



Shropshire Caving & Mining Club

Metal Mines of Shropshire

Edited by A J Pearce

Account No. 22

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Published by the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club.

Details of publications and videos available from :-

M Moore, 35 Masons Place, Newport, Shropshire TF10 7JS
T. 01952-405105

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ISBN 0 9519140 9 X

Cover photograph Halvens Enginehouse, Snailbeach Mine by Rob Southwick

Illustrations by Malcolm Newton

PREFACE

Adrian Pearce

This publication, in many forms, has been in existence just about as long as the Club itself. A lot of work has been expended over the years in exploring and surveying the mines of South West Shropshire and this is reflected in the following pages. Previous editions have been as follows :-

1. **Survey of the South Shropshire Lead Mining Area**
David Adams, 1962, Account No.2

This original work covered most of the mines detailed in the Bulletin of the Geological Survey No.14 (1958) which was used as the main source of locations.

2. **First Supplement to Survey of the South Shropshire Lead Mining Area**
David Adams, 1968, Account No.4

This included additions and corrections to the original work, as well as a general introduction to lead mining in Shropshire and extracts from previously published papers.

3. **A Survey of the Metal Mines of South West Shropshire**
John Heathcote, 1979, Account No.12

This updated the original entries and included a section on the geology of the ore deposits.

4. **A Survey of the Metal Mines of South Shropshire**
Steve Holding, 1992, Account No.12

This updated the original Account No.12.

The current version retains the format of Account No.12 but includes additional sites and plans, as well as extending the area of coverage. Readers are also referred to Account No.20 "Metalliferous Mines of Shropshire, Volume 1 : Gazetteer". This lists all known metalliferous mine sites in Shropshire and gives details of working periods, production, references, etc. In view of this, no individual references are included in this account. The site information includes a description of surface remains and underground workings where accessible.

The Club has been carrying out a surveying project since 1993 in which it intends to carry out surface surveys of all sites in South Shropshire together with underground surveys of accessible workings. These will be published in greater detail in future publications.

The Shropshire Caving & Mining Club provides this information to the best of its knowledge at the time of going to press. No responsibility is accepted for errors or changes due to events after the date of publication. In particular, the description of underground workings does not infer any right of access or any guarantee of safety.

INTRODUCTION

David Adams

In 1958, a group of friends started exploring the mines in South Shropshire and their activities led to the formation of the present Club. Two years later I decided to undertake a proper survey of the remains of a once thriving mining industry and this led to the publication of Account No.2 in 1962. There have been several revisions since that time and much has changed since the days that I first started visiting the mines.

Up until 1960, there still remained many relics of mines which had been closed half a century earlier. The headgear at Bog Mine's Bunting Shaft was still standing, as was that at Snailbeach Mine's George's Shaft. Burgam Mine was still being worked (albeit probably as a tax fiddle) and at Snailbeach Mine there were dust covered books and records in the office and all the tools were hanging up in the blacksmith's shop.

Since those days many buildings, shafts and adits have collapsed and been lost forever. Other things have been discovered, however, with the exploration of Ramsden's Shaft at Bog Mine and the workings at Snailbeach Mine down to the 112 Yard Level. Strangely, as the remains get less the public interest in them has been growing and this is reflected at Snailbeach Mine where the unique surface remains have been preserved by the County Council.

There is no cause for complacency, however, and the engine houses at Tankerville, Ladywell and the Grit Mines were still in danger of collapse at the time of publication. There are plans, however, to preserve these. It is hoped that this publication will stimulate interest in conserving those items of our mining heritage which still remain. Let us hope that our children in future years will not have to rely on mere descriptions in publications such as this!

Remember that many of the mining sites are on private land and you should ask permission of the landowner before visiting them. A description in this publication infers no right of way. You will find that many landowners are interested in the old mines and are willing to allow access if you only ask first. Please respect the landowners' rights and obey the country code when crossing their land.

Finally a warning for those who visit the sites. Old buildings or machinery may be in a dangerous condition - do not climb on them. Shafts and adits may be open and thus potentially dangerous, especially for children and dogs - keep away from them. Underground exploration is extremely dangerous unless you are properly equipped and have the necessary experience - contact the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club if you wish to go underground.

GAZETTEER OF MINES

ADSTONE MINE

SO391941 Last Visited : 1993 Minerals : Barytes, Copper

The adit was next to the road but appears to have been filled in and the spoil heap removed. No trace of vein minerals could be seen. This was probably only a trial.

BATHOLES MINE

SJ339006 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Lead

Plan 1

Brickiln Level (3), is open and issues into a concrete pit, often full of water. It is brick lined and goes 20ft to a mud blockage, which has been penetrated 50 yards further to another blockage. On the hillside above is a collapsed shaft (4) which corresponds to the blockage. Further up the hillside to the left is Upper Level (5). This is open but all other shafts in the near vicinity are collapsed. There is a hole into a collapsed adit (6) just to the south. By heading up the hillside, the old tramway connecting Nick Knolls, Batholes and East Roman Gravels Mine is reached. Near this is a large conical depression, probably the remains of Gin Ring Shaft. At the crest of the rise are a series of exploratory opencast workings.

To the west is the capped Milne Shaft (2), associated with the Leigh Level, and nearer the road is a flooded shaft (1) surrounded by trees. This is flooded to just below surface level and might have been a ventilation shaft for an old shallow drainage level. An open shaft (7) to the south-west is probably associated with workings on the Gate Level Vein.

BOAT LEVEL

SJ358001 Last visited : 1996 Drainage Level

Plans 2 & 4

The level is at the end of a small cutting (21 on Plan 4) and the entrance has been dug out and supported with angle iron struts. There has been silting up at this point and this causes the water to back up for the first part of the level. Just inside the entrance, the roof has been supported at some time by two short sections of brick arching. The low roof and high water at these points means that there is only 6 inches of air space. Beyond these sections, the water becomes shallower and a number of infilled shafts are passed on the right hand side, these were for access/ventilation while the level was being driven. One of these has a large tip at surface (22 on Plan 4). There is an arched passage junction but the left hand side goes nowhere and the purpose of this is unknown. Burgam Mine is marked by a small cross-cut to the left which end in stopes. On the opposite side of the level is a shaft going up for about 60ft to what appears to be a wooden staging.

Near Tankerville there is a crossroads and the right hand passage originally headed for Ovenpipe Shaft. It now ends at a roof fall but, just before this, there is a short passage to the left and a narrow shaft on the right heading upwards for about 70ft before it becomes tight. The left hand passage at the crossroads originally led to Lewis's Shaft but now ends in a roof fall. The main passage continues for a further 100 yards to where it is completely blocked by an infill of small diameter broken rock, tip material which has been pushed down a ventilation shaft. The water flows through the blockage but it is not known if the level is completely flooded beyond. A stope leads down to the level from Potters but the level is completely flooded. The top of Hoskins Shaft (11 on Plan 2) cannot be identified amongst scrub and it is not known if it is merely covered or filled. Ramsdens Shaft (6 on Plan 2) is open underneath a cap down to the level 420ft below but has not been fully explored yet.

BOG MINE

SO356978 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Barytes, Lead, Silver, Zinc

Plan 2

Little now remains at the main site, despite its long and chequered history, and most of the tips have been removed for roadstone. Both Main Shaft (1) and Buntings Shaft (2) have been filled, although the headgear on Buntings Shaft was still standing in 1960. A few foundations of the miners' institute have been preserved as the site of an interpretation board. The Somme Tunnel (3) is still open for 135 yards, with a metal grille at the entrance that is locked in winter to protect hibernating bats. Next to this is the rectangular powder house that is in an excellent state of preservation.

A collapsed building (4) to the east of the road may be the terminal of the aerial cableway which went to Minsterley. There is a collapsed shaft to the east of this (5).

To the south is the capped Ramsdens Shaft (6), sunk in 1915, which now lies in a stable yard. The site of Tews No.1 and No.2 Shafts (7 & 8) is now covered by trees and a search failed to find them. Either they have been missed in the thick foliage or they were infilled when the trees were planted. Swag Shaft (9) is just in the trees by the side of the track leading to Nipstone Rock but has been filled to the top with tree thinnings. It was descended in 1976 and, contrary to a plan which shows a shaft and crosscut, was found to be an incline shaft. The rock was blackened, perhaps by fire or explosion. A square depression to the south on a large mound (10) may be the Bog climbing shaft shown on old plans.

BROMLOW MINE

SJ321019 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Lead

There is an open adit by the side of a stream. A fast flow of water emerges and there is about 1ft of air space at the entrance, which has yet to be explored.

BULTHY MINE

SJ309133 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Lead

Plan 3

To the south of the A458, just below the cafe, the entrance to Deep Level (1) has been dammed as a water supply. This was driven to test the mineral reserves at depth but, although a few small barytes veins and a deposit of oil shale were discovered, they were never mined. On the hillside to the north of the road is a 165ft shaft (2) which has been filled with rubbish. There are concrete foundations here which mark the site of a boiler and the compressor, winding engine and pump which it served. There is a further air shaft (3) to the north which has also been filled.

In the field to the north is an open adit (4) that is collapsed a short way in. Beyond this is an area of gruffy ground planted with trees. To the west of this, just over the border in Wales, are four open trial adits (5-9) which are collapsed after a short distance and a small shaft (8) that is almost filled. This area is covered in brambles and it is very difficult to find the features in summer. Main Adit (11) has a high entrance but it has collapsed a short distance inside. A climb up a slope over the collapse leads to surface via a small shaft (10). Outside the entrance, the cutting ends abruptly at a bank of earth where the mine track went over. It appears as if there was once an access tunnel under this but it has collapsed. Beyond the bank, the line of the cutting can be followed to the end of a tip.

From the tips of Main Adit, the mine track can be followed south-west along the hill and then down to the road. A tramway can also be followed parallel to this for a short way, although it carries on where the track descends. At the end of the tramway, there used to be the brake of a gravity incline (17) which lowered wagons down the hill almost to the road. The line of this can just be distinguished.

On the north side of the hill there is an open adit (12) with a flooded shaft in the floor. To the south-west are the possible sites of two other adits (13 & 14) which may have connected with the main workings.

BURGAM MINE

SO358997 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Barytes, Lead, Zinc

Plan 4

Adit 1 (4) goes in about 10 yards to a left turn, where it is blocked after a short distance. Adit 2 (5) has a large entrance and about 150 yards of passages. There are parallel workings, one of which intersects a poor barytes vein. Adits 3 & 4 (6-7) have collapsed. The entrance to Adit 5 (8) is partly blocked but it can be negotiated with a squeeze. The passage follows a poor vein for 20 yards and ends in a water-filled sump. A side passage to the right leads to a 20ft air shaft (10). Adit 6 (9) has collapsed. Adit 7 (11) has a deep pool of water in the entrance but ends after 6 yards. These adits were worked as recently as the 1960s.

Further up the hillside is a large spoil tip and to the right of this is an open shaft (12). This is currently 45ft to a blockage but there used to be two passages off at the bottom. One led to some very unstable stopes and the other had a section of rail but ended in a large collapse. A label from a tin of tea found here was dated 1910-1916, so presumably this area was worked during the First World War. Further right, near the fence, is an open shaft (13) leading to a tight incline. This drops into some rather unstable workings which seem to extend to some depth. This lower part of the incline and a side chamber have not been fully explored due to bad air and unstable material higher up on the incline.

