

WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Lough Derravaragh
Other names used for site	Lough Derraghvarragh
IGH THEME	IGH7 Quaternary, IGH8 Lower Carboniferous, IGH14 Fluvial and Lacustrine Geomorphology
TOWNLAND(S)	Shrubbywood, Derrya, Lough Derravaragh, Soho, Lackan, Clonava, Donore, Ballynakill, Ballinphort, Ballinriddera, Mornintown, Knockbody, Kiltoom, Gartlandstown, Streamstown, Faughalstown, Coolure Demesne
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Crookedwood, Multyfarnham
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	6, 7, 12
ITM CO-ORDINATES	624600E 766950N (centre of lake)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	41 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 12

Outline Site Description

The Lough Derravaragh site includes a long, narrow lake between steep-sided hills, as well as the flanks of a number of these hills.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The bedrock geology around Lough Derravaragh is all of Lower Carboniferous limestone, much of which is chert-rich. The lake, particularly at the southeastern end occupies a glacially over-deepened valley. This over-deepening took place during the last Ice Age, between 20,000 and 15,000 years ago.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The bedrock geology at and around Lough Derravaragh is all of Lower Carboniferous limestone, with the Derravaragh Cherts being a dominant formation across the site and the wider terrain to the northeast. The chert concentrations may have contributed to the resistance of the enclosing hills to erosion. The chert in this area is sometimes known as 'festoon' chert, comprising multiple concentric thin bands of chert rock. Its distinctive character is seen in many prehistoric tools found in archaeological excavations in the region. Specific minor excavations of individual beds of chert are found on the top of Knockeyon. These are believed to be from quarrying in the Mesolithic (9,000 to 5,000 years ago).

The position of the lake today would have had a glacier within it during the Ice Age, and it excavated the channel which is now occupied by the lake water.

At the northern end of the lake, a public access point for boats has some rocks which presumably came from the immediate area. These rocks show some evidence of 'rohrekarren' – a rare form of karstic solution feature, known in Lough Mask, Lough Carra and Lough Corrib.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

The combination of geological influences on the landscape around Lough Derravaragh make this a site worthy of recognition as a County Geological Site.

Management/promotion issues

The site boundary is co-incident with the boundary of the Natural Heritage Area (sitecode 000684) which includes some of the bounding hillsides to the lake.



The southern end of Lough Derravaragh, from the air, showing flanking crag-and-tails which illustrate faithfully ice flow from northwest to southeast.



Lough Derravaragh from the middle zone of the northern side, looking southeast.



Knockeyon, with chert beds exposed on the summit, with probable Mesolithic excavations..

