

### NAHMO Field Meet

If you are reading this during the Field Meet, welcome to Shropshire, on behalf of the SCMC. I hope you enjoy the weekend, and find the workshops and activities laid on beneficial. On a sad note, make the most of Snailbeach, it may be the last time you'll be able to get underground!

### Club Clothing

As mentioned at the last Club Meeting, we are arranging to have a range of sweat shirts and T-shirts printed with the Club logo, if you have not yet ordered one or three, then please contact Kelvin as soon as possible - if you have lost your order form don't let this hold you back. There is a reasonable range of garment styles, colours and sizes on offer, I am certain we have just the thing for you ...

### Due to Visit Ireland?

For those considering a caving trip in County Clare, I'll draw up some sketches and notes, based on facts discovered on the Club's recent Irish trip, which might make it easier to locate some of the cave entrances.

Finding suitable places to park is sometimes awkward with narrow lanes and soft verges.

It is very important that you heed the guidebook warnings on caves prone to flooding (see the report on page 2, for more details).

*Alan Robinson*

### Snailbeach Accident

No don't go rushing off, it happened a little while ago, in fact almost 100 years ago to be precise.

In "Country Quest", May 1992 issue there is an article on the 6th March 1895 accident at Snailbeach when a winding rope broke, causing the cage to fall down the shaft killing 7 miners.

### Codes of Practice

There are currently 3 NAMHO codes of practice available as folded A4 leaflets covering:

Mine Exploration, Removal of Artefacts, and Mineral Collecting at Disused Mines.

While members have been given copies of the first one, it is worth reading the other 2.

If you would like to see what you should be doing, then Adrian has copies available in the Library.

Just as I was putting this issue to bed, the latest copy of Speleo Scene May/June arrived (20th June) with an advert for the 1992 Cavers Fair to be held at The Royal Forest of Dean College, near Coleford, Gloucestershire on the 10th-12th July.

The Fair will feature; seminars, trade stands, rescue service displays, rescue race, competitions, training, Club displays, field trips and a Saturday night stomp.

### Winch Site

After extensive searches throughout the length and breadth of the County a potential site for testing the Club winch (available soon) has been identified - Ramsdens Shaft. The shaft has good hard ground around the top, is accessible from all sides, seems to be in good condition (concrete lined at the top) - apart from odd girders across it, but when your knee caps have been knocked off once, it won't matter the second time!

To ascertain the full story, sometime after the NAMHO field meet the MineCam will be lowered down to check things out and see if it is safe.

Club records indicate that the shaft is still open to 420 feet, with access to the Boat Level, although last time Club members descended the shaft they were so knackered after the 420 foot ladder climb, they didn't have the strength left to explore the levels ... this time it will be different!

### 1992 Cavers Fair

Activities available will include: SRT, Cave Photography, Underground Video, Geology, Hydrology, Dowsing, Diving, Digging, Surveying, Climbing, ladder work, bolting etc.

If you are interested I have a booking form or contact:

"Caver's Fair 1992",  
NCA, FREEPOST,  
Leyland, Preston PR5 2BR.

*Kelvin*

## Ireland Caving Easter Jaunt '92

Once again the opportunity arose for us to find out what the 'C' in SCMC really stood for! "What NO mines" they cried. Well not quite, but some of us were determined to try and do a bit of caving too.

For security reasons we arrived in Ireland under the cover of darkness on three separate ferries. Each group swearing that they were the one and only Shropshire Caving Group visiting the Emerald Isle. Surprisingly, it was raining when we arrived, but this brief shower only lasted a week, so we made the most of it.

Anyway, back to the story in hand. On a fine Easter Sunday afternoon our brave group of 6 tentatively stepped its way across to Fisherstreet pot. This is the bottom entrance to the Doolin cave, which we were rigging as an exit for the through trip from St. Catherines swallet. Bumped into some Cambridge University CC lads who were going to take a mountain bike down the 12 metre pitch (!) They had caved quite a lot with my brother - so this probably explains everything. Orpheus were also doing a trip in the system, but we never saw anything of them.

At the top end of the cave the stream enters through crawling passage ending in an interesting Meco sized squeeze. Well, in truth slightly smaller than that! With our group now down to 5, we emerged into a dodgy looking collapse chamber and then started to gallop our way down the streamway.

Navigation is easy throughout - just follow the water. If the streamway becomes too tight then there is usually an alternative oxbow to follow. Another first for me was to see a white eel in the stream disturbed by our unruly splashing. As luck would have it, he was less than a foot long, and didn't seem to have any big brothers. A disconcerting thought when you've been told the last section before Fisherstreet pot is crawling in a foot of cold water (possibly infested by giant albino eels, with attitudes!).

Our exit was followed by a celebratory meal of Easter Sunday cheese and ham toasties, washed down with a pint or three of Guinness.

Flushed with our initial success, on Monday morning we went in search of Fournarooska.... by 4 p.m. we'd found it! The wind and rain in the meantime was demonstrating to us what 3,000 miles of Atlantic ocean was all about. A quick mutiny by myself and others went in favour of finding some of the other entrances to the systems we hoped to visit over the week. This proved none too easy, but perseverance on everybody's part persuaded Cara and Steve Holding to venture out into the storm.

These efforts were rewarded with two good trips into the Poulmagollum-Pouelva system. On a first visit we split into two teams for a sortie down from Poulmagollum pot. Vicky and myself made up the 'A' Team (need I say more) with special responsibilities for not carrying any tackle. Team 'B' were the porters, consisting of Cara and the two Steves. It was their task to be encumbered with the ladders and tackle sacks. Both parties entered Gatmans' cave then split up. 'A' went down the Canyon and into the Mainstreamway - fine walking passage. Meanwhile the porters had to grovel their way along the flat out bedding crawl of the Muddy Link to Upper Branch Passage. Branch Passage is a streamway that feeds into the mainstreamway, allowing us to make a circular tour. Both parties met up at a ladder pitch upstream of the Main Junction of Branch Passage and Mainstreamway. The formations of flowstones in Branch Passage are excellent in the high rifts.

