

SCMC on Facebook

The club are now using Facebook as an extra route for members (and others who might be interested) to obtain information on club trips and other events coming up.

There is a Facebook Group that can be accessed by searching for “**Shropshire Caving & Mining Club**” – this is an open group and can be viewed by anybody but an ‘administrator’ needs to authorise any posting.

The intention is that the Facebook Group is used to give information on trips and events coming up in the next week or two plus any event where a bit of notice is required.

We are not looking to use this route to post up photos of the trip or have trip reports. Where possible, a relevant photo for upcoming trips will be included in the posting just to give a bit of flavour and added interest.

The Facebook Group administrators (Andy Harris, Steve Holding and Andy Wood - with Steve carrying out most of the postings) look to accept membership of the group from anybody we know that applies. The only reason for not accepting general membership is that we have difficulty seeing any reason for someone not a club member or having specific interest in our activities being a member. although persistent applications will be accepted.

Steve Holding

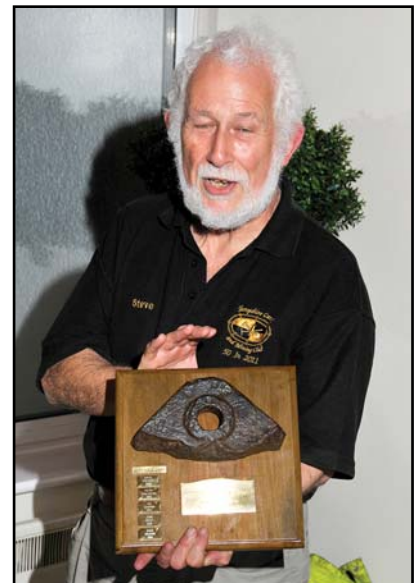
Annual Dinner

At the Club dinner held on the 8th October at the Wroxeter Hotel, Steve Holding received the 2016 “Archaeology Award” for his work at the Pitchcroft dig (*see photo right*).

The guest speaker was Paddy McManus from the Mines Rescue Service, who gave a talk on the 2011 Gleision Mine Incident.

It was interesting to hear about the problems they encountered in responding to the incident. He was also full of praise for the Cave Rescue divers who entered the mine first to establish the situation regarding the missing miners. This was the first time volunteers from cave rescue have worked alongside the ‘professional’ mines rescue teams in a coal mine incident.

Members and guests at the dinner raised £128 for the Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation through their sealed envelope raffle - this was despite some prior examination of the envelopes with torches!



A special mention must be made to John ‘Mole’ Hine for bringing along some of his flame safety lamps as table displays and for providing so many bottles of ‘Mole Juice’ as raffle prizes..... *hic!*

Finally a BIG thank you to Neal and Gareth Rushton for organising an entertaining evening.



Left: The guest speaker, Paddy McManus.



News Round-Up 1

Ivor Brown

Emys Thomas (1920-2016)

Without ‘Tommy’ there would probably be no IGMT. He was General Manager for TDC until 1991. In the 1970s he asked to be kept informed of the work of the SCMC in the Ironbridge Gorge particularly as he was interested in the mining aspects. It was with his support that work was done on the Tar Tunnel, Blists Hill Shafts, The Wellington Well and most of the other surviving mining remains in the Gorge (Lincoln Hill, Broseley Bank, etc.). He was even behind the preservation of Spout Mound in the Town Centre.

He was disappointed when the Gorge was “listed” that it did not include the “underground” remains as he believed that the longwall method of mining was developed around the Madeley Wood. He corresponded until recently with the writer on this and even had published some separate papers. His list “of coal mines in 1758” is remarkable it even includes names of workers and methods of work. See example extract in the box below (from “Coalbrookdale in the 18th Century” by E.Thomas, published privately by IGMT).

Pontesford Engine House

The No.2 Pontesford engine house was the house of the Dennis family for many years. The last occupant Susan Davies has just died. While never a member of SCMC she was always helpful to the Club in the early 1970s. Susan and her mother were keen, when they left the house, that the Club should take it over for preservation. They asked £100 for it, but the Club did not accept it at the time.

Mineral Railway

A book by Michael Clements “The Last Years of Steam in Shropshire” published by Fonthill Media (2014) contains details of a mineral railway line which for over a mile had only 3 rails for 2 tracks - this was the Titterstone Incline, opened 1861 as part of the Ludlow and Clee Hill Railway. It was a 1 in 12 gradient incline, rope hauled, 1.25 miles long with a rise of about 650 ft. It is an excellent book.

Titterstone Incline, Ludlow & Clee Hill Railway (closed 1960). Image from “Last Years of Steam” by Michael Clements, Font Hill Media 2014.



Manor of Madeley – Coal Pits Working in 1758

Name of Pit	Possible Location	Lessees	Type of Coal	Witnesses and Transcript Pages	Comments
Holland Old Foot Road	Madeley Wood close to River		River Coal Bottom Coal	James Hotchkiss 221-222	Coal obtained for “upwards of 120 years” (i.e from 1638). Now only river coals the worst in the Manor. Bottom Coal used to be raised, but ceased because of water and damp. Colliers could not work because of want of air.
Hollands Foot Road	Madeley Wood close to River	George Holland Robert Holland George York John Cope Edward Thomas	Bottom or Flint Coals	Edward Thomas 41-43 John Cope 43-47 Robert Holland 47-49 Henry Rainsford 162-165 Abraham Ford 240-257 William Dicken 258-275	Two sorts of coal, one at 6/- a half wagon and the other at 5/- Royalty 1/- tonnage 25 cwt (half wagon). Tonnage increased to 32cwt then 36cwt. 300 half wagons stacked on banks for three months. Part sold “at little better than price of slack” (John Cope). Pit closed.
Draw Well Pit	Madeley Wood “lying so conveniently close to the River Severn”	George Holland Robert Holland George York John Cope Edward Thomas	Bottom or Flint Coals	Edward Thomas 41-43 John Cope 43-47 Robert Holland 47-49 Robert Cox 78-86 Thomas Slaughter 95-121 Henry Rainsford 162-165 Edward Grainger 172-173	Worked in conjunction with Hollands Foot Road. Tonnage increased from 25cwt (half wagon) to 32 cwt then 36cwt. Royalty 2/- half wagon, 6 half wagons a day. Pit closed 1756 but had a large wall * of coal which could have sold in large quantities.

* Note: Does this expression mean that they were working by longwall rather than short wall in pillar workings?



SCMC Trip Reports, November 2016 to January 2017

Steve Holding

November

Wednesday 2nd - Snailbeach Roberts Level – Stuart Cowper, Steve Holding and Andy Wood removed some of the ropes from the “Scenic Route”.

Wednesday 9th - Snailbeach Roberts Level – SRT training for Rob, Olly and Steve – training provided by Julian Bromhead, Steve Holding, Andy Wood and Mike Worsfold.

Friday 12th to Sunday 13th - Dan-y-Mynydd bunkhouse, Lancashire Climbing & Caving Club, Tanygrisiau was booked for the weekend and was found to be very good for the three staying Friday night and the four staying on the Saturday night. We have often met at the Lakeside Café for breakfast before trips in the area – a revelation from this weekend is that it is also open for evening meals and found to be excellent value for money.

The Saturday had Steve Holding, Alan & Vicky Robinson and Andy Wood visit Wrysgan mine – many inclines used and a ‘new’ area of the mine accessed.

On the Sunday, the above four were joined by Chris Andrews, Julian Bromhead, Ian Cooper and Joe North (Joe meeting us underground) for a tour through Rhiwbach.

Wednesday 16th - Snailbeach Roberts Level – Mike Davies, Steve Holding and Andy Wood removed some of the ropes from the “Classic Route”.

Sunday 20th - Pitchcroft Dig (see report on page 6).

Wednesday 23rd - Snailbeach Roberts Level – SRT training for Rob, Olly and Steve – training provided by Andy Harris, Steve Holding, Andy Wood and Mike Worsfold.

Friday 25th to Sunday 27th - Penwylt bunkhouse, South Wales Caving Club was booked for the weekend for the SCMC caving sextet of Mike Clough, Andy Harris, Steve

Holding, Alan & Vicky Robinson and Stuart Walker.

Saturday the group had a wander through OFD I, mainly along the streamway but including through the boulder choke, up into Lowe’s Passage and up into the Waterfall Series.

Sunday was a wander into OFDII including visiting the Chasm, Arête Chamber and the route towards the Columns.

December 2016

Thursday 1st - Clive Mine – Andy Harris, Steve Holding, Neal Rushton and Andy Wood visited Clive Mine to set up for a visitor trip on the Saturday.

There had been a lot of recent tree damage due to storms and a lot of clearing was required to access the shaft top. The setting up including re-rigging the route up into the older, higher, baryte working.

Saturday 3rd - A visit by seven members of the Early Mines Group was looked after by Ian Cooper, Peter Eggleston, Andy Harris, Steve Holding, Kelvin Lake and Andy Wood.

Andy H made the ‘Ladies Walk’ accessible again and all appeared to enjoy the trip.

Wednesday 7th - Snailbeach Roberts Level – Julian Bromhead, Steve Holding and Richard Silk had a visit to re-instate some of the ropes from the “Scenic Route”.

Wednesday 14th - Snailbeach Roberts Level – prior to the club Stiperstones Social, Eileen Bowen, Mike Davies, Andy Harris, Steve Holding, Andy Wood and Mike Worsfold had the usual ‘play around’ trying out different abseil and prussick systems.

Sunday 18th- Pitchcroft Dig (see page 7).

Tuesday 20th - Bryneglwys Slate Quarry was visited by Ian Cooper, Steve Holding, Evan Kinsley, Alan Robinson, Neal Rushton and Andy Wood.

All completed an exchange trip with Evan, Neal and Steve entering the 20 Level and climbing up while Andy, Alan and Ian went up to the 10 Level, did some bolting and descended.

The two groups met up on the 15 Level, where there are lots of winches and other mining artefacts.

Tuesday 27th - Llanymynech walk – Eileen Bowen and Mike Worsfold organised a walk for a group consisting of Peter Eggleston, Steve Holding and Kelvin Lake (with non-members Andy & Emma Coyle) around the Llanymynech limekilns, quarries and mine entrances.

Thanks to Eileen and Mike for the subsequent refreshments.



Steve Holding and David Poyner excavating by the bob wall at Pitchcroft (November 2016).

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



SCMC Trip Reports, November 2016 to January 2017

Continued ...

Thursday 29th - Huglith – Eileen Bowen, Julian Bromhead, Ian Cooper, Steve Holding, Andy Wood and Mike Worsfold had a trip to Huglith Main Vein workings.

The whole group entered Badger Level and descended to the main tramming level. Most descended another pitch to the level with lots of mining artefacts – it had been intended to have a photographic archive of these artefacts but half-a-dozen bats placed themselves strategically to prevent this.

Friday 30th - Wyre Forest Walk – David Poyner organised a walk for Ian Cooper, Peter Eggleston, Steve Holding, Kelvin Lake and himself to look at 17th Century Coal Mining in the Arley area.

The group then all moved to the Lower Forge of Eardington Iron Works and explored some of the culverts/flues – this included David and Steve wandering up the culvert from the river bank. There is more to explore at Eardington and the owner is happy for us to return.

