

CAT

The Newsletter of the Cumbria Amenity Trust
Mining History Society



Florence mine in 1986. Photo by Ian Matheson.

No. 138

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Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society

Newsletter No 138, February 2020

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Society Officers and Committee Members

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Membership - New members:

Simon Newby, from Horwich, in Lancashire.

Peter Archer, from Staveley, Cumbria.

He says, I'm a freelance videographer by trade with a huge passion for both exploring and documenting the local history of slate mining across the Lake District. Would love to create a documentary on the history of slate in the Lakes, this being my biggest aim for 2020. As well as this, I'm a keen photographer and like to often explore small, remote sites with my dad as he has a similar passion. Hopefully I can bring some photo / drone / video skills to CATMHS and can help out with preserving some of the sites and locations too.

James Archer, from Ambleside.

Returning to exploring after a thirty year break! Now I assist my son with trips and underground photography.

Duncan Hooper, from Portishead, Somerset.

A member of Axbridge Caving Club. Has been caving for thirty years and would like to get into more mining.

Christopher Little, from Threlkeld.

An experienced and active caver (and occasional mine explorer) and a member of Nidderdale Caving Club.

Chris Chilton, from Scotton, N Yorkshire.

Member of NCMS.

Leif Andrews, from Darlington

Member of NCMS, interested in cartography and digging. Runs a climbing wall for a living.

Jonathan Briggs, from Teesside.

Member of Durham Cave & Mine Club.

Matt Lynch, from Cockermouth.

David Bates, from Huddersfield.

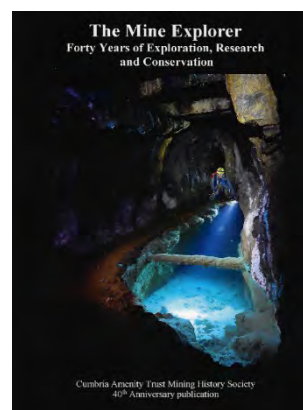
Gary Thomason, from Satterthwaite.

40th Anniversary publication.

Everyone who was a 2019 member should have received a copy. If you haven't email the membership secretary.

Copies were sent to NAMHO, the LDNPA Archaeologists, the National Trust, Cumbria Record Offices at Kendal, Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle, Cumbria libraries at Barrow, Carlisle, Kendal, Whitehaven and Ulverston, as well as to several past members who have made a significant contribution to the society.

There are a few copies left at £10 each plus £2.50 postage. You can order via the CATMHS website or email the Membership Secretary.



40th Anniversary AGM and Dinner.

As well as the annual AGM and Dinner at Rydal Hall, a program of talks and activities was arranged to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the inception of CAT on October 9th 1979.

On the Saturday there was a local walk on Loughrigg to suit both members and guests, starting from Rydal Hall and returning by lunchtime. This was followed by an indoor program of talks and photographs. Jon Knowles gave a presentation about their impressive exploration of Welsh slate caverns, Mark Hatton gave a condensed version of his History of German Mining in Cumbria and Ian Matheson showed some slides of many of the people who have been involved in CATMHS, and launched CATMHS 40th Anniversary publication, 'The Mine Explorer, Forty Years of Exploration, Research and Conservation.' After a break the AGM was held, followed by a pre-dinner talk by founder member and CAT's first membership secretary, Maureen Holland. Thirty nine people sat down for the dinner, followed by a social evening.

Overnight it snowed and Kirkstone pass was closed to traffic so the intended surface and underground meets at Greenside had to be postponed.

Chairman's report.

This year we have three long serving committee members who are stepping down, Angela Wilson, Mike Mitchell and Mark Scott. On behalf of the Society, I would like to offer them a huge vote of thanks for all their hard work and dedication over many years, but I won't embarrass them by saying how many.

This year is special in that the Society is forty years old and is one of the oldest and most respected mining societies in the country, and this report hopefully reflects some of that. There are too many achievements over those years to mention, but they are detailed in the new publication. CATMHS has been held up as one of the most active at the forefront of mine exploration, surveying and conservation; in the early days gaining a reputation as having a group of hard people who were pushing the limits, especially at Coniston.

Peter Claughton from NAMHO (the society was a founder member) recently said again at one of its meetings that our newsletters are journals in themselves. Our publications and trail leaflets have been produced to a very high standard and the latest one is no exception. Our archive, held by the Armit Museum in Ambleside, continues to grow and the collection of publications is probably the finest in Cumbria on mining. We are also very grateful for Mo Holland's generous donation of Eric's collection.

Until their recent retirement we had one of the country's foremost digging teams, who undertook some incredible and long-term digs, especially at Greenside Mine and the Horse Crag Level at Tilberthwaite. The work at Greenside has been standing for over twenty five years.

The Society was part of one of the last Time Team programmes, which was made in appalling weather and played a major part in the Coniston Copper Project, a £450,000 Heritage Lottery grant.

The Society helped to form the Mines Forum, which is unique in this country, and has brought together various organisations to work towards a common goal. The Forum is held up as something other parts of the country should replicate, and this is hopefully going to happen in the North Pennines.

A talk on the 40th anniversary was presented at the LDNPA Archaeological conference at Rhegged in November, and an article is to appear in the January edition of Cumbria Life.

CATMHS has evolved over the years and will continue to do so, hopefully reflecting its member's interests. For example, I am amazed at some of the photography now being done, which is quite outstanding and really does show the workings that the miners created, but which they would have never seen themselves by their candlelight.

On a personal level, I have to say that since joining the Society I have met so many wonderful people over the years and continue to do so, making some fantastic friends who I trust explicitly, especially on the digs, and we have had some laughs along the way.

I hope that everyone enjoys the celebration weekend, and here's to the next forty years.

Warren Allison
Chairman, December 2019

Secretary's report

Four committee meetings have been held this year. Minutes of meetings are on the member's page of our web-site. Following our last AGM and the associated Special General Meeting, where the decision to transfer our Society to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) was ratified, we have now completed our first year as a CIO. Our new Charity number is 1180198. Our old CATMHS (Charity no. 519424) has been formally dissolved and all funds transferred to the new CIO.

