



The Northern Mine Research Society Newsletter

December 2004

Society News

Autumn Meeting

This year's autumn meeting was held at the Cross Keys pub in Skipton on Saturday, October 16th 2004. This informal meeting kicked off at 2pm with a run through of the minutes of the last meeting, then we heard from each of the committee members. On page 3 of the newsletter you will find a copy of the final accounts for the society from 2003. A discussion arose regarding minor changes to the constitution which you will find outlined on page 4. After the official meeting, everyone broke for a delicious buffet before reconvening to hear a series of talks and picture slide shows of recent research, work, and photographs by members. Mike Gill gave a talk about the Ingleton Coalfield, and Martin Roe talked about various bits of his recent work. We had a picture show from Richard Platt on an underground trip into Sharneyford Coal Mine. Tom West talked about the Tanant valley and the Llangynog Mines, Wales. And we heard from P M Hughes talking about Cwm

Dwyfor Copper Mine: the Collection and utilisation of water. The meeting enjoyed a good attendance, but we would still like more members to come along. The next open meeting will be the AGM in Spring, which usually consists of a good dinner, with a series of talks afterwards. These events are always friendly and welcoming, a place to discover what the NMRS has been up to recently and to show off your research, photograph's, and interests.

Anna Davies

Joint Seminar – call for speakers

The second NMRS and PDMHS joint seminar is to be held on Saturday 21st May 2005 at the National Coal Mining Museum for England, at Wakefield. Once again, the theme is *work in progress* (in its broadest sense) and anyone who would like to give a 15-20 minute talk, with or without illustrations, should please ring Mike Gill, Tel:

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01535-635388. A **full** range audio-visual equipment, including video, is available.

All mining historians are cordially invited to participate in this event, which will feature a series of short presentations as well as an underground visit and a buffet lunch. There is ample parking and room for displays and publications will be provided. Full details will be given in subsequent Newsletters.

Mike Gill

Gift Aid

Thank you to everyone who signs a Gift Aid form. For 2003, we have been able to claim £1100 from the Inland Revenue. If you no longer pay Income Tax, please let me know so that I don't claim in error—the Government doesn't like me claiming back something you haven't paid! If you are not sure if you have ever signed a Gift Aid form, but pay tax and would like the Society to be able to claim it back, then please sign the Gift Aid form on the back of the membership renewal form. Don't worry about signing twice, that doesn't matter. In fact, when making the claim I need to check the date that you paid your subscription and whether you have signed a Gift Aid form; so it's actually quicker and easier for me if these two pieces of information are on the same form.

Sallie Bassham

Library

New library acquisitions include David Bick's "Waller's Description of the Mines in Cardiganshire", H Cotton's "Electrical Equipment in Mines", NCB "Ropeman's Handbooks", "Coal Miners Act 1911", NCB "The Colliery Official's Handbook to the Mines and Quarries Act 1954". Thank you to Ian McKay and Mike Gill. Thanks also to Peter Cloughton who has donated the book "Idrijski Rudnik" (fortunately it has lots of photographs, because I can't read a word of the text), the Japanese language version of a CD about the Tanko Virtual Museum, Proceedings of the 6th International Mining History Congress Proceedings

(in both English and Japanese) and Congress related items such as a booklet on the Sumitomo Akabira Colliery and Sorachi coal-mining area guide map. There is also an envelope full of photocopies of research papers in a variety of European languages. All will be added to the Library List (obtainable electronically from sbassham@nildram.co.uk or on paper from Mike Gill). If you are borrowing something, you may want to check the language first. Another recent donation is from Craven Pot Hole Club - their 2003 "Record". Thank you to those societies which regularly send copies of their publications for the library; we are always grateful for these and they are particularly useful to those doing research on specific minerals or geographical areas, as they often contain important details missing from national publications and books. Books acquired recently include Burgess and Wadge "The Geology of the Cross Fell Area", Morris "The Dalesmen of the Mississippi River" and Aris "Historic Landscapes of the Great Orme". My apologies if I have not acknowledged someone's donation to the library, please let me know and I will include it in a future Newsletter.

