

Northern Mine Research Society
Newsletter February 1987.

Hopefully this Newsletter will appear on time, unlike the November one which only just made it in time for Xmas.

The last two months of last year turned out to be quite hectic, and about all I had time to do was draft the thing, and Sue found herself doing everything else. She did have, dubious, assistance from the kids, but all the same it nearly turned out to be a New Year's issue.

I can't use the same excuse this time though, 'cos being employed by BT, I have plenty of time on my hands at present!

If you've paid your Subs. then you should find a Meets Card for 1987 hidden somewhere amongst the bumph you're now holding. If it's not, then it may have dropped out, so first take one step backwards and look down. If you can't see it then go and dig the envelope out of the bin and have a good look inside. If it's still missing then let us know, it's just possible it may be our fault. (Due to our Treasurer taking an early holiday, there will be a slight time lag - if you didn't pay till just recently i.e. in February, do not panic at this stage - give him a bit of time to catch up again.)

Future Meets

Sun. 22nd March, 1987. West Mine, Alderley Edge. Cheshire. Organiser: J.H. McNeil.

Meet at Beacon Lodge (N.G.R. SJ 858776) at 2pm. with underground gear.

Contact John Mac at 166 Irlam Rd, Flixton, Urmston, Manchester M31 3NB or Tel. 061 747 8652. If you get no reply contact Les Tyson on 061 776 1791.

Sun. 5th April, 1987. Raygill Mine, Wensleydale. Leader L.O. Tyson.

Meet at N.G.R. SD 902896 at 10.30am.

Sat. 16th May 1987. General Meeting 2pm. To be followed by lectures and slides.

Annual Dinner 7.30pm for 8pm. Hotel Italia, 53 Kings Rd, Harrogate.

NOT to be held at Sicklinghall as stated in Meets Card - see below.

GENERAL NOTE.

Anyone attending Meets this year is well advised to observe the note printed on the Meets Card i.e. Contact the Meet Leader prior to the Meet to check for last minute changes/cancellations etc. If you turn up and haven't checked first, and find that the Meet is cancelled don't blame us, blame yourself!

Annual Dinner

The more observant members will have noticed that the Annual Dinner is to be held in May this year, and not in October as has been the practice in previous years. The really wide awake ones will also have spotted that in the Meets Card its at Sicklinghall, but in the Newsletter; Harrogate.

Without getting too involved with the why's and wherefore's, suffice to say that the Scotts Arms have decided that they don't want our custom, but the Hotel Italia does.

The following blurb is the only official press release, anything else you see elsewhere are spurious rumours just put out to confuse the unwary.

General Meeting, Annual Dinner & Soiree - 16th May, 1987.

(That's just being posh, 'cos we're going to Harrogate).

Venue: Hotel Italia, 53 Kings Road, Harrogate HG1 5HJ.

Programme of Events:

General Meeting Commence 2.00pm prompt.

Cease 2.45pm business permitting.

Lectures. 3.00 to 3.45 - Mike Gill - Mining in Wharfedale.

3.50 to 4.35 - Andy Bowman - Mining in Somerset.

4.40 to 5.25 - Jim Rieuwerts - The Derbyshire Barmoot.

Break - to allow the room to be transformed for the Dinner.

Dinner 7.30 for 8.00pm. A 3 course meal offering:-

Minestrone Soup
Roast Chicken with Stuffing OR
Roast Pork with Apple Sauce & Stuffing
Vegetables of the Season
Trifle OR Fruit Salad
Coffee

The principle Guest will be Dr. Jim Rieuwerts, Mining Historian. After the Dinner there will be an illuminated discourse by the guest, entitled "An Introduction to Derbyshire".

Duly completed booking forms should be returned to Mrs. L. Dollery, 19 Osborne Gardens, Harrogate HG1 2EE to arrive no later than 2nd May, 1987. Cost is £8.00 per person. Cheques/PO payable to N.M.R.S.

