

## CORK - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Gortavallig Mine</b>		
Other names used for site	Gurtavallig, Strappabrista		
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH15 Economic Geology, IGH6 Mineralogy</b>		
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>Gortavallig</b>		
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Kilcrohane</b>		
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>138</b>		
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>476315E 537400N</b>		
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>GIS CODE</b>	<b>CK051</b>		

### Outline Site Description

Abandoned copper mine set in a high cliff on the north side of Sheep's Head Peninsula.

### Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

Mineralized quartz veins cutting Upper Devonian (Famennian) sandstone and mudstone of the Toe Head Formation.

### Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

Gortavallig copper mine was worked from 1845 to 1849. Attempts were made to reopen the mine in the 1850s and 1860s, but these attempts were never productive. In 1848, the Mining Journal reported that 87 tonnes of ore were loaded from the slipway at Gortavallig and shipped to Swansea. Gortavallig Mine was one of a group of copper mines situated in the Kilcrohane area, along the north side of the peninsula. Cole's 1922 *Memoir of Localities of Minerals of Economic importance and Metalliferous Mines in Ireland* lists the nearby copper mines at Killeen, Glanalin and Carravilleen. The site can be reached by following the Sheep's Head Way trail. On approaching the site, the mine reservoir is visible perched at the top of the cliff. Several small open stopes and open shafts are present to the east of the steep cliff into which the mines were dug. A rocky and steep miner's path leads down the 60 m high cliff to the site of the slipway. Two adits are open into the upper cliff face around 10 m below the track. A third adit is located further down the cliff, around 10 m above sea level. The dressing floor (not visible from the track) was situated at the foot of the cliff. From here, ore was loaded onto boats that docked at two 'quays'. A 1847 report by Captain William Thomas noted that '*the stuff is brought out of the deep adit on the Railway, it is tripped immediately on the spot where it is prepared for market*'. A row of miner's cottages is situated to the west of the mine site, with an open shaft situated behind the cottages. Cottages situated to the east of the site were known as 'Crimea'.

### Site Importance – County Geological Site

Gortavallig was the main copper mine on the Sheep's Head Peninsula in the nineteenth century, at a time when copper mining was an active industry throughout West Cork.

### Management/promotion issues

The site is accessed along a trail across open heathland. The track leads across the upper edge of the high steep cliff where a guide rope is in place. Extreme caution should be exercised at this site. Several open shafts are present on the surface, and the wire fencing has fallen away or is not in place. Access to adits in the cliff face should not be attempted. A 2006 report by the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (MHTI) provides detailed results of a survey at the site (The Mines of Sheeps Head and Mizen Peninsulas, County Cork). The miner's cottages are the main extant buildings at Gortavallig. Now roofless, with only the walls remaining, the buildings should be conserved to prevent the complete loss of the building structures. Consideration could be given to erecting a signboard at this location to provide an illustrated history of the Gortavallig copper mine.



Track leading across cliff top. Miner's cottages to west in background.



Open stope near reservoir.

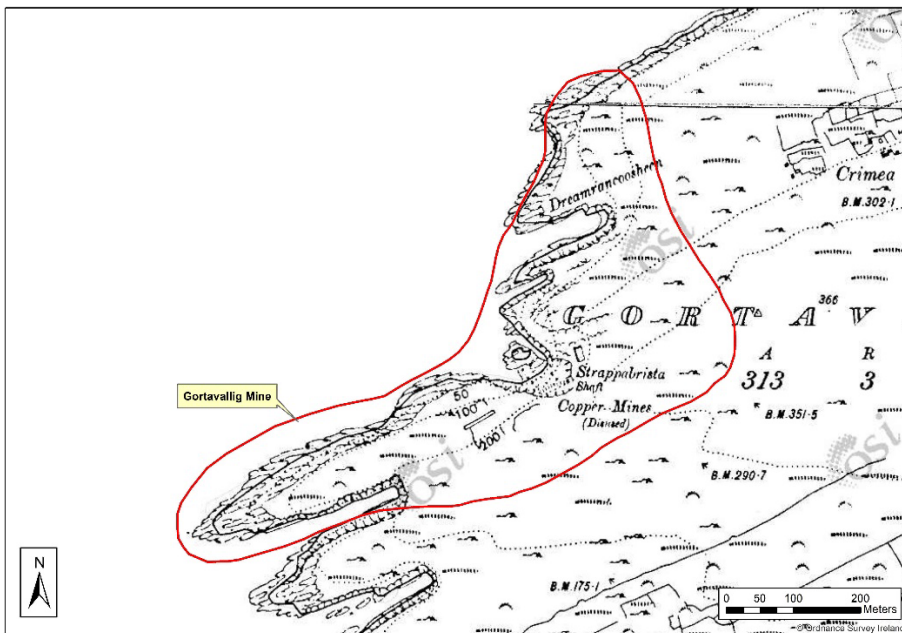
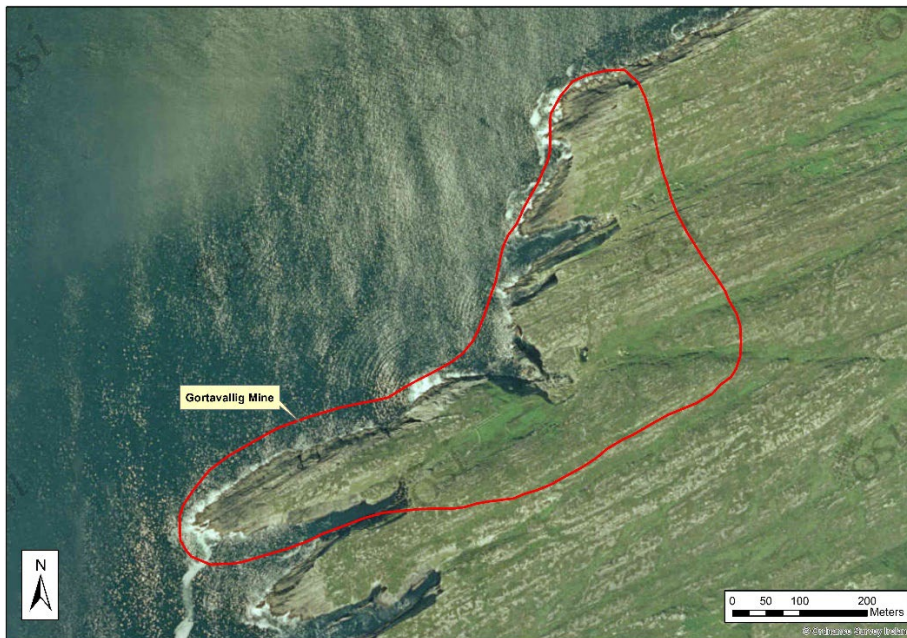


