



# NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 14

September 2000

*Cumann Oidhreachta na Mianadóireachta*

Mining Heritage Society of Ireland

## CONTENTS

### NEWSLETTER 14

2. Report from NAMHO conference in Truro.
3. National Mine Inventory (Summary of talk)
5. Mine Inventory Weekend in Monaghan
7. Correspondence
8. Society News –  
Geophysical survey Tankardstown; New members; Heritage Week events; Silvermines and pollution.

## EDITORIAL

A number of significant developments are about to take place. In early November Kevin Barton and Louise Geraghty will present the findings of their multi-sensory survey of Tankardstown engine complex in Co. Waterford. Outline on page 8.

The AGM next February will give members the opportunity to vote on a change of status from Society to a Trust. Members will be circulated with details of this proposed change beforehand.

Meanwhile preparations are well under way for the NAMHO conference to be held 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> September 2001 to be centred in Avondale, Co Wicklow. Appropriately, its former owner, C.S. Parnell, had an active interest in mining.

## MHSI PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 1999-2000

(**Bold print** indicates finalised programmes; further details will be sent to members of events in ordinary print; *italics* indicates non-MHSI activities)

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. : Inventory field trip “Van Diemens Land”. Meet at car park, Upper Lake, Glendalough at 10.30.**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> Oct.:** Inventory field trip to Tassan mine, Co. Monaghan, Meet at Anyalla post office (on Clontibret side of village) on the N2 to Monaghan.

4-6<sup>th</sup> November: Geophysical Survey of Tankardstown, report weekend (see editorial and p. 8).

Sat. 10<sup>th</sup> February 2001: AGM of MHSI (see editorial – documentation to follow)

**IS YOUR SUBSCRIPTION PAID FOR 2000?**  
Check the envelope that this came in. If 1999 is written on the label, then send off your £15 immediately to Dr. John Morris, GSI, Beggars Bush, Dublin 4.

**NOTE.** The EGM notified in the last Newsletter for 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. will not take place. Voting on becoming a Trust will take place instead at the AGM.

**MHSI**

## **NAMHO 2000: TRURO, CORNWALL: JULY 14 - 17**

(Martin Critchley and John Morris)

This event was centred in Truro School: all accommodation, including camping and caravanning, the display centre, beer hall, lecture theatre, most meals, and the concert, on this occasion presented by the Holman Climax Male Voice Choir.

A long traffic jam on the approaches to the Tamar Bridge conjured images of border check points as we “left England”. We arrived well in time to set up the MHSI “shop” on the Friday afternoon July 14, but unfortunately arrived too late to hear the opening lectures by Nick Johnson on Cornwall’s historic mining heritage, and Erik Nordberg on the development of the Michigan copper mines – a subject of particular relevance to the diaspora of Irish miners to that region from the 1840s on.

First event that evening was a truly magnificent reception, courtesy of Cornwall County Council in County Hall. The tables were groaning under the weight of food, including mounds of succulent pasties, and, washed down with the liquid of choice, we were well set up for the formal opening ceremony and opening address in the Council chamber. This was perhaps the only plenary occasion attended by most of the 200+ delegates, as over the succeeding days, the participants split into two very distinct groups: an underground exploration cohort (otherwise known as the “rope swingers”), who inevitably left for their events very early and arrived back late and dirty but well satisfied; and a second, and equally satisfied group who found their pleasure through slightly less strenuous endeavours at the lecture sessions and surface tours. The 3 MHSI attendees (Eamonn Grennan, - when he wasn’t slinking off to follow the GAA competition endeavours of Offaly - and the authors) conformed perfectly to the general pattern – and there are no prizes for guessing who fell into which group!



**John Morris displaying his tin-vanning skills in Truro.**

The eclectic lecture programme extended over a full three days, set at a very generous rate of three to four presentations per morning or afternoon session. This left plenty of time for informal discussions, networking, coffee, and viewing a wide range of commercial and society displays. Some talks were videoed, but, in a new, innovative and very welcome development, all [as well as tours] will be summarised in a Proceedings volume – which relieves us of the task of attempting to summarise them here.

