

III. *An Account of the late Discovery of Native Gold in Ireland. In a Letter from John Lloyd, Esq. F. R. S. to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. K. B. P. R. S.*

Read November 19, 1795.

DEAR SIR,

Cronbane Lodge, near Rathdrum,
the 4th of November, 1795.

THE late very important mineralogical discovery in Ireland, and a desire I had long entertained of visiting the celebrated copper mine at this place, together with the opportunity that presented itself, of making my tour in company with our friend Mr. MILLS, who is one of the proprietors, as well as sole director of the mine, determined me to seize this moment for my excursion ; and yesterday Mr. MILLS and I visited the spot, where so much pure gold has been of late taken up, being distant about 5 miles from this place.

About 7 miles westward of Arklow, in the county of Wicklow, there is a very high hill, perhaps 6 or 700 yards above the sea, called Croughan Kinshelly, one of whose NE abutments, or buttresses, is called Balinnagore, to which the ascent may be made in half or three quarters of an hour. Should you have JACOB NEVILL'S map of the county of Wicklow, published in 1760, at hand, by casting your eye on the river Ovo, which runs by Arklow, at about 4 miles above the latter place, you

will perceive the conflux of two considerable streams, and of a third about half a mile higher up, close to a bridge. By tracing this last to its source, you will come to a place, set down in the map Ballinvally; this is a ravine between two others, that run down the side of the hill into a semicircular, or more properly, semi-elliptical valley, which extends in breadth from one summit to the other of the boundary of the valley, and across the valley three-quarters of a mile, or somewhat less. The hollow side of the hill forms the termination of the valley, and down which run the three ravines abovementioned. At their junction, the brook assumes the name of Ballinasloge; at this place the descent is not very rapid, and so continues a hanging level for about a quarter of a mile, or somewhat more, when the valley grows narrower, and the sides of the brook become steeper; and it should seem, that some rocky bars across the course of the brook have formed the gravelly beds, above, over, and through which the stream flows, and in which the gold is found. The bed of the brook, and the adjacent banks of gravel, on each side, for near a quarter of a mile in length, and for 20 or 30 yards in breadth, have been entirely stirred and washed by the peasants of the country, who amounted to many hundreds, at work at a time, whilst they were permitted to search for the metal.

A gentleman, who saw them at work, told me, he counted above 300 women at one time, besides great numbers of men and children.

The stream runs down to the NE from the hill, which seems to consist of a mass of shistus and quartz; for on examination of the principal ravine, which is now washed clean by the late heavy rains, the bottom consisted of shistus, intersected at

different distances, and in various places, by veins of quartz, and of which substances the gravelly beds at the bottom, where the gold is found, seem to consist.

Large tumblers of quartz are thickly scattered over the surface of the top of the hill, under a turbarry of considerable thickness, upon the removal of which these tumblers appear.

I shall not take up your time in attempting to give a minute geological description of this part of the country, as I have prevailed with Mr. MILLS (who from his minute examinations, and practical knowledge, is so conversant with the mineralogy of this county), to undertake that task, which I am persuaded he will perform to your satisfaction.

The gold has been found in masses of all sizes, from those of small grains to that of a piece of the weight of 5 ounces, which beautiful specimen is intended for the cabinet of a nobleman, adored in this country, and not less respected by his friends in England, and which, I dare to say, you will shortly have an opportunity of seeing in London. One piece of 22 ounces has been taken up, and which, I am told, is to be presented to his Majesty.

In our visit to this extraordinary place, we were most hospitably entertained by Mr. GRAHAM, of Ballycoage, whose house is not more than a mile from the gold mine: from him and his brothers I learnt, that about 25 years ago, or more, one DUNAGHOO, a schoolmaster, resident near the place, used frequently to entertain them with accounts of the richness of the valley in gold; and that this man used to go in the night, and break of day, to search for the treasure; and these gentlemen, with their schoolfellows, used to watch the old man in his excursions to the hill, to frighten him, deeming him to be

deranged in his intellects ; however, the idea of this treasure did at last actually derange him.

JOHN BYRNE told me, that about 11 or 12 years ago, when he was a boy, he was fishing in this brook, and found a piece of gold, of a quarter of an ounce, which was sold in Dublin ; but that, upon one of his brothers telling him it must have been dropped into the brook by accident, he gave over all thoughts of searching for more. CHARLES TOOLE, a miner at Cronbane, tells me, he heard of this discovery at the time, but gave no credit to it, as he never found any gold, and lives very near the place. I am credibly informed too, that a goldsmith in Dublin has, every year, for 11 or 12 years, bought 4 or 5 ounces of gold, brought constantly by the same person, but not JOHN BYRNE.

Thus, Sir, you have all I could learn respecting this important event ; which is at your service to lay before the Royal Society, should you not have been furnished with an account from an abler pen.

I am, &c.

JOHN LLOYD.

P. S. I am told the name of the brook, where the gold is found, is, in Irish, *Aughatinavought*.