

GALWAY CITY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Merlin Park Quarry
Other names used for site	Merlin Park Marble Quarries, Royal Quarry
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology, IGH8 Lower Carboniferous
TOWNLAND(S)	Doughiska
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Galway
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	94
ITM CO-ORDINATES	534600E 725760N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER 46	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 14
GISCODE	GC006

Outline Site Description

A disused limestone quarry.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The bedrock comprises dark grey Lower Carboniferous (Mississippian) Burren Formation fossiliferous limestone.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Merlin Park Quarry began operating around 1814 and was owned by Sir Valentine Blake. Historically, the quarry was famous for its Galway 'Black Marble'. The Menlough (Menlo) and Anglingham 'black marble' quarries, situated several kilometres north of Merlin Park on the south shore of Lough Corrib, and also on the Blake estate, yielded a similar 'black marble' when polished. Two main beds of fossiliferous stone were worked at Merlin Park Quarry. The stone was used locally, nationally (Museum Building, TCD), and exported overseas. Merlin Black marble chimney pieces are reported to have been used on Chatham House in London. Hely Dutton's *Statistical and Agricultural survey of the County of Galway* (1824) notes the considerable manufacture of black marble chimney pieces from the quarries in Anglingham, Menlow (sic) and Merlin Park. Dutton noted that the first two quarries "are worked by Mr. Ireland, who exports a considerable quantity of blocks to Liverpool and Bristol where they are highly esteemed". Henry Hodgson took over the quarry operation in 1853, and later the quarry passed into the possession of Messrs. Sibthorpe and Sons in the 1880s. G.H. Kinahan's *Economic Geology of Ireland* (1889, p. 350) notes Merlin Quarry having a 'most beautiful compact marble'. After a hiatus of four decades, the quarry began operating again in the 1930s. The Connacht Tribune (12th Jan. 1935) reported on the reinvigoration of quarry activity at Merlin led by a local man named Captain Waithman, who was also involved with works at the Connemara Marble quarry at Streamstown. The same article reports: "*black panels from Merlin Park decorate Stormont House in Belfast, as well as the London, Midland, and Scottish Offices in London, and the national Gallery in the same great metropolis.*" The quarry is recorded on 1st Edition GSI Sheet 106 as a 'Marble Quarry'.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This County Geological Site is important in terms of its place in Galway City's industrial history. The quarry, along with quarries at Menlough (Mionlach) and Anglingham provided a source of a distinct type of black polished limestone that was a sought-after commodity in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Management/promotion issues

The quarry site is currently an area of disused waste ground, and little remains of the quarry works, except for an area of walled-off quarry yard. The main quarry face is subject to encroachment by cotoneaster and ivy, which in several years will completely mask the quarry face. Any future development in the site should consider clearing vegetation from the quarry face and conserving it to promote the site's historic industrial significance.



Merlin Park Quarry – main quarry face on left (north).



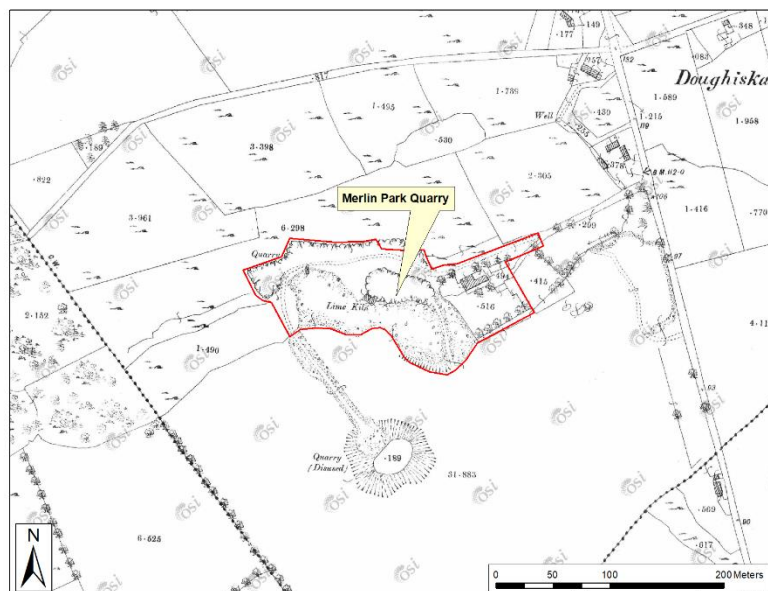
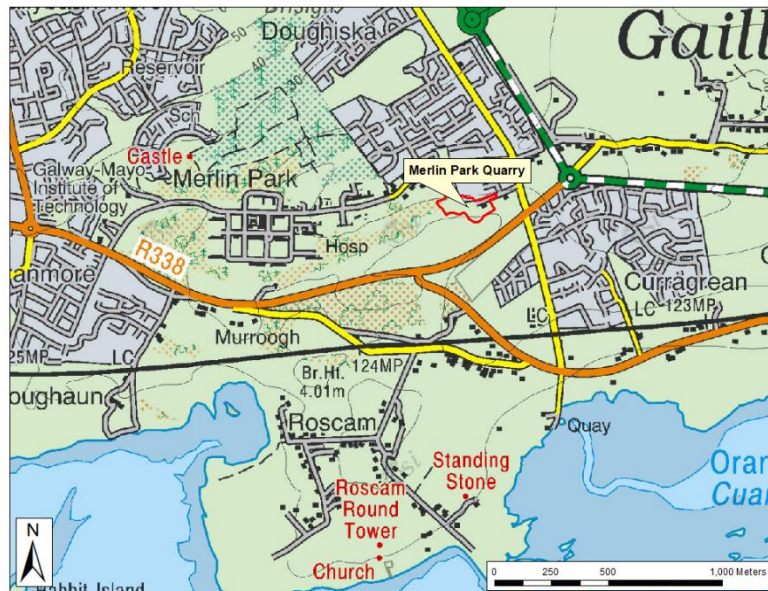
Limited limestone exposure along the vegetation (cotoneaster, ivy) covered quarry face.

