

## Library Additions

**Subterranea:** Summary Report 2004.  
**North Wales CC:** Newsletter, 294, June-October 2005. Contains an interesting report on one of their trips to the mines of Galloway, trips in Pool Park, Ogof Mwnglawdd and caving in the Yorkshire Dales.  
**BCA Newsletter:** No.4, September 2005.

## Snowdon Merc

Film companies seem obsessed with throwing vehicles down mine shafts and off cliffs. Notably the lorry down the shaft at Tankard's Town in the Mackenzie Break, Wheal Coates was used to dispose of a Rolls Royce about 10 years ago (Ok, so they did 'build' a fake shaft by the engine house!).

Last year over 1,000 square metres of the Snowdonia National Park were damaged by fire after a Mercedes was dropped off a 300 foot cliff and blown up during the filming of a new TV thriller (I'm surprised there wasn't a celebrity inside!)

## RNLI Cave Rescue

On the 5th August a party of six campers including two children, and a puppy, were rescued by a lifeboat from the RNLI Tenby station, as they waved frantically on the beach at Tenby in the early hours of the morning after having escaped from the incoming tide as it washed over their makeshift camp in a beach cave.

The group had arrived at Tenby the day before for a holiday, spotting a cave on the beach they promptly set up camp inside, erecting their tents and BBQ equipment.

Disaster struck in the early hours when the tide came in and washed every thing away. The campers decided to go further into the cave, however the tide kept coming and they ended up having to struggle out through deep water.

You can read more on the RNLI web site: [www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk)

## Wizard Brew

Club members Ian Cooper, Paul Thorne and Steve Holding, plus Mole feature heavily in the latest issue of "North Pennines Heritage" - the newsletter of the North Pennines Heritage Trust. The reason? Because they are suave, sophisticated and debonair ... well no, not really, it's all down to their work in repairing, redesigning and replacing the light-system in Brewery shaft. For those of you not familiar with the special effects in the shaft, museum visitors can drop a "virtual" stone down it causing it to light-up as the 'stone' drops. Due to water and damp problems the old system had stopped working, so Paul and Ian came up with a new system that should be more robust and easier to maintain.

## Firefly Slave

Club members who have digital cameras that do a number of pre-flashes before taking a picture (hence triggering slave flashguns too early!) will be interested to learn that the new Firefly 3 slave unit based on Dave Gibson's designs has now gone into production. It can be programmed to ignore any pre-flashes before it triggers the flash gun that it's connected to. The list price is £59.95, which does seem a lot of money - particularly when you realise that you can now get "digital" flash guns with built in slave units that will do a similar job for the same price. However, presumably the new Firefly (like the older model) will work with 'old' flash guns that are not safe to connect to modern digital cameras. Find out more at:

[www.fireflyelectronics.co.uk](http://www.fireflyelectronics.co.uk)



# News Round-Up 1

## by Ivor Brown

### Account 24 & the Bog

Publication of the new Club Account No.24 "Fatal Accidents in Shropshire Mines" has brought in several contributions (as expected). One concerns the Bog Mine. Apparently when the mine finally closed in 1925 the workmen came out, the cage was raised, everything was switched off for the last time and they went off to the pub to raise their spirits.

The family of the foreman, William Higginson, however were upset when he did not arrive home to do the milking at their holding, son Cuthbert age 7 and his mother had to do the job. Then at 9.00pm unable to wait any longer they set off around the pubs to find his colleagues.

They were found, but he was not among them. His colleagues dashed to the mine realising that William must have been doing a last check underground at the time they packed up. They got things going again and some went down. William was found alone and in poor shape at the bottom, he had to be carried home. Three days later William died.

What did he die of? Exposure, effects of rising water, bad air or what? Can anyone help?

### Formal Launch

The formal launch of Account No.24 will take place at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Coalbrookdale at 7.30pm on 18th January. Afterwards there will be a talk on "Accidents in Shropshire Mines" by the Author. All SCMC members are welcome.

### Corus Exploration

Corus, a British Steel Company have been offered an Exploration licence, an underground licence and a lease of the Margan coking coal reserves area in South Wales by the UK Coal Authority. They will now undertake a feasibility study on the prospect for a new underground mine.

*from Coal Magazine Sept/Oct. 2005*

### Shire Steam

A new book on Steam Wagons by D.Rayner (published by Shore Books) describes many versions of the Sentinel Steam Wagon made in Shropshire until the 1930s. A fair number of these finished up working on opencast sites around England including some in Shropshire.

The writer was told many years ago that a fleet of them were used on Lawley Furnace Opencast Site and at closure they were scrapped and buried under the now wooded area opposite the cottages on the Wellington-Lawley Road.

### Railway route

The guide to "The route of the Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway" (page 53) published in 1860 says "About half-mile from Leebotwood Station are the debris of the coal mines. These are no longer worked, but on the further side of the plantation a new mine has been opened, which is worked at a remunerating profit. The mines are the property of Colonel Corbett and Mr. Woolrich Whitmoor". Does anything remain of these mines?

### Laxey Mine

The book - The Great Laxey Mine (Isle of Man) by A.Scarffe contains a reference to Joseph Ball, formerly of "the Leeds Rock House Mine, Minsterley". He was a surface agent and head washer at Laxey from 1872 to 1874 when he was dismissed for "disposing large quantities of ore into the Laxey River". His father was manager of the Lisburne Mines, North Wales.

### Bog Miners

A list of names of the miners at the Bog Mine who were in the Bog Mines Platoon, 'C' Company KSLI about 1916 (see photograph and list on page 3 of this issue) has been located. It shows 52 names and titles (Lieutenant to Private), rather more than the 33 men who appear on the photograph.

The names have not yet been put to faces on the picture, but include Lieut. A.E.Thomas, 2nd Lieut. E.C.Grey and many familiar family names (4 Evans, 4 Potters, 5 Smiths, 4 Lewis, 2 Sandles, 2 Roberts, Purlow, Chidleys, Rowsons, Tomlins, etc.).

Mrs. Verna Lewis has agreed that copies can be circulated.

### New Rescue Station

Mines Rescue Services Ltd. have recently opened a new Central Mines Rescue Station to replace the now-closed Selby Station - making six MRS's now operating in the UK. The Company now raises over two thirds of its income from non-mining industries by using the MRS as a Health and Safety Training Centre.

Kellingley Training Centre is in the old Colliery Mineworkers Training Centre adjoining the working pit. During a recent tour by IJB the Superintendent said he had a staff of 24 men, including 3 full-time teams of mining rescue men, plus 24 trained volunteers at the pit.

He had only two pits in his area (Kellingley and small Scisset Colliery), but they had all the latest equipment for mines rescue (Draegar breathing Apparatus, short period sets, detectors (no canaries), hand winch to 36m depth, portable metal cutting equipment and stretchers).

The mobile winder and large diameter drilling equipment were based near Nottingham.

You can find out more about the Mines Rescue Service on their web site:

[www.minesrescue.com](http://www.minesrescue.com)

If you fancy a "Safe Entry into Confined Spaces Course" they currently have a special offer of 5 places for £1,000 + VAT (including workbook, refreshments and light lunch. They also offer "First Aid at Work Induction" courses for both individuals and groups.



## 2nd Volunteer Battalion, Kings Shropshire Light Infantry 'C' Company - Bog Mines Platoon c1916

Lieut. A.E.Thomas

2nd Lieut. E.C.Gray

Sgt. A.France

Sgt. F.W.White

L.Sgt. G.Betton (*probably front row,  
6th from right-hand end*)

Corpl. R.H.Evans

Corpl. R.Topham

Corpl. G.Edwards

Corpl. H.Purslow

Corpl. W.E.Blacker

L/Corpl. H.Rowson

Pte. W.Butler

Pte. J.A.Bennett

Pte. J.Corfield

Pte. J.Chidley

Pte. G.Downes

Pte. John Evans

Pte. T.Evans

Pte. R.H.Evans (2nd)

Pte. J.France

Pte. J.Groves

Pte. J.Gwilliam

Pte. G.Hotchkiss

Pte. J.H.Hotchkiss

Pte. W.Higgins

Pte. A.Jones

Pte. M.Jones

Pte. W.Lewis

Pte. R.Lewis

Pte. J.Lewis

Pte. James Lewis

Pte. R.Owen

Pte. W.Pinches

Pte. T.Potter

Pte. J.Potter

Pte. W.Pearce

Pte. R.Potter

Pte. S.Purslow

Pte. J.C.Roberts

Pte. John Roberts

Pte. E.Sandles

Pte. A.Sandles

Pte. James Smith

Pte. T.Smith (1st)

Pte. T.Smith (2nd)

Pte. T.Smith (3rd)

Pte. W.Smith

Pte. W.Swain

Pte. G.Thomas

Pte. G.Tomlins

Pte. N.Whittal

Pte. J.Waters

(List courtesy Verna Lewis and daughter Sue)

The Mine manager and his men formed a 'volunteer' platoon in case they were needed. The photograph (**below**) was taken in front of the mine buildings about 1916. The long-roofed barrack house (right) and power house (middle) can be seen behind the men. Note 33 men are shown on the photograph, but there are 52 on the list.