It is invidious to try and single out any particular talks, which ranged from Virtual Reality 3D computer modelling of actual and planned mines (Wheal Reality) by Keith Russ, through detailed historical research studies on a wide range of topics, such as the history of mining development in Devon by Peter Claughton, to thought provoking presentations on conservation and restoration projects. In the latter group, Jan Verbruggen outlined the restoration of the largest Cornish beam engine ever produced, the 144” Cruquius engine in the Netherlands; Milton Thomas spoke with passion on the restoration of the Levant engine; and Damian Nance described and illustrated the totality of beam engines preserved in the USA, only one of those, the Vaucluse engine, possibly of Cornish manufacture). On the same theme, two presentations on mine restoration and conservation were especially noteworthy, not least as a demonstration of what can be achieved by very small groups with very limited funds: the Rosevale Mine, described by Tony Bennett, and, with perhaps an Irish dimension, the Kelly Mine near Bovey Tracey, described and illustrated with video by Tony Brooks. Both Tony Bennett and Stuart Smith, in his closing address, pondered upon the whole concept of the how, and why, of mine heritage presentation, Stuart instancing the very thought provoking example of a gasometer in Germany converted into an indoor arena as an example of the type of innovative thinking now required.

Besides the talks for the more sedate members (John included!), there was a wide spectrum of surface and underground trips. These ranged from the easy, but very informative walk around St. Agnes (lead by Ken Brown) to the strenuous underground trips. Martin participated in two of the underground trips. At Polgooth, near St. Austell, we saw the extensive surface remains; including a Cornish Stamps and an Engine House converted for domestic use. The main adit here has been re-opened after much digging by the local mining group. At Rosemurgy, near St. Just, we explored an old tin mine situated on the cliff face. The entrance was via a lower adit, near to sea level, exiting via another level near to the top of the cliff.

We warmly congratulate all at the Carn Brea Society for a superbly organised event, the surest sign of their excellent organisation most subtly manifest in its, apparently, trouble-free progress. Their professionalism, and attention to detail was everywhere evident: registration, delegate packs, badges, event tickets, branded goods, an incredibly elaborate surface and underground tour registration facility, helicopter tour, river wine and dine cruise, the Conference dinner and the excellent concert: the list is endless. What an act to have to follow next year despite Maureen and Lawrence Holmes attempts to reassure us on that front! But at least they have given us a leg-up and the Carn Brea Society bequeathed to us their entire set of professionally produced directional signage, as well as guidelines. Now all we have to do is organise something at the end of that signage!

---

The following is a summary of the talk given by Martin Critchley and John Morris entitled **ARD\* work in Ireland: Developing the national Mine Heritage Inventory** (\* Archive, Record and Display).

### **A National Mine Heritage Inventory**

Despite the awareness of mining heritage at a governmental level in Ireland there has been little in the way of material resources applied to the study of old mine sites. Thus it has fallen to the Mining Heritage Society of Ireland to Acquire, Record and Display the information on Ireland's mining heritage. To meet this challenge the MHSI has implemented a multiphase work programme with the following aims:

- Development of relational database
- Locate and describe all mine sites
- Detailed site surveying
- Application of Geographic Information Systems
- Link database and GIS to web server
- Publications