The Hotel Italia offers luxurious accommodation starting at approx. £20.00 per person for Bed & Breakfast. Alternative accommodation at cheaper rates can be found at St. Mary's Lodge Guest House Tel. 0423 67104: Rheda Guest House Tel. 0423 68114 and camping/caravan site Highmoor Farm tel 0423 63637.

All members are welcome to attend the General Meeting and afternoon lectures, whether or not they wish to partake of the dinner.

For those members of the family who haven't any interest in Mining, then why not spend a few hours in Harrogate. There's plenty to occupy: Shops, Museum, Swimming Pool, Wells, Gardens, Ski slope etc.

To make a weekend of it, two events have been arranged for:-
Sun. 17th May, 1987.

Meet at Yarnbury (NGR 015659) at 10.30am. "The Grassington Moor Mines" - A guided walk with Michael Dickinson.

OR Meet at Buckden Car Park at 10.30am. "Buckden Gavel Mine"- An underground trip with Paul Dollery. Party size limited (see Paul on Saturday).

Liverton Ironstone Mine.

One of the largest and most obvious mining relics in Cleveland is under threat by a reclamation scheme proposed by Langbaugh Borough Council. The subject is the site of Liverton Ironstone Mine at NZ 709181, which is dominated by the huge shale tip caused by mining from 1870 to 1921. Little remains of the mine site itself, the two shafts 480ft deep are capped with concrete, some workshop buildings are now used as a timber yard, the reservoir was filled in and is now a childrens play area and the long brick base of the ten calcining kilns is hidden among the wild grass and hawthorn bushes which cover much of the site.

The prominent shale heap, large for Cleveland, but small compared to other areas, is reddish-brown in colour although some undergrowth has managed to grow on the lower slopes. Hardly attractive to the eye, it certainly doesn't merit the description 'monstrosity' heaped upon it by a local councillor. A recent report by John Brown Tourism Services entitled 'Tourism in Langbaugh' even recommended retaining the heap as a feature in the landscape, however the Council has other plans and believes that removal and reclamation of its site and the adjoining derelict mine site will provide a recreation area with an opportunity for another industrial estate.

The site is significant to the mining historian for two reasons, first the tip has a history. Initial recorded output for the mine was in 1871 from a seam over 9' thick unfortunately split into top and bottom blocks by a two feet thick band of shale. For most of the life of the mine the whole output was raised to bank for sorting on a picking belt, the waste being rope-hauled in tubs by a Robey portable engine up onto a steadily increasing mound where each tub was hand tipped. The resulting finger-like radiating mounds can still be seen.

Such a high output of rubbish was an embarrassment although relief came in 1907 when an agreement with the North Eastern Railway meant that tipping began around the neighbouring Kilton Viaduct to stabilise it because of subsidence. Over the following 7 years over 300,000 tons was tipped. In 1912 tipping on the original site recommenced with the installation of an aerial ropeway, this being responsible for the two large mounds at the furthest end of the site.

After closure in February 1921 some removal of the tip has taken place but otherwise most remains as finally left.

The second significant relic on the site is partly related to the first, the low iron content and the high cost of working the seam meant the erection of calcining kilns to try and reduce costs by improving the iron content. Ten kilns in total were erected at Liverton and although not unique in Cleveland they were very significant. The long base foundation of brick and stone which supported the steel bodied kilns still remains and must be considered to be under threat.

S.A. Chapman. 8.1.87.

Talargoch Mine BM31.

"My profuse apologies to anyone who with the aid of calculator or computer has been trying to make sense of the figures for lead and zinc production in Appendix I.

Due to my inability to put pages in the right order, the zinc ore figures for 1861-1890 got into the middle of the lead ore stats., which should run from 1870 to 1878 as there were no figures for the intervening years.

Apologies once again."

Jamie Thorburn

Stones for Burning

Before its untimely demise at the end of March 1986, South Yorkshire County Council, through its Archives Section, purchased a 14th century document with an interesting reference to coal.