(The return trip has been scheduled for the 8th April - river levels permitting!)

January 2017

Sunday 8th - MCRO training day at the Total Access facility, Eccleshall attended by several members.

Wednesday 11th - Snailbeach Roberts Level – SRT training for Rob Saunders and Steve Miller – training provided by Mike Davies, Steve Holding and Andy Wood.

Saturday 14th - Planned as Maddox Coppice but ended up with Steve Holding and Stephan Natynczuk (visitor) having a 40 Yard Level trip. Stephan N is a CIC holder and was impressed with the trip.

Sunday 15th - Pitchcroft Dig. See report on page 8.

Wednesday 18th - Snailbeach Roberts Level – SRT training for Rob Saunders and Olly Hughes – training provided by Andy Kennelly, Lara Sproson-Jones and Andy Wood.

Wednesday 25th - Snailbeach descent to 40 Yard Level.

Andy Harris and Andy Kennelly removed the rope that had been at the top of the pitch to the 90 Yard. Level.

It was the first trip to 40 Yard Level for Rob Saunders supervised by Julian Bromhead, Steve Holding, Richard Silk and Andy Wood.

Saturday 28th - Julian Bromhead, Eileen Bowen, Ian Cooper, Steve Holding, Richard Silk, Andy Wood and Mike Worsfold visited the various mine levels associated with Westcott Mine.

Some of the group returned by walking through the Huglith site – identifying a surface location worthy of a possible dig.

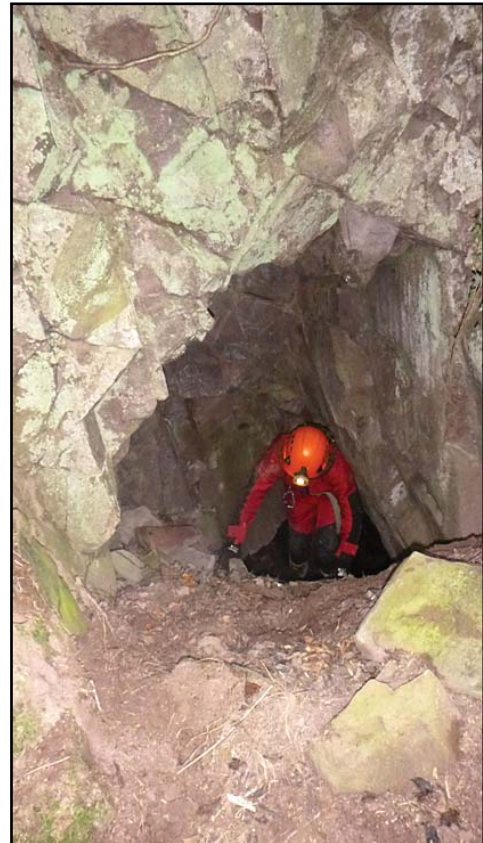
Sunday 29th - Eileen Bowen, Steve Holding and Mike Worsfold with Simon (Montgomery Bat Group) carried out bat survey at Huglith Mine.

Steve checked the area that can be climbed just beyond the winze to the main tramming level – there has been some rock fall and a lot of rock that appears could potentially fall – this could block the tight access below.

It is recommended that nobody goes beyond the winze until there has been further inspection/action from above to remove some of the loose material.



Above: Steve Miller on the high-level traverse in the Baryte Stope on the 11th January Snailbeach Trip. *(Steve Holding)*



Eileen Bowen climbing out of one of the Westcott levels on the 28th January trip. *(Steve Holding)*



South Wales Caving Trip, 25th to 27th November 2016

Mike Clough

Following the success of the caving weekend (the first for many years) in May 2016 (reported by Steve Holding in 'Below' 2016.3), a second weekend of similar format was organised in November.

Accommodation was again booked (thanks to Mike Moore for doing this) at the South Wales Caving Club HQ at Penwyllt. This time permits had been obtained for OFD1 and II (thanks to Alan Robinson).

Those participating in the weekend were the same six Club members: Mike Clough, Andy Harris, Steve Holding, Alan and Vicky Robinson and Stuart Walker.

We travelled and met up at Penwyllt on the Friday afternoon and in the evening ate together at the Ancient Briton pub; food and drink were again found to be excellent. No noisy stag party at Penwyllt this time but a group from Shepton Mallett Caving Club who were intent on drinking late and talking loudly in the common room beneath our dorm which was later used as a passageway from theirs to the toilet! Still, a potential contact for some future caving on Mendip.

Saturday

Saturday dawned dry but considerably colder than our previous visit. A walk of perhaps 30 minutes downhill along the lane, a field path and into woodland took us to the steel door entrance to OFD1.

The entrance shaft is descended on three fixed iron ladders which give access to the principal winding route with smaller passageways off to the passage descending steeply to the Main Streamway.

This was first followed downstream to the sump that leads to the resurgence before following the sportingly wet way upstream for about 2,000 feet, crossing the four deep potholes on the way with the aid of the scaffold poles laid across them.

At the end of the Main Streamway we noted the sump from which most of the water issues and followed the smaller incoming stream leading past a high cascade to Boulder Chamber (from which there is a connection to Cwmdwr and OFDII).

The cascade was then climbed into the Waterfall Series which was briefly explored; and then descended to begin retracing our steps to the Main Streamway to return eventually to the entrance. After first ascending at a hanging chain into Lowes Passage where we failed to find the alternative higher level return route.

A trip of between four and five hours underground was followed by the uphill return to Penwyllt; and later a meal together at the Glynn Arms.

We returned early to Penwyllt where a former Club member and his wife were duty wardens for the weekend. He joined us in the common room for some further reminiscence and later expressed his appreciation of our company.

Sunday

Similar to the previous weekend, we again opted for a shorter trip into OFDII, starting at Top Entrance.

From the far end of the large entrance passage we took the route through and over the huge and slippery boulders of the Brickyard and on to the end of Chasm Passage where no obvious route down to the Chasm was apparent without rope or ladder.

A meandering route took us via the extreme opposite end of the same huge chamber into the passages of the Labyrinth before entering the so-called Big Chamber Near the Entrance where a stop was made for a snack before some exploration of the passages off, including the location of the steel gated entrance to Column Hall. The trip of about three hours was enjoyed by all.

Future excursions were discussed on the walk back to the HQ and during the journey home; the strong likelihood now under consideration being one or two day trips to Derbyshire caves in the Peak District in the Spring and another weekend in South Wales in late Summer or Autumn.



The South Wales Caving Club HQ at Penwyllt, our accommodation for the weekend.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



Pitchcroft Reports - October & November, 2016

David Adams

16th October 2016

After a clearing of accumulated leaves from the pumping engine basement Kelvin Lake took a series of wide angle pictures in order to fully photographically record the basement before the likelihood of it being filled in this winter. In this he was helped by David Adams, Peter Eggleston, and Edwin Thorpe, standing in various parts to provide scale. Afterwards David Poyner and the team uncovered more of the top of the southern wall to ensure that it retained its 5ft (1.5m) width for its full length to the 'bob' wall, the spoil now being dumped on the now recorded basement floor.

20th November 2016

The first object was to attempt to pump out the iron tank in the bottom of the 'D' shaped chamber, this was done by Ian Cooper, Peter Eggleston and Steve Holding, but excavation in the confined space proved difficult. John Hendy was employed in pulling back the edges of the excavation pit above the south wall of the basement, to make further

examination of the wall safer, while David Poyner made a further study of the tank and the adjoining bob wall. This was the first occasion when due to the recent agreement with the Duchy full Health & Safety Hi-Vis jackets and helmets had to be worn supervised by Mike Moore.

Edwin Thorpe introduced a friend Phil from Taunton. In view of the intention possibly later in the winter to fill in the great pit, another visitor was a digger driver from Lineal Construction of Newport, Don Murray, who had worked on archaeological sites before and was willing to work with his machine on one of the future digging dates.

In winter the digging days usually last from 11am to 4pm so he said the cost could be based on five hours work and he would ask his boss George Lawrence to provide a price for the Club in writing.

Following this David Adams escorted both him and visitor Phil around the site, apparently disturbing a dog fox, which made a run for it.

Towards the end of the day with John managing to drive his digger once again down into the basement, it was possible to excavate more of the surface of the bob wall, including part of the pit side round it.

This proved strangely that the wall appeared to be butted up to the side wall but not keyed into it. David Poyner was also able to ascertain that from the earth stratification that there had been an excavation into the original natural ground level for a few feet to construct the basement, the rest being soil fill with a layer of ash. Kelvin Lake took more pictures of the revealed wall parts and stratification.

Unless any further major finds are found in this area it was resolved that if the price right and all being well the big pit could be refilled during the January dig. In December therefore all the iron artefacts found on this site and photographically recorded would be buried back in the apse area where many were found, the smaller items in a plastic box as previously on Site One. A good day.



Pitchcroft engine house site: David Adams (standing on the culvert area), David Poyner (standing by the bob wall), Peter Eggleston (W, by the top of the water shaft) and Edwin Thorpe (on the back wall of the engine house).

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



Pitchcroft Report - December, 2016

David Adams



18th December 2016

The object this time was to find the south west corner of the pumping house basement and prove the joint between the southern 5ft (1.5m) side wall and the 6ft 8ins (2.03m) bob wall, this being difficult due it being hidden in the side of the deep excavation and only possible by the use of John Hendy and his digger, aided by Steve Holding, Peter Eggleston and David Poyner, the spoil being dumped on the now filled basement floor.

In fact contrary to the impression given on the previous dig the walls were properly jointed but those who had demolished the building had left two extra layers of brickwork on the bob wall both being left perfectly flat topped. The corner as revealed was photographed by Kelvin Lake before being reburied.

As it was now possible for the digger to stand on the bob wall, attention now turned to excavating the fill from the iron tank in order to properly measure its dimensions, it turned out to be possibly 6ft deep but as the work continued into the dusk, and the tank seemed to be filling with water the final hand excavation and measurement will be a job for the next dig. The hole now being very deep and dangerous it was decided to surround it with more warning tape, and as David Adams had omitted to bring the tapes on this occasion, Peter Eggleston returned the following day to put the necessary tape around and added suitable warning notices.

Above, left: Pitchcroft engine house site with David Adams, David Poyner, Peter Eggleston and Edwin Thorpe in the same locations as in the picture on page 6. **Above, right:** The partially excavated bob wall and south-west corner of the engine house.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



David Poyner working on clearing the southern side wall of the engine house.



Steve Holding standing on the bob wall and the excavated south-west corner of the engine house.

The shaft and 'horseshoe' area with the iron tank is in the gully by Steve's feet.



The arm of John Hendy's digger carefully excavating the fill inside the iron tank.

The shaft is on the right of the picture.



Pitchcroft Report - January, 2017

David Adams

15th January 2017

A wet dismal day. It was found that recent high winds had felled a tree on the southern side of the excavation.

Steve Holding and Peter Eggleston attempted to pump out the iron tank from which much of the fill had been removed on the previous dig. The method was to use a small battery powered submersible pump with a hose outlet through the window to discharge the water into the shaft.

