

Welsh Mines Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 11 December 1984

1. IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT RE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many members are still persisting in sending their subscriptions to me. Please note they should be addressed to the membership secretary/treasurer Dr. David Roe, 29 Somers Road, Worcester. The number on the address label on the envelope of this Newsletter tells when you are paid up to. The sub is £1 per year but £2 pays for two years and saves a lot of trouble. Please send it now, to David Roe, not me.

2. Meeting at Gwynne Slate Quarry - 9th September 1984

This was well attended and an interesting underground trip took place. The manager informed us of old lead workings nearby, but access was prohibited due to danger of disturbing pheasants. There are often problems, but this is a new one.

3. Sygun Copper Mine

The WMS actively supported planning permission for turning part of this site into a mining museum, but the application was rejected. We have also supported an appeal, but the outcome is as yet unknown. Member Alun Richards is however very unhappy, claiming such museums 'tend to destroy their own sites, and other sites are vandalized in seeking artifacts to display out of context and unprovenanced ... it does little for the credibility of the WMS to support it'. If other members have similar opinions I should be grateful to hear, as we do not wish to act undemocratically. Personally I feel if Alun's arguments were generally followed, there would be no mining museums at all.

4. Frongoch Survey

The RCAHM has completed its survey, and on behalf of WMS I am currently researching into the mine's history for a joint publication, under the auspices of Northern Mines Research Society. This should be a valuable first step in getting something underway to save a unique site from eventual oblivion. If any member can supply old or new photos of Frongoch above or below ground, these would be much appreciated and acknowledged.

5. Gold at Arenig Mine

These workings went under the railway in Cwm Prysor and John Burman has found on the tips a splendid specimen of gold in a small piece of weathered quartz. Following Roy Shambrook's similar discovery in the same area, a rush to this district can be anticipated.

6. Red Dragon Mine - Important Discovery

perhaps the best known of 'lost' mines, the mystery of its location has now been solved by John Burman as a result of intensive field and documentary research. The remote site near DinasMawddwy includes leats, an open adit, carpenters and blacksmiths shops, wheelpit, and the tumbled building that once housed, and perhaps still houses, Perke's Crushing & Amalgamating Machine of 1854. The whole area is of great interest and it is proposed to hold a WMS field trip there.

7. Mines of Mawddwy Research Group (MOMRG)

This is being formed by John Burman as Project Co-ordinator, as a sub-section of WMS, being part of the general amenity of the society. John's address is pant-y-Llan, Arthog, Gwynedd, to whom all correspondence should be sent.

8. Friar's Coat

In the same vicinity is Friar's Coat, working in the 1770s and later. This is a mine of particular interest to David Roe, as well as others on Aran Mawddwy. If anyone is going there to explore or has information, he would like to know and perhaps arrange a joint visit.

9. Gwynfynydd Open Day - 17th November 1984

Our Gwynydd correspondent availed himself of the tour which was advertized in the Cambrian News, provoking an overwhelming response. Minibuses conveyed the crowds to the mine, 'a hair-raising journey, it was madness, at car rally speeds', where refreshments were laid on and maps, plans and gold samples made available for inspection. Helmets and torches were provided for a trip into No. 6 level where the underground mill was in full swing. According to a publicity hand-out gold is more or less proven over a large vertical range, the best ore going down below a 40 ft. winze under adit. Prospects appear good. Altogether our correspondent was very impressed apart from the equally hair-raising ride back. Next time he will go under his own steam.

10. Clogau

The company*s highly glossy and professional prospectus reveals a speedway rider and a Lord of the Realm among the directors, the whole bearing a remarkable resemblance to an Absalom Francis promotion in the best style. No prizes for predicting the outcome.

11. Graham Hall, late of Kings Youth Hostel, Dolgellau.

Graham, host of our 1983 weekend conference is now involved in a publishing business locally, concentrating on topics of local interest.

12. WMS Finances

In spite of our minimal subscription, assets currently stand at £140, thanks to David Roe*s efficient management. At a time when virtually all other societies are raising subs, we could actually get by with a reduction ! See item 15.

