

'95/96 Subscriptions

Your subscription for 1995/96 was due on October 1st 1995, unless you have joined since 31st July, in which case your membership lasts until next year. Please send your payment to the Treasurer Bob Taylor, as soon as possible. The current rates are:
 Full Member: **£15.00**, Family: **£22.00**,
 Junior: **£ 7.00**, Probationary: **£ 7.50**,
 Associate: **£ 8.00**

Unless your subscription is paid, this will be the last Newsletter and Journal you will receive and all except Associates will only receive one further set of minutes/meets list.

Adrian

Annual Journal

The next Annual Journal will be issued to paid up members in January 1996. Please send any contributions, to Adrian by the end of October.

Mining in Shropshire

Members will be pleased to learn that the book has proved to be much more popular than the Publishers originally thought it would be. The first edition has virtually sold-out. In fact sales have been so good that it actually made Waterstones "Book of the Week" list.

STOP PRESS

The proposed 'History of Minor Metals and Minerals Conference' (18th & 19th Nov.) at the Peak District Mining Museum has been cancelled due to a fire that has damaged part of the Mining Museum.

Unlikely Coalfields

There are several areas of Shropshire, known to be geologically unsuitable which have been opened up by the sinking of shafts for coal.

One of the most famous is the area between Marnwood and Buildwas. Another is described in a paper on "Outliers of Lias" by Rev. P.B. Brodie in the Proceedings of Warwickshire Naturalists and Archaeologists Field Club, 1865.

Brodie writes:

" The lower Lias crops out between Moreton Hill and Burley Dam (east of Whitchurch), in many places being bituminous and slaty like

Kimmeridge Coal, and this appearance, no doubt, has led to the numerous, fruitless and foolish trials for coal in the district, and which, while it proved the folly of the adventurers, benefited geologists by exposing the nature of the strata, which in a country thickly covered by drift prevents few satisfactory exposures of the older deposits.

In one instance in this district, shafts were sunk to a depth of 300ft. from which numerous fossils were obtained."

Ivor Brown

The SCMC in Cornwall

I.A. Recordings Compilation No. 29.

This massive compilation follows members of the Club as they explore the incomparable mining remains still to be found in Cornwall, both above and below ground. Mainly recorded during the Club's 1993 Cornish trip, plus a little footage from 1994 (up to a certain point...), it also features material from the I.A. Recordings video archive shot in 1983 and 1987 of sites that have since changed considerably, along with slides of mine sites not recorded on video.

The tape includes: Levant whim in steam, Goonvean beam engine, Mitchell's shaft preserved beam winder in operation, Taylor's shaft beam pumping engine & outbuildings, an underground tour of **South Crofty**

including mining operations, Tolgus tin streaming plant, stamps & calciner, Tywarnhale surface remains, an underground tour of South Condurrow, the Cambourne School of Mines (CSOM) training mine, an underground tour of the workings used by Holman Bros. to test their mining machinery, Cligga Head mine underground, Wheal Bassett surface remains and a tour round the dressing plant of Geevor tin mine while it was still working, and much more. All sites are identified by captions.

Running time: 144 mins.

Special Club members price: £12.95 (Available from Mike Moore **only**, payable to Bob Taylor).

Non-members price: £16.45



News Round-up 1 by Ivor Brown

Eric Tonks

Sadly Eric Tonks, author of the book *Snailbeach District Railway* (first published 1950, second edition 1974) died recently. He must have been in his 80's and was still working on his 14 volume series of books *Ironstone Railways of the Midlands*.

Lost Mine Model

Mr. More of Linley Hall, owner of several of Shropshire's metal mines made a model of the mining area for the 1851 exhibition which won a prize. After being on show in London Museums it was lost. The most recent report seems to be a letter in the *Wellington Journal* of 8th Feb. 1902, where Mr. R.J. More says that it is now in Shrewsbury Museum. Does anyone know of its present whereabouts?

Mine Tours

Atalaya Mining Study Tours, well known for their tours of Spanish historic mine sites are now advertising one for Western Britain - including Ironbridge Gorge and Snailbeach.

Two weeks for £1,350 (or £1,150 special offer) Telephone: 01970 828989

Finest Galena

According to Mr. Leifchild in an old issue of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (as copied into *Colliery Guardian* Jan. 2 1858, p11) the finest specimen of crystallised galena '*was found at Snailbeach and was comprised of an assemblage of large cubes measuring 3.15" a side and of rhombohedral crystals of violet coloured calcspar 9½" long, the edges replaced in large facets.*

It measured about 55" by 43½", its thickness being 14 inches'.

Museum of Iron

The IGMT's Museum of Iron reopened in May 1995 after refurbishment. There are many new displays and interpretations techniques including some relating to minerals in the Gorge.

Rorrington Minerals

A recent paper published in the *Journal of the Russell Society*, 5 (2) 1994 pp115-118, by R.E. Starkey, N. Hubbard and B. Young describes "*Baryte, Calcite and Witherite from Rorrington Mine, Chirbury, Shropshire*".

Cwm Colliery

Boots the Chemists have just republished Friths Famous Postcards, one is purported to show "Cwm Colliery c1955, Bicton, Shropshire".

Anyone got information on this colliery? (Another shows Bicton Church 1906).

Last in Shrewsbury

To answer a query at the NAMHO Conference, the last mine to work in the Shrewsbury Coalfield was Castle Place Mine, Pontesbury (sometimes called Longden Common), see last issue of 'Below' for details.

Granville Plate

A plate commemorating the Granville Colliery, Shropshire (1863-1979) is now available from British Fuels, price about £13 (see Mike Moore for details).

If ordering one, do not confuse it with Granville Colliery, Leicestershire.

Llanymynech Paper

A copy of the paper on Llanymynech Mine area referred to in the Spring issue of 'Below' has been placed in the Club Library courtesy of Mark Walters.

Val Reef Up-date

Since the report in the Spring issue of 'Below' about the Val Reef Mine Disaster, it is now thought that 104 were killed.

One man who should have been on the cage reported to management several days later. He was ok, but "no comment" was given to the question why didn't he go down with the others.

Mining in 1995

A United Nations Report says that there are now 25,000,000 persons employed at mines and about 11,000 are fatally injured annually. (*World Totals, Min. Journal* 16.6.95).

Ludlow Centre

Ludlow is to have a Geological Resources Centre, which will include the world famous reference collection - now in the Old Street premises. The new centre will also hold a lecture theatre, a laboratory and a public study area. For more information telephone Ann Waite on 01584-873857.

Quarry Plans

The August issue of *Quarry Management Journal* contains articles on Shropshire quarries including future proposals for Criggion (ARC), reclamation at Llanymynech (Redland) and Llyncllys (Redland).

Puzzle

Why are the supposed Bolton and Watt engine houses at South Shropshire mines so different from the drawings given in the B. & W. Collection, Birmingham (see Account NO.18 for pictures)?

Was it:-

- because for rented engines B. & W. only recommended designs and it was left to the local builder to complete the house.
- that the surviving houses are for later engines
- some other reason?

Cornish Smugglers

Cornwall has long been associated with smugglers but an 'excuse' for smuggling of spirits in the 1820's and 30's was that the spirits being smuggled were "low hollands proof" and they were "disposed of to miners, who mostly lived underground, to whom spirits are beneficial, but never-the-less could not afford to pay for entered spirits".



Huglith 11th August 1995

Members present: Ben Shaw and Ian Bretherton.

We descended the 'Dog Leg' shaft to the main tramming level, from here (heading outbye) a slope leads down to a stope with a floor of large boulders from where an archway can be seen, with blackness beyond.

