

Friends of Killhope

President: Sir Kingsley Dunham, F.R.S.

FEBRUARY 1989

NEWSLETTER No. 14

Elsewhere in this issue you will read of the serious loss of the Community Task Force from Killhope and thus of the growing importance of Friends in the development of the site. May I add my voice to the appeal for help on the strength of my experience there? I have been involved mainly with the small water wheel and Brunton buddle restoration and I can assure you these have been the most satisfying of tasks. Even long drawn out projects such as these are punctuated by the gratification of the completion of individual stages and of course the ultimate pleasure was to see the wheel turned by its own water supply. On my one half shift on duty watch outside Park Level last season I found this apparently tedious (but vital) task had its extra compensations since many visitors are keen to talk and you will find this useful service is also very satisfying. There is such a variety of tasks on offer you are almost certain to find something to your taste. Come and join us - I'm sure you'll enjoy yourself!

Word Processors

In our last newsletter we experimented with a word processor and were not enthusiastic about the results after printing. However, in order to save time and effort, we may still use items 'as submitted' where these can be fitted into the layout. Thus you may still see different styles of type in the newsletter but hopefully the results will be more pleasing than in No. 13.

Subscriptions (due 1st April 1989)

We have held these at the same level since our formation in 1985 but now increasing costs mean that your subscription barely covers the cost of the newsletter. Therefore we are reluctantly forced to increase for 1989 as follows:- £4 for individual members, £5.50 for family membership and £2.50 for senior/student members.

A Joint Publication

For some time it has been considered that much of the material in our newsletter was worthy of exposure to a wider audience but the cost of a more substantial publication than this was prohibitive. However, it has been agreed that Friends of Killhope would act as co-ordinator/publisher of other suitable material from members of similar groups such as North Pennine Heritage Trust. It is hoped that by pooling all our resources a publication might be offered for sale to the public as well as to members of the groups involved.

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MR. BEAUMONT'S MINESIan Forbes

The history of metal mining in most of the orefields of Britain has been well researched and published, and societies like the Northern Mines Research Society and the Peak District Mines Historical Society continue to produce papers on mines and mining companies.

For the North Pennines Dr. Raistrick published all of 50 years ago his well known history of the London Lead Company (Two Centuries of Industrial Welfare) which runs through the history of the Quaker Company's involvement in our area.

Other books have given a general history of lead mining in the North Pennines. Yet there remains an enormous hole in the published record.

Try the following questions to see what I mean.

1. Which family business mined lead from 1660 to 1896, making it probably the longest-lasting and most successful metal-mining concern in Britain's history?
2. Which family business produced well over a million tons of lead concentrates and three million ounces of silver?
3. Which family business was, in 1860, said to have had for many years furnished "about one fourth of the (lead) raised in England, about 1/6th of the produce of Great Britain and about 1/10th of that of the whole of Europe, including the British Isles"?
4. Which family business's lead was the only lead singled out to be sold at a premium price in the London metal markets of the 1860's?
5. Which family business exhibited a cake of pure silver, weighing 8,000 ounces, and the product of its own mines, at the Great Exhibition of 1851?
6. Which family business's last owner was "one of the wealthiest commoners in England"?
7. Which family business is regularly referred to by historians by a name it never used, while the name it was recognised by in its heyday is nowadays hardly ever mentioned?
8. Which family business has never had its history written up?

The answer to all these questions is, as you probably guessed, W.B. Lead, christened by recent historians as "Blackett/Beaumont" or "the Blackett/Beaumont company" and the business which developed the mine and mill at Killhope.

This business was started by a wealthy Newcastle merchant at the end of the Commonwealth and the beginning of the reign of Charles II after the Interregnum. His name was William Blackett.

Most published sources do not give the date when William Blackett turned to lead-mining, or give the wrong date.

In fact he took a lease on the mining ground at Allenheads on 7th December 1660 (1) and from then on he and his descendants ran a lead mining and smelting business in the Allendales and Weardale until Wentworth Blackett Beaumont sold the plant and equipment at Allenheads and Allen Smelt Mill by public auction in 1896 (2).

We are very fortunate in that for a large part of that time quite extensive records of the business survive, and Sir Kingsley Dunham has calculated that between 1729 and 1870 it produced from its numerous mines in East and West Allendale and Weardale 1,072,697 tons of lead concentrates and between 1725 and 1870 3,045,000 ounces of silver (3).

By the middle of the 19th century "Mr. Beaumont's Mines" were the most important lead mines in the country as the quotation in the third question demonstrates (4). His lead dominated the British industry, so much so that in the 1860's it sold at a considerable premium on the London market.

Thus we find prices quoted for the following forms of lead:-

Lead - sheet
Pig - W.B.
Pig - ordinary brands
Pig - foreign, soft
Red
Shot
Dry White

With a premium for W.B. pig (Mr. Beaumont's lead) over ordinary of from 5/- to £2 per ton, or up to 10% (5).

At that massive celebration of British industry, the Great Exhibition of 1851, Thomas Sopwith, Mr. Beaumont's chief mine agent, produced a large part of that area of the Exhibition devoted to lead-mining, showing many specimens, sections and models. His sectional drawing of the Allenheads area was 16½ feet long. As well as the cake of silver already mentioned "various specimens of litharge were also shown, also specimens of fume or deposit of the smoke in the long flues connected with the smelt mills; also thin films of oxide from the surface of melted lead, showing iridescent hues of great intensity and beauty; pig moulds and pigs of lead; the pigs weighed 1½ cwt each, and it was stated that the number usually manufactured at these mines in a year would, if laid in one continuous line, extend upwards of 70 miles in length" (6).

Incidentally that cake of silver would be about a foot square and a foot high, and would, at today's prices be worth about twenty-six thousand pounds. (7)

It is not surprising then that, taking all these facts, this business with its very extensive mining field and its policy of ploughing some of the income from profitable mines into exploration in a rolling programme of development bucked the trend of metal mining concerns and made large and continuing profits for the Beaumont family.

The man who reaped most of the benefit of this prosperity was Wentworth Blackett Beaumont, the last of his family to be involved in mining.

