Northern Mine Research Society

Newsletter August 1981.

September General Meeting at Sicklinghall

We have altered the date of the General Meeting to 27th September 1981. Time and venue remain the same.

The reason for this change is to enable anyone who is interested to attend the conference on Coal, Lead and Iron (details on separate hand-out should be somewhere with this Newsletter) and still come to the General Meeting.

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Coal, Lead and Iron

From the above you will gather that a few of the officers are showing an interest in going to this Conference. If anyone else fancies going - but baulks at the price charged for full board, we can offer limited camping on our back lawn (small tents please) or floor space for dossing. (We don't run a Sally Army Hostel - so bring your own food, or pay us to feed you!! First come, first served. (My address and telephone number is at the end of this Newsletter.)

Not mentioned in the hand-out is a closing date for bookings - this is no later than 1st September, 1981.

DO NOT SEND CONFERENCE BOOKINGS TO ME. The address for this is given on the form.

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Future Meets.

August 29th/31st. From the last Newsletter you will have twigged that the Islay Meet is off. Unfortunately no one has, as yet, come forward with any alternatives. If anyone has any ideas and wants to go off, give me a ring and we'll see if we can arrange anything between us.

September 19th/20th Northern Lakes. Leaders John McNeil/John Crompton. As per Meets card - Meet and vamp at NY355352 at 10.30am.

October 24th ANNUAL DINNER

Details as per Booking form in last Newsletter. But for the benefit of those who invariably loose all the relevant details of these such events the important points are :-

All bookings and full money of £5.50 each to Geoff Greenough, 22 Elmhurst Rd, St.Annes on Sea, Lancs FY8 3JH before 10th October, 1981.

The Dinner is to be held at The Royal Oak Hotel, Settle, Yorks at 7.00pm for 7.30pm.

I have heard a rumour that Dave Carlisle is to be guest of honour - but don't let this put you off.

October 25th PDMHS are having a meet at Force Crag Mine the same weekend of our Dinner, and they have invited any of our members, who wish to go, to join them there on the Sunday. Meet at the Mine NGR NY 200215 at 10.30am.

Dinner Part II Sorry about the installments, the letter containing this bit got mislaid.

John Stott, one of our members and Sec of Bolton Speleo Club, offers us the use of their hostel at Upper Winshill, near Langcliffe at the weekend. 75p per night, bring own sleeping bag. Members should book directly with John Stott, 1 Mottershead Ave, Little Lever, Bolton, Lancs. Tel Farnworth 72305.

NMRS are very grateful for this offer of hospitality.

November 14th General Meeting and Pie and Pea Supper/Presidents Talk-in.

Same place as usual, Sicklinghall Village Hall starting at 2.00pm.

The regular participants won't need reminding, so for the rest, if you've anything of interest, preferably with a mining 'bent' however remote, please bring it/them along and join in the fun.

We need slides to show; maps; plans; documents; minerals or owt else to display and/or talk about. So don't be bashful, let us see what you've got, and enjoy the social event of the year. All those clambering to give a slide show, no matter how long or short, good or corny, will be given priority for the most succulent of the pies and the juicyest of the peas. (The burnt offerings will be reserved for the wagg's who, as is their wont over the past years, have made me, poor defenceless

lovable and cuddly as I am, the butt of their jokes).

Remember to bring a dish and spoon 'cos mushy peas make a mess of your hands. Booking forms and full money back to us no later than 1st November, 1981 please.

Isle of Man Meet for 1982.

John Crompton wants to know if there would be enough support to warrant organising a meet to the Isle of Man next year for a long weekend. If enough interest is shown in the idea John is prepared to organise block bookings on the boat and in an Hotel, (obviously of a different class to our usual meets), and also the hire of a mini-bus for use over there.

If this appeals to you, John would appreciate an early reply - similarly if you have any critisism (constructive) or a better alternative idea he will be all ears.

Let him know also which weekend would suit you best - don't pick T.T. week though.

Contact John at 28 Knowle Ave,Cleveleys,Blackpool,FY5 3PP.

Centenary Open Days at the British Museum (Natural History) Cromwell Rd,London SW7- Wed/Thurs 18th/19th November, 1981 10.30 to 14.30.

Many aspects of the scientific work and supporting library services of one of the world's leading Taxonomic institutions will be shown in over 100 exhibits, and staff will be on hand to talk about their research and services.

NMRS members are welcome to come behind the scenes. Tickets for admission will not be issued, but those who wish to attend are asked to inform the 'Open Days Office', British Museum (Nat.Hist),Cromwell Rd, London SW7 5BD. Tel 01 589 6323, extensions 667 and 206.

