

The Quarterly Journal of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club

By the time this issue of "Below" reaches you, the Annual Dinner and the A.G.M. are likely to have come and gone, so there may have been some changes to the Committee members listed on the back page, on the other hand there may not!

Minerologists

During the summer I perchanced to have an interesting conversation with a minerologist. In the course of the conversation he started telling me about a certain mineral collector who went collecting in abandoned mines, mainly in the Lake District,

However it would appear that it was collecting with a difference, rather than just a few specimens he would collect lorry loads - all for re-sale. When it was felt that all the worth while minerals had been removed from the mine he would then blast the entrance to prevent other collectors gaining access and thus reducing his profit margins,

This sort of behaviour is quite common amongst the "professional" collector, apparently. Apart from the obvious dangers of blasting in a mine entrance - like there

being someone else in there (!), and removing the chance of other people exploring it, it is not too inconceivable that the local landowner might be a shade miffed.

This outright wholesale theft (after all that's what it is) of minerals for re-sale has repercussions for the innocent mine explorers. Pete Eggleston and I recently visited Combe Martin in North Devon, a silver-lead mining area that has largely been forgotten by mine historians, but not mineralogists it seems.

We discovered the remains of a superb engine house with a stone chimney, next to the engine house was a large spoil heap, however all entrances to the site were festooned with barbed wire and large notices warning dire consequences for anyone caught entering the site, with a particular mention about "removing" material.

Thus we were prevented from exploring the actual site by the mindless actions of a few irresponsible minerologists out to make a fast buck from their illegal actions.

Mine Classification

The Ironbridge Institute (part of the IGMT) has recently been carrying out a study on lead mining remains for English Heritage. The idea is to form a classification system for grading the worthiness for preservation of the remains. The Snailbeach complex **must** come high on the list.

[Unless they get their fingers out, there won't **BE** any remains to preserve. The IGMT have been "thinking" about Snailbeach for at least the last 15 years to my knowledge, during which time the physical remains on site have gradually diminished. **ED.**]

Iron Workings Fan

In March/April Ove Arup tried to ventilate the Crawstone Ironstone workings at Ironbridge in order to do a proper survey. A fan was used but the attempt was not entirely successful.

Snailbeach Study

The Snailbeach Study continues and a draft report is available. Results of blood tests, carried out as part of the study, showed that only two local residents, who "volunteered" for testing had levels of 26-30 micrograms (per 100 millilitres of blood), these are below the level of 30 which is supposed to be the "trigger" for concern.

Plans are now being drawn up for a professional archaeological dig on the mine site at Snailbeach.

Gorge Model ?

A 40 foot model of the Ironbridge Gorge has been unveiled in the former Ironbridge Wharfage Information Centre. Model mines and quarries are prominent in this - can you spot any deliberate errors?

[Note: The model is supposed to be the Gorge at the time of William of Orange, but even I [can see mistakes with it, ED.]

1898 Articles

IJB has obtained copies of 1898 articles on the Glee Hill and Grinshill Quarries. They make fascinating reading. The spring Issue of Industrial Archaeology Review contains an article on "Shropshire Quarrying" by M.A.Scard, who also seems to have found them and used them extensively.

Lost Car

In early June it was reported that a car had fallen into a "hole" which appeared in the road at Belle Vue, Ironbridge, but nothing more has been discovered.

Ironbridge By-pass

The new road over the "slip" at Buildwas has at long last been opened - but for how long? In the 1860's the local landowner, although outside the Coal Measures, brought in German Miners to sink shafts for coal. They were ridiculed by Shropshire miners who knew better and the Shropshire contributor to the Mining Journal sent in facetious monthly reports!

NAMHO Conference Reports

16/7/89 - 17/7/89

Field Meet: Friday

Tilberthwaite Gill

Mike Moore attended this Meet, with a total party size of 25.

The walk took around two and half hours, yet was only two and half miles long. The valley was littered with quarrying and mine remains.