### SCMC Monthly Club Meeting September 1st 2005

From the earliest times, about 1960, a full meeting of the Club has been held on the first Friday of the month - September 2005 however was one of the least well attended.

The photograph, does show the 'top table', from left to right facing the camera: Mike Davies (Secretary, in the corner), Bob Taylor (Treasurer), Eileen Bowen (Chair), Mike Worsfold (Bat Officer) and Alan Taylor (President) - with a few of the members present.

*Ivor Brown*



# A 17<sup>th</sup> Century mining interlude at Pensax by David Poyner

The earliest written reference to coal mining in the Wyre Forest is to a coal mine in Pensax in 1565, about 5 miles south of the Shropshire-Worcestershire border at Cleobury Mortimer. The Pensax mines were on land belonging to Worcester Cathedral and there are sporadic references to mines here in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

Writing in the 1866, John Noake listed what he had been able to discover about these mines (J.Noake, *The Monastery and Cathedral of Worcester*, pp 519-20, Longmore, Worcester). In 1610 one T. Vincent was authorised to get coal on Pensax common and in 1617 a Mr Salloway paid 6/- a ton for ironstone.

The bailiff of Pensax in 1634 was instructed to stop all mines on the common, but was then allowed to sink for coal on the waste in 1642.

In 1651 the Parliamentary Commissioners dismissed the coal in Menith Wood as not being worth the digging, but in 1668 a lease was taken out by Henry Tolley.

I have recently been made aware of a

letter in the Cathedral library discovered by Don Gilbert, a Kidderminster-based historian. This sheds new light on why mining stopped in 1634. It was written on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1635 from the Dean, Roger Mainwaring to William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

“On the manor of Lyndridge [this includes Pensax] being copiholders of inheritance, where the church cannot meddle with the wood growing on their soyle, there did Mr [Nathaniel] Tomkyns [a prebend, one of the senior administrators of the cathedral] gave leave to the tenants to open a colemyne on the church’s wastes and to fell tymber worth £20 to frame the pitt and thereoute to digg and carry away 15 tunn of coales, whereby the church in one yeare sustainyed the loss of above £50, this pit I caused to be stopped.”

The loss of money explains why Mainwaring ordered the cathedral bailiff to stop the mine. It was of some scale if £20 had been spent on timber alone. An output of 15 tons would be pitiful, bringing in only a few pounds of income. Labour costs on top of timber presumably would

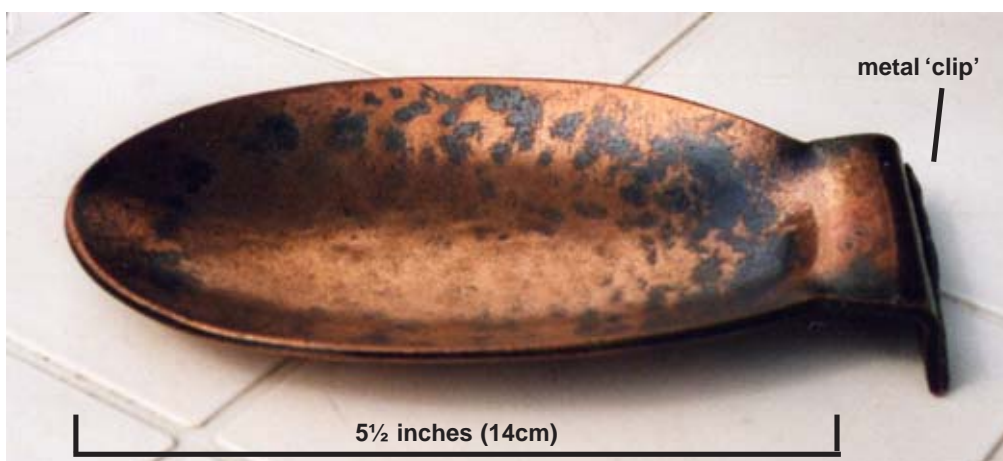
lead to the overall loss of £50. What is not clear is why this loss fell on the cathedral rather than its tenants at Pensax, as Mainwaring’s letter implies that they took the lead in opening the mine. It is possible that the liabilities were to be shared between the tenants and the cathedral.

It is of course impossible to know why the mine was so disappointing. There was certainly plenty of saleable coal at Pensax; enough to sustain mining into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The miners may simply have been unlucky, perhaps running into a fault. The last mine sunk on the common in 1894 was abandoned due to faulting. The wood on Pensax Common (SO 690720) is a rewarding place to walk; there is plenty of evidence to show it was heavily mined after (and perhaps before) 1634.

I am grateful to Don Gilbert for allowing me to quote from his unpublished research. Don believes that the original letter is held by the Public Record Office, SP 16/289, no. 43: Mainwaring’s service to the diocese.

## Mystery Item



The picture (right) shows a small copper dish about 5.5in x 3in with a metal clasp at one end. It is one of about 6 found in a smelter at Pontesford and handed to Ken Lock in the early 1960s. Ken passed one to I.J.Brown for identification etc. in

1965 and he has tried ever since to get a positive identification.

It has been suggested that it is a paddle from a pelton wheel or turbine, or that it was a cooling or measuring dish for use when

assaying molten lead, or that it could be a scoop from a small bucket or can-elevator.

Can anyone identify it?

*Ivor Brown*



# Talybont Deep Adit by Roy Fellows

The Talybont deep adit was driven about 1839 by a Flintshire company to cut the lodes crossing the Altycrib hill above the village, these being described by Prof. O. T. Jones in the BGS memoirs as north and south lodes.

The portal of the adit was right in the middle of the village, being driven north under the main Machynleth to Aberystwyth road and much of the northern part of the village. There was the associated dressing floors around the portal with water wheel driven stamps, buddles etc. and run of iron flat rods passing through the adit to pump the underground engine shaft.

After the turn of the century the mine fell into disuse and eventually in 1948 the whole site was obliterated. The deep adit was at the end of a cutting or trench driven at river level, and this was filled in completely burying the portal. Eventually the site became a private garden and absolutely no sign of the adit or works can be seen today.

In May 2004 I managed to con Dave Seabourne, Paul Smyth and Brian

Grimston into helping me commence a dig in the bottom of the air shaft on south lode, a gunnis up on the hill. Eventually, we had sunk to a depth of 75 feet, the dig being initially made up steps and then a series of ladders where it becomes vertical. In July 2005 we eventually broke through and entered a branch on the south lode.

This connected with the main level at about 40 metres in about 3 feet of water. Exploration was possible to near the portal where the water was chin deep, and also inbye to the north lode where the workings dry out. The underground engine shaft was found complete with the remains of the pumping angle bob, the rising main and many other artefacts. This is slightly further to the north, being sunk vertical to pick up north lode on the underlie. Adjacent to the engine shaft chamber was another chamber with the remains of a horse whim, virtually complete but lying on the floor to where it had fallen when the upper bearing failed due to the mounting going rotten.

To the best of my knowledge this is only the second one to be

discovered with the remains of whim in situ in the whole of the UK. The first to be discovered was in the Scaleburn Mine, Nenthead, Cumbria. There are also workings to the east on north lode which are not shown on the old plans, a copy of which is in the possession of Simon Hughes. The workings on north lode to the west are blocked by a fall which I believe to emanate from the old whim shaft. This is currently being dug and should enable access to workings below Wilkinsons Level.

I intend to make this the subject of my first book, the story of the digging project, the underground exploration of the mine, and its history. Both George Hall and Simon Hughes have been extremely helpful in providing me with material. I would however like to get a copy if possible of any material relating to Talybont or Alt-y-Crib Mine in the way of correspondence or share certificates.

If you have any information about this mine please contact me:

**Roy Fellows**

Telephone: 01822 406713 or  
e-mail: roy@iriscom.co.uk



## Hind Sight !

Club members seem to spend a lot of their time looking into enticing holes .....



# Civil Defence & Shropshire Mines (Part 2)

by Ivor Brown

The item on Civil Defence by David Poyner in the last issue of 'Below' fairly covers the situation on colliery surfaces in Shropshire - but the Organisation went deeper than this (excuse the pun) and lasted longer.

By 1960 the NCB had realised that if a nuclear bomb fell on a mining area it would have very serious repercussions for men underground. A 'hit' would cause havoc on the surface, but what about the men in the mines?

Could such an incident cause a 'bump' inducing roof falls or, at the least, slips on the surface that might seal shafts? Would a near direct hit cause an up-draft, exhausting all the air from the mine instantly? What about loss of power for pumps and winding - would the energy in the ventilation flow (at Kemberton Pit about 10 miles of moving air in tunnels, say averaging 6ft x 9ft. at say 0.08 lb/cu ft. = about 100 tons - see note 1) keep the air moving and in consequence carry into the mine radiation from the surface? What would be the psychological effect on men underground fearing for their families and homes 1,000 ft. above them - and with no way of getting to them? Would they quietly sit and wait?

The NCB started training selected underground officials, who would likely be underground if such a catastrophe happened 'up top'. The object was to prevent panic, preserve fresh air pockets below ground, have some drinking water available and to provide activities which might be useful and at least give everyone something to do thus taking their minds off the problems above.

