



NEWSLETTER

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Cumann Oidhreacht na Iannadóireachta

Mining Heritage Society of Ireland

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MHSI PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2001

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

Saturday 27th January: Mining communities and Culture”, a conference organised by the Cornish History Network in New, Cornwall. For details, e-mail :mining-history@jiscmail.ac.uk

Saturday 10th February: AGM of MHSI in GSI Beggars Bush (details enclosed with this Newsletter). There will be a field trip on the Sunday.

Sunday 1st April: Inventory meeting at Glendalough and Van Diemens land. Meet Upper Lake car park at 10.30.

Saturday/Sunday 19th/20th May: Inventory weekend in East Clare (details in next Newsletter).

21st-23rd September (plus option to 28th): NAMHO Conference in Wicklow (see p. 4)

EDITORIAL

Documentation accompanying this Newsletter spells out the significance of the decision to be made at the AGM of MHSI on 10th February. If the change of status of the Society is ratified, this will be followed immediately by an EGM of the new Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland Ltd. [MHTI]. Its immediate business will be the election of a board of directors who will later elect their own officers. This will be followed by an evaluation of the draft Five Year Plan.

This will not necessarily affect the programme as outlined above. The objectives are expected to remain the same, as will the practical methods for implementing them (e.g. the Inventory of mining sites). The Journal will certainly be published (it may be ready for the AGM) and the next one is under active consideration. Plans for the NAMHO conference are well advanced (see p. 4) and moves are in place towards conserving the man-engine at Allihies (p. 2-3).

This may well be the last MHSI Newsletter. Any thoughts on changes for a possible MHTI Newsletter to –

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MHSI

**Man Engine House, Mountain Mine, Allihies, Co. Cork:
conservation progress report.**

No news from this front for a while should not be taken as a sign of inactivity! Far from it, as in early November, Martin, Ken Brown, Roz Cundick and I spent 3 days on site participating in, and facilitating a detailed conservation consultancy study commissioned by the Heritage Council. The Consultant, David Ferguson from the John Knevitt Practice, Bodmin, Cornwall, was engaged by the Heritage Council to carry out and provide a detailed and fully costed conservation study and works plan – which we optimistically hope will form the basis for undertaking the works in 2001. Funding for the consultancy study has been appropriated from the Heritage Council grant of £6,000 awarded under the Community Grants Scheme to the MHSI earlier this year to undertake conservation works on the Engine House. The study involved a detailed evaluation of the structural condition of the entire building and ancillary structures, both internally and externally, followed by a meeting with representatives from the Heritage Council [Beatrice Kelly] and Cork County Council [Louise Harrington, Conservation Officer] to discuss critical administrative, logistical and grant issues – as well as considering, funds permitting, re-roofing the building as a conservation measure. This was a very productive meeting, even though it has posed more homework – including an ecological assessment of the building; and the huge cost of scaffolding. We have suggested to the Heritage Council that they consider acquiring a large stock of scaffolding and rent it to conservation groups, thereby creating an asset of value to the Council, and contributing to reduction of costs to groups such as MHSI. This suggestion is now under consideration by the Council and other matters are equally well in hand.

