



NEWSLETTER

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Cumann Oireacht na Mianadóireachta

MINING HERITAGE SOCIETY OF IRELAND

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EDITORIAL

Preparations are well underway for a number of publications. The publication of the *Mineral Statistics of Ireland* (due out in 1999) is well underway and hopefully will be ready for printing over the winter. This gives a county by county alphabetical listing of production figures for all the mines in Ireland (about 70 mines in Antrim; about 55 in Cork), plus surviving details of management and ownership. It will be possible to identify precisely almost every phase of mining in Ireland during the 19th and 20th centuries. The *Mineral Statistics* is a new compilation to be published jointly with the Northern Mines Research Society.

At the same time and complementing this, thanks to a Heritage Council grant, the Society will republish Cole's *Memoir of Localities of Minerals of Economic Importance and Metalliferous Mines in Ireland*. With the reprint will be a new introduction to the life of Granville Cole. This not only provides some descriptive detail of each mine but adds bibliographic information up to the time of its original publication in 1922. The 1956 reprint has long been unavailable.

These two publications will add considerably to the resources available to anybody interested in Ireland's mining history and heritage.

PROGRAMME

10-11th October: Field meet visiting Killaloe, Liscannor and the mines of south east Clare (Ballyvirgin, Ballyhickey, Miltown and Kilbreckan).

31st October. ISCAN – Stories in Stone. Geology Department, NUI, Galway.

13th Feb 1999: AGM of MHSI. Separate notice will be sent to members.

Spring 1999: Day Seminar "The tourism potential of mining heritage" (Avoca, Allihies, Arigna, Bunmahon, Coal Island, Glengowla, Silvermines with further examples from Ballarat and western Canada.)

2nd-3rd May 1999: Field Meet in the Isle of Man - Laxey, etc. (details in next Newsletter).

MHSI

-EDITORIAL (continued)

Two other publications are also envisaged before the new millennium. The proceedings of the ecology workshop held last October are to be published by the Royal Irish Academy. Also the first steps are being taken to record the oral traditions of those who worked in Irish mines since 1945. Such memories are the most fragile form of historical resource and in publishing such reminiscences both honours the past and services the future.

Finally, a government *National Heritage Plan* (subtitled *Managing the National Heritage into the New Millennium*) which has implications for mine heritage sites. This gives urgency to the inventory of mining sites being compiled by MHSI as the closing date for submissions is 16th November 1998.

MHSI VISIT TO CORNWALL

Six intrepid members of the society travelled to Cornwall and were hosted there by fellow members Ken Brown and Phil Saundry (thanks also to their ladies, the two Rozes) along with Kingsley Rickard. On Saturday 28th we got our introduction to Cornish technology at Parkandillick where Ken started the air compressor now driving the show engine there. He explained the intricate series of valve controls in the cataract chamber beneath the cylinder and we looked at the now dormant boiler in its house at a lower level outside. Passing the cylinder itself on the ground floor we watched the piston working the bob above as well as the mechanisms that connected to the cataracts below. On the upper level we marvelled at the smooth working of the beam and the series of links to the piston which kept its motion vertical. Standing on the bob wall and out along the cat-walk to watch the pump-rods' motion, all our shells of engine houses in Ireland assumed a meaning which no amount of reading about them could impart.

This was in China clay country and from there we proceeded to the museum at Wheal Martyn. A video and display explained the enormous waste tips and open casts we had seen on our way there. Outside, two water wheels with their balance bobs driving flat rods, one on to a working pump,

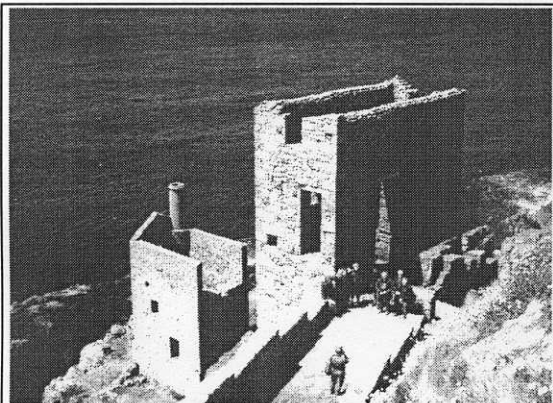


Figure 2. On the cliffs at Botallack.

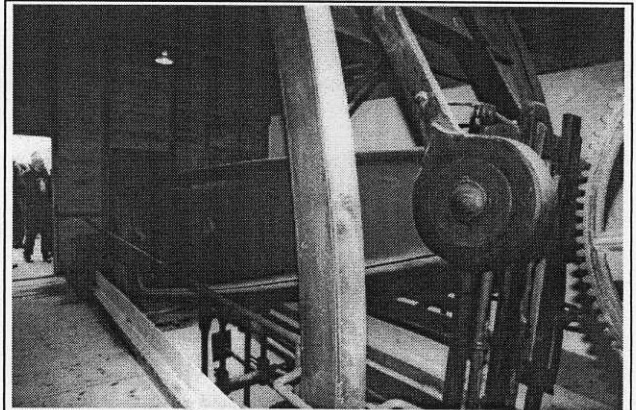


Figure 1. Indoors at Parandillick: bob and mechanisms. The top of the bob wall is on the left. (Photo: P. Saundry)

demonstrated exactly how that technology worked, and how very effective it was. The Friday ended with a party thrown by Roz and Ken where we all got to know each other better.

Sunday morning saw us on the cliffs at Botallack looking down on the two restored engine houses perched on rock ledges below. The mine here stretched an incredible 1½ miles under the sea so that the movement of ore from the remote workings was a huge problem. Then getting the ore to the surface was a major undertaking eventually solved by a skip on rails hauled by the winding engine up an incline surfacing as a hole in the cliff. A complex timber trestle brought the ore to a hopper whence it was conveyed by another skip up the cliff-face to the top. The flue for the chimney also ran up the cliff. Botallack mine working was really a marvel of how 19th century engineers could solve the most intractable problems.

Further east along the north Cornish coast lies Levant mine, another wonder of 19th century technology. This was deeper than Botallack. It ran more than a mile under the seabed and had a winding engine a quarter of a mile out for part of its life (1876-'92). A "man engine" installed in 1857 continued to raise and lower miners until a fatal day in 1919 when the rods broke off from the surface connectors plunging 31 men to their deaths. There is a restored steam engine on the mine - the only working one left in Cornwall. Extensive remains of

