

Library Additions

A number of publications have been received and are to be added to the Club Library:

Norfolk Mineral & Lapidary

Society: Stone Chat Volume 21, No. 3, Spring 2001 and Volume 21, No. 4 Summer 2001.

North Wales C.C. Newsletter:

No. 274, Jan/Feb/March 2001 (Peter Appleton has now taken over as Editor of the newsletter following Adrian Farrel's move to the USA), No. 275, April/May/June 2001.

The Way Out: Volume 1, Issue 8, Spring 2001 - newsletter of the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team (includes details of how a HeyPhone works).

Shropshire Geological Society

Newsletter: March 2001, May 2001.
Caves & Caving (Bulletin of the BCRA), No. 89, Winter 2000, No. 90, Spring 2001

Cave & Karst Science:

(Transactions of the British Cave Research Association) Vol. 27, No. 2 August 2000, No. 3 December 2000.

Speleological Abstracts from the International Union of Speleology produced in association with the BCRA.

Plymouth Caving Group Newsletter and Journal: No. 136, December 2000, No. 137, April 2001.

Accident Record

There were no fatalities in coal mines in the UK during 1999-2000. This is the first time such a record has been achieved.

Ivor Brown

September Meeting MOVED

Due to a large presentation taking place at the British Sugar Social Club on the 7th September the Club meeting due on that date will have to take place at an alternative venue, at the moment no more details are available but Club Officers are on the prowl and details should be announced at the August Club Meeting.

NAMHO 2001

Following the cancellation of the Irish meet, NMRS has agreed with NAMHO that it will host a two day conference on September 15th and 16th this year in The Novatel, off the M606 on Bradford's southern outskirts..

The theme of the conference - "Mining History and Beyond" - will concentrate on aspects of mining history which have so far received little attention, and look to the future.

Speakers include: Roger Burt, Rob Vernon, Ivor Brown, Peter Claughton, Mike Gill, Sallie Bassham and others.

For more details have a look at their web site:

www.mroe.freereserve.co.uk/nmrs/namho.htm

Recent Trips

Not many to record due to 'Foot and Mouth': Potters Pit, Clive - work on ladder & southern winze. Bersham Colliery - helping SMT, Nenthead, Stretcher work at Neal Rushton's.

Mike Summerfield

It is with great sadness that I have to report the recent loss of another Club Member. Mike Summerfield suffered a heart attack on Sunday 1st July, while on a day out to Leicestershire. Mike had been involved with the Club for the past 37 years and was very active in some of the epic 60's and 70's trips. Please turn to page 7 for David Adams' full report.

Annual Dinner

The 40th Anniversary Annual Dinner will be held at the Lord Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury on 6th October, 2001 (this is the weekend before the BCRA Hidden Earth event).

The guest speaker for the dinner will be Martyn Farr - those of you who have seen him before will know he has lots of fascinating cave diving and exploration stories, so book early!

A menu will be sent out soon, but booking forms should be available at the August Club Meeting.

Mike Moore

Dudley Speleoart

The planned Speleoart Exhibition at Dudley Art gallery and Museum plus the rock and fossil fair in the town hall, that was being organised for the 22nd September to 13th October has had to be postponed, due to the discovery of dry rot in the venue.

It is hoped to run the event next year following repairs to the Museum and Art gallery.

Steve Powell



News Round-Up 1

by Ivor Brown

Thanks

Over the last six months IJB has received much help from members of the Club and from others who have information, records, photos and artefacts relating to the mines and quarries of West Shropshire.

He is grateful to them all, the result of this is now in the hands of the publisher.

Lost pictures

During the 100th Anniversary weekend of the Snailbeach Mining Disaster in 1995 the glass negatives of the old mining photos in the Methodist Church were borrowed. The authorities at the Church are very anxious to get them back. If anyone knows of their present whereabouts please inform any Club Officer.

Request for Photos.

Has anyone got photos of the mystery structure at Mossey Green surveyed by the Club about 1970. It was thought then to be either a kiln or ice-house.

A survey map of 1794 has now been found which seems to show it as a kiln, probably experimental. It was connected with a Quaker named Botham, a friend of Richard Reynolds (see 'Below' 96.1 and Annual Journal No.3).

Christmas Competition

No entries were received for the competition in 'Below' 2000.4, so no prizes given. A more detailed map of the Shropshire outpost has been found however, on Baughs Map 1808. This shows an early, quite lengthy tunnel called "Lappal Tunnel" commencing near Halesowen.

[This is a tunnel on the Dudley No.2 Canal, of the Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN). At 3,795 yards long it is the third longest canal tunnel built in Britain, but throughout its life it was prone to roof-falls and subsidence.

The tunnel and the Dudley No.2 canal were promoted in an Act of Parliament in 1793, it was 'open' by 28th May 1798, and finally closed in June 1917 when there was a large collapse in the tunnel.

The tunnel had no towpath and to help boatmen "legging" through the tunnel a flow of water was created by putting a stop lock across the western end of the canal and pumping water from the west side to the east side causing a current to flow west to east. It also had the effect of raising the water level in the canal to the east for 5 miles towards Selly Oak by about 6 inches in three hours the pumps operated for. (Boats were allowed 3 hours alternately in each direction to get through the tunnel.)

When boats were ready to pass east to west a paddle was opened in the stop gate and the water levels allowed to equalise causing a current through the tunnel in the opposite direction. Kelvin]

Kelly Mine

A new 'show mine' in Devon, the Kelly Mine claims in its literature to be the 'last mine in Britain to use candles for lighting and hand drilling' - in 1952.

This is incorrect, to the writers knowledge Burgam Mine was using them until 1962 and the Rock Fireclay Mine, until 1964, both these being in Shropshire. It is quite likely that they were used in other mines until the 1970's.

Largest Tin Mine

The world's largest tin mine, is now the San Rafael Mine near Lake Titicaca in the Southern Peruvian Andes. It worked copper until the mid 1980's, now it produces 14% of the world's production of tin ore (giving some 36,000 tonnes of tin per year).

Culvert Talk

A talk on the Coalbrookdale Culverts etc.. is to be given by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Archaeologist on Wednesday 24th October at 7.30pm in the Coalbrookdale Museum.

Follow-up

Andy Cuckson has had a detailed correspondence with Mr.J.M.Taylor of Wolverhampton, who made and appeal for information about the Naylor's of Snailbeach in a previous issue of 'Below'.

This has been extremely fruitful for both parties. Two brothers, John and Samuel Naylor, were in the Minsterley area in the 1780's, and held senior positions in the Snailbeach Company (one is definite, the other highly likely). It also seems that these jobs were passed to their sons, John Jr. and Sam Jr.

With the co-operation of Mr.Taylor it is hoped that a detailed story for 'Below!' will follow.

Snailbeach Inventory

An inventory for Snailbeach Mine dated 1769 has been found, it mentions an 'engine' value £140. Could this be the one that was in the old house attached to the Blacksmiths Shop?

Recent Publications

The Hadley Mining Field by Ivor J.Brown in Telford Historical & Archaeological Society Journal No.4, 2000

Miners & Mariners of the Severn Gorge by B.S.Trinder & N.Cox, 357p £25 (published by Phillimore & Co. Ltd. 2000). Plenty about mining in Shropshire in the 1660's to 1760's.

The Practice of British Geology, 1750-1850 by H.Torrens, University of Keele, 2001 c350 pages. £57.50. Has chapters of Shropshire interest eg: on Arthur Aikin, the Silurian System etc..



Crawstone Iron Mine

28th April 2001

One of the few trips possible during April was to Crawstone mine, Ironbridge, 'Foot and Mouth' having closed all the other Shropshire sites. The aim of the trip was to complete the survey started on the last visit and to test the newly acquired HeyPhones.



Above: Opening up the mine entrance

On arrival some "debris" had to be removed from the entrance, while the HeyPhones were checked and a quick run-through of their operation was made. The group was split into two teams, one to initially go underground with one of the HeyPhones, while the other group visited various surface locations to establish communications with the underground station.



Above: Eileen Bowen in the entrance crawl.

Below: Neal Rushton checking the gas meter.



It all sounded good in theory, however when the underground party had gone in about 60m, just passed a slight widening in the passage, the gas multi-meter, the oxygen meter and the flame safety lamp all started indicating bad air. This was before any of the underground branches had been reached. The air seemed to be in layers, a concentration of carbon dioxide near the floor to just above knee height, a good layer of air in the middle to just about chest-head height then methane rich air above that.

