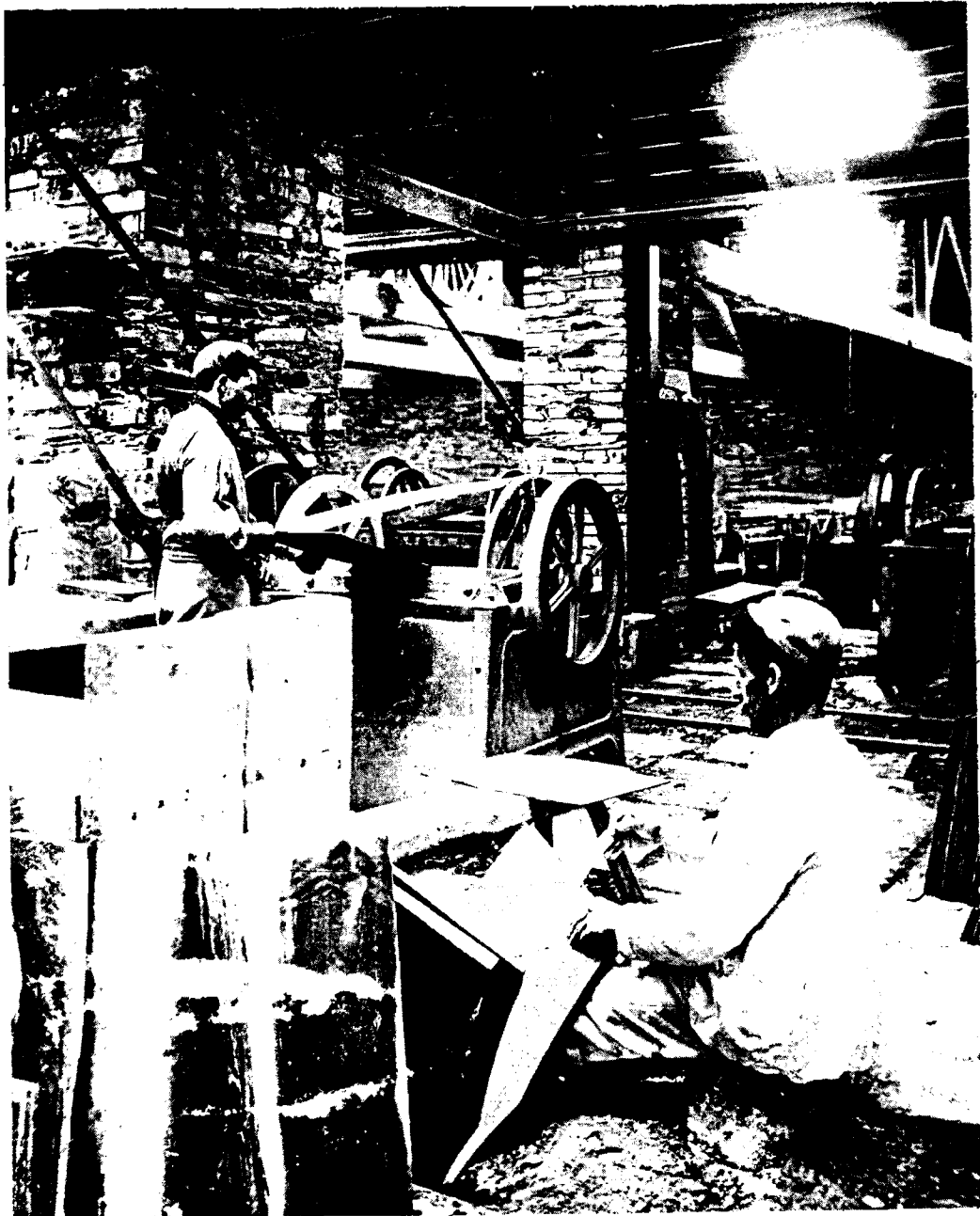


CUMBRIA AMENITY TRUST

NEWSLETTER No. 32
MAY 1992

Splitting and dressing slate, Llechwedd, approx 1890



MINING HISTORY SOCIETY

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We must thank Peter and Margaret Fleming who, yet again, have printed this newsletter and then collated it all together in its final form.

COMMENT

There has been a slight delay in producing this newsletter and much has happened in the intervening time. A quick glance at the contents of the pages as we "put it to bed" shows a marked cosmopolitan theme. As well as a selection of information on Coniston and other parts of the County there are two articles on Wales (both Corris), news from around the country and abroad. This must show, if nothing else, a greater awareness of what is going on further away and an increased ability by members to travel there.

At a recent meet some concern was being expressed by a very prominent member that the "fire had gone out of the Society". What had happened to all the exploration and pushing of new ground? This took a number of us aback. One only has to look at the contents of this edition to see an important report of a major new find at Paddy End, Coniston. The meets since the last AGM in December have been extremely well attended and many new members who are themselves competent at underground work are beginning to make their mark. There can be very few societies involved in the outdoors that have such a high proportion of extremely active members as CAT. A new edition of the Mine Explorer is being put together and CAT's new book must be seen as a success for the Society. Nevertheless, perhaps we do need to direct our attentions more to some fundamental exploration which, lets face it, is how the Society evolved to its present strength. So lets have some suggestions for future meets and even meet leaders.

The next newsletter is due out in July. Please send all copy to the editor, Alen McFadzean, 7, Silver Street, Marton, nr Ulverston. LA12 0NQ. Any complaints about this edition are not Alen's fault! Due to other commitments he had to forego this edition and it was put together by Alastair Cameron who can't help having the occasional dig at COMRU (page 22), secretly keeping his fingers crossed that he will never require their services!

NEWS & INFORMATION etc.

Planning Board's concern at Quarry Sites

The Lake District Special Planning Board is getting concerned about the state of a number of abandoned workshops at slate quarrying sites in the south of the Lake District. In particular, Moss Rigg and Broughton Moor workings have been mentioned. Although these sites are still being worked, slate is taken to Kirby for further processing and the workshops at the quarries are no longer used. Feelings within the Society are mixed. Clearly some debris should be removed but many consider that sites should be left as they are and that the Board have a manic fetish about returning everything to its former pristine virginal state.

Manager – Mandalls Slate Office

Applications are invited for the post of Office Manager for Mandalls Slate Office. The manager will be expected to arrange displays of artefacts, photographs etc. Please contact the Chairman or Secretary if you are interested. The successful applicant will enjoy enhanced status far beyond his/her wildest dreams!

Honister Slate Workings Lease

We understand that the lease for the Honister site has been put up for sale by the lease owners, McAlpines of Penrhyn. We have few other details but it is rumoured that a very large sum is being asked for.

Prehistoric Mining in Cornwall

We have received details of a one day conference to be held on 11th July at the Camborne School of Mines. The conference will deal with prehistoric mining in Cornwall including Bronze Age mining. If anyone is interested, contact the Secretary.

Guided Trip round the Coniston Mines.

Recently a party from Clifton College, Bristol, who were staying at the Barrow Club cottage at the Coppermines, were shown round parts of the mine by Pete Fleming and Sheila Barker. The trip included MAGS Catwalk and Top Level Extension. The group kindly made a generous donation to society funds in appreciation.

Guidelines on Archival Research

An excellent little booklet has been produced by NAMHO to help beginners start researching into mining sites etc. If anyone would like a copy, contact the Secretary.

Membership Renewal

There are still a number of members who still haven't renewed their subscription for this year. It's quite possible that they have forgotten completely or aren't sure whether they did or not. If you are not sure, please phone the secretary on 0229 472296. If you know you haven't paid just put a cheque for ten pounds into an envelope and send it to The Membership Secretary, Andrew Sibbald, 46 Luke Street, Barrow. No need to put in a covering note, he'll understand.

COVENANTING OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Since 1987 C.A.T.M.H.S. has been registered as a "Charitable Organisation", which allows tax paying members of the Society to covenant their subscriptions if they so wish.

The simple procedure only requires the completion of two forms in the first year of application. No further forms are needed in subsequent years. The Society is then able to reclaim annually from the Inland Revenue a sum corresponding to the tax paid on the member's subscription.

At the present rate of tax, this amounts to £3.34 for each £10 membership subscription. Currently about half of our members have covenanted their subscriptions and this is producing an extra income, from the Inland Revenue, of about £100 a year. If you would like to consider covenanting, or if you are not sure whether you have done so, or if you would like any further information, please contact:-

The Treasurer,
Mr. John Helme,
3 Town View Road,
Ulverston,
Cumbria.
LA12 7HH

Tel 0229 54895

TRAGEDY IN TURKEY (From the NAMHO's Newsletter)

The "Mining Journal" of 15th November 1991 carried a report of a serious incident in an old mine near Sirnak in SE Turkey.

A party of 12 mine explorers had illegally entered an old mine and they were caught by a serious roof fall. Nine members of the party were killed in the accident!

THE SCOTSMAN 17/2/92

Unique neolithic flint mine found

By Frank Urquhart

A TEAM of archaeologists has uncovered evidence of Scotland's only prehistoric flint mine near the Buchan coastal village of Boddam.

The discovery of an extensive complex of mine shafts at the flint pits at the Den of Boddam has been described as one of the most significant finds in Scotland in recent years.

The 5,000-year-old site is believed to have been the principal source of the raw material for the arrowheads, knives and scrapers used by neolithic man in the north-east.

Ian Shepherd, Grampian's regional archaeologist, said: "The interim results confirm

that this is an archaeological site unique in Scotland. It provides significant insights into the industrial activities of the prehistoric inhabitants."

Preliminary investigations at the five-acre site were made last summer by a team led by Alan Saville, head of the artefact research unit of the archaeology department of the National Museums of Scotland. He is planning to return to the site again this summer to complete his investigations at the complex of shafts, some more than three metres deep.

He said: "Flint is a very rare rock in Scotland in any quantity or quality and the geological deposit at Boddam is very peculiar. We think that it is the remains of a very ancient beach and that a very

unusual combination of circumstances has led to this deposit still surviving with very large flint cobbles in it.

"Prehistoric people, when they occupied the area, obviously realised that these cobbles were there, probably because they found some loose cobbles in the stream that runs through the floor of the Den.

"They then set about quarrying down into the deposit by digging a series of vertical shafts." Mr Saville said there had been speculation about the flint pits since the mid 19th century, but there had been only one previous, but inconclusive excavation at the site in 1918.

The discovery of the mines, he said, had aroused consider-

able excitement within archaeological circles.

"Evidence of similar flint mines has been discovered in East Anglia and the south-east of England," explained Mr Saville. "But these mines at Boddam are the only ones to have been found in Scotland. That is why the site is so important."

He continued: "It is a very extensive site and you could go on working there for years and years. We have to put a limit on the objectives of our project. What we are hoping to do by the end of this season is to provide a firm date for the mining activity and also some firm information about the technology used in the mining."

