

KERRY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ross Behy
Other names used for site	Rossbehy, Rossbeigh
IGH THEME	IGH7 Quaternary
TOWNLAND(S)	Rossbehy
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Glenbeigh
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	63
ITM CO-ORDINATES	464275E 590710N (cliff section at beach)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	78
GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.	20
GIS CODE	KY071

Outline Site Description

This site comprises a 25 m high coastal section approximately 500 m long, 2.5 km west of the village of Glenbeigh.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The cliff section along the western edge of the beach at Rossbehy is comprised of glacial sediments deposited during the last Ice Age in the Quaternary Period.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The section at Rossbehy exposes long-studied sediments that have made this an important site for glacial stratigraphic work in Ireland.

At Rossbehy, Quaternary deposits form the soft and rapidly-eroding cliffs. Studies completed in the 1950s reported the presence of two distinct tills in the cliff sections (at 'Ross Behy', hence the site name, which has persisted in Quaternary literature since) and these are still visible today as soft-sediment units of markedly different compositions.

The first detailed work on the sediments was conducted in the late 1970s. The reported sequence comprises (i) a lower diamicton containing black cherty mudstone and sandstone, which was interpreted as a till; (ii) an overlying raised beach and (iii) an upper diamicton, also interpreted as till, characterized by red sandstone clasts of local derivation.

The lower till is interpreted as having been deposited by ice during the penultimate glaciation, as it is overlain by the raised beach deposit which is assumed to date from the last interglacial. The upper, younger till is considered to have been deposited by ice moving from the south and southeast during the last glaciation, as it contains locally-derived sandstone and conglomerate clasts.

The presence of tundra frost polygons, which were reported from the site in the 1970s but which are not visible today, increases the geomorphological interest at the site.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This was historically one of the most important glacial lithostratigraphic sites in the country, and though the section is poorly exposed today it merits recognition as a County Geological Site.

Management/promotion issues

The site is located at a public beach and is readily accessible, but caution is required as some of the exposure is inaccessible at high tide, and with the tide encroaching rapidly one can get stranded. Care should also be taken close to the high cliffs as there may be occasional falls of rock or debris. The site merits promotion, preferably as part of an Iveragh Peninsula coastal geoheritage trail. It is entirely within the Castlemaine Harbour SPA (site code 004029).



The section along the southwestern end of the beach at Rossbehy, viewed from the roadside car park. Note the rock armouring at the left-hand side, obscuring some of the exposure.



The upper diamicton unit at Rossbehy (interpreted as relatively 'local' till).



The lower diamicton unit at Rossbehy, with clasts of black cherty mudstone and sandstone.



The two diamicton units at the eastern end of the Rossbehy exposure. Staff is 5 m high.



Exposure into head deposit in small roadside pit above the beach section.

