

## Jack Haseley

1913-1996

In September 1964, when Shropshire Mining Club members turned up at their 'new' overgrown Clubhouse armed with all the tools they could muster and a Whitlock digger, the neighbours looked on with increasing concern. When we told them that we wished to use the cottage exactly as it was and not to alter it in any way they began to relax and offer advice.

Mr. Haseley began to take an increasing interest in our works and the doings of our Club. He had been a master bricklayer, stonemason, and general craftsman, his knowledge of building, and the proper treatment of thatch was considerable. Both I and the Club had found a friend.

With any advice we needed on the Clubhouse Jack was always there. One day after a weekend when we had been burning huge logs on the fire the chimney, filled with old crow's nests, was found to be well alight. It was Jack who attended to it and calmed our fears. When we had mice he produced a remarkable trap, which must have been 150 years old. Our maintenance was not always of the best and he often mowed the grass, and even tidied the interior. In short he often went beyond the call of duty and was an elder friend to us all. We became much indebted to him and it was a Club rule that he should not be forgotten at Christmas.

He was a compendium of local knowledge and loved to point out the

minor things that others might miss, like the peg still driven into the side of his drive to mark the route of the pre-war Newport by-pass which would have taken his cottage. When we completed the survey of Llanymynech Ogof it was time to start the next project, on the suggestion of the editor of the Newport Advertiser I began the survey of the local mines of Church Aston & Lilleshall - a task which 30 years later still occupies me today. Jack was in from the start, leading me to all the strange places he had known from his youth and which with our combined knowledge we were able to piece together into the first comprehensive survey. He helped me plumb the shafts and hauled our rubber dingy across the pools while I did the soundings. He deserved in every way to be my co-author in the work.

Once it was published and our emphasis moved elsewhere we met a little less, but we made him the first Honorary member of the Club, Mike James and then Mike Moore maintaining contact. Unfortunately in the late seventies our Clubhouse became neglected and a source of much concern, eventually following the death of the owner we lost it. Jack however never lost interest in the Club and was pleased to attend our Annual Dinner in 1992, shortly afterwards he had a stroke and lost all means of communication. When I visited this old friend in the nursing home he could only cry, but I am sure he recognised me and was thinking of times past.

After three years he quietly passed away on 10th MAY aged 83. Mike

Moore, Mike Clough, Alan Taylor and I represented the Club at his funeral at Church Aston six days later. We were pleased to - his like is rare to find today.

I have decided that the second edition of Account No.7 "The Church Aston & Lilleshall Mines" should have a dedication to him which I have worded as follows:-

This Second Edition is dedicated to the memory of  
Jack Haseley 1913-1996  
bricklayer, stonemason, soldier, advisor, friend,  
Honoury Member of the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club  
who with his local knowledge and enthusiasm  
helped so much to produce the first detailed work  
on these mines and canals between 1960 and 1970  
and who regrettably was never able to study  
and discuss the much greater knowledge gained  
since and reproduced herein.

*David R. Adams*  
*Founder Member*

## Constitution Changes

A couple of changes are proposed to the Club Constitution for ratification at the AGM:

1. The reference to the monthly meeting be changed to read "...meet usually on the first Friday of the month." So if necessary we can avoid Bank Holidays.
2. It has been suggested that Probationary Membership be dropped and new members be allowed to join as Full Members. Such new members would not be allowed to vote for 6 months and would only attend simple trips until they have been through a training programme.

Comments to Adrian Pearce asap.



# News Round-Up 1

by Ivor Brown

## Tankerville Chapel

Attempts have recently been made to determine whether there was a chapel or Methodist Meeting Place at Tankerville Mine. Suggestions have been put forward that there were services held in the "Clubroom" and the "Blacksmiths Shop" at the mine. Also there was a West Tankerville Chapel in 1879 but this could well have been in the Hope Valley, where several mines worked under this name at various times.

[For more on this topic see the letter on page 8 from Andy Cuckson]

## Israel Underground

IJB has recently been in Israel. No past or present mines were found in northern Israel, but there are many caves, grotto's, cisterns and ancient water tunnels (all mostly in limestone). In the south the ancient Timna Copper Mines are now part of a Country Park and an important tourist attraction.

## Rossington Colliery

This Yorkshire mine is one of Budeges' 4 leased mines, as distinct from the 17 purchased mines. Rossington was re-opened and re-equipped by Budge in 1994 and now employs 320 men, producing nearly 1 million tons of coal per year. Shortly before BC closed it, 1,000 men produced the same amount. The workings are over ½ mile deep, and reached by a 5 mile 'paddy' train, then 1½ mile walk - it takes about 1 hour at each end of shift.

## 1864 Geo. Atlas

In 1864 Reynolds Geological Atlas gave the following information:- The Coalbrookdale Coalfield is rich in iron ore, blende, petroleum and fireclay - it is 28 square miles in area and contains a thickness of 27ft of coal in 1,200ft. of strata. It produces 800,000 tons per annum and at this rate has a future life of 20 years. Slight miscalculation somewhere, also where was the "blende"?

The foremost areas for the production of petroleum or mineral oil from coal measures and shale are given as Derbyshire, Coalbrookdale and near Edinburgh.

## Shropshire Engine

It is expected that work will commence soon on the restoration of the 1902 winding engine built by the Lilleshall Co. (Shropshire) for Pleasley Colliery (Derbyshire). The engine is to form a centrepiece for a major heritage centre project, supported by PDMHS, English Heritage and local Councils etc.

## Disaster Talk

On 13th March 1995, IJB gave repeat talks on the Snailbeach Disaster in Shrewsbury, exactly 101 years 1 week to the day (Wed. 6th March 1895) of the accident and exactly 101 years to the day (Wed. 13th March) of the inquest. About 60 attended.

The next talk is to the Black Country Geological Society at Ward Arms Hotel, Dudley, 8pm, Monday 7th Oct. 1996. The subject is *Limestone Mining in Shropshire*.

## Wanted Book

The Life of Richard Weaver, as mentioned on p2 of the Spring issue of 'Below'. MDCCCLXI does not mean 1856 but 1861. Sorry!

The original B.C.G.Soc. was founded in 1842 and took a great deal of interest in Shropshire - many mining celebrities from Shropshire contributed to their research and excursions.

## Coal Merchants

J.A.Smallshaw, formerly small mine owners near Dawley, now Coal Merchants, have started to import coal to Shropshire, via Gobowen Sidings. The coal is coming by the train-load - the last one, 350 tons came from Selby *Coal International Journal*, Jan. '96

## Lilleshall Finished

Contractors working on Lilleshall Limestone Mine stabilisation expect to finish in May 1996. They are now making safe a number of mine shafts. It is reported that the water filled old workings were found to be much more extensive than anticipated.

## Shares For Sale

B.R.Moore & Co. (Tel: Borth 871795), antiquarian Share and Book Dealers have recently been offering a collection of mining share certificates, one was for Roman Gravel's Mining Co. 1871. It is unusual to see Shropshire certificates for sale.

## Mining Museums

IJB has recently visited 3 mining museums of interest:

- 1) **Black Country Museum**, the limestone mine tour by canal is quite spectacular, and also the mock-up of the Thick-Coal Seam workings. By special arrangement it is possible to go down a real coal shaft (30ft.) and enter original workings.
- 2) **Cannock Chase Mining Heritage Centre**, The Valley Pit, Hednesford. Some of the old colliery buildings remain and now include exhibits. Underground trips are not yet available but there are some training galleries yet to be re-opened.
- 3) **Florence Ironstone Mine**, Egremont, Cumbria. Still working during the week, tourist trips at weekends. The mine will remain open until Sellafeld Power Station find an alternative supply of water.

## Query

"Blast from colliery explosion kills Shropshire children"

About 1900 there was a family named Frost who lived at "No.1 Turners Row" in New Dale (Telford). The explosives for the local pits were stored in their cellar. There were 5 children in the family and one day, while they were playing with matches in the cellar, there was an explosion. It is said that four of them were killed.

Does anyone know the actual date and location of the accident?



# Under Down Under: Mines, Caves and Tunnels

## by Alan Robinson

During the Christmas of 94/95 Vicky and myself were able to visit New Zealand for a tour of both islands. As well as the obligatory visiting of relations, namely my brother; we did manage to venture underground on a few occasions. Actually Derek is a very keen caver and has been busy in the Mount Owen and Bulmer caves in the South island.



Compared to our images of volcanoes, geysers or the fierce Maori warriors (and rugby players), New Zealand is not normally a country strongly associated with mining. However the discovery of gold in the 1850's helped boost the flagging colonisation of the furthest reaches of the Empire. In time many other workable ores, including copper, tungsten, antimony and platinum were found along with coal outcrops to enable smelting and steam production. Even today gold mining continues on a large scale at two sites in the South and one on the North Island.

Whilst there we were able to visit the development at Macraes Gold Mine in Eastern Otago. It is the only hard rock venture in the South Island. Gold was deposited in the Macraes area as a result of super-heated fluids flowing up through the faults in the country rock of schist approximately 120 million years ago. The gold is generally found within quartz veins and it is thought that there is a reserve of over one million ounces available. Gold was first produced at the end of 1990 and since 1992 has been producing over 100,000 ounces a year.

The mine is entirely open cast, with operations continuing 24 hours a day, 6 days a week to maximise production and offset the effect of weather conditions during the winter. Excavation uses conventional quarrying techniques of benching in either 2.5m lifts for the ore or 5m lifts for waste material. All movement of materials is carried out by 85 tonne or 150 tonne dump trucks.

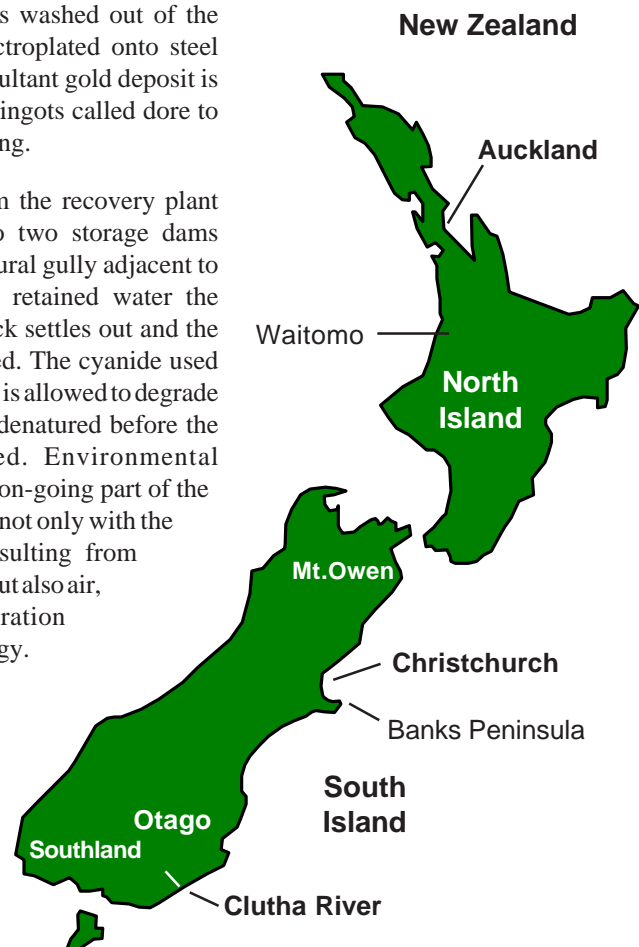
The main pit has been divided up into a 10 metre square grid, with a borehole being drilled at the corner of each square to obtain a core of the ore deposit. In this way a map of the gold concentration, typically 2g/t can be obtained prior to removal. Most of the rock breaking is done by ripping but blasting is required in some sections. All excavated material is then classified for immediate processing in the mill, stored on site until gold prices increase or as waste if the gold content is less than 0.7g/t. In practice nearly 80% of the excavation is graded as waste immediately and the mill generates almost 15 tonnes of tailings for every ounce of gold.