Our present constitution requires all of our founder trustees to resign at this first AGM. I have received notification from three trustees that they do not wish to stand for re-election. These long serving trustees are: Michael Mitchell, Angela Wilson and Mark Scott. I would like to thank them for what must be collectively over a century of service to this Society. Further, we have recognised that the role of the Archivist/Librarian is perhaps not so relevant in our present arrangements and we thank Don Borthwick for his care and attention in this role over many years. I have also received nominations and trustee declaration forms from three members willing to stand for election at this AGM. These members are: Graham Derbyshire, Michael Pringle and Stephen Cove. If there are no objections from any member present I propose that we conduct the elections en-bloc with a nominator and seconder. This process will take our new trustee membership to eleven, which is within our constitution and will leave capacity for future trustees to join. We would like to encourage further membership of our trustees to give us greater diversity and an ability to knowledgeably follow future changes in the direction of our Society

This year we have collectively provided ten walks and talks to people outside our society and have supported enquiries with information etc.

We have completed the following during the year:

- Assisted Dalemain Estates by repairing the portal access gate locking mechanism to Carrock Mine, which had been wilfully damaged.
- Measured Deep Level portal for a gravity close gate which the LDNPA are wishing to install.
- Uploaded the batch of Coniston Historic Documents to our website – an index is available on the drop down menu.

- The “Lambton Plans” scans have been sent to the BGS and paper copies placed in the Armit Museum.

Ongoing activities are:

- Keeping a watching brief on the LDNPA proposals to sell off parcels of land in and around Coniston. These include Mandell’s building which CATMHS currently rents.
- Considering a proposal to carry out conservation work on the Coniston Low Water Power House, which would require an application for permission to Rydal Estates.
- Peter Jackson and Colin Fowler are conducting a geological survey of Hudgillburn Mine.

On a personal level, I have been helping Peter Sandbach to complete the work on Brian Cubbon’s re-draft of David Kelly’s “The Red Earth” book on the Furness Iron Industry. This is near to finalisation and we are likely to seek CATMHS financial support to bring this volume to print as previously discussed.

Colin Woolard.

Treasurer’s report – John Aird

The year under review involved the change of the Society’s status to a CIO, requiring the closing of existing and opening of replacement bank and PayPal accounts. The additional work that this generated means that I am doubly grateful to the Auditor, Mr Douglas Harrison, and the Webmaster, Chris Cowdery, for their efforts on our behalf.

The Society’s financial position is sound and we should be able to move ahead to next year with confidence.

John Aird.

Membership Secretary’s report, 2019

At year end we had 151 members. During the year there were 17 new members, balanced by a similar number who didn’t renew, for whatever reason. Geographically two thirds can be considered local, residing in Cumbria or Lancashire. The remainder are further afield, including one each in Belgium, Spain and Hong Kong and two in Germany

Nearly all new members and most renewals and payments are now done online. I respond to enquiries and manage the membership list but some of the work is carried out by the Webmaster and the Treasurer, who are usually the first contact. A lot of care is taken checking and cross checking membership details and especially email addresses, so as to make sure there are no errors and that everyone gets the insurance and newsletter delivery that they specify.

Membership fees were due six weeks ago on 1st November and we have sent out two reminders. There has been a better than usual response, but there are still thirty or so members who haven’t yet renewed. It would be helpful if *everyone* would renew by the end of November.

Newsletter Editor’s report 2019

The default for circulating the newsletter is by email, but nearly fifty members pay extra to have a paper copy sent by post. I find it pleasing that it is valued in that way and am happy to continue printing and posting those copies.

Future of the CAT newsletter.

On the surface the newsletter appears healthy; there have been some new contributors, and several different people have written meet reports. However whilst I used to get material sent

spontaneously, now I have to be more pro-active and ask for contributions, or sometimes paste in stuff I find on Facebook. Without the regular contributions from Warren Allison and Mark Hatton the newsletter would be quite thin.

There have been 137 editions over our forty year history, and it provides a permanent record of our Society's activities and interests. However, nowadays people get their information in different ways, and I wonder if the newsletter will exist in its present form when we reach our 50th anniversary. Perhaps we should consider an annual review and journal instead?

40th Anniversary publication.

Our archivist Don Borthwick once said that CAT is an organisation that isn't very concerned about its history. I have a different view, so I decided to try to write it, but I gave up because there was so much to record and I couldn't make it readable. Then Don came up with a timeline, which enabled me to manage the information and to use other people's words, taken from our newsletters and journals. The 40th anniversary provided an incentive and a deadline to get it done.

I am grateful to Don for his ongoing suggestions and corrections, to Warren Allison for his support and encouragement, to John Aird for helping me to get it ready to print, and to my wife Meg for endless cups of coffee and putting up with my stuff all over our front room.

Everyone who was a member in 2019 will get one for free, with the caveat that only one copy will be sent where two people have the same address. There will be a few spare copies for sale @ £10 each. Hope you like it.

IM

Wales group report.

The Team continues to make good progress with eighteen trips this year and fortunately without any of the physical problems of previous years, although the gradual mental decline continues.

This time last year I said that the exploration of Maenofferen Slate Mine was substantially complete, with only a few loose ends to tidy up, however we are still finding new areas to explore, and there is still scope for more by careful study of the plans and marking these up with the areas that have been explored.

We have continued to assist Michael Brown with exploration in mid-Wales where he has almost single handedly dug through numerous falls and re-opened about six adits to gain access to a mine which had effectively been lost. Whilst a keen digger, Michael only has average SRT skills and we have assisted with a number of bolted ascents and descents.

The NAMHO Conference was a success despite a few quirks with Roy Fellowes organisation. We did preparatory work at Bwlch Glas Lead Mine and I took four groups underground over two days. It never fails to surprise me the variety of competence in vertical skills you find at these events, which ranges from people as competent as ourselves to those who have to think very hard which way to thread a Petzl stop. The most scary event was when a very substantially built Polish lady stripped off completely in the car park after having got soaked to the neck (she was only short) in the Deep Level!

When you spend a lot of time down a single mine you tend to look around more, and I became intrigued by what was at the end of the main stope. After NAMHO we had an exploration trip to get to the far end, which involved bolting about thirty meters horizontally above a flooded stope along what remains of the false floor, which just crumbled as you stood on it. This gave access to a small area which had clearly not been entered since the mine closed and contained a kibble, various hand tools and a number of wooden boxes, one of which had initials nicely engraved on it.

On a subsequent trip, led by another member of the team whilst I was on holiday, a problem with loose ground and a trapped rope resulted in one of the ropes having to be cut to prevent it being pulled from its anchors. It is unlikely that many people will visit this area again.

