Northern Mine Research Society

Newsletter November 1985

Subscriptions

First the bad news, subscriptions are going up.

They have remained the same for 3 years now and inflation has nibbled at the surplus. To meet the wishes of a large fraction of the membership who voted for 3 B.M.'s a year, but so as not to lose the support of the significant number who were against it, has lead the committee to a compromise solution of:-

Full membership	£9.00
Overseas	£11.00 (i)
Associate	£12.00
Family	£ 0.75

(i) those using a non- U.K. bank cheque should add 80p.

If membership remains steady; if after-sales of publications remain buoyant and if a lot of you covenant your subscription, this should enable the Editor to publish 3 B.M.'s in most years. Evenwith a little backsliding, 5 B.M.'s over two years should be feasable. Above all, we hope to maintain subs steady for another 3 years or so.

Three or four members have asked to pay subs. by Bankers Order or other new-fangled technique. Being an elederly mining historian accustomed to cost-book financing methods, Hon. Treasurer would much rather avoid the confusion that might arise at his end, and the Committee would be much obliged if all members would continue to pay by cheque, P.O. or cash.

Covenants

The Taxman is now convinced that we are a Charity and the road is clear for us to reclaim 43p in £1 on all subscriptions paid by members who pay U.K. income tax. The appropriate Deed of Covenant is attached to this Newsletter, along with your renewal form. In case you skipped too lightly over the first 4 paras. of the last Newsletter, the exhortations are now repeated.

Signing the Deed of Covenant will not affect your tax position, nor will it lead the Tax folk to query your tax returns in future. You are not irrevocably committed to remaining in the Society come hell or high water, you simply state that you have the intention of paying the Society your subscription for 4 years if its objectives remain unchanged and your circumstances remain the same. It does, however, involve you in some tedious paper work. You must get your signature witnessed; anyone can do this e.g. your mate at work, your bridge partner etc. They are only confirming that it is your signature, not that you are telling the truth. You may later be asked to sign yet another form to say that you actually did pay your sub. and return it to the Treasurer. All this, however, is small compared to the benefits to the Society, and negligible compared to the volume of extra paper the Treasurer is delighted to handle to swell the society's funds.

As a further challenge to your determination, please understand the footnotes on the Covenant form and act thereon, otherwise the Treasurer will go berserk and probably erstwhile as well.

Finally, if you have any moral or other reason for not covenanting your sub., we hope that you will remain a member and we look forward to receiving the sub. early - it earns useful tax-free interest and saves tedious reminders.

British Mining Publications

To keep members informed of what they can expect in the future (and also as an incentive to pay their next few year's subs. by Deed of Covenant) the following Monographs are likely to pour through members' letter-boxes. "What other society offers such wonderous things." I ask myself.... The Mines of Rossendale etc. M.C. Gill; The Frongoch Mine. D.E. Bick; The Mines of Arkengarthdale etc. L.Tyson; The Goginan Mines. S.J.Hughes; The Talargoch Mines. J.A.Thorburn; The Bassett Mines - their history & industrial archaeology. M.Palmer et al.; The Geology, mineralogy etc of the mid Wales Orefield etc. Messrs Mason & Curtsis; plus NMRS Memoirs each year. Can YOU afford to miss out on all this in the future?.

Specialist Interest List.

What we have done for years, the world does tomorrow!

Within NAMHO it was felt that a centralised list of individual "skills and special interests" would be useful for overcoming specific problems which member organisations might, from time to time, face. Its other value would be the opportunity provided for an overview of research in progress, and the opportunity for disseminating such information.

The most expedient way of producing such a list, would be for each member organisation to produce its own - which the Association could merge.

As anyone who has read our Membership Application form will know we already keep such a list for our own use. It is appreciated that not all inclusions on this may want their names included in the NAMHO one, so would anyone who doesn't want his passing on, please let us know. Similarly anyone not on our list, who has a specialised knowledge on any particular mining area or aspect of mining history, and are prepared to help out with queries from time to time, then please let us know.

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More on Winding

In the September Newsletter, Peter Holmes queried whether drivers of winding engines in the coal industry were discouraged from watching the cages landing. In fact "winding enginemen" were usually situated in a winding enginehouse somewhat remote from the pit top and it was usual to rely entirely on signals and depth indicator. Very often the latter consisted of a circular dial with a movable pointer representing the cages travelling in the shaft, the edge of the dial being graduated with the number of drum revolutions away from landing level. For precise stopping, marks were painted on the edge of the winding drum and had to be aligned with a fixed pointer.

In earlier times, signalling was by wire rope from each landing level operating separate hammers in the winding enginehouse. Later a mechanical indicator was developed giving both audible signal and visual instruction, and in modern times, of course, electrical equipment is used.

