

THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



Newsletter

DECEMBER 1999

Diary Dates

Saturday 25th March, 2000.

The Annual General Meeting will take place at the Wensleydale Heifer, at West Witton at 12.00 followed by the Annual Dinner at 14.00. Further details and a booking form will appear in the February newsletter.

Saturday 15th April 10.00 Houghton Le Spring Mines Rescue Station.

Saturday/Sunday 20th/21st May Hude Valley Teesdale (Tony Fretwell).

Saturday/Sunday 10th/11th June Snailbeach/S. Shropshire lead ore field (Mike Moore).

Saturday 8th July Sir Francis Level Gunnerside Gill Swaledale (Graham Dobbs).

Friday 14th to Tuesday 18th July 2000. 1st International NAMHO Conference

National Association of Mining History Organisations 21st Annual National Event hosted by Carn Brea Mining Society and Camborne School of Mines at Truro, Cornwall. Visit our web site at www.ex.ac.uk/~ajbeer/namho/namho.html or E-Mail : NAMHO@csml.ex.ac.uk or contact Lawrence Holmes at Rivergarth, Malpas, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 1SS. Tel: 01872-278234

The conference will be held in the beautiful Cathedral City of Truro, Cornwall. The City is well served by rail and road connections and the airport is some 15 miles to the north west at Newquay.

Truro has a large selection of High Street Stores together with many small specialist shops. The City has a wide variety of cafes, restaurants and top entertainment at the new Hall for Cornwall.

The conference venue is at the spectacularly

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2000 Subscriptions - Due on 1st January

Once again subscriptions have been held at 1996 levels. A subscription form and deed of covenant are enclosed. 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.

<http://www.ex.ac.uk/~RBurt/MinHistNet/NMRSevents.html>

sited Truro School and is only 10 minutes walk from the City centre. The venue offers lecture halls, on site bedroom accommodation together with dining and leisure facilities. There will also be ample space for Trade and Society stands, car parking, camping and caravan areas. The Theme of InterNAMHO2000 will be: Acquire, Record and Display. The four day event will include indoor lectures at the main conference venue and a large selection of excursions to many of Cornwall's Mining Heritage sites. Speakers already booked include Ian Cowburn (France), Jan Verbruggan (Holland), John Morris (Eire) as well as national and local speakers of note.

Saturday 12th August Plate Level dressing floor Keld Swaledale (Sallie Bassham)

September Tom Leonard iron stone museum and Boulby potash mine

Further details of meets will appear in the meets list and subsequent newsletters. All meets are subject to the weather and permission being granted.

Please contact the appropriate Meet Leader if you intend going on a meet.

Meet Reports

Grassington Surface Walk - July 24th 1999

On a day when rain had been forecast, eleven NMRS members and one dog met in bright sunshine at Yarnbury. A three hour walk included railway, grinding mill, meer stone, reservoirs, leats, shafts, metal-tolerant plants, twentieth century barytes plants, powder house, High Moor mill, cupola mill, settling ponds, condensers, flues, chimneys, dog kennel and mining landscapes in general. Several energetic participants then continued their explorations further out on Grassington Moor or along Hebden Gill. Many thanks to all who came and participated in lively discussion and the asking and answering of questions.

Sallie Bassham

4th September, 1999. Smallcleugh Mine, Nenthead

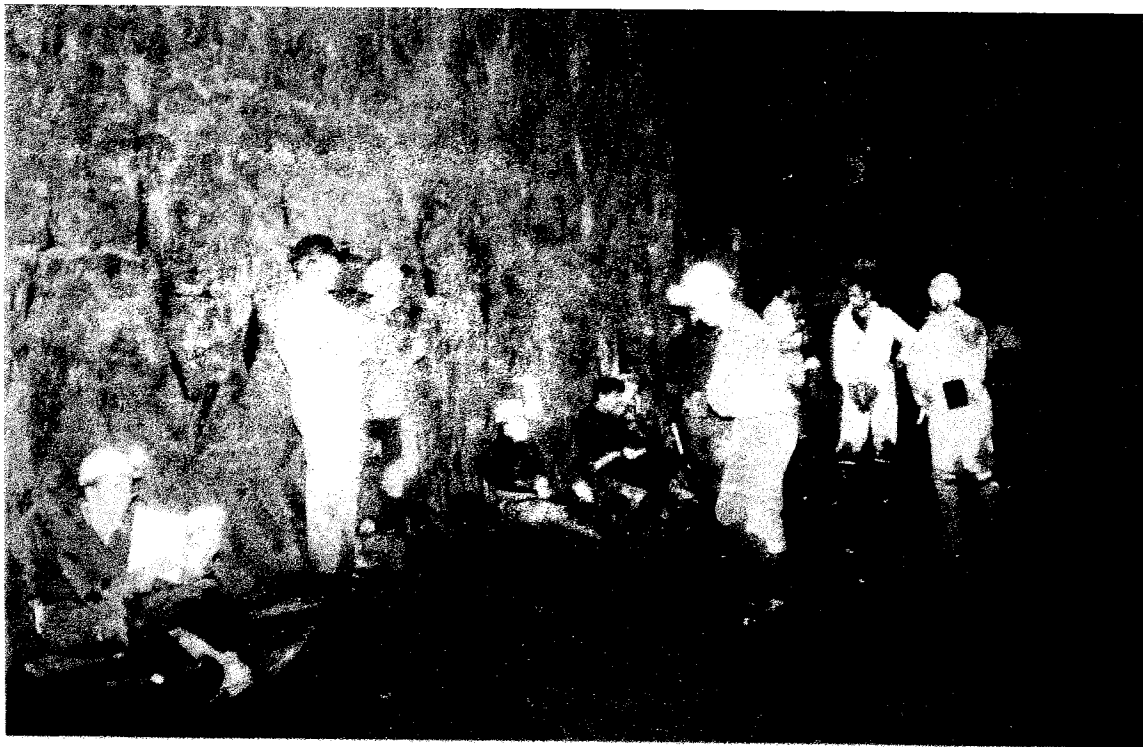
19 people turned up for this ever popular underground trip. 12 NMRS, 5 guests, and 2 Cumbria Amenity Trust (CAT) members met in the car park at Nenthead on a very hot and sunny day. This weather was most unusual for Nenthead, as it is normally raining or snowing! After reporting-in to the officials at the Lead Mining Museum we set off to the portal of Smallcleugh Mine, which incidentally has been pleasantly reconstructed.