Trip 2 was from Poulmagollum Pot down to the Pouelva pothole and back. This followed some significant downpours the day before and foam and flood debris was evident. At Main Junction the archway had sumped during the night, but water levels had fallen considerably by the time we entered. It was still quite a bit higher than on our

earlier visit, with a number of 'new' inlets flowing. A little trepidation is probably very healthy when caving in this part of Ireland and it was a real relief to see bright blue skies 35 metres above us when we emerged at Pouelva.

The route from the streamway to Pouelva isn't very complicated, but a read through a guidebook and nose at the survey is essential. A few arrows marked IN and OUT were also spotted, however on a couple of occasions we had to work things out by elimination. Still, unless you're up to your nostrils in water that's part of the fun of this cave. Once we knew the route we were able to retrace our steps back to the entrance in about an hour and a half. I am sure the locals can do this a lot quicker, especially if you run the open sections. Did I mention the crawling.... No? Well, there's some crawling. Enough said. As an added bonus to this trip it was dry whilst we were changing upon our exit. It started raining again 30 seconds after we got into the car. That's the luck of the English in Ireland, I suppose - normally, if it wasn't for the bad luck I wouldn't have any luck at all, at all. SORRY.

We revisited Fournarooska again (before the trip to Poulmagollum) for a really wet trip. It's a tight rift streamway cave, with some very sharp rock. This makes for an excellent descent through cascades, ramps and flowstone ducks. Towards the bottom of the cave the stream turns right down the Wet pitches, which looked more like a raging torrent to me. Beyond this it was possible to traverse on easy ledges above the small stream leading to the Dry pitches. More our sort of thing, but we couldn't find an easy point for descent. The trip out was also quite exciting as the stream had risen a couple of inches giving us some good exercise climbing back against its flow. Cara was particularly impressed, showing us how easy it was to be washed back down the steep, tight cascades. A must for any visit to this area for caving.

*Alan Robinson*

# Stillingfleet Rescue

Eight miners were rescued from Stillingfleet Mine, Yorkshire, part of the Selby complex after a 15 hour rescue. The men were trapped at 4.30pm on Monday 6th April, by a roof fall in a mile long development heading. The fall occurred 218 yards from the cutting face behind the miners.

The collapse, 16 feet thick completely filled the 12ft. high, 16 ft. wide tunnel. The trapped men broke open the compressed air pipe to obtain fresh air which was pumped into the pipe by the rescuers. Communication was possible through the fall via the tannoy system.

The operation to free them involved 4 teams of 3 men from the mines rescue

centres at Selby and Doncaster, working in 10 minute shifts to clear away debris from a bottom corner of the fall. After 5 hours the rescuers had managed to dig a small hole which allowed them to pass through drinks and sandwiches.

However progress was hampered when a large boulder blocking the way, moved causing a further roof fall of shale and rock.

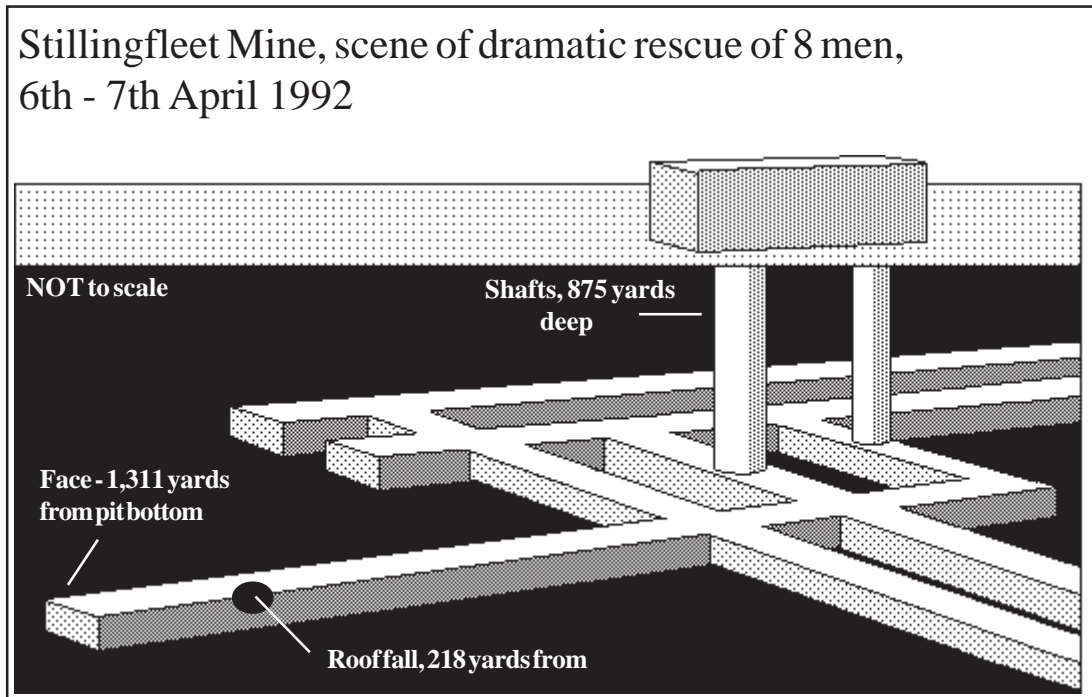
Stillingfleet is the UK's sixth safest mine and the second safest in the Selby coalfield since it came on stream, according to latest accident figures.

Only one man has died there underground since production began 4 years ago.

## Selby

The £1.4 billion development at Selby, the largest deep mine complex in Europe, covers 110 square miles between Selby and York and comprises 5 "Superpits", linked underground, with conveyers feeding coal to a central distribution point where coal is sent to power stations.

Stillingfleet was the third mine in the complex to come into production. It ended its first year by breaking UK and European records for output and productivity from a single face. At the end of December 1991, the mine, operating 2 faces, produced 28.71 tons per man shift - six times the national average.



## Carno Adit Visit, by Alan Robinson

Vicky and I recently took the opportunity to visit Carno Adit. This adit was originally driven to provide a water supply for nearby industry. Despite the guidance of "Expert geologists, from London", water was never found in significant quantities.