In general the mines were fairly small and some were of early Elizabethan origin, all were copper mines. The surface visit took in Wetherston Mine, Mon Arm Mine, Hellens Mine and the Elizabethan workings on Hawkrigg.

Owing to a tight time schedule I was unable to visit the slate quarries around Hodge Close.

Mike Moore

Conference Lectures

Members Present: Mike Moore, Peter Eggleston, Neal Rushton, Mike Clough, Chris Lucas, Edwin Thorpe and Steve Holding,

The lectures were of varied programme as usual, with one lecture being contributed by Neal on behalf of the Club.

The Isle of Man was featured and developments in the Laxey area were explained in photographs and slides.

As usual delegates were forced, on Saturday, to choose between lectures and the field trips (to Coniston Copper Mines), the two Mike's remained for lectures by Ivor Brown (on Museums of Australia, USA and Europe) and the future of Mining History by Adrian Pearce.

One of the two lectures on Mines in Spain were given that afternoon. The slides and talks were all excellent and they certainly wetted the appetite for more mining exploration.

The SCMC Clive Video Tour was very well received and resulted in several orders for the video.

Mike Moore

Coniston Copper Mine

Saturday

Members Present: Peter Eggleston, Steve Holding, Chris Lucas, Neal Rushton and Edwin Thorpe,

We all opted to participate in the "B" option trip laid on by CAT, this consisted of entering Levers Water and abseiling approximately 200 feet in various short pitches until a short scramble brought the party into Paddy End Mine Top Level Extension (this had been visited by members of the club in January 1988).

Despite the tour leader continually reassuring Edwin that there was no way we would be crossing the stemple traverse, after a scramble and climbing up through deads, the dreaded traverse was indeed encountered!!

For members not familiar with this section, you have to step/jump from stemple to stemple (a mixture of new and old wooden ones!), all at about 70 feet above the floor this part of the mine remains the most disturbing section of the trip!!

Steve Holding

NAMHO Conference Reports

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Force Crag Mine Sunday

Members Present: Mike Clough, Pete Eggleston, Steve Holding, Chris Lucas, Mike Moore and Edwin Thorpe.

This was the "A" option trip through this working mine. It involved entering Level 0 and after examining this level, climbing to Level 2 via 100 feet of fixed ladders and exiting just above the processing plant which the party was then shown around.

Steve Holding

Hoe, humm !

Plymouth Council are planning to infill a sea cave under the Hoe on the grounds that one day the roof might collapse!!

OFD 1 Choke

The Boulder Choke in Boulder Chamber (OFD 1), between the chamber and Hush Sump is in an unstable state. This will particularly affect you if planning a through trip from OFD 2 to OFD 1 (Mike take note), or vice versa. The choke actually collapsed a few months ago, although the route is now open you should take care.

This choke has been considered one of the most stable chokes it was opened in the late 1950*s, Always approach chokes with caution irrespective of how stable they are supposed to be, 3 experienced cavers were killed last year while passing a choke.

Newlands Valley Mines

Monday

Mike Moore and Steve Holding joined a large walking party to view the mines in the Newlands Valley. A level near the top of Dale Head was entered, this was remarkable for its location, with the entrance level being quite exposed.

Only the first part of the level was explored, but there is probably significant mine sections beyond questionable roof falls (we know members of CAT have taken maypoles into this section). Another mine at the other end of the valley was also entered, this lead to evidence of a large wheel pit; the same mine can be entered on the other side of the hill.

Steve Holding

L.N.R.C. Collapse ?

A report has been filed of a possible collapse in the Little Neath River Cave in the main section of streamway downstream from the Canal. Nobody is reported to have actually seen the collapse yet, but "rumbles" were heard coming from an area of instability.

Swildon's Rescue

Two rescues have recently taken place at Swildon's hole. One occurred at the Wet Way, with a caver suffering 2 fractured legs, the other as a result of an Army initiative test - how to get out of square bashing no doubt!

