

Welsh Mines Society

(Member of the National Association of Historical Mining Organisations)



WELSH MINES SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER 39

January 1999

1 1999 PROGRAMME

a) **Spring Meeting 10.30am, Sunday 21st March.** The venue is at George Hall's 'Abilene', Sheet Road, Ludlow, as per last year. Sheet Road runs into Ludlow from the southern of the two roundabouts on the by-pass, and Abilene is the third of four larger houses about 200 yards down on the right, past the turning to the Industrial Estate. Tea, coffee etc provided, also a buffet lunch @ £5 if booked with GWH a week in advance (phone 01584 877521). Please bring slides etc. We are greatly indebted to George for making his home available to us.

b) **Summer Meet. 12/13th June.** Based on the Red Lion Hotel, Llanidloes (01686 412270) - Leader D Bick for visits to Van, Dylife, Guefron etc. More details in the next N/L. Accommodation at the Red Lion Hotel double B/B £35, Unicorn Hotel (01686 413167), the Mount Inn (01686 412247), Lloyds Hotel (01686 412284) - all similar prices -it is advisable to book your accommodation as soon as possible - please mention the WMS.

c) **Autumn Meet 11/12 September** Leader George Hall. More details in the next N/L. Based on the Royal Sportsman Hotel, 131 High Street, Portmadoc, Gwynedd Double room £40 B/B, single £25. Make your own bookings direct with the hotel 01766 512015, fax 01766 512490. Evening meal will be £12.50, book this via George Hall with form in next N/L.

2 REPORT OF LLANGYNOG WEEKEND 26/27 September 1998 by Mike Munro

(Note - thanks are also due to John Knight who also sent in a report.) With slightly 'murky' weather which stayed all weekend although it didn't rain a drop, we initially gathered in the car park at Llangynog. Alan Williams, assisted by Lyndon Cooper, then ushered us over to the remains of the dressing floors of the 'Great Llangynog' lead and zinc mine at NGR SJ 054 256. A stroll down to a river level adit followed (recently drained due to works by the local farmer - more of this later) and then a look at the chimney, all that remains of the pumping station engine installation dating back to 1871. After lunch on the tips/dressing floors a short climb took us up to the mine manager's house 'Ty-Newydd' where good views of 'Craig Rhiwarth' could be had. A return to the car park was made via a brief look at the entrance to Cady's level, (now run in) and the 'out-fall' from the 'day level' by the main road.

For those still with plenty of energy reserves a steady walk was taken to NGR SJ 063 268 to view the site of a sixteenth century lead smelting site and hear about its history. Much speculation and doubts were aired as to the authenticity of this location in the face of what appeared to be convincing documentary and physical site evidence (such as lead slag)

The evening meal, held at the White Lion Hotel in Bala, was followed with a well presented and healthy variety of slides covering (amongst other subjects) engine house restoration in N Wales by Chris Williams and dragline excavators by Ivor Brown.

Sunday started at Pystyll-Rhaeadr, the tallest waterfall in England and Wales, with a stroll down the leat to Craig-y-Mwn (NGR SJ 078 288). After an initial look at the site of the crushing mill a steady climb (700ft up!) took us past the 'Deep Adit' level (run-in) and up to the early water systems used for hushing. Lunch was then taken and there after most people made their way home. For some of us however, much remained to be explored and interpreted, so working down the open works an opening behind a surface working was entered but a 10ft drop meant equipment we didn't have was required. Further down a short adit was entered, moving past a boulder took you to dead ends in the vein. Round the corner to No. 2 adit where an additional heading (to that shown in Alan's book) bears to the right, c/w a central barrow wheel groove. The main heading ran into unstable clayey ground where timbering had collapsed preventing further progress. Back up the hill, Adit No. 1 was viewed, and although now run in, a short dig could prove fruitful. An unnumbered adit further to the east with a rough looking entrance, due to much fractured and collapsed rock, allowed access (just) into small heading on the right which soon stopped, the left hand side being thoroughly run in.

