

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

Newsletter

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Black marble quarry near Galway

From George Wilkinson, 1845. Practical geology and ancient architecture of Ireland, John Murray, London.

Iontaobhas Oidhreachta Mianadóireachta na hEireann

MHTI Members' Business

Chairman's Report for 2018

During the year we held one event, on 7th July 2018, which was a visit to the National Museum of Ireland geological collections at the Collections Resource Centre in Swords, Co. Dublin. The visit was followed by our Annual General Meeting (AGM) for 2017. Nigel Monaghan and myself retired on rotation and were re-elected.

Your Board held three meetings during the year, on 12th May, 13th September and 8th November, and a director represented us at the NAMHO Council meeting on 17th November.

After a gap of a year, in June we restarted our Newsletters, producing three with a total of 30 pages. Thanks to Alastair Lings for compiling the newsletters, and to everyone who provided items for them.

In October we published Journal No. 16 comprising some of the papers and songs presented at the NAMHO Conference in Dublin in 2016. Many thanks to the contributors, and to Paul Rondelez for editing the papers.

Our Facebook page is still popular. At the end of 2018 it had 1054 "Likes", up from 887 the year before. There is very little interest in our page on VKontakte, however it requires minimal effort to maintain and is a useful alternative to Facebook.

We responded to the planning application for a gold mine (Curraghinalt) near Greencastle in Co. Tyrone. Our response was supportive of the development, suggesting that after production had ended the mine could become a mining tourist, education or training centre.

During the year we responded to thirteen enquiries including:

- information wanted about the Corraun Mines, Co. Mayo;
- sites for filming "The Underworld";
- employment in mining from 1922-1973, for a university project;
- visits to active and disused mines;
- information wanted about Benbulbin Mine for a university project;

In November 2017, Ewelina Rondelez designed an attractive website for us. Our priority is to develop this website as a significant resource for anyone researching Irish mining heritage.

For their efforts and support during 2018 I would like to thank our directors, members, corporate supporters, and contributors to our publications. Thank you all.

Matthew Parkes

14/02/2019

Report on Extraordinary General Meeting and winding up of MHTI clg

An EGM of the company was held on 12 January 2019. The resolution to wind up the MHTI Limited Company was passed unanimously. The timetable for this is to have our work plan finished by summer (June) in order to allow time for the formal process with the Companies Registration Office to be completed before September, when we would have to file further accounts and returns. The full implications of this were discussed and explored by those at the meeting, with some options laid out by the directors. The Board is currently developing the work plan. The main elements of it are:

- To make available a publicly accessible website with as much of the accumulated data, records, archives, photos etc as is feasible, and to find a secure host for this website
- To transfer physical archives and equipment to appropriate hosts such as National Museum of Ireland, Geological Survey Ireland etc
- To fund a contractor(s) to complete this work directed by the Board
- To find appropriate homes for donations of publications stocks to assist mine heritage ventures with possible income from sales
- To ensure sets of MHTI publications are available in libraries and institutions
- To consider publishing a final journal in the summer to complete various research projects

During the compilation of this newsletter we have engaged the services of Eleanor Honan to undertake much of the actual work in the MHTI closure workplan. She has commenced work and is already making inroads into the job, which will bring order to many boxes of much neglected material from the last 23 years. Eleanor is a UCC Geology graduate who has been volunteering in the Natural History Museum over the past year, with great organisational skills and hard work.

MHTI Journal 17

As noted above we are considering publishing a final journal in summer 2019 in order to 'mop-up' several possible papers and research projects. Whilst we have a number of probable commitments, we wish to hear from members of any papers, notes, short reports or other material they may have that would be suitable for publication. Please contact any director to alert us to your possible contribution. A provisional deadline of the end of April is likely, but please discuss your possible topics and timetable as soon as possible.

