

MEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

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| NAME OF SITE | Laytown to Gormanston |
| Other names used for site | Ben Head Moraine and Outwash Spread |
| IGH THEME: | IGH 7 (Quaternary) |
| TOWNLAND(S) | Numerous, including Gormanston, Julianstown |
| NEAREST TOWN | Balbriggan |
| SIX INCH MAP NUMBER | 28 |
| NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE | 316500 269300 = O165 693 |
| 1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER | 43 1/2 inch Sheet No. 13 |

Outline Site Description

Coastal plain, including sea cliffs.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

Quaternary sediments composed mainly of sand and gravel.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Laytown to Gormanstown sandur is a flat to gently undulating glacial outwash plain, comprising glaciofluvial and glaciolacustrine sands and gravels deposited by outwash/meltwater flowing from the leading edge of a glacier. Approximately 5 kilometres east-west by 7 kilometres north-south, a sandur is commonly wider than it is long, as seen here. Sandpits to the south as well as numerous exposed cliff faces along the beach show good cross-sectional views of the internal structures within this sandur and a lower sequence of two separate facies of Irish Sea Tills.

Site Importance

Glacial outwash plains are normally “hummocky”, meaning the terrain is bumpy. This example of an outwash plain is very flat, which makes it quite unusual and is therefore recommended as a County Geological Site.

Management/promotion issues

Nearly all of the features between Laytown and Gormanston can be viewed from public roads or from the beach. The northern part of this locality is owned by the Department of Defence and is used as a military aerodrome and rifle range as it is very flat. Much of the rest of the site is agricultural with the exception of an old sand and gravel pit to the south, which is used as an off road motor track. Due to the nature of the landuse (especially military use) general promotion is not suitable without appropriate arrangements being made with the Camp Commandant and various landowners. Quarrying is a major threat to this feature and should not be permitted on the main gravel body.



Left: Abnormally flat terrain – the expansive outwash plain of sandur gravels at Gormanston.
Right: Coastal cliff sections allowing us to see the internal structure and composition of a sandur at Benhead.

Laytown to Gormanston



