

## LEITRIM - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>NAME OF SITE</b>                  | <b>Bencroy</b>  |
| Other names used for site            | Aghacashel (Wynne's)                                    |
| <b>IGH THEME</b>                     | <b>IGH9 Upper Carboniferous, IGH15 Economic Geology</b> |
| <b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>                   | <b>Gubnaveagh</b>                                       |
| <b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>          | <b>Aghacashel</b>                                       |
| <b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>           | <b>21</b>   |
| <b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>              | <b>605190E 818900N</b>                                  |
| <b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER 26</b> | <b>GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 7</b>                |
| <b>GIS CODE LM004</b>                |   |

### **Outline Site Description**

Extensive former coal mine site on steep mountainside heath, with extant mine structures and waste heaps.

### **Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type**

Namurian (Carboniferous, c. 320 Ma) Lackagh Sandstone Formation comprising sandstones, siltstones, mudstones and coal seams.

### **Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest**

Bencroy is at a height of 500 m O.D. on the eastern flank of Sliabh an Iarainn (Slieve Anierin), and was the most significant coal mining site in the Connacht Coalfield east of Lough Allen. The coal in this part of the coalfield has historically been poorly exploited, probably because of the remoteness of the area from towns and villages, and latterly from the power station at Arigna. Modern coal mining on the site appears to have begun around 1930, when Coll and Gannon began exploiting the coal seam on the northern part of the site *via* adits running northwest from the roadside, including Coll's adit, visible above the recently-installed picnic area beside the road. Later mining to the southwest became the site of the Aghacashel colliery, operated by the Wynne brothers in the 1980s. This colliery produced around 100-150 tons per week, almost all of it supplied to the ESB power station at Arigna. A plaque, erected in 2015 beside the road at the former entrance to the colliery, marks the cessation of mining at Bencroy and the Connacht Coalfield as a whole in 1990.

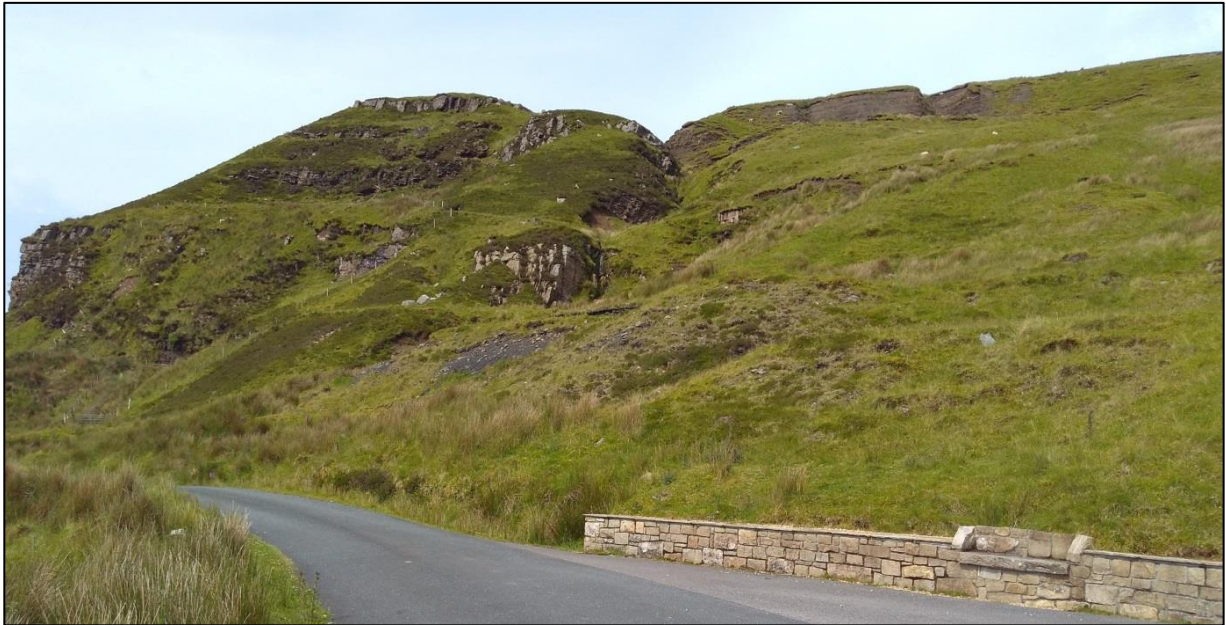
Today there are substantial waste heaps on the steep mountain slopes above the adits on the northern part of the site, as well as the remains of an old opencast operation on the site of the Aghacashel colliery, where coal was extracted from the outcropping seam. A thin seam of coal, which underlies the main seam exploited by these collieries, is visible beside the upper of the two paths that run southwest from the road. The lower path leads to a screening plant dating from the 1930s or 1940s. Beside it thick sandstone beds display large-scale cross-bedding, typical of their channel origin.