To recover the gold, the ore is crushed and ground in a ball mill to a smooth slurry. The blue grey ore which contains sulphide is then concentrated in a flotation process and re-ground to liberate the gold particles trapped by the sulphide. Cyanide is added to the slurry to dissolve the gold. The gold solution is recovered by passing it over carbon made from coconut shells. When the gold is washed out of the carbon, it is electroplated onto steel wool; and the resultant gold deposit is then melted into ingots called dore to be sent for refining.

The tailings from the recovery plant are pumped into two storage dams built across a natural gully adjacent to the 'pit'. In the retained water the finely ground rock settles out and the water is recovered. The cyanide used to extract the gold is allowed to degrade in sunlight or is denatured before the water is re-used. Environmental monitoring is an on-going part of the project and deals not only with the water quality resulting from these processes, but also air, noise, blast vibration and aquatic biology. All aspects of construction must include for the potential pollution that might result from earthquake damage.

Nearby to this mine are the remains of the Round Hill Mine at Golden Point. A number of levels are still open and an intact water powered stamp battery (complete with compulsory corrugated tin shed) can be found. This site has a more authentic feel to it than the 'restored' tourist gold mine sites elsewhere.

Still, many of the tourist trails do keep a realistic theme with their mining artefacts, particularly where the gold mining is secondary to the 'Main Attraction'. A good example of this is the Shotover River and Skipper's Canyon which can be visited as part of the very exhilarating white water rafting or jet boating excursions. Here, in 1862 two sheep shearers found about 200 ounces of gold in 8 days and told everybody about it! Townships of thousands sprang up with every able bodied person in the region intent on finding a fortune. As with many goldrushes, the easily found gold using simple panning or sluice-box techniques was quickly exhausted and





# Under Down Under: Mines, Caves and Tunnels Continued

after two years the population of the goldfield began to dwindle.

Longer term mining methods started with timbered tunnels and shafts into the loose gravel terraces or using high pressure water jets to remove the great depths of overburden on the sides of the gorges. The search also moved towards looking for gold in the reefs of quartz veins further upstream. These ventures required larger groups or syndicates, often financed from Australia.

The 1870's and 1880's saw the development of dredgers, which was a particularly intrepid endeavour for a fast moving river. The first boats were simple pontoons armed with a giant spoon which would blindly dip down into the river bed. A steam powered bucket dredge was used on the Clutha River nearer the coast in 1881 and its success there led to another dredge being brought to the Shotover in 1888.

This proved very profitable for the next ten years realising a return of over twenty five times the original investment and allowing the construction of a further 3 dredgers on the claim. 'Dredge Fever' hit the region and by 1904 there were over 150 on the rivers of Southland and Otago. As technology developed electricity was used for power and suction, rotating cutters were also introduced to work the rockier sections of the river beds. However the downfall of many operations was twofold: not enough gold and the extreme flooding in the already fast moving river.

Two schemes to win riches from the Shotover river bed involved major engineering projects for diverting the whole river. In 1906 the Oxenbridge family started blasting a tunnel to carry the water. After more than three years a level 14 foot wide and 750 feet long had been driven through solid rock.

Unfortunately, their efforts were not financially successful, as Chinese prospectors had managed to win much of the gold there during droughts some 15 years earlier. A similar attempt in

the late 1920's involved cutting across a large loop of the river to create an oxbow. This consisted of a sluicing operation to cut a channel nearly 2,000 feet across the glacial deposits, removing over 2,500 million tonnes of material. Once again it was a financial disaster with only small quantities of gold being recovered.

A final attempt at 'capturing' the river was made in 1932, with the construction of a steel flume 16 feet wide and 4 feet high through which the Shotover was to flow along one side of the river bed. The remains of this and an old suction dredge can be visited on the white knuckle ride of a Jet-Boat ride as it races up the narrow gorge of Skippers Canyon. In between the stomach churning spins and twists of this more recent NZ innovation the scarred sides of the gorge terraces can still be clearly seen with old cable hoists, leats, and compressor pipes.

There is also an opportunity to go through the Oxenbridge Tunnel by rafting the rapids of the Shotover which still flows through it. This is not for the armchair mining enthusiast as there is about an hours ride of fast flowing river and rapids (with quaint names like Pinball, Toilet and Oh Shit!) to reach the tunnel. The raft then hurtles through the darkness to emerge out of the tunnel about 2 minutes later straight onto an enormous all-engulfing cascade.

New Zealand has significant areas of karst landscape with an abundance of well developed caves. In the Waitomo region of the North Island several caves are over a mile long. However, it is perhaps best known for the incredible glow worm caves and the relatively new sport of blackwater rafting.



Here the would-be caver floats downstream on an inflated inner tube through passages lit up by the thousands of pin pricks of light.

The glow worms produce a blue or green light from their luminescent organs to attract other insects (and adult glow worms) onto a sticky fishing line of silk suspended beneath them. Once caught on the fishing line the glow worm reels the thread back up and eats its catch. The glow worm is in-fact the larvae of a fungus gnat, *Arachnocampa luminosa* and stays in the larval stage for several months. The brightness of the glow is proportional to how hungry the larvae is.

Access to these caves is controlled by commercial interests, but we were able to have a trip in the Footwhistle Cave which lies on Maori tribal lands. We also managed to get another trip into the entrance series of the Okupta River Cave as a Christmas Day excursion on another hunt for glow worms. As the name suggests the cave entrance swallows the whole of the Okupta river which flows through a heavily forested gorge.



Foot Whistle Formation

'Cave Tubing'



# Under Down Under: Mines, Caves and Tunnels Continued

The New Zealand forests of the North are better described as jungles, with a diversity and thickness of vegetation that has to be seen to be believed. It is virtually impossible to stray off cut paths without a machete. This was also true of the flood debris which had log jammed itself into the entrance, along with smashed remains of a timber walkway which had, until very recently provided a river crossing. Finding entire trees inside the cave suggested it was NOT the place to be on a rainy day!

During the late 1800's the threat of an ever expanding Russian sphere of influence led to the fortification of the East coast ports in the South Island. These often involved tunnels around the cliff tops protecting the harbours.

At the Banks Peninsula near Christchurch it is still possible to walk down through the cliffs along an old tunnel with its 'windows' looking out to sea across the bay. This allowed access from the barracks on top of the cliffs to the beach. In WW2 a pair of searchlight positions were installed to further increase the defence against Japanese landings.

Today all the popular tourist spots are invaded by luxury coachloads of Japanese, who turn up for 15 minutes and then mysteriously disappear again.

One place they can be seen disappearing is the Homer Tunnel on the only road to the spectacular Milford Sound fjord in the South. Construction of this tunnel started in 1935 and took

17 years to complete under mountains which are snow covered nearly all year. Avalanches and cold added to make extreme working and living conditions and there was many fatalities.

The tunnel climbs at a steep gradient of 1 in 11 and does not have a sealed tarmac road surface over the rough hewn rock. It is only in the last few years that it has been widened to allow traffic to flow in both directions simultaneously. Until then, the direction of traffic flow was determined by set times, but this was never seen as a hardship in a country where even the trains and cars share the same track!

*Alan Robinson*

## A Short History of Meeson Hall & Estate

Meeson Hall was completed by 1640, its main timbers being recently dated by dendrochronology to 1636. It has three close jointed red sandstone gables at the front, the middle gable being set back, and a long cross wing at the rear. Behind the house are two half timbered service blocks each side and within a stone walled courtyard with a central gateway to the rear, timbers dated to 1649.

There is an elaborate wooden fire place in the dining room contemporary with the building and several rooms are panelled. An unusual feature is a cellar cut into sandstone below the dining room with numerous drainage channels in the floor, these lead to an outlet in the wall presently blocked by a 2 x 2 paving slab. From here a stone cut man-sized tunnel curves away to a manhole in the paddock behind the house and then heads straight for the wood beyond under which it has collapsed, but depressions on the surface lead to a small stone built chamber. This was probably a 'wet' cellar

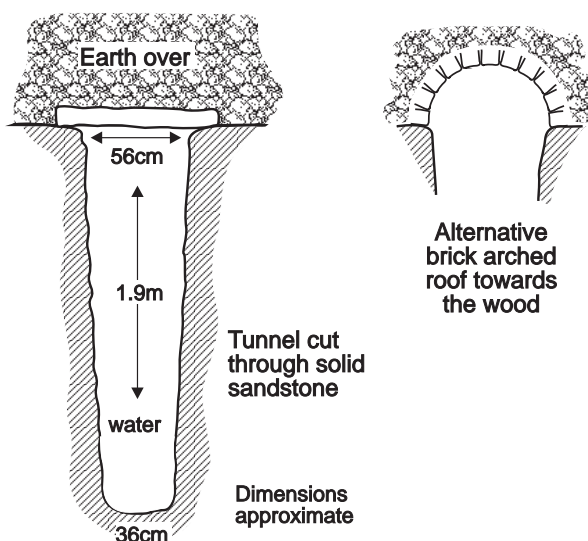
system. In the 17th century many great houses brewed their own beer and in order to keep it cool a spring would be tapped into the cellar and continuously run off into a drain, this would have the effect of keeping the cellar consistently cool for the storage of not only beer but also cheeses and dairy products. It is also possible that there was also another cellar now lost.

The house was built by the Tayleur family who held the estate for nearly

two centuries, originally from Longden-upon-Tern, they had purchased the whole manor of Bolas by 1632, and most probably occupied the Manor House before building the present Hall on a virgin site. The family had the custom of naming each eldest son 'Creswell' so there was a succession of Creswell Tayleurs. As time went on parts of the manor were sold, in the north some plantations were retained for game and in the south of the Parish sales are recorded of a considerable number of fields and properties as far as the Strine Brook to Thomas Meeson in 1718.