He succeeded to the family estate and businesses on the death of his father in 1848 (although then still a minor) and was reputed at one time to earn £100,000 a year from his mines.

When he died in 1907 (as the first Lord Allendale) his fortune was valued at £3,234,805 gross. (8)

From 1861 the business traded under the name "W.B. Lead" based on the initials of its founder. Only after 1883 when the Weardale leases were surrendered to concentrate on the Allendale mines was the business re-organised as a limited company, becoming W.B. Lead Ltd. Previously it had never been a limited liability company.

The name "W.B. Lead" goes back much further than 1861 however; as early as 1730 "W.B. common lead" was one of the grades of lead sold by the business, together with slag and refined lead. (9)

Thus the widely used designations of "Blackett/Beaumont" or the "Blackett/Beaumont Company" are modern coinages with no historical justification.

I would urge the adoption of the term "W.B. Lead" in its place as a neater and more well-founded overall term for Mr. Blackett's and Mr. Beaumont's mines.

And so we come to the last of my questions, I hope I have demonstrated with the random points picked out above that W.B. Lead was one of the most important lead-mining businesses in the country. Yet it has a history that remains largely unpublished.

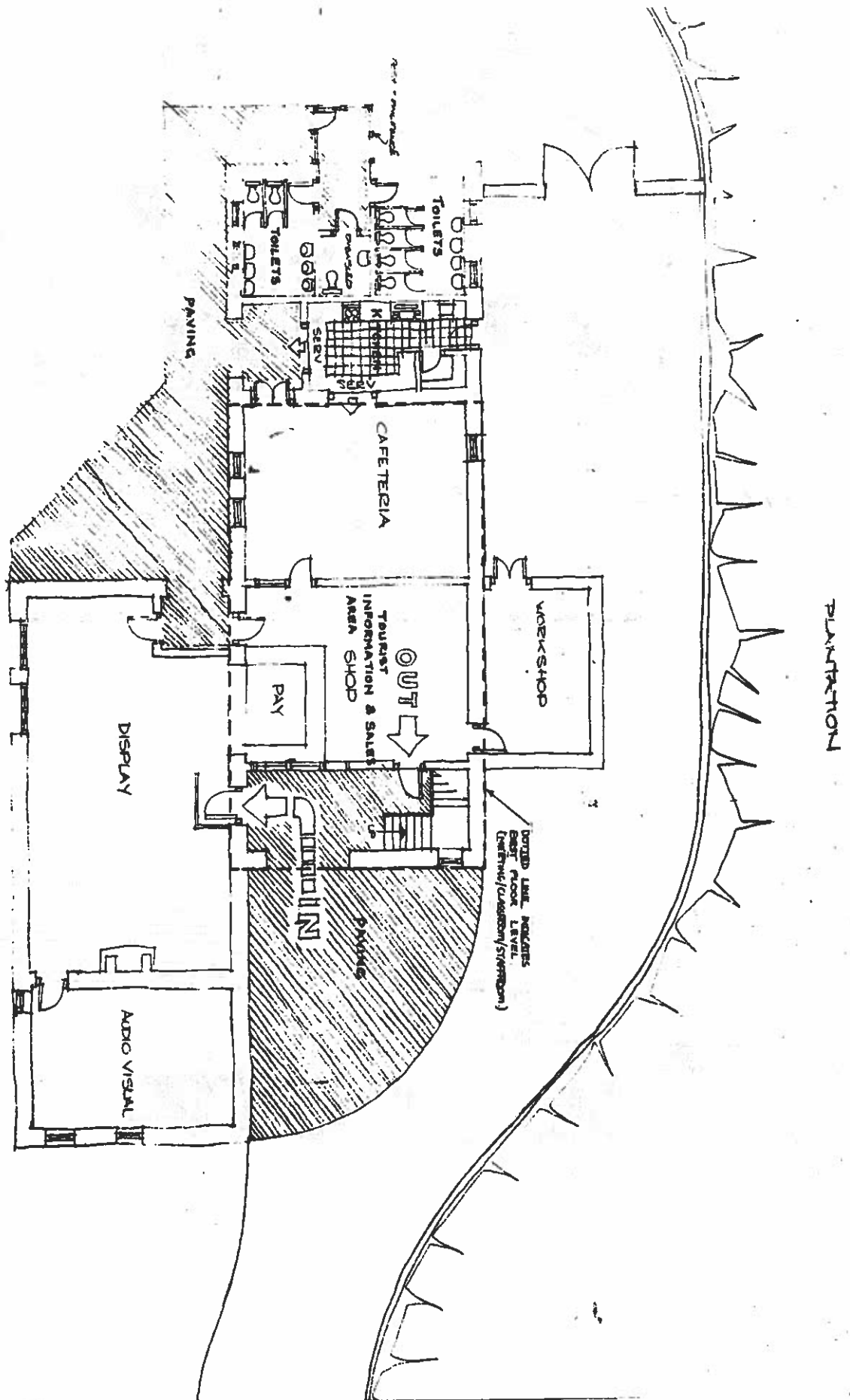
Because of the work of Dr. Raistrick the London Lead Company and its deeds are widely celebrated.

