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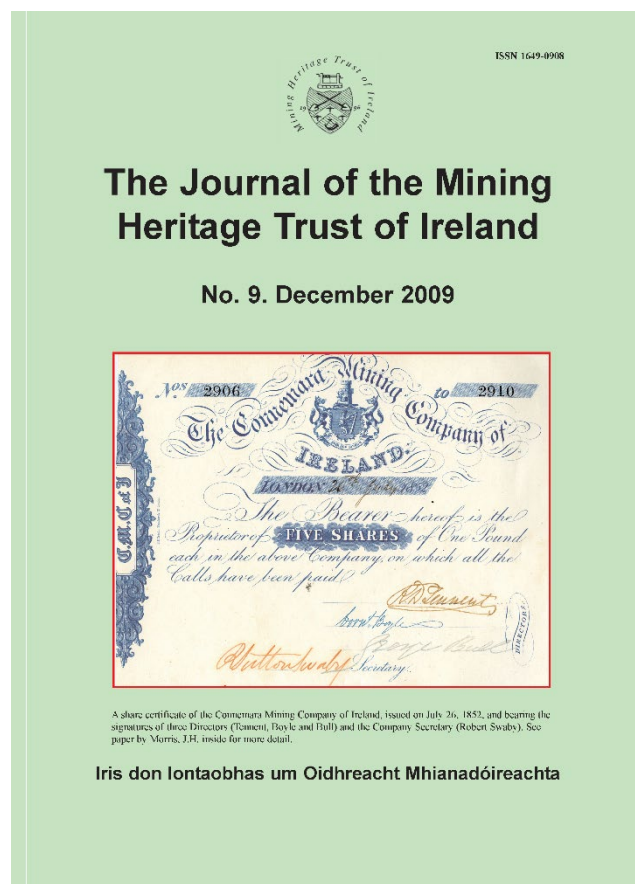
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DERRYLEA MINE, CO. GALWAY: NEW FEATURES EXPOSED DURING ROADWORKS

by Jerry O'Sullivan, Barry Flannery and Matthew Parkes

Abstract: During the summer of 2009, blasting of a new cutting for the N59 road at Derrylea Lough exposed some additional workings not previously recorded during the MHTI Survey of 2006. This brief article records these workings, as the excavations have now destroyed them. Additional data on the mineralogy was also provided by fresh rock cuttings. *Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland*, 9, 2009, 31-32.

INTRODUCTION

Derrylea Mine and the associated industrial heritage of a putative water powered processing plant, half-built but abandoned was the subject of a detailed study by members of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (MHTI) when a route selection study indicated that an historical mine site was under threat from planned improvements to the N59 Galway to Clifden road, at the eastern end of Derrylea Lough, about 5km east of Clifden. The study was published (Parkes *et al.* 2006) as part of the Proceedings of a Conference, *Galway's Mining Heritage: Extracting Galway* held in Oughterard in August 2006, largely arising from the Derrylea Research and supported by Galway County Council's Heritage Office and by the National Roads Authority (NRA).

The MHTI recommendations provided to the NRA were that, although interesting and relatively early, the very limited scale of workings at Derrylea were not unique in the context of County Galway or of Ireland, and were not of sufficient heritage importance to survive the road design. Unfortunately, the combination of geography with very high ground to the north and Derrylea Lough to the south meant that this was a 'pinch point' for the road, with no options to deviate it, without select-

ing an entirely different route with serious consequences for both costs and for other homes, farms and heritage that would be in the way.

However, the recommendations made by MHTI included the need to monitor closely the excavation and blasting of the cutting that would run through the mine site. Thus Jerry O'Sullivan, as NRA Archaeologist in Co. Galway (and commissioner of the original MHTI study), was on site during this phase and made the photographic record of minor workings which are recorded here for posterity.



Figure 1. The initial excavations and bulldozing expose a new underground working. All photos by Jerry O'Sullivan. Figures 2, 3. Right. Two closer views of the blasted area showing the small working.





Figure 4. A view over the steep spoil or back fill bank into the mined cavity, with camera held at arm's length above the head by Jerry O'Sullivan.



Figure 5. A view of the rock slope as it was being reduced to remove the bend at Derrylea. The former mine workings ran across the slope from left to right in mid slope

ADDITIONAL WORKINGS

Surface working 1 (Figures 5 and 8 of Parkes *et al.* 2006) is the area that showed new features. Figures 1-4 here show the minor underground working that was exposed by the new ground excavation to remove the rock ridge with the old mine workings. This was to allow the N59 to have a straighter line, even gradient and remove the road bends which were causing problems.



Figure 6. A view of the rock face at the late stages of cutting the new road section.

MINERALOGY

As an MHTI member and a Co. Galway resident, Barry Flannery was able to visit the site during the excavation works to examine any minerals or mineralisation exposed. He examined the blasted material and saw conclusive proof that the location was a lead prospect. There was a freshly blasted boulder with strings of barite running through it (under 1cm thick) containing large amounts of galena. As well as this small amounts of pyrite or perhaps chalcopyrite disseminated through the surrounding host rock were evident. It would appear that the remains of the void was in a location where mining had occurred in a heavily mineralized area as there were abundant barite vugs and cavities containing needle quartz and cockscomb barite as well as partially dissolved calcite. The latter is a new mineral record for Derrylea.

REFERENCES

Parkes, M., Duffy, P. and Critchley, M. 2006. Assessment of Derrylea Mine, County Galway. pp 9-24. *In* Galway's Mining Heritage: Extracting Galway. Proceedings of a Conference, 26th August 2006.