Northern Mine Research Society

Newsletter

Society established 1960

nmrs.org.uk **November 2011** nmrs.org.uk

Jottings from the President

Thank you to all who attended our **Autumn Meeting** where good food and company were enjoyed by the thirty two members who made their way to Gisburn. Following lunch and a short business meeting we enjoyed a variety of Member`s presentations making full use of the Society`s new digital projector. Rob Needham talked about Birth Hill gale, some iron mines in the old red sandstone, and Windrush – a typical local underground quarry for Cotswold stone. Further details of these will appear in the February Newsletter. David Kitching gave an excellent insight into Chinese Coal Mines and Ken Geddes illustrated Pinner Quarry near Crawshawbooth in Rossendale. Go to www.valleyofstone.org.uk for more details on this. This was followed by a short presentation by David Neal on the recent NMRS trip to Rogerley Mine, Stanhope. Finally Ron Callender provided us with advice on planning an exhibition with reference to his latest Frodsham Exhibition of "Gold in the Hills" and showed us some of the actual photos he used.

Enclosed with this newsletter is the **Membership Renewal Form** for 2012. It would be very helpful to David if these were returned as soon as possible, before they are put to one side and possibly forgotten, especially with Christmas creeping up on us. Also enclosed is a **Committee Nomination Form** for 2012 which needs to be sent to the Honorary Secretary at least 28 days before the actual AGM. The present Officers are:-

President: Barbara Sutcliffe
Vice-President: Malcolm Street
Junior Vice-President: Vacant
Secretary: Ron Callender
Treasurer: Tim Cook
Publications Editor: Richard Smith
Recorder: Mike Gill
Librarian and Meets Organiser: Sallie Bassham
Newsletter Editor : David Neal
Membership Secretary: David Neal
Webmaster Administrator: Malcolm Street
Committee Members: Janis Heward, Peter Pearson

We had been concerned about the lack of a Newsletter Editor after February 2012 but at the end of the Autumn Meeting Rob Needham kindly volunteered his services and he is in the process of talking to David about taking over the role after the AGM. We are very grateful for this offer as the Newsletter is an important part of our Society.

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 November Newsletter is the
3rd February, 2012

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.

Contents

Season Greetings and Good Health throughout 2012

Printed by ***The University of Wales, Lampeter***

Our **2011 Meet Programme** has now been completed and our grateful thanks go to Sallie for organising this and to all the Meet Leaders who have done such a splendid job. Our programme has been very varied and has given opportunities to many. We look forward with anticipation to our 2012 programme but please remember there is a necessity ***to book your place with each Meet Leader before attending.***

Many thanks for the **Publication donations** received from Ron Callender, Sheila Bridges and Peter Jackson. Many of these have already been redistributed to our members who had previously sent in their "wish" lists. Three are highly delighted that they have acquired all on their lists. If you have any gaps please let me know and I'll contact you when they become available. Why pay bookshop prices when you can benefit from NMRS Membership discounts! On the other hand if you have books you no longer require please remember we really appreciate your donations – not only NMRS Publications but other mining books.

The **Ingleton Book Fair,** in September, was an opportunity to meet some of our Members and also promote our Publications to a wider audience. Though quieter than previously – perhaps a sign of the times – our Ingleton board was admired by several visitors (thank you Ron!) I must add a big "Thank you" to Bernard Bond who returned at the end of the day to help us pack up. This gesture was much appreciated.

In the previous Newsletter we mentioned that the custodian of our **Garmins** is now Peter Pearson who should be contacted if you wish to borrow one. Unfortunately his e-mail was incorrectly printed and should be peterpearson@aol.com

Back in the May 2011 Newsletter Barry Hunt was asking if there is more information concerning mining in the Tempest Archives at Broughton Hall. I did write to Roger Tempest passing on the enquiry but he has not responded – perhaps I should have enclosed a S.A.E!

English Heritage has recently launched the results of their Industrial Heritage at Risk project alongside the 2011 Heritage at Risk Register. The full register is available to access from their website as a PDF for each part of the country through their fully searchable on-line database – www.english-heritage.org.uk/har Using this register you can search specifically for industrial sites on the Register using the on-line database.

The **2012 AGM** has been arranged for Saturday March 31st in Ingleton at Mealbank Hall, so please put this date in your diary. Further details and a booking form will be in the February Newsletter.

Gisburn seemed to be a convenient location for many of our members and thinking of that there is an excellent Indian Restaurant, Bombay Lounge in Barrowford – about seven miles from Gisburn. On a Sunday afternoon they do an **Indian Banquet** which I can recommend and wondered if any of our members would like to meet up there one Sunday afternoon when the days became longer. I have some names from the Autumn Meeting but if anyone else is interested please e-mail me and we will try and arrange something for 2012.

Finally, on behalf of all the Committee members who work so tirelessly for NMRS, I would like to wish all our Members Season's Greeting for Christmas and the New Year and thank you all for your support in 2011.

