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Mining History Society of Ireland 19 96

NEWSLETTER

Cumann Stair na Mianadóireachta

NUMBER 4 SPRING 1997

MINING HISTORY SOCIETY OF IRELAND

MHSI

PROGRAMME 1997

May 3rd-4th (Sat.-Sun.): Weekend workshop in Old Glengowla, Oughterard, Co. Galway on (i) Surveying surface remains; (ii) Clearing mine workings. It is hoped that out of (i) techniques will be developed for surveying other mines and that (ii) will represent the commencement by members of the society in on-going work there. (Details enclosed with this issue).

May 16th (Fri.): Field meet at Newtownards and Conlig mines, Co. Down with Dr. Norman Moles. (Lecture and site visit will precede the joint IAEG and IMM conference on *Europe's major gold deposits*.) Meet at 11.00 a.m. at the Somme Heritage Centre car park in Whitespots County Park on the Bangor road about 2 kms north of Newtownards [J 349 376]

July 11-14th (Fri.-Mon.): NAHMO conference (site/underground visits, lectures, etc.) near Matlock in Derbyshire. Irish members of the MHSI who wish to attend contact Dr. Martin Critchley. (Details enclosed with this issue).

September 7th (Sun.): National Heritage Day. (Details will be notified).

October 4th-5th (Sat.-Sun.): Field meet at Knockmahon and Slievardagh to be conducted by Ken Brown and Des Cowman. with geological commentary by Dan Tietzsch-Tyler. Assemble 10.00 a.m. on Sat. at car park, Bunmahon [X 433 989]. Depart Bunmahon 9.30 a.m. Sunday and reassemble Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary, at 10.30. (Further details will be notified).

18th Oct.; Workshop on the ecology of mining sites. (Invitation to contribute enclosed).

1st November (Sat.): Talk by Ron Callender "*Gold in the Hills*"

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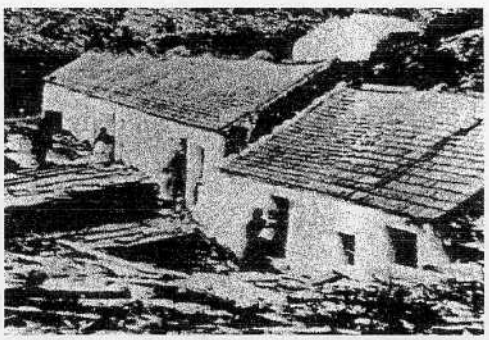
SOCIETY NEWS

FIELD TRIP TO AHENNY SLATE QUARRIES
Led by Dr. John Colthurst.

Spring arrived dramatically on 8th of March and so did members of the MHSI at Ahenny on the Kilkenny/Tipperary border. Backed by the local knowledge of John Meagher and Ned FitzPatrick, John Colthurst led us first to the Ormond Quarries. The spectacle of the dark slate walls along each side of the sun-drenched Lingaun valley was greatly enhanced by the slate sculptures placed there in 1992.

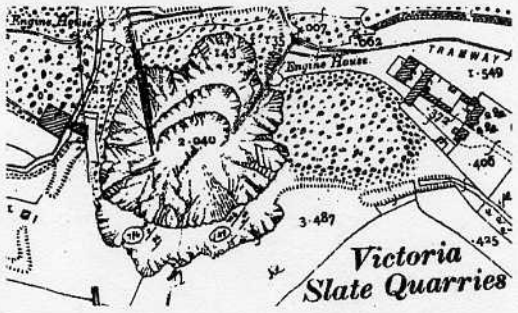
Slate from here was used in roofing Kells Priory in the 14th century, in the building of Carrick on Suir castle in the 16th and in roofing much of the town itself in the 17th century. During this last period and up into the early 19th local families quarried individual sites here under lease from the landowner, the earl of Ormond. By 1848, however they were all taken over by an engineer named William Mercer who began a more systematic development including the application of water power and, as the quarries deepened over the next forty years, steam power.. In 1890 Mercer would appear to have set up a limited company and quarrying here continued until 1923. Work resumed in 1927 under the Killaloe Slate Company but this only lasted about nine years until problems with quartz veins forced their abandonment apart from a brief resuscitation in 1944.



Workers' cottages at the Ormond slate quarries c. 1900.

There are few remains of buildings associated with the quarries here. One major reason must have been the flood in March 1947 which swept away the road beside the Lingaun and a concrete bridge over it which still remains at a forty five degree angle.. The new and current road would appear to have been driven across the top of the spoil heap ((the tip rails still stick out under the road!) destroying most of the structures along the way as depicted on the 1905 map . John, our guide, provided photocopies of post cards showing some of these including, most spectacularly the hamlet of Farnanaun with people standing on the concrete bridge. The ruined houses remain nearby.

