



## 2017 NAMHO Conference- Lecture Review

It fell to me to arrange and host the two days of lectures for the 2017 conference of the National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO), while other members of the hosting group, the Wealden Cave and Mine Society, worried about pig-roasts, field trips, beer and the Saturday evening's live band. The conference was held over the weekend of 24th and 25th June. Being lecture coordinator gave me the opportunity to compose a review of the lectures element of the weekend, and to demonstrate that, just as in the world of natural cave studies, mine exploration involves more than simply getting wet, muddy and tired.

The sedentary element of the conference weekend took place in the White Hart Barn, the village hall in Godstone, Surrey. As there is a barrier of at least two major conurbations (Birmingham and London) between a great many mine enthusiasts and Surrey, we were not expecting to be overwhelmed by a large number of conference delegates, so a simple programme of 13 lectures over two days was put together. The remote location of Surrey has hosted this conference before in 2005, and we knew from this earlier event that it was unrealistic to expect a great many delegates. But of course, it isn't quantity that counts, its quality, and all our speakers lived up to this maxim.

The theme was Mining History Groups – Achievements and Challenges. The aim was to encourage NAMHO member groups to showcase some project they thought would best illustrate to others how they have achieved something important, and the challenges they had to overcome on the way. This also gave the speakers a great degree of freedom to speak on just about anything!

Tracy Elliot of the Trevithick Society was our first speaker. She presented a history of the society, and especially on recent achievements such as the work with the National Trust at the Levant Mine engine on

Skip Shaft, and the construction of a working replica of Trevithick's first steam road locomotive.

Peter Burgess then followed this with a history of the development by Wealden Cave and Mine Society of the Reigate Caves from a derelict state into a local visitor attraction, a project that continues today. Working with the local authority which owns the caves, statutory bodies and other third party users of the caves (old sand mines and abandoned storage cellars) was the main thrust of the presentation, alongside the physical changes and improvements that have been undertaken.

Paul Sowan, although diverting somewhat from the theme of the conference, gave a very welcome presentation on the nature of the Surrey hearthstone trade, which in mining terms was very significant in the nineteenth and first half of twentieth centuries. To have a mining history conference based in Surrey and not to have included something on hearthstone mining would have been a serious omission!



*Peter Cloughton takes questions after his presentation to the NAMHO 2017 Conference in Godstone, Surrey. Photo: Peter Burgess*

The first lecture on Saturday afternoon was from Jon Barker of the National Trust, who was the prime mover in the restoration of the Fan Bay Deep Shelter near Dover. He spoke in his role as Visitor Experience Manager for the White Cliffs of Dover. This set of tunnels dug into the cliffs dates from the Second World War and served one of several long-range gun batteries in the area, protecting access to the English Channel. The means by which the restoration took place involved a large degree of volunteer labour, largely from the Kent Underground Research Group (of which Jon is a member), and is a showcase of how such voluntary projects can work, and result in a well-presented and managed visitor site, of national significance. Being located within a SSSI presented more challenges, but as the project essentially improved the chalk grassland immediately around the shelter, this was an easy issue to deal with.

Jon Maisey followed with a comprehensive narrative of the exploration and research of a set of quarry workings south of Windrush village in Gloucestershire. Jon described how with just a few volunteers, and with the blessing of the landowner, they have probably rediscovered much of the workings here, and undertaken research to locate and identify many of the names that have been written on the walls. This was considered a reasonably urgent project while the quarry inevitably deteriorates and sections of it become sealed or too dangerous to enter. An underground stables has been identified, which had been referred to in local stories about the old quarry. Haulage features in the form of deep sinuous grooves on pillars have been identified as being caused by the passage of teams of horses, the grooves being cut by the ends of swingletrees, the horizontal pole that forms part of a horse's haulage tackle, and which is found immediately behind the rear of the animal, and to which the traces are fixed and which transfers the load of the cart to the harness and collar. Similar features are found elsewhere in traditional dimension stone quarry workings and this is a good example of how research in one region can often benefit work elsewhere.

Peter Jackson, current NAMHO Secretary, then followed with the final presentation on Saturday which was a personal view on how NAMHO ought to reconsider its role and perhaps change some of its focus in areas of importance to its members. He pointed out that membership numbers are declining and considered what the reasons might be for this. He

listed the various functions that NAMHO performs successfully, such as being an enabler for the annual field trip and conference which is nevertheless always organised and run by a member organisation, the regular newsletters which provide a national overview of the field of mining history and exploration. The website provides a useful function, and includes download facility for several mine exploration and research guidelines, and for the newly completed Research Framework for the Archaeology of the Extractive Industries in England. Peter suggested a list of things that NAMHO should be considering at its next moves:

- Encourage new officers and consider changing the constitution to permit ordinary members of member organisations to be eligible for officer roles.
- Consult member organisations on what they would like NAMHO to focus on.
- Talk to "missing" members.
- Increase subscriptions, as they have remained unchanged for a long time.
- Facilitate regional forums to liaise with other organisations and statutory bodies.
- Promote archaeological research.

From the discussion came an interesting idea, that we should all be encouraged to consult our local Heritage Environment Records, and provide corrections or additions to them where we find omissions or mistakes in entries relating to mining and quarrying sites.

Another full day of lectures followed on Sunday. Hamish Orr-Ewing started the day by telling us the story of restoration and conservation work at Brandy Bottom Colliery, north east of Bristol. This is an important Scheduled Ancient Monument, being one of the best examples of a surviving set of nineteenth century colliery structures. Being located adjacent to a popular cycle route, along the old railway that served the mine, it is reasonably well visited location now, although it was once considered a remote spot. The means by which the tall stack was conserved involved installing an aluminium ladder within the flue, which was far cheaper than the alternative of erecting a scaffold frame. It also provides a permanent means to allow future inspections. The other surviving mine structures have been stabilised and conserved after full consultation with Historic England. A long egg-ended boiler has been purchased which is the correct length to install within the surviving boiler

foundations, adjacent to the Cornish engine house remains.

