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August 2010

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NMRS
50 Years of Mining History
1st - 3rd October, 2010
Reeth Memorial Hall, Swaledale, Yorkshire
www.nmrs.org.uk

Conference Papers
Walks
Poster Displays
Book Sales

Booking is Essential
Contact Barbara Sutcliffe on 01282 614615 or email
mansemin@btopenworld.com

NMRS 50th Celebrations

Sallie and your committee have been busy for some time now, organising our Jubilee celebrations for October. From Ron's logo, the specially commissioned badges you have received, to David's splendid colour Newsletter, and not forgetting the excellent work behind the scenes at Swaledale Museum who are hosting part of our event. We even have a revamp of the web site in the pipeline thanks to Malcolm.

Now we are approaching the *Grande Finale* – two days of specialized presentations plus a day of interesting walks. Richard has assembled an excellent programme of short talks, there will be NMRS books and other publications for sale and the Bridge Inn at Grinton is putting on a splendid dinner. All we need now is YOUR support.

Have you booked yet? This is essential as a first step. Please read on for the full schedule. Will you be around in another fifty years? Make the most of this unique event by supporting it now!

Continued on Page 2

Editor

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Would you please note that the deadline for inclusion with the November Newsletter is the
17th October, 2010

Submissions are welcomed that would be of interest to members of the NMRS. These can be forwarded to me as text/disc by post or you can email or telephone. If you require anything returning, please ask. Photographs, plans and drawings are acceptable as long as they can be reproduced in black and white.

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Newsletter printed by
The University of Wales, Lampeter.

NMRS 50 Year Anniversary Conference

Reeth Memorial Hall, 1-3rd October 2010

Poster displays and bookstalls from Registration to closing on Saturday.

Friday 1st October

18:30 -19:30 – Assemble and Registration at the Memorial Hall,
coffee/tea & biscuits (please note NO BUFFET)

19:30 - 19:45 – President's welcome

19:45 -21:30 – Members contributions (mainly the short papers and any poster lectures)

1. Mining Heritage in the Yorkshire Dales National Park – Robert White.
2. The Lead Industry of Bordley Township – Janis Heward.
3. Mines and miners in the mid-c19th; correspondence of the Reeth Poor Law Union – Alan Mills.
4. Little known smelting mills of the West Pennines, Richard Smith and Sam Murphy

21:30 Adjourn to the Buck, Kings Arms or Black Bull (time flexible)

Saturday 2nd October

9:30 – Conference Papers

1. Mining in Teesdale in the 16th and 17th Centuries, William Heyes
2. Mining and Smelting in Dacre and Darley-the work of the Iron Age Nidderdale Project. Gillian Hovell.
3. Coal Mining at Garforth, Alison Hennesey

11:00-11:15 – Coffee

11:15 – Conference Papers

4. Excavations at Silvergill Mine, Cumbria, Warren Allinson
5. The NE extremity of the Central Wales Orefield, Cwm Nant Ddu to Cwm Bychan, and the geological controls on the orefield extent, David M. D. James
6. Chert Quarrying in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale, Kay Jackson

12:45-14:00 – lunch (provided)

14:00 – Conference Papers

7. Hathorn Davey and Co Ltd, Leeds: Manufacturers of mine engines and pumps, Rob Vernon
8. The wrong end of the telescope? Mining law and the working of silver bearing ores in England and Wales, Peter Claughton
9. Lead Mining Plans of the Dales - Keith Sweetmore and Les Tyson

15:30-15:45 – Coffee

15:45-16:15 – Conference Papers

10. Introduction to Reeth Museum by Helen Bainbridge

16:15-18:30 – Visit to Swaledale Museum

19:30–21:30 – Conference Dinner Bridge Inn, Grinton.

Sunday 3rd October

Field trips with packed lunch. Let Barbara know your preference for egg or cheese or ham sandwich. Packed lunches to be collected at Reeth Museum. Also please let her know which walk you wish to join.

Walk One with Tim Laurie

Start time 10.00am near the Bus Shelter, Reeth Green.

A longish walk to visit archaeological sites of all periods on Harkerside and on Harkerside Moor reaching High Harker Hill. Returning to Reeth via Maiden Castle, across the swing bridge. Aiming also to visit the sites of the three "lost" smelt mills on Grove Beck and to walk past Grove Beck Lead Mine.

Walk Two with Ian Spensley

Start time 10.30am. Cobscar road/end Reeth to Redmire road (SE 0459 9345)

Distance 4.7miles max, Mostly easy walking on tracks with gentle rises. Points of interest Cobscar Vein, Calamine House, Cobscar Smelt Mill, Chaytor Rake Vein, Preston Moor Colliery, Cranehowbottom Engine Shaft, Preston Moor Colliery 18th century shafts & the old Pay House – A hand-out with more details will be available on the day.

Walk Three with Helen Bainbridge

Start time 10.30am near the Bus Shelter, Reeth Green.

A flat walk taking approximately 1-1.5 hours covering the development of Reeth as a busy commercial hub for the lead mining communities in the Dales. Starting with a consideration of pre-historic settlement patterns on Harkerside and moving rapidly forward to the 16th Century. The tour will consider architectural patterns, population growth and decline, business enterprises, literary connections, social history, the development of tourism and local anecdotes. A lively and informal canter through time!

