



Newsletter

nmrs.org.uk

February 2011

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Editorial

After an eventful year celebrating our 50th Anniversary we now move on to new challenges and discoveries.

Our Membership remains strong and loyal to the Society's aims and with a full programme of events arranged for this coming year, we hope to gain more of your support with these activities.

By coincidence we have two stories of Welsh gold written by authors, unconnected to each other, other than by a "try their luck" attitude but sadly now, probably a thing of the past.

A recent BBC Welsh News programme did a feature on the two main rivers and reported on the alleged damaged being caused to the environment by gold panning, which is now prohibited with up to £20,000 fines being threatened.

I was travelling on the Weardale Railway last year (Wolsingham to Stanhope) and spoke with one of the American owners who was excited at the prospect of the setting up of a opencast pit for coal mining in the vicinity and how this would greatly contribute to the finances of their railway venture with possible extensions to Westgate and Barnard Castle. According to reported news (see page 10) this may well happen at Whittonstall.

Editor

David R Neal

Lluest Fach, Llwyn y Groes, Tregaron, Ceredigion.
SY25 6PY

Tele:- 01974 821213

Email:- dgmail22-nmrs@yahoo.co.uk

Would you please note that the deadline for inclusion with the May Newsletter is the

20th April, 2011

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.

Membership Secretary

Thank you to all of those who have paid their 2011 subscription and you should find enclosed your Membership Card. Please keep this safe and carry it with you whenever on NMRS business. If you have chosen to pay by STO your Membership Card may be missing because of the lateness of our bank statements. Any such cards will be posted out as soon as possible.

Some of you have yet to pay (you know who you are!) and your cheque would be most welcomed. We are planning on sending out BM91 and a Memoirs, all being well this year, but if I don't get your money by the end of April, you'll miss out! If you have mislaid the paper work, then please send your details and a cheque for £17 to me at the address below.

David R Neal

2011 AGM

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday, 19th March at Coldstones Quarry, Pateley Bridge. The meeting **starts at 11am** followed by a free buffet lunch (pre-booking essential) and an afternoon underground at Gillfield Mine or looking around the quarry. There is a booking form with this Newsletter; please let Martin know if you are planning to attend so that we will have numbers for catering.

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Publication News

Thank you to all of you who, during 2010, helped to support NMRS by buying back copies and extra copies of our publication. Please remember we have some good second hand copies of some of our out of print Monographs and Memoirs. Please let me know if you have a "wish" list so I can try and help you out.

Unfortunately due to ever increasing postal and packaging costs we have had to increase postage charges on orders. Our charges have not increased for over ten years but we were at a point where we were losing money on each individual BM being mailed out. With postal charges going up again in April we have now modified our charges to reflect extra costs. Members can avoid postal charges by ordering books to be taken to our meetings or collecting them from Nelson by prior arrangement. As usual I will be taking some second hand BMs to our AGM in March so come along with your cheque book or plenty of cash!!

We still have available a few of our specially commissioned NMRS 50th Anniversary badges to any of you wanting a spare. These are available for £1 plus 75p post & packing. Again orders can be taken to meetings.

Barbara Sutcliffe
Telephone 01282 614615
mansemis@btopenworld.com



Reeth

As you all know last year we reached another important milestone when we celebrated our 50th Anniversary up in Reeth. Some of the appreciative quotes we received afterwards include

"Just a quick note of appreciation to all concerned for a most enjoyable conference. It was a pleasure to be there and to benefit from the excellent organisation, the splendid catering the great good humour of the delegates"

"A very interesting mix of talks/speakers"

"It was a pleasure to attend, although I only knew a very few from "my" era!"

"It was a really enjoyable and memorable day"

Barbara Sutcliffe

New Members

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

R. Appleyard	Otley
R. Bailey and Family	Skipton
M. Foden	Stocksfield
P. Gallagher	Skipton
R. Witt	Leeds

Peter Richardson

The society wishes to advise members that Peter Richardson, author of *The Mines of Dartmoor* and the *Tamar Valley* (British Mining No.44), died on New Year's Day aged 92 following a short decline.

His funeral was held at St Andrew's church, Ippleton (near Newton Abbott) on January 14th. Peter is survived by a daughter who remarked that his "happiest days were Dartmoor and mining pursuits".

Archaeological

Research Seminar/Workshops

As a part of the Research Framework project looking at the archaeology of the extractive industries - mining and quarrying - there will be a series of seminar / workshops around England to examine the various specialist themes within the project.

On Saturday 19 February, at the National Coal Mining Museum for England, Caphouse Colliery, near Wakefield there will be a further seminar looking at the archaeology of *coal, clay and ironstone*. The event will give participants the opportunity to discuss their work, to learn what others are doing and exchange ideas. For example, over the last few years a number of mining history interest groups have been investigating early steam engine sites associated with the coal industry. The work they are doing has the potential to expand our knowledge of early developments in pumping techniques. Sharing the results can help interpret the findings, adding value to the work and drive research forward. If you are involved in similar work on coal, clay or iron mining, then make sure you attend.

Other seminars on *lead, tin, copper and slate working* are also planned for the winter of 2011 at venues in the South-West, Cumbria and Derbyshire. Details will be circulated widely and posted to the Research pages at the National Association of Mining History Organisations' website - www.namho.org

For more details email Peter Claughton at p.f.claughton@exeter.ac.uk or Phil Newman at projectofficer@namho.org

Peter Claughton

Meets for 2011

Thank you to everyone who has agreed to lead a meet next year. There is an excellent variety of surface and underground, with some familiar favourites and some new venues. Please check the Newsletter for further details.

