

Welsh Mines Society

(Member of the National Association of Mining Historical Organizations)



NEWSLETTER

No.13 December, 1985.

1. GLOGFAWR/GLOGFACH September 8

In spite of rather poor weather, the meet was very well attended. We welcomed George Hall, doyen of Welsh mine explorer/historians and now a member, who led us over much of the site which was working until the 1st World War. The whole area is full of interest including a very enigmatic crusher house.

2. W.M.S. MEMBERS CUP

I mentioned at Dylife we had something up our sleeve:. It has now materialized in the form of a splendid high quality drinking cup of bone-china with the W.M.S. Logo on one side and an illustration of Cyffty mine in the 1880s on the other. Each is individually numbered and the edition is at present limited to 75. These are sure to become collectors items. The value is excellent at £2.50 but postal delivery is out due to risk of breakage. They will be on sale to members only at meets or at Pound House, Newent, Glos. Due to anticipated demand orders are limited to one per member. To reserve, please send me £2.50 (payable to Welsh Mines Society).

3. VAN MINE TO REOPEN?

According to the Western Mail, Mr. Oncy Nathan a 28 year old Egyptian who bought 18 acres of waste tips for £6000 in 1983, has been dismayed to learn that this is not the mine and that even so, the mineral rights are in dispute. He had ambitions to reopen Van, but at the current price of lead, not to mention planning problems and vast cost of such a project, he would do better to put up a waterwheel or two and make a tourist attraction.

4. WELSH MINES BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography is much needed, and Dr. Roger Burt, Dept. of Economic History, Exeter University, has begun by compiling a list of all papers and articles on historical aspects of Welsh Mines since 1945. Several W.M.S. members have assisted, and Dr. Burt would welcome further help.

5. AERIAL ROPEWAYS

Mr. W.A.Clough, 3, Beaconsfield Way, Gower Road, Sketty, Swansea, is interested in Welsh Aerial Ropeways and their preservation and would like to hear from others of similar inclinations.

6. REMARKABLE ESCAPE

An astonishing escape in the best traditions of Houdini took place in Cornwall recently, when Mr. Philip Roberts fell down a 20ft shaft. After 12 hours he gave up shouting and began to tunnel. 'Apparently he dug into the sandstone with his bare hands and a stick he found at the bottom' said a police spokesman. After 4 days without food he emerged. This is really an incredible story, and we can only comment 'some digger, some stick!' But I think Welsh rocks would have beaten him. (Guardian 17.8.85)

7. GREAT ORME COPPER MINES

Now that these islands are one vast museum, it is no surprise to hear of plans to reopen the deep adit of a Llandudno copper mine to tourists. Meanwhile Andrew Lewis reports some very interesting finds including clay pipes and an almost perfect pair of clogs left behind in such a place and position as to suggest an offering to the 'knockers'. This is by no means an absurd idea, for no less a man than Lewis Morris of Anglesey, antiquarian, surveyor, miner, musician and poet, firmly believed in these subterranean spirits. He recorded 'We only know they are our very good friends and have actually discovered us hidden treasures'. Andrew and friends are exploring the extensive workings and hope to find a way to surface. If you can help please write to him at Gwynedd, Tyn-Y-Coed Road, Great Orme, Llandudno, Gwynedd.

8. WELSH GOLD MINES

Newspaper cuttings have been showering here like autumn leaves. Regarding CLOGAU, warning bells are ringing louder. The new Chairman Lord King, and Charles Wyatt managing director, have quit following pressure from Australian investors for early profits. The total loss since incorporation is £658,000 (Western Mail 6.8.85) but there is quite a lot to get through yet. At GWYNFYNYDD which is at least regularly producing, the conservation lobby has succeeded in quashing a planning application for expansion. In an area of much unemployment this is in my opinion uncompromising and misguided. The visual impact and loss to amenity even to the most avid nature-lover would be negligible taking the vicinity as a whole. As for deterring tourism, what greater attraction could there be than a working gold mine, not to mention national prestige and dollar-earning capability. Even William Condry the naturalist who normally writes sense has become carried away, referring to Gwynfynydd as 'an outrage', and 'a depressing sight indeed'. The authorities are virtually refusing industry in National Parks as a matter of principle, and for a poor country like Britain this is madness. The men have offered to work an extra day every week without pay, to keep the mine going. From an article in International Mining, Gwynfynydd produced 100 oz of gold during 1984, the recovery being only 50%, prior to installation of new plant.

9. SYGUN COPPER MINE, BEDDGELERT

After going to appeal, consent has been given for a limited development here as a museum, and a memorial to the Elmore flotation process.