I hope you agree this looks very exciting. Some of you will have been members for a long time, others are fairly new members. The weekend will be an opportunity to join up with long standing friends, make new friendships and share our interest in our mining heritage. **Fifty years celebrating NMRS**



Barbara Sutcliffe

Members' Book Sale

As those of you know who have attended recent NMRS meetings, Barbara Sutcliffe, our Publications Officer usually takes along a selection of second-hand NMRS books and damaged copies for sale to our attendees.

We plan to extend this idea at our 50th Anniversary weekend. Not only will we have NMRS second-hand copies available but new NMRS publications that some of you might have missed. We extend an invitation to people planning to come, to bring along any copies of mining and related books which others might be interest in buying. This does not include NMRS books which we hope you will continue to donate back to us!!

Those books, brought to the weekend will be marketed by Barbara with 10% of the sales donated to our society and 90% going back to the seller.

Anyone interested in this please email Barbara at mansemins@btopenworld.com or 01282 614615. She will then send you a form to complete for your list of books to bring along and prices you intend to charge, a reference number for you to PENCIL inside the book. All details will be on the form. Members will have to register before the event and Barbara will man (sic) the stall while it is open.

We hope you take this opportunity for some late "spring cleaning" of your book shelves for the benefit of our other members.

30th May, Ingleton Book Fair.

Held at the Community Centre, the NMRS successfully joined tables with John Bentley to help the sale of John's book the *History of Ingleton*. I brought along my photo collection of Ingleton's Industrial Past with, of course, the BM 76 *Ingleton Coalfield*.

A very big thank you to Barbara and Rex who came along to help with the further sales of NMRS Publications. I also had a small collection of Ingleton artefacts, all to help make the table a little bit more interesting.

Bernie Bond



John Bentley, Barbara Sutcliffe and Bernie Bond

Letter to the Editor

8th June 2010

Dear David,

A belated thank you for the 50th Anniversary Newsletter which reached me in February. It is difficult for me to believe that so many years have vanished since that first meeting at Stump Cross Cavern Cafe in 1960 when I was a mere youth of thirty five!

The new badge was much appreciated as a marker in the Society's history. It must be the third version since the original one in 1960.

I must congratulate the Society on what it has achieved over the past fifty years. Most notable to me has been the regular production of high quality publications, which it has been my pleasure to read.

It may appear to be self-congratulation but my membership of the Society has perhaps been a distant one, where I have contributed little, but enjoyed the achievements of others.

I had to make a choice and I remained with my first love of pot holing; perhaps at the back of my mind was the thought that when I was too old for one I would be able to join in the activities of the other. I still remain a potholer but now enjoy both activities vicariously!

Yours Sincerely,

With best wishes for the next fifty years

Len Cook

NMRS Honourary Member

P.S. It seems a good opportunity to offer the Society my collection of publications so that more recent members can enjoy them as I have done. They might be described as in "mint condition" and suitable to be added to your stock.

I have to face the fact that I am unlikely to read them all again and I know others will enjoy them as much as I have done. I have not counted the books, but as you might imagine there is a large number packed in three boxes. A 'phone call in the evening after 7.00 pm. would ensure that anyone calling to collect them would find us in.

Publication News - STOP PRESS

Many thanks to Len Cook and Eddie Nutter who have donated some NMRS publications to us. A selection of these will be offered for sale in future newsletters. In the meantime if you have a "wants" list of our books which are now out of print please e-mail/phone/write to me with your requirements and I'll contact you if and when they become available. I am also putting together old newsletters in year groups for anyone interested.

Len Cook is a founder member of our society and

became an Honorary Member in 1985 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of our Society. Eddie Nutter was a librarian of our Society at one time. Our thanks go to both of them for their book donations which are greatly appreciated.

Barbara Sutcliffe

Library News

We are very grateful to Maurice Tointon for a generous donation to the library of NMRS and PDMHS publications. Any which are already in the library will be given to Barbara Sutcliffe for selling on to members. If you want to buy some earlier publications, please contact Barbara.

Sallie Bassham

Publication News

When I was younger I used to collect autographs like most youngsters. It started at Junior School and consisted of friends, family and teachers. I still have that book and now as an O.A.P. I've started collecting again, but this time my autograph hunting concerns the authors of our N.M.R.S. publications.

Thanks to Mike Gill, Bernie Bond and John Bentley, I can now offer a few, very collectable books signed by their authors. Hopefully more will follow as I widen my scope. Now I can offer the following new books, as usual with member's discount but limited to one of each title to each member on a first come, first served basis.

BM 49 *Wharfedale Mines* by Mike Gill £10

BM 60 *The Greenhow Mines* by Mike Gill £12

BM 74 *Keighley Coal* signed by Mike Gill £12

BM 76 *Ingleton Coalfield* signed by all three authors, John Bentley, Bernie Bond and Mike Gill £12

And as a **Summer Special Sale Offer** anyone buying one of these will receive BM 62, *Miners and Farmers* free of charge.

Regarding the Ingleton Book Fair we did, many thanks to Bernie Bond for his hard work. It was good meeting members Doug Grant and Graham Wilcox.

