GALWAY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE: Ballylee Hammerhead Sinks

IGH THEME: IGH1 Karst

TOWNLAND(S): Newhall, Cloonanearla, Ballynabucky

NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE: Gort

SIX INCH MAP NUMBER: 1

ITM CO-ORDINATES: 547853E 706418N (split in river)

1:50,000 O.S. SHEET No.: 52

GSI BEDROCK 1: 100,000 SHEET NO.: 14

Outline Site Description
The Streamstown River divides at Ballylee into two branches, both of which sink underground within a short distance.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type
The river sinks are into Carboniferous Limestone, but they are of post-glacial (Holocene) age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest
At Ballylee the Streamstown River divides into a north and south branch, both of which sink within a few hundred metres. The south branch normally carries the larger flows and ends in an extensive area of discrete and diffuse sinks. The northern branch, a sink under low and normal water conditions, reverses flow and becomes a spring under high flow conditions, presumably acting as an overflow outlet for the Lough Coy waters some 1 km to the north. The combination of a bifurcating sink and the fact that one sink is an estavelle renders the site very unusual.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA
This is one of numerous sites within the Gort-Kinvara lowlands which make up a complex of international importance. The site is recommended to NPWS for designation as a geological NHA, comprising one of 16 critical sites within the Gort-Kinvara lowland karst which is one of the best studied lowland karst areas of the World.

Management/promotion issues
Although the Streamstown River is easily accessed in the visitor attraction and surrounding area of Thoor Ballylee (associated with W.B. Yeats), there is no easy access to the sinks which are on private farmland. It is not a suitable site to promote to the wider public.

The site is within the Carrowbaun, Newhall and Ballylee Turloughs SAC (site code 002293).