

WICKLOW - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Bray Head
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH 2 Precambrian to Devonian Palaeontology
TOWNLAND(S)	Newcourt, Ballynamuddagh, Rathdown Upper
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Bray
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	8
ITM CO-ORDINATES	728020E 717060N (summit of headland)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	56
GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO:	16

Outline Site Description

Coastal headland with extensive natural exposure and sea cliffs, plus railway cuttings.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

Bray Head is composed of Cambrian rocks classified as the Bray Group. Most of the rock is greywacke slate, but the best exposed rocks are large sections of quartzite. These thick sandy units were formed as channels during original deposition. They are now more resistant to erosion and form the summit ridges.

Main Geological Interest

Bray Head is a prominent landmark, an important public amenity area and a designated conservation area for its heathland. The scientific and other characteristics result from the geological foundation of hard Cambrian slates and quartzite rocks, for which this is the best place to see them in eastern Ireland. The site is interesting because of a variety of trace fossils found and described first from Bray Head. Although the animals that made them are not known, these traces left behind are now recognised throughout the world. The most notable is *Oldhamia*, a probable feeding trace, which has a radial pattern or a fan shaped pattern. The site is very important for the Irish fossil record it provides from Cambrian rocks, at a time when common invertebrate life forms were just beginning to proliferate.

Site Importance - County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

In terms of Cambrian palaeontology, the Irish record is very sparse. The numerous trace fossils found on Bray Head, which is the type locality for some species, are an important element of Cambrian faunas, best represented on Bray Head. The site should receive protection as a Natural Heritage Area for the palaeontological interest.

Management/promotion issues

The site is relatively robust against most operations. Commercial fossil collecting should not be allowed, but in any case most museum specimens collected were probably found when fresh rock exposure was available in rail cuttings, as it is very difficult to find any fossils today. Any rock operations which compromise the railway line cuttings should be strictly forbidden. Any work on footpaths or other development which is permitted for any reason and **which** provides new exposures of fresh rock should be notified to GSI or the National Museum by NPWS. The walking path along the coast is very popular and surface upgrades make the site more accessible to all. The summit and paths on the top are well managed by the Council for amenity and recreation.



From the summit area looking south.



Bray Head from the seafront in Bray.



Looking north along the cliff path, with footpath above the railway line.



On the cliff path.



Looking north towards the summit.