Unfortunately the pump did not have the power to open the flat hose used where it went over the brickwork into the shaft and the pumping had to be abandoned.

Further attempts to drain the tank using a bucket proved too long winded, particularly as the water had to be discharged into the excavation pit, making wet surfaces wetter.

With David Poyner present attention turned to hand cutting back the side of the pit adjacent to the south western corner of the engine house basement, this revealed part of a brick wall 0.76m thick at a higher level, but under the root of the fallen tree.

For safety reasons it was considered necessary to attempt to remove the tree before attempting to do any more excavations in this area.

David had revisited the site between digs to further study the stratification near the bob wall, noting that the brick 'D' shaped chamber seemed to have been built after the installation of the iron tank.

As there was little more that could be achieved in the weather conditions the dig party broke up early, but both David Adams in the field and Peter on the roadside verge had difficulty moving their vehicles afterwards, Peter having to be rescued by a passing Land Rover.

Obviously a point to be borne in mind if there is heavy rain while on site.



Above: Steve Holding, David Poyner and Peter Eggleston working on the bob wall in the south-west corner of the engine house.

Right: View looking south along the bob wall with the camera beside the opening into the 'horseshoe' area with the iron tank.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



Eurospeleo 2016 – Club Caving Trips

Alan Robinson

Sunday 14th August White Scar Caves

With almost 40 people from the congress attending this led trip, it is probably the largest group Vicky and I have ever started a caving trip with!

There were slight tenterhooks at the start as the Show cave manager had to give his approval on the water levels in the cave. Ironically in contrast to the nice dry weather on our trip, a week later saw the highest flow for probably 30 years exiting the show caves via the turnstiles rather than the resurgence cave!

Coincidentally, it was just over 30 years since I last visited the cave. Fortunately, we were told water levels were okay, but it might be a bit sporting.

Initially we all went in together through the concrete paths and catwalks of the show cave section before crossing the final barrier and heading into the main streamway.

This starts as a 60m long 'lake' canal which is mostly too deep to wade. With a bit of luck it is possible to use underwater ledges to traverse around the edge whilst hanging off a large hose carrying power cable up to the show caves final chamber. As part of a large group this ended up being quite entertaining, as inevitably people slipped or lost their grip. There were quite a few squeals from

some of our visitors from warmer climates. It appears they thought the water was a tad cold or words to that effect.

Emerging from the water brought us to Big Bertha, a boulder the size of a house and the beginning of a long boulder choke. We had quite a long wait on both sides of this, as it took a while to get people through, although it was made easier by the first caver from Craven PC running a rope along the correct route.

The way through the choke was relatively roomy, but there was one hanging boulder which made for an interesting U-bend wriggle.

Back in the streamway, we made our way upstream in smaller groups. There were a lot of calcite flowstone and curtain formations to see whilst wading, paddling and occasionally swimming or climbing over small boulder chokes. The main passage continues for more than a kilometre, whilst the roof typically reaches up 15-20m with avens and high traverse ledges along its length.

After climbing a set of small cascades, the way on continues down a wide phreatic passage which becomes steadily lower. This still carries a fair portion of the stream, so the next section consists of low arches and ducks linking slightly higher chambers. As we neared the

sump the ducks become lower and more care is needed in choosing the way on. Grooves and niches in the roof help to keep most of our heads out of the water as we gently float/pull ourselves through the last stretch of the cave. Finally a diver's line is reached and we can go no further.

The way back is by retracing our footsteps, but this time using some of the ledges to stay out of the deeper water. I was also able to climb up to see some long straw formations in a small chamber, but did not have enough time to explore the Sleepwalker series as we were on a deadline to exit.

Another short session of queuing at the boulder choke saw us swim across the lake and emerge sopping wet, but clean (of Nenthead ochre from the week before) out into a warm summer day.

Monday 15th August Gaping Gill Winch trip

The second day saw us walking up from Dalesbridge via Austwick to the Allotment where Craven PC had set up for their annual winch meet at Gaping Gill.

We were a mixed group with Steve Holding planning to stay on the surface and continue up to the top of Ingleborough. Kelvin Lake and Idris Williams had decided on a shorter photo trip in the Main Chamber, whilst Kevin Baker, Cara Allison, Vicky and I were going to have a look around the SE Passage area, but use the winch in both directions.

Our walk to GG was about 5 miles or so and involved a bit of guesswork as we cut across the hillside for the last mile. The queue for the winch down was quite short, so we were able to get changed and head down fairly quickly.

The ride down only takes a minute, so there is not much opportunity to take in the view on the 110m descent. Despite Fell Beck, the surface stream, being dammed and



The Group outside White Scar Caves - ready for the 'Off!' (EuroSpeleo Event)



Eurospeleo 2016 – Club Caving Trips Continued ...



The Craven PC Gaping Gill winch booking tent and control.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)

The winch 'landing' in Gaping Gill main chamber.



diverted into Rat Hole, a lateral passageway, there was still a fair amount of spray coming down the main pitch. It is only as you step away from the winch bottom into the floodlit main chamber that it is possible to really appreciate the size and spectacular nature of this cave.

Three waterfalls descend from the

roof and spray across the block covered floor. It was great to see Kevin's reaction to this as it was his first trip here.

Once we were all down, we set off to the south side of the chamber and a short climb up to South Passage. This continues as a series of low passages with a few crawls to a



Alan Robinson relaxing in Gaping Gill - South East Passage. *(Vicky Robinson)*

Gaping Gill - Main Chamber. *(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)*



Eurospeleo 2016 – Club Caving Trips Continued ...

T-junction. The right hand route leads to the Sand caverns and our plan was to explore these later.

On the left we headed along more low passage (hopefully) towards Bar Pot. As we headed down this route we kept meeting groups coming the other way who had descended either Bar or Flood Entrance Pots. After trying a couple of very low crawls (Amphibean Passage), we backtracked slightly and found the way onto Flood Entrance initially and then via a short traverse and climb eventually arrived at Bar Pot.

Both the pitches had been pre-rigged for Eurospeleo and we stopped for a while to watch a couple of groups ascending. From Bar Pot the SE Passage continues, but we just went up to the next aven to see the start of the New Hensler's Crawl, plus a glutinous muddy route to somewhere else.

This seemed a good point to retrace our steps back to the Sand Caverns. These are quite roomy and as the name suggests have a sandy floor.

The main way on curves around to the right via a short climb up a smooth dry, muddy slope to an awkward step up and crawl. From here the cave gets a lot prettier with plenty of flowstone and straws.

By staying with the larger passage the sound of a stream is eventually heard. After passing a big hole in the floor we met the Stream from Stream Passage Pot coming in from the left. We continued a short distance further, but had to turn around as we had run out of time (Still had that 5 mile walk back!).

At the Main Chamber, we discovered that the exit queue for the winch had grown so that we had about an hour to wait. This gave us a chance to look around the Main Chamber and enjoy the view that the flood lighting offered. Fortunately as we cooled, a thermos of scalding tea came down the winch.



Alan Robinson & Steve Holding on the limestone pavement by Upper Long Churn.
(Vicky Robinson)

Emerging back at the surface to another hot afternoon saw us re-joining Steve, Idris and Kelvin who had patiently waited for us.

We took the more direct route back this time via Trow Gill to Clapham and even managed to get back to the kiosk at Ingleborough Show Cave just before it closed at 6pm.

This was just as well because to save time we had decided to walk down in our oversuits and wellies, so the steam was pouring off as we gulped down an ice cold drink.

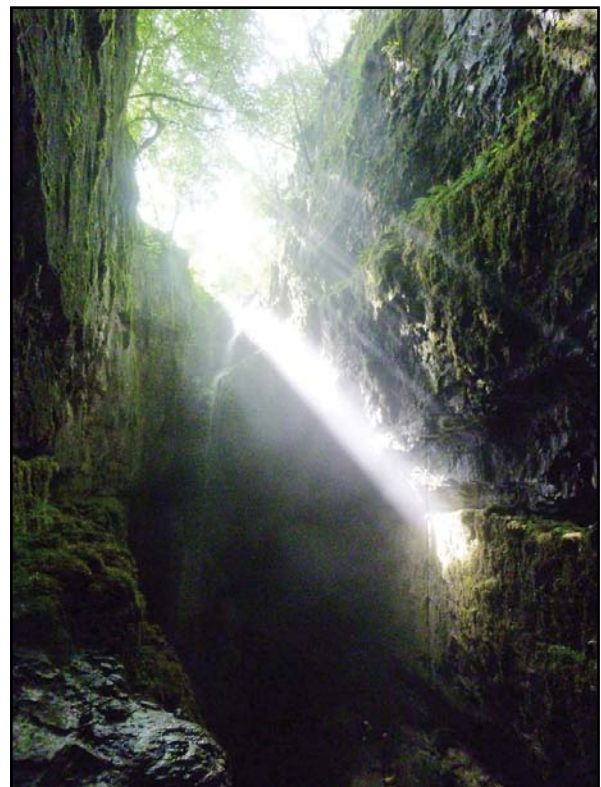
Wednesday 17th August, Alum Pot & Long Churn Caves

Our final trip saw Vicky, myself and Steve Holding, heading up to Selside.

It was Steve's first visit to this cave system, but Vicky and I had visited in the past many years

ago. Our plan was to make our way down through Lower Long Churn cave to the Dolly Tub pitches down to the opening into Alum pot with the possibility of descending further if we could.

Steve drove us across and we managed to find a parking spot on the lane before the main crowds arrived for the day. Ahead of us were a couple going to re-rig a short pitch (Greasy Slab) that had suffered some



Alum pot shaft.

(Vicky Robinson)



Eurospeleo 2016 – Club Caving Trips Continued ...

abrasion over the last couple of days. They suggested going in the Diccan pot entrance, then following a short crawl on the right that re-connected with the Long Churn streamway.

After initially going the wrong way upstream and negotiating a couple of avoidable climbs (failed memory) we arrived at the head of the Dolly Tub pitches. With a choice of two routes we opted to go down the one I had done previously. This was about 12-15m down to a short passage that opens out onto a ledge on the main Alum Pot.

From here we could see a multitude of cavers heading up and down the main pot as well as connecting over to our planned descent route via the short Greasy Slab pitch and The Bridge (a wide boulder lodged across the pot). In the end, we just made it around the protected ledges as far as the Bridge.

Here, a large group that had descended Diccan pot to the bottom

of the cave were now starting to ascend the long pitch below us.

The three of us agreed there would be a lot of hanging around, so made our escape. On the return, we went up the alternative Dolly

Tubs pitch which uses a small side rift and is split into two sections. We then followed the Long Churn streamway up as far as Dr Bannisters Handbasin, where a handline up a very damp waterfall makes for an interesting exit.