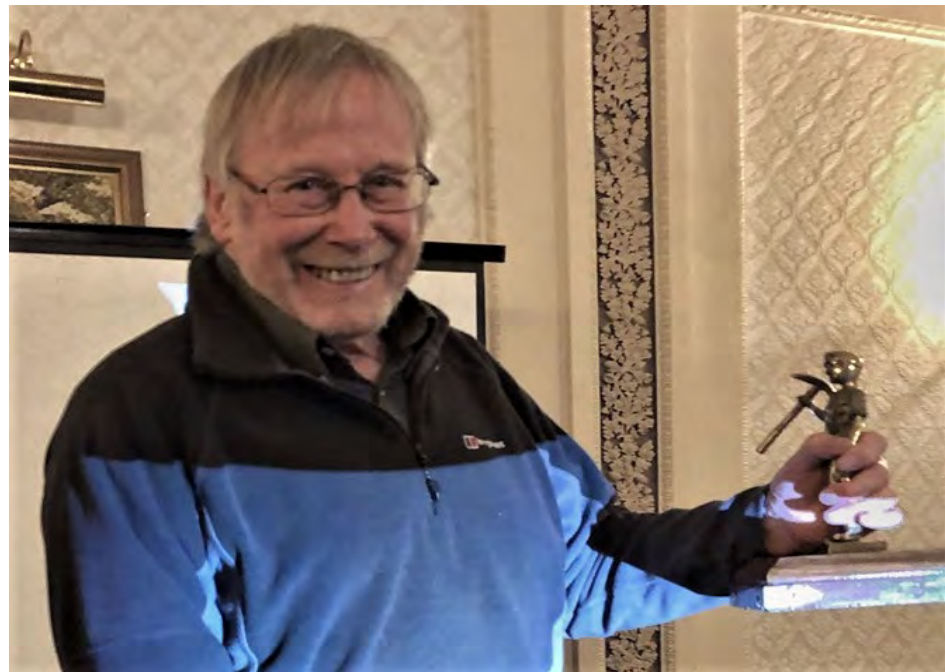
Our current exploration is focussed on entering new ground at Aberllefenni, although an attempt to re-open one of the adits, which could have been achieved easily ten years ago, failed due to recent surface work in connection with a Red Bull mountain bike event.

Jon Knowles.

Chairman's award 2019

This year's award went to Ian Matheson partially for his continued work and dedication in producing a high-quality newsletter which seems to continue to get better even after forty years. Peter Claughton from NAHMO, (the national umbrella organisation) at one of its recent meetings said that the newsletter is one of the finest in the country and is a journal in its own right.

However, the main reason for the award was to recognise Ian's production of the publication on the history of the society over the last forty years and is certainly a fitting way to celebrate this important milestone. CATMHS is one of the oldest mining societies in the country.



Although Ian had some minor assistance from several members, he basically produced this super publication on his own. From personnel experience I know how much time, effort was involved, and would not like to think how many hours he spent to see the publication to fruition, for which we should be very grateful.

Warren Allison.

Saturday morning walk before the AGM etc.

Present : Clare Harvey, Peter Sandbach, Rosie Lord, Kevin Timmins, Bob Mayow, Warren Allison, Liz Withey, Alastair Cameron, Robert & Angus Gurr, Celia Burbush, Craig Dring, Anna ?, Lorraine & Kevin Crisp, Chris & Joanne Cowdrey, Michael Oddie, Mark Hatton.

The plan for the morning of Saturday 14th December was to meet at Rydal Hall at 10am for a relatively gentle surface walk around Rydal Water and Grasmere, taking in the Elizabethan Mine workings and the 19th Century Slate Quarries, with a couple of other curiosities en-route. A good sized group set off in pretty decent weather, heading initially along The Coffin Route at a leisurely pace. This route was once the main thoroughfare between Ambleside and Grasmere and we shared many observations and stories along the way of the history of this area. Thirlmere Aqueduct, poets and coffin resting places being just three. Our first destination was the often overlooked Elizabethan mine workings above Dove Cottage. Here we encountered a bit of a problem of accommodating 19 people in such a small set of workings. Taking turns to go inside the workings was rather more time consuming than budgeted and already some anxiety was being expressed about lunchtime approaching. We then headed over to the other side of the valley, via White Moss, to visit the slate quarries. The obligatory group photo at the mouth of Rydal "Cave" was taken before exploring the much less frequented lower working. From here a short hop, skip and a jump returned us to Rydal Hall in good time for the afternoon sessions.

Mark Hatton.

Backup plan after the AGM & Dinner

Loughrigg Terrace.

After a heavy dusting of snow during the evening, the planned Lucy Tongue and Greenside surface visits had to be postponed. Frantic phone calls, messages and posts on social media managed to contact most of the attendees. Unfortunately Bob Mayow didn't have a signal and he was caught up in the melee on Kirkstone Pass, where he was stranded for hours. Mr Hatton attempted a rescue mission but couldn't get through due to the emergency service vehicles getting stuck!

Anyway, back to the day, and myself was nominated leader for an unplanned explore. Joining us on the walk were Ann Danson, Phil Meredith, Alastair Cameron, Mark Waite, Jon Knowles, Chris Cowdery, Warren Allison, Liz Withey and Angus and Robert Gurr. Also some partners were present and I may have forgotten someone else, but I remembered most!

The scenery was lovely with the snow on the ground and the sun low in the sky as we made our way towards Rydal Caves. The Welsh team fancied a climb and we explored the tunnel that hides from view leading to another chamber. Our adrenaline rush was minimal but it was a bit of fun none the less.

The meet leader then decided to look at the satellite image on his phone and exclaimed to the followers "there are lots of workings just up this gill", which had no path and was very steep. A few of the attendees wisely chose to ignore Mr Oddie's advice and followed the standard route along Rydal Water. The rest slogged up the gill with promises of riches and slate workings beyond imagination. Unfortunately this was not the case and the meet leader casually brushed off his slight exaggeration as we arrived at the top with nothing to see! Anyway the view over Grasmere and Rydal Water was worth the effort, so we took our photos and descended an even steeper gill back to the main path.

Diversion completed the group continued round the terrace to check the small slate workings just above the path before dropping down to White Moss Common. The meet leader discreetly checked out a close head that was spotted behind a holiday cottage which has been built in the old quarry workings, which unfortunately turned out to be nothing.



A selfie by the Meet Leader.

Continuing along the coffin path we were caught up by the Welsh Wives, who had been swigging back gin and other hard liquors in Grasmere after avoiding the “Oddie” diversion. We all walked together back to Rydal Hall and went to the lovely café there for cake and coffee. Everyone sat around chatting for a long time and it was nice to just have a social easy day out with other members and friends.

Michael Oddie.



*The Welsh Team,
Messrs Knowles, Cowdery and Waite.*



Angus Gurr on Loughrigg.

LDNPA Archaeology Conference - CATMHS 40th Anniversary promotion.

