



# NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 48

AUGUST 2010

Iontaobhas Oidhreachta Mianadóireachta na hEireann

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

## MHTI PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2010

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

*17-19<sup>th</sup> September ZINC 2010, Clarion Hotel, Cork*

**16-17 October 2010 Co. Down fieldtrip led by Alastair Lings**

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November: field visit to Lough Dan mine, Co. Wicklow**

**Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November: Holding on to your history – MHTI archives and records**

This meeting will be an opportunity to explore the archival collections MHTI has, and a chance to determine their future. Venue: Geological Survey of Ireland, Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin 4. **More details to follow soon, once confirmations are made. If there is sufficient interest we will run a visit to Lough Dan mine in Co Wicklow on the Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November**

## EDITORIAL

**No time for this now!**

**Matthew**

**Contact Matthew Parkes for information 087-122 1967 or [mparkes@museum.ie](mailto:mparkes@museum.ie)**

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**WWW.MHTI.COM**

**County Down Fieldtrip**  
**Saturday 16 – Sunday 17 October 2010**



*Newtownards Mine*

This fieldtrip will examine lead mining sites in County Down, followed by a hillwalk in the Mourne Mountains, in search of granite quarries and a sand pit.

**Coordinator**

Alastair Lings

e-mail: [alastairlings@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alastairlings@yahoo.co.uk)

Home: (Scotland +44) 01896 757861

Mobile: +44 7763 850087

In case of any changes to the programme, please let the coordinator know if you are interested in attending: no commitment is required.

**Programme**

**Saturday 16 October**

Meet at 10:30 at the public car park adjacent to the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards: signposted, just off the A21, J497760, Discoverer sheet 15, postcode BT23 7PH. Newtownards and Conlig Lead Mines (1780-1900). Tullyratty Mine (1828-1834), J566485, sheet 21. Castleward Mine (Dickson's Island)(1855-1865), J577501, sheet 21.

**Sunday 17 October**

Meet at 10:00 at the car park at Newcastle Harbour, J380297, Discoverer sheet 29 or The Mourne Activity Map. One short option is to follow The Granite Trail up an incline tramway to Millstone Mountain Quarry and Thomas's Mountain Quarry:

<http://www.walkni.com/Walk.aspx?ID=333> . Another option is to park at Bloody Bridge, J389270, and take the Quarry Track up to the Bog of Donard, before heading south to search for a sand pit at the head of Spences River.

**Equipment**

Full hillwalking equipment is recommended for walking in the Mourne Mountains: boots, warm clothes, waterproofs, packed lunch.



*Newtownards Mine*

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Moles, N.R., 1999. Newtownards lead mines. *Newsletter No. 10* (April 1999), p8. Mining Heritage Society of Ireland.

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Moles, N.R., 2007. Edingtonite, harmotome and other vein minerals at the Conlig-Whitespots lead mines, Co. Down, Northern Ireland. *Journal of the Russell Society*, Volume 10, p40-46.

Woodrow, A., 1978. A history of Conlig and Whitespots Lead Mines. *British Mining No. 7*. Monograph of the Northern Mines Research Society.

Habitas (National Museums Northern Ireland):

<http://www.habitas.org/escr/> . Search by site name for "Whitespots", "Dickson's Island" and

“Tullyratty”. Alternatively search site types for “Mine (disused)”

### Accommodation

There is a wide variety of accommodation in the Newcastle area including camping sites, guest houses, hostels and hotels. For more information please phone Newcastle Tourist Information Centre 028 437 2222. Callers from the Republic replace the 028 number with 048. Alternatively check out: <http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/>

## BENCROY MINE WOODEN RAILS

The earliest known waggonways in Ireland used wooden rails. Ease of manufacture, installation, renewal and even repair made them an obvious choice. However, they had their drawbacks, chief of which was that they wore out at a considerable rate.

