

Northern Mine Research Society

Newsletter



Society established 1960

nmrs.org.uk

May 2011

nmrs.org.uk

From the President

It was very rewarding to see those members who came to our AGM back in March. It gave us an opportunity to say a "Big Thank You" to Sallie Bassham who has done so much for our society in her capacity of President. She has now retired from that position but will still be actively involved with Society matters. I will do my best to carry on her good work. I would also like to thank Les Tyson, another retiree from our Committee. He, too, has been involved for a long time. The Committee extends a warm welcome to two new members, Janis Heward. (a co-opted member) well-known for her presentations at our meetings and her written contribution to BM90 and Peter Pearson, famous for his Grassington Moor Hospitality Vehicle and for the "meeting and greeting" role at our 50th last year.

This leads on to the next 50 years and our Society's planning for the future. Some of our assets – the records, the library, the publications take up a considerable amount of space. What happens to these when our present members are unable to carry on?

With families moving more frequently, homes on the whole becoming smaller, there might be a shortage of volunteers to carry on these important functions of

our society in the future. When we were paying out for storage of our publications, the sums of money going out were growing quite rapidly. Initially we need to make sure we are on a secure financial footing. We have a strong membership and are very fortunate to have generous donations of both money and publications – both ours and other mining related books. Many thanks to all of you who have contributed in this way.

Now I would like us to "have a go" and try and get even more members. To this end we have had some flyers printed advertising our society. Enclosed with this newsletter is one. If every member takes theirs to a local library, asking for it to be displayed we could try and attract even more members, which in turn improves our cash flow. Besides building up reserves we would have more money available for grants as and when needed. If you need more of these flyers please contact me. More members, besides a financial gain, mean a larger pool of possible help in the future. This is only one step in our planning for the next 50 years. Any other suggestions from you, the members would be very welcome.

The NMRS Autumn meeting is to be held on Saturday the 22nd October 2011 at Gisburn Festival

Editor

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Would you please note that the deadline for inclusion with the August Newsletter is the
10th July, 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.

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Hall at 12.30pm. It will start with a free lunch for those members who have booked, followed by a business meeting and presentations. Further details and a booking form will be in the August Newsletter. The Hall is conveniently located with an ample free car park. For those who come with husbands, wives or partners there is good walking to be had in the area and for keen shoppers a chance to visit Boundary Mill Stores about 9 miles away – a huge mill outlet including M&S which draws people to the area from miles away!

Barbara Sutcliffe

Coldstones Quarry

A selection of pictures by John Lawson of NMRS members enjoying a visit to the quarry after the AGM in March.



NMRS Committee for 2011

President

Barbara Sutcliffe

Vice President

Malcolm Street

Junior Vice President

Vacant

Treasurer

Tim Cook

Secretary

Ron Callender

Librarian

Sallie Bassham

Recorder

Mike Gill

Publications Editor

Richard Smith

Newsletter Editor

David Neal

Committee Member

Peter Pearson

Committee Member

Janis Heward

Committee Member

Vacant

Non Voting Appointments

Publications Officer

Barbara Sutcliffe

Membership Secretary

David Neal

Webmaster

Malcolm Street

NAHMO Representative

Sallie Bassham

Vacancies

As can be seen above there are two Committee positions unfilled. If you are interested in either post then please discuss the opportunity with the President who will inform you of what is involved.

It was announced at the AGM that the Newsletter Editor will not be seeking re-election at the 2012 AGM so we would like a volunteer to come on board and work alongside David with the remaining issues for 2011. Again have a word with the President.

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Events for 2011

Saturday 14 May

Surface walk around Hanber Side levels and calamine mines near Malham, c5 miles. Meet at Malham YDNP car park, SE 90 62 at 10.30am

Leader Tom Knapp, 01756 791378

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

Friday 29th - 31st July

NAHMO Conference based at Preston Montford Field Centre, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury. Bookings to Andrew Wood, Home Farm, Castle Pulverbatch, Shrewsbury. SY5 8DS or 01743 718668. There will be additional events in the following week. More details on www.namhoconference.org.uk.

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@broccross.co.uk

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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 12.30pm. Gisburn Village Institute. Volunteers who can give presentations, or show photographs of meets, would be very welcome.

Contact Barbara Sutcliffe on 01282 614615 or email to mansemis@btopenworld.com

Sallie Bassham

Library News

Thank you to David Sample for a very generous donation of books and journals including some early copies of British Mining, an 1872 Mines (Coal) Regulations in a leather cover gold-stamped "Cramlington Colliery" and several books on caves. (Getting this material to the library was quite a saga as my attempts to collect the boxes were hindered by winter snow and ice. Thank you to Janis Heward for acting as go-between.

Thank you to Ivor Brown for modern mining journals and a 2008/9 Midland Institute of Mining Engineers Year Book.

Thank you to Barbara for recent copies of Down to Earth and two books on Scottish mining. One of these is on shale oil; so would the member who asked for information on shale oil last year please get in touch again.

