

NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY

Newsletter May 1989.

Future Meets

May 20/21 - Black Country Coal Mines. Leader N.A.Chapman Tel 021 429 3930.
See February 89 Newsletter and Meets card for details.

July 1/2 - Wales, Slate and Gold. Leader N.Catford Tel 01 644 0118.

Sat. 1. Rhosydd/Cwmorthin Slate quarries. Meet at 9.30am at NGR SH683455 (1 mile West of Blaenau Ffestiniog)

1½ mile uphill walk passing the disused mills, inclines, levels etc. of Cwmorthin and Conglog quarries. For those who don't want to go underground there are many surface features to be seen, including the disused mills, barracks, wheelpits etc and the impressive incline into Cwm Croesor (at SH658463). A little wet at the entrance to the adit (although not above wellies). Plenty to see underground including two inclines complete with rails and winding gear and the remains of a bridge linking Rhosydd with Croesor quarry. Underground for approx 1½ hours. Return to cars by 2pm.

Manod/Cwt y Bugail slate quarries. Meet at 2.30pm at NGR SH733457 (1½ mile East of Blaenau Ffestiniog). There is a good road to this point which isn't shown on older O.S.maps.

Manod Quarry is still operational although it is no longer being worked underground. It was converted to house national treasures during the war and most of the buildings remain underground. From Manod a mile walk along the Rhiwbach Tramway leads past Rhiwbach Quarry to Cwt y Bugail which was still working until 1966. Although not particularly extensive, the quarry still retains many interesting features both above and below ground. Return to Manod on surface viewing the remains of Penmachno Quarry.

Sun. 2. Prince Edward Gold Mine. Meet at 9.30am at SH701356 (at junction of A470 & A4212).

The mine is reached by driving 2 miles along a very rough track. Although the mine is fairly small there are a number of interesting features remaining underground.

Slate Quarries around Corris. Meet at noon at SH77009.

A number of slate quarries will be visited in the Corris area. Further details from the Meet leader.

Meet will end at approx 4pm.

All mines & quarries would be considered 'moderate'. Wellies required.

Camping at Snowdonia National Park study centre at Maentwrog (tel. 076685 334).

For further information contact Meet leader Nick Catford on 01-644-0118. The programme may be subject to slight alteration.

July 14/17th NAMHO Conference - see page 7 of February Newsletter.

July 30th - Ding Dong Mine, Furness. Leader A.McFadzean Tel 0229 54172.

Underground. Difficult. There is only one pitch, the 90ft entrance shaft, which will be laddered with electron. There are very few "levels", a great deal of scrambling being necessary in order to get about. There are several short rises in which there are permanent electron ladders, though the highest is only 15'. Members not wishing to visit the ramifications of the neighbouring Derby and Buccleugh workings will not require wet gear. The trip will take several hours.

Meet at lay-by, NGR SD245768 at 10.30am.

Excellent campsite at Marsh Farm, Askam-in-Furness, 2 miles away.

Members wishing to make the trip please ring Alen beforehand.

Aug.12/13 - Northern Pennines, Blanchland area. Leader J.M.Dodds Tel 043 473 310.

Surface & easy Underground.

Meet at Bay Bridge, NGR NY958500 at 10.30am.

Sept.9/10 (NOTE NEW DATE). - Derbyshire. Leaders R.Paulson tel 0629 534775 & J.A.Jones Tel 0509 672125

Sat.2. Cromford via Gella. Surface walk looking at soughs, mines levels and underground watercourses. Meet at Cromford Market place NGR SK295569 at 1.30pm.

Sun.3. Ash Tree and Old Gells Mine. Underground. Meet at Godfrey Hole, near Wirksworth

NGR SK270538 at 10.30am. Members will be winched down (and up!) the 120ft Ash Tree shaft, the last worked levels (1940's) are dry and wide and are stoped out to 60ft. The mine can be penetrated down another 200ft via a corkscrew, a 40ft hading scramble by ladder into another series of levels and a 100ft pitch. there is mud in this section.

