

NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

JULY 1993

FUTURE MEETS

Sat. 11th. Sept - Alderley Edge Leader: L.O. Tyson. For information contact M. Street. Tel (0422) 839749. Meet at Wizard car park. NGR SJ859772 at 10.30am.

Sat. 25th and Sun. 26th Sept - Lake District - Greenside Mine Leader: J. Hodgkins. For information contact M. Street. Tel (0422) 839749. Meet at Glenridding car park. NGR NY387169 at 10.30am.

EXTRA MEET:

Sun. 24th. October - Ingleton Coalfield Leaders: Bernard Bond and Mike Goth. Meet at Bernard's house - 1, Beech Terrace, Tatterthorne Lane, Ingleton at 10.30am. (Tatterthorne Lane runs down the side of the Masons Arms from the A65 at Ingleton, 300 yards past the Three Peaks Garage)

Sat. 6th. Nov. - General Meeting Pie, Peas, Slides etc. Village Hall, Sicklinghall, near Wetherby. Starts at 2.00pm.

SOCIETY BUSINESS

John McNeil Memorial Seat

The seat was fitted on Sunday, 18th. July just below the junction of Flintergill and Occupation Road above Dent Village (SD698859). Some 54 people and 3 dogs attended the fitting, most walking up Flintergill, but some were carried in Landrovers along the top track.

Bernard Bond and Harry Houghton each gave a short speech and Mr. and Mrs. McNeil cut the tape and declared the seat to be used for sitting on. Over the next half hour many groups of people were photographed many times while sitting on the seat. Even a herd of cows, followed by their bull, came to see what was going on. Everyone then returned to Dent for Tea, Buns and Beer. (Except the cows).

The society was represented by about a dozen members. The rest included family, friends, work mates, Cave Rescue, PDMHS etc. Of course some people wore more than one "hat".

By the 18th. July some £780 had been donated to the appeal. After paying for the seat etc., £170 was left. This has been donated to the Dent Village Fund for a Community Field. If anyone is still wanting to make a donation in John's memory, would they please

make the cheques payable to "Dent Parish Council" and write on the reverse "John McNeil Memorial Seat Appeal".

The seat will require maintenance every 12 - 18 months. If anyone wishes to help with this, please contact Bernard Bond on 05242 41857.

Malcolm Street

Report on the Arkengarthdale Meet, 8/9th. May, 1993.

The weather was sunny but with a biting cold wind that was very strong on the tops. Nine members gathered at the C.B. Inn from where the party set off to walk up Windegg Scar where time was spent looking at the Windegg Hush workings. We then set off towards the Brass Pump Floats after a biology lesson on the sex life of some rare plants from two very enthusiastic botanists in the party. Sandwiches were eaten out of the biting cold wind in the shooting hut which just happened to be open for the day! We then strolled down to Washy Green and then across to the Fell End Mines to examine a Bale site above the hushes and where some excellent baryte crystals were found.

The party then descended to the warmth of the valley bottom to have a look at the Booze Wood dressing floors and then, after ice creams at Langthwaite, walked back to the cars. The meet leader then suggested a trip down Booze Wood Level, an announcement which was met by several cars haring off down the Dale leaving the poor man stood there wondering what he had said. This more or less concluded a very pleasant day.

On Sunday the weather was again sunny but the wind had picked up force so an underground trip seemed the best option. Six members set off to walk up the incline to Danby Level, a very interesting mine which contains good examples of the mining techniques used in the Dales. The vein is well displayed on the main drive and the Horse Whim chamber is always a high spot although one poor chap left his lunch behind but contented himself pottering about on the baryte vein.

After exiting the mine and taking a look at the very narrow dimensions of the entrance to Blackhills Level it was decided by the more robust members of the party to have a look at the Stoddart Hush area and the Chert Mines. The gale force freezing wind however persuaded us not to spend too much time here and we dropped down to Justice Level intent on a trip down. However after a brave volunteer had made his way through the wet muddy crawl, waded through thigh deep water and gone through several shale falls the unanimous decision was to return to the cars.

I would like to thank all who attended what was a very pleasant weekend with lots of input on various topics from all members who attended. Hope your chest infection is better, Ken, and as for the Meet Leader, I was left with a £300 bill for a blown head gasket and burnt out valves incurred on the run up to attend the meet.

Such is life.

