

## Shropshire Mining Heritage Forum

Adrian Pearce represented the Club and NAMHO at the inaugural meeting of the SMHF at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury in June. The Forum is composed of people and organisations from a wide range of interests, but all having some preservation 'links' eg: Sites and Monuments Officers, Council Conservation Officers, Archaeologists, Museums and Mining History Groups.

The next meeting of the Forum will take place during September 94, and will be looking at producing a County-wide priority list of mining sites for preservation, combining information on mining sites in the Sites and Monuments Record and applying for an EU Objective 2 & 5b grant (a new grant aimed at funding preservation work that is tourist orientated).

## Alan Otter Hole'd

Members will be pleased to hear that after his fall on the way in to Otter Hole (in a very gooey, muddy section), Alan Robinson's ribs are on the mend.

Apparently the spot Alan chose for his dive is a popular rib crushing site in Otter!

## Artful scheme

Signed drawings donated by the Kray twins are to be raffled by miners trying to raise cash to buy Tower Colliery in South Wales.

## Future Prospects Shropshire's Lead Mines

Lead mining in the area of Shropshire west of the Stiperstones, in the vicinity of Shelve, is of ancient origin. The mines having, under the influence of changing economic conditions, chance discoveries, technical improvements, and the flow of capital, been reworked and abandoned over centuries. Extraordinarily rich orebodies have been found from time to time, and the mines have on occasion proved very profitable and, by British standards, important producers. Their most active period was in the 1870's, a time of favourable prices and considerable prospecting and promotional activity, when 6,000 to 8,000 tons of lead concentrates (7—80% metal) were produced annually. This boom period ended in the mid-1880's, when dressed galena (lead concentrates in modern terms) fell in price from the £12 to £14 a ton of the 1850, 60's and 70's to £6.50. Since 1910 no deep mining has taken place in the area.

At the time of abandonment there was lead ore of a grade sufficient to pay, even at those prices, in the lower levels of Bog, Potters Pit, and Roman Gravels, but it could not be followed without development work for which capital could not be obtained in the depressed conditions then ruling.

The general situation of the mines is that orebodies, discovered at or near surface, have been followed down, at intervals, to considerable depths: 1,500 feet at Snailbeach and Tankerville, 1,000

feet at Bog, and rather less at the other mines. Apart from the main drainage levels very little exploration has been done between the old mines. It is clear that equally favourable geological conditions rule in these unexplored areas, and a better understanding of the geology, more detailed mapping, together with sophisticated geophysical prospecting methods and the use of core drills, would probably reveal the existence of orebodies, equal to those worked in the past, at shallow depths.

Lead (in the form of galena, PbS) was formerly by far the most valuable of the minerals present, and other ores were largely neglected. However the lodes contain considerable quantities of zinc blende (sphalerite, ZnS), barytes, and calcite all of which, once merely impediments, are now marketable, and can be readily recovered by modern techniques.

It is my belief that a change in general economic conditions, or the chance introduction of enterprise capital, will one day lead to the reopening of these mines, and I submit that anything that would prevent the development of these resources at some future date should be avoided for the general good.

G.W.Hall

## FidoNet

If anybody knows anything about FidoNet for caving could they please let me have some details. Thank You.

Kelvin

# News Round-up 1

## by Ivor Brown

### Eager Book

Found in Yorkshire Mining Museum Library - a book "Longwall Coal Cutting Machinery" by G.F.F.Eager (formerly General Manager of the Madeley Wood Company, Shropshire), published by Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, 1921.

Mr. Eager was manager of the Kemberton Colliery 1913-16 at a time when Hurd Coal Cutters were in use.

### Flat-Wire Rope

Lengths of flat-wire rope have been found in the Miners Dry at Snailbeach Mine. According to an NCB paper of 1950 Shropshire's Grange Mine was the last to use flat wire rope for winding, changing to modern round rope in 1952. Several photographs etc. exist of the winding drum at that time.

*[The large surface collapse at Snailbeach (by the bridge at the top of the hill) was fenced off from the field by lengths of flat rope - until the recent work started. Ed.]*

### Wetlands

The "Midland Meres and Mosses" have been designated a "wetland of international importance" under the Ramsar (?) convention. This includes parts of the old peat workings in Shropshire.

### Peat & Charcoal

Fisons have pulled out of peat fertilisers thanks to careful buying by customers, **NOW** check your barbecue charcoal. 96% of all charcoal is now imported having been produced by burning mangrove swamps and rainforests. 200 charcoal burners in Britain only produce 4% of our consumption, yet their coppicing improves our hardwood forests.

Coppicing is almost dead in Shropshire's Forest of Wyre and the Forest of Dean, using more British charcoal could stimulate the re-birth of hardwood forests and save the rainforests.

### Derelict Land

There is a move to designate all old mines that cause "water pollution" and "methane leaks" derelict land, which would enable grants to be obtained for their filling in etc.

*a high degree of risk - you should only subscribe for shares in the Company if you are prepared to lose your investment."*

Someone should have told the old-time Shropshire investors - but if they had we would not have all the remains and excavations that we enjoy today.