Departments open: Zoology, Entomology, Botany, Palaeontology, Mineralogy,Library Services.

Welsh Meet Report. Conway Valley Lead/Zinc Mines. Spring Bank Holiday May, 1981.

Saturday. I arrived at the camp site to find several members already in residence. Big Malcolm was given a lift the last 200 yards, having walked from Betws-y-Coed. Others kept arriving during the night.

At 10.30 precisely, 20 adults, 5 children and a dog left camp in a convoy of 7 cars. We parked on the picnic site by the Cyffty mine. The 'Powers That Be' intend to construct a Mine Interpretation Centre here, now that they have needleesly demolished the chimney and most of the buildings. Guilty conscience?

3 wheel pits in line, and a shaft with roaring water somewhere down below, kept everybody busy. We strolled round the corner to the Gorlan Mine, where supposedly empty drums of 245T Defoliant were dumped down one of the two shafts.

Back to the cars and on to the Llanrwst mine; looked at two blocked adits, chimney and the remains of buildings, - rock-bashers finding marcsite here as well as at Gor[illegible].

Deciding we had done enough for one morning, we went to Llanwrst. We found the biggest and poshiest hotel in the town and everybody trouped in in wellies and anoraks for bar snacks. The fact that they were in the Good Beer Guide explained the choice of pub. I eventually got everybody out into bright sunshine and led the convoy via Pen-yr-Allt mine to Aberllyn. A few years ago two local lads came out of Aberllyn carrying sticks of Dynamite and caused a panic in the local Police Station, resulting in three adits being collapsed. They did not realise, however, that determined explorers would get into the mine through an airvent, known locally as the Foxhole, leading into a level. The left fork, 30 feet in, has some dicey timbering. Thigh deep muddy water here, dry further in, a shaft in the floor with a huge stope further on and the wall covered with Zincite.

After looking round here, I led the few who had not dashed back to camp into the Pen-yr-Allt mine.

Sunday. My formula for a happy meet is to try and look after everybody, and not leaving wives, children and girlfriends to fend for themselves while the boys go down mines. So due to difficulty of parking at the Klondyke mine, a mixed party walked along the road by Llyn Geirionydd, pausing to look at the Pontefrak Adit to the New Pandora. The heavy showers of early morning stopped and the sun came out. We looked down the holes at the top of the gulley, then walked down the left side to the Klondyke Mill and dressing floors. This is the Aspinal Swindle Mine. (See N.C.M.R.S. Memoirs 1969 pp 1 - 7), stopping half-way down, where the stream goes through a short tunnel to explore the old trial workings which contrast with the larger and more

modern adit lower down. Warm sun, rock bashers at work, people disappearing into holes, children throwing stones into the water. I eventually managed to get everybody mobile again.

The mill is very impressive. I left three members exploring the adit and level, which is not extensive, the rest crossed the stream and went up the far side looking at holes we could not see on the way down.

A short walk along the road brought us to the Llanrhychwyn Quarry, really a massive undercut. The Tan-yr-Eglwys Mine is inside the quarry on floor 2. A tiny level with two flooded shafts. We scrambled out to floor 1.

As everybody was a bit tired, we made our way back to camp via the two blocked shafts of the New Pandora, stopping at Shon Sheltinga's house, where he gave an interesting account of Aspinal's Swindle Mine to an appreciative audience.

Following a late lunch, a convoy of seven cars moved off to park at the Hafna Mine, then walked to the No. 2 Adit of the Parc Mine. Considering the fact that this mine only closed in 1954, it is disintegrating fast. Many ore shoots, and there are a lot of them, have collapsed. Because the Forestry Commission are funny about people exploring mines on their property, we can only tell you what it should be possible to see:-

It should be possible to get along the No. 2 adit to the manway down to No. 3 level, bye-passing very large stopes - sometimes over them on dubious timbers, and by negotiating a few roof falls. No. 3 level will probably be quite wet at the bottom of the manway ladders, say about 4' deep. This could discourage anyone from venturing further in view of the above mentioned stopes which may also exist in similar fashion here. By turning right (with backs to the ladder) and first right again a flooded level should head in the direction of the Cyffty shaft.

One member managed to get his camper-van on to the campsite, and his helpers celebrated the fact until 1 a.m.

