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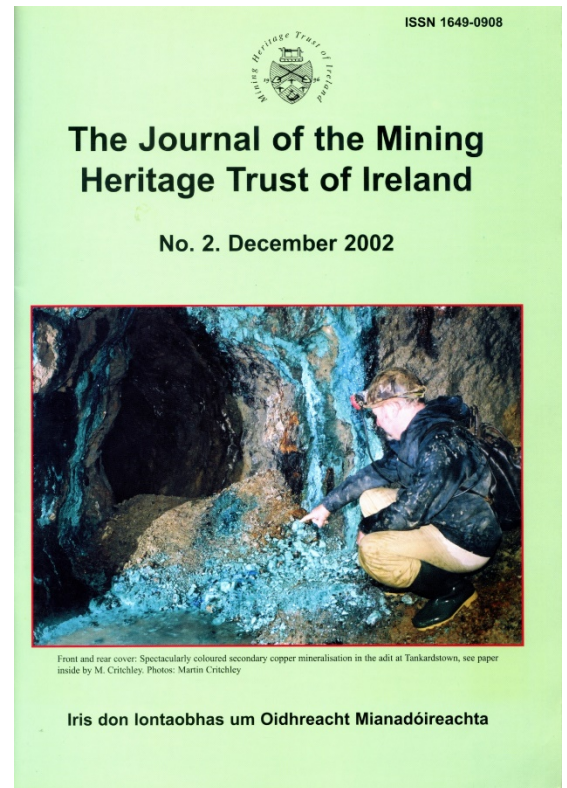
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A SURVEY OF TANKARDSTOWN MINE, BUNMAHON, CO. WATERFORD

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Abstract: A new survey of the presently accessible underground workings at Tankardstown Mine, Bunmahon, County Waterford is presented. The adit contains a total of 500m of accessible passage, and intersects one shaft from the surface. There is some spectacular but fragile secondary copper mineralisation present throughout the mine. *Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland, 2, 2002, 25-28.*

Tankardstown Mine is situated 13km west of Tramore in County Waterford and is the eastern most set of mine workings in the Bunmahon mining district (Fig. 1). The mine was originally developed between 1850 and 1875 by the Mining Company of Ireland; extending to a final depth of 164 fathoms. An attempt was made to re-open the mine in 1905-'07, but only 370 tons were raised, most of it apparently from north of the present site (Cowman 2003, forthcoming).

There are several prominent surface remains at Tankardstown Mine, including two engine houses and a mineral tramway. The main shaft (Heron's Shaft) was open until the mid-1970's when a burning lorry was crashed down the shaft as part of a

film set! Sometime after this the shaft became blocked by rubbish thrown down on top of the lorry now lodged part way down the shaft. There are several other collapsed shafts in the vicinity of the mine buildings, but the only open shaft is situated about 120m of the engine house, just on the seaward side of the main road. This open shaft intersects the adit level from the beach below the engine houses.

The main adit level is at the base of the cliff, just above high tide level and discharges a small amount of water. The level can be reached by either a long walk along the beach from Bunmahon at low tide or by climb/slide down a steep grassy valley to the east of the open shaft noted above. The climb down to the beach from here is difficult and care should be taken especially in wet weather. The entrance to the main adit has been driven on a wide quartz vein that outcrops in the cliffs and forms a prominent sea-stack (Foilaneena Cashel). Access to adit requires a 5m climb up from the beach, requiring a ladder.

The adit contains a total of 500m of accessible passage (Fig. 2) and is generally quite dry except for the entrance section where a rock fall along a fault often causes the water to be backed-up to about 1m depth. The fault also cuts out the mineral vein seen at the entrance. Twenty metres from the entrance is a large shaft in floor from which the water seen issuing from the adit upwells. From this point onwards the general trend of the passages is in NW direction, parallel to the strike of the mineral veins. The mineral vein reap-

