



# COPPER COAST CONNECTS

*The Journal of the  
Copper Coast UNESCO  
Global Geopark*

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# COPPER COAST CONNECTS:

the e-Journal of The Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark.

This e-Journal aims to provide a platform to highlight and promote the region's social, cultural, industrial and natural history and heritage connections locally, nationally and internationally. From 2022 onward, contributions will be published in two distinct sub-series to better reflect their principal focus:

**Series A:** The Geopark region. To provide a clear focus on the material and immaterial natural and cultural history and heritage of the Geopark and its adjoining regions.

**Series B:** Mining history. To provide and develop a focus for publication of research on mining history and heritage on the island of Ireland, thereby building a national and international profile for CCG as a knowledge centre based upon its own keynote heritage.

Journal papers are free to download, print and/or copy onward – all that we ask in return is that the journal, its authors, and articles are properly acknowledged if used as a source of information.

## Guidance for contributors

The Journal invites contributions on any dimension of the history and heritage of the Copper Coast as noted previously. These could be very brief articles or extend up to several thousand words or more. Illustrated articles will be particularly welcome, but in all instances, we will require that the sources of information cited in articles be provided. While the preferred submission format guidelines are outlined below, any prospective contributor should not be deterred by difficulty in meeting these guidelines, as the Editor/ Editorial Board will be able to provide assistance: [editor@coppercoastgeopark.com](mailto:editor@coppercoastgeopark.com)

### Preferred submission format

Please submit contributions in electronic format only, ideally as a WORD document (**NOT** as a pdf), as follows:

- Unformatted text, Calibri 10 point, left aligned, double space lines.
- Format in MS Word. Use no more than three levels of headings.
- Article to include a very brief abstract immediately below the article title and name of author
- Good quality (minimum 300dpi resolution), digital colour illustrations welcome. Please supply as separate TIFF or JPG files and **do not** embed in Word documents: their intended location therein to be indicated "Figure 1 here" etc.

**References.** Use the end note format only. Full references therein to be cited using the Harvard system on first use, as per this example:

- Cowman, D. 2007. The Mining Company of Ireland's operations at Glendasan-Glendalough 1825-1895. *The Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland*, Number 7, pp. 45-50.

If subsequent reference is made to the same work in the end notes use:

- Idem. - if that subsequent citation follows immediately after its first, immediately preceding use;
- Op. cit. - if used later in the text, in the format: surname, initials and year, op. cit., page number.

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**Cowman, D. 2022.** John Petherick (1803-1877): the radicalism of a visionary mine manager. *Copper Coast Connects*, Volume 2, Series A, number 1, 5 pp.

#### Series B.

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## John Petherick (1803-1877):

### The radicalism of a visionary mine manager.

Des Cowman

#### Why John Petherick?

- He lived in Bunmahon for 25 years, 20 as manager of the mines.
- He was one of the very few mine managers who publicly praised the local people and committed himself to them.
- He had also a life-long commitment, not only to his own wider family, but to the friends he made locally.
- He became a passionate advocate of Repeal
- As was said of him at a Repeal meeting in Dungarvan –

*England, the land of his birth, Ireland of his adoption and patriotic affection*

#### Background

In late 1803 ten-year-old Thomas Petherick acquired two new brothers, twins John and William. They all grew up in the mining



Gwennap Parish Church, Cornwall, where the Petherick twins were baptised on Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1804.

culture of Cornwall and the three went on to distinguish themselves internationally.



The house in Trevarth, Cornwall, which served as the Petherick family home from possibly the late 1810s to at least the early 1830s.

John, having worked in the local St. Blazey/Fowey mines, moved to mining in Norway and Finland and still in his twenties published a paper on the geology of northern Norway.



John and Mary Petherick's home in Bunmahon up to 1852 – and to this day still known locally as "Petherick's house".

Aged 28 he was invited by the Mining Company of Ireland to inspect their developing mine at Bunmahon and was quickly put in charge of it.

