



NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 45

NOVEMBER 2009

Iontaobhas Oidhreacht Mianadóireachta na hÉireann

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

CONTENTS NEWSLETTER 45

P2 North Wales Field Trip report
P3 Allihies Mine Museum
P4 Is mining history history?
Smola copper mine, Norway
P5 NAMHO 2009 Report
P5-7 Antrim fieldtrip report
P8 Mine Reports donated, NAMHO 2010

MHTI PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2009

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

MHTI AGM – Allihies, Co Cork

Field trip (perhaps underground) on the Sat 17th April, with AGM in late afternoon (to be held in Allihies Mining Museum, at 6pm). Dinner afterwards in O'Neils.
18th April Sunday – probable visit to local bronze age mines
Further details to follow shortly

Holding on to your history – MHTI archives and records

Date TBC in March – probably a Monday

This meeting will be an opportunity to explore the archival collections MHTI has, and a chance to determine their future.

More details to follow, but keep an eye out for a 2010

Programme to follow shortly.

NAMHO 2010 4-6 June, South Gloucester. See page 8 inside for more details

September 2010 Date TBC on a Tuesday or Friday. Boulby Potash Mine, UK

EDITORIAL

This newsletter comes with a membership renewal form. It is really important that we receive subscriptions as quickly as possible, in order to ensure that we have certainty over members and their insurance requirements for attending meetings and fieldtrips. Please could you check your own needs for membership and insurance (perhaps you already pay BCA insurance directly or through another mining heritage group you belong to?) and return the form with payment as soon as possible.

If you receive the printed newsletter by post as opposed to the pdf by email, it may be in black and white due to printing costs. Please consider switching to getting the email version – you get it faster and it is always in colour.

Your 2009 Journal will follow in the next couple of weeks.
Matthew Parkes

Contact Matthew Parkes for information 087-122 1967 or mparkes@museum.ie

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland Ltd. Registered Office: 36 Dame Street, Dublin 2.

TEMPORARY ADDRESS DUE TO RENOVATIONS: c/o Natural History Museum, Merrion Street, Dublin 2. Registered in Ireland as Company 340387

WWW.MHTI.COM

NORTH WALES FIELD TRIP 25th – 27th SEPTEMBER 2009

Seven of us congregated on Friday evening 25th Sept. in a lovely rustic cottage set amongst the debris from the derelict slate quarries and mines near the village of Talysarn. Dropping everything we hastened to an appointed visit with local enthusiasts to nearby Dorothea engine house which pumped the deepest of these mines to over 500 feet. There had been constant water problems up to 1906 when this 60 inch giant was started and successfully pumped to 500 feet until 1951. Being such a late example of 19th century technology it is relatively intact with all its major fittings spanning four stories. Outside, stood the boiler and flue to chimney. A necessarily sawn-off pump rod still hangs from the bob but the state of the platforms on either side is parlous. Of the future, local activist Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones said “It depends on which goes first, it or me” (he’d had health problems). However, we all felt it a privilege to be in the full powerful presence of what we had only seen in drawings.

Next morning we travelled back to Anglesey to meet with the Parys Mynydd Underground Group who had done huge work in draining the mines and making them accessible. We split into “hard” and “easy” groups. The former spent over four hours underground, including a section in shoulder-deep questionable water, low ceiling causing head to be held sideways. There were also steep climbs. They eventually got to the route the “easy” group had taken visiting the Bronze Age workings and the extraordinary growths along the side walls of the levels. All this was only a fraction of the labyrinthine working of Parys and the adjoining unopened Mona Mine. The “easy” group had the leisure to visit Amylch, a deep mini-fjord from which the ore was exported. There was a nice presentation at the Heritage Centre there.

