

Library

NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY

Newsletter

May 1977

I must apologise to those members concerned for the state of part of their last Newsletter - older members will recognise the signs as being the work of the retired hand duplicator. As the electric duplicator developed a minor fault unfortunately we had to finish some of the pages off on this beastie and it consumed more than it regurgitated. This should not happen again as a permanent cure has been found.

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Following the report about the Carrock Mine, in the last Newsletter, the following recently appeared on the financial page of the Daily Mail:-

"There's wolfram in them there fells...

If you find yourself in the northern part of the Lake District, with a few hours to spare, the operators at Carrock Fell mine would be grateful if you do not come too near their workings.

Since the mine was re-opened last year there have been coachloads of visitors trying to see how a curious and expensive metal is won from the surrounding fells.

Carrock Fell is a wolfram mine, and the wolfram price has gone through the roof in the past 18 months. Wolfram is the oxide of tungsten, a very heavy metal with a high melting point, used in light bulb filaments, special steels and the hard edges of cutting tools.

Much of the world's reserves are in China. Recently the Chinese have been reluctant sellers, while the Russians have been keen buyers. Thanks to capitalist supply and demand, the price has more than doubled.

The Carrock Fell mine should shortly be producing ten tons a month of wolfram concentrate. It may not sound much, but at £6500 a ton, its worth more than £500,000 a year.

If the wolfram price holds up the mine could last a decade, a wonderful investment for Amalgamated Industrials, who bought into it last year after a Canadian outfit, World Wide Energy, had spent £250,000 on preliminary work and nearly given up.

AI have an option on a half share in the mine in return for meeting all the costs for 12 months to August this year. These will add up to less than £250,000, and they've got a bargain."

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Quote from Mining Journal, 7.1.1888:

Edward Ashmead, F.C.A., professional company secretary and secretary of Russell Mines (Tavistock), 1881-89: "Fortunately most miners and lovers of mines are optimists, and ever wear a cheerful countenance."

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Did You Know?

That Full members can obtain back copies of publications at full price less 10% discount. Any other persons to pay full price.

That car stickers and metal lapel badges can be obtained from Lynda Finch, 10 Exeter Crescent, Killinghall, Harrogate. Prices -

Car Stickers 40p collected, 50p posted.

Badges 35p collected, 45p posted.

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The Saga of Virtuous Lady Mine. (Continued from last Newsletter).

The following has been received from Mr.J.D.J. Wildridge.

"In paragraph two the assumption of Justin Brooke about the Keswick Mines may be wrong.

The mine in question is Goldscope, and the date of its discovery is not certain, but the following may be of interest, and any dates I give are documented fact.

Newlands was said to have been a copper mine from the thirteenth century, and if this be so why did they not go straight there (they were mining lead just over the hill at Stoneycroft in 1564). They began work at Goldscope (originally called by the Germans 'Gottesgab' - Gods Gift) a little before Easter 1566 and in August of that year one Thos. Thurland wrote to Lord Cecil that a copper mine had been discovered there (Newlands) the richest in all England.

It is possible that he should have said re-discovered, but if so the above question needs to be asked - why wait two years before going there?

The trouble mentioned in the same paragraph was the Earl of Northumberland suing the Queen (Elizabeth I) for the right to extract ore from Goldscope. He had to be restrained because gold was reputed to have been extracted and in those days it was a royal metal and could only be mined by the Crown. He lost his case.

The copper smelt mill at Keswick started operating in the summer of 1566 and before this if any was done in the area it must have been on a very small scale because there is no record of smelt mills in the area for copper before this date. Before this date copper was probably being mined at Coniston but was not smelted in the Brigham Smelt mill, or in the Keswick area before 1566.

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Quote from Mining Journal 3.1.1891.

"A temperance almanack shows a publican carrying to his safe a pint pot containing sovereigns derived from the pockets of working men. There is something wrong here . . . for even non-experts know that gold is not found in pints but in quarts."

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The Miner by D.Schofield.

"He putteth forth his hand upon the flinty rock;
He overturneth the mountains by the roots.
He cutteth out passages among the rocks;
And his eye seeth every precious thing.
He stoppeth the streams from flooding;
And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light."

So wrote the author of the book of Job in about the fourth century B.C.

