

## NAMHO 2011 - Congratulations and Well Done!

Club members and our colleagues from Dudley Caving Club should congratulate themselves that all the hard work that went into this years NAMHO conference at Preston Montford in August really paid off.

Both Andy Wood and myself have received numerous letters of thanks from delegates who attended the event - one comment on Adit Now even suggested we should be considered for organising the next Royal wedding!

That the event ran so smoothly is testament to the dedication and commitment that Members showed.

I was also pleased to see so many at our 50th 'Do' on Sunday night which was also a great success for the wider audience. For those of you unable to attend Founder Member

David Adams did the honours in cutting the cake, which was washed down by several pints of the special beers ('Black Tom' & '112 Yard') from Rowton Brewery.

As part of our 50th Anniversary the annual dinner will take place on the 12th November - I hope to see as many Club members there as possible. Thank you all, once again, for doing such and excellent job.

*Neal Rushton, Chair*



**Below:** A group photograph of members who 'survived' and made it to the Sunday night 'Do' in the beer tent and marquee



# News Round-Up 1

Ivor Brown

## Old Snailbeach Winding Rope

On a recent visit to see the restored miners dry building/workshop a search was made for the coil of rope which used to be in this area. It could not be found. It used to be said that this was the remains of the rope which broke in 1895 (it was the same diameter). Even if it wasn't it must have been a very early rope because none of that length or diameter have been used on that site for many years. Where is the rope now?

(**Note:** it was severely damaged in recent years when it was used as a bin to hold burning rubbish).

## Account 27

The recent "Account No. 27" (Early History of the SCMC, by David Adams) says on page 41 that no newsletters have survived from 1967 to 1970. This is incorrect, as can be seen from the series "40 Years Ago", published early each year in Below. A set does exist but a few pages are missing.

Perhaps a reason for the author not having one is that the Club decided in June 1964 to send newsletters by post only to "Associate Members and President" to save money - it cost "Five shillings & sixpence" to send all the newsletter by post that month!

## Chartermaster's Chapel

It has been announced that the Fletcher Memorial Methodist Chapel, Madeley is to close. It was formerly known as the "Chartermaster's Chapel" because much of the money to build it came from local mine chartermasters, who also helped run it for their employees until the early years of the 20th Century.

It's story has been told recently in a booklet produced for the building's 170th Anniversary (1841 - 2011) by I.J. Brown (available *free* from Madeley Parish Council, Jubilee House, Madeley).

## Blists Hill Mining Exhibits - Old and New

The pit winding engine (see Below 2009.4) is now back in full operation. Visitors are now banned from passing under the rope between the engine and headframe; over-run and whiplash problems have been prevented by installing a deadman's pedal and electronic trip device in the headframe. It now complies with Mines Inspectors requirements.

The incline lift dispute has also been settled and the lift is in daily operation.

(**Special note** - the same problems regarding passing under rope and overwinding seem to apply to the use of the winch and chair at Chapel Shaft used during the NAMHO Conference weekend!)

## New Mining Exhibits

A wooden "horse gin" has been constructed alongside the manrider track at the entrance to the new "clay mine". It is however, rather small (perhaps it is for a

donkey?), and it has no bottom lip on the drum or rolley pulley to keep the rope from slipping off the drum during usage - see figures 1, 2 & 3.

## Iron "bee hive"

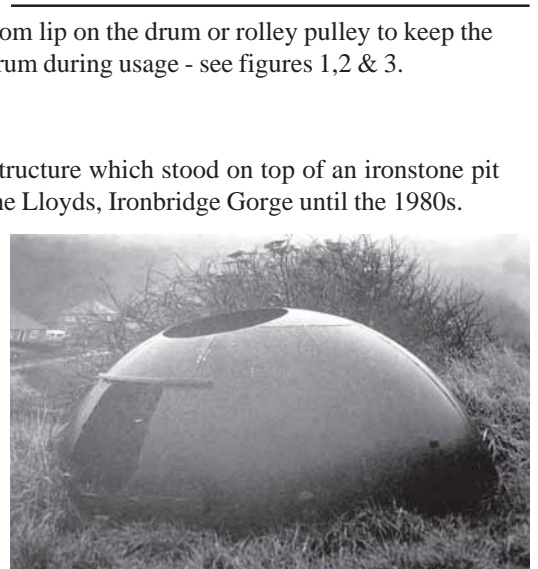
The photo below shows a structure which stood on top of an ironstone pit waste mound at the top of the Lloyds, Ironbridge Gorge until the 1980s.

Some thought it was a "bee hive" constructed over a shaft, or the end of a steam engine boiler. It was in fact part of a 1940s anti-aircraft gun emplacement. It rotated when pushed and normally had a large wooden stick poking out of the top at an angle for effect!



Figures 1 & 2, above: Views of the new Horsegin at Blists Hill Museum, Summer 2011.

Figure 3, below: Horsegin at Bersham Museum, showing wheel, rolley pulley and drum with a 'lip' (Ivor Brown Collection)



(Ivor Brown Collection)



# Trinafour Caves, Perthshire

## John Heathcote

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to go underground in Scotland in a real solution cave!

The Trinafour caves are located near the hamlet of the same name, north of Pitlochry in Perthshire (NN 72257 65965, NN 72138 66120). The caves are located in a very small sliver of metamorphosed limestone (marble), which a small stream penetrates almost from end to end. The two main caves are sufficiently constricted to offer decent sport for half a day, especially since the marble is on the sharp side of grippy as a result of little quartzite nodules! Despite the presence of an active stream, which clearly fills the cave at times, there is plenty of adhesive black mud to add to the experience. The obvious place to park is by Maud Loch, which also provides a convenient place to wash off afterwards.

More details about the caves can be found in the October 2008 GSG Bulletin - 4th series vol. 3 no. 5 pages 23 to 27 with some further progress reported on page 7 of the October 2009 issue.

*Pictures: Simon Brooks.*

**Below:** GSG Member Roger in Trinafour Upper Cave entrance crawl.



**Above:** GSG Members waiting outside the cave entrance



**Right:** GSG Member Andy in the Trinafour Lower Cave main passage.

**Below right:** Andy in a crawl in Trinafour Lower Cave.



# What the Papers Said - From the Colliery Guardian submitted by Steve Dewhirst

## FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT AT MADELEY.

### THE IRON TRADE IN SHROPSHIRE - ZINC FROM THE ORE.

I REGRET to state that no improvement is, as yet, visible in the demand for iron. Prices, consequent upon competition, and the practice of underselling on the part of some of the South Staffordshire firms, are still receding. Some improvement in the shape of home orders has been manifest at some of the foundries for finished articles of a useful kind, also for bar iron. The price of the latter article is usually so much above that of the South Staffordshire makers, that smiths often get supplied from the South Staffordshire makers. Some of the blast furnaces in the neighbourhood have suffered from a formation of zinc, which, notwithstanding attempts to dislodge it, accumulates in masses around the interior, so as to choke up the work. In a furnace recently blown out for repair, belonging to Beriah Botfield, Esq., M.P., as much as 11 tons 9 cwt. has been cleared away. From a specimen I have seen, and in the opinion of Mr. Onions, the White Flat, one of the ores in use in that district, contributes largely to produce the state of things described. I believe, however, that nearly all the iron ores of the Shropshire field contain a portion; crystals of that metal are often found forming a sort of nucleus wherever a nodule having a fossil occurs.