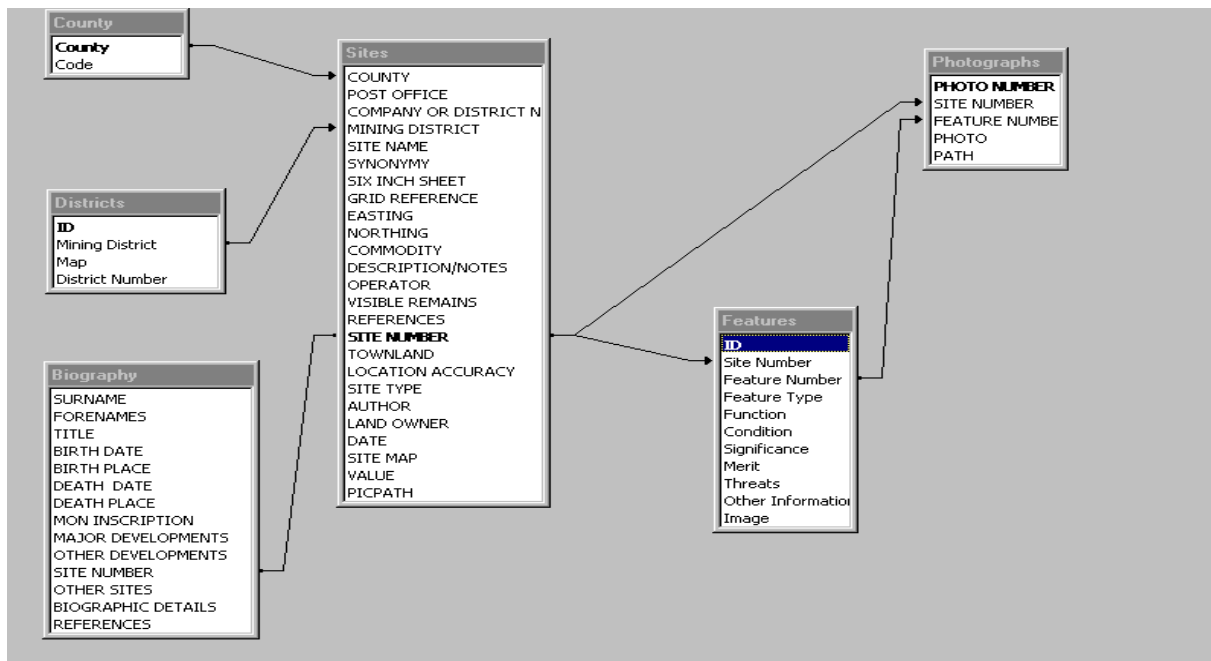
### **Database**

The development of a development of a database for mine sites in Ireland was not a difficult task and this has been accomplished in Microsoft Access. A more difficult task has been the population of the database.

The database structure is based upon a relational model of essentially a hierarchical nature. The main tables in the database are shown in figure 1, a site is basically described through the District, Site and Feature tables, which are cross-related upon the site number. Photographs can be related to Site or Feature Tables.

The population of the database has been accomplished using an initial 'seed' from published records, followed by site visits. The initial 'seed' was derived primarily from an 1854 catalogue prepared to accompany Sir Richard Griffith's geology and mineral deposits map of Ireland, published in 1855. To this we have started to add information from other sources, principally from Cole's 1922 memoir, as well as other information, such as grid references, which will facilitate development of a GIS interface. Additional tables have also been added to the database:

- A list of Mining companies which are known to have operated in Ireland.
- A biographical list of mining entrepreneurs and personnel connected with mine developments.
- A list of steam engines, which operated at Irish mines: manufacturer, engine size, function, when acquired, sold onward etc.

