

# Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

No. 75 Summer 2017

## SPECIAL FEATURE

Who Fears to Speak of Avoca?

Nick Coy

Mine Rescue Training Weekend, Glendasan

Ed Hicks

Primitive Mining on Lamb's Head, Caherdaniel,  
County Kerry

Alastair Lings

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT  
FOR 2016**

**THE FUTURE OF THE MHTI**

Iontaobhas Oidhreachta Mianadóireachta na hÉireann

# Dates for your Diary

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2017

June 15-19, Mining History Association Annual Conference, Alaska, USA. <http://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/>

June 23-26, NAMHO Conference, Godstone, Surrey, GB. [http://www.namho.org/conference\\_2017.php](http://www.namho.org/conference_2017.php)

August 19-27, Heritage Week. <http://www.heritageweek.ie/> See page 7 for more details

**September, tba, MHTI Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). Members will be advised by circular when the date, time and venue has been decided**

September 9-10, European Heritage Open Days NI.  
<https://www.discovernorthernireland.com/things-to-do/attractions/love-heritage/>

September 25-29, Australasian Mining History Association Conference at Taralgon, Victoria.  
<http://www.mininghistory.asn.au/>

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

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## Chairman's Report for 2016

Our first event of the year was in March looking at mines, quarries and related features around Derry / Londonderry.

The big event of the year was the National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO) Conference, which we hosted in June at Dublin City University. About 70 people registered for the events, including the lectures and field trips to working and abandoned mines. One of the high spots of the conference was the dinner at which Andy Irvine sang for us, including new songs he had composed for the event.

For the conference we produced a 20th Anniversary volume, looking back at the achievements of MHTI. I'd like to thank the organisations that sponsored the conference: Boliden Tara Mines, Conroy Gold and Natural Resources, Dalradian Resources, ERA-Maptec, the Exploration and Mining Division of DCENR, the Geological Survey of Ireland, the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, and SLR Consulting Ireland.

During the conference we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM). Sharron Schwartz, Martin Critchley and I retired as directors on rotation and were re-elected unopposed. Mick Carragher retired. He had served on the board since 2007 and we are very grateful for his efforts over the years, in particular leading fieldtrips to Benbulbin Barite Mine, where his local connections have been vital.

The key achievement of the AGM was passing a resolution: "It is hereby resolved that the directors of MHTI clg shall arrange for preparation of annual accounts by a qualified accountant and no longer subject accounts to professional audit". This will save the company about €1000 each year.

Back in 2004 MHTI helped to form Copper Coast Geopark Limited, and we have provided directors for their board. The company restructured in 2016 and MHTI are no longer members of the company. I'd like to thank John Morris, Des Cowman, Martin Critchley, Matthew Parkes and Nigel Monaghan for representing MHTI on their board, over the years.

The last scheduled event of 2016 was to have been the Members' Medley in November at the Collins Barracks site of the National Museum. Unfortunately there appeared to be little interest and the event was cancelled.

During the year we produced three Newsletters, a total of 42 pages. Many thanks to Sharron Schwartz for producing the newsletters, and to everyone who contributed towards them. At a NAMHO Council meeting last October Don Borthwick, a member based in Cumbria, told me that our Newsletter was "the BEST mining history newsletter". The 2016 Journal has been delayed due to the late submission of several papers that were presented at the NAMHO Conference in Dublin, but will be published shortly.

By the end of 2016 our Facebook page had 709 "Likes", up from 492 the year before. Our page is regularly updated, and it can still be viewed without signing up for Facebook.

Early in 2016 we wrote to the Glenmalure Pure Mile Group in support of their application to the Adopt a Monument Scheme, in relation to the Baravore New Crusher House. The application was successful and restoration work has been carried out on the building.

During the year the MHTI commented on two planning applications to Wicklow County Council:

- Application 15/473, in relation to contaminated soil at Tigroney Mine;
- Application 15/119, in relation to Ballymurtagh Mine.

We wrote to Wicklow County Council about their Revised Draft County Development Plan in connection with the curtilages around mining features at Avoca. Also the MHTI wrote to Wicklow Councillors about these matters. Many thanks to Martin Critchley for writing all the letters.

During the year we responded to nine enquiries including:

- Information on mines near Schull, West Cork, for a tourist initiative;
- Information of Conlig & Whitepots Mines for a proposed heritage trail;
- Potential quarries or open pits for scuba diving;
- Historical mining technology;
- Access to Shallee Mine;
- Qualifications for driving or fixing dump trucks;
- Underground mining courses.

You may remember Martin Critchley and Sharron Schwartz's article in Journal 13 about the lead mines of County Down. During the year they discussed the conservation of the Newtownards Mines with North Down Borough Council, the Geological Society of London and others.

They subsequently met with the Strategic Investment Board for Northern Ireland, who have been tasked with preparing a pre-feasibility study for the mine site. We hope that some good will come of this work, and thank Martin and Sharron for their efforts in Co. Down.

For their efforts and support during 2016 I would like to thank our directors, members, corporate supporters, contributors to our publications and to the NAMHO Conference, and landowners. Thank you all.

*Alastair Lings*  
27/05/2017

# Discussion on the Future of the MHTI

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The AGM's significant item after the Chairman's Report and the presentation of accounts was a discussion on the future of MHTI. The Board has held two meetings prior to the AGM, where this was the sole topic and the AGM was the opportunity to present the topic to members, with a view to then seeking wider views of members through this newsletter and to reach the point where decisions can be put to members at an EGM in September 2017.