It is an Indenture of Sale dated March 1342 and relates to land at Cawthorne, a village some four miles north west of Barnsley in an area where the mining of coal and ironstone is of historical interest. The sale included ~~hedges~~ woods pasture and coal and one of the most interesting points is the phrase used for 'coal'.

The document is in Latin and the words "petras ad comburendas" when literally translated mean "stones for burning" or "burning stones". This implies that coal was then being used as fuel in the area and thus mined locally. At the same time the wording avoids any possible confusion with charcoal which sometimes arises out of the simple word coal.

Thanks are due to Mrs Short, the former County Archivist for drawing attention to the document and for its translation.

Peter Spurrier.

The following is a translation of the document referred to - (we had to do it this way, our typewriter can't cope with medieval characters - even if we could read the Latin!)

" SOUTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE
630/Z

CAWTHORNE

TITLE DEED

1/1 Indenture of sale by Thomas, son of Dyonisia de Calthorn and Beatrice 1342/3
his wife to Nicholas Costnought, of all their wood growing in Dykongreve
and Canongreve, le Halker and Coperonker, with all hedges (except protective
hedges between the common pasture and Caperonker) and also all the wood
in le Dikrode and le Malkyncroft (except three ash trees and one hespus
(? aspen)) and all the wood belonging to le Westrod (except the brushwood
of all the above woods) as fuel for a forge, for sale or for his own use,
in consideration of 45s. paid now and a further 15s. to be paid at Easter
17 Ed. III (1343) - Nicholas to have the whole pasture of le Helehill, with
coal (petras as comburendas) and free ingress and egress for himself, his
merchandise and carts - he is to commence operating and burning on Monday
in the second week of Quadragesima (10 March) and all places are to be
delivered to him by the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24 June) -
Nicholas is to have the total profit of the forge. Dated at Calthorn
(Cawthorne), Sunday after St. Mathias the Apostle (2 March) 1342/3.

Parchment, 234mm x 125mm.

Portion of seal in white wax.

N.B. This deed (or its counterpart) was quoted by Joseph Hunter in South Yorkshire,
vol. 2 pp. 229-230 (1831), when it was among the muniments of the Bosviles. "

Anyone lost a drainage sough?

Members looking for the site of a supposed drainage adit might get help from
Dr. J.D. Wilcock (22 Kingsley Clse, Stafford. Tel 0785 58979) who has tried dowsing
with some success.

Wanlockhead

" I keep receiving enquiries from members as to what has happened to Jeremy Landless
and his moles. Well, he certainly hasn't hibernated or failed to return from the Pibble
Mine outing last year.

In fact, he has devoted a lot of time since the summer to making a video of the
Glencrieff engines. (It's not true that he has become a video fanatic, though his team
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of moles subscribe to that view). Working on the supposition that it will take a little time to drag a sixty-foot long engine through a body-width hole in a massive fall the video, which is an epic documentary covering three years of digging, is intended for public showing in the Lead Mining Museum Visitor Centre here from Easter on, to accompany a new display featuring a working scale model of the Glencrieff water-pressure engine built by Frank Jackson of P.D.M.S. The model, based on 'hand-span' and 'finger-thick' measurements supplied by Jeremy, actually works.

In addition, Jeremy managed to do a recce of an old trial on Goldscaur Vein, afforded when flood water burst a hillside here. Furthermore, although the rate of attrition has slackened lately, he and his team are pushing on with a heading along Straitsteps Vein in search of a second pumping engine - increasing our collection of old tools, bits of clothing and bones (mutton ones, we think) on the way."

Thanks to Geoff Downs-Rose for the above information.

Planning Appeal - Cononley Mine.

Further to the last Newsletter, the Society has been advised that Minworth Ltd is to appeal against the North Yorkshire County Council's decision to refuse planning permission. To support its claim of archaeological significance, the Society is preparing a detailed report on the importance of features in the Engine Shaft complex. It will also be canvassing support from other National and Local groups.