However, a number of natural cavities were intercepted, during the drive.

Locating and excavating these caverns has occupied BrynMawr CC over the last 10 years! This has culminated in tremendous progress over the last 18 months.

The entrance to the largest system can be found over 1 MILE, in-by from the adit portal. We only did a small portion of the system, but some of the trips can

be pretty murderous - 15 or 16 hours long. All our thanks should go out to Bill Gascoigne who has been involved with exploration from the beginning and guided us on the day. The potential for major extensions and the known length of the cave is rapidly expanding (it's always wrong by the time it gets to Press).

Access must be by prior arrangement.

# News Round-up 1

## by Ivor Brown

### Brickworks Close

Lightmoor Brickworks closed in October 1991, it was the last of many in the Ironbridge Gorge Area (although Blockleys remains elsewhere in the coalfield). Lightmoor Brickworks was supplied with clay from underground mines even in the 1940's. Jabbs Leasow Mine was a supplier as were a number of much later steel arched adits still explorable in the 1950's.

### Limestone Report

The Third Annual Report by the DoE. Limestone Advisory Panel, published in August 1991 gives the research and backfilling situation of the Shropshire mines as follows:-

- (a) Benthall, Wrekin, Bridgnorth and Caughley, initial appraisal concluded; no investigation needed.
- (b) Lilleshall Stage 2 investigation in progress, feasibility study on possible dewatering completed, minor emergency works completed.
- (c) Lincoln Hill - infilling completed.
- (d) Steeraway Stage 1 investigation complete.

### Surveyors Conference

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors recently held a conference in Telford on Telford - the Story of a Coalfield. Papers were given on its mineral wealth, Lincoln Hill Mine infilling, Opencast mining in Telford, Derelict Land and Reclamation in Telford. A copy of all the papers is available on loan from IJB.

### Germany Revisited

IJB returned to South Germany again in April. Managed to visit another cave in Schwabishe Alb (see article in "Below", Dec. 1990). Nebelhohle Cave is a large stream passage in Jurassic Limestone, many formations but not colourful. 400 yard long self-guided tour. Nearby is

another tourist cave called Baarehohle, very similar but famous as site of excavation for 'bear bones' etc. Also visited a working salt mine at Heilbronn near Stuttgart. 35 men produce 4 million tonnes per year from pillar and stall mechanised workings. Mine also contains many typical salt sculptures of 1920-30 era, domed dining halls, churches and miners slides.

### Gypsum Mine & Others

Recent visits by IJB in UK include Fauld Gypsum Mine, Staffs - site of 1940's explosion, when up to 200 were killed including villagers on surface (hushed up because of the War) and Hayroyds Private Coal Mine near Denby Dale. The owners (Flacks) have recently drained old coal workings and brought to light workings 70 years old and a complete run of 10 trucks containing supplies for the miners - timber, tools etc. Some items have now gone to Caphouse Mining Museum (which has been affected recently by 'gas' being forced out of recently closed mines as the water rises. A problem that is occurring all over the UK).

### Snailbeach

Work is underway at conserving the compressor house at Snailbeach and

the area around the workshop has been cleared of ivy (large sections of the workshop wall have also been taken down including the chimney, Ed.). Clearing the ivy has given a much clearer view of the building and the 18th century enginehouse attached.

### Help Wanted

Bill Huxley (Telephone: 0782-566043), is seeking photographs and details of the Ruston Steam Shovel and RB No.4 Shovel that are believed to have been used in coal and stone getting by Coalmoor Basalt Co Ltd., Shropshire.

### New Publications

No.150, Life in a small mining community, Cuckoo Oak, Shropshire 1944-1954, by IJB in Bulletin, PDMHS Vol. 11, No.4 Winter 1991, p183-188.

No. 151, Mineral Wealth of Coalbrookdale Coalfield, by IJB, Proc. RICS Conference 1992, pp1-12.

### Note:

Copies of the complete collection of papers by IJB 1962 to present - 152 in all are now available in IGMT Library and in Shropshire County Archive.

### Union Coal Buy-out

Pit managers and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers have opened negotiations to mount a £500 million joint bid to buy British Coal.

Plans for the business from would-be owners must be with Mr. Heseltine, President of the Board of Trade, by June 22.

Lloyds Merchant Bank are advising the Union and it is hoped that the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers. East Midlands Electricity and Budge (the private mining company) would join the consortium.

Other potential buyers for the industry include Hanson, and RTZ. All concerned are anxious to discover if the Government plans a 'single' sale or whether they intend to split the industry up.

The UDM has already said that if they owned the industry they would have to close pits and axe jobs because the market for fuel was shrinking. So we are likely to see a further reduction in the number of working mines from the current 49 pits and 45,000 miners.

The NUM, at the moment is refusing to be drawn into any Privatisation deals with the UDM etc.

## Snailbeach Rescue Practice, 6/6/92

Members present: Steve Holding, Neal Rushton, Stuart Tomlins, Andy Harris, Alan Taylor, Colin Armfield, Kelvin Lake, Pete Etchells, Mike Moore (Surface Co-ordinator), Pete Ward, Mark Stanton (Mid-Wales)

It was thought prudent to perform a trial rescue from Snailbeach prior to the NAMHO field meet, just in case!

The main emphasis was on techniques, planning, hauling positions, rigging etc.. So there was no devilish Pearce "Scenario", just the plain aim of trying to raise a stretcher from the intermediate level (below Roberts), followed by a carry to the bottom of the Sheep Shaft.

Neal practised his usual knit-one, pearl-one technique of pitch head rigging to produce a delightful spiders web of ropes which incorporated the Club logo, a design for a new 'Shark Oversuit' and from certain angles members are certain they could discern the face of Christ!

While the rigging for the stretcher was taking place (shape?), other team members took the opportunity to install bolts and hand lines in readiness for the field meet. Pete Etchells also tried out a new Mega-lux light to help him take underground photographs using light painting techniques, unfortunately the lamp went "ping" before a full field test could be made.