NATIONAL COAL BOARD NORTH WESTERN DIVISION FIRE AND RESCUE BRIGADE

IN CASE OF

FIRE

OR

EXPLOSION

TELEPHONE THE CENTRAL FIRE AND RESCUE STATION

WINSCALES

WORKINGTON 2671/2

(URGENT LIFESAVING CALL)

It is most important that the Brigade should be called at the earliest possible moment. To expedite the call the words "Urgent Lifesaving Call" should be used when speaking to the Telephone Exchange and
EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF THE OCCURRENCE

Other Rescue Stations are:—

**BENWELL TOWER,
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE
BOOTHSTOWN, LANCASHIRE**

Telephone or Telegraph

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| NEWCASTLE | | | | 33133-4 |
| WALKDEN | | Dial 061 Wal. 2215-6 | | |

SEND someone to show the Brigade the best road into the premises.

The Maximum Size of Rescue Vehicle is 25ft. long, 7ft. 6ins. wide and 9ft. 3ins. high.

Callander & Dixon. Printers, Whitehaven.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members into their midst:

Mr & Mrs Jackson
Mr E Rumney
Mr E Brown
Mr J Parry
Mr P Hay
Mr J Knowles
Mr E D Brown

It's hoped that they will actively join in with all aspects of the Society.

(It's about time that Peter Hay and Jon Knowles joined! They have been exploring underground mining remains for longer than they care to remember. Their knowledge of workings in Wales, Cumbria and the Pennines is extensive).

REVIEW "Beneath the Lakeland Fells"

There are many thousands of "coffee-table" publications written about the Lake District and at first sight this appears to be just another. But leaf through the pages and it's obviously different.

The concept is excellent. To one who has only a passing interest in underground workings I found the book fascinating and, as well as being interesting to lay people, it will also appeal to specialists. The notion of having a different author for each section was inspired. Clearly each contributor had expert knowledge and is a leading authority in their subject. With a total of eleven writers, one detects an interesting variety of styles. But this doesn't detract at all from the overall impression and even enhances it.

The photographs, in general, are good and some excellent. The fact that there are none in colour does not seem to matter. Often black and white is a much better medium for prints where the stark nature of the scene must be emphasised. I found the photographs from the turn of the century much more interesting as they showed actual working scenes. The captions for the plates are exceptionally clear and give enough information without being too technical or long.

The layout of the text and photographs is well-planned with the respective prints grouped at the end of each chapter. The glossary of mining terms and bibliography are adequate.

One criticism of the book is the dust cover. The photographs on the front and back of the dust cover are too small and not particularly clear. The title style is poor, doesn't stand out well and in particular I did not like the lower case lettering of "Lakeland" and "Fells". Also poor was the colour of the surround which looked like a blue sky covered with snowflakes. There was also no reference to the authors or publisher. The subject of the picture is adequate but one of a larger underground area such as the photograph of Cathedral Cavern on page 76 would have been better, or even an above-ground shot.

The book should prove useful in helping to counteract the views of those who see mining sites as eyesores which must at all cost be obliterated for ever. I suggest "Beneath the Lakeland Fells" is a useful reference book rather than a field guide.

P.M.C.

Note: Available to CAT and NAHMO Members at a special discount price of £13.50

LETTER FROM THE LAXLEY MINES RESEARCH GROUP

Dear Namho Member

I feel sure that everyone is now aware that the Biennial Conference is to be held in the Isle of Man next year and that many people will be asking the question "Why so far away?" The answer is quite simply what we have to offer.

The decision was made following the request from other organisations to change from hosting a Field Meet on the Island, in view of the distance people would have to travel, this being agreed in 1990.

Firstly, how many of you have been to our Island before and how long ago? The Isle of Man really hasn't changed at all, in fact it's a land caught in time. Our suggestion is to make your visit a family holiday and stay for the week or longer - the Isle of Man isn't all about mines.

The conference dates have been set for Friday 23rd to Monday 26th April, 1993, at the Manx Museum in Douglas, which offers a superb hi-tech 200 seat lecture theatre, with seminar rooms and associated facilities.

As we are slightly isolated from the mainland we have decided to start well in advance and get the necessary information out early in order that bookings are made in good time. We would like to hear from you as soon as possible, if you are interested in coming to the conference, in order that we may obtain an early idea of numbers. Also, should anyone wish to give a lecture or talk, we would like to hear from you soon.

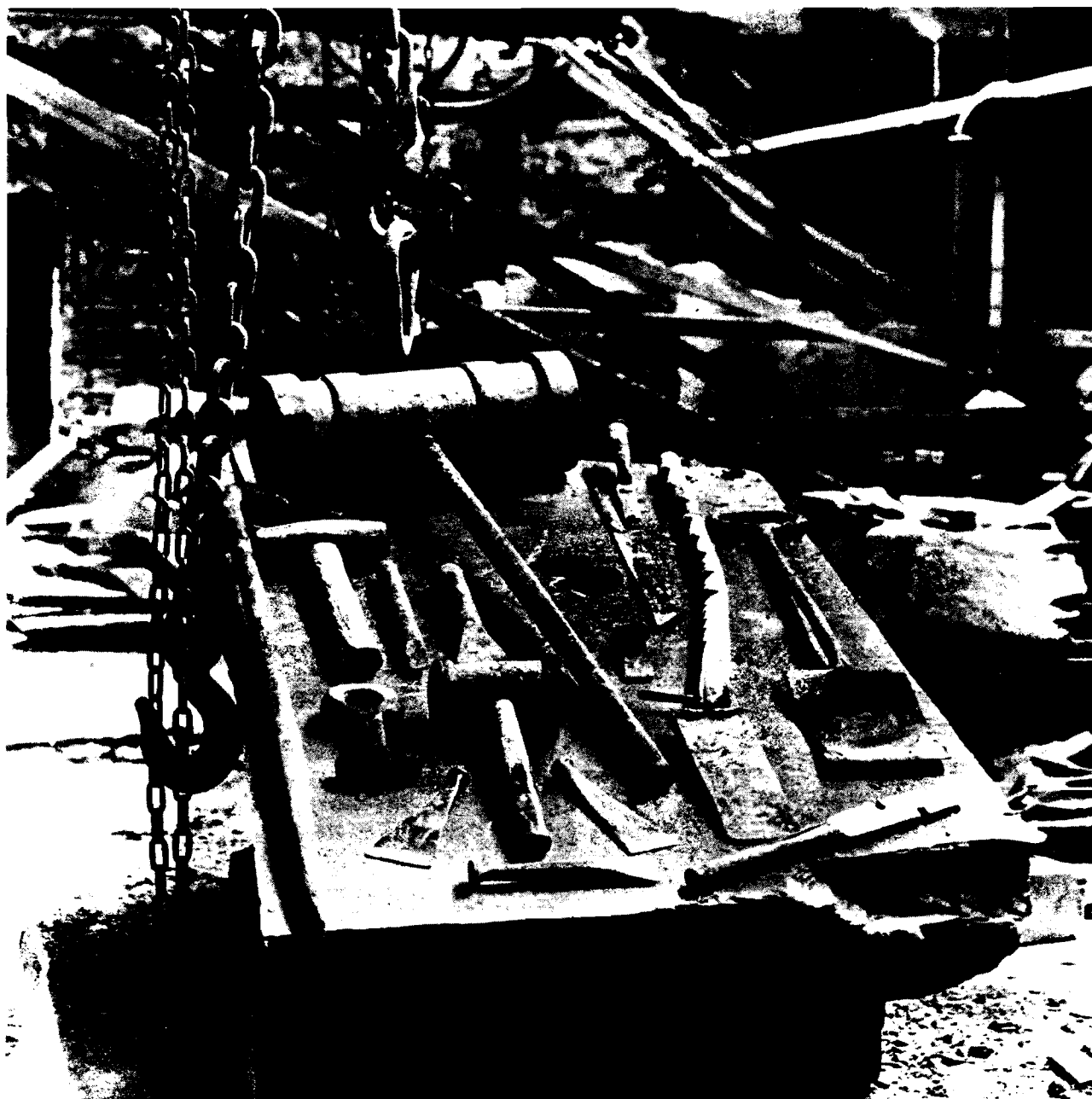
The Island, in general, offers more accommodation than previous conferences put together, plus beautiful scenery - many beaches, rocky coves, glens and waterfalls, hills and mountains. Explore the castles and dungeons and other museums and ancient sites.

1993 has been designated "Year of Railways", as 1993 is the centenary year of the famous Manx Electric Railway, special events being held all summer. Trams 1 & 2 are the oldest operating electric tramcars still in regular service on their original lines anywhere in the world. It is hoped to involve the tramcars in an evening social event.

And if you are still undecided, may we finally mention that the Isle of Man is home to a reasonable sized water wheel and mine site and many mining trips above and below ground.

Rachel Robertson
Conference Co-ordinator

Lets hope that we can arrange for a large group from CAT to go over. If anyone would like more details they should contact Sheila Barker or the Conference Co-ordinator, Rachel Robertson, telephone number 0624 674702.



WANTED

The Publicity Officer wishes to borrow any photographs which might be of use in forthcoming and future publicity material. If you have any which you think are particularly outstanding and could be useful to him, please telephone him on 0386 750494 or write to A D Cameron, 18 Beck Yeat, Coniston, Cumbria. Any material used will be suitably credited and returned promptly, all types of material accepted – colour prints with negs., b & w prints with negs. or colour slides. Surface shots as well as underground ones gladly received.

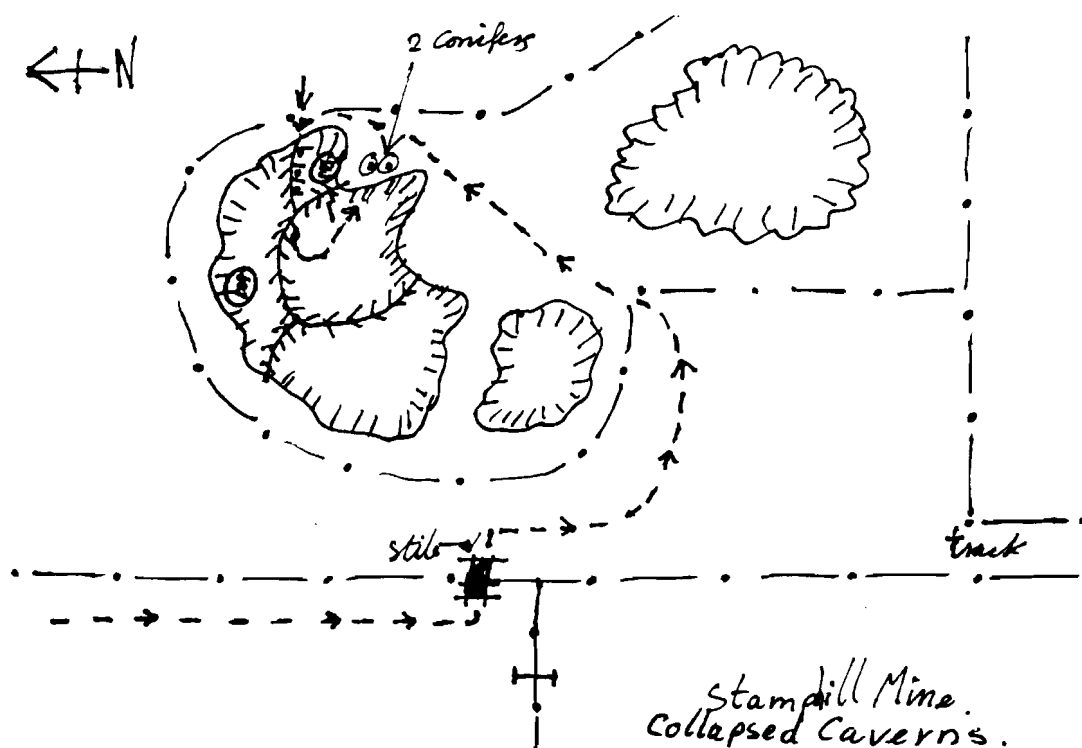
Stamphill Mine, Kirbythore, old British Gypsum mine. GR.656254.