There was an element of secrecy about all this and a wish to avoid unnecessary alarm. The chosen 'leaders' did not need to meet each other, for if anything happened as likely as not they would have to act alone. There was no need to worry every-one with practices etc. It may never happen!

At Madeley Wood (Kemberton) Pit in 1960 the writer was chosen as he worked regular nights and no manager or undermanager would be on duty then, There may have been others chosen but secrecy was such that he never knew of them (see note 2). He was duly sent on a concentrated one-day course at the Valley pit, Hednesford in September 1960 (see box 1).

He was informed before he went that a large metal tank had been placed underground at the colliery full of fresh water. This was in the connecting roadway between main intake from Kemberton shafts and the main return to Halesfield shafts. There was a heap of suitable timber and stone at each end of this normally door-sealed roadway to form stoppings. Here men within the connected roadway could wait while air containing radiation passed along the main airways. Similar assembly places had been chosen and supplied with heaps of timber elsewhere in the pit. This timber was also suitable for making emergency fans to be manually operated.

The course proved to be an intensive one and the programme is shown in the box. It was led by a Mr. C. Williams, the class was made up of one representative from each colliery in the NCB's South Staffordshire & Shropshire Area.

In the morning the topic was 'The Threat'. It consisted of a film about the H-bomb and another about the consequential fallout. There were also two lectures on the 'objects of NCB Civil Defence' and on 'Nuclear Weapons' in general. A frightening aspect of it was that the films were "not for public exhibition".

Lunch was taken in a very sober and thoughtful manner! In the afternoon the topic was 'Civil Defence', first a film showing what the Government was doing and what the National Organisations - including the industrial units David outlined were doing or capable of doing. Then the

afternoon covered the part that the chosen would have to play. This covered all the topics shown and the audience were expected to give their ideas and views throughout. The writer especially remembers having to design a wooden fan to be powered by 10 men and to discuss the pros and cons of locating the emergency mobile winding engines in urban and country locations. Much of it was very hypothetical, the writer certainly went home with a 'thick head' that night.

The writer was awarded his Civil Defence 'ticket' (see page opposite), but fortunately the "bomb" was never dropped!

## Note 1: Competition

Although during the course the writer was given exercises on how to calculate how long the ventilation current would continue at his pit, he cannot now remember the factors assumed. Can anyone calculate how long the air would take to stop - assume own values if none given below.

Length of ventilation airways: 10 miles  
Section of roadways average: 6ft. x 9ft.  
Density of air, say: 0.0807 lb per cu. ft.  
Velocity of air flow: ?  
Coefficient of friction: ?  
- also others as necessary.

For guidance - the writer remembers one occasion when the fan stopped at Madeley Wood Colliery, the men in perimeter workings were all withdrawn to main airways as a precaution by deputies. Inspections found no apparent deterioration in air-flow even after a couple of hours.

## Note 2

David Poyner has not found any such precautions being taken at Highley Pit. None have been found at Granville but Ray Rushton reports that at least two more persons were trained at Madeley namely Peter Beddall and Harry Adams.



# Underground Officials Training Syllabus

## Civil Defence Course September 1960, Valley Pit, Hednesford

Box 1

Presented by C. Williams

Begins at	Subject	Type
0900	Introduction { Administration Policy	
	<b>1. The Threat</b>	
0910	(a) The H. bomb	Film
0940	(b) The Object of N.C.B. Civil Defence	Lecture
1000	(c) The Fall Out.	Film
1100	(d) Nuclear Weapons - add. Data	Lecture
1130	Refreshments.	
	<b>2. Organisation of Civil Defence</b>	
1200	(a) To the Rescue	Film
	<b>3. The Colliery Civil Defence Scheme.</b>	
1230	(a) Colliery Unit Planning i. Mobile Columns - emergency winders etc. ii. Establishment and Plans.	Floor Map and Lecture
1300	(b) Underground Hazards. i. Power Failure ii. Ventilation Failure iii. Smoke and obnoxious fumes iv. Radioactivity	Lecture
1330	(c) Underground Precautionary Measures i. Action below ground ii. Assembly places iii. Ventilation and Emergency Fans	Lecture
1400	(d) Underground Organisation i. Duties of Officials etc.	Lecture and Discussion

Total 5½ hours Instruction.

N.C.B. Industrial Civil Defence training 'ticket' awarded to the writer in 1960



**NATIONAL COAL BOARD**  
WEST MIDLANDS DIVISION

**This is to Certify:**

that IVOR J. BROWN  
of MADDELEY WOOD COLLIERY  
has completed a course of Industrial Civil Defence training held under the auspices of the National Coal Board, and has acquired sufficient knowledge to act as a member of the Board's Civil Defence Service.

Name of Course attended UNDERGROUND OFFICIALS 9/60.

Date 1st December, 1960. Signed C. Williams  
Area Civil Defence Officer.

*Mr. Jamison*  
Area General Manager.



# Icehouse at Sugnall

by John Martin

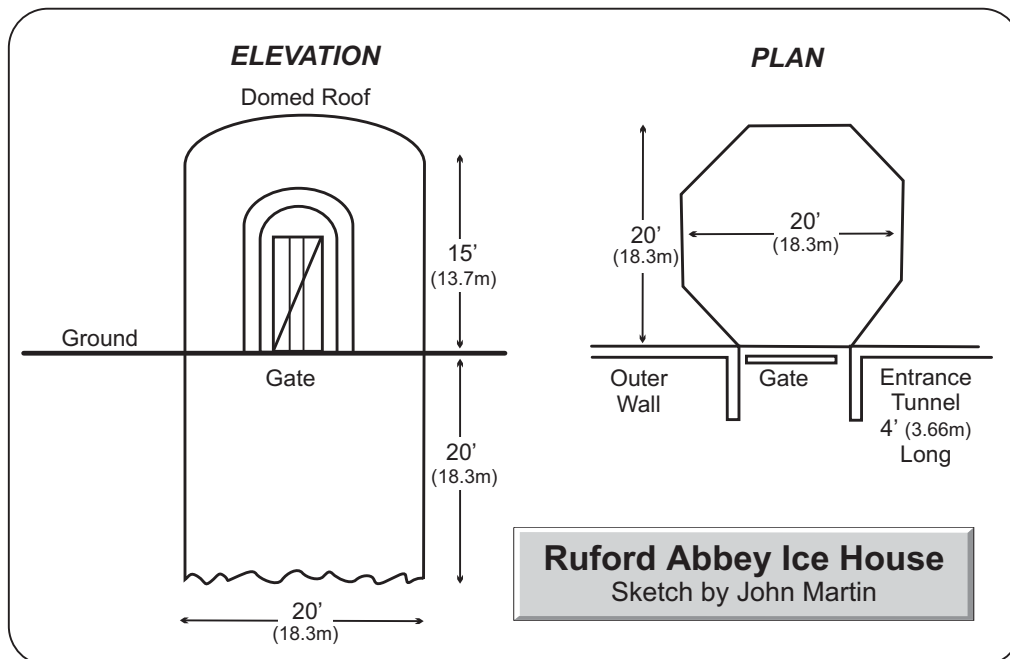
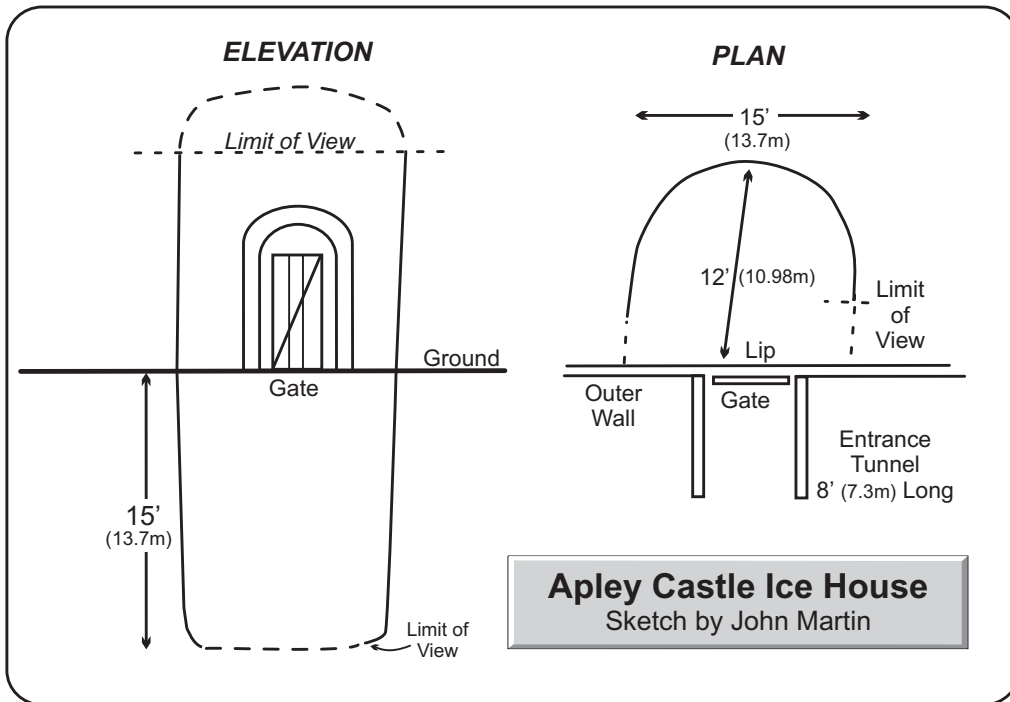
Members of the club have been engaged for some time in digging out an icehouse at Sugnall, at the request of the owner. A large amount of rubbish has been removed and the hole is quite deep, so much that some people are now questioning if it is indeed an icehouse, however I disagree with this, having recently examined two other icehouses. One is at Apley Castle, Telford, and the other at Ruford Abbey in Nottinghamshire. Both of these differ slightly from Sugnall, as there is no

walkway around the pit, the entrance doorway being right on the lip, and both are protected by an iron gate within a short tunnel. Examination was carried out with the aid of a torch, looking through the gate.

