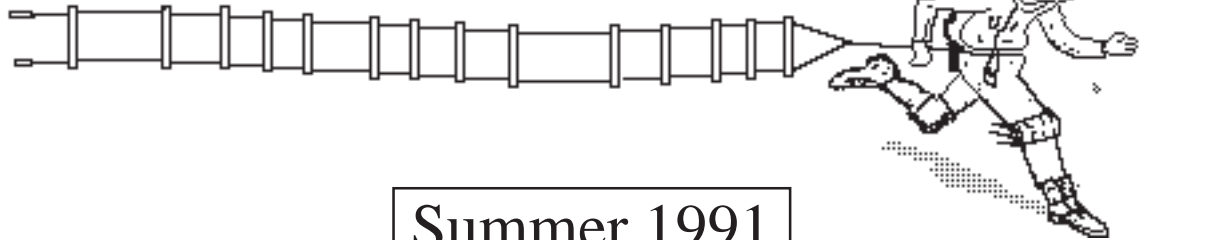


B E L O W !



Summer 1991

Quarterly Journal of the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club

Foil or Plastic?

I notice a recent article in *Descent* discusses the relative merits of metalised plastic Space blankets and Poly Bags for the use in cave rescues. A few years ago I invested in a pair of special inner "Space gloves", for my motor-cycle gaunlets, interwoven with foil to help "reflect" back radiated heat, I soon discovered your fingers loose very little heat by radiation and the inner gloves **AIDED** heat loss through conduction - a pair of wind proof over gaunlets proved far more effective. Due to this experience I've always had my suspicions over the effectiveness of the Space blankets, and it would seem that sealing a person inside a large poly bag is more suitable to the cold damp underground environment.

MineCam Developments

Over the past couple of months Peter Eggleston has been working hard on improving the MineCam. Several members will have seen it in action at Clive during the building of a stopping in "Garage" shaft. This was the Mark II version based on a CCD chip camera - actually the front end of a 'HandyCam'.

The only problem with this was the lack of low light sensitivity causing the pictures to look like something from the undersea world of Jack Custard!

A trial lowering of the prototype Mark III took place at Lord's Hill, Engine Shaft when after

what can only be described as a curious pitch rig, (resulting in barbed wire lacerations to most members of the team) the camera was lowered to the 112 yard level from the surface.

Since then the camera has been modified to allow it to be tilted from the vertical to the horizontal while under the control of a person watching the monitor on the surface. A host of extra features are planned, so stay tuned....

Rack Warning

Caving supplies are warning anyone who purchased a 5 bar C.S. Rappel Rack between 16.10.90 and 14.12.90 to check that the fourth and fifth bars hinge in the correct direction. I know one or two members have recently invested in new racks so it is probably worth checking them. Caving Supplies, stress that they believe only 6 "rogue" racks have been sold, but point out that as the racks are of the safety type the first three bars will still retain the rope.

Appology

Appologies to Alan Robinson and Pete Etchells for not correctly crediting them on the Isle of Man and Peaks Cavern trip reports in the last issue of *Below*. But if you could put your names on your reports in future, I'll try to get it right!

Kelvin

Tan-y-Bwlch 6/5/91

The visit to Tan-y-Bwlch Mine was one of the field trips during the NAMHO conference. Harold Morris of Welsh Mines Society led a large group on a walk which took in the surface remains of Catherine & Janes Consols as well as Tan-y-Bwlch Mine. The party was reduced to 7, including Alan Robinson, Vicky Gamblin and myself, for the underground trip.

The party entered via number 4 level and after some distance the level ended in a "T" junction. Whilst the right hand route only gave access to a rise (believed to connect to an upper level and a short shaft to surface), the left hand route lead to a rope protected traverse which in turn lead to a climb down to the Deep Adit Level; this level

proved to be quite extensive, with many branches, but with little evidence of successful mining!

A wet exit from the Deep Adit would have been possible, but a climb up the rope to regain number 4 level was preferred.

The part of level 4 beyond the traverse was explored and found to contain a rise with an abseil rope from a higher level; clearly a good through trip could be had by abseiling down from some level above number 4 and exiting via the Deep Adit (which was believed to be approximately waist deep - although exactly who's waist is not certain!).