We set out down Hard Crosscut, regrouped where the flats open out on both sides of the crosscut, and then proceeded through North End Flats into the Smallcleugh Main Flats past the well preserved wooden door and ore hoppers to arrive at Wheel Flats. Because of the very warm air outside, the air in the mine was circulated nicely. This was particularly pleasant in the crawl in Hetherington's Crosscut considering at times the air can be very stale in here. We then continued along Middlecleugh First Sun Vein to branch off left down Smallcleugh Cross Vein to arrive at the Ballroom Flat, the main object of the trip.

After a lunch break, we retraced our steps back to Wheel Flats, after first having a look at Hydraulic Shaft and 'Gypsum Corner' with its superb gypsum formations on the wall. We returned via the Old Flat Crosscut which links up to the Main Horse Level taking special care to skirt around the side of Luke's Hall Sump, over a small section of 'sporting' rails which crossed a hole in the floor.

We continued up the wet level, passing several large walled-up sumps on the way, to arrive at Whim Chamber. Having now completed a circular stroll, we exited the mine to grass. After returning to the car park, some of us went partly up Rampgill Level to see the top of Brewery Shaft, an awesome sight. My thanks to Paul Dollery for his help and assistance on this field trip.

Richard Platt



Smallcleugh Mine, Nenthead. 4th September, 1999. Entrance and Ballroom Flats
Photographs by Malcolm Needham.

NAMHO

Although I am NAMHO representative for NMRS, the first I knew of "The Future of NAMHO" debate on the Mining History List was from the NMRS May Newsletter. Since then, no-one has responded to the Editor's invitation to write to me, although NMRS members who are also members of other Mining History Organisations and represent these on NAMHO have expressed concern that, from a lengthy and varied correspondence, only one point of view was printed. Incidentally, when I had e-mail access I belonged to the Mining History List and found it interesting and informative - although I was not always able to get answers to my questions.

My first comment is about dissemination of information. NAMHO will accept two contact names for every member organisation. Our Newsletter Editor receives all information direct and makes decisions about what should appear in NMRS Newsletters. I do not filter the information in any way. The criticism in the May Newsletter about NAMHO Reps who "cannot be bothered to pass information to their Newsletter Editor" could be overcome by the member organisation doing as NMRS does.

Secondly, another contributor to the debate commented favourably on the NAMHO conferences and field meetings, as opportunities "to see the real effectiveness of NAMHO at its best". These events really are good opportunities for any member of any of the different Mining History Organisations to meet with others and exchange ideas and information. I have always felt it important that communication between organisations should be possible for all and not just for committee members. Since new members keep joining NMRS and other mining organisations, NAMHO is still doing its effective work of introductions and any-member communication.

Thirdly, in addition to the above, I do not perceive NAMHO as 'moribund' or there being 'little ... left for it to achieve'. Surely, it is a demonstration of success that early work was well done and does not have to be re-done? In recent years, NAMHO has been effective in representing the responsible viewpoint of mining historians and mining organisations so that legislation, codes and guidelines allow us to do safely what we want to do and have traditionally done. Initial drafts of documents may have considered only working mines, say, and would have caused problems for us and our activities. My personal opinion is that it is wise to be cautious in how such achievements are publicised. Unfortunately, this means that the beneficial outcome is taken for granted and few realise how much effort NAMHO and its members have put in. I do not mean to imply that NAMHO activists are looking for praise. Personally, I tend to take lack of comment as lack of criticism and assume that since members are not complaining, they are content with what is being done and the ways it is done. (As my Yorkshire grandfather used to say when his wife and daughters looked for compliments - 'If there was owt wrong I'd have told thee'.)

Fourthly (and not necessarily related to the above!) NAMHO and its members have made substantial contributions to various Monument Protection programmes, radon guidelines, Minerals Local Plans, Mineral Planning Guidelines and Mines Access Code.

Speaking personally, I get the impression that NAMHO is being criticised for not being something else. I think NAMHO has changed and developed over the years and that much of what NAMHO does well is necessary, but boring! Perhaps it is time for a new national organisation to do other things, but it would be a shame if NAMHO's current effectiveness was compromised by trying to change it too much unnecessarily or by it trying to take on too much additional work. After all, it does seem to have too few, over-burdened volunteers, all of whom are getting older not younger. Sounds like every Mining Society I know!

