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THE FORGOTTEN IRON MINES OF KIRK MAUGHOLD, ISLE OF MAN
Recent Explorations

D.B. Hollis

SYNOPSIS
Recent visits by a number of mining research groups to the north-east corner of the Isle of Man have produced evidence of the former iron mining industry there. This article summarises their findings and places these in the context of the historical material available on the iron mines of that area.

In the north-east corner of the Isle of Man is an iron bearing region about 1 mile wide by about two miles north to south. As a result of recent talks, at "NAMHO/ 87" (4th biennial conference of the National Association of Mining History Organisations) in Cornwall in July 1986, several organisations have come forward with information on their discoveries in this little-known mining area.

Hollis (1987a, b) has given a detailed account of the area. Here, we need only note that it consists of two major lodes striking NNW-SSE, outcropping on the east coast, and going at least a mile inland. The northernmost one (the Glebe Lode) actually outcrops again on the north coast, having passed under the village of Maughold. The other is called Drynane, after the cove on the east coast where the adit is situated. Smaller lodes exist inland, at a farm called Magher-e-Breck, and south-east of Ballajora Chapel.

A simplified map of the area appears in Figure 1. This is a revised and corrected version of that to be found in the previous article (Hollis, 1987b). The mineral mined was earthy hematite in a gangue of calcite, dolomite, and country rock (slate fragments). There was no manganese ore here - manganese in the previous article (Hollis, 1987b) should read magnesium.

The main sites are:

Maughold	SC493908, worked 1857-1874
Glebe (shaft)	SC493918, worked 1857-1874
Ballajora	SC466904, worked 1858-1874
Maughold Head	SC484927, worked 1866-1867
Drynane (adit entrance)	SC493910
Magher-e-Breck	SC470905
Maughold lighthouse	SC498913

The dates of working of Drynane and Magher-e-Breck were intermittent, and are given in detail by Hollis (1987).

Little remains on the surface today, so discoveries made by mines historical groups in recent years are helpful in pinpointing site locations, and defining what remains are still left.