### **Site Importance – County Geological Site**

This site contains the most extensive remains of 20<sup>th</sup>-century coal mining activity in County Leitrim, including adits, an opencast, waste heaps and screening plant. In addition, the presence of an outcrop of coal in the form of a 0.4 m+ thick seam overlain by a thick bed of sandstone is unusual and allows fuller appreciation of the geological setting.

### **Management/promotion issues**

The site is entirely within the Cuilcagh – Anierin Uplands pNHA (00584). It is remote but recent addition of a landscaped picnic and parking area at the northern end of the site opens the possibility for some promotion, e.g. installation of a signboard to describe the geology and mining history of the site, together with a map identifying the more accessible mine features.



Northern part of site, grassed-over waste heaps on slopes above new car park and picnic area (right)



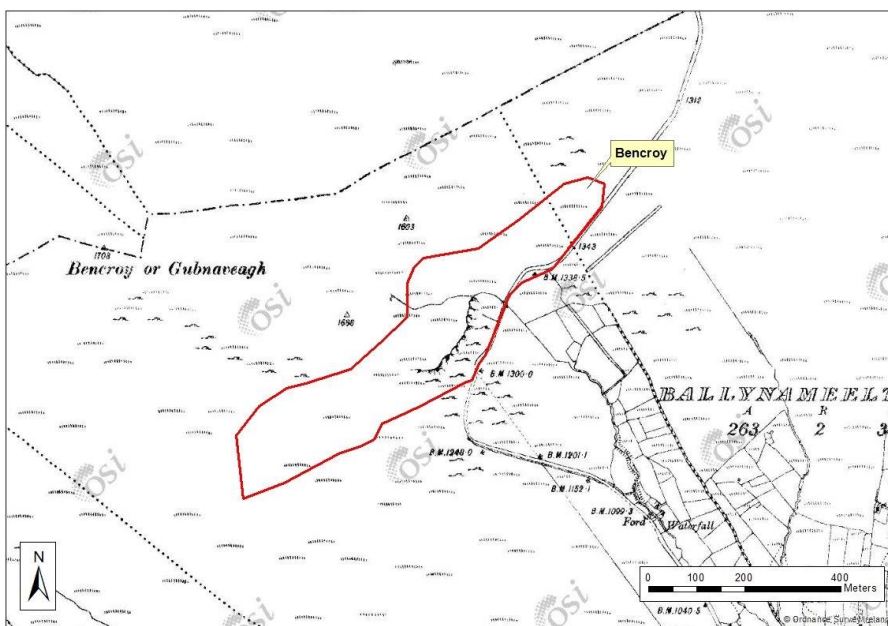
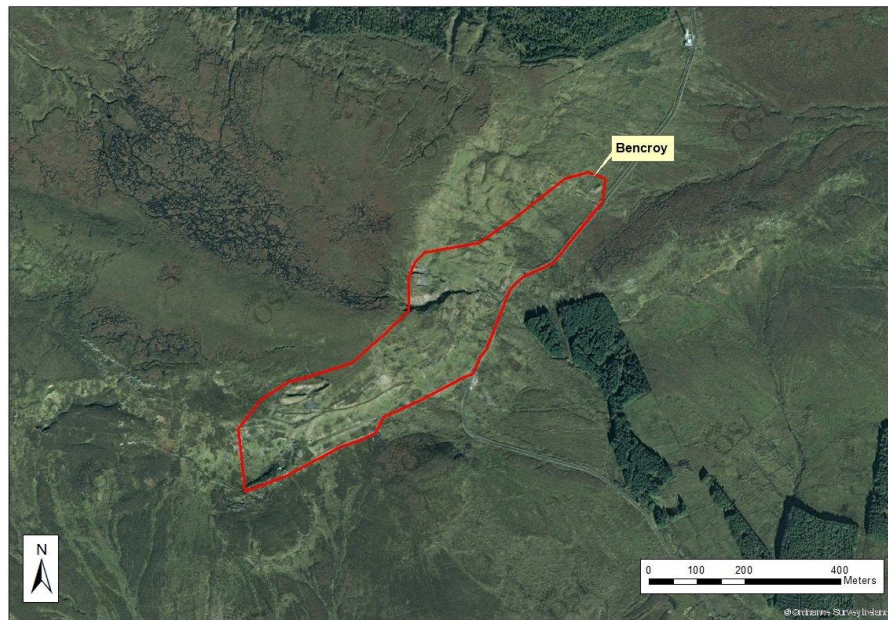
Coal seam outcrop (beside hammer) below thick sandstone bed.



Screening plant, with cross-bedded sandstone units on right.



View southwest at Aghacashel colliery open cast, with coal-rich waste on left.



Parkes et al., 2020. Geological Survey Ireland.