Paul Thorne, well-known by many for his entrance security work, and other ingenious constructions related to mine exploration, was the next speaker. He described a project from a few years ago, which comprised a thorough investigation of a late 18th century limestone mine in the Burwash area of East Sussex. The limestones of the Purbeck inlier in the Battle area were exploited for lime-production, and those on the Ashburnham Estate are very well documented. Shafts were sunk down to intercept the beds of “grey” and “blue” limestones, and drainage levels kept the mines dry. At the spot on Kingsdown Farm selected by the Kent Underground Research Group, there was a suspected sough draining the workings into the nearby River Dudwell. This was evident as an obvious spring in the bank of the river but was clearly completely collapsed and not capable of being re-opened. The original shaft location where the workings were to be investigated was on the shallow hillside to the south of the spring, and as luck would have it, the team excavated a new shaft exactly on the line of the old shaft, not only of the same dimensions, 3ft by 4ft, but at the precise orientation as well. This meant that as the new shaft progressed downwards, they gradually discovered more and more of the original timber lining materials, and at depth found it to be very well preserved even though it was at least 200 years old. The timbers were probably from local oak trees. Several problems were overcome during the dig, including power to hoist the spoil buckets, a means to provide safe steel scaffold framework for the lining, ventilation, and finally pumping.

The shaft was of sufficient depth (40 ft) that it was necessary to pump the water using a staged combination of petrol powered and electric submersible pumps, but this proved inadequate, and finally a 4 inch pump, 8 kW, 400V 3 phase mains pump was hired for a weekend. This removed a cubic metre of water per minute, and allowed a further ten feet of the shaft to be dug out, albeit in exceptionally wet conditions, and this exposed timbers in good enough condition that no further steel lining was considered necessary. It also allowed the mine level to be inspected, as long as the pump continued to work, as the entire base of the shaft would fill up within 5 minutes once the pump was switched off. The level had collapsed a short way in either direction, but

enough of the original lining was visible to see how the level was supported and laid out. Paul gave a very lively and fascinating insight into a little-known aspect of mining, and one that is barely recognised in the locality, never mind at a national level.

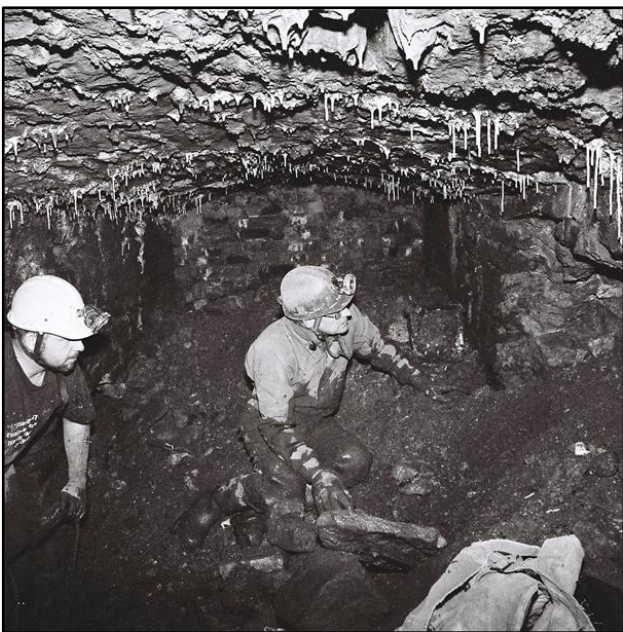
John Smiles, another KURG and Sub Brit member, then spoke about his project to conserve and improve the abandoned radar station bunker from the 1950s at Wartling near Pevensey, known as Wartling ZUN. This abandoned bunker had suffered from a serious ingress of water and this presented quite a challenge to the team of volunteers. The cause was the way in which the RAF had decommissioned the site, by demolishing many of the surface structures which allowed water to enter via cable and other service ducts. Apart from a major pumping exercise, using stages, the long term answer was to expose part of the top of the bunker, which is in effect a huge concrete box, and seal the leaking points from the outside. This also allowed ventilation ducts to be added which helps keep the site dry. One concern was that discharging a huge volume of water into the Pevensey Levels would upset Natural England, but the water itself proved not to be seriously contaminated and doing the pumping in the summer was a bonus as it raised the water in the levels beneficially.

The long term plan is to make the bunker reasonably safe for visitors, and not to restore, but to leave the site as it is. Work is concentrated on research into the history of the bunker, recovery of artefacts which were removed by others for safe-keeping, keeping the site free of water, and maintaining the basic infrastructure such as stairs and walkways.

Entitled *Working Across Boundaries*, Peter Cloughton’s presentation sought to demonstrate how it was necessary to bring together the work and knowledge of mining history groups from many areas to produce a coherent framework document for the Archaeology of the Extractive Industries in England, in conjunction with Historic England. Without this work, it would not be possible to move forward to produce a research strategy, prioritising those areas of mining archaeology that are most important. The first two phases of the Research Framework were published last year as *The Archaeology of Mining and Quarrying in England* – available as a [free PDF download](#).

The story of the excavation of the Serridge Pumping Engine in proved to be a good example of how working

with third parties provided a number of challenges to the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group. Dave Hardwick described the story of their investigations in detail. Working on the site of a coal mine required regular consultation with the Coal Authority over whether permission was required to undertake work. By and large, this turned out not to be an issue, but interpreting whether the tunnels being investigated were coal mines or just tunnels meant regular consultations with the Coal Authority. Three further considerations provided more challenges for the group. First, relationships with the neighbour were quite delicate at times, there were discussions with the local authority over whether planning consent would be required for the work (it wasn't), and the matter of insurance was also an issue. This archaeological work was often considered out of scope of the group's third party liability cover, as it was often being done underground, albeit in shallow tunnels. Whereas the group itself is not insured by its members being BCA members, so it is fortunate that many of the group are also members of the Hades Caving Club, or other clubs, which allows the BCA's liability cover to apply.



*Is this archaeology, or working in a mine? Photo: Steve Grudgings*

Richard Shaw, is a recently retired principal scientist with the British Geological Survey and presented a few recent projects within that organisation of interest to mine historians. First he described the Mining Hazards Project, which comprises three elements. There is an ongoing scheme to digitise mine plans, of which there are a great number not covered by the statutory requirements of mining legislation. These have been

variously deposited with county and regional record offices, obtained from the Coal Authority, or are in private or company collections. There is also a compilation of indexes to mine workings, and from these there follows the compilation of mining hazard maps.

Aside from this major work, Richard also mentioned investigations in the underground Corsham Bathstone quarry, geological work in Carrock Tungsten Mine, mine water levels in Frongoch Mine, and research into the exceptionally fast-growing speleothems in an abandoned railway tunnel in Derbyshire.

Our final scheduled speaker was Hugh Carson of the Ecton Mines Educational Trust. Hugh first described the work of the trust and the nature of the mine workings entrusted to them. He then described an EU-funded project to develop autonomous submersible drones, that it is planned will be capable of descending deep flooded workings to record mining features and the mineral content therein. Restoration work of part of the Ecton Mines dressing floors was also described.