On the surface there are some very easy walk-in "caves".

Overnight one could slum-it our "hut" at Bage Mine, Bolehill, Wirksworth NGR SK291550 or park ones caravan/sleeper on Bage mine tip, or provided you are totally self-contained, you could park/camp in the field next to Ash Tree Mine.

(ALSO NOTE. Roy would like to know beforehand how many of us intend attending - please give him a ring. Ed.)

Annual General Meeting - 26th February, 1989.

Editors Report.

This last year we have again seen the Society publish three issues of British Mining. There has been a steady demand for the Kelton & Knockmurton volume and, if this continues, this title will probably be out-of-print by the middle of 1989.

Material in preparation is not as prolific as has been the case over the last few years and, whilst this will keep us busy through 1989 and 1990, I urge members to begin writing up material on their pet subject or location so as to be ready towards the end of next year. Blow the dust off those accumulated notes and get stuck in!

The procedure used for the binding of British Mining has been criticised by a few, with the observation that this is currently too tight, making the books difficult to open and read. I am addressing this issue.

I would again like to express my thanks to contributors for their continued support of our efforts, and the committee for their continued support of mine.

Dick Bird.

Secretary's Report.

1988 has yet again been a busy year for me as Secretary. Correspondence has included membership enquiries, changes of address, requests for information on mining sites throughout the British Isles from both amateurs and professionals alike, information to students from GCSE to PhD level carrying out projects or researching theses, requests for family information from genealogists researching their family trees together with the usual junk mail.

During the year there have been five field meetings all of which were well attended and I would like to thank both the leaders for organising them and the members for attending them. A good programme has been organised for the coming year, not without quite a lot of effort, and I would ask everyone to support it and help make it a success.

I have now held the position of Secretary for 11 years and find the job to be taking up an increasing amount of my spare time. With this in mind I feel that it is now time for me to retire, I will, therefore, continue as Secretary for a further twelve months, thus allowing the necessary time to find a suitable replacement.

John H. McNeil.

Librarian's Report.

1988/89 has been a very quiet year for The Library. Only 14 publications have been lent out and these have been to 4 members. I have dealt with a few enquiries and supplied several photocopies of items included in books which can only be viewed at The Library.

The contents of the Library has been enlarged by the addition of 15 publications including the 2 NMRS Monographs and the 1988 Memoirs. (Listed elsewhere in this N/L. Ed.)

D.J. McCurdy.

The Officers were elected as detailed in the February Newsletter.

More on Mr R.E. Raspe.

In August/September 1793 Raspe reported on mineral deposits under the lands of Will Knox at Minwear and Martletwy in mid Pembrokeshire. These lands lay on the northern edge of the coalfield, and coal, therefore, featured large in the report; but of particular interest is the detail on an alleged silver mine just south of Minwear church. Apparently a legend existed that pits south of the church were ancient silver workings and Knox, along with a Capt. Allen, had driven an adit, from the stream, 64 fathoms north to investigate these pits in depth. Raspe's examination of the pits and adit revealed nothing

more than bog iron ore and painters black of economic interest; stating "... I think you may safely stop the further pursuit of these expensive trials and turn your patriotic views and spirit towards the promising trials for coal." (NLW Slebech 4100)

Interestingly there is at least one other site in similar rocks, Old Red Sandstone, in Pembrokeshire where a legend of silver mining is connected with bog iron deposits.

R.E.Raspe is described as 'mining engineer of Haverfordwest' and was reporting on Knox's coal mining and lime quarrying interests up to 1795.

Peter F. Claughton.

Book Reviews

'The Heritage of Exmoor' Roger Burton.

300pp, published privately. £12.95. Available from the author at 12 Style Close, Rumsam, Barnstaple, North Devon.

I must admit to being biased on this one as the author shares my interest in the mines of North Devon and West Somerset, and we have co-operated in research work for many years.

Currently with the printers, and due in the bookshops in late April, this is a 'mine' of information on Exmoor. Two sizable chapters deal with the numerous attempts to make an economic success of mining in this inaccessible area of West Somerset.