Following a picnic lunch in Delany's pub the party crossed the band of greywacke that that separates the Ormond from the more western Victoria Quarries . There Ned FitzPatrick treated us to a slate-trimming exhibition using a vertically mounted flat iron bar as a platform and a one foot flat blade with a off-set handle, having a spike on the obverse of the cutting side to make nail holes.. We all then took our turn timorously - except Paddy Geoghan who turned out a fully trimmed standard slate with nail holes in about thirty seconds.



The number One pit: the water leat and wheel house are on the left.

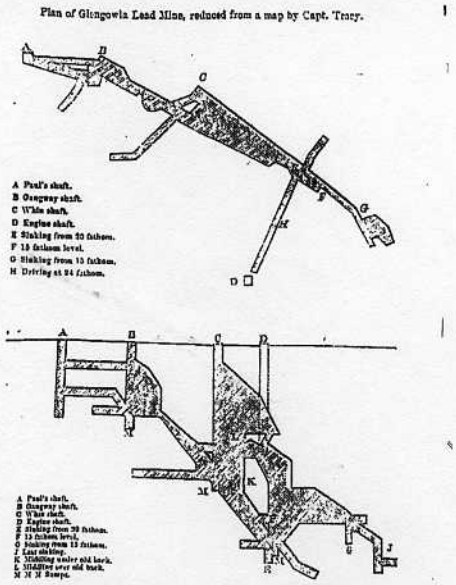
We then proceed to the Number one pit filled with about 180 feet of water including, we were told, an indeterminate amount of sludge and nastiness dumped there by the now defunct tannery in Carrick. At its western end stands what must have been the water-driven pumphouse with a huge wheel-pit whose axle sockets would appear to be buried in rubbish.. The leat for this emerges nearby from a rock-cut tunnel and map evidence shows it to have been about two and a half miles long. At the number 2 quarry pit further east only what must have been a platform for a hoist now stands above the water line.

ITEMS RECEIVED BY SOCIETY

1. From Dr. John Pyne, *The Discoverers. A 50 year History of the Prospectors and Developers Association, some famous prospectors and their discoveries.* 1982. Edited by Hanula, M.R. and Longo, R.M. Published by Pitt Publishing Company, Toronto, Ontario, 1982.

2. From Mr. Brian Moore of Shropshire *Exploring Cornish Mines* by Kenneth Brown and Bob Acton . Published by Landfall Publications, Truro, 1994.

3. From Ms Pat Geoghegan a collection of photocopied material on Glengowla Mine, co. Galway. These comprise [a] the maps (1871 reproductions of which are attached) which were originally obtained by Dr. Billy O'Brien, and [b] notes on the workings obtained and transcribed (mainly in typescript) by Dr. Stephen Moreton, In summary, these comprise, chronologically -



Plan and section of Glengowla mine 1851 made by Captain Tracey.

1850 [from National Library of Ireland (NLI) ms 15492]

- Oct & Dec. Letters re assays.
- (?) Undated suggestions from P.J. Foley re Royalties.

1851 Series of bi-weekly reports with gaps from June to October by P.J. Foley on Glengowla with some reference to Drumsnane and Curraghduff Copper Mines (also called Glan) [from NLI ms 20716]. e,g. -

- 25th &28th June: 40 perches of water course ready. Two existing shafts - Engine and Colonel's. Paul's shaft being "forked" but needing timbering.
- 2nd July: mention of "coppery sulphur" and blende.
- 9th July At Drumsnane 13 tons of sulphur undressed; Doone shaft 4 fathoms deep being worked by six men.
- 19th July: Engine shaft at Glengowla 16ft (fathoms?) deep: "water very strong --- top part (10 feet) dangerous". Foley recommends "oak setts" rather than walling as "masons are bad here and dear". He asks where the bob and kingpost are to be placed.
- 23rd July: Number 2 "vein constantly leaking water"; "Whimsey (sic -Whim?) badly needed". Timbering of engine shaft has commenced.
- 30th Aug.: Mention of a "timber slide" for "Whymme barrels"
- 24th Sept.: "Wheel nearly completed; water course getting forward; launders completed for watercourse; the powder that had gone astray will be here this evening".
- 22nd Oct.: mention of Capt. Tracey.
- 25th Oct.: Final letter from P.J. Foley -"Dear sir, I am very sorry to give you this bad report." (There is no more in this letter!)

(Included with this is a brief biography of P.J. Foley by Des Cowman first published in *Decies* 45, 1992).

1853. Two reports on Glengowla (and other mines) in *Mining Journal* From "Galway Correspondent".

- 15th Jan.: "An excellent discovery at the 16 fathom level"
- 29th Jan.: "Very little doing this week. The deep workings are full of water"

1854 (Mine now apparently being worked by landowner G.F. O'Flaherty with K Lumsden as manager).

- 24th Oct.: Wages sheet
- Nov. & Dec.: Reports from Lumsden.