Over the fence, at the top of the big spoil heap, is a grilled adit (15). This leads to 150 yards of passage in Big Spar Lode, ending at a constriction caused by material falling down a 60ft shaft from surface. The latter has recently been grilled. Beyond the shaft, the passage continues to a blind heading with a small stope part way along (the latter containing traces of the rare mineral pyromorphite). To the left of the adit are buildings (15) and, further left, a narrow open shaft (14) which is blocked with rubbish at 15ft. Above the adit is the grilled open shaft (17) referred to above and, further up the hillside, a collapsed shaft (18). Diagonally right from the gated adit up the hillside is a short open trial adit (19) with ruined buildings beyond. Below these is an open shaft (20) and a collapsed adit (21) further down.

Below the road, there are more spoil heaps and a shallow cutting may indicate a collapsed adit (2). A wide depression next to the road was a shaft (1) which was used for many years by locals for dumping - it now appears to be full. This may be the shaft down to Boat Level but the position of this has not yet been confirmed. Further north is a possibly collapsed shaft next to the footpath (3).

CALCOT MINE

SJ298973 Last visited : 1985 Minerals : Barytes

This mine was worked in conjunction with Cliffdale Mine. An adit on the north-east side of the valley goes for 100 yards but may be blocked with sheep. Lower down, on the opposite side of the valley, is a short level leading to a stope that has broken through to the surface. The total depth is about 70ft, split into three levels by floors supported on stemples. The bottom of the stope is partly flooded.

CALLOW HILL MINE

SJ386048 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Lead, Zinc

Most of the workings have now been quarried away. Two air shafts into Lower Level are open but flooded a short distance down.

CARREGWFA MINE

Plan 5

SJ264219 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Lead, Silver

All shafts (6 & 7) have been filled and most of the tips have been landscaped as part of a golf course. This mine was worked to produce silver for the ransom of King Richard I.

CEFN GUNTPLY MINE

Plan 6

SO331950 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Lead

The workings are divided into two areas, one on the west side of Cefn Gunthly Hill and one on the east side working three parallel veins. On the west side there is an adit (8) south-east of Pultheley Farm, now used as a water supply for cattle. This has been explored for about 30 yards in 3ft deep water to a blockage of stone and rubble. An old blacksmith's sledge hammer was found in this adit, which was driven in 1832. In the wood further up the hill is a square shaft (7) in good condition but blocked 50ft down. This probably corresponds to the blockage in the adit. Further along the same line, in the next field, is a collapsed adit (6) and infilled open stoping can be followed up the hill from here to another shaft (9). The latter is blocked with a large number of dead sheep.

There is a line of collapsed adits up the north-east side of the hill (1-3) and a line of collapsed shafts on the hill top (4 & 5). On the east side, an obvious spoil tip can be found by following the track to a field boundary. It is associated with a adit (11) containing deep water and 2ft airspace. This was explored in 1964 to a blockage after 33 yards. Further up the hillside is a depression marking a collapsed shaft (12), corresponding to the blockage in the adit. Various depressions can be seen up the hillside, leading to a more obvious line of filled surface stoping which ends at a collapsed shaft (10). Adjacent to the adit entrance is a wet depression in the hillside, perhaps another adit.

By following the line of workings down the hill to the stream, another adit (13) can be found which has collapsed for some distance but still issues water. On the same bank of the stream, 200 yards to the north, is an open adit (14) driven to intersect a vein. There is an open shaft (15) just above the adit and a badly covered shaft (16) further up the hillside. Another shaft (17) higher up near the track has collapsed. The adit is 45 yards long in 3ft deep water, leading to stoping and an upper level before the shaft. It is possible that the last two adits were the workings known as Heathmynd Mine.

CENTRAL SNAILBEACH MINE

Plan 7

SJ369016 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Lead

This mine is easily recognised by its truncated square chimney and engine house (1), which have been converted into a dwelling. The latter still contains two Lancashire boilers and the owner may be willing to show you these if you ask. Engine Shaft (2) is completely filled. The entrance to Deep Level (4) has collapsed, as well as two ventilation shafts (5 & 6) on the line. An open adit (3) to the north-east is approximately 100 yards long and ends at an inclined winze about 20ft deep.

A supposed adit to the south at Blackhole could not be found in 1959 and has not been searched for since, although a clump of trees can be seen from the road south of the farm.

To the east of the road and about 400yds up Crowsnest Dingle, there is a collapsed adit (7) with a filled shaft (8) just above. What appear to be arched adits in the farm opposite and on the right of the track further up the main valley are only potato stores. About 200 yards north up the side of the valley is an open adit (9) in a large tip. This goes for 40yds to a right-angled bend, then a further 60yds to a winze. On the other side of the winze, the adit continues for 100yds to a blockage. The winze, which is 50ft deep, leads to an adit heading for a short distance in both directions, parallel to the adit above.

CHITTOL WOOD MINE

SO348950 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Copper

There is a large tip with a collapsed adit half way up the hill and a collapsed shaft on top of the hill. Two collapsed adits in the valley bottom may only be trials.

CLIFFDALE MINE

Plan 9

SO302977 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite

Weston Shaft (3) is by the roadside and has been filled. Sump Shaft (4) is to the east and has been filled and ploughed over. Powis Shaft (2) is located by the reservoir and was last visited in 1979 when it was found to be blocked a short way down. As a matter of interest, the border passes through the mine and Powis Shaft is actually in Wales. Bowers Shaft (1) is filled with rubbish, including a complete car, but the concrete engine foundations still exist next to it. To the west is a collapsed adit below the road with a collapsed adit and shaft above the road. These are believed to be associated with the main workings. To the north-west, at Cwm Dingle Farm, is the entrance to Cliffdale Level. This was the drainage level for the mine but it is currently dammed as a domestic water supply.

CLIVE MINE

SJ514239 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Cobalt, Copper

There are a number of shafts into the workings and many of these are old shallow ones which date from the early working of the mine. The Rubbish Shaft is in the wood opposite Mine House and has been capped with a locked lid. Well Shaft is in the building in front of Mine House and has been converted to a well. All other shafts have either been filled or capped.

Rubbish Shaft can be descended 25ft to Upper Level. Heading south leads to the South Winze which has an unstable lining. This can be descended for 80ft to Lower Level and a long low crawl which ends in a chamber part way down Well Shaft. Upper Level continues beyond the top of the winze and once emerged at surface but this has now been filled in. Back at Rubbish Shaft, heading north leads to the Main Winze. This can be descended for 80ft to Lower Level, which can be followed north to a collapse. Heading south from the bottom of the winze leads to the chamber part way down Well Shaft. Another level heads off from here but is collapsed after a short distance.

The top of Main Winze can be crossed by a wall traverse and leads to a series of tall stopes with copper mineralisation. A number of older surface shafts have been undercut by these later workings and can be seen in the roof. A section passing through a fault has bad ground and this has been recently stabilised. The workings eventually lose the mineralisation and trial levels searching for it again proceed for a short distance before ending at the North Winze with blind headings.

COLDYELD MINE

SO364965 Last visited : 1978 Minerals : Barytes

The adit has been blown in and the opencast workings infilled.

COTHERCOTT MINE

Plan 11

SJ415003 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

This mine is split into two sections which lie east and west of Cothercott Hill. On the west side, the concrete floor and loading bay of the barytes mill (9) are obvious features by the side of the road. Close inspection will reveal two millstones near to the fence. A ramp leads up from the mill and this connected with a loop of the light railway. This curved round the hillside to the eastern workings and was operated by a steam locomotive. Four collapsed adits (5-8) can be made out on this side of the hill.

On the east side of the hill, No.6 Adit (11) has collapsed a short distance inside. Further up the hillside is a collapsed shaft (12) and a trial adit (10). A trial adit to the north-east (13) is also collapsed. On the far side of the valley, No.10 Adit (14) has run in. Along the hillside, No.8 Adit (16) is still open and leads via knee-deep water to an air shaft (15) blocked with rubbish. Next to this is a deep open working (17) partly filled with rubbish. Just to the north, below the track, is a small collapsed trial adit (18).

Over the fence is a collapsed drainage level (19), still issuing water, and a flooded shaft (20). The latter had a wooden headgear which was lying on the ground until it was removed in recent times. To the south-east is a collapsed adit (21) with a long cutting filled with brushwood. Further on is an open adit (22) which slopes steeply down to water, the workings below being flooded. On the hillside above is a partly filled shaft (23).

CRAWSTONE MINE

SJ671036 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Iron

An open level behind a house leads to a series of side passages which have been worked in the longwall method. Although there is a narrow seam of coal, this mine was worked mainly for ironstone. Due to the strata and single entrance, there is a great danger of carbon dioxide gas building up in the workings and exploration should not be attempted without some form of gas detection.

CRICKHEATH HILL MINE

Plan 12

SJ274232 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Lead, Zinc

There are two short adits in a small quarry west of Pant. No.1 Adit (1) goes for about 180ft with a passage fork. No.2 Adit (2) goes for over 200ft and has a stream of water flowing out. In another quarry to the north-west are Nos. 3 & 4 Adits (3 & 4) which are only short. In yet another quarry, to the east of the track, is the entrance to No.5 Adit (5) which leads to over 2,000ft of workings on three levels. Next to this is the gated No.6 Adit (6) which also has a network of workings.

To the west of the track is a line of three shafts. The first (7) is covered by boulders, the second (8) is covered by a steel plate and descends 40ft to a short passage. The third (9) is open but is blocked with debris at the bottom. Close by is a cutting leading to a collapsed adit (10). To the north is a possible shaft (11) which is the site of an old pump. Further north still is a spoil tip with a filled shaft (12).

CWM DINGLE MINE

SJ295982 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Barytes

There is an open adit with a line of workings going up the hillside. On top of the hill are three collapsed shafts, with a filled shaft and collapsed adit to the north-east.

DINGLE MINE

Plan 3

SJ301127 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Calcite

The shaft (16) is next to the track but it has been filled and recent landscaping has obscured the site. Hidden in the trees to the north of the track is a reservoir which fed the boilers of the winding engine. Calcite seems to have been worked opencast to the north of the track and there was once an access tunnel (15) from the track which is still open on the far side.

EAST ROMAN GRAVELS MINE

Plan 1

SJ337002 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead, Silver, Zinc

This is located at the north end of the spoil tips in Hope Valley. By following the track that leads up past the tips, the infilled Black Gin Shaft (14) can be seen on the right. The line of four air shafts heading north-west are on the line of Wood Level.

On contouring round the hill to the south, the site of Wood Winding Shaft (16) has now been capped and is in a garden. The only masonry structure left is the stump of a square chimney (15) by the road which seems to have been associated with the ore dressing plant. By the reservoir are three adits. The first (18) on the south bank is blind, the second (19) leads into a small stope, while the third (17) on the north bank leads to a blockage which corresponds to a blocked shaft (20) on surface. This may be Lawrence Whim Shaft and its associated Day Level. It is not really clear from plans as there is another shaft (21) on the south side of the valley only 20 yards away, which also may be Lawrence Whim Shaft. Another blocked shaft (22) near the one on the north side overlooks a second reservoir.

