

NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY

Newsletter                      August 1976

Forthcoming Events

Aug 14/15 Swinhope Area. Meet at GR Sheet 84 NY896347 at 10.30am.

Sept 5      General Meeting at 186 Station Road, Billingham at 14.00hrs.

Sept 11/12 Hurst Mines. Meet at Green Dragon Hotel, Washfold at 10.30am  
GR Sheet 90 ZZ052029.

Oct 2/3      Annual Dinner start at 8.30pm.

To be held at Harefield Hall Hotel, Pateley Bridge. This is a meal with a difference, being a 17th Century Banquet comprising 5 course meal, wine, mead and ale, serving wenches and entertainments (note not entertainment by serving wenches).

The price of the dinner is £4 each and as there is a maximum that they can cater for, it will be a case of first come, first served. (Full money and completed booking form to be returned to M.Gill 38 Main Street, Sutton, Keighley BD20 5HD before 18 Sept.

The Sunday will be spent in the Greenhow Area (Not Chimney Shaft). Camping at Riverside Caravan Park, Lofthouse Rd, Pateley Bridge. GR Sheet 91 SE 154657.

Nov 6/7      Presidents Talk-in and General Meeting

It was decided to hold a Presidents Talk-in and Pie and Pea Supper and Firework display (bring your own fireworks) on the Saturday preceeding the General Meeting on Sunday 7th Nov.

~~Accommodation is available in the Scout Hut, Skipton, so sort~~  
out your slides, lectures or funny stories - or just bring yourselves.

Starts 2.30pm Saturday (see booking form which is to be returned to H. Houghton 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds LS6 4LY before 23rd Oct. Price 50p)

Nov 21      Chimney Shaft

This Sunday is to be the last chance for anyone interested to descend Chimney Shaft before it is capped. Meet at 11.00am at GR Sheet 91 SE 109642.

Meet Reports.

Report of a visit by the Northern Mine Research Society.

April 20th. 21st. 22nd. & 23rd. 1976.

To pass an opinion on the S.Devon and E.Cornwall mines and minerals after a 4 day visit is ridiculous to say the least. I have been asked to do this so this is the result.

On Tuesday 20th. Owen Baker and Brian Cooper escorted 6 members of the N.M.R.S. to Kelly & Hennock Mines. This was the first time I had seen micaceous haemetite in situ. It's consistency and brightness even after years of exposure amazed me. The use of haemetite ore for paints and ocre colouring is common but as a drying agent before the use of blotting paper it just did not appear to have an absorbant texture. The stamps and mill though robbed and neglected were extremely interesting as these were the first Californian Stamps seen.

Brian's key opening his iron door at Hay Tor took us into a man-made cavern resembling Daylight Hole in the Furness district only the mud was much cleaner. Brian claimed Hastingsite, magnetic ironstone and numerous other minerals with wierd and wonderful names but I only saw rocks with different weights and textures all dull and dark coloured. This accounted for West Country collectors being predominantly interested in crystal minerals to the exclusion of all massive forms.

Birch Tor and Vitifer were next on our way to Tavistock. The afternoon was just made for our moorland rambling over the hushes and opencast workings which in the afternoon light were plain to see and a pleasure to potter around, although the wheel-pits etc. must be very dangerous in fog or darkness.

Thanks Brian and Owen for a wonderful day on and around Dartmoor.

Wed. 21st. Cyril Stevens and his two able assistants provided a change of guides for Wed. and Thurs. and exceedingly good they were, but they did not tell the story of how VIRTUOUS LADY MINE got its name. Surely some research is indicated on this matter. With a name like that it's unthinkable that an explanation is not available. This privately owned and administered copper mine is probably in the most beautiful setting possible. "Drop over anytime" which is Peggy Oxenford's war cry is very appropriate as her garden is perched on a 100ft. precipice with the river below. If I lived in Plymouth area I would spend hours surveying and mapping the various sites and workings. The dead tree branches which have absorbed the green copper staining is another first. An extra hours bonus was a look at her mineral specimens.

The Mary-Tavy-Tavistock-Morwelham canal and port gave an industrial archaeologist an idea of trade in the 1850's but the present set-up leaves a lot to be desired, but at least it's an attempt to bring visitors to see what it is all about.

Thurs. 22nd. Carradon dumps yielded copper the size of a shilling (5p). Tretery Quoit and the Hurlers at Minnions gave us an appetite for a pasty and a drink. The Cheese-wring and the nearby granite quarry were viewed on the way to Pheonix Mine. Kit Hill adit seemed to be a good example of tin and wolfram in a white and speckled granite. WARNING - watch your exposures any underground photographers as a flash will be reflected, not absorbed. I enjoyed Kit Hill, it seemed different.

Fri. 23rd. Roy Shambrook took over as leader for the Devon Consuls. The old arsenic plant with 5 calciners and the usual labyrinth and chimney were most interesting as sufficient masonry is still there to show what a huge complex it was when in full production. The size of the burnt and unburnt tips of fines gives some idea of the volume processed. The plant at present re-processing the fines is typical of undercapitalised undertakings, but most interesting almost because of this. Our guide provided by the company was exceedingly knowledgeable about the old Devon Consuls, but what is equally important, could pass it on to all who cared to listen.

From here we walked the area before taking the cars to Ding Dong and two underground trips which had good entertainment value. The green flowstone on the walls was too soft, the wolfram too hard, and the wooden planks to walk on slippery enough to send 2 out of 6 thigh deep in red ouse.

Good entertainment was had by all. Thanks are extended to all concerned.

Cyril and I will have to have another get-together.

