



NEWSLETTER

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Iontaobhas Oidhreacht Mianadóireachta na hEireann

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

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MHTI PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2004

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

Sunday 5th September

Ice Fire and water – guided walk by John Morris on the Copper Coast (details inside)

Saturday 11th September

Visit to Tankardstown, Bunmahon, Co. Waterford Archaeological site investigation (details inside)

September 24-26

Recording and Interpreting Cornish Engine Houses from extant ruins. Joint MHTI / Trevithick Society and Europamines field meeting/workshop Cornwall. (Details inside)

ADVANCE NOTICE

Sat 9th April 2005, 2pm 2004 AGM Castlecomer

EDITORIAL

In the absence of Des Cowman, on a trip away, it fell to me to throw this newsletter together to get information out to all members about the forthcoming trip to Bunmahon on September 11th, and to keep you informed of things going on there as part of a major project being managed by MHTI. However, it is a situation which is symptomatic of most MHTI activities – the work and effort is increasingly falling on the shoulders of a very few people, all of whom already have many commitments. There is a vital need for some new blood to bring extra energy to the existing projects and activities, and enthusiasm for new actions. We need more active members to lead field trips and visits to mine sites, to research individual sites and make information available on the website and for the inventory, to write up papers for the Journal or for the Newsletter, to run workshops and so on. It does not require a lifetime commitment, but if a number of members each undertook just one action in a year it would transform the Trust. If you are one of those members don't hesitate to come forward, talk to one of the Directors and get involved! Thanks very much to John Morris for contributing most of the articles in this Newsletter and if you have material for the next one, due in October /November send it to Des and also to me for certainty.

Matthew Parkes 01-6782858, matthewparkes@gsi.ie

Des Cowman, "Knockane", Annestown, Co. Waterford. ☎ (051) 396157 📧 dcowman@iol.ie

www.mhti.com

COPPER COAST: Field visit to archaeological investigations Saturday 11th – Sunday 12th September

There is an opportunity for all members to visit the Tankardstown site and see and hear the results of the archaeological investigations currently underway. **If and ONLY if there is sufficient interest amongst members there will be an MHTI members only visit on the Saturday 11th September** giving plenty of opportunity to see in detail what has been learned and exposed by the excavations. Alternatively, if you can't make the Saturday visit, on Sunday 12th, the local community and general public will get an opportunity to hear explanations, and see the site, but this is likely to be less detailed. **Optional underground visits to the Tankardstown Mine may be arranged for the Saturday if there is sufficient interest. Therefore we need to know the likely level of interest amongst members. Please contact John Morris to let him know of your intention to attend on September 11th as soon as possible:**

01-6782871

087-9294615

Email: johnmorris@clubi.ie

Members are reminded that only paid up members covered by either surface or underground insurance will be able to participate in appropriate activities. Subscribers are not covered by our insurance to attend field visits or events.

COPPER COAST: UPDATE ON INTERREG 3B FUNDED PROJECT ACTIONS



Some of the planned activities have not proceeded as rapidly as anticipated, though many are now underway concurrently. The archaeological excavation noted in the last newsletter, and due to start in June, effectively started on August 17th, and will take about 4 weeks to complete. This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first such archaeological excavation on a 19th C mine site in the Republic of Ireland, and while to many overseas members, what has been achieved so far [Figs 1-5], and what is planned, may seem relatively modest, it has to be remembered that such excavations can only be undertaken in Ireland by licensed archaeologists: for

anybody else to do so is an indictable offence. To mark this special occasion, notice has been given in this newsletter of a special weekend field event at Tankardstown over the weekend of September 11-12, to coincide with “Heritage Week”. This will include a guided tour of excavations by the archaeologists; Des regaling us in his own inimitable way of the social and cultural context; and Martin leading an underground tour.

The accompanying photos, all taken on Aug. 18th, show progress to date, which has mainly been concentrated within the pumping engine house, but will quickly extend to the entire area around that engine house, and then to the winding engine house [the building ruin by the chimney in the photo in the Newsletter 26 article], before focussing on other areas at a distance from both buildings. This plan has been adopted in order to complete excavations in and around buildings before conservation works commence, hopefully by mid-September. Final specifications for those works have essentially been completed, and will be put to tender on Aug. 27. These works will hopefully also include construction of the viewing platform noted in Newsletter 26, as well as re-instating the brick top to the chimney. The picture below gives Martin's computer generated idea of what that might look like: if only the actual works could be done as easily – and cost effectively!