And finally the commercial - I still have several copies of the NAMHO Mining Heritage Guide. Orders always welcome.

Sallie Bassham

Books

Mining History Bibliography for Windows 95/98 - Roy Fellows.

Available from Iris Computers Ltd, Green Gables, Stafford Road, Great Wyrley, Walsall, WS6 6AX price £29.95. Access programmer Roy Fellows has put his expertise to use in designing the first Mining History Bibliography be found on CD Rom. Roy, a fearless explorer of mines and avid collector of mining books, used his library as a database. The CD presupposes a knowledge of Windows 95/98 based programs. However, you do not need to have Access on your computer as a working copy comes as part of the CD.

As a licensed Access programmer, Roy has supplied an easy to use system of menus which simplifies a very complicated computer program. It is possible to search by Title, Author, Subject, and name of mine. These selections can be done by using the pull down menus, the items are sorted alphabetically, or by typing them in.

Tony Oldham

However, Peter Claughton writes on the Mining History List: "I have recently had sight of the CD by Roy Fellows and I would point out that its title is something of a misnomer. It is NOT a mining history bibliography. What you get is a program for creating your own bibliography. Fair enough it is pre-loaded with information on a limited number of mining history publications. But they are poorly catalogued and you would really need to delete them and start again. A very obvious error is that authors are listed by their forename!! How many people would search for D. B. Barton under Dennys? What you get is a fancy facade allowing you to search and display information stored in a Microsoft Access database. Sufficient elements of the Access application are provided to allow you to do only that and no more."

Rhymes of the Mines / Life in the Underground Compiled by Mason and Janice Coggin.

141 pp, 22 illus. Published by Cowboy Miner Productions, PO Box 9674, Phoenix, AZ 85068, USA @ \$14.95 + \$3 post. Readers in the rest of the Colonies can obtain it for £12 post free from Tony Oldham, Duncavin, Rest Home for Retired Cavers, Riverside Mews, Cardigan, SA43 1DH.

Books of mining poetry used to be like hen's teeth, but like buses when they do come they seem to come in three's as this is the third such volume to be received in as many weeks. Mason and Janice compiled this volume for the first Gathering of Mining Poets at the Western Folklife Center in Elko, Nevada, November 12, 1999 to preserve this art form in what is now a rapidly changing industry. These poems reflect the traditions of the underground miners from the hanging wall of Butte to the footwall of Cananea, from Alaska to Patagonia, from Australia to South Africa and even the British Isles. Mason and Janice looked for poetry with a rhyme and a meter that lend themselves to both listening or setting to music for singing. The poems were gathered from books, oral tradition and the backs of business cards, advertisements, bar napkins and single sheets of well faded notebook paper. They were contributed by friends, found in old collections, were donated by historical societies and discovered in old mining books. This is an open collection and it is intended that poems, songs and short stories will be added as they are re-discovered. Mining is possibly the most dangerous occupation in the world and these poems recall the accidents, the tragic circumstances of the relatives left behind and the hardship endured by the miners who survived.

On a lighter note, it appears that mules are reputed to be to miners like sheep are to Welsh farmers, as some poems describe kissing a mule or "My sweetheart is a mule in the mine". It is pleasing to note that there are numerous contributions by Newsgroup member Tony Brewis one of which follows: "O harken to the music there, Music? Music? Music where? Hark to the sound that stirs and thrills - The music of pneumatic drills!"

Tony Oldham

In the Shadow of the Mines - Joe and Seamus Walsh.

p/b 217pp quarto. A very well written book on the Castlecomer Coal Mines in County Kilkenny, and a Social and Economic historic of Deerpark Colliery which closed in 1969. Joe worked in the mine and kept a Journal which was continued by Seamus until the mine closed in 1969. The book contains lots of unique photographs both surface and underground. There is even a photo gallery of the miners themselves, also would you believe a couple of pages of mining poetry. Also included are photographs of Rossmoor Colliery County Laois where Joe was manager. This very impressive book, will be collectable and is well worth the money-£11.00 Paperback and £20.00 Hardback It is available from Mike Moore, Mining and Caving Bookseller, 35 Masons Place, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 7JS. Email: Mike@moorebooks.freemove.co.uk. WWW.moorebooks.freemove.co.uk

Coal Mining in Lunesdale - Philip J. Hudson,

£15, Hudson History. Lunesdale, with its unspoiled views, seems an unlikely place for coal mining to have been carried out but coal seams have been found and mined in this area for several hundred years. According to this book, some seams might have been worked by the Romans, using advanced mining technology such as round shafts.

But the coals were not exploited until the 16th century, possibly because they are of an inferior type that will not burn well without a good draught.

At that time, horizontal and vertical shafts were often driven in the hills and men would be lowered up to 120 feet while sitting upon an iron bar.

Drenched to the skin, local boys would creep on hands and knees, harnessed to a "corf", which dragged about a hundredweight of coal. For several months a year they never saw daylight except on Sundays.

The book contains chapters on the geology, history and technology of mining before covering in depth areas such as Caton, Lancaster, the Hornby Castle estate, Wennington and Bentham, Ingleton and, in the north, Sedbergh and Dent.

