



# NEWSLETTER

**NUMBER 66****Autumn 2014****Iontaobhas Oidhreacht Mianadóireachta na hEireann**

## DIARY DATES 2014-5

**2014**

October 26, Talk by Eamonn Monaghan at 12 noon in the Community Centre, Mountcharles, Co. Donegal (Part of Mountcharles Heritage Weekend, for details contact 087 784 4803 / 087 978 5314)

**November 8, Members' Medley and Dinner. 4-6pm, Education Workroom, National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2. See p. 3 for more details.**

**2015**

**March 19, Board Meeting (Thursday)**

**March 21-22, Field trip to Co. Donegal to survey the Crohy Head Talc Mine. Members will be able to assist in a mine survey and some training in Total Station will be available. See p.3 for more details.**

**May 2-3, AGM (Carrickdale Hotel, Louth), seminar (guest speaker, Dr Norman Moles, University of Brighton) and field trips to the Whitespots and Conlig lead mines, Newtownards, and the Castle Espie Lime, Brick and Pottery Works, County Down. Additional details in our next newsletter.**

May 22-25, NAMHO Conference, Nenthead, Cumbria, England. <http://www.namho.org/>

June 3-6, Archaeometallurgy in Europe IV conference, Spain. Deadline for abstracts/proposals: 15th November 2014 <http://www.congresos.cchs.csic.es/aie4/>

June 11-14, Mining History Association Conference, Virginia City NV, USA.  
<http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/VirginiaCity.htm>

June 21-25, Australasian Mining History Association Conference, Darwin, Northern Territory, with a post-conference excursion to Pine Creek and the Golden Loop, 26th-27th June.  
<http://www.mininghistory.asn.au/conference/>

**July 9 Board Meeting (Thursday)**

**July 11-12, Field trip to the mines of County Clare with Paul Rondelez. Additional details in our next newsletter.**

August 22-30 Heritage Week (probable dates)

**September 11-13, 'The Historic Metal Mines of Scotland', a field trip to visit some of the most important metalliferous mines, including Tyndrum and Wanlockhead. Additional details in future newsletters.**

**November 13, Board meeting (Friday)**

**November 14, Annual Members' Medley and Dinner**

Check with organisers of meetings before making any travel bookings in case of change of dates or arrangements. MHTI lists events in good faith but is not responsible for errors or changes made. For MHTI field trips please register your interest, without commitment, so the organiser can keep you informed

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

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## MHTI MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### NAMHO Conference 2016

The Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland has offered to host the NAMHO Conference in 2016, with the theme *Mining and Social Change*. For ease of access, we intend to hold the conference in Dublin, possibly using student accommodation near the airport in the north of the city.

The programme is likely to be:

Friday daytime - visits to working mines (limited spaces available);

Friday evening - welcome and opening talk on mining in Ireland;

Saturday daytime - lectures, with possible workshop on music and songs;

Saturday evening - conference dinner;

Sunday daytime - field trip to mines in County Wicklow, by coach

We plan to provide information leaflets for other mining areas, and may coordinate field trips to these areas, before or after the conference weekend.

A call for papers will be sent out during the course of next year. See page four for more details on how you can get involved and be able to help.

### Extraordinary General Meeting 6/9/2014

An EGM, as advertised, was held at Ballyknockan, County Wicklow, to present the accounts for 2013. Discussion about these revolved around the balance of funds in deposit versus current accounts and how we could get best value return, with flexibility.

### Hope Mine Cornish Chimney

Following an enquiry from Shirley Clerkin, County Heritage Officer of County Monaghan, arising from our letter to her of the 28 May 2014, we replied on 27 June. In this letter we addressed her question 'what typifies a Cornish chimney?' and explained the significance of the Hope engine house chimney in a regional and wider context.

We have informed the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site Office of the existence of this stack which has enabled them to include it in their GIS of overseas Cornish-type mine buildings. The MHTI is delighted to learn from Shirley that the stack has been included in the NIAH and is a candidate for inclusion in the RPS for County Monaghan. We would certainly support any future plans for the consolidation of this important industrial monument and it is very encouraging to know that the County Heritage Officer is keen to learn more about Monaghan's mining history and heritage.

### Glendalough Consolidation Works

Martin Critchley and Sharron Schwartz recently met Wesley Atkinson, Manager of the Wicklow Mountains National Park, and Damian Clark, Park Ranger, on site to discuss the forthcoming consolidation and flood prevention works at the Glendalough Dressing Floors.

The day of the visit (25 August) was extremely wet and the flooding at the site was very severe. The Glenealo River had burst its banks and it was impossible to cross the stepping stones on the footpath near the 'Miners' Village' without wellies, as the water was so deep and the current quite fast. The extreme weather conditions proved to be a blessing, as this provided a unique opportunity to note where the water was going and where it was doing the most damage.

Consolidation works began in mid-September on the Cornish crusher house that dates to about 1855, which is fantastic news. In addition, we discussed plans to protect some of the most important archaeological features from future water damage, in particular the cobbled surface of the primary dressing floor, which is being badly scoured and damaged during flood events. Some intervention to limit the flow of storm water was undertaken at the same time as the consolidation works.

We appreciate the fact that the MHTI was consulted regarding the plans at the Glendalough Dressing Floors and that our input is valued by Wesley and his team. In the next newsletter we will give a full report of the works to the Cornish crusher house, one of only a handful left in Ireland, which will continue to dominate the beautiful valley of Glendalough as it would have done when built in the mid-nineteenth century.



