C A T

The Newsletter of the Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society



Roger Ramsden abseiling down a pitch in The Wad Mine.
Photo by Mark Hatton

No. 153 November 2023

Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society
Newsletter No 153, November 2023

Membership

New members	Page 1
Editorial	Page 1
Forthcoming CATMHS meets	Page 2
CATMHS AGM	Page 2

News

Ordnance survey maps licence	Page 3
Mines Forum, 3rd October	Page 3
Florence mine	Page 6
Exploration of Kernal Stope, Part 4	Page 7
Greenside – a little explore	Page 10

Meets

Nenthead weekend 2nd- 3rd September	Page 12
Tullie House mineral collection	Page 15
Mineral display at Ambleside	Page 18
Welsh weekend 23rd-24th September	Page 20
Tilberthwaite stope repair	Page 25

Articles

William Smith, the father of English geology	Page 29
The Jewell family of miners	Page 33
Straw houses smoke holes & Bruce Willis	Page 36
Old photos of Askham & Roanhead mines	Page 38

Society Officers and Committee Members Back cover

New members

Simon Athersmith, from Ulverston.

Nick Roden, from Cockermouth. Nick is a professional photographer & videographer.

Amy McGowan, from Shap in Cumbria.

Simon Pickford, from Harborne, Birmingham. Simon says 'My Jewell family mined at Greenside mine (Jewell shaft). My Pearce family mined at Caldbeck and also managed at Blackcraig Mine near Newton Stewart.'

James Morrison, from Tiverton, Devon. James says 'I'm currently employed as a Field Archaeologist, and have qualifications in History (BA, MA). My family were miners at Greenside Mine (including my Grandad, Cyril Connor, and Great-Grandad, James Connor, who were both managers).'

John Adams, from Cleator Moor.

Joanna Culross, from Aberhonddu, Powys. Joanna is a member of the Welsh Mines Society.

Richard Coates, from Prudhoe, Northumberland. Member of Nenthead Mines Conservation Society.

Steve Walker, from Guisbrough, N Yorks. Member of Cleveland Mining Heritage Society.

Patrick Sanderson, from Ambleside, Cumbria. Member of North York Moors Caving Club.

Adam Bradley, from Brough, Cumbria.

Pete Burton, from Askham in Furness, Cumbria. Pete was a member in the early days with the late Peter Fleming and Eric Holland.

Thomas Goldsby-West, from Barnsley.

Sean Blaney, from Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorks.

Lee Thompson, from Sheffield. Lee has an interest in muon tomography, a geophysical technique.

David Mcdougle, from Dalton-in-Furness.

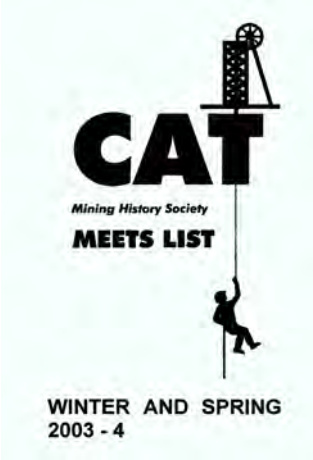
Membership Renewals are now due

The CATMHS membership year ends on 31st October and renewals are now due. You will find a renewal form with this issue. There is no change in CATMHS or BCA Membership charges, but the issuing of plastic membership cards will cease and members will be provided with "e"memberships that can be held on mobile devices and printed out. Please renew promptly as this will help with administration and enable us to provide BCA membership and insurance to be in place on 1st January. Those who joined after August already have 2024 membership.

Editorial

Two articles in this issue, William Smith, father of English Geology and The Jewell family of miners, show how information can come to light due to personal contact by individual members and the public profile of our Society via our website, Facebook pages or relations with other organisations or individuals. The more we share and publish information the more it seems we receive back. It pays to be free and open about our projects and researches and to provide links whereby people can find and access the information. The CATMHS website is open to all and is searchable, if you know what to ask. There is a CATMHS Facebook page for members only, but another for everyone, the CATMHS Mines & Quarries Public Group. We have published seven Journals so far, which carry reports on completed projects and other articles, and a special 40th Anniversary publication which reports on our first forty years. The newsletter is published four times a year and carries reports of our activities, accounts of ongoing projects and articles reflecting or promoting the interests of our members. All one hundred and fifty three issues are available for anyone to read on the CATMHS website and are sent to the Cumbria Public Libraries and to our archive at the Armitt Library in Ambleside, as well as to every member. It provides a record both in print

and online, going back to the foundation of CAT in 1979, and as such comprises an archive in its own right. I appeal to everyone to contribute and to continue this record.



Forthcoming meets

We used to publish a meets list every six months so people knew what to plan for, but this was discontinued in 2019, so in the newsletter I have tried to publish a list of meets for three months ahead but this is proving difficult. Meets are now organised, sometimes at short notice, via the CATMHS Facebook page, which also lists past events. They *should* be published on the CATMHS website, but it hasn't been kept up to date. At the time of writing, 20th October, the only meet listed on either site is a Zoom talk by Roy Starkey on 10th November, but this has not been updated on the CATMHS website. Members who don't use Facebook are effectively excluded from CATMHS meets.

The following meets have now been arranged:

10th November. Zoom talk - Natures Treasures- the legacy of 300 years of Mining

Roy Starky is one of the country's leading amateur mineralogists and gave this lecture at this year's NAMHO conference. The mines and quarries in Cumbria have produced world class specimens and this talk will showcase a broad range of examples and seek to explain why mineral collecting has been a passion for many and a lucrative supplement to the earnings of miners over the centuries. On the Facebook page and website but contact Meets Secretary Julian Cruickshank or Mark Hatton for details on how to log on if needed.

10th December. Greenside Mine joint meet with Nenthead Mines History Society-

This is a reciprocal meet following the Nenthead weekend in September. It will be a walk along the Lucy Tongue Level using old photographs to show it when working. Led by Warren Allison whose family worked at the mine. Meet at the Tourist Information Centre at Glenridding at 10.00am. Do not drive up to the mine until everyone is accounted for.

12th January. Zoom talk - Carrock Mine from the late 1500's to final closure in the 1980's

Warren Allison will present a talk covering geology and history of this internationally renowned mine in the Caldbeck Fells. It will start with the mining of Bismuth by German miners in the 1500's, to mining of lead, followed by a German company mining Tungsten prior to the First World War, to its final period of working in the 1980's. Then CATMHS's re-opening of the main access level in 2011.

4th February. Carrock Mine photo meet.

This is a very photogenic mine with hoppers and mineral formations. Liz Withey will lead a photographic meet for those who would like to have the time to photograph. For those who would just like to see the rest of the mine, Warren Allison will lead this part.
Meet at 10.00 at the layby just south of Mosedale at Mosedale Bridge CA11 0XQ NY357319

CATMHS AGM & Dinner

Our AGM and Dinner was first held at Rydal Hall on the occasion of our 21st anniversary in 2000, and has been held there every year since then. Rydal Hall charges have risen considerably and although the usual weekend was booked well in advance they have now told us that they cannot give us exclusive use for our AGM and Dinner. Consequently the Committee has

decided to hold the AGM at the Ambleside Parish Rooms (Wesley) on 25th November at 3.00pm, with a presentation and some refreshments afterwards. Ambleside town may then give a venue for an evening get together afterwards. A surface meet at Tilberthwaite slate quarries will be arranged for the weekend. Check the CATMHS Facebook page or website for up to date details or contact the Treasurer at johnraird@gmail.com

Volunteer/s needed

Since 1984 the Society has had a long and successful history of publication, from the first edition of the "Mine Explorer" right up to the current year, when "Volume 7" appeared. We now really require a volunteer to take on the tough role of travelling salesperson, whose task will be to tour shops in the Lake District which sell publications and persuade them of the merits of our books.

Our experience is that main bookshops will only deal through their head office, who will only deal with wholesalers, so we need to approach people like "Just for Ewe" in Coniston for whom books form only a small but significant part of their sales. Our publications are good enough that slow but steady sales result from them being on display. The task need not be too time consuming - visiting each establishment about once a month in the summer and bi-monthly in the winter would seem about right, and keeping tabs on new shops opening.

Should we be overwhelmed with applications then the area can be split up to suit!
Please contact the Treasurer.

Ordnance Survey licence

CATMHS have renewed their OS 'Paper Map Copying Licence' for another year. This allows us to make both paper and electronic copies of OS maps to support the needs of our society. We originally arranged this as part of the NAMHO Conference to allow us to use OS maps on the meet leaflets. However it was felt that it would continue to be useful. To use it, all we have to do is include the text "Crown copyright 2023 OS AC0000859207" on any maps.

The easiest place to obtain digital OS maps is Bing Maps which has an 'Ordnance Survey' layer. For those lacking anything more interesting to do on a winters evening, the full licence can be found here:
https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/documents/licensing/PMCL-Terms-and-conditions.pdf

Lake District Mining Forum Meeting, 11th July
At LDNPA offices, Murley Moss, Kendal and on Teams

Attendees at Murley Moss: Eleanor Kingston (LDNPA), Chris Newton (Coal Authority), Jamie Lund (National Trust), Warren Allison, Mark Simpson & Mike Mitchell (CATMHS), Alastair Cameron.
Attendees on Teams: Liz Withey & Danielle Nutter (Environment Agency), Andrew Davison (English Heritage), Ian Matheson (CATMHS).

Updates:

Greenburn,
Jamie Lund reported that Greenburn Common had been put forward for the Agri scheme and heritage statements had been published. Most of the scheme involves High Tilberthwaite farm, and only a small part of the mine is included in the scheme.

Work has been carried out to evaluate pollution, which has met the Coal Board assessment. Mike Mitchell expressed concern about an unfenced deep flooded shaft. Especially as if frozen it might be mistaken for just a puddle.