An extraordinary general meeting, commonly abbreviated as EGM, is a meeting of members of an organisation, shareholders of a company, or employees of an official body, which occurs at an irregular time. The term is usually used where the group would ordinarily hold an annual general meeting (AGM), but where an issue arises which requires the input of the entire membership and is too serious or urgent to wait until the next AGM. Members and/or shareholders must be informed of the purpose of the EGM so that they may attend in a position where they can discuss and exercise intelligent judgment, otherwise any resolutions passed are invalid.

Discussion points were in three sections, but the bullet points listed below were elaborated upon in my presentation and in a group discussion, and examples given, or cross referenced to earlier reporting in the AGM.

## The Problem

1. Declining membership
2. Declining participation
3. Loss of directors through time with few replacements
4. Current loss of active directors (Martin Critchley, Sharron Schwartz, Stephen Callaghan)
5. Loss of interest amongst members?
6. Have we done everything we can?
7. Remaining Directors struggling to find time for any MHTI activities
8. Lack of 'new' venues or ideas
9. No joint working with other like-minded interest groups
10. Fall-off in active support from UK
11. Deterioration of relationship with EMD for active conservation
12. No scope or appetite for EU Interreg funded projects
13. Community groups stuck in their local silos not seeing need for a 'national body'
14. National lack of value placed on heritage
15. No foothold or membership in NI

## Possible alternative futures

1. Complete wind-up
2. Attempt to keep going as we are
3. Scale back operations and ambitions significantly,

4. continuing as a company
4. Seek to become a special interest group within another organisation
5. Change status from company to society

Of these options, despite a 'fatigue' amongst directors, we rejected the first option, and have now made several efforts at maintaining the organisation of an active programme of activities over the past couple of years. This is now clearly unsuccessful and the present approach to MHTI is unsustainable, without a radical injection of new blood to carry it forwards.

The fourth option is a possibility if there was a natural 'home' but some other groups in geological, industrial heritage and social history have their own difficulties in maintaining themselves and therefore we need to find the right fit for this to be a viable option.

Changing our status back to a voluntary society from the company limited by guarantee (clg) [formerly a Limited Company] does not readily solve any problems and Directors' liabilities remain for many years in the eventuality of some delayed claim against the Trust. Also, given that the audit reporting requirements have become less arduous for accounts for remaining as a clg means that if a new generation of enthusiasts came to the fore in a year or two or more, then an established structure exists to allow for a ramped up scale of operation.

## Directors' preferred option

Consequently our collective position as directors is that option 3 is the most appropriate, with differences of opinion being mostly around the scale of retraction in our operation. What does this mean? Listed below are things we consider are required to achieve some level of sustainable organisation with the current directors and resources.

1. Focus on spending our resources on delivering a new website (data rich, focused on inventory) which becomes a legacy resource for anyone interested
2. Attempt to publish an annual or occasional journal with whatever research or material is available
3. Cease publication of the newsletter but maintain a regular email notice system of events of interest
4. Reduced fees for membership
5. Members interested in underground exploration must have individual BCA membership and insurance or through SUI to do any activities underground
6. Possibly organise one annual trip per year, BUT only in association with another group
7. Maintain the archive of MHTI in National Museum

- for present but keep under review
8. Respond to consultation where mining heritage is under threat as the 'expert body'
  9. Consider the question of charitable status, and probably cease being a charity.

Without field excursions organised solely by MHTI, the need to administer the third party insurance cover through the British Caving Association may be redundant and this burden is a significant one. The linking with other groups may mean that sufficient people turn up to make it worth the effort of organising for the trip leader.

Equally, benefits of MHTI specialist knowledge may be shared with other groups in this way. Individuals who wish to conduct their own underground exploration may get their own BCA cover as direct individual members or through the Speleological Union of Ireland which uses the same scheme that all mining and caving clubs in the UK and Ireland avail of.

Although Sharron Schwartz has resigned as a Director and Editor she has very kindly agreed to complete Journal 16. Whilst we may attempt to continue the journal, one comment in the discussion was that the high standard scared off many potential contributors. So this needs looking at carefully and all views on the matter will be vital in determining the correct path.

The knowledge base of 20 years of the MHTI is, we consider, best presented and maintained in an MHTI website that generally provides free access to data and archives and is a legacy of MHTI activity, even if the organisation has run its course for now.

We have financial resources to [finally] develop this website [after many attempts that have run into different problems] and it is considered by the board to be the best use of cash resources in developing and maintaining the website as a global presence for a topic that can have very widely distributed followers.

In terms of governance, the charitable status only means a financial benefit if subscriptions or donations are at a level where tax paid by the member can be claimed back from Revenue for MHTI. We have not been able to utilise this in the past, even when running the large conservation or INTERREG projects, as public grants did not qualify. The directors currently see no benefit in maintaining charitable status.

The AGM discussion was enlarged by Sean McNulty, a mining engineer and caver who assisted Matthew Parkes in the running of the rescue practice by ICRO (Irish Cave Rescue Organisation) in February this year. The practice provoked a massive attendance of cavers for the event and interest has been maintained by many, and perhaps this is a new suite of potential enthusiasts that could mean some resurgence for MHTI in the future?

