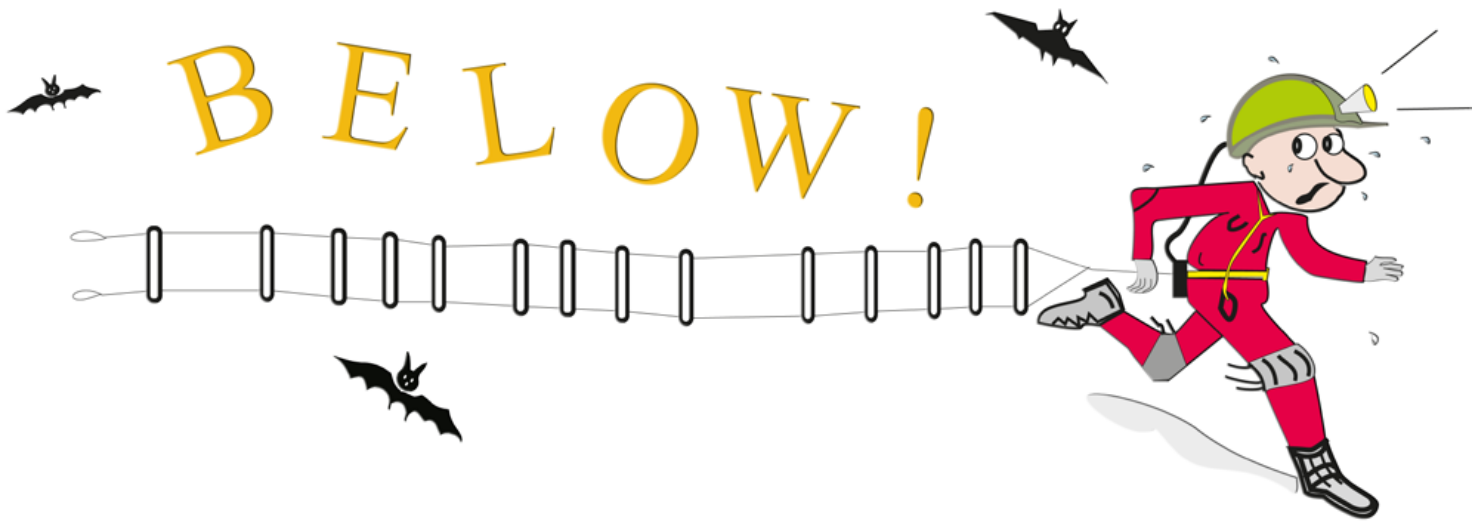




To Mike Moore and Beverley Cooper on their wedding which took place at Wellington Registry Office on Saturday 26th October. The ceremony was followed by a reception for family and friends at *The Tile Press Cafe*, Maws Tile Works amongst a veritable sea of cakes!



(Kelvin Lake)



To Laura and Gareth on the birth of their twins James and Skye. Gareth is already trying to get them interested in visiting steam railways and going underground!



(Gareth Rushton)

Club AGM & Subs Update

At the November AGM there were no major changes to roles of Club officers. Alan Robinson and Andy Harris have agreed to share the role of tackle officer for the next year.

A change in Club subscriptions was voted through, which bucks the modern trend - a reduction for some (but increase for others)! Adult Membership for 2025 is £18.00 (down from £22). However, the Joint/Family membership category has been abolished, so all adult members will now pay the £18.00 fee. The Subscribers rate has also been reduced to £18.00.

The reduction in Club fees has been offset by the increase in the [BCA](#) membership fee to £24 for Cavers. By paying the BCA fee via the Club you become a *Club Individual Member* of the BCA. As a benefit of this membership you are covered by the BCA Public Liability Insurance (PLI) which covers both surface and underground activities. If you don't go underground, the BCA Non-Caving membership fee for 2025 is £8 per person. If you get BCA membership via another Club or Society, or you are a *Direct Individual Member*, please let Julian know your BCA number (the new eCard number is not the same as your old card number).



Clive Copper Mine – New Traverse Route Installed over Maypole Winze, September 2024, Alan Robinson

In May 2023, there were a number of discussions on how to improve the ease and safety of crossing the top of the Maypole winze when accessing the main upper level workings at Clive. A number of options were considered, but it was decided to proceed on the basis of a resin P-Hanger anchor system.

The P hangers were designed and manufactured by Andy Harris. In total, eight new anchors were placed along the line of the old traverse. The positions were chosen to optimise the anchors being at or above waist height and utilise the best quality rock. Given the jointed nature of the sandstone and its variable hardness there was a bit of compromise in one or two locations, but this should not be detrimental to the increased level of protection.

Each location was drilled to full depth at 12mm, cleaned and all dust blown out.



The 10mm diameter x 225mm stainless steel P Hangers. (Andy Harris)

A set volume of resin was injected into the base of the hole, then the hanger inserted and rotated to ensure that the annulus between the rod and hole perimeter was well filled.

The resin chosen (Fischer FIS VW 360S) was a rapid setting winter version of the one used by the Council of Northern Caving Clubs (CNCC). The setting process was activated by the addition of a catalyst through a secondary nozzle at the point of injection. The setting point was very rapid and occurred 2-3 minutes after injection. In each instance the excess resin at the top of the drill hole indicated that the column had been filled. The direction of the hanger ring was aligned to optimise the load direction and reduce torsional loading. Any excess resin was quickly wiped away to give a clean surface.



Andy drilling the traverse bolt holes. (Steve Holding)



The Fischer resin that was used. (Andy Harris)



Andy cutting a new step for the traverse. (Vicky Robinson)

Consideration was also given to installing a high quality stainless steel cable as the main traverse line as a long term solution. However, the complication of needing to order an exact length of cable with prepared ends gave us less flexibility for hanger placement. In the end, we went with an unused (but not new) 11mm SRT rope. It was felt that the shorter distances between anchor points would negate the need for a dynamic rope, plus SRT rope generally has better wear resistance.

The placement of this in-situ rope has now removed the need for life-lining. However, it is *essential* that a harness and cow tails are used when crossing the winze traverse in both directions.



Clive Copper Mine – New Traverse Route Installed over Maypole Winze, September 2024, Alan Robinson, continued ...

The rope has been placed to ensure best protection only along the obvious ledge and steps. **DO NOT** climb above the anchor points. We would also advise leaving at least 2 anchors between people whilst crossing the winze.

As a final measure a new step was cut on the far side of the ledge and a section of timber was placed across the passage to highlight the need to not get close to the drop off without protection.

All works were carried out by: Andy Harris, Steve Holding and Alan Robinson.



A finished bolt with maillon and rope. *(Vicky Robinson)*



The first test run on the traverse. *(Vicky Robinson)*



Andy and Alan putting the finishing touches to the traverse rope over the Maypole winze. *(Vicky Robinson)*

Stress testing a bolt using a 'standard' Holding (in his shiny new AV over trousers). *(Vicky Robinson)*



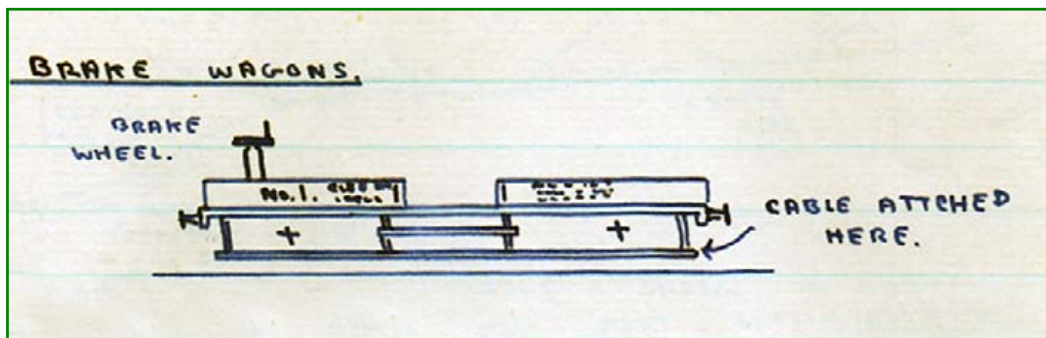
A Ride Up The Clee Hill Incline in 1957

John Tennent

There were three rope worked inclines on the Clee Hills, Standard gauge ones on each of Clee Hill and the Brown Clee and a narrow gauge one serving the Titterstone Clee.

In addition to these an Aerial Ropeway served a quarry on the east side of the Clee Hill. Latterly only the Clee Hill standard gauge one survived and this was the one that we rode up. The Branch Line Society organised a visit to it on the 27th of January 1957. We travelled from Kidderminster to Clee Hill Village on a Midland Red bus, and walked from there to the top of the incline.

The shunting loco at the top of the incline on the day of our visit was an ex.L.N.E.R. Sentinel geared loco. It had the sound of an express train whilst moving at walking pace. This was due to it's fast operating cylinders and gearing arrangement. The top shunters were changed quite frequently, being balanced on the incline with a run of loaded wagons. We watched a run of loaded wagons descend the incline balanced by a set of empties coming up. The cable passed round a large horizontal wheel at ground level, a brakeman controlling the speed. We then walked down the incline. It was allowed to ride up, but not down, as in case of a runaway an ascending wagon would stop before running away allowing you to jump off but a descending one would just accelerate. The incline was laid with three rails on the top half, a passing loop in the middle and was single track on the bottom half. At the bottom there were several sidings in use plus several more now disused. These latter had served the wharf of the 3ft. gauge Titterstone line. That incline had closed in 1947 and the track had been lifted, but the marks left by lifting it enabled me to draw a track plan (*see next page*).



Sketch of a brake wagon, from 1957 notebook.

(John Tennent)

Each run of wagons on the incline has a brake wagon attached at the lower end and the cable is attached to the brake wagon. So in effect the brake wagon pushes the train up the incline while it's counterpart controls the descending wagons. There were steps on each side of the brake wagons and a brake wheel on a column as in a guards' van.

However if staff needed to go up the hill they would ride up on the brake wagon, but with no brake man riding on it. There were three of these brake wagons, numbered 1 to 3. One and two were in use and were painted gray and black with white lettering, while No.3 was in brown and stored in a siding at the base of the incline which by the way was called Bitterly Yard and had a signal box. There was a notice on the side of the brake wagons warning people not to ride on them, presumably to cover B.R. in case of an accident. In spite of this we took a ride up. The ride was smooth but slow, the view was spectacular.

At the top the Sentinel shunted the wagons in preparation for another run. While it did the shunting the quarry Company used their own motive power to bring the wagons from the quarry. At one time it was an American Baldwin saddle tank which had been used in Europe during the first world war. Latterly however they used a mobile steam crane to do the work.

Now we had to walk down again! At the bottom of the incline the branch loco, on this day a 57XX pannier tank No.8781, drew the wagons (there were four in a run) forward and then let them run by gravity into a siding. When they were all down they were coupled up, drawn forward and a brake van added to form the train for Ludlow. At the time of our visit the branch was being worked three days a week.

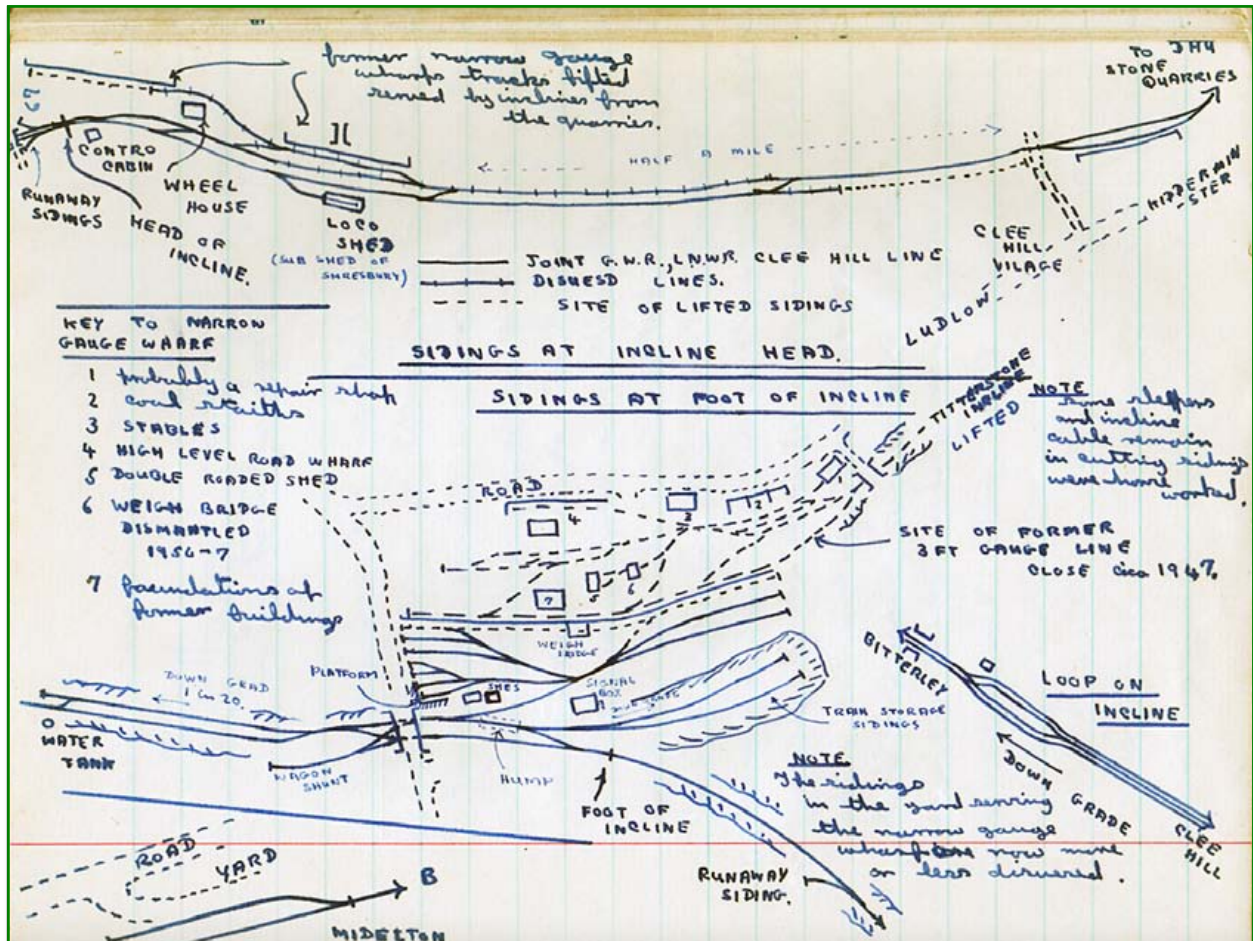
LUDLOW 11.15am
BITTERLEY 4.30pm
BITTERLEY 11.45am
LUDLOW 5.00pm

The branch was originally an independent company the "Ludlow and Clee Hill Railway" with its own locomotives, but was later absorbed into the main line companies.

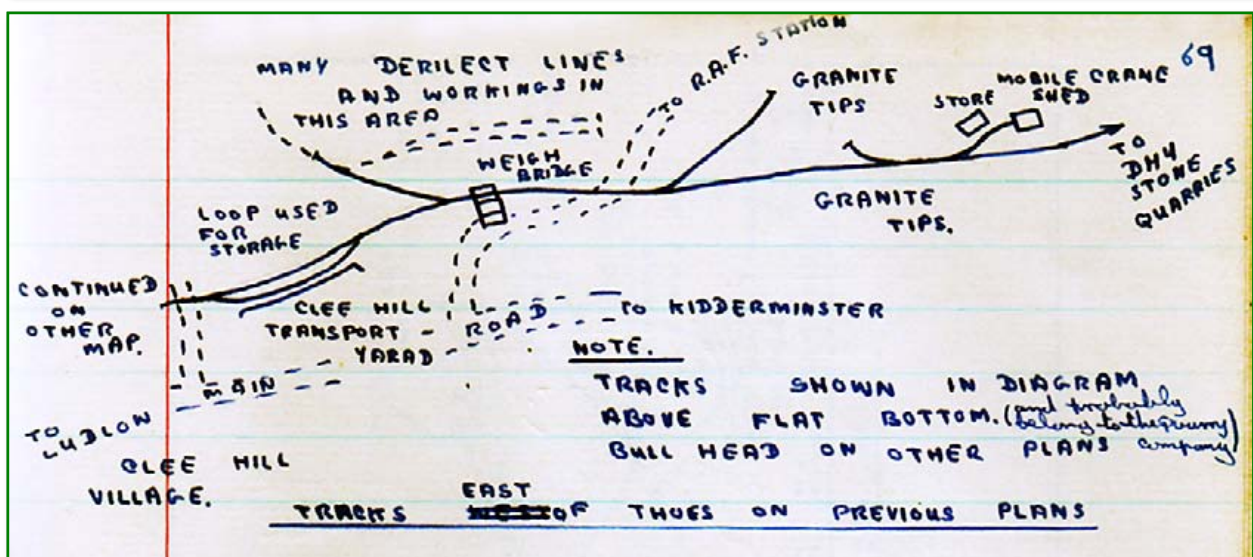


John Tennent, continued ...

