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). The area has become re-colonised with native species, predominantly Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*) and some Sessile Oak saplings. The canopy height in this secondary stand is generally 5m.

At the cliff, the woodland becomes more open, but still maintains a closed canopy. There is limited regeneration of Sessile Oak and Beech here. Two additional shrub species present are Guelder-rose *(Viburnum opulus*) and Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). The ground flora is typical of western woodland on base-rich soils, and includes the following species: Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) and Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*). Some leaching of the woodland soils results in the additional presence of calcifuge species such as Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) and Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*). The woodland flora contains a range of ferns species, including Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and Hart's-tongue (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*).

The limestone cliff supports a flora dominated by False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), sedges (*Carex flacca* and *C. nigra*) and mosses (*Ctenidium molluscum* and others).

The main threats to semi-natural woodlands are grazing, which can prevent regeneration of tree species, and the spread of exotic species, such as Beech, which can out-compete native species through the process of natural regeneration.

This site is one of few naturally developing woods on the Sligo - Leitrim limestone mountains. The young age of the wood is of interest as it demonstrates the natural succession of this woodland type on steep ground.

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