

TIPPERARY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ballingarry-Copper (Slieve Ardagh coalfield)
Other names used for site	Copper
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology
TOWNLAND(S)	Ballingarry Lower
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Ballingarry
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	55
ITM CO-ORDINATES	628765E 649220N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER 67	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 18

Outline Site Description

Pasture field with 19th century mine building

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

Upper Carboniferous (Pennsylvanian 300 – 320 Ma) sandstones, siltstones and shales with, in the youngest sequences, Westphalian coal seams.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Ballingarry is the largest village in the Slieve Ardagh district and the name is to some extent synonymous with 20th-century coal mining in the area. The mine site is located in the Copper basin and was worked in the 19th century and possibly earlier. Modern mining was entirely underground. Mianrai Teoranta initially developed the site in 1948 after it abandoned Ballynunty. It was taken over in 1952 by what was to become Ballingarry Collieries Ltd. and worked until 1957. Despite the extensive underground operations here little remains on the surface. The surrounding land is almost entirely under pasture.

On the western edge of the site stands Copper Chimney, one of the finest 19th century (1863) mine buildings remaining in Slieve Ardagh. It is a 30 m-high, quadrangular stack with an arched opening at the base. The chimney was apparently intended for ventilation of the level below: a fire built in the base of the chimney would create an updraft to draw air from the underground workings. However, the chimney was apparently never connected to the underground workings. Loose stonework is apparent above the flange at the top and cracks are visible in the walls. Blocks are missing from one corner of the base. The chimney has no lightening conductor.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

As in most sites in Slieve Ardagh, mining in Ballingarry took place underground, with limited surface expression, now largely lost. However, the Copper Chimney is a superb example of a 19th-century mine building, with a somewhat unusual quadrangular design.

Management/promotion issues

The chimney is in urgent need of conservation, given the loss of stone blocks from one corner at the base and loose stonework observed above the flange. The absence of a lightening conductor means it is highly vulnerable to storm damage. This is an iconic building that could be one of the centrepieces of a heritage trail in Slieve Ardagh. The existence of the Old School Mining Museum in Commons, run by knowledgeable and committed volunteers, should be the basis for any mine heritage or geotourism initiatives in the district.



Copper chimney, Ballingarry



Miners' shrine outside site of Ballingarry colliery



Copper chimney: missing stonework at base



View of base of Copper chimney showing arched aperture

