

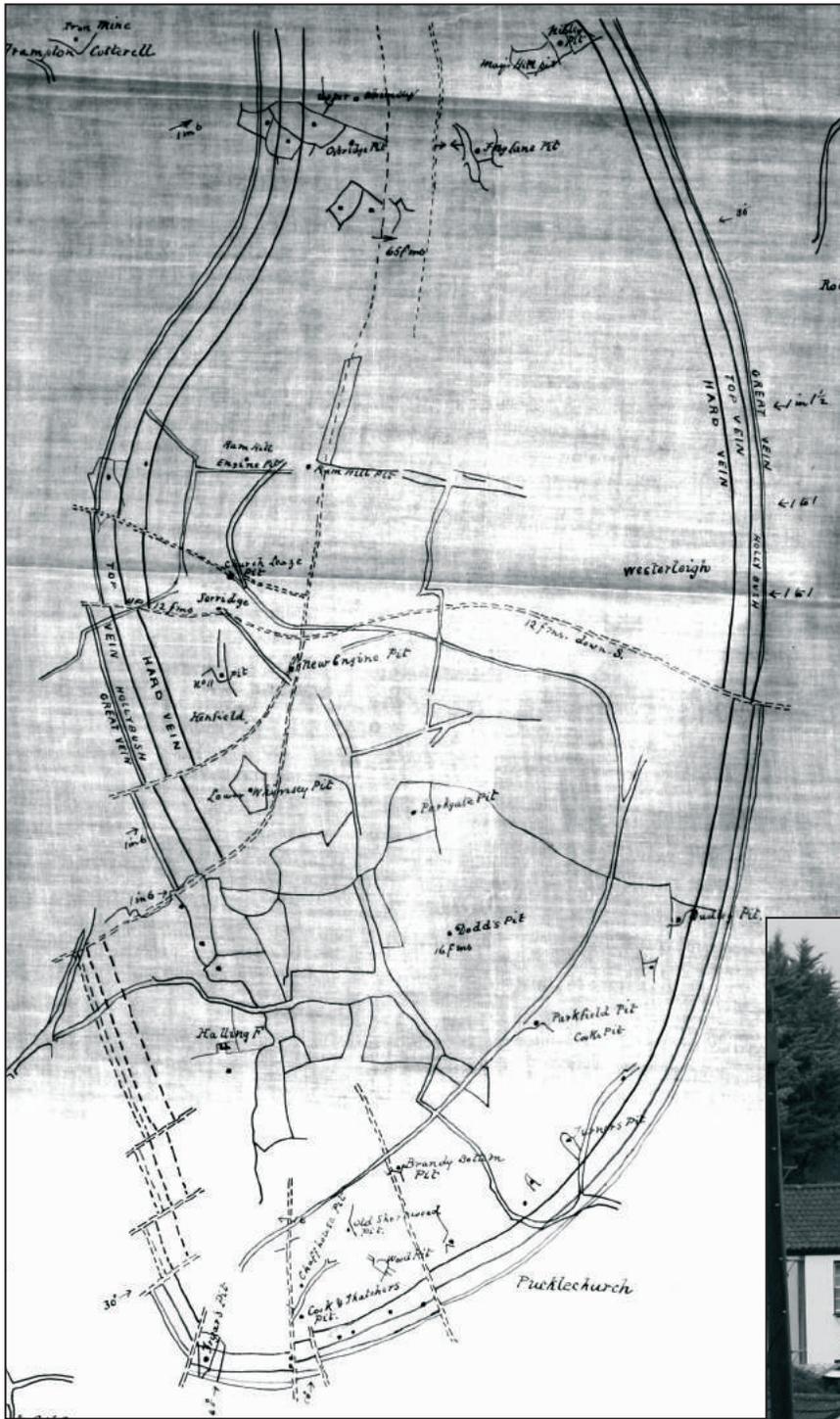
TEN YEARS ON

March 2012



A Report on the first ten years of work recording
and conserving the Coal Mining Sites of South
Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group

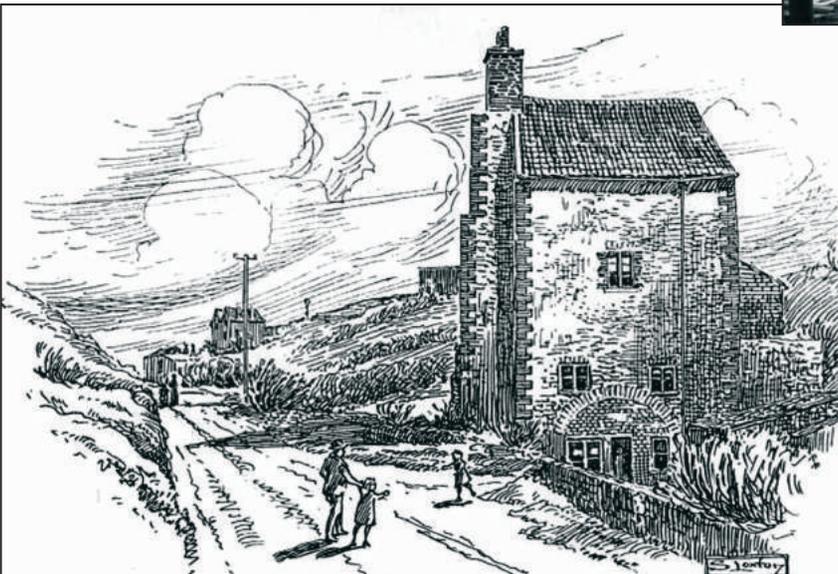


A 19th century map of the Coalpit Heath Coalfield clearly showing the outcrops and many of the early pits. Image courtesy of NIEM.

The 1739 Newcomen Engine House in Brislington thought to be the UK's oldest complete Newcomen Engine House.



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The Newcomen Engine House of Troupers Hill Colliery sketched by Samuel Loxton c 1910. Image courtesy of Bristol Reference Library.

South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group

www.sgmrg.co.uk

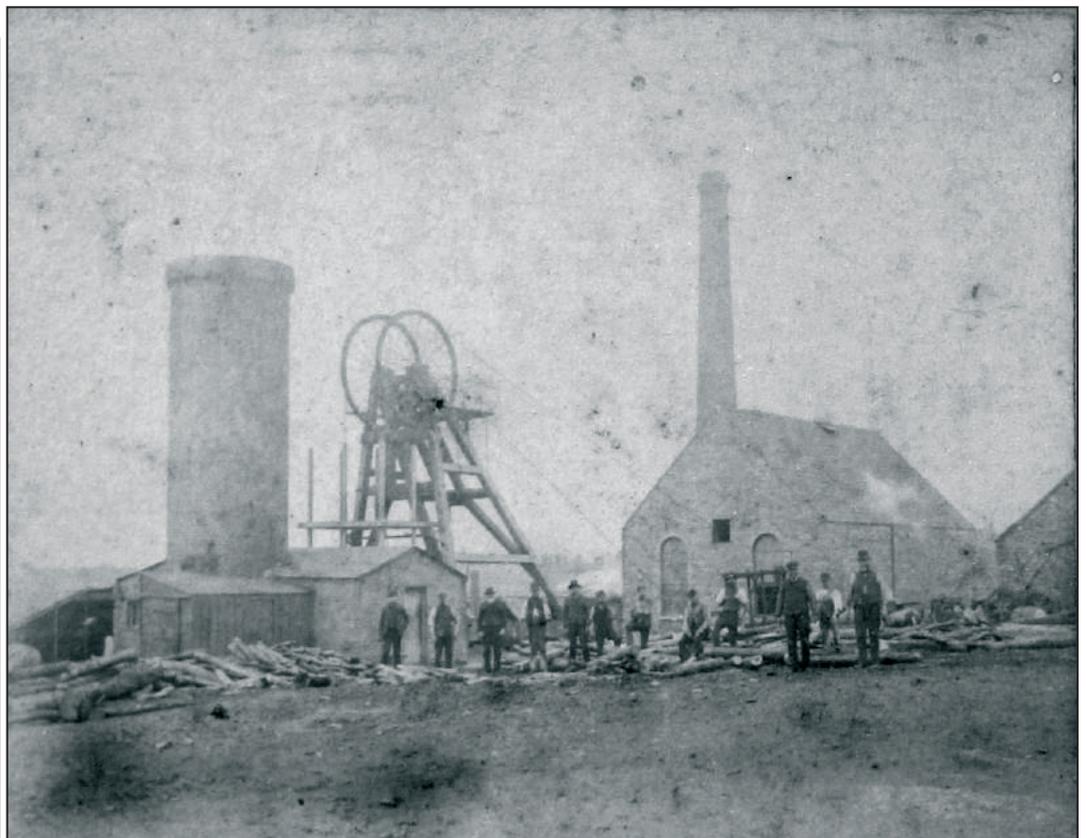
*A group
concerned with
local mining
heritage*

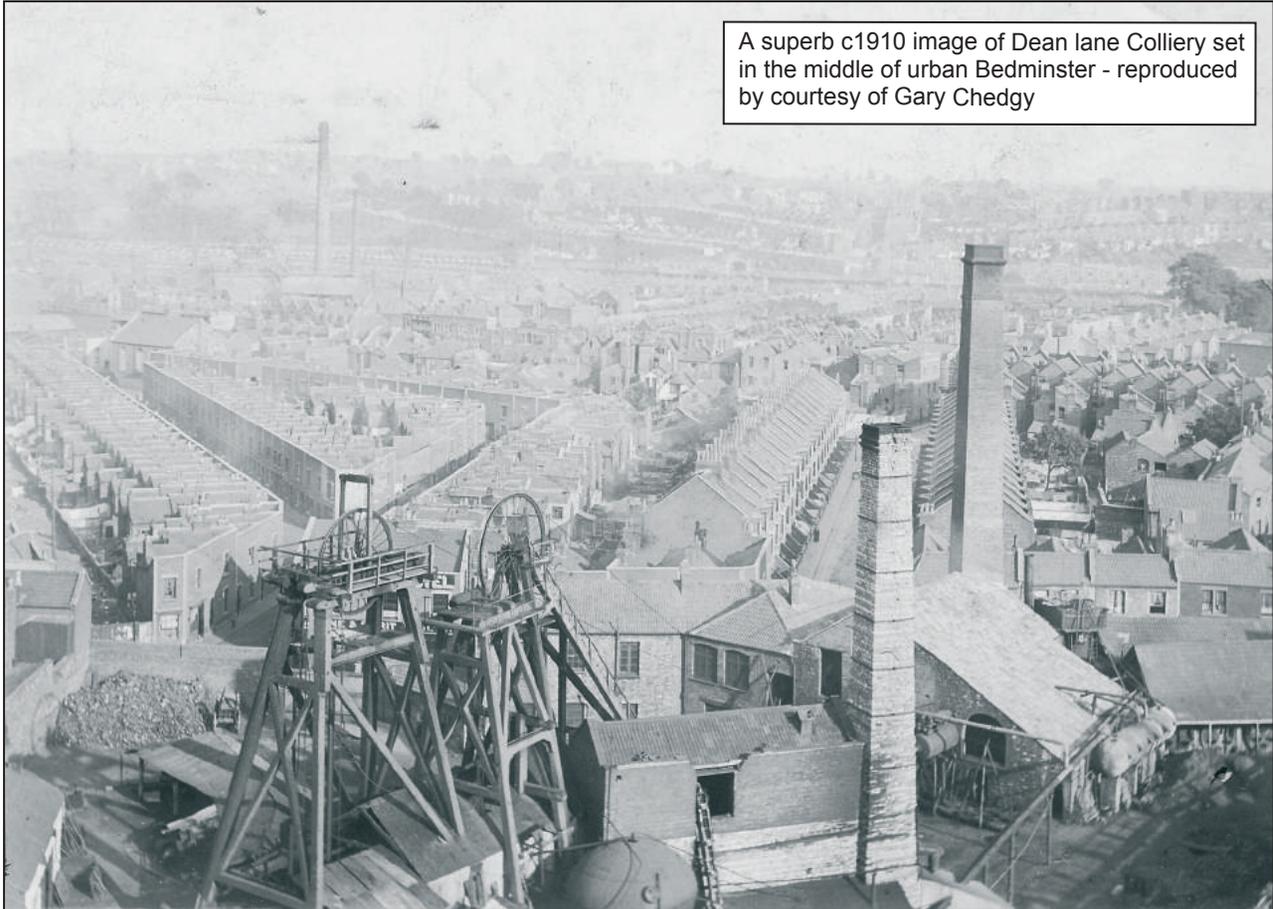


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Treasures of the Bristol Records Office - Despite over ten previous visits, new materials can still be found! This superb original image (only 2"x3") is contained inside the diary that lists the sinking details of Easton, Whitehall and Starveall Pit in the early 1860s. The pit is unidentified but may be Whitehall although the engine house profile appears different. The "chimney" in the foreground is the upcast for what I suspect is the ventilation furnace and the large wheel implies flat rope. My guess is that it shows the pit on completion of sinking and with the permanent engine house newly completed. If it is Whitehall this dates the image to 1867 and is therefore the earliest photograph of any Bristol pit (BRO REF 43705)





A superb c1910 image of Dean lane Colliery set in the middle of urban Bedminster - reproduced by courtesy of Gary Chedgy

Introduction

The purpose of this enlarged tenth anniversary edition of our Newsletter is twofold, firstly as a celebration of our achievements and secondly to set out for those less familiar with the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group (SGMRG), what we do and why we do it. The articles in this edition are written by members from their own perspectives and selected to provide a representative cross-section of our activities and achievements since the group was formed in 2002. I will let the voices of our contributors speak for themselves and our readers judge the progress of our work to date.

OUR MEMBERS

SGMRG was established by a group of disparate individuals, brought together by a shared interest in the mining heritage of South Gloucestershire. The history of the group is described in some of the articles and so I won't repeat it here. My own passion for mining history started in the late 1970s on discovering the last few working steam locomotives in the South Wales Coalfield. As these dwindled my interest turned to the pits themselves, many dating back to the Victorian period. My interest turned serious on a visit to Brynlliw Colliery, west of Swansea when I was invited to go underground! As the pit closures of the 1980s accelerated my interest in the Bristol Coalfield grew and this was the main factor that prompted me to join with others to establish SGMRG in 2002.

The group's founders quickly realised they held many values in common, specifically wanting to be active and not passive, to share knowledge freely and most important of all, encouraging others to develop their personal areas of interest. These ideas were incorporated into the constitution of the group and have formed the basis of the group's success. Our membership contains a higher proportion of men than ladies and our average age is probably higher than we would prefer and we remain keen to widen our membership. It pleases me that we have made some solid contributions to published research in our field and that these are nicely balanced by active and (sometimes) strenuous fieldwork and contributions to awareness of local history through talks, walks and publications.

Our membership is our strength, with many professions and trades represented. I take great pleasure from those "what do you do when you are not doing this" conversations when working on site with newer members. Not everyone is able or inclined to get involved in our wide range of activities but I can't think of any member who has not contributed in some form. I was particularly delighted with the response when we asked for help with the Yate no. 2 emergency dig in 2008.

I can't let talk of members pass without reference to our honorary members who are defined as owners of a significant mining site or ex Frog Lane Miners. The support we get from them is one of the keystones to our success and on behalf of the group I would like to express our sincere thanks for their continued

tolerance of our intrusions into their property and memories.

OUR SUPPORTERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

We continue to enjoy an excellent relationship with South Gloucestershire Council, both financially and in other forms. We work closely with the Council on Archaeology, Planning and Community matters and are grateful for their continuing support. The support of local MPs Steve Webb and Chris Skidmore and local Councillor Claire Young is also appreciated.

We owe much to David Hardill and his volunteers at the Yate and District Heritage Centre (Y&DHC); our Frog Lane 2009 event would not have been possible without them. David's experience with Oral History has been crucial to the success of our joint oral history work. John Delaney and colleagues at the Coal Authority have also been supportive of SGMRG's work over a long period. I would like to record our gratitude for the help we get from the Coalpit Heath Miners Institute, Kingswood and Thornbury Museums, the Bristol Record Office and Gloucestershire Archives, the Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society (BIAS) Hades Caving Club and our local newspapers and media. Last, but far from least, I would like to express our thanks to everyone who has shared their photographs, artefacts, recollections and other material.

THE MINING HERITAGE OF OUR AREA

Our area has a rich and varied mining heritage, the earliest records of coal mining going back as far as the thirteenth century. Commercial mining in our area has included minerals as diverse as Ochre, Lead, Silver, Limestone, Iron and Celestine. Bristol's position as the country's second city and leading industrial centre well into the nineteenth century was greatly helped by the combination of local mineral wealth and maritime access.

Whilst our "patch" includes the area defined by the South Gloucestershire local government boundaries, we also cover the coalfield within urban Bristol and the stone mines that follow the Cotswold edge. We are careful not to claim territory that is covered by others so the Forest of Dean and the Nailsea Coalfields are outside our area. However we have "annexed" the collieries of Bedminster and Brislington even though both are south of the Avon. Our boundary tends to be defined by a triangle with apexes at Cromall, Central Bristol and Bitton.

Inevitably our efforts are not spread evenly across the area, the urban nature of much of the Bristol Coalfield precludes major site work and the concentration of our work in the Coalpit Heath and Yate areas is attributable to a fascinating set of sites for which extensive archival data is available. Many members contribute time to other local mining conservation

groups, such as Friends of Ram Hill and AIBT's work at Brandy Bottom. SGMRG supports and assists such groups as much as we can.



Unlike groups whose areas include upland areas where metal mining predominates, underground access in South Gloucestershire is limited to a few stone mines. We have however managed to find enough confined and muddy spaces to satisfy the cavers in our group. It's worth highlighting the contribution made by these members, particularly those that are cave rescue trained, to our safe working practices in confined spaces.

LOOKING FORWARD

The articles that follow provide what I believe is an excellent insight into many of SGMRG's activities since 2002. However these are now history and whilst we can and should pause to look back with satisfaction at our achievements, our focus should be doing more and better work in the future!

There are opportunities for us and our partners to make a significantly greater contribution to the long term conservation of our area's mining heritage. This will require funding as well as even closer working relationships with local bodies.

From a purely personal viewpoint I hope that we can also focus on areas such as education, supporting and involving both our senior citizens, the unemployed, young people and also addressing the growth of interest in genealogy and family history.

I am also keen that we find ourselves a Corporate Partner and Sponsor as well as a mining site that we can call our own. So if you are in a position to help on either (or both) we would be delighted to hear from you.

Steve

Steve Grudgings – March 2012

1

“There’s gold in them there hills”

Steve Hillyard

Well, if there is, we haven’t found it yet, so in the meantime SGRMG will have to rely on less exciting but more reliable ways of paying for what we want to do.

Roger Gosling was our treasurer when SGRMG produced its first accounts, for 2003. Many of the things we did in that first full year, we still do now. We held meetings for members and the general public in the Miners Institute at Coalpit Heath (don’t tell the management that they haven’t put their room hire charges up since then!), we produced members’ newsletters, sold the “Bristol Coal Industry” booklet, and we held open days at Oldwood. We were pleased to join the National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO) group and be a member of the British Association for Local History. We spent a little under £1,000 that year, a good slice of which went on an exhibition at Yate Heritage Centre, which was financially supported by Hanson.

Our accounts for 2011 show how much we have grown. Our membership has doubled. For the second time in three years (and probably the last time for a while at least) we spent over £10,000, most of which was on our major and innovative preservation work at Serridge which is described elsewhere in this newsletter.

