

Mining History Society of Ireland

Newsletter

No. 1. Spring 1996

PROGRAMME

(Separate notice of these will be sent to members)

- **May 25th and 26th:** Field meet and lecture: *Lead Mining at Ballycorus, Glendalough and the Wicklow Gap Area* with Rob Goodbody and William Dick. Begins at Silver Tassie pub at 3.00.
- **June 15th and 16th:** Field meet and Lecture: *An Introduction to the Mines of Antrim* with Kevin O'Hagan.. Begins at Glenariff Forest Car Park at 12.00 on Sat 15th.
- **Sept. 8th National Heritage Day:** It is anticipated that walks will be held in various parts of the country introducing the public to our mining heritage.
- **October 16th and 17th:** Field meet to the Ross Island Bronze Age Mines, Killarney and to the mines of the Kenmare valley with Billy O'Brien.
- **November:** lecture (to be arranged).
- **8th February 1997:** AGM.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to this the first newsletter of the newly established Mining History Society of Ireland. At the time of the conception of such a Society, in late 1995, several individuals with an established profile in Mining History in Ireland, while very enthusiastic about the concept, equally considered that their interest was that of "a lone voice in the wilderness". I shall spare their blushes(!?) by preserving their anonymity, but they along with others, came together to form an ad hoc committee which steered the nascent Society to its formal inauguration at the IGM on February 10th, 1996. The current membership now stands at about 75 - a remarkable achievement in so short a period of time. If nothing else, none of us need now feel that we are "lone voices in the wilderness"! More seriously, though, I would like to thank all of you for the support and encouragement which you have demonstrated in such a tangible way - by joining the new Society. The committee elected at our IGM comprised the following:

John Morris, Chair	Kevin O'Hagan, Vice-Chair.
Matthew Parkes, Secretary	Martin Critchley, Treasurer.
Des Cowman, Editor	Tom Reilly, member
Eamonn Grennan, member	Nick Coy, member.

We hope that, over the coming months, years and on into the future, your commitment will be amply rewarded and that you will share in and enjoy the growth and development of our Society. There is much to do, as was outlined at the IGM, and it would be tempting to start running before we have learnt to walk. For that reason, we have set a rather modest

CONTENTS

Programme; Note from the Chairman;	
Editorial.	Pages 1-2.
ARTICLES	Pages 2-6
# William Thomas Mulvany,--- coal mines in Germany.	
# The Old Glengowla East Lead Mine, Oughterard, Co. Galway	
# Mines and their use by Bats	
# Cornish Engine Houses in Ireland.	
SOURCES AND QUERIES	Pages 6-8
Logo	Page 9
LIST OF MEMBERS	Pages 9-12

target of actions in our first, establishment year, as outlined above: a programme of field excursions, lectures, a one week field meet and support of at least one publication, currently under discussion with its authors. We hope also to inaugurate a folio of fact sheets for all historic mine sites throughout Ireland, which will serve not just as an archival record in its own right, but perhaps more importantly provide a documentary record to be used to support our efforts to encourage local planning authorities to recognise the conservation worth of mining heritage sites. More of this concept in another newsletter.

Enclosed with this newsletter, you will find a copy of the Society's constitution. This incorporates amendments to the draft version adopted at the IGM. There were six proposed amendments, of which three were adopted:

- to adopt a bilingual name for the Society [reflected in the title and in Article 1];
- to provide for a postal ballot of members for elections to the Committee [Article 17];
- and to empower the Committee to act on behalf of the Society on issues not explicitly stated in the Constitution, but in keeping with its objectives [Article 16].

Incorporation of the latter two amendments into the draft version has been effected by creating a new Article [17], by subdividing draft Article 16 into Articles 16 and 17 and renumbering all subsequent Articles and cross-references therein.

Three motions were defeated:

- to alter the proposed length of service permitted on Committee;
- to delete the indemnity clause [draft Article 37, now 38];
- and to modify the terms Chairman and Vice-Chairman to non-sexist equivalents.

The latter motion was defeated by a single vote and has already produced some dissension. Accordingly, I propose to re-submit this amendment to the next AGM with a very strong recommendation that it be accepted in order to avoid affront to any current or future members. Finally, in redrafting the Constitution to reflect the amendments, I noticed a drafting error in Article 18.4, which should make reference to Article 18.2, instead of Article 18.1 as stated. This error will need to be rectified by a formal amendment at the next AGM.