The Club visited the site to examine the tunnel on the 26th March last year, although the tunnel from the cellar under the house was not measured on the day. Following this visit I have surveyed the small 8 acre estate around the Hall for the present owner Mr. Adrian Jones (see plan on page xx). Measurements of the underground length of the tunnel have been taken from evidence on the surface and underground details from my own memory and photographs.

*David R.B.Adams*

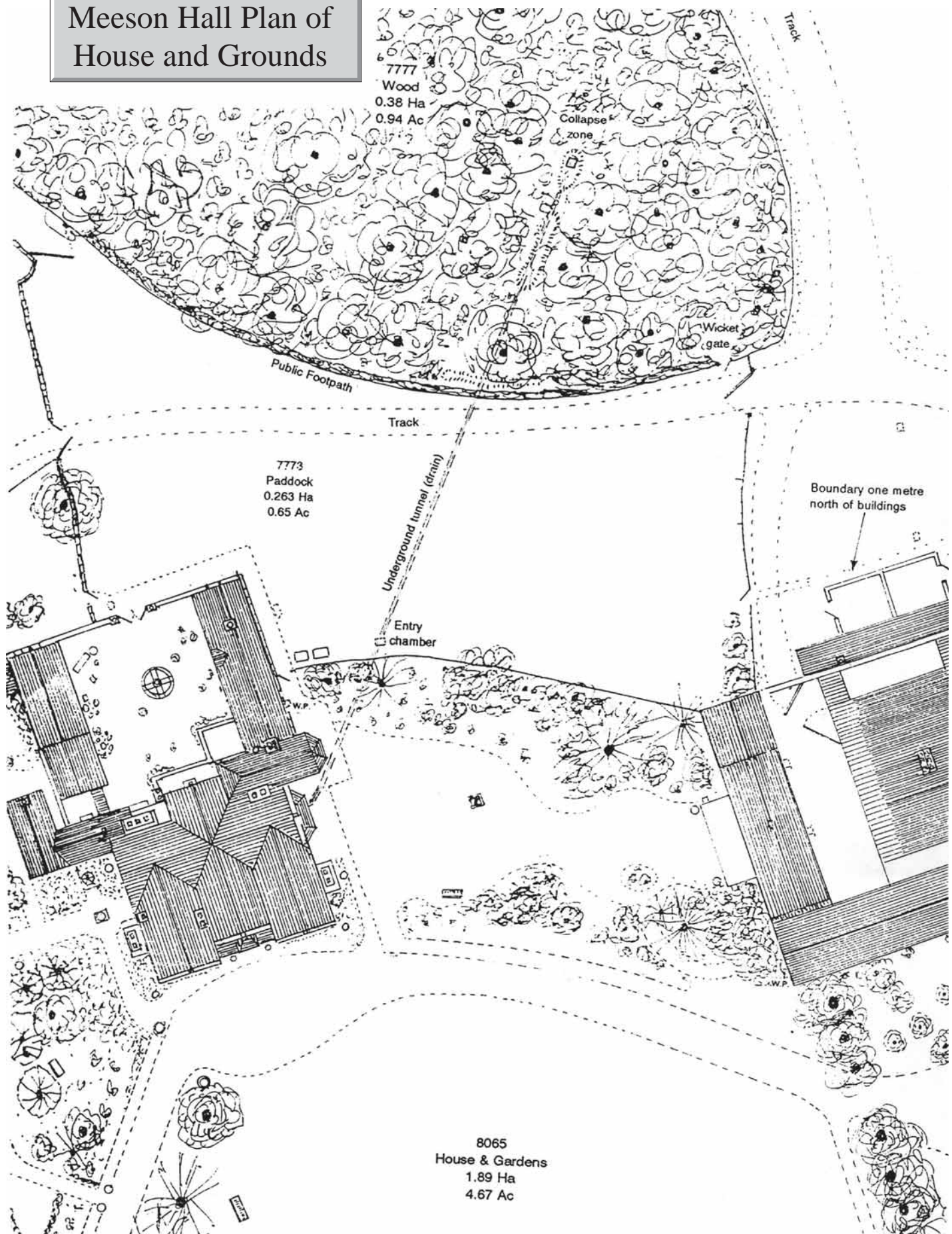


**Section of Underground Tunnel at Meeson Hall, Great Bolas**  
Drawn by David R.B.Adams, Jan. 1996





**Meeson Hall Plan of House and Grounds**



**Drawn by David R.B.Adams  
for Mr & Mrs A.C.Jones  
January 1996**



# Shropshire Project Up-date by Nick Southwick

**12 November 1995**

*Well & Tunnel NGR: SJ671052*

**Members Present:** Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Peter Eggleston, Kelvin Lake, Mike Moore, Ben Shaw, Nick Southwick, Rob Southwick, Edwin Thorpe and Tom West.

MineCam lowered down Well to expose Tunnel, Ben Shaw investigated and surveyed tunnel - digging to continue at a later date.

**19 November 1995**

*"1800" Tunnel*

(Behind The Malthouse, Ironbridge)

**Members Present:** John Davies, Mike Moore, Nick Southwick and Rob Southwick.

"1800" Tunnel investigated and surveyed to collapse. [See page 7 for sketch of accessible tunnel].

**3 December 1995**

*Yorton Bank Copper Mine*

**Members Present:** Colin & Liz Armfield, John Davies, Mike Moore, Adrian Pearce, Julie Pearce, Nick Southwick and Rob Southwick.

"Treasure Map" locating the lost Yorton Bank Copper Mine (as supplied by Geoff Warrington) was investigated - metal grid cover located - further investigation required.

*Clive Copper Mine*

Shaft stabilisation photographed.

**23 December 1995**

*Bulthy Mine*

**Members Present:** Adrian Pearce and Stuart Tomlins.

Investigation of surface features, sketch map made and recording from old miner taken.

**28 December 1995**

*Pontesford Coalfield*

**Members Present:** Colin & Liz Armfield, Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Mike Moore, Adrian Pearce, Julie Pearce, Nick Southwick, Rob Southwick, Edwin

Thorpe, Stuart Tomlins and Mike Worsfold.

Surface walk to investigate surface remains, a visit to four Pumping Engine Houses (two of which have been turned into residential use), plus Snailbeach and Grits Smelters.

**7 January 1996**

*Well and Tunnel, Old Wynd*

**Members Present:** Colin & Liz Armfield, Eileen Bowen, Peter Eggleston, Steve Holding, Kelvin Lake, Mike Moore, Neal Rushton, Adrian Pearce, Nick Southwick, Rob Southwick, Edwin Thorpe and Alan Taylor.

Well entered by Eileen Bowen, who re-surveyed the length towards the field. The underground location beacon was also placed at the fall so the exact spot could be identified on the surface. The spot was then dug with a mini JCB. Tunnel entered later - more surveying to be carried out.

**14 January 1996**

*Well & Tunnel, Old Wynd*

**Members Present:** Dave Adams, Colin & Liz Armfield, John Davies, Mike Moore, Nick Southwick and Rob Southwick.

Tunnel entered via excavation, owners taken underground, photographic and video record taken.

**4 February 1996**

*Brierly Hill Tunnel System*

*Coalbrookdale NGR: SJ671051*

**Members Present:** Dave Adams, Colin & Liz Armfield, Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Peter Eggleston, Kelvin Lake, Mike Moore, Neal Rushton, Nick Southwick, Rob Southwick, Tom West and Mike Worsfold.

Bricks taken out of supposed Brierly Hill tunnel entrance - only to find solid clay behind. May only be a retaining wall, entrance bricked back up.

**17 February 1996**

*Rorrington Mine*

**Members Present:** Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Steve Holding, Neal Rushton, Adrian Pearce, Julie Pearce, Nick Southwick, Rob Southwick, Stuart Tomlins and Mike Worsfold.

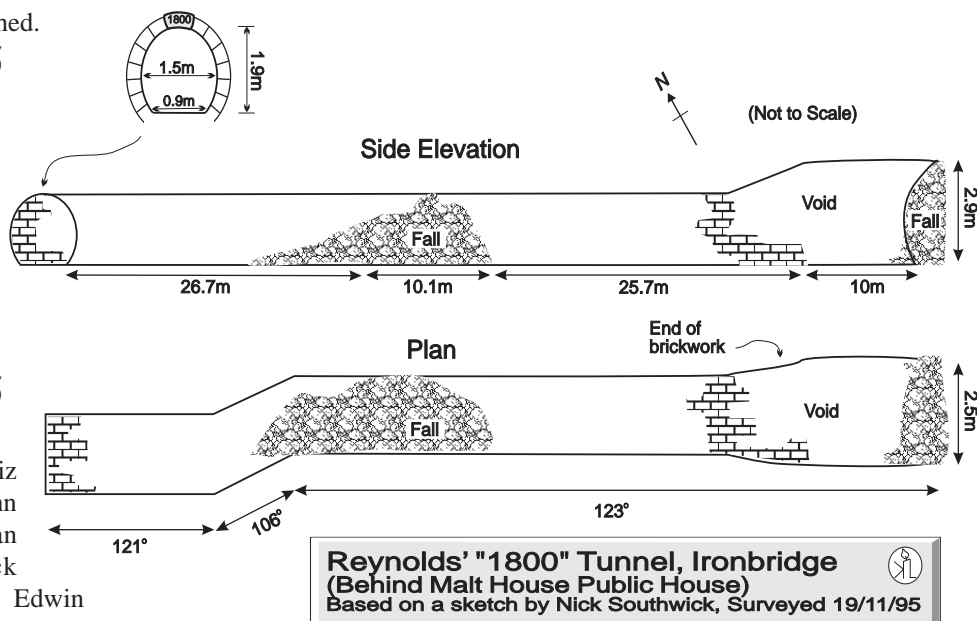
Gate and lock fitted to Rorrington Mine Adit.

**3 March 1996**

*Bulthy Mine*

**Members Present:** Colin Armfield, Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Nick Southwick, Rob Southwick, Edwin Thorpe, Stuart Tomlins and Mike Worsfold.

Bulthy mine surveyed on surface and underground.





## Methodist Chapels

With reference to Ivor's piece 'Stiperstones Miners Poem' on page 15 in the last issue of 'Below' and the earlier item on the 'Chapel Circuit' poem in issue 95.5, I have a few comments:

Firstly, since the Primitive Methodists are non-Conformists their places of worship (if they are formal ones and not a persons home) are always called chapels and not churches. This was firmly impressed on me by Mollie and Joyce Evans, grand-daughters of Enoch Parry who spearheaded the building of the Snailbeach Primitive Methodist Chapel. Church refers only to an Anglican or Catholic religious house.

The second point is that a mention in the Circuit Plan did not always mean there was a chapel at that place. If the local society (the followers) was strong enough, it would meet in a member's house rather than travel further afield to worship, and as such would feature on the Plan to be served by the Circuit's preachers.

Regarding Tankerville Chapel, I think I can provide a clue for Ivor on this one. I didn't take notes on it specifically, but I borrowed item PJ1 "The Joint Lordship and Tankerville Estates" from the Club Library recently, and vaguely remember a chapel at Tankerville being one of the properties offered at Auction in 1953.