*Extreme flooding event at the Glendalough Dressing Floor, (Miners' Village) during late August. The very high water levels meant that the stepping stones on the footpath near the buildings on the right were inundated under shin-high fast flowing flood waters*

## EVENTS AND NOTICES

### Annual Members' Medley, 8 November 2014

4:00-6:00 pm, Education Workroom, National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.  
6:00-8:30 pm Dinner at Hugo's Restaurant, Merrion Row

Join us for an informal evening of fascinating presentations and displays followed by dinner this November! We are planning to make the Members' Medley an annual event, your chance to present the fascinating details of your latest research, or to share some of your mining heritage discoveries, with fellow members. Afterwards, we will have a get together in the form of a dinner, a great opportunity to meet up with old friends and to get to know new members. This year's contributors are:

#### Matthew Parkes: 'Ballyknockan Granite Quarrying'

Find out more about the granite quarrying heritage at Ballyknockan, near Blessington, Co. Wicklow. Following recent visits led by local heritage promoters, we can explore ways in which the MHTI might assist the local efforts to protect and promote their stone cutting heritage.

#### Paul Rondelez: 'Iron mining and smelting in east Co. Clare and southeast Co. Galway in the 17th and 18th centuries'

Learn more about this relatively unknown activity in SE Ireland, ahead of Paul's field trip to County Clare in July 2015.

#### Sharron Schwartz and Martin Critchley: 'From Desert Ghost Camps to Man Eating Mountains: Metal Mines of the Atacama and the Andes'

The presenters will show some images from their recent trips to the desert and altiplano mines in South America, and will describe the condition of the mining heritage encountered.

#### Alastair Lings: 'This Year's Field Trips in Pictures'

If you didn't manage to make all this year's field trips, this is your chance to find out just what you missed!

In addition, **Stephen Callaghan** and **Alastair Lings** will be displaying some Irish and Scottish mineral specimens.

**Please advise Nigel Monaghan of your attendance at dinner before 5 November. We look forward to seeing you there!**

To see Hugo's Pre-Theatre Dinner Menu visit:  
<http://www.hugos.ie/#!/menus/c1jo3>

### Donegal Field Trip, 21-22 March 2015

In September 2007 MHTI visited the talc / soapstone / steatite mines in County Donegal, including Crohy Head on the coast southwest of Dungloe (Discovery sheet 1, grid reference B 708 078). This mine was worked intermittently between 1861 until it was closed by a massive collapse of ground in 1947 (Boner, 2009)

Newsletter 39 (March 2008) summarised our findings: an inclined adit, access track and a mill with chimney at the top of the cliffs, and below the cliffs various inaccessible, collapsing levels and some short trial workings. We also found a sea cave running parallel to the cliffs, perhaps 100 metres long and 10 m high. The article proposed that "future work at the mine could include making a surface plan of the site showing pedestrian access routes, haulage routes and the mill".

In December 2013 MHTI responded to the consultation on the County Donegal Heritage Plan. Our submission included the following: "We would like to see surveys made of surface remains at Carrowtrasna Talc Mine (Church Hill) and Crohy Head Talc Mine (Dungloe), which would aid interpretation of these sites. This would require reference to the online historical maps of Ordnance Survey Ireland, and the use of surveying equipment and drafting software".

In order to fulfil the above recommendations, we aim to survey the Crohy Head Mine. Members will have the opportunity to assist in a survey and Martin Critchley will provide some basic training in Total Station for those who are interested. The very low tide at 12:51 GMT on the 21st means we could explore the sea cave again, for possible connections to the mine above it.

#### Reference:

Boner, Patrick, 2009. *The story of The Cope*. Templecrone Press, Dungloe. 604pp. (Chapter 10: Granite and soapstone).



*Crohy Head Mine. In the gully at the centre of the photo are six inaccessible levels. Above the right of the beach are three short trials. The sea cave is behind the sloping base of the cliff, and connects with the gully*



## Report on the NAMHO Conference, Bangor, Wales, 25-27 July 2014

This year's (UK) National Association of Mining History Organisations Conference (NAMHO) conference was held at Bangor University, Gwynedd. The University started life in 1884 as the University College of North Wales, funded by donations from quarrymen and other local people. The lectures were held in the Main Arts Building, most of which dates back to 1911. Accommodation was available about 10 minutes walk away, in the Ffriddoedd Halls of Residence, built in 2009.

The Conference was attended by 135 delegates, and organised by the AditNow Mining History Society with support from Nigel Dibben, Angela Gawthrop, Dave Linton and others. The theme was *Mining technology: technical innovation in the extractive industries*.

There were 16 lectures covering subjects ranging from "Mechanisation on the coal face" to "Precipitation Pools on Mynydd Parys", dates ranging from "Prehistoric Mining Technology" to "Metalliferous Mineral Exploration in North Wales since 1964" and locations from Devon and Cornwall up to Tyndrum in Perthshire, with a good focus on Wales.

During the breaks between lectures delegates could visit the displays set up by researchers, clubs and organisations such as I.A. Recordings, Moore Books and Starless River.

As an alternative to the lecture programme there were a variety of field trips arranged within a 60 mile radius of the University. The 26 underground visits to 11 areas ranged from photographic visits, exploration using SRT (Single Rope Techniques), to the classic Mona – Parys Through-Trip which includes wading chest or neck-deep in water with an "interesting" chemistry and biology. Two surface tours were offered, along with seven Do-It-Yourself visits mainly to the local mining and quarrying visitor attractions.