Steve Holding

Masson Group Visit 27 & 28/4/91

A group from Masson Caving Group visited Shropshire for a weekend, with underground trips to Snailbeach and Clive.

Snailbeach 27/4/91

Alan Robinson, Neal Rushton, Cara and myself took a group of 10 visitors underground whilst Brian Tildsley and his wife showed one visitor around the surface workings. Three of the visitors only explored down as far as Robert's Level and then exited the mine on their own.

Alan and Neal left after rigging the mine as far as the 'Ore-Shoot', but 7 visitors, Cara and myself descended to the 40 yard level. Some of the party started the climb out after a brief inspection of the level, but a group of five travelled as far as the winze to the 90 yard level.

The climb out was made somewhat more diffi-

cult by the leading group unwittingly removing all the ladders (on the miss-assumption that these were only there for the one visitor not happy with SRT).

Clive 28/4/91

A large number of visitors were shown through Clive Mine by Mike Moore, Roland Gibson, Neal Rushton, Andy Harris and myself. The normal trip was made more interesting by accessing the lower level by abseiling down the Southern winze and ascending via the Maypole shaft after the "enjoyable" crawl in between.

The Masson Group clearly enjoyed their visit and offered to organise a trip for SCMC to enter a mine not normally accessible.

Steve Holding

Club Library Update

The following items were missing from the Club Library when it was transferred from Newport Library. If any member still holds these on loan, could they please arrange to return them.

SCMC Publications:

Newsletter (Series 1) No.1-71

Newsletter (Series 2) No. 114, 211, 228, 230-231, 233-235, 237-238, 240, 242-?

Other Society Publications:

A.I.A. - Bulletin Vol.10, No.1 1982

B.C.R.A. - Caves & Caving No.33 1986

Gloucester Speleological Society - Newsletter
No.s: ?/86 1986, 1/87 1987

North Wales Caving Club -

Newsletter No.s: 138 1984 & 145-154 1985-86

P.D.M.H.S. - Bulletin Vol. 9, No.4 1985

University of Bristol Speleological Society -
Proceedings Vol. ?, No.? 1979

Other Periodicals:

Descent: No.s: 57, 63, 67-69, 76-79, Handbook
1974

Quarry Management & Products - July 1980

Shropshire Magazine - Feb 1972, July 1972

Offprints:

"Some Mineral Deposits of the Carboniferous
Limestone of Derbyshire" T.Ford

Books & Reports

"Economic & Social Consequences of Coal Min-
ing in the Highley District of the Wyre Forest
Coalfield 1879-1945" G.Williams

"Ropeman's Handbook" NCB

"Snailbeach Lead Mine Study" Ove Arup &
Partners

Surveys:

Alum Pot, Yorkshire

As a reminder Members may inspect the Library
(now at 72, Hopkins Heath, Shawbirch, Telford,
Shropshire, TF5 0LZ, Tel: 0952-53310) at any
reasonable time, but it would be appreciated if
prior notice could be given.

Adrian Pearce

This Issue of "**Below**" has been sponsored by

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News Round-Up 1

by Ivor Brown

Geology World

An organisation named Geology World has been set up at Much Wenlock. They have obtained permission for a museum to be established in Lilleshall Quarry, Presthope, Wenlock Edge. (Will they find the long-lost limestone mines worked from the Presthope Railway Tunnel during its construction?)

Book Sale

William Lack of Pontesbury (Tel: 0743 790343) is selling his large collection of mining books and plans. Many relate to the Midlands area (he worked for Lea Cross Geophysical Services). Who knows there may be something left!

Mine Requests

IJB continues to receive many requests for information on Shropshire Mines - two recent were:

(1) Anyone know of someone named Noon who considered investing in a colliery at Madeley with an almost certain return of £2000 pa in the

1860's? IJB thinks this was Madeley (Staffs).

(2) Nigel Taylor of Alverley, Bridgnorth (0746 780 703) is building a precise model of Snailbeach Mine Surface. He needs as many old photos as possible to take detail from. Has anyone any ideas on whether new Engine Shaft winding gear had a roof over the drums or spool?

