

Kilmore Quay Walking Trail



Location

The Kilmore Quay Walking Trail is accessed from the seaside village and port fishing of Kilmore Quay (Irish Grid: S9703) located on the south Wexford natural heritage coastline^{1 & 2}.



Location map: Screenshot from <https://maps.wexford.ie/imaps/>. Ordnance Survey Ireland Permit No MP 004117. © Ordnance Survey Ireland/Government of Ireland.

In Kilmore Quay village, car parks are located by 'Shipwreck Cove', the children's playground immediately west of the harbour and marina. The walking trail starts and finishes at these car parks. The trail is a looped walk on Ballyteige Burrow, an extensive and magnificent sand dune system that is accessed via a five-minute walk to the west (right) along the promenade bordering the car parks.

The walking trail

The looped walking trail³ has a return length of 4.5km (2.8 miles) and takes about two hours to complete at a leisurely pace with frequent stops along the way to explore the natural world. The trail comprises five segments. It starts by following the promenade to the Viewing Point. From there it runs north towards the factory premises of Sofrimar, a shellfish-processing company. It turns northwest (left) along a hind-dune grass path extending from Sofrimar to the southern end of Furlong's Road, a



farm access laneway. At the fence and stile, it turns left again and traverses the dunes to the beach. A final turn to the left leads walkers back to the

starting point in Kilmore Quay village by following the beach (pictured above) (map overleaf).

Points of interest

Fourteen stops along the walking trail are flagged on the map overleaf and the points of interest at these fourteen stops are described very briefly below.

Stop 1: Car parks

The car parks and promenade are in the townland of Crossfarnoge. The placename is interpreted as an anglicisation of the Irish 'Crois Fhearnóg' meaning '(the) cross of alders'. It is not clear whether the

name refers to a religious symbol, or simply to a crossroads⁴. Lying about 5km offshore, the two Saltee Islands are of heritage importance for ten species of breeding seabirds, for breeding Grey Seals and for vegetated cliffs and sea caves. The reefs and other marine habitats in a large area of surrounding seabed support very diverse communities of marine life^{5 & 6}.

Stop 2: The Forlorn

The steps on the left lead to Forlorn Point. The placename is a reinterpretation of 'Furloan' meaning 'foreland' in the obsolete English dialect Yola⁴ that was spoken locally. The rocks are Precambrian gneisses. They are at least 600 million years old and are the remains of an ancient continent called Avalonia. Outside of south Wexford, these rocks are not exposed anywhere else in Ireland^{7 & 8}.

Stop 3: The Viewing Point

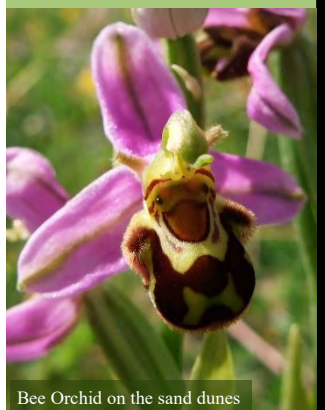
The Viewing Point affords an elevated overview of Ballyteige Bay. Depending on the clarity of the day, some or all of the following may be in view: the



black-and-white banded lighthouse at Hook Head reputed to be the oldest operational lighthouse in the world; Baginbun Head marked by a Martello tower; the two low-lying Keeragh Islands; Sliabh Coillte the flat-topped hill in the arboretum at Kennedy Park; the Blackstairs Mountain range on the border of counties Wexford and Carlow; and the Comeragh Mountains in Co Waterford.

Stop 4: The Cutting

The bridge (pictured) crosses a deep drainage cutting excavated into the underlying bedrock to drain water from the hind-dune sloblands. An area of some 660ha of wetland was intaken in the period 1847-1855 (map overleaf), providing much-needed work for people suffering the effects of An Gorta Mór or The Great Hunger, the potato famine of 1845-1852. The famine works sought to drain water westwards and were partially successful; this cutting was excavated in the period 1883-1886 in an attempt to drain the water southwards⁹.



