

Newsletter



Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

No.67 Winter 2014/5

**HUGE CROWD AT SILVERMINES
WALK: Éamonn De Stafort**

**AVOCA REVISITED: Mick and
Gerry's Trip Down Memory Lane**

**CANADA'S OLDEST
ACTIVE GEOLOGIST**
Special Feature by Sean O'Neill

**THE SLIABH AUGHTY FURNACE
PROJECT: Paul Rondelez**

UPDATE
Iarnród Éireann Works, East Avoca

FORTHCOMING FIELD TRIPS
Counties Donegal, Down and Clare

NAMHO CONFERENCE 2015, NENTHEAD
Online booking system now open!

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Iontaobhas Oidhreachta Mianadóireachta na hEireann

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

February 24, *The Lisheen Mine – From Discovery to Closure*, see page 10 for more details

March 6, *Lost Industrial Archaeology of the Mourne*s, see page 10 for more details

March 19, Board Meeting (Thursday)

March 21-22, Field trip to Co. Donegal to survey the Crohy Head Talc Mine. See page 7 for more details

March 31, Lecture on gypsum mining in Co. Monaghan, see page 10 for more details

May 2-3, MHTI AGM, Exhibition Launch, Seminar and Field Trips see page 8 for more details

May 21-24, 10th International Symposium on Archaeological Mining History, Aichach, Germany.
<http://www.europa-subterranea.eu/>

May 22-25, NAMHO Conference, Nenthead, Cumbria, England. <http://www.namho.org/> see page 10 for more details

June 1-3, NEW DATES for Archaeometallurgy in Europe IV conference, Spain. <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. See page 9 for more details

August 15-22, Allihies to Bunmahon Miners Trail. <https://atobminerstrail.wordpress.com/>

August 22-30 Heritage Week. see page 10 for more details

September 6-11, The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage (TICCIH) International Congress, Lille, France. <http://ticcih.org/>

September 8-11, 10th International Symposium on Knappable Materials, University of Barcelona, Spain.
<http://www.ub.edu/cherts-symp2015/>

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. Itinerary to be published in our summer newsletter.

September 12-13, European Heritage Open Days Northern Ireland.
<http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/niea/ehod.aspx>

October 21-23, The ERIH Annual Conference 2015: *How to attract new Audiences? New Ideas and Innovations for the Interpretation of Industrial Heritage*, Pilzen Brewery, Czech Republic. Call for papers, deadline 1 June 2015. Email abstracts of half a page including your contact details and a short CV to info@erih.net. Further details will be available on the ERIH Website from 1 August onwards.

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

MHTI MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Resignation of Director

It is with regret that we report that John Gibbons resigned from the Board of Directors on the 9th November. MHTI are very grateful to him for his service on the Board since his election on the 25 May 2013.

2015 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Notice is hereby given that an Annual General Meeting of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland Ltd. will be held on Saturday 2 May at 3.00 pm at the Carrickdale Hotel, County Louth. See page 8 for more details.

Agenda

- 1) Presentation of the accounts for 2014
- 2) To appoint auditors
- 3) To elect Directors

Signed: Nigel Monaghan, Company Secretary

If you are unable to attend but wish to have a proxy form, please contact Nigel Monaghan. Matthew Parkes, Nigel Monaghan and Mick Carragher are resigning at the AGM, as required by the Memo and Articles of the MHTI. All three are willing to stand for re-election. **We welcome nominations from people who wish to become Directors of the MHTI. Please contact Nigel Monaghan if you are interested.**

Members' Medley and Dinner

In November, we held our first Members' Medley at the Education Workroom, National Museum of Ireland. A fun-packed afternoon was enjoyed by about a dozen members and guests who enjoyed a variety of presentations including Ballyknockan Granite Quarrying; Iron mining and smelting in east Co. Clare and southeast Co. Galway in the 17th and 18th centuries and the Metal Mines of the Atacama and the Andes. On display were a range of fascinating mineral specimens collected by members over the years. A very convivial evening was afterwards enjoyed at Hugo's Restaurant, Merrion Row. We intend to make this an annual event, so make sure you keep your diary free on 14 November this year!

NAMHO 2016

The Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland has offered to host the NAMHO Conference in 2016, with the theme *Mining and Social Change*. We intend to hold the conference in Dublin, possibly at the Botanical Gardens, with field trips to the Wicklow Mines by coach. Information leaflets for other mining areas will be available and field trips to these before or after the conference weekend will be coordinated, dependent on demand. As 2016 is the year of our 20th anniversary, this will be the perfect platform to showcase the achievements of the MHTI over the last two decades. We will require numerous

people here to help make an event of this magnitude a success. A conference working group will be set up shortly. Please get in touch as soon as possible with any of our Directors if you are able to help with the organisation of the conference and/or are willing to lead a field trip.

A Crushing Success and Failure

In mid-September the long-awaited consolidation works at the Glendalough dressing floors on the Cornish crusher house that dates to about 1855 was completed. The Wicklow Mountains National Park, which has a duty of care for this monument, oversaw its consolidation after consultation with the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland among other agencies and professionals. For some time, the fragile state of the masonry walling has been of concern on health and safety grounds. The walls have been made safe, with one section being repaired with stone that had fallen from the building. The masonry in this repaired section of wall has been set back slightly to denote that it has been rebuilt, and the tops of the walls have been capped to prevent future water ingress.

The works have been completed to a high standard, following archaeological and architectural best practice guidelines, using authentic materials and lime mortar. Some intervention to limit the flow of storm water which was badly scouring the primary cobbled dressing area, was also undertaken, a small wall of random moorstone placed to direct walkers away from the dressing floor and a sturdy barrage of stone built up-river from the site to help to mitigate the flooding threat. Additional work by Mountain Meitheal uncovered the original cobbled track leading past the mine yard towards Van Diemen's Land Mine which had been covered by silt and bog. This will now form part of the walkers' path through the site.

However, the news from the Glenmalure valley, which contains the two finest examples of extant crusher houses in Ireland, is not as good. Not only do these mid-nineteenth century buildings continue to languish in various stages of neglect, Coillte, the agency which has a duty of care for them, has unfortunately chosen to replant forestry in the previously clear-felled flat areas in front of both monuments. This course of action is regrettable as it will completely destroy the visual integrity of these protected structures and will in time prevent visitors from viewing them from the old Donard road that runs parallel to both sites. This is particularly disappointing given that the Glens of Lead community group is about to install an interpretation board nearby.

The MHTI Board has informed Wicklow's Heritage Officer, Deirdre Burns, of this development and sent a letter to Coillte registering our disapproval, with an appeal to them to actively safeguard the future of both monuments. Their response (if any) will be published in our next newsletter.

Update on the Iarnród Éireann Works, East Avoca, County Wicklow

The Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland was notified by the Avoca Heritage Committee that on the 21st October 2014, Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail) commenced works at the White Bridge site adjacent to the Avoca Mines on the grounds of health and safety in order to stabilise mine workings which run beneath the Dublin to Rosslare railway. The main threat to the railway was identified as potential subsidence of the Tigroney Deep Adit (access tunnel) which runs about 5 metres 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 the works involved the temporary closing of the line and the replacement of the section of the adit under the railway with a concrete culvert.

As reported in our last newsletter, two directors of the MHTI, Dr Martin Critchley and Dr Sharron Schwartz, visited the works site on 23rd October in the company of staff from Iarnród Éireann and The Exploration and Mining Division of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR). Following our visit, a letter was sent to Iarnród Éireann, DCENR and Wicklow County Council, the main points of which are outlined below:

- The MHTI was disappointed that there was no environmental impact assessment prior to the works and no industrial

archaeologist on site, nor was planning permission sought for the works. There has been considerable disturbance of the surface mine spoil which probably contains buried archaeology. The lack of an industrial archaeologist on site during the works means that valuable structures may have been destroyed and the lack of recording would make an archaeological interpretation of the site more difficult in the future.

- The MHTI recommends that the adit portals are retained and finished in a style similar to that at the time of original construction. Controlled access to the adit workings is necessary for future safety audits and for scientific research. The 850 Level in particular is a valuable resource for research, education and as a potential future tourist attraction.

- The MHTI is particularly concerned that the portal of the Decline Adit could be covered over during the reprofiling of the spoil. The Decline Adit is a unique feature in Ireland and the MHTI wishes to see it retained with an appropriate visible entrance portal.

- The MHTI is concerned that the manner in which the works were undertaken at White Bridge (without an environmental impact assessment, without planning permission and without an industrial archaeologist on site) could be a precedent for



Works by Iarnród Éireann to replace a section of the Tigroney Deep Adit under the railway with a concrete culvert. A considerable amount of ground was excavated from the hillside above, allegedly to prevent land slippage while the works were in progress. This course of action has resulted in significant changes to the historic mining landscape



An exposed and damaged twentieth century timber launder containing scrap metal associated with copper cementation

any future works at the Avoca Mine site.