### Bottomless pit

IJB has recently acquired a copy of J.Randall's hardback book on the Court House at Madeley (published 1883, 96 pages, very rare). With relevance to recent items in Below it says:

*"From the upper portion of the building a pit said to be without a bottom and leading to a subterranean passage to Buildwas Abbey may be seen. There is of course no ground for either tradition, a house belonging to the Priors of Wenlock would want no communication with a rival monastery.....*

*The pit or well has no bottom, in as much as it slants when it gets below the building in the direction of the pool in which it terminates."*

*[Note: South Crofty managed to raise their target £1m a couple of hours before a Government imposed deadline. As a result of this, the Government have promised to write off some £31m in Company debts. Ed.]*

### Colorado Mines

During his recent trip to Colorado IJB was able to study artefacts of the same type and vintage as Snailbeach, for example the Western Museum of Mining has renovated a Hertz Jig for display which is the same size and type as that from Snailbeach.

At Gold Coin Mine, Victor, a flat-rope winding engine with a double reel survives, the rope is similar to some recently found at Snailbeach.

### Geo. Soc.

The Proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society Vol.10 1992-3 contains several articles of interest to Shropshire miners, most important is the article on coal mining at Clee Hill (followed by a visit report) and a reference to the Wenlock Edge quarries and Wenlock Museum.

### Coal Plates

British Fuels Ltd. {Nottingham (0623)-26146} are selling commemorative mining plates (in Edwardian China series) of recently active collieries for £12.50. Sadly Shropshire is not represented, but several pits in Stoke, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are, as well as Littleton Colliery.

### South Crofty

Shares in South Crofty Tin Mine are now on offer, but the prospectus warns: *"Investment in the Company involves*

### Down to Earth

Down to Earth Issue No.7, May 1994 contains an article on Tom Fry, the geologist who worked for Prof.Whittard of Bristol University for over 10 years collecting fossils etc. from South Shropshire mines in the 1940's and 50's. He is now over 90 years of age.

Did he take any photos?

*(The same issue contains a note by IJB on the present state of Murchison's Walk, Roman Gravels).*

### French 'Germinal'

The French version of the film 'Germinal' by Emile Zola is now in Yorkshire. It is an excellent mining film, rather long, but with some fantastic scenes.

It was filmed at the Levarde Mining Museum, Northern France and shows a flat-rope winder in use.

## Snailbeach Lead Mine

In response to Shropshire County Council's bid for funding, the Government has given the go-ahead for Phase Two of the Snailbeach Mine land reclamation project. The estimated cost of £2.5 million will be supported by a 100% grant from English Partnerships.

The first stage includes treatment by infilling and stabilising that part of the mine beneath Lords Hill where several surface collapses of the workings have occurred. The contractors have to finish this work by the end of September to avoid disturbing a nationally significant colony of Lesser Horseshoe bats which hibernate in the mine.

The next stage will be the treatment of the White Tips. This will entail installing

a complex drainage system round the perimeter of the tips prior to reshaping to a more stable landform. To stop the migration of contamination a geotextile layer will be laid over the tip before covering with soil.

Finally, disturbed ground will be seeded with grass and in selected areas trees and shrubs will be planted.

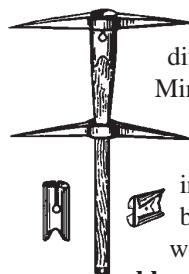
As a separate operation the long disused mine buildings are being consolidated as ruins at a cost of about £250,000 with the assistance of a grant from English Heritage.

Peter Sheldrake  
Property & Planning Services  
Shropshire County Council

## The Colliery Guardian

### January 18th 1878

The Hardy Patent Pick Company Limited  
Mining Tool Works  
Eccleshall Road  
Sheffield



**Picks** are made of every shape and weight to suit the different Colliery districts, and for iron, Gold, Tin and Lead Mining, Quarries, Railways, Contractors etc. The Picks are of special steel and will face the hardest substances found in Mining, such as "Brass" (Pyrites of Iron), so often met with in coal, and which quickly blunts the common picks. They have, besides, the merit of portability. The handle is protected from wear, and they have a peculiar **truth and effectiveness in the blows**, enabling a miner to much increase his output with diminished fatigue.

The **Handles** are of choicest American Hickory, renowned for its elasticity and durability, and being interchangeable **one Handle serves for any number of Picks**. Several large districts such as Durham and the Midland Counties are using these Picks almost exclusively.

The Hardy Patent Pick Company Limited desire to call attention to their **Special Drill Steel**, which for toughness and cutting qualities cannot be excelled. They also manufacture Cast Steel Hammers, Cast Steel Wedges Stemming Gear and Mining Tools generally.

Orders sent direct to the Company will receive prompt and careful attention.

Brian Tildesley

## Addendum

To an article in:

**SCMC Journal No.1 1993,**  
**pages 15-20.**

*"A note on circumstances surrounding the sale of Pennerley Mine, 1902".*

Mr. Jasper More, the Mineral Owner of the Roman Gravels Mine wrote an essay in "The Advertiser", February 1903 in which he gives the following information.

