

*News report in the 'Monas Herald' Isle of Man - 15th October 1865.*

East Laxey Mines - Starting of a large new Water Wheel.

As public journalists it falls within our province to chronicle all passing events, whether their characteristics are joyous or grievous. The latter course must always be a disagreeable duty, while the former animates us with feelings of pleasure. Anything tending to enhance the prosperity and happiness of our island community - to foster and enlarge our trade - to provide Labour and encourage industry - to employ capital and develop our hitherto latent resources - must be alike satisfactory to our readers as it invariably proves gratifying to ourselves.

It is with such feelings of pleasure that we present to our readers a few notes which we pencilled at the East Laxey Mines on Friday last, on the starting of a large water wheel which has just been erected there for pumping water out of the mines, as well as for other purposes connected with the Mining works.

But we must first inform our readers as to the locality of those mines., The success of the 'Great Laxey' having made that name familiar to all who take an interest in our mines and minerals and the name being applied to three other sets yet undeveloped, but of a hopeful character, of which the East Laxey is the most important. It is situated about half-a-mile above Corna Bridge, Maughold, alongside the river, and the wheel can be seen from the Ramsey road, just before arriving at the bridge. There are three promising lodes said to be within 400 yards of each other-two running north and south, and one east and west-and the position chosen for the site of the new wheel is such that its power can be applied to the requirements of each or all three lodes.

The shaft to which the pumping apparatus is already applied is the most western, or farthest from Corna Bridge, and before the workman had ceased driving, from the rapid flow of water into the shaft, indications were discovered of a very hopeful character, and fully warranting the belief that this mine would yet be amongst the richest and most valuable on the island. Its character bears a closer resemblance to the large wild veins of Cornwall and Devon (whose mineral resources are inexhaustible though at considerable depth) than the numerous small arteries which are now being tested in the Isle of Man. We do not pretend to possess a sufficiency of geological knowledge to offer an unquestionable opinion as to the probabilities of this mine, but we will be very much disappointed if it does not enrich the whole neighbourhood -transforming it into a happy valley like its neighbour Laxey.

We believe that the management of the mine is in the hands of Captain William Henry Rowe, brother to the indefatigable and energetic manager of the Great

Laxey, and himself a gentleman of considerable experience and acknowledged ability as a mining manager, being also aided by the assistance and advice of the Laxey manager. Under such combined management, if the material is at all discoverable, it must certainly come out.

As soon as operations were commenced it was seen that a pumping wheel would be necessary, and the very close proximity of a good stream of water (alike useful as a motive power, and for preparing the minerals) will save the Company a considerable sum annually, in thus avoiding the cost of steam power.

Six months ago massive stone pillars were being laid on the rock, and a case of very substantial masonry for the wheel itself to revolve in. The water is conveyed along the banks of the river on the hillside, and taken from a little above the wheel in the glen by means of wooden sluices, supported by tall stone pillars 30 feet high. The wheel itself is 55 feet in diameter, and we fancy next in point of size to the Great Laxey wheel in the island. Most of the castings have been obtained from Messrs L&J Howell, of Hawarden Iron Works in Bagillt, Flintshire, and placed in position under the energetic supervision of Mr Louis Howell (brother of the members of the firm); and the manner in which the work is executed reflects great credit on that gentleman. The crank piston which extends on wheels similar to the Great Laxey, and works the pumps, is 200 yards long. The engineering work has taken about four months to accomplish, and considering that the engineer (Mr Howell) had to provide everything in the shape of purchases, gear, trucks, and lifts, which he extemporized from such materials as were at hand, we think that the work has been expeditiously executed. The stone work has been erected by masons on the spot; and the woodwork, which is not ornamental, but strong and massive, has been executed chiefly by joiners from Mr Robert Corkhill's establishment, Derby Road, Ramsey. The wooden sluices and the crank piston to the pump are supported on fifteen pillars. All the works are on the north side of the river, on the estate of Cardle Moar.

Our heading as regards the starting of the wheel is after all a misnomer, as the same wheel has done duty on several prior occasions in pumping, but with incompleteness until this occasion. Friday last being also pay day for the three mines in this valley, viz., East Laxey, and North Laxey, and East Snaefell (where a combined sum of £520 is paid monthly for wages.) It was thought suitable to treat the workmen to a dinner to celebrate the completion of the wheel and pumping apparatus.

The day was rather favourable for the season, though cold and with slight showers of rain in the afternoon.

A profusion of bunting which was flying in several places, as well as surmounting the wheel, made the appearance of festivity; and the workmen in their holiday garb and gait told of a cessation of labour to enjoy the same.

Captain Rowe, Mrs Rowe, the Misses Rowe, and the Rev J. and Mrs Bellamy arrived from Laxey about eleven o'clock, and were followed immediately by the Laxey Brass Band. Near to the wheel we also noticed Mrs Haslam of Ballaglass, Mrs Hutchinson, and other ladies; Mr VI.Kinnish, Coraney; Mr. Manchester, Caledonia Lodge; Mr R. Corkhill, builder, of Ramsey, and other gentlemen. Mr H.Myers, artist, of Parliament Street, Ramsey, was on the ground with his photographic apparatus, taking photographs of the wheel and works, and succeeded in taking some admirable ones prior to the starting of the wheel. At half-past eleven o'clock the water was let on the wheel by Mr Stowell, and immediately it commenced its revolutions as gracefully and as beautifully as the minutest piece of mechanism. Captain Rowe and his lady and Mr Horsley (the overlooker of the North Laxey Mine) stood on the platform on the top of the casing of masonry; and on the wheel being started, Mrs Rowe dashed on it a bottle of wine (taken specially from the Captains own cellar) in order to confer upon it a name, and that was 'Ellan Vannin'. Once-twice-thrice was the bottle thrown on the wheel without cracking the bottle or spilling the wine, although the utmost force was used; until at last the rebound sent it over the rail and on to a heap of stones far outside, and there its contents baptized the soil. The workmen gave three hearty cheers, assisted by the band, and the latter then struck up the National Anthem.

While all this ado was going on at the wheel, another matter was in progress at a short distance. A large collection of 'broth pots' (the most capacious in the parish) stood in a row over a blazing fire, and each were filled with potatoes, and very soon the revolving wheel lost all its attraction to the workmen, who cast their longing eyes alternately on the pots, and on a corner of the smithy, where three casks lay in a row bearing the eminent brand of 'The Royal Albert Brewery'. A dining hall had been constructed of a very fragile and temporary character of loose battens, loosely put together; and running the entire length thereof was a table capable of seating about 110 individuals, which number sat down to the repast of beef, potatoes, and beer, with appetites quickened by the mountain and sea breeze, and ability to stow away such quantities as appeared to our town-spoiled-appetite quite prodigious

After dinner three hearty cheers were given for Captain Rowe, three more for his good lady, and yet three more for Mr Stowell, the engineer; and with amount of 'spouting' the company seemed to be perfectly satisfied, save and except the spouting of the ale tap. Having left the 'dining hall' the younger workmen engaged in various games; but with some of the elders it was otherwise

*"Like barrels with their full*

*They only weighed the heavier"*

As the evening wore on some rockets were set off, and other fireworks exhibited. The utmost good humour prevailed throughout the day. We have heard that the wheel and machinery has given the utmost satisfaction, both on this day, and when pumping on prior occasions, and does its work well and expeditiously.

*Monas Herald*

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