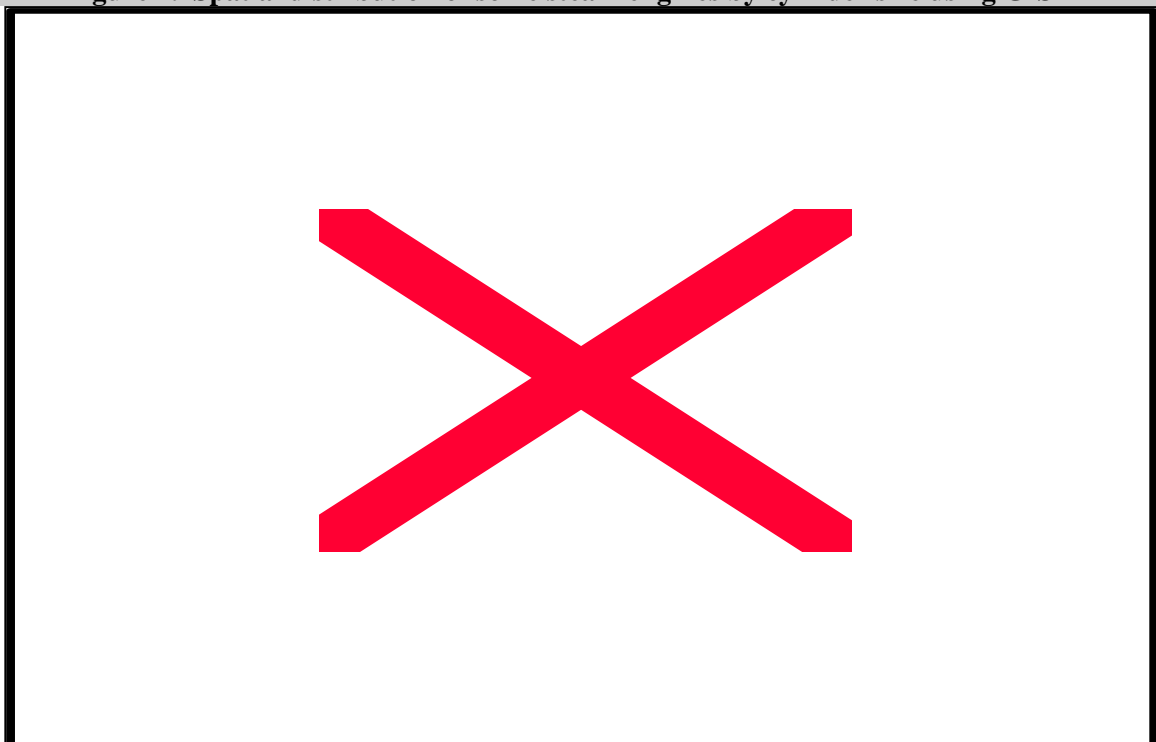


**Figure 1. Database Structure**

### Application

The database has been designed to allow for research, customised queries, publications and links to Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Customised reports will be used to produce ‘fact sheets’ for some of the major mine sites.

**Figure 2. Spatial distribution of some steam engines by cylinder size using GIS**



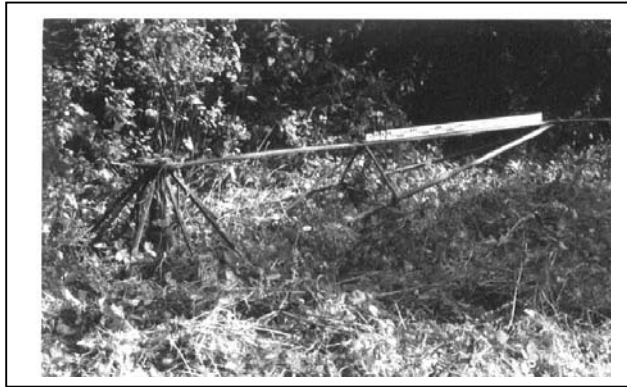
GIS present spatial data in a digital 2D or 3D format and allow for powerful data query and analysis. GIS can also be used to ‘serve’ live maps over the Internet. The maps can be generated to a users’ specific requirements rather than just looking at predefined static maps. Example of the use of GIS would be looking at the spatial distribution of for example engine houses by cylinder size (figure 2) or as an interface to other feature attributes, such as photographs.

