RECORD BREAKING OR RECORD MAKING?

The Peak District Mining Historian is walking along a rake on a Sunday afternoon when a grimy helmeted figure emerges from a shaft. A conversation ensues which all too often runs like this:

Historian: Had a good time down there? How deep was the shaft?

Grimy Figure: It were all right. How deep? Well, we had two twenties and a fifty, or was it two fifties and a twenty? Anyway, one of them was cut short when a rock fell last month, and there was some left lying at the shaft bottom.

Historian: What did you find below? Any workings?

Grimy Figure: There was a passage off, but I did not go along it - I just wanted to find out how fast I could climb out.

From which the Historian may gather that the shaft is somewhere between eighty and one hundred and twenty feet deep, and that a gallery does lead off, and no more. The Grimy Figure will not doubt rejoice in having made an uncertain record time for climbing a ladder of doubtful length.

The morals to this story are numerous. Too much time is being spent in climbs for climbing sake and far too little in recording what was seen. This Society has the finest possible opportunities for collecting the data of the Peak's Lead Mines, but so many of the opportunities are being wasted. Almost every shaft within a mile of the Society's cottage at Magpie Mine has been descended, but has anything been entered up in a log book about what was found, about the depths of shafts, lengths of workings, widths and contents of veins, nature of wall rock, etc. ? A weekend or two cross-examining the members concerned may extract some of this information so necessary in understanding our mining history, but only some of the information will be agreed by the members, and some features will not have been noticed at all.

With increasing world shortages and prices of metals more interest is being shown in the possibilities of re-opening some of Derbyshire's mines. Any mining company today must know at an early stage, the extent of old workings and the amount of unworked minerals of value still available. As members of the Peak District Mines Historical Society we

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should realise that today's finds are tomorrow's history. We should be able to supply information on request from our records. Sometimes we can help, but all too often all we can say is "well, so and so went down, but left no record of what he found". This situation must be remedied. Every shaft must be recorded - position, depth, extent of workings, width of vein, minerals present. It is amazing that the last comprehensive list of Peak District mines and their products was made by Farey 150 years ago! A Society library already exists to receive your reports, John Robey is compiling a card index of mines, and the Bulletin always welcomes accounts of your findings. Do not worry about your imagined inability to write such reports coherently. Any report is better than none at all, and the Society's "elders" will usually help you translate if necessary.

THE EDITOR

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