I can proudly boast to have operated a steam winder, if only for a few days, so can testify to it being an exacting job although thoroughly boring!

A clutch drum arrangement is certainly not unique to metal mining, it was particularly useful in coal mining, where the shallower seams were mined initially, then the shafts sunk further at a later date, to get at deeper seams. At Bedlington "A" Colliery (NZ 273829) closed in 1971, the steam winder had a clutch drum and the usual dial indicator, which had graduations through 270° representing the full depth of the shaft. However, the depth to the shallow seam worked used only the first 180° so a blank covering-plate could be slipped over the dial to obscure the approximate 90° not needed when winding from the upper level. Numerous paint marks were needed on the winding drum for the differing precise landing points. This particular winding engine, wound from two separate small diameter shafts linked by a tandem steel headgear, probably the last to exist in the North East.

An engine with a clutch drum is preserved at Bestwood Colliery site (SK 557475) now part of a Country Park scheme, this engine being the only remaining twin-cylinder vertical winder. Whilst not having a clutch drum, the engine at Lewis Merthyr Colliery (ST 038912) closed in 1983, is certainly unusual, if only for the fact that for some 24 years it operated on compressed air! It wound from two seams simultaneously, each cage being wound by a by-cylinder drum arrangement, consequently the single drum has two spirals and four diameters.

Simon Chapman.

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Welsh Meet Report - Spring Bank Holiday 1985.

This Meet Report is really 2 in 1 - Margaret Griffith has written about Sunday's activities and Eric Gray-Thomas the rest, complete with in-built Welsh lesson.

Saturday. The Penrhyn Du Headland - this rather isolated Lead, Zinc orefield had 9 mines, most of them also produced Barite + Copper.

We began our walkabout at the beach car park below Marchros, stopping at the tips of Tan-yr-Allt & Bwlchtocyn (SH 313266), figures of output date from 1888, but it is certain that it was at work long before this , as the earliest I could find is 1639 mentioned in a letter of 3rd October from Thomas Bushell to the Secretary of State Windlebank. Bushell was, at this time, the person in charge of the Royal Mint at Aberystwyth, he also owned several mines in Cardiganshire.

Bwlchtocyn (Bwlch = Pass; Tocyn = apile or heap) is situated on the edge of the Abersoch

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Golf Course, and the tips are being landscaped. The Tan-yr-Allt (Under the Hill) is a continuation of Bwlchtocyn eastward. Further on again, on the tramroad which connects up the various mines, is Pantgwyn, there is only one small tip, much overgrown here & not worth a visit, it is near a water purification plant at map ref 308267. 447 tons of Zinc; 8,123 tons of Copper; and 8,722 tons of Lead was extracted from Pantgwyn, but some of this came from Bwlchtocyn & Tan-yr-Allt mines, and owned by the same company. Pantgwyn closed in 1892.

Next to be visited was West Assheton at SH 318263, and just above the car park. The name refers to Lord Assheton of the Vaenol estate at Portdinorwic. A Vaenol or Vaynol rentbook of 1696 gives John & Thomas Weldon as holding land for mining purposes in the parish of Llanengan (the Penrhyn Du area).

The West Assheton drainage adit is right on the beach, and just East of the car park and boatyard owned by Mr John Roberts. It is a large Rock arch, with a padlocked solid wood door - we also looked down a hole that goes into the adit. The adit has a brick wall some way in, holding back a lot of water, it goes in as far as the shaft, which is Bwlchtocyn's water supply, higher up the hillside. The 1910 & 1914 O.S. map consulted shows a level above the car park, this is still open and goes in for 100ft to a roof fall. Directly above this level are the tips and old shafts of the West Assheton, one of the shafts is gradually sinking in and is the cause of the roof fall in the level below. The land around here is owned by Mr Nick Fletcher Brewer, he also owns the Bwlchtocyn Hotel which is on the site of the East Assheton , there are 2 collapsed shafts in the rough ground opposite the hotel entrance, it is on the ruins of an old farmhouse called Trem-y-Don, the hotel water supply comes from a 130ft shaft, two thirds full of water at the rear of the hotel, it has a wood capping - the shaft - not the hotel.

The Assheton Mines were at work in 1876-81. Tonnages of ore - Zinc 864 tons; Galena 1,895 tons;

Our next mine is Cim at 318257. There were 2 shafts, 20ft apart in the front garden of the mine captain's house, now called "Pen-y-Waen", beyond the garage is the circular stone wall of a 3rd shaft, dated 1854. Lower down is the old farmhouse of Penrhyn Mawr. It is reputed to have a ghost; it also has a cellar and according to local legend a tunnel went from it to the beach at Porth Bach and was used by smugglers. The farmhouse was the Penrhyn Du mine owners house, the tunnel was probably an adit.