Club Sales

The following publications are available from stocks-

Account No.8 "Survey of Llanymynech Ogof, Roman Copper Mine" by D.R.Adams, 1970. £2.00 (£2.50 non-members).

Account No.9 "Mines and Caves in the Area between Llanymynech and the Dee" by D.R.Adams, 1972. £2.00 (£2.50 non-members).

Account No.12 "Survey of the Metal Mines of S,W.Shropshire", J.Heathcote, 1979. £2.00 (£3.00 non-members).

Account No.13 "Lincoln Hill Limestone Mines" by I.J.Brown. £1.50 (£2.00 non-members).

The 1980 Journal - including a report on Huglith. £1.00 (£1.50 non-members).

Videos

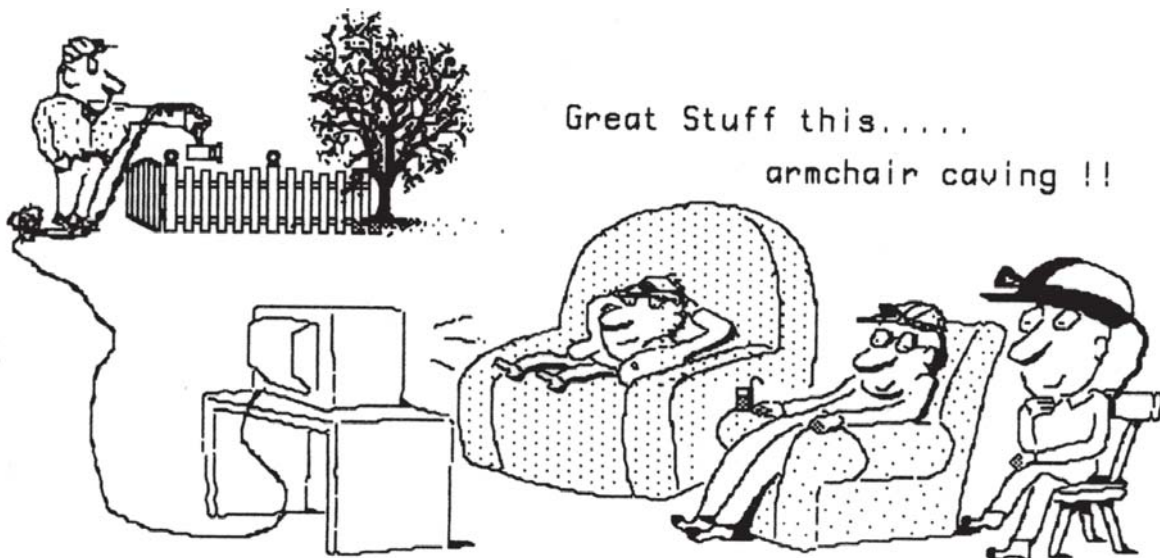
Clive Rescue Practice

Follows the SCMC's intrepid band of rescuers, as they boldly rescue where no man has been rescued before. Stare in amazement as the helpless victim crosses the Maypole Winze without flinching (well almost). Complete with library case and designer label for £5.00

All items available from Mike Moore (see back page for address). Postage and packing

A Tour of Clive Copper Mine

Edwin Thorpe brings all his charm and talents to bear as he guides a "newcomer" to the mine around its assorted features. Coupled with dynamic computer graphics a brief insight into Clive Mine's development and history is possible, as Edwin explains (all without the aid of a script!!). Complete with library case and matching label, a vital Christmas present for someone who hasn't got everything. £9.50



Giants Hole Sunday 13/8/89

Sheans First Cave

Members Present: Shean Bostock, Andy Harris, Steve Holding, Alan Robinson,

After a number of mining trips, Shean was very keen to take part in any trip, as long as it was not Clive! Consequently a small party was led by Alan on a visit to Giants Hole in Derbyshire.

After travelling through the Old Cave, Garlands Pot was descended and the Crab Walk followed accompanied by many grunts, reaching a crescendo at the Vice. From eating House Pass the party ascended the awkward climbs into Maginns

Series where after a wet passage through the Giants Windpipe, Shean started to think twice about the traverses above the Crab Walk and was not alone in questioning the traverse achieved simply by friction (ie: NO ledge!).