This is your Society: your input and participation is vital to its development. So please feel free to communicate your thoughts, ideas and concerns to any member of the Committee; come along to the meetings (and encourage new members to do so as well!); and, not least of all, the newsletter is here ready and waiting for your contributions!

Best wishes, John Morris, Chairman.

EDITORIAL

The main aim of the Newsletter into the future will be to report on meetings and outings as well as to notify members of forthcoming events. Also important will be the "Sources and Queries" which we would anticipate being greatly expanded in future issues. Allied to this will be short items such as the three in this issue dealing with aspects of Irish mining history as well as contemporary facets of abandoned mines.

With this is first Newsletter we publish the list of members up to mid-April 1996. For some members we have established what their mining interests are and we would hope to feature this in further membership lists. A number of members volunteered to involve themselves in an editorial subcommittee. These are -

Ben Dhonau	Adrian Pierce	Alan Williams
Billy O'Brien	Wally Walsham	

The Newsletter, therefore can be a forum for questions and answers, analysis and comment, sources and summaries. Its pages are open to you, the members of the Mining History Society of Ireland. Simply contact Des Cowman -

"Knockane", Annestown, Co. Waterford. Ph.: 051- 396157.

ARTICLES

William Thomas Mulvany, developer of the *Hibernia*, *Shamrock* and *Erin* coal mines in Germany.

William Thomas Mulvany was born in Dublin in 1806 and was employed as an engineer by the Irish Board of works up to 1854 when he resigned following a dispute. He met in Dublin a Michael Corr (originally of Slane) who was involved in coal mining in Germany. Together they interested themselves in a coal field near Gelsenkirchen (east of Düsseldorf) and along with another Dubliner, James Perry they bought it in 1854. They then sought further capital in Ireland to develop these deposits and interested the cotton miller Joseph Malcomson of Portlaw, county Waterford.

The new company was formally set up in March 1856 although work had already commence on St. Patrick's day 1855. It comprised 128 shares, fifty six of which were held by three of the Malcomson family, forty by the Perry family while Mulvany and Corr had sixteen each. The new operation was proudly christened Hibernia! Meanwhile the opportunity had come up to buy another series of mines near Herne about eight kilometres to the east and the same group plus one Cussack P. Roney set up a separate company to run these. They named the area Shamrock!

The guiding spirit behind the development of these German mines was Mulvany. While none of his work in Ireland was likely to have given him experience of coal mining, he seemed to have known how to employ the best expertise available. He engaged the engineer William Coulson from Durham along with miners from there to solve the problems of water as the new shafts were sunk. They used cast iron tubes as linings, piloting this type of development in other German mines. These mines were highly successful and by the mid-1860s were producing between them well over 300,000 tons of coal per year.

This success lead to Mulvany interesting himself in another group of coal mines as well as further east, just outside Dortmund in 1865. He set up a new company to work them with and Roney plus Ebenezer Pike of Cork as shareholders. This time he took on a number

of German shareholders as well: nevertheless the mines were firmly named "Erin"! Immediately they bought two other German coal mines plus a smelter nearby. They then set up a separate company to run the mining and smelting of the entire area. This was, however, called the Prussian Mining and Iron Company but Mulvany was its chairman. Its reports were published both in German and English.

All three companies remained under Irish influence up to the mid 1870s. Hibernia and Shamrock were sold to German investors at that stage and the Prussian company collapsed during a crisis in 1877. The first two mines remained in operation up to 1925 and 1967 respectively while the Erin mine continued with that name up to 1983. Mulvany himself died in Düsseldorf in 1885. His local importance is reflected in the fact that streets in four town of the area are named after him. He is remembered not alone for the coal mines but because he piloted and promoted a range of local business developments.

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The above summary probably fails to do justice to William Thomas Mulvany. However there is still some research to be done into some aspects of his work and writing pending the availability of sources. I would, for instance be grateful if readers know the whereabouts of any of the English/German reports of the Prussian Mining and Iron Company (Preussische Bergwerks- und Hütten-Aktiengesellschaft) between 1866 and '77. Mulvany himself apparently contributed to a collection *On Mining Machinery* edited by (?) Davey or Dawey, published London 1882 which does not, however, appear on the indexes of any of the major depositories. Perhaps some readers might have come across it! I would be very grateful to hear of these or of rare reports or manuscript material relating to any aspect of W.T. Mulvany's life. Do let the editor know, or write to me -

Olaf Schmidt

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