Barbara Sutcliffe

Library News

Thank you to Rob Needham for a CD with a copy (words and pictures) of his Autumn Meeting presentations on Birch Hill Gale iron mines and Windrush stone mines, to Mike Gill for the latest Newsletter from the Friends of Williamson's Tunnels and PDMHS Newsletters, to Peter Jackson for NMRS Newsletters and some A4 BMs and to Barbara for Down to Earth, C G Down's Mining in Cornwall Today and 1968 Proceedings of the North-East Lancashire Group of the Geologists' Association.

Sallie Bassham

Subscriptions for 2012

These become due from the 1st January and enclosed is your Renewal Form. This only needs checking for your name and address details together with an email address if you wish to be included with occasional mail outs from the Society.

You will also find a Bank *Standing Order Form* for those of you who wish to pay their subs this way. Just complete your name and address details, the date of the first payment and the amount to pay. Hand or send this part to your bank ensuring ***they include the reference shown.*** The same applies if you manage your account on line - please include your reference otherwise we will not know who has paid! Those of you who already pay by STO need take no action this year.

David R Neal
Membership Secretary

New Projector

We have bought a new projector! No, not a film one but a modern digital one. An Optoma Model EX531 with carrying case was purchased in time for our Autumn Meeting. For the technophiles it features 2600 lumens, XGA resolution 1024 x 768 and has up to 4000 hours of lamp-light.

David R Neal

New Members

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

J. Armstrong & Family	Shapeley
R. Hall	Darlington
L. Morris	Southport
K. Sweetmore	Northallerton
A. Thomas	Barrow-in-Furness
J. Thornley	Darlington
J. Todd & Family	Skipton
P. Webster	Bishop Auckland
H. Whitfield	North Shields

Rogerley Mine
Saturday 16th July, 2011

Rogerley mine is situated in an old 19th century quarry just off the main road to Stanhope in Wear Dale. It is unusual in that it is one of the only mines in the area to be driven solely for Fluorite. It is also about the only working level in Wear Dale and produces the rare green fluorite and also blue, these are mined for decorative purposes and are highly valued by collectors worldwide. The current owners are Cal and Kerith Graeber who travel from their home in California to work the mine between June and September each year.

I arrived at the Dales Visitor centre in Stanhope about 9.30 it was a clear but coldish morning. I was greeted by David Neal (Meet Leader) who had stayed in Stanhope the precious night, soon most other NMRS members had turned up and there were about twelve of us. Members present were: David Neal, David Lewis, John Lawson, Barbara Sutcliffe, Rex Cook, Sallie Bassham, Peter Riley, Henry Whitfield, Keith Turner, David Taylor, Roy Attwood and myself , Ian Eeles. Cal Greaber then arrived, he had kindly agreed to be our host for the visit, and so we set off down the dale to the turn off for the Rogerley Mine.

The entrance to Rogerley Mine seen above the spoil-heaps

Green Fluorite freshly mined

Once everyone was parked in the quarry area we began to change into underground clothes and helmets. A number of members began exploring the waste heap as we had been told we could keep anything we found there. Cal said that he would take us into the mine in parties of four so the first members set off up to the entrance. The rest of us looked round the mine site and talked to Kerith who showed us some great samples of fluorite, which she was washing in truck cleaner as this, apparently, was the best thing for the job.

Cleaning Fluorite specimewns in the sun and chatting about mining

Soon it was our turn to enter the mine so up to the entrance we climbed, where we took a few pictures and inspected the entrance. Inside the entrance was a compressor which supplied air for the rock drills and the Emco shovel, There was also a generator and the electric engine which pulled the tubs. As we moved forward we came to a junction and were shown some of the earlier workings there was also an electric fan and trunking to take air further into the mine. Further on and to the left of the passage was a very interesting working which still contained Green fluorite here we took more pictures.

Next we came to the forehead of the mine where miners were using high pressure water to remove the fluorite, very interesting to see miners at work in a

Carl blasting away clayey-mud to expose the green Fluorite

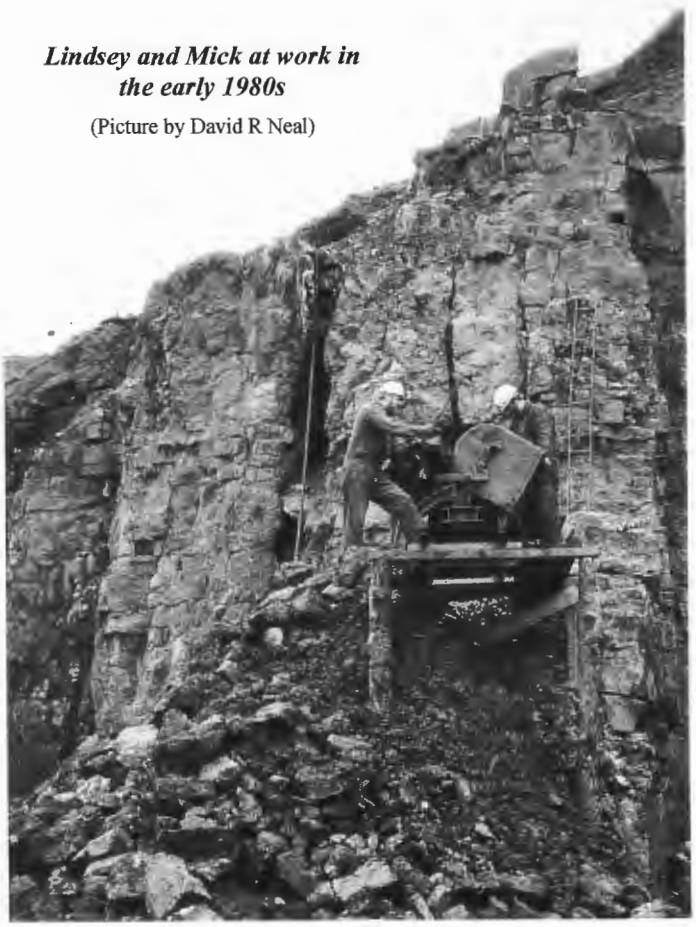
level which looked very much as it would have in the 1900's apart from the modern helmets etc. Then all to soon we were heading back out of the mine and down to the car parking area where we most people indulged in lunch.