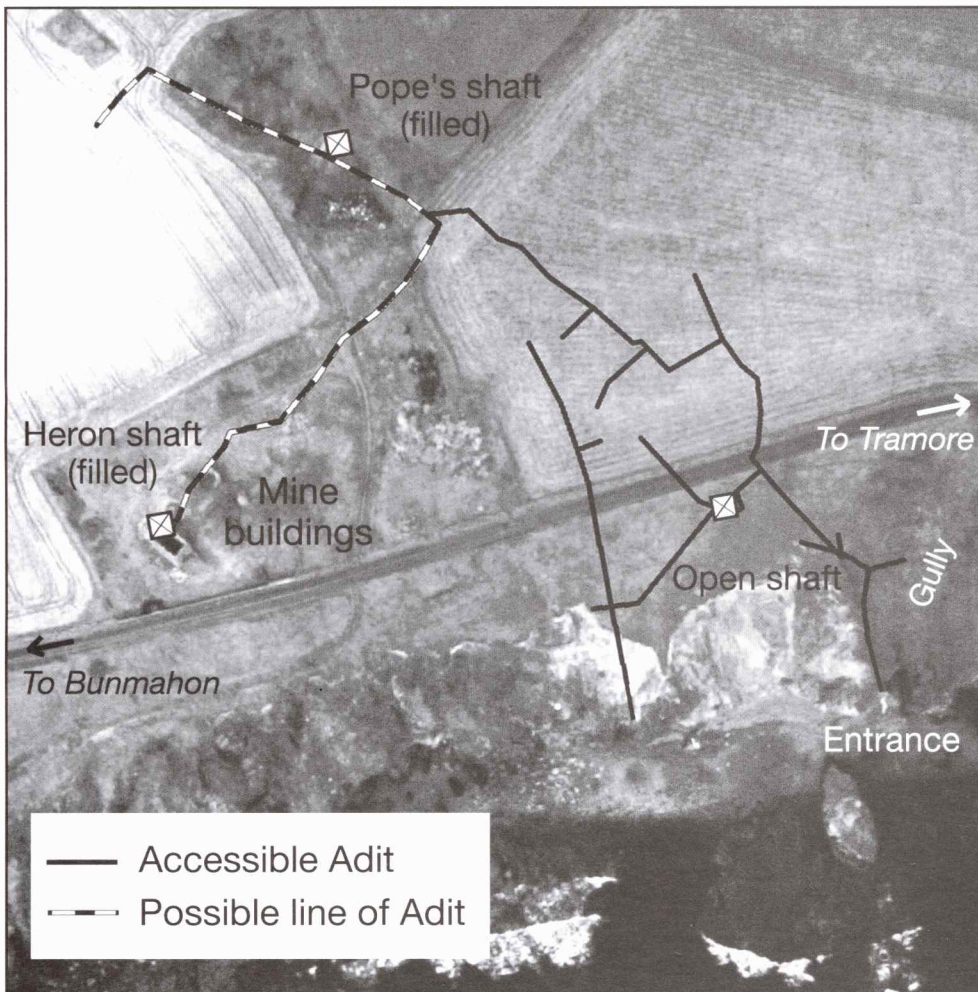
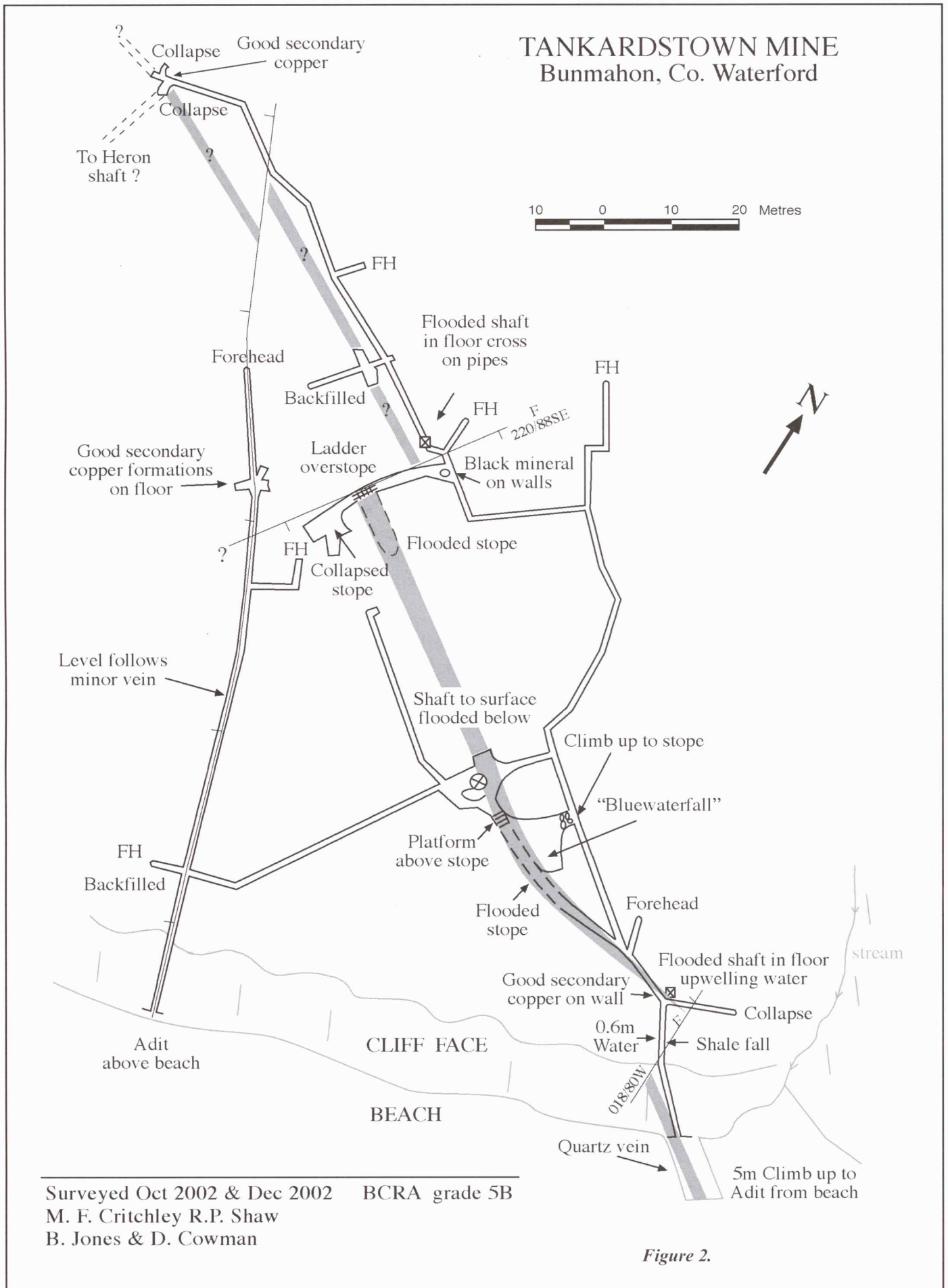