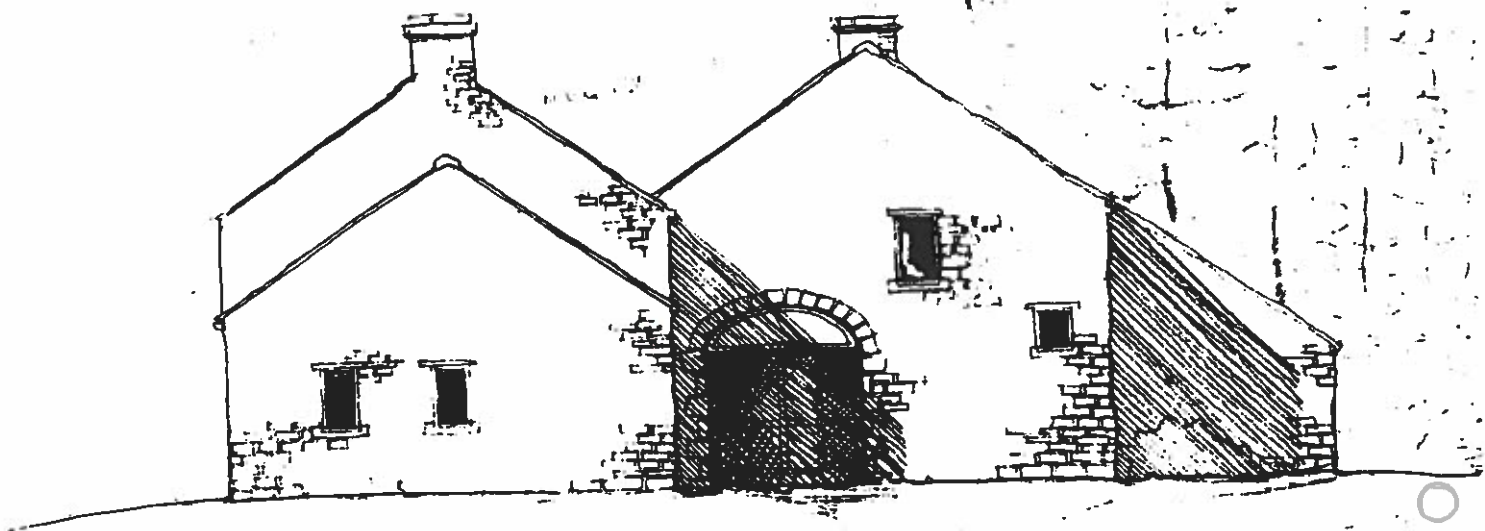
Someone must do the same for W.B. Lead, for until they do, the lack of a history of this business leaves a huge hole in the story of the British lead mining industry.

- (1) Northumberland Record Office. Wallington papers.
- (2) Dixon "An Allendale Miscellany."
- (3) K.C. Dunham "The Production of Galena and Associated Minerals in the Northern Pennines" Transactions of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy 1944.
- (4) Ure's Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures and Mines. 5th Edition 1860.
- (5) Mining and Smelting Magazine (7 vols 1861 - 1865.)
- (6) Cyclopaedia of Useful Arts. Edited by Charles Tomlinson 1854.
- (7) I am grateful to Doug Tyerman for this information.
- (8) Information from contemporary newspapers.
- (9) Northumberland Record Office. Allendale MSS.

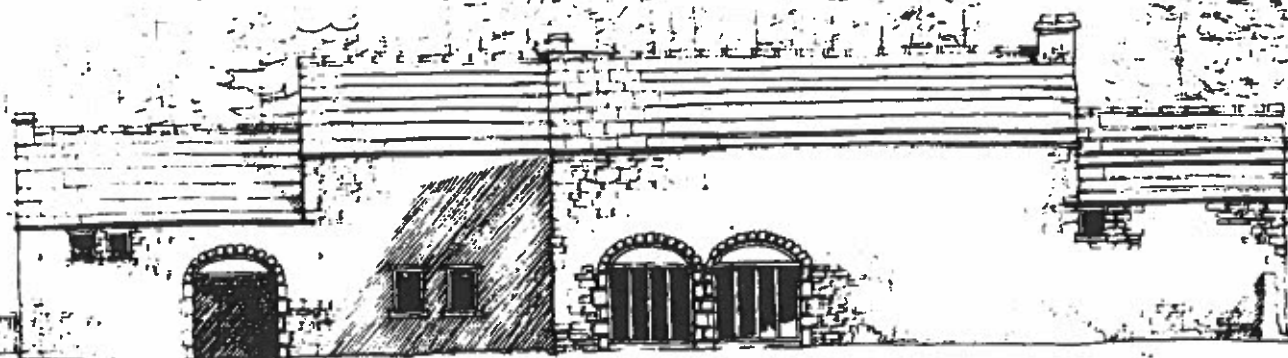
PROPOSED VISITOR CENTRE, KILLHOPE WHEEL, SKETCH PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR

A "Stop Press" item in the last Newsletter informed us that the new Visitor Centre at Killhope was indeed to go ahead and we are pleased to print these drawings of the new building which will be such an asset to the site.





Northwest Elevation



North East Elevation (from A689)

Killhope encompasses several habitats, most of which are man induced, and all of which are man affected. Two areas of particular interest. The washing floor area, including the incline and other areas surrounding the buildings, is particularly noteworthy for the presence of "Heavy Metal Flora". The other area of particular interest lies just downstream of the site, on the site of a former lime kiln, which might well have lent its name to "Kiln-hope." This area is where the Carboniferous limestone overlies sandstone, thus creating a wet flush, the surrounding soil enriched by the presence of the limekiln. The remaining areas around Killhope are not without interest. The woodland area contains a fairly typical coniferous forest flora. There are several derelict areas scattered around the site which are not affected by heavy metal pollution and contain many typical wasteland species. Much of the perimeter of the site is bounded by heather moorland, which is managed by man to create a suitable environment for game birds. Even the stream banks have been altered by man in his attempts to exploit the area.

The Heavy Metal Flora is most relevant to Killhope. This is the flora which is most tolerant to lead mining pollution at Killhope, or can tolerate the presence of other heavy metals such as zinc and cadmium at other sites around the North Pennines orefield, where lead has been mined, dressed, processed or in some way deposited. The washing floor area is characterised by lead tolerant plants. It should be noted that half a century has elapsed since the cessation of ore production at Killhope, and that revegetation is now taking place as levels of toxicity diminish and this lessening of the presence of lead tolerant plants is increasing as reconstruction of the site is taking place. Thus plants not seen to be lead tolerant are appearing and there is now a more diverse flora than would have been found a decade ago.

Commonly known as Leadwort, Spring Sandwort typifies the Heavy Metal flora to be found around the Washing Floor area. Growing in dark green-leaved cushions, its delicate white flowers open in late spring and early summer. Alpine Pennycress is another unusual lead tolerant plant. Somewhat rarer than Leadwort, also flowering in spring, its white flowers rise out of a rosette of spoon-shaped leaves along a single stem. Coming into flower before these is Common Scurveygrass, which from mid April is the most abundant of lead tolerant herbs around the site. It too, has small white flowers and its leaves are kidney shaped at the end of long stems. Also to be found is Alpine Scurveygrass, which closely resembles the latter, although seemingly in miniature.

