

Northern Mine Research Society

Newsletter



Society established 1960

www.nmrs.org.uk

May 2022

www.nmrs.org.uk

Welcome to the May Newsletter. Spring has sprung and, with luck, members will be able to visit more mining sites over the summer. Please consider contributing even a short write-up of the site to the Newsletter – a couple of photo's and a description will be fine. If members don't send in material, it will become a Newsheet, with blank paper! I'd like to thank those stalwarts who have contributed regularly to the Newsletter and Roger Burt for pointing me towards various items in the press.

2022 looks like a good year for future mining history, with various re-openings promised and new sinkings either promised or in progress. Anglesey Mining is also drilling a series of infill holes at Parys Mountain in order to add detail to earlier holes. Michael Gove has to decide the fate of the proposed Woodhouse Colliery by July 7th.

A reminder that we need volunteers to fill vacancies for Membership Secretary and Newsletter Editor. They were temporarily filled by Malcolm Street and myself respectively, but we are finding this to have an adverse effect on our output. Malcolm took on the post of Membership Secretary and has had to delay plans for updating and adding to the NMRS Website. I took over the Newsletter and have had to delay work on a couple of major additions to the website. Most importantly, having fewer officers is not healthy for the democratic running of the society.

If you are interested in filling either of the above offices, please contact myself or Malcolm and we will forward a written job description.

Finally, a huge thank you to Barbara and Rex for posting Newsletters and British Mining to members.

Mike Gill

Newsletter Editor

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Please note that the deadline for inclusion in the August Newsletter is the 30th July 2022.

Submissions that will interest members of the NMRS are welcome. They may be forwarded to me by email or as a USB Flash Drive, by post, or by telephone. If you want anything returning please ask.

Photographs, plans and drawings must be reproducible in monochrome. Colour photo's will appear as such in the electronic version.

Committee Meeting by Zoom, 18-02-2022

Project Grants

Members are reminded that, as part of its charitable function, the society makes grants towards mining-related projects. To find out more look on our website at foot of the following page: <https://www.nmrs.org.uk/resources/>

Annual Subscriptions

The committee discussed the rates charged for annual subscriptions, which were last adjusted in 2010, but even the NMRS Committee cannot resist inflation for ever. Nevertheless, in order to have a clearer idea of cost increases etc it was agreed to discuss the matter, when the current turbulence in prices has settled, and make a recommendation to the Autumn Meeting to be held in late October, provisionally at Gisburn.

For the record, in 1965 the subscription was £1/year and, using an inflation calculator, that should now be £17.16/year, but members now get much more value for their money.

Website

Malcolm suggested that, because the website is now larger than many commercial sites, we should begin to pay for its full

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indexing. The committee supported this, and Malcolm was to ask if preferential rates were offered to charities.

Zoom Lectures

Given the small number of field meets on offer, it was agreed to experiment with a number, of one hour long, Zoom-based talks on mining-related topics. Please keep an eye on the website for further news of this development.

Library News

Thank you to Lynne Mayers for a copy of a 24 page Mond Nickel Company leaflet, "The Acton Platinum Metals Refinery". We are also grateful to long-standing NMRS member Archie Meadowcroft who is moving house and has contributed boxes of journals and books to the society, but I have not yet had time to sort these. Thank you to Mike Gill for donating to the library a copy of "The Blacketts" by Greg Finch. Mike wrote a review of this book in the February 2022 Newsletter.

Sallie Bassham (Honorary Librarian)

Access to mines in Wales under the CAL agreement with NRW

SOME GOOD NEWS – The following is of particular interest to those members active in Wales.

Roy Fellows has pointed out that your latest newsletter (February) contains an article relating the termination of agreement between Cave Access Limited (CAL) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Roy is a director of CAL together with myself and Stuart France. NRW did terminate the agreement towards the end of last year, however they had second thoughts and the agreement is still in force and CAL welcomes mine explorers to register and explore the mines covered by the agreement subject to some reasonable wildlife restrictions. Could you please let your members know we are still up and running and rumours of our demise are incorrect! See www.caveaccess.co.uk for up-to-date information.

Dave Tyson for Cave Access Limited

Photography Competition

There will be a photography competition at the Northern Pennine Mineral Expo on the 23rd & 24th July 2022 held at St John's Chapel Town Hall, Weardale. Two groups: for children under 16 and adults. Each age group is divided into three categories - minerals, mining landscape/buildings and mining heritage (people, artefacts).

You may submit as many photographs to each category as you wish. The photos can be printed on any photographic paper in A4 size. Any medium or colour choice is allowed. Please avoid the excessive use of Photoshop when not necessary. We are aware that there are some photographic techniques, especially for photographing mineral specimens, that require the use of Photoshop and other image software and of course, the need to convert photos from raw format to JPEG etc through Photoshop is perfectly acceptable.

Photographs are to be sent by post to The Calfhouse, Cowshill, Weardale, Co. Durham, DL13 1JQ and by email to northpenninesmineralexpo@gmail.com by Thursday the

16th of July.

Please identify each photo with your full name, age group and competition category, contact number, date and details of the subject, if possible, on a sticky label on the back.

Entry is free of charge and prize money will be awarded for each category. It is proposed that winning photos will be featured in next year's publicity.

Enrico Rinaldi

Greg's Hut

The Mountain Bothies Association are appealing for funds to renovate Greg's Hut on Cross Fell: <https://mailchi.mp/hendersonblack.co.uk/mba-gregshut-0322-fundraising?e=0c65576659>

Located close to the summit of Cross Fell, the highest point in the Pennines, this free-to-use cottage is helpfully situated in a remote part of the hills prone to bad weather. The building, which stands on the Pennine Way at an elevation of 2265 ft a.o.d. (NY690.354), was originally built as a Blacksmiths Shop to serve nearby lead mines, but was rebuilt in the early 1970s in memory of John Gregory, who was killed in a climbing accident in the Alps in 1968.

