

THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1994

Forthcoming Events

Saturday, 25th March, 1995. Annual General Meeting and Dinner.

This will be held at the Dog and Gun, Glusburn, Keighley, West Yorkshire. NGR SD993444. Although there is no accommodation at the Dog and Gun there is plenty of B&B locally. Taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced.

The AGM will commence at 17.00, Dinner will be 19.30 for 20.00. The cost of the dinner will be £10.95.

Members staying in the area may like to visit Lumb Clough smelt mill, Cononley mine and the Earby Mining Museum.

Further details and a booking form will be sent out with the February newsletter.

Saturday, 10th June 1995 & Cross Fell/Nenthead.

Sunday, 11th June, 1995.

Start from Kirkland Church, NGR NY645325, at 10.00 each day. Cross Fell is home to numerous unexplored mining remains. Prospective attenders should anticipate route marches of over 20 miles each day. Bearing in mind the nature of the terrain and the elevation, Nenthead is proposed as an alternative in the event of bad weather. Leader: Roger Bade.

For further details contact Roger. Tel: 081 540 6229 (Home) or 071 283 7500 (Work).

July, 1995.

NAHMO Conference.

This will be hosted by the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club. Further details will be given when available.

Apology

The following has been received from Les Tyson.

"I wish to apologise to anyone who turned up for the Whitaside meet to find the leader missing. As I have just started my own business and Saturday is my busiest day it was not possible for me to attend and I do hope that those who did show will understand the reasons for my absence".

Unfortunately, Les's telephone number was missed off the newsletter, so apologies from your editor are also called for and hereby tendered.

NAHMO 1994

There are two reports on the NAHMO meet in this newsletter. They illustrate widely differing viewpoints on the part of the contributors. They are printed in full because important issues are raised which should be the subject of debate by us all. Perhaps you may wish to consider these issues and let the society have your views.

NAHMO - 1.

This was an excellent weekend packed with activities and providing opportunities for underground exploration accompanied by experienced leaders familiar with the mines of the area. I arrived to register at Clearwell Cave on the Friday evening and was greeted by a most efficient reception desk manned by Roger Gosling. A comprehensive folder of information detailing all the events, rendezvous points, etc. was issued to each delegate, together with several self-adhesive labels bearing the delegate's name and club affiliations. This was a really useful touch and many people made an effort to wear their badges throughout the weekend. The delegate list showed 81 attenders from 24 organisations, together with 45 volunteer helpers from 6 local caving and mining clubs. The organisational feat of coordinating all these people reflected the considerable preparation and planning which had gone into the event, and is a credit to all of the team headed by John Hine (whom we learned to call "Mole".)

My first trip, at 7 pm on Friday took us through the labyrinthine workings of the Old Ham Iron Mine, part of the Clearwell Caves complex. These mines ceased production in 1945 and are reckoned to have produced some 850,000 tons of iron ore from workings as deep as 440 feet. Our guide for the evening was John Wright, to whom thanks go for a most interesting and informative evening. Upon returning to surface at about 10 pm, the group dispersed to various local hostelrys, my group ending up at the Dog and Muffler, an out of the way pub offering excellent real ale.

On Saturday morning seven different underground trips were on offer and I took a unique opportunity to visit one of the last working "Free" coal mines in the Forest of Dean. The mine, Morse's Level, is run by a group of about 4 enthusiasts headed by Mike Howell. The Free Miners of the Royal Forest of Dean have special traditional rights and privileges relating to the working of minerals found in the Forest. Freemining is a unique birthright. To qualify today, certain conditions must be met, "*...that all persons born or hereafter to be born and abiding within the said Hundred of St. Briavels, of the age of twenty one years and upwards, who shall have worked a year and a day in a coal or iron mine within the said Hundred of St. Briavels, shall be deemed and taken to be Free Miners...*". Morse's level was possibly originally called James' Level and was driven to the Yorkley coal seam in 1826. For the last 15 years two Free Miners have leased the gale and have been working, with others, in and around a 2000 ton lump of coal. The seam is only 2'-4" thick and dips at about 40°. The coal face is therefore very constricted (and muddy). This was a truly fascinating trip, like stepping back in time 100 years. After lunch at the Rising Sun (venue for the pig roast social), I moved on to join a trip down the Noxon Park Iron Mines near Bream. Today the mine is entered via a scowle† hole in the woods. We descended to the Oakwood Mill Land level via Ian's Hole, and made a through trip back to the surface. A second entrance was also explored and we exited via High Rift workings. There is clearly considerable potential for exploration in this area. Saturday evening saw the pig roast social, prefaced by a fascinating film showing reminiscences of Free Miners and footage of workings now closed. The Shropshire Caving and Mining club mounted a bookstall selling a wide range of mining books, and the evening passed rapidly, characterised by friendly conversation, good beer and food.