Back to business... the stretcher haul, with Andy Harris as jockey, and Steve Holding passing whistle commands, (from the intermediate level up to the haulers in Roberts Level) went surprisingly well. Some of the problems envisaged up the sand slope were not encountered, although if the stretcher contained a real person, rather than rocks things might have been a little different.

As time was pressing it was decided to heap all the tackle that was not wanted on the journey out, onto the stretcher - probably making the weight a bit more

realistic!

As Mark Stanton had claimed to be not equipped for water, but capable of taking it anyway (they breed them tough in Mid-Wales), Neal mercilessly picked him to stand in the water under the rail to take the weight of the stretcher as it was hauled over.

The rock slope was the next major problem - a return pulley being established near the top, the stretcher on one side and Pete Ward and Colin on the other. As they walked backwards (!) down the rock slope, so the stretcher was lifted and moved forward. Whistle commands were initially used. At one point frantic puffing from Neal, demonstrated the simple fact that when giving whistle commands it helps to actually have the whistle in your mouth.

Again the haul up the rock slope went very well, although Pete ward probably lost about 3 stone in sweat, running up and staggering down the slope about 15 times before the stretcher was actually at the top.

On the trip up to the bottom of Sheep Shaft, a handline is essential for the stretcher party as they make their way up the slope to the iron ladder. Once in the chamber at the bottom of the shaft, things get a little easier, although the jockey up the shaft does need to keep the head of the stretcher out from the wall, particularly near the over-hang, to prevent things from jamming.

A useful day, which enabled a range of techniques to be tried, and illustrated the problems in rescue from Snailbeach.

Any serious victims much further down into the mine, say on the 40 yard level, would have to come out via Chapel Shaft if they were to stand any chance of survival... that's the dilemma... unless Steves drafting stope by Black Tom holds the answer.

*Kelvin*

## News Round-Up 2

### Littleton Accident

Mr. John Brotherton, of Oswestry, Shropshire died in an underground accident at Littleton Colliery, Cannock on Wednesday 17th June after he was crushed between a conveyer belt and the roof. Mr. Brotherton was on a man riding conveyer, but somehow travelled past the safety gate at the end of the belt and became trapped.

British Coal have launched an enquiry into why the safety gate did not operate correctly.

### Chunnel Firms in Court

The five construction companies, that make up the Transmanche Link Consortium building the British end of the Channel Tunnel are being prosecuted by the Health & Safety Executive over the death of Mr. Keith Lynch from Retford, Notts, last year.

Mr. Lynch was the fourth of seven workmen to who have lost their lives on the project so far.

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## Foreign Mines

### Norway

Three mine workers were killed, on the 4th May, in an abandoned copper mine in Nordland, Northern Norway, when the wagon they were in plunged 2,500 ft. down an inclined shaft.

The men were part of a 20 strong team securing shafts and tunnels and salvaging equipment from the Sulitjлма mine.

### China

A gas explosion in a coal mine in Heilongjiang province killed 28 people, according to a recent Chinese radio report.

## The Club, The Tar Tunnel and The Ironbridge Gorge Museum

During the 1950's there were several collectors of mining memorabilia active in the Coalbrookdale Coalfield, among these were the late Howard Williams and the present writer. Indeed this writer's notebooks on the history of local mining go back to 1951 and his first literary effort in the field was in 1956. At this time the N.C.B. asked the writer to produce a brochure on the history of Madeley Wood Colliery for distribution to visitors<sup>1</sup>. By 1960 many of these "collectors" had got together within the 'Shropshire Mining Club'. From these early days the Shrewsbury Museum gave support, originally through Mr. J.Hobbs, but later through Mr.R.James.

The editor of the Shropshire Magazine was also an unwitting supporter of the mining group as she encouraged the present writer to produce articles on mining history. No less than 12 appeared in a series in her monthly magazine between January 1962 and May 1966<sup>2</sup>. Howard Williams was busy too, but his interest was mainly in the railways and canals. However on 13th. November 1964 these two enthusiasts came together to give a talk at Newport organised by the Shropshire Mining Club. This talk and discussion went on for over 3 hours and eventually it was decided to see if a major exhibition could be staged on the industrial history of the area.

### 1964-65

In June 1964 the Shropshire Mining Club began publishing its monthly newsletter with the writer as editor, from that time there was a heavy sprinkling of items regarding the preservation of mining relics in the Coalbrookdale area with news of artefacts found, expeditions to various sites and of the constant stream of visiting industrial archaeologists touring the area.

Things began to move fast, the Rock Mine at Ketley closed and the Club salvaged it, both underground and surface, during the winter of 1964/5.

Ron James agreed that the collection should form the nucleus of a major exhibition to be held in Shrewsbury. Later in June 1965, an "Exhibition of the industrial history of Dawley New Town" was held in the Art Gallery, Shrewsbury<sup>4</sup> and the heavier relics, hand winches, mine wagons and Siskol Coal Cutter attracted particular attention. Much of this material had been on show in a special display of mining at the Dawley Development Corporation's Exhibition Room (27th May to 2nd June 1965).

While the Shrewsbury exhibition was being prepared, the Tar Tunnel was re-discovered by the writer. An 18th Century tunnel, still accessible for nearly 1,00 yards, seemed the perfect answer to the problem of where to permanently display the mining artefacts. Consideration was now definitely being given to opening up a show-mine.

By this time both the County Council and the Dawley Development Corporation had working parties considering what should be done with the industrial relics of the area. Ron James and J.Horsley-Denton were leading members of the Council group (active since 1963), while the Corporation's group involved among others Ceri Griffiths (the Architect/Planner) and G.Brook-Taylor of the Social Development Section.

The setting-up of an Open Air Museum based on the Gorge had been mooted in November 1964 by Michael Rix, in an article on "National Display Parks of Industrial Archaeology", but the actual site was still very much a matter for discussion. In April 1965 the County Council Working Party came down strongly in favour of using the Blists Hill Furnace Site<sup>3</sup> although they did not know anything about the presence of the Tar Tunnel beneath. The writer and the Shropshire Mining Club saw this as an opportunity to push for their pet project, the Tar Tunnel mining museum and store.