At Kirbythore turn right off the A66 (from Penrith), go through the village, past the British Gypsum factory. Continue along the road until you have gone over the Carlisle - Settle railway bridge, (if you miss the bridge the road ends in a 'T' junction, turn round and have another go). Just after the bridge there is a track to the right to Stamphill Farm, marked footpath, just up the road the verges are fairly wide.

Walk along the track, straight past the farm, carry on round to the right under the bridge then over the covered conveyor, still working. Continue along the track step off just before you drop into a pit, keeping hedge to the left walk along side. (Normally you can see a white sign the other side of the pit, if you walk past the sign and round to the left you will see a padlocked entrance to an incline, which can be accessed from inside). Over the gate then at the fence take the big stile on the left, and straight in front is the depression/ collapsed caverns walk around the depression to the right (south). Over stile out of view of farm down to the corner of the fence, once over the fence head towards the two conifers on there own. Continue round past the trees with the hole on left, walk across the ridge, once on the peak straight down, then to the left under arch then in. From the peak straight ahead can be seen an easier entrance. Even in summer the paths are easy to follow down to the entrances. If anybody is in the need of parts for 1950's / 60's cars then this is the ideal place.

Once in side continue down the inclines until reaching a level which connects to the left with a main incline, refer to the rough sketch. Further explorations are predicted.

-By Ian Bretherton.



UP DATE ON MAINBAND COLLIERY, MIREHOUSE, NEAR WHITEHAVEN, CUMBRIA

I visited this coal mine on Saturday 18th of January 1992 with the manager Mr John Agnew. The mine at present is on care and maintenance. The manager inspects the mine every day, checking ventilation, roof and sides and pumping water out.

There are two main roads into the mine. One is the intake road. Driven down one in four and supported by 13 x 10 ft steel arches and covered by steel sheets. In this roadway runs a 36 inch conveyor down into the development headings. A standard 2ft.3½ gauge railway system runs the full length of the intake till just below 2 East Split and an electric Pickrose Haulage sited on the surface serves this. There are two small pumping stations and lodges on this roadway.

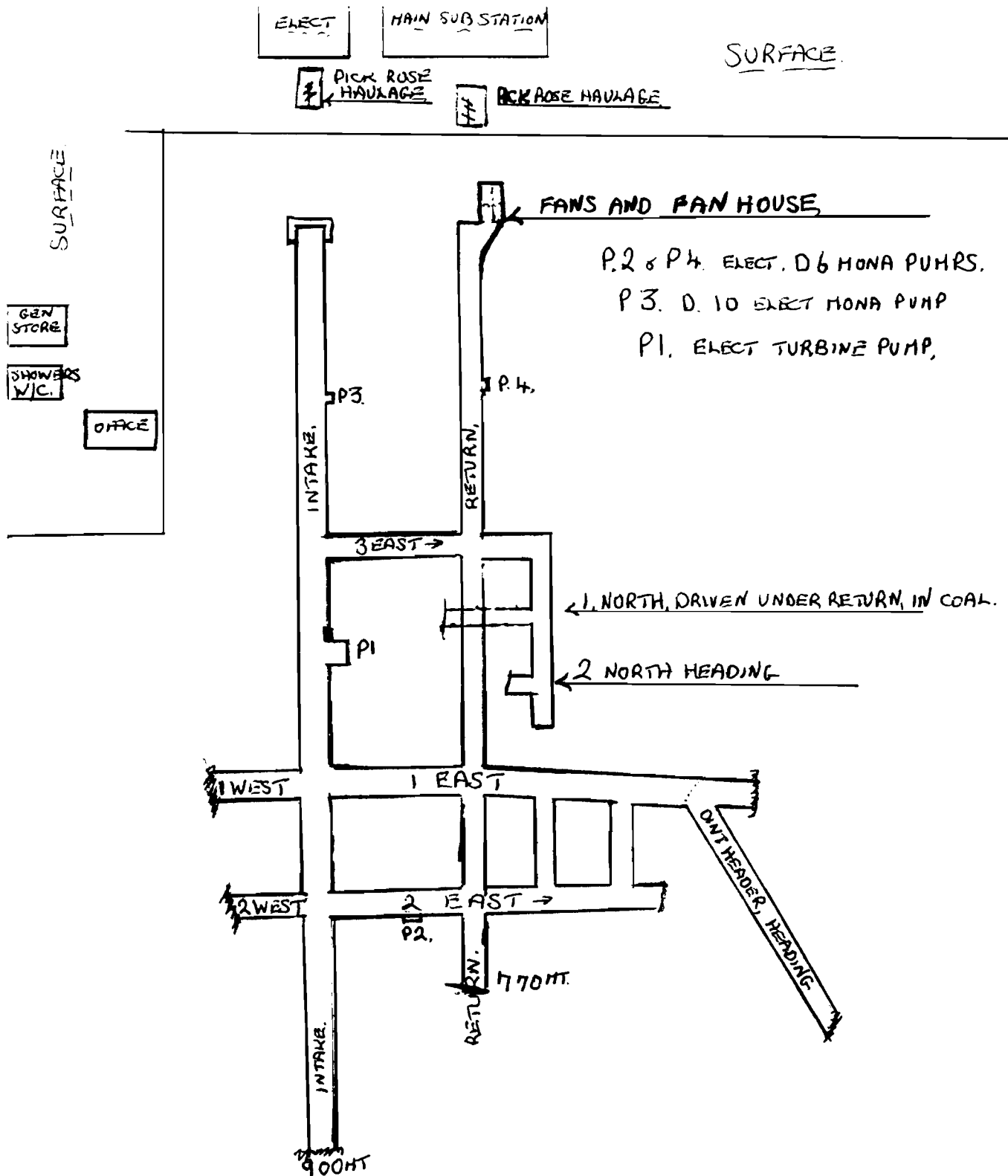
The first P3 on the map is D10 Mona Pump and at P1 an electric turbine pump. At all lodges, belt drives and electric panels safety warricks are set to stop tubs running away. Also in this roadway 3 x 4 vitualoc pipe ranges are at the right hand side. One for compressed air, a pump range and water for fire fighting and dust repression. Heavy stone dust barriers are in use in this road. This roadway is 900mt in. The second roadway, the return is driven down a grade of 1 in 3-73 to a distance of 770mt. It is supported by 13 x 10 arches down to development headings. One pump lodge is serving this roadway; P4 and electric D6 Mona Pump. A steel track runs in the middle so all the heavy mine equipment can be transported safely. The road also has 3 x 4 inch ranges for the same use as the intake, safety warricks are in use and heavy stone dust barriers. At the entrance to the return airway is the fan house which holds four extracting fans. Only two are in use at present. On the surface an electric Pickrose Haulage serves this roadway.

I found the safety in this mine to a very high standard. Roadways well stone dusted, fire fighting equipment at all electrical points, pumps and belt drives plus first aid containers.

C P pumps are used to pump the development heading out as required, these being compressed air drivers. The development headings are all supported by 13ft 6in x 10ft RSJ and covered when required by sneets or weld mesh in the thirls in between intake and return. Roof bolts holding mesh in between RSJ was used and a Dasco Heading Machine used, also an undercut coal cutter was used along with boring and firing then hand filling. The ventilation in the developments was by 24 inch electric forcing and extracting fans using light alloy tubing.

As I stated before, this mine is set up to a very high standard and I would thank Mr John Agnew for my visit.

I will report further on the more detailed operations once this mine restarts up.



PLAN OF THE MAINBAND, COLLIERY AS 18-1-1992, NOT TO SCALE AND NO OPERATIONAL DETAILS ON THIS MAP. THIS WOULD BE REPORTED MORE FULLY WHEN THE MINE RESTARTS UP. IT GIVES A GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE MINE AT PRESENT.

yet something else on Corris

Exploration at Corris is becoming extremely popular. It seems that this remote corner of Central Wales is at last getting the attention that it deserves. Unfortunately this isn't without problems. Recently a group from Bristol University Caving Club were ordered off land close to the Foel Grochan slate mining area. In February a small party of CAT members, despite showing extreme discretion, were asked by a lone individual to keep out of the Braich Goch workings. When asked why, they were informed that a considerable amount of vandalism had occurred underground. This seemed an unjustified reason for excluding members of a society such as CAT so, after he had gone, the plans for the day were undertaken without alteration.

Further trips have been made to Foel Grochan where on one occasion it was attempted to walk through the hill from the forestry workings to the Foel Grochan site. The entrance close to the old crane jib was accessed but some distance along an enormous roof fall blocked the route. The group were sure that it was once possible to pass right through on this horizon and felt that the roof fall was fairly recent. Some weeks later another CAT group confirmed that the through route was well and truly open when they walked right through to emerge in the Hengae Valley after viewing immense chambers on the way.

A major trip was undertaken on Easter Bank Holiday Monday when a small group of four CAT members successfully undertook the Gaewern to Braich Goch through trip. The group entered Gaewern by what was probably Scwd No 4 Level and exited some five hours later at Braich Goch No 5 Level. Route finding was the major problem and the trip is extremely sporting. A number of the descents are by forebreast staircases which require extreme care to avoid plunging hundreds of feet into the black void beneath. Fortunately one member of the group, Jon Knowles, had done the trip before – else we'd still be there now! A full report is given elsewhere in the newsletter. It is planned to return to Braich Goch in the summer when, if the sun is shining, the spectacle of the "sundial" can be seen in a chamber off No 6 level. The chamber is over 300ft high and through a narrow slit in the roof the sun's rays produce an effect similar to a pin-hole camera. Many years ago someone laid out a line of boulders on the chamber floor marking the hours.

Peter Hay of CAT also reports that the Floor No 7 at the remote Ratgoed workings in the Corris area has recently been re-opened by members of the Shropshire Mining and Caving Club.

We intend to go back to Corris from time to time and if anyone is interested they should contact Mark Simpson (05242 41920) or Alastair Cameron (0386 750494).

ADC March '92

BCRA

Dear Club Secretary

BCRA NATIONAL CAVING CONFERENCE - advance notification

Please bring the contents of this letter to the attention of your members.

Venue: The Richmond Building, University of Bradford.

Date: Weekend of the 11th - 13th September 1992

Doors open 0900hrs Saturday and Sunday (Richmond Building)

Friday evening: late bar and entertainment (Communal Building)

Saturday evening: late bar, ceilidh, stomp (Communal Building)

The caver's premier annual event is celebrating its venue move from UMIST to the University of Bradford with the biggest and best ever conference, so don't miss out! An action packed weekend is promised with all your favourite events and some surprises thrown in. Look out for the brochure with advanced booking form (and take advantage of the reduced entry offer), or just turn up.