I am indebted to the miners of long ago, who have left so many passages among the rocks, so many mountains overturned. There is evidence in abundance of the miner putting forth his hand, the ravaged landscapes of many of our old mining areas bear mute witness to his activities in the past, and to the price we have for industrialisation and profit. The one thing that depresses me is the fact that with 100,000 old mines in N.W.Derbyshire alone, 97 leadmines in Flintshire etc, etc and so on, it is going to take me a long time to get round them all, I shall have to stick to one area and study it in depth.

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Strontian Meet - 8th to 11th April, 1977.

Members attended:-

Meet Leader - Jerry Landless
Members - Harry Houghton, Sue and 'Kim'
Phil Pashley and Stuart
Bob Blewitt and Pauline
Graham Hopwood and Janet.

I do hope nobody else tried to find us and are still floundering in the Sound of Mull or some such place. Sorry about that, I was using an old military map - thats my story and I am sticking to it.

Harry and party arrived by 3pm on Friday so a quick tent putting up job was carried out, some quicker than others. We were underground by 4pm to have a look around the shafts in our immediate vicinity (Belsgrove Engine Shaft). We first had a look in the Engine Shaft from a side passage entered from the open cast workings. The entrance to the heading was a bit blocked so we removed a few small boulders and in we went. The shaft itself is a bit uninviting as it takes water all the time but quite impressive and still in good condition: it is capped with stout timbers. Stuart crawled into the heading trying very hard not to get his new Kag dirty, which he managed and was the only one who could walk upright. We removed ourselves and had a look at the shaft the other side of the road. It is a stope which has been worked out to the surface and is about 100' from surface to bottom of the workings. It is three years since I was last underground at the mines and considerable decay has taken place, and what used to be an easy climb over boulders and rubbish now requires a ladder. We looked at the only part that has been really stoped

out and there being no decent belay point no one really wanted to go to the bottom to have a look - sad, it is quite impressive.

We had been joined by Bob and Pauline. Bob had joined us underground and was first up the ladder so did the honours with a life line, which Harry needed, but to be fair he was humping a rather heavy camera box about.

It was a very cold and clear night. Sue took to the use of two hot water bottles - such luxury - and very wise!

Saturday we managed to crawl out by 9am and after breakfast and some discussion it was decided to look at Fee Donald Mine. I could not remember any shafts there but I could remember loss of water so wet suits were taken but no ladder. Harry, in his usual fashion, took the car and I just had to pop down to the village for some food, so went with Harry's party, while Bob, Pauline, Graham and Janet (who arrived late Friday evening) took to the hills. We all arrived at a small bridge about 1 mile from the mine at the same time - hard luck Harry the car will not get across, so to foot.

We had a general look around and generally identified bits, then walked to the far end of the mine to Antomany Vein, which has always been flooded but on this occasion it was not. It extends for about 60' with a water filled shaft about 30' from its portal. We found two more of this type of working. We had a look into the entrance to the Lower Level of the main workings and Bob declined to go too far up because of a blockage and water so I changed into my wet suit and up I went. Lying in about 18" of water (very cold water) I cleared the blockage and pushed through only to be faced by another and complete. Very sad. We had a look at the surface up the line of workings and there it was - newly fenced off - a shaft, 50' deep or so, all very sad no ladders. This could be a ladder way into Middle Level.

I did not want to change so walked back to camp with the others a very pleasant walk. After a nice cuppa Harry and I had a look at the Main Adit (Middleshop Adit). In 1973 the workings flooded very badly and I was interested in seeing how much more blocked they were. In fact the floods had cleared a lot of rubble out and another 300' or so of the Grand Level is passable, with a good deal of flat out crawling. A good, but very wet trip.

Sunday dawned very wet and cold, but had cleared somewhat by 11am when Graham and Janet had the first Easter Egg race, Graham won. Feeling a bit reluctant to go too far due to the great likelihood of getting wet, we took a look at the Engine Shaft. Bob volunteered to be first man down, goodie I did not like the look of it. So it was decided to try and find and stop the water going into the shaft via a 2" dia. cast iron pipe. As it turned out we failed, only succeeding in diverting the whole of the stream down the shaft via the forementioned side passage. But we did a bit of a dig in a portion of the stream bed which Harry noticed looked very much like a wheel pit. We dropped 200' of ladder down and off went Bob and was back out double quick, he assured us nothing nasty was down there, but after dinner Pauline did the same but it was thought that a quick dig may yield something so Phil and myself went down. It turned out to be a very nice climb but well short of the bottom (probably 180') and was in fact only 110' deep and a quick dig only confirmed that we were on a major blockage. With Phil out I had a look in another side heading which

took a little bit of pushing to get in, which was no way helped by Harry talking about pavements (?). The heading only went 40' and was blocked presumably by rubble pushed in when making the road.