### SINKINGS IN SILURIAN LIMESTONE.

In the COLLIERY GUARDIAN, some months ago, I directed attention to a very futile attempt made by a landed proprietor in this neighbourhood to sink for coal in strata which any tyro in geology would know to be silurian. Fortunately for the estate, water has at last put a stop to the proceedings, after a large outlay of money, and an amount of anxiety and perseverance worthy a better cause. The error was so palpable from the first, that it is really astonishing how any man could have been led astray. The first spadeful of earth, after the surface soil had been removed, brought up silurian fossils by handful; yet, misled by its colour and appearance, they were declared to be one of the coal-measure shales. In this shale and its underlying silurian member, men have been fruitlessly labouring for eighteen months or more. What makes the matter still more preposterous is, that the millstone grit, which marks the passage from the carboniferous formation to the silurian system, lies in an elevated ridge but a few hundred yards

from the sinkings, while the cuttings into the strata from the high grounds where the several shafts have been sunk, to the river below, made by brooks, display every variation of rock down to the base of the Wenlock limestone. As is usual in such cases, every one who offered a disinterested opinion upon the matter was suspected to be in the pay or under the influence of some coal or iron company of the district. For the honour of our countrymen, let me say, the wiseacre who conducted the proceedings is a foreigner, who professed to believe the government survey maps erroneous, and who, I believe, is entirely ignorant of geology.

*24<sup>th</sup> July 1858*

### NARROW ESCAPE.

On Tuesday morning last, two men, both named James Corbet, had a narrow escape from being drawn over the pulley at one of the Langley Field pits. The men were just going down, and the engineman pulled them up for that purpose, but pulled them so high, that finding themselves against the pulley they jumped out, and it was fortunate they did so, for the cage, as it is called, was drawn completely over, pulling down a portion of the frame-work. Fortunately the men escaped with a few bruises. The runner had not been withdrawn, otherwise the men might have fallen down the shaft. The fellow at the engine appeared half asleep when remonstrated with.

### ARGILLACEOUS CARBONATE

In Shropshire, the quantity of argillaceous carbonate raised is estimated at 165,500 tons. It contained thirteen ironworks with thirty two blast furnaces, twenty six of which were in blast, and produced 145,200 tons of pig iron.

*24<sup>th</sup> August 1861*

### FATAL ACCIDENT AT MADELEY.

On Thursday last week, a fatal accident took place at the Shawfield pits, belonging to the Madeley Wood Company. A man named Robert Steel was in the act of getting a piece of timber to prop up a portion of rock forming the roof of the mine, when it fell upon him and crushed him, so as to cause death. An inquest was held on Saturday last, at Dawley, when a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

*5<sup>th</sup> April 1862*



# Mining Memorials

## Ivor Brown

The construction of a “mine tub” memorial for miners killed in Telford’s pits seems to have been delayed yet again as there are problems with location, use of voluntary labour, and the need for planning approvals.

A selection of similar memorials are illustrated here and it is wondered whether any of these had the same constraints put on them?

**Below:** Mine tub at Horsehay, Telford, July 2009.  
*(Ivor Brown Collection)*



**Above:** Tub at Bersham Visitor Centre, June 2011.  
*(Ivor Brown Collection)*

**Below:** Pinxton Memorial, July 2006. *(Ivor Brown Collection)*



**Below, left:** Memorial to Ifton Miners, St. Martins, Shropshire.

**Below right:** Limestone mining ‘memorial’, near Ruabon.  
*(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)*



# Narrow Gauge Sleepers in the Sierra Minera

Andy Wood

There is a back entrance to La Manga Club, which is accessed from the West golf course and it is a convenient short cut when on the way back from Portman. I have used this many times but on my recent trip I caught a glimpse of a stack of timber abandoned in the corner of a field right by the road and something made me stop and take a closer look. The field gate was unlocked and close examination revealed that this

was a pile of sleepers from a narrow gauge rail/tram way.

They had obviously been there for some considerable time, judging from the wizened state of the woodwork, perhaps someone had thought they would come in useful eventually. But the question is: where did they come from?

It could have been from any one of the many mines in the area or maybe even from the original mineral railway from El Descargador down to Cartagena, now replaced by the FEVE. There is no way of knowing, but here lies yet another archaeological remnant of the Sierra Minera.



**Above:** The timber sleepers behind La Manga Club, Portman. (Andy Wood)

# The 'Enchanted City' of Bolnuevo

Andy Wood

During the 2008 club trip to the Sierra Minera de Cartagena/La Union we spent a day being guided by Rob Vernon around the fascinating and ancient mining remains of Mazarrón. However, we managed to miss seeing one of the local natural wonders just a couple of miles down the road opposite the one mile long sandy beach at Bolnuevo.

Here, there are sandstone cliffs, which have been eroded by wind and rain into a series of fantastic shapes over thousands of years.

Unusually for this part of Spain, the information board even has an english translation which gives the full geological history of the site and, with a foresight that is sadly lacking on much of the Mediterranean coast, no building has been permitted to block the view.



*Pictures: Andy Wood*



# The Last Years of the Woodhouse Pits, 1940s - 1960s

A summary of notes by Mr. Tom Price with additional material by Ivor Brown and Ian Myatt.

There were some thoughts at the time of Nationalisation of re-opening this mine and also using it as a training mine for new recruits to the Shropshire Pits. (The Mines Inspectorate refer to this in their reports, mistakenly calling the pit by the name 'Woodside'). These ideas were soon abandoned however, although it was considered necessary to continue pumping water to reduce problems at other pits in the area.

The two pits were now called 'Bottom' and 'Top' Pit, but it is not clear which was the former No.1 and No.2 pit. Each pit now had two shafts. No.1 was down to the Big Flint Seam level (about 800 ft.) and the second shaft was a shallower Water Pit. At Top Pit, it's No.2 shaft was open down to the New Mine Coal Seam (about 850 ft.) with a shallower air shaft nearby. Most of the surface buildings remained (some roofless) but the engines had been removed probably as scrap during the War (1940-45). Top Pit (No.2) shaft however had a small electric pit haulage engine with a wooden headframe which was used for winding for access to maintain the pumps.

Two men were employed pumping water, Edwin Gough (the winding engineman) and Harry Turley (the Overman and pumpman). Harry was in charge. His job was to keep the water in No.2 shaft down to a point

50ft. from the top of a pumping inset (4). It was believed at that time that if it got above this point it would get through to the working Grange Pit.

A 5-stage Pulsometer pump had been installed in the Inset (4), 65 ft. up from the bottom of No.2 shaft which was fed from a submersible pump in the shaft about 6ft. from the present bottom. Water was then pumped from the submersible to the pulsometer, then to the surface. The switch gear for the pumps was on the surface and the submersible had to be switched on first each day. The pumps were in operation 7 days per week on Day shifts only.

About 1950 some of the shaft walling in No.1 shaft, above the pump Inset (4) collapsed. The actual site could not be reached from the surface since there was no engine or headframe above it. The shaft itself was covered by RSJs spaced 2 inches apart to allow for ventilation. Ted Carney, the Engineer for the NCB (Shropshire Sub Area) collieries asked Tom Price and Arthur Bowers, who were based at Halesfield Pit, if they would do repair work at Woodhouse and they agreed.