I found the online booking system easy to use. The conference venue was readily accessible by public transport, with the accommodation nearby. Both the accommodation and the catering were excellent, provided by very friendly staff. The NAMHO Conference Pack and administration was first-rate.

Unfortunately, I didn't manage to join a field trip, but the lectures were excellent, and I was very impressed by the depth and breadth of knowledge of the participants.

Top marks to the AditNow Mining History Society, their helpers, speakers, field trip leaders, exhibitors, sponsors, landowners and the University for making this a most interesting and enjoyable conference. Thank you.

*Alastair Lings*



*MHTI members manning our display table at NAMHO 2014*

### NAMHO 2015

NAMHO 2015 will be hosted at the Village Hall at Nenthead near Alston, Cumbria, on 22-25 May. Organised by the Nenthead Mines Conservation Society, the conference themes will be *Mining Industries of the North Pennines and Adjacent Areas* and *The Relationship between the UK Mining Industry and War*.

The Nenthead district will be well known to both mining historians and mine explorers and it boasts a veritable cornucopia of surface and underground industrial heritage features. If you would like to offer a paper for the 2015 Conference, or to find out more, contact Peter Jackson: [admin@nentheadmines.com](mailto:admin@nentheadmines.com)

Details of the 2015 conference will be made available at the NAMHO website in due course: [www.namho.org](http://www.namho.org)

### NAMHO 2016

As members will by now be aware, the MHTI has agreed with the NAMHO committee that we will host the annual conference in the summer of 2016, with the theme, *Mining and Social Change* (more details on page 2). The programme of events will include lectures, evening entertainment, and surface and underground trips. As 2016 is the year of our 20th anniversary, this will be the perfect platform to showcase the various achievements of the MHTI over the last two decades.

An event of this magnitude requires careful planning and the active participation of numerous organisers. A NAMHO 2016 Working Group will be set up shortly, so please contact any of the Directors to discuss ways in which you may be able to help. You do not need to be a Director to be a part of the Working Group.

## Report on the Connaught Coalfield visit, 12-13th July 2014

In pleasant weather eight people met at the Arigna Mining Experience, visitor mine and museum. Some members toured the mine, while others headed west to look at old winch gear and a weighbridge in Gubbarudda townland, close to the entrance to the Hillstreet Quarries.

The first area visited by the full team was in the forest in the west of Aghabehy townland. The O'Reillys brothers, who needed coal for their ironworks at Arigna, started a Deep Level to drain future coal workings along the boundary between Gubbarudda and Aghabehy townlands. This adit was probably referred to by Charles Etienne Coquebert de Montbret in 1791: "a perpendicular passage is now to be opened fifty feet below as a drain extending to the centre of the mountain" (Sile Ni Chinneide, 1978, p41). By 1804 the tunnel had been abandoned after 200 yards (183 metres) of driving, although Thomas Guest (1804) estimated that it could be extended to a total distance of 990 yards (905 m). Griffith (1818, p33) says the "cause of its abandonment was the ruinous expense of sinking air shafts to ventilate it". In 1827 J.A. Twigg recommended widening and extending the level. By 1831 it was 522 yards (477 m) long (Weld, 1832).

The entrance portal to the Deep Level is shown on the Ordnance Survey (OS) 25" scale map as an "o", close to the stream by the only "Coal Mine (Disused)" in Aghabehy townland: <http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,589871,816305,7,9>

The entrance is a wide stone arch, beyond which there is deep ochreous sludge. The level extends for 100 m, with a further 30 m visible after a roof-fall, almost as far as the first Air Shaft. 80 m east of the portal, across vegetated spoil, are the remains of an incline. The incline ran down towards the Arigna River, linking the mines to a Coke Works and a Railroad which ran to the Arigna Ironworks. Both the incline and the tramway were

constructed in 1832 and operated up to 1838 (Johnson).

The first "Air shaft" on the Deep Level was 132 m from the portal, and we found it to be fenced-off, and blocked a few metres down. Next to the shaft is another stretch of incline, in the form of a cutting with stone retaining walls. This part of the incline was built in 1919 and closed in 1927, and moved coal down to the Arigna Extension Railway, which operated in the valley from 1920 to 1930 (Johnson).

On the edge of the forest one of our members showed us the location of another "Air shaft", now capped and moss-covered. This shaft is 294 m from the portal. Four more shafts are marked on the OS map as "Coal Pit (Disused)" on a bearing of 225-235°: at 428, 719, 1109 and 1271 metres distance from the portal of the Deep Level. It would be interesting to know how far the Deep Level extended beyond the 477 m reported by Weld (1832).

Our next visit was to the eastern extremity of Aghabehy townland, on the right (south) bank of the Arigna River, where a line of a dozen or so short tunnels were driven to mine ironstone from soft shales: <http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,591105,816417,7,9>

These mines were worked around 1790 as Coquebert found "The thickest beds of iron are at the base of the mountains and the O'Reillys are now opening a regular excavation along the river in order that they may no longer have to depend on what the peasants collect in the stream and bring to the works" Sile Ni Chinneide (1978, p40). During the Civil War (1922 – 1923) the mines were used as a hideout by Commandant Seamus Cull and Volunteer Patrick Tymon before their deaths (Scott). Our next stop, in heavy drizzle, was to view the entrance gates of the former Arigna Power Station. The station was built in 1958, and closed in 1991. In the 1970s the station used about