Monday. The usual heavy showers eased off as we walked the few yards to Shon Sheltinga's house, where we received precise instructions how to get into the New Pandora, if this was what we wanted - again the Forestry Commission have gated off the adit level. Whilst some went to inspect the New Pandors entrances, the rest looked at the D'eresy level and adit, and the tips for marcasite, lead and zinc. On the way back to camp we were waylaid by a chap who looked as if he wanted something and I managed to talk myself into leading his Senior Scouts to explore the Klondyke Mine, but first we had a look at Netherton's level, fifty yards from the campsite entrance, beside the stream. Netherton was at one time New Pandora's Mine Captain. Anybody entering this adit, which never got as far as the mine it was supposed to drain, causes coffee coloured H_2O to run out, and when this appears outside our site-owners house, he does not like it - so keep out.

May I thank the members who turned up, and who made this, my first meet as Leader, a pleasure.

Eric Gray-Thomas.

Book Reviews.

A Concise History of Mining by C.E.Gregory published by Pergamon Press Ltd, Oxford 1980, hardback but no jacket. 258pp + xviii, 20 figs, 18 maps, 5 photos. Price £15. American spelling is used throughout.

A real compendium of information, 28 chapters with much intriging titles as The Scope of Mining Activity, The Uranium Age, Hard Rock Breaking, The Legend of St. Barbara and Financial Aspects of Mineral Development. This is a potted history of every aspect of mining and the detail is surprising although there are no references to follow up if some fact takes the readers' interest. For instance on plll "the longwall method was introduced into the Shropshire Coalfields of Britain in 1770" ! How can the author be so specific? Where did he get the information from? How can the reader find out more? The reviewer is intrigued but such 'positive statements' cast a shadow over the rest of the book. Perhaps the book was written for an elite for as the introduction states "Armed with this textbook any professor of mining engineering, or even of the geological sciences, should find no difficulty etc". Perhaps they are not as inquisitive as the reviewer or perhaps they know all the sources.

This criticism apart the book does provide a vast amount of information on mining topics that is rarely covered in other historical accounts. Such items as "non-entry mining" (anger and solution mining etc), mining traditions and claims for the oldest known underground mine (Bomru Ridge in Swaziland worked before 40,000BC, although later in the book this becomes "perhaps 50,000BC a mere range of 10,000 years).

There is no doubt the book is interesting but many statements are open to doubt. For example "The first surface railway was erected on a coal mine in 1804" - there were many long before this date. Even more recent dates are wide of the mark "By 1950 all the main producing longwall mines in Britain were equipped with powered support systems." This is at least 10 years out to this reviewers' personal knowledge.

The main fault is that such facts cannot be followed up using this book. All in all at £15 a copy this really is a book only to be borrowed from a library for bed time reading not as a source book for deeper research.

I.J.Brown.

The Clarkes of Silkstone and their Collieries by Robert A.Roberts. Published by Worker's Educational Association, Barnsley. A4, 39pp

This pamphlet by one of our recent members is well researched piece of work dealing with the Clarke family and their coal mining activities in the Silkstone Valley, four miles from Barnsley.

Apart from dealing with history of coal mining at Silkstone the pamphlet also explores the social history of the miners and their families.

The publication is well laid out and makes easy and interesting reading.

Copies available from:- R.A.Roberts, 24 Springfield St,Barnsley,South Yorkshire.

J.H.McNeil.

The Shropshire Caving and Mining Club Journal 1980.

This annual publication is in two parts,
Part 1, is a series of short articles covering such topics as Mining Incidents in the Broseley Coalfield, Underground Structures at Tong Castle and at Shipton Hall. Some Notes on the Shropshire Smelthouses and on Shropshire Copper Mining. There is also a rather longer description of the Huglith Barytes Mine which closed about 1948. In all 33 pages.

Part 11 is a longer item of 20 pages and deals with the history, surface and underground remains of the Lincoln Hill Limestone Mine near Ironbridge, Shropshire. It has been prepared by Dr I.J.Brown and is No. 13 in the Clubs' series of Special Accounts.

The two parts are in similar style, A4, Typescript with 18 text figures and maps. The Journal is available, price £1.80, post free, from Mr A.Taylor, 57 Oaken Lane, Codsall, near Wolberhampton, Staffs.

I.J.Brown.

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"Yorkshire Oil Hunt gets the Go-ahead"
so says the headline in a recent Yorkshire Evening Post (the paper that not so much reports the news - as makes it up as it goes along)

"A joint production licence has been granted, giving five companies permission search and drill for oil and produce petrol.

The licence covers an area extending from Pontefract in the north to South Elmsall in the south and will be valid initially for four years."