On Sunday I journeyed to the north of the mining field to visit the Wigpool Iron Mine, one of the largest workings still accessible. Today there are at least 5 entrances which connect with the deeper levels, the main ones being Sway and Steam holes. The workings are fairly complex and route finding can cause problems. We were treated to an extensive tour encompassing both artefacts and flowstone formations, descending via Foxes Hole and emerging from Steam Hole, a stone lined vertical shaft.

The final trip of the weekend was to the extensive rabbit warren-like workings of Devil's Chapel Iron Mine. The immediate vicinity shows some excellent examples of scowles†, now well overgrown by a unique flora of mosses and ferns. Our guides, Cliff and Clare, led us through the maze of workings with total confidence and up and down some (what I considered to be) fairly tricky climbs on slippery rock.

After 12 hours or so of underground activity over the weekend my lamp decided to go out, adding greatly to the technical difficulty and excitement of the free climbs and hand/fothold finding! Thanks to the other members of the party who guided me with their lamps.

All in all this was a most enjoyable weekend and I certainly learned a lot about an area which I had not previously visited from the mining/geology point of view. There is much to see and I am sure that future Society trips would prove popular. Thanks are due to all the leaders, organisers and helpers.

†Scowles - ancient opencast workings.

Roy Starkey

NAHMO - 2.

At last, a programme of events within easy travelling distance of our homes! My wife and I decided that the NAHMO 94 event in the Forest of Dean would be worth attending. When we received the list of delegates, 17 of these had shown the NMRS as their club.

On registration we were handed an A4 folder containing an impressive and thorough selection of papers which listed the weekend events and venues. Those which each delegate had opted for were highlighted on his or her own chart together with a breakdown of the principal features of each venue, map references and location details. An attraction of the weekend programme had been the listing of underground trips, where some were in the category of "easy". Our first option was easy. We had chosen to wander around the Clearwell Caves show mine on Friday evening. At least, together with some others, we thought we had. It turned out to be a guided tour, unfortunately pitched at a lower level than the knowledge of most present.

On Saturday morning we had nominated as our first trip, Morse's Level, a Free Miners working mine. This was an "easy" option. I should make it clear that neither my wife or I are experienced in, or fully equipped for underground work. We have visited commercial operations and made short journeys into adits at a few locations. My wife had enough of Morse's level after a hundred yards, although the mine owner would have nursed her through the trip. The trip, to me, was not easy, but it was very interesting. I would recommend this trip to anyone, but for much of the time you will be bent double, and one stage involved a crawl of about 100 feet.

Later that day we were off to the Bixhead Stone Mine. My wife had a word with the leader about the difficulty, and opted out. Again the trip was rated "easy". Perhaps it would have been for a proficient caver, but to me, vertical ascents of seven feet without foot or hand holds are not easy. Luckily, I acquired a guardian angel who kept an eye on me and, when needed, there was no shortage of assistance. The workings themselves were of great interest, but I had the feeling that the trip was for cavers and underground enthusiasts, as distinct from those interested in mining. Some consolation in the Bixhead trip was that it ran parallel with a surface walk. This was excellent and held much of interest; too much to do justice to the time available. This was a valuable feature of the weekend in that it gave a good insight into what the Forest of Dean has to offer. The NMRS newsletter often carries notes bemoaning the lack of support for field meets. I mentioned this to a member who was on the Morse's Level trip and asked him how it rated with the NMRS field trips. He told me that it was very easy by comparison. If that is so, then the Society's underground field trips will not get an increase in support. He did mention that on his last NMRS trip he was up to his neck in water. My wife would have been *sub aqua*!