1870. Geological Survey of Ireland Memoir on the mine. This includes Capt. Tracy's plan and section reproduced here.

4. From Mr. Pat Power, Arklow, photocopied material relating to Avoca.
(i) 1749 estate map of Kilcashel showing some of the workings adjoining Ballymurtagh at that date (detail reproduced here, digitally adapted). They read: **A** Ballymurtagh Oaker shaft' **B** Kilcashell oaker open cast, **C** & **D** the level and the course of ore, **F** The hill shafts, Kilcashel, **F** & **G** the hill and bounds shafts Kilcashel

(ii) Series of redrawing of the illustrations in *The Mines of Wicklow*, Anon, London 1856.
(iii) Large section and diallings of Knockode South Mine dated May 1860.
(iv) Damaged rental map for Knockanode and Raheenavine townlands showing them in the context of the lodes at Avoca. Undated, c. 1860.
(v) Typescript list of burials of Avoca miners in the mining area of California that includes Nevada, Amador and El Dorado whose tombstones state that they were born either in Avoca or "Newbridge", County Wicklow. These are, chronologically (age in brackets)

1821 John Judd (60):
1828 Thos. Brady (78);
1829 Stephen Finn (80)
{Also Catherine Finn - no dates];
1834 Richard Hall (68);
1836 Wm. Walker (73);
1841 George Hall (97);
1841 Miles Cosgrave (65);
1859 Eliza and Thomas Manning (?);
c. 1870 Dan Maher (?)

EDITORIAL NOTE
The dates and ages of all but the last two would suggest that their mining experience came from the operations at Avoca that petered out between 1800 and 1810. How they found their way to California at that early date raises a lot of questions.

5 From Mr. John Davis of Shropshire, original material relating to Abbeytown Mine, Co. Sligo.
(i) **Abbeytown Mining Company Ltd.:** Statement of accounts drawn up by Craig, Gardner & Co., Dublin for the year ended 30th April 1952.
The company had an authorised capital of £50,000 of which £30,000 had been fully paid up in 2/- shares with a loan from Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Ltd. of £59,500. In the previous financial year mining and milling costs had been £28.236 and £25,876 respectively producing £152,000 worth of concentrate. Their working capital for the year was put at £80,429
(ii) **New Abbeytown Mining Company Ltd.**: Supplementary data of 7th November 1960 supplied to the Minister for Industry and Commerce in respect of a technical assistance grant for exploration. An accompanying map shows the workings and the exploration area.

NOTES, NOTICES AND QUERIES

IRISH MINING SCAMS - AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

1. Ardmore and Harry Ferguson 1919.

.On the 16 October 1919 Edmund Spargo and Harry Ferguson issued a statement to the press, reported in the Cork Examiner, extolling the "rosy potential" of the copper deposit in Ardmore, county Waterford. "In a few days up to 300 men will be employed", the report ran. No detail of the operation has survived, except within the memories of the local people who remember a Harry Ferguson as being the chief promoter and Edmund Spargo as being the engineer. These memories were collected by James Quain, a local man, and published in the *Ardmore Journal* (No. 10) in 1993 under the title "Harry will be home next week!". From the summary that follows the course of the scam is evident enough though not what was hoped to gain from it - except perhaps free accommodation!

Jimmy Rooney was 10 in 1919 and remembers Ferguson as a low-sized man with a beard who along with his wife had taken lodgings on the sea-front. Local rumour had it that a millionaire had arrived in their midst and young Jimmy was among the school children who scrambled for silver coins thrown up in the air between his schoolmates. "The only gentleman in Ardmore" he was according to Ciss Quain recalling how impressed everybody was by his flourishing anything as exotic as a cheque book. She was six years old at the time and much of the operation was carried out on her father's land. She recalled how unimpressed Mr. Quain was about this - particularly as not only was a lease not negotiated but basic permission to work there was not even sought! Nevertheless, Ferguson was allowed to proceed uninterrupted.

Eileen Colbert remembers the mining operation thus: "There were a lot of people up there with ponies and carts but there seemed to be little organisation. I'd shift some earth here and you'd shift some there ---". Paddy Mockler and Tommy Maloney were positive a shaft was at least started. Tommy was 12 then and helped at the forge. He is worth quoting verbatim to give an insight into the technology of a primitive 20th century mine: "They had miners' lamps we used to make in the forge - twisted wire stuck into the peak of a cap ---. We used octagonal steel bars to make the hammers. One end was a chisel, the other end pointed with the whole thing bent back like a bow and in the middle was a hole for the handle. The men used to bring them back to be edged or pointed --- and we'd have half a dozen tools at a time for sharpening, including hammers and bars".

