

Welsh Mines Society

(Member of The National Association of Mining Historical Organisations)



NEWSLETTER 20

JUNE 1989

1. For your diary - SUMMER MEET (10th Anniversary) 24/25 June
Members should already have had details. However, the time of the Saturday start was omitted. It is 10 am. for the short trip, 12 noon for the main trip, both commencing at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre, Llyn Sarnau, Grid ref 779593. The evening gathering is at Princes Arms Country Hotel, Trefriw, phone 0492 640592. The guest speaker is Dr David Jenkins of Bangor University, and his subject is "Scientific Aspects of Mining History in North Wales". In view of recent bronze-age discoveries, this promises to be a very interesting address.

Please bring slides etc. in case time permits for further talks.

For any queries about accommodation, camping etc., please phone John Bennett 0606 889325. For both days a packed lunch is suggested. We are much indebted to Dr David Jenkins, John Bennett and Rob Vernon for contributing so much to the weekend.

2. AUTUMN MEET 30 September/1 October, SHROPSHIRE LEAD MINES
(Note new date). This is our first venture outside the Principality, and our thanks are due to George Hall and Dr Ivor Brown for leading the trips.

SATURDAY Meet mid-day at the Nags Head Inn between Pontesford and Pontesbury on the A488. To see the smelting works and enginehouses of the Pontesford Coalfield. Thence to Snailbeach Mine arriving at the Village Hall at 3pm, to see the mine, railway and smelter, finishing about 6pm. No underground trips. Evening at Bishops Castle Hotel, phone 0588 638403. Buffet meal about £5, B+B £15. George Hall, phone 0544 231006, will talk on the Shropshire mines. Others speakers will be welcome.

SUNDAY Meet 10 am, The Oak Inn, Old Churchstoke, north of A489 road grid ref 287952, phone 0588 5574, for a short trip, returning 12.45. Depart 1.15 for the main event including Roman Gravels mine.

3. GWYNFYND D GOLD MINE

The mine is still threatened with imminent closure. Whatever happens we must hope the chances of future mining are not jeopardised; one Clogau show mine is surely enough, though even this project at present seems in the melting-pot, depending on a public enquiry.

4. CWMYSTWYTH MILL AND GREENS FOUNDRY, ABERYSTWYTH

At the time of writing the mill still stands, though it is imminently for demolition and transplanting, at least in part, to the Llywernog Mining Museum. The future of Green's Foundry is in the balance, with rumours that it may also end its days uprooted and rebuilt at Llywernog. Surely this cannot be a serious possibility; the converse would almost make more sense.

5. RARE MINERAL IN MID-WALES

George Hall was recently escorted by Neil Hubbard to a site near Ystrad Meurig where the mineral Allmanite (Nickel-antimony sulphide) occurs. It apparently looks like galena.

6. ESGAIRMWYN

Last week I was at Esgairmwyn on a fine spring day helping George Hall and Neil Hubbard with certain teething problems at the mill, which is in

general behaving very well. The throb of a diesel engine and the sight of a tram being filled were heart-warning indeed for those who hope to see a revival of mining in Mid Wales. Afterwards we retired to Pantyfedwen, Strata Florida for the night. We dined about 1/2 past 7 o'clock on a cold collation and apple pie taken very freely with a rich old claret. We drank to all friends in England as also to the mines, just as Francis Thompson had done in similar circumstances just up the road almost exactly 200 years ago. (See Old Metal Mines of Mid Wales Part 1, Page 36). It is too much to hope that someone will be doing the same two centuries hence?

7. BOOKS (NEW)

a) THE MINES OF GWYDIR FOREST - Part 1, Llanrwst mine. This long awaited series by John Bennett and Bob Vernon is in the press and samples may be available in time for the June meet.

b) THE GREAT ORME COPPER MINES 48 Pages £2.30 by post from 26 Carmen Sylva Road, Llandudno, Gwynedd. This little book by Don Smith is remarkably good value. I was kindly invited to the launch in February and learnt about the extensive Bronze-age workings that are to be opened to the public. Actually to see slides of the 19th century levels driven through the consolidated breccia of ancient deads full of stone hammers was a very sobering experience, and enough to convince even the hardened sceptic.

c) THE OLD METAL MINES OF MID WALES Part 3 (North of Goginan), David Bick. This long out-of-print volume is now on sale in revised form, price £3.95 + 35p postage and packing

8. BOOKS WANTED

Steve Grudgings, 37 Laverstoke Lane, Laverstoke, Witchurch, Hants, seeks the Moorland photo album of Shropshire Mining Scenes.

9. CAVING BOOKS

For a detailed list for sale, apply to Anne Oldham, Rhychydwr, Crymch, Dyfed, SA41 3RB.

10. PAPERS/ARTICLES

a) The 1988 edition of Archaeology in Wales contains a great deal of interest regarding pre-historic and early metal mining, including details of the Early Mines Research Group, Excavations at Parys Mountain and Nantyreira by Simon Timberlake, Stone Tools and Early Mining in Wales by John Pickin, An Ancient Leat Near Dolaucothi Gold mine by David Bick, Great Orme Copper Mines by Andy Lewis and L. A. Dutton, Parys Mountain by Stephen Briggs and Llanberis Copper Mine and its Antiquity by David Bick.

b) The Last 100 Years of Mining at Pontrhydroges. This illuminating 5 page article by George Hall was published in the Mining Magazine, February 1989, and thanks to his untiring efforts the chapter is not yet closed.