Tilberthwaite,
High Fell quarry. Mark Simpson & Mike Mitchell have undertaken to carry out an aerial survey of the now disused quarry and buildings, but have not so far managed to obtain permission from the owner, who is not known to them. Alastair Cameron is to follow this up.

Greenside,
Repairs have been completed to a footbridge and a wooden leat by the ranger team. A survey of stables & gunpowder store completed. Monitoring continues. Mike Mitchell reported that he and Mark Simpson have made an aerial record of all the buildings. A trip is to be held on 7th Nov for the Northern Ranger team to give them information about the site. They will be taken underground by Warren Allison.

Eagle Crag,
A potential project to survey Eagle Crag mine, on the surface by LDNPA volunteers and underground by CATMHS, has stalled due to lack of information. Documentary evidence has been sought from the owners, Dalemain Estates, but they have not responded. Eleanor Kingston & Warren Allison will make a personal visit.

Force Crag,
National Trust Managers recently met with senior representatives from the Environment Agency and the Coal Authority seeking ways to bring about more effective treatment. There has been a positive change in approach to work carried out in abandoned mines and a new accord with mutual benefits for interested parties is possible. Drainage work on Force Crag Level 3, which has been in abeyance, may be allowed. The National Trust, who own the site are considering further development of the mill feature, left as last miners used it. Lighting is needed to improve the experience for visitors.

Security and periodic vandalism was discussed, which led to a long discussion initiated by Alastair Cameron regarding the security and preservation of all Lake District mining sites. Eleanor Kingston pointed out that most are listed on the Historical Environment Record. Sites of special interest already being addressed, such as Coniston, Tilberthwaite, Greenburn, Greenside, Roughton Gill, Force Crag, etc. Resources are limited and it isn't possible to preserve everything.

A debate ensued on the future of private archives such as the aerial drone surveys carried out by Messrs Mitchell and Simpson. Eleanor expressed a willingness to work towards finding a way to do this. Archiving will be discussed in greater detail at a future meeting

Yewthwaite,
Jamie Lund reported that work on water quality might identify sites which needed attention and that this could lead to funding to help the archaeology. Liz Withey has it in hand and intends to go back and take more samples.

Honister Slate Quarry
Alistair Cameron was visiting once a month to ensure the workings were not breaching the planning consent.

Coniston Old Man
Alistair Cameron had submitted information on his Coniston Old Man project. With Robert Gurr they will expand the project to improve understanding of pre 18th C slate workings on the mountain as suggested by old parish records. A historic review and some surveys have been completed, with more planned. Display panels have been designed for future installation at Saddlestone Bank.

Mark Simpson commented on the walk over survey at Bannishead Quarry and intends to go back to photograph and measure the buildings. He reported that they have permission to record Lords quarry & associated buildings at Elterwater quarry before alterations occur. He asked if anyone knows what is to happen at Skelwith Bridge works, which have been closed for some time. He has images of the exterior and there is a collection of photos of the site when it was working.

NAMHO
The recent conference hosted by CATMHS was very successful but incurred considerable costs to CATMHS due to difficulties in providing camping. The next conference will be in Cornwall June 2024.

Historic England update
Anthony Davidson had nothing to report for the Lake District. He is currently working with the Environment Agency and the Coal Authority on Alston Moor.

Coal Authority update
Chris Newton reported that the proposed treatment plant at Threlkeld Mine was progressing and work had been carried out to improve the media at Force Crag Mine.

Environment Agency update
A baseline is to be established requiring a map of all water courses. Liz Withey has been visiting sites, upsteam as well as downstream and a GIS map of watercourses will become available to the public in due course. 'Interesting' results have been obtained from the Northern fells at Caldbeck and Newlands. Monitoring is to be carried out to find the limits of affected areas. A report is due next spring.

Other business.
Planning applications for developments at Brandlehowe mine and Elterwater quarry have been refused.

Dr Kevin Privett, is working on the archive at the University of Oxford of William Smith, the father of English Geology. Dr Privett sent CATMHS a copy of a survey of the mines at Caldbeck carried out William Smith in the early 1800's for Thomas Braddyll. It has been transcribed by Colin Woollard and Ian Matheson.

CATMHS has gained access to the mineral collection at Tullie House museum in Carlisle, which has been re-catalogued with a view to putting it back on display. This has begun by collating information on the collectors, and should include further information regarding the mines from where the specimens were collected as well as photography of the specimens.

The next Mines Forum will be held on 27th February 2024.

Florence Mine- Mining the Future

Florence Arts Centre is a participatory arts hub based in the original mine buildings, which curates a varied programme of exhibitions and activities in its gallery, auditorium, and workshops. Their latest exhibition is titled “Mining the Future: Architectural Designs for the re-use of Florence Mine”.

The exhibition showcased the work done by architect students from Manchester School of Architecture (Fifth best in the world). The students were given a blank sheet of paper and asked to come up with their designs to reuse the mine, no matter how outlandish they might seem to be.

I was invited to a presentation before opening to the public and travelled through on a Tuesday evening in some appalling weather. On arriving it was a pleasure to meet with Sue Mackay (Director of Florence Arts Centre) who I hadn’t seen for a few years, and she gave me a bit of background to the project.

Dr Richard Morton and Sam Higgins from the University gave a presentation on how they and the students became involved and was something which was a total departure from what the University and students would normally do. It had been so successful that they are doing a similar project at another historical (non-mining) site a few miles away during the coming year.



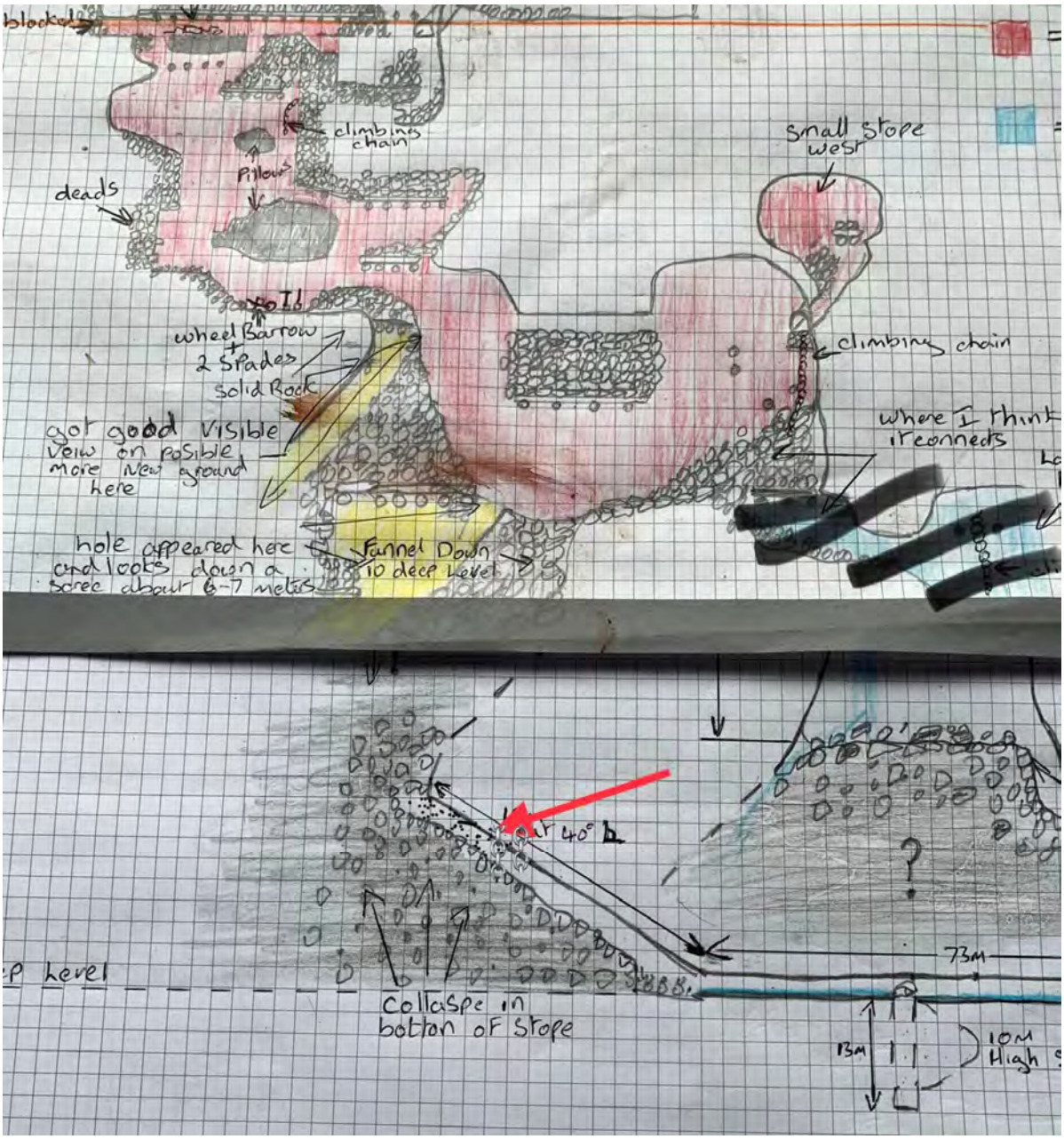


The ideas from the students were very interesting and were totally different to anything I had seen before, but on talking to Sam afterwards this was to get people discussing the future of the mine in the hope that it could help make the case for finding funding to conserve it and enable the site to become vibrant once again and is an example of how art initiated the idea. The project involved Gilbert Finlinson, who holds the lease and had worked the mine along with his son and granddaughter.

Warren Allison

Exploration of Kernal Stopes by Carl Barrow, part 4.

22nd July. Well you might of thought the other week when I said I'm using these old snow chains to help me with a dig I'm doing, that that must be a daft idea. Well it's only a daft if it doesn't work. Well it worked, it did what I wanted it to do, so it was a good idea. This project has been going on for a bit of time now but you can't rush a job, especially one that's wants to kill you or seriously wants to hurt you, and has nearly done both so far, but hopefully my time and effort will be worth it. After a couple more trips I'm hoping to make connection between two parts of the mine, time will tell.



