

Welsh Mines Society

(Member of the National Association of Historical Mining Organizations)



WELSH MINES NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER 28

June 1993

1 1993 PROGRAMME

Summer Meet 19/20 June 1993: Dolgellau Gold and Manganese.

Meet 11am on Saturday at the Cross Foxes Inn near Dolgellau, GR 766 168 to proceed to Foel Ispri etc. Saturday evening will be at the Cross Foxes with a speaker and a "please bring your own slides evening". Bar snacks and accommodation at Cross Foxes.

Meet 10 am Sunday at the Fiddlers Elbow Lay-by 1 km East of Bontddu (SH 678 189). Proceed via A496 to Llanbedr and thence to Ciel Cychwyn Farm at Cwm Nant Col (SH 634 259) (parking 20p)

Leaders George Hall and Harold Morris

Autumn Meet. 18/19 September

Esgairhir and Ponterwyd District. Leader D Bick. Based at the White Lion, Talybont, North of Aberystwyth. phone 0970 832245. Further accommodation next door at the Black Lion, 0970 83 2345. Meet Saturday 12 noon at Esgairhir, GR 735912. We hope also to visit Eaglebrook etc. Please bring slides for the evening

On Sunday, meet at 10 am, GR 739799 for Bwlchgwyn, Ystum Tuen etc..

2 THE GLYN PITS, PONTYPOOL

This scheduled site with its priceless 19th Century machinery has been going to rack and ruin for many years. Following a site meeting on 25th April with Steve Grudgings and Nigel Chapman and me, the Welsh Mines preservation Trust is in contact with Cadw with a view to its long term restoration. Volunteers will be needed, hopefully before long, for scrub clearance etc. Please contact DEB if you could help.

3 GEEVOR MINE

The company owning this famous tin mine is now wound up, a sad end to a long and honourable history. I myself was a shareholder for 39 years.

4 BRAMMOAK RODS

These are supposed to be synonymous with flat-rods but the origin of the term is a mystery. It may have been the name of a mine captain. If anyone has any clues please let me know. Michael Lewis, an authority on the welsh slate industry, is especially interested.

5 GREAT ORME, LLANDUDNO

Don Smith, 26 Carmen Sylva Road, Llandudno, is editor of the Great Orme Exploration Society's Journal, and has kindly sent a copy of the latest well-produced issue. It is full of news, including a proposed survey of the line of Brammoak-rods that went over the Orme to the Tom & Jerry or Flop-Jack engine. There was much head scratching about the lack of slags. The thought that the ores were smelted elsewhere never seems to occur to anyone.

6 CWMYSTWTH

We are grateful to Robert Protheroe Jones for the following:

Until the mid 1970s, a fine slate plaque adomed the entrance to the Level I-awr at Cwmystwth. Erected by the Cwmystwyth Mining Co. Ltd in 1898 when the mine reopened, it

named Henry Gammon as Managing Director; the names of his two co-directors had been obliterated and in filled with lead when he assumed sole ownership in 1905. A glass fibre replica was later put up by the North Cardiganshire Mining Club. This too, disappeared and was briefly returned in 1978 before vanishing completely.

The fate of both plaques was unknown until shortly before Christmas 1992 when the original was anonymously donated to the Welsh Industrial & Marine museum. The plaque had obviously been well looked after. It is pleasing that its future is now safely assured as such plaques are now rare. To my knowledge only 2 entrance inscriptions survive in-situ in mid Wales- the 1785 Keystone to level Fawr at Pontyrhydgroes and an 1870 Keystone to Brommwyn Deep Adit. Preserved Plaques include one at Treddol Chapel Museum and several at Llywernog Mining Museum. The Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum has two others in its collection - the small 1842 tablet from Taylor's incline at Goginan and the huge ornate plaque from the Van mine.

The possibility of unauthorised removal led to a replica, rather than the original Goginan tablet being emplaced during restoration work in 1991. With reclamation work being mooted for Cwmystwyth it would be pleasing if money could be found for a similar replica at Level Fawr as part of the works. (Editors query: where is Brommwyn?).