To help celebrate the anniversary, the Society was asked to do a talk at the Lake District National Park Authority's archaeological conference held at Reghed, Penrith in November.

With assistance from Ian Matheson, we put a presentation together titled *CATMHS 40 years of mine exploration and conservation*, which was not easy to do as forty years had to be condensed into twenty-five minutes.

The talk was split into The Beginning, Exploration, Conservation, Digging Team, Recording & Surveying, Furness Adventurers & Newlands Furnace, Publications, Archive & Coniston Copper Project, Working with other organisations, and The Future. Some of the photographs from the recent publication were used, but many, especially on the dig at Lucy Tongue level at Greenside Mine had not been seen before. On a personal level the memories of digging through the falls on the Lucy level are still fresh in the mind, even after nearly thirty years from when we first started. Warren Allison.



John Brown on the sledgehammer, Pete Blezard holding the scaffolding tube at fall four

Breakthrough to Smiths shaft, Greenside Mine December 1996. Warren Allison, Willie Snaith, Pete Sedgewick, John Brown, Pete Blezard, Colin Woolard, Andrew Woolard (just off the photo).



John Brown using a gas burner to install additional supports on the Lucy Level.

The talk was well received by nearly two hundred people attending the conference, and some people commented to me afterwards their great admiration for the society and what it has achieved over the years.



The part on the future of the society was an opportunity to showcase the photography that is currently being done by members and here are a couple of photographs used.

*Coniston Copper Mines
by Michael Bill Oddie.*

*Harding level
at Carrock
Mine by Liz
Withey.*



Article in Cumbria Life

This well known quality publication is published on a monthly basis and Hunter Davies the prolific author, journalist and broadcaster is listed amongst its contributors. So in December, with some trepidation I approached the editor as to whether they would be interested in an article on the Society's 40th anniversary. Much to my surprise, the editor said "yes, but could you write it, send it in for editing and oh, by the way it needs to be nine hundred words long and it will probably be in the February edition". Mistakenly, I thought this left loads of time.

Having written a draft I asked Ian Matheson if he would put his red pen through it, which he did, and we sent the article in. I received a phone call from the editor in mid December asking if I could get in touch urgently because the article did not need any changes, was very well written (thanks to Ian's red pen) and it was going into the January edition.



Descent into Coniston Copper Mines by Michael Bill Oddie.



I went to the magazine's office in Carlisle with a memory stick which had the high resolution photographs that Michael Bill Oddie and Liz Withey had kindly provided (none of the locations were named) and was told "due to company rules we cannot use your stick". However not all was lost as, fortunately, I had my laptop in the car, and using their internet managed to transfer everything over so that the deadline was met.

The editor commented that it was perhaps the most unusual article they had published and below are examples of the photographs that were used.

Warren Allison



Smiths shaft at Greenside Mine by Liz Withey.

Archaeological dig at Penny Rigg Mill as part of the Coniston Copper Project-Warren Allison.

Council of British Archaeology awards

Eleanor Kingston, who has been a huge supporter of CATMHS, was recently awarded “Community Archaeologist of the Year” at the Council for British Archaeology’s annual Marsh Awards, which were created by Brian Marsh OBE, chairman of the [Marsh Christian Trust](#), who wanted a vehicle to recognise 'unsung heroes and heroines', people who are passionate about what they do and devote their time to improving the world and our knowledge of it. The Award recognises and promotes the results of research and fieldwork carried out by community groups. This is a prestigious award and is well deserved.

The following is taken from various web sites regarding the award.

The **Community Archaeologist of the Year Award** is for an individual who has inspired others to share their love of archaeology, and recognises and promotes the results of research and fieldwork led by community groups which have made a substantial contribution to knowledge and wellbeing.

Eleanor is the Lake District National Park (LDNPA) archaeologist. Between 2016 and 2018, in addition to supporting her network of seventy volunteers, she actively engaged local communities in ‘hands on’ archaeology which benefitted the historic environment of the National Park. She has designed and managed a number of Heritage Lottery funded projects in this time, encouraging local communities and schools to get involved and engage with their local historical environment. Eleanor has been responsible for the LDNPA Volunteer Network since 2014 which has seen volunteers from local communities undertake an annual programme of surveys, conservation work and archival research. She also organises an annual public conference on archaeology in the Lake District, which displays and shares the findings of community projects. Interest in community archaeology in the LDNPA is on the rise and this is largely due to Eleanor’s efforts. Her enthusiasm, leadership, support and encouragement have seen a growing number of people involved in delivering successful community projects.

One of Eleanor’s most successful community projects is Coniston Copper. She involved local communities in the history, conservation and interpretation of Coniston’s nationally important copper mining heritage. Eleanor was the linchpin during the project’s development and implementation and, since 2014, she has been responsible for the Park’s Archaeology Volunteer Network, established to maintain and extend participation in archaeology within the Lake District.

Eleanor said: “I am honoured to have been named community archaeologist of the year. To have been nominated by people in the community meant so much and has made the award extra special.” Tim Duckmanton, the Authority’s Strategy and Programme Development Team Leader, said: “This award highlights Eleanor’s outstanding leadership and central role in coordinating and delivering opportunities for Lake District communities to celebrate their heritage. It’s a huge credit to Eleanor’s talent. Well done!”

The Duddon Valley Local History Group won the Community Archaeological Project of the Year Award at the same ceremony, for their Duddon Dig project. The Lake District National Park Authority supported this project and Eleanor was on the steering group.

Coniston Sawmill waterwheel.

Phillip Johnston has continued work on re-establishing the thirty two foot waterwheel which used to provide power for the circa 1830 sawmill at the Bonsor Upper dressing floors. Parts were cast for the new wheel, which was pre-assembled on site and the wheel-pit prepared. Work began on the installation of the water wheel at the end of October 2019.





Planned meets.

Forthcoming meets are listed on the CATMHS website and a comprehensive description of each meet as well as opportunity to book a place is posted on the Events section of the CATMHS Facebook page.

19th January. Gunpowder Mills on the River Kent.

A surface walk taking in New and Old Sedgwick and Basingill Gunpowder Works.

These were started in 1764 and worked intermittently till 1936. They were established in this area mainly as a result for the demand for blasting powder in the regional mines and quarries but also for their geographical location. Meet grade – easy.

2nd February. Hodbarrow Mines, Millom.

Stephe Cove has kindly offered to run a meet at Hodbarrow. There will be a presentation on history, maps and photos with additional material and artefacts. Picnic inside in the warm with a kettle, then out for a couple of hours walking around the site, three miles, mostly on the flat. Only a very small underground section about ten meters long. Meet grade – easy.