The library is being sorted and re-shelved and visitors should now find it easier to browse and find materials of interest.

Sallie Bassham

Publication News

NMRS has organized a stand at the North West Book Fair in Ingleton. The event, run by Jon P. Smith, is taking place at Ingleton Community Hall (postcode LA6 3HG) on Sunday May 29th from 10am-4pm. I will be there with new and second-hand NMRS publications including some of the older out of print A4 ones and some of our recently donated books. If you are wanting any of our O.O.P. publications please contact me before this event. Normal NMRS member's discounts will be available but if coming to Ingleton please either wear your badge or bring your membership card. We are very grateful to the organiser for waving the stand fees for us at this event.

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The same weekend the Ingleton Overground Underground Festival will be taking place. One of our members, Bernard Bond is involved. He will be at Mealbank Scout Hut on the Saturday and Sunday, talking about Ingleton's Coal Fields and displaying some of the Bernard Bond Collection. John Bentley, a co-writer of our popular BM76 "Ingleton Coalfield" will be with him for part of the weekend so there is a chance to have your copy signed by them.

A full event list can also be found on the website www.ingletonovergroundunderground.co.uk. There will be plenty to see and do and I hope some of you will be able to support both events.

In August the BLMDA are holding their annual Gem and Mineral Fair at the Pavilions of Harrogate, Great Yorkshire Showground on Saturday and Sunday August 21st. More details on www.blmda.com Members wanting to pre-order books to be collected there to save on postage are welcome to do so. Usual discounts will be available on these but unfortunately not on publications at the event.

Sales through our website continue to improve as word gets around. Members wishing to order our publications this way can just e-mail me their requirements with their address and I will post them out with an appropriate invoice for payment on arrival.

We are still grateful for any donations of our publications, and other books of mines and mining interest. If these are not in our library their resale will result in extra income for our Society.

Barbara Sutcliffe

Skelton Park Pit Meet

Saturday May 22nd 2010

Feeling suitably chastised by the note to meet organisers in the February 2011 newsletter, I decided it was about time to pull my finger out and write up this 2010 trip.



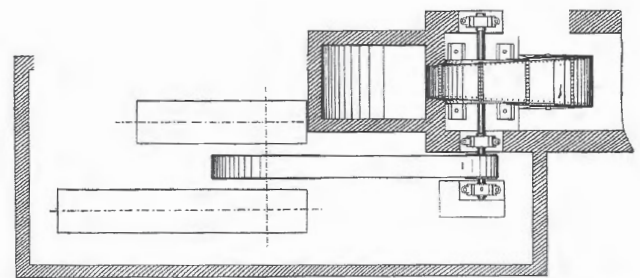
Group at the downcast shaft and combined winding and pumping house.

Over a dozen eager participants embarked with landowners permission letter in-hand, retracing the steps taken by miners from the village of Skelton Green to Skelton Park Pit.

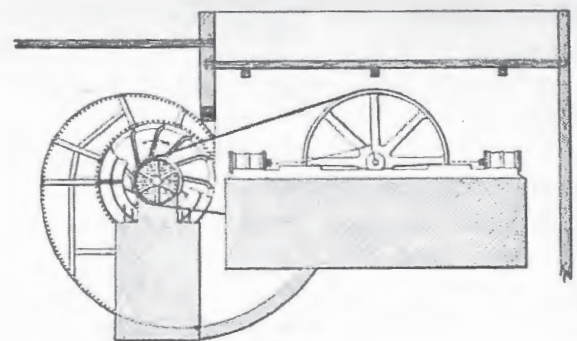
We were blessed with fantastic weather, temperatures soaring to such a degree that some had even elected to wear shorts (a decision they probably came to regret while stood in the nettles and thistles covering much of the site)

Simon Chapman armed with his large folder of information and photos entertained the assembled crowd for several hours as we toured this largely intact ironstone mining site.

The group took in the major structures such as the huge sandstone pumping and winding house which despite being abandoned since 1938 only lost its roof to the elements in 1994, and the concrete built Schiele fan-house surrounding the 380 ft deep upcast shaft.



Skelton
Schiele Fan 1



Skelton
Schiele Fan 2

Ancillary buildings were then explored including the Powder Magazine, Blacksmiths Workshop and Provender House all the way down to the privies with traces of workers graffiti still visible on their whitewashed walls.

A much more detailed account of the mines history and buildings from Simon was included in the February 2010 NMRS Newsletter and further details can of course be found in his "Skelton Park Pit Ironstone Mine" publication.

Chris Twigg

Gillfield Mine

Saturday, 19th March 2011.

The day began with the official NMRS AGM. This started at 11am that morning, and after of course pouring several gallons of tea and cakes down our throats; the meeting finished and what turned out to be a grand afternoon, begun.

We drove to Coldstones Quarry near Greenhow, as this is where the key to the mine was held. It turned out the reason why the mine was gated was because the level is classed as a working mine, even though ore has not been extracted from it since the 30's!

