SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MINANE BRIDGE MARSH

SITE CODE: 001966

The narrow Ringabella estuary runs west to east to the mouth of Cork Harbour and is fed by a stream from Ballyfeard and Minane Bridge. Much of the valley bottom has been impounded by a sluice and embankment so that tidal flooding no longer occurs. The stream however, still causes some flooding in winter and the extreme flatness of the valley above Minane Bridge means that the adjacent fields experience a regular wet phase though they also dry out in summer. These conditions mean that the grasslands and marshes are mineral in character and there is little accumulation of peat. Another feature of the valley is that limestone does not occur, which makes it unlike most of those that run into Cork Harbour.

The resulting vegetation is dominated by rushes (*Juncus effusus* and *J. inflexus*) but there are many ditches and hollows where marsh plants grow, among them Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and horsetails (*Equisetum palustre* and *E. fluviatile*). Mud exposed by grazing cattle is a particular habitat in which Blinks (*Montia fontana*), Round-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus omiophyllus*) and Celery-leaved Buttercup (*R. sceleratus*) occur, among other species. Tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) are scattered through the site but they reach their most numerous in a small square of cutover peat at the western end where they grow with Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*). There is some colonisation by Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *cinerea*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) into this area and also along the length of the central stream and ditches. The trees create cover for Heron and Mallard of which a few pairs breed. There are also Snipe and probably Water Rail present.

The area is listed for its unusual vegetation type which throughout much of the country has been drained.

7.12.2009