SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: GARRETTSTOWN MARSH

SITE CODE: 001053

The beach on the western side of the base of the Old Head of Kinsale impedes the natural drainage to form two adjacent marshes - Garrettstown and Garrylucas which is also an NHA. Garrettstown lies in the valley of a north-south stream which empties through a sluice at the eastern end of the strand. There is little fine material on this beach so that only the very southern end of the marsh is affected by blown sand. For the most part it is on a clay or peat substrate, including some small scraws and some firmer ground.

The seaweed end of the marsh consists of a bed of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) enclosing one or two small pools. There is some salt influence which is shown by the occurrence of Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*) and, at the sea end, of Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) and Distant Sedge (*Carex distans*). The Common Reeds give way to a stand of Greater Pond-sedge (*C. riparia*) on the landward side in which Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) are also important constituents.

Outside this 'tall fen' community there is usually grazing land with abundant Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Yellow Flag and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*). In particular wet areas Common Water-starwort (*Callitriche stagnalis*), Ivy-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus hederaceus*), Sharp-flowered Rush (*J. acutiflorus*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) are found and there is one swampy site on the eastern side overgrown by Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) where Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) combine to produce a treacherous scraw. A little Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) grows here too.

Some recent reclamation has been attempted on the same side and wet fields with Amphibious Bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*), foxtail grasses (*Alopecurus geniculatus*, *A. pratensis*) and Curled Dock (*Rumex crispus*) are the result. There is Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) in abundance with some Ragged-Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), and Common Fleabane (Pulicaria dysenterica) where the ground is firmer.

The birdlife of the marsh includes expected species like Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting, Mallard, Snipe, Moorhen and Mute Swan. The latter species are associated with the small ponds where additional Teal and Mallard are likely in winter.

Although the overall bird numbers are small the site has significant value as an example of a lagoonal marsh with characteristic plants and a relatively untouched centre.

16.11.2009