

WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ballymoney Strand
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH4 Cambrian-Silurian
TOWNLAND(S)	Kildermot, Ballymoney Lower, Duffcarrick, Seafield
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Courtown
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	7, 12
ITM CO-ORDINATES	721300E 659600N (centre of feature)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	62, 69 GSI Bedrock 1:100,000 Sheet No. 19

Outline Site Description

Approximately 2km of rocky coastal exposures.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The rocks exposed here are all Ordovician in age, with both Lower Ordovician and Upper Ordovician strata separated by an unconformity (a time gap not present in the rock record).

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This coastal section of rocks is one of very few places where detailed structural geology and the relationships between different strata in the Ordovician rocks of Wexford can actually be seen in some detail. Lower Ordovician slates of the Ribband Group are exposed with Upper Ordovician rocks of the Duncannon Group lying unconformably on them, with a conglomerate at the base of the younger sequence. Some limited fossil evidence indicates that there is a significant time gap here.

The whole succession is structurally complex with tight folding caused by the Caledonian Orogeny at the end of the Silurian Period, although the older rocks probably suffered additional periods of deformation too. There are many small faults too.

The sequence has the red and buff coloured slates of the Lower Ordovician Riverchapel Formation with the unconformable Duncannon Group above. This starts with the brown and grey Courtown Limestone Formation, which has very little carbonate and is mostly slaty rock. Following this are black slates of the Ballinatray Formation, which are overlain by volcanic tuffs of the Ballymoney Formation (also classed as the Campile Formation). The interaction of the sea and the unconsolidated glacial sediments has resulted in some small landslips along the section too.

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

This is an important section for understanding the geology of Wexford and is likely to be recommended for NHA status when the Cambrian-Silurian theme is fully assessed.

Management/promotion issues

The sections exposed along the coast north of and south of Ballymoney are largely accessible from the beach, but as with any coastal sections, great care must be taken with the tides. Some headlands require low tide to pass or a degree of scrambling to cross over them. There is a locally produced Coastwatch leaflet guide to the geology of Ballymoney, but there is scope for a more detailed guide (printed or on the web) if funding was made available to do the work required to compile it.



The view looking south from the rocks immediately north of Ballymoney.



Left: A good exposure illustrating the relationship between bedding, dipping down the right, and the cleavage which is almost vertical.

Right: The northern end of the site, north of Ballymoney, with a fold of Courtown Limestone Formation exposed, and the basal conglomerate exposed.



The Lower Ordovician Riverchapel Formation is well exposed at Seafield.