After successfully negotiating the traverse, the party re-ascended Garlands Pot and exited via the Old Cave. This was probably the first SCMC trip to Derbyshire for some years, but hopefully there will be more such caving trips in the near future.

Steve Holding.

From NAMHO Newsheet

No.13 Llandudno Cats

A Celtic expert is of the opinion that the cat skeletons found underground at Llandudno were part of a pagan ceremony representing offerings to earth, plant and animal spirits. It is not known if they were to do with mining, or whether the passage was just a "nice" place for a ritual. On similar lines a skeleton of a monkey has been found nearby in Maeshafn Mine.

1988 Cave Rescues

There were 48 underground incidents in 1988, involving Cave Rescue Teams with 124 persons involved. Of these there were 14 person injured and 5 fatalities (all in caves) .

The main problem arose from lack of awareness of local weather conditions, resulting in parties being trapped or suffering exposure.

Most of the parties were from universities, colleges or schools. Of the fatalities 3 were caused in one incident by a roof fall, 1 by exposure after becoming "hung-up" on a SET rope and 1 when a cave diver became stuck.

Workings Exposed

Construction of a new by-pass on Tyneside as revealed an old coal mine worked on the pillar and stall principle. The old workings can be seen from the A1 southbound, just before the Killingworth turn off.

Car Thefts

During the early part of this year several cars in the Eyam area were broken into. If you visit the area potholing or climbing you are advised to put any valuables out of sight.

Mining Museums

Bath Stone Quarry

The underground section of the Bath Stone Quarry is now open to the public, along with various surface features. As the museum develops it is hoped to add more items.

The museum is open Easter to October, Tuesday to Sunday, Admission costs £2.00.

Chwarel Wynne

Pronounced Kwarel Win, this former slate quarry, opened in 1750 changed to mining about 1867, finally closing in 1928.

Although the surface is now overgrown - it recently won the Rural Wales Award for landscaping, nature trails and natural gardens, two and half miles of underground caverns are open to the public.

The visitor is taken on a 30 minute tour of the mine, most caverns being over 60 feet in height.

Situated in the village of Glyn Ceiriog on the B4500, 6 miles from Chirk, or go across the Berwyn mountains from Llangollen (4 miles).

The museum is open 10 am to 5pm., last underground tour 4.30pm., Easter to end of October.

Out of season parties can be arranged.

The Grange Cavern Military Museum

Reputed to be the worlds largest underground military museum, it is set in the two and half acres of Grange Caverns.

The workings were excavated in the early nineteenth century for limestone to construct Liverpool docks. It was used during the Second World War by the M.O.D. to store 11,000 bombs (including the famous bouncing bombs).

The museum includes a collection of vehicles, guns, bikes and other militaria.

Situated at Holway, Holywell, Clwyd, 400 yards off the A5026,

Open Easter to end of October, every day 9.30am to 6.00pm. (last admission 5pm,).

End of Belgian Mines

The remains of the Belgian coal mining industry, in the Limburg area, are under threat of demolition by the government. Despite promising to retain the Beringen Mine as a museum, local groups would like to preserve many more sites.

The Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology are backing the fight and hope to get international support.

When the last mines were closed they were the scene of very emotive demonstrations by miners, including sit-down protests in the road.

BOOKS

The Iron Moor

by Alen McFadzean

This book unfolds the history and reveals the secrets of LIndal Moor (The Iron Moor) from the advent of mining activity (first exploited by Cistercian monks of Furness Abbey) to its eventual demise in recent years. This is a story of masters and men, their struggles against the elements in a deep, dark, hostile environment, and their determination to survive in the face of natural and industrial crises.

148 pages, illustrated with 16 plates plus maps & sketches.

