

A REPORT ON A MEETING TO DISCUSS THE PRESERVATION  
OF MINING REMAINS WITHIN THE PEAK DISTRICT

by

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The preservation of mining remains is an important part of the Society's activities. With the present-day exploitation of the mining field within the County, it was felt that there was a need for a discussion on these matters at which all points of view could be expressed. Such a meeting was held at Bakewell on Saturday, 1 May 1971, when members were joined by representatives from industry and planning. The following is a summary of the proceedings.

In his opening remarks, Dr W.A.S. Sarjeant who chaired the session, referred to his personal interest and involvement in the study of the history of mining and the mineralogy of the Peak District, and to the formation of the Society. He thought it was particularly fitting to hold a meeting to discuss the preservation of the surviving relics of the mining industry within the Peak District at Bakewell. He then referred to the early efforts to save the Watergrove Chimney which failed mainly due to a lack of expertise. A number of later projects had been successful and particular mention was made of the work in Lathkilldale. Preservation work had been surpassed in quantity very greatly by the work on documentation undertaken by many members and the bulk of this work had been published in the Bulletin. There had also been an impressive series of occasional publications, the most recent and spectacularly successful being the red booklet published through the auspices of the Peak Park Planning Board. The rapid sales demonstrated very clearly how much interest there is in the Peak and how much people wanted to see the relics of the industry which had for so long been associated with it. The meeting provided an opportunity for finding out what people really thought about preservation without necessarily laying down any plans for future action.

The first speaker was Mr J.H. Rieuwerts who referred to preservation and conservation falling into different categories and the possibility of a number of schemes being considered. There were a number of small sites scattered throughout the area each one illustrating a particular feature such as a buddling pool or gin circle. These were interesting and in some cases unique but were nevertheless rapidly disappearing.

The attention of the planning authorities had been drawn to such features through the County Treasures Survey which commenced in

1969. This did not preserve them in any way or ensure their conservation but it did mean that should a particular site be developed, or was the subject of a proposed development, then the interest of the Society could be considered.

Mr Rieuwerts went on to discuss a number of sites with the aid of colour slides.

One possible scheme suggested was the setting up of a museum or museums, one specifically to deal with surface features and the other underground. If the two aspects could be incorporated on one site then obviously this would be ideal. The Magpie Mine was suggested as a suitable surface site. This was typical mining ground incorporating small surface features and the engine houses of larger scale operations. It has been the subject of one of the Society's special publications (now available as a revised 3rd edition, Ed.) Another area for possible consideration was Lathkilldale where surface features might be utilised together with underground workings.

The Chairman stated that he thought one of the assets of mining relics in Derbyshire was that they are very much a part of the landscape. It could not fairly be said that they marred the landscape, some buildings harmonised where other structures did not. Old mine buildings could be an attraction and this was desirable for an historical viewpoint.

The second speaker was Dr T.D. Ford who had a multiple task in trying to explain what he thought could be done in the Peak District and, by taking examples from the United States, produce some ideas for discussion.

The Peak District National Park was created in 1948 with a multi-purpose object in preserving the landscape from unnecessary and unwelcomed development whilst at the same time making parts of it accessible to all as a means of recreation and education. It was well known that the Board had created formal footpaths, walks and so on. The National Parks of Britain were in some ways a modified version of the parks which exist in the United States where the concept was first brought forward in the 1880s. They are mostly in "wild" unsettled country and are to a large extent under the control and ownership of the park authorities. Our own National Parks were set up relatively recently in already populated areas and are a complete contrast to those in the U.S.A. There are some 20 or 30 thousand people living in the Peak District National Park getting their livelihood there and some commuting to the surrounding towns and cities.

In the National Park we have a man-made, or man-modified landscape, part of which is the relics of the lead-mining industry. This is part of our national heritage and it should be available to the visitor. A number of relics scattered around the district which are of interest to the visitor have already been discussed and reference has already been made to the red book which was produced with the

visitor in mind. Even so these remains are vanishing rapidly. The Society has the knowledge as to where these remains are located and of the importance and uniqueness of them but it does not have the resources or indeed the legal right to do anything with them.