Apley Castle icehouse appears to be 'dee shaped', the ceiling is out of sight, above ten feet. The width of the pit is about twelve feet and the depth about fifteen feet, at which point it seems to curve in, as though the floor is saucer shaped. Also the

pit tapers in towards the bottom. The interior is quite dark.

Ruford Abbey icehouse is the larger of the two. It rises to about fifteen feet, with a domed ceiling. The pit is octagonal and about twenty feet wide, one can see down to a mass of twigs and branches at a depth of about twenty feet. The interior of this icehouse is much lighter due to the shorter entrance tunnel. This seems to confirm that Sugnall is indeed an icehouse.





# Down to the '112'

2nd October 2005

On the 2nd October, Steve Holding, Andy Wood, Mike Worsfold and Kelvin Lake met at Snailbeach with a view to descending to the 112 yard level - although Steve decided to stop on the 90 (or should it be 80?) and do some digging to clear a few fallen rocks at one end of the level.

We were also joined by 4 Dudley members, but they stayed in the upper levels and the 40 yard taking photographs.

It was hoped that the water levels on the 112 might be low due to the dry summer, although I don't know if 'nipple' deep is classed as shallow!

This was the first time down to the 112 for Andy and Kelvin, although Mike had been there before he had a bit of trouble remembering things.

After the descent into the water, we came out the side level into the main passage and turn 'right' effectively heading towards George's shaft (and deeper water). Mike lead the way and kept muttering about there being a shaft in the level somewhere, which didn't instill confidence in those behind as he was stirring up the silt and we couldn't see anything under the water. In the end we didn't find any shafts going down, just a couple of stopes overhead, the first one of which presumably connected back up to higher levels.

In the second stope we encountered some timbers across the level (under water) just before the tunnel narrowed into a triangular section (see 3), with one side being made of rails and stacked or collapsed deads. At the end of this section, beside a large chamber, a fall had effectively blocked the route on, although it was felt that there was a potential dig there. Mike then started a rough compass and tape survey back to the pitch up to the 90 (see 4).

At this stage we had been in the water about 45 minutes and were beginning to feel the cold, so while Kelvin (who didn't have a wet suite on) started climbing out Andy and

**1 Right:** Mike and Andy at the collapse from a stope that may connect to higher levels



**2 :** Mike and Andy moving back to the main level.

**Note:** Photography was only possible in the shallower sections, where there was space between the roof and water to get the camera out!

**3 :** The second stope, where the level continues beyond the timbers in a narrow passage, with deads and waste heaped on the right.



**4 :** Mike and Andy about to start the survey at the limit of exploration.



**5 :** The view back from the limit of exploration, Andy Wood 30m away with the end of the tape.



Mike had a quick look along the level towards Chapel shaft (although they didn't go far).

Next year, water levels permitting, it is planned to make a return visit and explore further towards Chapel shaft - where the water gets much shallower !





# Christmas Extra - The mine donkeys of Shropshire

by Ivor Brown



It seems that Shropshire mines employed more donkeys underground than any other County - why?

In 1900 for example Shropshire mines employed 358 horses and ponies underground plus 26 donkeys, while the adjacent North Staffordshire Coalfield employed 999 horses, but only 1 donkey and Cheshire 83 horses and no donkeys. Shropshire mines also employed a donkey on the surface as well as mules at this time and it is known that more donkeys were hired in for turning winding gins and for mineral haulage as required.

The difference between horses; ponies; asses; donkeys and mules is not as great as some imagine. The Mines Inspectors report of 1900 describes a pony as a small horse '14 hands and under' in height. An ass is described in a dictionary as a wild, long-eared quadruped of "the horse family". The main difference between an ass and a donkey is that the ass is a wild animal - the donkey is a domesticated one, however in colloquial use a donkey is often called an ass. For example according to the Wellington Journal of 24th December 1845, a roof fall at Snedshill Pit killed "3 men and an ass". A 'mule' is of course the result of crossing a female horse with a male donkey.

As is seen above donkeys were in use in Shropshire pits in 1845 and further evidence of this is given in the Report of the Commissioners into

the employment of children underground, published in 1842. While collecting information for this Dr. Mathew Webb of Oakengates said that workings were often "so low as to prevent horses of the smallest size or asses from being used"; elsewhere it is stated that "asses or donkeys were used underground at many of the smaller, poorer mines." The Coalbrookdale Company representative said their mines tended to be larger so that 'there is room for small horses and donkeys, and in some of them for larger horses'.

Donkeys have been described locally as the "poor-mans pony" and probably this explains why the donkey was in greater demand in Shropshire than in North Staffs, possibly because Shropshire pits were mostly small poorly funded, thin seam operations, particularly the clay pits.

The ICS (International Correspondence School) course in mining for 1906 states that the pit pony, given regular employment and good food, is much more powerful than the mule or donkey, he does more work so that a smaller number are required, requiring fewer drivers.

The total costs are less, but in Shropshire's small mines, few men were employed, who had to do all the jobs in thin seams with small tubs. Therefore many of the above advantages would be lost so that a donkey, grazed on wastelands, which was tough and hardy, would be just

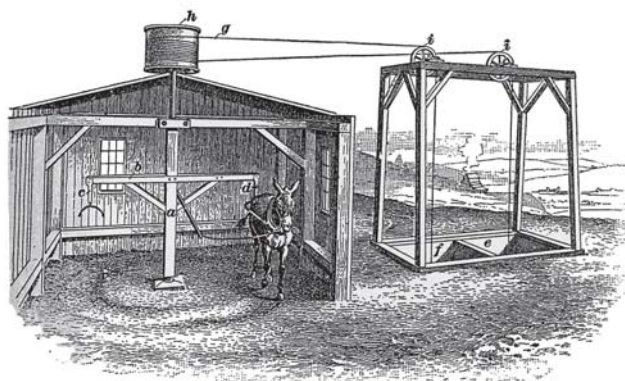
as good. This deduction is bourn out by the only incident the writer has found in the Inspector's reports of donkeys being employed underground. In 1890 at the small Turners Yard Pit of the Broseley Tileries Company a donkey driver died underground. "He was walking out behind a donkey drawing a load, and had only left the men at the face a few minutes before, he was found dead". The post mortem found that he had no injuries and he must have died of heart disease.

There are several references available, and some pictures, of donkeys being used on the surface, the principal uses being to operate gins and to haul carts. The late Jim Roberts of Broseley told the writer how they had a donkey working the gin at Guests Deep Pit who could be left to operate the gin on his own; for stopping and reversing him all the banksman had to do was to give a special whistle and the donkey would respond accordingly. He lived in a little hut by the shaft and seemed to eat anything given to him (see figure, below left).

Living near a pit shaft sometimes proved fatal to a donkey. An old mineworker Don Fletcher told the writer about a pit called Spratts Castle near his home at Dawley; early last century a vertical boiler stood near the pit top and a donkey was tethered to it. During one night the shaft collapsed, the ground ran in and nothing was seen of the donkey or boiler again. A similar story is told of a mine at Lincoln Hill (Ironbridge), on December 31st 1901 a subsidence occurred near the pit top and "Wellings' Stables containing Mrs. Page's donkey vanished and neither were ever seen again". The diarist C.F.Peskin who recorded this incident said that donkeys were used in the Ironbridge mines to draw wagons and each evening were walked out to the surface.

In the early 20th century many local mining households, with homes alongside old colliery waste tips especially around Dawley, kept a

**Cornish Whim or Gin** - When the loads are such that horses or mules can be employed, a whim or gin is used.  
ICS Course 1906





## Christmas Extra



### The mine donkeys of Shropshire, continued ...

donkey to use with a cart and to hire out occasionally. The writer's mother's family, who lived at Smokey House, Southall Corner, Dawley did this, three of her brothers worked at the pits and another two with the father worked as a team of bricklayers. Their main work was to brick shafts and build chimneys. A donkey could be useful in this work as well as in hauling loads of coal from the pit.

A donkey is not such the poor stupid animal as some believe, he has a special place (remember the biblical stories of Christmas and Easter - which is where the 'cross' on the donkeys back is reputed to come from). A story is also told in mining circles as follows:

One day a donkey fell down an old shaft. The animal cried piteously for hours as its owner tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the pit needed to be covered up anyway, it was just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the pit. At first the donkey realised what was happening and cried horribly.