Early summer is brightened up by the purple flowers of the Wild Pansy. Also found are the yellow flowers of the Mountain Pansy. Eyebright, although not as common as on other sites such as at Nenthead Stamps, is quite commonly found. Its white flowers growing out of leafy spikes with a delicate bell-shaped calyx. The blue Harebell is another plant found more frequently on other sites, but throughout the summer a few examples of this species are to be found. Procumbent Pearlwort is another spring flowering creeping herb to be found on the washing floor, its tiny white flowers rising from rooting runners. Fairy Flax is also to be found, its small white flowers rising out of a forked inflorescence.

This lead tolerant herbage is complemented by four particularly prevalent grass species on the washing floor. These are Yorkshire Fog, Tufted Hair Grass, Red Fescue and Sheep's Fescue. Other grasses are present such as Common Bent, Wavy Hair Grass and Creeping Bent, and it is these species which typify the grass species to be found on lead polluted sites around the North Pennines. Jointed Rush and Soft Rush are to be found on the washing floor but these are not necessarily connected to the pollution, as impeded drainage will attract such species. The same can be said for Short stalked Yellow Sedge, both of which are sparsely scattered around the washing floor and surrounding area. One species of Fern which is worthy of inclusion as a lead tolerant species is Moonwort, a remarkably tiny species, although this is markedly rare at Killhope.

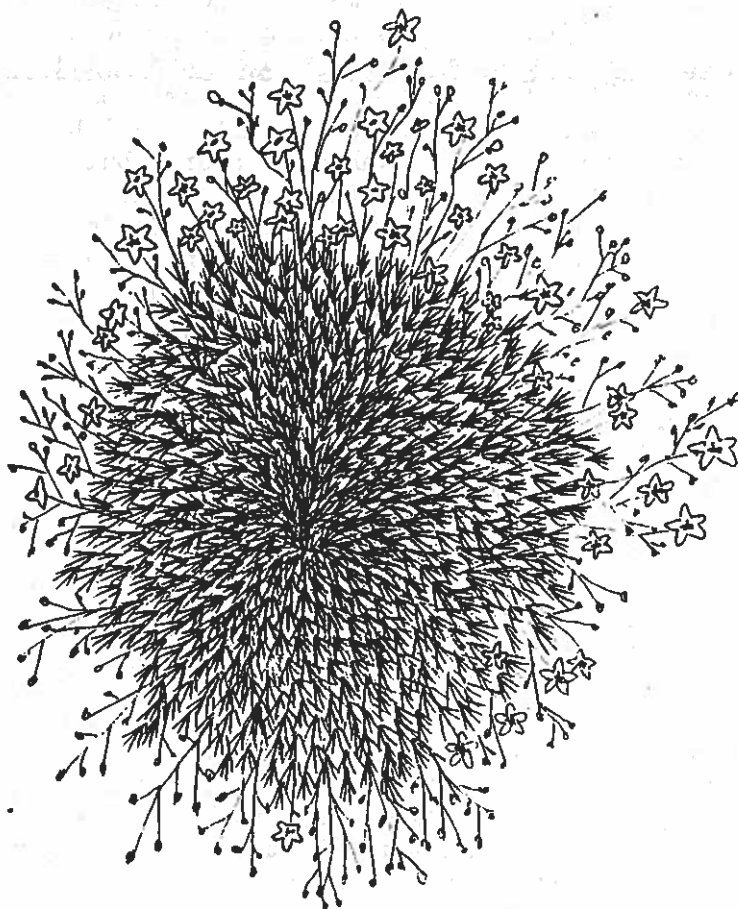
The lead tolerant flora can be found over the washing floor, around the bouseteams, around all the buildings, is particularly prevalent around the incline area, and can be found near to Killhope Burn where flooding has helped to disperse the seeds of the lead tolerant plants. It is diminishing as reconstruction of the site takes place, and it will be interesting to study how this flora adapts to the site in its new guise as a visitor centre.

Downstream from the site, on the north bank of Killhope Burn where the limekiln used to be, is a small yet fascinating area. The flora typifies that of particularly lime rich areas, and there is a wealth of species so different from the Heavy Metal Flora of the washing floor, yet so very interesting. The herbage is not very rich, yet what there is, is interesting. Common Butterwort is the most interesting plant to be found. Flowering in early June, its blue, violet like flowers are not often seen, but its bright green starfish like leaves are easily recognised. It is one of the commoner insectivorous plants of the North Pennines, in suitable habitats. The remainder of the herbage typifies local wet flushes, with Marsh Willowherb, Lesser Spearwort, and other common plants frequently found. The sedges of this small area are worthy of comment. Altogether there are nine sedges in an area of ten square yards. Most interesting is Dioecious Sedge, as this is not to be found in many County Durham sites, but also present are Flea Sedge, Spring Sedge, Pill Sedge, Carnation Sedge, Common Sedge, Glaucous Sedge and Oval Sedge, with nearby Short Stalked Yellow Sedge. Several rushes are to be found in this area and also a great many grass species, including some of interest. It is not possible to condense this area into a short paragraph, but suffice to say it is an interesting area.

The woodland walk deserves a mention, although there is no great wealth of flora. The floor of this area is thinly vegetated, mainly with Heath Bedstraw, Wood Sorrel, members of the Speedwell family, a few other scattered species introduced by workmen and visitors passing through. Hazely Hush has a small crop of Bilberries and Wild Strawberries and Wild Thyme is commonly found throughout the area. This latter species is one of the more widespread of the Heavy Metal Flora species, being quite ubiquitous.

Within one mile of Killhope Wheel are to be found over 120 plant species, not including ferns, mosses and lichens. There is a diversity of flora which helps to add to the interest of Killhope to visitors. But with Bobby the horse on the rampage, along with Mr. Forbes and his watering can, Dave Cranstone and the Diggerfolk to say nothing of the workmen doing such an excellent job rebuilding the site, and visitors to the area looking around and learning about the site, will this flora survive? I suspect it will, but perhaps it will be necessary to look just that little bit more closely to appreciate it to the full.