The red arrow shows where I am digging down in Deep Level at the top of the scree slope. The bottom part is Deep Level and the top part is Kernal Crag which all connects. I'm close, but I don't know how close, I don't know how far it is between the two. If this does not work and I can still see a load of rock and it's just not happening I'm going to dig higher up and try to make it go down another way.

Down at Deep Level on my dig, I'm using old snow chains to control the avalanche. It works, I can dig underneath and the snow chain catches it. I've had a couple of digs now and it's worked every time. Loads of rocks came down and it caught them as I wanted it to. Now I can see where it rises up into a stope up into Kernal Crag. It's opened up now. The deads aren't flowing and there's a void but I daren't climb up there. One way or another I've done some damage in Kernal Crag. It's either cleared it through or there's a load left hanging above. I won't know until I go back into Kernal Crag and then come down from the top and see what it has done there.



Happy in what I got done today, just need to go in at the top next time and get to the bottom of that part of the mine to see if I've made connection, or to see how much the funnel of rocks has dropped now.

20th August

Great to get back to one of my on-going projects in yon mine. I've had a bit of a break on this project as I wanted to go off and tick off a few other areas on the mine and have a rest from doing this trip to the bottom, as it can be hard work getting there and getting back out. So decided to go and check on my very long on-going project in yon mine, the project that doesn't seemed to want to be finished anytime soon. It's becoming mentally draining but I will not let it beat me that way either. The dig of all digs to try and make connection between two parts of the mine

The other week I was digging at the bottom of the funnel and had had another avalanche from the funnel, so today I went to the top of the tunnel in the Kernal Crag stope to see if the rock level had dropped. At first glance I didn't think it had, then I thought I could see a bit of a difference in one part at the top of the funnel but not much. Looking back at my photos from my last trip to this part there is definitely a difference, little as it may be.



Last time I was there



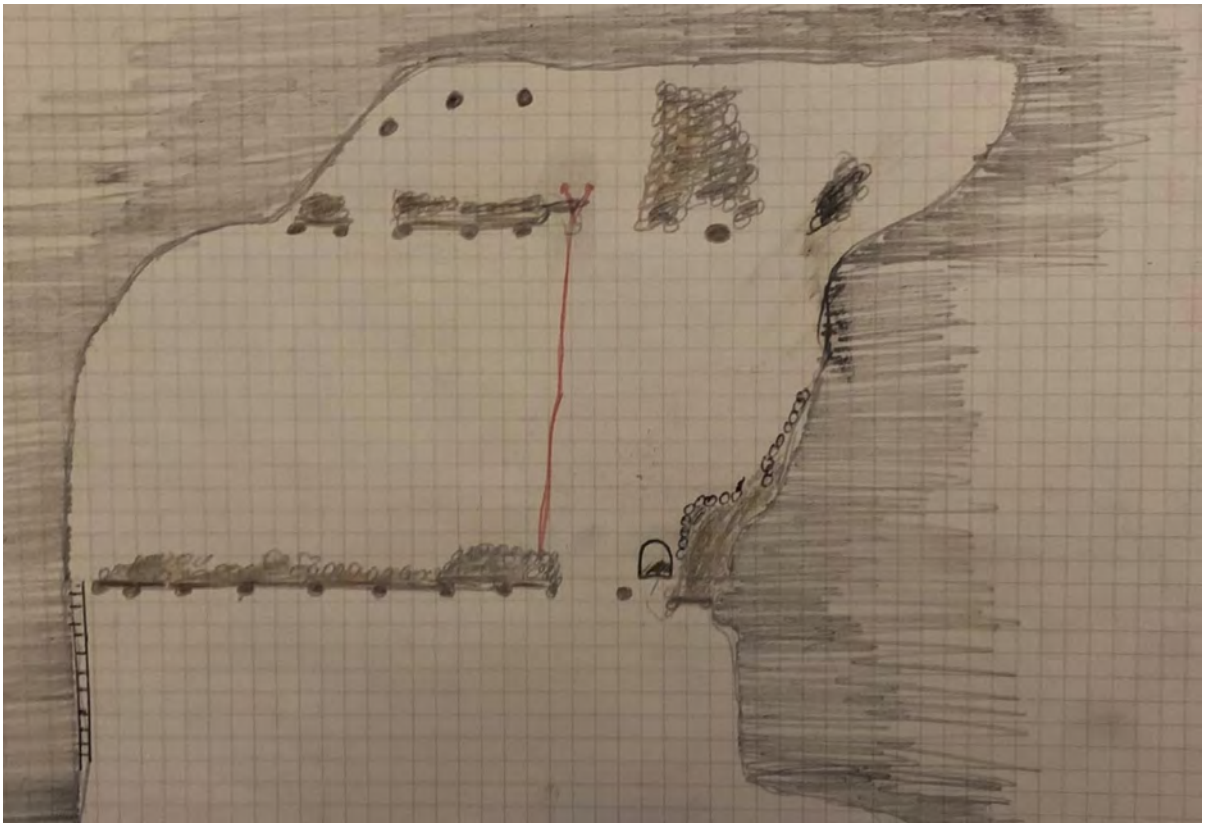
Todays photo

Had a little dig today at the top but not much, as for the last three weeks I've been dressing in the quarry face at work and we've moved near a hundred ton of rocks and muck, so when I

started digging today I soon got sick of moving rocks again. It's not the easiest trip to keep doing to get right down here into the bottom of this part of the mine. It's a big trip I have to do to get in and out of the mine to get to my digging project; there will be over two hundred meters of rope and about fifty brackets and carabiners and maillons I used in this part of the mine.

4th October
Although I didn't quite get finished in the last stope I was in, I want to get in the next stope and get that one finished so then I can get into the another stope and get to the part I want to get to in that stope. Then I'll go back to the first stope and get that one finished off to see where that bit might lead to. Once I've done all that I'm hoping for a bit of a dry spell so then I can go back to the main project I started at the beginning of the year.

15th October. One of Carl's recent projects.
Finished off bolting up to the next false floor right in the top of this stope to see what was up there and see what's been going on and how the miners left it when they finished. I do enjoy getting into these such places right at the top of the stopes as these are the parts of the stope last worked by the miners. I enjoy the feeling of the atmosphere, thinking who worked here last and when was the last shift in here worked, how many men and lads worked the full stope and the stories they could tell about working in here. Just some of the things that go through my head when I get into such places.



The top of this stope is just about Top Level horizon but goes down to Middle Level then down to a sub level then down to Grey Crag level then down to and past the next sub level. It would of connected to Deep Level but doesn't now due to the final ten meters or so being choked up after all the different floors collapsing and landing down there, so the stope is over a hundred meters high or deep, depending if you looking up or down.

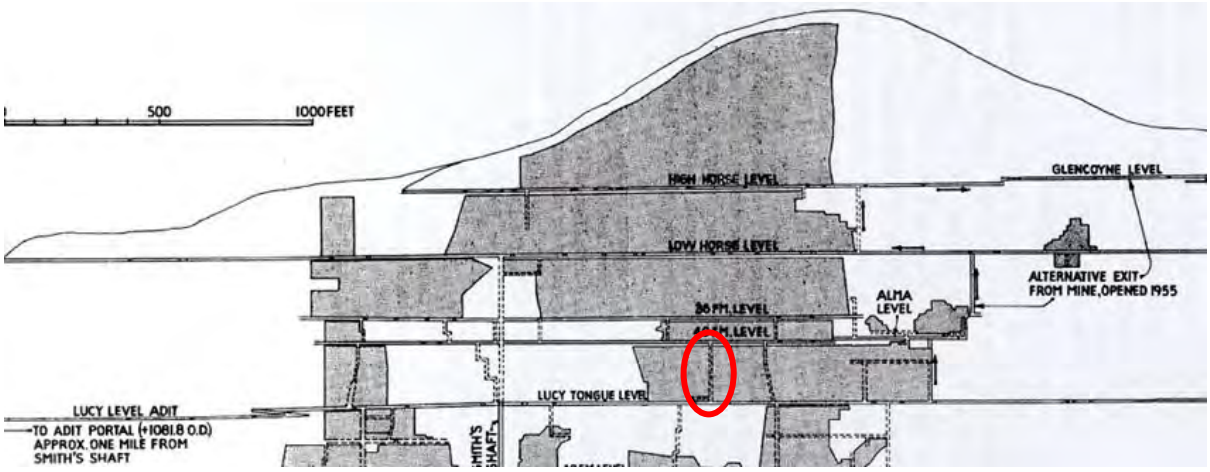
I have done the full stope in different trips doing each horizon separately; the part of the stope I've been in lately was explored back in 2002 for the first time since the miners last worked here by the early CAT members, but they didn't get up to the last false floor that I've just been up to. They had surveyed the stope and drew what they thought was up there, and they wasn't far out, but now we know for sure what is up there.



Been a great little project in bolting up to the top, it's helped with it being one of the best rock I've bolted up for a while, with no faults or rotten scabby parts to bolt past. The stope here is vertical when normally the stope is a couple degrees off vertical. I did find this a little more difficult as I seemed to have full weight in the harness all the time, and today I was struggling with aches and pains and my legs going dead with being in the harness. I was glad to touch down again on the floor to get the circulation going in my legs. Just need to de-rigg my traverse line now, then move onto my next bolting project.

Greenside – a little bit of an explore

Having completed the hard graft of refurbishing the emergency escape route at Greenside, it felt like time for a play. Warren had given us a tip off that it might be possible to reach the 48 Fathom Level (and above) from a shaft just off the vein and stope above the Lucy Tongue level, so we didn't need any persuasion to see where it went. The shaft is a beautiful almost circular hole that has been mined from the top downwards to intersect the stope. The bottom few metres are off vertical (so a relatively gentle start), then the remainder is completely vertical.



