

NAMHO

National Association of Mining History Organisations



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE No 33

WINTER 1997

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WET EARTH COLLIERY EXPLORATION GROUP

In the last edition of the Newsletter a report, abstracted from the Manchester Evening News, was published relating to the enforced closure of the Clifton workings to the public. The group concerned with the excavation and preservation of these workings, the Wet Earth Colliery Exploration Group, are very demoralised with the situation. Alan Davies, founder of the Group, replies as follows:-

"The truth is that the enforcing agency are at Clifton to monitor gas and water levels in old shafts. This is after they had asked me "Do you know of any old shafts in your area which we can monitor?" and my pointing them to Clifton and shafts which we had come across during our group's seven years of work on site.

Once they became aware of our groups' activities in the waterwheel drainage tunnels they decided to survey them, classed them as "workings" (which is absolutely ridiculous) and said we were not to take visitors around any more until further notice.

An attempt by myself to drum up support in the press backfired when a stupid journalist altered my statement from walking visitors along a 500 metre level tailrace tunnel into "taking hundreds of children down a 1000 metre shaft". He also spoke to IMC who gave him their Health and Safety

line with no regard for our competency and track record.

The whole episode has totally demoralised the group which I set up in 1990. I just felt that, of all people, NAMHO members and other mining historians should get the true facts. All the best".

NAMHO FIELD MEET '98

15th - 17th May 1998

Hosted jointly by The Friends of Killhope and The North Pennines Heritage Trust

Surface Field trips: Cowshill and Coptcleugh in Weardale, Allenheads Mine and Village, Mining in the Rookhope Valley, Rotherhope Fell Mine, Mining and Geology of the Nent Valley.

Underground Field Trips: Brownley Hill Mine, Rampgill Horse Gin, Killhope Mine, Brewery Shaft Winch, Tyne Bottom Mine, Caplecleugh to Rampgill, Smallcleugh Mine, Barhaugh Coal Pit, Rotherhope Fell Mine, Frazer's Hush Mine.

Accommodation: Selection of various type of accommodation available. Details will be sent with booking form.

Saturday Night Event: Social gathering in Nenthead Village Hall. Cost £5.00 per person

Field Meet Fee: £5.00 per person attending plus £2.00 insurance for anyone without BCRA, or equivalent cover.

Further details and booking forms from Sheila Barker, The Rise, Alston, Cumbria, CA9 3DB

PUBLICATIONS RELATING TO MINES AND CAVE EXPLORATION

1. "Radon Exposure during Underground Trips" by the NCA Radon Working Party. 1996, 24pp. Cost £3.00. Available from Tony Oldham Book Sales, (01239) 831371.

This is a set of guidelines for mine and cave exploration.

2. "Legal Aspects of Access Underground" by compiled P T Mellors on behalf of the NCA. 32pp, Cost £1.30. Available from NCA, 3 The Acorns, Oakhill, Bath, Somerset, BA3 5BT.

This is a guide to the legal rights and obligations of people who explore caves, potholes and disused mines, and of the people who control access to them.

The booklet was first published in 1988 and some of the detail is out of date but the major principles still apply.

CONVICTS GO UNDERGROUND

Hardened convicted criminals in South Africa will be incarcerated in converted disused gold mines. The underground prisons would be secure and cost-effective. A spokesman has said "the conditions will be humane, consistent with the constitution and will have provision for health care and visitors. A ride in a lift down a mine should be a pleasant experience for visiting family members."

Daily Telegraph

MAGPIE SOUGH, DERBYSHIRE

A group of cavers/mine explorers recently got through the grill and went up Magpie Sough without permission. This incident was brought to the attention of PDMHS by Chatsworth Estates who control access into the sough.

The identity of these persons is unknown

Members of NAMHO Organisations are, however, reminded that there is NO access into Magpie Sough except with special permission. PDMHS were granted access during the recent NAMHO Conference and many delegates took advantage of the facility. Incidents of trespass into this sensitive area puts future access arrangements at risk.

The message to all is **"KEEP OUT OF MAGPIE SOUGH!!! - THERE IS NO ACCESS AT ANY TIME"**.