Whatever the final shape of MHTI, we aim to have an EGM in September to address final accounts for 2016, and to

pass any required resolutions to change organisational or governance matters as required. Consequently, we need your views urgently to ensure that we can steer MHTI in a manner and direction that is in keeping with the wishes of the members as far as is possible.

**We have not created any formal questions, but would ask you to make the effort to send email or letters or phone calls to let the directors know what your views are by the end of July. Perhaps you are willing to be elected as a Director of MHTI and take on a role, as most current incumbents would wish to pass on their responsibilities to someone with fresh enthusiasm.**

Contact details on back page  
*Matthew Parkes*

## Note from the Editor

Martin Critchley and I have stepped down as MHTI Directors, and I have resigned my position as Editor of the Journal and the Newsletter. We are going to be moving to NW County Donegal in the very near future and we are also beginning a new business venture that will entail spending more time overseas than we currently do.

This will make it very difficult for us to make Board Meetings on a regular basis and to attend and support MHTI field events and lectures throughout the year as Directors should. I would also not be in a position to devote considerable time to producing four annual newsletters and a journal, and it is only fair to pass the baton to someone who is.

Paul Rondelez has kindly offered to take on the role as Journal Editor and I wish him every success with this in the future. Above all, I would encourage members to submit papers and articles for inclusion in our annual Journal, as it has not always been easy to source enough articles to bring it out on an annual basis.

As this is my last Newsletter as Editor, I would like to take the opportunity of thanking all of those people who have sent in articles, images and items of news over the last five years which has made it possible to bring our Newsletter out on a fairly regular quarterly basis.

This one has unfortunately been delayed due to a paucity of material. Consequently, the future of the Newsletter is now under discussion.

Journal 16 is close to being published, having been delayed by the late submission of a couple of articles related to last year's NAMHO conference in Dublin.

Thanks to all those people who have submitted articles to make the MHTI Journal a quality publication.  
*Sharron Schwartz*

# Events and Notices

## Obituary

On January 4th 2017 Ken Brown, one of the world's foremost authorities on Cornish beam engines, died peacefully in the *Brendon Care Nursing Home* in Froxfield, Wiltshire.

Ken was born on 5th November 1925. He spent his early childhood in Exeter where his father was Professor of Mathematics at the local University. His home overlooked Queen Street Railway Station and it was here that Ken developed an early interest in trains and steam power.

His early education was at a local prep school before moving on to Kings School in Bruton. The fact that the school was situated next to the GWR main line must have made his schooldays more interesting. On leaving Kings, he moved on to Dolcoath Technical College in Camborne (a forerunner of the Camborne School of Mines). Across the road from the college stands the compressor house and chimney stack of New Sump Shaft on Dolcoath Mne, Cornwall's deepest and richest tin mine, which no doubt further influenced his interest in mining.

After his national service with the Royal Engineers he moved to London where he worked in the planning department of the GWR at Paddington. From there he was offered a post of reporter for the *Engineering Magazine* which further enhanced his interest in, and passion for, Cornish mining and beam engines.

His work for the magazine took him around the world from Europe to Africa, America and Australia and always seemed to coincide with railways and mine sites. He frequently reminisced on his travelling adventures; one of which he was particularly proud was that he was the first journalist to cross the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul – albeit crossing on the cables before the roadway had been constructed.

On retiring from his journalistic career he devoted his time to research into Cornish mining history before eventually moving to the Duchy. He worked with the Cornish Archaeological Unit which formed the basis of the successful bid for World Heritage Site status.

Accompanied by his partner Roz, trips to mine sites in Ireland, Spain and Australia led to his works being published there as well as a series of books on Cornish Mine Sites co-authored with Bob Acton. One of his proudest moments was being invested as a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedd, taking the name of *Covenor Gynns* (Recorder of Engines).

He was the proud owner of a steam Road Roller called *Blackberry Jack* until his failing health forced her sale. He was a volunteer at both the Kew Bridge steam engines where he was valued for his expertise in beam engines and their operation.



Kenneth Mersey Brown who died in January aged 91

I was first introduced to Ken and Roz over twenty years ago when he was visiting his Cornish friend, Alan Thomas, at Avoca. He subsequently studied and interpreted all the beam engine houses in Avoca and has written and spoken extensively on the subject.

As his health failed in his later years he was lovingly cared for by Roz before moving to the nursing home late in 2016 where he was a popular resident. He passed away peacefully on Wednesday 4th January 2017.

Even though it is an often-used expression to say that we will not see his like again, it is probably true when one thinks of Ken. In his genes he was a man of the Industrial Revolution and had he been born a century earlier, would probably have been found working as an engineer at Harvey's or somewhere similar.

In Ireland we also owe him a debt of gratitude for his interpretation of Irish beam engines which he generously imparted with enthusiasm and humour. To those of us who were fortunate enough to have had the pleasure of meeting Ken, we will long remember him. Our sincere sympathy goes to Roz, his loyal partner and constant companion, on her great loss.

*Ar dheis De go raib a hanam*  
Nick Coy

# NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2017 19-27 AUG



## **18 and 21 August, Umha Aois 2017 - Bronze Age Mining, Smelting and Casting, County Cork**

The Ireland-based experimental archaeology group Umha Aois will be hosting its annual archaeology and sculpture symposium at The Cornish Village, Allihies Co. Cork, Friday 18th and on Monday 21st August.