Figure 1. Aerial photographic location map of the Tankardstown adit, showing relationship to surface features.



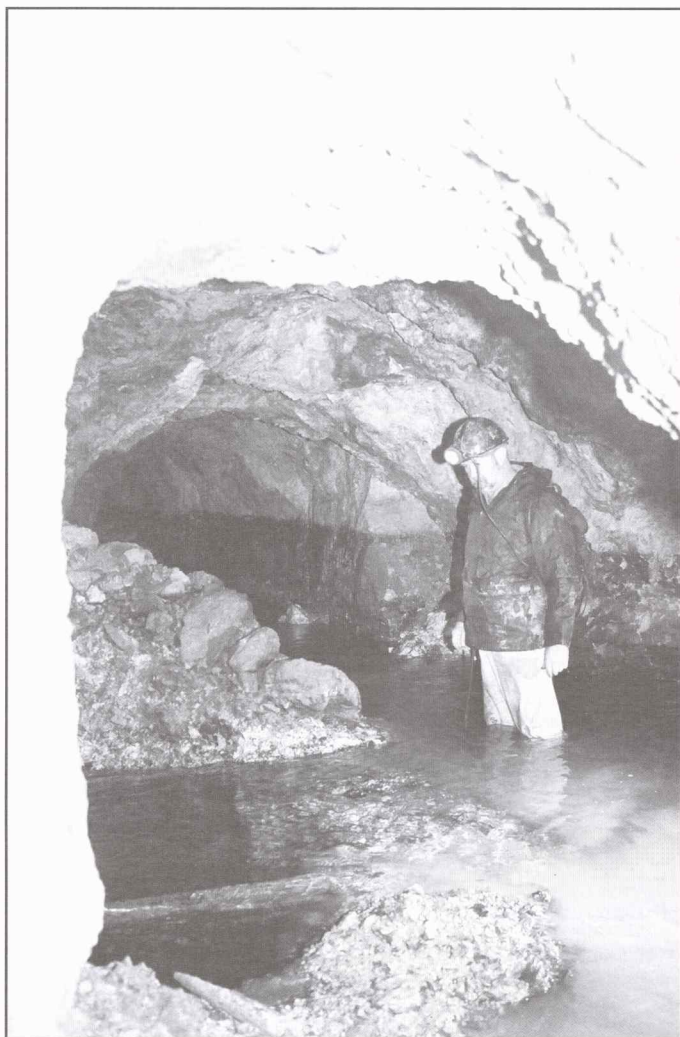


Figure 3. Des Cowman in the wet adit looking at a flooded shaft, only 10m in from the entrance. Photo M. Critchley.



Figure 4. Des Cowman at the shaft which can be crossed with the aid of metal pipes. Photo M. Critchley.

pears here and there are vivid secondary copper mineral stains along the passage walls. Turning left at the flooded shaft a branch passage on the left follows the main vein where it swells to over 3 metres in width. There has been some stoping at this point. Continuing on the main level inwards for another 20 metres leads to an opening on the left with a short climb up to stope workings on the main vein. One wall of the stope is almost completely covered with blue and green secondary copper minerals and has been named the "waterfall" by Wilson (2002).