In 1751 copper was discovered at Penrhyn Du mine, it was then an "Old" mine. Charles Roe of the Macclesfield Co took the lease in 1764, the Owner being Sir Nickolas Bayley (he was part owner of the Parys mine on Anglesey). The mine foreman was Jonathan Roose, a Derbyshire miner who was later moved to Anglesey, and it was he who introduced the system of 3 or 4 miners working together as a team. These gangs were rewarded with a bottle of whisky when they discovered a profitable vein of ore.

On the site of the Penrhyn Du mine, the old maps show 5 shafts, only 1 now still open on top of the hill - it is deep and contains water fall below (stone dropping test). The whole area, from the shaft on the hill top to the remains of the Cornish engine-house & Mr Reid's cottage "Bwthyn Twr" (Tower Cottage) is pockmarked with shallow depressions and spoil heaps. Earlier this year, a G.P.O. van delivered a letter to "Bwthyn Twr", when he turned to leave a huge hole appeared in the track and only 20ft from the front door - tons of waste was used to fill it. Mr Reid has a 'well' in front of the cottage. We, with permission, removed the cover and looked down - it is about 70ft deep with a level leading off some way down.

Lower down the track to the beach, there was a row of 10 cottages (now a house) called "Cornish Row". Whole mining families came here to work. Between the "Row" and Mr Reid's cottage there is the remains of a stone building, which was the school for the children of the Cornish miners, who were taught in the Cornish language. The miners "Home from Home", their 'local' was a pub in Marchros called "The Lamb" - now known as "Lamb Cottage".

The tramroad goes all the way from the tip of the headland beyond Cornish Row to the village of Sarn Bach and on, running parallel with the road, to Llanengan as far as Llain Gapel. Here it turned left, through a 50ft tunnel to a quarry worked for iron ore. The tunnel is still there, but flooded. The tramway was called "St Tudwalls Railway" & was built by the St Tudwalls Iron Ore Company in 1846. the total length was almost 2 miles and it worked until 1885.

After pub lunch at the "Sun" in Llanengan, we had a look at the Porth Neigwl Mine (295267) the most westerly mine; best period 1870-90. Lead ore 879 tons - the tips have plenty of barite. Above the tips are the ivy covered buildings and the filled-in shaft. Up again, to the flue & chimney - this has a bulge near the top, which if not repaired

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will bring about the collapse of the upper part of the chimney. The engine shaft goes down 90 fathoms, but it was only worked to the 80 fathom level. There was an air shaft in a field some distance away.

The name "Poeth - Port", "Neigwl - Nigel" comes from Nigel de Loryng, medieval Lord of the area.

I decided at the last minute to have a look for a level, driven in search of lead in a quarry at Creigir Uchaf - avery wet, pongy, short level - nuff said.

A small group who had not had enough decided to have a look at Pared Mawr (167264). This one is different to the other mines in being up a cliff. "Pared - Wall, Mawr -Big". The cliffs here are in a very unstable condition. In December '84 a huge chunk of cliff crashed down onto the sandy beach of Porth Ceiriad. The mine is mentioned in the Mining Journal of 29 December 1851. The tips on the cliff top show no mineralisation and are much weathered. The level goes in 30ft, a 12ft drop leads left & right for 35 yards, a short climb up & into a level again 35 yards long.

My thanks to the many people in the area who willingly supplied information & showed a lot of interest, & especially to Mr Reid of "Tyddyn Twr". Information from G.A.S. Gwynedd Archive Service; Caernarfon Historical Society; British Mining No.4; + much walking about and pestering the locals.

Sunday_ Over 25 adults and children assembled on a remote Welsh hillside around llam, and immediately various officials rushed around collecting the 50pences from a dozen or so non-members who had seen the excursion advertised locally (We gained at least 3 new members!)

The Rhiw and Benallt Manganese mines were the first port of call. They had been worked intermittently from the 1840's to 1945, with production and manpower peaking in 1907 and during the two World Wars. We looked at the site of the aerial ropeway which carried bucketsful of manganese from the Rhiw mines to a jetty in Porth Neigwl from 1903 -1910, and at the remains of the 1903 tramway from the Benallt mine down to the coast near Porth Ysgo. We peered into vast opencast areas and dropped stones down shafts. A huge bank of unsaleable lowgrade manganese reminded us of the need to check the quality of the ore before going to the hassle of getting it out of the ground! One of the local people who joined us had an eager audience as he recounted his experiences working underground there during the second World War.