It was at this point that I made the acquaintance of Peter Riley who I found to be very knowledgeable on the subject of the Wear Dale mining area. He agreed, at the request of some members, to lead them into the newly opened West Pastures Mine. Sadly I had to leave at this point but will meet Peter at a later date to explore more of the mines in the area. This was a great day in good company.

Words by Ian Eeles
Photos by David R Neal

Lindsey and Mick at work in the early 1980s

(Picture by David R Neal)



Rogerley Mine

A Post Script

Further to our NMRS meet back in July I thought Members might be interested in a little background history to the location. At the moment the Rogerley Mine in Weardale is currently operated as a specimen mine by the UK Mining Ventures, a company owned by a group of American collectors and mineral dealers who have been operating since May 1999 on a seasonal basis during each summer.

The mine is located within an abandoned quarry of the same name, near Stanhope. The quarry was originally operated during the mid-nineteenth century for limestone which was used as a flux in the iron foundries around Consett. There is no evidence that the quarry was ever worked for lead or fluorspar, which were at the time just impurities in the limestone. When found they were just discarded on the south side of the quarry which is now heavily overgrown.

In 1972 four good friends Lindsay & Patricia Greenbank and Michael & Brenda Sutcliffe formed the Cumbria Mining & Mineral Company with the intention of mining mineral specimens on a commercial basis in their spare time – having day jobs. This partnership obtained permission to explore a previously unworked vein in the Rogerley Quarry. Prior to this an enthusiastic mineral collector had discovered specimens along the base of the quarry wall and decided they had come from a high spot on the north of the quarry. Lindsey and Mick decided to investigate this by roping down from the top of the quarry.

The CM&MC then set about obtaining leases for mineral rights from the mineral agents for the Church Commissioners of England, access rights were granted by the local land-owners and the mine was then operated at weekends for mineral specimens during the course of the next 25 years until 1998 when ill-health brought an end to this very successful venture.

My thanks go to Lindsey and Patricia Greenbank for providing this information.

Barbara Sutcliffe

Surface Walk around the Collieries of Pott Shrigley and Hurdsfield, Nr Macclesfield

Saturday 20th August 2011

Three members, one guest and two dogs assembled at the designated parking place for 10.30 am. Our leader David Kitching duly arrived armed with extensive hand outs for us to use on the walk. We were lucky with the weather which stayed dry and mainly sunny throughout the day. The colliery field meet was

divided into two parts. In the morning we looked at the Collieries of Bakestonedale and Sponds Moor, and in the afternoon drove to Bollington to visit the collieries of the Hurdsfield district.

We set off through the bracken onto Bakestonedale Moor and quickly came across the first of the shaft workings which were surrounded by planted trees, apparently a common occurrence in these areas. Higher up on the moor the shafts became more plentiful. They are complex in nature. They vary from shallower shafts in the vicinity of deeper shafts/gin circles and closely placed shafts suggesting different periods of working. Also gin circles with part of the shelter wall intact (see picture below), embanked gin circles, and gin circles with surrounding upslope drains (to keep running surface water away from the shafts). At the top of Sponds Moor, on the boundary with Lyme Park, we reached the huge shaft of Hall's Founder. The views from up here were exceptionable as we were able to see Frodsham Ridge, Beeston Castle, and the Wrekin in Shropshire.

Seven seams of coal lie beneath the moor and all have been worked. The seams are the lowest in the lower coal measures, from the lower Holcombe Brook up to the Upper Mountain, or to give it its local more descriptive name, the Bollington Smut. Two of the seams are underlain by thick, high quality fireclay or ganister, and this is the reason why mining has persisted here until 1957. At least seven companies produced bricks and/or fire bricks nearby.

Lunch was taken at the Bollington recreation ground where we sat and watched a game of cricket. It was a lively affair with lots of friendly banter and clapping from the team. That never happened in my day!

