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# NENTHEAD MINES CONSERVATION SOCIETY

**Newsletter No 4**

**March 2013**

## SOCIETY NEWS

### October 2012 Meeting

The meeting opened with a presentation by Peter Wilkinson, who described the history and exploration of the Nentforce Level. Peter gave an illustrated presentation about the driving of the level and the activities of the NORPEX group in exploring the mine. After a tea break, Committee members updated the meeting about their activities and then opened a forum discussion.

Here is a list of the suggestions that were made by members during the discussion:

- 1 Raise the profile of the Society.
- 2 Heritage Open days
- 3 National Archaeology weeks
- 4 Get involved with Altogether Archaeology
- 5 Promote the society to Cumbria County council
- 6 Arrange field trips and surface walks for members
- 7 Think about Publications
- 8 Make a short term and medium term plan
- 9 Think about the long-term objectives
- 10 Look at similar mining museum sites
- 11 Promote the Society
- 12 Arrange a members meeting for Easter 2013

### Committee action

Your committee met following the October meeting and debated what to do next.

We decided that our short-term efforts should be devoted to working with Cumbria County Council (CCC), and that our medium term plans should be built around arranging some events for members and the public in 2013.

We have met on site with the CCC staff and have discussed short and long-term arrangements for the site. The conclusion to these meetings has been that the society has asked for a license to use most of the Nenthead Mines site. We have a detailed report later in this Newsletter.

We have also discussed the future of the NPHT assets with the Administrator of that company. A detailed report also follows.

We have canvassed members via the website for suggestions for events in 2013. More information is in the Programme section of this Newsletter.

### Cumbria County Council

Cumbria County council mainly owns the site and buildings at Nenthead. The exceptions are the Brewery Shaft land and the Mill Cottage site. These two freeholds are the property of the North Pennines Heritage Trust in administration (NPHT). We have a separate report later about NPHT.

Your committee has met officers of Cumbria County Council several times since May of 2012. By agreement, the Society has taken on a caretaking role of the site, mainly carried out by Sheila Barker assisted by members and other people from Nenthead. We have also catalogued the NPHT property that is on the site and we are working on cataloguing the archaeology reports, records and plans (which are also owned by NPHT). During this work, we noticed that the lack of heating in the buildings was beginning to have adverse effects on the archaeology records. By agreement with CCC and the power supplier, we have arranged for one storage heater to be switched on and for all the records to be stored in one room. This has had a positive effect on the condition of the papers and plans.

In March 2013, the society applied for a License to use the site. In our application letter, we suggested that the Society might be responsible for the land and buildings on the site; except for the Café, Museum and Wood yard areas. NMCS would take over the water, electricity, gas and tax charges on the assay house and smelt mill section of the site and be able to provide bunkhouse facilities for NMCS members. If an alternative use can be found for the Museum buildings, we have suggested that the inside displays might be moved to the Smelt Mill Barracks building. It might be possible for CCC to find a use for the Museum and Café buildings, which could bring income towards the cost of running and maintaining the whole site. CCC has asked the society to continue work on a detailed Business Plan and have advised that, because of other unrelated legal work, it is likely to be June 2013 before they can formally respond.

If you have knowledge or experience, which would help us with the details of the Business case, the Committee would warmly welcome your support. Please get in touch via Peter Jackson 07718385646.

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## North Pennines Heritage Trust in Administration (NPHT)

Your committee has worked with the Administrator in order to catalogue the NPHT property on site and is also close to completing a more detailed catalogue of the Archaeology records.

We are shortly to meet formally and discuss the registration of a charitable company limited by guarantee, which would aim to take over the assets of NPHT. Apart from the costs of drawing up suitable articles and registration with Companies House, it is possible that the Administrator is likely to require payment for the assets of NPHT.



*Nenthead Clock Tower – before 1908*

## NMCS PROGRAMME 2013

### Nenthead Mines Site Maintenance

One day in each month, starting on 1<sup>st</sup> April (Easter Monday). Thereafter on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month: 21<sup>st</sup> April, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 15<sup>th</sup> September & 20<sup>th</sup> October.

Bring lunch. Tea & coffee provided. Meet 1000 in the car park. You must bring your BCA Green card.

More information from Sheila barker email: [sheila.barker@cybermoor.org.uk](mailto:sheila.barker@cybermoor.org.uk), or phone 01434 381903

### Annual General Meeting

18<sup>th</sup> May 2013, 1100hrs  
Nenthead Village Hall.

The programme will include a short presentation, NMCS business, and a walk around the site to discuss plans for the future. See the website for latest information.

## Smallcleugh Mine-off the Tourist Route

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1030hrs

“Off the tourist route” - an underground trip to explore those places you normally march straight past. No SRT. Not unduly wet, wellies are fine but it can be a bit mucky so old clothes would be best.

The Leader is Nick Green, who can help with more information about this event.

Email: [gnick44@aol.com](mailto:gnick44@aol.com).

Meet in the car park at Nenthead Mines.

