

CAT Newsletter No. 4

APRIL, 1984

Important to Capitalists, Miners, Furnace Proprietors,
and Steel Manufacturers.

→* Valuable Hematite Iron Ore Mines,*← IN THE FURNESS DISTRICT.

To be SOLD BY AUCTION, by
MR. ROBERT CASSON

At the COUNTY HOTEL, ULVERSTON, in the County of Lancaster,
On *THURSDAY*, the 15th day of October, 1885, at Three o'clock p.m.

In Three Lots, unless previously disposed of by Private Contract, of which due notice will be given,
the following VALUABLE

IRON ORE MINES

The Property of the Ulverston Mining Company, Limited,

LOT 1.—THE MINES KNOWN AS **The CROSS GATES AND EURE PITS**

With the MINERAL RIGHTS and POWERS TO GET IRON ORE over an area of 95a. 3r. 24p., statute measure, more or less, and the OFFICES, ENGINE HOUSES, and other ERECTIONS, PUMPING and DRAWING ENGINES, and other MACHINERY and EFFECTS, the property of the Company within the Limits of the Royalty.

LOT 2.—THE MINES KNOWN AS **BIRCUNE AND THE JAMES PIT**

With the MINERAL RIGHTS and POWERS TO GET IRON ORE over an area of 100a. 2r. 38p., statute measure, more or less, with the ENGINE HOUSE, and other ERECTIONS, PUMPING and DRAWING ENGINES, and other MACHINERY and EFFECTS, the property of the Company within the Limits of the Royalty.

LOT 3.—THE MINES KNOWN AS **Lindal Cote Mine and Pinder Ring Mine**

With the MINERAL RIGHTS and POWERS TO GET IRON ORE over an area of 257a. 3r. 12p., statute measure, more or less; together with the COMPANY'S OFFICES, ENGINE and other Houses, PUMPING and DRAWING ENGINES, and other MACHINERY and EFFECTS, the property of the Company within the Limits of the Royalty.

This lot also includes a MANAGER'S RESIDENCE and FOUR WORKMEN'S COTTAGES and 9a. 2r. of Meadow Land.

The above Mines are situate in the Parish of Dalton-in-Furness, in the County of Lancaster, in the heart of the Furness Ore District. The Furness Railway runs through the Royalty, and the various Pits communicate with the Main Lines of Railway by convenient Tramways and Sidings.

The Mines and Royalties are held by the Vendors on Lease from His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, under an Indenture of Lease bearing date the 10th day of February, 1882, for a term of 21½ years from the 29th day of September, 1881 (except a small part of Lot No. 1, which is held of the Right Honorable the Earl of Derby, for the like term and on similar conditions to the Buccleuch Lease), at a dead rent of £1,050 per annum, which rent merges in the Royalty reserved by the Lease, and take note on the ordinary sliding scale adopted in Leases of the Duke of Buccleuch's Royalties in the Furness district. Intending Purchasers can inspect the same. This dead rent, if the property is sold in lots, will be apportioned by the Lord in the following manner.—Lot 1, £550; Lot 2, £250; Lot 3, £250.

This sale poster marks the beginning of the last large-scale investment in the mines around Lindal in Furness culminating in their eventual closure after the First World War.

MEETS REVIEW 1983

BY MCF

Ah yes, 1983 - I can hear the sceptics muttering amid caterwauling and gnashing of teeth - Cruise missiles, Grenada, radioactive seaweed, the Hitler Diaries, Cecil Parkinson, Norpex, Mr Andropov, Greenham Common; not much of a year by all accounts, bit of a non starter, all gloom and despondency. So I thought I'd cheer you all up (especially those who live near Windscale) and generally brighten your lives with a magnificent catalogue of CAT discoveries and achievements. You may find this hard to swallow but midst all the plague and pestilence we had a marvellous year, a bumper year, a salad-day year, the sort of year that old men in bath-chairs recall with tears twinkling on their monacles, a vintage year, a pioneering year, a flag-waving drum-beating year. And if you think I've gone a bit over the top there, or you momentarily formed the impression that you'd been in suspended-animation for twelve months.....tough nuts. I had a good time anyway.

29-30th of Jan - Coniston Coppermines. Exploration work in Red Dell and Paddy End. Meet at BMSC hut. M.L. E.G. Holland.

