

Northern Mine Research Society

Newsletter



Society established 1960

www.nmrs.org.uk

November 2012

www.nmrs.org.uk

SOCIETY NEWS

Presidents Jottings

It was good to see those of you who were able to attend our recent **Autumn meeting** at Gisburn. I was pleased to see some new faces there, and as usual the buffet was enjoyed by all. The books, both our publications and other mining related ones provided further interest. After the business meetings and reports we had a variety of presentations. John Knight informed us of the day Conference to be held at the National Coal Mining Museum at Caphouse Colliery entitled "Yorkshire Geology & Mining Resources of Yorkshire Revisited" on April 27th 2013. More details of this are elsewhere in this Newsletter. David Cross gave an interesting presentation on the Winn family of Nostell near Wakefield who owned Nostell Priory and some ironstone quarries in Lincolnshire. Ken Geddes talk on mine museums in the Harz Mountains was well received. Mike and Andy Richards presentation on underground photography was of great help to the amateur photographers amongst us.

Bernard Bond explained a little about Woodend Colliery Private museum at Reedley Hallows near Burnley and Malcolm Street had sent some photos of NMRS meets this year. Thank you to all who volunteered to give these presentations.

Our Autumn meeting brought to an end our programme of **events** as per our membership cards. I am sure you will agree we have had an interesting selection of meets from indoor events to underground visits as well as surface walks. Something for everyone. We are so grateful to our leaders who arrange their event and who very often send reports to Rob Needham, our Newsletter Editor. Thank you to those who actually attend, often taking photos which can be seen on our website. In particular we must thank Sallie who has the task of finding and co-ordinating meet leaders and meets. She does an excellent job in assembling the list. If you feel YOU could lead a meet Sallie would love to hear from you.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the **Membership Renewal Form** for 2013. As Malcolm explains elsewhere in the Newsletter there are now a variety of methods of renewing. Don't put the form to one side, why not attend to it now! Also enclosed is a **Committee Nomination Form** for 2013 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: Vacant from the 2013 AGM

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Would you please note that the deadline for inclusion with the February 2013 Newsletter is the 20th January 2013.

Submissions are welcome 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

Society News	1
Visit reports	4
Forthcoming Events	6
Letters	7
Cononish Diary	8
Reviews	8
Publications	10
Mining & Mining History News	11
What is this? The answer	14
Late News	14
From Lead to Magnesite	15
To finish	16

Treasurer: Tim Cook
Publications Editor: Richard Smith
Recorder: Mike Gill
Librarian & Meets Organiser: Sallie Bassham
NAMHO representative: Sallie Bassham
Newsletter Editor: Rob Needham
Membership Secretary: Malcolm Street
Webmaster Administrator: Malcolm Street
Committee Member: Peter Pearson

You will see we urgently require a **Secretary** to take over from Ron Callender when he relinquishes his post in April. He has done an excellent job and we will miss him greatly. There are guidelines available to help anyone interested in the post and Ron has offered further assistance. Our grateful thanks go to Ron for all he has done to help the smooth running of our Society.

Many thanks for the **Publication donations** received from Sheila Bridges, Steve Grudgings, Mr Lamb, a former member and Keith Turner. Some of these have already been distributed to members and the public. Now we have a list of out of print publications on our website, thanks to Malcolm, we will have more interest in what we have to offer. The list will be kept up to date. As we do not want to be a price comparison site no prices are listed but rest assured member's 25% discount would be applicable. If you have a particular "want" let me know so you will be on our waiting list.

At the time of writing this **BM 94** is well advanced and should soon be with you if not with this Newsletter. With the long winter days fast approaching now is the time to turn to indoor activities. Perhaps you could write an article for our 2013

Memoirs? Richard Smith is the person to contact for full details. He does an excellent job as our Editor and is always there to give guidance for prospective authors. Perhaps you could help with our planned expansion of our website into British Mining Sites? Further details are elsewhere in this Newsletter. Malcolm Street and Mike Gill are the people to contact for this.

Since the last newsletter the following members have joined our Society and we would like to welcome them

Andrew Cassells – Ballymoney

Margaret Forsman

William Nutbrown – Selby

Colin Robinson – Wigton

Judith Sutcliffe -

Patrick Watson - Newton Abbot

We were sorry to hear of the deaths of members Mr A. Muckalt, Lt Col F.H. Hume and Mr S.J. Punchard. Francis Hume was one of our oldest members who died late August, just a few days before his 95th birthday. It was a pleasure to have known him and visited him.

The **2013 AGM** has been arranged for Saturday 20th April 2013 at Mealbank Hall, Ingleton, so please put this date in your diary. Further details will be in the February Newsletter.

Finally, on behalf of all the Committee members who work so tirelessly for NMRS, I would like to wish all our Members Season's Greetings for Christmas and the New Year and thank you all for your support in 2012

Barbara Sutcliffe

Library Report

Since the AGM in March, three people have borrowed seven items and four photocopies have been provided. One member has been sent a paper copy of the "Library List". There have been many generous donations to the library and we are very grateful for these. Thank you to Keith Turner for copies of Craven Pothole Club "Record" and "News" and for Mines of the Lake District "Newsletters"; and to Mike Gill for Tim Gates "The Great Trial: A Swaledale Lead Mining Dispute in the Court of Exchequer, 1705 – 1708". Thank you to Ivor Brown for two bags of journals – unfortunately, I have not yet been able to get them home and catalogue them. With the donors' permission, duplicate material is passed to Barbara Sutcliffe.

NAMHO Report

Work on the English Heritage funded "Mining and Quarrying Archaeology Research Framework" is in its final stages. Additional funding has been given to print and edit a final report; and this will also be available free on the NAMHO web-site. In May there will be a one-day conference to launch

the report. NMRS publications have been extremely useful in almost all subject areas: the variety, quantity and, particularly, the high quality of our work is valued. Thank you to all contributors and editors over the years.

This year's conference was well attended and appreciated. It was based at Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire. Next year's conference will be at Aberystwyth from 28 June to 1 July 2013. The theme for talks is "Mining Legacies: examining the impact of historic mineral working and ore processing on land, landscapes and perceptions of place". There will be field visits and underground trips. Further information at <http://www.namhoconference.org.uk/>.

Meets

Thank you to everyone who has led meets this year. Please volunteer if you have an underground or surface trip you would like to share with others in 2013.

Sallie Bassham

Website News

Since taking over the job of webmaster 2 years ago I have striven to make the site as functional as possible with a new look, menu driven navigation and site search engines.

Over the past year the website has expanded considerably with many more ideas and requests in the pipeline. We have added the means where prospective new members can join online and pay with a credit/debit card and we have gained 4 new members by this process. We have also just extended this to allow members to renew this way if they so wish (see membership renewal below). Email addresses have finally been removed from the website and replaced with a contact form, which not only helps to reduce spam, but also provides a non threatening means of contacting us; many people are using this method now.