10. MINES OF MAWDDWY RESEARCH GROUP

This makes steady headway and hopefully something can be published before long. David Roe has sent copious notes of recent discoveries. Red Dragon is in danger of becoming a shrine, judging by the numbers who have been there. Alun Hughes has sent photos of the inexplicable line of hollows above Dyfi Falls, and if it could be arranged excavation may reveal the purpose. (*See page 4*)

11. DINAS SILICA MINES

In September I visited these mines near Neath with the Newcomen Society, on a typically wet summer's day. They are in a deep and remote valley wonderfully reminiscent of the Mawddach at Gwynfynydd.. A bed of silica about 10ft thick declining somewhat to the east was worked extensively for furnace linings until about 20 years ago when changing technology destroyed the demand. The silica is so abrasive as to wear out pumps in 3 weeks.

The ex-manager Mr. Thomas who led us below, began his career at Pumpsaint Gold Mine before the war. The product went by aerial ropeway. This is an interesting area with barytes and lead mines which we could visit. Volunteers for leaders please.

12. OLD SHARE CERTIFICATES

A recent catalogue included Nant Y Brain £35, New Foxdale £22 and Old Treburgett £25. We look forward to Brian Mills list of Welsh examples, mentioned in N/L 12.

13. OUR MEN IN THE NEW WORLD

Simon Timberlake is home from Peru and Alan Williams from Mexico. Perhaps they will submit their experiences in due course.

14. OLD BOOKS

Martin Simpson, 4 Undermount, Bonchurch, Isle of Wight has sent a geological catalogue which includes Greenwell A Treatise on Mine Engineering 1855, described as 'rubbed and slightly soiled, joints tender, some internal spotting and marginal soiling'. At £235 it seems pricey. It refers mainly to coal mining. Henwood Observations on Metalliferous Reports 1871 at £35 is I think a better buy, and absolutely full of information - a very valuable source. It has probably gone by now. Or you could have William Smith's geological map

14. OLD BOOKS cont'd

of England & Wales, 1815, for £3,120. Another dealer wants £350 for Burrow's Mongst Mines & Miners 1893 (Cornwall).

15. NEW BOOKS

Roger Burt has sent a copy of The Mines of Cardiganshire (£4.50) hot from the press. Based on official statistics it is packed with figures of output, employment, ownership etc, and would have saved me endless labour had it come 10 years earlier. The title however is misleading, and might be more properly The Mines of Cardiganshire and Many Other Places Also. The reason is that Burt and colleagues have stuck to the vagaries of the original publications, so that we encounter Dalrhiw (Rhayader), Bryngwiog (Flintshire), Craigymwyn (Llanrhaidr), Coedmawrpool (Llanrwst) and even Cefn Guntle (England), to name but a few. It is, in short, full of surprises. Nevertheless, this volume is indispensable to anyone interested in mining history; though it must be remembered that much of the early statistics are unfortunately by no means trustworthy. One small criticism is that many sites lack grid references for no apparent reason.

Dr. Burt has kindly enabled W.M.S.'members to obtain copies at £4, or £4.40 including P. & P. from your editor. Please order as soon as possible.

16. BERSHAM INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE CENTRE

This is on the B 5099 west of Wrexham with horse-whim, fact-sheets on Minera Mines and an industrial trail. Alan Williams recommends you visit.

17. PROPOSED NEW MINE AT PARYS MOUNTAIN

Further to item 9 N/L 12, W.M.S. have been approached by Gwynedd C.C. Planning Dept. to submit details of features worthy of preservation. This is in hand.

18. EDITORIAL CRY

Will members please note that matters relating to subscriptions, change of address, membership, lonely hearts etc., should be addressed to David Roe, 29 Somers Road, Worcester.

19. FRONGOCH HISTORY & SURVEY (Item 5 N/L 12 refers)

Delays in completion of the M/S have arisen beyond our control, so there is still time to submit underground photos.

20. GEOLOGICAL MAP OF NORMANDY &/or BRITTANY

I should be grateful to hear if anyone can loan or sell me such an item.

21. CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks are due to Liz Pughe, Peter Challis, Rob Vernon, Alun Hughes, Alan Williams, John Burman, Ifor Higgon, Roger Burt and Andrew Lewis.

22. NEXT MEETING

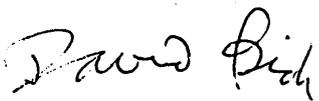
Our first annual summer weekend meet is being organized by Jeremy Wilkinson and John Bennett for 7th / 8th June 1986. Area will be Parys Mountain Angelsey including coastal Mines. A meal and entertainment are planned on Saturday evening. PLEASE ASSIST planning by completing enclosed form if you hope to go.

