Introduction. Ballyteige Burrow is a 9km-long, narrow, coastal townland that extends in a north-westerly direction from the seaside village of Kilmore Quay (Irish National Grid Reference: S9603). The townland has an area of 271ha (665 acres) and is dominated by a magnificent series of sand dunes.

Placename. The placename ‘Ballyteige’ is interpreted as an anglicization of the Irish ‘Baile Thaidhg’ (Tadhg’s town). It is not known who Tadhg was. ‘Burrow’ refers to the fact that the townland was managed as a rabbit warren for over 600 years.

Rabbits. The Rabbit Oryctolagus cuniculus is not native to Ireland. The animal was introduced by the Anglo-Normans in the 12th and 13th centuries and was farmed as a source of food and fur. Originally only the young were known as ‘rabbits’; the adults were called ‘conies’.

Whitty family. Ballyteige Castle was the seat of the Anglo-Norman Whitty family and there are several historical references to various members of the family from as early as 1247. Sir Richard Whitty was summoned to parliament as a baron by Edward III (1312-1377). Members of the Whitty family managed the rabbit warren at ‘the Burrow’. The family lost possession of their stronghold in 1654 following the Cromwellian plantation.

Plantation. The Cromwellian conquest of Ireland was one of the largest land-grabs in modern European history. Irish Catholics were largely confined to a reservation in Connacht. Ballyteige Burrow was confiscated and granted to new owners in payment for debts incurred earlier. The Civil Survey of 1654-56 was conducted to describe and value the lands being confiscated. The Civil Survey describes Ballyteige Burrow as “a sandy Burrow called the great Cunniger of Ballyteige” fringing the tidal creek Mablen Haven and the wetland Broad Water. Sir William Petty conducted the Down Survey and produced the first detailed map of the area; his map features the words “Cunny bourrogh ...” written across Ballyteige Burrow.

Origin of the landform. The Burrow is part of the local legacy of the last Ice Age. Ice sheets associated with the Irish Sea Glacier melted over 10,000 years ago and the meltwater poured seawards via a meltwater discharge channel running from Mayglass to Bridgetown. Huge quantities of clay, silt, sand, gravel and stones were carried by the meltwater and were deposited both on land and in the nearshore waters. The sediments deposited on land are the parent materials of the soils that are present at Inish and Ballyteige Slob. Sea level was lower during the last glaciation as large quantities of water were ‘tied up’ as ice. Sea level rose as the ice sheets melted. Rising sea level and coastal processes rolled a long lens of gravels and shingle onshore. This lens grew in size to become a fringing barrier anchored to Forlorn Point at its eastern end but free at its western extremity. The shingle barrier was later decorated with dunes sourced from sand blown off the beach by the prevailing south-westerly winds.

Fossil soil. Deposits of carbon in a soil found under the dunes at Ballyteige Burrow have been dated to be about 2,000 years old (1955±60BP). That result implies that the gravel barrier was still transgressing landwards at that time.

Intaken lands. A large area of silting wetland (c 660ha) was reclaimed from the sea during the period 1847-1855. The work involved four main elements: (1) building a 401m-long earthen dam called ‘The Cull Bank’ across Ballyteige Lough at the landward terminus of the neap tide basin. The seaward side of the dam was faced with a high wall built of limestone rock quarried at Seafield, Duncormick. A reservoir was constructed behind the dam to hold drainage water. (2) The Bridgetown Canal carrying the Bridgetown River between levees across the intaken lowlands. (3) Installing two extensive systems of drains, The Cull Bank and Blackstone Drains, to take surface water from the polders and discharge them to the estuary at The Cull by gravity fall when the tide had ebbed. (4) New roads linking the village of Kilmore Quay to Baldwinstown, Rathangan and Duncormick. These drainage works permanently joined a large portion of Ballyteige Burrow to the mainland.
**Geology.** Seven different rock units underlie Ballyteige Burrow but the rocks are not exposed anywhere except at the extreme eastern end where the Kilmore Quay Group of gneisses of Precambrian Period age (>570 million years ago) outcrop.

**Sunny South East.** The extreme south-east corner of County Wexford, including Ballyteige Burrow, enjoys the highest number of hours of bright sunshine per year (>1600) of anywhere in Ireland.

**Access points.** Public access to the Burrow is via a number of points adjoining the village of Kilmore Quay. The hind-dune grass path is part of Sli Charman, a long-distance coastal walking route established by Wexford County Council. Visitors are asked to observe the Country Code; in a nutshell: leave nothing but footprints; take nothing but memories; kill nothing but time. Also, be aware that electric fences are normally live from September to March.