On 31st. July 1965 a meeting was held at

Madeley Vicarage to consider the setting up of a museum in the Tar Tunnel and a visit to the Tunnel followed during the evening. Present at the meeting were the host Rev.A.Lord (Vicar of Madeley), Mr.C.Griffiths and Mr.J.Cuffley of the Development Corporation and the writer. It was agreed that the Corporation should seek to purchase the tunnel entrance, make it secure and provide access to interested parties.

Arrangements were also made for a weekend exhibition of some of the larger exhibits. Using equipment supplied by the Corporation a display was later staged in The Square at Ironbridge, manned by members of the Shropshire Mining Club.

Also in July 1965, the writer and others showed members of the Newcomen Society around the area, they looked at all the potential museum sites during the day and several members were most impressed by what they saw. One visitor, Michael Rix, the "father" of the term 'industrial archaeology' asked for a more detailed look and this was arranged a few weeks later.

### 1966

The collection of mining relics had now grown considerably, the Club's newsletter of July 1966<sup>5</sup> pointed out how it had now become scattered. Many objects remained in private hands, while the heavy items were still at Shrewsbury Museum, smaller items in glass cases at the County Library annexe at Coalbrookdale and most of the books and documents were with the County Record Office.

In November 1966, the consultants for the New Town, John H.D. Madin and Partners, had, in a report<sup>6</sup> come down heavily in favour of setting up an open air museum in the New Town. The problem remained however of which site should form the nucleus. During 1966 the writer and others had begun to put greater emphasis on the value of the Blists Hill site and the Tar Tunnel.

## The Club, The Tar Tunnel and The Ironbridge Gorge Museum, part 2

Forexample:

- (a) In January 1966 the writer published a combined reprint from recent articles in the Bulletin of PDMHS. Entitled "The Mineral Wealth of Coalbrookdale" <sup>7</sup> this booklet proved most popular and created a considerable amount of interest.
- (b) In October 1966 the writer published the second of two articles on the Rock Fireclay Mine at Ketley in the Shropshire Magazine <sup>8</sup>. This dealt with the salvaging of the artefacts from the mine and expressed concern for their future. (One of the owners of the mine, Councillor I. Jones was now Deputy Chairman of the New Town Corporation and a useful ally in the battle for the Tar Tunnel).
- (c) On 11th November 1966 the writer gave the Annual Lecture to the Coalbrookdale Archives Association on "the mining remains in the Coalfield". Over 60 persons were present and great interest was shown in the possibility of a mining museum at the Tar Tunnel and at Blists Hill.

Disappointment followed for in December 1966 Jonathan Ansell produced a paper for the Newcomen Society <sup>9</sup> in which he referred to many of the conservation and recording activities then underway but made no reference to the mining project or to a potential site for the museum's display area. Mr. Ansell was involved with the Corporation's research group.

### 1967

During 1967 discussion continued to take place on the likely site for the museum and the Shropshire Mining Club kept up its pressure on the need for a mining input and for the value of the Tar Tunnel to be considered. In May 1967 the writer published an article in the Shropshire Magazine <sup>10</sup> in which he made it clear that Blists Hill would be the best site from the mining point of view. This was perhaps the first time that this choice was put into print in a publicly available publication.

Late in 1967 the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was officially established and before the end of 1967 the Corporation purchased the property in which the Tar Tunnel entrance lay, installing new entrance doors and refurbishing its surroundings the following spring.

### 1968

Still no firm decision seems to have been made on the site for the open air museum, by the middle of 1968 three options remained: the derelict land around the Priorslee, the Lodge and Blists Hill Furnaces respectively.

On 30th September 1968 Barrie Trinder gave a talk to the Shropshire Mining Club outlining the aims of the Museum Trust and indicated the merits of the sites being considered for a museum. The following weekend the Club did a tour of the various sites but later concentrated on the Blists Hill proposal.

Movement was afoot however and it was arranged for the Corporation's Research Group to re-visit the Tar Tunnel in November 1968. By this time Mr. Reg Morton had taken over the leading roll and on Sunday 3rd November 1968 the writer showed members of the Group the Tar Tunnel area. It was explained how the side passages could be opened up to form displays and eventually the mineshaft near the canal at Blists Hill might be reopened to form a further access right in the heart of site. Mr. Morton was very impressed and became even more enthusiastic about the Blists Hill Site. He stated openly that the Tar Tunnel and the opportunity for an underground experience gave Blists Hill a head start over the other options.

Following this the Shropshire Mining Club with the agreement of the Corporation commenced opening up the Tar Tunnel side passages at weekends. By this time the Club represented by David Adams became members of the newly formed Museum advisory group.

### 1969 onwards

In June 1969 the Newcomen Society members held a return visit to the Ironbridge Gorge and this time some of them visited the Tunnel. Later, on the 28th of June 1969, the writer was invited to a meeting with Reg Morton to discuss the potential of the Blists Hill/Tar Tunnel complex as a mining museum.

The decision had now been made, Blists Hill was to be the main site and it was "all systems go". The Shropshire Mining Club had been invited to act as guides for the Tar Tunnel as part of the new Museum's Open Day and on 28th September 1969 over 400 people were taken up the Tunnel using storm lamps and candles!

The Tar Tunnel had been accepted as part of the "Museum" and at the next Open Day, 24th April 1970, it proved an even greater attraction. Over 700 people swamped the guides in the confined spaces of the Tunnel and it was decided that from here on greater safety was the order of the day. No more naked lights and no more over crowding.

In September 1971 the Corporation's working group, now Technical Panel, chaired by Ceri Griffiths produced its report, the blueprint for the Museum <sup>11</sup>. Mining and the tar Tunnel were to be well established parts of the museum's proposals based on the Blists Hill Site.

The efforts of the mining enthusiasts had been rewarded. Had they had any influence on the choice of the site however? The writer strongly believes that it was the presence of the Tar Tunnel that clinched it for Blists Hill and that the correct choice was certainly made. While all the ideas have still not been put into practice good progress has been made. The Tunnel is now open regularly to the public and the Blists Hill shaft equipment is displayed daily. Unfortunately the two features are not yet connected but this still remains one of the aims of the museum.

