



NEWSLETTER 15

December 1986

1. ANGLESEY WEEKEND 7/8 JUNE 1986

Good weather blessed this very enjoyable 2-day event, some 50 members attending. We visited the Parys/Mona mines, the Porthwen Brickworks, and the Pantygaseg copper mine, the two latter being on the coast. (See para entitled Pantygaseg Adit). On the Saturday evening talks were given as follows: Roy Starkey- The minerals of Wales, George Hall- Parys Mines, Simon Timberlake-Potosi, Jeremy Wilkinson- Pantygaseg Mine & Porthwen Brickworks. Trevor Chesters panned for gold, with results as below. Altogether a weekend that could not have been bettered. Our thanks are due to Liz Pugh for suggesting a 2-day event, and John Bennett and Jeremy Wilkinson for the organisation and leading the walks.

2. GENERAL MEETING (in Anglesey)

Little of moment arose. According to David Roe membership stood at 210, with funds of £250, all on a sub of £1. *However see Item 55!*

By a show of hands the next summer meet is to be at Dolgellau, organised by Messrs Hall & Bick. (See later).

3. GOLD PANNING IN ANGLESEY

We thank Trevor Chesters for the following report: 'After the samples from Parys were washed free of ochre, they proved to contain liberal quantities of those enemies of the panner, namely magnetite in large amounts, pyrites, and worse still, cerussite. Indeed I'm quite sure the samples actually contained more gold than the three tiny specks I eventually got... I think the Red River would give a better chance.

'Far better, though still unlikely to inspire an early return visit, was the product of one small sample bag from the outcrop of the Pantygaseg Lode. This was easily processed, being of a gossany nature, and produced five barely visible specks of gold... Pantygaseg also produced some chalcopyrite, bornite and copper carbonate...'

4. MINING PROPOSALS IN ANGLESEY

Gwynedd Planning Committee will decide on a multi-million scheme by Anglesey Mining Ltd early in 1987. They are aware the site is an environmental hot potato, and WMS has put forward recommendations which include safeguarding the whole of the opencast areas. The Nature Conservation Council and the Dept of Biochemistry & Soil Science, UCNW, have also added their weight.

5. WMS RED DRAGON MEET (Dinas Mawddwy) 21 Sept 1986

Again in good weather this meet led by Messrs Roe & Burman, verified what we have long suspected, that lesser-known mines can be as big a pull as any of the greats- or do people largely come regardless, to see their friends and enjoy a day out in the incomparable Welsh hills. I think so. At all events over 40 turned up. In its setting and its history there is an aura of mystery about Red Dragon, and I am sure I was not the only one who felt it. Trevor Chesters panned for gold, but even if his results pose more questions than they answer, we can certainly no longer regard the venture of the 1850s as little better than a fraud.

Trevor reports as follows:

'The samples from as far as you can go in the adit and from the dump of black stuff outside, failed to produce gold. The one I took from the floor just inside produced three tiny pieces... together with a small amount of floured mercury. This of course, arouses the suspicion that the mine was salted, but, considering the facts, I don't think this is so. In the first place the particles are unlike

any I've seen from anywhere else. Secondly, they bear no evidence of wear caused by water travel or by stamping to free them from gangue. In fact, I'm positive they originated inside that adit. But whether the gold is in the black stuff, the quartz, or the nests of sulphides in the shales only systematic analysis will settle. Some gossan from the working high above the adit didn't reveal a speck.

I am sure there is gold at Red Dragon, but I very much doubt there's enough to make an economic mine.'

The ruins of the mill that once housed Perkes' ill-fated gold-reduction machine aroused much interest, and the site would justify a proper excavation to see what lies beneath the rubble.

6. DOLAUCOTHI GOLD MINES, near Llampeter.

Members will recall our visit a year or two ago. The site is rapidly growing as a tourist centre. The Times Educational Supplement 17 10 86 reveals the Univ. College of Cardiff has spent 100,000 pounds here since 1978, and hope to erect a small extraction plant. Electric locos will be used to move waste rock etc, and plant from a closed lead mine (which one?) may be acquired. It is asserted that Roman chisel-marks have been found on tunnel roofs, but how these differ from any other chisel-marks is not explained. Archaeologically speaking this mine is probably the most important of any in these islands, and investigations are as yet, barely scratching the surface.