There are also maps and figures aplenty and extensive quotations from local and national archives, as well as more vivid contemporary diaries.

There is no doubt the book will interest the mining enthusiast or industrial archaeologist but I dug deep to extract these nuggets and, lacking any narrative thread, large sections of the book will remain impenetrable to the general reader.

Review from Craven Herald Leisure - Friday October 22nd 1999.

Mike Gill

"Off, - on a Tangent . . ." with Brynmor - Brynmor Evans

1999 48 pp illus. Brynmor Evans was born on 9th October 1930, the son of a miner, in an era when coal mining was still the main industry in the Aberdare and Cynon Valley area. Recollections of that era are still clear, deep rooted and have a profound meaning for him, illustrated through a number of poems which highlight the harshness of the industry at that time, and also the unique comradeship that existed among the miners - unequalled elsewhere in industry. Being brought up in a close-knit mining community that was typical of 'The Valleys' provided a sense of 'belonging' that sadly appears to be on the wane in society today. The mining industry of that time, with its risk of accidents, or 'the dust', (pneumoconiosis or silicosis), was a key factor in creating that community spirit, because families never knew when tragedy might possibly affect them and consequently were very supportive of each other. An evocative trip down memory lane. Should appeal to all those who bought the Auden book and like the coalescence of industrial archaeology and verse. SB £2.50 [post 50p]

Mendip Underground A Caver's Guide - D J Irwin and A R Jarratt. 1999.

241 pp illus. As its title implies, concentrates mainly on caves, but many mines are included, with surveys, and valuable bibliographical details: Axbridge Ochre Mine, Banwell Stalactite Cave, Box Stone Mines [length 90+ km], Brown's Folly Mine, Cairo Shaft, Compton Martin Ochre Mine, Devil's Cave, Dolebury Levvy, Five Buddles Sink, Great Maple Mine, Lamb Leer Cavern Loxton Cavern, Mangle Hole, Pen Park Hole and Redcliff Caves Bristol, Sandford Levvy, Singing River Mine, Single Way Mine, Swan Mine etc etc. Also many caves containing mining relicts. SB £14.00 [post £1] Both the above books are available from Tony Oldham, Duncavin, Rest Home for Retired Cavers, Riverside Mews, Cardigan, SA43 1DH.

The Hidden Side of Swaledale (The Life and Death of a Yorkshire Lead Mining Community) - John Hardy

Published by Frank Peters, Kendal. Price £9.95. Nightmares return to trouble us all, and the recent positive discussion of Hardy's books on Swaledale is a good example. I've not seen his second book, but those who have say once more it is beautifully produced, but Those of us with a knowledge of lead mining in the Yorkshire Dales were appalled with his work in 1988 and we still are.

Hardy's approach to the subject is superficial at best and has more in common with the worst pseudo-science and ley-line studies.

For the record, I include my review of his first book, which appeared in the Northern Mine Research Society Newsletter for September 1988 and which was widely reprinted by other mining history and industrial archaeology newsletters.

This is a beautifully produced book, as one would expect from Frank Peters. Its large format and quality paper does justice to the colour photographs of surface scenes around the mines. These superbly convey the sullen somnolence which is Swaledale.

The author's style is in the genre of Enid Blyton's "Famous Five (Go Mine Exploring)" books. What a pity he did not trouble to research his subject properly. In the second sentence, one is amazed to learn that in 1778 "the Swaledale orefield appears to have been leased to the London Lead Company". Nonsense. Despite his acknowledgement of Raistrick and Jennings, the author has clearly failed to comprehend their work. He is oblivious to the existence of other published mining history and his poor grasp of the wider subject manifests itself in the misuse of the very specific terms such as broad gauge and wateredout. Another example is the claim that Water Blast Shaft got its name from an accident when 24 miners were killed after blasting into underground water!

The list of misinterpretations is long, but those associated with the Hard Level Brandy Bottle complex disregard previous writers almost completely, even when his explorations may have something to add.

Whilst the book does not purport to be detailed mining history, it does recount, in graphic detail, the exploration of Swaledale mines. The author admits he and his brother had no experience of this and the narrative makes it clear that they never gained much. The book carries no warning against emulating their follies and there are many. There is no mention of common hazards, such as bad air, and their first descent, of an eighty foot winze, on a rope ladder was done without a lifeline!

The tenor of the book is, therefore, highly irresponsible, but its high quality production will give it spurious authenticity which will make it attractive to the public. What is worse, after reading it, they too may be tempted to indulge in such fantastic trips. It is to be hoped that no respectable stockist of mining history books will give "The Hidden Side of Swaledale" shelf space.

Mike Gill

Underground in Poland

In September 1999 two Dutch friends from Maastricht invited me to join them in a visit to Poland, to see underground sites - mostly mines and quarries. Without a great deal of thought about it, I said 'yes!' On previous such occasions, my tendency to kneejerk reactions to such suggestions has found me in Iceland and Ukraine!