Sallie Bassham

Insurance

For those members of the Northern Mine Research Society that enjoy mine exploration and caving, you might be aware that there has been a series of lengthy discussions of late regarding Indeminty Insurance. The situation seems to have resolved itself, so if you wish to find out more about Individual Indeminty Insurance, visit the British Caving Association Website:

www.british-caving.org.uk

Or write to:

**British Caving Association
The Old Methodist Chapel
Great Hucklow
Buxton
Derbyshire
SK17 8RG**

Anna Davies

Summary of NMRS Accounts for the period 1 Jan 2003 - 31 Dec 2003			
Summary	Receipts	Payments	
Opening balance - General account			£12,174.35
Opening balance - Publications accounts			£6,834.32
Opening balance - Investment account			£19,570.23
Cash in hand			£11.62
Opening balance - Total			£38,590.52
Income	£25,334.68		
Expenditure		£25,950.41	
Expenditure in 2002 included in 2003 balance		£162.59	
Expenditure in 2003 included in 2004 balance	£279.65		
Debt written off	£9.31		
Total	£25,623.64	£26,113.00	
Calculated closing balance			£38,101.16
General account - actual closing balance			£10,315.08
Publications account - actual closing balance			£5,215.85
Investment account - actual closing balance			£22,570.23
Cash in hand			£0.00
Total actual closing balance			£38,101.16
Receipts and Payments - detail			
Members' subscriptions & donations	£6,237.50		
Printing Newsletters (x3)		£426.58	
Greenhow Survey	£6,750.00	£6,750.00	
Subscriptions to other societies		£51.00	
Periodicals & books		£76.97	
Gunnarside Gill leaflet		£1,000.00	
Yorkshire Dales National Park	£2,400.00		
Meetings	£311.00	£353.00	
Transfer to Investment Account	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	
Printing publications (x4)		£10,186.00	
Membership cards		£76.38	
Sales	£5,410.10		
GIS members' project		£1,060.48	
Postage	£6.55	£138.97	
Envelopes/postage		£2,829.02	
Interest - general account	£9.66		
Interest - publications account	£64.84		
Bank charges		£2.01	
Inland Revenue	£1,145.03		
Total	£25,334.68	£25,950.41	

Proposed changes to the Society's constitution

The committee is considering making minor amendments to the Society's constitution, agreed in 1984, to recognise changes both in our practices and in the requirements of the Charity Commission. These revisions fall into three categories:-

1. Minor changes of wording or punctuation, for clarity.
2. Change to reflect our current practices.
3. Changes needed to meet the Charity Commission's accounting standards.

Changes in categories 2 and 3 are given below and the full texts of both the current and proposed constitutions are given on the Society's website www.nmrs.org.uk. For those without access to the internet, copies may be obtained from the Secretary by sending an A4 SAE.

Section 23 of the current constitution states: "A General Meeting shall be held every quarter. The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the first quarter of the year", but current practice is for two General Meetings per year, in the spring and the autumn, and so this is reflected in the revised section 23 as follows:-

"A General Meeting shall be held at least twice per year, normally in the spring and autumn. The first General Meeting of the year shall be the Annual General Meeting."

In recent years the Society has received monies from other bodies and made grants to support members' projects. This accords with the society's aims, but the proposed new section 8 will comply with the Charity Commission's requirements:-

"The Society may seek funding from other bodies and may make grants to other bodies or any individuals, whether they be members

or trustees of the Society or not, to undertake activities in furtherance of its aims. Such grants shall be approved by the Committee and shall be reported to the next General Meeting."

There is also a need to clarify responsibilities for managing the accounts and also the accounting regime to be adopted. The current constitution states that:-

"21. The Treasurer and Editor shall keep proper accounts and submit them, after auditing to the Annual General Meeting.

22. The Society shall appoint an independent auditor."

As a registered charity the Society must satisfy the Charity Commission's accounting requirements. These do not require a formal audit of the accounts, which must be checked and signed-off by an independent, responsible person. The new section 22 addresses these issues:-

"The Treasurer and Editor shall keep proper accounts for each calendar year in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission. The annual accounts shall be prepared by the Treasurer, checked or audited as required, and submitted to the Annual General Meeting."

Process

Section 26 of the constitution requires that members be given notice of proposed changes to the constitution, which will be considered by the Annual General Meeting on March 19th 2005. Please send any comments you may have to the Secretary, Steve Mitchell, 21 Lowfield Road, Silsden, KEIGHLEY, BD20 0QE.