*Ivor Brown*

## References for: Pages 6 & 7

- (1) Brown I.J. Madeley Wood Colliery, Brochure for N.C.B., 1958.
- (2) Brown I.J. Mining in the Coalbrookdale Coalfield, series of 12 articles in the Shropshire Magazine, January 1962-May 1966.
- (3) James R. and Denton J.H. Proposal for an industrial museum at Blists Hill. Report by members of County Council Working Party, April 1965.
- (4) James R. Dawley New Town Exhibition Catalogue, Shrewsbury Art Gallery, May 1965. (Exhibition open June 12 - July 3rd. 1965).
- (5) Shropshire Mining Club Newsletter, July 1966.
- (6) John Madin & Partners, November 1966.
- (7) Brown I.J. The Mineral Wealth of Coalbrookdale, reprinted from Bulletin of Peak District Mines Historical Society, May 1965 and December 1965 issues.
- (8) Brown I.J. The History of the Rock Fireclay Mine, Shropshire Magazine, October 1966.
- (9) Ansell J. Coalbrookdale - a problem. Paper produced for the Newcomen Society, 12 December 1966.
- (10) Brown I.J. The Tar Tunnel and the Blists Hill Mines, Shropshire Magazine, May 1967.
- (11) Technical Panel, Ironbridge Gorge Museum. A Technical Report - A Museum in the Making, September 1971.

*Ivor Brown*

### “Into the Thick”

The Black Country Museums new mining exhibit, “Into the Thick”, was opened at Easter.

Telling the story of Black Country mining through the ages. It makes use of ‘personalities’ to introduce the visitor to different eras (in a similar way that talking dummies are used in Dudley Tunnel). Henry Johnson, a 19th century mining engineer, who founded the exhibits sponsors (Johnson Poole and Bloomer) in 1844, introduces the exhibition to the public as they walk round.

## Clive Holes 14/3/92

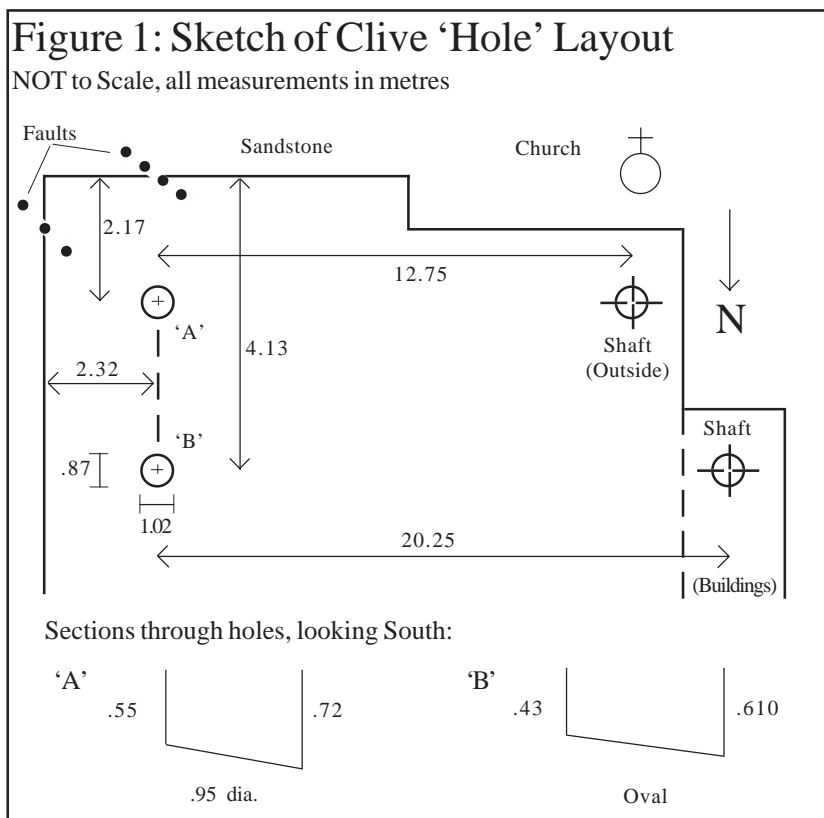
On a recent visit to Clive to view the new caps over the old shafts by Clive cottage, the area in front of the garage had been cleared down to the bed rock. This had exposed the Clive fault quite nicely in the retaining wall of the yard area, plus 2 interesting holes carved out of the solid rock in the yard floor.

The holes seemed too far from the shafts (12 and 20m respectively) to have had anything to do with them, or are they?

Suggestions so far include: soak-aways of some sort, allowing some liquid to drain through the sandstone - although the holes are quite clean, no staining. Postholes, although the bases of the holes are angled so any posts would have lent towards to shafts!

Figure 1, gives you some idea of the layout of the holes and their relationship to the 2 shafts, which were about 30m deep.

Thanks to Nick Southwick for taking down the measurements and drawing up a sketch of the area.



### Underground Films

A National Newspaper recently highlighted the problems Sid Perou has been having in getting permission to film the newly-discovered extension to Peak Cavern, Castleton, for the BBC series “Classic Adventures”.

The Duchy of Lancaster who are the landowners of Peak Cavern are demanding a “substantial fee” before granting permission for the filming. As the extension is the biggest discovery

in British caving for a long while, it is very important that a modern record is made of the cave. Normally permission for filming in caves (and mines) is given without charge, however I suppose it is only logical that the harsh world of “Money” should impinge on harmless low budget pastimes - after all try getting permission to film trains on the Severn Valley Railway and you will be looking for a second mortgage!



## Recent Club Trips

### Snailbeach 21/3/92

Members present; Neal Rushton, Colin and Liz Armfield, Steve Holding and Dig. Plus 7 members of the Dudley Club.

The mine was rigged to the Forty Yard Level for the visit of the Dudley Club.