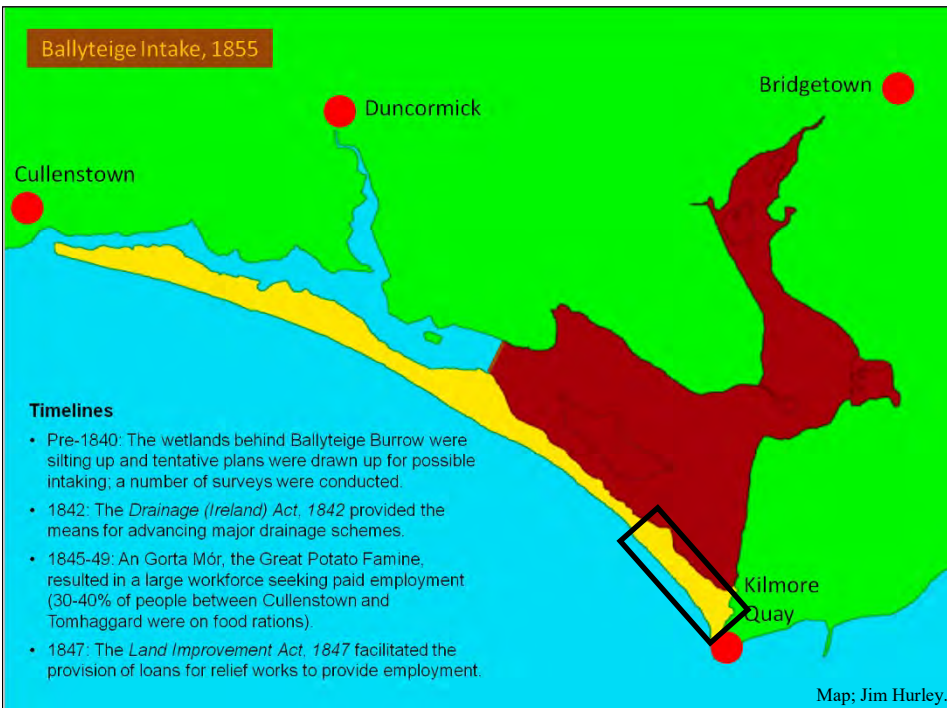
Bee Orchid on the sand dunes

Text and photos: Jim Hurley, SWC Promotions, Grange, Kilmore, Co Wexford Y35 YN35. Email southwexfordcoast@gmail.com. Mobile: 086 163 7199. Copies available as a PDF file on request via email or online at www.southwexfordcoast.com. Version: 202107. SWC Promotions: promoting the natural heritage resource values of the South Wexford Coast.





The black rectangle superimposed on the image below indicates the approximate area covered by the Kilmore Quay Walking Trail.



Stop 5: Bracken

The large, coarse fern is Bracken (pictured right). Its presence here, and that of Gorse, indicates that the dunes are older and the sand is consequently becoming more acid as the lime from seashells is leached out by rainwater. The next step in dune succession is the development of scrub. Young Bracken fronds are coiled like a fiddlehead or crozier. The factory premises of Sofrimar, a shellfish-processing company, mark the point where the trail turns west (left) along a hind-dune, mowed, grass path.



Stop 6: The highs ...

A climb to the top of the first tall sand dune affords an overview of the hind-dune intaken wetlands (map below left). Ballyteige Burrow is one of the finest sand dune systems in southeast Ireland and is of international conservation importance¹⁰. Fixed dunes, also known as 'grey dunes', are a priority habitat for conservation under the EU Habitats Directive¹¹ as they support diverse communities of plants and animals.