Improvements in the pipeline include a member's area and a project to provide information to the general public to the mining areas of the UK (see below). I am seeking help from the membership with these projects; from technical help in setting up a member's area to general help in writing short articles on mining areas and maybe even mines themselves. Good photographs are also sought.

UK Mining Project

We are looking at starting a project to enable a visitor to our website to find out about mining throughout the UK. We are looking at doing this through a series of maps. The initial map will be of the UK as a whole showing different mining areas. The visitor can point and click on an area to be taken to a larger scale map showing the groups of mines and ultimately we will be able to get down to individual mines this way. The idea is to make it interactive with text and good quality photographs to illustrate the various stages along the way. I envisage that as we get deeper down into the areas we can add links to articles in our publications and to other websites and sources of information.

BUT, the task is huge, and too much for one person and your help is sought. You don't need to be a technical person or a great mining historian, but someone who can write short articles with a BRIEF history of the location, and maybe what is still there, aimed at the general public. Photographs do not need to be fantastic, but of reasonable quality, providing they show something that is relevant. All contributions will be acknowledged. If you feel you can help in any way, or have other suggestions, then please contact me so that we can plan the way forward.

Membership Renewal

This is due on 1st January for 2013, a renewal form is included with this newsletter. Please check

that your details are correct and inform us of any changes.

Ways that you can renew:

- By Post – please return your renewal form (please write any changes on the form) together with your cheque to the Membership Secretary.
- On Line – please visit www.nmrs.org.uk/renew and complete the online form. When this is done you will be taken to a page where you can pay by Paypal, or by using your Credit/Debit card. There is a charge for this of 85p to cover the credit charges, but it will save you an envelope, a stamp and a trip to the post box.
- By Standing Order – some members already pay this way and if you are one it will be indicated on your renewal form. If you want to change to this method the please contact the Membership Secretary.

Newsletters

We are now starting to produce newsletters in PDF format that members will be able to view online or download to their computers. A number of members have expressed a wish to receive electronic versions to save the use of paper. If you are one who reads it and then throws it away, or if your bookshelves are groaning under the weight, then you may wish to opt out of receiving the paper version.

The electronic version in PDF format has an advantage over the paper one in that it is in colour, which is too expensive for us to print. When the newsletter is published we will email you the link to its location and you can either read it or download it from there. When the member's area is up and running all the PDF copies will be stored there for future reference. Newsletters in this format are also useful as you will be able to search the text easily.

Opting out of the paper version will help us to reduce our costs, as well and help us to keep the membership subscription low; less printing and less postage to pay.

On your renewal form or on the online form, there will be a means for you to opt out of paper newsletters, or you can contact me to request this also.

Malcolm Street

Society Garmins

The two NMRS Garmin Geko 201's are now back from their most recent loan and back in my care.

Should any member wish to make use of these brilliant little devices then please contact me using the following email address

VISIT REPORTS

Rogerley Mine Meet

Saturday 21st July 2012



On a lovely sunny day eleven enthusiastic members, plus one, met in the car park at the Durham Dales Visitor Centre. The purpose was a visit to Rogerley Mine in the quarry of that name near Stanhope. We were warmly welcomed by Cal Graeber. He is part of the UK Mining Venture team, and although based in the U.S.A. spends the period from May to August each year in Weardale, along with his wife Kerith and with the purpose of mining fluorite from the mine. Asked what happens to the specimens we were informed that each year the vast majority of the output is sold, mostly wholesale to various countries, from France being the biggest buyer to the UK where very few specimens are sold.

Ja



pan takes the most small specimens.

Weardale this year has been very wet and the convoy of vehicles up the track into the quarry were able to see the new ponds that have appeared this year – complete with moorhens and ducks. Our members were split up into groups of four with a group at a time being taken into the mine, via strong wooden ladders. The others, while awaiting their turn were able to chat to Kerith, look at the containers of specimens ready to be shipped back to the States for final preparation work prior to selling, and collect on the dumps. Some acceptable samples were to be found, especially in areas not often frequented! Rex and I went looking for the wild

orchids found in the quarry without success. Apparently we were a couple weeks too late.



During the actual mine tour we were able to see the Black Sheep Pocket named in honour of a very good local ale and which had yielded many exceptional specimens, the Bluebell Pocket named after a local pub, and Penny's Pocket named after a friend who was visiting when it was found. The Greenbank Vein and the Sutcliffe Vein, named after the original enthusiastic collectors demonstrated how hard it is to extract specimens from the mine. Nowadays lots of high pressure water is used to clean some of the muddy clay off the specimens while still in the mine. This is the source of the muddy water we paddled through in some area, hence the suggestion to wear old clothes and wellington boots.

Three days before we visited the largest specimen ever found at the mine had been discovered. Obviously this caused some excitement and we were able to see the huge specimen, still inside the mine and covered up away from other prying eyes. It had taken a lot of effort to extract the specimen from the roof and measured almost a metre across, covered with hundreds of well-formed, deep green penetration-twinned fluorite crystals. Running down a ridge through the centre of the specimen were a number of large untwined fluorite crystals measuring up to 8cm on edge. Cal thought it might have weighed nearly half a ton! Christened "The Weardale Giant" it should now be in California for further work, culminating in being displayed at the Tucson Show in 2013. We were fortunate to have seen it.

Cal and Kerith have had a very good summer in Weardale with some excellent specimens found. They obviously hope to return next year, having already purchased some second-hand rails for their wagon so if any of our members are interested in another visit showing what enterprise, perseverance, enthusiasm and money can achieve I will arrange it.

Barbara Sutcliffe

Photographs by Jean Thorley

Williamson's Tunnels, Liverpool

Saturday 4th August 2012

We are grateful to Chris Iles, and his colleagues, from "The Friends of Williamson's Tunnels" who arranged our trip, made us welcome, took us underground, amused us with tales of Liverpool's history and told us about Joseph Williamson, the "King of Edge Hill".

Joseph Williamson lived from 1769 to 1840. He came from a poor family to work in Liverpool and found a job with Thomas Moss Tate, a tobacco merchant. He worked hard, did well for himself and married into the boss's family. In 1818, Joseph Williamson was rich enough to retire and he bought land and houses in Edge Hill. His Mason Street house was built on solid sand-stone and Williamson started from his cellars and carved out underground rooms, a banqueting hall and a maze of passages stretching for miles. One reason for doing this was to provide employment and an income for poor men of the area. Unemployment was high because of the Napoleonic Wars. "The Friends of Williamson's Tunnels" have been able to unearth only a minute part of Williamson's underground kingdom; but are full of plans for future developments.

In August, about a dozen people met in Edge Hill to look at Williamson's Tunnels. Unfortunately, there was a last-minute problem with keys; so we were able to visit only one of the two underground sites. Thank you to everyone who supported.

Sallie Bassham

Tynebottom mine, Garrigill

Saturday 22nd September 2012

After meeting at Nenthead Mines car park, eight members and two guests re-convened on the road just outside Garrigill village where we changed into underground gear in autumnal sunshine. A short level walk from the road soon brought us all to the main entrance of the mine.