Alastair Lings

The Common Room – at Newcastle upon Tyne

Dr David Bell, the current treasurer of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, has written about the creation of a new charity, The Common Room (<https://thecommonroom.org.uk/>), [formerly known as The Mining Institute] to manage Neville Hall and the collections. This will allow NEIMME to concentrate on its charitable objectives. The Common Room has completed a huge refurbishment of Neville Hall, and is now open to the public. We have started to hold meetings back in Neville Hall, but we will continue to stream them on YouTube for distant members. We have had a few problems with the new hardware not being Zoom friendly, but we hope that we have got past the teething problems.

If any NMRS members need information from the library then the new contact details for Jennifer Hillyard, the Library and Archives Manager, are jennifer.hillyard@thecommonroom.org.uk and 07469 923969.

David Bell

The Lost Sister - A Member's Family Study

John Clifford has asked that we tell members about his paper – *The Lost Sister: Susan Clifford (1888-1938) and her family in Derbyshire, County Durham and London*, which the Lanchester Local History Society has recently published on its webpage: <https://www.durhamweb.org.uk/historyforum/cdfhlanchester.html>

It's the story of a baby girl, Susan, whose mother died in childbirth at Darley Abbey, near Derby. Her father could not look after another child and so had her adopted by John and Harriet Varley, who were childless. John was a collier and in the 1890s moved his family north to Hamsteels Common, near Cornsay Colliery.

Housing conditions were poor, the times hard, and there was much drinking, gambling and violence.

After ten or so years the Varleys moved to Jarrow, which was equally 'idyllic'. Here Susan became pregnant at 21 and her son was born in December 1909. The baby's father, Augustine Ashman, was a Palmers shipyard worker of mixed race. Susan married him in South Shields in 1911, and had a daughter in 1913.

He worked at Palmers through the Great War, but by the 1921 census, Susan and Augustine were in the borough of Poplar in London's East End. They would live there for around 20 years. They had taken John and Harriet Varley with them.

By John Clifford

Graduates of the Camborne School of Mines

I note the new information on the NMRS website on this topic. I was unaware until recently that there was not only a Camborne School of Mines, but also one in Redruth. Mike Shaw and I have been researching one graduate of the Redruth school, who graduated in 1909 and also took MIMM membership. He was Edgar Charles Gray, who first worked in Cornwall then moved to Shropshire in 1916. He had a successful career including an appointment during the Second World War as Prospecting Officer for the Ministry of Fuel and Power. He died in the 1960s.

I wonder how many members were also unaware of the existence of the Redruth School of Mines?

Andy Cuckson

The processing plant of the two Cwmheisian mines

On completing my memoir for British Mining 108, I felt a sense of frustration. I wrote about the processing plant that had served the east and west Cwmheisian gold mines in the 19th century, but I had never visited the site. It was a SSSI and a scheduled monument. It was concealed by vegetation. I badgered the manager of Natural Resources Wales to provide access; he was sympathetic but could not help me.



Fig 01 First view of the processing mill, previously concealed by trees and vegetation



Fig 02 The pit of the waterwheel. Note the river Mawddach, top left

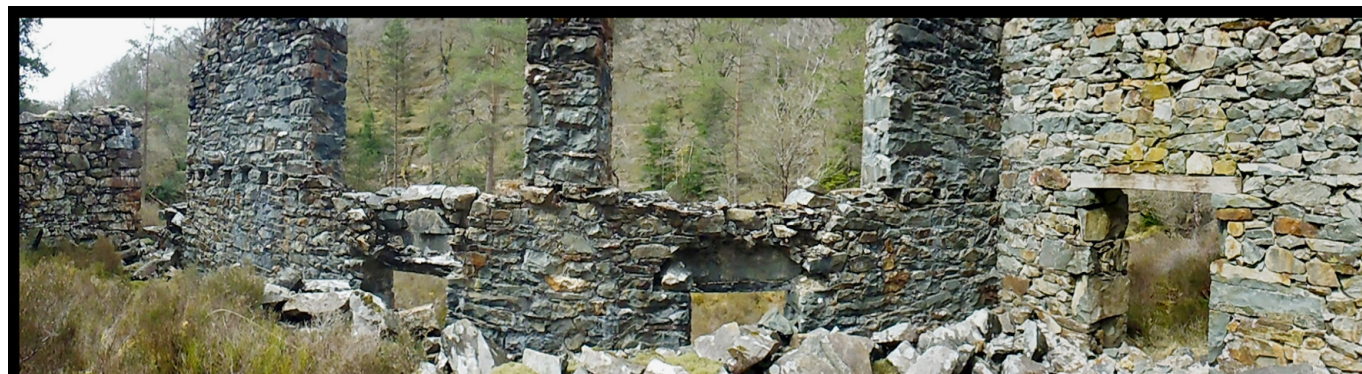


Fig 03 Interior view of the mill that features three sides (taken on a panorama camera)

On one side, it is protected by the river Mawddach, and on the other side a steep downward slope is a hazard for a safe journey on the return trip. My colleagues considered a Bailey bridge (to be carried to the site in sections), or we would saunter across in waders whenever the river level was low, or we might develop a hoist on the steep bank. None went beyond the planning stage.

Then ... a miracle! The area around the processing mill was cleared by official foresters. Trees damaged in the winter storms had collapsed, trees surrounding the mill were removed, and the dense undergrowth was flattened. What is more, the foresters' entrance point from the footpath was graced by an inviting orange ribbon.

It seemed too good to be true and the attached photographs are pleasant reminders of a recent foray with the simple objective – that is, to secure a clear view of the exterior of the mill and to document the former interior comprehensively. It worked ... All's well that ends well ... and thanks go to two companions who made it all possible.