M.C.Gill.

The Society Records

Members are reminded that the Society has a collection of Records, which includes material relating to many areas of Britain's mining and smelting industry. Although it is not possible to provide copies, members are welcome to spend time working on them at Mike Gill's house. Also, donations of field reports etc., will be most welcome - no matter how incomplete - as they often form our chief source of information on many sites.

The N.A.M.H.O. "Metalliferous Mining History Bibliography"

More than just a listing of NMRS articles! Roger Burt advises that work on this, the first comprehensive guide to works on metal mining history, between 1946 & 1986, is now well advanced. All manner of publications, from the obvious to the downright obscure, have been searched to reveal relevant articles and theses to add to those produced by member organisations.

The Embsay Display.

The display was taken down for the winter and attempts have been made to damp-proof the units. The inside of the building has been redecorated and it is hoped that it will prove possible to leave the display intact in future years, thereby greatly reducing maintenance.

Book Reviews.

1. Quarrying and Rockbreaking. by D.Lester, published by Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd. Price hardback £7.50. 116 pp including many diagrams.

This is a rather unusual book published with the 'small' quarryman in mind and particularly useful for guidance in developing countries. This explains why the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church among others all provided grants to enable publication of a book on blasting! There is much of historical interest, a description of primitive ways of breaking rocks, the conversion of "half shafts" into "jump" drills and the manpower needed for a semi-mechanised quarry (10 men prebreaking rock, 4 handloading the lorry, 1 driver etc.).

But there is also a wealth of detail on the operation and choice of mechanical plant, screens, conveyors, crushes and of course drilling equipment. There is also much of value to active field groups like mining societies with regard to the safe use of explosives, the movement of rock, operation of simple plant and behaviour in a quarry environment. As stated earlier this is an unusual book for the sophisticated 1980's but of particular interest to people who do or have done quarrying activities in a small way.

I.J.B.

Book Reviews cont'd.

2. Paupers Venture - Childrens Fortune - The Lead Mines and Miners of Brassington, Derbyshire. by Ron Slack, published by Scarthin Books of Cromford. Price £3.00. 1986.

This book is soft back, contains 52 pages including 20 photos and 3 figures. The title is taken from the very colourful mine names in use in the area but it might equally have been entitled 'The Slack family & lead miners through the ages'.

This study of lead mining is alive with personal details from the author's family involvement in mining and in the social life of the area, their involvement in farming, the Miners Arms Public House and the Barmasters Court, all aspects so interwoven in the leadminers life. It is full of facts and makes for a most interesting read - but be wary there are a few printers errors, such as when "owned" becomes "owed" on page 25.

The book includes a map of the area and a gazetteer which lists the names, sites and remains of over sixty separate mines. It is an ideal companion for either a summer walk or a winters evening by the fireside.

I.J.B.

3. Coals from Barnsley by John Goodchild. Published by Wakefield Historical Publications. Price £7.20 plus 70p postage.

A history of the collieries of the Woolley area so well known to anyone who travels north on the M1 in Yorkshire. Although only 200 have been printed it is a welcome addition to the few books on Yorkshire coalmining. (At the last count Embsay Railway Bookshop had 7 different recent coal mining titles for Lancashire - but only 1 from Yorkshire - is there any significance in this? Perhaps Yorkshire is too busy looking forward).

"The rise of the Barnsley coal industry as illustrated by the history of the Gawber, North Gawber and Woolley Collieries.

