

THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



Newsletter

AUGUST 1997

Diary Dates

9/10th August, 1997 - Arkengarthdale Lead Mines.

Leader, Clive Torrens. Tel: 01969 624721. Meet at 10.30 at the lay-by opposite the CB Inn. NGR NY 999 031. Surface walks and underground.

13/14th September, 1997 - Teesdale Lead Mines.

Leader: Tony Fretwell Tel: 01388 605965. Meet at 10.30 each day at the cross in Middleton-in-Teesdale NGR NY 947 255. Saturday - surface in Hude Valley. Sunday - underground. In order to give Tony some idea of the size of the party, will you please telephone him if you intend to go on the meet.

18th October, 1997 - Autumn Meeting.

See page 9 of this newsletter. A booking form is enclosed.

19th October - Wharfedale Lead Mines.

Steve Mitchell will lead this meet to the Buckden Gavel Mine and the High smelt mill. Meet at the car park NGR SD 942 774 on the edge of the village at 10.30. An arduous, but impressive, walk up Buckden Gill leads to this extensive mine. The trip may last up to five hours and, except for a short section near the entrance, the Gavel Mine is bone dry. Contact Steve for further details Tel. (01535) 657090.

15th / 17th May 1998 - NAMHO Field Meeting 98.

The Friends of Killhope and the North Pennines Heritage Trust give advance notice that this event will be based at Nenthead. A variety of surface and underground activities are proposed and further details will be given as they become available.

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Meet Reports

St. Aidans Opencast, Leeds.

Only 2 members were able to join Ivor Brown's meet on Sat 7 June 1997 to St. Aidans open cast site in South Leeds.

Mr. Alan Stopher, of R J Budge Mining, the owners of the site, gave an introductory talk in the site offices, using a wall display of aerial and other photographs. The history of working the site goes back 26 years to 1971. 2.7 million tonnes of coal have been won to date with about 2.1 million tonnes to come. There are 3 seams, each approximately 1m thick, with the top-most about 17m down. The coal goes away mostly by barge on the Aire and Calder navigation.

In March 1988 the River Aire broke into the workings and for a fortnight there was frantic activity, dumping stone and piling walls until the river was re-established in a channel. 16 billion gallons of water entered the workings and remedial works to date have cost upwards of £17 million. Within about 12 weeks or so of writing this report the workings should have been pumped dry, the drag-lines we had come to see will be back at work again, and coal production should have recommenced. Although only capable of walking at 0.15 mile/h flat out, they managed to escape the inundation by walking away to higher ground.

After Alan Stopher's talk, we were driven round the site (which is about 800 acres in extent) in a Land Rover, stopping to take photos and finishing back at the drag-lines, both of which we were allowed to go inside, a couple of hours later. Unless you can get close up it is difficult to appreciate just how huge these magnificent machines are. The larger of the two is a Ransome Rapier W2000, weighing in at 1 600 tonnes and the smaller one which is an American 1150-B weighs 2, 225 000 lb.

Grateful thanks to Alan Stopher for giving up his Saturday morning, to R J Budge for allowing the visit, and to Dr. Ivor Brown for arranging the trip.

Mines of the Dyfi Forest.

Fine weather for the whole weekend favoured the group taking part in the July meet to the Dyfi forest. Six of us went underground at Minllyn slate quarry on Saturday morning, through water only about 10 inches deep. Very high chambers and several winches (crabs) in various states of decay were to be seen. In the afternoon, augmented to 10 members, the party visited Red Dragon gold mine nearby, where the Welsh Mines Society carried out consolidation work on the Samuel Perke's mill in 1990. Though the adit was open, we did not venture underground. Then on to Cwm Cowarch (lead) where one crusher roll has been removed to the nearby farm for safe-keeping, but a segment of waterwheel remains as a lintel for the sheep-creep through a drystone wall near the mine. Can anyone give an 8-figure map reference for the deep level, which we were unable to locate?

