

NORTHERN CAVERN AND MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY.
NEWSLETTER JAN. 1971.

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS.

Members are reminded that Annual Subscriptions are due on the 1st January. The Subscription rates are as follows,

Ordinary (Full) Members (18 years and over)	£2.0.0.
Junior Members (15-18 years of age)	£1.0.0.
Student Members (Full time Students)	£1.0.0.
Family Members (Members of the household of an ordinary member who do not wish to receive Society publications)	£0.10.0.

Subscriptions to be sent to the Honorary Treasurer Mr N.P. Scarr, 4, Canada Drive Rawdon, Leeds. Cheques & Postal orders to be made out to The Northern Cavern & Mine Research Soc.

Please attend to this matter WITHOUT DELAY- present day postal charges make the sending out of reminders an expensive business.

Members who do not pay their subscriptions promptly may experience delays in the receipt of Society Notices, publications etc.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

Members are urged to notify any change of address at once to D. Latt, 11 Neville St, Skipton, W. Yorks. BD23 2EU.

Nomination of Officers for 1971.

Unless the Hon Sec Mr K. Walls, is notified in writing that an officer who served in 1970 does not wish to stand for re-election it will be assumed that they are willing to stand for re-election in 1971. This does not mean that someone else cannot be proposed for such a position. Nominations must be submitted in writing to the Hon Sec and accompanied by the signature of the proposer, the signature of a seconder if possible (if you don't live near enough to someone you can ask to second your proposal send it in without and one will be requested at the Meeting.), and an assurance that the person you are proposing is willing to stand for the position if elected. NOMINATIONS MUST REACH THE HON SEC BY THE 18th FEB 1971.

Members who have not paid their 1971 Subscription will not be eligible to stand for election.

PROPOSITIONS BEING PUT TO THE AGM.

Whilst propositions will be accepted from the body of the hall at the agm it would be an advantage if you would send in your proposition in writing to the Hon Sec- make sure he gets it on or before 18th February 1971

ITEMS FROM MEMBERS (in order of reception.)

NENTHEAD VILLAGE RECLAMATION SCHEME.

It was some two years ago, when the inhabitants of Nenthead village first complained about the state of their settlement. Dust from the settling tanks of the old mill blew over the village in summer, and the mill itself was in a half-demolished state. After representations to the local MP a plan was drawn up by Cumberland County Council to tidy up the village with Government grant assistance. This plan is now being carried out, and should be completed by the end of 1970, as far as the major work is concerned.

For persons who have never seen the village, it may be prudent to explain that the centre of the village was the mine dressing plant, surrounded by old buildings and large rock dumps. These were in turn surrounded by settling ponds built out of fines from the plant.

The reclamation plan had two main aspects:

1. To demolish the major part of the plant.
2. To demolish or grade the various dumps.

Part one of the plan has now been completed, leaving only one section of the plant standing, as a bus depot. Part two is being tackled slowly, and providing the amusing sight of small dragline excavators sinking at various angles into the soft settling ponds, in wet weather. Materials from the rock dumps are being used to cover some fine dumps. In addition, some old buildings have been demolished, including those surrounding WELLGILL SHAFT, sunk to the Nentforce Level. Fortunately, these have been photographed and drawings are being prepared. Excavation work at this point a large iron beam was revealed mounted on bearings, possibly to work the pump mechanism. There seems to have been a steam engine on the site also (COMMENT INVITED).

After the completion of the work on the earthworks, sites will be grassed or forested.

Nenthead is one of the few mining settlements in the British Isles which was established primarily for the mines themselves, and it may be said that reclamation has not altered the fundamental character of the village.

ADVERT

Smallcleugh & Middlecleugh Levels, Nenthead. Plans at scale of 22 fathoms - 1 inch, size 22" / 40". Posted folded up in British Isles for 4/- Post Paid. If wanted in tube send tube and return postage.

To P, Jackson, 37, Broomhall Place, Sheffield, S10 2DG.

(This by the way is an address change, Please note).

IRON MINES IN THE ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN.

Iron ore has been mined in the Forest since before the Roman Invasion, and much evidence has been found to indicate the extent and importance of Iron during the Roman occupation.

