SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: POWERSCOURT WOODLAND

SITE CODE: 001768

Powerscourt Woodland is located about 2km south-west of Enniskerry. It is largely contained within the two large demesnes of Powerscourt and Charleville, and includes a 4km stretch of the Dargle River. The topography of the area is rolling hillside sloping down to the river. The site includes some parkland with large specimen trees.

Mixed woodland covers most of the site and includes both native and introduced species. Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and many exotic conifers are among the introductions. The native Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) are locally common. The shrub layers are variable, sometimes sparse where conifers predominate and otherwise with Holly (Ilex *aquifolium*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) are locally abundant.

Typical plants of the ground layer include Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*). The fern and moss floras are well developed in places; Powerscourt is also the site of a rare species of Myxomycete fungus, *Didymium clavus.*

The Dargle River holds a rich flora on its sandy and rocky banks. Species include Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Bearded Couch (*Elymus caninus*), Giant Fescue (*Festuca gigantea*), Hairy-brome (*Bromus ramosus*), Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomis*) and Hairy Wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*). Exposed areas in the centre of the river hold Colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Welsh Poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). There is some wet woodland associated with low-lying areas of the Dargle where Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is the predominant tree species. There are many tributaries to the Dargle at the southern end of the site. They flow through small steep-sided ravines, which are often covered in a Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) dominated scrub/woodland.

Although the site includes many exotic plant species, the habitats are still of interest and support an interesting flora. The mix of semi-natural habitats and estate woodland is particularly conducive to macro-fungi. The well documented record of land management practices held by the demesnes adds to the scientific interest. The area is also of great educational value, being frequently used for teaching.

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