Over the last ten years, SGRMG has received a total of £43,800, or £39,300 if you take off the cost of producing the books we sell. For the first couple of years, we mainly depended on members’ subscriptions,

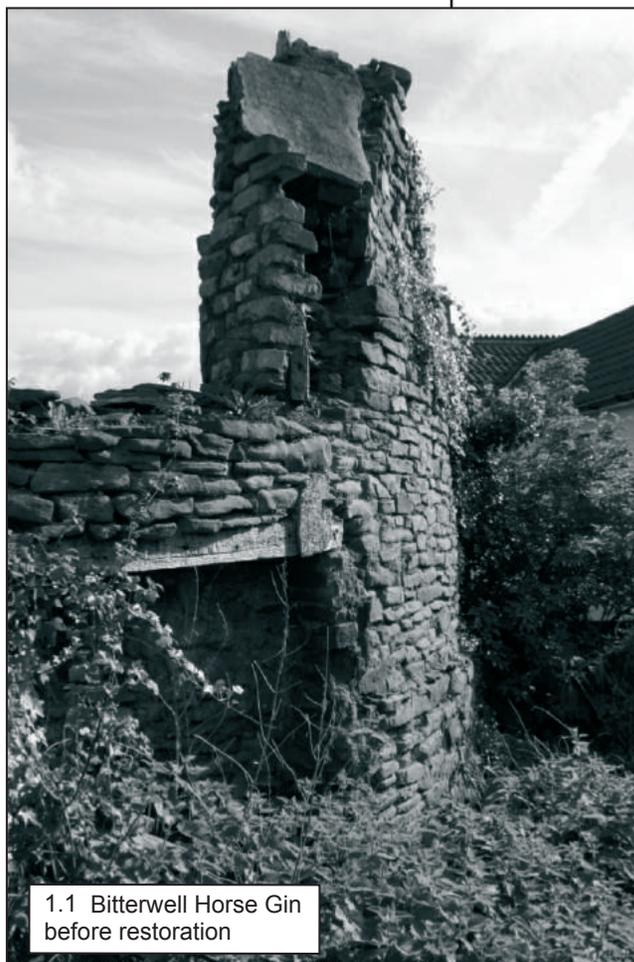


1.2 Bitterwell Horse Gin post restoration

donations and income from Oldwood Open Days. Since 2005, we have benefited greatly from South Gloucestershire Council’s grant schemes for community groups, from whom we have received £20,200 in total. Overall, 52% of our expenditure has been funded from public grants, and 28% from membership subscriptions and private donations. Profits from Kingwood Coal, Frog Lane and other books now total nearly £5,000, or 12% of our income, but have been more important to us in the past four years. Without this £5,000, we would not have been able to carry out the work we did last year at Serridge. The remaining 8% of our income came from open days, charges to non-members for meetings and visits, and from our successful (in more ways than just financially) hosting of the NAMHO conference in 2010.

Since we began, SGRMG has spent £40,300. Our books cost £4,500 to produce, but have more than paid their way for the Group (and, of course, they are not just about the money). We try to keep the costs of running the organisation as low as possible; less than £1 in £5 is spent on this, which includes the cost of producing and sending out all the newsletters, maintaining the website, and making sure all our volunteers are appropriately insured.

We have spent £27,800 directly on achieving the Group’s objectives:



1.1 Bitterwell Horse Gin before restoration



1.3 The poor condition of the steps into the Serridge Ashpit when first uncovered

•Memories. All those who worked in the deep mines of South Gloucestershire are honorary members of SGRMG. We genuinely honour them and all those who went before them. Their memories and those of their families and friends, which they have kindly shared with us and we have recorded for history, are a rich vein indeed. One of my favourite moments as an SGRMG member was the “Celebrating Age” evening at the Miners’ Institute last year, when those of all ages enjoyed the photographs and stories born out of our local mining heritage.

- £4,500 of this has gone on making people more aware of their mining heritage, through exhibitions and open days (featuring the artefacts we have bought) and our walks and talks.

- Trust. SGRMG would only be a shadow of what it is without the trust and cooperation given to us by those who own the land, building, and mining heritage on which and with which we work.

- Special events like the Celebrating Age Parkfield event Steve Grudgings led in 2010, and supporting members’ research into mining history in South Gloucestershire.

- Over the years our conservation spend has been substantial with just under £11,000 at Oldwood, just over £9,000 at Serridge and around £3,000 on the Horse Gin house at Bitterwell.

- However, SGRMG’s most important resource doesn’t cost us any money, and in our members and those we work closely with we really have struck gold. Our members and friends provide us with:

- Expertise. We have surveyors, archaeologists, local history experts, genealogists, cavers, curators, digger drivers and a host of other skills to draw on.

- Muscle. SGRMG puts old men to work digging and hauling for long hours in appalling conditions. Often welly-deep in smelly mud and clay. And they come back for more, and they never ask for money (although a slice of Jean Grudgings’s cake is always welcome). SGRMG volunteer time must now total tens of thousands of hours. (Sorry about the “old men” bit. My apologies to those on our work parties who are either young or a woman. I haven’t come across one who is both yet.)



1.4 Lime Mortaring the arch

Through our members, we have built a track record as a reliable group who will work with the right experts, make effective use of money granted to us, and deliver what we say we will do on time.

How, financially, does SGMRG face the future? There is still so much to do and we will have, after our major investment in Serridge, to choose our priorities carefully in the next couple of years. We know our members will stick with us and we will always welcome new ones. So if you are reading this and you like what you have learnt, please consider joining us. We have exciting plans for new books which will, if successful, provide us with revenue for years to come. With government finances continuing to be squeezed, we know we cannot continue to rely as heavily as we have done in the past on the support of South Gloucestershire



1.5 Finished Lime Mortar - the Arch



1.6 The Excavated base of the 1791 Serridge Engine House showing the masonry box erected around it as the basis for its subsequent roofing and conservation

1.7 One of the restoration projects planned for 2012 - Golden Valley Ventilation Furnace Chimney and Horse Gin Platform

Council.

So we are looking for other sources of funding from local landfill contractors, charities and the like. After all, we got that money from Hanson in 2003.

And we may even find gold under Serridge ...

Steve Hillyard,
SGMRG Treasurer



2

That Sinking Feeling

Ian Greenfield

Quite how I came to be sitting in the back bar of the Royal Oak in Cromhall, one evening in either 2001 or 2002 with three cavers of the locality, I now know not, but as I was easily persuaded in those days to drink ale of any or not much merit, no doubt the idea of a session had an allure all of its own; that we were there in fact to talk about mining was, perhaps, a happy bonus.

To our surprise and delight, Mr Grudgings bought the first round and then rather more predictably held forth. Something should, he said be done. Mr Hardwick agreed and Mr Gosling concurred. We were of one accord. The Cromhall Engine House should be saved. We would start a group to do just that we decided and from that decision, after more meetings was born the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group.

Every club, group, association, society, or union of the like minded needs a constitution we quickly learned and the construction of one was, we found a tedious necessity, but once in place we could begin our mission to dig and delve, read up and research, the past mining glories of our county. For me, this had a great attraction. Until 2000 I had worked as John Cornwell's assistant at his Bristol Coal Mining Archives (BCMA), and we had in earlier times worked together in the 1980s on many



2.2 Ian beside the Yate no 2 winding engine holding down bolts back in 2003 - SGMRG digs are invariably happy ones!



2.1 Ian and Jenny beside the drift at Oldwood in 2003 before any restoration work - note the height of the water table.

practical projects including the big dig at Bitton under the BIAS banner which he so successfully led. I hadn't done any of that for a long time and was keen to get my hands dirty once again.

But just as each club needs its constitution, and its does it also needs a means of telling everyone what is happening, and so it was that the newsletter came into being, at first as a single sheet rattled off from an attic room in Grudgings Grange deep in the heart of Hampshire. We had two of that nature, until an opinion was expressed that perhaps something less ephemeral would serve rather better and perhaps leave a legacy for others to discover. Something needed to be done and I, apparently, was the person to do it, according to Steve in one of his persuasive drives with which most of us will be all too familiar. I got that sinking feeling, but agreed to do it.

My first effort was Newsletter No.3 which came out in the Spring of 2003. It was a new departure, and a

pattern was established which the next few years would follow. Headings such as Kibble Corner; Inbye, Outbye; From the Bookshelf; Small Treasures Unearthed all made their debut. I also wrote an article on mine ventilation and transcribed another on thin seam working. With all the what's on and what's been on news, I was exhausted, but before I knew it the next one came around. Once again, I got that sinking feeling...

Actually, although the deadlines were always tight, I really enjoyed producing the newsletter and was privileged to report on some fantastic discoveries, some sad losses and much hard effort in the journey of discovery that this interest has provided. I have very fond recollections of stumbling across plateway rail and an iron hook from a guss & crook in Cromhall, a candle holder with Somerset provenance from an E bay vendor in Bristol, I was privileged to be able to acquire the nameplate from Nancy, the Peckett works shunter at their Atlas works in St George and being led to the diary of a foreman at Speedwell Pit - some lucky and delightful personal finds.

Among the many other highlights I recall whilst I was SGMRG Newsletter Editor, I took particular pleasure in knowing John Mills, the ex Bevan Boy from Cromhall and serialising his story. David Hardwick's Wick Ochre Works walk was a special one for me as was an Evening's research at the Bristol Record Office and finding a shaft hitherto unknown, The Radstock Museum Visit and the mesmerising talk by Alex Hann at Gasex inside the workshops at Ludlows Colliery were also highlights. But then how to separate those from going underground at the Swan Freestone Mine, Oldwood adventures, among which was the amazing donation of the mineral tub and the stunning revelations of the shaft cam, or acquiring colliery tramway with Mike Taylor and producing the Pit Profiles which so many seemed to have enjoyed, not to mention of course, the many fine speakers we have been so lucky to learn from in the Coalpit Heath Miners Institute.

Naturally there have been sad times too, none more hurtful to a group like ours than the vulgar demolition of the engine houses at Frog Lane and at Crown Colliery, Warmley but notwithstanding those losses, hopefully most folk would I suspect agree that our efforts have made a difference, sometimes strikingly so. Probably more is known now by local people than perhaps has been true since the mining age ceased with the closure of Harry Stoke Drift in 1963. Reconnecting local people with their heritage is of incalculable importance.

I had to give up the editorship in 2007 because we moved to our small farm and I then had more pressing priorities than mining to meet but since that time I have been more than ably replaced and the newsletter goes from strength to strength with the stream of contributions from so many capable and enthusiastic members. How can we ever forget the shaft collapse at Yate and how diligently that was

recorded by Roger Gosling, Ken Kemp and others, the mapping of the adit at Coalpit Heath or, perhaps the greatest triumph of all the exploration and restoration at Serridge. These are efforts of which we can be proud, none more so than the dedicated teams who drove those projects forward.

My own contributions have, regrettably, been rather limited since I gave up editing the newsletter, but the baton is in good and safe hands. I still earn my living, to a certain extent from South Gloucestershire Coal Mining – I returned to BCMA as its Mining Consultant after John Cornwell's sad and untimely death in 2007 – and in fact the next job after this is a coal mining risk assessment in Longwell Green. And because I still get to go underground; most recently, this Saturday past, in Corsham at Hanson's Pickwick Mine, I make sure I never lose that sinking feeling and I hope I never will.



2.3 The Bull Engine House at Farlers End in Nailsea. one of the trips that Ian enjoyed so much.



Delving in history - SGMRG's transcripts database

Steve Grudgings

Transcripts Database, that's sound dull and techie, what's this about then?

Whilst I have always been absorbed by the physical outdoor and underground aspects of exploring old coal mines, uncovering the full story normally requires other forms of research. If you are fortunate that there is an authoritative book or data on the web on the subject of your interest that's great, but this is rarely the case!

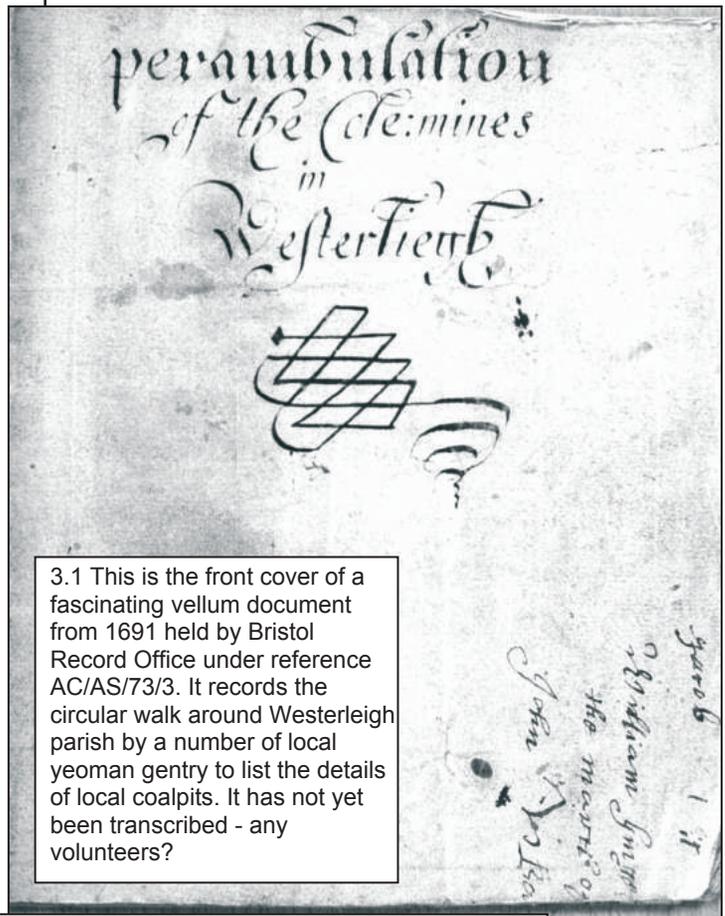
Most researchers will at some stage therefore venture into one or more of the local record offices (ROs), or Archive centres as they now often called, hoping that there is material on their research topic. There are however two problems with ROs (which exist for each county), firstly because of the deposition process of the records, the ones you are interested in (if they exist) may be elsewhere – hopefully not too far away. Secondly ROs are crammed full of fascinating stuff that you will be tempted to look at instead of your chosen topic.

If you are sufficiently organised and disciplined, you may eventually find some of the material you are looking for. It's unusual to find exactly what you need but the Access to Archives (A2A) web site is an excellent search facility covering all ROs and the local office web sites are also very good these days. So once you have located and examined your chosen lease, indenture or account book (carefully following that office's guidelines for handling such materials) you then photocopy or photograph your treasure (having signed the RO permissions form) and set off home to study it at your leisure.

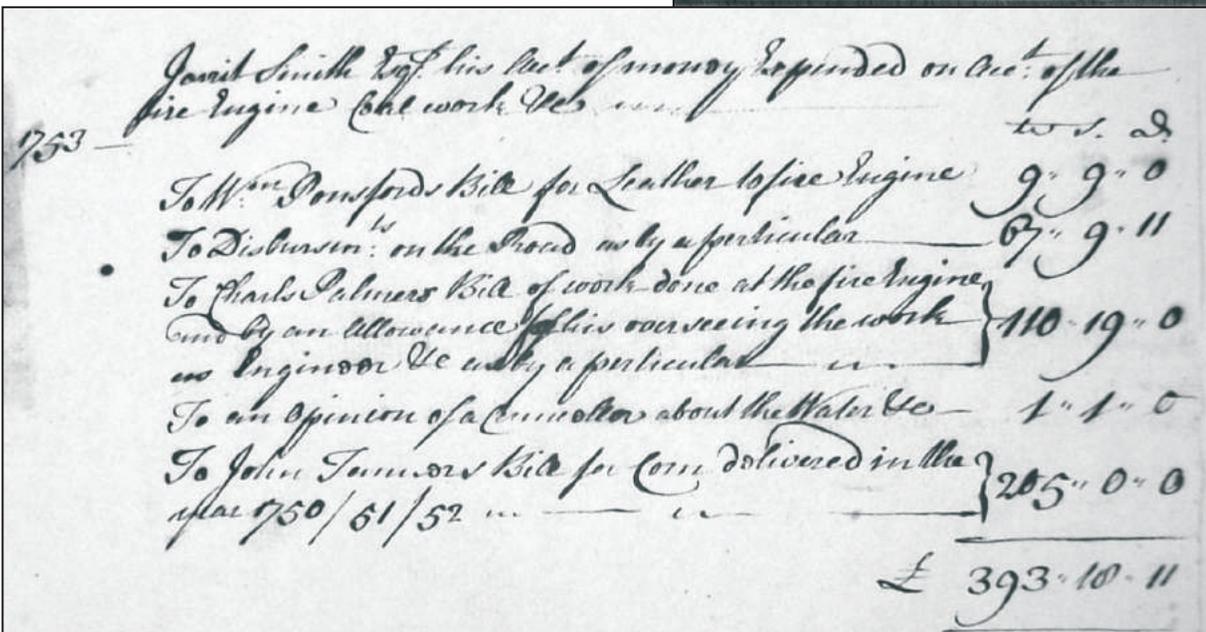
So far so good but once you have done this for a while with a range of documents some challenges

arise, firstly how do you turn your material into a format that is easily readable (many old documents are difficult to read for all sorts of reasons) Secondly how to organise and file your materials so that you know what you have got and where to find it.

The start up of SGMRG gave me a real incentive to do some more thorough research as I realised that whilst I may have covered the physical aspects of our local industry reasonably well that this was only part



3.1 This is the front cover of a fascinating vellum document from 1691 held by Bristol Record Office under reference AC/AS/73/3. It records the circular walk around Westerleigh parish by a number of local yeoman gentry to list the details of local coalpits. It has not yet been transcribed - any volunteers?



3.2 A short account from 1753 recording Jarrit Smiths share of the costs of the "Fire Engine and Coleworks" (at Coalpit Heath) one of series of similar materials held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections (ref MI Av 171 /11)

of story. I also had a sufficient grounding in my subject to know what to look for and understand at least some of the information contained in the records. Combined with a job that involved an hours commute to London each day, I started to transcribe the original documents into MS Word as a basis for being able to read them, index and retrieve them better.

So on the 6.40 or 7.19 into Waterloo, whilst fellow travellers were poring over the FT or organising hedge fund deals on their Blackberrys, I was transcribing the details of Blister Steel ordered by Charles Palmer in 1751 for Jarret Smith's first Newcomen Engine. After a couple of years of this I had a body of over a hundred or so document transcripts, all in consistent format and indexed in a way that worked for me. These provided an excellent basis for a number of articles in our Newsletter and the BIAS Journal.

There were some useful lessons for me in this process that I know others have experienced:

- Having to go through the documents word by word meant I developed a deeper understanding of the contents than was possible with a quick glance.
- Ancient hand writing that might initially appear impossible to read gradually became easier once I became familiar with the writer's style and nuances.

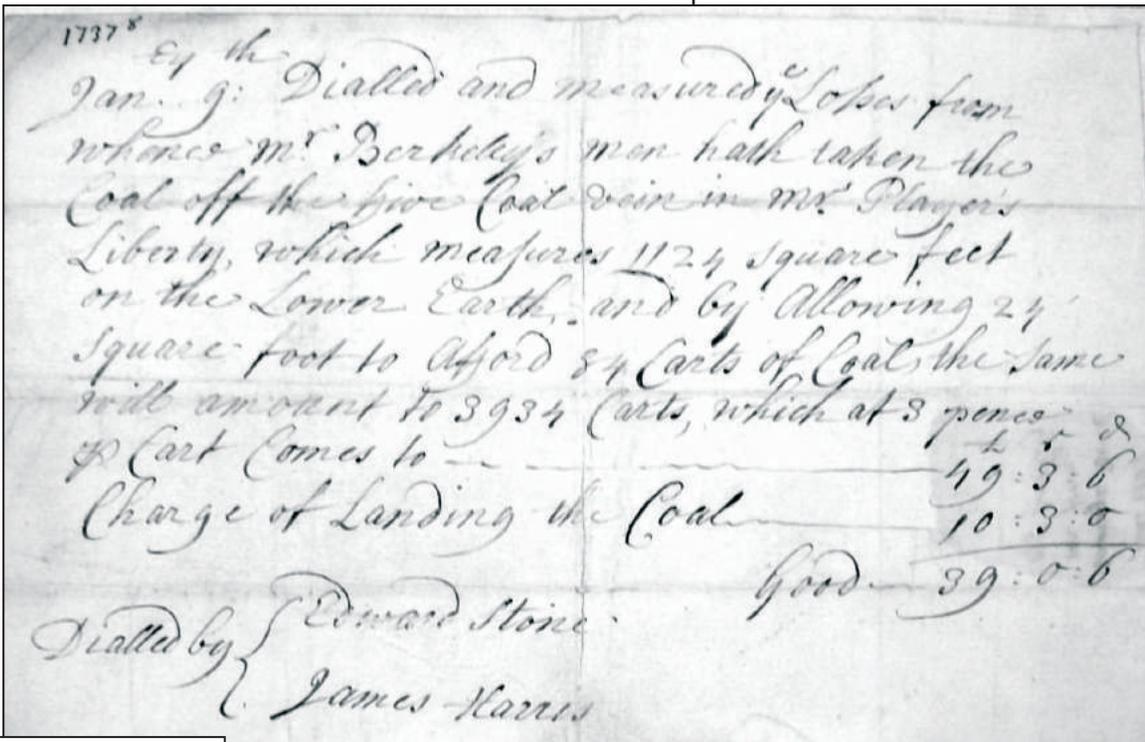
with some clues, your progress accelerates.

