

1990

Meet Secretary's Report

1990 has seen a varied program of eighteen meets, most of which have been reasonably well attended, though numbers do seem to have fallen a little. Early in the year there was a visit to the newly discovered section of Middle Level beyond the twin tunnels, with its spectacular blue ore hopper. In the summer Peter Fleming led a most enjoyable fell walk to visit Doves Nest Caves and the Stone Axe sites near the summit of Glaramara. Alistair Cameron instigated and led a photographic meet at Force Crag, and Roy Garner showed us the very wet workings at Brandlehow which were recently re-entered by the LMQT diggers. Ann Danson arranged for Rod Chiltern to give us an exciting winch trip down Wellhope Shaft at Nenthead and there was a fascinating visit to the face, four and a half miles out under the North Sea, of the Potash mine at Boulby in Cleveland, which is the deepest working mine in Europe. Chris Jones led a meet at Tilberthwaite mine and Mike Mitchell organised meets at Greenside and at Nenthead. Ian Tyler led a mammoth through trip of Force Crag Mine from No 5 down to Zero Level which is unlikely ever to be repeated because of subsequent collapses at Force Crag. I owe Ian an apology for arranging a meet at Roughton Gill to coincide with a COMRU practice and which was consequently very poorly attended. I have made the same mistake regarding the Coniston Meet next January 13th. Please note that this meet has now been brought forward a week to January 6th.

In addition to our regular programme there have been two meets on behalf of other societies. In June we were host to members of the Cleveland Industrial Archaeology Society who spent a weekend visiting Coniston Coppermine and the quarries at Honister Pass. In September a meet for the Cumbria Geological Society at Honister was attended by twenty five of their members. Thanks are due to Alistair Cameron who guided both groups. The Cumbria Geological Society have asked for another visit to Yew Crag Quarry, and this will take place next April.

The main conservation project this year has been the saving of Newland Furnace, which was in danger of collapse. A lot of work was done by CATMHS under the leadership of John Helme and in conjunction with Dr John Marshall and the Cumbria Industrial History Society, to secure access, excavate the blowing chamber and support the blowing chamber arch. Work is continuing to remove the ivy which threatens the main structure. On a more modest scale a meet was arranged in May to tidy and stabilise the interesting Brake House at Moss head Quarry at Coniston. CATMHS has obtained the lease to Mandells Slate Office on the old Coniston Station site. Some initial work has already been done to make the building secure and more will be needed to make it habitable. A forthcoming project will be to secure the Victorian winding and pump rods in the Old Engine Shaft.

There have been evening meets at the Low Wood Gunpowder Works, at Kirkby Quarry, the iron mines around Newton in Furness, Heron Corn Mill and the Old Engine Shaft at Coniston. Field meets during the dark evenings are difficult to organise and are have not always been well attended, so I intend to restrict them to the months of May to August

next year, unless the membership demands otherwise. Social evenings take place on the second Wednesday of each month and the venue has been changed from the Haverthwaite Railway to the White Lion at Bouth.

In reviewing the meets for 1990, whilst the programme was intended to be as interesting and varied as possible and to appeal to as broad a spectrum of the membership as possible, it does seem to me that it has lacked excitement. I hope to remedy this in the coming year by including more SRT meets and by repeating some of the major routes at Coniston which may not yet have been done by newer members.

Mine exploration is one of the main reasons for the existence of our society and it is through the programme of organised meets that most members do this. It is important that new people come forward with suggestions, requests and offers to lead meets and that there is an input of fresh ideas. In order to maintain interest and enthusiasm there needs to be a fresh approach from time to time. For that reason, whilst I am prepared to stand for re-election for the coming year, I feel that it would be beneficial to the Society if there was a new candidate at the end of that time.

Ian Matheson.