23. AUTUMN MEET - 21 September 1986, possibly Dinas Mawddwy.

24. NEXT ISSUE Copy to be received before 15 April please.

A VERY PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

3.12.'85


David Bick
Pound House,
Newent, Glos.
(0531) 820650

25. STOP PRESS (See Item 8)

I have just heard that Gwynfyndd miners have received redundancy notices as from 9 January 1986.

26. Tom Jones has noted a gravestone at Llanmawddwy Parish Church to .. Captain John Jenkins who departed this life ... 1865, aged 84 years ... Born in St Annes Cornwall. He was a mine agent of integrity and ability for more than 40 years'. A John Jenkins was involved with the 'Aberdovey' Mine in 1851.

27. The site of a Copper Mine, complete with shaft, outlines of building and spoil head has been found a few miles East of Dolgellau at Garth '777.195'. As yet unidentified it is reputed to have worked around 1840.

28. At an informal meeting during the Dyliffe field meet, W J Lewis was given an honorary Life Membership in recognition of his pioneering work in awakening interest in Welsh Mines.

29. Membership is £1 per year from 1st January. Cheques, etc, made payable to the 'Welsh Mines Society', should be sent to David Roe, 29 Somers Road, Worcester, WR1 3JJ. The address labels on the newsletter envelope always show the current standing of your payment, eg, 8234 - joined 1982, paid up to and including 1984. A red sticker is intended to draw attention to prolonged non-payment.

30. WMS Car Stickers 50 p inc post and package

31. WMS 2" Lapel Badge (2" diameter) 50 p inc post and package

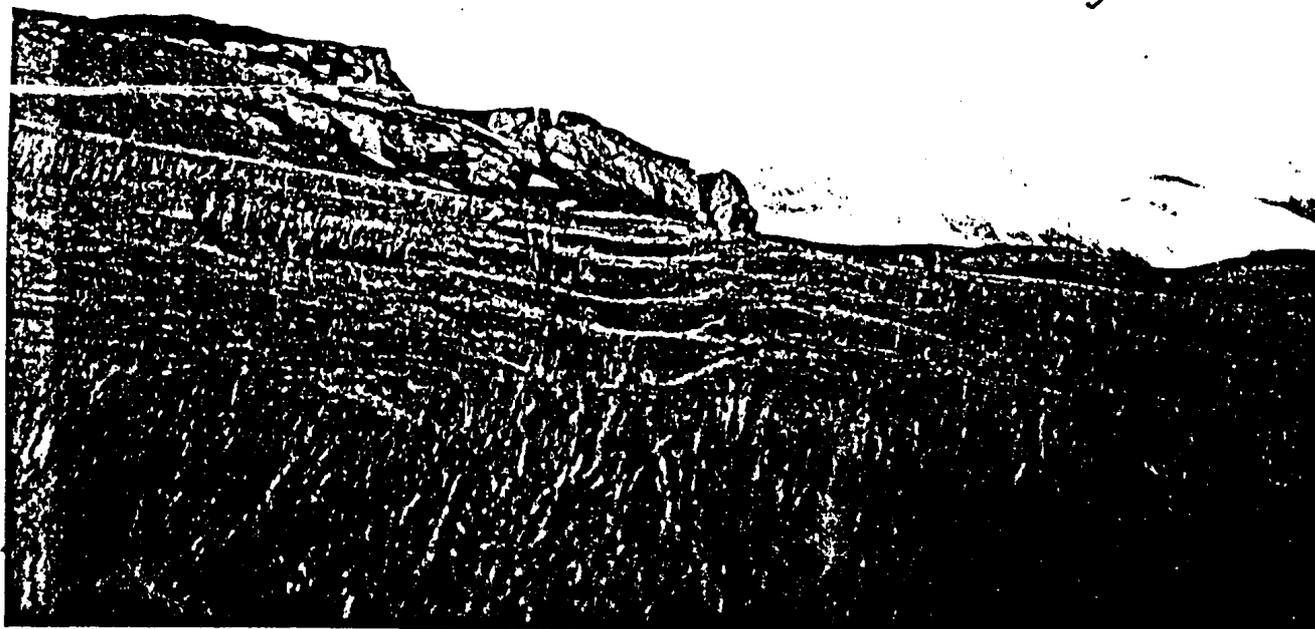
32. Complete set of WMS Newsletters 1 - 10 £1.50 inc post and package

33. Cwm Maengwynedd Slate Mine by LAS Cooper. Copies of this monograph are still available at 30 p.

Above are available from David Roe.

David Roe

LINE OF HOLLOWS ABOVE DYFI FALLS (ITEM 10)
(Photo Alun Hughes)



ARAN FAODDHY