Sunday brought a switch to the other side of Corris, starting from Nant Gwernol station on the Tal-y-Llyn railway at noon for an above-ground exploration of Bryn Eglwys slate quarry. The 4 hours available to us were woefully inadequate to do justice to the site, and forestry plus normal summer growth impeded progress and interpretation. However, one bonus of recent tree-felling was that the manganese trial above the Lower Mill was clearly visible. During the lunch stop, Tony Oldham successfully located, repeatedly, samples of fool's gold from within chunks of slate waste on the tips.

Sue and John Hopkinson

PS How would members feel about a 09.00 start on the Sunday of a week-end meet? For this meet, everyone joining in on the Sunday, as it turned out, was staying locally, either in B&B or caravanning. 11.00 at Dinas Mawddwy had been chosen for both days to allow day visitors an opportunity to join without an excessively early start.

British Gypsum Meet - 29th April, 1997.

The Tuesday 29 April meet at Robertsbridge Mine and Works of British Gypsum was unfortunately cancelled at the last moment. British Gypsum contacted me on Friday afternoon 25 April with the news that the mine was closed for a few days as a result of "a serious incident" (no further details available). Luckily most members intending to attend were relatively local so a few phone calls prevented unnecessary journeys (except for the secretary who travelled anyway!)

The staff at British Gypsum are most apologetic and will try and let me know if a cancellation makes a visit possible later this year. It will likely be at short notice and if it is offered too late to publicise, I shall contact those members who expressed interest in the original date. Otherwise perhaps next year?

John Heaviside

Apologies

Apologies to those members who, due to late delivery of the May Newsletter, were denied the reminder re the draglines visit. As always, your Committee were anxious to keep postage costs down by holding the Newsletter until BM 58 was ready.

White Coal or Chop-Wood

In the May Newsletter, John Seaman asked if white coal and chop-wood were the same. The answer is yes. The former name appears to have been more widely used in Derbyshire, Wales and Mendip, whilst the latter was used in the Pennines.

Chop-wood was billets of wood which were debarked and then kiln dried at around 200° C. to remove sap and hygroscopic water. The debarking probably made the baking process more efficient. The process left light (around 1/3rd of the weight was lost) pieces of whitish wood, which burnt well and gave a moderate heat. This was well suited to smelting lead in an ore-hearth. Accounts by Joseph Glanvil, in 1667, and J. Martyn, in 1729, respectively describe white coal as "young oaken gads" and "dried sticks". Charcoal, on the other hand, is wood which has been heated at about 300° C., without access to air, to give mostly carbon, which gave much more heat.

The woodcutters, who managed woodland by coppicing, often produced charcoal on flat platforms, using smaller sections of wood, and chop-wood, in kilns cut into nearby bankings, using slightly larger sections (6 inches long by two inches diameter). These features have been found together in a number of woods from Derbyshire northwards.

The term elling hearth is more problematical. It has come to be used instead of chop-kiln, which is favoured by contemporary writers (I have never seen elling hearth used in mine accounts), but may refer to a place where lye was made from ashes for soap making. Eller is also an alternative name for Alder, which was a tree favoured by charcoal makers. The estate at Barden, in Wharfedale, belonged to the Earls of Burlington and it, along with woods at Grassington and around Bolton Abbey, supplied chop and other wood for the Grassington mines.

Mike Gill

Meet Leaders for 1998

The meets programme for 1998 is being prepared now. Will anyone interested in leading a meet please contact the Secretary 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.

Please send details to: **Clive Torrens, Jubilee House, Preston-under-Scar, Leyburn, North Yorkshire. DL8 4AH. Tel: 01969 624721.**

Scottish Gold Rush

The following press release is dated 11th July, 1997:

Earlier this week, Welsh Gold plc sought a suspension of trading in its shares, pending an announcement today (Friday), regarding its Scottish gold exploration license. The license reserved consists of 480 sq. km. of land in Perthshire and contains several gold anomalies. The company has concentrated on one particular anomaly, due to the high gold grades found. The vein crops out just below the surface and is therefore easily accessible. Information regarding the exact location is being withheld at this stage.