All five people interviewed assumed the operation lasted five to twelve months. In fact it lasted only three to four weeks. Before mid-November 1919Fergusson had left but his wife was still there in lodgings. When people called wondering about financial matters she would invariably reply "Harry will be back next week". This became a local phrase for many years afterwards. applied to any hoped-for event that was destined not to happen. When Mrs. Ferguson left is not remembered though the fate of the cheques her husband issued is. The all bounced. Nobody was paid for any of the work done. Whatever equipment had been brought there was simply abandoned according to Jimmy Rooney who says that a few dead cows were dumped into the hole in the ground left over and rubbish thrown in on top. Thus fittingly ended Harry Ferguson's flirtation with Ardmore.

VIDEO REVIEW

(by Nick Coy)

THE S.C.M.C. IN IRELAND
Exploration of Irish mines above and below ground.
I.A. Recordings

This ninety minute video tape is a compilation of recordings made by members of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club during their visits to Ireland in 1995 and 1996.

Many of the significant historic Irish Mining sites are included - Avoca, Glendalough and Glenmalure in County Wicklow; Allihies, Mount Gabriel, Cappagh, Ballycummisk and Derryginagh in County Cork; Bonmahon and Knockmahon in County Waterford; Silvermines and Shalee in County Tipperary; Ross Island, Muckross and Carrigorohane in County Kerry. Tara Mine at Navan is the only operating mine included.

The video is described by I. A. Recordings as a compilation tape which has not been edited or dubbed. Each location visited is identified by caption , but no further information is given. Even though the tape has no commentary, extraneous background sounds and voices, recorded during filming, can be a bit irritating to the viewer. The S.C.M.C were also somewhat unfortunate in that their visits to Ireland seem to be mainly in the rainy season !! The underground trip to Tara Mines is very well done, given the filming constraints of a working mine.

Those who were present at the A.G.M of the Mining History AGM in February, were shown a specially edited version of this video with commentary and background music. This more polished and informative version would have far greater appeal to the viewer, specialist or otherwise, and have greater commercial potential for the makers.

It would be nitpicking to criticise what is in effect the first filmed collection of the major historical Irish mining sites. Like in so many other areas of activity the producers are to be commended for getting the job done, while the rest of us are still thinking about it. At £15 inc of vat, postage and packaging, it is still good value.

I.A. Recordings seem to be the video equivalent of Shire books, and have produced a wide range of recordings on Mining, Engineering and Industrial archaeology.
For further information write to
I.A.Recordings, P.O. Box 476Telford, Shropshire TF7 4R e-mail: -info @ iarecord.demon.co.uk.

QUERY RE. MANUSCRIPT SOURCE

Some years ago the editor was given a portion of a typewritten listing of manuscript material which had no record of provenance. There are four references to Irish mining in a folder number 999/313 with sub files numbered -/1 to -/15. They are introduced as follows -
"Deeds of leases of lands in Co. Clare and Co. Tipperary. Also related financial transactions. Deposited by Gloucester Record Office, Worcester St., Gloucester, England 10 June 1981."
There is, however, no mention of where they were deposited. Spokespersons at the National Archives, National Library and Land Commission in Dublin state that 999/313 does not correspond with any referencing system of theirs. So, where have they been for the past fifteen years?

One clue to the provenance is that all fifteen files originated in the office of a London solicitor, George Playdell Wilton of 1 Raymond Buildings.. Irish mining history would be indebted to any member who can find where these are now deposited as they seem to comprise significant collections of documents relating not only to legal agreements but containing references to the past history of exploration and working at the three county Clare mines cited . There is only one reference to a lease of land in Tipperary and the index does not indicate a particular Irish context for any of the rest. They do include, however, "correspondence and memoranda" (15 items) "concerning an invention for improvements in coating iron with copper and brass", dated 1852-'55, no. -/2.

The Clare references are as follows:-
-/10. 19th Nov. 1853: *Lease for 21 years by Elizabeth Brown, Newgrove, Parish of Tulla, Co. Clare to Robert Smith, 34 Lombard St. London and Richard Wm. Smith, Moyriesk, Co. Clare and John Scott, Ebury St., Westminister of mines and minerals on land of* ***Ballyvirgin*** *otherwise Shanbally, par. Kilmanaheen, Bar. Comcomroe. Rent one eighteenth of profits p.a.. Also -*
1853-'59. Correspondence, memoranda, draft leases, opinions, costs between George Playdell Wilton and C.L. Barnwell, sec to Ballyvirgin Mining co., etc.. 31 items

-/11. 6th March 1858: *Lease for lives by Richard Scott, Middle Gardner St., Dublin to William Turquand, Old Jewry (sic) Chambers, London and Daniel Turner McDonald of the Ballyvirgin Mine, Co. Clare of Deal Yard Field, townland Clare Hill, par. Clareabbey, bar, Islands, Co. Clare. Rent £10 p.a... Also -*
1854-'57 Correspondence, instructions, draft leases between George Playdell Wilton and C. L. Barnwell, sec to Ballyvirgin Mining co., ect.. 6 items

