

# WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Ballycor Mushroom Rocks</b>
Other names used for site	
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH1 Karst</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>Ballycor</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Killucan</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>653350E 755250N (centre of site)</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>42 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.13</b>

## Outline Site Description

A suite of limestone exposures displaying undercuts in a low-lying basin.

## Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

These mushroom rocks are in Carboniferous Limestone bedrock, but the undercut features and overhanging lips were formed in Holocene, or post-glacial times (*i.e.* in the last 10,000 years).

## Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This 'mushroom rock' phenomenon is relatively rare across the country, but best known in Offaly, Clare and Roscommon. Westmeath also has some other examples but this suite shows a range of morphology without having any fully developed 'mushroom' shapes. The undercut sections of the limestone bedrock exposures are thought to have been dissolved by waters in former temporary lakes, probably following soon after the melting of glacial ice, at the end of the Ice Age, around 10,000 years ago. Some examples are thought to have been dissolved below bog or soils, which have subsequently shrunk back, perhaps after natural or man-made drainage. Measuring the lip heights and finding a consistency across a basin area would suggest a former lake, and Ballycor's rocks seem to all be at a consistent height.

## Site Importance – County Geological Site

This newly recognised suite was not included in earlier published works analysing the origins and distribution of mushroom rocks, and is a significant addition to the known data. There are 8 rocks recognised at the Ballycor locality in this audit, but additional rocks representing possible 'stumps' of former mushroom stones have been identified.

## Management/promotion issues

The rocks are situated on the margins of the damp poorer grazing in the lower ground of the fields. Any field drainage works, reseeding or other agricultural ground works have the potential to damage and destroy the mushroom rocks, which are subtle features, so should ideally be avoided. The rocks are on private farmland and are not suitable for public promotion, without support and agreement of the landowner.



Ballycor Mushroom Rock (No. 1 of this report) with small rucksack for scale.



Mushroom Rock (No 3 of this audit)



Mushroom Rocks (No 4-6 of this audit)



Mushroom Rock (No 2 of this audit)



Mushroom Rocks (No 8 of this audit)



