

LONGFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Keel Mine
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH6 Mineralogy, IGH15 Economic Geology
TOWNLAND(S)	Keel
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Longford
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	19
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE	617540E 766380N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	41 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 Sheet No. 12

Outline Site Description

An abandoned 1960's exploratory mine site with a capped shaft, numerous mine buildings and coresheds with discarded drill core.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The ore body is of similar age and style to other 'Irish style' lead-zinc deposits, and was formed as a mineral deposit by mineral rich fluids within a large fault structure and perhaps penetrating into shallow sea floor sediments. This would have occurred contemporaneously with the deposition of sediments at the beginning of the Carboniferous Period, approximately 350 million years ago.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This mineral deposit was explored by boreholes and then by a shaft sunk in the mid-1960s to 585 feet depth with three exploratory levels at 200 feet, 400 feet and 500 feet depth. The deposit was proven, but at 1.85 million tons at 7.71% zinc it was too small for economic production compared to Silvermines in Tipperary and Tara Mine in Meath which were beginning around the same time. So no production of ore really took place at Keel, and in 1968 Rio Tinto closed it down,

The mineralogy is of honey coloured sphalerite (zinc sulphide) primarily within a pebble conglomerate, but other minerals such as lead, silver (as the mineral jalpaite) and cadmium occur also. Some examples can be found in the small amounts of spoil heap or abandoned drill core on the site.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This is not a major centre of mine heritage value, but is an interesting example of a mine site that never was in full production, and worth recognition as a CGS in Longford.

Management/promotion issues

The State owns the mineral rights here, having acquired them in 1963, and through the Exploration and Mining Division has responsibility for the safety of the shaft. It was concrete lined and is capped. The State does not own the site, and the landowner is unknown. Several different owners may be involved since a dwelling has been built very close to the capped shaft and some former mine buildings are now used as garages or farm sheds. Others are derelict and fenced off. Forestry has been planted over much of the site surrounding the core buildings. A portable jaw crusher was located close by but is now lost, presumably in the forestry. The site is not suitable for promotion to or access by the public as it is private land.

The abandonment plans, as required by law, were lodged with the Geological Survey of Ireland. They are now freely accessible, along with a large archive of maps and documents about Keel Mine, on the following website: <https://secure.dcenr.gov.ie/goldmine/>. Using the search terms 'Keel Mine Longford' will find the material which includes a photographic record of the site.



The former hoist house with the capped shaft in the foreground.



Long abandoned drill core inside a shed is now just a reminder.



The former Administration Block is now derelict.