The afternoon's walk commenced from the lower western ridge of Kerridge Hill along Lidgetts Lane. Kerridge Hill has extensive areas of quarrying. We passed a few 'ganks' (surface roads into quarries) to visit the interesting Clayton's Tower. This circular castellated stone tower, c.1840, a grade 2 listed building, sits just across the road from Victoria Bridge. In the 20th century it was generally assumed that the tower was built by William Clayton as a ventilation shaft for a coal mine, but the shaft was never actually used.

We then carefully descended the 118 steps of the Tramway Incline that goes down under Victoria Bridge to continue our walk to the Swanscoe Collieries. These were the principle mines to the west of the hill and were worked for many years by William Clayton in the early 19th century.

We visited a farm which still has remains of colliery buildings and part of the coal pit bank. With the owner's permission, we went to look at a fenced off open shaft, nicely bricked down to water. Information regarding the mining history of the area is sparse.

Proceeding up the farm road we reached a small hamlet and from the public footpath, we saw a complete Newcomen steam engine house which used to be known as the Shrigley Fold pumping engine. It is now converted into a private dwelling. Originally it housed a 44 inch diameter cylinder and worked a 7 feet stroke. It was put up for sale on August 9th 1834. We then walked through a series of open fields to look for the remains of old shafts. David lifted various bits of vegetation to point out the concrete coverings of the capped shafts. It was easy to make out the shafts surrounded by trees inside stone walls.

Many thanks to David for leading this interesting and informative field meet. It complements the walk he led to Poynton Collieries in July 2009, this being only a couple of miles away.

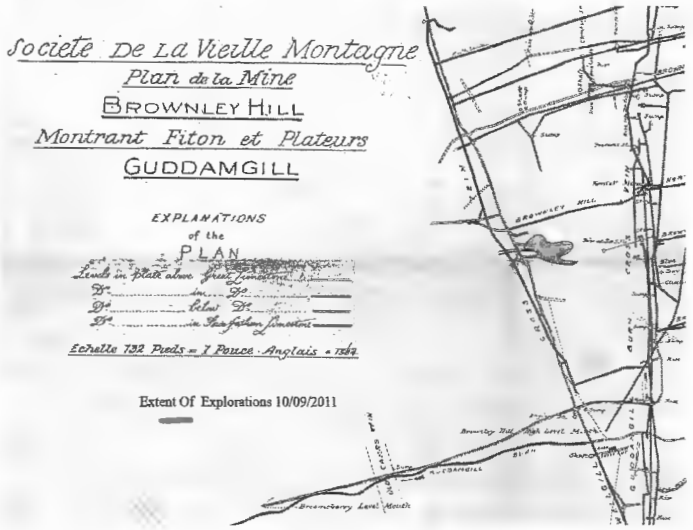
Richard Platt

AditNow 2012 Calendar

For the past five years the AditNow website has produced a calendar as a fund raising exercise. To date just over £2,000 has been donated from sales to groups including Cumbria Ores Mines Rescue Unit, Friends of Cwmorthin, North Wales Cave Rescue and Kelly Mine Preservation Society. This year the beneficiaries have been selected as Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation and the Welsh Mines Preservation Trust.

For more information please see:
http://www.aditnow.co.uk/

Brownley Hill Level
Saturday 10th September, 2011



My Dad and I arrived at the heritage centre car park at about 10:30; a similar time to Meet Leader Paul Dollery. Upon arrival, Paul and I said hello and immediately started discussing our favourite topic; bacon sandwiches – and where to get the best ones from! After a good amount of discussing and scoffing, some of the other members started to arrive. By about 11:10 only six people had turned up, and so we set off on foot toward the mine. I actually felt sorry for Paul, and I feel that frankly a turnout of 6 out of 400 is shameful. I do not believe that only six people could attend; I find it much more likely that only six people could be bothered. Let's hope that this is only a one off!

The level mouth was about half a kilometre from the heritage centre, and so it took around 10 minutes to get there. Of course as with any trip, there were distractions; in this case it was a model village built in someone's back garden. We later discovered that all of the buildings were hand built out of tiny stones and cement!

After a brief walk and talk through the damp and the midges, we reached the level mouth, known as Broomsberry Level. After yet another good chat, I got inside the adit to hold the gate open for all of the other

members. Once everyone was through, Paul took point whilst I led up the rear, as we gently navigated our way into the mine. The main drive starts out narrow and tall – with the arching only lasting for several yards. Once into the solid rock, the passage opened out, becoming much wider and more manoeuvrable. I was still struggling though; the passage was only six feet tall...not tall enough for me...

After about ten minutes of walking, or ducking in my case; we reached the first junction. There were five ways to go; west (the way we had just come), north (Cross vein), east (Crosscut to Guddhamgill burn cross vein), south (Wellgill vein), and also from where we stood , there was a flooded engine shaft about ten feet to the south of where we were stood. Paul decided to lead the group east into the crosscut, whilst my dad and I stopped for photos.