*The Deep Level commenced by the O'Reilly Brothers in the late eighteenth century on the boundary between Gubbarudda and Aghabehy townlands. By 1831 it was noted as being 522 yards long*



*MHTI group looking at the iron mines by the Arigna River, Aghabehy*



65% of the coal mined in the area (Arigna Mining Experience).  
<http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,595119,816222,6,5>

Further north along the shore of Lough Allen we viewed the impressive chimney of the Lough Allen Clayworks which operated from 1873 until 1882, producing bricks, tiles and pipes (Flanagan). Clay was supplied from Curragh North townland (Macdermot et al), 1.5 kilometres to the west.  
<http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,593560,821524,7,9>

Our last stop of the day was at the Creevelea Iron Works in Gowlaun townland. Sir Charles Coote had a furnace here which was destroyed in 1641, but reopened and lasted until about 1768 (McCracken). The present impressive structures date from 1852, and were last worked in 1900 (McAuley, no date). <http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,590823,829290,7,9>

The works was supplied with ironstone from Tullynamoyle townland to the north, by a horse operated tramway (Johnson). An “Iron Mine (Disused)” is marked on the OS 25” map, and a “Well” is marked on the right (west) bank of the stream that divides Tullynamoyle from Gowlaun townland.: the “Well” is a short trial level. About 80 m to the north-north-east of the Furnace is a short level driven for fireclay. None of these mine workings were visited due to a shortage of time. There may be another tunnel to the east of the Iron Works (McAuley, 2014).

Near the church in the nearby village of Tawnylea is a corrugated iron building. Originally the building was situated downstream from the Iron Works, and provided accommodation for the workforce. After the closure of the works it became a lace school, and after that it was moved to the village (McAuley, 2014). We ended the day enjoying drinks and an excellent meal in Drumshanbo.

On the Sunday we visited Bencroy Mine, Gubnaveagh townland, and walked westwards over the heather to Beal Beg Mine, in Knockacullion townland. Beal Beg was started by Paddy Wynne in 1947, and worked until the early 1960s (Wynne). There are two adits and a trial level, and the remains of three huts on the steep hillside. Below the cliffs are the remains of the access track. On Bencroy a tunnel known as “Dane’s Pit” suggests ancient workings (McGovern), but the earliest workings probably date to around 1800, as McParlan (1802) records coal in the area around Slieve Anierin. Modern mining began after 1922 when Cull and Gannon moved to the area from Arigna (McGovern). The mines were taken over by Paddy Wynne in the early 1960s and worked until 1990 (Wynne).

A drawing accompanying an article by McGovern shows from west to east: The Danes Pit, Wynnes Pit, Cull & Gannons Pit (1922), Bruens Pit and Watsons Pit. Donald George Watson and his wife started Watson’s Pit (McGovern). We then headed north through Dowra to Monesk Colliery, Co. Cavan.  
<http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,600430,833397,7,9>

The area has an intermittent history of exploration and production since 1788 when William Willoughby (Lord Viscount Enniskillen), Jonathan Morton Pleydell and John Hassard agreed terms for a prospecting licence and mining

partnership (Pleydell estate papers, 1788a and 1788b). Griffith (1818, p52) reports that a “ten foot bed of coal is visible on the eastern face of the mountain at a place called Meneask, in the county of Cavan, where some trifling workings have been made. A pit was also sunk in the top of the mountain, a short distance from the face of the cliff.” John Grieve was probably referring to this seam when he wrote “there has been discovered on the neighbouring mountains at Dowbally, a seam said to be ten feet thick” (1800, p92). By 1893 an incline had been built, but work at the mine was “suddenly stopped for want of funds”(Gregory, p2).

In 1912 Saron Anthracite Collieries Ltd tried to raise £80 000 to develop the Gubaveeny Coalfield, hoping to produce 400 tons of coal and iron per day (The Saron Anthracite Collieries Limited). Some prospecting was done by John Reid in 1917, with the help of Mr Hallissey from the Geological Survey (Reid). From 1918 a John Reid from Dublin worked coal at Murlough Bay, Co. Antrim (McCahan): it is likely they are the same person. In 1931 the levels were closed (Cunningham, 1934), but by February 1942 local farmers had reopened an old adit level (Cunningham, 1942).

Subsequently the mine was worked by “Johnny and Francie Green from Cavan Town. This coal mine was only in production for about two years as the coal was of poor quality and too costly to extract” (Slevin, p44). Another report says “the Board of Works closed it down in 1946/7 for safety reasons” (J.N., p214). Later on, the farmer built a road up towards the mine at a cost of £4000 before exhausting his funds (Oireachtas Official Report, 1951). In 1954/5 the Minister of Finance approved a grant of £3275 from the National Development Fund for a road to the coal mine (Oireachtas Official Report, 1955). The grant was never taken up. Two boreholes (Numbers 153 & 154) have been drilled to the west and south west of the mine (Brandon & Hodson), probably in 1964 by the Geological Survey of Ireland.

By agreement with the landowner we drove up to a quarry close to the course of the “Disused Tramway” to the mine. Rock from the quarry was used to construct the road up to the mine (McLoughlin), which we followed. The most impressive feature at the mine is the stone incline. At the top of the incline an eagle-eyed member spotted the wheel of a vehicle almost hidden in the heather. The radius of the wheel was 310 mm, it was complete with brakes, and it would have been used to control rail vehicles on the incline. Just south of the top of the incline we identified the location of a blocked adit. Unfortunately time was short and we didn’t get to explore the area or see the “Englishman’s House (in Ruins)”. It gives us a reason to visit Monesk again. In a glorious evening, we walked back to our cars, said our farewells, and went our separate ways.