The "dry" haulage level had a small amount of water flowing out of it and a rather inconveniently placed tree in front of the entrance, however everybody managed to crawl under the low branches of the tree and negotiate the "up and under" gate just inside entrance, doing their utmost to stay dry. Unfortunately over the next few hundred feet of passage the small flow of water had ponded up to about knee-deep, so everyone had wet feet right at the beginning of the trip.

Once beyond the arching the rock-cut passage is quite wide and high and from the evidence we assumed that it was following the Windshaw Bridge vein, which is the main cross vein in this part of the mine. Soon we came upon a side passage branching off to the right along the northern most string of the Dryburn Washpool vein which is the principal vein in the area. This passage, the source of the water we encountered earlier, led us to a

flooded sump in a raised alcove and then just beyond a forehead.

Back in the haulage-way we pressed on to the junction with the Dryburn Washpool vein proper, having noted the remains of wooden rails in places en route. Some of the more enthusiastic explorers crawled over a couple small rock-falls to follow the passage to the point where it becomes totally water-logged.

At the junction it is possible to climb up into the "flat" workings, a couple of intrepid souls were dispatched to investigate the western end of these flats while we awaited the return of those in the haulage level. Apparently it is not possible to progress very far in that direction, the main route into the mine being in the opposite direction. Having gathered the party back together we set off east from the junction, the workings quickly swing to the south east, being associated with the Windshaw Bridge vein and can be followed to a climb back down into another haulage level. As this passage goes back under the flats it is totally flooded and it was suggested that it could, in fact, be the continuation of the initial haulage-way. However from this point the workings veer off in a more easterly direction, following the disseminated mineralisation of the Dryburn Washpool vein and its strings.

The way forward is through large "broken-down" flat workings, scrambling over piles of waste rocks, with sections of an un-roofed haulage-way visible lower down on the left side. Within in these workings there is considerable secondary mineralisation and we were all able to appreciate the deposits of purple & pink cobalt minerals and the blue colouration from copper minerals.

Eventually the accompanying haulage-way becomes arched and the continuing flat workings rather more choked with waste rock, so we descended into the haulage-way, noting lengths of iron rails in this section. A left branch of this passage leads to a climb up into further flats on the north side of the vein and our ardent explorers were not satisfied until every corner had been investigated. The main passage continues eastward until it meets a junction with the drainage adit and our way out. While a couple of the team could not resist the lure of the outside world and sunshine, the majority followed the adit passage as it swings east onto the vein heading towards the point where the mine went under the South Tyne river.

There are still parallel workings to the south of this passage and they must be bringing in a considerable amount of percolation water from the river because for some distance the right wall of the passage has large volumes of water pouring out between the base of the arching and a raised rock sill. Progress was halted at a "Y" junction with both ways blocked by "run-ins". The right-hand branch has been dug through and an oil-drum inserted, however this has been squeezed down by the collapsed material to about half its original height and the percolation

water has deposited a couple of inches of glutinous grey clay inside it. Even our most intrepid explorer decided to call it a day at this point and we all splashed our way down the adit to the exit right alongside the river.

I hope everybody enjoyed their visit and thank all those in attendance, (including the person remaining with the cars and acting as surface support).

Sally Jenkins

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Archaeology and British History by Francis Pryor

On Monday 26 November 2012 Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society present a public lecture in The Concert Room, Scarborough Library Vernon Rd, Scarborough at 7:30pm (tea and coffee will be available from 6:45pm). The lecture is free, though a donation to cover our expenses would be appreciated, but entrance is by ticket. Tickets are available by sending a SAE to

Chris Hall
10 Westbourne Park
Scarborough
YO12 4AT

The Geology & Mineral Resources of Yorkshire - revisited

The Yorkshire Geological Society (YGS) will organise a full day event at the National Coal Mining Museum for England (NCMME) on 27th April 2013 with the aim to provide a focus on the exploitation of the natural mineral resources of Yorkshire, covering historical perspective, industrial heritage and future prospects. This event falls within a now regular programme of popular events to attract interest from the general public; in the coming year it will be 'Yorkshire Rock and Fossil Day 2013' at the NCMME.

However, within the overall public event, the programme of displays, lectures and discussion will focus on a theme developed specifically for enthusiasts and professionals in the field of mineral resource development and industrial heritage in Northern England - 'The Geology and Mineral Resources of Yorkshire - revisited'. This title refers to a landmark publication of the YGS, published in 1974, and endeavours to plot and discuss the development, growth, stagnation or decline, of the traditional extractive industries of our region, in particular since the middle decades of the last century.

YGS has planned this event to be an opportunity to collaborate with other societies in North-

ern England which share our interest in geology and the exploitation of mineral resources in our region, including from an earth science and industrial heritage perspective. It is anticipated that short seminars or presentations will cover plans for regional geodiversity partnerships and also the planning and programme of events within a county-wide Yorkshire Geology Month in May 2013.

For YGS the year 2013 is a particular milestone, representing the 175th anniversary session of the Society, which held its inaugural meeting in Wakefield on 1st December 1837, which founded the Geological and Polytechnic Society of the West Riding of Yorkshire. From that date the Society has been continuously active, and the record in the Proceedings of the Society covers all the mineral extractive industries of the region. This NCMME event forms part of the anniversary celebration programme.

YGS has invited the participation and collaboration of all local geological societies and groups within the regional footprint and extends the invitation to our colleagues in mining history and industrial heritage societies. The event offers the opportunity for poster or other displays or short presentations on individual or society research projects, display of publications and society activities. In addition it is planned to organise up to two extended underground visits at Caphouse Colliery, covering areas outside the range of the standard underground visits for the general public, and involving walks out of the ventilation drift; numbers are limited and initial planning foresees a 'first come - first served' basis for members of participating partner societies.

As planning progresses, details will be posted on the YGS website - www.yorksgeolsoc.org.uk

Specific enquiries can be directed to the Programme Secretary of YGS, John Knight at jaknight@btinternet.com

The Archaeology of Mining and Quarrying in England

A one day conference to launch the publication of a three year assessment of mining and quarrying in England from prehistory through to the present day, 18 May 2013, at the Coal Mining Museum for England, Caphouse Colliery, near Wakefield. Invited speakers will cover all aspects of the extractive industries, from lead and coal to stone and slate, including the investigation of their underground archaeology.

Further details will be published on the NAMHO web site - www.namho.org - and in the newsletters of our constituent groups. Registration fee will be in the region of £5, including lunch. Advance booking - contact Peter Cloughton - e-mail: P.F.Cloughton@exeter.ac.uk - Tel: 01437 532578

Advanced Notice and Call for Papers
NAMHO Conference to be held at Aberyst-
wyth University, 28 June to 1 July 2013

Mining Legacies: examining the impact of historic mineral working and ore processing on land, landscapes and perceptions of place

A three to four day conference looking at the multiple legacies of historic mineral extraction with the opportunity for field visits to relevant mining sites in the Ceredigion uplands.