Unfortunately this is only a brochure with no maps, although plans are referred to, but somebody around there might be able to pinpoint this building. I suggest checking the brochure.

## Correction

A slight correction to my article as published in the Spring issue of 'Below'; in the References, all the SRRC reference numbers should be 5982 in case anyone is interested in looking up this collection. SRRC is Shropshire Records & Research Centre; you might have guessed.

Thanks

*Andy Cuckson*

## Copper and Silver in Shropshire

In 1394 James Mynour, from Derbyshire, provided the Crown with information as to the existence of a copper and silver mine on the lands of Wenlock priory, or thereabouts, and offered to work the mine to the king's profit.

The Sheriff of Shropshire, and one Hugh de Burnell, were commissioned to oversee the work. Burnell later claimed never to have received the commission and there is, to my knowledge, no record of profitable working in the exchequer accounts. (PRO Cal. Pat. R., Ric. II, Vol. 5, p. 444; Cal. Close R., Ric. II, Vol. 6, p. 128.)

The documentary evidence I have found to-date suggests that copper mining and smelting during the medieval period was generally in the hands of continental metallurgists who had only limited success in working the English ores. Copper / silver ores in particular appear to have attracted continental expertise. For a Derbyshire miner to be involved in working copper would appear unusual, particularly as it was linked to silver.

Was the mine of 1394 successful and where was it located ?

*Peter Cloughton,*

*Blaenpant Morfil, Rosebush,*

*Clynderwen, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed*

*SA66 7RE.*

*e-mail: P.F.Cloughton@exeter.ac.uk*

## Snelson

I have been told that in your book "Mining in Shropshire", in a section by Geoff Warrington, that there was a mention of a certain Reverend Snelson, who evidently had been searching for copper at Weston, to no avail.

I wonder whether you could tell me the source of this reference? I ask, because I am managing a database of 'Snelson' references - now taking 50 Mb of disk space, and I would dearly like to confirm the identity of this Snelson

## Gwydyr Mines Access

Two years ago Adrian Pearce (representing NAMHO) and myself attended a meeting with Mr. T.M.Owen, District manager for the Forestry Commission at Llanrwst.

During the meeting it was mooted that some kind of arrangements may be possible in the form of an exploration lease, which would transfer the legal liability. I contacted Mr. Owen again recently to suggest that I would be willing, subject to agreement, and at my own expense, to set up a limited liability company for this purpose. Members might be interested in his response:

*" At our meeting in 1994, we raised serious concerns over giving permission to enter abandoned mines in Gwydyr Forest, although we agreed in principle to consider a lease. Mr Pearce's attention was particularly focused on the Aberllyn Mine.*

*However, since our meeting a detailed bat survey was undertaken at Aberllyn and this has revealed several serious underground structural and safety hazards. On this basis we are not prepared to consider a lease for this mine. Other abandoned mines in Gwydyr Forest are also known to have underground hazards. Therefore, we intend to persist with our clearly stated policy of not permitting underground access for recreation or education."*

*Roy Fellows*

mining magnate (failed!).

Cheers

*Adrian John Snelson*

*New South Wales, Australia*

*E-mail: jsnelson@ozemail.com.au*

## Reply:

The reference mentioned is on page 25 of "Mining in Shropshire", but the original reference to Snelson was in J.Plymly "General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire" 1803.





## Digging Activities at Snailbeach

There are a couple of digs currently in progress at Snailbeach and members should be aware of the potential dangers around the digs - they may also be interested in helping !

The most successful dig at the moment is the one to by-pass the "Ore-Chute" pitch down to the Forty Yard Level. It had been appreciated for sometime that there was a probable connection between what I call the Back-Stope\* and the Forty Yard Level.

An evening trip on 27th March, involving Francis Turner, Mike Worsfold and myself, confirmed voice contact and started the dig. The connection was pushed through by Ben Shaw and myself on Sunday 30th March. There is currently a 12 to 15 foot 'tube' through loose rubble which was sufficiently large for both Ben and myself to get through but the dig needs stabilising before regular use.

The other current dig is at the "Intermediate Level". The normal route down is to turn left on the Intermediate Level as straight on the level was blocked. Alan Robinson, Mike Worsfold and myself have had a couple of evening trips digging this blockage. It has proven to be vertical, on a slope, rather than a completely vertical shaft or back-filled level.

We suspect that this is another ore-chute with the top probably being the back side of the 'platform' below Perkin's Level. At times material has collapsed dramatically as we have been digging and anyone visiting the dig should treat it with caution. However, the slope means that we have been able to 'tickle' the lower material and induce collapses from a reasonably safe position.

Potentially the upper dig might allow us to establish a safer route down (the

top of the "Sand Slope" looks increasingly less stable) and it might connect to the Back Stope.

The work for the immediate future is to stabilise the lower dig, carry on the upper dig and examine possible connections from the Back Stope. The various pitches are being kept rigged and it is anticipated that much of this work will be carried out as evening trips.

\* *What I refer to as the "Back Stope" is the one below the now filled "Bipod Shaft" which has always been accessible from the level at the top of the Ore-Chute. I only returned to this stope a few weeks ago and was surprised to find that cement from the fill had travelled all the way down from the surface fill.*

*Steve Holding*

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## 1884 - A year of Catastrophe

Going through old papers the full depth of despair suffered in the Shropshire metalliferous mines in the year has recently come to light.

The official lists show its magnitude:

### **Tankerville Great Consols and Bog Mine**

Stopped May 1884 - 129 jobs lost

### **Pennerley Mine**

Stopped May - 116 jobs

### **Tankerville Mine**

Stopped May - 98 jobs

### **Snailbeach**

Underground work stopped Dec. 1884 - 72 jobs lost, 76 remaining

**East Roman Gravels** was in liquidation, as was **Ladywell**.

**Roman Gravels Boundary** was closed and **West Roman Gravels** abandoned July 1884.

Only the smaller mines and barytes mines (**Wotherton** was the largest with 31 men) remained, except for **Roman Gravels Mine** itself, struggling on with 179 employees.

Some mines did restart for a while, particularly **Snailbeach** but the employment (over 900 in 1880-1883) was never to be reached again. It fell to the 300's - but did rise again temporarily to the 500's by the end of the decade.

A special Distress Fund was set-up and bread, butter and tea distributed - also rail fares to get the unemployed to move elsewhere, even to take striking men's jobs in other fields. The local powers-that-be tried to put some of the blame for the losses on the miners themselves!

See: Bulletin PDMHS Vol.12 No.5 1995, for the rest of the story.

*Ivor Brown*

## Pleasley Colliery

This interesting mine site in North Derbyshire (NGR: SK 498644) is now the subject of a preservation scheme being proposed by Pleasley & New Houghton Action Group and other interested parties like local Councils, following the listing of the remaining structures.

The site holds the last two headframes and engine houses in North Derbyshire. The headframes are now badly corroded, but not considered in any danger. It is thought that they were the first steel plate headframes to be made by Stanton Steelworks - who later became the owners of the pit.

The two engine houses still contain their steam winders, both horizontal duplex winders: one built in 1902 by the Lilleshall Co. (Oakengates) and the other by Markham & Co. (Chesterfield) in 1924.

It is possible that the colliery site will be converted into a country park or other similar amenity.



# SCMC Caving Round-Up

## Dec. '95 - Feb. '96

### Lesser Spotted Caver

Just when it was thought that the caver had become extinct in Shropshire, a few were spotted coming out of hibernation and migrating northwards. The first reliable sighting was in December, where a weekend trip to Derbyshire reminded us that it can sometimes be warmer below ground than above.

Cara, Vicky, Ben and myself all met up at Moneyash for a wander into Hillocks Mine. Although predominantly a mine, the miners did intercept a number of natural features. It has some excellent examples of 'coffin' levels, with one or two squeezes just to make it even more interesting. We timed our exit right just as Sheffield Uni. were setting up for their underground Christmas party and the bar was open! Cara stayed for the party which was quite a success, whilst we retired to TSG's hut (a disused Methodist Chapel). Eventually driven out by the cold we were forced to spend the evening at a local hostelry, jealously guarding a roaring fire.

Suitably refreshed for the next day, our party was swelled by the arrival of Steve Holding, Steve Pope and Andy Harris for a long overdue return to Peak Cavern. Peak is a great cave for nice streamway, muddy crawls and a chance to get very wet.

After visiting the 4 sumps (reached from the main streamway), we followed Steve H. through the confusing system of interconnecting crawls of the 'Main Stream Inlet' to come out once again into the main stream. Our emergence back into daylight was met by the bemused glances of the Christmas tourists as we wended our way back through Castleton's busy streets to the hut.

### January

January saw us venture a little further north still with a weekend in the Yorkshire Dales. Steve H., Ben, Vicky and myself were joined by our friends Martyn and April, part-time cavers who valiantly volunteered their

services to help prevent the total extinction of the SCMC caving community. Saturday saw us on the side of Ingleborough looking for the entrance to Roaring Hole. On the previous visit I hadn't been paying attention to where the entrance was. Still, it turned out to be where the guide book said it should be.

This cave goes very deep, over 130m considering there are only a couple of short ladder pitches. In essence, it is a series of vertical boulder chokes connected by a few big chambers. The boulder chokes can be very wet - and the walk back to the car can be bloody freezing! Once again we found solace at another fine northern inn, the 'Marton Arms' where only the indecision of which of the wide selection of real Ales to try prevents over subscription.

The nice'n easy Sunday trip was to be Kingsdale where we had decided to do Simpsons to Valley Entrance as the weather and water conditions seemed quite stable. Ben volunteered to brave the duck at V.E. to rig a ladder and lifeline for our exit, whilst we trudged up to the top of the hill.

This trip is a series of 7 or 8 pitches, abseiling down then pulling the rope down. It does of course mean that after the first pitch is de-rigged you are fully committed. However we had two ropes and two SRT kits in case of a rope jamming or other problems. All went quite smoothly until the final pitch - Slit Pot. As the name suggests the start of the pitch is tight - just a bit too tight for Steve!

It consists of a vertical slot about 4-5 metres high through which the prospective caver must extrude him (or her)self out over a 25 metre pitch - having first fitted their descender!

Steve and myself enjoyed the opportunity of exploring the alternative route from a ledge at the top of the slot. For me this turned out to be an interesting chimney up the slot, partially protected by some in-situ bolts. Steve was then able to prussik up

to this ledge and abseil down the whole pot from the far side of the constriction. I returned to the Slit where I re-rigged again for a pull through once more after some qualms of whether the double rope was long enough. It was.

### February

Two trips in February to the Dales show the enthusiasm hasn't wavered for Vicky or myself, especially as NSG had permits for County and Notts Pot. Both times the caves were 'pirated' by other groups during our time in the cave, showing that some clubs (Higher Education especially) are willing to risk endangering present and future access agreements. Notts Pot had some excellent ice waterfalls in the shake hole entrance which made a set of crampons an ideal optional extra to start this trips. Casteret's ice Cave here I come.