- A letter from DCENR to the MHTI, dated 14th November 2013, stated that, 'The team [managing works at Avoca mines] will be required, on appointment, to liaise and consult with relevant stakeholders, including heritage interests such as your organisation [MHTI]'. Whilst the MHTI, was asked about factual issues regarding the underground workings and was allowed to inspect the works, we were not consulted about heritage issues prior to the works commencing.

To date, the DCENR has not had the courtesy to even acknowledge the receipt of our letter, let alone address any of the issues raised within it. However, we understand that Wicklow County Council was concerned that the works were undertaken without planning permission and have issued an enforcement order to Iarnród Éireann and the DCENR to cease all works. Unfortunately the order came too late to prevent damage to the site.

On a follow up visit on the 26th October we witnessed the additional excavation and redistribution of the mine spoil and the on-going installation of the concrete culvert through the railway embankment. Post-work site visits have been made and a number of points of concern detailed in our letter to DCENR about the potential negative impact of the works on the historic mining landscape have unfortunately occurred.

There has been no attempt to finish the portal of Decline Adit, presently covered with a concrete slab, or the Tigroney Deep Adit in a style commensurate with the time of their construction. The ugly concrete culvert is clearly visible at the latter. A considerable amount of spoil has been moved during post-works 'landscaping' involving levelling the area above the portal. Several previously buried timber launders associated with the mid-twentieth century copper precipitation process have been exposed and cut through by heavy earth

moving machinery. Still containing scrap iron in the form of metal off-cuts, presumably supplied by a canning factory, these launders are of significant archaeological interest and great historic value, evidence of the cementation of copper, a hydrometallurgical process practised at the Avoca Mines since the eighteenth century. Additional sub-surface archaeology undoubtedly exists in this area, and no further 'landscaping' should be permitted without a thorough archaeological survey.

Furthermore, part of a calcified, stratified finger dump has been cut into by a digger, again disturbing and exposing buried archaeology. Moreover, little regard has been paid to the geological heritage of the site, as this dump contains the rare mineral Chalcantite (Copper Sulphate), amounts of which have been destroyed by the partial destruction of this dump.

DCENR have, on the back of these works, removed the concrete block walling at the entrance of the 850 Level; this is presently sealed by loose backfill. Whether or not a bat survey was conducted prior to the blocking of the adit is unclear. We understand that DCENR plan to further 'landscape' and grass over the spoil at Tigroney and other sites at Avoca and has recently submitted an application to Wicklow County Council for planning permission (application reference 15119) for the capping of Whelan's, Reed's and Air Shafts at Ballymurtagh. The MHTI is currently considering a submission in relation to this application.

We understand that many of the residents of the Avoca valley share our concerns about the scale and nature of the current and proposed future remediation works. The Avoca Heritage Committee has, amongst other things, been actively raising awareness of the potential threats to the historic mining landscape posed by these works with local county councillors, TD's and relevant Government Ministers.

Martin Critchley

Slieveardagh Coalfield, Co. Tipperary: Lack of Listing Cause for Concern

Whilst on a recent visit to the Ballingarry coalfield (Slieveardagh) we noticed that several industrial buildings and monuments are languishing in a state of benign neglect and seem to have undergone significant deterioration over the last decade. The main structures inspected were:

Mining Company of Ireland Office at Mardyke
Cornish-type 50" pumping engine house at Mardyke
Mine engine house at Lisnamrock
Mine manager's house at Earlshill
Powder house at Earlshill
Ventilation chimney at Copper

We had expected that these would have been on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) for County Tipperary, but it doesn't appear so when we consulted the list. The historic mining landscape of the Slieveardagh coalfield is of great heritage value as it contains the only extant examples of Cornish-type steam engine houses on a coalfield in Ireland and other industrial monuments that are unique to this island.

The rate of decay at many of the sites is palpable, nowhere more so than at the Mining Company of Ireland's Office at Mardyke, which has lost more of its roof and walling since July 2007. The conical slate roofed powder house at Earlshill is of particular interest as it is the only one of its kind in Ireland. We spoke with the landowner who is very receptive to the preservation of the mining heritage on his land, particularly the powder house. He is concerned that Tipperary County Council has made the demolition of the mine manager's house a condition of the planning permission for his new house and stables. Under the terms of this, he had to knock down the mine offices and is loathe to do the same to the mine manager's house, which is a perfectly sound building with an amenity as well as heritage value. When the MHTI visited the Earlshill site in March 2013 with Phelim Lally, we noticed that two sections of cast iron rising main, one formerly installed as a gate post, the other propping up a wall in the mine office block, had disappeared. We were delighted to learn that the landowner has these safely

stored and he allowed us to inspect them.

In a wider context, none of the structures have lightning conductors, the ivy choked Cornish-type pumping engine house at Mardyke has sections of masonry missing above its cylinder doorway which threatens the integrity of the entire wall and the upper courses of stonework on the square chimney at Copper are in a parlous condition with several courses of stonework having fallen away since 2007.

We've written to the County Heritage Officer stating that the MHTI wishes to see these structures incorporated in the RPS and that we would be happy to provide our knowledge in the history and significance of the structures to Tipperary Co. Co. as part of the listing procedure. We had an immediate response to our letter and our concerns have been passed on to the planner dealing with the update of the RPS. We have also contacted the Ballingarry/Slieveardagh Mining Group in the hope that they will support the inclusion of these structures in the RPS and help with the process of identifying what monuments should be included if requested by Tipperary Co Co.

Martin Critchley and Sharron Schwartz



Chimney at Copper July 2007 left, February 2015 right



The Mining Company of Ireland's Offices at Mardyke seen here on the left in July 2007, and on the right, February 2015. In less than a decade the decay is evident. The structure has lost more of its slate roof, a chimney, walling and ivy has taken hold of the far right of the building

EVENTS AND NOTICES

Crohy Head Mine, Donegal, Field Trip Saturday 21 – Sunday 22 March, 2015



Crohy Head Mine. In the gully (centre) are six inaccessible levels. At the back of the beach are three short trials. The sea cave which connects with the gully is behind the sloping base of the cliff.

The main purpose of this field trip is to make a plan of the surface remains of the talc mine and the small processing plant on the cliffs at Crohy Head, southwest of Dunglow. Martin Critchley will provide some training in basic surveying techniques for those who are interested. A second aim is to examine the sea cave beneath the old mine, to see if there are connections between the two. MHTI swimmers previously entered the cave in September 2007, at a very low tide (see NL39, March 2008). In the event of windy or wet weather, an alternative mine site will be visited. All visits are subject to the consent of landowners. **In the event of any changes to the programme, please let the coordinator know if you are interested in attending.**

Coordinator

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Programme

Saturday 21 March

Meet at 10:30 in the car park of SuperValu, Carnmore Road (N56), Dunglow (An Clochan Liath), grid reference B 774 116, Discovery sheet 1. We will drive via Maghery to Crohy Head Mine. There is VERY limited parking available near the remains of the mill at B 710 075. After viewing the workings



Three short trials at the base of the cliff

on the top of the cliffs we will descend to the beach, to look at more workings. A hand-line will be provided to safeguard our descent to the beach. Adventurous (insured caving) members will try to access the sea cave, using wet suits, helmets, safety lines etc. Low tide is at 12:51 (0.19m at Burtonport). Please bring a packed lunch.

Sunday 22 March

10:00 meet as above. Low tide is at 13:31 (0.25m at Burtonport). Please bring a packed lunch.

Equipment

Members are requested to bring warm clothing, waterproofs and hillwalking boots. If going caving, wetsuits, wellies, buoyancy aids, helmets, and electric lamps are recommended.

Bibliography

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

Accommodation in Dunglow

(These premises are within about 1km of the town centre)
Atlantic Guest House – Main Street, Dungloe, Co. Donegal, tel. 074 952 1061, jcannon@iol.ie

Midway Bar & Guest House – Main Street, Dungloe, tel. 074 952 1318

Radharc an Oileain – Quay Road, Dungloe, Co. Donegal, tel. 074 952 1093

Rest a Wyle – Mrs. Josephine Bonner, Carnmore Road, Dungloe, tel. 074 956 1701/086 824 1159

More accommodation listings at: <http://www.dungloe.info/>

2015 AGM, Launch of Exhibition, Seminar, and Field Trip to the Newtownards Mines Co. Down

The Newtownards Mines at Conlig and Whitespots were the most successful lead producers in Northern Ireland, working the only major lode in County Down. In the decade 1848-1858, the Whitespots Mine accounted for almost 40 per cent of all the lead produced in Ireland. Unusually for Irish mines, much is known about the colourful characters who owned and managed them and something of the lives of the many hundreds of people who worked them.