Next day we assembled at Blenau Ffestiniog in the midst of the slate quarries and mines. Bob Fellows led us up-hill to the site of the most recent working – closed 1997. There, isolated, stood all the buildings with much of their contents intact – sawing and cutting machines, generators, engines and flat wagons (some with raw slate still on them), rails, stores, blacksmiths and carpenter, offices (with chairs) etc. Despite its remoteness there was much vandalism and anything of value had been taken. Still it was easy to see how the system worked from the time the great flat stones were winched up on railed flat wagons from underground and then tracked around the various processes that produced roofing slates (some still standing there awaiting sale). The vandals, however, didn’t dare to go underground so everything there remained intact with evidence of rapid abandonment.

The mist had cleared when we came out and there were eerie contrasts between the spectacular mountain scenery, the derelict buildings and the towering slate

waste heaps. As we descended, the multiple past of these quarries became apparent – old engines, inclines and tramways semi-overlaid by more modern waste and the more natural scree seeming to threaten the back-gardens of the little town below.

Des Cowman

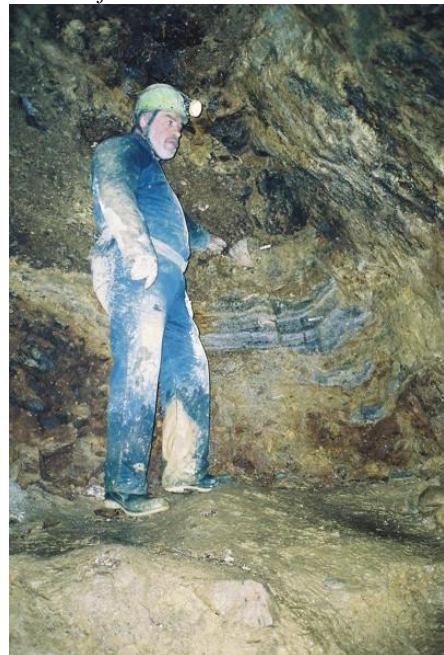
[Ed note: A further report on the Dorothea engine will feature in the next issue, from John Hopkinson]



View of main Parys Mountain opencast, from the south



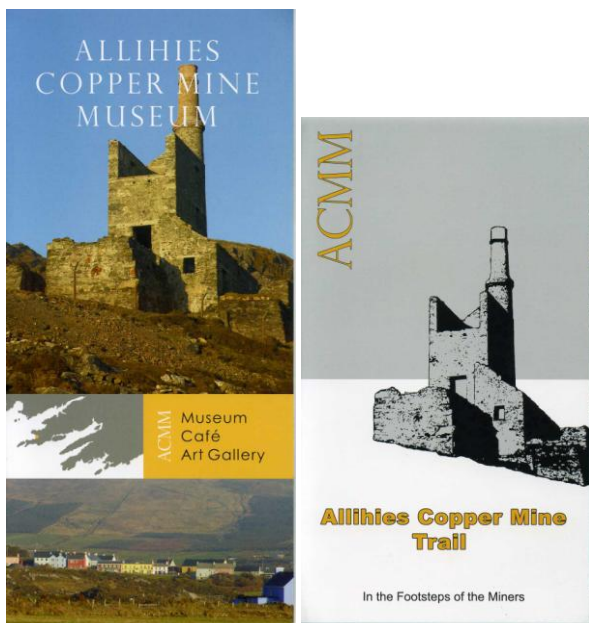
Des Cowman with stone mauls recovered from material run-in from above



Parys Mine Guide next to stratified infill with stone mauls, dated to 3900 BP

Allihies Mine Museum

Two new items came our way recently. The Allihies Copper Mine Museum is now up and running. They are open daily from June to September, with weekend opening in April, May and October, and all through the Easter period. They have a glossy colour leaflet advertising their existence and outlining the attractions of the Museum and associated Copper Café and an Art Gallery too. Check their website www.acmmm.ie for more information or email info@acmmm.ie or phone 027-2773218.