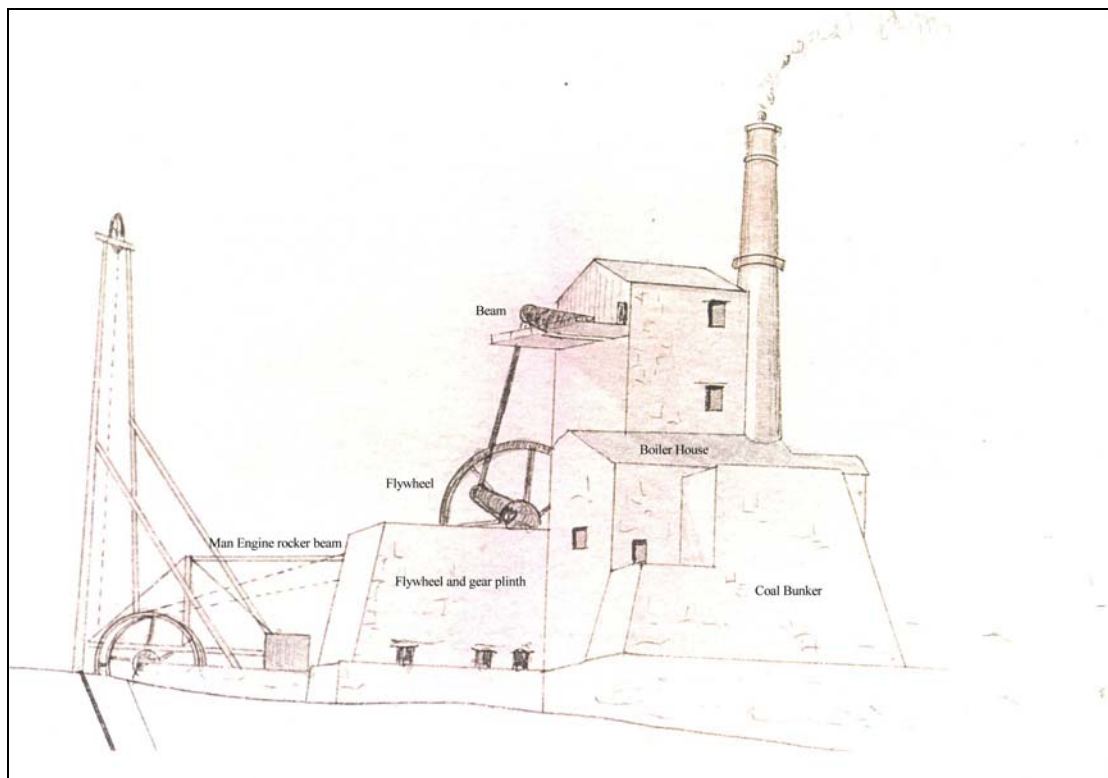
At the same time, the MHSI was also asked by the Heritage Council to provide a detailed account of the historical context and heritage value of the building. Again, this is well in hand, and completing the interpretation section has benefited enormously from Ken and Roz's input, both in January and again in November. One of the most critical aspects has been interpreting exactly how the Man Engine system actually worked. Ken was able to make some very well informed surmises from measurements taken, in atrocious weather conditions, on the flywheel and gear plinth in front of the bob wall during his January visit, and these have now been further refined – and dare I say “copper” fastened now?

A sketch of the Man Engine House and ancillary structures, reproduced below, appears in the margin of a mine plan dated 1869, held in the Mine Records Archive of the Geological Survey of Ireland. The sketch is unfortunately, not to scale, resulting in some amusing distortions as we attempted to enlarge it to scale factors derived from some direct measurements on the building. Even so, it has provided invaluable evidence to help the overall interpretation.

In light of this detailed consultancy study requested by the Heritage Council, we decided not to proceed with our earlier intention of initiating conservation works on certain high risk damaged areas, most notably to replace the missing pillar in the north wall; and rotten timbers and missing masonry wall sections around a gear mechanism slot which passes through the bob wall adjacent to the condenser pit. It was felt that it would be prudent to await the outcome of the consultancy study in order to ensure consistency of conservation works. The consultancy report is, as yet incomplete, but is due for submission in the early part of December. A further update on progress will be given at the AGM next February.

There is one final issue to note, and that is to extend our thanks to Exploration and Mining Division, Department of Marine and Natural Resources, for kindly offering to insert a gateway into the fenced off area around the Engine House to facilitate access by contractors.

John Morris.



A sketch of the Man Engine House and ancillary structure, which appears in the margin of a mine plan dated 1869, held in the Mine Records Archive of the Geological Survey of Ireland.

**SUMMARY OF GEOPHYSICAL CONFERENCE ON TANKARDSTOWN
SURVEYED BY KEVIN BARTON
4/5TH NOVEMBER 2000**

About 25 people attended the various stages of this. Following introductions (including a very supportive letter from Ian Forbes), Kevin Barton explained the four stages of his geophysical survey and presented what each revealed.

Collectively they differentiated between areas of high activity at Tankardstown and track-ways or service area (including that of capstan) as suggested in concurrent and subsequent discussion. The problematic reservoir-like area across the road was tentatively identified as a natural or residual feature bisected by a railed causeway used for the dumping of waste over the cliff.