*"Pennerley Mine was said to be lost to the Linley Estate through neglect of walking the boundary. Lately an engine fell in (the shaft) which probably led to the sale of the engines on Lord Tankerville's adjoining property, which sold well last summer, while the neighbourhood much regretted their removal".*

Mr. More added that the purchasers of the machinery, who had come from a distance, did not know of the zinc as well as the lead in the District otherwise they might have kept the equipment on site.

Mr. More further added that a Mr. Boundy, who held the adjoining mine (probably East Roman Gravels) had only heard of the sale the day before it was due, as he had just returned from Spain.

It appears that the sale had not been advertised well. Mr. Boundy ordered his agent *"to buy the machinery but his letter missed the post"*. Mr. Boundy then *"negotiated in vain for the Cornish Engine, which was not sold but which was partly broken up afterwards and sold as iron"*.

Ivor Brown

## Lead Load

Every day, enough lead is mined to load a juggernaut jam 6 miles long.

Each year 5.5 million tonnes of lead are mined!

# The Dragon Cave Diving Expedition

## November-December 1993 by Dig Hastilow

Four dishevelled bleary eyed cave divers found themselves a seat and flopped down. We were in the new ultra-modern terminal of Tokyo's Narita Airport, and we were knackered! After 20 hours of travel we now faced the prospect of trying to locate our Toyota hire van, find the location of  $\frac{3}{4}$  tonne of equipment "somewhere" in Narita (if it had been shipped out correctly), getting it all cleared through customs and driving 600 miles to the caving area crossing central Tokyo in the process.....

The first of those tasks was not too troublesome, only the girl on the International terminal hire car desk only spoke Japanese!

They have a different system of paying for hire vehicles there, no cash, no credit cards, just pay when you bring it back! Can't see that system working at Heathrow!

We eventually found the Virgin Atlantic Freight shed hidden around the back of the airport, and the welcome sight of our compressors, diving bottles and crates of equipment that we had left at First Air at Heathrow a week or so before. The girl on the freight shed spoke perfect English, and she probably got less opportunity to practise it than the hire car rep!

Next customs. Here things began to get sticky. Clutching our "Carnet", a temporary importation document, we desperately tried to gesticulate as to the reason we wanted to bring thousands of pounds worth of goods into their country without paying any duty.

They wanted a letter of authority from "*a recognised Japanese body....*". We tried to explain this was not too easy, in desperation we showed him our sponsorship proposal brochure. The officious looking customs officer silently browsed through this, his eyes lit up and he announced "*ah, I have seen you on television*" !! The rubber stamp was produced, and 5 minutes later we were trying to cram the kit into our bulging Toyota van. This was our

first hint that cave exploration was big news in Japan.

Our first caving area was Akiyoshi-dai in the far west corner of the main Island of Honshu. Our attempt to traverse central Tokyo to pick up the motorway west was a complete nightmare, as it seemed motorways are only signposted at the actual slip roundabout itself.

The most effective way we found for navigating in Tokyo at night was by compass! Martyn clutched his wrist mounted diving instrument and a map, and eventually we found our way down a myriad of narrowing lanes (that were "in the right direction") to emerge on the expressway west. 6 hours on the road, 550 miles to go .....

### Akiyoshi-dai

When we arrived at Akiyoshi-dai we were immediately ushered into our first press conference. This was our "rent", as showcaves in the areas we were to explore had laid on accommodation in exchange for publicity.

After a couple of days recovering and assembling/sorting equipment we were at last in a resurgence pool and descending down a gravel slope into the depths of "Shiramizu-no-Eki-no-Ana". With some difficulty we found our way to the well decorated 1st. chamber, through the perfectly round and appropriately named "echo chamber" to reach the limit of exploration at Chamber 4.

Martyn Farr and Nick Geh took turns to push a way on, the most likely of which emerged in a small kicking water chamber, "5A". This had an extension upwards, so while the others waited in the water I de-kitted and climbed upwards into the chamber above.

This had 2 ways on, one a straw filled crawling tube heading towards the entrance (not entered as this would entail severe damage), the other a walking size phreatic passage heading off in the right direction. However this required either tackle or a suicidal bold

step/scrabble to pass a 7 metre drop and mindful of our geographical location compared to that of the MCRO, this promising lead, frustratingly, also had to be left!

The trio returned to Pat Cronin who was as we had left him, training the Japanese divers in British techniques. What had thankfully disappeared during our trip, were the 5 TV crews and numerous newspaper reporters that had swarmed about us during our pre-dive kitting up and equipment checks.

The other sights we pushed on Akiyoshi-dai, were Oban-no-Ike Cave, Kuroiwa-no-Yusen-no-Ana, and the main showcave and resurgence on the Akiyoshi-dai plateaux, Akiyoshi-do.

### Oban-no-Ike

At Oban, a small resurgence at the edge of the wood, Nick made an exploratory dive to the "too tight" section that had thwarted the Japanese divers at 150m. After a painfully long wait, Nick emerged. He had not really noticed the too tight section and had added 120m to the length of the cave.