Saturday 9 April

Surface walk of Bordley lead mines. Meet at Malham Moor Gate (by the cattlegrid) SE 951653 at 10.15am for a 10.30am start.

Leader Janis Heward, 01423 564197.

Saturday 14 May

Surface walk around Hanber Side levels and calamine mines near Malham, c5 miles. Meet at Malham YDNP car park, SE 900626 at 10.30am

Leader Tom Knapp, 01756 791378
tomknapp69@yahoo.co.uk

Saturday 4 June

Underground meet at Goldscope mine. Meet at Little Town Bridge car park, Newlands Valley (NY 2345 1950). Harness or web belt and cows tail needed. Insurance is essential.

Leader Derrick Emptage 07812 835038

Saturday 25 June

Surface walk of coal mines at Bacup.
Leader Clive Seal 01768 885969.

Saturday 16 July (or 23 July)

Underground meet at Rogerley Mine, Weardale. Details being arranged in May 2011. Maximum 12 people.

Leader David Neal, 01974 821213

Saturday 6 August

Underground meet at Force Crag Mine, near Braithwaite. Meet in the car park at the start of the mine road (NY 2260 2390) at 10am. Harness or web belt and cows tail needed. Insurance is essential.
Leader Derrick Emptage 07812 835038

Saturday 20 August

Surface walk of Bollington, Rainow and Pott Shrigley coal mines, East Cheshire. Meet at 10.30am at the start of the bridleway off Bakestonedale Road SJ 95535 79560. (head uphill from Pott Shrigley Church towards Kettleshulme, pass through the old brickworks and the pull in is about ¼ mile up on the left). Booking essential - maximum number of walkers is 20

Leader David Kitching 01625 423249
email: davidk@brocross.co.uk

Saturday 10 September

Underground meet at Brownley Hill mine, Nenthead. Easy dryish mine. Meet at 11am in the Nenthead Heritage Centre car park NY 781435. Nenthead is on the A688 Alston/Weardale road.

Leader Paul Dollery, 01937 580 579.

Saturday 22 October

Autumn Meeting, starting with a buffet lunch at 12 noon. Gisburn Village Institute (to be confirmed). Volunteers who can give presentations, or show photographs of meets, would be very welcome.

Sallie Bassham

NB: Meet Leaders

Would all Leaders please ensure that a "Meet Report" is produced with perhaps, a photo or two, by someone from within their group. This report should be sent to the Editor for inclusion with the next Newsletter. This way, all members can be aware of the varying activities of the Society. Only three meets out of six were recorded in 2010. Thank you.

David R Neal

At the bottom of your garden?

I'll let you into a secret! At the bottom of our garden is a repository of NMRS Publications. The photo shows how one of our garages now accommodates the stock of our books, all neatly labeled. Now there is no excuse in getting your orders dispatched quickly. I even have my old desk, used for many years in teaching, as a packing station. It was kindly donated by my late head who, in packing 39 small children into a tiny space, said I did not need a desk!

Packing is quite easy, small packages entail a short brisk walk, but going to the Post Office is another story - long queues and too many people coughing and spluttering! Large orders are no problem. We have fantastic carriers who, if I phone after lunch, still manage to collect the same day.

Barbara Sutcliffe



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Welsh Gold

Some early reminiscences

I must have been about 8 or 9 years old when I first learned about gold in Wales. I was an already confirmed mineral collector, and regularly went underground with my mum in the Weardale, and with Dick Barstow, down in Cornwall. Our neighbour learned of my interest, and one day presented me with a beautiful specimen of gold in quartz, from the Clogau gold mine, at Bontddu – together with a newspaper clipping about the gold mine being run by Jack Williams. They knew old Jack, and arranged for my mum to take me up there and meet him.

We drove up to Dolgellau – I had spent the previous weeks exploring every book I could find on the subject of gold mining there – visions of nuggets lying waiting in the river bed, of gold sticking out of the quartz in the veins filled my head. In Dolgellau, we asked for directions, and eventually found the track which led up to the mine. Jack was waiting for us, and with a wry smile, set about educating this naive but enthusiastic little boy. We walked up the river bed, Jack pointing out the vein as it crossed the river, picking up pieces of quartz laced with pyrite and explaining how the gold was associated with sulphides – but then... its where you find it too, young lad...

We climbed out of the river and explored the little sheds and buildings – Jack pointing out rock drills and pieces of machinery that he used.. . A dolly pot for bashing up samples, his gold pan... He picked up some torches, and we trooped into the mine for a look underground. My heart was pounding – my eyes were everywhere – where was the gold!!! We were actually in a gold mine – I had a specimen from here – I could almost feel the warmth of the gold in the little piece of quartz that took pride of place in my collection. We walked deeper into the workings, and down a ladderway – the tunnel led away down, twisting back under the river. Jack smiled at me – he stopped at an outcrop and led my eyes to a splash of iron staining running through the quartz where the vein ran under the river. My incredulous eyes picked out the little flakes and spangles of yellow metal and my little heart soared. We bashed away at the quartz, and soon I had another few pieces – I had collected my own gold, in Jacks mine... The old man smiled and took us out to the sheds where a lunch of sandwiches and pop awaited.