PLANT HOLDS KEY TO LAND CLEAN-UP

A research project has shown the Alpine Pennycress (*Thalaspis caerulescens*), a rare plant growing on the site of Hafina Mine, Llanrwst, has been found to be capable of absorbing high quantities of lead and zinc pollutants. It is hoped that cultivation, and harvesting, of the plant could

eventually cleanse the land of its heavy metal contaminants.

Daily Telegraph

MINESHAFT RESCUE

A man who tried, unsuccessfully, to rescue his springer spaniel dog from a 50ft flooded mineshaft near Helston, Cornwall last January got into difficulties and had to be rescued.

Daily Telegraph

NEW DEEP COAL MINE IN SOUTH WALES

NSM, the coal mining group, has plunged to a £75.7m pre-tax interim loss after providing for expected losses on the sale of its Pennsylvanian and West Virginian coalfield business in the US.

The Chairman, John Jermine, said that he was still confident that the new deep mine at Pentreclwydau, South Wales had a profitable future.

Daily Telegraph

SPONTANEOUS HEATING AT RICCALL MINE

A seat of spontaneous heating was recently identified and sealed off in an area of old workings at the Riccall Mine in the Selby Coalfield. Production at Riccall was affected for several days whilst the area was sealed off but there will be no long term impact on Riccall or any other part of the Selby complex

RJB "New Scene"

DEMOLITION OF HEM HEATH HEADGEAR

The massive "A-frame" headgear at Hem Heath Colliery in Stoke on Trent is to be demolished. Stoke City Council has stated "...the headgear could have a detrimental impact in attracting new developments into the area.....".

The Coal Authority is funding the clearing of the site as the operator, Coal Investments has gone into administration with debts of almost £60 million.

RJB "New Scene"

HM INSPECTORATE OF MINES REPORT

The latest issue of H & S E's HM Inspectorate of Mines Report of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences shows that in the year 1995/6 there were no reported fatalities or injuries in Tourist Mines. The last reported injuries were in 1992/3 when two members of the public were involved.

There were two reported Dangerous Occurrences in Tourist Mines reported during 1995/6. These were the stoppage of ventilation apparatus and an incident involving a locomotive.

H & S E ARCHIVES

The historical archives of the H & S Executive have been registered with the Public Records Library. The archive contains documents and books of historical importance on the mining industry, some dating back to the early 19th Century. Access can be arranged through the Librarian, H & S E Library, Broad Lane, Sheffield, S3 7HQ

RECENT MINING INCIDENTS (Reported in Mining Journal)

1. Two NUM (South Africa) officials and four members of their family were killed in a dispute between two miners' unions at the Anglo-American Platinum Mine in South Africa.
2. Fifteen miners have been killed and three more presumed dead in a rockburst at Hartebeestfontein Gold Mine in South Africa.
3. Eight miners were killed and two are missing after a rockburst in Deelkraal Gold Mine, South Africa.
4. A series of explosions in Chinese coal mines which killed 86 miners has resulted in a management purge. The owners of the privately run mines have all been arrested.
5. A number of pillars of coal collapsed in the Mufulira Copper Mine,

Zambia, causing a large area of surface to crater and a large blast of air was forced through the mine. Surprisingly only one man was injured.

6. Twenty six Russian and Ukrainian miners were killed in an explosion at a coal mine in Barentsburg in Arctic Norway. The mine is operated by the Russian company, Trust Arktikugol.

7. Explosion of gas at Sangrund -e- Lowshan Colliery, Iran killed 15 miners, injured 29 and trapped 150 (later rescued). The explosion was caused by an electrical short circuit in underground equipment.

8. Two Siberian miners blew themselves up in a car with 20lb explosive because they had not been paid for 6 months. The blast also wrecked the railway station at Kilelyousk.

9. After an explosion of methane at Graig Merthyr Colliery, South Wales, in June 1994 the owner, manger, mine deputy and workmen were prosecuted at Swansea Crown Court. The charges covered inadequate ventilation, lack of inspections, failure in supervision, manner of use of explosives, inadequate searching for contraband, smoking underground etc.