The next outing for NMRS Publications will be to the Harrogate Gem and Mineral Fair at the Pavilions of Harrogate, Great Yorkshire Showground on 21st and 22nd August. Then to our Jubilee Conference at Reeth, on October 1-3rd, followed by the "Rock Exchange" Mineral and Fossil Show at Lady Manners School, Bakewell on the 9th and 10th October. If you are visiting please introduce yourself to me.

Barbara Sutcliffe

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Gambleside Meet (July 24th, 2010)

After days of rain, the weather for the Gambleside meet was fine and sunny. Meeting near Clowbridge Reservoir, Clive introduced the geology and mining of the area and we then visited the nearby site of Wholaw Nook colliery. The stone engine bearers and the stone-lined shaft were clear evidence of the past (see the photograph on page 154 of BM58), but no tracks are visible and the site is now quietly grazed by sheep.

We continued across the top of the reservoir to Limers Way. There are a number of interpretation boards in the area, some more interesting than others (well, more interesting to the mining enthusiast). On the east side of the reservoir are many old shafts and drifts. The former are more easily found, because the Coal Authority has helpfully put fences round them; so they can be seen from a distance. One fence even has a Coal Authority notice apologising for any 'inconvenience' caused.

Clive not only gave us fascinating details about the mines – he seemed to know the depth of every shaft, when it worked, how many miners worked there, which coal seam it was on and how productive it was – but also explained what the area had been like before shaft mining. We saw many ruined farm houses and learned how the construction of the reservoir had finished farming in the area; not by evicting families and paying compensation, but by gradually squeezing farmers out with laws and regulations.

We saw the former open-air baptistry, now in open country; the adjacent interpretation board claimed a congregation of 300 for the Baptist Chapel. Since the Methodists were also strong in the area; this information peopled the hillsides with houses and families in a way difficult to imagine when looking at the acres of rough moorland. Throughout the walk, Clive helped us to understand the social circumstances surrounding the mines. He told us of young children being carried asleep each morning to the mine to work underground all day; he described the brutal punishments for minor, and understandable, crimes and we learned of the meagre diets (mainly gruel) which explained why production was relatively low despite the long hours worked. Yet, the local miners belonged to a choir and a brass band and met to practice after work. There was a commitment to the community and to its organisations and structures.

There are significant remains at the former Gambleside Colliery and Clive had old photographs of miners and of the buildings. There is a large boiler house and the remains of a flue and chimney. The shaft position is clear and the lines of two ginny tracks. However, the engine position as indicated by the large stone blocks does not line up with the shaft. There was some tramping through the nettles and much serious hand-waving to try to explain how and why things had been. Which came first the shaft or the ginny level? We then walked over the hill following the direction of the underground ginny and found where it comes to day. Continuing along the tramway we saw Swinshaw drift and marvelled at the number of tramways and tracks. Returning to Gambleside, Clive managed to find a line of stones amongst the reeds; this marked a drift from which

a second ginny came to Gambleside colliery. In another couple of years, these stones are likely to be completely over-grown. A number of previously open and explored drifts are now silted up – yet more of our industrial heritage which is at risk of being lost and forgotten.

Returning south of the reservoir to the main road; we stopped to admire the gas retort now used as a gate post at Cotton Row – there is no known connection with the cotton industry. The house owner let us go into his back garden to look at the position of the coal staithe for Burnt Hills Colliery. He showed us photographs of the shaft that is now covered and landscaped. We could see the ginny going up the field to Porters Gate.

Throughout our walk, Clive described the landscape in all directions. He knew where drifts and shafts had been and told us how to find the mining remains on Hambledon Hill away to the north. He also understood the underlying geology and mineralisation and could relate these to mines out of sight in all directions. It was a fascinating walk and we are very grateful to Clive for sharing his knowledge, his explorations, his researches and his collection of photographs. Thank you!

Sallie Bassham

Meets for 2011

Thank you to everyone who has led meets this year. They have been well attended; and there has been much positive feedback, which shows that people have found them enjoyable and interesting. I am starting to put together a meets list for 2011. Please volunteer! So far, I have offers from Cheshire and East Lancashire. This spring, at Beldi Hill, a surface walk and an underground trip were offered on the same day: this enabled people to decide which they wanted to do when they arrived, saw the weather and had discussed the details of length and difficulty. If you would like to offer an underground option to complement a surface walk, please get in touch to discuss the possibilities.

Sallie Bassham 01524 241851 or
sbassham@nildram.co.uk



Correction

The illustration is an extract from a photograph showing a group of miners, which appeared in the last issue. At the time, we believed the mine captain was Mr Paul, but we have received a correction. William Henry Paull (sic)

was a mine captain, living in Leadhills in 1896, but he is NOT the man featured in our photograph. In the next issue, we hope to provide more details of W.H. Paull, who is the grandfather of NMRS Member, Mrs Shelagh Bridges.