I was the next to dive the following day. I followed the Japanese line along the roomy passage. The sump dropped down a well to an elbow then ascended again to only a few metres depth where Nick's line joined the Japanese'. Following this along a meandering passage I reached his last belay and tied my line reel on. A quick look at my gauges, (there was plenty of air) and off into the unknown.

I followed the left-hand wall as the 'viz' was only about 3 metres, but there were plenty of good pendants to secure strong belays on, which made the task more pleasant. At this shallow depth my air diminished slowly as the line rattled off the reel, and I was careful to take time out to ensure my belays were well positioned and strong. "Old Master Farr" who would be next down the line, was all too quick to criticise dubious line laying from "*the deshi*" (Japanese for apprentice).

## The Dragon Cave Diving Expedition continued.....

With every fin stroke taking me further into the gloom away from the sunshine I had left at base, it was with a slight tinge of relief when my contents gauges at last both touched the “thirds” mark. I tied off and cut the line and started the long swim back, surveying as I went.

I surfaced about 1½ hours after leaving base, and reported to the reception committee. “Still big and shallow, 90 metres of line added to Nick’s.” Martyn then struggled into the water with 2 huge 100cu.ft. tanks for the next leg. He was back within the hour, the passage had continued 25 metres beyond the end of my line, and dropped into a huge well, in excess of 30m(100ft.) depth with no bottom in sight. With time pressing we changed our target to the more promising huge river cave at Akiyoshi-do.

### Akiyoshi-do

This cave had been pushed by the local divers passed 7 longish but shallow sumps to a large passage explored for 1km which had been left on going. Due to the length of sumps, it took a number of trips to ferry all the cylinders, line etc. etc. to the dive base upstream from the showcave. It seemed to amuse the tourists to see 4 muddy “gaijin” (Japanese slang for a westerner) continually filling the show cave lift with diving kit. Local caver Koichi Yasuda and Pat, who was still not diving due to the effects of a bout of “Kamikaze’s revenge”, were invaluable during this operation.

Due to the effort required to prepare for this dive, we really only had one chance to get it right. Therefore a lot of equipment was taken in, surveying gear, photographic equipment, line reels in case the old line had been washed out etc..

Steady progress and intact lines allowed us to swim the 800m upstream to Akiyoshi-do 8 and finally de-kit.

The Japanese divers had only followed the river and turned back as their light reserves prevented any extensive

exploration. The first thing we did was to climb up out of the streamway into a high level section that immediately opened up into a MASSIVE chamber. Having photographed this we continued upstream to the limit of exploration that was marked by a slate snoopy looped onto a pendant. We continued for another 500m or so as the passage gradually became lower and wider. This tortuous water filled flat out, helmet off section led to the final sump that marked the end of Akiyoshi-do 8.

The return trip was spent surveying and photographing. While Martyn Farr(ted) about at length taking one particular shot, (those Club Members who have suffered one of my photo trips may think this justice!). I clambered into a high oxbow and discovered an exquisitely decorated grotto which we named “*The Dragon’s Lair*”. This proved to be one of the highlights of the expedition.

With a limit to our lighting we had to leave a number of leads, both above and below water, untouched as we kitted up for the long dive out.

When I finally surfaced at the dive base I was pleased to be greeted by Pat and Koichi, who assisted me to clamber out of the water. With 4 waist mounted cylinders on, I collapsed on the gravel beach like a whale jumping out of a landing craft! We left the cave at midnight after a 13½ hour trip with over 600m of new passage surveyed, but the lift was going to be busy again the next day.

### Kuroiwa-no-Yusen-no-Ana

The other main cave we dived on Akiyoshi-dai was Kuroiwa-no-Yusen-no-Ana. This was undived and had a narrow rift entrance down to water. It was my turn to dive first, so using 2 small 28cu.ft. exploration bottles, I squeezed down to the sump and to my relief, the rift belled out into a chamber underwater. I dropped almost vertically in crystal clear water straight down to bottom out at 30m(100ft.). Panning my lights round the base of the chamber I spotted the way on, a 1m high boulder strewn passage descending at about 30 degrees.

At this depth air consumption is high. I had already reached thirds on my left tank and with these small capacity bottles, my right tank gauge needle twitched with every breath. I was also very heavy, as I had chosen to dive without the usual stab jacket because of the restricted entrance and because we were not expecting to go so deep so soon. Despite having ditched one weight on the way down, I was pinned to the bottom. I tried to crawl a little way down the slope, but I was all too aware that increased depth also increased my weight as well as air consumption. I tied the line off and finned hard to ascend to depths of increased buoyancy.

Martyn was next in, and with bigger tanks he was quickly at 40m(130ft.) in a maze of low bedding planes with several possible ways on. These depths were to become a feature of the rest of the dives of the expedition.

*Part 2, continues in the next issue*

### Black Water

Most people have probably heard of White water rafting, well a new ‘sport’ for tourists is Black Water Rafting.