After lunch, Jack stooped and picked up a big gold pan – rusty around the edges – about 18 inches across. He took us down to the stream and began to explain the twists and turns of the river. He made me think about being a piece of gold – how would I behave in the river, where would I sink when the river was a

foaming torrent – imagine I was soooo heavy, where would I go and hide... He stooped and rolled some boulders aside, getting me to collect the gravel from beneath them. Together we dug down under the boulders, digging deeper into the river bed.

All the time, he was tossing the gravel into a sieve, shaking it in the same spot we were digging, and then tossing it away. After an hour or so, we had cleared a hole right down to the rock of the river bed, and he scooped the clay and gravel into the pan. It was so big I could hardly carry it, and he put his arms around me and held the rim while I learned the rocking, swirling motion that lifted the gravel over the rim, and left behind the heavy minerals from the river bed. A minute or two later, and we had almost emptied the pan, save for half a cupful of fine black and red sand. He took the pan from my hands, and with me intently watching his every move, flicked the dark sand aside to reveal a bright yellow tail of tiny yellow gold flakes and grains. He smiled – and handed me the pan. “Take it with you lad – there’s no more of these now – they’ve all rusted, but this one’s still good.. its the last of the old Welsh gold pans – they made them here in Dolgellau”

I’ve never forgotten Jack. I was so privileged and lucky to have met him – I don’t think many people enjoyed his hospitality, and his gold pan is one of my treasured possessions. It’s been all over the world with me – I’ve worked as a gold geologist in mines in Australia, Africa, South America, the mountains of California, China – and I’ve always had Jacks pan. I’ve panned gold all over Scotland, Cornwall, Devon and Wales – but my favourite spot is still Dolgellau – the Mawddach and the Wen.

As a teenager, I used to camp up at Gwynfynnyd Mine in my first little old Landrover. Jack had told me to go up to the mill site, and pan the gravels below the mill – so I started to use his system – clearing boulders first, trying to imagine where the water would surge and flow when it was in flood. After a week, I’d cleared an area a good few feet across, and was systematically shovelling gravels from the bottom of the hole – sieving them roughly, but secure in the knowledge that the gold would always sink straight to the bottom. I shifted tons of gravel that week – but eventually the contours of the river bed started to appear – little potholes and slots in the solid rock bed. Working more carefully now, I sieved the gravel into the pan, scooping the light material off the top, refilling with more gravel, scooping the top, sieving and scooping – hour after hour. In all this time, I could hear Jack telling me the gold would be at the bottom of the pan – don’t bother clearing it – just keep washing and concentrating. He had another trick – he

used to suck the last of the gravel from the deep potholes with a piece of drainpipe – a crude plunger was fashioned out of a tennis ball nailed to a broomstick. You shoved it in the hole, pulled the plunger, and discharged it into the pan.

The last job was always to let the water in the potholes and crevices clear – sometimes there would be flat, penny sized nuggets jammed into cracks, and you didn't want to miss those! You pulled them out with tweezers – some of mine still have the marks on them where I wiggled them loose. Clearing the pan was my favourite task – usually at the end of the day. You'd sit in a quiet back eddy, where the water was calm, and gently swish the heavies to one side until that dull yellow tail appeared. When I first went up there, it wasn't uncommon to find nuggets and masses of gold up to a centimetre across lying there in the little dimple at the bottom of the pan. There was often silvery stuff in the pan too – it stuck to the gold and coated the nuggets.

I had begun to meet the locals – some of them had matchboxes full of nuggets that they carried around with them – we used to meet in the Tyn-y-Groes hotel at Ganllwyd in the evenings and compare 'catches'. I'd pull my little vial of gold out of my pocket and proudly dump it on the bar, whereupon one of the old boys would tip a couple of ounces of big, flat nuggets onto the bar and smile in triumph. They'd tell me where to look, and I got to know the charismatic river warden too – his tales of catching local miners dynamiting trout in the river drew hysterics from his assembled audience in the tiny bar. He explained that the silver was mercury from the tables of the stamp mill, washed into the river, and polluting it. From then on I used to collect it, sometimes coming home with enough to fill a film canister – I discovered that it was forming big crumbly lumps of amalgam and collected them for some years before one day burning them off and producing an ingot of pure gold weighing several ounces.

Those evenings in the pub resulted in another strategy – diving. The deep pools were explored, you descended into the gloomy brown depths, and looked for the bright edges of the nuggets as they poked out of cracks they were jammed into by floodwaters. I panned less, and swam more – in those days – the 1970's and early 80's it was easy pickings for a while. About that time a Cornish miner called John Daniels was working up at Gwynfynnyd Mine. Dick Barstow rang me one day and we organised a trip up there to spend a few days in the mine. I must have been about 22 or 23 at the time. Dick had lost most of his hair by then, and was taking me around the country on regular trips to show me his secret localities – there were

dozens of them. I still had no idea how bad the illness was – he just brushed it off and sank another pint. There aren't many photos of him around – I have some shots of him down Gwynfynnyd, in his bright yellow oilskins, climbing around in the stopes. We collected some magnificent specimens that week – the best were beautiful furry goethite, forming botryoidal crusts all over quartz crystals in cavities, with bright marcasite crystals scattered over them. Beautiful. Dick was ecstatic with them. There was gold too – I have some superb specimens of gold – rich masses of hackly gold wires and flakes intergrown with sphalerite and pyrite from the Chidlaw Vein, found close to where the goethite came from.

