

TIPPERARY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Earlshill (Slieve Ardagh coalfield)		
Other names used for site			
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology		
TOWNLAND(S)	Earlshill		
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Ballingarry		
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	48		
ITM CO-ORDINATES	626080E 650760N		
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	67	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.	18

Outline Site Description

Farmyard with outbuildings, adjacent field and area of thick overgrowth.

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

Earlshill was leased in 1844 by the Mining Company of Ireland from the landowner, Mr. Going, who had previously worked it and the neighbouring Ballyphillip. It is sited on a syncline in which the upper coal seams, missing in the rest of the district, were preserved. The mine extended down at least 116 metres. It had closed by the 1880s. Though small, Earlshill has the best remaining group of 19th century mine buildings in Slieve Ardagh or indeed any of the Irish coalfields.

The site includes three large “banks” or heaps of waste and several well-preserved mine buildings. Two of the waste heaps are flattened and overgrown by gorse, trees and rough grass. The third, on the site of the engine house and chimney, has been reclaimed to pasture. The engine house is now gone but the round chimney remains: cracks are showing on the walls and numerous blocks have fallen from the top where birds appear to be nesting. A hollow beside the chimney is presumably what remains of the engine shaft.

Along the entrance road to the west the old mine manager’s house and offices are abandoned but still standing. To the rear of the house, in what is now a farmyard, a round building with pitched conical roof is a powder house or magazine. The roof is intact and the building dry. The door lintel is broken and requires repair.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This compact site contains several 19th century mine buildings, including the unique powder house, as well as several waste heaps.

Management/promotion issues

The powder house is a unique building in the context of Irish coalfields or indeed Irish mine sites in general. It has been in disrepair for many years and requires conservation. It is sited within a farmyard on private land but the landowner is apparently well disposed towards efforts to preserve the heritage amenity of the site. The engine house chimney also requires conservation. The powder house 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.



Engine house chimney, Earlshill



Powder house (magazine), Earlshill