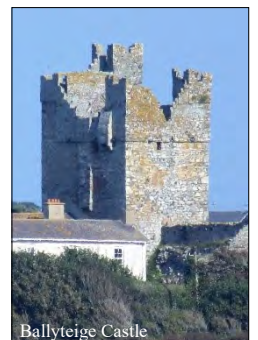
Stop 7: ... and the lows

Slacks are the hollows between the sandhills. The prevailing winds are onshore so dunes grow in height as sand gets blown inland from the beach. If the wind finds an area of bare sand it will erode downwards forming a slack. Some slacks are so deep that they expose the underlying shingle barrier. Humid dune slacks are one of five Annex 1 habitats to be seen on this walk. This slack regularly floods in winter. Marsh orchids flower here in early summer and Dewberries (pictured above) are common in August. Closely related to the Blackberry, the Dewberry's fruits are fewer and are bluish with a white bloom.



Stop 8: Ballyteige Castle

Ballyteige Castle (pictured below) is located 1km north of the village of Kilmore Quay. The castle was the seat of the Anglo-Norman Whitty family. There are several historical references to various members of the family from as early as 1247. Sir Richard Whitty was summoned to parliament as a baron by Edward III (1312-1377). Members of the Whitty family managed a rabbit warren at Ballyteige Burrow. The family lost possession of their stronghold in 1654 when their estate was forfeited following the Cromwellian plantation¹².



The Rabbit is not native to Ireland. The animal was introduced by the Anglo-Normans in the 12th and 13th centuries and was farmed as a source of food and fur. Originally only the young were known as 'rabbits'; the adults were called 'conies'¹³.

Stop 9: Ants and Asparagus

The Turf Ant, a rare insect in Ireland, nests under stones in this area. It is the dominant species on the dunes^{14 & 15} and is often abundant. The species was first recorded in Ireland at Ballyteige Burrow by Arthur Stelfox on 14 May 1932^{16 & 17}. The first nest was found, also at Ballyteige Burrow, by Fergus O'Rourke in July 1942¹⁸. Workers are small but aggressive, very dark brown, almost black, insects that collect, store and eat seeds.



Turf Ant workers tending larvae (white) and pupae (orange)

At least four other species of ant have been recorded on the dunes.

Wild Asparagus is a very rare plant. In recent years, it has been recorded in Ireland only from counties Wexford (Ballyteige Burrow and Ballygarrett) and Waterford (Tramore). Older records exist for Bannow, Curraclloe and Arklow¹⁹.



Wild Asparagus in fruit showing its red berries

This area also supports a wide range of wild plants including Sand Cat's-tail (pictured above right), a small grass, Bee Orchids in summer (pictured at the bottom of page 1), Burnet Rose with cream flowers and black fruits, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (yellow), Devil's-bit Scabious (blue), Dewberry (pictured on page 2), Sand Sedge creeping in lines, and many more.

Stop 10: Birds and bees

Resident birds regularly seen along this section of the walking trail include Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Wrens, and Stonechats. Flocks of Linnets visit from the adjoining polders, together with Reed Buntings. Migrant Wheatears occur in spring and autumn. Snipe often shelter in the dune slacks in winter.

The dunes are a hot spot for a variety of insects such as grasshoppers, solitary bees, dragonflies, moths and butterflies especially the Dark Green Fritillary.



A Bee-fly (male), one of the rare insects found on the dunes

Stop 11: Protected areas

The fence, gate and stile are in line with the southern end of Furlong's Road, a farm access laneway. The fence is also the boundary

between the lands behind owned by the Kilmore Quay Community Development Association CLG and the lands ahead owned by the State. The lands ahead are a statutory Nature Reserve. The reserve was established in 1987 and has an area of 227ha²⁰. The entire dune system is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)¹⁰ (see map overleaf).

At the fence and stile, turn left and traverse the dunes to the beach.



Sand Cat's-tail grass

Stop 12: On the beach

The beach affords views across Ballyteige Bay of the Saltee Islands to the southeast, of Hook Head to the southwest and of the open Celtic Sea to the south.

The soft shoreline is subject to ongoing erosion by the sea. Wind erosion is also ongoing; blow-outs occur where the thin skin of vegetation at the seaward edge of the dunes is broken by trampling.

The beach face is comprised of varying expanses of sand (grains <2mm in diameter), pebbles (<64mm) and cobbles (>64mm). Some small boulders (>256mm) occur but they are quite rare.