The Society has been fortunate in being able to discuss the preservation of a number of small sites with landowners, farmers and industrial concerns. But some other outside bodies could assist in the preservation of relics. It is hoped that the New Engine Mine Chimney might be preserved and not demolished for walling stone as was the case with the Watergrove Chimney. The Magpie Mine, already referred to, is perhaps the only site which adequately meets the requirements for a mining museum and when viewed from the industrial archaeological point of view produces many interesting features. Other relics could be moved there from sites currently being worked or threatened by development.

Dr Ford then discussed the type of organisation that would be required if such a museum was set up either by the use of voluntary helpers or with a permanent staff and the sort of facilities and services which might be envisaged for visitors.

The possibilities of incorporating an underground section were then discussed. Other possible sites for this purpose were then considered including the Cumberland Cavern at Matlock, the Merlin Mine in Eyamdale, and the Goodluck Mine in the Via Gellia. The question of ownership was not considered at this stage. Each site was briefly discussed together with possible administrative arrangements and difficulties. Dr Ford discussed the sites in terms of what they had to offer underground to educate visiting parties and intimated the different approaches of the voluntary weekend personnel rota system as against an authority administering the site as an educational establishment.

Dr Ford then went on to describe, with the aid of colour slides, a number of mining museum sites in the United States and special facilities provided by mining companies in some areas for visitors.

The Chairman felt that the point regarding the establishment of a mining museum should be underlined, the project need not be dismissed as a potential dead-loss, for it could be an economic proposition, even a very profitable one. He felt that the County or some other public body would undertake this with more taste. He felt sure that a viable mining museum in the Peak which could attract visitors would also be of real educative value and if done right would also be a research centre for historical and geological studies in the area.

The third speaker was Mr H. Bailey of the Peak Park Planning Board who told members how the Board was constituted and that its main object was firstly to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the

area and secondly to promote its enjoyment by the public. It was noted that about a quarter of the total population of the country lived within 50 miles of the boundaries of the National Park. The Park did not set out to attract people but sought to promote the quieter forms of enjoyment such as walking and climbing. The objects of the Society were therefore by no means in conflict with those of the Board.

There were two main aspects of the Board's duties which hinged on the subject for discussion, one positive and one of a negative nature.

From a positive point of view the Board, like any other planning authority, was able to acquire land and bring it into the form of the development plan. The need for such an acquisition had of course to be set against the background of overall need and funds in the public sector, like those in the private sector, were very limited. He felt that perhaps the Society represented a sectional rather than a wider interest. One other positive aspect of conservation is the listing of buildings of architectural or historical interest. The procedure and how it was administered was briefly described. The New Engine Mine Chimney was cited as an example. This was a subject of current concern and members learnt that the Board had indicated to the owner that it was prepared to serve a Repairs Notice in connection with the work required. It was hoped that this would be undertaken by the owner without compulsion.

Turning to the negative aspects of planning, the process of development control, Mr Bailey stated that this was a sphere in which the Board might be of assistance to the Society. Basically the problem of present concern with the value which fluorspar and barytes has in the national economy. The Board acknowledges the importance which is attached to these minerals and there are a very large number of sites, something over one hundred, which have been approved, mostly still being operated. They are in some respects injurious to the landscape; the workings cause considerable problems not only in appearance but in the traffic which is generated. Approximately 90 per cent of the applications submitted for the extraction of minerals are approved and the Board is particularly keen to approve applications of this type if they refer only to the removal of surface dumps rather than digging new holes because the removal of dumps very often results in an improvement to the agricultural value of the land in question.

A number of sites of special interest have been notified to the Board by Mrs P.E. Lunn and Mr J.H. Rieuwerts. These have been plotted on the map register and the interests of the Society can be considered should any applications affecting the sites be submitted. It had been agreed that a search through the older consents should be made to check if they included any sites of special interest. This task was almost complete. It was pointed out that where consents had been granted in the 1950s and no work had taken place on those sites,

they were valid until 1973. Where they had been partly worked they would, under present law, remain indefinitely. It is important therefore that the search previously mentioned should be completed and the results notified to the Society.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bailey for his remarks and said it was a tribute to the Board that they had considered the Society's interests in the past and that the book already mentioned was an example of their collaboration. It would have been unfair to expect Mr Bailey to commit the Board in any future action; this he clearly could not do. His statement that the Society's interest was a sectional one might be challenged and indeed the sales of the book had shown that people who were not specialists in any way but had a casual interest in the Peak District would use it to plan their walks, and help them to use the Park as an area for recreation. Schools at a considerable distance from the Peak are using this publication to organise educative visits so the implications of what we are discussing are very much wider than sectional, in other words this book provides what we are considering and not those which concern a small group with a sectionalised interest but have a much wider impact on the public at large.

