

KILKENNY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Coolbaun Hill
Other names used for site	Ormonde Brick Materials Quarry
IGH THEME:	IGH 9 (Upper Carboniferous and Permian)
TOWNLAND(S)	Coolbaun
NEAREST TOWN	Castlecomer
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	6
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE	257063 174932 = S 57 74
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	61 1/2 inch Sheet No. 19

Outline Site Description

A working open cast quarry.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

Upper Carboniferous (Westphalian) shale with occasional anthracitic coal, of the Coolbaun Formation.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The open cast quarry at Coolbaun Hill, 5km north east of Castlecomer, is a good example of well exposed Upper Carboniferous shale of the Coolbaun Formation. Within this shale are less obvious units of anthracitic coal (a high grade fossil fuel), remnants of a past when this area was extensively mined for coal resources. Observed throughout the shale are numerous iron rich nodules, which can be easily dislodged. These nodules are noticeably heavier than the surrounding shale due to their high iron content.

Site Importance

This site displays good sections of Upper Carboniferous rock. Without the presence of the quarry this shale formation would be hidden from sight. As well as the geology, the existence of an old mine shaft, which was exposed when it was cut into by past quarrying excavations, gives us a glimpse into the coal mining heritage of the Castlecomer area and is recommended for County Geological Site status.

Management/promotion issues

Although a relatively quiet working quarry with little heavy machinery, this is a potentially hazardous environment. It is therefore not suitable for general promotion without proper arrangements being made with the owners, Ormonde Brick, based in Castlecomer. The quarry face that is exposed on the north eastern part of the site is the most significant as it displays all of the features described here. It is therefore recommended that this section should be left accessible when the quarry eventually closes.



Left: Exposed mine shaft along part of the quarry face, probably from a bell pit, an early form of mining.
Middle: Quarry face showing good sections of Upper Carboniferous shale of the Coolbaun Formation.
Right: Iron rich nodule, found extensively in this shale formation, note its smooth edges and rounded appearance.

Coolbaun Hill