A handline descent down to the ledge (see diagram below) enabled us to climb through the archway.

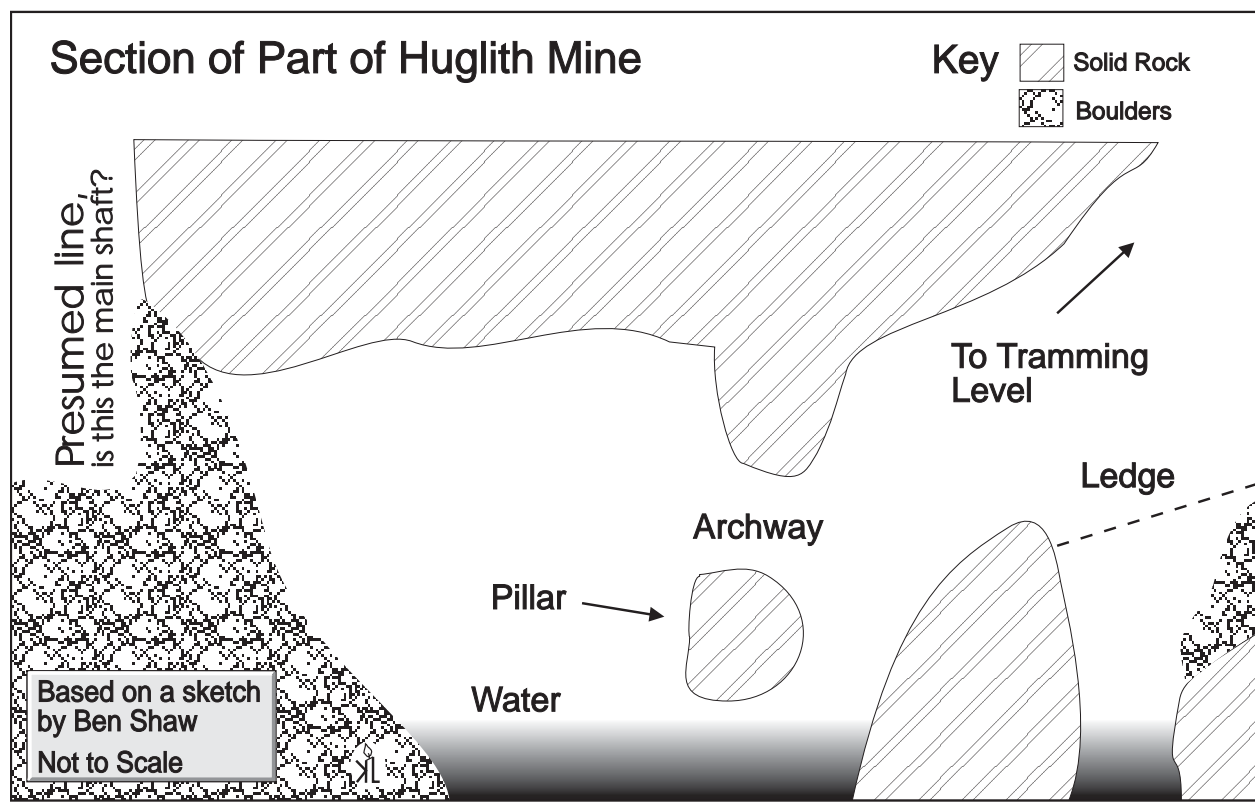
Once inside, there is a 2m drop to water (handline essential). As soon as I entered the water both my wellies almost came off, so I had to get out up the handline - which is harder than it looks! You can get out more easily by going under the pillar (see diagram).

Once we were both ready the swim did not take long; it must be about 16m to a rubble slope which goes up to meet the roof.

There is potential for exploration either:

- a) below the tramming level in the flooded stope (heading inbye)
- or
- b) by digging the blockage just past the winze (to Badger level) on the main tramming level (also heading inbye).

Ben Shaw



Finance News

NSM buys Ryan

NSM, is buying Ryan Mining in an £8.5m deal.

The buy-out includes 2 pits in South Wales, Pentreclywdau and Lyn in the Vale of Neath, plus a screening and blending plant linked by a conveyer system at Pentreclywdau mine, a processing and disposal facility at Cardiff docks and a smokeless fuel plant at Llanelli.

RJB Pay-back

To confound the sceptics, RJB Mining has begun paying back its debts more

quickly than promised. It originally raised £815m from banks and investors to pay the Treasury when it bought most of the British Coal industry. RJB's half-yearly profit before tax was £86m on turnover of £740m, and they have managed to reduce their debt to £153m by the end of July. This means that repayments are running one and half years ahead of schedule, increasing the chance that shareholders will gain more from the big fixed contracts with power generators that run until mid-1998.

RJB have also recently won a £150m deal to supply coal to an aluminium company over 5 years.

Tally Sticks

Lancashire Mining Museum, Salford have recently put a set of colliers' tally sticks on display. The wooden tally sticks are thought to date from the 1740's and were found in the Potato Delph workings, when chemically contaminated ground was removed during a land reclamation scheme at St.Helens.

The tallies would have been attached to baskets of coal before being raised to the surface, allowing a tally to be kept of each collier's output. The Museum is not aware of any other existing tally sticks and believes that they could be of National importance.



Mining Characters No.3

Daniel Jones and the Shropshire Coalfield



Daniel Jones (1836-1918) was not a miner but became interested in Shropshire mining through his interest in geology. His grandfather came from Broseley but became involved in a South Staffordshire ironworks in the 1820's. During Daniel's fathers time, especially in the 1850's, his business expanded to include collieries.

Young Daniel seems only to have been really interested in geology when at school and at the age of 15 he was expelled mainly because he insisted on following his own interests to the detriment of other works. One complaint was that he spent too much time breaking ironstone nodules in search of ferns and fossils.

His family sent him to Germany to study chemistry under Rammelsburg, the author of a famous handbook on 'Mineralchemie' first published in 1841. Returning to Britain, Daniel worked for some years in the family business but this hit hard times in the 1860's and he became unemployed.

Fortune struck however and in 1866 Daniel was appointed an assistant commissioner on the Royal Coal Commission for the whole of Shropshire. The Commission had been formed "to inquire into the several matters relating to Coal in the UK". This was quite a prize for an almost wholly self-taught geologist, but Daniel's interest in collecting and classifying minerals and the productions of "journals" containing notes, which still survive from 1852-1866, was well known. Surprisingly the Shropshire content of the Commission's reports is disappointing, but there is no doubt that it was this work which set him off lecturing and writing the many more papers on the Shropshire coalfield that we have copies of today.

From the mid 1880's Daniel lived in Shropshire, first at Ruckley Grange near Tong, then Kilsall Hall at Shifnal and at both places he kept an ever-expanding geological collection. His professional geological work also expanded so that by 1905 he was able to claim "I have received in fees connected with geological work not less than £1200", which was a lot of money in those days.

Daniel studied the geology of the coalfields in some detail particularly those of the south of the county. He had some difficulty in getting his papers into print because of suspicions about his training and background and due to the competition among the 'mining and geological' institutes in the South Midlands.

Eventually gaining membership he began to get his papers published and from 1871 they appeared in quick succession. In 1871 for example there were four in Geological Magazine, on the Coalbrookdale, Cornbrook, Brown Clee and Forest of Wyre Coalfields. These same topics constantly reappear in other journals, in the mining institute's transactions and in the Colliery Guardian (including one on the Sulphur Springs at Codsall Wood).