I recently went back to the river. Gwynfynnyd is shut – the machinery gone, a holiday chalet company owns the land and wants to build holiday cabins all over it. I don't think the Parks Board are too keen on the idea. The forestry tracks have all got locked gates on them – you can't go anywhere, and you don't feel welcome any more. I dug some holes into the river bed and panned. Two days failed to reveal more than a few fine grains of gold. A friend of mine who lives there tells me there were catastrophic floods a couple of years back which ripped the heart out of the river, and now the bureaucrats are trying to stop panning on the basis that it is harming supposedly rare mussels that are supposed to live in the river, but according to the river warden, never have. There have been semi commercial panners living off the river for years – I guess you could say the minority have spoiled it for the majority by being greedy. Like everywhere else, it seems things have changed – the nimbys and bureaucratic wallies have taken over and stopped everyone from having innocent fun. The Tyn-y-Groes has changed hands too – they don't even like dogs in there now, and its all touristy – nothing like the little local pub it used to be, with its regulars, and their matchboxes of gold nuggets..

I never did find out what happened to Jack – he was an old man when I was a kid, so he'll be long gone now. I don't think they'll ever open the mine again, other than to mine gullible shareholders pockets – Jack always reckoned the best gold in Clogau was the bit left in the pillar that kept the river from coming into the workings. He was on Jim'll Fix It once – he took a little girl down who wanted to mine some gold. They set some charges and then took her outside and she held the firing wire onto the terminals of a battery and fired the shots. You heard the dull 'whump, whump' of the shots going off, and sometime after they went down and collected some gold. The little girls dream came true, and Jim was happy. Jack wasn't – the mines inspector turned up the next day

after the show was broadcast and fined him for not using the regulation exploder box – batteries aren't really recommended!

I've still got that gold pan though, and my mum and fiancée used to wear some magnificent jewellery I had made for them out of Welsh gold I panned from the river – set with Chinese aquamarines I mined myself in the Altai Mountains.

Peter Ward
peter@campylite.com

Where do they go? Part I

Perhaps some of you may have wondered where our publications go to. Obviously our members receive some but what happens to any surplus? As they are sold in places with interests similar to our members I thought it would be interesting to let you know where they were. I will only mention outlets that have our BMs on a regular basis. Having recently returned from a holiday in Cornwall I will start with that area where most of our "Cape Cornwall" books go.

The Cook Book/ Bosorne Books
4 Cape Cornwall Street, St Just,
Cornwall, TR19 7JZ.

This establishment, opened for several years now, has a cafe downstairs with coffees, cream teas, home-made soup and good fresh food. Upstairs are rooms of books, which are bought, sold, repaired, restored and rebound. They are open from 10am – 5pm in Summer and in Winter from 10am -4pm. For more details please look at their websites

www.thecookbookstjust.co.uk
www.bosomebooks.co.uk

Geevor Tin Mine

Pendeen, Penzance, Cornwall, TR19 7EW

This is one of the largest preserved mine sites in the country housed in two acres of listed buildings. Underground tours are available and an interesting museum. The cafe and gift shop are free entry and there is a good selection of Cornish books, gifts and mineral specimens available. www.geevor.com

Cornish Mines and Engines,
Pool, nr Redruth, TR15 3ED

Two Cornish beam engines are preserved in their towering houses. Taylor's engine is one of the largest surviving in the world. And Mitchell's engine is in action daily. The gift shop has a good selection of mining books, mostly of Cornish origin.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cornishminesandengines

Just Books

9 Pydar Mews, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2UX

A second-hand bookshop specializing in Cornish books. Their website is www.pydarmewsbooks.com

King Edward Mine Museum ***Troon, Camborn, TR14 9HW***

This adjacent to the circular Great Flat Lode cycle/walking trail and an excellent starting place with plenty of parking. Beside the museum there is a good selection of new and second hand books of mining interest available.

www.kingedwardmine.co.uk

County Maps & Minerals 22 River Street, Truro,
Phone 01872 272972

If you want a map this is the place to visit. Also available are a small selection of books, lots of mineral specimens and some fossils.

On a depressing note two of the outlets we usually visit, had closed since our last Cornish trip. If you visit anywhere that might be interested in stocking our books please let me know and I will contact them. More next time.

Barbara Sutcliffe
mansemins@btopenworld.com

Halton Lea Gate

A third application has been submitted for an opencast mine at Halton Lea Gate that's near Haltwhistle. The application is to extract 140,000 tonnes of coal and is very similar to an application which was turned down last December.

Sallie Bassham

Bardon Mill Colliery Site

According to the Hexham Courant, Bardon Mill is to have an 'underground' village hall on the site of the coal mine which closed in 1973. The newspaper took the opportunity to print a photograph of miners leaving the colliery at the end of a shift.

Sallie Bassham

NCB Collection Vol 1: *Portrait of a Miner*

The British Film Institute have recently released the film below, available for £18.98 including VAT at 20%.

"From intense drama-documentaries and humorous safety films to cine magazine and instructional films, this unique collection of work from the National Coal Board Film Unit offers insight into the domestic, community and working life of miners and their Families and testifies to the incredible effect that coal mining has had on British life."

(UK, 1947-1978 various directors, 368 minutes)

http://filmstore.bfi.org.uk/acatalog/info_13726.html

Alistair Lings

Rough Lane Coal Road 1678

With the publication of Northern Mine Research Society's *Ingleton Coalfield* in 2005, local interest continues to turn up. Recently, Mr Robert Baines drew my attention to his interest in three coal workings in a seven acre meadow called Bull Ing; these workings are positioned over a four foot coal seam (ref: BM76 page 51).

