



NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 32

DECEMBER 2005

Iontaobhas Oidhreacht Mianadóireachta na hEireann

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

CONTENTS NEWSLETTER 32

- p. 2. Survey of Derrylea mine, Co. Galway.
 p. 2 Correspondence – Allihies, Reed & Answerd, Youghal Mining Company, Minerals of Ballycummisk.
 p. 4. Book Review.

MHTI PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2006

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

Silvermines, Co Tipperary. MHTI expect to undertake some active field assessment of mining heritage interest at Silvermines, for North Tipperary County Council, subject to confirmation. The work will take place over the next few weekends. Please contact Martin Critchley (mcritchley@era.ie or +353 (01) 6330516 if you wish to get involved

MHTI AGM and Field meeting 28-30 April 2006

Bantry Co Cork. AGM 6.30pm Saturday 29th, Westlodge Hotel, Bantry. On the Saturday and Sunday, we will visit a range of sites on the Sheep's Head Peninsula, led by Paddy O'Sullivan. Anyone intending to attend is asked to email Matthew Parkes on mparkes@museum.ie or phone 087-122 1967 to register their interest and to get further details in due course. *Accommodation list is attached.*

NAMHO Conference 2006 9th – 11th June 2006

Mining in the Landscape, The Royal Pavilion, Llangollen, Wales. more details on website www.namhoconference.org.uk

MHTI Board meeting normally on second Thursday of each

month in GSI, Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin 4 at 6pm

Next one 16th February 2006

EDITORIAL

Ten years ago the first MH(*istory*)S(*ociety*)I (as it was then) Newsletter appeared. Its aspiration then was to rectify what a school text book (Eleanor Butler) declared under "Mines" – "*There are no mines in Ireland*". MHTI, of course, has not only well disproved that but has gone on, through Newsletter and Journal, to record details of the multifarious mining activities. As members contributing will appreciate, no definitive history is possible.

For instance, your current editor's 1988 co-edited book on the mines of West Carbery contained single paragraph dismissals of various mining operations there. Major field work, involving abseiling, inflatable dinghies, cliff-scaling and wet-suited flooded mine horrors by Paddy O'Sullivan of Bandon has indicated that that these were, in fact, quite major operations.

Part of MHTI's function is, therefore, correcting records such as these.. It is also, of course about conserving and recording what currently exists as recorded in our publications. For instance, the first item here summarises MHTI's survey, on behalf of Galway County Council, of Derrylea Mine. Further professional commissions are impending; those involved will give their stipends back to MHTI.

Apologies to members and contributors for the non appearance of the 2005 Journal. This is due to matters outside the control of the Trust. However, it appears that the impediment has now been removed and the Journal should arrive in February.

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WWW.MHTI.COM

MHTI SUBSCRIPTIONS

You will receive an invoice for your 2006 membership with this newsletter. Please pay this as promptly as possible to allow for the proper running of the Trust. Your co-operation will be much appreciated if we can receive all payments within 2 weeks. In particular the BCA insurance scheme requires payment up front. An insurance membership card will be sent out shortly with your copy of the 2005 Journal. If your cover needs changing please let us know on the invoice by return. One rare development is that although the Directors had agreed a small increase in rates for 2006 to keep pace with increased costs and keep the MHTI finances stable, we are able to pass on a decrease in costs for those taking the underground insurance. We could make further savings if you accept the Newsletter and other mail by email. Please advise with your payment if you can accept MHTI email.

The MHTI would like to welcome the following new members to the trust: Andrew Wilson, Anthony Lee and David Adams. MHTI gratefully acknowledges your support.

MHTI SURVEY OF DERRYLEA MINE, COUNTY GALWAY

Only a flavoring can be give of this forty-page report drawn up by member of MHTI on behalf of Galway County Council. Its table of contents indicates the nature of the report.

