



# NEWSLETTER

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Iontaobhas Oidhreachta Mianadóireachta na hEireann

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

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## 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)

**Galway's Mining Heritage: Extracting Galway Conference Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August**  
**The Corrib Hotel, Oughterard, Co. Galway**  
**See enclosed flier for full details and booking form.**

[Those who get their newsletter by email will have already received this flier. If you did not receive it please contact **Matthew Parkes 087-122 1967** or by email on [mparkes@museum.ie](mailto:mparkes@museum.ie)]

## EDITORIAL

The good news is that Journal 5 is back from the printer; the bad news is that it is ten months late; the lesson learned is not to go for a "special issue" because it deprives those involved of being able to run with the articles on hand. Anyhow, it will be a very special edition as nothing like it has been attempted for any mine complex in these islands as far as is known.

Congratulations to Cornwall on becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While it is a tribute to the team there that put together the application dossier, it is also a tribute to the Cornish engineers and problem-solvers who created a new landscape in Cornwall and Devon. The demand for their skill led to Cornish engine houses springing up in various parts of the world, including Ireland. MHTI can be proud of its role in conserving two of its most iconic examples in Allihies and Tankardstown and thus to associate itself with Cornwall's new status.

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## REPORT on the AGM

The chair, Martin, had to exercise good humoured restraint as our UK members bantered about the inherent mining virtues of Wales, Cornwall and Shropshire before finally being allowed to finish his address following the Minutes. Matthew, stepping in for the unavoidable absence of Nigel, solemnly failed to record such digressions. Ewan's financial report calmed things down. Matthew and Des explained to tardy nature of Journal 5 but promised that number six would be out in the Autumn.



The evening following the AGM was taken up with a very enjoyable gathering at O'Connor's Seafood restaurant in Bantry, and a chance to chat.



## Field Trips

Friday was designated for tours of Brow Head mine on the Mizen to be followed by an afternoon a visit to Crookhaven copper mine on the lands of Richard Notter. Sadly Richard's thirty-five year old wife passed away the previous day and the visit had to be cancelled as a mark of respect. Dhurode mine on the Mizen was substituted for the afternoon tour. Saturday's tours were planned and led by Diane Hodnett to include visits to both Rooska lead-and-silver mine near Bantry and later, Dereenalomane barytes mine near Durrus.

On 29 April 2006, the MHTI held their annual general meeting at West Lodge Hotel in Bantry. With so many members and guests converging on the scene, it was decided to include various mine tours around the event. The gathering of enthusiasts consisted of approximately twenty-five members including guests, from as far as Cornwall and Scotland – some of the group were geologists, mining experts, and even a mine cartographer.

As many of the places visited during the week-end will be fully considered in Journal 6, consideration will be given to the main sites visited which will not feature. Both Matthew and Diane had prepared handouts on Dereenalomane 19<sup>th</sup> century barites mine near Durrus. After some difficulty, despite its proximity to a road, and with local inquiry we found the location. Nothing remained of the engine house which may have served a rubbish-filled pit. Our attention was drawn to the other side of the road by a concrete stanchion which could have carried an aerial ropeway. However, it had no fellows.

Peering through a heavily overgrown area, however, we saw what could have been the remains of Matthews' houses drawn in 1856. There were other structures also, both masonry and concrete. The masonry ones we had some documentation for but we knew nothing about the 20<sup>th</sup> century working that the concrete represented. However, after happy speculation in the sun we headed to Durrus for lunch.

Paddy O'Sullivan however was dissatisfied! He called into a local house and there interviewed an elderly man. The house itself, he was told was originally (1920s?) two miners houses and a shop. The concrete stanchion behind it he had built as a windmill for electricity! Was there ever a cable system? There was, but the stanchions were made of made of wood. Paddy's own report follows.



*Some of the concrete pillars at Dereenalomane*

## PADDY O'SULLIVAN: THE TRIALS OF GATHERING THE ORAL HISTORY OF DEREENALOMANE!

As I made my way up the garden path to an unusually long terracotta-coloured residence, a friendly tail-wagging dog sauntered forth to greet me. His mistress, the lady of the house, followed in the distance. She seemed quite perplexed at the sudden invasion of bush-rambling explorers all around her property. I soon allayed her fears by explaining our purpose – she then

informed me that her home, the terracotta long house, was once two miners' cottages and a mine shop; she also urged me to speak to her aged father-in-law who lived on his own in the one-time shop attached to the main house.

I duly visited this elderly gentleman and having dealt with the opening pleasantries, I set a train of questions in motion. Though shy at first, the old man was sharp of memory and quite helpful – some interesting facts emerged. He informed me that a line of timber pylons ran from the mine site down the steep hillside all the way to Dunmanus Bay. The pylons, anchored to triangular concrete-and-stone foundations, supported a continuous aerial rope and a number of 'cable cars'. The system was powered by gas engine. One of our U.K. guests, Allister Ling, had already come across one pylon foundation; however, I was to learn that all were still in situ and could be followed to the sea.

As I continued my questions, more snippets of information emerged. Five-hundred men had worked at the mine between 1917-18, mine water was pumped by a 'balanced bob' with the engine house being sited over the main shaft. The gas engine house was located adjacent to the pump house.

