

VOLCANIC SLIEVE GULLION

Slieve Gullion was once a volcano.

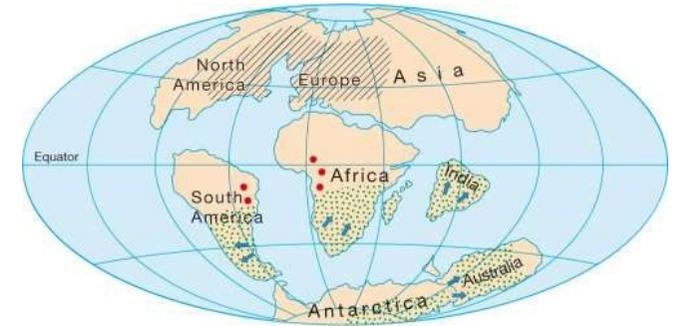
Known as the Ring of Gullion, the ancient hills are nearly 60 million years old. They formed when an ancient volcano collapsed—leaving a circular fault into which molten rock seeped—then layers of magma built up in the volcano. This type of formation is called a ring dyke and the Ring of Gullion is the most spectacular example of a ring-dyke intrusion in the British Isles.

The older rock is covered by soil that was deposited under glaciers during the last ice age. Green fields—farms—now grow in that soil. The newer volcanic rock in the Ring of Gullion appears brown in Land-satellite images.

The oldest rocks in the area formed in an ancient ocean more than 400 million years ago. The granites are some 390 million years old and date from a major period of mountain building in Ireland.

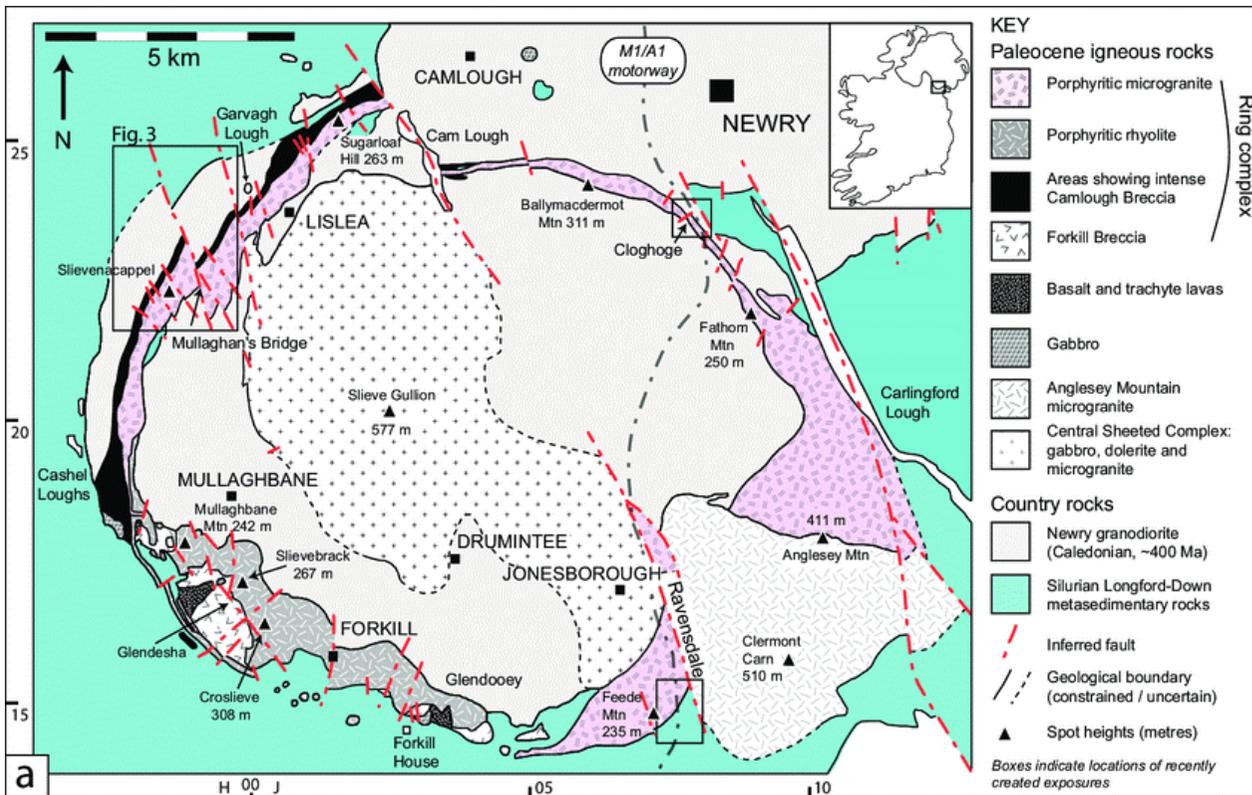
These volcanic eruptions and events are linked to a time when the continents of Europe and America began to move apart creating the Atlantic Ocean (see map on the right).

Around 1.6 million years ago much of the island of Ireland was subjected to a series of 'Ice Ages'. The main ice which affected south Armagh and south Down formed further north.



The harder volcanic rocks of the Ring of Gullion and the Mournes resisted the erosive powers of the glaciers while fault lines such as through Camlough lake and bands of weaker rock such as Carlingford Lough were scoured out by moving ice and flowing melt waters.

The effects of glaciation also deposited material creating what is known as a drumlin landscape of small rounded hills into south Armagh and south Down. These small rounded hills were deposited silts and clays as the glacier lost its ability to carry material and was forced to deposit it. The hills were shaped by the ice retreating back as conditions warmed and the Ice Age ended around 12,000 - 15,000 years ago.



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