

Welsh Mines Society

(Member of the National Association of Mining Historical Organizations)



WELSH MINES SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 24

JUNE 1991

1 EDITORIAL APOLOGY.

Due to a great pressure of work that cannot be postponed, the perfunctory nature of this newsletter will hopefully be no more than a temporary blip in the annals of WMS publications.

2 1991 PROGRAMME.

Our organizer Liz Pugh now being otherwise occupied, Weekend Meets have taken a nose-dive. We are now greatly in need of a replacement, and offers, with ideas for Meets, will be more than welcome. Meanwhile, thanks are due to Liz for services rendered in the past.

a) Summer Meet North Wales. 12.00 on Sunday 23rd June 1991

***** NOTE CHANGE IN DATE *****

Leader: Trevor Chesters, Phone 0244 675826

Meet at Loggerheads County Park about 3 miles west of MOLD on the Ruthin road. The car park is 200 yards beyond the Loggerheads Inn, (the one opposite the Inn charges £1). We shall visit the Glan Alyn Mine etc. and John Taylor leat, also gold mines in the CLWYDIAN Hills.

b) Autumn Meet South Wales, Nantymwyn. 12.00 on Sunday 29 September.

***** NOTE CHANGE IN DATE *****

I have recently surveyed the remains at surface and there is far more to be seen than I remembered, including ancient hushing systems and (possibly) Roman workings. The way to the mine is up an unmetalled road about 1/2 mile beyond RHANDIR MYWN, north of LLANDOVERY. You turn right through an iron gate at grid reference 775445. The Mine is a further 1/2 mile up the track.

Note: No pub is handy, so please bring your own refreshments

We have permission for access from the Economic Forestry Group.

Leader is David Bick.

c) IRISH TRIP Postponed indefinitely due to problems over the water.

3 FIELD MEET REPORTS.

a) Adit Digging Group: No activity as yet.

b) Ladywell Enginehouse: Repair work postponed.

c) Red Dragon Dig: April 1991. A number of dedicated workers under Simon Harris continued the dig, and found a splendid cast-iron flask, presumably for Mercury. Hopefully we shall see this on a future meet.

d) NAMHO Conference: May 1991. Organized by the WMS, the event proved very enjoyable and was generally acclaimed by one and all. Much credit is due to the Vernons and Alan Williams in particular, and also to the many

Field Trip organizers, speakers, and to all who contributed in various ways. I, myself received a pair of knitted woolly socks with a WMS/NAMHO emblem, made by the fair hands of Boo Vernon - kindness itself, for I had done little enough to deserve them. Hopefully they will be worn at the next meet!

4 WMS BONE CHINA MUGS

The new special limited edition is now available from the Pound House, or at a meet - too fragile to post.

5 DAVID ROE - NEW ADDRESS

Our membership secretary treasurer now resides at
20, LUTTERBURN STREET,
UGBOROUGH,
IVYBRIDGE,
DEVON,
PL21 ONG
Phone 0752 896432

6 MONSTER ORE SPECIMEN

Recently while staying at RHANDIRMWYN, near Nantymwyn, the landlady showed me an enormous boulder of SOLID GALENA that must have weighed 1/4 ton, found in ploughing a field, and the biggest lump of ore I ever saw. She said there was no risk of theft as it was too heavy but I told her not to be too sure of that!

7 NANTYMWYN (see Item 2b)

During a survey here, I encountered evidence of early hushing systems that need a full investigation. The whole site is very impressive.

8 ACCOMMODATION OFFER

Ben Brownless is usually at his country abode near Betws y Coed in the holidays, and has kindly offered, subject to a small charge, a barn with facilities, for members who prefer a roof over their heads to camping under canvas. For details phone:

0344 885713 term time
0690 5317 holidays

9 INFORMATION REQUIRED

John Bennett would like to know anything about Captain HITCHENS, KNAPP, NOTTINGHAM AND WASLEY. Please write or phone 0606 889325.

10 SLATE DEVELOPMENTS IN GWYNEDD - a report by Ben Brownless:

It has been interesting to watch recent developments in the slate industry in Gwynedd. Two quarries (to my knowledge) have re-opened and the idea of re-opening several others has been floated (Rhosydd, Croesor, Cwt-y-Bugail for example). Recent increase in demand and the current difficulties experienced as a result of the collapse of the working face at Sir Alfred MacAlpine's operation at Penrhyn have perhaps gone some way to stimulate production.