In passing, I note that advance notice for a meet next year involves 20 mile route marches. Do not get me wrong, if you are able to enjoy such things, all well and good, but surely, there are many members who are just not capable of such strenuous activity, but would like an opportunity to savour the full range of mining history and activities.

Saturday evening featured a pig roast, which gave an opportunity to meet and speak to others under more sociable conditions. Whether the pig roast was worth the money was disputed by a few. I was so tired that it mattered little.

On Sunday morning I had chosen a trip to Devil's Chapel which is an area of old iron mine workings. The leader was the lady from the Bixhead trip. A quick enquiry about the "easy" category trip and I withdrew. Twenty foot vertical ascents were not my scene. Later in the day an experienced caver, who knew the problems I had encountered, confirmed to me that I would have found it very difficult. The morning turned out to be a complete dead loss as we had decided to visit the Forest of Dean Railway. Does anyone know of any preserved railway where you cannot use the refreshment room or view the station until you buy a train (not a platform) ticket? We walked away.

On Sunday afternoon we went on a car trip which included a coke blast furnace, two beam engine houses, a free mine and an iron mine. That was an interesting trip. Sunday evening was an unofficial social at the Dog and Muffler, well worth visiting if only for the pub name. The conversation was interesting. On Monday morning we opted out and went home.

It was an excellent weekend and gave a good insight into what is on offer within a relatively small area. What it did not offer was the opportunity for inexperienced people to go underground and thoroughly enjoy the experience. The so-called easy trips were not easy. The weekend as such is to be recommended, but if you have never been, and are interested, please remember that "easy" may mean easy to the experienced. It would seem that novices are not thought to exist. One example of the "moderate" category which was described to me was the trip into Wigpool Mine which descended some 400 feet and exited by the same route. The angle of descent was around 60°.

The point which I have been trying to make was taken up by some. Shropshire Caving Club organise NAHMO 95 which will include some trips as distinct from lectures. My wife was told she would be expected to attend, as something would be included for the inexperienced who wish to go underground. If dates do not clash, we expect to attend.

Peter Donovan

Facts, Figures and Credits

Eighty one delegates attended, seventeen of whom admitted allegiance to the NMRS. John Hine, the chief organiser, had assembled a veritable army of helpers, ranging from top-knotch cavers to bottom rung of the ladder kitchen hands for the pig roast. Particular praise was due to Mike Howell for his commentary during trips into Morse's Level colliery.

Also of great interest was the 1979 film of the Freeminers shown on the Saturday evening by Mr. Melvyn Watts of the long established Watts family of Lydney.

Thanks to all those and many who are not mentioned for a most enjoyable weekend.

John Hopkinson

Books

Lewis Morris and the Cardiganshire Mines - David Bick & Philip Wyn Davies

This book is a study and edition of Lewis Morris's "Account of the Lead and Silver Mines in the King's Manor called Cwmmwd y Perveth". It arose from a suggestion made to The National Library of Wales by David Bick, and this book is the result of his close collaboration with Philip Wyn Davies. David Bick is already well known for his various publications mainly concerning the metal mines of Mid-Wales. Philip Wyn Davies is an assistant archivist in the Department of Manuscripts and Records and is an acknowledged authority on the work of Lewis Morris.

The book is split into four sections: a chapter on mining in Perfedd before Lewis Morris, the subsequent history and the present state of the mines, a biographical introduction on Morris and the transcribed and edited text of the manuscripts. The first two sections have been written by David Bick and the latter two by Philip Wyn Davies.

The text from the manuscripts is most interesting and is presented in a page for page format where possible with the minimum of editing, thus leaving the reader with a real flavour of the original manuscript. The reproduction of the plans is excellent and there is a large coloured fold-out reproduction map/plan of the whole area as drawn by Lewis Morris.

