

GALWAY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ballylee Hammerhead Sinks
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH1 Karst
TOWNLAND(S)	Newhall, Cloonanearla, Ballynabucky
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Gort
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	123
ITM CO-ORDINATES	547853E 706418N (split in river)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET No. 52	GS1 BEDROCK 1: 100,000 SHEET NO. 14

Outline Site Description

The Streamstown River divides at Ballylee into two branches, both of which sink underground within a short distance.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The river sinks are into Carboniferous Limestone, but they are of post-glacial (Holocene) age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

At Ballylee the Streamstown River divides into a north and south branch, both of which sink within a few hundred metres. The south branch normally carries the larger flows and ends in an extensive area of discrete and diffuse sinks. The northern branch, a sink under low and normal water conditions, reverses flow and becomes a spring under high flow conditions, presumably acting as an overflow outlet for the Lough Coy waters some 1 km to the north. The combination of a bifurcating sink and the fact that one sink is an estavelle renders the site very unusual.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

This is one of numerous sites within the Gort-Kinvara lowlands which make up a complex of international importance. The site is recommended to NPWS for designation as a geological NHA, comprising one of 16 critical sites within the Gort-Kinvara lowland karst which is one of the best studied lowland karst areas of the World.

Management/promotion issues

Although the Streamstown River is easily accessed in the visitor attraction and surrounding area of Thoor Ballylee (associated with W.B. Yeats), there is no easy access to the sinks which are on private farmland. It is not a suitable site to promote to the wider public.

The site is within the Carrowbaun, Newhall and Ballylee Turloughs SAC (site code 002293).



The northern branch of the Ballylee River.



The sinks at the northern branch of the Ballylee River.



The sinking end of the southern branch of the Ballylee River.