All of the officials were found guilty on various counts but the workmen were found not guilty. The manager had his First Class "Managers" Certificate cancelled.

SOUTH CROFTY TIN MINE

It has been announced that the South Crofty tin mine is to close unless further funding is made available to see the Company through its current difficulties caused by the low selling price of tin and the strength of the UK pound. The closure will bring to an end the deep mining of tin in Cornwall.

The local newspaper, the West Briton, has published many articles in support of keeping the mine open and the consequence of closing the mine, both in economic, environmental and humane terms.

Headlines to these articles include:

"Glimmer of hope for South Crofty"
"Cash aid needed to run the pumps"
"Ministerial support pledged"
"MD says outlook for the mine is bleak"
"Springs and ancient streams may flow if pumps are turned off"
"Mine set to flood?"
"Mine will not be liquidated"
"Traders fear closure"
"It's a sad day for the whole of Cornwall"
"Task force bid to find new operator for mine"
"Go home there is nothing to do"
"Glory years of a great industry"
"We just had no choice - mine boss"
"Pay cut secures reprieve"
"Councils write-off debts"
"Mine is finalising medallion design"

The Western Morning News, another local newspaper gave great coverage to this news and their headlines included:

"Energy plant for Drofty"
"Crofty - Council backs recsue bid"
"Troubled tin mine lays off 40 workers"
Maureen Holmes

INTERNET NOTES

1) Mining-history e-mail discussion list - a proposal.

The Mining-History list is intended for the discussion of all aspects of mining and associated activity, including ore preparation, on-site smelting, transport systems, social conditions, etc., related to British and Irish sites. As such it will be inter-disciplinary in its approach, bringing together economic historians, local historians, archaeologists, archaeometalurgists, geographers - in fact all those with an interest in mining; academic, professional and amateur alike.

If you have any views on the proposal, if you would support such a list if it went ahead and would like notification, or would like more information - please contact Peter Cloughton at P.F.Cloughton@exeter.ac.uk

2) A New Mining History Website

Mining History Information, created and run by Peter Cloughton at the University of Exeter.

Access using the URL
<http://www.ex.ac.uk/~pfclough/mhin/f/>

The site is currently biased towards Wales and South-West England, reflecting the author's research interests, but also incorporates mining history related information for Britain and Ireland as a whole.

Details of the proposed Mining-History e-mail discussion list will be found on the website and these will be updated as the list develops.

A 'Notice Board' page will shortly be added to the website. If you have any mining history matter which would benefit from exposure on the World Wide Web please pass the details to Peter.

Send by e-mail to P.F.Cloughton@exeter.ac.uk or (for those with no connection to the Internet) by post to Blaenpant Morfil, Rosebush, Clynderwen, Pembrokeshire SA66 7RE. In the latter case a text file on disc would be preferred (including a 1st class stamp will ensure your disc is returned).

Peter Cloughton

3) NAMHO WEBSITE

A website for NAMHO, by courtesy of Adrian Pearce, has recently been set up. The address is:-

wkweb4.cablenet.co.uk/adrian.pearce/NAMHO.HTM

PERKINS BEACH LEAD/ BARYTES MINE

This mine, in a beautiful sequestered mountainous valley near Snailbeach is ancient and with a very interesting history. According to The Mining World in 1872 there were two underground steam engines and boilers at the 20 fathom level below the adit for pumping and winding. Unfortunately the lode failed soon afterwards and it is quite possible, in view of the expense of

removal, that some or all of the plant is still there.

Welsh Mines Society

BUNKHOUSE ACCOMMODATION AT NENTHEAD

The Mill Cottage Bunkhouse at Nenthead, which is owned and operated by the North Pennines Heritage Trust, has recently been opened in the village. It is an eighteenth century building that is set amidst a spectacular landscape.

All of the usual facilities are provided, together with a washing machine and tumble drier. Linen is provided for the nine bunks. The bunkhouse is open all year except January. The costs are £8.00 for a bed only or £12.00 bed and breakfast.

For further information and bookings, please contact Jill Fenwick, Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre, Nenthead, ALSTON, Cumbria, CA9 3PD. Tel: 01434 382037. Fax: 01434 382294. E-Mail: np.ht@virgin.net.