The brake van was lettered "Ludlow and Cleve Hill". So its use was confined to the branch. An extra brake van had been added on this day for our party and we rode in it to Ludlow. The journey was quite uneventful, the only point of interest on the way being the goods station at Middleton which consisted of just one siding. We left the train at Ludlow goods yard which was some distance north of Ludlow Station and walked down the line to the station being passed on the way by an express heading for Hereford. Things were different in those days. At the station we had to buy excess fare tickets at 10 pence each, they were cheaper too. Return to Kidderminster was by the good old Midland Red.



1957 Sketches of the rail sidings at the top of the incline (upper part) with the rail and road layout at the incline foot below. (John Tennent)



Sketch of the rail and road layout east of the plan above.



Minera: Meadow/City Shaft Engine House Mike Moore

On a visit to the Minera Lead Mines Visitor Centre it was quite a shock to see how run-down and derelict the site has become. Most of the wooden items on the dressing floor have rotted or disappeared. Even worse the 'restored' 1857 pumping engine house on Meadow or City Shaft that once housed a 40" beam pumping engine and had been renovated in 1988 with replica equipment and features, has lost its bob platform and the wooden headframe chopped into small chunks!

My pictures below give an idea of its current condition:



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner

The Clee Hill is made of a series of layers, with a capping of dolerite, then coal measures and carboniferous sandstone. Beneath the sandstone, on the east and south-west flanks, is carboniferous limestone (Figure 1). The eastern exposure begins at Ingardine, formerly a detached portion of Stottesdon, runs through Farlow and Oreton before finally ending on the east side of the River Rea at Prescott, where there is also a small patch of coal measures¹. On the south-west, the limestone is exposed either side of the ridge that runs from Clee Hill village to Knowle, in Burford. In both exposures, the limestone beds are typically 50 feet thick and bear the remains of extensive quarrying. In the Oreton exposure there is also an underground stream, a short section of which has been explored². In this article, I will look at the industrial archaeology of the quarries and lime kilns in the Oreton area.

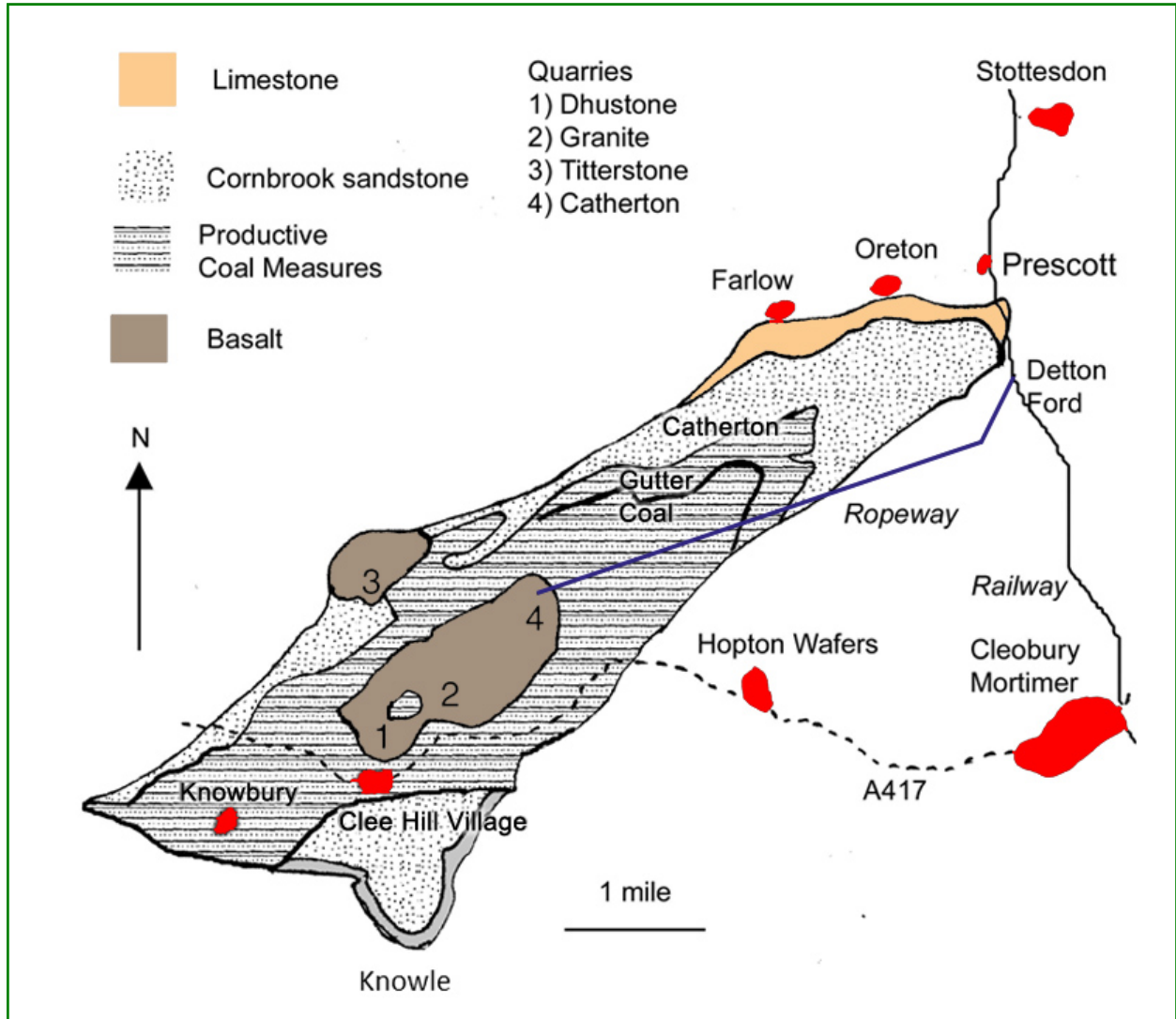


Figure 1: Geology of the Clee Hill.

History³

There is documentary evidence for limestone working at Farlow from the late 15th century and in 1526, Farlow and Oreton were the main source of lime used for the construction of Tickenhill Palace in Bewdley. The industry probably expanded in the later 17th century to meet increasing demand for lime in farming and for around 100 years from the mid-18th century, 10-15 lime masters operated quarries and kilns. In the late 19th century the industry declined; by 1870 there were three working quarries, which declined to two after 1890 and then just one by around 1930. This closed around 1960. The limestone was burnt in kilns for lime, used as building stone (the last large order was for Ludlow Roman Catholic church in the early 1930s) or as roadstone (particularly by the US Army in the Second World War). Marketed as “Clee Hill Marble”, one bed was also used for monumental masonry.

The Quarries

The quarries extend across the entire limestone exposure from Ingardine to Prescott (Figure 2). At either end of the exposure, the quarries are usually just shallow diggings into the hillside. The limestone is probably not very thick in



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner, continued ...

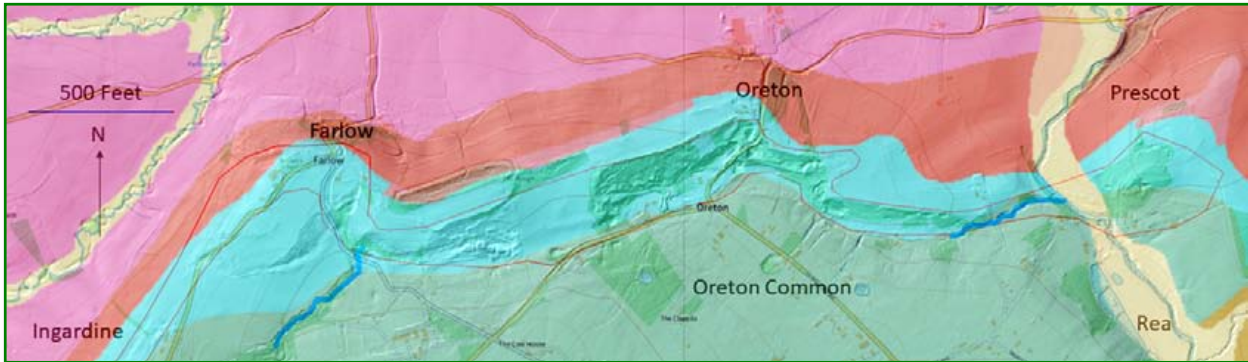


Figure 2: Lidar image showing the quarries in the Farlow/Oreton areas (Environment Agency, 1m DTM) with the geology (British Geological Survey, Geology Viewer) superimposed. The light blue area (across the middle) shows the limestone outcrop.

these places and so quarry faces would only ever have been a few feet high. Workings in these places probably are from the 18th century, when the demand for lime was at its peak and the quarries would soon have been exhausted⁴.

In the east of Farlow and through Oreton, the limestone thickens, forming the northern slope of a dry valley, probably cut by the now subterranean stream. At least in the west of the valley, the dip of the strata roughly matches the slope of the hillside, meaning that the limestone is easily accessible. Here the workings are much more extensive with quarry faces 40 or more feet high cut into the prominent escarpment. The exposure seems to have been cut by three large faults, running roughly north-south. The forms the quarries take are probably shaped by the local geology. In Farlow a long, linear quarry has been cut into the edge of the escarpment and similar forms are found in the east of Oreton as the limestone approaches the Rea. By contrast, where faults have shifted the limestone, the quarries appear as narrow headings driven into the rock.

A number of quarries show features of special interest. The most westerly of the Oreton quarries is what I will term “Bray’s Quarry”, from the occupier, Nicholas Bray, in the 1845 tithe survey. At this time Bray was a farmer, leasing land from the Botfield family and no working was taking place on his land. However, a 10 acre field is covered by the remains of quarrying (Figure 3). The Lidar survey suggests lime was extracted at 6 distinct levels (Q1-Q6); there are suggestions of steeply inclined track in the centre of the quarry to bring the stone down to the valley bottom. Q1 at the highest level and Q2, immediately below, seem to work beds of uniform thickness along the valley side and form a distinct upper quarry. However, thereafter the pattern of extraction differs between the west and east of the quarry, with two levels, Q3 and Q6 present in the east quarry only. Q6 represents the last stage of quarrying, as it has cut through a number of roads which accessed Q5b. The workings may be organised chronologically, with Q1 as the earliest. At the base of the hill is a large amount of spoil, partly overburden from the quarries but also waste from kilns. Some of this forms a line of mounds in front of this hill but the spoil has also been used to create a level

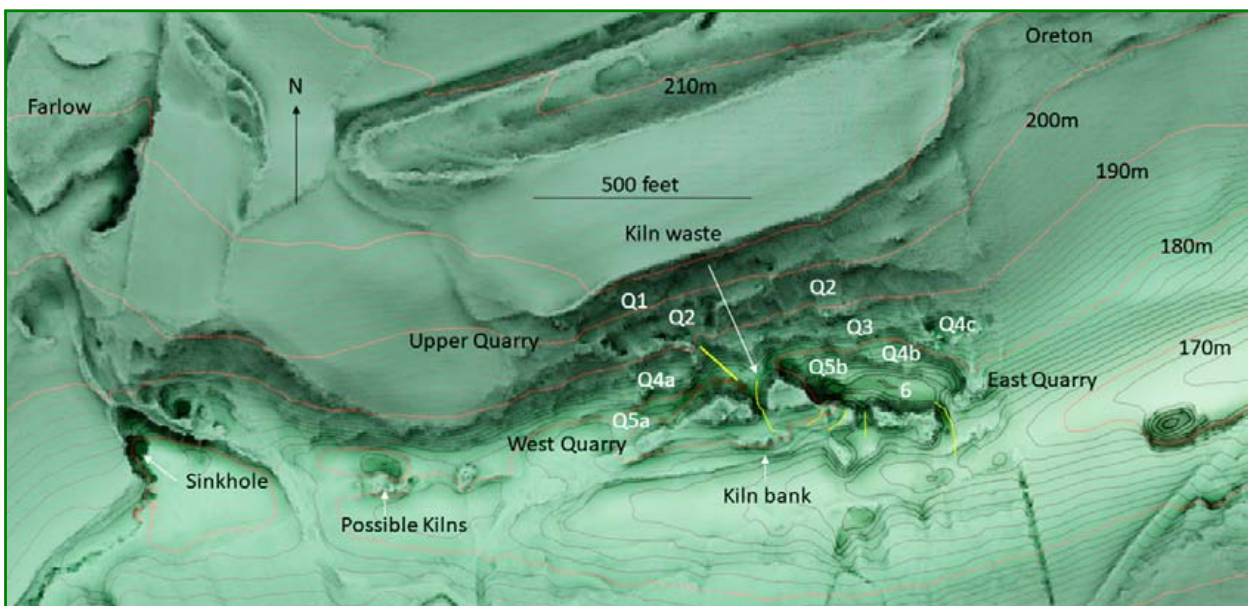


Figure 3: Lidar image of Bray's Quarry (Environment Agency, 1m DTM); yellow lines show tracks. Contours are at 1m intervals.



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner, continued ...

platform to support 4 kilns. There may have been further kilns between the east and west quarries as there is much kiln waste here. As quarrying progressed, these early kilns are likely to either have been destroyed or buried under the spoil banks.

The largest quarry is Breakwell's Quarry, the last to work (Figures 4, 5). On the tithe map it was owned and occupied by William Page and had 9 kilns, with another 4 squeezed on a strip of land next to the road which Page leased. It subsequently passed to the Breakwell family and then to final owner, Herbert Jones. The main quarry worked down the slope of the hill and a photograph taken around 1930 shows the method of extraction (Figure 6). The stone is conveniently found in beds around 4 feet thick and these were progressively worked up the slope of the hill. Towards the base of the hill, there is a face, about 45 feet high and created by the removal of successive lifts. At the base of the slope is a track which winds its way up to the crest of the hill via a zig-zag.

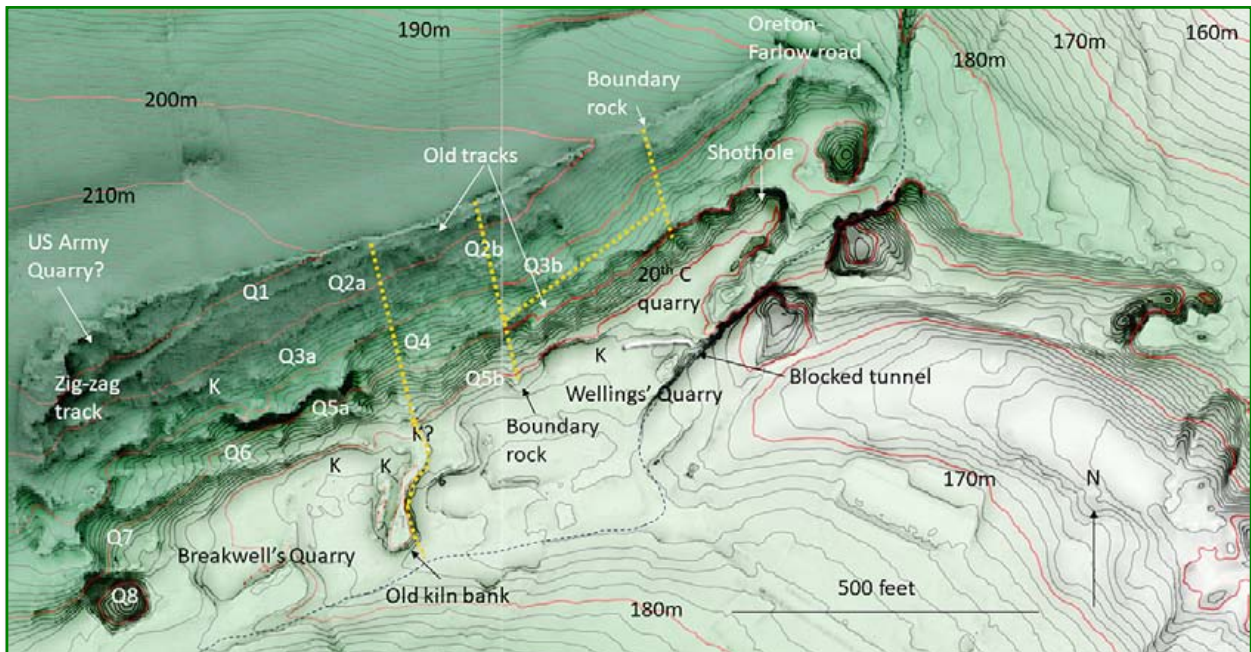


Figure 4: Lidar image of Breakwell's and Wellings' Quarries (Environment Agency, 1m DTM); K, kiln. White line to the right of 'K' marks the track leading to the blocked tunnel under the road (broken black line). Yellow dotted lines show estate boundaries on the 1845 tithe map. Contours are at 1m intervals.