Memories of that first meet are hauntingly vivid - Arctic conditions prevailed both inside and outside the climbing hut. Men sat in the bar of the Crown with pint glasses frozen to their lips. Ah the hardship, the human sacrifice; such is devotion.

The 30th of January is a date to be emblazoned in CAT history. We made an epic descent of Triddle Shaft (400ft +) taking with us a baulk of timber seven feet long by ten inches thick to plug a gap in Fleming's Level (which was about half way down). The timber was donated to the Trust by a local contractor and was positioned, with much grunting and groaning on the end of a rope, by Martin Maher, motor mechanic by vocation and masochist by trade.

February dawned with a visit to Force Crag Mine, the recently abandoned zinc and barytes working in the wilds of Coledale. Lots of members turned out for this meet and Mark Wickenden took them all through the elaborate system of levels, shafts, and inclines. Also in February we had a dig at the entrance of the main level at Yewthwaite Mine near Keswick. We didn't get in; the ground was too broken. Have sharp recollections of member Calvin digging with unbounded energy and encouraging all and sundry in his rich West Cumberland dialect. At least I think they were words of encouragement. Rock on Ronnie.

March.....ah yes.....Lancaster Hole to County Pot, the annual caving trip. This was a memorable day. Those who claimed to be adept at potholing had a rough time while those who had done nothing but mining thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I think we were all a bit stiff after forging up that stream passage but it was well worth it. Mr Holland came to grief (several times) in a whirlpool and later in a tight squeeze called Dick's Dilema. Also Mike Maher did a lot of grunting and groaning in a flat out crawl called Poetic Justice. And I'm sorry but I just can't finish this paragraph without mentioning Mark Wickenden who drove his car through a stone wall on his way up to Bullpot Farm.

Easter....we camped at Bontddu near Dolgellau and, as always on our Easter expeditions, had beautiful weather. On Good Friday four of us abseiled down a shaft into Clogau Mine and had an eye-opener of a trip through the old gold workings. On Saturday we drove down to Cwmystwyth Mine and had a very interesting afternoon exploring the massive stopes, some of which still retained their original miners' ladders. There was much to photograph both underground and on the mill site. Cwmystwyth was a popular meet, thirteen members turning out. On Sunday eight members visited Gwynfynydd Mine, which is a going concern. It had closed for the weekend and the gate was locked so we explored some older workings

higher up the valley where, on our first Welsh visit, we had found mispickel crystals. And on Easter Monday we had a delightful stroll up into the fells above Nantpennant to take photos of an abandoned waterwheel on a coppermining site. The wheel, although rusty, could still be turned. Also there was an impressive balance-bob in situ above the collar of a flooded shaft. A shame, we thought, that it was all going to rack and ruin; had it been nearer home we could have done something to preserve it (I have a vague memory of E.G.H. saying he was making a trip to Wales with the purpose of creosoting the timberwork on this site. I can't remember now if he actually got round to it. Perhaps on a future meet we could take some pots and brushes and have a working day up there).

On May Day we had a meet at Dale Head copper mine, which is the highest copper mine in England. Members dug into some ancient workings and, by all accounts, had a jolly good day. Then came the 15th of the month; another day to be emblazoned in CAT history. A five-person team (four men and a woman) abseiled 300ft down the Red Dell stopes at Coniston and pioneered a route into the legendary Cobblers' Hole. This successful trip followed an earlier attempt by C.D. Jones, Martin Maher, Wickenden, and McFadzean, where the participants manhandled the rubber dinghy (by some devilish and underhanded means) through 300ft of stopes and chasms to the foot of the New Engine Shaft where, with a sigh, it promptly deflated. By some quirk in the laws of physics this unfortunate craft, we discovered, 'levelled out' 16 inches underwater while carrying two persons at a time, and thus we were transported along the flooded stopes to a dead-end where, twenty feet above us, we beheld the entrance passage to Cobblers' Hole tantalizingly out of reach. It was quite an unnerving experience to paddle through water which was in places well over a thousand feet deep, in the world's first submersible dinghy. However, to return to the 15th of May.....Fleming took a party into Fleming's Level (no it was not named in his honour) while Wickenden, Blezard, Danson, Murphy, and McFadzean abbed down the stopes and landed on Deep Level at the place we had gazed up at months earlier from the dinghy. From there it was an easy stroll into the magnificence of Cobblers' Hole, an immense stope and site of the richest ore deposit in the Coniston fells.