The internationally-acclaimed group of sculptors and makers, founded in 1995, will be joined by archaeologists and artists to research and re-create Bronze Age metalwork processes from smelting, to casting and finishing. While this year's focus is on smelting and ore-processing, the use of the stone moulds, lost-wax process, clay moulds and charcoal pit-furnaces will give spectators and participants a fascinating insight into a wide range of ancient metalworking techniques - carried out in Ireland 4,000 years ago. The event in the Cornish Village is open to the public on all days from 10am to 6pm and for night casting after 8pm on Sunday, following a guided walk of the Allihies mines by Theo Dahlke of the Friends of Allihies Mines (see opposite). From Allihies village, follow signs to the site.

Suitable for Children under 12. Wheelchair Access (Partial). Car Parking Available.

Contact details:  
086-8556190  
fachtnaandhelen@eircom.net

## **19 August, 9am - 5pm, Mining Heritage Hill Walk, County Wicklow**

A 20km Hill Walk taking in all the significant lead mining sites in Wicklow. Combined with informative talks along the way. Starting at Glendasan, Glendalough and finishing at Baravore, Glenmalure. This attractive moderate/challenging Hill Walk takes in three valleys and contours around Camaderry & Lugduff Mountain. Informative talks on mining at key sites en route. Suitable Hill walking gear required plus lunch, snacks and drink. Hosted jointly by the Glenmalure PURE Mile / Adopt a Monument Group & Glens of lead. (Note - Charge of approx €10 for transport to start of the walk in Glendasan).

Meet Baravore Car Park. Booking required.  
Contact details:  
0404 46768.  
glenmalurepuremile@gmail.com

## **20 August 2-4pm, Field Trip to Allihies Copper Mines, County Cork**

Meet at the Old Schoolhouse, Reentrisk, Allihies, for a guided tour of the Allihies copper mines with local historian, Theo Dalke. Theo's field trip will include a visit to the Reentrisk prehistoric copper mine and the Allihies copper mines. Suitable attire is required for rough terrain.

Admission free, no booking required.  
For further information contact: 086-8556190  
fachtnaandhelen@eircom.net  
fachtnaandhelen@eircom.net

## **20, 27 August, 11am-12pm, Summer of Heritage, Co. Dublin – Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown**

Meet at Barnaslingan Wood car park to take a guided walk with volunteers from Dublin Mountain Partnership to Barnaslingan Wood, Carrickgollogan and the Lead Mines. This tour must be pre-booked via [heritage@dublinmountains.ie](mailto:heritage@dublinmountains.ie) Sunday 11am. Admission free. Suitable for Children under 12 Car Parking Available

Contact:  
01 2047011  
[heritage@dublinmountains.ie](mailto:heritage@dublinmountains.ie)  
[events.dlrcoo.ie](http://events.dlrcoo.ie)  
[facebook.com/dlrheritageevents](https://facebook.com/dlrheritageevents)  
[twitter.com/dlrheritevents](https://twitter.com/dlrheritevents)

## **26 August, 12pm - 1:30pm, Antique Rock and Mineral Show, County Waterford**

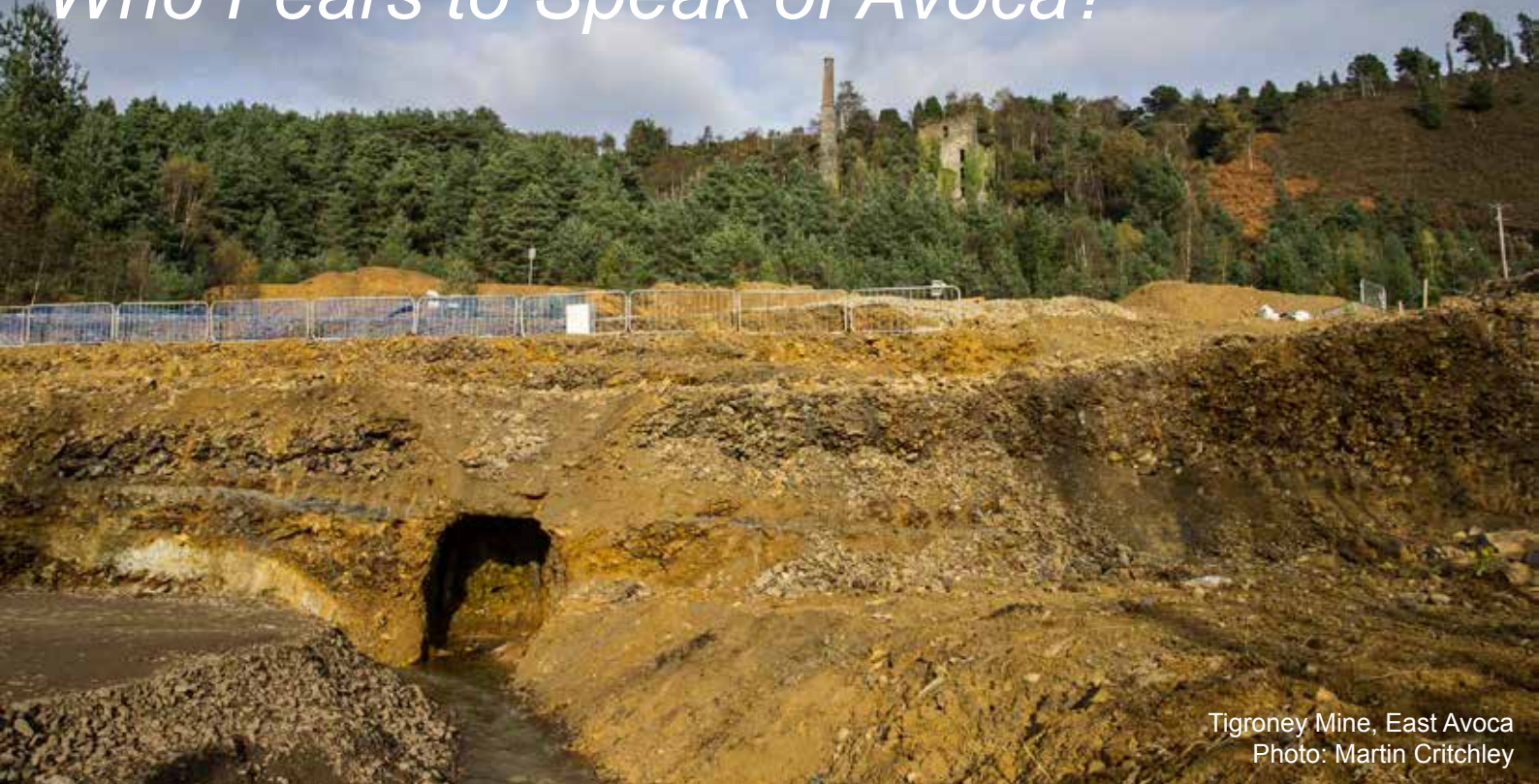
Come along to the Copper Coast Geopark visitor centre, Bunmahon, and check out our selection of fantastic minerals and fossils along with our geologist. Bring along any rock you have that interests you and we will see if we can identify it and show you how it fits into the geological timescale.