We'd acquired a new toy that claimed to allow an average speed of 30m/hour bolting upwards, so this was a perfect test for it. Arriving at the bottom of the shaft we noted that the recent rainfall had increased the water flow from when we initially looked at it; just enough to make it unpleasant, but not enough to deter us. Rob set off at high speed and in less than an hour was twenty five metres up, which was impressive considering the less-than-ideal conditions. Unfortunately, he found the way on blocked by huge boulders that had fallen across the top of the shaft. It looks like the shaft has originated from within the stope above and collapses have completely blocked it. Shame, but it was a grand day out.

Rob McClymont & Tracey Binks





A gentle start



Top of the shaft blocked by a huge boulder and other smaller boulders



Looking back down the shaft, with the falling water apparent

Nenthead weekend meet, 2nd – 3rd September.
Following last year's successful weekend meet organised by Leif Andrews from Nenthead Mines Conservation Society (NMRS) he amazingly decided to do it again with a barbeque and a talk on Saturday night. The meets this year were at Tatters String, Brownleyhill Mine, Blagill Mine, Rampgill/Scaleburn, Guddhamgill High Level, Boundary Shaft through trip, Carrs Mine photography trip.

I went on the Carrs Mine photography trip and the Blagill Mine which was a place I had wanted to visit for many years.

On Saturday Liz Withey, who had offered tips on underground photography, and I met with the others at the Barracks, where we were greeted by our meet leader Peter Jackson who was taking us beyond the show mine. This was an opportunity to see a part of the mines which one doesn't normally get to see but has some incredible mineral formations and is a photographer's paradise.

At the entrance to Carrs Mine, Peter explained that we were first going through the show mine which was classed as a working mine. The show mine is worth visiting and it is quite incredible what the NMRS has achieved. Beyond the door we visited various parts of the workings where there was a lot of photography to be had which was the reason for arranging the meet this way as on a normal meet there is not usually the opportunity to take the time to do it. We were in flats, up and down ladders, in stone arched levels, etc., with so much to see.









On Saturday evening the barbeque was fired up and Rosemary's husband took over the cooking which made it so much easier. Once the midges got too much, we went inside the Barracks where I did a talk on Greenside Mine although Leif had hoped that Peter Wilkinson would have done one, but unfortunately not. Once I had finished prattling on the raffle was drawn with the money raised being donated to COMRU.



Sunday came and we gathered at the Barracks where we waited for our meet leader Nick Green to rise from his slumbers in the Assay House. Having gathered everyone together we drove down to Blagill and got appropriately dressed for a trip into the lower level, which currently has a dig at the end on which Nick is working. This is an ancient mine and is not much visited. Unfortunately the dressing mill has been landscaped, but what remains gives the impression of a large operation.

We entered the level and soon came upon otter prints in the mud. Walking on we came upon rises to what has been assumed are connections with the upper workings at Shop Level. There was graffiti, an ore tub, stone arching, wooden ventilation trunking, a mixture of wood and iron rail and what was impressive a cobbled floor between the rails.




Processing plant and low-level entrance




Cobbled floor

On exiting the level Liz and I bade our farewells as we wanted to visit the work being done at Brewery Shaft by NMCS, while the others carried on with a surface walk.

What a superb weekend this had been fantastic trips, great crack and a huge thank you to our hosts NMCS for organising it especially Leif who has already pencilled in the first weekend in September next year.

Warren Allison.

Tullie House meet. 16th September.
Warren Allison, Ian Hebson, Lorraine Crisp, Kevin Crisp, Liz Withey, Michael Pringle, Derek Mitchell, Julian Cruickshank, Martin Lawton, Fred Lawton, Andy Hopkirk, Anne Danson.

Tullie House museum in Carlisle has the finest mineral collection outside of London which, apart from a very small handful of specimens, is not normally on show. The museum had employed Neil Owen on a fixed two-year contract to re-catalogue the collection, numbering some three thousand mineral specimens.

Following a conversation I had in April with Anna Smalley, who is the museum's Head of Collections & Engagement, I was able to arrange a visit to view part of the collection and had a meeting with Wednesday Batchelor, Biodiversity Curator, who explained the vision to put the minerals on display as part of the plans to improve the museum. I explained how the museum and CATMHS had already collaborated in last year's National Geoweek, when the museum put some minerals on display and CATMHS provided some information about the mine from whence they came. I was certain there was much more we could do together.

We were met by in reception Wednesday, who took us to the conference room adjacent to the café (does very nice food and drinks) and she explained what we would see. As space is restricted in the storeroom we split into two groups. After over an hour the first group came out and for want of a better term seemed overawed. Being in the second group we knew we would be in for a treat and from a personal point of view it was like being a child in a sweet shop. Some of us, especially Kevin Crisp, were drooling at the samples, and that was only the few that Wednesday had put out for us as a taster for what was to come. I recognised the name of some of the collectors, especially Norman Thompson who was a very good friend and had collected/donated specimens in 1943.





Wednesday with some of the taster specimens

Wednesday then pulled out drawers full of the most fantastic specimens and at this point Kevin sank to his hands and knees. There were some which were the size of the shelf and a humongous piece of Wad from Borrowdale (Mark Hatton, have you seen this?). Questions were thrown at Wednesday who responded brilliantly, and it is a tribute to Neil for doing such a fantastic job to re-catalogue the collection.





Kevin on his hands and knees.





How did they manage to recover these specimens? *Specimen of Wad*

There were also mining artefacts to look at which I had not seen in any other museum or collection. Back in the conference room we met the others who had stayed, and we discussed how CATMHS could help the museum with the project, with suggestions summed up as “it would be so much more interesting to have information about the site the mineral came from

and the person who collected or donated the specimen, which CATMHS could help with". Andy also suggested that a trip to Nenthead Mines would be beneficial to the museum.





The museum also has a spar box and information on the person who made it.

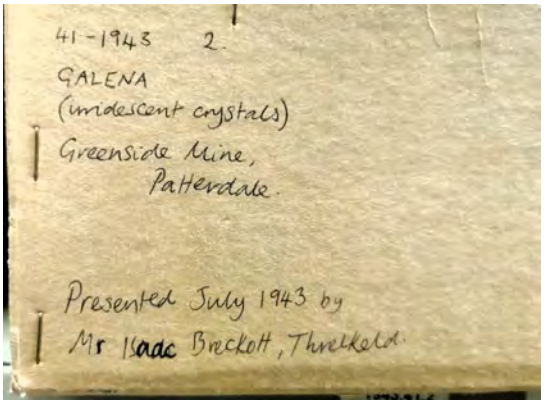




Two fine specimens from the Tullie house collection. Photos by Liz Withey

Left is Plumbogummite, Mimetite from Roughtongill Mine; Right is Hemimorphite from Eagle Crag Mine.

After most people had left, Lorraine& Kevin Crisp, Liz Withey, and I continued the discussion and agreed that this is a project that the Society could certainly help with by providing information, with Liz and Andy offering to do photography of the specimens where the museum would set up a room for them.



Following the visit, I emailed Donald Angus, who lives at Threlkeld and whose family had worked at the mines there, to see if he knew of Issac Beecrost or Breckott who had donated a fantastic specimen of iridescent Galena from Greenside Mine in 1943, which is what the museum is looking for.

His reply came back as:

"Yes l do remember lsick Becroft, he lived with his wife & daughter up the road leading to Blencathra Centre. If I remember correctly he worked at one of the limestone quarries near Penrith. In 1943 he may have worked at Greenside, as many Threlkeld men did. Hope this is of some use to you".

Subsequently I have found more information on Issac Beecroft and also Norman Thompson including my own personal recollections of him which has been sent to Wednesday Batchelor.

Andy Hopkirk is a very good mineral photographer and has recorded the three hundred specimens at Nenthead Mines. We had another meeting at the museum to see how this project could be taken forward and Liz, Andy and Wednesday agreed that a specification is required on how the photographs should be taken, to enable consistency regardless of who took them, and how they could be used. Wednesday said that about eight hundred had already been taken but they were not the best quality, so it was agreed to start from box one. A specification was also confirmed as to how to present the information about the collectors.

This is a long-term project that will take more than two years and will help to further raise the profile of CATMHS and expand the areas of interest for current and new members, as well as helping to put on display one of the country's foremost mineral collections. Watch this space.

Warren Allison.

Mineral meet at Ambleside

Following the previous mineral meet members decided to hold another one but to open it to the public. Arrangements were made to book the Wesley Room at Ambleside Parish Rooms and advertisements were sent out to various organisations who might be interested.

Tables were set up with Anne Danson, Rosemary Vidler, Lindsay Harrison, Kevin Crisp and Warren Allison setting out their wares. James Archer brought examples of rough-outs from the Axe Factory in Langdale. Liz set up her photography equipment and was soon busy photographing specimens. Other members set up the tea, coffee and cake in the kitchen, which has a hatch directly into the room. We asked for donations to go towards the Parish Rooms.

Soon there was a steady flow of people over the afternoon (numbering 30 to 40) coming to visit and they appeared to be surprised by what was on display as well as the knowledge of our members.







Kidney Ore - Steve Cove



Malachite - Anne Danson

There were several geologists and members of geological societies who came, and it was agreed that there should be more collaboration between us. An example being Cumbria Geoconservation who monitor geological SSSI's for Natural England do not have the expertise to go underground at places like the Wad Mine and Force Crag Mine, but CATMHS could assist in the survey.

Steve Cove had a box with specimens showing the different formations of Hematite, from Specularite, Pencil Ore, Kidney Ore and a strange formation.



It was very interesting watching the discussions going on and it is another area of interest for not only our members but the opportunity to collaborate with other like-minded societies which could be very interesting. It has potentially attracted new members and raised £30 through the donations for cakes, etc for the Parish Rooms, all of which sits with the Societies charitable aims.