With a history spanning almost 150 years, the mines have bequeathed a rich historical legacy to the Newtownards area and several industrial monuments of significant archaeological and heritage value are set in a landscape with great amenity worth. However, the mines have also left an indelible mark on this landscape in the form of numerous spoil heaps and tailings ponds which pose environmental challenges as lead is toxic. Balancing the needs of making safe an environment contaminated by mining activity with the preservation and consolidation of the very monuments and features that are its *raison d'être*, requires careful management.

Our post-AGM seminar theme for this year is *Lead Mining Lives and Landscapes*, timed to coincide with the launch of an exhibition on the mines by the MHTI being held at the North Bangor Museum. We are delighted to announce the attendance of Dr. Norman Moles of the University of Brighton as our guest speaker this year. Dr. Moles, whose research interests include environmental geochemistry and geo-hazards, has published several academic papers on the environmental legacy of lead mining at the Newtownards Mines. He will be joined by Drs. Martin Critchley and Sharron Schwartz, who will outline the rise and decline of mining at Newtownards and its rich social history. We will conclude our seminar with a panel presentation and Q&A session concerning the importance of protecting the legacy of the historic mining landscape and the factors and issues that problematise this. The following day there will be a guided walk of the mine sites.

Coordinator

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Provisional Programme

Saturday 2 May

2:30 pm Refreshments on arrival prior to the AGM at Carrickdale Hotel, County Louth
3:00-4.00 pm AGM

Exhibition Launch & Seminar at the North Down Museum. This is a ticketed event. Details will be made available in future publicity material

6:00-6:30 Launch of the *Lead Mining Lives and Landscapes* Exhibition
6.30 -7:00 pm Sharron Schwartz and Martin Critchley, *The Rise and Decline of the Newtownards Mines and the People who Owned, Managed and Worked them*

7.00- 7:30 pm Norman Moles,
lecture title tba

7:30 -8:00 pm Open panel discussion and Q&A session
Managing the Lead Mining Legacy

8:30 pm Dinner at Wolsey's Bar and Steakhouse, Bangor ([http://www. http://worseys.com](http://www.http://worseys.com))

Please let Martin know before Friday 3rd April if you will be joining the speakers for dinner, or a place at the restaurant cannot be guaranteed

Sunday 3 May Field Trip

10.00am Meet in the Car Park at the entrance of the Whitespots Country Park near to the Somme Heritage Centre (Grid Ref: 349800E/376400N). We will then embark on a guided walk of the mines taking in Conlig Engine House, the North Engine Shaft site, the windmill and dressing floor area, South Engine House and Bog Shaft. **The walk is free to MHTI members but there will be a £5.00 charge for non-members. Please bring a packed lunch**

2:30pm Visit to the Clandeboye Estate, former home of the Fifth Baron Dufferin and Claneboye, who owned the Conlig Mine sett.

Equipment

The trails around the mine sites offer fairly easy walking but these are muddy in places. Members are advised to bring waterproofs, hillwalking boots and gaiters, or wellies.

Bibliography

Moles, N.R., Betz, S.M., McCready, A.J. and Murphy, P.J. (2003) 'Replacement and authigenic mineralogy of metal contaminants in stream and estuarine sediments at Newtownards', *Northern Ireland Mineralogical Magazine*, 67 (2). pp. 305-324.
Moles, N.R., Smyth, D., Maher, C.E., Beattie, E., Kerr, K. and Kelly, M. (2004) *Dispersion of cerussite-rich tailings and plant uptake of heavy metals at historical lead mines near Newtownards*, Northern Ireland Applied Earth Science (Trans. IMM B), 113 (1). pp. 21-30.
Schwartz, S.P. and Critchley, M F., (2013) 'A History of the Silver-Lead Mines of County Down, Northern Ireland', *Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland*, pp. 23-95.

Accommodation

There is a wide variety of accommodation in Bangor. See <http://www.booking.com/> **It is the May Day Bank Holiday weekend in Northern Ireland. Booking early is advisable.**

In the event of any changes to the programme, please let the coordinator know at your earliest convenience if you are interested in attending.

Clare/Galway Iron Mining and Smelting Field Trip Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 July, 2015

The aim of this field trip is to introduce MHTI members to the remains of the iron mining and smelting industry which flourished during the 17th and early 18th century on the western banks of the Lower Shannon.

Further information on the history and significance of this activity can be found on page 17 of this Newsletter. As the details of the programme are subject to the consent of landowners and new discoveries in the intervening times these are liable to change.

Coordinator

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Programme:

Saturday 11th of July

10.30 Meet on the large lakeside Parking Space at Ballycuggaran, 3km north of Killaloe on the R463 to Scarriff and just before the University of Limerick Adventure Centre (ING: 168722,176279)

- Hematite mines at Ballymalone: rather extensive open cast mines with a documented adit and local claims of deep shafts.
- (optional) Hematite mines at Bealkelly (Eyre).
- Ballyvannan blast furnace: likely the oldest upstanding blast furnace remains in Ireland. (1610s) and potentially worldwide! Furnace, extensive spoilheap, dam, charcoal production area.
- Bealkelly (Purdon) furnace: well preserved remains dating to c. 1700.

Evening: Illustrated talk in Feakle on the history and context of the iron mining and smelting industry in the area by P. Rondelez (c. 1h).

Sunday 12th of July

9.30 Meet at Peppers Bar in Feakle

- Iron mines at Glendree: opencast mines with a documented adit.
- Derryoover furnace: unusual small furnace in very good condition. 18th century?
- Whitegate furnace: remains of very large furnace with an enigmatic tunnel preserved within its structure. Early 18th century.

Equipment

Some of the sites are located in wet areas and appropriate footwear is strongly recommended. Please bring packed lunches.

Bibliography

Kinahan G. H. 1863. *Explanation to accompany Sheet 124 and that Part of Sheet 125 that lies on the West of Lough Derg of the Maps of the Geological Survey*



Extant remains of the Whitegate Furnace

of Ireland, illustrating Parts of the Counties of Galway and Clare. Dublin, Alexander Thom and Co.

Accommodation in and around Feakle

Loughnane's Hostel (Feakle)

Tel.: 061 924200
website: www.eastclarehostels.com
email: loughnaneshostel@gmail.com

Laccaroe House B&B (Gurrane, Feakle)

Tel.: 061 924150 or 087 2258803
website: www.laccaroehouse.com
email karenbreen1966@yahoo.ie

Clondanagh Cottage B&B (Clondanagh, Tulla) and Glendree Self Catering Cottage (Glendree, Feakle)

Tel.: 086 8268862
website: www.clondanaghcottage.com/
email: info@clondanaghcottage.com

More accommodation is listed on the Feakle Festival website (<http://www.feaklefestival.ie/accom.html>), but some of these could only apply during the festival.

Additional accommodation is also available through Airbnb (www.airbnb.ie)

Lecture *The Lisheen Mine – From Discovery to Closure*, Tuesday 24th February

Brendan Morris, Head of Mining and Technical at the Lisheen Mine, will give a lecture about the mine, covering: discovery of the orebody; cycle of mining; metallurgical process; environmental management; social and corporate responsibility; people and closure; and site closure and rehabilitation. The talk will be held at 7:30pm immediately after the AGM of the Irish Mining & Quarrying Society (7pm), at the Lucan Spa Hotel, Lucan, Co. Dublin.

<http://www.imqs.ie/NewsEventsViewer/tabid/93/>

[ArticleId/551/Irish-Mining-and-Quarrying-Society-IMQS-AGM-2015-and-Evening-Presentation.aspx](http://www.imqs.ie/NewsEventsViewer/tabid/93/ArticleId/551/Irish-Mining-and-Quarrying-Society-IMQS-AGM-2015-and-Evening-Presentation.aspx)

Lecture *Lost Industrial Archaeology of the Mourne* Friday 6th March

As part of a series of public lectures organised by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Stephen Russell, of the Historic Monuments Council, will give a lecture on the above subject. The talk will be held from 1-2pm in the Pat Collins reading room in Waterman House, 5-33 Hill Street, Belfast, BT1 2LA. Space is limited: if you want a seat arrive early. For further information please call 028 9054 3159 or email hmenquiries@doeni.gov.uk

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/nica/built-home/promoting/public_lectures_2015

Euromines Conference *Pushing boundaries beyond - Circular by 2020*, Dublin, 9 March

The conference will focus on the role of new technologies and policy approaches for a future mining industry in Europe. There will be high level participation from European mineral suppliers as well as technology providers and a representatives of Irish Ministries will attend this event as one of the key speakers. Deadline for registration 27 February.