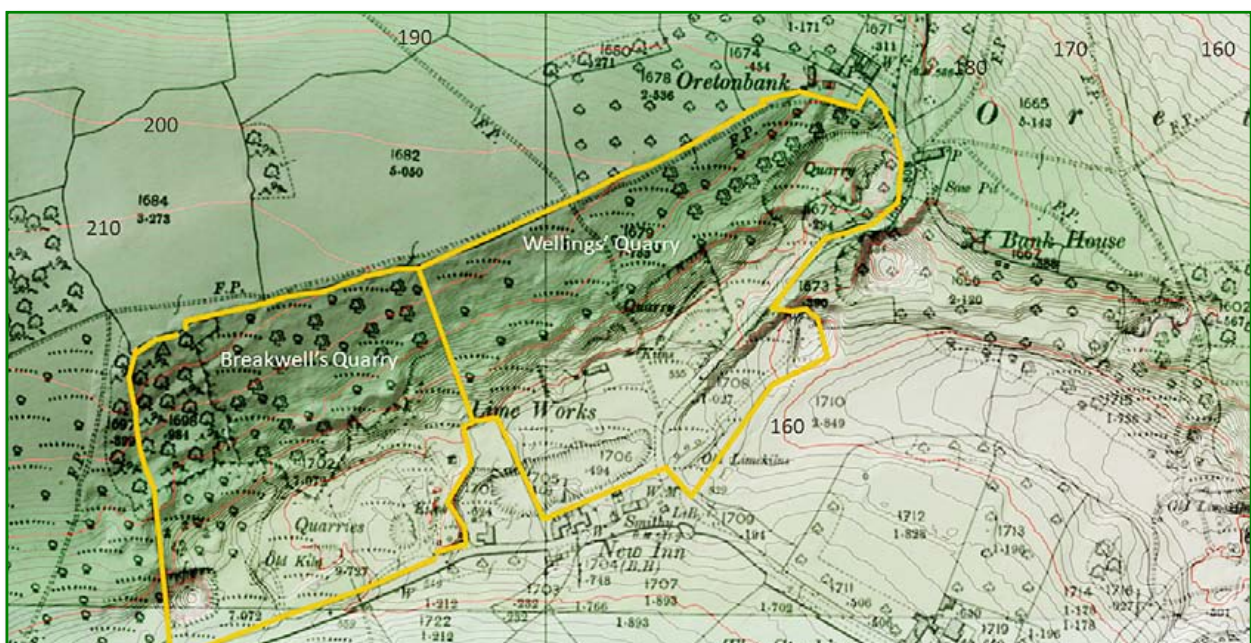


Figure 5: 1901 1:2500 OS map of Breakwell's and Wellings' Quarries superimposed on Lidar. (National Library of Scotland).



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner, continued ...

Numerous quarry faces can be traced on the Lidar survey, caused by the partial extraction of different beds as seen in Figure 6. The chronology of the site is complicated, but it is likely that earliest workings are found at the top of the escarpment. They go beyond the land occupied by Page on the 1845 tithe map, perhaps representing an early period when the entire area was still owned by a single individual. As with Bray's Quarry, there are different patterns of lifts in the east and west of the site. A lime kiln is built against the face of Q3. There were probably other kilns at this level; whilst they would have been removed by later quarrying, there is still much kiln waste that probably came from them.

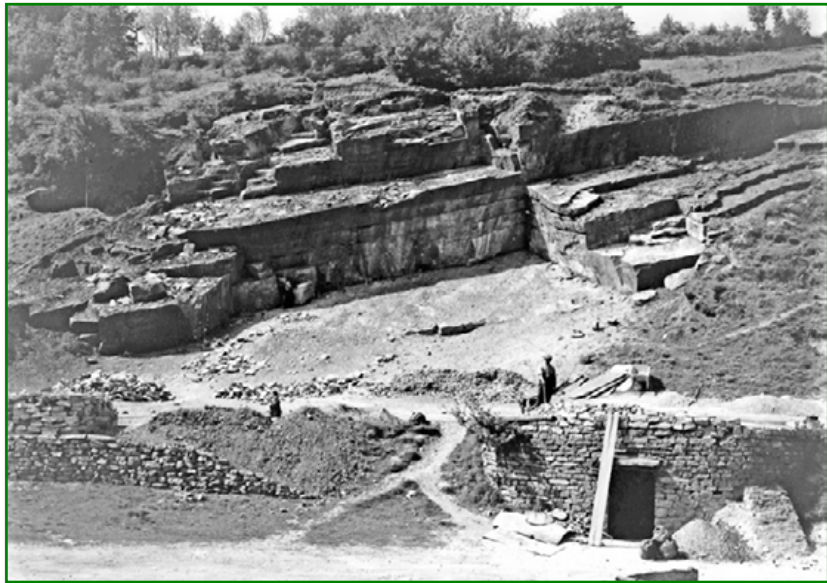


Figure 6: Photo of Breakwell's quarry, c1930.

(British Geological Survey)

These features may mark the base of an early, upper quarry extending to the crest of the ridge. On the 1845 tithe map, all kilns were at the base of the hill and so it seems that operations were now focussed on the lower, southern part of the quarry. The 1882 and 1902 ordnance survey maps show how the main face was progressively moving up the hill, as the deeper beds of stone were removed; this can be seen in Figure 6. This would destroy any earlier, shallow quarrying. An isolated quarry pit (Q8) had been worked prior to 1882 and the stone in the north-west corner of the quarry was largely untouched. For the most part, this pattern of working continued until the end of quarrying. However, in the Second World War the US army extracted stone for road making for use at their bases and they were responsible for either creating or giving the final form to the zig-zag track. It is likely that they removed the stone from the north-west corner, using a bulldozer. A crushing plant was also installed, either by them or Jones; the concrete bases of the crusher survive above the main face, allowing the stone to drop into the yard below. There are the remains of two kilns in the quarry bottom; they will be considered later.

Until the site was redeveloped for houses, two pits existed in the base of the quarry at the bottom of the hill. These are said to have been sunk in an effort to locate the underground stream and were dug in the period between the 1882 and 1902 Ordnance Survey maps. In 1970 a report on these by George Price of the Birmingham Enterprise Club noted how they ended in "tight fissures and boulder ruckles"⁵. The two pits align with a long quarry pit to their east and shown on the 1882 and 1901 OS maps. All but the very western end of this has now been infilled. Possibly working of this quarry was possible because of fissures in its floor allowing drainage to the underground stream.

The final quarry of note is Wellings' Quarry, taking the name from the last owner (Figures, 4, 5). This closed in the 1920s. It incorporated two distinct enterprises worked in 1845 under lease by Thomas Preston and Samuel Cleeton. The Preston family had a lease in 1806 and Cleeton's landlord was a member of the Haycox family, who in 1782 leased $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of lime ground to two of Thomas's ancestors. This area was also advertised as a source of Clee Hill Marble. The quarries are bisected by the road coming over the hill from the original hamlet of Oreton; this is supported by a pillar of limestone. The north-west edge of the quarry is marked by a limestone block, about 10 feet wide and 40 feet high which was the boundary between Preston's holding, leased from Thomas Pardoe and a strip of land belonging to the Botfields. Either side, the limestone has been totally quarried away; there is a similar boundary high above the later Wellings' Quarry. To the north, a straight, regularly-graded track would have given easier access to the quarries from the crest of the hill than the current road. The necessity of leaving a pillar to support the current road means that the main quarry eventually took the form of a heading into the stone, with rock walls on three sides. At the far end of this is a shot hole, the only one I have been able to identify in all of the Clee limestone quarries. Most of quarry dates from the 20th century; the 1901 map shows the start of this working. This map also marks the only tramway recorded in the Oreton area, although the absence of any rails in the 1882 maps may simply reflect the judgement of the surveyors that any tramway was likely to be too temporary to justify including. There is also at least one well-preserved kiln. However, the chief item of interest is an infilled bridge beneath the road. This must have been constructed to allow limestone to the south of the road to be carried to the kilns on the north. There are suggestions of an embankment leading from old kilns to this bridge. As quarrying continued, a second lift deepened



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner, continued ...

the workings south of the road, removing the old floor and leaving the bridge around 15 feet above current ground level. All this activity can be dated between 1845 and 1881. The tithe map shows a cottage south of the road and no quarry; by 1882 it looks like the current layout was present and three kilns had been built to take the limestone after the route to the northern kilns had been cut off. These kilns in turn were out-of-use by 1901.

The Kilns

I have examined three intact kilns in Breakwell's Quarry and one in Wellings' Quarry (Figures 8,9,11,12); one of the Breakwell kilns has now largely been destroyed. A typical lime kiln consists of a pot, where the lime is burnt and a draw hole at the base, giving access both to the base of the fire in the pot and also allowing the burnt lime to be drawn. There is usually a short tunnel between the entrance to the draw hole, in the outer wall of the kiln, and the base of the pot. The top of the pot is open, to allow filling with stone and also for a draught to circulate through the kiln during firing.



Figure 7: Lime kiln at Abberley, c1784.

All of the surviving Oreton kilns were built to a common plan; they were made of stone, around 10 feet high and the draw hole had a straight lintel. The lining of the pot was either sandstone or firebrick. These kilns are much shorter than most surviving kilns elsewhere and so would have had only limited capacity to produce lime. The square lintel is also an unusual feature. The opening at the base of the pot to communicate with the draw hole is usually blocked. Perhaps this happened once the kilns had been abandoned, to allow infilling to prevent accidents. The Oreton kilns show a strong similarity to an illustration of a lime kiln at Abberley, around 15 miles to the south, from c1784 (Figure 7)⁶. It may be that Oreton kept an old design. The use of a small kiln would explain why so many are shown on the tithe map (36 to serve 8 quarries) and the 1882 OS map (20 for 5 quarries).

The oldest kiln is that built up against the shallow face of Q3, half-way up the slope at Breakwell's Quarry (SO 60848051, Figure 8). As it predates the tithe map, I would guess it would have been built about 1800. It seems to be of stone construction throughout. The partially demolished kiln at Breakwell's Quarry (SO 6491 8051, Figure 9) may date from the 3rd quarter of the 19th century; it corresponds to a bank of 3 kilns shown on the OS map, although there was no trace of the other two. In 2002 the draw hole had been blocked but it had a timber lintel. In 2009 it was partially demolished, revealing its interior. The pot was typical of kilns, with the upper portion being a cylinder of around 10 feet in diameter. A conical section connected this to a smaller diameter cylinder accessed by the draw hole. The pot had been infilled. What was probably a kiln was also revealed in vertical cross-section



Figure 8: Lime kiln in Breakwell's quarry. **Left:** exterior; **right:** view through draw hole.

(David Poyner)



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner, continued ...



Figure 9: Lime kiln in Breakwell's quarry. **Left:** 2002; **right:** after partial demolition in 2009.

(David Poyner)

when a bank was being dug away at SO 6496 8054 (Figure 10). A row of kilns was present close to this spot in 1845, although they were on the property of an adjacent land-owner. The tithe map also shows a bank of three kilns built against the road at SO 6495 8048; the wall still survives, although it was reduced in height about 10 years ago. The infill is largely kiln waste but there is no obvious trace of the kilns themselves.

In Wellings' Quarry there is an intact kiln, shown on the 1882 OS map (SO 6506 8059, Figure 11). It was one of a pair; the front of the other is missing but the pot appears still to be present in the bank. The lintel of the kiln is formed from rails, consistent with construction in the 1860s or 1870s.

The final intact kiln at Oreton is at Breakwell's Quarry, at SO 6489 8052 (Figure 12). This is the most recent of all the Oreton kilns, being built after the 1902 OS map. It is set into the embankment of the track that runs beneath the main quarry face before forming the zig-zag to reach the top of the quarry. It is clearly shown on the c1930 photograph. It has firebrick pot and a timber lintel.

Conclusions

The Oreton area has good remains of the limestone industry, despite recent development. There are shallow diggings, perhaps dating from the 18th century or earlier. There are also deeper quarries from the 19th and 20th centuries, with multiple phases and showing how the limestone was removed in different beds. The surviving kilns seem to preserve a form seen more widely in the region from the 18th century; they are small, with rectangular draw-holes.



Figure 10: Probably lime kiln exposed by digging into a bank at Breakwell's Quarry.

(David Poyner)



Figure 11: Draw hole of the lime kiln in Wellings' Quarry.

(David Poyner)



The Lime Quarries and Kilns at Oreton on the Clee Hill

David Poyner, continued ...

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2. S. Powell, "Subterranean Shropshire", *Tempus*, 2002, pp. 21-24.
3. A fuller history of the Clee Hill limestone industry has just been submitted to the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society, for Volume 99, 2024.
4. Poyner, "Coal Workings"
5. Powell, "Subterranean Shropshire".
6. Worcestershire Record Office, "Limekiln on Abberley Hill" c1784, Burley – Lear Drawings Collection, Reference X899:192, BA 2432 52A. This is illustrated in "Lime kilns in Worcestershire", Nils Wilkes, nd, pg. 2.



Figure 12: Lime kiln in Breakwell's quarry. **Left:** exterior; **right:** view through draw hole.

(David Poyner)

Winding Accident at Colorado Show Mine

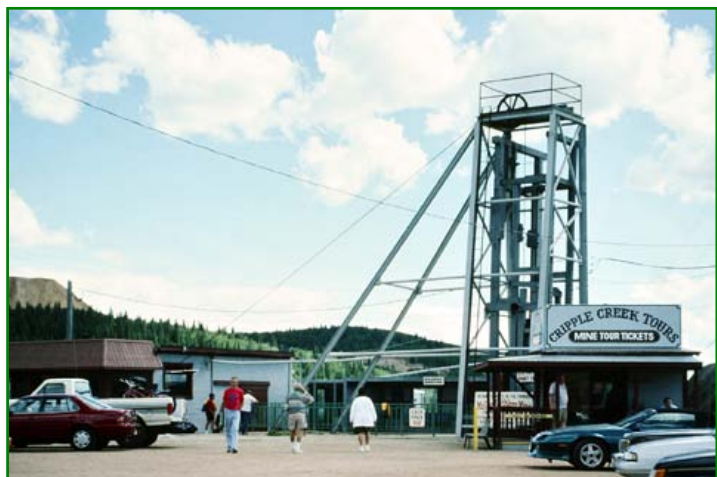
On October 10th during the noon tour, guide Patrick Weier (46) died in a winding accident at the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine in Cripple Creek, Colorado (about 110 miles south of Denver).

The shaft used for the tours is 305m deep and when the cage reached a depth of about 150m a mechanical issue occurred. This resulted in the death of Mr. Weier and trapped 11 tourists in the shaft, including two children. Four of the tourists suffered minor injuries. A second group of 11 tourists and a guide (who were waiting to ascend) were stranded at the bottom of the mine for 6 hours. The guide made them comfortable with chairs, blankets, and water. Pizza was also sent down to them while they waited.

Several agencies, and search and rescue teams, responded to the incident with heavy equipment to recover those trapped underground. The most recent safety inspections of the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine took place on August 29th. The mine and equipment also undergo daily inspections before tours start and nothing out of the ordinary on any of the inspections was detected.

Engineers checked over the winding gear before it was used to retrieve the group trapped underground. However, they still don't know what caused the problem. The Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety has ordered the mine to remain closed and not conduct tours while its operations are reviewed.

The former gold mine was sunk in the 1890s and is named after Mollie Kathleen Gortner, the first woman in the Cripple Creek Gold Camp to strike gold in 1891. It was closed in 1961 and has been operating as a tourist mine for 50 years.



The headframe at Mollie Kathleen Gold mine, July 1993.

Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings



Wild West? or ‘A great brass kettle – that will do nicely’

Mike Shaw

On the night of 4 February 1677 Thomas Kidwallader, David Howells, Messrs Read, Brown and Morgan, two Edward Davys, Robert Mason, Edward Hamerston and Samuel Chilton, armed with guns, pistols and swords entered Mr More’s Gritt lead mine in Shelve and seized it on behalf of Edward, 3rd Baron Herbert of Chirbury. They carried away two cart loads of ore and 1000 lbs of lead to the value of £4. In the morning the miners arrived and were prevented from working. At some stage there was violence, with Hamerston seriously wounding one of Mr More’s Derbyshire miners, though there is no suggestion that that was fatal. Samuel Chilton was Lord Herbert’s bailiff. The appearance of ‘Mr Read, Brown and Morgan’ in a case paper (*Shropshire Archives 1037/2/12*), and their designations each as ‘Mr’ could imply that they were: John (perhaps J. V.) Read (Reade), recorder in the Lordship of Chirbury; Captain Browne (Brown), who appears several times in the correspondence; and Morgan, William of that ilk, who was Lord Herbert’s attorney when the case came to court. On 11 February Richard More (Moore) and a witness went to the mine and requested entrance and possession. They were ‘kept away because of the weapons’.