The other item is a full colour glossy leaflet guide to the Allihies Copper Mine Trail – in the Footsteps of the Miners. This is a fine production with a detailed map showing the trail and locations of all extant mining heritage features, centred on the Museum and the village of Allihies. On the reverse each mine is discussed and illustrated, with a brief chronology of operations and some fine photos. It may be buried in the text for Mountain Mine, but it was good to see the work of MHTI on the conservation of the Man Engine House acknowledged in print. As a major project involving raising funds of at least a quarter of a million euro (or much more depending on criteria used to calculate it), this is one of MHTI's many success stories, based on the sheer commitment of John Morris and others involved to see it through. I for one don't think we should understate the significance of this achievement in the face of very difficult issues. MHTI was set up partly with the aim of encouraging local groups and communities to assess and value their own mining heritage.

Therefore it is encouraging to see the achievement of the Allihies Copper Mine Museum in both building and opening their facility (reported upon in previous Newsletters) and now offering quality product to visitors for outside of the Museum. It owes something

in general style to Dan Tietzsch-Tyler's guide of 1996 or so, but I would not recommend one over the other. I would say get both!

Matthew Parkes

Keeping abandoned mines safe

Geologists are helping protect the public from the risk of old mines.

<http://planetearth.nerc.ac.uk/multimedia/story.aspx?id=515>

This is worth a read – find out what the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland are doing in relation to abandoned mines.

Alastair Lings

Tara Mines Photography Exhibition

Sadly it is too late with this issue for visiting, but it is worth recording that Tim Durham had an exhibition of photographs of Tara Mines in the Solstice Art Centre, Navan until October 10th 2009. It was opened by Minister Noel Dempsey. It is hoped that it went well in Navan. Perhaps it will be possible to exhibit it elsewhere in future?

Matthew Parkes

HMS Archaeology Day Meeting Spring 2010 Early Scottish Metallurgy

The next spring day meeting will be held in Edinburgh on Saturday 20th March 2010. The meeting will be on the subject of early Scottish metallurgy (up to c. AD1000). Offers of papers (along with an abstract) should be sent to **Fraser Hunter**, National Museum of Scotland, Chamber Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1JF

Email: fh@nms.ac.uk

New website www.aditnow.uk UK Mine Exploration

Some leaflets were received promoting this new website which claims to be the leading online resource for the UK mine and quarry exploration and research community. So when I went online to see what they were offering, what did I find?

Wow! Well I think you should have a look for yourself.

2009 SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not yet paid your membership subscription invoice for 2009 please do so as soon as possible. You could add it to the 2010 payment with the enclosed invoice.

For the immediate future please send any outstanding subs to: Brian Jones,
C/o Eason and Son, 41 Lower O'Connell St, Dublin 1

LORETO FARRELL

At the end of October, Loreto Farrell retired from the Exploration and Mining Division (EMD). Loreto has been a member from the earliest days of the Mining Heritage Society of Ireland, and has been a good friend to MHTI in relation to many sites and projects. Her support and sensible guidance within the context of her official responsibilities will be missed, but hopefully she will now be able to participate in more meetings and trips in the course of enjoying retirement. Our best wishes go to Loreto on the occasion of her retirement.

IS MINING HISTORY - HISTORY ?

Dear Des

The "editorial" in the April 2009 Newsletter confirmed a view that I have held for some time. At the outset one might even ask if mining history finished in the late 20th century. Will our descendants be interested in Tynagh, Tara, Lisheen or Galmoy. Will they wonder about the social history or visit localities that will probably be "green field" sites by that time, with the slight exception of Tynagh which may still have a tailings pond and flooded pit. Perhaps there will be nothing to see or write about as these sites had little social impact on their localities, with the exception of new cars and busy pubs in Killimor and Loughrea in the 1960s.