<http://www.imqs.ie/NewsEventsViewer/tabid/93/>

[ArticleId/553/Euromines-Dublin-Conference.aspx](http://www.imqs.ie/NewsEventsViewer/tabid/93/ArticleId/553/Euromines-Dublin-Conference.aspx)

Lecture on gypsum mining in Co. Monaghan, Tuesday 31st March

Benson Plunket, Mine Operations Manager for Irish Gypsum, will give a talk about the mine at Knocknacran, Co. Monaghan. The talk will be held at 8pm in Room A206 in the Quad, NUI Galway. Coffee and biscuits from about 7:30pm.

<http://www.galwaygeology.net/our-program.html>

***Lead Mining Lives and Landscapes*, Exhibition at the Community Gallery, North Bangor Museum, Bangor, Northern Ireland, 2-31 May**

This exhibition by the MHTI offers an insight into the Newtownards Mines of Conlig and Whitespots, the most important lead producers in Northern Ireland. Mining activity since the late eighteenth century has left a wealth of industrial monuments and a landscape of great amenity value, albeit one with ongoing environmental issues due to lead contamination. The exhibition will be opened on Saturday 2 May at 6.30 pm as part of our AGM, weekend. See page 8 for more details.

NAMHO 2015, 22-26 May

The UK National Association of Mining History Organisations have announced their programme of lectures and field trips for the NAMHO Conference 2015, which is being held at Nenthead, near Alston in Cumbria.

The conference this year has two themes: *The Influence of War on UK Mining* and *Recent Research on the North Pennines Mining Industries*.

An interesting array of lectures have already been offered and include: 'The Rise of the North Pennines Lead Industry in the Seventeenth Century'; 'The History and Conservation of Carrock Wolfram Mine'; 'Mineral Independence - Access to metalliferous resources in time of conflict'; 'Labour Contracts in 19th Century Metal Mining, Bingtale, Fathomtale and other Tales'; 'Mining Tramways in the North Pennines'; 'Samson, the Cornish Hush Tramway and creating the 2015 replica'; 'Hudgill Burn Mine Caverns - Britain's Biggest Maze Cave'; 'New Society, Old Industry'; '18 months in the life of an abandoned lead mine- field monitoring of Whitesike and Bentyfield Mines, North Pennines'; and 'Running a Tourist Mine in the 21st Century'.

Many of our readers will need no introduction to Nenthead, which is one of the premier mining history and heritage regions in the British Isles. There are a wide range of surface field trips and an amazing total of 46 underground field trips, although twelve of these are winch trips down Brewery Shaft (320 feet). Spaces on the underground field trips are filling up fast, with many already booked up, so readers are advised to avail of the early bird delegate fee and book your place quickly. **As the event is being held over an English bank holiday weekend, it might be wise to arrange your accommodation early.** For more information and to book your place, visit the conference website:

http://www.namho.org/nenthead2015/conf_home.php



Discover the past. Build the future.
Aimsigh an t-am atá caite. Tóg an todhchaí.

Heritage Week, 22-30 August

The theme for this years Heritage Week is *From mill to forge, from mind to hand – discovering Ireland's industrial past*. A training day for event organisers is being held on Thursday 9th April in Dublin Castle. Topics covered will include social media, creating creative events and media relations. The industrial heritage theme will be discussed.

<http://www.heritageweek.ie/>

Over One Hundred Participate in Mining Walk at Silvermines By Éamonn De Stafort



A great turn out for the early January mining heritage walk from Shallee to Ballygowan, organised by the Silvermines Historical Society

On Sunday 4 January, over 100 walkers participated in a four-mile Mining Walk organised by Silvermines Historical Society from Shallee to Ballygowan. It was quite a spectacle to witness all age groups with varying degrees of mining interests traverse the four-mile walk that commenced at the former 19th and 20th century site at Shallee.

Starting point was at the Shallee Engine House which some years ago was conserved as part of a major Rehabilitation Programme and now serves as an important Tourism Product. Our guide at this site was Denis Gleeson, a former employee of Mogul of Ireland, who traced the history of the building, built after 1861. Also still standing on this site is the 19th century *King's House*, called after Thomas King who is credited with discovering zinc at Ballygowan in Silvermines. This four-bay period house is now but a shell but still an important ingredient in the Mining Attractions of this area.

From Shallee we travelled the road to the Mogul of Ireland Site just one mile 'up the road' but not before we crossed the Barony Bridge that divides Upper Ormond and the Barony of Arra and Owney. It also divides the parish of Silvermines and Ballinahinch and also the Diocese of Killaloe and Cashel.

Denis Gleeson also led us to the site of Mogul Of Ireland Lead and Zinc Mine which was the largest mining development in this area since Italians arrived from Genoa and Florence,

Italy in 1289. Employing over 500 people it produced over 10 million tons of ore from 1968 to 1982. It had seven levels with a shaft depth of almost 1000 feet. Here they toiled and laboured for over 14 years 'digging through the ground in search of ore, the sweetener of their toil'. The mine closed in June 1982.

Still in evidence are the rail sidings which were used for transporting the ore from Silvermines to Foynes in Co. Limerick. Denis gave a graphic description of the Mogul workings and many former employees who attended the walk were generous in adding to much of what Denis told the attendance. There were five fatalities during the life of the mine and those who lost their lives are listed on a plaque erected in the village in September 2013.

From the Mogul site at Garryard we traversed the mountain climb to the gigantic former Barytes Quarry which was worked for thirty years by Magcobar Ltd., until closure in 1990. This 200 ft deep 50 acre quarry is surely the largest in Europe. Former employee, Pat Sheehan, gave a very interesting outline of the workings which preceded the Mogul of Ireland Mine. This site was the subject of a proposal by Waste Management Ireland in 1994 to develop a major landfill at the disused quarry. The proposal led to a massive campaign of opposition by the local community that went on for some six years. Eventually the proposal was turned down when An Bord Pleanála allowed an appeal to dewater the huge quarry at the site. Today the site is fenced off and the water remains.

From Magcobar we travelled cross country to our final stop at the 19th century Ballygowan Engine House adjacent to the village of Silvermines where Eamonn De Stafort outlined the workings of the building and how it represented a quantum leap for industrial development in North Tipperary after 1861. After the walk, local publican, Tommy Hickey, provided welcome refreshments for all participants.



Shallee Cornish engine house

Avoca Revisited: Mick and Gerry's Trip Down Memory Lane

By Mick Carragher

On the 12th and 13th September last, Gerry Clear and myself went to visit Avoca Mines, where both of us had formerly worked.

Our first stop-off was Avondale House near Rathdrum, the former home of Charles Stewart Parnell. We watched a short film about the history of the house, when it was built and how it came into the ownership of his family. This is a wonderful estate which is managed by the OPW. Our guide gave us the freedom to wander around upstairs and down. We walked around the grounds and down to the Avonmore River. After lunch in the cafe we were on our way to Avoca.

We parked at Mary Carter's house and walked up to Cronebane Open Pit and on to Connary Cross Roads where we visited our friend Dave Moxley who was busy making wooden beehives with his neighbour. That's Dave with white beard in the photo below! We stayed here about an hour. Dave was in charge of stope blasting with ANFO when Avoca Mines was in full production in the 1970s and early 1980s.

It was a great walk going up to Cronebane and better going back down; Mount Platt still stands proud. We visited all the landmarks and Engine Houses, we had a good chat with the people who were working at the Road Adit and there is a lot of road works going on at the mine gate. The mine water discharge from the Road Adit used to flow towards the village; that is all changed now.

A large pipe is installed directly opposite the adit which flows under the road into the Avoca River. The old culvert beside the road is rehabilitated and another large pipe is now under the road where an old one was. This second pipe is for security should the North pipe ever become blocked.

A young man from Tinahely was working there and he took great pleasure to show us around, pointing out features with his shovel. It was getting late in the evening when we arrived at our friend's house, Noel and Bridie Burke in Arklow, with

Bridie filling the pan with large striploin steaks around 8pm. After we had a few Paddys to round off the evening, it was off to bed.

Noel left for Bray at 7am the next morning but it was nearer 10 o'clock before we got moving. Bridie filled the pan again, this time with the 'full Irish' with soda farls. We took our leave and headed out to Avoca. We went out past the mine and parked opposite the old Methodist Church and entered the grounds of the derelict *Vale View Hotel*. We had permission from the owner, Peter King, to enter the property in search of an old adit we had been told about.

Past the locked gates we met a man with a white van who is running a business related to the repair and cleaning of old house guttering and downpipes. There are two dwelling houses up the roadway and we made our way to the lane outside the house directly behind the hotel. After a hard climb to get access to the wooded area and a lot of searching through thick bushes and trees, we decided to consult with the experts as to where exactly the old adits were located.