*Alastair Lings*

#### **Acknowledgements**

MHTI are very grateful to the landowners and mineral owners for access to their properties, and to local people for their advice and support.





*The magnificent scenery of the Connaught Coalfield. In the foreground is the opencast at Bencroy Mine, Gubnaveagh. Beal Beag (561m) and Slieve Anierin (585m) can be seen in the distance*



*MHTI members at Creevelea Furnace (1852-1900), Gowlaun*



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## **Report on the Ballyknockan and Cloghleagh Field Visit, County Wicklow, Saturday 6th September 2014**

After some confusion about which of the two pubs in the village of Ballyknockan that we were meeting at, we met in the Ballyknockan Inn and over tea and coffee, Terry O'Flaherty gave us a brief outline of his aspirations for promoting the stone cutting heritage of the place, focused on his Ballyknockan Inn, which is itself an example of the craftsmen's skills, having been the quarry owner's house when it was built. He is a stonemason himself and has strong commitment to the skills and heritage of the profession. However, since he was struggling to stay on top of supplies for a large motorcyclist rally that were in residence in the village, it was a brief discussion (to be continued!).

David McEvoy then took us on a tour. He is from a multi-generation family of stonemasons, and is still practising in a family business in Ballyknockan. We walked via some of the interesting and quirky features of the village to the quarry. The quarry is really one big one, at least to this geologist, but for the stone cutters of Ballyknockan, different sections belonged to different families and were known as different names. We didn't go in this time, but much can be seen from over the fence. Outside the quarry is a spoil heap with abandoned crane machinery and the 'Law Rock' – whose story can be told elsewhere or this account will not get sent in time! A large stone cross monument to the quarry workers, erected relatively recently, was explained by David as actually being a flawed piece that had been abandoned part finished as a weakness emerged during cutting.

We spent a good long time visiting the McEvoy works in the most eastern part of the workings. The works that he showed us included a range of machinery at different scales, including both large modern diamond saws and old traditional skills like

forges, for tempering their own tools. Most impressive though, for me, was the adaptability and versatility of skills for 'bread and butter' stone conservation work for large houses, to one-off artistic commissions involving imagination and novel methods.

Following a vote of thanks we departed for Cloghleagh, where the Churchwarden Ron Corry and his colleagues provided us with a comfortable lunch place and drinks in the Church Hall, as well as a safe place to park. George Reynolds then kindly led us on a visit to Cloghleagh Mine, which is an unusual one in Wicklow. George had done a geophysical project here for the Young Scientist Competition in its earliest days and he won the overall prize based on that work. It involved very low frequency (VLF) radio waves. The mine itself is in a manganese deposit of cryptomelane that is essentially a fault breccia from movements about 12 million years ago. The ore was emplaced within the breccia in one phase of faulting involving hydrothermal fluids.

Small adits and a fault breccia exposure are to be seen, along with remnants of a crushing wheel in stone segments that seems not to have been used. The Mine owner's house has been demolished by Coillte in modern times. It was developed by the Rev Ogle Moore who also built the church in Cloghleagh. It was worked in 1862 to 1868.

The day ended with a guided look at the Church and more refreshments. Grateful thanks to our host at Ballyknockan and at Cloghleagh and to David McEvoy and George Reynolds for stimulating visits.

***Matthew Parkes***



***MHTI group examining a winch at Ballyknockan. Photograph, Nick Coy***

## Mike Mc Carthy 1927-2014, An Obituary

Mike Mc Carthy was born in Mohonagh near Skibereen County Cork in 1927. In 1949 at the age of 22, he emigrated to Canada where a mining and construction boom was underway. Working as a bricklayer, he became a close friend of Pat Hughes and two other Irishmen, Joe McPartland and Matt Gilroy. The depth of that friendship is illustrated in a story told by Pat Hughes. He claimed that Matt Gilroy who had no experience of bricklaying, was trained by the others who brought bricks back from work every evening and trained him in the art of bricklaying in their hotel bedroom.

While working in Uranium City in Northern Saskatchewan, where there were over fifty working mines in the early 1950s, the group soon developed an interest and expertise in the mineral exploration business. They then started working in the business by prospecting and staking claims, shortly afterwards setting up Northgate Exploration Ltd. and Tara Exploration and Development Ltd. in Toronto. The four men returned to Ireland 1955 with Pat Hughes at the head of Irish Base Metals Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Northgate and Mike Mc Carthy at the head of Tara Exploration and Development Ltd. and Priority Drilling and Construction Ltd.

Both companies commenced extensive exploration throughout Ireland with Irish Base Metals making the first significant discovery at Tynagh near Loughrea, County Galway, in 1962. Tara continued to carry out a large scale exploration programme of geochemistry, geophysics and diamond drilling over the following eight years and when others might have given up, the persistence and determination of Tara finally led to the discovery of the major Navan orebody in 1970. This

discovery, of what turned out to be the biggest zinc mine in Europe, lay lightly on the shoulders of Mike Mc Carthy. He was an extremely modest man in every area of his life and did not portray the image and lifestyle one often associates with heads of successful major companies. From his youth on the farm in west Cork he had a particular love of horses and he competed in carriage driving events throughout his lifetime.