As I was attending the Association for Industrial Archaeology Conference the week before the intended visit, and my friends were setting off by car from Maastricht on the Friday, I elected to go by train and catch up with them at Kazimierz Dolny. I prefer trains anyway. It was interesting to discover (after I had spent 20 minutes in a queue) that the UK's only 'international' railway station, at Waterloo, 'doesn't do' tickets to Poland. And our Euro-Rail office in Piccadilly (a thinly-disguised SNCF outpost) does tickets to Warszawa, but nowhere else in Poland (not even Kraków!) The Polish Tourist Office in London seems more interested in selling airline tickets (some of them actually to Poland!) than railways ... but did produce a Polish railway timetable from which it seemed there was a train every couple of hours to Pulawy, the nearest station to Kazimierz Dolny. The assistant disappeared before I could ask for help with the footnotes (could I rely on a 15.30 train on a Sunday afternoon?), but did at least confirm how to say Pulawy (poo - Waa - vy) All the Poles we met in Poland were a great deal more helpful.

Kazimierz Dolny is a Polish beauty spot on the river Wisla (Vistula), south-east of Warszawa, in an entirely rural and scenically very attractive setting.

BOCHOTNICA - UNDERGROUND LIMESTONE QUARRY

Bochotnica is a hamlet on the right (eastern) bank of the river Wisla, some six kilometres north of Kazimierz Dolny, and 12 km south of Pulawy. In this area the river cuts through loess-covered Maastrichtian limestone uplands. We visited a small underground quarry now lying abandoned in woodlands behind the village primary school, with about nine parallel galleries worked into a south-facing hillside. An area of approximately 1,350 square metres has been quarried by a very irregular pillar-and-stall method, the only pillar regularity being that imposed by a prominent system of parallel joints running approximately north-south. Pillar dimensions of from 1.5 metres to 4 metres across were noted, many pillar sides being joint planes. The rock was sufficiently closely jointed that extracting stone seems to have been largely by the use of bars and probably hammers and wedges. No evidence of picks or saws was seen. Ceiling heights are from three to four metres. Much fallen or abandoned rock debris covered most of the quarry floor. The beds worked appeared to comprise three main beds and a series of thinner beds at floor level. A top bed, immediately below the quarry ceiling, appeared to be of variable thickness and rather broken. The two centre beds, each of from one to two metres thick, seemed to be the main object of exploitation. A very shallow dip to the north was noted. The fine-grained hard compact limestone contains frequent fossil traces.

We were informed that this quarry had been the work of a single quarryman, or at least of him and his family, and made since World War II. And that iron bars, wedges, and 6 kg hammers had been used. Lighting had been by oil lamps. Wooden bars with iron hooks had been used to manoeuvre blocks, and wooden barrows to transport them. They were not cut to any standard size for use, blocks too large for convenient handling simply being reduced with an axe to smaller ones. The stonework in local building contains roughly squared blocks up to 0.15 x 0.2 metres, and much random rubble.

A short distance away, east of the school and behind an abandoned (but relatively modern) watermill we visited two very small open quarries, evidently still worked from time to time for random rubble limestone, a neatly stacked pile of freshly won stone of this sort being noted. In one of these quarries, two narrow parallel galleries have been driven in along the jointing, one of which (with a total length of perhaps five metres) seemed still to be worked.

Although we visited 13th and 14th century masonry fragments of the castle at Kazimierz Dolny, and ancient granaries and churches and other buildings in and around the town, we found no trace of the quarries whence their stone might have been taken.

CHELM - CHALK MINES OR QUARRIES AND TUNNELS

Chelm (pronounced Hewm) is about 60 km east of Lublin, close to the Ukrainian border. The underground excavations in the chalk are below the town centre, and operated as a tourist attraction, with a substantial souvenir shop and ticket office prominently advertised as CHELMSKIE PODZIEMIA KREDOWE (podziemia means underground, and kreda is chalk.) An English-language guidebook describes the system as having its origin in 16th century chalk mining, several independent systems on various levels having subsequently become interconnected. The tunnels were adapted for tourism in 1972, with about two kilometres publicly visitable. A plan of the system, reproduced on postcards sold at the souvenir shop, relates the visitable tunnels to the streets and town square above, and gives an impression of four or five small chalk mines with interconnecting tunnels.

It was at the souvenir shop at the tunnels entrance that we found the very helpful English-language guidebook 'Subterranean tourist routes in Poland.' We did not see this at any of the other sites featured in the booklet.

OSTROWIEC-SWIETOKRZYSKI - NEOLITHIC FIRESTONE [ie FLINT] MINE W KRZEMIONKACH

Krzemionki is not a town or village, but is a nature reserve containing two publicly visitable Neolithic flint mines, a reconstructed Neolithic village, and a general display of geological specimens. The site is clearly signposted, but lies off a minor country road about 12 km north-east of Ostrowiec-Swietokrzyski. There is a modern snack bar and reception centre, with ticket office and souvenir counter. Each of the two visitable flint-mines has a modern interpretation centre with photographs, models, and specimens displayed above the mine shaft. The mines are accessed via spiral staircases in modern shafts, and viewed from modern circular walking-height passages with windows into the well-lit mine galleries themselves. Interestingly, the flint occurs in a Jurassic rather than a Cretaceous, but nevertheless chalk-like limestone. Our guide spoke English, and an English-language explanatory leaflet was available. The standards of presentation and interpretation were impressive and quite a contrast with what two of us had found in rural Ukraine a few years ago.