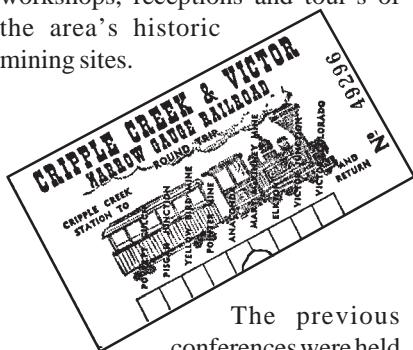
As you might guess, it takes place underground and involves floating through a cave system on an inner tube. Some of the passages are a bit low, but by all accounts it is great fun,

*but very cold!*

If you are interested, I’m afraid it is a bit of a long trip, as Black Water rafting tours are operated in The Labyrinth, Ruakuri Cave by the Museum of Caves, P.O.Box 12, Waitomo Caves, New Zealand  
(Tel.:(07)878-7640).

# The Third International Mining History Conference

This Conference was held at the Colorado School of Mines, Golden, Colorado, June 5th to 10th 1994. Well over 300 persons from most parts of the world attended the week long conference to hear some 120 talks (divided into 3 parallel programmes) on all aspects of mining history and to participate in discussion sessions, workshops, receptions and tour's of the area's historic mining sites.



The previous conferences were held

in Australia and in Germany and it is hoped to continue to hold the Conferences at about 4 yearly intervals. Three offers were received to organise the next conference from Chile, South Africa and Australia and a decision on this will be made in the next 12 months. To assist in this it is hoped to form an International Mining History Union probably based on facilities provided by the Colorado School of Mines. Much discussion took place at the conference on these matters. The contact in Britain for the present will probably be Dr. Roger Burt, Exeter University or the Chairman of the (British) National Association of Mining History Organisations.

About 20 persons attended from Britain including 13 speakers, most were academics but a few were from other fields such as museums. For example, Andy Lewis and Ivor Brown spoke on the Great Orme Mines and the Ironbridge mining area respectively.

On Sunday 5th June there was a reception at the School of Mines to celebrate the 500th birthday of Agricola, a short talk was given by Dr. Werner Kroker of the Georg Agricola Society. Other speakers were the President of the (American) Mining History Association, the Conference Co-ordinator (Robert Spude) representing the US Dept. of Interior, National Park

Service and the Mayor of the City of Golden.

The Conference continued on Monday with 12 working sessions and an evening reception at the Colorado History Society Museum, Denver. The speakers included representatives of the Conference Sponsors, the organisations previously referred to plus Royal Gold Inc. and International Mining Industries. This was followed by a tour of the Museum's collection which include a fine display of artefacts, some of considerable size such as a complete pit-top wagon control and tipping arrangement in working order.

After the 18th Working Session of the Conference on the Tuesday, the afternoon was spent on one of the 3 tours provided (underground trip to CSM's own mine, The Loop Railroad Tour and the Georgetown Mining City Tour. The Loop Railroad was a preserved narrow gauge steam railway which climbs 2 miles up the mountains, because of its 'loops' to gain height it travels 4 miles, looping over its own track on a steel lattice girder bridge. On the way it calls at the Lebanon Silver Mine for passengers to visit the underground workings.



Wednesday was another full working day but Thursday was a day out with tours offered to either Cripple Creek or Leadville. The writer joined the Cripple Creek Tour which in fact went to the

twin 'ghost' cities of Cripple Creek and Victor. Cripple Creek, like Central City (another former mining town), has been completely re-born recently as a gambling town - the profits, it is said, will prevent the areas from dying completely and provide cash for preservation of artefacts and wildlife.

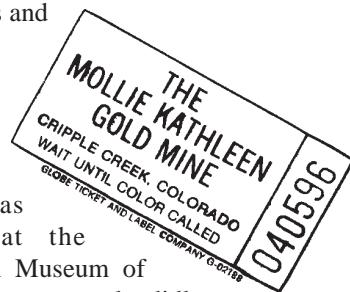
En route to Victor a stop was made at the Western Museum of Mining a very splendidly prepared museum of working mills and other technical features. There is also a display of very large mining machinery outside, all the usual features including simulated mine galleries inside and a research centre probably larger than many British Libraries.

The visit to Victor was hosted by the Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Company, who are at present planning to re-open a deep-mining area using open pit and leaching methods. They aim to preserve many of the fine relics which exist, complete headframes, mill foundations, a large flat-rope winding engine at Gold Coin Mine and provide viewpoints and interpretation facilities. At present they have 42 archaeologists working full-time in their project area.

Victor had not changed much since the writer's last visit in 1987, perhaps there were even more mining relics and greater dereliction as the mines continued to adopt different methods of working and there certainly seemed to be less people and fewer shops and hotels.

Friday continued with further sessions, totalling 30 for the week, and with the conclusion of the parallel Preservation Symposium (6 sessions covering Experience in Australia, Britain, Canada and USA, Europe, Latin America and Mining Site Archaeology).

Discussion meetings were also concluded covering archives, formation of a Union for Mining History



## 3rd I.H.M.C.

continued...

and arrangements for the new Conference hopefully in 1998 or 1999.

This was a really first rate conference, well organised but greatly assisted by ideal surroundings and generous supporters. Many of the delegates remained in America for a further period after the conference either for the official Post Conference Tour or for privately arranged tours.

