

TIPPERARY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Gorteen (Slieve Ardagh coalfield)
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology
TOWNLAND(S)	Gorteen Upper
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	New Birmingham
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	49
ITM CO-ORDINATES	627050E 652420N
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER 67	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 18

Outline Site Description

Abandoned modern colliery site with large derelict infrastructure and waste heaps.

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

Gorteen was the site of the most recent operations in the Slieve Ardagh coalfield. It was the site of underground mining by Ballingarry Collieries Ltd. between 1957 and 1972. Subsequently, the site was used for processing and storing coal mined at Lickfinn from 1978 to 1982, and as a base for Emerald Resources (1989-1991), the last company to hold a mining licence in the district. The site is dominated by the tall concrete gantry from which mining operations were run and by its very large waste heap. Other features on the site include large concrete settling tanks and the remains of the mine offices near the entrance. Only the footprint of the processing plant remains. The main decline is open, the portal having been cleared in recent years. The waste heap is the largest within the Slieve Ardagh coalfield. It has significant coal content and has undergone localized spontaneous combustion in the past, as evidenced by large zones of red-white burnt waste, called “red dog”. The site has been partly cleared over the last decade with the removal of a large metal chute and the remains of winding gear.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This is a significant site, containing the most tangible remains of 20th century coal mining in the Slieve Ardagh district.

Management/promotion issues

Gorteen could have been the site of a mine museum or heritage centre for the Slieve Ardagh district, given the extensive infrastructure remaining on site after mining ceased and the possibility of underground access. Moreover, the Old School Mining Museum project based in Commons has recently interviewed miners who worked at Gorteen as part of an oral history of the coalfield. However, the gantry is derelict and would require significant work to make it safe were public access to be considered in the future. The site is privately owned. In its current state, it does not require promotion.



Concrete hardstand and gantry, Gorteen colliery



Waste heap



Portal to main decline



Model of Gorteen colliery when operational, on display in the Mine Heritage centre, Commons.

