

ROSCOMMON - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Castlesampson Esker
Other names used for site	Onagh Esker
IGH THEME	IGH7 Quaternary
TOWNLAND(S)	Tobermacloughlin, Onagh, Kilkenny, Castlesampson, Carrowkeeran, Eskerbeg
NEAREST TOWN	Athlone, Ballyforan
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	48, 51
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE	192000 241240 (centre of features)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	47 1/2 inch Sheet No. 15

Outline Site Description

This esker trends west-northwest to east-southeast in south Roscommon, occurring south of the R363 road between Ballyforan and Athlone.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The esker is formed on bedrock which is Lower Carboniferous limestone. The feature itself is Quaternary in age, having been deposited at the base of the ice sheet moving northwest to southeast during early deglaciation after the last Ice Age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Castlesampson esker is an excellent example of a complex, multi-crested esker which is comprised of numerous beads. The esker system comprises ten individual segments, which stretch for a distance of just over six kilometres. The most complex portion of the longest bead (3.5km) has at least four crests. The esker has a very complex, generally sinuous morphology. The feature interfingers with many flanking fans and deltas, with a pronounced kame-kettle topography in places. Many of the kettle holes host lakes.

The esker was probably deposited as a series of fans, which formed at the mouth of a subglacial tunnel as the ice progressively retreated towards the northwest in this area of Roscommon. Several fans, deltas and kames flank the feature.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

The esker is one of Ireland's best examples of the 'long beaded' esker type.

Management/promotion issues

This report gives proper recognition to the geomorphological component of a site that is already conserved for its grassland natural heritage as SAC and proposed NHA (Site Number 001625).



Scrub vegetation on a bead of the Castlesampson esker system.



Reclaimed gravel pit within the Castlesampson esker system.



Bare gravels outcropping on the summit of the Castlesampson esker. See the sinuous nature of the feature as it winds away into the distance.



Two distinct beads of the Castlesampson esker system.