R. Guthrie.

#### Wanlockhead Meet. July 10/11.

Eight members, supported by Kim and Emily, camped on the Elvan Water on the Friday night, and set out for the rendezvous at the Wanlockhead railway station on Saturday. Having bumped over rough tracks to a desolate piece of moorland, they were assured by Mike that they had arrived. There was not a train in sight, not even a railway line, but the meet leader was eventually discerned scampering through the village towards them. The party then set off to see the site of the Water-level which had been begun in 1763 to bring water under the Mennock Hass for the water-wheels on the mines. At a time when most people considered it was not for mere mortals to make streams to flow in the opposite direction from that which nature intended, it must have been a bold

decision. Back into the village, we gathered at the old smithy for a picnic lunch. Eatables included cold pies. Yes, genuine cold pie straight from the freezer in the Store. But at least the hot weather meant that there was warm beer with which to wash it down.

The Meet co-incided with the opening of the Mining Museum and this was the next port of call. Under the direction of Geoff Downs-Rose, the Museum Trust have renovated a derelict cottage and the museum is now enjoying a successful season. A feature of the display is a working scale model, of the water-powered beam engine, still on the Straitsteps mine: so, after examining some inconclusive excavations of what was thought to be a steam engine house on the Beltongrain mine, the party set off for Straitsteps. This was once pumped by two waterwheels, the Black engine and the Little engine, using water from the Mennock level. Towards the end of the last century, the beam engine now by the shaft was installed. Its remains are in the care of the Dept. of the Environment, and the renovations they had carried out were examined. We then visited the Summer School sites at Pates Knowes smelter, and the Bay Minehead. It is now planned to consolidate the remaining foundations at these sites using labour provided through the Job Creation Scheme.

A walk down the tramway track took us to the ruins of the big Wanlockhead smelter. This was built in the 1840's, as much to obtain a better supply of water, down the valley, as to remove the fume nuisance from the village. It was modified at various times with large condensers and flues, and probably worked until the 1920's.

The day ended with a gathering at Bill's cottage, large containers of 'real ale' being specially provided. Those present were assured that a recently installed main sewer meant that there was no fear of overloading the drains!

On Sunday the sun shone again and we toured the mining grounds of Leadhills. A start was made at the site of the old workshops and washing floors near the present golf course, and from there the line of the old tramway was followed to Minehill. The concrete ore hoppers at Wilsons mine offered a vantage point for the mine workings, and the lines of the old lades. These included one to the Susanna mine, the subject of a protracted lawsuit between the Scots Mines Co. and the Leadhills Co. in 1840. A visit to the site of the Minehill smelter offered the opportunity to puzzle over the amount of ash and cinder which now marks the spot, and to speculate if it had been a reverbratory furnace instead of the usual ore hearth. We then went on to the ruined buildings around the Glengonnar mine. This was the last to work in Leadhills, closing in 1928. It used electric power below ground, and the workings were sunk to 260 fathoms below the adit.

We then broke off for lunch; there being no cold pie, some of the party were seen heading for the Hopetoun Arms, and its doubtful comfort. However, fortified for more history, we started the afternoon in the

Miner's Library. This was founded in 1741, and its first members paid a subscription of 2/- (10p) to take out books once a month. The first books included little of mining technology, and, after a hard day, the members seem to have regaled themselves with religion and philosophy.

The meet ended with what proved to be an interesting visit to the Susanna mine, once the richest in the area, and first worked open-cast in the 17th century. It was now a scene of unwonted activity, as a small band from the Scottish Mineral and Lapidary Club, assisted by a 'JCB', were found opening up one of the adits - The Level Drift - and setting timber by cut and cover. Overtures, however, were not encouraged and it was clear that those concerned were keeping the whole affair to themselves. Later that evening it was found that the level was in any event blocked by a run-in, and it was considered that a major operation was involved if these old workings were to be safely opened up.

W. Harvey.

#### Amendments to Members List.

#### Late Renewals of Membership.

TEL.

|                  |                                                       |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| G.W. Madoc-Jones | Borthwen, The Green, Denbigh. LL16 5TL.               |
| B. Pyatt         | 2 Botany Avenue, Kings Park, Bradford 2.              |
| C.A. White       | 22 Bracewell Street, Barnoldswick. Lancs. B/lick 3674 |

#### Changes of Address

|              |                                                     |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| P. Jackson   | 1 Basegreen Crescent, Gleadless, Sheffield S12 3FD. |
| L.J. Taylder | 14 Lavender Gdns., Lonfell, Gateshead NE9 5TB.      |

#### New

|                       |                                                                                         |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| D.A. Appleby (Junior) | 22 Belle Vue Road, Scholes, Leeds LS15 4AB.                                             |
| T.A. Bowland (Full)   | 12 St. Nicholas Way, Wiggington, York YO38GW.                                           |
| D.J. Briscoe (Full)   | 42 Leyburn Rd, Skellow, Nr. Doncaster.                                                  |
| P.J. Briscoe (Full)   | Lloches, Job Lane, Hattersley, Doncaster.                                               |
| R.G. Cooper (Full)    | Dept. of Geography, University of Keeld, Keele,<br>Staffs. ST5 5BG<br>Bus. 0782-71-371. |
| M.J. Turner (Full)    | Millbeckstock, Bowness on Windermere, Cumbria,<br>LA23 3DS<br>Wind. 3491.               |
| M.V. Twigg (Full)     | 73 Beach View Road, Kingsley, Cheshire. WA6 8DG.                                        |
| D.I. White (Full)     | 339 Wakefield Rd, Denby Dale, Nr. Huddersfield.<br>Yorks. HD8 8RT.                      |

Note You should have received your copy of British Mining No.2 by now, and B.M. No.3 will be going to the printers anytime. Dick Bird would be grateful for any articles for future publications as soon as possible, so don't just sit on part completed articles, finish them and post them.