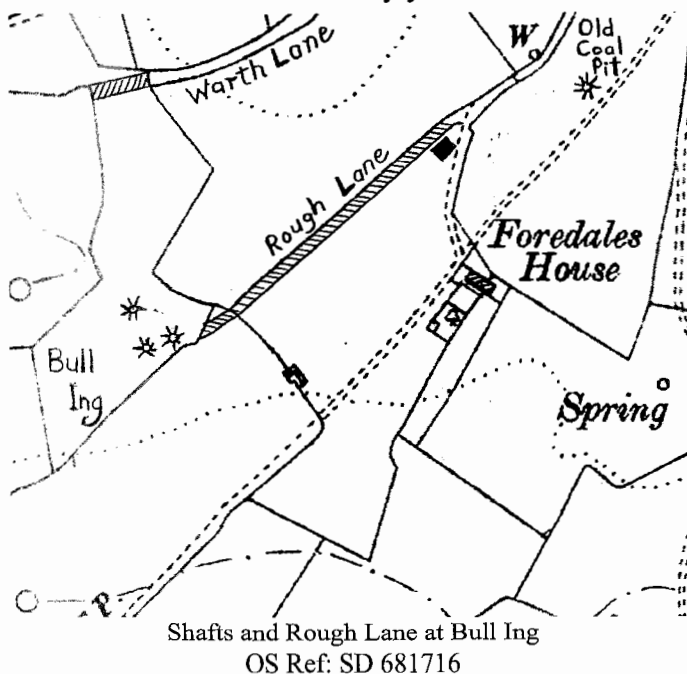
Ingleton coal extraction is minuted to have begun in 1612. The three workings shown (there are more in the field) were dug out in 1673/78 by Leanard Wharton (2) and Henry Bouch (1).

Anthony Bouch, the Lord of the Manor at Ingleton Hall, passed away in February 1673. His son, Henry, succeeded him the following year and began a court dispute with Leanard Wharton and the digging of the two shafts twelve months previous. Henry Bouch claimed all coal mining was restricted to the nearby area of Raygill. Bouch also sank a shaft nearby which threatened to flood and make the two existing shaft-workings unsafe.

Other court cases followed in 1678, a William Knipe against Bouch was granted the right to dig coal shafts/mines where he wished and to have access using wagons and carts.

Further coal interest by William Knipes and Anthony Walker engaged Cuthbert Kidd of Burton in Lonsdale to restore the shafts and workings and so full production returned. Kidd completed a roadway leading to Foredales Farm and Warth Lane. Muriel Humphries' map collection shows the coal road "Rough Lane" on one OS Drawing but not on much later OS Maps.

In the map below Rough Lane is lined out as shown as is also a small section of Warth Lane. The latter has been removed in the last thirty years.



The above photograph is the current view of Rough Lane coal road. The bales in the distance right are at the junction to Fourdales. (Photo by B.Bond, November 2010).

References

- 1) LRO, WRW/L. Probate Inventory of Richard Lowther 1649.
- 2) YAS DD123 (Knipe and Others against Bouch November 4th, 1678, page 5)
- 3) Unpublished excellent Ingleton Coalfield researched by M. Humphries. Holder B.bond

Further Reading

- 1) John Bentley *The History of Ingleton* pp 176-179
- 2) J.Bentley, M.Gill, B.Bond *Ingleton Coalfield* (BM76 pp 17-23)

Bernie Bond

Washing gold in Wales

A brisk review of the last thirty years

My wife said, "Cheer up!" when a compulsory company transfer brought us to Cheshire in 1980. "You are only one hour from the Dolgellau gold field," she explained. It took some time to venture across the English border and when I did, my first excursions concentrated on the well-known gold mines of



In the Spring, when the water is low, the author liked to be able to access the "hot spots" of the Afon Wen that had been replenished by the winter floods

Gwynfynydd and Clogau. At the time, both mines were "in production" and, for an international lecture, I was anxious to secure evidence that Britain had men mining for gold - albeit on a modest scale. At Clogau, the owner welcomed the idea of assembling a set of good photographs, which he could use to promote the mine. Gwynfynydd was a harder nut to crack but when the mine manager made an important "strike", we were able to agree a deal. In return for a picture taken underground by my technique of painted light, he would allow me to photograph his men at work.

By this time, I had a rough understanding of the locality and the rivers where gold might be found. The Afon Wen was a popular place patronised by many people, but upstream there was a location known as Percy's Canyon. The canyon was out of sight from the roadway; it was intended to be a secret place but the ferocious flow of water probably dissuaded many enthusiasts.



In April 1983, the author revealed Percy's Canyon to his family and they washed about thirty particles of gold without anyone falling in the water

Panning was not easy, but the results were always encouraging. One winter, I fell into the stream, my thigh-length rubber boots filled with water and I was soaked to the skin. Fortunately, my companions decided to quit and rush me home, where I huddled over a warm fire for four hours before thawing out.

For a few summers, we washed the river gravels downstream near a small bridge in the heart of Coed y Brenin forest. The water flow was gentle here; rocks obstructed its motion and gold particles lodged conveniently in the clay-like detritus. We used hand-made pumps to raise material from the riverbed for transfer to the gold pan; a sieve helped to discard unwelcome pebbles and stones, and a selection of

large rocks provided the necessary comfortable seating whilst searching for the yellow metal.