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Warton Crag

Lancaster City Council Planning Committee have unanimously turned down the application for 115 bungalows to be built at Crag Foot, though the Landowner is to appeal to the Minister.

This refusal has, it seems, annoyed the owner intensely, and as a result he is stripping all the timbers and movable limestone from his part of the crag - so it is supposed that the building stone of the upper mine may be at risk.

It is also thought that he will close access to the mines. I suppose this makes it 15 all.!!

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Honister Slate Mines.

I have heard that the upper abandoned workings in this mine are in a VERY dangerous condition.

The upper outer incline, overlooking the pass, appears to be in an imminent state of collapse. If this lot does go, it should make driving interesting on the road below. There is evidence of fairly recent roof falls in the mine itself, as well as scree runs over some of the levels. Could this condition be on account of the earth

tremors that rattled the country some time back.
At Quaysiye Quarry, just down the road in Borrowdale, 3 climbers were wandering about. They had just emerged into the open when, without warning, the level behind them collapsed. They were lucky - the worst they suffered was dirty trousers.

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N.A M H.O. 1981 Biennial Conference.

The Conference at Ironbridge Gorge Museum was jointly hosted by the museum and Shropshire Caving and Mining Club. The 108 delegates were able to camp near the Coalport China works and others were in local hotels.

Field meets had been organised for the Friday and Monday, taking in Llanymynach Copper Mine, Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum, Stiperstones Mining field and the Black Country Museum. On the Friday evening, delegates were guests of the SCMS for its 21st Birthday Social Evening.

After registration and an opening address by Stuart Smith, Deputy Director, IGMT, and John Heathcote, Chairman, SCMC, a tour of Museum sites was arranged.

The afternoon opened with a description of Shropshire Underground by Dr I.J.Brown, which left one feeling that the whole area was hollow and lible to Aberfan type earth movements. Next, J.Bryant gave a description of the work being done at Chatterley Whitfield Colliery, after its abandonment by the N.C.B., to establish a mining museum. Peter Wainwright of the Derbyshire County Council described the efforts being made to cap shafts in that county, leaving one with the impression that parts of Bonsall Moor are paved with D.C. railway sleepers. He produced figures for costs per shaft capped, numbers dealt with per year, and methods used. Delegates were also fortunate in being able to examine a "Clwyd Cap" which its manufacturers had provided. Harry Parker's (PDMHS) talk described a P R.O. as everything our own Harry is not, except 7' tall ! Harry's jokes were as usual not too good, but on P.R.O. work he's more than a success.

A combined talk followed, by Mike Gill and Adrian Pearce. The latter dealt with the BCRA Insurance Scheme, for which NAMHO is an agent, and its importance to our activities. One point in particular should be stressed again, and that is, the Insurance cover is for THIRD PARTY LIABILITY ONLY. All active members are encouraged to obtain their own Personal Accident cover, ensuring that the Policy covers their particular activities. Mike Gill gave a report of the efforts to gain clarification of the stance taken by the Health and Safety Executive on our activities. Any Queen's Counsel or Judges in the audience please reply. This joint talk was followed by a question and answer session and a number of points were raised on liabilities arising from our activities.

On Saturday evening, those staying near Coalport were treated to Folk Singing, a Brass Bank, a barbeque and ale.

Sundays talks included a history of Mine Photography in Cornwall and the work of the Carn Brea Mining Society. Paul Sowan, Subterranea Brittanica, proved that mines do exist in south east England, even if they are non-metalliferous. Paul had studied the various sandstone, flint and rare earth mines of the region and gave comparisons with simllar mines in France and Holland. He also highlighted the attitude of various local authorities to these mines, which frequently occur under "built up" areas. Once again the foreigners are taking a more enlightened view. Dr Willies then spoke on the preservation of mining relics and taunted various areas for their lack of action in this field. It was concluded that Derbyshire did so well because nothing was left to preserve anyway and most of the miners had left to secure better pay and conditions in the prosperous mining fields of Yorkshire and Cornwall. The final talk was by Dr Neil Cossons, Director, IGMT, he showed us the ways in which museums throughout the world tackle preservation and the differing emphasis each gave to its exhibits. Again our American brothers won the day with "Frozen custard souveniers" near one museum.

Dave Carlisle, Chairman, NAMGO, gave the closing address and offered a vote of thanks to the speakers and to the hosts for what was, without doubt, a successful weekend.

For those of you unable to attend Ironbridge, hard luck, but you will have the opportunity to attend the 1983 Conference, to be hosted by ourselves. Will anyone with ideas (for the Conference) please contact any of our Officers, NOW!