Nationwide Slate Products, financed by a Guernsey based investment company, have started to operate Croes-y-ddwy-afon (near what was once the highest petrol station) and Cwmorthin quarries. The company's

administrative base is at Croes, and the company presently employs about 50 people here and 25 at Cwmorthin. At Croes the land belongs to the Crown. At Cwmorthin Mr Evans Jones has leased the mineral rights to NSP. Both operations are open quarrying, involving the removal of pillars and chamber roofs and floors.

The Croes mine was originally a small open quarry with two underground levels drained by an adit towards the road. A short incline was presumably used to bring the state out to the workshops (although the O.S. map suggests the adit may have been the main egress). When visiting about 5 years ago I was unable to discover how this incline might have been powered - it seems too small for a water balance.

NSP have a 10 acre site which should give many years useful slate production. There are 2 digger/loaders, several large dump trucks and a 'down-the-hole' pneumatic drilling machine on site, this latter producing straight, impressive four inch holes. The mill contains one large diamond tipped circular saw table and five dressing bays.

Apart from the sale of roof slates the company continues to look at other by-products:

1. Peat, but this is too acidic and has to be retained for landscaping at a later date.
2. Crushed waste for roadstone, but this at present is not cost effective, partly because the material has had such a bad press after failure when incorrectly used in one or two road schemes.
3. Slate dust recovered from settling ponds after milling operations, but to dry this may be too difficult.

The future may enable them to look across the road to the granite quarry opposite to extract road stone (the overburden) first, and thus to get at what should be good slate beneath. The twin mounds of Carreg y Foel-gron would conceal this operation extremely well.

I find the recent expansion of the slate industry exciting because it is such an important part of the industrial heritage of this area. The provision of local employment can only be a good thing. With the responsible attitude shown towards conservation and safety by the NSP I wish them well.

11 ANOTHER MINE IN THE MARCHES

I am told of a limestone adit on the steep hillside at CREDEHILL (GR 4459 4485). Would someone like to kindly report on what there is to be seen ? Every school boy learns there are no mines in Herefordshire, yet they keep turning up - coal, iron, gold, stone and silver sand, and hopefully there will be more.

12 THE MINERS LAMP

From candle to cap-lamp, the exhibition by several Welsh museums should be worth seeing. It includes material on metal and slate mines, and is on view at the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum, Bute Street, Cardiff, from 14 May till 14 July, thereafter touring Wales at sundry sites. For more details phone R Prothero-Jones, 0222 481919.

13 MORE NEWS

Further items are being held over to N/L 25 when hopefully your worn out editor will have time to prepare a bumper issue. Meanwhile many thanks to all past, present and future correspondents.

David Bick (Editor) June 1991
Pound House, Newent, Glos. Phone (0531) 820650.

Some snippets from David Roe

14 SUBSCRIPTIONS

The address label gives the expiry date of your subscription payment. Should you be in arrears then £2 per year would be gratefully received by the Treasurer, David Roe,

20, LUTTERBURN STREET,
UGEOROUGH,
IVYBRIDGE,
DEVON. PL21 ONG

Payment of 2 years at a time is even more gratefully received.

15. GREAT ORME MINE LTD

Under the headline 'Mine shut for 2000 years hits jackpot' the Guardian (7th May) reported on the above enterprise at Llandudno giving 16 column inches to the story of bronze age mining finally overwhelmed by cheap continental imports.

16 FORROMENT

This former Welsh Gold mining group which now 'trades in American stainless steel' was the subject of a management Buyout with shares closing at 2p. (Daily Telegraph 7th March).

17 COOKED BOOKS.

Desmond Congdon, a Cornish tin miner who 'went to seek his fortune in a Welsh gold mine' was Jailed for 2 years at Truro for his part in an alleged £450,000 fraud at Clogau St David's Mine between 1983 and 1988 and later at another company in his native Cornwall. (Western Daily News March).

18 PLAS TAN Y BWLCH

Some of the courses offered include:

GEOLOGY AND SCENERY	13th - 20th July
ARCHAEOLOGY SUMMER SCHOOL	4th - 11th August
SLATE SURVEY	10th - 17th August
ANCIENT MINES	17th - 23rd August
ROCKS AND MINERALS	31st - 7th September
ORES AND MINES	11th - 14th October

Please contact Margaret Griffith, Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, LL41 3YU. Phone 0766 85 324.