Mining & Geology Gallery

Work continues on the development of the Mining and Geology Gallery, a new feature for the IGMT at Jackfield. IGMT have also recently reclaimed the Lightmoor Beam Engine built c1800, which was taken to the USA in 1928 by Henry Ford for his Museum.

Grant Aided

Rumour has it that Shropshire County Council have been successful in their application for a grant to carry out more work at Snailbeach Mine. No details available at the moment.

Obituaries

Bruce Foster

It is with great sadness that it is necessary to report the death after a stroke of Bruce, who was in his mid forties.

He was the main cave rescue warden in South Wales and was usually one of the first on the scene in most rescue situations. He had been involved with cave rescue for over 20 years and was the main fund raising organiser behind the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team Land Rover Ambulance. He was also in the process of trying to obtain a £9000+ grant towards the purchase of rescue equipment for Mid-Wales.

His loss will be deeply felt by all South Wales

members and he will be very difficult to replace. Our condolences to his widow and family. Donations, instead of flowers, can be sent to South Wales Caving Club Secretary for the West Brecon C.R. Team.

Mike Moore

Mrs. Amy Payne

The last Shropshire ironstone mine worker has died age 103. She was a real character to the end, and has been the subject of numerous interviews and articles, providing fascinating memories of ironstone mining. She died in hospital at Madeley, the town where she had lived all her life.

Ivor Brown

Pre-Roman Mining in Shropshire

There is evidence to suggest that the Romans carried out mining at Llanymynech and Roman Gravels, possibly also in the area near Snailbeach. Until recently, however, few mining historians have considered the possibility of even earlier mining in the U.K., mainly due to the lack of identifiable remains.

Recent work has proved the existence of Bronze Age copper mining at Mount Gabriel in Ireland, Alderley Edge in Cheshire and Great Orme/Cwm Ystwyth in Wales. These sites have shown that the technology existed for relatively deep mining, as well as surface trenching which must have been much more common.

So, should we look more closely at Shropshire sites to see if any pre-Roman mining took place?

Archival evidence is out of the question so we are left with examination of physical remains. Perhaps Llanymynech is the obvious place to start since it is unquestionably ancient and was worked for copper ore.

Folklore often associates old mines with the Romans and perhaps we have been guilty of complacency by the finds of Roman coins, etc.

We should ask ourselves why the Romans chose that particular site and, if copper ore was exposed at surface, wouldn't our Bronze Age ancestors have noticed this also? It seems logical to assume that they may have carried out surface trenching and (based on recent findings elsewhere) possibly underground mining as well. An existing mine site would have been an attractive proposition for the Romans to take over, especially with a skilled local workforce.

What about other sites? It is tempting to draw a parallel with Alderley Edge where malachite was found in Triassic Sandstone. We have identical strata in the series of inliers at Weston, Grinshill, Pym Hill and Nescliffe. Copper mining took

place during the 19th century at the first three sites - could they have re-worked older mines as at Alderley Edge? Have we ever checked the Nescliffe inlier to see if there are traces of copper mining?

The metalliferous mines around Shelve are other possibilities but it depends on whether the copper ores were sufficiently shallow.

Examples of old surface trenching do exist but this type of extraction took place right up to relatively recent times. It is impossible to date a grassed-over trench without archaeological excavation and discovery of an item which can be radio-carbon dated (or subjected to a newer technique of examining rings in wood).

One clue might be the existence of an adjacent Bronze Age settlement - particularly important sites may even have had fortifications. I think we should look closely at potential sites and use archaeological techniques to investigate the date of original working. We could usefully liaise with local history or archaeological societies who probably already have this information and may be interested in a joint project.

A quick check of the map around Weston/Grinshill provides some initial leads to follow up, viz.

516271 Ancient Earthworks (What date?)

547272 Tumulus (What date?)

558254 Rutunium Roman Settlement (why here? Roman mining?)

577275 Bury Walls Hill Fort (Iron Age? built on an earlier site?).

The Great Orme Exploration Society has shown that a small local group can make important finds. If we do the same, it should be possible to interest the County Archaeological Officer in arranging for professional back-up.

