

OFFALY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Clonkeen Mushroom Rock		
Other names used for site	Fin MacCool's Stone		
IGH THEME	IGH1 Karst		
TOWNLAND(S)	Clonkeen		
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Clonbulloge		
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	19		
ITM CO-ORDINATES	660080E 723125N		
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	49	GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 Sheet No.	16

Outline Site Description

A Mushroom Rock – isolated upstanding rock in a grass field.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The rock is composed of Carboniferous Limestone but the solutional weathering is post glacial – that is, Holocene in age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Clonkeen is one of the relatively numerous examples of mushroom rocks in Offaly compared to most counties in Ireland. Isolated upstanding rocks with undercut lips and shapes sometimes resembling mushrooms are believed to be the result of former temporary lake levels where the undercut section of the rock was submerged below lake water which was acid enough to dissolve the limestone it was in contact with. Such lakes or expanded river basins were common in the period at the end of the Ice Age when extensive meltwaters could be trapped behind temporary dams of glacial till and remaining ice sheets.

An alternative hypothesis for some mushroom rocks is that they were dissolved below a soil or bog deposit which has subsequently either shrunk or been eroded away to reveal the weathered section of the rock.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This is one of the spread of mushroom rocks that is particularly well represented in Offaly on a national basis. It is the most easterly, and less clearly associated with a former larger river basin or lake. It warrants recognition and protection, and is recommended as a County Geological Site.

Management/promotion issues

The rock has been left untouched in a managed grass field so seems to be recognised as important. However this may be due to its inclusion in the Record of Sites and Monuments as an archaeological megalith. This may have resulted in the grass field around it being maintained when the larger part of the field was afforested. The online record of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on www.archaeology.ie (RMP OF019-006, as at September 2016) recognises it as a mushroom rock and not a megalithic monument, although it is present on some amateur antiquarian website listings as such. Inclusion of it as a County Geological Site in the Offaly County Development Plan should help prevent possibility of future damage.



Clonkeen Mushroom Rock, seen through gap in hedge from the adjacent road.



Clonkeen Mushroom Rock.



Clonkeen Mushroom Rock.



Clonkeen Mushroom Rock.