So far so good, but I wasn't the only one doing this and when those of us working on a shared project exchanged documents, it became clear we needed some common standards and approaches! It was also important that the effort put in by individuals was not duplicated by not knowing what transcriptions others had done.

Fortunately SGMRG has a wealth of talent in this area and the problem of implementing a common standard for data exchange is a frequent requirement for IT systems so Ken Kemp and Andy Brander bravely volunteered to develop a common standard for producing, editing and storing transcriptions.

From the initial aim of a common standard for transcripts, the project quickly expanded to record images of the original documents, to produce an index of the images and documents, and to include in the index details from RO catalogues of other potentially relevant material. This last aspect had already been started by SGMRG members for the Bristol and Gloucester ROs to locate mining material which needed to be examined to see if it had any relevance to our researches.

Fast forward to 2010 when SGMRG launched it's Transcripts Database which consists of three parts:



1. The Index. This is the core of the database which links together the other two parts.

2. The Images. This is the set of digital images of the original documents which have been seen and photographed.

3. The Transcripts. This is the set of transcripts of the documents.

The index basically corresponds to

the catalogue entries from the ROs. Complexity is added by the fact that some single catalogue entries can cover many (sometimes over a hundred) individual documents, and some documents are large requiring a number of images to record all the pages. The index copes with all these situations. The index can be searched to locate something of particular interest to the user. (e.g. all references to Serridge). At the time of writing the index has over 1350 entries.

3.3 A 1737 account of compensation to be paid by Mr Berkeley because his men took coal from an area leased by Mr Player. This document is held in the Gloucestershire Archives (GA) (ref D421/E62)

- Old or legal terms gradually became familiar.
- The more documents from a given group I transcribed, the more connections and correlations I made. It's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle in this – struggling to get started but once underway and

Transcription of one of several Documents

Location Reference Document Date BRO AC AS 97/12 Unknown – believed C1789/90

Date	Activity
00/00/2009	A3 Photocopy provided by BRO
13/01/2012	Original photographed by Ken Kemp as 2 images
12/10/2009	Transcription from photocopy by Steve Grudgings
10/02/2012	Checked by Ken Kemp

Transcript Information

Each line of original is separately transcribed in order to make alignment of original and transcription correspond.

Original spelling has been retained.

Words or part words in Square brackets e.g. [b_d] indicates either a word which is unclear or cannot be read or one that the transcriber and checker disagree on.

{ words in curly brackets } indicate where additions to original document appear.

Legible crossings out are shown with strike through.

Note - this transcript & summary are only an interpretation of the document. Anyone researching is advised to read the full transcript and the original document where possible.

3.4 Transcription of the Serridge Engine Specification of 1790 from the original held by the Bristol Record Office (BRO) (ref AC/AS 97/12)

Summary

This document is believed to describe the arrangements for pumping water out of the Serridge Engine pit and supplying the engine with water and allowing for deepening of the pit later. It is particularly useful in interpreting the layout of the Newcomen engine and pumping shaft commissioned in 1790 and their correlation with the drainage level/adit

BRO_AC-AS-97-12_11.doc
Transcription

{Page 1}

	Yds	Ft	In
Engine Pitt (now sunk) is from Top } at Burge down to coal }	94	1	0
-A place is to be made in the } head near y ^e bottom for the crooked }			
end of the Wind Bore to be put in deeper }	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
	95	0	0
-The Levill is from Top of Ground } where water is to be delivered in }	<u>23</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
This is the height to which the } Water from the Colliery will be } delivered except a small quan } tity for the house purposes }	72	0	0

Two Beams will appear from the back part of the House – One of these is to raise the Water occasionally in dry Weather wanted to supply the Reservoirs.

The other Beam must work constantly to raise Water from Reservoir to House Cisterns – The Water used for Cillindar runs down a Gout in at one end of Reservoir & passes round to the Pump foot wrought by this Beam & consequently is proper for to prevent corroding

BRO_AC-AS-97-12_11.doc

{Page 2}

and by using it repeatedly over & over & except what exhausts or evaporates. There will also require but a small quantity of water to be raised from whence the levill deliver to the Reservoir & not any in Winter or wet weather.

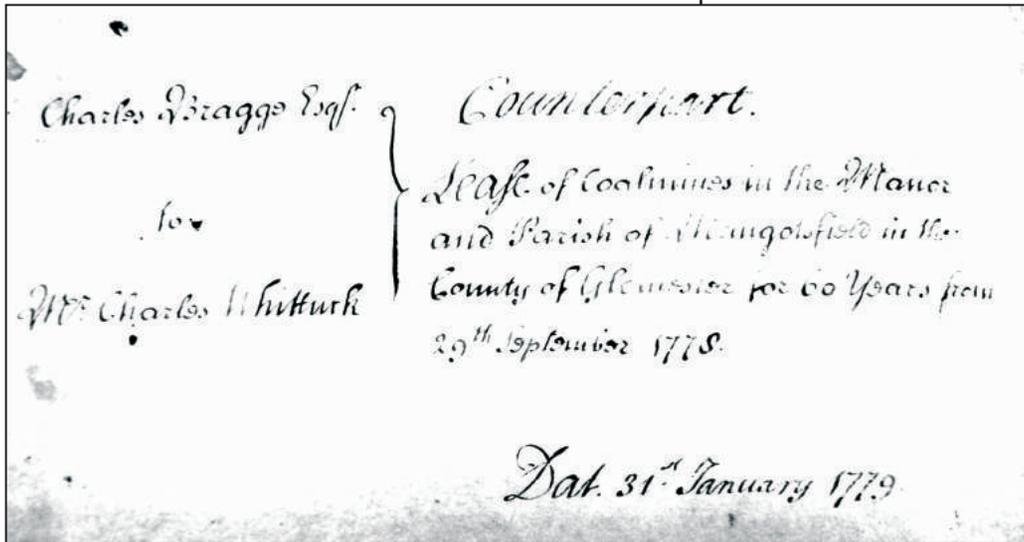
-The general outlines of Engine fixed upon are

-To have two Sets of Pumps (or Shides) to raise the Water from the Coal up to the levill divided proportionately

-Diameter of working Barrels 10 in.

-Two crooked Wind Bore Pumps each of them to turn aside at [fut] into their [two districts] by Heads one at bottom the other at midway to take in their water at.

-These are crooked for the purpose of taking in their Water from behind the Wall of y^e Pitts so that the Pitt may be kept dry & without a Cistern standing in the Pitt which is detrimental also when this Engine Pitt is hereafter wanted to be sunk 33 yards lower it will be found of great advantage



3.5 Header from a 1778 Lease Counterpart for mines in Mangotsfield Parish between two of the areas well known mine owners, Messrs Bragge and Whittuck (GA D421/T110)

point for materials that relate to Mining in South Gloucestershire that is not constrained either by the physical location of the items or the legibility of the originals.

So if we made our Transcripts Database

publicly available we would risk being in conflict with many of the ROs on whose permission and approval we rely on to use this data. There would also be no control over the use to which our research materials could be put and the less honest folks could use the material, claim it was their own and publish it commercially with no acknowledgement or benefit to SGMRG.

Copyright is a complex area and one that SGMRG do not have the legal expertise or resource to address in the way that it requires. Therefore whilst we believe we have created something that is highly innovative and of inestimable value to those interested in our area of research, access to it is limited to individually authorised SGMRG members whose use of the resource is subject to some tight restrictions.

Whilst we have only transcribed a minute portion of the available materials, the choice of documents included are very much determined by the specific interest of the Transcriber, we already have some fascinating groups of materials including:

- An excellent selection of correspondence between the Lords of the Manor of Westerleigh covering their coal mining and estate operations in the eighteenth century.
- An interesting series of letters from Sir John Newton's steward responsible for his coal mining operations in Bitton and Hanham in 1720s.
- A range of leases and other materials relating to coal mining around Bridgegate.

The expansion of the database depends on the efforts of SGMRG members to share their findings and to transcribe and check the documents. We have many records which still need to be transcribed and are always looking for more help with this. For those who do not like getting dirt under the finger nails, this is an ideal and rewarding opportunity to help with research without leaving home. Please contact us if you would like to be involved

By consulting the index, the user can:

- See if any known RO entries exist for their search criteria and if these have been seen by SGMRG members.
- See if any transcripts have been recorded and with a single click, view the transcript.
- See if any images exist and with another single click, browse through the set of images, enlarging them if required.

The transcripts themselves are in a common format, with full source details and an accompanying commentary and they have been checked by someone else. Where there is any doubt about the interpretation of individual words, this is indicated so that the reader can consult the images to make their own assessment.

All of this is not something I am aware has been done by any other groups like ours.

But wait – why isn't this up on the web and available nationally if it's so good? As ever its not that simple, lets step back a few stages and look at what we are dealing with:

- The source materials for our transcriptions are original documents, held by various ROs, other archives and sometimes private individuals who have given us permission to use them for our own research purposes. Whilst terms and conditions vary, in general access to such documents is conditional on them being for our own use.
- All RO's and similar bodies respond positively to requests to use and reproduce their materials in academic publications (in my experience) but this is different from putting volumes of transcripts in the public domain.
- What we have created has two unique aspects, firstly the transcription into a common standard gives us the basis for sharing, communication and other benefits. Secondly we have created a focal

4

Oldwood Pits and the origins of SGMRG

Roger Gosling

Even before the SGMRG was formed in 2002, individual members have been closely associated with Oldwood Pits, near Rangeworthy, and its owner Jenny Humphris (who is now an SGMRG Honorary Member).

One day in the late 1990s, Dave Hardwick, one of the members of the local Hades Caving Club, knowing I was interested in mining history, took me to see the remains of Cromhall Colliery Engine House, near to where he lived. This engine house is the most northerly in the South Gloucestershire coalfield and has a reasonable amount of the structure remaining and the top of a large circular shaft and a large spoil heap (or "batch"). Dave was talking about the possibility of setting up a group to conserve the existing remains, so I put "Cromhall Colliery Preservation Society" on the side of a ring file. Anyway this possibility was mentioned again off and on for the next few years, but other than talk, nothing came of the "CCPS" (and it still hasn't).

So fast forward to 2001, Dave asked me "Would you like to come to a chat about local coal mining and meet some other people who are interested?". So off we went, not to Cromhall, but to Oldwood Pits, where I

met Jenny, Steve Grudgings and Ian Greenfield. Steve and Dave had both been to Oldwood from time to time as they knew it was a coal mine; so it was partly because of Jenny that they met! Ian was working part-time for John Cornwell at the Bristol Coal Mining Archive and also lived in Cromhall. I was shown around parts of Oldwood including the shaft inset which had been bricked up by the NCB (as it was then) before Jenny bought the property. Jenny didn't realize that the small holding she had bought was previously a coal mine.

Anyway at that meeting in Jenny's living room it was proposed by Dave & Steve that "we" ought to see if others would be interested in the history of mining in South Gloucestershire (well actually I think it was in the whole of Gloucestershire until I pointed out that there is already a Forest of Dean Local History Society and Caving Club and that the Cotswold area was quite another "mining" area). It was decided to have an open day at Oldwood on the May day bank holiday on Monday 6th May 2002. This was publicized in the local press (both Bristol Evening Post and The Gazette) and was a great success; see the newspaper report (from Evening Post) below:

Coal pit proves a big crowd-puller

THE DISUSED Oldwood Pits Mine in Rangeworthy was open to the public for the first time on Monday - and attracted more than 100 visitors. Representatives from Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society, and two members of Hades Caving Club gave free guided tours of the site in Tanhouse Lane throughout the day.

The pit, which is located in the former South Gloucestershire coalfield, was operated between 1867 and 1889.

Visitors had the chance to see mining exhibits along with the site's adit drift mine, brick-lined main shaft, spoil heap and other related buildings.

The land-owner, Jenni Humphris, who lives in the old mine office, had so much interest from archaeologists that she decided to hold the open day, along with another taking place on Bank Holiday Monday, June 3 (from 10am).

Spokesman Roger Gosling said: "It's very unusual to have an adit and shaft that are still both visible at the same place. The event, was very successful and people said they found it very informative."

One of the event organisers, Dave Hardwick, of Cromhall, is researching the history of South Gloucestershire coalfield, with a view to compiling a book. He hoped the day would bring contacts who could give him new information on the subject and is keen to hear from anyone with relevant mining information.

People can contact Mr Hardwick by phoning 01454 413248 or 299035.



Picture caption: Volunteer guide Roger Gosling shows a party of visitors around Oldwood Pits Mine on Bank Holiday Monday

Therefore it seemed there was plenty of interest and another open day was held in June 2002 as well; this was also just as successful. We got anyone interested in a new mining group to give us their names and contact details. We thought about what we were taking on and held an "Initiation Meeting" at Oldwood on 28 June 2002. This was attended by eight people and we decided to call the group "South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group" (or SGMRG), at the time this seemed to be a real mouthful, but people have got used to it with time! This title seemed to encapsulate what we envisaged that the group would actually be doing (i.e. mining history research).

So the next thing was to put together our first newsletter and send it out to "everyone" and the local press and we booked the Miners' Institute in Coalpit Heath, then waited to see if anyone else turned up! An edited version of NL1 is below:

SGMRG NEWSLETTER 1 – August 2002

About this Newsletter This is our first newsletter and is intended to start the wide scale communication process with the intended members of our group. It has been sent to you or your organisation as someone who has expressed an interest in this subject in the past. It is also intended to alert you to our inaugural meeting on **3rd October**.

What has been happening so far? Over 150 people attended the 2 open days in May and June at Old Wood Pits in Rangeworthy. A talk at the Yate Heritage centre by David Hardwick was also well received and a number of other local groups have been interested in visiting the sites. In view of the response a preliminary planning meeting was held to discuss how to set up the group formally and following on from this there have been discussions with various other organisations and the Heritage officers of South Gloucestershire council. A bank account has been set up into which a number of donations have already been made. A further open day is planned at the Rangeworthy site and a date has been set for an inaugural meeting.

Group Objectives Nine objectives were detailed. The Group is not intended to be in competition to any other organisation or individual. It is very much hoped that it can work alongside existing local and family history groups where these overlap into the areas of the groups interest. There is also no intention of the group becoming a commercial organization.

Inaugural Meeting We plan to hold this on **Thursday 3 October 2002**, 7.30 p.m. at Coalpit Heath Village Hall (The former Miner's Institute). This will be the first chance to get together everyone we have spoken to about the formation of the group. The purpose of the meeting is to set up the group, confirm its objectives and identify the tasks and roles that we need to get working on. There will be a formal agenda and it is intended that the meeting will be run as professionally as possible, although the input of those interested is essential so an open and friendly atmosphere is also desirable. Please feel free to come along and invite anyone else you know who might be interested.

Cost of Membership This is one of the many things that will need to be agreed at the inaugural meeting. It has been suggested that there should be an annual charge of around £15.

Benefits of Membership The bottom line is that we should be able to achieve more as an organised group than as individuals. Information can be shared and communication improved. There should hopefully be a recognised focal point where others can bring information. It is aimed that a Newsletter will be produced (probably quarterly); Members will have access to physical and virtual archives, group third party insurance cover and perhaps the most important of all the opportunity to share your interests with fellow enthusiasts.

Proposed Scope of Initial Work There are a number of mine sites where excavation have taken place and several more where permission is already given. We also expect to undertake broad scale field based work as well as investigations into available records. For those interested in helping out at the Rangeworthy site either on open days or in conservation work, there is plenty to do. The owner of another site in the area has indicated a suggested asking price. Purchase of the site would ensure the long-term preservation of the site. There is scope for the group to investigate the availability of funds and grants towards this. **There are also proposals regarding other important sites..... There is a lot to investigate and it is very much hoped that you will become involved.**

Additional Information/Contacts David Hardwick, Roger Gosling and Steve Grudgings

The inaugural meeting of the SGMRG on 3rd October 2002 was attended by 29 people. Steve Grudgings welcomed everyone to the meeting "to formally establish the SGMRG and describe its purpose, objectives and goal so that interested parties are sufficiently interested to participate and join the group". David Hardwick introduced himself and aimed to answer the question "why do we need a group?" A "draft" committee were agreed who were tasked with proposing a constitution, suggesting a subscription and investigating insurance (we were told that South Glos Council would ask for up to £10 million public liability insurance for activities on their land).

The next SGMRG meeting was on 5 December 2002 where David Hardwick gave a talk on "Children working in the Coal mines of South Gloucestershire" At the end of 2002 SGMRG had 28 members. After Dave's talk, our regular annual schedule of talks (in January, March - with the AGM, October and December) started. Well actually the first AGM was originally fixed for 27 March 2003, but had to be postponed to 3 April. Before this AGM the group membership had grown to 40 and a year later to 65.



4.1 The inset (side entrance) to the Oldwood Shaft following lime mortar repair (courtesy of South Gloucestershire Council and Mike Hardwick) to the collar and archway

In 2004, Jenny proposed opening Oldwood for the "Heritage Open Day" event in September. So a press release was issued:

Opportunity to visit Historic Coal Mine Site

When Oldwood Pit coal mine flooded at the end of the nineteenth century, it was abandoned by the coal miners who worked there, but what they left behind gives an insight into the conditions they worked in. Oldwood Pit, Tanhouse Lane, Rangeworthy (just north of Engine Common) will be open to the public on Sunday 12th September; with tours around the site led by members of the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group. The history of the site will be explained to visitors, both on guided tours of the site and in a variety of displays of information and artefacts. The tours (first one at 11:00 am, last one at 5:00 pm) are all above ground; the ground is uneven and can be muddy, so sensible footwear is advisable. Refreshments will also be available to add to what promises to be an enjoyable and interesting visit.

For further information contact Mrs J Humphris (01454 228160) or look at the information about the Open Day on the South Gloucestershire Council website. Also, further information about the aims of SGMRG is on the SGC website.

This started a regular annual opening of Oldwood for the HOD weekend, apart from 2011 when Jenny decided she wanted a rest. In the early years, we normally opened for one day in May and one in September. Later this changed to two days in September.

The SGMRG have been very fortunate with grants from South Gloucestershire Council towards the restoration work at Oldwood over many years, see separate report on grants. We are very grateful for these grants, which have enabled a lot of effective conservation work to be carried out at Oldwood over the years.

Alex Lowe did a superb reconstruction drawing of what Oldwood Pits might have looked like when in full production; copies of this were on sale at the first open day in 2003. This drawing, reduced considerably in size, became the SGMRG logo and can be seen on the front page of all our newsletters from no. 3 onwards.