The emphasis this year will be on photography, films and videos. There will be a review of all the latest cave finds, foreign news and training events. Amongst the many fringe events will be the SRT race, rope stuff, blindfolded carbide assembly and many other competitions with big prizes. Entertainment is the key word, with late bars, music and cheap food.

Accommodation is available at the University Halls of Residence but the organisers are trying to get some cheap floor space arranged. Bradford is the centre for Asian cuisine and there are dozens of curry houses a short walk from the venue where you can buy a curry for less than £3.

Make a note of the date in your diary and start practising for the competitions. Photographers should note that there will be a Photo Salon competition with excellent prizes already lined up and waiting to be won. For only £5 (table and backboard included) your club can take advantage of stand space to sell your Journals and Surveys or just display your activities. There will be a big cash prize for the best club stand. During the Conference, judging will also take place for the Arthur Butcher Cave Survey Award, so make sure your survey efforts are on display, or you may loose out on yet more prizes!

The BCRA National Caving Conference is organised for the benefit of ALL CAVERS, so come along and improve your knowledge of caving and caves, be entertained and meet new friends! I hope to see you there.

To book club stand space or for further information contact the Conference Manager: Paul Hatherley, 54 High Street, Queensbury, Bradford, BD13 2PA, or see the caving press.

BRAICH GOCH

adits

Braich Goch level 5

CORRIS

Braich Goch level 6

Vanes Level

Sketch plan
Gaewern - Braich-
Goch.

forebreast staircase

Definitely not
to scale

Skylight chambers

Triangular hole

blocked

Vanes Floor 8

Scwd 3

Scwd 4

?

HORIZONS.

Vanes Floor 7

Vanes Floor 8

Vanes Level

Braich Goch 5

Braich Goch 6

① = descent

Ⓐ = ascent

Vanes Floor 7

deep water.

Timber decked incline

Scwd Level 3

Blocked

Scwd Level 4

N (approx)

GAEWERN

ENTRANCE

ADC April 1992.

MEETS REPORT Corris, Easter Monday 1992.

The plan to go down to Corris at Easter was only proposed at the last minute and was included in the recent news-sheet. Consequently only four members gathered at the car park in the centre of the village. These included Jon Knowles, Mark Simpson and two Camerons. Jon had not travelled far, having spent the previous few days acting as guard on the Ffestiniog railway (Bank Holiday Monday was his day off). The two Camerons had left Coniston at 5am but had made good time and had managed a huge fry-up at the Little Chef between Corris and Dollgellau on the way. Mark, complete with family, arrived in the Simpson family dormobile which was disgorging vital fluids over the Corris car park. After sorting themselves out and having a bit of a chat the group proceeded to tackle the task of the day which was to do the Gaewern to Braich Goch through trip.

The route is complex but the group were fortunate that they had some information to go on. CAT member Peter Hay is the expert on this part of Corris and the Camerons had met him the day before at Coniston Copper Mines. Also on a previous occasion Jon had been taken along the route and thought he could remember it. Jon became instant "meet leader", a post he accepted graciously.

Starting point was the main road at Upper Corris village where a rough track leads up the hillside to the west and eventually to an entrance which is probably Scwd No.4 Level. To get to the entrance one has to pass along a narrow crumbling undercut ledge along the side of an open chamber with a hellish drop on the left. The level is wide and has a side passage on the left leading to a huge black void. After a few hundred feet the way is blocked by a roof fall. Which way now? The secret to the whole descent is, believe it or not, to climb up to a higher level (probably Scwd 3). The climb is executed by pulling up on a rusty chain, and it is possible, with a bit of thrutching, to get into the higher level.

It's worth exploring this horizon entirely. At several places the level becomes a ledge along the walls of colossal chambers. By turning left and left again the level ends at a point where a descent can be made with care down the forebreast (footwall) of one of the chambers to a lower horizon. A short distance along this level is a small manhole in the floor which is the head of an inclined shaft. No time to sort out a hand line; yet another rusty chain provides the means of descent.

The next level is not extensive and the tunnel ends as a ledge along the forebreast of yet another gigantic chamber (possibly the same one as entered on Scwd 3 about 150ft above). Descent from here is via a narrow scramble down into an extensive level which is possible Vanes Floor 7. Along one branch of this floor one can see daylight but as getting there would involve a swim, this was not followed on this occasion. In a side tunnel off this floor an inclined shaft complete with foot holes descends towards Vanes Floor 8. The shaft, alarmingly, opens out onto a narrow ledge with a drop beyond. This is a sub level and the way continues as a further forebreast staircase down to the base of the chamber.

Casting around on the base of this chamber, a tunnel can be found leading back through the forebreast to intersect with a major level. This is Vanes Floor 8. Turn left, and the tunnel runs for about a quarter of a mile and then ends. But to continue the through trip one has to turn right. This was clearly a major carrying level and the direction that we had taken was obviously out to day. But up ahead the tunnel was blocked by yet another roof fall. We had now been underground for nearly four hours.

The key to the continuation was found in a side tunnel. The previous day at Coniston, Peter Hay had stressed that an important landmark was a triangular shaped opening in the wall of a chamber. The side tunnel ended at a triangular shaped hole! We passed through the hole and then two more chambers, both of which had skylights, and then found ourselves on familiar ground. This was Vanes Level, visited by us several weeks earlier and also by the CAT trip the previous year. A quarter of a mile along Vanes is the top of the timber decked incline. A scramble down the incline to the half-way point brought us into the Braich Goch workings. The through trip had been completed!! It now only required us to walk another quarter of a mile along Braich Goch floor 5 and then out to day above the craft centre at Corris village.

EARTHQUAKE PASSAGE AND AVALANCHE STOPE.

The two major discoveries in the recent exploration of Coniston Copper Mine were those of Levers Water Mine in 1985, and of the Top Level Extension in 1987. Both events gave access to large areas of the mine which had hitherto been inaccessible and triggered a burst of activity and enthusiasm for further exploration. In both places however there was some ground so unstable as to discourage even the keenest mine explorer. In Levers Water Mine in the area which became known as Avalanche Stope Phil Merrin narrowly escaped being carried away by a large slide of mud and rock. The party continued on down that day, but were continually exposed to the danger of falling stones, and only Phil reached the bottom, somewhere near the Grey Crag Level horizon, to report that there was nothing there but piles of stones. In Top Level the Shattered Stope at the end of Earthquake Passage caused concern because the ground there is fractured and broken, and there has been a lot of movement since it was first re-entered. Ian Matheson descended it in 1987 with Mike Mitchell and Peter Fleming, and they found the bottom also to be at about the level of Grey Crag. There was a possibility that a climb up an overhanging boulder pile might lead on to new ground, but it was felt that there had been enough risked for one day, and this was not pursued. Nothing else was done, and nearly five years passed before any one returned to either location.

Shortly before Christmas 1991 Chris Jones, Phil Merrin, Trevor Tucker and Max Doby turned their attentions to Shattered Stope, thinking that they might make a traverse along it, and they made two visits without reaching the bottom. Both this and Avalanche Stope, although approached from different parts of the mine, are very close together, and long ago Peter Fleming had suggested that they must be on the same vein. After the Boxing Day meet an arrangement was made to return the following Sunday to test this theory by trying to get parties in both stopes at the same time. Messrs Jones, Merrin, Tucker and Doby, together with Paul Witheridge, went into Shattered Stope with the intention of abseiling down below a fragment of the collapsed Middle Level, and to climb back up the steep slope beneath it. Fleming, Mitchell, and Matheson, later to be joined by Dave Bridge and Angela Wilson, went into Levers Water Mine to examine Avalanche Stope. Mike shone his powerful spotlight down the stope, and almost immediately there was a shout from below. The connection was proved!

In fact all of that days progress was made in the first half hour. Ian Matheson and Peter Fleming descended part way down Avalanche Stope in the hope of learning more about the connection between the two. Chris descended Shattered Stope but found the steep slope was surmounted by a pile of overhanging boulders which were unclimbable. He was threatened by falling stones dislodged by the other group somewhere above in Avalanche Stope, and so he returned to Top Level. The others had insufficient rope to reach the bottom of Avalanche Stope, and indeed had to re-rig what they had in order to use it to best advantage. They were able to descend to a point where they could see indirect light from those in Earthquake Passage, and were able to communicate with them, but could not see the connection. It had been decided earlier that the Shattered Stope party would make a signal by setting off some loud fireworks at a pre-arranged time. This was no longer necessary, but people with fireworks will want to set them off, and so, precisely at two o'clock, the mine resounded with several explosions and soon afterwards smoke reduced visibility to about three yards and effectively ended any further examination for that day.

On 18th January, a Saturday, Chris Jones, Phil Merrin, Trevor Tucker and Ian Matheson returned to Shattered Stope with the intention of examining the bottom. Max Doby should also have been there, but unfortunately no-one had told him of the change of day from Sunday to Saturday! Jones and Merrin quickly descended the first pitch, but well over an hour passed before they were able to get out of the danger zone and allow the others to follow. The first 140 feet is a vertical abseil onto a steep and loose slope with some further short vertical sections, and anyone in this area is at risk from stones dislodged by those above. Whilst it is sometimes awkward there is no real difficulty but great care is required, and it takes time. At the bottom a 20 foot drop onto a floor leads to the climb which had defeated the previous party five years earlier, but Chris was able to bypass this by bridging boldly across at high level, and so gained new ground. Once a traverse line was fixed the others followed.

They found themselves on the top of a pile of rocks, littered with rubble and sloping steeply downwards to a hole through which deep water could be seen some 35 feet below. The far side of the hole was made up of two short debris strewn false floors projecting from the headwall of the stope. Phil Merrin, who was wearing a dry suit volunteered to go down. He abseiled into the water and swam along it some fifteen feet to the furthest extent of the rope. After the first yard or two there was a square cut roof of solid rock 4 feet above the water, but there appeared to be no bottom. He reported that he could just see the end of the 'passage' about fifteen feet beyond his furthest point. There seemed to be no way on. Ian Matheson also abseiled down to the water, but declined to enter it. The water level did not appear to fluctuate, indicating that there must be some below surface connection with a continuation which probably drains into Grey Crag Level, but this is speculation, and no new information had been gained.

Messrs Dobie, Jones, Merrin and Tucker visited Avalanche stope on Feb 16th and descended to the level which had been reached by the main party in 1985. They began to place a bolt for a rebelay at the top of an overhang, but one of the party became unwell, and so they returned to the surface.

The next visit was the official CAT meet on March 1st. That day Mike Mitchell was busy installing the new showers at the BMSC hut and Peter Fleming had arranged to conduct some new members down the Paddy End Through Trip, but the main business of the day was to examine the connection between Avalanche and Shattered stopes by once more trying to get a party into each at the same time. Nearly a thousand feet of rope was carried up to Levers Water, but most of it was left on the surface. The majority of the group entered the Funnell, intending to descend Shattered Stope. Sheila Barker, Dave Bridge and Ian Matheson prepared to enter Levers Water Mine in order to continue the descent down Avalanche Stope, but first, finding themselves embarrassed with a surplus of rope, they left a bag containing a hundred meter length inside the entrance of the Funnell for the other group to collect. Unfortunately they were unaware of this, and so, when they found that they had no rope with which to continue beyond Earthquake Passage, they joined Peter Flemings party and used his ropes to continue down through Paddy End.

