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JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK • FIELD BRIEFING

The Kilbride Peninsula: Undergraduate Geological Mapping Guide

A compact 8 km² natural laboratory in Co. Galway — 25 minutes from our field course base in Cong, Co. Mayo, Ireland

Source Note: This summary briefing is based on educational fieldwork resources produced by the **Joyce Country & Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark** team.

1. WHY MAP THE KILBRIDE PENINSULA?

Ratified by UNESCO in April 2026 as Connacht's first—and Ireland's fifth—UNESCO Global Geopark, the **Joyce Country and Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark** preserves over 700 million years of Earth history. Within an accessible 8 km² area on the Kilbride Peninsula (reached from Cong via Clonbur on the R300), undergraduate students can map a complete sequence of Neoproterozoic, Ordovician, and Silurian igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks recording the opening and closure of the Iapetus Ocean, arc volcanism, marine transgression, and Caledonian faulting.

2. CORE FIELD SKILLS PRACTISED

- **Sedimentary & Stratigraphic Analysis:** Sedimentary logging, way-up indicators (pillow convexity, cross-bedding, graded beds, rip-up clasts, *Skolithos* burrows), and fossil-based palaeoenvironmental interpretation.
- **Structural Mapping:** Measuring strike/dip and plunge/azimuth, stereonet plotting, fault/unconformity analysis, field sketching, GPS orientation, and producing fair-copy geological maps.

3. FOUR KEY MAPPING LOCALITIES (ITM GRID COORDINATES)

Locality & Parking	ITM Coordinates	Stratigraphy & Age	Key Outcrops & Geological Interpretation
1. Finny, Cangarrow & Bencorragh Parking: 500306 E, 759390 N	500330 E, 759438 N 500207 E, 759266 N 499543 E, 759272 N 499152 E, 758658 N	Knock Kilbride Fm, Rosroe Fm & Bencorragh Fm *(Ordovician)*	**2D & 3D submarine pillow basalts** (zeolite-filled vesicles, steep northerly dip), volcanic autobreccias, bedded red jaspers uphill, and coarse Rosroe submarine-fan conglomerates resting with angular unconformity on the Lough Nafooey Group. Panoramic views of Maumtrasna Plateau & Derry Bay Fault.
2. Finny Church Parking: 501130 E, 758888 N	501319 E, 758725 N 501433 E, 758602 N 501630 E, 758252 N*	Lough Mask Fm (Ardaun Lava) & Kilbride Fm *(Early Silurian)*	Pink-weathering low-viscosity Ardaun Lava; fluvial cross-bedded sandstones with mud rip-up clasts in roadside quarry; steeply dipping high-energy marine sandstones with ***Skolithos* trace fossils** marking the onset of the Silurian marine transgression (*private field: landowner permission required).
3. Drin Parking: 501041 E, 758233 N	500679 E, 758125 N	Lettergesh Formation *(Silurian)*	Graded turbidite sandstones (greywackes) with 20 cm diagenetic concretions, vertical dewatering pipes, and fresh pink/red volcanic clasts. Views across Lough Mask to Cloghbrack (Dalradian schist) and the Bohaun epithermal gold-bearing shear zone.
4. Kilbride Quarry & Doon Rock Parking: 503859 E, 758777 N	504168 E, 759282 N* 504611 E, 759415 N 504896 E, 759509 N 504965 E, 759305 N	Kilbride Fm, Tonalee Mbr, Lettergesh Fm & Dalradian Schist *(Neoproterozoic–Silurian)*	Offshore shelf siltstones with tabulate/solitary corals preserved in life position beneath a pale **volcanic bentonite ash layer** (*private quarry: permission required); faulted Tonalee red marine mudstone; steeply plunging folds approaching the **Doon Rock Fault** juxtaposing Silurian turbidites against Dalradian Lough Kilbride Schist.

4. WIDER GEOPARK EXCURSIONS NEAR CONG

- **Karst Hydrology & Epikarst (Cong & Loughs Mask/Carra/Corrib):** Subterranean drainage linking Lough Mask to Lough Corrib via **Cong Spring** (3 million m³/day at low flow) and Pigeon Hole Cave; globally unique *boulders in their sockets* (up to 14 cm deep), upward-dissolved *tube-karren (röhrenkarren)*, *eggbox pitting*, and Lough Carra's calcite marl lake.
- **Dalradian Marbles & Quaternary Glaciation:** Folded Dalradian marbles (S, Z & M minor folds) at Corr na Móna and Cur Hill; green Connemara Marble in Glen Inagh; **Killary Harbour** (Ireland's only true fjord, -40 m deep), Owenbrin glacial corries (*The Deircs*), Lough Mask drumlins, Leenane glacial lake delta, and Aill Dubh meltwater channels.

Fieldwork Access & Conservation Code: Contact the Geopark geologist (**geologist@jcwlgeopark.ie**) prior to your trip to coordinate farmer/landowner permissions. Always respect boundaries, leave all gates as found, and strictly observe a **no-hammering policy** (fresh rock samples can be examined loose at Kilbride Quarry).

YOUR FIELD COURSE BASE IN CONG, CO. MAYO, IRELAND (EASTER – END OF SEPTEMBER)

- **Lakeland House (Up to 60 Guests):** Capacity for up to 60 people in a mix of private ensuite rooms and shared dorms with shared bathrooms—featuring a sitting room, mini-cinema, free WiFi for evening map-work/GIS, laundry/drying facilities, and free coach parking.
- **Michaeleen's Manor (Up to 20 Guests):** Located right next door, ideal for housing lecturers, demonstrators, and visiting researchers separately.
- **Catering, Local Guides & Transport:** Choose **catered meal packages** (breakfast, packed lunches for the field, and evening dinners) or well-equipped **self-catering** facilities. We can also arrange **experienced local geological guides** and assist with local coach hire on request.

Groups welcome from Easter until the end of September • Contact us for prices based on your group requirements:
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