Earlier work included bulk sampling, which was very encouraging. Results for the bulk sample calculated at 73 grammes of gold per tonne recovered, a very high grade in mining terms. The new work was to identify the nature of the gold vein below the area of surface oxidation, known as the gossan, which can be gold enriched due to weathering. The gold vein has been shown by the new sampling to show minimal reduction in grade below the gossan. The samples were taken by an experienced independent mining geologist, Dr. Simon Dominy and each sample was split into two or more parts by him. One sample set was sent to the NAMAS accredited, Rio Tinto Anamet laboratory in Bristol, the other sample set analysed, as a check, at the University of Greenwich Geochemistry Laboratory. There was general consistency in the results of the sample sets. These showed an average grade over 77 grammes per tonne below the gossan, consistent with the results of earlier bulk sampling work. Dr. Dominy said, "Past work gave high results and I was delighted to independently confirm that the gold values continue at depth. The gold content is very high compared to other vein gold deposits world-wide"

Roland Phelps, Managing Director of Welsh Gold and a Chartered Mining Engineer said, "It now looks as if our Scottish property can be profitable from a jewellery metal standpoint. The vein is comparatively narrow, but we are well experienced in deposits of this type. Although there is variation in vein width the gold content appears strong, reliable and relatively consistent. We have identified a small high-grade tonnage which remains open at depth and we will be doing further work to extend this."

Welsh Gold's Gwynfynydd Gold Mine, Snowdonia, North Wales has what is believed to be the most efficient gravity gold extraction plant in Europe. The next set of tests are to see how effectively this technology will work on the Scottish deposit. Mark Wheeler, Mine Manager at Gwynfynydd explained that the underground plant extracts the gold with a special high speed centrifuge spiral, which avoids the need for the use of cyanide. The preliminary examination of the new Scottish samples suggests that this equipment will work. A small bulk sample will be taken to test it and a small amount of Scottish gold is expected to be produced from this.

A Scottish subsidiary, owned by Welsh Gold, has been formed. A range of Scottish jewellery, initially to be made from gold produced from bulk sampling, has been developed. It is hoped to be available in limited amounts later this year.

Roland Phelps said, "We have carried out a preliminary environmental impact assessment, which was favourable and in due course will be making a planning application for a small mine. I anticipate that a premium will be achievable on Scottish gold. There is little doubt that this is excellent news for Welsh Gold shareholders." Welsh Gold shares are quoted on the OFEX market and trading in the shares is expected to resume on Friday.

Simon Dominy

We've Lost A Member! Can You Help?

Mr I.B. Richards, formerly of 5 St James's Square, Aberystwyth, has recently moved and we do not know his new address. Does anyone know where we can contact him? If so, please tell the Treasurer, Colin Hindle, 19 Durham Street, Langley Park, Co. Durham, DH7 9YJ or phone (0191) 3733740.

Books

Exmoor's Industrial Archaeology - Edited by Mick Atkinson.

Contributions from Vervan Heal, Mike Jones, David Dixon, Peter Claughton, Andy Bowman, Chris Tilley, Derrick Warren and John Bentley.

To many people and especially the visitor to Exmoor, the area seems to be one of rural beauty, altered only by Man's striving to eke out a living by farming the unforgiving uplands. Yet, the curious traveller cannot fail to notice the remains of past industrial activity which evidence a rather different past. Exmoor has been the source of valuable raw materials such as copper, lead, silver and iron ores and quarried stone. The wool from its sheep and the power of its rushing streams gave rise to a textile trade whilst a number of other small industries arose providing goods and materials to local industry, agriculture and the population at large. Cheap transportation was also key to economic success and this meant not only shipping via Exmoor's coastal ports but the creation of roads, bridges and railways. The many themes of industrial Exmoor are brought together here in one volume for the first time. Each chapter covers the history, technology and remains of each industry. Expertly and colourfully written, the book is intended to inform and interpret and share with a wider public the enjoyment of understanding the evolution of Exmoor's historic landscape.

