

THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



Newsletter

AUGUST 1995

Diary Dates

Saturday, 16th September.

Weardale-Bollihope Valley.

Leader P. Wilkinson. Meet in car park at Frosterley. NGR NZ 026370 at 10.30. Mostly surface, including extensive limestone quarries.

Sunday, 24th September.

Roughten Gill Mine. (Mining Heritage Walk)

Meet at Fellside, near Caldbeck. 10.30. £2.50 per person. For more details Tel: 01228 561883.

Saturday, 30th September.

Grimebridge Colliery, Rossendale, Lancashire.

Grimebridge Colliery is one of only two working collieries in the county. Now privately owned, Grimebridge has, with the exception of a twelve year interlude, produced coal since 1851; portions of the pit dating back to 1797.

Clive Seal plans to take a guided tour to the pit. If permission can be obtained from a local farmer, it is intended to include a 3 mile-ish stroll visiting the remains of Nabb and Dean Pits as well as outlining the history of mining in the Water Valley.

Grimebridge Colliery is a unique visit to the past, as methods (with the exception of a compressor) are as they would have been some 200 years ago. If you are claustrophobic or suffer from back problems you are advised to think twice, as the main roads are between three feet six inches and four feet high. There are no "facilities" at the pit and refinements are on a par with a badly run Middle Eastern jail. Seen one colliery - seen 'em all. You ain't seen nuthin' yet!

If this hasn't put you off, then the meeting point will be the bus stop at the bottom of Dean Lane, Water, (just past the Commercial Inn if you are travelling in from Waterfoot) NGR SD 842258.

Do not turn up unannounced. Ring Clive Seal on 01434 382429 beforehand to confirm numbers and meeting time.

IN THIS ISSUE

Cross Fell Meet Report	3
NAMHO Conference Weekend - 1995 ..	4
Llywernog Machinery Trust	6
Radon in Mines	7
Wanlockhead & Alderley Edge News ..	8
Books	9
Pies & Peas - Booking form	12

Saturday, 14th October. (Cancellation)

Mining Remains in The Halifax Area.

Please note that due to the continuing illness of Malcolm Street, this meet is cancelled.

Saturday, 11th November.

General Meeting, Slides, Pies & Peas.

Sicklinghall Village Hall NGR SE 364484 at 14.00. Booking form on last page of this newsletter.

Saturday, 18th & Sunday, 19th November.

History of Minor Metals and Minerals Conference.

This conference will be held at The Peak District Mining Museum.

Papers are sought on the following topics, but further suggestions will be welcomed.

Abrasives, refractories, fluxes, ornamental stones and minerals, muds, pigments, medicaments, absorbents, mordants, chemicals, fertilisers, land-based oil, dimension stones, minor metallic ores (not iron, copper, lead or tin), non-metallic minerals, limekilns, etc.

For further details or information please contact Evelyn Dixon, Peak District Mining Museum, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, DE4 3NR. Tel: 01773 823020.

Saturday, 8th & Sunday, 9th June, 1996.

Weardale Tour.

Leader: Roger Bade. No long walks this time, but plenty of interesting sites. Start from Rookhope Arch (NY 925430) at 10.00. Watch this space for further details.

The Yorkshire Dales Archaeology Group

This group, which exists under the ægis of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, met at the Malham Tarn Field Centre on April 27th. Its members are drawn from local groups with an interest in Dales archaeology and history, University Archaeology Departments, English Heritage, National Trust, RCHM(E) and the Countryside Commission. The Society was represented by Mike Gill.

Robert White, of the YDNP, reported on progress with plans for consolidation work of lead mining remains in Gunnerside Gill, where January's floods had almost destroyed some features. Work is also progressing at Grassington and Grinton smelt mills. Work is due to begin on the Hoffman limekiln near Settle. A request has been made that the RCHM(E) surveys the Hungry Hush complex in Arkengarthdale. Owing to uncertainty caused by Government inspired changes in the organisation, no decision has been given. A grant has been given towards the cost of publishing British Mining No.51 - The Grinton Mines, which includes a section on the consolidation and archaeological work done on the How smelt mill. The Recorder of the NMRS has also been commissioned to prepare maps of 'Lead Mining Affected Landscapes' in the Dales. This is a refinement of a broader, desk-based study made two years ago.

As part of the 'Defence of Britain Survey', Robert would also like details of any military sites, such as camps and gun or searchlight emplacements, in the Dales.