For this particular bunch of mining enthusiasts, the weekend was still [far] from over... so with the land owners permission, the river level adit at Llangynog mine (NGR SJ 048 257) was revisited and entered, but only for some 43 paces, when a substantial collapse was reached, possibly caused quite recently by the 15+tonne excavator being used for drainage works. The adit, quite likely a cut and cover 'culvert' was on a heading of 148deg (MN), in the direction of the location of the 1871 engine house on the other side of the road. Surely this wasn't just an outlet for pumped water (its dimensions were a bit small for a tramming level) but if so, why run such a shallow level when a surface leat would no doubt suffice?

An early plan in Alan Williams book (Fig 17a) indicates that a covered tail race for the earlier water wheel exited further up in the field and ran slightly different location to the river level adit.

The enthusiastic bunch re-grouped on Monday at Penarth quarry NGR SJ 107 424, a good 700ft climb to the dressing sheds makes one appreciate it all the more. Some of the surface remains are a bit difficult to interpret, but the underground works accessed via a roofing shaft into a chamber, are really quite extensive, with workings on three levels, and evidence of five adit entrances, not all of which are obvious on the surface. Other than the reference in A J Richards Welsh Slate Gazetteer, and a photo in P Staniers Quarries of England and Wales, I'm not aware of any other published information covering this quarry - can anyone add to this?

3 NAMHO MEETS

a) **NAMHO 2000** 14/18 July, Truro, Cornwall. Hosted by Cam Brae Mining Society and the Camborne School of Mines this is the first international NAMHO conference and will be on the theme of "Acquire, Record and Display". For details phone Lawrence Holmes 01872 278234

b) **NAMHO Forest of Dean Meet** 24/27 September. Free Mining in Dean and other Traditional Mining Rights Areas'. Contact Mole 01594 833217

4 GOOD NEWS FOR SOUTH CROFTY

According to The Guardian a consortium led by Welsh businessman Wilf Hughes has clinched a deal to buy the mine which closed last March, and by the time you read this the pumps should be working again. We can only wish them every success.

5 WMS 20th ANNIVERSARY

This takes place in June, and we are hoping to produce a Souvenir programme to commemorate this auspicious occasion, but it all depends on how much help we can get from members. What we need are your comments, recollections or whatever - did you meet your life's partner at one of these meetings? Did you receive inordinate pleasure watching the unfortunate fall in a river or become mired in boggy ground? Did you have a vision that changed your life? SOMETHING must have made an impression. Best of all, have you any photographs taken at the meetings? People even more than places - everyone likes their own picture immortalising them in print! Photos will be copied and returned.

Please send any contributions as soon as possible to John Bennett at 17 Field Lane, Appleton, Warrington WA4 5JR.

6 WELSH COAL & IRON CLUB

In connection with family history, Norman A J Martin of the Wirral seeks information about the W.C.&I.C. Please phone him on 0151 625 5834 if you can help. I've never heard of it.

7 ANCIENT MINES AT MACHEN

Item 20 in the last N/L has aroused comments from Michael Munro and Michael Messenger, who says some years ago he went into an old working (on the same vein) revealed in a quarry at Risca, in which was the remains of a wooden railway. Needless to say, entry was soon blocked off by the local council who were using the site as a tip.

8 MID-WALES MINERALS

According to Earth Heritage June 98, the National Museums of Wales and the Country side Council have been surveying the old mines for exotic mineral specimens, some of which look wonderful in the colour photos until you realise you need a microscope to see them. Perhaps the best finds have been at Dolyhir in Radnorshire where in a quarry a splendid copper vein coming right up to grass has yielded tennantite, proustite, rammelsbergite, greenockite and much, much more. There is also cosalite, a rare lead bismuth sulphide from Braich yr Ven in Snowdonia.