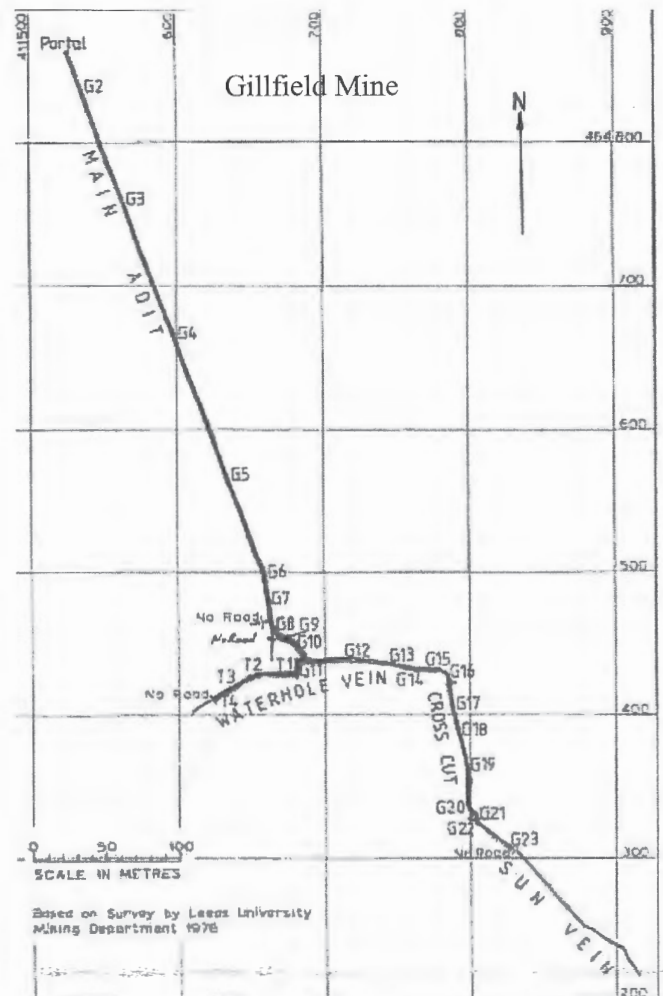
After collecting the key, the 6 or 7 cars headed down an old cart track in convoy, toward the mine - about a mile away. After ten minutes or so, the mine entrance and parking area came into view. Now parked up, I hastily got changed in a nearby hut that resembled something from Chernobyl! After everyone was ready, Malcolm - the meet leader; briefed us on the certain health and safety aspects of the mine, as required by the quarry. Once the red tape had reached its ultimatum, Malcolm allowed Mike (my dad), Ian Eeles and myself to proceed into the mine ahead of the main group; we requested this in the interests of photography only!

Once inside and through the gate, the arching lasts only twenty to thirty feet before hitting the solid rock. From here the adit - Waterhole Vein; continues in a southerly direction until the first 'S' bend, where we made our first stop for photos and a quick drink.

After squeezing the shutter a few times, the large group was catching us up at a rapid rate, so we started moving on further into Waterhole Vein. After fifty feet or so we arrived at a T junction, where there were a series of ladders which reached right up into a large stope to the right, and a secondary adit - Sun Vein to the left. We proceeded to climb the ladders, whilst the main group explored the other passage way. The



The ladder to the rabbit warren and the adit leading away



ladders themselves were heavily oxidised (rusted) iron ladders, which looked to date back to the days when the mine was used for the Leeds mining college, or perhaps right back to the days of ore extraction! The ladders were in two stages, the first was around 15 feet high. Upon submitting the first series of ladders, I stopped for a quick photo session.

After I had finished photographing the area, I discovered that both Mike and Ian had cleared the second set of ladders, which were 23 feet tall. And so with good haste, I started the ascent up. The ladder however was in two pieces, the first 15 feet on about 80 degrees but then the orientation changes to about 50 degrees! This makes the ascent tricky enough, but unfortunately for me (a man with a good size bag full of camera gear) the roof/wall is very tight to the ladders; And so climbing them resembles a cross between extreme caving and steeple-jacking!

After much perseverance (and much more wriggling) I reached the top of the ladder, which was in fact; a balcony within the stope - also known as a false floor. Upon submitting, I was greeted by an old tub, lots of iron mesh and many more deads piled up against the wall ahead. And so after a quick recce, I decided to unleash the camera and tripod once again.

Beyond this, the passage reveals another ladder, NMRS - Newsletter May 2011

which leads to another area of no access called the 'rabbit warren'. Beyond this however there is only another twenty foot section of passage, before the adit opens up into the top part of the stope. The mine area after which is also a no access area, and so this is as far as we could go in Waterhole Vein.