Information Wanted

Has anyone got any information on mines around Spartylea, Allendale? If so, please contact James Tuck on 01670 363808.

Meet Report

Saturday, 10th June & Sunday, 11th June.

Cross Fell.

As forecast, this was to be a very long walk and a very long day. As we climbed the funerary route from Kirkland to Garrigill, over Cross Fell, the weather deteriorated to a steady drizzle. Greggs Hut was the first mining site to be visited. It was good to see a mine shop being used for its original purpose. The fallen level, nearby, did seem quite substantial, although the site is not much more than a trial. Descending the flank of Cross Fell, it was observed that the workings along West Cross Vein are very extensive. Cashwell Mine (NY 715360) is separated by a 700 foot gap from Slatesike Mine (NY 705350). A couple of levels which cross cut into the vein were tried but had run-in. A small smelting site with aerated slag was evident, while small pieces of hand cobbled ore were also found. Purple fluorspar was in abundance. As Dunham says, "were it not for the remote location, it might well offer an interesting prospect for fluorspar".

From Cashwell mine we could see that the weather was clearing from the direction of Greencastle Tarn. Descending Cash Burn, we noted copper minerals as we approached Cashburn Vein Level (NY 71543720). Malachite and Azurite are claimed by Dunham. Continuing down Cash Burn more copper was to be found, this time underground. These two levels (NY 711384) are not mentioned in Dunham, but follow a small ENE vein. The first (upper) level ended at a rise about 200 paces from day. Two sumps were passed and a particularly fine iron-stained stalagmite was observed. Flowstone was the highlight, mainly white calcite, with greeny-blue copper staining in more than one location. A trace of chalcopyrite was found on the surface. The second (lower) level was wet, and from its position it seemed unlikely that the two were connected.

A cross-country trek then brought us to Smittergill Head Mine (NY 674390). This is a substantial site on the Great Sulphur Vein. According to Dunham, the shaft was sunk to 150 feet. Two large wheel pits and extensive dumps are to be found today. The most interesting mineral to be found is a reddish quartz. From Smittergill Head it appears, on the map, to be an easy passage along the Maiden Way back to Kirkland. It just happens to be a very long way, and due to infrequent use, the Roman Carrier Way can be difficult to follow. It is not to be recommended in bad weather. As we descended Muska Hill we lost it completely. After cutting across country we picked it up again, just above a very large lime kiln in Ardale Beck (NY 674344), which we had noted in the morning. Just to prove that she was the freshest among us, Sue pointed out that the sunken track by which we were descending was, in fact, a mineral tramway complete with rail. Presumably it was used to transport limestone from the fell down to the kilns.

On Sunday, a much depleted party set off to fill in the gap between Smittergill Head and Cashwell Burn, via Rotherhope Fell and Greencastle. Rotherhope Fell Upper Level (NY 69964157) had run-in after a short distance. Charlton's Level (NY 70224097) and Cleugh Head Level (NY 70654060) were tried but had also run-in. According to Dunham, the latter had been driven for 3000 feet in an unsuccessful attempt to test the Greencastle Veins. No wonder the dump was so big.

By this time, fatigue had set in and an early tea was taken at Killhope. Thanks to all who participated. Next year - a Weardale tour. See diary dates.

Roger Bade

Thanks also to our indefatigable President who sent in a short report on this meet. Congratulations to John, his Good Lady Sue, the Dog (unnamed), Malcolm, George and Tony who took part in the meet. Thanks also to Roger for organising it. - Ed.

NAMHO Conference Weekend - July 1995

This event spanned four days from Friday through to Monday and offered a very wide range of activities and lectures/discussion groups. The delegate list showed over 160 participants from 35 different organisations. The conference was based on Lilleshall Hall (The National Sports Centre), near Newport, Shropshire. I joined the proceedings on Saturday, and after an opening address from Alan Taylor (Hon. President of Shropshire Caving and Mining Club), Ivor Brown (also of SCMC) took the floor with a historical review of The Coalbrookdale Coalfield. This small but fascinating coalfield supported about 100 collieries in the 1800's, giving rise to some 4000 shafts and adits. Several of the mines managed to work coal, ironstone, fireclay and limestone from a single shaft - thus producing all the essential raw materials for iron manufacture from a single venture. At its peak of activity in the mid 1800's the coalfield produced around 500,000 tons of ironstone.

