

WATERFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Oonagaloor and Brothers Cave
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH1 Karst
TOWNLAND(S)	Bridgequarter and Ballygambon Lower
NEAREST TOWN	Dungarvan
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	Waterford 30
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE	215636 95321 Oonagaloor 215614 95281 Brothers Cave wood entrance 215576 95258 Brothers Cave quarry entrance
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	82 1/2 inch Sheet No. 22

Outline Site Description

Two almost interlinked cave systems in lowland farmland, accessed through old quarries.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The caves may have been formed in the Quaternary period or in the early Holocene (post-glacial) period, and are formed in Carboniferous Limestone.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Cave surveys show these two systems are almost joined with only 5m of separation by passages too small for cavers to access. The length of Oonagaloor is 350m and Brothers is 225m making them amongst the largest of Waterford's caves. Excavations yielding animal and human remains and artefacts from 1906 make these caves important archaeological sites, in addition to their geological interest.

Oonagaloor has been surveyed to a very high standard for fear that the large unstable chamber at the furthest distances from the entrance (named Sheol by the surveyors) could cave in as it was thought to be underneath the roadway into the Whitechurch House, or possibly even under the house itself. To the relief of the new owners of Whitechurch House, who were letting holiday apartments, the cave does not underlie either the road or the house. The cavern is still only 4m below the surface of the adjacent grassland.

Site Importance

These combined are one of the most important cave sites from the known Waterford relict caves. In 2002 the original 1906 detailed excavation records of Brothers Cave were relocated after being lost. These add to the significance of the caves with potential for more finds remaining in unexcavated areas. Chance finds of animal bones, some showing butchery marks, during cave surveying, indicates significant potential in undisturbed parts of Oonagaloor for scientific records of great value. The caves are of County Geological Site importance.

Management/promotion issues

The caves are on private farmland and are unsuited to general access or promotion and should remain the province of scientific cavers and cave archaeologists, but should be protected from disturbance or damage.



Brothers Cave quarry entrance.



Brothers Cave wood entrance.



Brothers Cave wood entrance.



Pack walls left by archaeologists in Brothers Cave.