The NCB supplied an old haulage engine to use as a winding engine and a spare steel pit headframe. These were then erected at No.1 shaft. A steel bucket 4ft. in diameter and 4ft. deep and a steel rope was also supplied and fitted. Some of the

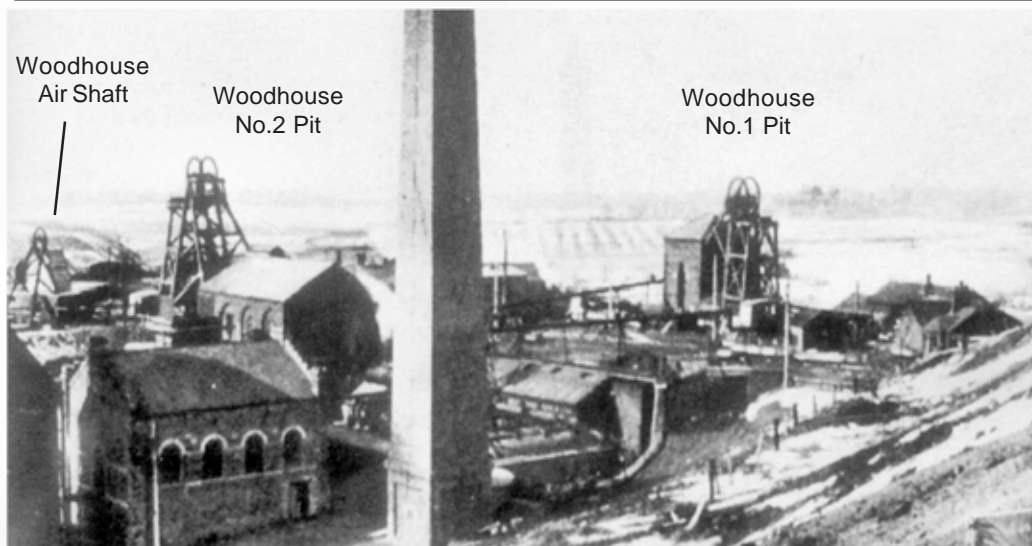
RSJs covering the shaft were removed and a steel grid which could be lifted for access was fitted over the open shaft.

The first descent of the shaft in over 10 years was then made by the Overman, Harry Turley, Tom Price and Arthur Bowers all standing in the bucket. The journey down was steadied by pushing their hands on the old wooden guide rods. They stopped at the top of Inset 1, got out and went inside. It had all the walls lined with glazed white brick and a paved brick floor. The pump in this inset had a horizontal twin cylinder engine which appeared "as good as the day the pit closed". There was a culvert at the side of the pump house with a small dam across and with a 2 inch pipe on the bottom, taking water down the shaft.

Travelling down the shaft they came to Inset 2 and found that this inset went through to No.2 shaft. At this level there was also a tunnel going through to the Air shaft and a side tunnel to old coal workings.

Returning to the bucket they continued down the shaft and stopped above the collapsed sides. The guide rods had been broken off about 7ft. below them, but they descended as far as they could to assess the condition of the present roof and sides.

The roof was of hard rock which had obviously stopped further upward



Woodhouse Pit c1920.

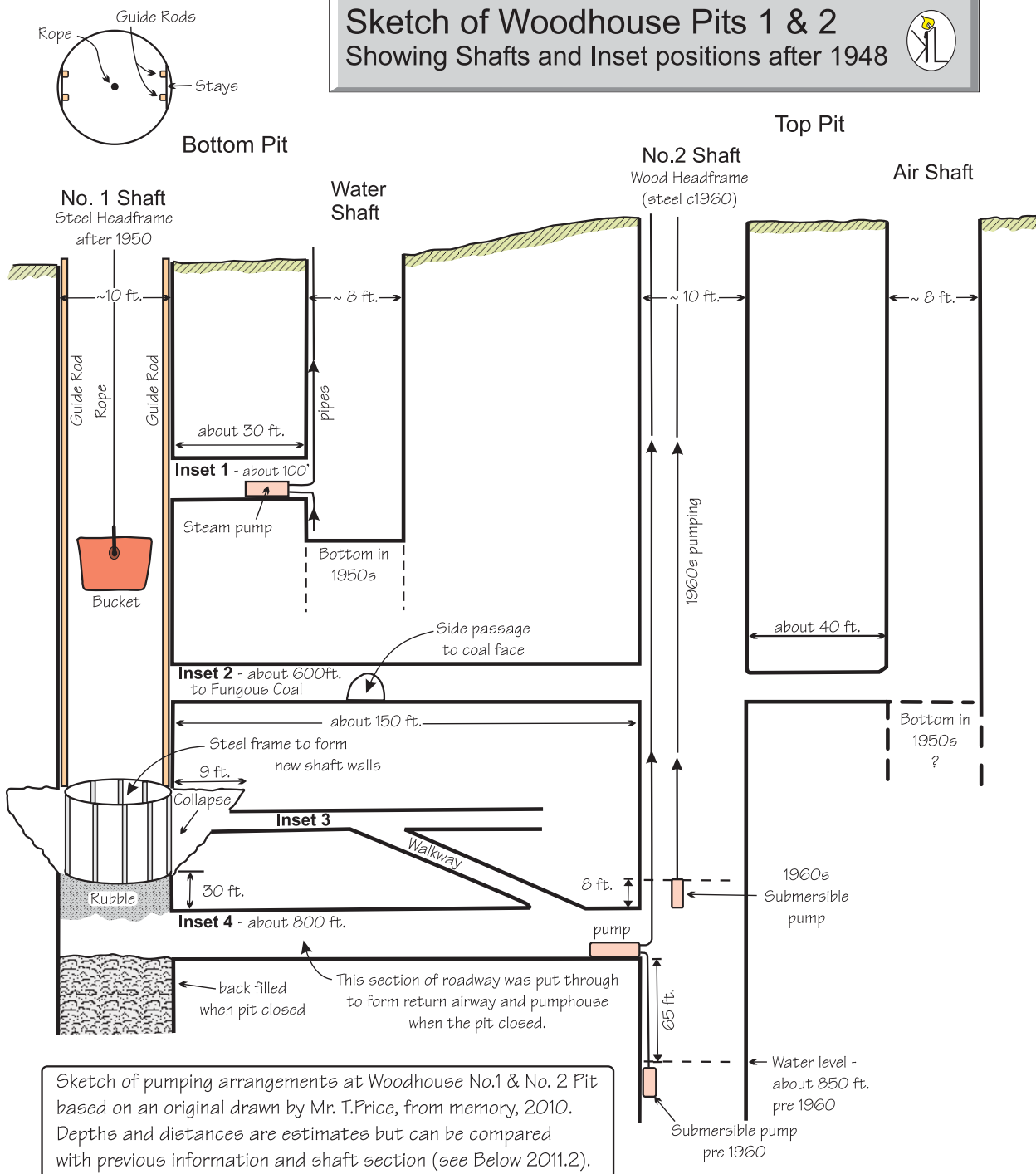
(IGMT Lilleshall Collection)



# The Last Years of the Woodhouse Pits, 1940s - 1960s

## Continued...

**Sketch of Woodhouse Pits 1 & 2**  
Showing Shafts and Inset positions after 1948



collapse, but the sides had come in all around to a depth of about 9ft from the back of the shaft brickwork. The shaft below was blocked, but some of the brickwork below the break could be seen. The brickwork at the top of the collapse was very loose.

In order to make this safe, plaster was pushed into all the joints to hold it together until a support could be put around beneath it.

The broken guide rods were then repaired for 17ft. through the fall area.

In order to repair the shaft it was decided to construct a steel frame using 7 steel rings of 10ft. diameter made of 4" x 4" RSJ, each ring being in 5 sections. To hold these rings together they prepared eight 16ft. long verticals of 4" x 4" RSJ with holes 3" from the bottom, others 3ft. apart up the RSJ and further holes 3" from the top.

The brickwork at the bottom of the fall had to be cleared and then each vertical RSJ was put down and held temporarily in place. (The means for doing this was extremely complicated and would take too long to describe.)