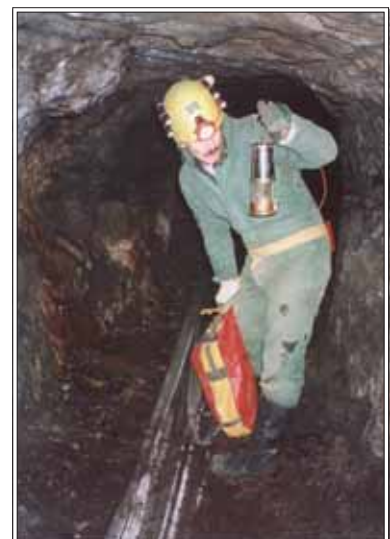
It was decided to abandon the survey work and to test the Hay phones using the wide section in the passage-way as a base. Initial tests of talking to the surface station near the entrance seemed to work, although the sound was a little crackly. Tests to other points on the surface were not so successful, and it was found very difficult to hear what was being said.

Since this trip the faulty HeyPhone has been replaced and test trials made at Clive. The phones seem to work, but a good ground and the full length of the "groundials" needs to be laid out. When conditions allow tests need to be carried out at some of the metal mines in South Shropshire. Alan Robinson will give a more detailed report on the HeyPhones in the next issue of 'Below'.

Pictures: Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings, 2001



Above: A HeyPhone 'kit' - just fits in a Pelican case
Below: Alan Robinson preparing the first HeyPhone.



Above: Andy Harris checking the flame safety lamp



'Never on Sundays' - early attempts 100 years ago

by Ivor Brown

This recent publication of the Shropshire Mines trust is excellent, but how much more it would have contained on mining if it had been produced 100 years ago - a project was started then - and two attempts made to do something about it.

On January 16, 1898, a meeting was held, at Shelve School, of the Reading and Recreation Society; Reverend K. Rolton presided and the room was "well filled". Mr. Jasper More MP was to give a lecture - he had chosen the subject of 'local mining'.

Mr. More commenced by saying that "strangers were now enquiring about these mines and it would be useful to print the most authentic facts". He proposed that for a start "different authorities should undertake a short sketch of each mine" and that "Mr. Higgins" should jointly edit them with himself. Mr. More said that he himself would also write a history of "locomotion" in the district (by which he seems to have meant the roads and railways of the area) and that others like "Mr. Morton, Mr. Salmon and Sir Roderick Murchison" had all left material which would make up a chapter on geology. Others at the meeting also offered to write something including Captain Oldfield of Snailbeach.

The meeting was said to have lasted 3 hours and the proposal was well discussed.

By January 19, 1898 Mr. More had written, and had published in the Mining Journal the first part "Introduction to Proposed Handbook to Mines of the Shelve and Minsterley District". It began "in all neighbourhoods, especially where there are mines, there are old people whose memories are stored with information which may be of use to posterity, if only they will write it down. This it is always difficult to induce old people to do".

Mr. More then goes on to discuss local personalities and what they

have written, but he does ramble on rather into other areas which obviously interested him. through February, March and April this weekly Journal continued with Mr. More's writings moving on from his "Introduction" to the "Proposed First Chapter" in which he began by looking at the history and geology of mining in the area. His writings brought forth some contributions from others, such as Miss Laurence of Pontesbury - but then seems to stop suddenly.

This was not the end however for Mr. More began a similar project, using as his medium this time a local newspaper "The Advertiser". On February 6th 1903 there began the first of a number of articles by Mr. Jasper More MP on "The West Shropshire District and Mines - chiefly zinc, barytes and granite".

The first article headed "Preface" is introduced by a quote from 'Old Philosopher'.

"A full knowledge of the past is the best means of understanding the present and determining the future".

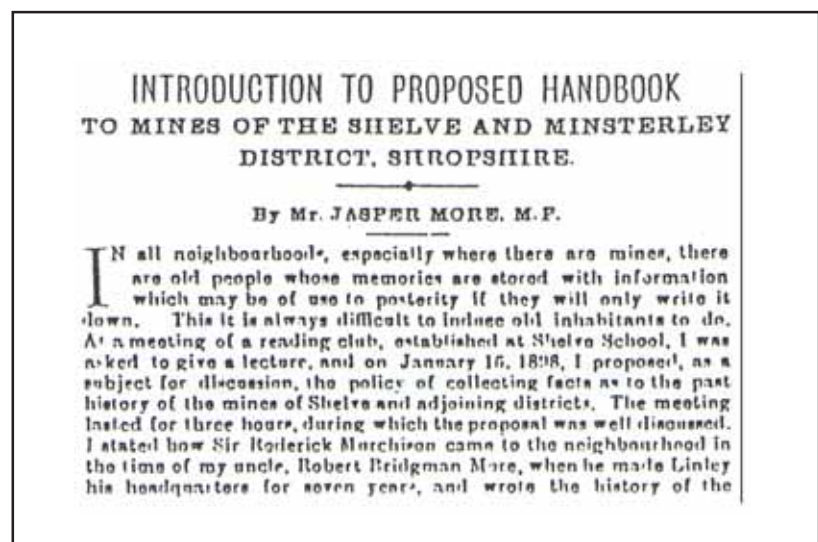
write what he remembered". He said that his father, Mr. Fredrick More, died in 1870 at nearly the age of 80.

He mentions also another person, the Earl of Monnt Cashell of More Park, Co. Cork (who died at the age of 91), who he had tried to get to commit his "reminiscences to writing". Mr. More added that one of the problems was that these old persons did not have access to "shorthand writers and typewriters".

In these articles Mr. More even refers to the persons he knows who have "known the district for 50 years and more" and many others with whom he had had business dealings.

Unfortunately, again the articles do tend to be of a rambling nature with mentions of the mines in the Lake District, Northumberland and North Wales.

Part V (although mistakenly shown as IV) was published on March 6th, 1903, like the rest it is interesting but did not achieve the aim of getting others to put down their memories - it is very much the work of one Mr. Jasper More MP.



Mr. More then wrote:

"Persons in advancing years have often been urged to commit to writing their knowledge of a neighbourhood. Mr. More MP began his father to

The producers of 'Never on Sunday' have been much more successful at obtaining the reminiscences of the older generation, but then they had all the modern gadgetry to help them. The have done a very good job.



'Never on Sundays' - early attempts 100 years ago continued...

Footnote 1

In the 1950's the Coalbrookdale Archives Association distributed school exercise books and pencils to the older occupants of the area with a request that they put down their memories. This produced a reasonable response and the results were kept in the "Coalbrookdale Archives" now part of the IGMT Library.

Footnote 2

The last Jasper More MP of the South Shropshire lead mining family

(and Tory MP for the Ludlow Constituency in the 1950's) applied to the NCB to be allowed to tour the pit top area and to meet the miners at Madeley Wood Colliery as they left the pithead baths.

The Jasper Mores had been MPs for the area through 6 generations "and the best part of 400 years". The visit was agreed by the pit manager and the writer was instructed to look after the MP ("to prevent injury or abuse") when the shift came up. IJB objected, but was informed that it was part of his training as a pit official!

Fortunately no real problems arose, but IJB did keep a low profile well away from Mr. Mores banner. At the end of the visit Mr. More gave IJB permission to ride his BSA Scooter along his long private drive, thus avoiding the tortuous route through Linley Woods on his visits to the lead mines in the south - and also to visit him to see his collection of mining relics. IJB never took up the offers in case it got known to the miners! Sir Jasper More was the last of the line as MP and died without heir in 1987.

PROPOSED FIRST CHAPTER OF A HANDBOOK TO THE BIELVE AND MINSTERLEY DISTRICT SHROPSHIRE.

By JASPER MORE, M.P.

MOST handbooks begin with a chapter on some early period which is interesting to antiquaries, but is not what the general public want. The Roman period left its mark on this district, as a pig of lead with the stamp of Hadrian show that mines were worked in the early part of the second century A.D. I shall be happy to go more fully into the Roman period on any self-

The World's Deepest Mine Shaft

The Company AngloGold has nearly completed the deepening of the Moab Khotson Mine (situated in the North West province of South Africa, 25km (16 miles) southeast of Klerksdorp) from 2,340m (7,677 ft.) to 3,150m (10,335 ft.). This will make it the deepest single-lift shaft in the world!

The main shaft is a 'composite' shaft 10.7m (35.1 ft.) in diameter and 2,340 m deep. It carries men, materials, rock, ventilation and reticulation requirements, each in their own compartment or section. Deepening work started on the shaft in September 1998 and it is due to finish in August 2001, when the men and materials handling section of the shaft will have been extended to a depth of 3,150m.