#### Advocate for the miners

His disposition may be gathered from a report of a speech he made in Waterford in 1842 –

*He spoke in laudatory terms of the demeanour of the people of Bunmahon ----. Though not an Irishman, from a protracted residence amongst Irishmen, his feelings had become truly Irish.*

This manifested itself in practical ways –

- He endeavoured to have a National School in Knockmahon.
- He contributed towards building a Catholic church near Bunmahon.
- He tried to get a district hospital in Bunmahon during the Famine.
- He gave evidence to a Lords Committee aspiring to get a coastal railway between Waterford and Cork.
- He also performed small practical acts of kindness like finding places in Waterford workhouse for elderly former miners and paying a fine for a worker who had two horses confiscated.

### John Petherick the Repealer

In a letter of 1841, the reasons he gave for involving himself are –

*--- with my knowledge, as an Englishman, of the hopelessness of being ever admitted to equal participation of political rights by English people, convinced me of the absolute necessity of Repeal of the Act of Union and the subsequent restoration of a domestic legislature in Ireland,*

Daniel O’Connell headed this movement using mass rallies around the country. John Petherick sat on the platform with him at such rallies in Waterford, Dungarvan and Lismore. O’Connell publicly referred to him as “*a true friend of liberty – a plain straightforward Englishman ---*”.

As a piece of local doggerel puts it, Petherick –

*Who throws his weight into the scale  
For Ireland’s freedom and repale  
At the banquet I saw him stand  
And shake O’Connell by the hand*



Daniel O’Connell, friend of John Petherick.

### Temperance Advocates

Miners had always been notorious drinkers but in late 1839 the local miners suddenly and unexpectedly renounced alcohol. For Petherick this meant healthier miners and increased production. In 1842 he informed his employers that the miners’ –

*..leisure hours which were formerly spent in the whiskey shop, they have established, at their own expense --- a Temperance Hall*



The Temperance Hall that Mary Petherick played such a role in (now used as a church).

They had a lot of support from the clergy and the “Apostle of Temperance”, Fr Matthew. There was direct encouragement from Petherick and his new wife (married 1838)

Mary (née Hooper). She entertained Fr. Matthew and a host of priests for the inauguration of a Temperance Hall and when it was opened, she was the only female amongst 400 invited dignitaries present. She insisted that the miners have their own celebration and somehow gave 500 of them the rare treat of bread, butter, cakes and tea.

The Famine provided temptation, but Petherick made it clear that anyone who started drinking would be immediately sacked.

### The Sacking of John Petherick

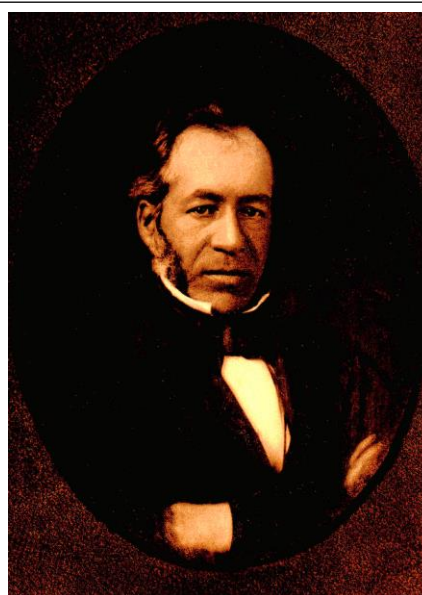
The directors of MCI gave no reason why he was suddenly no longer managing the mine from 1852. Several possible reasons may be given mainly relating to his outspokenness about injustice –

- The original liberal Quakers who founded MCI had been replaced by less tolerant speculators who had bought shares.
- His advocacy of Repeal which in their minds led to rebellion in 1848 threatening their colliery in Tipperary.
- He had other radical views like blaming landlords for rural poverty and later said Fenianism was “*engendered by past misgovernment*”.
- In 1842 he announced that any Protestant miner speaking disrespectfully of Catholics would be dismissed and in 1848 acted on it.
- At one stage, however, he went to mass to stand up and rebuke the priest for his treatment of the local rector.
- Ignorance among the labouring classes “*must always be the case where education is almost exclusively controlled by the clergy*”.

