

Welsh Mines Society

NEWSLETTER

No.10 June, 1984

1. Joint WMS/NAMHO Field Trip to Snowdonia 19 and 20 May 1984

The lion's share of organising this very successful weekend was undertaken by Eric Gray-Thomas, to whom our best thanks are due. Eric was on his back with gall-bladder trouble only a few days before but rallied sufficiently to lead parties to Lliwedd and other inaccessible sites when the time came. Ernie Pickard also greatly assisted as leader. One of the prime features of the weekend was an underground trip up ladders in Sygun mine by kind permission of the owner Phil Amies, who is hoping to turn the site into a mining museum. The WMS is officially lending its support to this venture. We also visited Llwyndu and Nantmor, and mines in the Nantlle Valley as well as the Cornish Engine at Dorothea Slate Quarry. This engine, erected in 1904, though in a sad state is more or less complete and will hopefully be opened to the public in the fullness of time.

2. Mill's Foundry, Llanidloes

The records of this foundry, once famous for mining machinery in Wales and overseas, are now deposited in the National Library of Vales, Aberystwyth, dept. of pictures and maps. They should be well worth inspecting.

3. Welsh Water Authority and Nant Ffrancon

The WWA is currently considering a plan for a pipeline and treatment works which may involve destruction of the early arsenic works etc. at Ceunant near Dolawen. I visited this site recently with Rob Vernon and Alan Williams and there is no doubt the flues etc. at this spot are of great archaeological interest. Rob is taking up the matter to ensure safeguarding this industrial monument.

4. WMS Logo

The final design is now approved and has been sent to Gary Llewellyn who kindly volunteered to draw it up to professional standards.

5. Mining & Geological Books for sale Apply D.Bick.

All bound and in good condition except items 2, a few somewhat worm-eaten. First reasonable offers accepted.

1 <u>Proceedings of the Cleveland Institution of Engineers</u>	9 Volumes
Sessions: 1881/2, 1886/7, 1889/90, 1891/2, 1922/3, 1926/7, 1928/9, 1929/30.	
2 <u>Reports of the Inspection of Mines in India</u> 1894/1923	30 Volumes
3 <u>Bulletins of the US Bureau of Mines</u> 1910/20	20 Volumes
4 <u>Proceedings of the Lake Superior Mining Institute</u> 1912-1930 (Vols 17-28)	12 Volumes
5 <u>New Zealand: Papers and Reports Relating to Minerals and Lining</u> 1893-1902, 1904,5?6, 1910,11,14	16 Volumes

6. Clogau There has been no shortage of press coverage concerning this mine. According to a report in the Sunday Times 20 May, leading geological surveyors Mackay & Schnellman 'see excellent prospects for economic goldmining at Clogau'. The directors include Lord Harlech and the venture is clashed, not surprisingly, as a higher risk investment. No doubt money will be made by someone.

A glossy prospectus has been issued which exceeds 30 pages including coloured maps and plans. It appears it can be obtained from J.P.Gorman, F.C.A., Hill House, 1, Little New Street, EC4A 3TC, and will no doubt become a collector's item.

7. Gwynfynydd The best part of £1,000,000 has been spent. The mill is 19th century in concept, flotation not having penetrated this far, although invented at Glasdir only a stone's throw down the road. Prospects promising if handled properly.