In June we had a weekend up at Nenthead and descended, amongst other things, the infamous Brewery Shaft. Quite a number of members made the 250ft descent on electron ladder and I understand it took no short length of time to pull them all out again. But it's good to hear that these deep places are being visited by members other than the 'daredevil' faction, and if it means long weary hours of lifelining and rigging ladders, well then, that's how it has to be.

Now about this time we had a meet in the Duddon Valley to dig open a copper mine high on the side of Hesk Fell. The dig went well, the weather was hot and sweaty, folk had a grand day and a swim in the river; though one of our members had an unfortunate experience on his way to the mine. Ewan Cameron had motorcycled all the way from Montrose in Scotland specifically to attend this meet and sadly he came to grief in the Woodlands Valley four miles from his destination. Ewan collided with a car and was knocked into a stone wall, breaking both of his legs. From his bed in North Lonsdale Hospital he forced a grin, while recounting his story, and shrugged his shoulders in a gesture that conveyed the impression it happened all the time. Never mind Ewan.....rest assured you are not the only member who has demolished a stone wall on his way to a meet.

The working mine visit was a huge success, with sixteen members turning out for a trip down the anhydrite mine at Whitehaven. We all took lots of photographs (which all turned out identical); the more mechanically minded amongst us had lengthy discussions with the engineers; and Jill Aldersley attempted to drive off a Terex 72:41 face shovel, hair streaming behind her like a valkyrie, white knuckles clenched on the steering wheel. All good clean fun. Members met at Kinniside Mine the following day for some exploratory work under the leadership of Geof Cram.

The Cornwall trip was cancelled due to lack of interest.

And then it was the Tilberthwaite Shaft. Now then.....the only 'S' graded meet on the list. Four members set out but only three reached the bottom, Wickenden collapsing at the half-way stage through the delayed effects of advanced alcohol poisoning. The valiant three who made it were C.D. Jones and C.H. Jones (which is even more confusing in the darkness) and McFadzean. Once safely at the bottom we pushed the Horse Level several hundred feet further than on the previous visit but were forced back when the water reached the roof. My special award for 'Dunkirk Spirit' goes to C.H.J. who ploughed on down the passage with his nose scraping along the roof and, before the waves actually washed into his nostrils, won into a spacious stope. The unfortunate spin-off of this gallant deed was that to keep up appearances C.D.J. and McF. had to follow him.

In September members Blezard and Danson threw wide the doors of Ashfell Farm and kindly acted as hosts for a weekend meet. A handful of members turned up early on Saturday morning eager to get underground but Blezard said it was too cold and windy and made us all go to Beamish museum instead. So we went (under protest of course) and spent lots of money on the merry-go-round and in the tea room (first noted strange phenomenon - member Murphy never actually spends any money. Shall have to learn his secret). The following day we drove into Swaledale to attempt the Hard Level to Brandy Bottle Incline through-trip. Mike Mitchell led us up Hard Level but he couldn't remember the way through so in the end we were obliged to retrace our steps. We then spent two hours tramping over the Yorkshire moors looking for the entrance to the Incline. Quite an evocative experience tramping through mist one moment, torrential rain the next, then glorious sunshine, mist again - we were like the lost 9th Legion off to fight the Picts. We never did locate the entrance.

Talking about going off to fight the Picts, we had a weekend in Nenthead in October, the repercussions of which are still echoing through the valleys. It seems we upset Norpex, a kindred society, who are involved with exploration work in the Nenthead area. I am not going to comment on the unsavoury accusations and counter-accusations which have, since that time, been flung back and forth across the Penines because they are being dealt with through the proper channels; suffice to say that on that meet no CAT member took part in any activity contrary to CAT, or NAMHO, guidelines, and that all exploratory work was conducted in the usual level-headed and open manner.

