



Welsh Mines Society

Cymdeithas Mwyngloddiau Cymru

FIELD MEET NOTES – June 2004

Bryneglwys Slate Quarry

The date when quarrying started isn't precisely known, but it was active in a small way by the early 1840s. In 1844 John Pughe obtained a quarrying lease from Lewis Morris, owner of the Bryneglwys Estate, for a term of 50 years. This was followed in 1846 by another lease, this time for the Cantrybedd land on the opposite side of the valley. Pughe sank a shaft to exploit the Narrow Vein, which runs from NE to SW across the valley, and built a small mill nearby connected to the foot of the shaft by a level, now known as the Daylight Adit.

In 1864 the Aberdovey Slate Company Limited was formed by a group of Manchester business men who opened the quarry on a relatively large scale, built the Tallylyn Railway and erected some 71 workers houses in the village of Abergynolwyn. They sank the main shaft just north of the Narrow Vein to a depth of 204 feet and the long level from its foot to an exit 645 yards further down the valley.

Outside the vein a series of levels at 25 yard vertical intervals were driven and cross-levels at approximately 40 yard intervals gave access into the vein. This enabled the rockmen to open chambers at each point. Over a period of many years a chamber would be worked until it was 30 yards long and separated from the next by a wall 10 yards wide.

A haulage system driven by two 30ft waterwheels was started in 1862 but fell out of use before 1910, - the remains have been scheduled as an Ancient Monument. Another slate vein, the Broad Vein, was exploited on several levels but was probably worked as a series of open galleries. Now it forms a large worked out pit or sinc visible from the road up the valley from Abergynolwyn.

In 1977 most of the buildings - mills, houses, barracks - were wantonly destroyed by the Forestry Commission which owns much of the land in the valley. Moreover, trees planted from the mid-1950s onwards have clothed much of the site. Recently Forest Enterprise have belatedly realised the tourist potential of the valley and several new paths have been made, selective felling has opened up views long hidden and the 1864 drumhouse above Nant Gwernol station was conserved.

Several adits are still accessible, opening out onto the slopes each side of the valley. The Daylight adit and the Long Tunnel are still intact. Most of the Narrow Vein chambers have either been filled in with waste rock or have collapsed, though about 20 still remain open. There is a dam (breached shortly after closure in 1946) higher up the valley and the control tower remains in situ.

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