Ron Callender



Fig 04 Ron enjoys a rest but takes a chance to observe his surroundings

Spar Boxes

Weardale is famous for its mines and minerals, but less well known are the boxes from the area – not filled with chocolates! – but made with actual specimens. They do originate from other areas, but here we just touch on those from the North Pennines. A spar box has one main constituent – mineral specimens and - Weardale produced some extremely colourful and pretty ones. Some were in wooden boxes, often mirrors were used to enhance the appearance of a grotto and some were in an obelisk form beneath a glass dome. Some were even incorporated into pieces of furniture. The tradition of spar boxes goes back more than 175 years. A spar box of 2000 mineral specimens, cemented together by a miner, Isaac Robinson of Nenthead, was shown in the Great Exhibition of 1851. Much of the history of them has been lost and they have

been bought and sold through junk shops, antique shops and auctions. For instance in 1990 at Sotheby's auction at West Green House on instruction of The Lord McAlpine there were seven spar boxes, individually lotted.

Weardale is relatively isolated, with settlements strung out along valley bottoms, and the growth of the villages and hamlets was due to lead mining, it being the most extensive and productive area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. People lived and worked in higher altitudes than much of the country. The miners were after lead mainly but often they came across cavities or vughs and these provided mineral specimens for their hobby or second income. Some prized finds in the area included nail head calcites (white), sphalerite (black), zinc (glittery), quartz (clear), pyrite (fools gold), and fluorite (many colours). Weardale fluorite is famous across the world for its colour, shape and clarity. Boltsburn mine at Rookhope is well known for the size and quality of fluorites from the Boltsburn flats and there is speculation this find fuelled an interest in making spar boxes. The miners were being paid to mine lead, not the “Bonny bits” used in spar boxes or sold to dealers. They often worked in groups, often family members. They were paid by piecework not by the hour. So the perceived view by many was to collect “Bonny bits” to be smuggled out – the result of which was a possible second income. Most specimens were sold, but when spar boxes were fashionable were used in their making. They usually have gemmy fluorite colours predominately, coupled with other finds, but some did contain West Cumbrian minerals in their construction.

Many country houses had cabinets of curiosities – collection of small items they had collected themselves or acquired. Spar boxes were of a similar nature – a miner had collected

or swapped the specimens and used them to make a one off collectible. The Victorian age was an age of exhibitions and towards the end of the nineteenth century popular exhibitions were held in St John's Chapel. One constant was that there were mineral specimens and spar boxes displayed. Originally those exhibited came from people's front parlours but then they started to be made especially for the events. In 1887 the “*Grand Mineral & Geological exhibition*” was held in the town Hall at St John's Chapel and opened by Walter Beaumont on Saturday, December 24th. There were 480 entries in 35 classes with rave reviews in the local press. The 1901 show in the same location appears to be the last and was entitled “*Weardale Mineral and Industrial Exhibition*”. Some former miners and collectors still make Spar boxes as a hobby. Each is a one off.



Photo of some of the Spar boxes at Killhope from the late David Walker Barker's book “*In Search of a Hidden Landscape*”.



Killhope Lead Mining Museum has a display of spar boxes in an exhibition. It is open from 10am to 4.30pm (last entry 3.30) until 31st October and the museum is free entry for the 2022 season.

The Weardale Museum at Ireshopeburn, run by volunteers has a large spar box with a mining scene plus another one. It also has lots of mining related photos of the area plus a catalogue of the entries to the 1887 exhibition mentioned above. This actually lists what was in the show. The museum is also an excellent resource for anyone involved with family history in the area. It is open 1.00pm - 4.30pm until May 31st Wednesday – Sunday and June 1st - September 30th daily. Admission is £5 with under 18s free. Yearly membership is £10 with unlimited visits.

Barbara Sutcliffe

Curlers, Trains and Miners:

The early days of a Scottish mining museum

In 1953, after two years of active military service, I had the urge to visit Scotland's Southern Uplands and especially the Lanarkshire village of Leadhills. All went well and to my joy, I found a fragment of fool's gold embedded in a chunk of quartz. So far, so good.

During the 1970s, on regular visits to my mother in Lanarkshire, I often called in at Leadhills and eventually encountered NMRS member, the late Geoff Downs-Rose in Wanlockhead. He outlined plans to open a museum and introduced me to the late Bill Harvey; both men were NMRS stalwarts. In 1976-ish, they coaxed me to join NMRS and the Wanlockhead Museum Trust as an advisor on graphics. My brief was to 'fill the museum', which was easier said than done. Of course, I also took umpteen photographs!

Geoff secured premises; I built a scale model of a possible layout. The Trustees, who were villagers, unanimously approved of our suggestions and the three advisors to the trust (Geoff, Bill and me) made a start. At the time, I was living in Buckinghamshire, but the scale model allowed me to make great progress

00 The model of the small space allocated for conversion to a museum, which the author used in 1977 to plan the panel layouts.

Photo of a spar box from the North Pennine Mineral Expo in 2017 and on the Weardale Museum stand there.

and in an exchange of letters bearing a postage stamp, I maintained weekly contact with Geoff.

In Wanlockhead, an SOS went out to the villagers and, on loan, we received photographs of Wanlockhead of yesteryear. Bill did the same in Leadhills. Offers flooded in. During the seventies, it was a skill to make decent copies of photographs. Development of the negative was tricky – the range of densities had to match the density range of the printing paper. The only help was the availability of three grades of contrasts in print papers - soft, normal and hard. Successful negatives could be enlarged to the then universal standard of 20" x 16" for hanging on the panels in the emerging museum. There was a welcome bonus; on viewing the up-to-date versions, the donors preferred these and we negotiated a swop.

Of course, the museum project needed money and Geoff agreed to fund a suggestion of mine. "Why not design a set of postcards we can sell to the tourists?" Nine different themes from our 'loan collection' were commissioned; some sold well and others lingered at the sales counter. "Why not sell them as a set of nine in a wrapper?" I suggested to Geoff and within weeks, he was telling me that visitors liked the idea and we needed some reprints.



Another idea raised even more money. In the museum we featured a display about the unusual railway that ran from main-line Elvanfoot to Wanlockhead, via Leadhills. MacAlpine's civil engineering company had built the line years ago. Mr MacAlpine's PR department did not know this, but gladly provided enough money to design and print a poster in celebration.

