

NAMHO

**National Association
of Mining History
Organisations**



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2023

NAMHO 2023 Conference

The conference is being held between the 7th and 11th July 2023
at Grasmere Village Hall.



The overall format is as follows.

Friday 7th

During the day there will be a Geology Walk at Buttermere and an SRT refresher session at Ambleside Climbing Wall.

The evening event will start with a brief introduction to the event by Warren Allison (Chair) and an introductory video of drone footage. This will be followed by Chilli & Nachos and a bar until late with a picture show in the background.

Saturday 8th

The day will be filled with a lecture programme and underground/surface trips. The evening event will be a 3-course dinner with bar until late.

Sunday 9th

This will be very similar to Saturday during the day. Delegates are free to explore the fine eating and drinking establishments of Grasmere and Ambleside in the evening.

Monday 10th

We have arranged visits to a number of working quarries.

Tuesday 11th

There are a number of trips further afield, e.g., Wanlockhead and Nenthead.

Meet leaders and helpers do not need to pay the delegate fee but must pay for everything else.

The organisers are still on the lookout for additional helpers, so if you feel you can add anything to the conference, please let them know – even if as a backup person to be called upon at the last minute!

Furthermore, if you feel that the programme needs something adding, the organisers will be pleased to hear your views, perhaps a trip you could lead, maybe you are a secret cabaret singer/magician or can play the ukulele while balancing upside down on your nose.

There is a need for a couple of helpers at the SRT refresher session, so if you feel that you are both competent at SRT and have good people skills please let the organisers know,

Please alert the organisers to any mistakes or omissions you see on the booking website.

The organisers (Chris Cowdry and John Aird) can be contacted at namho@catmhs.org.uk

The organisers have also confirmed the bar will NOT run out of beer.

The NAMHO 2023 booking website went live on the 1st February and can be found here; <http://www.namho.org/conference>

CLEVELAND MINING HERITAGE SOCIETY – NAMHO JUNE 2022

The decision on whether to host NAMHO 2022 was a very tricky one for many reasons; Cleveland Mining Heritage Society (CMHS) has a small membership with those who are regularly ‘active’ underground probably numbering less than a dozen. We also knew that the maze-like bord and pillar workings of our local ironstone mines with the ever-present risk of low oxygen conditions would require a lot of manpower and equipment to safely guide relatively small groups of visitors. Added to this the lack of opportunities for any vertical ropework to keep the SRT-ninjas entertained, we honestly did wonder whether there would be any interest in our little corner of the world.

This whole decision-making process took place under the shadow of Covid restrictions and the very real possibility we might not be doing anything at all in 2022 anyway, however a Zoom meeting with NAMHO officials helped to reassure us to just do our own thing and not worry about comparing ourselves to previous conferences.

We settled on Grosmont, North Yorkshire as the venue for the conference as one of our club members is heavily involved in the local community and managed to secure both the lecture venue of St Matthews Church and a large camping/bunk barn facility at Holme House a short walk away (normally exclusively for the use of Girl Guides). As well as being the site of the earliest ironstone mines in the area, Grosmont has the added attraction of being the home of the North York Moors Railway, so we knew there would be added bonus of stream trains regularly passing the venue.

Providing catering was far beyond our groups capabilities, so we opted for a simple Fish and Chips takeaway on the Friday and hired local caterers to cover breakfasts at the campsite and an evening curry on the Saturday at the Lecture Hall. The bar facilities were provided by a community-owned venture called the “Crossing Club” also based in Grosmont.

The lecture programme with the theme “Industrial Minerals’ was largely gathered from local speakers, plus a couple of speakers from the wider-NAMHO community who’s offers of talks were gratefully received. Members of the York Caving Club (YCC) also gave the event a huge boost by providing AV equipment and expertise free of charge.



St Matthew's Church, the lecture venue for NAMHO 2022. Photo: Peter Burgess

The members of CMHS decided it would be best to focus their attention on offering trips to ironstone mines at Grinkle, Coate Moor and Eskdaleside, all three sites being long-term club projects located on private property, hence not usually accessible to visitors.

From the outset we knew that our group couldn't achieve this alone, so we recruited help from members of the North York Moors Caving Club (NYMCC) and York Caving Club (YCC) to run additional underground trips to Sil Howe Whinstone Mine and Hutton Lowcross Jet Mine, plus provide support with underground experience on the CMHS-led trips.

Members of the Rosedale History Society and Skelton History Group were also recruited to offer surface walks in their local areas of expertise and the Cleveland Ironstone Mining Museum and North York Moors Railway offered events on their sites. Swaledale Mountain Rescue Team were also able to assist with underground incident support (which happily was not required!)



Seaton Drift – Photo : Mark Hatton

Despite our best efforts, there were a few last-minute wobbles all relating to access. The trip to Sil Howe could not be agreed with the landowners and had to be switched to the Seaton Drift ironstone mine, and the Grinkle Ironstone trip had to be down-graded to surface-only as unwelcome attention from “Youtubers” around this time had unfortunately put that landowners nerves on edge.