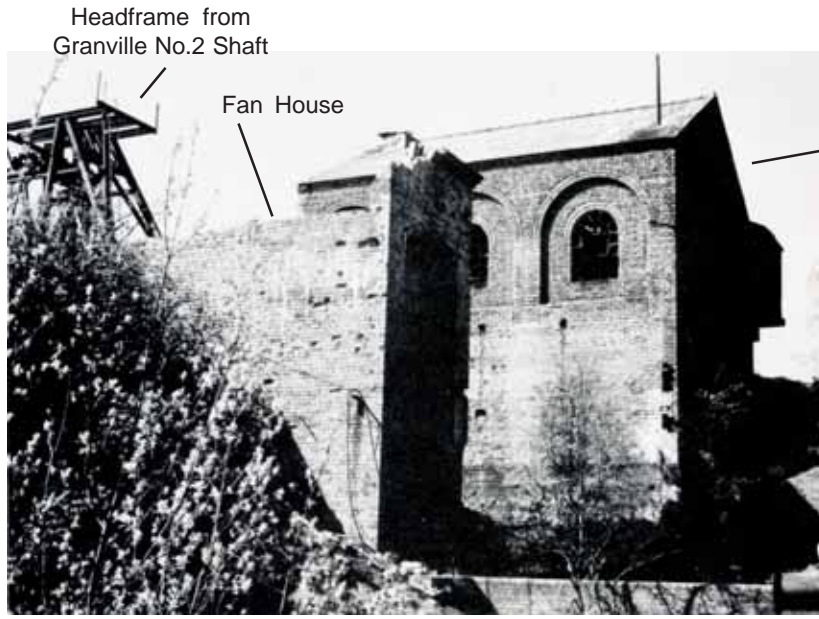
The rings were then put in position and shuttering was set behind them. This space was then filled with concrete.





# The Last Years of the Woodhouse Pits, 1940s - 1960s

## Continued...



Woodhouse No.2 Pit in 1960.  
(P.J.Donnelly)

4. The new pump was completely automatic, so there was no need for a pumpman.

About 1962-3 the new pump broke down and was taken out, it was not replaced. The water rose high in the shaft, but did not seem to get through into Grange Pit, however, about 1966/7 water started coming through joints in the pitwork 7ft. up the shaft at Grange Pit bottom. A brick was cut out and water shot across the shaft for about half-an-hour. It then slowly reduced, but was still running some 10 years later when the pit was closed.

During the War years 1939-45 and later much of the material in the tips at this site were removed for construction work elsewhere, this also applied to the material in the structures present. However, even in the 1970s the layout of the pit surface could be discerned and at least 2 large buildings and one headframe remained. The present position at the site is not known.

The assistance provided by Mr. Tom Price with regards to this article is gratefully acknowledged.

A team of sinkers were then brought in from Granville to remove the blockage in the shaft. When this was completed Tom Price and Arthur Bowers were brought back from another job (putting a wheel on the headframe at Beech Tree Colliery, Staffs.) to complete the renewing of the guide rods to the pit bottom. A small cage was then put in the shaft to make access easier.

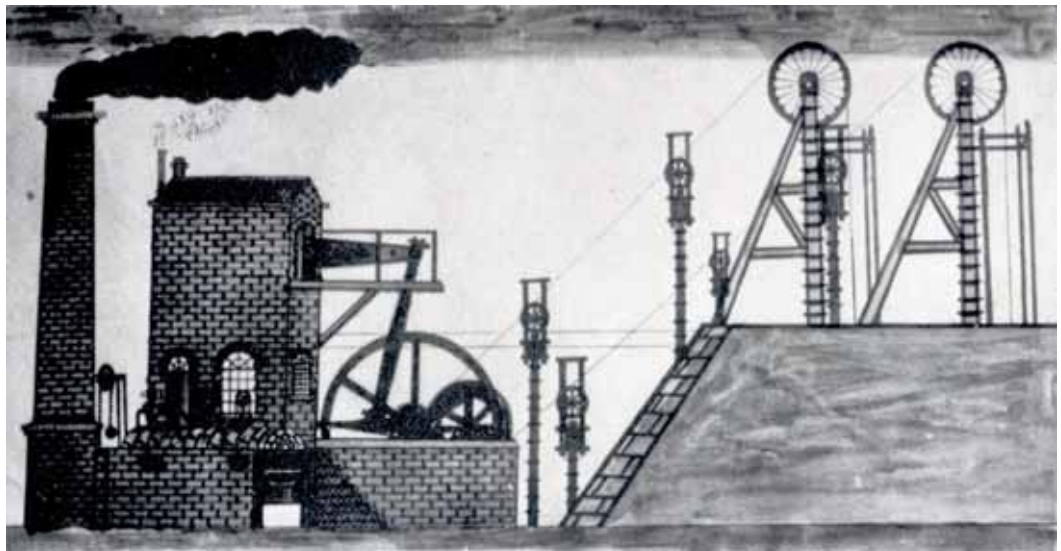
About 1958/9 the Pulsometer pump in Inset 4 broke down and it was not possible to repair it before the water rose up and covered it. The pump was lost.

The management then decided to put a submersible pump down No.2 shaft, lifting water all the way to the surface.

Using the existing winding engine and wooden frame on No.2 shaft the repair team were sent down No.2 shaft to determine a position for the new pump in the rising water in the shaft. A tie marker was then put on the rope to mark this depth. An RSJ was placed across the shaft to hold the pump and the cage removed from the shaft. The old wooden headframe was replaced by a steel one from Granville Pit to take the extra load and the submersible pump, pipe work and supports necessary were all made ready.

When all this was complete the cage was re-fitted and the new pump installed in a position 8ft. higher up the shaft than the old pump in Inset

Woodhouse Pit as it appears in an 1888 painting.  
(NCB)



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## News Round-Up 2

### Good News

#### RNLI Volunteer Receives Medal after Treacherous Cave Rescue

St Abbs volunteer lifeboat Helm Darren Crowe (39) is to be awarded the RNLI's **Bronze Medal for Gallantry** for rescuing a man who became trapped in a cave at low tide after falling from St Abbs Head, North of Berwick on Tweed, into the sea while fishing with a friend.

For their part in the rescue Lifeboat Operations Manager Alistair Crowe (63) and former Crew Member James Crowe (37) are to be awarded a Framed Letter of Thanks signed by the RNLI Chairman; and Crew Member David Wilson (36) is to receive a Letter of Appreciation signed by the RNLI Chief Executive.

The incident happened at 10.38am on 6 June 2011 when David, at sea onboard the fishing vessel Danny Boy, witnessed a man fall into the sea and raised the alarm.

The 2m easterly swell swept the man away into a nearby gully and washed him into Ty's Tunnel, where he was described by those involved in the rescue as being 'completely at the mercy of the powerful swell, cold, battered and clinging to a half-submerged rock'.

Low water was due at 11.33am so the sea level within Ty's Tunnel would soon be rising – the tunnel is completely submerged at high water.

The lifeboat arrived at the cave at 10.53am, but the crew could not see the man so they went into the gully. With barely enough room to turn the lifeboat, Darren caught sight of the casualty within Ty's Tunnel as he turned back head to sea.

VHF communications were not possible so Danny Boy, having visual sight of the gully, relayed communications to Forth Coastguard. The entrance to the tunnel could only be gained through a narrow fissure in the rock, so the crew called to the man to swim out to be picked up, but he didn't respond.