Continuing for a further 10m on the main level a branch passage on the left leads to the open shaft seen on the surface near to the road. One passage on the left gives access to the stope workings below the "waterfall"; whilst straight ahead is a 40m cross cut. This cross cut gives access to a long drive on a poorly mineralised vein. Turning left from where the cross cut meets the north-south vein leads to an open adit entrance in the cliff face, about 7-8m above the beach level. This section of the adit is liberally coated with pigeon guano and nesting birds can sometimes be found here. Turning right from the cross cut leads to an 80m long almost straight level on which the vein

check can be seen on the right-hand side dipping about 80 degrees west. The level ends in a hard forehead and good secondary copper mineralisation can be seen in small chamber near to the end.

Returning back past the open shaft, the main level turns northwards and then eastwards through barren rock until a branch on the left leads to further stope workings on the main vein. The passage walls here are coated with an unidentified black mineral. The branch to the left meets the main vein after about 15m and the stope is crossed by a wooden ladder of unknown age. The sole of the workings on the far side of the stope are collapsed and there are suggestions from the old mine plans that there is a winze leading downwards from here.

Back on the adit level, the passage turns left then immediately right and a winze is encountered filling the full width of the passage. The winze is flooded about 2m below adit level and can be crossed by traversing two small iron pipes. Twenty metres past the winze is a short passage on the left, which shows trial workings on the main vein. Past here the main level continues for another 55m before further progress is stopped by a col-

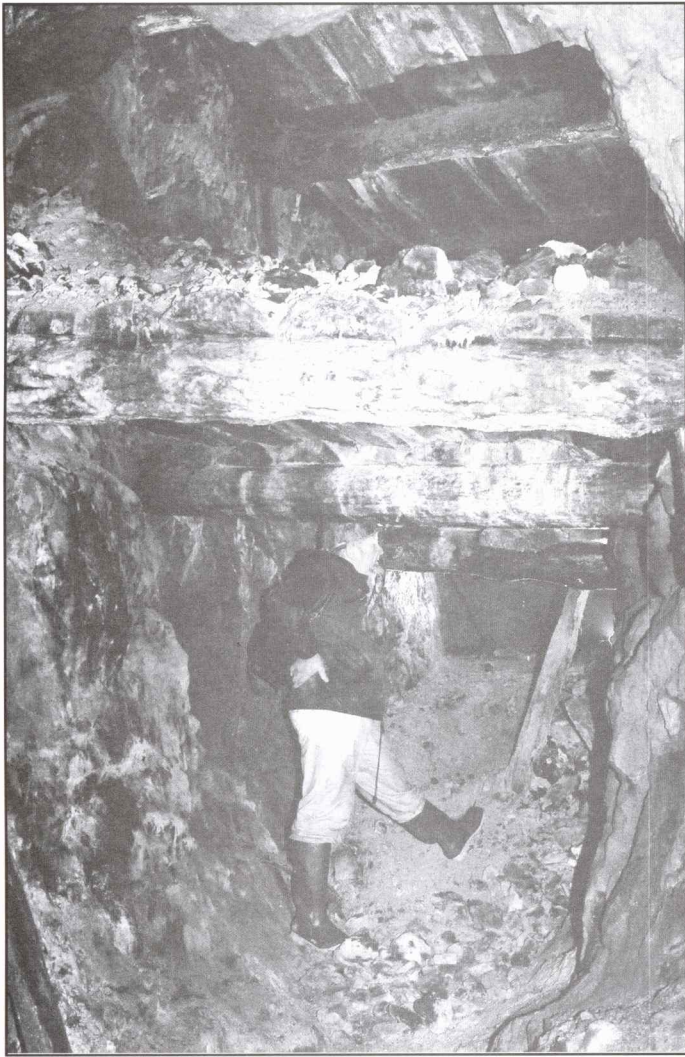


Figure 5. Des Cowman stoops beneath a platform in the main stope. Photo M. Critchley.

lapse. The level at this point appears to branch with one passage continuing NE and a second passage going to the left (SW). The abandonment plan shows a junction at this point and the left hand branch should lead to the main engine shaft (Heron's Shaft). Digging may be possible in both directions, but there are large overhead boulders on the left branch. Good secondary copper minerals are visible at the collapse suggesting that the main vein is nearby.

To conclude, the Tankardstown adit shows some of the most spectacular secondary mineralisation in Ireland and care should be taken during any visit so as not to destroy any formations. It should be noted that there is no general right of access to abandoned mines in Ireland; all abandoned mines are in the ownership of the State and access is controlled by the Minister of the Communications, Natural Resources and the Marine.

I am grateful to Richard Shaw, Brian Jones and Des Cowman for help in the underground surveying and to the Minister of the Communications, Natural Resources and the Marine for permission to access the workings.

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- Cowman, D. 2003, forthcoming. *The Making and Breaking of a Mining Community: The Copper Coast, Co. Waterford, 1825-1875+*.
- Wilson, I. 2001. *Beneath your feet: Tankardstown Mine*. Privately Published.