Over the last four thousand years mining has left a footprint on the environment, leaving both visible and hidden legacies for today and the future. Evidence of past mineral extraction can be prominent in the landscape as spoil heaps, discharges, dressing floors, mine entrances, derelict buildings, rusting machinery, transport infrastructure and settlements. Other remains are less visible, such as earthworks indicating sub-surface remains and subterranean workings, heavy metal residues, sometimes dating back thousands of years captured in polar ice caps or peat deposits. Less tangible still are the socio-economic, political and cultural impacts of mining, such as in the sense of place and identity, the development of heritage and alternative economic pathways, and the moral dilemmas of current and future mineral exploitation that these historic sites have often provoked and represented over time. Papers are invited on all aspects of the mining legacy.

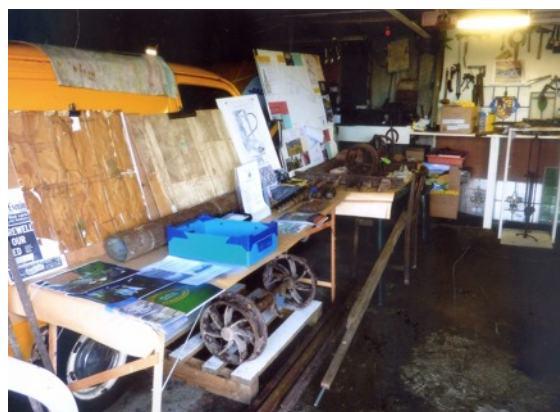
Investigating, in some cases, rectifying and also promoting the post industrial landscape can inform our knowledge of mining over the last four millennia. This conference aims to bring practitioners from a variety of academic disciplines, industry, the public sector, heritage charities, and independent researchers together and provide a stimulating platform for the transfer of knowledge and expertise. For further information contact: Dr Peter Claughton: p.f.claughton@exeter.ac.uk (01437 532578) or Dr Catherine Mills: c.j.mills@stir.ac.uk (01786 467583)

LETTERS

Ian Tyler would like to thank all our members who have visited and supported Keswick Mining Museum over the years. He will still be dealing in books, old and new, and is happy to source any "wants". He also has a complete run of NMRS publications if anyone would like a full set of these. He can be contacted on 01228 561883.

On 19th August a walk was given around one of Ingleton's mining areas, the Wilson Wood Colliery, by NMRS member Bernie Bond at the request of the local Ewecross Historical Society (of Bentham). Bernie's enthusiasm led to four display

tables plus 'Agin' the Bedford HA van and heavier mining equipment staged on the floor of his double garage. The equipment included an Elliot Boring Drill, manufactured by Pick Co. Of Sheffield and known to have been used in the New Ingleton Colliery.



Nine local visitors came along on a pre-visit before 28 members of the Ewecross Historical Society arrived. Much conversation centred on the displays, including the latest additions to Bernie's collection, several linen and (damaged) heavy brown paper surface and underground drawings, dated August 1910. These drawings are linked to the formation of the new Ingle-nook Ltd from the Old Ingleton Collieries Ltd. The drawings are signed by H.C.Embleton of Leeds, who



was one of four trustees gaining ownership of the new company in April/June 1909.

On the walk the visitors saw the three 1677 bell pits in the (private) field area of Bull Ing. Further descent of the open field area brought the party to the site of the Wilson Wood Colliery of 1853-1887 (path to the site is behind the group in the photograph). Below this area in 2003 the track was found to be brick-paved, this being the incoming road for arriving empty coal carts. Level areas in the field extend to the cottage, and the 1887 building plan marks these as the Shoeing Forge, Smithy and Cottage. Further information is in BM76, pages 63, 75 and (shaft collapse) 121. Armed with umbrellas the group continued their tour of the site through a 'very wet weather cycle'. On returning wet to the cover of Bernie's garage display, the group stayed for a further hour.

Bernie Bond, with thanks to John Bentley for his assistance

CONONISH DIARY : A YEAR-END REVIEW

When Scotgold Resources Ltd published its annual report in August 2012, the chairman drew attention to the benefit of gold maintaining its price of £1000 per ounce, because the company's operating costs are in sterling.



Photo: Cononish Farm sits at the base of Beinn a'Chuirn, where the main adit has been driven into the mountainside.

The company has yet to turn “producer” but continues with explorations so as to “increase the confidence level in the gold and silver resource”; that is, specific work which will create confidence and influence potential investors. The results of eight infill drillings in the main adit (that is, at the 400m level) have verified “grades and widths” in the first three holes, whereupon the “inferred resource” has changed to “indicated resource”. In the words of CEO Chris Sangster, it is “confirmation of the high grade nature of the Cononish vein”.

Finance contains to dominate the day-to-day activities, and although the chairman states his board considers the company is a going concern, he recognises that additional funding is required to develop its mineral explorations over the next twelve months. An earlier forecast has been revised and the first production of gold is now promised for “late 2013”.



Photo: A view of the exploration area with the buildings of Cononish gold mine situated at a deceptive 400 metres.

The company has already drawn down £1M from Rand Merchant Bank (of South Africa), which came to the rescue in July with an offer of a loan facility worth £1.18M. A recent estimate suggests that the loan will meet 50% of the capital required for the project, hence the current emphasis on fund raising.



Photo: The portal to the main adit, in a view from the interior of the mine.

Ron Callender

REVIEWS

Jarrit Smith's 1751 Newcomen Engine

Recently published by South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group, the author Steve Grudgings set out to give an account of the sequence, materials, methods and operational context for the construction and commissioning in 1751 of an early Newcomen “atmospheric” pumping engine at Coalpit Heath in South Gloucestershire.

The book is based on a possibly unique complete set of surviving bills from both suppliers and contractors concerned with the building of the engine. These documents are supported by contemporary maps, related archival materials and component illustrations to explain how the engine was built.

A great deal of effort has gone into the research needed to produce this well set out publication and it serves to illustrate how self taught artisans were able to produce bespoke products. The format is logically set out starting with the overall historical, industrial, technical and local context with maps, diagrams and photos adding interest. The actual detailed sequence of building and commissioning the engine follows together with a look at actual bills in detail and the author's interpretations of them. A further chapter examines possible conclusions that can be made and there is also a short bibliography.

An excellent feature of the book is the large number of illustrations, photos and maps. These break up the text and are of interest in their own right. The book appeals to many - anyone interested in mining history or engineering, local historians and to research

students showing how original documentation can be interpreted and used, to name but a few.

The paperback book is keenly priced at £9.99 plus postage and available from SGMRG – see their website at www.sgmrg.co.uk

Barbara Sutcliffe

Mine Drainage: Being a Complete and Practical Treatise on Direct-Acting Underground Steam Pumping Machinery

Stephen Michell, Cambridge University Press, Paperback, 370pages, 86 b/w illustrations, 216 x 140 mm, £19.99

ISBN: 9781108026659

Contents: Preface; Introductory; Classification of underground steam-pumping engines; Horizontal Pumping Engines: rotary horizontal engines; Non-rotary engines; Vertical Pumping Engines: rotary vertical engines; Non-rotary vertical engines; Appendix; Index.