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Reporter Details	1
1.2. Context.....	1
2. HISTORY OF DERRYLEA MINE.....	2
2.1. Study of existing records.....	2
2.2. Confusion with Derrynea Mine.....	6
2.3. Interpreted summary of history of Derrylea Mine.....	9
2.4. References.....	9
3. SURFACE REMAINS AT THE MINE SITE.....	11
3.1. Description.....	11
3.2. Interpretation	19
4. THE CAUSEWAY.....	21
4.1. Description.....	21
4.2. Interpretation	25
5. THE PROCESSING WORKS	27
5.1. Description.....	27
5.2. Documented history.....	32
5.3. Interpretation	33
6. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	36
6.1. Summary of the Derrylea mine report and interpretation	36
6.2. Recommendations.....	37

A total of 39 figures (maps and photos mainly) illustrate the report and the second paragraph of 6.1

above summarizes such history of the mine as documentary sources and site remains reveal.

“The mine at Derrylea was probably worked before 1839 for lead, and most likely in the years shortly after 1790. This was opencast working at the cutting opposite Mr McDonagh’s farm at the eastern end of the 4 workings. It is most likely that the main working and the partial construction of a causeway across the bog and a processing works took place in 1854 and thereafter for a short period. It appears to have been abandoned during construction. A reopening of the mine or at least a reassessment in 1919 is possible, but it is argued that this is more likely to have been at Derrynea mine some miles away to the southeast.”

CORRESPONDENCE

Allihies

Theo Dalke writes

We met a descendant of Capt. Reed in Allihies. Ron Reed came with a friend, a former miner (mine captain?) from Cornwall. We had a good talk and they will be back soon.

In addition to the account and cost books held locally listed in Newsletter 31 there are four letters, which are to go into the museum

1832 John L. Puxley to Hedges Eyre

1833 Capt. Martin to Puxley (with the report of the water accident in Caminches)

1832 John Reed To Puxley

1832 Puxley to the council office in Dublin about the gunpowder

At the bottom of the cliff at Duneen were a number of objects that we have raised and will display in the museum. Below (bottom) is probably a stamp-head and above another with an iron grid (part of the stamps mechanism?)



Who were Reed and Answard?

Michael Philcox writes

Re the documents produced in Journal, no.4, p. 47, letter from Edward Key, the following suggestion may be absurd, but I cannot tell without having seen the original. You mention that the letter has two additional signatories, Reed and Answard. Is it not possible that these are (by modern standards) misspelling for "read and answered"?

Ed Comment: Yes, of course, that makes perfect sense. Thank you Michael.