There is also evidence that he privately produced at least 2 booklets "The Spirorbis Limestone in the Forest of Wyre Coalfield", published in Hertford and "The Correlation of the Coalbrookdale and South Staffordshire Coalfields", published by Steen and Blckett of Wolverhampton, but the writer has not yet found a copy of the latter.

Daniel Jones died in 1918. In Shropshire mining terms he will probably be best remembered for his contributions to the controversy relating to denudation and its effects on any continuation of the Shropshire coalfields through to Staffordshire and for his studies on the Spirorbis Limestone seam high up in the Coal Measures (worked underground from shafts in the Shrewsbury Coalfield and around Broseley where it produced a

yellowish limewash known as 'Lord Foresters Livery'). His papers on the Forest of Wyre Coalfield are still important as a source of information on that little known area (summed up in his major paper in 'Transactions Institute of Mining Engineers' Vol.7 1893-4 pp287-301).

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements for much of the detail to the following works:

1. "Geological collecting and a Geological Career, Daniel Jones" by H.S.Torrens in Geological Curator Vol.4 No.8 1987 pp493-502
2. "List of Works on the Geology etc. of Shropshire" by W.Whitaker and W.W.Watts in Trans. Shrops. Archeo. Nat. History Society Vol.12 1889 pp33-62.
3. David Poyner for his comments on the draft.

Ivor J.Brown

Worth a Visit

Elsecar Heritage Centre near Barnsley.

A mine and mining village dating back to the 18th Century. The collieries Newcomen Pumping Engine (operational until 1950's) is now being restored to commemorate its 200th Anniversary this year. Other colliery buildings and extensive workshops are now part of the museum and craft centre.

The standard gauge railway (in steam), the Lord's private station, the canal and complete village are all well worth a visit. The site is very close to Junction 36 on the M1.

Give me a ring: 01924-257137, if you are coming this way, perhaps we can fix something up, IJB.

Ivor Brown



News Round-Up 2

Levers Water Bomb

CAT member John Davies was showing a friend around the Paddy End section of Coniston Mine on Saturday July 29th when he discovered a large Calor gas bottle propped up against the oak plug at the top of Woodend's Rise. SCMC members who were at the NAMHO Conference in the Lake District will remember the plug, which was put there to stop Levers Water tarn draining into the mine, when the level of the tarn was raised during the last century.

John became suspicious when he realised that the container was extremely heavy and appeared to contain solid material. He also noticed a short length of fuse attached to the top.

The bomb disposal squad were subsequently called out, along with the Coniston Mountain Rescue Team. The bomb disposal expert eventually declared the device safe and it was removed (with much difficulty) to the

shore of Levers Water, where it was destroyed with a controlled explosion.

The incident is obviously of some concern to everyone. The cylinder held about 80lb. of fertiliser explosive. Luckily the fuse had fallen in some water and gone out - with only 30cm to go! Had the bomb exploded and the tarn been breached it would have caused immense damage to the mine and possibly affected the water supply to a large part of High Furness. The bomb disposal expert felt that anyone retreating having lit the fuse, would almost certainly not have survived.

It appears that a vehicle would have been needed to get the bomb to the mine site, and at least 3 people to carry it into the mine. The Police have started to investigate but have taken the view that the bomb was planted by explorers who were intent on finding out what was behind the plug.

CAT Bulletin 95/4

Artificial Cave

The Warehouse (an indoor climbing centre in Gloucester) has proposed building a horizontal and vertical "cave" system behind their existing climbing walls. The system will offer pitches up to 13m as well as horizontal/vertical combinations of varying degrees of difficulty.

The NCA, while approving of some aspects of the facility ie: the provision of good vertical training (with suitably qualified instructors), they are a little concerned with the horizontal aspects.

The main target market of the centre is youngsters in full time education, and both the NCA, local cavers and the Gloucester Cave Rescue are worried about the consequential effect on local caves and mines. They feel that no matter how realistic the "cave" is, it will not be able to duplicate the hazards found in the real thing. The particular dangers are:-

1. Youngsters having experienced one or two trips may be tempted to

visit local caves with inadequate equipment/lighting, etc.

2. that those having gained experience in an artificial environment may attempt trips which may be beyond their capabilities or without regard to flooding or other hazards.
3. that access arrangements may be compromised by such trips.
4. that conservation issues may be ignored by such trips.

What do Club Members think?

Personally I believe that it should be encouraged and that the above doubts and worries can be addressed by local caving Club's getting involved with the Centre and offering to help with "real" caving trips either organised by themselves or by the Centre. At the end of the day if it improves peoples skills and abilities in SRT, rigging etc. it should be supported.

Kelvin

Pit Wenches

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum has received more information on the annual migrations of Shropshire pit girls to London to work in the market gardens that once thrived on the outskirts of the Capital.

Mr. S.J. Heyward whose family once ran market gardens at Harlington, Middlesex, has recently allowed the museum to copy his family photo album showing "Shroppies" picking strawberries in 1906.

Many of London's market gardens were destroyed by gravel pits and housing developments in the 1920's and 30's, with Heathrow Airport swallowing most of the others after World War II.

New Coal Mines

In June 1995, new Coal Industry in Britain (excluding small mines and opencasts) seemed to be as follows:

Budge: 17 + 3 lease & licensed mines, 14 opencast sites

Mining Scotland: 1 mine, 9 opencasts

Celtic Energy: 9 opencast sites

Coal Investments: 1+ 5 lease & licensed mines

Buy-outs etc.: 4

Breakdown

Budge, North: Kellinley, Maltby, Point of Ayr, Prince of Wales, North Selby, Riccall, Stillingfleet, Wistow, Whitemoor.

Budge South: Daw Mill, Harworth, Thorsby, Welbeck, Asfordby

Budge, Care & Maintenance: Thorne & Ellington (Standing)

Budge Licensed: Clipstone, Calverton, Rossington, Blenkinsgap.

Mining Scotland: Longannet, in discussion Francis (Standing).

Coal Investment: Annesley-Bentinck (Standing), **Licensed:** Hem Heath, Silverdale, Coventry, Markham, Cwmgwilli

Buy-outs etc.: Monktonhall, Hatfield, Betws Anthracite, Goitre-Tower Anthracite.

Ivor Brown



The Search for Halesfield Clock

At the sale of furnishings from Madeley Wood Colliery in the 1960's, the writer bought the 3ft. high wooden mechanical clocking-in clock from Halesfield Pit. In 1967, before Ironbridge Museum was started, he lent this clock to Doncaster Museum for an exhibition. Having no room for it, it was left there but recently its return was requested for transfer to Ironbridge.

The writer was called into identify it, the Museum had 5, but none was that from Halesfield and the search goes on. However while there he mentioned that he was also trying to find relatives of William Brown (born 1873), his great uncle who moved to the Doncaster area to help sink the pits, as the Shropshire industry was declining towards the end of the Century. The

Curator said that he had a teapot and a photo from a William Brown taken in 1912. He was a young man about 25 and seems the wrong age for either William Brown the father (who would be 39) or son who would be about 19 in 1912.

Royal Tea

Apparently King George V and Queen Mary arrived in Doncaster on 9 July 1912 to see a new house at The Woodlands Model Village and visit Elsecar Colliery. When they arrived at The Woodlands they were told that nearby Cadeby Colliery had blown up with nearly 100 dead (actually 88). The King asked for a cup of tea at the nearest house, he had no time for the planned estate tour and visit to the specially prepared house - and so dropped in on young William Brown,

a Brodsworth Collier, and his pregnant wife in an unfinished house.