Tynagh, which fed and clothed me for 25 years, is an interesting example. I visited the site in 1961, when Richie Mc Carthy and a few Canadians were drilling the first exploration holes in a sea of black oxide mud. Visitors from all over East Galway flocked to the area at weekends to see this great new development taking place, it was a wonder to behold in an era when many people did not have a "backside in their trousers" and the weekly potato market in Loughrea was the social occasion of the week. By way of contrast some forty years later I stood on the same road outside the gates of the mine once again. By this time the mine had come and gone. New buildings were being built where formerly stood the mine mill and flotation plant. This time there were no locals looking in awe at the proceedings but hundreds of Turkish construction workers, living on site and building a new gas powered electricity generation plant. Even though I felt a real sense of nostalgia, even sadness, for what had gone, I think I was probably alone in my sentiments.

That experience may be the nub of the problem you outlined in your editorial. People generally don't care about things that do not directly affect their lives, and Mines, Mine sites and Mining History are well off the radar. Other groups and societies (of the "anorak" variety) would probably agree with me. In short, with all due respect to the current MHTI members, we are a

dying breed. This fact, however unpalatable, we may have to accept.

From my own experience in taking groups around East Avoca, (160 turned up on Heritage Day 2007), people like to hear about the social history (poverty and hardship especially) but their knowledge of and interest in the technical aspects of mining is generally very limited. The MHTI has done extraordinary work in raising awareness of our mining heritage and should take pride in the rehabilitation work, the publications and other aspects of their activities to date. However it may also have to accept that it is probable that the ivy will once again reclaim its foothold on the Williams and Tankardstown chimney stacks at some time in the future when we are no longer around to do anything about it and nobody else cares.

Nick Coy <nickcoy@eircom.net>

Sent: Monday, April 20, 2009 12:52 PM

Our editorial apologies to Nick Coy that this contribution which should have appeared in the last issue was accidentally omitted.

Coppermine on the island of Smøla, Norway

As part of a possible geophysical survey project with the Norwegian National University of Science and Technology in Trondheim I am seeking information and advice on the mining and possible mineral processing operations carried out. There is little documentary or mapping evidence on the operations carried out. The island lies some 125 km west of Trondheim; mining was started around 1718 and is reputed to have been partly financed from England.

It appears that there were 3 ovens on the island which could have been used to roast the ore. There is mention of the name William Gabb or William Cobb associated with the operations. Coal is supposed to have been shipped from England, perhaps 50 to 100 years before it came into regular use in Norway. It could be that coal was shipped in and roasted ore was shipped out?

Any information or advice will be greatly appreciated.





Kevin Barton, Landscape & Geophysical Services, Claremorris, Co Mayo kevin.barton@lgs.ie

NAMHO 2009, 19th-22th June

The National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO) was formed in 1979 making this year its 30th anniversary. The 2009 Conference was held in Derbyshire, hosted by the Peak District Mines Historical Society (PDMHS) who celebrated the 50th anniversary of their formation earlier in the year.

The conference opened in the County Hall, Matlock. After the formalities of registration, and the pleasures of a buffet dinner, the proceedings started with a welcome, and a series of presentations with a local flavour: the formation of PDMHS, the legacy of lead mining in the Peak District National Park, the Barmoot Court and its administration of mining in the Peak District. The final presentation of the evening was a superb slide show of the local mines.

Saturdays lectures continued in the County Hall, covering a wide spectrum of interests from archaeology and ecology, to colliery winding and ore dressing. The regions covered were equally diverse: the Peak District, France, Spain, Germany, India, Australia, Mexico and Canada. The day's activities ended with another buffet dinner and entertainment provided by folk singers.

Sunday's presentations were held in the Pavilion at Matlock Bath, the home of the Peak District Mining Museum. Appropriately, the lectures were mainly concerned with mining museums. The day finished with an excellent barbeque held at the impressive remains of Magpie Mine, five km to the north of Matlock.

The conference was accompanied by a superb selection of fieldtrips running from the Friday afternoon to the Monday morning. Archaeologists will have been fascinated by the visits to Engine Vein at Alderley Edge. Roman mining activity is visible at surface and underground, and it now looks like copper mining started in the Neolithic Age. Other visits included a winch trip to Bage Mine, near Wirksworth, and deep wading in some of the long drainage adits of the area.