The writer spent a week in New England visiting the Saugus Ironworks Site and Museum, the Witches' Museum at Salem and industrial and maritime museums in Boston also several preserved railways, protected geological sites, the amazing Rock of Ages Granite Quarries (500ft. deep and still going down using Welsh slate open-pit mining and lifting techniques) and the Ruggles Mine (worked 1803 to 1960 now a show mine).

Ruggles Mine worked mica, felspar, uranium and 47 other varieties of minerals with adits nearly 30ft. high and 20ft. wide, "the largest adit mine in the world".

*Dr. Ivor J.Brown*

## Lost Investments

It is claimed that redundant miners have lost about £100m of their savings in flawed investment schemes over the past 4 years.

## Radon in Mines

West Devon Borough Council have started putting Radon notices at the entrances to mines close to public footpaths. They are not doing it with a view to prevent access by responsible cavers and mining groups, but as a warning to members of the public.

Radon readings from a few sites in Devon and Cornwall (particularly in mines that once worked Uranium), are at levels many times greater than those recorded from any cave. While there is a potential immediate health risk, for the average mine explorer, the risk is probably no higher than that for someone who regularly goes caving.

## News Round-Up 2

### Dressing Floor Dig

In August Shropshire County Council Archaeologists were investigating the lower dressing floor of Snailbeach in advance of commencing work on the regrading of the white tips.

A crane was in use at Lords Hill road collapse (removing years of rubbish and spoil, prior to the filling of this large stope), and much of the surrounding fields had been stripped of topsoil (with hard core roads built to carry heavy lorries).

### Minerals Local Plan

Copies of the Shropshire County Council 'Minerals Local Plan' are now available for comment. The emphasis is on restoration of old workings and interested parties are asked to comment about the proposals. It would be a pity to see the good work done by the Club in the last 'Plan' of the 70's destroyed by a "no comment" reply.

*Ivor Brown*

### Letters to the Editor

#### Re: Winter 93, Below

I am much obliged to Ivor Brown for searching in his reference books for the Arthur Waters' article I have been looking for. I sense a slight feeling of scepticism in Ivor's remarks, and I would like to quote from the Mining Journal of 1880, p.1063, which says:

*"The precise situation and characteristics of these mines are well described in a recently printed paper by Capt. Arthur Waters"*, and goes on to quote from the paper.

I think we may therefore assume that it did exist, but whether in some individual pamphlet, of which all copies have been lost, or in some unlikely periodical I do not know, but wish I did. Of course, I've done some searching myself!

I hope that members will not be deterred by Ivor's comments, but will please still keep a look out - who knows what treasures still lie in some dusty bookshop or neglected corner?

*George Hall*

### Midlands Pits Summary

The initially reprieved Silverdale Coal Mine (Newcastle-under-Lyme) was duly closed despite vociferous protests.

Littleton Colliery, Cannock has also closed and is in the process of being 'dismantled'. A small group of Club Members managed to make a visit to the site and were given a surface tour of the mine just before it closed. Peter Eggleston took the I.A.Recordings equipment along with him and in addition to getting a few surface shots of the pit, he managed to persuade the Shaft Inspectors to take the video camera down on top of the cage as they carried out their inspection!

On the positive side, Trentham Pit, Stoke-on-Tent, has been partially reopened by Coal Investments plc. They have resurrected the name Hem Heath for this venture.

The saddest side to pit closures however must be the loss of Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum and the subsequent break-up and destruction of its mining collections. The only 'winners' in the sale of the Museums effects were the scrapmen who snapped up many of the larger items.

### Foreign Mines

### Australia

Following a series of underground explosions and fires, attempts to rescue 11 coal miners trapped underground for 5 days were finally abandoned in early August and the mine was sealed.

### Canada

Two Canadian gold mines have joined forces to enter the £1 billion bidding war for Lac Minerals of Toronto. TVX Gold Inc. and Kinross Gold Corp. have made a joint bid to break-up Lac Minerals.

TVX, which operates mainly in South America, would take over Lac's mining and exploration assets in the USA and South America, and Kinross would take the mining and exploration rights in Canada.