16th February. Nenthead, Middlecleugh.

Nick Green will be meet leader taking you into Middlecleugh, this will involve knee deep water at times and some crawling. Some optional deep water and a tight crawl for anyone that fancies it. A highlight of the trip being Camel Sump, so don't forget your cameras.

Please note that access to Nenthead can be treacherous in winter, so we shall check the weather close to the day.

23rd February. Greenside mine, Lucy Tongue level.

This meet was scheduled to follow the AGM on 15th December but was postponed because snow closed Kirkstone Pass. ML Warren Allison.

29th February. Derbyshire DCC Weekend.

A weekend exploring some Peak District Mines; we will be visiting Lathgill/Mandale and Youds. Accommodation is available for the Saturday night. Robert Stevenson of DCC is kindly showing us around.

Lathgill - This is a very interesting area – especially for mining archaeology, a beautiful valley full of old artifacts and interesting short soughs. The main set piece here is Mandale mine and that is *very* interesting. I would recommend a light wet suit. It is total luck of the draw whether you end up spending two hours up to your waist (or sometimes neck) in water clinging to the traverse lines trying not to float away, or, in the very same passages, on the traverse line dry as a bone trying not fall to your death – there seems to be no rhyme nor reason to the hydrology of this place. No SRT required but there are a couple of places where we could do a simple pitch if folk want.

Youds - If you are interested in the longest coffin level in Derbyshire (I think it is five hundred meters) this is a good trip. The typical entry is via SRT but that route has been closed and we can enter at ground level. Another one for a small wet suit just to keep the cold off.

There are lots of other options depending on weather and numbers on the weekend so let's see who wants to come and we can take it from there. I think this will be a great weekend, with the chance of a good social on the Saturday night.

21st March. SRT Practice Session.

Due to interest being shown in developing SRT skills by a number of members and prospective members, we have arranged a further opportunity to practice and perfect your SRT work with experienced CATMHS club members in the first class SRT facility at the Yorkshire Subterranean Society near Settle. Their purpose-built SRT facility is designed to challenge cavers of all abilities and to provide a clean, dry and comparatively warm place to practise skills. There are fifteen permanently rigged routes including all the usual obstacles, four sets of ground-level anchors and a platform with three permanently rigged ropes, as well as over a hundred anchors for users to rig their own routes.

Optional accommodation is also available on the Saturday night or Friday. We will be creating a further event for the opportunity for an underground SRT trip on the Sunday.

22nd March. Lost Johns Cave, Leck Fell, near Ingleton.

A popular place to practice SRT. This will be an extension of the training day so people can try out the skills they have learned.

19th April Jet mines at Guisborough.

Chris Twigg has kindly offered to run a meet around the Jet Mines he has been exploring and surveying. This is a vast mine with many interconnecting passages. There is a lot of crawling and stooping involved.

31st May. Coniston Copper mines.

Mark Hatton will conduct a surface walk around Coniston Copper mines, with a few optional short underground sections. We can explore the history and engineering marvels of this wonderful copper mine, nestled in some of the finest Lakeland scenery. Suitable for all.

Buttermere Mine survey

Some time ago, following research by a member who has been looking at the mines near Gatesgarth Farm on the western shore of Buttermere, it was suggested that perhaps a proper survey should be carried out to the specification that the Lake District National Park Authority volunteers were doing, and that by combining the knowledge of both organisations this could be a joint project.

The mines in question are of German origin and not a lot is known of this period other than from scant documentary evidence, but it was for a short period one of their most important operations. There are some superb underground German workings in this area virtually untouched since they left.

Dates for the proposed survey have been suggested by the LDNPA volunteers, and they are on the following Wednesdays, meeting at Gatesgarth Farm at 10am.

12 th February	26 th February
11 th March	25 th March
8 th April	22 nd April

If you are interested in helping in the survey, please contact Warren Allison 01228 523923 or warrenallison82@gmail.com

Meets and activities.

Arkengarthdale Mines, Sun 13th October 2019.

Meet leaders-Dave Carlisle and John Green.

Meet attendees-

John Green's group - Michael Oddie, Mark Hatton (parking attendant), Carl Barrow, Derek Mitchell, Michael Pringle, Tracey Binks.

Dave Carlisle's group - Charlie and Sue Fowler, Peter Jackson, John Brown

We all met on a misty damp corner near Whaw Bridge to await our instructions from the meet leaders. Hastily parked up, blindfolded and packed into vehicles we headed off to the mine. After a short dirt track ride we were allowed to remove our blindfolds and take in the area. Huge spoil heaps completely filled one side of the shallow valley we were in. A nicely up-kept ex-mine building provided a nice dry area to change into our gear.

Dave then described the workings, which were of considerable size - we are talking miles! Mainly on the same horizon with various side levels and pockets where the ore was won. Splitting into groups we headed for the entrance. I soon realised that maybe a wet suit would of been a good idea as the water started to lap at the danger zone. I was in John's group and he opened what can only be described as a bank safe type door no bigger than two feet square. We all slithered through into some more of the cold stuff. Mumbling and cursing was heard from the back of the group although I'm not at liberty to divulge who it was.

Ha ha.

The tunnel carried on past beautiful stone arching supporting the ceiling; at one point there was a fine example of perfectly horizontal stone work. It really was defying gravity. Fine examples of bottles, pipes and bogey wheels were noted as we pushed on.

Arriving at my favourite part of the trip there was a sublime cobbled decline which was used to transfer horses from one mine into another. Such was the scale of the mine that this decline afforded another way to bring out the ore to prevent miles of tunnel. We passed through small natural limestone caves before we suddenly appeared in a limestone maze of tunnels and caverns. Pushing deep into these, the group was having rather a fun time sliding up and down the mud stream embankments we were following. Cheers of weyhey and laughing following peoples misfortunes in the mud. (I have to confess to rather enjoying this part)

Marvellous old chalk drawings were seen deep in these limestone caverns, showing that the early visitors liked to leave their marks.





Heading back into the mine we bumped into Dave's group, who were doing a different circuit to us. A quick "how do you do" was exchanged before we pressed on to see more. More miner's graffiti, candles, locks in doors, and pipes were seen before we started to make our way out. The danger zone deep water seemed longer on the way back to day but we all emerged safely and happy.

After getting changed and being re-united with Dave's group everyone said their goodbyes and slipped off into the mist once more. My thanks go to Dave and John, one for showing us the mine, and two for being a very knowledgeable and funny leader. I personally had a great day as I'm sure everyone else did.