The Iron Moor is available from:-

Red Earth Publications, 7 Silver Street, Marton, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 ONQ

There is a 10% discount for Club members. So state on your order that you are a member of the SCMC and send £6.20 plus £1 postage. (Normal price £6.90 + £1 postage).

Metalliferous Mining Region of SW England

This classic geological memoir by Dines has recently been reprinted and is available in 2 volumes for £30 from the Peak District Mining Museum.

Other Re-prints

PDMHS are considering reprinting a series of old mining books ie: "The Miners Dictionary" of 1747 by W.Hooson, "The Cornpleat Miner" T.Houghton; 1729, "The Derbyshire Miners Glossary" by J.Mander; 1824, "The Miners Arithmetic" by J.Rosewarne; 1836 and "Treatise on Derbyshire Mining Customs" by T.Tapping; 1852.

To get some idea of potential demand before proceeding they would like anyone interested to contact Roy Paulson (Tel: 0629-534775). This does not commit you to any purchase at this stage.

So send No monies, as they say

Help Wanted

A new road between the M62 and St. Helens is going to destroy several industrial sites including coal mines. Surveys of the sites are desperately being carried out before destruction and assistance is required. Anyone willing to help should ring Roy Forshaw on 051-236-4552 (day) or 051-733-9597 (evenings).

Thoralby Lead Mines

Barry Hunt is researching the Thoralby Lead Mines near Bishopsdale, Yorkshire. Could anyone with information contact him at 70, Carr Road, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 7SR.

New Publications

British Mining No. 39 Memoirs 1989

This latest publication from the Northern Mines Research Society in their new look A5 style contains a number of interesting articles, on a wide range of mining topics.

Of particular interest are the three items by Ivor Brown.

The first on "Horses in Shropshire Mines" looks briefly at the use and abuse of horses, mainly in the mines of the Telford area. Including a few of the authors personal memories of horses in action in and around Kemberton and Halesfield pits.

The second "Woman Workers in Shropshire Mines" briefly examines the employment of woman in mines, although this did not seem to occur to any great extent. Women being largely employed on the surface as pickers (sorting ironstone nodules out from the clay), carriers (carrying the material to the "heaps" - on their heads) and bankswomen. A few of the typical accidents involving women are covered, plus a brief snatch of the "memories" of Mrs Amy Payne (100 years old last year) who worked at Kemberton pit in 1900.

The final article is on "Drainage, Water Supply, Soughs and other Tunnels in the Coalbrookdale Coalfield". It covers a range of tunnels, unfortunately the map included with the article is very hard to understand and even though I know the areas considered quite well, found it very difficult to exactly place the tunnels etc. mentioned in the article.

I also get the impression that it was written at least 10 to 15 years ago, as several features mentioned have either been obliterated or proposed sewers built some time ago.

Also in this issue of British Mining is a "mini" autobiography by David Bick "Forty years of Mines and Minerals", tracing the origins of his interest in mining, it is nicely written as all his work is and makes an enjoyable read.

On a similar vein, there is the autobiography of George Boddy, who worked in mines around Greenhow after the First World War.

Mines of Cardigan, Montgomery & Salop

First printed in 1869-70, possibly as the first of three promotional booklets, it has a very brief description of metal mines in the three counties, mainly just the name, a rough description of where the mine is and if it was working.

Twenty two south Shropshire mines are mentioned all round the Minsterley - Stiperstones area,

I had thought that some mention might have been made of the ironstone mines in East Shropshire, but it would seem the booklet was aimed at the Lead/Copper/Barytes market.

It has been nicely reprinted in A5 format with card covers by Simon Hughes (Mining Services, Talybont). Current price £2.50 (inc Postage)

S.C.M. Club Officers

President : David Adams

Chairman : Mike Moore

Secretary : Steve Holding

Treasurer : Bob Taylor

NAMHO Rep.: Mike Moore

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Rescue Officer : Neal Rushton

Newsletter Editor: Kelvin Lake

Future Trips

As trips are likely to be changed at short notice future trip details will not be printed in Below. For information about any trip contact Steve Holding.