Some Oldwood Pits Highlights

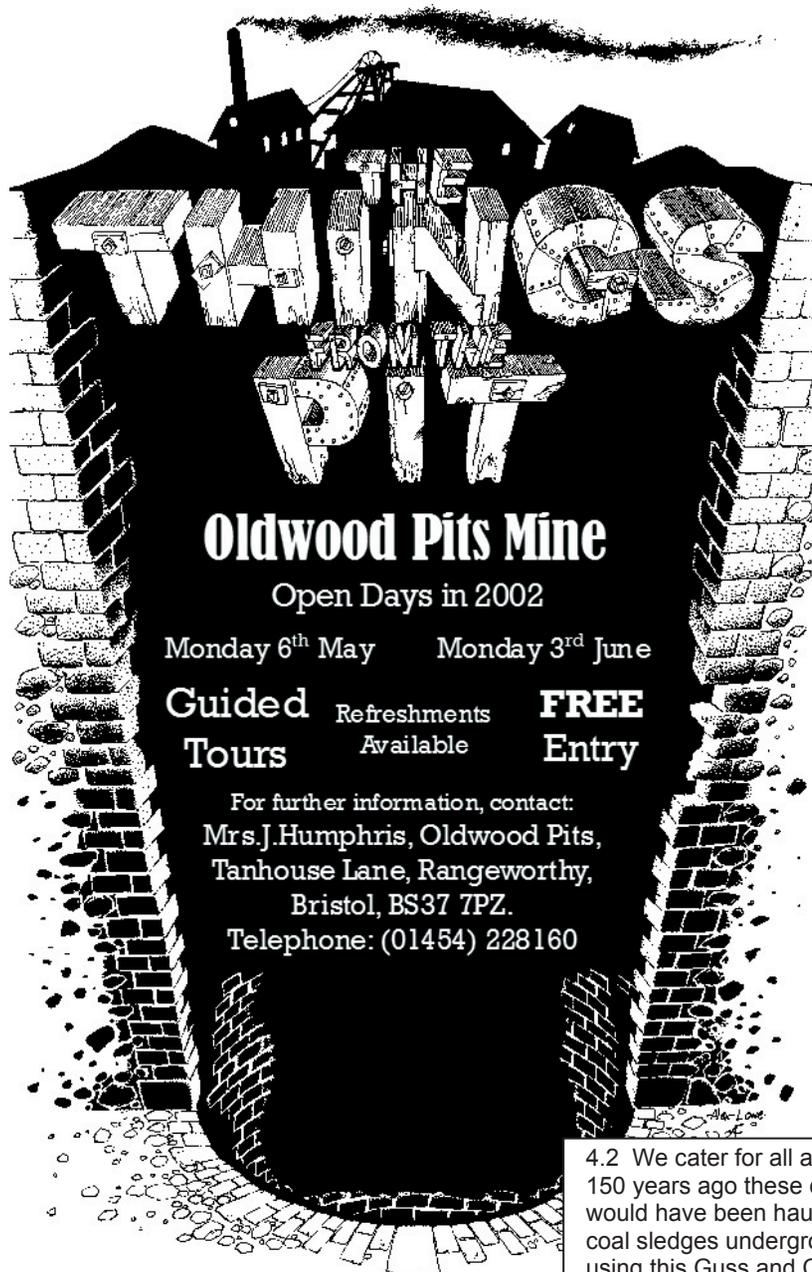
2002

6 May **FIRST OPEN DAY** – hosted by members of Hades Caving Club and Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society.

Lots of clearance work throughout the year

2003

February-April -Clearing northern bank of the batch, excavating chimney base and decorating the barn room before-



Oldwood Pits Mine

Open Days in 2002

Monday 6th May Monday 3rd June

Guided Refreshments **FREE**
Tours Available Entry

For further information, contact:
Mrs J. Humphris, Oldwood Pits,
Tanhouse Lane, Rangeworthy,
Bristol, BS37 7PZ.
Telephone: (01454) 228160

4.2 We cater for all ages, 150 years ago these children would have been hauling coal sledges underground using this Guss and Crook. Mike Taylor in 2010.

steps put up side of the batch above drift entrance

2005

29 May **OPEN DAY**

11 September **OPEN DAY**

2006

13 & 14 May **Open Weekend (our first)**

10 September **OPEN DAY**

2007

January Working session on display boards and March session on blockwork for heapstead wall and repairing steps



26 May **FIRST SGMRG OPEN DAY**

9, 10 August Pumping out the Drift

13 September **SECOND OPEN DAY** – 100 visitors

2004

May Two foot gauge mine railway tracks from Stafford taken to Oldwood plus clearance for Open day

31 May **OPEN DAY**

12 September **OPEN DAY** over 100 visitors

31 October Bonfire building ready for 5th November party plus



20 May **OPEN DAY**

7 July Part 2 on heapstead wall and our next "large exhibit" the wind-bore arrives at Oldwood

1 & 2 September Part 3 on heapstead wall and set up for open day

9 September **OPEN DAY** Highest number of visitors yet– 300 adults and 87 children

2008

18 May **OPEN DAY** - again just short of 400 visitors (306 adults and 89 children)

14 September **OPEN DAY**– yet again, just short of 400 visitors (315 adults and 81 children)

2009

Work on restoration of drift walls finished
 12 & 13 September **OPEN WEEKEND**– over 650 visitors! (533 adults and 132 children)

2010

11 & 12 September **OPEN WEEKEND** (512 visitors)

2011

No public open days this year, but private visits were arranged by a range of groups of people young and old.

25 June Delivery of a shipping container (8ft x 8ft x 20ft) for our artefacts in, was kindly donated by David Pollard.

November, the Coal Authority investigated a hole (nothing was found to indicate the reason for this); they repointed the arch of the drift entrance (including fitting a keystone made by Mike Taylor) and fitted a grille to stop people (with aqualungs??)



4.3 Mike Taylor giving a guided tour on the 2010 Open Weekend.



4.4 The first stage of work on the right hand drift wall in 2004 involved progressive "jacking up" of the wall and when vertical, repointing with lime mortar. A capital grant from South Gloucestershire Council funded the building work but all clearance and earth moving was done by SGMRG volunteers.

4.5 Our host at Oldwood and Honorary SGMRG Member Jenny Humpris in front of the conserved drift mouth accompanied by one of her springer spaniels

going into the drift. They fitted a stronger barrier around the shaft and concrete step to the shaft inset

2012

27 January a private visit from a nursing home, this included two blind people who thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

8 & 9 September will be **OPEN DAYS**

I hope to see lots of you helping as usual!



5

Oral History - what's this to do with SGMRG?

David Hardill

It is tempting to think that the oral history (OH) work of SGMRG is inextricably linked with the Frog Lane 2009 project and has not really featured in any way shape or form apart from accruing information on Frog Lane and its community. However, this would be far from the truth. SGMRG were committed to oral history from the off. Indeed, the Yate District Oral History Project (YDOHP) was invited to the inaugural meeting.

Although the oral history which has

maps, plans, reports, images and all manner of documents is the heart of mines research, not to mention industrial archaeology?

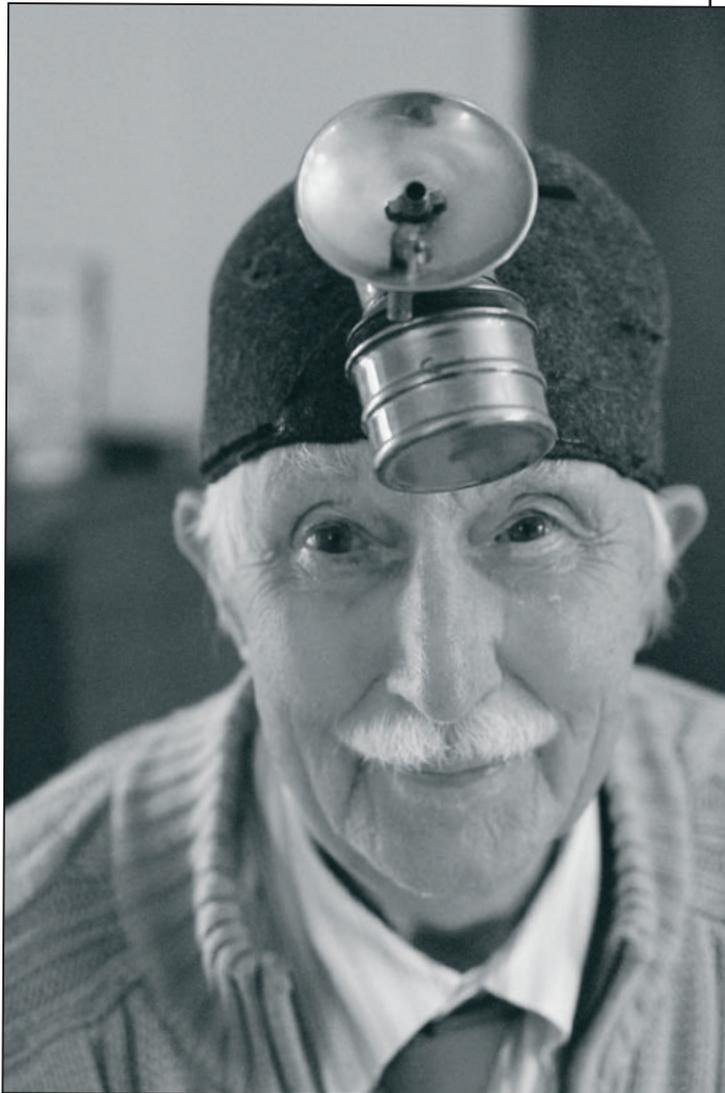
Even a cursory glance at OH transcriptions or even exhibition panels counters this assertion. Despite the vast amount of work on aspects of our mining heritage it became clear there was a vast chasm of unknown information about mining techniques, experiences, interaction with other staff, leisure time and potentially a rich strain of detail about the minutiae of mining life in its many forms, which could only emerge from this form of enquiry.

Thus, oral history has enabled us to understand so much more about miners and mining communities. Whether through colourful descriptions or otherwise unknown details we now have it all there in writing. Of course, OH is more than filling in the gaps of historic knowledge it allows us to engender opinion, comparison and even bigotry, which help forms a wider historic perspective for us all. Naturally, we should treat OH with the caution we treat other historic evidence, but using it as a regular tool, interviewing many people ensures we get somewhere nearer to the truth.

But of course, Frog Lane was the catalyst for a considerable amount of oral history. It was, after all the heart of the book and exhibition linked to the overall project. Although we believe that this OH project with numerous local miners and members of the Coalpit Heath community was a great triumph, there was no guarantee of this at the start. Frog Lane had shut in 1949 after all! Would there be anyone left to talk to. Were there too few folk from Coalpit Heath still prepared to discuss the old mining community? In terms of an OH project yielding vast enough information to fuel the project, we were decidedly in uncharted territory.

We need not have worried. The project was an unqualified success. In part this was down to a real team effort. The surgeries, involving several SGMRG members, which took place in 2008 and 2009 to raise awareness of the project and encourage local people to participate, were a testimony to the dedication which exists in a group of what are, after all, volunteers.

Yet, it goes almost without saying the real heroes here are the former miners and mining families who devoted time to helping us. From having a mere handful of mining interviewees we ended up with over 25 linked purely to the Frog Lane project. All of these interviews yielded something, but there were several outstanding interviews oozing vast knowledge, experience and often descriptive prowess. A good 15



5.1. The late John Mills, one of our first Oral History Interviewees, a Frog Lane "optant" (volunteer for pit service in WW2) pictured in 2008 with his safety helmet (a brimless trilby) and carbine lamp. safety wear at Frog Lane in the 1940s John kindly gave permission for us to use this image as our logo for "Frog Lane 2009".

emanated from SGMRG has involved different groups and individuals to YDOHP it nevertheless reflected the enthusiasm and intent to cover Oral History.

So what purpose does and did oral history serve to SGMRG? Surely, the assiduous and meticulous research our members have undertaken in several record offices and research organisations poring over

of these painted a wonderful picture of the Frog Lane mine workings and landscape.

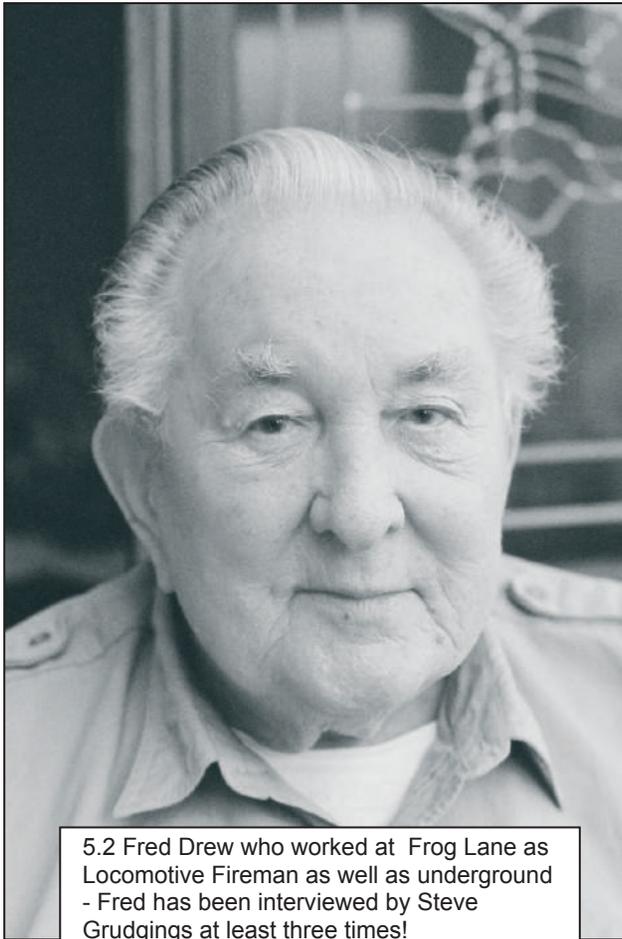
Plans, diagrams do not always enable us to form a real picture of how the mine looked and operated. The quirks and varieties of mining descriptions threw new light on the pit.

“The incline or the coal-face was away in the distance but they were going towards the surface all the time. From the pit bottom in the other direction they were going downhill and they had an engine there that pulled the coal up; but where I worked the seam was going towards the surface. Now that allowed a system, where the full drams were used to pull the empty drams up.”

John Mills, Bevin Boy, Frog Lane 1940s

On other occasions oral history offers the only evidence of aspects of pit life. Pit Horses are remembered fondly, or at least vividly by former pit men.

“There was one long stall and we were away first thing in the morning and put all the lights on, you’d see one black mass going up the



5.2 Fred Drew who worked at Frog Lane as Locomotive Fireman as well as underground - Fred has been interviewed by Steve Grudgings at least three times!

walls, all cockroaches, they’d come out the feed bins where you’d put the hay in to feed the horses and you see these things coming out of the hay and up the wall as though they were coal, thousands of the perishing things, yes. Just one of those things; cockroaches, yes.



We

5.3 Ann, David and Tony Mouldsdales, some of SGMRG's longer suffering honorary members. In addition to being oral history interviewees, they are honorary SGMRG members as they live in what was the engine house for New Engine pit and have the restored horse gin in their garden. We have taken endless visitors to their engine house and horse gin.

used to have mice down there, a few mice, we didn’t used to see those very often unless we were sat down eating food and we’d throw some bits out and see them come from God knows where, and get a stick like and then pomp, pomp, and we’d line them up.”

Fred Drew, Frog Lane 1940s.

Another distinct advantage of oral history was shedding light on less considered aspects of mining. Mining is and was a series of interrelated processes, not least transporting materials around. Again, only OH was able to throw up the routine of the locomotive driver.

“We would take some loads up to Coalpit Heath Station on a morning, that was the first load on a morning, roughly 10 or 11 o’clock time we would take a load up to Coalpit Heath Station and then come back down after taking that load up there; they’d come down and shunt about a bit and get the load ready for the afternoon shunting, empties back in for me Uncle Sam and they were loading the coal back into the hopper, then shunt the empties and that back in there, then we sort out shunting and they’d be shunting them up until they’d get the load ready and then it was dinner time, so everybody did

have a bit of dinner, perhaps a little bit more shunting, then couple up and take them down to Westerleigh sidings."

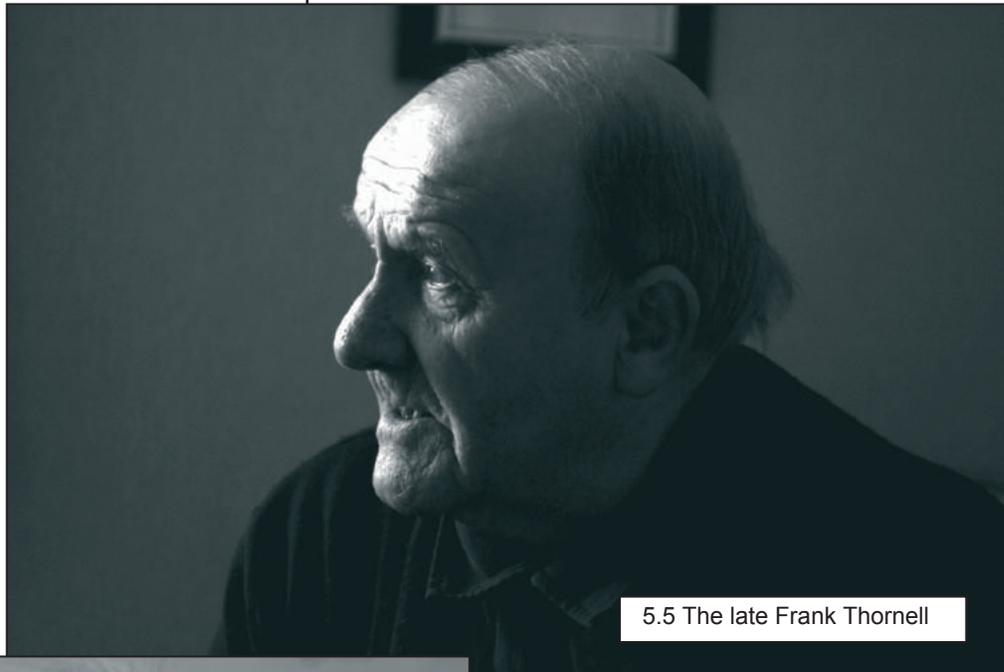
Frank Britton, Frog Lane driver 1940s.

pigeons all over the place. I can remember when I first started at Coalpit Heath Station, pigeons would come in the baskets and we used to have to release them and fill out the time when we released them and send that off and

As much as anything the oral history provided evidence of life in a Gloucestershire mining community, where there had been only guesswork. Many questions on home life and mining culture were answered.

"Father would be home an hour earlier than the rest of us, bath in front of the fire and be in bed before the rest of us, two or three brothers, the horse chap first to get in the bath and have wash before the others came in and then a continuation."

Stan Williams, Coalpit Heath 1928+.



5.5 The late Frank Thornell



5.6 Frank Britton, Frog Lane Locomotive Fireman and Underground Horse Boy

then they would see how long it took them to get back from where ever they were going to. There was a lot of that, the railways used to carry phenomenal amounts of pigeons so it was quite a big thing that was, especially in the Coalpit Heath area and I think in Yate and everywhere else, everybody had a pigeon loft." Bob Williams.

The Frog Lane Oral History project worked on many different levels and as much as anything else, demonstrated the foresight of SGMRG in undertaking this work. It enabled SGMRG to obtain a foothold in to the Coalpit Heath community and beyond and produced more than could ever have otherwise have been hoped for.

And of course the major concerns of the community.....

"You had big families, you used to boast about the size of your family – I've got 4, you've got 5, this went on a lot. No women in there. Men wanted to sit down and discuss mining. A woman's place was in the home." Stan Williams.

Including pigeons.

"A lot of people kept pigeons as well, they used to race pigeons, that's something else that's gone, but that was quite a thing, pigeon fanciers they called them. They used to take these

While Frog Lane will inevitably dominate, this is not the end of the story. The insatiable Steve Grudgings continues to keep the OH flame alive with many more interviews since 2009. As Frog Lane demonstrated the worth and value of OH, then so have interviews with people linked to countless other sites or merely with useful information on mining life throughout our sphere of research.

And finally a tribute! In 2012, we are close to 50 interviews, mainly extensive ones at that. I would like to pay homage to our unsung heroes, not least Jan Hazelby, who has typed a frighteningly vast array of words to complete these many interviews for the group and for future historians.

6

Ram Hill: A case study in site Conservation

Roger Gosling

Ram Hill Colliery is small self contained colliery site dating from the early nineteenth century. The site is owned by South Gloucestershire Council and contains a combination of important mining features, notably horse gin walls, shaft top, dramway terminus and the foundations of a small beam winding engine. The site is maintained by "The Friends of Ram Hill Colliery" (FoRHC) small but active group of local folks. Setting up a dedicated group of "local enthusiasts" specifically for one site works well, not least because it makes it simpler to apply for grant aid. SGMRG and its members have provided considerable support to FoRHC and this model could well be adopted for other sites in the SGMRG

History of Ram Hill Colliery -

Coal has been dug in Coalpit Heath for hundreds of years, hence the place name. As technology advanced, deeper shafts could be safely dug and, in the 19th century the steam engine allowed water to be pumped out of mines. By the 1840s, coal was being raised from eight separate pits around Coalpit Heath of which Ram Hill was one.