Michael Oddie

Florence Mine, 3rd November 2019.

Meet leader Warren Allison, with a lot of assistance from Bob Mayow.

John Pickin, David Hughes, Steve Sim, Lucy Sim, Ian Matheson, Liz Withey, David Lund, Tom Hallett, Michael Pringle, Rosemary Lord, Alistair Cameron, Kevin Timmins, Robert Gurr, Claire Harvey, Rosemary Vidler, Derek Mitchell, Mark Hatton, Jason Attwood, Paige Craike, Graham Fuller, Charlie Fowler, Sue Fowler, Dave Donkin, Stephe Cove.

The idea for the meet came from a visit earlier in the year which was reported in a previous newsletter, as Florence Mine is quite unique and is a scheduled monument with the remains of a fantastic headgear and buildings. The lease is still held by Gilbert Finlinson, who last operated the mine. I well remember a couple of trips underground many years ago when it was still working. For a number of years BNFL paid the high cost of pumping water from the mine to use for cooling at Sellafield. Alas, when they no longer required, it the mine it became uneconomic and flooded.

Whilst organising the meet Bob Mayow contacted me and offered to get in touch with Gilbert and see if he would open up the buildings, which he agreed to do, and Bob also made contact with some of the landowners in the area, who allowed us to visit mines on their land.

I had an idea that there would be a few people turning up, but not the number that actually did. We met at the locked gates to the mine, blocking the road, and after a short while Gilbert arrived to open up, although it was thought at first, he had got the wrong key. We made our way to the mine office/changing area, which is now an arts centre, where it took some time to gather everyone up. Gilbert took us into his “office” and organised people around the superb huge model showing the geology and the various mines and boreholes sunk to find the haematite ore in the area.



Gilbert had started work as a mine surveyor in 1952 and became a mining engineer before moving to Northern Ireland to work at a salt mine. He returned to the UK and worked at Honister Quarry from 1967 to 1970 before going to Canada to work at a nickel mine. Returning back home again he worked for ICI at Burtree Pasture Mine, Cowshill, in Weardale. In 1982 he became involved in Florence Mine, working the Lonely-Hearts section and eventually taking over the lease and working the mine until it closed in 2006 when Sellafield stopped using the water.

He gave a fascinating talk on the geology of West Cumbria, its mining history and how there is still at least two to three million tons of haematite ore left at Florence. There were so many questions being asked by members, which Gilbert gracefully answered, that I wondered if we were going to run out of time to see everything else that Bob had arranged. We finished this part of the meet with a cup of tea or coffee and cake in the arts centre's café next door, which made everything seem so civilised.

Gathering everyone together, Gilbert took us on a tour of the outside of buildings, explaining what each part did, before opening up the door to probably the most exciting part, the top of the shaft. This was a twin compartment shaft fitted out with cages which are still in situ. On the left-hand side you can look down the concrete lined shaft. Ian Matheson passed comment that he can remember going down in one of the cages on a CAT visit, (in 1986?) Gilbert responded that, due to the maintenance costs, especially relating to the wire rope, to keep the shaft operational the incline had to be sunk to reach the workings. Within the confines of the building were various pieces of equipment including a battery locomotive.



Gilbert explaining the complex of buildings





Battery loco at the shaft top

Gathered around the shaft top

We then moved on to look at some of the outbuildings which housed the switch gear and ventilation fan, before Gilbert took us to the top of the incline, which is now flooded to within about thirty feet from surface. Here again he held court explaining how the incline was operated during the latter stages of the mine working up to closure, with lots of questions being asked and answered.



The entrance to the incline

Returning back to the art centre, we thanked Gilbert for what had been a wonderful tour, made all the more interesting by someone who had been involved in mining all his life, worked Florence Mine until closure, and still has such an involvement in the site.

Travelling a short distance up the road, we parked on the roadside where Bob led us to into a field and down to the top of the shaft belonging to Ullcoats No 1 shaft, where the fan house was still in situ and you could hear the water pouring down the shaft. Bob explained that the workings at Florence Mine connected into this shaft with Ullcoats No 2 shaft in between. We walked a short distance to that shaft, in parts following the course of the old railway line which originally connected into the main west coast line. All that remains are the spoil heaps covered with trees and some old railway sleepers, but no sign of the shaft top amongst the trees.



Ullcoats No 1 shaft



Ullcoats No 2 shaft

Returning back to the cars we travelled further on to arrive at Ullcoats No 7 shaft, which is now a small industrial park with some of the original buildings still intact. Bob pointed out the shaft top which is now capped and once again had connected into Florence Mine. It was here that Pete Blezard did part of his mining engineering course in the 1960's. Bob explained that this effectively completed this part of the tour as we had seen the various mines which were connected together and had been worked until fairly recently.



Ullcoats No 7 with the capped shaft top in the middle of the car park

We were now going on to visit Haile Moor Mine, sunk in 1939, which was not connected to the Ullcoats and Florence Mines. The mine was up the road on a hillside and although Bob had got us permission to visit from the landowner, we parked on the roadside and walked up.

Arriving at the mine, what a site it was; the buildings which housed the offices, changing rooms and the winding gear, including the electrical switch room, are virtually complete. The shaft top in front had been capped, but there were huge spoil heaps spreading out, on which some members took the opportunity to go looking for specimens. Bob had brought a booklet with photographs in it which had been written when the mine was working, including how the ore was transported by an aerial flight to Beckermest Mine.



Haille Moor buildings.



End of the aerial flight at Beckermat Mine a mile away.

Suddenly a Landrover appeared, with the driver asking “Who were we? Were we from the council?”, to which Bob explained that we were a society interested in mining and had permission to visit from the landowner and that we had just been shown round Florence Mine by Gilbert. Bob and I had quite a long crack with the gentleman who said he could not get his head around why we were interested in old mines.

As we were running out of time, it was decided to call the meet to a close. It had been extremely interesting, in an area the society has not perhaps spent as much time recently as it might have done. (There were CAT meets to the working mine in 1986, when we descended the shaft in the cage, and again in 1992 after the incline had been driven. IM)



Florence mine meet in 1986. IM



Gilbert Finlinson, 1992

I am sure there is more to see in this part of the county and will be looking to see if more meets could be arranged there. I must thank Bob for all his help especially with getting permission to visit the various sites, and Gilbert for his time, patience and good humour.

Warren Allison.

Bwlch Glas 2019.

In 2019 the Welsh Team, most of who are also Welsh Mines Society Members, offered to lead trips into Bwlch Glas Lead Mine for the WMS organised NAMHO conference, to assist Roy Fellowes. Bwlch Glas is a small but very interesting site in a remote valley to the east of Tal-y-bont, and offers very interesting remains which are reasonably straightforward to access, although one of them is wet.