Although losing control of the Navan Mine in the mid seventies, he still took an active management role in Priority Drilling and Construction over the following years. Like his lifelong friend Pat Hughes, whose sister Teresa he married, he also had a strong faith and put his family at the centre of his life. Climbing Croagh Patrick on the annual pilgrimage featured throughout his life. After a health scare in 1972 he took up long distance running, completing his twentieth Dublin Marathon in the year 2000, at the age of 73. He passed away at his home in Ballinasloe on 20th July 2014 at the age of 87.

His passing sees the last of that group of extraordinary men who emigrated to Canada in the 1940's and returned to create an Irish mining industry which still thrives today. I was fortunate enough to have had the pleasure of meeting Mike during his visits to Tara's head office at 162 Clontarf Road in Dublin, which they shared with Northgate and Priority. Ironically, there are many working in the industry today, not least in the Navan Mine, who may never have heard, let alone had the pleasure of meeting, the quiet spoken Cork man to whom they and the industry owe so much.

*Nick Coy*



**Back Row: Pat Hughes (Newry) Left. Mike Mc Carthy (Skibbereen) 4th from left. Front Row: Bottom Left Joe Mc Partland (Newry) with Matt Gilroy (Enniskillen) to his right. Port Albert, Canada, 1952.  
(Photograph courtesy of the Mc Carthy family)**



## **SPECIAL FEATURE**

### **My Mining Heritage Tour of Britain**

*by Ewan Duffy*

I recently spent a week in Britain on a driving holiday, visiting different industrial heritage locations from Wales to Scotland, which included two mines and a site connected with mining history.

The first mine I visited was Killhope in Durham. At 11:00 the museum opened and I booked the 12:30 tour. For the intervening one and a half hours, I toured the site above ground. I liked the interpretative displays and the outside features, which included one room of a house presented as a lodging room with three miners to a bed.

Upon finishing my self guided tour above ground, the girl who had taken my entrance fee was showing two gentlemen one of the pieces of equipment for sorting the ore so I joined them for a guided tour. The guide was excellent, knew her stuff and was confident in answering questions. I also came away with a small piece of galena, which was sifted out of the aforementioned equipment. I saw some things at Killhope that I hadn't seen before, including a building enclosing the buddles and rails with a very thin web which sit directly into a chair.

The underground tour was led by Michaela, the same guide

from the overground section. I was suitably impressed with her knowledge of the subject and found her manner very pleasant and welcoming. Underground we were introduced to the concept of the thunder box which I had never encountered in another mine. It saved miners from having to make a trip to the surface.

After leaving Killhope, I headed across country to the Causey Arch near Newcastle, which is the oldest surviving single-arch railway bridge in the world, dating from 1725/6. It and its associated railway were built by private enterprise to take coal to the River Tyne for onward shipment. Nowadays, there is a single pathway across the bridge for pedestrians with pathways through the gorge that it spans to allow for photographs.

The second mine I visited was the Wanlockhead Mining Experience. This is a small museum with a separate underground trip nearby and miner's cottage laid out with rooms representing different eras and how the rooms would have looked, with generally improving prosperity as time progressed.



*The restored 10-metre-diameter metal waterwheel, constructed by the Tyneside firm of William Armstrong, at Killhope, the North of England Lead Mining Museum*



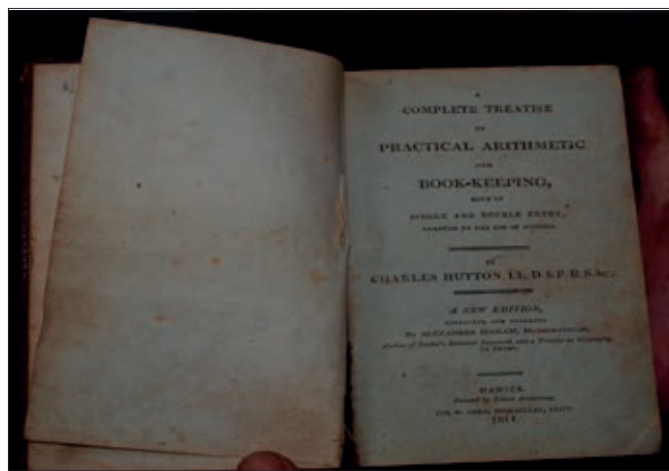
***One thing that particularly impressed me about Wanlockhead was that the miners here took pride in furthering their education and established a subscription library to do this***

In the miner's cottage, they have a book which it is stated would have been bought by a miner for his son to learn some knowledge other than mining, as means of escaping from mining as a living. This was arithmetic and bookkeeping! Needless to say, I took a photo of this (for those not in the

know, I am a qualified accountant). The miner's cottage also contained a blue ball hanging in the window, which I was told was a witch ball, to keep the witches away – popular in Cornwall, they assured me!

I spent an enjoyable week in Britain, clocking up over 1,000 miles driving from Pembroke to Troon via Newcastle, taking in multiple sites and a personal pilgrimage to Lockerbie (a relative of mine lived in Lockerbie and was killed when the wing of Pan Am 103 hit his house in 1988) and would recommend the locations above as worthy of your tourist pound.

Many thanks to our Chairman for putting me up for one of the nights of my visit.



***Many nineteenth century miners valued education and attended evening classes and formed subscription libraries***



***The Killhope 'thunderbox', an attempt to improve sanitary conditions underground***



***Causey Arch near Stanley in County Durham, northern England. It is the oldest surviving single-arch railway bridge in the world, and a key element of the industrial heritage of England***



## IRISH NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

### **Berehaven Copper Mines attract renewed interest (Gondwana Oil Corp. press release, 7/8/2014)**

Canadian company, Gondwana Oil Corporation, has stated its intent to take an 80 per cent stake in the Westcork Copper Mining Company (WCMC) which has interests in the Allihies area of County Cork.