The Romans mined and smelted lead in south Shropshire. If mining ceased after their departure it had resumed by the twelfth century, no doubt to decline again. There was some lead mining at Gritt in the sixteenth century and early seventeenth by the Lawrence family¹ The latter half of the seventeenth century saw a resurgence in commercial activity and when the More family acquired the Linley Hall estate in the manor of Shelve in 1653 they hired miners from Derbyshire to search for lead in the old mines. After eighteen months at a cost of £200, lead was found and worked successfully. Meanwhile in the manor of Ritton, almost certainly the site of Bog Mine, Rowland Niccolls (Nicholls, Nichols, Niccols) was mining lead by 1676.

Before the Norman conquest, the hundred was a long established division of the English countryside. Civil and criminal cases were judged in it by the county sheriff using customary law. The hundred was not divided into manors and parishes but included them, often coterminously. The issues dealt with in this paper involve Chirbury Hundred, the manor of Chirbury, the manor of Ritton in the parish of Worthen and the manor of Shelve in the eponymous parish. The issue in each of the cases being whether the Lord of the Manor of Chirbury had rights over the wastes and commons in the other manors in the Chirbury Hundred.

Lord Herbert - Edward, 3rd Baron Herbert of Chirbury and Castleisland (1633-1678) was the central figure in these disputes. He succeeded to the title on 13 May 1655 and died without issue on the 9 December 1678, his brother Henry was the 4th and last Baron of that creation. Edward was Lord of the Manor of Chirbury.

Richard More (bap. 18 October 1627, d 1698) – the Mores found lead by c1655, it is probable that a 21 year lease was granted to the Derbyshire men as a similar length lease was granted in 1676. This lease included all ‘manner of mines pits and veins of lead in More lands in Shelve’.

Rowland Niccolls – on his marriage to Anne in 1651 certain properties, including the manor of Ritton were conveyed to him by his father Rowland who held a 900 year lease from the Boycotts of Rudge. (*SA 2028/1/2/131 & 186*).

As Lord of the manor, Edward Herbert would collect various monies, fines, amerciaments etc for activities including for breaking the soil and enclosing land in the wastes and commons of his manor. As noted above he considered that he as Lord of Chirbury had those rights over such lands and activities throughout the entire hundred of Chirbury and that More, Lord of the Manor of Shelve and Niccolls, who held a 900 year lease on land in the manor of Ritton should pay him for mining lead. Both these gentlemen disagreed. Much of the surviving paperwork consists of Herbert’s researchers seeking to justify his view of his right using material back to the Domesday Book, and charters back to Henry III in the thirteenth century. Herbert’s staff and other local parties were examined and spoke of cases where fines and amerciaments were collected for enclosing land, breaking the soil and non payment of fines, from the wastes and commons of Shelve and Ritton manors, including that

‘James Jagler...[who] says that he with Thomas Davies the bailiff about 15 years ago did take a great brass kettle of one Corbett then living in Shelve for a warrant of 5s or 6s for breaking the Lord’s soil on the commons in Shelve And that the kettle was delivered to one Mr Richard Bowen the steward of Cherbury Court who received it then to the use of my Lord Herbert.’ (*case notes from NLW Box 94 bundle 7²*)

More saw these ‘proofs’ and was aware of the apparent collection of monies. He does however note that neither Herbert nor his predecessor had at any time made a claim or forbade work at the mine which appears to have been operating since the mid 1650s. He was also aware of the fate of the great brass kettle and that some of his tenants

‘have been contested by the deft.’s ancestors who have been cast in the suits they have presented about them; so that the deft has not all the wastes within the hundred ... It will be objected that the deft caused a kettle of one of the plt’s tenants to be distrained, upon pretence of some amercement. Answer: there was a kettle taken but upon what account was not known and when the person, whose kettle it was, endeavoured to [recover] the same, he could not discover where it was, and when he intended to bring an action against the person that took it, the said person ran away, and afterwards died.’ (*SA 1037/2/12*)



Wild West? or ‘A great brass kettle – that will do nicely’ Mike Shaw, continued ...

Though Herbert had made no previous approach to More³ the debated issue had been current for over than a century as William Shelley the Lord of Shelve writing to Edward Herbert esq the then Lord of the Manor of Chirbury in 1567 noted:

‘I understand that diverse of my tenants of Shelve have been amerced by you within the hundred of Cherbury’ and ‘That my poor tenants of Shelve may not be otherwise used at your hand as then as law will bear’ (*NLW Box 94 bundle 7*)

Letters from 1629 and 1633 have much the same, in 1633 Blanche Lingen said, related to actions against one of her tenants:

‘upon what pretence or title we know not And when we shall understand the same we doubt not but to give your Lordship full satisfaction’ (*NLW Box 94 bundle 7*)

The legal cases

The partial paperwork surviving deals with the action between More and Herbert and with what may be an application for an injunction against Niccolls, but does not contain any reference to a decisive case between these latter. More and Niccolls knew each other and More attended at the above action against Niccolls at a time when More’s issue was ‘not publicly disputed’. Their acquaintance is also noted when More (of necessity grovelling) in a tetchy exchange with Herbert, points out following an implied slur on his respect for Herbert that it

‘certainly would have restrained me from having the least thought of disobliging so noble a friend And this may appear to be real in that I refused to join with Mr Nicholls and others when solicited in the suit between my Lord and Mr Nicholls’ (*NLW Box 94 bundle 7*)

Herbert v Niccolls

The first reference to Niccolls’ and More’s cases is in a letter to a third party in September 1676 where Herbert bemoans the costs of the actions. A set of notes on the manorial rights issue, of 23 October 1676 rehearse a series of memories of monies, waifs and strays collected in Ritton manor and confirm the existence of ‘a certain lead mine of late discovery and found’ at that time possessed by Thomas Price. By March 1677 Niccolls case had been set for 26 November⁴. It is not absolutely clear but appears to have been taken by Herbert to seek an injunction. By July Niccolls was requesting that more witnesses be examined, no outcome is known.

A letter of 8 September 1677 sees a John Newton write to Herbert that:

‘In obedience to your Ldships commands I give your Honour this brief accompt of what Mr Niccolls was pleased to say, that Mr Reade and Mr [Oatley?] had discoursed something touchinge an accommodation in ye controversy concerning Ritton’ (*NLW Box 125 bundle 17*)

he told Mr Jones as he could not call upon Herbert. Mr Jones⁵ did not consider the matter sufficient to worry Herbert immediately, but a letter of the 11th informs him that his employer, who has found of this possible plot elsewhere, would clearly have liked to have known at the earliest opportunity. Mr Jones apologises but

‘Mr Newton told me that he was informed by a gent (whose name he would not tell) that Mr Read had been meeting with Mr Oatley for a interference in ye businis nowe in dispute between yr Ldsp & Mr Niccols’

he considers the issue to not be ‘eyther to yr Ldsps advantage or disadvantage’, he also doubted the truth of it, Mr Reade had denied any dealings with Oatley. In view of the above delay Jones tendered his resignation

‘My Lord I am very sorry my endeavourey in yr service is not such that anyway gives] [...] I therefore humbly offer yr Ldsp will please to imploy someother person in my place that is [...] and capable of managing yr Ldsps affairs to better satisfaction’ (*NLW Box 125 bundle 17*).

Having this off his chest, Jones goes on to report on the builders work and payments there-for at the house. Presumably it was still the same Mr Jones at the lodge in that December.

November 1677 saw correspondence on the case and plans for the attendance at Sergeant’s Inn for the case to be heard before the Barons of the Exchequer in the forenoon of the 26th. Unfortunately a high profile case involving Lady Wentworth preceded theirs and overran. Herbert v Niccolls was rescheduled for 6 December. After two hours discussion the Barons considered that the case had been heard in the wrong court and dismissed it as being a common law matter. Herbert, at home in Montgomeryshire, received three letters reporting this and noting other issues raised including the his taking of Niccolls’ mine presumably in the manner he had taken More’s, and planning the next moves

‘yr Ldsp may if you think fitt order me and Mr Burton to meet after the holydaise to advise you on the future busines’. (*NLW Box 125 bundle 17*)



Wild West? or ‘A great brass kettle – that will do nicely’ Mike Shaw, continued ...

One trusts that ‘a small fardel⁶ from Mr Loftus bringing powder horns & baggs etc’ mentioned in that letter was not specifically to do with taking the mine. Herbert drafted a response in a letter of 13 December to ‘My Good Lord’ thanking, presumably Lord Newport, for attending the court hearing, he goes on to discuss Niccolls going to trial and being served with an injunction and makes reference to the fact that ‘Mr Moore has found a mine in ye waste of another petty Ldsp within my ldsp of Cherbury ... there is but little matter of difference in ye cases only this latter is not yet publicly disputed’ and notes that More has been present at Niccolls’ hearing. He goes on to discuss the selection of a jury presumably for a further case against (or by) Niccolls.

The remaining letters to Herbert in the late winter of 1678 continue to deal with preparations for Niccolls’ and More’s cases, noting that

‘The king’s solicitor is my counsel and the king’s attorney is against me in a trial relating to land and lands encroached by one Nicholls in Rhitton another small pretended Lordship in Cherbury’ (*NLW Box 125 bundle 17*)

Regrettably these are the final references to Niccolls found so far. No other source offers any information beyond the fact that Rowland’s son Orlando conveyed the manor of Ritton (and the adjoining Kinnerton) to Michael Noble of the Middle Temple in 1692.

More v Herbert

A rather less incomplete correspondence offers a better picture of this case. The seizure of the mine several years after it began life is noted above. Up to the end of 1677 references to More’s case are as those above in Niccolls’. Just over a year after the seizure of the mine Herbert’s correspondence on the case is first found. He notes that:

‘I am entered upon some mines in the waste of my own Lordship of Cherbury in the particular wastes of Shelve a mean Lordship within it which was worked by Mr Moore of Lindley’ (*NLW Box 94 bundle 7*)

and that More was to indict Herbert’s miners in the crown office and to make the mine a Mine Royal. By mid March Herbert had been asked and had refused to let More’s men restart work ‘but by a verdict definitive at law’. More is troubled about legal action by the Derbyshire miners who have a lease of the mine. Despite Herbert’s agreement to the matter being settled in court, because of parliamentary privilege the hearings had to take place outside Shropshire, so they were heard in Herefordshire.

The first of two cases came to court in Hereford on 1 May 1678.

‘The deft. being a peer of the realm & taking advantage of his privileges did in (blank).....last (it being then parliament time) cause his servants to enter upon the said mine (when the plt’s workmen were not there) and to seise the lead which the pit’s workmen had gotten & to take the same away. And has ever since continued the possession by force & gets lead there which he disposes of at his pleasure. And the dread of the deft’s privileges as a peer caused the Justices of Peace to refuse to remove the force & restore the plt’s possession. But the deft. has consented to wave his privileges and to try his title in an indifferent County by a transitory action, so that his action is intended for the trial of the plt’s title to the Manor of Shelve & the wastes thereof.’ (*SA 1037/2/12 & 13*)

Though More’s title was found sound, this case did not resolve the matter.

The available correspondence from the Summer of 1678 centres around preparations for the second case (*More v Herbert*), mainly the selection of jurors. The Duke of Chandos assisted in the matter writing to eight gentlemen. He is ‘well satisfied his title is so good that it cannot miscarry, if such just and discerning persons appear upon the jury’ and Herbert’s attorney Wm Morgan notes that

‘We have engaged other particular men as attorneys that have very good interest so that there needs no fear of a good jury ... There must be likewise a house taken for your witnesses that they may be carefully kept together to prevent being tampered with and made drunk as is the usual course in these times’ (*NLW Box 94 bundle 7*)

The next available materials are the results of the trial reported on 14 November 1678:

‘1 Richard More of Lindley, Salop, Esq.
2. Right Honourable Edward Lord Herbert Baron of Cherbury. and Castle Island.
2 his heirs, executors, administrators, workmen, agents or servants are absolutely acquitted from any actions that may be sued against them by 1. his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns.
2 agrees that 1 may peaceably have hold and enjoy the lead mines in the manor of Shelve and disclaims all right to them.
Signed and sealed by 2.
Witnessed by William Oakley, Thomas Mason and R. Jones. No.44.
14 November, 30 Charles II, 1678’ (*SA 1037/2/19e*)

In addition there was a bond:



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Mike Shaw, continued ...

'dated 14th November 1678 of Richard Moore of Lindley, co. Salop, esq., and Richard Heape of Wirksworth, co. Derby, in £1,000 to Lord Herbert baron of Cherbury and Castleisland upon condition that if the above bounden Richard Moore his heirs executors and administrators and every of them do and will' do what was agreed' 'this obligation to be void and of no effect or else to continue in full force effect and virtue. signed: Richard Moore, Richard Heape.' (NLW Box 94 bundle 7)

No doubt Richard Heape of Wirksworth led the Derbyshire miners who had rediscovered the mine for More.

Other possible mine issues

As noted above, one of the sets of case notes from October 1676 is endorsed 'concerning Niccolls & More about & mining' and refers to land in Ritton 'possessed by Thos Price 'upon [which] there is a certain lead mine of late discovery'. Presumably Price is the surface tenant where Niccolls is mining, but this is not absolutely clear. Mr More's papers on his case note that 'in May last my Ld's Agents endeavoured to present Richard Shor a miner for digging the waste', again, beyond presumably being in Shelve, nothing is known though clearly it cannot be More's Derbyshire men's activity to be reported thus. It is also unknown if the taking of Corbett's great brass kettle (above) for breaking the soil in Shelve refers to mining and if so whether this was separate to More's activity. More's exchange with Herbert noted above refers to other intended cases against Herbert in addition those of More and Niccolls.

The digression

Aside from the principal story, the correspondence studied acts a little like a time machine. The fact that Herbert was sequestered during the 'late troubled times' bring history to life and the upheavals of the reformation which were also noted were no further back than the births of my and several of my gentle reader's grandparents. Letters that begin with the business in hand sometimes go on to deal with estate and household matters, so the reader finds out what the builders have been doing at Herbert's home, Llyssyn, Llanerfyl⁷ and that the carpenters and masons had been or needed to be paid and that monies had been given to Arabella and the Lady Alice and that 'ye taylor has promised Mrs Prissillas clothes this night'.

This piece has been written from the perspective of a mining historian, not a legal one and some nuances and niceties will have been unrecognised. The material used contains much of interest in the history of law and of English administration. If there are mistakes, incorrect assumptions or similar your author would be happy to know of them. There is a formidable amount of paper in the archives which, as it appears to relate to Herbert's search for proof of his rights, has not been fully investigated. It includes a document which one had hoped may have contained thirty or so skins, but became the reality of one with one hundred and ninety eight sheets of paper, at which your author baulked. I would like to thank Melvin Humphries for alerting me to the NLW Powis papers referred to above and to David Poyner for some much needed palaeographical assistance.

References

1. Information from papers in an 1820s case between R B More and John Lawrence over More's refusal to renew a lease to Lawrence. Also information from a pencil list (made by Sir Jasper More and formerly in Linley Hall library) of the leases which were passed by the last John Lawrence to his daughter Helen. She showed them to Sir Jasper c1900 who was planning to write a history of the area's mining. Regrettably the 1820s papers have not been seen for many years and not by this author, the pencil list probably survived into this century and was listed in an early 1990s library catalogue but a concerted effort to find it recently failed, your author only knows that it included reference to leases back to the sixteenth century.
2. The survival of papers is unsurprisingly patchy, a quantity Herbert's from both cases are listed but uncatalogued in the Powis papers at the National Library of Wales, for the case taken against him by More they are principally in Box 94 bundle 7, these have been transcribed by NLW, papers from the Niccolls' case are in the NLW, untranscribed, in Box 125 bundle 17. Some of More's papers survive in Shropshire Archives at 1037/2/, none of Niccolls' papers have yet surfaced. The vagaries of the 1670s hands and the vagaries of your author's palaeography have not necessarily added to this story! A further visit to the NLW had been planned but life and a deadline did not agree so there may be a little more could be added to the story.
3. A letter of Sept. 1673 refers to arbitration between Lord Herbert and Mr More, but with no context.
4. Though a hearing took place in the following Easter week where his witnesses were 'proved'. Niccolls had also threatened to have his mine declared a Mine Royal and to lease it from the company who farm such mines.
5. Presumably Robert Jones, he lived in or worked from the lodge at Llyssyn and clearly had many financial responsibilities around the estate.
6. A parcel or bundle.
7. 'The masons have seild ye wash house & inner room & painted? both & made a finish to carry out & water thence they have also sield ye roomes over ye wash house & nowe are at that next to Mrs Judiths closet where John George hath made a partition & door & stairs to come out of ye great room over ye hall into part of thy [...] [...] an inner chamber.'