Stephen Michell's 1881 work covers the full range of engines and steam-pumps available for draining mines in the nineteenth century. An expert on contemporary mining technology, Michell co-authored the essays 'The Best Mining Machinery' and 'The Cornish System of Mine Drainage' prior to writing this comprehensive survey. Mine Drainage represents the first attempt to gather in one book information previously located in various journals (and therefore difficult to find), and documentation about engines by their (possibly biased) manufacturers. The book also contains almost 140 illustrations of the diverse pumps and engines discussed. After a short introduction, the material is organised into two main sections, focusing on horizontal and vertical engines. Within those categories it discusses rotary and non-rotary engines, and simple and compound steam-pumps. The book will interest historians of technology, science, engineering, and mining in the Victorian period.

Coal Mining

T.C. Cantrill, Cambridge University Press, paperback, 203x127mm, £12.99,

ISBN: 9781107605817

Contents: Preface; Introduction and historical review; Varieties, geological age and origin of coal; The coal measures and the coal-seam; Coalfields, folds and faults; Prospecting and boring; Winning the coal; Working the coal; Ventilation, draining and lighting; Underground haulage, winding, and surface arrangements; Leases and royalties, administration, and state regulations; Bibliography; Index.

Originally published during the early part of the twentieth century, the Cambridge Manuals of Sci-

ence and Literature were designed to provide concise introductions to a broad range of topics. They were written by experts for the general reader and combined a comprehensive approach to knowledge with an emphasis on accessibility. Coal Mining by T.C. Cantrill was first published in 1914. The text contains an account of the key principles involved in coal mining, together with information regarding its historical development.

No Redemption

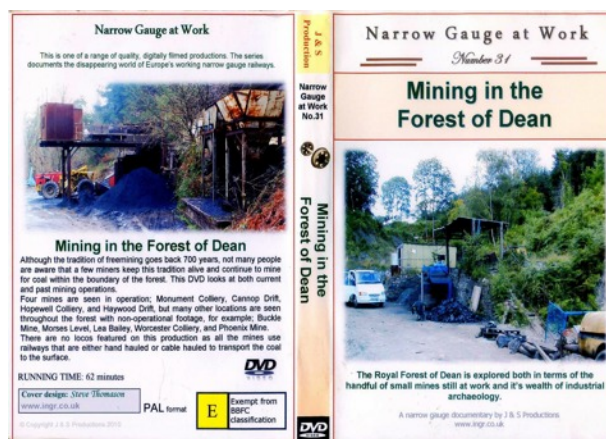
Keith Pattison and David Peace, Flambard Press, paperback, illustrated, 104 pages, 238x238mm, £20.00, ISBN 978-1-906601-20-1

Keith Pattison spent six months at the height of the Miners' Strike of 1984–85 living in the Durham coastal village of Easington Colliery and photographing the people there as events took shape. With the increasing determination of the government to break the strike and force miners back to work, he witnessed from the inside a community laid siege by the state.

Twenty-five years later, on Election Day 2010, Pattison took the writer David Peace to Easington to interview three of the people caught up in the strike – Alan Cummings, Marilyn Johnson and her husband Jimmy. Their memories, still freshly felt, make explicit the anger, pain, resilience and warmth captured in the photographs.

Narrow Gauge at Work No.31 Mining in the Forest of Dean

Produced by J&S Productions, 2010, available from www.ingr.co.uk, £14.00, running time approx 62 minutes



Although filmed ostensibly to show narrow gauge railways, this DVD visits all of the current free mines in the Forest of Dean except for the Prospector Mine (which was not started until last year) as well as several sites not currently being worked. Of particular note is the film of an electric coal-cutter in operation in Cannop Drift Mine. I have a few minor quibbles :- On the map Lydney is spelt incorrectly Hamblins Yorkley is incorrectly referred to as Hamblins Gale

The incline at Morses Level is not operated with a Landrover, but with a compressed air winch inside the mine, the cable being fed out between a pair of rollers in the mine entrance then up the incline, round the roller at the top and back down to the tub being wound out. *

The reason for inactivity at Morses Level, Worcester Colliery and Hamblins (Yorkeley) is not given, but is due to a legal dispute between the miners and the Coal Authority. The miners refuse to pay for a CA licence as they say that they already have a licence from the Deputy Gaveler as the representative of the Crown in the Forest and therefore object in principle to having to obtain a second licence.

However, overall this DVD is good value and gives an informative survey of free mining in the Forest. As mining, and hence use of narrow gauge railways to serve the mines, continues in the Forest hopefully this DVD will be updated and re-issued from time to time.

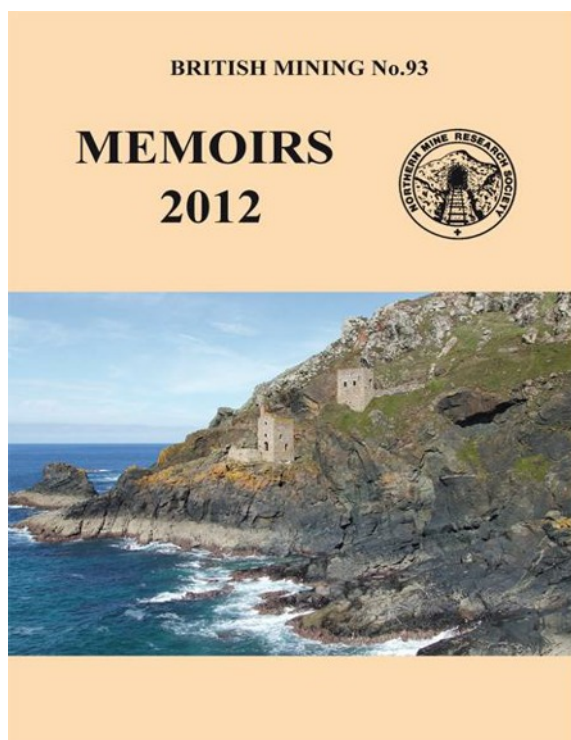
Rob Needham

*Operation is explained and shown, along with film of the current and abandoned underground workings, in 'Morse's Level, Compilation No.28', produced by IA Recordings in 1993 and still available, 19 minutes running time, price £10, from www.iarecordings.org

PUBLICATIONS

British Mining No. 93, Memoirs 2012

Papers in Memoirs 2012 are: Coal Mining at Samson Colliery, Oldbury in the nineteenth century (Nigel A. Chapman), 19th century photography at Walsall Wood Colliery (John Goodchild and Ron Callender), The Dolaucothi Roman drainage wheel



(Stefan W Meier), Haltcliffe Lead Smelting Mill, Cumbria (Richard Smith and Sam Murphy), William Stewart and the Lundhill Colliery (John Goodchild), The arsenic industry at Botallack Mine, Cornwall and its archaeology: a story of early 20th century adaptive re-use (Peter Joseph), Mines, trials and lodes of the Glandyfi Tract, Ceredigion, Wales (David M.D. James), Further notes on North Pennine iron ore mines (Graham Brooks) A5, 112pp., £10.00 + £1.80 p&p. (NMRS members discount £2.50 per copy). Booksellers and trade terms on request.