The King and Queen had tea from that very pot, the photo was taken (with poor Sarah hiding her stomach with a tray, in prudish Victorian manner) and the Royal couple dashed to the Cadeby Colliery to add their sympathy.

An interesting story, but the writer cannot prove this William was one of the clan. A search of the 1891 census (the latest available) hasn't been of any use - but has shown that some streets had many Shropshire mining families - from Pontesford, Shrewsbury and Telford areas and some Browns from other counties.

The search for positive identification still goes on!

Ivor Brown

Hoard Up-date

More details are now available on the hoard of Roman coins found at Alderley Edge (as reported in 'Below' issue 95.2). Member of the Derbyshire Caving Club were digging a square shaft on the west side of Engine Vein, when a clay pot was discovered about 3m below the surface.

The pot was about 1m below the original floor level and held between 300 to 400 bronze coins dating from the reign of the Emperor Constantine, about 300 to 320 AD. The coins have been taken to Manchester Museum where they are being separated ready for exhibition. Some of the more identifiable coins have depictions of slaves kneeling under a banner bearing the lettering "Vot XX", indicating that they were struck to commemorate the 20th year of the Emperor's reign.

Due to the find, digging has been suspended until the National Trust decide whether excavations can be carried out by Derbyshire Caving Club or professional archaeologists. Some of the Alderley Edge mines may also be scheduled, with excavations only being allowed under controlled conditions.

DCC Newsletter

Annual Journal No.2 - Some thoughts

1. Moelferna Slate Quarry article page 1, was an early draft of the article published in SMC Journal 1972/3.
2. Copa Hill buildings page 43 - could these have been weeknight shelters or barracks for the workers, open or wood fronted, roof of wood and/or turf with the bed at the back (such crude buildings were used in Snailbeach area as late as the 1870's).
3. Listed mine sites article is incorrectly titled, only single structures have been 'listed' although of course one mine site Snailbeach has been made a "conservation area".

This is the policy being pursued in other mining areas - e.g.: Kirklees District Council have just declared the Hope Colliery site near Huddersfield a conservation area including 3 listed structures (chimney and attached boilerhouse, winding house, the heapstead and headstock), bell pits in an adjoining area of woodland, air pit (scheduled ancient monument) in an adjoining field and the disused colliery

railway line.

The mine finally closed in 1985. This really is the way the Shropshire Mines should be "listed" not just as single structures.

4. Coal Mining in Shrewsbury District - page 46. Unfortunately no-date is given for this "pre-war" description, but a similar description appeared in the Wellington Journal July 1937, which includes also descriptions of the mines then operating in the Coalbrookdale, Wyre Forest and Oswestry Coalfields.

Ivor Brown

Mining History

Bridgnorth District Council is planning to put up several tourist information boards in the Severn Valley Country Park, between Highley and Alveley, covering the area's mining and industrial history.

The boards are expected to cost £8,000 (!). Half the money is expected to come from a grant from the Rural Development Commission, with some of the rest being raised from local parish councils.



Nenthead 19-26 August

Members attending: Cara Allison, Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Steve Holding, Mike Moore, Malcolm Newton, Adrian & Julie Pearce, Nick Southwick, Paul Thorne, Stuart Tomlins, Tom West, Mike Worsfold.

Saturday

We were led around Ayle Burn Colliery by Dave Carlisle of Earby Mines Research Group who had arranged it with the owner. This is a working coal adit that is extracting an 18" seam of anthracite for local domestic sales.

Dave operated his own coal mine until recently so was able to explain exactly how it was operated.

Sunday

Courtesy of Paul Thorne's winch, we

were able to explore the 400ft. deep shaft of Wellhope Mine. This led to 20th century workings with many minerals still in situ.

Monday

We split into 2 groups. One did the through trip from Capelcleugh Mine to Smallcleugh Mine which involved getting VERY wet (ask Steve about his swimming lessons). The other did a tourist trip into Smallcleugh Mine to the Ballroom Flats.

Tuesday

We piled into 2 landrovers and travelled over to Florence Mine at Egremont. This is a working haematite mine but we had a tourist trip into the workings via the incline. After emerging we were allowed to look at

the engine, etc. We then went over to Haig Pit at Whitehaven but, despite the best efforts of Stuart, were unable to find anyone with a key to allow us to look at the engines inside the enginehouse. We contented ourselves with looking at the building and headgear and then walked along the beach, finding an early winding house, adits, etc.

Wednesday

The winch came into play again and we descended the 400ft. Brewery Shaft to look at the underground workshop, pelton wheels and waterwheel.

Most people left on Wednesday afternoon, but a hardy few stayed on to spend the next few days on the surface recovering.

Adrian Pearce

Welsh Gold

This is the commercial name for the underground tours to Gwynfynydd Gold Mine and I recently tried it with my family during a wet and windy bank holiday.

You report to the Welsh Gold shop at Dolgellau next to the public car park and it costs £9.50 per adult or £25.00 for a family ticket. The danger here is allowing your wife or daughter to look around the shop since there is some very attractive (and expensive) jewellery on display!

Tours leave about every half hour, but you have to wait until a minimum of 8 persons have paid.

You board a minibus which is very comfortable and has individual seat belts (very topical). The driver puts on a taped commentary which lasts the 30 minute drive to the mine and tells you about the history of the mine.

At the mine, you are rigged out in waterproof jacket, wellies, helmet and lamp and taken in a locked adit.

The helmet has ear defenders with built in speakers and there is a system underground where taped

commentaries suddenly start in your ears as you reach each feature. The standard is in English, but I understand you can have Welsh or other languages. The advantage of this is that the commentary is not spoiled by being delivered in bored tones by a guide who has given it a hundred times that week.

Main features on the 30 minute underground tour include a demonstration of charging a face, a simulated blast further down the passage, being given hammers to hack off specimens in a grotto (unfortunately only pyrites), the underground processing area (the noise of the ball mill is unbelievable), explanation of stope working, inspection of the internal incline and a video screen underground showing miners in the actual working area.

You exit via another adit and are shown how the gold is smelted on site. I asked if they did trips to the old workings for groups such as ourselves but they don't.

Apparently they cannot tip outside to all the waste slurry is pumped into the old workings which are now filled up so there is nothing to see anyway.

Back on the minibus for the trip back and you go next door to the shop where there are a number of troughs with mine gravel under water. You are allowed to pan for gold here and keep what you find.

They claim that people find good flakes but all I saw was pyrites - I reckon they salt the gravel from time to time. Still it was a good laugh and overall good value for the money.

Adrian Pearce

Munich Update

Since the fatal tunnel collapse in Munich, (see 'Below' 95.1) where a bus fell into a hole in the street, Railtrack have become concerned about the safety of the Jubilee line extension which is due to pass under their property, after they discovered that London Underground are using the same 'New Austrian Tunnelling' technique. Despite reassurances that the method is safer in London Clay than Munich's sub-soil Railtrack have been a bit jittery since the collapse of the Heathrow Express Link Tunnel, and subsidence has effected some of the surface buildings at the airport.



Reopening Old Shafts (at Titterstone Cleve) 1880

The Journal of the British Society of Mining Students (active 1876-1910) contains an illustrated article on the above in Volume 6 published in 1882. It was written by T. Bertram, Brereton Collieries, Rugeley, who appears to have been brought in to reopen some old coal mines. He describes the topography and geology of the hills up to 1,600 ft. high, flat topped capped with a thick layer of "basalt" (now described as dolerite) about 5 miles long and half as wide.

