

NAMHO
National Association
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Organisations



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NEWSLETTER

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NAMHO CONFERENCE 1995

Once more a very successful NAMHO Conference has come and gone. The Conference was hosted this year by the Shropshire Caving and Mining Club. It was based at the Lilleshall National Sports Centre where the delegates had the benefit of the excellent facilities that are available at this location.

There was a full and balanced programme of events to keep delegates fully occupied over the weekend. A varied programme of lectures, all of which were presented in a very professional manner, were well attended in the very impressive, and well equipped, lecture theatre. In addition, the underground meets, which provided interest for the sporty types as well as less arduous trips for the faint hearted, and the surface walks were also supported. It was unfortunate that the majority of the sites available for these activities were located some 35 miles from Lilleshall.

It had been planned that the Saturday evening Social Gathering would not have any formal entertainment. The plan was changed at the last minute, which was a pity!!!

An excellent Conference once more. It was enjoyed by all who attended and it was the people who stayed away who were the losers. The SCMC had put a tremendous amount of effort into the planning and organisation of the Conference and deserve the praise and rewards associated with a successful weekend.

The next NAMHO Conference will be hosted by PDMHS in the summer of 1997. A start has already been made by on the planning for this Conference so please plan to join us in 1997.

NAMHO REJOINS NCA

Following the successful negotiations between NAMHO and NCA, NAMHO has rejoined the NCA. The immediate effect of this action is that NAMHO organisations who have been participating in the BCRA Insurance Scheme WILL be able to continue using it when the premiums expire in September. BCRA will invoice participating organisations direct.

MONUMENTS PROTECTION PROGRAMME

In the last edition of the Newsletter the address given at which to contact David Cranstone, as supplied by our correspondent, was incorrect. Will all members please address any correspondence, on this or any other subject, to:- David Cranstone, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, Belbeck Hall, Westgate Rd, Newcastle on Tyne, NE1 1SE. Tel:- 0191 221 0772

RECENT REPORTS ON EARLY MINING

The last decade has seen a great deal of innovative work on early mining in the British Isles and the result of some of that research is now being published. Two major reports have recently been brought out which give a new and fascinating insight into the origins and development of metal mining in Britain and Ireland.

The Mount Gabriel Mines in Co Cork became well known in the 1960's when the late John Jackson obtained a Bronze Age radiocarbon date from charcoal in one of the mine tips. During the 1980's the mines were subjected to a programme of

intensive archaeological investigation which has now been published by the excavator, Dr W O'Brien, as *Mount Gabriel - Bronze Age Mining in Ireland* (Galway University Press 1994, £30.00). The report is a model of its kind and provides an historical introduction to mining in the Mizen peninsula, a detailed archaeological and geological account of the excavation, its results and a wide ranging discussion of the place of Mount Gabriel in the development of Irish and European mining in late prehistory. The report must be the most detailed account of a single mine ever produced and although this particular site is prehistoric the techniques employed by O'Brien can - and indeed should - be applied with equal effect on mines of the medieval and post-medieval periods. Industrial archaeologists still have much to learn from the methods employed by their more rigorous prehistoric colleagues.

The Great Orme Mines will be familiar to many Society members and the discovery of the extensive Bronze Age workings in the area must rank as one of the most exciting events in mining history studies during the last few years. *Prehistoric Copper Mining on the Great Orme, Llandudno, Gwynedd* by Andrew Dutton and Peter Fasham (Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 60, 1994, pp245-286) is a detailed account of the surface excavations undertaken around Vivian's Shaft between 1988 and 1992 by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. The report details the investigation of the opencast and surface vein system, describes the archaeological discoveries and includes a contribution by D A Jenkins on the geological context of the mines. It is instructive to see how much archaeological evidence could be retrieved from what was initially regarded as a reclamation site in need of modern landscaping and, as Dutton says in a footnote to this report, "it is to be hoped that other (mine) sites, irrespective of their age, will benefit from a balanced assessment of their worth especially in terms of potential for long-term preservation, access and interpretation". The report on the exploration and excavation of the deep prehistoric workings on the Orme is to be published elsewhere and must be awaited with anticipation.

John Pickin

NEW PUBLICATIONS

"The Mining Journal 1860 - An Index of British and Irish Mines and Mining Companies" compiled by Peter Claughton. 47 pages, softbound. Cost £5.00.

From Abbey Consols to Ystrad Owen Colliery; a comprehensive index of all of the references to mines and mining activity as reported in the Mining Journal for the year of 1860. It includes all of the advertisements.

"Mining in Shropshire" edited by Adrian Pearce, published by Shropshire Books. Paperback, illustrated with photographs and drawings. Cost £7.95.