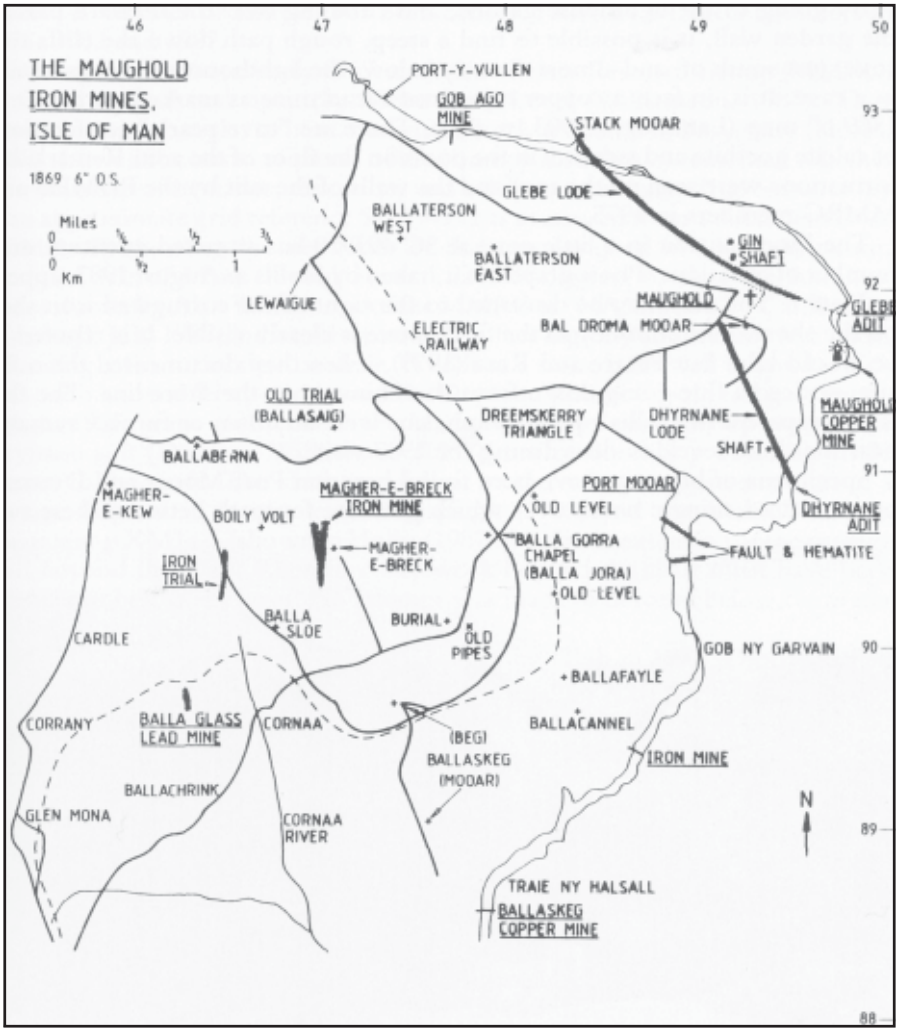

*Fig.*1. *Map of the Maughold area of the Isle of Man, showing sites of iron mines.*

During August-September 1975, the Peak District Mines Historical Society (PDMHS) and some members of the Manx Mines Research Group (MMRG) surveyed the area briefly. From Maughold Church, a narrow road leads up behind the church to the lighthouse. To the left (north) is an area of high ground covered in scrub and small trees. The 1869 6" Ordnance Survey map shows a mine here, and the headland cliffs, which are about 300 ft high and fall almost sheer to the sea, show red staining. However, the track to the mine from the lighthouse road ends in a precipitous drop where landslides have taken part of it into the sea.

By going to the lighthouse garden, and climbing over the seaward part of the garden wall, it is possible to find a steep, rough path down the cliffs to a cove, just south of, and almost directly below, the lighthouse. This has an adit in a cave. It is, in fact, a copper mine, not a lead mine as marked on the O.S. 18696" map (Lamplugh, 1903, p. 548). There are “cave pearls” (concretions of calcite goethite and siderite) in the pools on the floor of the adit. Remarkable formations were seen on the roof and the walls of the adit by the PDMHS and MMRG members in 1975.

The Drynane adit in a little cove at SC 493910 has attracted attention on a number of occasions. Photographs of it, taken by Hollis in August 1987, appear in Plate I. The adit may be discerned to the right of the corrugated iron shed on the shore. The chimney in the field above is clearly visible. It is reputed to be an old kiln, but Pearce and Rose (1979), when they documented the mine site, noticed a flue going down from this chimney to the shore line. The flue is not apparent in Hollis’s photograph, nor were any flue, or furnace remains near the shore level, evident during the 1987 visit.

Specimens of hematite have been found between Port Mooar and Drynane on the raised shingle beach over which goes the footpath between these two

Plate I. Photograph of Drynane Cove looking north towards Maughold, showing sealed adit and the chimney. Photographed in 1987.

places. A number of samples has been collected here by MMRG members in 1975,1982 and 1987.

During late 1986 and early 1987, the Manx Mines Research Group (MMRG) managed to find and open the Glebe Deep Level (Williamson, 1987). They retrieved some samples of hematite which work at Sheffield University (Hollis, 1988) showed to consist of pieces of the country rock (shale) cemented together by a mixture of hematite, dolomite, and calcium carbonate. This entrance lay at an approximate grid reference SC 494912 as measured from a document (No. pXM.1 a.5) showing the ore lodes of the area (original in Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man). It took several days of digging to clear the entrance. Slides shown by Alan Williamson of the MMRG at "NAMHO/87", Camborne, Cornwall, July 1987, indicated a passage six feet high by about three feet wide, following a fissure in slate or shale. It ends at a stone built wall beyond which lies – who knows? They also visited the Drynane adit, but could not gain entry. Late in 1987, some members of the Manx Mines Research Group entered the Drynane adit [Dobson, Williamson (1987)] but could only proceed about 35 metres to the shaft. The shaft was full of water, nor was there any sign of a passage beyond it at adit level. Lamplugh (1903) and the Manx Museum document p XM1a. S (shown in Hollis (1987b)) indicate extension of the passage well beyond the shaft. Therefore any work beyond the shaft must have been carried out below sea level. No attempt was made to descend below the water surface of the shaft.