*Alan Robinson*

### MCRO AGM Report

The AGM of the Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation was held on Monday 4th. March 1996. At this meeting, it was agreed that Simon Amatt (Cave & Crag Club) be Chair and Treasurer and that Steve Holding (SCMC) be Secretary.

Keith Edwards (Dudley CRT) agreed to co-ordinate the call-out list and Alan Robinson (SCMC) and Dave Bowdley (DCRT) were put forward as Training Officers (Alan in his absence!).

The AGM of the British Cave Rescue Council is to be held on 21st. April 1996 and I hope to attend. It is planned that some form of Rescue Practice be organised in Shropshire probably in early September 1996.

It was announced that Gloucester are planning another major practice for late 1996 but there were assurances that it would not be in Westbury Brook Mine this time.

*Steve Holding*



## Answers to Queries in 'Below' Spring Issue 96.1

### 1. *In response to the query on p17:*

Mr. William Eddowes, surgeon of Pontesbury, commenced his practice 1835. He was appointed Surgeon to Snailbeach Mine "with the consent of the men". Initially he was paid 8 shillings per year by each man, but in the 1860's this was increased to 12 shillings to cover each man and his family (the average wage at the time was c£50 per year). He visited miners up to 7 miles from the mine.

Prior to the 1860's he also attended men at Gravels and Grit. When the Grit closed in the 1860's Mr. John Hughes became surgeon to the Gravels.

Eddowes thought that miners were "rather smarter fellows" than agricultural labourers. He only ever went underground once, about 1840.

In the Kinaird Commission Report 1863, Eddowes states that he attended about 500 miners per year. He had also seen cases of "miners asthma" (silicosis?), lead poisoning in miners, poisoning at smelters etc..

### 2. *In response to the query on p10.*

Presumably Adrian means "self-acting" gravity inclines\*. These were normally used where outputs had to go downhill, they could thus pull 'empties' up. Shropshire metal mines did not produce high outputs from mines up on hill sides. Some

smaller mines like Burgam could have used inclines but never achieved high outputs. Gravity inclines were common features elsewhere in Shropshire, in quarries (Clee Hill, Wenlock Edge), on Bridgnorth's Funicular Railway (water was used) and of course in the Coalbrookdale Coalfield. It is thought gravity inclines were first used in Britain in the mid 17th Century, either in the North east or in Shropshire. early records describe them as Jigs, Wynds, or Tylling Rails. There are several place names which may have been acquired from their use - e.g. Jiggers Bank, The Wynd End, Link-on Hill.

Writers have recorded gravity inclines in the Ironbridge Gorge since the 1650's and the remains of two have been 'listed', the Jighthouse at the top of the Crawstone Mine Incline, and the brake-wheel supports on Benthall Edge. There is an early picture of a gravity incline at Pattens Rock (19thC.) and several general ones in existence.

One of the most interesting survivals (which has recently been affected by modern house building) is the 'Wynd' which ran from the Meadow Pit down to the Lee Dingle Bridge, Coalport Road, Madeley - beside the 'All Nations'. The cottage at the top of the slope by the pub was once the drum/brake house.

\* The other type of 'gravity incline' was the direct acting form - where gravity takes the load one way, but they have to be hauled the other e.g.: empties pulling a rope behind them as they enter a drift (as at Shortwoods Adit). Then being pulled out by haulage engine, or where empties are pushed up a bank and then returned by gravity - this happened at Halesfield, where railway wagons were pushed from behind to the top of a hill and returned under the respective loading screens by gravity. On long inclines the horse would ride down with the wagons by gravity and then have to haul the empties back up!

All types of gravity inclines were in use in Shropshire mines until the 1960's. At Kemberton Pit at least when IJB was there in the 1950's, all mine entrants were taught to use self-acting inclines underground. IJB did his training on the South Vigers incline which was rather unusual in that the return wheel was vertical (most are horizontal, under the haulage way).

Direct acting inclines were in use in most 'dips' and crutts in Top Coal and Best & Randles seams at various times.

*Ivor Brown*

## Coal Industry Update

Further to the report in the last issue of 'Below', **Coal investments** are now £6.7million in debt and attempts are being made to sell off pits individually. Bids have been received for 4 including Staffordshire's Hem Heath and Silverdale, but no candidates yet with £50 million for project finance for the Coventry pit.

**RJB Mining** have also warned that Asfordby colliery, which entered production last year has hit serious operating difficulties.

The problems at Asfordby stem from the complex geology of the thick beds

of sandstone which lie above the Deep Main coal seam, which has not been worked before. Fracturing of the roof is breaking the sandstone into large blocks which are pushing the hydraulic face support equipment down into the soft clay layer beneath.

RJB have also reorganised 4 Selby pits and "combined" them to make two single pits (a "polite way" of closing two separate mines). The rest of the RJB pits seem ok for the moment.

On the 'bright-side', at current rates, RJB's bank debt will be cleared during the second quarter of this year - leaving

just the £105 million deferred debt owing to the government.

In the year to end-December 1995, RJB's revenue was some £1,440 million from the sale of 41 Mt of coal. Production was 37 Mt, with 80% of this coming from RJB's underground mines - where reserves rose during the year from 350 Mt to 488 Mt (excluding Asfordby's 52 Mt). Open cast coal reserves were a little changed at 20 Mt. The company's net profit is expected to rise from £170 million in 1995 to around £200 million this year.

*Ivor Brown & Mining Journal*





# Mining Characters No. 6: William and John Anstice (father & son), other Anstices and the Madeley Wood Company



As explained in the last issue of 'Below', William Anstice (1781-1850) had served time as an assistant to William Reynolds, and following Reynold's death in 1803 a share in his estate passed to him. William Anstice in partnership with Reynold's stepbrother Joseph (1793-1858) continued the Ketley and Madeley Wood operations as 'Reynolds & Anstice'.

The direct management of the Madeley Wood operations went to William Anstice then aged 21 and he proved to be a very able manager with a scientific bent particularly in chemistry and geology. He spent some time with his friend (later Sir) Humphrey Davy (of the Safety Lamp) at the laboratories of a Dr. Beddows in Shifnal and worked on the composition of ironstones in particular. Many of the pictures in the classic Prestwich paper of 1840 were drawings of specimens in Anstice's collection. He also helped Murchison and eventually became a Fellow of the Geological Society in 1836.

During his time in management the mines at Madeley wood and the Lloyds were running out of reserves of mineral so he started the movement eastwards to Hills Lane Pits and then the Old Halesfield Pits. Both were developed before the 1830s. Similarly he began to move the Blast Furnace operations from Bedlam to Blists Hill during the 1830s and 1840s.

In 1840 the Commission on the Employment of Children visited Madeley Wood. John Anstice (1810-67), William's son came forward to give evidence. He told the Commissioners that he was 30 years of age and had lived "about the works" all his life. He was now a partner in the Company of which his father was manager. The Anstices welcomed the Commissioners to inspect all their operations and stated that if the

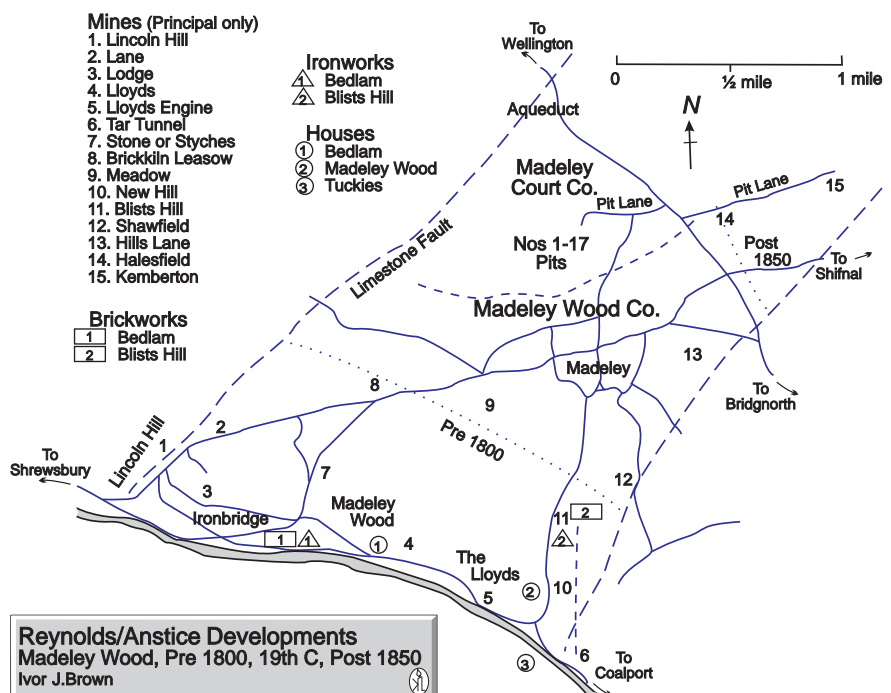
Commissioners found anything amiss the Company would immediately correct it. Much of Anstice's personal contribution to the proceedings seemed to concern the hours of work and ages of his workforce. He explained that they had to employ workers on 24 hour shifts on Sundays so that the normal 12 hour shift-turns could change without the furnaces having to be cooled, however, the men were allowed to take an 8 hour break in rotation during that 24 hour shift which enabled some to go to church.

The Commissioners were also told that only boys aged 10-15 years old were allowed to work on haulage, but Anstice was embarrassed when the Commissioners visiting Hills Lane Pit found a 4 years old boy underground. To this it was explained that fathers could take down their sons from that age to help them by doing errands underground, fetching candles and operating doors.

At this time the Company employed 1000, up to 700 at the mines and 300 at blast furnaces, brickworks etc. The Commissioners were very impressed overall and after pointing to the welcome they had received noted that in Shropshire "the very best feelings exist between all ranks" from owner, chartermaster to workmen.

John was also called to give evidence about 1842 to the Midland Mining Commission investigating the causes of much unrest among the mining community in the West Midlands at that time. He pointed out to them that he would not allow Chartermasters to also be publicans and that he had no knowledge of 'tommy shops' in operation. Anstice admitted however that this was an 'evil system' that might be covertly going on without his knowledge. It is almost certain that it was, for even within 100 yards of his old home, Beldam Hall, part of an old half-timbered building near the "Bird in Hand", was in use as a 'lobby shop', the Shropshire equivalent.

In 1850, when the Company still employed 800 in Madeley, William Anstice died and John became Manager of the Madeley Wood works and mines. In 1858, the partner Joseph Reynolds also died leaving his shares to John. John gave some of the shares to his solicitor brother William Reynolds Anstice, but retained full management to himself - he was then 48 years of age and his health was not good. The only major changes that John Anstice made were modernisation of the Hales Pits (later called Halesfield) plus the important new easternmost development of the Company, Kemberton Pit, in the 1860s. John



# William and John Anstice, & the Madeley Wood Company

## Continued

Anstice, however, made one great impact on his workers and that was in human kindness.