Returning to the south side of the valley, Cornish Shaft (23) and California Shaft (24) are located in the first field but both have been filled in recent years. Under the holly tree at the corner of the field is another unnamed shaft (25) on the California Vein. This has been descended for 75ft past a blockage of loose rocks and carcasses to a point where it became too dangerous. The collapsed entrance to Upper Level (26), which led into these workings, can be seen by the tramway on the hillside. California Shaft was worked by an engine in the next field, where the groove occupied by the flatrods is visible. This engine also worked Boundary Shaft of Roman Gravels Mine.

EAST WOTHERTON MINE

Plan 10

SJ279004 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

There is an open shaft (4) with an iron fence next to the road. Nearby is an open stope (5) with rubbish in but side passages appear to lead off. A narrow opencut (6) on the hillside above has stemples and planks still in place. Old maps indicate a trial adit (7) to the south and another to the east but these have not yet been visited.

FAR GATTEN MINE

Plan 13

SO388985 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

There is an open adit (5) on the side of the hill but it has collapsed a short distance inside. On the hillside above to the north-west is a blocked shaft (6) which may have connected to the adit. Another open adit (10), north of a track, only goes a short distance. There are remains of open workings (7) and collapses (8) to the west but no trace of an adit (9) supposed to be next to the road.

FOXHOLE MINE

Plan 14

SO323983 Last visited : 1979 Minerals : Lead

Foxhole Vein can be followed north-west from Old Grit to Foxhole Shaft (23) near the corner of the next field. This shaft is now blocked and, from it, the large tip surrounding Foxhole Drawing Shaft (24) can be seen in the distance. This shaft has not been inspected closely but, from the large amount of farmyard scrap surrounding it, it is assumed to be blocked. It was open in 1960 when it was estimated to be 200ft deep. Climbing Shaft (25) would appear to be in the middle of the farm, so is also assumed to be blocked.

GATTEN MINE

Plan 13

SO386992 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

A 15ft adit used to lead to the top of the main shaft but it has been completely removed by reworking of the tips. The shaft itself (1) has a concrete cap and it used to have the runners still in position for a double cage system. It has been descended 75ft to water. To the south is the base of the winding engine and concrete supports for the fuel tank. To the north is a brick magazine in excellent condition. Just to the east is the top of an open stope (2) which has been partly filled and further east is the concrete cap of the incline shaft (3). The climbing shaft (4) to the west of the road is filled.

GRIT MINES

Plan 14

SO327980 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead, Zinc

This group consists of two mines that have sometimes been worked separately in the past but at other times as one undertaking, viz White Grit and East Grit. The whole site has been worked extensively, producing a large confusing area of gruffy ground which is here described vein by vein.

White (or West) Grit Engine Shaft (1) is situated at the junction of the A488 with the road to Priestweston. The shaft, which was sunk on the intersection of the Rider and Dingle Veins, is completely blocked but a reasonable amount of the engine house still remains. The tips have been completely removed for roadstone. The drainage level (2) is in the wood to the south, it is almost silted up but still issuing water. There is a line of air shafts (3-4) heading north-east, mostly collapsed. One is open and is 3ft diameter with ginging, blocked at 10ft depth. Another just to the east of the road has been filled but this is slipping.

Rider Vein can be followed east from White Grit towards the trees on the hilltop. Three blocked shafts (5) without names are encountered before Blue Pit (6), situated in a large spoil tip. On the way up, the unique circular magazine is passed on the right. Blue Pit is filled but the vein can be followed further up the hill, past some opencast workings and a collapsed shaft (7), to Rider Shaft (8) on the other side of the fence. This small square shaft is open and is situated in a large spoil tip, which bears a circular depression which may mark the position of a horse gin. Rider Shaft has been measured in the past as 200ft to water, which suggests that Wood Level is backed up (calculated depth is 230ft below Rider Shaft collar). It was descended in 1994 to a blockage (including a dead cow) at 130ft. At 100ft there is a level off the shaft but this has collapsed after 5ft.

A short distance to the south is another unnamed shaft (10), now blocked, and a few yards to the north is an open stopehead (9). The latter was descended for 30ft in 1994 into an excavated vein. There is a squeeze into Rider Shaft and workings heading west for 40ft to a collapse. From Rider Shaft, the line of the vein can be followed to the remains of Old Grit engine house. The pumping shaft (11) here is open but the three other shafts in the area, including Foxhole Air Shaft (12) to the north-west and Bye Pit (13) to the south-west, are blocked. Excavation of the tips at Old Grit has revealed that they consist largely of boiler ash.

South-west of Old Grit there are dressing floors and the winding engine house of New Engine (or East Grit) Shaft (14). This led to workings on Engine Vein, which intersects Rider Vein at Rider Shaft, but the shaft is completely filled. The engine house is similar to the one at Ladywell in that the rear wall contains a slot, presumably for a flywheel to drive winding or dressing machinery. The track from here can be followed back to the A488, near which it crosses over Dingle or Squilver Vein.

On the south side of the track, Dingle Shaft (15) is completely blocked, though a large stream sinks in this area. Footway Shaft (16), just to the north of the track, is also blocked. On the brow of the hill, Hampsons Shaft (17) is filled but Flat Rod Shaft (18) is open to a rubbish infill at 60ft. The next shaft encountered is Stone Shaft (19), now blocked, followed by an area of gruffy ground in which Gardens Shaft (20) and Old Shaft (21) are located. The last shaft, Gough's Shaft (22), is by the side of the road and is blocked.

HAYTONS BENT MINE

S0516811 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Copper

There are two collapsed adits by the side of the road and the dressing floor for these was on an area of ground to the north. Up the hillside to the south-east is an area of open working and further uphill are two collapsed shafts. The country rock is crumbly limestone and collapses were apparently common when the mine was working.

HAWKSTONE MINE

SJ587293 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Copper

The site of this mine is now in Hawkstone Park. There is reputed to be one shaft that was filled and another that is grilled but "lost" in the shrubbery. It is not known if the grotto was once a mine or whether it was driven purely for decorative purposes.

HOLLIES TRIALS

SJ383014 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Lead

There is a small tip with an arched adit, the entrance to which has been almost completely filled in. It is stone arched for 10ft and then in shale. The adit goes for about 60ft to a collapse, which corresponds to a collapsed shaft on surface. Another adit to the south has a much smaller tip and the entrance is completely collapsed. This adit is known locally as Roman Level but there is no evidence for this dating.

HUGLITH MINE

SJ404016 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Barytes, Copper

Plan 15

All of the mine area has now been planted with trees which makes location difficult. Most of the mine was worked on three distinct veins, Main Vein, Riddleswood Vein and the Mud Vein. but there are also some trial adits in other parts of the site. Most of the currently accessible workings are on the Main Vein but there is a reasonable amount of accessible workings on the Riddleswood Vein. There are not believed to be any accessible workings on the Mud Vein.

A Forestry Commission track from the road leads to the remains of numerous buildings around Main Shaft (2). These include the foundations of the winding engine, compressor and boiler, brick transformer house, smithy, metal chimney (now on the ground) and a set of concrete pillars which were the terminal of the aerial ropeway that connected the mine to the mill at Minsterley. Further concrete pier bases for this can be seen at places along the route. There is an open flooded shaft (10) to the south-west of the buildings with an open adit (9) into it.

Main Shaft descends for a distance in an open stope to the north of the buildings but there was a girder headgear across this for winding. It is now blocked 80ft down by a mass of slipped concrete and this, plus overhanging debris, makes the area very dangerous. It was originally 250ft deep, inclined on the vein and wide enough for two cages.

The Main Vein Adit Level (1) was located just to the west of this but it has now collapsed. The line of the vein can be easily followed up the hill and there are many points where the vein has been worked to surface. Approximately two-thirds of the way up the hill, there is a large cutting in which there is the top of a worked stope (3) that can be descended 140ft to the main tramming level. Immediately adjacent to the top of the stope there is a short adit (4) leading to a shaft to surface (5). Further up the hill, some shallow surface workings (6) can be walked into with no apparent connection to the lower workings. However, at the top of the hill, the open vein (7) can be descended via a number of routes to the upper levels of the underground workings.

The Main Vein workings can also be accessed from the side of the hill via Badger Level (20). At the vein, the level divides left and right. To the right, a 20ft drop leads to an extensive stope running for a distance of 50 yards. In places, this stope breaks out to surface, connecting to (7) above. In the stope there are the remains of various intermediate levels suspended on stemples and a spectacular string of azurite running down the wall from Badger Level.

Heading to the left at the junction on Badger Level, the passage leads to a winze after 10ft and then continues through a couple of constrictions for 250ft, where a collapse prevents further progress. Beyond the first constriction, there is a ramp up into the upper workings where there are routes to surface and back down to above the initial junction in Badger Level. The winze is 110ft deep to the main tramming level and still contains the compressor pipe.

As noted above, Adit Level can be reached via the 140ft stope part way up the hill or by descending the 110ft winze from Badger Level. At the bottom of this winze, Adit Level is blocked in the 'in-by' direction by an extensive collapse. In the opposite direction (towards the level entrance), it leads past a pool of azurite mine pearls to an area of loose ground underneath a stope. Several felt hats and the base of a carbide lamp made by Messrs P & H Ltd of Birmingham have been found in this level. A trial cross-cut to the north leads to a blind heading containing some lengths of slow fuse. Two winzes lead down from Adit Level, the second of which has been descended 103ft to water, traces of the 75ft Level being noticed on the way down. Before Main Shaft is reached, an unstable floor has to be negotiated but the level ends in a blockage of large rocks through which a strong draught disappears. The remains of a side tipping truck is present.

Above the area of unstable floor is the 140ft stope to surface. Below this point, the vast stope below the Adit Level can be accessed and descent to the water level allows inspection of intermediate workings. There is an open connection to the area below the two winzes but the open void and water prevent significant progress further in. A rubble slope, just beyond the unstable floor, leads down to the 75ft Level from which it is possible to descend into the water. The flooded chamber here may be on the line of Main Shaft.

Plans are available that show that the Main Vein originally continued significantly further into the hill. Where Adit Level is blocked, there was a significant deviation from the worked line which is presumed to have been an unstable area. At surface there are various large depressions, mainly difficult to access due to excessive vegetation. The limit of the workings on Main Vein probably correspond to a 60ft deep shaft (8) at the eastern edge of the forestry. Early investigations by the club report that the shaft was blocked with herbicide tins and might be deeper. Some stoping has been carried out at the shaft bottom and short levels containing rails go both ways at the bottom but both end at blind headings after a short distance. A 15ft winze leads to a lower level, heading back towards the shaft where it is blocked. These workings are rather puzzling and appear to have been constructed from below.

By following the tramway north from the entrance of Badger Level, another adit (19) is reached. This adit, which contains waist deep water, is blind but it is believed that it was originally intended to go through the hill (17) to link Badger Level and Mud Vein workings. The ridge of this hill is effectively the line of the Riddleswood workings.

In a similar manner to the Main Vein workings, the line of the Riddleswood Vein can be clearly followed on the surface but the undergrowth is generally thicker and the lower end of the workings are virtually impossible to reach.