-/13 1 May 1857: *Lease for 21 years to Stafford O'Brien, Blatherwyche Park, Northhamton to Richard William Smith, Moyreisk, Clare and John Scott, 8 Western Cottage, Western Road, Brighton of mines and minerals in lands of Carahan, par. Tulla, bar. Tulla Upper, Co. Clare. Rent one fifteenth of the whole into fifteen equal parts. Also -*
1957. correspondence, draft leases, memoranda, costs between and C.L. Barnwell, sec., etc.
25 items

-/14 2 September 1857: *Lease for 21 Years to Stafford O'Brien, Blatherwyche Park, Northampton, to John Scott, 8 Westerly cottage, Brighton of mines and minerals within lands of Rathclouney, par. Clooney. Bar. Corcomroe, Co. Clare. Rent one fifteenth, the whole divided into 15 equal parts. Also -*
1857-'70, Correspondence, draft leases, costs and C. L. Barnwell, sec., etc. 7 items.

THE CORNISH ENGINE HOUSES OF IRELAND

1. A SIMPLIFIED GUIDE.

Kenneth Brown.

Introduction

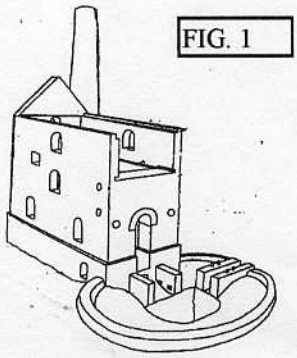


FIG. 1

A Cornish engine is defined as a non rotative beam pumping engine working on the single-acting Cornish steam cycle. It replaced earlier engines of the Watt type. Cornish engines were manufactured by a number of English foundries in the period 1815 to 1916. Most, but not all, were situated in Cornwall where tin and copper mining provided a ready market and underground water was a problem. The term "Cornish" has been applied to rotative beam engines connected to a crank and flywheel that were used for mine purposes other than pumping, such as hoisting and ore-crushing. These engines were normally double acting, taking steam on both sides of the piston.

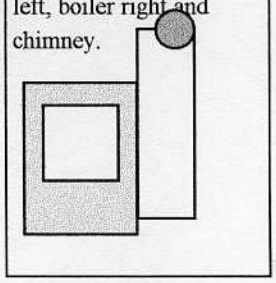


FIG. 2. Engine house left, boiler right and chimney.

All Cornish engine houses required a substantially built engine house to support the overhead rocking beam and hence act as the engine frame. It was usual for the empty house to be left *in situ* when an engine was scrapped or moved to another site. Many such houses survive in whole or in part, not only in Cornwall, but in other parts of the world where Cornish miners applied their skills, such as Ireland, Mexico and Australia. These notes are intended as a guide to interpreting them - specific examples in Ireland will be described in subsequent articles.

Pumping Engines

Fig. 1 shows an engine house as it might have been shortly after abandonment. Across the extra-thicken bob-wall would have rested the beam whose movement operated the pumps. Immediately outside was the shaft with a protective collar wall around it. Beside the shaft was the surface balance bob or counter weight (see fig. 3) to lighten the load on the engine raising the pumping rods. The footings of this masonry is buried in most Irish mines as are the stub walls between bob-wall and shaft which usually contained the condenser..

The house for the boiler which supplied steam to the engine took the form of low annex of less robust construction and generally at one side as in Fig 2. This is not shown in Fig. 1 where the chimney appears attached to the engine house. Such was not the norm in Irish engine houses where the chimney usually stood separately (there appears to have been no particular rule about this) attached directly (as in Fig. 2) or by an horizontal flue to the boiler house (these thin-walled structures rarely survive).

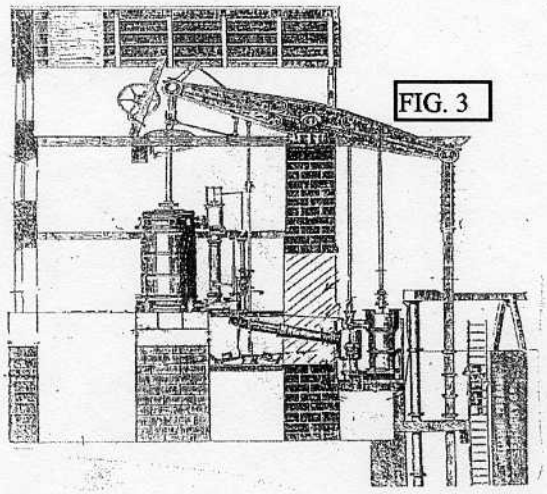


FIG. 3

Fig. 3 shows a detail of an engine house with the machinery in place. The cylinder is bolted on to a solid bed of masonry. The steam from the boiler house outside was piped to a valve chest at the top of the cylinder. This pushed down the piston, pulling with it the beam which in turn lifted its other end thereby raising the pump rods. A valve then released the steam which was piped to the underside of the piston. The pump rods then sank by virtue of their own weight. The cycle then recommenced and the spent steam led a condenser immediately outside the bob wall where a vacuum was created and from where it was returned to the boiler as hot water. The speed could be set at from two to eight or more strokes per minute depending on the amount of water to be pumped at any given time. An adjustable pause between each half-stroke was effected by devices called cataracts in a basement beneath the driver's floor.