Then, to everyone's amazement, he quietened down. A few shovel loads later, the owner looked down the pit and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the neighbours continued to shovel this continued. Soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the shaft and trotted off!

The moral of this story was that life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of this pit is to shake it off and take a step up Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest pit, just by not stopping, never

giving up! Shake it off and take a step up!

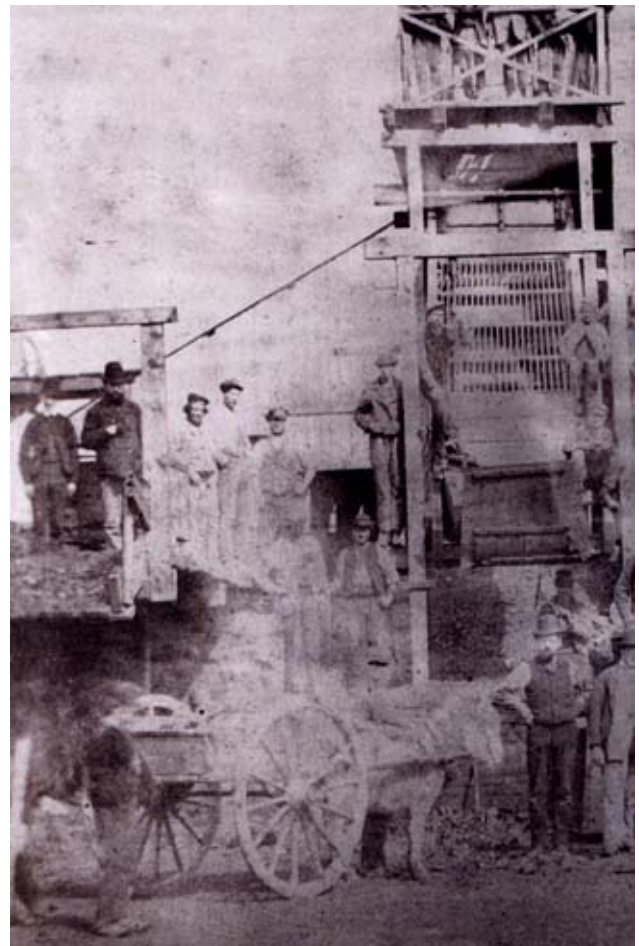
The donkey has also a special place in American mining too - here he is called a 'burro' (the Spanish for donkey) and is used as the logo for the female miner's union - 'Women in Mining'.



The burros, and their descendants, left behind by old-time prospectors on their death or departure from the deserts are now protected by law (Burro Act of 1974).

Thought to number over 20,000 they even have the free run of some towns like Oatman, Arizona, where they are a great tourist attraction and nearly outnumber their human neighbours.

**Below:** The Brown family (left) with local four-legged residents at Oatman, USA, 1982.



**Right:** Donkey cart at Preesgweene Colliery, 1873.



## What the Journals Were Saying Submitted by Alan Vickers

Extracts from the London Illustrated News

### **REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF SELF-PRESERVATION. -**

The *Newcastle Chronicle* records a startling incident which occurred at the Keld Head Lead-mines last week, and which exhibits a remarkable degree of presence of mind and promptitude of action on the part of an inspector of the works. The gentleman had occasion to enter one of the mines, and descended two or three shafts, (*i.e.* from a higher to a lower level). Having completed his survey, he started on his return to the mouth of the mine, but was somewhat surprised to find that none of the workmen were in that part of the mine. This surprise deepened into alarm when he arrived at the foot of one of the shafts, where he had usually been drawn up, and found that it too, was deserted. He contrived, however, to scramble up to the next higher level. Here he discovered a train of gunpowder, laid for the purpose of blasting the very spot of earth on which he was standing.

The match was lit, and the insidious spark rapidly scintillating towards the train of gunpowder, which would, in an instant, have scattered the ore into a thousand atoms, and hurried the unfortunate man into eternity. But he seized the fatal match, and escaped the catastrophe. The workmen, who were not aware of any one being in the mine, after firing the train, had retired from the mine to avoid the effects of the explosion.

*May 28th, 1859.*

### **NEWLY-INVENTED SAFETY-LAMP FOR MINERS. -**

In the library of the Royal Institution, on Friday week, Mr. S. S. Kenrick (formerly a coal-proprietor of Flintshire, but now of St. Helier's, Jersey) exhibited in action his newly-invented safety-lamp for miners, his object being to provide for them more light than they obtain from the lamps now in use, with greater security from danger.

To increase the brilliancy of the light, air is admitted to the oil-pan from the top through two short thin tubes, about 1-16th of an inch in diameter ; and greater security is obtained by various internal arrangements which prevent the flame from ascending when the lamp is brought into combustible air, and by giving it greater external strength. Mr. Kenrick states that no external agitation of the air outside the lamp can affect the flame.

He is very sanguine with respect to the success of his lamp, which he says can be manufactured cheaply in large numbers. He considers, also, that oil will be found much more economical than candles, now so much used, and so exceedingly dangerous. In connection with this important subject there were laid on the table the original drawings made by Sir Humphrey Davy himself when constructing his safety-lamp, and the explanatory MSS. (belonging to the Royal Institute Library).

June 4th, 1859.

### **COAL. -**

M. de Carnal, a Prussian mining engineer, has recently prepared some general statistics of mining. He asserts that the quantity of coal raised through the world, in 1857, amounted to 125 millions of tons, worth 930 millions of francs. Prussia alone, he says, contains enough coal to suffice for the consumption of the globe for nine centuries, taking as a measure that of 1857 ; while England, far from being exhausted, as some Continental alarmists suppose, is able to supply the world with coal for 4000 years.

*June 11th, 1859.*

*from the Warminster and Westbury Journal and Wiltshire County Advertiser, Saturday 19 September 1908.*

### **LIGHTNING IN COAL MINE**

A disaster of a most extraordinary nature is reported to have occurred in a Pennsylvania coal mine on Saturday.

During a heavy thunderstorm lightning flashed down the mine which is 1,300 feet deep, and killed three miners who were at work near the bottom of the shaft. A steel rail which runs down the shaft evidently acted as a conductor for the lightning.

*Submitted by Roger Gosling*



# NAHMO '06 Update

Preparations for NAMHO 2006 are well in hand, although, perhaps more work needs to be done on the preparations for the underground visits - i.e. parking locations, the time needed to reach underground places, access issues.

The team working on the video have been busy, making contacts with various agencies and organisations, and visiting and recording a number of locations.

Drawing a circle of about 20 miles radius from Llangollen actually pulls in a surprising number of different mines and quarries, working a wide range of minerals and materials from slate, silica, clay, limestone, lead and coal.

The Wrexham area has produced a few surprises, at the moment the most impressive has been Plas Power Colliery. Little seems to have been written about this mine, but several very impressive buildings survive. These include 2 large engine houses, a long row of engineering workshops, and a power hall. At the time of our visit in September, workmen were digging out the machinery foundations in the Power Hall in preparation for converting the building into a climbing centre for children.

There are several other colliery sites in the area that retain a number of buildings and features. At Llay Colliery numerous buildings survive including the screens buildings (which we were only able to obtain distant shots of as the owners refused permission for us to actually walk round them).

The team would like to thank everyone who helped carry batteries and lights to record the underground remains at Moel Fferna and Penarth - some very good shots have been captured. Our next task is to start compiling the material to produce a 'story' and to do some more research into the history of the area.



The memorial to the victims of the Gresford Pit disaster (when 266 miners were killed in 1934), in the grounds of Gresford Colliery Social Club



**Below:** A circular buddle at Minera Lead mine - the visitor centre here has one of Malcom Newtons models on loan from the Club, although it does not appear to be working any more.



Pictures: Kelvin Lake - I.A. Recordings



NAHMO '06  
Update, continued ...



**Bersham Colliery**  
**Left and below:**  
The electric winder house.

**Right:** Winding drum from the Point of Ayr Colliery steam winder.

**Right, below:**  
Headframe from inside the engine house



**Plas Power Colliery**

**Left:** The Power Hall (soon to be a climbing centre for children)  
**Right:** Inside one of the winding houses - Ian Cooper in the far doorway.



The two large horizontal winding engine houses at Plas Power. The shafts were on the far side of the buildings from the camera.



Pictures: Kelvin Lake - I.A. Recordings



# HUSH, HUSH! No Longer

by David Pannett.

Some years ago the late professor Barrie Jones of Manchester, identified features near Norbury as examples of Roman 'hushing', a method of revealing mineral veins by sluicing water down a series of channels. The way in which Roman writers described this method, was discussed by Roger White (The Gale of Life, SW Shropshire History and Archaeological Society, 2000) who could not, however, offer any evidence that the Norbury 'channels' were the result. By then aerial photographs of them had already appeared under a 'Roman' heading in other publications, adopting Barrie Jones' interpretation without question. (Michael Watson and Chris Musson: Shropshire from the Air; an English County at Work, Shropshire Books 1996 and also Roger White and Phillip Barker, Wroxeter, Tempus 1998) and these no doubt prompted Roger's essay for SWSHAS.