7. DOLGELLAU GOLD

I spent a glorious few days with John Burman during the Indian Summer of 1986. We explored Old Clogau, high on the mountain, and measured up an 1860 s Steam Whim enginehouse that nobody seems to have noticed. We were also kindly taken over the Clogau mill by the company's geologist, a courtesy which put me wonderfully in mind of George Borrow's visit out of the blue, to Egsair Hir or Welsh Potosi, in the autumn of 1854.

Clogau closed down only a few days later, only 40 oz of gold being officially returned for the expenditure of millions. The company intends now to concentrate on Nevada, with what better results remains to be seen.

8. GWYNFYNNYD GOLD

Work here continues but by all accounts at a loss. We were welcomed by the resident geologist. The mill is located underground. It is rumoured that a considerable orebody of gold is being kept unworked as a nest-egg for the future.

9. CEREDIGION MINES GROUP

In July this group held its inaugural meeting in Aberystwyth, which I attended. The main objective is to conserve the physical remnants of mining in the old county, both actively, and by lobbying. Simon Timberlake (now at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge) was the instigator and we wish the venture every success. The chief problem is one of educating those in high places the potential of sites which even now, are summarily consigned as communal garbage-tips for future use. The perilous state of Frongoch, now on the market, was the spark which finally motivated Simon, and much has been going on behind the scenes to save this very important, and now Scheduled, Industrial Monument.

The NMRS Monograph on Frongoch has now been published, and it is hoped this will go some way to serve the above purpose. (For details, see under New Books)

10. DYLLIFE

The use of old mines to aid tourism is being discussed in Powys, (Cambrian News 28 11 86) A 100 per cent grant could be available from the Welsh Development Agency, and I am pursuing the possibilities with the Local Authority.

11. A DARLINGTON ENGINE AT FRONCOCH, BLASTING BY LIME.

The Mining Journal is an infinite source of information, and it often comes up with the answer many years out of context. In the 1885 volume, we learn that in the 1840s a Darlington Water-pressure engine was used at Frongoch (Hitherto we suspected the fact, but lacked the proof) These engines enjoyed a considerable vogue at one time, but after about 1850 went right out of favour- it would be interesting to know why. We also learn that in 1885 compressed lime was still being used,

- in collieries. (Pg 418)
12. CHANGE OF ADDRESS
George Hall now lives at 45 Bridge St, Kington. Phone 231006
 13. PANTYGASEG ADIT (See Paras 1, 3)
Roy Starkey sends the following report:
'The mineralogical description which Greenly (The Geology of Anglesey) gives is in line with material I collected, i.e., small crystals of chalcopyrite on white dolomite/ankerite with colourless quartz and large milky calcite crystals. I have not seen any sphalerite(Blende) however. Two of the drives end in what appear to be collapses and may well represent previous connections to surface or slopes above adit. The adit is basically dry and no nasty holes in the floor.
The small X-cut near the end of the main drive appears to be the source of the clay mineral dickite mentioned by Greenly and examined by A.Dick... the hexagonal plates are up to 0.1mm across... It seems reasonable to assume that this is the dickite.'
- REPORT FROM SIMON HUGHES. We are obliged to Simon for the following items,14 to 23.
14. FRONGOCH. Simon Hughes is still negotiating on behalf of clients to develop as a cultural & heritage centre.
 15. CWM EINION. The Ceredigion Mines Group is forwarding proposals to the Forestry Commission for a restoration project on the old mine buildings and general area. It is hoped to use MSC funded labour, 10 people for a year full time plus volunteers at weekends.
 16. CWMYSTWYTH. With the owners consent about 20 people are staying on the site over the winter in a hamlet of caravans, buses and tents... My suspicions have been confirmed that they have deterred theft of timber from the dressing mill and many members of the commune expressed concern over the lack of interest in preserving the site. The owners are trying to assemble a rescue package with a small commercial development.
 17. GOGINAN. The NMRS volume by Simon Hughes is due to appear in print in mid-1987.
 18. DARREN. It is doubtful if this will go to press before 1988.
 19. VAN. I (S. Hughes) am still retained as project manager although there has been a change of management during the past quarter. I can honestly say that it has been the most exciting project I have been involved with. I hope to give more details in the next issue, but at present must limit myself to saying it is intended to install a pilot plant.
 20. MONTS. I (S.H) have come across references to workings in the Dylife - Nantyiago area, viz. Cilgwn, Castell Ffridd, Pantcoch, Esgair Wyan, Glas, Hirgoed, Nant y Hafod, Blaen Cwy, Dinas Bank, Fedw Ddu, and Rhyd y Bennwch. Has any reader any ideas as to their precise locations?... I have also found a considerable number of 'new' papers relating to the Monts mines and Van in particular. I hope to outline the collections in the next issue.
 21. CARDS. Despite base metals remaining depressed, interest is still being shown by 3 UK and one Canadian Company. The quantity of geological fieldwork being done, however, is minimal.
 22. GENERAL. I (S.H.) recently purchased 'A hundred years of Metallurgy' by W.H.Dennis published by Duckworth, 1963. Predominantly lead, zinc and copper extractive metallurgy. The remainder is largely of Welsh interest, most readable. If you see a copy at bargain price grab it quickly.
 23. WEDDING BELLS. I'm (S.H., not D.B.) getting married again. Weather still bleak and sky overcast. (Congratulations, even if the weather is bad! - D.B.)