When the party got down, Neal did some digging under the backfilled stope near the Ore-chute, Steve and one of the Dudley members doing some digging near Black Tom Shaft.

The drafting near Black Tom Shaft was very obvious, it could be felt and the sound of wind heard in two locations - at the end of the level, and at the stope 30 feet back - this stope now appears to be nearly passable. Is this a potential alternative route out/in?

The Dudley Club did quite a bit of video recording using a simple camcorder and three 100watt hand held halogen lamps.

*Steve Holding*

### Clive 22/3/92

At a request from the Mid-Wales Club, Neal Rushton and Steve Holding took a party of four Mid-Wales members through the mine.

Neal took them through the upper workings while Steve rigged both the Maypole Shaft and the South Winze.

Peter and Sandra Ward joined the group and Steve took them and the Mid-Wales members through the crawl (which they all thoroughly enjoyed!).

Mark Stanton (MWCC) suggested they practice ladder work on the Maypole Shaft and confirmed to himself that he did NOT like ladders, while Clive (MWCC) played the "hard-man" prussiking the shaft just using tapes.

*Steve Holding*

## Researchers go Underground

ICL, the British computer firm, plans to save millions of pounds and to steal a march on its rivals with an underground product development facility in Winsford Salt Mine, Cheshire.

The company is renting 12,000 square metres of underground space at the salt mine, where it has set-up a research team testing new products for electromagnetic conformance.

It is claimed that the scheme has already saved the company £1.5 million in development costs and cut testing time by 80%. It cost £1 million to set up.

The increasing levels of background

electromagnetic interference and tougher E.C. regulations that come into effect this year have forced ICL to find more sophisticated research facilities. The advantage of using the salt mine is that it is virtually free of background interference.

ICL are hoping to rent spare capacity at the facility to other hardware development companies, but only those with which ICL collaborates.

Perhaps we could put in a last minute bid for Snailbeach as a high tech computer testing centre, complete with extensive deep water research facility .... do you think we could interest IBM?

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## TRAD 2

Over the weekend 20th to 21st June the Dudley Canal Trust held the TRAD 2 celebrations - Tunnel Re-opening At Dudley.

These celebrations coincided within a day or two, with the 200th anniversary of the original opening of the main Dudley Canal tunnel in 1792.

The previous TRAD held during Easter 1973 celebrated the re-opening of the Dudley Canal Tunnel after abandonment and the end of commercial traffic. A tremendous amount of work was put into re-opening the tunnel during the 1960's and 70's by the Trust, virtually all of it being volunteer labour. This time the repairs have been carried out by contractors and the work financed by British Waterways with the assistance of Dudley MBC.

The tunnel was closed a few years ago to through traffic when the fill in a construction shaft, in the area of the tunnel known as the Gaol, (near the Parkhead End) slumped, distorting the roof and side walls. This area was always difficult to navigate with a boat, as bulges in both the roof and side walls severely restricted the size of boat which could pass. Numerous boats that

ignored the tunnel templates, hanging over the canal at the portals found out the hard way! This area has now been rebuilt and concrete lined, thus improving the tunnel profile.

During 1984 and 1989 when the Canal Trust were instrumental in promoting the construction of brand new tunnels near the Black Country Museum, they came in for a lot of criticism, and were accused of ignoring the main tunnel in favour of "tourist mining". However behind the scenes the Trust have been very active in promoting the complete re-opening of the tunnel and deserve full credit for the various initiatives at Dudley.

Incidentally prior to the opening ceremonies the BWB consulted the Fire Brigade over rescue plans for the tunnel. The Brigade, apparently were horrified, that members of the public would be going underground and have insisted that the boats maintain radio contact with the "outside" world at all times.

While this is possible at the BCM end, as the Canal Trust have a leaky feeder set up, it has effectively meant that through trips are not possible on 'TRAD' day, unless the Trust install telephones every 50 yards!

## Early Mining Sites in Shropshire & Powys?

In a book called "History on the Ground" by A. Bird (1977), he lists the sites of a number of prehistoric finds in Shropshire and Powys. From several of these, a very tenuous connection may be made to possible early mining sites.

A stone axe 'factory' existed to the south of Corndon Hill in the area of NGR: SO 310 953. This worked an outcrop of picrite rock and examples of hammerstones made of this have been found north of Knighton at NGR: SO 274 745 and SO 284 771. In addition, a flint pick was discovered nearby at NGR: SO 296 751. Although these may have been purely for domestic purposes, it is interesting to note that Bronze Age copper mining was carried out by using hammerstones.

I have yet to check the geology of the area north of Knighton but, if copper deposits occur, it may point to an early

exploitation of the mineral. In addition, the 'factory' is just to the west of known copper deposits around Linley and Wentnor but, to my knowledge, no hammerstones have yet been found in this area. Does anyone know different?

To the south-east of Knighton, there is a place called Cwm Copa at NGR: SO 315 717. The author of the book interprets this as referring to a 'coper' or horse dealer. Perhaps another interpretation can be placed on this as a corruption of the word 'copper'.

To add weight to the argument, there is nearby at NGR: SO 3124 715 an Upper Pitts Farm. Perhaps it is just a coincidence but a check on the geology may reveal another possible mining site.

*Adrian Pearce*

## News Round-Up 3

### Natural Wastage

The Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority is spending £20,000 on installing a composting toilet on the Llangattock Hillside. The waste unit will be operated by a solar powered motor. This is the second such toilet installed in Britain though there are quite a lot in the USA.

*Cambrian C.C. Newsletter*

To interject a crude "Carry-on", lavatorial type joke, about the above item - it adds a whole new dimension to the saying "The sun shines out of his/her....."

### Severn Bridge

If you have travelled into Wales recently across the Severn Bridge, you will have discovered that there are new one-way toll charges in operation. Travelling from England to Wales £2.80, Light Vans £5.60, travelling from Wales to England FREE.

Rumours that Wales will be closed on Bank Holidays and Sundays are totally untrue.