After I had finished messing around with the camera, we decided to head back down the ladder and explore Sun Vein. As we edged over the balcony onto the ladder, lights and voices of the main group met us, as they came up the first set of ladders. The timing could not have been more perfect, as we now had Sun Vein to ourselves! After briefly chatting and waiting for the last few members of the main group to ascend, we headed back down the first set of ladders and into the original T junction. After my dad had descended the ladder, we set off into Sun Vein.

After only a hundred feet or so, we stopped whilst Ian and I explored a small side passage. Unfortunately I did not manage to get any photos of what we found. It was a flooded sump, but with a ferrous oxide layer encrusted over the top! Anyway after discussing about how iron oxide in rocks gets diffused into water, we set off further into Sun Vein. The adit now



The old tub and the stack of dead.

starts to meander, in and out of arched areas. After only several hundred feet however, there is another turnoff, again into the left side. I peered my head through the small opening, to reveal that the passage led up and around like a spiral staircase. I then grabbed my bag and headed up about ten feet, where the passage goes down to probably the tightest crawl I have ever seen! As neither my Dad nor Ian could get through fully, I ventured it alone. And so after clipping my bag to my ankle so that it would drag through (a trick taught to me by a good friend in Swinnergill level almost a year ago), I began to wriggle through, forever watching the large deads just above my head! I had to use the movement of my ankles to get through, but I got there eventually. Once through, the tight



Looking back towards Sun Vein and the first set of ladders.

passage opened up into a three foot tall opening, only ten feet square, where there was a Fore Head. I decided to ask my dad to stick his head through the crawl, as it looked like a fantastic photo opportunity. After taking a few snapshots of my dad coming through, I put all of the camera gear into my bag, and passed it back through the crawl. I then asked my dad to take a photo of me coming back out

Once out of the side passage and back into the main adit, we pressed on to the end of the mine. The short trek was pretty featureless, with only a few minor side passages which led nowhere. We finally arrived at the end, which is another stoped area. We now stopped for a photo and of course chocolate break. To the right there is a wooden gate, through which there is a flooded sump, with a few beams across. The whole rig looked and felt fairly unstable, and so I decided not to cross. Behind us now the passage continued for only twenty yards until the final 'No Road' sign and gate. Here the only real feature was a small water fissure in the right-hand wall which fed into the mine. I was probably down at the gate for about twenty minutes or so, taking photos as usual!



Ian investigating the huge stack of deads.



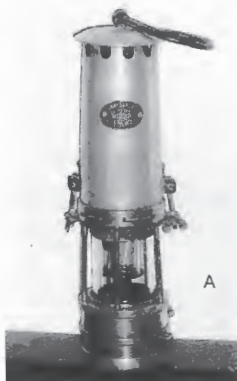
After which I turned around a final time for a photo of Mike and Ian, before we all kitted up and headed out.

Now on our way out we got going, so that we would not be too late for the members of the main group. We only stopped again for another photo opportunity near the entrance.

And so there you have it, my first trip under this year, and not a bad warmer up'er it was too. Many thanks to my team mates Mike and Ian, who were mostly co-operative for photos! And of course many more thanks to meet leader Malcolm, and Coldstones Quarry near Greenhow; who were most helpful both towards ourselves and the NMRS in general. Cheers guys!!!

Andy Richards

Mining Lamps (Help wanted)



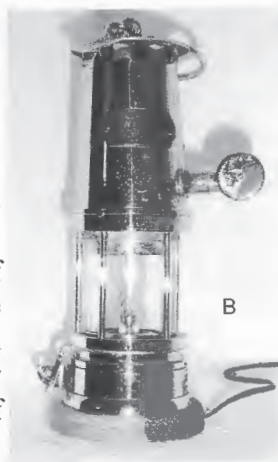
This is what I would call a "bog standard" miner's lamp from 1940/50s. It was always referred to as a "Davy" lamp but I am not sure that is quite correct.

It is labelled: Ackroyd & Best Ltd. Patentees and sole makers. Morley nr. Leeds.

It is of brass, steel and aluminium construction.

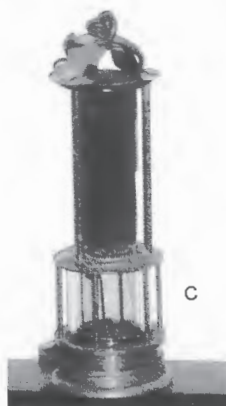
Item B is a bit of a special. I understand it was used in the certification of Pit Deputies.

A valve allows a quantity of methane to be introduced. The budding deputy was expected to estimate the percentage by observing shape and colour of the flame.



It is labelled: J. H. Naylor Ltd. Wigan. manufacturers of Miner's safety lamps, gunmetal boiler mountings and valves. It is chrome plated and appears to be of brass construction.

As can be seen from this picture it has been modified as a feature lamp. I have replaced the wick assembly with a MES bulb holder fed by thin wires run through the tube which carried the wick adjuster. All the pieces have been retained, no holes were drilled and the lamp can quickly be returned to "original" condition.



Item C Is perhaps of most interest. It is labelled: The Wolf Safety Lamp Co. Leeds. It is brass apart from the mesh.