L.O. Tyson

Publications News

Despite the gloomy report in the last Newsletter, You will see that I have now managed to produce two substantial Monographs so far this year. BM46 "The Grassington Mines" is selling quite well and I'm hoping BM47 "Alston Moor" will do the same. Work is also well advanced on BM48, which will be a Memoirs. I hope to publish this in November, but, if I do, there is a danger that we will be faced with the same problem at the beginning of next year that we had at the beginning of this one - that is, a shortage of money with which to continue our publishing programme.

I believe this to be a fairly short term problem, as both BM46 and BM47 should be well into profit by the end of Summer '94, but meanwhile I would appreciate any suggestions for raising funds, increasing our market and getting more publicity.

One member in Leeds suggested that if everyone sent in a gift of £10.00, then all our problems would be solved - and he kindly sent £10.00 to start the ball rolling.

Another possibility is to print new A5 editions of two or three of the most popular monographs which are now long out of print and make these available for sale only - that is, not as one of the publications members would automatically receive as part of their yearly subscription.

Unfortunately our wide geographical spread means that most of the usual fund-raising things - such as coffee mornings, jumble sales and sponsored walks - are difficult to organise, but if you think of anything that might work, please phone me or Mike Gill on 0535-635388 or write to me c/o 38, Main Street, Sutton-in-Craven, Keighley, Yorkshire. BD20 7HD.

Hazel Mary Martell.

Letters

Society Publications : 1

Thanks for the Newsletters and all the Publications that drop through my letterbox these last so many years. I'm so sorry I haven't been able to get to a surface meet and see other members. I just don't seem to be able to match my spare time with a suitable meet (not being an underground person !) My interest is in Yorkshire Lead and volumes by Tyson, Dickinson, Gill et al have been superb companions in my solo walks over the Dales Lead Mining Fields.

I was sorry to hear that the society was short of funds. My Humble Solution is to send you another tenner, which is enclosed. I pay my subs to be a member, to have meets available and a Newsletter. I don't expect such fine books to come free, but they do !! So I'm happy to help, by coughing up more money. I hope others will follow.

All the best to everyone,

Mike Green.

Society Publications : 2

In her annual report (Newsletter May 1993 p.4) the Editor highlighted the poor finances available for society publications. It is evident that this is primarily due to the publications being virtually 'in house' with few sales to the public in general.

Short of amalgamating the publications of the two major societies, NMRS and Peak District Mines Historical, a move which I understand has been suggested and rejected in the past, the only way of increasing sales and reducing unit costs is to promote the publications with local bookshops and generally make them more attractive to the general public.

Unfortunately there are currently a number of features which can make the publications unattractive to the casual reader. The first point of contact with a potential purchaser is the cover; at present this is rather drab and unlikely to encourage anyone not attracted by the title. Redesign with the use of more colour would be of considerable benefit although probably increasing cost.

A second point to tackle is the rather cramped appearance of the text. The technical content of publications is on the whole excellent, but there seems to be the desire to get as much information on to the minimum amount of paper. Whilst this may make sense on cost grounds, it makes for a difficult read; something which is sure to repel a casual purchaser.

Action has to be taken to increase sales. Editorial staff can help by improving the physical appearance of the publications; authors by pushing their work around the bookshops in the relevant area and keeping up the pressure to ensure stocks, once ordered, are replenished. Independent authors, like David Bick, have shown the way; I would suggest that it is up to the society to learn from their experience.

Best wishes.

Peter F. Claughton.

Society Publications : 3.

I have just received your most recent Newsletter and am sorry to hear about the financial problems which, I hope, will only be temporary. Perhaps a letter to each member/interested organisation might produce an injection of money into your funds? Please let me know if I can help financially.

Another reason for writing is that I am looking for two previous publications. If any member has copies of the following which they wish to dispose of please get in touch.

BM15 (1980) "The Teign Valley Silver-Lead Mines"

BM20 (1982) "The Caradon and Phoenix Mining Area"

Mr. W.A.R.Wright,
17, Wesley Place, Mutley, PLYMOUTH, Devon, PL3 4RF.

Sale of Metals and Ores

The article by Alan Blackburn in the February newsletter refers to discrepancies between sales and figures from different sources. This in fact is a feature to be seen in many areas of metal mining. It is manifest in the ticketing system of ore sales, used in Cornwall and Devon for tin and copper ores into the early years of this century. Lead ores were also sold by this system, but it had died out by an earlier date.