The overall picture was reinforced by a site visit in the afternoon with an added dimension provided by Ken Brown's illustrated lecture on the typical layout of Cornish engine houses. In all a complex site-plan emerged of a system of track-ways servicing a rectangular shaft at right angles longitudinally to the bob wall of the pumping engine with ladder-way possibly in the middle and raising area aligning with north wall of whim engine. The low-activity areas and line of the railway thus fall into place. The high-activity area in the south-western corner may have been the location of smithy and carpenters' shop.

Two major questions, however, remain unanswered. Why was there no subsurface evidence of the boiler houses or the flue(s) to the chimney? What was the source of the water for the boilers and condensers?

The spectacular rain the next morning eliminated all but the most intrepid who set out to look at other aspects of the mining operation, particularly the dressing floors. Responding to Christy Power's comments on mining remains near his home, a visit was arranged and the evidence of a hitherto unknown aspect was disclosed on Kilduane townland. He had showed us a beautiful specimen of almost native copper which he had got from one of the three waste tips there. They were possibly earlier 19th century with an undatable shaft uphill. A second concrete-collared shaft stood nearer the road with the settings for what was probably a

diesel lifting engine and nearby a house which Christy said is locally thought to have been a mine office but never used. The likely date was the mining revival of 1906 though no details of this seem to have survived.

Discussion of all these revelations lead to re-examination of the surviving maps and plans of the area with Peter Cloughton and Ken Brown out of which an agenda for further re-examination of evidence emerged. However, one immediate response from the latter to what was available in Bunmahon Heritage Centre was that the ruined barn-like building at Knockmahon was probably the winding engine which operated a capstan running to the various shafts still open on the sea-ward side.

The significance of Kevin Barton's geophysical survey of Tankardstown lay not only in what it revealed there but the pattern of interpretation for all similar sites in these islands. What lies or does not lie underground can now be reasonably predicted from the correlation of surface remains. That there were so many spin-off benefits from this weekend was an additional bonus. Meanwhile, the host group, Bunmahon Heritage Society, can only bask in a glow of gratitude towards the various national sponsoring organisations – GSI & MHSI; towards the local involvement – Sean O'Brien of Seaview Celtic, Annestown must be particularly commended for venue and support; and it probably could not have happened without Karen Toebe of Knockmahon Lodge.

Des Cowman

NAMHO 2001

Arrangements are well under way for this conference centred on Avondale, County Wicklow. The main programme begins on Friday evening 21st September. On the Saturday and Sunday there will be a choice of surface walks on the various Wicklow mines, underground visits and lectures (mornings only). **TARA MINES have offered us a visit, but please be warned they can only accommodate us on Tuesday 25th September 2001**, not on the Monday as we had originally hoped for. Lots of people have already expresses interest in this visit, but please check your travel plans NOW!

For those who wish to stay on and visit other Irish mining areas there will be a choice of three mine circuits with guides on hand for each from Monday 24th to Friday 28th September. Further details will follow soon.

THE FORTHCOMING MHSI JOURNAL.

It is hope to have this Journal ready by the AGM and it will be issued free to all paid-up members for 2001 on renewal. As a flavouring of what it will contain, the following is the provisional table of contents.

- "The Iron Mines of Dysert, County Laois" by Geraldine Carville
- "The metal mines of Dublin" by Des Cowman.
- "The Sandstone Mines of Mountcharles, County Donegal" by M. A. Parkes, G. Carville, G. Kelly & S. Dowds.
- "The Mines of Glenmalure: A Survey" by Stuart Chester, Nigel Burns and A.N.Other.
- "The Mining Boom of 1824-'25. PART I" by Des Cowman
- " Lemgare mine working survey" John H. Morris and M.A. Parkes.
- "An 1854 Catalogue of Mines and mineral occurrences in Ireland" John H. Morris.
- "Catalogue of Board of Trade Records of English based companies in Ireland 1856-1920" by John H. Morris and Des Cowman .
- "Some Mining Remains in Ireland" by Nick Southwick and Mike Moore
- "Man Engine House, Mountain Mine, Allihies, Co. Cork; Historical Context" by John H. Morris.
- "Irish Immigrants in the early Keweenaw Mines, Michigan: a research note" by William . Mulligan.
- "Mining History, Ireland and the World Wide Web: a Survey of Current Resources" by Greg Fewer.