National Association of Mining History Organisations Conference, 04-08 July 2019

Bookings are now being taken for the NAMHO Conference in Mid Wales. An early-bird discount ends on 31 March. A dozen underground visits are offered, mostly not needing caving techniques for exploration. Public liability insurance is mandatory for the visits and can be arranged for people needing it.

https://www.namho.org/conference_2019.php

Dates for your diary

04-05 April: Health down the mine conference, Lewarde, France. <https://www.chm-lewarde.com/en/>

17 April: Practical mining course, Dublin. <http://igi.ie/event/practical-mining-course/>

18 May: The geology and geoheritage of the Connemara Marble (fieldtrip). <https://www.galwaygeology.net/>

30 May-02 June: Institute Europa Subterranea Symposium, Bad Munster am Stein-Ebernburg, Germany.
<http://europa-subterranea.eu/>

06-10 June: Mining History Association Annual Conference, Michigan, USA.
<https://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/>

19-21 June: Archaeometallurgy in Europe 2019 conference, Miskolc, Hungary.
<http://aie2019.argum.hu/index.php>

04-08 July: NAMHO Conference, Llanafan, Ceredigion, Wales. <https://namho.org/>

07-14 July: Australasian Mining History Conference, Queensland, Australia.
<http://www.mininghistory.asn.au/next-conference/>

17-25 August: National Heritage Week. <https://www.heritageweek.ie/>

19-25 August: Woodford Furnace Festival, Woodford, Co. Galway. <https://www.furnacefestival.org/>

14-15 September: European Heritage Open Days (NI).
<https://discovernorthernireland.com/events/European-Heritage-Open-Days/>

18-21 September: European Labour History Network conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
<https://socialhistoryportal.org/elhn>

10-12 October: International conference for the history of mining and metallurgy. Jihlava, Czechia. Contact Petr Hruby, PetrSilberbergbau@seznam.cz

2020

18-22 June 2020: International Mining History Conference, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.
<https://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/>

Please 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.

We plan to issue our next Newsletter in July, but we need your help. If you have information on forthcoming events, come across news items, or want to contribute a report or article, please contact the Newsletter Editor (contact details on back page).

Irish News

Abbeytown Mine, Ballysodare, Co. Sligo (30/01/2019)

Erris Resources have completed a 12 hole, 1004.5 metre programme of underground drilling from the former Abbeytown Mine. The company's Chief Executive Officer, Anton du Plessis said "We are delighted with the results of the underground work programme at Abbeytown, which has extended the mineralisation south to join with the surface drilling we completed last year, expanding the overall size and potential of the mineralised system. The combination of underground mapping and drilling has allowed us to advance the project more efficiently and develop new targets in the extended area south of the mine. The ground conditions at Abbeytown appear to be very good and the team has gained valuable experience in underground operations which will aid future work". A video showing the surface and underground exploration is available on the company's website. <https://www.errisresources.com/ireland>

Drumgoosat Mine, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan (08/02/2019)

Following the subsidence at the former Drumgoosat gypsum mine SRK Consulting, acting for Gyproc, investigated the cause of the collapse and the potential extent of the problem. Wardell Armstrong, acting for the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) reviewed the work of SRK and concluded:

1. Pumping of water to Drumgoosat affected the stability of the pillars.
2. The collapse area is contained within the area of subsidence.
3. The mine workings under the roads R179 and L4900 are stable.

The report by Wardell Armstrong was published on the DCCAE website on 17 December. On 19 December a new crown hole, 9 metres in diameter opened up 35 m west of the LP4900 local road, about 400 m north-north-east of the original disturbance zone. The road was closed again, for safety and to facilitate ground investigation work.