Apart from that an Office Manager (Margaret Cosgrave) and a Geologist (Sophie Preteseille: starting Sept. 15) have both been recruited; a Copper Coast project office has been opened; a formal legal entity, the *Copper Coast Geopark Ltd*, registered; quotations for designing a *Copper Coast Geopark* logo and script is underway; and stone sculpture competition process initiated [to reflect the theme “Fire and Water” – volcanoes, ore fluids and so on, for example in the Copper Coast]. Margaret is an absolute dynamo of activity, organisation and planning, and she has already made extensive media and other publicity etc contacts to ensure maximum exposure of what is now getting underway – including the Sept 11-12 weekend event.



1



2



3



4



5

Figs 1 and 2. Tankardstown Pumping Engine House, viewed from the SE and NW respectively. Note start of excavation trench along SW wing wall in Fig. 2; and spoil heaps from interior and exterior excavations in both photos. Spoil in Fig. 2 sits almost exactly on top of the shaft site, all held in place by no more than the lorry shoved down the shaft in the film “*The MacKenzie Break*”!

Figs 3 and 4. top right and middle right. Views of internal excavation looking NW and SE respectively: Flor Hurley, supervising archaeologist, in hard hat in Fig. 3; and your Chairperson hard at work playing with yet another electronic gizmo in Fig. 4. The seriously damaged area of the cylinder loading plinth is clearly visible in Fig.4: most of it has been excavated away in past times, leaving undermined sections of rear and wing walls and only a portion of the cataract pit wall (right of hardhat).

Fig. 5. Opening up exterior excavation trench along the SW facing wing wall.

MHTI JOURNAL No. 4: Thematic volume, Bunmahon/Tankardstown **WANTED : ARTICLES**

Journal 4 will be a special thematic volume devoted largely to the Bunmahon/Tankardstown copper mining district. It will include articles on geology/ore geology, geophysical surveying, archaeological excavations, and conservation works at Tankardstown, further underground exploration, and the use of water power. But that leaves plenty for all of you to consider contributing articles on such dimensions as steam engines, mining genealogy, mineralogy, social history, and recent exploration history [20th C]. So out with the quills, dip pens, fountain pens or computer mice! Please let Des Cowman or Matthew Parkes know as soon as possible if you wish to contribute an article.

EUROPAMINES [ex- MINET], the European Mining Heritage Network

Some of you may have been following the very occasional references to the lengthy metamorphosis of the 1999 "MINET" project into its new successor hybrid, "EUROPAMINES", not least because the otherwise attractive title MINET had very unfortunate connotations in French, Portuguese and Polish. Apart from our singular lack of success in conjuring up a better title than *Europamines* [alternative suggestions are still very welcome, but need to be submitted very promptly to me], the project proposal itself has been funded in full by, and as submitted to the EU Culture 2000 Programme. Contracts were signed in July by the EU Secretariat and by the Geological Survey of Ireland, acting as the Lead Partner on behalf of a consortium of funding partners in the UK, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland [MHTI, as well as GSI], along with a number of associate, non-funding partners in Cornwall, Germany, France and Poland.

The 1 year (August 1, 2004 to July 31, 2005), €100,000 budget project is basically an enabling action to provide for the creation of *Europamines* as a legally formulated entity which will provide a sustainable framework for pursuing, amongst other actions:

- heightened awareness and appreciation of Europe's mining heritage, in all its diversity, technological, historical, architectural, social, cultural etc;
- lobbying for the conservation of such heritage, to complement similar activities by other national and international groups such as TICCIH;
- creating a series of communications and publicity tools, including a web site, information leaflets and display units;
- providing a series of thematic, on-site training sessions (5 such sessions are planned in the 1

year period, in Cornwall (see note below), Spain (Linares – early December 2004), Italy (March 2005), Poland (late April 2005) and Portugal (June 2005)), and an annual conference; [*NB all dates provisional*]

- and to create a partnership forum through which members will be able to identify mutually advantageous developmental and funding opportunities in the future.

Membership will be open to all site specific, regional or national bodies which are actively engaged in mine heritage conservation, presentation or research activities, and which will subscribe to a quality standard represented in the network charter and code of good practice. Many of these issues have been outlined in the first "*Europamines Bulletin*" which has been circulated to all current project members for consideration and in-depth development at the first planned training session, in Cornwall in late September (**See notice below**). Ongoing reports on developments and reviews of actions will be provided to MHTI members through this newsletter as well as on the MHTI web site, which will provide for more in-depth coverage via a hot-link to the *Europamines* web site, once it has been established.