Admission free. Suitable for Children under 12. Wheelchair Access (Full). Car Parking Available.

Contact details:  
051292828  
[robbie@coppercoastgeopark.com](mailto:robbie@coppercoastgeopark.com)  
[coppercoastgeopark.com](http://coppercoastgeopark.com)  
[facebook.com/CoastCopper](https://facebook.com/CoastCopper)

# SPECIAL FEATURE

## *Who Fears to Speak of Avoca?*



Tigroney Mine, East Avoca  
Photo: Martin Critchley

### ***Why is it that two glorious opportunities to bring the Avoca mining story to a vast television audience have both been lost? questions mining heritage stalwart, Nick Coy***

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The Avoca mine site in County Wicklow is probably the most complete and interesting in Ireland. At the turn of the 20th century, a number of picture postcards showing the splendour of the Vale of Avoca made every effort to exclude the mine site from the frame. This was probably understandable at the time as the mine site was covered with large mounds of mine spoil and probably conflicted with the sylvan beauty of the surrounding countryside. In any event, industrial sites were not popular subject matter for scenic postcards a century ago.

Bringing matters forward to a more enlightened (?) 21st century. The mines are now closed, much of the above-ground evidence has gone, particularly the mounds of spoil, and heather, furze and pine have taken over most of the surface area. What has not disappeared is the heritage. There are also a number of unique surviving mining features such as engine houses, pits, ponds and highly colourful geology.

In May 2016 I was contacted by MHTI, who in turn had been contacted by the production team of the popular BBC 2 television series *Great Railway Journeys*, presented by Michael Portillo. The production company was planning to film an episode on the railway journey from Wexford to Wicklow. The producer wished to include the Arklow / Avoca stretch to highlight the Industrial heritage of both locations, i.e. the Kynock Explosives factory in Arklow and the mines at

Avoca. These sites are described in Bradshaw's *1882 Railway Guidebook* which Portillo uses in the programme.

I arranged to meet the TV production team at Avoca last June. On arrival we were also joined by an official from EMD as this is the department currently responsible for the mine site and from whom the production company had sought permission. It was quickly made clear by the official from EMD that filming would not be permitted in East Avoca due to "construction" work which was due to take place later in the year.

Even though there was no activity on the ground at the time of our visit, the official made it clear that the television crew were barred from the Tigroney Mine site, even though we were not given any idea when work would actually commence. It was somewhat ironic that the television crew had produced an insurance indemnity to EMD at the outset of the meeting.

Having effectively ruled out Tigroney, the most significant and interesting part of the mine site, the EMD official departed and I continued to show the team around West Avoca i.e. the Tramway Arch and a small Engine House. The undergrowth has almost completely encroached on the area around Twin Shafts and as a consequence opportunities to film there are very limited and problematic. Having been warned off East



Avoca, and with little else to see, the television crew then decided to leave. I provided them with written and other material to help the producers in preparing a film script.

Unfortunately, some weeks later I received a telephone call from the assistant producer, informing me that due to the restricted access and the subsequent shortage of interesting mining features such as Williams's Engine House, they had decided not to include the mine in the planned episode. A great opportunity to show the world some of our modest, but nonetheless impressive industrial heritage, to millions of viewers in Britain and across Europe had been lost for the most tenuous reasons.

The programme went ahead in any event and was shown on January 16th last. The train passed over the mines without even a mention, which is a little ironic when one considers that the mines were the only reason that the railway was built through the valley in the first instance. All we got from Avoca was a short musical interlude at the Meeting of the Waters.