He concentrates on Titterstone where the coalfield is split in two; Cornbrook to the North, Knowsbury to the South, but the basalt only covers the Cornbrook part and this is where he was working. He observed a 'dyke' of thick basalt which forced the coal and ironstone together to form a material resembling slag but called "clinker" by the miners. The basalt cap was very hard to sink through and could be several hundreds of feet thick. He adds that there are 4 seams of coal, but they are one-third thicker in the southern, Knowsbury part of the coalfield.

The reason for reopening old shafts was that the cost of new shafts was great, particularly when they go through basalt. Formerly a new shaft would cost £40 per yard but Bertram had just completed a new shaft, same diameter at £12 per yard, the saving could be accounted for by the use of modern appliances (1880's, drilling and explosives?). He hoped to reduce the cost by half again, by reopening old shafts.

The reopening described was of a shaft 400 yards from their new shaft, it was in good order for 60 yards depth (see Figure 1.) but below this, for 36 yards to the coal seam, it had fallen in. Men were then set to work filling the shaft up to a point 5 yards above where the deterioration occurred i.e.: 55 yards down.

It was filled with "fine rolack that had been got in the old mens time". While the filling was settling all the loose bricks in the top part were replaced, clips for hanging air pipes added and

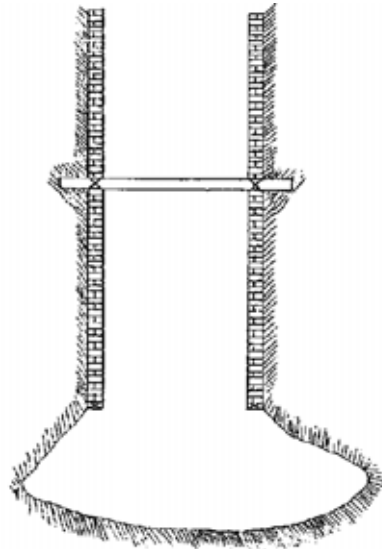


Figure 1

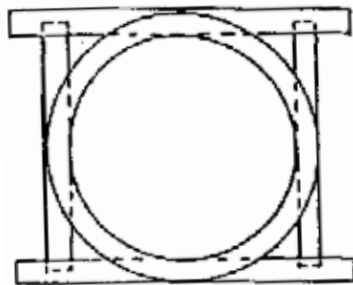


Figure 2

a "good square frame" put in to support the sound part of the shaft (Figures 1 and 2).

After the preparations in the top part were completed they then started sending the rubbish, the temporary

filling and the old bricks, to surface - putting in a further wood frame every 4 feet and supporting the sides with backing boards. When the old sides became really bad they put up "good Norway timber" backed with old railway sleepers - brought cheap (Fig.4).

Where there was a large cavity they had difficulty in getting long pieces down the shaft to form the struts (Fig.3). The frames were bolted not nailed and 2 1/2" battens and oak wedges used as necessary. The process is described in great detail.

It took about as long to get to the bottom as it did normally in good ground. They then commenced to build from the bottom at finished diameter inside the temporary wooden lining "with nine-inch circular bricks, set in mortar, packing between the bricks and frame work with ashes and lime riddlings, keeping one man with a beater stemming with all his might".

Check measurements were taken frequently to ensure that nothing had moved.

They completed the shaft successfully, without any injuries and at only "a little over one-half what a new shaft would have cost".

The owners expressed themselves "highly satisfied".

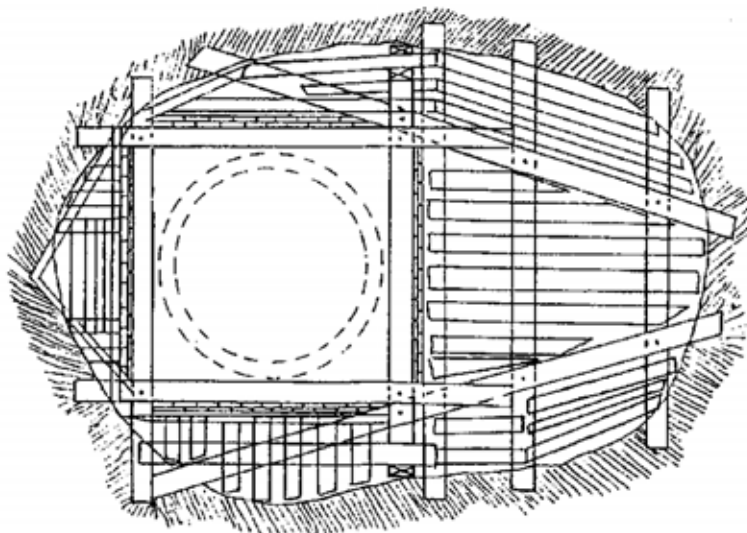


Figure 3



Footnote

Who were the 'owners'?

Contemporary writers say coal was mined on Titterstone Clee almost solely for the engines of the quarrying companies. In 1880 there were only 2 such companies; the Dhu Stone Company (commenced 1863) and the Granite Company (1867), but in 1881 Colonel William Field and Mr. John Mackay opened up Titterstone Quarry proper, as "Field & Mackay".

According to A.E.Jenkins, this company found the purchase of coal from the other 2, too expensive, and they controlled the 3 mines on the hill. Field and Mackay decided to start with water power and built the reservoir on top of the hill near Bensoms Brook, this was used to drive turbines to generate power to drive the crushers

producing aggregate for their new incline and railway. It seem likely that they were the owners opening a colliery to obtain coal for their future engines.

The reopened shaft was in the basalt area probably near Watshill Colliery or the Magpie Mine (Magpie first mentioned in 1840 as being abandoned was abandoned again in 1889). The actual shaft is not known, (there were 19 mines shown on Walkers Map showing the Mines of Shropshire in 1830 and about 50 named mines alone shown on the Abandoned Mines list, 1939).

The method used for repairing the shaft - backfilling, lining and shuttering was similar to that used at Granville Colliery in the 1950's with different materials.

Ivor Brown

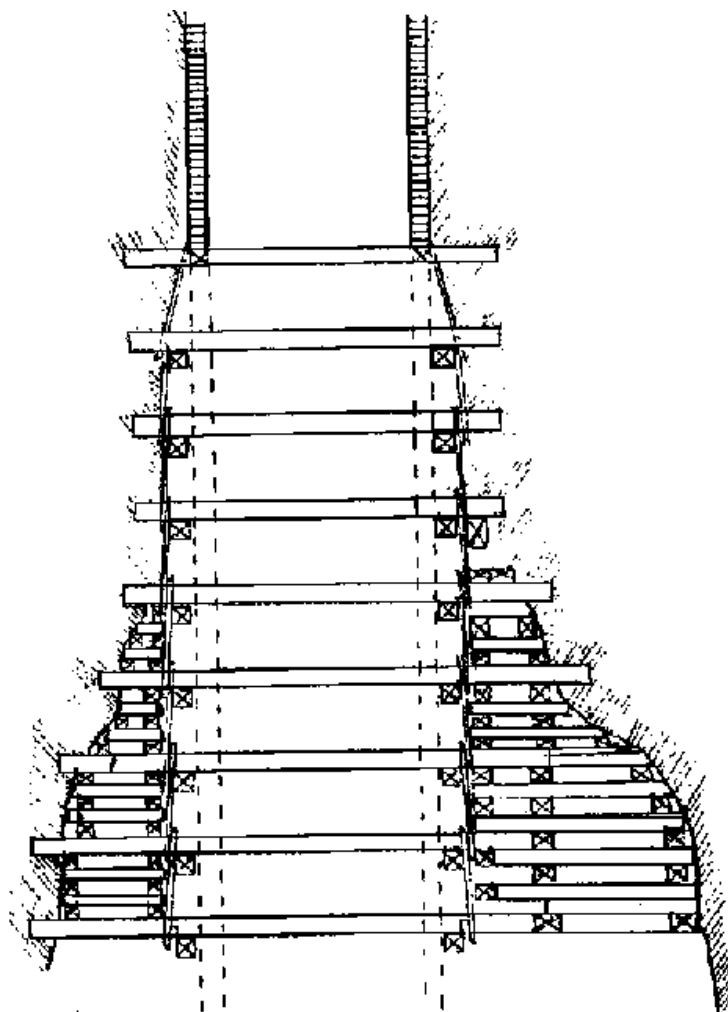


Figure 4

Two major deposits have recently been found new homes:

1. Plans of Mines of Coal, Ironstone & Fireclay etc. for abandoned mines are now with the Coal Authority, Mining Records Dept., Bretby Business Park, Ashby Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 0QD. Tel: 01283-553463.

