

# WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Kilbeggan Esker</b>
Other names used for site	
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH7 Quaternary</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>Kilbeggan, Skeahanagh</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Kilbeggan</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>634515E 734950N</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>48 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 15</b>

## **Outline Site Description**

A sand and gravel ridge, partially cut away during construction of the terminal section of the Grand Canal Kilbeggan Branch during the 1830s.

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

The esker is Quaternary in age, and was deposited either under or at the edge of a westward-retreating ice sheet during deglaciation around 14,000 years ago. The esker overlies Lower Carboniferous (Mississippian) limestone bedrock.

## **Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest**

The Kilbeggan Esker is a single segment ridge of subglacial tunnel fill sediments, and is completely surrounded by deglacial sands and gravels of ice marginal genesis. Approximately 1.5km in length, covering around 9 hectares, the feature is orientated WNW-ESE, stretching from Kilbeggan town almost as far as the M6 motorway. Harbour Road follows a route from the town southeast along the esker, towards the Grand Canal Kilbeggan Harbour (dry). The Grand Canal (Kilbeggan Branch, opened in 1835, closed 1961) was constructed along the eastern section of the esker. The elevated morphology of the esker can be appreciated when ascending from Harbour Road to the harbour site, and onto the crest of the esker.

## **Site Importance – County Geological Site; may be recommended for Geological NHA**

An important County Geological Site, the Kilbeggan esker and associated sands and gravels in the locality are a good example of a deglacial, meltwater-deposited sediments deposited under the ice sheet, and a fine example of a contributory feeder into the esker confluence in this part of the Irish midlands.

## **Management/promotion issues**

The east section of the esker was dug out during the construction of the Kilbeggan Branch of the Grand Canal during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Kilbeggan Grand Canal Harbour (built c. 1833) site is a suitable location for the inclusion of a public signboard exhibiting the esker and glacial story of county and midlands. The esker and canal can be observed from Mann Bridge (Skeahanagh Bridge), a well-preserved single-arch ashlar limestone canal bridge.



Kilbeggan Esker and Grand Canal (Kilbeggan Branch) viewed from Mann Bridge, looking west.



Tree cover on esker, flanked by level grassy terrain, east of Grand Canal Harbour.



Grand Canal Harbour (dry) and storehouses, constructed on the esker.