Near the road is a flooded shaft (11) with the top of a compressor pipe showing. This was a trial sunk in the 1940s. Near the main Forestry Commission track, there is a cutting with flooded adits (12) at each end. Progressing up the hill, a stope head (14) below a spoil tip can be descended 80ft into complex workings, some of which might be on the Lower Riddleswood Day Level, the entrance of which (13) is collapsed. Further up the hill is a collapsed adit (15) which connected with an inclined shaft (16). Part of this adit has been driven through the brow of the hill on a thin vein. The shaft has been descended 110ft to the Upper Day Level. Into the hill, it ends after a short distance at a blind heading, with a side passage to the left following the cauter vein seen on the hill top. In the other direction, it leads to a collapse near surface, with some small stopes.

The Mud Vein workings have not been investigated but are expected to be under water. Some opencasting has been done on this vein and at least two shafts (20 & 21) have been filled by the farmer over the years.

KNOLLS MINE

SO374974 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Barytes

An adit 500 yards north-west of Squilver Farm has now collapsed. Another adit, 600 yards west of the farm, has an obvious spoil tip and can be entered by squeezing over a pile of earth at the entrance. It leads after 50 yards into a stope at right-angles to the adit, after passing through a fault plane halfway along. The strata on both sides of the fault appear to be red Longmyndian Sandstones. The stope is about 30 yards long and 40ft high. At its far end the barytes vein is replaced by a clay plug, along which an adit has been driven for a few yards to a blind heading.

LADYWELL MINE

Plan 16

SO328992 Last visited :1996 Minerals : Lead

Ladywell Pit (11) has collapsed. Air Shaft (12) is situated in a large spoil heap and is open with trees growing out of the top. It was descended in 1993 to a rubble blockage at 230ft.

New Engine Shaft (13) has been capped and even the 2" air pipe left through the capping is blocked. The engine house is still standing and shows an unusual design worthy of preservation. It is set back from the shaft so the pump cannot have operated in the normal way. The same engine also drove the winding gear.

First Roman Shaft (15), on the Wood Level, is amongst the trees but has been filled. Second Roman Shaft (16), is brick-lined and in good condition, though blocked to near surface with corrugated iron and rubbish. Other shafts (14) in Ladywell Plantation are blocked with spoil.

LLANYMYNECH MINE

Plan 5

SJ266222 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Copper, Lead, Zinc

Parts of this area were worked for copper by the Romans and they may even date from as early as the Bronze Age. Working continued intermittently for lead and zinc until the 19th century, so this must be the longest worked site in the area.

The entrance to the Ogof (1) is relatively wide but the passages inside soon become narrow and winding, apart from a chamber at the bottom of the fenced shaft (2). Although there are some natural sections, most of the passages have been mined. The Ogof is the oldest working and artifacts, coins and bones have been found inside over the years.

To the north is an open 19th century adit (3) which leads to the bottom of earlier stope workings. South-west are some smaller workings which are very difficult to find.

LEIGH LEVEL

Plan 1

SJ331035 Last Visited : 1996 Drainage Level

This was originally meant to drain East Roman Gravels, Roman Gravels, Ladywell and Grit Mines but it only reached to just beyond Batholes. The level entrance is open in a wood and a small flow of water issues. Tree roots are pushing out the arching at the entrance and this may cause collapse in the near future. There are small shafts offset from the level at 350 yards and 750 yards from the portal but both are filled to surface. There is believed to be another air shaft south of these but it has not yet been located at surface.

The level is completely blocked at 1,100 yards by the infilled Blue Barn Shaft. Milne Shaft near Batholes was capped with concrete in 1967 but there are local rumours that there is a stable block at the bottom of it. There is bad air in this level and recent exploration has only been possible with breathing apparatus.

MADDOX COPPICE MINE

SJ382031 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Lead

This was an extensive trial by the Snailbeach Company. The drainage level is a water supply and should not be entered without prior permission from the farm. It goes in for about 50 yards to a fall.

The upper adit, after a fall 50 yards in, reaches the vein after 100 yards. It ends in a blind heading after a further 30 yards but there are crosscuts left and right at the vein. The right hand passage follows the vein for about 40 yards to a blind heading. After 20 yards, a crosscut to the left runs under a loose roof to a pool 15ft long and 17ft deep. On the other side of the pool the passage continues 10 yards to a winze and a blind heading. With the exception of the upper reaches of the left hand passage, the whole mine is under 3ft of water.

MEADOWTOWN MINE

SJ314015 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Lead

There is an adit on the west of a stream next to a hut, with the spoil tip on the other side of the stream. The entrance has been dammed with earth to provide a water supply. Old maps show a shaft to the north but this has not yet been visited.

MEDLICOTT MINE

SO400946 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Copper

A shaft behind Medlicott Farm is filled. There is an adit in the valley bottom to the north which is collapsed but the spoil heap is quite large and contains much malachite-stained rock. Murchison describes the mine as having been worked by the Snailbeach Company.

MYNDTOWN MINE

SO389888 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Copper

There is a collapsed adit with a small tip below the road but it was probably only a trial. A rock outcrop above the road shows traces of malachite.

MYTTONSBEACH MINE

Plan 17

SJ369005 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Lead

There is an open adit (2) on top of a large tip and this goes in for 50yds to a blind heading. It is connected to an open shaft (1) further up the hillside which is offset and appears to continue below water level. An 8" pumping main is present and this may have been operated by an engine sited in the building ruins just to the east of the tip.

Further up the valley, there is a grilled open shaft (3) on the hillside to the left. This is inclined and has been descended 60ft to a choke of decaying refuse. There is a possibility of it having led to workings beneath the valley floor. An adit (4) on the opposite side of the valley is now choked with debris and flooded but has been explored for 80yds to a blind heading. The body of a tipper truck lies just down the valley from the first adit.

NEW VENTURE MINE

Plan 17

SO367999 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Lead

The entrance of Deep Level (5) is gated but it is blocked by a fall a short distance inside, corresponding to a collapsed shaft (6) on the hillside above. In the past, this adit has been explored to beyond the shaft until progress was halted by a further fall. There are the remains of mine buildings adjacent to the entrance.

There is an open air shaft (7) in the wood to the north which has been explored to a blockage at 90ft. Just to the north-west of this is a grilled adit (8) which goes in 15ft to a right turn and is then blocked.

Further up the valley is a shaft (9) which has been capped with concrete. This has been descended 300ft to water at the bottom and is assumed to have led to Deep Level. Adjacent to the top is the base of the winding engine. There are several collapsed adits and buildings in the valley leading up to the col, where there is a collapsed shaft and tips. There is now no trace of an adit (10) found here in 1960 which led to a 40ft deep stope. A short adit at the bottom of this led to a deep winze which was not descended.

NICK KNOLLS MINE

SJ343008 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Barytes

The engine house has been completely flattened and is difficult to distinguish. All underground entrances are now blocked but were explored in 1965. No.1 Adit was explored for 50yds to a stope that was 25ft high with signs of galena at the top. A timbered winze 10ft deep was present about 10yds in. A nearby open stope was descended for 30ft to a level with a collapsed entrance. This went for a short distance to a blind heading. A side passage to the right went for a short distance with four branches, all blind. Further down the hillside is a collapsed drainage level which issues water.

NIPSTONE MINE

Plan 2

SO354969 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

Nipstone Level (12) is on the west of the road with a large tip. It appears to be used as a water supply but it was described as collapsed on previous visits. It has been explored for 100 yards to a stope, in which the water level used to fluctuate by at least 60ft. This was surprising since the workings are drained by the Boat Level. The stope was descended during a dry period and a drop of 40ft led to a rubble slope ending in water, the chamber at this point being 15ft wide and 60ft high. The water was dived for 20ft to a 5ft square level leading off.

To the east of the road is a deep opencut (13) but no apparent adits off. Further south is a collapsed adit (14).

NORBURY MINE

SO359943 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Copper

Old maps show 3 shafts to the west of the track near Clapper Farm but there is no obvious trace other than various areas of gruffy ground. A local shepherd had no knowledge of the shafts, which were visited by E C Gray in 1921, but knew that copper mining had taken place in the area. To the north-east, on the other side of the track, there is a collapsed adit where a few pieces of barytes were found.

Murchison refers to workings at Norbury in Palaeozoic slaty rocks and Dines also refers to such rocks but Norbury Hill is clearly composed of red Longmyndian sandstones. Greig et al have suggested that these descriptions may refer to workings in Shuttocks Wood. It is most unlikely that Murchison would describe these distinctive sandy rocks as Palaeozoic slates. The mystery remains unsolved.

PENNERLEY MINE

Plan 8

SO353989 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Barytes, Lead, Silver, Zinc

Most of the buildings have collapsed and the area has been tidied up after use as a scapyard, so all that remains is acres of stony rubble. Engine Shaft (1) and Gin Shaft (2) to the west of the road have both been filled. Blands Shaft (3) to the east of the road has also been filled.

PENTIRVIN MINE

SJ330015 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Lead

There is an open adit with a large tip but it has been dammed with concrete to form a water supply.

PERKINSBEACH MINE

Plan 17

SO364997 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Barytes, Lead

Maddox Shaft (11) is blocked and Deep Level (12) is collapsed.

To the east of Deep Level are two open adits (13 & 14) and another (15) to the west of these which has collapsed. One of the former led into the bottom of a stope seen breaking out above but it was rather loose and full of dead sheep. Vein workings can be easily traced up the hillside and the next entrance up (16) is a 15ft drop into a small stope. The highest entrance (17) is a short adit leading to a winze 80ft deep, with no way out at the bottom.. These two adits were called Lewis's Exploration on an old map.

The vein can be followed over the top of the hill by traces of opencuts and collapsed shafts. Nearby are the remains of the booster station of an aerial cableway which ran from Bog Mine to Minsterley. Associated with this are two tower bases further north, the second one below a cutting excavated for buckets to clear the lip of the hill when descending.

PIM HILL MINE

SJ488215 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Cobalt, Copper, Vanadium

A partly filled entrance leads to an adit which ends at a shaft. There may have been other ways on but these have been blocked by infill. Nearby are two filled shafts.

PITCHOLDS MINE

SO330929 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Lead

An open adit in a quarry has been dammed for a water supply. Just above is another open adit but this does not go far and was probably a short trial.

POTTERS PIT MINE

Plan 19

SO355993 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Lead

The main shaft (7) is blocked and a large amount of the tip has been removed as a source of aggregate. This uncovered a small but substantial building which may be the remains of an engine, although it is set back from the shaft.

An adit (6) close to the road is called Goodest (Good as) Tuesday Vein. After a short distance, 3 holes in the floor lead into a stope. Several small crosscuts from the adit are blind and have been partially backfilled. The stope extends horizontally for 350ft and has been descended 300ft to water. It is believed to connect with the Boat Level, which is now flooded. The entrance to the adit is used for watering cows and access is not encouraged.

REDNAL MINE

SJ367247 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Copper

The foundations of the engine house can be seen next to the filled shaft. To the east, on the other side of the road, is an open trial adit which can be followed 100 yards to a collapse. This used to go a lot further but the weight of a tractor caused the collapse some years ago.