The next speaker was Paul Humphreys (South Shropshire District Council), with an interesting account of the problems faced by the council when considering mining remains from a public safety point of view. The present approach of the Council is to identify, risk-assess and report on all sites within the area. Colin Richards (also from SSDC) continued the theme from a conservation standpoint and explained the various measures available to provide protection of structures and buildings. The problems of financial justification and competition for limited resources were explored, using Tankerville Mine engine house and Grit Mine as examples. Harley Thomas (Conservation Officer for South Shropshire County Council) rounded off the trio's presentation by extending the scope beyond engine houses, shafts etc., to include miners cottages, the schools and chapels they used, and so on. It was refreshing to hear such an enthusiastic presentation from these council officers and we all wish them well in their endeavours.

David Poyner's lecture - Development of the Wyre Forest Coalfield, presented his exhaustive researches of some 20 years. The coalfield runs from Bridgnorth in the north, to Abberley in the south, straddling the Shropshire-Worcestershire boundary. David explained the geology and various coal types and how these had influenced the exploration and development activities. We were treated to an intriguing insight into the dubious business characters and companies who had played a part in the growth and history of this historic area. The mine adventurers had confounded the experts by finding high grade coal where it should not have occurred, and at its height of activity, around 1910, Highley Colliery was employing 500 men and producing 100,000 tons of coal per annum. The last mine finally closed in 1971.

A really comprehensive selection of trade stands and club exhibits was available on both days in the main hall, with a terrific selection of publications and caving gear. This formed the focal point of the weekend and provided a really good venue for conversation and meeting people.

I took a break from lectures in the afternoon and joined a field excursion to the ancient mines of Llanymynech Hill near Oswestry. This small copper mine dates back to Roman times and may well have been worked even earlier than that. The labyrinthine workings are twisted and narrow, uncomfortable flat out crawls being not uncommon. The trio from the local council also joined the trip and thoroughly enjoyed their first underground experience, even if it was "a little muddy", and resulted in seriously sore knees. There is very little mineralisation to be seen nowadays; the old miners clearly having done a very thorough job. If the leader had carried a rucksack full of knee pads underground he could have sold the lot at a premium to all the members of the party without such equipment - the angular limestone rubble is extremely uncomfortable stuff to crawl on!

During the afternoon I missed lectures by Paul Sowan (Subterranea Britannica) - Re-use of Mines and Underground Quarries; Dave Carlisle (Earby Mines Research Group) - Slate Mines in North Yorkshire; and Rob Vernon (Welsh Mines Society) - Conservation in the Gwydyr Forest. Two Seminar Sessions also ran in the afternoon, the first covering the IRIS industrial archaeology project (led by Jane Robson), and the other on Early Mining in the UK (led by The Great Orme Exploration Society).

Saturday evening was occupied with a pleasant social gathering and pie and pea supper (followed by most excellent mince tart) and drinking in the bar. Neal Rushton (SCMC) then taxed befuddled brains with a lengthy quiz on mining related topics. The winning table scored 120 odd points out of a possible maximum of 132 - sounded pretty good to me. The evening concluded with the draw for the Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation Raffle - which saw Mike Moore (of bookshop fame) trying to avoid winning back the items he had donated!

Sunday got off to a flying start with an excellent lecture from Lyn Willies (Peak District Mines Historical Society) - Gold, Gold, Gold! This turned out to be a travelogue account of a journey made by Lyn up through the western USA and over the mountains to the Yukon. Illustrated by excellent colour slides and packed with interesting background information Lyn grabbed everyone's attention and held it. His final slide of five nuggets nearly filling a steel gold-pan was a nicely presented hoax - the pan was a special 3 inch diameter job for taking pictures!

Kevin Baker (Carn Brea Mining Society) followed, with a presentation on Boscreege Mine, Cornwall. Kevin chose an interesting approach by way of introduction, taking the audience through a regressing "time-line" of key dates and events such as 1839 (invention of photography), 1791 (Ordnance Survey established), 1775 (James Watt's steam engine) and 1665 when 60,000 people died in London from The Plague, in order to set his chosen topic in context. Kevin traced the history of the mines in the parish of Germo back to 1701, demonstrating how shaft names and mine names can become confused with time, and rounding off with a fascinating account of how the CBMS have become involved in excavating Cooper's Shaft on Great Work Mine. The work so far has reached a depth of about 86 feet below surface and has given access to quite extensive workings.

Alan Williams (Welsh Mines Society) stepped in to replace John Morris (Irish Geological Survey), who had unfortunately been unable to attend. Alan traced the history and development of The Berehaven Mines in southern Ireland, leaving the audience in no doubt that this would be an area well worth visiting. (See below). The mines have been worked over a period of some 4000 years, and being in a relatively remote corner of the country, blessed with beautiful scenery, there are substantial surface and underground remains awaiting exploration.