The NAMHO Conference is a great way of visiting new mining areas, seeing the mines, and learning about them, all in excellent company. MHTI members who

attended NAMHO 2009 found the experience very rewarding, and are grateful to everyone involved in organising and delivering the event.

New geological map

In July the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland published a 1:50 000 scale map of the Cushendall area, County Antrim (sheet 14). The map shows the bedrock and superficial deposits, as well as many of the adits that were driven in search of the interbasaltic iron (laterite) and aluminium (bauxite) ores. The publication also includes well illustrated panels summarising the geology of the area, and describing the mining heritage of mid-Antrim.

Irish Newspaper Archives Online

The Irish Times was first published in 1859, and all issues have now been digitised and are searchable online. Similarly the Irish Newspaper Archives is gradually digitising other national and local papers, back to 1798.

You can SEARCH online for articles at www.irishtimes.com (digital archive button half way down page on right) and www.irishnewsarchive.com.

Typing in a townland name could be a start, unless it something as common as Cashel. To be specific about a name use inverted commas EG "Tassan Mine", "Tassan Lead", "Tassan Siver Lead", "Captain Skimming" or "James Skimming" for example. The irishnewsarchive site allows you to search for 'similar' words, which is good for townland names.

To VIEW the articles you need to subscribe to the site, 10 Euros/day, or cheaper for longer.

I would search first, trying Tassan, "Tassan Lead Mine", "James Skimming" etc first, noting useful search terms and non-returns. Then I'd subscribe and get full value from my 10 Euro!

Alastair Lings

ANTRIM FIELD TRIP 17th – 19th JULY 2009 EARLY MINING IN NE IRELAND

Seven members and quests gathered near the Quaker Cottage in Ballymagarry on the edge of Black Mountain overlooking Belfast. After admiring the spectacular views of the city we set off to find the "Flint Factory (site of)". The first thing that we stumbled upon was a small diameter water-level monitoring borehole. After wriggling through a fence we entered a shoulder-high jungle, including gorse and brambles. We must have got very close to the "site", but all we succeeded in finding was a derelict young persons assault course. Tired and bleeding we drove to our next location.



Ballymagarry

At the Cairndhu Golf Course on Ballygalley Hill we were joined by four members of the Larne Archaeological Society. Soon we established that the site of Collins' 1957 excavation was on the fourth green. Here Neolithic men had worked horizontal layers of the Ulster White Limestone (UWL) in benches, extracting the flint and dumping the waste on the floors behind them. After this we visited the rath (earth fort) on the hill top, which provided a fantastic view of the area, much of it lying within the Knockdhu area of special archaeological interest.



Ballygally

Our next stop was the Ballycoos Quarry where flint scrapers and other tools have been found. The quarried face is rounded rather than blocky, suggesting that early man removed the outer weathered layers of UWL, extracting the flint.