Later that night, I paid a visit to Kilcrohane pub in hopes of meeting an old friend, Charlie Donovan of Glanalin mine on Sheep's Head. Charlie duly arrived and was soon bombarded by my many questions on Dereenalomane mine. The jollity of the evening was assured by the regular appearance of fresh pints at our table. Others joined us in discussion as our mining Árd Fheis got into full swing. Meanwhile, the pub band played on; at one stage it gave an accordion rendering of 'The Cuckoo Waltz' – very appropriate to my condition I thought!

Local man James O'Mahony, joined us for a most informative discussion. James is renowned for his knowledge of local history. Here I was to learn that the mining company entrusted to job of making ore-bearing cable-cars to a local carpenter come pit-sawyer named Willie Coakley. Willie was noted for his great skill as a carpenter and his flair for designing the impossible! He seems to have played a considerable role in erecting the aerial ropeway system and in weaving wicker cable-cars to transport ore from mine to sea.

On the first trial of the aerial ropeway, a number of baskets were laden with barytes and sent on their merry way down the steep hill to their destination, a pier at Dunmanus Bay. However, on releasing the baskets it was discovered that the braking mechanism on the aerial ropeway had failed. It is not difficult to imagine the mayhem that followed, or to visualise the ore-baskets accelerating to roller-coaster speeds as they tore down the slopes to imminent catastrophe. On

reaching journey's end, the run-away cable-cars demolished a portion of the aerial rope and caused extensive damage to the system, presumably several pylons were torn from their foundations.

Never known to miss an opportunity, a local wit composed a poem to commemorate the event – the poem was titled 'Willie Coakley's Apparatus' One line of the poem describes the wicker basket in euphemism as "a donkey who would never have a foal" As the drink-fuelled merriment at the pub revved up to top gear, there was talk of dance starting up – difficult to imagine how, as our table on the edge of the dance-floor was awash with pints. I had already downed five and could not manage another drop. On the premise that 'a good run is said to be better than a bad stand' I said my 'goodbyes' and staggered back to my nearby B&B. On departing, several revellers promised to dig out a copy of the famous song commemorating the runaway ore-baskets. Hopefully it will arrive in the post in the near future.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

Castlecomer; A happy Seamus Walsh writes

- Just a few lines to let you know that work has at last started on the museum and it is hoped it will be finished by late summer. The location is changed again - it is now going to be built in the estate yard kindly donated by Errol Delaney. There is great buzz around the town that at long last things are starting to move. The buy a brick campaign is going very well with nearly 12,000 euro raised. At long last the dream I had about the museum is about to come true.

Alastair.Lings sent the following

- [biab online](http://www.biab.ac.uk) - The British & Irish Archaeological Bibliography (biab) is a Council for British Archaeology service, funded by a consortium of key heritage organisations from the UK and Ireland. Since January 2005, the biab e-bibliography has been available as an online service to all at <http://www.biab.ac.uk>. (Source: Conservation Bulletin, issue 51, spring 2006)
- IAMS Summer School 2006 was on Ancient Mining and Metallurgy. It was held at the Institute of Archaeology UCL, 31-34 Gordon Square, London. On 10th to 14th July: the topic was Ancient Mining Technology, the main speaker being Professor Tim Shaw. From 17th to 21st July: the theme was Smelting and Metallurgy with Professor H.G. Bachmann as main speaker. Contact [c.cohen@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.cohen@ucl.ac.uk) for details. (Source HMS News, issue 62, spring 2006)



## Model Steam Engine

- Somebody (Nick Southwick?) sent the editor an extract from the *Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Journal* for 1929 but the attached letter somehow became detached. Therefore thanks to the now anonymous sender. An article within it, "Summary of the History of Perran Foundry" by W. Tregoning Hooper has the following paragraph on p. 277 –

*"In 1873 a replica of the powerful 100 inch S. Wales was made at Perran for the Royal College of Science, Dublin; the engine was a perfect model in all details and after being tested under steam 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 years as a watchmaker at St. Day before coming to Perran to the engine fitting."*

From the context the model was of the 100 inch at Harris Navigation Colliery. Any theories about why the Royal College of Science in Dublin should have commissioned a model of this particular engine and what would have become of it, or indeed of the Royal College itself (part of UCD?).

## BREAKINGS VOWS OF SILENCE

I am sure we were all committed to silence about the sorry affair, but really thanks to Paddy O'Sullivan for his assistance must come first. Whilst leaving Gortavallig Mine on the Sunday after the AGM, in a sudden rain shower that appeared, Martin Critchley's car and occupants slipped off the narrow boren and down into the ditch.



Fortunately Paddy O'Sullivan was on hand with his 4 - wheel drive and a tow rope to get us out otherwise it would have been a very long night. Thanks Paddy!

## SCART MINE

The first site visited on the Saturday fieldtrips around the AGM was Scart Mine – high on a ridge overlooking Bantry and the Bay. Whilst little remains apart from this magazine and an unidentified mine building (below), the pictures illustrate what a glorious weekend we had weather wise - the norm on MHTI trips of course.....



## N.A.M.H.O. Conference 2007 Mines of the Tamar and Tavy

The 2007 NAMHO conference is being hosted by Tamar Mining Group in association with Plymouth Caving Group and other local NAMHO member organisations and will take place over the weekend of 15th - 17th June 2007. Morwellham Quay can claim a rich and diverse metalliferous mining heritage - the area has a well documented mining history dating back to the 1290s.

Plan ahead and check <http://www.namho.org/> for details.