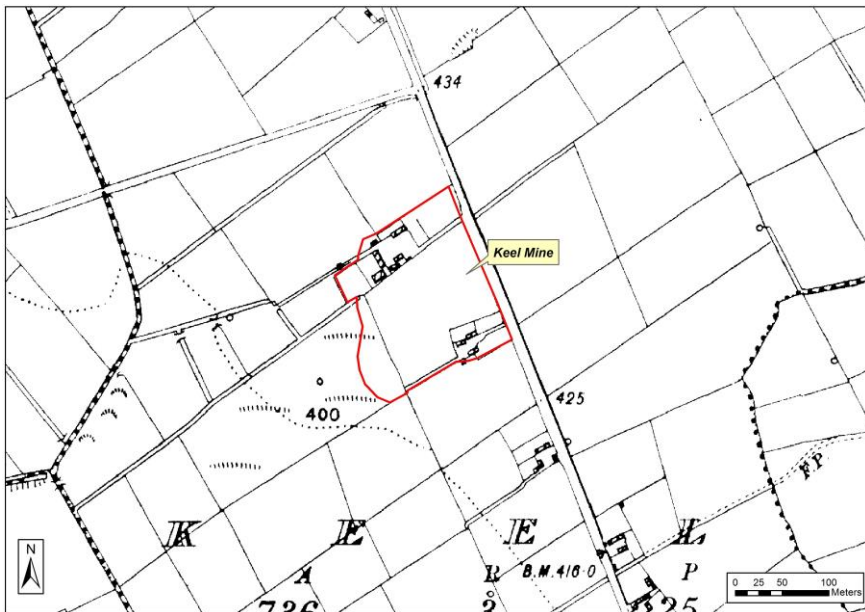
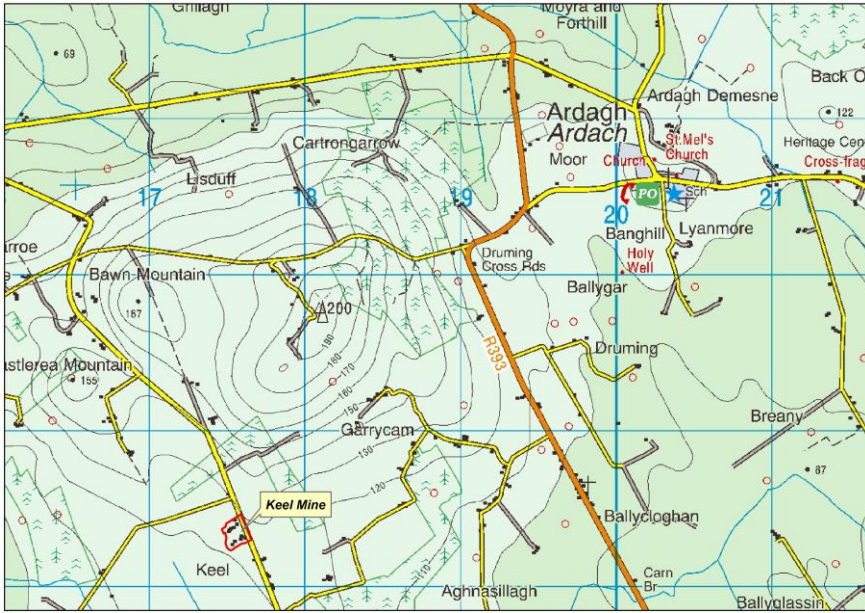
From the roadside alongside the Keel Mine site, mine workshops are now farm buildings.



Workshops and a crude timber wall and platform for loading onto lorries.



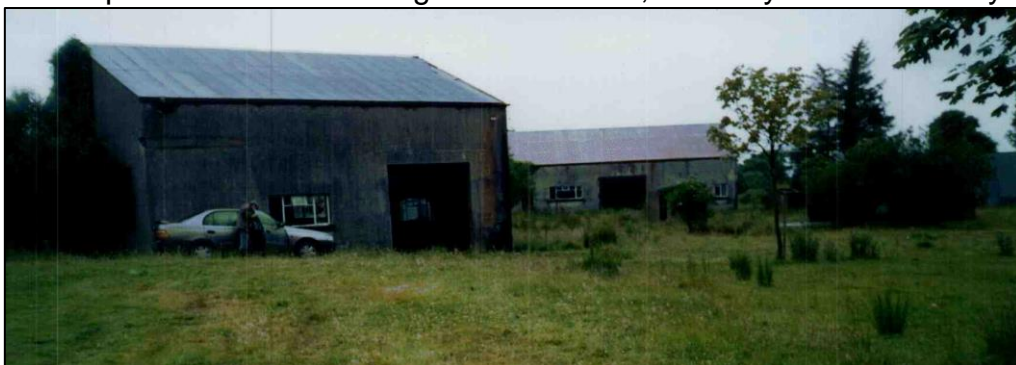
A new dwelling house is built in the centre of the site close to the shaft.



Historical pictures of Keel Mine site reproduced from the Historic Mine Records of the Geological Survey of Ireland, and in Lally, P. 2002. Salvaging minesites – the case of Keel. *Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland* 2, 3-7.



Aerial photo of the site during the late 1960s, taken by Charles Morley.



The winding house and mechanical workshop beyond taken in 2002.



The portable jaw crusher taken in 2002, now in the forestry.