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SCMC Trips Summary

Midweek Trips

A number of midweek trips and training sessions have taken place recently. Although there was a brief lull in September while Andy Wood was away. Most of the midweek 'trips' have been training/coaching sessions for new club members to introduce/refresh SRT skills. This has led to a couple of trips for various new members to the 40-yard level in Snailbeach. However, not all trips need to be SRT ones, so Julian and Oliver have led some walk-in trips to a couple of the more horizontal mines in the area.

Thursday 15th August - Snailbeach 40 yard Level

Alan Robinson, David Reeves, Julian Bromhead and Daniel Williams descended to the 40yd level for a look around. Steve Holding travelled as far as the bottom of Rushton's leap. No significant changes were observed on the descent since the last visit in May when some digging work was carried out below the fixed aluminium ladder and through the crawl section just above the 40yd.

Thursday 29th August - Bergam

Julian Bromhead, Chris Wood, David Poyner, Oliver Beard, Jonathan Wilkes and Steve Holding visited Upper Bergam mine for which the club are the access controlling body. Steve stayed at the entrance to do some clearance whilst the others explored the workings. It was the first time in the mine for three of the group who had to make it through the crawl sections. On the way back the group also explored the main Lower Bergam level.



Chris, Jonathan, Oliver and David Poyner in Upper Bergam. *(Julian Bromhead)*



A sleeper with intact 'dogs' (giving an estimated gauge of 21"). Improvised scale of a 9" glove. *(David Poyner)*

Tuesday October 8th Rhadley

Julian Bromhead, Oliver Beard, David Poyner, and James Heywood had an interesting evening at Rhadley. Following all the recent rain the long level was thigh deep in water, making for a chilly walk! Luckily the water level wasn't high enough to wash away the recent 'cave paintings' (created by someone during one of the Lockdowns). After exploring the various areas of the long adit the group moved further along the hillside. Crawling into the next level (which has 2 entrances) the pitch down to the tramming level was looked at. As this was not intended to be an SRT visit the pitch to the lower level was not descended.



The shallow end of the long Rhadley adit. *(Oliver Beard)*



James looking down the 'pipe' shaft in the long adit. *(Oliver Beard)*



Julian at the head of the pitch to the tramming level. *(Oliver Beard)*



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

Saturday 24th - Monday 26th August - Shrewsbury Steam Rally

Several club members joined colleagues in the Shropshire Mines Trust to help run the Trust's rock crushing display at Onslow Park over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The Club, along with the Shropshire Bat Group and I.A.Recordings had their own displays in the Trust's marquee. Several former Club members made themselves known and talked about their involvement back in the 1960s and 70s. Mike Worsfold also hung a few of his mining lamps up, which proved to be another talking point.



Peter Eggleston waits on the winch as Stuart Tomlins operates the Trust's Eimco Rocker Shovel during the steam rally rock crushing demonstration.



Catering for the weekend was overseen by Arlo, who appeared courtesy of the ACME-Harris Catering Division.
(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)

Saturday 31st August - Huglith

Steve Holding, Julian Bromhead, David Heavy, Lois Dennis, Al Braybrooke and Daniel Williams visited the main tramming level with access from Badger level and descent down the winze.

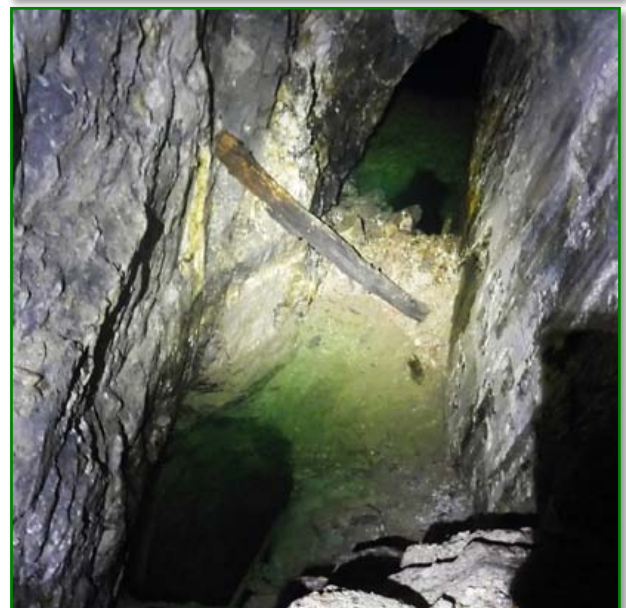
Once on the tramming level there were also descents to the sub-level workings below the rail traverse and down the handline slope. It was the first time down to the tramming level for three of the group who coped well with the prussik back-up. Dog-leg shaft and the short adjacent level were visited on the walk back.



Lois and David ascending from the sub-level below the rails, Huglith.
(Julian Bromhead)



David on the handline slope to the sub-level.
(Julian Bromhead)



Flooded workings below the handline slope.
(Julian Bromhead)



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

Saturday 14th September - Penarth

Club members Benjamin Morris, Steve Holding, David Heavey, Lois Dennis, Julian Bromhead, Alan Robinson, Vicky Robinson, Dan and Beverly Cooper made the steep trek up to this Welsh slate mine. Luckily it was great weather for the hike and gave newer Club members chance to visit a different type of mine with a variety of interesting remains on the surface and underground. Plus a bit of paddling. Overall a super day!

David Heavey



Club members heading for Penarth. *(David Heavey)*



Air receiver on the surface at Penarth. *(David Heavey)*



Remains of a slate wagon. *(Julian Bromhead)*



Remains of an underground winch. *(Julian Bromhead)*



Ben exploring a timbered level. *(David Heavey)*



Alan, Vicky, Lois, Beverley, Dan, Julian. *(David Heavey)*



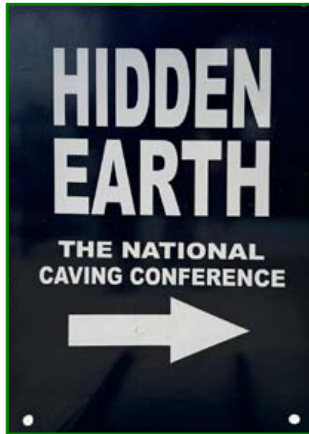
View down one of the inclines. *(Julian Bromhead)*



Alan climbing iron pegs in a face. *(Julian Bromhead)*



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...



Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd September - Hidden Earth, Llangollen

The national caving conference this year was held at The Pavilion, Llangollen. This was the site of the 2006 NAMHO Conference hosted by the club. This time the BCA Hidden Earth team had rented the entire site so delegates had the option of camping on the site, which meant you didn't have to stagger too far from the bar to your accommodation. Although in a break from tradition the on-site catering and the bar was provided by the venue rather than the BCA.

There was a wide range of lectures, although two of the lecture rooms were a little small and unless you got there early to nab a front row seat it was often tricky to see the presentation screen. The 'trade hall' was in a large area usually used for concerts. The lighting gantries also proved handy for the SRT races! In addition to the trade stands the video salon was also set-up there.



One of the talks in Lecture Room 1 on Saturday: Chris Howes and Chris Scaife (past and present editors of Descent magazine) talking about the history of Descent and the forthcoming 300th issue..

(Kelvin Lake)

Congratulations should go to club member Ian Cooper who was awarded *Distinction* for his video "Moel Fferna, Llangollen's Last Slate Mine" produced almost single-handed over the past couple of years. He only missed 'best in show' by a fraction of a point.

As the venue was so close to Shropshire, it was good to see so many club members there supporting the event either as delegates or as traders (like Mike Moore with his book stall).

Saturday 28th September - North Wales

Lois Dennis, Julian Bromhead, Nikki Paton, Emily Rose, Ben Morris and Dan Williams headed to north Wales for a walk in the woods to visit a former lead mine.

There was lots to see, including parts of old wooden machinery and plenty of nice orange mud. At least wading up a stream to view a blocked entrance washed the mud off. An epic day!



Emily, Julian, Ben, Lois, Nikki and Dan ready to go!

(David Heavey)



An old angle bob. (David Heavey)



Ben getting ready to abseil down a shaft by some pipes. (David Heavey)



Mine tubs outside a grilled entrance. (David Heavey)



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

Saturday 5th October - Huglith

Present: David Heavey, Lois Dennis, Andy Wood, Julian Bromhead, James Hobson and Steve Holding.

Andy, David and Lois descended the 'Pipe Stope' on the Huglith Riddleswood workings whilst Julian, James and Steve initially went to descend the 'Upper Stope', with the intention of the two groups later switching around.

The visit to the 'Upper Stope' went without any problems - Julian and James having a good look around whilst Steve just did the descent and ascent. The pitch was left rigged and the three returned to 'Pipe Stope'.

It seems that Andy appeared to have had a bit of an issue with the lower part of the stope (a slightly separate drop) - unwisely using an old length of rope attached to the pipe work and the rather ancient bit of ladder. What ever happened, Andy managed to have a short fall and later dragged over David to have both rolling in the mud. On exit Andy was somewhat exhausted and both Andy and David looked rather muddy (Lois emerging still clean!).

After some repairs to Andy, James and Steve returned to the 'Upper Stope' to de-rig, James making a second descent of the pitch. All came to have a look at the 'Upper Stope' but it was not re-entered by the others. So we all retired to the Mytton Arms for refreshment.

Steve Holding



Lois in the 'Pipe' shaft workings.
(David Heavey)



Lois at the top of 'Pipe' shaft.
(David Heavey)



The top pitch into the upper stope.
(David Heavey)

Purple Fungus!

While walking through the woods to the Riddleswood mine entrances James Hobson was amazed to see dozens of stunning Amethyst Deceivers (*Laccaria amethystina*). These small brightly coloured mushrooms grow in deciduous and coniferous forests. As they age they lose their bright amethyst colouration making them difficult to identify, hence the name "deceiver".

They were first described by well-known English botanist and apothecary William Hudson, who named them *Agaricus amethystinus*. The cap is 1 to 6 cm in diameter, and is initially convex, later flattening, and often with a central depression (navel). The stem is the same colour as the cap, and has whitish fibrils at the base.

Like other members of the genus *Laccaria*, this species is edible, although the flesh doesn't have a distinctive taste or smell.

However, while not inherently toxic, in soils that are polluted with arsenic, it can bio-accumulate a high concentration of that element!



Amethyst Deceivers (*Laccaria amethystina*).
(James Hobson)



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

Saturday 12th October - Eardington

David Poyner, James Hobson and Kelvin Lake visited the site of Lower Forge, Eardington to see what progress the landowner, Oliver Wassall, had made in removing the vegetation and debris from around the pit and forge site. His grant application to the Association for Industrial Archaeology (AIA) to help with the work was successful and since we were last there a lot of material has been removed and the large tree that was in one corner cut down. A wall has also been built around the pit to prevent animals and people dropping into the hole.

What was immediately striking was that the main part of the pit has all the hallmarks of a waterwheel pit - complete with holding down bolts on both sides. There were also a couple of very long bolts (over 4m), one loose in the main culvert the other in situ in a flat area on one side. There is still debris in the pit and David is keen for the club to help remove it and excavate the flat area with the long bolt to see what is there.



James and David by the new pit wall. (Kelvin Lake)



The pit with the long bolt top of picture, culvert to left.



David with the landowner, Oliver by the pit. (Kelvin Lake)



David and James studying the possible water inlet.

Studying the newly exposed area it would seem that water came into the pit area from the upper culvert (calcite scalloping on the wall suggested a steady flow) on the west side then left down the main culvert to the river on the east. On earlier visits we thought that this upper culvert was part of a flue, although you could crawl along a muddy silted brick passage to a point under the nearby smithy building to the east. The previous occupant of the smithy said there had once been a sluice by the front porch. The current theory is that water from the large waterwheel in the nearby cliff face came down its tail race which curved round into an upper level (above the main river culvert). It then passed along this upper level to a side passage which connected to the upper culvert for the pit. The flow being controlled by the sluice by the smithy. To confirm this theory we just need to make the connection between the two higher level levels. A more detailed and accurate survey also needs to be made.

As we were leaving the site, a fragment of a Madeley Wood Co. 'yellow' tile was spotted along with an interesting rectangular firebrick, also inscribed 'Madeley Wood Co.' measuring 24 x 6 x 6cm.



The Madeley Wood Co. rectangular firebrick.



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

Saturday 23rd November - Return to Eardington

David Poyner, Andy Wood, Gareth Rushton, Steve Holding, Alan Robinson, Vicky Robinson, Peter Eggleston and Kelvin Lake visited Eardington to do some digging on the flat area in the D-shaped pit where the long 4m bolts were situated, and check previous survey details.

Despite the rain, the surface diggers (David, Andy, Gareth and Steve) made good progress. Pipes related to the Ram pump that was installed in one of the adjoining rooms were uncovered.

The underground party used Peter's location beacon to pinpoint where the culvert passed under the old smithy building. Then Peter stayed underground by the 'end' wall of the culvert while Alan, Vicky and Kelvin accessed the upper culverts via the hole in the roof of the main river culvert. As we approached the 'wall' in the side culvert we could see Peter's light shining through gaps in the brickwork and were able to talk to him. It is believed that this wall corresponds to the position of a sluice that was once operated from the smithy area.

Photographs were taken, measurements checked, then the junction of the main upper culvert and the side passage was located by Peter on the surface using his beacon.

The far end of the upper culvert was also photographed. This area is unstable, with a collapse and a run-in of ash and cinder, it also ends in a wall. Could this wall be the site of another sluice?

A return visit is planned for December to do some more digging and perhaps explore the surface near the collapse at the far end of the upper culvert. More details in *Below! 2025.1*



David, Steve & Andy digging in the pit.

(Gareth Rushton)



Vicky measuring distances in the main culvert.

(Gareth Rushton)



Alan & Vicky by the smithy culvert wall.

(Kelvin Lake)



Culvert wall under the smithy.

(Vicky Robinson)



Alan crawling through the ash filled collapse.

(Vicky Robinson)



Far end wall - note the shape!

(Vicky Robinson)



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

Sunday 20th October - Llechwedd Old Workings, *Keith Whiddon*

A while back I came across an intriguing photo taken by a friend in a Ffestiniog slate mine, where an underground incline intersected a floor. The elegant track layout enabling wagons to access the incline by means of a small turntable captured my attention and I just had to know the location. Sadly I learned that it was old Llechwedd Mine and now very much 'off-limits' due the proximity to the 'Zip World Slate Caverns' tourist attraction.

I showed the photo to Andy Wood. Now that SCMC has developed a relationship with Llechwedd management through Jon Knowles and having been on an 'official' club trip to Maenofferen, I wondered if they might permit access to us. Andy had success - Jon, assisted by Mark Waite of Corris Explorers, kindly agreed to lead 8 of us (Andy Wood, Lois Dennis, David Heavey, Andy Harris, Graham Smith, Alan Robinson, Vicky Robinson and myself) on a tour down to the flooded levels.



The Llechwedd group: : Lois, Keith, Jon, Andy W, Graham, Vicky, Mark Waite, Alan, Andy H.

(David Heavey)

Llechwedd Slate Quarry was started by John Whitehead Greaves in 1846 and rapidly became one of the largest in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Chambering went down almost to sea level with 20 miles of tunnels. Water power was used extensively for driving mills, pumping and haulage. In 1889 Llechwedd became the first quarry in the area to introduce electrical power with its own hydro-electric generating station. This part of the mine worked the *Old*, the *Back* and the *New* slate veins.

After signing an indemnity form, we parked at a convenient spot near to the large pit (twll in Welsh). Here the cliff face was riddled by several underground openings – ours being the furthest and reached by a traverse across a steep and loose slate waste slope. Inside the yawning entrance a rough path led down over more scree and boulders until we eventually reached a level.

Jon took us to a chamber strewn with fallen boulders. Around 1900 a massive collapse here blocked access to the lower levels. A new incline parallel to the one destroyed had to be built. It was this incredibly slippery incline that we descended to the flooded levels. Following this level to the right we soon arrived at a very unusual feature in a slate mine. A significant brick built incline-head. It is thought that the brickwork was necessary to retain the fallen waste from the collapse. A nice feature here is the wooden insulated conduit for electrical cables that powered the



An impressive haulage incline winch.