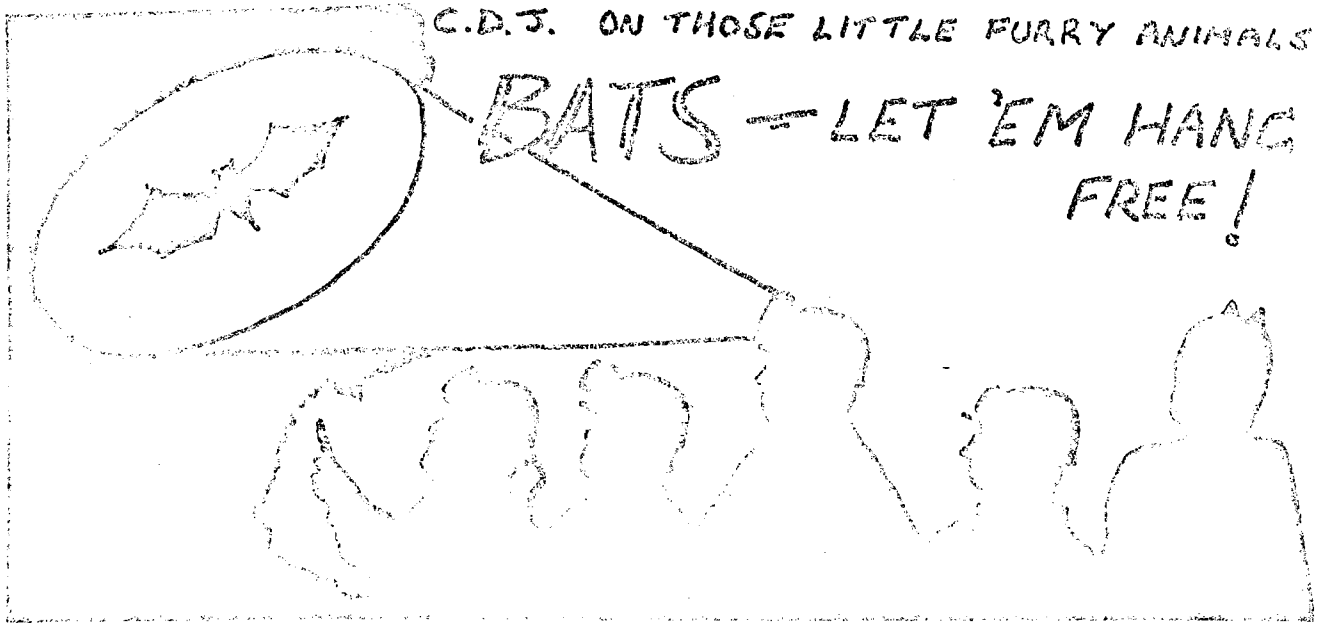
On Saturday Dave Blundell led a surface walk around the mines of Weardale and district. This was followed by an evening excursion into Smallcleugh to explore some uncharted territory in the depths of the mine. We discovered that the mine entrance had been walled up (because of a recent fatality) so we removed the top three rows of stones (which were not cemented in) with the intention of replacing them on our return - only to find that someone had beaten us to it and walled us in! It appears that the sleepy village of Nenthead harbours phantom wallers who conduct their work under the cover of darkness.

On Sunday P. Fleming led a party into Brownley Hill Mine; this was followed by a brief walk to examine some deep and UNFENCED shafts on the outskirts of the village. Meanwhile a three-man team made a descent of Wellgill Shaft and pushed the Nent Force Level considerably further than anyone had been before, progress being finally barred by a series of iron frames across the roof of the passage (three inches of air space between the roof and water level at this point). This team (Martin Maher, Wickenden, and McFadzean) has come under severe criticism from Norpex over the techniques employed to descend the shaft and also the safety arrangements at the shaft collar. If Norpex would care to get in touch with any one of the three men concerned they would be only too happy to alleviate their worries and put the record straight.

27th of November - Greenside. Thirty two people turned out for this classic trip. My God there were bodies everywhere. The meet leader was last seen running screaming over the ridge of Helvellyn pulling his hair out. We were crammed into Lucy Tongue Level like upright sardines. But I think everyone had a good

time. Amazingly, amid the chaos, Martin Maher and Mike Mitchell managed to carry out some original exploration, the former abseiling into one of the immense stopes that flank the ladderway in the lower stages and making voice contact with the latter through one of the ore hoppers on Lucy Tongue Level. Admirable work chaps! Take a bow.