From the Publications Editor

Hopefully, society members will be receiving their copy of BM75 – NMRS Memoirs 2004 - with this newsletter. I would like to thank the authors for all of their hard work, producing

their individual papers, especially those who submitted them early in the year, as this gives me more time to work on the layout and improve the quality of the publication. The papers cover a variety of topics, with some being quite lengthy studies while others are just short notes. I hope that this variety gives encouragement to prospective authors who may have some material suitable for publication but have hesitated to submit it because it will not fill dozens of pages. If you are thinking of preparing a paper for the 2005 memoirs, please start now and give yourself plenty of time.

With regard to two of the articles in BM75, readers of John Goodchild's paper on the Thornhill collieries may be interested to learn that the January 2005 issue of Practical Family History magazine is expected to contain an article about the Combe pit disaster, and while editing Alan Crosby's paper on the Smithill Estate, I discovered a web site called www.smithills.org/ which shows pictures of the estate (although it does not contain any information on its industrial history). I found the link from another site called www.industrialpowerhouse.co.uk which, although currently under construction, claims it will be making downloadable industrial heritage trial maps available for the Manchester area (click on the 'power' page).

John Hunter

Thanks from the Newsletter Editor

I would like to pass on thanks to David Ifold, who donated a full set of NMRS newsletters from 1980—2004. It has been fascinating to see what has changed over the years and what has stayed the same. It is hoped that some selected articles from previous newsletters can soon appear on the NMRS website for everyone to read a second time around.

Anna Davies

Field Meetings for 2005

If any one has suggestions for venues or would like to volunteer to lead a meet for 2005 please contact the secretary Steve Mitchell on 01535 657090.

For Sale:

**A collection of books on mining, mines and miners.
Send an SAE to: Tony Oldham,
1 Riverside Mews, Cardigan,
SA43 1DH, UK
or email tonyfoldham@hotmail.com
for a list by email.**

Other News

New Mining Museum

Ian and Jean Tyler have moved their collection of mining artefacts from Threlkeld Quarry to a more prestigious site in the centre of Keswick, Cumbria. With more space, they will be better able to tell the story of Cumbria's Mining Heritage, not only through our amazing collections of artefacts, geology and minerals, but also by using video and audio effects. Displays of Cumbrian Mining Heritage cover Stone Age axe factories, the German

miners of Queen Elizabeth I's time, through to the present day. There's Geology, Minerals, Drilling, Extraction, Smelting, Mines Rescue, Lighting, Social History and lots more besides.

The new shop will contain a large range of books both new and second-hand on all aspects of Mining, Geology, Minerals, Industrial Archaeology etc. Original Miners' lamps will also be on sale.

In Spring 2005 the "Shaft Experience" will be opened along with "Gold Panning" and other attractions.

Come and see us in our new home:-

Keswick Mining Museum, Otley House, Otley Road, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 5LE

017687 80055 - 01228 561883
email: coppermaid@aol.com

International Mining History Congress

The next International Mining History Congress (IMHC) will be held between 9 and 17 October 2006 at Beringen in the Limberg mining region of north-east Belgium. It is proposed that the Congress itself will be held between Wednesday or Thursday 11/12 Oct. and Sunday 15 Oct., with visits to sites in the area in the days before and after the Congress.

More details will be circulated when they are available.

Peter Claughton (NAMHO Chairman)

Death of the Selby Coalfield

There is no doubt that in the coming years much will be written about the Selby project, its cost, the political manoeuvring, its privatisation and eventual closure. It will be interesting to read the various interpretations, but what follows is merely a brief overview of a project which involved much more tunnelling and precise surveying than its famous civil engineering rival under the Channel.

Earlier borings had failed to find coal, but by 1967 the NCB was convinced that Yorkshire's concealed coalfield extended further north than had been thought, and that the Barnsley seam was present at workable depths under the Selby area. When I worked for the NCB (1969-74) proposals for working the Selby Coalfield seemed like a fanciful dream, however, because collieries were closing and

North Sea oil was going to ensure cheap oil and gas prices. The project was boosted by OPEC's actions and the Labour Government's adoption of the "Plan for Coal" in the mid 1970s, when more boreholes were sunk and the planning process began. The Government gave permission for work to start in April 1976, but it took over a decade and cost £1.4bn to get the Selby complex into full production.

