

GALWAY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Maumtrasna
Other names used for site	Maamtrasna, Maum Trasna, <i>Mám Trasna</i>
IGH THEME	IGH7 Quaternary, IGH8 Lower Carboniferous
TOWNLAND(S)	Tawnaleen, Shanafaraghaun
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Leenaun
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	12, 13
ITM CO-ORDINATES	496464E 763664N (extent of mountain to north in Galway)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NO. 38	GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 10

Outline Site Description

Maumtrasna is probably Ireland's largest singular, discrete mountain, covering an area of just under fifty square kilometres. It is one of the best areas in Ireland to view corries and associated features of upland glacial erosion, and its significance as a 'corrie landscape' is heightened by the number and size of corries in a relatively small area.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The mountain has been shaped and moulded during the Quaternary (Ice Age) by glacier ice abrading the mountain top and flanks. The mountain therefore comprises ice-scoured bedrock, which itself is of Ordovician age (485 – 444 Ma), and mostly comprises sandstones, conglomerate and ignimbrites. Small outliers of Carboniferous (359 – 299 Ma) sandstone also remain on top, including a portion at the northernmost point of the mountain in County Galway.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The 21 corries on Maumtrasna comprise wide, deep hollows which are sometimes over a kilometre wide, and include discrete as well as composite corrie features. Many hold tarns (corrie lakes) and also show excellent examples of lateral and corrie-edge recessional moraines. The moraines are often strewn with very large erratic boulders, dropped from the ice and weighing several hundred tonnes in some cases.

The features have almost-vertical backwalls, with the highest at Glenawough, up to 420m in height. The corries at the east and northeast are flanked by fine arête ridges, which are very jagged, craggy rock walls which separate two corrie features.

The extensive flat top of Maumtrasna is the exhumed early Carboniferous peneplain, and small outliers of Carboniferous sandstone remain on top.

Maumtrasna is unusual also in that the majority of Irish mountain summits are blanketed by several metres depth of blanket peat, which formed across the summits since the Ice Age. There is only a small portion of the summit of Maumtrasna with peat atop.

Site Importance - County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

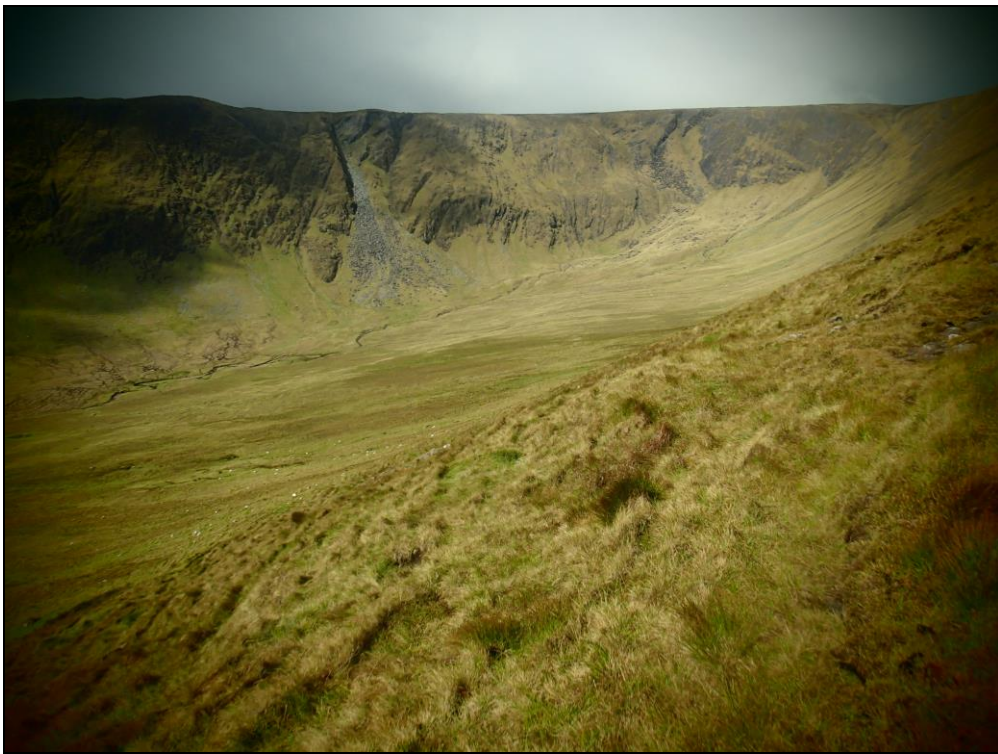
The mountain is the largest in the country, relatively peat-free and has one of the best corrie landscapes in the country within a relatively restricted (50 square kilometres) extent. The mountain is already designated as a proposed NHA (sitecode 000735) and the landscape itself is worthy of Geological NHA status. It is a cross-county site and the Galway section is combined with the larger area in Mayo as one County Geological Site.

Management/promotion issues

Access to the mountains is restricted to hillwalkers and climbers, as there is no road access excepting some cul-de-sac trackways into some of the valleys. Some promotional signs near Lough Nafooe, explaining the mountain's geological significance, would be beneficial.



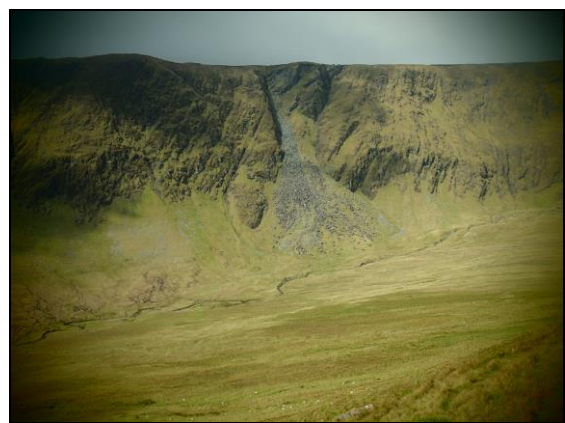
The early Carboniferous peneplane of Maumtrasna, viewed from just south of Lough Mask.



The corrie at Leynabricka, straddling the Galway – Mayo county boundary.



Leynabricka and Benwee.



Detail of rockfall at Leynabricka.