Although there is evidence of extensive early iron working, the story really begins in the mid 19th century after the forest had been purchased by the Knights; a family with their roots in iron manufacture in Shropshire. A futile search for workable copper deposits at the Wheal Eliza in the late '40's was superseded by a determined effort by the Knights to promote the iron deposits on the moor.

Dowlais, Plymouth Iron, and Schneider and Hannay were all persuaded to take leases of large areas of the Knight estates, and plans were made for a railway to the coast. With the demand for iron falling, and after extensive trials had been made, the iron companies withdrew and litigation ensued. All of which is explored in the book, as are the later attempts to exploit the deposits.

Those attempts continued up to the 1st World War and were dogged by lack of suitable transport; which makes it all the more surprising that an estimated 60-70,000 tons of ore had been removed by early miners long before the 19th century. The question as to where, and how, this was moved has yet to be answered.

Roger Burton's work is a readable account of the moor based on a lifetimes personal knowledge of the area allied to unlimited access to the Fortescue archives.

Peter F.Claughton.

'Slate - From Blaenau Ffestiniog'. J.G. Isherwood.

Published by A.B. Publishing, A4, 48pp, 100 plates, 17 figs, paperback.

ISBN 1 869915 02 X.

Society member Graham Isherwood is no newcomer to the literary world of Welsh slate. His latest book deals specifically with the Blaenau Ffestiniog area.

The first section of the book deals with the historical background, but the book is mainly a photographic record of the various quarries. The photographs themselves, and there are a lot of them, cover all aspects of the slate industry from actually working the slate through to the final despatch by rail. Many of the photographs are taken from the in house journal of the Oakley and Votty Quarries called 'Caban'. In addition to the old photographs of the quarries in their heyday, the author has also included recent photographs of the workings, many of which are in colour, which is to be applauded. The choice of photographs is excellent and the production is to a very high standard. Several diagrams of the quarries are also included together with a useful bibliography.

To anyone interested in the Welsh slate industry this book is a must for the bookshelf.

Available from: A.B. Publishing, 33 Cannock St, LEICESTER, LE4 7HR. Price. £3.95 +p&p.

'The Derbyshire Lead Industry in the Sixteenth Century'. D Kieran.

338pp., 7 maps, 9 figs., 40 tables, Bibliography, appendices etc.

Published by Derbyshire Record Society. Distributed by Alan Sutton Publishing, Gloucester. ISBN 0 946324 10 7. £25.00.

This volume, which represents Vol.XIV of the Derbyshire Record Society's publications, is a truly scholarly tome and pushes back the frontiers of mining research in Derbyshire by a century or more.

The lead industry had sunk to quite a low ebb during late medieval times, consequent upon the relative dearth of big ore (i.e. large pieces of ore needing little dressing before smelting) which was essential for the successful smelting operations in the primitive bole hearths. The latter method of smelting is well described in the book, along with the brenners who tended them; the locations of the bole hills (or bales, as they are more commonly referred to 'up north') are also dealt with at some length.

In the period under review, the bole gave way to the ore hearth and along with this, the application of more capital - allied to better marketing - ensured a more systematic approach to mining, particularly the financing of the long drainage soughs, now synonymous with this part of the world.

Concurrently, the marketing of the finished product produced, at this time, a new breed of lead merchant in Derby, Chesterfield and Wirksworth, these including families who were to go on to establish themselves as gentry in the county.

The route taken by lead to market was almost always to the east, so that the River Trent and the Idle became the focus for its export from the area. At Bawtry, for instance, the Earls of Shrewsbury and others assisted in the development of port facilities here.

In a major work like this, it is impossible to do justice to the author's research in a few lines of book review but, suffice it to say that anyone with an interest in Derbyshire lead mining - and early mining and smelting in particular - will find this volume fascinating and absorbing reading.

Dr Kieran has done a phenomenal amount of work in drawing together material from a plethora of manuscript sources. It is, of course, a rather specialised work and may not appeal to some as a consequence but, that said, it surely ranks as the 'vade mecum' of its kind.

