



**Fig. W13.1** Geological map of the area around Laggan Point after British Geological Survey (1997), showing the localities described in Excursion 13.

## Excursion 13: Laggan Point

Coastal walking around Laggan Point to view the Bowmore Sandstone. Interesting igneous rocks, good views, sandy beaches and a hill fort.

**Grade:** 1+.

**Terrain:** The coastal sections are a mixture of farm tracks and pathless sections but are relatively easy.

**Duration:** Allow 4-5 hours.

**Facilities:** Full range available in Bowmore.

**Access:** No particular issues.

**Dogs:** Not in the lambing season (Feb-June).

**Distance:** From Gartbreck to Cnoc Ebric is 10 km return (6.5 miles).

From the Laggan Bay parking to Laggan Point is an 11 km return trip.

**Start:** Near Gartbreck [NR 2832 5806]. Heading S from Bowmore turn right after the warehouses and follow signs to the Recycling Centre. The road from here to Gartbreck is quite rough. Either park after about 100 m or go a further 900 m and park in a small grassy parking area on the left just before the entrance gate to Gartbreck.

Alternatively start at Laggan Bay [NR 3046 5492] on the track accessed from the main Bowmore to Port Ellen road. The track has several gates (marked G on Fig. W13.1) and is rough with some soft sand patches. Best parking is 600 m on L after the gate at the burn.

*This excursion examines the Bowmore Sandstone which was probably deposited above the Colonsay Group about 800 million years ago (Ma). It is only weakly metamorphosed. There are many but often subtle sedimentary, metamorphic and structural features. There are also some good examples of Paleocene dolerite dykes intruded along fault planes.*

This excursion described is an out-and-back coastal route to Cnoc Ebric via Laggan Point from Gartbreck. The alternative of starting and finishing at Laggan Bay (The 'Big Strand') and just visiting Localities 3, 4 and 5 is about the same distance, although dependent on the footbridge across the Laggan, which has been recently restored. The road to Laggan Farm is a private road and should not be used.

As an alternative to this excursion, there are two very short walking options to see the main aspects of the Bowmore Sandstone. These are the foreshore at Battery Point immediately W of Bowmore [NR 3070 5980] and Blackrock Point at the head of Loch Indaal [NR 3014 6280].



**Fig. W13.2** The farm track along the coast at Locality 1.

From Gartbreck head W towards the shore for 50 m and go through a gate onto a vehicle track which follows the coast heading SW (Fig. W13.2). Go down onto the mixed rocky and sandy foreshore area.

### **Locality 1** [NR 2818 5800]

Coast south of Saltpan Point.

*The rocks exposed around here are typical of the Bowmore Sandstone Group which here is a fine to medium grained moderately sorted **metasandstone**. It has a low proportion of **quartz** grains (only about 50%), around 20% of **feldspar** and is, therefore, classified as a **subarkose**. The feldspar was not completely chemically weathered to clay in the source area which implies that deposition was quite quick and probably quite close to a mountainous source area. The **metamorphism** is quite low-grade with the clay minerals being altered to fine-grained **white mica**. The metasandstone is remarkably uniform and it occurs all the way along the coast from Bowmore to Laggan Bay. Each exposure is superficially similar to the last. There are some uncommon and subtle sedimentary feature such as pebbly beds and heavy mineral **laminations** which define the original bedding orientation, plus rare **cross-bedding** and **soft-sediment deformation** as well as a weak **metamorphic foliation**.*

Follow the grassy farm track S between the shoreline and an old wall (Fig. W13.2) for about 500 m until both the track and wall ends. Continue following the shoreline, go through a gate in a substantial metal fence and then over a small burn. After a further 800 m a new track is picked up at some ruined buildings at Rubha Buidhe. Follow this track S across a flat grassy area until it reaches the rocky ridge of Creag Mhor na Faing where the tracks winds its way through a cutting (Fig. W13.3).



**Fig. W13.3** Locality 2 The track winds its way through a cutting in a rocky ridge made of Bowmore Sandstone dipping to the SE.

### **Locality 2** [NR 2786 5665]

Creag Mhor na Faing.

*The rocks exposed in the ridge are also part of the Bowmore Sandstone, they are very similar to those at Locality 1 and are steeply dipping to the SE. It is not clear what process formed the ridge.*

*Small grains of **zircon** in the sandstone have been used for **radiometric dating** to determine its age and the likely source area of the sediment. These analyses suggest that the sequence is younger than about 900 Ma, and the range of ages suggests a westerly source from ancient mountainous areas in North America. It is thus very similar to rocks in the upper part of the Grampian Group in the Scottish Central Highlands which are thought to be about 800 Ma.*

**Fig. W13.4** View N from the gate on the higher beach terrace between Localities 2 and 3 looking back over the first half of Excursion 13.



Continue following the track S for 300 m to the end of the flat grassy area then leave the track and bear SW along the coast on the rough grass of the raised beach for a further 500 m to a bay (Port Mhor) and at its S end cross an old wall and ascend onto the higher terrace to a fence with a gate in a fence corner (Fig. W13.4). Cross the gate and head SW for about 250 m to a SW facing pebbly beach near Laggan Point.

### Locality 3 [NR 2754 5561]

Laggan Point.

