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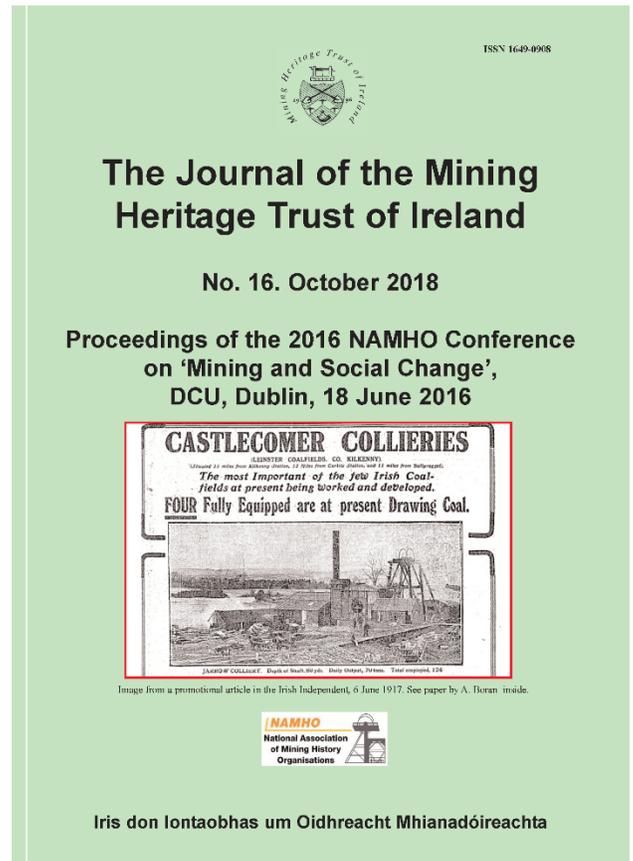
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## ANDY IRVINE'S NEW SONGS FOR OLD MINERS

The National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO) annual meeting included a conference dinner. Everyone present at that was privileged to witness a performance following the dinner, by the legendary singer Andy Irvine. His repertoire for that concert was most apt for the event, including the sadness of 'He fades away' about the blue asbestos miners in Australia through to the humorous take on gold rush miners in 'The close shave'. For fans of Andy's music the highlight of the evening was two new songs written for the occasion. The lyrics of these are reproduced here, with the sleeve notes. For best effect though, it is recommended that you buy and listen to the music itself!

Matthew Parkes

### HARD TIMES IN 'COMER'S MINES

(Andy Irvine)

Another song I wrote for the NAMHO concert in 2016. Nixie Boran was a union man and a local hero of his time who worked tirelessly for the rights of the miners and their families in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny in spite of strong opposition from the Church and the State. Many thanks to John Coffey who provided the information needed to write the song, to Seamus Walsh and his dad Joe, miners in Castlecomer whose book, "In The Shadow of the Mines" told the whole story and to Joseph Kavanagh who first brought Nixie Boran to my attention. -Andy

In 1930 my Daddy said he  
Stay out of the mines take a warning from me  
With dust you'll be choked and a pauper you'll be  
And you'll wheeze like the bagpipes of Patsy Touhey  
It's hard times in 'Comer's mines  
It's hard times we know  
To dig out the coal you must lie on your side  
For the seam it is just eighteen inches high  
Eight hours a day for pie in the sky  
Your pay so low your expenses so high  
Nixie Boran was invited to go  
To a Union Congress held in Moscow  
The Department of Foreign Affairs it said No  
For Red Russia we'll never allow  
But Nixie stowed away on a ship  
And he landed in France and continued his trip  
Says he in old Ireland we must get a grip  
And we'll form a union for miners now  
The huts that we live in are built very poor  
The holes in the roof let the rain in go leor  
To keep ourselves warm you can be very sure  
With mud we have plastered the walls  
The rain washes it off all over the floor  
My wife she sits weeping what can she do more  
On a wet winter's night how the children they bawl  
And the Captain in comfort at luxury Hall  
The money we earn well it is very slight  
And we pay for our tools which doesn't seem right  
The detonators and the gelignite  
The candles the fuses the fittings  
The rent for our hut is a half crown out  
And we pay for the new church five bob a shout  
By the end of the week you can have little doubt