The two sections written by David Bick are, as we have come to expect from him, well written and researched and make interesting reading, with the monochrome plates showing the mine sites as they are today, together with a couple of older views. It has to be said, however, that most of the text can also be found in his *Old Metal Mines of Mid-Wales* series. It does, though, make the book a more complete volume and this is justification enough.

The book is likely to have a relatively limited appeal, but it will be a must for all those who are interested in the Cardiganshire mines and Lewis Morris.

The book is A4 size with 89 pages, 31 plans and 11 plates. It is available from the publishers, The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. The cost is £15.00 + £3.00 p&p. ISBN 0 907158 65 X

Damian McCurdy

Exploring Cornish Mines - Kenneth Brown & Bob Acton.

When this book dropped through my letterbox it was scooped up with glee! At last a book I could use - not just read. It is written by two specialists in their field. Kenneth Brown's detailed knowledge of Cornish beam engines has been combined with Bob Acton's sharp eye and experience in mapping and describing walks.

Six walks through some of Cornwall's best known historic district are described, together with a history and detailed descriptions of the ruins visible today. To names like Dolcoath, Botallack, Wheal Kitty, Basset, Twarnhayle, United and Consols are added others, less well known, which the walker will encounter en route. There is a wealth of detail on engine houses and other mine ruins, with a general introduction on exploring mine sites. There is a simple glossary of terms (some of which, after more than twenty years of interest, are new to me) and a few diagrams. All this should enable the layman to visualise how the machinery worked and what the surface workers did. This welcome publication places on record what can still be seen on mine sites. As such it should find a place on the bookshelf of everyone with an interest of mining remains at heart and in the hands of any mine explorer visiting Cornwall.

The book includes 60 half-tones of historic and recent views of the mines coupled with maps and site plans. The A5 book has 144 pages with a thread sewn binding and a laminated full-colour cover. It is obtainable from Landfall Publications, Landfall, Penpol, Devoran, Truro, Cornwall. TR3 6NW. The cost is £5.50 + 20% p&p. ISBN 1 873443 17 X

Colin Lansdell

The Red Hills - Dave Kelly

The title of the book comes from the description of the spoil heaps of the hæmatite mines of West Cumberland. This area was once described as an Eldorado more prosperous than any gold mine. In the last century and the first quarter of this, the presence of the iron ore transformed the western fringe of the Lake District from a rural backwater to a thriving industrial area.

This book, of 176 pages, describes the mines of West Cumberland in geographical sequence from Murton in the north to Beckermest in the south, the central region being those around Cleator Moor. There are descriptions and short histories of more than sixty mines, trials and smaller workings, together with thirty seven surface plans and more than fifty illustrations.

The book contains chapters on the ironmasters and the workers in the mines as well as short sections on the ironworks and railways of the area.

This is a comprehensive, well researched book, packed with detail. The human cost of iron is seen when from time to time reports of accidents appear in the histories.

The book is published by Red Earth Publications, 7, Silver Street, Ulverston, Cumbria. The cost is £9.99 + £1.50 p&p. ISBN 0 9512946 7 9

Mining Interest Tours to Spain - 1995

Atalaya tours have three mining interest itineraries to the major Spanish mining areas planned for 1995. The first is a long-established tour to Rio Tinto and the Iberian Pyrite Belt from the 22nd to 29th April. This will include visits based around the internationally famous Rio Tinto mines as well as excursions throughout the Spanish and Portuguese sections of the pyrite mining belt and nearby copper and silver mining fields.

In June a longer 12 day tour is planned in northern Spain between Bilbao, Asturias and Santander, an area very rich in industrial archeology as well as the remains of Roman gold mining. In September a further tour in the metal mining areas of eastern Andalucia and Murcia will include the silver-lead-zinc mining fields of La Union/Cartagena, the Sierra Almagrera in Almeria, the Linares/La Carolina field as well as copper and silver-lead mines in the Sierra Morena around Cordoba.