Mike Gill.

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More Vandalism?

The following is an extract from a letter from Mike MacLeod.

"Perhaps you could find room in the next Newsletter for a wee word on Pary's Mountain, North Wales. I was visiting Pary's Mountain (with permission) during early

July and I was very angry to see that the incline shaft and several of the other shafts had been filled in. Also some of the precipitation pits are looking as if work is being done prior to removing these. As the incline shaft was very easy to get up and down I see no real danger here, anyway the shafts should be gated or fenced NOT wantonly filled in, and the famous precipitation tanks must be preserved as they are virtually unique.

This is outrageous vandalism of valuable industrial revolution sites. Is it not possible to get a preservation order on this most important site so that the present mining company can be forced to preserve some of it?"

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Gwynfyedd Mine

Mike also tells me that the latest from Gwynfyedd is that a new incline shaft is to be started from No. 6 level down to a depth of some 3,000ft. A settling tank has been built underground, some way past the underground headframe, so that the mine water does not discolour and polute the river.

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Losehill Hall Courses, which may interest members.

Oct 16/18. Practical Industrial Archaeology.
Learn how to record and measure Laed mining remains. £41.00.
Oct 23/25. Minerals, Rocks and Fossils. £39.50.
Nov 13/15. Caves of the Peak District. £40.00.

Full details from The Principle, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire S30 2WB.

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Ennerdale Meet Report. 18/19th July.

It could be suggested that fine weather follows the righteous. However we wont go into that too deeply as it rained on the Sunday.

Saturday was a beautiful day for our trip round the Kelton Fell and Knockmurton mines, heightened by the magnificent mountains of Ennerdale. The group, about 16 in all, parked at the mines and walked along the mineral railway. Knockmurton mine is the oldest of the group and has been worked since 1853. Kelton Fell dates from about 1890. Most of the workings on Knockmurton Fell were by levels, most of which can be seen. The veins followed across the slope of the fell. The railway for these was built by William Baird & Co, the scottish ironmaster. A parliamentary act(for the railway) was obtained on 16th July 1874 and it was opened in 1877. The Rowah and Kelton Fell railway was 3½ miles long with 11 bridges and cost £25,000, about 3 times the cost of a branch line of similar length. This was due to the difficult country and the height at which the line terminates 850ft O.D. The trains used in these lines were 0-6-0 saddle tanks, but were unusual due to the double buffers on the engine. These were probably used with different types of wagons. The larger size used on railway work, the smaller one in the mine, and when being shunted around with the loco in the mine yard.

As we walked round the fell we descended to Cogra Mine to see if the drainage adit was open. No luck. After lunch, on Knockmurton Fell, we had a good look at the higher workings round about the summit. This is a very good point from which to see the extent of the workings. These mines would be an excellent project for more research. They closed in the 1920's.

Following this exhausting jaunt in the hot sun it was decided to adjourn to the village for ice-cream etc. Take note the day is much more pleasant with a civilised break, (bad planning here, the pub was shut).

Kinniside Lead mine was the next place to be visited. This mine was worked over a vertical extent of 120' and stoped out to the surface. On the top side of the mine there are various shafts, one of which has an excellent lining of sandstone blocks. The trip underground was a welcome break from the sun, although the water was cold (for some). The levels seem to twist and turn quite a bit, which would seem to suggest that the vein was difficult to locate. There are numerous stopes, and one shaft and a couple of rises. The meet was concluded about 6.00pm.

To all members who retired to their various hostelries, you missed the best part of the entertainment. We had on the campsite a mistic or fakir, by name John Singe MacNeil, who at great personal sacrifice set himself on fire with meths. Quite entertaining while it lasted, trying to extinguish flames that are difficult to see. Hope the hands are better.

On Sunday 16 members went to visit some of the many old iron ore workings. Again this was all surface exploration. After parking the cars at Winder we walked down the

old railway to the chimney stack at Agnes pit. This site is in quite good order, apart from much undergrowth. The chimney here is in good order, with engine beds, and water tanks, along with a large shaft. This would be the pumping shaft and manway, as there is no sign of spoil. Agnes pit dates from before 1854 and closed for ore in 1895. Taking a direct line across the fields to another mine chimney brought us to Margaret Mine. This site is almost complete, with smelt mill site, and quite a large slag heap. The shaft by the engine house has collapsed leaving a crater full of water. This whole complex closed in 1923.