The Chairman then invited Dr J.V. Bramley (Glebe Mines, Laporte Industries) to say a few words. Dr Bramley said that he was still reeling under Dr Ford's suggestion of a viewing platform over opencast workings on Longstone Edge. His company's programme was to restore the land in some way though not necessarily to the original contour. Such restoration would obliterate what might in a hundred years time be a mining relic. Had the Peak Park Planning Board been formed a hundred years earlier he wondered what work there would be for the Society to do today for he felt sure they would not have allowed the 'old man' to exploit the mineral field as he had.

Dr Bramley then referred to the Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, Sheffield, and thought that if such a standard could be emulated at Magpie or some other site something of real educative value would result. His company received numerous requests for parties to visit their mines in operation and it had been necessary to enforce severe restrictions in order not to interfere with production. The company would otherwise have had to employ special staff and this was not feasible in the present economic climate. He was well aware that visits by youth groups and others to the area were very popular.

Referring to the question of planning consents given prior to 1951, which were in the normal course of events due to expire in 1973, Dr Bramley pointed out that the mineral working regulations were to be discussed in parliament and there would be a strong lobby from industry for an extension of the period of time. With high capital investment it was necessary for companies to secure reserves well ahead of production in order to get a reasonable return from investment. Mineral rights were no good in themselves unless they carried planning permission and industry wanted to be protected for a

far greater period ahead.

In conclusion Dr Bramley said that it was his company's policy that should anything of interest be found in their workings the Society would be notified.

The Chairman, turning to another aspect of preservation, said one of the problems associated with the preservation of mining remains in Derbyshire was the ancient mining laws governing the holding of mines. It was agreed that technically it was impossible to set up a mining museum in the sense that at any stage a mine could be re-opened for lead. There was also the question of consolidated lead rights. One interesting point was that the lead mining Acts and the mine workings supports and facilities regulations had never been tested against the planning legislation and it was not quite clear as to which was the most powerful.

Mr Parker urged the Planning Board not to fill in all the current mining sites as some were of scientific interest. Mr Bailey replied that the Board were advised on these matters by the Nature Conservancy.

Members were reminded by Mr Willies that the Via Gellia had recently been declared a conservation area. Commenting on the sites mentioned he felt that Cumberland Cavern and the Magpie Mine were the only two feasible sites from a planning point of view and with regard to the Cumberland Cavern he thought that the local authority, who were anxious to settle the problem there, might welcome an approach.

Miss Wadsworth felt that Mandale Mine in Lathkilldale would be impractical as an underground site.

The Chairman referred to the desirability in the long term of a mining museum which could incorporate a study centre and drew parallel with the U.S.A. The project would be an enormous one but with proper administration and support could pay for itself. He referred to the Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet which had been owned by a Society for a number of years but which had not been viable until the owners had entered into a partnership with another body.

The need for instruction in the methods of preservation was expressed by Mr S.J. Thompson who referred to the work at present being undertaken by small groups; such matters could form the subject of a general or discussion meeting.

Dr Bramley said he had been interested to hear that a survey report on the New Engine Mine Chimney had been received. He had formed the opinion that the chimney would have to be destroyed. The Ladywash Mine Chimney nearby had recently been re-pointed by his company at a cost of £50 more than the cost of demolition because of the interest shown in its preservation. The Chairman welcomed this news.

In reply to an enquiry from Mr J. Travis as to where the Ministry of Works drew the line for injecting monies into preservation between something like Peveril Castle and the Magpie Mine, Dr P. Strange, the County Correspondent for Ancient Monuments, said that there was no hard and fast rule, the date was coming further forward and the youngest monument in Derbyshire was perhaps the pumping station at High Peak Junction which dated from the 1830s. It was of some regret that no lead mining monuments had been scheduled.\* This was something which the Society could and should look into. The Chairman stated that in the early days of the Society information had been submitted to the Ministry without success. He was pleased to learn that the attitude had changed and that a new approach might receive better results.

