

1 Annual General Field Meeting (A.G.F.M.)

This will take place before lunch at 12 noon, at Cwmystwyth Mine, Cardiganshire. (Grid Ref.803746) Sunday 22nd June. There is no agenda, but topics will include a)Future trends for the W.M.S. b)N.A.M.H.O. (see para 4),c) Increase in subscriptions. The nearest pub is the Miners Arms, Pontrhydygroes. It also offers accommodation. There is a camping site upstream from the mine.

At 2 pm we will explore the mine, and Simon Hughes of Manchester University has kindly offered to point out some prehistoric workings.

2 Membership

Since formation last June, membership now exceeds 80, and if members will spread the word wherever possible, it no doubt could be much increased. A number have kindly sent in donations over and above the 25p sub, and Mr. W.G.Jones aged 74 has become a 'life member', in exchange for £6. He is currently working on a history of Talargoch. A list of members is appended.

3 Aims

The present aims are to provide a newsletter and generally to further the study and protection of Welsh mines. Members live far and wide, which with the high cost of petrol, makes more than the occasional meeting a doubtful proposition. Similar difficulties could arise in forming a committee, but in any event that would only be justified in my opinion, if a considerably expanded role was contemplated.

The existing scale of operations is all that your present secretary/treasurer/ editor/reporter can provide single-handed, but any alterations or suggestions will be welcome at the A.G.F.M.

4 N.A.M.H.O.(National Association of Mining History Organizations)

This body was formed in 1979, the annual sub being £5. Inter alia, it would provide the valuable role of enabling mining societies to speak with a united voice in matters of preservation etc., and I recommend that the WMS should consider applying for membership. Further details at the A.G.F.M.

5 Afforestation

One matter which could be raised by the N.A.M.H.O. is the proposal for afforesting vast new areas in upland parts of Britain, many of which are mining regions. Much damage has been done, and the threat from this source is I believe, greater than any other. Our case needs urgently and cogently putting forward to the appropriate bodies. The value of mine sites to our heritage is as yet hardly understood at all in official circles. Liason could well be established with the Ramblers Association and the C.P.R.E., both of whom oppose further indiscriminate afforestation.

6 Welsh Development Agency - Land Reclamation Unit

Vast sums of public money are being spent on reclamation of 'industrial eyesores' in Wales. A year or two ago I assisted Dr. Mike Johnson of Liverpool University Botany Dept. in drawing up a list of mine sites worthy of respect, for the guidance of the W.D.A I have not seen the final document, neither can I say to what extent its recommendations are being heeded. The question of educating the various authorities as to the importance of sites is something with which mining societies as a whole should concern themselves. My own personal efforts have met with little or no success.

7 Mining Literature

Subterranean Britain. Edited by Harriet Crawford, publisher John Baker.

With contributions by Dr. J.W.Barnes and Professor Barri Jones, contains specialist chapters on early metal mining in Wales, and is well worth reading. The authors doubt the existence of pre-Roman underground workings in this country. A major problem is the difficulty in dating old workings, but if parallels can be drawn from Continental discoveries, it is probable that evidence for pre-Roman mines will ultimately be found - at least that is my belief. There is room for a great deal of fieldwork in this direction, and a further reason why ancient sites deserve protection.

Remnants of Mining in Cardiganshire before the 19th Century. This is an article of mine, published by the Ceredigion Antiquarian Society, 1978. A few offprints are available on request.

The Llandudno Copper Mines C.J.Williams, published by the Northern Mine Research Society (N.M.R.S.). Copies from 186 Station Road, Billingham, Co.Cleveland. A well written and scholarly account, with illustrations. Mr. Williams' Metal Mines of North Wales is also believed to be appearing shortly, under the imprint of another publisher.

Monographs on Welsh Mines, Many members will be aware of Mr. Foster-Smith's series, in course of publication by the N.M.R.S. The manuscript for these monographs was completed some 10 years or more ago, and has not incorporated the results of more recent research, such as my own Old Metal Mines of Mid-Wales, although the latter is quoted in the bibliography and extensive page references to it have been added to the text.

Please note that to avoid possible confusion, the two series should therefore be treated as quite separate sources, and the N.M.R.S. has issued a statement to this effect.

Metal Mines of Southern Wales Mr G.W.Halls' out-of-print book of this title is, I understand, being prepared for a new edition, plus a chapter on Glamorganshire. The South-East Wales I.A. Society, Oxford House, Risca, has recently issued a long paper on a mine in their area but regrettably no further details are to hand.

8 Minerals

Mr. H.Woolgar has found Selenite crystals in road works at Llangynog.

9 Brynpostig - Rubbish Tip

The local authority appears to be earmarking the site as a rubbish tip, but I understand the inevitable risk of pollution of the river Severn via the adit has been drawn to its attention. Quite apart from any archaeological merits, mine sites are generally unsuited for such a use because of this danger, and authorities need to be advised of the fact.

10 Van Mines

An Observer article 20.5.79, described trials here with a special grass developed for old mine dumps, - 'ugly unusable scars on beautiful landscapes'. Grass on tailings dumps is one thing, but may all seeds falling on rocky ground suffer the traditional fate!

On another matter, rumours have recurred that two chimneys at Van are to be felled by a developer. One is worthy of Listing, and perhaps someone can tell us if this has been done.

11 Esgair Hir Mine

Marilyn and David Palmer are continuing their practical I.A. course this summer. Details from the tutors at Dept. of Adult Education, Leicester University. There is scope for more work of this kind.

12 Dylife-Rhoswydol area

Jeremy Wilkinson has recently located a lot more M/S material in N.L.W. and elsewhere, also papers relating to Capt.Williams of Dylife and Davies of Dyfnungum. I am also grateful to Mr. P.R.Jenkins for discovering papers concerning Dylife in the West Sussex Record Office. Details on request.

13 Gold in Wales The Clogau Mine is turning out extremely rich ore. The Assay Office is said to have assessed a specimen at 555 oz/ton, and I have heard of 40oz gold from 40lb of quartz. Not surprisingly, there are rumours of attempts to reopen Pumpsaint & Gwynfynydd.

14 Nantymwyn, Roger Shambrook reports that he recently found a new shed below one of the main adits; pit-props, a digging machine and a type of ropeway. Further news would be welcomed.

15 Getting the Wheels Turning The idea of acquiring a site in Wales has been brought up, where mining enthusiasts could re-erect old machinery (sufficient can probably be found) to form a fully working 19th century mine at surface - waterwheels, crushing rolls, buddles and all. Such would be of great social and educational worth, to say nothing of value for an understanding of vanished technologies. When we reflect what narrow-gauge railway societies have achieved, such a project must be possible, though the problems are enormous.

16 A.G.F.M. (see Para 1) Please come if you can, and in any event please send in news items, comments etc. A report of the meeting will be issued to all members not present.

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