SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH BOORA

SITE CODE: 001365

This drained lake, surrounded by cutaway bog, lies 5km north-west of Kilcormac in Co. Offaly. Previously a post-glacial lake, it was impounded and much reduced, in size by raised bog development. The drained lake-bed consists of shallow fen peat overlying calcareous shell-marsh.

The surface of the western portion has been left undisturbed allowing plant colonisation and regeneration. This includes Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and willow (*Salix* spp.) with a ground flora of Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Along with these acid-loving plants are other base-loving fen species such as Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*) and Ragged-Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*). The site also contains various orchids including Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) and Lesser Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*). The above is taken from part of a 1972 An Foras Forbartha description of the site. A recent (April 1994) aerial view of the site appears to confirm this ecological status.

The peatland and former lake has been drained by Bord na Mona but otherwise the site is now mostly undisturbed. Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of past human activities. The site has supplied the earliest evidence of an Early Mesolithic hunter gatherer settlement in the Irish Midlands at about 7000 B.C.

Lough Boora is of interest botanically due to the mixture of fen and bog species on the former peatland lake-bed. Its importance archaeologically gives added dimension to the site quality.

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