Further details on all tours can be obtained from James Thorburn, Atalaya Tours Ltd., Ceinionfa, Capel Dewi, Aberystwyth, SY23 3HR. Telephone 0970 828989. Fax 0970 627290.

Shropshire Mines

A multi-million pound scheme to fill in abandoned mineworkings in a Shropshire village could be launched early in the new year. Work could start on the disused limestone mines in Lilleshall in 1995 after the government pledged £5 million to the scheme.

Villagers are to be briefed on the extent of the work at a special meeting with consultants. A report into the state of the mines has been prepared by the consultants and would be discussed at the meeting between residents and planners.

Limestone was mined in the village during the 18th and 19th centuries, producing a network of shallow workings. Last year a regional report named a mine in Lime Kiln Lane in the village as needing urgent attention.

Since 1983 around £50 million has already been spent in the Midlands on limestone mines. Several mines, or parts of mines, have been filled and more than 100 hectares of land have been made safe from the threat of subsidence.

Tim Jeffcoat

Gold Mining in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has enormous oil and mineral wealth, with three significant gold producing areas in a belt of palaeozoic rocks that runs from the southern Urals to the T'ien Shan mountains on the Chinese border. The deposits are in the Kyzyl Shear Zone, in carbonaceous siltstones, sandstones and mudstones. The zone also contains much shungite, a coal-like mineral, which makes separation of the gold difficult.

Bakyrchik Mine is in north-east Kazakhstan, about 1000 Km north of the capital, Almaty. The orebody was discovered by Soviet geologists in the 1950s and prospected by trenching, drilling and seismic geophysical techniques. A drilling programme then gave over 750 Km of drill core and proved a substantial resource. The decision to work it, at a rate of one million tonnes per year, was taken in 1965. Work began, but was not completed owing to lack of capital and the ore's refractory nature. Nevertheless, ore was mined, at about 10 per cent of the planned rate, and was sold to Russian smelters as a flux. The Kazakhstan government sought a western partner and entered a joint venture with Bakyrchik Gold PLC (BKG), a London-based company, formed to develop and finance the mine.

Arsenic and carbon in the ore inhibits the recovery of gold using a conventional plant, but advances in extractive metallurgy have overcome the problem. The carbon is removed by flotation and the gold extracted from a sulphide-rich concentrate using a nitric acid oxidation method, called the Redox process, developed in Denver. This is the method's first full-scale use.

Mineral processing machinery from the US and Australia was brought to the mine by rail. The township and mine drew 10 Mw of electricity from the National Grid, but this will rise by 4 Mw under phase one. In phase one, BKG aims to produce 300,000 tonnes per year and £2¼ million was raised in March 1994 to fund a carbon-in-leach plant to exploit a large reserve of oxide ore. Ways of raising output to one million tonnes are being studied and it is hoped to return to the market later this year to raise over US\$100 million for phase two.

Five shafts have been sunk and haulages developed to a depth of 250 metres. Ore will be carried in trains of side tipping wagons pulled by electric locomotives. The 411 metres deep, concrete lined, Skip Shaft is fitted with two 9½ cubic metre skips. Because the orebody's walls are unstable, mining will continue using a complicated undercut method needing large amounts of timber for support, but support will eventually be replaced by cemented back-fill. Shallow oxide material will be worked by opencast and some sulphide ore may also be won this way.

A refinery to make high purity gold bars was planned, but spare capacity in European refineries means that it is cheaper to only toll refine all gold production. The BKG share of profits will be paid in hard currency based on the London gold fix.

Abridged from a report by A.P. Finch, Mining Analyst, Williams de Broë PLC, April 1994.

Mike Gill

Combe Downs Mines - Bath

The condition of these mines is continuing to deteriorate and it is only a matter of time before parts could collapse, putting lives and property at risk. The land above some of the mines is only 1.2 metres thick. Engineering consultants, Sir William Halcrow have put forward a £21 million project using pulverised fuel ash (PFA) to infill parts of these mines as the best way to stabilise the old workings. The project, which would last at least five years, would involve pumping 220,000 cubic metres of PFA into the mines and structurally supporting other areas with shotcrete. More than 1000 boreholes will need to be drilled. A decision on the project is to be made by Bath City Council in mid-November.