RESTORATION OF CORNISH MINE LANDMARK

Cash from European regional development funds have been awarded to repaint the chimney of the Pednandrea Mine which is located at Redruth. The ivy encrusted stack is the only remains of this once extensive mine.

The stack, at 80 feet high, is a shadow of its former self. It was built in "rings" (stages) and last century it was 145 feet tall. "Rings" were removed over the years, the latest being in 1936 to reduce it to its current height.

Maureen Holmes

USE FOR ST AIDAN'S OPENCAST WATER

The St Aidans opencast site at Swillington, near Leeds, was flooded by a breach in the embankment separating the site from the River Aire in the late 1980's. The major recovery work has been completed and the void is being pumped out.

The void contained 20 million cubic metres of water and this volume of water would be a good supplement for the local water shortage. In order to take advantage of this water source, albeit temporary, Yorkshire Water has developed the first reverse osmosis treatment plant to provide drinking water from the site. The plant has a capacity to provide 4m gallons of safe drinking water per day.

Yorkshire Post

A BOHEMIAN MINERS BAND AT SHEFFIELD

On the 11th July 1803, Thomas Asline Ward of Sheffield noted in his diary: "Mary and I went to the Theatre to hear the musical performance of the Famous Band of Silver Miners from the High Mountains of Bohemia."

A little over a year later, on 3rd September 1804, Mr Ward again went to a concert in Sheffield that was given by the same band.

This second concert had been advertised in the Sheffield Iris newspaper as follows:

"THE FAMOUS BAND OF SILVER MINERS will present a Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music. The Silver Miners are lately arrived in England from the High Mountains of Bohemia, to whom His Imperial Majesty Francis II, Emperor of Germany has granted two years leave of absence. They had the honour of performing before His Majesty and the Royal Family twenty four years ago. Two of the old Band are still remaining and lately had the repeated honour of performing before His Majesty and the Royal Family at Windsor They wear their original Dresses as when working in the Mines."

The band had also performed in front of other dignitaries such as the Duke of Marlborough, Prince William Frederick of Gloucester, the Duke of Buccleugh and the Earl of Dalkeith.

PDMHS Newsletter

THE COPPER MINING CLOCKMAKER

In the mid-eighteenth century the Powley (occasionally spelled Pooley) family were clockmakers in Asby (now known as Great Asby) near Appleby in Cumbria. In 1775 a mining engineer reported:

"in this parish is a cop[p]er mine in which a Clock Smith digs all his copper he uses, having smelted it himself; it [having] so fine a colour, he makes wa[t]ch cases and sells them for pinchbeck [ie Pinchbeck metal, a gold coloured alloy]. He is all has [ie always] overworked; being in a remote place, 'tis scarce known...."

PDMHS member Sam Murphy has been able to gather a good deal of information about the family from parish records, but nothing has come to light about the mine worked. It seems inconceivable that a clockmaker would also mine and smelt his own copper, particularly as it is brass that is really needed. Copper is very difficult to smelt and refine from the usual ores - it is certainly not a cottage industry unless the ores were such that smelting was easier than normal. In any event copper is not usually found in this area, lead being more usual.

Can anyone identify a possible source of the copper or shed any other light on the matter?

I feel that either the "mining engineer" was told a tall story or that he has misunderstood what he was being told, possibly due to not being used to the local dialect or accent. It is difficult to believe that someone skilled in clockmaking would mine ore, smelt it, refine it, convert it to brass by the calamine process, cast the brass and then make his clocks - it would be self-sufficiency taken to the extreme.

PDMHS Newsletter

THE FRIENDS OF ST AIDAN'S BE 1150B DRAGLINE

This is a recently formed group whose principal aim is to assist in attempts to preserve at least one of the walking draglines at St Aidan's Opencast Site near Leeds. The group will support,

encourage and provide information to Leeds City Council in its efforts to achieve the above aim. It will also research and interpret the history of draglines. It is proposed to hold occasional meetings and produce a Newsletter.