The Broomsberry Level

After a good faff around, my dad and I decided to recce the local part of the mine to where we were. In wellgill, there was remains of a pulley with several hundred old bolts, as well as an intriguing looking sump that was surrounded by wooden boards. After this little distraction, we packed away the camera gear and headed into the crosscut which was again filled with water, and another low roof. Along the first 100 yards there were around five flooded and backfilled sumps. Only 300 yards in we bumped into Paul and the rest of the group. Beyond them, there was a good example of a twin archway, and yet another sump.

Because my dad and I were still trying to 'catch up' to Paul, and I had some more photos to take; I dumped my bag at the junction and continued on for a brief recce. The passage had gone from solid rock, to arched, to shale in a matter of 20 feet! After a simple hands and knees through some fallen shale, the passage opened out again, with the odd sign of archwork, and several ore chutes; one of which I free climbed for about 15 feet, until it became too unstable to continue.

After a quick investigation of some iron sleepers for the rails, I headed back to my dad, who had long finished his photos! We paused and faffed once again, getting some long exposure shot before packing up and heading back to the first main junction.

The trip back to the first junction, under my lead went very quickly as we were both trying to be polite and keep up with Paul! Once back at the junction, we threw a right, into cross vein (north). After navigating the first crawl, we had actually caught up with the rest of the group, at least from here we could take it steady! The adit was now very plain, solid rock. This soon changed however; after a few stoops under collapsed ore chutes, we reached a very famous part of the mine: Well Gill flats. After photographing the famous archway, I climbed up an ore chute into the flats themselves. By the time I had arrived to eat my lunch however, everyone else had finished theirs! And so after supping a quick cup of tea, I went for a quick recce of the area and a few photos.

Once I had finally finished faffing around, I joined Paul and the rest of the group back in the lower main level. The route to them was a steady descent over the deads and into the adit; however out of shire inquisition, I decided to drop down a 'hole in the floor'. As I chimney climbed down the 10 foot hole, It occurred to me that I was in another old ore chute. Once I reached the bottom I sat down to contemplate how to safely climb out. I had however sat on the old, wet timbers – which meant that I subsequently slid straight out into the adit – luckily the same one that Paul and the group were waiting for me in!

Once I had composed myself, and stopped Paul laughing at me, we pressed on; deeper into cross vein. Beyond this point there was not much to see, aside from several rollers – which got us all discussing the idea of a rope hauled tubway! The adit was now easy going, until finally pressing into some water and some minor falls; It was here that people decided not to get any wetter, and so we turned around and headed out.

Aside from a brief stop for a photograph of yet another

another flooded sump, we got out within an hour.

From here my Dad and I went on for some SRT practice in Smallcleugh level. Yet another big thanks to Paul Dollery for yet another grand one, cheers!

The six intrepid explorers at Brownley Hill Mine

All of My Underground Photography can be found by searching "theyorkshireminer" on Google or the website www.flickr.com/photos/theyorkshireminer

Andy Richards

Underground above Horwich

This book explores the history of the mines, mining practices and miners' lives associated with Winter Hill. Currently more famous for its TV transmitter! It is the culmination of many years of research by Danny Calderbank

The book will be available to purchase from December and includes many colour and black and white photographs, maps and documents.

Two new 'heritage trails' are fully described including route diagrams and grid references. These will be of particular interest to ramblers (not necessarily with any interest in mining!) seeking areas away from the over-popular areas of Rivington and Anglezarke.

Orders for pre-publication copies are being taken up to November 30th. These will be cheaper than the published price and only these will be will be signed and numbered.

In total 500 copies have been ordered – no more will ever be printed! Books will be sent out in December with all profit to the British Heart Foundation.

Send a cheque for £6.50 (this includes p&p) made payable to Astley Publications at:

24 Morewood Drive
Burton in Kendal
Cumbria
LA6 1NE

Include your name and address on the reverse of the cheque, no other communication is necessary

Coal Mining in Lancashire and Cheshire by Alan Davies

The book begins with a 37-page section which gives an overview of the history of the coalfield from 1295 until the closure of Parkside Colliery at Newton le Willows in 1993. In the preface, the author points out that the documentary sources for the subject are massive and that it would not be possible to do full justice to it in a single volume and this should be noted by any prospective purchaser. The remaining pages, which comprise the main body of the book, are devoted to a huge selection of photographs together with generously-sized captions. Most of these are hitherto unpublished and contain a wealth of information, albeit presented in a somewhat fragmented manner.

The Appendix lists pit disasters in the coalfield since 1774, although the first systematic records appear to date from 1830. This is a good book for browsing and for the coffee table but those who expect a conventionally-written history of the coalfield will be disappointed.

Davies A., 2010, *'Coal Mining in Lancashire & Cheshire'*, Amberley Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire, pp. 240, 248 x 172mm, ISBN 978-1-84868-488-1. (£17.99).