24. COWARCH MINE, near Dinas Mawddwy.
M of MRG members will be interested to hear of a General Meeting report in the Mining Journal 1837 P 189. I have not seen it personally- information kindly supplied by Alan Williams.
25. TYLLAU MWN (Friar's Coat)
More of interest to our Mines of Mawddwy Research Group (MOMRG) is to hand from Simon Harris: 'Some trial drilling was carried out very near the opencut last year and apparently some very scarce /uncommon samples were sent to Cambridge...'
The rare mineral Stilpnomelane occurs here, and we may suppose this is what they were after.
26. INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN WALES
On behalf of WMS I attended a very useful conference at Cardiff on 5 th Dec. One important point was made crystal-clear, that closer dialogue with Local Authorities, The Welsh Development Agency etc is essential if our voices are to be effectively heard. Via the Royal Commission it is hoped to establish such a mechanism in the near future.
27. NEW MINING PERIODICAL.
According to the NMRS Newsletter Dec '96, a 'UK journal for the mining and mineral enthusiast' has been launched at £3.50 per annum (3 issues) obtainable from Mrs J.Spence, 3 Oaktree Drive, Bawtry, Doncaster, Yorks. It is entitled 'Rockbottom,' a somewhat unfortunate name, which it is hoped does not reflect on the content. We wish it well, though the difficulties in establishing such a venture on even a 'break-even' basis are very great.
28. WELSH MINING SHARE CERTIFICATES.
By dint of much work and research by Brian Hills and others, a comprehensive list of surviving examples is now published and enclosed herewith. It should be of much interest to members and we are indebted to Brian for permission to reproduce. Please notify Brian of any errors or omissions.
29. PHOTOGRAPHY IN NORTH WALES.
Nick Catford, 77 Burleigh Rd, Sutton, Surrey, phone 016440118, seeks volunteers to help carrying equipment etc, firing flash guns etc. Helpers will get a full set of colour prints for their trouble. Note: The work is underground.
30. CAE SARA LEAD MINE, near Llandilo.
This little-known mine in the backwoods of Carmarthenshire is noteworthy for its splendid, if ruinous, 56 inch Comish enginehouse. We are pleased to learn it is now the object of a conservation and restoration scheme.
31. DINAS SILICA MINES, Vale of Neath.
These interesting mines, in scenery wonderfully reminiscent of the Mawddach Valley near Gwynfynydd, are also the subject of attention in terms of restoration and interpretation. Times are certainly changing, at least in the more enlightened parts of the Principality.
32. SLATE MINES AT CORRIS.
Plans to dump refuse into old workings at a beauty-spot known as the Blue Lake, are running into determined opposition. This is again a council-inspired idea, as at Frongoch.
33. COPPER HILL, CWMYSTWYTH.
Simon Timberlake has been excavating here, by permission, the site of presumed ancient smelting, where stone hammers abound. A carbon 14 sample is being submitted, and we shall be interested to get the result.
34. OLD BOOKS.
1. A recent catalogue advertised Henry English, The Mining Almanac for 1849, 550 pgs. Price £20. Though described as in a poor state this was clearly a collector's item of exceptional rarity and was immediately snapped up. Does anyone know where it went? We should like to see it.