Editor

NMRS - Newsletter August 2010

Email to the Editor

I received a request from A.R.Nichols in Tasmania asking to be put in contact with our Founder and Honorary Member Caleb Wade. I spoke with Caleb and was able to pass on a contact number. In Roger's email he has the following recollections:-

"I certainly went to what I recall as being the foundation meeting at the Devonshire? in Skipton. I would have been about 16 at the time. First came across CPC/NCMRS members (definitely Derrick? Platt - who took the colour photo) in Trollers Ghyll



"Platty" got me interested and we (school and Scout group) went on to do a few weeks of shaft sinking at Stump Cross during a school holiday, staying at Low Farside. I left school in 1960 and thereafter spent almost every weekend at Greenhow, and later Hebden until getting a job on Grassington Moor at Dales Chemicals and a year later at Dry Ghyll Mine.

Michael "Dicko" Dickinson followed me to both. Lived initially at the NCMRS 'cottage' at Hebden, before moving into the Black Horse in Grassington, thence boarding with Roger Harker's parents at Lythe House. When Dry Ghyll closed, moved to geophysical exploration, primarily in Ireland, then tin processing in Cornwall, then transferred to tin in Tasmania, later HR management. Finally ten years in HR work at corporate in Sydney. Retired back to Tasmania in 1998. So, that chance encounter in Trollers Ghyll made a bit of a difference!



Roger Nichols second from left and Caleb Wade second from the right
c1962

Dry Ghyll Mine (owned by the Clay Cross Company) operated as such between about 1962 and 1966. They purchased the leases from Fred Walker of Burnsall who worked the area for many years and managed the operation for Clay Cross. Interesting anecdote is that whilst there I was known as Arthur. I applied for a job when still working for Dales Chemicals on Grassington Moor. Was told they'd let me know a bit closer to the time the mill was ready for operation.

Some weeks later, I had a phone call for Arthur Nichols offering Arthur the job. I accepted and spent the next four years known as Arthur. (My first initial is A but for Aldred, usually mistaken for Alfred).

Nobody knew any better because, amongst friends, I was known as Nick. Clay Cross worked primarily in Newcastle Rake and latterly Gill Heads.



Kettlewell

Back – Keith "Foz" Foster, me, Roger & Susan Harker, Caleb,??, ??, Alf & Mary Cannell

When the operation closed in 1996, Michael Dickinson and I worked on, stripping the mine of salvageable equipment, rehabilitating and pulling out pillars of fluorspar which we sold to Clay Cross. We had intended to continue on as self employed miners, but I was offered a job in Ireland doing geophysics for a company which had done a gravity survey at Dry Ghyll and decided that offered more security, especially with a new baby. Did that for three years in various parts until son's school age which demanded a less nomadic lifestyle. Thus Cornish tin mining (processing) at Wheal Jane until transferring in 1974 to Renison Mine in Tasmania.

An offshoot of the geophysics is that, when back at the office in Shropshire, I dug out the survey results from Dry Ghyll. They showed a significant gravity low which I still believe indicated the position of Longs Lake (if you are familiar with the history). Did poke about in a few holes in the vicinity but never found a way in.

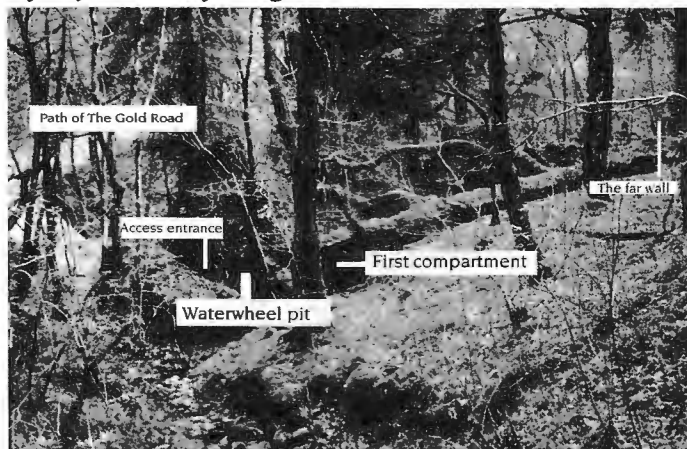
An end of an era. I did call at Stump Cross in about 1994 on a UK trip and was pleased to chat with Barbara and Gordon who remembered me from those shaft sinking days."

A. "Roger" Nichols

Me and Tyddyn Gwladys

A cry for help!

In the past twenty-five years, I have made many forays into the Dolgellau gold belt of North Wales. With a group of like-minded enthusiasts from Chester, we have explored adits, examined old buildings, searched for shafts, photographed murky interiors and on occasion, we have successfully washed for gold in the Afon Wen. It has always been enjoyable to show visitors these aspects of Britain's history in the gold business, but my commentary usually ceases at Tyddyn Gwladys. For a start, I always wonder where Tyddyn Gwladys begins and finishes.



A view of the building from high ground showing the main features of the Tyddyn Gwladys building, following electronic processing

The Forestry Commission claims it is "right beside the rolling Mawdach river" in Coed y Brenin (The King's Forest) and promotes its car park as the starting point for "the Golmines [*sic*] Walk". The nearby Ferndale holiday cottages state, "the historic Welsh gold era will unfold when you stay in one of the three uniquely converted Tyddyn Gwladys gold mine buildings". More reliable is T.A. Morrison, writing in *Goldmining in Western Merioneth* in 1975. He records how Matthew Francis inspected the locality in 1846 and "found several lode branches" but his output



A view of the surface features that shows the compartmentalised nature of the building at Tyddyn Gwladys

figures favour lead ore (12 tons in 1848 and 9¼ tons in 1851). In 1881, 43 tons of ore provided just 7 ounces of gold following "a determined effort by Pritchard Morgan". Morrison ends his chapter with a sketch of the mine and the wry comment, "nothing has been done since".