I was photographed from every angle getting in and out - Bob ran out of film at the moment of launching myself into the shaft. Thanks Graham that top rope felt good.

The wind had by this time really got up and I could not light my stove so I went down to the local cafe for a nosh. In the evening Bob and I had a look at Whitesmith. This is very much in a bad state of decay but very impressive.

Monday started for me at 4am being violently sick (at both ends) so Monday for me was a non-event, in fact I took off before midday and took refuge at my brothers in Oban.

Harry, Sue, Phil, Stuart, Graham and Janet took a walk over to Corantee while Bob and Pauline took their leave and went home. Harrys party had a good look around and just for me came back via the old track; this was made good in 1965 but since then has suffered and is not passable except on foot. It was hoped to get the crusher plus a few other bits out that way, but no go. Actually Harry and party must have walked about 15 miles, so my sincere thanks to them. It was unfortunate that Argyll showed the remaining campers just what rain and wind was, and I gather that a very uncomfortable night was had by all. It was so bad that they were on the road home by 7am on Tuesday.

My thanks to all who attended. A good deal of useful work was done and it was nice to get underground with some of the Society members.

Jerry Landless.

Pikedaw Calamine Caverns. Meet 20th March, 1977.

It was pleasing to find such a good turnout of members willing to attend this venue, despite their loss of an hours sleep and the bleak conditions expected on the exposed moor.

The 60' shaft was busy with 16 making the ladder descent - some showing their skills from Chimney Shaft - and the most eager demonstrating their prowess on S.R.T.

Whilst no new "World-shattering" discoveries were made, it seems that most parts of the cavern/mine system were visited by someone or other before being called to the surface into conditions colder and wetter than below.

Thank you to those, who, although unable to descend, came along to the meet and/or took tackle across the moor, and especially to the mams who did not chastise their lads for presenting them with such dirty gear on Mothers Day.

Ray Walls.

For Sale

Duplicator - Roneo 250 - hand cranked. Sensible offers considered.

Typewriter, long carriage. Any offers.

Contact H.Houghton, 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds LS6 4LY.

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Meet Leaders Wanted

If you would be prepared to lead a meet next year, please contact Lynda Finch at 10 Exeter Crescent, Killinghall, Harrogate. If we have an early response this will enable us to prepare and publish next years programme in good time. The more meets we have the better, so don't be shy - volunteer now.

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Note Ye

Users of carbide lamps must remember to turn the water off if the lamp goes out. Acetylene reacts with some violence when ignited in a confined space.

The practice of using Single Rope Techniques with carbide lamps can be a dangerous one. If when a distance from the ground your lamp burns through the rope, and if no top ropeplopp!!!

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Caving Supplies

The above firm of 19 London Road, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 9PA. Tel Buxton (0298) 5040, will give an additional discount of 5% on orders around £50 mark to Society members.

Quite a few people recently have asked if I could recommend anywhere to buy equipment - in my experience this firm have offered a very good mail order service at very competitive rates. You could do worse than send for a catalogue.

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Autumn Memoirs

Any contributions for the next memoirs to be submitted to Dick no later than 30th June, '77. Any to send to be despatched to R.Bird, 41 Windsor Walk, South Anston, Sheffield S31 7EL.

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"I have received a letter from Herr Ernst Schornig of Frankfurt in which he tells me of his longstanding research into past mining activities in the Hessen and South West Hessen (Taunus Mountains) districts of Germany. He tells me that he had access to a letter written in 1836 by one HENRY MANCUR (at that time shareholder and general agent for the German Mining Company of London) in which he writes "that he had been working in the mining business since 25 years - sometimes as Managing Director - and that he worked in Cornwall, Wales, Staffordshire, Lancashire and Cheshire."

The period under consideration is therefore 1810-1835. Any information that may be available regarding Henry Mancur's activities in this country during this period will therefore be of considerable help and interest."

So writes W.G.Jones of 6 Gele Avenue, Abergelle, Clwyd LL22 7BB. If anyone can help please contact him.

Meets List.

