SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BLARNEY CASTLE WOODS

SITE CODE: 001039

This site is situated 1km south-west of Blarney in the grounds of Blarney Castle. The wood is bounded to the north by the Blarney River and to the south by the parklands surrounding the castle. The wood is situated on limestone which is exposed in several places. Within this rich area of limestone two other Natural Heritage Areas occur, Blarney Lake (001798) and Ardamadare Wood (001799).

In 1986 An Foras Forbartha provided the following description of the woodland –

The influence of the nearby limestone gives the woodland at Blarney a rich soil able to support a wide variety of plants and animals. The site is an old estate woodland with oak (*Quercus* spp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). The ground flora in this base-rich woodland contains many species including Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*) and the violets - Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*) and Early Dog-Violet (*V. reichenbachiana*). In rocky areas of shallow soils Wood Melic (*Melica uniflora*) and Bearded Couch (*Elymus caninus*) grow. Two parasitic plants occur in areas of deeper soils within the wood, namely Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*) and Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederae*).

Ivy Broomrape is listed in the Irish Red Data Book and is associated with areas where Ivy (*Hedera helix*), and its accompanying woodland have persisted for long periods of time.

The woodland is of interest for its birdlife. Woodcock occur within the woodlands during winter.

The main land uses within this site are fishing, shooting, grazing by sheep and cattle and amenity use.

This site is very scenic and seen by many tourists who visit Blarney Castle. Its proximity to Cork city and nearby roads gives it considerable educational value. The base-rich woodland is an example of a habitat not widely found in Cork where acid uplands predominate.

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