The complex, between Selby and York in North Yorkshire, was bounded to the east by the River Derwent and increasing seam depth, to the north by an arbitrary permission line and poor geology, to the west by the seam incropping against an aquifer, and to the south by seam splitting in the Barnsley Seam. Because a major unconformity separates the north-east dipping Coal Measures from the overlying Permo-Triassic strata, the Barnsley Seam incrops beneath the Permian in the west of the Selby district. The full Barnsley Seam, which is generally >2 metres thick, is present across most of the area. The overlying Dull Seam is united with the Barnsley north-west of York, and the two seams split to the south-east, well to the north of Selby. The Barnsley itself splits into the Low Barnsley and the overlying Warren House seams, around the western, southern, and eastern margins of the district.

Begun under the NCB, which became the British Coal Corporation, the Selby complex was sold, along with other mines, to RJB Mining (UK) Ltd at the beginning of January 1995. The company was renamed UK Coal Mining Limited in 2001.

The development of the Selby coalfield, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, was the largest deep mine project undertaken in the United Kingdom. It covered about 110 square miles, with six surface sites from which 10 shafts were sunk and two surface drifts were driven. The complex's five mines (Riccall, Wistow, Stillingfleet, North Selby and Whitmoor) were laid out along a 'spine' of two 15-km-long, parallel conveyor tunnels which brought their coal to the surface by two drifts

at Gascoigne Wood. Because the planning permission prevented coal being raised at any of the other sites, Gascoigne Wood served solely as a coal-handling facility, where coal was loaded onto trains and taken to the area's power stations. In fine NCB tradition, however, no thought was given to the possibility that any of the coal might need washing. Whoops!

Work on sinking the first shaft (No.1) at Wistow began on 29/10/1976 and the Barnsley Seam was reached in 1979. The surface plant was complete by June 1983 when the first face (A1) began cutting coal. Being near the western side of the coalfield, Wistow soon experienced problems with inrushes of water. These were caused by voids in the subsiding sandstone and siltstone strata above the seam filling with water, from the Permian aquifers above, rather than self-sealing. In areas 'close' to the Permian aquifers, therefore, partial extraction systems, with narrow face widths of 60 to 65 metres and less, were used in order to limit subsidence. Wistow set the UK and European output record of 68,362 tonnes in a week in December 1987.

The two, 1-in-4 drifts at Gascoigne Wood were begun in 1977 and the spine roads, which crossed the complex from north-east to south-west, were driven in a bed of siltstone about 75 metres below the Barnsley seam. The South Tunnel held Europe's longest underground coal-mining conveyor, with 65 vulcanized joints over a total looped length of 25 km. The power needed to move the belt, which alone weighed 2,000 tonnes, was 11.2 MW. This moved 3,200 tonnes of coal per hour at a top speed of 32 km/h and it took around 25 minutes to travel the full length of the South Tunnel to the surface at Gascoigne Wood. Most of the plant was operated remotely from a control room at the surface. The latter also controlled the conveyor in the North Tunnel, which carried Wistow's coal and roadway dirt. The completion of the South Tunnel and its conveyor belt, in January 1988, allowed coaling to begin at the Riccall, Stillingfleet and Whitemoor mines.

Shaft sinking at Riccall began in June 1978 and mining began in January 1988. Like Wistow, it too used narrow faces in its western workings to avoid inrushes of water. The mine was merged with Whitemoor from July 1996 as part of RJB Mining (UK) Ltd's rationalisation of its holdings. In 2001, with workable reserves of the Barnsley seam diminishing, work began on developing the Stanley Main seam (equates with the High Hazel at Hatfield) and production began at the end of that year. The Stanley Main seam varies in thickness from 1.96 m to 1.67, and its coal was used to sweeten the overall mix.

Shaft sinking at Stillingfleet began in June 1978 and mining began in January 1988. The mine was merged with North Selby in July 1997 and took over its neighbouring reserves.

Shaft sinking began at Whitemoor in 1980 and mining began in January 1988. On encountering seam splitting and washouts to the south and east, it was merged with Riccall in July 1996 and closed in 1997.

The shafts at North Selby were begun in 1979 and about half way down it became necessary to inject grout into the surrounding strata in order to prevent high-pressure inflows of water. The inset level was reached at a depth of 997 metres in March 1985, but mining did not begin until January 1991, when the north tunnel was finished. Mining was difficult at the eastern side of the coalfield, where depths exceeded 1000 metres, because roadway stability was a costly problem to control. Methane liberation was also higher in the deeper workings and the thinning seam was prone to washouts. Because of these problems, North Selby was merged with Stillingfleet and closed in July 1997.