An update issued by Gyproc on 08 February reports: "There are 4 drilling rigs on site and work is progressing as planned. 12 of the 16 previously agreed boreholes have now been drilled in the investigation of the crown hole and an additional eight agreed locations will be drilled over the next number of weeks. A number of the boreholes have also been identified for laser scanning to investigate the workings underground. It is expected that all exploratory works will be completed in February including all drilling and laser scanning. The resulting data will then be analysed in March with conclusions and proposals agreed for April". The LP4900 remains closed, and Gyproc continue to provide support to the families affected by the subsidence.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/specialreports/digging-for-the-truth-as-south-monaghan-community-fears-mount-898863.html>

Ballynoe Mine, Silvermines, Co. Tipperary (30/10/2018)

During the autumn of 2018 the former barite open pit was used for testing iVAMOS!, an underwater mining system developed with €9.2 M of European Funding. The equipment includes a track-mounted mining vehicle with cutter head and ore-gathering, a barge with winch, a power and control umbilical, a floating slurry hose, and a power and control centre. The remotely controlled vehicle was tested in depths to 57 metres. On 24 October a demonstration day was held, which attracted 85 visitors.

The open pit is leased to Siga Hydro Ltd who plan to use it as the lower reservoir in a 360 megawatt pumped-storage hydropower scheme. Barite was first quarried here in 1956. Between 1963 and 1993 Magcobar (Ireland) Ltd produced 5.13 MT of barite (90%), mainly from the open pit, with underground mining from 1989. At its peak production in the early 1980s the mine was the biggest barite producer in Europe, providing 5% of the world's supply. <http://vamos-project.eu/news/>

Cavanacaw Mine, Omagh, Co. Tyrone (11/02/2019)

Underground development at the mine now exceeds 900 metres. The decline spiral has passed the 1084 (second) level, where a 50 m long crosscut provides access to the Kearney Vein. A level is being driven along the vein, and it is planned to extract the ore between the 1096 (first) and 1084 levels using the long-hole method. The stope will be backfilled with cemented rock and tailings. An escapeway has been created, which will also form part of the ventilation system. The main ventilation fans are onsite, prior to installation. A basic plan of the workings is available on the company website, under Operations Documents. <https://www.galantas.com/operations/operation-documents/>

Curraghinalt Project, Omagh, Co. Tyrone (09/01/2019)

The Strategic Planning Division of the Department for Infrastructure has requested further environmental information in relation to the planning application (LA10/2017/1249/F) for a gold mine submitted by Dalradian Gold in November 2017. The applicant is expected to provide the information within three months, or a longer period by agreement. The company's Chief Executive Officer, Patrick F. N. Anderson said "We're happy to have completed the first major period of review and consultation on our application. Dalradian welcomes close scrutiny of our proposals, including a public inquiry at the appropriate stage". <https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index.htm>

Valentia Slate Quarry, Valentia Island, Co. Kerry (09/03/2019)

In 2015 the business was offered for sale by the joint owners who wished to retire: included were the rights to 130 acres of slate, and processing equipment (see Newsletter 68). Aidan Forde, a geologist turned businessman in Killarney has now bought the operation and said "We are keen to develop it sustainably and leverage the uses that Valentia slate can be put to". The quarry was first worked commercially in 1816. <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/kerryman/news/bright-future-for-valentia-slate-as-a-new-owner-takes-the-helm-37883080.html>

Tynagh Mine, Loughrea, Co. Galway (09/01/2019)

Viridian Metals Ireland Ltd (formerly Tynagh Iron Mines Ltd) plan to drill six exploratory boreholes in Boleynaminna and Skehanagh townlands which lie between the former Tynagh Mine (Derryfrench td) and the Old Tynagh Mine (Carhoon td). Between 1965 and 1981 the former Tynagh Mine produced 9.4 MT of ore at 5.2% lead, 3.0% zinc and 0.2% copper. <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/natural-resources/topics/Minerals-Exploration-Mining/statutory-notice/Pages/Appropriate-Assessment.aspx>

Wolfhill Coalmine Project (17/01/2019)