Exmoor's Industrial Archaeology is published by Exmoor Books. It is a sewn hardback with a 4 colour jacket, 229 x 148 mm consisting of 192 pages, heavily illustrated with photographs and line drawings. It will be available in the shops at £14.95 but you can order your copy at the special price of £12.95 (postage and packing free) by sending your remittance to Exmoor Books, Halsgrove House, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 6SS, stating that you are a member of NMRS and quoting your membership number.

Peter Claughton

Mines of the Gwydyr Forest. Part 7. Llanwrst: Coed Gwydyr & Cae Coch. Llangelynin: Trecastell & Derwen Deg. - John Bennett and Robert W. Vernon.

This series needs no introduction from me since by now its reputation goes before it. Part 7 is the culmination of 20 years research by Messrs. Bennett and Vernon and concludes their work on this area of North Wales. Part 1 was published in 1989 and Part 7 winds up the series by covering the N.E. area of Gwydyr and part of Dolgarrog.

Near Llanwrst, the Cae Coch mine was unusual for the area in that the principal mineral sought was Sulphur, which had been mined there for at least 400 years. This mine and Trecastell (lead/zinc) are the two main mines discussed and both have a history which continued well into the 20th century. Unfortunately, as those with an interest in old mines will have come to accept, the mines which have worked most recently are likely to be those with the least physical remains and this certainly applies to Trecastell, where a waterwheel stood until the early 1970s when the whole site was "reclaimed". Although the history of the mines is not quite as colourful as some in earlier volumes, there is a great deal of relatively recent history which is fascinating to learn about. There are 4 fold out plans of the mines, no less than 27 maps and diagrams and 14 photographs which all go to make a most interesting and comprehensive book. A5. 116pp. ISBN 0 95147986 5. Price £6.95. Post free from Gwydyr Mines Publications c/o John Bennett, 17 Field Lane, Appleton, Warrington. WA4 5JR.

Damian Mc Curdy

Mining Heritage Guide.

NAMHO (the National Association of Mining History Organisations) has published this useful guide, which gives details of all the organisations and museums who belong to it. Members can get their copy by sending a cheque (payable to NAMHO) for £5.80, which includes postage, to:- Rob Vernon, 78 Oakenshaw Lane, Walton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF2 6NH.

In Search of Aweswell Mine - Mike Brown.

This is a further leaflet in the series *Transcripts and Guides for Dartmoor Researchers*, which has now reached No. 19.

The author deals with a very obscure copper mine situated to the north-east of Ashburton, Devon, which was once quoted "as having no records preserved on this mine" by the authority Dines in his two volume *Guide on the Metalliferous Mining Region of South-West England*.

Not so! Mike Brown has painstakingly gathered together diverse sources such as the locally held Bastaud family papers or as far afield as the record offices at Avon, Somerset, greater London and Hertfordshire to produce an intriguing history of the mine from this thread of tantalising records. It gives also a fascinating insight into the research techniques utilised and shows how a fragmented history can be assembled into a readable account.

The author's patient and witty style comes across when an original error made many years ago was corrected after further research transcribing and interpreting original documents which put him on the track of this mine (i.e. the name Pylza should have been transcribed Hylza > Hazel > Ayzewell > Awsewell). A lesson for all would-be researchers and a good guide on how to marshal facts to produce a fascinating and readable account.

Two pages outline the remains which can still be found together with brief geological notes on the site. Mr. Brown should be congratulated on producing this useful addition to our knowledge of this mine which was worked intermittently over a period of more than three hundred years.

The booklet is A4 size of 18 pages and may be obtained direct from the author at Dartmoor press, 24 Lipson Court, Greenbank Road, Plymouth, Devon PL4 7JG, for £2.19 + 50p. p&p. Please make cheques payable to M. Brown.