A discovery made by the Derbyshire Caving Club in 1972 (Dibben, 1972) at map reference SC 477927, on the north coast, near Port-e-Vullen, consisted of a shaft, which, because of the 20° slope of the cliff, stood clear at the top, and merged into the cliff half-way down. The surrounding area was inspected and a walled enclosure nearby was found to contain a stone inscribed: "OLD MINE SHAFT". In line with the open shaft was an arrangement of thick brick and stone walls with evidence of having had machinery supported on the top. Directly in line with the shaft, and beside the walls, was a concrete lined cistern. Near this was a short blocked tunnel and, above, a culvert leading uphill to a square structure of stone. It is supposed that, as there is no suitable supply of running water nearby, the shaft was an engine shaft operated by a steam engine and the cistern would have provided water for it, and possibly cooled the winding drum as well. The culvert and stone structure were the remains of a flue and chimney.

The Derbyshire Caving Club visited the shore below the cliff, and entered two short adits (only about 10-20 m long). One was directly beneath the structures described above, but, unfortunately, did not have any connection with the shaft. The other was nearer to the sea, and about 200 m nearer to Port-e-Vullen. The conclusion that the Derbyshire Caving Club put forward at the time was that the mine was working iron under the sea.

In spring 1988, the Manx Mines Research Group, based at Onchan, Isle of Man, explored the area of Ramsey (Northern) Mine (M. Dobson, private communication to the author, July 1988). Had the Derbyshire Caving Club gone along the bottom of the cliff eastwards from the two adits they found – that is towards Maughold - they would have found another adit 80 metres long.

Some 10 metres in is a winze 15 metres deep, 10 metres of which is filled with clear water, and is timbered. Another 10 metres further in is a shaft, which, below adit, is filled 15 metres deep with water so murky that is appears not to be connected to the winze. Above adit, this shaft goes up to the walled enclosure whose inscription has been variously read as “Old Mine Chapel” and “Old Mine Shaft”. Here the shaft is capped.

The adit partly follows the vein. During their exploration in spring 1988, the Manx Mines Research Group (Onchan) recovered samples from the vein.

There were:

Peacock ore (chalcopyrite) $CuFeS_2$
Limonite $FeO(OH).nH_2O$
Malachite $Cu_2C0_3(OHh$

This mine is too far west to be part of the iron mining area of Maughold. In fact, it is the site of the Ramsey or “Northern” lead mine. It is described by Lamplugh (1903, p.549) who explains that the level driven northwards under the sea was for lead.

Remarkably, the Derbyshire Caving Club quote the grid reference of the lighthouse at Maughold as SC 496920. This is too far north, and in fact is the site of St. Maughold’s Well, a spring associated with the monastic settlement whose remains lie beneath the present Maughold Church. It is also close to the site of a “mine” (trial adit in the cliffs?) marked on the 1869 6" O.S. map.

The Lakeland Mines and Quarries Trust sent over an expedition to the Isle of Man in August 1986. Their findings were reported in Autumn 1986 (Garner, 1986). Although they do not give the map reference, their photograph indicates that they have found the chimney-like shaft on the cliffs near the Ramsey or “Northern” mine. Another photograph they display shows a pile of shale outside a blocked and overgrown adit. Again, unfortunately, they do not supply a grid reference. However, this looks like the Maughold mine at SC 403990 on the path between Port Mooar, and Drynane cove. A recent communication by Roy Garner (1988) of the Lakeland Mines and Quarries Trust (LMQT) has shed light on most of the unknown details. The walled enclosure which the Derbyshire Caving Club expedition found, and thought to be marked “Old Mine” lies at about SC480928, on the coast. The central stone in the wall of the enclosure is actually marked “Old Mine Chapel”. The remaining sites were discovered and correctly described by the Derbyshire Caving Club, with the exception of a number of small trials and adits discovered on the shore between Port Mooar (SC 488910) and Maughold lighthouse (SC 498917) by the LMQT. These are all either blocked by falls, or sealed by brick and cement. At least one of these has to be the Umber mine referred to by Lamplugh as existing hereabouts. There the rock is a rotted tertiary olivine dyke, not the hematite and dolomite characteristic of the rest of the mines. Unfortunately, the LMQT do not know which of the adits was the Umber mine.

Lamplugh (1903) notes several trials in the area between Port Mooar in the south and Ramsey mine in the north-west. None of these was productive. Production centred on the Glebe Mine, Drynane, Magher-e-Breck, and the Ramsey mine. Few of these trials have been visited.