RHADLEY MINE

Plan 20

SO344957 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Lead

The opencast (5) on top of the hill has been bulldozed almost flat. The main adit (1) is open on a large tip by the side of the track. There is approximately 1ft of water on the floor and it goes some distance past a clay blockage to a brick wall, beyond which the stopes have collapsed. In front of this is a 36ft winze leading to a short drivage.

There are two adjacent adits (2 & 3) open to the south, which connect inside. Stopes descend to complex lower workings. Further up the hill (4) is a collapsed adit. A very long tip to the north-west has a collapsed adit (8) at the end and the remains of a compressor house. This was a trial driven in 1920s to search for veins.

On the south of the hill is an open adit (6) and an adjacent collapsed adit (7).

RIDGE HILL MINE

Plan 21

SO279980 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

The mine is reached by following the track leading North from Hagley Farm. To the west is the shaft (1), now blocked with scrap iron and beginning to crown. Adjacent to this is the base of the winding engine and concrete footings for processing machinery. A vertical girder construction next to the winding engine was associated with a farm generator operated by a gas engine earlier this century. The incline shaft is believed to be sunk in the floor of the adit (2), the entrance of which is assumed to be represented by the collapse depression a short distance south-east of the shaft. An adjacent adit (3) is on a branch vein and only goes in a few yards.

RITTON CASTLE MINE

Plan 22

SO341977 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Lead

The remains of the pumping engine house and chimney are hidden amongst the trees and both badly deteriorating. The adjacent oval engine shaft (1) is open to a blockage a short way down but has good ginging.

In the valley below to the east is the winding shaft (2), open to water 10ft down. It has been suggested that the adjacent masonry structure is possibly the base of a waterwheel for winding in the shaft. A trial shaft (3) in a side valley to the south-east is blocked a short way down. The climbing shaft (4) to the north is open to water a few feet down, with opencut workings just to the east. There are larger opencut workings above on the opposite bank, behind a shed. At the back of these is a badly covered stopehead (5). This has been descended to a 20ft stope but a rotting carcass prevented further exploration.

North of the climbing shaft is a collapsed adit (6) on the west bank of the stream and an open arched adit (7) on the opposite bank. This is collapsed 15 yards in and there are signs of a collapsed air shaft on the hillside above. It has been suggested that this was the original drainage level for Bog Mine. Upstream are the remains of a large dam which may have supplied water for ore dressing and possibly a waterwheel.

ROCK MINE

Plan 18

SO347963 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Barytes, Lead

The remains of the dressing floors and a circular pond are present just below the road. Two adits (1 & 2) enter the hillside from here but both are blocked, although a stream of water issues from one of them. On the other side of the road, just below The Rock, is the open main shaft (3). This has been descended 220ft to water. A deep stope leads off 50ft down and, further down, a level leads off but it has not been entered as it is on the wrong side of the shaft for safe descent. At the bottom, levels lead off in both directions along a vein. A length of rising main protrudes from a sump at the shaft bottom. Just to the south-west of this shaft is a small collapsed shaft (4). The adjacent tips are very large with much galena.

A short distance towards Rock Cottage is another shaft (5) blocked with rubbish and the adjacent building may have housed a winding engine. In the opposite direction, near the remains of another cottage, is a small blocked shaft (6).

On the east side of The Rock, at the edge of the wood, is a collapsed adit (7) and large spoil tip with remains of associated buildings. A collapsed shaft (8) to the west is on the line of the adit.

ROMAN BOUNDARY MINE

Plan 1

SJ333002 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Lead

The site can be recognised as a bench halfway up Gravelsbank. The shaft (27) has been capped.

ROMAN GRAVELS MINE

Plan 16

SO334998 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead, Silver, Zinc

This mine site was used for demolition practice during the Second World War, hence little remains of the buildings. The remains of a pumping enginehouse can be seen on the east side of the road and this pumped from Old Engine Shaft (5), now completely crowned. The footings of a horizontal winder for this shaft are also present. Behind the engine house, the back walls of two ore bins can be seen and, above these, the partly-filled entrance of Day Level (6). It is possible to squeeze into the top of a loose stope which has been backfilled. A crawl up this leads to an open exit 20ft above (7). The course of Day Level can be traced up the hillside as a series of collapse depressions to New Engine Shaft (8), which is completely filled. In 1964, remains of a pump rod protruded from this shaft but these have now slipped down.

To the north is Boundary Shaft (4). It was open in 1960 but the tip has since been pushed down it, although subsidence is continuing. This shaft, although on First North Vein which branches off Roman Vein, was worked by the California Engine of East Roman Gravels Mine. Below Boundary Shaft are two others (1 & 2) on Second North Vein. One of these is flooded to within 6ft of surface, while the other is blocked 25ft down. This was descended 40ft in 1964 to the top of a deep stope, described as unpleasantly loose. There was an adit in this area (3) which was explored in 1964 to a waterfilled stope but this was not found.

Following the track from New Engine Shaft to Ladywell, a small ginged shaft (9) on the Sawpit Vein can be seen on the left. It is blocked with rubbish at 90ft, with a small chamber and fault rift 75ft down. Further to the south, down the hillside is Spring Vein Pit (10). This large shaft is still open and the ditch along which the flat rods ran can still be seen. A video camera was lowered down here in 1993 and it was found to be flooded with no passages off above water level.

Roman Gravels Mine is known to have been worked opencast by the Romans around 120 AD. Three sets of opencast are present - a small one just to the north of Old Engine Shaft on First North Vein, a very large one 50yds to the south on Roman Vein and another small one 70yds further on Sawpit Vein.

The Hope Brook can be followed up the valley to the Roman Gravels tips, where it issues from a culvert. This is about 5ft across, with stone walls and a brick arched roof. For most of its 200yds length it is about 4½ft high with a paved floor. One 24" culvert (explored for 100ft until it narrowed) enters from the right about 100 yds along, before a collapse of the brickwork has allowed large rocks to block it. Most of the water enters a seepage on the left. The culvert is decorated with white stalactites up to 2ft long, with stalagmite columns up to 9 inches high.

RORRINGTON MINE

Plan 23

SO305998 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Lead

The grilled portal of Deep Level (1) is open to the west of the track and water flows from here along a leat into the stream. A short distance in there is a filled shaft offset to the right of the level, this corresponds to a depression (2) on surface next to a track. Air Shaft (3) is 150yds from the entrance and there is an obstruction in the level due to attempts to fill the shaft, the infill having fallen away to a height of 20ft up the shaft. At surface, the shaft is open to a depth of 30ft due to settling of the infill. The level continues to the base of the filled No.1 Shaft, at which point it turns left. The passage then leads to stoping on No.3 Vein which is very loose and the source of the large amount of water in the mine. The main passage continues and, in 1964, contained rotting timber which had to be cleared before access was gained to a second stope, on No.1 Vein. Numerous formations of ochre and hydrozincite occur in these workings. A clay dam is eventually reached, beyond which the water reaches the roof. Attempts to remove this dam have not been successful. There is bad air in the far reaches of these workings and breathing apparatus is required.

To the south-east of Air Shaft, there are the masonry remains of a waterwheel and dressing floor. To the east of these are two parallel veins running up the hillside, which have been worked by open cut methods. There are three adits (4-6) driven on the veins but all are collapsed a short distance in. An open shaft (7) part way up the hillside leads to some workings the other side of one of the adits.

Engine Shaft (8) is situated in the middle of a large spoil tip to the west and has collapsed to leave a large crater. Just to the north of this is a line of open cut workings and a collapsed shaft (9), as well as a short masonry arched tunnel for which the purpose is unknown.

A track leads south-west down the hillside to the site of No.1 Shaft (10) which is filled. Across the stream to the west was a stopehead (11), which has now been capped. There are three short trial adits (12-14) just south of this and some open vein workings in the hillside. Further south, on the left side of the dingle, is another short adit (15). No.2 Shaft (16) appears to have been filled and ploughed over in the field to the west.

ROUNDHILL MINE

Plan 19

SO351995 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead, Silver

The mine buildings have now been built on by a bungalow and coal yard. To south of these is the collapsed main shaft (9) in a large crater. There are opencut workings (10) south of this and old bellpits (11) on top of the hill to the west of the opencut. North-west of the main shaft is a collapsed adit (12) and east of this is a collapsed shaft (13). Deep Level (8) is easily identified from its large tip but it is collapsed.

ROUNDTAIN MINE

SO292947 Last visited : 1979 Minerals : Barytes

An obvious spoil tip is present behind the house "Green Acres". At the top of this is an adit which follows a vein for 50yds. Sleeper impressions are present in the floor but no stopping was seen. The area is somewhat gruffy, perhaps from quarrying.

SALLIES MINE

Plan 24

SJ396001 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes

The site is marked by a small spoil tip and several concrete footings for buildings and machinery. The brick magazine is well preserved but the concrete cap of the shaft (2) is split and beginning to tilt. The foundations of the headgear can still be seen. There appears to be a collapsed trial adit (5) next to the shaft.

The main adit (1) is open but blocked by a timber gate since it is used as water supply. It heads south-east for 60yds to a narrow vein. A short passage to the left ends in a blind heading, while to the right a pile of backfill has raised the water level to within a few inches of the roof. The main adit crosses another vein just inside the portal. Workings on this end after a few yards on the right, while to the left are a series of flooded winzes in the floor, with the passage continuing beyond. Below water level there is extensive stopping. On the hillside above are two filled shafts (3 & 4) which connected with the workings.

A small hole (6) on the right of the track, 45 yards north of the ford, leads into a collapsed adit. There seems to be a spoil tip for this on the opposite side of the stream.

SANTLEY TRIAL

SJ342003 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Lead

The main shaft has been filled with the tip material. A smaller shaft about 50ft lower down the hillside is also filled.

SHELVE MINE

SO339991 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Lead

A large spoil heap marks the site of More Shaft, sunk as a trial between the wars. It has completely collapsed. To the north-east is the silted up entrance to a stone arched adit with a long spoil tip, which may have drained the workings. It was open in 1964, when it was found to be filled to within 30" of the roof with thick grey mud and was not fully explored. An air shaft to the south-east, on the other side of the track, is collapsed.

SHELVE POOL MINE

SO332979 Last visited : 1960 Minerals : Barytes

The shaft and both adits are blocked.

SHELVE TRIAL

SO331986 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Lead

There is an open adit with a concrete step and 3ft deep water behind. It has not been explored.

SHIPTON MINE

SO563922 Last visited : 1979 Minerals : Lead

The 6ft high entrance is normally semi-flooded by a pond. The passage slopes downwards but ends at a fall after 55 yards, at this point the height is 4ft 6 inches with 3ft of water. The fall has been bypassed and water pumped out to reveal that the passage continued for a further 100ft. It was not explored beyond this point since it still sloped downward and the air space was too small. A shaft marked on the map has not been found.

SHUTTOCKS WOOD MINE

SO373923 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Copper

There is a collapsed shaft on the right of a track through the wood. In the southern edge of the wood is an opencut with a depression at the western end. Water flows into a hole here but this may be a land drain.