In Avalanche Stope there is no shelter from stonefall before the bottom of the third pitch, and it is nescessarry for the first person to descend some 200 feet before the next one can follow. Ian went first, and was followed by Sheila, who had difficulty passing an awkward hanging rebelay. She was trying a new harness which made her task impossible as it was not properly adjusted, and so after expending a lot of energy she decided to go back up. During this time Ian,

sheltering in a small rock chamber, was for a time able to see reflected light from the other party in Earthquake Passage, but was could not communicate properly with them. By the time Dave had joined him and he was able to emerge from the shelter they had departed, and all was quiet and dark.

From the foot of the 90 foot pitch below the Avalanche Slope a rubble slope extends downwards. Part way down is an old bolt in a corner with the name of Dennis Webb scratched on the rock. This marks the lowest point which most people reached in 1985. Lower still Dave and Ian found another bolt which had been placed by the party a fortnight earlier, and then at the end of the slope above an overhang an unfinished bolt hole marked their lowest point. Across the stope could be seen part of a false floor with broken timbers which looked vaguely familiar, but it was quite unreachable. After a few minutes work with a hammer a new bolt was in place, and the descent continued. The stope is mainly a steep and rather loose slope with some vertical or overhanging pitches, and they were surprised to find a 10mm bolt in place at the head of the next pitch. Some one had been here before! Who could it have been? This had been thought to be unexplored ground. Ian continued to the end of the rope, and, seeing that the slope continued at a reasonable angle, unclipped and scrambled down to the bottom some sixty feet further on. It was not until then that he suddenly recognised where he was. This was, beyond all doubt, the bottom of Shattered Stope, which he had last visited with Chris Jones and Co on 18th January! Shattered Stope and Earthquake Stope were in fact one huge stope, some 400 feet from top to bottom.

It remained to identify the connection between them, and everything was examined carefully on the ascent. The solution was not forthcoming until they had ascended the rope to the stance where the unfinished bolthole had been located. Looking across to the inaccessible false floor it suddenly dawned that this was the first landing on the Middle Level horizon on the descent from Earthquake Passage, and that the overhang beneath the unfinished bolt was non other than the unclimbable boulder pile which Chris Jones had found back in December! It was now apparent that a single stope extends downwards from Levers Water Mine to somewhere near Grey Crag Level, and that Earthquake Passage is just an alternative entrance in the side of that stope.

It took some time to re-ascend to Levers Water, as once again loose stones made it necessary to move one at a time. Sheila had thoughtfully collected the rope which had been left in the Funnel, but it was after eight o'clock before Dave and Ian reached the BMSC hut to find the others making ready to start a search. This more or less concludes another chapter of exploration at Coniston. All that remains is to make an accurate survey so as to see how the bottom of Avalanche Stope ties in with Grey Crag Level. If that were to indicate a connection then, who knows, someone might be tempted to try to dive the sump at the bottom!

MEETS REPORT – HODGE CLOSE QUARRIES

The sun was shining, the birds singing and it occurred to the meet leader as he drove up the road to Hodge Close that spring was well and truly on the way. With the membership secretary hard on his heels, he drove past Holme Ground cottages, through the wood and down to the disused workings.

Hodge Close Quarries are one of those places that one thinks one knows well but can still produce a lot of surprises. The plan for the day was to cover the whole site and try to carry out a bit of detailed interpretation on the way. A respectable number on members turned up (unfortunately the meet leader forgot to do an accurate head-count) and when everyone was ready the party set off for the Low Works to the north of the site. The main level in from here formerly lead to the Parrock Quarry which was once a large underground working before they took the roof off. Now it is accessible from the surface but the level which formerly served it is blocked close to where it enters the quarry.

The level is still worth visiting because, off the main drive, are numerous side tunnels leading to a maze of small caverns and further passages. One could spend all day in here but soon it was time to depart to other areas. By now the Furness group had joined the party, but not for long. They were going off to nearby Cathedral Cavern to learn single-rope-technique.

The next venue was the workings to the west of the site not far above the Pierce How Beck. All the levels that run in from here do so in a south westerly direction trying to locate the band of slate. Some levels are quite some length and end at a forehead, clearly showing the highly speculative nature of the exploration that took place in former times in this area. One of the main plans for the day was to walk the route of the narrow gauge railway that wound its way through the lower part of Bakestone Barrow Wood linking up several of the workings in the area. Much discussion took place about the method of operation. At the northern end of the railway there appeared to be no terminus. Exactly what happened to material that was being carried can only be speculation.

The group made their way up through the trees towards the road and back to where the cars were parked for lunch. By this time weekend activities at Hodge Close were in full swing. The place was crawling with pony trekkers, mountain bikers, rock climbers, fell walkers, numerous cave divers, and the usual assortment of hangers on. Its no wonder that the Planning Board are getting jumpy about the place. Long may they not interfere!

After lunch the two main quarry holes were entered. The flooded one which was the last main area worked was accessed by walking (wading) along the Hodge Close Level. The level eventually dries out and opens out at a window on the rock face above the water. A ladder leads down to a shelf just above water level from which further levels run off. What most will not realise is that the depth of the quarry below water level is twice the depth above water! No wonder it is a divers paradise – and they were certainly there on this particular day!

From the south end of the quarry a level formerly ran off but the entrance is now blocked beneath a great depth of abandoned cars and other rubbish which Coniston people have tipped over during the past 30 years. One member of the party remembered exploring the level which leads to a number of quite large chambers. Some way below water level on the opposite side of the "lake" divers report that an arch-way leads through to a further air-locked chamber where they say the air always appears to be fresh. Above the great hole a travelling crane spanned the void and was used to lift slate clog to the surface. Peter Fleming has a colour slide of the workings before they finally closed in the late 1950's. Unfortunately the meet leader, who spent much of his youth playing up here with his friends can't remember much about the workings at all.

Before leaving this part of the site the group paid a quick visit to the Parrock Quarry, the adjacent open working and then departed leaving the rock gymnasts and cave divers in peace.

The final venue for the day was the site of the last workings at Hodge Close in the late '50s. By this time the group had dwindled to a mere 5 people – the dedicated explorers! The Bakestone Level is situated in the woods close to the site of the old chapel. The entrance to the level is a little unsafe and the entire length of the tunnel and the chambers at the end are all flooded. Nevertheless the small group waded in, looked round and then departed.

A few years ago three local lads were fortunate enough to be allowed to re-commence slate extraction at Hodge Close. It is pleasing to see that they seem to be making a go of it. Not far away, too other enterprises are in operation. Above Moss Rigg on the other side of the valley the Walker brothers from Spark Bridge are operating High Fellside Quarry and nearby, at Tilberthwaite, George Tarr of Coniston is working Shaw's old site at Horse Crag Level. As far as we know, George's working is Lakeland's last slate mine!

DESCENT OF BONSOR EAST STOPE AT COMISTON
JAN 5TH 1992.

ML: Ian Matheson, Dave Fridge.

Participants: Max Doby, Alistair Cameron, Peter Fleming, Adam Gourlay, Phil Merrin, Mark Simpson, Angela Wilson, Ian Wood.

Non Participants: Chris Jones, Mike Mitchell, Anton C.P.Thomas, Paul Timewell, Peter Sandbach.

It was hoped that we would be able to descend Bonsor East Stope, Bonsor East Shaft and the Old Engine Shaft, but heavy overnight rain caused a torrent of water to pour down the Old Engine Shaft, making this impossible. Dave Bridge rigged the Bonsor East Shaft, and Ian Matheson went to fix the ropes down the stope, only to find that here too there was a heavy flow of water down the line of descent. Some time was spent on the surface diverting the stream running down the fellside, and draining the entrance. Eventually the flow was reduced to an acceptable volume, and by the time the ropes were fixed most of the participants had already completed the Bonsor East Shaft through trip, which was accomplished very speedily because, as no ascent was involved, it was decided not to use any rebelayes or deviations.

It was possible to communicate by voice between the two descents, and occasionally to see reflected light, thus confirming that both lines of descent are in the same stope. There is a small possibility that some as yet unexplored ground may exist to the north of Bonsor East Shaft, but if so this could only be reached through a small hole in the stacked deads, which would be both difficult and hazardous. The prevailing wet and humid conditions were unsuitable for such exploration.

Bonsor East Shaft is 280 feet deep, and the adjoining stope, which is the only access to the Eastern extension of Deep Level, involves both a descent and an ascent of 310 feet, so that those members who did both completed some 900 feet of SRT. Pity we couldn't do the Engine Shaft as well!

Ian Matheson.



Panning for gold - El Dorado County

MEET SECRETARIES REPORT 1991.

There have been slightly more meets this year than last, twenty one in all, and no less than twelve different people have participated as meet leader. My aim has been to provide as wide a variety as possible in order to appeal to all interests. An innovation has been two meets, suggested and led by Alistair Cameron, to provide opportunity and guidance for underground photography. The first was at Honister last February, and the second will be at Coniston tomorrow. Last April Alistair lead a large and not very agile group from the Cumberland Geological Society through the slate closeheads at Yew Crag. They enjoyed themselves so much that they asked for another meet at Coniston, and this has been arranged for May next year. They are very interesting company, and we gain a great deal from their specialist knowledge. The NAMHO conference took place in May at Blaenau Ffestiniog, and one of the field meets there was a visit to the recently discovered bronze age copper mines at Great Orme. Peter Fleming arranged for a reciprocal meet with the Great Orme Exploration Society, and in October he entertained them at Coniston, amongst other things completing a continuous trip through Levers Water Mine, Brow stoep, Top Level Extension, to finish down the Paddy End Through Trip. This meet was poorly attended by CAT members, and it is to be hoped that the return visit to Great Orme next year will be better supported.

Some exploration was carried out at Nenthead, but little has been done closer to home. We do seem to have lost momentum and drive in this area, which is a pity as there is still a lot to be done, especially at Coniston. Indeed there have been a number of small groups of CATMHS members, including myself, carrying out their own exploration. I am concerned that their discoveries should be reported, recorded, and added to the knowledge we already have. I appeal therefore to those doing their own thing to report their activities to the Meet Secretary, or, in the case of Coniston, to Peter Fleming who co-ordinates exploration there, and to write reports for the Newsletter and Log Book.

There has been a lot of activity involving projects. The Old Engine Shaft Winding Wheel, which was in danger of falling down the shaft, has been restored, and a start made to secure the original wooden pump rods, and the new catwalk which will restore the continuity of Taylors Level is almost complete. At Logan Beck Copper Mine Anton Thomas and company successfully completed a four year digging project by pumping the water out and exploring the previously submerged levels. The same group, under the leadership of John Helme have continued the restoration of Newlands Furnace in conjunction with the Cumbria Industrial History Society, and have recently succeeded in replacing the main supporting beam for the blowing arch. Much the same group, this time under the leadership of Paul Timewell, have done a lot of work to reverse the dereliction of Mandells Slate Office, on the old Coniston Station site. It is hoped that the building will be used to mount a display and for occasional exhibitions. In conjunction with Red Earth Publications CATMHS is to publish a book of photographs entitled 'Beneath the Lakeland Fells.' This should be out next Spring, and there have been a series of meetings

cont.

with the Editor, Alen MacFadzean, to discuss the format and to select the photographs.