9 SWANSEA COPPER TICKETS GS

Not having heard from Alasdair Neill for many years, I was delighted to receive this contribution in the course of compiling this Newsletter. Alasdair's address is 25, Lipson Road, Plymouth.

"The sales of copper ore by ticketing at Swansea since 1804 have provided a useful source particularly for Welsh and Irish mines. In many cases no other sources are available. Some Cornish, other English and also Scottish mines appear and from the 1830's increasing quantities of foreign ores are given.

Details of the sales have in the past been obtained from the Memoirs of the Geological Survey Vol II part ii, giving annual figures up to 1847, while Phillips and Darlington, Records of Mining and Metallurgy (1857) lists total production of mines up to 1856 (reprinted by NMRS - British Mining 8 1978). Figures after 1847 were included in the annual Mineral Statistics and have been included (with some omissions) in the Exeter University Mineral Statistics series.

I have been attempting to check the figures produced in these sources up to 1844. The first source was the Mining Journal, which includes details of each sale from 1835 onwards. Cornish newspapers were then checked, these included details from the first sale (Drwys y Coed and Snowdon) in April 1804. Royal Cornwall Gazette and West Briton at the Royal Cornwall Museum (RIC), Truro, and Cornish Studies Library, Redruth. These sources have so far been extracted to 1828, but include many gaps. They add very considerably to the figures given by the MGS, and reveal errors such as Welsh ores listed in the latter as being sold in 1811 were actually sold in 1812. Some figures from smaller mines were wrongly attributed to mines with vaguely similar names in the MGS.

Another source has been the manuscripts of the Jenkin family of Redruth, who acted as agents for several Swansea copper companies. These include six-month or annual lists of sales at Swansea from 1819. They are a useful check on the newspaper figures, and in addition give the metal content. In earlier years at least, samples were sent to Redruth for assay for the Welsh smelters, e.g. Llandudno ores in 1814/15. A number of other publications, for instance the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall, include details of ticketings, perhaps provided by Jenkins or their associates. There may be other sources in Cornwall or Wales - if anyone can provide details or wishes information on the production of any individual mine please let me know.

10 BOOKS FOR SALE

I have these books for sale, all in 'as new' condition. Can be posted, or preferably I can bring them to a meet.

A K Hamilton Jenkins	<u>Mines of Cornwall Vol XV Calstock, Callington & Launceston</u> 1976	£5
D Stuckey	<u>Adventurers Slopes</u> (Combe Martin Silver Mines) 1965	£4
Hamilton & Laurence	<u>Men & Mining on the Quantocks</u> 1970	£8

11 NEW BOOKS

a) The Greenshaw [Greenhow] Mines M C Gill 1998 NMRS British Mining No. 60

I first visited the Greenshaw lead mines 50 years ago by bus from Leeds - a very slow and tedious journey stopping at every tiny hamlet, with finally a long walk uphill from Pately Bridge. I did this several times, and always it was raining when we got there. Nonetheless these mines have always aroused nostalgic memories and hence Mike Gill's book was received with great interest. But there is a rather serious flaw, not uncommon in works of this nature. For although there are detailed plans of the mines, there is no overall map, so you have no idea where each is in relation to the others, or even to the nearest town. You are simply stranded in the middle of nowhere.

Still, all very evocative, and I yet may go there again, complete with wellingtons, waxed jacket and sou-wester.

b) The 1844 Dairy of John William Sneyd

I mentioned this book in the last N/L (item 11). It is subtitled 'Muskets and Mining', but having obtained a copy I rather wish I had not. The Sneyds invested heavily in the Snowdon copper Mine where a level is named after them. But in spite of the subtitle the mining content is disappointingly [sic] thin, and to read time after time entries such as 'we stayed at home', 'I went to the mine', and even 'nothing in particular', makes you wonder if the editor has lost his blue pencil.