W. A. R. Wright

Stanhope Dene Blast Furnace

Dr. W. F. Heyes writes:

"With regard to the Weardale item on p.8 in the May Newsletter, I can confirm that the map reference given by the editor for the location of the Weardale Iron Company blast furnace in Stanhope Dene was indeed correct. The original site of the furnace is now a holiday caravan park. Anyone wishing to know more about the layout of the Dene from an industrial archaeology point of view will find more information in T. Rounthwaite's book "The Railways of Weardale" which includes a map of the Dene based on an early edition of the OS (1914) showing the location of the furnace; the text also gives much information on lead and iron mining, particularly the effect of the railways on the development of iron mining/quarrying in Weardale.

For more detailed information, the 6" Geological Survey map of 1875 (Sheet XXIV) is recommended. This map shows the full detail of lead mining and smelting activities, location of veins and mines, quarrying activities, the Iron Works and associated railway network."

Which reminds me, does anyone have any information on the railway which served Brandon Walls ironstone mine? It crossed the Eastgate-Rookhope road at around NY 944413, passed over the Rookhope Burn and appears to split into two branches above and below the calcining kilns at the mine. Was it ever completed, did it run, and if so, was it part of the Weardale Iron Co. network?

If you can help, please contact your Editor. Address, etc. is at the end of the newsletter.

Conservation Work in the Nenthead Area.

Are you proposing to visit Alston Moor as a mining group? Do you want to be involved in a little conservation work (digging), after wandering in the area's mines? Or, alternatively, do you want to know about worthwhile projects which will help to keep our mines open and help to preserve access and hence conserve our future mining heritage - if so read on!

At least 75% of the main passageways in Nenthead's four main horse levels are accessible and as detailed below we (locals) have managed to keep them open. The problem is we haven't the time to recover some of the lesser mines, which have run in over the last few years, so any work done at these by visiting groups or others would be most helpful. The first mine to consider is Carr's Mine, sometimes called Old Carr's, which gives access to a large number of flat workings, both above and below the horse level, and at its present, opened forehead, access to a sublevel in Proud's Sump (Smallcleugh, Cross Vein). If further work was carried out at this forehead it could be pushed further, for Carr's level is met with in sublevels in Readshaws Sump and in the unnamed sump next to the crosscut to Middlecleugh Vein (Smallcleugh Mine). So there is a lot of potential here, not to mention some 750m. of known passageway. This mine ran in some 20m. from the entrance last November.

The second mine to consider is Middlecleugh high level. The entrance to this mine was first opened up in the late 1960s but has been run in close to its entrance for the last 10 years. We think that this level was driven originally as a ventilation level for all the major Nent valley veins i.e. Smallcleugh, Middlecleugh and Longcleugh, and then latterly was refurbished to enable reworking of higher strata on the latter two Veins. Finally, in the Vieille Montagne era, we suggest it was used as a prospecting level. Its closure prevents access to over 2000m. of surveyed passageways, and since very few of the sumps from this mine were explored at the time (this being in the days before S.R.T. was widely used) there is lots of potential in this mine.

Finally in this review of possible reopenings I would like to draw the reader's attention to the passageway which gives rise to flat and horse levels on Longcleugh and Longcleugh 2nd Sun Veins. The horse level passageway in the latter vein is particularly interesting since it is double the width of the normal ones for Alston Moor. Photographs of it decorate the wall of a well known Nenthead hostelry. The history of the Longcleugh Veins is very interesting, since it is only known underground and can only be accessed from the horse level network. The entrance to this Vein system is now almost completely hidden at the end of Smallcleugh Cross Vein where it meets Longcleugh Vein (see map on page 8).