He reproduces a small photograph of the mine in 1860, but gives few clues as to its specific location. Nevertheless, one substantial building has survived close to the steel bridge that spans the Afon Gain, just before it joins the River Mawdach. The building is viewable from the footpath but scrambling up the bank, offers a closer inspection. Recently, I scrambled up the bank for the fourth time, determined to deduce its function ... but I remain stumped.

It measures about sixty metres in length, and five metres in width. There was once a conventional sloping roof, with a centralised eave, and it is subdivided into five "compartments". Nowadays, open gratings permit a view into the vast subterranean section, which can be accessed from an entrance at the west end, near the pit of the waterwheel, once driven by water ducted from the Afon Gain.



Close to the wall of the wheel pit, there is access to the subterranean section of the building



A view that captures the full length of the 'chamber' below ground, and which shows another opening at the far end.

It must have had a purpose ... but what was it? Why are there sub-divided areas at ground level? What was the purpose of the subterranean area? Anyone with ideas is welcome to share them by email at finlaggan@tesco.net, and if appropriate, there will be a sequel in the next Newsletter.

Ron Callender

Author's note : If my dimensions are hazy, there is a simple explanation. Following my examination of the features of the building, I fell onto a set of slabs designed to duct water from the wheel pit. I broke two ribs and picked up extensive bruising and multiple abrasions. The incident ended proceedings.

Editor:- Ron, all of us join in wishing you a speedy recovery with no lasting ill effects.

CLAUGHTON MANOR BRICKWORKS

"Lune Valley site mothballed"

On Friday, 23rd April it was announced the production of their brick would be mothballed and so 28 workers would lose their jobs. From the local newspaper the Lancaster Guardian, Friday, 23rd April the spokesman for Hansen Building Products, Mr. David weeks explained *"There are no plans to dismantle the aerial ropeway as it would be essential*



West End Brickworks

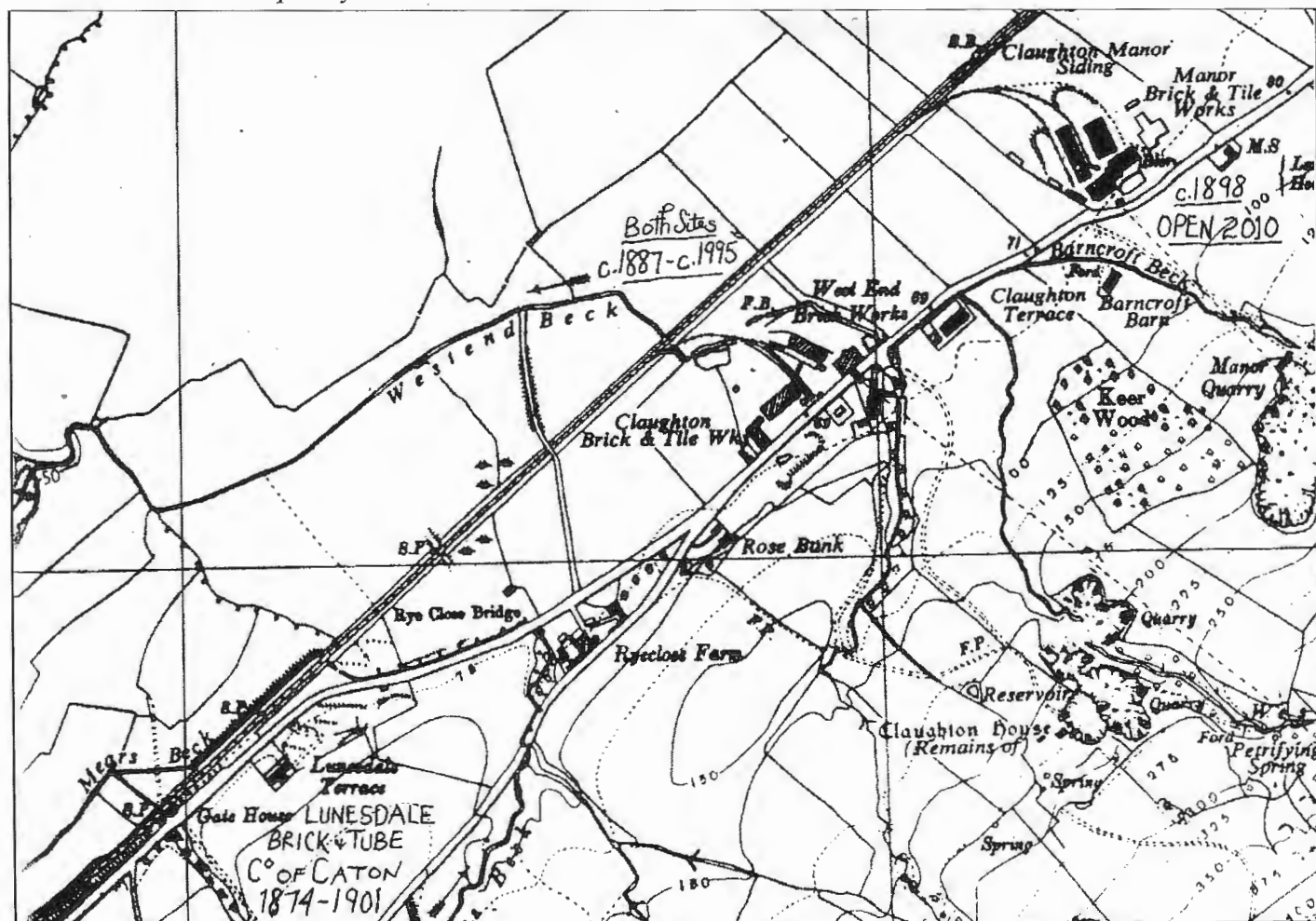
One of the three remaining stanchions above the Belt Wood Area. Used to convey shale to the West End Brick Works, the road site being demolished in May 2007