As regards the general history of the Snowdon mine, not a word is mentioned, so that the average reader is totally in the dark. There are only two illustrations relating to mining, one being the derelict Britannia Mill, built in 1898, but described as an 'engine shed' erected in 1844. The other purports to show 'flat-rods' but they are quite invisible. On the positive side we learn that ore was carted all the way to Stoke on Trent, so it is not surprising the mine did not pay. One hopes for the publisher's sake that the book does better.

c) Mines of Cornwall & Devon Peter Stamer £15 hardback, Twelveheads Press, Chy Mengleth, Twelveheads, Truro, Cornwall - 'an historic photographic record' [P. Stanier]

d) The Moorfield Pit Disaster Harry Tootle 64 pgs £6 from Laundy Publishing, 3 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool FY3 OBU. All about a colliery explosion in 1883 when 68 men and boys were killed.

e) Hafodlas Slate Quarry John Knight writes the following glowing report.

"I have recently received a magnificent publication on this quarry in Betws-y-coed. The book is the work of Griff Jones and fellow members of the Fforwn Plas Tanybwllch over four years. Griff is a WMS member. This excellent work won the prestigious Fieldwork and Recording Award of the Association of Industrial Archaeology. It prompted acclaimed reviews from Stephen Hughes, Head

of Survey, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical monuments of Wales, Dr M J T Lewis and David Gwynn of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

The book covers the history and development of the quarry from 1855 to its final closure in 1929, with an analysis of the production and men employed, it then assesses and interprets the site remains with 37 detailed drawings and 60 photographs. It is A4 format with covers and is 230 pages. ISBN 0 9533692 0 X. It is also available direct from Mr G R Jones, Gwylfa, Cae Clyd, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd LL41 4AU at £12.50 plus £1.50 p+p.

I visited the quarry in May and found it a most intriguing place and very worthy of a further visit."

12 TRANSPORT OF LEAD ORE ETC.

Allyn Austin, 28 Wordsworth Road, High Meadows, Whitehaven, Cumbria, is very interested in specially built railway wagons for carrying ores such as galena and barytes. He would be pleased to hear any details; also the kind of bags or sacks that the lead ore was shipped in.

13 MINING INTEREST STUDY TOURS

You can get a 12 page illustrated brochure from Atayala Tours, Ceinionfa, Capel Dewi, Aberystwyth (07970 828989) all about their foreign and UK tours. One which appeals to me is 9 days in Saxony and the Hartz mountains, which in fact is much cheaper than 10 days visiting the mines of Wales and SW England. Or you can go to Spain, Mexico, Greece and Cyprus.

14 FROM JOHN KNIGHT

John Knight has kindly sent the following

"a) Welsh Mines Society Sweatshirts May I on behalf of the membership offer our sincere thanks to Margaret Williams for organising the ordering and purchasing of the WMS sweat shirts which made a welcome contribution to funds. It was also very good to see her back on her feet at the September meet.

b) Rhosydd Slate Quarry During a visit to Wales to encompass the WMS weekend I spent a few days roaming a number of slate quarries and a significant change was encountered at Rhosydd. There has been a collapse at surface level close to Floor 2 adit. It would appear that it was quite recent (my visit was 25th September 1998) and there was certainly evidence that a further fall will not be too far away. (See also next item - DEB)

c) Maenofferen Slate Quarry It was also noted during a visit recently that the "New Mill" shown on Graham Isherwood's plan on page 36 of "Slate from Blaenau" has been razed to the ground. There did not appear to have been any apparent need.

d) Pen-yr-Orsedd Slate Quarry Since purchased by McAJpines the quarry has now been closed with all "good plant" removed. The winders and Blondin's still remain in place. It was also noted on a recent visit that the tiled roof on W4 mill has disappeared.

e) Editor in Waiting I was very pleased to hear the announcement at the meeting in September that Mike Munro has volunteered his services. It was good to see copious notes being taken at numerous times throughout the weekend. I also spotted him with pen in hand in the pub on Sunday evening, he'll burn himself out before he starts, I pondered, but he was just taking the beer order!

