

LIVING BESIDE A MINE - ANGLING

Angling in Ireland is not only one of the country's favourite past times, it's also a major draw for anglers from across the world.

One of the most popular destinations is the river Boyne and its tributaries in County Meath, which enjoy some of Ireland's best wild brown trout fisheries, as well as offering excellent pike and coarse fishing. What's less well known is that Tara Mines, Europe's largest lead and zinc mine, is located beside and under one of those tributaries (the river Blackwater), and has co-existed happily with the local angling community for over 40 years.

Tara Mines Fishing Club

Talking to the Tara Mines Fishing Club it's hard not to get swept along with its enthusiasm.

"I remember fishing as a young lad in the rivers around Tipperary, especially in the Nenagh river. I'd go out with my

uncles and we'd fish mainly for trout or, if it was in season, salmon. The fish could be anything from 1lb to 1.5lb. I've great memories of catching bream where the river entered the lake and my uncle giving me the rod to land them.

"We used to go to an estate just up the road where the landowner grew bamboo. She used to give us some of the bamboo to make our own rods; we'd use bakelite reels and buy eyes for the rods. They were heavy and makeshift, but it was gas making our own rods and spending the summer fishing. It's a passion that's never died."

Tara Mines Fishing Club was formed over 30 years ago and is affiliated to the Tara Mines Social Club, both of which are supported financially by Tara Mines. Fully regulated, the Club ensures that all members, both current and past employees, are licensed to comply with Irish angling regulations such as the 'Catch and Release' programme.

The mine has had a major positive impact on the angling scene. As one Club member put it, "I moved to Navan in the mid-1970s to work at Tara. I was still there 40 years later! The job didn't just give me the chance to buy a car, a house, and then the opportunity to build my own home, it also helped educate our families, which was a huge thing for us.

"The other bonus was that it put us right on the doorstep of some of Ireland's best angling - trout fishing in Lough Sheelin, pike fishing in Lough Derravaragh, the river Inny in Westmeath and the annual mayfly competition in Oughterard, County Galway."

The proximity of the mine to local rivers was great for anglers in the workforce and he recalls renting a house near the Blackwater, "I'd get up at 6:00am, be in the river within minutes and be enjoying five trout on the pan by 9:15am!"

One senior angler from the club, now retired, said, "We've all enjoyed a great experience with Tara Mines. When you look at the opportunities they've generated for the local economy and how they've helped the local community, I don't know where the town would be without them.

"When Tara Mines started, they worked with the local Chamber of Commerce to use local suppliers and contractors. The mine and its employees are part of the fabric of the local community - and beyond to Trim, Kells and Athboy."

The Club's anglers are in no doubt that mining, angling and the protection of Ireland's precious waterways can peacefully coexist. As one remarked, the mine "has had no detrimental effect whatsoever to our rivers". The Boyne and its tributaries have provided world-class angling for generations and prove that modern mining is an environmentally sensitive business.



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