Ballycoos



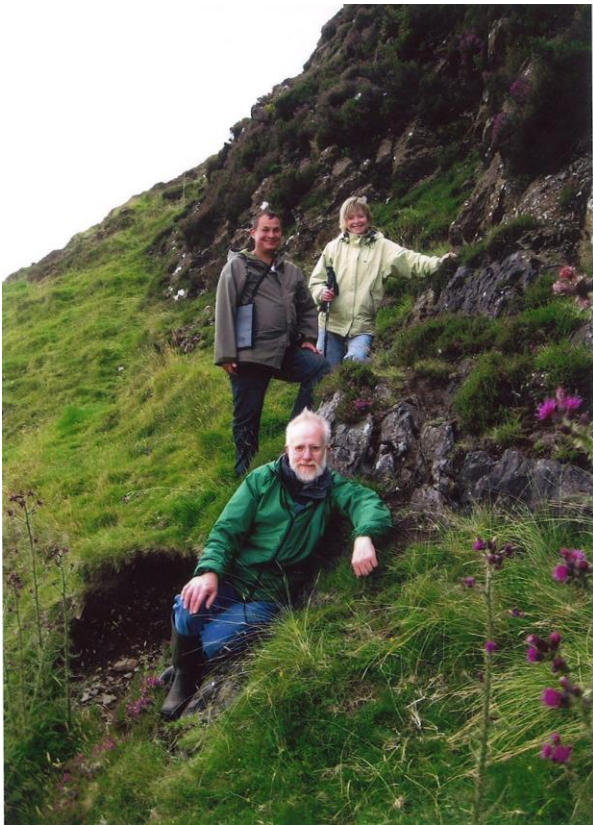
Ballycoos Flint Quarry

The final visit of Day One was to Tievebullagh Neolithic Porcellanite Axe Factory. After ascending Tievebullagh Mountain (402 metres) in a howling gale, we descended its east side to the main porcellanite outcrop and had good views of the spoil heaps from the comparatively recent UWL workings.

Mallory excavated the porcellanite outcrop in 1984, exposing an irregular face with "flake scars and overhangs", but for safety reasons he could not excavate the bottom of the working face. He suggested that whole blocks of porcellanite were removed from the working face, and that the face was worked from the top downwards.



Tievebullagh spoil heaps



Tievebulliagh outcrop

The day ended with an excellent meal in the Quay 26 restaurant, overlooking the marina in Ballycastle. By Day Two our numbers has increased to 13, and we set off for Rathlin Island on the brand new “Rathlin Express”, making its first crossing from the mainland. On the island we visited the excellent Boathouse Visitor Centre, and then caught “Berts Bird Bus” to the West Lighthouse. Bert is a colourful character who gave us the history of local sites as we passed them.

With a bit of planning we could have had a tour of the lighthouse, but contented ourselves by enjoying the view extending as far as Malin Head, Islay, Jura and the Mull of Kintyre Peninsula (Scotland). Puffins provided some foreground interest.

Soon it was time to catch the “Bird Bus” back to Brockley, the location of a prehistoric porcellanite mine. The site consists of two small caverns, resembling the workings on Mount Gabriel (Co. Cork). The roof of one was curved upwards and outwards, suggesting that firesetting may have been used to selectively fracture the porcellanite, before extracting blocks of the rock.

It was hoped to see the the interbasaltic iron ores that outcrop on the north of the island, but time was getting short, so we adjourned to local hosteleries for refreshment. After we returned to the mainland we enjoyed another fine meal in Quay 26.



Brockley

On Day Three we visited Murlough Bay, looking at Arched Mine, White Mine, White Mine Incline, miners cottages, the managers house (?) and Stage Rock from where coal was shipped. For its geology and mines alone, Murlough Bay is well worth a visit.

After an enjoyable lunch in a local pub we headed our separate ways. The planned underground trip to North Star Colliery will keep for another day.

Many thanks to the landowners for allowing access to the sites, to members of the Cairndhu Golf Club for tolerating some disruption to their game, and to members of the Larne Archaeological Society for their great assistance and good company. Once again the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland has provided excellent help.



Murlough Bay



Twin entrances to Arched Mine
Alastair Lings

Victorian mining museum for sale

Morwellham Quay served silver, tin and copper mines in the area. A restored Victorian mining village and museum in Tavistock has been put up for sale with a guide price of £1.1m. Two months ago Devon County Council announced it was to stop funding Morwellham Quay, a world heritage site, leaving it with a £1m shortfall. It went into administration and then closed in October. Sealed bids and written proposals on what prospective buyers would do with the site must be submitted to the estate agents by 21 January. In the 1970s Morwellham Quay attracted more than 150,000 visitors a year, but this number has since dropped by two-thirds. In its heyday as an attraction about 300 people were employed at the site, which once served the local silver, tin and copper mines. Michael Easton, of King Sturge, said: "This is an incredibly unique property so is quite difficult to deal with. However, we are expecting a lot of interest."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/8358715.stm>

MINE REPORTS

Mr. Ryan Silke of *NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines* based in Yellowknife, Canada has kindly sent the following for MHTI archives.