From the start of all this, many others were unhappy with the 'Roman' label and now must speak up before further publications perpetuate the myth. Apart from being in an area beyond the recognised distribution of lead veins, the aerial photographs clearly show the 'ridge and furrow' of a medieval field system, not unlike those correctly illustrated in both volumes of aerial photographs. (Watson and Musson; *ibid* 1996 and Shropshire from the Air; Man and the Landscape, Shropshire Books, 1993) Readers can therefore judge for themselves and take a closer look in light of the following observations.

In the Middle Ages most villages and even small hamlets had at least a nucleus of 'open fields' of typical 'Midland' type. Holdings consisted of intermingled strips scattered around two or three or four large fields, which formed the basis of the arable crop rotation. In detail, strips occupied one or more ridges, which were grouped in 'furlongs' or 'flats', all laid out for the convenience of ploughing and land drainage. Ridges were usually from six to eight yards in width, about 200 yards long ('furlong' or 'furlong'), gently

curved like a reversed 'S' and ended in clear headlands. Many of these had become raised with soil constantly brushed from the turning plough and team, and some at the downslope end would be cut through to ease drainage, giving a knobbly end to each ridge. If slope directions demanded, a few ridges would also taper to a point ('gores', 'pikes' etc.) Furrows ('reans') and headlands were normally grass, together with odd wet areas and watercourses ('slades' and 'sykes'). All these provided extra hay during cropped years and common grazing after harvest and in the fallow year.

However an important feature of the fallow was summer ploughing, so that strict rules were necessary to protect the grassland and these helped to control the whole field management. In the western counties, such as Shropshire, where alternative pasture could be found on commons and assarts, these rules could be more relaxed and thus allow the gradual breakdown and piecemeal enclosure of the fields long before the well known 'Parliamentary Enclosure' movement of the 18th century.

Within the new closes, ploughing would continue on the best arable soils, but as under-draining and harvesting machinery developed old ridges would be gradually ploughed flat, leaving any survivors as rare features in the modern landscape. Hedges planted during the process of piecemeal enclosure often

followed the old 'furlong' patterns and may provide the only clues to their former existence (e.g. Wentnor).

What is known about the history of Norbury in general (Joyce Pinnock, "A Place in the Sun") and can be seen in the surviving ridges in particular, conform to this normal picture. As can be seen on the published aerial photographs and on the ground, they occupy a stony hillside where several watercourses and actual rock outcrops break up an otherwise regular pattern. These would have been accommodated as extra, intermixed grassland in an 'open field' system but would have been a nuisance to an enclosed system requiring 'all arable' or 'all grass' at any one time within each close. For this reason further regular ploughing would have been discouraged, so that old ridges survived here while they may have almost disappeared from elsewhere in the parish.

A related aspect of this 'Roman' story has been the idea that a 'villa' at Linley was part of an industrial complex. In view of the association with woodland shown by the place name, perhaps remote 'hunting lodge' might be more likely. If Roman mining had taken place in this region, geology demands that it must have been on exposed veins at White Grit, Gravels or Snailbeach leaving Linley as a quiet retreat.

As they would say in court, the evidence is before you and I rest my case.

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## Things you didn't know about Snowdon

'Glaslyn' is Welsh for 'blue lake'. The lake gets its glacial blue colour from the high levels of copper in the water. Due to the copper in the water there are no fish in any of the 3 lakes on the east side of Snowdon.

When a new mine manager was wanted at any of the mines on Snowdon, it was a prerequisite that applicants spoke English and French, because so many of the miners were Breton. 'Llyn Llydaw' means 'Lake Brittany' in Welsh.

A hundred years ago, the miners earned extra money by taking bunches of Snowdon lillies down to the Victoria Hotel in Llanberis - every table at the hotel had its own bunch of flowers.

Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team, deals with an average of 6 deaths a year and 70 hospital cases. They have to escort 5 to 10 people off Crib Goch, 2 to 3 of them come down in a stretcher and about 1 a year in a box.



## News Round-Up 2

### BC AD BP ?

There is a growing trend to drop the use of BC or AD when talking about things that happened 'some time ago' and use BP (Before Present) instead.

One of the recent converts is Cheddar Caves Museum. They are now using BP labels on their artefacts because "it is easier to understand" (not as some sections of the British press would have it, to appease those who might be offended by the Christian dating system).

The museum says it still uses BC and AD when a piece can be dated, but they use BP when it's age is effectively pre-historic.

BP is a year numbering system that counts back from 1950 - although I'm not quite sure why they chose 1950, perhaps someone can enlighten me.

*Kelvin*

### Mining Heritage Protected

September saw the completion of a ten-year project by the National Trust to secure the long-term future of a number of industrial sites in the St. Just area of Cornwall.

A survey by Cornwall County Council in 1992 identified that the area's mining heritage was under threat. To commemorate the National Trust's centenary year in 1995, the Trust started the "St. Just Coast Project", with the aim of protecting and restoring the mining remains through acquisition.

Now, ten years on, the Trust owns many of the mining sites in the St. Just mining district.

This area consists of an estimated 2,000 shafts, 13 surviving engine houses, including two of the best known mines Botallack and Levant, plus a number of other important historical sites such as the Carn Praunter arsenic works and the arsenic labyrinth and calciner at Botallack.

### Brenton Symon's Liskeard area map

Now available - the 2nd edition of the CD-ROM version of this map. Originally published in 1863 the map covers the Caradon, Ludcott and Menheniot mines. The disk also includes a full transcript of Webb & Geach's book "The history and progress of Mining in the Cardon and Liskeard district" along with several other assorted bits of information and some photographs.

It is available from Liskeard bookshops or online/mail order from "Just Cornish".

*John Manley*

### Teenager dies on school cave trip

Joseph Lister (14), a pupil at Tadcaster Grammar School, went missing in Manchester Hole, Upper Nidderdale on Monday, 14th Nov. as the party of 10 other boys and girls that he was in made their way out of the cave due to rising water levels.

Members of the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue team were quickly on the scene, and recovered his body later that night. At the time of writing, a post mortem examination has proved inconclusive. Toxicology and other tests will be carried out as pathologists try and establish how he died.

Investigations have been launched by North Yorkshire Police, the county council and the Health and Safety Executive to establish the chain of events which led to the tragedy.

The cave the children were in is used by instructors to give a basic introduction to caving. Manchester Hole adjoins Goyden Pot in the stream bed of the River Nidd one-and-a-half miles north of Lofthouse, near Pateley Bridge. Although the river level was high after recent heavy rain, it was not considered dangerous to enter.

*Compiled from News Reports*

### The Archaeology of Alderley Edge

The report arising from the Alderley Edge Landscape Project in the late 1990s. Jointly edited by Simon Timberlake and Professor John Prag, it has two ISBNs: **1 84171 715 0** for the blue BAR cover or **1 84058 007 0** for the glossy cover edition published for the Manchester Museum and National Trust.

Price: £30 for 308 pages plus 16 colour plates. It covers all of the archaeological work during the project plus some work done later the by Derbyshire Caving Club.

*Nigel Dibben*

### That's Shallot

Club members will be saddened to hear that Jean Le Roux has died ... who? Jean was one of the last "Onion Johnnies" - this was the name given to Brittany farmers who travelled around Britain selling their produce (originally onions and shallots) from their bicycles.

After WW II Jean and his father used a surplus tank landing craft to carry their products across to the UK. This part of their business became very successful and grew, eventually becoming Brittany Ferries.

Nothing to do with mining I know, but what the heck ... it's Christmas!

### Underground Boating

The British Waterways' Standedge Tunnel and Visitor centre (based in the Tunnel End Cottage on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal) are offering visitors 30 minute guided tunnel trips in glass roofed narrow boats from the centre at Marsden, Huddersfield.. The tunnel is Britain's longest canal tunnel and was abandoned for over 40 years, before being reopened in 2001 following a 20-year restoration programme. The Visitor Centre is open from the end of March to the end of September, admission is free, there is a small charge for boat trips. For more details visit: [www.waterscape.com/standedge](http://www.waterscape.com/standedge)





## Questions and Answers

### The Omnibus Pit A Query

#### Query:

Has anyone information on the "Bus Pit" from which the Omnibus Public House near Oakengates took its name?

#### Answer:

It is assumed that the pit was officially called the Omnibus Pit not Bus Pit since there is information available on the former but not the latter.

The Omnibus Pit was part of Wombridge Colliery owned by Hopley Bros. of Wombridge in the late 1880s. J.O.Owen was manager and W.Hassall undermanager of this and other pits of the Colliery (which included pits called the Boundary, Greyhound, Nabbside, Pear Tree, Bridge, Roundhouse and 'Rose and Crown', all apparently named after Public Houses). Most of those pits had at least two shafts.