## Monaghan Site Inventory weekend: Aug. 19 – 20.

(John Morris)

*O stoney soil of Monaghan,  
You burgled my bank of youth.*  
(Patrick Kavanagh)

Well, I'm not very youthful, and I'm sure glad that I never had to farm the heavy clay soils of drumlin covered Monaghan; or mine the equally hard and unyielding greywacke rocks which host that region's lead (-silver) and antimony (-gold) deposits. So having paid due homage to Monaghan's "Poet Laureate", we can now turn to the purpose of our visit on Aug. 19-20. A small, but select group [Des and I to be precise!] foregathered outside Corr's pub in Annyalla [no, we did not meet inside], and, beating a hasty retreat from the traffic infested N2, we headed east into the depths of the Monaghan Marches.



**Fig. 1. The iron horse whim at Tassan.**

First stop Tassan, where we spent most of Saturday measuring up and recording the Mine Office building, almost certainly the largest 19<sup>th</sup> Century mine building still standing anywhere in Ireland. This is a composite building, built in at least three stages, the first, of generally superior construction standard, probably dating from the period 1854/5; the second, and larger part of poorer construction, and only crudely tied into the original building, probably dating from the 1860s; and the third phase, almost certainly unrelated to mine related use, marked by lean-to's attached at both ends. Late on in the afternoon an extra pair of eyes and hands appeared in the shape of Phelim Lally, who set to poking around in the undergrowth and taking GPS readings at various points. Meantime Des and I fought off the attention of a herd of over-friendly Charolais bullocks, although we had less success with the midges. Then a cry from the bushes – Phelim had uncovered what looks like an almost entirely intact, cast iron horse whim, which Des and I, to our chagrin, had walked by thinking it to be a piece of farm machinery [fig. 1].

The whim appears to consist of a horizontal tow bar, which is connected to a vertically mounted axle through a saucer shaped flange at ground level. We presume that this connects, by a crown wheel and pinion gear, to a horizontal axle below ground level [to allow the horse to walk over it], which then passes under the Mine building wall to what we surmise are the remains of carpenters shop machinery gearing [fig. 2]. This is still partially intact, though the main pulley wheel has been cut back to ground level. That, essentially, was it for the day – apart from a very late night in Andy's pub in Monaghan town!



**Fig. 2 The indoor machinery which was probably driven by the horse whim.**

Next day, back to Tassan, by which time Martin had appeared, as did the site owner, Seamus McVicar. He, like Philip McAdam, the present owner of Mine Manager, James Skimming's house at nearby Annaglogh [not in Co. Clare as Mineral Statistics might lead you to believe], was very interested to see and hear what we were doing. Both are interested to work with us to conserve what is left. Anyway, we found the very heavily overgrown engine house foundation [presumably that of the 25" rotative engine erected in 1854: Ken Brown, May 1999], the main shaft site, probable dressing floor site etc. All-in-all, a very satisfactory visit with enough teasers to encourage us to go back again in October when vegetation has died back: in particular, to have a much closer look at the horse whim.



**Fig. 3. The mine captain's house at Annaglogh.**

On to Annaglogh, where apart from James Skimming's house [Fig. 3], and the foundation of the engine house chimney, apparently demolished in the 1960s to provide a source of track making material, there is very little to see. The house was quickly measured up and GPS readings again taken at various points. The nearby "Blackquarter" ring fort provided a distraction for some, who, duly, and reverentially muttering about "ritual sites" [I did not enquire of what nature], rejoined us, and, after a brief sortie across the border into Armagh to see the site of the ex-MCI Derrynoose mine [completely flattened and not a thing to see], we moved on to Coolartra(gh) – otherwise termed the Bond and Coolarten Mine in Mineral Statistics. There, according to the *Dublin Builder* of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1863 an engine house had just been erected.

There was little sign of it and not a lot to see, apart from the remains of the small roofless, office building, locally known as the "Ceilidh House". But we measured up what we could see and related it to a copy of an 1890s mine abandonment plan [original in the archives of the Geological Survey of Ireland]: the travelling way portal and partial wall foundations of what we presume to be the engine house, boiler house and chimney, as well as sites of two shafts. Again, Phelim was a dab hand with the GPS, and the surveying was rather more ordered, with Martin in charge to lay out a base line etc.