The meeting was also happy to welcome Tony Brewis who had offered a short presentation on the story of copper, which was an informative and interesting way to finish the conference. First he ran through the nature of various copper deposits and minerals, and gave an overview of how they were formed and where they can be found. Tony, with a long career in the industry, was able to show the various copper mines around the world, their development and possible future.

And thus the 2017 conference came to a nice conclusion, and in 2018, we will reconvene in the Forest of Dean.

Finally, a brief comment about the venue. The White Hart Barn proved more than adequate for the conference, with very convenient facilities, a good kitchen, comfortable seating, an excellent stage and screen, and set in a quiet neighbourhood. My thanks go to fellow WCMS members Mary Albury and Jenny Watts for taking on board the catering for both days, with an ample supply of food and refreshments, and helping with setting up the hall and clearing up afterwards.

*Courtesy of Peter Burgess*  
<http://darknessbelow.co.uk/>

## Around the NAMHO Groups

### **Subterranea Britannica**

A new full-colour edition of the popular Subterranea Britannica UK Site Directory has been published. The updated and revised version of the directory lists nearly 300 underground sites in the UK that are open to the public. Sites range from Neolithic flint mines to nuclear bunkers. Many sites are open year-round, admission to others is sometimes limited to special visits arranged by local groups. A brief description, location and contact details are listed for each site, along with a breakdown by county.

<http://shop.subbrit.org.uk/product/uk-site-directory/>

### **PDMHS Magpie Mine Open Day**

The Society is pleased to announce that one of the Heritage Open Day events in the Derbyshire Peak District will be held at the Magpie lead mine, near Sheldon, on **Sunday 10th September 2017**.

This **free event** will take place between 11.00am and 5.00pm, with the last tour starting at 4.00pm. No booking required – just turn up on the day.

The day's events will include:

- **free** guided tours of the buildings and other surface features of the mine (lasting about 1 hour)
- demonstrations of blacksmith's skills
- light refreshments including tea and coffee

The Magpie Mine is the best preserved example of a 19th century lead mine anywhere in Britain, and was in use from at least 1650 until 1958 – the last working lead mine in Derbyshire. It is now a Scheduled Monument, and is looked after by the Peak District Mines Historical Society. You can read more about the [history of Magpie Mine here](#).

There is no vehicle access to the mine site itself, but cars can be left on the road close to the mine. A short walk along a track leads to the mine buildings, which are situated near the village of Sheldon in the Peak District, three miles west of Bakewell, and two miles east of Monyash. The event will be signposted from the A6 at Ashford-in-the-Water and other roads which lead to the site. Use postcode DE45 1QU to find it on sat-nav, or [click here](#) to see the location on Google maps.

Sturdy footwear is advised because parts of the site are quite rough. The site is at over 1000ft above sea level

on the limestone plateau is quite exposed, so a wind- and waterproof jacket is also advisable. There is no access to the underground workings of the mine.

<https://pdmhs.co.uk/news-and-events/>

### **National Stone Centre officially reopened**

The Discovery Centre re-opened on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2017 with a new exhibition, new re-located cafe run by a talented local chef, phase 1 changes to the educational area and fully refurbished toilets.

TV celebrity and professor, Iain Stewart formally re-opened the Discovery Centre. Local artists displayed a range of artwork as well as local bands kept the visitors entertained. Ian Stewart, MBE FGS is a Scottish geologist, a Fellow of the Geological Society of London and President of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

<http://www.nationalstonecentre.org.uk/>

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## Obituary

### **Dr. Ivor Brown 1937-2017**

Ivor like his father before him was a coal miner, living in Shifnal and working in the Madeley Wood Pit, when he joined our Club in January 1964 (although he had been involved as early as 1962).

From the beginning he was a great asset with his fund of knowledge on the subject of mining, writing numerous papers, articles and books over the years on mining and quarrying. He was also a life-long member of the Methodist Church and had other main interests in gardening, steam engines and brass bands. He was married to Iris for 54 years and they had two daughters, Anita and Julia and now four grandchildren and a much loved dog (Denver).

He became a Certificated Mine Safety Officer and his experience became very useful when in 1965 Mr Isaiah Jones the owner of the Rock Fireclay Mine at Ketley, which was in the process of closing, asked the Club if we would like to take some of the remaining mine artefacts for preservation. These included an early 20th century Siskol Coal Cutter, electric motor and drills which had been left down his mine some eighteen years before. The cutter was said to be within easy reach of the foot of a 30-metre mineshaft. On inspection carbon dioxide gas was found

not only in the shaft but overflowing the shaft collar, a daunting prospect.

However Mr Jones assured us that when the barometric pressure was high, the gas would be forced back down the shaft and into the workings beyond, also that this could be aided by lowering a fire bucket to induce draught in a neighbouring shaft; there had never been any problem with firedamp. We obviously had to rely on Ivor's knowledge, he visited the mine on a number of occasions, finally announcing that the gas had retreated far enough into the workings for us to have a go at retrieving the cutter. Ivor descended first, the job of finding and hauling the stuff out was tricky but eventually successful just in the nick of time. Ivor was the last man out by which time the gas was up to his knees, we were very lucky to have him! Unfortunately the drills were later lost in Shrewsbury but the cutter is now in the possession of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

After the closure of the Madeley Wood Colliery he also took up lecturing on mining and later was employed by Telford Development Corporation as a mining consultant to check and make safe all the mine shafts believed to exist beneath the New Town area, I believe he dealt with around 2,000 of them. He had to work from mine record maps often of dubious accuracy. Once his men had to work in wet weather in a particularly muddy field and were being somewhat defiant that no shaft could exist there, but Ivor stuck to his guns. The weekend came and work stopped, but when it was resumed on the Monday the men were shocked to find that their rig had fallen down the missing shaft.

While working in the Ironbridge area he became aware of the supposed existence of the Tar Tunnel at Coalport which by enquiry the entrance he found was accessible from a cellar near the foot of the Coalport Incline. Thus he was able to be the first in modern times to explore the tunnel and its offshoots, which he then surveyed with the help of the Club. From then on Ivor also did considerable work to aid the then new Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust with his advice and lectures. He became an Honorary Consultant and Trustee for many years.

His work for the Corporation was nearing its end so he applied and got the job of Mining and Geological Consultant to West Yorkshire County

Council, this occasioned a move to his final address at Sandal near Wakefield. After all his work for the Club and the Museum Trust it was felt that we should attempt to give him a really good send off. Stuart Smith the Deputy Director of the Museum asked me for ideas. Having just read a book on the life of Brunel I remembered that the Brunels held a banquet in the Thames Tunnel in 1828. "How about a dinner in the Tar Tunnel?" I suggested somewhat tongue in cheek.