Annual subscription is £3.00, to the Secretary, Dr I J Brown, 95 Manygates, Sandal, Wakefield, WF2 7DL

BOOK REVIEWS

1. "Exploring Cornish Mines Vol 3 - Five Guided Tours" by K Brown and B Acton. Landfall Publications 1997, A5 soft back, 200 pages, over 100 plates figures and maps. Cost £8.25.

This series does more than describe a "tour". It is almost a heritage course with a 14 page introduction which sets the scene, makes the case for preservation, contains an expanded glossary of engineering terms and lists the changes which have taken place at sites in the last three years along the routes described in the two earlier volumes.

The "tours" are described in depth. The route is covered in ordinary pagination, each page having its own numbered footnotes which provide additional sources of information. Then, on almost alternate pages, the history of the most important sites is given with black lines on the border to ease identification. Within the "tour" description there are many excellent photos, historic and recent, and some exceedingly useful maps. These maps are often based on early O/S maps.

The "tours" cover Minion's and Caradon Hill, East Wheal Rose, St Agnes Village, Wendron District and Geevor and Levant Mines. For the reviewer the Geevor and Levant "tour" is the highlight of the book - to read of the progress being made on the preservation and interpretation of these wonderful remains is most heartening but there are tinges of sadness in that some features are still being lost. The book ends with a useful glossary of Cornish mining terms.

It is a fine book. How fortunate Cornwall is to have such an interesting industrial past and with so much remaining, but even more fortunate in having such competent writers and interpreters so that it can be enjoyed to the full

I J Brown

2. "500 years of Earthmoving" by Heinz-Herbert Cohrs. Published by KHL International. Cost £49.95. 1995 German edition, 1997 English edition. 260 pages, 400 photos and illustrations.

The story of excavation is told from using simple hand held tools to the sophisticated plant of today. The book covers development in all parts of the world but, understandably, the emphasis is on Europe and the United States, the birthplace of both the railbound and railless excavators. In covering 500 years of earthmoving this book is both a textbook and reference book. The story of the development of the various types of excavator can be followed in a very simple manner. The translation from the German to English seemed to be well above the normal standard and few spelling mistakes were noted. The captions to the photos and illustrations are very helpful. The index could have been more useful if it had included types of machines in addition to the "Individuals and Companies". Unlike most other books on excavators, this one deals with the subject in chronological chunks rather than by machine type so that reference to a particular type of machine has to be sought in several chapters.

There are not so many experts in excavator history but H H Cohrs must be a real enthusiast amongst the few. This work shows the hand of a real expert not only in the subject matter but in the manner in making it available and understandable to others. An expensive book but it is certainly most interesting and useful.

I J Brown

3. "Mines of the Gwydyr Forest-Part 7" By J Bennett & R W Vernon. Published by Gwydyr Mines Publications. 1997, soft back, A5, 116 pages, 41 maps and diagrams. Cost £6.95.

This volume is similar to the other six volumes in the series and describes the last section of the Llanrwst mining field.

The mines of Llanrwst, Coed Gwydr and Coe Coch and Llangelynin, Trecastell and Derwen Deg are described in this book. They are some of the most interesting mines in the area and two of them, Coe Coch and Trecastell have been operational within living memory and are associated with geologists such as R H Hoare and G N Schnellman. Both of these mines received considerable attention during the last war, Coe Coch for its sulphur and Trecastell for its Lead. The latter also operated in the 1950's and even in 1970's its waterwheel was a well known landmark on the Conway Valley slopes.

As with the other books in the series, this is well produced makes for easy and understandable reading. It concludes with a section entitled "The Mines Today" and it is most disappointing to read that at only one of these three mine sites (Coe Coch) there are any significant remains.

A most useful addition to the literature on Welsh Mines - thanks John and Rob for all the work that you have done in producing this series of books.

I J Brown

NEW PUBLICATIONS

"Civil Engineering Heritage: Wales and West Central England" by Roger Crag, Thomas Telford Publishing, 2nd edition 1997, 320pp, £12.50. ISBN 0 7227 2576 9.

This is a revised, enlarged and updated second edition of one of the Civil Engineering Heritage Series compiled by the Panel for Historical Engineering Works of the Institute of Civil Engineers. Heavily illustrated.