OPATÓW - CELLARS

Opatów is a small, sleepy town in south-central Poland. Underneath the central square (rather than below the individual properties around it, which was interesting) there are numerous cellars, at various levels, excavated in loess, but to a large extent now brick-lined for stability. These have subsequently been joined-up, and are now a minor tourist attraction. The formidable lady in charge had no English, but a typically English way of dealing with foreigners ... shouting ever-louder in Polish! We had no difficulty in learning the Polish for 'gate' (brama), as she kept pointing at the Warszawska gate in the town walls and shouting 'Warszawska brama' at us. Otherwise, communication was difficult ... but, with bits of English, Dutch, German, and body language, we got along famously. The dear lady clearly had a heart of gold, for she went out of her way to find an English-speaking guide for us, making an appointment for a tour an hour later.

OCHNIA - ANCIENT SALT MINE

This salt mine tourist attraction is in the town centre of Bochnia, some 25 km east of the more famous Wieliczka, on the main road from Kraków to Tarnów. In Polish, it is Zabytkowa Kopalnia

solu w Bochnia (Ancient salt mine in Bochnia.) It is very much less commercialised than Wieliczka, and as experienced on the guided tour has much more appeal to persons primarily interested in mining techniques than in gnomes and whatever carved out of solid rock salt, and standard tourist guide jokes and stories. The mine has three currently functioning shafts, of which that in the town centre (the 'Sutoris' shaft, with a splendid pit headgear amidst standard commercial buildings) is used for tourist visits and underground health resort purposes. The other two shafts, 'Campi' and 'Trinitatis', are to the west of the town, and maintained for ventilation purposes and for access by the 290 miners employed by the Polish government on mine maintenance (active commercial mining having ceased some years ago.) An additional 30 staff are employed running the underground tours and the underground sanatorium. The Miocene salt body has the form of a steeply inclined lens some 4.5 km long and from 50 to 500 metres thick, in which during nearly 750 years of exploitation up to 16 shafts have been sunk to depths reaching 428 metres. Mining has been carried on on 16 levels, and interconnection of formerly independent workings has continued from 1368 onwards. In the 18th century mine transport was rationalised by the driving of two long subterranean drifts between the Sutoris and Campi shafts at depths of 212 and 300 metres. The mine is the oldest salt mine in Poland, and the uppermost six levels have been conserved since 1981 as a legally protected monument.

The public mine tour commences with an entirely realistic and cramped mine cage descent to the 212 metres level. It includes the very large Wazym chamber which now has a role as sanatorium (complete with beds) and recreation centre, and continues (upwards) via an impressive slope shaft, to the August drift, and timbered mine workings, with a large timber winding engine, former stables, etc, to be seen. There is also en route a carved rock salt chapel with statues, pulpit, gallery, etc, all worked in the solid salt. Most of the underground scenery traversed, however, is authentic mining structures, fixtures, fittings, and artefacts.

The mine management undertook to find us an English-speaking interpreter (a local teacher of English) if we booked a tour the following day. As a result we were able to ask a great many questions, and get reliable answers. We felt the charge of about £15 well worthwhile ... especially as it was proving very difficult to spend much money in Poland, hotels and restaurants being ridiculously cheap, even those of excellent quality!

WIELICZKA - SALT MINE

Wieliczka is of course one of Poland's internationally known tourist sites - and it was here land in Kraków - that we saw our only tourist crowds. The mine is certainly impressive and worth seeing ... but it is all very commercialised, with groups of 30 being sent underground at five-minute intervals throughout the day (sorted by language!) The tour commentary in English concentrates on folklore as much as serious mining, and there is no real opportunity to ask questions.

At the end of the tour (alongside the inevitable underground gift-shop) we noticed an advertisement for a salt-mining technical museum, about which we enquired, and found ourselves spending another two hours underground in a most impressive network of museum galleries containing mining relics, displays of historic documents, geological specimens, etc. We had this to ourselves, all the other gnome-satiated tourists having gone to the gift-shops, the bars, or back to the fleshpots of Kraków! The town of Wieliczka itself proved an attractive and inexpensive place to stay the night (£5 each in a perfectly acceptable and cosy pension) and dine - a superb three course meal with wine, and brandy afterwards, cost £21.68 for the three of us! Evidently, all the tourists are whisked back on their coaches to Kraków as soon as they've 'done' the salt mine.

WALIM - GERMAN UNDERGROUND FACTORY

Our last visit was to sinister, wet, unfinished WWII German tunnels in the Silesian mountains south of Walbrzych, very close to the Czech border.

There are about five of these unfinished works, little being known about their intended use had they been finished, although it is suspected all five were eventually to have been linked together to form one large underground complex. At least two of the sites are open to public tours. This is the only site where we found neither spoken nor printed English for visitors.

The nearby large Village (Walim), set in very attractive scenery, has a huge abandoned industrial premises, vaguely reminiscent of Cromford or New Lanark (without the river.)

GENERAL

Despite the quite impossible-looking language, we found very few problems in rural Poland, and numerous people most anxious to help us make the most of our visit. We visited (apart from the quarry at Bochoznica) only sites open to the public as tourist attractions, and found almost always either English-speaking guides, or English speaking interpreters found for us, or English-language printed material. We also passed numerous derelict industrial structures which looked most interesting, but which we did not have time to investigate. And we found, in English, a surprising amount of inexpensive printed material concerning IA in Poland ... so much so that a return visit is already at the planning stage! Some of the most helpful publications are listed below:

GWÓZDZ, Stefan, 1998, Podziemne Trasy Turystyczne w Polsce: Mapa Orientacyjna. Tarnow: Turystyczne Polski z Siedziba w Tarnowskich Górach: folded sheet [ISBN 83-91:196-0-2] This is a guide to underground tourist sites, user-friendly despite being entirely in Polish. It gives details for natural caves (5), mines (12), cellars (1) and military sites (5) ... overlapping but also supplementing the English-language booklet by Tworek.