Four types of sand habitats occur: 'Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]', 'Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]', 'Marram dunes (white dunes) [2120]' and '*Fixed dunes (grey dunes) [2130]'²¹.

Stop 13: Seabirds and seaweeds

Small flocks of gulls and Oystercatchers regularly roost on the beach. A Ringed Plover or two may be spotted running about among



Seaweeds on the beach

the stones. In summer, terns and Great Cormorants regularly fish in the nearshore waters with Northern Gannets plunge-diving for surface-shoaling fish farther offshore. On the shore, Starlings feed on fly maggots in drifts of rotting seaweed cast up during stormy weather.

Common seaweeds seen in tidal debris include Sea Lettuce and Velvet Horn (green), all the common wracks, Mermaid's Tresses and kelps, especially Tangle Oarweed and Sea Belt (brown) and Carrageen and Dulse (red).

Stop 14: On the rocks

Marine debris regularly collects by the rocks at the extreme eastern end of the Burrow shore.

Seaweeds and seashells regularly occur. Local seashells in order of abundance include:

Common Cockle, Banded Wedge Shell, Rayed Trough Shell, Common Mussel, Common Limpet, Toothed Top Shell and Common Whelk. Oceanic debris irregularly occurs. By-the-wind Sailors, Sea Beans, Violet Sea Snails and Portuguese Man-o'-War jellyfishes have all been found.

Seven different rock units underlie Ballyteige Burrow but the rocks are not exposed

anywhere except at the extreme eastern end of the dunes where the Kilmore Quay Group of gneisses of Precambrian Period age outcrop. These ancient rocks are about 600 million years old. They underlie Kilmore Quay village and are exposed on the foreshore on both sides of the marina^{7 & 8}.

Sources and references

- [http://shop.osi.ie/Shop/Products/StockedItemsWH03/PID-51077\(StockedItems\).aspx](http://shop.osi.ie/Shop/Products/StockedItemsWH03/PID-51077(StockedItems).aspx).
- <http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V2,696441,603700,9,10>.
- <http://wexfordwalkingtrail.ie/ballyteige-burrow/>.
- O Cruaiaoch, C. and Mac Giolla Chomhghaill, A. 2016. *Townland Names in Co. Wexford*. Number 4 in the Logainmneacha na hÉireann series. Two volumes: Volume 1 (A-F) and Volume 2 (G-Y). Dublin: Placenames Branch, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004002>.
- <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000707>.
- <http://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>.
- Tietzsch-Tyler, D., and Sleeman, A. G. 1994. *Geology of South Wexford*. Dublin: Geological Survey of Ireland.
- Hurley, J. 2008. *Development Plan for the property at Ballyteige Burrow owned by the Kilmore Quay Community Development Association*. Kilmore: SWC Promotions.
- <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000696>.
- http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm.
- Adams, C. L. 1904. *Castles of Ireland, Some Fortress Histories and Legends*. London: Elliot Stock.
- Hayden, T. and Harrington, R. 2000. *Exploring Irish Mammals*. Dublin: Town House.
- Breen, J. and O'Brien, A. 1990. *Tetramorium caespitum in an Irish dune: spatial distribution and ordination of sites*. Pages 219-220 in Veeresh *et al*, 1990.
- Veeresh G. K., Mallik, B and Viraktamath, C. A. 1990. *Social Insects and the Environment*. Proceedings of the 11th international congress of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects. New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. PVT. Ltd.
- Transcription of Arthur Stelfox's "Diary of Insects, chiefly Hymenoptera, 1931-32, Volume 4". Page 127. Available online at <https://transcription.si.edu/transcribe/8531/SIA-SIA2016-001249>.
- Stelfox, A. W. 1933. Some recent records of Irish Aculeate hymenoptera. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine*, Volume 69, page 47.
- O'Rourke, F. J. 1979. The Social Hymenoptera of County Wexford. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Volume 79, Section B, Number 1, pages 1-15. page 3.
- <http://bsbi.org/maps?taxonid=2cd4p9h.30ztkp>.
- <https://www.npws.ie/nature-reserves/wexford/ballyteigue-burrow-nature-reserve>.
- http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/docs/Int_Manual_EU28.pdf.