Today there are no working mines left in Shropshire. This book provides an illustrated history of the main mining areas of the county. It describes the working conditions, equipment and methods used in the extraction of the minerals. It also discusses the mixed fortunes of the mine owners. Each section contains a field guide to any remains that can still be seen.

"Manifold Light Railway" by Lindsey Porter. Published by Ashbourne Editions. Cost £4.95.

This is a new publication of illustrations of the Manifold Light Railway. It includes a previously unpublished photograph of Ecton that was taken about 1900. This photograph shows the dressing floors and the site of the two buddles etc.

"Seathwaite Wad and The Mines of the Borrowdale Valley" by Ian Tyler. 220 pages with over 120 photographs, diagrams and illustrations. Softbacked. Published by Blue Rock Publications, cost £13.99.

This book paints a wide canvas of life in the Borrowdale Valley through hundreds of years. It describes the rough and tumble of working the mines, of the daring and foolhardy smugglers and of the elusive magical Seathwaite Wad.

"Minera: Lead Mines and Quarries" edited by John Bennett.

This volume on the lead mines and lime quarries of Minera and the surrounding area has been written by members of the WMPT, with addition material from local contributors. It was expected to be published in June 1995 by Maelor Borough Council.

"The Iron Industry of the Weald" by Cleeve and Crossley. Published by Merton Press, Cardiff, hardback, £24.95.

A revised and enlarged edition of a classic work.

"Great Western Corris" by Gwyn Briwnant Jones. 1994 85pp 9 maps 7 diagrams and 86 B/W photos. hardback, £9.95.

Constructed to serve the slate quarries, this is a detailed history for the slate buff.

"Senghennydd: The Universal Pit Village 1890-1930" by Michael Lieven. 1994 387pp 2 maps 42 B/W illus, hardback, £17.50.

In 1894 Sir William Lewis (Lord Merthyr) sank a coal mine in the valley and within 10 years it became one of the largest pits in Wales. Over 500 miners were killed in two pit disasters.

"Coal Society: A history of South Wales Mining Valleys 1840-1980" by David Egan. 1987 xii+153pp 21 maps 140 illus, softback £36.75.

This book even includes coal mining in Pembrokeshire.

BRONZE AGE LEAD NECKLACE FOUND IN SCOTLAND

Recent work by the National Museums of Scotland has resulted in the discovery of the earliest lead objects ever to be found in Great Britain. Archaeological excavation of an Early Bronze Age cemetery at West Water Reservoir, near West Linton, Peebleshire, revealed a number of burials including the grave of a six year old child who had been buried with a two-string necklace.

The outer string was made from cannel coal beads. The inner ring was made of smelted lead beads and these appear to have been formed by hammering and piercing individual globules of lead. Lead isotope analysis has so far failed to link the beads with a particular ore source but the silver-lead mining complex at Siller Holes on Lead Law is only 3 km from the cemetery site. There are still no precise dates for the burial but it is thought to belong within the period 2100 - 1600 BC.

The objects are currently on display in the Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh.
John Pickin

GEOLOGICAL TOURS TO THE LAND OF YOUR DREAMS

The Geologists' Association is running the following tours in the next two years. They are:-

1996 18 August-8 September. Alaska and the Yukon.

1997 6-17 April. Jordan and Syria.

1997 August. Western USA.

The tours are planned to the theme of "Geology is Fun". Not too heavy, plenty of the spectacular, and wildlife or history included. Non-members of the Association are welcome.

For further details, please contact Dr Tony Waltham, Civil Eng Dept, Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 4BU. Tel:- 0115 942 8418 ext 2133.

THRELKELD QUARRY & MINING MUSEUM

The Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum in the Lake District is now open to the public. The museum is open six days a week (closed Thursday) from 11.00am until 4.45pm. At weekends the Quarry Engine House, complete with narrow gauge railway will also be open to the public.

The quarry is located off the A66 at Threlkeld, east of Keswick and was originally opened in 1870 to supply railway ballast, granite setts, building facing stone and granite slabs. It was closed in 1982. The artifacts on site include many large machines that were used in the quarrying industry. The site is unique in that many of the original buildings still exist, eg powder house, engine house, weighbridge etc. The quarrymen's canteen now houses the Museum and Shop.

The Museum contains the collection from the recently closed Caldbeck Mining Museum. This collection contains artifacts relating to the coal mining, ironstone mining, slate quarrying and mineral mining in Cumbria.

The site has ample free parking space, together with a picnic area.

GEEVOR MINE, PENDEEN, WEST CORNWALL

The Cornwall Archaeological Unit has been involved in a County Council led project to rescue the Geevor Mine site from demolition and to develop it as a museum of mining history.