KUROWSKI, Robert, 1995, Zabytkowu Kopalnia Soli w Bochni /Ancient Salt Mine in Bochnia. Bochnia: Kopalnia Soli Bochnia: 37pp [ISBN 83-904427-0-1] This well-produced, well-illustrated colour-printed booklet, in Polish and English, contains much of interest on the geology and history of the mines.

TWOREK, Jozef, 1997, Subterranean tourist routes in Poland. Warszawa: Publishing and Advertising Agency "Dino": 32 pp [ISBN 83-900751-7-2] This gives details for natural caves (9), mines (11), cellars and stores (4) and strategic and military objects (4) - mostly in the southern half of the country. We found it on sale at Chelm, but not at other places although they featured in its pages. Information is given on location (including map extracts), legally protected status, opening dates and times, contact addresses and telephone numbers etc.

WOJEWODZKI, Radoslaw, 1994, Karta Polozenia Zabutkow Techniki. Kielce: Old Polish Mining, metallurgy and Industry Society in Kielce: folded sheet [ISBN 83-901190-4-8] This exceptionally interesting and helpful publication has a pictorial map of the area around Kielce (south central Poland), indicating various sorts of remains of mines, kilns, mills, and so forth worth visiting (not predominantly tourist sites.) On the back, there is a large amount of English text explaining the industry of the area, with information on the mining, smelting, and processing of iron; the mining and processing of non-ferrous metals (mainly copper and lead); other mineral raw materials (including stone, clays, salt, sulphur, etc); and other industries (milling, brewing, etc.) A list of 24 references (all in Polish) is appended. Eleven small colour photographs offer a tempting glimpse of what is to be seen in the area. A number of advertisements (with English as well as Polish text) bear witness to continuing industry, and presumably sponsorship for this invaluable guide. A visit to bookshops in Kielce would appear to be a good investment for any industrial archaeologists visiting this part of Poland ... which is some way to the north east of the 'traditional' industrial area around Katowice, which I imagine would be an even more rewarding areas to visit. Good detailed town street plans and large-scale maps of particular localities, usually with some explanatory English, were readily and inexpensively available at petrol stations and tourist sites.

Paul W. Sowan

Slate Mining, etc.

John Knight writes:

"My main interest is in slate and after numerous holidays in the Dales and virtually monthly deliveries of books from the NMRS Library through the good offices of Sallie Bassham. This has led to a major interest.

Have any members site plans of the following which I could use/borrow, etc. All expenses paid.

Wet Groves, Prys level and dressing area, How level, the levels opposite the Old Gang Mills, Cobscar (I have Clough's plan), Slei Gill levels (there appears to be discrepancies between Raistrick and Morrison), CB mines (number of adits unidentified, some of the adits between Gunnerside and Bunton level. Also the small stone quarry at Carperby. Please contact John at 40 Fladgate Road, Leytonstone, London E11 1LY.

John also sent a copy of some observations taken on a trip to Wales.

Pen-yr-Orsedd Quarry - This quarry was closed by McAlpines shortly after purchase and since there has been much vandalism to the old building remains. Two of the Blondin towers have "fallen" over leaving only one intact.

Maenofferen Quarry - Underground working has ceased at present - I have heard that it has possibly been abandoned totally with the workforce moving over to the Llechwedd operation. The Office on Maenofferen "Office Level" has been razed to the ground. It was thought that historical papers were kept/dumped in the loft of this building but if they were there we have no idea if they were saved.

Gloddfa Ganol - This site closed last year as a tourist attraction and work has commenced on "open topping" the old Hollands Level Fawr, this was the site of the underground tourist route. McAlpines bought the site and are engaged on robbing the pillars for good quality slate. There has also been a major find in the area as substantial remains of a weighbridge mechanism, thought to be dated from the 1840/1850s has been uncovered. Believed to have been tipped over early on it is made from a number of wooden parts instead of iron.

Glanrafon Quarry - The ravages of the Welsh climate are not dealing kindly to the two-storey barracks. On a recent visit (9.9.1999) more of the structure had fallen. The somewhat unique end on bay window is still surviving however...at present. **Aberllefeni Quarry** - The water balance table on the face of the Feel Grochan incline sited between levels 7 and 8 has been taken down being considered unsafe.

Talysam Quarry - On a recent Archaeological Survey of the quarry a boiler was unearthed amidst slate waste. On further inspection it was found to be off of a locomotive and carried the name "Margaret". (August 1999)

Rhosydd Quarry - Subsequent to a major fall last August/September '98 it appears that a further, albeit smaller fall, has taken place. The area around is heavily cracked and very obviously dangerous with further falls expected. The falls are close to Floor 2 adit.

Ty Mawr East Quarry - Just a rather odd comment on this site, a local resident stated "There is more slate being taken in than being taken out!" It would appear that parts of the site are being infilled. The original pits have already seen such action.

