

Welsh Mines Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 8 June, 1983.

1. Welsh Mining & Slate Conference, Dolgellau, 27-29 May.

This weekend, organized jointly by Graham Hall, warden of Kings Youth Hostel, Dolgellau, and the WMS, proved highly successful. Grateful thanks must go to Graham for performing the lion's share of the work and arranging the speakers. Some 40 members and friends heard a series of lectures on the history of the Oakley Quarries, IA of Welsh Mining, Forest of Dean Iron Mines, the use of archives in research, gold mineralization and lastly, the latest theories on ore deposition in Snowdonia. There were also field trips to Cwm Orthin Slate Quarry and Gwynfynydd Gold Mine, and our best thanks are rendered to the staff of the latter for the excellent underground trip including the climbing of many fathoms of ladders connecting the various workings. With Graham Hall's kind offer to make available his facilities for further meetings, no doubt we shall have occasion to go there again.

2. Business Meeting at Dolgellau The opportunity was taken for a brief meeting on WMS matters as below:

2a WMS/Forestry Commission Dialogue. Alan Williams produced a map of Wales showing the various Forestry districts and WMS delegates were appointed as follows:

Aberystwyth - D.Bick	Llanrwst - Rob Vernon
Dolgellau - Graham Hall	Ruthin - C.J.Williams (Subject to confirmation)
Newtown - Alan Williams	

Each delegate will receive the appropriate area map and WMS IA lists of important sites as a guide, and will be requested to initiate a meeting as soon as possible with the appropriate District Officer.

We are however, short of delegates for the South Wales area, which is roughly the old counties of Carmarthen, Pembroke, Brecon and Glamorgan. This is divided into several Districts, and Alan would be pleased to hear from volunteers. His address is 5 Longshore Common, Billinge, Wigan, Lancs.

2b NAMHO Field Trip 1984 The WMS has been requested to host this event. It will be based on Beddgellert, Snowdonia, the weekend before the May Bank Holiday, and organized by Eric Gray Thomas and D.Bick. Details later. Please note the date.

2c WMS Logo Competition A number of designs are reproduced at the end of this Newsletter, as received from Richard Bird, Alan Williams, Rob Vernon and Eric Gray-Thomas who has supplied no less than six! They are numbered, and we will decide their merits at the next Field Meeting. Written comments are of course welcome and thanks to all contributors are due.

3 Sites of I.A. Importance Significant co-operation is now established between the WMS and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, particularly concerning an intended survey and historical account of Frongoch Mine. It is hoped that work will commence shortly, and the assistance rendered by Professor D.G.Tucker in setting up this development is gratefully acknowledged.

Our regional IA lists have been forwarded to various individuals and bodies during the past few months, including the Council for British Archaeology, Group 2 (Wales). Interest in the origins of British mining sites is on the increase, and to this end the Institute of Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies, is launching a 'bid to probe mining history in England's West-Country' (meaning Cornwall & Devon). Let us hope this interest shortly extends to Wales. Further details from the Institute of Archeology, phone 01-3876052.

4 W.M.S. Dinner This proposal has fallen almost completely prostrate, though perhaps may be revived for some suitable occasion in the future.

5 Clogau Gold Mine The recent working which yielded at least £25,000 of rich gold unhappily ended in Caernarfon Crown Court when one director was found not guilty of an £81,000 fraud. Another director, an undischarged bankrupt to the tune of nearly £300,000, will be out of circulation for 15 months. The case made legal history in that the judge and jury actually ventured below ground to inspect the scene of the crime.

The rights of Clogau are now in the hands of the Caernarfon Mining Co. and 10 people were at work in January. It was then proposed to transport 'scour' from old tips to Plymouth for analysis according to newspaper reports supplied by Ifor Higgon. A recent radio programme on Welsh gold stated the company plans to invest a million pounds, which in view of precedent is a pretty sure recipe for disaster.

6 Bookshelf

- 1 Stronger than 100 Men Terry S. Reynolds 454 P John Hopkins University Press 1983 £20.

This peculiar title refers to the history of the waterwheel., and it would be pleasant to report that its voluminous content deals adequately with mining applications. Unfortunately, such a publication has yet to see the light. The approach is somewhat dry and academic, but nonetheless is packed with information and will clearly become something of a standard work on the subject.

- 2 'The Richest in All Wales' Marilyn Palmer, NMRS Monograph 22, 1983.

Dr. Palmer's account of the history and IA of Esgair Hir and Esgair Fraith mines in Cardiganshire, which of course were not the richest or anywhere approaching the richest in all Wales, is well researched, well written and well illustrated. It is tragic that Forestry activities have so desecrated the site, for 20 or 30 years ago far more was to be seen especially at Esgair Hir, including a number of workings on parallel veins, and an ancient stone-lined shaft, no doubt from Waller's period, near the crest of the hill. One small point; on page 19 copper ore returns are said to have ceased from the Snowdon Mines in 1904; in fact they were producing in 1913, if not later. Let us hope further monographs of this kind will follow.

- 3 Wheal Concord Ltd. Available from W.H. Smith & Son, Camborne. £2.20 including postage.