Leech's Pub in Wolfhill, Co. Laois, now houses much of the exhibition of the Wolfhill Coalmine Project. The display includes photographs, newspaper cuttings and documents from the mines. The Wolfhill Mine was last worked from 1939 to 1966, employing a maximum of 166 people. <https://laois-nationalist.ie/2019/01/17/wolfhill-pub-will-host-permanent-exhibition-on-mining-in-the-area/>

Gorteen, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny (22/02/2019)

In mid February a road at Gurteen in the Leinster Coalfield subsided and it was closed by Kilkenny County Council. Engineers Seamus Kavanagh and Phillippe Beubry visited the site and a geophysical survey was ordered. Cllr Maurice Shortall said "The geophysical survey covered an area some 150 metres on both sides which has alleviated the concern of nearby residents". The road has been repaired and should be back in use by early April. In the area there were old bell pits in the Three Foot Coal seam. <https://www.kilkennypeople.ie/news/castlecomer/371263/work-begins-to-fill-in-castlecomer-road-that-fell-into-a-mine.html>

Glens of Antrim Greenway Project (04/02/2019)

In February 2018 a study proposed the creation of a greenway between Ballymena and Cushendall, mainly along the route of the former Ballymena, Cushendall & Red Bay Railway. The railway was developed to serve the many iron ore and bauxite mines in the area, operating from 1875 to 1937. It ran for 26 km from Ballymena to Retreat Station at the head of Glen Ballymon, with sidings to the Rathkenny, Mountcashel, Dungonnell, Crommelin and other mines. Mid & East Antrim Borough Council are now in a position to bid for funding for the Greenway from the Department for Infrastructure. <https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/news/community-consultations-complete-040219>

Geotourism grants (07/02/2019)

The Geological Survey of Ireland has awarded grants totalling €65 000 to 13 organisations to support the development and publication of educational and outreach materials that promote the geology of their areas. The recipients include Arigna Mining Experience, Glengowla Mines and The Sliabh Aughty Furnace Festival. <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/events-and-news/news/Pages/Geotourism-grants-announced.aspx>

Publications

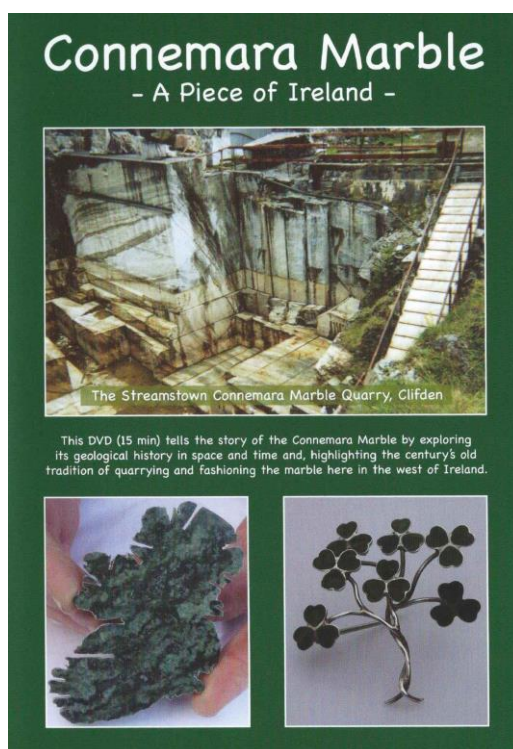
Ministerial Brief, October 2018

Published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment. The Exploration and Mining Division is covered on pages 201-208. Some recent statistics on mining are provided and past and proposed work at Silvermines and Avoca is summarised. A departmental priority for 2018 was to “Develop an overall remediation plan for Avoca, and plan remediation works at Silvermines” (p.15).

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/news-and-media/publications/Pages/Ministerial-Brief-.aspx>

Connemara Marble- a piece of Ireland (DVD)

This documentary by Alison Paylor for Connemara Marble Industries Ltd covers the geology of the marble at Streamstown Quarry; and its production, export and use. Duration 13 minutes. Copies are available free on request from Matthew Parkes. <http://www.connemaramarble.ie/index.html>



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