Enquiries and orders should be sent to:
Northern Mine Research Society Publications,
Barbara Sutcliffe,
The Old Manse,
93 Halifax Rd.,
Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 0EQ
Tel/Fax 01282 614615.
mansemins@btopenworld.com

Victoria County History, Yorkshire East Riding IX

Dedicated to Queen Victoria, the VCH was founded in 1899 and aims to be an encyclopaedic record of England's places and people from earliest times to the present day. Written county by county from original documents and fieldwork, the famous 'big red books' constitute the greatest publishing project in English local history, providing an invaluable resource for academics and enthusiasts alike.

Published by Boydell & Brewer Ltd, the latest VCH volume for the East Riding of Yorkshire presents an authoritative and comprehensive account of an important area centred upon Great Driffild. The book has 300 pages of text and is illustrated with over 75 photographs, maps and drawings.

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**New publication by CBA Yorkshire member
Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology
Group (SWAAG)**

Swaledale
Where the Gods Shed a Tear:
Geology and Industrial Archaeology



Edited by: Stephen Eastmead and Peter Derison-Edson

Editors note - I have no further information on this publication. Can anyone supply more, please?

MINING & MINING HISTORY NEWS

Maltby Colliery

The geological and safety problems at this mine continue, with water, oil and gas still leaking into its T125 coal face. The 540 workers were given notice of possible redundancies on October 8th, but the Board of Hargreaves Services is expecting a report on this issue later in the month, when it will decide the mine's future.

Sinking to the Barnsley seam began at Maltby in 1908, and in 1985 a new shaft was sunk to develop the Parkgate and Thorncliffe seams. Hargreaves Services bought the mine from UK Coal in 2007, when it was expected to work until 2015.

Morley Main Colliery

A memorial service for the 34 men and boys killed by an explosion at this mine [140 years ago to the day] was held at the National Coal Mining Museum, near Wakefield, on October 7th. Details of this disaster, in 1872, can be found in British Mining No.87 – *Coal Mining in Morley* by Jim Thorp.

National Coal Mining Museum

Recent additions of works of art and photographs to the museum's collection have been put on display using a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Collecting Cultures scheme. Called 'Seeing the Whole Picture', the exhibition celebrates this extensive project by displaying many pieces of art and photography acquired throughout the last 4 years. With subjects covering home life and the 1984/85 strikes, the exhibition includes the work of eminent coal miner artist George William Bissill

along with the fantastic work produced by local school and youth groups during project workshops. The exhibition, at Caphouse Colliery, Overton near Wakefield, runs until January 27th. Entry to the museum and car parking are free.

Carbosulcis Colliery

Miners at Italy's only coal mine, immediately south of Nuraxi Figus in Sardinia's province of Carbonia-Iglesias, occupied the mine in protest against the regional government's proposed closure at the end of the year. Sunk in the late 1930s, the 370 metre (1,214 feet) deep mine employs 500 people, but had been struggling to be economically viable. On August 26th, following a decision to close the mine, 50 miners (who were joined by 80 more the following day) occupied their workplace, declaring that they were "ready to do anything", even blow up the mine. It was reported that they wanted the pit to be diversified into a combined mining and carbon capture site.

The occupation ended on September 3rd, after the Ministry of Industry reversed its decision and said the mine would instead be updated. In 1995, miners occupied the pit for 100 days.

Aberpergwm Colliery

American owners Walter Energy blamed a fall in demand for coal and a challenging economic environment for its planned shutdown of this drift mine near Glynneath, which will affect about 270 employees. Miners there are already in a redundancy process that was expected to include about a third of the workforce, and during the 90-day notice period announced by the firm, most employees will now remain at home on full pay. A small number of employees are likely to be needed to maintain the mine until operations resume.

Aberpergwm, which was closed by the NCB in 1985, but reopened a year later under private ownership, is believed to have coal reserves of about 6.8m tonnes. Production is said to have halved to around 200,000 tonnes annually over the past couple of years while resources were being used to prove a deeper seam. The owners had recently invested in a new washery. The mine's main customer, Aberthaw power station in the Vale of Glamorgan, buys around one million tonnes of Welsh coal a year.

Unity Mine, on the other side of the valley, nearby, remains at work.

Mike Gill

**Mining & Mining History News
July & August 2012 (to 29/08/2012)**

Geothermal energy in Glasgow, 19/04/2012

The British Geological Survey believe that the water contained in old mine workings beneath

Glasgow could provide nearly 40% of the city's heat, using heat pumps. A small scheme in Shettleston has heated 17 houses for over ten years. The BGS has used over 50 000 borehole records and old mine plans dating back to 1839 to generate a 3D computer model of the geology and mines. This model will be used to identify promising locations where new boreholes could exploit the minewaters. The Leader of Glasgow City Council has requested "We want developers and local communities to come forward in the future with projects which could use this new source of heating and help ensure that everyone in Glasgow is able to benefit from the new green energy revolution."

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/research/energy/geothermal/heatEnergyGlasgow.html>

Keswick Mining Museum, Cumbria, 05/06/2012

Ian Tyler is selling the contents of the Keswick Mining Museum, almost 5000 artefacts, which he describes as "the finest collection of mining memorabilia in the whole of the north of England". The contents will be sold on a "first come, first served" basis with books and ephemera being sold from 21st August, minerals and fossils from 15th September, and lamps and instruments from 6th October. The Museum will close on 27th October. For more details phone 01228 561883 or 017687 80055, or e-mail coppermaidkes@aol.com
<http://www.keswickminingmuseum.co.uk/index.htm>

Wallonia, Belgium, 01/07/2012

UNESCO has added four coal mining areas to its World Heritage List: at Grand-Hornu, Bois-du-Luc, Bois du Cazier and Blegny-Mine. One of Europe's earliest collieries is at Bois-du-Luc, dating to the late 17th century. The Neolithic flint mines at Spiennes are also a World Heritage site.
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1344/>

Hesley Wood spoil heap, South Yorkshire

This spoil heap in Chapeltown near Sheffield was produced by the former Smithy Wood Colliery. RecyCoal has submitted a planning application for coal recovery and restoration of the site. The company hopes to process 3.3 million m³ of spoil, to recover 395 000 tonnes of coal. The 50 hectare site will become a public open space with 22 hectares of woodland, and grassland and wetland. The scheme will create 35 jobs.
<http://www.recycoal.com/home>

Leadhills, South Lanarkshire, 19/07/2012

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency commissioned the Coal Authority to

investigate water pollution in the Glengonnar Water, to see if improvements in water quality could be made. The study found significant levels of pollution by lead, zinc and cadmium. There is a build up of water in the Gripps Level, with a head of over 50 metres in the workings, which could cause a "blow-out". Some work was also done in the headwaters of the Wanlock Water in Dumfriesshire. NHS Scotland has published a human health risk assessment which is available, with other guidance, on the NHS Dumfries & Galloway website.

http://www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/news/2012/fund_helps_study_effects_of_le.aspx
<http://www.nhsdg.scot.nhs.uk/dumfries/5346.html>

Curraghinalt Gold Project, County Tyrone, 25/07/2012

Dalradian Resources has announced the findings of a Preliminary Economic Assessment into its proposed underground mine. The study suggests a mine with a 15 year life, producing a total of 2223000 ounces of gold (69 tonnes). The average grade of ore is 8.1 g/t, and 1700 tonnes of ore would be processed each day by crushing, grinding and cyanidation.