Alistair volunteered to swim to the casualty but Darren instructed Alistair to helm the lifeboat so that he – the younger of the two – could enter the water. To keep Darren safe in the water, two heaving lines were knotted together and attached to his lifejacket.

He entered the water to swim the 20m to the casualty but found the weight of the rope hampered his progress. He tried twice to time his way through the breaking swell; at first he was swept back out of the tunnel hitting the rocks but on the second attempt he got through.

Darren shouted to the casualty to get into the water so that they could both swim out, but he was unwilling to let go of the rock. Darren called to the casualty telling him the water was about to start rising and the only way out was by swimming out with him. The man then let go and tightly gripped Darren around the neck.

The pair were recovered onboard the lifeboat, where the main concern was the man's temperature as he continued to shiver uncontrollably. So he was transferred to the warmth and shelter of the fishing vessel's wheelhouse at 11.09am. Danny Boy then took him to St Abbs Harbour to a waiting ambulance.

RNLI Operations Director Michael Vlasto said of the rescue "Alistair Crowe's actions once he took over the helming of the lifeboat in the narrow confines of the gully with a 2m swell, required boat handling and seamanship skills of the highest order.

"Swimming into a tunnel and then encouraging a terrified individual to put his trust in him and re-enter the water demonstrated Helmsman Darren Crowe's courage, level headedness, physical strength and resourcefulness, which were critical to saving the man's life."

*RNLI Report, 14th July, 2011*  
[www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk)

#### Wheal Jane Solar Power

In early July this year, it was announced that the Wheal Jane site near Truro was to become one of the last large-scale solar power plants to benefit from the government's "clean energy cashback" scheme.

It will be one of the few large photovoltaic projects in the UK to benefit from "feed-in tariff" (FiT) rates, also known as "clean energy cashback". The government programme was designed to 'incentivise' solar panel installation by paying businesses for the energy they generate, even if they use all of the energy themselves. The initiative offers those generating energy a rate that is well over the rate at which utility companies can sell the electricity, because it factors in the fact that solar power is more expensive to produce than fossil fuel power.

The solar farm is predicted to generate 1.4 megawatts of power each year, making it one of the UK's largest. The project is the result of a joint venture between Lightsource Renewable Energy and solar panel supplier Solarcentury. The park covers a 2.9 hectare plot at Wheal Jane and will generate an estimated 1,437MWh of power per year from around 5,700 modules. This will be enough to power the equivalent of 430 homes in the area, saving more than 737 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.

There has been a dash to cash-in on the FiT for large scale solar farms with several arrays starting up during the summer - any large installations that hadn't joined the grid by the end of July will only receive 70% of the original FiT.

Other projects on the Wheal Jane mine site include an earth science park to use renewable energy from solar, wind, hydro, and shallow and deep geothermal sources.

*News Reports*



# NAMHO 2011 - Images from the Conference

## Kelvin Lake



**The Beer Goggles Team** - it was important to test that the pipes and barrels were set-up correctly before opening to the public.

It also took a certain amount of skill to place a full pint of beer on to the turf bar!



**Happy Diners** at the Saturday night conference dinner - a slight dent in beer sales was due to the 'free' bottles of wine given out with the meals.



**Above:** Emma Scheck of Wealden Cave and Mine Society enjoying her pre-dinner pint of '112 Yard' on the Saturday night.

*Pictures this page:  
Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings*



**Above:** Detail of the 'miners lamp' on top of the 50th Anniversary cake.

**Below:** One snag of having a turf bar was that it attracted 'livestock'.

During the weekend we were suddenly subjected to a bit of mining subsidence and this little character appeared from underground!



# NAMHO 2011 Preparations

## Chapel Shaft Platform

To prepare for the NAMHO winch trips at Chapel Shaft a landing platform was constructed at the 40 yard level inset (actually 90m from the collar of Chapel shaft). Making use of an existing ledge (presumably it once held a platform when the mine was working) the scaffolding was fitted across the shaft and secured to the shaft walls with chains.



**Right:** Andy Kennelly working on the scaffold frame.

**Left:** Back-up chains and clamps securing the framework to the wall.



When complete the whole structure provided a secure place for people to access the winch seat - safety lines were also fitted to prevent any unwanted 'descents'!

Timber boards were clamped to the top of the scaffold frame - unfortunately the boards were slightly thicker than the clamps, so the boards had to be 'whittled' down a little.

Andy Kennelly made an interesting video of a descent down the shaft - plus an unorthodox method of getting off the winch seat - i.e. by falling backwards out of it!



**Above left:** Andy Harris shaping the boards for the clamps. **Right:** Neal Rushton sorting the platform safety lines.  
**Below left:** Typical 'Rushton' safety knitting. **Right:** Stuart Tomlins watching Paul Thorne rig his winch headframe.



*Pictures this page:  
Andy Kennelly*



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## News Round-Up 3

### Gleision Colliery Disaster, Pontardawe

Inquests opened on the 27th September, at the Guildhall in Swansea into the deaths of the four miners (Charles Breslin, Phillip Hill, Garry Jenkins and David Powell) who died at Gleision Colliery on the 15th September, when the mine was inundated by water from old flooded workings.

After opening remarks from the Coroner the hearing was adjourned until a later date.

The inquest heard the cause of the miners' deaths, which was released last week by South Wales Police, was exposure to flooded pit contents under pressure. Investigations into the cause of the tragedy are continuing.

As Below goes to press the funerals of the miners are set for the following dates:

**Charles Breslin:** Wednesday 28 September at Swansea crematorium at 15:00.

**Phillip Hill:** Friday 30 September at Margam crematorium at 14:00.

**Garry Jenkins:** Saturday 1 October at Beulah Chapel, Lower Cwmtwrch, at 11:15 with burial at Gorof public cemetery, Ystradgynlais at 12:15.

**David Powell:** Date yet to be set.

#### Lucky Escape

Three other miners managed to escape as flood water engulfed the mine, two were able to join the rescue attempt, but the other man was too badly injured and was hospitalised.

The major rescue operation achieved widespread media coverage (both at home and abroad). The rescue is also notable from the Cave Rescue point-of-view, in that it was possibly the first time the statutory bodies have called upon a volunteer organisation to provide underground

help - Cave Divers from South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team were called upon to enter the flooded sump to try and make contact with the men. However after passing the flooded section they discovered the body of one of the men and were then confronted by a blockage of timbers and debris, so had to withdraw. Pumping continued to allow the Mines Rescue Team to enter the mine, who then cleared the blockage and discovered the bodies of the other men.

South Wales Police said they were continuing to work with the Health and Safety Executive to investigate the incident and inquiries could last up to three months.

An appeal fund launched to support the families of the four miners who were killed has raised more than £200,000, according to estimates by the office of Neath MP Peter Hain.

*BBC News Reports*

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### Memorial to Ruabon's Miners

At the beginning of August a memorial to Wrexham and Ruabon's mining past was given the go-ahead.

Half a sheave wheel from Bersham Colliery is to be erected on the roundabout on Llangollen Road in Ruabon. The village's community council came up with the idea which has been approved by Wrexham's planners.

In 1918 there were 60 pits across north east Wales' coal fields, including collieries in Ruabon and elsewhere in Wrexham. Among them was the Wynnstay Colliery, which operated from 1856 to 1927.

Some of the former pit's buildings still stand like the Grade II-listed Vertical Winding Engine House and the Walker Fan House, built in 1902 to ventilate the pit.

*BBC News Reports*

### Lead Mine Rescue

On Monday 8th August a 54-year-old man, from Telford, Shropshire, was rescued after plunging into water when he went to investigate the "shaft" of an old lead mine in Snowdon.