Everyone enjoyed the afternoon, great crack, much discussion and one suggestion for the next one is to expand it to include mining artefacts which was a very interesting idea. One of the members commented "*for me it was good to meet up with friends old and new and enthusiasts of what's below our feet*".

Warren Allison

Wales Weekend 22nd-24th October 2023

Attendees: Richard Neilson, Iwan Fletcher, Mark Hatton, Julian Cruikshank, Dave Donkin, Rose Lord, Chris Cowdery, Michael Oddie (pub trip only), Mark Waite & Jon Knowles.



General view of Minllyn. Photo Jon Knowles

The weekend, which was led by Jon Knowles and Mark Waite, aimed to provide an introduction to the underground slate quarries of Southern Merioneth and was aimed at those who were not familiar with it. On the Friday Jon led a select group of Messers Hatton, Neilson, and Cruikshank to Minllyn. This underground quarry, small, by Welsh standards, lies on the hillside above Dinas Mawddwy and is on the eastern extremity of the Narrow Vein of slate which starts west of Bryn Eglwys before passing through Corris, Aberllefeni and Ratgoed.

Climbing up through the trees the mill was seen before the team explored underground. Despite recent heavy rain the level of water in the adit was just below a critical depth – on the male anatomy. The underground chambers were explored and the attendees raised many questions about the geology which the leader tried to avoid, due to its complexities. The site is fairly unique, having the remains of a steam powered crane in one chamber, the boiler and jib of which survive. After lunch the group headed to the exit incline and searched for level G. The ground here is steep, wet and has numerous fallen trees. After giving a warning about how slippery it was the leader promptly slid down on his backside! Descending further through fallen trees level G was attained. This contains only two chambers but one has the remains of a very wide bridge in the roof and also a fine engraving of a plough on the wall. On exiting it was decided to head back to the incline and continue down to a track – with hindsight other decisions may have been better. Initially it was fallen trees and heavy vegetation and it was every man for himself. We eventually re-grouped and started down through much brash and young trees which was all wet. Eventually the track was attained.



Entrance to Minllyn Floor I. Photo Mark Hatton.



Engraving of a plough. Photo Jon Knowles.



Julian escapes, briefly, from the vegetation whilst Mark Hatton continues to battle through. Photo Richard Neilson.

On Saturday the complete group visited Aberllefeni Slate Quarry. After entering Level 5 we descended the large pile of fallen material which forms a rough slope down to Floor 7. Heading in-bye, the ladder down to Floor 8 was rigged with a rope for those who needed it. Floor 8 was explored completely and all marvelled at the enormity of the chambering and the large amount of equipment and machinery which remains underground with most having been abandoned in situ when extraction ceased at the end of 2023. Returning to Floor 7 this was also explored, after which the group returned to surface when most attendees headed up the hillside to Floor 4 to see the remains of an ex-marine steam winch which had been converted to run on compressed air. Those seeking more information on Aberllefeni should see “Aberllefeni Slate Quarry by Jon Knowles” published in 2023 and of which 750 of the 1000 copies printed have already sold.



Derrick crane manufactured by Butters of Glasgow. Chamber 8 on Floor 8 at Aberllefeni. Photo Jon Knowles.



Messers Cowdery, Fletcher, Cruikshank and Knowles study the winch on Floor 4.



One of the last chambers to be worked underground at Braich Goch. Photo Jon Knowles.



Rose Lord looks down the timber incline from Floor 4 to Floor 6. Photo Mark Hatton.

Saturday night was spent at the Red Lion in Dinas Mawddwy and everybody seemed to have a good time, although some were keen to return to their tents before the heavens opened again! Accommodation ranged from tents on the ground or on the roof of a car, through motorhomes from the 1960's onwards, to Waite Towers where renovations meant that luxury was limited to such an extent that a glass, which had been highlighted as being chipped on the rim on a previous visit, had been filed down rather than being replaced! Clearly times are hard.

Due to limited interest and a poor weather forecast the Aberllefeni surface walk scheduled for the Sunday was abandoned. Instead the group split into two and were led into different parts of the Braich Goch slate quarry by Mark and Jon, with participants choosing either an SRT or walking trip. Mark Waite took Iwan, Richard and Dave on an extensive tour covering six floors of the southern workings which have been systematically explored by the Welsh Explorers over the last twenty years and Jon led Mark Hatton, Rose, Chris and Julian along the full length of Floor 5 before ascending to Floor 4 and seeing the chambers which were worked prior to closure of the quarry in 1970.

Whilst Braich Goch is an impressive place underground the surface was landscaped in the 1970's to enable road improvements and a craft centre to be built on the levelled tips. Jon Knowles.



Part of the Braich Goch site prior to landscaping.



The enormity of the chambers in Braich Goch with the remains of a bridge, to a long worked away level, visible in the roof. Photo Jon Knowles.

Tilberthwaite Stope repair meet, 14th-15th October.
When the preparation for the NAMHO conference meet at the Penny Rigg Horse Crag level was being done it was noticed that debris from the stope at the third fall was starting to fill the level, so it thought pertinent to extend the dig by another three sets of steel to ensure access was maintained. The material required was already at Mandell's, so the meet was advertised with the digging team taking the lead. Given the amount of material that was needed, it was decided that a small team would collect the material on Saturday with the aim to get it underground ready for members coming on Sunday to make best use of their time. A plan was prepared:

Normally we move equipment inwards in stages. This gives us a rest while returning out between loads. It also stops the length of any route being too long and leading to pain and discomfort. Gently does work best. It is also necessary to ensure materials are not left vulnerable to theft or misuse by others if we have to leave in mid operation.

Stage 1: Materials to outside adit entrance.
Vehicular transport to Tilberthwaite. Crash barriers will be brought to the bottom of the track on a trailer but will need to be carried up the track. All steelwork and lagging boards to be fetched from Mandells, requiring six persons to load at Mandells and six to carry CBs up the track.

Stage 2: Adit entrance to end of 1000ft straight drive.
The level gate will be lifted off to give a clear passage through the first fall. Safe storage for materials around the corner before the bag wall constriction. There is a wheelbarrow here.

Stage 3: Materials through the bag wall section.
This section is difficult, it is narrow and uneven underfoot. We must avoid damage to the bags as a collapse here would be very serious and difficult to rectify. Traffic has to be one way in batches in this section as you cannot pass each other.

Stage 4: End of bag wall section to work site.
A relatively short section through tunnelled sections

Stage 5: Stope repair section
Here the following tasks are required. Not all need to be completed on the day but it will be good if a point of stabilised safety can be reached:
Clear debris from floor and put into trugs /plastic bags for temporary storage.
Clean out the sole to take the feet of the legs. Dig footings to ensure levels are ok.
Bolt the legs and headtrees together and set into position, spaced by sidebars.
Set in at least two lagging boards on each side to fix the positions against moving.
Repeat until three sets are installed and set.
Lay crash barriers over the steelwork, align and fix to previous sections.
Set in lagging boards with priority on the stope fall side in case of a collapse. Build up the ends of the boards with bagged material. Infill behind with trugged material. This is secure point for safety.
Set tonne bags across the end of the new protection and fill with material from the stope collapse. Cover the crash barriers with material and ensure that the level sides are secure – fix with bagged material as necessary.

Saturday: Colin Woollard, John Brown, Steve Cove, John Aird and Warren Allison (combined age 359 years) met at Tilberthwaite car park where Mark Hatton had agreed to take Colin's trailer up to the entrance. John Aird had already taken material up in his vehicle.

Mark had a detachable tow bar which was proving problematic to fit to his vehicle. The digging team thought this was continuing the tradition of issues with trailers during the original dig, but more was to come. Having secured the trailer Mark slowly made his way up the track, only to lose the trailer part way up, which necessitated recoupling it. This is what can happen with a third-party contractor!



Trailer with part of the material



The lost trailer

All the material was unloaded and the trolley, which had originally been used on the Greenside dig was bolted back together. The intention was to get the material underground and hopefully some of it as far as the internal gate. The team did much better with a set of legs and head tree with some of the lagging boards being taken to the dig. While this was being done Colin and John started to clear the debris ready for a good start on Sunday.



Moving material to the internal gate



Digging commenced

Sunday
Meet leader Warren Allison (only because Julian said so), John Aird, Colin Woollard, Andrew Woollard, John Brown, Richard Neilson, Martin Lawton, Julian Cruickshank, Charlotte Taylor, Robert Gurr, Patrick Sanderson, Steve Cove, David Hughes, Simon Athersmith, Philip Newton.

Colin, John, and Andrew had arrived early to continue clearing the debris to get the first sett in. Everyone else met in the car park and after introductions Warren gave a pep talk about what was required to hopefully get the whole job done that day. Arriving at the close-head the boards that were left were moved to where the level turned right, with some people starting the process of moving material up to the dig site. As there could be a traffic jam if we all did this, some carried on moving material from the gate, with the crash barriers being moved last.



Photos by Simon Athersmith



Crash barriers arrive at the pack wall

Having moved all the material to the beginning of the pack wall lunch beckoned, so, apart from the digging team, we dined outside. Returning, the next job was to finish moving the material through the pack wall which required some thought to make sure people didn't meet in the middle, as there was no room to pass.

It was decided that as the crash barriers could be difficult to move that there would be an extra person front and back to take over. It was surprising how quickly all the material was moved to the dig where the first sett had been installed, with the second one nearly ready. This was the time where most people could not help until the third sett was in so they had a look up the level to the end and view what is the best piece of timbering in a Cumbrian mine.

The third settwent in followed by the crash barriers which allowed people to get into the stope to start to bring material down to backfill the lagging boards and put on top of the crash barriers, followed by a tonne bag at the front.



Digging continued.



Moving material in the stope. Photo - Simon Athersmith.



Job done, and what a huge credit to everyone who came for what was a phenomenal effort, to get and install steel for three setts, three crash barriers and over seventy lagging boards from Mandell's to approximately seven hundred yards underground.