13. Forestry Commission Sales of Land

A Parliamentary committee has been asking the F.C. some very pertinent questions about land sold at secret prices to buyers of unknown identity. All this augers badly for mine sites on such territories.

14. Welsh Mills Group

A group to study Welsh wind and water-mills has been formed. For details contact D.Nash, Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans, Cardiff. The sub is £4.

15. WMS Random Publications

David Roe has suggested that in view of our good financial position we could publish the occasional paper on Welsh mining/quarrying not exceeding 14 pages in length - items worthy of seeing the light, but not long enough for a full-blown monograph. These would be circulated with the Newsletter. This seems a sound idea and we look forward to contributions and/or comments.

16. Adit near Arthog

. David Black reports an adit with rails in situ in the garden of a nearby house. We await further details.

17. Rhiwnant Valley Mines, Rhayader

. David Roe has sent several pages copied from a book called Up the Claerwen, referring to lead mines and miners when at work, many of whom walked there from Ffair Rhos. Date and author unspecified, but clearly a title to look out for. WMS will visit this area before long. See item 35.

18. Poisoned Fish

Peter Challis has forwarded a cutting from The Guardian referring to pollution killing over 4,000 fish in the River Mawddach, described as a major disaster. High levels of zinc, cadmium and copper were detected. The manager of Gwynfynydd, Mr. Nick Warrell (ex. Wheal Concord) disclaimed responsibility.

19. Geological Map for Sale

I have a good map of the Sheffield area extending from Mansfield to Leeds, showing all coal seams and collieries, 1/2 inch/mile, signed in person by W.G. Fearnside, 1916. It must be worth £5. Money back if not satisfied.

20. Mathew's Slate-Dressing Machine

An example of this device, pre-dating the Greaves rotary design, has been unearthed by members of an IA course held at Plas Tanybwich. It is hoped to be put on display at Llechwedd Slate Caverns (Cambrian News 14/9/84, ex. Alan Williams).

21. Mines at Moelydd near Llanymynach

In response to a mention in Newsletter No. 10, Dr. T.S. Vaughan writes to confirm the hill was riddled with trial shafts at the time of his visit in the last war. The old D.C. Davies level was serving as a water supply and its mouth was blocked by a pump-house.

22. New Books, Papers

(a) Mining Facsimilies, 41 Windsor Walk, South Anston, Sheffield. This is a private venture by Dick Bird, and the first title is The Principles of Metal Mining by J.H. Collins. -1875, 150 pages, 76 line drawings, index etc., size 4½" x 6½". Price about £5.95 post paid. Apply to Dick for further details; we wish the project success and look forward to further re-prints, particularly O.T. Jones.

(b) The British Lead Mining-Industry, Dr. 'Roger Burt, £10.95 + p & p, 344 pages, published by Dyllansow Truran, Trewolsta, Trewirgie, Redruth, Cornwall - deals with the development of the lead mining and manufacturing industries in the UK after 1700. Having purchased a copy a few observations may be of interest.

This is clearly a very scholarly work with copious references and the result of a great deal of research. The main topics concern mineral ownership, organization and finance, management and labour, sale of ore and price of metal, manufacture and consumption, charts and tables included. These are aspects that have not hitherto received very much critical attention, and the contribution is thus very welcome. The presentation is however rather drab, with not a single illustration beyond a few line drawings - a common failing in academic titles, as though in some manner to lighten or illuminate the text detracts from its worth. Also, paragraphs sometimes reaching a page in length make the narrative heavy going. Nevertheless, an important book which should grace the shelves of every serious student of mining history.

(c) The Old Mines of the Llangynog District. R.A. Williams.

This title should be on sale in the summer, published by NMRS at £4.50.

(d) Mineral Statistics, Devon & Somerset. Dr. Roger Burt,

Peter Waite and Raymond Burnley - details of output, ownership, management and employment. £3.95. Published by the University of Exeter in association with NMRS. Orders to Dr. Burt, Department of Economic History, University of Exeter.

