

# WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Cappalahy Esker</b>
Other names used for site	
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH7 Quaternary</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>Cappalahy, Grange and Kiltober, Atticonor</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Kilbeggan</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>636390E 733035N (centre of feature)</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>48 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 15</b>

## **Outline Site Description**

The Cappalahy Esker comprises a small accumulation of esker sands and gravels deposited under the ice sheet as the ice withdrew westwards across south Westmeath at the end of the last Ice Age. The esker is situated three kilometres southeast of Kilbeggan.

The esker system is one of the shortest in the Midlands, comprising only three beads, each a number of hundred metres in length, along a total distance of just under 1.5 kilometres.

## **Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type**

The Cappalahy Esker is formed exclusively on pure, bedded, Lower Carboniferous limestone bedrock, which is heavily karstified. The esker itself is Quaternary in age, having been deposited either under the westward-retreating ice sheet in deglaciation, approximately 14,000 years ago. Or?

## **Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest**

The esker ridge is a striking feature, standing proud of the flat landscape of either till (boulder clay) or low-lying sands and gravels among which it was deposited. At Cappalahy, Grange and Kiltober the esker has been surrounded by post-glacial alluvial deposits in the Holocene, since the Ice Age. This is especially striking along the eastern boundary of Cappalahy Townland.

The esker feature is important in that it records faithfully the ice movement across this area of Westmeath during the final phase of deglaciation. Wide belts of associated sands and gravels at the eastern end of the feature, and flanking the esker ridge itself, have long been recognised and are part of associated ice marginal fan and delta systems. The sands and gravels within the esker are comprised chiefly of limestone clasts.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this relatively small, short esker is the amount of road that has been constructed along the crest or flanks of it. Of the 1,477 metres length of esker ridge, 1,126m length of road has been constructed across the length of the feature.

## **Site Importance – County Geological Site**

The feature is a relatively high, striking example of a dry sand and gravel ridge, and stands proud of the surrounding landscape. This is one of the shortest esker systems in the Midlands yet is a superb example of a relict subglacial conduit system, and is especially noteworthy as road traverse almost all of the extent of its crest. A small portion of the Grand Canal pNHA crosses the esker (sitecode 002104).

## **Management/promotion issues**

This system comprises a well-defined landform sequence and should be listed as a County Geological Site. A roadside signboard at Grange Bridge, on the Grand Canal, where the roadside verge is wide and the esker feature is easily seen on both sides of the bridge (with the road atop each side also), would help in promoting the feature.



The road rising up onto the eastern segment of the esker at Cappalahy.



The sides of the esker at Cappalahy are so steep the grass thereon cannot be cut for hay or silage.



Scrub-covered portion of the esker at Grange and Kiltober.



Disused gravel pit in the esker at the eastern portion of the segment in Grange and Kiltober..



