

TIPPERARY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ballynunty-Mardyke (Slieve Ardagh coalfield)		
Other names used for site	Ballynonty		
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology		
TOWNLAND(S)	Ballynunty, Mardyke		
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Ballynunty		
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	54		
ITM CO-ORDINATES	623660E 648460N (Ballynunty), 624260E, 648130 N (Mardyke)		
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	67	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.	18

Outline Site Description

Cattle pasture marked by a series of low grassed mounds; farmyard with ivy-clad 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

This site combines two distinct areas at the southwestern end of the coalfield. The Ballynunty site lies immediately south of the R691, one kilometre east of Ballynunty village. The Mardyke site is a further 600 m southeast. Mardyke became the first major centre of coal mining in Slieve Ardagh when the Mining Company of Ireland opened a colliery there in 1826. It closed in 1833 and little or no trace remains of the mine workings. The site is on a farm close to the farmhouse and outbuildings. The ivy-covered engine house and chimney stack are still standing. Ballynunty was last operated in the 1940s by Mianrai Teoranta, which opened the site in response to the need for indigenous resources during the Second World War. The entire operation, including machinery and buildings, was removed in 1948 to Copper, west of Ballingarry village, where a new colliery was established. The mine workings were mainly on the south bank of the Ballynunty river and this part of the site has been largely reclaimed for pasture farming. Two partly vegetated waste heaps are the most obvious signs of mining. Several concrete structures are probably remnants of Mianrai Teoranta's time on the site. Within the wooded area along the riverbank, an in-filled decline portal can be seen, one of three inclines used at Ballynunty. The main drainage adit for the northwestern side of the Slieve Ardagh coalfield, called the Ballynunty-Lickfinn adit, discharges into the river at the western edge of the site.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This is a significant site, containing one of only two surviving 19th-century engine houses in the Slieve Ardagh district, as well as the remains of Mianrai Teoranta's war-time operations. The Ballynunty-Lickfinn adit drains the entire northwestern side of the coalfield and is evidence of the considerable extent of operations in the district.

Management/promotion issues

The Mardyke engine house chimney is in a hazardous condition: its wall is cracked and bulges in the centre, it lacks a lightening conductor and blocks have already fallen from the top. The engine house is leaning, has cracked walls and missing lintels and lacks a lightening conductor. Both are in need of urgent conservation if they are to be preserved. The Mardyke site is part of a farmyard while the Ballynunty site is used for grazing cattle. In their current state neither require promotion but both could be made accessible in the context of a possible Slieve Ardagh mine heritage trail, by arrangement with the land owners. 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.



Mardyke engine house and chimney



Ballynunty incline portal



Ballynunty waste heap (part)



Ballynunty site, view from southwest.