He was not bitter it seems as he stayed on in Bunmahon over the next six years.

In 1854 he was awarded a prestigious Fellowship of the Geological Society, becoming John Petherick FGS.

He got other commissions to examine mining practises in Ireland, with invitations to America. That proved difficult from Bunmahon, besides leaving Mary alone there for long periods. And so they moved to Surrey about 1858.



There is no known photograph of John, but this photograph of his twin brother William was most likely taken in 1859, when he was about 56. Were they identical? (Image courtesy of Tiffanv Bingham).

### John Petherick’s warm friendships

His elder brother, Thomas’ two daughters stayed with them in Bunmahon and twin brother William came over for the opening of the Temperance Hall. Both then went to America. In 1860 John met them in Boston and they went to the Petherick Mine in north Michigan named after William. In a second visit he had arranged to meet William in Los Angeles.

He kept in contact with his friends in Waterford, particularly with Quaker, Joshua Penrose, ending one letter –

*“With kindest regards to Mrs Penrose and circle, I am, my dear Penrose,  
Yours very sincerely*

In another letter to him he refers admiringly to the Malcomson family, to Mr Fisher (editor of the *Waterford News*) and he says he has had a long letter from Mr Roberts.

He also revisited Waterford twice – in 1868 it was at the behest of his ex-colleagues on the Board of Guardians of Kilmacthomas workhouse. In 1873 he was at the wedding of other friends, the Osbournes, whose daughter married the Duke of St Albans.

He also invited his one-time colleagues in Bunmahon, William Paul and James Clemes, to go to America with him to explore new mining prospects.

### International Consultancy

Petherick made four other trips across the Atlantic and on his recommendations four companies were set up:

1. In 1853 he was asked to assess a company in Nova Scotia, Canada. He reported back that - there had been

*“deliberate delusion”, earning thereby a reputation for, “unpurchasable integrity and great judgement”*

2. In late 1856 he and James Clemes left for Cuba and spent three months there resulting in the setting up of the *Consolidated Copper Mines of Cobre*.

3. About 1865 he and Clemes went to view mineral properties in Mexico; In 1867 he and Clemes were given credit for setting up the *Sonara* (later *Almada*) *Silver/Lead Mining Company* there.



4. About 1868 he visited California: his report is credited with the setting-up of *North Star Gold Mining Company* in Nevada County.

His ex-colleague William Paul came back to consult him about a potential mine he'd inspected in Nicaragua about 1865. Out of this *The Chantalles Gold and Silver Mining Company* was established with Paul returning to run the operation and Petherick cited as Consultant Engineer.

### Retirement and Death

As there is no news of new American companies attributed to him, it must be presumed that, by now in his mid-60s he had had enough. He was in any case now a very rich man owning a then massive £20,000.

Mary, his wife, died in 1873 and thereafter he lived alone with a lifetime of memories.

His five nieces and nephew were all in America many of whom had married with children. He must have kept in contact with them, remembering them in his will. His radicalism survived his death in August 1877.



John Petherick's grave, Kingston-upon-Thames cemetery, London. The epitaph reads:  
*In memory of John Petherick Mining Engineer who died in  
 Surbiton August 14th 1877 aged 73 years.*

Usually, at that time, a wife's possessions accrued automatically to her husband. Instead, John Petherick's legacy to his nieces stated -

*--- to married women shall belong to them for their sole and separate use.*

## Footnote

It is intended that a fuller and referenced version of this very abbreviated biography will be published in the newly created Series B of Copper Coast Connects.

Both the full and abbreviated biographies have been abstracted from a contextual history of the Petherick brothers, Thomas, John and William, which is planned for publication in 2023.