

## SOME ARCHIVAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON MINES

by

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Cave Registries are just getting into their stride and it may come about that a person interested in what lies beneath a particular area may only have to refer to one source to find out everything that is known. However the task of working back through all the known caving literature is formidable and there will still be considerable scope for search in local history, geological and natural history publications. Thus those who are interested in the locations and history of mines will still have a lot of archival work to carry out in order to trace abandoned and forgotten mines. These notes are intended to suggest one or two useful sources of research.

### Parish Registers

Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials have been kept since 1538. Initially they were combined in a simple, plain document, written in Latin. Over the years they have evolved into separate pre-printed books written in English. Their particular use to us is in establishing whether and when mining might have been carried out in a given parish. According to the whim of the early register-keepers the professions of the people recorded may be shown, so that one can study mining professions. In addition all sorts of useful notes find their way into the registers about the causes of death, and various local affairs.

Registers may still be in the possession of the incumbent of a parish, where marriage registers may be inspected free. Alternatively they may have been deposited with the County Archivist, who generally allows free access. Copies will have also been deposited with the Diocese and may also have been reprinted by a local history society.

### The Census

Census returns become available for inspection free of charge when they are 100 years old. They may be seen at the Public Records Office, Portugal Street, London W.C.1, but you will require a Readers Ticket, which is available on application.

Names, addresses, occupations and ages of individuals were recorded from 1841. Thus the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses are of

interest to us. The 1871 returns become available next year.

One can readily locate the names of all people whose professions or trades had mining associations. From this can be determined the size of work force. Since miners generally lived as close as possible to the mine entrances the distribution pattern of trades may well reveal the locations of unsuspected mine entrances.

#### Plans of abandoned mines.

At the offices of the Ministry of Power at Thames House on Millbank are deposited official copies of plans of abandoned mines in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Coal Mines Regulations Act of 1872 placed upon mine owners the obligation to deposit plans of abandoned coal workings with a government agency. Subsequent Acts of Parliament broadened the provisions of this Act to cover what were termed "metalliferous mines", which appeared to cover everything mined other than coal.

The principle provision of the Act was that within three months of abandonment the owner had to deposit with a Secretary of State a plan showing:-

- the boundaries, headings and working faces;
- the unworked pillars;
- the position, direction and extent of every known fault and dislocation of the seam with its vertical throw;
- the position of the workings with regard to the surface boundary;
- the general direction and rate of dip of the strata, and a statement of the depth of the shaft from the surface to the seam abandoned;
- a section of the strata above the workings.

The whole was to be drawn to a scale of not less than 25 inches to the mile and its accuracy was to be certified by a surveyor.

The enforcement of these laws was left to His/Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines. However, this is not to say that the plans are complete. I know of plenty of instances where no plan was deposited. Also the custody of the plans has changed many times over the years. In 1920 the plans were with the Board of Trade, but in 1939 they seem to have been divided between five ministries. Somewhere in between these moves, plans seem to have gone missing. I extracted a list of 76 entries from the 1911 catalogue relating to the County of Cornwall, but could only trace 60 in the 1958 catalogue.

The plans of coal mines are now lodged with the National Coal Board while those for oil shale mines are with Scottish Oils Ltd. (If coal and another mineral e.g. ironstone, was worked in the same mine then the plan is with the N.C.B.).

The Ministry of Power has issued a catalogue to the rest which contains several thousand entries. Unless special consent is obtained the public may only inspect a plan after it has been deposited for 10 years. Inspection is free of charge by appointment at (a) the Mining Record Office, Safety and Health Division, Ministry of Power, Thames House, Millbank, S.W.1. (b) the offices of H.M. Divisional Inspectors of Mines and Quarries, or (c) the Cornwall County Record Office, "Gwendroc", Barrack Lane, Truro, Cornwall. The M.O.P. will also supply copies of mine plans at a nominal charge, or will send them to the office of local Inspectors of Mines for inspection there by arrangement.

A typical catalogue entry (for Somerset) is:-

BUCKINGHAM; Barrets; Derbyshire; Glebe; Glebe Middle; Hills; Holamm's; Newhall; Roskows (R2/E) - (a) Dodington. (b) COPPER ORE (1801) (c) 49. N.W. (1904), D 5, 6, 7; E 5, 6, 7.

The first group of names is of all the individually named mines within a particular area. The other items are

- (a) The Parish within which the workings are situated.
- (b) The minerals worked.
- (c) References to O.S. Map Squares.

The map referencing system which has been adopted is to take the 6" maps and divide them into  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " ( $\frac{1}{4}$  mile) squares, lettered vertically and numbered horizontally. All the wholly or partially undermined squares are then listed.

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