

TIPPERARY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Shallee (Silvermines)	
Other names used for site		
IGH THEME	IGH15 Economic Geology	
TOWNLAND(S)	Shallee	
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Silvermines	
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	26	
ITM CO-ORDINATES	580600E 671380N	
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	59	GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 18

Outline Site Description

Large abandoned mine site on lower slopes of mountain, comprising extensive areas of bare spoil, revegetated ground, extant 19th and 20th century mine buildings and surface and exposed underground workings.

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

The Shallee site straddles the Silvermines-Shallee road, with most of it occupying the northern flank of Silvermines Mountain south of the road. Over 40 mineralized veins were worked at Shallee in the 19th century, around half of these from the surface and the remainder underground. Mineralization mainly comprised argentiferous galena and barite. In the 20th century, Silvermines Lead and Zinc Company mined intermittently at Shallee from 1949 until 1958, producing over 350,000 tons of ore by surface and underground mining.

The extant mine workings visible on the site include the opencast workings and, exposed at the north end of the pit, the so-called 'Catherdral Cavern', a section of the underground room and pillar stopes. The hillside above and south of the open pit is scored with deep trenches that were excavated on the mineralized veins. Solid waste heaps cover much of the ground west of the open pit and, on the northern part of the site, there is a tailings dumps on either side of the main road. The remains of the 19th- and 20th-century mine plant are located between the open pit and the tailings dumps and include a crusher base, other machine bases, a stone-built engine house, 19th-century mine manager's house (King's House) and core sheds. The remains of the 20th-century offices, chemical store and laboratory beside the track that leads down to the road were removed in the last decade as part of remediation works.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

This is a significant 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

Virtually all of the Shallee site is within the Silvermines Mountain West SAC but it is not clear what significance if any this has for mine heritage. Fencing erected as part of remediation works has restricted access to large parts of the site. A sign on the gate at the entrance to the site, apparently part of the same heritage initiative as observed at Ballygown and dating from the 2000s, refers to the engine house, King House and underground workings but only the first is accessible now. Moreover, since conservation of the 19th century buildings was completed over a decade ago, unchecked revegetation has obscured large areas, including King House. As at Ballygown, vegetation is taking hold once again in the engine house. There is a need for active heritage management of the site before further erosion of its heritage value occurs.



19th century Cornish engine house.



Cathedral Caverns - underground stopes exposed by opencast workings.



Area of opencast workings with exposed stopes and adit (foreground, with roof timber visible). "Cathedral caverns" opencast area in background.



Revegetation in last decade has obscured many parts of the site.