Richard Smith

Acidic and iron contaminated mine-water at the former North Skelton Mine near Saltburn, East Yorkshire

On 18 May 1999 Saltburn Gill and its tributary Saltburn Gill Beck suffered massive pollution by slightly acidic iron-rich mine water which deposited large quantities of ochre (hydrated iron oxide) in this nature reserve and statutory Site of Special Scientific Interest, an event severely prejudicial to the ecology of the hitherto clear streams (noted amongst other things for otters and kingfishers) through relict post-glacial native woodland. An additional iron load of about 180 kg per day has been estimated. A report of investigations of the cause of this unfortunate event, and of possible mitigation measures, has just been published in the Geological Society of London's fellows' magazine *Geoscientist*.

The spring yielding contaminated water bearing 1200 milligrams of dissolved iron per litre has been rated as having the second highest contaminant concentration recorded in UK minewater. It emerged at a point immediately above shallow ironstone mine workings. As the mine in question (North Skelton) had closed in 1964, well before 1 January 2000, no legal responsibility attached to current landowners or former mine operators. Metalliferous mines fall out

side the scope of the Coal Authority's duty to remediate similar pollution from abandoned coal mines. And the Mine Waste Directive, it seems, applies only to solid and not dissolved contaminants. It is reported that of 86,869 'known UK mine and quarry sites' there are 1650 ironstone mines, and at least 1969 other mines for metallic ores and / or gangue minerals. This gap in environmental protection legislation is thus of some importance.

Field and archival investigation or the Cleveland ironstone orefield revealed a surviving open shaft which is, however, choked with debris just below the water-table. And numbers of mines which were, notionally, kept separate by intervening unworked ore, but which in reality had largely been interconnected by, for example, tunnels driven to assist ventilation.

There is therefore now a large area of interconnected more or less collapsed ironstone workings (up to 90% of the worked ironstone seam was removed) which provides a permeable zone through which water can percolate. The cause of the gross contamination is not the iron silicate / iron carbonate ore itself, but the accompanying iron pyrites (iron II disulphide) which, with bacterial assistance, is oxidised and hydrolysed to iron sulphate and in turn sulphuric acid. There was in fact sufficient iron pyrites in the ore beds for it to be mined separately for the commercial manufacture of sulphuric acid. The leaking mine water, however, is only mildly acidic. This appears to be as result of the sulphuric acid being largely neutralised by iron carbonate, resulting in the high concentrations of iron sulphate from which the ochre has been precipitated at surface.

Why this mine water should appear only 35 years after the last mine closed has also been investigated. It appears that the North Skelton mine shaft, sunk in 1870, was lined with iron tubbing to exclude groundwater to exclude groundwater in beds above the ore seams. This water-excluding lining has probably now been corroded-through, releasing a head of eight to ten metres of water into the old mineworkings. That water, collecting dissolved iron sulphate *en route*, has now re-surfaced at Saltburn.

Intensive industrial-scale mining commenced in this district in the 1850s, ore production peaking at 6.5 million tons p.a. in 1883. The mines dominated UK production until 1912, and by the time the last mine closed in 1964 371 million tons of ore had been removed. The mine-out orefield is reckoned to occupy an area of 36 square kilometres to the south of Saltburn Gill and eastwards to Skinningrove (where there is a preserved publicly accessible mine gallery) and another 13 square kilometres in the Loftus – Whitecliff mines group. There is therefore a large potential for groundwater pollution, and investigations continue into how this problem can be dealt with, and how remediation is to be paid for.

SOURCE: LORD, Richard, and Don MASON, 2011, Metal mines: who pays the tab? *Geoscientist* 21(6), 12 – 17.

Paul W. SOWAN

[Abstract from *Geoscientist* 21(6) (2011)

An Aberfeldy Memoir

When I gave a talk on aspects of gold discovery at Leeds University in 1993, I declined a fee but negotiated an opportunity to join the students on an outing to the gold fields near Aberfeldy, in the southern Scottish Highlands. When we mustered in Perthshire at the appointed place and time a few weeks later, I was surprised to learn the visit had been made possible by the Edinburgh branch of the British Geological Survey (BGS).

We set off from Aberfeldy in Landrovers, which were packed with students loaded with equipment. As we bumped over the fields, there was a cheery wave of acknowledgement from the stern farmer. Gates were opened and closed and eventually we reached our destination. We were close to the (by now) famous Calliachar Burn. Extemporising, our host, the late Dr Mike Gallacher delivered a preliminary briefing on the geology of the neighbourhood and a summary of recent exploration programmes. His conclusion was succinct – "Recent work by BGS and by the private sector has demonstrated that gold occurs widely in Britain." Finally, he turned to the matter of trespass on the land. He emphasised that rightly or wrongly, the farmer discouraged visitors … and especially gold panners. Return visits were out of the question.

It all made sense. In 1990, *The Times* had reported that the Canadian company, Colby Gold plc, "hopes

At the Calliacher Burn, there was a scramble to unpack equipment and transfer into clothes suitable for working all day in the water.