In the museum, we displayed a life-sized photograph of the Dewar Challenge Shield presented to the curling society in 1912 ... that is, in the days when the local rinks froze. An

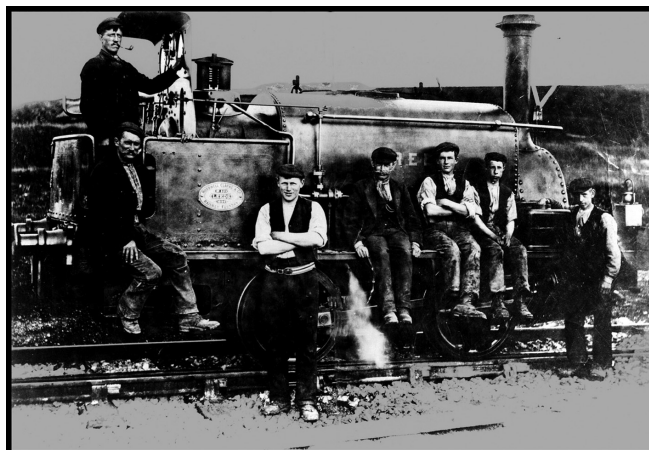
approach to Dewar & Sons, Ltd in Perth led to the gift of a cheque which covered the production of fifty posters for sale on curling.

All good things come to an end. In 1980, my employment transferred to Cheshire and the gold mines of North Wales took my attention. The museum continued to prosper and with generous grants from funding agencies, the accumulating collections transferred to a new and larger building in Wanlockhead. Appropriately, it bears the name of the visionary, Geoff Downs-Rose.

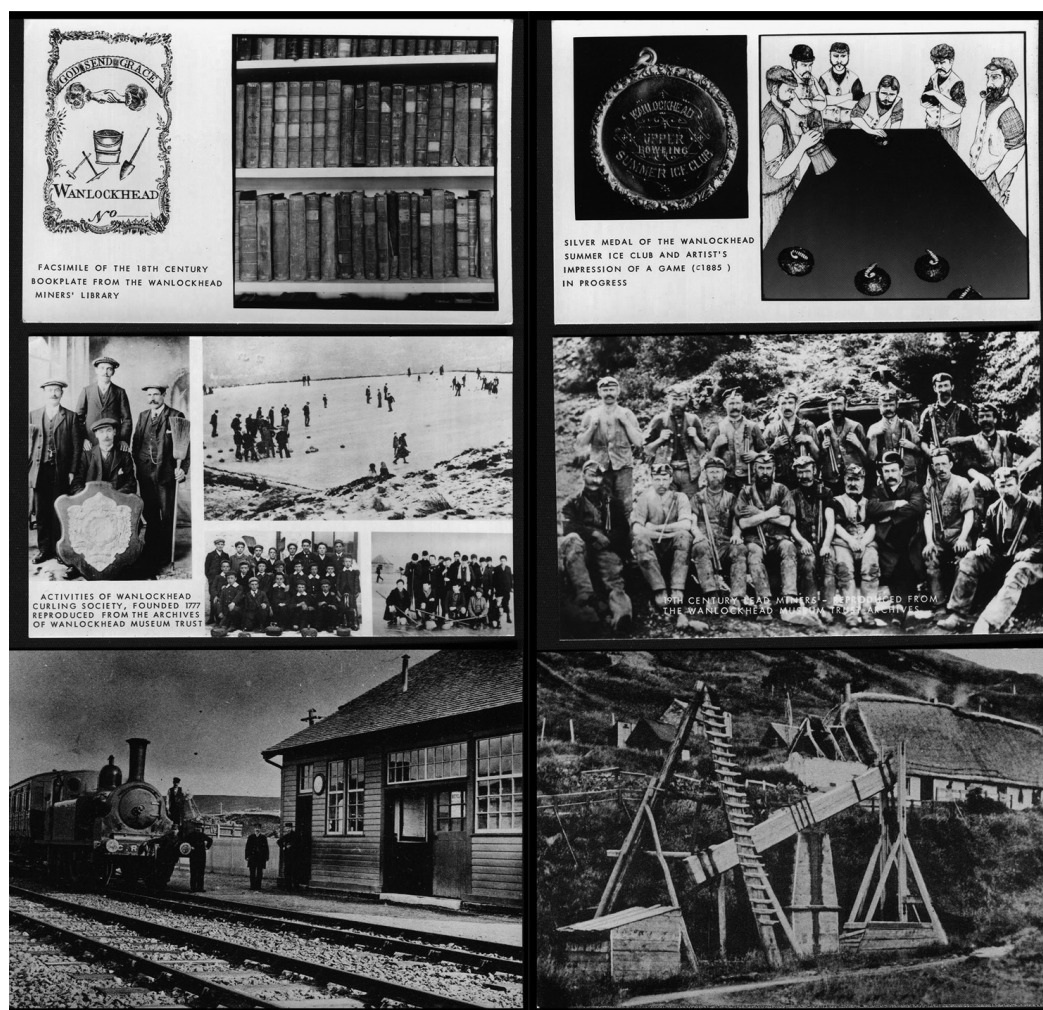
Ron Callender



1 An example of the photographs provided by local people when plans for a museum were first circulated in Wanlockhead.



2 Mining history was bolstered by the donation of photographs featuring the trains that worked between the mines and the smelter.



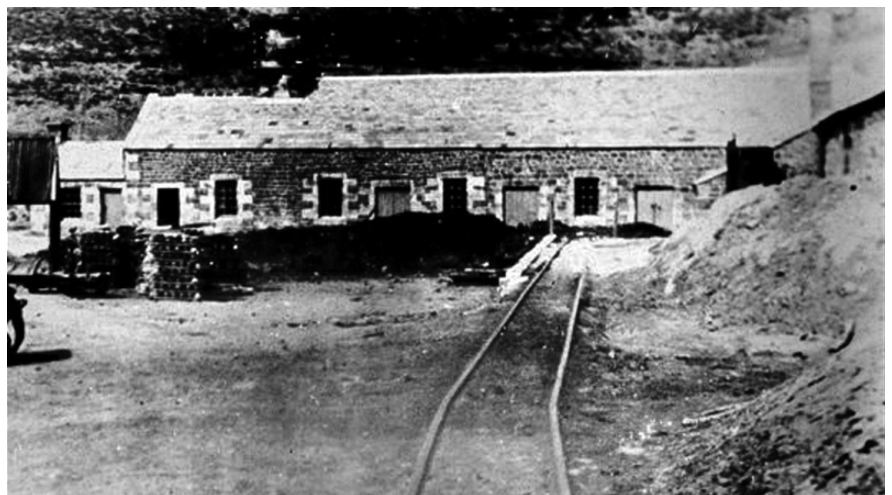
3 A selection of six postcards offered for sale as a set, which helped the Museum to move a few that were not selling to well.