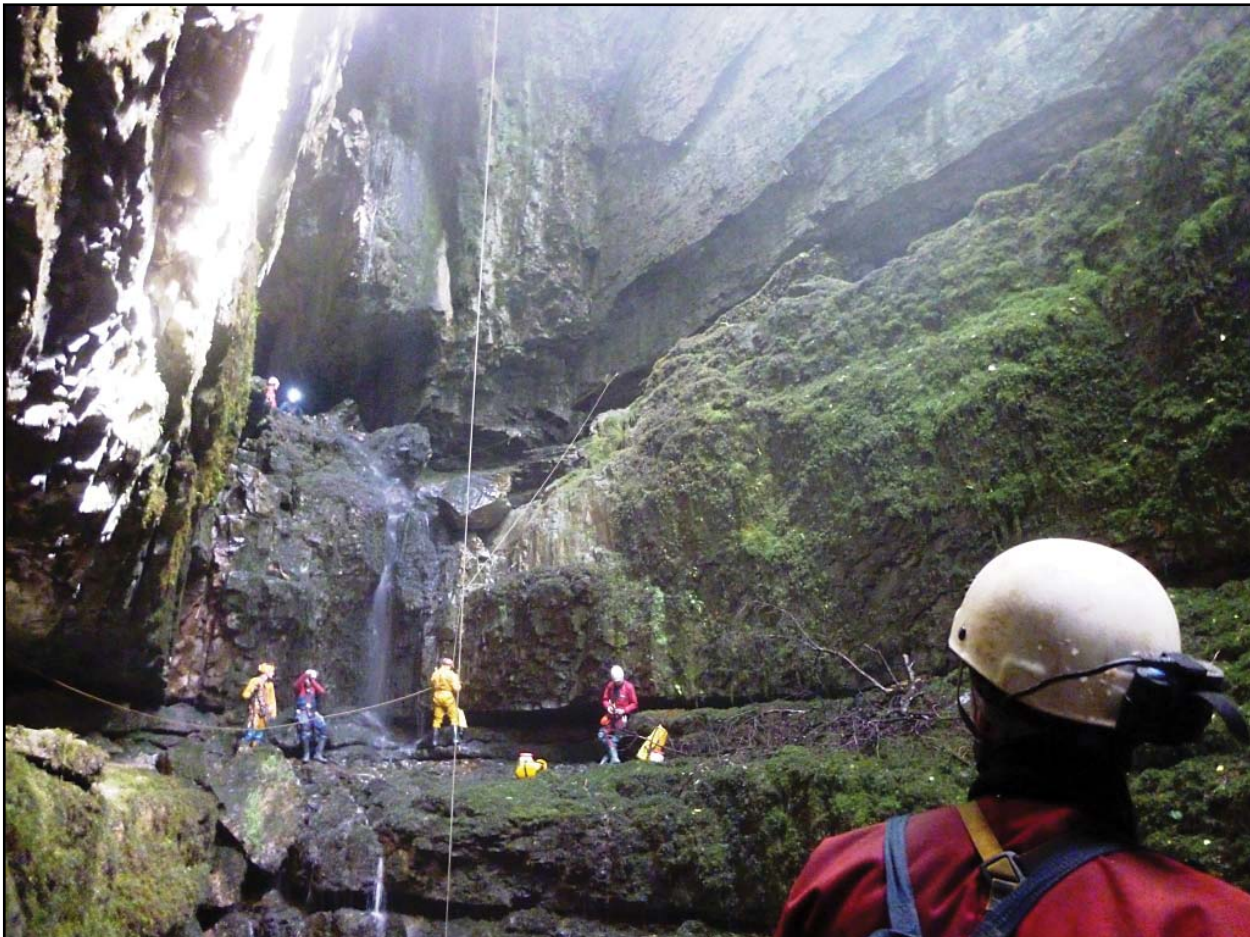


Above: Alum pot- Bridge boulder.

(Vicky Robinson)

Below: Alum Pot Dolly Tubs and Greasy Slab.

(Vicky Robinson)



Club Yorkshire Collieries Visit – 6th November 2016

Ivor Brown

Some 10 Club members visited Yorkshire on 6th November 2016 to visit the National Coal Mining museum (Caphouse Colliery), the Elsecar Colliery preserved Newcomen engine and engine house and the extensive remains of Hemingfield Colliery.

Members present: John & Davelene Alder, Steve Dewhirst, Graham Smith, Gareth Rushton, Neal Rushton, Peter Eggleston, Kelvin Lake, David & Margaret Adams.

The last Club visit to the area was in 1999 and is recorded in 'Below' 99.4, and four members revisited in 2009 (see 'Below' 2009.2).

The focus of the Caphouse visit this time was a walk down the mine's drift, constructed at about 1 in 4 slope and about 400 yards long. It still contains a conveyor belt and is used as the intake airway for the mines forcing fan ventilation.

The mine's main shaft, sunk before 1790 and about 420ft. to the visitor galleries and a similar "furnace shaft" are nearby in the colliery yard/working area. The furnace shaft is now covered with a thick glass plate and is electrically lit for it's full depth. Whether the original ventilation furnace was at the top or bottom of this shaft is still open to debate. (See also "Repair Work in Caphouse Colliery Shafts" in 'Below' 2008.4).

Figure 1 (right) shows a plan view of the tourist mine and the route taken by the SCMC visitors – down the dog-leg drift along the old haulageway, passed the visitor galleries and, then the new galleries (not visited on this occasion), returning along the modern exhibition face.

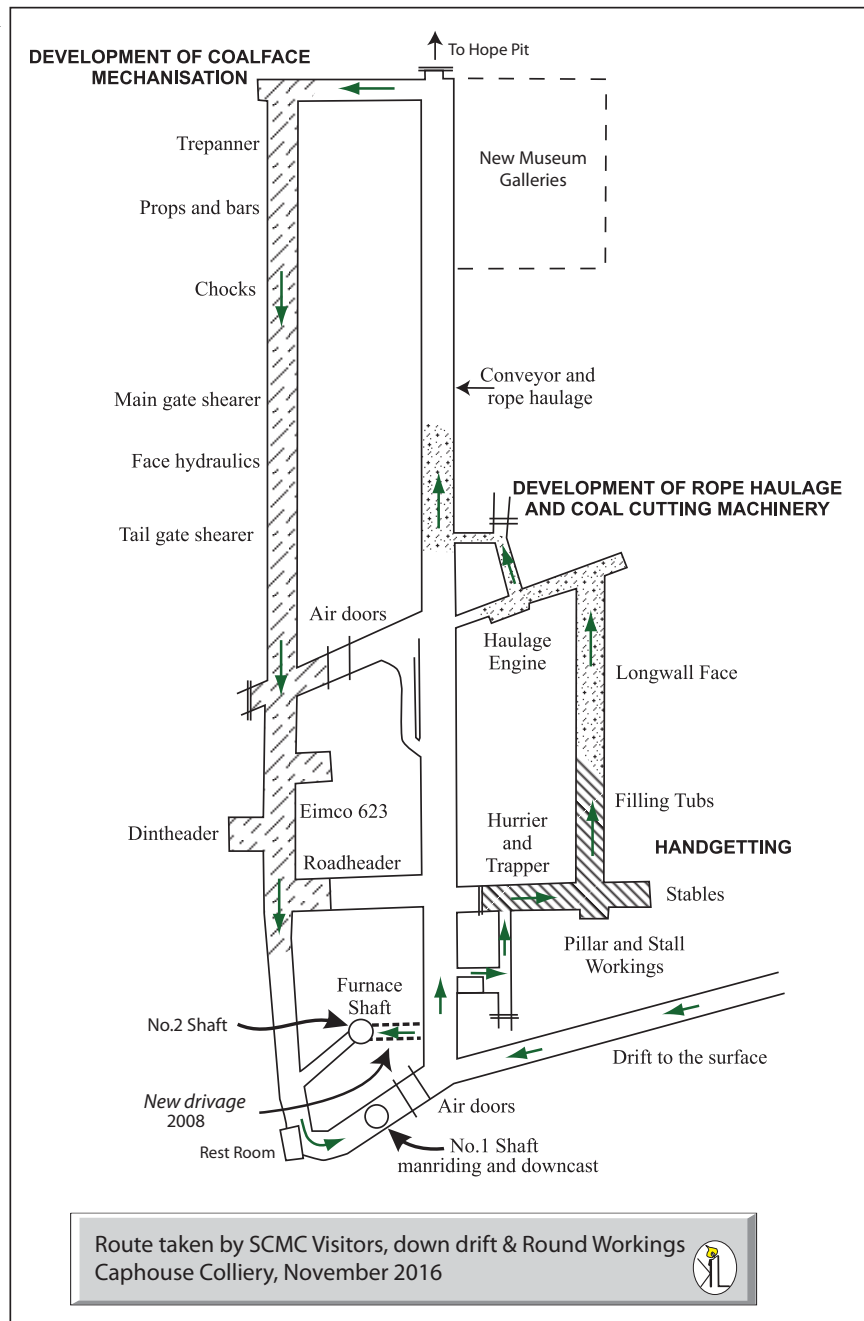
After the underground tour at Caphouse the group travelled South to Elsecar to meet up with Mike Moore and Mike Clough, plus our guide at the 1795 Newcomen engine, Nigel Cavanagh.

The mine (Elsecar Low Pit) was developed in the late 1790s by the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam who installed the Newcomen engine to pump from the Barnsley Seam of coal, 130ft. underground. The engine worked until 1923 when it was replaced with electric pumps. In 1928 Henry Ford offered a blank cheque to take the engine to America. His request was refused, making this the last Newcomen engine in situ and the oldest steam engine in its original location.

Initially preserved by Shell, who

modified the engine in the 1950s to be turned over by steam supplied by a railway locomotive on the nearby sidings, the engine was derelict for a number of years.

An extensive scheme of conservation works were undertaken between 2011-14 by English Heritage, Barnsley and Metropolitan Borough Council with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The engine is now turned by a hidden engine which works on the plug rod. It is very effective and gives the visitor a good idea of how the engine operated.



Club Yorkshire Collieries Visit – 6th November 2016

Continued ...



SCMC Members studying the mine layout plan, Caphouse Colliery, Yorkshire. November 2016.

Caphouse pictures: Ivor Brown

View down the furnace shaft, Caphouse Colliery.

SCMC Members entering the fan drift (below the forcing ventilation fan tubes), Caphouse Colliery.



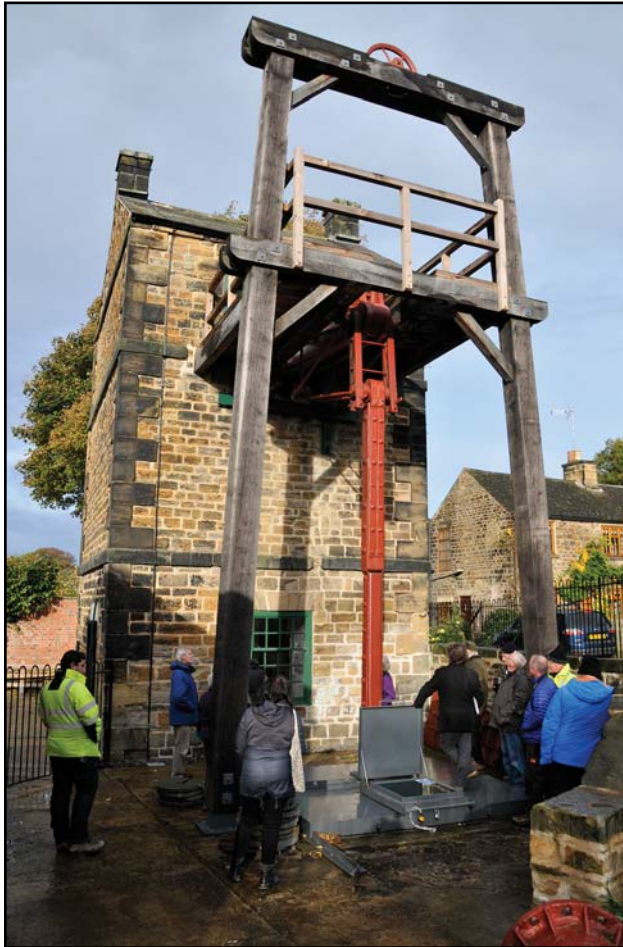
Below: Elsecar 1795 Newcomen pumping engine house and the nearby concrete winding headframe.

(Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings)



Club Yorkshire Collieries Visit – 6th November 2016

Continued ...



Above: SCMC Members studying the shaft and pump rod at Elsecar.



Above: Ivor Brown watching the 1795 Newcomen pumping engine house in operation.

Below: The damaged catch-wings on the outside end of the Newcomen beam.



Left: John Alder and David Adams watching the Newcomen engine as it operates.

Elsecar pictures: Kelvin Lake - I.A.Recordings

Below: The valve gear on the 1795 Newcomen engine.



Left: The top of the Newcomen engine piston - fitted with a 'shield' to stop visitors falling.



Club Yorkshire Collieries Visit – 6th November 2016 Continued ...

From the Newcomen engine house we were taken on a short walk through the historic village of Elsecar, past Earl Fitzwilliam's 1870 Railway Station and the Darwin Ironworks out to Hemingfield Colliery where members of the Friends of Hemingfield Colliery were on hand to take us around the buildings and explain their plans for the site.

At the time of the visit they had just erected the scaffolding on the main engine house in preparation for repairing the roof. They have done a lot of work on the site, but there is still a lot more to do!

There is quite a lot to see in Elsecar and the surrounding area and it warrants another trip. It was a hectic day, but very enjoyable!

Thanks

A big thank you to Ivor Brown for arranging the Caphouse visit.

To Andy Wood for organising the visit and our guide, Nigel Cavanagh, at Elsecar, and to Christine Cameron and the Friends of Hemingfield Colliery for taking the time to explain the site to us.



Left: The truncated Cornish pumping engine house and the attached concrete headframe at Hemingfield Colliery.

Right: The winding engine house at Hemingfield Colliery with the second concrete headframe at the far end of the building.



Left: One of the two concrete headframes at Hemingfield Colliery.



Nantymwyn Lead Mine, Rhandirmwyn

Andy Wood

Nantymwyn was the most important lead mine in South Wales with a history perhaps dating back to Roman times. It is known for its use of two boat levels (the Upper Boat Level and the Deep Boat Level) with processing works near the outlets of each. There is now little to see of either of these as most of the upper works have been buried by spoil from later workings and at the deep level works, down by the river Towy, only the odd stone wall and largely levelled spoil heaps remain.

There are shafts and adits scattered over the mountainside, a few of which are supposed to be accessible. In the 1920s major investment was made in new plant and machinery and a new shaft was dug.

Access is up a forest track but much clearance work has taken place, leaving only the footings of buildings and much landscaped spoil. However, some old photos survive and it is possible to match the ruins to these to determine roughly what was there.



Above: The mine spoil heap from Upper Boat level.

The best relic is the Angred engine house towards the top of the site, which dates from the late 19th century.

The adjacent Angred shaft was sunk by Captain Joseph Argall, who managed the mine through the 1890s. The good news is that CCW has designated much of the area as a SSSI so further destruction should be avoided.

A summary of Simon Hughes history of the mine can be found at:

www.rhandirmwyn.net/leadmine/simonhughes.html

All pictures: Andy Wood



Above, left & right: Views of the Angred engine house.
Below: Ore Hopper.



View over mine site from Angred engine house.



Below: Part of the processing plant.



News Round-Up 2

Underground Access to Snailbeach

Shropshire Mines Trust are looking to have improved knowledge and control of access to the underground tourist parts* of Snailbeach mine and anybody visiting is asked to give information in advance by sending an email to:

minemanager@shropshiremines.org.uk

It will be helpful if the email includes brief description of when (date, time and expected duration) and intended location – this should help avoid groups getting in one another's way.

*It is difficult to access anything without going through the tourist mine so this probably means all visits.

Steve Holding

EU 'Vehicle' Directive

A new EU directive may see full insurance become a necessity for all "vehicles", including those that are only used on private land. This could effect items as diverse as Golf buggies and fairground dodgems - requiring them to have motor insurance for the first time.

The Department for Transport (DfT) have said they are legally obliged to consult on the changes while Britain remains in the EU and admitted the new rules could have "potentially costly consequences".

The consultation will run until March and the new directive casts doubt over the statutory off-road notification (Sorn) scheme which permits uninsured cars to be kept on driveways.

The government said that some vehicles that could be impacted by the judgement include, "electrically assisted pedal cycles, construction vehicles, agricultural vehicles, Segways, ride-on lawnmowers, motor sports vehicles, mobility scooters, golf buggies, motorised ride-on children's toys, fairground rides (eg dodgems), forklift trucks, dumper trucks, engineering plant and

Microbes Re-animated

Organisms that were encased in gypsum between 10,000 to 50,000 years ago have been extracted from inside the famous giant crystals of the Naica mountain caves in Mexico - and revived by scientists!

The extraordinary microbes, which are not very closely related to anything in the known genetic databases are known as extremophiles and can thrive in seemingly impossible conditions.

The caves were first opened by miners looking for silver and other metals a hundred years ago. The environment is hot (40-60°C), humid and acidic. With no light at depth, any life form must use chemosynthesis to survive. That is, it must derive the energy needed to sustain itself by processing rock minerals.

Researchers had identified microbes living in the walls of the caves, but isolating them from inside the metres-long crystals is a surprise.

These outsized needles of gypsum have grown over millions of years. They are not perfect. In places they have defects - small voids where fluids have collected and become encased. Using sterile tools, these inclusions were opened and their contents sampled.

Not only was the presence of bacteria and archaea detected, but scientists were able to re-animate the organisms in the lab.

Unfortunately, due to the cessation of mining activities the crystal complex has become flooded, preventing any further access.

Large Spanish Geode

The huge crystals in Naica Mine, Mexico (mentioned above) are well known, closer to home is a large crystal geode that was discovered 50m down inside the Pilar de Jaravia Mine a silver-lead mine near Pulpi, Almeria by Javier Garcia-Guinea of the Grupo Mineralogista de Madrid in December 1999.

The geode is notable on a worldwide scale for both its size and the transparency and perfection of the selenite (gypsum) crystals lining the interior, which reach up to 2m in length, with 0.5m being the average.

The geode is 8m long, 1.8m wide and averages 1.7m high.

It's thought the crystals formed about 6 million years ago during the 'Messinian salinity crisis' when the Mediterranean evaporated producing layers of salt.

Even a few visitors entering the geode cause the humidity in the geode to rise from 65 % to almost 100 %, which is not good for a delicate and water soluble mineral such as gypsum. Read more at:

News Reports

Sid Perou Films

If you are interested in watching one of Sid Perou's caving films you might be interested in the new page set up by the British Caving Library which lists all of Sid's videos that he has uploaded to YouTube:

www.caving-library.org.uk/collections/sidperou.shtml

The index page provides some background to Sid's career and lists the films in date order (from 1968 to 2015) with links to further web pages with the embedded videos and some more details of the film, the participants and any awards that it won.

Descent (253), Dec/Jan 2016/17

giantcrystals.strahlen.org/europe/pilar.htm



Tin Mining in Malaysia in the Late 1980s

Ivor Brown

The 1980s saw many changes in the mining industry worldwide, uneconomic mines closed and manpower dropped dramatically. This applied to almost all minerals and areas. Traditional mining areas were having to diversify in order to survive – in Yorkshire this writer was much involved in rehabilitating old mining areas including converting a closing colliery to a tourist attraction. To help with this he had been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to allow him to study similar problems and solutions abroad.

Hearing of this the British Institute of Quarrying asked if he could give talks to some of their overseas branches in Malaysia, Tasmania and Australia during his travels.

The first stop was to be the Malaysian branch where it was agreed that he would be met and given a tour to assess the situation, then to give the talk on “Mining Rehabilitation and Tourism” followed by several days of meetings while visiting possible conversion sites.

During the 1980s the production of tin ore, which had been the basis of the Malaysian economy fell from over 60,000 tons per annum to about 30,000 with consequential loss in persons employed. The Government were actively looking at diversification including tourism.

The range of mountains which forms the backbone of the Malaysian peninsula had in times passed been intruded by granite magma including minerals. The rivers which flowed from the range had then deposited thick layers of alluvium down to the coast. The alluvium had filled all the hollows and caves in the limestone but the harder areas of limestone still remained as “pinnacles”.

Five methods have been used for obtaining the tin ore

1. By mining with shafts or drifting into the caves (less than 1% in 1987 was obtained from underground. Several openings have been maintained as tourist



Above, 1: Bridge entrance to an underground tin mine at Kakit Bukit, Parlig State, Malaysia. A tourist mine showing caves and crevices from which tin ore was extracted.



Above, 2: Tin dredger on a 1,000 acre site. 3,000 ton weight, 10ft. draught and 240ft. long bucket elevator. Large screen layout aboard, 200 men employed. Selanger Dredge Pit, Malaysia 1987. (Pictures: Ivor Brown)

Below, 3: Hydraulic tin working with monitor (water) & limestone “pinnacles” being worked for aggregates. Unitex Tin & Limestone Quarry, Malaysia.



Tin Mining in Malaysia in the Late 1980s Continued ...

mines including Kakit Bukit Mine (see photo 1).

2. By dredge floating on an artificial lake with buckets on an elevator which reaches to the bottom of the deposit, formerly very economic but inefficient. By 1987 the number of dredges in use had fallen from 70 to 40, but they still produced about 37% of the ore ².
3. By hydraulic mining (high pressure water jets from 'monitors'), the washings were drained into a sump for pumping to a separation plant (produced about 40% of the ore) ^{photo 3}.
4. By quarrying, excavating with "shovel and truck" an increasingly preferred method as it allows some of the "pinnacles" to be extracted for use as aggregates (about 10% in 1987).
5. By dulong washing, similar to "panning for gold". Normally done by family groups (about 8% in 1987) ^{photo 4}.

On arrival in Kuala Lumpur the writer was met by officers of the local branch, and over a meal was given his programme. The next day he was to be taken on a tour of some of the more local extraction sites, followed in the evening by lunch and the talk. He was informed that as the talk was to be given in a Chinese Temple, shoes could not be worn. Giving a talk in stockings and feet was found to be a little off-putting, but all seemed to go well.