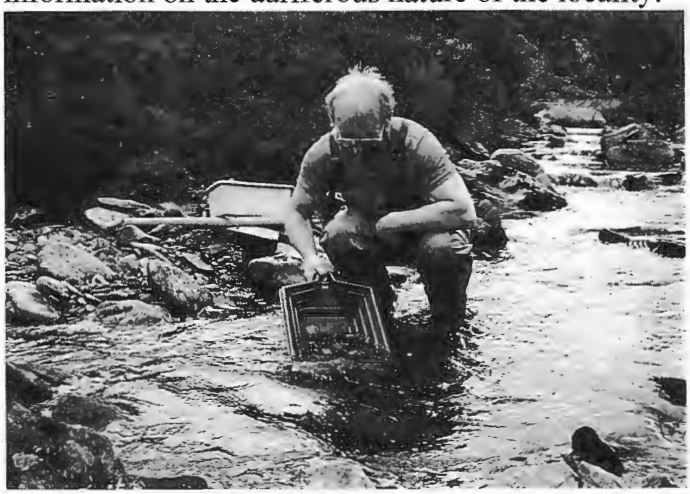
to strike ore in this remote land in Scotland" and said "the company is ready to begin tests at Calliachar Burn ... but it needs to raise the money just to decide whether it is worth going ahead, let alone produce gold in quantity."

My recollection of the occasion is that the BGS was keen to boost publicity, which would aid the raising of finance, and thus justify its Mineral Reconnaissance Programme. Just two years earlier, *The Daily Telegraph* had reported a "Highland find starts Scottish 'gold rush'" by quoting Dr Michael Gallacher of the BGS, who had "described recent gold finds as 'important and appreciable". He added that "several international companies were prospecting at more than a dozen sites." Some years later, in a prospectus which the company issued in 2005, Alba Minerals Resources plc emerged as another company having a serious interest in "two main swarms *[of gold]* at the Calliachar and Urlar burns about 2 kilometres south of Aberfeldy ..." Even more recently, Alba has declared its intention "to explore approximately 100 square kilometres of exploration ground near Borland Glen, close to the town of Dollar, Perthshire ..."

In what proved to be a reliably sunny day, the students spread out along the banks of the Calliacher Burn.

In the summer of 1993, however, I was by the Calliachar Burn, courtesy of Leeds University and the BGS, equipping myself with rubber boots, my favourite gold pan and sieve. My equipment included a shovel for shifting stones and a hand-made pump for raising gravel from the river bed. Groups of enthusiasts spread out along the burn, each hoping to be the first to reveal that their chosen 'hot spot' had produced some gold. This did not take long, and when we broke off for lunch, there was an impromptu talk delivered by Dr Gallacher. Mike explained his involvement in preparing reports on the natural resources in Scotland. He expressed confidence, but was realistic, "In world terms, the finds are not major, but in the European league table they are important. We have not had gold finds in Scotland like this before."

Mike's talk prompted students to tour the area and we identified the traces of prospecting and exploration. There was a post hammered into the ground that marked a survey point, a boarded-over trench or pit, and spoil heaps. One of Mike's colleagues also demonstrated how he used a specific mesh to filter river gravel before he washed the remainder in a wooden pan. The accumulated results from this prospecting technique had provided reliable information on the auriferous nature of the locality.



Project leader, Rob Chapman, evaluates the practicality of a new design of gold pan.

All in all it was a successful day, and back in the Breadalbane Arms Hotel in Aberfeldy, Mike needed little encouragement to talk about his adventures with the survey. The next day, everyone mustered in the car park of a nearby inn, ready for an early start. We were due to visit another location which was described as "in the Ochil Hills". The Landrovers drove off, and this time, I attempted to follow the route, but it was not easy on account of the way we were packed into the vehicle. (Some months later, I was able to work out that our destination had been Borland Glen, near Glendevon.)

During the spring Bank Holiday of 1996, successful goldpanning championships were held in the grounds of Glendevon Castle.

The weather was very favourable as we drove into the Perthshire landscape. When we stopped beside a steep slope, we made our way on foot to the banks of a burn. Again we spread out, staked places and started the heavy work of shifting stones and rocks, before panning the gravel to reveal particles of gold. When the weekend drew to a close, the Landrovers took everyone back to Sunday's starting point but some years later, when I attempted to retraced the route, accompanied by NMRS member Patrick Reeson, two huge, barking dogs dissuaded us from persisting in our quest.

The owner of the dogs, however, suggested we try our luck in the Westplace Burn, which ran through the grounds of nearby Glendevon Castle, and where the British Goldpanning Championships were held in May 1996. In spite of receiving permission to pan for gold, we encountered a very Scottish hazard – the midges. Because the burn ran through a very dark wood, the midges relished operating in the shafts of sunlight. In a word, it was agony. We panned for about an hour, wearing head, face and hand protection, took two photographs of ourselves on the location and then, with some relief, we departed.

The author photographed in Borland Glen in an illustration that shows how a temporary dam restricts and re-directs the flow of water, as well as the importance of a comfortable seat downstream.

Because I maintained a diary of gold mining activities in those days, it seemed worth checking the details of that special outing in 1993, but there is an unexplained omission. To my surprise, I have no record of Aberfeldy apart from a very comprehensive set of negatives that chronicle the people, the places and the location. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. How true !