Over the last two years WCMC has performed various studies including a ground magnetometer survey between the Mountain Mine and Coom Mine, and between the Caminches and Kealogue Mines. In addition, Westcork undertook a structural lineament, satellite imagery study, and conducted a VLF survey between the Caminches and Kealogue Mines, as well as VLF surveys over the Mountain Mine, and other select areas. This work has generated targets which the Company intends to further explore.

James McCannell will join Gondwana's Board of Advisors. "Mr. McCannell was geologist in charge of exploration from 1956 to 1961 working on the Berehaven copper mines where he dewatered the Mountain Mine to the bottom (1500 foot level) and carried out underground development and diamond drilling." <http://www.newswire.ca/en/story/1395552/gondwana-transitions-with-copper-acquisition>

### **Dalradian brings hope of a golden future for County Tyrone (BBC, 19/8/2014)**

A Canadian company exploring the possibility of gold mining in County Tyrone is to create 19 new jobs. Described by Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster, as "good news for the local economy", the jobs are to support Dalradian Resources' gold exploration project. Dalradian is looking to develop the first underground gold mine in Northern Ireland. "This offers a unique opportunity to introduce specialist skills and sophisticated international resource investment into our important professional services sector", they stated.

Dalradian has the mineral rights to more than 80,000 hectares in Northern Ireland including the Curraghinalt gold deposit outside Gortin, identified as one of the top ten undeveloped gold deposits by grade in the world. The company hopes to begin mining in the next four years with the potential to employ 300 people. Dalradian stated its commitment to helping to create a new industry in Northern Ireland, to hire locally and build up specialised mining skills through training over the next several years. "Ultimately, we believe Northern Ireland can support a vibrant mining sector with well-remunerated jobs." Invest Northern Ireland has offered more than £326,000 of support for the jobs and associated training, which will generate almost £1m a year in salaries. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-foyle-west-28848826>

**Further update:** Dalradian's Underground Exploration Programme commenced in September, with surface works undertaken by local contractor FP McCann, a Northern Ireland-based civil engineering company and manufacturer and distributor of concrete and other construction products. Surface works are expected to be completed within several months in preparation for going underground. For more detail see: <http://www.dalradian.com/news-and-events>

### **A most palatial order (Valentia Slate, 3/09/2014)**

Valentia Slate Ltd has received another order from the Palace of Westminster, London. They will be supplying bar counter tops for the Pugin Room and Members Smoking Room. The first commercial production of slate on Valentia Island was in 1816. The slate was used in many prominent buildings and railway stations in London. <http://www.valentiaslate.com/>

### **Irish geological sites make 'rock star' list**

Fourteen sites from across Ireland are included in a list of the top 100 most important geological sites in the UK and Ireland. An initiative of the Geological Society of London as part of Earth Science Week 2014, the Geological Society and partner organisations are celebrating Britain and Ireland's unique geo-heritage by launching a list of 100 Great Geosites.

The UK and Ireland '...feature some of the most diverse and beautiful geology in the world, spanning most of geological time, from the oldest Pre-Cambrian rocks to the youngest Quaternary sediments,' and the list which reflects this is split into ten categories. Five Northern Ireland Sites make this rock star list: Loughareema, Giant's Causeway, Portrush, Slieve Gullion and Marble Arch, and a further nine in the Republic: The Cliffs of Slieve League, Benbulbin, Ceide Field Bog; Drumlins of Clew Bay; Dalradian, Knocknagar; The Burren; The Cliffs of Moher; Sand Volcanoes near Kilkee and Mizen Head.

Although none of the Irish sites make the 'Industrial and Economic Importance' category, some mining sites well known to MHTI members in the UK do: Geevor Tin Mine, Cornwall and Iron Bridge Gorge, both World Heritage Sites; Great Orme Bronze Age Mine in north Wales which we visited last year, and Allenheads Lead Mining District in Northumberland.

### **Did you know?**

The Geological Society of London is the UK national society for geoscience, providing support to over 10,000 members in the UK and overseas. Founded in 1807, it is the oldest geological society in the world. See:

<http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/100geosites>

## Concerns Over Track Stability Works by Iarnród Éireann at East Avoca

On the 21st October 2014, Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail), the national railway system operator of Ireland, commenced works at the White Bridge site adjacent to the Avoca Mines, Co. Wicklow, in order to stabilise mine workings which run beneath the Dublin to Rosslare railway. The MHTI was made aware of these works by the Avoca Heritage Committee, who, concerned about the extent and nature of the works, have also raised the matter with the planning section of Wicklow County Council.

Consequently, two directors of the MHTI, Dr. Martin Critchley and Dr. Sharron Schwartz, visited the works' site on 23rd October. We are very grateful for the assistance of the resident engineer and to Dr. Billy O'Keefe (DCENR) in facilitating the visit.

Iarnród Éireann had identified a threat to the railway from potential subsidence of the Tigroney Deep adit which runs about 5m below the line, the portal of which is within the railway embankment. The adit was sealed at some time in the past but discharges the bulk of the water from the mine workings at East Avoca. The scheme of works involves the temporary closing of the line to lift the tracks and replace the section of the adit under the railway with a concrete culvert.

During the works, the water flow at the adit portal has been stopped by drilling a hole into the adit before it reaches the railway and pumping the water to the surface. A considerable amount of spoil has been moved on the site which, according to the resident engineer, was necessary to prevent any slippage of ground during the works. The Decline entrance to the Deep adit has been opened and the level was explored by divers prior to the dewatering.