Geevor Mine site has been used for metal mining for some 500 years. The site contains a full range of mining site buildings, complete with all the associated machinery, instead of the romantic ruins that are found elsewhere in Cornwall.

A visitor centre was opened in 1993. Work on the surface has involved capping shafts and making areas of shallow workings safe. In addition, the surface water drainage system has been repaired to reduce erosion of archaeological features. Repairs have also been carried out on two chimneys, a water powered tin stamps building that is perched on the cliff edge and the Levant Arsenic calciners.

The value of having an Archaeological watching brief on such a project has enabled features to be examined as they have been exposed during the site work. A classic example was the "interesting stone" found by a contractor who gave it to the site archaeologist. This stone had clearly once been hafted as a hammerstone. Perhaps, given the association of these distinctive artifacts with prehistoric mining elsewhere in Britain, the concept of ancient mining on the site should be reviewed.

*Abstract from "Rescue News" No 65 (1995)
Paul Sowan*

NEW DIMENSIONS AND NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF GROUND SUBSIDENCE

This is the title of an article by Dr Tony Waltham of the Civil Engineering Department of Nottingham Trent University, that was published in *Geoscientist*, Vol 5 No 4

This is a short, but very interesting, article which very briefly discusses the basic problems with ground subsidence both in the UK and in other parts of the world. The article vividly illustrates that mining is not the only cause of ground subsidence.

Paul Sowan

BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY STAFF PAPERS

The following are included in the February 1995 edition of the list of BGS Staff Papers.

1. "Field excursion Alderley Edge SSSI, Cheshire, 2 October 1994". Warrington G. Prepared for the East Midlands Geological Society site visits.

2. "Barytocalcite and Witherite from Rorrington Mine, Chirbury, Salop, England". Starkey R E, Hubbard N, and Young B. *Journal of the Russell Society*, 5 (2), 1994. 115-118.

3. "The North Swaledale mineral belt around Gunnerside". Ineson R and Young B. *Yorkshire rocks and landscape, a field guide*. Edited by Scutton C. Yorkshire Geological Society, 1994. 51-57.

Request for copies of the above should be directed to the authors. Tel:- (01159) 363100.

SOUTH CROFTY SECURES MORE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The future of South Crofty, the only surviving Cornish tin mine, appeared to be secure with the completion of a £4 million financing package that was recently completed. This is in addition the share sale of August 1994.

The financial stability of the mine was not secure after the share issue but the additional finance (£1.12 million), provided at that time by two Vancouver based Britons, Paul Darch and Gerald Wright, enabled the mine to continue to operate.

These two supporters of South Crofty were also involved in a recent deal which saw South Crofty Holdings, the mine's parent company, place some £4.1 million of new shares on the Vancouver Stock Exchange. It was stated that the additional finance would enable the development of the mine, especially a scheme to deepen the workings, to be speeded up.
(Guardian 20/6/95 - Paul Sowan)

GOLD IN DEAN

The media is getting very excited about gold discoveries at the Bailey Level, Forest of Dean,

which was last worked in 1908. The geological survey has also found gold in the area but won't say exactly where. No doubt all will be revealed in a costly report in due course.
(WMS)

REFERENCE SOURCE FOR RESEARCH INTO WELSH AND FOREST OF DEAN MINES

Dr Ivor Brown reports that the Transactions of the British Society of Mining Students (1876 - 1910) is a valuable source of material on mines in Wales and the Forest of Dean.
(WMS)

COAL MINES SUBSIDENCE

A new quango, the Coal Authority, has been set up to spend £50 million on subsidence claims. The Chairman, Sir David White, has no experience of mining but will get £18,000 per year for one day's work per week. Not a bad little earner!
(WMS)

PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP

The latest edition of the Plymouth Caving Group Newsletter and Journal contains a series of interesting short articles.

The subjects of these articles are:-

Pete's Paradise Cave, Gibraltar
An Insight into Cave and Mine
Conservation
Ambrose Lake Mine, St Neot, Cornwall
Code of Practice for the University of
Plymouth Caving Club

WEALDON CAVE AND MINE SOCIETY

The July 1995 edition of the News of the Weald contains a large list of potential future projects that could be carried out in Surrey. The outcome of these projects will depend on the enthusiasm of the members doing the research, whether it be academic or physical, and the object of publishing the list is an attempt to whet the appetite of members to these projects.

It is good to see a Society giving guidance to members rather than just leaving them to independently do their own thing.
(WCMS)

SHROPSHIRE CAVING AND MINING CLUB

On a similar vein, the summer edition of Below, the quarterly Journal of SCMC, reports on the work that has been done on Society projects in the six months to June 1995.