# Mine Rescue at Wheal Hermon, Cornwall

## 4th April 1994

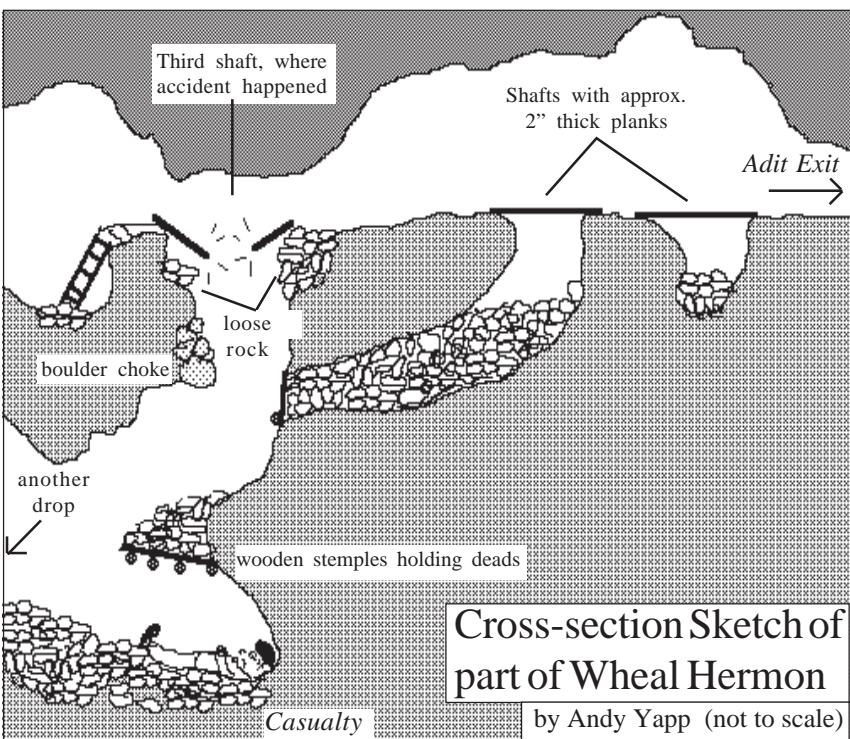
At 13:20 on Easter Monday a party of Club members consisting of Pete Eggleston, Pete Etchells, Stuart Tomlins, Tom West and Andy Yapp entered an adit of Wheal Hermon from the Cornish Coastal path. After a short distance there was a shaft in the floor spanned by 2 planks, held in the middle by a wooden stompel. A few yards further on was a second shaft, spanned by a single plank.

The group effectively split into two. The first party (Andy Yapp and Tom West) crossed both shafts and headed down the passage for about 150m. In the second party, Pete Eggleston was using his video camera to record some underground shots. Pete Etchells and Pete Eggleston crossed the first shaft and filmed Stuart Tomlins as he crossed.

At 13:30 Pete Etchells then crossed the second shaft and turned to tell Pete Eggleston not to come across on the plank. By this time he was already half-way across it and at that exact moment the plank snapped. He tried to hold himself but fell down the shaft. Pete Etchells and Stuart shouted down to him, but receiving no reply, immediately recalled Andy and Tom.

Stuart Tomlins was sent outside to get help and met Adrian Pearce in the car park in Cot Valley. After explaining briefly what had happened, it was decided to call out the local Cave Rescue because:-

- it would take about 1 hour to recall sufficient Club members from Wheal Bellan (where the main party had gone).
- no spare rope was immediately available. The only known ropes were rigged on the pitch at Wheal Bellan and it was not considered wise at that time to remove them and thus trap the main party at the bottom of the pitch.
- medical help was obviously needed, as well as a stretcher to pull Pete Eggleston up the shaft.



At 13:45 Adrian Pearce dialled 999 from a call-box in St. Just and was switched to Taunton. He asked for Cave Rescue but the operator didn't know what this was, eventually switching him to the Police. Adrian explained that a caver had fallen down a shaft in a mine and he was asked to wait by the call-box.

The others who could now hear Pete Eggleston groaning, removed the SRT rope rigged on the Wheal Bellan pitch so that they could get down to Pete, while Tom West was sent into Wheal Bellan to re-call the main party.

While the rope was being fetched Stuart managed to make contact with Pete, and climbed into a position where he could see one of Pete's camera's on rubble about 15m below. From Pete's voice Stuart deduced that he must be somewhere near it, as he said he could see the beam from Stuart's lamp.

At 14:00 a Police car arrived at the call-box, closely followed by the fire brigade and an ambulance. Adrian was told that a rescue team from Cambourne School of Mines was on its way. The Police had not heard of the West Cornwall Mines Rescue Unit.

Andy Yapp, being a trained first aider,

meanwhile had descended the shaft and found Pete about 25m down it, lying on his back with his feet elevated. There were stones beneath him and although Andy was confident that there was no broken spinal cord, he was still concerned that Pete might have a badly damaged back.

By 14:45 the adit (only 1.5m wide) was seriously congested with firemen. At this point the Cambourne School of Mines team had been cancelled and the fire service had taken control.

Despite never having been underground before, the paramedic in attendance agreed to go down the shaft. Using Andy's harness and rack which had been sent up from below, he was quickly instructed in the principles of abseiling and with a fire service rope as a life-line he cautiously made his way down to Pete.

Pete was moved from his confined space in a spinal stretcher, then transferred to a Paraguard stretcher for hauling up the shaft. A hauling team of firemen and 7 Club members (Alan Robinson, John Hine, Kelvin Lake, Malcolm Newton, Tom West Mike Worsfold and Alan Moseley) very



**Lewis Morris and the Cardiganshire Mines.** by David Bick and Phillip Wyn Davies. Published by The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. A4, 89pages, 31 plans and 11 plates. Hardback ISBN:0-907158-65-X. Price £15.00plus£3.00p&pfromTheNational Library of Wales (ask Mike Moore to see if he can get you a copy and save the postage).

