

MAYO - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Erriff Valley
Other names used for site	Tanwyncrower, Sheefry, Sheffry
IGH THEME	IGH14 Fluvial and Lacustrine Geomorphology
TOWNLAND(S)	Letterass, Derrintin, Barnaderg, Lettermaglinskin, Derryilra, Srahlea (Co. Mayo) Srahatloe, Aillebaun, Erriff, Glennacally (Co. Galway)
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Leeanuan
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	107, 116
ITM CO-ORDINATES	493970E 766170N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NOs. 37, 38	GS1 BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NOs. 10, 11
GIS Code MO054	

Outline Site Description

The Erriff Valley extends northeastwards from the head of Killary Harbour to Srahlea Bridge. The valley is roughly 2km wide and 15km long.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The valley is a Quaternary landscape feature, and landforms (kames, eskers) are considered to be Late Midlandian (~18,000 years ago) age. Holocene (post-glacial) peats blanket the NE floor of the valley. Bedrock comprises Mweelrea Formation (Middle-Upper Ordovician) conglomerates, sandstones, and ignimbrites.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Erriff Valley is a wide NE-SW trending glacial-valley, through which flows the Erriff River and Owenmore River. Open ended at the NE end, the valley stretches for 15km SW from Srahlea Bridge (NE) to the head of Killary Harbour (SW). The NE end of the valley continues through to the low-lying land around Castlebar. The upper reaches of the eastern margins of the valley rise steeply up the flanks of the Maumtrasna and Partry Mountains; both of which are fretted with large cirque basins, some draining alluvial fans into the eastern margin of the Erriff valley, at Glenanane Bridge and Glennacally Bridge. At Aasleagh a large rock-bar crosses the valley. The valley narrows near Aasleagh, between Glenanane Bridge and Colonel's Pool. A prominent kame terrace occurs on the northern valley side opposite Glennacally Bridge. Glennacally Bridge traverses a major tributary that flows from Glennagleragh valley. This tributary joins the Erriff, and an alluvial fan (Holocene) emerges from its mouth. Between Glennacally Bridge and Gowlar Bridge a kame terrace occurs on both sides of the valley and prominent cross-valley moraine ridges curve westwards. To the east (upstream) of Erriff Bridge a distinctive beaded esker runs parallel to the central axis of the valley. Opposite Srahlea Bridge a large moraine swings off the kame terrace to loop westwards, partially across the wide valley floor. Throughout the valley kame terraces blanket the slopes of the valley side. The Owenwee River and Owenmore River join to form the Erriff River near Gowlaun Bridge. Streams drain from the glaciated corries on the sides of the Maumtrasna and Partry mountains.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

A large site, the Erriff Valley is important for the numerous glacial landforms located in and around the valley. The landforms greatly contribute to understanding the episodes of Late Midlandian sea-level fluctuation, and the retreat of the Irish Ice Sheet.

Management/promotion issues

Access to many of the kames and riverbanks is through private land. There are several good pull-in areas along the N59 road from which to remotely observe the landforms. The Western Way (marked walk) follows the N59 for 5km from Aasleagh, before turning NW to cross the Erriff River and valley at Houston's Bridge.



Kame terraces viewed from N59 road, 300 west of Erriff Bridge, looking north across the Erriff River. Coillte-managed Barnaderg forest is visible in the distance.



Loose fluvial sediments in the riverbed 200m downstream (west) of Erriff Bridge.



Glennacally River flowing over south dipping Mweelrea sandstones (south side of Glennacally Bridge) into the Erriff River and Erriff Valley. Glennacally valley is visible in the distance.



Pasture lands bounding the Erriff River at Glennacally Bridge. Kame terraces in the middle background.



View from the N59 looking SW towards the northern limb of Devil's Mother. Northwestern limb of Maumtrasna (Luga Kippen) rises on the right. Ben Gorm is cloud covered in left background.