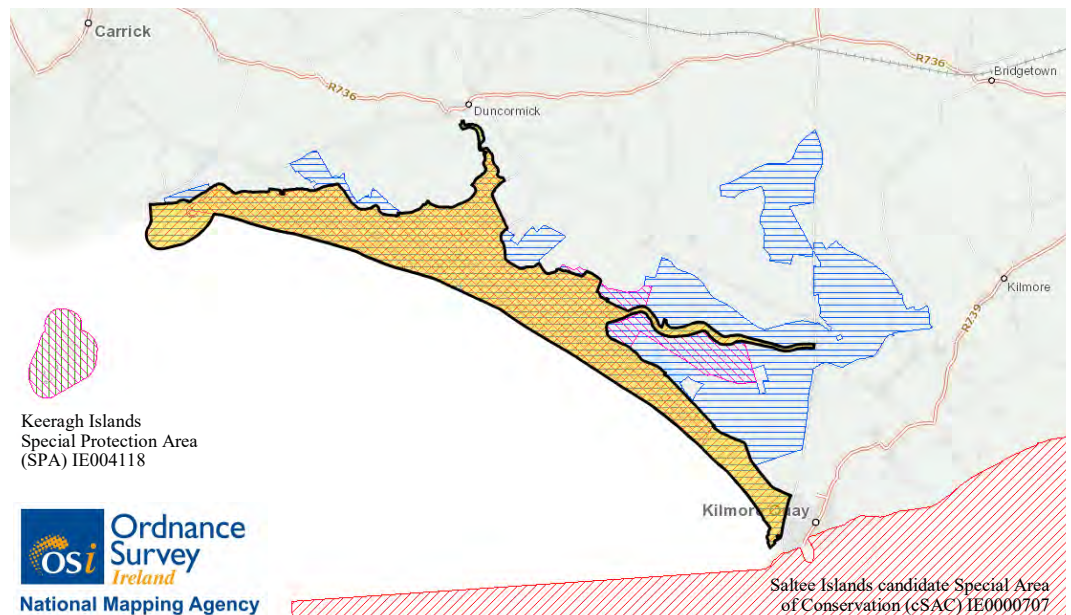
-00-

Protected sites

The Ballyteige Burrow complex of protected natural heritage sites comprises the following three areas

- Ballyteige Burrow Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Code No IE0000696 (mustard colour below and upward diagonal red lines),
- Ballyteige Burrow Special Protection Area (SPA), Code No IE0004020 (downward diagonal red lines) and
- Ballyteige Burrow proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA), Code No 696 (horizontal blue lines).

(Source: Screenshot from National Parks and Wildlife Service website at www.npws.ie. Ordnance Survey Ireland Permit No MP 004117. © Ordnance Survey Ireland/Government of Ireland)



Follow the Country Code when visiting Ballyteige Burrow

There are no restrictions on walkers accessing the dunes at Ballyteige Burrow from the village of Kilmore Quay. Ownership of the dunes near the village is vested in a local company limited by guarantee: the Kilmore Quay Community Development Association CLG. Ownership of the more distant dunes is vested in the State. Visitors to both properties are welcome and can help conserve the biodiversity of the area by following the Country Code.

- Leave the area as you found it. Do nothing to destroy the wonderful amenity you have come to enjoy. Stay on the paths. Kill nothing but time; take nothing but memories and photographs.
- Please take your rubbish home with you. Leave nothing but footprints.

The protected wildlife areas are managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). If you see any threats to wildlife report your concerns to Tony Murray, the local NPWS Conservation Ranger, email Tony.Murray@housing.gov.ie, telephone 076 100 2662. If you see any threats to the wellbeing of the property owned by the local community please report in person to the reception in the Stella Maris Centre in Kilmore Quay, or email reception@stellamariscentre.com, or telephone 053 912 9922.

Thank you.