(Graham Smith)



Head of the incline with winch above.

(Vicky Robinson)



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

incline, which is now flooded.

We explored the large chambers on this level, many with deep, blue lakes before entering a knee-deep flooded cross-cut passage. Here was a magnificent Victorian miners' staircase to the level above.

In an old caban is an interesting inscribed slate memorial. This commemorated the day in 1972 that the owners of the mine turned off the pumps and left this part of the mine to flood completely. However, just 6 or so years later, the pumps were turned on again as it had been decided to open the 'Deep Mine Tour' to tourists which meant draining this level.



The brick built incline-head.
(Keith Whiddon)



A magnificent Victorian miners' staircase.
(Keith Whiddon)



The group by the bottom of the staircase.(Vicky Robinson)



One of the flooded chambers. (Vicky Robinson)



Vicky looking at the 1972 memorial. (Graham Smith)



The switching off of the pumps memorial.(Vicky Robinson)

Nearby was a sump where a large cast iron drainage pipe had been constructed to carry water to the surface, a job originally powered by a huge waterwheel. We followed this pipe up a level emerging at the location of the photo that had inspired me to visit the mine in the first place! The group kindly indulged me by taking up positions so as to light all the different passages as I attempted to recreate the original photo. It really is a beautifully designed layout and the turntable still revolves freely (*see picture on the next page*).

We explored this level, Alan tried out an old latrine complete with bum-shaped carved wooden seat and flowing water! The chambers here are vast, but there had been some significant rock falls, including a massive boulder crushing an old wooden A-frame crane.



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...



The elegant track layout at the head of an incline which enables wagons to access the incline by means of the small turntable in foreground. *(Keith Whiddon)*

One chamber had interesting ‘spoon points’, where flat-ended rails were manually lifted into position to change the direction of the wagons. There were a number of good examples of ‘rust oysters’ growing on old cast iron piping. These formations are now thought to be the result of a bio-mineralisation process, involving bacteria and oxidation. The resultant delicate formations look just like seashells.

We returned to the incline and ascended to explore the next level and eventually climb back up to the top.

Here we entered some of the oldest high-level chambers exploiting the New Vein, including a chamber which was the last to be worked in the mine. It was clear that the aim was to rob the pillars for good slate – a very dangerous practice! In a side passage were some nice artefacts.



Detail of the manual ‘spoon points’. *(Graham Smith)*

This level provided some spectacular views down into lower chambers, until we reached a very unstable area that had originally linked with what is now the tourist part of the mine but which is blocked.

Before exiting the mine we explored the top level, which had a huge strike chamber, cutting across the places where pillars would normally be left.

The trip took about 5 hours with Jon acting as a very knowledgeable guide. It was a rare opportunity to visit such a historic mine, made all the better as so few people enter it, leaving the artefacts and geology relatively undisturbed.

Thanks

Thanks go to Jon Knowles and Mark Waite for showing us around and the Llechwedd Management team for allowing access, and to Andy Wood for organising it. There is a possibility of another trip for those club members who were on the ‘reserve’ list for this trip.



SCMC Trips Summary, continued ...

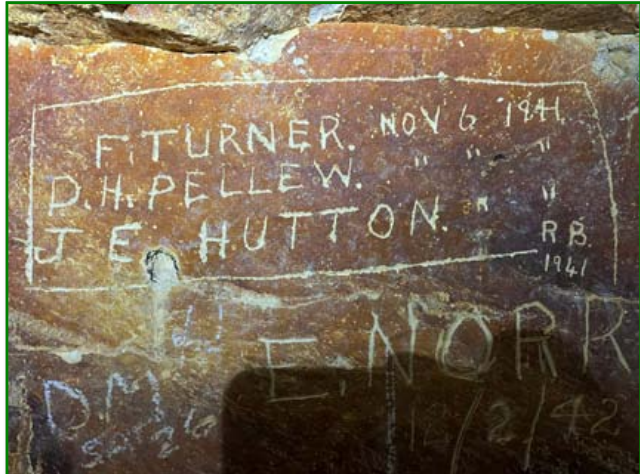
Saturday 26th October - Emmer Green Chalk Mine

Oliver Beard arranged a joint trip for the club with South Wales Mine Exploration Group (SWMEG) to the chalk mine known as Emmer Green in Reading. Club members David Heavey and Lois Dennis joined Oliver on the visit to this fascinating mine, which has had several uses over it's life. Initially worked for chalk it was used as an air raid shelter during World War II and then for storage.

The original 'walk in' entrance is now collapsed/ blocked so access is down a 20m shaft in the grounds of the 89th Reading Scout group site. The Scout group have constructed a metal shelter over the shaft and installed a metal ladder to allow scouts and other groups easier access.

A big thanks to the Scout group for making this trip possible.

It is unfortunate that this trip clashed with the wedding of Mike Moore and Beverley Cooper.



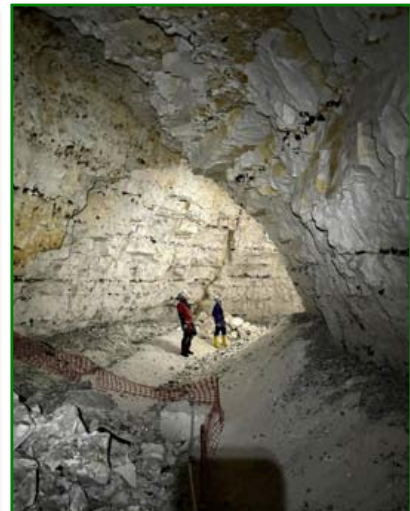
1940s graffiti underground in Emmer Green. (Oliver Beard)



A former storage area. (Oliver Beard)



The entrance shaft. (Oliver Beard)



Underground chamber. (Oliver Beard)

Sunday 10th November - Huglith

Oliver Beard led a trip for the UK Mine Exploration group (UKME) into Huglith. They descended the winze in Badger Level to the main tramming level and viewed the artefacts, wheelbarrow and colourful copper staining before returning to surface.

Huglith tramming level below the Badger Level winze.
(Oliver Beard)



View along the cross-cut off the Huglith tramming level.
(Oliver Beard)



Club Trip - Murcia, Spain, 25th April to 4th May 2023, Part 7

Andy Wood and Kelvin Lake

Day 10 - 4th May

Today, the last day of our trip, was planned to be a little more relaxed with a leisurely morning in La Unión followed by an afternoon trip to the Salt pans and harbour area of Cabo de Palos and La Manga.



The sites visited on the last day of our 2023 Spanish trip. This map has been simplified from the 590-site interactive map developed by Peter Eggleston for the Spanish trip. You can access the map at:

https://www.iarecordings.org/maps/Spain_2023_v03.html Username: **SCMC**, Password: **s8z75qu8t7**

Our first stop of the day was a coffee shop in La Unión to meet Reme, who was our guide on the 2008 Club trip. This was followed by a brief ramble around the south-west side of the town.

Mina Ocasión, Pozo Carmelo

The remains at this site include a truncated chimney, power house, a winding engine house (intact with roof) containing a flat rope winder, rope-faced wooden brake shoes, wooden headframe with tippler and raised cages. The 360m deep shaft is not capped, but has a wall built around it. The mine is sometimes labelled Mina Huerto (“vegetable patch”) on some maps. The companion shaft on this mine Pozo Alfonso was visited by some of the group on Sunday 30th April when we visited many of the mine sites on and around Cabezo Rajao, which was visible to the west.



Mina Ocasión, Pozo Carmelo. (Kelvin Lake-I.A.Recordings)



Andy Harris beside the flat rope winder remains.



Club Trip - Murcia, Spain, 25th April to 4th May 2023, Part 7

Andy Wood and Kelvin Lake, continued ...



The cage suspension system at Pozo Carmelo.



Tippler by the shaft of Mina Ocasión, Pozo Carmelo.



The mines south-west of the centre of La Unión visited on the last day and some of the distant mines visible.



Oliver investigating Mina Lo Veremos Viejo. The building on the left was the electrical power house with the winding engine house on the right. (Kelvin Lake)

Right: The headframe as it appears in 2023.



Club Trip - Murcia, Spain, 25th April to 4th May 2023, Part 7

Andy Wood and Kelvin Lake, continued ...

Mina Lo Veremos Viejo, Pozo No.1

An interesting name for a mine, which effectively translates as “Old we will see” shaft No.1. Pozo No.2 was a short distance down the road on top of a large pit mound; it had been visited in 2008. Things had changed at Pozo No.1. When we visited in 2008 the wooden headframe had a reasonably complete high-level tub platform with two tubs. Sadly these have now gone, and there were also fewer flat rope winder parts in the engine house.

Mina La Cierva (“The Doe” mine), Pozo San José

This mine is also known as Mina Sierva (“Servant” mine). Several members made the trek across to the site, via various allotments and goat pens to a steel headframe with two round flat rope sheaves and balustrade around the top. The engine house and other buildings are fairly ruinous and the open shaft has been surrounded by a breeze-block wall.



Julian by Mina La Cierva, Pozo San José.



Julian & Oliver in the engine house of Pozo San José.
(Gareth Rushton)

Salinas de Marchamalo

The salt industry in this part of Spain was established at the end of the 19th century. The salt flats, shallow artificial ponds, each one about the size of football pitch, were used for the extraction of salt from sea water. They extend from the beginning of La Manga to Playa Paraíso, and are now a nature reserve.



Salt company name on a former salt warehouse.



Part of the salt flats with a feeder channel between.

After a quick walk around the salt flats we headed into Cabo de Palos hoping to get some lunch. However, the harbour was very busy with queues at many of the restaurants. The prices had also dramatically increased since we were last there! Most of the group opted to return to Casa Perez and pack while five of us braved the wait for lunch. This proved to be a good move later that night!

After lunch, we opted for a drive along the Gran Vía de La Manga. This is a long road surrounded by apartment blocks that runs along the thin strip of land between the large saltwater lagoon, Mar Menor, and the Mediterranean (Mar Mayor).

Molino De Viento De Los Luengos

On the way back to Casa Perez there was just time to visit Molino De Viento De Los Luengos, one of the numerous wind pumps on the Campo de Cartagena. This one was once a museum but doesn't appear to be open any more and all the signs had been removed. Across the fields the remains of another windmill was visible. This was not a pump, but had been a rice mill.



Club Trip - Murcia, Spain, 25th April to 4th May 2023, Part 7

Andy Wood and Kelvin Lake, continued ...



Wooden salt truck by an old salt store, Cabo de Palos.



Molino N° 23 El Algar, a former wind powered rice mill.



Molino De Viento De Los Luengos.

And so our trip was over . . . almost! We got the cars back to the rental firms on time and were checked in and ready for our 21:30 flight, only to find that our plane hadn't actually left the UK. Luckily a few of us had eaten at lunch time so managed to survive a few hours on coffee and tea. Murcia airport doesn't have many facilities and the shops were all closing by 22:00. The plane finally arrived in Murcia at 23:36. We didn't get back to Manchester until the **very** early hours of the morning. Only to find the M6 was closed for re-surfacing, making for a long route to Shropshire.



Our plane finally arrives in Murcia at 23:36. Now to get the passengers off and us on ...

Thanks to:

Andy Wood for all his hard work in organising the trip. The drivers for ferrying us around and especial thanks to Ant and Roz at Casa Perez for making us so welcome and providing such excellent meals.



The group on the last day in La Unión after the morning coffee. **Left to right:** Steve, Kelvin, Gareth, Andy H, Julian, Graham, Oliver, Peter, Reme, Andy W. (Gareth Rushton)



Damp Days at Snailbeach

In October a prolonged period of heavy rain caused a flooding event in Landing Level. This is not a new phenomenon, but at least on this occasion it was not a day when members of the public were due to go in.

There was quite a flow of water coming out the level and going down the track towards the Compressor house. Even shimmying along the rails the depth of the water was nearly over welly depth.

There were various places along the level where showers of water were falling (places to keep an eye on for potential future rock falls), but the water falling in the Engine shaft chamber was the most dramatic. At least two water spouts could be seen entering the side of the shaft about two-thirds of the way up, cascading down over the windlass. Unfortunately, the water was too intense to get a photograph actually looking up the shaft.



Flood water at the entrance up to the base of the truck.
(Kelvin Lake)



The water made for a dramatic picture inside the level.



The wooden windlass in the middle of the downpour - luckily the drainage holes in the kibble prevented it from filling up!



Water cascading down the upper part of the shaft. At least two 'spouts' were visible shooting water into the centre of it.



New Safety Platform in the Bartye Stope, Snailbeach

With some concerns of loose rock in the Perkins Level Bartye Stope, the Mines Trust have decided to build a wooden platform below the area where the problem rocks were identified. The intention is to protect members of the public from potential future rock falls.

The work has largely been undertaken during the Thursday afternoon maintenance sessions by Alan Robinson, Julian Bromhead and Steve Holding. Vicky Robinson, Nick Southwick, Peter Eggleston and Kelvin Lake have also lent a 'hand' at times. The platform has been designed to look like a traditional miners staging using some of the existing stemple sockets. Two layers of timber planks are laid across the stemples, the upper layer being made of scaffold boards.

The traverse line above the platform will be extended as a back-up for anyone walking along it during inspections.



Julian Bromhead on the edge of the new platform.



Alan Robinson on the platform, with Peter Eggleston on the haul rope.

Roman Lead Ingots at Chester Museum

In [Below 2019.1 \(pages 8-10\)](#) Nick Southwick wrote an article about the four Roman lead ingots that had been found in Shropshire and his efforts to track them down. On a visit to Chester Museum earlier this year Alan and Vicky Robinson noted three Roman lead ingots in the museum. Two of them had inscriptions which were legible and read:- IMP.VESP.V.T.IMP.III.COS which translates to "made when the Emperor Vespasian was consul for the fifth time and Emperor Titus was consul for the third time". This dates these two ingots to A.D. 74.

On the side of them is:- DECEANGL meaning "(from the territory) of the Deceangli". This was the tribe who lived in north-eastern Wales, probably the Minera area where the lead was mined.

These ingots are about 50 years older than the Shropshire ones which are inscribed IMP HADRIANI AVG. Emperor Hadrian Augustus reigned from 117 to 138 A.D.

All the ingots are of a similar weight to the Shropshire ones (which are 190lb (86 kg)). Although the ingot in Chester with the illegible inscription only weighs 76 kg (168lb), the letters CAESARI...NI...VADON are visible on it, but this is not enough for archaeologists to make any sense of them or date the ingot.

Alan Robinson



A Roman ingot with the inscription IMP.VESP.V.T.IMP.III.COS and DECEANGL on the side. Weighing 81 kg (179 lb) it was found in 1838 to the east of Chester city centre near Tarvin Bridge.

(Vicky Robinson)



The second ingot with a legible inscription weighing 87 kg (192 lb). Found in 1886, buried deep below the surface of the Roodee. In Roman times this area was under water and was close to the Roman harbour. It is possible that the pig may have fallen into the river by accident.

(Vicky Robinson)



Crackpot Book Signing, 5th August 2024

Robert Hall

On a visit to Kirkby Stephen one Easter, I recollect a member of the local Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) lamenting the number of callouts during the winter that had been caused by “satnav on; brain off” events. The main A66 Bowes Moor trunk road across the Pennines had been shut by deep and drifting snow and some motorists decided instead to use the steep and winding minor roads past the Tan Hill Inn. This hostelry is so windswept that it was famously the setting for advertisements for Everest™ double glazing featuring that zenith of nominative determinism - Ted Moulton – dropping feathers behind the windows of the inn to show the benefits of draught proofing. At an altitude of 526 metres overlooking the A66 at Stainmore, using that route as a winter weather alternative was never going to end well and a series of rescues by the MRT ensued.

Further nearby “satnav on; brain off” events occurred in the spring and summer of 2006 on the Swaledale side of the Tan Hill Inn pass. Satnavs choosing optimal routes between Swaledale and Wensleydale selected a route that goes along progressively more minor roads through a tiny hamlet and then through a gate onto an unsurfaced track that winds steeply up to the top of a 100ft limestone cliff, before the surface deteriorates further. In this case, the local MRT was not called out, but local farmers were reported to deploy their tractors on a weekly basis to drag cars off boulders while larger vehicles struggled to turn around once the nature of the route became apparent. The need for satnavs to be reprogrammed was widely reported in national newspapers under various headlines incorporating the rather appropriate name of the hamlet; *Crackpot*.