When the winter arrived, the river level rose, and increased its velocity - disturbing the environment but bringing another ration of gold into play; gold which we would seek out and wash from the river during the coming months. On a reciprocal basis, friends from overseas expected me to show them where to pan for gold and the Afon Wen was generally my favourite place. There was easy access and plenty of room for everyone. In theory, "machines" were forbidden but there was no one to draw the line or confiscate the day's takings. One veteran from Leyland used a sluice box to good effect and enjoyed his reward at the end of each day, when he cleaned the riffle system.



Geoff Ball was an enthusiast who set up his sluice box in a secluded corner of the Afon Mawddach and worked all day long before cleaning up his gold

In May 1989, the founder of the embryo Gold Panners Association wanted to organise a competition and Afon Wen met the requirements. Unfortunately, anglers later complained that the afternoon meeting had churned up the riverbed and spoiled the fishing in the Mawddach. We learned our lesson, but it was a successful venture nevertheless, and within three years, the principal organisers secured an invitation to organise the World Championships, which Great Britain hosted in the Lowther Hills of Scotland.

By the end of 1992, my waterproof boots were showing signs of wear and tear and I took this as a good time to retire. "You can't just quit," protested NMRS member Patrick Reeson, "you must have at least one more try." I took his point and in great haste purchased a new pair of boots. But the shop sold me a pair with two left-feet, and all week-end I stumbled on rocks and lost my balance. We found a bend in the river with all the indications showing that gold might be found on the adjacent sandbank. We panned in silence and apparently, I let out a cry. Patrick laid down his shovel and came over; "What is it, mate?"

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I carefully rolled some water over the fine gravel I had been washing up until then. Gingerly manipulating the gravel in my pan with wash water, I exposed the heavy material, which always adheres to the base of the pan. Among the black magnetite sand was a small chunk of gold about five millimetres long; when it moved in the pan, it made a lovely scraping noise ... it was a magic moment.

The Afon Mawddach also offers many places for gold panning ... some are close to the forestry car park, others involve scrambling over the rocks, and some deep water-worn pools require a wet suit. My wife and I ran tutorials in the Mawddach when NAHMO came to North Wales and everyone recovered a sample of gold, but my best recollection relates to the two participants who insisted on purchasing the plastic gold pans I had provided on loan.



Pirjo Muotkajarvi is a gold prospector from Finnish Lapland, but found no difficulty in adapting her distinctive Lapland pan to the waters of the Afon Mawddach

All good things come to an end; the two working gold mines have been abandoned once more and for some reason, panning for gold is now illegal. Violent storms in the winter of 2008/2009 had uprooted trees and disrupted the course of the Afon Wen. Rumours imply that the damage is used as an excuse to blame the gold panners, but another story claims it is to protect the fresh water shrimp. Irrespective of the reason, there are cautionary notices at all the favourite "hot spots" warning panners they *may* [sic] be committing an offence. No one has challenged the possibility, but the British Gold Panners Association has engaged Vince Thurkettle, the President of the World Goldpanning Association, to plead their case. If Vincent cannot pull off a remission, no one can. For the time being, the gold will stay in the rivers and increase in value.

Ron Callender

www.nmrs.org.uk

Scottish Agates

by Nick Crawford & David Anderson

Some of our members are interested in looking for and possibly finding natural items while out and about. This book has been written by two real enthusiasts who have been researching their interest for many years. It is their attempt to share their finding and expertise with others and in my opinion is a qualified success. A full colour paperback (a hard back would have been preferable but printing costs would have been much greater) with more than 800 full colour images of agates, landscape photographs and illustrations.

Some of the photos could have been larger but then book would have become more unwieldy. There is also an illustrated description of the geological history of Scotland. One chapter examines how Scottish agates were formed, another discovers how the characteristic banding colours are due to later desposition of impurities. The history of agate collecting in Scotland provides a detailed account of collecting from about 1800 to the present day.

The bulk of the book divides Scotland into various areas and discusses the ages and characteristics of that area and where to look for agates. Other topics covered, though not in as much detail, are photographing agates, artefacts made from them, techniques for collecting, cutting and polishing agates, and a look at some Scottish agate collectors.

For anyone interested in this subject this book comprises the most detailed study of agates to date and is excellent value at £14.99 plus £2.50 p&p. It is available from Lapidary Stone Publications. I also have some copies available.

Published by Lapidary Stone Publications 2010

Barbara Sutcliffe

Forest of Dean Free Miner

According to a report in The Guardian newspaper, Elaine Mormon has become the first woman to be recognised as a Free Miner in the Forest of Dean. Elaine was born in the Forest of Dean, lives locally, is over 21 and has worked as a miner for more than a year and a day. Her application to be a Free Miner was originally turned down: she met all the criteria except one - *she is a woman*.

She appealed against the decision by the Deputy Gaveler, the issue was raised in parliament, and the Forestry Commission reversed its decision. Elaine's family has mined ochre in the area for generations, and she provides the material for use in artists' paints and in the cosmetic industry.

Sallie Bassham

Lead Mining In Derbyshire History, Development & Drainage. No 3: *Winster to the Via Gellia*

After a longer-than intended interval since Volume 2, the third part of Jim Rieuwerts' magnum opus "Lead Mining in Derbyshire" has emerged in print.

As with the previous two volumes there are some excellent photographs, courtesy of Paul Deakin, particularly the colour images which help the reader to understand the scale and form of the underground workings covered in the book. Although the series was originally intended as a trilogy, the sheer amount of material to include has meant that a fourth volume will be necessary, covering the southernmost part of the orefield and the outliers of Ashover and Crich, as well as updates and corrections to the previous volumes.