SNAILBEACH MINE

SJ375822 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead, Silver, Zinc

Plan 25

This was the largest and most productive metalliferous mine in the county and it consequently has an impressive collection of both surface remains and accessible underground workings. Much of the site has been acquired by Shropshire County Council and they have preserved many of the buildings. Extensive work has also been undertaken to infill shallow underground workings near the village and on the high ground to the east. Parking is restricted so use the car park next to the village hall.

In front of the car park are the large tips which were once white and thus a local landmark. These have now been landscaped and planted to prevent pollution. To the north, at the base of the tips, are several round buddles (1) which have only recently been uncovered. To the south-west of the village hall is Scott Level (2), which is a gridded and stone arched adit leading under the road towards Resting Hill and eventually towards Crowsnest Dingle.

On climbing the road up to Lordshill, the first building encountered is the Halvans engine house (4). This was constructed in 1900 and housed a horizontal engine to process the tips for barytes. The road then climbs past the tips to the level of the dressing floors (5) and on the left can be seen an area of exposed spoil that has been retained for amateur geologists. Next to this is the ore house (6) and a tunnel (7) under the road which allowed the ore to be conveyed from the dressing floor to the start of the tramway to the smeltnworks. East of this is the filled Black Tom Shaft (8), which has been filled to within 6ft of the top and gridded. The headframe has been stored for future reconstruction and the wooden engine shed (9) has been preserved. Several other features from the dressing plant can be found nearby, as well as a filled adit (10). To the east is Paraffin Level (11) which has been gridded and filled a short distance inside.

On the other side of the road, several buildings remain in fair condition. By far the most impressive of these is the compressor house (12) and its chimney, erected in 1881. Between this and the miners' dry (14) is the gridded portal of Day Level (13), which leads to Lordshill Shaft and out of which ore was trammed to the crusher house (15). Next to the dry is the engine house (16) that served Georges Shaft (17), now filled to within 6ft of the top and gridded. Behind the engine house, was a reservoir (18) to serve the boilers. The headframe of Georges Shaft has also been stored for future reconstruction but the remains of the cage stand nearby. Adjacent to the shaft is a blacksmiths shop (19, built onto the side of an old pumping engine house (20). Next to this is the mine office (21), which contained documents now deposited in the County Record Office, and the engine shed (22) for the locomotives that used to run on the Snailbeach District Railway. This line, which had a gauge of 2ft 4 inches, was built in 1877 and connected the mine to Minsterley.

Some way up the hillside is the massive structure of Lordshill engine house (23) and the smaller buildings of the winding engine (24) and boiler house (25). The gridded Engine Shaft (26) is just in front of the engine house and to the side is the space (27) where the balance bob used to sit. The shaft was descended for 420ft in 1993 to a rubble blockage at the 112 Yard Level. It was possible to squeeze into the level itself but water met the roof after about 650ft. Further up the hill is the tall chimney (28) that served both the Lordshill boilers and the smeltnmill flue. Small sections of the flue can be followed some way down the hillside. The smeltnmill itself has been turned into a farm and there was little left to see in 1964. At the top of the valley is the reservoir (29) that served the dressing floors. The valves are situated in a small brick building (30) below the reservoir. To the south are the remains of the magazine (31) which is a square stone building with double walls to direct any blast upwards. To the west is a section of the railway loop (32) that took coal up to Lordshill engine house. To the east is the remains of a processing shed (33) with a jaw crusher and several kibbles.

Some distance away in Hope Valley is the portal of Wagbeach Level, the drainage level of the mine. Here are the remains of a waterwheel pit used to drive a dressing mill for barytes from Cliffdale Mill. Contrary to popular opinion, the water was not driven by water from the level. At an early stage of the working of Snailbeach, this wheel drove the pumps to drain the mine. Wagbeach Level has been explored some distance in waist deep water to a blockage. This has been dug through to reveal a second blockage and a third, although water still flows freely through. These have been caused by infilling of the air shafts.

Entry to the underground workings is possible in several ways. In Scott Level there were two dams, one being a concrete dam to chest depth approximately 100ft from the entrance. This was installed to provide a water supply for a number of properties around the entrance. There was a more substantial dam approximately 200 yards from the entrance. This consisted of large wooden sleepers arranged as a 'V' pointing into the level, backed by around 12" of clay, held in place by a wall of bricks. A 6" metal pipe leads from this dam to a shaft up to Resting Hill and it is thought that Scott Level was dammed here to provide a water supply for surface processing at the mine. Part way up, the water pipe was diverted via another level and carried out to surface. The shaft on Resting Hill (3) now has a grill covering it but the pipes are still in place in the shaft and along the level to surface.

Both dams have now been completely breached by contractors on behalf of the County Council and it is possible to explore further. The level is very straight and without any side passages for approximate 500 yards beyond the dam. About 20ft before the end of this level, there is a branch to the left which has only been explored for about 100ft before the low oxygen level prevented further exploration. At the end of the main drive, the level turns left where it follows a vein which has been worked to some extent. This branch has been followed for a further 300 yards before the low oxygen level stopped further progress. A short distance along this branch, there is a short cross-cut to the right which leads to a flooded square shaft. There is another right hand cross-cut slightly further on but this has yet to be explored.

Perkins Level (34) leads in 50yds under a small capped air shaft to a junction. Turning right leads to a stope in a barytes vein, with a passage continuing to several blind headings. Straight on at the junction leads to a bridge over the top of a stope. Beyond the bridge, the bottom of a large stope is reached and this is accessed by two shafts from surface, known as Sheep Shaft (35) and Paint Shaft (36). Back at the bridge, a descent leads eventually to the 40 Yard Level with several artefacts including trucks, tools, etc. A cross cut from here leads to Chapel Shaft (37). A further descent is possible to the 112 Yard Level, which is the current water level in the mine and where the Wagbeach Level connects.

Adjacent to Perkins Level is another boarded up adit (38) which is used as a water supply. It goes 30yds to a fall. Another adit (39) only goes in a short way and yet another adit (40) leads to a fork and ends in two blind headings. There were once open stopes on top of the hill (41) but these have been filled and landscaped. Yew Tree Level is over the hill but has not been visited. Chapel Shaft (37) is adjacent to a small chapel and is gridded. Nearby are the remains of the engine house (42) and boiler with a flue that ran up the hillside to a stub chimney (43). A trial adit east of here goes for 100ft to right angled turn to the right, then a further 50ft to a blind heading. There is waist deep water for most of the way.

SOUTH ROMAN GRAVELS MINE

SO342996 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead

This mine is marked by a large spoil heap adjacent to Shelfield Farm. The shaft is completely blocked and the engine house is only just distinguishable. There is what appears to be a collapsed shaft to the west, next to a stone quarry. Old maps show another shaft and an adit to the east but these have not been looked for.

SQUILVER MINE

SO377974 Last visited : 1964 Minerals : Barytes

A short adit was found which has not been re-visited.

SQUILVER HILL MINE

SO327932 Last visited : 1993 Minerals : Lead

The adit entrance has been completely buried by quarry spoil tipped down the hillside. Old maps show a shaft to the south-west but this has not been visited.

STAPELEY MINE

SO309992 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Lead

There is an open adit on the hillside which ends at a fall. This corresponds with several collapsed shafts further uphill. Another adit further down is blocked and used as a water supply.

TANKERVILLE MINE

Plan 19

SO355994 Last visited : 1997 Minerals : Barytes, Calcite, Lead, Silver, Zinc

Ovenpipe Shaft (2) is located in the middle of a farmyard next to the old Count House and is completely blocked. Nearby are the remains of the small engine house that worked it and a chimney. At the rear of the new barn is an arched tunnel which used to house the balance bob for the capped Watson's Shaft (1). This is the deepest shaft in the orefield at 1690ft and is blocked a short distance down. A recent descent found a level just above the blockage which connects to both Ovenpipe and New Shafts. At the rear is the large engine house for the pumping engine and an octagonal chimney. Much of the area has been acquired by the Shropshire Mines Trust for preservation.

On the uphill side of the road, behind the cottage, was Lewis's Shaft (3), now filled and landscaped as part of a garden. What appears to be an open arched adit behind pottery is actually a potato store. A short open adit (4) on the hillside opposite to the pottery has a tight inclined drop of unknown depth. There is said to be a shaft on the site of the workshop next to the pottery which has been filled. New Shaft (5) is located a short distance along the road to Bog on the right hand side. It has trees growing out of the top and there is an engine base adjacent. It was descended in 1993 to a blockage at 200ft. The path to it leads across the dam of the mine reservoir.

WATERCRESS LEVEL

SO348998 Last visited : 1995 Drainage Level

The entrance issues water and can be followed for about 100 yards to where it is blocked with gravel infill which appears to have been washed in. It is rumoured to drain Pennerley Mine but is more likely to have been connected with Tankerville Mine.

WEST MIDDLETOWN MINE

Plan 3

SJ300128 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : China clay

This mine extracted a white clay which was sold to the pottery industry. Current remains are being quarried away but adits (18) could be seen in the quarry face.

WESTCOTT MINE

Plan 15

SJ403015 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Copper

The main part of this mine around the engine house, boiler house and shaft (22) has been landscaped into a garden for Westcott Birches. Pump rods used to stick out of the shaft but it has now been filled with rubbish. Two adjacent adits (23 & 24) have collapsed but one was explored in 1960, when it went a short distance to flooded stopes leading down.

South of the garden, there are two open adits east of the track (25 & 26) but neither goes very far. Further on is a collapsed adit (27) west of the track and the main adit (28) east of the track. This goes to a junction where stopping on a vein extends to the right and left. To the right is a flooded winze, beyond which a shaft (29) leads to surface. To the left, the passage crosses over two flooded winzes and ends at a blind heading. A sloping stope leads up but does not go far. Further up the hillside is an open stope (30) and two collapsed shafts (31 & 32).

To the west of the road is the tip of a collapsed shaft (33) and a collapsed trial adit (34).

WILDERLEY MINE

Plan 11

SJ412005 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Copper

The two shafts (1 & 2) on the main site have been filled with rubbish. The foundations of the engine shed and office building can be distinguished but the most obvious feature is the cracked concrete reservoir.

The drainage level (3) is in the bottom of the valley to the north. There is a large tip but the entrance has been dammed as a water supply. To the south-west is a small collapsed trial adit (4). There was an extension of the light railway which ran from the Cothercott Mill and this can be followed for most of its course. It was originally intended to extend this to Wrenthall Mine but it didn't get much further beyond the drainage level. What appears to be a lower spur line ends suddenly and may have finished because they couldn't get permission to follow the direct line through a smallholding. The higher course has to perform a loop through a cutting and embankment to avoid the smallholding. The body of an old tipping truck lies by the line here but there are plans to recover it for preservation.

WIXHILL MINE

SJ558286 Last visited : 1994 Minerals : Copper

A shaft to the east of the road has been partly filled and capped with concrete but is flooded to near surface. Higher up the hillside to the north-east is an open adit which follows a vein for a short distance. Near the entrance to this is a filled shaft. Further north is another short adit.