Fig. 4 shows the normal method of pumping at the top of shaft. The *balance bob* acts as a counter-weight lessening the steam consumption of the engine in raising the rods and mitigating their downward plunge. Fig. 5 shows how the plungers work. They are arranged in a series of lifts so that the water from various points in the mine is led into one of the pump cisterns. The upward movement of the plunger or "pole" attached to the rods draws water from the cistern to fill the "polecase". Then the return or downward movement pushes the water up the rising main and out via either the top of the shaft or through an adit. From about 1860 all mine water tended to be fed into a single deeper sump from where it was pumped to avoid having to carry out this operation from several shafts..

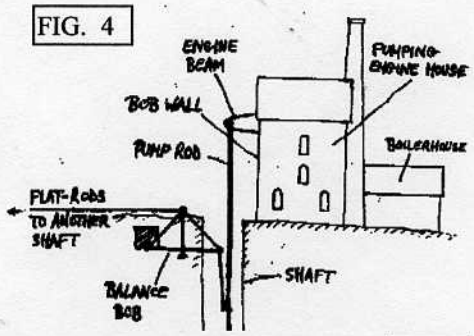


FIG. 4

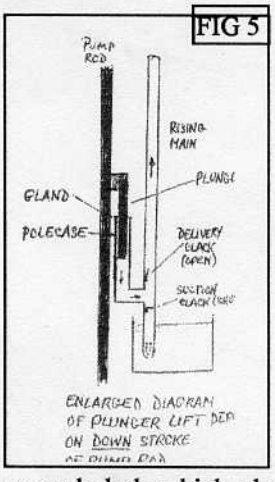


FIG 5

Other functions and features.

In Ireland many rotative engines appear to have been used for pumping as well as hoisting. This was done by having a pumping crank working horizontal rods ("flat rods") leading to the shaft where the horizontal motion was turned into the vertical motion of the pump rod by means of a large bell crank or angle-bob which also incorporated the balance weight. The winding drums were attached to the crankshaft via clutches. Flat rods could also be worked from the balance bob of a non-rotative pumping engine as shown in Fig. 4.

In pumping the pitwork needed constant adjusting and wooden pump rods needed periodic replacing, so a working mine had tall shear-legs standing over the shaft for maintenance hoisting. There would also have been two wooden walkways projecting from the bob-wall of the engine house on either side of the beam to allow greasing of the nosepin bearing where the beam met the pump rods. Therefore when one looks at the remains of a Cornish pumping engine house at present one sees only the bare skeleton of what it was in its working life.

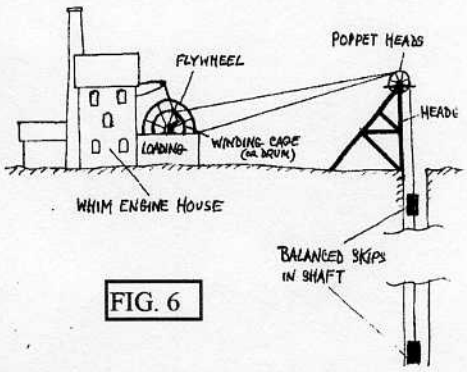


FIG. 6

Likewise for hoisting engines (called *steam whims*) where the beam was connected to a flywheel to impart rotary action (FIG. 6). Instead of the mine shaft what is likely to survive at the front of the house is the pair of massive footings for the flywheel shaft. The mine shaft served by a whim will be found some distance from the engine house rather that adjoining the bob wall.

[Over the next four issues Mr. Brown will suggest interpretations of the surviving engine houses and other remains in the various Irish mining districts]

REPORT A.G.M.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mining History Society of Ireland / Cumann Stair na Mianadoireachta Sat 8th February 1997, 11.00 am, Geological Survey of Ireland, Dublin .

Present:, Des Cowman, Nick Coy, Martin Critchley, John Davies, Peter Eggleston, Loreto Farrell, Keith Geoghegan, Pat Geoghegan, Paddy Geoghegan, Rob Goodbody, Conor MacDermot, Dermot Mooney, Mike Moore, John Morris, Kevin O Hagan, Matthew Parkes, Adrian Pearce, Tom Reilly, Nick Southwick, Eamonn de Stafort, Alan Thomas, Edwin Thorpe, Tara Walsh plus others.
Apologies: Peter Claughton

Agenda Items

1. Chairman's welcome and address. John Morris welcomed everybody and thanked those who had been involved in the activities of the Society during the year. He outlined the revised agenda and briefly summarised the highlights of the year s events.