Armed with plans of the sites and a rough sketch of the local network of lanes, the convoy moved off along the line of the old tramway, down to the Nant Manganese Mine. A gale sent most of us scurrying to the shelter of a stream gorge to devour our food. Much later we continued on down to the coast through the remains of the Nant mine which operated intermittently from 1827 to the 1920's. A few fit, energetic folk climbed down to the foreshore to gaze upon the remains of the jetty, waggons winch gears and assorted ironwork, whilst the older, wiser or lazier "studied" the drums at the top of the pier inclines, the loco shed and the inevitable variety of holes. A few disappeared underground briefly, led, of course, by Eric, but all resurfaced - I think!

Reference was made to Chris Down's monograph on Manganese Mining in North Wales in which the period 1886 - 1945 is described, and also to the 1827 - 1886 period into which I have been researching. Some notes on the first sixty years of recorded manganese working in this district may appear shortly! We also looked at a number of old photographs of the manganese workings and the miners.

The convoy continued West, to the Llanllawen Jasper Quarry beyond Aberdaron, where we saw a large Victorian Celtic Cross cut from the jasper, and where the local farmer and a local monumental mason told us more about the stone, the machinery and the site.

The final visit was to the Carreg Jasper Quarries near the Whistling Sands, where the local farmer described features and energetically assisted us obtain samples of the beautifully veined deep red stone.

The interest and involvement of local people, dry weather and clear views from the tip of North Wales added up to make an enjoyable day.

Monday. Off at 10.45 am to the Llanaelhaern Manganese Mine. There is not a lot to see, a row of hollows along the hillside of Gurn Ddu (407461). The only output is 50 tons in 1872. Owner - John Cowper, 1872-76. The level shown in British Mining No.14 has been blown up by the previous owner of Cwm Coryn farm, and the rabbit warren of workings are no longer accessable. We admired the view, and back down to the beach car park at Trefor. Near here, at 367474, there was a trial for copper, the site is still there - now just a muddy hollow. The huge hopper that disgorged the various size of granite chippings into the waiting ships, holding 20-30 tons each. Drove on through Trefor village to the bottom of the incline at 365462. The village, with its rows of solid stone built houses

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is often used by S4C T.V.

Up through Lithfaen and along trackway to top of quarry, looked around, and back to car park. Got everybody to the top of the Porth-y-Nant quarry, scrambled down to the beach. A big rusted lathe in the ruined building was admired, & along the beach to Nant Gwrtheyrn - this village was built for the quarrymen and their families, becoming derelict on quarry closure, it has now been restored as a Welsh Language Centre. As we began our grind up-hill to the car park, it rained, a good old fashioned downpour.

These quarries are called "Set" quarries. They started working in earnest with the Industrial Revolution. Roads paved with blocks of hard igneous rock being better able to withstand the iron shod wheels of the carts. A hard core of chippings were put down, setting the blocks on top, each sett breaking joint with those on either side, after the style of laying bricks. At first setts were big and heavy - 6" - 1' depth, and 8" - 20" length; later sizes were 6" depth, 3" -4½" width & 4" - 8" length.

The inclines used the counter balance method, chains used initially soon changed to wirerope.

The coming of the Chester & Holyhead Railway in 1845-8, helped the transport of rock. Hand cutting gave way to crushing plant as the big companies became involved. Much of the quarry machinery was made at the de Winton ironworks in Caernarfon. Plug & feather method was used to split the rock. The "Sett" in Welsh is called "Ithfaen". During the 1914-18 war, a Royal Welsh Fusilier Battalion was formed, German P.O.W.'s were sent to work in the quarries.

Trefor or Yr Eifl	Map Ref	365462
Rivals or Croft	"	350452
Porth-y-Nant	"	348446
Carreg-y-Llam	"	356438

They closed in 1963. Trefor, the largest, is 1,500ft above the village. It is sad to see what was for many years a thriving industry, stripped of its machinery and quiet, where once it throbed with life. Tfefor village still has a Brass Band. A Company near Conwy takes granite for making curling stones, these can be seen being made at 782788.

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Book Reviews

1. Underground Britain. A Guide to the Wild Caves & Show Caves of England, Scotland & Wales by Bruce Bedford. Published by Willow Books, Collins, London 1985. Price £9.95.

