

CLOGHFIN PORT

A SPECIAL PLACE...



Cloghfin Port

Cloghfin Port is a special place because of its important geology.

The sedimentary rocks here date from the Mesozoic Era of Earth history. During much of the Mesozoic (some 183 million years long) Northern Ireland was covered by seas.

The rock sequence exposed at Cloghfin Port ranges from the mid Triassic (around 220 million years old) to the late Cretaceous (around 80 million years old) and is one of the most complete rock sequences in the Larne – Lough Neagh Basin.

The rocks are sedimentary and are a mixture of sandstones, mudstones and limestones. Originally, the sediments were deposited in a range of tropical marine environments. The amount and thickness of rock exposed here is different to areas of the same geological age north and south of Cloghfin Port. This shows there was a difference in the local environment during this time.

Fossils are found throughout the range of rock exposures that help date the different layers and show us what kind of ancient life lived in the seas and nearby land. Scallops, belemnites (squid like organisms) and sponges are the most obvious. In fact, a layer of the Cretaceous rocks at the south end of the site is named the Cloghfin Sponge Bed after the site. Small parts of land dwelling insects have also been recently found in the rocks.



Scallop Shell in the rocks at Cloghfin Port

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL AND EARTH SCIENCE IMPORTANCE HAVE BEEN SURVEYED BY NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY TO ASSESS THEIR SCIENTIFIC INTEREST. THE BEST SITES ARE NOW BEING DECLARED AS AREAS OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ASSIs). IN DOING SO WE AIM TO SAFEGUARD THESE IMPORTANT SITES FOR THE BENEFIT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.



Sponge Bed - The limestone is full of fossil sponges, easily spotted from their yellow colour

Correct management is essential for special places like Cloghfin Port. To retain access to the rock outcrop in the ASSI it is important to keep the site open and allow natural processes to continue. Dumping of waste or inappropriate development, for example, could all damage the site. Northern Ireland Environment Agency is keen to work closely with landowners to maintain and enhance Cloghfin Port ASSI.