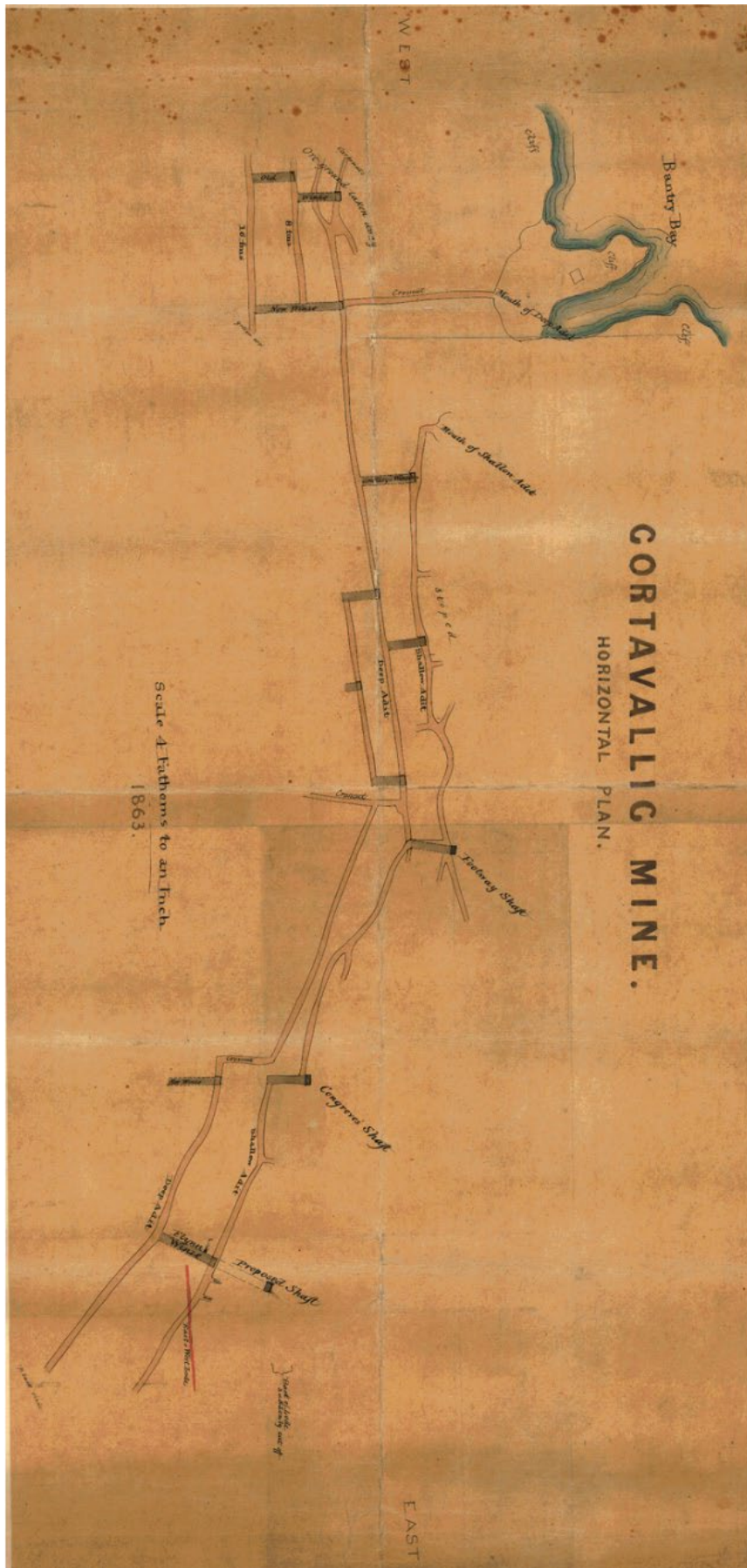
Reservoir on cliff top. View looking west.



Miner's cottages to the west of the mine site. Slieve Mickish on Beara peninsula visible to north across Bantry Bay. Allihies Copper Mines were situated west of Slieve Mickish.







1863 Plan of Gortavallig Mine. (Source: <https://www.mindat.org/loc-122149.html>)