In Continental Europe, wooden rails with flanges can be traced back as far as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>[1]</sup>. As a concept, they gave way to later developments involving the removal of the flange from the rail and having it on the wheels of the rail vehicle instead. Later still was the placing of an iron strip along the top of the wooden rail, which gave way to iron rails and ultimately to the steel rails that we are familiar with today, both for public and industrial railways.

On the recent MHTI fieldtrip to Bencroy Mine in the Connaught coalfield, a number of interesting mineral tramway features awaited us. As we entered the mine, we quickly encountered wooden sleepers. Most mineral tramways I have encountered used metal sleepers, due to the shortened lifespan of wooden sleepers in an environment as wet as a mine. This was unusual enough to merit attention (and a photograph!). It didn't prepare me for the spectacular discovery that lay around the corner.

On a side level, we encountered what would appear to be, in a 20<sup>th</sup> century mine, makeshift “track” comprising wooden sleepers and two inch wooden laths acting as a railway line (see photo). The only possible suggestion I would have for the need to resort to this most basic and historic of track type was the operation of the mine during the Emergency (World War II for the uninitiated). It would appear that in order to facilitate the extraction of coal for use in keeping the country's rail network moving (as a poor substitute for the Welsh steam coal normally used)<sup>[2]</sup>, the use of wood to produce makeshift track/rails was required, in the absence of normal rails due to wartime exigencies.

The final item of railway interest that caught my eye as we were leaving Bencroy was the rail based weighbridge (see photo). From my perspective as a railway enthusiast who has progressed into mining

heritage via the broader topic of industrial heritage, Bencroy was the best find I have ever had.

Ewan Duffy

<sup>[1]</sup> M J T Lewis , 1970, Early Wooden Railways (London)

<sup>[2]</sup> A recent publication “Trains, Coal and Turf” by Peter Rigney examines and destroys some of the urban legends about train operation in the Free State during the Emergency.

## HOWTH CHURCH

Located on Abbey Street in Howth, this deconsecrated Roman Catholic church (the first in Howth) has two tramway wagon motifs built into the front wall, in memory of the quarry workers who built the church and assisted in transport of the stone to the site from quarries on Howth Head. Dating from 1814, the building is very un-churchlike in design as Catholic Emancipation did not come into being until after the passing of the Catholic Relief Act 1829.

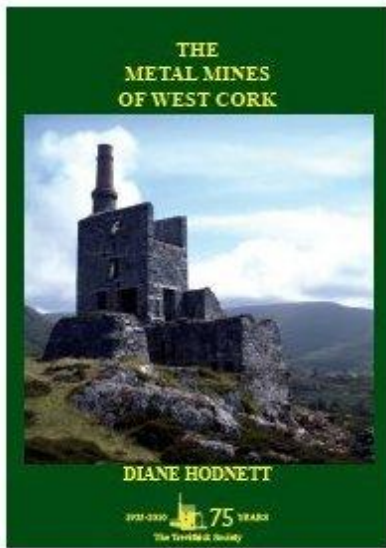


Ewan Duffy

## Safe senders list

If you get the newsletter by email you may want to add the MHTI to the safe senders list in your email so that it never gets diverted to the junk email folder!

**THE METAL MINES OF WEST CORK  
A NEW BOOK BY DIANE HODNETT  
with photos/surveys by Paddy O’Sullivan**



Thanks to the kindness of Diane Hodnett, and her publisher, the Trevithick Society, we are able to offer this new book at a special price for MHI members. It will cost €18.00 plus postage €3.00 in Ireland (€7.50 to UK). I picked up copies and it is truly a fantastic new resource on the mining history and heritage of West Cork. A review will hopefully follow in a future newsletter, but why wait? Get your own copy now.

Send cheques payable to MHTI to Matthew Parkes, Natural History Museum, Merrion Street, Dublin 2.  
Email: [mparkes@museum.ie](mailto:mparkes@museum.ie)

The book was launched in Cornwall, with the First Secretary from the Irish Embassy doing the honours. An Irish launch is planned at Allihies Copper Mining Museum on the Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October at 3pm, also in recognition of the enormous help that Diane Hodnett has given to Allihies through her Cornish friends and allies in mining heritage. MHTI members have been invited. Please contact ACCM by email on [contact@acmm.ie](mailto:contact@acmm.ie) if you would like to attend.



