

WICKLOW – COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	The Scalp
Other names used for site	<i>An Scailp</i> , which means ‘the chasm’ or ‘the cleft’
IGH THEME	IGH7 Quaternary
TOWNLAND(S)	Barnaslingan (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) Killegar (Wicklow)
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Kiltiernan (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) Enniskerry (Wicklow)
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	3
ITM CO-ORDINATES	712552E 720214N (centre of channel)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	50, 56 GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 16

Outline Site Description

The Scalp comprises a deep channel that was formed by meltwater erosion on the northeastern flank of the Wicklow Mountains. The channel is oriented generally north–south, and extends for a distance of approx. 700m.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type,

The feature is formed in an area of bedrock outcrop and subcrop, and bedrock crops out along the majority of the channel sides, giving the feature its ‘scalped’ or ‘carved out’ appearance. The feature was etched out by meltwater during deglaciation at the end of the last Ice Age, about 12,000 years ago.

The bedrock in the locality is dominated by granite, but the southernmost portion of the channel is etched into mica-schist.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Scalp channel is up to 70m deep and has a U-shaped profile, typical of meltwater channels. The base of the channel is dry, although a drainage ditch has been dug along most of its length to channel excess surface water during heavy rainfall.

The Scalp is considered to have formed completely in the late-glacial Period. Initially the Scalp was a subglacial channel, formed under the ice, but later carried surface glacial outwash into Glacial Lake Enniskerry from an ice margin just to the north. The channel carried huge amounts of subglacial meltwater draining the ice sheet which covered the Irish Midlands close to its zone of convergence with Irish Sea Basin ice. This very high energy meltwater flow resulted in the Scalp’s unusual depth and size.

Much of the sides of the channels are very steep, and littered with (often huge) boulders, some in quite precarious positions above the R117 road, which passes through the feature. This makes the site a popular rock climbing destination. This also means many of the huge boulders have interesting names, such as ‘Quartz Crag’, ‘Eugene’s Pinnacle’ and ‘Rothery’s Rocks’.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; may be recommended for Geological NHA

This is a site with good teaching potential on glacial meltwater erosion, as the feature is accessible, quite spectacular, and easily viewed from roads.

Management/promotion issues

The roadside location of the channel means it is easily accessible, although the flanks are located presumably in private ownership or in commonage. However, there is no parking nearby and it is difficult to stop safely on the road. A good impression of the feature can be had by driving through it on the R117 road, but the view from the Old Connaught to Enniskerry road, to the south, is better.