MHTI is a funding partner in the project, a position due entirely to allocation of a special grant of €5,000 from the Heritage Council, an award which MHTI very gratefully acknowledges.

John Morris (john.morris@gsi.ie)

Workshop, September 24 - 26: Recording and Interpreting Cornish Engine Houses from extant ruins.

An effort was made to include measuring, recording and interpreting Cornish Engine Houses, engine sizes etc from extant engine house ruins as part of the MHTI trip to Linares earlier in the year, but, for various reasons, this focus had to be dropped. Instead, efforts were switched to organising such a workshop in Cornwall - not unreasonably! This intention is now taking shape in the form of a joint MHTI/Trevithick Society field meeting which is proposed to be held over the weekend of September 25 - 26. The workshop will be conducted by Ken Brown, who will also be giving a Trevithick Society hosted lecture on the topic of "Cornish Engine Oddities", in The Public Rooms, Liskeard at 7pm on Friday evening, Sept. 24. MHTI members are welcome to attend and indeed, for those attending from Ireland, we would aim to time our travel to include a stop in Liskeard as part of the trip. Saturday and most of Sunday would then be devoted to learning from Ken how to measure, record and, most importantly, interpret engine house features, engine sizes etc from extant ruins - a source of much head-scratching for those of us who have tried it! As an

additional attraction, Roz Cundick has very kindly offered to host a supper party in her home on Saturday evening, Sept. 25: some of you may well recall the memorable time that we all had when she hosted a similar event for a previous MHTI trip to Cornwall!

This workshop will, in addition, form one strand of an EUROPAMINES project workshop in Cornwall, which will continue on to about Sept. 29 to include consideration of adverse environmental impact of mining and mitigation strategies, as well as the "Cornish World Mining" UNESCO World Heritage Site bid. MHTI members are welcome to stay on for those sessions if they so wish. These will include lecture room presentations and site visits, as well as EUROPAMINES project partner business meetings. The exact schedule and timing of these events is still being developed.

Could any MHTI members interested in participating in either the MHTI/Trevithick Society event, or staying on for the extra EUROPAMINES sessions please contact John Morris, **by email preferably**, in order to facilitate travel, accommodation and other logistical arrangements, as well as receive updates, amendments etc to the proposed programme: **john.morris@gsi.ie**; or **phone 00353-1-678-2871** [and leave a voice mail message with contact details if I am not there to receive your call]

Caherglassaun, Co. Galway

It's not often that the name of a lead mine is associated with a nature conservation site: but such is the case of Caherglassaun, the site of a 19thC lead-silver mine, which shares its name (only) with a designated SAC [for the fauna and flora associated with Caherglassaun turlough¹]. Even though the respective sites are some distance apart, if the 19th C promoters and investors had realised what a turlough was, how it operated, and

¹ Turlough is an Irish word, which means "dry lake". Such lakes are not only a characteristic feature of the Burren and Gort lowlands and the western limestone regions generally, but it is also the region which gives its name to such features, and a name which has now been absorbed into the international geological vocabulary. Turloughs owe their existence to the groundwater hydrodynamics of this outstanding karst landscape, where most water flows are underground, but controlled by a single outfall at the coast, which is only exposed at low tide level. Water consequently backs up through the system at high tide level, and though this is not much of a problem during the summer, it most certainly is in the winter, when surface water flows from adjoining highlands exceed the underground drainage capacity, and what were dry depressions in the summer become extensive lakes – and, very commonly, extensive flooding.

how it could impact upon their enterprise, maybe they wouldn't have fallen over themselves to get involved with the site. But then again, maybe they would, as the promotional vehicle, *The Connemara Mining Company of Ireland* (CMCI), might very reasonably be classified as one of Des Cowman's beloved "bubble companies".

I have been intrigued by this mine for some time, but only got a chance to pay my first visit to the site in early August 2004. My interest was first stimulated by the acquisition some years ago of several CMCI share certificates, all issued in July 1852, augmented more recently by the discovery of a list of shareholders amongst other Company information at the PRO, Kew, London, and a copy of the CMCI share prospectus at the Guildhall Library, London. This is not the place to analyse or present that and other information: instead, as a taster for what will hopefully be a paper in a future issue of the MHTI journal, a few pictures of some of what now remains to be seen at the site – precious little in a nut-shell: the almost totally backfilled shaft site, the circular base of what I interpret as a chimney stack, and a wall of a presumed mine related building. This is very close to what appears to have been an engine house, from the shape of the building shown on the 1906 edition of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map, though there is now no visible trace of it at surface whatsoever.