4 Twenty four pupils of varying ages and one teacher assembled for a photograph, which required much restoration by computer.



5 The lead miners of Wanlockhead won awards for curling, including the world cup, which the club retained after three wins.

6 During the lead smelting stage, the silver recovered by the Meadowfoot smelter was delivered to the Duke of Buccleuch.





7 The main ice rink positioned on flat ground, close to the railway station at Wanlockhead for “the roarin’ game”.

8 The advisors to the Trust, staged summer exhibitions in the Wanlockhead Miners’ Library to explore the merits of a museum.

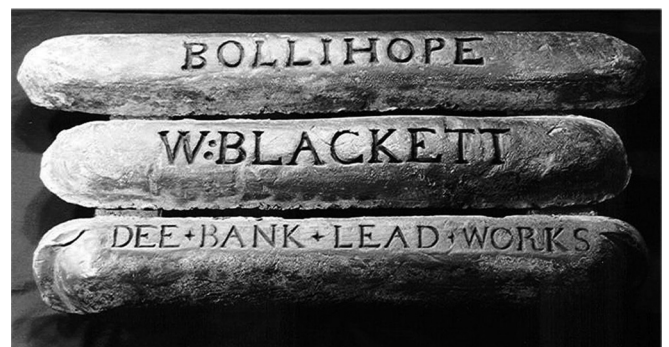


Lead Pieces in Portland Museum, Dorset

Staff and volunteers from Portland Museum are currently working on artefacts which Ed Cummings and others from the Weymouth Underwater Archaeological Group recovered from the wreck of the *Earl of Abergavenny*. This was an East India Trading Company vessel, which sank in Weymouth Bay during a storm in February 1805, while on a voyage to India and China. Her captain, John Wordsworth, the brother of William, the poet, expected to make a sizeable sum of money from the voyage, the profits of which, he intended to use to support his family. Unfortunately, he and around 300 of his crew and passengers drowned, and his cargo sank.

The first salvage work on the *Abergavenny* was done by John Braithwaite in the *Endeavour* and continued until the end of March 1806 when, having recovered all the chests of specie and much of the rest of the cargo, the wreck was blown up. Luckily, those pioneer divers missed some items, including a number of pieces (pigs) of lead. Three of them are at Portland Museum (see photo), three more are at the museum in Hastings, and the others are at the British Museum. Their approx. weight, at 75 kg = 165 lbs, is nearly 1½ cwt or 168

lbs, which is normal. The manifest suggests that the full load of lead was around 385 tons worth £11,567 or £30 per ton.



Bollihope smelt mill was south of the river Wear, at Stanhope. It was owned by Messrs [Anthony] Hopper & Co. NZ 0162.3525.

W. Blackett was a large, enduring concern, and there is no indication which smelt mill produced it.



Mill mark on the Bollihope piece.

The Dee Bank Lead Works was at Bagillt on the Flintshire/Dee estuary coast. It served the mines on the Halkyn Mountain. SJ 2126.7610

Mike Gill

Scotland Set for a Graphite Rush?

One of the main components of lithium-ion (li-ion) batteries, where it forms a primary ingredient of the all-important anode, is Graphite. The estimated demand for flake graphite in 2020 was around 850,000 tonnes. By 2025, this is set to grow to nearly two million tonnes, and by 2030, four million tonnes. In consequence, graphite flake prices are 33% higher than they were a year ago.

Graphite, a form of carbon, occurs as black to steel grey, lustrous flaky aggregates, disseminated in metamorphic rocks, or as veins with a fibrous or foliated texture. Natural graphite has a number of special properties, such as high electrical conductivity, a high melting point, resistance to corrosion, and lubricity. Consequently it has various industrial uses, including in electronics, lubrication, metallurgy and steel production. In the UK graphite is used in aerospace applications, nuclear power generation and associated industries, in the petrochemical and automotive sectors, and for glass and steel manufacturing. Global natural graphite production in 2017 amounted to an estimated 1.2 million tonnes.

China produced 75 per cent of the total in 2017. Other large producers are Brazil, India, Canada, Russia and Austria. The UK imported around 3,800 tonnes of natural graphite, worth £3,400,000, in 2017. The European Union considers natural graphite to be a 'critical raw material'. In common with some other industrial minerals, natural graphite has an industrially important synthetic equivalent, which is produced in electric furnaces from petroleum coke [the solid non-volatile carbon residue left after the distillation and cracking of petroleum]. In 2020 the average price of uncoated natural spherical graphite was around US\$3,000 per tonne

In the UK, Graphite is a widespread constituent of metamorphic rocks. It has been mined near Seathwaite, in Borrowdale, Cumbria.¹ Mining there is known in the 14th century and continued intermittently until it was abandoned in the late 19th century. It apparently produced a significant quantity of very pure lump graphite. In Scotland, graphite was worked in several counties on a small scale. Output data is scarce, and even the fairly important mines in the Highlands only appear to have produced a few tonnes of graphite annually. For example, the Glen Strathfarrar deposit [NH285384] is reported to have produced five tons of graphite in 1818, and a vein at Invergarry produced about two tons of graphite in 1825. It is reported that more than 100 tons of graphite was raised from the Craigman coalmine [NS547124] near New Cumnock, in Ayrshire, around 1840.

