

WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Saltee Islands
Other names used for site	Great Saltee Island, Little Saltee Island, Saltee Island Great, Saltee Island Little
IGH THEME	IGH11 Igneous Intrusions, IGH13 Coastal Geomorphology, IGH7 Quaternary
TOWNLAND(S)	Saltee Island Great, Saltee Island Little
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Kilmore Quay
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	47, 52, 53
ITM CO-ORDINATES	697540E 603420N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	77 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 23

Outline Site Description

Two islands situated in St. George's Channel, five kilometres south of Kilmore Quay.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The Saltee Islands are formed of granite (specifically granodiorite) that was intruded into the Rosslare Complex about 436 million years ago during the Silurian Period. Dolerite bedrock occurs on Great Saltee Island

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Saltee Granite is pink-coloured granite that forms the two Saltee Islands. The granites are best exposed in the cliffs on the islands, and also along the outer foreshore at low tide at Kilmore Quay. The hinterland of Great Saltee is covered by limestone-rich clay deposited by glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age.

The Saltee Granite originated as hot molten magma and was emplaced into an actively deforming shear zone that affected the Rosslare Complex around 480 million years ago. The granites are also deformed, and radiometric dating of the granites ascribes a date for this deformation episode during late Ordovician and early Silurian times.

Boulders of Carnsore Granite occur as erratics on the islands, and raised beaches reflect periods of higher sea levels.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

This is an important County Geological Site, and should be designated a geological NHA. The Saltee Islands comprise a designated SAC (000707) and SPA (004002).

Management/promotion issues

The islands are privately owned. Day visits to Great Saltee are permitted; however, difficult landing conditions restrict visits to Little Saltee. The Saltees Granite occurs low on the shoreline to the east of the harbour at Kilmore Quay. This marks the northern margin of the foliated granite body, where it is in contact with gneiss of the Rosslare Complex.



St. Patrick's Bridge (half-tide) extending southwards towards the Saltee Islands (distance).
St. Patrick's Rock visible on left. Kilmore Quay Harbour visible far right.



Southeastern coast of Great Saltee Island.*