The Coalpit Heath Colliery Company opened Ram Hill pit sometime between 1825 and 1832. It remains a fine example of early 19th century coalmining. The shaft (the oval mouth of which remains visible) was reported to be 558ft deep and linked underground to Churchleaze (to the W), New Engine (S), and Rose Oak (N) pits. Thirty tons of coal could be raised a day in a kibble (large metal bucket containing around ¾ ton of coal or, to put it another way, about 9,360 tons a year). The colliery was originally designed so that coal and men were raised in buckets attached to a rope, with the power coming from horses walking around in a *horse gin* (short for 'Engine House'). The keyhole outline of the horse gin house can still clearly be seen. It is not certain, however, that the horse gin was ever used before a steam-powered beam engine was built between 1832 and 1845. Again, the foundations of the beam engine house can be clearly seen today.

Ram Hill Colliery closed around 1870 and the site was bought in 1898 by the Great Western Railway as it

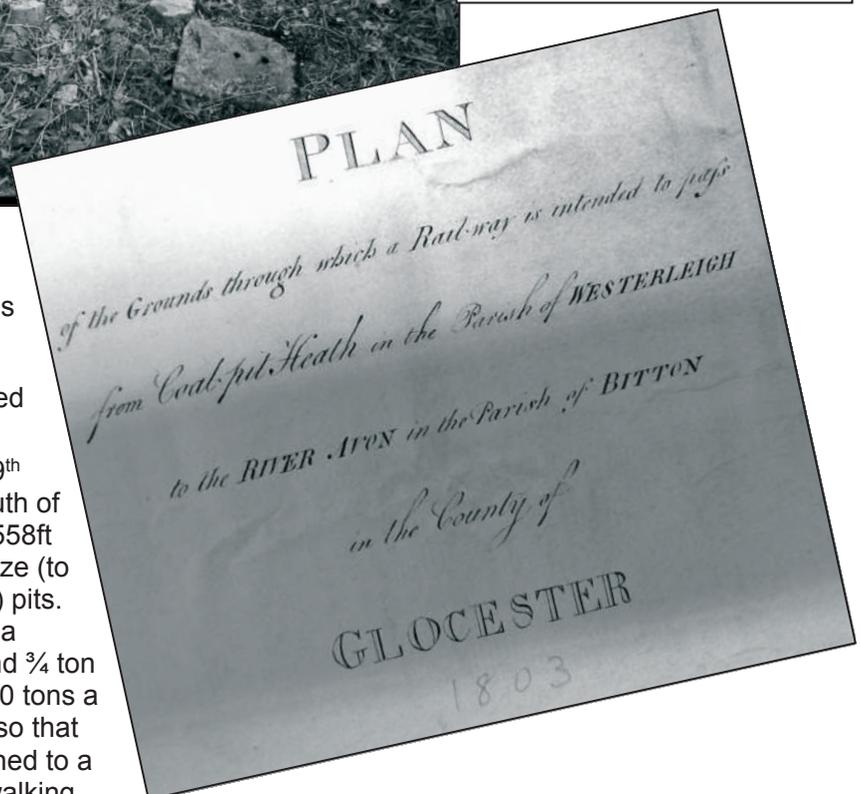
overlapped with the cutting planned for their new direct London to South Wales line.



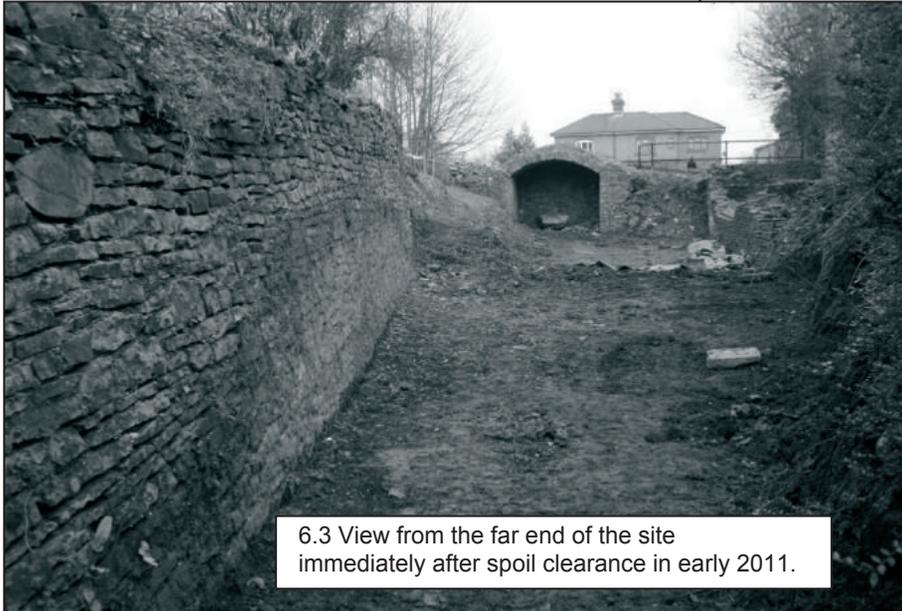
The Site Remains - Whilst no complete buildings remain, the base of the beam engine house, the complete footprint of the horse gin, the loading bays of the Dramway all exist (and possibly, but as yet undiscovered, the boiler house and reservoir). So the site features enable interpretation of how coal was mined during the industrial revolution which for many local people, forms a link to their family history.

6.1 The dramway terminus in 2005 before clearance work, the stone sleeper blocks for the rails are clearly visible.

6.2 The cover of the first dramway survey in 1803.



On lower part of site are two sidings forming the northern end of the 'dramway', a single track railway built in 1828 with a gradient dropping 225ft to quays near Keynsham on the River Avon. The rails were a standard 4ft 8½in gauge. The drams (trucks full of coal) went downhill under gravity and were pulled back, originally by horses, later by steam locomotives. There are stone sleepers and metal 'chairs' (brackets) to hold the rails. The coal was



6.3 View from the far end of the site immediately after spoil clearance in early 2011.

Scheduled Ancient Monument (number 1021386), making it subject to special protection and recognising its national importance.

After an unsuccessful bid in 2006 to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a site remediation grant, FoRHC started clearance of the site of undergrowth. Between 2007 and 2011, grant funding from SITA and South Gloucestershire Council enabled removal of the two spoil heaps and work has started (with the necessary consent) from English Heritage, on conserving the standing remains

FoRHC are now well on the way to securing the long-term future of the site. We aim to maintain a balance

between archaeology and ecology by maintaining it as a grassed area. Volunteers from the "Green Gym" have been on the site helping to remove undergrowth and general 'gardening' and also improving the look and stability of the lower part of the site.

transferred to boats at the quays on the river. The Dramway had its northern terminus at Ram Hill; the Dramway also served several other coalpits en route, with branches to each where necessary.

Conservation Work at Ram Hill Colliery

- The site lay forgotten until 1981 when local archaeologist and author, the late John Cornwell, with assistance from job creation scheme staff started to excavate parts of the site. This work continued sporadically until 1987, when the funding ran out. Large piles of waste earth were left at the bottom of the site covering part of the dramway and another on the upper level of the site, partially covering the north side of the Engine house remains and the site became overgrown and neglected.



6.4 View over the site from the engine house, note the typical keyhole shape of the horse gin walls.

In 2003, David Evans (Historic Environment Record Officer at South Gloucestershire Council) commissioned Bridget Hetzel, a Bristol University student, to study the site and write a report for an M.A. thesis. Her report can be found on the S Glos Council website.

Following a meeting in June 2004 at which Bridget Hetzel gave a presentation on the site history, based on her research the FoRHC was formed. The main group aims are to raise funding to protect the standing archaeology, improving access and interpretation and maintain the site as an area of interest and local heritage.

Using his lime mortaring skills (learnt on a course funded by SGC), David Godden (primarily, but with some assistance from other people) has carried out some repairs to the horse gin wall, the chimney base and some other parts of the site. Marian Godden is also on site frequently and is usually hard at work gardening.

On site we now have bird and bat boxes; these reflect FoRHC's commitment to maintain and improve the natural habitat as well as the man-made environment of our site. This was made possible with assistance

Because the Ram Hill site is of such importance, in December 2005, English Heritage listed it as a



6.5 Close up of the mounting bolts for the vertical cylinder of the beam engine.

work to do, repointing walls, gardening and general site clearance work. For more information, contact David Godden on 0117 932 2602 or email projectofficer@ramhillcolliery.org.uk

Visiting the Site - It is situated near Coalpit Heath, just to the North of the highest point of a road called Ram Hill. The site itself is to the west of a lane leading from Ram Hill to a footbridge over the railway line. Note that parking is not allowed in this lane, but there is space to park nearby.

Postcode of houses opposite the site:
BS36 2TY

National Grid Reference: ST679802

GPS co-ordinates: (51.520427, -2.463174)

The plan of the site is displayed on a sign next to the gate leading onto the site. **Please take care on the site as there are some steep slopes.**

Join the Friends of Ram Hill Colliery

Currently membership of the FoRHC is free To join the group, please contact the Membership Secretary, Steve Hillyard, friends@ramhillcolliery.co.uk

or by post to 24 The Bluebells, Bradley Stoke, BRISTOL. BS32 8BE Contact 0117 923 6595 (evenings before 9pm please).

from John Morris (Environmental Projects Officer at South Gloucestershire Council).

Geophysical surveys have been carried out at Ram Hill Colliery and more surveys are planned. The surveys so far have revealed traces of what may be a reservoir in the northern corner of the site. The first of these surveys was carried out for the FoRHC by Sagascan. Their report can be seen on the SGC website. A second geophysical survey was carried out by members of the FoRHC and members of the SGMRG under the instructions of Dr Robert Vernon and Paul Driscoll, as part of the SCARP Project which is funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The method of remote sensing used so far was resistivity; due to the nature of the ground it is proposed to carry out more surveys, including the use of a magnetometer.

Working Parties -.Regular work parties are held on the second Sunday of the month between March and October starting at 10:30am. New members are always welcome and we have always got plenty of



This picture is believed to show the results of the test boring work undertaken around Westerleigh in 1920 Image courtesy of Ann Matson

7

Why I like the SGMRG Walks

Andy Brander

SGMRG organises a series of walks each summer, to a variety of local and distant places of historical mining interest. There are many reasons for this; but perhaps the most important are that walks allow us to share our knowledge and we like doing it. SGMRG has a constitution covering a wide range of objectives, many of which are relevant to walks:

“The general promotion of awareness, appreciation and conservation of the mining heritage of South Gloucestershire;

- to create and maintain an inventory of surface and underground mining heritage;
- to actively participate in, facilitate and promote physical surveying and documentation of the extant mining heritage;
- to create and maintain a catalogue and archive of information to assist research into all facets of mining history and development;

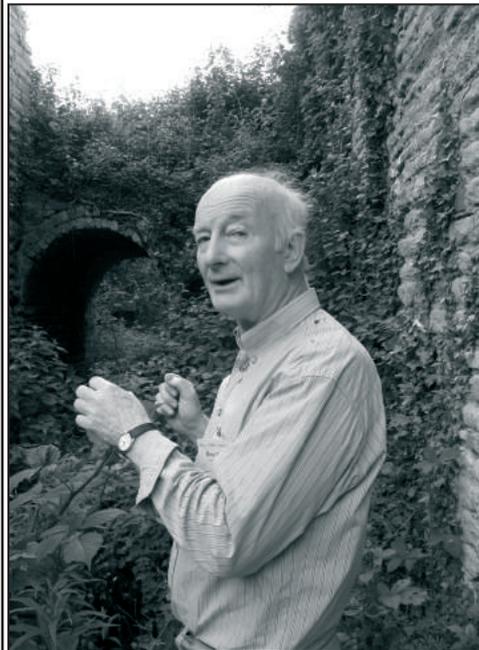


7.2 Not strictly a walk, more of a crawl! Andy Brander in his element with brightly coloured clothing, hard hat and lots of mud in a confined space - SGMRG caters for all tastes!

- provide publications and newsletters;
- to undertake general mining history educational initiatives;
- to support, participate and / or initiate with others in the development of examples of mining heritage;
- to promote a "Code of Practice" in relation to visiting and accessing sites above and below ground; and

- to provide representation on mining heritage to relevant statutory authorities.”

Clearly the constitution gives other reasons why we organise walks; there is a large fit with increasing awareness and education.



7.1 Honorary Member Dave Tooze pictured at Brandy Bottom in 2009 on our Pucklechurch Collieries Walk - despite living less than a mile away he had no idea this huge nineteenth century colliery complex existed.

I particularly like the walks, as it is a great opportunity to get out and learn about our local environment. All our walks are led by volunteers who have often spent many years researching their local village. I have not lived in this area very long (comparatively anyway, having moved from Cambridge 12 years ago) and I knew nothing about the history of the area until I joined SGMRG. I remember buying my house here and being told that I needed a coal mining search. When this came back, it stated that there was nothing known that I should be worried about (other than a pit 200m away), but that not everything was necessarily documented and there could be anything.... I was curious about this hole in our knowledge, especially as much of what is not known happened less than a hundred years ago. I was keen to find out more and when I heard about SGMRG I joined immediately (and somehow ended up being roped in to do their website).

The walks are not usually particularly strenuous, but may sometimes involve walking across fields and rough ground to reach some of the remoter sites, so boots are advisable. The walks typically last 2-3 hours at a gentle pace, but this varies depending on the features to be seen and this can be tailored to suit those attending (and the number of questions asked). It is usually possible to cut short a walk and make your own way back to the car if you need to leave early.

Over the last few years there have been walks locally round:

- Nailsea
- Coalpit Heath
- Various sections of the Dramway
- Cromhall Collieries
- Golden Valley
- And many more places

- Norton Radstock
- The Black Country Museum

It is surprising how much mining and industrial heritage exists when you really think about it. These places are all well worth exploring by yourself, but you will learn so much more with a knowledgeable guide than without.

It is curious being taken on a guided walk in an area that you already know and have walked in several times. The knowledgeable guide can frequently take you down new routes and show you things that you did not know were there. Indeed the guide can often stop you on a familiar path and point out something that you had never noticed before. It is fascinating to find little platforms, marker posts and bits of history just sitting there waiting to be discovered behind a bit of undergrowth. I find that knowing the reason for things being as they are is quite enlightening. For instance there might be a pond beside the path (as there is at Parkfield). You would think nothing of it (perhaps other than an overgrown



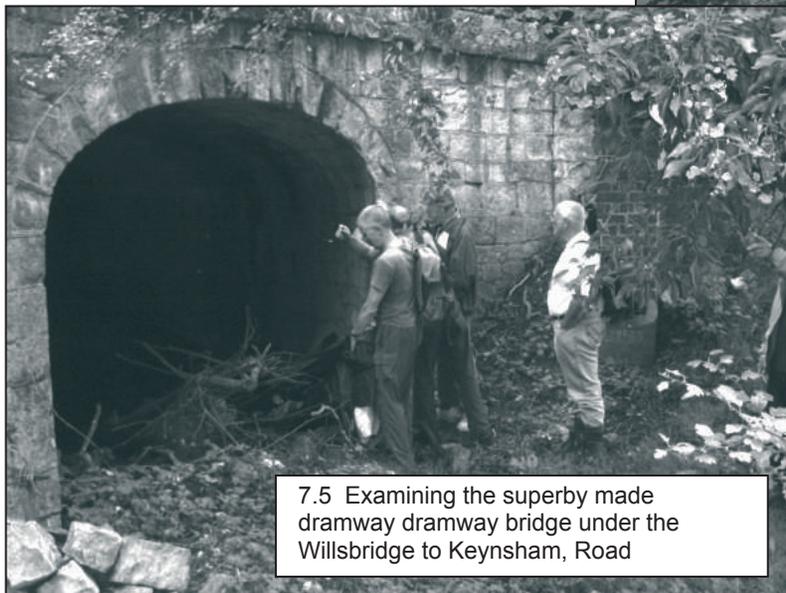
7.3 Jason Townsend, SGMRG archaeology stalwart, pictured beside the end of an egg ended boiler at Golden Valley Old pit on SGMRGs walk there in 2011

7.4 SGMRG members at the southern portal of the dramway tunnel at Willsbridge in 2008



And places further afield:

- Tondu, Wales
- Somerset Coal Canal
- Bath Stone Mines
- Wissington Stone Mines



7.5 Examining the superbly made dramway dramway bridge under the Willsbridge to Keynsham, Road

duck pond), but it turns out that it is likely to have been the feeder for the steam engine down the road. Again this is the fascination (and the frustration) 'it is likely'; so much history is lost and hard to prove exactly what happened. Of course adding to the complication is that uses change over time, so you have a tricky 4 dimensional puzzle.

One of my favourite walks was round Nailsea. I think I particularly liked this because of the scale of the historical remains still standing. An added bonus was that it was all on nice paths. SGMRG had organised a local expert from Nailsea and District Local History Society (www.ndlhs.org.uk) to take us round. He

provided us with a map of all the sites, which included 7 no-less old Engine Houses. We even had permission from the owners to go inside some of them and see in detail what they look like. Some are ruins, some empty shells and some being lived in. All in quite a variety of different states of repair and showing different features from their different uses.

I often bring my eldest son, Thomas (now 7), on the walks. He is outgoing and quite adventurous; never afraid to ask a silly question (which saves me doing it). If there are any holes to be explored on the route, you will find us doing that. He has developed quite an interest in caving (especially with his friend Eva), but that is another story and another interest, which I fulfil in SGMRG by exploring tricky old holes under the village in cellars, gardens and elsewhere. If you know of a dark hole, let me know!

I have never really got into the local history of any area that I have lived in before, but I find that knowledge of my local environment has helped me to better appreciate life and to settle down here faster (maybe I am just getting old). It is fascinating to discover new things about the area – I am sure I now know more about the area than some of the young people who have lived here all their life.

The walks (and all our events) are well publicised locally and anyone (even non-member) are invited to join us on the walks. The walks are a good opportunity to meet new people - members and non-members, and to share your common interest. You



7.6 SGMRG Chairmen numbers 1 and 2, AKA Messrs Hardwick and Grudgings at Londonderry Wharf - terminus of the dramway - note that Steve has his hands on a fence made of bullhead rail

can read more about the walks we have done in our quarterly newsletters.

If you would like to join us on a walk, then you can contact us via the website www.sgmrg.co.uk. Details of our planned walks are also on the website.

7.7 Brandy Bottom Colliery Cornish Engine House, one of the more impressive sites visited by SGMRG.

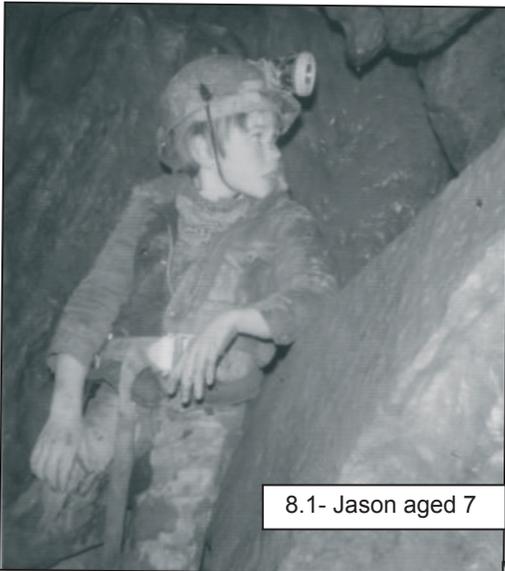


8

When Coal meets Golf

Mike Taylor

(with apologies to the late Edge Cutler)



8.1- Jason aged 7

It all started here!

This is Jason Taylor aged about seven in Goatchurch cave in the Mendips. Jason's dad Mike Taylor encouraged him from an early age into the

looked like a drift mine entrance belonging to the next door neighbour, a Mr Dave Tooze.

Jason arranged for his dad Mike to meet Dave Tooze to view the site and ask if SGMRG could investigate. As you all know, the rest is history, but here are some of the aspects of the early exploration you may not be familiar with.

With Dave Tooze's blessing, surface archaeology was to be evaluated with the help of our very own residential archaeologist Di Grudgings. At this point it is worth noting that we were not the first to look at the site as John Cornwell and Trevor Thompson had already perused and suggested that it was only an ash pit.

delights of the underground. Our story starts a few years later when Jason was working for Peter Manning owner of the Kendleshire Golf Club.