He was unable to climb out of the shaft near Llyn Geirionydd, a lake above the Conwy Valley.

A passer-by heard his woman companion shouting for help and dialled 999. Members of Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Team used a rope to haul him clear and the man was unhurt.

An RAF Sea King helicopter had been called but was not required.

This is a slightly confused news item, but from reading various reports it appears he must have entered an adit then fallen or slipped from timbers around a flooded winze.

*Various News Reports*

### Kellingley Miner Killed

A miner died and another was injured due to a roof fall at Kellingley Colliery, North Yorkshire on Tuesday 27th September. UK Coal, owners of the mine, say that the point where the accident happened is a very good face for working conditions, and the equipment is brand new.

Kellingley, known by miners as "The Big K", has been a major coal producer, at its height it employed about 2,000 people. Today about 800 people work there. On the border of North and West Yorkshire - a mile-and-a-half outside Knottingley - it is one of Britain's deepest remaining coal mines. The two 2,600ft (800m) shafts were sunk in the late-1950s and production began 1965.

This incident is the third death at Kellingley in three years.

18th October 2009 - Miner Ian

Cameron died after equipment fell on him

September 2008 - Miner Don Cook died in a rock fall.

*News Reports*



# Anniversary Talk, September 2011

Ivor Brown

On the 15th September 2011, a talk was given to the Friends of Ironbridge Gorge Museum, by the writer, to mark the 40th Anniversary of the commencement of land reclamation to pave the way for the development of the New Town of Telford - also of the start of works on the Blists Hill 'Open-Air' Museum site. It was apt that much of this early work was done by volunteers, including members of the Shropshire Mining Club then ten years old.

In the talk it was pointed out that the SMC moved on site as soon as the principal area had been re-shaped from the abandoned quarry hole and a main pathway, to be called "The Miner's Way", had been cut through the site in 1969. The construction of the Adit Mine and the transfer and re-building of the headframes, engine, hand winches from the Milburgh, the Mossey Green, The Rock, Farm Mine and others, was described, (see recent issues of 'Below'). These were the earliest features to be erected on the site and most of them came from the Dawley area, the subject of the evenings' talk.



Blists Hill Drift Mine, c1970  
(Ivor Brown Collection)

The talk also included reference to the recent 40th Anniversary of the Friends' own newsletter, which commenced in 1971 and of the annual series of lectures arranged by them - which also commenced in 1971. One of the speakers in the first series was the writer, and thus the first lecture of the 40th year, was also being given by the same person, the 16th he has given over the period.

Dawley produced probably more ironstone than any other part of the



Slag Removal at Blists Hill Furnaces, October 1964.

(Ivor Brown Collection)

New Town, records go back to the 1500s and this mineral was its most important until about 1883, from which time coal and fireclay became the most important. The Dawley area had at least seven major sets of blast furnaces between the 1750s and the 1880s, the industry probably peaking in the 1830s to 40s. The extensive flat-topped waste tips of the area (10 tons waste for 1 of ironstone) are testament to the scale of the industry. Hardly any coal or fireclay waste was produced. From the establishment of the New Town these great areas of waste tip, quarried and shallow mined areas have had to be dealt with. The manner by which this was done using re-shaping, opencasting and refilling were described and illustrated with slides.

The final part of the talk included a consideration of the number of accidents that had occurred including the fatalities (for example the statistics show in 1861, 13 miners died in ironstone mines and 15 in the areas' coalmines).

There have been 5 disasters (more than two killed) since 1850, the worst was at Springwell Pit that took eight lives. To complete the evening a ballad that was produced to raise funds in 1872 for the bereaved was sung by Iris Brown to the tune St Winifred (the carol "Cradled in a manger meanly" is usually sung to this).

Thanks are due to Boo Vernon for the accompaniment, Peter Eggleston for recording this and Kelvin Lake for printing copies of this final dedication to the old miners of the area.

The local miners' union banner was on display throughout the meeting. About 50 persons attended.



Cliff Hewitt with the Miners Banner during the talk.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



## News, Books and Library

### Wheal Jenkin Collapse

Following heavy rain the top of the pumping shaft at Wheal Jenkin (known as Bellingham shaft) at Caradon Hill, Bodmin Moor has recently run-in.

The crown hole is currently about 20ft in diameter and claimed to be currently open to a depth of 700ft. Wheal Jenkin closed in 1892.

It remains to be seen how the shaft is treated. There is a danger, after this year's dry spell that this type of incident will become more frequent when the winter rains arrive. News Reports, starting 22nd September 2011

### Library Additions

**Stone Chat, Vol. 31 No.4. Summer 2011 (Newsletter of the Norfolk Mineral & Lapidary Society).**

Contains an interesting article on early metal workers, particularly the development of bronze in Britain, plus a mineral fair in Quartzite, Arizona, and how to make a pendant.

**Stone Chat, Vol. 32 No.1.**

**Autumn 2011.** Contains a report on a trip to the Eifel Mountains, Idar-Oberstein & St. Marie, plus an article on diamonds.

**North Wales Caving Club Newsletter 318, July 2011.**

Covers trips to the Yorkshire Dales and Parc Western.

**Subterranea Britannica, Subterranea, Issue 27: Sept.**

**2011** - articles on the Treiser railway tunnel, Germany, Sedish weekend trip, water supply tunnels of Istanbul, Ramsgate tunnels, Halberstadt, East Germany, a tourist mine in China, WWII tunnels on Corregidor Island, Phillipines, plus much more!

**Mendip Caving Group News, 365, February 2011.**

Trip reports to Derbyshire, Sima Gesm (the deepest cave in Southern Spain).

**MCG News, 366, May 2011.**

Article on SRT Self Rescue, building a model of the MCG cottage, trip reports to Morwellham, and more on the MCG Southern Spain expedition.

### OFD Entrance Sold

South Wales Caving Club have managed to purchase about 7 acres of land surrounding the entrance to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I. Powell's Cave and other sites of speleological interest.

To fund the purchase the Club have relied on donations from individuals, a grant from the Countryside Council for Wales and fund raising events.

Due to the sale of the cottage near to the entrance the route to OFD I through the garden of Y Grithig is no longer possible. Full details of the new route are available at the SWCC HQ.

### Fractious Fracking

An energy firm which has been test drilling for controversial "shale gas" in Lancashire has said it has found vast gas resources underground.

Cuadrilla Resources which began test drilling for controversial "shale gas" in Lancashire has said it has found vast gas resources off the Fylde Coast in March, using a technique known as "fracking".

It said it had found 200 trillion cubic feet of gas underground, which if recovered could provide 5,600 jobs in the UK, 1,700 of those in Lancashire. This is also more than 10 times the reserves known to exist under the UK's part of the North Sea - more than the total known in all UK fields, in fact! How much of the gas can be extracted is another matter.

Fracking involves the hydraulic fracturing of the ground using high-pressure liquid containing chemicals to release the gas. Opponents to the process believe it produces damaging carbon emissions.

The process has caused controversy in the US and in Lancashire, the tests were halted in June when two earthquakes occurred in the nearby Blackpool area, which opponents believe were caused by the drilling operations. This is still under investigation.

### The Lead, Copper & Barytes Mines of Shropshire

By Michael Shaw, Logaston press.

While SCMC publications have often carried articles about the various mines covered by this book, there has long been a need to try and pull everything together into a coherent publication. In this aim Mike Shaw has been very successful.

He has spent years researching records and books, talking to surviving miners, members of their families, SCMC members and tracking down original documents and the sites of numerous mines - many of which only lasted a year or two!