We are sick of these wrongs for the slimmest of pickings  
We voted to strike without further delay  
For a small increase in our miserable wage  
And coal for our families for which we would pay  
The cost of its production  
So Nixie our demands conveyed  
We were ignored no offers were made  
And the Church it stepped up its holy crusade  
For our militant union's total destruction  
Peadar O'Donnell he entered the fray  
And he went to the bakers in Dublin they say  
Two carloads of bread were delivered that day  
And supporters doled out more  
Street meetings in Dublin were held every night  
Urging support for the miners on strike  
But after six weeks we were losing the fight  
And we wondered how long we could hold out for  
On Sundays at Mass our bold parish priest  
Compared our union to the mark of the beast  
And some of our neighbours they shared his belief  
That Nixie was Satan invested  
They tried to stop Nixie attending at Mass  
And they stationed themselves to not let him pass  
But we all stood beside them like snakes in the grass  
And Nixie and family went in unmolested  
We found it too hard to endure all this hate  
From the Might of the Church and the Power of the State  
Our only desire was to better the fate  
Of the men who worked in the mine  
So we joined up with Larkin in Thirty-Three  
And the coal mine owners at last did agree  
Our victory was small but t'was still victory  
For we felt like we'd struck a blow for mankind  
Well I've finished me song and I'll go away  
But now in conclusion I'd just like to pay  
Homage to Nixie there's much more to say  
'Bout the times that came to pass  
John Fitzgerald Jimmy and Tom  
Walsh was their surname but now they are gone  
And all those brave men that their names may live on  
For they fought for the rights of the Working Class

## HERE'S A HEALTH TO EVERY MINER LAD

(Andy Irvine)

Written for a concert I gave at Dublin City University for the National Association of Mine History Organisations (NAMHO) in 2016. I wanted to point out that Ireland has a long history of various kinds of mining and that, along with "Cousin Jacks" (The name given to Cornish miners), they formed a large part of the early coal mining community in Pennsylvania and the copper mining in Butte, Montana. The reference to Frank Little is in memory of the dreadful murder of this IWW organiser, lynched from a railroad trestle by six 'vigilantes' who were never identified. Many thanks to Matthew Parkes. -Andy

As I roved out one morning one morning in the Spring  
I spied a pretty fair maid these words I heard her sing  
The miner lives a hard life never knowing what's in store  
May Providence protect him and keep hardship from his door  
So fill your glasses up  
Let the toast go merrily round  
Here's a health to every miner lad  
That works down underground  
She sang about the union men who fought for better pay  
To escape the poverty that dogged them night and day  
And then averse she did disburse of men from Erin's Isle  
How they had travelled round this world for many's a weary  
mile  
She sang of some from Cushendun

and some from Carrick town  
And more who strayed from Bantry Bay  
that place of great renown  
She said they were the finest that ever you could behold  
For they could turn the hardest rock to silver or fine gold  
She told how many years ago they worked out in West Cork  
And when the copper seam ran out they sailed for old New York  
And out in Pennsylvania they dug the Anthracite  
And they joined the Molly Maguires  
for to fight for what was right'  
And next in Butte Montana they wore the wooden shoe  
For they joined that mighty union  
called the eye double double u  
But standing up for workers rights they quickly lost their jobs  
And they couldn't save Frank Little from that vigilante mob  
She sang a stave about the brave coal miners in South Wales  
How they were paid short measure  
on the crooked weighing scales  
She told of how Nye Bevan in nineteen forty five  
He set up the National Coal Board and stood by the miners side  
And finally the Miner's Strike of nineteen eighty four  
And tears ran down her hollow cheeks  
and she could sing no more  
That ruthless Iron lady in the song she featured not  
May her name be never mentioned but her deeds deeds be ne'er  
forgot

## SITES VISITED BEFORE AND AFTER THE CONFERENCE

### WORKING MINES

Tara Mine (zinc, lead)  
Curraghinalt Mine Core Store (gold)  
Drummond Mine (gypsum)  
Kilroot Mine (salt)  
Cavanacaw (Omagh) Mine (gold)

### DISUSED MINES

#### Co. Donegal

Crohy Head Mine (talc)  
Drumkeelan Mines (sandstone) and Civil War Hideout

#### Co. Leitrim

Bencroy Mine (coal)  
Gowlaun fireclay trials and Creevelea Furnace (iron)

#### Co. Roscommon

Aghabehy Deep Level (coal)  
Derreenavoggy Mine (Arigna Mining Experience) (coal)  
Greaghnageeragh (Noones) Mine (coal)

#### Co. Sligo

Abbeystown Mine (zinc, lead)  
Ballintrillick Mill (barite)  
Glencarbury Mine (barite)  
Streamstown Saltworks

#### Co. Wicklow

Avoca Mines (copper)  
Glendasan Mines (lead)  
Glendalough Mine (lead)

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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*About to enter Abbeystown Mine, Co. Sligo*



*In a Core Store for Curraghinalt Mine, Co. Tyrone*