*Ciaran Byrne, First Secretary from the Irish Embassy, London, Kingsley Rickard (Vice-chairman, Trev. Society). Diane . Charles Tyrell, Allihies Museum, George Wilson, (Trev Soc). This photo appeared in the local newspaper (The West Briton)- hence the small size.*



*The Launch was held in the Surveying Office, King Edward Mine, Troon. On extreme right of photo is Pete Joseph, Curator of the Trevithick Society, talking to Bryan Earl, Chairman of the Trevithick Society.*



*Diane Hodnett, the author, with Philip Hosken, Chairman of the Trevithick Society*

**Gypsum mining and the Shirley Estate in south Monaghan, 1800-1936. By Micheal McDermott, 2009. Four Courts Press. 64pp.**

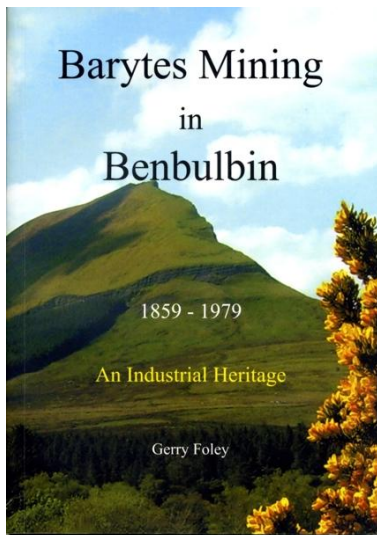
The author says his “study concerns a local community and the emergence of a gypsum mining enterprise”, which describes the study perfectly. This is a well researched and well written work, focussing on the social development of the area.

If you want to read about geology, mining and mineral processing you may be disappointed in the book. The strength of the study is how it sets the mining in its historical context, be it famine, the expansion of the railway network, land reform, or protectionism during the Economic War (1932-1938). The gypsum mining was not a driver for social change, but dependent on change.

For me the most interesting, and shocking, description was of the conduct of W.T. Trimble representing the Gypsum Association of England. The association was later described as the “Forty Thieves” (p43). In 1919 Trimble threatened the Monaghan Minerals Syndicate against producing plaster of paris in Ireland, because

his organisation controlled the market. No doubt Mr Trimble would be pleased that members of his association amalgamated in 1936 to form the British Plaster Board Group, which subsequently acquired the mining operations of Gypsum & Bricks Ltd (1947) and the Irish Gypsum Company (1955).  
Alastair Lings

**THE BARYTES MINES OF SLIGO  
A NEW BOOK BY GERRY FOLEY**



Gerry Foley has recently self published a new book on the baryte mines of Gleniff in Benbulbin, Co Sligo. Lavishly illustrated in colour this book represents many years of research by Gerry. I picked mine up for €8.99 in a shop at Drumcliff, and they are reportedly selling well. Contact Gerry Foley direct for information on ordering: [geraldfoley@eircom.net](mailto:geraldfoley@eircom.net).

**DERRYGINAGH BARYTE MINE**

Sunrise Resources plc has recently been awarded an exploration licence which includes the abandoned Derryginagh Mine, near Bantry, in County Cork. The Derryginagh mine was worked in the period 1864-1922, supplying white baryte to the local paint industry. The mine workings extend over a strike length of 200m and to a maximum depth of 60m. In the 1970s the mine workings were de-watered and mapped by a local company and in the 1980s four holes were drilled to intersect the baryte vein at 100m below surface by Dresser Minerals International Inc., which was then a major supplier of drilling-mud grade baryte around the world. All four Dresser holes intersected white baryte over an average width of 2.4m and over a total strike length of 200m, with the vein being open along strike and at depth.