By 2002 the reserves at all of the mines consisted of either small blocks within previously worked areas or on the latter's edges, which were poorly proved and difficult to access. Because of the lay-out of the complex, it was felt that adverse geology affecting only one of the mines would have a deleterious affect on the other two, because they were interdependent. The closure of one mine would,

therefore, mean the closure of the other two on economic grounds.

Gascoigne Wood had relatively high fixed costs, meaning that savings were hard to make, and the closure of North Selby and Whitemoor had made them proportionally higher.

Riccall had the lowest risk reserves, with all its proposed Stanley Main seam workings being located above the old Barnsley workings, some 70 metres below. As development progressed, however, it appeared that the seam was thinning. This meant lower outputs, but the risk of disruption from unknown geology was low. Riccall had little chance of proving further reserves in the Barnsley seam, because access to them was lost when it was abandoned.

Stillingfleet had two years of fairly low risk reserves, but it was felt that the mining plan failed to maintain continuity of longwall face production beyond April 2004. If it was decided to develop new reserves, there would be a significant gap whilst these new, probably high-risk reserves, were reached. Because the mines were dependent upon each other, however, the mine with the shortest life dictated the life of the others. A decision to close Stillingfleet, therefore, would eventually end production at Wistow and Riccall.

Most of the remaining reserves at Wistow were at significant risk from faults which were expected to make the seam unworkable in one area. In the other it was likely that areas would be left unworked in favour of getting easily won coal using only one face. This was a high-risk strategy and exhaustion of workable reserves was anticipated by 2004.

The option of developing peripheral resources would be very costly and would involve driving through rock for long distances and, in parts, the negotiation of waterlogged old workings. Unfortunately, the existing resources gave insufficient time to do this as it was essential that all three mines maintained production in order to support Gascoigne Wood. This

meant that Wistow's lack of resources effectively eliminated the exploitation of those at Riccall and Stillingfleet.

Extending the complex's life by working alternative seams, such as the Dunsil, Swallow Wood or Haigh Moor, was unattractive because of their relative thinness and poorer quality. Moreover, no permission had been granted to work them nor was it likely to be because of the subsidence constraints in this area of low-lying land.

UK Coal, the complex's owners, had seen output falling as costs increased. This is to be expected as a mine enters its declining phase, but the problem was compounded by lower selling prices for its coal. Faced with mounting losses, which reached between £93m and £100m in the last three years, in 2002 UK Coal announced its decision to run the complex down and close it in 2004. Thus it was that the last coal was mined at Wistow on 13/05/2004, and coal production at Stillingfleet ended on 30/07/2004.

The last coal was cut at Riccall on Tuesday 26th of October 2004. What remains of the complex has been consigned to a month or so of salvage work before it is allowed to die. It is believed that English, Welsh & Scottish Railways is interested in using the sidings at Gascoigne Wood as a freight depot. The original planning consent stipulated that the mine sites should be restored to agricultural use upon abandonment, but this has been revised at Whitemoor and North Selby, which have become business parks. UK Coal hopes to do the same with its remaining land.

Mike Gill

Obituary

Fred Dibnah died on Saturday 6th November 2004 following a battle with cancer.

Initially famous for his one man destruction of mill chimneys in Lancashire, and apparent disregard for health and safety. In recent years Fred had been reinvented as the presenter of a number of television programmes

dealing with industrial heritage and architectural history.

One of his last television appearances was a documentary about Fred's attempts to sink a mine shaft in his garden and his consequent battle with the local council. Part of the programme showed Fred visiting NMRS member Clive Seal at Ayle Colliery, to see what it might be like to work in a coal mine. This is probably a rare example of the viewing public being exposed to Lancashire accent thicker than Fred's, (sorry Clive).

It is hard to quantify the contribution that Fred made to the study of industrial heritage but he certainly made a memorable contribution to what the media refer to as Edutainment, i.e. programming that serves to both educate and

entertain. Often frustratingly presenting old fashioned views of industrial archaeology, a subject that has changed considerably over the last 20 years in terms of both techniques and understanding, there is no doubt that more people are now aware of the importance of the monuments of the industrial revolution thanks to his programs. How many people watched just to see the flat cap wearing eccentric northerner and how many were genuinely interested in the subject is difficult to say, but he will certainly be remembered for his contribution to the English language, with his *de mon strations* and *chimleys* and his catch phrase "did yer like that".

