

WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Clonthread Mushroom Rock
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH1 Karst
TOWNLAND(S)	Clonthread
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Moate
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	30
ITM CO-ORDINATES	619010E 741620N (centre of field hosting rock)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	48. GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 15

Outline Site Description

An isolated single undercut limestone mushroom rock in a pasture field, close to farm buildings and a road.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

This mushroom rock is formed in Carboniferous Limestone bedrock, but the undercutting dissolution took place, and the mushroom shape was formed, in the Holocene or post-glacial period (*i.e.* in the last 10,000 years).

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The mushroom rock phenomenon is relatively rare across the country, but best known in Offaly, Clare and Roscommon. Westmeath also has some other examples and this is a single stone with clear undercutting creating the classic mushroom shape. The undercut sections of the limestone bedrock exposures are thought to have been dissolved by waters in former temporary lakes, probably soon after the melting of glacial ice, at the end of the Ice Age around 10,000 years ago. Some other examples are thought to have been dissolved below bog or soils, which have subsequently shrunk back, perhaps after natural or man-made drainage.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; may be recommended for geological NHA

This mushroom rock probably ranks as one of the best national examples and could be recommended for geological NHA status. It was not previously known of when mushroom rocks were first audited and inventories published by Louise Dunne and John Feehan, and it was not considered in the course of the Irish Geological Heritage Programme Karst Theme reporting.

Management/promotion issues

The mushroom rock is known of and appreciated by the landowner and family, and is not under any immediate threat, but County Geological Site status should help protect that situation, especially against any future lack of awareness if land ownership changed. Being on private farmland it is not suitable for general promotion.



General view of Clonthead Mushroom Rock showing the narrow 'stalk' and wide 'cap'.



General view of Clonthead Mushroom Rock showing proximity to farm buildings.