We must also not forget Pete's tub, which is between the second and third falls and was affectionately named by the digging team. Without Pete the underground digs which started in 1992 at the Lucy Tongue level at Greenside mine using mining techniques, followed by the Tilberthwaite Horse Crag level, which he did not see completed, would not have happened.

Warren Allison.



William Smith (1769 - 1839), 'the father of English geology'



Almost two hundred years ago, William Smith published the first geological map of England and Wales. This would have been an incredible feat under any circumstance, requiring an enormous breadth of geological knowledge. Smith's accomplishment was even more extraordinary because he achieved it on his own.

William Smith began work as a land surveyor's assistant in his home village of Churchill, Oxfordshire. He excelled at this job, and soon Smith was travelling the country working on mining, canal construction and irrigation projects. This work gave him the opportunity to observe the patterns in the layers of rock he found so fascinating, and he began making detailed and fastidious notes on their formation and the fossils found within them. When he realised he was the first to make these observations, he sought to publish his findings. Although publishing his work would ultimately bankrupt him, he achieved this goal in 1815 with the publication of his map 'A delineation of strata of England and Wales'.

Geological maps show which layer of soil or rock (stratum) is found at the surface. Under the surface, however, other strata are found at varying depths, making the map a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional reality.



Geological section from London to Snowden, 1817

A geological section, such as the one shown here, demonstrates how strata are situated in relation to one another underground. Geological sections can also be represented as vertical 'cores', showing the strata found at one particular location, from the surface to a specific depth.

'Oak Tree Clay' fossils

The plate below shows some of the fossils commonly found in Oak Tree Clay (also known as the Kimmeridge Clay). According to Smith's description of this stratum, this type of clay is found at the surface between Swindon and Wootton Bassett.



Smith was only formally recognised for his accomplishments and discoveries very late in his life, receiving the Wollaston Medal in 1831, the highest honour given in the geological sciences. His legacy lived on with his nephew and ward John Phillips, a key figure in the founding of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and a Professor of Geology at Oxford in the late 19th century. Phillips left Smith's archive to the Museum at his death in 1874, recognising its importance to the history of science, and it has remained here ever since.

Source - University of Oxford.

Mark Hatton received the following enquiry from Dr Kevin Privett regarding William Smith, who was born on the 23rd March 1769 at the Forge, Churchill, Oxfordshire, the son of John Smith the village blacksmith.

"*I am a volunteer at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History involved in a project to transcribe the archive of letters of William Smith. You may of heard of him, he was the person who produced the first geological map of England & Wales. He was also a mineral surveyor and his letters refer to the Caldbeck Pb/Cu mine, in particular, a survey carried out in 1823 for Thomas Richmond Gale Braddyll, who was considering purchasing a mining lease. I recently visited Oxford (I live in S Wales and have been working remotely) and discovered a copy of Smith's report (OUMNH Archive WSD23008), which gives details of his investigations mentioned in the letters. I have not seen this document referenced in any of the publications I have read and when I came across CATMHS I wondered if you might like a copy. Accordingly, I attach a PDF of the document for your interest*".

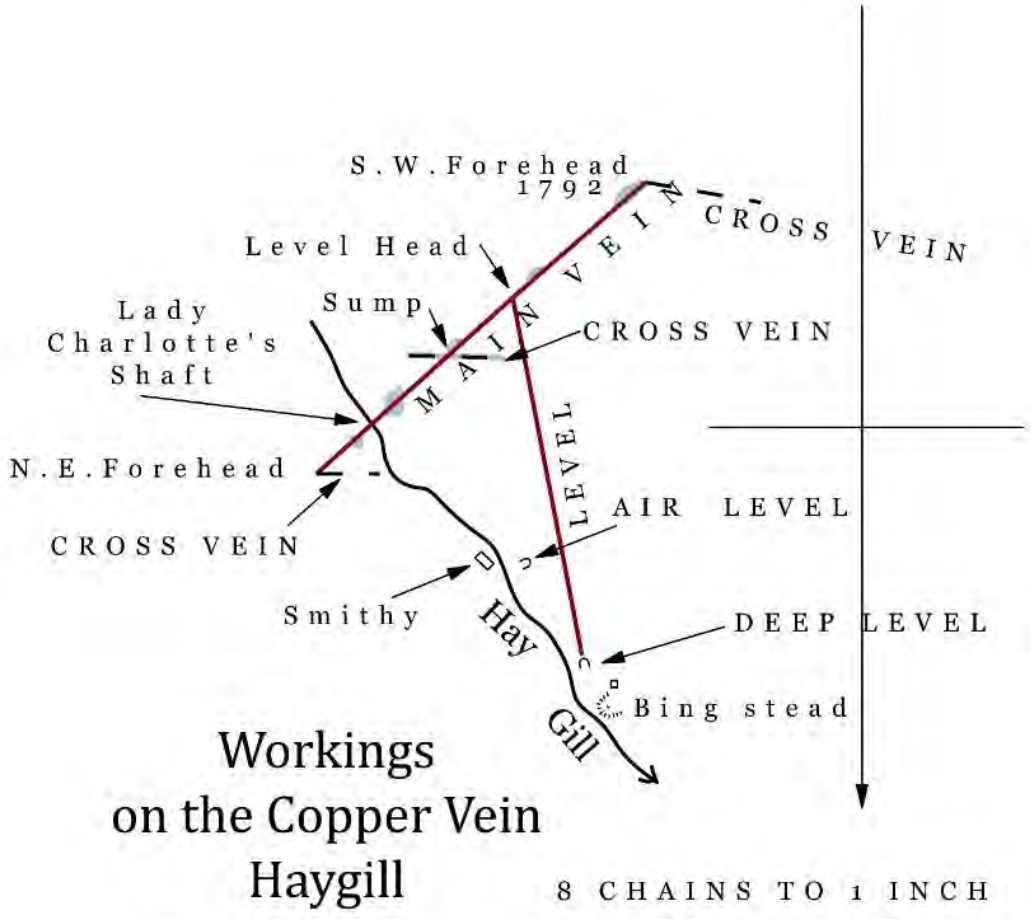
This has led to much correspondence between Kevin Privett, Mark and I, and, when Kevin was on holiday in the Lakes, we had a meeting over fish and chips at Mark's house in Ambleside. (Courtesy of a local fish and chip shop - Mark's hospitality didn't extend to cooking!)

I sent the document to Colin Woolard and Ian Matheson, who have transcribed it, and what a wealth of information it contains on many mines on the Caldbeck Fells, which still needs to be analysed. Below is a very small reproduction of the document that Colin and Ian have transcribed:

Survey of Mines & Minerals for proposed mines Lease to T. R. G Braddyll Esq^{r}.
The Mines of Caldbeck Fells containing 10,970 acres belongs to The Earl of Pomfret

Extract from the Bargain Book and Cash Book of Hay Gill Copper Mine kept by Joseph Scott, agent. Various expenses of agency and day work commence Dec 13th 1784.

In the first Bargain dated June 20th 1785 it is agreed to sink in the wet sump Haygill 2 fathoms at £6-6-0 a fathom and the second Bargain of July 26th 1785 is to drive the Low or Deep Level to unwater the said sump. 10 fathoms were driven at 9/-; 18 fathoms at 15/-; 7½ at £1-10-0d; after which the bargains are at £3-0s; £3-3s; £3-5s; £3-10s; £4-0s; £4-15s. This last is the highest price. In October 1786 a short level driven for air joined the Deep Level by a sump of about 5 fathoms.



The meeting with Kevin just re-enforced what an incredible man William was, and this article could have extended to many pages. Mark took Kevin to have a look at the Coniston copper mines and we have agreed between us to carry on with the research, which will provide the opportunity to learn more about not only the mines at Caldbeck, but in Cumbria.

Kevin has since provided us with a list of the material held by the University relating to William Smith. I also remember a plan published in the 'Minerals of the English Lake District: Caldbeck

Fells' dated 1823 which is in the BM (NH) and the author was unknown, but I think it is one of William Smiths which Kevin has confirmed is probably correct. He has also provided much better-quality copies of the plans he had previously sent which has revealed more new information.

Kevin has sent the draft transcribed copy to his colleague Danielle Czerkaszyn, the Librarian and Archivist at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, and she has described it as 'wonderful work'. This is an incredible opportunity to collaborate with one of the finest Universities, gaining access to their archive with the prospect of discovering much more historical information on one of our most important mining areas.

Warren Allison.



A map of the Caldbeck Fells dated 1823 for TGR Braddyll, which accompanies William Smith's report. If you are viewing this on a screen you can zoom in to enlarge it and see the detail. The orginal is a very large fileCollin Woollard has redrawn it to provide a digital version.

Jewell's Sump at Greenside Mine- a personal connection

Simon Pickford a recent new member mentioned that he had family on the Jewell side, who worked at Greenside Mine and the Pearce family, who mined at Caldbeck before moving onto managing the Blackcraig Mine near Newton Stewart.

Simon's email regarding the families is reproduced below:

My mother was also the product of two mining families that came together in Swarthmoor near Ulverston around 1850. My grandfather was a Pearce and they originated from Lannar near Redruth in Cornwall and were miners at the Tresavean copper mine nearby. When that went into decline Abraham Pearce moved to Ulverston in 1849 and I believe worked in the lead mines near there but I haven't been able to trace which mine or find good information on these mines. They were Methodists and later officiated at a chapel in Cartmel. Abraham later worked briefly at the Caldbeck mine before becoming mine manager at Blackcraig lead mine near Newton Stewart in S Scotland (why I am part Scottish) – my great grandfather John Edward Pearce was born there and Abraham after about five years returned to Ulverston. Due to the lack of surviving mine company records I have been unable to establish details of their mining activities but I have visited all the sites and would like to know more and visit the mines below if that becomes possible. There is a good book on Lannar and the Tresavean mine which details much of the history. I have some information on Blackcraig mine too when I met the local historian.