But it was Carol and Andrew Fraser, owners of the house immediately adjoining the Coolartra site [? the Mine Managers house originally?] who provided us with our most unusual, and so far unique find: our first known example of an Irish mining poem, the "Coolartra Races". Written by local poet Neil Doran (c.1850? – 1936), this 6 verse poem recounts a race meeting for horses, ponies and donkeys organised on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1892 by the local Mine Captain, Captain Walker. As reproduced in "The Clontibret Story" (Brendan Ó'Dufaigh, 1997), the final verse reads as follows:

*"Long life to Captain Walker and long may he reign,  
To conduct the mines in Ireland till we have a race again,  
To split the rock apart till our treasure it is found,  
And pick up all the silver lead that lies underneath the ground."*

And so to our final quick look-see stop, to the Hope (Cornalough/Carricakagarvan; Dundalk in Mineral Statistics) Mine, just south of Castleblayney. In 1984, when I last visited the site, this was the only mine in Monaghan where a chimney still stood, and I fully expected to find that it had finally succumbed to the elements. But, amazingly, there it still stands, albeit looking a bit frilly around the edges. No time for surveying though – that's for another time. But if this account whets your appetite, why not come along this coming October and help us beat up a few bushes at Tassan (see Programme on the front page)?

## CORRESPONDENCE

### **Pumping Engine Model at the Royal College of Science Dublin**

Mr. Russell Bennett of 9 Penvale Court, Brook Place, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 3QR ([russ@trevear.freemove.co.uk](mailto:russ@trevear.freemove.co.uk)) sent photocopies of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Exhibition Report of 1872, p. 22 with a reference to "a beautiful Model of a Cornish Pumping Engine which has been constructed by the Perran Foundry for the Royal College of Science at Dublin". He also sent a copy of Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Journal for 1929, p. 277 of which contains the further explanatory paragraph –

*"In 1873, a replica of the powerful 100 inch S. Wales engine was made at Perran for the Royal College of Science, Dublin: the engine is a perfect model in all details and after being tested under steam it was exhibited at the Polytechnic Exhibition in 1873. The engine fitter who made this engine was named W. Cornelius, who was a highly competent man, and served some time as a watchmaker at St. Day before coming to Perran for the engine fitting"*

This query was circulated by e-mail and evoked the following two responses,

**1** The Royal College of Science (RCSI) was at 51 St Stephen's Green, and then moved circa 1911 to what is now Government Buildings on Merrion Square (which explains the statues of scientists at the door!). It closed circa 1920 when it merged with UCD.

Mary Mulvihill, Science Writer & Editor 51 Manor St, Dublin 7; T: +353 1 670 5029

**2** The Royal College of Science for Ireland was one of the constituent colleges of what became UCD. The 51 St Stephen's Green address is the current Office of Public Works but was the Museum of Irish Industry, RCSI and GSI jointly from about 1860-1890. In 1911 the RCSI got new premises constructed in Upper Merrion Street which is now part of Government Buildings and escaped from the eternal battling of shared accommodation.

There are a few possibilities for the fate of the model. Transferred by RCSI from Stephen's Green to Upper Merrion Street and thence to Belfield as departments de-camped (geology 1970s, engineering as late as 1990s). The model may have been under Engineering or transferred to the National Museum into which part of the Museum of Irish Industry was incorporated. Some exhibitions transferred into the new NMI building in Kildare Street (opened to public in 1890) while other exhibits stayed with the RCSI as teaching material.

Nigel Monaghan, Natural History Museum.