R. A. Needham

South Crofty Mine

The government agreed to write off the debts of this mine, totalling £23 million if a share issue could be raised totalling £1.8 million on the open market. The present company, South Crofty PLC, which was a management/worker buyout from RTZ in 1988, were given only six weeks to organise the share issue with a deadline of midnight on Thursday, 4th August, 1994 for the subscription of one million ordinary shares with an initial payment of 10p per share with the full £1.00 per share payable on application. The minimum application was for 200 shares per request.

Applications from over 1500, mainly small private investors totalling £500,000 had been received by the final day, still short of the target. However, two anonymous foreign investors had been negotiating with the company and they finally agreed to purchase £600,000 worth of shares. The cheque was only received in Cornwall 2 hours before the expiry of the deadline, having been flown in from London

This last minute rescue has secured the future of the mine which has already cut its workforce from 500 to 260 people since the 1988 takeover, stirring strong emotions across Cornwall and further afield. Many of the small investors were miners, ex-miners and expatriate Cornish who wished to support their county and its last working tin mine.

W. A. R. Wright

Pollution - Et Tu Brute?

Atmospheric pollution as a result of lead/silver mining is apparently not only a recent phenomenon. Pollution evidence has been found whilst examining samples of ice cores drilled into the ice cap to a depth of more than 1km. These cores represent a time span of some 8,000 years. These show surges in the amount of lead, a by-product of cupellation, the old way of extracting silver from lead at depths which correspond with the rise and fall of Athens and Rome. Appreciable amounts of this lead pollution, corresponding to medieval silver working, were found at higher levels.

Estimates show that about 400 tons of lead fell on the Greenland ice cap during the 800 years of the Roman Empire. This presumably came from the ancient tradition of smelting lead ore in open furnaces - cupellation - to extract the silver content. Although cupellation was invented about 5,000 years ago, it was the Greeks who first exploited it on a large scale at the silver mines of Laurium, and helped, incidentally, to finance the Greek naval wars against the Persians.

Lead smelting during the Roman period was on an even larger scale and over a longer period. At its peak it is estimated that airborne lead emissions rivalled the pollution produced at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution 1,700 years later.

Around the time of the birth of Christ, silver mines were producing around 80,000 tons of lead slag every year and at least 1% went straight into the atmosphere. Eventually the depletion of the lead/silver mines resulted in a shortage of silver coins, a factor which contributed to the eventual decline of the Roman Empire.

W. A. R. Wright

Change of Address of Treasurer

Please note the Treasurer's change of address. It is **Colin Hindle, 19, Durham Street, Langley Park, Co. Durham. DH7 9YJ. Telephone 091 373 3740.** Please ensure that communications are not sent to his former address as they will no longer be forwarded to him.

Society People

It is with great regret that we announce the untimely death of Dave Blundell at the age of 41 on 14th August. He leaves a wife, Cathy, and two teenage daughters, Susie and Linda.

Many members will know of Dave from his regular contributions to these newsletters or from one or more of his many contributions to mining history. At a formal level Dave was a past NAHMO council member, a former secretary of CATMHS and the secretary of COMRU (a rescue team formed in recognition of wide interest in mine and quarry exploration in Cumbria and the Northern Pennines). A meticulous researcher, with major interests in his adopted Cumbria, the Northern Pennines and Wales, he contributed regularly to CATMHS publications. He was a member of a number of mining history groups and had a fund of knowledge on many of this country's extractive industries. Dave must also be remembered for his active involvement in the 'wet and dirty' end of mining history; exploring, digging and surveying both underground and surface remains.

An excellent companion, unselfish with both his time and information, he will be a great loss to family, friends and mining.