We contacted Matthew Parkes who kindly used his computer at home to look up the old 1" maps of the area. Matthew



Dave Moxley (left), formerly in charge of stope blasting with ANFO at the Avoca Mines in the 1970s and 80s



Mick Carragher outside the 'Vale View Adit'



***Mick Carragher in front of the ore bins at Tigroney.
Williams' engine house is on the hillside behind***

confirmed that we were almost beside one of the adits and that there were two more at a different spot back towards the main road. The adit we found we called the Vale View Adit. Water was flowing from the adit and there was a plastic pipe bringing water to a large storage tank.

We were not able to find the other adit down nearer the main road as directed by Matthew Parkes, because the area was so overgrown with bushes and briars that it couldn't be accessed. [Ed's note: the adit Mick and Gerry explored appears to be the trial in Kilcashell undertaken by the Mining Company of Ireland in 1840 on the back of a rise in demand for iron pyrites. It was not a success and the trial terminated the same year].

After a bit of a rest, we went back to Avoca village because I had a few artefacts that I wanted to donate to the museum above the Old Courthouse. Unfortunately it closes early on Saturdays and wasn't open when we arrived. Not to worry, we will be back again when the days are longer.

Next stop was a visit to former Electrical Foreman at Avoca, Mike Cerny and Theresa. Mike told us that the adit we located behind the *Vale View* was used to supply water to the hotel whenever there was a problem with the normal water mains. After coffee and sandwiches, we left for our next stop, a Cornish Engine House chimney still standing in the townland



The Ballymoneen Cornish-type engine house at West Avoca

of Ballymoneen. Here we chanced to meet a former miner from Avoca, John Fleming, who was very happy to talk about times past and men from the mines who we knew.

We then went to visit Alan Thomas who was busy in his workshop. We sat in the sunshine at the back of his house with some cold drinks and talked about mining and those we knew from over the years [sadly, Alan has since passed away, see his obituary on page 20].

After leaving Alan, we paid a quick visit to the new World War One Memorial Park on the riverbank at Woodenbridge. The park commemorates those from the County of Wicklow who died in the war, grouped by the town or village they came from. A very peaceful and tranquil spot, it is well worth a visit.

While walking around we noticed an old trestle in poor repair where the Avoca train crossed the Aughrim River first and then passed under the Arklow road on its way to Carlow. This could be of interest to Ewan Duffy with his knowledge of railways.

Our final stop on the way home was a call to Peter King's pub in Glenealy where we told him all about our visit to Avoca. Suitably refreshed, we started on the road back to Navan, a most enjoyable visit.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Canada's Oldest Active Geologist

By Sean O'Neill

Ninety nine next month, you would think that Canadian geologist, Jim McCannell, would be taking things easy in his twilight years. But slowing down is not hardwired into the psychology of this man on the brink of centenarianism, who is undoubtedly Canada's oldest active geologist and quite possibly its oldest geochemist and engineer too. When I last spoke to him a few days ago, he had driven to lunch in Toronto and had driven back home, some 90 miles, mostly in bright sunshine but for the final ten miles in the biggest snowstorm he had ever experienced!

Born on 12 March 1916 in Port McNicoll, a small Ontario town on Georgian Bay, he is the son of a merchant marine officer. His first mining experience was a job underground as a helper on a rock drill at the Shawkey Mines, Val D'Or, Quebec, in early January 1937. Later that year, he was moved into the assay office and finished as the mine assayer when the operation closed in late August 1938. A month later, he began studies at the University of Western Ontario (Western) and took the first year of general science with the intention

of majoring in physical and theoretical chemistry but later combined chemistry and geology, graduating in 1943 with a degree in both subjects.

Associate Professor of Geology, G.H. (Harold) Reavely told McCannell with the amount of mining experience he had and the fact he had so much geology in his geo-chemistry, if he took another year at Western, he could earn enough credits for geology as well. "So, my degree actually reads: geochemistry and geology," says the long-time miner. While attending Western, McCannell worked during the summer of 1939 at the East Malartic Mines Limited and the summers of 1940, '41 and '42 at the Malartic Goldfields.

In September 1947, McCannell joined Mining Geophysics, a company owned by N.B. Keevil. He was the first geologist hired by Dr. Keevil to work on the airborne magnetometer project on which Mining Geophysics was working under a contract with the Gulf Oil Company.

Although Gulf offered him an attractive position after his two-year contract was up, the Western grad decided to start his own geological consulting practice. He was well occupied directing exploration programs in various parts of Canada, when through a mutual acquaintance, he met T.M. Stirling, a partner in the Toronto brokerage firm of Watt & Watt. Stirling had been approached by the New York brokerage firm of Ungerleider & Company to locate a Canadian geologist to examine and prepare an evaluation report on a mine they thought was in B.C.

"The mine in question, was the Pend Oreille Mines and Metals Company, which at the time was expanding their lead and zinc operation at Metaline Falls, State of Washington. The Company was reluctant to let any outside technical people on the property but for some reason the management granted me permission to visit the property and write a report," says Jim. As it turned out, Ungerleider & Co. required the report for a group of clients that included New York showman and songwriter, Billy Rose, of *Me and My Shadow, It's Only a Paper Moon*, fame. Through Billy Rose the report got into the hands of Bernard Baruch, who was close to the Sullivan Hecla group.

"The Sullivan Hecla group had just closed a deal for 750,000 shares of Pend Oreille when the stock was selling for \$2.50 per share on the open market. On receiving my report, Billy Rose requested to meet me in New York, and when I arrived, he arranged for me to meet with Mr. Baruch immediately." McCannell spent almost a full day at Baruch's New York apartment, a man so important at the time that presidents found a hard time to get an hour with him. Baruch was convinced of



Jim McCannell today

“Well, I’ve had quite a career in mining. I’ve worked in about 30 countries. I have the best record of any geologist I’ve ever known – for mine finding.”

the authenticity of the report McCannell produced and the two remained in friendly contact over the years. While working on various projects in Central America, one in Costa Rica, which adjoins Nicaragua, McCannell was invited to Nicaragua to meet the then President General Anastosia Somoza Garcia. He was a guest at the presidential palace for three days while they discussed the financing of several of his geological prospects. McCannell had to return immediately to New York, but before he could travel back to Nicaragua, the General was assassinated by poet, Rigoberto López Pérez, on 21 September 1956.

“Well, I’ve had quite a career in mining. I’ve worked in about 30 countries. I have the best record of any geologist I’ve ever known – for mine finding.” He has worked in every province or territory in Canada (except PEI, which has no outcrop). “I’ve walked for thousands of kilometres through the bush all the way from the Yukon to Labrador.”

Another claim to fame is that McCannell found the only mine in Haiti, when in 1955 he drilled an old Spanish showing, originally discovered in the 1800’s, and found 126 feet of rich copper-zinc ore, with credits in gold and silver.

Many of our readers will no doubt be aware of Jim’s long connection with Ireland. We take up the story of this chapter of his life in his own words:

“I was first attracted to Ireland by a Toronto based lawyer, Warren Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong represented a group of young Irishmen who had emigrated to Canada about 1950 and found employment on a large uranium construction project in the Beaverlodge area of northern Saskatchewan. This group included Pat Hughes and Joseph McParlend from Newry, County Down, Matt Gillroy from Eniskillen County Fermanagh, and Michael McCarthy from Skibbereen County Cork [whose obituary appeared in our last newsletter No. 66]. These men got their first mining experience in Beaverlodge and while working there staked a group of uranium claims. They sold these claims for cash and returned to Ireland.

This resulted in Mr. Armstrong, Pat O’Sullivan and myself flying to Ireland on 12 January 1956. We landed at Shannon airport about 5 am and it was quite cold. We were met by Pat Hughes and Joe McParlend and after a few hot scotch toddies at the Shannon airport bar we drove to Dublin, and registered at the Gresham Hotel. The following day Warren Armstrong and myself accompanied by Pat Hughes and Joe McParlend,



Jim McCannell centre, in West Cork, 28 February 1959



Jim McCannell far left, with Terry O'Sullivan, H. O'Sullivan and Joe McParlend in Allihies village

drove to Newry.

We spent a couple of days examining some small showings in Counties Meath and West Meath, mostly zinc and lead but also copper zinc mineralization a few miles south of Slane on the Boyne river. I saw enough to convince me that metallic mineralized showings did exist in Ireland. Armstrong, O'Sullivan and myself spent about 10 days in the country and then returned to Canada.

When all this was completed and Can-Erin was financed, I returned to Ireland and the first property I worked on was a copper zinc showing south of Slane. McParlend and Hughes had arranged with a Canadian diamond driller, Harvey Hendrick, to form an Irish drilling company which they named Priority Drilling. Hendrick set up a portable light diamond drill that was very mobile and ideal for drilling angle holes up to three hundred feet deep and recovering a one-inch diameter core.