The mystery mining company

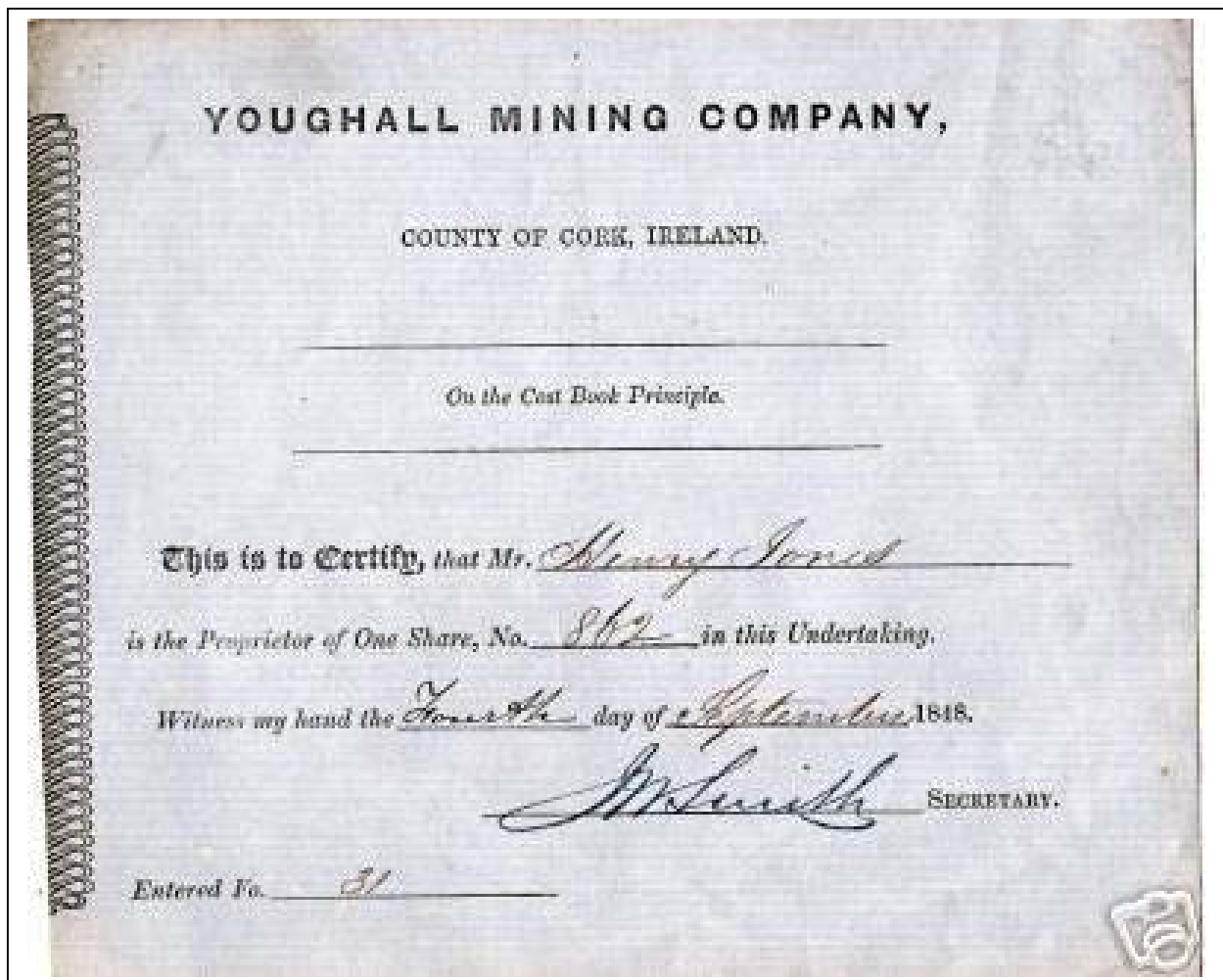
John Morris has recently purchased this share certificate dated 4th September 1848 signed by company secretary J N Smith and sold to a Henry Jones. While the certificate looks genuine there are a number of minor difficulties about it, and one major problem. It is a minor matter, perhaps, the misspelling of Youghal and the somewhat clichéd names Smith and Jones. Also, however, the share certificate gives no indication of value. September 1848 would have been a most unpropitious time to buy shares with the uncertainties caused by revolutions across Europe and

famine in Ireland. That no mention of such a company appears in any listings is serious enough but the major problem is what could be mined around Youghal? There is some slight mineralisation up the river Blackwater at Camphire in Waterford and the nearest area that actually had mines is Ardmore but they were long exhausted.

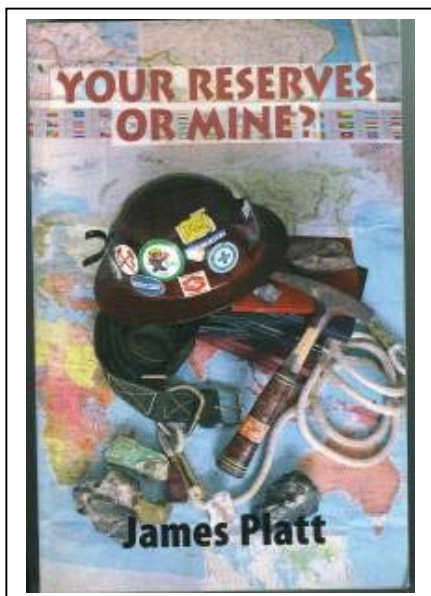
Minerals of Ballycummisk mine, West Carbery

