
INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

January 2000

Diary dates

- Feb 28 'The Viking Age buildings of Dublin'. IEI talk by Patrick Wallace.
- Mar 8 Canal Forum, Athlone (Heritage Council).
- Mar 11 **IHAI AGM, Skerries, Co Dublin.**
- Mar 27 'The promotion of a heritage centre'. IEI talk by William Roe.
- May 3 Canal Forum, Ballyconnell, Co Leitrim (Heritage Council).
- May 27-28 **IHAI Spring tour, Co Wexford.**

Subscription renewal

A membership renewal form for 2000 is enclosed; as you can see, the fees are the same as last year. Thank you supporting us in 1999 and do please renew so that we have a stronger basis to extend our schedule of conferences and tours.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM takes place at the Watermill, Skerries, Co Dublin, on Saturday 11th March, courtesy of IHAI member Michael Lynch. This complex, for which Michael is responsible on behalf of Finglas County Council, features a restored watermill and two windmills, all working. Skerries is on the coast 20km north-east of Dublin, east of the N1 trunk road. Proceedings kick off at 11.00am with registration and coffee, followed by a tour of the watermill. Lunch will be available from 1pm at nominal cost. Formal proceedings get underway at 2pm and the day concludes with a conducted visit to the windmills. An agenda is enclosed.

Plunkett Hayes has retired from the Committee and we are grateful for his tireless efforts, particularly in drawing up our Constitution and organising the 1998 conference. We all wish him and his wife every success at Croom Mill.

Mary McMahon wishes to step down as IHAI secretary, as does chairman Fred Hamond, both having served three years. Both are willing, however, to stand for re-election to the Committee. Any members also willing to serve on the Committee should return the enclosed nomination paper (even if they do not yet have a proposer) to Mary. Duties are not particularly onerous, and basically entail four meetings a year in Dublin to discuss policy and organise activities.

Please also notify Mary of any motions and topics you wish to raise at the AGM so they can be put on the agenda. *Nominations and submissions should be returned to Mary (77 Brian Rd, Marino, Dublin 3) before 13 February 2000.*

Spring tour to Co Wexford

This will be held on 27-28 May and is being coordinated by Norman Campion. There will be visits to Johnston Agricultural Museum and a variety of sites including pumping stations, a cement works, maltings, and assorted cornmills (for which the county is famous). Please return the enclosed form to Norman know if you are thinking of coming. Some of

our friends in the Scottish Industrial Heritage Society have expressed an interest in joining us and we look forward to welcoming them.

IEI talks

You will have noticed in the 'Diary Dates' section that the Institution of Engineers is holding two public lectures. These take place at 22 Clyde Road, Dublin, starting at 8pm. All IHAI members are invited. Please make a special effort to be at the March talk as this is being sponsored by the IHAI.

Canal Users' forum

You will also have noted that two more regional canal forums are taking place. The March one is at the Ballykeeran Marina Hotel, Inner Lakes, Lough Rea, Athlone, and the May event is at the Slieve Russell Hotel, Ballyconnell, Co Leitrim. Both start at 1.45pm. Attendance is free but please let the Council know in advance if you intend to go (tel 056-70777).

Tullamore conference

A very successful conference entitled *Ireland's Industrial Diversity* was held at the Tullamore Dew Visitors' Centre on 13 November last. Participants were treated to a fascinating series of talks on all aspects of our industrial heritage. A big thanks to all contributors for their excellent presentations, to Centre Manager Amanda Pedlow (ex Locke's Distillery) and her staff, the caterers and everyone who attended. The IHAI intends to publish the proceedings later on this year.

During the concluding discussion Tom Meaney of Straffan Steam Museum proposed the setting up of a panel of engineers and craftsmen willing to participate in restoration projects, either by sharing their knowledge and experience or practical action. Contact Tom through the Museum (tel 01-6273155) if you can help develop this very worthwhile idea.

MINET conference

The Mining Heritage Society of Ireland, in collaboration with the Geological Society of Ireland and Shannon Development, held a very interesting mining conference on *Mine Heritage & Tourism: a Hidden Resource* on 3-6 Nov last. It began with an excursion to Bunmahon and an exploration of Waterford's Copper Coast. The action then moved to Nenagh, Co Tipperary, and two days of presentations on various aspects of mine conservation and tourism to an international gathering of enthusiasts. The event concluded with a visit to Shallee lead-zinc mine, Silvermines, where it is intended to create a National Mine Heritage Centre. The MHSI is to be congratulated on an excellent programme and faultless but relaxed organisation, all of which made it a most memorable event.

Culm crushers

IHAI member Michael Conry has recently published a book with the above title on making domestic fuel from culm, the fine dust associated with anthracite. This entailed mixing it with clay to make it burnable and was usually done with horse-drawn edge runner stones. The book is based on

Michael's visits to 80 sites in Kilkenny, Carlow, Kildare and Laois. It is copiously illustrated with sketches and photographs and is an excellent example of how to combine research with systematic fieldwork and present it clearly and concisely. Copies can be obtained from any good bookshop or directly from Michael at 'Avila', Chapelstown, Carlow (£6 incl p&p).