WOOD LEVEL

SJ337007 Last visited : 1996 Drainage Level

Plan 1

This was driven to drain East Roman Gravels, Roman Gravels, Ladywell and Grit Mines. The entrance (8) has a concrete dam with a 9 inch slot from which the water issues. Nearby is the original portal which collapsed many years ago and a collapsed air shaft (9) right next to the road. South-east of the road is a line of four air shafts (10-13) either filled or blocked part way down.

WOTHERTON MINE

SJ277005 Last visited : 1996 Minerals : Barytes, Copper

Plan 10

The winding engine house on Old Engine Shaft (2) remains almost complete and has been converted to a dwelling, although the cut out for a wheel can be seen in one corner. The shaft has been filled and the big boggy depression between here and the road is probably due to collapsed workings. To the west is a ruined building next to New Engine Shaft (1) which may have housed a pumping engine. This shaft has also been filled, as has a climbing shaft (3) to the east.

WRETNALL MINE

SJ4170312 Last visited : 1995 Minerals : Barytes

Plan 26

To the west of the road is a filled shaft (2) and an adjacent filled stopehead (3). Further west is an adit (1) in a cutting which has been dammed as a water supply.

East of the road, next to the footpath, is a collapsed shaft (4) and a collapsed associated adit (5). South of the stream, two adits (6 & 7) have collapsed. Further south-west is a drainage adit (8) which has collapsed but is issuing water.

North of the stream is a line of three flooded shafts (9 & 11-12) and a shallow grided shaft (10) which has not been explored. Higher up the hillside is a large opencut working (13) with a short adit (14) exiting the eastern end. Sited here was the processing mill, with part of the wall and the machinery footings still visible. East of this is another flooded shaft (15) with an inclined tramway heading up the hillside to a loop which ends at a collapsed adit (16). This connected through to a large open working and the other entrance (17) is still open. The passage heads south-west for a short distance to where it has collapsed, leaving it open to surface. East of here is a filled shaft (19) and an open shaft (20) which is 18ft deep to water. In the valley bottom is a collapsed drainage level (18) which still issues water.

MINE PLANS

Plan 1 - Batholes, East Roman Gravels, Roman Boundary Mines & Wood Level

Plan 7 - Central Snailbeach Mine

Plan 8 - Pennerley Mine

Plan 9 - Cliffdale Mine

Plan 10 - Wotherton & East Wotherton Mines

Pumping & Winding Engines

Georges Shaft, Snailbeach Mine 1895

Plan 17 - Myttonsbeach, New Venture & Perkinsbeach Mines

Plan 18 - Rock Mine

Plan 21 - Ridge Hill Mine

Plan 22 - Ritton Castle Mine

SOME MYSTERIES

There are several cases where there is a reference to a mine site but, to date, either the exact location has not been found or the site has not been visited yet to confirm what is there. In a number of cases it is possible to identify the general area to within a 1 kilometre grid square or better but there is no guarantee of any accuracy. These examples are included here for interest, in the hope that they may stimulate the reader to find out more. Any sites which are subsequently identified will be included in the main gazetteer in future editions of this publication.

BENREE MINE SO3498 Minerals : Lead

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft.

BLACKWOOD MINE SO5191 Minerals : Lead

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly an adit.

CHURCH STOKE TRIAL SO2994 Minerals : Barytes

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly an adit.

CWMDWLA MINE SO291965 Minerals : Barytes

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly an adit.

HAZELOR MINE SO462929 Minerals : Copper

This site has not yet been visited. There was a reference in the 19th century to the shaft infill being dug out in the search for a missing body. This indicates that it was worked at an earlier period.

HEATHMYND MINE SO3393 Minerals : Lead

This site has not been confirmed but one possibility is that it is the eastern workings of the Cefn Gunthly complex. This is not certain, however, and there may be a shaft or adit elsewhere on Heathmynd.

HOGSTOW HALL TRIAL SJ361014 Minerals : Lead

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft.

LINLEY MINE SO3493 Minerals : Lead

This site has not yet been visited. It is believed to contain remains of surface lead workings from the Roman period.

NETHER HEATH MINE SO3600 Minerals : Copper

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft.

RATLINGHOPE TRIAL SO396963 Minerals : Copper

A fenced area can be seen from the road and looks like a shaft. It has not yet been visited to see if anything is open.

VENUSBANK TRIAL SJ352011 Minerals : Lead

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft.

WESTON HEATH TRIAL SJ5527 Minerals : Copper

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft.

WHITCLIFFE MINE

SO5074

Minerals : Lead

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft and adit.

WHITTINGSLOW TRIAL

SO429894

Minerals : N/K

This site has not yet been visited. There is possibly a shaft.

YORTON MINE

SJ499238

Minerals : Copper

There is a record of a 150ft deep shaft by the side of the road. The site has been visited twice but there is no obvious sign of the shaft at surface. A ground disturbance has now been identified on an aerial photograph and it is planned to investigate further.

GEOLOGY OF THE SOUTH SHROPSHIRE ORE DEPOSITS

John Heathcote

Stratigraphy

Within the orefield, rocks ranging in age from Precambrian to Upper Carboniferous can be found. Of these, Precambrian and Ordovician rocks are sources of the metalliferous ores, while Carboniferous rocks have yielded coal for smelting. A stratigraphical succession is given in Fig.1 and the outcrop pattern is shown in Fig.2.

The earliest rocks in the area are the volcanics of Pontesford Hill. This limited outcrop is correlated with the more extensive Uriconian Volcanics of Church Stretton and the Wrekin. By analogy, the rocks of Pontesford Hill are probably older than 640 million years (Ma). They are overlain uncomfortably, ie with a time gap in which erosion and earth movement took place, by Longmyndian sediments which form the Long Mynd plateau and the ground to the west. The upper part of the Longmyndian comprises the thick purple sandstones of the Bayston-Oakwood Group, overlain by the more shaly Bridges Group. The whole has been folded double, so that the Bayston-Oakwood Group crops out along the summit of the Long Mynd, and also from Huglith to Linley, while the intervening valley is occupied by the Bridges Group.

Separated from the Longmyndian by the Pontesford-Linley Fault, the Upper Cambrian Habberley Shales occupy the country to the east of the Stiperstones. These black shales dip steeply west and are overlain uncomfortably by Ordovician strata, which make up the bulk of the orefield. The succession of these rocks is detailed in Fig.3. The structure of the area is complex, which leads to difficulties in interpretation, hence two sets of thicknesses are given. The interpretations differ mainly in their amounts of north-south faulting. The Stiperstones Quartzite crops out along the crest of the Stiperstones ridge and dips steeply west. It is succeeded by flaggy grits of the Tankerville and Mytton Flags and by the black Hope Shales. The area around Ritton Castle is occupied by the andesitic ashes of the Stapeley Volcanics, which form the core of a syncline. The Tankerville Flags and the Hope Shales reappear around the village of Shelve, where the former occupy the core of an anticline. These structures can be seen in Fig.4. Beyond this feature the rocks, consisting of an alternating sequence of shales, grits and volcanic ashes, dip steeply west. The Ordovician strata are cut by a series of north-westerly dip faults and north-north-easterly tear faults.

The Ordovician rocks are overlain by the Silurian Pentamerus Beds and Hughley Shales with pronounced unconformity. These rocks are for the most part purple silty shales, although typical Pentamerus Beds lithology is developed at Norbury. It is possible that much of the present area protruded from the Llandovery sea, because beach deposits of this age are found at the south end of the Long Mynd and also near the Wrekin. During the rest of the Silurian, a thick sequence of marine muds was probably deposited in the Shelve area, while to the east at Wenlock Edge a much thinner sequence of limestones was forming. There is no further evidence as to the geological history of the area until Upper Carboniferous (Westphalian) times. These rocks again rest with strong unconformity on the strata beneath. They consist of the Coed-yr-Allt Group, which contains the Thin, Yard and Half Yard coal seams with a total thickness of 6ft, and the non-productive Erbistock Beds, which are overlain by the Triassic Bunter Sandstones that underlie the North Shropshire Plain. No Permian strata are present and there are no post-Triassic deposits in the area other than drift.

Geological History

The history of the area is as complex as the stratigraphy and as difficult to decipher. The first recorded event is the deposit of the Uriconian Volcanics some time before 640 Ma. Before the beginning of the Cambrian, around 570 Ma, the Longmyndian rocks had received their present intense folding and further movement took place during this period before the deposition of the Habberley Shales in marine conditions. Also before the deposition of the Ordovician rocks spanning about 50 million years, followed soon after by their folding and faulting. Faulting in both observed directions is widespread and affects the Ordovician and Longmyndian rocks. Many of the fault fissures are filled with dolerite, which has been dated as late Ordovician and must certainly be pre-Silurian, since it is not found in these later rocks. The Pontesford-Linley Fault, which is related to the major Church Stretton line of weakness, also moved at this time.

After the transgression of the Silurian sea, the history of the area becomes less spectacular, as it is dominated by essentially vertical movements. Further small scale faulting, parallel to the Church Stretton fault system, affects all the rocks, showing that this was still active into the Triassic. Stratigraphic evidence suggests that the baryte deposits are post-Lower Carboniferous but pre-Triassic, while a single lead isotope date from galena (lead ore) gave a late Carboniferous/early Permian model age, so these are at least compatible.

Ore Deposits

The geology of the mineral veins of South Shropshire makes a fascinating, though frustrating, study. The available evidence indicates several unusual features although, as the mines closed many years ago, the deposits have not been and cannot be subjected to modern research methods to solve the problems. Hence the present account is based to a large extent on the description given by Dines in 1958.

On the basis of the minerals raised, the mining area can be divided from west to east into four regions :-

- 1) West of Corndon Hill, producing mainly baryte with a little galena.
- 2) Centred on the Hope Valley near Shelve, producing galena.
- 3) West side of the Stiperstones ridge, producing galena and baryte.
- 4) East of the Pontesford-Linley Fault, producing baryte and some copper.

Any theory of the origin of the ores has to explain this regional dependence in addition to the finer details observed in the individual mines.

All the ore bodies in the area are of the vein type, filling fissures cutting across the country rock. Very few of these fissures correspond to mappable faults, Roman Vein in region 2 and Hugelith Main Vein in region 4 being the main exceptions. With the exception of Snailbeach, many veins cut across faults and are unaffected by them, no faulting veins are known. In cases where veins are cut by a caunter vein as at Pennerley, this later vein does not offset the earlier ones. The veins are also later than the dykes which sometimes jointly occupy the fissures, as the ore solutions have sericitized (altered) the dyke rock. The availability of fissures was a major control on the ore deposition, as it can be seen that all worked deposits are found in flags, sandstones or volcanics. The shales in the area are barren as a consequence of movement in this rock type being accommodated by the formation of a soft clay plug, rather than a void. Many times when the mines were being worked, veins were found to pinch out on passing from flaggy to shaly strata.

The geographical distribution of the ore is probably explained by the presence of depth zonation. Detailed study shows that the zonation is arched about an axis running approximately north-north-east through Shelve. Since the area is divided into four potential ore bearing regions by the intervening shales, this can to a large extent explain the facts. Two parallel sets of depth zones occur, affecting the ore minerals galena and sphalerite (zinc ore), and the gangue minerals (not valuable for their metal content) calcite and baryte. Other minerals present are quartz (common), witherite (rare) and fluorite (rare). Pyrite is conspicuous by its absence. The zonation is such that galena occurs above sphalerite, and baryte above calcite. The baryte/calcite boundary occurs in the middle of the galena zone. The zone boundaries are not sharp, so the following is an idealised traverse downwards :-

galena/baryte
galena/baryte/calcite
galena calcite
galena/sphalerite/calcite.

