

Geology Sheet 8

Drumlins; the last major deposits of the ice age.



Drumlins are small, low, rounded hills that make the landscape look like a gently rolling blanket. These low hills - drumlins - were formed at the end of the last Ice Age when the great ice sheets that covered Ireland were melting. These hump-back type features were first described by scientists in Ireland in the 1800s; the word drumlin comes from the Irish word “*droimnín*”. The drumlins are made of till: mixed-up deposits of boulders, gravel, sand and soil, some have a solid rock core. Drumlins are complex structures and their streamlined rounded shape is generally attributed to melt water flowing beneath melting

ice
sheets.



Fig. 1. Drumlin in north Clare



Fig. 2. Glacial till

The orientation of drumlins shows the direction that the ice sheets moved. The map in Figure 3 displays drumlins as small oval-shaped hills. The drumlins are all aligned in an east-west direction, and this helps scientists to explain how the ice sheets moved from the northeast to the southwest.

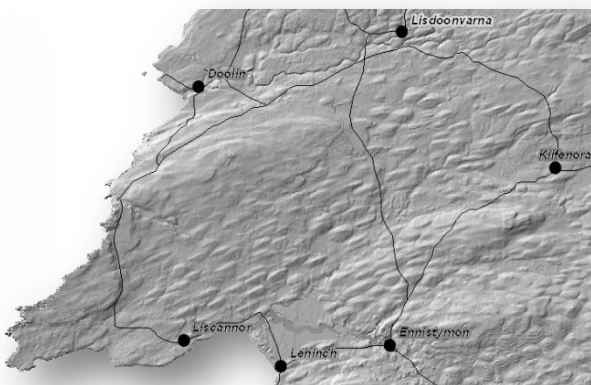


Fig. 3. Map of drumlins in northwest Clare. The drumlins appear as aligned swarms of bumps and mounds.