SPRING SANDWORT (drawn by Rachael Clare Dornan)



The Graham letters were written from his family at Killhope to Joseph Graham who had emigrated to America in the middle of the last century.

The letters are reproduced by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Harry Cripps, Mrs. Cripps being the great grand-daughter of Joseph Graham.

In our last extract we learnt of the flood of emigration from Weardale as go-ahead young people took advantage of new opportunities in America.

The next letter is undated but seems to follow on from the previous one. This puts the other side of the picture and reminds us that it was possible for lead-miners in good times to earn reasonable wages.

Nevertheless for Thomas Graham who "has had bad work these two or three years" times in England are hard, and emigration seems an attractive option. This letter is full of interest as it gives the prices of many common food-stuffs and also demonstrates how aware an ordinary leadminer was of what was going on in the world beyond his daily horizons.

Dear Brother:

I have given you a good Account of the flow of emigration of Weardale I must return to our own humbel Family Instriests which I can write to you with more heapeness (happiness) than I sumtimes have don in regeard to a gerinal (general) view of all our hilths. Thomas has got very well again and William to is well And I think thair is nothing among none of thy Friends which is dangerous. thy Daughter Jane Ann had been a littel poorly but is a vast better again and my Mother to is a vast weaker than she youst to be but she is abel to work her house work still and I have seen Joshua Stobbs and he says that his daughter Hannah is poorly but is not very ill and I no (know) no more that aileth any thing. my old Ant Betty is a vast weaker but is much about one any other way And her son John still thirtens (thirsts?) to go to America but you need not look for him yet for I think he will never go time his Old Mother is liven and I understand that he will have a good pay this year in the Burtreepastergrove mine and thir is som more of ous will do very well this year to. (too.) (1) Thomas Millburn and Nicklas Padon both have Masterwork this year and Josua Stobbs is a masterman Washer at Burtreepaster mine and will have a bit pay to (too) (2) and as for Thomas Dalton I do not no how he will come on this year and my Brother thomas has had bad work these two or three years. he thinks that if you was whare he work whar a candel will not bumyou would not be so much against him going to America and you think that you would not advice any of us to go to America. well what would you think if you ware pleast (placed?) in this Countery with a Wife and Four or Five children with only £2 per month to live on (3) in a Counterey ware vitualin (victualling) is so very high. the last year in April flour was as low as 1s and 8d per stoen and it rose to 2s and 6d in August and has been as high as 3s and 6d per stoen nearly all this winter and is 2s and 8d yet. Bacon is as high as 9d per lb Butter 11d per lb mutton is 7d per lb and has been as high as 8d lb and in fact every thing is high. a good poney is as high as 15 to 20 and 25 pounds each and all other kind of horeses is equaly as dear and a good Milk Cow has been solin from 10 to 18 pounds a peace (4) Sheep has been equaly as dear and in fact it has been the dearest year any of ous ever so (saw.) And as for Cholera I get the Newpapers every week and I think it has totely left the Nation all together and I think it is

nearly distroyed in the Eastern Nations to and as for the War both Great Britian and France has combined with Turkey and has sent a great land force of Troops unto Turkey with two very great combined Fleets the one into the Black Sea and the other into the Baltic Sea and I think thay will Force to Russia to a pease she will never break more. (5) and you must let me know weather you bote (bought) that peace of land you wonce wrote of. so I must bring my letter to a close hopeing that it will find you and I care not how soon I was on a portion of land along with you and as many of my Frinds as would like to go and may be that siteth on the Sicekls of the Heavens soon hayl that prospriety

So I rem your ever sincer Brother

John Graham

- (1) Aunt Betty Peart and John lived at Burnbotton, a house which stood just where the ford crosses the burn to Killhope, but which has long since been demolished. It is interesting that John works at Burtree Pasture Mine, 3 miles away at Cowhill, rather than at the Killhope mine which was much nearer. Perhaps the earnings were better at the very prosperous Burtree Pasture mines. Park Level Mine a couple of hundred yards from John's house had only just started and there would be few jobs there. Even the mineshop was not yet built.
- (2) A Masterman Washer supervised the lads doing ore separation (the washer boys.) I'm not certain of the meaning of "Masterwork" - I suspect Thomas and Nicholas, like Joshua, would be in positions of responsibility on the washing floor. In a later letter we learn that "Nicholas Padon" is a minder of a new Boudel (buddle) at Pastergrove Washing Place."
- (3) £2 per month was the basic subsistence payment for a miner - his "lent money." If he was in a poor working he would only make this basic wage per month; and £2 per month wouldn't go very far as the list of food prices in the letter indicates.
- (4) If you consider that a good pony cost as much as a man would earn in six months or more you can appreciate why many smallholders could not afford one and why the mine owners took good care of theirs.
- (5) The third great 19th century cholera epidemic had reached Europe the previous year and raged for two years across the whole continent. The war referred to is of course the Crimean War, where the siege of Sebastopol was about to start.

LEAD MINING SEMINARRichard V. Turner

On a sunny Saturday in mid-October over sixty representatives of interested organisations, English Heritage officers, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland County Council officers and regional officers from the Countryside Commission gathered in Alston's Samuel King's School to consider the "Lead Mining Heritage Strategy Discussion Document" circulated in 1987 by the three North Pennines counties. The seminar had been organised jointly by Friends of Killhope, the Allenheads Trust and the North Pennines Heritage Trust, all sharing the hope of moving on from discussion to action.

Speakers from English Heritage and the three County Councils made the following points clear:

1. The conservation of the Lead Mining Heritage of the Northern Pennines presents a large problem and one which requires urgent solutions.
2. The County Councils have relatively little money to spend; they would seek assistance from other bodies.
3. English Heritage has funds but needs to be convinced of the national importance of sites.

There was a recognition on the part of County Council representatives that they were in the company of people who could provide them with a great deal of information and assistance for use in establishing criteria for lead mining sites and other industrial remains. Information was felt to be essential in order to attract funding from English Heritage.