At the 3,150m level, a twin decline system will then be sunk to a depth of 3,522m (11,555 ft.). The advantage of this system is that contact with an expected shale horizon will be of a limited nature and it will help improve the strata control.

World Record Winder

To work this shaft, the world's most modern and technically advanced mine winder-system has been installed. The system consists of two completely independent drum winders which are used as an electrically coupled drum winding system. The system comprises two squirrel cage induction motors rated at 7.4 Mega Watts (MW) [*root-mean-square*] at 62 rpm and 16.8 MW at peak rate, and Mk20 medium-voltage cycloconvertors. The digital

control systems incorporate electronic speed/distance protection and closed-loop brake controls as well as functions specifically designed for the winder to reduce dynamic rope forces during drive and emergency braking operations (ie: gizmo's to compensate for rope bounce!).

The winding system is capable of hoisting a 13.5 tonne payload at a speed of 19 metres per second (if you fancy doing a bit of maths, this means it takes 2mins. 45 secs. to travel the full length of the shaft!). The electrically coupled configuration of the system offers a number of advantages - when one drum is unavailable, for whatever reason, production can continue, albeit at 50%.



News Round-Up 2

Roman Coal

A Roman pottery and smithy just south-west of the Meole Brace island on the A5(T) by Shrewsbury, on the site of a new water main. The main item of interest was the discovery of “fairly convincing” coal fragments in the slag from the smithy. Whilst charcoal would have been the main fuel for the smithy, it seems reasonable to suggest that this is more indirect evidence for Roman coal mining in Shropshire.

from Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society, (volume 74, 1999), Romano-British kilns at Meole Brace (Pulley), Shropshire, by C.J. Evans et al. (Pp 1-27).

Llanymynech Bones

In 1982 David Adams passed on fragments of bone and teeth from the Burial and Mandible Chambers found during club explorations in the 1960s.

The bones have come from a cow (these show butchery marks) and two humans (an adult female and a child of 5-6). It is suggested that the mine was used for human burial during a period of disuse.

from Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society, (volume 74, 1999), Human and faunal remains from the Ogof (Roman mine), Llanymynech, A. Tyler et al. (Pp75-6).

Mine Remains

At Benthall (SJ 66590280) a bell pit and other mining remains were recorded, between Ash and Workhouse Coppice. They lay on the course of a new water main. The pit was part of a larger mining site which it is suggested, supplied Benthall Ironworks. The site is entered in the County Sites and Monuments Record as SA7284 and the excavation is described in Shropshire County Council Archaeological Report No 144. Pottery wasters from Benthall Pottery were also found.

At Knowbury (SO 576747) a pit mound and bell pit were recorded prior to removal for a new housing development. The pit had gone out of use by the 17th Century; it was probably early post-medieval in date. The record is filed as an internal County Council report; “A watching brief at Knowbury, Shropshire” by H. Hannaford, 1998.

from Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society, (volume 74, 1999), Archaeological Investigations in Shropshire, 1997-8, H. Hannaford (Pg 93).

Items submitted by David Poyner

Foxfield Colliery

The future for the disused Foxfield Colliery at Dilhorne, North Staffordshire seems a little brighter with the awarding of a £446,500 Lottery grant to the Foxfield Light Railway Society.

The grant is to go towards the restoration of part of the mineral railway and the pithead area of Foxfield Colliery.

Over the weekend of July 21st-22nd the Society held a gala at Blythe Bridge (at one end of the railway) with 8 working steam locos and an exhibition at the Dilhorne end with guided tours of the Colliery site.

Scottish Mining Museum

A three year funding package has been put together to safe-guard the Scottish Mining Museum which was on the verge of bankruptcy, following the collapse of local authority finance for museums.

The rescue package for the SMM also includes The Scottish Fisheries Museum and the Scottish Maritime Museum. However Scotlands other independant and regional museums are having severe funding problems.

The Scottish Lead Mining Museum at Wanlockhead and Doon Valley’s industrial museum at Dunaskin are still under threat of closure.

40 Years ago

How different Shropshire mining was 40 years ago - when the ‘Club’ was formed - some 10 mines with over 3,200 miners then active:

Mine	Men (u/g / surface)	Manager	Production	Seams worked
Highley	721 /170	G.T.Wood	231,700 tons	Brooch
Granville	482 /152	T.Blower	243,900 tons	Top, Double
Madeley Wood	397 /178	J.T.Tullett	187,200 tons	Top, Big Flint
Ifton	820 /220	L.H.Looker	372,000 tons	Two Yard, Quaker, Main, Powell
Shortwood 9,10	24 /6	H.Tarr	-	Best & Two Feet
Hunthouse	10	-	-	Five Feet

Also

Smalley Hill coal & clay, converting to opencast, Rock Fireclay (7), Burgam ‘Metal’ mine (2), Lordshill ‘standing’ - but surface working.

Ivor Brown



Obituary

Michael Summerfield

Michael Summerfield died on Sunday 1st July 2001 aged 61, he had been associated with the Club for 37 of its near 40 years. Mike first appeared on a Club expedition with his brother Peter on the 26th April 1964. This was on our first trip to the Glyn Ceriog slate mines, organised by Tom Vaughan. They were introduced by Dave Stevenson, Melvyn Hinks and Dave Fielding who had 'found' the Club a week or two earlier on the 12th April while studying geology in South Shropshire.

Once introduced to the Club they became very regular attenders, being accepted as Full Members at the Club meeting of 5th June. Some time later they turned up at the Club House which Jenny Davies had just cleaned, dumping their gear on the floor. She flared: "You tramp about like a herd of elephants". So Mike, who was a big fellow, became 'Big Herd', while the smaller Peter naturally became 'Little Herd'. Well that's my story, apparently there are other variants!

They took part in the great North Wales Cave Rescue of 27th Sept to 2nd Oct 1964 when two youths supposedly disappeared near Maeshafn. In terms of manpower this was the largest underground rescue operation ever carried out in North Wales, a complete farce, the two youths were found on a car park in Weston-Super-Mare!

Glyn Ceriog

The Summerfield's took part in the several attempts to recover on old ship's winch from the depths of the Glyn Ceriog Mine as an exercise in our rescue teamwork. They were present when John Mason 'lifted' the great Cornish engine house at the

head of the trench incline with 82 lbs of gelignite on 25th December 1964, also in the recovery of the Siskol coal cutter from the Rock Mine shaft workings on 31st January 1965. This is now in the 'Great Rock Sandwich Museum' at Jackfield.

The cutter was equipped with about a dozen bits of varying lengths and there was an unfortunate incident while the cutter was being delivered to a Borough Library Mining Exhibition some years later when Mike slipped on a wet lorry deck straight into the shortest bit, which cut into his leg, he was rushed to hospital, but carried the marks for the rest of his life.

They were also among the first members to venture into the Yorkshire caves, and were present on several trips to Derbyshire including Knotlow and Giants In these years Mike was the Club photographer. He was also present during the interesting weekend spent exploring strange tunnels beneath Mr Bibby's house at Llansannon, near Denbigh.

Tacklemaster

In 1966 Mike became the Club Tacklemaster.

Mike and Peter took a particular interest in the caves of North Wales and took part in many of the famous 29 expeditions to the Brasgyl Gorge Near Denbigh between 1965 and 67.

During the 1970's and 80's their attendance dropped as other matters took precedence in their lives, but they still occasionally attended the Annual Dinner. One seems always to mention 'they' because the two brothers were rarely far apart, and that continued to the end.

For a long time Mike went out with a disabled girl called Carol Evans from Shrewsbury, who I introduced him to on his second trip with us in 1964, she was obviously very keen; it was unlikely that Mike would ever bring himself to marry her, but it was a measure of his extreme kindness that he continued with her as long as he did, he just could not bring himself to let her down. However he married Jenny and perhaps it was perfidious fate that he ended his days pushing her wheelchair. Mike was kind to the end.

His funeral took place at Chasetown near Cannock on Tuesday 10th July, in addition to Peter six of us represented the Club. Chris & Liz Lane, Terry & Jenny Davies, Mike James, Mike Moore and myself. Chris gave a splendid eulogy on Mike's life and association with the Club, in fact he got quite emotional. Apparently he, Liz, Mike, and Jenny had been much closer than we knew and had been on holiday together. It was a sad occasion to witness the final rites of one who had been so much involved with the Club in its early years.

Afterwards we retired to the 'Drill' where many tales of older days were exchanged. Then we left, giving our sympathy to Peter and the two Jenny's in their loss.

