

1989

Meet Secretary's Report

The most important event of 1989 was the NAMHO conference, which was hosted by the Lakeland Mines and Quarries Trust and ourselves. Part of our contribution was to organise a programme of field meets which involved both surface and underground visits. At the instigation of the NAMHO Committee, who thought our provisional programme of surface walks and walk in visits rather tame, a through trip from Levers Water Mine to Brow Stope and the Top Level Extension was included. This entailed a considerable amount of work beforehand, requiring several visits in order to re-open Levers Water Mine and to dig open and make safe the Brow Stope Connection. The trip took place on the Saturday of the Conference, but unfortunately it was poorly attended, the nine NAMHO delegates being outnumbered by thirteen CATMHS helpers. I am not sure whether the poor attendance was because the meet clashed with some of the lectures, or because of its adventurous nature, but whatever the case the other field meets were better attended. On the Friday preceding the Conference thirteen delegates were guided around the mines and quarries at Tilberthwaite, whilst on the Sunday, after the lecture programme at Charlotte Mason College had been concluded, 33 delegates visited Force Crag Mine. The following day some 25 visitors toured the Newlands valley. Thanks are due to all the twenty or so CATMHS members who helped during the Conference.

In addition to the NAMHO programme and the regular monthly social evenings at the Haverthwaite Railway there were twenty regular weekend meets during 1989 and eight evening meets. As I said in my report last year this was a slight reduction over 1988. I believe that this is still rather too many and for 1990 there will be a programme of about sixteen meets. This is to give those members who regularly lead or attend CAT meets greater opportunity to arrange their own visits and for more exploration and development, an area which has been rather neglected of late.

Attendance at meets has been varied, a fairly typical turnout being ten or so members. The best attended meet was at Force Crag in May, which attracted 21 people, in April fifteen took part in a fell walk to visit the Stone Age Axe factory sites on the Langdale Pikes. Sixteen individuals abseiled down the Paddy End Through Trip in November and thirteen adults, four young children and two dogs put in a hard days work at the Low Water Power House in October. The visit to Boulby Potash Mine in Cleveland in September did not take place, but a visit has been arranged for next April with a limit of ten participants. The Easter meet to North Wales was very disappointing, particularly in view of all the work put in by the Meet Leader. He was joined by just one other member, and so for 1990 there will be an Easter meet at Nenthead instead of the traditional Welsh Meet.

There have been suggestions of a visit to the Isle of Man and elsewhere, but whilst I firmly believe that such visits should be part of our Society, I feel that they are best organised by individuals and publicised through the Newsletter rather than through the Meets List. Last December two members made a six day visit to the copper mines at Rio

Tinto and Tharsis, in South West Spain and to a haematite mine which used to be owned and worked by the Millom and Askam Mining Co. A follow up is planned and perhaps in 1991 a full scale CATMHS summer expedition to the Spanish mining fields will be arranged.

Nothing is forever and mining remains continue to disappear from the landscape, either as a result of natural decay, or of deliberate intent. The mill at Carrock Mine has been removed and most of the entrances have been blocked, Greenside has been further landscaped and Phillip Johnson continues to disguise the Copper Works at Coniston by building structures upon it. Earlier this year the disused Slate Quarry Power House below Low Water was in imminent danger of collapse, but this has been averted. Three visits have been made and the bulging walls repaired, the exposed roof gables grouted, and the whole building cleaned out and tidied up. A notice is to be placed in the building describing its use, explaining that conservation work has been carried out and appealing to the public not to cause damage. A similar project at the Moss Head Brake House will be carried out next year and there will be a good deal of work to do at Mandells Slate Office at Coniston Station. We have been asked by Dr Marshall to help to preserve the iron furnace at Newlands, which is also in danger of collapse and work has already started on this project.

It is good to have links with other societies which have related interests. In this connection I think that it is a pity that we have not developed a relationship with the Cumbria Industrial History Society, with whom we were sometimes double booked at the Farmers Arms at Lowick. We have however been approached by the Cumberland Geological Society to conduct some of their members around the Honister Slate Quarries, and this has been arranged for next September. We have also been asked by the Cleveland Industrial History Society to arrange a meet for them in the Lake District and this will probably take place next June.

The Meets List for the first half of 1990 has been prepared, but publication has been delayed so that the names of the new committee can be added. It is surprisingly difficult to produce a balanced meets list to suit all tastes, which covers the full spectrum of mining history in our area and which is suitable for the weather conditions which are likely to prevail at different times of the year, so may I conclude with an appeal for your comments, criticisms and constructive suggestions for future meets, so that the meets programme may best reflect the wishes of the membership.

Ian Matheson.