### Wet Earth Colliery

This colliery beside the River Irwell in Salford, has been the scene of renewed interest in recent years. Various individuals have been "digging" at the site, exploring several tunnels and underground workings. Of particular interest to historians is work in what is thought to be the original Brindley Tunnel

Brindleys inverted siphon and tunnels under the Irwell, built to supply a waterwheel operating mine pumps, are this mines main claim to fame.

There is a 'trail' around Wet Earth Colliery, the nearby Botany Bay Colliery; the Manchester, Bolton and Bury, and the Fletcher's Canal (built to connect the mines). I am trying to obtain a copy of the trail guide and will let you know when I'm successful.

*Kelvin*

### RSPCA Award

Graham Stark and the Cwmbran CC have been awarded an RSPCA Award for rescuing a dog from a quarry.

It seems the dog had been trapped underground for 2 days. Although the South Wales CRO stress that rescuing animals from holes is not part of their remit.

### Euro-Court Prosecution

Britain faces renewed prosecution in the European Court of Justices for the breaches of E.C. environmental law over Wheal Jane tin mine. Signor Carlo Ripa de Meana, Environmental Commissioner, has persuaded his colleagues to launch proceedings under which the British Government is obliged to justify its actions or face the Court.

### Silica Mine Update

Since the report on the threatened closure of Dinas Silica Mine in the last issue of "Below". Further details have emerged; the area around the mine (and presumably the nearby Gunpowder works) is to be made into an industrial archaeological trail by the Brecon

Beacons National Park and the Forestry Commission. As members of the public are likely to use this I.A. trail, they have to be excluded from the mine (!). Negotiations are underway to get a grilled access provided to allow cavers to continue to use the site for cave-diving training. Presumably Industrial Archaeologists/Mine Historians using the cave would also be allowed to enter the mines if suitably equipped?

### Cornwall of Mine

A newly formed, London based company called "Cornwall of Mine" is offering a range of one-day explorations, short breaks and longer tours for small groups of people around 3 Cornish mining areas; Cambourne/Redruth, St. Austell (for China Clay sites), St. Just/Levant area. If you are interested contact: "Cornwall of Mine Ltd", 24, Pembroke Crescent, London W11 3DS (Tel: 071-229-2616).

If you are a mineral enthusiast they also offer a special range of tours of Devon and Cornwall under the name "Mineral Search".

## Video Tapes

### 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 (90 feet straight down!) without flinching - well almost. Complete with Library case and label for £9.95. (CLUB price).

### A Tour of Clive Mine

Edwin Thorpe brings all his charm and talents to bear as he guides a "newcomer", to this threatened 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 designer library case and matching label. £14.95.

### BCRA Conference

For the weekend 11th to 13th September, 1992. This year's conference is being held at The Richmond Building, University of Bradford. To celebrate the change of venue, the biggest and best Conference ever is planned.

The emphasis this year will be on photography, including a wide range of films, videos and photographic displays. Plus all the usual events (SRT race, blindfolded carbide lamp assembly etc.). Further details available from: Paul Hatherley, 54 High Street, Queensbury, Bradford, BD13 2PA

### Speleology Congress

The Portuguese Speleological Federation is staging the 3rd. National Congress of Speleology and the First meeting of the Volcanospeleology of the Atlantic Islands on Terceira Island in the Azorean Archipelago from 30th September to 4th October 1992. For more details write to the President of the Speleological Exploration Society "Os Montanheiros", Manuel de Aguiar Silva, Rua da Rocha 6/8, 9700 Angra Do Heroismo, Azores Portugal.

*Cambrian C.C. Newsletter*

### Snailbeach

This tapes needs no introduction, since it's launch it has proved very popular, particularly with the inhabitants of Snailbeach - I can't think why !!

Providing a "potted" history of the development of Snailbeach Mine, it features unique underground footage of Club explorations, and is superbly supported by Peter Eggleston's computer graphics. Price: £14.95 (including library case & label).

### Snailbeach:- The Final Frontier

This **compilation** tape (as shown at the 1990 Annual Dinner) follows the exploration of Snailbeach by Club members down as far as "Robert's Level". Price (with library case): £9.95

### Carno Adit Access

On the insistence of the Water Authority, access to this adit for cavers is to be very tightly controlled, only a few named members of Brynmawr Caving Club will hold keys to the entrance gate.

At least one of the key holders must be present during any trip, and be responsible for opening and locking the gate. It is stressed that when ever possible the key holder must actually be underground, while the party is inside.

Visiting cavers will be free to explore, providing they fill in the log book and inform BCC of any finds that they make. The actual party size will not be restricted, but safe caving practices will be insisted upon.

Trips can be arranged by telephoning a key holder and arranging a date and time - you will need to give some notice.

If you are interested in a trip, the telephone numbers will be passed onto Alan Robinson and Adrian Pearce very shortly.

## Club Publications

### Account No.12

*A Survey of the Metal Mines of South Shropshire*

This publication is a revised and updated version by Steve Holding, taking into account a lot of the recent changes to the mine sites in South Shropshire.

65 pages, plus 17 maps/plans (which are legable this time!). Club price £3

### Account No.14

*The Mines of Llanymynech Hill*

Originally written by Dave Adams, as Account No.8, this version has been edited/re-written by Adrian Pearce and includes reference to recent discoveries at ancient mine site, plus 16 B/W photographic plates, and more..

Club price: £3

### 6 Mining Sketches

From the 'pen' of Malcom Newton. These drawings need No explanation, just buy them! Club price: £5

*All tapes and publications are available from the Club, Via Mike Moore (address on back page)*



### Mineral Spot

*Pyromorphite*

Lead Chlorophosphate-arsenate.

Occurs in weathered zones of lead bearing veins. It is formed by oxidation of ore minerals, gangue and wall rock by water. Its crystals assume the shape of the minerals galena and cerrusite, which it replaces (its a pseudomorph). In Pyromorphite, Phosphate is dominant over arsenate, while in the related **mimetite**, arsenate is dominant. Pyromorphite can be green, yellow, brown, orange, red, white or colourless, depending on composition.

Found in many lead producing areas, traces of this mineral can be found at Burgham. Common chemical formula:  $Pb_5(PO_4)_3AsO_4Cl$