Coal mining has been carried on in the Barnsley area on a small scale from at least early medieval times. The Barnsley and Silkstone seams yield some of the country's highest quality coal. However lack of cheap transport facilities inhibited the development of the Barnsley coalfield until the opening of the Barnsley Canal in 1799 and the Dearne and Dove Canal in 1804. The advent of the steam railways, with the coming of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway's branch to Barnsley in 1850, gave further impetus. This book attempts to provide a fairly detailed study of the development of a small number of significant colliery concerns which were established in response to the new opportunities, and to illustrate some of the factors which influenced the growth of the coalfield into one which became of world-wide significance and reputation. Its author, a leading authority on the industrial history of the West Riding, has based the book in considerable part on documentary evidence in his own collection. 'Coals from Barnsley' provides an account of some of the key personalities associated with the growth of the coalmining industry in the Bransley area, including members of the Thorp, Fountain and Burnley families and two highly-influential lawyers-cum-colliery directors, John Marsden of Wakefield and Sir Joseph Hewitt of Barnsley.

80pp, 16 illustrations 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6". ISBN 0 901869 26 0. Obtainable from Wakefield Historical Publications, 19 Pinder's Grove, Wakefield WF1 4AH. Tel WKf. 372748."

(John is a member of NMRS. Ed.)

4. Cornwall Mineral Statistics.

The University of Exeter in association with the Northern Mine Research Society will be publishing 'The Cornwall Mineral Statistics' in April. This comprehensive volume, covering the whole of Cornwall, will run to approximately 630 pages and will include information on 1500 mines. The Statistics will be presented in sewn paper covers. Retail price will be £12.00 per volume.

NMRS Publication Aftersales will again be stocking these volumes for sale to members, and for advance orders we are offering a reduction on the retail price and free post and packing. This OFFER CLOSES ON 31st MARCH, 1987. Orders received after this date will be at full retail price plus £2.50 p & p. (See Order Form attached to Newsletter).

Whilst on the subject of selling books, Bird Enterprises have asked for a plug for their reprints under the Mining Facsimiles banner:-
Taylor, John. Records of Mining 1829. Numerous line drawings and fold-out illustrations.

Case bound individual numbered copies. Limited to 100. £25.95 + p & p.

Mems. Geol. Survey. Special reports on Mineral Resources of G.B. Vol. XIX Lead & Zinc

Ores in the Carboniferous Rocks of N.Wales. B. Smith. £14.50 + p & p.

Available soon:- Vol. XVII Lead, Zinc, Copper & Nickel Ores of Scotland. G.V. Wilson.

£14.50 + p & p.

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In preparation:- Britains Metal Mines. J.R. Pike. 1860.

Orders and enquiries to:- Mining Facsimilies, Mrs. H. Bird, 41 Windsor Walk, South Anston, Sheffield S31 7EL.

RAL Promotions.

This is a newly formed organisation, made up partly of redundant miners, who are now specialising in mining souvenirs particularly of the South Wales Coalfield.

Their catalogue is a pot-pourie of mining memorabilia offering all manor of relics, books, plans etc.

If interested, catalogue can be obtained from RAL Promotions, P.O. Box 2, Newbridge, Newport, Gwent, NP1 5YB. Tel (0495) 244313.

For Sale

A copy of Mineral Statistics for Devon & Somerset Mines for £3.75 (post paid) from Hon. Treasurer, who had a brain storm and got two copies. Phone first to reserve the copy. - 0253 723987.

Library List

Many members probably wonder why we have a Librarian when we dont appear to possess a library. To justify having Damien therefore it was felt that the veil of secrecy could be lifted somewhat, and after a mass sort out of the more irrelevant material, an up-to-date list circulated. Thanks to computerisation the results of Damiens cogitations are contained for your contemplation.

At the A.G.M. held at Sicklinghall on Sun. 15th February, the new Committee was elected. Either you think we're all doing marvelously on your behalf, or apathy reigns supreme, because no new names were submitted, so the 'mitty' remains as it was last year.

The only controversial issue to be acted upon was with respect of the BCRA insurance scheme for which NAMHO act as Agents.

The subscription for this year has been increased from 30p per member to 55p per member for £500,000 cover, or to 75p per member for £1million cover. It was the view of the meeting that this was a rather steep rise that hadn't been budgetted for and that it was of dubious value for most of our members anyway. Most members felt that the insurance company were exploiting what they saw as a captive market. As far as anyone was aware there had never been a claim on the policy, so therefore no bad history to warrant such an increase. A vote was taken, and the majority agreed that this insurance should not be renewed.