As we went there was one thought in our minds, that our Club has not just been an organisation solely for the exploration and recording of the underground, but has been responsible for cementing the bonds of friendship between people who, but for the Club and its activities, may never have met, but once met are friends for life.

Lasting friendships were created in the early days, and are still being created now, let that be Mike's legacy.

*David Adams,
Founder Member, 27th July 2001*



Left: SCMC Members dismantling the winch at Rock Mine in 1965, with which Mike helped.



Clive Copper Mine

10th June, 2001

Sunday, 10th June saw 10 SCMC members plus 4 from Dudley Caving Club, eager and keen to get underground. There was a slight delay while Andy Harris concreted the mountings for the removable section of the access ladder, but all went well and the new ladder was thoroughly tested (Andy took it away again to make a few minor adjustments!)

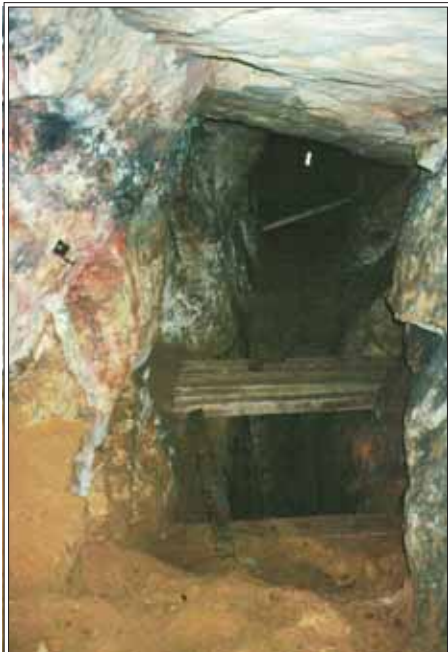


Left: Leah Priest (the lightest Club member on the day), gets the job of being the first down the new ladder!

Below: Cara Alison and Mike Worsfold examine the cladding of the new concrete section.

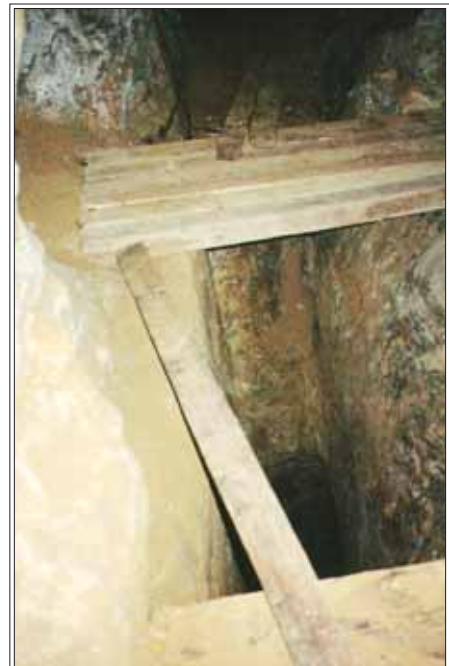


Once underground the Dudley team set-off to descend the Maypole winze and to explore the lower levels, while one SCMC team went to the North stope and another (Alan Robinson, John Priest, Andy Harris & Mike Worsfold) took some timber to the South winze to make the pitch-head safer - the sand has collapsed around the pitch making it quite tricky to cross or descend..



Left: View towards the top of the South Winze with the new timbering in place.

Right: Close-up of the timbering put in place over the South Winze during this trip.



Pictures: Kelvin Lake -
I.A.Recordings, June 2001



Clive Copper Mine

10th June, 2001 - continued

The timber around the concreted section in the Tarporley Siltstones is beginning to rot, in some places (particularly on the southern side) there are large fungal growths beginning to spread along the walls, while in the area towards the top of the sand slope in the Northern stope dry rot appears to be a problem (there is a very noticeable dry-stillness to the air here).



Left: Mike Worsfold entering the new concrete section in the Tarporley Siltstones



Right: Cara climbing up the slope inside the new concrete section. In time, as the floor 'erodes' a hand-line might be useful here.



Above: Fungus hanging from timber on the south side of the new concrete section.

Below: The tunnel along the top of the new section - contrast this with scenes in the Clive Rescue Practice video of the tight passage through the collapse.



Left: Cara at the top of the short ladder down to the sand slope. Note the dry rot forming on the timber to the right.

Below left: The short ladder to the sand slope (it lost another rung after this picture was taken c/o J.Priest)



The short ladder down to the top of the sand slope had already lost one rung, and another broke during this trip leaving several sets of 6" nails sticking out from the remains of the steps.

It would probably be a good idea to remove this ladder and perhaps replace it with an old short electron ladder, or a short aluminium ladder if anyone has one they don't want!

It might also be a good idea to remove some of the untreated timber that is showing signs of rotting, unless you enjoy walking through white fluffy fungus and breathing the spores!



John Fletcher - Chartermaster by Ivor Brown



John Fletcher (1846-1925) was almost certainly the last charter master of the old style with the

Madeley Wood Company. He was also a staunch supporter of the Wesleyan Chapel in Court Street Madeley, but he is not to be confused with

the renowned John Fletcher after whom this church is now named. The John Fletcher of this article was the son of George Fletcher and the grandson of William Fletcher of Dawley.

William Fletcher was a farmer and chartermaster in Dawley during the first half of the 19th Century. His son George was born in 1813 and later worked for the Madeley Wood Company at their pits in Madeley. George married Ann the daughter of Jonas Jones (1786-1862)*, the chartermaster at the Company's Hills Lane Pit (and the 'master' who had been present when the Child Employment Commission found a boy of 4 years working underground in that pit in the 1840's)

George became chartermaster at the Company's Meadow Pit. He became Vice-Chairman of the Shropshire Chartermasters Association in 1873 and the representative for the Madeley Wood Company's chartermasters. In 1872 however, George broke his leg at the Meadow Pit and this caused his early retirement in 1876 and death in 1878. His place at Meadow Pit was taken by a Mr. Farmer.

George and Ann had 7 children, but only one boy, John, so having father a chartermaster and mother the daughter of a chartermaster, it was natural that he would follow this path. He is believed to have been born at the Old Malthouse, Madeley although a few years later he was moved to Rose Villa, a house built by his father George on the site of an old

hall, known locally as Burnt Hall. It was just off Court Street, Madeley. John continued to live in this area for the rest of his life.

By the 1870's both John and his father are listed in directories as being 'chartermasters' living in Court Street, Madeley. After the father had retired, records show that the Company's pits then came under a partnership "Fletcher and Jones" and this continued until at least 1895, but by 1900, however the Company had ceased to operate under the chartermaster system. (It was quite usual for mines to be operated under partnerships where chartermasters would take charge of underground and surface working usually on alternative months basis).

In 1881 the Census shows that John Fletcher, age 35 was an "Iron Mine Master employing 50 men and 14 girls." This was almost certainly at Halesfield Pit and the girls were ironstone pickers on the pit bank. The census also shows that John was married to "Harriet age 42" and had a son William and daughter Annie 6.

John Fletcher has been described as being "worshipped by his 6 sisters"

and very knowledgeable "about geology, ponies, machinery, and the management of fields and coppices belonging to his company's pits". He is also said to have been "excellent company", "the best-loved man in the village" - and yet he was effectively the 'boss' for many of its inhabitants! It was said that he was a bit of a "character". He was the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Superintendent from 1885 - 1925 and one "usually saw children about him". On Sunday mornings he sat with the boys in chapel supplying them with humbugs during the sermon. These children commenced Sunday School at 9.00am and moved into church for morning service at 10.30. On one Sunday at least, it is said, that he called out, as the clock pointed to 12 and the preacher was still in his sermon, "Brother these children have been here since 9, and will be back again at 2".

John's working life was hectic, he got up at 4, prepared breakfast for himself and his son William (who was following his fathers footsteps at the pit, William was put in charge of all the ironstone-pickers on the surface). John then walked nearly 2 miles to the pit in time for the arrival of the workers. "Home again about 2, wash,



Court Street Methodist Church, Madeley (locally known as "the Chartermasters Chapel" because so many attended), built 1841. Now a *memorial* church to John Fletcher (a Church of England vicar *not* chartermaster John Fletcher).



John Fletcher - Chartermaster continued

feed, garden for an hour or so, then attend a chapel meeting or visit some sick folk". For years he never had a holiday, "except for an occasional day at Shrewsbury or Wolverhampton Flower Show".