It was therefore to my surprise that a few weeks later I got an invitation to Ivor's going away party – yes, in the Tar Tunnel. When I saw Stuart again he told me that he had checked and it was possible in the wider passing place some distance in, welcoming sherry could be drunk in the cellar before the entrance, guests would then walk in and the hot food could be delivered in insulated rail tubs using the still existing track. The only problem was how the guests could be entertained, or entertain themselves when unable to leave the tables in the narrow space. "I have a suggestion" he said, "you be the toastmaster, there will be several official speeches, thereafter you will invite everyone in turn around the tables to make their own complimentary speeches, it should be interesting."

On the evening of the dinner a large party collected their drinks in the cellar and proceeded into the tunnel, Ivor and I brought up the rear and were last to sit at the well laid out table. We went into deep conversation only to find that suddenly looking up our noses were about level with our plates, apparently the last two chairs brought in had different pattern legs and we had slowly sunk into the floor!

After the first course we could hear the main meal being brought in on the tubs rumbling towards us down the long tunnel. After an excellent meal it was time for the speeches and for me to do my bit as toastmaster. Everyone made an effort but got more and more lost for something to say, resorting to poetry and songs, which got bawdier as the wine went round. Eventually we ran out of wine and resorted to emptying a large tank of beer, we were quite merry. Now we found, what I had thought for some time, drunk underground, beer has the opposite effect to what one would expect, and we all sobered up to go home.

Ivor's move to Yorkshire obviously meant that we would see less of him but he still did his best to come down to Club meetings whenever he could. He also made many trips abroad to study mining practise in a wide range of countries. He took great interest in the designation and running of the Caphouse Colliery Museum until only a few days before his death.

The very large contribution he made from his records and researches as printed in our newsletter 'Below' has added much to the prestige of our Club and our knowledge of mining in our local area. We shall miss him greatly. It is rather sad that after several of our early members have proposed an annual meeting of veterans to renew old acquaintances, having enthusiastically supported the idea he has not lived to see it happen.

*David Adams, President Shropshire Caving & Mining Club, Journal SCMC Summer 2017*

## **Mining and Heritage News**

### **North Pennines**

*The following news provided by Peter Jackson*

#### **Allenheads Mine Washing Floors**

The North Pennines AONB are continuing their work to conserve and interpret the remains of the floors at Allenheads in Northumberland. The bouse teams are being conserved and an interpretation panel is being developed.

#### **Barneycraig Level**

Environment Agency (EA) are funding work to stabilize the slimes dumps and repair the river retaining walls. The AONB are hoping to fund the conservation of the mine shop. This may become a camping barn. EA are continuing discussions about the installation of a minewater treatment plant.

#### **Nentsberry Haggs Level**

EA are installing a weir on the River Nent which will form a slime catching pond. Public consultations continue about the siting of mine water treatment ponds.

#### **Caplecleugh and Rampgill Levels**

Public consultations continue about possible sites for mine water treatment ponds. The new water meter installations are operating satisfactorily.

#### **River Nent at Nenthead**

EA have dredged the silt ponds in the river this summer.

#### **Derwent Valley**

Studies may be starting into works which will reduce the amount of contaminated silt entering the River Derwent from mines at Jeffries and Whiteheaps.

#### **Oresome Project**

Volunteers have continued fieldwork about the botany, geology and archaeology of mine sites. Brandon walls, Cashwell, Bentyfield, Nenthead, Greenlaws, Pike Law, Coldberry and Middlehope Burn are included.

#### **Allen Smelting Mill**

Conservation work on the SAM is mainly complete. Volunteers have continued work on the leat tunnels which fed water to the site. Excavation has also continued on the floors of the bingsteads.

### **Lake District**

*The following Lake District updates provided by Warren Allison CATMHS*

#### **Coniston HLF Grant update**

This has been a very busy year with a huge amount of work being done, the surveys and the dig at Penny Rigg Mill will be described in separate articles. However there has been a lot done with the primary and secondary schools through many projects including art, history, practical demonstrations of equipment such as stamps, waterwheels, rag and chain pump etc. which have been built by Steve Cove (a new member) and trips to the mine to explain the site as part of the industrial revolution as well as the geology.

Work is ongoing with the local community to promote Coniston through its copper mining history which will hopefully bring people in to the area and make them stay for longer.

There are volunteers who are delving into the archives, newspapers and other sources with guidance from Ian Matheson who has suggested the areas which would be of the greatest benefit and have not been looked at before. There is a huge amount of new information turning up such as probably one of Ian's favourites- There is a book which lists the miners and how much it cost them to have their drills sharpened which was

done by weighing the drill steel before and after so they could be charged for the lost metal. Maureen Fleming and others are researching the development of the village and this is throwing up some fascinating facts such as how buildings had many uses, such as going from being a mill, to cottages for the miners and it has now gone.

Interpretation panels which will be at discrete locations have been agreed with Rydall Estates and will also use information from the archive research.

New people have come forward to become guides on walks to the mines and a day was recently organised to follow an existing guided walk to see what route was followed and what information was being given to the public. After a discussion near the end the walk the route has been slightly changed and a pack with information and old photographs will be produced to help the guides with the walk.

There will also be a trail leaflet produced which will take people around the village for those who do not necessarily want to go to the mines, but have a better understanding of how the village developed.

The consolidation work is carrying on with the Paddy End Mill and Low Bonsor Mill being completed and the contractors have now moved onto the Upper Bonsor Mill.



*One of the buildings at Low Bonsor Mill before restoration*

Three other people who the society owes a great deal of gratitude to for making this project such a success are:

John Hodgson (Senior LDNPA archaeologist) for submitting the first grant application to the Higher-Level Stewardship scheme which unfortunately failed,

but then had a Plan B to submit an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Eleanor Kingston (LDNPA archaeologist) who took over the application and has been instrumental in delivering the project and has put in a huge amount of her own time.

Lisa Keys (Project Manager) who has been working with the schools, the archive volunteers and local community and again has put in a huge amount of her own time.

A special mention must be made of the contractors who have done incredible work in consolidating the various structures which were in a really dilapidated state and have now been rescued from further decline.

On a personal level, I have found this project to be superb, far exceeding expectations, having met a lot of very nice people, the NAA staff who have been with the volunteers have been brilliant and although not yet finished, the project is a great testament to the society whose members have for many years fought to have this kind of work carried out and it is not yet finished.



