

KERRY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Macgillicuddy's Reeks
Other names used for site	The Reeks, <i>Na Cruacha Dubha</i>
IGH THEME	IGH7 Quaternary
TOWNLAND(S)	Carhoonahone, Shannera Lower, Cappaganneen, Cullenagh Upper, Gortboy, Shannera Upper, Ballyledder, Gearha, Kill, Glена, Dunloe Upper, Ballagh, Glancuttaun Upper, Alohart, Gortdirra, Cullinagh, Meallis, Lisleibane, Coolcummisk, Coolroe, Breanlee, Lyreboy, Coomcallee, Clogfune, Keeas, Gortmaloon East, Doogary, Derrynafeana, Derrycarna, Gortmaloon West, Gearhameen, Derrynafeana, Coss, Curragh Beg, Curragh More, Cloghernooish, Boheeshil, Capparoe, Cappanthlarig, Bridia, Glanmakee, Munigagarha, Maghanlawoun, Dromluska, Magherasrahan, Dromdarragh
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Beaufort, Killarney
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	72, 73, 74, 82, 83
ITM CO-ORDINATES	480338E 608225N (Carrauntoohill Peak)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	78
GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.	20
GIS CODE	KY065

Outline Site Description

The Macgillicuddy's Reeks form Ireland's highest mountains, to the southwest of Killarney.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The bedrock cropping out comprises Devonian rocks (419-359 million years old), while the stunning mountain landscape was formed during the Quaternary Period, by glacier ice scouring out deep valleys and hollows within the mountains in the last Ice Age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Macgillicuddy's Reeks form a high-elevation massif that covers an area of approximately 80 km² and includes the highest terrain in Ireland, including most of the highest peaks and the sharpest ridges found anywhere in the country. The range also includes the only three peaks on the island which reach over 1,000 m in elevation. The Reeks were subject to significant glaciation during the last Ice Age, which led to fracturing and shattering of the bedrock. Subsequently the ice carved out the range's characteristic U-shaped valleys and flanking, steep mountain ridges. As the mountains were so high, they contained some of the most extensive ice-free areas in the country (which remained above the ice as 'nunataks'), covering a total area of almost 12 km². Some of the deepest corries in the country are also found here and the total number of corries is just shy of fifty, which is extraordinary for such a small area. High, sharp arêtes and matterhorn peaks also characterise the ridges. With numerous U-shaped valleys containing lateral and medial moraines, corrie lakes, boulder erratic spreads, and other ice-affected ridges, the Reeks exhibit the most spectacular and best expressed upland glacial landscape in the country.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

The mountains provide the best glacially-affected mountain landscape in the country, within a relatively restricted geographical extent.

Management/promotion issues

The site is remote and only accessible *via* well-trodden hill walking pathways. Parts of the pathways are boggy, and any walking or climbing should only be attempted in good weather. The cliff slopes at the sides of the valleys are dangerously steep and there is also a risk of landslip or landfall, so no attempt should be made to access the base of any escarpments. Some leaflets or booklets detailing the geological history of the mountains in general would be of use. The site is within the Killarney National Park, Macgillicuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC and pNHA (site code 000365) and the eastern extremity of the site is within the Killarney National Park SPA (site code 004038).



The Macgillycuddy's Reeks, viewed from the south near Beaufort. Carrauntoohil is the highest peak.



Moraines flanking Skregbeg Mountain, at the northwestern end of the Macgillycuddy's Reeks.



Ridges on the east side of the Gaddagh Valley, on the north side of the Macgillycuddy's Reeks.



The Gaddagh Valley, viewed from Cronin's Yard at the northern side of the Macgillycuddy's Reeks. Carrauntoohil is cloud-covered here.