Picture taken on the 19th April, 2010

to the business if and when the brickworks was to start production again". Mr. Weeks also mentioned *"If things pick up we'll go back in and start production again and the first people we'd turn to are those that have been made redundant"*.

I have for the last three years been encouraged to research the three, Lune Valley, brick making sites by both the Management and the working staff of the Claughton Manor Brickworks. At six weeks after this date, gaps are now showing in the site's stock of brick and a steady return of wagons.

Bernie Bond

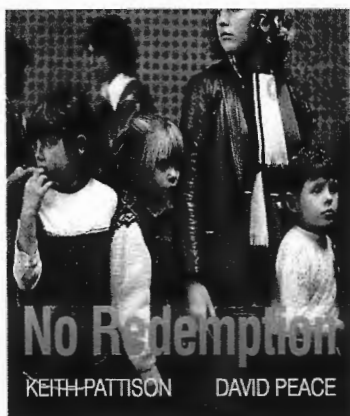


Mine wastes report

The British Geological Survey has just published a report for the Environment Agency on the mineral wastes associated with closed and abandoned mines in England & Wales: Palumbo-Roe, B. and Colman, T., 2010.

The nature of waste associated with closed mines in England and Wales. British Geological Survey Open Report OR//10/14. 88pp. The report is available at: <http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/10083/1/OR10014.pdf>

Alastair Lings



Published July 2010 this book contains photography from behind the scenes of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike when Keith Pattison spent six months living in the Durham coastal village of Easington Colliery and photographing the people there as events took shape.

He was able to witness from inside a community laid siege by the state. Taken as a whole, these images form a narrative sequence from the optimism of August, through the deepening pessimism of winter, right through to the final vote to return to work.

In 2010 David Peace saw the photographs, recognised their relevance to present day Britain and became involved. He went to the colliery with Pattison on election day, 6th May to interview three of the people caught up in the strike. They brought back memories of the Strike and how it affected and continues to affect their community. Together they make explicit the dignity, anger, bewilderment and humanity captured in the photographs.

The 2010 interviews make very interesting reading with some political surprises. The photographs which take up most of the book could do with more captions.

At £20 the book is expensive. The Strike of 1984-85 shook the foundations of British society, tearing apart traditional mining communities and leaving them in tatters and those interested in modern social history will find this book a good example of social problems.

Published by Flambar Press Ltd. P/b 100pp orders to Central Books, telephone 0845 4589911 or you can visit the website www.centralbooks.co.uk

Barbara Sutcliffe

Ian Forbes

Manager of the North of England Lead Mining Museum (Killhope), Upper Weardale. (1983-2010)

Ian retired from his post as Manager of the Killhope Museum in January of this year, much to the regret of all who knew him, particularly his staff in the Museum, his colleagues in the Durham County Council (who own the site) and last but not least all of us in the Friends of Killhope. He has been the first and only Manager of Killhope so far and its present status as a multi-award-winning flagship site is all due to Ian and his wonderful staff over the years.

We shall remember him for his passion for Killhope, which we sincerely hope will continue with us in the Friends, his friendliness, his approachability, his diplomacy and his interest in every person with whom he dealt. He knew so many people in the Weardale area who all had tales to tell and, of course, told them to Ian who stored them in his encyclopaedic mind and brought them out at appropriate moments to interest those around him. His friendly contact with people also meant that people would donate their treasures to Killhope, such as some of the wonderful spar boxes which are on display on the Killhope site, Sir Kingsley Dunham's hammer, local bibles, etc. The Friends of Killhope also have a large archive, the vast majority of which was initially handed over to Ian.

Ian's emphasis on the care of his customers, particularly the children, and their interest in and enjoyment of the Killhope site is amply shown by the 18 awards won by Killhope between 1990 and 2008, including: the *Guardian's Family Friendly Museum Award 2004*, *Northumbria Tourist Board's Pride of Northumbria awards 2000 - Special Award to Killhope as "An outstanding learning experience"* and *Gold Award Small Visitor Attraction of the Year - North East Tourism Awards 2008*

Shelagh Bridges

Reprinted from the June 2010 issue of the NAHMO Newsletter with thanks.