A more recent case relates to a current RTÉ series called *Tracks and Trails* in which personalities do countryside walks in locations around Ireland, showing the beauty of the landscape in addition to highlighting interesting aspects of local history or activities along the route. In a recent episode, two young restaurant owners did a circular walk in Avoca which started and finished at the Meeting of the Waters.

In the programme we saw lanes and hedgerows, some wayside herbs, a kite (the feathered variety), the Mottee Stone and some panoramic vistas, a bridge and a river. Even though the trip circumnavigated the mines, never a glimpse was shown, although the two boys met an "old Miner" Tom Connolly at the Marian Year Cross (which they somehow managed to rename as the Miners' Cross ), overlooking the vale.

When questioned, Tom described the mines as dark and wet and proceeded to show the two walkers a very rusted and broken tin lunch box, around which the conversation then revolved. Three centuries of mining heritage in Avoca was encapsulated in what kind of sandwiches the box might have contained. Exciting stuff, but hardly likely to have viewers

***The question remains as to why some people have such a negative view of an area that has more history and heritage, both social and industrial, than any other part of County Wicklow?***

rushing to see the place.

So the question remains as to why some people have such a negative view of an area that has more history and heritage, both social and industrial, than any other part of County Wicklow? And why would an English production company come specifically (if unfortunately unsuccessfully) to film our Industrial heritage, yet an Irish company, which should know better, can see no merit in it? Is it ignorance or indifference?

It is also disappointing that a Government Department which has responsibility for all aspects of Irish mining would not be more aware of the positive and free shop window for our heritage that such opportunities provide, while other semi-state bodies are currently trying to promote *Ireland's Ancient East*. A lack of joined-up thinking seems to be a feature of the Irish psyche.

In the MHTI we try to raise awareness of our mining heritage, and yet two glorious opportunities to bring the story to a vast television audience have both been lost for different, but altogether inexcusable, reasons.



Ballymurtagh Mine Tramway Arch, West Avoca  
Photo: Martin Critchley

# *First ever training in a mine for the Irish Cave Rescue Organisation*



Participants in the mine rescue exercises prepare to venture underground  
Image: courtesy Donach ó Longargáin

## ***Valuable experience was gained and networks strengthened during the hugely successful mine rescue training exercises held in Glendasan, County Wicklow, writes Ed Hick***

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The weekend of 27-28 January saw a coming together of stakeholders in County Wicklow to co-operate and participate in a full size rescue training exercise in the Glendasan Valley. This event came about initially through informal discussions between MHTI members, and members of Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC) and Irish Cave Rescue Organisation (ICRO) throughout 2016.

ICRO is a 32-county voluntary team and runs extensive training programmes for its members on an annual basis. While its remit also extends to rescue from abandoned mines, there had never been an exercise in rescue from mines to this point, so interest was high! Attendance for the weekend was 40+, with a full-scale underground team of 30.

The exercise also saw participation from, and liaison with, An Garda Síochána, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team and Wicklow County Fire Service.

Saturday was an introductory day, with a presentation by Matthew Parkes on the local mining history and techniques, and the various risks and hazards that can be associated with abandoned mines. Sean McAnulty briefed the group from a

mining engineers viewpoint. The discussion then broadened out to include gasses and monitors, and locations of mining areas that ICRO might be called out to.

There followed in the afternoon short familiarisation visits to the Foxrock Fourth Adit and the Moll Doyle Adit in Glendasan to give a flavour of how mines differ from caves! The numbers in attendance were so high we were split into three groups to minimise risk and impact on the mines, in particular around the portal at Foxrock.

As an added bonus, we were kindly allowed access to ESB Turlough Hill generating station and were given "backstage passes", and a very bespoke tour of the facility. Though not technically a mine, most of the construction methods were derived from mining. ESB run open days at the facility from time to time, and a visit here is well worthwhile. The group then repaired to the IMC Hut in Glendasan for a social evening, with locally brewed beer on tap.

Sunday morning started (9.00 am a little too early for some!) with a briefing and scenario outline. The mine chosen for this practice was Hayes Adit, where two casualties were inserted at high level with a feigned head injury and a broken shoulder

***As the exercise got into full swing there were search and comfort teams providing Remote Emergency Care first aid, and rigging and communication teams preparing for extraction***

following a fall. As the exercise got into full swing there were search and comfort teams providing Remote Emergency Care first aid, and rigging and communication teams preparing for extraction. ICRO was handling all of the first aid and rescue aspects with MHTI, NPWS and IMC in observer roles. The total underground operating time was 5 ½ hours and this was followed with a surface debrief to assess key learnings.

Overall the rescue training was a success, with valuable experience gained and networks strengthened.



One of the teams entering an adit  
Image: courtesy Donach ó Longargáin



Participants in the mine rescue exercise outside the IMC Hut in Glendasan  
Image: courtesy Donach ó Longargáin

# Irish News and Publications

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## Primitive Mining on Lamb's Head, Caherdaniel, County Kerry

Newsletter 69 (Summer 2015) described the dewatering and discovery of a primitive mine on the Lamb's Head (SMR number KE-106-144----). The article mentioned that "there may be further primitive workings at the base of a cliff, 70 metres to the southeast".

On 13th September 2016 Theo Dahlke, Ian Farrimond and Alastair Lings visited the cliff, hoping to find evidence of primitive workings in the cliff, and in the adjacent fallen blocks. A water-filled sub-horizontal slot at the southern end of the cliff was siphoned dry, but was found to be of limited extent and probably of natural origin.