11. LLANFAIR SLATE CAVERNS

The manager Mr R.G. Owen is very anxious to locate 1 or 2 old mining trams for display. Phone 0756 780247

12. THE WELSH MINES SOCIETY AND CONSERVATION

During the past year or two I have been involved in the following projects.

a) Report on the IA of the Minera mines. b) Report on the IA of the Parys Mountain mines, c) Report on the IA of the Dyfed mines, d) Report on the IA of the Prestatyn - Dyserth area. e) Member of the I.A Panel of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments (Wales). f) Member of the IA Panel of the Forestry Commission, Forest of Dean area. g) Liason with CADW re listing of the Bull Enginehouse at Bedwas. h) Inventory for CADW of enginehouses in Wales. i) Assistance with an Ironbridge Gorge Museum raining report for English Heritage. j) Finding a new use for a 78" Cornish enginehouse in the Forest of Dean. k) Preparing text for an IA trail leaflet for AM plc/Gwynedd County Council. l) Preparing drawings for an IA trail leaflet for Clwyd County Council. m) Preparation of guidelines for consultants etc reclaiming old mine sites. n) Correspondence with Gwynedd County Council re. their Draft Structure Plan. o) Sundry articles, lectures and activities relating to IA and preservations.

In addition to the above, Simon Hughes, Bob Vernon and others are also very active and I will be pleased to publish details upon receipt. Interest in old mines is growing almost too quickly for comfort, and there is a danger that serious and irrevocable damage could be done without some form of liason with all interested bodies and a guiding policy - this being the aim of item (a) above. To this end also, an important conference has been convened - see below.

There is scope for WMS members to become actively involved in conservation etc., provided a suitable target and willing landowner can be found.

13. CONFERENCES

a) British Metal Mining Heritage : Conservation Interpretation and Research. Joint AIA/NAMHO. 16/17 June 1989, Loughborough. Speakers include Marilyn Palmer, Ivor Brown, Rob Vernon, Lynn Willies and Peter Crew. For details apply Marilyn Palmer, Department of History, Loughborough University.

b) NAMHO Conference. Lake District 14/16 July. Details phone Ambleside 32127.

c) Association of Industrial Archaeology Conference Huddersfield 9/10 September. Details from David Bick.

d) Historical Metallurgy Society Conference Matlock 22/24 September. Details from David Bick.

14. YSTRAD-EINIION AND BRYN-YR-AFR

Alan Williams writes to say much information on plant and machinery for sale at these mines is in the Mining Journal 1900 p 671 and 1903, p 521 respectively.

15. PEMBROKESHIRE COPPER (N/L 19 Item 17)

According to Peter Claughton the workings were at Porth Taflod, GR 717232, shaft now filled in. Tony Oldham has kindly sent a good article from The Pembrokeshire Magazine November 1985 on the Treginnis mine.

16. CWM CIPRWTH

P Claughton also reports an article in The Great Outdoors February 1989 on the Snowdonia mines with photos of the restored waterwheel. The flat-rods are also to be rebuilt and generally the Snowdonia National Park is to be congratulated on the treatment. This site will become one of the best, and probably the best, IA restoration jobs in Wales.

17. HOOK COLLIERY, near Pembroke

P Claughton advises us the pumping engine house was recently demolished alter partial collapse of the shaft. Are there any photos of the building?

18. LLANENGAN mine Lley Peninsula (near Abersoch)

I came across an old postcard recently showing an enginehouse here, which housed a 40" Cornish engine, put up in the 1870s. Does it still stand?

19. COLLIERY PLANT

Mary Hyde reports sundry mining plant has gone from Pontypridd Polytechnic to the Heritage Park at Lewis Merthyr Colliery for exhibition.

20. INSURANCE

Please contact Alan Williams (new address, 4 Tarlscough Lane, Burscough, Ormskirk, Lancs, L4Q ORJ) for details of insurance that NAMHO provides for WMS members.

21. ALAN MARRIOTT AND W. R. EVASON

Members will be saddened to learn of the recent deaths of these two members. The Evasons often attended meets till moving to Scotland a few years ago.

22. CRUSHING WHEELS AND THEIR ORIGIN

The birthplace and inventor of the "Cornish" rolls has given rise to much debate, but they were pretty certainly introduced first of all into the north of England. In a letter dated 31 January 1853 to the Mining Journal a Mr Dolphin says he worked in his youth for Frederick Hall, managing partner of the Derwent Mines, who carried out many improvements "he devised the first crushing rolls to...supersede hand labour". The exact date is not given but by implication was not long after 1807, certainly before 1812, and possibly even before 1807. We are indebted to George Hall for this information.

23. WATERWHEEL WANTED

I am on the look-out for an old waterwheel about 10ft diameter in any condition. Any information gratefully received (phone 0531 820650) It is to be used for blowing an iron bloomery in Gloucestershire.

24. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to all members who have contributed items for the Newsletter. Deadline for next issue, Mid November.

DAVID BICK (Editor) 0531 820650

May 1989

£2 subscriptions to David Roe, 14 Hillside Drive YEALMPTON Devon
PL8 2NT

STOP PRESS "PIGS AND INGOTS" PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION BY TINA CARR AND ANNEMARIE SCHONE OF LEAD AND SILVER MINES OF CARDIGANSHIRE TUES - SAT 10-5pm FFOTOGALLERY 31 CHARLES STREET CARDIFF UNTIL 12th JULY