

ROSCOMMON - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Lecarrow clay pit
Other names used for site	Blackbrink Bay
IGH THEME	IGH 12 Mesozoic/Cenozoic, IGH 15 Economic Geology
TOWNLAND(S)	Carrownamaddy
NEAREST TOWN	Roscommon
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	42
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE	197870 255920
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	40 1/2 inch Sheet No. 12

Outline Site Description

A flooded, overgrown and disused clay pit near the shore of Blackbrink Bay in Lough Ree.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The pit seems to be in a karstic solution pipe, of probable Tertiary age (from 2.5-60 million years ago), within Carboniferous age limestone, from about 330 million years ago. The exact age of the clay deposit is unknown but it is likely to be a Tertiary clay deposit rather than a younger, Ice Age (Quaternary) or post glacial (Holocene) deposit that many local brick clay pits are found in.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This clay deposit is known to be constrained to a narrow solution pipe within Carboniferous limestone, as a pionjar drilling programme in 1979 by the Geological Survey of Ireland found bedrock in close proximity to the old flooded pit. Such Tertiary deposits are rare in Ireland. There may have been some minor secondary deposits as the present landowner described some smaller pits as having been worked. These were possibly trial pits from the 1979 investigation.

Although it is not certain, and imported clay from Scotland or Wales was probably used at some periods, it seems likely that the clay pipe industry in Ireland, based in Knockcroghery, was founded on using the deposit at Carrownamaddy. An alternative use in pottery in Belleek is also suggested, but the focus of clay pipe making at Knockcroghery presumably resulted from the local supply of suitable clean clay at Lecarrow.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

Despite being effectively inaccessible at present the site merits being considered as a County Geological Site, due to its rarity as a Tertiary clay deposit protected in a karstic solution pipe or doline. The association with the clay pipe industry at Knockcroghery is significant, since it is understood that the clay pipe works supplied pipes to the entire island of Ireland from this one place, rather than there being dispersed production.

Management/promotion issues

The association of the pit with the clay pipe industry at Knockcroghery is not something that can reasonably be promoted at present, and the flooded pit is likely to remain that way unless a major change of use was proposed such as reworking the deposit, which would require the pit to be pumped out. Any other alternative use is difficult to envisage. If older photographs of the pit in use could be sourced, a signboard could be put into the Clay Pipe Museum in Knockcroghery explaining the geological origins and significance of the deposit. The site falls within the area of Lough Ree proposed NHA (Site Number 000440).



The closest point from which the heavily overgrown and flooded pit could be viewed.



The flooded pit is situated within the wooded area of skyline trees close to the shore of Lough Ree.