Derryginagh is being evaluated by Sunrise Resources for a modest-sized underground mining operation to produce high-value filler (paint) grade baryte. Apparently, there is a significant demand for white

paint-grade baryte in Europe but no major mine supply outside of China and India. Consequently there is a niche opportunity for a new European supplier as China's own internal demand limits traditional exports.

In August 2010, ERA-Maptec Ltd. (based in Dublin) was contracted to collect samples of baryte vein material from accessible sections of the No.1 level of the mine. 20 samples with a total weight of over 70Kg were collected both from the adit workings on the No. 1 level and from workings accessed via an open stope. Below the No.1 level the mine workings are currently water filled. The baryte samples have been delivered to SGS Mineral Services UK Limited in Cornwall where a programme of metallurgical test work is being undertaken to evaluate low cost gravity concentration of the baryte to saleable specification. For more information see the website:

[www.sunriseresourcesplc.com](http://www.sunriseresourcesplc.com)



*Open stoped workings at Derryginagh (Martin Critchley)*



*The reopened adit at Derryginagh (Martin Critchley)*



*Sampling at Derryginagh (Martin Crichley)*

### **Letter to the Editor: is mining history - history?**

Dear Matthew,

Nick Coys letter in Newsletter No.45 raised a number of issues:

- will our descendants be interested in the history of our current mining operations, if nothing remains to be seen at surface, but "green fields",
- do people generally not "care about things that do not directly affect their lives" and
- are mining historians a "dying breed"?

At first glance these new "green fields" are unlikely to inspire an interest in mining history, but perhaps their large size, smooth profiles and modern fencing contrasts with older, smaller irregular walled fields, or rougher ground pock-marked with ancient workings...

Future mining historians will have a mass of geological, environmental and economic information available to study, after today's mine sites have been restored to a pristine state. Our duty is to ensure that today's records are stored safely, and are available for use by the researchers of the future.

People do care about things outside their own lives, for example the global environment, and poverty reduction in the developing world. But mining is vitally important in our lives: we depend on the extractive industries for our houses, cars, consumer goods and fuels. The 160 people who turned up to Nick's tour of East Avoca in 2007 are evidence of this interest in mining.

Individually we are getting older and the challenge for MHTI, and for any other group, is to attract and retain new members. High quality publications and a variety of events have their part to play in sustaining MHTI, so does a friendly atmosphere and good publicity. Please spread the word!

Yours sincerely,  
Alastair Lings, (Member)

## **ABBEYTOWN AND CONNAUGHT COALFIELD FIELD TRIP REPORT 15-16<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

Our weekend trip began on the 15<sup>th</sup> May when a group of us met at Abbeytown Quarry, Ballysadare in Co. Sligo. We entered the mine where the quarry working had intersected the mine at the surface. We were led underground by John Kelly, our first stop was to visit the marker beds of the Carboniferous limestone. After this we carried onward further into the mine. The water table had been lowered by the pumps in the quarry so we were able to visit the room and pillar area where we could see sulphide mineralisation. Afterwards we returned to the surface and thanked our guide and the quarry manager Pat English.