Prior appointment is necessary, make it clear what is to be examined and agree whether there is a charge or not. For many categories of records there is a charge of £45 + VAT per half-day.

2. Shropshire Record Office Collection has joined the Shrewsbury Library Local History Collection at Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Castle Gate, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ, Tel: 01743-255350.

Prior appointment is necessary, on your first visit 2 passport photos, driving licence and completed application form has to be presented. Documents have to be ordered, and you are only allowed 1 at a time on the table. Browsing is not encouraged, orders have to be definite.

Ivor brown

Maggots Clean-up

Descent (125) carries an interesting item about a pollution incident in Triple Hole, Sandford (Mendip), where it was discovered that someone had fly-tipped a large number of sheep and calf carcasses and offal into the cave and surrounding surface holes.

The NRA immediately swung into action and poured 340 litres of maggots onto the 'debris'. The idea being that the maggots would organically dispose of the meat! Any residue after they have 'eaten' will be removed at a later date.

A novel 'green' solution to a nasty problem, the only thing that puzzles me is where do you go to buy 340 litres of maggots?



News Round-Up 3

Fumes kill 9

Further to the initial report in the Spring issue of 'Below', it is now known that 9 people died, including 5 rescue workers, 3 teenagers and a father of 2 of the youths in carbon monoxide filled caves near Rouen on the 22 June.

The teenagers, aged between 13 and 14 had decided to celebrate the annual Fete de la Musique, with an exploratory trip to the Monterolier caves near Buchy, Rouen. They are a local landmark and have been a popular children's hideout since W.W. II, when the labyrinth of caves were used by the Nazis to store V-1 flying bombs.

When the boys did not return home that evening one of the boys fathers went off to search for them. When he failed to return, the initial rescue team of 4 firemen and a local volunteer guide were sent in, these in turn were overcome by fumes and died - one only 25m from the tunnel entrance.

It is thought that a fire lit by the teenagers had caused a build-up of carbon monoxide gas, although some reports indicate the presence of other toxic gases (I suppose it depends upon what they were burning!). With the loss of the first rescue team, over 50 rescuers wearing breathing apparatus, worked 4 hour shifts searching the network of 3m high tunnels, until they eventually found the bodies of the father and the 3 boys in the remotest part of the system, the following afternoon.

During the search 4 other rescuers were effected by the fumes but recovered later in hospital.

Malcom Newton

NAMHO Insurance

After successful negotiations between NAMHO and NCA, NAMHO has decided to rejoin the NCA. One of the main effects of this is that NAMHO organisations who have been involved in the BCRA Insurance Scheme will be able to continue to use it when the premiums expire (in September). The BCRA will invoice the Club's concerned directly.

NAMHO Newsletter

Geevor Mine

The Geevor Mine site has been saved from demolition by a Cornwall County Council project to develop it as a mining history museum.

The site is especially important because it contains a full range of mining buildings, complete with all the associated machinery (some of which can be seen working on the latest I.A. Recordings video "**The SCMC in Cornwall**").

A visitor centre was opened in 1993, and repairs have been carried out to a number of surface features, notably 2 chimneys, a water powered tin stamps building (on the edge of the cliff) and the Levant Arsenic calciners.

One of the contractors working on site recently discovered an "interesting stone", which turned out to be ancient hammerstone, which raises questions about Geevor's history, and may mean that the site has been in use for metal mining for longer than the 500 years Archaeologists originally thought.

Coal Authority

This brand new quango (yes another one!), has been created to spend £50 million on subsidence claims. The Authority Chairman, Sir David White (who has no experience of mining), will only be required to work one day a week, so is only being paid a meagre £18,000 per year.



Mineral Spot

Cassiterite - Tin Dioxide.

The major ore of tin. It is found in small amounts in many areas, largely associated with silica-rich rocks, and granites. Because it is very heavy it is mined primarily from placer deposits today (notable Malaya).

Crystallises in tetragonal system as short prismatic or pyramidal crystals. It is opaque to transparent black, yellow, red or white.

C h e m i c a l
formula: SnO₂

Methodist Miners in Shropshire

There is in **St. Georges Churchyard** a tombstone which reads "John Tudor, The praying Miner".

His son C.L.Tudor (1896-1986) became a Methodist Minister and for many years held some of the highest positions in that church. His grandson, Rev. Dr. R.John Tudor also became a minister and for some years has been in charge of Westminster Central Hall, London - the "cathedral" of Methodism.

Madeley Fletcher Methodist Church was nicknamed the 'Chartermasters Chapel' throughout the latter half of the last century. It was built in 1841 with money raised principally by mine chartermasters (or contractors - butties in Staffordshire), among them were the Wards, the Farmers and the Perks.

Minsterley Methodist Circuit (9 churches) was until a couple of years ago notable because 3 of its churches were at least 1/4 mile from a tarmac road. Pennerley still is, but the "Miners Chapel" at Perkins Beach has recently been replaced by a new one at the Stiperstones. The name of the third chapel is not known to the writer.

The mining areas of **Dawley and Lawley Bank** produced many notable Methodist "missionaries". Rev. F.Mason became President of the South African Church. Rev. E and Rev. I Perry became leading Ministers in USA and Australia, Rev. Dr.S.P.Cadman (of the mine owning family ?) went to the USA. Rev. I.Southern of the clay pipe family, Broseley went to the West Indies (all this in the late 19th century - and there are many more examples).

The miners Sunday at **Lawley Bank** and **Old Park** in the mid-nineteenth century was:

6am Class meeting, 8am Prayer meeting, 9am School, 10.30am Morning Service, 1.30pm Religious Tract Distribution, 2pm School, 5pm Prayer meeting, 6pm Evening Service, 7.30pm Prayer meeting.

Not much time left for Club activities!

Ivor Brown



International Symposium of Souterrains Report

IJB has returned from the International Symposium of Souterrains (ie: man-made underground cavities) in Maastricht, The Netherlands.

The Symposium was held from August 19-25th 1995 and attracted about 65 delegates from the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Germany, France, UK, Czech Republic, Bosnia, Croatia, Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Iceland and The Argentine.

Except for the delegates from Western Europe and the last 3 countries listed all were sponsored by various Government agencies or local companies.

Twenty lectures were given during 5 mornings, including one on the Lincoln Hill Limestone Mines, and on the sixth morning there were 8 table demonstrations on underground photography, Speleo-Internet (SCMC, NAMHO and Sub. Brit. are on),

computer mapping, mines on postage stamps, mining trails, mining bibliography, underground war-time resistance work etc..