Mines advertised parcels of ore for sale at a "ticketing", where potential purchasers put in bids for the parcels. The tonnages and accepted sale price were published in the Mining Journal and elsewhere, but it should be noted that these figures were "computed", ie an estimate probably either visual or by measuring the volume of the parcel. Any weighing would involve duplication, as the ore must subsequently be weighed in the presence of the purchaser. The results of weighing were only published by certain individual mines in the earlier years.

Recent work, including the University of Exeter Mineral Statistics series, has largely used the "computed" figures for at least copper ores, and must therefore be treated with caution by anyone trying to reconstruct detailed finances of an individual mine. These figures are probably adequate, however, at providing an overall view of levels of output.

A few examples indicating the errors that might appear are as follows :

Holmbush Mine in 1842 - "computed" copper ore 2472 tons; weighed 2464 tons 15 cwt 2 qrs - an error of 0.3%. The maximum error in one monthly sale was 4.5%.

Stray Park and Camborne Vean, February 1844 - "computed" 450 tons, weighed 404 tons 15 cwt - an error of 11%. This was probably exceptional.

West Kitty, in 1901 - "computed" 411 tons black tin, weighed 432 tons - 5% error.

Tin ores seemed to show larger errors than copper, although this requires further research.

Alasdair Neill.

Cwmystwyth Level Fawr Plaque

With reference to the item in the May Newsletter on "Cwmystwyth Level Fawr Plaque". I have some information which may be of interest.

The replica plaque referred to reappeared last summer, it was found in a stream at Cwmystwyth, and is now at the Mid Wales Mining Museum, Llwernog. On June 30th, 1992, I borrowed the plaque, with the permission of Mr. Peter Herve, the owner of the museum at Llywernog, to photograph it in-situ at Level Fawr.

Graham Levins.

Copies of Mr. Levins' photographs of the replica plaque in situ have been deposited in the NMRS archives.

FUTURE EVENTS

Historical Metallurgy Society : 1993 Conference

The 1993 Annual Conference of the Historical Metallurgy Society will be held at Durham University on 3rd-5th September. The theme of the conference will be 'North Pennine Lead and Tyneside Industry', and the Saturday tour will visit Killhope, Nenthead and other sites in the North Pennines. Accommodation will be in Durham Castle, and the programme will include a Conference Dinner in the Castle Hall. We intend the Conference to be a stimulating and lively occasion, in historic and beautiful surroundings. Costs will range from £25 (non-residential) to £81 (fully residential including conference dinner) for non-members, with reductions for members and students.

Booking forms and provisional programmes are available from the Conference Organiser:

David Cranstone, HMS Conference, 267 Kells Lane, Low Fell, GATESHEAD, Tyne and Wear. NE9 5HU.

Association for Industrial Archaeology : Annual Conference

The AIA's 21st Annual Conference is to be held at Charlotte Mason College, Ambleside, Cumbria. 10th-12th. September.

Visits are arranged for several days on either side of the main conference. Of mining interest are Monday, 13th. Sept. Florence haematite mine, Tuesday 14th, Mining sites in the Coniston area.

Details are available to non-members by contacting Chris Irwin, The Book House, Ravenstone, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria. CA17 4NQ.

BOOK REVIEW

LA MINIERA TRA DOCUMENTO, STORIA E RACCONTO, RAPPRESENTAZIONE E CONSERVAZIONE published by Istituto per i Beni Artistici Culturali e Naturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna. In the series Emilia Romagna Biblioteche Archivi No. 20. Edizioni Analisi, 1991, Bologna. 434 pages, 223 illustrations and photographs. In Italian.

It was Ivor Brown who asked me to review this book. After several months it had passed through the hands of three Italian translators. As they were more conversant with religious matters, the technical nature of the book made translation difficult. However :-

La Miniera.....was published after a conference which was organised to save documents and record the remains of the sulphur mining industry (and other minerals) in the Romagna region of Italy before they were lost for ever. It attempts to pull together the conference papers and other material relating to the area, most of which are now in a national archive at the Malatestiana Library at Cesena,

Another aspect of the conference was to try to evaluate and save the mining complex of Formignano where the living quarters and mine offices are in a state of neglect. Conference outlined the proposal for a new museum and interpretation centre at the mine.

As one might expect the various papers deal with all aspects of mining. I was even pleased to see this region had not been forsaken by British entrepreneurs who formed the Cesena Sulphur Company in London in 1871.