John and his wife Harriet had only two children a girl who died young and William who is mentioned above. Although William followed his father - he is said not to have had the same energy. William is remembered as the man in charge of the last pit-girls picking ironstone on the tips (see article on Annie Payne in 'Below' 99.2). The abandonment of the chartermaster system meant that the family 'line' had ended, but it did not mean that the chartermasters lost their jobs. Most seem to have become "contractors" for haulage or supplies or pit "owners" in their own right. But this is a subject for further study.

John Fletcher died in 1925, but is still remembered in Madeley, a large photo of him looked down on generations of Sunday School

children - even the present writer in the 1940s - and the writer has also an old "attendance card" from his father's generation describing J.W. Fletcher (the father) as School Superintendent and W.J.Fletcher (the son) as Secretary of the School. John Fletcher was in fact also a Trustee of the Madeley Wesleyan Methodist Church from 1871 to 1925 (This is now Fletcher Memorial Methodist Church but, as mentioned previously, it is not a memorial to this John Fletcher).

Many of the historical notes above have come from the papers of Mr. Harry Micklewright (see SCMC Journal No.5 1997) who died in 1979 and who was the son of one of John's sisters. Mr. Micklewright's own favourite recollection of John seems to have been, being met by his Uncle John Fletcher from the train one day about 1895 at Madeley Market Station. His Uncle had brought his garden wheelbarrow for the luggage and while wheeling this up the steep street home nearly every child they met called out

"Hello Mr.Fletcher".

The May 16th issue of the Wellington Journal states in its obituary of John - "Septuagenarian's Death - there passed away at Burnt Hall a much respected resident in the person of John William Fletcher in his 80th year. He has been a Wesleyan Methodist for the greater part of his life and won the love and respect of all who came into contact with him A large number of people lined the streets at his funeral". It would seem that not all chartermasters were bad.

The writer is indebted to Mrs.P.Watt of New Zealand, a descendant of this family, for her assistance and to Mr.J.Smart for his useful comments on the draft.

Note

- * Jonas Jones' grave in Madeley Church Yard is alongside the communal grave for the miners killed in the 1864 shaft accident and alongside him is that of his son-in-law George Fletcher (1813-1878) mentioned in this article.



Left Top & Bottom: The overgrown communal grave in St.Michaels, (Madeley) churchyard, of the 9 miners killed in the Brick-kiln Leasow disaster, 27th September 1864. To the right are the 2 Chartermasters graves.



Below: The gravestone of Jonas Jones (left) and George Fletcher his son-in-law (right).



Pictures: Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings, July 2001



Glory-holes by Ivor Brown

Criggon Quarry lies on Breiddon Hill just outside Shropshire and is now one of only two quarries in the UK to use a 'glory-hole' shaft system. IJB and Stuart Tomlins recently visited this courtesy of Hansons.

The quarry is believed to be in a volcanic 'plug', the rock being olivine dolerite (or even gabbro) intruded into shales and volcanics (mainly tuffs) - all of Ordovician age.

Up to the 1960's the face was worked by gangs of men suspended from the top on ropes fixing explosives and blasting. In 1972 a 6ft diameter shaft was put down from the upper quarry to meet a 120 yard tunnel driven from the base.

Now the top quarry is worked conventionally and the broken stone tipped down the shaft to a conveyor beneath. (The shaft is steeply inclined at the bottom to form a buffer and also offset from the conveyor road for safety).

Further shafts and tunnels have also been formed to give access to remove blockages and make repairs.

About 40 are employed on site producing 3/4 million tonnes of stone per year.

Right: View down onto the Quarry processing plant and main yard from the working quarry.



Right: The cone crusher on top of the shaft in the upper quarry.



Below: CCTV camera used to monitor the conveyor belt at the bottom of the shaft.



Right: Portal of the 120 yard tunnel at the bottom of the hill with the covered conveyor for crushed rock connecting the tunnel to the main plant and storage bins.



Left and Below: Main processing plant, conveyors and storage hoppers with loading bays for the graded rock.



Pictures: Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings. Taken on a quarry open day in July 1995.



News Round-Up 3

Iron Pit Props

A few months ago there was talk on the "Mining History Discussion List" about the use of iron/steel roof supports. I have recently been going through some ledgers relating to coal mines on the Clee Hills in Shropshire, owned by the Botfield family. In October 1804 there is a payment of £7-11-8 to "Mr Jn Curr for cast iron coal props".

I had not previously heard of iron props from this date. I assume they were not one of Curr's more successful ideas, but has anybody else come across them?

David Poyner

In an article on 'Mining' in Edinburgh Encyclopaedia (1820) a Mr. Bald wrote that at some of the collieries in Shropshire a large proportion of pit props were cast iron. These were found to effect a saving in collieries connected with ironworks, in as much as when broken they can be recast again.

Ivor Brown

Help Wanted

My family, the Bettons, worked at the Pennerley and Tankerville mines from the eighteenth century. Richard Betton was overseer in the 1770s and Nathaniel was a shareholder in the Tankerville mine. Branches of the family continued to live and work in the area until very recently. Other family members moved out as the lead mining began to decline and went to work in coal mining and on the railways - my own branch moved to Liverpool by way of Chester (to drive trains) whilst another branch was "headhunted" by a coal mine in Derbyshire.

I would appreciate information about where I might find information about the Pennerley mines, the mine owners, and any of the people who worked there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Many thanks.

Alison Young

Alison@hampton2.demon.co.uk

European Congress of Subterraneology

The 7th to 9th of September 2001, a European congress of subterraneology and the 24th National Congress of the Société Française d'Etude des Souterrains will be held in Laon, France organised by the S.F.E.S. and the Town of Laon.

Laon is in the North of France, in the Department of the Aisne, 140 kilometres to the North-East of Paris.

The city's underground features cover many periods, from the early medieval period through to civil and military workings of the XVI to the XIX century. It is claimed that there are over 140 hectares of holes in the town-centre!

Several visits are projected to the surroundings of Laon, which are also rich in underground features: troglodyte villages, quarries that were working in the first world war, during the famous Chemin des Dames battle.

Draft programme:

1. Friday the 7th: Special day for professional and S.F.E.S. members. AM: lectures PM: undergrounds visits
2. Saturday the 8th: AM: lectures PM: undergrounds visits
3. Sunday the 9th: AM: lectures PM: undergrounds visits

If you are interested then contact:

Denis MONTAGNE
Responsable du Service de
Recherche des Carrières

Service de Recherche des Carrières -
8, Rue Sérurier - 02000 LAON

Tel: 03 23 23 17 14

or you can contact him via e-mail:

webmaster@ville-laon.fr

Rio Tinto

There are a number of mining sites spanning pre-Roman to the current day in the Pyrite belt of the Iberian Peninsula. However, at the moment mining operations are currently suspended at Rio Tinto, following the withdrawal from mining investment and operations in this area by the UK-based Rio Tinto Corporation in the 1980s.

A number of Spanish registered companies have tried to maintain operations, of which the latest commercial operation was **Rio Tinto Minera**, but it suspended operations in 1998. Although it looked at the prospects for some deep underground polymetallic resources, the main operations were surface mining of the gossan (which unfortunately involved the removal of a number of historic features from the older phases of mining).

When Rio Tinto Minera went out of business, the ownership of its concession, the plant and equipment passed, to **Minas de Rio Tinto SAL**. This is effectively a miners co-operative (the SAL status means a **Sociedad Anonima Laboral**). However they were not able to raise sufficient working capital and have also ceased operations.

If you want to visit the area the first port of call should be the **Fundacion Rio Tinto**, which runs the mining museum and is also the custodian of the deep excavation, **Corta Atalaya**, claimed as the deepest open-pit in Europe, you can contact them at:

La Fundacion Rio Tinto, Plaza del
Museo s/n, 21660 RIO TINTO,
(Huelva)

Director-General: Jose Maria
Mantecon Jara,
Tel: 00 34 959 591015

You may also want to contact:

Minas de Rio Tinto SAL, La Dehesa
s/n, 21660 RIO TINTO (Huelva)
Tel. 00 34 959 599200



Easington Colliery Remembers

submitted by Alan Vickers

May 2001 marks the 50th anniversary of the devastating Easington pit disaster which claimed the lives of 83 men.

The first sign that something was wrong at Easington Colliery came in the early hours of Tuesday, May 29th 1951, when a spark from a coal cutting machine ignited a pocket of gas, bringing down tons of earth and stone into the Duck Bill District of the Five Quarter Seam, blocking up parts of the district and effectively sealing off the ventilation.