On 4 afternoons there were 2 or 3 underground visits to Rijckholt Flint Mine, the stone mines of Zonneberg, Sibbe (still producing), Avergat, Zussen, Pietersberg North Quarry and Fluwelen grot. Two large underground fortresses, Eben Emael and Sint Pieter, an overburden - top view point and a natural history museum at Maastricht (which had a mock-up flint mine and a stone quarry in the cellar) were also visited.

The quarries were vast, up to 14m high tunnels, 6m wide, on a pillar and stall system, each up to 60 hectares in area and often crossing country boundaries (hence the resistance work). There were many sculptures and drawings with dates going back to the 1400's.

Most quarries were safe but in 1957, one of the 180 mines did collapse crushing 12 mushroom pickers and the ensuing air-blast killed another 6 and injured many more. Most of those crushed still remain buried in the mine.

Accommodation was in the NATO barracks in The Netherlands (at £3 per night), breakfast, sessions and dinner (evening) were all in Belgium where food is cheaper but the visits were mainly made by bus into the Dutch quarries. Mid-day lunch was mostly a picnic lunch underground. The whole Symposium was well arranged and went like clockwork.

Forty stayed on for a post-symposium underground weekend (including IJB) and a further 4 quarries were visited. All very exhausting, but most interesting. IJB topped it all by travelling home through the Channel Tunnel.

Ivor Brown

Underground Folklore

A book called "Shropshire Folklore" by G. Jackson (1883) describes several folktales connected with mining and, with tongue in cheek, they are worth recording.

Bridgnorth Hermitage

"... In Bridgnorth are some caves in the side of one of the ruddy sandstone cliffs overlooking the Severn, once used (one of them still used) for human habitation.

One of these, now empty and deserted, is known as the Hermitage. Here the rock has been smoothed and shaped into round arches and there are evident traces of a little oratory or chapel, communicating by a well preserved flight of steps with the upper chamber of the cave.

There is documentary evidence to show that this cave has really been occupied as a hermitage and the local tradition that it was first occupied by a brother of King Athelstan gains some support from

its ancient name of the Hermitage of Athelardeston in the forest of Morfe. There are tales of an underground passage in the cave floor but in 1878 Hubert Smith had the cave dug out until solid rock was found.

The 'passage' is variously supposed to link with Hoards Park, Whitefriars or Bridgnorth Castle - in each case it is supposed to go under the Severn (!)."

[The Hermitage is at NGR SO 728934]

Bridgnorth Witch

"... An old witch is said to have long ago inhabited Bridgnorth Castle or rather perhaps one of the rock dwellings in the cliff below it ... Mrs. Seamer, the good woman of the cave dwelling on the opposite cliff ... In the same cliff with Mrs. Seamer's quaint dwelling and with the Hermitage of which she is the proud guardian, is a third and much smaller cavern, called the Witch's Cave.

Tradition has it that here, long ago, lived a witch who often brought horses and wagons to a standstill when they reached that part of the steep road which is opposite her cave."

Cuckoo's Foot-ale

"... The colliers have a way of their own of celebrating the cuckoo's coming. They say 'the cuckoo must pay his foot-ale' (the customary treat given by a new workman to his fellows), so they club their money together and send for a 'fetching' of ale and spend the day on the pit bank drinking, instead of working down in the pit."

Lead Mine King

"... 'Wild Edric' or 'Cong-kerry' was Edric Silvaticus, leader of a revolt against the Normans on the Welsh borders. He made peace in 1070 but later fell out again, his lands being confiscated and given to Normans.

Local folklore has it that he is still
continued on p12..



Mining in Shropshire

Written by Members of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club, Edited by Adrian Pearce, published by Shropshire Books, 1995. Price £7.95. (A5, 98 pages.)

Aimed at a general audience, the book sets out to describe the story of mining in Shropshire from prehistoric times to the closing of the last mine. The book is very readable, and allows you to dip into it by 'browsing' the photographs or learn more from the text.

The book deals briefly with each of the main mining areas in Shropshire, these range from the highly productive Coalbrookdale coalfield and South Shropshire metal mines to the small

mining areas around Oswestry and Lilleshall. Each section contains a brief field guide to remains in that area, complete with map references.

Overall there is a nice balance between the amount of 'dry' text, photographs and the superb illustrations. I particularly liked the choice of photographs used in the book, providing a good mix of old period pictures, with present-day views, of both underground exploration and surface scenes.

A very enjoyable book, and one that I have found myself constantly referring back to.

Edwin Thorpe

One to Visit

Sygun Copper Mine

Open all year round. 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

Kelvin

Underground Folklore

Continued from p11

alive, imprisoned in the lead mines of West Shropshire, with his wife and his followers. Miners call them the 'Old Men' and sometimes hear them knocking, wherever they knock the best lodes are found. Whenever war is going to break out, they ride over hills in the direction of the enemy's country and, if they appear, it is a sign that the war will be serious."

Blind Fidler

(This story has been related in the Club's Llanymynech Account).

"... The entrance to fairyland .. Ogo Hole, a cavern on the English side of the Llanymynech Hill ... once the mouth of a copper mine worked by the Romans ... its mysterious passages are thought to lead directly under Llanymynech village.

An old blind fiddler once wandered into them by accident and wandered on and on underground, playing his violin as he went, till the people in the cellars of the village inn at Llanymynech heard the strains of the instrument far in the depths below."

Adrian Pearce

All Accounts currently cost £4 (to members), available from Mike Moore.

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 legible this time!).

Account No.14

The Mines of Llanymynech Hill

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

Account No.15

Snailbeach Recent Explorations

A new publication written by Steve Holding, charting the Club's activities in exploring Snailbeach over the past few years. It includes sketch map sections of the areas around and below Chapel shaft and "Sheep" shaft etc.

Club Publications

Account No.16

The Mines of Lilleshall and Church Aston, Shropshire.

Written by David Coxhill, this informative account, draws heavily on David's Geology background. It brings up to-date an old Club account originally written by Dave Adams.

Account 17

Snailbeach Lead Mine, nr. Minsterley, Shropshire.

A short history of some of the surface remains of this fascinating mine site, written by Dr. I.J.Brown. Many of the buildings mentioned in this Account are currently being restored/preserved.

Account 19

Underground Video Techniques.

Written by Peter Eggleston, this is a very useful guide for all you budding video buffs.

It provides guides to choosing and using equipment, techniques for lighting and recording scenes, plus ideas on protecting your camcorder from the underground environment, and how to tell a "story". Plus much more...



Mines of the Gwydyr Forest, Part 6

“Pandora and Other Mines in North West Gwydyr”

By John Bennett and Robert W.Vernon. A5, 116pp ISBN 0 9514798 5 7.

Price £6.50. Post free from Gwydyr Publications c/o John Bennett, 7 St.John's Way, Cuddington, Cheshire, CW8 2LX or available from Mike Moore at Club meetings or the Annual Dinner.

This is the sixth and penultimate volume in the series “Mine of the Gwydyr Forest”. The authors Messrs. Bennett and Vernon have continued with their now recognisable style to produce another very readable book.

The workings described cover a period of activity from mid 16th century to the early decades of the 20th century. These were largely concerned with lead mining, with a revival for zinc in the latter part of the 1800's, and the area includes one of the last lead ventures in Gwydyr in the early part of the 20th century.

As the title suggests the mine which dominates the north west of the chosen area is one which has become generally known as the Pandora Mine although it has had in its time been known by a least a dozen different names. The main workings discussed are all based around Llyn Gererionedd, mainly to the south with some very small ventures to the north of Llyn Crafnant.