New Members



The Society extends a warm welcome to the following who have joined our ranks since April:-

K. McManus	Ellesmere Port
T. Collins & Family	Birmingham
T. Ball & Family	Bedale
I. Eeles	Chester-le-Street
J. Gibbon & Family	Pontypool

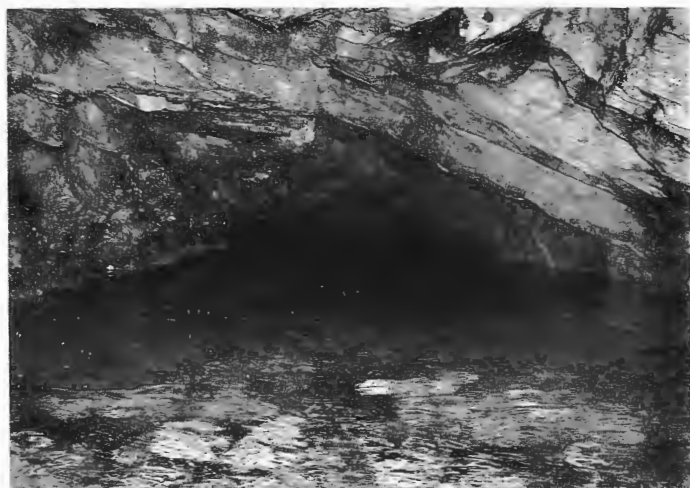
A short memoir from *The Gold Road*

I had been living in Cheshire for two years before it dawned on me that the Dolgellau gold belt was one hour's drive from my home. It was not difficult to find Dolgellau, avoid the town centre and drive up the Mawddach valley. A tricky turn at Ganllwyd took me into the vast forest and just as I began to question my sense of direction, I came on a sign - "The Gold Road".



The Forestry Commission board in a photograph taken in 1982

I took a photograph and when the sign disappeared in 1985, I endeavoured to establish the reason, but drew a blank. I had the impression the authorities were loathe to promote gold, gold mines or gold washing opportunities. Since then, the Forestry Commission has created a new car park further up the Gold Road, and its position is now a good launch pad for explorations of the area's industrial archaeology. Very soon, there is a waterlogged adit; it is small but offers a good chance to rest and benefit from the cool air wafting out of the entrance.



The waterlogged small adit close to the Ferndale cottages at Tyddyn Gwladys



The channel that ducts water from the waterfalls of the Afon Gain (to be seen on the RHS) to the former waterwheel at Tyddyn Gwladys

Further along the trail, two ruined buildings reveal a small pit for a water wheel, exceptionally heavy buttressing, and a fireplace to suggest an explosives store, or a workshop, or an office ... or all three! From here, it is not far to the confluence of the rivers Gain and the Mawddach. A spectacular waterfall camouflages a concealed leat, cut into the rock to deliver water to the water wheel of a building, known as Tyddyn Gwladys.



Reproduction of the photograph that appeared in *Financial World* in 1888 showing the processing works of the Gwynfynydd gold mine

The noise of powerful waterfalls signals the approach to the remains of the 19th century mining structures. On the ground, there is evidence of ore-crushing stamps, a wheel pit, and bits of discarded machinery. Best of all, are the traces of the Gwynfynydd Mill, which *Financial World* photographed in 1888, in a view featuring the gigantic waterwheel. Another photograph, thought to be early 20th century, indicates modifications to enlarge the size and scope of the working area. For example, the waterwheel is no longer evident. As a rule, I have my lunch here. I reflect on the fact that the area was once natural forest, but the search for minerals and especially gold, brought entrepreneurs, managers, miners and casual workers to this specific spot. I try

to imagine the scene as the men planned their buildings and set out to develop the site as an industrial zone.

Always, I reflect on the lack of an interpretation board, knowing that the historical remains would be venerated in California, and that the locality deserves an explanation. What it was ... what it did ... when it worked. "It would not be difficult", I think as I continue to plod along The Gold Road. The pictorial material exists, and the route is well travelled by holiday makers and walkers. But more mining features loom into view and the first is identified by an attractive bridge spanning the river.



Ruins of a small smelter thought to have been shared by two companies operating on the opposite bank of the river Mawddach

The remains of Cwm Heisian mine survive on the west side of the far bank. Submerged beneath vegetation, they are difficult to see, but one of the adits seems to lead off from a room. That is, there is a fourth wall, pierced by a great hole, which invites scrutiny. Further upstream, also on the far bank, is a lovely little smelter, purportedly shared by companies known as East and West Cwm Hiesian. In the distance, there are the workings of the 'modern' Gwynfynydd mine: Now abandoned, with warning notices placed