The Derbyshire Archaeological Society, together with PDMHS, have provided financial assistance towards the cost of publishing this work.

R.H.Bird.

Help wanted

"Has anyone any information relating to the Thoraby Lead Mines on Thoraby Common above Bishopdale in Yorkshire? - I've tried numerous sources and 'drawn a blank'."

Please reply direct to Barry M. Hunt, 70 Carr Road, Nelson, Lancs. BB9 7SR.

Prince of Wales Colliery.

The mine was founded by John Rhodes as a combined brickworks/colliery venture in the 1860's. The first shaft sinking was started in 1869, and production began from the Haigh Moor Seam about 1872.

John Rhodes sold out to the Glasshoughton and Castleford Collieries Ltd., in 1928 and this company held the colliery until nationalisation on the 1st January, 1947.

The colliery by then had three shafts:-

No.1 commenced sinking March 1911 - it was worked intermittently and was completed in February, 1925. It had a diameter of 18' 0", and a depth of 662 yards to the Silkstone seam.

No.2 was sunk about 1872 to the Haigh Moor Seam - deepened to the Silkstone level about 1894 - and again at a later date to the Beeston Seam. It had a diameter of 14' 0" and a depth of 716 yards.

No.3's sinking was completed about 1872. With a diameter of 14' 0" and originally a depth of 662 yards to the Silkstone Seam, this shaft was only operative to the Warren House Seam in its later years, a depth of 376 yards.

Manpower increased from the 20 or 30 required for sinking shafts, to a figure of 2,200 in 1958. (The standard day wage for underground workers was 7/6d. in 1913).

The colliery take is traversed by four large faults all running in a North Easterly direction, they are (1) Fairy Hill fault 25 - 110 yards throw down to south - this being on the North side of the Pit. (2) North Pontefract fault - 80 yards down to south, (3) South Pontefract fault - 20 yards down to north, (4) Carleton fault - 60 yards down to south - this fault was the southern boundary on the Colliery take.

Due to the varying throw of the Fairy Hill Fault, the Winter Seam in the North is level with Castleford Four Foot Seam on the South side, and at a point further to the North East, the Haigh Moor Seam on the North side is thrown level with Warren House seam on the south side. In the second case, advantage was taken of the displacement and the

Haigh Moor Seam was worked via roadways in the Warren House Seam.

(For detailed geology - see "Geology of the Country around Wakefield").

In August 1975 approval was given for a major reorganisation involving the construction of a new mine at a cost of £74m. This consisted of closing down completely the old shaft mine and driving two inclined drifts from the surface to develop new areas of coal. Virtually all the old facilities which varied in age from about 1880 to more recent times have now been replaced by modern buildings and equipment. These include a modern type Coal Preparation Plant together with blending silos, stock out/reclaim pads and a M.G.R. Rapid Loading Bunker.

In 1981/82, the first full year of production after the substantial completion of the reconstruction project in 1980, the colliery employing 1443 men, produced 945,000 saleable tonnes with a productivity of 3.40 tonne per manshift.

There are two surface drifts which were driven from the colliery yard into previously untapped reserves to the south east of Pontefract; both drifts are over 2000metres long.

Intake Drift. This drift is at a gradient of 1 in 5 and is supported on 6.40 metres x 4.57 metres arched girders. All the output is surfaced via this drift.

Return Drift. This drift is at a gradient of 1 in 4.8 and is supported on 5.64 metres x 3.73 metres arched girders. The drift is used to transport men and materials into the mine.

Reserves are defined by the Pontefract Trough Faults to the north west and by the Stubbs Lane Fault to the south east. Both these faults show a general NE/SW trend. The south western and north eastern boundaries are Ackton Hall and Kellingley Colliery takes respectively.

Within the area, which is mainly virgin, the structure has been determined by surface boreholes and by seismic surveys. The area to be worked to the two surface drifts is overlain by Permian measures.

There are six seams in the reserves. Together they amount to 39.2 million tonnes of classified reserves and 3.2 million tonnes of unclassified reserves. Two seams are currently being worked at the colliery.