The UK has had no systematic or modern exploration for graphite. Nor is there any mining of graphite, and there are

no deposits in which graphite reserves or resources have been reported. A commodity profile, 'The potential for graphite in the UK', was produced by the British Geological Survey (2020).² It concluded that "Graphite is very unlikely to be mined on a commercial scale in the UK".

1. Documents relating to the mines at Seathwaite form part of the Bankes family archive which is currently held in the Dorset County Record Office in Dorchester.
2. <https://www2.bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk/download/cmp/graphite.pdf>

N/L Editor

Cornish Lithium

The granite rocks beneath Cornwall are rich in lithium and heat. Cornish Lithium plans to design and build a pilot-scale lithium extraction plant at the United Downs Deep Geothermal Project site, near St Day. The pilot plant will then be used to demonstrate that lithium hydroxide, a key component of lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles, can be produced in Cornwall from naturally occurring geothermal waters with a net zero carbon footprint. Domestic production of this critical metal is vital for the UK to deliver its zero carbon and clean growth ambitions.

This demonstration lithium extraction pilot plant will trial environmentally-responsible DLE (Direct Lithium Extraction) technology to selectively remove lithium compounds from water extracted by the geothermal powerplant from its 5.2km deep borehole. Once the lithium has been extracted, the water will be reinjected into the rock.

Following the success of the work carried out independently by both Cornish Lithium and GEL (Geothermal Engineering Ltd) to date, the co-production of lithium with geothermal heat and power from the same geothermal waters is an exciting opportunity for Cornwall.

In April, Ian Cockerill, who had recently resigned as chairman of Russian mining giant Polymetal, joined Cornish Lithium as non-executive chairman and replaced Derek Linfield. Also, Janet Blas, finance chief of lithium miner Bacanora, joined the board as a non-executive director. Cornish Lithium's chief financial officer became an executive director.

Ultimately, Cornish Lithium aims to produce a battery-quality lithium hydroxide product from the geothermal waters.

South Crofty

In Mid-February 2022, Cornish Metals Inc. agreed a 25 year lease of certain mineral rights owned by Sir Ferrers Vyvyan, of Treloarwarren in Cornwall. The lease covers an area of 222 hectares and will enable Cornish Metals to explore and mine within all the mineral right areas owned by the Vyvyan family inside the South Crofty Underground Permission Area, and to explore certain other mineral right areas adjacent to the South Crofty property.

The terms of the lease require Canadian-headquartered Cornish Metals to pay an annual rent, plus a tin-price-based sliding scale net smelter return royalty on production of any minerals recovered from the leased area.

The Vyvyan family has a long association with Cornish Mining, South Crofty and Camborne in particular.

"This mineral lease agreement with the Vyvyan family is another important step for the company, consolidating further

ground within the South Crofty Underground Permission Area,” said Richard Williams, CEO of Cornish Metals. He continued that, *“The agreement enables Cornish Metals to further explore and develop the mineral resources that are contained within the South Crofty Underground Permission Area.”*

On March 28th 2022 Cornwalllive reported that Cornish Metals is to receive £25m from Vision Blue Resources towards the cost of reopening South Crofty. Work will include draining the mine, resource drilling, completion of a feasibility study, evaluation of further downstream beneficiation opportunities, and on-site early works in advance of a potential construction decision.

Cornish Metals said demand for tin is expected to increasingly outstrip supply in coming years, driven by growing demand from the electronics sector, EVs, and renewable power, especially solar cells. The fund raise is subject to receipt of shareholder approvals and the approval of the Canadian stock exchange TSX Venture Exchange. The investment in South Crofty has the potential to deliver significant tin production to meet an expected supply shortfall and enable the deployment of new, green technologies.

N/L Editor

Cononish Diary

Scotgold Resources, the gold exploration company working at Cononish, near Tyndrum in the central highlands of Scotland, is generous with its press releases and has been reporting progress as satisfactory.

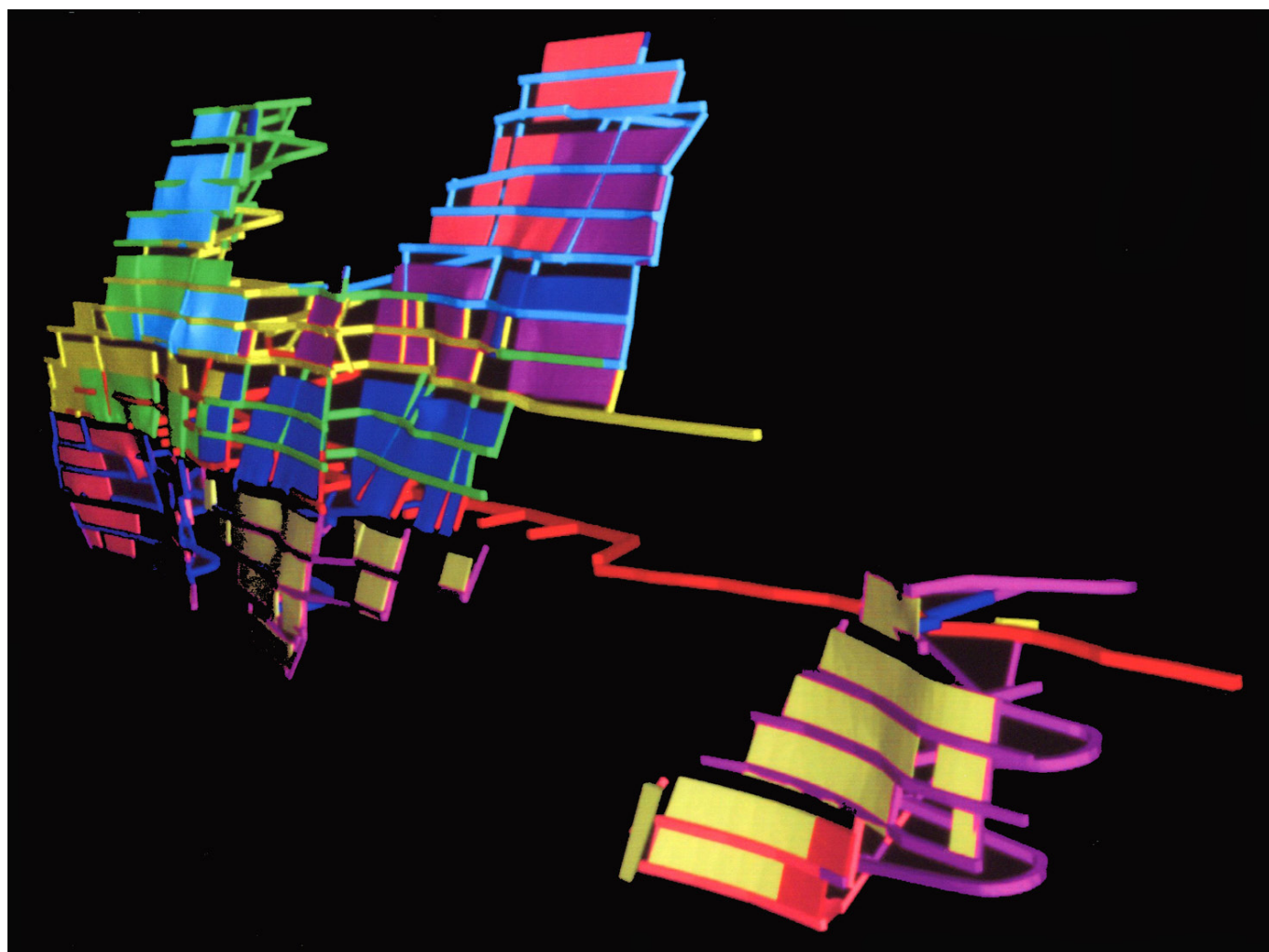
The very up-to-date processing plant is running and further news announces a change of CEO. Mr Phil Day, a ‘highly experienced senior mining executive’ with a BSc in metallurgy & chemistry has taken over as CEO and Managing Director. Mr Day is optimistic and emphasised it has been *“a transformative time ... This is a pivotal moment in our mine development plan, allowing us to access reserve mine gold grade more readily, which should see our gold grades increase significantly in line with our mine plan during 2022 and beyond.”*

