

LONGFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Newtowncashel
Other names used for site	Ballyreevagh Quarry, Ballyreeve, Ballyrevagh, Quarry Park
IGH THEME	IGH8 Lower Carboniferous
TOWNLAND(S)	Ballyrevagh
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Newtowncashel
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	25
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE	604280E 759350N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	40
GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 Sheet No.	
12	

Outline Site Description

A disused limestone quarry rehabilitated to a community park after the year 2000, now celebrating the quarry's heritage in sculpture and rock carvings.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

Thickly bedded Lower Carboniferous limestone and varying amounts of dolomite.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The limestone quarry face exposures extend to a height of 15 metres. Bedrock comprises thickly bedded bioclastic limestones, generally dipping less than 5° to the west. Solutionally enhanced joints are visible in the upper strata, near the top of the quarry face. Thick bedding is clearly visible in the disused quarry to the north of Quarry Park.

The old quarry (Quarry Park) was operated from the mid-1800's, when the Knight and Farrell families from Lanesborough quarried stone here for the building of St. Mel's Cathedral in Longford, and for general construction in the local area, providing stone for e.g. window sill lintels and gravestones.

The original columns supporting the roof of St. Mel's Cathedral were quarried at Newtowncashel. The columns were quarried horizontally, and then were laid/set vertically upon each other (face bedded) as the columns in the cathedral. Stone for St. Mel's Cathedral was quarried here from January 1845 until 1846, and is a likely source of stone when rebuilding began after 1856.

With the intense heat of the fire of December 25th 2009, the columns shattered easily (frost and ice action in the immediate aftermath of the fire also contributed to the disintegration of the columns). The columns were replaced by 28 solid blue-coloured columns sourced from 10,000 tons of limestone at Old Leighlin quarry, Co. Carlow.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This site is an important County Geological Site as it was the source of stone for buildings in the county including St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford Town. The quarry to the north of Quarry Park exhibits good exposure of the Lower Carboniferous rocks in this part of Longford.

Management/promotion issues

The development of the old Ballyreeve quarry into a community park, Quarry Park, with old machinery, sculptures and stone features that acknowledge the quarry workers of the past and the geology of the bedrock, is of great interest, and is an excellent example of how derelict quarries can be reclaimed as sites of public amenity. The stone carvings on the quarry face represent an interesting example of how industrial heritage, rock-art and folklore can be merged. This is an excellent example of geological heritage promotion in a local community. The park is a popular site for school visits.



Quarry Park at Newtowncashel, with quarry face, pond, sculptures and stone features.



"The Rock Breaker": by Brian Ganley, Tom Feeney and Michael Casey.



"The Stonebreaker": 1940s quarry machinery at Quarry Park roadside parking area.



Disused quarry immediately north of Quarry Park.