The early mining took place where ever the ore was exposed to the surface, and the mines gradually increased in depth as the ore in the surface workings was "won", the surface workings are termed Scowles-possibly a corruption of the Celtic word Crowll meaning Caves. Scowles are evident at a number of places in the Forest particularly in the area around Braam, e.g. the Devils Chapel.

Iron ore has been in the rocks called Drybrook Sandstone and Carboniferous Limestone. The latter consists of four Geological divisions.

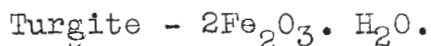
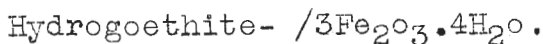
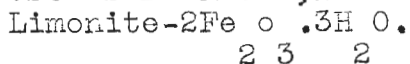
WHITEHEAD LIMESTONE	)	
CREASE LIMESTONE	)	MAIN LIMESTONE.
LOWER DOLOMITE	)	
LOWER LIMESTONE SHALES	)	

The greatest quantity of ore was won from the Crease limestone, which varies in thickness between 75 and 100ft, however workable quantities have been extracted from the other strata mentioned.

The iron ore occurs in pockets (ore bodies) which vary in size from that of a football to enormous chambers. The size of one of the chambers or "churns" can be imagined from the fact that in excess of 500 people have recently been accommodated in one, at an underground barbeque. Small veins of ore radiate from the ore bodies, and these were termed "leads" by the old miners since they often served as a guide to new ore bodies.

The ore was deposited long after the rock beds were laid down by a process in which downward percolation of iron bearing water replaced the rock by chemical means. Because of this the occurrence of iron decreases with depth, and small amounts of iron were won at a depth greater than 600ft from the surface.

Chemically the ore consists of Haematite-hydrated iron oxide and a small number of different iron hydroxides have been isolated in the Forest of Dean ore, namely;



and anhydrous haematite - Fe_2O_3 .

The various forms in which they occur are:

"Brush ore - Massive or Stalactitic ore with very little gangue (waste material) present. Removed with hammer and chisel.

(Pipey Brush)-a finer version of brush ore which was easily dug with a pick and shovel.

Ochres-soft ores,consisting of microscopic grains of haematite.

Ochres were important sources of colouring materials and a small number of mines were worked predominately for "colour", particularly St. Annals pit,nr Cinderford.

The ochres are usually red, although brown,yellow,and purple are found in workable quantities.

Metallic iron in the best quality ore represents approximately 60% by weight,although the average quality was probably nearer 45%.

The iron mines have been active for more than 2,000 years (untill1945)the only production figures available date from 1861.

Between 1861 and 1925,3,903,000 tons of ore were raised. By 1921, however , mining had virtually ceased,(as a result of the increasing difficulties of mining and the low price that could be obtained), and in 1921 only 1,727 tons were raised. The last iron mine in operation-New Dun Pit-was reopened in 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, finally closing in 1945.

"FREE MINERS"

"Bee itt in minde and Remembrance what the Customes and Franchises hath been that were granted tyme out of minde and after in tyme of the excellent and Redoubtable Prince King Edward unto ye Miners of the Forest of Dean and the Castle of ST. Bridvills....."

These are the opening words of a manuscript called the Book of Dennis, which sets out the rights and priveleges of Free Miners in the Forest of Dean.

The currant deginition of a free miner is a man who "being boꝝn and abiding in the Hundred of ST. Briavels" has worked a year and a day in a mine ,either coal or iron.

Only free miners can lease a "Gale"(the name given to an area in which a mine can be worked) from the Crown(the owner of the mineral rights in the Forest), however the Free Miner then has the choice of working the mine or sub-leasing to others. Should the mine cease to be worked ,the Crown Lease will expire at the end of a period of time , when the Gale can be leased again, to any Free Miner who makes the proper application.

The ancient priveleges of the Free miners were very Jealously guarded during the 16th to 18th Centuries, and a main Law Court sat at regular intervals,consisting of either 12 ,24 ,or 48Free Miners, under the presidency of the Constable of ST. Briavels Castle, or his Deputy. The Mine Law Court dealt with such questions as the price

to be paid for iron ore delivered to various places inside the Forest and outside, and the interpretation of the rights and privileges of the Free Miners.

The same conditions apply to the leasing of coal mines and quarries, and although the large coal mines have ceased production some Free Miners are still working Coal Mines on a small scale.