The first few chapters cover the early mining history of Shropshire, the products and processes, before delving off into the different mining areas and covering the mines in more detail, so it will have general appeal.

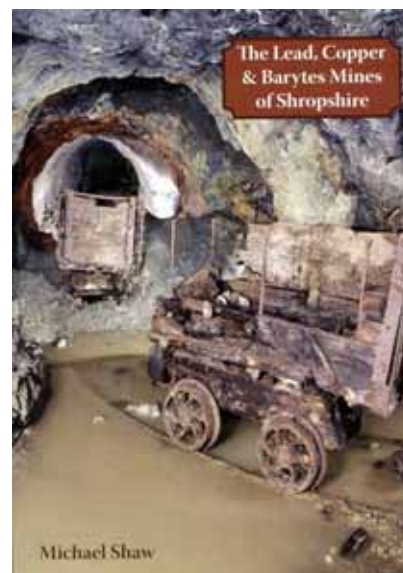
There are plenty of interesting snippets and facts to keep 'enthusiasts' engaged. This excellent publication is a must for anyone interested in Shropshire's mining history.

ISBN: 978-906663-09-4

Softback, 320 pages, over 200 b&w photographs, drawings and plans. Price £12.95.

Available from Mike Moore at Club meetings, or online at

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



## Books

### A History of Iron Mining In Cornwall

Tony Brooks, SB, 250pp

There were Iron Mines of various sizes throughout Cornwall, the book describes the history of 70 workings, including the Reformed Mine Visited by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1846 to small operations such as Wheal Edith where Iron was worked alongside China Clay.

Tony had sight of the WW2 study carried out in the UK by a Government Geologist, which provides further glimpses of the UK industry in the 1940s and has used some of this information. As ever anything from Tony is guaranteed to be of excellent quality and well researched -this volume is no exception. The volume is full of maps, plans and photos colour and black and white.

Soft back £11.99 and Hardback £15.99 plus postage

### History and Progress of Mining in the Liskeard and Caradon District

William Webb & Edward Geach, Softback, A5, 158pp

Webb and Geach published their History and Progress of Mining in the Caradon and Liskeard Districts in 1862 and a new edition was issued the following year.

Although predominantly aimed at potential investors, it is clear that the authors also wished to put on record the history of the area. In consequence their book is an invaluable picture of the Liskeard and Caradon area in those early boom times.

This book (with new photographs and additional material) has been transcribed from a typewritten transcription held by Liskeard Library; the reason for the original manuscript is not known but the

fragile state of the pages would indicate it was made many years ago. It was the fragile state of this transcript that was the prompt for this new transcription, to allow future generations to read this remarkable description of this remarkable mining district.

New material added includes the sett map, contents list, editor's notes, glossary and index. This additional material has been reproduced in a modern typeface to differentiate from the original text.

The only changes to the Webb and Geach text have been the introduction of some additional paragraphing to improve readability.

Reference has been made throughout this reprint to the Brenton Symons map of 1865. An interactive version of this map on CD-ROM is available (see below).

The map will give the reader the valuable opportunity of comparing the text of this book with a geological map produced in the same year. The text of the book is contained on the Liskeard Mining Area in 1863 CD-ROM

Price £10.99 + P&P

### CD ROM

Also available from Moore Books is the CD Rom "The Liskeard Mining Area in 1863" which includes an interactive Geological Map and History £7.50

### Within These Hills: A Study of Corris Uchaf, Braichgoch Quarry the Upper Corris Tramway and the Social Life of a Merionethshire Village

Sara Eade, Softback, A4, 208pp

A follow up to her book on Ratgoed, this book describes, the workings, the Upper Corris Railway, the men that worked underground, the significant local buildings and the social lives of the people. There are two pull out plans of Braich Goch

and Gaewern Slate Quarries, and single page scans of other quarries.

There are original colour drawings from the Sketchbook of Ken Kirkam showing miners and working methods.

The book is illustrated throughout with colour photos of surface and underground from the Authors personal collection supplemented by some excellent photography by Jon Knowles.

There are original black and white photographs of men, machinery, scenes and railways.

This is an excellent study illustrated in full colour and without doubt is one of the better publications of its type

Price £25.00 + P&P

### "Finished Labour of a Thousand Hands": The Archaeology of the Combe Down Stone Mines, Bath, Somerset

Neville Redvers-Higgins, Lynn Willis, Ianto Wain, A4, Sb, 341 pp 248 figs.

The Combe Down Stone Quarries, which were the principal supplier of building stone for the great period of building in Bath during the 18th and 19th centuries, form a significant element of the wider landscape of the City of Bath World Heritage Site. Archaeological recording of the mine was required to allow preservation by record of features of archaeological interest.

The results of the archaeological recording programme and laser and video scanning survey contributes not only to the study of Bath and its post-medieval development, but also to national and international research in mining and industrial archaeology

Price £25.00 + P&P

All books on this page available from Mike Moore at Club meetings, or online at [www.moorebooks.co.uk](http://www.moorebooks.co.uk)





## News, Books and Videos

### Walker Tech Development

Hama Developments submitted plans on the 23rd September for a multi-million pound scheme to convert the buildings of the Walker Institute, in Hartsbridge Road, Oakengates into 14 luxury apartments and add 14 detached homes at the rear.

Unlike previous developers who owned the site (which has been empty for over 9 years, since Telford College of Arts and Technology left) the new owners are keen to stress that they want to preserve the character of the 1920s building - once the centre for mining education.

If planning permission is given they hope to start work before the end of the year.

### Tin Mining in Malaysia, 1800-2000 - The Osborne & Chappel Story

David Palmer & Michael Joll, Hardcover, 222mm x 140mm, 352pages. ISBN: 978-967-10295-0-3

The Malay Peninsula was the principal source of the world's tin throughout the 20th century. The book contains a short history of the mining industry in that country with particular reference to the firm of Osborne & Chappel. "O&C" was one of the earliest of the European pioneers and played an important part throughout the history of tin mining in Malaya and in the Kinta Valley tin field in particular.

The book emphasizes the foresight, astuteness and involvement of the Cornish investors who, from the early days, acted as a catalyst for establishing the tin mining industry in Malaya; an industry which, together with rubber, formed the mainstay of that country's economy for so long.

A section of the book describes the various alluvial mining techniques used over the years.

Price: £20 (+p&p). Available from: M Joll, Manor Cottage, Stoke Climsland, Callington, Cornwall, PL178NZ

### Steetley - Dolomite and Sea Water Operations in the North of England

Robert Dunn & John Smailes, 279pp.

This book is clearly well researched by people who were involved in the operations, in the Coxhoe area of Co Durham and the war time activities there and at Harrington in Cumberland.

Card cover, some colour content. Published privately by the authors and available from:

John Smailes, 5 Lichfield Rd, Newton Hall, Durham, DH1 5QW.

Price £10 plus £3 p&p.

*Russell Wear*

## HISTORIC MINES OF SPAIN VOL.2

### EXPLORING THE MINES OF SIERRA MINERA AND MAZARRÓN

In April 2008, the Club visited the Sierra Minera region of Murcia in Spain to see some of the vast range of ancient and modern mines which survive so well in the area. At scores of sites, flat-rope winders stand beside intact steel or wooden headframes over extremely deep open shafts! The footage in this recording is a compilation of the many sites visited, along with location maps and captions - it has no commentary, but there is incidental dialogue in Spanish and English.

Las Matildes mining museum near La Unión, is where the Fundación Sierra Minera preserves and exhibits a wide variety of mines, buildings and equipment. Later we visited the picturesque ruins in the Rambla del Avenque and at Portman we explored part of the large elaborate processing mill Lavadero Roberto.