I had always assumed it was an early version of A. However there is a picture on exhibition in the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle showing two miners "going home". Each is carrying a lamp and one identical to this is described as a "Clanny" lamp.

The other is said to be a "Geordie" lamp and is entirely mesh. I believe Clanny was a resident of Sunderland and first introduced the glass into these lamps.

Maybe some of the members can provide further information on all these variations.

John Heavitree

John.heavitree@care4free.net

John has emailed to ask if any member can shed some light (pardon the pun) on these lamps. Additionally, he would like to know what fuel was used in these lamps. I posed this question to a friend Nick Carruth in Cornwall who tells me that:-

"A is the most interesting with the bonnet held on by wing nuts. B is as described but I don't like the chrome plating and C, I have never seen a Clanny marked Wolf of Leeds"

Nick also sent me details from an old book regarding the fuel to use in these lamps. A bit difficult to read but

"A mixture of three parts of best Col? Oil with not more (than) one part of best Paraffin (flashing point not lower than 80 degrees F) will give an excellent light. A Royal Commission on Accidents in Mines shows that a superior illuminant is obtained by the admixture of Col? And Paraffin Oils. It is undesirable to purchase mixed oils as offered by dealers under various names. It is preferable to buy best Col? And Paraffin separately to be mixed at the Colliery Stores.

The lamp wick should invariably be dried immediately before it is used. Flat wick tubes give a more effective light than round wick tubes".

The Miners Lamp Society

The Miners Lamp Society is now in its fourth year and arose out of informal meetings of enthusiasts at Antiques Fairs. Over a hundred members, in the UK and overseas, exchange information and expertise.

The Society's Journal is called *The Gauzing Gazette*, and its latest issue has more than 20 pages of articles illustrated with many colour photographs. Some articles are aimed at beginners and give advice about buying and restoring lamps. There is a fascinating piece about safety lamp glasses, describing the problems of avoiding cracking and shattering and the manufacture and checking of glasses. There is general advice about researching manufacturing companies and a detailed account of investigating the history of a particular lamp with a presentation plaque. Society members have links with related mining organisations and have visited the Durham Miners' Gala and Pleasley Colliery. Their next gathering and lamp fair is being held at Pleasley Colliery (not far from J29 on the M1) on the 11th June, 2011.

Anyone interested in finding out more about **The Miners Lamp Society** should contact:-
Maurice Dawson on 01844 279136 or email at maurice.dawson@hotmail.co.uk.

2011 NAMHO Conference

The 2011 NAMHO conference will be held from the 29th July to the 1st August at Preston Montford Field Centre, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury. Further activities will continue around Shropshire during the following week.

This delightful Queen Anne country house lies by the river Severn to the west of Shrewsbury and is set in 12 hectares of grassland and woodland. It is close to the A5 and the Welsh and Shropshire Hills. Ironbridge, the 'Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution', is a short distance away. On-site, there is accommodation for 120 with two drying rooms, dining facilities, plus camping and bar. Space will be available for those staying on during the following week.

The conference lecture programme will run on the Saturday and Sunday with a series of surface and underground trips from the Friday lunchtime until at least the Wednesday of the following week, for those wishing to extend their stay. Some of the field trips will be re-run in the week to allow attendance at lectures without missing underground trips. It is intended that there will be a set of conference proceedings. A conference dinner will be held on the Saturday evening and a special event on the Sunday evening is to be hosted by the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club in celebration of its 50th anniversary; the

evening meal is free to delegates. The theme of the conference is '50 Years of Mine Exploration'. Fifty years ago, there was little interest in industrial archaeology and many important mine sites were lost to neglect or the bulldozer. Many more would have been permanently lost but for the efforts of mine explorers. Following the welcome evening on Friday, a full programme of lectures is planned on Saturday and Sunday with parallel threads in separate rooms. Particular emphasis will be given to practical mine exploration over the years and subjects range from local to international. Speakers include George Hall, who reminisces about his early explorations with David Bick, Rob Vernon on Mines of Spain, Dave Linton, Ivor Brown and many more. There will be facilities for posters, club stands and trade stands, including Starless River's mobile showroom.

There will be an extensive programme of complementary surface and underground trips to lesser-known parts of Shropshire's mining history as well as some longer trips further afield. Underground trips will include a winch trip at Snailbeach and range from simple walk-in mines to some serious through or round trips with SRT. Full information and booking details are available below.

Andrew Wood
Home Farm
Castle Pulverbatch
Shrewsbury
SY5 8DS

Telephone: 01743 718668

www.namhoconference.org.uk

www.field-studies-council.org/prestonmontford

The Tempest of Broughton

I came across this reference the other day from Lancaster, M.E. (1987) *The Tempests of Broughton*. Pub. H.R. Tempest. Broughton Hall, Nr. Skipton, North Yorkshire. Page 45.

"In 1509 Roger [Tempest of Broughton, Esquire] was involved in a law suite concerning lead from mines at Thorpe or Glusburn [Yorkshire] which must have been worked during this period."

