

TIPPERARY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ballygown (Silvermines)	
Other names used for site		
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology, IGH6 Mineralogy	
TOWNLAND(S)	Ballygown South, Knockanroe	
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Silvermines	
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	26	
ITM CO-ORDINATES	583900E 671010N	
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	59	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 18

Outline Site Description

Large abandoned mine site on gentle slope above village, comprising extensive areas of bare spoil as well as revegetated ground, with extant 19th and 20th century mine buildings.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The mineralization at Silvermines is hosted by basement rocks of the Silurian and Devonian Old Red Sandstone and by the overlying Lower Carboniferous succession.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This is the most accessible mine site in the Silvermines district and contains a number of significant geoheritage features. Ballygown was mined initially in the 17th and 18th centuries for residual lead-silver mineralization, giving the village its name, and subsequently for residual zinc mineralization (calamine – mixed Zn carbonate-hydroxide). The site has been extensively worked both on the surface and underground. Extant surface mine features include an extensive open pit at the southern end of the site (Knockanroe, above what was subsequently called the “K” underground mine zone by Mogul), a heavily-overgrown opencast developed during the 1948-53 phase of calamine mining, where waste heaps may be a source of mineral specimens, the Waelz plant constructed during the same period, numerous solid waste dumps and a 19th-century Cornish engine house and furnace house. Most of the many shafts sunk in the area are collapsed or backfilled but a drainage adit that links them continues to discharge mine water into the Silvermines Stream north of the village.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This is an excellent mine heritage site, a County Geological Site albeit within the context of the Silvermines district that should be considered for NHA status.

Management/promotion issues

The site is not within any existing designated area. There is some mine heritage infrastructure in the area, including information panels at the engine house, furnace house and Waelz plant. Extensive conservation work was completed on the 19th century buildings in the 2000s. There are signs that vegetation is taking hold again in the engine house, with some colonization of the stonework. The information panel at the engine house is missing. There is scope for renewal of the existing heritage information panels with the possible addition of others. Ballygown would be an ideal location for a mine heritage trail that tells the story of mining in the district. Abundant material is already available through organizations such as the Silvermines Historical Society. A heritage trail could be developed using minimal infrastructure, such as QR codes with links to web pages.



Area of graded mine waste, Ballygown, view northwards with 1950s processing plant buildings in background.