On the evening of 5 August a combined team of KURG, SCMC (Paul Thorne, Cara Allison, John Heathcote, Steve Holding, Alan and Vicky Robinson) and WCMS members prodded their satnavs into life and went in a convoy of vehicles from Low Row bunkhouse to Crackpot. The ultimate destination was Crackpot Cave, where Pete Roe, a member of Swaledale Cave and Mountain Rescue Team (“SMRT”) has an ongoing dig and had made plain his hope for some extra muscle to move some rocks around. Whatever our satnavs said, our convoy stopped beside the track immediately beyond the gate and we switched into caving gear to make the ascent. At the top we met Pete with his trusty ancient Landrover and fellow members of SMRT: Tony, Emmy and Mary, the latter being Pete’s collie dog. Pete bore gifts: bags of cement, scaffolding clamps and other digging material for us to carry to the dig face. These thoughtful presents were in due course to be augmented by further ballast in the form of bags of sand: how kind.

The route to the cave started with a descent down the side of a limestone crag with a resurgence of a stream at the foot, somewhat reminiscent of a miniature Malham Cove. The entrance to the cave is a small hole in the foot of the crag that gives access to what is known to its few friends as the “Kneewrecker”: an entrance series of zig-zagging low grovels over polished rocks in cold puddles. Nothing at all difficult and irritatingly easily negotiated by a collie dog, but certainly tiresome when encumbered by bags. While traversing this we contemplated what we had seen at the entrance; a nicely produced wooden sign pointing into the cave with the message “Book Signing”. At this point,



Paul Thorne descends into the Kneewrecker, past the “Book Signing” sign.

(Vicky Robinson)



Crackpot Book Signing, 5th August 2024

Robert Hall, continued ...

our expectation was that this was one of those caves with a visitors' book somewhere suitably inconvenient beyond the entrance series. However, no visitors' book materialised beyond the crawl: just a well-decorated streamway.

At an apparently robust stalactite/stalagmite column, Pete recounted how the base on which it stood had had to be rebuilt dry-stone walling-style after recent floods had eroded the streamway. A small climb to a parallel passage then led up to a significant chamber with straws and many small bosses, giving it its name of "Field of Turnips". When it grows up, this chamber might become an alternative to Otter Hole's "Hall of Thirty".

It was now that the mystery of the sign was solved; Emmy had written a book entitled "Rescued?" that was "inspired by" events at SMRT and this was being sold in aid of SMRT funds. She had dragged a bag of copies through the Kneewrecker and these were the subject of the book signing. It was certainly a venue that differed from the traditional environs of Hay-on-Wye accompanied by wine and canapes, or even Waterstones with tea and biscuits. It also necessitated cash payments (waterproof notes preferred), as it appeared that she had omitted to obtain a card reader suitable for subterranean use. Nevertheless, I and others obtained copies – but on the condition that she carried it back out on the basis that only she had a bag suitable for the conveyance of such an item.

There then ensued about 90 minutes of significant effort as large rocks, many showing signs of being persuaded to become slightly smaller by means of vigorous chemical and mechanical processes, were rolled away from the dig face by our chain gang. Apart from the basic problems of large heavy rocks in confined spaces partly filled with water, a further hazard was the ear-splitting barking of Mary who regarded each rock as a potential ball to chase and was perpetually disappointed by their inability to bounce.

A rather more tired, but lightly-loaded, party traversed the Kneewrecker and exited to face the midges on the trudge back towards Crackpot enroute to the more appealing midge-free surrounds of the Black Bull in Reeth.

And the book? It is a series of short, amusing stories; fictional(ish), but not so far removed from Pete Roe's accounts of travails in the area. Fiction based on fact has form here: Swaledale is the core of "James Heriot Country", with the books of the eponymous vet being loosely related to real events, people and places. It certainly gives the sense that SMRT have more fun than the South East Cave Rescue Organisation. For example; a deliberately disjointed account of events following a truck crashing and dumping its load of naked female mannequins into the River Swale and triggering a rash of well-intentioned callouts could not be mimicked in the Mole Valley. That chapter might have more fiction about it than some of the others, but there is much here that rings bells as a wry take on events at a busy MRT/CRO. And certainly, the volume has proved a pleasant way to while away the time awaiting trains.

Copies may be obtained via other subterranean book signing events or, for the more sensible, at outlets around Swaledale or on Amazon (including a Kindle version). Some proceeds of each sale are for the benefit of SMRT.

Somewhat bizarrely, a further account of this evening, together with photos, can be found on the pages of "The Bookseller" and "Richmondshire Today" journals.



Emmy Hoyes signs books while Mary rounds up bags of cement and sand. (Vicky Robinson)



Moving rocks at the Crackpot dig face. (Vicky Robinson)



What the Papers Said

Submitted by Steve Dewhirst

MONTHLY ILLUSTRATED

THE NEW MINING ENTERPRISE AT MOAT HALL. *JUNE 1875*

We are glad to find that Mr. Shorthouse, with characteristic energy, is pushing mining enterprise beyond the old limits in the direction of Elmwood, near Shrewsbury. He is now sinking a new shaft at some distance from the old one, at which he is getting some excellent coal. Mr. Shorthouse appears to be using the best appliances for the purpose and has already got down 118 yards, he expects to find coal at 152 yards. We wish him every success and trust that his efforts will only be the prelude to further operations, for there can be no doubt but that an extensive Coal Field, as yet untouched, lies hidden beneath the Red Sand-stone, which crops out, displaying a most interesting section, just above the old Coal Field, at Red Hill.

COLLIERY GUARDIAN

FIRE AT THE BROMFORD IRONWORKS, WEST BROMWICH. *19TH MARCH 1864*

On Sunday morning a serious fire took place at the ironworks of Mr. H- Dawes, of Moseley Hall, which are situated at Bromford-lane, in the parish of West Bromwich. The fire broke out in the engine-house, from which the motive power which works the immense rolling mills is obtained. This is situated in the centre of the mills, which cover a very large area, and the engine is one of 100-horse power, and valued at about £1,000. In addition to the fire engines from the local offices, there were also present doing good service the engine of the Birmingham office, which is situated at West Bromwich, and that from the Railway Carriage Works at Oldbury, and Messrs. Chance's Chemical Works. The origin of the fire is not known. It was not extinguished until the engine with the adjacent portions of the rolling mill had been very seriously injured. The damage will in all probability amount to upwards of £1,000, but we believe that Mr. Dawes is insured.

THE LATE JOHN ANSTICE, ESQ. *8TH JUNE 1867*

A meeting attended by the principal gentry and tradesmen of the neighbourhood was held in the Infant School Room, Madeley, on Friday last, with a view of consulting as to what steps should be taken for the purpose of commemorating the good deeds of the late John Anstice, Esq., of Madeley, ironmaster; the Vicar (the Rev. G. E. Yale) occupied the chair. Suggestions were made and discussed as to the form the memorial should take; ultimately it was considered desirable to defer the question as to the precise form of the memorial until opportunities had been afforded to those desirous of subscribing of making their suggestions. Considering also how widely Mr. Anstice was known and respected, it was thought well to place the proposal on a broad basis, and resolutions to this effect were proposed by Mr. Pugh, Mr. Pearce, and Mr. Randall, and carried unanimously. All persons desirous of assisting in this laudable undertaking are requested to communicate with the secretary, Mr. H. Roberts, Gothic Villa, Madeley.

OLD PARK COMPANY - COLLIERY EXPLOSION AT DAWLEY, *6TH FEBRUARY 1869*

At the Wellington petty sessions, on Monday, Mr. Thomas William Plum, agent to the Old Park Company, appeared in answer to a summons charging the company with a violation of the colliery rules, by not providing adequate ventilation to a certain mine, at which an explosion occurred, and eleven men were burnt—one so seriously that he has since died. The circumstances detailed in the evidence showed that the ventilation of the pit was of the most incomplete character. Several witnesses were examined, and the hearing occupied a considerable time.—James Poole, a miner, said that he was in the pit on the morning of the accident, but he did not see any examination of the workings made. Part of the workings was not ventilated, but the men were engaged in making the ventilation perfect when the explosion occurred. Air could have been sent round the workings, but it was not done. He did not think there was sufficient air in the pit.—Edwin Gough, chartermaster of the pit, deposed that it was the duty of the “reeve” to examine the workings before the men went down ; and had he done so on the morning of the explosion, most likely it would not have occurred. He considered the ventilation good, but the men were engaged in making it more complete.—Mr. Wynne, her Majesty's inspector of mines, said that he examined the pit after the accident, and found that part of the workings was entirely without ventilation. The air was conveyed a certain distance through a pipe, but there was nothing put up to prevent it returning to the pit bottom. No means were taken to send it round the workings. He had never seen a worse case than this in the whole course of his life, and he felt that he should not be doing his duty unless he asked the Bench to inflict the highest penalty allowed by law.—For the defence, Mr. Parton, mine agent, of Willenhall, was called, and deposed to making an examination of the pit after the accident. He did not find any gas. Under ordinary circumstances the ventilation was sufficient. The witness was severely cross-examined by Mr. Wynne, who elicited the fact that air might have been sent round the workings by the means suggested by Mr. Wynne, but that it was not so sent.—Another witness, named Bailey, admitted that air might have been taken to the whole of the workings, but it was not considered necessary, as “ there was no gas in the pit.”—Mr. Wynne : There seems to have been some, though or it would not have exploded.—At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Smallwood addressed the Court for the defence, and the magistrates then inflicted a fine of £15 and costs. A case was granted.





Christmas Puzzles 1



Find the Mining Characters

Can you find the names of the following people who have been involved in the mines around the Stiperstones in the box below?

Bath	Harrison	Lewis	Palin	Tankerville
Clements	Hampson	Lister	Perkins	Taylor
Cross	Hewitt	Lloyd	Phillips	Walker
Dennis	Jeffries	Lovett	Ramsden	Ward
Dore	Jones	Maddox	Readwin	Waters
Eddy	Kitto	More	Roberts	Watson
Edwards	Lawrence	Mytton	Scott	



Can you turn the dial to get the right tone?

By changing 1 letter at a time to make a new word see if you can alter DIAL to TONE

DIAL

TONE



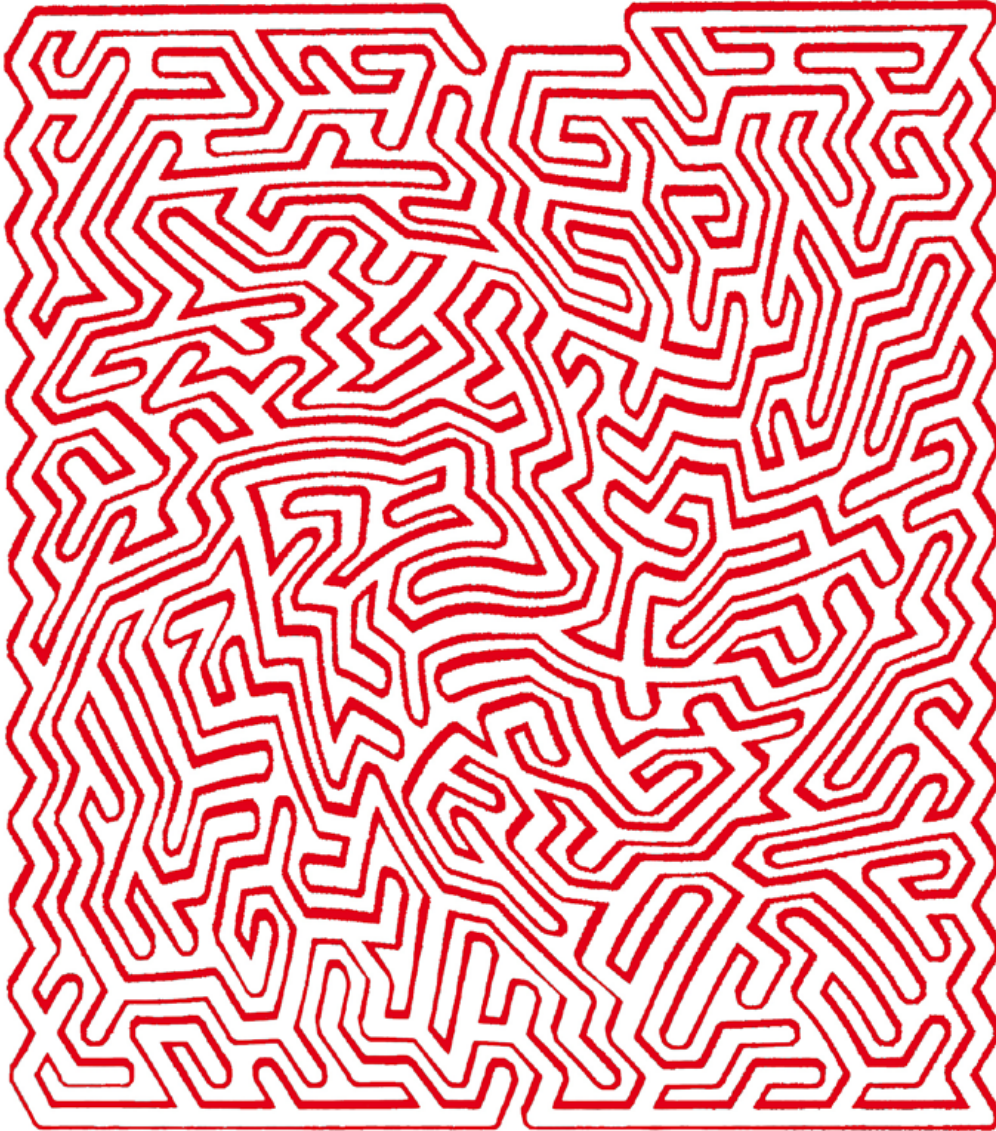


Christmas Puzzles 2



Christmas Delivery

Can you guide the Santa through the maze to 'Moley' who is eagerly awaiting his present?



Try your hand at Captions

Writing captions for the pictures featured in *Below!* can be tricky at times.

Here are 3 pictures kindly offered by the photographers, with their suggested captions. If you think that you can come up with something better please let the Editor have your copy.

1: _____



"Are you sure the plan really shows a pub down here?"
(David Poyner)



"OK, today we start SRT training."
(Gareth Rushton)

2: _____

"The piskie the club brought from Cornwall ponders its new home in Burgam."
(David Poyner)

3: _____



Parys Mountain Mine Progress

The developers hoping to restart mining at the Parys Mountain copper mine on Ynys Môn (Anglesey) have reached a "significant milestone" after submitting an environmental impact assessment as the first phase in their plans to re-open the mine that could create 120 jobs. Their tests have shown that the area around Parys Mountain contains deposits rich in copper, zinc, lead, silver and gold estimated to be "worth around £755m".

Evidence of copper mining on the mountain dates back to the Bronze and Roman ages. By the 1780's Mynydd Parys was the world's biggest copper mine and led to an economic and population boom in nearby Amlwch. Despite opening up significant underground workings about 1810, by the turn of the 20th Century all significant mining activity had come to an end.



The abandoned 1990s headframe in January 2002.



Club members viewing the open pit, 2002. (Kelvin Lake)

Anglesey Mining PLC says that any future mining would be carried out around 400m underground, potentially using the existing shaft sunk in the 1990s. The nearby historic great open pit, pearl engine house and windmill areas won't be affected. The deepest 18th Century mining was about 100m below the surface.

BBC News Report 28th August 2024



Something for the Weekend or a bit of web-reading for Christmas

Early Engine Database

If you are interested in details of some of the early steam engines erected in the United Kingdom then you will find this an invaluable resource.

The database is the result of over 40 years of work by John Kanefsky, drawing together the research and scholarship of many people. John is constantly adding to the database, the most recent being the addition of grid references by Mike Gill.

It is a record of the steam engines constructed in the United Kingdom up to the end of the year 1800. Although it only records the first erection of each engine, what happened to it later is explained in the comments section if known.

The database can be found at:

<https://coalpitheath.org.uk/engines/index>

Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland

The Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland (MHTI) existed from 1996 until August 2019 and several Club members were involved in its formation. It was a great shame that it was wound up. Luckily all the public information on Irish mining heritage that the Trust accumulated in its 23 years has been made available on the MHTI website. During its existence 17 Journals were produced, along with 80 newsletters and other publications, all of which are available to download.

Further archival information, including a large photographic collection and material whose copyright is held by others has been transferred to the Natural History Museum, in the National Museum of Ireland.

Visit the MHTI at <https://www.mhti.org/index.html> or go directly to the publications page:

<https://www.mhti.org/publications.html>

Mining Journal

For something a little different you can peruse the searchable copies of the famous Mining Journal. This weekly publication started in August 1835 with the primary aim to keep readers informed about the latest developments and trends in the mining industry, offering valuable insights into various aspects such as mining exploration, resource management and mining operations. You can search copies from August 1835 (Volume 1 issue 1) to 1961-12-29: Vol 257 Issue 6593, and the Index for subsequent issues up to 1999.