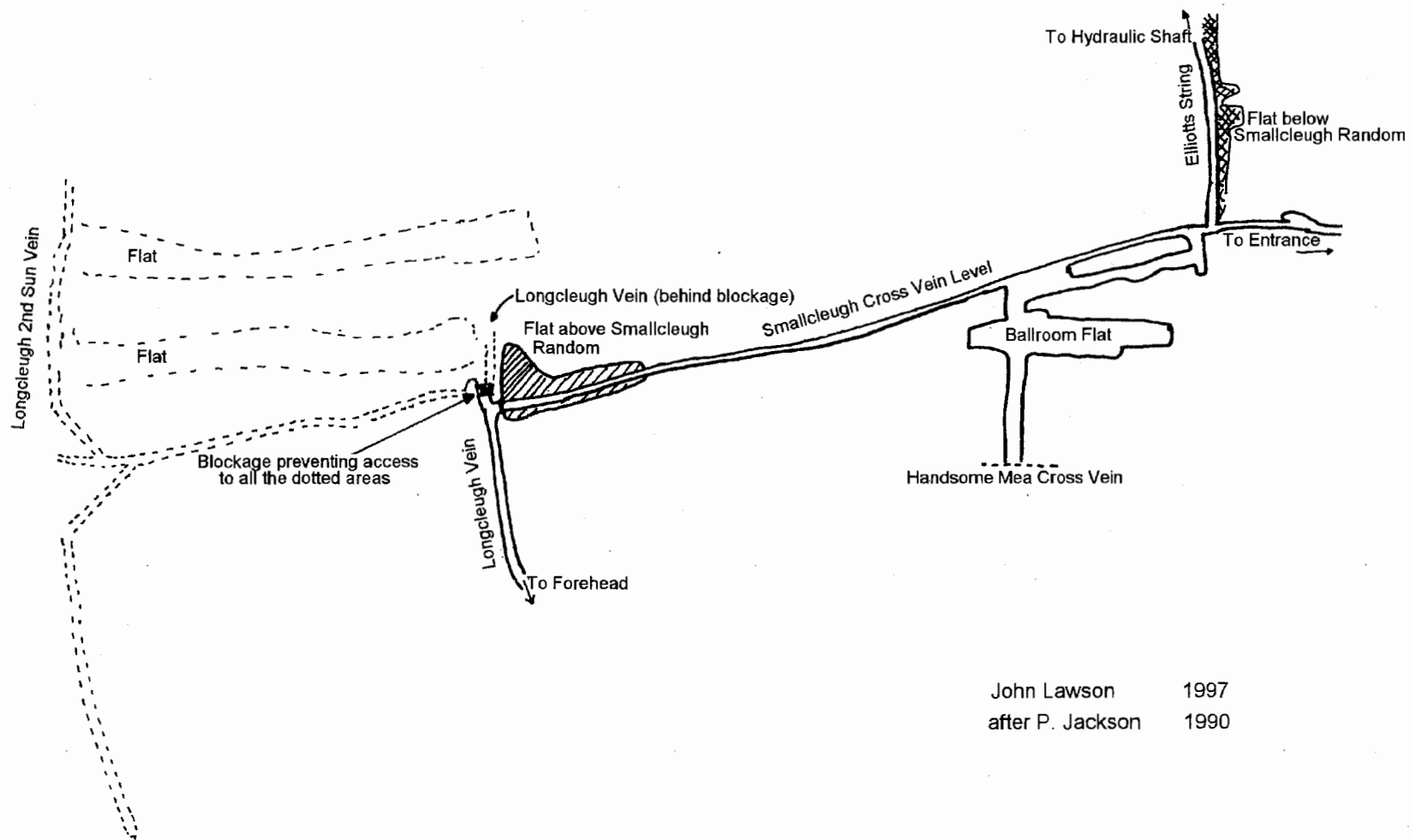
Originally this part of the mine was opened up by the Earby Group, and for many years after that it periodically ran in and was dug out as necessary. However the latest fall has been there for some 5 years and is now acquiring an air of permanence. Some 700m. of surveyed passageway lie behind this fall.

During the last few years what have we secured? Brownley Hill Mine has run in 3 times in the last eight years; twice some 30m. from the entrance, and more recently on the passageway between Guddamgill Moss Cross Vein and the crosscut to Brownley Hill North Vein. All these major blockages are now clear and the author went to the far end of the Jug Vein only two weeks ago.