Miles Staveley of Ripon sued for £20, alleging that Roger Tempest and James Metcalf of Nappa had failed to deliver 10 fodder of lead at The Crayne, York, before Midsummer 1508, as they had agreed to do. (Common Rolls 1 Henry VIII m. 1892)."

Anyone out there well in at Broughton Hall? I wonder if there is more information concerning mining in the Tempest Archives.

Barry Hunt

Arctic Gold

It seemed a good idea at the time, says Ron Callender, who had received an invitation to give a lecture in Northern Lapland. Ron and his wife reasoned they could leave the train before it reached the Arctic Circle, meet up with their friend Pirjo who lived in Oulo, and rejoin the train 24 hours later. "A great idea," said Pirjo, "except that I will be working on my husband's gold claim for the summer. Why don't you join us there?"

The attractive undertaking was a tall order; we had to consider travel, accommodation, transport and food, but Pirjo roughed out some details and a programme soon emerged. We would stay overnight on the Arctic Circle, take the post bus to Inari and change buses, then rely on getting a lift in a school bus to Njurgalahti on the Lemmonjoki river. Here we would stay one more night and secure two places on the morning riverboat, which would take us forty kilometres upstream. Pirjo promised to meet us at a small landing stage on Saturday morning, but warned the subsequent walk to the claim at Jäkälä Äytsi might take four or five hours.

So far, so good, and it was a great relief to me when we met up with our hosts and I knew we were in safe hands. Husband Jakke had brought his all terrain vehicle, which had space for baggage and one passenger, so Margaret climbed aboard. Five hours later, after I had tramped through endless pine forest, we were reunited; it had been a bumpy ride, said my wife. Pirjo showed us the facilities, which included our tented accommodation (complete with mattresses), an adjacent sauna bath, the communal dining tent, a water-tap fed from the river, her own cottage/cabin, a cold-frame for growing salads and Jakke's all-important and well-equipped workshop.



*Jakke's gold claim at Jäkälä Äytsi
in Finland's Northern Lapland*

Jäkälä Äytsi was a hive of activity. We did nothing but wander around the small community, and this was

a delight in itself. Jakke's brother in law was using a mechanical shovel to heave gravel into the path of jets of water, which flushed the material into a long sluice box. A heavy-duty mesh removed all the big stones and rocks. We worked out the sequence of operations - scoop up a bucket of gravel, move to the water jets, which cleaned out the bucket, and return to the 'hot spot' for another load of auriferous gravel.



*Detail showing the water jets
that flush out the shovel*

Jakke had generously allowed a party of Belgians and Hungarians to camp at his claim and to pan for gold; their presence swelled the small community and provided an opportunity for good photographs.

A splendid supper materialised in the dining tent, where Jakke's sister used a wood-burning stove to bake bread and cook potatoes that accompanied an appetising stew. Her husband had shot an elk and as is normal practice, he engaged a canning company to preserve the meat. As a result, there was no shortage of choice cuts and delicious sauce. As night approached, darkness never arrived but it was not difficult to fall asleep, because the river adjacent to our tent provided a background noise not experienced in Cheshire.

After breakfast, the ever-resourceful Pirjo proposed a walk. She had telephoned her neighbour (about five kilometres away) and the husband and wife had agreed on a visit to their claim. It was a good contrast because the owner worked the hard way - with a shovel, a wheelbarrow and a small pump to run a sluice box. He was satisfied with the open-air life and, although he did not say so, he continued to find sufficient yellow metal. We also visited some big claims where groups of men tackled the task of recovery with powerful diggers. To the uninitiated eye, the reliance on heavy machinery resembled the work involved in extending a motorway. We soon learned, however, that the activities depended on diesel fuel, which the prospectors brought in on snowmobiles during the winter, along with supplies and spare parts

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for the earth-moving machines.

Another outing took us to "the miners' library". We set off by climbing through a cloak of pine forest until we reached a huge plateau. There was a makeshift runway for small aeroplanes; white stones set out in two neat rows. In the distance, a small hut punctuated the vast, empty landscape. We veered towards it and Pirjo explained the library was very popular with the many gold prospectors who worked in the neighbourhood ... some men would walk for hours to exchange books. It was unlocked and the interior contained shelves for the books, a notice board displayed a map of the district, and there was a small table and chair. I passed over a copy of NMRS's BM84 and Pirjo added it to the inventory before placing it on the shelf. A quarto notebook on the table contained pages of messages from everyone who had used the library or passed this way in recent weeks. Pirjo translated and read out some of the entries to prove it was a very efficient "grapevine"; afterwards she added brief details of our own visit.

Back at Jäkälä Äytsi, Jakke offered to show us the gold he had recovered and had no objections to photographs. In the winter months, he made jewellery that relied on matching small nuggets to form the design. To our amusement, he stored his collection in three jam jars - large nuggets, small nuggets and gold particles. It was an impressive sight but we appreciated it was all due to his hard work during the short summer months.