2. Minutes of Inaugural General Meeting on February 10th 1996.The minutes were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting.

3. Matters arising. .Mike Moore noted that due to some uncertainty between them neither he nor Alan Williams had represented the Society at NAMHO meetings. Some discussion arose concerning the response that the Society should give to those enquiring about collecting minerals at mine sites. Adrian Pearce responded that an umbrella body similar to NAMHO had been suggested to some UK mineral collectors groups

EDITORIAL

Enclosed with this issue is a copy of the data base drawn up by Martin Critchley as well as details of our working weekend in Glengowla. on 3rd and 4th of May. Together they mark the beginning of our "hands on" approach to Irish mining sites. Members are invited to learn or brush up on their surveying techniques and apply them to filling out the data base for their own local mines.

Over a quarter of this issues is given over to reportage of our first AGM at the request of the committee, on the principal that our procedures to date should be fully presented. Thanks are due to our Hon. Sec., Matthew Parkes, for his diligence in that regard.

Mention was made in the minutes (item 6) to difficulties over the joint publication of the *Mineral Statistics* for Ireland but these have now been resolved and the tedious business of collating and presenting lists of figures is under way. Also being considered by the committee is the publication of occasional papers or pamphlets on sites where little or nothing has previously been published. Such was the case with Ahenny Slate quarries where it would be regrettable if the original research undertaken by John Colthurst and John Morris were not more widely available.

Members are invited to contribute to contribute to the next *Newsletter* - anything from short queries to fully fledged articles. Looking forward to hearing from you!
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to effectively guide conduct of such groups. Rob Goodbody suggested a standard response saying that we could not give specific details of localities. Loreto Farrell reported that in dealing with such enquiries officially as an employee of the EMD, a general response stating that details of a specific site was required from the enquirer before more information could be given, invariably led to no further response. For the Heritage Council, Ruth Delaney suggested that the official position should be included in the MHSI s response to such enquiries. Rob Goodbody raised the point that there should be MHSI information and membership forms available to distribute to interested parties on Heritage Day walks.

4. Secretary's report

The activities of 1996 were briefly reported, commencing with the Ballycorus and Wicklow Gap/Glendalough fieldmeet at the end of May. Thanks were offered to Rob Goodbody and William Dick for an excellent trip. As Rob's lecture was attended by so few, it was being presented again today.

Thanks were also offered to Kevin O Hagan who led another wonderful weekend trip to the Glens of Antrim in June.

On Sunday 8th September the MHSI comprised a substantial element of the programme for National Heritage Day. Members led walks at various locations (which were noted) with as many as 100 people attending Nick Coy's walk at Avoca. Apologies were given for the omission of his walk from the Newsletter programme.

A third successful weekend trip was held in October where the Society visited Valentia Slate Quarries led by Eamonn Grennan and Michael Lyne who hopes to renew extraction. Then Billy O'Brien gave a great talk on the Ross Island Bronze Age copper mining and prepared us for what we would see on the Sunday including the 19th century copper mining at Muckross. The Shropshire Caving and Mining Club members attended the Killarney parts of this trip and then spent a week exploring other areas of the SW assisted by Tom Reilly.

As well as the Society's active field programme, Des Cowman produced 3 Newsletters in 1996. He is also proceeding with completion of the Mineral Statistics for Ireland in conjunction with Roger Burt in Exeter University.

On other fronts the Society has been quietly pursuing matters. At Avoca Nick Coy and John Morris have been involved with the VADA group in broad negotiations with Wicklow County Council and the EMD about preserving the best mining heritage there. Two weeks previously Ken Brown (an authority on steam engines) visited and met with all interested parties.

We have also been following up possible sources of funding for large scale projects to achieve some of our ambitions as a Society regarding an inventory of mining heritage, from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund.

5. Treasurer's Report

The enclosed accounts were presented by Martin Critchley. The differences in insurance costs were explained as a credit for a partial year s fee for 1995-'96 had been offset for 1996-'97 fee. The miscellaneous costs mainly consisted of hall hire for talks etc.

The cost of £125 for Web page design was then justified by later demonstration of the finished internet site for the meeting.

6. Editor's Report

Des Cowman outlined his efforts on the Newsletters and the problems of actually getting volunteer helpers involved because of the production process. However an e-mail based offer of help from Peter Claughton in Wales was recorded. Concerning the Mineral Statistics publication, Des reported the progress to date in negotiations with Roger Burt and others. However things had stalled at present over actual details of costs and division of costs and possible returns. Adrian Pearce and Rob Goodbody supported by the meeting, congratulated Des on the Newsletter production.

7. Constitutional amendments

The previously circulated amendments proposed were discussed.