The work has been done by 15-20 members at some 12 sites in Shropshire. The work has ranged from clearing sites, digs, underground exploration, surveying both surface and underground locations to meeting with Local Authority, Forestry Commission and English Heritage personnel to discuss ways of stabilising and preserving specific sites.

(SCMC)

HOPEWELL COLLIERY, FOREST OF DEAN

This site (SO602114) was one of two pits that were worked by 4 Free Miners which had to close as they cannot now compete with the imported coal. It is hoped to establish a mining museum in redundant surface buildings and to open parts of the workings for visitors to see the traditional working methods

CORNISH MINES

Work at Taylor's Shaft and Engine House is almost complete. The chimney has been rebuilt, the buildings stabilised, and the area generally cleaned up. The present owners, Kerrier District Council, plan to transfer ownership of the site to The National Trust.

In a separate arrangement, The National Trust has made a short term management agreement with the Trevithick Trust to manage Robinson's Engine and Engine House, Trevithick's Cottage, East Pool Engine and Engine House and now Taylor's Shaft

ECTON COPPER MINES

Evidence of mining activity in the early seventeenth century at Ecton, or other North Staffordshire non-ferrous metal mines, is rather scarce. There is reference to "excellent copper ore of some mines in

Staffordshire" by Gerard Malynes in 1622, but no specific reference is made to Ecton. In 1630 the lead mines of Staffordshire were recorded as belonging to Sir Richard Fleetwood of Colwich and Mr Hurt. Until now, the earliest record for Ecton has been 1654 when 2 loads and 4 dishes of ore (probably lead) were sold by Jeremiah Rhodes (see page 17 of "The Copper & Lead Mines of Ecton Hill, Staffordshire" by John Robey & Lindsey Porter).

The Ashbourne News of 1909 contains several articles by the Rev W Beresford, whose family lived at Beresford Hall in earlier times. One of his articles was about Ecton, largely quoting the Efford article of 1769. Beresford states that the Alstonfield parish register records that on 23rd July 1642, one "Millar of Wessyd, being dawpt in a groane at Eckton" was buried. In 1652 George Lomas, also of Wessyd, met with the same fate. "Wessyd" is clearly West Side, situated just upstream of Apes Tor, Ecton, and I think we can safely assume that the reference to a "groane" was poor handwriting and the writer meant "grove" or mine.

If "dawpt" really should have read as "damp", then we have an early reference of gassing. Gassing in a mine is not unique, for gas in a reopened shaft at Butterton Ford, southwest of Ecton, claimed several lives 150 years ago. A plaque in the Butterton church records this fact and more detail is given in the addendum of Garner's "History of Staffordshire" of 1844. Moreover, the mine was being worked a dozen years prior to the previous earliest reference.

It is also worth noting that Geoff Cox of Ecton told me that radiocarbon dating of a piece of stemple from the pipe workings above Salts Level was dated to about the time of the Civil War. I am not aware that the dating report was ever published, or that it even still exists, but this note serves as an indicator that seventeenth century working of the Ecton pipe had reached that depth.

Lindsey Porter

HISTORY OF MINOR METALS AND MINERALS CONFERENCE

This conference is being organised by PDMHS and will be held at the Peak District Mining Museum on 18th and 19th November 1995. The papers will be published as a special edition of the PDMHS Bulletin, similar to "Mining Before Powder".

For further information, please write to Evelyn Dixon, Peak District Mining Museum, Matlock Bath, Derbys, DE4 3NR or telephone (01773) 823020.

BOOK REVIEW

"South Crofty Underground" by Paul Deakin, Alan Buckley and Karla Riekstins. Published by Penhellick Publications. Pocket sized (8.5" x 5.75"), soft backed, 31 pictures. Cost £3.50.

This is the first in what promises to be an excellent series of picture books (four more are planned) in both colour and black and white. All of the pictures are captioned with a detailed description which explains what is happening and the miners involved during day to day working of the mine. These are contemporary operations, the record of which will become historical pictures for future mining historians.

Paul Deakin is one of the country's leading underground photographers, as well as being a Mining Engineer and Chartered Surveyor. His technique and lighting plots are so good that readers will see the mine in greater detail than those who work in the mine, the illumination available to the miners being restricted to that of a cap lamp. Alan Buckley is a mining historian who has worked at South Crofty for some 30 years and Karla Riekstins is believed to be the first woman Mining Engineer to be employed underground in Great Britain. She also works at South Crofty. Alan and Karla have provided the caption material for the book.

Paul's pictures are, of course, both excellent and fascinating. They give a privileged view of the working of Cornwall's last tin mine. The book is highly recommended and at the sensible price of £3.50, even more so.

Harry M Parker

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINING HISTORY ORGANISATIONS

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