What, then, were the conclusions reached?

Firstly, the Discussion Document was endorsed by all as a basis for a strategy.

Secondly, the North Pennines Heritage Trust offered to liaise between the voluntary and official bodies in an exchange of information.

Was it worthwhile? The answer must be "Yes", since it was the first such forum and undoubtedly there was a much greater understanding of viewpoints on all sides by the end of the day.

We are left with a clearer view of what there is to be done and a realisation that conservation of the heritage is a long-term operation.

PROSPECTS FOR 1989 - VISITORS TO KILLHOPEEric Ryan

After two years in which the number of tourists coming to the North Pennines has dramatically increased, the evidence is that the trend will continue in 1989. Certainly many of Killhope's visitors last year were tourists visiting the area for the first time and proclaiming that they would return.

On the home front there is a problem. We may struggle to sustain the number of visits from schools on day trips. Regulations will be introduced in April which will have a restrictive effect on parents contributing to the cost of school visits in school time. However, the good news is that despite this, there are now twice as many booked-in parties for 1989 as there were for 1988 at this time last year. As well as local schools and groups, there are parties from France, Reading, Cambridge, Birmingham, Market Weighton, Hull, York, Blackpool and Cumbria.

Killhope is becoming more widely known, slowly perhaps, but the word is spreading.

HAREHOPE GILL LEAD MINES, FROSTERLEY

In response to Brian Short's article, Simon Chapman writes:-

"I have a few scraps of information about Harehope Gill Lead Mine described in Friends of Killhope Newsletter No. 13.

The order books of Messrs Hathorn Davey & Co. have been preserved and are available for research at the West Yorkshire Archives in Leeds.

The company manufactured heavy pumping equipment mainly but did some general engineering work as well. Very little was supplied to lead mining sites but two order numbers were for equipment delivered 11 November 1882 for an order from the Harehope Gill Mining Co. of Newcastle.

Order No. 3522 was for a horizontal condensing pumping engine with high pressure cylinder 20" diameter, low pressure 36", both with a stroke of 6 feet and arranged tandem fashion. The engine was fitted with Davey's Patent Differential valve gear.

Order No. 3523 was for an injection condenser and 2 quadrants.

The engine and condenser cost £690 and the quadrants and connecting rod cost another £265.

There is no mention of Hathorn Davey supplying the pumps which this engine would have driven, nor whether the engine would have been situated on the surface or underground.

What worries me is I'm not sure to which site the above refers as in "The Durham & Northumberland Mineral Statistics" published by Exeter University, 1983, Harehope Gill is described as being at a completely different site near Edmondbyers.

Perhaps via the Newsletter someone might clarify matters."

In reply to the letter from Mr. Chapman, there are a number of facts which would seem to offset the possibility of the engine's destination being the Frosterley site. They are:-

- (a) As far as I can ascertain the Harehope Gill Lead Mining Company Limited were London based.
- (b) The Lease had been taken up several months earlier than the stated delivery date by the Boardwood Mining Syndicate Limited, and there is no mention of an engine in their minutes which have been preserved at the Durham Records Office.
- (c) A look at the redrawn plan of the mine leads to the assumption that pumping would be done using the water wheel situated underground (if indeed it was still working in 1882.)

As the mine at Edmondbyers was apparently working solely from a 350ft. deep shaft from surface without a water drainage level, the engine you describe would be well suited to facilitate the pumping of water from those workings.

All things considered, it seems likely that this was its destination, unless of course someone knows of another Harehope Gill mine elsewhere!

Incidentally, a sad footnote to add to the original article came to light via the Weardale Gazette, that being on 30th September 1840, the crushing machinery claimed the life of Joseph Bainbridge, aged 10 years, after losing a leg in the grinder.

Brian Short

CAN ANYONE HELP?

Don Wilcock has dug out a couple of items from the Colliery Guardian of around 1858, and asks if anyone has further information.

The first concerns Sunnyside mine, south of Wolsingham. Here "a valuable property of 300 acres..... and having its engine shaft within 800 yards of the Stockton and Darlington railway (Wear Valley) is in the process of being opened out by the Sunnyside Lead and Iron Co in the property of J. Wooler of Wolsingham an exploratory adit or water level to be driven through the principal vein (Harehope Gill or Great Slitt)....."

The second is a reference to a Mr. Richard Cordner of Crawleyside, Stanhope who was described as a "contractor" and builder of railways. Can anyone add information about him?

Ian Forbes adds:

I too would like to know more about Richard Cordner. He was the contractor for at least two developments at local lead mines.

The first was the building of Slitt dam at Westgate to supply water to the Armstrong hydraulic engine at Slitt mine, and the second was the construction of the incline from the Weardale Iron Company's railway line at Sikehead to Whiteheaps mine in the Derwent company's mining field.

Richard Watson was born in Middleton in Teesdale in 1833. He became known as the Teesdale Poet and his work was known throughout the dale. Today, a few enthusiasts survive, but his work is largely unknown, yet it has a lot to offer. His sentiments about the beauty of Teesdale are still true and his observations about the difficult employment situation could have been written in our own time. On first coming across his work doing research into Lead Mining, I made a mental note to come back to the whole subject of Watson and his work, with a view to writing folk songs and presenting his poetry. The result of this is an entertainment called "Miner and Poet" and in a strange way the work has fitted in with Watson's gravestone which says:

"Enough this record of his name - his songs perpetuate his fame"

Sadly, Watson's songs are not sung and his poetry is not read. The entertainment has gone some way to bringing Watson's work back into the public eye and keeping an important part of the heritage of Teesdale alive.

When Richard Watson's father died, Richard was well on his way to becoming a Victorian workman. To be accepted as an employee of the London Lead-mining Company it was essential to pass the Sunday School examinations. Richard had always loved his books and his work and had been encouraged by the local vicar. In contrast to later attitudes taken by the coal companies in Durham, the London Lead Mining Company took a positive attitude to learning. In some coal mining districts a man could be badly treated, perhaps laid off if it was proven that he was continuing to be educated. Coal Owners were beginning to fear the rumblings of dissent and the workers movements.

