

CORK - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Haulbowline and Rocky Islands		
Other names used for site	Haulbowline Island Recreational Park, <i>Páirc Áineasa Inish Sionnach</i> (both for Haulbowline Island)		
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology		
TOWNLAND(S)	Haulbowline Island, Rocky Island		
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Cobh		
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	87		
ITM CO-ORDINATES	579635E 565440N (centre of park)		
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	87	GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.	25
GIS CODE	CK053		

Outline Site Description

This site includes two adjacent but very contrasting small islands at the entrance to Cork Harbour, one which comprises rocky outcrops and one which is split between the Irish Naval Base Headquarters and a moderate sized parkland amenity.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The bedrock comprises Lower Carboniferous (Mississippian) 359-323 Ma fossil-rich, 'Waulsortian' limestones, deposited as reefs in open marine conditions. Rocky Island is an outcrop of this bedrock, while Haulbowline Island has some bedrock cropping out at its western extremity, but is covered in the majority by reclaimed ground, most of which is Quaternary deposits sourced in the locality.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Rocky Island is made up on an outcrop of bedded Waulsortian limestone, and the rock outcrop forms one of the stanchions on the bridge built in 1966 between Ringaskiddy and Haulbowline Island. Much earlier, two large magazines were built on Rocky Island in the early 1800's, to store up to 25,000 barrels of gunpowder, which was manufactured at the nearby Ballincollig Gunpowder Mills. The magazines were used for military storage into the 20th Century, and were re-purposed for use by Irish Steel until 2002. The island was redeveloped between 2005 and 2007, and is now home to the Island Crematorium, which was the first crematorium in Ireland outside of Dublin.

On larger Haulbowline Island, as well as hosting the Irish Naval Base Headquarters since 1923, earlier naval fortifications date back to the British Empire of the early 1600s. Though bedrock anchors part of the island, over 2/3 of its area is comprised of 'Made', reclaimed ground. A privately-owned steelworks opened here in 1939, which was then passed on to state control as 'Irish Steel', in 1947. Steel was produced for galvanised roof sheets across the country between the 1950s and 1980s, and many steel products were also exported abroad in the 1970s and 1980s. At the peak of its operation, Irish Steel employed over 1,200 people in the 1970s. Irish Steel was then sold to Ispat International in 1996, and became Irish Ispat, finally closing in 2001.

When the Steel works closed, the site became literally a toxic eyesore, with much waste metal, spoil and other detritus left out in the open in an expansive wasteland. Following environmental studies it was determined that this could all be capped and sealed, using subsoil material sourced in local Ringaskiddy, and the environmental clean-up and capping operation began in 2013. When completed, an amenity parkland, Haulbowline Park, was created at ground surface. The site shows how the use, re-use, misuse and reclamation of natural resources is a transient, ever-changing and never-ending process.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This County Geological Site is an important representative site exhibiting fresh exposure of Waulsortian limestone, as well as a colourful illustration of an intense industrial heritage and history, all made possible by the exploitation of geology from further afield as well as the locality itself.

Management/promotion issues

Both Rocky Island and Haulbowline Island are easily accessible and visited on foot or by car, and Haulbowline Park has excellent signboards which document the industrial, geological and environmental history of both islands.



High crag of Waulsortian limestone on Rocky Island.



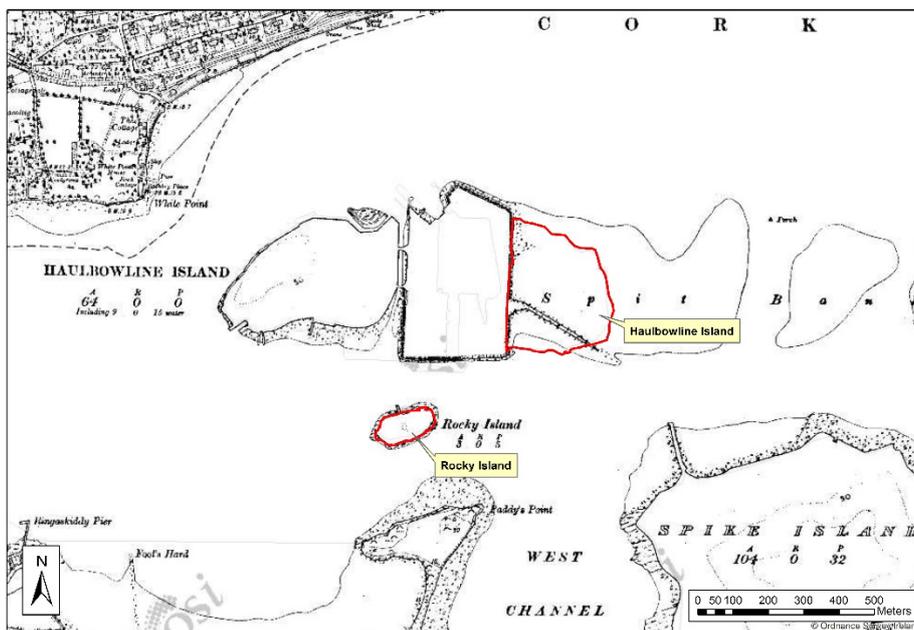
A panorama of Haulbowline Park, viewed from the west, with a blacksmith's power hammer as a symbol of the old steelworks, now buried within the park grounds.