A glossy hardback, copiously illustrated with fine black & white & colour photos. The first 65 of the 175 pages deal with the Wild Caves, all natural formations but fascinating to read about and with excellent photos. The remainder of the book deals with the Show Caves, but over two thirds of the 36 "caves" are really Show Mines; Poldark, Grimes Graves, Big Pit and Chatterley Whitfield to name but a few. Other "caves" described include a grotto as well as the Dinorwig and Cruachan Power Stations. The show mine descriptions are concise and, in a few cases, complete with a mine plan or section. Each description also has a map of Britain which takes up about one sixth of the page, on this there is a black dot indicating the general location of the mine, a too generalised and probably unnecessary piece of information. It would have been much better to have a plan of every mine - since for most readers it would have been sufficient to say, for example, that Poldark Mine was in Cornwall.

In all, however, this is a book well worth having.

I.J.B.

2. The Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield, 1200-1099 by Colin Owen. Published by Moorland Publishing Co. Ltd 1984. Hardback 321pp.£14.95

One of the smaller U.K. coalfields, and never a major producer, the Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield nevertheless has an interesting history stretching back over at least 800 years. The field extends from the outskirts of Burton upon Trent in the north-west to Desford in the south-east.

After a brief resume of the geology, sufficient to provide the necessary background, the author traces the development of individual coal pits in a broadly chronological account, analysing the influence of the landowners and their various degrees of enthusiasm: the market opportunities provided by local industries and those in Burton upon Trent and the city of Leicester; and (for a long period) the adverse effect of comparitive isolation and poor communications.

Multiple coal seams, either out-cropping or at comparatively shallow depths, provided plenty of encouragement for early working, but the first big expansion came

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in Elizabethan times.

Leading families involved around that time were the Beaumonts of Coleorton and the Willoughbys of Wollaton. Further technical advances were made around 1700 by John Wilkins and George Sparrow, who first introduced the longwall method of mining to the area, and installed Newcomen atmospheric engines to aid in pumping.

Further innovations were introduced by Joseph Wilkes of Measham, the Earls of Moira, the Boultbees of Thringstone and the Bullivant, Granville and Nadin families at Swadlincote and Newhall around 1800, and shortly afterwards mines began to be sunk in the concealed southern extensions of the coalfield. In the 1830's George Robert Stephenson, the renowned father & son railway engineers, worked on the provision of a branch line to the area, and were also involved themselves in sinking mines.

The final chapter of the book, covering the period 1860-1900, relates the developments which occurred as the output from the coalfield approached its peak. (Some of the shafts sunk during this period were still in use when the U.K. coal mines were nationalized half a century later).

The author has produced a detailed yet interesting & readable historical account.

Filched from Mining Mag, June 1985.

3. Metallurgy.

The Dutch publishers with that unpronouncable name announce that they are re-printing various volumes in Dr. John Percy's "Metallurgy" series. These volumes were initially published in the mid nineteenth century and are now difficult to obtain.

Volume I of the series is now available, this being titled "Fuel, Fire-clays, copper, zinc and brass". It is split into two parts, both of which are in a single volume i.e. single parts cannot be ordered. This case bound book retails at £19.75 +p & p.

Of more immediate interest to the mining historian is their promised issue (1985/6) of Vol.III "Metallurgy of Lead". This is again in two parts, Pt 1 "Properties of lead; lead desilverisation". Pt 2 "Lead". Vol IV on gold & silver is also expected in 1986.

This publisher also offers other interesting titles dealing with various aspects of Industrial Archaeology. For full details and order form write to:-
De Archaeologische Pers, Zeelsterstraat 147, NL-5652 EE Eindhoven, Netherlands.

R.H.B.

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Show Mines in Poland - Ivor Brown.

At the invitation of the authorities in Poland, I recently attended a conference to discuss mining museums based on the Lower Silesian Coalfield. Poland already has several showmines including the Wieliczka Salt Mine near Cracow, a mine which has been producing salt since the Middle Ages and now recognised by UNESCO on their World List of important cultural sites. The show-mine operation is financed by a national tax on table salt. There is also a former silver mine open to the public at Tarnowskie Gory with a mile-long underground trail and the Tunnel of the Black Trent, an old silver mine drainage adit in the Tarnow Mountains, where visitors are taken in metal boats along part of the 8km tunnel.

Several coal mines have been converted into museums, one at Zabrze is well developed, and a major eco-museum is now being formed around the still very active Victoria Mine in the Lower Silesian Coalfield. This mine employs 3,000 persons and has an under-ground training centre with four complete coalfaces each using different mining techniques. Young miners are also trained here for three similar mines. Visitors are taken through the operational underground training and museum galleries, through the mine workshops, fan house and pumphouse (along a raised glass enclosed walkway) and up the winding tower. All parties are accompanied by officials in Silesian miners' uniform. Admittance is free and it is intended that the "show-mine" will be financed by a tax on coal produced.

The Conference itself looked at the problems of operating show-mine museums which included whole settlements and kindred activities (eco-museums) and was attended mainly by persons from East & West Germany, France, Czechoslovakia & Poland.