<http://www.dalradian.com/about-us/default.aspx>

Parvs Mountain, Anglesey, 30/07/2012

Anglesey Mining PLC has completed the drilling programme that it started in January 2012. Results indicate that mineralisation extends upwards from the Engine Zone, but not as far as the surface. Two holes on the edge of the Great Open Cast indicate the area has potential. The first results available for drilling in the New Pearl Engine House area were "very encouraging".

<http://angleseymining.co.uk/news/?p=306>

Coniston Copper Mines, Cumbria, 30/07/2012

Channel 4s Time Team have been excavating and filming at Levers Water and Cobblers Level mines. They are hoping to link 16th century documentary evidence of mining to artifacts in the ground. The Team were assisted by members of Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society. Series 20 will be broadcast early in 2013. For a flavour of the programme check out the Time Team Digital website.

<http://www.timeteamdigital.com/digs/copper-mine.html>

<http://www.nwemail.co.uk/home>

Well Hill Surface Mine, Northumberland, 08/08/2012

Northumberland County Council will grant planning permission for a surface mine, at Stannington near Morpeth. Hargreaves Services PLC plan to extract 130 000 tonnes of coal over a two year period.

<http://www.hargreavesservices.co.uk/default.aspx>

The 2012 Mine Rescue Competition, 13/08/2012

Irish Salt Mining & Exploration Company Ltd were the hosts for this years contests. Teams from Cleveland Potash Mine, Winsford Salt Mine, and Lisheen and Tara Mines competed with the host team at Kilroot Mine, County Antrim. Representatives were present from Turkey, Portugal, Spain and elsewhere in Ireland. The events included a test of mine rescue knowledge, a fitness and initiative test in breathing apparatus, a first aid exercise and an underground search and rescue. The Best Overall Mine Rescue Team award was won by Lisheen Mine. Tara Mine is hosting next years competition in May 2013.

<http://www.imqs.ie/Home.aspx>

Rubislaw Quarry, Aberdeen, 17/08/2012

Work has started to pump water from this quarry in the suburbs of "The Granite City". The 150m deep flooded working was bought in 2010 by Hugh Black and Sandy Whyte who plan to create a heritage centre. The quarry was first opened in 1740, finally shutting in 1971.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-19296757>

<http://rubislawquarry.co.uk/new/>

Burnston Surface Mine, East Ayrshire, 19/08/2012

Scottish Coal has received planning permission for mining at this site, which adjoins its House of Water Complex at the head of the Nith Valley. 2.6Mt of coal will be extracted during a period of five years, and 65 jobs will be safeguarded.

http://www.dcservices.co.uk/go/mineral_planning_home/

Coal Authority Map Viewer, 21/08/2012

The authority has made more of its data available on an interactive map viewer. One can now zoom in to an area of interest, at 1:25000 scale, and get basic information on the features displayed. EG one shaft (289903-001) in the Brora Coalfield was "capped at rockhead by the National Coal Board in the late 1970's to an unknown specification".

<http://coal.decc.gov.uk/en/coal/cms/publications/data/map/map.aspx>

New Films

The Underground Journey

In the 1960s a group called Operation Mole made a film showing the link between Meerbrook and Cromford soughs in Derbyshire. This 40 minute classic is now available as a DVD for £12 plus £1.50 p&p, from Dave Webb: davidwebb12@ntlworld.com. The story of how the film was made will appear in a future issue of the magazine Descent.

Glass Mountain: The Story of Muckish Sand

This film tells the story of a silica sand quarry in a spectacular location near the summit of Muckish Mountain in the north-west of Ireland. The quarry was worked intermittently from about 1798 until 1954. The 38 minute documentary was produced by a local community group, and includes rare colour footage of work in the quarry, and recent interviews with four of the men who worked on Muckish. The film is available for €10 plus p&p from Gerald Duffy, Creeslough View, Carrownamaddy, Dunfanaghy, County Donegal, Ireland. Mobile +353 87 610 9331.

Diary Dates

30 November 2012 (to be confirmed). Irish Geological Association fieldtrip to Tara Mine, Co. Meath.

<http://www.geology.ie/category/programme/>

20-21 April 2013 BCRA Cave Technology Symposium, South Wales. <http://www.bcra.org.uk/>

Alastair Lings

Opencast coal mining at Halton Lea Gate

Sallie Bassham sent a series of cuttings from the Hexham Courant newspaper covering the period from 10 August 2012 to 14 September. Below is the first article. The rest give more detail of the planned mining and describe the protests against the plan.

Villagers are calling on the Prime Minister to help in their fight against large-scale opencast mining.

Hartleyburn Parish Council has just six weeks to challenge a decision by the Government's planning inspectorate to allow 140,000 tonnes of coal to be extracted at Halton Lea Gate.

And councillors are seeking urgent support from senior politicians, including David Cameron. At an extraordinary meeting of the parish council, on Wednesday, Coun Eddie Armstrong said: "We need to find out who can help us and we need to be stamping our feet."

Hexham MP Guy Opperman pledged his support to the campaign last week.

And Coun Jeremy Ancketill added: "We will write to David Cameron, asking why his inspector is not following the Government's policy on leaving an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as it is."

WHAT IS THIS? - THE ANSWER

On the back page of the August newsletter, a photograph of a tracked machine was reproduced and I asked the question 'What is this?' Read on.

Re. the query in the NMRS Newsletter received last week. The machine is a Samson Arc Shearer track-mounted coal cutter, adapted to cut limestone in mine headings, thus enabling blocks of rock to be removed either as blocks or to facilitate blasting for subsequent removal. These 50, or later 60 hp machines had cutting jibs laced with hardened steel (later carbide tipped) picks which acted in similar fashion to a chain saw. In fact, they replaced two-handed saws in the limestone mines some time after WW2.

Chilmark was a former stone mine converted into an RAF munitions store, operating from the late 1930's into WW2. RAF officials introduced coal mining practice and machines for more efficient working when enlarging the mine for extra storage. So called "American" mining was practiced at some Midlands collieries using shortwall systems, sometimes using arc-wall coal cutters made by Anderson Boyes (Motherwell) and Mavor and Coulson (Bridgeton, Glasgow). The machine in your photo is an M & C "Samson" arc wall machine. The track

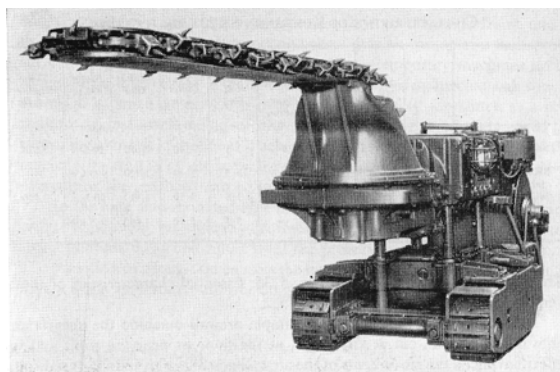


FIG. 5.36. Mavor and Coulson shearing coal-cutter for overcutting at 6 ft. 1 in. height

mounted versions were preferred to those mounted on rails for their better manouverability in stone mines.