Watson's natural gift for literature and his brightness meant that he was soon promoted to a position on the dressing floor. Up top, he was much more free to pursue his passionate interests, reading, writing and poetry. It is said that he constantly had books around him and that one day, engrossed in Shakespeare, he fell absent mindedly into the slime pit!

Watson's personality and his attitude to work are the source of some amusement. He was easily side tracked into reading or writing and sometimes did not turn up for work at all. His unreliability irritated Nancy, his wife, who struggled to feed and clothe the family. There were inherent tensions in living with a poet! She was often annoyed with him and the result of one row was that she refused to knit him a scarf. The result was from that time onwards he wore a hank of sheep's wool around his neck, until such time as it became too smelly and he would find a new one.

When his poetic volumes did not sell well, he became disillusioned. He also had the misfortune to be half blinded in a pitch fork accident. He moved the whole family to Scotland and then to Workington, trying to find a better life. This failed and in the travelling all of his children died. Nancy and Richard stuck together in the face of hunger, destitution and their children's deaths. In the end, Watson felt their lot may have been easier in Teesdale and the family returned, with three new children. These children were named after the first three, which must have caused some confusion when they returned to the local villages!

The Watson's couldn't have returned at a worse time, Spain's lead production rates were being felt and it was doubly hard for an unfit man to find work. He did some coal mining at Copley and odd jobs and finally some labouring in the building of Holwick Mansion. Just when this job was helping him to regain some dignity, good fortune ran out. A dressed stone fell and crushed one of Watson's feet and the complications included gangrene. He died at the age of fifty eight, which was a good age when most men only lasted until their forties.

Now that the folksong and poetry tour is almost over, and I am reviewing the project, we can look back on a number of pleasant evenings, meeting people in Teesdale and around the towns. We have been privileged to meet Parkin Raine, the direct descendant of Parkin Raine the Fiddler, who was the subject of one of Watson's poems. We have also been contacted by Watson's great grandson and have heard of the possibility of the formation of a new society to keep Watson's work known and enjoyed. Recently, as a result of the project, both BBC and LTV researchers have been in contact, with a view to recording something of the Dales, on the lead mining subject in general. There is no doubt that media coverage will aid the promotion of Killhope and the surrounding district. So we hope that the project will have made some contribution to both Teesdale and Weardale.

Most writers say that it is most difficult to choose one or two poems from a complete work of one poet. I have no hesitation in choosing two for the Newsletter however. The first one, The Fells, shows Watson's love of the dale, his detailed observation of wildlife and his historical knowledge. Who could expect children in school today to know about Randolph and Douglas on both the Teesdale and Weardale fells! There is also an element of wonder in this poem as to the progress of Science, "goods, whirled on iron rails" and "news from distant parts borne on wires." Finally, this poem makes a projection into the future and remarks about the pace of change. The ultimate conclusion, however, is about the way in which our own dales are dearer to us than,

"All the spicy, fragrant orange groves,
Where beautiful flowers perfume the air,
Which Spain and sunny Italy can boast."

The second poem I have chosen because it is simply the most popular, the poem which all the Teesdale people want to hear, the poem which they have already marked in their copies and talk about with enthusiasm. Fairey Dell is not referring to High Force but to a cascade that falls nearby. My own theory however is that the poem was stimulated by Jerry Force which is a hidden fall, very close to Copley, which was where Watson was living when he wrote the poem about Nancy. Jerry Force and Fairey Dell have all the shady, fern qualities written about in the poem. The subject of the poem is old age and his thoughts on the subject have certainly stood the test of time.

(Richard Watson's poem The Fells will appear in the next newsletter)

FAIREY DELL by Richard Watson

Come sit you down dear Nancy,
 By t'fire while you and I
 converse together, Nancy,
 Of happy days gone by,
 We've pretty scenes here in Teesdale,
 But none I love so well,
 As that sweet place by Millbeck,
 Known as the Fairey Dell.

Chorus

Nancy, O Nancy,
 I know you remember well,
 The happy hours we spent love,
 Up in the Fairey Dell.

My youthful days, dear Nancy,
 seem like a pleasant stream.
 When arm in arm we rambled
 By the rippling silvery stream.
 We gathered nuts and sloes, love,
 And wild flowers you loved well,
 By shady bower and rock, love,
 Up in the Fairey Dell.

When you were at the town, Nancy,
 I ment you oft at night,
 Lest bogles of Unthank, Nancy,
 Should put you in a fright;
 Your fears fled when I met you,
 As You'll remember well,
 We often kissed and promised
 to meet in Fairey Dell.

Since then, my dearest Nancy,
 We've in strange place been;
 We've wandered far from Teesdale,
 And curious sights we've seen;
 Your hair is turning grey, love,
 Yet I love you just as well,
 As when we strolled together,
 Up in the Fairey Dell.

We're going down the hill, Nancy,
 Soon at its foot we'll fall,
 And youthful days, dear Nancy,
 We never can recall.
 I hope we both are going,
 To where bright spirits dwell;
 Where we will happier be, love,
 Than in the Fairey Dell.

PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORTIan Forbes

So the Community Task Force have finally left Killhope. The last familiar green Transit van pulling away from the site left a strange empty feeling behind. CTF have been rebuilding Killhope for 8 years, and, although we have had our differences, they have achieved a great deal of high quality work. They have transformed the place from a derelict ruin to a nationally-known leadmining centre. But, with a final and grateful thank-you to those who worked on the project, we need now to look forward rather than back. Eric Ryan, elsewhere in this newsletter, outlines the possibilities open to Friends. Here, in the traditional Project Officer's report, I want to glance back briefly to what Friends have done since the last newsletter.

At the October meeting in Barnard Castle Rob White showed some dazzling slides of industrial scenes old and new taken from the air, in and around his own patch of North Yorkshire. For the Members' Night in the Allenheads Inn in November the McMullon family gave us warm and cosy surroundings and a number of Friends informed and entertained with their slides of scenes above and below ground. Both were grand evenings.