Barry Flannery has sent an illustrated analysis of this mine beginning with its background and history. This is followed by his mineralogical analysis of the lowest spoil heap where he identifies seventeen different minerals and provides microscope photographs of nine of them. He provides notes on the wider and more immediate local mineralogy as well as commentary on the current situation on site. This is augmented by notes, acknowledgements and bibliography.

While this major illustrated study by a very young member can not be reproduced in full here, it is being placed on MHTI web-site. Congratulations are due to Barry on a major achievement.



BOOK REVIEW BY NICK COY



YOUR RESERVES OR MINE ?

Author : James Platt. Published by: Creighton Books.
ISBN 90 807808 2 0

It has been said that “Wherever a hole is sunk in the ground - no matter in what corner of the globe - you will be sure to find a Cornishman at the bottom of it, searching for metal”. We know that Chasewater miners were working in the Avoca Mines by the mid 18th century and miners from Redruth had travelled as far as Lake Superior some years prior to 1778. Throughout the boom and bust years of the Cornish mining industry from the 18th to the 20th century this tradition has continued. *Your reserves or mine?* is essentially the story of another 20th century Cornish miner carrying on the tradition of his forefathers. The book should appeal to anyone with an interest in mining, ancient or modern, as it gives the reader a unique insight into the operation of a large international mining company in the closing decades of the 20th century. The author, Jim Platt has given us a fascinating insight into this sometimes-idiosyncratic world of the modern mining industry and the people involved, from the boardroom to the pit face.

Jim Platt was born in Port Isaac in Cornwall in 1939. Following the tradition of many of his fellow countrymen, he graduated from the Royal School of Mines with a degree in Mining Geology in 1960. His first work experience was in central Africa where he worked for four years before taking up a position as Chief Mine Geologist in a copper mine in Quebec in 1965. He returned to Africa in 1968 before taking up the position of Chief Mine Geologist at the reopening of the Avoca Mines in 1969. He worked at Avoca for the next ten years becoming an expert on the complex geology and mineralogy of the ore bodies.

In 1979 he took up the post of a Senior Mining Consultant with Dutch based Billiton International Metals, (whom he affectionately refers to as “Uncle Joe”). *Your reserves or mine?* “ describes some of his experiences with Billiton where he was required to travel to remote and often strange parts of the world. His struggle to make sense of mineral prospects and establish valid ore reserves, while trying to balance the demands of Uncle Joe and the sometimes inexplicable behaviour of the mineral property owners, shows that life is never simple or straight forward in the world of mining or ore reserve calculations. The author has a real and often amusing insight into the vagaries of the industry and its people and we can only look forward to a time when he publishes his experiences and adventures at Avoca. This book should appeal to anyone who has an interest in mining at any level (no pun intended) not least those who worked for “Uncle Joe” during his exploration years in Ireland between 1970 and 1980.

This is Jim Platt’s third book, *Skittery Grass* (2002) and *East of Varley Head* (2003) being his two previous publications. Whether *Your reserves or mine?* becomes a mining classic like Jenkin’s “*Cornish Miner*”, remains to be seen, but it is certainly one of the few mining related books that one can read with a smile.

In any event, the authors name will never be forgotten in the beautiful Vale of Avoca, where a small mountain of mine spoil, standing proudly against the skyline between the open pits of Cronebane and Connary, has affectionately become known as “Mount Platt”

NAMHO Conference 2006

Mining in the Landscape

**The Royal Pavilion, Llangollen, Wales
9th – 11th June 2006**

for more details visit the conference website

www.namhoconference.org.uk

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