OLD HAM IRON MINE

Old Ham mine is one of a series of mines, between Coleford and Clearwell, which follow the iron ore down dip (underground) from the surface outcrop. Underground connections exist between Old Ham and Lambsquay Pit, New Dun Pit, and Red Pit.

Fragments of clay pipes that have been found in Old Ham indicate that the mine was being worked in the mid 18th Century although it is highly likely that the mine was active before this.

In the Award of The Forest of Dean Mining Commissioners 1841, the boundaries of Old Ham were defined, and a payment of 3s per ton of ore extracted was set, to be paid to the Crown, with a minimum of £2 per annum.

Between 1846 and 1900 the Mine produced (Old Ham) 62,000 tons of ore, and from 1909 to 1919, 3,000 tons were won.

It was noted during the geological survey of the Forest in 1918/1919 that "the winning of ore is at present incidental to the development of colour. Exploration of colour leads is in progress and ochre is being won from one churn". From this point it is apparent that very little iron ore was being won in Old Ham at this time. The production figures for 1925 was 18 tons, and the mine ceased production altogether shortly after this date.

The connection between Old Ham and New Dun Pit was used as a walk-in route to the New Dun Pit (in preference to the shaft). and this route is mainly followed during "tourists visits to the two mines.

Reproduced with permission of the Forest of
Dean Caving Club,.

REPORT OF PRIVATE MEMBERS MEETS IN THE N. West AREA. FROM STEPHAN COATES.

-Under Kneeton .

An 80ft shaft discovered while demolishing farm buildings at Under Kneeton (Scotch Corner) was laddered, while a steady rain was falling. Mr Bob Guthrie then descended, the 15 ft of water thought to be at the bottom turned out to be only 1ft. An 1 1/2 inch dia pipe which goes down the centre of the shaft carries on through the rubble at the bottom. In one corner at water level Bob found what might have been the beginning of a passage. He came up and decided that it was probably only a well .

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West Scrafton Pot.

9 members were present, 6 of whom entered the pot, whilst the others went off to examine the new Swineside Cave.

West Scrafton entrance is a little way downstream of the bridge (12 to 15ft) on the left bank. A 15ft entrance climb down, and a 60ft pitch took us to Boulder Chamber, after walking a little way and crawling for some distance through a maze of passages we came to the top of a 12ft pitch with an iron cart axle for a belay. Once down the pitch there was a small chamber containing a sump which prohibits further exploration, so we retraced our steps, to Boulder Chamber exploring further passages on the way.

We left the upper levels for a latter exploration as we were anxious to bottom the pot along the North West Passage. This passage is a combination of walking and crawling at the end of which is a 20ft pitch followed by another of 20ft within a few yards. At the bottom of this pitch, along a short crawl is another sump.

We had been underground for about 4 hours now so we set off for the Boulder Chamber and out.

Stephen Coates.-

HOW DOES YOUR CLIMBING COMPARE?

with the following account of the Peruvian yellow pyrites miners as related by Charles Darwin in 1835 when he was on his famous voyage round the world which was to revolutionise beliefs as to the origin of the Species.

"The workers known as Apies, or beasts of burden, were truly such. They carried loads of up to 200lbs for the greater part of the way climbing upnotched poles placed zigzag up the shaft. There was a rule that the miner was not allowed to halt for breath unless the mine was 600ft deep. These men carried an average twelve loads a day, that is to say 2,400lbs, from depths of 250ft, or more, and in addition to these gigantic efforts they were required to break up the ore when they reached the surface. Yet with all this Darwin was astounded to find them apparently healthy and cheerful. Their cloths were bizarre: longshirts of a dark coloured baize, with a leather apron, fastened round the waist with a bright coloured sash, wide trousers, and a close fitting scarlet cap.

Transcribed from Darwin and the Beagle, by Alan Morehead.

NB A drawing shows the trousers to be knee length, with a 2 or 3 inch paler coloured under trouser or fringe just covering the kneecap. The leather apron covers all round the thighs and waist to 5 inches above the knee.

R.G.GUTHRIE.

THE LAW AND YOU.

That was the heading of an article in the July News Letter which has provoked some comment?

Mr H.W. Ratcliffe, took the subject up with the P.R.O. of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment. One extract from his letter is reproduced: "I understand that prospecting for uranium in this country requires no more approval than would be required for any other mineral and that, should you discover large reserves of uranium-bearing ore, the Institute of Geological Sciences in London would be very interested to hear from you."