*The same building at Low Bonsor Mill after consolidation*

### **Coniston Copper HLF Project- Low Bonsor Mill Survey**

A survey of the Low Bonsor Mill was one of the volunteer projects which ran from the 13<sup>th</sup> March to the 31<sup>st</sup> March with six people attending each day and was oversubscribed. Under the watch of John Pickin and Kate Chapman from Northern Archaeological Associates (NAA), the volunteers surveyed the whole of the site and on some days, it was carried out in what could be deemed to be challenging weather

conditions. The mill treated the poorer material from the upper mill and had stamps, jigs, buddles and settling ponds. The results will be published later in the year and should provide a better understanding of the site. The processing mill at Coniston Copper Mines was in area probably the largest in Cumbria.



*Surveying in difficult weather conditions.*

### **Coniston Copper HLF Project- Penny Rigg Mill archaeological dig**

Again, under the careful watch of John Pickin and Kate Chapman from Northern Archaeological Associates (NAA), a dig of the crushing house and jigging house floors was undertaken between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March which would hopefully answer some of the questions which came out of the survey carried out last year and provide a better understanding of the mill. Mike Mitchell also flew his drone over the site while the dig was going on. Also he and Mark Simpson put their camera up the stone culvert from where it is thought the second waterwheel was at, but it goes much further than initially thought and this has raised more questions.

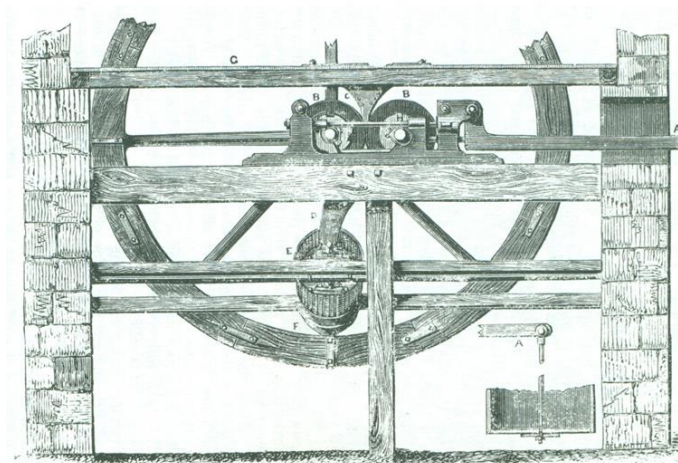


*The crushing house as it is today*

On the first day, the turf from part of the floor of each area was removed which uncovered a superb flagged

floor in the crushing house and cobbled floor in the jigging house. Over the week, the volunteers carefully surveyed and recorded the floors and various other features in the crushing house were also discovered.

The remains of three post holes in which vertical timber some eight by ten inches had been inserted, which sat on what seemed to be another floor some twenty inches under the top one. Timber also appeared to have been placed horizontally between the vertical timbers with the gap between the floors filled in with well compacted material. The vertical timbers were to help carry the upper floor where the crusher was situated with the trommels and elevators to return the oversized material back to the crusher underneath. There were also bolts still in-situ in the flagged floor which could have been to hold down the elevators and trommels. The diagram below from Mining Facsimiles published in 1857 shows how the crushing house may have looked



The ore to be crushed is lodged on a floor G and is then introduced into a hopper C, from which it falls between the crushing rolls B; these are mounted in a framework of cast iron stayed by a wrought iron bar H and firmly bolted to longitudinal beams inserted into the walls of the crushing house. To keep the rolls in contact a weighted bar A is placed on either side, which, by means of a sliding bar acting against the bearings, keeps a constant pressure upon the rollers.

The crushed ore passes from between the rolls through the chute D, into the higher extremity of an inclined cylinder E (known at Penny Rigg as a trommel), of coarse wire gauze. That portion which passes through the sieve falls onto the crusher house floor while the other which is too large is carried to the lower end of the trommel and passes into a kind of

inverted bucket-wheel F to be conveyed into the hopper to be re-crushed.

The material passing through the trommel would then have gone onto be processed by jigs. The waste from the jigs would have passed through a wooden chute into a wooden launder to be carried to the settling ponds which is what appears to have happened at Penny Rigg.



*The flagged floor of the crushing house with the three post holes in a line in the middle*

This dig has shown just how much effort and expense went into building the mill on what is quite a steep hillside. The crushing house is particularly impressive given that there appears to be two floors at ground level which have been infilled in between them to provide stability to carry the upper floor where the crusher was located.

In the future, it would be pertinent to consider completely uncovering both floors, but in the meantime, I look forward to both reports being published.

### **HLF Upper Tilberthwaite Mine Survey**

Between the 22<sup>nd</sup> May and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the last survey by volunteers was carried out on the upper part of the mine near the head of Muckle Gill in two areas, one being around Benson's level and the other at the long open work further up the gill. It was hoped that this survey would make some sense of the myriad of different periods of working from when it was reported in "Dutch Agnus Her Valentine" being the journal of the Curate of Coniston 1616-1623, that at Whitsuntide 1617 the Curate walked with Balthazar Puthparker known as Towsie to view the newly discovered mines at Tilberthwaite known as the "Three King's" (we may have also discovered the actual

workings) which was produced by W. G. Collingwood in 1910. This book was based on a transcript by the curate which was sent by Thomas Rawlinson, Esquire, barrister-in-law, Fellow of the Royal Society, to his brother, the Rev. Richard Rawlinson at St John's College, Oxford University in 1716. A letter has been written to the Bodleian Library at the University asking if the transcript is still there to see how much of Dutch Agnus is related to it.

The mine always showed great promise, hence why many different companies took out leases over a long period of time and this has made it difficult to try and work out what period the various workings related to especially the buildings that remain. The location of the stamp mill which was there in the 1690's has never really been proven, although production figures were quite high for that period.

The volunteers were getting quite good at doing the surveys and as usual in all sorts of weather, from torrential rain through to a heatwave. However, the survey was completed on time, but there are still many questions which remain unanswered possibly because the boundary between the Rydall and Pennington estates runs right through the mine. The survey was carried out under Northern Archaeological Associates (NAA) who had also done the previous ones at Coniston Copper Mines and Penny Rigg Mill, this time under John Pickin (who has worked on all of them) and Clare Henderson (who has an interest in mining) as Kate Chapman who worked on the other projects was unavailable. The volunteers have commented on how professional the NAA staff have been especially around asking them what their thoughts were on aspects of the survey and listening to their comments which has added greatly to the survey.

The work in the archive by other volunteers has also been beneficial especially the work that Jeremy Robinson Rowan has done on trying to piece together the chronology of the leases.

During the survey, a large bucking stone (previously unknown) was found close to one of the open workings on the west side of the gill as well as possible peat cutting which may be one of the sources of fuel for fire setting as described in Dutch Agnus.