Unlike the other major industrialists of the 17th/18th centuries in the Coalbrookdale Coalfield the Anstices were not Quakers but of the established church with very strong leanings towards Methodism. (William Anstice's brother 1808-1836, was born at Madeley Wood, became a professor of classical literature at Kings College, London, and was a great hymn writer. A book of 52 of these was published just after his death and one of the hymns still appeared in the recently superseded Methodist hymn book.)

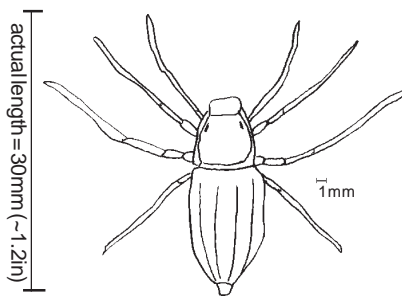
The Anstices provided a school and mission room at the Lloyds, Ironbridge, in 1852 and by 1860 John Anstice is shown as its manager. The ladies of the Anstices did voluntary work in this school for about 50 years. The school closed about 1920 shortly after the Anstices had left the area.

John died in 1867 having left the Company in the hands of his brother W.R.Anstice and his own 5 sons. Randall wrote of John in the 1880s in glowing terms "in bad times he kept his men employed whether others did or not, he knew them by their names and generally had a joke, a kind word or a cheerful recognition for each; he spared no expense to secure the safety of life and limb in his works and if by some unforeseen circumstances, or some act of carelessness on their part, accidents did occur his grief knew no bounds and he would often weep like a child with the bereaved; he dedicated his energies less to the service of his peers than to those in a condition to require them".

John's death did not pass un-noticed, thousands lined the streets for his funeral and his burial was in the family vault (with iron covers) in Madeley Churchyard. A fund was set up to build a memorial to him and this resulted in the construction of the Anstice Memorial Hall and Working Men's Institute at Madeley in 1869. It is a fine building and from its opening provided much that the 'Working Man'

might aspire to; games, concerts, lectures, library, even banking services and a restaurant although at first, no political or religious meetings were allowed.

The Hall has served the Madeley community up to the present day but its position has been spoiled by crowding it in with a 1960s shopping complex. The Hall has seen many changes, it was even severely damaged by fire within 4 years of its opening. It was rebuilt and all the wood-turning necessary was done by 'Stumpy' Brown, the writer's ancestor who lost his arms when he accidentally blew up the Madeley Wood Company's offices in the 1820s. The Anstices forgave him and he lived a long and fruitful life despite his handicaps (another story for later).



Fossil: *Curculioides ansticii* Buckland 1837. Rough sketch based on a paper by P.A.Seldoen, Trans. Royal Soc. of Edinburgh; Earth Sciences 83, 1992

### Anstices' Successors

During the 1870s the Anstices' successors tried hard to keep the firm in business, boom times had passed, and they attempted to sink new and bigger shafts at Kemberton Pit so that they could concentrate more on coal rather than clay and ironstone production. By 1880 the business was being carried on by W.R.Anstice, a solicitor, and John Anstice's two sons Captain J.A.Anstice and Lieutenant (later Colonel) E.Anstice but the day-to-day management was in the hands of non-family 'Managers'. In 1891 they were down to 8 producing mines; Kemberton, Old Hales, New Hales, Hills Lane, Meadow, Shaws, Styches, Stone Pit and Blists Hill Clay Pit and by 1908 only 3 reasonably sized pits

remained; Kemberton (357 men), Halesfield (113 men), and Meadow (63 men) with the small combined Blists Hill/Shaws Clay Pits (11 men).

In 1905 J.Cadman had become Manager, he soon closed down many of the ancillary operations, such as Blists Hill Ironworks, to concentrate on coal production from the combined Kemberton-Halesfield Pits together with the smaller Meadow Pit. In February 1918 the enterprise became a Limited Company, the Madeley Wood C. Ltd., (the last Anstice directors were Sir Arthur Anstice, Sir R.H.Anstice and Mr. R.E.Anstice). Shortly afterwards the Anstices were bought out by the Cadmans for about £42,000. In the 1920s the Anstice family sold all their remaining interests and lands in the coalfield.

The Anstice's original home 'Bedlam Hall' was damaged by landslip early last century and was eventually destroyed by further landslips. The Anstice's new home at Madeley Wood Hall was demolished after they left in the 1920s.

Kemberton Pit grew to employ nearly 1000 men after nationalisation in 1947, but closed in 1967. The writer's father who had worked there for 51 years had the job of selling up the small surface items, he was the last workman and his ancestors had been among the first to be taken on by the company nearly two hundred years before. Like so many in Madeley the family livelihood was intimately bound up with the fortunes of the company and its owner managers the Reynolds, Anstices, and latterly the Cadmans. The Reynolds/Anstice 'Beldam Furnaces', the Blists Hill Furnace and Mine site and the Tar Tunnel are now museums.

No published history of any of the Reynolds, Anstice or cadmans has been found, the principal references appear to be those appended to the previous article on the Reynolds family. A large number of scattered records exist awaiting collation.

*Ivor Brown*



# Secret Sandworkings at Blakeshall, Kinver Edge

Situated six miles south-east of Highley Mine, few, except the locals seem to have known much (until recently) about the extensive range of underground tunnels beneath 150ft. of sandstone at Blakeshall Common near Wolverley (between Kingsford Country Park and Kinver Edge).

This 'mine' now off the official secrets list seems to have been one of 4 extensive underground factory/administration complexes built in the early 1940's.

## Start of Mining

Mining of sandstone began in 1941 with construction workers lodged in a hostel on site, although others were bussed in from Cleobury Mortimer and Ludlow in Shropshire. There were four main adits and mineral was brought out on a conveyor and used mainly for "levelling surrounding fields" although there is still one recognisable waste heap.

Blasting seems to have been a major cause of accidents, it is also believed that in total up to 12 lives were lost in the mine.

Excavation was completed in 1943 and the 'factory' was ready for use the following year. Total area covered by the mine was 53.34 acres. The four main tunnels were each 16ft. wide and 18ft high and up to 300 yards long.

The underground complex had (still has?) all the facilities required of a factory employing up to 1000 and including offices, several bars, canteens, games area, medical room and a concert hall.

It was never used to full capacity, but did some manufacturing from 1943 to the 1950's when it became mainly a storage area.

From about 1960 it became part of a Regional Seat of Government nuclear shelter to control Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, West Midlands etc. and had offices for about 350 persons and a wide range of

emergency equipment including BBC radio stations.

Some re-equipment took place in the early 1980's and many of the derelict surface buildings were removed, it is believed to make it less conspicuous from the air. About 1990 interest in the site was waning and in 1994 it was put up for sale - but on one occasion was opened for charity, about 900 people paid over £4,000 to view the underground area.

## New Book

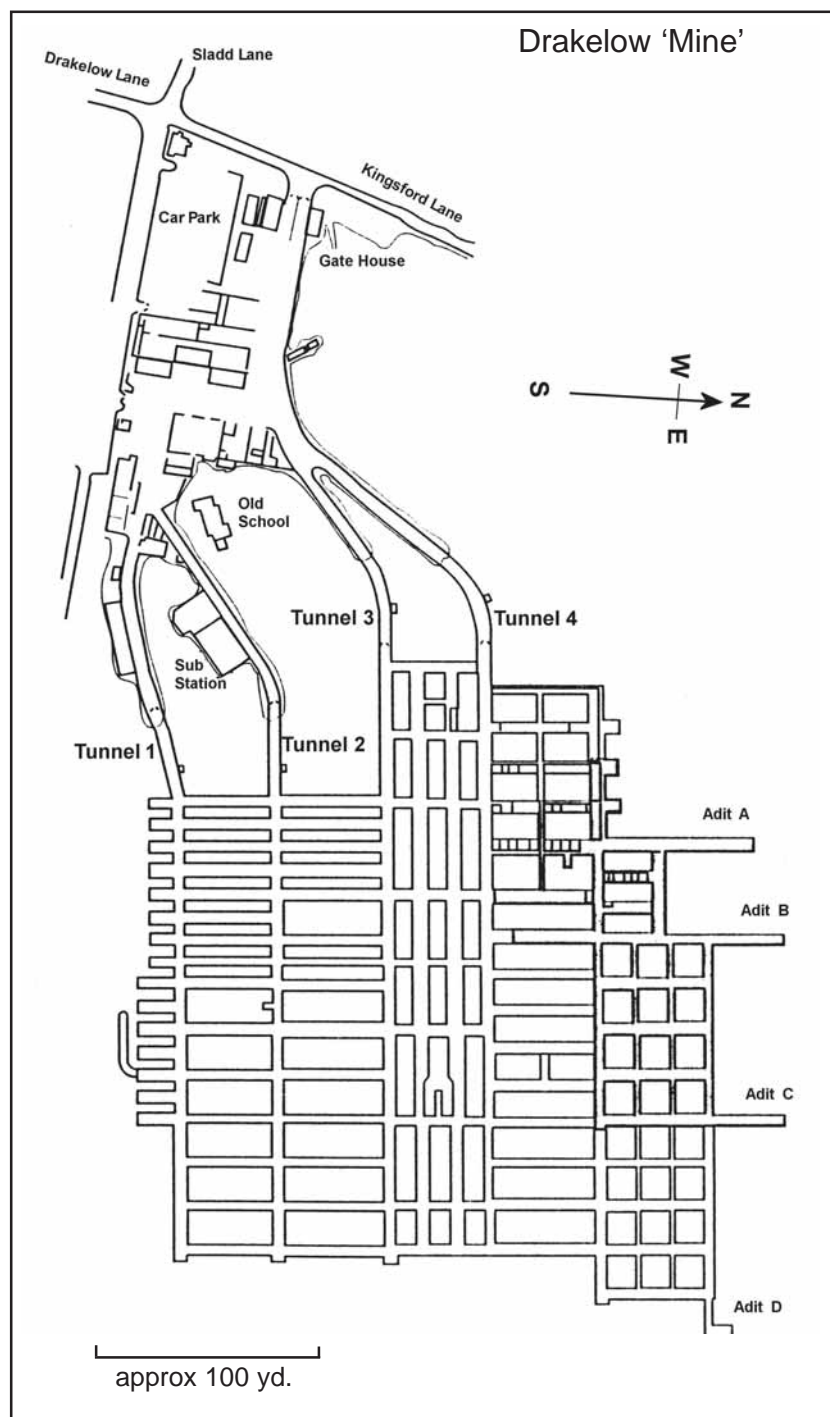
A 30 page book on the site:

### 'Drakelow Unearthed'

by Paul Stokes has recently been published (1996), price £4.50.

Copies available from Mike Moore.