Editors Report.

"I think we can be well satisfied by the activities last year with regards to our publications policy. A stron financial position brought about by increased money from covenants on subscriptions, a cash grant, plus a steady aftersales activity, meant that three publications could be issued with ease.

On behalf of the Society, I wish to put on record our thanks to the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments (Wales) for their generous financial assistance with £M30.

I have recommended to the committee that another three publications are possible in 1987 - i.e. two monographs and a memoir - and this has been agreed. The first of these, dealing with the Basset Mines, Cornwall, will be published in May to more or less coincide with the bi-annual NAMHO conference in Camborne (July).

Concern has been expressed periodically from various quarters about the G.P.O.'s rough treatment of our mailings. Regrettably, short of increasing packaging costs (or mailing publications in ammo boxes) there is little we can do about this state of affairs. Narrow letter boxes also cause damage! Perhaps we should think in terms of eventually reducing the format size of British Mining to A5 which would undoubtedly help; this would, in my view, make maps and plans too small if printed thus, particularly if they are very detailed. However, the A5 format does lend itself to bookcase storage more readily and fits well into car door pockets for the 'field'. This may be worth considering in the future?

The following monographs are either to hand or, to my knowledge, in preparation: The Mines of Rossendale and Craven, M.C.Gill; The Kelton and Knockmorton Mines, R.E. Hewer; The Goginaam Mines, S.J.S.Hughes; The Daren Mines, S.J.S.Hughes and The Allihies Mines (Ireland), R.E. Williams.

Finally, a little trumpet blowing for the Society. I venture to suggest that the

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continued and magnificent support received, both in terms of contributors and members, not to mention various outside bodies, has enabled your Society to pursue and sustain a publications programme which must be the envy of all similar organisations within the country. Please keep it up...

R.H. Bird.

Recorder's Report

The last three or four years have seen an influx of plans into the Records and during the past four months I have completely re-indexed them. This has brought the total number of plans and sections accessioned to 546 for metalliferous mines, plus a further 140 for coal, stone and clay. Excluding the latter, I estimate that about 80% of them are of the Yorkshire Dales.

Because of that, I have started work on updating the site indexes for Yorkshire mines. To date, the Greenhow and Nidderdale area is complete, Wharfedale and Airedale are well advanced; and Wensleydale, Swaledale and Arkengarthdale are progressing.

M.C.Gill.

N.A.M.H.Q. Representative's Report.

The Association continues to fulfil its function as a forum for discussing matters of common interest and, though it may appear slow, has made some progress on matters such as: Codes of practice on Exploration of Mines by Novices, Advice to Leaders of Exploring parties, Recording of Surface Sites and their Evaluation, and the bibliography of sources in mining history (1946 to date). The first two are available, and the latter is well advanced. It is the work of Roger Burt, plus about a dozen other people, who have searched the pages of publications ranging from Archaeologia to British Mining. The results have been placed in a computer data base and we are presently discussing the best method of presentation, i.e. whether by geographical criteria, or by subject, author etc. When published, it will be the most comprehensive bibliography of mining history, much more than just a listing of NMRS or PDMHS articles, and it will provide a much needed research tool.

David Cranstone informs me of two developments on scheduled sites in which he has an interest. The first, is that Mr. Johnston has been granted scheduled monument consent at Conistone Copper Mine. He has also won an appeal against the enforcement order compelling him to pull down his additions to the powder store (Nov. Newsletter refers. Ed.) The second is that the Durham County Council has been granted consent for restoration of the washing floor at Park Level, Killhope. This is subject to maximum retention of old timber work, clear distinction between old and replacement timbers etc, and archaeological supervision. In order to mop up remaining cash, work on excavating the site will continue during the next two weeks!