The latest part of the series covers the mines from Elton and Winster down to the north side of the Via Gellia, taking in the historically important mines around Wensley and Matlock on the eastern edge of the orefield. Like Volumes 1 and 2, the book is densely packed with information, gleaned not only from the "usual suspects" of the Chatsworth archives and the Bagshaw and Brooke-Taylor collections, but also from the extensive 17th century litigation records of the Duchy of Lancaster and Chancery Courts held by the National Archives and the normally-closed archives of the Duchy of Rutland.

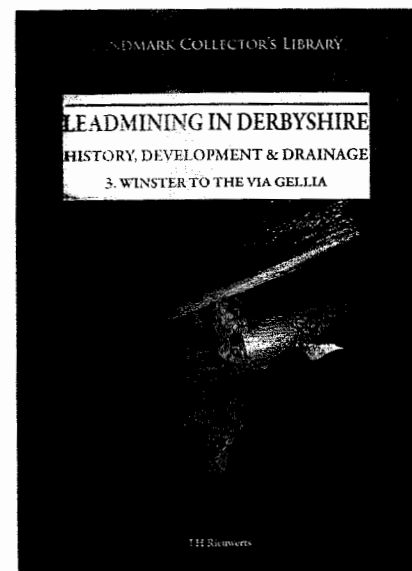
The National Archives records in particular give an invaluable window on the mining industry in the Matlock area through its great expansions during the late 16th and early 17th centuries and the miners' struggle to access the rich veins and pipes below the water table. These also show the changes in the technology employed to deal with the water problems, from the early use of horse-powered engines to try to de-water veins running beneath the shale cover, or where impermeable beds raised the local water table, then the onset of soughing to provide more permanent drainage, through to the introduction of steam power. This is of particular importance in the Winster area, where the great riches of the Yatestoope Pipe prompted the installation of a Newcomen engine as early as 1719.

The one criticism I do have of this volume concerns the placing of some of the maps and illustrations. Occasionally, these are somewhat remote from the text dealing with the mines for these areas, and as a result one often has to flick backwards or forwards for quite some distance when reading the book to try to place where a particular mine or feature is. While the sheer amount of text means that the relevant maps can't always be on the same leaves, I did notice some cases where maps seem to have been grouped together,

rather than placed near to the text they related to. Surely with modern computer-based layout it would not be a problem to address this and seek to place the maps in the optimal position with respect to the text they inform?

Also, for some of the more complicated areas a few more larger-scale maps and diagrams would be of assistance to the reader in visualising the relative layouts of the mines, veins and soughs, particularly for the reader not intimately familiar with the ground.

However, the above does not detract from the merit of this volume. Given the amount of valuable information that has been collected together in this book I would strongly recommend it to anyone with an interest in the history of lead mining, not just the Peak District. I hope Volume 4 will be out some time next year, and I will be trying my best to generate some updates to include in it!



J H Rieuwerts, Horizon Editions Ltd., 2010,
208 pp. £25.
ISBN 978-1-84306-345-2

Adam Russell

News of a (possible) New Mine

According to the Hexham Courant of 3 December, UK Coal has lodged a planning application with Northumberland County Council for a new open-cast mine near Whittonstall.

Proposals put forward in 1978 and 1984 were refused. The latest plans are for extraction of 2.2 million tonnes of coal and half a million tonnes of brick-making fire-clay over a period of about seven years from the 208 hectare Hoodsclouse site.

Sallie Bassham

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NAMHO

This year's conference is from **29 July to 1 August** at the Preston Montford Field Centre, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury organised by the **Shropshire Caving and Mining Club**. There is on-site accommodation for 120 people **including camping** and a bar. There will be lectures **on the Friday** and Saturday and surface and **underground trips** from Saturday to Wednesday and a **conference dinner** on the Saturday evening. **Bookings organiser** is:-

Andrew Wood,
Home Farm, **Castle Pulverbatch**,
Shrewsbury, **SY5 8DS**
01743 718668,
andrewbwood@hotmail.com.
www.namhoconference.org.uk/

The next **AGM and Council** meetings are on Saturday **March 12 at Alderley**, starting at 11am. Observers are **always welcome**.

Following **the meetings** there will be two underground trips in **Wood Mine** (one easy, one with some scrambling). There will also be a trip down West Mine on the **following day**.

Sallie Bassham

News of an Old Kiln

According to the Hexham Courant of 24 December, the **Thorngreen** limekilns at Allenheads have been repaired with socks. Blakett Ord Conservation Engineering of Appleby devised the solution which used grout-filled socks and steel bars to pin the cracked structure together.

Sallie Bassham

Firth of Forth (Courier 08/10/10)

An ambitious joint venture to exploit untapped coal seams under the Firth of Forth has taken a significant step forward. "Fife-based Thornton New Energy Limited and Australian company Riverside Energy Ltd have joined forces in a multi-million pound bid to explore and develop huge underground "clean" coal reserves off the Fife coast — a project which could significantly cut the country's carbon emissions and bring huge investment and jobs to the region.

Thornton New Energy was awarded the UK's first underground coal gasification (UCG) licence last year, which will allow it to turn coal deposits that either cannot be mined or where mining is not commercially viable into a synthetic gas which can then be used as a power generation feedstock.