- (First?) Annual Report and Financial Statement, 1965, for Consolidated Mogul Mines Ltd. (Silvermines).
- Third, Fourth and Fifth Annual Reports, 1966-'68, for Gortdrum Mines Ltd. plus interim Reports for 1967 and '69.
- First Annual report, 1969, of Avoca Mines Canada Ltd.

Most of the directors of these companies were based in Toronto. The Mogul report states that "Ireland has become a Mecca of mining activities by Canadian interest". These documents chart their early years.

Mogul were just developing their zinc (75%)-lead (25%) holding at Silvermines in 1965 with 225 people employed but that was expected to rise to 500 by the end of 1967. Shipment would be from Foynes and the outlet for its zinc would be the US motor industry. The company was also testing other mines in Limerick and Wexford. The company had sold less than half their shares, and by mid 1965 were running a deficit of nearly four million C\$. Later reports no doubt show how a happy end was reached.

Gortdrum Mines Ltd. Ltd. came into existence in 1963 with Patrick J. Hughes as President. There was a tie between this company and Northgate Exploration Ltd. as well as Irish Base Metals. In 1966 the concentration complex was still being built and many photos show various stages of development. A contract had been signed with a Hamburg company to buy the silver-rich copper and it was anticipated there would be a big demand due to the Vietnam War. In 1967 mining

commenced in Gortdrum but there is mention of mechanical difficulties and "an unexpectedly high content of arsenic antimony in the ore". Sales were 2,246 tons. Through 1968 their mechanical problems continued as did the arsenic although nearly half a million tons of ore were dressed. By September 1969 a mercury extraction plant had been erected though it was still at the tune-up stage.

There as a link through Northgate between Gortdrum and the Avoca company which had taken over the workings by St. Patrick's Company, 1958-'62. The 1969 report expected production to begin early in 1971 and 2,000 tons of copper (1% rich) and pyrite (for fertilizer factory near Arklow) per day. Reserves were estimated to be seven million tons in two deposits outside the area of the old workings. Its chief geologist was J.W. Platt and capital over three million C\$.

NAMHO 2010, 4 - 6 June Fuelling the Industrial Revolution

Venue: Miners Institute, Coalpit Heath, South Gloucestershire

Organised by South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group, Friends of Ram Hill Colliery and Hades Caving Club.

All the usual NAMHO events, (and follow on events) camping available nearby on Scout site.

Coal, stone, celestine are all local specialities !

Trips already organised include:

- Visits to local coal mines and archaeological sites
- Working and abandoned Bath Stone 'mines' (underground quarries)
- Champion's brass works and 'grotto'
- Redcliffe Caves (sandstone mine)
- Unusual underground sites such as Clifton Rocks (underground) Railway

Trips further afield will include Mendip mines, and the Forest of Dean

Watch the NAMHO Conference website for more details later in the year:

<http://www.namhoconference.org.uk>. Full details and booking forms available from 1 January 2010.

Note: The Miners Institute is a members' club, so delegates will need to book at least 2 weeks before the event - (but it does mean cheap beer).

Fuelling the Industrial Revolution

Bristol was the second City of England - until the Industrial Revolution. Yet Darby, Champion, and other pioneers of the industrial revolution started their work in Bristol. Coal, stone and other minerals on Bristol's doorstep fuelled its trading and industrial power - and its period at the cutting edge of change. So our theme is the relationship between mining and industrial change - but ideas for trips and offers of papers on any Mining subject will be welcome. To offer a paper contact Roger Gosling of SGMRG during the 2009 Conference or email him at treasurer2@sgmrg.co.uk