SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: GROVE WOOD

SITE CODE: 000954

Grove Wood Natural Heritage Area is a large tract of deciduous woodland situated on a gently sloping sandstone hill to the south of Fethard in Co. Tipperary. This woodland is of regional importance, being one of the largest and most natural woods in this area.

The canopy comprises mature to almost mature oak (*Quercus* spp.), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hazel (*Coryllus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The understorey features Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Holly and Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*).

The ground flora contains typical deciduous woodland species with one notable species – Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) is present here but is generally rare in this region, being more typical of the north and west of Ireland.

In the older part of the forest, the oak near the top of the hill used to occur in a more heath-type community with a ground flora comprised of Wood Sage (Teucrium scorodonia), Creeping Soft-grass (Holcus mollis), Greater Stitchwort (Stellaria holostea) and a Three-nerved Sandwort (Moehringia trinerva). Unfortunately much of this area has been clear felled and replanted with conifers but the natural vegetation is regenerating in many places.

This woodland is of high scientific interest as it constitutes one of the few intact examples of oak growing on relatively base-rich soil in the county. There is also quite a rich fauna in the wood including squirrels and birds. The colourful canopy is also of immense scenic value as it can be seen from many roads in the area. The woodland is used extensively for horse riding and other amenity purposes.

This NHA is presently under threat from widespread tree felling and in some areas clear felled places are being underplanted with conifers. The actual area of natural forest has been considerably reduced in historical times and at least half of the original stand of oak has now disappeared. Quarrying, littering and invasion by introduced species such as Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) have also damaged parts of this site. It is imperative that the remaining intact areas are given immediate and adequate protection.

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