By a tragic trick of fate, the time of the explosion came at 4.45 am, when two shifts of men were in the area.

Forty three men from the fore-shift were just going in, to relieve the 38-strong night-shift team.

Minutes after news of the explosion reached the surface, 27 year-old George Ottowell was being raised from his bed at Crook, west of Durham.

George was a member of the Crook Rescue Brigade, and by 6 am was being driven through the gates at Easington Colliery by fellow rescue-worker David Patton.

Recalling the events of that day, George said : "As we approached the colliery gates there was already a large crowd of anxious people gathering and wanting news of what had happened.

"As our unit arrived, bells ringing, the crowd parted to allow us to sweep past. There was a sea of faces looking at us and still full of hope that their worst fears would not be realised.

"When we arrived at the scene of the explosion there was an eerie silence, the only noise being the sound of your breathing apparatus.... it was a scene of utter devastation."

"We heard a low moan coming from somewhere ahead of us, "We moved forward and found a young lad still alive. It was nothing short of a miracle and the only explanation was that he had fallen and somehow was lying in a pocket of fresh air."

That miner was 18 year-old Matthew Williams and he was the only miner to be rescued alive. He was brought out and rushed to Ryhope General Hospital. Unfortunately, he died later of his injuries.

In those first hours of the rescue some teams stayed underground for almost three hours without being able to gauge the extent of the accident, or to account accurately for the trapped men.

By Thursday, May 31st – 52 hours after the explosion – rescuers had still not reached the main body of men.

Their work was hindered by gas, and they were forced to use breathing apparatus.

Forty three men who had been underground at the time of the explosion, but who were unhurt, remained below to help with the rescue work.

The rescue operation covered 257 hours and involved 11 officers, 48 permanent corps and 291 trained colliery rescue workers.

Easington Colliery was in the nation's thoughts and £183,000 was donated to a disaster fund which had been launched.

Eleven of the dead were laid to rest in their home villages and 72 shared a communal grave in Easington Colliery Cemetery.

In 1954 a memorial was erected depicting a life-sized miner and in the Colliery Welfare Park a tree was planted in memory of each man who died.

This tree-lined walkway is now known as Memorial Avenue.

*Based on articles in the:
Sunderland Echo,
Monday May 14th, 2001
and the Sunderland Star,
Thursday May 17th, 2001.*

Pit Banners fly in Tribute to the Dead

Former miners marched through the centre of Eppleton in July to mark the 50th anniversary of the Eppleton Colliery tragedy.

The parade was led by Hetton Silver band and the Elemore lodge banner from Easington Lane was also on display.

The march was followed by a service in Hetton Methodist Chapel.

The congregation included relations of the nine victims of the explosion

which ripped through the pit in July, 1951.

The Rev John Stephenson, former Rector of All Saints', Eppleton, came out of retirement to lead the prayers.

The roll call of the dead was read out and a short period of silence in their memory was held during the service while the band also played the miners' hymn, Gressford.

The chapel was bedecked with colliery artefacts including miners'

lamps and helmets painted with scenes by ex-Eppleton miner George Westgarth.

Guests at the service included Hetton Council chairman Ann Rankin, Houghton MP Fraser Kemp, and Durham NUM leader Dave Hopper.

*Based on reports in the
Sunderland Echo
Monday 9th July 2001.
Submitted by Alan Vickers*



Halesfield Developments 2000 - 2001

Development work at Severn Gorge Caravan Park, the former site of Halesfield Colliery has been turning up a few odd remnants of the pithead buildings.

The owners are currently adding retirement 'homes' to the site which involves building a number of concrete pads and service trenches.

Most of the old mine remains have disappeared over the years, but this latest phase of developments has turned up a lot of white ceramic tiles in one area (probably from the engine house, there were no pit baths at Halesfield), along with a few brick 'pillars'.

Some more interesting relics have been a number of iron pipes, complete with junctions and valves. These were probably part of the rising main (water pipes) at Halesfield. The mine was used as the main pumping station for surrounding pits.



Pictures: Pipes unearthed during building work on former Halesfield Colliery site, Winter 2000-Spring 2001.

Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings, May 2001

An interesting incident happened here after the pit closed when a 'blow-out' occurred from the sealed pipes. See the next two issues of

'Below' for more on Halesfield Colliery and the pipe incident from Ivor Brown.

Kelvin

French Rescue Swiss Potholers

In the middle of May this year over 300 French and Swiss rescuers launched a massive effort to free eight Swiss potholers who had been trapped in a flooded French cave for several days.

The inexperienced team of potholers, aged between 25 and 30 (seven student social workers from a college in Zurich along with a teacher), were trapped by flood water following torrential rain on Wednesday, 16th May.

By Friday 18th of May, cave divers had found the inexperienced team alive, but stranded in a narrow fault around 100 metres (300 feet) from the entrance to the cave near the town of Goumois.

Attempts by the large rescue team to reach the trapped cavers, were continually foiled by the flood waters. Pumps brought in to try and reduce the volume of water in the cave failed to cope with a surge in

underground water levels.

Rescue worker Eric Zipper told the Reuters news agency: "Our pumps are getting flooded out. Only three out of 12 are now working."

Luckily the cavers were able to sit out the floods in a dry section of the cave, while divers supplied them with food, drinks and survival blankets.

Television reports said they had undertaken the tour to help develop their ability to face challenges in their careers!

The cave, about 20 kilometres (30 miles) from the Swiss border, is not deep but covers about 415 metres. It is considered an ideal site for cavers - but only in the right weather conditions. Rainfall in that area of France during the period April to May was around 80 percent higher than last year's levels.

Hidden Earth 2001

The BCRA Annual Conference is being held at Buxton Community School this year, 12th to 14th October.

There will be all the usual things like SRT races and the Surveying competition (this year it will be underground for the first time - in Poole's Cavern), photo salon, video & AV salon, Cave Art and Cartoons competition.

There will also be a squeeze machine (!), Expedition & Science lectures, meetings, workshops, club and trade stands, SRT training. The NCA rope testing rig will also be in action - give you chance to test that old bit of hemp you use for cowtails.

Cost for advanced bookings (before 1st October) £15.00, Weekend rate on the door: £17.00 (single day £9.00) For more details e-mail:

enquiries@hidden-earth.org.uk



Saint Marie aux Mines Alsace-Lorraine, France

When you think of ancient metal mining areas, you tend to think of Germany or Rio Tinto in Spain, Cyprus and of course Britain. France tends to be overlooked. If you do think of mining in France it tends to be coal mining, however metal mining in France has just as long a 'pedigree' as that in Britain and a recent visit to Alsace-Lorraine was a real eye-opener with regards to French mining history.

The Vosges mountains in eastern France, situated along the German border and just North of Switzerland are home to numerous metal mines - principally lead and silver, with some copper and non-metal mines worked for arsenic. The bulk of the remains appear to date from the 1540's with some being worked up until the First World War.

The mines were originally driven in the hard rock (gneiss) using hammers and picks (pointerolles) aided by fire setting.

The local caving club in St. Marie aux-Mines have been gradually exploring and opening up a lot of the surviving mines and have discovered literally thousands of discarded pointerolles, but very few hammers.

The story goes that the miners had to provide the hammers while the mine owners provided the pointerolles - these became blunt very quickly in the hard rock and were often discarded rather than re-sharpened, hence the large numbers. It is claimed that they were only able to drive 10cm of tunnel a day due to the nature of the rock. When you consider there are over 300 kilometres of tunnel, that's a lot of miners or a long time! (Some of the mines were worked for 30 years before the main silver veins were reached). It is claimed that by the 16th Century there were over 70 kilometres of underground galleries in Saint Marie alone.

The veins yielded 1 kilogramme of silver per tonne of galena, with a total yield of 150 tonnes of silver. The

peak years of production were the 1530's when 1.5 tonnes of silver metal was produced per annum.

Remains Today

The hardness of the rock is an advantage to the modern explorer, in that once inside the workings they are very stable. Evidence of fire setting and hand working can be readily seen in the shape of the tunnels and the marks on the walls. The most striking feature of the passages is that they are coffin levels, but very tall ones - this is because the top of the tunnel was partitioned off with timber staging and linked to vertical shafts (and in some cases ventilation furnaces) to provide air-coursing. To get the height of the levels, each tunnel was driven by 2 miners, both sitting down, one on an upper 'bench' and

slightly in front of the other who worked the lower section of the level. They sat on long leather 'coat tails' - illustrations in Agricola (first published in 1556) and by Heinrich Gross (in his album of 1530) show certain miners of the 15th & 16th Centuries wearing coats with long tails, just like the seven dwarves.