The working in the base of the cliff is represented by the curved surface of an overhang, at Irish Grid location V 52380 56510 by GPS (<http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V2,452350,556565,11,4>). Its age is unknown, but its appearance is similar to the southern working of the primitive mine 500 metres to the northeast (SMR KE-106- 130----), which was visited during an MHTI fieldtrip and reported on page 10 in Newsletter 65 (Summer 2014).

A large fallen block close to the working in the cliff might have collapsed due to undermining, and it was hoped that evidence of mining might be found underneath it. An examination of part of the underside of the block showed a stepped surface which may be due to mining.

On the north-western vertical face of a very large fallen block to the north of the cliff working, Theo Dahlke found that a nodule of malachite had been partly extracted, and was surrounded by a battered surface, probably dating back to the bronze-age.

It is surprising that the trial was abandoned with ore in sight. The ore was rich enough (possibly 300 g of malachite in 10 kg of rock, equivalent to 1.7% copper) and amenable to treatment. Perhaps the local ores were of higher grade or more easily mined.

Aerial photography on <https://www.bing.com/maps/> show seven or more circular vegetation marks in the area of peat immediately to the west of the cliff. These marks may indicate the remains of a mining camp, or subsequent settlement.

Future work could include a search of the area between the known primitive mines on the peninsula, and visits to the known copper localities. It would be useful if an experienced mining archaeologist visited the area.

*Alastair Lings*

## Tara Mine, Navan, Co. Meath (11/01/2017)

Exploration at Tara Mine has identified an additional inferred mineral resource of 10 MT of ore with 8.5% zinc and 1.8% lead at a depth of between 1200 and 1900 metres. The Tara Deep mineralisation will be explored with a decline costing €11M. Boliden plan to spend €33M extending the life of the mine and increasing the capacity of the tailings dam.

Mikael Staffas, President of Boliden Mines said "Tara's exploration work in the last few years has been successful, and the capacity of the tailings dam is now limiting the life-of-mine to 2020. New exploration successes, increased productivity, and high zinc prices make extending the mine's lifespan a profitable option, so we have decided to expand the tailings dam with a capacity until 2026". Tara Mine has been in production since 1977, with over 80 MT of ore mined since then.

[http://www.boliden.com/Investor-Relations/Press/?p=press&afw\\_id=1457540&afw\\_lang=en](http://www.boliden.com/Investor-Relations/Press/?p=press&afw_id=1457540&afw_lang=en)

## Dalradian's Curraghinalt gold processed (08/05/2017)

In February 2017 Dalradian Resources sent over 14 000 tonnes of gold ore from their Curraghinalt Project in Co. Tyrone to a mill in North America for processing. The sample results were encouraging, and the value of the gold recovered was €3.6 M.

Eric Tremblay, Dalradian's Chief Operating Officer, commented: "Ultimately, the true test of any deposit is at the mill. These positive results build on the success of our test stoping, which demonstrated our ability to mine using mechanized methods while minimizing dilution. We have proven that these portions of the deposit contain more gold and a higher grade than estimated in our resource model."

<http://www.dalradian.com/news-and-events/news-releases/news-releases-details/2017/Processing-of-Dalradians-Curraghinalt-mineralized-material-achieves-higher-than-expected-gold-grades-and-recoveries/default.aspx>

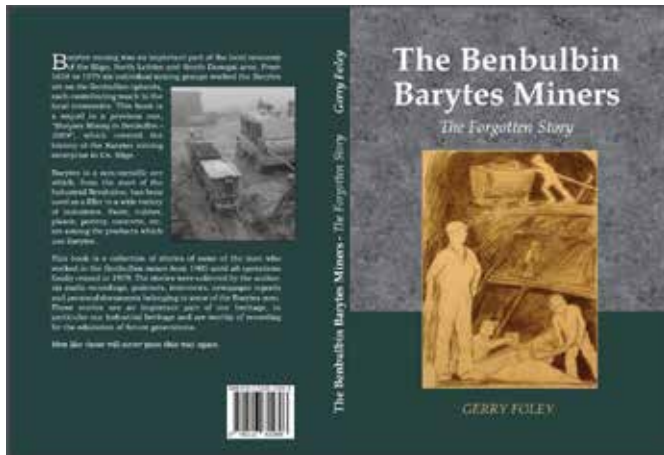
## Underground development commences at Omagh Gold Mine (15/05/2017)

Galantas Gold Corporation has announced that underground mine development operations are shortly expected to commence at the Omagh Gold Mine, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland. This follows notification that the Police Service of Northern Ireland ("PSNI") has been able to increase availability of its required anti-terrorism cover in regard to blasting operations, sufficient for underground mine development to start. The PSNI requires that it supervises transportation and use of certain rock breaking materials and explosives in Northern Ireland.

<http://www.galantas.com/news/underground-development-commences-at-omagh-gold-mine/>

## New Publications

*The Benbulbin Barytes Miners: The Forgotten Story*  
by Gerry Foley.