The tour had provided a good background to the local situation. The sites visited included Selangor Dredging which was one of the largest such sites remaining covering over 1,000 acres. The Company had had two dredges on this site but now only the one, it employed about 200 men. It weighed 3,000 tons, had a draught of 10ft. but its elevator could reach about 150ft. depth. The tin-bearing alluvium was removed from the rugged bottom of the man-made lake by the buckets which were able to work around the "pinnacles" of limestone.



Above, 4: Durang tin workings with washer women, Malaysia, 1987.



Above, 5: Batu Cave, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia near Kuala Lumpur. Used partly as a religious shrine with wide stepped entrance (272 steps). Open to the public, 1987.

(Pictures: Ivor Brown)

Right, 6: View across the entrance platform of Temple Cave (Cathedral Cave), Batu Cave, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia.

Single way steps to accommodate large numbers of pilgrims.



Tin Mining in Malaysia in the Late 1980s Continued ...

On board were many screens and tables, which allowed the materials to be sorted, all waste being returned to the lake. The dredge was powered by electricity and was moved using ropes, winches and stakes from the surrounding land.

The Company planned eventually to preserve the dredge for tourists to visit and to convert the mine area to a nature/water park. photo 2

Other sites nearby were also seen, most were former dredge sites now being drained or being worked by monitors. The waste from the tin washing areas was pumped into areas for settling and rehabilitation.

Other sites studied included:

Sungai Wai disused dredge pit, partly drained it had 'pinnacles' up to 100ft. high, and monitors were being used to flush out the ore. Some of the pinnacles were being blasted, excavated and used for aggregates and brick making. The processing plant was aboard an old marooned dredge, the sludge being allowed to dry and used as a base for housing. The site also had a "blondin" ropeway over the pinnacles. photo 7

Unitex Quarry, two large monitors were in operation, but some alluvium was being removed as a solid and sorted mechanically. There were extensive separating tables photo 3.

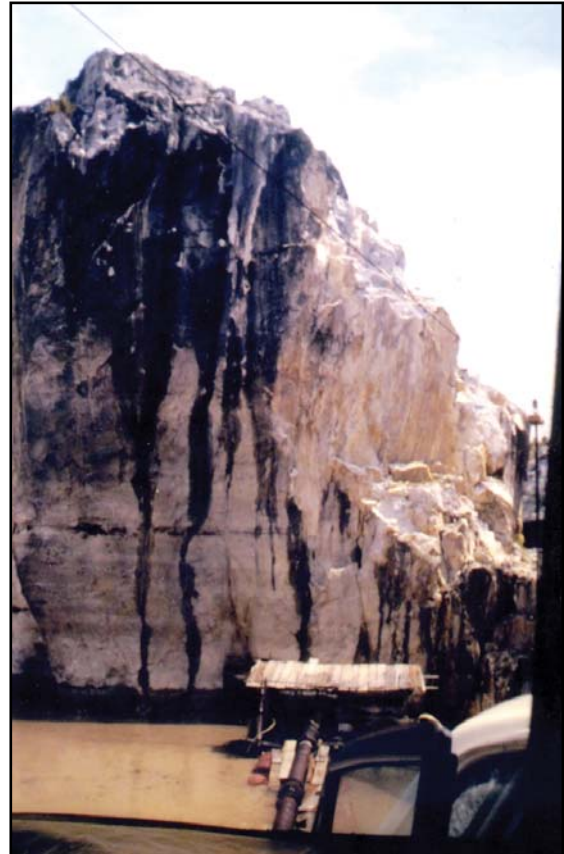
Ampang Granite Quarry was also visited – this site produced stone for building, over 200 men were at work on 7 benches each 50ft. high.

The final underground visit was made to the Batu Caves area near Kuala Lumpur. These were fully operational show caves cum Hindu shrines entered by two flights of steps (each of 29 steps with high tourist capacity. Parts were illuminated lavishly, others remained dark with long stalactites, bats and pigeons. photos 5 & 6

Right, 7: 90ft. high pinnacles in a former dredger pit tin workings, being worked by shovel and truck (open pit).

Note the Blondin ropeway for conveying equipment. Sungai Wai Quarry, Malaysia 1987.

(Picture: Ivor Brown)



Finally a visit was made to the local technical college and the national museum. A report was produced both for the Institute and Churchill Trust.

The tourist industry has continued to take over from tin mining in Malaysia as the major contribution to the economy. The number of dredges

once 70, then 30 in the late 1980s was down to three on the writers next visit in 1994. It is now understood that there are only two left, both in preservation, one at Denghil, Seangor (see above) and one at Tanjung Taulang in Perak State – for further details Google: Malaysian Tin Museum – Tourism.

End of Civilisation? Teapots Recalled!

Teapots and ceramics bearing the Yorkshire Tea logo are being recalled after customers reported they were breaking as they brewed up.

The bases of some one-litre teapots have reportedly fractured and fallen out during normal use, according to Yorkshire Tea.

To check if you have one of the defective products (the Yorkshire Tea teapots - 1 litre and one cup - the Yorkshire Tea Big Tea Mug and the Yorkshire Tea Milk Jug), they have the Harrogate part of the "Taylors of Harrogate" logo written in a lower case font. They were sold by Amazon and independent retailers from 2015.

Anyone with one of these products is being urged to contact the company.

Extensive testing revealed the potential for fracture or breakages during normal use. So in the interests of customer safety, Yorkshire Tea have taken the decision to implement a recall of all the ceramics which were made by the same manufacturer.



Coneybury Mine, Broseley (SJ 6853 0191)

Steve Dewhirst

Background

The mound is a mixture of grey Pennystone clay, from an initial working and small coal waste from later workings up to 1896. It is bounded by two tracks forming a 'V'. On the opposite side of the southern track is a small mound of Pennystone clay which probably dates from the original ironstone working, there being no evidence of a shaft on this mound. Also adjacent to the track is a pool, shown as two pools on historic maps. The shape suggests these were man made and although one was probably used as a water supply of the pit engine this does not explain there being two rectilinear pools.

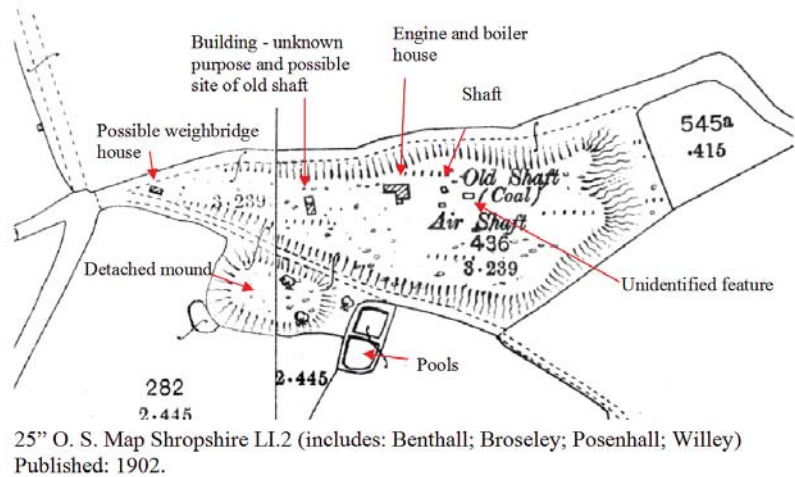
Two shafts are shown on the 1822 and 1839 maps but the westerly one is not marked on subsequent maps so presumably this was filled in. The air shaft marked on the OS map is not shown on the abandonment plan or any other maps so it may have been for a ventilation furnace and connected to the main shaft. Neither shaft is visible today.

Other than clearing the buildings and some woodland management there is no evidence of further activity on the site. The site is covered by scrubby woodland with no visible features except the intact concrete bed of the upright winding engine which is still in situ (SJ 68460 01895) and helps to locate the buildings shown on the OS map. The exact type of engine is not known as it was extremely rare for a small upright engine to be used for winding. A similar engine was used at the nearby Bottom Coal colliery by the same owner.

On the track to the south side, opposite the field, are the remains of an iron fence and a length of winding chain attached to a mature tree, which also would have been used as fencing (SJ 68465 01865).

History

The first reference to the pit is in 1828 at which time there were two shafts some distance apart, probably for two mines. They had probably



been worked by John Onions in conjunction with the nearby Coneybury Furnace (1782-1823).¹ James Foster took over the mines and would have worked them for Pennystone ironstone as confirmed by the substantial clay mound which still remains. The tithe map apportionment of 1839 lists the plot as 'spoil bank' and back in the hands of Francis Blythe Harries (Broseley Estate) suggesting that the mine had been abandoned.

In 1851 John Raspass was described as a Coal Master employing 10 labourers who were probably the entire workforce at the re-opened Coneybury pit.² He was summonsed for not having an adequate brake on his steam engine:

SHREWSBURY CHRONICLE 7TH JANUARY 1857

John Raspass, who works a pit called the Cunneberry (*sic*) Pit in Broseley was also summonsed for a similar infringement of the provisions of the act under rule 6, which required the use of so adequate break for the purpose of letting down the men whenever a seam engine was used to a pit. Mr Wynne said he had visited the works on the 10th. and found no such break employed, nor was there any provided; he had conversed with Raspass on the subject, who did not think it necessary, nor did he appear to know that such was required. Mr Raspass, in his defence, said he had applied for rules, and that Mr Slater had written to Newport, but could not obtain them. The inspector said he believed the violation in this case, as in the others, arose from ignorance, and he should therefore only apply to the bench for a mitigated penalty. A fine of 5s., and expenses was inflicted.—Mr Wynne suggested that defendant and others employed in similar operations in the district should have a meeting among themselves, select such rules as applied to their peculiar district, and send them to the Secretary of State for his approval, and afterwards to him (Mr Wynne). They could then have them printed and distribute copies among themselves. By this means they would have such an epitome of the act as would be in force in the district.

Birds nesting in a shaft must be somewhat unusual:

BIRMINGHAM JOURNAL 7TH AUGUST 1858

Some weeks since there appeared in the *Journal* a record of a novel cooperative society, the principals being swallows. We propose to add another interesting fact, referring to birds of the same tribe. A short time back, a pair of swallows commenced building their nests, twenty-two feet below the surface, on the side of a coal pit shaft, at the Coneybury. The pit has been in constant work for years. Their first attempt proved a failure, and the nest became detached and was destroyed. Nothing daunted, the birds recommenced building, and in due time completed their nest. Eggs were laid, and young ones hatched. During all this time, men and boys descended to work every morning, and ascended every evening. Tons of coal were daily raised up the shaft. The master of the pit, Mr. Raspass, and all



Coneybury Mine, Broseley

Continued ...

the pit's company, became much interested in the welfare of the fledglings, and no attempt was permitted to disturb the birds or injure their young. The tameness and confidence of the swallows became more and more marked as the young ones required attention. Frequently, when they appeared at the mouth of the shaft, the runner was over to land the coal. They would then take up a position on the edge of the pit head, and if a too long delay occurred, they would dive down through any small aperture that was available. On Saturday last it was deemed advisable to let down the bowk, after the conclusion of the day's work, to a level with the nest, with a view to assist the young brood in their first attempt to reach the sun light and the broad expanse of air. On the following Monday both the parents and their brood had disappeared; nor was there the slightest evidence of a mishap having occurred.