The chairman and archivist of the Manx Mines Research Group (Mike Dobson and Alan Williamson, (1988)) have together kindly supplied copies of documentary evidence contained in the Manx Museum about the Glebe Mine. One shows a section of the Glebe crosscut as at 22 October 1903. A copy of this appears as Figure 2. We note that the entire lode was 45 feet wide – and could therefore represent infill of a fissure rather like those seen at the Chasms, near Port St. Mary (SC 195682). However, the several hematite veins are only 1-2 ft thick each. A letter by W.H. Rowe, not dated, but believed to be at the same time (1903) as his plan (Manx Museum document S/650C) is reproduced here on account of its interesting wealth of detail. His sketch map – of Traie Cum, just below Maughold lighthouse, is re-drawn here, as Figure 3. Manx Museum document S/650C:

(Supplied by courtesy of the Manx Museum and M. Dobson of Manx Mines Research Group, 18 February 1988.)

The Hematite Iron, Umber and Copper Veins, Maughold Head, Isle of Man.
"At and in the vicinity of Maughold Head are several strong well defined metalliferous veins embedded in a mineralised Clay Slate rock, traversed by banks of quartzite, greens tone and Micro Granite.

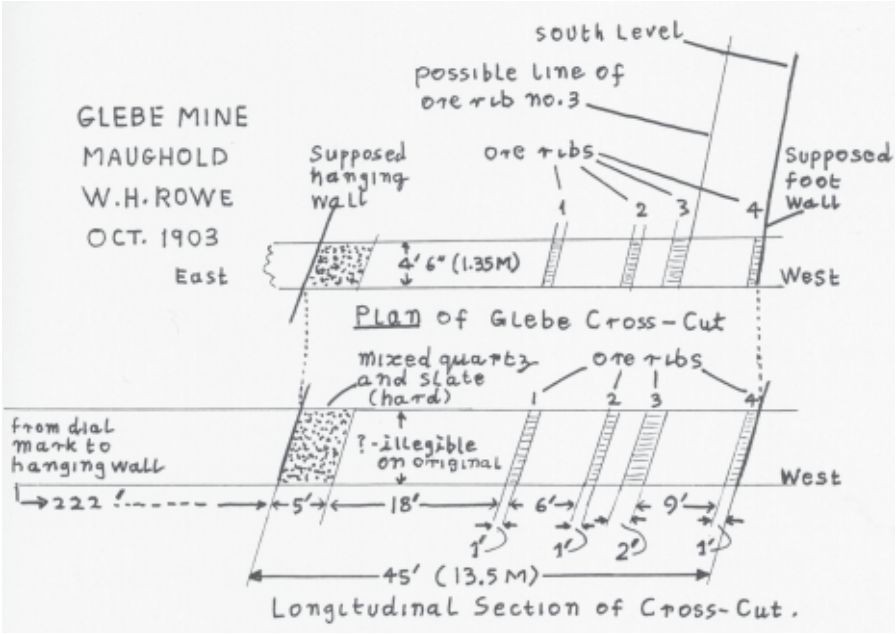

Fig.2. Copy of a sketch by W.H. Rowe in October 1903 of the Glebe Crosscut.

Large returns of Hematite Iron have been made from what is known as the Glebe Mine, and considerable quantities as well as Umber from time to time mainly from the Staff lands and Baldroma Estate. Some trials have also been made up on a powerful Copper Lode, old workings upon which and upon the