Remains of presumed Mine Office building wall [2 budding junior mine historians for scale! GPS coords IM 40699 06396]



Circular wall enclosure, interpreted as the base of a chimney stack [GPS coords: IM 40648 06394]



General view looking southward towards Pollnamona, behind the heavily overgrown area which covers a surface trench and a wrought iron fenced enclosure. The shaft is the shallow pit partially surrounded by nettles in the middle foreground [GPS coords: IM 40725 06344

John Morris

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Appreciative thanks to everyone who has renewed their 2004 membership subscriptions with the MHTI. At the end of August, the current MHTI membership stood at 104. Twenty-eight of last year's membership have yet to re-subscribe to the Trust.

The geographic distribution of the current membership is shown below. The majority of MHTI members are based in either Dublin or Leinster (46). Almost one third of the membership reside in Great Britain.

Region	No. of Members
Dublin	29
Leinster (Excluding Dublin)	17
Connaght	7
Munster	12
Northern Ireland	5
Great Britain	32
Brazil	1
Germany	<u>1</u>
	104

A breakdown of the different categories of membership demonstrates that the Individual (non-caver) and Subscriber classes of membership are the most populous.

Membership Class	No. of Members
Subscriber	24
Individual (Non-caver)	45
Individual (Caver)	20
Family/Small Group	7
Corporate	7
Affiliated Society	<u>1</u>
	104

Valentia Slate Mine, Co. Kerry.

Some years ago, in October 1996 to be more precise, the MHSI, as it was then, organised a weekend field excursion to Co. Kerry to examine, amongst other sites, the substantial and very impressive slate mine² on Valentia Island, Co. Kerry. A very brief summary of that trip was published in MHSI Newsletter 3 [December 1996]. At that time the mine lay abandoned, although strenuous efforts were being made to re-open them. That effort succeeded, and the mines were re-opened in late 1998, and since then, they have been developing very successfully. Very recently in Newsletter 26, the operator, *Valentia Slate Ltd.*, announced the award of a contract to provide new paving slabs for renewal of corridor flooring in part of the Houses of Parliament, one of the many sites in England where Valentia slate was used during the 19thC.

I had occasion to re-visit the mine in early August 2004, and I was quite astonished to compare the current hive of activity with the once silent caverns – other than for the incessant drip of water. The caverns remain as majestic as ever, but now house within them the entire modern extraction, slabbing, cutting, polishing and engraving processes. The accompanying pictures give an idea of the current scale and extent of the operation, which has become quite a tourist attraction in its own right. While I was there a number of conducted tours, as well as independent tourists, arrived, walked past the Grotto built in the entrance, onto the inner area, which now acts fortuitously for Valentia Slate Ltd as a viewing platform for their products which are displayed in front of it (all my photos were taken from it). It was quite interesting to observe people's curiosity in the process, as well as how long many stayed to watch.

I also include two photos of Valentia slate tombstones in nearby Catholic and Church of Ireland graveyards. We were taken to see these on the 1996 trip, but at that time none of us, to the best of my knowledge, took any pictures of them. The dates, and the pristine condition of the engravings on these tombstones, speak eloquently upon the durability of this stone for such purposes, especially given the very exposed position of both cemeteries. This particular application is being very actively re-developed by the current operation, and indeed it was quite fascinating to watch the stone

² I use the term "mine" in the sense of it being an underground operation, rather than a surface activity (quarry, open-pit, open-cast, trench etc), and regardless of the nature of the commodity extracted. I hope that this simplistic definition will not unleash a torrent of debate, as it did several years ago on the Mining history mailbase. But then if it does, it will at least show that some people bother to read "footnotes"!

engraver in action within the cavern. If you want to see more about the modern operation and their products, visit their web site at: www.valentiaslate.com.
John Morris



View of the 19th C extraction bench timbers, high up along the side wall, and the inner grotto platform, now acting as a viewing area for the slate products.



A general view of slate extraction and processing facilities within the principal slate cavern, which was excavated during the 19th C.



Two mid 19th C Valentia slate gravestones: above - Carrick gravestone, inscription date 1860 [Kylemore Burial Ground]; below - Smith gravestone, inscription dates 1847 and 1854 [Church of Ireland Graveyard]



Another general view of slate extraction and processing facilities within the principal slate cavern, which was excavated during the 19th C.