Pirjo's neighbour sees no need for a pram in the wilderness!

An early start was imperative for our return to the outside world. Our boat was due around eleven o'clock, and it would take about three hours to reach the river. However, we made for a landing stage downstream, which gave us a bit of time in hand. Government regulations outlawed Jakke's vehicle on these paths and we had to walk, but it was an enjoyable experience. The morning was a lovely, sunny day; Pirjo led the way at an unhurried pace as we crossed

rivers, strode along paths, climbed low-lying fells and admired the unfolding landscape of pine trees, gold workings, abandoned cabins and space itself. We heard, and then saw our riverboat racing upstream and Pirjo confirmed we were making good speed. When we came on a sign-board informing us we were 7.8 kilometres from Jäkälä Äytsi, I proposed a rest and a burst of farewell photographs. As we reached Kultahamina, (the small "Port of the gold"), the river boat appeared and we were handed our life jackets and squeezed on board. To my surprise, the smiling face of my friend Matti was waiting for us at Nurghalahti. The conference organiser had been keeping in touch with our movements and she wished to avoid any disruption to her speakers' programme. It was a perfect way to end a perfect experience.

But there was a postscript ... an important postscript. We kept in touch with Pirjo and she told us that during an eclipse of the sun, she took her small daughter to stay with her mother, who lived 200 kilometres away. On arrival, she received a telephone call from Jakke; he had just unearthed a substantial gold nugget. Pirjo made the briefest of stops, and returned immediately to Jäkälä Äytsi to share in the impending celebration. A bottle of Speyside Scotch had been set aside for such an occasion and at 88.7g, the nugget was big enough to qualify for a distinctive name. It had been found at 2pm on the 1st August 2008 - what better than "Auringonpimennys", which translates to Eclipse of the sun?

Ron Callender



Auringonpimennys

('Eclipse of the sun' : 2pm : 1st August 2008)

Shale Oil in North Wales.

I read with interest Dr R. Callendar's review of the book "Shale Oil" - the history of this industry in the West Lothians. The statement that the Oil Shale deposits occurred only in this region of Britain seemed rather odd since there was, locally, a thriving "shale oil" industry.

The industry was in an area a few miles to the east of Mold (now Flintshire again), extending from Padeswood in the north to Leeswood and Coed Talwrn in the south, with a further oil producing area at Acrefair, to the SSW of Wrexham. Production in these areas started in about 1860; eleven collieries in the Mold area were listed in the 1868 Slaters Directory as producing Cannel. Production had ceased by about 1880 when it had become uneconomic as a result of cheap imported oil from Texas.

The shale oil industry in Scotland continued for almost the next 100 years, latterly as a result of a tax concession on home produced road fuel. This was revoked and in 1962 the refinery at Westwood, the last refining shale oil, closed.

The term Shale Oil is somewhat misleading. Although oil was distilled from oil shale a far larger proportion came from Cannel Coal. Locally there were two types of Cannel; Smooth and Curly, as determined by fracture - the Smooth having a large conchoidal fracture and the Curly a small. The seams varied in thickness from 2' 9" to 4' 0" at depths from 93yds to 241yds, being deeper towards the south.

The shale and cannel was processed at the site of the colliery, each having its own Oil Works. It was first reduced to fist sized lumps in a rotary mill and then subjected to destructive distillation by heating to 800°F in a cylindrical vertical retort. The retorts were grouped in a set of three around a central coal fired furnace and hopper fed from the top; the waste being removed hourly from the bottom of the retort via a water seal. The vapour from the top of the retort, sometimes accelerated by superheated steam, was then condensed into crude oil. At some oil works this was further refined into finished products, paraffin, lubricating oils of various grades, greases, down to pitch and waxes. Petroleum products either were not present or not recovered. Other works sent their crude oil to refineries by rail tanker. The principal refineries were at Saltney, near Chester, (two) Queensferry and Flint.

The process used was invented and patented by a Scottish Chemist, Mr James Young who, during the period of the patent (1850 - 1864), licensed its use both in this country and abroad. The industry seems to have increased in size with the expiry of the patent - this may have been due to other factors.

Typical rates of crude oil recovery were: Oil Shale 16 - 33 gallons/ton; Cannel Coal: Smooth - 35gallons/ton; Curly - 80 gallons/ton. (1 gallon = 4.546 l; 1 ton = 1.016 tonnes). There was also a price differential: Shale Oil 8/6 per ton, Smooth Cannel at 9/- per ton and Curly Cannel at 28/- per ton. (1/- = £0.05.) (The average sp.g of the crude was about 0.9 so a ton would be about 250 gallons.) No information was found on the economics of processing, which generated large tonnages of waste. The refining process, which used sulphuric acid, may also have had a waste disposal problem.

Boghead, which supplied the refinery at Bathgate, had the highest recorded recovery; 120-130 gallons/ton from Cannel Coal, although the mine was exhausted by 1863.

