WESTMEATH - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

| NAME OF SITE | Rahugh Ridge |
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| Other names used for site | Rahugh Esker, Kiltober Esker; The Ballyduff Esker- |
| | Rahugh Ridge, sometimes called part of the Eiscir |
| | Riada |
| IGH THEME | IGH7 Quaternary |
| TOWNLAND(S) | Montrath, Cappanrush, Kiltober, Atticonor, |
| | Monasset |
| NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE | Kilbeggan |
| SIX INCH MAP NUMBER | 38, 40 |
| ITM CO-ORDINATES | 639720E 733020N (Rahugh RC Church) |
| 1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER | 48 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 15 |
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Outline Site Description

A 3 km long woodland covered esker ridge close to the county boundary with Offaly.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The esker deposits and the sands and gravels adjacent to them, lie entirely on Lower Carboniferous limestone.. The eskers are Quaternary in age, having been deposited either under or at the edge of the westward-retreating ice sheet during deglaciation, approximately 14,000 years ago.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Rahugh Ridge is a 3 km long southwest to northeast oriented esker separated into two segments by a road that bisects the esker at Rahugh Roman Catholic Church. The Rahugh Ridge forms part of the larger Ballyduff Esker-Rahugh Ridge Esker System, which extends into County Offaly to the southwest. There are three small sand and gravel pits on the southern segment, two of which are accessible from public roads.

The earliest editions of the OSi 6" scale maps annotate the esker segment in Westmeath as the Rahugh Ridge. The ridge traverses the Rahugh Civil Parish, though it does not occur in the townland of Rahugh. The ridge forms a natural boundary along which five townland boundaries fall.

This Ballyduff Esker-Rahugh Ridge Esker System is the southernmost of the three long and large, and thus important, esker systems that drained the central portion of the Irish Ice Sheet and which meet together in south Westmeath and north Offaly. The esker ridge is important as it records the ice movement across the midlands during the final phase of deglaciation. Wide belts of associated sands and gravels flanking the esker ridge are part of associated ice marginal fan and delta systems. The sands and gravels within the esker are comprised chiefly of limestone clasts.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

This esker represents a well-defined landform, the steep-sided margins of which are particularly well preserved. The esker probably hosts the most natural, broadleaf woodland found on any esker in the country. The site is an important County Geological Site owing to its important geodiversity and biodiversity value.

Management/promotion issues

The extraction of esker sand and gravel for development continues on many eskers throughout the Irish Midlands. A large quarry at the east end of the esker has been in operation for several years. A signboard at the esker face exposed at Rahugh Church would be a suitable location for public information. The esker forms part of the larger Ballyduff Esker-Rahugh Ridge Esker System, and the majority of the ridge segments themselves are worthy of pNHA status geologically and geomorphologically.



Esker cutting at Rahugh Church crossroads.



Gravel pit along Rahugh ridge esker at Westmeath-Offaly county boundary.



Esker at Rahugh Church crossroads viewed from school.



Gravel pit on esker near Rahugh Moat or Motte.



Meehan et al. 2019. Geological Survey Ireland.