I am sending some photos and illustrations separately showing these machines at work in the Corsham stone mines in Wiltshire, which operated under conditions similar to those at Chilmark.

Please get back to me if you want any further information, but meanwhile see "British MiningFields", published by the IMM in 1969 (pages 9 - 11), and Nick McCamley's "Secret Under

ground Cities", pub. Leo Cooper, in 1998.

The National Museum of Scotland's preserved Lady Victoria mine at Newtongrange near Edinburgh may be interested in recovering the machine, if it is still recoverable, as they have a nice collection of underground equipment in their "heavy stores" department, much of it "made in Scotland". Well worth a visit.

Prof Tom Elliott, Kidderminster

As a result, I am trying to find out who owns the Chilmark mine site, now that the former operator has given it up and the current lessee has banned access.

Rob Needham

LATE NEWS

Daily Telegraph 25th October 2012 Mine Host - Cornish tradition to be revived in search for tin



(Editor: The photograph with the article was of an old engine house and was of poor quality, so I thought that this one of Geevor was more appropriate, having been taken just after Geevor stopped pumping.)

The South Crofty tin mine could reopen, bringing a sense of pride back to Cornwall.

Investors have valued the mine's tin at £1.5 billion. The reversal of fortunes, thanks to the demand for metal in China and the developing world, is expected to revive an ancient Cornish industry that stretches back more than 4,000 years.

It will also lift the town of Camborne, one of the most deprived areas of England. The owners of the mine have promised to invest £7.8 million over the next year to prepare the site for mining. Celeste Copper Corporation plans to spend £1.1 million on drilling at the site and £2.6 million pumping water out of the mine.

The Canadian owners valued the tin by comparing the quantity of the metal, believed to be about 8.76 million tons, with current markets.

It hopes to create more than 220 jobs. The price of the metal has quadrupled over the past decade.

It is now worth about £12,700 a ton, but when the mine closed in 1998, it was worth little more than £3,000.

Mark Kaczmarek, who mined for 17 years, said: "If South Crofty were to reopen, it would restore a lot of pride. People of Cornwall have their own identity, and mining plays a role in that."

FROM LEAD TO MAGNESITE IN FIFTY YEARS

For over thirty years, my wife and I have often stopped to eat sandwiches at Lecht lead mine, which is no more than five miles from Tomintoul, the highest village in the Scottish Highlands. Blissfully we enjoy the silence, the scenery and the tenuous link with our interest in Lanarkshire's Leadhills. This year, we heard it was not a lead mine and that Scotland's Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments refers to it as the Lecht *ironstone* mine. While finding out that ironstone is "a limited source of iron", I learned it can be an important component in making ceramics. For example, Josiah Wedgwood's stoneware china was very popular in the 19th century and became



fashionable again in the 1970s.

Photo: The centre of the operations at Lecht mine was a mill that has been preserved by a renovation scheme, which includes a cut-away diagram featuring the different operations,

and explaining the reason for the fenestration in the four walls. The arched entrance was big enough for the horse and cart that collected the crushed product and transported it to furnaces twenty miles away.

So far, so good ... and then I discovered that the Duke of Richmond re-opened the Lecht mine in 1841 to recover manganese, which was more important than the ironstone that had been worked between 1730 and 1737. I was familiar with manganese; it is found in the body and a careful balance maintains strong and healthy bones. Too little is dangerous, but too much is also danger-

ous. Not only does manganese come from Lecht, it also occurs in pineapples, garlic, lettuce, kale, maple syrup, cloves, black paper and so on. There are claims it is used in some toothpastes to accelerate the whitening of teeth, but the companies do not emphasise the fact. Coming from Motherwell, however, I know that manganese once had an important place in the town's steel-making industry; at high temperatures, manganese not only makes the steel more flexible during handling but it also toughens the metal.



Photo: The rear of the building shows, on the left hand side, where ore was brought direct into the upper storey by a bridge that connected an adit and building. A water wheel (right hand side) provided the power for Cornish rolls, stamps and a trammel. The final stage of separating manganese from waste material was probably tackled outside by 'jigging'.

Thinking about manganese brought to mind magnesite. Fifty years ago I was shooting two films on the Greek island of Euobea and at the end of each day, lorries full of women and men squeezed past our Land Rover on the mountainous tracks. Dismissively, our Athenian interpreter explained they were workers from the mine and we should ignore them, but the frequent outcrops of a white material that studded the mountains, took our curiosity.



Photo: The Greek island of Euobea is mountainous and the most important natural resource is the mineral magnesite.

One day we decided to investigate and on flat ground, we came on a collection of discarded buckets and what looked like the remains of an overhead railway system. Nearby were pyramids of

“the white stuff”, carefully graded into big rocks, small rocks, ground-up rocks and powder. The intensity of the sun beating down on the mysterious white rocks dictated the briefest of camera exposures, in which the sky and sea were reproduced as brilliant saturated blues. We shot some cine film and later used the footage as ‘cutaways’ when we established it was a mineral called Magnesite, one of the few economic virtues of the island.



Photo: In Euboea, the mining operations show as a brilliant white scar on the densely wooded hill-sides of the mountains and valleys.

It did not seem to be a valuable commodity and it was not easy to find out why Magnesite was worth mining. Being porous, it stuck to the tongue in a simple taste test. The World Wide Web came to the rescue by stating “magnesite belongs to the calcite group of minerals, a group of related carbonates that are isomorphous [*that is, forming similar crystals*] with one another”. But what use is it? Another search revealed that by encouraging the formation of slag in steelmaking, it helps to protect the linings of the furnaces. That was good enough for me until I learned that it also masquerades as “a wonderful relaxing and calming stone when used in

meditation”. Assured that it is ideal for creative visualisation and “the soothing vibration contributes to psychic visions of exceptional clarity”, I terminated my searches.



Photo: A sample of magnesite which originated in one of the mines in the northern area of Euboea, Greece.

I was reluctant to experience “a pulsing sensation when used during a third eye chakra” but more anxious to re-examine my recent photographs of the Lecht Mine and rummage in my loft for ancient pictures of magnesite mining on a Greek island.

Ron Callender

To finish, a request from the editor. When you send me a file as an attachment to an email, would you please ensure that the file includes the name of the author at the end of the text. There are a couple of items in this issue where a file has become separated from the email to which it was attached, and so I am, uncertain whether I have got the author’s name correct.

Rob Needham

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