At La Union, we toured the work being done to convert Agrupa Vicenta into a show mine, then followed the "33 Road" mine track over the mountain through Roman mining remains and past manganese kilns to Portman Bay. At Corta Emilia we were given permission to examine a unique donkey gin.

Cabezo Rajado - the "Riven Hill" has been mined for hundreds of years and still has plenty to show: 450m deep shafts, ornate steel headframes, a flat rope winder, a large mill containing 40 wooden flotation cells and a ball mill. The winder at Mina Ocasión, La Union, has both its flat ropes still in good condition.

At El Lirio, levels with wooden pit props lead to an underground stables. Other sites visited include: Corta Brunita opencast, La Parreta, Lavadero San Ignacio, Jose Maestre tunnel and more ...

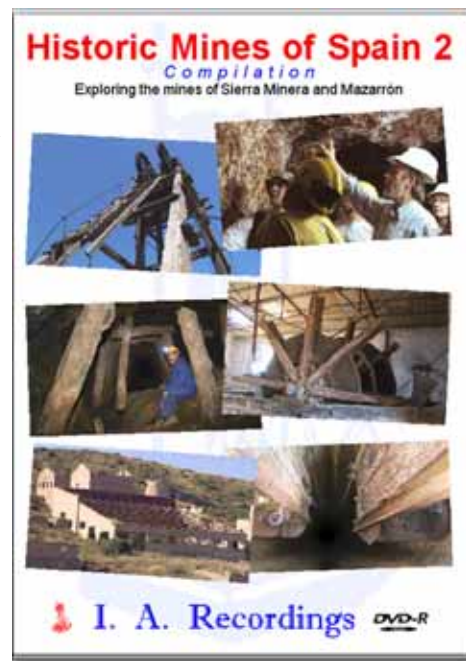
Mazarrón west of Cartagena is an ochre-red zone of rich lead and silver, mined before the Romans. The hill is cut by open stopes and dotted with open shafts; many with headframes of stone, wood or steel. Under a wooden building, a steam winder still has its flat ropes connected to a wooden headframe.

Running time: 1 hour 42 minutes

Price: £14.40 (High Definition Blu-ray version £18.00)

**Discounted price for Club members: £10 (£14 for Blu-ray) - if you collect e.g. at Club Meetings.**

full details available at:  
[www.iarecordings.org](http://www.iarecordings.org)



**Club Officers**  
(may change after the October AGM)

**Diary Dates**  
2011

**President: David Adams**

**Membership & Insurance:**  
**Mike Davies**

**28th - 31st Oct.:** 27th SUICRO  
Symposium Hotel Doolin, Doolin,  
County Clare.

**Chair: Neal Rushton**

**Tackle: Andy Harris**

**12th Nov.:** Club Annual Dinner and  
50th Anniversary celebrations.

**Vice-Chair: Tony Wilson**

**First Aid Officer:**  
**Alan Moseley**

**18th - 20th Nov.:** Explore 2011,  
Expedition Planning Seminar, Royal  
Geographical Society, London.

2012

**Secretary: Andrew Wood**  
*scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk*

**1st Jan.:** Columns Open Day, Ogof  
Ffynnon Ddu.

**Treasurer: Marian Boston**

**Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold**

**10th March:** BCRA Cave Science  
Symposium, University of Leeds.

**14th - 18th March:** 15th International  
Symposium on Vulcanospeleology,  
Amman, Jordan.

**Training Officer:**

**Andrew Wood**

**Rescue Officer:**

**Neal Rushton**

**1st - 8th April:** 4th Argentine  
Congress of Speleology (and 1st  
Latin American Congress of  
Speleology), Mendoza, Argentina.

**8th April:** Columns Open Day, Ogof  
Ffynnon Ddu.

**Conservation, BCA &  
NAMHO Rep: Steve Holding**

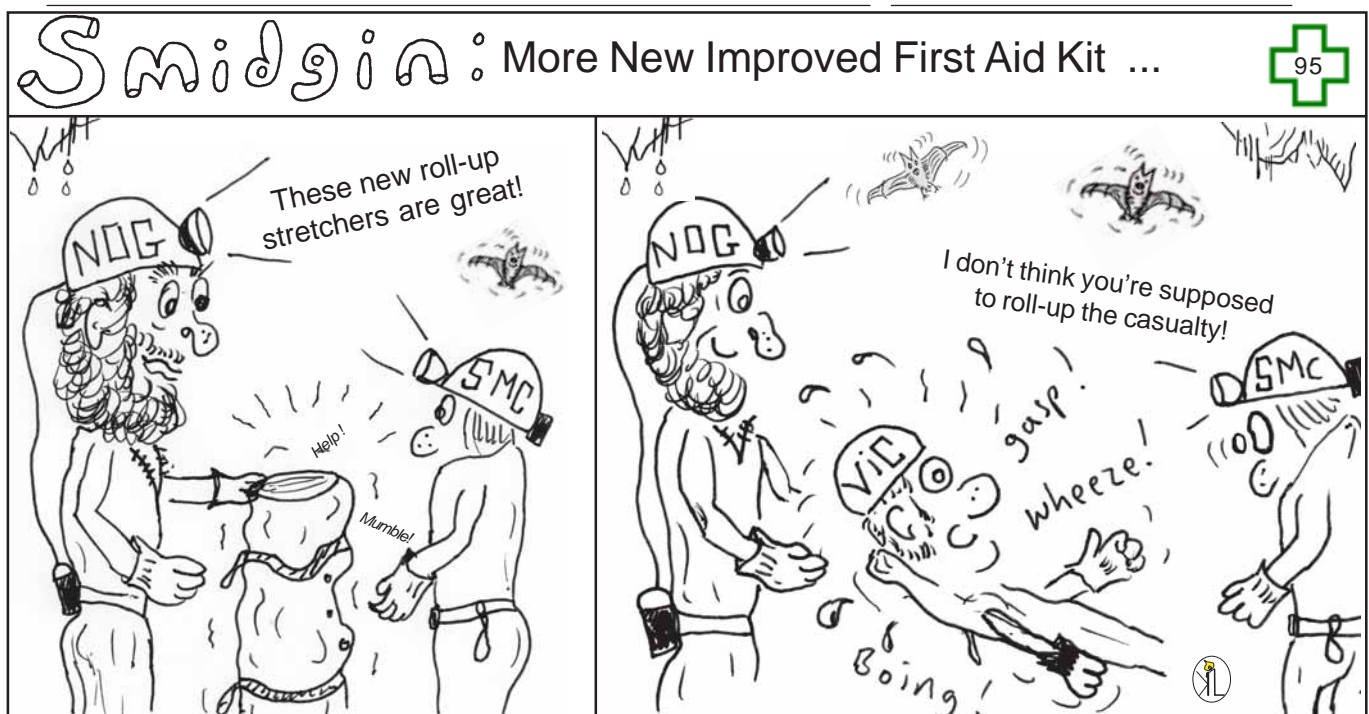
**'Below' Editor, Publications:**  
**Kelvin Lake**

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

**17th - 20th April:** 9th International  
Mining History Conference,  
Johannesburg, South Africa..

**6th May:** Columns Open Day, Ogof  
Ffynnon Ddu.

**9th - 10th June:** Welsh Mines Soc.  
Summer Field Meet, North Wales.



Catch us on the World Wide Web. Club activities & the labyrinth: [www.shropshirecmc.org.uk](http://www.shropshirecmc.org.uk)