In March 1956 while I was staying at the Shelbourne hotel in Dublin, my Irish associates brought Murro O'Brien, the director of the Geological Survey of Ireland, to the hotel to meet me. While we were discussing the mining potential of Ireland, Murro O'Brien mentioned a copper property in West Cork. I inquired as to whether these were the copper mines that Daphne DuMaurier had written about in her book *Hungry Hill* and the J. Arthur Rank Company had made into a movie? Mr. O'Brien stated that these were the mines he was discussing.

Two days later Joe McParlend and I left for Ahillies in West Cork, stopping at Skibbereen to pick up Michael McCarthy.

We spent two full days at Ahillies and I was thoroughly impressed with the extensive mining that had left large stopes open through to surface and much chalcopyrite mineralization in evidence.

In the meantime I was checking lead/zinc showings throughout the carbonate belt with the help of an elderly Monaghan gentleman, Michael Hughes, introduced to me by Pat Hughes (not a relative). Michael Hughes proved to be very knowledgeable on the mineral showings throughout the carbonate area. Based largely on Michael's knowledge of the various showings I spent about 10 days examining showings right up to the north coast of Counties Mayo and Sligo, accompanied by Pat Hughes, Joe McParlend, and James McCluskey, a geologist with the Geological Survey of Ireland.

Several of these showings were briefly tested with Harvey Hendrick's mobile diamond drill, but I was operating with limited funds and the only real encouraging results were the discovery of gold in a quartz antimony vein near Castleblayney in County Monaghan. I drilled three short forty-five degree holes spaced twenty-five feet apart on this showing. As I recall, I got values as high as one ounce of gold per ton across a core width of three feet. This resulted in reports in the Irish press but I was advised by the company's Dublin lawyer, Gerry McGowan, that the Irish government had not yet set a policy on gold discoveries. Following this advice I did no further work on this showing. In June 1956 I decided to concentrate on the Berehaven copper deposits".

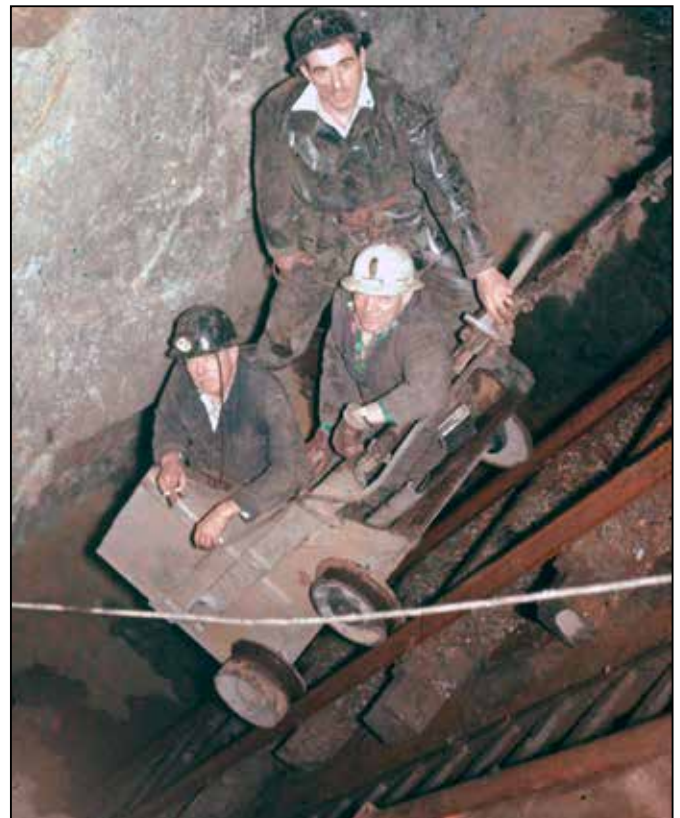
Jim headed up an exploration team in Berehaven from 1956 to 1960. He concentrated on Mountain Mine, which was the

biggest of the five old mines. Having dewatered the mine, he used diamond drilling to explore at various levels down to the bottom (1600 feet) and then did further drilling to 2200 feet. He found several parallel seams and also established that the main seams continued downward with improved grades. There were 52 people working there in 1959. In 1960 he reported to his directors that they should make preparations to bring the mine into production. However he was hastily recalled when it was discovered that the directors' financial shenanigans led them to lose control of the company. It was taken over by Denison mines but they decided not to proceed to mining.

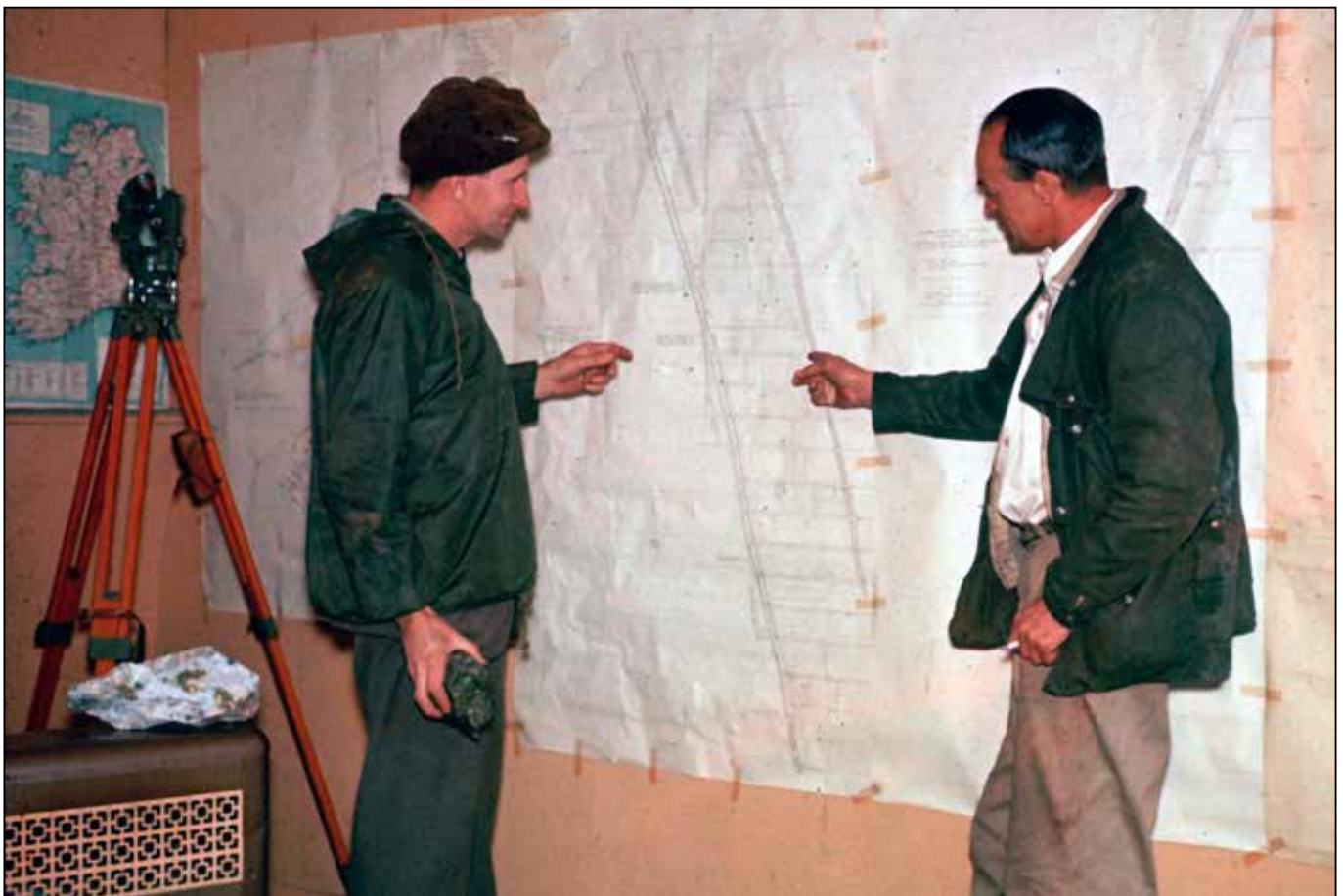
In more recent times Jim has again become involved in exploration in Berehaven. A local businessman and author of this article, decided to resume exploration and recruited Jim to his team. During a visit to Ireland in 2007, Jim met with John Pyne and his team at EMD and also with Peadar McArdle of the Geological Survey of Ireland.