"Small mines of South Wales" by A J Booth, Industrial Railway Society, 1995 96pp, £15.00. ISBN 0901096 86 5.

This book includes brief descriptions, photographs and site plans for 32 small independent coal mines in South Wales.

"The Cornish Arsenic Industry" by Bryan Earl

"Metal Mines of North Wales" a collection of pictures by C J Williams.

"Exmoor's Industrial Archaeology" Edited by Mick Atkinson. Exmoor Books, 192pp, illustrated. Cost £14.95.

"A Richly Yielding Piece of Ground" by Jim Lewis. This is the story of Fowey Consols Mine, near St Blazey, Cornwall. Cost £11.99.

ABSTRACTS FROM "COAL AGE"

1. The European Community has authorised Britain to provide £891m to its coal industry between 1997 and July 2002. This is to cover liabilities inherited from British Coal, including environmental damage, obligations to former workers (pension schemes and social welfare benefits) and is to ensure that these liabilities do not place a burden on privatised mines.

2. In 1996 women made up about 5% (6000) of the mining work force in the USA with the bulk of the women being in coal mining. In 1976 there were 2,600 female workers and in the peak in the 1980's, the figure reached 11,600.

ROSEVALE MINE, ZENNOR, PENWITH, CORNWALL

Nowadays there are no underground tours at Rosevale Mine for members of the public. This is because of the high cost of insurance and, therefore, the level of commitment that would be required to cover these costs. However, certain groups, such as those who are affiliated to NAMHO and have their own insurance cover, can be guided round the mine.

Rosevale is one of the principal underground mining heritage sites in the West of England and work continues to refurbish the mine in an authentic and realistic manner.
Trevithick Trust

MINERALS 98

It is expected Minerals '98 will be launched at an International Launch Conference in London on 22nd May. Day 2 will be a Focus on Education, Day 3 will be a Industry Professionals' Conference, Day 4 will have a Health & Safety Conference whilst days 5 & 6 will be open days at a number of mines and quarries. The open days will continue through the summer of 1998.

UNDERGROUND IN NEW YORK AND LONDON

The Subterranea Britannica Secretary's Newsletter No 18, 1997, contains articles on the underground systems in both New York and London.

The reference to New York is a review of "Under New York" by Jeol L Swerdlow which was published in The National Geographic Magazine in February 1997.

The article referring to London is titled "London Below Ground - a Honeycomb of Tunnels - the Buried Rivers" by Our Special Correspondent. This very interesting article was from an old yellowing newspaper cutting that had been found in a draw. It is believed to have come from an edition of The Times that had been published in 1928.

THE LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MINERS IN THE FOREST OF DEAN

The June 1997 edition of "Firestone", the occasional publication of the Durham Dales Mining Society, contains a copy of "The Miners Lawes and Priviledges"

This copy of "The Laws and Customs of the Miners in the Forest of Dean in the County of Gloucester" (otherwise known as "The Book of Dennis") is transcribed from a facsimile reproduction (1981, ISBN 09505926 84) of "Iron Making in the Olden Times" written by the Rev H G Nicholls MA and published in 1866.

LEAD MINES OF THE GOWER, SOUTH WALES

Colin Jones has asked for some help in a research project on the "Lead Mines and other Mining Ventures on the Gower, South Wales". He has identified the presence of a number of mines in the area but would welcome any assistance.

Any assistance would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Colin directly at 41 Brynmead Close, Tycoc'h, Swansea, SA2 9EY.

A TALE FROM THE COURTROOM

Q: "Doctor, before you performed the autopsy did you check for a pulse?"

A: "No"

Q: "Did you check for blood pressure?"

A: "No"

Q: "Did you check for breathing?"

A: "No"

Q: "So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?"

A: "No"

Q: "How can you be so sure Doctor?"

A: "Because his brain was sitting in a jar on my desk"

Q: "But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?"

A: "It is possible that he could have been alive and practising law somewhere....."

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINING

HISTORY ORGANISATIONS

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wkweb4.cablenet.co.uk/adrian.pearce/NAMHO.HTM

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