### **"Mining" the Kilpatrick Tunnel in Cork.**

Mr. Ernie Shepherd from Ballyvalloo, Blackwater, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford ([ernies@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:ernies@gofree.indigo.ie)) writes in connection with research on the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway. "In August 1846 their resident engineer, Charles Nixon, was commencing work on Kilpatrick tunnel near Innishannon and experienced difficulties getting navvies to do the work. In the event he hired a group of miners from West Carbery. And they excavated the 170 yard long tunnel, completing the work in a year".. Mr. Shepherd would be grateful for any information on this or precedents for miners thus tunnelling elsewhere.

## SOCIETY NEWS

### Bunmahon Geophysical Survey

The full report on the geophysical survey of Tankardstown engine house complex will be presented by Kevin Barton and Louise Geraghty in Bunmahon on 4<sup>th</sup> –5<sup>th</sup> November. It is envisaged that it will take the following form –

Introduction by Dr. Martin Critchley, Chairperson MHSI.

Presentation of the report by Kevin Barton and Louise Geraghty.

Responses from the floor – questions and answers.

Proceed to Bunmahon for lunch and museum visit.

Reassemble at Tankardstown.

On site interpretation by Kevin Barton and Louise Geraghty.

Placing the site within its Cornish context by Kenneth Brown.  
The archaeological implications by Billy O'Brien.  
Site potential and possible development Ian Forbes.  
Response by Kevin Barton and Louise Geraghty. Open session.

#### Welcome to new members

Susan Seager, (Full)  
77 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

Roland Budd (Research student at Dept  
Medieval History at TCD)  
5 Rowan Park Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin  
[BuddR@TCD.IE](mailto:BuddR@TCD.IE)

#### Heritage Week events

##### AVOCA

A crowd of about 150 including some old and modern day miners, turned up at White Bridge, Tigroney to take part in the annual walk over the East Avoca mines. Starting off at the mouth of 18th century Deep Level the group walked uphill past the ore-bins and timber stockwork of St Patrick's Copper Mines stopping off to view Williams Engine house en route. We looked at ochre and other mineralisation, an old water leat and a collapse zone before stopping at Baronet's Engine house to look across the valley at the slowly disappearing mine heritage of West Avoca under landfill. The final stage of the walk took us to the Cronebane open pit where a lively discussion followed on all sorts of matters relating to mining and heritage. On a beautiful autumnal day with the red and brown rocks glowing in the warm sunshine and the purple heather in full bloom, everyone present at Avoca could not but agree with the landscape historian W.G. Hoskins that abandoned metal mines are "perhaps the most appealing of all industrial landscapes...possessing a profound melancholy beauty"

Nick Coy

##### BUNMAHON

Several hundred people were packed into the sun-drenched car park in Bunmahon wearing strange gear at 10.30 on September 3rd causing panic in at least one breast. It transpired that most were participating in a triathlon and so an elite group detached themselves to walk the heritage trail. The morning session was a round of the local historical churches including Cornish miners' burials and the chapel that was once the miners' temperance hall.

In continuing glorious sunshine we set out along the mining trail in the afternoon with the sea sparkling on our right. There was positively a festive spirit as people casually joined, walked some of the way, said thanks and departed. These included interesting people like the man who had stayed in the mine captain's house over fifty years ago and the retired Nottinghamshire track layer in the coal mines there.

Des Cowman

#### Action re pollution threat at Silvermines

##### SUBMISSION ON THE REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF LEAD IN THE SILVERMINES AREA OF COUNTY TIPPERARY

Dr. Martin Critchley, on behalf of MHSI has made a formal submission to the relevant Government Departments and agencies on the above. These are the concluding paragraphs -

*The proposed work at Silvermines will be the first time that large scale rehabilitation has taken place on an industrial site in Ireland. As such, it will set a model for other like work in Ireland and a balance must be found between remedial actions, heritage conservation and eco-systems. Handled correctly, the work could remove the threats to human and environmental health; whilst at the same time provide a means of conserving Ireland's industrial heritage.*

*The Mining Heritage Society of Ireland is ready to assist the authorities in the work at Silvermines and we look forward to a successful outcome.*