OLD BOOKS (Cont)

2. The Old Metal Mines of Mid-Wales. - limited edition of 250 copies, 1978. According to David Roe, a copy was on sale at a London mineral fair recently, at the inflated price of £35. This reminds me that numbers 139 - 144 went astray, said to have been lost in the post, and should any of these turn up, I would be more than interested to hear. Those who have a copy, please check your number now. One has to be careful of dealers: it is not unknown for books to be offered over the listed price whilst still in print, not that this applies here.
35. NEW OLD BOOKS.
John Taylor's Records of Mining, 1829, was recently reprinted in an edition limited to 150-numbered-copies. I understand it has again been reprinted, though how this has been done under the circumstances is difficult to envisage. Copies available from Mining Facsimilies, 41 Windsor Walk, South Anston, Sheffield. Cheques payable to Mrs H.Bird, Price £25.95 plus p&p.
36. NEW BOOKS.
David Bick, Frongoch Lead & Zinc Mine, NMRS, £4.50 + P&P. This title with contributions from the Royal Commission on Ancient & Historic Monuments (Wales) is now published, assisted by a generous contribution from the Commission. It is I believe, already out of print, though I still have a number of copies for sale. (Please allow £1 P&P)
J.A.Thorburn, Talargoch Mine, NMRS, 64 pgs. This is a scholarly work, though I noticed an unfortunate hiccup in the output figures on pgs 59/60, where after 1890 -they revert to 1878, then continuing up to 1898 but with entirely different tonnages. It is difficult to see how this came about.
C.J.Williams, Industry in Clwyd, 96 pgs. With colour plates this is excellent value at £4.50 P&P from Clwyd Record Office, Hawarden, Deeside. It contains a lot on mining, with 'new' old pictures, and should be on all our bookshelves. Kenneth Addison, The Ice Age in Cwm Idwal (Snowdonia). Those of geological bent will find this 16pg illustrated handbook of considerable interest. Price £2 including postage, from 10 Hurst Close, Broseley, Salop.
David Bick, The Newent Coalfield. This title is being revised to include iron-mining as well. And will not be published before next summer, under the title The Mines of Newent.
37. RECENT PAPERS OF MINING INTEREST.
T.Colman and N.d'A Laffoley, Brittania or Snowdon Mine. Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, Summer 1986. Concerns the workings, mineralisation and is recommended.
Reedman, Colman, Campbell and Howells, Volcanogenic mineralization related to the Snowdon Volcanic Group, Journal of the Geological Society of London, Vol142, 1985. Over the heads of most of us, nevertheless interesting facts may be gleaned, such as the occurrence of lead-bismuth sulphide at Hafodyporth, and Caer moch.
David Bick, A Mushet Mystery, Glos Society for Industrial Archaeology, 1986. Shortly to be published, this deals with a remarkable metal mine in the heart of the Old Red Sandstone near Talgarth in Breconshire.
38. WELSH MINES SOCIETY CUPS. A number of these fine bone-china cups are still available at £2.50, and can be acquired at meets or collected from Newent. They are not suitable for consigning to the rigours of the G.P.O.
39. MUMBLES MINE.
Our member Derek James is investigating an old adit, and would welcome assistance from anyone in the area or otherwise interested. His address is 'Linmiri', Pennance Rd, Lanner, Redruth, Cornwall. He also reports as follows regarding mid-Wales :
40. BRYNPOSTIG.
Now razed and being used as a council rubbish tip. (Query:; have the authorities forgotten the adit leads straight to the River Severn?)
41. CWMFRON.
On the hillside opposite, a forestry road leads to a fresh excavation with signs of barytes or witherite, also galena and blende.
42. EAST CWMFRON.