Due to the mistakes and omissions on the Meets card, the following list has been drawn up and should replace the Meets card:-

- June 3 - 7 Wales. Camping at Caegynon Mine NGR SN 718784 (near North Cardiganshire Mining Club's Hut) from evening of 3rd. Local pub Tynllidiart Arms at Capel Bangor NGR SN 666803.
Program: In the hands of the North Cardiganshire Mining Club who hopefully will be our guides for the weekend.
Leader J.H.McNeil. (Note limited to NMRS members and guests only)
- June 18-19 Ecton Copper Mines, Ecton Hill. NGR SK 104593 (camp site) R.Bird 10-30am. (Please note change of date).
- July 16-17 Old Gang Mine. NGRSD 989999. Meet at above map reference at 10-30am. There is limited camping at side of road by stream but no facilities. I.Cornwall.
- July 23-24 Hurst Mine NGR NZ 052029 10-30am. R.Guthrie.
- Aug. 13-14 Coniston Copper Mines. NGR SD 305961 (Coniston Hall camp site) at 10-30am. J.Crompton.
- Sept 4 General Meeting, Skipton Scout Hut (behind Devonshire Hotel, Newmarket Street) 2.00pm.
- Sept. 11 Hebden Gill Mines. NGR SE 026632, 10-30am. M.C.Gill.
- Oct 1 - 2 Gunnerside Gill. Meet at NGR SD 951982 at 10-30am. J.H.McNeil.
- Oct 8 Annual Dinner. Foster Beck Watermill, Foster Beck, Pateley Bridge. (this is situated on the left hand side of the Ramsgill/Middlesmoor road from Pateley Bridge.)
- Nov 12 Presidents Talk-in and Pie and Pea Supper } 2.00pm Skipton Scout Hut.
Nov 13 General Meeting }
- 1978
Feb 5 Annual General Meeting. 2.00pm Skipton Scout Hut.
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Julian Holmes Trophy.

Julian has kindly donated a trophy which he would like to be awarded as prize for an annual photographic competition to be open to all members of the Society.

The competition is for Black and White prints only (any size) with a maximum of 3 photos per member with an entry fee of 5p per photo to be paid on entry in useable postage stamps.

Entries should be sent to Lynda Finch, 10 Exeter Crescent, Killinghall, Harrogate before 1st October, 1977, and if photos are to be returned by post please include a stamped addressed envelope.

All entries will be judged by the Guest of Honour of the Dinner and will then be displayed and trophy presented to the winner at the president's talk-in on 12th November, 1977.

It should go without saying that the subject matter should relate, at least in a vague respect, to mining. Also no names/addresses to be written on the photos themselves and we shall want the trophy back in time to be presented for next years competition.

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The Non-Ferrous Mines of Wales series - Merioneth.

It was originally proposed to publish this Monograph no earlier than 1981, the Editor being committed with other works up to then. However Mr. Foster-Smith has expressed a desire to see the next part of his work in print at an early date. This volume deals with the mines of Merioneth and includes not only the well known gold mines but also - with the thoroughness we have come to expect from this author - every other mining site within the county, a total exceeding 130 locations. If the printing of this monograph can be arranged it would be necessary to invoice all members for their copies since subscriptions cover only the cost of two publications per year. It is stressed that the above is still in the earliest stages of consideration but this information is included merely to keep members informed of likely future developments.

So as to formulate a policy, in the meantime the committee would like to sound out members feelings about issuing an extra publication in the above series this year, which WILL NOT BE INCLUDED IN YOUR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION.

Since this may be initially supported by private subscription it is necessary to know the prospective demand (or any objection). Published price will be £0.90 including postage. . . Please indicate if you would be willing to purchase a copy or not on publication (see attached form) before 30/6/77. STOP PRESS.) Through the generosity of the Author, it will be possible to offer this volume to bona fide members at the special low rate of 90p. Funds produced by the sale of the work will be used to finance the next volume in the series pro rata. Please return the form. YOUR CO-OPERATION IS ESSENTIAL.

Annual Dinner 8th October, 1977 at Foster Beck Watermill, Foster Beck, Pateley Bridge.

This is to be a 4 course meal at £3.50 per person menu as follows:-

Choice of Florida Cocktail/Egg Mayonnaise/Sardines.

Choice of Tomato Soup/Minestrone Soup/Celery Soup.

Turkey with pots and selection of veg.

Choice of Black Forest Gateau/Apple Pie & Cream/Fresh Fruit Salad & Cream Coffee

The Guest of Honour is to be Mr. P.C.D. Brears, Curator of the Castle Museum, York.

Sundays events are to be arranged informally on the Saturday evening, and camping at Riverside Caravan Park, Lofthouse Road, Pateley Bridge. NGR Sheet 91 SE 154657.