It came on the rain at lunchtime and this was when the leader had a great idea. With the welfare of the others to consider he conspired with another to obtain permission to visit the steam winders at Haig Colliery at Whitehaven. This was obtained, with many thanks to the security people. These engines, one of which has been working since 1917, the other since 1933, are a magnificent sight. The engine men take great pride in their engines and tell a fascinating story of their lives. It was only recently that the automatic governers were taken off and electric devices installed. When running these engines are almost devoid of noise, most of the noise coming from the drum spokes. It is to be hoped that when they come to the end of their working lives they will be preserved. Many thanks to the engine men for taking time to explain and answer the many questions posed. We also had time to look round the yard and shaft tops. All the coal was formally wound down a railway incline to Whitehaven harbour and into ships. It now goes by conveyor belt and into wagons.

By this time it had stopped raining, so we decided to visit Wellington pit. This was started in 1840. By the entrance road above the harbour stands the Waddle ventilating fan house. These fans were driven by steam engines and as one stands in the ventilating fan housing it is very easy to imagine the huge fan going round. Further down the road is the old engine house, now a cafe. All the buildings have castleated tops. Behind and above the buildings stands the well-known "candlestick" shaped chimney. Built over a shaft to create more draw on the upcast for the furnace at the shaft bottom, to ventilate the mine workings. Whilst this type of furnace improved ventilation, they also contributed to explosions by "flash" backs.

The next pit to be visited was Salton pit, about 20' above sea, and on the beach. This pit is unique, and was sunk by Carlisle Spedding in 1731. These coalfields contain quite large quantities of methan gas. Here, at a depth of 252' a blower of methane was encounted, and so this was piped to the top for the illumination of Whitehaven. The full depth of this pit was 456'. An unheard of depth at that period, because of the many problems, pumping being just one of them. It was also the start of undersea mining. The pit was closed around the middle of the 19th Century. The old engine house here is quite impressive, with a backdrop of shattered cliffs, this provided many pictures for the photographers.

The day drew to a close at 5.00pm with tea all round in the Wellington pit engine house.

Many thanks to all who attended and thanks to Alwyn Austin who provided details of the railways and many other features.

John Crompton.

Help Wanted

Syphons.

In a report on the Wanlockhead mines written in 1883, T.B. Stewart claimed the biggest working syphon in Britain was being used to carry water to a water-pressure engine in the New Glencrieff mine.

Can any member comment on the use of syphons underground? Can anyone answer the question: "Why a syphon"? And if Wanlockhead had the biggest, where were the others and who had the smallest?

Advice and suggestions to Bill Harvey, 23 Orleans Ave, Glasgow 14.

Small Lancashire Mines Meet Report - June 27/28th.

This meeting offered a choice of visits and a total of 24 members and 6 visitors came to at least one of the items on offer.

The Anglezarke mine is near Chorley, which may surprise many memebrs whose experience of NMRS is that all mines are many leagues away from civilisation (not that Chorley is all that civilised). Practically all those present dodged the splendid direction sign put up by the leader by arriving through the back door. The meet started with a brief synopsis of the geology of the area and a view of the small area,

½ mile square, wherein the veins were located and worked mainly from 1700-1800. Those were in the millstone grits/shales overlying the limestone, and none are now accessible. However, sun vein can still be traced by well marked run-in shafts, and one of two short drainage adits can still be identified.

This area is best known because the mineral witherite (barium Carbonate) was first identified here in 1790; there must have been a great deal because the enthusiasts could still find samples after 200 years of collectors. Also found, was a shaped gritstone which was either a smelt hearth stone, a (very shallow) kithen sink or water collector from a downspout, the majority were sceptical of lead mining connections. The meet then proceeded in a motley cavalcade (which other Society travels in/on transport which includes aged motorcycles, pick-up trucks and even saloon cars) to White Coppice to see an exposed Sarytes vein typical of those mined in the area. White Coppice too has one of the most pituresque cricket fields in Lancashire (plug for those members who have to entertain non-mines enthusiasts).

Next day, morning assembly was at Sykes Mine, near Trough of Bowland. The leader's morale was rather undermined to find that the party included several old timers with encyclopaedic knowledge, nevertheless pressed on with his thumb-nail sketch of the geology and history and followed (sic) the enthusiasts up to the sparse remains. Morale was somewhat restored when it was discovered that confident predictions of stopes that could be entered had been overtaken by falls of stone (assisted by the County Council with an eye on safety?). The site has been tidied and litle is now visible except the small caves left at the top of the limestone dome by the extraction of galena and barytes.