In both of the above cases, I have had long correspondence with the parties involved, principally because I feel strongly that the two dressing floors, which have been preserved as being of national archaeological importance, are being disturbed. I am also worried about the philosophy of treating such remains as a "Hone Pot", or poor man's Disney World, at the apparent expense of their true value.

M.C.Gill.

Mine Boat at Dudley.

One of the features of the Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone mine complex was a wooden boat which lay sunk and almost buried in the interconnecting tunnel between the thick bed workings of Dark or 144 Cavern and the thin bed workings of the cavern now known as Singing Cavern. This boat effectively isolated Singing Cavern from the rest of the canal system until 1984 when the Dudley Canal Trust arranged for a new tunnel to be dug, by Thyssens, linking Singing Cavern to the main Dudley Tunnel in the area known as the Well.

Whilst clearing the cavern down to the original canal bed, the other end of the old sunken boat was, unexpectedly, uncovered projecting out of the original canal tunnel entrance now known as the Rock Tunnel. The two ends were at least 70 feet apart and appeared to be misaligned. It was thought unlikely for a boat of this length to be able to navigate the turns in the mine tunnels and so it was decided that there must be two short boats lying buried, end to end. The end that has just been exposed was obviously damaged by the excavators and as it was obstructing the works in the cavern it was dug away, after significant remnants had been rescued.

The winter of 1985 saw further improvements to the cavern, one of which was the installation of stop-plank grooves to the end of the Rock Tunnel. This enabled the water in the Rock Tunnel to be pumped out without draining the Singing Cavern, thus making it practical to investigate fully the remains of the boat(s) in the Rock Tunnel.

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Volunteers have now cleared over 20 tons of rock and mud and have revealed that in fact there was only one sunken boat after all and it appears to have been a 71ft x 6ft 6in day boat. The hold of the boat was full of limestone rubble, silt and general rubbish (pottery, glass, branches and a small tree trunk) and so was not a load of good limestone. There was also a 'clean' hole knocked in a bottom board which suggests the boat was sunk deliberately and that some of the fill was tipped in after the sinking. The same type of fill is packed between the boat sides and the tunnel walls so it appears the intention was to construct a dam or at least to prevent boat access to Singing Cavern. The boat appears to be well worn and patched up so assuming it was sunk in the 1840's when the mines were last worked, it could well be over 150 years old.

The construction of the old boat is very similar to that of the wooden dayboats found throughout the Birmingham Canal Navigations, one of which has recently been fully restored at the Black Country Museum. The main differences noted so far are that the side planking is held together by iron rods passing right through the planks, rather than by rapping nails, the width is only 6ft 6 instead of the normal 7ft, and there is a long 13ft rake to the stem/stern.

Although the top plank is missing all round the boat and the one end was unfortunately lost during the openingup of the cavern in 1984, there is still just over 50ft left which the Trust hope to be able to float away to allow the Rock Tunnel to be made navigable again.

Work in the cavern is usually restricted to the winter months when the Trust's trip boats are not operating.

The cavern is open from about March to December and can be visited either via the Black Country Museum, 021 557 9643, or by chartering one of the Trusts boats (maximum of 50 passengers per boat) 021 520 5321. The main Dudley Tunnel beyond the cavern is still closed awaiting repairs to the brick lining.

Martin Guest. Feb. 87.

Finally, another word from our Treasurer.

"Many thanks to all those recent recruits to the covenanters ranks, the treasurer would welcome early return of the forms he sent you. If any 1986 covenanters are not paying this year would they please write to the Treasurer to say why they are breaking the 4 year promise ... he may need the letter to avoid having to repay the Income Tax refund already claimed.

The membership cards of those paying after February 2nd will be included in our next posting, unless a SAE is enclosed".

The next edition of the Newsletter should be issued in May together with our next publication in the British Mining series. All articles/correspondence should, therefore, be forwarded to me, Harry Houghton, 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds LS6 4LY in good time - otherwise it may be held over till a later issue.

That's it folks, this time around.

Have a nice day and be kind to each other. HH.