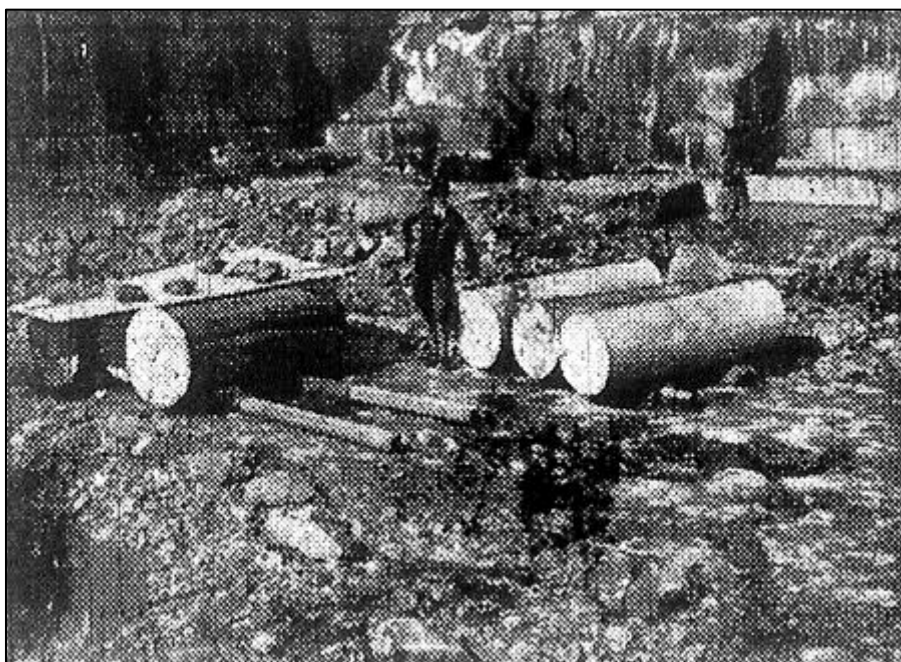


Cut limestone block discarded on quarry floor.

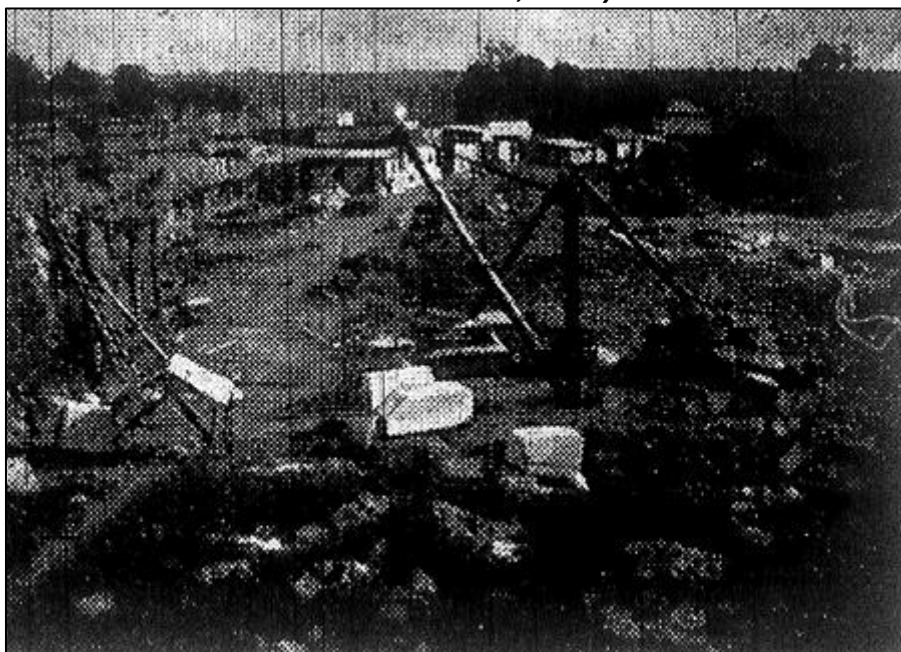


Limestone quarry face alongside quarry access route looking east towards entrance.





Connacht Tribute (12th January 1935) photo and caption: *For St. Peter's, Athlone, the great new church which is being erected by Very Rev. Canon Crowe, twenty of these columns of Connemara marble shown are being made at Merlin Park, Galway.*



Connacht Tribute (12th January 1935) photo and caption: *The picture gives a general view of the marble quarries at Merlin Park, with the entrance to the workshops in the background. It is in these quarries that blocks of smooth shining black marble of almost any size can be obtained.*