In 2010 Jim and myself applied for an exploration licence and this was granted, in the name of West Cork Copper Company Limited. Exploration work continues on the site. Much of the local work in structural geology, remote sensing and geophysics has been done by Martin Critchley and Jim continues to be very actively involved.

Extracts informing this article come from the Fall 2014 edition of the University of Western Ontario's *Alumni Gazette*.



McCannell, centre, in the Main Shaft, Mountain Mine, Allihies, January 1958



Jim McCannell in the Mountain Mine office with Evan Harris, 15 April 1957

The Sliabh Aughty Furnace Project

By Paul Rondelez

In the late sixteenth century, the growing religious polarization within the British Isles led to the defeat and the confiscation of the properties of many of the Catholic landowners in Ireland. As a consequence, the English crown engaged itself in the systematic plantation of the newly acquired lands with an eye to their full economic exploitation. One of the most coveted commodities consisted of extensive tracts of woodlands, which were either cut as timber or converted into charcoal for fuel. As a result of the availability of cheap fuel, Ireland saw the introduction of the blast furnace for smelting iron ores during that time, replacing the much smaller bloomery furnaces operating up till then. In some cases, these blast furnaces relied on imported ore which was smelted with local charcoal. In others, iron ores were mined after the supply of imported ore got cut off.

This occurred in Co. Waterford in 1613/4 after which large iron mines were opened up by Richard Boyle, the First Earl of Cork. Uniquely, two of these mines were supplied with water-powered pumps to keep them dry. In other areas, mines of high-grade iron ore were known and furnaces were constructed nearby, even if they were situated in relative isolation. This was the situation in the foothills of the Sliabh Aughty Mountains to the west of Lough Derg on the river Shannon. At least seven blast furnaces were built in the area between 1610 and the first half of the eighteenth century. They were supplied with hematite ore from mines in the area between Tuamgraney and Feakle in Co. Clare and bog iron ore from various localities. More installations for the further processing of the iron, such as fineries and chaferies, are known to have been built. Most of the mines are still visible in the landscape and four

of the furnaces have upstanding remains, some of them well preserved. This situation is not only unique for Ireland, but no comparable group of upstanding remains of that age is known worldwide.

In 2014, the Sliabh Aughty Furnace Project was launched with three aims: researching the history of the iron industry in that area, the conservation of the remains and spreading the knowledge of the same. The documentary research has progressed well, but much more is left to do as nearly all the material consists of unpublished manuscript material thinly spread over various archives. All the relevant installations have now been located as well as most of the mines, but many questions about their operating dates, ownership and technological details remain. The research is partially undertaken by volunteers. Contacts have been made with the owners of the various mines and monuments and funding is now being sought for a first report on their conservation.

Up to now, several talks have been given on different aspects of the Sliabh Aughty iron industry and last September a first Furnace Festival was held in Mountshannon, Co. Clare, combining a conference with attractions and tours. This Summer, on the weekend of the 11th and 12th of July, a MHTI field trip is planned to the area, when both the iron mines and the blast furnaces will be visited. Details of this field trip can be found on page 8 of this Newsletter. Hope to see you there!

Paul Rondelez
Independent researcher
Mitchelstown, Co. Cork



Extant remains of the Derryoover Furnace

IRISH NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

Fatality at Threecastles Quarry, Stradbally, Co. Laois (09/01/2015)

Tony Bergin died at Threecastles Quarry on Monday 5th January. He was working near the edge of the quarry, when a block of stone separated from the face, and he fell 10-12 metres. The quarry has been operated by McKeon Stone Ltd. since 1960, and produces blocks of blue limestone for use in construction and monuments. Mr Bergin, aged 48, had worked for the company for 17 years, operating the chain saws and wire saws in the quarry. He leaves his wife and three children. <http://www.naturalstonespecialist.com/currentissue/unlockednewsarticle.php?id=6831>

Ballylig Mine, Broughshane, Co. Antrim (14/12/2014)

During 2013, subsidence occurred at this former iron mine. In the absence of a detailed mine plan, the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland carried out a geophysical magnetic survey to map the old mine. The results indicated the presence and location of room and pillar workings. In December 2014 three bore-holes successfully established the position of the workings beneath a public road, allowing remedial work to be started.

<http://britgeopeople.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/searching-for-abandoned-mines-breaking.html>

Historic Mine Sites - Inventory and Risk Classification

This joint study by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Geological Survey of Ireland created an inventory of mine sites in the Republic, and assessed the potential risk posed to humans, animal health and the surrounding environment. Appendix 5, of Volume 1, contains Full Site Reports, with historical information, and surface features and underground workings marked on aerial photographs. The main report is readily available on the EPA website. The Appendix 5 Site Reports are available via the EPA site: click on EPA maps (at top of page); GET DATA; EPA DATABASE; Mines Documents. You can then request a link to the appropriate Site Report. <http://gis.epa.ie/GetData/Download>

Mining the Past 2014

The latest publication from Silvermines Historical Society, Mining the Past 2014, includes an article on Mogul Mine, and photographs, by a former Mogul employee. The publication is on sale in the area for €10 and can be posted elsewhere - contact: silvermineshistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Journal No.25, Roundwood & District Historical & Folklore Society

This includes an article on 'Life at the Glendasan Mines' by Imelda Conway-Duffy. It is available for €6 from Justines

Shop in Roundwood Village, Co. Wicklow, or contact <http://www.roundwoodhistoricalsociety.com/contact-us.html>

A life in stone

This memoir is by Barry Feely, a ninth generation stonemason from Co. Roscommon. According to the publishers, "The book is a treasure trove of intimate knowledge of a passing art, and friendships over a lifetime in the trade. We learn about the lifestyles and lingo of the stonecutters that Barry has known. The book is packed with lovely incidental touches that only someone steeped in the profession would know. It's full of many great humorous stories told by a master storyteller." The book is available for purchase for €15, plus €3.50 post & packing, from FeelyStone in Boyle, 07196 62066 or online at: <http://www.feelystone.com/category/news-blog/>

Geological maps, memoirs and mine plans

Mine Abandonment Plans for Northern Ireland are now available for viewing on the Irish Historical Geological Maps website. You can also view old 1" to 1 mile scale geological maps, and download the Sheet Memoirs, and District Memoirs for Belfast, Cork, Limerick and Londonderry. The Economic Memoirs, on page 3 of the Memoirs List, may be of particular interest. <http://geologicalmaps.net/IrishHistMaps/index.cfm>

MHTI Journal 14

Due to the late arrival of a couple of papers, Volume 14 of the MHTI Journal is slightly delayed. The editor is completing the type-setting and it should be with members by mid-March. Titles are: 'Salt Mines in the Carrickfergus Area of County Antrim'; 'The Silver-Lead Mines of Glenmalure, County Wicklow: A History and a Survey of Extant Remains'; 'A Comparison of the Sedimentary Record of the Upper Lake Glendalough, County Wicklow, Against the Historic Lead Mining Records of the Area' and 'Bronze Age Copper Mines in Wales and a Brief Comparison with the Evidence from Ireland'.

Additions to Bibliography:

Graves, H.G., 1898. 'Irish legislation on mining and coal up to the year 1800'. *Transactions of the Federated Institution of Mining Engineers*, Volume 14, p179-189. <https://archive.org/details/miningengineer14goog>

Kinahan, G.H., 1903. 'The re-development of the slate-trade in Ireland'. *Transactions of the Institution of Mining Engineers*, Volume 25, p670-677. <https://archive.org/details/miningengineer10goog>

If you come across any articles or books on Irish mining and quarrying that are not listed in the bibliography in the Journal (2009), or on Facebook, please let the Editor know.

Alan Thomas: *An Obituary*



Alan McLean Thomas, the last Cornish Mine Captain to work in the Avoca Mines, was laid to rest in Ballycoog Cemetery on Friday 23 January 2015, beside his beloved wife Kay who predeceased him by just over a year. The passing of Alan after a short illness brought to an end the era of Cornish Miners and Engineers coming to Avoca from the first reported arrival of a Cornish Mine Captain from Chasewater Mine in the mid 18th century.

Alan was born in Pool in Cornwall on 10th January 1931. It could be said that he had mining blood in his veins. His Grandfather, who was born in 1842, emigrated to North America at the age of 22 and worked as a Mining Engineer for the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company for forty years before returning to Cornwall in 1904. Alan's Father started work for the East Pool and Agar Mines in 1912, later becoming Secretary of South Crofty Mine. With this mining pedigree it was hardly surprising that Alan would follow the family tradition. He graduated as a Mining Engineer from the Camborne School of Mines in 1953.

On graduation he left for Brazil where he worked as a shift boss with the St. John d'el Rey Mining Company Gold Mine. He subsequently moved to a Wolfram and Scheelite mine before returning briefly to the U.K. in 1959. He returned to South America the following year, spending six years as Mine Superintendent at the Frontino Gold Mines in Colombia. He returned to the U.K. in 1967 where he worked as Mine Manager with Laporte Industries Flourspar Mines in Derbyshire.