Martin Roe

Book reviews

The Forgotten Mines of Sheffield, by Ray Battye

Ray's book examines the rise and decline of Gannister and Pot Clay mining and processing, and its impact on the settlements and the landscape of western Sheffield in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. Such companies as: Dysons, Marshalls, Wraggs and General Refractories, which owned the mines and produced refractory materials, were once well known to inhabitants of Deepcar, Dore, Dungworth, Loadbrook and Worrall, but now the industry is fading from the memory of many Sheffielders.

It includes maps, diagrams, documents and photographs and may be bought from the author: Ray Battye, 78 Towngate Road, Worrall, Sheffield S35 0AR. Price £9.99 (+£2.01 p&p).

Waller's description of the Mines of Cardiganshire by David Bick

300 years after the publication Waller's *Description*, David Bick examines a small, but

important part of the Governor and Company of Mine Adventurers of England's involvement in Cardiganshire from 1698. In particular, he looks at the influence of William Waller, its enigmatic manager, from Stainmore in Westmorland, who had been lessee of the nearby Tan Hill colliery, at the head of Swaledale. Waller's diagrams are the earliest published 'mine plans' in Britain and, at first glance, they appear to make little sense. Fortunately, however, David's comprehensive knowledge of mid-Wales allows him to discuss the detail of what Waller was depicting in the first part of his book. The second part is a verbatim copy of Waller's *Description*.

Ironically, around 10 years after Waller died, the 'Mine Adventurers' leased the Spout Gill and Keld Side lead mines in Swaledale, which are only a few miles from his home and the colliery at Tan Hill. I would like to echo David's comment that there is a crying need for someone to write a detailed study of the Company of Mine Adventurers of England.

Waller's Description of the mines of Cardiganshire (ISBN 1 903599 11 3) costs £9.99 and was published by Black Dwarf Publications in 2004.

Balmaidens by Lynne Mayers

This book covers women's contribution, especially on the dressing floors, to mining in south-west England. Like historians elsewhere, Lynne has found that such women are often invisible because they usually worked as sub-contractors under a male dressing master. Nevertheless, she is to be congratulated on pulling together so many fascinating snippets and quotes.

There are chapters covering women's work, their home lives and employment at copper, tin, clay and other mines. For me, a little more analysis of the context in which the quotations about the women were made, as well as the people making them, would have been useful. For example, when discussing their low wages, the 'mining men' had an interest in portraying the women as fickle because they spent their money on fripperies instead of wholesome food etc.

Having written about the mechanics of the dressing processes, I found the chapter on the associated health risks stimulating. By the 19th century, however, it seems that the balmaiden's story is very much linked to the mechanisation processes. The mid 19th century dates given for technology beginning to affect the numbers of women employed seem rather late for one used to the lead industry. Are we seeing philanthropic self-interest by the mine owners, whereby they paid low wages, but gave work to all the family? Were women and children simply cheaper than mechanisation until the industry was forced to change? Why did Cornwall never provide much alternative employment for its women rather than exporting them? Unlike coal mining, where 'pit top' women worked until 1972, the last balmaidens were dismissed soon after the First World War. Most left the industry after the slumps of the late 1860s, however, and became part of the Cornish diaspora, going abroad, into service and even to northern England.

This is a book which needed to be written and hopefully it will stimulate more work on the topic.

Balmaidens (ISBN 1 872229 48 4) costs £20.00 and was published by The Hypatia Trust, of Penzance, in 2004.

Roots to Your Roots—Mapping Your Mining Past by Alison Henesey

This useful booklet grew out of the National Coal Mining Museum of England's exhibition called *Routes to your roots: mapping your mining past*. It is intended to show how to begin researching your mining ancestors, in the English Coalfields, and to get a feel for the kind of life that they would have led. Whilst aimed at the general reader, the author gives a wide range of possible sources and some suggestions on how to proceed.

Routes to your roots: mapping your mining past (ISBN 1 872925 08 1) costs £2.00 and was published by the National Coal Mining Museum of England in 2004.

