

# Castlerock Beach



## Beach Safety

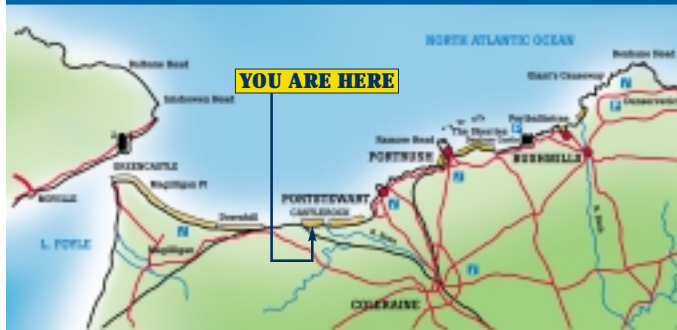
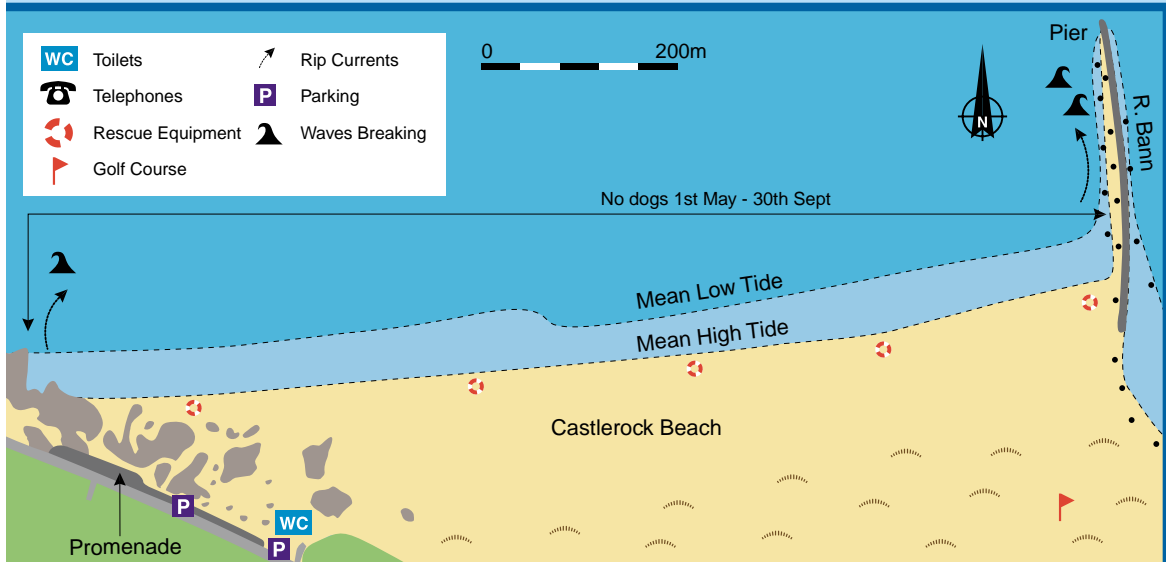


Prickly Cockle



Backing onto the tranquil village of **Castlerock**, the 1 km long **beach** is flanked to the west by **sea cliffs** at **Downhill** and to the east by the **Lower Bann estuary (Barmouth)**. The dunes extend inland past the popular **Castlerock Golf links**, past the **National Trust-owned Bird Sanctuary** at **Grangemore** and as far inland as **Articlave** to the earliest dated sand dunes in Ireland (5-6,000 ya).

The beach is part of the **Bann Estuary Area of Special Scientific Interest** (includes **Portstewart dunes system**) by virtue of **flora** and **fauna** as well as important **physiographical features** (landforms) including the dunes which contain important information about **past climatic** and **sea level changes**.



Harebell

### SHIPWRECKS

Only **Rathlin Island** has laid claim to more **shipwrecks** on the **north coast** than the **Barmouth**. With a combination of heavy **Atlantic swells**, strong '**nor-westerlies**', **shallow water** and **tidal currents**, the entrance has always been a **hazardous** place for ships. To date it has caused over **25 wrecks** and countless groundings and other accidents.

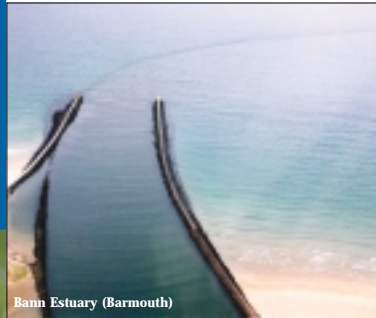
The last major incident saw the outward bound Panamanian registered vessel the **Burgundia** with a cargo of **potatoes**, striking the Castlerock pier in **February 1981**. She was carried on to Castlerock beach from where it was eventually towed away for scrap a few weeks later.