Alan arrived in Avoca in 1970 as Mine Superintendent, responsible for initial development of the ore body and sinking the main decline. He moved to Tara Mines in 1977, working as Mine Superintendent for two years before returning to Avoca in 1979 as Production Superintendent. By 1983 he had risen to the position of Director and General Manager at Avoca. After the closure of the Mine, Alan spent one year as Mine Manager

at Rossmore Anthracite Mine in County Carlow followed by a year as Mine Manager at Magcobar Barite Mine in Tipperary. In 1987 Alan was offered the position of Project Manager at the Gebeit Gold Mine in Northern Sudan.

He returned to Ireland in 1989, where he lived at *Vale Cottage* Woodenbridge, overlooking the beautiful Avoca Valley and the Goldmines River. He never lost touch with his beloved Cornwall, making frequent visits to his old haunts and old friends. He was deeply involved in the mining history of Cornwall and has written extensively on the East Pool and Agar Mines. He was a "Cousin Jack" in every way, never losing his soft Cornish accent and sense of humour.

After nearly three centuries of Mining in the Avoca Valley it is unlikely that we will ever hear those distinctive Cornish voices again. For those of us who were fortunate enough to have known Alan, he will long be remembered. Alan is survived by his four children: sons Michael and Alan who live in Ireland, Ann in the U.K., and Mary in the Philippines. May he rest in peace.

Nick Coy

Ian Cowburn: *An Obituary*

Ian was Director of the Service Culturel in L'Argentière-la-Bessée (France, Haute-Alpes) and was instrumental in organising an extensive network of mining historians and archaeologists across the south and west of Europe in the late 1990s. He died, working at his computer in L'Argentière, on 29 January - an unexpected heart attack.

As Director of the Service Culturel from 1992 Ian, with the mining archaeologist Bruno Ancel, was at the forefront of the presentation of mining heritage to the wider public, developing the abandoned silver mine at La Fournel and its associated museum as both tourism and research assets.

After the closure of the aluminium smelter in the town in 1985, L'Argentière-la-Bessée was the target of significant investment in its economic and social infrastructure. Ian was in a position to successfully channel funding into mining heritage at a period when the concept of industrial / mining archaeology as a tourism asset was in its infancy. Using his networking abilities he established contacts with others of similar interests across south and western Europe, to the benefit of all concerned.

I first met Ian around twenty years ago and helped him organise a Spring 'voyage' for the Association Archéologique pour l'Étude des Mines et de la Métallurgie (now re-titled as the Société Archéologique Française d'Etudes des Mines et de la Métallurgie, or SAFEMM for short), visiting Wales and the Ogofau gold mine at Dolaucothi before moving on to the north of England. So Ian was instrumental in introducing me to a long lasting appreciation of the enthusiasm for mining archaeology in France; something which he will have done for all his networking contacts.

In 1994 Ian co-ordinated the Southern Alps mining heritage

valorisation programme, funded by the European Union INTERREG funding for cross-border cooperation and introduced a wider grouping to the concept of 'valorisation', in this case adding value to heritage assets through research and conservation, through his involvement in *Minet* (the European Mining Heritage Network). This drew in partners from the UK (Cornwall), Spain, Italy and Ireland, and led to further networking through its successor *Europamines*, with an expansion to include Norway, the Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal. Those early networks were to lead on to the *Green Mines* project and, lately, *Atlanterra* - solid research and conservation work which owes much to the early networking which Ian had promoted.

As the chair of the Association from 1998 to 2001, Ian was instrumental in involving a large group from Britain in their major anniversary conference at Saint-Clément-les-Places near Lyon in 2001. At a personal level the contacts made there have greatly increased the cooperation between mining historians and archaeologists in France, England and Wales.

Ian was something of a character. Born in central Lancashire, in or near Preston, with an MA in History from Cambridge, he had absorbed a very French persona having lived and married there from the late 1970s. As one of my colleagues said, after being met at Turin airport, 'he even drives like a Frenchman'. My abiding image of Ian is of him sitting in a cafe in L'Argentière, a cigarette in one hand and a coffee or something stronger in the other, interacting with his friends and neighbours - a natural.

Our condolences go to his wife Marianne, and daughters Géraldine and Margot - he will be missed.

Peter Cloughton

Jack Hickey: *An Obituary*



The death has occurred of Jack Hickey, Silvermines, Nenagh, on the 8 September 2014. He was born in the townland of Logg in the upper hills of Silvermines into a farming family

in 1934.

His first job at 18 was in the local Gleann Forestry and in 1956 (the blackest year for Irish emigration since the Great Famine) he emigrated to London where he worked on the Hyde Park underground and the Hilton Hotel. On a visit home in 1963, he encountered great excitement in the area when extensive drilling was underway in the Silvermines mountains and the Magcobar Barytes Quarry was under development at Garryard just one mile from the village of Silvermines.

While in London Jack was a regular visitor to the famous Galtymore Ballroom and it was there he met his future wife, Ann Boyle, from lovely Glenties in Co. Donegal.

In 1965 he got a job with Mogul of Ireland sinking the main shaft at Garryard, opposite the Magcobar Quarry plant. This was to become the nerve centre of Europe's largest base metal mine that commenced production in May 1968 and continued for 14 years up to closure in 1982.

Jack Hickey was renowned for his work ethic in the mine and was one of the most popular employees in the 500 member workforce. In an interview given to *Mining the Past*, the Silvermines Journal of 2013, Jack spoke highly of the years he spent with Mogul and in particular the safety practices of the company.

After closure he had still not reached 50 and continued working in the forestry and then went to England for a short spell, returning to work for Magcobar for four years, which, before closure, had traversed underground west of the Barytes Quarry. After Magcobar's closure, Jack and some colleagues secured their own blasting licence and worked on projects around the country.

In his later working years he went back to mining and worked in Galmoy and Lisheen Mine with Cementation. In 2003, disaster struck when Jack was involved in a horrific accident on his farm in Silvermines. It happened while attending to a cow and calf. He sustained serious injuries when attacked by the cow that left him confined to a wheel chair. It seems cruel that a man who worked so hard in so many dangerous situations almost a thousand feet underground for over 20 years, should be struck down during an accident, doing a job he loved so well on his own farm.

His spirit for over ten years was unbelievable: after long spells in Dún Laoire Rehabilitation Centre he eventually returned home and would often be seen travelling the short distance from his house on a propelled wheel-chair up the village to his son's public house.

Small wonder his colleagues gathered to celebrate the life of a unique miner, making a presentation of a miner's lamp in appreciation of his contribution down through the years. For Jack, the light finally went out on 8 September 2014. To his extended family we offer our sincere sympathy. Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

Éamonn De Stafort

OTHER NEWS

Plans to close the Snibston Discovery Museum ‘an affront to local democracy’ (15/01/2015)

The Snibston Discovery Museum in Coalville, England, is facing demolition after Leicestershire County Council approved plans to close the facility at a cabinet meeting. The council needs to make £120m cuts by 2018 and claims that it cannot afford the museum’s £900,000-a-year running costs. It is proposing to sell the existing museum building to developers and create a smaller mining museum in the site’s adjoining colliery, which it says will save £580,000 annually.

Earlier this year the council rejected an alternative business plan submitted by the Friends of Snibston group to run the facility through an independent trust. The Friends state that the decision is ‘an affront to democracy’ and the council had ‘run roughshod’ over the wishes of key stakeholders and local people, almost 10,000 of whom have supported a campaign to save the museum. A council spokeswoman said the museum is expected to close later this year.

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/15012014-council-approves-closure-snibston-discovery-museum>

Offshore tin exploration, Cornwall (18/11/2014 – 21/01/2015)

Marine Minerals Ltd. hope to recover tin from 22 MT of mine wastes lying off the north coast of Cornwall, near St Ives, Perranporth, Portreath and St Agnes. The company hope to be in production by 2017 and expect to employ over 100 people during the 10 year lifetime of the project.

Elsewhere, Treliiver Minerals are hoping to start exploration in St Austell Bay, on the south coast of the county. The Crown Estate are considering issuing an exploration licence for an area between Dodman Point and Lansallos.

<http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/tin-poised-rival-tourism-major-Cornish-wealth/story-24545587-detail/story.html>

http://www.mininginnovationnews.com/2015/01/21/treliiver-minerals-aiming-to-restart-cornish-tin/?utm_source=FB&utm_medium=post&utm_campaign=FB_3dit
<http://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/news-and-media/news/2014/rights-sought-to-explore-tin-deposits-off-cornish-coast/>

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