Many of our members have dual membership with the Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit, who hold training meets on the second Sunday of every month. They achieve much larger numbers at these meets than we do, so it would seem that practicing rescues in mines has become more attractive than exploring them. The CATS meetlist has to be published up to eight months in advance and cannot be changed after publication, whilst the venue for COMRU is decided monthly and is therefore more flexible. On March 24th there was a published CAT SRT training meet at Lyon Ladders, but two weeks earlier COMRU held a similar meet at Black Hole Quarry. On June 2nd there was a CAT meet at Flemings Level at Coniston. Three weeks earlier COMRU held a practice there. On October 20th there was a CAT meet at Greenside, and the week before COMRU chose that venue for their training. This pre-emptive programming can only be detrimental to the subsequent CATS meet, as people must feel less enthusiastic about attending a meet at a venue which they had visited only a few days previously whilst wearing a different hat.

It will be seen from this revue that there has been a great variety of activity within and without the society, a lot going on, and this is encouraging, but it seems to me that despite this there has also been fragmentation and loss of momentum, a lack of purpose. There is a need for closer liason and better communication. It is not sufficient to announce that a particular project will take place on say the last Saturday of each month, or the second Tuesday. People, especially those who are not regular attenders, need reminders and need to have their interest stimulated.

The regular meets programme, despite its variety, does not attract large attendances, and it is often the same few people each time. There are a limited number of local mining sites, and in terms of visits there is little new to offer long term members. Repeat visits are obviously less attractive than exploring unfamiliar territory, and fewer and fewer people will turn up to visit the same old mines. I think that to generate more enthusiasm the meets system will have to change. Perhaps there should be more work meets, maybe the ongoing projects in Furness and elsewhere should be included in the official meets list. Should some meets be non specific, by which I mean that people turn up at a particular venue and then decide what to do? Should we have more weekend meets, or more meets outside Cumbria, and if so who will lead them? Can we develop links with other groups outside the County? Is it time to reinstate the annual caving meet? Should we have fewer meets so that people look forward to them, or should we have more so as to appeal to a broader spectrum? I don't know the answers to these questions, but as I said last year I feel that as I have held this post for five years it is time for a fresh approach, and a new Meets Secretary. Accordingly whilst I would like to continue as a committee member, I do not wish to stand again as Meets Secretary.

Ian Matheson.

MEET REPORT

Sunday February 2nd 1992

Coniston

The aim of this meet was to have a close look at the various workings below Hospital/Grey Crag Level to assess the possibility of gaining access to Deep Level about 200ft below and of making connections between adjacent stopes. From previous descents it was known that all the workings were choked at the bottom. In the event only six people ventured underground and so it was decided to confine the exploration to the workings connecting with the Paddy End Engine Shaft and the workings on South Vein below the Puddingstone Level branch of Grey Crag Level.

There was a short hiatus while the tackle (which had been inadvertently spirited away to Levers Water) was recovered by Sheila and Angela. Then Pete and Ian rigged the Engine Shaft and after the first two short pitches which drop between stagings a clean descent of about 80ft was made into the widening stope to a rock pillar or plug of debris bridging the workings at about 130ft below Grey Crag Level. An old rope already in place below the second pitch was avoided. The floor of the stope turned out to be a disappointing jumble of debris typical of robbed workings, the lowest point being about 180ft below Grey Crag Level and probably some 20ft above Deep Level. A trammed sub-level originally ran the length of the stope (ie approx 100ft) crossing the top of the rock pillar. A pendule from the pillar enabled an inspection to be made of the south end of the stope where the level is choked in collapsed ground. In the opposite direction the same level could be gained from the floor of the stope with the help of a rope already in position and although now completely blocked it almost certainly continues into the adjacent "Waterfall Stope" where there is a half buried wagon. Someone had previously attempted to dig through at this point.

It was hoped that there might be a connection at some horizon between the south end of the Engine Shaft stope and the workings on South Vein which were being inspected by Dave, Mark and Angela. The route here is from the overhanging tram lines in the Puddingstone Level - ie a descent over loose material (much of which had to be dislodged for safety), a short pitch past a huge chokestone, a clean vertical pitch of some 60 ft to a solid floor and finally a drop through a narrow stope to a sloping floor containing half buried timbers and a large collapsed climbing chain. From the upper part of the descent it was possible to pick out the platform which some four years previously three members on the meet had reached from Middle Level 200ft above when exploring the continuation of Puddingstone Level. Part of the line of descent below Grey Crag Level appears to coincide with a throw in the vein with workings along the fault in the direction of the Paddy End Vein but attempts at a voice connection with the first party were unsuccessful. At the bottom of the stope, possibly 160 ft below Grey Crag Level, a dig revealed what could be the roof of a level continuing in solid rock but completely choked with mud. The workings could be seen to continue to the north about 30ft above this point but were inaccessible.

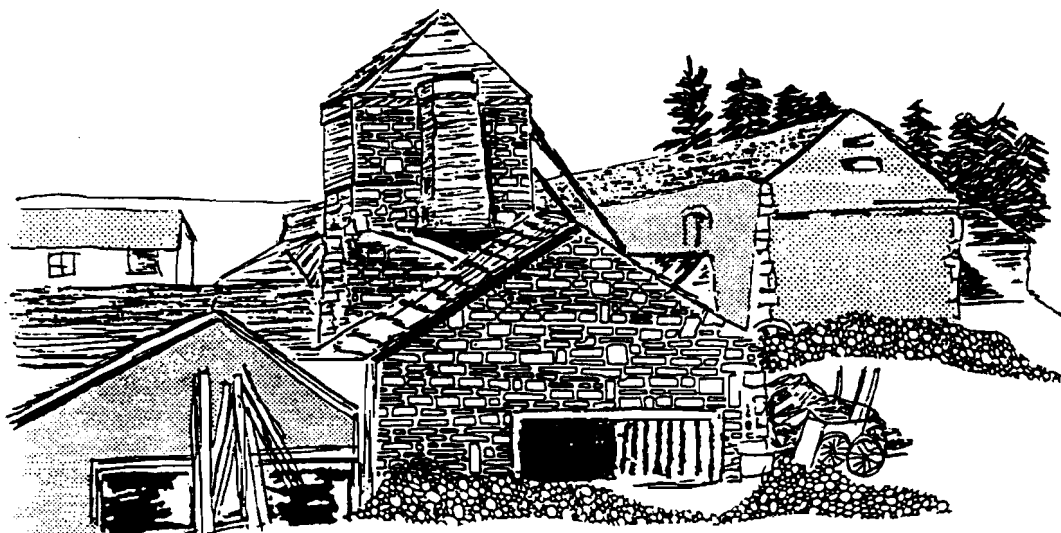
By the end of the day four of the team had been to the bottom of both stopes and generally agreed that a Deep Level connection was not a practical proposition.

Dave Bridge



Recent COMRU practice, Levers Water.

NEWLAND BLAST FURNACE



1992 started well with the launch by the treasurer, Tony Keates, of the "Newland Restoration Project" appeal.

Leaflets have gone out to the public, local businesses, and to all members of the "Cumbria Industrial History Society" and also to members of the "Historical Metallurgy Society". We are grateful to C.A.T.M.H.S. for a generous donation.

The work force had a well deserved rest during December and January after the strenuous day spent raising the one ton oak beam into place in the blowing chamber wall. Much publicity was given in the local press during this event and the financial appeal has attempted to capitalize on this. The total received at the time of writing was approaching £100.

We are planning to restart work days in February and at regular intervals after that. The first task is to lay reinforced concrete foundations and footings for the left hand side of the furnace wall. When this is completed the wall needs to be built up to about five feet high and integrated into the existing furnace wall. Later in the year we hope to move on to casting, in situ, concrete beams and a raft to bridge the right and left hand sides of the furnace/ blowing chamber wall. Eventually this raft and the oak beam will support a replacement wall which collapsed and threatened the existence of the furnace when the original 200 year old oak beam rotted and collapsed.

The dates planned are:-

Saturday February 8th

Digging out of wall foundations and concreting

Saturday February 29th

Start of wall building on the concrete foundation

Saturday March 28th

Continue wall building-

Sunday March 29th

Please attend whichever day suits you better

Saturday May 2nd

Saturday May 30th

MEETS REPORT – HONISTER SLATE WORKINGS.

The meet leader, being a natural pessimist, was absolutely convinced that no-one would turn up for the Honister meet on February 23rd. Imagine his surprise when, on arriving at the car park at the Hause, he found that most of the people there were not heading for Great Gable, but were getting kitted out for an underground trip. In total 26 people turned up and the meet leader felt very humble when he realised how far some had travelled for the trip. He was assured that two members, Pete and Ann, had flown back from Arizona especially to be present!

The first problem of the day was to gain access into the workings at the Main Road entrance. This has now been very effectively sealed which is not a bad thing considering the vandalism that has taken place in the underground workings. A hand-line had already been fixed and the party soon scrambled up to a higher entrance on the Kimberley band thereby gaining access to the Link Level.

The plan for the day was to climb up through the underground workings on the Honister slate band from E1 right up to E13. Part of the route had only been opened within the past 6 months after a successful dig. There was a lot to see and a long way to go. The meet leader got out the whip and the party set off along Honister Bottom Level at a cracking pace.

A number of people in the party including a group from the Durham Dales Mining Society had not visited Honister before and some time was spent in explaining the history and geology of the workings. The party climbed the Honister Internal Incline viewing the associated equipment en-route and then proceeded along No 4 Level to gain access to workings higher up.

Above Honister Top Level the party passed from 20th century workings into those of former centuries (possibly even as early as the 1500's). In the vicinity of E9 Level the group assembled at the site of the Bank Holiday Dig and the meet leader was relieved to find it still open. It was also with some relief that all 26 members of the party passed through the area without mishap. The ground there is very unstable. Above the site of the dig a massive retaining wall is bulging, loose and crumbling. Enormous collapsed blocks from the roof lean against the wall which doesn't help the general stability of the area at all.

Beyond the dig the group passed into an extensive chamber which hasn't been fully explored yet. By climbing the chamber over huge collapses the way eventually led to familiar ground close to E13 entrance and eventually out into daylight on the External Incline on the crag face.

The party then climbed the external incline to the top of the crag and several of the ancient workings off the incline were explored as they went. One group entered E14 Level and discovered an underground route from there through more unstable ground to emerge into daylight again on the floor of the open quarry workings beyond the top of the crag.

The whole party finally re-assembled at the top and as there was still time, it was decided to descend the Kimberley Incline to return to the starting point. Access was gained to the top of the incline via the "trap door" into the inclined shaft above the motor-house at the incline head. The party finally left the workings by the way they had come in, collected the hand-line ropes and returned to the cars.

A very successful day was rounded off by a cup of tea in the Skiddaw Hotel at Keswick before the drive home.

m.l. Alastair Cameron



Blasting horn, Penrhyn, approx 1910.

Name/Civil Parish County
Greenburn Mine, Little Langdale. Cumbria.
Elevation 850 ft.

Grid Ref,
NY 290020.

Outline Description.