**Infrastructure.** Palings, electric fences and water troughs for cattle are the main structures on the Burrow together with a green caravan, the ruins of the late Mag Redmond’s cow shed, the Burrow House, and the Life Saving Apparatus Station. Three underground fibre optics cables linking Ireland and Britain make the Burrow House, and the Life Saving Apparatus Station.

**Habitats.** Habitats are places where plants and animal live. The dominant habitat type is the sand system comprising shifting dunes characterised by Sea Spurge *Euphorbia paralias* and fixed dunes that support hundreds of species of wild flowers. Many of the dunes, especially at the eastern end, exceed 10m in height. Blowouts and slacks are all dry-bottomed. Slacks are sometimes so deep that the underlying shingle barrier is exposed.

**Lower plants.** The scarce Beard Moss or Strings-of-Sausages Lichen *Usnea articulata* occurs. The Scrambled-egg Lichen *Fulgensia fulgens*, a protected species, is found nowhere else in Ireland outside of Ballyteige Burrow. Golden Screw-moss *Tortula ruraliformis* is very common on the dunes and changes colour from green to golden after moistening by a shower on a sunny day.

**Higher plants.** The dunes are well developed, are of good quality and are consequently species-rich. The population of Wild Asparagus *Asparagus officinalis* subsp. prostratus is especially extensive. The area abounds in wild orchids. The pink, clove-scented Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* is pollinated by the Six-spot Burnet *Zygaena filipendula*, a black and red day-flying moth. Thousands of Autumn Lady’s tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*, tiny white orchids, often bloom in August and September.

**Grasses.** The dunes at Ballyteige Burrow are essentially grassy places and many species may be found. Marram *Ammophila arenaria*, known locally as ‘Bennet’, is the big, coarse grass that binds the mobile sand. Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* is the fine, soft grass that is abundant throughout.

**Invertebrates.** Sand dune snails are abundant. *Armadilloidium album* a rare, pale pill woodlouse has been recorded from a small number of sites on the east coast of Ireland. In 2006 it was found to be living on the beach at Ballyteige Burrow.

Two of the rarest bees found in Ireland have been recorded at Ballyteige Burrow: the Great Yellow Bumblebee *Bombus distinguendus* and the Shril Carder Bee *Bombus sylvarum*. Both are classed as ‘endangered’ due to changes in agricultural practices. Both need flower-rich grasslands to ensure their continued survival. Other rare insects include the very brightly coloured jewel wasp *Hedychridium ardens* and the Silver Spiny Digger Wasp *Oxybelus argentatus* that digs holes in which to store paralysed prey on which it lays its eggs. Ballyteige Burrow is the stronghold in Ireland of the Turf Ant *Tetramorium caespitum*, a southern species. It nests under stones in eroded slacks and is the only species of ant in Ireland that gathers, stores, and eats seeds, so it needs wild flowers nearby as a food source. The dunes are a hotspot for butterflies and support a large population of the Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*.

**Birds.** Walkers on the grass paths cannot fail to notice the resident Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Wrens, and Stonechats. Flocks of Linnets visit from the adjoining polders, together with Reed Buntings, and Wheatears occur in spring and autumn. Little Terns *Sterna albifrons*, Ireland’s smallest and rarest breeding tern nest irregularly on the beach on the spit at the extreme western end of the sand system.

**Animals.** The Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara* was very common on the dunes in the past but seems to have declined somewhat in abundance in recent years. The Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* population now see-saws between explosions and crashes due to the presence since 1956 of the viral disease myxomatosis. In the population’s heyday trappers were harvesting up to 4,400 rabbits from the dunes each season. Pygmy Shrews *Sorex minutus* may be heard squeaking in the long grass. Foxes, Irish Hares and other mammals visit from the adjoining polder lands.

**Land ownership.** Henry Bruen, Oak Park House, Carlow, was the last landlord to manage the rabbit warren at Ballyteige Burrow. He died in 1954. The Burrow was sold in 1958 and the property passed to the present owners during the 1980s. The large western portion (228ha) is owned by the State and is managed as a Nature Reserve. The smaller eastern portion (42ha) is very largely owned by a local limited company: the Kilmore Quay Community Development Association and is managed as a community amenity area. All of the townland of Ballyteige Burrow is rated of international importance for its natural heritage resource values and is subject to a number of nature conservation designations in an attempt to conserve its many natural heritage riches for the common good and for posterity.