15 RHOSYDD QUARRY

Ben Brownless reports a recent visit to Snowdonia when he walked from Llyn Stwlan to Rhosydd main entrance at 9 level. On reaching the buildings at 4 level (GR 656453) he noticed a big collapse as if much of the ground had run -in. Hence the workings may be even less accessible than they were before.

16 GOLDEN PROSPECTS MINING CO.

According to a prospectus drawn to my attention by George Hall, Nick Warrell, late of Gwynfynydd gold mines and Wheal Concord, is Chief Executive of the above company which is attempting to raise capital for a "can't fail" prospect in Africa. The blurb tells us of an inferred resource of 515,000 cubic metres of gravels averaging 14gms of gold per ton, worth over £80,000,000'. However in the small print we read that 'inferred resources can not be classified as reserves' How then, are they to be classified? Better to keep your money in your pocket.

17 SIR ARTHUR KINGSBURY - Fraud and Faker

Members keen on minerals will have heard of the late Sir Arthur Kingsbury, the great mineral expert at Oxford University, who died in 1968. He gained an international reputation, not least for the frequency with which he discovered new and exotic specimens. Well, it now transpires he was an incorrigible fraud, many of his specimens having either been 'planted' or pulled out of his pocket when no one was looking. According to a paper by George Ryback, A M dark and C J Stanley in The Geological Curator 6 (9) 317 -322, there is overwhelming evidence that they did not come from Britain, but from abroad, and how he got away with it for so long is astonishing.

On a similar subject it always surprises me how in catalogues of specimens for sale by mineral dealers they can always supply a provenance - you never see a sample without one.

But provenance double or trebles the value, and if you don't provide it, somebody else will.

18 KIBBLES AT DYLFIFE, MINERALS AT KEW

Years ago there was a kibble at Dyfngwm, which I rather fancy Liz Armfield had a hand in rescuing. Now, more kibbles have come to light in the stream below Star Inn, and Mary Hyde has photos of them. Mary also adds that Paul Lowes mineral fair will be at Kew Gardens about June 12. His phone number is 01872 223227.

19 ALL SLADE LEAD MINE, GOWER

Colin Jones work unravelling the history and archaeology of this mine has been mentioned in previous N/Ls, and he has kindly sent photos and his impression of the mine in full swing, which hopefully David Roe can reproduce (see page 8). Unfortunately excavations at the end of the parallel walls (presumably a balance - bob pit) have revealed nothing at all.

20 NEWS FROM PANAMA

David Pelham last July was in Central America, where in the old days gold and silver providing vast wealth for Spain was conveyed across the Atlantic. He was involved in evaluating the Romance gold mine, worked as early as 1560, but gold prices are low, and due to a large mining fraud (surprise!) it is hard to raise capital. Metal prices are so roller-coaster at present that a geologist's future is by no means assured, but we wish him luck with new assignments.

21 CWMBRWYNO LEAD MINE - DANGER TO LICHENS

Planning permission has been granted for an environmental improvement scheme, mainly concerning the old tailings dumps. It does not appear that much archaeology will be disturbed. A main concern has been expressed that lichens may be threatened, which calls to mind some years ago on Parys Mountain when a nature conservancy man gave us a rocket for walking over the dumps. Where will it all end?

22 NEW EDITOR

Having digested your last N/L you will all know that Mike Munro has kindly offered to take over the role of editor, though I am expecting to complete the next N/L before gracefully retiring into the background - making 40 newsletters in all. Please give him your very best support.

23 MYSTERY MINE

Mike Munro has seen some disturbed ground about 10 miles south of Newtown on the Builth Wells road (NGR 5008822) with a possible leat. Could it be a mine or slate working? Comments please.