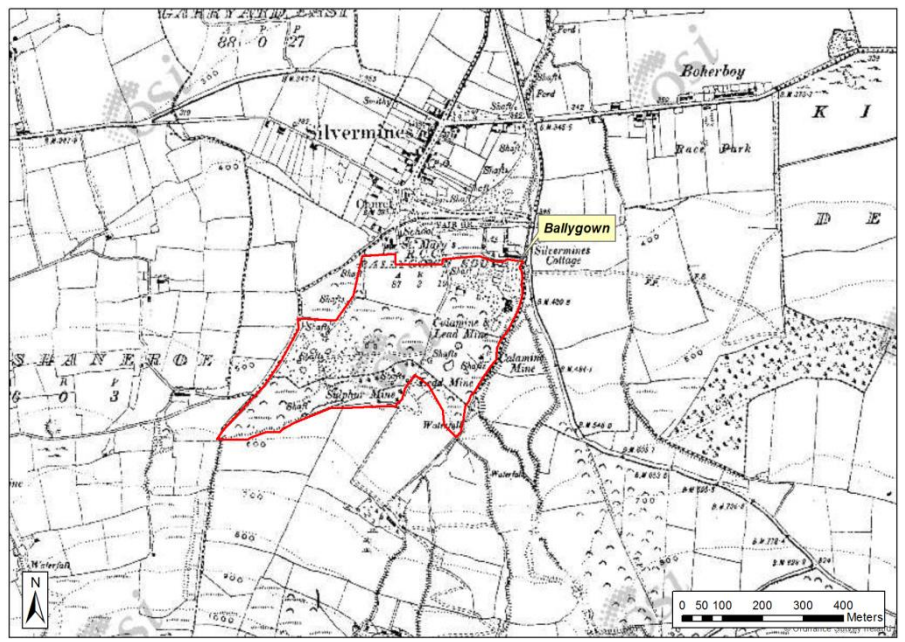
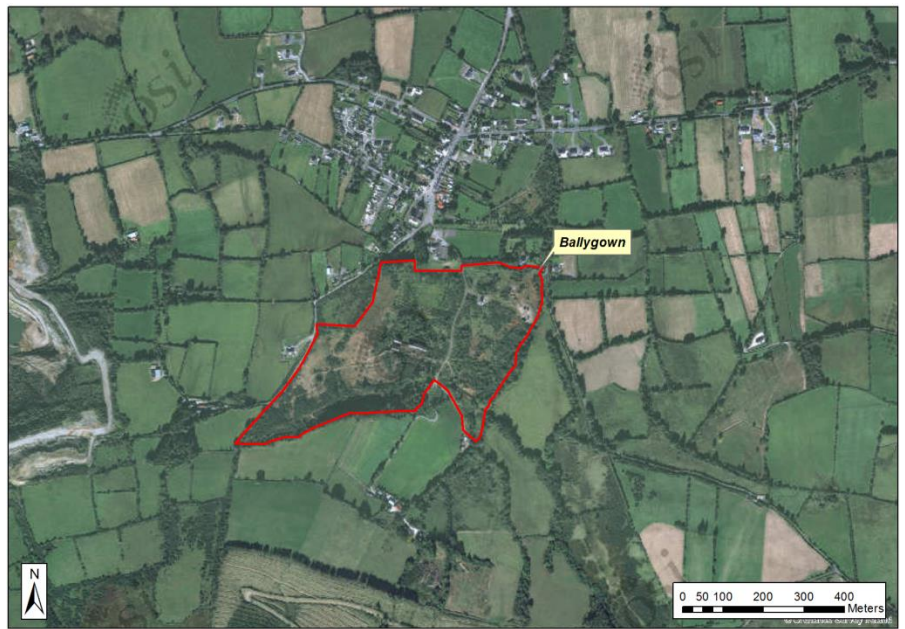
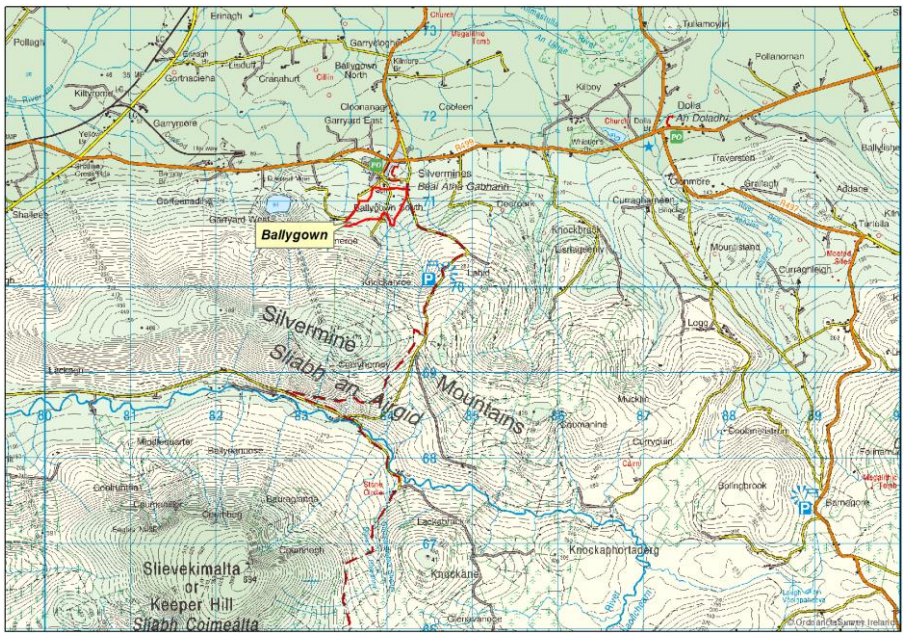
19th century Cornish engine house, Ballygown.



Remains of pilot Waelz processing plant (1950) built to recycle zinc left in slag heaps after 19th century mining at Ballygown.



Knockanroe opencast at southern end of site.



Gallagher et al. 2019. Geological Survey Ireland.