The book is laid out as the earlier volumes and the lesser ventures are described first, which in fact only takes up some 17 pages out of a total of 116. There are 3 fold out plans and sections of the Pandora Mine and a fold out plan of the Eagle Lead Mine (Pandora) Oil Flotation Mill of c1930. It is difficult to see how anyone other than the promoters of the various ventures described managed to make any sort of return on their investment, it certainly did not take the mineral owners long to realise that receiving royalties was a much safer bet than actually getting

involved in the “digging”.

There are some fascinating stories of the promotion of the Pandora sett over the years and one in particular based on the disused New Pandora Lead Mill which became known as the Klondyke Mine needs to be read to be believed. The authors have in this case managed to get first-hand information on this “classic” confidence trick concerning a “mountain” of silver.

There are fairly recent photographs of the Pandora Mine and 21 maps and diagrams, all well presented. Unfortunately as in previous volumes there is a scarcity of photographs taken at the time of mining activity. This volume maintains the standard already achieved and readers will I am sure be looking forward now to the final edition, Vol.7 “Cae Coch - Coed Gwydyr - Trecastell” to complete this series.

Damian McCurdy

Recent Publications

Groundwater

The National Rivers Authority have just published a “Groundwater Vulnerability Map” for West Shropshire - available from HMSO June 1995, ú9.95.

Quarries of England and Wales

By P.Stanier, Twelveheads Press, 1995 This book only contains 1 picture of a Shropshire quarry (out of the hundreds in the G.S.Collection). This is of Callow Hill Quarry, Minsterley in 1929, it adds that at that time the owners Haywards Quarries Ltd also owned quarries at Nills Hill (Pontesbury), Grimmer (Minsterley), Crows Nest(Snailbeach) and Upper Mill (Bishops Castle).

Hanwood Leaflets

Shrewsbury Underground Exploration Group have recently produced 2 interesting illustrated leaflets on the Hanwood Mines.

Mining Videos

(available from the Club)



If you are interested in doing a bit of armchair mine exploration the following videos, produced by I.A.Recordings with help from Club members, may be of interest to you.

A Tour of Clive Copper Mine £14.95

A comprehensive guided tour of Clive, with Edwin Thorpe acting the ‘experienced’ expert and Kelvin Lake the ‘novice’. The tour covers both the upper and lower levels, plus the Northern stope (the access to which is now a bit dodgy).

Clive Rescue Practice, £9.95

An action packed ‘head banging’ record of a Club rescue practice, featuring the ‘infamous’ maypole winze traverse!

Snailbeach, £14.95

The rise and fall of Snailbeach, once renowned as the “richest per acre of ground in Europe”, is traced in this production through the use of historic photographs, animated plans and sections, and unique underground video footage.

Collections from the Archives

The following tapes contain almost all the footage recorded at the given mine, and are intended as a resource base, not a finished production:

- C.15:Dudley Tunnel '88 to '89, £14.10
- C.18:Donisthorpe Colliery, £11.75
- C.20a:Snailbeach - Final Frontier, £9.87
- C.23: Bagworth Colliery, £11.75
- C.28: Morse's Level, £9.87

*For more details contact: I.A.Recordings, PO Box 476, Telford, TF8 7RH
e-mail: info@iarecord.demon.co.uk*



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scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk

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**Membership Services:
Mike Moore**

'Below' Editor: Kelvin Lake
e-mail: scmc@factree.org.uk

Diary Dates '95

For organised Club trips please refer to Adrian's Monthly Meets lists.

Bank Holiday Sundays: OFD II Columns visits. 10.30am from South Wales C.C.Cottages.

30 September - 1st Oct.: BCRA Conference

6 October: Club AGM, 8pm Last Inn, Newport

7 October: Club Annual Dinner at the Wroxeter Hotel. Contact Mike Moore for details & menus.

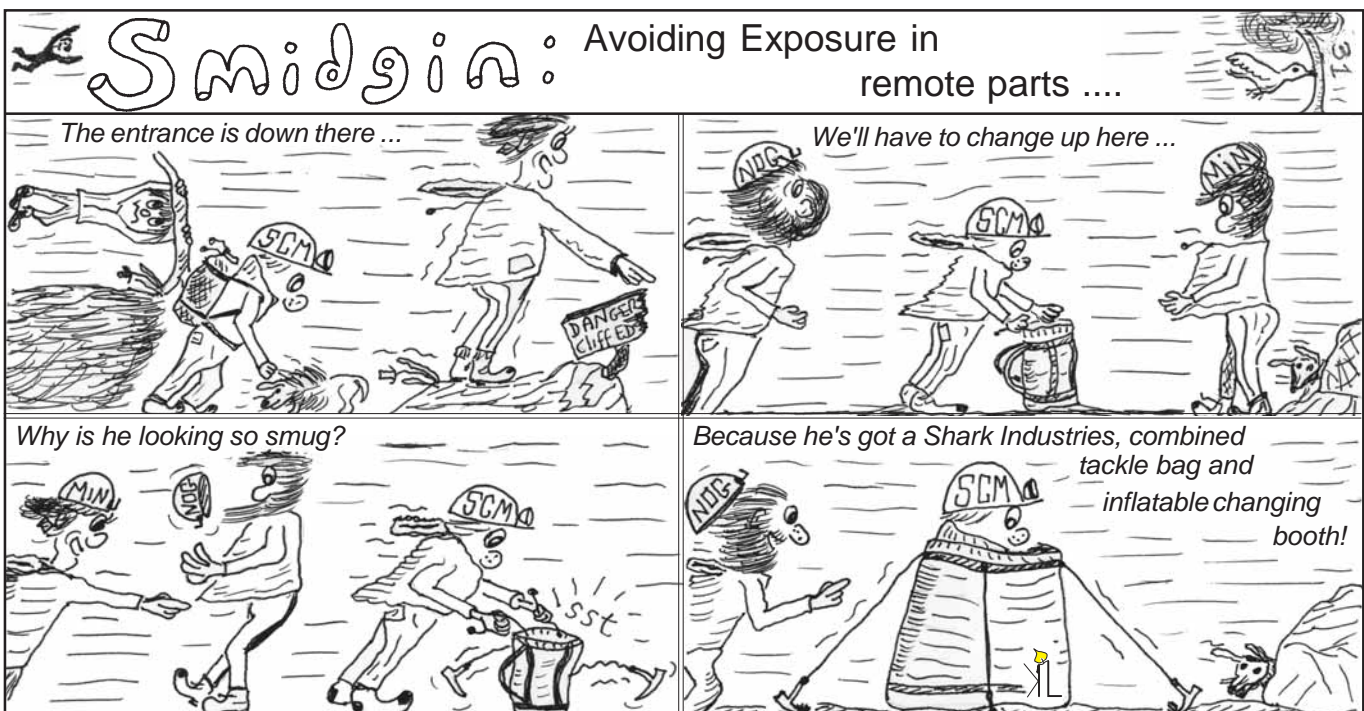
8 October: Midlands CRO Rescue Practice. Contact Neal Rushton.

13 October: 'Mining Ghost Towns', talk by Ivor Brown at Ironbridge Gorge Museum (Coalbrookdale) Includes: The Bog and The Lloyds Mines.

14-21 October: Mines in Ireland. Contact Nick Southwick.

21 October: Subterranea Britannica AGM & Autumn Day Conference, 10am Lucy Cavendish College "New Building", Cambridge. Booking form available from Kelvin

10 December: Peak Cavern, Derbyshire. Contact Steve Holding.



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