The chairman explained that during 2021, *“the mine produced 1,508 ounces of gold and 7,200 ounces of silver, with December being a record month in terms of gold concentrate.”*

The company’s web-sites are well maintained and feature informative images of diagrams, mine interiors, vehicles, and the machinery for gold recovery. Access is easy and starts by opening *“Scotgold Resources Ltd.”* Once all the financial offers are deleted, the texts provide a good insight into modern mining as it occurs today in Scotland.

STOP PRESS: Today, (7th April 2022), Scotgold announced completion of a £3m loan agreement with a Swiss wealth management firm, which will assist *“plans to fast-track ... the optimisation initiatives”*. Note that cash of £1.48m which was available last June decreased to £551,000 at the end of 2021.

Ron Callender



THE 3-D SECTION: In preparing a lecture on the uses of colour, I came on the diagram of the underground workings at the Cononish gold mine and admired it as a work of art and an important working document.

Retired Colonels Harrumph?

Many mining historians also have an interest in railways the development of which was closely linked to mining, especially in collieries. Given the link, members may wish to consider how long it will be before the finger points at mining history.

Over the winter, two similar newspaper articles discussed the reaction of the National Railway Museum, York, and the National Museum Wales to questions raised by the 'Black Lives Matter' movement over their exhibits' possible links to slavery and colonialism. This included the interpretation of their collections on signage. It has been argued that steam-powered machinery drove cotton gins and sugar mills on slave plantations, and that railways aided colonial expansion. Moreover, many early financiers of the rail network had investments in the slave trade, although it is not claimed that Trevithick had any such backing.

The first, in early November, came from the Daily Mail and was snappily entitled – "National Railway Museum will investigate STEAM TRAINS for links to slavery and colonialism in £9,000 research project." The second, in the Daily Telegraph in early March, had the title "The Train built in 1804 will now be cancelled". The latter, by Craig Simpson, covered an unexpected interpretation of the National Museum Wales's life-sized replica of one of Richard Trevithick's early locomotives. The latter is on display at National Waterfront Museum in Swansea.



The Ironbridge Locomotive, a replica of one built at Ironbridge for Richard Trevithick and similar to the one used at Penyarden.

The background

By the late C18th, owners of American tobacco plantations were facing shrinking profits from over-supply and soil exhaustion. The success of cotton growing was becoming vital to the economic survival of the South. Until 1793, however, when Eli Whitney invented a mechanical cotton gin, most of America's comparatively small cotton industry relied on long-staple cotton. It was easy to separate from its seeds, but could only be grown along the Atlantic coast. Short-staple cotton, which grew inland, had many small and sticky green seeds that took time and labour to pick out of the cotton bolls. Whitney's gin was able to process the seeds profitably and allowed the growth of short-staple to spread rapidly. Unfortunately, plantation owners used slave labour in order to boost their profits.

Meanwhile, in Wales during 1804, Richard Trevithick unveiled the first steam-powered locomotive, which ran on a nine-mile-long track from the Penyarden ironworks to the Merthyr-Cardiff canal. Although the locomotive successfully did what was asked of it, the rails proved unable to carry the weight. Moreover, the ergonomics applied to its design was practically zero, and would fail even the most basic safety test.

The Science Museum Group, of which the National Railway Museum is part, has been reassessing the legacy of rail travel and colonialism after last year's Black Lives Matter protests. Internal documents are said to show that staff found "little interpretation that addresses the railways' role in empire" in its collection of almost 300 locomotives.

The £9,000 project – titled 'Slavery and Steam: steam power, railways and colonialism' – was developed by curators from the National Railway Museum, the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester, and Leeds Industrial Museum, as well as research hubs at York, Leeds and Sheffield Universities. They will consider whether steam power aided imperial expansion and also assess trains for their role in facilitating expansion.

While Trevithick had no known links to slavery, the replica of his engine and the entire industrial collection of the National Museum Wales are being reviewed after the museum group launched a "charter for decolonising", and promised that it would "identify collections linked to colonial aggression and the transatlantic slave trade".