7 MELINGLOCH MINE

I mentioned a swindle mine in **Old Metal Mines Part 4**, pg 46, west of Newtown at GR 067943. The other day I passed the place and noticed a deep adit driven into a vertical rock face close to the road, it was open but had a foot or so of water inside. Could someone please explore and report ? I could see no sign of a lode in the work.

8 DYLIFE - ANCIENT WORKINGS

The late Will Richards told me they cleared out a level, now run in, east of Boundary Shaft in 1936, and found a wooden hand pump in the winze. The miners thought the workings were Roman, and undoubtedly they are very old. A project for the Early Mines Research Group?

9 DYLIFE - NEW BOOK

Mr Cyril Jones of Tregynog, Powys, is writing a book in Welsh about Dylife called Calon Blwm. We look forward to seeing it in print and also an English version.

10 OLD METAL MINES OF MID-WALES OMNIBUS EDITION

This is now on sale, limited to 500 hard bound copies of all six parts with index. There are two versions:

- a) cloth bound with dustjacket £35 +£2.50 p&p
- b) Bound in half calf or morocco leather with raised bands and title on the spine, marbled end papers etc., £69.50 +£2.50 p&p.

The latter is special order only with a few weeks delay.

11 SHOTHIOLES, BARRACKS ETC.

Robert Protheroe Jones has kindly sent the following copy.

a) Peter Hay's "**Triangular**" shotholes are not rare and can be found in many Mid Wales mines. These hole seem peculiar to hand drilled holes: a potential interpretation is a repeated 60 degree hand turning of the drill steel between blows: 60 degrees is about the normal rotation of one's wrist in this plane. This could indicate single handed drilling. For non-underground members an in situ triangular shothole can be seen along the cliff/stope wall at Eaglebrook mine. (We are going there in September - Ed)

b) "**New**" **Cornish Engine House** - the gable wall and parts of the side of a late 1830's engine house stand in full height at Gorsgoch colliery, Cross Hands, near Llanelli (SN575 136). The base of the Bobwall and machinery are just visible.

c) **powder magazines** - during recent fieldwork I came across what seems to be only the second recognised circular magazine in Cardiganshire (the other being the splendid one at Llywernog). This latest example is at Camdwrnwyr and stands to a maximum height of four feet. Do members know of any other non-square rectangular examples or in any other way unusual magazines in Wales so that I can estimate their relative scarcity?

d) **Barracks** - I am currently pursuing some work on metal mine barracks which seem to be much rarer both in terms of original existence and survival than slate mine barracks. Can members help with references to vanished, and information on surviving examples. To start the ball rolling I am aware of the following in Cardiganshire: Blaencaeulan - very ruinous; Camdwrnwyr - beneath the Nant y Moch reservoir, Esgairhir very ruinous - (can this be regarded as a true example?). (Why not - Ed?)

12 CARNO ADIT, EBBW VALE

Suggestions in the last N/L 17, that there is not much to see have not gone down too well in caving circles, even though in a recent article, Descent (106) actually states that 'enthusiasm post-trip has not matched the pre-trip confidence' Whatever the truth, Carno is not everyone's cup of tea by the sound of it - mud crawls etc. etc..

13 GOLD

Mark Waters reports that Simon Hughes has found gold in a stream at Nant y Garw lead mine near Rhayader.

14 RARE MINERALS

Mr J S Mason writes to report that the rare secondary minerals Ramsbeckite and Schulenbersite have been found at Ystum Tuen, near Ponterwyd. This puts the site in the European class. Exciting, though I expect you need a magnifying glass to see them. We are going there in September.

15 CWMRHEIDOL - YSTUM TUEN MINES

These are the subject of a land reclamation scheme, but it is anticipated that the more important mining/IA features will be saved. Incidentally a local man told me recently that his grandfather was a miner, who would have starved rather than work there. Apparently the water was so acid that boots only lasted a few weeks and the sulphurous air was extremely bad for health.