With a potential coal field area of up to 95 square miles identified beneath the Forth, the project has now gathered pace after both firms unveiled their new joint project offices at Methil Business Park ."

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Tower Colliery site to opencast?

Put on care and maintenance by British Coal on April 22nd 1994, Tower Colliery, near Hirwaun, is famous for being reopened by mine workers who pooled their redundancy money to buy it. This gave the mine a further 13 years of life, but it closed on January 25th 2008 when its workable reserves were exhausted. It is estimated, however, that around 6m tonnes of anthracite remain untapped at a depth too shallow for mining.

Now trading as Tower Regeneration Ltd, the 280 directors are seeking planning consent for opencasting this coal from Rhondda Cynon Taf council, which will consider the matter later this year. Some 200 acres of coal on the old washery site (SN942049) will be worked at depths of up to 165m and be taken by train to Aberthaw power station. The work is expected to take around seven years when the site will be landscaped and other remedial work done.

Mike Gill

MHTI Journal.

The Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland publishes an annual journal, the latest issue being No.9. This 56 page, A4 size, colour journal contain eight articles: A bibliography by county of writings on Irish mines; An history of the Caherglassaun silver-lead mine, Co. Galway; Mesolithic chert extraction at Lough Derravaragh, Co. Westmeath; Derrylea Mine, Co. Galway; The Cashel Silver Lead Mine, Co. Monaghan; The mining boom c1905-08; The internet-a mine of information; Irish miners and the road to Leadville.

Copies are available direct from the editor, Matthew Parkes, mparkes@museum.ie. They can also be obtained from Alastair Lings, 01896 757861, alastairlings@yahoo.co.uk for £9 + £1 P&P.

Alastair Lings

Prosecution

Polluting an Ayrshire burn with coal slurry landed The Scottish Coal Company Limited with a £7,000 fine at Ayr Sheriff Court this week. The fine was imposed after the company pleaded guilty to carrying on an activity liable to cause pollution of the water environment by removing accumulated silt from a settlement lagoon known as the Coseley Pond in such a manner as to cause silt and/or silt contaminated water to spill to the Taiglum Burn at Drongan. The matter was investigated by SEPA and reported to the Procurator Fiscal.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency



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Stenlake Publishing Ltd., Catrine, KA5 6RD

On a recent trip to Scotland, my pal handed me an attractive leaflet and said, "This will interest you." I scoured the contents and agreed; it did interest me.

Stenlake Publishing Ltd specialises in books that gather together old photographs and presents them in a standard format, with generous captions, at the reasonable price of £7.99 (post free). There is another range of books in a larger format, covering for example, *The Highland Railway*, *Old Shetland* and "a quirky bestseller" - *The first home-built aeroplanes*.

My attention focussed on *Old Wanlockhead* (by Alex F Young at £7.99) and I was not disappointed. The cover features a great photograph of the Glencrieff Mine in its heyday, and illustrations of the village emphasise its dependence on lead mining. There are familiar photographs from the archives of the museum - groups of bandsmen, school pupils, curling teams, the Wanlock Lads (a football team of 1938), and railwaymen. The photographs include many mining activities - men installing the power cable to the submersible pump at the Glencrieff Mine, a formal group of miners at the Daisy Bell shaft with the bowler-hatted manager, John Mitchell in attendance, reproduc-



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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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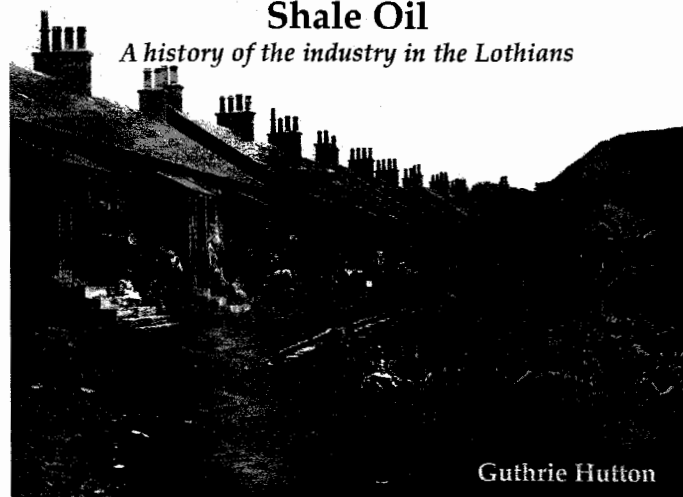
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tions of the certificate and the bookplate issued by the Miners Library, founded in 1756. Best of all is an interior view of the Smiddy, taken around 1900, showing the blacksmith and his assistant in the process of making a horseshoe, presumably for the ponies working underground.

Shale Oil

A history of the industry in the Lothians



The publisher included another book for review - *Shale Oil : A history of the industry in the Lothians*, by Guthrie Hutton at £7.99. The photographs capture the essence of an industry, which started in 1851 at Bathgate and survived for 100 years. The text illustrates how oil is distilled from coal - "shale is the volcanic mud and ash from the bed of a lagoon compressed into sedimentary rock ... only those shales that also contain a high percentage of vegetable matter yield oil ..." In Britain, such deposits only occurred in West Lothian, near Edinburgh. The photographs feature the people, the company-created townships, the works, the encroaching spoil heaps or "bings", and include an inspirational selection of adverts, such as the colour reproduction for "Oakbank motor spirit - the finest burning oil". This book qualifies for a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in "mining". The publisher's website is worth a visit at:- www.stenlake.co.uk

Dr R M Callender