It is not known if the Telegraph's retired Colonels Harrumphed, but, as one might expect, this news has stimulated debate. Dr Zareer Masani, a historian of British colonialism, said that it was "*absurd how once-sensible institutions have been infected by the craze to look for slavery connections, however tenuous*".

Robert Poll, a 'heritage' campaigner and founder of Save Our Statues, said: "*We should be celebrating these amazing feats of civilisation, rather than weaving them into a false narrative of endless oppression. This relentless focus on supposed negative associations of progress is leading us backwards, with science, philosophy and new industry all being systematically renounced.*"

The largely positive impact of the railways cannot be gainsaid, but simply rejecting claimed links to slavery and colonial aggression is not enough to reject fallacious arguments.

N/L Editor

Did You Know?

In order to prevent the free movement of workers in the Scottish coal and salt industries, King James VI enacted a law, in 1606, preventing employers from hiring or conducting salters, colliers or coal bearers without a written release, endorsed by a magistrate, from their last master. If, within a year and one day, their first master was to challenge any absconder, their new master was to return them within twenty-four hours or pay a £100 fine. Any colliers, bearers, and salters so transgressing and receiving wages to be held as thieves and punished accordingly. Owners of collieries and salt-pans were

also given power to apprehend vagabonds and sturdy beggars and to put them to work.

This state of slavery or bondage, where workers were bound to the Collieries and Salt-works for life, and transferable with the Collieries and Salt-works, when their original masters had no further use for them, obtained until 1775. By then the industry was expanding and having difficulty recruiting workers. In that year, the British Parliament passed an act amending the 1606 Act. This held that anyone becoming a collier, coal carrier or salt worker after July 1st 1775 was no longer bound to the colliery in anyway other than applied to other Scottish workers.

For existing collier or Salter, however, a sliding scale was applied:
I. Under the age of 21 years shall, after 7 years' service, be free.
II. Over the age of 21 years, and under the age of 35 years shall, after 10 years' service, be free.
III. Above the age of 35 years, and under the age of 45 years shall, after 10 years' service, be free.
IV. Any collier etc above the age of 45 years shall, after 3 years' service, be free.

This foregoing table appears to be designed to satisfy masters by condemning colliers to give their most productive years in slavery.

Interestingly, the 1606 and 1775 Acts appear to have been ignored in a Scottish court's 1777 finding, that slavery never existed in Scotland. This was the case of Knight vs Wedderburn, followed by two appeals, and it gives an interesting picture of the Scottish Court of Session's opinion. It then sat with twelve judges. John Knight, a slave from Guinea, was transported to Jamaica as a child, where he was sold to John Wedderburn, a Scot with major landownings in Jamaica.

Wedderburn returned to Scotland, in 1769, taking Knight with him. While there, Knight was baptised and married Ann Thompson, one of Wedderburn's servants. Wedderburn, however, would not let them live together, so Knight left his service. Wedderburn begrudged this, and had Knight arrested. The Justices of the Peace in Perth found in Wedderburn's favour. So Knight appealed to the Sheriff of Perth, who found that "*the state of slavery is not recognised by the laws of this kingdom, and is inconsistent with the principles thereof: That the regulations in Jamaica, concerning slaves, do not extend to this kingdom.*"

Wedderburn's next recourse was to the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Scotland's supreme civil court, arguing that Knight still owed him perpetual service and might be taken and sent back to Jamaica by force. That court, however, by eight votes to four, sustained the sheriff's decision, which had held "*That the state of slavery is not recognised by the laws of this kingdom, and is inconsistent with the principles thereof: and found that*

the regulations in Jamaica, concerning slaves, do not extend to this kingdom". Knight was free.

The 1775 ruling was reinforced in 1799 by 'An Act to explain and amend the Laws relative to Colliers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland', which effectively freed all remaining slaves.

Mike Gill

Publication News

Monthly Special Offers – JUNE – one free second-hand Memoir (our choice) to any member ordering a new BM from us providing when you fill in the order form and shipping address you add "free book" after your name. Postage will be for one book.

JULY – one free "*Riches of the Earth, over & under the South Pennine Moors*" to any member ordering a new BM from us and following the above instructions. Again no extra postage involved.

We also have available Ex Norman Thompson papers on magnetite, pyrrhotine & pentlandite from the Leadhills; Fifth supplementary list of Scottish Minerals (1982); Notes on crystals of Wulfenite from Leadhills (Steve Rust); Nickel-copper Mineralisation at Talnoty, Newton Stewart, Scotland (1987) £6.50 the lot including postage.

Barbara Sutcliffe

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The Rise and Fall of King Coal

More than six years after the end of Britain's last deep-shaft colliery, the word 'coal' is still never far from the headlines as the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, war and rising energy prices.

The golden age of the fuel that fired the Industrial Revolution is recalled in 'The Rise and Fall of King Coal', a new book by NMRS member Nick Pigott.

Published by Gresley Books, the 256-page hardback is an updated and greatly enlarged edition of a bookazine published in 2016. It contains 50 new illustrations, a glossary, an index, a section on heritage sites, a report on the proposed Whitehaven mine and a chapter on the recent UN climate change summit in Glasgow.

Containing almost 300 photographs and diagrams in total, 'King Coal' explores the pits and their railways, explains the locations of the coalfields and examines the hazards, disputes and tragedies that were part of every mineworker's life. Ventilation, subsidence, opencast and drift mines are among the many subjects covered. A4-sized, it retails at £29.99 and is available from good bookshops or from www.mortonsbooks.co.uk (ISBN 978-1-911658-63-4).

Glück Auf



The Legal Stuff

No animals were hurt during the writing of this Newsletter, although some species did become extinct.

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Members are reminded that the NMRS maintains a list of their names and addresses solely for the purpose of printing labels for membership cards and posting newsletters and publications. Such details are deleted from the database for any member who leaves the society, either after the committee has been notified, or after it has been determined that an overdue subscription has not been paid for several months.

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