Surveying a small working above Bensons level which has a (newly discovered) bucking stone so possibly dating it back to the 1600's.



*The large bucking stone found during the survey*

On Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> June following the Mines Forum meeting, Eleanor Kingston and I met BBC North West at the mine in appalling weather conditions who were producing a news item on the survey. As we arrived they had already interviewed the volunteers and John, so we proceeded to do our bit with the news item going out on the following day. There will also be an article in the Cumbria Life magazine.

It has been very difficult to interpret the site especially the buildings which caused Clare a great deal of frustration, but hopefully the final report will have some of the answers.

## **Southern England**

### **Kent Mining Museum to open in 2018**

Due to open in spring 2018, the Kent Mining Museum has been built on the site of last working coal mine in the area, Betteshanger. The aim of the museum is to celebrate the story of energy in Kent and to provide a focus for all the Kent collieries and associated communities.

With the completion of the storeroom, the museum has taken custody of a collection of over 500 artefacts. The items, which includes mining equipment, workwear and signs, are on loan from Dover museum, but the museum is actively seeking other items and local stories associated with mining.

<https://www.betteshanger-park.co.uk/kent-mining-museum.html>

<http://www.kentnews.co.uk/entertainment/mining-museum-opening-next-year-gains-over-500-artifacts-1-5151461>

### **Closure of Box Mine, Wiltshire**

Following two recent rescues from Box Mines, Wiltshire, quarry owners Hanson UK are proceeding with the gating of other entrances. One of the recent rescues was caused when a party who had entered the disused stone mines via the entrance known as Back Door were unable to exit through Jack's Working due to a grill installed after their last visit to the mine a couple of weeks earlier. They were unable to return to Back Door as they were only using mobile phone flashlights and their batteries were running low. Fortunately they had sufficient charge to be able to call for help from inside the mine.

Since then, quarry owners Hanson UK have been working to install grills on other entrances to the mines.

Darkness Below approached Hanson for comment and received the following information from David Weeks, PR and Communications Manager: *"We are replacing grills at two entrances (Jack's and Back Door) which were damaged, and are planning to install a new grill at a third entrance (Lady Hamilton's) subject to consultation with Natural England regarding the bat population. The mines are a designated site of special scientific interest due to the population of greater and lesser horseshoe bats, which are a protected species. We are also improving fencing on adjoining farmland and carrying out an awareness campaign locally to keep people out of the mines due to the danger posed by falling rocks and collapsing chambers. Last year we ceased all underground inspections on safety grounds."*

In response to a further question as to whether Hanson would be willing to discuss negotiating access to the mines for experienced cavers and mine explorers, David Weeks responded: *"No, there is no prospect of us entertaining access for anyone, I'm afraid. Nor should any experienced caver consider entering the mine."*

From recent photographs received from local cavers and further information from Hanson, we can confirm that the work referred to above has now been carried out, and cavers and mine explorers should be aware of the fact that all access to Box Mines now appears to have been lost. (10/07/2017)

<http://darknessbelow.co.uk/news-no-access-to-box-mines-wiltshire/>

## Lancashire

### **Haydock Cottage Hospital Foundation Stone secured for the public**

A 130 year old foundation stone, entrance arch and time capsule from the former Haydock Cottage Hospital has been given back to St. Helens Council for public display. The hospital, which was built in 1886 on land donated by Lord Newton, originally served the local miners. The colliers of Haydock contributed a halfpenny per week from their wages, raising the sum of £290. In consideration of this the miners of Haydock, Parr and Pewfall were treated free at the hospital.

The foundation stone, entrance arch and a time capsule have been given to the Council by the current landowner so that they can be put on display in Haydock. (13/07/2017)

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/news/2017/july/13/councillor-secures-pieces-of-haydocks-proud-history/>

## Wales

### **'Smokey Bridge' threatened with demolition**

The community of Hopkinstown, Rhondda Cynon Taff, are fighting to preserve the Gyfeillion Colliery footbridge. The bridge, known locally as 'Smokey Bridge' and used by miners to cross the railway, is jointly owned by Network Rail and the County Council and was closed in 2014 due to safety fears.

Local residents are proud of their mining heritage and are determined to save the structure from demolition, which has been the fate of many of the other mining structures in the area. The bridge is situated near to the listed Hetty Pit winding engine house.

(12/08/2017)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-40905842>

### **Queens Award for Miners' Museum**

The South Wales Miners' Museum has been awarded the 2017 Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to voluntary organisations in the UK.

The museum, situated in the Afan Valley close to Port Talbot, was the first mining museum in Wales and officially opened in 1976. Dedicated to promoting the industrial heritage of the area, the museum is operated and managed by volunteers.

<https://www.south-wales-miners-museum.co.uk/>

## Ireland

### **Sliabh Aughty Furnace Project- Bloomery Smelting Event, 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

The event: This will be the 3rd Furnace Festival organized by the Sliabh Aughty Furnace Project. The idea is to raise awareness about the 17th and 18th century iron industry in the area.

This year's Festival will be about producing iron and has two parts:

- Lee Sauder will be training up a group of people, preferably local, into the arts of bloomery iron smelting. This will happen in the week from 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

- On the following weekend, several teams, including the newly trained, will smelt iron ore into blooms (Saturday). Irish blacksmiths will, on Sunday, work some of the blooms produced. People are welcome to arrive earlier to have a test run, build their furnace or for any other reason.

What do we offer?

- Iron ore
- Charcoal (locally made)
- Clay
- Blowers
- Bricks, wood, anything else reasonably needed

Where?

- In Woodford, Co. Galway (53.051379, -8.400237) in a field next to the pond which supplied water for the blast furnace making iron there between 1681 and 1780.

Interested? Please contact me- prondelez (at) yahoo.com.

*Paul Rondelez*

<https://www.facebook.com/FurnaceProject/>

*The following news from Ireland provided by Alastair Ling, MHTI*

### **SUICRO Symposium, 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

The 20<sup>th</sup> SUICRO Symposium will be held at the Lough Melvin Holiday Centre, Garrison, Co. Fermanagh. The event will include talks on mine rescue and a day of visits to abandoned mines in nearby counties. Caving equipment will be available for purchase, and there will be plenty of opportunities to visit local caves. In the evenings there will be social events, a pub quiz and raffle, with money raised going to the Irish Cave Rescue Organisation.