(e) The Minerals of Newent, Glos.

A paper of mine on the iron, lead, zinc and silver minerals and mines of this district is to be published by The Russell Society. Further details in due course,

(f) Dylife

A revised re-print is now in the press, with new material on Cobden and Taylor.

23. Van Chimneys

These are again said to be under threat and the RCAHM has been informed of the owner so that action might be taken.

24. Gorn Lead Mine, Llanidloes

Chris Williams has sent a very interesting account of a visit to Gorn mine in the 1840s, full of details of the underground workings and dressing plant. Published in Labour and the Poor in England & Wales 1849-51 Vol. III. Published by Frank Cass, 1983.

25. Ancient Copper Workings

According to IAMS Newsletter No. 7, copper workings at Mount Gabriel in S.W. Ireland described by Dr. J.S. Jackson as pre-Christian, have now been definitely dated by radio-carbon at around 1500 B.C. This should no doubt put an end to a counter-claim that the workings were as recent as 19th Century. Such findings are of great interest and support the opinions of those who believe a number of copper mines in this country also have pre-historic origins - especially around the coast.

26. Mining in Anglesey

Borings at Parys Mountain have started which could lead to a £26,000,000 investment for zinc, lead, silver and gold. WMS proposes to visit these mines in due course. See item 36.

27. Mining History Publications since 1945

Dr. Roger Burt proposes to compile a bibliography, something that is much needed. Hopefully the pre-1945 period will also eventually be covered, although a daunting task.

28. 1985 NAMHO Conference 31 May - 2 June 1985

To be hosted by Peak District Mines Historical Society at the Mining Museum, Mattock Bath. Details from the Museum.

29. 16th Western I.A. Conference 16th March 1985

At the Strode Theatre, Church Road, Street, Somerset. Details from C.A. Buchanan, 2 Blake Green, Ashcott, Bridgwater. I shall be talking on the cast-iron firebacks of Gloucestershire - one of my non-mining interests.

30. Cwm Ciprwth Copper Mine. North Wales

Damian McCurdy writes that the site has changed into sympathetic hands. He has felled 3 trees growing out of the masonry aided by an NMRS group. 'The wheel now looks superb ... and perhaps more can be done in the future'. (Restored to going order?)

31. Mining Paintings, Engravings

Peter Challis is seeking old illustrations of the British metal mining scene for a comprehensive catalogue. All information welcomed.

32. AIA Conference, Aberystwyth September 1984

This well attended gathering on lead mining organized by Douglas Hague, was a great success. Frongoch & Bronfloyd were visited, the state of the former as a scrapyards for old cars being much deplored.

As a result of publicising Bushell's 1637 adit at Cwmerfin, there is a good chance of it being scheduled as an Ancient Monument.

33. WMS Logo

Jeremy Wilkinson has this in hand.

34. Next Meeting - 12 Noon, 16th June 1985. Dylife.

Star Inn, Dylife, between Llanidloes and Machynlleth. Liz pugh has kindly liaised with the manager and a ^{cold buffet} lunch will be available; no need to order before the day. We can have a room and perhaps a little celebration of our first five years.

35. Next-but-one Meeting

This is provisionally arranged for August or September 1985, at the Nantycar, Dalrhiw and Nantgarw lead and copper mines near Rhayader, to be led by Rob Vernon. Date to be decided at Dylife.