We carried out a preparatory trip on the 1st June to check all the bolts and ladders and then the author took four trips through the mine over the weekend of the 5th-7th July. When you spend a lot of time down a single mine, you tend to look around more and I became intrigued by what was at the end of the main stope. The main tourist route enters the Main (middle) level before a descent is made to the deep level horizon using timber ladders in fairly good condition (a safety line is always a good idea), and then an SRT descent of approximately 25m which lands on a large pile of fallen material comprising rocks, timbering and ladders. It must be this pile of material which blocks the direct connection between the deep level adit and the main stope. Descending this pile of material and heading east gives access to the headgear of the underground shaft and many small artefacts including a wheel barrow.



I was unable to find details of anyone who had been east along the stope, probably with good reason, since the mess of fallen material descends into the flooded stope with no obvious means of progressing. However the Welsh Team are not put off by minor obstacles and Mark

Waite, Chris Cowdery and the author returned on the 28th July to give it a go. The author descended the stope but installed an additional deviation so that the descent turned to the west and then dropped through some fallen timbers to land on a very loose slope dropping into water. The slope just ran as you stood on it, so a bolt was quickly installed in the hanging wall. At this point the remnants of a false floor were visible, although almost all the rock fill and all the timber had collapsed, but it did provide some support when bolting along the stope. After a warm couple of hours and thirty meters of rope and nine anchors later, it was possible to descend to a solid floor beyond the flooded stope.

A short walk along a solid floor gave access to the top of another flooded stope in which ladders could be seen descending and a headwall. On the floor lay numerous artefacts shown in the photographs which follow. There was no evidence of modern explorers having entered this area. On returning along the stope more of the remains of the floor gave way.

On a subsequent trip to show the new ground to John Ashby and John Aird, Mark Waite encountered a “small difficulty” due to the rope being trapped in falling material, which required the rope having to be cut to stop it being dragged from the bolts!



Mark Waite about to start return along stope.



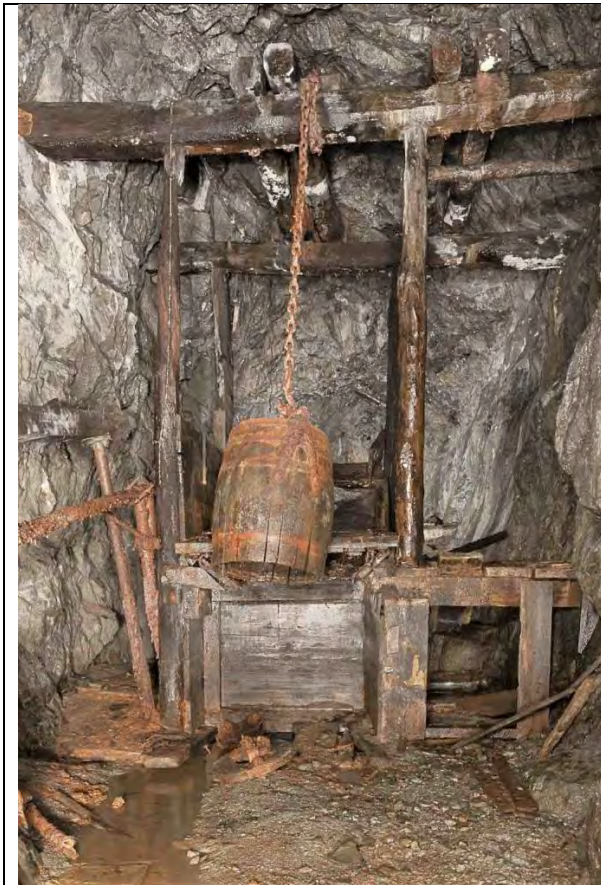
Chris Cowdery ascending through fallen timbers.

	
<p>Mark Waite and other small artefacts.</p>	<p>Kibble.</p>
	
<p>There were numerous small wooden boxes a number of which had sliding lids.</p>	<p>One box had the initials W.M. engraved on the lid.</p>
	
<p>Looking down into the flooded stope.</p>	

For the sake of completeness it is worth giving details of a unique survivor in the deep level adit. It is accessed via the obvious level at the side of the road. This is initially knee deep in water, but after carefully passing a filled in shaft which was used to lift material from the adit to the mill above, it is at least chest deep, but gradually reduces until eventually you get out of the water by progressing further in-by. Here lies a head-frame and bailing barrel, surely a unique survivor, the basic principle of operation being suggested as follows:-

The angle trap door is opened and the barrel is lowered into the water. As the kibble lands the valve on the bottom opens and the kibble fills. The barrel is then raised (the power source is not known) and the trap door is shut. The barrel is lowered onto the trap door which turns it

over and the water is allowed to run out and is channelled out along the adit. The barrel is raised and the process is repeated.



Water bailing headgear and barrel.



Detail of valve which has become detached from barrel.



View showing how water was deflected into adit.



Frame and moveable trap door.

For further reading please see:-

Bwlch Glas Lead Mine, Cardiganshire by R.P.Shaw. Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society Vol.8 No.3 Summer 1982.

Bwlchglas Mine, Dyfed, Wales by S.J.S.Hughes.

<http://orapweb.rcahms.gov.uk/coflein/S/SJSH04.pdf>

Jon Knowles.

A newspaper account of an inquest, from 1882.

Iron mining was generally considered to be safer than coal mining, but while it is true that catastrophes due to fire and flood were on a much smaller scale, and miner's phthisis was rare in the limestone district, there was a steady stream of fatalities, and the commonest cause was a fall of rock from the working face. This inquest held following the accident at Whicham is quoted in full because it gives some details of the daily routine. As usual, nobody was blamed.

Peter Sandbach.

Ulverston Mirror and Furness Reflector, 2 Dec 1882.

The Accident at Whicham Mines, Millom.

An inquest was opened by Dr Stoney, coroner, on the three men James Briggs, formerly of Ulverston, Philip Lowrey and Thomas Stevens, killed as previously recorded, and was resumed on Wednesday, when Mr James Willis, mine inspector, was present. Mr Howson of Whitehaven and Mr Bradshaw of Barrow watched the proceedings, the former on behalf of the Whicham Mining Company and the latter on behalf of Lowrey's relatives.