Carrock and the Mines of Skiddaw and Blencathra by Ian Tyler

This is the latest book in the Lake District Mining Series and has just been published. The book is a history of the Mines of Skiddaw and Blencathra. Also covered are the Glenderterra Mine and many of the small mines and trials in that area. The price is £17.99 plus Postage and signed copies can be obtained from Threlkeld Mining Museum, Threlkeld Quarry, Nr Keswick, CA12 4TT. Cheques should be made payable to Threlkeld Museum Shop.

***John Taylor the Famous Cornish Mining Engineer* (review by Mike Gill of Ecton Copper Mines 1760—1790 by C.L.M. Porter in NMRS Newsletter May 2004). A response by Lynne Willies.**

I am nearly as fond of irritating Lindsay Porter as I am of Mike Gill himself, but Mike is unfair to Lindsay when he says this title for Taylor undermines Lindsay's scholarship.

It is perfectly usual to entitle a person with the place or feat with which their fame is associated, and this is certainly true of Taylor, ar-

guably the father of the Cornish mining system at least, if not the British, as it evolved in the 19th Century. As an example James Cook is associated with voyages to Australasia—his country of origin most would consider of little consequence. I know Norwich and Norfolk does have its mines, but “John Taylor, the Famous Norwich mine engineer”. Ridiculous, who ever heard of him.

Lynne Willies.

A Response to Lynne Willies by Martin Roe

It is some time since Roger Burt published his biography of John Taylor and so we know that he was not a Cornishman and we also know

that his influence and business interests extended well beyond the southwest. John Taylor was certainly an entrepreneur who could perhaps also be considered a mining engineer, although my understanding is that his skill was to employ technical specialists whilst he maintained the role of manager.

It is the attention to small detail like this that identifies a well researched publication and repeating old ideas no matter how small can cast doubt on the rest of the facts presented in a book.

Martin Roe

Biographical sketches

Benjamin Outram (1764- 1805)

A civil engineer, the oldest son of Joseph Outram (1732- 1810), of Alfreton, Derbyshire, by his second wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Edmund Hodgkinson, was born on the 1st of April 1764, and named after Benjamin Franklin, who was a friend of his father. He was educated as a civil engineer, projected the aqueduct over the Mersey at Chapel-en-le-Frith, and was constantly employed in the construction of roads and canals. His chief claim to remembrance however, lies in his being instrumental in the introduction of iron railways for colliery traffic. The rails hitherto had generally been constructed of timber. Outram greatly improved the iron section and the method of laying it, and it was long thought that he was the inventor of tramways and that the term 'tram' was derived from his name. It is certain however that the word was in use long before his time, both for a plank road in a mine and for the wagons used upon such a road in the mines and collieries. Hence the term was readily applied to the planks or rails, to the line itself and also, elliptically, to the vehicle running along the rails (see 'Surtees Soc. xxxviii, 37, where the word 'tram' occurs in a Will dated 1555). The word appears to be

identical with the old Swedish 'tram', a log or beam; cf. 'Notes & Queries' 6th Ser.ii, 225, 356,498; Skeat's 'Etymological Dict. 1884. About 1800 Outram founded the extensive Butterley Ironworks in Derbyshire, but he died suddenly in London, on 22nd May 1805, before the large expenditure on the Ironworks (which passed to Messrs Jessop & Co.) had proved remunerative. By his wife Margaret, only surviving daughter of James Anderson (1739- 1808), whom he had married on 4th June 1800, he left five children: Francis, Anna, James (the celebrated General), Margaret and Elizabeth. A good-looking high-spirited man, of an equable temperament and with restless energy, which could ill brook either stupidity or opposition, Outram possessed many of the characteristics which were inherited by his more famous son. (Goldsmid's 'Life of James Outram', 1880; Burke's Peerage & Baronetage; Smiles' 'Life of Stephenson', p.59; Wood's 'Practical Treatise on Railways'; Glover's 'History & Gazetteer of the County of Derby',ii,200; Brand's 'History of Newcastle on Tyne', ii.681n; Whitney's 'Century Dictionary', s.v.tram.)

Thanks go to Tony Fretwell for this sketch.

Thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. Please continue to send material for the newsletter. Contributions can either be sent by email via the website or direct to me. Alternatively, you can post contributions either as text, or on disc, all are welcome. If you require anything returning, it will be returned with the newsletter unless instructed otherwise. In particular, photo's, plans, and pictures are welcome as long as they can be reproduced well in black and white. Contributions for the May newsletter should be with me by the end of March please to:

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