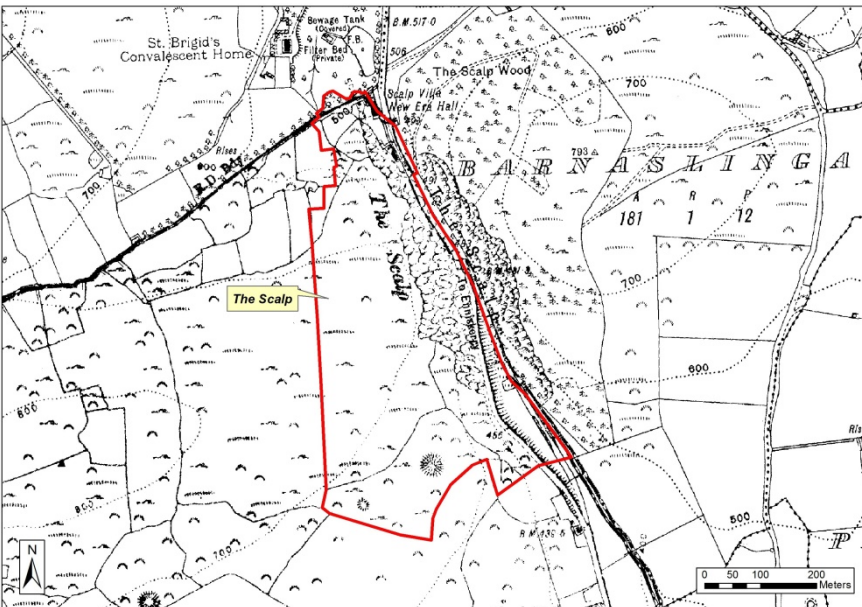
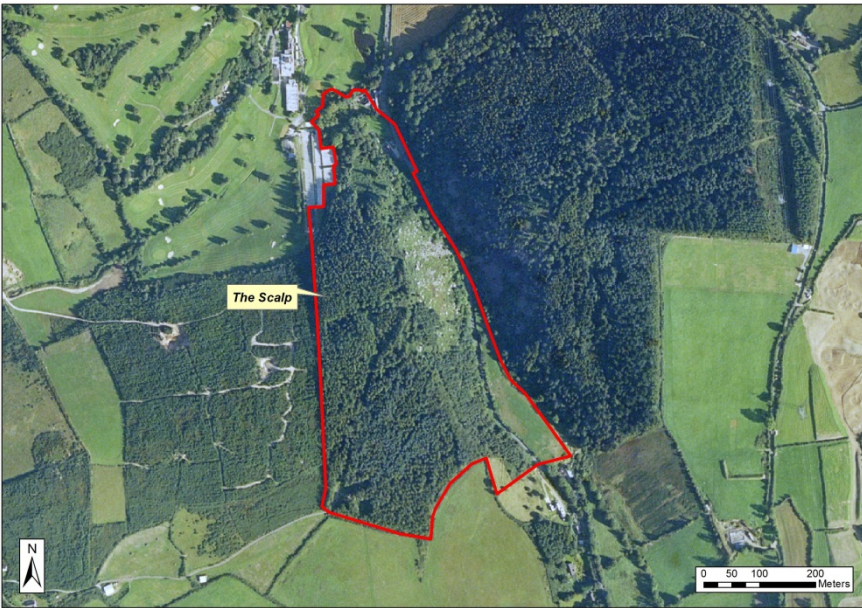
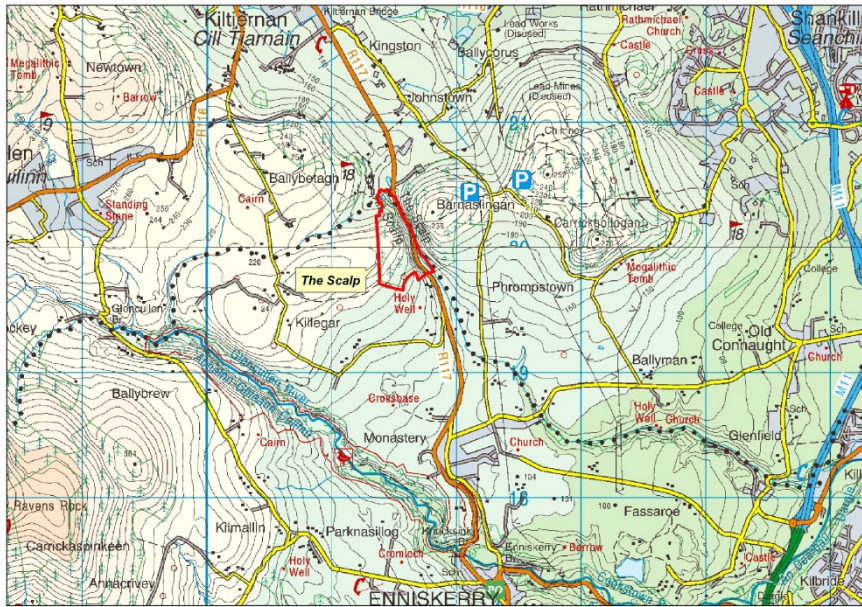
The Scalp, viewed from the south.



Left: Large boulders along the eastern flank of the Scalp. Right: One of the huge boulders along the R117 road.

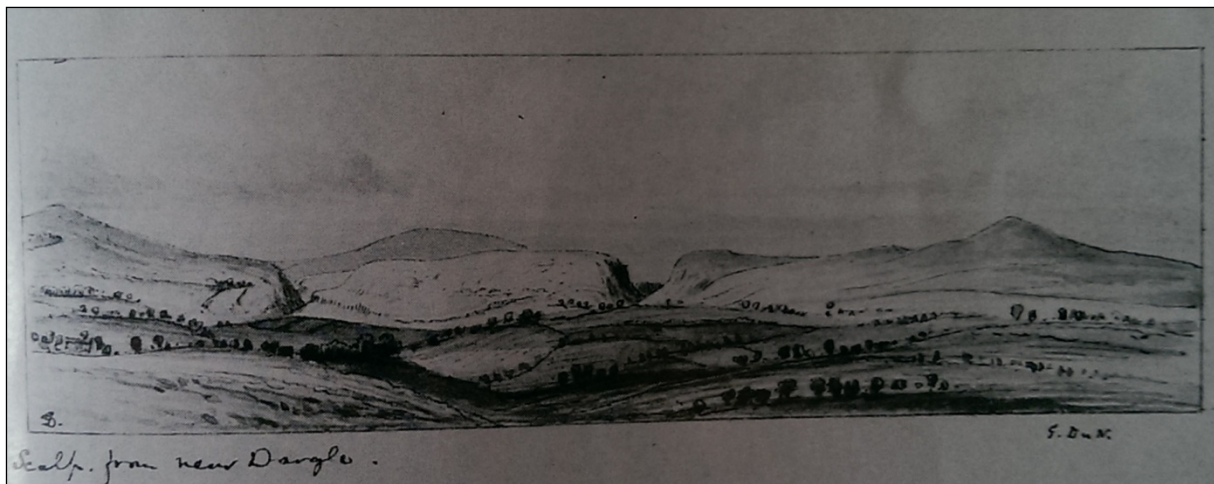


The Scalp, viewed from the north.





An old photograph of The Scalp from the late nineteenth century, which was used as a postcard from the locality (David Cotter Postcard Collection).



George Victor du Noyer's sketch of The Scalp, viewed from "near the Dargle".