The next speaker, Mike Gill (Friends of Cononley Mine), presented a review of the terrific amount of work that has been done at Cononley Mine, Yorkshire. The clearance of the site, restoration of buildings, negotiations with land owners and other agencies, and major civil engineering works which have been undertaken are an example to any would-be conservationist. Mike's characteristic dry wit kept the audience entertained, and the project shows just what CAN be achieved with about £10K, a group of volunteers and a lot of hard work.

After lunch delegates again split into two seminar groups - the first dealing with Bat Environments in Mining Remains (led by Andrew McLeish), and the other aimed at discussing the possibility of the Formation of an Irish Mining History Society. I attended the latter, and was interested to hear how much there is to see and do in Ireland. Adrian Pearce, on behalf of John Morris who had been unable to attend, acted as chairman and helped the discussion along. It was agreed that the driving force must come from Ireland, but that NAMHO representatives and member groups would do all they could to publicise and support the venture. It is likely that an inaugural meeting will be held in Ireland, perhaps early in 1996. Look out for details.

The penultimate lecture was by Roy Starkey (The Russell Society) - titled A Mineralogical Miscellany. Roy firstly set out how mineralogy fitted within the NAMHO framework, and explained how mineralogists could be of help to mining history and exploration groups. The idea of "get some mineralogical input into your trips" seemed to be taken on-board by delegates, as was the message that not all mineral collectors are bad! Roy rounded off his session with a mineralogical Land's End to John O'Groats tour through the mining fields of Britain, illustrated by colour photographs of typical specimens from each area.

Events were brought to a close by Nigel Chapman with his résumé - What Remains - a Personal View of Coal Mining. This was a somewhat depressing account of conservation opportunities lost and preservation orders overturned, relating to coalfield mining remains. A unique photographic archive of important sites, Nigel's heartfelt account of how he and his brother have been involved in the painstaking drawing and recording of equipment such as engines, fans and winders, made even me (someone with scant interest in collieries) wonder whether we ought not to be thinking a little harder about conserving this rapidly disappearing part of our industrial heritage.

Finally, Ivor Brown - NAMHO President, drew the proceedings to a close, thanking the organisers, speakers, field trip leaders and everyone concerned for a really excellent weekend. The next NAMHO Council Meeting will be on 29 October at the Black Country Museum, Dudley, and next year's event will be a field-based meeting in Devon (date to be confirmed). The next (1997) Conference is to be hosted by the Peak District Mines Historical Society.

As most delegates departed for home, the remainder were looking forward to yet another day of activities on the Monday, centring around Shropshire's premier mining complex - Snailbeach. If you didn't come to this year's gathering, think about coming next time - you won't be disappointed!

Roy Starkey

The Llywernog Mine Machinery Trust Ltd.

This Trust was formed early in 1994 to take over the running and development of the Llywernog Mine as it was becoming increasingly obvious that the site could not survive in its present structure. Initially, the Trust was formed to prevent the machinery and artefacts from being dissipated and to take advantage of grant-aided development funding, but this strategy cannot work without control of the whole site. We have agreed with the present owner that this option ought to be followed.

The Trust is an entirely separate entity from the existing business and is now actively seeking grant aid to purchase the site, erect the 50 foot Ellen Vannin waterwheel and the Luhrig mill from Cwmystwyth, build a conservation workshop, and a number of lesser projects. These will include the development of an engine room, a steam collection and a miner's homestead. We are also applying for charitable status which will yield further fiscal benefits. It is the aim of the Trust to steer the present site in the direction of education, industrial heritage and culture, with less emphasis on commercial-type tourism. There is no reason why this listed and scheduled site cannot eventually be brought up to a standard where we have an operating mine, dressing mill and all the ancillary facilities, such as a smithy, carpenters' shop, etc.

We have been met with great support from all quarters, but still need the support of mining activists to form a "Friends Society". This is a unique opportunity which must not be missed and it offers all enthusiasts a chance to realise their dreams of being involved in securing a superb site which is well stocked and grossly underdeveloped. By following this route, the museum will be brought into line with the majority of other museums. We will continue to raise revenue through admissions but, unlike the present business, as a charitable trust the dividends will have to be ploughed back into maintenance, development and research towards a common benefit.

If you would like further details of our aims, or would like to offer ideas, assistance or the loan of artefacts please contact:

Simon Hughes on 01970 832324 at most times

Jamie Thorburn on 01970 820692 in the evenings

Bernard Moore on 01970 871795 at most times.

Radon Exposure During Caving and Similar Activities

The National Radiological Protection Board considers that there is a need for advice on the limitation of exposures to radon (and its decay products) during visits to caves, abandoned mines and similar places. A consultative document has been issued and some of the main points contained in it are given below.

Radon is a natural radioactive gas given off by most materials in the earth's crust. Amounts can build up in enclosed spaces such as caves, mines and buildings. Under certain circumstances exposure to radon, or more strictly, its short lived decay products, can lead to excessive doses to the lungs. Elevated levels of lung cancer have been observed in miners and those exposed to high domestic levels of radon.

Occupational exposures to radon, including those incurred underground, are controlled under the Ionising Radiation Regulations, (1985), and the Board has issued advice on the limitation of domestic exposures. Hitherto there has been no guidance on the limitation of exposure to radon during recreational visits to caves, abandoned mines and similar places. The Board now feels that it is appropriate to make such a recommendation. This advice is aimed mainly at individuals trained and equipped for the activity, who are likely to penetrate beyond the outer parts of such places.

The Board recommends an annual limit of 1 million (10^6) becquerels (Bq) per cubic millimetre (m^{-3}) per hour (h). For example, spending 200 hours in an atmosphere containing a concentration of 1000 Bq m^{-3} would give an integrated exposure $200,000 (10^5) \text{ Bq m}^{-3}\text{h}$. The same integrated exposure would be reached by spending 100 hours in a radon concentration of 2000 Bq m^{-3} . The limit is broadly similar to the exposure from living for a year in a house just below the Government Action Level. The exposure limit is appropriate for an equilibrium factor of approximately 0.4. The equilibrium factor is a measure of the total alpha particle energy emitted. It is frequently found to be between 0.3 and 0.5 in caves. The values in mines are more variable. If the equilibrium factors are known to be consistently higher or lower, then a modified exposure limit may be appropriate. The Board advises that measurements should be undertaken to ensure that the limit is not exceeded. In some caves and abandoned mines radon levels may be well established. In most cases, however, personal monitoring will be required.

Track etch detectors are a simple, cheap and robust means of monitoring. In most circumstances a track etch detector, worn for a period of three months, will be adequate. If radon levels are known to be low and predictable, this period can be extended to six months. If many visits are to be made in a short period, or radon levels are high or unpredictable, a shorter wearing period may be appropriate. Alternatively, shorter term measurements may be made with electrets or electronic equipment.

The limit is advisory and has no regulatory or similar significance. The recommended exposure limit is designed to protect against the possibility of the long-term development of lung cancer. The Board wishes to stress that the development of lung cancer is not inevitable, and that early effects are not likely to be a matter of concern. Nevertheless, radon exposures do carry a risk, and the Board advises that leaders of parties going underground should explain these risks to those they lead and that, as well as keeping within the recommended limit, exposures should be minimised insofar as this can be done without unduly constraining the recreation.

Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum

On 3rd July, the Caldbeck Mining Museum and the Threlkeld Quarry Project amalgamated to form the Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum. The new museum is at Threlkeld Quarry and is open six days a week from 11.00 to 16.45. The museum contains many large quarrying machines from the latter days of the quarry, the quarry engine house, complete with narrow-gauge railway, together with the collection from the now closed Caldbeck Mining Museum and a shop which boasts the largest collection of mining and geological books in the county. Telephone: 01768 779747.

News from Wanlockhead....

Underground work has been going on at Wanlockhead for many years. In 1983 a large pump engine was discovered underground and a team has been actively involved in adding to the knowledge of the underground workings. However, the latest report on activities from Jeremy Landless does not contain good news.

In 1992 permission to dig was received from the Buccleuch Estates Ltd. and work commenced on 9th January, 1993. The adit was completely run-in for the first 17 metres of ground. Each obstacle was dealt with in turn and the ground was allowed to settle for two weeks before proceeding. In all, 61 feet were cleared, 53 feet inbye and 8 feet outbye from the adit mouth with 6 metres of drainage pipe laid from the end of the concrete pipe inbye. This took two years work at a cost of £1179.13, excluding labour costs, and was funded by Jeremy Landless.

When the time came to renew the permission to dig in January, 1995, the Factor for Buccleuch Estates wished to have Historic Scotland and the Health & Safety Executive Mine Inspectorate involved, and this was written into the permission to dig agreement. This resulted in the HSE carrying out a risk-assessment on the adit dig in February, 1995. A new method of working was suggested, the cost of which, for phase two of the work, was estimated at £60,000. As the project is privately funded there is no way that such costs can be met and work has stopped. To be stopped with only 6 to 8 feet to go is a great disappointment to all concerned. If money cannot be found to do the work professionally (£100,000 or so) the engine, which is of great historic value, will be lost forever.

There is also a problem with exploration work as there are no potholers in the team. If you are interested or feel that you can help please contact Jeremy Landless at 169, Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PH.

There is however, one piece of good news. The museum goes from strength to strength largely due to the enthusiasm of the Manager and the volunteer force.

....And Alderley Edge

During the process of digging out a shaft in March this year on the west side of Engine Vein at Alderley Edge, a member of the Derbyshire Caving Club unearthed a hoard of Roman coins. The shaft, almost opposite the present day entrance to Engine Vein, is unlike the majority of those at Alderley, being square in shape and roughly six feet from wall to wall.

Approximately 8 feet below the present surface, or 3 feet below the surface at the time, 300 to 400 coins were buried in a clay pot. Made of bronze, they have been dated from 300 to 320 AD., during the reign of Emperor Constantine and are known to archaeologists as "follis". Symbols on some of the more identifiable coins include the town gate, the altar and depictions of slaves kneeling under a banner bearing the lettering "Vot XX" which shows that they were struck to commemorate the twentieth year of the Emperor's reign. Many coin hoards date from this period, probably because the value of the coinage was falling and they were hoarded in the hope that the value would rise again.

The hoard is now at Manchester Museum where a team, partly financed by Cheshire County Council and headed by Dr. John Prag, are beginning the task of separating the coins ready for exhibition later in the year. Discussions are under way to decide whether some of the Alderley mines may be scheduled, and excavation allowed only under controlled conditions. Excavation of the remainder of the shaft is held in abeyance until the National Trust decides whether it should be undertaken by the Derbyshire Caving Club or by trained archaeologists.

Les Tyson - DCC Newsletter.

Books

Who said it was grim up North? This couldn't be further from the truth, especially for lovers of mining history books as three prolific northern authors are proving. Ian Tyler has just released his fourth book on the Lakeland mines entitled **Seathwaite Wad***. Ian again comes up with a delightful publication which is full of more than just facts and figures. Jimmy Tuck has released his second book on the Northumberland coalfield, close on the heels of David Temple's first book on the Durham coalfield.

The financial returns for authors of these specialist publications is ridiculously low when one considers the legwork, painstaking research and sheer man-hours represented by each page. Although it is a good idea to support your local bookshop, perhaps it is even better to support these dedicated authors by buying the books direct from them, otherwise they may pack it in for a more steady job.

Collieries of Northumberland. Volume 2 - James T. Tuck.

Jimmy does it again! This is the second in a series of books plotting the history of the collieries of Northumberland which survived until vesting day. There have been changes in format from Vol.1, as Vol. 2 deals with only twelve pits. This, however, gives Jimmy the chance to go into more detail, both in photographic coverage and history. Plans of roadway layout at selected collieries are included.

The high point for me was the photograph of William Coulson, along with his brave band of sinkers on the bank at New Hartley Colliery during the ill-fated rescue operations in 1862. It was a privilege to see these men of steel.

For the social historian, there is an outline of the miners' union up to 1844, which gives a fitting introduction. This is liberally sprinkled with a selection of the sketches of T. H. Hair.

The price of the book is £9.50 + £1.00 p.&p. from James Tuck, 21, Ingoe Close, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 5EG. Alternatively, if you are in the area, why not pay a visit to Durham Inside Market where Jimmy has his stall, "Mining Memories". You can spend a pleasant hour having a "bit crack" with Jimmy and a look at his collection of mining photographs on display.

The Collieries of Durham. Volume 1. - David Temple.

David is another ex-miner turned author. After nineteen years at Murton Colliery and a year at Easington, Dave turned publisher when the pit closed. After publishing Jimmy Tuck's first book, he was given a little gentle persuasion to put pen to paper for a series about the pits south of the Tyne.

David begins with an overview of the history of the Durham coalfield complete with more of Hair's sketches and engravings from the London Illustrated News. These are followed by detailed descriptions of the Hawthorn Combine, Elemore, Eppleton. Murton, Sacriston, Witton, Shields Row and Wearmouth collieries. There are 123 photographs along with plans of some of the roadway layouts. The price is £9.50 + £1.00 p&p. from James Tuck.