Until 1844 it was called the *The Mining Journal and Commercial Gazette*, becoming the *Mining Journal, Railway and Commercial Gazette* until 1908 when the title was shortened to *The Mining Journal*. It is still an active publication today providing international coverage of political, financial, and technical news affecting the mining industry and is published weekly by Aspermont UK.

The searchable copies can be found at https://archive.org/details/pub_mining-journal and the current Mining Journal is online at: <https://www.mining-journal.com/>

Stone Age Net Fishing Images

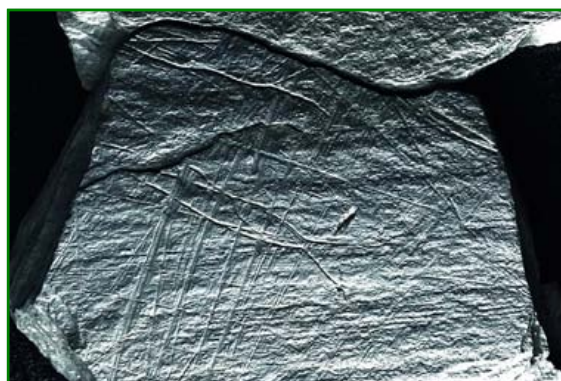
Rare depictions of Stone Age net fishing have been discovered on engraved stones thanks to a new digital imaging technique. The previously unnoticed lines forming scenes of fish caught in large nets are etched into eight stones found at Gönnersdorf, an approximately 16,000-year-old Upper Paleolithic site in Germany.

Excavations at the site from 1968 to 1976 uncovered animal bones, headless female figurines and a range of other artefacts. For the new study archaeologist Jérôme Robitaille and colleagues from Monrepos Archaeological Research Center and Museum for Human Behavioral Evolution in Neuwied, Germany examined about 400 engraved stones, or plaquettes, from Gönnersdorf using reflectance transformation imaging, or RTI. This technique let the researchers manipulate light and shadow on digital versions of engraved surfaces, revealing details that had evaded standard magnification studies.

Earlier studies had identified simple representations of fish with forked tails on four plaquettes. RTI showed that one of those four includes a grid of cross-hatched lines, probably portraying a net, which surrounds the watery prey. Another seven plaquettes examined with RTI have similar net-and-fish scenes. The title of the paper and link to it are below.

Robitaille J, Meyering L-E, Gaudzinski-Windheuser S, Pettitt P, Jöris O, Kentridge R (2024) Upper Palaeolithic fishing techniques: Insights from the engraved plaquettes of the Magdalenian site of Gönnersdorf, Germany. PLoS ONE 19(11): e0311302.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0311302>



Newly identified engraved scene of net fishing; depicts two fish (centre and top) surrounded by lines likely representing a net.

J. Robitaille et al/PLOS ONE 2024 (CC-BY 4.0)



Books

Publications are available from Mike Moore at Club meetings, or online: www.moorebooks.co.uk

Mines of the Gwydyr Forest: Metal Mining Ventures in the Heart of North Wales. (Revised 2nd Edition)

By John Bennett and Robert Vernon

Revised Second edition, published 4 December 2023.

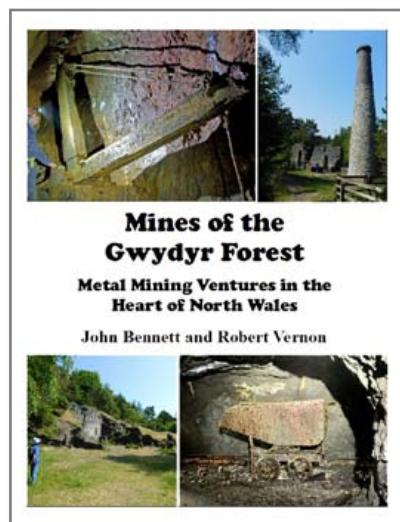
Paperback: 562 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1838362129.

Price: £40 (Club members can get a discount from Moorebooks)

Mines of the Gwydyr Forest was originally published as a seven part series between 1989 and 1997. It was well received and was used by others to conduct their own mine explorations.

It was always intended 'one day' to publish the series as one complete volume. John sadly died in 2019, but most of his historical notes survived. Rob had fortunately kept all the illustrations, together with some of the mine plans and reports, and this has enabled 'Mines of the Gwydyr Forest' to finally be produced as one complete, revised and updated, volume.

The book starts with an Introduction followed by a section on the geology and mineralisation. This is followed with examples of early mining in Gwydyr. Much of the more detailed mining information comes from the latter-half of the 19th century, and the following sections follow a similar format to the original series. The central areas, south and north, deal with Llanrwst and Hafna mines, respectively, plus related mines; North-East Gwydyr is primarily Parc mine and the plateau area to the south; North-West Gwydyr includes Pandora and the Llyn Geirionydd area; South-West Gwydyr includes the Cyffty and Coed Mawr Pool area; Aberllyn and adjacent mines are discussed in the section on South-East Gwydyr. The penultimate chapter covers the mines on the northern edge of the Gwydyr Forest, Cae Coch and adjacent mines. The book concludes with an Epilogue.



Metal Mines of Llanengan: Mining Ventures in a North Wales Parish

By John Bennett and Robert Vernon

Second edition, published 5 December 2022.

Paperback: 172 pages. 18.9 x 1.19 x 24.61 cm. ISBN-13: 978-1838362119.

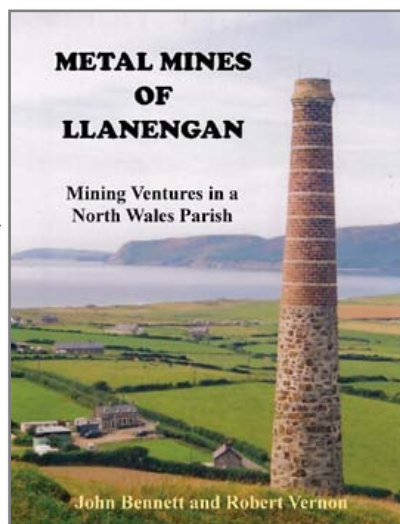
Price: £14 from Moorebooks. Other retailers are charging £18.00 to £25.00 - prices for second-hand copies of the First edition range from £15 to £45 !

The relatively unknown Llanengan metal mining field is found on the St. Tudwal's headland, on the tip of the Llyn Peninsula, North Wales. Its isolated position meant that it never was given the same publicity as many of the major metal mining areas. Nevertheless it was a hive of activity in the latter half of the 19th century, and the mines were deepened with the aid of steam power pumping water out of the workings, and for winding. Everything, from mine engines to coal was brought into the area on ships.

The book details the history of mining in the area from the 17th century through to its eventual demise at the end of the 19th century. Initially mining was conducted by partnerships that were eventually superseded by London based companies that acquired capital to purchase the necessary machinery to deepen the mines. Now there is very little to show that this area was once a hive of industrial activity, although the final chapter does suggest a small heritage walk around the area.

For a number of years, John Bennett and Rob Vernon were involved with the historical study of Welsh metal mining. Their series of seven detailed books on the Gwydyr Forest mines was a substantial contribution to the recording of Welsh mining history. In addition, they were also involved with mine site conservation projects in the Gwydyr Forest and elsewhere in Wales. John sadly died in 2019, and Rob is now involved with other aspects of mining history.

At the time of the publication of the first edition of Metal Mines of Llanengan in 2002, it did take their interests further and brought into the public domain a relatively unknown Welsh mining area. The publication of this second edition will hopefully make another generation of mining historians aware of this interesting mining field and is dedicated to John and his wife Elizabeth.



Books & Videos

Aberllefeni Slate Quarry

A history of the last underground slate working in Wales

By Jon Knowles

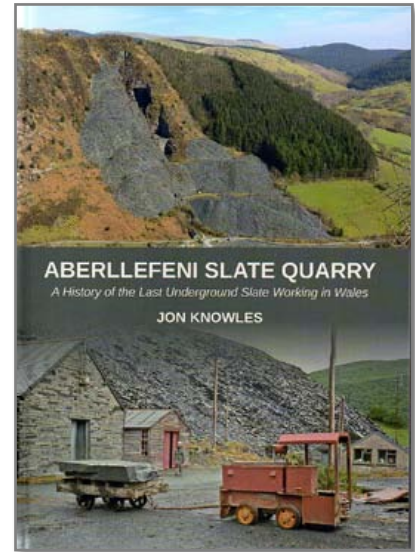
Hardback, 277 pages, colour plates throughout, A4. Price: £35.00

In Jon's own words "the book is a culmination of over 15 years exploration underground and archival research". It traces the history of Aberllefeni Slate Quarry from its inception to 2016. The quarry was one of the oldest, and certainly the last worked underground, in Wales.

Since 1985 Jon and a group of like minded colleagues have been systematically exploring the mines of the area in their spare time. After 30 years working in heavy engineering Jon relocated to Penrhyndeudraeth and is employed locally by J.W.Greaves and Sons Ltd of Blaenau, owners of the Llechwedd Mine (amongst others).

This book is a credit to Jon's expertise and determination, it is full of his own colour photographs, with black and white historical pictures. He has also provided a lot of detail of the industry itself, with the workshops and machinery supported diagrams and drawings, there are also plans of the mine. Plus a nice touch - an aerial photograph with a labelled photo on the opposite page so as not to detract from the original. I could easily go on raving about this volume but it is really an excellent piece of original work.

Mike Moore



Historic Mines of Spain Vol.4 Compilation No.57

Exploring more mines in Murcia and Andalucía

In April 2023 the Club re-visited south-east Spain to see more of the vast range of ancient and modern mines which survive so well in the country. Only highlights of the DVD are mentioned here - more details of the sites can be found in the series of reports that started in *Below! 2023.2*.

The isolated hill of Cabezo Gordo near San Javier is an important Neanderthal archaeological site and magnetite breccia has been mined there from several levels.

La Calera in the Barranco de la Mina valley was worked for iron and other minerals from 1884. A 2km long aerial ropeway was installed in 1915 and many trestles and some wire rope survive. Mining ended in 1962. Underground remains include masonry headframes and steel ore chutes.



Underground in La Calera.



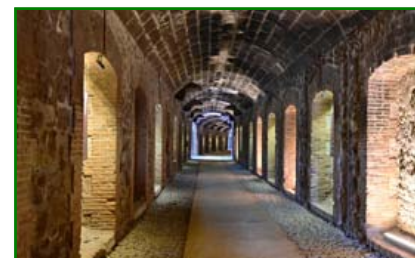
Barranco del Chaperral winder.

After visiting the rebuilt mining museum in La Unión, the Maria Dolores and Calón mines of La Parajitos were explored both on the surface and underground.

A full day was spent in the Sierra Almagrera with Rob and Boo Vernon showing us Barranco Jarosa and the almost intact British stean winder high up at Barranco del Chaperral. They then took us to El Arteal where a large tunnel, miners' village and bath house remain to tell the story of intensive 20th century mining.

Around Portmán we re-visited the wharf, the archaeological museum and the impressive Lavadero Roberto with its extensive railway infrastructure.

Corta Brunita's rusting ball mills were followed by many mines both small and large along the Rambla del Avenque, down to the tailings beach at El Gorguel. In the same day we saw the Peñarroya compressors and Túnel Lilliane at Mina Gloria; and re-visited La Parreta.



View along an Águilas rail tunnel.

Águilas has impressive iron ore hoppers above railway tunnels and a long steel loading pier. That day was rounded off with Mina Amali and Lorca sulphur mines.

Price: **£ 14.40 (DVD)** Running Time: 1 hour 15 mins. **Club discount available at meetings** or visit: iarecordings.org



Club Officers

Some Diary Dates

President: Neal Rushton

Chair: Gareth Rushton

Vice Chair: Kelvin Lake

Secretary: Andrew Wood

scmc.secretary@shropshirecmc.org.uk

Treasurer: Marian Boston

Conservation: David Poyner

NAMHO Rep: Peter Eggleston

Membership Secretary: Julian Bromhead

scmc.membership@shropshirecmc.org.uk

Tackle: Alan Robinson & Andy Harris

Training Officer: Andrew Wood

First Aid Officer: Alan Moseley

Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold

'Below' Editor, Publications: Kelvin Lake

scmc@shropshirecmc.org.uk

Monthly Meetings - Normally held on the first Friday of the month at Allscott Sports Club. **Please note:** The start time for Monthly Club meetings is 19:30 starting with a presentation or talk by a Club member (to be less than 60 minutes long), before the main meeting.

The secretary usually emails the meeting details a day or so beforehand. Please let him know if you don't receive them.

2025

January 1st: OFD: Columns Open Day. Please contact the Permit Secretary for more information:
permit_secretary@swcc.org.uk

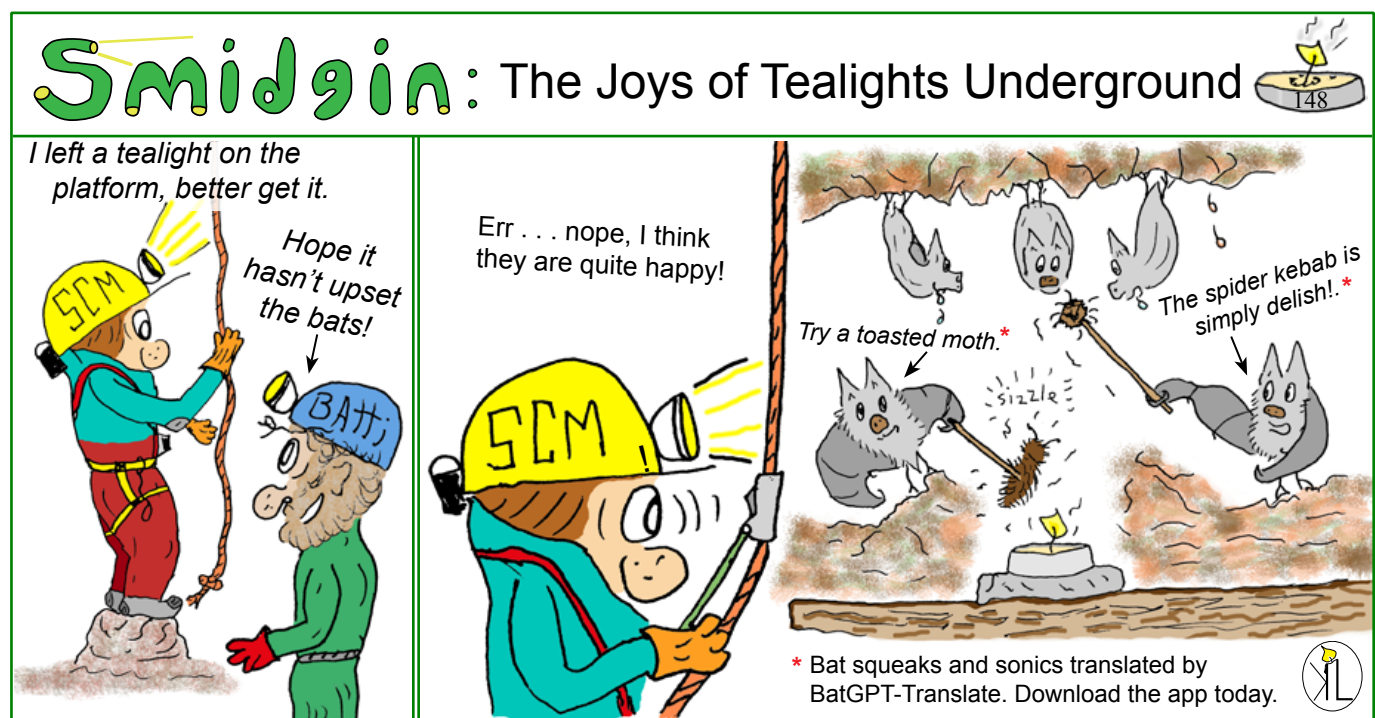
On the day you will need to make contact with the Columns Warden before 10:00am. This should be done in person at the South Wales Caving Club, Penwyllt.

April 22nd to May 1st: Club trip to South-east Spain. If you are interested in going on this trip then let Andy Wood know as soon as possible so that accommodation can be sorted/booked.

April 20th: OFD: Columns Open Day. Contact the Permit Secretary for more information: permit_secretary@swcc.org.uk

May 24th to 25th: Gaping Gill winch meet, hosted by Bradford Pothole Club. Pre-booking is not possible, winching starts at 8am. As there is a limit to the number that can be winched in one day closing is when the book is full or at 5pm. Price: £20 More details at: www.bpc-cave.org.uk/wp/gg-winch-meet/

TBA, 2025: National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO) Conference, organisers, venue and location yet to be announced.



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