Mr Rieuwerts asked how the Ministry lists were related to the County Treasures Survey. Dr Strange in reply said that the two were complimentary to one another. On the one hand a scheduled ancient monument or listed building was protected under the Acts, whilst the County Treasures Survey made information known to the planning authorities but did not give protection in any way.

The point of view of the landowner on whose property a relic might be situated was discussed. Quite clearly if the landowner was to be faced with a large bill for repairs it was not reasonable to expect him to pay, money should be found from other sources to supplement the cost. It would be regrettable if the interest of one owner who probably occupied the land for a relatively short period should result in the destruction of a monument which could never be replaced. It was agreed that the legislation was by no means satisfactory but was "middle of the road" when compared with other countries.

Dr P.R. Ineson referred to the Killhope site in the North of England which attracted a large number of visitors. It was regrettable that this had been damaged by vandals. This was a problem which would have to be faced with regard to any surface site. It was noted that the remains of the Lord's Mill Cupola in Stoney Middleton Dale were likely to be demolished. From the point of view of the owner this would be worthwhile. In the North of England a number of mines had been closed by the owners as a result of vandalism and misuse by visiting parties. He then referred to the number of large parties of small school children being taken on field excursions with inadequate supervision and the possibility of a serious accident occurring which might be repercussions against the Society's interest. The only safe site appeared to be one permanently wardened and should Magpie Mine site be developed a provision should be made at the outset for a residential caretaker.

\* A small number of mining sites are now listed, these include New Engine Mine, Pindale Mine, and Watergrove Mine. FEL

Mr Gregory referred to difficulties which might be encountered from the safety and insurance point of view with any site either surface or underground. Dr Bramley considered an adit entrance to an underground site to be preferred; the use of ladders would require additional safety facilities. Dr Ford questioned the legal ownership of mine passages when they passed under land not owned by the owner of the mine or cavern entrance.

Mr Parker thought it was impractical to talk about underground museums. The mines in Derbyshire had been long abandoned and the safety factor had to be considered very carefully. The Magpie Site was not feasible from this viewpoint, the workings being dangerous and the main shaft over 700 ft. deep. Thinking in terms of an underground museum one might be set up at some time in the future if a suitable mine became abandoned such as the Sallet Hole Mine in Coombsdale which would make an ideal underground museum, it had an adit entrance, was easily accessible and there was ample parking space.

Dr Bramley commented that it would be at least 10 years and more likely 20 years before Sallet Hole could be considered.

The Chairman thought Magpie Mine could be a future prospect in the sense that when a lot of money was forthcoming an underground extension might be a possibility. There did not appear to be any means of achieving this in the foreseeable future and the two concepts would have to be separately considered.

Mr Parker felt there was a better chance of preserving surface relics at the present time than those underground, though an underground museum would be far more attractive to the public.

The Chairman summarising the discussion said that this had been helpful and wide ranging, a variety of suggestions had been put forward and the matter obviously needed to be looked at in greater detail.

It was agreed that a Working Party should be set up with members representing the various interests and that the Peak Park Planning Board should be asked to take part in these discussions from the outset. The Working Party could be extended as necessary and the various local authorities invited to take part when the initial discussions had taken place. It was further agreed that the Working Party should consist of Mr N. Gregory, Mrs P.E. Lunn, Mr R.W. Mercer (being Society Officers and ex-officio members), Dr J.V. Bramley, Mr I.J. Brown, Dr T.D. Ford, Dr P.R. Ineson, Dr W.A.S. Sarjeant and Dr P. Strange, with Mr J.H. Rieuwerts as convenor.

Before closing the discussion Dr Sarjeant took the opportunity to pay tribute to Mr Gregory, the Society's Chairman, for the work he had undertaken in connection with the display at Crich.

Most of which had been shouldered by him with some support from other members. The work had been enormously admired and Dr Sarjeant was sure that this was going to be a great source of publicity for the Society as well as adding interest to the museum at Crich which was the concern of another body.

Mr Parker proposed the vote of thanks and the discussion was then formally closed.

Received 28th May 1971

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