Little remains of the Collieries or the Oil Works. Sites are under industrial or housing developments in the Leeswood area, are part under a golf course or have reverted to farmland as at Padeswood, or elsewhere to tree covered wasteland.

As with many mining districts there is the legend of huge reserves remaining untouched. There may be more of an element of truth in this here than in most areas. The collieries appear to have closed because of lack of demand, not lack of coal. Even with the current price of oil it is unlikely that these coal seams will be re-opened; deep shaft working would be too slow and expensive for economic quantities and the shallowest seams at 93yds might present a problem for opencast working - it is certain that Padeswood's golfers would not be best pleased.

Cannel Coals are found in many coalfields and were, at this period, mined in North Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Lancashire. Of these only the first two areas are listed as oil producers. There were other markets for Cannel: from about 1852 onwards Cannel was used in the production of town gas. Early gas lighting depended on the luminous flame produced by gas from Cannel but the market reduced with the invention in 1891 of the gas mantle, which depends for its light output on the heating property of the gas.

The main source of information for the above is the pamphlet "Oil" produced by Buckley (Flints) schools as a project sponsored and published by the Clwyd Centre for Educational Technology. Other sources are C.J.Williams "Industry in Clwyd" p87 and H.Gregory, "The Distillation of Oil from Cannel Coal and Shales", *Flints Hist Soc Jnl*, Vol 25 (1971-2).

Alan Hawkins.

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Young Madeley Coal Miners and the Welsh Gold Mine

During the 1950s the Miner's Welfare Fund sponsored a thriving Youth Club in Madeley, Shropshire, for young workers and their girlfriends. Their activities were varied, both indoor and outdoor. For a period, one activity that was popular was the hiring of a mini-bus or two and with a couple of cars going to the hills for hikes, climbs and occasionally a bit of caving. One of these trips, on a Sunday in August 1959, was to spend a day with the operators of the then working Clogau Gold Mine at Bontddu.

At this time the mine was operated by Clogau St. Davids Gold Mines Ltd and the Crown Lease Holder (Gold is a Crown Mineral) was Hugh Edwards who although 76 years of age also ran Caerdeon Farm in the hills near Bontddu.

He was assisted by Jack Williams, another farmer living 300 yards from the mine with other helpers from the Halfway House pub as required. Mining took place when work on the farms in the area was quiet. The writer had spent some days at the mine earlier that year during a pit holiday. He was also one of several volunteer assistant leaders at the Club.

The great day arrived, the writer and companions set off first in a borrowed car to arrive early so that they could pick-up Hugh Edwards from his farm, a couple of miles from the Clogau Mine, and to get to the mine in time to light the blacksmiths forge so that coffee, (and later a three course meal) could be prepared for the adventurers when they arrived. At the farm Hugh surprised these early visitors by pulling open a draw and showing samples of gold and other minerals from the area all wrapped in paper. He explained that some of his gold had gone recently to make Royal Wedding rings. He also put some samples in his pocket to take to the mine.

The rest of the party arrived on time, having left their transport in the village and walking up the stream path. Over coffee Hugh explained that he started his working life as a gold miner at the turn of the 19th/20th Century when

there were over 300 such miners in the area. He had got his gold license in 1949 and now leads a team of prospectors, mainly in "the winter months. They used a compressed air drill with diamond pointed chisel and at present were sinking a new shaft into the vein about 600 yards in the Sower or 'Llechfraith' adit to the mine. The only power available (other than manual) was the compressor, situated at the adit entrance. Much to the surprise of the visiting mineworkers, ventilation was natural - with the other entrance, a shaft, further up the hill, and illumination was by carbide lamp. Hugh said that when they find gold they get £12 per ounce, but one-twenty-fifth goes to the Crown.

While the girls, with the youth leader, peeled the potatoes and prepared the food for lunch, Hugh and Jack Williams took the lads to the stream (Hirgwrn) where there was a lower drainage adit and two gold bearing veins. Hugh demonstrated gold panning - but the only gold we saw came wrapped in paper out of his pocket! Later while Hugh watched over the meal on the hot-hearth, the rest went for a tour of the underground workings inside the adit. Water was obviously the problem and the present working shaft was flooded to the top and would have to be bailed out before work could recommence. Several likely gold bearing areas were pointed out and there was much glistening - but how much of it was gold!

After a hot lunch taken by all, and washing up in the stream, time was spent picking over the tips and visiting other surface workings nearby. There was much quartz, "tellurium" and some copper, but disappointingly no real gold was found. The gold miners were thanked by the Shropshire Coal Miners - who then moved on, to the nearby beach. There was much talk of another visit soon, to look for copper on Snowdonia's Copper Miners Trail - but that is another story!

Ivor Brown

This article by Ivor first appeared in the Shropshire Mine and Caving Club's publication "Below" 2008.2 and purports to show the gold scene some 15 years before Peter Ward's story in the NMRS Newsletter February 2011. EDITOR

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