*Ivor Brown*





# Trip to Britannia Mine

## 20th. April 1996

### Members Present:

Andy Harris; Steve Holding; Alan Moseley; Steve Powell; John Priest; Neal Rushton; Francis Turner; Andy Yapp and Mike Cousins (Guest).

After the long walk up Snowden, the whole party abseiled down the open stope to Level 5. On Level 5, one area of flooring was judged to have deteriorated and was life-lined. The descent to Level 4 was uneventful, the belay rope from an earlier trip being re-used. The ropes available not been sufficient to double the approx. 100 foot pitch, two separate ropes were used, with a knot against the krab approach to allow descent on a single rope.

Various items of interest were noted on Level 4 including part of a "Nobel Explosives" cardboard box and the remains of a Black Powder Barrel.

Existing belay aids were also used for the descent from Level 4 to Level 3 which was uneventful, except in that

the rope would not pull through and Steve Powell had to prussik back up to release it.

The delay on Level 3 had two consequences - some members started digging their way out (the level was open until two or three years ago) and Neal was likely to be late getting home (again) - a spare rope was used to allow Neal and Andy Yapp to carry on down.

Alan Moseley and Steve Powell carried on digging their way out of Level 3, which was much appreciated by Andy Harris who was suffering from a bad back and was reluctant to continue descending. Meanwhile, Neal and Andy carried on down to Level 1, pulling the rope behind them to life-line the 'bridge' in that level.

At one point, there was a danger that the four on Level 2 were going to be stranded, the rope down have being pulled down with Neal and Andy while the three on Level 3 seemed inclined to pull the ropes back up and exit via

Level 3 portal which they had successfully re-opened. Eventually Andy H. and Alan exited this way while Steve P carried on down. A 110 foot rope pass released down to Level 2, which proved to be about 20 foot short of doubling the pitch; the difference was made up with tapes, a long tackle bag and Mike Cousins being appropriately tall.

On Level 1, the 'bridge' was found to have clearly deteriorated and life-lining is now clearly required.

On exiting Level 1, it was found to be a nice sunny day and Steve P and Francis had sufficient energy to go back up to re-enter Level 3 to see the results of their earlier digging efforts.

Andy Y had returned to above Level 5 to de-tackle and we reckoned that Neal just about got away in time (assuming that speed limits were pushed).

*Steve Holding*

## Snailbeach Project Update

### by Nick Southwick

### 2 December 1995

**Members Present:** Colin & Liz Armfield, Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Mike Moore, Adrian Pearce, Julie Pearce, Nick Southwick, and Stuart Tomlins.

Contractors fence around main Mine building site removed and stored in miners dry. Part removal of rubble from floor of Mine Manager's offices to expose cast iron range and wooden floor.

### 6 January 1996

**Members Present:** Colin & Liz Armfield, Eileen Bowen, Mike Moore, Adrian Pearce, Nick Southwick, and Mike Worsfold.

Ivy removed from Lordshill Engine Boiler House, more excavation of Mine Manager's House and clearing out of Loco Shed.

### 3 February 1996

**Members Present:** Eileen Bowen, Adrian Pearce, Nick Southwick, Stuart Tomlins, Mike Worsfold, and Andy Yapp.

Loco Shed cleared of junk and artefacts sorted.

### 2 March 1996

**Members Present:** Colin & Liz Armfield, Eileen Bowen, John Davies, Adrian Pearce, Nick Southwick, Stuart Tomlins, and Mike Worsfold.

Boiler house flues of Lordshill investigated and surveyed.

More artefacts moved from Blacksmith's shop to loco shed and sorted.

## South Crofty

### Future

Recent rises in the price of tin to some \$7,000 per mt with a projection that prices might top \$10,000 per mt by the year 2000 have made the future of South Crofty secure (at least for a few years).

New investment is being made in the mine, with plans to deepen the Roskear Shaft to provide access to higher grade ores on the 445 and 470 fathom levels.

The mill is also due to move from Wheal Jane to South Crofty, eliminating the need for transporting ore to Wheal Jane and allowing the tailings to be disposed of underground at South Crofty.

### NAMHO Change

Adrian Pearce has resigned as secretary of NAMHO. The position has now been taken over by Wes Taylor, 18 Station Lane, Walton-on-Trent, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE12 8NA



# The Power House at Kemberton Pit

The most substantial and imposing building at collieries operating in the early 20th century was often its Power House. This large building usually incorporated the principal 'engines' at the mine, the compressor, electric generator and, sometimes, the main winding engines too, as well as associated controls and storage area for spares. The power house at Kemberton Pit was no exception but it did have a slightly longer history than most having been a conversion of an earlier building. It was the heart of the mine.

The main part of the building seems to have started its life as a house for a pair of very large steam engines in the 1870s. The first shafts had been sunk nearby in 1864-68 almost as a 'trial' in an area suggested as being a possible eastern extension of the Coalfield by local geologists. The shafts were small, only 8ft. dia. but the hunch paid off and good seams of coal were found at about 300 yards depth.

This success led to the decision in about 1872 to put down a pair of bigger shafts nearly twice the size of the earlier ones and about 50 yds away. The new twin-horizontal cylinder steam engines were ordered from John G. Stevenson & Co. of Preston,

Lancashire and a large engine house was built. This building had many similarities to the Anstice Memorial Hall (built 1869) then recently completed and also the blowing engine house with steam engines (also by Stevenson 1973) at Blists Hill Blast Furnaces. Were they all designed by the same architect or perhaps constructed by the same builder?

It is certain that the bricks were all the same, variously coloured but with the Madeley Wood Company imprint. Furthermore at the opening of the Memorial Hall in 1870 there was on display a model of "the double action steam engine" used at the Kemberton Pit. Was this in fact a model of the engine then proposed for Kemberton Pit?

After about 40 yards had been sunk trouble occurred when, it is said the sinking met running sand and work was brought to a halt. In 1877 the Company took advice on whether they could get out of the contract for the new engines which had not yet been delivered but the order does not seem to have been cancelled. It appears that the engines were installed and some further work was done in the shafts. Shortly after,

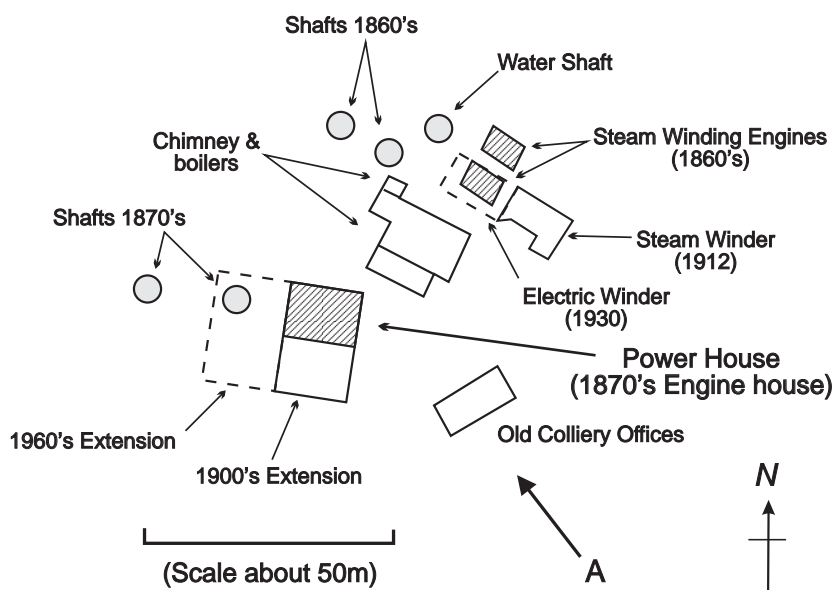
however, with a collapsing local iron economy (ironstone was a major product of the pit) the project was abandoned. The engines remained in the large new house, almost unused, from 1877 until about 1895 when they seem to have been sold. They had been kept in good condition and on Edmund Anstice's instruction "given a run every Sunday" until sold, it is said, to a northern colliery, perhaps near Chesterfield.

Efforts to trace their purchaser have not been successful although it is known that most of the very few Stevenson Winding Engines were in use at Haydock Collieries, Lancashire in the 1890s.

In 1902 the Madeley Wood Company was the first colliery owner in Shropshire to apply for Special Rules to use electricity for underground equipment and the electricity generator was placed in the engine house alongside an air compressor. The building was now the "power-house" for the mine and with some extensions it became a much larger rectangular building with a basement containing the foundation blocks of the old engine, the new engine house on a raised floor and a large new storage area. The electricity produced was used in early trials in mechanised coalcutting and in haulage underground as well as for lighting and pumping.

By the early 1900s Kemberton Pit was operated alongside the older Halesfield Pit with the same management and a common coal preparation plant situated midway between them. Halesfield Pit was supplied with electric power for use underground from Kemberton. During 1911 Halesfield recorded its first electrical fatality when C.E.Griffiths, who operated both the underground haulage and the electric pumps, was electrocuted due to "damaged insulation". At this time the power was 425 volts direct current but in 1924 much larger power equipment was installed.

Direct current continued to be used for most plant at the mine until the Second World War and one of the writer's first



**Sketch plan Kemberton Colliery c1930**  
based on 1:2500 OS (enlarged)  
Ivor J. Brown



# The Power House at Kemberton Pit

jobs in the 1950s was to assist in the scrapping of this equipment. In 1937 the colliery was connected to the country's Grid System and generation of electricity ceased. In the 1940s during the period of transition the writer well remembers being taken into the power house as a treat to see the "flames dancing on a lake of mercury", the mercury-arc rectifiers in use.

The power or engine house played its part after in the tragic pit disaster in December 1910 in which 7 men and 2 boys lost their lives when the cage in which they were travelling crashed down the shaft. According to press reports the "engine house" was used for laying out the dismembered bodies of the victims. To commemorate this the window overlooking the shafts was partly replaced, a clock fitted and a memorial to the dead miners installed in the window arch. This was still in place at the time the colliery closed in 1967.

From the 1950s the building was converted to various other uses but still looked much the same from the outside. In the basement a series of passages around the old engine foundations was used as the colliery fire station and for a while the rescue equipment store. The raised floor was chiefly used as stores with some offices, the high stores building adjoining continued as the main colliery stores. This had a chain operated crane on a carriage, also powered by hand using a chain, running on rails in the roof.

The writer remembers clearly one event in 1952 when, being one of the smallest lads at the mine, he had to hang onto one of the lift-chains while others pulled on the other chain to raise him to the carriage above. Here he had to replace the carriage chain on its pulley after a mishap. He then returned to ground level by hanging on the chain again while being lowered down with aching arms.

Being a substantial and useful building the power house was left intact when the other pithead buildings were demolished and it survived in various industrial uses another 20 years. It was generally thought to have been scheduled for preservation just like its sister buildings, the Anstice Memorial Hall and the Blists Hill engine house but on a visit in the late 1980s the writer was amazed to find it had been demolished.