Not sure of the exact date but certainly in SGMRG's early days, Jason was asked by Mr Manning to do some work in the gardens of Serridge House, and being Jason he has always been inquisitive. So Jason had a good look round and noticed some interesting features and on asking about them he was told stories of mine shafts and lakes built over a shaft and shown what



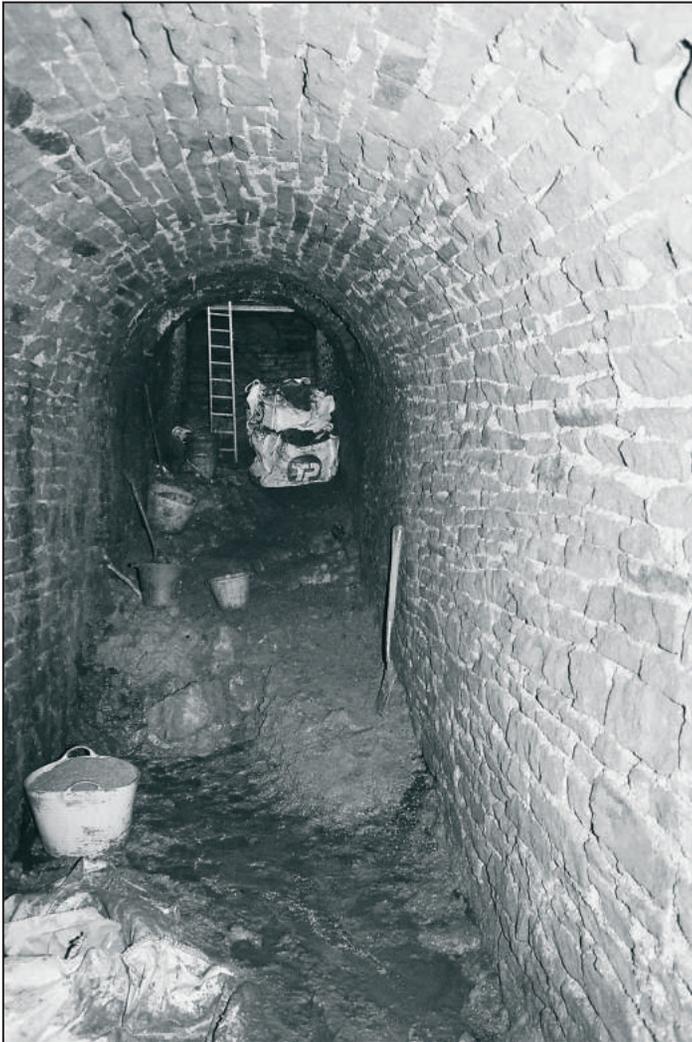
8.2 Mike slips inside the arch

8.3 Mike inside the arch

Very little was actually found on our first sessions, so a dissident breakaway faction moved to one side to take a closer look at the blocked up entrance of the so called drift. Unfortunately Mike Taylor had an accident and his foot slipped and before he knew it he was in a rubbish filled tunnel, and reported back to our leader on the wondrous sights that he had seen. Over the next few months much work was undertaken by the small group of dedicated diggers and a lot of mud, stone and general debris was moved.

Just like real miners we used basic hand tools which does give you a great respect for those who did this for a living and not a hobby. The working area was quite constricted with only allowing one digger to work at the face at a time. Air was a risk so the unsung hero of the day "Jack" invented our very own ventilation system to ensure we had a plentiful supply. The only draw back was it was a manual system and only Jack had the stamina to pump all the night shift. After many months work we reached a

8.4 The interior of the main chamber taken in 2007 when clearance was still underway, note the spoil filled builders bags at the far end waiting Slim's JCB. The chamber is a very impressive construction with the roof just a metre or two below surface level, we are still puzzling as to its purpose.

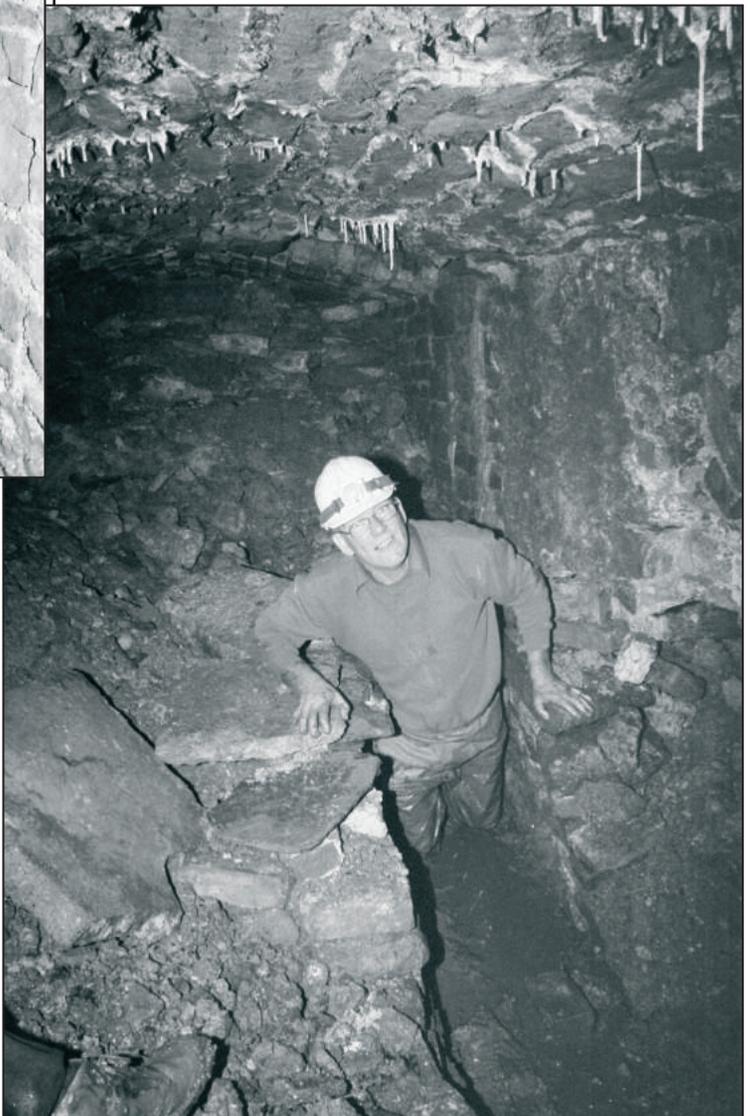


What you are able to see today is all due to an inquisitive young man, a band of dedicated diggers, and thankfully a sympathetic owner. The story is far from finished as many of members and friends who have visited Serridge will understand, as there are so many questions to be answered. Thank you Dave Tooze for being enthusiastic and supportive as without you this wonderful and historic site would still lay hidden.

* Editors Note – those who were teenagers after the 1970s may not be familiar with the late Aidge Cutlers recordings, a thriving dispute exists amongst the SGMRG about the closest reference. if you search for “Twice Daily” or, “When the common market came to Stanton Drew” on a good music site, you may find yourself inspired in the same way that Mike (and I) obviously were.

brick wall (actually not figuratively) and decided to turn our attention back to surface archaeology.

Our efforts were not in vain. As the work progressed this encouraged Dave Tooze to get the legendary “Slim”, local JCB supremo to help Di “time team” style at the other end of the site. Well one thing lead to another and as the saying goes sumat slipped and sumat ripped and the diggers went there once a week for quite some time. We developed a wonderful system where we filled bulk builders bags with mud and Slim would come and lift the bags out of the hole and tip them for us so we would come and fill them up again. Finally all was revealed, and what an amazing find it was, a complete complex of sub surface passages and chambers that we believe formed the basement of the 1791 Serridge Engine. No one could have guessed the extent of the discovery.



8.5 Mike emerging from the crawlway into the basement of the Serridge Engine house. Explorations such as these are led by experienced and properly equipped cavers operated under the appropriate NAMHO code of practice. SGMRG have subsequently spent four years clearing and conserving this chamber - see fig 9.1

9

SGMRG's work at the 1791 Serridge Engine Site

Steve Grudgings



9.1 The interior of the basement of the 1791 Serridge Engine House in 2011 following clearance and stabilisation.

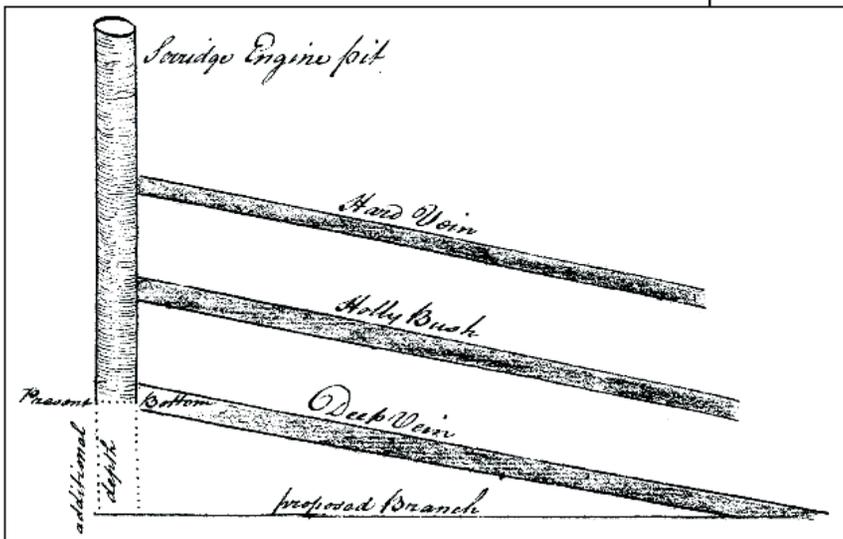
Mike Taylor's account (where Coal Meets Golf) gives a colourful description of some of our work at Serridge and it's not my intention to repeat that here, rather to give a brief outline of the history of the site and a summary of the major finds and features.

Installation of a Newcomen Engine on the Serridge estate was proposed as far back as 1722 but it was not until acquisition by the Lords of the Manor of Westerleigh of the whole estate in 1785 that anything further was done. It appears that when the Serridge Engine was constructed in 1791 it was the final component in the drainage infrastructure needed to enable the rich coal measures in this section of the

Coalpit Heath Coalfield to be fully exploited. The Serridge engine was a pumping engine raising water to an underground culvert which eventually discharged into the River Frome. The site was not used for raising coal.

We know that Robert Bond and Thomas Palmer were contracted to build the engine under the overall direction of Robert Barber, the Bailiff or Manager of the Collieries and we have the specification for the engine and pitwork. We understand the engine may have remained in use until 1871 when the coal reserves in the immediate vicinity were exhausted and abandoned. Other than that, we are reliant on our archaeological discoveries on the engine site for information.

Our site work to date has uncovered a substantial arched chamber connecting a series of sub surface passages and tunnels with the basement of a stone built engine house. None of these features were known or suspected and there has been much excitement within the Serridge Team



9.2 This 1790s sketch shows the correlation of the Serridge Engine shaft with the three coal seams worked by the adjacent pits (the Serridge Engine shaft was for pumping only) It was produced to support the case for eventual deepening of the shaft to reach the Deep Vein. BRO AC/AS/97/12

as they were discovered and explored. Adjacent to these we found what appears to be the housing for a large boiler. The arched entrance at the far end of the site (the only feature visible when we started on site) has been opened up and cleared of debris. What is not always obvious is that the excitement of discovery is normally punctuated by months of hard and dirty work to clear and stabilise each feature.

Whilst a comprehensive report of our site work will be published in due course, the main activities so far have included:

- Based on careful plotting from a number of historic



9.3 A 2011 view of the ashpit tunnel. There is a debate as to whether the tunnel was to access the ashpit or to enable ventilation (or both)

maps, setting out a series of grids and surface trenches in positions where we expected to find buildings.

- Progressive deepening and profiling of some of these trenches to the point where we have located the engine house walls and cylinder mountings.
- Construction, with grant aid support, of a masonry "box" to enable the engine house remains to be

roofed just below current ground level and therefore protected and conserved.

- Lime mortar repairs and security gating the arched entrances to the sub surface chambers.
- Clearance, making safe and conservation of the sub surface features and the erection of safety railings and signage.
- Recording and photographing work and finds.

The site continues to fascinate the Serridge Team who over time have come to realise they are working on a unique site for which there is very little reference material or expertise available. The site is probably of national significance and we strive to reflect that in the quality and care of our work on site. There is still a substantial amount of archaeological work to be done and much more to be discovered.

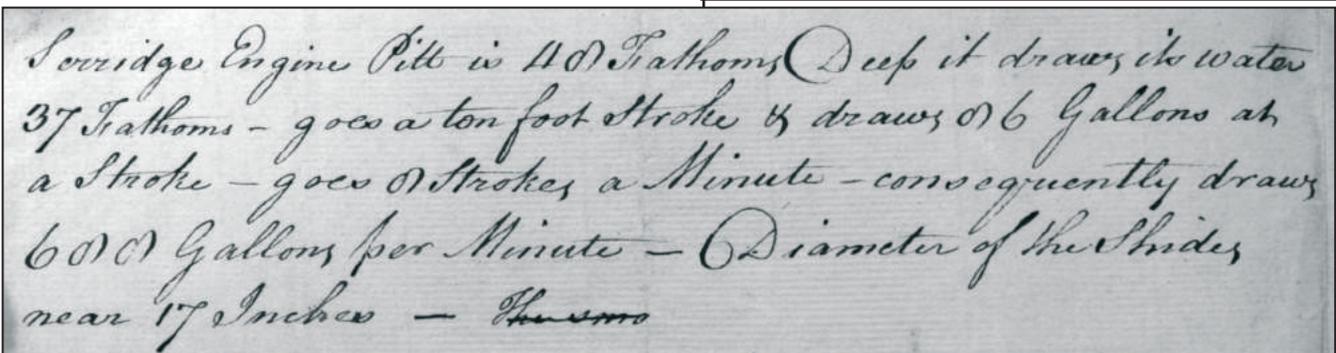
Whilst we are always careful to record all finds, we have been fascinated by the volume of materials and artefacts unearthed. Amongst all the damaged crockery, we regularly turn up complete stoneware and glass bottles and such like in the spoil from the Victorian era. In the deeper deposits we have also found sections of early plateway rails, something of great interest to students of early railways.

As Steve Hillyard's section on grants and expenditure makes clear, we have received and are extremely grateful for the significant grant support from South Gloucestershire Council for our work at Serridge as well as digging deep into our own reserves for this.

As Mike mentions, our presence on and access to this site is due entirely to the continuing support and goodwill of the owners (and SGMRG honorary members) Dave and Kim Tooze. Please check with SGMRG or Mr and Mrs Tooze before visiting the site which is on private land.

Working parties are scheduled on site throughout the year and we have a range of light and heavy work at Serridge for volunteers. Do get in touch and come and help, we make an effort to make everyone welcome.

9.4 - The performance specification of (what we understand to be) the 1791 Serridge Engine. Together with the building arrangement we are able to get a good understanding of how it worked (BRO AC/AS/97/12)



10

Rescue Dig at Yate No.2 coalpit - A personal account

Ken Kemp

The archaeological rescue dig at Yate No. 2 Pit in 2008 introduced me to the activities of SGMRG. I had been a member of Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS) for a few years when a request was received from SGMRG for additional people to help with a rescue dig, I decided that I would volunteer as I was keen to become involved with practical archaeology, an area in which BIAS was not active. This article gives the background to the project, an overview of what was done and describes my involvement and experiences. Those who want a full description of the result of the project, should read the project report published in BIAS Journal Number 42 of 2009.

Yate No. 2 pit is situated on Engine Common, to the north of Yate. Its existence was known and recorded by BIAS in its Journal Number 34 published in 2001 and written by founder SGMRG member David Hardwick. The pit closed in 1888. The site is now within a privately owned wood and in 2007 SGMRG had permission to inspect the site and established that the location of an engine house could be identified and that most of the wood was growing on a low spoil tip. There was also the likely remains of the base of a chimney. Comparison with the 1880 large scale plan (see Fig. 10.1) indicated the building at the left next to the well is the position of the engine house and below it, the circle next to the open square is the chimney.

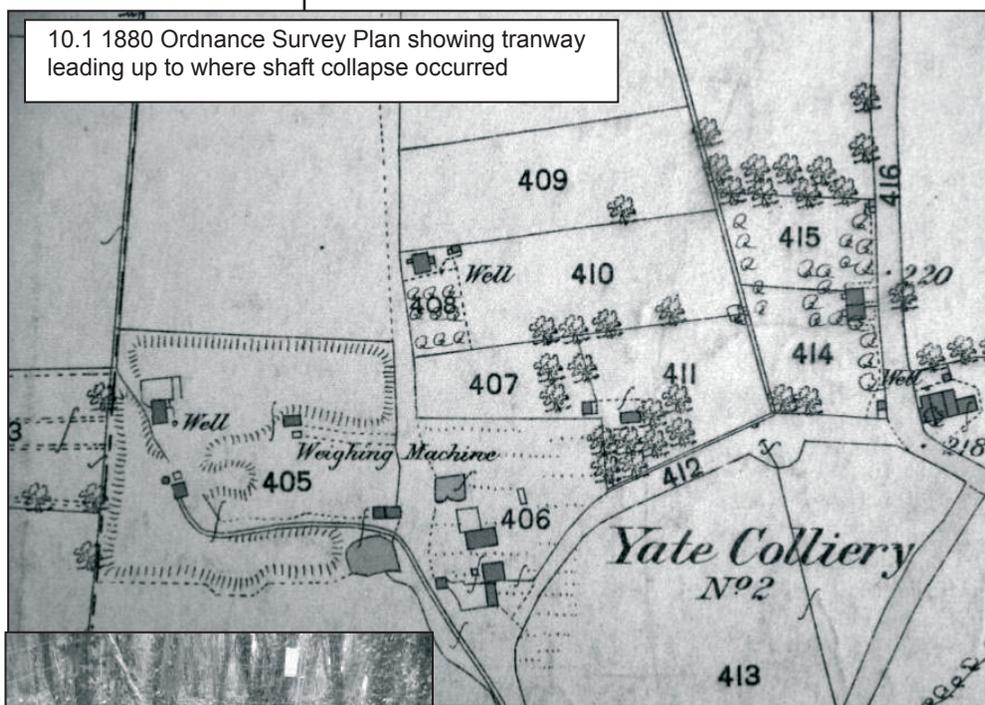
During the Easter weekend in March 2008, the capping of the shaft collapsed leaving a deep hole. (see Fig 10.2) The Coal Authority, the body responsible for dealing with such events, were notified and quickly put up a safety fence around the open shaft. SGMRG were also told about the collapse by one of their members who lives nearby and realised that a unique opportunity to gather information about a late 19th century mine presented itself. A meeting with the Coal Authority indicated the shaft would be soon filled and to do so, much of the area around the shaft would be heavily disturbed and any remaining evidence of

mining destroyed. With the permission of the land owner, SGMRG decided to mount a rescue dig to discover if any such remains were present. Due to the short window of opportunity, all SGMRG's resources would have to be diverted to this project and additional help recruited – hence the request to BIAS and my involvement

A rescue dig is somewhat different from a normal archaeological investigation where much planning is done before hand, specific objectives are set and the digging and recording is done in a very controlled and careful manner. With a rescue dig, the time available is usually very short and dictated by external events. In this case the Coal Authority indicated they would start work within two months. In fact, this time frame was extended on a number of occasions and it was not until January 2009 that work started. If this was known at the outset, a different approach may have been taken.

The approach SGMRG took was to concentrate on

10.1 1880 Ordnance Survey Plan showing tranway leading up to where shaft collapse occurred



10.2 The Open Shaft before it was fenced, showing remains of chimney in background

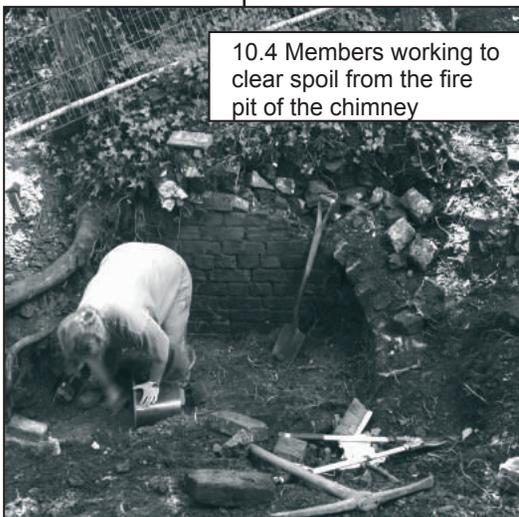
the area immediately outside of the fence, which it was known would be the most heavily disturbed area and to work further outwards if time allowed. The additional constraints were that the site was wooded and heavily covered in ivy and brambles and activity for most volunteers was limited to weekends and evenings. The standard approach of laying down a grid and digging trial trenches at predefined positions to locate likely features was rejected in favour of digging where experience and prior knowledge indicated likely remains would

be and then extending the trench if anything was found. The wooded nature of the site prevented the use of geophysical surveys.