And that brings us finally to the Boxing Day meet. What a splendid day that was - brilliant sunshine, turkey sandwiches, Bushmill's from C.D.J.'s hip-flask, and ah yes, the dig. Twenty four members rolled up to work off the excesses of the festive season and succeeded in excavating a trench, of mind-boggling proportions, which drained Taylor's Level almost completely. Everyone enjoyed the day; even E.G.H. had a smile on his face. We pushed the level as far as its connection with the Red Dell stopes where it was blocked with rock and timber. We shifted several tons of material but failed to win through. Still..... better leave something for 1984.



Sorry to keep on about this but these creatures are on the decline and they are one of the few creatures we find underground. They can, and have, done us all a favour already by keeping several mines open in other parts of the country. Please, if you discover any of them in the mines that you visit, even if the mines are outside Cumbria, let Chris Jones know. Try not to disturb them especially if they're hibernating, just make a note of their precise position in the mine and send it on. (Chris's address is 3 Bell Hill Cottages, Marton, Lindal-in-Furness, Ulverston, Cumbria.). The information will be passed on to the Nature Conservancy Council.

JOURNAL No. 2

I know it's a bit early since you've only just received the first one but we are keen to get new material for No. 2 - on any subject related to mines, not necessarily in Cumbria, so get your pens out now and give us some information on your pet mine. Send it to the editor - address is in the journal.

WANTED:- An electronics expert who would be capable of constructing one or two items which will further the cause of mine exploration. Ring (0229) 63892 for further details.

JOURNAL No. 1

Dear member, you will find enclosed with this newsletter a copy of THE MINE EXPLORER, the journal of the Cumbria Amenity Trust. If, for some reason, you have failed to pay your 1984 subs then there is a good chance you will not find enclosed a copy of the journal. The cost of publishing THE MINE EXPLORER was several hundred pounds, the front cover alone being in the three figure bracket, so you will appreciate that we can only send copies of this excellent, and very professional, publication to fully paid-up members.

If your subs are in the post please (as they say on the red phone bills) disregard this notice.

Yes folks, at last it's on the way! What's this? Groans of disbelief? Well it's true, I've heard it from the very lips of the man himself. And now all can be revealed: ERIC G. HOLLAND HAS FINISHED HIS BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF CONJSTON COPPER MINES. I know it's hard to swallow, but finished it is; twenty long years of research and exploration he was telling me. That means he started it two years before I was born! Well we'll all look forward to it being published and hope there is a substantial discount for C.A.T. members. Eric hasn't yet decided on a title for the book, though Max Dobie has suggested: Memoirs of an Old Man on the Old Man.

We have just received the news that Haig Pit, at Whitehaven, is on the N.C.B. hit-list for mine closures. Haig is the last surviving colliery in the West Cumberland coalfield, and so we are about to witness the ending of a mining era. Sad news indeed; Haig has always been a favourite amongst our members, some of whom have toured the mine on several occasions. Ironically the mine has just been modernised, and details of the modernisation can be read in THE MINE EXPLORER in an article by Ronnie Calvin, who has worked at the pit for many years. Details of the closure have not yet filtered through to this publication though it is rumoured over 500 miners will be made redundant. It is understood that about 120 men will be kept on for development work.

SCOTLAND - THE EASTER MEET

This Easter we break with tradition and head for the Highlands of Scotland to explore the mines of Tyndrum and Strontian. Ewan Cameron is familiar with these mines and knows a bit about their history, and has kindly agreed to act as meet leader/native guide.

Camping arrangements - Glencoe has been chosen, not only because it is roughly central for the mines, but also the scenery is dramatic and there are plenty of good walks and climbs for those who do not particularly want to go underground every day. The camp/caravan site is on the A 82 a mile outside Glencoe Village on the Glencoe side. (It is marked on the O.S. maps).

Good Friday - we will be exploring the lead mines of the Tyndrum area, which is about half an hours drive south of the campsite. Member Cameron has done a deal of work in these mines so this promises to be a good day. Also, later in the weekend, we might have a dig here so bring your tools if you have the room.

There are no definite plans for the remaining days (except Strontian, which we shall be visiting one day), the plan is to decide the venues on the previous evenings. Don't worry, there is plenty to go at.

Watering holes - there are pubs in the village, and just up the road (or down the glen, as they say) is the notorious Clachaig Bar.....folk music, bar meals, real ale.

Hope to see you all there.

EDITORS - Christopher D. Jones and Alan McPadzean.