Castleford Four Foot Seam - This seam is geologically complex. It was laid down on top of the thick Woolley Edge Rock and is overlain by marine mudstones and seatearths.

The geology of the roof measures is such that partial and complete washout of the seam can occur. The geology of the floor measures, which are of variable hardness, appears to control the thickness of the lower leaf of the seam, which is extremely variable.

An extensive boring programme has been undertaken to investigate all aspects of the geology of the seam. This, in addition to information collected underground, indicates that the seam thickness varies from nearly two metres to under one metre and that this can vary rapidly. Planning and designing of faces within the Castleford Four Foot Seam has proved difficult due to the variable geology. There have also been roof support difficulties in cutting in areas of hard floor.

Low Barnsley Seam - The seam thickness varies from 160cm to 230cm. Reserves are limited in the east by a line of seam split and deterioration.

The remaining seams in the reserves are:-

Stanley Main Seam - The seam varies from 90cm to 160cm in thickness. The seam splits and thins towards the south and east.

Warren House Seam - The seam varies from 120cm to 250cm in thickness. The thinner sections are found in the north of the colliery take, where the lower portions of the seam split and deteriorate.

Haigh Moor Seam - The seam varies from 90cm to 180cm in thickness. It is joined by the upper part of the Low Haigh Moor Seam to the east of the Surface Drifts to give a thicker composite seam. An area of sandstone roof with attendant washout has been proved at the adjacent Ackworth colliery. Boreholes indicate that this area will extend across the Prince of Wales colliery take.

Flockton Thick Seam - The seam varies from 107cm to 132cm in thickness.

Last week we, that is the lady and myself, went on a trip down the "new" mine. The double drift finishes up at a depth of just over 300m, though they are starting to extend this.

We descended in the paddy train which normally carries 250 men, so our party had plenty of room to stretch out - not as cosy though! The engine travels at a maximum

speed of 13m.p.h. If it is ever going faster it's out of control - they wouldn't give a dem. of this though.

After walkies of about 1½ mile, ("so as not to spoil the trip back!") we arrived at one of the three faces presently being worked. This face is about 100m long, and they are taking out a 4ft depth of coal, which meant a crawling shuffle along it. It's at times like this, that you realise that the back somehow doesn't bend quite as easily as you remember it did and, even worse, doesn't straighten out as far as it did before you bent it. We were in luck?, the cutter was working and so we were able to come off the face with a respectable covering of coal dust to make it all seem worthwhile.

Ever ridden on a man riding conveyor? There were only two of us who were used to this form of transport, to the rest, well, ignorance and bliss came into it somewhere. A few didn't manage to land on the belt quite as daintily as they might, and the getting off at the other end had to be seen to be believed. It didn't occur to any of them to wonder how to get off until they were half way there! ("Just like getting off the escalator in Woolies!" says our guide.- I'm glad I don't go to his branch!).

Back at the incline we went out by man rider, the coal continued on the conveyor and went up its own way. For some reason best known to themselves the ladies declined the offers to share the covered part with the miners, and opted, instead, for the open truck with their beloveds. (maybe they'd all had an experience on the ghost train in their younger days). Someones loss is someones gain. Half way up the slope, on the line of the fault, water pours in through the roof. The driver usually stops the train under this and walks back to the "trippers" to enquire about their wellbeing. On this trip he kept going, he must have been a gentleman after all.

H.H.

Items from a notebook.

Crown Mines in Dorset/Hampshire; In the 1570's one Cornelius Devos took out a lease on Crown mines in the area now known as Bournemouth, at Alum Chine, Boscombe, and Brownsea. No doubt unsuccessful, these workings were the subject of a valuation in Exchequer Commission 710 (19 Eliz.). Does anything remain on the ground to show where these workings were?

Early Coal workings; the Exchequer Commissions could provide useful information on coal working from the early years of Elizabeth I onwards, particularly for Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire. See PRO Lists and Indexes No.XXXVI (Mike Gill has a copy of my extracts from the List, or write to me for details.)