The fine collection of contemporary photographs, some reproduced in sepia, gives this publication an air of quality. One photograph of a flat rope winder, actually from Sardinia, implies that there is much for the Mining Historian to see in Italy, and that the area covered by this book is "only the tip of the iceberg". Italy here I come !

Rob Vernon.

NEWS ROUND UP

CORNWALL :- Polberro Mine, St. Agnes, a popular site, is reportedly no longer accessible due to a collapse of timbering near the entrance. Access may still be possible through Primrose Shaft although the ownership of this is unknown. Moves to clear the blockage are being considered although this would probably be a major task.

DEVON :- Mary Tavy area. The mineral rights owners, National Power plc, had many shafts in this area plugged during January. Many of these shafts are used by bats. English Nature were informed of their actions and talks led to National Power agreeing to remove some of these plugs. Barkell's Shaft of Wheal Friendship and an air shaft of Devon United (South Mine) were to be opened up and bore holes drilled at Lanyon's Shaft for ventilation. This work was in progress in May, but it is doubtful if this would save any bats at these sites when the shafts were plugged. Barkell's gave access to the Friendship inclined planes, which are of great historical significance - probably being the first in the World. The National Park planning department has been informed.

Those shafts reopened will probably be secured with "bat castles".

Apparently work to close all adits and other openings is to follow. National Power have refused permission for access to these mines, although the CEGB did previously allow access.

The consultants for this work, Cornwall Mining Services, were apparently responsible for plugging shafts at Parys Mountain, Anglesey, about ten years ago, which resulted in the destruction of possibly the largest lesser horseshoe bat hibernation site in Britain.

Bedford United Mines. Plymouth Caving Group members recently fenced an unprotected shaft on Phillip's Lode. This was financed by Devon and Cornwall Underground Council.

Penrecca Mine, Buckfastleigh, Devon. At present access by the previously announced arrangements is possible through the top (quarry) entrance. In the years since we last visited it, unauthorised bolts have appeared, and acts of vandalism have included the destruction of the wooden shaft collar. For access by recognised groups, please contact DCUC Access and Conservation Officer, c/o 25, Lipson Road, Plymouth.

Alasdair Neill

SHROPSHIRE :- (Jan. 1993) Shropshire County Council has awarded a £715 000 contract to Kinmain Construction as the first phase of environmental clearance and heritage site development at the former lead mine at Snailbeach. The scheme, designed by Wardell Armstrong and funded by Derelict Land Grant, includes stabilising and filling old workings, capping shafts and putting in safety grills and venting.

Dave Blundell

STAFFORDSHIRE :- (July, '93) Mineworkings dating back to medieval times have been discovered by archaeologists surveying Cannock Chase. The coal and ironstone workings, discovered in the Beaudesert area, are thought to be very rare and among some of the finest examples found anywhere in the country.

Staffs C.C. planning and economic development department archaeologists identified the workings earlier this year. More than 700 different workings ranging from shallow pits to the remains of shafts and coal seams have been discovered. They demonstrate the historical development of mining techniques. The need for protection from forestry operations has been recognised. The considerable archaeological significance of the site means that they should be preserved because of their recreational value as a natural museum.

Tim Jeffcoat

MINE POLLUTION :- The National Rivers Authority has developed a compact, cheap-to-run process which could see an end to rivers running orange through iron pollution from abandoned coal mines. A pilot plant at Stocksbridge on the river Little Don in Yorkshire has lowered the amount of iron in the water from 30-70mg/l to a target 5-15mg/l. The process involves treating the water with sodium hydroxide to precipitate a residue of iron oxide. Interest has been shown in the resulting residue from brick manufacturers which may be able to use it as a pigment.

The work has been pushed into the forefront by the likely introduction of Statutory Water Quality objectives for all rivers coupled with the run down of the coal industry. Working mines do not present the same scale of problem as closed mines because they are pumped and the effluents are closely controlled. In flooded, abandoned mines sulphur dissolves in the water, acidifying it and dissolving out iron from the surrounding rock. This precipitates out when the water emerges to the surface and meets air, giving the familiar ochrous deposit which can coat a river bed for miles.

The newly developed treatment plant is low cost, low maintenance and small enough to fit into a portacabin

Dave Blundell

Please send contributions for the November Newsletter by October 20th. to Phil Clayton, 211, Marsh Lane, WOLVERHAMPTON, West Midlands. WV10 6SA. Tel (0902) 780920.

Thanks to all who contributed to this Newsletter.

Views and opinions are those of the correspondents and are not necessarily agreed with or shared by NMRS or its officers.