(The thing is though, did he sign any of them up for membership of NAMHO? Ed.)

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Excavations by the Society?

I read Roger Turton's comments in the May Newsletter with interest; as (so far as I know) one of the very few trained archaeologists in the Society, I would like to add a few points of my own.

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1). Surveying the standing buildings and visible surface features on a mine site is perfectly harmless, and is obviously invaluable if done carefully by someone who knows what he is doing; the sort of survey done with twenty minutes and a piece of paper may be good fun, but is unlikely to be of much value.

2). Excavation work is, however a very different kettle of fish, as the act of excavation inevitably destroys much of the more subtle evidence contained in the soil layers, and the structure exposed will normally start to deteriorate far more rapidly than if they had been left covered. Dressing floors (as I have found the hard way at Killhope) are difficult and complex sites to excavate properly, and very difficult to conserve after excavation.

3). For someone to embark on excavation of a mine site without the expertise, equipment and resources to do the job properly, including a full record of the excavation and the conservation of the structures uncovered, is therefore an act of vandalism; all too many archaeological sites have, in fact, been ruined this way over the years.

4). The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (alias English Heritage) is increasingly aware of the importance of our industrial heritage, and more of the best surviving surface remains are now being scheduled as Ancient Monuments, To excavate on a scheduled site without consent from English Heritage (as well as from the land-owner) is ILLEGAL, and the perpetrator can be fined heavily. Anyone thinking of taking on excavation work at any mining site would therefore be well advised to contact English Heritage (Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 2HE) for advise; county archaeological units may also be able to help.

5). My impression is that most NMRS members have neither the skills nor the interest to do good excavation work on surface remains (any more than most archaeologists would be competent to lead an underground mine exploration), and should therefore avoid this sort of fieldwork unless it is under competent leadership.

6). Following on from this, the Society's constitution goes out of its way to encourage involvement of archaeologists, historians, and indeed anyone who can contribute to the study of past mining, but my impression of the reality is very different; in practice there seems to be little interest in anything except underground exploration and the impression the newsletter gives is very much of an in-group of "minefreaks" rather than the much more open organisation that the constitution envisaged. Since the mine exploration side is surely covered by many societies all over the country, could NMRS do more to encourage membership outside that fraternity, from the historians, archaeologists, industrial archaeologists, metallurgists etc who at present figure so slightly in the active membership? Maybe the impression is worse than the reality, but I've had all too many visitors at Killhope who have a deep interest in, and knowledge of, mining history, ore processing etc, but don't join NMRS because they feel the society is only interested in mine exploration.

David Cranstone.

I know this next piece overlaps the above in several areas, but is a valuable contribution to the debate and gives a different slant to some of it.

Research Objectives in Mining History - Pt 1 - Fieldwork.

During the recent years there has been a growing call for the Society to consider organising excavations as part of its field meet programme. Whilst having sympathy with this desire, it is simply insufficient to descend on a site and excavate it; no matter how rigorously the work is done, and the findings recorded. Also, besides being beyond its resources, it is not the Society's place to originate such research. It serves members better by providing a vehicle for their work; which may indeed mean inclusion of suitable projects on the meets list. Further, it must act as a forum, where its combined expertise could contribute to discussion of work in hand.

It is a problem of practically all I.A. that no research philosophy has emerged, and very few of us appear willing to consider precisely what an excavation is likely to reveal? It is an expensive process, which nearly always destroys the site, and is extravagant in manhours, materials and money A Doctor would not normally expect to use surgery; his most drastic tool, first. So what can we reveal by other means?

I would like to see members contributing to more comprehensive, regional surveys, which were designed to answer a set of theoretical problems. To achieve this, would require co-ordinated programmes of field archaeology and, where necessary, selected

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excavations to provide clues which are missing, or imprecise, from the historical record. It is, however, insuffieient to have the limited aim of describing and understanding mining landscapes, because these are merely the parchment on which the history of exploitation is written. The principal focus of interest must be the human populations responsible for that exploitation. Here. to ensure a complete overview of developments, it would be prudent to involve other local historians.

Even those so anxious to re-open old workings, and push ever deeper into hillsides, could contribute, were they to approach the task with some modicum of a research philosophy. That would not only include the mapping of the geological or physical structures, but making some attempt to assess the chronology and mode of working the mine, especially when correlated with the development of surface features. Alas, too often, all that is achieved is a good day out.

M.C. Gill.

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Annual Dinner by your roving (or is it raving? Ed.) reporter - R.E. Hewer,

I've just received a call from Harry. He says I have to write a report for the Newsletter about the NMRS annual dinner this year.