A complete Copper mining site, in an attractive setting of a side valley of the River Brathay. The site comprises a mine reservoir (now breached and partially drained) early shaft workings, a series of adit levels on fellside above, with remains of connecting self-acting tramways, 2 No. waterwheel pits, and engine shaft with protruding pump rod, copper dressing floor, stone slab tanks (formerly lead-lined) used in the precipitation process of copper production, substantial remains of miners cottages, mines office, smithy, and other associated buildings. Also remains of small dams on Greenburn Beck, along with remains of stamps and buddle on dressing floor.

MINING:- Adits (6No.)
 Shafts.(6No.)
 Trial opencuts.

HAULAGE/ACCESS

 HAND WINLASS
 SELF-ACTING TRAMWAYS.

DRAINAGE

 Pump rods.
 Reservoir for water supply to wheel

A number of Society members have been charged with the task of producing details of specific mine sites for proposed scheduling by English Heritage. This example of the details of the Greenburn Mine drawn up by Dave Blundell has been included in the newsletter to show exactly how information should be laid out.

PERIOD OF ACTIVITY 1845 - 1938.

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Cont...

Ownership

Egremont Estates?

Overall Assessment

Greenburn mine represents a small mining site with a large variety of features contained within one site, from early shaft workings in the valley floor, to later adit levels on the fellside. 5 No mineral veins cross this site, and 1 can be seen at surface. A reasonably well-preserved dressing floor for copper exists on the site, and along with the associated domestic buildings, this site is unique in the copper mining industry of Cumbria.

Galvanised Portable Commodes & Receptacles
(To comply with the Coal Mines Act, 1911).
Specially Suitable where Sanitation is Not Dealt with by Water Carriage.

Cheap to Buy.
Design Registered.

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All parts are strongly made to withstand rough wear.

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Rd. No. 624242.

STAND
Orders of 50 Commodes, or
20 Receptacles sent carriage paid.

RECEPTACLE
P. Patent No. 19072 13.
Rd. No. 624027.

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Nine Locks Works, Brierley Hill, STAFFS.
Telegrams: "Wollescote Co., Brierley Hill." Telephone: No. 4 Brierley Hill. A B C Code, 5th Edition.

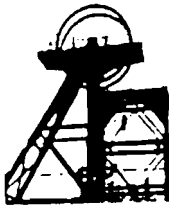
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15 1/2 in.
9 in.
18 in.



NAMHO

National Association of Mining History Organisation



NEWSLETTER

No 20

November 1991

Editor: Wes Taylor, 18 Station Lane, Walton on Trent, Swadlincote,
Derbys, DE12 8NA.

Tel: Barton under Needwood (0283) 713315

The last NAMHO Newsletter was produced by Adrian Pearce way back in March 1991. I accepted the position of NAMHO Newsletter editor at the Council Meeting that took place during the Conference at LLechwedd last May. The delay in producing this edition of the Newsletter is due to a single fact. I have not had anything to go into the Newsletter other than a couple of items from Roger Burt. The copy that I have received for this edition has been obtained through the efforts of Mike Gill. Mike has provided a considerable amount of copy himself and he has twisted the arm of other persons to send me articles etc for inclusion in the Newsletter.

The NAMHO Council believe that the Newsletter is an asset to the Organisation but it can only be published on a regular basis if members provide the editor with articles and other snippets for publication. Would members please send me any articles etc which they believe are suitable for consideration for publication. A worthwhile source of information may well be your own Newsletters - please send me a copy so that you may get an even wider circulation for your publication.

It is hoped that the Newsletter can be published three times a year and be circulated with the minutes of the Council Meetings. In order to satisfy this timetable all copy etc should be sent to me at least four weeks before the relevant Council meeting.

Wes Taylor

MINING HISTORY HANDBOOK

The first edition of the Mining History Handbook is still available for purchase. This publication contains a wealth of information for the mining historian. Besides listing all of the members of NAMHO and giving details of the Societies, their main activities, facilities, locations etc, the publication gives advice and guidance to individuals who wish to develop their interest in mining history.

The book also contains extensive address lists of organisations outside of NAMHO which may be a source of information to mining historians.

The retail cost of the book is £3.50 per copy (including postage). For orders of 3 or more copies there is a discounted price of £2.00 per copy.

Copies of the handbook are available from Adrian Pearce, 72 Hopkins Heath, Shawburch, Telford, Shropshire, TF5 0LZ. Tel: Telford (0952) 253310.

NAMHO BI-ANNUAL FIELD MEET - SHROPSHIRE 1992

Do you want to:-

- Explore old mines?
- Learn about underground surveying?
- Attend seminars on preserving mining sites?
- Learn how to take underground video recordings?
- Have a conducted surface tour of mines?
- Learn single rope techniques?
- Buy books and/or equipment

Whatever your interest, you will be catered for.

| | |
|-------|--|
| When | June 27th-28th 1992 |
| What | The bi-annual field meet of the National Association of Mining History Organisations |
| Who | Anyone |
| Cost | £5.00 per person for the weekend |
| Hosts | Shropshire Caving & Mining Club |

Full details of the weekend can be obtained by sending an SAE to Adrian Pearce, 72 Hopkins Heath, Shawbirch, Telford, Shropshire, TF5 0LZ. Tel: Telford (0952) 253310.

NEW SYSTEM FOR THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY RECORDS

During the last ten years the Society's Records have grown to a size such that a new filing system is being introduced.

Under the old system files were devoted to mining areas and specific sites were recorded in a paper index. This method was adequate whilst the range of material was small but, now that the coverage has become more comprehensive, the Recorder is revising the way in which the material is kept.

The main files are being re-organised and the material is being split into its pre-1974 County and then sub-divided into its Civil Parish. The counties, parishes and documents will each have a unique number to make indexing and searching easier.

Material relating to the Yorkshire Dales and North Yorkshire Moors has already been entered into the new system and work is progressing with other areas.

Mike Gill

BACKBARROW IRON FURNACE

The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit has been appointed to make a full photographic record of the Backbarrow Furnace in Cumbria. (MG)

FORCE CRAG MINE

Force Crag Mine in the Lake District has now closed and the Lake District Mines and Quarries Trust has bought the crushing and fines processing plant (excluding the flotation cells) for its museum. (MG)

MARRICK HIGH AND LOW SMELT MILLS

Due to the deteriorating condition of these important monuments and a problem with the owner of the site regarding access, English Heritage has, for the first time, used the provisions in Section 5 of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. This Act gives English Heritage the power to enter land and do emergency repairs to a monument which is under serious threat.

The work being done under the Act includes consolidation of the chimney of the Top Mill and a gable wall on the Bottom Mill. The cost of these emergency repairs is £80,000. (MG)

BRITISH COAL RECORDS

The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts is talking to British Coal with a view to establishing a procedure for saving the British Coal archives. There are grounds for disquiet, however, as British Coal have given the matter a very low priority in its accelerated closure programme. The loss of monuments caused by the rapid clearance of abandoned colliery sites is also giving cause for concern. (MG)

HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

English Heritage recently announced that it will be consulting interested parties about proposals for a Register of Historic Landscapes. Through it's chairman, NAMHO has been urging this as an option for protecting mining landscapes like the Upper Nent Valley, Grassington Moor and the Hungry Hushes in Arkengarthdale. (MG)

TRAINING SCHEMES

It has been established that funds are available from NCA to contribute to the cost of providing training in techniques used in mine and/or cave exploration. Please contact Adrian Pearce for advice as to how the funds may be obtained.

A NOTE AND QUERY FROM LEADHILLS - GRIPPS LEVEL

Gripps Level, the drainage level for the mines at Leadhills, Lanarkshire, Scotland, is at this moment of time choked at a point about 570 metres from the portal. The water has backed up to produce a head of 34 metres.

The tail of the level has a number of shafts along its length and the blockage is at the penultimate shaft. Water is issuing through the (backfilled) spoil at the shaft head and at the one beyond, (Grid Ref NS88501705). A strong flow of water is also issuing through the spoil filling of the portal of a horse level that is located a short distance away (Grid Ref NS 88551640). Taking levels from the 6" OS Map, the difference in height between the Horse Level and Gripps is about 34 metres. There is still water at Gripps Portal but the flow is very much reduced. The normal flow is said to be 25 million litres per day.

Gripps drains all of the Leadhills Mines via an estimated 8 kilometres of levels. The level was started in 1768 by the Earl of Hopetown to drain the Susanna and adjacent mines. It was taken over in 1772 by one of the Earl's leasees, the Scots Mines Company. Susanna was reached in 1790 and by 1859, when operations were greatly reduced, Gripps had been extended into Brown's vein but at this time it had not overtaken the older Poutshiel Level. Poutshiel Level

was driven in the 1860's as part of a programme to use this level as a tramway out to an adjacent dressing floor. It seems probable that the water now flowing from it is rising via the Borlaise (Wembley) shaft and/or old shafts in the Mill and Glasgow veins. Short of digging out the portal there is no way of examining the situation below ground.

The landowner, Hopetown Estates, is aware of the situation. Messrs Johnson, Poole and Bloomer, who were involved in grouting old workings under the village in 1989, and more recently capping shafts, are also aware of the situation. The Clyde River Purification Board is also monitoring the situation and the author of this article is liaising with their Inspector on this problem.

Do any NAMHO members know of similar situations elsewhere in the country? If there are, or were, any similar situations, what happened? The topography at Leadhills makes it unlikely that there could be a "blow out" such as occurred at the Magpie Sough in Derbyshire but there must be potential for other problems.

Any comments would be gratefully received. Bill Harvey, 86 Beechwood Drive, Broomhill, Glasgow, G1 7HG.

PROGRESS AT CONNONLEY LEAD MINE

The Connonley Project has gone well this summer and many of the major pieces of work that were necessary for site safety have been completed by the Friends of Connonley mine.

The work has included a reinforced concrete retaining wall that was built into the tip alongside the bob-pit at the Engine Shaft. This wall will relieve pit and shaft top of any pressure from the dump. The dump has been replaced and landscaped to hide the wall.

The area around the top of the Engine Shaft and over the stone arched bob-pit was also dug out and backfilled with concrete to consolidate the area. As the new collar was kept close to the shaft, no trace of the poppet-headframe (used for lifting pitwork) was found. It is intended to replace the concrete sleeper cap on the shaft with a grille. The material which had collapsed into the bob-pit has also been removed. Sadly, however, the only traces of the pitwork were two holding-down bolts near to the shaft edge.

The large thorn bush growing from the top of Taylor's Shaft was removed and the ground was dug out to the clay sub-soil. The shaft, which is in good condition but flooded at about 30 metres, is stone lined and has an oval profile, about 1.8 by 1.3 metres. A raft of concrete sleepers was laid across the shaft and capped with concrete. A vent pipe was incorporated in the cap.

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers spent a second week on site during the summer when they rebuilt a section of drystone arched culvert which carried the beck under the dumps. Sadly, however, due to a lack of stone, much of which has been denatured by the acid in the spoil, and the major damage that was done by a dragline used to reclaim barytes in the 1950's, it will not be possible to rebuild all of the culvert. It is proposed to pipe the middle section of the culvert and arch both ends.