The area around the pit shaft was on top of the waste heap which was some 2.5M above original ground level, with steep drops on two sides. This is a fairly typical layout for a pit as it allows the coal brought to the surface to be tipped over the edge into wagons below to be taken away. Usually there is a substantial wall (called a heapstead wall) to support the waste tip. The 1880 plan shows a tramway and some buildings, although the only visible surface remains was the chimney base. The ground generally was uneven with humps and bumps. The obvious first target areas to dig were around the chimney base, and where the heapstead walls and other buildings were indicated, and these very quickly produced results.

My practical experience of archaeology was zero, but I had watched many Time Team programmes. For my first visit, I was asked to bring my own tools, so thinking I would be used as a general labourer while the “experts” did the delicate work, I took along a spade and shovel. I was made to feel welcome and asked if I would like to dig “there”, pointing to a hump close to the safety fence and chimney where others had already exposed more of the chimney. In a very short time I had started to expose a course of brick. I showed this to one of the others, expecting to be re-directed to some other mundane task while an “expert” took over what I had exposed. But this was not the case, I was asked to continue digging to expose more of the wall. So here I was, after a very short time of arriving on my first dig, actually doing “Real Archaeology” and uncovering something which was previously unknown. Later as others came to look at what I was doing, it became known as “Ken’s Wall”. SGMRG has this habit of giving informal names to things depending on who first worked on it. Fig 10.3 shows “my wall”, something I will remember for a long time.

I was now hooked on this archaeology thing and then went to as many other days and evenings as I could at Yate No.2. What attracted me besides the thrill of discovery, was learning from others the techniques of archaeology and the history of mining in our locality. Everyone was willing to share what they knew and it was evident that some of them knew a lot.



As the sessions continued, the most striking feature was the large flue beside the chimney which was a brick built structure extending well below the surface and still showing evidence of soot. Fig 10.4 shows some of the SGMRG members working in this place. It was frustrating that this area was very close to the safety fence and the brick work continued under the fence and was not accessible. The area immediately around the shaft was very unstable and no access behind the safety fence was permitted. It was just possible to see into the shaft, which was about 3 by 1.5 metres and stone lined. A chamber leading off the shaft curving towards the fire pit could be seen. (See Fig 10.5) It is presumed that this chamber was related to ventilation of the mine which may originally have been provided by the draught from the chimney, but later replaced by a fan. It was not possible to dig down to the chamber in the fire pit due to the depth of the excavation being beyond a safe working limit.

Due to the Coal Authority postponing the start date for their work on a number of occasions, there were a number of “last days” to dig before all was destroyed. In the

end, investigation had moved quite a way from the threatened area. Many of the thick retaining walls used to support the waste tip were located and the brick remains of what is believed to be boiler house was found. Nearer the shaft, the existence of the small building shown on the 1880 plan was confirmed and a number of other structures were found, some with an unknown purpose. During the course of the dig, many photos were taken and measured drawings made of the remains. There were few finds located during the dig, mostly being ironwork. There was little evidence of rubble from demolished buildings.

When the Coal Authority started work in January 2009, their intention was to cap the shaft by digging down to bed rock and casting a reinforced slab. On investigation, they decided the bed rock was too far down so changed the plan to filling the shaft. SGMRG provided information to the Coal Authority that the shaft was likely to be about 300 yards deep. Plumbing of the shaft gave a reading of 125 metres – considerably less than 300 yards. Perhaps the lack of



10.5 View looking down shaft showing opening into a brick chamber - taken during shaft filling

SGMRG was able to demonstrate again that although it is composed of amateur archaeologists, it can perform in a professional manner and has the respect of professional bodies such as the Coal Authority. Use is made not only of our depth of knowledge of the local coal industry, but also the professional skills the members have in areas such as surveying and report writing. The good relationships we have built up with local land owners has enabled us to gain access to areas which they may be reluctant to let official bodies have. These are good examples of the use of local voluntary sector organisation to contribute to the understanding of our local heritage.

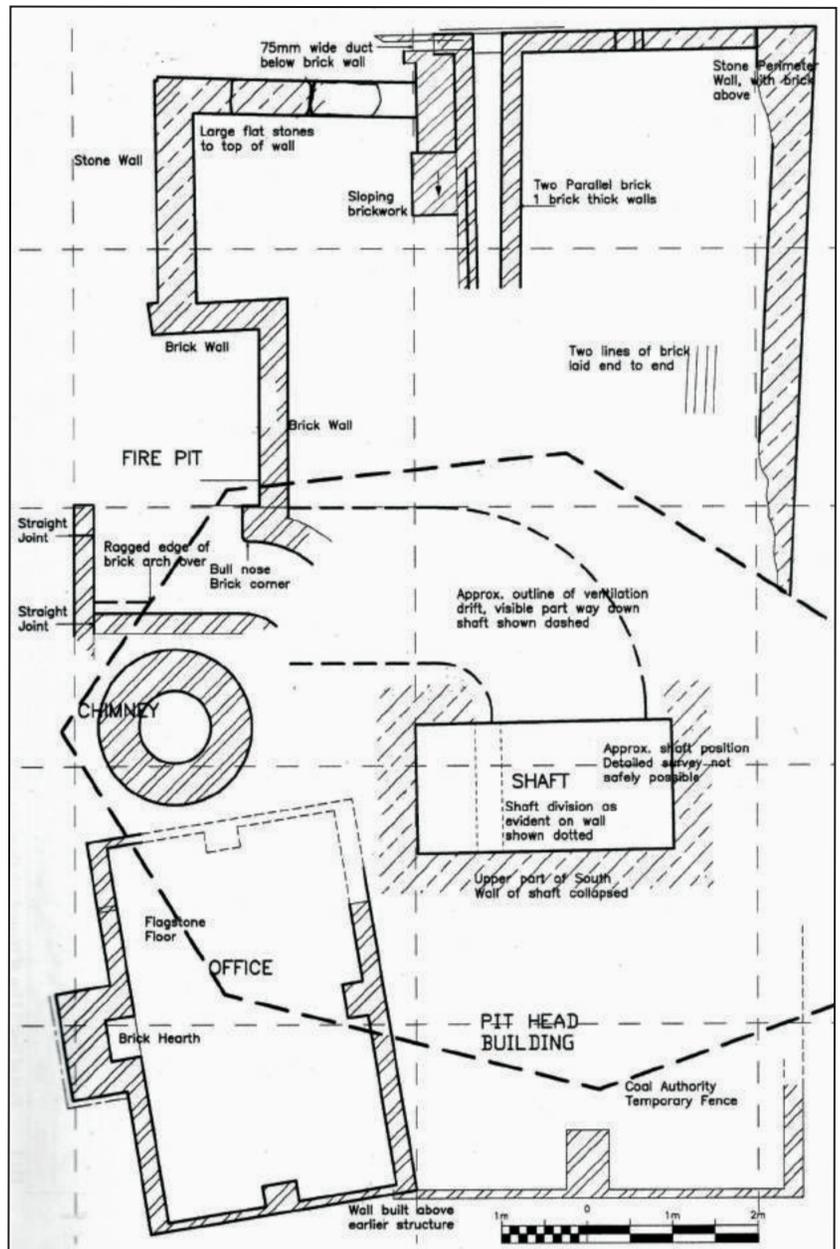
From a personnel viewpoint, I learnt a lot in a short time, The practical techniques of archaeology, the methods and importance of good record keeping, how to set up a survey grid, the use of archive material to support research and an insight into Victorian coal mining methods. I also realised that within SGMRG, there is a vast amount of knowledge about the mining heritage of our area, and that this knowledge is being made available to a wider audience.

demolition rubble indicated it had been dumped down the shaft. With the approval of the Coal Authority, SGMRG kept a watching brief during their work which initially consisted of removal of material around the shaft to form a flat area, and a ramp up from original ground level. Some more wall remains were uncovered at this lower depth and recorded. The remains uncovered during the rescue dig were destroyed and the chimney base removed. Eventually, 1,400 tonnes of stone was used to fill the shaft, considerably more than the Coal Authority originally estimated.

10.6 Structures around the shaft destroyed in 2009

Following consultation with the land owner, it was decided that any remains which had been exposed and were still in situ after the Coal Authority had finished work, should be buried again to protect them. SGMRG published the result of their rescue dig in the BIAS Journal. It is important to record for the future what was found and destroyed, and to record what is still on site, so that future archaeologists know what is there should they wish to make further investigations. Fig 10.6 is taken from the report and shows the various structures around the shaft which were found, recorded and destroyed.

This was the first major rescue dig SGMRG conducted. Due to its extended time span, more was accomplished than envisaged at the outset. Using part time labour instead of full time may have been a disadvantage if the original time scale had been kept to by the Coal Authority and no where near as much would have been achieved. On the other hand, SGMRG could be more flexible than a professional organisation and change its activities quickly to deal with sudden changes in events.



11

Celebrating Age

Dave Tooze

In 2011 South Gloucestershire Council launched an excellent initiative entitled "Celebrating Age." The aim was to engage people of a senior age with a wide range of activities designed to be accessible and available to all.

A varied agenda was on offer during June & July 2011, with lectures/talks, visits and activities including Art, Bee keeping, Ancestry Tracing, Making a Will, Keep-Fit, Tai-chi, Bowls, the Armed Forces Day and many others. These were held in a number of venues throughout South Gloucestershire.



11.1-The ladies at the Miners Institute in the 1970s, Colin Dee kindly allowed us to use this picture of his late mother and three friends. This and similar photos from the same occasion generated much interest at our 2011 celebrating age event.

fear of ageism legislation because I am one myself) were becoming fully involved, with names, locations, events being offered with a lively debate on each photograph. Nearly everyone seemed to have a relative, friend, or neighbour who they could identify on one or other of the images.

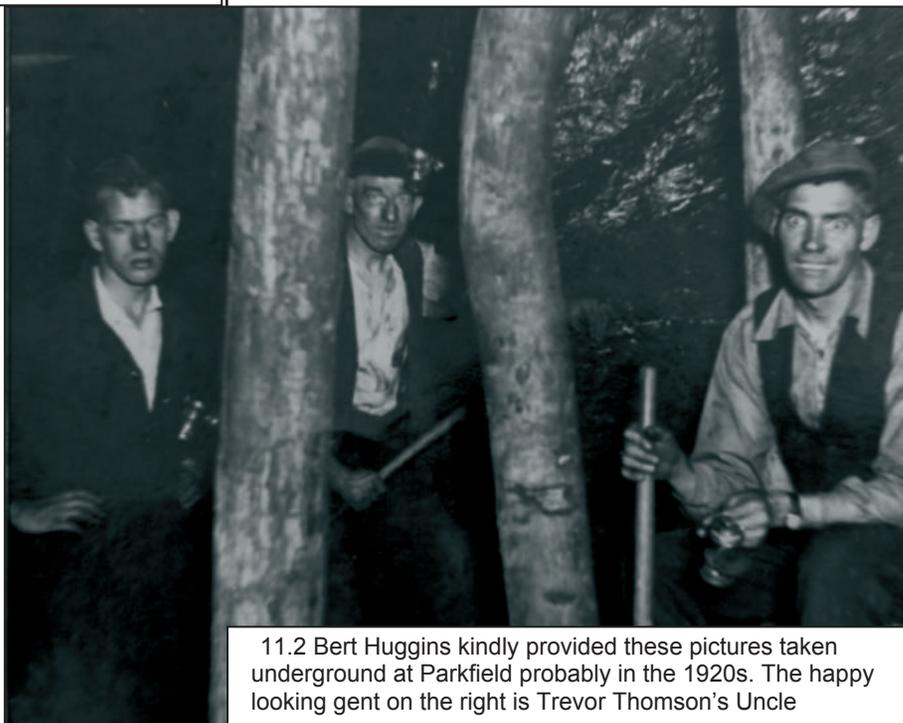
Two particular instances remain in my mind. Firstly Steve projected a photograph of the famous local shunting engine, Lord Salisbury taken in 1940, and challenged the audience to name the three people standing on various parts of the engine. Immediately a lady raised her hand saying, "The one on the footplate is my grandfather." When the question of the second person in the photograph arose, one of those lovely coincidences occurred, almost on cue, the door at the back of the hall opened, and a gentleman slowly entered, aided by a Zimmer frame and a lady helper. This was our second person. After a brief discussion they identified the third man as a young apprentice working with them.

The second case was a photograph showing a group of around thirty residents in front of one of those delightful pre-war open top charabancs. Steve's prompting immediately provoked a comprehensive identification as a Coalpit Heath Village day trip to Severn Beach, and the contributor was able to pinpoint several relatives and neighbours, with further inputs from other members of the audience.

These cases were typical of the interest and involvement that highlighted the event. I was able to

The South Gloucestershire Research Mines Group contribution to this programme was "Looking back to Yesterday – an Illustrated Talk on Life in Coalpit Heath" given by Steve Grudgings at the Miners Club on 24th June 2011. The main constituents of Steve's talk were a series of excellent old photographs, not just of local mining scenarios, but of places and people in the village of forty/fifty years ago and earlier. Many of these have been acquired or borrowed during SGMRG's research programme and initiatives.

Very expertly Steve switched from lecture mode to a more facilitative style where audience participation was paramount. Soon the gathering of 35/40 local people mainly from the elder generation (I can say this



11.2 Bert Huggins kindly provided these pictures taken underground at Parkfield probably in the 1920s. The happy looking gent on the right is Trevor Thomson's Uncle

they had immensely enjoyed the evening and were asking when the next one would take place.

We were particularly pleased to welcome to the talk Denise Swain from South Gloucestershire Council and the prime architect of the Celebrating Age

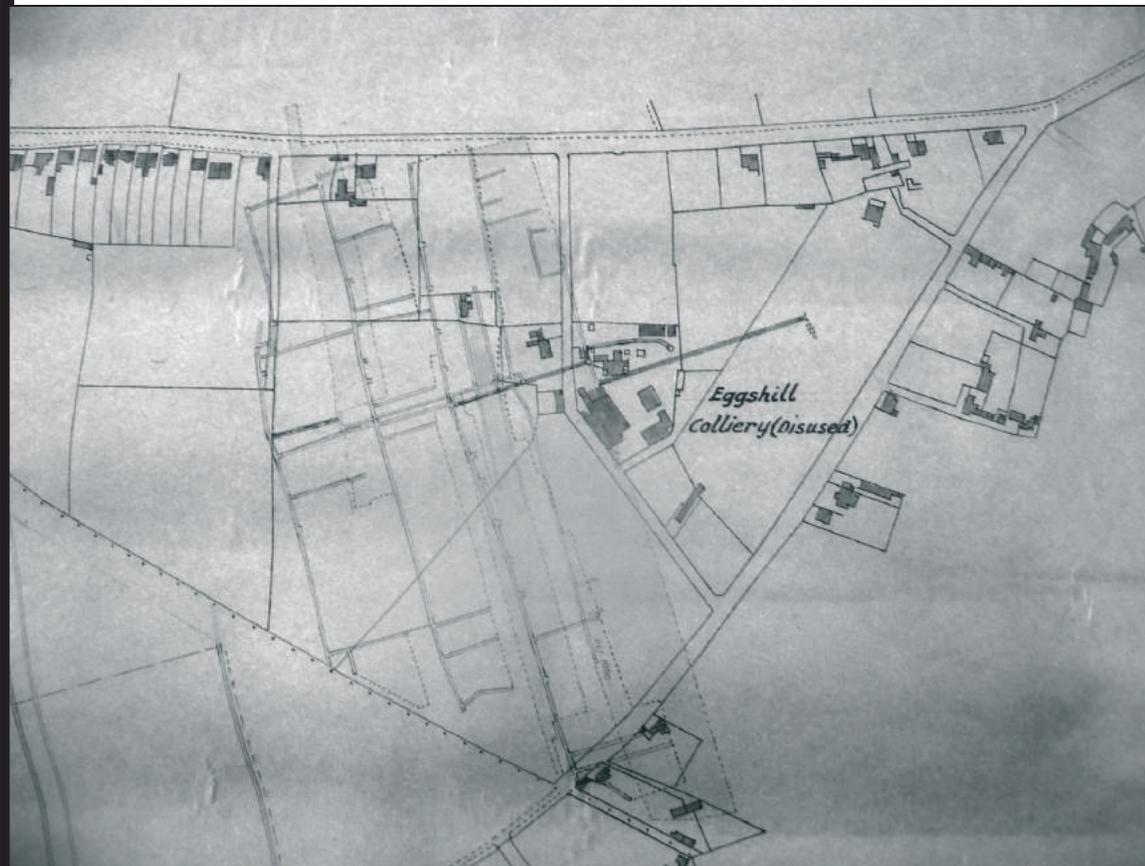
programme. Denise clearly enjoyed her visit and was especially excited to discover that one of her relatives featured on one of the photographs. She was very impressed with the involvement and participation of the local people present and their interaction with the speaker. In fact the whole evening epitomised the principles of Celebrating Age.

The event proved an invaluable opportunity for SGMRG to demonstrate its commitment and contribution to the local community and a great many accolades were earned that evening. Full marks to Steve, Roger, Ken, Andy and other members of the Group who made the occasion such a success.



11.3 The Coalpit Heath Football Club pictured in front of the Manor School in 1901, picture courtesy of Fred Drew - lots of local families represented here!

Eggshill Colliery, Yate



Eggshill Colliery, Yate. An enlarged section of a map from the interwar period showing how the coal between Westerleigh and Yate could be worked by modern methods - this section shows the links with the disused workings of Eggshill Colliery, Yate's last working pit which closed in 1911. Courtesy BRO 39398/219

12

NAMHO – Conferences and Seminars

Roger Gosling

When the SGMRG was formed, 10 years ago, several founder members were already aware of the existence of the “National Association of Mining History Organisations” or **NAMHO** for short. In fact your current SGMRG Chairman, Roger Gosling, had been Treasurer of NAMHO from 1996 to 2004. SGMRG joined NAMHO as soon as we were formed. So, first a bit of history about NAMHO, then how SGMRG is active within NAMHO.

NAMHO
National Association
of Mining History
Organisations

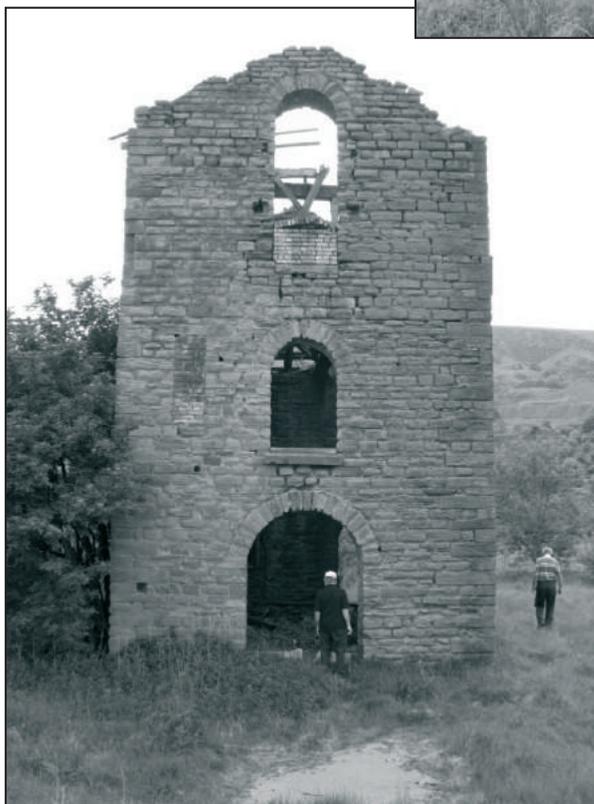


History: **NAMHO**, a registered charity, was formed in 1979 with 10 founder members and by the end of the first year it had 14 members. Within NAMHO, a member is not a *person*, but a *mining related club or organisation*, for example there are several caving clubs, some mining museums and companies with involvement in mining can also be members. Currently NAMHO has about 70 member organisations and is the only umbrella organisation devoted to encouraging the study of mining history.