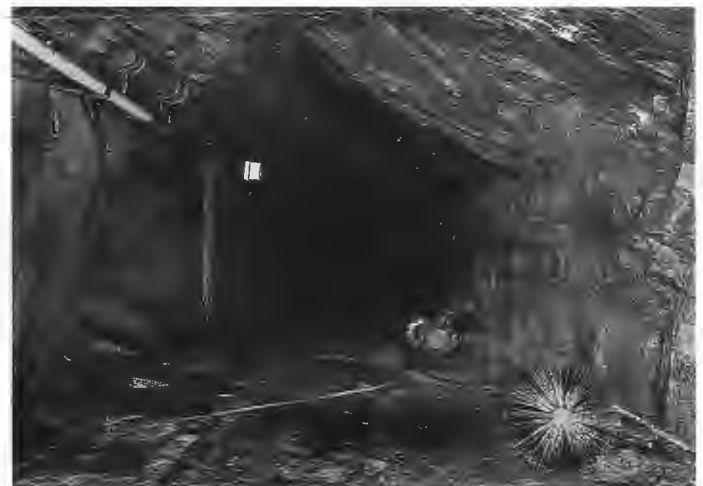


The wheel which was revealed when the covering layers of spoil were used to block level 5 of the Gwynfynydd gold mine in the 1990s



A restored 19th century photograph showing the hoist, which transferred bogeys from the upper levels to the main level of Gwynfynydd gold mine. Now overgrown, the feature is very hard to detect.

by a security company, there is history all around. Undergrowth obscures the former hoist, but a good photograph exists. A path near here ought to lead to the entrance to level 5, but the mine manager obliterated all signs of the entrance during his mining operations in the 1990s. However, there was a bonus. In using a vast heap of spoil to block the entrance, he uncovered the wheel that once operated the transfer of bogies up and down the slope.



A successful photograph of the main adit of the Gwynfynydd gold mine taken through a small aperture in the steel door blocking access

A steel door now protects the main entrance, but it is possible to poke a camera lens through a hole and, with an automatic time exposure, attain a view of the interior. About ninety metres beyond the abandoned offices, there is another adit, which was an integral feature of ambitious tourist trips in the 1990s. That is, the modern-day gold miners worked in one part of the mine, while a guide took tourists around another segment, which included a chance to watch the miners on close-circuit television. It was a tape recording on a long loop, but very convincing.

The Gold Road continues beyond the Gwynfynydd Mine, and Roberts Level is by the river. It measures no more than forty metres and is ideal for giving newcomers a taste of mine exploration. More serious are the remaining traces of the Bedd-coedwr Mine. In spite of the waterlogged entrance, access is easy, but difficult to exit. It is not extensive but contains a crossing, formed by a second trial having been driven at 900 to the adit. A rail track has been laid along both and at the junction, there is a device that assisted the manoeuvres of the small bogey, whose frame and four wheels was present in the late 1980s.

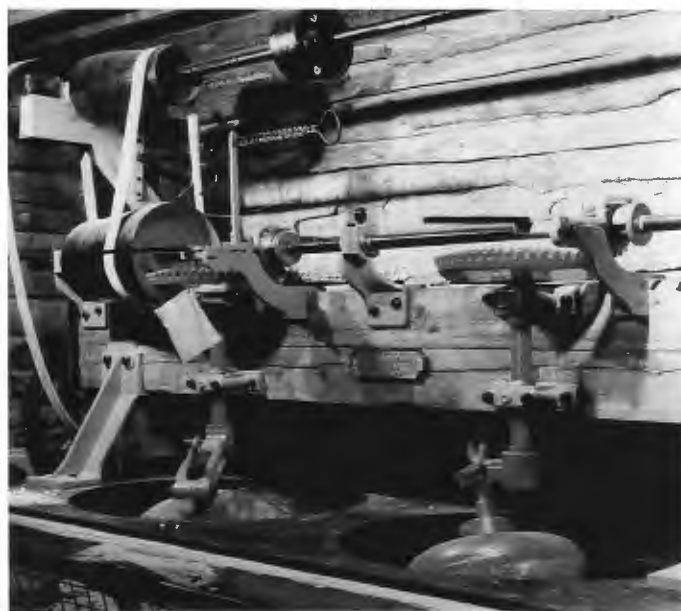
And finally ... further on, the mine evolves into the Princess Marina Mine where the owners installed two Britten pans (for grinding the ore to recover gold). For years, they remained abandoned, unwanted and unloved, until HRH Prince Charles dropped a hint and the apprentices of the Steel Company of Wales accepted the challenge to restore them



The interior of Bedd-coedwr mine, which is situated near the end of The Gold Road, contains rails and the chassis and wheels of an discarded bogey.

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The refurbished Britten pans when on view in the Visitor Centre in the 1980s, but now in

The pans graced the Forestry Commission visitor centre for many years, but when the centre relocated to a different part of the forest, the pans vanished. Last month, my enquiry directed to the duty ranger established that they were in a safe place and much thought had been given to a re-installation. "But it would take a low loader to shift them," said the ranger. In the meantime, I have unearthed a photograph that shows them in all their glory.

I guess cash prohibits the authorities making a feature of the Dolgellau gold belt and the history of gold mining. Nothing is gained by saying it would not happen in America but it is a shame. Thankfully, the gold road is there to explore - even if the former, welcoming signpost is missing.

Dr Ron Callender

Data Protection Act

Members are reminded that the NMRS maintains a list of their names and addresses solely for the purposes of printing labels for Membership Cards and posting newsletters and publications.

Such details are deleted from the database for any member who leaves the Society, either after the committee have been notified, or after it has been determined that an overdue subscription has not been paid for several months.

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