The Omnibus Pit shafts were 105 ft. deep to the Yard Coal Seam and the Abandonment Plans were sent to the Inspector of Mines in December 1890, but the Inspectors Report for the following year describes the pit as "standing" presumably still having the possibility of re-opening. The pit shafts were at Grid ref. SJ 696 105. Other nearby pits in the Company's control also worked the Two Foot Coal Seam (105ft. deep at the 'Rose and Crown' Pits, shafts 7ft. diameter) and the Clunch Clay Seam for the Lilleshall Company Works.

Large Scale published maps of the area, and Trade Directories, may also provide an answer to which came first, the pit or the pub - but even in modern times it is general practice to name British Coal Opencast Sites after the nearest pub. This does not however seem to apply in Shropshire with such opencast names as Old Park, Clares Lane, The Rock, New Dale and Candles!

*Ivor Brown*

### NCB Industrial Training Branch AIR Test Questions

- 1 Air is a mixture of several gases. One of these gases has a greater volume than all the others. What is this gas called ?
- 2 What percentage (%) of the air consists of this gas ?
- 3 Which gas is the second largest in volume ?
- 4 What percentage of air consists of this gas ?
- 5 What is left ?
- 6 When we breathe in, the \_\_\_\_\_ in the air
- 7 combines with \_\_\_\_\_ in our bloodstream.
- 8 So we breathe out \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ (*two words*).
- 9 What happens to the gas we breathe out ?
- 10 Besides providing the miner with air for breathing, can you suggest another reason for ventilating a mine ?
- 11 Can you name another ?
- 12 And another ?
- 13 And another ?

**National Coal Board 1970**

### Northern Pennine Silver in the Late Medieval Period

A seminar to be held at the North Pennines Heritage Trust Centre, Nenthead, Saturday 8 April 2006 to consider the evidence for silver production and discuss how our understanding of mining in the area during the late medieval period might be advanced. The intention is to hear presentations from all those with an interest in the area - geologists, historians, archaeologists and mine explorers.

The evidence for silver production from the northern Pennine orefield in the late medieval period has been addressed by both historians and geologists in recent years. There is strong documentary support for the position that the area was the major source of newly mined English silver in the late medieval period, that is not

backed up by the geological evidence. The majority of the ores mined in the modern period were low in silver and there is, as yet, no evidence for significant quantities of silver-rich minerals at the shallow depths accessible to the medieval miner.

Information is available on the organisational structure under which mining was carried out but there is currently little to indicate how it fitted into the social framework and upland agricultural practice.

To book a free place, contact:

Sheila Barker,  
The Rise, ALSTON,  
Cumbria CA9 3DB

[sheila.barker@cybermoor.org.uk](mailto:sheila.barker@cybermoor.org.uk)



## Back to Purple at the Rock

After the Club dinner at the Callow Inn in October (where we had a very nice meal, and learnt how to make a camping stove from two empty beer cans, courtesy of the speaker - who treated us to stories about his long distance walking exploits in the USA), Edwin Thorpe, Peter Eggleston and Kelvin Lake decided to take a walk over the Nipstone Rock area to see what was happening in the area that is being de-forested as part of the "Back to Purple" scheme - where 28ha of trees are being around the rock outcrops and boulder fields of the Stiperstones SSI to return the area to grazing, control the bracken and encourage the growth of heather.

Quite a large area from near the Nipstone car park all along the ridge to the Rock has been cleared of trees, the ridge is quite dramatic now! As you follow the footpath, at one point they appear to have revealed 2 or 3 surface trials and possibly a small test pit - they could be holes or depressions made by tree roots, but they do look like trial workings!

At the end of the ridge, you can look down on a denuded area around the open shaft at the Rock mine. This has a new fence around it, but still appears to be open to a considerable depth. The Club last descended here in 1998 (Alan Robinson and Ben Shaw) - the only problem now is that there are no trees to act as belays!

Down the slope from the open shaft, and the other side of the boundary fence in the grounds of Rock Cottage can be seen another shaft, which appears to be filled and still overgrown with trees and bushes. As you walk back along the road from The Rock towards the Bog, in the fields down in the valley can be seen a number of interesting features; a possible dressing floor area, sites of adits, remains of a reservoir and evidence of water courses. It would be worth contacting the landowner here for permission to investigate these features in more detail.

*Kelvin*

**Below right:** Part of one of the "Back to Purple" signs at Nipstone Rock

**Below:** Rock mine as seen from the top of 'the Rock' (October 2005), Peter Eggleston and Edwin Thorpe by the shaft.



**Right:** Edwin Thorpe, looking at the Rock mine shaft, with it's new fence.



**Below:** View across to the end of the Rock and what appears to be a rubbish filled shaft (no fence).





# Christmas Puzzle



As NAMHO 2006 is on the horizon, for this years Christmas puzzle I thought you might like to try and find the names of a variety of mines and quarries in the Llangollen area - or at least mines within a 'rough' 20 mile radius of Llangollen.

To help you all the names you are looking for are listed (in alphabetical order) on the right.



## Mines and Quarries

Bersham	Minera
Berwyn	Milwr
	Moel Fferna
Cambrian	
Chatham	Oernant
Corwen	Penarth
Clogau	Penrhos
	Plas Power
Deeside	
Drill	Ruabon
Gresford	Trefarelawdd
Hendre	Trevor
Ifton	Wynnstay
Llay	Wynne



### Big Question

The next big question is .... can you now say what minerals were mined or worked at each of these places?

Hint: Coal, Clay, Lead, Limestone, or Slate

### And finally:

One of those listed is still working!

**BUT ....** Which one?



If you are really stuck, as it's Christmas the answers to the last two questions are printed below - but not the word search.



* - indicates the last working	
slate quarry in the area.	
Bersham - C	Minera - Pb
Berwyn - S	Milwr - Pb, L
	Moel Fferna - S
Cambrian - S	
Chatham - L	Oernant - L
Corwen - S	Penarth - S
Clogau - L	Penrhos - C
Deeside - S	Plas Power - C
Drill - C	Ruabon - Clay
Gresford - C	Trefarelawdd - C
Hendre - S	Trevor - L
Ifton - C	Wynnstay - C
Llay - C	Wynne - S

Key: C= Coal, S= Slate, L= Limestone, Pb= Lead.



## Books and Conferences

### Worth a Visit

The Winsford Salt Mines, Cheshire Owned by Salt Union Ltd, the writer visited these on 13th September 2005. They include the UK's oldest operating mine, opened in 1844, now probably one of the largest mines in the world extending underground to an area about 3 miles x 2 miles.

The mineral is in a stratified deposit about 500 feet deep to the 20 foot thick section now being worked. The parallel headings, about 70 foot wide, are connected by cross cuts of similar size to leave 70 foot square pillars to support the roof. This gives 70% extraction and a production of 1 million tonnes per year depending on market demands (almost all of this is now used for de-icing roads).

A Joy continuous miner, weighing about 140 tons, cuts and loads the salt in the headings onto a central conveyor using a shorter flexible conveyor which is advanced by a walking motion. Thus it can receive the cut material from any angle depending on which of the 5 parallel advances the miner is making in the heading. At present the full height is being worked in two lifts, the miner taking the top lift with the lower lift being taken by conventional drilling and blasting, and then being loaded by hydraulic front end loader.

The material is then transported to an underground primary crusher by belt conveyor (of which there are 26 miles altogether in the mine), then on to a secondary crushing and screening plant. There are stockpiling and reloading facilities at each crushing plant. About 40 people are employed in mining and preparation of the salt.

Personnel travel down No.3 shaft (sunk 1941), Materials down No.4 shaft (1964) and mineral winding by skip in No.5 (1973). There are about 130 miles of accessible tunnel underground.

The party travelled by open topped coach a total distance of about 8 miles underground, leaving the coach at various points, firstly to view a film

in the theatre showing earlier methods of working, and at other points to see the present operations, mineral getting, transportation methods, crushers, screens, hoisting and ventilating systems. The present operations are at the northern side of the 6 square mile area of take.

The party then visited the 2 subsidiary operations at the mine, in the western part the deep store facilities and 2½ miles away in the east, the Minosus Project, a site for waste disposal. The deep store facilities provide secure storage for documents and other items in an older part of the mine. At present about 2% of the available space underground is used for this purpose and about 40 people are employed.

The mine has changed greatly from the time 40 years ago when first visited - then it covered only 65 acres but employed 120 men on production alone, with an output very similar to that today. It had recently changed from the use of tracked wagons to free-steer road wagons, but in one area of the mine the old rail tracks can still be seen today.

*Ivor Brown*

### Fund Raising Event for Derbyshire C.R.O. Improvised Rescues for Single Rope Technique

Lead by Adam Evans, member of Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation, C.I.C holder and member of the Professional Caving Instructors body A.C.I.

Open to anyone wishing to improve their knowledge of SRT rescues under professional guidance. Pick up hints, tips, and technical skills in improvised S.R.T rescues.

Develop techniques on group assistance and problem prevention on vertical underground sections. It is flexible to meet the groups needs and all group equipment is provided. If required SRT kits can be hired at extra cost. All donations to DCRO.

N.B. Participants must be proficient in Single Rope Technique and have

### Red Rose Club Library

The library pages on the club web site have now been updated to include a "FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE, and a WANTED" list of publications.