<https://www.facebook.com/Suicro-Symposium-182675591884633/>

## **Wolfhill Coalmine Project**

The Wolfhill Coalmine project is a social history and art project collecting the memories and histories from the Wolfhill Mines, Co. Laois. The team aim to collect as many stories as possible from those who worked there and their families culminating in a collaborative exhibition of Photography, Art and Video and spoken word. For more information phone +353 87 942 3741. <https://www.facebook.com/wolfhillcoalmine/>

## **Cavanacaw Mine, Omagh, Co.Tyrone**

In March Omagh Minerals started underground development with the construction of a portal in the Kearney Open Pit using a refurbished drill jumbo and 6 T capacity load haul dump vehicle. After construction of the portal the company discussed future arrangements for blasting with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The company were notified that anti-terrorist cover for the use of explosives would only be provided for a two-hour period on two days each week, at the companys expense. This cover would be inadequate for the development and operation of the mine. In May the PSNI offered to provide three days cover each week, and mine development restarted on a short-term basis. By 12th July the tunnel face was 47 metres from the portal and a 0.5 metre thick gold bearing vein had been intersected, as predicted by drilling and trenching. This small vein will be developed for mining, and should produce ore for the re-commissioned processing plant by early October. Development work will continue to gain access to the main Kearney Vein at depth. New arrangements for blasting have been agreed with the PSNI which will aid development. <http://www.galantas.com/news/>

## **Scotland**

### **Extension for Leadhills and Wanlockhead Railway**

Described as Britain's highest narrow gauge adhesion railway, the line currently only stretches 0.6 miles from Leadhills to Glengonnar, just short of Wanlockhead. The railway operates on the former trackbed of the Caledonian Railway, which originally served the lead mining industry, closing in the 1938 after the mines in Wanlockhead closed.

The original plans to extend the railway to the Wanlockhead were made 20 years ago, with the breakthrough being made with an agreement with the landowners to access the trackbed.

Trains are expected to be running by 2020 and is expected to boost local tourism. In 2016 the railway provided a lifeline to rural residents with a road closure meaning a 50 mile detour by road. <https://www.leadhillsrailway.co.uk/>

*The following news provided by Alastair Lings, MHTI*

### **Lochaline Mine, Morvern, Argyllshire**

Lochaline Quartz Sand Ltd have invested £1M in mineral processing equipment and storage facilities at their silica sand mine. The expansion has created nine new jobs.

The companys Operations Director, Daniele Trogolo Got said "This latest capital investment underlines our commitment to the mine and local area. It should put us in a good position to supply high quality sand to new and emerging markets both in the UK and internationally. The re-opening and refurbishment of the original Lochaline sand mine coupled with this latest venture and a highly committed workforce means we can look forward to the future with confidence". (23/05/2017)

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/north-of-scotland/1250006/jobs-boost-for-lochaber-community-in-1million-mine-expansion/>

### **Cononish Mine, Tyndrum, Perthshire**

Scotgold Resources Ltd have submitted another planning application (2017/0254/MIN) to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority. The application differs from the existing planning permission with a redesign of the Tailings Storage Facility, and changes to the phasing of production.

The companys Chief Executive Officer, Richard Gray said "The revisions made to the project in this application offer significant advantages, both in terms of environmental impacts and economics with the peak funding requirement reduced from GBP18.5 million to GBP7.4 million. In parallel to the permitting process we are continuing to examine the financing options now available". (18/08/2017)

<http://www.londonstockexchange.com/exchange/new/alliance-news/detail/1503053167490638900.html>

## Assistance Required

### **'TRAPPED' – a production by Experiential Dance and Film Company**

We have received an enquiry from the director of a dance and film company called Experiential. Their current production - "Trapped" - is motivated by the true and world renowned story of 33 Chilean miners who, against all odds, survived 69 days trapped underground. This is an inspiring and emotional story sharing miners' bravery, their brotherhood and strive for survival, creating the basis for a production which made the director personally connect to the miners' story, was deeply powerful and gave her hope in humanity.

In 2018, the company is touring the production internationally through seven underground venues including the National Mining Museum and Pooles Cavern in Buxton - as part of Buxton Fringe Festival. The director has made contact with us to offer opportunities to participate in their workshops and contribute mining stories. Experiential is aiming to collect old mining safety videos and have purchased a small amount of National Coal Board footage from the BFI. They are asking whether we have any footage and would like to see it brought back alive in this show. If anyone wants to contribute or find out more, please contact Rachel Johnson direct via [rachel.johnson17@icloud.com](mailto:rachel.johnson17@icloud.com).

Finally Experiential would be delighted for our community to experience the Buxton show and will provide more information, flyers, e-mails etc. to be shared across our network and we will publish these in the newsletter and website when we receive them.

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## Publications

### **British Mining No.103, John Taylor and Sons and Their Three 'Drops of Comfort'**

*Robert W. Vernon*, Northern Mines Research Society, paperback, 250 pages, illustrated with b&w photographs, plans and maps, A5  
ISBN- 978 09014507309

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, British companies exploited the rich mining areas of Spain, bringing with them substantial capital and technological resources. This was an important factor

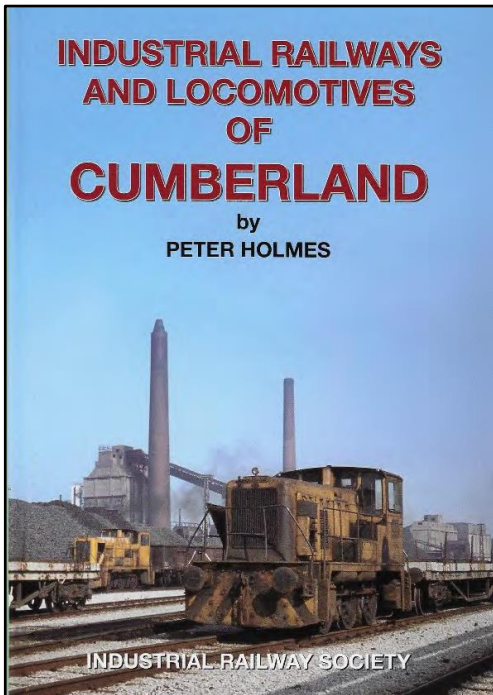
in the decline of lead mining in the UK. The world famous mining house of John Taylor and Sons developed three large companies: the Linares Lead Mining Company, the Fortuna Company and the Alamillos Company which together paid consistent dividends for well over 50 years from about 1850 until the start of the First World War. These companies were the Taylors' 'Three Drops of Comfort', which brought great wealth to the family. This account also includes the history of two more modest ventures: the Buena Ventura Company and Spanish Mining Properties which were developed towards the end of this period.

This is a comprehensive work with over ninety illustrations and 250 pages and is a fitting tribute to British mining expertise in its heyday.