Dublin man invents artificial fuel

Whilst on the topic of fuel, Alan Birt, our Suffolk-based member, writes that the *Colliery Guardian* announced on 25 Feb 1865 that William Smith of Dublin, a civil engineer, had been given a provisional patent protection for his "Improvements in the manufacture of artificial fuel". This invention related to the mixing of peat, charcoal, coal slack, culm, coke, and other combustible material with more peat, either dry in a state of minute division, or wet and rendered plastic by pugging, and then moulding the mixture into blocks of fuel by pressure. It seems he had two types of fuel in mind: one for use in blast furnaces, the other for general and domestic consumption.

For the smelting of iron, Mr Smith suggested reducing peat-charcoal to powder and blending it with an equal weight of well-pugged peat. The mix was then compressed into blocks and dried. He claimed the blocks would stand the pressures in a blast furnace and not crumble to powder. For his other type of fuel, which used coal slack or culm, Mr Smith proposed to powder these finely and mix them with powdered dry peat in the proportions of "1-2 parts coal to 2-3 parts peat" and then mix in some tar, "about 5-20 gallons per ton". He specifically mentions that the tar must not be added to the dry peat before mixing as the peat would absorb the tar and form clots which could not then be properly assimilated with the coal dust. This mixture was then compressed into blocks. He also suggested that wet pugged peat could be used and mixed with coal powder in equal weight, the mixture then being put in moulds and afterwards air-dried or heated. Because these blocks might crumble if they became wet, he suggested a protective coat of tar and pitch.

Whether Mr Smith made any money (or how much he lost!) is not known but his system carries the burden that has bedevilled most projects connected with peat fuel - that of the high cost of drying. The most ill-fated of these projects was in the west of Ireland where one ton of high-quality English coal was used for drying in order to produce one ton of peat briquettes!

The repair of historic buildings

The Heritage Council has recently published a research report entitled *Regulatory Environment for the Management and Repair of Historic Buildings*. It examines practical problems associated with the application of the statutory Building Regulations to the conservation of historic buildings and suggests ways in which the legislation might be improved. Interestingly, most planners think the Regulations have a positive impact on historic buildings, whereas conservation architects think the converse! Copies are obtainable from the Heritage Council, Rothe House, Kilkenny.

IHBC

Late last year a branch of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation was set up in the Republic. Its purpose is to serve as a vehicle for the exchange of information and ideas

between professionals (architects, engineers, surveyors, planners etc) involved in the conservation of the built heritage. For more details write to PO Box 7145, Rutland St, Dublin 1 (e-mail amcmahon@indigo.ie).

IHAI logo

Do you have any ideas for an Association logo? It should be symbolic of all aspects of industrial heritage throughout the 32 counties and also be reducible to a black-and-white letterhead. Please send any ideas and sketches to Norman Campion.

IHAI home page

We now have two new internet addresses courtesy of Robert Guinness of Straffan Steam Museum: www.steam-museum.ie/ihai or www.steam-museum.com/ihai. Cormac Scally, who looks after the site, has also changed his e-mail address to cscally@nationwideisp.net. Also worth checking out is the UK-based (but world-wide in scope) industrial archaeology discussion group at www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/ind-arch/.

IHAI publications

Copies of *Taking Stock of Ireland's Industrial Heritage* (£5.50 incl p&p) and *Power from Steam* (£6.00 incl p&p) can both be ordered from Wordwell, PO Box 69, Bray, Co Wicklow (tel 01-2862649).

Whilst on the subject of IHAI books, members may recall a conference entitled *Irish Mills and Milling* organised by Committee member Colm Donnelly at Enniskillen on 7 May last. This coincided with the restoration of Mullycovet watermill at nearby Belcoo. Colm and his co-editor Colin Rynne intend to publish the proceedings on behalf of the IHAI later this year.

Rumour also has it that Colin's seminal tone on the industrial archaeology of Cork City and its environs is finally to hit the bookshelves in the not too distant future. I've had a sneak preview and it's a cracker! More in the next bulletin.

Finally, best wishes to all our members for the New Year/ New Century/ New Millennium. My thanks to Ruth Delany, Mary McMahon and Alan Birt for their contributions to this bulletin. The next one will be out in April and all articles will be gratefully received by Fred Hamond at the address below. Please promise to send me one contribution this year, if only to absolve yourself of all those resolutions already broken!

IHAI Committee

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- *Vice-President:* Norman Campion, Inver, 1 Kilgobbin Rd, Sandyford, Dublin 18 (01-2955632).
- *Secretary:* Mary McMahon, 77 Brian Rd, Marino, Dublin 3 (01-8334709).
- *Treasurer:* Dan Hurst, 27 Churchview Drive, Killiney, Co Dublin (01-2854640).
- *Membership Secretary:* Dermot McNamarra, 95 Bulfin Rd, Dublin 8 (01-4535827).
- *Web site:* Cormac Scally, 114 Marlborough Pk Central, Belfast 9 (08-01232-209735; e-mail cscally@nationwideisp.net).
- *Committee:* Vincent Conaghan (01-4514784), Ron Cox (01-6082544), Colm Donnelly (08-01232-620080), Ruth Delany (01-2852258), Robert Guinness (01-6273155), Paul McMahon (01-6761022), Ken Mawhinney (01-2955415), and Helen Perry (08-01265-321129).