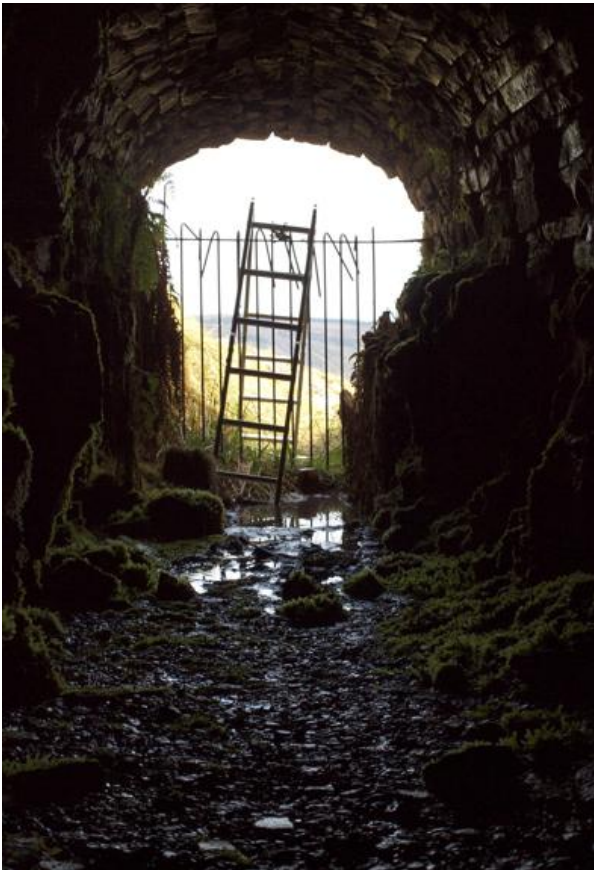
Next, some of us caught up with the people who were visiting the Arigna Mining Experience centre. We proceeded on to the mountains of Slieve Anierin where coal and iron was mined. The coal is hosted in the Lackagh Sandstone formation and ironstone nodules were found in the underlying shales. The remains at Bencroy Mine included an attractive stone arched adit and a weighbridge. Coal mining was recorded as being done in the early 1800's. More recent mining had been done in the 1930's, ending in 1990. Rain forced us off the mountain and we retreated for the day.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> we meet at the Arigna Mining Experience centre where we proceeded to visit the coal mines south west of the Arigna River. Mining was carried out around Kilronan Mountain. We got to see one of the coal cutter machines which were used to extract the coal in the mines. The owner of it was able to give us a brief history of how it was used. We thanked Denis Flynn and went on to visit more workings. The coal mines we visited included Derrenavoggy, Gubbarudda, Greaghaglough and Glackaun mines. Most of these had been worked in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the surface of some of these sites we saw the remains of buckets which had moved the coal, there were many adits open too and there was lots of spoil.

Our final stop was Creevelea furnace. The impressive remains of the blast furnace were of much interest to everyone. Iron ore that was mined at Tullynamoyle was used in the furnace. At the site there had once been two coke fired blast furnaces, a blowing engine, offices, workshops, store houses and 10 cottages for workers. The iron works at Creevelea began sometime around 1621 using charcoal from local wood as a fuel, but the wood eventually ran out in 1768. The iron workings at Creevelea stopped in about 1900.

At the end of the trip everyone thanked and gave praise to our guide Alistair Lings.

Stephen Callaghan



*Cull's Adit, Bencroy Mine*



*The MHTI group at Creevelea furnace*



*One of Denis Flynn's coal cutters, lovingly restored to working order.*



*The group at Creevelea furnace*

## TOWNSEND FAMILY ENQUIRY

I teach at the University of Western Ontario, and I have just begun doing research on the life of the Rev. Joseph Townsend (1739-1816) of Pewsey, Wiltshire. Townsend's father was Chauncy Townsend/Townshend, a London merchant and owner of coal and copper mines in Wales and Cornwall (and perhaps Ireland?). Joseph Townsend was a friend of Lord Lansdowne (formerly the Earl of Shelburne), who owned large estates in the Kenmare area and elsewhere. Joseph Townsend visited Ireland in 1769 and 1770, was keenly interested in geology, and a source suggests that he had mining interests in Ireland. If Townsend visited these estates, it is likely that Lansdowne would have asked him for a geological assessment.

My interests focus on the pre-1800 period; I am hoping that you can help answer several questions.

1. Have you come across Chauncy Townsend/Townshend as an investor in any Irish mines pre-1770?
2. Did Lord Lansdowne (aka the Earl of Shelburne) develop any mines in SW Ireland?
3. Are you aware of any mines in which Joseph Townsend was an investor?

Yours Richard VandeWetering  
 Email: [rvandewe@uwo.ca](mailto:rvandewe@uwo.ca)

[Editorial note – this enquiry has been circulated to a few MHTI members who have provided a some information but any further specific information would be welcomed by Richard]