Acknowledgement

Nearly twenty years have passed, but it is not too late to thank Dr Rob Chapman who made my outing possible and continues to motivate his students by virtue of his own enthusiasm for gold, its discovery, its composition and its origin.

Author's postscript

One year, as my wife and I were travelling north to Aviemore, our route took us from Loch Tay to Loch Tummel. To my surprise, we passed a site revealing all the signs of extensive and very serious mining. Thinking the Scottish 'gold rush' had come to fruition, we stopped to investigate. It was the Foss Mine of M I Great Britain Ltd., which had been formed by amalgamating two oil-service companies, Magcobar and Imco, in 1987. Exploration had started in 1979 and Perth and Kinross District Council gave permission to extract barytes in 1987.

Ron Callender

Cononish Mine

News comes of a gold mine situated in the hills of Glen Cononish, near Tyndrum, some fifty miles north of Glasgow. Gold had been found here in the 1980s but the mine was not developed and became derelict when the price of gold collapsed. Earlier in October 2011 permission was granted by the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authorities and mining is to commence next year, making this Britain's only commercial gold mine.

Scotgold, an Australian mining company, had previously applied to mine gold and silver at the site which it had bought in 2007, but was turned down last year over concerns about size and restoration.

At current prices, Scotgold believes there could be about £170m of precious metals at the site, which could be extracted over the next ten years. At least fifty jobs will be created and money will go to the local community to help develop a visitor and heritage centre.

From an article in***The Guardian***
31st October, 2011 by Kirsty Scott

Keswick Museum

Various reports have appeared .recently inferring that the Keswick Mining Museum is closed or closing down, which is incorrect. I am writing to clarify the situation. Certainly the finest collection of mining memorabilia in the country is up for sale! The owner and curator of the Keswick Mining Museum lan Tyler is hanging up his pit boots and helmet. After researching and collecting for fifteen years lan and his late wife Jean, decided to open, the first Mining Museum in the county at Caldbeck twenty four years ago and over this period has acquired hundreds of artefacts and memorabilia related to Cumbria's mining heritage.

They also founded Blue Rock Publications, and over the last twenty years have published twelve books on Cumbrian mining history, two of which have the distinction of winning Lakeland Book of the year Awards. The thirteenth in the series "The Mines of Cross Fell and the Pennines" will be published in March

2012. Ian also formed M.O.L.E.S, Mines Of Lakeland Exploration Society, for the purpose of creating a club of people wishing to explore and study disused mine workings, record and photograph our heritage before the establishment and time destroyed what was left. To this end the group worked closely with the National Park and the National Trust.

Ian is now well past retirement age and the daily drive from Carlisle to Keswick, plus working a full six day week is cramping his passion of fell walking and hindering his continued research and writing. It has been a difficult decision to let the museum go as it has been a life's work and passion. It is important to realise that the museum contents are for sale as a collection, and will not be separated unless we fail to find a responsible buyer.

Naturally the Museum will remain open daily from 10.00am-4.00pm as usual, but closed on Mondays although a winter time table will come into effect in November. Should you wish any further details or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ian Tyler
www.keswickminingmuseum.co.uk

Coal Mining
West of Whittonstall 1266-1966

Bill Stokoe, the author, has first hand knowledge of his subject having worked in and managed one of the mines concerned from 1953 to 1965 before leaving to train as a teacher.

The hills to the west of Whittonstall, to the south of Prudhoe, are formed by outliers of Lower Coal Measures. The old man had used bell pits to work the German ironstone, which is overlain by slippery, blue fireclay and lays about 900mm above the Victoria Seam. The coal had been ignored and the ironstone workings had been backfilled with the oozing fireclay, making later attempts at coal getting very hazardous.

Bill describes how his father and grandfather, having been made unemployed by the failure of the Shilford Coal Company, decided to sink their own drift onto the remaining area of Brockwell seam under Highfield Hill. They knew that the Brockwell seam had been worked under Whittonstall between 1820 and 1850, but an area to the west was left unworked. Using a system of headings driven off a haulage gate at eight yard centres, the coal between them was removed using six foot wide bords, leaving narrow pillars to support the roof. The haulages were driven up the full dip (1 in 20) from the main drift, and the headings were driven on the strike. This allowed between 75 and 80 per cent of the coal to be got.

Bill also covers the small mines and opencasts on the nearby Greymare and Kiln Pit Hills and westwards to Acton Burn. They are representative of the myriad drift mines on the western edge of the Durham-Northumberland Coalfield, many of which have been obliterated by opencasting.

As part of his studies, Bill and friends also excavated the site of a beehive coke-oven at Wall House Colliery. It is the only one known in the area and was supplied by a group of shafts working the upper leaf of the Brockwell seam. They also recorded a bingstead, at one of the shafts, where the coal was stored.

The book, which has 40 plates, 33 figures and 123pp, is available from the author (R.W. Stokoe), 14 The Drive, Shotley Bridge, Consett, DH8 0DL for £10 including p&p.

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.

The Northern Mine Research Society is a
Registered Charity
No. 326704

Visit our Website

www.nmrs.org.uk