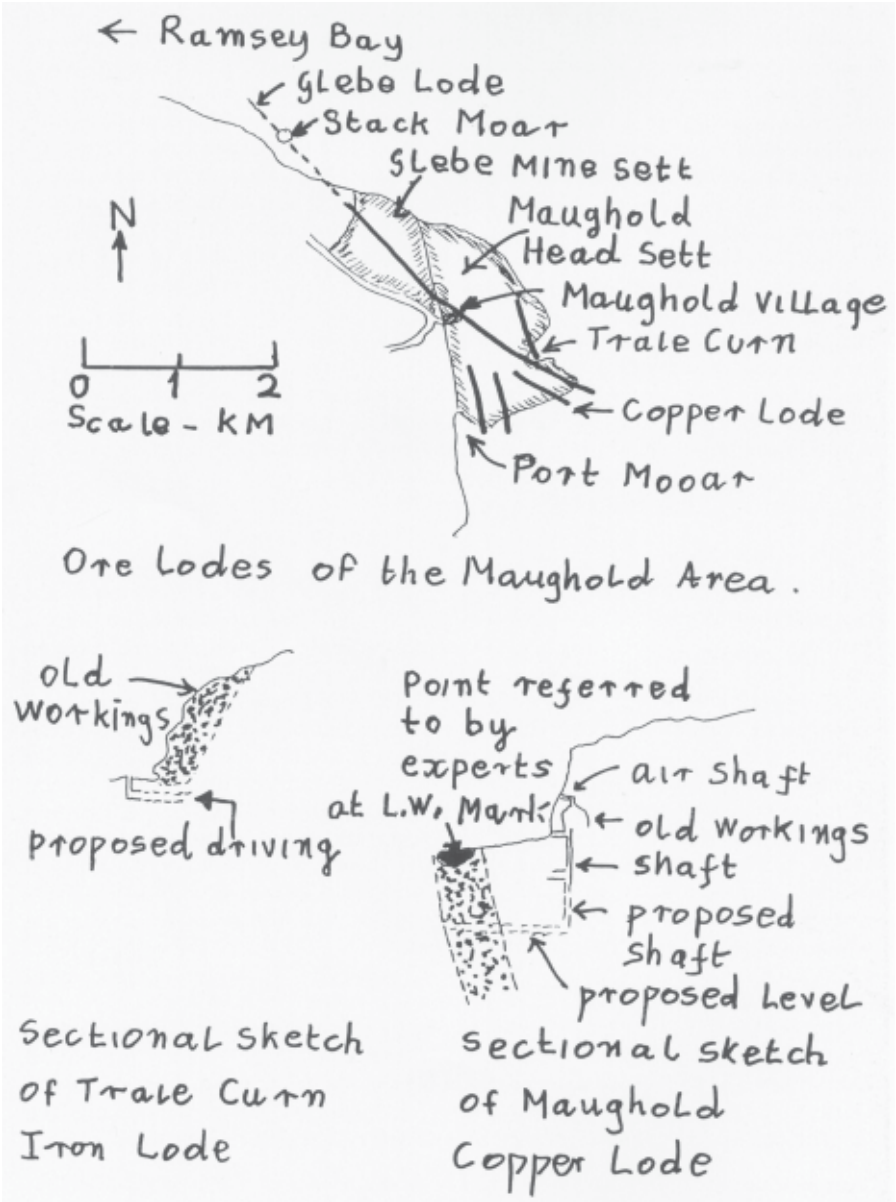

Fig. 3. *Copy of a sketch by w.H. Rowe, probably in 1903, of the area close to Traie Churn, below Maughold lighthouse.*

Iron lode at Traie Curn are very conspicuous from the sea, on rounding Maughold Head and entering Ramsey Bay. Operations were however evidently conducted upon a most primitive and costly option, ore being carted a long distance, or vessels lying at anchor and loaded by means of small boats. The creak known as "Traie Curn" right under Maughold Head, shows obvious extensive old workings for iron in the face of the cliffs, and in the Geological Survey of the Island recently made, the Glebe Iron lode is supposed to crop out just at this point, which makes Traie Curn a most interesting point from a Miner's point of view.

The whole district shows unmistakable indications of mineral wealth and one of the leading Mining Engineers in the Barrow district after inspection stated "it was bound to be worked sooner or later" as the English and Spanish deposits were getting exhausted.

A lease of all mineral in and under the estate of Baldroma and Stafflands has been obtained together with a grant of the foreshore from the Crown, both concessions forming an area of about 150 acres; the terms in the first instance being a minimum rent of £10 per annum merging into royalty of 1/20th of all ores sold, and in the Crown grant £6 per annum and a royalty of 1/15th on all ones sold.