John Edward Pearce married Elizabeth Jewell who came from a mining family in Combe Martin in Devon. Combe Martin had a Silver Mine which had been active for some thousand years or more producing at times very high-grade silver ore which helped fund various wars in the Tudor times. Like most mines it operated when technology, silver price and operating conditions all became favourable. A distant Jewell cousin of mine named Mike Warburton was Mine Captain of the preservation group that is now managing this mine. Mike sadly died last Christmas and I visited recently for the scattering of his ashes at the mine, and I donated £1000 to help with their archive project. They have done a tremendous job there excavating and preserving the mine, mostly without any external funding – just their own hard work two days a week. It is owned by a group of five of them. As with Tresavean, the Combe Martin silver mine became uneconomic in about 1850 and Elizabeth Jewell and her family moved to Ulverston to take up mining there before later moving to Glenridding to work at Greenside mine.

Two brothers Thomas and Henry Jewell had married two Rook sisters in Combe Martin. They lived together in 1, Mires Cottage – all thirteen of them! I think there are four Mires Cottages (you may know them near Mires Brook)) which were probably built by the mine along with other miners cottages in the area. I have the book – Greenside Mine and the Mines of the Ullswater Valley by Ian Tyler and my Jewell family is all recorded in there and I guess yours are too. There were a number of other mining families that came up from



No. 1 Mires Cottage, Glenridding

Combe Martin – Burch, Brook, Norman, Lake, – these worked at Greenside – others worked near Pennington and some other family groups came up from Lanner.

It would appear that the Jewell family were well respected at Greenside because the Jewell shaft was named after them – maybe this was just the shaft they worked on – no doubt being paid so much a foot or however the rates were calculated. In 1888 and 1890 most of the Jewell family (twenty two of them) at Greenside emigrated to Ishpeming in Michigan – sadly my GG Grandfather Thomas Jewell died in 1888 (a mine related condition) before they left. This I am sure prompted the emigration – my great grandmother Elizabeth Jewell stayed as she had married John Edward Pearce in 1862. Two of her brothers (Thomas and William Henry) I eventually discovered had emigrated to Charter Towers in Queensland as part of the gold rush, but it was not a success for them. The Jewell family that emigrated to Michigan were soon engaged mining there and by then worked at turning around failing mines in the area. Elizabeth Jewell's cousin Ellen Jewell had emigrated with Joseph Hodgson from Ulverston, and they married in 1890 in Ishpeming. Within five or ten years the Jewell family group had grown to over eighty individuals, most not all engaged in mining.



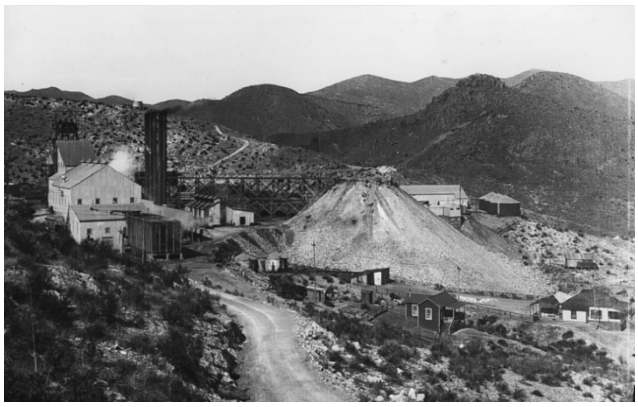
Joseph Hodgson



Ellen Jewell

After five or ten years in Ishpeming, the family group mostly moved to Bisbee, Arizona where Joseph Hodgson eventually secured a position of manager of the Copper Queen mine which, I am told, at that time was the largest copper mine in the world. He lived in some style in the mine captain's house in Warren and secured positions in the mine for most of the family and some others came over from Ulverston. I have traced about forty family graves in the Bisbee cemetery.

By way of background, I am a retired chartered accountant based in Birmingham having initially working for Johnson Matthey in their Jewellery Division in Birmingham. My interest in mining has come from my family connections. At some point I would certainly welcome going down the Greenside Mine and also the Caldbeck mine but I don't have any particular experience visiting mines but am a reasonably fit 70 year old! Mike Warburton gave me a good tour of the Combe Martin mine. Hope we can meet at some point, and I will try and come up to the Lakes for some suitable probably surface event.



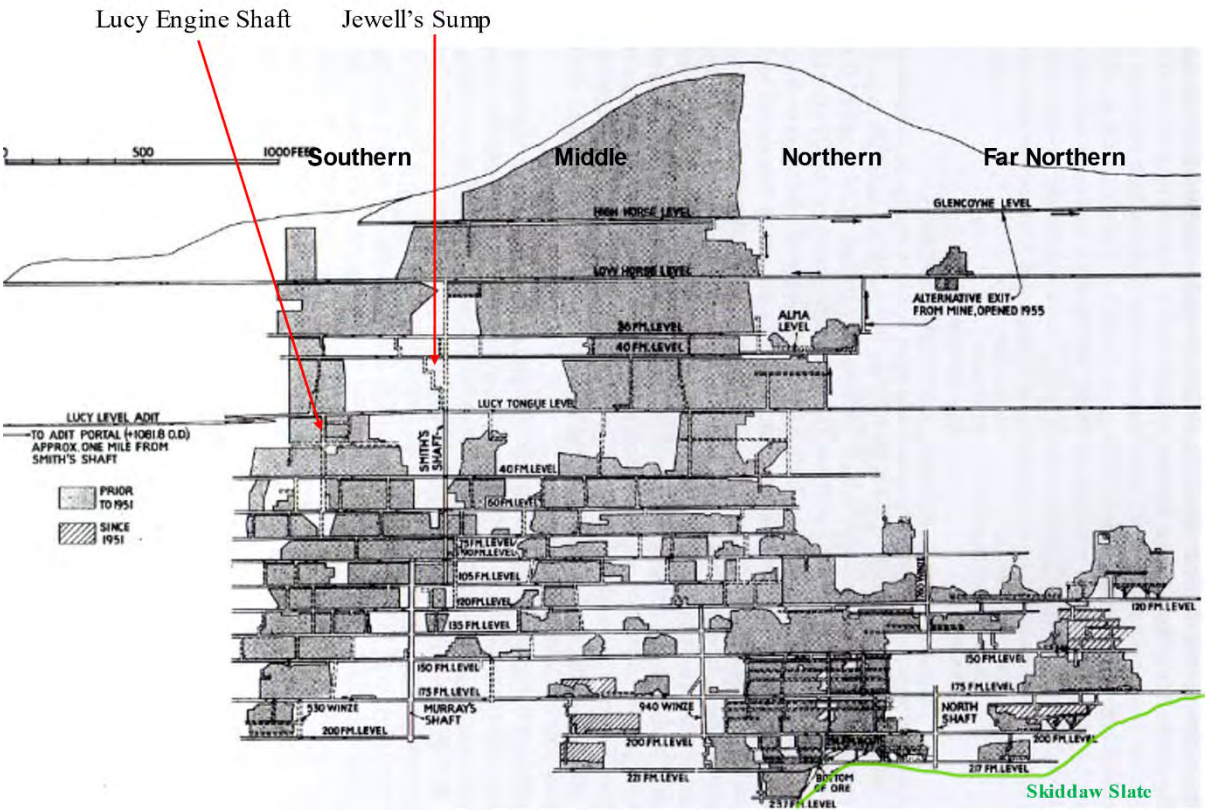
Copper Queen mine



Captain's house in Warren

On looking in Grey Gold by Sam Murphy, I found these references to the Jewell family:
Page 126 - In the 48 fathom level, so recently connected to the Lucy Level, Thomas Jewell and his three partners cut out a sump head and sank the first part of the sump which bears his name nearly 12 fathoms from February to June 1873 but then went working on roofs.

Page 127 - It was January 1874 before the work on the Lucy Engine Shaft was restarted, this time by Thomas Jewell and initially eight other partners, a number which was soon raised to eleven and by the end of April 1974 they had sunk eleven fathoms at the enormous cost of £50 per fathom.



I have managed to put Simon in touch with Peter Sandbach and Bryan Cooper a former work colleague who is the go-to person about Millom as well as at Wanlockhead Mining Museum.

Simon Pickford and Warren Allison

Straw Houses, Smoke Holes & Bruce Willis, Tales of the Coniston Slate Industry, 2006.
It is astonishing how much history can be found on one Lakeland mountain. Coniston Old Man holds evidence of man's activity from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, mediaeval era and onwards to the present day. Since the settlement of Coniston was first established the mountain has figured largely in the lives of the community of Coniston and even today at least two dozen families in the village still owe part of their livelihoods to their work on the mountain.

The study that we have been carrying out, to piece together the industrial history of the mountain, goes on with enthusiasm. The small team from the local community has been out several times during this spring. One area that has attracted interest is that of The Cove.

Cove Quarries are an extensive and remote sprawl of ancient workings that spill down from just below the summit on the south west side of the mountain. They are rarely visited by anyone. Anthony Inman from High Ground farm, who holds common grazing rights on the Old Man, will go there no more than a couple of times a year. Occasionally the hunt might pass through, but hardly anyone else.

Walkers and climbers pass along the track below the Cove workings and many will probably not even notice the ancient banks of spoil high above, so well have they mellowed with the surrounding mountain. The first 'tourists' here were the mountaineers heading for Dow Crags. In 1886 W.P. Haskett-Smith climbed a route on 'E' Buttress and became the first climber to record a climb on the crag. No doubt on his way up to Dow (and back down again) he must have been very conscious of the activity at Cove. In 1886 at least forty men and boys were working there. There would have been constant activity and noise from the quarry. The dull thud of black-powder and rattle as 'rid' was disposed of over the tip-end would have mixed with the call of the ravens and buzzards.