Local industry continues to be most supportive of our projects. Friends' contacts secured a large quantity of mine tailings free of charge from Weardale Minerals and the Blue Circle works at Eastgate remain superb. A group of Friends has undertaken to remake the Brunton buddles at Killhope; work is well underway with the joinery and Blue Circle are being more than helpful with the ironwork and an offer to machine the shafts. Friends would certainly achieve a good deal less without the help both of the management and of some Friends who work at Eastgate and who can use the facilities there to fabricate parts for our projects in their own time. A fuller report on the Brunton project and on the fascinating detective work among the archaeological "finds" from Killhope which has helped keep us right on details will appear in the next Newsletter.

The other major project - the rehabilitation of Park Level Mine - has been in abeyance since Christmas; not for lack of volunteers but because the poor "duty watch" outside was getting frozen! Inside it was quite warm. Work will start again soon; so far nearly 700 hours of volunteers' time have been put into this project and we are slowly beginning to see results.

Friends are always on the look-out for suitable items for Killhope. Recently a small group has been to examine a 3-compartment jig (made by Davisons of Hexham) near Ravenstonedale to see whether it was suitable for the jigger house. Following our report it seems likely that the County Council will buy it. Now does anyone know where we can get flat belts, flat belt pulleys and so on to link up the machinery?

I have pleasure in noting three significant additions to the library. We have been given a folder of 6" geological maps covering large parts of the North Pennines and some 200 aerial photographs covering parts of Weardale, Allendale, the Rookhope valley, the Tow Law area, and the Derwent valley. These photos were some of those taken by the R.A.F. in the early 1950's and are a wonderful source of information and fascinating to study. We have also been given on long loan 67 sheets of the 6" ordnance survey maps from the 1950's covering most of the North Pennines from Melmerby to West Auckland and from Slaley to Stainmore - a superb collection of maps.

These collections add greatly to our library and I am most grateful to George Pickin for making these gifts possible. They can be inspected by prior arrangement at Fieldfare, Wearhead. I'm afraid they cannot be lent out.

Finally, I would like to place on record the thanks of your Committee to Durham County Council for a grant of £440 given to us in recognition of work achieved and to enable us to continue to play a full and expanding role in the development of Killhope. As I said at the beginning Killhope feels empty without C.T.F. but the presence of Friends on site can help to compensate for their departure. You will always be made welcome, whether you come to work or just to see what's going on.

RESTORATION PROGRESS AT KILLHOPE

Eric Ryan

The Community Task Force scheme continued to operate from September to the middle of February but on a reduced level. In September we lost some of the skilled men who had been working there for some time and they were not replaced. However, there has been progress on a variety of small-scale elements which overall, have had a significant impact on the appearance of the site.

It is a long time since there was a dead heap composed of washing floor waste at Killhope. The stream swept it away. A dead heap has been recreated with material excavated from the hole which is now filled by the sewage treatment works for the visitor centre. The heap has been covered with tailings and a railway laid along its 50 metre length. Buntings have been erected at the end of the deads, as there were already at the end of the dead heap near the bouse teams. Thus the railway system is now complete (except for the installation of crusher tubs on the lower network.)

The Buddle House has had glass put in the windows, downpipes erected and a box installed connecting it with the Jigger House. The drystone wall on the east side of the field behind the Buddle House has been partly rebuilt.

On the washing floor a third knockstone has been built and the settling tanks are now completely restored. The water supply to and overflow from the eastern set of double hotching tubs have been installed. Heather-thatched fleaks have begun to grow on the washing floor and there are more heaps of mined material lying around, giving the place a much more authentic look. The restoration of stone walling at the Brunton Buddles will allow the Friends to progress with the reconstruction of the machinery and cloths.

On the opposite bank of the stream there has been a dramatic change during January and early February. The tailrace from the wheel, having been joined by the mine water, has for some years been discharged into Killhope-burn half way across a reconstructed aquaduct. Last summer the water race was extended as far as the Cart Bridge before a sluice directed water into the stream. Now the race has been extended much further. Tunnels have been cleared and there is a 70 metre long, wooden-box race careering along the face of the cliff and then crossing a gully on stone piers. This provides an excellent illustration of the way in which W.B. Lead controlled the water supply system over a vast area and the lengths they went to in creating this network.

In the woodland the display of early ore dressing is really taking shape. At the top of Hazely Hush the knockstone and bingstead are complete together with two tubs for using sieves. There is an operational buddle in place. The stable in the woodland is nearing completion - half the roof is thatched and there is sufficient heather on site to complete the job.

So C.T.F. are now off-site but there is still much to do. If there are Friends out there, with or without skills, who want to make an impact on Killhope, now is your chance. You may only be able to manage an occasional day but there are plenty of opportunities to help with reconstruction and replication and be able to see solid achievement at the end of the day. The railway along the eastern side of the washing floor needs relaying, replica tubs need to be built to sit on those rails (a different design and wider gauge than the mine tubs) one reservoir needs to be dug out, the water race which led to Burn Bottom Mill has only been partially recreated, a gin-gang will be erected in the wood, the thatching of the stable block is not complete, the pit at the top of Hazely Hush has to be recreated, etc. etc. Many of the most exciting elements of Killhope will not be completed unless Friends take up the challenge as they have done with the Brunton Buddles and Park Level. Volunteers should contact Ian Forbes.

PARYS MOUNTAIN

Ian Forbes

Readers may think that large scale metal mining in Britain is a thing of the past. Not so.

Parys Mountain on Anglesey was, in the last century, the world's biggest copper mine, employing thousands of men.

Now mining is to be revived there on a large scale. The Anglesey Mining Company plc was established, with Canadian backing, last year and has awarded Cementation Mining a £3 million contract to develop a completely new mine.

The contract is for the first phase of the work, which will involve the sinking of a 540 metres deep shaft of 4.75 metres diameter and the development of two levels for bulk sampling and diamond drilling. The new shaft will be sunk into an untouched orebody.

On the successful completion of this part of the work, Phase two will encompass the development and commissioning of the mine and mineral processing plant.

Parys Mountain will be the country's deepest metal mine with zinc being the main ore mined, as well as associated copper, gold, lead and silver.

(Thanks to Leslie Blackett for drawing attention to news of this development in "New Mining and Quarrying" December 1988.)