A cutting also enclosed is reproduced in part.

URANIUM MINING IN BRITAIN. from ATOM165.

Mr Barnes asked the Minister of Technology if he will take further steps to encourage commercial exploration of uranium and other radioactive minerals in this country.

Mr Benn: As I told the House on 20th March, 1968, the Atomic Energy Authority has commissioned the Institute of Geological Sciences to undertake a reconnaissance survey for radioactive minerals in selected areas of the United Kingdom. But, in view of the increasing interest now being taken in mineral exploitation in Britain, I am satisfied that it would also be right to allow exploration to proceed on a wider basis. Section 7 of the Atomic Energy Act, 1946, allows me to acquire compulsorily the exclusive right to work radioactive substances without paying compensation.

While this power has not been used, it operates as a deterrent to exploration for uranium by the mining industry. I am, therefore taking this opportunity of making it clear that I do not intend to use my powers to deprive mining companies of the opportunity of working any uranium which they may find and for which they may obtain planning consent. Any necessary amending legislation will be introduced when a suitable opportunity occurs.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

DATED 9 JAN 1971.

Please note all Members and all others who read this News Letter. THAT PERMISSION HAS BEEN REFUSED to all Raby Estate, ie, FLUSHMERE, SKEERS, and FIRESTONE LEVELS.

In the interests of good relationships with all the interested parties I would ask ALL MEMBERS AND OTHERS, TO AVOID THE

WHOLE AREA OF TEESDALE NORTH OF THE RIVER.

MR Foster-Smith depends on goodwill with owners, for his livelihood so I would advise members not to bring his name into conversation with any irate owners. It has been done twice in the past to my knowledge and is most unfair.

I stated at the General Meeting ON 22nd Nov. 1970 that Flushmere and the Raby Estate were forbidden but apparently some members were not aware that Skeers and Firestone were also involved. R. Guthrie.

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That concludes Articles from Members, For this issue, Next Issue will contain Report from the Rundale Mines and Escarpment area. Some information on the Leadhills Area (May 30th Meet) Additional information welcome for this area or members views) and a report of the Teeside Industrial Archaeology Group, s visit to Low Worsall, nr Yarm. Plus a report of the 11th A.G.M. to be held on the 21st of Feb 1971 at the Overdale Hotel, Skipton, at 2PM.

MEETS FOR 1971, are not as frequent as last years, due in the main to the very difficult position of keeping on the right side of the law, and obtaining permission for access, this is quite a problem these days, and getting worse.

Members are advised to ask at all times for permission to enter private land or mines, and to work in small groups.

A major Dig is contemplated on Greenhow, as a follow up to the information we now have, the Buckden and Bishopdale Mines are still not finished with, for this project we have invested in a very complete set of Aerial Photos, (I am given to understand that the W.R.C.C. have also had an aerial survey done, of the whole of the West Riding.) Any information?

One aspect of our work, should not be overlooked, this was pointed out by Dr A. Raistick at the Annual Dinner,

That evidence is swiftly being destroyed of past works, and that we should record in Black and White, and Notes at every site we visit.

So, whilst meets may be curtailed a little, plenty of avenues still remain to be exploited, if, and when, reports are completed, please bear in mind that the best resting place for them are the SOC RECORDER, who can then incorporate them in the Regional File.

REquest from R. Guthrie.

Has anyone any clear Black & White Photos of Easter Grotto? Wanted for an Article to be published in March. Please write Bob if you can oblige.

The Earby Pothole Club found in a new Dig, remains which have now been identified as OX or a Bison. Most probably OX, since Bison did not survive the Pleistocene Age in Britain.

These specimens were sent via J. Wilcock, to Dr A. J. Sutcliffe. John has asked me to inform members of the need to appoint Regional Recorders who would compile records for Caves of the Northern Pennines, as well as East Yorkshire, and the remainder of Northern England, with the exception of the Lake District and Morecambe Bay area, this work is for C.R.G. Anyone willing to undertake this work, should have an interest in Archaeology and/or Palaeontology. for the present time, reports of this nature can be sent to me, (D.P?) as well as all Newsletter material.

D, PLATT. SKIPTON: