

THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



Newsletter

DECEMBER 1996

Diary Dates

22nd March, 1997. Annual General Meeting and Dinner.

A change of format for the Annual Dinner is planned for 1997. It's going to be at Yorkshire dinner time; 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The venue will be The Wensleydale Heifer at West Witton (NGR SE 056 884). Tel: 01969 622322. The AGM will start at 12 noon and dinner will be at 14.00. Cost will be similar to last year. A menu and booking form will appear with the February newsletter. The Wensleydale Heifer offers accommodation and other accommodation is available at Ivydene, West Witton (B&B). Tel: 01969 622785 and Chantry Caravan Park. Tel: 01969 622372. For the more strenuous among us an evening meet has been arranged at 17.30 on the 22nd, starting at the Wensleydale Heifer and visiting Wetgroves Mine, Carperby. For those who intend to go on this meet it is essential that they contact the meet leader, Clive Torrens. His telephone number is 01969 624721.

23rd March, 1997.

Keldheads and Cobscar Mines.

This meet has been arranged in conjunction with the AGM and dinner but, of course, all are welcome. Meet at 10.30 at Wensley Church (NGR SE 093 895). Surface walks and some underground trips - Leader Clive Torrens.

11th -14th July, 1997. NAMHO Conference.

Hosted by The Peak District Mines Historical Society. The conference will be based at Darley Dale, Matlock, Derbyshire. The centre will have facilities for camping and caravans as well as residential accommodation. Further details will be given nearer to the date.

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1997 Subscriptions - Due on 1st January

Subscriptions have been held at 1996 levels - no inflation here! If you pay UK income tax please complete a deed of covenant form. Although it is for four years, it doesn't matter if you fill one in every year. The Society derives a lot of benefit from reclaimed tax and it costs you nothing extra.

Meet Reports (and a little history too!)

Alston Moor Collieries, 14th September, 1996. - Report by Clive Seal

September certainly pulled out all the stops as far as the weather was concerned for this "home match", and about 20 members (some MOLES) assembled at the railway station for a brief tour around the Alston Collieries. The Alston Coals are to be found within the Limestone measures. Four coals were worked on the Moor; Fell Top, Firestone, Little Limestone and the Four Fathom Limestone. With the exception of the Firestone, all the coals are around 18" thick (on a good day). The Firestone gets up to a yard in places but is full of Ironstone balls. The last pit to work the coal closed in 1964, nearly all of the production going into the lime kilns. The Little Limestone coal is the one mainly worked and is good quality Semi Anthracite. Coal mining was tied up with the limeburning industry; find a kiln and there will be a drift nearby for sure. Documentation is very scant to say the least, which makes history writing very difficult. The information which has come to light tells us that pits were working on Hartside by the end of the 1600's, but where the actual beginnings lie is unknown as yet. Did the Romans scratch a few cobbles out? They certainly did 12 miles to the West at Magna (Thirlwall).

By the mid 19th century, the industry was well established on major sites: Dowgang, Foreshield Grains, Blagill, Park Fell and either side of the Ayle Burn near to Clargill. The Vielle Montagne Zinc Co. worked Coal Cleugh, Dowgang and Gutter Gill collieries, employing less than 20 men in total. These pits were closed by 1907 but the colliery at Clargill (which could appear on the 1820-odd map) worked on until 1933 under the name of Alston Drift. This pit got the nickname of Linger and Die, not only was it situated near Linger quarry, but it kept avoiding closure for a considerable number of years. The horse level was known as Goodfellow drift and is still accessible today.

The 1950's saw a change in the industry as the bottom fell out of the lime market. Household coal was now the premium, by the 1960's most of the men on Alston Moor worked at either the foundry or in the pits. Barhaugh, Flow Edge, Ayle, High Row and Clargill gave the men highly paid jobs which brought prosperity to an area which relied heavily on the coal mining industry. Men also travelled to Collieries along the South Tyne near Haltwhistle, two of which were nationally owned whilst the others were private concerns at various stages of mechanization. When the 1980's came along, the economic climate was completely changed. Gone was the foundry in Alston, vanished was the NCB from the South Tyne and the advent of tourism was now threatening Alston's only stable industry, coal. In 1967 the South Tynedale council had closed Barhaugh colliery because they thought it a bad advert for tourism. The heaps were taken away and the way left open for the flood of tourists who would bring prosperity to Alston Moor. They would drive along the road throwing gold sovereigns at the local populace who found it next to impossible to find a job and completely impossible to open a pit because of the opposition.

Today two collieries operate: Barhaugh (opened 1988) and Ayle. A third, Clargill, is about to be re-opened whilst Tows Bank has closed. The total number of men employed in the Alston pits is around 20. Fortunately a large number of miners found work at Blenkinsopp collieries in Haltwhistle, now an RJB concern with estimated reserves of 26 million tonnes. Our walk started with a 6 mile drive to Barhaugh. Unfortunately we lost a member, who was last seen heading towards Carlisle. (If he would like to get in touch I can perhaps come to some arrangement for a visit). A tour of the Barhaugh mines would be a meet in itself so a good look through strained eyes at the moorland had to suffice. The management training centre, Barhaugh Hall (pronounced Baruf) dates from 1269 (well, there was a building of sorts there at that time anyway). In 1850, the estate was up for sale. In the particulars is the mention of the mineral wealth to be found on the estate; lead, iron and coal. A pit had worked the Fell Top coal during the 1830's from a point about 1800 feet above sea level (not very viable). A company unsuccessfully tried for lead behind Black Cleugh Farm but the level hit an underground spring after producing nothing but stones, so the claim that the manor had mineral wealth was a downright lie, basically.

The estate was bought during 1873 by John Dryden, an architect. John built two new wings to the hall, added the Rapunzel tower and installed a ship's stair case inside, which is still there. His son, F. M. Dryden opened two drifts into the coal during 1909. Scawberry drift (NY 697 508) only entered the coal for about 150 yards and was the centre of a legal controversy with the owners of Windy Hall, who claimed the coal was theirs. Dryden conceded the battle and shut the drift. He then discovered that all the land and coal belonged to Barhaugh and not Windy Hall (it is to be hoped he had a sense of humour). His second pit, Black Cleugh (NY 701 515) was more successful. In 1913 he was joined by a civil engineer from the SW of England. An aerial flight was installed from the Alston railway to a loading station behind Black Cleugh Farm with a further aerial flight running up to the drift. A big fault was hit in 1916 which put an end to development, and the manpower shortage during the war forced Mr. Beavis to pull out of the partnership in 1918 when the drift closed. A new drift, Middle Pasture was opened around 1920 when F.M. Dryden found a new partner. The Middle Pasture drift (NY 700 512) worked on until 1936 when the coal thinned out to 12 inches. In the mean time the Firestone coal was worked high above Dewley Field (NY 705 518). Coal was sent down to the loading station via a self acting incline. Stan Shepherd arrived from Prudhoe during 1926 and it was he who did most of the work at Dewley drift, alone. All the plant at Barhaugh was dismantled by Dryden in 1938.

We then moved on to the present day Barhaugh colliery, owned by one of Stan's sons, Frank. Barhaugh drift was driven in the early 1950's, working on until 1967 when the council closed it down. Frank had one big battle to re open the pit in 1988. His planing permission states that he can't have any more than 2 vehicles at the pit. (How are we supposed to get to work?) The pit top had to blend in to the local surroundings (unlike the agricultural sheds) and cost over £30,000 before a nut of coal was hit. All stone out of the drift has to be transported off site and the planners never leave him alone. It is quite ironic that the major opposer was Barhaugh Hall. They got experts to say that dust would be spewed over the fell side out of the return drift. I will give anybody a tenner if they can detect air movement anywhere in the pit! The hall claimed they would employ over 20 full time staff and the pit would put their business in jeopardy. I worked at the pit and my wife was one of the 5 employees at the hall, They were laid off more than they were working and received low wages. One - Nil to the pit I think.

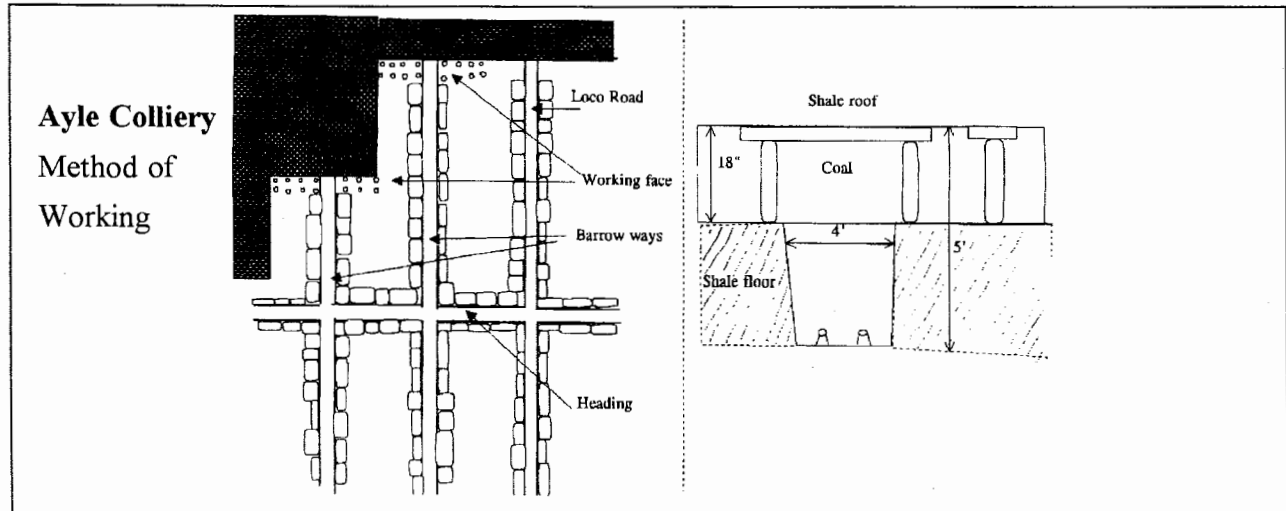
The day of our surface visit found Frank and his son installing a washing plant at the pit. Barhaugh employs four. Frank, Steven (son), Angela (wife-ish) and Jez, who is also a farmer, Mines Rescue Brigades man (part time) and guide at Killhope. Angela is a legal underground employee, probably the first woman coal miner since 1840. On the days she works, she fills and putts tubs as well as helping out with the screening, and if I might pre-empt your thoughts, she is an attractive young woman of slight build, who would not play prop forward for Widnes.

We left Barhaugh heading for Ayle colliery, passing the remains of High Row (1974 RIP) as we went. Ayle is situated next to the old Ayle Burn mine. The old level was blocked last year. Ayle opened in 1933 but the pit has moved round somewhat. Sometimes it was in Cumberland and other times (as today) it was a Northumbrian pit. Stan Shepherd became manager of the pit after he left Barhaugh. The second drift opened in 1937, the day Stan's son, John, was born. Stan wanted to call the drift "The John Pit", but the owner would have none of it, so it was christened Ayle East. As Stan got on in years John became manager. Frank Heads (owner) promised John the pit when he retired, if he could save the pit from bankruptcy. John turned things around but Frank didn't retire until he was 75. His decision then was prompted by the only fatal accident at the pit when John Heatherington was killed between the Christmas and New Year holiday in 1974. The tragedy was even greater because John only had half a tub left to fill before he went home. A big stone came out of the roof stunning him. The stone landed on his throat causing him to asphyxiate. The present drift was driven in 1980 and is situated on the Great limestone above the quarry.

Kevin, Stan's' grandson, is the third generation Shepherd to be Manager at Ayle Colliery, which makes the mine the second longest run family pit in the country.

The Ayle burn vein is met with 50 yards inbye of the surface which brings up the lower Little Limestone coal to the main roadway. 10 feet above this is the middle Little Limestone coal which is worked throughout Alston. The pit employs 5 men on the face during the summer months, extra men coming to supply winter demand. All the coal is won by compressed air picks, though cutters are sometimes used to cut the stone beneath the coal. The method of working affords more or less 100% extraction from a series of 10 yard stalls all holed into one another, one man to each stall. Longwall faces of 70 yards are experimented with but are still worked with the compressed air picks. The coal is filled into 8 cwt. tubs and transported to the surface by locomotive haulage.

All members enjoyed the visit to the coal face, where the methods of working were explained. On returning to the surface some ventured across the road to Clargill, then to see Tows Bank before the plant is dismantled. I hope you all had a safe trip home.



Rampgill Mine, Nenthead, 15th September, 1996. - Report by Damian McCurdy.

On a beautiful hot sunny Sunday morning 17 members and friends gathered at the car park in Nenthead and began to wonder why they were going underground on such a beautiful day. As those of you who know the area will realise such a morning is not all that common.

The old chicken sheds have now been restored by the North Pennines Heritage Trust and are called the Nenthead Mines Visitor Centre. There is a small Museum, £2.00 per head, a shop selling the usual tourist type goods and a coffee shop.....very different to 12 months ago. There has also been the usual landscaping job done in the immediate vicinity to beautify the area and the consequent loss of interesting features and their inter-relationship with their surroundings. However it is probably better than total loss. The Heritage Trust, at this time, do not object to properly led and organised parties going underground, but one can only wonder how long this situation will persist. (See page 10 - Ed) Probably as long as it takes before the first accident! Your meet leader therefore checked in with Jill Fenwick, the Centre Manager to let her know that as previously arranged we were about to go into Rampgill. We first had a look at Brewery shaft, always impressive, and then went along the Scaleburn Vein to the blockage about 1,300 ft. from the junction. The sub-level haulage system up the steps just before the blockage was also inspected and the presence of wooden rails noted.

After lunch we proceeded to Whisky Bottle Junction and then along the Rampgill Vein as far as the Rampgill Cross Vein and just past which is the "Norpeck Door" which prevents any further progress along the horse level. The door was installed many years ago to prevent the digging work being done by the group getting disturbed or equipment being taken. They have been digging here for about 13 years and last year they finally got through their 13th fall and found.....yes, you've guessed it, the 14th fall, blocking the level. Full marks for perseverance. They have advanced about 300 yds. from the door in this time.

The Low Whimsey Engine shaft on the Rampgill Vein was inspected. This shaft goes all the way down to connect with the Nentforce Level and marks its termination. The ladderway up to the winding engine chamber is now unsafe and we did not even attempt the 30 ft. climb. There is in fact very little to see there, as virtually everything was stripped out to leave just an excavated chamber which is progressively collapsing.

Some time was spent exploring the Patterdale Cross Vein and workings on the Rampgill Sun Vein before we made our way out to be greeted by the warm sun which we were informed had been shining all day!

Many thanks to all those who turned up and helped to make it an interesting and entertaining day.

Society Publications

So far 1996 has been a mixture of good news and bad. The good news is that, up to November 9th, sales have brought in a total of just over £5,500, with more to come before the end of the year. To add to this, there has been an income of £1,295 from NMRS Records and a donation of £10, giving a total of £6811.

And now for the bad news... By the middle of May the price of paper had increased by such vast amounts that it seemed we would not be able to produce either Frongoch or the Memoirs this year. For those who don't know what's been happening, the price of paper has been rising at around 30% a year for at least the last two years. This is said to be a result of massive cut-backs in the early '90's - when demand for paper had slumped - leading to a great undercapacity as demand started to rise again. These increases meant that the Weardale publication cost £1000 more than I'd expected, while the original price quoted for Frongoch would have meant a selling price of £8.15 per copy - at which I don't think we could have sold it.

Luckily towards the end of May the price of paper began to drop and Frongoch became a viable proposition once more. I had visions of the situation continuing as there was then said to be a world glut of paper, which would bring prices down further. I even had visions of 1997 being another "bumper year" with more than one monograph, plus reprints and a memoirs, but reality caught up with me again when the 1996 Memoirs was ready to go to the printers and I found that the price of paper has started to go up again, with a 10% rise at the end of October.

After all the hard work Mike and I have put into the publications over the last four years, this is extremely disheartening and, quite frankly, I don't know what to do about it. The size of the print runs seems to be ideal - a smaller number would raise the unit cost still further, while a larger number would take too long to sell (and cost more initially) and I feel that an increase in the price of either the membership subscription or the books themselves would be a negative move and would lose members and sales.

A possibility would be to lower the standard of the publications by using cheaper paper throughout, but this could also have a negative effect where several publications were on sale in one place as we would either have to sell the cheaper ones at a lower price or risk not selling them at all.

If anyone can see a sensible way out of the situation (including getting a new editor if you think someone else might do better!), please get in touch.

Hazel Martell.

Change of Address

Les Tyson has written to notify the society of his new address. It is:

11, West Grove, Brooklands, Sale, Cheshire, M33 3AS. Telephone: 0161 969 5635.

Weardale

Roger Bade, now ensconced in the south for the winter after his Wardle wanderings has sent one or two questions and an offering. The questions first.

Roger is looking for No's 1, 2, and 3 of "*The Bonny Moor Hen - Journal of the Weardale Field Study Society*" to complete his collection. Can anyone help?

In the *Friends of Killhope Newsletter*, No 38 there appears a description of Nenthead taken from *History and Topography of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland* by William Whellan, written/published in 1865. While describing the extensive nature of the underground workings it is stated "I was told that it is possible to go all through seven miles underground and come out in Weardale". According to Dunham, Coalcleugh cross veins were tested both from Killhope and Coalcleugh, but no connection is suggested, although the Nenthead Coalcleugh connection is well documented. Is there anyone out there with information on this one?

Which leads quite nicely into the ballad of the Bonny Moor Hen.

In the early 19th century, life was hard for the miners of Weardale. Although the moors abounded with game this, especially the red grouse - the bonny moor hen - was strictly reserved for the Bishop of Durham and his guests and was closely protected by his keepers. The only way the miners could tap this source of food was by poaching - which they did. In 1818 a group of miners were caught in the act by the keepers, taken to Stanhope and locked in a room in the Black Bull Inn to await transportation to Durham gaol. The resentment already simmering among the poverty stricken miners burst out and a rescue party broke into the inn and fought fiercely with the hated keepers. The prisoners escaped and the keepers were badly beaten. No one was ever charged or brought to book. The victory of the miners is celebrated in the ballad.

THE BONNY MOOR HEN

You brave lads of Weardale, I pray lend an ear,
The account of a battle you quickly shall hear,
That was fought by the miners, so well you may ken,
By claiming a right to the bonny moor hen.

There's the fat man of Oakland, and Durham the same,
Lay claim to the moors, likewise the game,
They sent word to the miners, they'd have them to ken,
They would stop them from shooting the bonny moor hen.

So the army set off straightways as we hear,
And the miners' grand army did quickly appear,
Oh, they fired along till their powder was done,
And then they laid on with the butt end of their guns.

Oh, this bonny moor hen, she has feathers anew,
She has many fine colours, but none of them blue.
Oh, the miners of Weardale they are valiant men,
They will fight till they die for the bonny moor hen.



William Morely Egglestone.

Recorder's Report

The Society is represented on the Yorkshire Dales Archaeology Group. This is a forum for professionals and amateurs with an interest in the archaeology and history of the dales, which meets twice per year and is hosted by the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

The latter acts as a facilitator for those researching in the area, and has given funding to a range of projects from a survey of the Malham area, by the University of Bradford, to a study of ancient land boundaries in Swaledale, and a survey of bridges and water crossings in the areas of Sedburgh, Dent and Garsdale. This year, it is also been involved in the following lead mining related work:-

A pre-consolidation survey on the earthworks and buildings at Keld Side smelt mill, in upper Swaledale.

Minor consolidation and further archaeological recording at Grinton How smelt mill.

A survey of the dressing floors at Dolly and Barbara Levels, in Gunnerside Gill, also the Blakethwaite Dams.

Some consolidation work on the Grassington smelt mill flues.

The Recorder has also been invited to attend the November meeting of the Grassington Moor Management Association, which is discussing the options for treating shafts on Grassington Out Moor. The Association is comprised of the Yorkshire Dales National Park (as the trustee land owner); the Gaitholders (farmers with grazing rights); the Mineral Owner (Duchy of Devonshire) and Sporting Rights Owners (Messrs. Roberts). They are faced with the consequences of a "quick fix" in the late 1960s, when many open shafts were capped with wooden sleepers and covered by piles of spoil. Firstly, the shafts so treated became obscured and lost from memory, and secondly the caps are becoming unsafe as the timber rots. Besides being faced with a large bill, the Association is, therefore, eager to trace the shafts and to maintain the safety of the public and stock, whilst protecting the archaeological integrity of the mining remains.

With the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) finally becoming a reality, this year has seen much activity towards the production of the Nidderdale AONB Management Plan. There have been seminars and meetings of those groups with an interest in the archaeology and history of the AONB - which extends east from the YDNP boundary to near Ripon and Harrogate, north into Wensleydale and south to near Blubberhouses. As part of the Society's contribution to the Management Plan, Geoff Blacker and Mike Gill have prepared a specialist report on the Extractive Industries in the AONB. This discusses the history of the area's lead, stone, coal and iron industries and will be used to inform discussion by the Joint Advisory Committee, which runs the AONB, and to aid future archaeological work. Other reports will cover geology and the environment; prehistory; the mediaeval period; and buildings. The next meeting is early in the New Year.

Last year, the Society was asked to contribute material on the history of British mining to an Open University Course Book on Physical Resources and Environment. This has now been published as Part 2 of Block 5 and covers - Resource Exploitation (Metals).

Mrs. June Clough, the widow of Robert T. Clough, has donated part of Bob's collection to the Society Records. This includes negatives and prints of mining and smelting sites, surveys and maps, and correspondence relating to the Caldbeck Mining Co. at Greenhow. Bob was the Society's first Editor and a former President.

Mike Gill.

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, Clive Torrens, Jubilee House, Preston under Scar, Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 4AH, at least twenty eight clear days before the date of the AGM.

General Meeting, Pies & Peas

At the general meeting at Sicklinghall on 9th November, Sallie Bassham, John Hopkinson and Mike Gill gave illustrated talks.

This year Sallie Bassham spent her holiday on Shetland looking at stone circles and misty mountains. Like most of us, she thought that apart from talc quarrying the islands hold about as much interest to mining enthusiasts as the Norfolk Broads. Not so! Armed with a geological map, she soon found a fault in a sea cliff and at least two shafts sunk onto it. Further searching revealed a sheave wheel jammed into rocks on the beach. At a nearby hamlet she also found a display of photographs and relics from another small mine. Clearly, whilst Shetland is not a little Cornwall, there is more to see and Sallie promised to return.

John and Sue Hopkinson also fell to the lure of the far north - this time the Strontian area. With the aid of Jerry Landless's paper in *British Mining* No.1 they hiked through some impressive scenery to visit Corrantee, Bellsgrrove and Fee Donald mines. They saw the remains of an aerial ropeway which ran from the Corrantee Deep Level to a waterwheel-powered roller crusher. One of the fluted rolls from the latter has survived.

There was also a fine exposure of the vein in an opencast. The portal of the Grand Level, near Bellsgrrove Lodge, was visited, but not entered because it was gated. According to John Barrett (of Wheal Friendship, Grassington and Coniston Copper Mine fame), large quantities of poor ore had been stoped out of this part of the mine before 1852. (In 1856, the Grassington mines bought 6.5 tons of rails and chairs from the Strontian Mining Company). The extensive dumps of Fee Donald Mine (which are being removed for aggregate) were also viewed. One member asked about the remains of a hut containing a number of drill-cores which he had seen on an earlier visit. This dated from 1965, when Consolidated Gold Fields Ltd. prospected the area, and now survived as shattered woodwork and scattered cores.

Mike Gill described the Society Records and the collection of 79 four-post binders (Records Files), which are organised by county and then sub-divided into parishes. These contain field notes, photographs, small sketches and plans, and notes from archives material donated by members. The files are supplemented by a series of index files. The latter are also loose-leaf binders with pre-printed sheets giving details of specific sites or features. There are also indexes to the Society's collection of surveys. Mike went on to describe how these indexes are being moved onto computer data-bases, which makes them more accessible, and new ones relating to mining personalities generated.

The second part of Mike's talk was about his work on Lead Mining Affected and Mining Related Landscapes for the YDNP and English Heritage. In 1993 he had produced a series of maps showing the outline of those parts of the Yorkshire Dales which had been affected by lead mining and smelting, including the water catchment areas. He had then highlighted the specific areas which had been: opencasted (including hushing), or worked by shallow shafts, deeper shafts or from levels. A second phase of the work, on mining related landscapes, has not yet gone ahead in the Yorkshire Dales, although some work was done in Derbyshire. This was aimed at identifying any physical signs of dual economy which had been left on the landscape by miners who also had farming interests. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence for miners having a cow or a pig on an acre or two of land, but nothing very solid to show an effect on the landscape. It is thought, for example, that areas of small fields, especially those with lots of small field barns, on the margins of older enclosures may be such an effect. The Derbyshire work was at best inconclusive, probably because it lacked the depth of detail which will be needed, but more importantly because much of the evidence used dated from the 1851 census onwards. This was when the Derbyshire lead industry was already in decline (free fall) and many miners had moved on. Mike believed that it would be necessary to look at likely areas in much greater detail, using data from the 17th and 18th centuries.

He had, therefore, chosen to begin work on the population of upper Wharfedale area because the Society already has a great deal of data relating to its mines, many of the parish registers have been published for the period from the early 16th century to 1812 and the census returns are available. Others are working on related topics - such as land holding patterns.

Mike, who is sceptical about the possibility of coming up with more than broad rules for identifying landscape features related to the dual economy, showed how, by using a database, it was possible to make more sense of the complex information held in parish registers. Using Microsoft Access, he has been able to sort all family entries together in alphabetical order of surname and then given name, with further sorting of given names by date order. From this, he is slowly building up a picture of occupational structure, infant mortality, age at marriage and the ages at which adults died.

Further useful information is available from the census returns because the area's mines were only reaching their peak in 1851. It was hoped to eventually include data for a string of parishes from Beverley to Hubberholme, which would cover a discrete lead mining field. Some of Mike's provisional results for the migration of miners agreed with work by Lawrence Barker (and others) for the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale census of 1851. This showed that by far the majority of men were born near the place at which they were recorded as living, whereas a significant number of wives had moved from further afield.

On behalf of all who attended, the committee would like to say thank you to Sue Houghton for arranging the Pies and Peas, etc., and also to the ladies who helped in the kitchen. Your efforts were greatly appreciated.

Coal Authority Look into Hole

In August a large hole, about 50 feet deep appeared in the bowling green at the Swadlincote Catholic Club. The Coal Authority has filled the hole with concrete. Tim Jeffcoat, who sent in the report, says, "consulting Colin Owen's excellent book *The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield - 1200-1900*, I see that there was a White House Colliery at work in 1853 in the area of the collapse. At this colliery they proved the full range of seams down to the Stockings seam at 800 feet. this makes a 50 ft. deep hole seem quite tame."

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mining at this colliery ceased on 23rd August, 1996 with the loss of 230 jobs. RJB chief, Richard Budge offered to sell the pit to the workers for £1.2 million, but the deal was rejected. Now, Flintshire County Council is floating the idea of turning it into a heritage centre linked to a dockside boating marina.

A. S. Mousdale.

Query Corner

The newsletter certainly seems to have a coal theme this time. Clive Seal asks:

What did a Bob Gin look like and how did it operate?

What is a chain Gin?

Is anybody an authority on early 17th century coal working?

Clive asks one or two other questions re Horse gins, etc., - if anyone can help, please contact him at The Cottage, Knarsdale, Slaggyford, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 7NS. Tel: 01434 382429.

Access to Mines at Nenthead

The Society has been advised of the following arrangements covering access to mines in the Upper Nent Valley. The land is owned by the Cumbria County Council and it has been leased by the North Pennines Heritage Trust, which now controls access.

The whole site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Parts of the site, including Carrs Level and Smallcleugh (both surface and underground) are scheduled as a Geological SSSI. The site is the subject of an English Heritage approved management plan and a programme of conservation of the surface remains is being prepared.

The development of the site means that access to it must be regulated. Will members please note, therefore, that vehicles are not allowed beyond the Heritage Centre Car Park. Except for public footpaths, visitors to the site will pay to use the Heritage Centre and the waymarked trails which are being set up. Permission to wander from these routes must be sought from the Centre Manager (Jill Fenwick - 01434 382037) at the Rampgill Visitor Centre.

Neither the County Council nor the Trust wishes to prevent access to the mines by *bona fide* mine exploration and survey groups. Indeed, the Trust would welcome co-operation in extending its knowledge of the Nenthead Mines. Member organisations of NAMHO may, therefore, continue to use the site within the following framework:-

All vehicles must park in the enlarged car park at the old Rampgill workshops.

The Centre Manager must be notified before you go down a mine - either call at the Trust Office during working hours or leave a note in the trust letter box outside those hours.

Activities which damage the fabric of the mines or involve the extraction of minerals are not allowed.

The Trust cannot be held responsible for any damage, injury to, or loss by mining history or geological groups visiting the site.

Anyone wishing to help with the conservation of surface remains will be very welcome. They should contact the Centre Manager so that any work is done with Scheduled Monument Consent and in accordance with the Management Plan. The Trust is also making a comprehensive record of the whole site and would welcome copies of surveys, field notes or papers for its archive.

Roger Bade contacted Graham Coggins, the Chairman of the North Pennines Heritage Trust for clarification on some of the points above. Firstly, the notice appears harsher and more formal than intended because it was penned by Cumbria County Council lawyers.

The North Pennines Heritage Trust believe, that as they are now legally responsible for the site and are in receipt of a variety of government grants, they should regulate access. They particularly want to control organised groups from outdoor activity centres, schools, youth groups and commercial mineral collectors; groups which have acted irresponsibly in the past.

As far as mine historians or individual mineral collectors are concerned, no control is currently intended. They would, however, like to be informed of any underground trips as mentioned above. Singletons will be discouraged from venturing underground.

The site management plan is being undertaken by a consultant and is funded by English Heritage. The plan concerns the consolidation, conservation and re-roofing of surface remains. Archaeological excavations are also planned.

Roger makes the point that no prominent mine historian appears on the list of directors of the North Pennines Heritage Trust. We can support and influence developments at Nenthead and elsewhere in the North Pennine Orefield by becoming members of the North Pennines Heritage Trust. Roger is prepared to formulate a collective response to Graham Coggins. Please send any observations to Roger at 104, Monkleigh Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4EP. Tel: Home 0181 540 6229. Work 0171662 6017.

Books

St. Barbara - Journey of a Saint Through Time. Rolfroderich Nemitz & Deiter Thierse.

This fascinating book about the patron saint of miners, metallurgists and others was published on the 4th December, the Saint's day, in 1995.

The authors, who are prominent mining engineers in Germany and world-wide, have researched the history of St. Barbara very thoroughly and have produced a very interesting book which is a first in its field. The very detailed research and the quality of the illustrations make the book rank with the work of Georgius Agricola who produced the first well illustrated book on mining and metallurgy some 440 years ago.

Following years of intensive research by the authors and their assistants, a picture emerges of the importance of St. Barbara down the ages. Her presence is depicted in religious, historical and artistic spheres, manifested in her legendary role in ancient Christianity, or as an object of art. Her name has been given to countless churches and hospitals and her influence has extended beyond the Christian faith. The authors discovered the unusual attraction of St. Barbara and became increasingly interested in her historical origins and the role she has played up to the present day.

The book deals with the legends and traditions surrounding St. Barbara; the historical and spiritual background; religious rituals; the setting and locations of St. Barbara's presence; the origin and means of worship and its dispersion world-wide; associated cults and customs, and the identification and portrayal of St. Barbara. The influence of icons over several centuries is systematically considered and comprehensively described. The book has 250 beautifully coloured illustrations which emphasise the strong, widespread aura of this 3rd century legend and the message she symbolised. The book is clothbound with a paper jacket with 380 pages, 250 full colour 30 single colour illustrations and maps. Demand for the book in Europe is strong and an English version will be available soon from: Verlag Glückauf GmbH, PO Box 18 56 20, D-45206, Essen, Germany. Fax +49+20 5492 4129.

Review by Professor Albert W. Davies in The Journal of the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

Nanteos - Janet Joel

Nanteos was the home of the Powell family, who had extensive mining interests in Cardiganshire. This book is a concise history of this great mansion, interspersed with many personal anecdotes. The book is of 24 pages and contains 11 photos and plans. It is available at £3.00, post free from Tony Oldham, Rhychdywr, Crymych, Pembrokeshire, SA41 3RB. Tel. 01239 831371.

Mining Tours 1997

Atalaya Tours propose the following programme for 1997:

India - Late January/early February

Rio Tinto & the Pyrite Belt - 13-20 April

Mines of Northern Spain - July

Mexico - Autumn

For further details please write, phone or fax. It would greatly help future planning if you could indicate any particular areas of interest. Contact Atalaya Tours Ltd. at Ceinionfa, Capel Dewi, Aberystwyth, SY23 3HR. Tel/Fax: 01970 828989.

Roger Burt

The Society wishes to congratulate Roger Burt on his appointment as the first Professor of Mining History. Roger is based in the Department of Economic History at the University of Exeter.

Damage to Mining Remains

Graham Dobbs writes:

"The note in the August newsletter regarding damaged mining remains at Grovebeck Mine prompts me to write to mention the sad decay of many noted mining sites in Swaledale in recent times. Little now remains of Level House at Old Gang and the bridge over the beck to Victoria Level has suffered a recent collapse. Much of the remaining building walls associated with Danby Level appear to have been removed within the last year, while the pack horse bridge downstream of Prys Mine in Shaw Beck has suffered a minor collapse. While I understand that the YDNP is closely involved in conservation in The Old Gang area I wonder if the more remote sites are being neglected simply because their significance is not appreciated. Perhaps the Society could make representation to YDNP pointing out the potential loss to our mining heritage if prompt action is not taken. Alternatively, do we as a Society have the capital, skills and dedication to undertake some of the restoration ourselves? Do we have sufficient numbers in Yorkshire to form a local group to further such aims? I would welcome other members' views on the subject."

Joseph Evans Mine Pumps

Does anyone know of any Joseph Evans mine pumps. Rupert J. A. Evans, the Great Great Grandson of Joseph Evans, is still in the water business and would very much like to find a large Evans mine pump (they have a lion cast on them) to save from the scrapyard. He has heard that one may have been taken away for apprentices to rebuild at some engineering works. If you can help with information please contact Rupert at Evans Engineering Ltd., Trecarrell Mill, Trebullet, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 9QE. Tel: 01566 782285, Fax 01556 782793.

Wheal Jane Pollution

Those with good memories may recall that it was reported in the August, 1994 newsletter the use of reed beds to control the pollutants in mine water was to be given a trial. This year has seen the second full growing season and the results are promising. The reed beds, without the benefit of pre-treatment have removed on average 80% of the iron and 95% of the arsenic. Underground beds of cattle slurry, straw and hay have been shown to be capable of removing zinc, cadmium and copper. This does have a down side in that hydrogen sulphide gas is generated in the process, causing complaints from nearby residents. The Environment Agency, however, say that the levels of gas are well below safety standards for prolonged exposure.

Finally

Tim Jeffcoat

A Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year to all our members, and 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. Don't forget your 1997 subs!

Contributions for the February newsletter by 11th January, please, to: **Keith Nolan, West End Cottage, Woodhall, South Duffield, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 7TG. Telephone or Fax: 01757 638503. Email: kjn1@york.ac.uk.**

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.