Remedial work has been put into the entrances of Smallcleugh and Rampgill horse-levels and hopefully this will allow access for years to come. Also in Smallcleugh the horse-level collapsed on Middlecleugh 2nd Sun Vein close to where it meets Carr's Cross Vein. Again this has now been cleared and the way to the 1922 forehead on New Cross Vein is open. If some of this remedial work is carried out then more of our mining heritage will be available for years to come, if not, then we will see a gradual reduction in our underground experiences at Nenthead.

John Lawson

MAP SHOWING BLOCKAGE ON LONGCLEUGH VEIN



John Lawson 1997
after P. Jackson 1990

Autumn Meeting - 1997

This will be held at the Cross Keys Hotel (on Otley Road, Skipton) on Saturday, October 18th, commencing at 14.30. The Cross Keys, which has a good sized car park, is handy for the town centre and the by-pass. The bus and railway stations are about 1/3 and 3/4 of a mile away respectively. Members coming by car from the south, west and north are advised to follow the Skipton by-pass to its junction with the A65 (see map below) and then turn back into Skipton.

As the Society's membership becomes more widespread, the Autumn Meeting is an ideal opportunity to get to know other members and to discuss common interests. Please bring along a few slides, say of your latest project or of something that you need identifying, or just spend a few minutes telling us about your work. It need not be a full-scale lecture.

Surroundings will be more comfortable than at Sicklinghall and, instead of Pie and Peas, there will be a buffet (see booking form) which will include vegetarian food - and no washing-up afterwards.

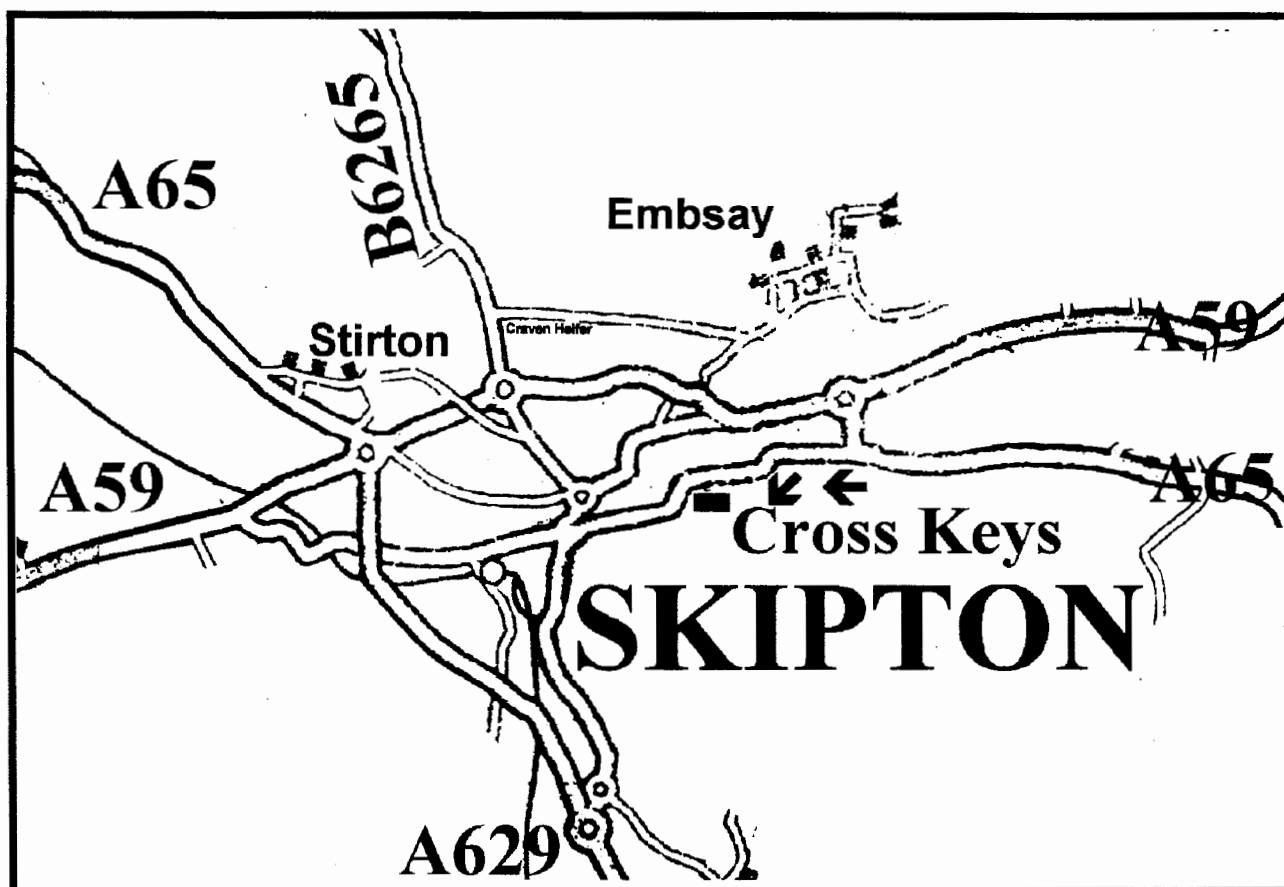
Please note that there is no meeting at Sicklinghall this year.