Adit on western side of the valley explored for some 80 metres, but very dangerous and unstable. A smaller adit on the eastern side was intact. Interesting outcrops of mineralised ground were found in a recently made road on the eastern side of the valley.
43. ABBEY CONSOLS, Strata Florida.
Buildings have deteriorated alarmingly, and a bulldozer has been very active. Derek fears the site may be lost completely. 'Can we do anything about this? '
44. THE OLD METAL MINES OF MID WALES.
Of this 5-part series, parts 3 and 5 are exhausted, and only of part 2 (a reprint) do substantial stocks remain. Having been in print for some years, the demand, though steady, is-not great, but I feel a certain obligation to present and future enthusiasts to keep the series going. However, the cost of reprinting four parts is very substantial indeed. If anyone has any ideas, I would be pleased to hear.
45. CONTINENTAL MINES GROUP
We have a number of members very interested in mines on the Continent- Rob Vernon and Dick Bird are names that spring to mind. Perhaps we should form a C.M.G. We also have members (myself included) interested in Irish mines(IMG). Comments please.
46. MODEL WATERWHEEL AND PUMPS
Big waterwheels, stateliest of engines, have always fascinated me and some time ago I began making a scale model(1/24) of a 50 ft wheel, flat-rods and mine pumps including the shaft. The whole is now nearly complete, and works well. One can almost feel it is the real thing. It will actually pump at less than 1 rpm, with the wheel stationary most of the time, standing against the load, just as in real life when they were short of water. The model will fit into my car and I hope to use it for demonstration purposes. With luck it will be going at the Dolgellau meet in June. Also included are a shear-legs and capstan, and I may eventually add a drawing machine.
47. SUMMER MEET AT DOLGELLAU, Sat/ Sun 6/7 June 1987
This is based on the Dolserau Hall Hotel, about two miles from Dolgellau on the road to Bala. Phone Dolgellau 422522. Bar meals and a buffet will be available, and it is hoped members will support this facility. Accommodation is available e.g. £14 per single room (price per room, not per person). Whether you wish to stay here or elsewhere, or camp out, please make your own arrangements. Details as to the programme in the next N/L.
48. AUTUMN MEET AT BRYN EGLWYS SLATE QUARRY, NEAR TOWYN, Sunday 27 Sept 1987
Alan Holmes, an expert on the quarry, has kindly consented to lead the trip. Details in the next N/L.
49. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Grateful thanks are given to the following for contributions received. Eric Gray-Thomas, Liz Pugh, David Jenkins, David Roe, Trevor Chesters, Dick Bird, George Hall, John Bennett, W.T.P. Griffiths, Simon Timberlake, Simon Hughes, C.J.Williams, Roy Starkey, Simon Harris, John Burman, Rob Vernon, Brian Mills . Peter Challis and Derek James.
Date for copy for next N/L. 1st May 1987.
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS.
Late News. 
David Bick, Pound House, Newent, Glos
50. LLANRWST LEAD MINE CONSERVATION SCHEME. 29 12 86
This was initiated by the Snowdonia National Park and completed in August 1986, preserving the enginehouse and chimney and various shafts, which were capped with bat grills. A small carpark has been constructed at Llyn Sarnu. Three information plaques will be erected, explaining,
1. The site, the nature of the scheme and who was involved. (The WMS will be mentioned)
2. The enginehouse and a diagram to show how the pumps worked.
3. A general history relating the various features, mine section, plan of site etc.
The overall scheme went very well and I (Rob Vernon) was involved from the onset. The buildings should now stand for another 100 years.