William Jackson of The Moor, Millom (Witness) said:

Witness worked at No.3 working, Whicham mines. He left work about 10pm, and Lowrey and Briggs went to work then. A stone had come out of the side of the drift about 6pm, and knocked two forks out from under the headtrees, which fell down and the rise wood fell down. There was a quantity of metal down then, and it could not be got out because the engine had broken down. He reported the condition to Stevens, the night watchman: also to the other men whose duty it was to put wood in as soon as the metal was got away. There was always plenty of timber for the men – as much as they could carry down. It was their duty to put it in. Witness would have wrought in the mine as being safe. He could not see any difference in it, only that the wood had come out.

In reply to the inspector, Witness said that no official person had been at the workings during the afternoon. Witness did not put any timber in during his eight hours shift. Timber had been put in a few days before. They could get timber and put it in according to their own judgement, and on their own responsibility. Mr Eagins, the manager, generally went down on the morning shift; when witness was on that shift, the manager always went down. They were leaving the rise behind and the wood was behind them. They had got a lot of metal, and the succeeding men would start getting it out. They would have twelve, thirteen, or fourteen bogies to fill. Stevens went in at 10: he was an officer of the mines, and was present when witness told the other two deceased men about the state of affairs in the mine. The timber came out of the sixth level: it was between the sixth and fifth. In his opinion, even after the stones and timber had fallen, the place was still in a safe condition for to do the work they were busy with. That falling out of the stone and wood he did not think had anything to do with the accident. Stevens was a skilled miner, and would help to put the timber up.

In reply to Mr Howson, witness said he never had any difficulty with the manager or watchman about timbering. The manager once told Lowry he was not using strong enough wood. He was using Norway spars instead of larch of which there was plenty. The wood was selected by the men, and taken down by the cage. Witness had worked there two years and six or seven months. He never refused to do so if asked. Witness had left the "rise" when the accident occurred. He did not tell the men the working was not safe, or that where the stones had fallen there were some more projecting out. There were only two men in the night shift.

Thomas Leece stated:

He with two other men had put in two courses of wood on Wednesday morning. They had no difficulty in getting timber. When he left the mine at two o'clock on Thursday he considered it was quite safe. Jackson did not restore the timber that came out; he could not for the metal that was lying on the bottom. The metal lay between two rocks. It was absolutely necessary that the metal should be removed. They had to get the metal out before they could wood the place. Witness had been a miner for twenty four years.

Timothy Myers said:

He worked at No.6 on the night shift. Briggs and Lowrey went down before him. He did not see anything of Stevens while at work. At a quarter to one he went to see Lowrey and Briggs to tell them what time it was, and then discovered that the accident had happened. It took several hours to get the bodies out.

Alexander Eagins, the manager said:

He was present when the bodies were found. He would think forty three tons of ore, and fifteen tons of stone were removed before the bodies were got out. He visited that working on Wednesday morning. He was down the pit on Thursday morning when the engine was broken. He passed that working, considering it safe, and went through to the other. Lowrey never wooded as he ought, but always left it for the next shift to do, and he had fined him for not doing his timbering. On the previous Thursday he had fined all the men in No.3 working 5s each for not timbering, to be stopped off their pay. He had fined Lowrey and Jackson several times for not timbering. Briggs had only wrought one day there and had gone down on the second. Stevens, the night manager was a practical miner. Miners, as a rule, would not take a heavy wood if they could get away with light wood. He could not tell what was the cause of the accident, unless it was the wet weather and that the ore had been softened where it joined the limestone, and then slipped. He told the men to be careful, owing to the wet weather. Richard Shaw was appointed to attend to wooding the mines where requisite, and had from two to six men to assist him as needed. Some men would use the pick to get the ore, while others preferred blasting; dynamite was used. Jackson should not have brought so much ore down, and he thought Jackson's firing was the primary cause of the mischief.

The inspector laid considerable stress on the fact of no officer visiting the workings for eight hours. The manager pointed out that the miner at work had often to act as he thought best, on his own responsibility. He considered it to be perfectly safe for a practical miner to be eight hours without oversight, and if the men in wooding were interfered with then the blame, if any, would fall back on the officers.

In reply to Mr Bradshaw, he said Lowry was fined for removing ore and spiles he should not have done. All the six men of the working were simultaneously fined. They had good ventilation at that mine; two shafts were always connected and the most of the time three. Supposing he had seen the place just before the men went he would not have permitted them to have gone into it. Shaw, who would come straight from the mine, reported to him between two and three pm on the day of the accident that he found the workings safe. He thought Lowrey would (have) beckon(ed) Stephens to the place where the accident happened to ask him a question, as he was never seen in the other part of the mine that night, and that when he went there the fall took place.

The coroner summed up and the jury, after a consultation, returned a verdict that the deaths were accidental and no blame attached to anyone.

Christmas Quiz Answers.

This quiz, sent in by Max Dobie in 1982 was re-printed in the last newsletter.

There are FIVE mines in the side of the valley. Never mind which valley. Each works a different MINERAL. Each is worked by a different NATIONALITY. Each miner is an expert with a particular TOOL, has his own preference for DRINK and his own brand of 'BACCY'.

All you have to do is find the man who has the only WHEELBARROW.

To achieve this you are provided with lots of valuable information:

The English miner works the copper mine.

The Spaniard is an expert with a shovel.

Coffee is drunk in the lead mine.

The Ukrainian miner prefers Vodka, of course!

The lead mine is next to the iron mine.

The Medium-cut smoker is good with a joke.

Spun-cut is smoked in the barytes mine.

The miner in the middle mine prefers milk.

In the last mine on the left a Norwegian miner is hard at work.

St Bruno is smoked by the miner in the mine next to the mine worked by the man with an air drill.

Spun-cut is smoked by the miner in the mine next to the miner with a sledge-hammer.

The Golden Flake smoker always drinks orange juice.

The Japanese miner enjoys a pipe of Rough-cut.

The Norwegian miner works in the mine next to the zinc mine.

I received a postcard from Sallie Bassham which stated that 'the Japanese lead miner has the wheelbarrow'.

Tracy Binks emailed 'I'm going for the Japanese miner, who also is mining lead, drinking coffee and smoking rough-cut baccy'.

John Greasley sent me his solution below:

Mine: ~~Barytes~~Zinc ~~Copper~~Lead Iron

Nationality:	Norwegian	Ukrainian	English	Japanese	Spanish
Tobacco:	Spun cut	St Bruno	Medium cut	Rough cut	Golden Flake
Drink:		Vodka	Milk	Coffee	Orange juice
Tool:	Air drill	Sledge hammer	Good w joke	Wheelbarrow	Shovel

Answer: The Japanese miner in the Lead Mine has the Wheelbarrow.

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