The Club has a substantial number of early and more modern caving publications which the committee has agreed can be exchanged for items the library has not in stock or SOLD in aid of the Bullpot Farm fund.

There are links on the library home page to a list of "duplicate" publications, a list of "wanted" items, plus a list of RRCPC publications available.

Hopefully before Christmas there will also be a list of duplicate "Books". It's all in a good cause so now is your chance to get hold of your own copy of that rare magazine or pass on your unwanted caving publications.

Contact the librarian to buy/exchange or gift a publication.

*Andy Hall*

[www.rrcpc.org.uk](http://www.rrcpc.org.uk)  
[www.easegill.org.uk](http://www.easegill.org.uk)

working knowledge of S.R.T rigging and rope work.

Surface based on 19th of March 2006, at Pindale Bunkhouse, near Hope in Derbyshire. Cost: £35 per head all to be donated to DCRO.

Accommodation can be booked at Pindale Bunkhouse and camp site contact: 01433 620111

Strictly limited to a maximum of 6 people, so early booking advised

For more information on booking contact:

**Adam Evans**  
Mobile: 07900927400  
Email: adam@outdoorinstruction.co.uk  
[www.outdoorinstruction.co.uk](http://www.outdoorinstruction.co.uk)



# Books and Videos

## British Mining No. 77 The Mines of Upper Teesdale

Author: R. A. Fairbairn  
A5, 168 pp, 37 figures, 11 plates.

This monograph is the first systematic compilation of information on the historical mining sites of Teesdale to be published and it completes a series written about the lead mines of the Alston Block.

The volume begins with general summaries of the minerals that were produced, the geology of the district, the activities of the London Lead Company and the conditions in which the miners lived and worked.

Subsequent chapters describe mining sites and remains in three geographical areas separated by the pre-1974 county boundaries, i.e., North Yorkshire, Westmorland and Durham. A final chapter briefly describes the main smelting sites. The author has checked the location of every site in the field and, wherever possible, he has worked from primary documentary sources stored in county record offices. Following the demise of the lead mining industry in the late 1800s, extraction of barytes and fluorspar continued from the Teesdale area throughout much of the 20th century, but reduced demand for the product and cheaper foreign imports eventually forced the closure of the last operations in the 1970s.

Price £10.50.  
Available from: **Mike Moore**

## Rhiwbach Slate Quarry Its History and Development

By Griff R Jones, A4, 212pp

The Author has chronicled Rhiwbach's history from its stirrings in the 18th Century to its closure. This is an excellent production which includes colour and B&W photos, excellent plans and details of surface underground. It is a suitable follow up to his book on Hafodlas Slate Quarry. Price £17.50

## Latest Mining Video from I.A.Recordings



### The MHTI in the Harz

*“Like stepping into the pages of De Re Metallica”*



1hr 33min. £14.10 - VHS or DVD-R  
**(£10 to Club Members)**



In September 2003 a group from the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (most of the group were SCMC members too), visited the unique mining area of the Harz in Germany. Iron, silver, copper, lead and zinc were intensively mined, milled and smelted in the Harz mountains from the 10th century, helped by the abundance of water & wood.

Exploring the historic mining remains is like stepping into the pages of Georgius Agricola's "De Re Metallica".

First we visit the Oberharzer Bergwerksmuseum in Clausthal-Zellerfeld, with many models and artefacts collected from the area. In the reconstructed 1787 mineshaft building of August Caroliner Schacht, Andreas Ravens demonstrates some of the techniques including a 'rescue kibble'.

At the preserved Schachtanlage Kaiser-Wilhelm II we explore the ancient tunnels of the Oberharzer Wasserregal, built to supply power to hundreds of mine waterwheels and



for more details visit  
[www.iarecordings.org](http://www.iarecordings.org)



Edwin Thorpe tests the rescue kibble at the Oberharzer Museum now providing drinking water and hydroelectric power.

The HQ of Harz mining from 1731 was the Clausthal Amtshaus, where we are shown the ornate boardrooms and historic artefacts including a visitors book signed by James Watt!

At Sankt Andreasburg, we visit Grube Samson (1521) which has huge underground waterwheels on display including a reversing wheel for winding; and a man engine which is still used by engineers to inspect a hydroelectric generator 190m below!

90km South-East in the former DDR "East Germany" is Röhrigschacht mine where we descend 283m in the cage then catch the miners train for an 800m trip to the working face, a seam of copper-shale 40cm high!

Der Rammelsberg UNESCO World Heritage Site has been mined continuously for over 1,000 years. We are shown underground waterwheels used for winding and pumping and taken beyond the tourist route to see astonishingly beautiful 12th century coffin levels stained all imaginable colours by the rich mineralisation.

Thomas Moritz shows us around the nearby town of Goslar which was built on the wealth of Rammelsberg and the many elegant medieval buildings show this very clearly.



## Club Officers

**President: Alan Taylor**

**Tackle: Ian Cooper**

**Chair: Eileen Bowen**

**First Aid Officer:  
Alan Moseley**

**Secretary: Mike Davies**  
*scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk*

**Librarian: Alan Robinson**

**Treasurer: Bob Taylor**

**Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold**

**Training Officer: Ian Davies**

**Rescue Officer:  
Neal Rushton**

**Conservation & NAMHO  
Rep: Steve Holding**

**'Below' Editor, Publications:  
Kelvin Lake**

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

## Diary Dates

2006

**18th Jan.:** Formal launch of Account No.24, 7.30pm IGMT Museum, Coalbrookdale. Followed by a talk on "Accidents in Shropshire Mines" by the Ivor Brown.

**25th Feb.:** DCA AGM, 10am, Monyash Village Hall.

**19th March:** Fund Raising Event for Derbyshire CRO, 'Improvised Rescues for Single Rope Technique', Pindale Bunkhouse, near Hope in Derbyshire. Contact: **Adam Evans** [www.outdoorinstruction.co.uk](http://www.outdoorinstruction.co.uk)

**8th April:** Northern Pennine Silver in the Late Medieval Period. A seminar to be held at the North Pennines Heritage Trust Centre, Nenthead.

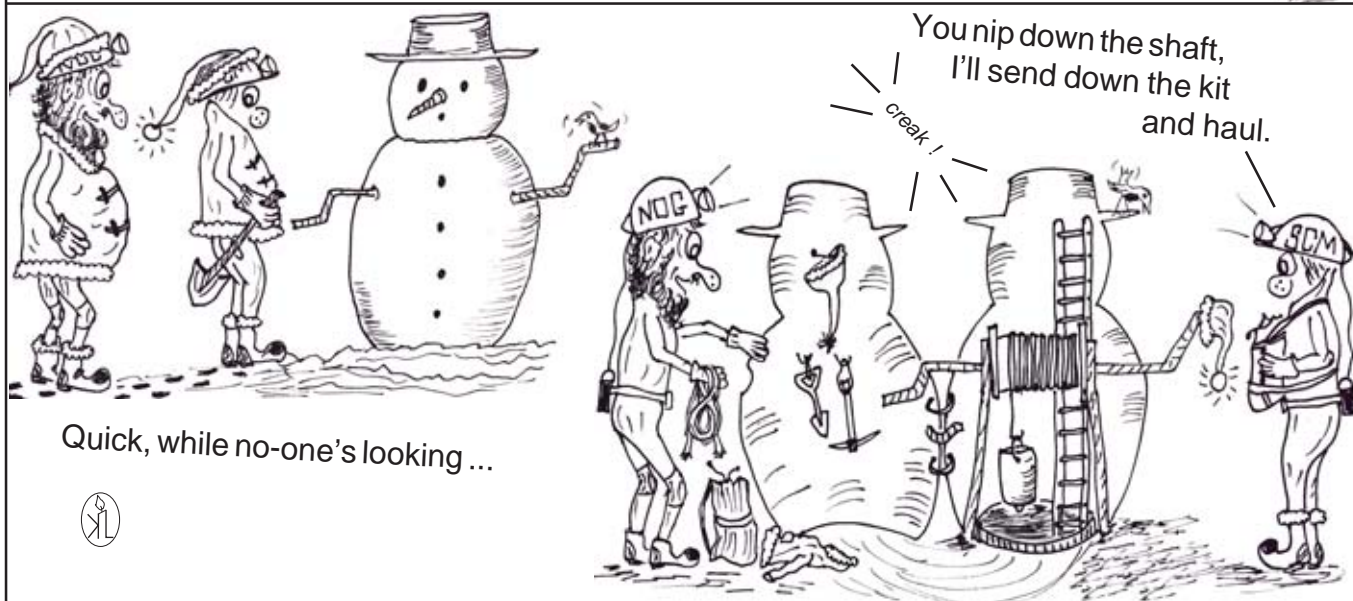
**6th May:** CSCC AGM, 10.30am, Hunters' Lodge, Priddy.

**11th-13th June:** NAMHO 2006 Conference, Royal Pavillion, Llangollen.

**7th-11th August:** NSS Convention, Bellingham, Washington, USA.

**9th-17th October:** International Mining History Congress (IMHC), Beringen in the Limberg mining region of north-east Belgium. Visits to sites in the area will take place during this period.

**Smidgin:** The art of keeping the winter dig secret ....



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