*The area around the point comprises an extensive exposure of Bowmore Sandstone looking very similar to the previous exposures. Bedding is dipping down to the SE. It is quite difficult to be definitive about the overall thickness of the sequence given that its top and base are not seen. Nevertheless a range of between 1.5 km and 5 km has been estimated. Its likely depositional environment is also difficult to interpret given the lack of sedimentary structures, its uniformity and the lack of fossils. However, some form of shallow marine environment is most likely.*

**Fig. W13.5** Dykes intruding along a fault plane into steeply dipping Bowmore Sandstone near Laggan Point. Locality 3.



**Fig. W13.6** Spectacular eroded dyke at Locality 3. Note the hexagonal jointing.





**Fig. W13.7** Creag nam Fhiteach from the west. The direct approach is steep and has large fences so follow the track towards Laggan Farm and cross the field through a gate.

*A NW-SE trending **fault** cuts through the rocks here. This is the same direction as many found on Islay and is probably of **Permo-Triassic** age (i.e. between 300 and 200 Ma). The **fault** has been intruded by later **Paleocene**-age (60 Ma) **igneous dykes** made of **dolerite** (Fig. W13.5). Parts of these have large white crystals (**phenocrysts**) of **plagioclase** and **veins** of **dolerite** can be seen intruding into the sandstones. Hexagonal **jointing** can be observed where the surrounding rocks have been eroded (Fig. W13.6).*

Continue for 150 m E across the pebbly beach and at its end go another 100 m across a grassy area to a small sandy bay overlooked by the headland of Creag nam Fhiteach (Fig. W13.7). Head NE for 100 m through some rock outcrops to a gate where a more substantial track is joined which leads to Laggan Farm. To get an overview of the area it is worth diverting onto the headland and its trig point; not by climbing it directly from the bay but by going along the track for 200 m towards the farm and then going right through a gate close to a track junction at [NR 2817 5566] and heading SW across the field, crossing an old wall and continuing for another 300 m to the trig point.

#### **Locality 4** [NR 2801 5538]

Creag nam Fhiteach.

*The headland is also composed of Bowmore Sandstone and here it dips roughly SW and W in contrast with the rocks at Laggan Point where they were dipping SE. It is, therefore, probable that a **plunging synclinal** fold axis is present between Localities 3 and 4. The fault seen at Locality 3 also cuts through the rocks to the S of the headland in a gully trending in a parallel direction to the coast.*



**Fig. W13.8** Bedding in the Bowmore Sandstone at Locality A. A thin bed of coarser sandstone shows the orientation of the bedding. The layers above and below contain more clay minerals and they show a foliation developed at right angles to the compression. See Fig. W13.9 for location.

From the trig point return NE to the track and follow it for about 1 km around Laggan Farm to the point where it follows the coast heading E to a junction where the main track bears inland, which this is the main access road to Laggan Farm. To continue to Locality 5, take the right track and then the next right (both within 50 m) and keep following the coast into a broad pebbly and sandy bay with the headland of Cnoc Ebric ahead.

**Locality 5** [NR 2910 5542]

Beach W of Cnoc Ebric.

*Amongst the rocks exposed on the foreshore of the bay close to the headland are good examples of laminated **metasandstones** with alternating beds of*



**Fig. W13.9** View looking W from Cnoc Ebric over Locality 5 towards Laggan Farm, Laggan Point and Locality 4. The exposure of the laminated metasandstone in Fig. W13.8 is circled.

*coarse and fine-grained sand which are good indicators of the bedding direction. Many of the fine-grained layers contain clay minerals and show a **foliation** (resulting from compression and folding) which is in a different direction to the bedding (Fig. W13.8). The bedding in the rocks is dipping about 30-40° to the WSW whereas the foliation is dipping at 50° to the NNW.*

Climbing up onto the headland of Cnoc Ebric is a good way to complete this version of the excursion. It provides a good view back over the previous localities (Fig. W13.9), and there are the remains of a hill fort comprising a stone wall with a shieling from a later period in the centre.

To return to Gartbreck follow the majority of the outward route, taking a short-cut via the track on the eastern shore of Loch na Nigheadaireachd.

To access the Laggan Point area from the Big Strand the best parking is on a gravelly area some 600 m (0.4 miles) after the bridge over the burn. Going further with a vehicle to the last gate runs the risk of getting stuck in the sand. Walk over the dunes and get down onto the beach, and walk NW for about 1 km along the beach to the mouth of the River Laggan. If the water is low it is possible to ford the river here, alternatively walk upstream some 500m to a footbridge (Fig. W13.10). Cross the bridge with care and at your own risk!. The bridge was swept away in 2017 but has been recently reinstated by the estate.



**Fig. W13.10** The wire bridge across the Laggan River. Cross at your own risk!. If the river is low then you can ford it here or further downstream at the beach.

On the other side of the river follow the farm track to the left around the bend in the river and then ascend the sloping northern flank of Cnoc Ebric to the fort. Follow the main excursion in reverse to Laggan Point.

#### WHISKY RECOMMENDATION

After this walk over the Bowmore Sandstone the recommended whisky has to be one from the Bowmore distillery. The Legend and 12-year-old are peated but not highly so. The water comes along the 8 km lade from the Laggan River at Mulindry.