The weekend of the event itself was blessed with utterly glorious weather which was a massive boost, allowing people to enjoy their breakfasts and beers outside in the sunshine, there were of course minor hiccups such as real-ale becoming critically low towards the end of the event, but the 150+ delegates were all very easy-going and feedback for the event was overwhelmingly positive.

Whilst undeniably hard work, CMHS are extremely proud of what our little group managed to achieve. The event returned a good profit to boost funds for our ongoing projects and we were able to make sizeable donation to all the groups, societies and rescue teams who had given up all their time free of charge.

Chris Twigg

SHROPSHIRE MINES TRUST IN 2022

The first proper post-Covid year saw visitor numbers to Snailbeach Mine return to previous levels. The Snailbeach Show Mine being open Sundays between Easter and the end of October – only isolated Sundays up to July but then almost every Sunday – finishing off with some Halloween fun.



2022 also saw a return to the County of Salop Steam Rally and Shropshire Mines Trust had its usual working mining display – working Eimco shovel, winch, jaw crusher and electric loco and trucks. This year even saw some prior maintenance!



Steve Holding on Behalf of Shropshire Mines Trust

Rare ‘time capsule’ cobalt mine abandoned over 200 years ago is discovered in Cheshire.



Archaeologist Jamie Lund and caving club leader Ed Coghlan explore the mines below Alderley Edge National Trust images/Paul Harris

New discovery at Alderley Edge in Cheshire offers a glimpse into a mine in production during the Napoleonic Wars, with personal objects, equipment and inscriptions the workers left behind.

A cobalt mine, abandoned in the early 19th century, has been discovered at Alderley Edge in Cheshire revealing a ‘time capsule’ of personal objects, equipment and inscriptions the workers left behind.

There has been mining activity at Alderley Edge since pre-historic times. Now owned by the National trust the mine have been leased since the 1970s to the Derbyshire Caving Club whose members maintain access and search for areas of mining that have been closed for centuries.

The latest mine to be discovered is believed to have been abandoned around 1810 and it is rare to find one in such pristine condition. Leather shoes, clay pipes, a metal button from a jacket along with inscriptions written in candle soot and mine machinery were among the objects that were found.

Also discovered was a clay bowl that had been buried in a wall, a practise that may have been followed by superstitious miners as an offering of thanks for a good vein of mineral. Other discoveries include clearly defined fingerprints in clay used to hold candles, and the imprint of corduroy from a worker’s clothing as he lent against a wall.

Among the larger abandoned items was a windlass, a piece of equipment used to shift large weights or quantities of raw materials. This is the first time such a piece has been discovered at Alderley Edge.

Cobalt was used widely especially for the blue colouring in pottery and glass. However Cobalt mining was short lived in England because imports from the Continent were more plentiful. These had stalled during the Napoleonic Wars from 1803-1815 leading to the search closer to home.

At this time, the land at Alderley Edge was owned by Sir Thomas Stanley. He anticipated a lucrative cobalt market, so in 1808 he leased out the rights to the extraction of cobalt ore in a network of his mines, but these were abandoned in 1817 when imports resumed.

Derbyshire Caving Club first made the discovery of the mine in autumn 2021 and has been researching it since. However, access was not easy down a long mine shaft and a complex network of tunnels.

The National Trust has worked with a specialist team to use state of the art technology to create an immersive fly through of the cobalt mine which is now shared online to give everyone a chance to see inside virtually.

Ed Coghlan of the Derbyshire Caving Club explained: “In the time the club has been active here, we have explored a number of disused historic mines and made some significant discoveries. But many mines have been filled with rubble over the years or with sand washed into them by heavy rainfalls or they have been inaccessible in some form since they were abandoned, so everything of interest has been removed”.

“To find a mine in pristine condition together with such personal objects and inscriptions is rare. It is a compelling window into the past and to the last day when the mine workers stopped their activities”.

Ed continued! One of the objects which we had not unearthed in this area before, was the windlass. This was an important piece of mining equipment which we would have expected the workers to have taken with them for use at another mine. It does suggest that they were told without much warning to collect their tools and move on, which is not surprising once the cobalt was exhausted, since each day there was a day paying wages”.

“We are also intrigued by the initials ‘WS’ with the date ‘20th Aug 1810’ that we found written in candle soot in part of the mine. Who was he and what is the significance of the date? We found other more basic initials and numbers in what we believe were the ‘cribs’ or rest areas, as if someone had been learning and practising their writing. But the ‘WS’ is stylishly written, with quite a flourish. Our research so far has not identified who this could be. Was it just an individual wanting to say, ‘I was here’ or from a visit by a mine manager or estate owner or could it have been to indicate the last day the mine was in use”.

Jamie Lund, National Trust archaeologist said, “This discovery is helping us understand a less well-known chapter in the story of mining at Alderley Edge, which has been explored and exploited for 4000 years”.