The role of NAMHO is an important one for groups such as ours in that it works on national basis to raise awareness of the importance of the UK's Mining Heritage

Hosting the NAMHO

Conference: **NAMHO** holds an annual conference that includes talks, walks and underground visits) and these attract visitors from around the UK. SGMRG members regularly attend these events to pick up latest developments and enable us to put our local understanding in context.



But in June 2010 following extensive planning and consultation, SGMRG hosted the annual conference and field meet, based at the Miners' Institute in Coalpit Heath. The conference had 108 paid-up delegates and around 65 “helpers” (speakers, walk leaders, underground trip leaders and those assisting at the venue).

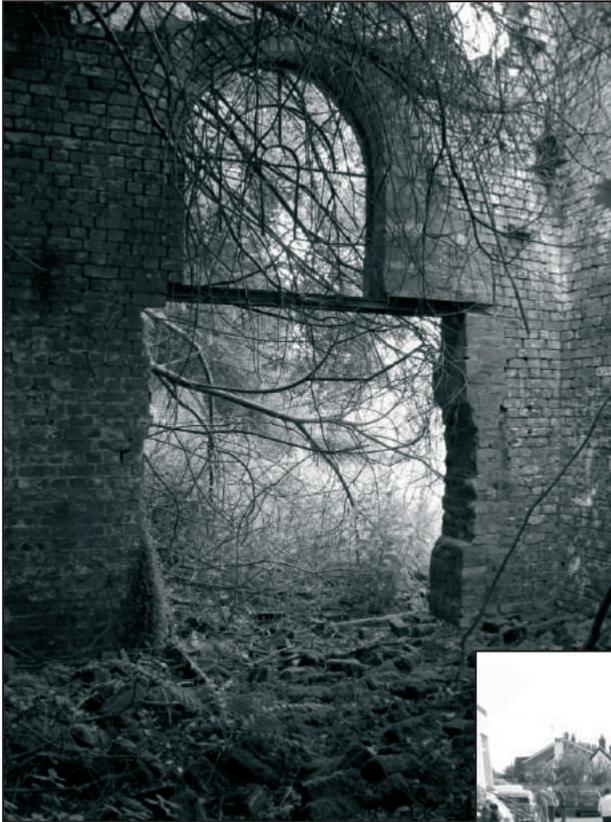
The conference was titled “**Fuelling the Industrial Revolution**” and was introduced by Professor Mark Horton and Local MP and Government Minister (a first for a NAMHO Conference) Steve Webb. As a group we were particularly pleased with the conference, not only was it well attended and the quality of its organisation and administration was commented on but it put South Gloucestershire very much on the National Mining Map. Most hosts are long established



12.1 Conservation . Above Abersychan at Cymburgwym, is an important historic mining landscape. One of the more notable features included a complete water balance headgear, the only one remaining in situ. It was dismantled some twenty years ago and then left to deteriorate. Here two Conference attendees are inspecting the water tank.

groups, so for a young organisation like ours, this really helped us to develop our links. The general theme of most attendees comments was “The conference opened our eyes to the extent of South Gloucestershire's mining heritage”

12.2 One of the NAMHO Conference excursions was “over the water” into Monmouthshire, where we visited the Cornish Engine House that drained the coal mines at Abersychan



12.3 All the major buildings at Crumlin Colliery near Aberbeeg remain intact albeit derelict and deteriorating following closure in the 1960s, here we see see nature gradually taking over.

NAMHO Research One of NAMHO's other aims is to support and encourage **documentary research** and NAMHO have been given a grant by **English Heritage** for a "Research Framework for the Archaeology of the Extractive Industries in England (Mining and Quarrying)".



ENGLISH HERITAGE

The **Research Framework** is a two-year project, which will enable NAMHO groups and individuals to contribute towards and help influence research priorities. It will also provide guidance towards conservation and education strategies, and raise awareness of historic extractive industries as part of the wider heritage agenda. At its

core will be a coordinated effort to collate the results of previous archaeological research, which will provide the information needed to achieve these wider aims.

SGMRG's research and archaeological work has been recognized by the Research Frameworks Steering Group as examples of good practice and SGMRG members have attended and contributed to the series of national seminars that are underway in 2012.



12.4 One of the exhibits at the NAMHO Conference was a replica of a local wooden bodied colliery tub; here we see the team removing it after the conference.

1876 Midland Railway Mineral Invoice from Long and Co, proprietors of Yate Nos 1 and 2 Collieries for a wagon of lime presumably from the lime kilns at Rangeworthy to a Mr Hill at Berkeley. MR Rly Centre Ref 22998

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

MINERAL INVOICE, No. 7 M. F. 1

From Bristol via _____ to Berkeley

On Account of Long & Co Sep 22nd 1876

From what Colliery.	Consignee.	Destination.	WAGONS.		Species.	T.	C.
			Mark and Numbers.	Quantity.			
<u>Yate</u>	<u>Hill</u>	<u>Berkeley & Co</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Lime</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14</u>

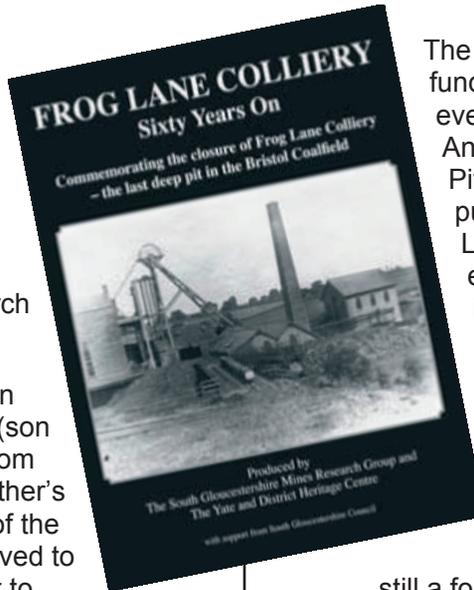
13

Frog Lane Sixty Years On - 2009

Dave Tooze

I have often said that my knowledge of industrial and mining archaeology could be written on a postage stamp. However nobody, including me, could fail to become enmeshed into such a fascinating subject, having become progressively more and more closely involved with the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group.

My first awareness of the organisation was an approach from Jason Taylor (son of Mike), a friend and greenkeeper from the local golf club. He asked if his father's group could investigate the location of the Serridge Engine site which was believed to be located on my small field adjacent to Henfield Road. I was quite happy to agree and soon met some of the key members of the group to discuss potential activities. I was immediately impressed with the commitment and dedication of these gentlemen and although unfamiliar with the subject, the aforementioned attributes were those that I valued immensely in my own fields of cricket, rugby and business. Work started around five years ago, and has continued apace ever since. The story of Serridge has been well documented in excellent reports and newsletters, but from an on the spot perspective, the amount of Records research, artefacts analysis, repair and making safe, documentation, photographs and the removal of many tons of soil has been truly remarkable.



The same zeal and commitment were fundamental in setting up the series of events in 2009 to mark the 60th Anniversary of the closure of Frog Lane Pit, and the highlight of the year – publication of the superb book “Frog Lane Colliery – Sixty Years On” – an essential read for anyone with an interest in local heritage and history.

As a comparative newcomer to Coalpit Heath (since 1977) I became quickly aware of the strong mining heritage in the village. In fact, the local cricket club's motif is a pit head and wheel, and the Miners Institute is

still a focal point of village life. Many local people have parents, grandparents and other relatives who had worked at Frog Lane and had passed down observations and reminiscences. Frog Lane, as the last and probably the largest of the many pits that worked in the area over the last three to four hundred years, is still very much in people's minds.

The initiative to celebrate and record the Frog Lane Anniversary really epitomised what the SGMRG is all about. The detail and history of Frog Lane Colliery is excellently documented in the book mentioned above, and in a number of the Group's Newsletters. There were also number of activities associated with

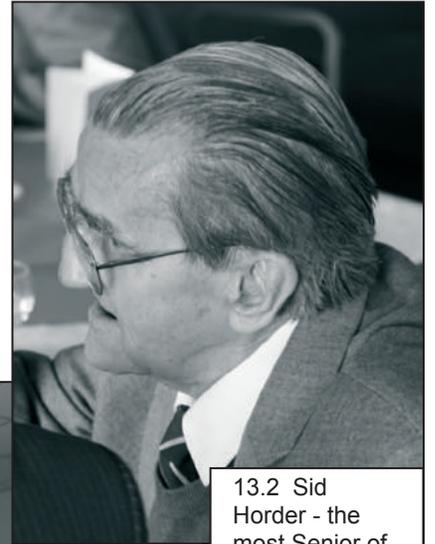


13.1 The whole team at the end of the Frog Lane 2009 celebration and exhibition (apart from the camerawoman!)

the launch of the book which contributed to the success of the anniversary:

- The Oral History work instigated by David Hardill of the Yate and District Heritage Centre was very impressive. Detailed discussions and recordings with the dwindling band of former Frog Lane miners and associates obtained first hand accounts of life and work at the colliery, with many stories and anecdotes.
- This work proved to be particularly opportune since some of these miners have since sadly passed away, including my old friend and cricket opponent, Frank Thornell. Frank told me how much he had welcomed the discussions and was very pleased to think that his information and experiences would not be forgotten, but recorded to be enjoyed for many years in the future.

and Anne Matson's positive response, these incredible historical images may have remained hidden. Now thanks to the combined good work from Steve, Anne,



13.2 Sid Horder - the most Senior of all the Frog Lane Miners - Sid was there in the 1930s



13.3 Local MP Steve Webb speaking at the launch lunch



13.4 Ex Frog Lane Miners - Stan Williams and Graham Brown



13.5 Ex Frog Lane Miner Fred Woodruff and his wife Daisy

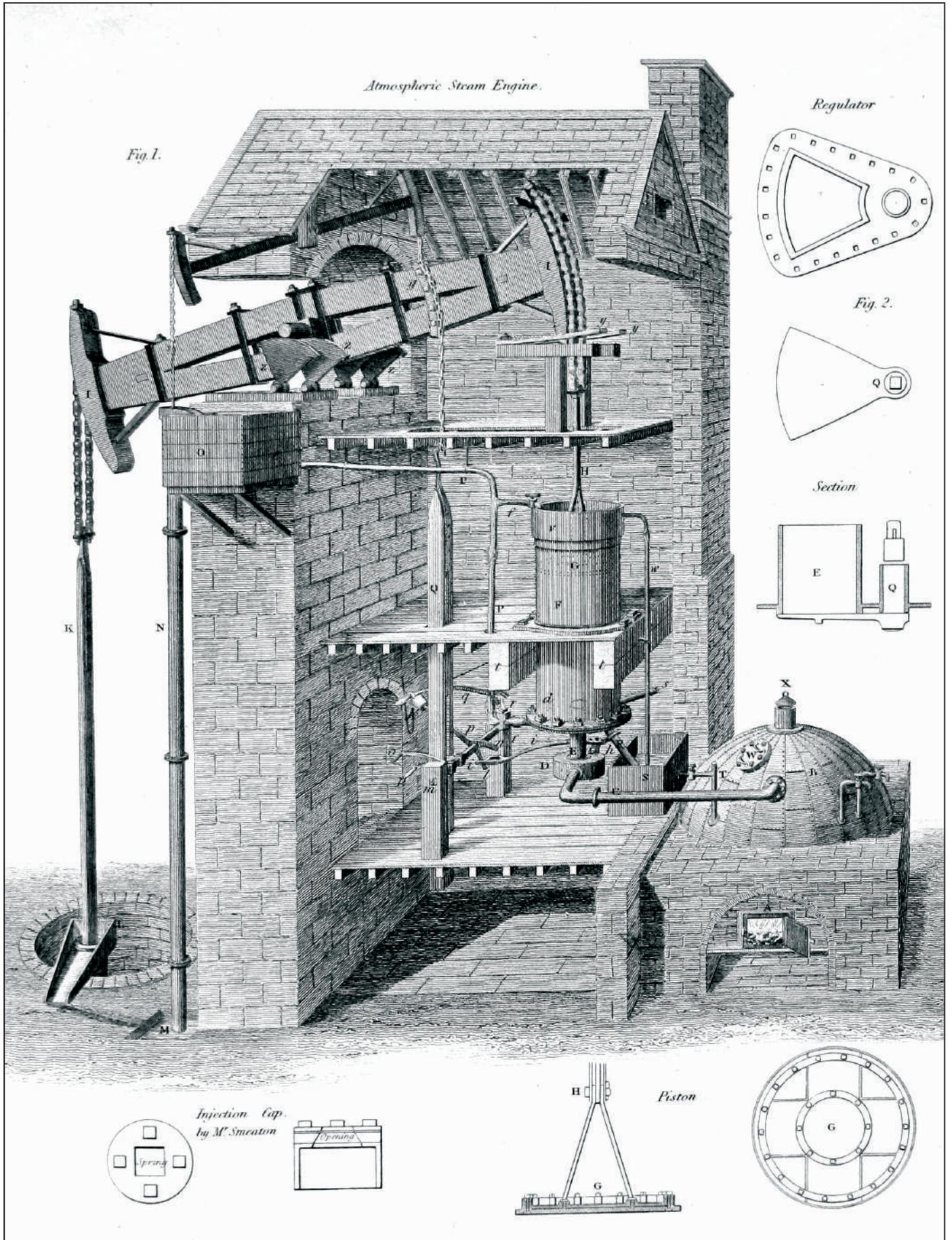
Dave Hardwick, Trevor Thompson, Ian Haddrell, and the Bristol Record Office, the photographs will be available for everyone's education and

- The Lunch and Reception for former miners held in the Miners Institute in May 2009 was another success and also a highly appropriate occasion to formally launch the Frog Lane book. Some friends who attended told me they had expected a cup of tea and a sandwich – but when an excellent three course meal ensued with a welcome from our popular MP, Steve Webb, and Councillor Claire Young, they were bowled over. It was an excellent way to say thank you to people who had contributed to the Oral History and other matters, and to cement the burgeoning relationship between SGMRG and local people for mutual benefit. In addition the presence of our MP and Councillor illustrated the support and welcome encouragement SGMRG receives from South Gloucestershire Council, who clearly appreciate the Group's aims of research, conservation, engaging with and involving an increasing number of local residents, while recording historical information for current and future generations.
- The "Hewitt Collection" of photographs of Frog Lane and other local landmarks produced a number of exciting and high quality images. It is almost frightening to think that but for Steve Grudgings's interview about Frog Lane 2009 on Radio Bristol

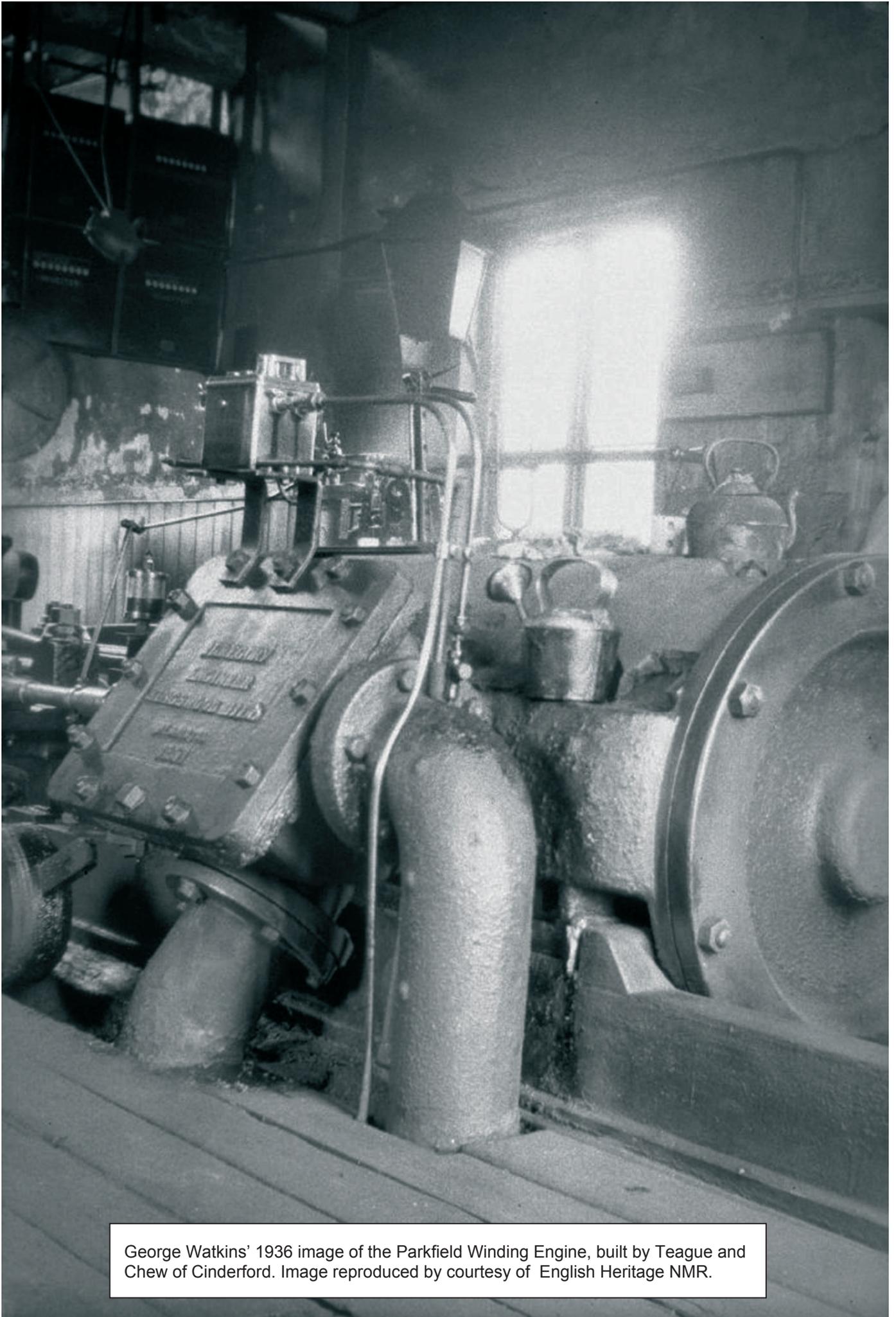
enjoyment, some being included in the Frog Lane Colliery book and Newsletters. As the SGMRG work and aims become even more widely known, will this lead to the unearthing of similar "treasures"?

- Finally the Frog Lane Exhibition in the Miners Club and Yate Heritage Centre, Steve Grudgings's Talk on the History of Frog Lane Colliery, Trevor Thompson's Talk and Walk, and the Community Event at Frog Lane were all enthusiastically received. The events illustrated to a large number of people a myriad of facts on local mining and history. The interaction with local people is equally important to the SGMRG, as experience has shown this to be an invaluable source of information, photographs and other facets.

Thus Frog Lane 2009 was a huge success enjoyed by many, however the subject is far from finished and in true SGMRG fashion the "show will go on".



An engraving C1780 of an "improved" Newcomen Engine (with external boiler) reportedly as constructed by Smeaton (of Lighthouse fame) courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum



George Watkins' 1936 image of the Parkfield Winding Engine, built by Teague and Chew of Cinderford. Image reproduced by courtesy of English Heritage NMR.



This is the only known picture of the Engine House at New Engine Pit, Henfield in its original form, thought to have been taken around 1906. The pit was sunk around 1825 and is understood to have ceased winding circa 1870 and was then adapted to power the site sawmill. From left to right can be seen the "haystack" boiler, the ornate chimney (very similar to the one remaining at Brandy Bottom Colliery less than a mile distant), the engine house containing the beam engine, railway wagons of timber being unloaded and the weighbridge cottage. Image Courtesy of Anne Matson.

The same location from the same viewpoint 100 years later. The engine house is all that remains, reduced in height and converted to a dwelling.



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Front Cover Caption:
Rangeworthy Colliery
(Oldwood Pits) drift
mine entrance in 1991
- the only remaining
open drift mine
entrance in the area