51. ALAN GOLDING. This past secretary/ treasurer of V.M.S. is currently working in Botswana.
52. THE RUSSELL SOCIETY. A Southern section of this society is being organised and, being based in Cardiff, may well have an emphasis on Welsh minerals and mineralisation. For information contact -:
R.J.King, Dept. of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

53. SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK STUDY CENTRE. The following courses may be of interest to members -:

Feb. 15-19 ; Prehistoric Iron Making - experimenting with ancient techniques.
Feb. 25-28 ; Slate Extraction.
June 28- ; Mines and Quarries- a study of techniques from Snowdon
July 4 to Cwm Ystwyth.
Aug 29- ; North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways.
Sept. 5
Sept.18-20 ; Historical Metallurgy Conference.
Contact M.Williams at the centre, Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog, Blanau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd LL41 3YU

54. NEWSLETTERS 1-10. The Special reprints of these issues are now sold out.

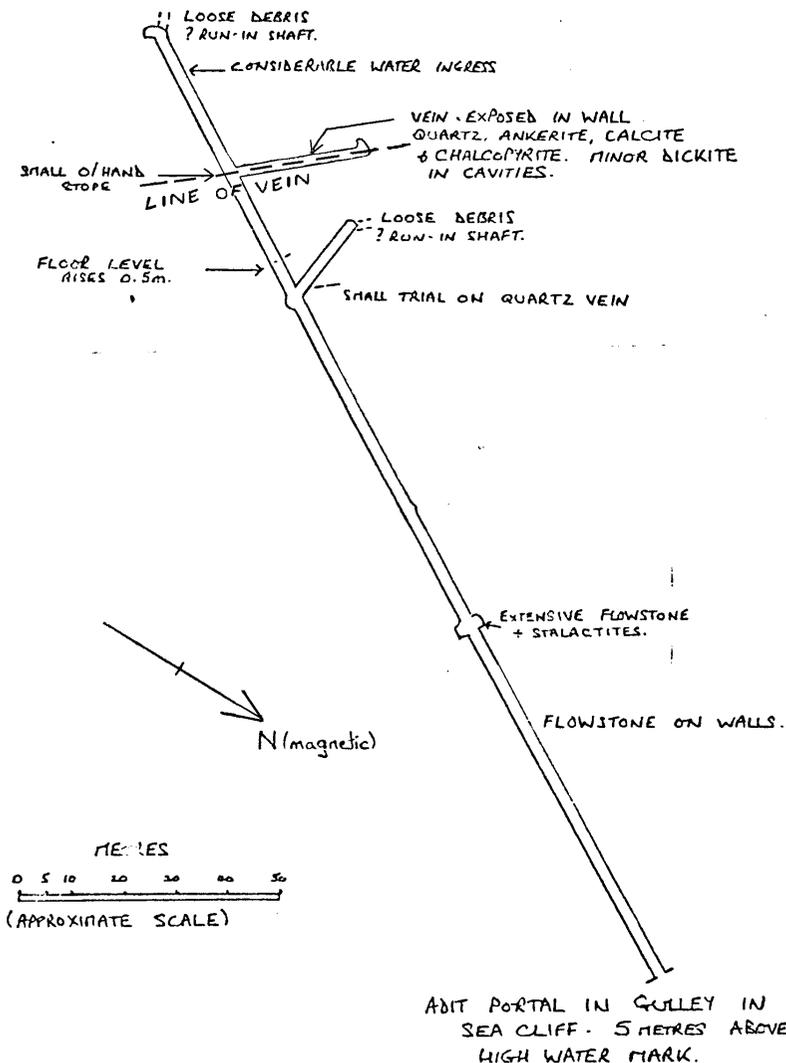
55. INSURANCE. I have just been notified that the insurance premium per member has increased from 35p to 55p per annum. We therefore move from being just in financial equilibrium to losing 20p per member each year. Insurance will be taken out for 1987 but alternative insurance, no insurance, or increased subscriptions will have to be discussed in June.

56. SUBSCRIPTIONS REMINDER. On your address label are various digits. The first 2 represent the year you joined the Society, and the following digits the years for which subscriptions have been received, (e.g. 823456 - joined 1982, paid 1983-86 inclusive. If the last digit on the label is 4, 5, or 6 it means your £1 subscription for 1987 is now due. I regret that members more than 2 years in arrears, (i.e. the last digit shown on the label is 4 and therefore payment has not been received since 1984,) will not receive any further Newsletters.

57. FORMAT. After several years of experimentation, the format of this issue of the Newsletter, adapted from the British Micromount Society, is how I intend all further Newsletters/Publications to appear. It gives a good compromise between readability, postage and paper costs and should fit on your bookshelf more readily. Any comments would be appreciated.

David Roe (29 SOMERS ROAD WORLESTER WR1 3JS)
4.1.87

PLAN OF ADIT AT PANT-Y-GASEG MINE
TRWYNBYCHAN, ANGLESEY.



SURVEYED 29 JUNE 1986.
R.E. STARKEY.