24 BACK NUMBERS OF WMS NEWSLETTERS

At the last field meet someone kindly offered Mike Munro a complete set to aid his forthcoming role as editor. But he has forgotten who it was! Please get in touch with him (01446748690)

25 WASTE METHANE FOR POWER

Mike Munro reports that Tower Colliery in S Wales is to build a £3.000,000 methane burning plant on site providing 6 megawatts to power colliery's electricity, and even pump some into the grid.

26 ANGLESEY MINING PLC AND DOLAUCOTHI

Reading between the lines of the latest report, the situation of the company now appears to be desperate. They are considerably in debt, and the latest drill hole 593 metres deep at Parys mountain seems to have found no ore at all, merely 'ample evidence of the potential', whatever that may mean. At Dolaucothi, south of the main workings a boring found a rich sulphide vein at 32 metres with 'small traces of gold'. With financing conditions 'the worst since 1973' they intend to stick to their plans, but prospects appear gloomy indeed.

27 A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

To all members, and thanks to all contributors to the N/L. Deadline for next N/L 1st May 1999.
David Bick January 1999 Pound House, Newent, Glos. GL18 IPS (01531 820650)

28 WMS MEMBERSHIP

Please note that annual membership is now £4, (or to ease administration - £8 for 2 years). *The paid up date is shown on your address label - and if you are overdue I attempt to highlight the date in red.* If you are "paid up to DEC 1998" or before then you are overdue and your treasurer would be most grateful if you could pay promptly.

The address for subscription is c/o David Roe 20, Lutterburn Street, Ugborough, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 ONG (01752 896432).

29 WMS INSURANCE

Insurance has become a major problem for the society as it now absorbs nearly £300 of our income per year. Members may recall that last year I asked if there were any insurance experts in the ranks of the WMS - there were not. However an ex insurance underwriter came to my aid and after reading the 20 page "short summary" of our insurance policy confessed themselves bemused. I spoke to a number of similar organisations and found that the British Micromount Society - the very organisation that scours Welsh mine tips for the minerals "you need a microscope to see" (item 8) has had excellent cover via the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers at a fraction of the cost. The BTCV have accepted our membership under the description "*The specific activities include clearing sites, repairs to buildings and other structures, site visits and field trips with up to 80 members in attendance. Additionally a limited number of our members undertake underground exploration of mines.*"

