SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: JAMES FORT

SITE CODE: 001060

James Fort occupies a promontory on the Cork coast, in the middle of Kinsale harbour, opposite the town. Its diamond-shaped enclosure and the slopes down to the sea on the north and east sides are included in this site.

The sandstone rock outcrops in several places where it is colonised by Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*), English Stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*) and annual grasses such as hair-grass (*Aira* spp.) and Squirreltail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*). On deeper soil Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) are frequent and there are a few clumps of Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

The buildings and fortifications on the headland form a habitat in their own right. The banks have a dry grassland flora including Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*), as well as the grasses Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). There is much Pellitory-of-the-wall (*Parietaria judaica*), Ivy-leaved Toadflax (*Cymbalaria muralis*) and ferns (*Polypodium* spp., *Asplenium trichomanes*, *A. adiantum-nigrum*) on the walls while the Blockhouse on the coast has, in addition, Garden Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*), Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), Biting Stonecrop (*Sedum acre*) and Musk Stork's-bill (*Erodium moschatum*).

Below the fort on the north side an old meadow occurs in which Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) are the main species. Mixed with these are Smooth Hawk's-beard (*Crepis capillaris*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Cat's-ear (*Hypochoeris radicata*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) and clovers (*Trifolium pratense*, *T. repens*). There is also a constant presence of Soft-brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), Changing Forget-me-not (*Myosotis discolor*), Trailing St. John's-wort (*Hypericum humifusum*) and Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*) which gives an unusual look to the community.

The site is included as an NHA because it is floristically rich with a good number of less common plants, some of them introduced. In addition there is a species-rich meadow of some ecological interest.

17.11.2009