All that could be salvaged of this fine building, and a memorial not only to the early Stevenson engines, the first colliery use of electricity in Shropshire, the owners, the workers and those tragically killed in 1910 in the country's multi-fatality pit disaster, were some of the roof beams (removed to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum) and a few coloured bricks now in private hands. The heart of the old colliery and the Kemberton colliers had gone.

No photograph or plans of this building have been found except for views of the top of its roof standing proud above all the other buildings. If any exist the



writer and Museum would appreciate a copy. Now only one other 'Power house' remains in Shropshire, this is near Hanwood and it has been converted into a house.

*Ivor Brown*



## Parys Mountain

Anglesey County Council are trying to get Parys Mountain copper mine to be given World Heritage Site status. There is evidence for Bronze Age mining, although the majority of the mining activity was in the eighteenth century when the mine cornered the copper market. There are also plans to make Parys Mountain the focus of an industrial heritage trail, which would include the copper port of Amlwch.

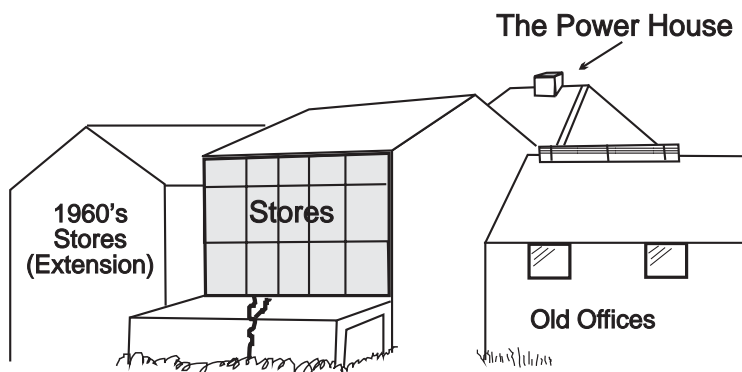
## Castle-an-Dinas Help

The Castle-an-Dinas Mine near St. Columb, Cornwall was worked for Wolfram from 1917 to 1957, Tony Brooks is currently researching the history of the operation and would be grateful to hear from anybody who has any information, photographs, personal experience, notes, etc. of the mine. If you can help then contact him at: Polstrong Cottage, Polstrong, Cambourne, Cornwall, TR14 0QA.

## NCA On-line

The National Caving Association with the help of UK Online has now joined the internet and have their own e-mail address: [jenny.potts@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:jenny.potts@ukonline.co.uk) They also have a web site:

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/nca>



**View of Kemberton Colliery in 1960's From South West (A on the 1930's plan)**

Ivor J. Brown





# Activity Photos



**Above:** The 'exposed' New Crusher house at Snailbeach



**Above:** "There's nae netties doon tha pit", or so they say, but Mike Moore managed to find one on a recent trip to Derbyshire.

**Right:** Inside the 'tramway' tunnel near the top of the 'Wynd', Cherry Tree Hill, Coalbrookdale (looking in the direction of the top of the incline).



## On the Move

Due to plans by the providers of Club's *Activities* Web site to abolish their 'Metropolis' Accounts and switch holders of these accounts to charge accounts costing \$14.95 per month (which is too expensive!), I have had to move the web pages.

The new home is now with a service provider 'DataRealm Internet Services'. One advantage of this site is that the address is simpler! So if you want to visit the *Activities* pages have a look at: <http://www.serve.com/scmc>

Our other web pages held on Joep Orbons 'International Souterrains' site which provide a background to the Club, it's research and publications is still resident on: **http:** [//www.xs4all.nl/~jorbons/scmc.html](http://www.xs4all.nl/~jorbons/scmc.html)

This last site is not just worth a visit for our pages, but there are details about Club's and sites around the world, plus an interesting lexicon of mining and related terms (in several languages). Start from **http:** [//www.xs4all.nl/~jorbons/home.html](http://www.xs4all.nl/~jorbons/home.html)



## Reminder NAHMO Conference

Just a little reminder that audio recordings of the lectures and seminars made at the 1995 NAMHO Conference at Lilleshall are still available.

Running to 9 x C90 tape, they can be ordered individually.

For more details contact Kelvin, or Peter Eggleston.

*Kelvin*



**“Methane, carbon dioxide and oilseeps from natural sources and mining areas, characteristics, extent and relevance to development”** published by BGS 1996 including plan, 83 pages + 2 large maps (includes details of Shropshire “oils”). Price £71.

**“Geology of Telford and the Coalbrookdale Coalfield”** by R.J.O.Hamblin & B.C.Coppack, BGS 1995, 170 pages.

This account of the geology of Telford and the surrounding area is intended to be a description of the published 1:25000 scale geological map. The district described in this memoir is dominated by Telford new town and the Coalbrookdale Coalfield, and extends from Sheinton in the south-west, to Lilleshall in the north-east.

Telford new town continues to develop, and the surrounding district continues to be exploited for a range of mineral products, including opencast coal, and aggregates for the construction industry.

*Up-to-date* geological information is vital for planners faced with conflicting demands for land use, as well as for those involved in the construction and mineral extraction industries. The memoir is intended to satisfy this need and to indicate where more detailed information is available in the Survey’s extensive database.

The memoir concentrates largely on the Coal Measures because of the problems induced by earlier generations of underground and opencast mining. The area was chosen for new town development because of its high proportion of derelict land.

ISBN: 0 11 884516 0. Price £50.

*The fieldwork for this survey was carried out 1971-75 - twenty years at the printers; is this a record?*

*Ivor Brown*

For more video details contact:

I.A.Recordings, PO Box 476, Telford, TF8 7RH    e-mail: [info@iarecordings.org](mailto:info@iarecordings.org)  
<http://www.iarecordings.org>



## *Advance Notice*



### 1996 Annual Dinner

to be held at:

## Snailbeach Village Hall

5 October 1996

Accommodation has been reserved for those that booked.  
 If you wish to stay near the venue contact Mike Moore a.s.a.p for details of local B.& B’s etc.

Menus and other details will be sent out at a later date

## 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

You can now visit the mine in ‘virtual reality’ if you have a web browser:  
<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/SnowdoniaMine>



## 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
- C.29: SCMC in Cornwall, £16.45





## Club Officers

**President: Alan Taylor**

**Chairman: Neal Rushton**

**Vice Chair: Malcolm Newton**

**Secretary: Adrian Pearce**

*scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk*

**Treasurer: Bob Taylor**

**Membership Services:**

**Mike Moore**

**Tackle & Rescue Officer:**

**Steve Holding**

**Training Officer:**

**Alan Robinson**

**Conservation Officer:**

**Nick Southwick**

**Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold**

**NAMHO Rep:**

**Colin Armfield**

**CCC/CNCC Rep: Ben Shaw**

## Diary Dates '96

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

**11 August:** Shropshire Geological Society Extravaganza, Oswestry. Contact: Adrian Pearce.

**13-15 September:** National Caving Conference & Exhibition "Hidden Earth", Hallam University, Sheffield.

**27-29 September:** NAMHO Field Meet. Based at the "Plume of Feathers", Princetown, Dartmoor. Hosted by Plymouth Caving Group. Steve Holding is co-ordinating accomodation for Club Members. Anyone interested should contact him.

**5 October:** Annual Dinner, Snailbeach Village Hall. Speaker: Roy Starkey (Mineralogist). Booking forms will be sent out by Mike Moore in August.

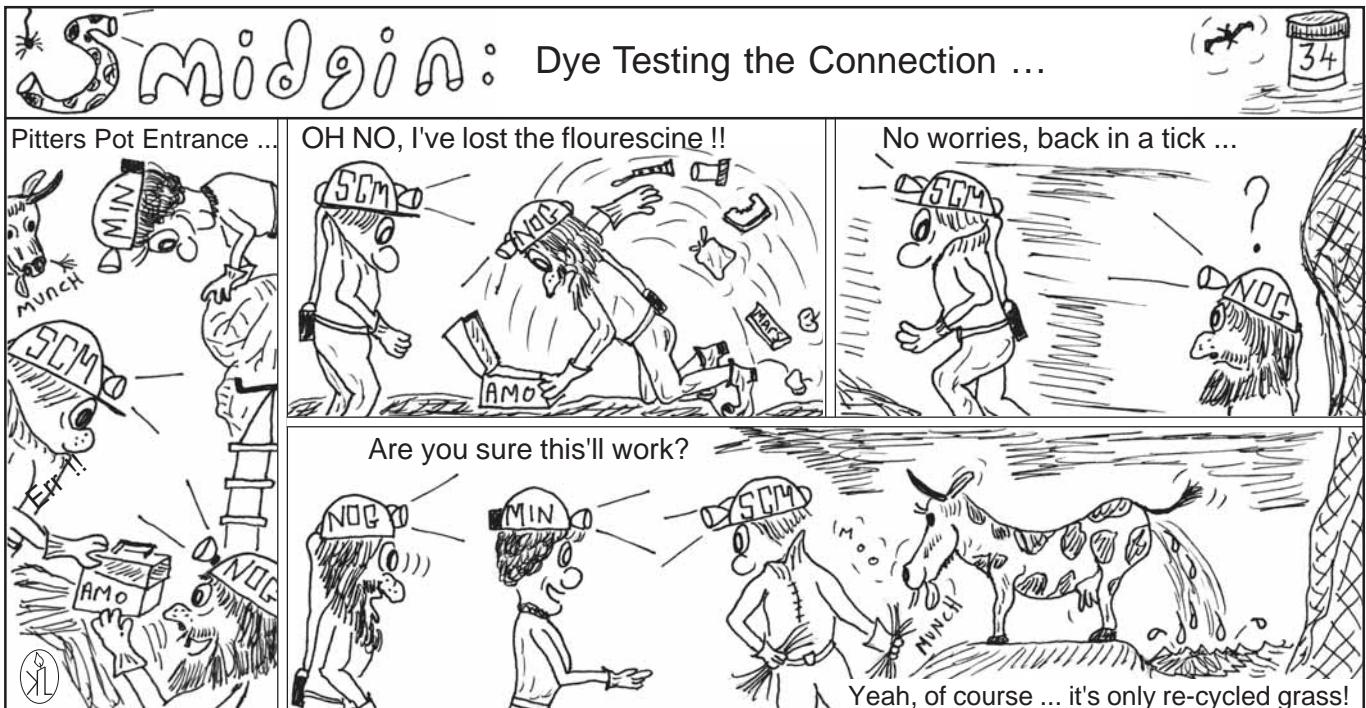
**7 October:** Talk; Lincoln Hill Limestone Mines - Recent work" by Ivor Brown. Black Country Geological Soc., Ward Arms Hotel, Dudley, 7.30pm.

1997

**'Below' Editor: Kelvin Lake**

*e-mail: scmc@factree.org.uk*

**14-17 July:** NAMHO Conference '97, Darley Dale, Matlock. Hosts: Peak District Mines Historical Society.



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