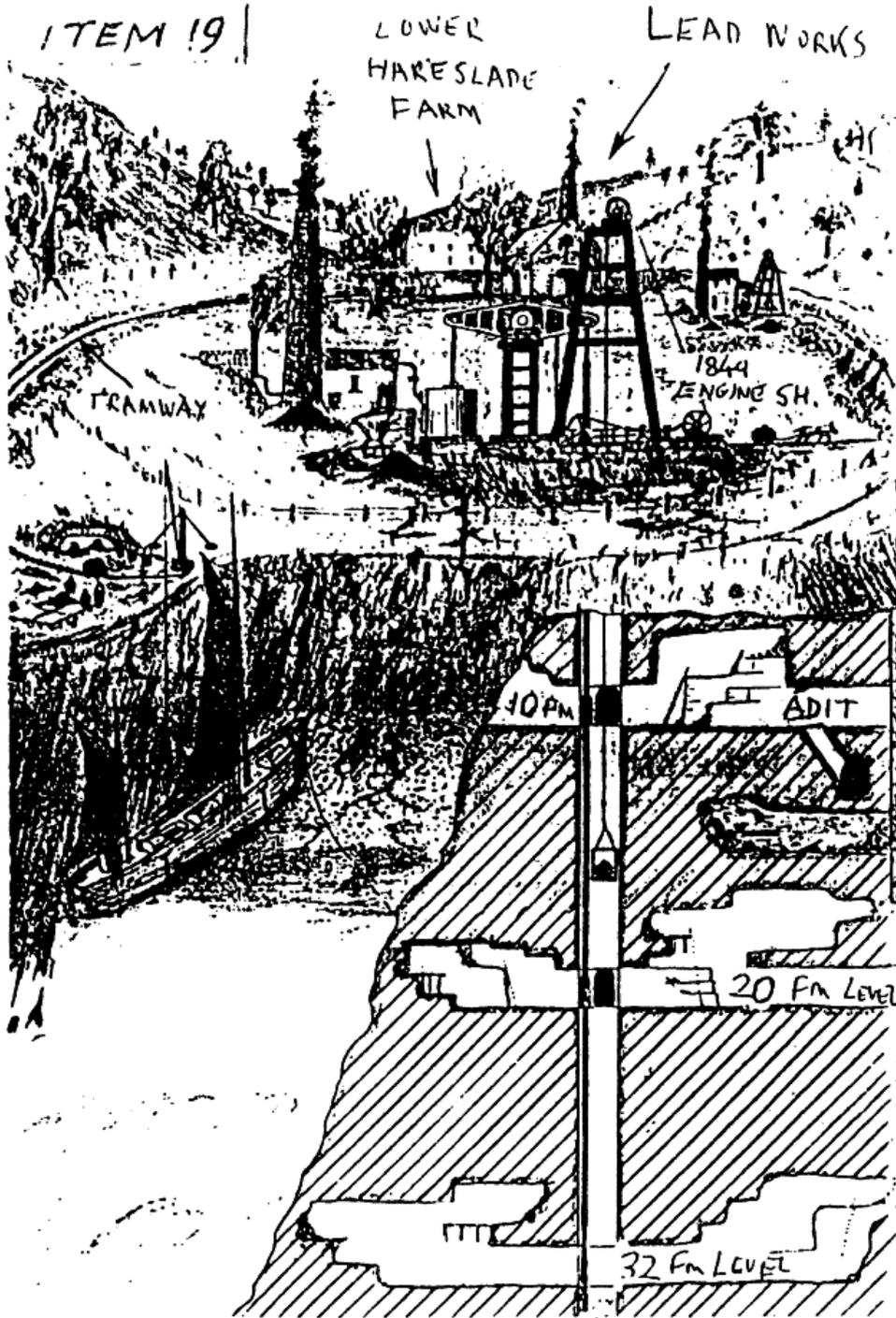
The alternative insurance cover for preservation activities, overground and underground organised field trips will be very similar - covering members for damage to third parties as in the past. Advanced mine exploration involving rock climbing techniques would not be covered but it is anticipated that those who do undertake such activities are members of other organisations covered by the BCRA insurance and they should ensure that they are covered by these. *Please remember that the insurance has always only covered the damage you do to others - not what you do to yourself*

The insurance problem has greatly exercised me in the last few months and I hope members will not violently disagree with my decision - I feel much happier that the WMS can spend a good proportion of the money saved on the 20th Anniversary Souvenir programme. I hope you agree David Roe

30 FLEMISH IA

On a lighter note - I have received a press release for the new website of the Flemish Association for

Industrial Archaeology
<http://www.conservare.be/vvia/vviahome.htm>
 - it is in Dutch.



31 WMPT

This splendid off shoot of the WMS has made some impressive achievements at Parys Mountain, Penrhos, Llanarmon, Pennant, Glyn Pits and Dorothea. Contact Chris Williams on 01978 852601 - WMS members who join WMPT could ensure even more success in the coming years.

STOP PRESS - GWYNFYNYDD CLOSES

According to The Guardian 9/1/99, Gwynfynydd gold mine near Dolgellau has closed as no longer economic, and the deep adit appears to have been plugged solid with concrete, destroying all hopes of a re-opening. The late managing director, Mr Roland Phelps is reported now in Scotland to work an 'incredibly rich' gold and silver ores found at a secret site. We await events with interest.

"ALL SLADE" SILVER/LEAD MINE 1852.
BRANDY COVE. GOWER