Pre-Roman Mining in Shropshire cont..

I would be interested in hearing from anyone who would like to get involved in such a project. Also, from anyone who has heard or seen the following at the previously mentioned sites:

Shallow trenching
Firesetting
Stone hammer heads

Adjacent Bronze Age settlements
Local rumours of "Ancient" mining.

Adrian Pearce

News Round-Up 2 by Kelvin Lake

New Name

With effect from 1st May 1991, the Montgomeryshire Caving Club will become known as the Mid-Wales Caving Club.

This is due to confusion arising from Montgomeryshire - which is Powys, which is Mid-Wales, being misinterpreted with the town of Montgomery. The club officers remain the same.

Capper Pass Smelter

RTZ are to close their Capper Pass tin smelter on Humberside, due to the low price of tin. This smelter has a world-wide reputation for its ability to smelt low grade tin concentrates (20% metal) and tin in waste products.

Originally established in Bristol in 1830, and moved north in 1937.

The closure of the smelter could do more to destroy hopes of a future British tin mining industry than the actual mine closures.

New Rescue Group

The West Cornwall Mine Rescue Group have now become fully operational and are working with the Devon CRO on joint rescue practices.

Daren Cilau Rescue Report

The Daren Cilau Rescue Working Party Report was published earlier this year, based on two rescue practices held there. The comprehensive report covers both general and specific actions and tactics to be employed at Daren.

A useful addition to the Club Library?

Wheal Jane Update

Unless the leisure development takes place on the surface at Wheal Jane, to help fund pumping then the mine will be allowed to flood after major items of equipment have been salvaged.

Wheal Jane is one of the wettest mines in the world and once flooded is unlikely to be work again.

Parys Mountain Snags

Anglesey Mining appear to be running in to problems with the financial backing needed to bring its Parys Mountain mine into production.

Hopefully this is a temporary set back, due to the money men having "jitters in the market" or some such technical reason.

BOOKS

Discounts

I have become aware that it is possible to obtain generous discounts by purchasing three or more copies of publications. To this end profits are made by the Club and unless stipulated by the Author a 10% discount (assuming no postage charges) is available to Club Members. The following may be purchased through the Club:-

***Rob Vernon & John Bennett,**

"Mines of Gwydyr Forest", Part 1 : £4.95
Part 2 : £6.25

Soon to be published, Part 3

(*All proceeds go to the Club)

D.Bick - all titles currently in print, plus soon to be published:

"Metal Mines of Mid-Wales Part 6"

G.W.Hall, "Gold Mines of Merioneth", 2nd Edition : £7.95

"An interesting book, and in particular, some of the photographs of dressing mills and Britten Pans are worth studying - those featured on page 60 are currently at the Forestry Commission visitor centre, Maesgwm (SH 715 276)."

KL

Kent Underground Research Group,
"Kent & East Sussex Underground" : £5.95

R. Callender - "Gold in Britain" : £4.95

"This is an excellent publication, well written and easy to read (which is more than can be said for my writing!), with geological facts and historical information."

Mike Moore

Other Titles

"The Beauty of Grinshill Sandstone" - a glossy pamphlet produced by ECC Quarries Ltd., Grinshill Stone Quarry, Clive, Shrewsbury SY4 3LF

Mining History Handbook 1991

A5 softback publication, 70 pages, gives details of all Members of the National Association of Mining History Organisations (including the SCMC and 20 mining museums). The cover picture is of Tankerville Mine, drawn by our very own Malcolm Newton. Price £3.50 (the book, not Malcolm). Copies are available from Mike Moore. Interestingly enough, while addresses for all the Clubs, Museums and Firms are given, there does not appear to be one for NAMHO !!

Ivor Brown

If you wish to order any of the above or other titles then contact:

Mike Moore

Letters to the Editor

Some comments on the last issue of "Below".

(a) The 1851 Census Analysis, care is needed in interpretation as administration boundaries have changed. In 1851 Shropshire included parts of the Black Country around Halesowen.

