

GALWAY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Aughnanure Castle
Other names used for site	<i>Caisleán Achadh na nIubhar</i>
IGH THEME	IGH 1 Karst
TOWNLAND(S)	Aughnanure
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Oughterard
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	54
ITM CO-ORDINATES	515215E 741715N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET No. 45	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 11

Outline Site Description

The site includes several exposures of bedrock outcrop near the southern shore of Lough Corrib on which Aughnature Castle is built; the castle has been designed so that the bedrock forms part of its structure, as well as its foundation.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The outcrop is pure bedded limestone of Lower Carboniferous (359-323 Ma) age. The form of the rock was shaped during the Quaternary (Ice Age) Period, when the limestone bedrock was smoothed and scoured by glacier ice.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Aughnanure Castle was built by the O'Flaherty family in the 16th century, one of Connacht's most notable lord families, and has a chequered history. The site is now managed by the Office of Public Works.

The castle is built on a crag of karstified limestone bedrock, with epikarst, cavities, enlarged fissures, scalloping and limestone pavement at surface, all observable within and around the castle grounds. A subterranean river flows beneath the castle, and the banquet hall was destroyed in the sixteenth century when a natural stone arch over this river collapsed. The cavity beneath the castle was actually used as a place of torture for unwelcome guests to the O'Flaherty's stronghold, whereby they were dropped into it to be carried away by the stream beneath.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This site is a good representative example displaying the Carboniferous limestone bedrock geology of mid-Galway, with additional features of karstic interest. The fact that the karst features and active karstic collapse form part of the human history of the castle gives the site a unique geoheritage.

Management/promotion issues

The site is already a popular stop for tourist visits, and is an Office of Public Works National Monument. An information panel on the karst geology of the site should be considered.



Aughnanure Castle, built on top of a bedrock crag.



One of the cavities beneath the main castle structure, within the underlying bedrock crag.



Well developed epikarst in the castle grounds.



Signboard at castle entrance.