Six members were virtuous enough to resist the immediate temptation of underground Ashnott to proceed by car - kind permission of Water Board - to the Brennand Mine which is on the same limestone anticline as Sykes but in the next valley. This mine was worked until 1870 and, although the remains are scant, is more like the site to which mining types are accustomed. There is a part of a water wheel housing and obvious material left after ore crushing as well as from the sinking of the major shaft at the top of the saddle. The Raistrick map is helpful, but no trace remains of some of the veins. Brennand is noteworthy because the lead contained substantial amounts of silver, enough to make it a Royal mine. The vein also contains noticeable quantities of quartz and small amounts of copper, all of which distinguish this mine from most lead mines in the limestone areas. The select band enjoyed the walk and moved on to join the Ashnott brigade to find virtue rewarded because the mud filled dead end adit had by then been sorted out. The late-comers had time to explore the interesting workings.

John Mac has been invited!!! to do a report on Ashnott - see later.

Perhaps I could claim presidential privilege and use the experience of this weekend to encourage the ordinary member to organise weekend visits. You do not have to have a detailed knowledge coming from years of reading and exploration. You can gain enough knowledge by reading Raistrick and a few other published papers, and by walking over, or under, the ground beforehand to plan the two days. There are certain to be people on the trip who know more about some things than you do - don't be embarrassed, encourage them to tell the troops. We are always short of weekend meets in the summer, they don't have to be entirely underground and I hope some of those reading this can generate sufficient self confidence to volunteer to organise a weekend in 1982. Let us know when, and where, and spend the winter planning the details.

Geoff Greenough.

Ashnott Mine is a small lead mine working veins in a limestone reef knoll. This limestone is highly fossilised containing many fine crinnoids.

The lower adit below the farm served as drainage adit to the mine. This adit is driven through shale and ends in a forehead. There is no evidence of mineralisation and the place has been subjected to many years of silting.

The workings behind Ashnott Farm offer more interest to the underground explorer. The knoll was worked by four adits and a few small shafts from the surface. The lowest of these adits is now blocked but was presumably the haulage adit for the mine. All that now remains is a grassed spoil heap. Of the trhee other levels the largest was entered and this led to a small maze of narrow twisting passages. Just inside the entrance is a veritable assortment of scrap iron and other miscellaneous junk.

These workings lead to a lower level and thence via a small shaft to haulage level previously mentioned. This haulage level contains an excellent example of wooden rail with metal running surfaces. The trackwork includes a turn rail.

Judging by the large amounts of fauna at the blockage in this level it cannot be far from day.

Cont'd.....

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On our return to the surface a saall shaft, approx. ten feet deep, was descended. An Austin 10 (?) gearbox and prop-shaft afforded a suitable belay for the ladder.

John McNeil.

Hadrians Wall breached by Scottish Hordes or Bill Harvey visits Yorkshire and Spots the Obvious.

"I was recently travelling south east on business, and took the opportunity of visiting the Marrick smelt mills near Richmond. The Low Mill is pretty ruinous, but the High Mill is fairly intact with the hearth vaulting and chimney still standing. However, so far as I could see, nothing is being done to preserve it. I feel sure the High Mill must be the only surviving example of the sort of vaulting that went over the open, 18th century, ore hearths. That it has survived so long is due to the mill having latterly served as the chimney for the other smelter. But once the vaulting starts to go, the whole will come down and an example of a unique style of architecture will be gone for ever."

Members observations please - to me HH.

Lake District Meet - 25/26th July.

It was so nice to see such a generous turn out on the Saturday for a visit to the Plumbago Mines. We had to split the group into two, my wife leading one and myself the other. Both members were very flattered at such personal attention - total number 4 adults and 2 children. However we had a very good trip.

Commencing with the old trials on the moor, one of which is now open, diggers take note. The open quarry working provided us with some nice samples of pure graphite. (Don't tell Harry! He'll class us as vandals). Harrisons stage was blocked so we descended to Gills Stage where we had lunch, and then inspected all the pipes in Gills section. We did not gain entry into Harrisons from Gills because the upper level was flooding into our section. It was not worth the soaking required for access. One of our members moved on ahead at a rather fast rate and somehow ended up at the beginning. Don't ask me how. We then descended to Farey's Stage and crossed the grand pipe - easier to cross than it looks. Farey's level is welllaid out, with the plate rails still in situ. A clog was found during the exploration. The shaft leading to the Old Mens Stage was not descended, it is about 70' deep. We returned a nd finally entered Gilbert's Stage. Started in 1789 it was driven up to the base of the Grand Pipe and passed through to a large sump and small drifts. We crossed the pipe base and continued to the sump. There was a loud splash, no, it was not Steven but one of our taller members testing the depth with a stone. The afternoon was finished with a nice cup of tea and scones at Seathwaite Farm.