(b) Request for Grid Refs. etc. I have searched for the mines listed for many years, before providing R.Burt with the references for his list. No suc-

cess. I think some of the mines listed (eg: Rhysnant) were mistakenly included in the National Records for Shropshire, but Hazelor Copper Mine could be in Church Stretton as there's an area called Hazler, including Hazler Road, Crescent, Drive and Orchard, there are also records of copper mines in that area.

Ivor Brown

Places and Activities of interest

Event of the Year

Yes it's that time again .. the Club Annual Dinner. Once again it is being held at the **Radbrook Hotel Carvery**, Shrewsbury, on **Saturday 28th September**.

The guest speaker is Lynn Willies of P.D.M.H.S. who will talk about his travels and the mines in India and the Middle East.

Members will be sent further details in the not too distant future, or you can contact Mike Moore.

Sygun Copper Mine

Open all year round, the Mine has a new "**Sound Experience**" for 1991.

The fascination of history and the wonders of modern-day technology combine to create an unforgettable experience at this Prince of Wales award-winning family attraction, set in the heart of the stunning Snowdonia National Park.

Bookings/inquiries to:
Sygun Copper Mine, Beddgelert, Caernarfon,
Gwynedd, LL55 4NE
Telephone: 076686 585
24 Hour infoline: 076686 564

If you have not visited this mine before, it is well worth it. You can also combine a visit with a walk over the mountain to Llwynddu (OS. ref: 606 483), an interesting copper mine site that was worked for about 6 years in the late 1830's-40's, and has a variety of surface remains. Not far from here (603 472) are a series of steel towers - all that remains of the Cwmbychan ropeway down the valley.

The area makes interesting walking, with numerous trails and levels dotted around the mountain - so take care!

Kelvin

Cave Rescue Conference 1991

Derbyshire C.R.O. are holding a Cave Rescue Conference over the weekend 13th. & 14th. July at Pindale Farm, Castleton, Derbyshire.

A varied programme has been arranged and the total cost including meals and entertainment is £12 (accommodation extra). As places are limited if you are interested in going Book early.

I have a booking form, or you can contact:
Dave Gough, 26 Lodge Road, Newthorpe, Nottingham, NG16 2AZ (Tel: 0773 714552)

1992 International Cave Rescue Conference

The South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation will be host to the 1992 International Cave Rescue Conference at the SWCC Hostel at Penwyllt, South Wales from 23rd. to 30th August 1992.

Accommodation for delegates will in local Adventure Centres with transport laid on to and from the venue.

Assistance is welcome from individuals and other rescue organisations, as are ideas and suggestions. A particular requirement is for cavers with linguistic skills to help with translation.

If there is any way in which you can help, please contact:

B. Jopling, 31 Holbeche Road,
Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B75 7LL, (Tel:
021 378 1936)

Gaping Gill Winch Meet 25 May 1991

Members present: Steve Holding, Peter Ward, S. Ward, Peter Eggleston, Andy Harris, Mike Moore, Tom West, Vicky Gamblin, Alan Robinson.

The group met at 9.00 in Clapham. Alan and Vicky opted for the route through Disappointment Pot, Steve and Peter E. entered via the winch. The remainder went into the system through Barr Pot.

On arrival at the winch site we booked in for the "Open air lift" and wandered down to the entrance of Barr Pot, where upon several 8½ stone weaklings proceeded to get themselves stuck in the entrance squeeze and the only method of getting through was jumping on each others shoulders!

Various comments were made by Peter Ward who felt it would be difficult to return that way and had **NO** intention of exiting via the winch. It was observed that Moore being twice the size of the midgets in the previous group would not get through. At this point our "**hero**" (?) demonstrated how it should be done and simply wriggled through without assistance!!

This weekend was run by the Bradford Potholing Club who set all the pitches for SRT so the map was followed. After various discussions and the superb but slippery trip (Moore had smooth soles

and worn out boots) the abseil of about 100 foot down Barr Pot is probably one of the best of its kind, and worth while doing.

Route finding became a bit of a problem until one of several other parties appeared and pointed us in the right direction.