Full money and completed booking form to be returned to K. Walls, 33 Gledhow Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds LS8 1LD before 23rd September, 1977.

Force Crag. Meet 7 - 8 May, 1977.

Sunday. Following the abandonment of the meet on the Saturday by a large percentage of the party five adult stalwarts four children and a dog remained to brave the elements under canvas.

The next morning God was kind and the weather was good. More members arrived from nearby localities and were soon seen disappearing down Goldscope copper/lead mine, armed with hammers picks and climbing apparatus, (suprisingly no-one took a compressor). The afternoon was spent basking in the sun and exploring the surface workings of Castlenook and Long Work Mines. One member was dischraged down an old stope on the end of a rope but suffice to say the rope was too short and he soon returned.

Despite the weather on the Saturday the weekend was not a total disaster.

Post script. When camping in the Lake District always take a waterproof tent and waterproof clothing unless you enjoy getting wet.

J.H.McNeil.

Hilton and Murton Mines.

Early in March of this year I was approached with regard to the imminent closure of the above mines, by the Army for reasons of safety, to see what could be done to save them. I must say that I fully agreed with the closure of many of the Murton levels as these were in a very bad condition and the time was drawing near when a rescue would have to be mounted. The Mines and Quarries Act puts the responsibility for injuries etc to trespassers and others on to the shoulders of the mine owners, and as you may be aware this is the position now with the Army as Lords of the Manor - hence their concern.

I duly made contact with Lt.Col. A.W.H. Cameron, Commandant of Warcop Training Centre and discussed the matter, and arranged a meeting on site between himself, Mr. Barnes and myself on 13th March. This meeting was of great use as following our combined visit to all known areas of the mine it was agreed that the following levels should be blown totally:-

1. Murton Horse Level
2. Hardshins
3. Curly Level
4. Hardside Low Level
- * 5. Horse Level
6. Wilsons
7. Jaques
- + Two Levels unnamed.

This was done on 22nd March by the Engineers.

However I have agreed to preserve both Middle and Dowscar High Levels for posterity. A means of gating and making secure these two has been designed and transmitted to Co.Cameron by myself and Mr.Barnes - who has arranged for installation by the P.S.A. to be implemented in the near future. Following which a very strict control will be maintained over person or persons permitted entry for purely research or allied reasons. But on no account for commercial operators either legal or illegal.

✕ With respect to No 5. on list, have no concern - although this level has been blown the stonework is intact - thanks to Col. Cameron who insisted that the Engineers followed our instructions (and indeed was present himself to make sure) and placed their charges in the shales beyond the ringing, which I believe presented them with quite a problem.

As regard my comment above about commercial operators, illegal, it must by now be well known that these mines have been despoiled by mineral dealers and their suppliers, Scordale Fluor being quite distinctive and in demand. I myself have seen large specimens for sale in Cornwall and other areas. In fact whilst inspecting the area with Col. Cameron a long w/b Landrover was seen to come up the dale, ignoring the fact that the red flags were being flown. Six persons with LARGE kitbags then entered Middle Level. The Reg. No. of the vehicle was taken and the Col was going to arrange a reception committee for them on leaving, by the Police. I suppose it is possible that they could be charged with the following:-

- a) Trespass
- b) Theft
- c) Entering on to a firing range and endangering life

SO BE WARNED If anyone should wish to visit, then contact Warcop Training Centre. Tel. Brough 270.

We would like to thank Lt.Col. Cameron for his understanding and assistance in this matter, without which ALL the mines together with their unique geological interest would now be gone and lost forever.

D.M.Goth.

Notice

Will all members please note that all internal and external enquiries, orders and anything relevant to publication sales should be directed to R.G. Guthrie, 186 Station Road, Billingham, TS23 2TT and NOT to the Editor which has previously been the practise.

Each year we award the following trophies at the Dinner.

The Founders cup - presented to any member for outstanding dedication to the aims of the Society in the current year.

The Presidents Piton - presented to the person who achieves the most meritorious performance during the year.

The Golden Chicken - awarded for the greatest act of ineptitude during the year.

Nominees are judged on their merits by the Barmaster with a little assistance from the Barmoot Court. (If you don't want this award the best way out is to nominate someone else).

Provision has been made on your Dinner Booking form for nominations.

All contributions/comments for newsletter to be sent to H.Houghton, 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds LS6 4LY. Tel. 758505.