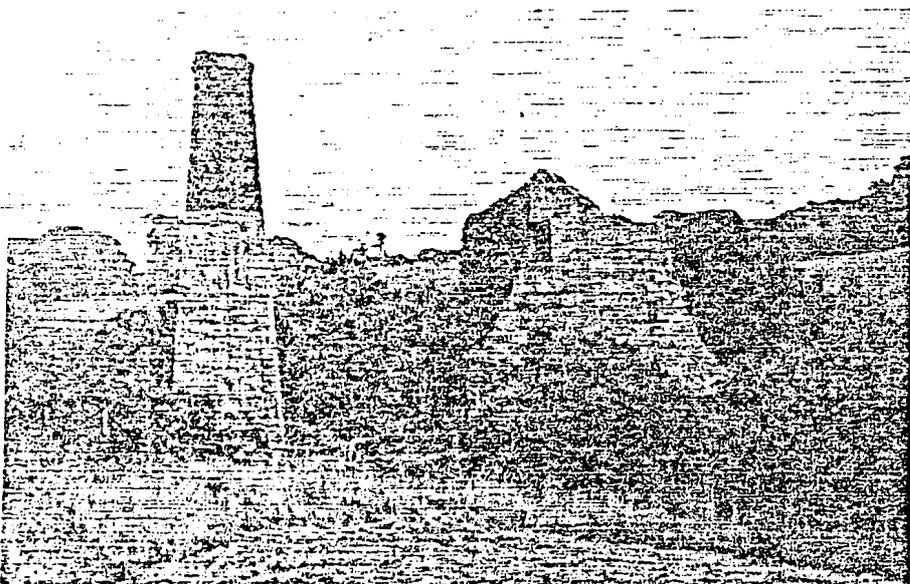
36. The June 1986 meeting is provisionally Parys Mountain, Anglesey.

37. Important Notice to all Members

Please read and digest item No. 1. Compliments of the Season.

10.12.84

David Bick
Pound House, Newent.



1
WMS XMAS QUIZ
STEAM IN WALES

2
ONE YEAR'S FREE SUBSCRIPTION OFFERED
BY EDITOR FOR FIRST CORRECT IDENTIFICATIONS

Welsh Mines - a Basic Bibliography

Old Copper Mines of Snowionia	D Bick	(2)
<i>Dylife (Revised 1985)</i>	<i>D Bick</i>	(2)
Old Metal Mines of Mid Wales Parts 1,2,3*,4,5	D Bick	(2)
Old Metal Mines of North Wales	C J Williams	(1)
Gold Mining in Western Merioneth*	T A Morisson	Merioneth Historical and Record Society
Lead Mining in Wales*	W J Lewis	
Metal Mines of Southern Wales*	G W Hall	
The Gold Mines of Merioneth*	G W Hall	
Mines and Minerals of Mid Wales	J A Jones	N J H Moreton
The Cwmystwyth Mines	S J Hughes	(3)
The Non Ferrous Mines of the South Wales Area	J R Foster Smith	(3)
Richest in all Wales (Esgair Hir)	M Palmer	(3)
The Old Mines of the Llangynog District	R A Williams	(3)
The Manganese Mines of North Wales	C G Downs	(3)
Copper Mountain (<i>Parys</i>)	J Rowlands	Anglesey Antiquarian Society
Cardiganshire - 25 Mines and Miners	S J Hughes	
Lead Mines of the Alyn Valley	C J Williams	Flint Historical Society
Britain's Old Metal Mines	R H Bird	
Welsh Minerals	Bevins and Sharp	Natural Museum of Wales [National]
Yesterday's Golcondas	R H Bird	
Cwmorthin Slate Quarry	G Isherwood	(1)
Llechi Slate	M J Lewis	(1)
The Old Slate Industry of Pembrokeshire	G and M Tucker	N L W Journal XXIII 1983
Rhosydd Slate Quarry	Lewis and Denton	20 Talbot Chambers Shrewsbury
A History of the North Wales Slate Industry	J Lindsay	David and Charles
The Great Western and Merthyr Collieries	J Cornwell	(1)
The Collieries of Western Gwent	J Cornwell	(1)
Coal Mining in Wales	W Gerwyn Thomas	
Coal Mining in Llanelli Area	M V Symons	Public Library, Llanelli

* Out of Print

- (1) Obtainable from Dales Railway Museum, Embsay, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 6AX
0756 - 5005
 - (2) Pound House Newent, Gloucestershire GL18 IPS 0531 - 820650
 - (3) N M R S Publications, 41 Windsor Walk, South Anston, Sheffield S31 7EL
- The above is far from complete and additional titles would be welcomed for future inclusion.

D M Roe
6th June 1985