Now you all know I'm not a vindictive person and I may have been harsh calling Harry, 'a little hairy moron' (I must apologise to the moron.)) Well since the dinner I am a changed man; I'm older. The aging process from such events accelerates time rapidly. So for the benefit of R2 D2 (Harry) I have put pen to paper. - HELLO!

Many thanks to the 270 members who attended this years dinner, it was a superb affair, an excellent meal downed by excellent beer in an excellent room (are there too many excellents?)

Joking aside, both members did have a good evening out and the meal was excellent. May I offer a very special thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Callendar, our guests for the evening, with a special thanks to Ron for a highly entertaining after-dinner speech.

The Golden Chicken this year went to Geof Greenough for loosing his wallet (and Society funds) whilst underground on an NMRS trip. We do have to keep any eye on him, he's almost as bad as Harry - well not quite!!!

Finally, your leader is leaving! Yes I'm going, some say I've been gone for years mentally that is. But this time both the body and brain are leaving. Where? did you ask? Oh, only the committee, making room for someone younger, more agile, decrepid and ignorant ... like ... Harry!! It's time to attack from the floor. This will bring a new dimension to General Meetings ..... nauseating !!!!

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The latest on Dudley's Limestone Caverns, sent in by Dave Blundell taken from New Civil Engineer of June 1985.

Tests are underway in a cavern beneath Dudley cricket ground which is already pitted with sinkholes and is one of many places around Birmingham suffering from the after effects of mainly 18th & 19th century limestone mining.

Disused mines which are now classified by the D of E as derelict areas have already been responsible for subsidence beneath the M1, M5 & M6 motorways. Stabilising ground movements either by grouting or by controlled collapse and backfill does not come cheaply.

Now consultant Ove Arup & Partners has been asked to investigate the hopefully much cheaper possibility of using colliery waste to infill the workings.

Most of the exhausted Black Country workings are flooded. Castle fields mine under Dudley Sports Centre was selected because it is remarkably dry.

The concept of using one area of dereliction, a nearby slag heap, to fill up another has great appeal says Arup, and at five pence a tonne from the NCB it is a cheap supply. The colliery waste comprises mudstones and shales loosely cemented by clay so it is not easily transportable by conveyor or pump. This, and the fact that access for placement into the mine is restricted to half a dozen 200mm diameter shafts and two man access lifts, provided Arup with a tricky challenge.

"What we're doing to make it easily pumpable is simply mixing it with water in a conventional 60m^3/h Barber Greene batching plant" explains project engineer David Stevens. "By converting the colliery spoil into what we call rock paste it should be possible to use conventional concrete pumps, with an extended elephant's trunk to place the material."

The mine to be filled is small by Black Country standards. It is a kidney shaped,

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pillar and stall cavern about 60m long and up to 5m high. Contractor RM Douglas has been asked to seal off a wet area at one end of the working with a solid bulkhead between ceiling and floor. Elsewhere the water table ia about 1m below the mine floor.

The object of infilling, explains Stevens, is not to inject a structural element which will prevent the roof plane approaching the floor plane. Watered colliery spoil actually has very little shear strength, a maximum of 5kN/m^2, and acts simply as a bulk infilling material. Placing the paste is designed to arrest local roofing failures. Crown holes, as they are known, are like inverted potholes a few square metres in area. The poor bridging quality found in limestone deteriorates further if the moisture content is reduced by a spell of very dry weather. As fallen rock from the crown accumulates on the floor, the long term effect is migration of the void from the mine to the ground above, a distance of 26m at Dudley. "What we're hoping is that with the insertion of rock paste the whole mechanism will be self choking" says Stevens.

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Scoutmoor Quarries

Remember it's always wise to keep a camera handy.

Remember the Scoutmoor Quarries trip in 1980?

Well, the colliery engine house, drift entrance and boiler room have been flattened by the new quarry.

R.E. Hewer.

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For Sale

Bill Davies of 8 Dundonald Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 6LL has the following books for sale. Please contact him direct.

Mines & Mining in the English Lake District. Postlethwaite. 3rd Edn. Republ. 1975.
The Old Metal Mines of Mid Wales. Bick. 1978 (Signed copy 164/250)
Collectors Guide to Minerals & Gemstones. Boegel, Ed.Sinkankas.
The Geology of the Lake District, Ed. F.Moseley. Yorkshire Geol. Soc 1978.

British Mining Nos 2, 3, 4,6,7,8,9,19,12,13,14,15,17,18,19,22,23,24,25,26,27
Memoirs of NC & MRS Vol 2,3 & 4.
NCMRS Occasional Pub. No 7. Non-Ferrous Mines of Flintshire.