St. Marie and the other villages in the area are full of mining relics - not just the mine tubs full of flowers in every square, but carvings of crossed hammers and picks, mining statues in niches on gable ends, old lamps hanging on walls etc.. The local caving club (ASEPAM) have been very active in preserving the mines and also in helping the local authorities to lay-out mining trails through the woods and around the town of St. Marie.



Above: View along a 16th century hand cut coffin level in St. Louis Eisenthür Mine, Neuenberg, St. Marie-aux-Mines.

(Postcard, reproduced courtesy of ASEPAM, Centre du Patrimoine Minier, 68169 Ste Marie-aux-Mines)



Saint Marie aux Mines

Alsace-Lorraine, France

Les filons du Neuenberg

On the outskirts of St. Marie, the small village of Neuenberg forms the focal point for a fascinating tour around a series of mine sites that were worked from the 1580's through to 1906. The later 18th century workings were for "Cobalt blue" and the 1.5 kilometre long "Chretien Inferieur" was expanded in the 19th century into a series of stopes and the main drainage level (la galerie du Tiefstollen) was fitted with rails in 1900. Rails in the earlier workings were made of 2 parallel flat wooden planks with a narrow gap between them, the small trucks which ran on the rails had non-flanged wheels and were guided by a peg which slotted between the planks.



Above: Peter Eggleston in the entrance to "la galerie du Tiefstollen" part of the **Chretien Inferieur**, with its 1900 rails. [KL]



Some Neuenberg Sites



Above: Maison du Receveur des Dîmes - the house of the Royalty collector for the Mineral Rights Owner. The 'Reciever' was the third most important person in the mine. [KL]

Below: The 16th Century "Miners Tower" This was used as a Miners prison & court (a bit like a Moot Hall). Recently restored, the building dates from the late 16th century. [KL]



Left: Mike Moore and Sue Blattner *testing* the rails and flat bed truck in the entrance cutting to "la galerie du Tiefstollen". [KL]

Right: Site of the mine dressing floor and tunnel entrance "Fürstenstollen". Driven in 1898 for 1,500m to intercept older stopes. In 1900 a ventilation furnace was added. It finally closed in 1906. [SB]



Above: Reconstructed mine timber work, including 'rails' in the entrance to "Die Aych" a mine dating from 1560, now the exit of the St. Louis Eisenthür Mine tour run by ASEPM.

Below: Pete Eggleston & Mike



Moore negotiating the "Judges hole" in St. Louis Eisenthür Mine (the judge got stuck there for 7 days). [KL]



Saint Marie aux Mines

Alsace-Lorraine, France

Many of the smaller levels are still open and can be explored, although those that are considered to be of archaeological interest or are dangerous are gated. ASEPM run regular trips into a fascinating mine known as St. Louis Eisenthür.

Opened in 1549 visitors are taken around about 1km of the workings which have been reconstructed with the original wooden equipment (based upon items discovered in some of the more remote sections of the mine). You pay about £6 for the trip, all equipment is provided and its well worth it.

ASEPM also control another mine the "Gottes-Gabe" mine which was a former arsenic mine and has a lot of interesting surviving remains, but they take visitors there on a very controlled basis.



Left: A typical village scene - a flower filled mining truck. [PE]

Below: One of several mining statues that can be "spotted" on buildings around St. Marie aux-Mines. [PE]



Above left: A carved wooden miner set in a niche in an old 'auberge' (inn), 2 Rue Weisgerber, St. Marie. The inn dates from 1589. [PE]

Above Right: Detail of the statue. [PE]

Left: The Center du Patrimoine Minier - the base and shop of the local caving club ASEPM in St. Marie aux-Mines. [PE]



Saint Marie aux Mines Alsace-Lorraine, France

Mineral Fair

In June each year St. Marie hosts its annual Mineral and Gem fair which attracts “rock-hounds” from around the world. The specimens on show this year were certainly spectacular, although it is claimed that the prices are getting too high - fossilised tree stumps were going for F50 per kilogramme (on the ‘trade’ days most minerals were selling by weight!).

However looking at some of the items on sale, they looked just too good to be real! In addition to the minerals, numerous mining items (mainly from

the former Eastern block countries) were available such as miners oil lamps, helmets and even mining medals (50 years Cleaning toilets in Siberian Salt Mines), not too mention mining books ... well OK, then ... There was an incredible range of mining books (mainly in French!), but talking to the authors it seems to be mainly British and German mining enthusiasts who buy them. Rumour has it that Mike Moore purchased one or two copies, so have a word with him at the next Club meeting.

To be continued

Finally

If you want to know more about the mines in St. Marie and arrange trips to the mines with controlled access you should contact:

ASEPAM,
Centre du Patrimoine Minier,
4, rue Weisgerber,
68160 Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines.
Telephone: 03 89 58 62 11 (they speak French or German)

Pictures

The pictures used in this article have come from several sources:

Key

SB = Sue Blattner (digital camera)
PE = Peter Eggleston/I.A.Recordings
(video grabs)
KL = Kelvin Lake/I.A.Recordings
(slides & prints)



Left: The scenes on the first day of the St. Marie aux-Mines mineral fair, 2001. [PE]

Below: Tree fossils on sale for 50 francs a Kg. or by the pallet! [PE]

Below: A collection of miners oil lamps. Several varieties from former Eastern block countries were on sale in the mineral fair. [PE]



Bibliography

Sainte-Marie aux-Mines, by Pierre Fluck, Les Editions du Patrimoine Minier, 2000
“Les filons du Neuenberg” (the veins of Neuenberg), guide to the miners path, from the local Tourist Information Office.
Sainte-Marie aux-Mines, Historic Circuit (walking guide), from the local Tourist Information Office.



Books and Events

A Historical Gazetteer and Bibliography of By-product Coking Plants in the United Kingdom,

David G Edwards. PB 80pp 12A4
BW photos, 3 maps & plans.

By-product coke manufacture formed a significant sector of the British economy for most of the twentieth century, and still plays an important part in the much reduced coal and steel industries. At its height in the 1950s, the coking industry converted more than 30 million tonnes of coal a year into coke for blast furnaces, foundries and other purposes, with important outputs of coal gas, tar, benzole and ammonia-by-products that have found uses in many fields and were at one time quite profitable.

Almost 170 by-product coking plants

of various sizes have existed in Great Britain, situated at collieries, steelworks, gasworks or other sites in several regions of the country, and with start-up dates ranging from 1882 to 1981. This new study provides details of all these plants: name, location, period of existence, ownership, numbers and types of coke ovens (with startup and shut-down dates where known), coal carbonising capacity, location of photographs and plans in the literature, and references to technical articles dealing with the plants. An introduction supplies a clear outline of the rather specialised technology of coke manufacture, which differs in important respects from that of the

coal-based gas industry. Detailed indexes to the gazetteer and bibliography are provided, as well as a number of illustrations. No compilation of this kind has previously been attempted.

This book, the first major work on the history of cokemaking in the United Kingdom to be published since 1936, provides a record of an industry for which little or no archaeological evidence survives, and will form a basic reference for future studies of individual enterprises or cokemaking in general. As such it will be of interest to both economic historians and those who have worked in the industry. **Price £12.50**

Mike Moore

Local Mining Museums

When you think of local mining museums you tend to only think of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum or the Black Country Museum, however there are several small museums within easy driving distance of Shropshire.

Museum of Cannock Chase

Valley Road, Hednesford, Cannock, Staffs. WS12 5TD. Telephone: 01543-428272 (NGR: SJ007 127)

Based in the former colliery corn store (where the pit pony feed was kept) of the Valley Colliery, there is an interesting museum display, plus a surface trail.

Valley's corn store became the training centre for the Cannock Chase coalfield in 1957.

A curious building is the 'Lost Mine' pub. This was the mines pithead baths (opened in 1940, they were the sixth to be built on the Cannock Chase coalfield and could accommodate 576 men). After coal production at Valley was transferred to West Cannock 5's in the 1970's the Mines Rescue service took over

the building and practised rescues in simulated underground and underwater conditions (well they were big showers!). The building also housed aviaries for canaries. The Mines Rescue Team was moved to Ashby-de-la-Zouche in 1991. The building being opened as a pub in 1997 - I won't mention the 'theme' of the pub, but its certainly different!

There are a few other surface buildings remaining, but if you follow the trail a lot refers to 'site of ...' and it is probably best followed when the vegetation has died down.