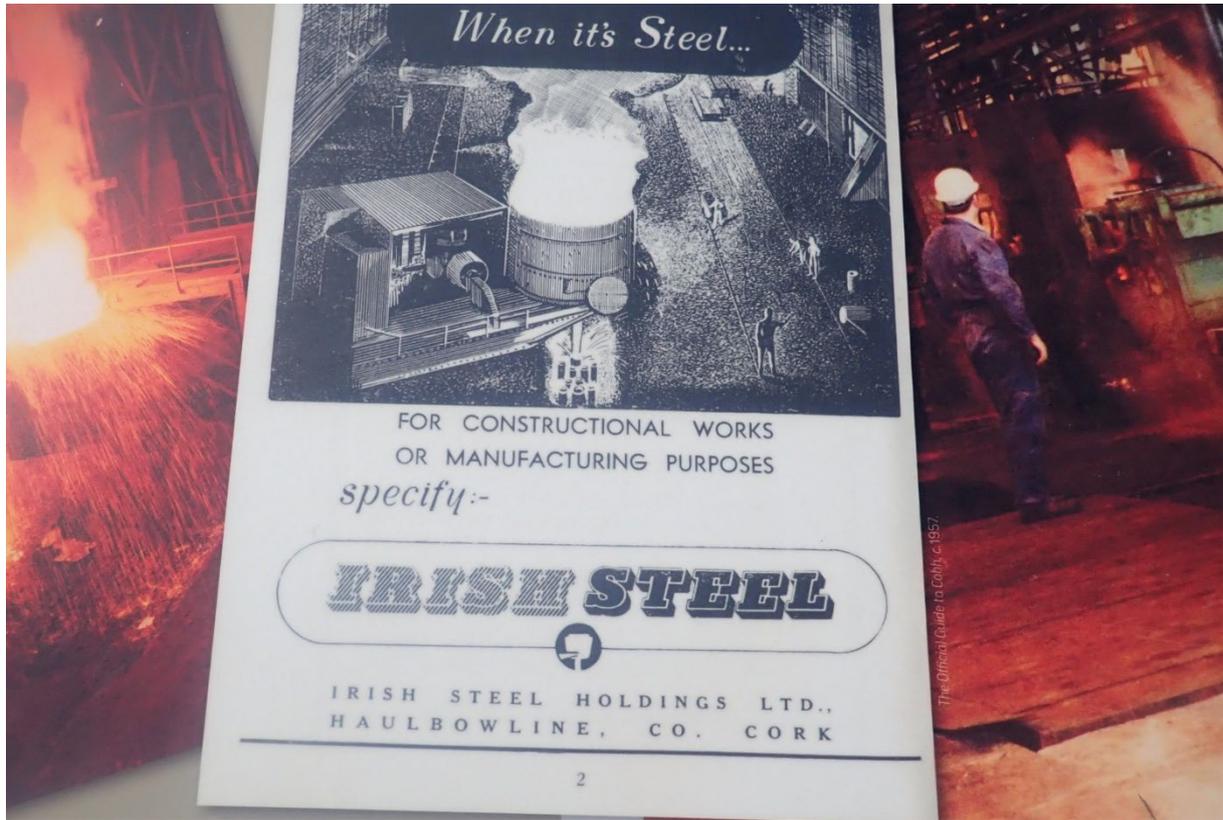


Some of the rock armour anchoring the island and park amenity.



Landscaped area of former steelworks, beneath the park surface.





Old advertisement for Irish Steel, from the early 1950s, and displayed on one of the signboards at Haulbowline Park.