Vivian Quarry - The V2 incline is now in operation and is part of the attractions offered at Gilfach Ddu, the Welsh Slate Museum. The old quarrymen's cottages of Fron Haul dismantled from Tan y Grisau and re-erected in the back yard are now open to the public. Three of the cottages have been furnished from a different era, the fourth is being maintained as a "hands on" living history house for educational use. They have made a welcome addition to the site. (8.9.1999)

Cook & Ddol Quarry - The two storey building on the lower level to the mill (thought to be a barracks) has seen a partial collapse. There also appears (and not noted on my previous visits) to be a waliau built within the southern room. (6.9.1999)

Dorothea Quarry - The diving centre at the quarry pit workings has closed after a short time in operation. It also appears that work on the first phase of restoration of the beam engine at the site is close to fruition. The first operation will be to remove asbestos from the cylinders.

Alexandra Quarry - The stone circle that was sited on the infilled No 1 pit and built for a film scene appears to have been removed. (7.9.1999) **Glynmonwy Upper Quarry** - Whilst visiting recently (6.9.1999) it was noticed that a quite substantial fall of rock had taken place from the north face. The fall into the pit working is close to the old wooden bridge for those who know the site.

Weardale

As Britain's last fluorspar mine at Grove Rake in the Rookhope Valley closes there is another blow for the displaced workers. Attempts by the owners to create new jobs at Broadwood Quarry, Frosterley have been halted by a High Court injunction. The company has amassed 5000 tons of fluorspar at Broadwood and wants to carry out the purification of it as well as opening the quarry for limestone extraction. But a local resident, Rodney Huddleston has obtained a High Court injunction after arguing that re-opening the quarry could damage the environment.

The managing director of Durham Industrial Minerals, Mr. Jeffrey Allinson said the Frosterley plant could provide jobs for all the workers. But he said that the company has already lost orders because of the delay in implementing the Broadwood plans, which would involve the fluorspar crushing plant also being used for limestone.

The Northern Echo. September 8th, 1999.

Tara Mines

Roger Bade

A Fresh dispute is looming at Tara Mines because the Finnish owner, Outokompu Ltd, has made arrangements to fly in Canadian miners to begin exploiting a new orebody which has been discovered. The new orebody is larger than existing reserves and is expected to extend the life of the mine by several years. However, the decision to introduce foreign labour could lead to a mass walkout by Irish miners. The first contingent of Canadian miners is understood to have already arrived in Ireland. They are due to start work on Monday 8th November. Trade union sources say most of the 500 workers will leave the plant if this happens.

The Canadians are being brought in because productivity at the mine has fallen significantly in recent weeks and absenteeism has risen. Under a recent agreement, the miners accepted the need to increase productivity by 23 per cent and reduce costs by 15 per cent. In return for anticipated loss of earnings, miners were paid between £6,000 and £20,000 tax free. The 1997 Finance Act was amended in order to facilitate this. About £5 million was paid out in compensation to the workers affected. In return, the miners accepted a number of redundancies and cuts of between £6,000 and £8,000 a year in earnings. They also agreed to switch from a 14-shift to a 15-shift system and to produce 23 per cent more in order to qualify for production bonuses. However the agreement was extremely technical. It is understood that the company interpreted the agreement to mean that miners would produce 23 per cent more on each of the 15 shifts, whereas the workers understood that the extra shift being worked would be taken into account when calculating if they had met the 23 per cent extra target over a fortnightly period.

Irish Times 5th November, 1999

Roger Bade

Scottish Mining Museum

A visitor centre dedicated to the preservation of Scotland's mining heritage was officially opened on 17th September amid claims that it could become one of the country's top attractions.

The Scottish Mining Museum was opened by Lord Steel, the Scottish parliament presiding officer, but his involvement prompted some Midlothian councillors former miners - to boycott the event, saying he had no connection with the coal industry.

The centre at Lady Victoria Colliery, Newtongrange, near Edinburgh, has been refurbished a cost of £5 million. The colliery is regarded as one of the finest surviving examples of a Victorian mine in Europe.

The Scotsman 18th September, 1999.

Alastair Lings

NMRS Library

The Librarian's various house-moving difficulties will (she hopes) shortly be resolved and her new permanent address is: Winshaw Barn, Chapel-le-Dale, INGLETON, Yorkshire, LA6 3AT. (no telephone or fax or e-mail).

The NMRS library items were unpacked first and although not yet well-ordered are all shelved and easily accessible. It is now possible for members to visit and browse the library for material in which they are interested. However, there is no photocopier and Winshaw Barn (NGR SD78 80) is somewhat isolated; so would members coming to use the library please bring their NMRS membership card with them if they think they might want to borrow items.

Sallie Bassham (Librarian)

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A subscription form and deed of covenant are enclosed. 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.

Finally

Apologies to those who have sent in material which has not appeared in this newsletter. I have had a bumper crop of items this time so those which have not appeared will be held over until the next newsletter.

A Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year to all readers. Thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. Please keep the contributions rolling in - they are very much appreciated. Contributions on 3½" discs are welcome. Discs will normally be returned with the following newsletter unless otherwise requested. Attachments to Emails in text (.txt) only format please. Contributions for the February 2000 Newsletter by 22nd January, please, to:

Keith Nolan, West End Cottage, Woodhall, South Duffield, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 6TG. Telephone or Fax: 01757 638503. E-mail: keithn@woodhall.u-net.com

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