The Copper Lode

Having laid the matter before Mr. Ernest Wood of London he has expended considerably over £1000 in preliminary trials upon the Iron lodes, making a shaft and driving a short distance on the Copper lodes. The shaft there has been sunk from a point a little above high water mark to a depth of 18 fathoms, and at that depth cross-cuts driven to prove the full width of the lode, and a level driven seawards 10 fathoms; all going to show that the various branches are all concentrating at a point above 30 fathoms still further south or about under low water mark. Curiously enough this is the exact point referred to by several Mining experts who inspected the property some years ago: Mr. Barkell, among others stated "we were surprised at the great improvement in the Copper lode at low water mark where it is about 2½ fathoms wide presenting two well defined walls, and consisting of quartz Copel and goesan, [the spelling of these is written in the original letter] interspaced with good patches of copper ore which in Devon and Cornwall would be good work for the Crusher." A sample of the lode stuff yielded by assay 5.20% copper 3½ dwts Silver 3½ dwts gold per ton of ore.

The several Mining experts referred to were all unanimous in recommending the shaft to be sunk to a sufficient depth below sea level, but the present 18 fathom level is too shallow to drive under the good indications at low water mark, and I therefore strongly recommend deepening the shaft to say twice the present depth, and then levels could be driven out with perfect safety.

Iron Lodes

An adit has been driven northward from the shore on one of the lodes 50 fathoms and about 60 tons of ore in a crude state mainly and lying at the level mouths.

The continuation of this driving towards the Glebe Mine would be a good trial, the lode in the "face" or forehead being of great promise. This strong lode also well deserves proving in depth, as the Umber, which forms a sort of matrix to the iron, may be required in the same way as "goesan", which almost invariably indicates good ore in depth.

The Iron lode at "Traie Cum" is also well worthy of further development, the ore being of a superior hard quality, but the lode having been "worked shallow" by old miners, future operations should be directed towards working at and below sea level. With this object in mind I sank a shaft about 30 feet, and at that depth put out a small driving towards the bottom of the old workings. The last few feet showed a marked improvement, the lode widening out and improving. By continuing this level right under the old workings, there is every prospect of opening out a good deposit of ore.

To continue the trials and development work on both Copper and Iron lodes I estimate a further sum of £4,000 may be required which judiciously expended, should make the property a very valuable one. Considering that he has, up to present borne the expense single handed, I consider it would not be fair to ask Mr. Wood to contribute anything further. Being practically the sole owner he is open to a fair and liberal arrangement with anyone who would continue the development work to the desired points.

As the Lessee I would join him in an agreement to assign the greater portion of the property, as may be decided upon, to the parties finding the further money required.

W.H. Rowe WE,
4 Howard Drive,
Garrendale,
Liverpool"

Another small trial, at Ballaskeig (SC 476885), on the shore almost exactly due east of Glen Mona Hotel, was also investigated by the MMRG during Summer 1987. An upper and lower adit followed a strongly iron-stained fissure into the cliff. Where the digging stopped, at solid rock, the vein, though persistent, seemed barren of any worthwhile quantity of ore. Cornaa mine – grid reference not given – was also explored, and found barren of any vein.

Lamplugh mentions mines ESE of the Methodist chapel at Ballajora. Although a search by the MMRG in August 1987 revealed nothing, some pipes similar to the type used in the pumping shafts of nineteenth century mines were found in the vicinity. They are lying in a field just east of the Long Cairn at SC 478901, about 1/2 km almost due south of Ballajora chapel (which is now a garage). These pipes are depicted in Plate II by a photograph taken by Hollis in August 1987. They appear to have been lying there for many years, but have weathered extremely well. Their bore is about 9", the length of each section being about 6 ft. The flanges at one end have four bolt-holes in a square endplate. The other end of each section of pipe having a round end-plate. The reason for this strange construction is unknown, unless these are in fact the iron pillars of a now demolished building. Why they ended up in that field and have remained there ever since, remains a mystery.

