

DONEGAL - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ceann na Cruaiche
Other names used for site	Crohy Head
IGH THEME(S)	IGH15 Economic Geology, IGH6 Mineralogy, IGH13 Coastal Geomorphology
TOWNLAND(S)	Crohy
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	An Machaire (Maghery)
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	56
ITM CO-ORDINATES	570784E, 907693N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER: 1	GS1 BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NOs. 3, 4
GIS Code DL010	

Outline Site Description

Vertical excavation in 25m-high cliff, with associated surface workings on cliff-top site.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The rocks are part of the Dalradian Ards Pelite Formation and consist of talc-schist interbedded with quartzites and black schists.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The site comprises an abandoned talc mine worked in the late 19th and early 20th century and again in the 1940s. There were 7 or 8 veins, up to 1.5m wide, of light-grey foliated talc containing pyrite. The site shows a deep, near vertical excavation in the cliff face and a number of surface mine features on the ground that slopes down to the cliff edge. These features include, from south to north, the remains of two mine buildings (including a drying house), the entrance to a decline that was excavated with the intention of hauling ore wagons to the surface from the cliff excavations, and an area of subsidence where the roof of the decline collapsed some time prior to the 1940s.

The main workings are in the cliff face in the central part of the site. The deep, near-vertical excavation was created by the earliest extraction of the talc deposit. Mining in the 1940s was carried out via adits cut into the seam in the lower part of the cliff face. The adits were reached via rope or by a railway wagon winched on a narrow-gauge track. Talc can still be examined in the cliff face and in samples of talc schist found in the material on the cliff-top around the edge of the excavation. The adits ran northwards towards the northern limit of the site where an unworked steatite (talc) vein is present in the cliff-face.

In addition to the mine features, the site also displays excellent examples of coastal erosion, including a spectacular sea arch at the southern end and numerous sea caves cut into the base of the cliff north of the mine workings.

Site Importance: County Geological Site

Crohy was one of at least three talc or soapstone deposits in the Dalradian rocks of Donegal that were worked intermittently from the 19th century onwards. The others were at Carrowtrasna (Gartan) and Glendowan. Crohy Head was the most productive and certainly the most famous as it was reopened in 1942 by Templecrone Co-Op Society at the suggestion of its founder, Paddy the Cope. It is one of a few abandoned mine sites in Donegal where mine features are still preserved and, as such, is of regional importance.

Management/promotion issues

The cliff-top around the excavation is beyond a gate at the end of a farm track, apparently on private land. It is unfenced and for safety reasons would not warrant public promotion. The mine building remains are likely to be of interest mainly to specialists in historic mines. This is a geologically and historically significant site in an area that attracts many tourists and an information signboard, perhaps in the nearby lay-by, could be considered.



Crohy Head site: general view from north with cliff excavation in foreground.



Unfenced cliff top around main excavation (left) and talc workings in cliff face (right).



Opening into partially collapsed adit (left) and remains of drying house (right).