A few years ago Nils Wilks and I made an attempt to gain access to some of the highest chambers at Cove, without success. Late last year Jane Moreland and I paid another visit to Cove, this time to carry out a brief survey of the site and try to estimate the dates of some of the workings. Although Cove was last operated in the 1920's the first workings on this side of the Old Man are lost in the mists of time and may well have been shortly after the Norman Conquest.

Earlier this year (February 2006) we were presented with old plans and documents, which we hope are destined to form part of the Brownlee Collection in the Coniston Museum. One of the old plans was of Cove Quarries, produced as the result of surveys carried out in 1906 by the eminent surveyor Henry Mellon. As well as showing exactly where the old areas of slate extraction had been, the plan also marked the exact location of the Cove straw-house. A straw house is a small building, usually of slate, in which powder straws were safely stored. There were two on the Old Man, one at Cove and the other part way between the Walna Scar fell gate and Low Bank. Clearly we had to go back to Cove to see if we could find the remains of it.

On March 10th 2006 the team assembled at the Fell Gate and we set off along the Walna Scar Road to Cove. We halted at the remains of Cove Hut, the old magazine on the fellside below the quarry. It is now only a tumbled ruin but most of the team remembered using it in their youth. It was a good place to stop for a brew. Further up, on one of the lower quarry banks, are the remains of a small cottage, re-built in the 1950's by Jack Diamond, our Coniston school master.

The Brownlee plan showed the location of the straw-house almost directly above the cottage. We spent some time scouring the hillside, without success. Quite clearly all remains are now lost, although on a subsequent visit, Maureen Fleming thought she may have located its original position.

During the autumn of 2006 we turned our attention to Scald Cop Quarry, one of the highest workings on the North-east shoulder of the Old Man. Donald Kelly, who has worked in the industry all his life and 'served his time' at Moss Head, remembers setting off charges in the Middle Moss Head closehead and seeing smoke issuing from Scald Cop entrance high above as he walked down from the workings later in the day. We decided to investigate the reason for this and took Don along with us.

This proved to be a most interesting afternoon. Donald had the key to the gate at the bottom of the Brossen Stone track so we rode up to Brossen in his quarry Landrover and walked across to Moss Head from there. It seems that the reason that smoke vented from Scald Cop was because a 'smoke hole' in the form of a vertical shaft had been constructed between the two. We wanted to find both ends of it so we went onto the Moss Head floor with powerful lights and studied the roof of the chamber high above. It was difficult to identify any feature, even with millions of candlepower, but in the end we thought we might have found the bottom of a shaft.

Later we walked up to Scald Cop. The old plans marked the top of the shaft very clearly. We wriggled through the tight entrance – and there it was, just as Henry Mellon had recorded it on his plans. It is interesting that, during a trip here a few years earlier, we had eaten our lunch sitting on the actual shaft top without realising it. Perhaps if we had known what was beneath we may have moved somewhere else!

The most interesting feature at Scald Cop are the old surface remains. Donald had studied them carefully. I had always estimated that the great roof collapse had occurred in the 1790's. We talked this through and eventually we both became convinced it must have occurred much earlier – possibly even several hundred years earlier.

Later, back in the village, we enjoyed a pint in the Sun. 'Stormer' Walker, one of Lakeland's most skilled slate-men, came in and joined us. After hours talking about the ancient history of the industry high up on the mountain, Stormer brought us back to the present day with a bump. He gave us the news that his Company (Kirkstone) had just won a huge contract to supply the American celebrity, Bruce Willis, with slate for the numerous bathrooms in his enormous New York mansion.

Now that definitely called for another pint. How time pushes on!!

Alastair Cameron

Old photos of Roanhead

Brian Lee has offered some digitised photographs of Roanhead mine. He says "They were borrowed back in the 80's via a friend whose parents lived opposite the site of the old ironworks in Askam They knew a Miss Kneebone who was either the daughter or granddaughter of Captain George Kneebone who worked at Yarlside in the early 1900's. I am not certain but I seem to remember I was told that he moved to Roanhead when Yarlside declined in the 1920's. I made copies on black and white film and also 35mm slides."



Photo As1



Photo As2

Photographs As1 and As2 were said to be of Askam miners. Roanhead was the nearest mine, so it is feasible that the miners worked there. In the front row of one of the photos two miners are displaying powder flasks and one is holding a shot hole pricker, which was used for making a hole for the fuse through the stemming clay. These men would have been shot firers. It seems as if a relaxed attitude to health and safety prevailed as several of the nearby miners are smoking. Hopefully the flasks were empty! By the size of the flat caps the photos were probably taken in the late 19th or early 20th century.

Photograph R1a shows the pithead winding gear at the top of Rita Pit. The mine was connected to the Barrow - Carlisle railway. The photo was taken in WWII and, judging by the extensive heaps of pit props, it seems as if expansion was anticipated. However, by 1942 the ore reserves were exhausted and the mine closed.



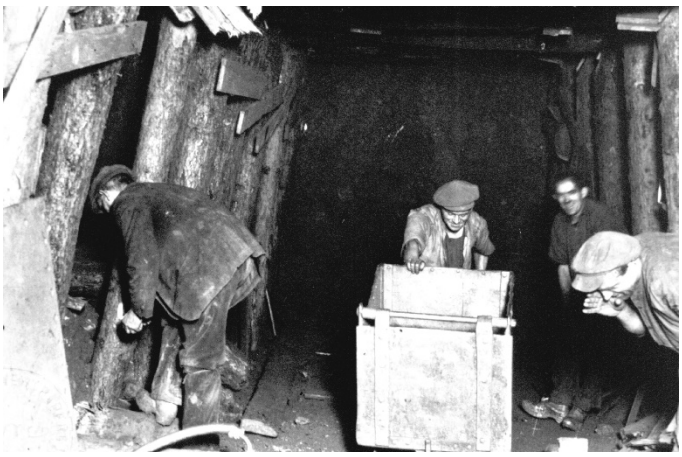
Photo R1a

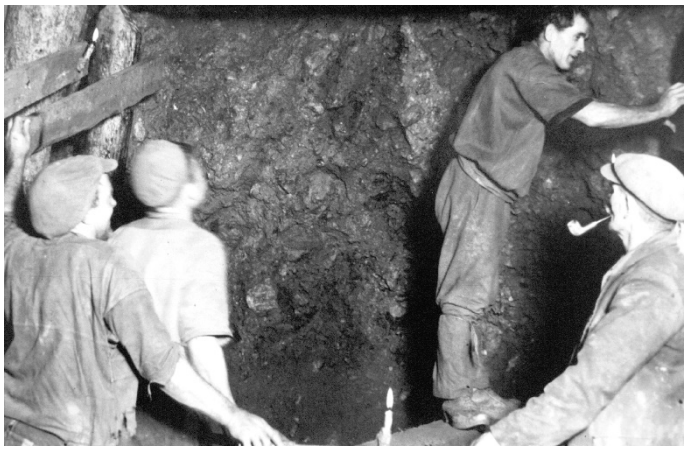
“The underground photos seem to have been somewhat posed, so I suspect they were the work of a professional or newspaper photographer. On one of them there is a gentleman in an overcoat and trilby hat. Hardly the sort of clothing worn by a miner! Maybe some visiting luminary or the mine manager.”

The six photographs of the underground workings appear to have been taken in the 1920’s or 1930’s. They depict working the ore and tubs of ore being man-hauled along the railed levels to the shaft bottom and prepared for haulage to the surface. These photos were said to be the work of a local newspaper photographer. Although they are obviously posed, they nevertheless depict the timbering, tools used and working conditions at the mine in the early 20th century. Notably, candles were still used for illumination, at least in some areas of the mine.

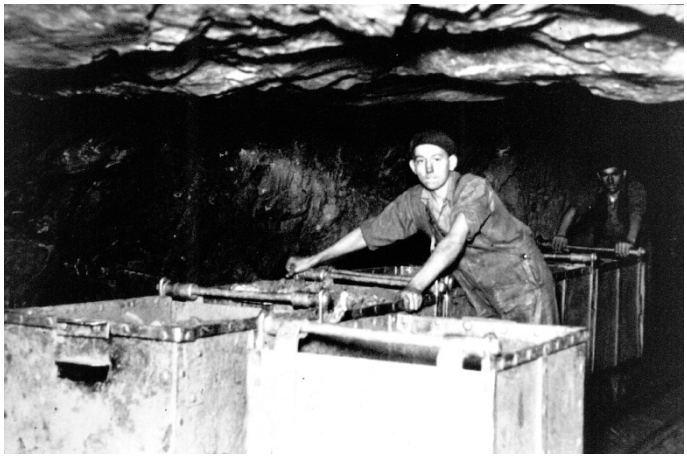
Brian Lee.













CUMBRIA AMENITY TRUST MINING HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1180198

Honorary President:	Lord Egremont Petworth House, Sussex
Chairman	Warren Allison Phone: 01228 523923 Email: chairman@catmhs.org.uk
Secretary:	Colin Woollard, Phone 01900 823686 Email: secretary@catmhs.org.uk
Treasurer:	John Aird, Phone: 0208 997 5985 Email: treasurer@catmhs.org.uk
Membership Secretary & Newsletter Editor:	Ian Matheson Phone: 015394 32957. Email: membership@catmhs.org.uk
Meets Secretary:	Julian Cruikshank Phone: 07752 879120 Email: meets@catmhs.org.uk
Webmaster:	Chris Cowdery Email: webmaster@catmhs.org.uk
Committee members:	John Aird, Warren Allison, John Brown, Chris Bunker, Stephe Cove, Chris Cowdery, Julian Cruikshank, Lorraine Crisp, Graham Derbyshire, Mark Hatton, Ian Matheson, Michael Oddie, Michael Pringle, Mark Simpson, Colin Woollard.
CATMHS website:	www.catmhs.org.uk

CATMHS Newsletter No 153, November 2023