LAUNCH OF INTERREG 3B EUROPEAN GEOPARKS NETWORK:

**A PILOT PROJECT TO DEVELOP A JOINT,
HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE ,
TRANSNATIONAL TOURISM AND
EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT IN NORTH WEST
EUROPE**

FRIDAY OCTOBER 1

11h00 - Official launch of project at the Killyhevlin Hotel (Enniskillen) with guest speaker Dr Margaret Patzak from UNESCO

12h30 - Buffet Lunch

14h00 - Tour of the Marble Arch Caves and trip to Cuilcagh Mountain Park

Accommodation is available at the Killyhevlin Hotel in Enniskillen.

For further details of the launch and to express any interest in being part of this event, contact John Morris

01-6782871

087-9294615

Email: johnmorris@clubi.ie

Congratulations!



Congratulations are offered to Brian Jones who married his bride Fiona on Friday 13th August. We send our best wishes for a long and happy life together.

Heritage Week : 5-12 September 2004 - Walks related to geological or mining heritage Further details on www.gsi.ie

	Title	Where	Location / Meeting place	Who	Hour	Details
Sunday 5	Carlingford Volcanic Centre	Carlingford, Co. Louth	Car Park, Coast Road Carlingford Town	Patrick O'Connor (GSI) 01-678 2857	2pm	The rocks of the Cooley Peninsula represent the eroded roots of an ancient volcano which erupted 60 million years ago.
Sunday 5	Killala Bay Geology	Killala, Co. Mayo	Ross Strand Car Park, ca. 3.5 km North Killala, Co. Mayo	Markus Pracht (GSI) 01-678 2838	2pm	Guided tour along the western side of Killala Bay to study the geology. Intrusions, gabbro, Mullaghmore sandstone and what it has to do with Tuscany.
Sunday 5	Nature and Turloughs of the Burren	Burren, Co. Clare	Crag Road at Lough Gealain, Gortlecka, at foot of Mullagh More	Koen Verbruggen (GSI-MHTI) 01-678 2864	2pm	Plant life and geology in a turlough area of the Burren.
Sunday 5	Visit to the Pollatomish Landslide area	Pollatomish, Co. Mayo	The Old Graveyard, Pollatomish, Co. Mayo	Christine Colgan (NUI) Niamh Redmond (GSI) 01-678 2760	2.30pm	A guided tour of the Pollatomish landslide area and description of the event, geology, past and contributing factors. A tour that will be educational and will provide awareness of geological hazards.
Sunday 5	Some silent place - The black and the white of it!	Blackstairs, Co. Carlow	The Nine Stones, Mount Leinster, Co. Carlow	Peadar McArdle (GSI) 01-678 2730	2.30pm	A gentle walk in the Blackstairs of County Carlow.
Sunday 5	Ice, Fire and Water: building the physical foundation of the Copper Coast	Copper Coast, Co. Waterford	Car park, Kilfarrasy beach, South of Fernor, Co. Waterford	John Morris (GSI-MHTI) 01-678 2871	2.30pm	An interpretation of the cliffscapes of the Copper Coast and their cultural heritage.
Sunday 5	Avoca Mines	Avoca Mines, Co. Wicklow	White bridge, half way between The Meetings and Avoca Village	Nick Coy (MHTI) 045-866 400	3pm	Guided walk over Ireland's greatest mine "Where the dust killed you or the water cured you".
Wednesday 8	Volcanic Dublin	Portrane, Co. Dublin	Portrane Coastal Car Park, by Martello Tower, Grid Ref. O 3262 2504	Brian McConnell (GSI) 01-678 2850	7pm	A short evening stroll to examine evidence that North Dublin had a volcanic past comparable to the recent eruption of Montserrat in the Caribbean.
Sunday 12	Geology and Nature of Bray Head	Bray, Co. Wicklow	Pitch and Putt Car Park, Bray Head, Co. Wicklow	Koen Verbruggen (GSI-MHTI) 01-678 2864	2pm	A visit to Bray Head, exploring the geology and natural environment along the scenic cliff walk.
Sunday 12	Killiney Beach	Killiney, Co. Wicklow	Killiney station car park	Sarah Gatley (GSI) 01-678 2837	2.30pm	A gentle stroll into the past via pebbles and rocks at Killiney beach: how the geological processes have shaped the landscape.