The depositional sequence is similar to the zonation in that galena and sphalerite formed first, followed by calcite, then baryte. Quartz occurs throughout the zone sequence and is probably a late addition as it is found coating all the other minerals. Witherite and fluorite are restricted to the uppermost zone. The arrangement of zones is shown in Fig.5.

Little comment is called for except in region 4. This differs from the other regions in that the baryte is predominantly pink and that copper minerals are frequent. Hall in particular proposed a very complicated mechanism to account for this but this seems unnecessary. The baryte veins are quite crumbly and permeable, thus circulating groundwater over geological time could transfer some of the free iron oxide present in huge amounts in the Longmyndian rocks into the veins. The problem of the copper ores is discussed later.

Galena is rather rare outside the central regions, particularly in region 4. This is probably a function of wall rock interaction with the ore bearing fluids. If a source of metal-bearing fluids is assumed, some process or processes are required to bring the metals out of solution as ore minerals. A major cause is probably falling temperature but, superimposed on this, chemical reactions between the ore fluids and the surrounding rocks also have an effect. In Snailbeach Mine, the ore shoots (individual bodies of ore about 8ft wide and up to 300ft long) are described as pitching with the strata. This is almost certainly caused by wall rock interaction causing

precipitation opposite certain favourable beds of rock. No galena is present where the Snailbeach Vein passes into the Stiperstones Quartzite, even though the fissure is present in this rock. The pure quartz rock is most unlikely to have taken part in any reaction. The Longmyndian Sandstones were probably similarly unreactive when compared with the Mytton and Tankerville Flags, hence the lack of galena in region 4.

So far this account has been based on fact but now I drift into the realms of fantasy and try to deduce a mode of origin for the ores, from which to predict future discoveries. The presence of a marked depth zonation in a small area is reminiscent of the Cornish deposits, zoned around the various protruberances of the Cornubian granite batholith. On the basis of a single date (which is a very poor basis when the dating method is understood), the age of the Shropshire deposits is similar to that of Cornwall and also to the North Pennines. Having proposed that the deposit is caused by granite at depth, it becomes necessary to examine its implications. In Cornwall, a zone of chalcopyrite deposits occur but in Shropshire it has only been found at the White Grit Mine. Perhaps none of the mines went deep enough. The Cornish deposits are on a vast scale compared with Shropshire. It may be that the Silurian shales surrounding the area prevented ore deposition to the north, west and south, and that the deep structure of the Longmynd syncline stopped migration of fluid to the east, since apart from a few strings of baryte there are no ore minerals in the fractured rocks east of the Long Mynd.

The ore deposits of Shropshire show many differences from the ore deposits of Mid Wales, which are also in Ordovician strata. These latter deposits do not show the same zonation and their mineralogy is different. Baryte is not common, pyrite and chalcopyrite are frequently present and the galena is high in silver, around 20 oz/ton (the Shropshire average is only 2 oz/ton). The Welsh deposits have been dated from many samples as late Ordovician, which corresponds with the phase of folding and dyke injection that affected Wales and Shropshire. Deep burial would produce the ores, with no need to invoke a granite. However, there is evidence that the Ordovician rocks of Shropshire were not deeply buried during the late Carboniferous/early Permian when the ores may have formed.

The combination of baryte, no pyrite and galena low in silver is characteristic of the lead-zinc-limestone association found in the Pennines, north-east Wales and the Mendips. However, in the Shelve area there is no limestone. Hence the fascination of the Shropshire area, none of the three lead-zinc ore forming theories adequately accounts for the ores! Until a satisfactory theory can be proposed, it is impossible to predict future discoveries. The Mytton Flags appear to be the most favourable but the only unexplored area is that beneath the core of the Ritton Castle syncline. If the theory of depth zonation about a hidden granite is correct, we should expect to find mainly sphalerite with perhaps some copper. The depth of the possible deposits makes it unlikely that anyone will look for them for many years.

Two points remain. Firstly, the copper ores of region 4 do not contain the primary copper mineral chalcopyrite but the secondary minerals malachite, tenorite and chalcocite. This suggests that they have nothing to do with the depth zonation and, in addition, they are later than the baryte. Dispersed copper is not unknown in freshwater red sandstones, eg it occurs in the Triassic of Alderley Edge, Cheshire and is important in much of central North America. It is possible that, when ore solutions permeated the Longmyndian and precipitated baryte, dispersed copper was mobilised and concentrated in the baryte veins. The mobility of copper is demonstrated by the amount of azurite, a mineral similar to malachite, that has coated the walls of Huglith Mine in the last 40 years.

Lastly, the Big Spar Lode and the associated Criss and Chimney Veins, which pass through Burgam and Perkinsbeach Mines, contain the rare lead phosphate mineral pyromorphite coating the other minerals. These are the only veins in Shropshire to contain this mineral. Why?

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Fig.1 - Stratigraphical Succession of Shelve Area

Time	System	Stage	Rock	Lithology
0.1	Quaternary		Drift	Head, alluvium, etc
65	Tertiary		?	
140	Cretaceous		?	
195	Jurassic		?	
220	Triassic		Bunter Sandstone	Red pebbly sandstone
			xx	
310	Carboniferous	Westphalian	Erbistock Formation	Red beds
			Coed-yr-Allt Fm	Coal bearing measures
			xx	
360	Devonian		Old Red Sandstone	Red sandstone with marl*
395		Ludlow	Ludlow Shale/Limestone	Shales & limestone
	Silurian	Wenlock	Wenlock Shale/Limestone	Shales & limestone
		Llandovery	Pentamerus Beds	Purple siltstones, sandy in parts at base
440			Hughley Shales	
			xx	
445		Caradoc		
		Llandeilo	see Fig.3	Shales, sandstones, volcanics
	Ordovician	Llanvirn		
500		Arenig		
			xx	
515	Cambrian	Tremadoc	Haberley Shales	Black shales
			xx	
			Bridges Formation	Purple shales & sands
600	Longmyndian	Wentnor	Bayston-Oakwood Fm	Purple sandstones
			xx	
		Stretton		Shales, sandstones, volcanics
Precambrian			xx	
640	Uriconian		Pontesford Formation	Ashes, lavas, & dolerite intrusions

* not present in area but included for completeness.

Fig.2 - Geological Map of the South Shropshire Mining District

Based on Lapworth & Dines.

Fig.3 - The Ordovician Rocks of South Shropshire

Stage	Rock	Thickness	
		Lapworth	Whittard
Caradoc	Whittery Shales	900	>1000
	Whittery Volcanics Group)		300
	Hagley Shales)	800	150
	Hagley Volcanics Group)	350	
	Aldress Shales	700	1000
	Spy Wood Grit	175	300
	Rorrington Shales	400	400
Llandeilo	Meadowtown Beds	800	400
Llanvirn	Betton Shales	200	
	Upper Weston Grit	200	
	Weston Shales	100	
	Lower Weston Grit	200	5000
	Stapeley Shales	900	
	Stapeley Volcanic Group)		
	Hope Shales)	800	
Arenig	Tankerville Flags)		
	Mytton Flags)	1500	>3000
	Stiperstones Quartzite	250	

Fig.4 - Diagrammatic Cross Section Across South Shropshire

From Rorrington to Caer Caradoc, after Earp et al.

Fig.5 - Diagrammatic Section of Orefield to Show Zonation

From Roman Gravels to Tankerville, after Dines.

Key : Ba - baryte zone, Ca - calcite zone, Pb - galena zone, Zn - sphalerite zone

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Stiperstones Inn

*Stiperstones
Nr Minsterley
Shropshire
Tel 01743-791327*

Sited in the heart of the South Shropshire Orefield, the Stiperstones Inn is a popular Free House serving local Real Ales. It has a friendly atmosphere and children are welcome.

From 10.00am to 10.00pm delicious, home-cooked food is available plus an excellent range of modestly priced wines. Part of the premises acts as a shop and post office. For those wishing to stay in the area, the Inn also offers :-

Bed & Breakfast Accommodation (5 rooms with colour TV)

Self-Catering Chalet (sleeps 4 with full facilities)

The Proprietor and Host is John Sproson, an LDWA member. Fellow walkers are welcome and ensured an enjoyable, unforgettable holiday. This is ideal walking country, the Stiperstones being part of the Shropshire Way, and Offa's Dyke a few miles distant. Organised walks in the area include the Longmynd Hike in October and the Six Shropshire Summits in mid-summer.

Members of the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club always visit the Inn when in the area and have stayed there on a number of occasions. They recommend it highly.

The Shropshire Caving & Mining Club was formed in 1959 by a group of people interested in the exploration and study of disused mines and caves in Shropshire and Wales. Since that time, the Club has expanded its interest to include caves and mines throughout Britain and Ireland. Our main interest is in Shropshire and Mid-Wales but we organise trips to caves and mines in all parts of the mainland, Isle of Man and Ireland. The Club has an active programme of underground trips and there are usually at least 2-3 trips per month. Full and Probationary Members receive a future trips list every month with full details.

Members carry out historical research which the Club publishes in :-

- a quarterly Newsletter for members called "Below"
- an annual Journal
- occasional publications called "Accounts" on specific mines or topics
- videos (in conjunction with IA Recordings)

A full price list of publications and videos can be obtained from the address below. There is a large Club library with all sorts of publications, documents, plans, etc which are available to members.

The Club has a large range of tackle such as ropes, ladders, etc to gain access to underground workings. This is used for official club trips and can be borrowed by members as soon as they are competent in its use. Individual equipment, such as helmets, lamps, etc, can be loaned in the early days but members are expected to buy their own as soon as possible. Club members are willing to give advice on the best equipment to buy and one of our members runs his own equipment sales business which offers competitive prices.

Everybody has to start sometime and the Club has a Training Officer whose responsibility is to organise training for new members. Certain of the club trips are specially planned for novices and this allows them to learn the necessary skills without pressure. We use single rope techniques (abseiling and prussiking) a great deal and experienced members are willing to teach these skills and advise on the necessary personal equipment.

If you wish to become a Full Member, you first join as a Probationary Member until you have attended at least three trips with the Club. This allows us (and you!) to decide whether you have the right attitude to become a member. Underground exploration can be potentially dangerous if you do not have the right equipment or skills and this is why we insist on this initial assessment period. Don't worry if you have never been underground before since we will train you in the necessary skills and lend you equipment for your first few trips. Those under 16 join as Junior Members and can only attend Club trips where a Full Member takes responsibility for them. If you do not intend to join in the underground trips, you can become an Associate Member to receive the Newsletter and join in surface trips and social events.

The Club meets at 8pm on the first Friday of every month in a local pub. We discuss Club business, organise future trips, have slide shows, etc. You are welcome to come along and talk to members. For more details write to the Secretary :-

Adrian Pearce : 72,Hopkins Heath, Shawbirch, Telford, Shropshire TF5 0LZ T. 01952-405369