Entry to the museum is free and it is worth a visit - the old film showing in the museum made for the NCB by Basic Films is particularly interesting, although the copy is in a poor condition.

Opening Times: Easter to end of September 11am to 5pm daily, October to Easter 11am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

Apedale Heritage Centre

Situated in the Apedale Community Country Park (off the A34, Liverpool Road, Chesterton, Newcastle-under-

Lyme. Telephone: 01782-565625, (NGR: SJ 823 484) once the site of a blast furnace, brickworks, railway, canal and Apedale Mine, the park now covers 200 hectares managed by Staffordshire County Council Countryside Services.

The Heritage Centre is a purpose built building to house the mining museum and art exhibition gallery. Outside the centre are three former drift mine entrances, although underground trips are possible the Trust who runs the site have recently lost the person who performed the inspection tours, so without someone to sign the safety book the underground trips have been temporarily suspended.

The Trust seem to have big plans for the site and are very keen - they are looking to rebuild Silverdale Railway Station and build a narrow gauge railway to take visitors into the Apedale Valley.

Well worth a visit, the Heritage Cafe is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am - 4pm. The Heritage Shop and Underground visits (when available) are only open Saturday & Sunday (from 10am).



Books, Videos and Events

The Broseley Heavy Clay

Industry

A.J.Mugridge, A4 p/b Spiral Bound includes photos and a fold out map of the area, plus details of the development and manufacture of bricks and tiles in the Broseley area of Shropshire.

It follows the fortunes and failures of 46 yards, provides an insight into production methods and a guide to the Industrial Remains - Tony is also the last 'traditional' country brickmaker in the area. He describes himself as a real anorak on the subject and this is reflected in the research and detail included. Price £6.50.

Available from Mike Moore at Club meetings or

www.moorebooks.co.uk

Mike@moorebooks.co.uk

Bands and Banners Magazine

published by Durham NUM in conjunction with TUPS Books. The magazine reproduces the front cover of the NCB magazine Coal and contains various items :

A report of the award of the Edward medal to two Wearside miners for their bravery in trying to save the life of a workmate overpowered by gas in an old working in Hylton Colliery.

A letter campaigning for bathrooms in NCB houses.

A report of an 85 year old engine still in use at Wearmouth Colliery. etc.

The magazine is priced at £1.95 and is available from :

NUM, PO Box 6
Red Hills, Durham, DH1 4BB
and:

TUPS Books, 30 Lime Street
Newcastle upon Tyne.
Tel: 0191 233 0990.

Alan Vickers

A Time of Tears

By T J Witts, HB 238pp, a quality produced book on the historical and social history of the Coal Mines in Llanharan and Brynna, South Wales.

Information is provided from Historical and Personal sources with rare Black and White photos, plans and sketches. There is information and photos surface and underground on Meiros Colliery, Meiros Colliery Rescue Team, Llanbad Colliery and Drift, Wern Tarw Colliery and Coalite

works, Brynna Wood Drift, Llanhazan Colliery and Ynsmaerdy Explosion. The author uses personal interviews and photo's to full effect.

This is a well written and interesting book that also details the movement of Miners from the Forest of Dean who settled in the Welsh Valleys.

This is definitely one to add to the collection. **Price £20.00**

Mike Moore



Mining Videos

all available from the Club at a discount,
see Alan Robinson



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 has completely changed).

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.

Glengowla, £6.58

A tour around this amazing mineral rich lead mine in Ireland, complete with commentary and diagrams.

[12 mins.]

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

C.32: **SCMC in Ireland**, £14.10

C.37: Dudley Tunnel - Wrens Nest East Mine, a rare trip into the workings during stabilisation works. £9.87

C.41: Hem Heath Winders, £9.87

C.42 **The SCMC at Onslow Park** - a record of the 1998 Club and Trust display. £9.87

C.45 Twelve Mines of Ireland - made for the first AGM of the MHSI it contains excerpts of C.32 with **added commentary**. £11.75

C.46 Astley Green Colliery - shot during the 1999 engine rally at the Museum site (including views of the huge winding engine) £9.87

C.48 Draglines - features the moving of "Oddball" at St.Aidans Opencast site, plus bigger draglines at work in the North East of England. £14.10

For more details about videos contact:

I.A.Recordings, PO Box 476, Telford, TF8 7RH

e-mail: info@iarecordings.org or visit their web site at:

www.iarecordings.org/



Club Officers

President: Alan Taylor

Chairman: Neal Rushton

**Vice Chair & Assistant
Secretary: Eileen Bowen**

Secretary: John Priest
scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk

Treasurer: Bob Taylor

Tackle Officer: Andy Harris

**Training Officer:
Steve Holding**

**First Aid Officer:
Alan Moseley**

Librarian: Alan Robinson

**Conservation Officer:
John Martin**

Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold

Rescue Officer:
*Role undertaken by the Rescue
Wardens: Neal Rushton, Steve
Holding, Alan Robinson, Andy Yapp*

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

Diary Dates

For organised Club trips please refer to the Monthly Meets lists.

4th - 19th Aug.: Greenside Lead Mine exhibition, Glenridding.

26th Aug.: Columns Open Day, Ogof Ffynon Ddu.

24th-27th Aug.: Sustainable Development in Karst Regions, Beijing, China

Sept: Club's 40th 'Birthday'

20th-22nd Sept: Besançon, France - 7th Conference on Limesotne Hydrology and Fissured Media.

6th Oct: The Club's '40th Anniversary' Annual Dinner at the Lord Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury. Guest speaker Martin Farr.

12th-14th Oct: BCRA Hidden Earth, National Caving Conference, Buxton Community School, workshops and events in Poole Cavern. *See page 15.*

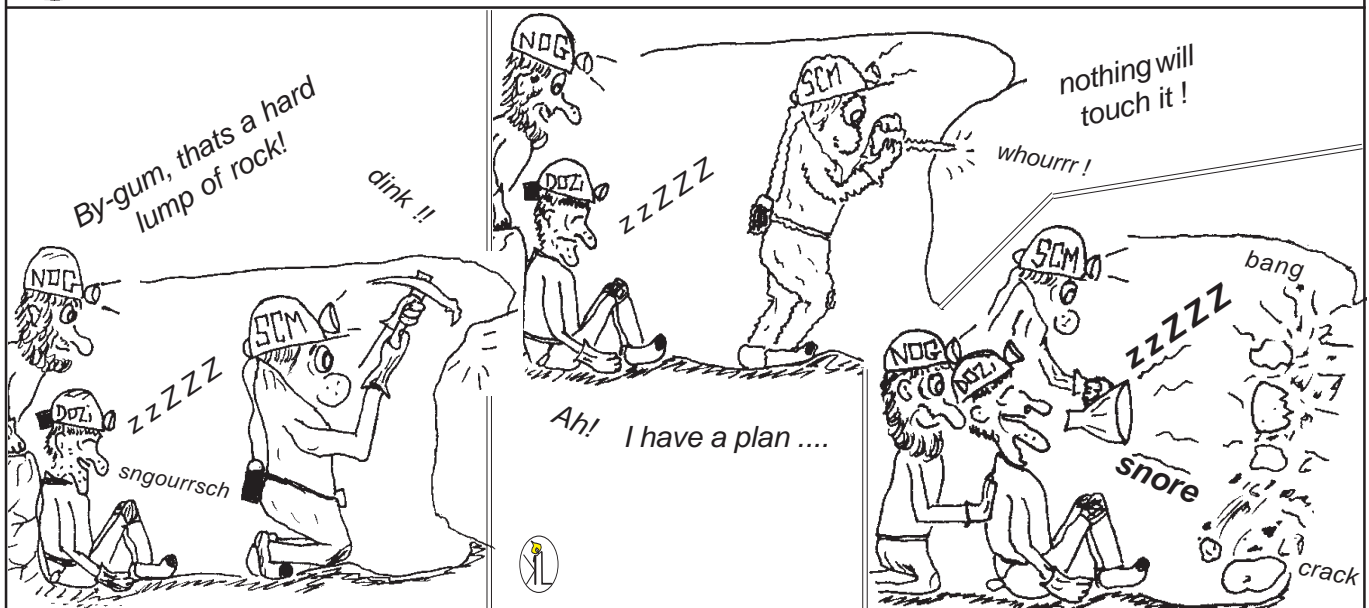
2002

9th March: BCRA Science Symposium, Leeds.

5th - 8th July: Application of Water Power in Mining, University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Hosted by Welsh Mines Society and NAMHO.

Smidgin: Digging techniques & hints, part 1 ...

54



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