This book is a study and edition of Lewis Morris's "Account of the Lead and Silver Mines in the King's Manor called Cwmmwd y Perveth". It arose from a suggestion made to the National Library of Wales by David Bick and this book is the result of his close collaboration with Phillip Wyn Davies. David Bick is already well known for his various publications mainly concerning the metal mines of Mid-Wales. Phillip Wyn Davies is an assistant archivist in the Department of Manuscripts and Records and is an acknowledged authority on the work of Lewis Morris.

The book is divided into four sections. A chapter on mining in Perfedd before Lewis Morris, the subsequent history and present state of the mines, a biographical introduction on Morris and the transcribed and edited text of the manuscripts. The first two mentioned

above have been written by David Bick and the latter by Phillip Wyn Davies.

The text from the manuscripts is most interesting and is presented in a page for page format, where possible, with the minimum of editing thus leaving the reader with a real flavour for the original manuscript. The reproduction of the plans is excellent and there is a large coloured fold-out reproduction map/plan of the whole area as drawn by Lewis Morris.

The two sections written by David Bick are, as we have come to expect from him, well written and researched and make interesting reading with the monochrome plates showing the mine sites as they are today together with a couple of older views. It has to be said, however, that most of the text can also be found in his Old Metal Mines of Mid-Wales series. It does though make the book a more complete volume and this is justification enough.

The book is likely to have a relatively limited appeal but will be a must for all those who are interested in the Cardiganshire mines and Lewis Morris.

*Damian McCurdy*

## Wheal Hermon Cont..

slowly raised Pete and the Paramedic up to the adit, with Andy Yapp prusiking up the SRT rope, keeping above the stretcher and assisting it over obstacles.

Pete was out of the adit by 18:30 where he received further treatment on the cliff path, with firemen and Club members forming a human shield from the freezing cold wind and sleet.

From here the stretcher was taken down to the car park and put in an ambulance for the short journey up the road to where the air ambulance was waiting to take him to Trelisk Hospital, Truro. The helicopter finally took off at 19:20 with Pete on board.

## Sygun Copper Mine

One mile from Beddgelert on the A498 road to Capel Curig.

Open all year round. The fascination of history and the wonders of modern-day technology combine to create an unforgettable experience at this Prince of Wales award-winning family attraction, set in the heart of the stunning Snowdonia National Park.

Each stage of the mining process is clearly explained by audio presentations, as you make your way around the quarter mile route which rises 140 feet via stairways to emerge at the Victoria Level for a breathtaking view of the Gwynant valley and surrounding Snowdonia mountain range.

## SCMC Special rates:

If you present your Club Membership card at the desk you can get a 10% discount on the entrance fee.

Bookings/inquiries to:

Sygun Copper Mine, Beddgelert, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 4NE

Telephone: 0176686585

24 Hour infoline: 0176686564



*Cerussite - Basic Lead Carbonate.*

The common oxidation product of galena, it often coats galena crystals which show a white encrustation on their surface. If oxidation continues clusters of white, blade-like crystals form.

If total oxidation occurs, cerussite can be worked as "white lead" - once commonly used in paint manufacturing. These deposits are often known as "white ore" or "wheatstone". In Derbyshire the name 'White Rake' at Brassington, Wardlow, Winster, Tideswell and Eyam indicates cerussite workings.

Common chemical formula:  $\text{PbCO}_3$

## Clay Colliery

The Ketley based Clay Colliery Co. Ltd. now control 2 underground mines:

1. Lodge Drift Mine, Pentre Broughton near Wrexham.
2. Blinkbonny Mine, Gorebridge, Midlothian.

## Tar Tunnel

Work has commenced on conserving the Tar Tunnel (using a firm of Cornish Mining Engineers ?), steel arches are being used near the entrance and work is continuing beyond to the gate at 100 metres. Several 'bulges' have been removed particularly under the inclined plane and Coalport Road. Work is also taking place at 3 mine shafts on site, capping off two at rockhead and deciding what to do with the winding shaft.

*Ivor Brown*

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## Club Officers

## Diary Dates '94

**President:** Alan Taylor

**Membership Services:**  
Mike Moore

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

**Chairman/NAMHO Rep:**  
Steve Holding

**Tackle & Rescue Officer:**  
Neal Rushton

**7 October:** Club AGM, 8pm Last Inn, Newport

**Vice Chair:** Malcolm Newton

**Training Officer:**  
Alan Robinson

**15 October:** Club Annual Dinner at the Wroxeter Hotel, Wroxeter. Contact Mike Moore for places.

**Secretary:** Adrian Pearce  
*scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk*

**Conservation Officer:**  
Brian Tildesley

**22 October:** Subterranea Britannica AGM and 1994 Autumn Day Conference. Starts 10am at Lucy Cavendish College "New Building", Lady Margaret Road, Cambridge.

**Treasurer:** Bob Taylor

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

**NOVEMBER:** Bats start hibernating, do not disturb them.

**12 November:** 10am. Surface visit and tour of Clywedog Dam and Bryntail Mine. Age limit: 14 years or over. Numbers limited contact Stuart Tomlins.

**1995**

**8-9 July:** NAMHO Conference, Harper Adams Agricultural College, Newport, Shropshire - hosted by US!