“We are passionate about giving people the chance to explore our industrial heritage and the Caving Club conducts tours of some of the more accessible mines that have been discovered at Alderley Edge. But sometime locations with impractical access mean we have to find other ways to bring the place to life for visitors. Virtual access is a great way anyone can navigate their way around the mine from the comfort of their armchair and imagine themselves in the boots of the men who worked there”.

“The objects found in the mine have been photographed and catalogued and left where they were found, to remain in the underground conditions which have preserved them. It leaves the mine as a time capsule, protecting a place that was once a hive of activity for future generations to explore and enjoy”.

The immersive fly-throughs were funded with support from the Robert Kiln Fund. The work was carried out by Christians Survey & Inspection Solutions.

Source- National Trust press release Summer 2022

Mining firm Cornish Metals makes discovery while drilling at South Crofty mine in Cornwall

The mine dates back hundreds of years and was acquired by the AIM-Listed company in 2016.



Mining company Cornish Metals has found new high-grade tin while drilling at its mine in Cornwall. The AIM-listed firm said it made the discovery while carrying out work at the southern boundary of the South Crofty mine in the Duchy.

The spot, called the 'Wide Formation', is an extension of the Great Flat Lode - a mineral-bearing body of rock under the southern slopes of Carn Brea south of Camborne in west Cornwall.

The area the discovery was made lies parallel to, north of, and beneath the Great Flat Lode. Richard Williams, chief executive of Cornish Metals, said: "The Wide Formation has been interpreted to exist from exploration drilling conducted in the 1960s but has never been followed up until now. Discovering a new high-grade zone of tin mineralisation in the middle of a historic mining district is a tremendous outcome, and again demonstrates the exploration potential of the region."

Mr Williams said the Great Flat Lode, which lies above the Wide Formation, was mined historically over a five km strike length and Cornish Metals believed it had a "very compelling" target to explore within and immediately next to the South Crofty underground permission area.

He added: "We look forward to the next phase of drilling to determine the extent of this discovery. The shallow, high-grade, tin intersects from the Great Flat Lode, represent an opportunity to define nearby and near surface Mineral Resources to complement those we have already identified at South Crofty."

South Crofty closed in 1998 following more than 400 years of continuous production and was acquired by Cornish Metals in 2016.

The company has undertaken extensive pilot-scale water treatment trials at the site and successfully applied for and received the necessary environmental permits to abstract, treat and discharge mine water in order to dewater the mine.

Source- Business Live 11th January 2023

Shropshire Caving and Mining Club

Shropshire Caving and Mining Club has some 80 members actively engaged in mine exploration, archive research and recording as well as in conservation. Post COVID members have been very active both at home and around the country. In particular, 14 members spent a week in Cornwall both on surface and underground. There have also been visits to the North Pennines, North Yorkshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire plus many Welsh slate and metalliferous mines. Many members attending and enjoying the NAMHO Conference in Cleveland.

New members are welcomed and great care is taken to safely introduce them to the sport. SCMC actively works with other interest groups locally to promote a better understanding and appreciation of mining history, industrial archaeology and ecology and is pleased to be part of NAMHO."

Andrew Wood
Hon Sec SCMC

The Mine Explorer

Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society
Journal No 7



The Borrowdale Wad Mine. Photo Mark Hatton

CATMHS has produced its seventh journal in A4 with 18 articles over 219 pages including colour photographs. The journal covers the period since the last one and brings the Societies activities up to date.

Some of the articles relate to the 2023 NAMHO conference where the journal will be available for purchase.

Greenburn Mine near Coniston

Protecting for another generation

By Rona Webster, National Trust Senior Communications & Marketing Officer, South Lakes

The countryside team in the South Lakes, have recently completed a project to consolidate one of our scheduled monument of Greenburn Mine that has long been identified as ‘at risk’, arising from the impacts of rainfall events.

Records suggest that copper has been mined from the valley since the late seventeenth century, although it wasn’t until 1845 that the industry began to transform the landscape through the opening of vertical shafts and horizontal levels to extract copper from deep below the ground.

The construction of a reservoir ensured a constant supply of water to turn the waterwheels that powered the stamp mill, roller crusher and buddles used to pulverise the ore bearing rock into a wet sludge from which the copper could be separated and extracted.



With funding through one of our tenants agri-environment schemes matched by a donor’s support, contractors spent October 2022 working to consolidate the buildings and industrial features on site to prevent further rapid deterioration.

We have not attempted to rebuild or renew, but to slow down the natural process of erosion and loss so that the industrial complex retains its legibility for another generation to explore and understand.

Its required local drystone wallers to carefully replace rotten timber lintels which held up standing elevations, repair collapsed wall tops and door jambs on buildings and reveal features such as wheel pits from beneath stonework, which had collapsed during heavy rainfall events. And the ultimate testament to their work... is that you could never tell they’d been there.