It is intended to visit Ystum Tuen / Bwlchwyn mines - a very important historic mining landscape - on the autumn meet.

16 A CAUTIONARY TALE

Ben Brownless reports that last year someone took a party into Rhiw Bach slate mine through a barred -off entrance, and somebody got injured. The leader was fined £90 with costs for unlawful entry.

17 MINERA OPENING

Bill Stater says that Minera IA / Mining centre with book shop etc. is officially now open to the public, 3 miles West of Wrexham. Get there if you can.

18 SLATE WORKINGS REVIEW

The D of E is reviewing slate tips and workings and assessing reclamation, re-use of waste etc.. The contract has been given to Richards Moorehead & Laing Ltd who are experienced in this kind of work. Hopefully the IA will be given full attention.

19 ILL TIDINGS FROM NEWENT

Members will be saddened but perhaps not altogether surprised to learn that after years of more or less unhappy marriage my wife and I are separating. Shortly, I shall be sole occupant of the Pound House, and visitors will be more than ever welcome. Let us hope, as Sheila supposes, that it will all be for the best in the end.

20 RED DRAGON ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG, April 1993

Due to problems down on the farm, Simon Harris was unable to be present, but the usual stalwarts were there and good progress made, though no spectacular discoveries. Many thanks to the farmer for his co-operation.

21 GOLD MINES IN SPAIN (See also para 24)

Your editor will be spending 3 weeks in Spain as from the 4th May exploring gold and other mines, and may indeed decide never to return! At all events, it is a thought.

22 METAL MINES IN ANTIQUITY - EMRG please note.

George MI writes to say that Prof William Fowland gave a paper on this topic, which was published in abstract form in the **Mining Magazine**, December 1912. he said that in the early metal age, bronze was not obtained by melting together tin and copper together, but by mixing the ores before smelting.. Fowland had actually proved this on a simple furnace he built himself. There is also a substantial piece in the Sept. 1954 issue on William Champion of Bristol, the zinc smelting man.

23 LORD WOOD OF LUNE

I am very sorry to report the death on 8th February of our member, Keith, Lord of Lune. Many members will recall that he and his wife joined us at Lianidloes last year and he seemed well on the road to recovery after a determined fight to conquer his illness.

24 MINING TRIP TO SPAIN

Jamie Thorburn is organising another trip to Andalucia, 16-27 Sept.- copper and silver lead mines, Roman mines and dramatic scenery. It sounds full of interest. For further details phone 0970 625077

25 CARMEL HEAD COPPER MINES ANGLESEY

It is pleasing to report that the chimney on this site near the coast is to be repaired by a local builder, as part of a National Trust exercise.

26 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all contributors including Jeremy Wilkinson, John and Betty Steel, Tony Oldham, Mark Walters, J S Mason, Ben Brownless, George Hall, Simon Hughes and Simon Harris.

Deadline for next N/L - mid November

David Bick The Pound House Newent Glos 0531 820650

27 WELSH MINES PRESERVATION TRUST REPORT

The trust continues to expand. Cadw has asked the committee to investigate the potential of the unique Glyn Pits. Members have been deeply involved in a survey of Shropshire mining remains, and a report on the Pennant mine in Clwyd for the Clwyd/ Powys Archaeological Trust. A study of the Waunfawr Granite Quarry is in hand and discussions continue with Forest Enterprise about Gwydry Uchaf. We are seeking a WDA grant for restoration work on Parys Mountain. A number of other projects are under consideration and we would welcome new members who can offer support - preferably (but not exclusively) financial, logistical or physical. There is no financial liability if you join the Trust and if you are interested please contact The Secretary, 7 St Johns Way, Cuddington, Cheshire CW8 2LX.

28 EXMOOR MINES RESEARCH GROUP

Please contact Chris Tilley 14, Glanfield Close, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3BH 0832 432692

29 This N/L has not been proof read by DEB and all errors are the responsibility of David Roe, who still looks forward to receiving subscriptions (preferably 2 years for £4) and is at 20, Lutterburn Street, Ugborough, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 ONG.