### **The Mines of the Shrewsbury Coalfields: Hanwood, Leebotwood and Dryton and trials in North East Shropshire**

*Mike Shaw*, YouCaxton Publications, paperback, 220 pages, ISBN- 978 1911175155

The book covers the history of three small coalfields just east of Shrewsbury west into Powys and south to just outside Church Stretton, The coal was thin, faulted and low grade but was available and affordable. The coal was used to power the steam engines around south Shropshire including Snailbeach, Tankerville and the Bog. staking research along with numerous site visits where shafts and building remains have been identified, each area is supported by excellent maps drawn by Daviid Adams and will help others exploring these areas find the mines and their remains. In Pontesford at least two of the engine houses have been preserved as dwellings, colour photographs taken by Ken Lock in the late 1960s give a better idea of what they looked like. A third engine house has been preserved recently with lottery monies although access is restricted. This book is an excellent study of the area as you expect from this author whose previous study on the Lead Copper and Barytes Mines of Shropshire. Included are Pontesbury, Hanwood, Leebotwood, Dryton and trials in North East Shropshire



## Industrial Railways and Locomotives of Cumberland

*Peter Holmes*, Industrial Railway Society, hardback, 464 pages, illustrated, £35.00, ISBN 978 1901556957

This book, by CAT member Peter Holmes, is the result of over 40 years work. Impressively researched, organised and cross referenced, it covers industrial railways in the former county of Cumberland. A second volume will cover Westmorland, Furness and the Isle of Man, which may well end up titled just 'South Cumbria'.

There are over 450 pages with more than 200 historic photographs, each with a descriptive note, 18 key maps, and a section of explanatory notes. It describes every conceivable industrial railway or locomotive, and is divided into chapters on Locomotive worked sites, National Coal Board, Contractors Locomotives, Preserved Sites and Non Locomotive Worked Sites. At the back are comprehensive indexes of Locomotives, Locomotive Names and Owners and Locations. The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway and Ministry of Defence railways are included. For the mine historian, most of the railways are in or to do with quarries, mines or ports. Just leafing through at random, one can find headings on Nenthead Mines, Force Crag Mine, Hodbarrow Sea Wall, Haig Colliery, Millom Ironworks, Florence Mine, Honister Slate Quarries, Hartside Barytes Mine; even Goldscope, Borrowdale Graphite Mine and the Elizabethan Silver Gill Lead Mine are covered.

Whilst principally a reference book, with detailed information about the history of each railway or locomotive, one can find anecdotes of the life and times which make good reading. I can't wait to see the second volume, which should include Barrow, Furness and Coniston.

*Review by Ian Matheson,  
CAT, the Newsletter of CATMHS, No.128 August 2017*

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to convey my appreciation to Peter Jackson, Warren Allison, and Alastair Lings for their contributions towards this edition of the NAMHO Newsletter. I would also like to thank Peter Burgess for allowing use of his article on NAMHO 2017 Conference lecture review from Darkness Below.

Items are credited to the contributor, unless written/supplied by myself as Editor.

*Roy Meldrum, NAMHO Editor*

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## Erratum

The correct date for the NAMHO Autumn Council Meeting is **4<sup>th</sup> November 2017** and not as reported in NAMHO Newsletter No.80. Apologies for any confusion caused.

**Copy date** for the next newsletter is **12<sup>th</sup> November 2017**  
With publication due December 2017

**Contributions:** Email the Newsletter Editor-  
[editor@namho.org](mailto:editor@namho.org)

Or by post-

NAMHO Editor, c/o Peak District Mining Museum, The Pavilion, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, DE4 3NR

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September 2017:** Heritage Open Days, England  
<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>

**16<sup>th</sup> September 2017:** FREE Autumn Lecture: Coal Mining Underground - A Personal Journey to its End, 1.30pm at Big Pit, Blaenafon, NP4 9XP. Dr Barrie Jones, CBE, was born in Llanelly Hill, near Blaenafon and worked at Big Pit in 1964 & 1965 whilst studying at University.

Barrie will be sharing his experiences and involvement of working as a mining engineer for the NCB/British Coal Corporation for 26 years between 1970 and 1996, before embarking on a long and distinguished career which also included working for the Mines Rescue Service, a Non-Executive Member/ Director of the Coal Authority, Chief Examiner for the Mining Qualifications Boards and Fellow of the Institution of Mining. Barrie was awarded a CBE in 2012 for his "services to mining".

Supported by players of the People's Postcode Lottery

**20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017:** ERIH Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark. Topic of this year's conference is "Industrial Tourism: Linking the past with the present and future".

**27<sup>th</sup> September 2017:** "Cornish mining, mineral processing & heavy engineering through the eyes of a mine engineer", 7.30pm at King Edward Mine Museum, Newton Road, Camborne. A talk and slideshow by Bob Orchard, an ex-Cornish miner and has an amazing collection of photographs from his time here. He has come back from Down Under to give us this slideshow, not to be missed.

**28<sup>th</sup> September 2017:** : "Cornish mining, mineral processing & heavy engineering through the eyes of a mine engineer", 7.30pm at The Public Hall, 3-5 West Street, Liskeard. A talk and slideshow by Bob Orchard, an ex-Cornish miner and has an amazing collection of photographs from his time here.

**29<sup>th</sup> September-1<sup>st</sup> October 2017:** Hidden Earth, UK's National Caving Conference and Exhibition, Churchill Academy, Churchill, North Somerset, B25 5QN  
<https://hidden-earth.org.uk/>

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017:** Coal and Transport by Road, Rail and Canal, 7.30pm at The Somer Centre, Midsomer Norton. An illustrated talk by local railway expert Andrew Linham. Admission £3.

**27<sup>th</sup>- 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017:** SUICRO Symposium, Garrison, Co. Fermanagh. <https://www.facebook.com/Suicro-Symposium-182675591884633/>

**4<sup>th</sup> November 2017:** NAMHO Autumn Council Meeting, Dean Field Study Centre, Parkend, Forest of Dean

**28<sup>th</sup> March-1<sup>st</sup> April 2018:** 40th Annual Intercollegiate Mining Games, hosted by the Camborne School of Mines, Cornwall.  
<http://www.csmimg.com/csm-2018-mining-games>

**10<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> May 2018:** 13<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Archaeological Mining History, Kelmis / Plombières, Belgium. <http://europa-subterranea.eu/>

**6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> June 2018:** Mining History Association Annual Conference, South Dakota, USA.  
<https://www.mininghistoryassociation.org/index.htm>

**25<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> August 2018:** Sliabh Aughty Furnace Festival, Woodford, Co. Galway.  
<http://www.furnaceproject.org/>

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