SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: KILLOUGH HILL

SITE CODE: 000959

This site surrounds a mounting quarry between Thurles and Cashel in Co. Tipperary. The quarry exploits a limestone escarpment which had an abrupt north slope formed by the termination of its beds while the other side is a gentle slope conforming more or less perfectly with the inclination of the beds. Rock is now exposed on top and on the south slope where it has been eroded into limestone pavement.

The southern side of the hill is partly under grass cover and drift soil normally overlies the limestone. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is well established here with some Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and scattered oak (*Quercus* spp.) trees, but only small patches of closed canopy are found.

Higher up and to the north side Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) wood becomes dominant with some Ash and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and shrubs such as Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*), Dog-rose (*Rosa canina*) and Field-rose (*R. arvensis*). The woodland floor has a characteristic assemblage of herbs and mosses, with abundant Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). The woodland has a typical range of invertebrates.

The limestone grassland is dominated by Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina*) with characteristic lime loving plants, such as Lady's Bedstraw (Galium verum) and Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*). The pavement area is vegetated by a characteristic mixture of variously adapted plant species.

The woodland on Killough Hill is of relatively recent origin but is developing well with a very good ground flora. It also houses a large bird population and varied mammals. The open area of pavement and limestone grassland are perhaps more important since they are a rare feature in the country. To date only four exposures of pavement are known outside the western Clare-Galway area.

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