The divining rod as an aid in the exploration of mine sites; having recently tried my hand at water divining, using two bent pieces of fencing wire, I am in the process of experimenting with its use in locating a missing adit.

The abandonment plan of the Llanfyrnach Mine, Pembs., whilst showing in detail the deep workings on the Llandre section, shows little other than part of the 14 fathom level on the Llwyncelyn section, east of the river, with no detail as to the adit levels on either section. The collapse, two years ago, of an unmarked shaft on the Llwyncelyn section revealed a flow of water in the adit running in a direction contrary to that expected. Unfortunately the shaft was filled before an exploration could be made and I am now trying to use divining to trace the run of the adit. A trial run gave some good responses but my fear is that I may be getting indications from the veins, which are known to be complexed and faulted on that section, rather than the flow of water in the adit.

Has anyone tried using divining in this context? There are certainly plenty of references to its use in locating mineral deposits but has anyone used it to locate old workings?

Peter F.Claughton.

Blaenpant Morfil, Rosebush, Clynderwen, Dyfed SA66 7RE.

Before I get inundated by the sceptics, I can assure you that divining does work. In my far and distant youth, well I was younger anyway, I was working on a particular job that involved having to find a culvert. The area looked like a battlefield after trying to find it from the plans : local knowledge : line-of-eye and hang-of-gob methods, and 'owt else you care to name. At last the foreman declared "go get old Arthur!"

You can imagine the ribald comments from the Cop end when 'Old Arthur' started wandering about holding a bent brazing rod clutched in each hand. The two rods swung across one another, the spot was marked, the gang started digging, the wags came up with new material, and "Hey presto", there about six feet down, the top of the culvert.

Since then I've seen it done many times. It is reckoned that two out of three people can do it, though needless to say it never works for me. If you've never tried it - don't Knock it. H.H.

George Henwood on Geology and Mining.

In the 1850's, Henwood, author of numerous papers on mining in the south west which appeared in the Mining Journal, gave a series of lectures in northern England. These, he delivered at the Mechanics Institutes in Leeds, Hull, Bradford and Harrogate.

The Mining Journal published these lectures in book form in 1855. They were entitled: The study of geology and mineralogy as sources of interesting and valuable information; Observations on certain tin stream works in the county of Cornwall; The metalliferous veins or lodes of Devon and Cornwall and the methods of mining them; The manipulation of ores of Devon and Cornwall to render them marketable. The book was illustrated with one large fold-out sheet of figures.

Mining Facsimiles are to reprint this work in 1989, and it is estimated that the cost will be about £15.20. If you wish to reserve one of these copies (100 will be printed) please let Hilary Bird know. Her address is the same as Dick Bird's!

Open day at Geological Museum Sat. 21 Oct 1989.

The format will consist of guided tours of the Mineralogy Section, each lasting about two hours, (10.15am: 12.15am: 3.00pm) that will include: Mineral Gallery: Cataloguing: Gemmology: Rock and mineral preparation laboratory: X-ray laboratory: Electron microprobe laboratory. There will be two lectures, one in the morning (10.25am) which will be concerned with current topics of mineral research in the department, the other in the afternoon, (3.15pm) "The minerals of the Caldbeck Fells", each lasting about an hour.

Attendance will be by ticket only, on a "first-come-first-served" basis and must be ordered in advance.

Please reply to Miss Cally Oldershaw, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London, SW7. Enclose a s.a.e. for your tickets, and specify your preferred tour starting time.

Advertisement

It's not often that we publish advertisements, but every now-and-again we are bribed with a large enough donation to induce inclusion.

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Liverton Ironstone Mine

"In the newsletter of Feb. 1987 I reported the threat to the site of Liverton Ironstone Mine at NZ 709181 in Cleveland. Since then, the reclamation scheme has obliterated the unique remains of the calcining kilns and knocked the top off the shale heap before the money ran out. As and when more money becomes available the scheme will proceed. Not only was this shale heap recommended for retention by independent tourism consultants as a feature of the landscape, but likewise the conical tip at Kilton Mine. NZ 694170. Now the latter site is under threat from a similar reclamation scheme, but this time controversy has ensued.