Bill would like to dispose of the NMRS Publications as a job lot.

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Another Book Review

A Gazetteer to The Metal Mines of Scotland by J.G. Landless
Published by Wanlockhead Museum Trust. 1985. £1.20 by post.

This very handy 70 page paperback contains some 210 entries of mines, trials and documented sites.

These have been listed in alphabetical order in the main text and in the first appendage.

Two other appendages are included; one, of the mines on a regional basis; the other, of each mine by mineral.

Wherever possible the location is shown by related towns, villages, hills etc., as well as by Map. Ref. If part of a large complex then the main area is shown. Similarly is the site is unclear then a note to the effect is given, though where possible the probable area is boxed with 2 map references. If Jerry has visited a site the date of his last visit is shown.

Where the principal mineral is shown, this may not be the one for which the mine is best known, but will be the one that was most productive.

Whilst maybe not a book for sitting down and reading, it is an essential addition for anyone wanting to find mines in Scotland. HH.

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Meets

Last years Meets list was fairly sparse, but so far next years is looking even more so. If you want Meets, and many of you do, then let's have some volunteers to lead them, don't leave it to the same few each time. The best way to get variation is to have plenty of new faces and ideas, or even to have old ideas presented in a different way.

To start off with so far, the Easter in Cornwall will not be held as a Meet as such, but a group of us will be on holiday down there over the Easter period. We will be using the same campsite at Chacewater and will be doing similar activities i.e.

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playing on beaches; watching veteran motor trials; looking up/round/in lighthouses; having pub lunches etc., and more than likely nosing around the odd mine or two!!

Anyone wanting to join us is welcome to do so. Anyone willing to entertain us is encouraged to do so!!

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For Sale

The following Prints are for sale (offers) or will exchange for prints of Metal Mines.

1. 8"x 5" Print in 12"x 9" frame border. Hand tinted in Watercolour.
   Entitled: Coal-Whimsey, or Engine Drawing Coal in the Staffordshire Colleries.
2. 9"x 6" Print in 13"x 9" frame border (untinted)
   Entitled: The Great Ardsley Main Colliery, Nr. Barnsley. 1847
3. 8"x 7" Print in 12"x 11" frame border (untinted)
   Entitled: The Page Bank Colliery Pit on Fire 1858
4. 14"x 9" print in 18"x 12" frame border (untinted)
   Entitled: Filling the Cupola Shaft at the Oaks Colliery, Barnsley, to stop the draught of air. 1866.

Anyone interested, please contact John Jones, 31 Bridgefields, Kegworth, Derby.

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Pie & Pea Supper Report - 9th November, 1985.

As usual the General Meeting preceeding the Talk-in was the best attended of the year, even if it wasn't the most interesting. Like the Dinner,numbers were down on previous years, and the Committee would welcome suggestions for improving matters.

Three & a half dozen pies were consumed, so the turnout was not wholly disastrous, and although the selection of talks was sparse the content was most agreeable and went down very well.

John Jones started off with an illustrated guide to the work being done at Golconda - Hopton Mining Co., to demolish the old head frame over the shaft. Because they couldn't blast it they used a new substance called "Cellto-mix". Holes are drilled as for blasting, these are then packed with Cellto-mix and left to work overnight. Instead of a big bang, this stuff just quietly expands and so cracks the rock, or as in this case the concrete, leaving a heap of rubble to be shovelled away.

The next job was to strip the shaft(460ft) and then start a thorough survey of the old workings, which is still going on as they are so extensive.

Mike Gill then showed a rather technical series of slides explaining how,with the use of Bradford University's facilities,he had done research into the composition of slags from various smelt mill sites.

Hilary Bird cast a rather jaundiced eye over the whole aspect of mining activities as seen from the "little womans" viewpoint. Cynical, but funny and enjoyed by all.

Finally Richard Matthews gave a gruesome but humorous series of "Buckden Bill", the skeleton found in Buckden Gavel Mine some years back. (Report in N.C. & M.R.S. Memoirs 1964 Number 2.)

Thanks to all who came and especially those ladies of the kitchen, without whom we couldn't have functioned.

HH.

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Don't forget:to renew your Subscription and complete the Covenant Form.
:attend the A.G.M. at Sicklinghall Village Hall on Sun.16th Feb.'86 at 2pm.
:volunteer to lead a meet, details to John McNeil, 166 Irlam Rd, Flixton, Urmston, Manchester M31 3NB as soon as possible.

Articles for next Newsletter (February) to be sent to me:- Harry Houghton, 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds LS6 4LY as soon as possible.

May I, on behalf of the Committee, wish all our members and friends a Merry Christmas, Happy Healthy & Prosperous New Year.