The Ben Voora at Barmouth 1936

### THE BARMOUTH

Where the Lower R Bann enters the sea is known as the **Barmouth**, testimony to the large and potentially treacherous **sand bar** that builds up at the mouth of the river. The river enters the sea between two stone and concrete breakwaters first constructed in **1879** by the **Coleraine Harbour Commissioners** (later lengthened and strengthened in **1929-1943**) to facilitate safe navigation to the growing trade to the port of **Coleraine**. Some of the design was to be later incorporated in the building of the **Mulberry Harbours** used in the **1944 D-Day** landings.



Bann Estuary (Barmouth)



Harbour Porpoise

### PORPOISES

The pier is an excellent vantage point for catching glimpses of the small **harbour porpoises** which frequent the entrance (typically in groups of 3-5) feeding on mackerel and other bottom feeding fish. **Calm, windless** and **slightly overcast** conditions are best for viewing. More common in **summer**.

Nicknamed the **sea pig** or **blackfish**, the porpoise will seldom **breach** (leave the water) and will mostly be seen by a characteristic **forward roll**, exposing a stubby **dark dorsal fin** as it surfaces to breathe, sounding like a grunt (hence sea pig).

**Care needed in accessing pier. Inadvisable in high winds and breaking seas.**

### BIRDS

The estuary is an important site for over-wintering **waders** and **wild fowl**, including **lapwing, golden plover, curlew, shelduck, redshank** and **snipe**. For information regarding **access** to the **National Trust Bird Sanctuary** bird hide at the Barmouth T. **70848728**.



Curlew



Portstewart Pier at Barmouth

### Read & heed all information Seek & take safety advice

#### Safer bathing:

- **Don't swim alone.**
- **Don't stay too long.**
- **Avoid bathing among surfers and anglers.**
- **Avoid bathing near headlands and piers.**

#### If in difficulty at sea:

- **Remain calm.**
- **Float on your back.**
- **Keep arms** under water and breathe steadily.
- **Conserve energy.**
- **Use one arm** only to attract attention.

#### If someone else in difficulty at sea:

- Use nearest **telephone / mobile** to dial **999** and ask for **Coastguard**.
- Only enter water if **trained** and are **competent** to carry out a rescue.
- Attempt to **reassure** person in difficulty.
- Use public **safety equipment** or anything with a reach (stick, clothing).
- Throw anything that will float eg. **ball or rope**.
- Keep rescued casualties **warm** and **safe**. Send for **medical help** and remain until help arrives.

#### Be aware of wind direction and speed.

- **Strong, offshore** — flat water but can blow inflatables and surfers out to sea.
- **Strong along shore** — waves and can blow inflatables and surfers into nearby danger.
- **Strong onshore** — large waves (bathing with care).

#### Be aware of tide:

- **Low spring tides** can lure bathers further offshore and into shelving soft sand.
- **High Spring tides**, like low Springs, move fast and can cut bathers off from safety.
- All **tidal currents** can carry bathers and surfers out to sea.

#### Be aware of rip currents:

- Rips are **seaward moving channels** of water of varying strength that can carry bathers and surfers offshore.
- If caught in a rip: **remain calm** and **swim or wade parallel** to shore to break out of the current.

#### General safety:

- Be aware of local **tidal** and **weather** conditions.
- Avoid **over-exposure** to strong sun.
- Do not handle **carcasses**.
- **Supervise children.**
- **Tether inflatable toys to beach** and supervise.
- Respect all **life saving equipment** (report if missing T. (028) 7034 7272).
- Respect all other users.

For further details see Coleraine Borough Council's own **Beach Safety Guide** (available at all local Tourist Information Offices).

#### PUBLIC INFORMATION: BEACH BYE LAWS

- Thankyou for not leaving litter on the beach and using the bins provided.
- Please do not allow your dog to foul in this area and clean up all dog waste. There are bins provided for this purpose.
- The consumption of alcohol is not permitted on the beach, promenade or surrounding area.
- Sorry, camping is not permitted in this area.
- Motorised vehicles including beach buggies and quad bikes are not permitted in this area.
- Jet Skis and motor boats are not permitted on this seashore and cannot be launched in this area.
- Dogs are not permitted between 1st May and 30th September. (Please refer to beach map for further details.)
- Please DO NOT remove any sand from the beach.

The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, helping to create a better world for us all. In Northern Ireland it runs ten reserves and works closely with local government and communities to realise these goals. To find out more information about the RSPB Northern Ireland, please go to [www.rspb.org.uk/nireland](http://www.rspb.org.uk/nireland) or T. 028 949 1547

All the above are bye laws of Coleraine Borough Council and any person breaking these laws shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine if convicted. Please comply with these bye-laws in the interests of all who use the beach.

