SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BURNHAM INLET

SITE CODE: 001960

This site is located on the west side of Dingle Harbour, some 3km south-east of Dingle town in County Kerry.

While the site is not very large it displays quite a high diversity of intertidal and terrestrial habitats. Most extensive are the mudflats that are exposed at low tide. Bedrock shores lie adjacent to these and are noted as having exceptionally rich mussel (*Mytilus* spp.) beds, with an estimated 160,000 individuals occurring in an area covering 18.6m^2. Crustacean species are also well-represented and include three *Gammarus* species, both fresh- and saltwater forms. Brown seaweed such as *Pelvetia* spp., *Fucus vesiculosus* and *F. serratus* occur lower down the shore.

Further up the channel a salt marsh occurs. This has abundant Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), along with Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*), Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), Saltmarsh Rush (*Juncus gerardii*), Sea-milkwort (*Glaux maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) and Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*).

A bed of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) occurs at the backward edge of the saltmarsh and grades into wet grassland further inland, which supports Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

Planted stands of woodland occur on both sides of the inlet. That on the northern side comprises Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and a little Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*). The ground flora is made up of species such as Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*). On the southern side the woodland contains oak (*Quercus* spp.), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Sycamore and other tree species, while various exotics including Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Bamboo are found in the shrub layer. Additional ground-layer species present include Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) and Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*).

The uncommon Lax-flowered Sea-lavender (*Limonium humile*) occurs on the shore here.

The importance of the woodland, a scarce habitat in the area, to birds is reflected in the presence of a heronry, a rookery and Breeding long-eared Owls, but the invertebrate fauna is the most noteworthy. Two rare species of fly from the family Hybotidae have been recorded from the saltmarsh. *Stilpon graminum* occurs here at its only known Irish station and *Stilpon lunatus* at one of only three known stations. *Rhamphomyia simplex*, another rare fly, is found here. The White Prominent moth

(*Leucodonta bicoloria*) also occurs here and it is thought to be the best station for the species in Ireland. This moth is also very rare in Britain.

The spread of exotics such as Rhododendron and Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) poses a threat to the woodlands as does Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) to the saltmarsh. Although totally artificial, the old causeway is a vital part of the ecology of the system as it exerts some control over the tide locally and may well be essential to the maintenance of the rare insect populations.

7.12.2009