Don Borthwick

Many of our long standing members will be sorry to learn of the death of Adrian Finch, who was killed in a plane crash at Mendoza, in Argentina, on September 29th. Adrian was an active member in the 1970s and, in particular, organised and took part in the dig at Chimney Shaft. Unlike most of us, Adrian's interest in old mines led him to a new career after he took a degree in mining at Leeds University. On graduation, he went to work in the South African gold mines. Whilst there he took a business degree and moved into the world of mining finance. After a brief spell at the Mining Journal in 1988 he moved to Australia with his wife Kathy and then back to South Africa, before returning to London in 1993 to work as a mining analyst at Williams de Broë PLC. He was killed whilst viewing mines in the Andes.

On the Society's behalf, we attended his funeral at Putney Vale Crematorium. Donations in lieu of flowers are being made to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, 5 Blyth Road, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3RS.

Mike Gill & Hazel Martell

The Society regrets to announce the recent death of Jack Burnett. He was very active in the early days of the Society, of which he was a Founder Member, but had also attended social gatherings in recent years.

Finally, some good news. The Society extends its (belated) congratulations to John and Hilda MacPherson on their Golden Wedding during the summer.

Subscriptions for 1995

Subscriptions for 1995 are due on 1st January, 1995. You will be pleased to note (I hope) that the rates have been held at the same levels as in 1994. A renewal form is attached to the newsletter.

If you are a UK taxpayer you can help us by completing the deed of covenant. This effectively boosts the Society's income by enabling it to claim a proportion of your subscription from the Inland Revenue. It will cost you nothing except a few minutes of your time.

In order to keep costs down, membership cards will be distributed with the newsletter.

Collieries of Alston Moor

Much has been written about the North Pennine orefield but research appears to have overlooked the collieries.

Clive Seal and a few other interested parties have been researching the collieries of Alston Moor, the South Tyne and Naworth. Alston remains a secret as most of the records are tied up within those of metalliferous mines. Has anyone come across any documented records of the collieries which were worked? From records so far obtained it has been learned that the Dowgang colliery was working around 1860. Dowgang was also being worked round about the turn of the century by the Vieille Montagne Company who also operated a pit at either Gutter Gill or Gudham Gill. Collieries were established in the 1860's around Blagill and at Foreshield Grains. Clive is also interested in any information pertaining to Coal Cleugh and Stublick Colliery. Stublick was in the hands of the Greenwich Hospital at one stage.

If you can help please contact Clive Seal, The Cottage, Towngreen, Slaggyford, Carlisle. CA6 7NS. Tel: 0434 382 429.

RAF Chilmark

The closure is planned of RAF Chilmark, near Salisbury, which must be the only RAF station with a working mine within its boundary. The mine is run by Rare Stones who supply Chilmark limestone for building use. In the past it was used for the building of Salisbury Cathedral. Currently the mine employs between three and six miners. It has a single adit served by a branch from the RAF two foot gauge railway system.

RAF Chilmark also includes the former Chilmark Quarries, taken over by the military around 1938 for use as an ammunition store. These quarries are all underground and cover several acres under Ladydown. With the closure of the station planned for early 1995, nobody seems to have come up with a use for the quarries. Apart from being relatively remote in the Wiltshire countryside, they suffer from the presence of radon gas. Although the area is predominantly greensand and limestone, the radon is released from underlying rocks and has to be monitored in the mine and the quarries/ammunition store. RAF Chilmark is in fact two sites, one at Chilmark and the other a few miles away at Dinton. These comments relate to the Chilmark site.

R. A. Needham.

Nominations for the Election of Officers

Please note that any nominations for the election of officers must be sent in writing, with a proposer and seconder, to the Secretary, at least twenty eight clear days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.

Finally

Thanks to all who contributed to this Newsletter. Very best wishes to all our readers for Christmas and the New Year. This is your newsletter and is, in many cases, the only channel of communication between members, so please, keep the contributions rolling in - they are very much appreciated.

Contributions for the February Newsletter by December 31st please to: **Keith Nolan, West End Cottage, Woodhall, South Duffield, Selby, North Yorkshire. YO8 7TG. Tel: 01757 638503.**

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of its correspondents and are not necessarily agreed with or shared by the Northern Mine Research Society, its officers or the editor. The accuracy of submissions is the responsibility of the authors and will not necessarily be checked by the editor for validity.
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