The overflow to the mine reservoir was breached and this has now been repaired and a spillway has been built to prevent erosion. It is proposed to reopen the original outlet which has collapsed and is silted up. This will provide a means of draining the reservoir if required. In the meantime the summer has ended with the reservoir full of water and it is no longer in danger of drying up, a fact appreciated by the sundry birds, frogs, newts and fish which live in, or

on, the water and the cattle which drink from it.

The portal of the Inclined Shaft had been filled with old cars and "chicken exhaust". This has been cleaned out but it needs a handrail around the area and the stonework requires some repair work to make it sound. A start has been made to repair the pointing to the Magazine and Smithy buildings.

The site roads have been scraped clean and dressed with (limestone) quarry waste. This is not in keeping with the mine's geology (grit, shale and mudstone) but it makes better roads and is easily recognised as foreign material. Moreover, it matches the whiteness of the dumps whereas crushed sandstone would not be compatible.

Work will continue through the winter and next year it is intended to erect notice boards to guide visitors around the site. Anyone is welcome to visit the site but PLEASE leave cars on the road and walk up the private track.

There is still plenty of work to be done on the site and offers of help will be most welcome. Please contact Mike Gill. Tel: (0535) 635388.

SOURCES OF COPPER FOR THE BRITISH BRONZE AGE

A project has been set up to determine the origin of the ores that were used in the manufacture of copper artifacts during the British Bronze Age. The work will be carried out at the Isotracer Laboratory, Department of Nuclear Physics at Oxford University.

Lead Isotope and Trace Element analysis will be used to characterise the artifacts and ore samples. It is hoped that by using this technique it will be possible to match the artifacts to regional ore sources, thus providing a wealth of information on the trading routes in Bronze Age Britain.

To enable this work to proceed it is necessary for samples of lead and copper ores to be made available for analysis. The samples of ore required for analysis must not be weathered or oxidised and detailed information relating to the source of the ore is also required.

Offers of assistance with this project, and requests for further information should be addressed to Brenda Rohl, Isotracer Laboratory, Nuclear Physics, Oxford University, Keble Rd, Oxford, OX1 3RH. Tel: Oxford (0865) 237489.

HAIG COLLIERY - WHITEHAVEN

A report has been produced by Task Management Services for Cumbria County Council outlining the history of Haig Colliery and stating why this colliery should be preserved. It is hoped that the project to preserve the site will attract EEC Development funding.

British Coal have gone quiet about allowing the Trust to take over the engine buildings. There is, however, a worry that the buildings will be vandalised. (CATMHS)

COVENTRY COLLIERY, KERESLEY, WARWICKSHIRE

In 1901 the Warwickshire Coal Company was registered and its shares were floated. The declared aim of the Company was to develop a colliery on a large area of virgin coal seams at Keresley, north of the City of Coventry.

Very little appears to have been done on the ground but a large number of the shares were purchased in 1902 by the Coltness Iron Company of Scotland. Again there was little activity on the ground but there were negotiations with local landowners aimed at obtaining a lease on a larger area of coal seams. The old Company liquidated in favour of the new Warwickshire Coal Company which paid £270,000 in fully paid up shares for the assets. The Warwickshire Coal Company was registered on 14th February 1911 and held an estate of 975 acres freehold and 2,999 acres leasehold. The capital was £450,000. All of the shares were held by the Coltness Iron Company, whose Directors formed the Board.

Sinking began in March 1912 and was completed at a depth of 730 yards in September 1917. The pit bottom was in the Warwickshire Thick Coal which was 28 feet thick. This seam was made up of a number of seams of coal that had come together in this area. The main seams are, from the bottom up, the Nine Foot, Ell, Ryder, Bare and Two Yard. The seam dipped westwards at 1 in 16.

It was planned to produce 20,000 tons of coal per week but the mine was developed slowly and it was not until 1939 that 1,011,566 tons were produced in the year. It is stated that the colliery was profitable from 1924.

Just prior to the Second World War a drilling programme to the west of the colliery located a further 6,000 acres of workable coal and a new colliery was proposed. The intervention of the War stopped the plans from being developed and this coal was eventually worked from the existing shafts.

In the early years of working the method of extraction was by the Board and Pillar system but the level of output was disappointing. Experiments with the Longwall system were more promising and this developed into a retreat system with three separate faces, each 6 feet high, taking slices out of the seam. The bottom slice, the Nine Foot, was taken first, followed about 15 yards behind by the Ryder slice. The Two Yard slice followed a further 15 yards behind the Ryder. Whilst working under the city of Coventry a modified form of Board and Pillar system was used to minimise surface subsidence.

In order to improve output a battery electric locomotive haulage system and a new coal preparation plant were installed in the 1960's. A "Homefire" smokeless fuel plant was constructed on the site in 1967 and this huge steel structure has dominated the area ever since.

Originally steam winders were used at the colliery. One by Markham's of Chesterfield, the other by Robey's of Lincoln. Electricity for use at the colliery was produced by turbo alternators that were driven by waste steam. These winders were replaced by electric winders in 1970.

The electric winder that was installed to serve the Downcast Shaft had originally been used at Moseley Common Colliery in Lancashire. When this machine had originally been installed it had been described as the "largest winder in Europe".

When the electric winders were installed the coal handling system in the shafts was changed by replacing the mine cars with 12 tonne capacity skips. A further first at this time was the introduction of "Elram" electro-hydraulic skip handling equipment.

With the completion of these modifications the colliery was producing 522,000 tonne of coal annually with a workforce of 1,114 men.

The period of time to 1990 saw the elimination of the "three tier" system of work and the extended use of high technology shearer/powered support working a leaf, 2 to 4 metre thick, from the top of the Warwickshire Thick Coal, in the

conventional longwall method. A f16 million coal preparation plant, which incorporated rapid loading facilities, was also built. At this stage the colliery was producing 1.2 million tonnes per year with a workforce of 1,350 men.

Over recent years losses, said to run to f6 million per year, have influenced the decision to impose very high output targets on the colliery. It has been said that these targets were impossible to achieve and that the intention was to lead to the closure of the colliery. The colliery ceased production on 16th October 1991.

British Coal have stated that the site will be cleared within two years. There is now only one working colliery left on the Warwickshire Coalfield. This is at Daw Mill, near Arley and is working the upper leaf of the Warwickshire Thick Coal.

Nigel Chapman

HOW MANY ACTIVE MINES ARE THERE IN THE UK?

The official answer to the above question for underground mining, as recognised by the British Geological Survey, is 263. There are 226 coal mines, 5 for metaliferrous ores, the remaining 32 mines are for miscellaneous mineral products. There are 70 coal mines listed as being worked by British Coal, but this number has been reduced since this research has been carried out. The remaining coal mines are operated privately.

The mines working metaliferrous and miscellaneous products as listed in P M Harris, D E Highley, and K R Bentley's (1991) Directory of Mines and Quarries, 1991, Third Edition (British geological Survey) are:-

| <u>Mineral</u> | <u>Mine</u> | <u>NGR</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|----------------|----------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Anhydrite | Newbiggin | NY630270 | Appelby, Cumbria |
| Ball clay | No 11 | SX850763 | Newton Abbot, Devon |
| | Nos 5 & 6 | SX855758 | " " |
| | No 4 | SX859751 | " " |
| | Broadway | SX860737 | " " |
| | Aldermoor | SY916827 | Wareham, Dorset |
| | Greenspecks | SY926827 | " |
| | Norden No 6 | SY946827 | Corfe Castle, Dorset |
| Barytes | Force Crag | NY200217 | Braithwaite, Cumbria |
| | (Now closed) | | |
| Fireclay | Shibden No 2 | SE097274 | Halifax, W Yorks |
| Fluorspar | Frazer's Grove | NY896441 | Rookhope, Durham |
| | Milldam | SK177781 | Great Hucklow, Derbyshire |
| | Sallet Hole | SK220742 | Eyam, Derbyshire |
| Gypsum | Longriggs | NY654257 | Appelby, Cumbria |
| | Birkshead | NY668258 | " |
| | Barrow | SK570180 | Barrow on Soar, Notts |
| | Marblaegis | SK554282 | East Leake, Notts |
| | Fauld | SK181283 | Tutbury, Staffs |
| | Brightling | TQ677219 | Robertsbridge, E Sussex |
| | Sundrum | NS432232 | Stair, Strathclyde Region |
| Honestone | Quilkiestone | NS433230 | " |
| Iron ore | Florence | NY015095 | Egremont, Cumbria |
| Limestone | Middleton | SK277556 | Wirksworth, Derbyshire |
| | Hayes Wood | ST778608 | Bath, Avon |
| | Westwood | ST808597 | Bradford on Avon, Wilts |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Potash | Monks Park | ST881683 | Corsham, Wilts |
| Salt | Boulby | NZ762183 | Loftus, Cleveland |
| | Meadowbank | SJ652680 | Winsford, Cheshire |
| | Kilroot | J 450890 | Carrickfergus, Antrim |
| Silica sand | Lochaline | NM680450 | Lochaline, Highland Region |
| Slate | Manod | SH731454 | Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd |
| | Aberllefenni | SH768104 | Machhynlleth, Gwynedd |
| Tin | Geevor | SW374345 | Pendeen, Cornwall |
| | South Crofty | SW665412 | Pool, Redruth, Cornwall |
| | Wheal Jane | SW771425 | Chacewater, Cornwall |
| | (Now closed) | | |
| Zinc | Parys | SH437897 | Amlwch, Anglesey |

Paul W Sowan

THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON UNDERGROUND QUARRIES - NAPLES, JULY 1991

Underground archaeology, whether of underground stone quarries or of a wider variety of subterranean structures, is currently attracting considerable attention throughout Europe with active societies in many countries publishing well-produced journals. During the last ten years or so the members of these societies have been increasing the contact with each other through visits, international conferences and by correspondence.

The Naples conference was held at a stunning location, the Castel dell 'Ovo, a fortified rock jutting out into the Bay of Naples. It was hosted by the Neapolitan Section of the Italian Alpine Club. Overseas representatives were from the UK (the writer of this report), the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, France and the USA. The papers presented dealt with extensive underground aqueducts, quarries, and tunnels of Naples and the surrounding areas; and a variety of quarry and non-quarry structures in Czechoslovakia, France, West Bohemia, Bulgaria and South East England.

Subterranea Britannica last held an International Conference in 1978. The conference was based in Cambridge with visits to Nottingham and the Chatham fortifications. This conference attracted massive support from its French sister organisation, Societe Francaise d'Etudes des Souterrains.

The next UK International Symposium is to be organised by Subterranea Britannica and will be based at Newton Park, Bath. It will be held on 7th - 11th August 1992. Full details and booking forms are available from Mrs S P Beamon, Subterranea Britannica, 2 Morton St, Royston, Herts, SG8 7AZ. (PWS)

THE MINES OF IBERIA

Two tours have been provisionally arranged by Atalaya Tours Ltd for 1992. One will be visiting Rio Tinto and the other will be to the Mines of Andalucia.

Further details are available from Atalaya Tours Ltd, Ceinionfa, Penglais Terrace, Aberystwyth, SY23 2ET.

WHEAL JANE

Cannon Consolidated have submitted proposals to turn the Wheal Jane Mine into a £35 million leisure, tourist and business complex. It is claimed that this is the only way that South Crofty mine can be kept open and that it allows for Wheal Jane to be re-opened in the future if the price of tin rises sufficiently.