The Planning Department of Langbaugh Borough Council itself suggested retaining the shale mound after minor cosmetic treatment. The Councillors decided otherwise, helped by a petition from the residents of the ten houses at Kiltonthorpe, situated 500 metres to the North West of the tip. They claim that it is an eyesore and in windy weather responsible for the dust that settles in the houses. The council has decided to reclaim the tip and mine site for " nature conservation and public amenity purposes ", which would entail

complete clearance similar to the schemes undertaken at Lingdale (NZ 673165) and Boosbeck mine sites (NZ 657168). Another scheme started to reclaim derelict land at North Skelton (NZ 674183) has still not been completed, and a further scheme is proposed for Lumpsey Mine (NZ 685187).

A number of objectors to the Kilton scheme, including the landowner, have expressed the view that this prominent and substantial memorial to Cleveland's ironstone mining industry should be retained, but the Council has replied by "preserving" the much smaller tip at South Skelton Mine (NZ 653164) which is much less conspicuous.

Many of the buildings at Kilton were demolished about ten years ago when the two 700 feet deep shafts were filled in. The present remains comprise a shaft top air lock, an electricity sub-station (both partly demolished) two magazines, a range of workshops largely dating from 1870's and the large concrete winding house built about 1918. All have remained empty since closure of this penultimate Cleveland ironstone mine in February 1963.

Unfortunately the future looks bleak with the relevant County Councillor publicly stating that he is tired of being reminded of his mining heritage and describing pre-mining history individuals as "retrophiliacs". The Borough Councillor limits his description of the site to a "blot on the landscape". More enlightened people feel that too much has been destroyed already of the area's history and a stand is needed against an unrelenting and unimaginative authority."

Simon A. Chapman. 20/3/89.

Another Pumping Engine, and melancholy accidents, at Leadhills.

My article in British Mining No. 19, Pumping Engines at the Leadhills Mines, made reference to two steam engines on the mines in the late eighteenth century; I have now found reference to another in the early nineteenth. In a paper by James Braid, the mine surgeon; "An account of the fatal accident which happened in the Leadhills Company's mines, 1st March, 1817." (EDINBURGH MEDICAL & SURGICAL JOURNAL. 1817. ix.) Braid refers to a "fire engine nearly 600 feet below the surface in the Leadhills Company's mines", but he gives no details of the engine itself.

In fact his account refers to three accidents. The first was on the 30th December, 1816, when the engine keeper was suffocated, in the second on the 24th February following, "several men were severely affected", and on the 1st March, four men lost their lives.

The GLASGOW HERALD of the 7th March has another account of the affair. This claims that a total of seven men died as a result of the accidents, five of them leaving "large families fatherless."

The engine was almost certainly on the Brow Vein on Minehill, and somewhere to the west of the later Wilson shaft. Its siting was clearly a death trap and I wonder if there is a history of accidents from suffocation with these underground steam engines?

Bill Harvey.

Now I've Heard It All

"Do you read Amateur Photographer?" asks Big Malc arriving breathless on the doorstep and waving said rag under my nose. "Well, get a load of this!"

There in full colour were pictures of... wait for it ... Mountain biking down old Cornish tin mines. I must admit, I had to take a second look to make sure, but no, there it still was, just as before. The accompanying blurb explained all!

There's this wooden-top who has invented the 'sport' of charging around underground mine workings on a mountain bike, "...with the only light provided by a miners lamp on his helmet..."

The mind boggles to say the least, especially when you hear how he trains for this doyllem pastime. He rides along the Cornish cliff-tops - in the dark.

Does he have a bell on his bike?, and if the men in white coats don't catch him first, who has right of way, him, or any mine explorers?

Any contributions to H.Houghton, 29 Parkside Road, Meanwood, Leeds, LS6 4LY.

Next Newsletter out by the beginning of September. I hope!

Wiv Wots of Wuv.

'aitch. 'aitch.