

Special 4 page NAMHO 2011 Conference Edition

Issue No: 2011.3

## Welcome to NAMHO 2011

On behalf of the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club I would like to welcome you to Shropshire and the NAMHO 2011 Conference.

This event coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the official founding of the Club.

The Club was founded in 1961, as the Shropshire Mining Club, by a group of friends who had been exploring underground sites in Wales, Derbyshire and of course Shropshire.

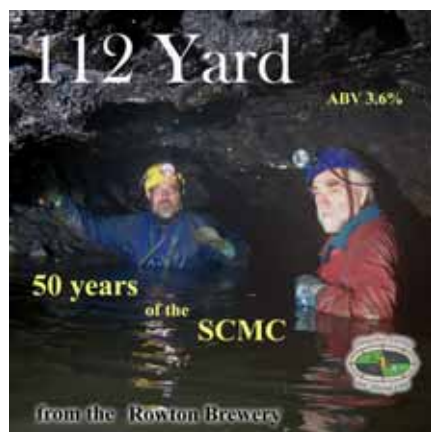
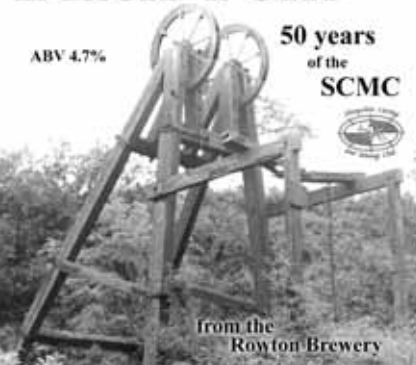
Alongside exploration, one of our main aims has always been to survey and document the sites we explore - we started our detailed survey of the metal mines of South Shropshire in late 1959, which formed the basis of one of our first publications in the 1960s.

To reflect the increased interest in caving by club members, we changed our name to the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club in 1972.

To mark the occasion of our anniversary at this year's conference, we commissioned two special beers: "Black Tom" and "112 Yard" from the Rowton Brewery, and we have a special social event on Sunday night.

The names of the beers come from Snailbeach Lead Mine - "Black Tom" is a shaft on the main mine site that still retains it's original wooden engine house (with some interesting features - well worth a visit while you are here!). "112 Yard" gets it's name from the 112

## Black Tom



yard level at Snailbeach - we can explore down to this level, which drains via a long tunnel into the Hope Valley at a place called Waterwheel.

Shropshire as a County is rich in mining history and this weekend can only give you a *hint* of what has happened in our industrial past. Hopefully it will 'wet' your appetite, and make you want to come back for more.

Enjoy yourselves.

*David Adams,  
SCMC Founder & President*

## 2011 - Celebrating 50 years of the SCMC



## Preparing for Conference - Chapel Shaft Winch Trip

As with any NAMHO conference a lot has to be thought about - not just the venue, food and drinks, but the lecture and trips programmes too. Modern life being what it is, a lot of these details have to be ready 6 or 7 months prior to the event so they can be put on the web site! After that it's just a question of getting down to the "nitty-gritty" and ironing out a few "wrinkles"!

Over the past few months the Club have been checking the various underground sites for trips. This has included visual inspections, digging, bolting and "propping" work where necessary.

For this conference the Club decided to offer a winch trip down Chapel shaft (a special thanks to Paul Thorne for agreeing to bring his winch along for us to use). A number of tasks have been carried out to ensure the viability of the winch trip - firstly at the top of the shaft to check the integrity of the cap. Then to check radio comms to the 40 yard level inset, 90m below.

As the shaft is currently 134m deep, we didn't want people missing their "stop", so a platform has been constructed to allow easy access and landing.

Construction took a number of months, but the design and build team have made a superb job it - well done everyone.



**Above:** Rigging the temporary inspection headframe on Chapel shaft.

**Below:** Chairman, Neal Rushton at the base of the Chapel shaft rings.

*(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)*



**Below:** Anchor points on one side of the platform, utilising original wall pockets, but with additional safety chains. *(Andy Kennelly)*



**Above and right:** Andy Kennelly working on the construction of the platform, 90m below surface at the 40 yard level inset.

*(Andy Kennelly)*



# Large Geological Section Mural, Queensway, Oakengates

## Ivor Brown

(based on articles in previous issues of Below)

On your trips around Shropshire during the conference you may travel along the “Queensway” in Telford - particularly if you are going to visit the Club’s Pitchcroft dig site. As you pass Oakengates you will enter a long cutting that contains a stylised geological section of the Oakengates area. It’s probably the largest piece of ‘geological’ art in Britain (unless you know of somewhere else? - if you do please let us know.).

While it has been seen by thousands as they speed past, it is well worth taking a diversion into Oakengates and looking at it from the road bridge (in New Road) leading to Wrockwardine Wood.

Based upon a “geological” map produced by the writer in the 1970s, the mural designer Kenneth Budd used considerable artistic licence in the final work!

The road cutting when constructed found extensive old workings (and some good coal !). It was obvious that a major retaining wall was going to be needed as there was much instability from superficial deposits and old workings. Temporary slopes of 3:1 for unworked ground and 1:1 for superimposed material had to be established on both sides.

The main portion of the cutting was on each side of the Stafford Road crossing and a length of wall about 330m long rising to 10.4m was used for the mural.

The wall itself is of concrete 1.5m thick at the foot and battered at 1:20 with thickness tapering to 1m thick at the top. Behind the wall on the original battered unstable face the coal seams and workings were sealed with a layer of concrete. The rear of the wall received two coats of bitumen waterproofing and a polythene membrane.

The enclosed space was filled with granular material. The mural itself is made of whole tiles and is intended to

depict seams of coal and other materials, some worked, with extensive geological faulting. Other walls in the cutting were of concrete which had been grit-blasted.

The mural and other finishes to the walls were completed in 12 weeks and cost over £100,000 (1981 prices). The main contractor was R.M. Douglas Construction Ltd.



**Above:** Detail of part of the mural - it does have a 3D quality !

**Below:** View of the mural looking West from the New Road/Station Road bridge, Oakengates.



(Kelvin Lake - I.A. Recordings)



# Old Hymn Book Cupboard from Gritt Methodist Chapel

Ivor Brown

(based on an article in the last issue of Below)

This Chapel, which closed in April 2011, seemed to have had a number of Cornish miners among the instigators of its construction and the stone built chapel does have a Cornish look about it!

An interesting feature was the cupboard beside the pulpit which appeared to have been made from an explosives box.

Each time the cupboard was opened to remove a hymn book the words "EXPLOSIVES" and "DYNAMITE" could be seen. The study of this wording indicates that the box is post 1877.

The cupboard is now in the care of the Shropshire Mines Trust at Snailbeach and has had the door reversed so the logos can be seen more easily.



Right: Logo on the Hymn book cupboard door.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)

## Pitchcroft Engine House Dig

The Club has been involved in an interesting dig at Pitchcroft Limestone Mine, Church Aston near Newport. Started in January 2009, we have been digging at the site one Sunday a month from October to April ever since (weather permitting).

We believe we are digging the foundations of an early winding engine house (probably with chain spools), possibly for a Heslop engine. Comparison with engine house foundations elsewhere has failed so far to find a match.

We have uncovered the base of a haystack boiler, but it appears to have earlier coal floors beneath it!

The dig is the subject of a talk at the conference and we are interested in

opinions from others and invite you to visit the site, either during the weekend or during the week after conference.

Below: The dig site in April this year.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)