After several hundred yards of squatting and kneeling, Tom was heard to say with glee "*its walking from now on*" - as another party appeared from a side passage and could be seen moving quickly. It was only when fully in view that the eight year olds and three exhausted adults appeared that the error of his comment was seen!

Not long afterwards the main chamber was reached and marked by the orange glow of flood-lights the scene was quite eerie, completely amazing and needs to be seen to be believed.

Mud Hall was also visited as were various side passages. The queue at this time for the winch was one hour long. Although by the time Alan and Vicky reached the Chamber it was up to 2 hours!

No doubt repeat trips will be made to Gaping Gill, if you haven't been yet, it is really worth going next time.

Mike Moore

Cefn Coed Colliery Museum

This museum, situated on the site of the former Cefn Coed Colliery - once the deepest anthracite mine in the world, portrays the story of the men and machines involved in mining coal at the site. The main features of the site are a large steam winder (turned by electric now), an intact boiler house, and a mock underground gallery.

Open through-out the year but with reduced hours in the winter. Admission: Adults £1.00, Children & OAP's 60p.

Address: Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, Blaenant Colliery, Crynant, Neath, West Glamorgan. Telephone: 0639 - 750556

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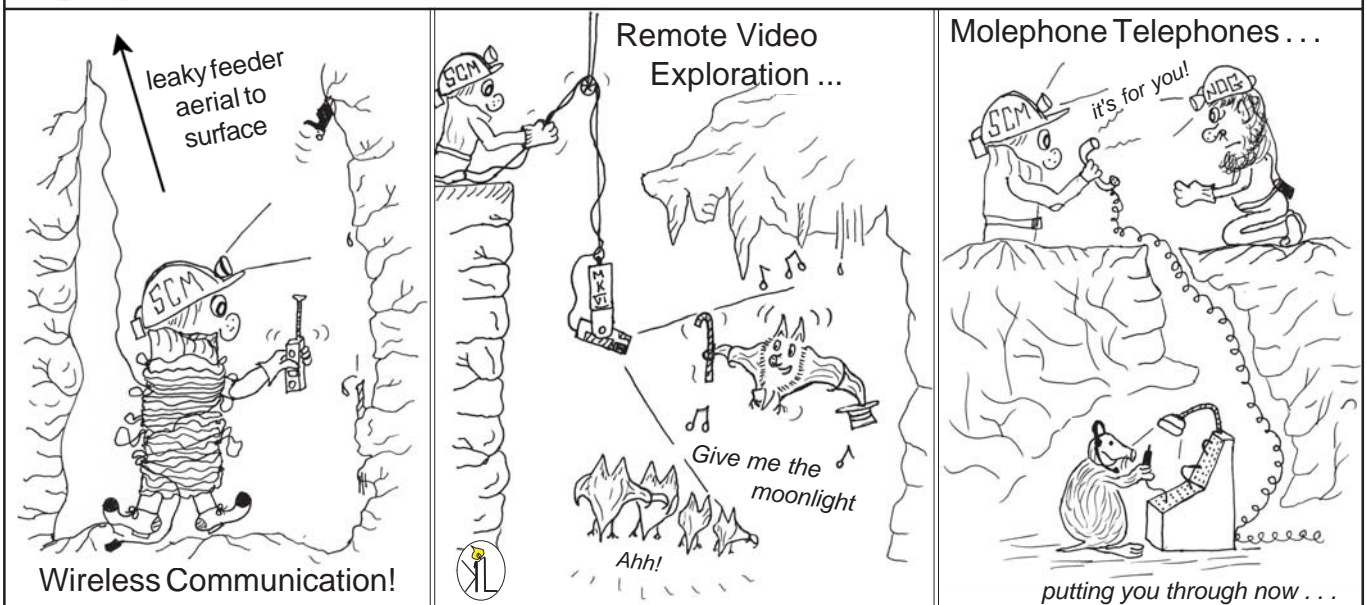
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Smidgin: Modern Technology Underground

13



Catch us on the World Wide Web. Club activities & the labyrinth: <http://www.shropshirecmc.org.uk/>