In 1858 there was a case of a live insect being found in the coal:

2ND OCTOBER 1858 WELLINGTON JOURNAL

SINGULAR DISCOVERY.- On Saturday last the banksman of the Coneybury pit, while unloading a draught of coal, came to a piece, to which was attached a piece of brass about two inches thick. Whilst the coal is in the draught it is usual to separate the brass. In doing so, in a small matrix, was discovered one of those insects known as "lady cows." (*Ladybird?*) On removing the insect from its cell, there appeared not the slightest indication of life: but after a while, signs of animation became evident. The insect was carefully wrapped up in paper, but eventually it was lost.

Raspass probably ran the mine on a shoestring and did not take the colliery rules too seriously:

25TH JANUARY 1862 WELLINGTON JOURNAL

John Raspass and Company were charged with neglect of the rules at the "Coneybury pit."— Mr. Newill said that there were three separate charges against the defendants. The first was brought under the 7th general rule, which provided that every working pit or shaft should be provided with some proper means of communicating distinct and definite signals from the bottom of the shaft to the surface, and from the surface to the bottom of the shaft. The second offence was a breach of the 12th general rule, which provided that a proper indicator to show the position of the load in the pit or shaft, and also that an adequate brake should be attached to every machine, worked by steam or water power, used for lowering or raising persons. The 13th rule provided that every steam boiler should be provided with a proper steam gauge, water gauge, and safety valve; this rule, also, the defendant's had failed to comply with.— A plea of excuse was advanced by the defendants, but the magistrates inflicted a fine of 10s. and 11s. costs on each charge.

The last reference before closure is in 1862 when there was a dispute between two of the workers.

8TH MARCH 1862 WELLINGTON JOURNAL

ASSAULT.— A man, named James Dowd, who was "wanted" upon another charge, was charged by John Holt with assaulting him at the Coneybury pit, Broseley, on the 25th ultimo.— Complainant said that he was working in the pit with the defendant on the day in question, when Dowd said he had got his (defendant's) work. This complainant denied, and defendant then struck at him with a pick saying he would stick him.— Police-constable Wiley said the defendant intimated that he should not appear, as he intended to leave the country.— Fined 5s and costs, or 14 days.

Raspass died in 1865 leaving under £300 in his will. It seems likely that this is the time that Thomas Plimley, Raspass's son-in-law and executor, took over the mine; certainly he was operating it by 1869.³ In 1871 Plimley described himself as a Coal Master⁴ but by 1881 he was a grocer. In 1877 Plimley decided to give up the mine and put the plant, which was clearly out of date, up for sale:

9TH JULY 1877 EDDOWES SALOPIAN JOURNAL

ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 22ND, 1877.
The CONEYBURY COLLIERY WORKS, near the Forester Arms Inn, Broseley, and within Half a Mile of Ironbridge Railway Station, adjoining a good road.
UNRESERVED Sale of the WORKING PLANT at the above Colliery, consisting of an Atmospheric (12 horse power) Engine, Steam Gauge, Pit Head, Flat Chain (upwards of 200 yards long), Rollers and Pulley, Baskets and Squares, Wrought and Cast Iron Rails, Patent Weighing Machine (new, by Brownhill and Sons), all kind of Pit Tools, Blacksmiths' Tools, Bellows, Anvil and Block, Bench and Vice, Wheelbarrows, Iron Piping, new and old Iron, Timber, Chaff Cutter (new), flat and parting Iron Plates in lots, and a miscellaneous lot of other articles, the whole of which will be SOLD by AUCTION, without the least reservation, by
MR. LEADBETTER,
At the time and place as mentioned above, being the property of Mr. Plimley, who has given up the Works.
Sale to commence at 12-30 prompt.

The mine appears to have closed and the plant removed as it is shown as disused and no buildings are shown on the 1882 OS map. By 1886 it had been re-opened by Samuel Meredith who had operated nearby the Bottom Coal Colliery. Meredith worked the Sulphur coal which was 3'4" thick extracting over 1,000 tons of coal and slack per year.⁵

A local watchmaker, used the mine to test an electric light powered by an accumulator. The filament lamp had only just been invented and the Royal Commission on Accidents in Mines reported in 1886 that lamps should soon be available. It was not until 1893 that the first commercial electric lamp was introduced in mines in the UK.⁶

30TH APRIL 1887 WELLINGTON JOURNAL

THE ELECTRIC LIGHT IN A COAL MINE.- ON Wednesday last a party of gentlemen descended the Coneybure (sic) Coal Mine, by permission and under the guidance of Mr. S. Meredith, the proprietor, who took



Coneybury Mine, Broseley Continued ...

them over the entire workings. The object of the visit was to test the utility and lighting power of the electric light. The apparatus, which consisted of a charged accumulator, and an incandescent lamp, giving a light equal to eight candles, was supplied by Mr. F. C. Percy, watchmaker, of Broseley, to whom every credit is due for the able manner in which the lamp was worked. After having been down some two hours the party came to the surface, having thoroughly enjoyed the visit. In the evening the employees, to the number of 22, were by the generosity of the proprietor, supplied with refreshments.

At the closure he was employing 17 men underground and three on the surface.⁷ Meredith died on 30th January 1896 and later that year the plant at the put was put up for sale:

25TH JULY 1896 WELLINGTON JOURNAL

TO COLLIERY OWNERS AND OTHERS.
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, on WEDNESDAY, August 5th,
 all the **WORKING PLANT** in and upon the premises of
 the **CONEYBURY PITS, BROSELEY.**
MR. JOHN D. BENBOW
 Will **SELL** by **PUBLIC AUCTION**, on the above date, from
 instructions of the Executors of the late Mr. S. Meredith,
 deceased,
ALL the WORKING PLANT, which will include a Nine-
 horse power Upright High-pressure Engine (with brake
 and all connections), One Steam Boiler (27ft. by 4ft. 6in., 7/16
 split, with all the brickwork attached), Two Force Pumps
 (with feed water tank), One-tank Water Boiler (27ft. by 4ft.
 wide, with stop valve and all connections), Pit Frame and
 Pulley, a New Winding Chain (120 yards), quantity of Pit
 Timber, about 1,250 Yards of Iron Rails (in lots), about 400
 Iron Sleepers, Two Pairs of Chain Tackling (with bonnet),
 Five Pit Baskets, 10 Squares, a Six-ton Weighing Machine
 (which has just been tested, with all brick work), a New
 Wire Rope (120 yards, quite new), Two strong Carts and
 Trapples, Horse Gearing and Horse Pit Gearing, a Pit Pony
 6 years, with gearing; about 30 Tons of Prime HAY, the
 growth of 1895 6; with all the Working Tools and Plant of
 the Pit.
 Sale to commence at One o'clock prompt.
 Catalogues to be had from the Auctioneer's Officers,
 Madley and Broseley.

In 1899 Donald Prestage of the Milburgh Tileworks wanted to re-open the mine for tile clay in association with his new works at Wallace. At this time some of the plant and materials appear to have still been on site as he requested permission to remove them. Prestage found the shaft was badly bulged and required repairing but nothing seems to have been done. He also wanted to try the clay in the mound for tile making.⁸ Nothing came of his plans and any remaining machinery was removed and buildings demolished at some time later.



Engine bed for an upright (vertical) steam winding engine. SJ 68460 01895. (S.Dewhirst)

The concrete bed (see photo bottom left) is 1.62m by 0.97m in two sections. The square section to the right has four 1" holding down bolts and was probably for the engine iron base. The rectangular block to the left was cast separately and has two 1" holding down bolts but its purpose is unclear.



Iron fence and remains of winding chain fence bottom left. SJ68465 01852. (S.Dewhirst)



Remains of winding chain used as fencing. (S.Dewhirst)



Coneybury Mine, Broseley Continued ...



Pool, possibly used for engine water supply. SJ 68450 01860.

(S.Dewhirst)

References

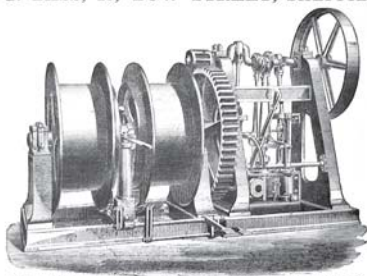
1. Indenture William Yelverton Davenport (Broseley Estate) and James Foster for mines previously leased to John Onions. Shropshire Archives 6000/11420
2. 1851 Census. In 1841 he was described as a miner and in 1861 as a Coal Master. On all three censuses he was living in Birch Row.
3. Annual return for mines 1869.
4. Casey's directory.
5. Groves returns for mines on Broseley estate 1886,87. *Shropshire Archives 1681/191/10.*
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safety_lamp#Electric_lamps
7. From the Tables compiled by W.N Atkinson, H.M. Inspector for the North Staffordshire District in his Report for 1896. *Peak District Mines Historical Society website.*
8. Shropshire Archives 1681/5189/4

Request for Information

Steve Dewhirst

While working on the Coneybury article the suggestion that a vertical engine was used at the mine intrigued me.

I. G. BASS, 18, BOW STREET, SHEFFIELD.



IMPROVED DESIGN OF ENGINE FOR HAULING.
For use with either Steam or Compressed Air. Takes less room, and can be supplied for less money than any other Engine of the same power.
MAY ALSO BE HAD WITH SINGLE DRUM FOR WINDING.

Images: *The Colliery Guardian*, Jan. 1875

This seems like a rare occurrence, although large engines were fairly common in the North-east coalfield and elsewhere, smaller engines seem to have almost invariably been horizontal.

Is anyone able to provide more information about the use of small vertical engines in mines?

If yes, then please let the editor know. Thank you.

IMPROVED PORTABLE ENGINE

FOR SINKING & WINDING.

These Engines are especially adapted for
SINKING PITS,
GENERAL WINDING PURPOSES,
INCLINES, &c.

THEY CAN ALSO BE FITTED WITH AN
ARRANGEMENT FOR PUMPING.



WESTRAY, COPELAND, & CO.,
ENGINEERS, FOUNDERS, AND BOILER MAKERS,
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MAKERS OF ALL KINDS OF MACHINERY FOR MINES, IRON, AND STEEL WORKS,
HYDRAULIC, POWER, AND HAND CRANES.
SPECIFICATIONS AND PRICES ON APPLICATION.



The Club 40 Years Ago (1977)

Ivor Brown

The first full year, under the Club's new name – Shropshire Caving & Mining Club had 26 full members and 16 associate members. The age range of active members was 35-45!

According to the Club's newsletter (Nos 143-154) published monthly through the year, many trips were being undertaken but mostly to caves outside the county. Some mines were also visited however, including coal mines in North Staffs. Attendance at monthly meetings was "poor" often about 6 or 7 and one was abandoned.

Work was continuing at the Brewery Well, Wellington and support had been provided to IGMT for removing a hydraulic ram from Tong Castle, There was some exploration of the smaller mines in South Shropshire and ladders were being made by club members to assist with this.

Maintenance of the Club cottage was falling behind, but Jack Hazeley had been doing his best, particularly after our recent break-in. The Club decided finally to abandon the Cilcain Barn.