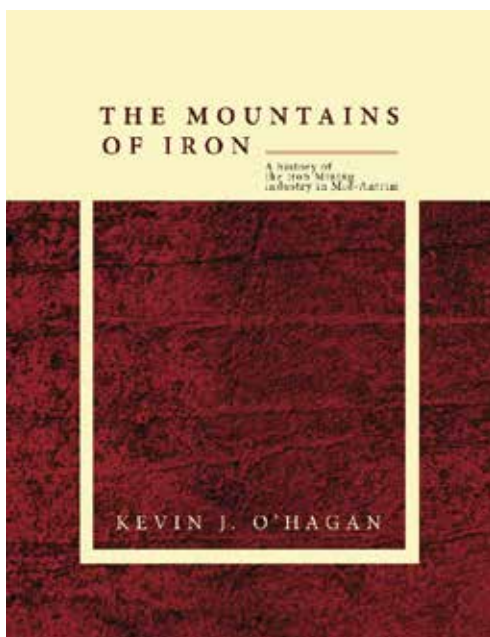


Gerry Foley's newest book tells the forgotten stories of local people who worked hard in the industrial mines on the Sligo Leitrim border. The mines gave employment to large numbers of people in North Leitrim and water from Glencar was used as a washing plant for the industry. Barytes mining was an important part of the local economy in Sligo, North Leitrim and South Donegal from 1858 to 1979. The book records the experience of eleven men who mined on Benbulbin (Kings Mountain), Co. Sligo, from Folliot Barton (1867-1875) to Michael Carragher (1974-1979).

Paperback, perfect bound, full colour covers, 90 pages, b/w images and text. The book is available locally in Sligo / Leitrim for €12, from the Geological Survey of Ireland or direct from the author, sligomine(at)eircom.net.

*The Mountains of Iron: a history of the iron mining industry in Mid-Antrim*

By Kevin J. O'Hagan



This book tells how iron ore mining began in Co. Antrim 150 years ago, how the mines were worked and how small farmers became skilled miners, toiling in cramped conditions beneath the Antrim hills. The industry gave birth to the Irish Narrow Gauge railway system.

The mines transformed the bleak hills of the Antrim Plateau into a hive of industry. Today the red spoil heaps, disused railway cuttings and the Drum Brae are reminders of a once thriving industry – a story that had to be told.

Author Kevin J O'Hagan is a retired civil servant who was born in the heart of the mining area. His father and grandfather were iron ore miners. Educated St MacNissi's College, Garron Tower and St Joseph's Training College, Trench House, he took up caving in 1970 and was part of Irish Speleological Expedition to the French Alps in 1975. From that experience he became interested in mines in Mid-Antrim and has been researching their history and recording and exploring them since.

He is a former chairperson Glens of Antrim Historical Society, a founding member of Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (1996) and Glenravel Historical Society (2010). Kevin has also given talks about the mines to many groups, societies and universities and contributed articles to various history-based journals.

Paperback, 140 pages. £12.99. Available in the Cargan area and from the Shanway Press: <http://shanway.com/>

### County Geological Site Audits

The latest local authorities in the Republic to be covered by audits are Laois and Offaly, bringing the total to 19. The audits include bibliographies, and individual site reports. Some of the site reports relate to mineralogy or economic geology, for example the audit of Laois has site reports for Modubeagh and Old Rossmore coal mines. The audits and site reports are available on the Geological Survey of Ireland website: <http://www.gsi.ie/Programmes/Heritage+and+Planning/County+Geological+Sites+Audits/>

### An economic assessment of Irish mining waste (2016)

Report No.25 here:

<http://www.gsi.ie/Research/GSI+Funded+Projects/2015+GSI+Geoscience+Research+Short+Call.htm>

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# Other News

## Cornwall on the verge of another mining revolution? (*Cornwall Live* 19 January 2017)

Vast deposits of a precious metal could be extracted from deep underground in Cornwall, pushing the duchy to the forefront of a multi-billion industrial revolution.

Lithium, which is vital for rechargeable batteries in just about every device from phones to cars, could be extracted from the granite beneath Cornwall's landscape. Dubbed 'white petroleum', analysts believe lithium could help the world to move away from fossil fuels into a new era of battery powered energy.

According to *Fortune* magazine, growing demand for lithium from the car industry is starting to outstrip supply and one intelligence report noted prices for the metal were up 28 per cent last year, while some related products saw a 47 per cent rise.

Lithium has been named a strategically important mineral for the UK by the Government because of its importance for developing industries and due to its scarcity. At present, it is mainly mined in Chile, Argentina and Nevada, USA.

But without a home grown source of lithium the UK would be vulnerable to shortfall as global demand increases. And Cornwall could be Europe's only source of this valuable mineral.

High levels of lithium readings were first recognised in 1864 in water flowing into Cornish mines. Historically, the soft, volatile metal was regarded as a mere curiosity, as it effectively had no market, and when the mines in Cornwall closed it was largely forgotten.

The lithium occurs in natural, hot brine springs under Cornwall and extraction is described as clean and environmentally friendly, with the added bonus of generating geothermal energy.

In a major announcement made to the Stock Market, private firm Cornish Lithium confirmed that it has secured the rights to develop the lithium deposits under Cornwall – undertaking the largest, single unified exploration project in the duchy's history. Cornish Lithium has gained the rights to prospect for lithium from two other mining companies (including that currently operating South Crofty), and the Tregothnan Estate of Lord Falmouth, covering an area 15 miles wide. It is now seeking investors to raise an initial £5m for exploration to identify the best area for drilling.

The brines will be commercially extracted from deep water bearing structures via drill holes offering the possibility of a mining revival across this historic mining region.

The development of Cornwall's lithium deposits will give the UK access to its own supply of the element, the market for which is expected to quadruple to \$70 billion by 2020.

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