For members with mobile homes who wish to stay in the area, the following sites are listed:

Mr. P.G. Smith, Craven Heifer Inn, Grassington Road, SKIPTON, Yorkshire, BD23 3LA (NGR SD 983535). Site is 0.5 mile north of the Grassington Road (B6265) roundabout on the Skipton by-pass. PH on RHS. Tel. (01756) 792521

The Manager, Tarn Caravan Park, Thronbold Developments Ltd, Stirton, SKIPTON, Yorkshire, BD23 3LQ (SD977533). Site is 1.25 miles north-west of the Grassington Road roundabout on the Skipton by-pass. From the roundabout, go SW on minor road (SP local traffic only) after 200 yards turn right. Tel. (01756) 795309

Location Map



What's New at the Museum of Yorkshire Dales Lead Mining?

Anyone intending to visit the Yorkshire Dales must include this gem of a museum on their itinerary. It's at School Lane, Earby, near Skipton.

The museum is in the process of becoming a charitable trust to allow it to attract funding and operate independently of the Earby Mines Research Group, which established it. There are also plans for a major overall of the museum, which has been included in an application for lottery funding by the Pendle District Council. This would include major repairs to the fabric of the late 16th century building; the addition of a second floor; a large exhibit depicting a Dales' lead mine; new display cabinets and better facilities for visitors and workers.

Meanwhile, work is progressing on a less ambitious scheme to display artefacts more clearly and to their best advantage. A 'stock take' of the collection is also under way and each item is being fully archived on a computerised accession record.

Exhibits include the waterwheel-powered roller crushers from Old Providence Mine at Kettlewell which stands in the museum grounds. This wheel dates from 1866 and features on the cover of British Mining No.49. There are also tableaux of scenes, using artefacts and full-size models, to give an impression of work in a mine; Frank Woodall's working models of pumps, stamps, roller crushers and a smelt mill; John McNeil's collection of minerals (plus other specimens collected by members of the EMRG); a wide selection of mining tools and the World's largest collection of rail chairs. On a more macabre note, there are Buckden Bill's personal effects

The museum needs volunteers regardless of skills. There are plenty of jobs to do, ranging from repairs to helping visitors and brewing tea. You could even cut the grass and we'll promise not to tell your spouse! Contact Mike Gill (Tel: 01535 635388. Email: martgill@legend.co.uk)

Obituary

Members will be saddened to hear of the death, in March, of NMRS member Tony Wall, of Reading. I remember Tony as a quiet, uncomplaining member of Roger Bade's epic 20 mile Cross Fell walk in 1995. It appears that in retrospect at least, Tony derived much pleasure from that walk, and his wife tells us that he frequently mentioned it. Our heartfelt condolences to Mrs. Wall.

Stop Press - South Crofty Mine

John Hopkinson

As the newsletter goes to the printers we hear of the proposed closure of South Crofty Mine. We hope to have more news on this for the next newsletter.

Finally

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 December newsletter by 9th November, 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.

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