Sunday

Fancy, another great turn out. All those who came on Saturday couldn't resist a trip to Honister Quarries. I'm sure it was the dynamic qualities of the leader which created the enthusiasm. We set off and reached the main tunnel to both sets of workings. We more or less followed the route of 2 years ago. The window set in the slate has now been run over by the scree from above, The large cavernous workings at the base of the old 'Count or Balance' Incline is interesting. One of the hanging walls is riddled with a row of shot holes about 5' deep, the cores are still on the floor. (John McNeil may wish to bring his jar, it was suggested that the holes were the work of Stone Worm beetles). Then Steven fell and burst his nose, putting one member off the tomato he was eating and changing the colour of the Honister slates. The incline was ascended with each stage inspected as they lead off into the various caverns, many back filled with large dry wall packs. Lunch was consumed with relish high on the crags. We reached the counter balance brake house and set off to exit onto the crags for the last section of the journey, but the level has completely shattered. We could just see daylight. A descent was necessary back down the incline to a lower level and then back down the external incline. We then visited the new incline and slate cavern to complete the day. Many thanks to all who attended.

A few days later I descended the upper external incline from the top. The condition of the whole incline had deteriorated considerably in 2 years. I reached the level we should have exited at to find the whole of the level entrance has shattered and dropped, the area is very unstable. The winding drum and brake , a little further

up the incline is teetering on the edge ready to crash down the side of the mountain onto some unsuspecting tourist having tea in his car below. Sections of the incline are on the move as are some rock sections above. Anyone visiting please take extreme care. (As per earlier snippet. Ed.)

Richard Hewer.

Letter for circulating to M.P.'s.

You will find attached to this Newsletter, a standard letter, that we would like every member to send to their Member of Parliament. (If you know more than 1 M.P. then send copies to them too.) Just insert your name and address at the top, sign at the bottom, place in envelope and post. If every member of Societies attached to NAMHO's does this, then approx. 1500 letters will be sent. This is the only way we can hope to get any action. SEND YOURS NOW BEFORE YOU FORGET.

Irish Trip.

Two of our members wrote to us about insurance cover for a trip to Ireland, and not missing the opportunity offered, the following account was commissioned.

"We began in the Bantry Area and found that we were 'exploding myths'. The only mine we found any trace of was one on the coast at Coppagh, where we found one or two capped shafts, the tipps having practically been cleared away. It is believed that the mines have been filled and sealed. The ones at Streek and Brow are at beach level and go under the sea. At the Dhurodes mine, the main shaft has been partially filled in to approx 300'. A pair of chuffs (rare birds) are nesting in the 10' x 10' shaft. The mine is on the cliff edge with a huge drop to the sea. This is quite a spectacular site involving quite a trudge from the road to the headland. The coast is serrated, being composed of a folded volcanic slate. The scenery is breathtaking - or so we thought until we visited Alhillies mine the next day. This is not a mine as we know them. The copper veins were discovered on the surface and worked downwards until it was too dangerous to go any further. We heard that there are still deposits of Chalcopyrite which couldn't be reached. The mountainside is covered in a series of huge long gashes, hundreds of feet deep and wide. They are not fenced and most of them are hidden by the grass covered tips so that you literally stumble in them. We never saw the bottom of any, as the only way to approach the edge was on ones stomach. Some ran into gigantic caverns which went under the hillside. One gully had wide rock bridges left to support the top side. The walls of these gashes are covered with a beautiful blue and green staining. As a mineralogist I never thought that I would fall over a mineral vein but that's exactly what happened. An 18" wide vein of weathered chalcopyrite crosses the path, disappearing into the heather.

Our next port of call was Silvermines near Limerick and is now running down. The mine is on a double fault from which they have been mining silver rich lead and associated minerals. Apart from a spectacular strike of irridescent pyrites the minerals are massive. As the mineralisation occures along the fault, they are taking bores to ensure that the 3 levels have indeed expired.

We found the same story at Tynagh. This mine has also had copper at one time and they are now working the tips for silver. They were to cast their first silver ingot the day after our visit. The mine is due to close when the tips are worked out, and the workings are already flooding. It's sister mine at Limerick Junction - Gortdrum has flooded to within 40' of the shaft top."

Jean Spence

Next Newsletter to be issued in Novemeer. All contributions, in good time, to:-

H.Houghton, 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds LS6 4LY. Tel 758505.