Amendment 1

After some discussion amongst those present the written amendment proposed by John Morris was modified by a proposal (Proposed by Eamonn de Stafort, Seconded by Edwin Thorpe) That the terms Chairman and Vice Chairman be deleted, wherever they appear in the Constitution, and be replaced by the non-sexist terms Chairperson and Vice Chairperson respectively.

For: 16 Against: 5

Amendment 2

The second proposal by John Morris, seconded by the Secretary was accepted unanimously. It was a purely correctional procedure to deal with an error in the original constitution. It was - *That reference to article 18.1 in Article 18.4 be amended to read Article 18.2.*

Amendment 3

After some discussion amongst those present the written amendment was modified to - *That in Article 15, the following sentence be added after the first sentence: In the case of the AGM, fully paid up members refers to those members who are fully paid up during the calendar year to which the AGM applies.* This was proposed by Adrian Pearce and seconded by Mike Moore.

It was passed unanimously.

8. Election of 1997 Committee

As the nominations received by the Secretary equalled the positions available all persons were deemed elected without the necessity for a vote. The 1997 Committee is thus:

Chairperson	John Morris
Vice chairperson	Kevin O Hagan
Treasurer	Martin Critchley
Secretary	Matthew Parkes
Editor	Des Cowman
Committee Member	Nick Coy
Committee Member	Eamonn Grennan
Committee Member	Billy O Brien

9. Response to Questionnaire

The Secretary presented a brief summary of the collated results of the questionnaire circulated with Newsletter 3. There were 22 replies.

The mean scores for all aspects of the Newsletter fell between 4 and 5 i.e. good to very good.

Field meets and lectures: general response was for a mix of the two, some one day trips some weekends and some separate lectures. Most responses were happy about making their own arrangements, but in future suggestions for accommodation will be given together with a contact person for details.

Future possibilities suggested include: Waterford copper mines; Schull, Co. Cork, Avoca; Tara Mine/ Galmoy/ Lisheen or Tara combined with Beauparc, Leinster coalfield weekend, Beara copper mines.

Few people responded to the Heritage Day questions which hopefully means that those attending were non members.

Few responses to the World Wide Web question which suggests few have seen it.

Workshops were generally supported (15 for, 4 against). Other topics suggested include - Conservation of buildings: Use of archival sources and accessing data: Safety in disused mines: Interpretation of disused mine sites: Engineering of mines.

Few people supported the idea of a Society Journal or would provide papers.

11. WWW page and inventory.

The Treasurer then showed the WWW MHSI homepage and a few of the facilities using the GSI display facilities. He also demonstrated progress on the design of a database using Microsoft Access for the purposes of generating a mining heritage inventory. Preliminary sheets for the recording of data following the database structure and fields were also distributed. Some comments from the meeting regarding small changes in design were noted for amendment.

12. Mining heritage developments

John Morris then outlined some recent developments in the area of particular sites being developed as heritage attractions.

Old Glengowla The MHSI is to help the Geoghegans on workshop weekends.

Allihies Mining museum and art gallery proposed by local group

Arigna Active local group

Silvermines Eamon de Stafort outlined the story here. A full feasibility study showed it was a viable project with an underground trail and surface buildings. Shannon Heritage, a subsidiary of Shannon Development, will have to show that it can be self funding.

Avoca. John reported recent discussions, and the recognition that the Williams engine house was the best to preserve. Alan Thomas also spoke to note that the History Committee of VADA were not stepping on Nick Coy's toes. Eamon de Stafort pointed out the useful role of the Society in harmonising relations between groups, and its strength as a group in dealing with insurance issues.

Following this was some discussion of the whole issue of access, liability and insurance. Rob Goodbody suggested seeing how Showcaves eg Aillwee Cave operated, but caves are viewed entirely differently as they are natural.

Loreto Farrell noted that the Dept. through EMD does not allow open access simply because of insurance questions.

The whole area of public liability needs looking into. The OPW must be contacted concerning insurance for Heritage Day events. The possibility of a temporary membership for the day, using the existing members cover scheme was suggested. However there are restrictions in the BCRA scheme which preclude this.

Ruth Delaney of the Heritage Council reported that the Inland Waterways Association became a limited liability company on legal advice after a big legal action against the Association. Other examples include the IAEG and SUI and this possibility should be considered for the MHSI. However there are costs such as auditor's fees for accounts, which would be a large fraction of the Society s income.

13. AOB

Funding: Loreto Farrell suggested contacting the Irish American Fund. Wicklow Co Council trying to get Interreg funding for the maritime border with Wales which may lead to something concerning Avoca.

Peter Eggleston commented that we should completely exhaust all voluntary effort for getting things done eg appeal for input and support from members with MS Access for inputting data to the inventory.

Alan Thomas re-iterated the need to pursue the insurance issue.

Adrian Pearce suggested the possibility of having a fieldtrip after the AGM on the Sunday next year to make a weekend of it for those travelling some distance.