Clive Seal

***Seathwaite Wad** (220pp. 120 illustrations. Softbound.) is available from Blue Rock Publications, Threlkeld Quarry, Threlkeld, Cumbria, CA12 4TT. Tel: 01768 779747. The cost is £13.99 + £1.50 p&p.

The Mining Journal 1860. An Index of British and Irish Mines and Mining Companies. Compiled by Peter Claughton.

From Abbey Consols to Ystrad Owen Colliery; a comprehensive index of all references to mines and mining activity as reported in the Mining Journal for 1860, including advertisements. 47pp. Softbound. Available, price £5.00, from Tony Oldham, Rhychydwr, Crymch, Dyfed, SA41 3RB.

MINING BOOKS FROM WALES

A Mineralogy of Wales - Richard E. Bevins

The mineralogy of Wales is diverse with over 340 different species recognised to date. The varying occurrence of minerals in Wales, rock forming minerals, mineral veins and superficial deposits - glacial and river, are reviewed. The second part of the book describes the varying modes of form and occurrence of minerals and where they can be found. 146pp. 107 colour plates, 17 black & white illustrations. Softbound. £28.00.

Slate Quarrying in Wales - Alun John Richards

This follows the fortunes and misfortunes of a great industry, from its earliest beginnings to the present day. It examines the growth of enterprises which enriched some entrepreneurs and beggared others. 231pp. Illustrated. Softbound. £8.00.

Great Western Corris - Gwyn Briwnant Jones

Constructed to serve the slate quarries. A detailed history for the slate buff. 85pp. 9 maps. 7 diagrams. 86 black & white photographs. Softbound. £11.00.

Nearly a Miner - Einion Evans

The reflections of an ex-coalminer at the Point of Ayr Colliery, North Wales. 139pp. 28 black & white illustrations. Softbound. £7.00.

Senghennydd: The Universal Pit Village 1890-1930 - Michael Lieven

In 1890 Senghennydd was a small isolated community of hill farms. In 1894 Sir William Lewis (Lord Merthyr) sank a coal mine in the valley and within ten years it became one of the largest pits in Wales. The community experienced some good fortune and prosperity, but much more hardship and loss. Over five hundred miners were killed in two pit disasters. The mine was closed in 1928. 387pp. 2 maps. 42 black & white illustrations. Hardback. £20.00.

Calon Blwm (Heart of Lead) - Cyril Jones

This book is in Welsh. An old miner reminisces on life in Dylife, the centre of lead mining in mid-Wales. The book includes old photographs of mines, etc. and a social history, some of which is quite gruesome. 191pp. Many illustrations. £10.00.

All these books are available from Tony Oldham, Rhychydwr, Crymych, Dyfed, SA41 3RB. Tel: 01239 831371. Prices include postage and packing.

Mine Tubs For Sale

Are you fed up with looking over the garden fence and feeling envious of Mr. Next-Door's conservatory? Do you feel like wrapping his imitation gas lamp round his neck? You can now go one better!

This is your chance to purchase one of only twenty five mine tubs from the famous Settlingstones Mine in Northumberland. Settlingstones was the last producer of Witherite. The tubs have been restored to their former glory, painted white with black trim. They make ideal garden furniture.

The tubs are on offer at £70.00 each. For more details call 01434 382429.

National Coal Mining Museum

On 28th June, 1995, the Yorkshire Mining Museum became the National Coal Mining Museum for England, almost exactly seven years after opening to the public and thirteen years after the beginning of the project. It is the only deep-shaft underground museum in this country and has the best preserved layout of a 19th century colliery anywhere in England. The museum is at Caphouse Colliery, New Road, Overton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF4 4RH. Tel: 01924 848806.

Rhosydd Slate Quarry

The Ffestiniog Slate Quarry Company proposes to re-open the Rhosydd Quarry at the head of the Cwmorthin Valley. The quarry was closed some 50 years ago. The company says that the new operation is needed to protect 70 jobs at its nearby Oakeley Quarry where production is winding down due to increasing problems with groundwater.

Conservationists objected on the grounds that quarrying at Rhosydd would damage scenic beauty and peace in a place where these qualities are at a premium, and would conflict with the founding principles of national parks. The Countryside Council for Wales, a government body which advises the Secretary of State for Wales, opposed the scheme. So did Cadw, the statutory body which protects ancient monuments in Wales.