Although beyond Wales, I make no apology for drawing attention to this splendid, splendid title, devoted to the re-opening of a small Cornish mine, once famed for its mineral specimens. This publication is certainly destined to become a collectors treasure, and it is particularly tragic to learn that the venture has recently been forced to a stand due to problems with sub-contracting the ore-dressing to Wheal Jane.

- 4 Old Metal Mines of Mid-Wales, Part 2 Revised edition £2.40.

This should be available by the time these words appear in print, and contains some new illustrations including a fine view of Bwlch Consols in 1879.

7 Visit, to Pumsaint (Ogofau) Gold Mine between Llandovey and Lampeter. This is confirmed for 4th September, 12 noon for 2pm guided tour. Cost approx £1 per head, please bring lamps in case they are not provided. Judging by my experience here last year, this should be a good trip. Note: There is a convenient 'pub' and accommodation in Pumsaint ½ a mile away.

Our thanks are rendered to Jim Groucott for organising the event.

8 O.T. Jones To the initiated, this name conjures the classic but virtually-unobtainable-at-any-price memoirs on the North Cardiganshire/West Montgomeryshire mines, published by the Geological Survey in 1922. I have a Xerox set of sheets surplus to requirements for disposal and the best offer secures, 50% of which will go to Society funds.

5 The Great Western & Lewis Merthyr Collieries John Cornwell £4.95
Published by D. Brown & Sons, Cowbridge S. Wales. This is a magnificent collection of old and recent photos, strongly recommended. Hardbo

- 9 Minor Workings (1) Eric Gray-Thomas informs us of a small mine near Caemarfon, Grid ref. 594698, named Penrhyn. There is a quarrylike hole, 2 small levels, 2 flooded inclines and a 30ft deep shaft, also lead, iron, and copper mineralization.
- 10 Minor Workings (2) Alan Richards sends details of manganese trials east of Ffestiniog, Grid ref. 804402, also 832400. At the latter are several adits, curious stone-lined shelter and wheelpit etc. He also requests information about a mine 'said to be Wolfram', at 762612 (on the shore of Llyn Geirionydd). Can Rob Vernon please advise - I am not aware that Wolfram has ever been found in Wales.
- 11 Cwm Symlog Lead Mine This historic site has been 'landscaped' with grants from the Welsh Development Agency at a cost of £43,000, with what result to the IA is not apparent. Can our Mid-Wales correspondent advise us? Meanwhile I have sent to the Consulting Engineers for details.
- 12 18th C Newcomen Enginehouse in S.Wales? In March I visited a long and narrow brick building more or less ruinous, in the company of Kenneth Brown the Beam Engine authority. This is at an old Colliery near Swansea, called Gwernllwynchwith; its existence was first noticed, it appears, by the RCAHMW, and if cylinder foundations etc. can be exposed within by excavating through the rubble, the case will be proved.
- 13 Mining Books and books on miners lamps for for sale 'Phone Tony Oldham (023973) 371.
- 14 Carmel Head Copper Mine, Anglesey SH 295928
Rob Vernon has kindly supplied the following notes of a recent visit:
'The east/west trending vein was explored by shafts over a distance of 1000ft (approx). The vein is mainly quartz with traces of Chalcopyrite and terminates in a narrow cove (equivalent to a Cornish zawn), where it has been eroded by the sea. There is apparently no adit level other than a small trial on a north/south lode adjacent to the mine offices. The mine site is dominated by a round chimney stack on a square base some 25ft high. This structure is cracked and may not survive much longer. Adjacent are a series of overgrown pits and foundations of what I believe to be a small engine house, probably used for pumping two shafts in tandem via flat rods which appear to have run in a hollow in front of the mine buildings to the western shaft. The buildings consist of four in a row a probably included a house, smithy and store room.' (Note: This mine was also known as Gadair - D.E.B.)
- 15 Gwydyr Forest near Llanrwst. Mine site reclamation. Rob Vernon has been very actively assisting these developments and reports as follows:
'In September 1982 the Snowdonia National Parks Office examined mine sites in the Gwydyr Forest for possible reclamation. Treatment would involve shaft capping with grills, gating adits, removal or natural revegetation of tips and preserving features for public access.
To expedite this, a study group was set up involving the National Parks Office, Aberconwy Planning Dept., the Landowners (the Forestry Commission), Civil Engineers, Nature Conservancy, Local Study Groups, The Gwynedd Mines Research Group and The Welsh Mines Society. The group chose Hafna and Llanrwst sites for treatment.
At HAFNA it is proposed to remove the spoil tip north of the mill. The mill and all other features will be made safe.
At LLANRWST it is proposed to cap all shafts and preserve the Engine House and Stack. All other foundations uncovered will be preserved. Diagonal and Endeans Shafts with fill resting on wooden platforms may present some problem, and cap design must cater for possible future collapse.
This proposal is to be presented to the National Parks Committee, and then to the Welsh Development Agency for financial authority to proceed, with anticipated correlation with a permanent exhibition at the National Parks Office, Royal Oak Stable Block, Bettws-y-Coed.'
- 16 Minerals, Mines & Mills This is the title of a week's course 13-20 August at Plas Tan-y-Bwlch, Maentwrog, Gwynedd. The price is £125.75 and further details are available from the Snowdonia National Park Study Centre at the above address.