8. Penrhyn Mine Carnarfon. Eric Gray-Thomas reported it has vanished during construction of the Bangor by-pass.
9. Mines at Moelydd Grid Ref 245 255 NE of Llanymynech. According to D.C.Davies, this hill was 'fairly riddled with shafts'. Much lead and zinc was reputedly got and Davies recalled a long level driving when he was a boy (about 1840). Is anything to be seen there now?
10. Van Mine As reported in N/L 9, the surface of Van, or some of it, was sold to an Egyptian Mr. Nathan aged 27. This millionaire, according to a report in the Guardian kindly sent by Alan Williams, has also bought two tiny islands off Scotland, mere rocks that he had never seen, for £4,700. What next? I have also to thank Chris Williams (now father of a bouncing boy) and Merfyn Williams for similar reports.
11. Ystrad Einion Wheel The furore over the proposed removal of this famous underground wheel has died down. The Forestry Commission, after refusing to let it go, discovered that it was not on their land. It has now been brought under the protection of the Ancient Monuments Dept. and in fact apparently belongs to a Pop Group. [*Robert Plant, of Led Zeppelin*]
12. Industrial Archaeology in Gloucestershire I have been requested by the Secretary of the Gloucestershire Society for I.A. to point out that the 3rd edition of this Gazetteer of sites is now available at £1.75 incl. postage, from Hon. Sec. Oak House, Hamshill, Coaley, Dursley, Glos.
13. Plas Tan Y Bwlch Course on experimental archaeology 14-18 September 1984. This looks a very interesting weekend indeed and involves actual iron-smelting trials. Further details from the Snowdonia National Park Study Centre, Maentwrog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd.
14. Mineral Samples Required The Geological Museum of North Wales, Bwlchwyn, near Wrexham, wishes to purchase large specimens for display, in size not less than 2ft x 2ft slabs. If any members have such, we should like to hear, whether for sale or no!
15. Forestry Commission According to the Guardian 13 Feb., the Exchequer has ordered £82 million to be raised within 2 years by sale of Forestry land. The effect on our interests could be damaging.
16. Gold at Cwm Prysor Roy Shambrook reports discovering 'a neat little gold nugget in the Afon Prysor just below the copper mine 768395'.
17. Anglesey Mines I recently spent a week in Anglesey and visited a number of lesser known copper workings, being joined on one day by Jeremy Wilkinson. Several are right on the cliffs with adits going in from the sea-shore and of great antiquity judging by the state of the dumps and opencuts. There is much scope for research into the subject.
18. Ancient Mining & Smelting. Mention has been made in a previous N/L about the Institute for Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies, which is doing great things, mainly abroad, in extending our knowledge. Sophisticated zinc smelters of the 16th century have been excavated in India, and a T.V. Film has been made in Israel on copper smelting 3000 years ago. This will be shown in England in due course and should be worth seeing.
19. WMS 5th Anniversary Meeting Though the idea of a dinner fell flat, Bob Vernon has suggested a mid-day lunch before a field trip. This sounds a good idea and we could invite a guest speaker for a short address. I- should like to suggest the DYLFIFE area with a meal in the vicinity. The WMS began at Dylife and perhaps it is time to go there again as a kind of pilgrimage, where we can take stock of developments over the past 5 years since the inaugural gathering on 10th June 1979. Comments please. The matter will be raised at the September meet, see item 28.
20. Dylife Enquiries about this little book, out of print for several years, continue undiminished. I have decided to reprint it more or less as it stands, but to include an addendum about the critical period of the late 1850s. This was a time when Cobden & Bright were making frantic efforts to prevent the mine falling like a ripe plum into the hands of the Taylors. A 'new' old photograph will also be included.

Enough material has in fact come to light to justify an entirely new book

21. The Old Copper Mines of Snowdonia This is now virtually out of print and a new revised edition will shortly go to press.

22. O.T.Jones, Lead & Zinc Memoirs Mid-Wales Item 8 N/L No. 8, refers to a Xerox copy of this classic work. I have sold it for £15 to Alun Jones (the highest bidder) and have paid half the amount into Society funds, as promised.

23. Mine Surveys in Mid Wales. Marilyn Palmer has asked it to be made clear that the title of her NMRS Monograph The Richest In All Wales mentioned in N/L No. 8, was taken from the description of the mine by those who worked there, as reported by George Borrow in Wild Wales. Further surveys by the Leicester University Adult Education Dept. include Bleanceulan, Temple, Bryn Dyfi, Bron Floyd and Ystrad Einion. The results will be published and the original material deposited with the RCHM at Aberystwyth.

24. Llangynog & District Alan Williams has completed his monograph on the subject, to be published by NMRS. Having read the M/S, I can recommend the work, upon which much effort has been expended.

25. Slate Quarrying in Pembrokeshire. Mary and Gordon Tuckers' paper 'The Old Slate Industry of Pembrokeshire and other parts of South Wales' has been published in The National Library of Wales Journal Vol.23 No.2, and contains some very interesting material including much statistical & Company details.

26. Sygun Copper Mine Philip Aimes has just sent in details of his descent of Pen Bwlch Shaft, 220ft. above and slightly east of the Victoria level. No.4 level was reached about 60ft down and stoped out on either side. The shaft descends a further 80ft to No.3 where a connection leads to the top of a stope in Victoria level 70ft below. Various other workings were also encountered.

27. Bi-annual Subscriptions To save work all round, the idea of paying £2 for 2 years subscription rather than £1 annually, is worth considering as standard practice.

28. Next Meeting Gwynne Slate Quarry & Museum, Glyn Ceiriog, south of Llangollen. 2 noon Sunday 9 September. There is a good underground trip here, with a little-known lead mine nearby if time permits.

29. June 1985 Meeting Provisionally 16 June in the Dylife/Llanidloes Area.

30. Next Newsletter Please send contributions before 1 December.

D.E.Bick,
Pound House, Newent, Glos.
4/7/'84.

31. Margaret Griffith, 16 Empire Road, Sheffield, S7 1GL is interested in the Manganese Mines of the Lley Peninsular, particularly 1827-1886. Information on Andrew Burt, the manager of Nant Mine Rhiw who was born 1827 particularly wanted.

32. Mr R P Frosty Higher Sweethey, Trull, Taunton, Somerset, is a modest collector of Welsh Mine Share Certificates and would be pleased to hear from any like-minded.

33. A reminder that the label on the envelope shows for which years you have paid. No number means, you have not paid since 1982. An orange sticker means you have not paid for 1984 . . . far be it for the WMS to act like the Electricity Board but . . . (!)