However, the Snowdonia National Park Authorities endorsed the plans and the council, which has the final say, has approved them, attaching some conditions to protect the environment. The need for local jobs figured strongly in its deliberations. The decline of the slate industry and the closure of Trawsfynydd power station, also within the park and its largest single employer, are contributing to high unemployment. (Abstracted from The Independent 16th December, 1994.)

Cannock Chase Mines

Tim Jeffcoat

Archaeologists surveying Cannock Chase have discovered new examples of ancient mine workings. The finds, which are concentrated around Beaudesert, are thought to be very rare and could date back to medieval times. The mine workings were first uncovered some two years ago. The first excavations revealed more than 700 different workings, ranging from shallow pits to the remains of shafts and coal seams. Since the first discovery, the workings, which provide clues to the different types of mining techniques used over the past centuries, have all undergone further scrutiny. The new findings are detailed in a report to Staffordshire County Council's planning department.

An area surrounding one of the old shafts has been singled out for special attention, and further excavation work has been carried out. Several unusual features have been unearthed near the surface which have provided the archaeologists with fresh evidence to study. "Whilst it is difficult to be precise about the nature and function of these features, it appears that, following the sinking of the shaft, extensive development was undertaken around the shaft head to provide a working area," said a county council spokesman. He said that the excavation had also recovered a large quantity of bricks which, it is thought, had been made locally.

The county council has said that because of the historical value of the workings, it is vital that they are protected from nearby forestry operations.

(Wolverhampton Express & Star. 9th January, 1995)

Tim Jeffcoat

Meet Leaders for 1996

The meets programme for 1996 is being prepared now. Will anyone interested in leading a meet please contact the President as soon as possible?

Please come forward by the end of October (at the very latest) and give details of the date, time and place (with NGR) at which to meet. Please also indicate whether this will be a surface or underground meet and whether the going will be easy, moderate or difficult.

This will give us time to get them on the meets card.

Details to: **John Hopkinson, 4, Knights Way, Newent, Glos, GL18 1QL.**

PS. Why not fill in the form overleaf and come to the Pie & Peas meeting too?

Medieval Copper Working

It is evident that from an early date the Crown exercised a right of prerogative over copper ores, a right which was assigned to the Mines Royal society in various counties in England and Wales, including Devon and Cornwall, after 1568, although it was not until the late 17th century that there was extensive working of these ores in the South-West.

One suggestion for the Crown's early interest in copper is the silver content of some ores. Effective extraction of that silver had to wait until the 15th century and the development of the saiger process in central Europe, involving the addition of lead during smelting to draw out silver from the copper ores (liquation). However, there had been experimentation with a form of liquation at the Bere Ferrers mines in the 1290's and copper is known to have been smelted in that area in the 1320's. The latter was the reworking of copper blackwork (slags remaining after initial smelting - nigrum operum coperos), implying earlier copper mining; but where, and for what reason? If it was for the silver content, and some ores in the Callington - Tavistock area do carry significant amounts of silver, then is there evidence for medieval working of copper mines in that area?

The grant by the crown of a copper mine at North Molton, in Devon, dated 1346 makes no reference to gold or silver although both are known to exist there in small quantities. Concentrations of the latter in its free state attracted attention in the 19th century, culminating in the ill-advised gold workings of the 1850's.

Conversely the 'copper mine of Richmond', in Yorkshire, although included in grants by the Crown, as in 1475 when it was included in the silver-rich lead workings at Sheldon and Fletcheras, has, to my knowledge, no record of precious metal production. Perhaps someone can confirm or correct the latter.

Finally

Peter Cloughton

Thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. Please, keep the contributions rolling in - they are very much appreciated. Contributions on 3½" discs are welcomed. ASCII text format only please. Discs will normally be returned with the following newsletter unless otherwise requested.

Contributions for the November newsletter by 14th October, please, to: **Keith Nolan, West End Cottage, Woodhall, South Duffield, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 7TG. Telephone or Fax: 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.



Booking Form - Pies & Peas - 11th November, 1995.

I will be attending this event.

I enclose a cheque/P0 for £1.50 payable to 'NMRS'.

Name.....

Address.....

If you wish to show slides or give a talk, please tick the box and give brief details.

☐

Please return by 21 October to: **John Hopkinson, 4, Knights Way, Newent, Glos, GL18 1QL.**

PS. If you are going to the Pie & Peas meeting, then why not volunteer to lead a meet next year to your favourite mining site? - See overleaf.