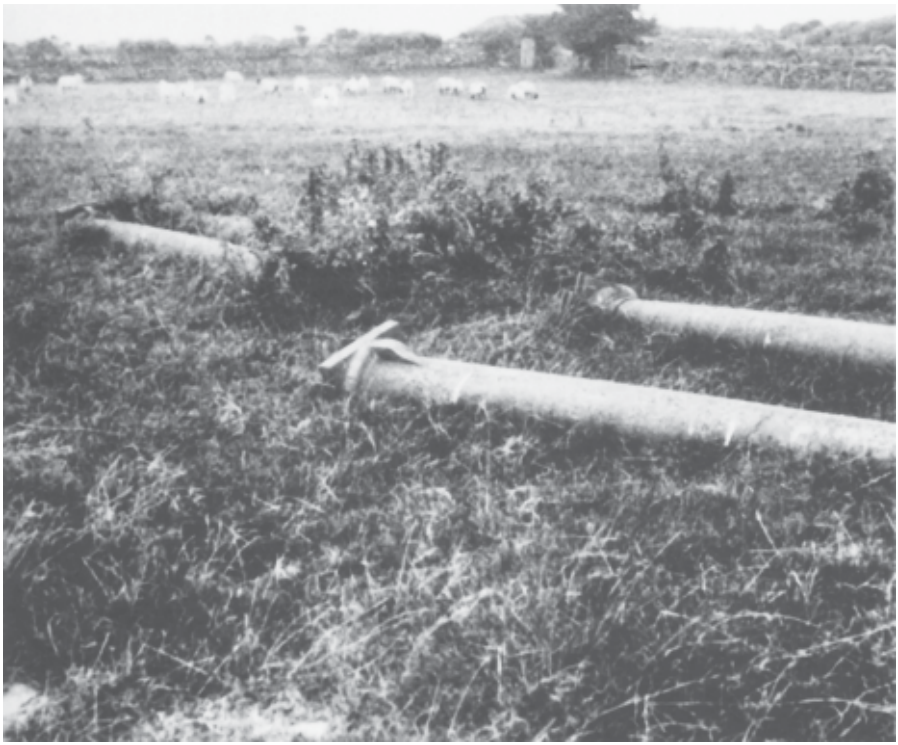

Plate II. Photograph of seven lengths of pipe (or iron pillars?) found about half a kilometre south of Ballajora chapel in 1987.

It is worth noting the importance of the iron-bearing area of Maughold, above the church and near to the lighthouse, even in antiquity. A plan, by B.R.S. Megaw, of the Maughold area in the Manx Museum publication "Prehistoric Remains in the Isle of Man", published in 1977, and reproduced by Hollis (1987b), indicates the nineteenth century Glebe shaft west of the vicarage, the medieval monastic settlement which now forms Maughold Church and graveyard, and an iron age fort on the headland just north of the lighthouse, directly above the iron-stained cliffs. Evidence of early iron working has been noted by the groups working under Dr. L.S. Garrad of the Manx Museum. For example, at a site known as Port-y-Canlas, iron ore was found by them in about 1987. Investigations since then by Hollis (1988) have shown similarities between the iron ores from Port-y-Canlas and from Maughold. We also note the remarks in W.H. Rowe's letter concerning old workings at Maughold.

Of work since the end of the first World War, little is known. However, there is an old photograph in the Manx Museum, of iron miners at Port Mooar, about 1920. They are probably members of the [Port] Mooar syndicate, who most likely made the adits found by the Lakeland Mines and Quarries Trust

during their recent visit to the isle of Man. The miners in the photograph are named (J.J. Crowe, Griffith Callow, Stephen Quayle, J.H. Crowe (son of J.J. Crowe), Edwin Kewin (visiting from Ramsey), Alfred Foulis (Ramsey, working manager), Tom Kerruish (Ramsey), George Kermode (with son George), William Lowey, and Alec Redpath. Some of these were still alive when the present author was younger, but no mention was ever made of the iron mines. No-one was interested. By then, Alec Redpath was running a successful shoe repair business in Douglas, and the Crowe family were again farming in the Baldwyn Valleys. By 1931, the Government Mines Inspector was listing only one mine for the Isle of Man – for its last time – the closure of Great Laxey.

Many mysteries remain in the Maughold area of the Isle of Man. Some will never be solved, but others may yet come to light or be explained as a result of further visits and investigations.

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CAVEAT

It should be pointed out that almost all mines and quarries lie on private land. Therefore, BEFORE gaining access, those who wish to go there should OBTAIN OWNER'S PERMISSION. No excavation or structural work should be undertaken until owner's consent is obtained in writing.

Also, one is reminded of the dangers of old workings abandoned for many years - such as failing timber work, incipient weaknesses in rock walls and roofs, and unstable floors, or shafts hidden beneath water. Inexperienced explorers beware!

The author of this article does not accept responsibility for those who transgress these simple rules of common-sense and good manners.

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