The Exploration and Mining Division (EMD) of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources have, on the back of these works, removed the walling at the entrance of the 850 level in order to gain access to the level pending an

inspection to further understand the mine's hydrology. At the moment there appear to be no obvious threats to the ore bins or the flat rod tunnels which are fenced off.

Following our visit, a letter was sent to Iarnród Éireann and EMD recording our observations, noting our concerns and giving our recommendations for the future conduct of the works. The main comments are summarised below:

- The MHTI was disappointed that there was no environmental impact assessment prior to the works and no archaeologist on site, nor was planning permission sought for the works (Iarnród Éireann claim that the works are exempt from planning permission under the Railways Act 2001). The MHTI would question whether this exemption applies to the excavations on the State owned mine lands and the opening of the 850 level.
- The MHTI recommends that the adit portals are retained and finished in a style commensurate with the time of their original construction: stone arching for the Deep and Decline adits and timber frame for the 850 level.
- The MHTI is particularly concerned that the post remediation site plan includes covering the portal of the Decline adit as part of the reprofiling of the spoil. The Decline adit is a unique feature in Ireland and the MHTI wishes to see its entrance portal retained.
- Reprofiling of the spoil should attempt to replicate the soil profile before the works. The MHTI is opposed to any artificial or natural (grass) covering the spoil which must be retained as a visible part of the heritage of the Avoca Mines.

The MHTI will continue to monitor the works at Avoca and where necessary, lobby for the application of best practice in the protection of the mining heritage.

*Martin Critchley*



*Tigroney Deep Adit, the water of which has been temporarily diverted while essential maintenance work to stabilise the railway line is undertaken*



*Debris obscuring the entrance portal to the 850 level has been removed by EMD on the back of the Iarnród Éireann works, allowing for an impending inspection of the adit*



## Paws for thought... (Irish Independent, 20/10/2014)

Four Beagles out hunting with their owner disappeared down a disused mine shaft at Leap, near Glandore in County Cork. The Toe Head Coast Guard team was tasked with rescuing the stricken hounds. Three of the dogs were lifted to safety after coastguards climbed down the 80 ft shaft to haul them to the surface using a bucket and rope. The dogs were unscathed by their misadventure, but a fourth dog remains trapped underground after it ran beyond the reach of its rescuers. Another attempt will be made to retrieve the dog. Presumably the rescue is taking place from the "Big Pit" at Aghatubrid Beg. Manganese was worked in the area from 1832, with the last recorded production being in 1909. More information on the mine is available in *The metal mines of West Cork* by Diane Hodnett (2010). <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/>

## Back Copies from GSI

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) have remaindered many of their Report Series publications from the 1970s and 1980s, and some from the 1990s as well as their Bulletin of the GSI publication.

If anyone wants to get copies of specific titles, send an email to [mparkes@museum.ie](mailto:mparkes@museum.ie) and I will see if they have copies available for pick up in the Customer Centre, and I can hold them till you attend a meeting. Alternatively, pay them a visit and collect your own. Items include the Index to mineral and mining public records, Minerals Localities in Connemara Dalradian and others

See <http://www.gsi.ie/GSIShop/> for the full selection and pay your own postage if you want them sooner.

**Matthew Parkes**

## New Publications

*The Miners Way & Historical Trail Map Guide.*

This guidebook has been reissued, and is available en-route. The first edition (1999) contained 1:50 000 scale maps by EastWest Mapping, which showed some tramways and mines that are not shown on Ordnance Survey Ireland Discovery sheet 26.

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## OTHER NEWS

### **Ebola forces UK mining company into bankruptcy (BBC 16/10/2014)**

A London-based iron ore mining company operating in Ebola-ravaged Sierra Leone has gone into administration. London Mining suffered high costs, falling iron prices, and the impact of the Ebola virus in West Africa. Administrators from accountants, PricewaterhouseCoopers, have been appointed to run the firm and try to find a buyer for the Marampa mine.

London Mining had already withdrawn non-essential staff from Sierra Leone warning in late September that it did not have enough cash to operate its only mine and that it was in talks about a potential “strategic investment”. Trading in London Mining shares were suspended last week at the request of the company after directors warned that it was running out of money.

Iron ore prices have fallen by almost 40 per cent over the past 12 months and many potential investors are thought to have been put off because of the fears and uncertainty caused by the ongoing Ebola crisis. <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-29650186>

### **Arctic Town on the Move (The Guardian, 23/10/2014)**

Sweden’s most northerly town, Kiruna, is being relocated 3km east to avoid being swallowed up by the world’s largest iron-ore mine. Founded in 1900 by the state-owned Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara mining company (LK), Kiruna has grown rich off the vast seam of iron ore that lurks below the town, but it’s now facing destruction by the very phenomenon that created its wealth.

Located 145km inside the Arctic circle, Kiruna endures a brutal climate: winters with no sunlight and average temperatures below -15C. But the deep deposit of magnetite has proved a strong enough magnet to keep people here. Driven by the insatiable global appetite for construction, the mine has become the world’s largest iron ore extraction site, producing 90 per cent of all the iron in Europe. White Architects, a Stockholm-based firm, is charged with the biblical task of moving this city of 23,000 people to avoid the certain closure of the mine and consequent unemployment. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/oct/22/kiruna-sweden-town-moved-east-iron-ore-mine>

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