The AGM was held in September as usual, principal officers elected were D. Corbyn (President), A. Taylor (Vice-president), J. Tasker (Chairman), M. Clough (Secretary) and S. Walker (Treasurer). It was decided to hold subs at £3 (full) and £2 (associate members) despite financial losses in the previous year. The meeting was followed by a Dinner at the Barley Mow, Newport and a talk on Walsall Limestone Mines by H.E. Green.

At the end of the year the Club became concerned about two outside matters. In the first, led by John Heathcote, approaches were made to the local MP Gerry Fowler regarding certain aspects of the Health & Safety legislation that was now affecting the Club's interests. Secondly, the County Council were threatening to make the South Shropshire lead mining area a priority for land reclamation.

Representations were being made to the Council and I.J. Brown was preparing a letter of objection. (This eventually led to an inquiry and a change in the Council's approach).

1977 had been the 100th Anniversary of the Snailbeach District Railways, Ken Lock had been trying to get this marked in some way, but

there seemed little local interest, however he was more successful in drawing the clubs attention to some interesting relics from the working of Hanwood Colliery including an original wooden sledge (photo). Where are these relics now?

Although an Annual Journal was published during the year, no new Accounts were printed.



Above: Hanwood Colliery c1930. Two miners moving a sledge or 'dan' of coal. Miners: Percy Mansell (at the back) and Walter Challinor (at the front) near the coal face. A candle is stuck in a gob of clay on the coal face.
(Howard Davies Shrewsbury Coalfield Collection)

Below: The 1930s Sledge from Hanwood Pit. In operation a "square" timber frame was put on the sledge to carry more coal.
(Ivor Brown)



Books and Videos

The Great County Adit (New Edition)

Author: Allen Buckley,
Sb, 240mm x 170mm, 144pp, fully
illustrated with 12 pages in colour.

This new edition has been revised
and extended, with a larger page
format, improved maps, and
illustrations, plus a gazetteer of what
can be seen along the Adit's course.

Started in 1748 in the Carnon Valley
within 50 years it drained the largest
number of working mines in the
world, eventually over 60 mines
were served and it reached about 40
miles in length. Informative and well
researched the book includes both
modern and historical photos. Well
worth adding to your collection.

Price: £15.99 +p&p

Available from Mike Moore at Club
meetings, or online at

www.moorebooks.co.uk

Kelly Mine & the 'Shiny Ore' Mines of the Wray Valley

A non-profit making exercise this
book, concentrates on the mines in
the Wray valley - that is between
Bovey Tracy and Moretonhampstead.
All were tiny, usually employing less
than ten people. Much of the mines'
surface structures have been swept
away. Fortunately the Kelly Mine
Preservation Society has restored
the surface part of Kelly Mine to
working order.

An important part of this book is a
record of what is there now. To this
end Alasdair Neill and colleagues
from the Plymouth Caving Group
surveyed the accessible workings
at Wray, Pepperdon, Kelly and
Hawkmoor.

Once the productions costs have
been recovered the bulk of the
remaining stock of books will be
given to the Kelly Mine Preservation
Society to support their project there.

Soft back, 190 pages.

£15.00 post free UK only.

Cheques only please, made out to:
A W. Brooks, Polstrong Cottage,
Polstrong, Camborne,
Cornwall TR14 0QA

HISTORIC MINES OF SPAIN VOL.2 COMPILATION No.53 Exploring the mines of Sierra Minera and Mazarrón

In April 2008, the Shropshire Caving
and Mining Club visited the Sierra
Minera region of Murcia in Spain to
see some of the vast range of ancient
and modern mines which survive so
well in the area. At scores of sites,
flat-rope winders stand beside intact
steel or wooden headframes over
extremely deep open shafts!

First we visit Las Matildes mining
museum near La Unión, where the
Fundación Sierra Minera preserves
and exhibits a wide variety of
mines, buildings and equipment.
Later we see the huge Corta Brunita
opencast zinc mine followed by the
picturesque ruins in the Rambla del
Avenque. At El Laberinto a tunnel
takes us to Mina Obdulia and we
then travel to Portman to see a jetty
completely cut off from the sea by
mining waste filling the bay, and we
explore part of the large elaborate
processing mill Lavadero Roberto.

We go underground to see the work
being done to make Agrupa Vicenta
into the show mine of the Parque
Minero de la Unión. Following the
"33 Road" mine track over the
mountain takes us through Roman
and later mining remains including
manganese kilns overlooking
Portman Bay. At Corta Emilia we
were given permission to examine a
unique donkey gin.

Cabezo Rajado - the "Riven Hill"
has been mined for hundreds of years
and still has plenty to show: 450m
deep shafts, ornate steel headframes,
a flat rope winder and a large mill
containing 40 wooden flotation cells
and a ball mill. Back at ground level,
The winder at Mina Ocasión has both
its flat ropes still in good condition.

At El Lirio, levels with wooden
pit props lead to fascinating
underground stables. In the sidings
leading to the railway tunnel Jose
Maestre are many rail tipping cars
and two locomotives. La Parreta
is an impressive collection of mill
buildings including Lavadero San
Ignacio.

Mazarrón west of Cartagena is an
ochre-red zone of rich lead and
silver, mined before the Romans.
The hill is cut by open stopes and
dotted with open shafts; many
with headframes of stone, wood or
steel. Under a wooden building, a
steam winder still has its flat ropes
connected to a wooden headframe.

Thanks to Andy Wood for organising
the visit and to our Spanish friends
Ana Christina Contreras and
Paco Fernández Antolinos of the
Fundación Sierra Minera; Reme
Pagán Martí, Profesor Jose Ignacio
Manteca and the Parque Minero de la
Unión; and Portman Golf SA for site
access. Thanks also to participants
including the Friends of La Union
Mines; and to Rob Vernon for his
excellent research and guidance at
and around Mazarrón.

This recording is a compilation - it
has no commentary and it is not fully
edited or dubbed. Incidental dialogue
is in Spanish and English.

Running time: 1 hour 42 minutes

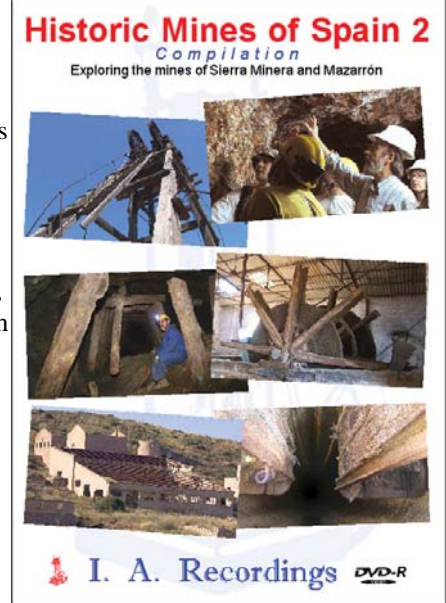
Price: £14. 40

(full HD Blu-ray £18.00)

Discounted price for Club members:

£10, £14 for Blu-ray

(if you collect e.g. at Club Meetings)



more details at:
www.iarecordings.org



Club Officers

Diary Dates 2017

President: David Adams

**Membership & Insurance:
Mike Davies**

11th-13th May: International Early Engines Conference. At the Ironworks Centre, Elsecar, South Yorkshire.

Chair: Neal Rushton

Tackle: Andy Harris

27th May - 2nd June: Bradford PC Gaping Gill winch meet.

Vice Chair: Gareth Rushton

**Training Officer:
Andrew Wood**

9th-11th June: BCA Party Weekend, Rotary Centre, Castleton.

Secretary: Andrew Wood
scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk

**First Aid Officer:
Alan Moseley**

11th June: BCA AGM, 10:30am, Rotary Centre, Castleton.

Treasurer: Marian Boston

Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold

16th-18th June: BCRC Cave Rescue Conference, SWCC HQ, Penwylt, South Wales.

24th-25th June: NAMHO Conference, Godstone, Surrey. Plus events the following week. Plans are well advanced and the booking system should open early in the New Year.

Conservation: David Poyner

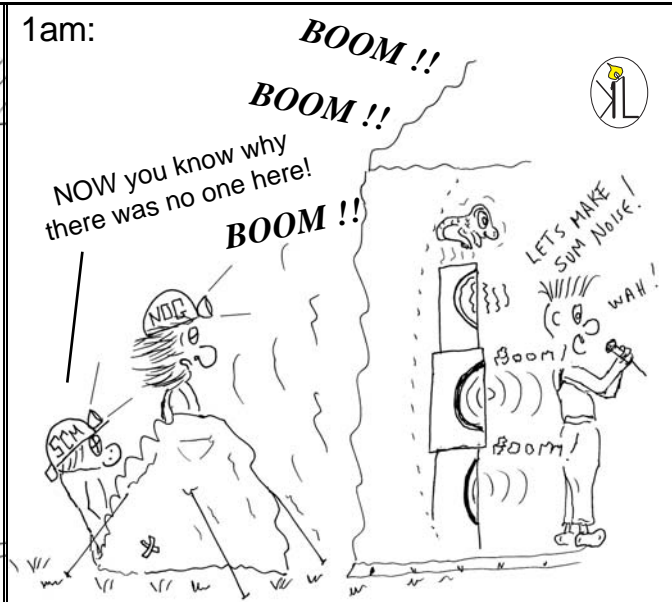
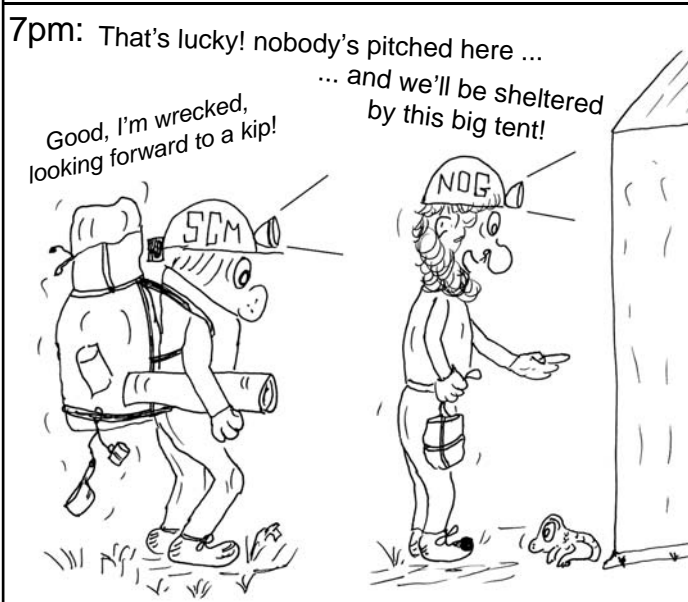
**'Below' Editor, Publications:
Kelvin Lake**
e-mail: scmc@factree.org.uk

23rd-30th July: 17th International Congress of Speleology, Penrith, Western Sydney, Australia. If you want to attend you will need to apply for a business visa.
www.speleo2017.com

NAMHO Rep: Alan Robinson

September: Hidden Earth, National Caving Conference, details yet to be announced. Keep an eye on:
hidden-earth.org.uk/

Smidgin: The Joys of Caving Conference Camping ...



Catch us on the World Wide Web. Club activities & the labyrinth: www.shropshirecmc.org.uk