## Nenthead Mines Archaeology

14 July, 1045 – 1445hrs

A guided tour of the archaeology of the site by Matt Town, MA. Matt authored the report on the smelting mill excavations for English Heritage.

Meet in the Nenthead Mines car park.

## History and Geology in Carrs Mine

28<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 18<sup>th</sup> August.

These trips will provide an Introduction to Nenthead mining history and geology via a visit into Carrs Mine. Designed for first time visitors. Bookable via the NMCS website.

## SITE NEWS

### HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP

CCC has continued work started by NPHT to apply for Higher Level Stewardship, which is funded by Natural England. The aim of this programme is to deliver environmental benefits via land management. It seems likely that CCC will succeed with their application and that some funds will become available for managing the site. The first part of this project in 2013 is likely to be an Archaeological review of the site. English Heritage and the Environment Agency (EA) are also assisting with HLS on the site. The North Pennines AONB staff unit has also contributed time to continuing the application and facilitating meetings.

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## REMEDIATION

The water discharges from the mines into the River Nent contain significant amounts of zinc. The Environment Agency has a legal obligation to propose strategies and arrange treatment of this water to reduce the quantity of zinc. There has been considerable academic study and research about this problem (which is not unique to Nenthead). Newcastle University constructed and operated an experimental water treatment plant, which ran for one year on a site adjacent to the Café.

In late 2012, the EA visited the site in order to examine what might be required. The first actions are likely to be flow meters placed for one year in Rampgill and Caplecleugh Levels in order to measure the annual water flows from the mines. The data from these meters will then inform the required capacity of a water treatment operation. The EA has also looked at the erosion of the mine dumps and it seems likely that there will be proposals to reduce the material being washed into Rampgill Burn.

Natural England has funded an experimental site, which is just north of the smelt mill flue. This experiment aims to show the best plants for growing on the mine dumps. The wet summer weather in 2012 prevented the trial continuing and we assume that this will re-start in 2013.

## BUILDINGS AND MINES

Most of the site buildings are in reasonable order. None of the buildings have had heating through the summer and winter and damp patches are visible in some rooms. Mortar has eroded from gable ends and frost has damaged the smelt spine wall in a new area on the south side. There is now a large outward bulge adjacent to the site of the boiler house. Some woodwork in doors and windows is rotting badly.

There has been a collapse of the retaining wall between the Stamp Mill site and the River Nent. Some months ago, an erosion cavity became visible as the river washed material away from the wall foundation which then collapsed into the river.

Carrs Mine has remained free of rock falls and the water drain continues to operate. It is likely that some of the timbering will require replacing in 2013. The 240/12-volt transformers had been switched off for many months until February 2013. A recent test found that the lighting system was working, with the expected number of failed bulbs. The lighting system was switched off after this test.

## DONATIONS

We have received a donation of £468.65 from the members of the Adit Now Mining History Society. Thank you to all the members of Aditnow who contributed to this donation.

## WORKING WITH OTHER GROUPS

### Minco PLC

Minco PLC is a mining company, which has started a US\$1 million exploration programme, including 4,000 metres of diamond drilling over 12 months, around Nenthead. They are searching for zinc and lead ore bodies. Holes have been drilled on the north side of Rampgill Vein and on the north side of Gudhamgill Vein.



Drill rig north of Rampgill Vein, November 2012. © Don Borthwick

Through a wholly owned subsidiary, Minco has entered into agreements with a number of mineral rights and surface rights owners. The Company is in discussion with additional mineral rights and surface rights owners to add further exploration rights located in other parts of the North Pennines.

If this company were to start mining around Nenthead, there may be an impact on the accessibility and preservation of old mine workings.

### Nenthead Chapel

Your committee hopes to be able to work with the group that is aiming to purchase and convert Nenthead Chapel into a resource for the village. This group has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for assistance with purchase and renovation.

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## Alston Moor Partnership

The Partnership has a website at <http://www.alstonmoorpartnership.co.uk>. Your society has been represented at a monthly information-sharing meeting.

## Killhope

We have held meetings with Michael Boase, the Manager of Killhope, North of England Lead Mining Museum. We are hoping to arrange joint events in the summer of 2013. Information will be posted on our website.

## National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO)

NMCS has been granted membership of NAMHO. Newsletters from NAMHO will be posted on the Society website.

## YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND THE FUTURE

Membership subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. We hope that you will continue your membership. A renewal form is sent with this Newsletter.

Your committee is always looking for fresh ideas and alternative views. If you think that you might be able to contribute, please tell us about your opinions and ideas. The Society *contacts list* is at the end of this Newsletter.

## SOCIETY CONTACTS

Chair: Peter Jackson, 41 Cranswick Close, Billingham, Stockton, TS23 3NH. Phone 01642564100.  
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Membership Secretary: Sheila Barker, The Rise, Alston, Cumbria, CA9 3DB.  
Email: [membership@nentheadmines.com](mailto:membership@nentheadmines.com)

Committee:

Nick Green, Peter Wilkinson, Alistair Myers.

The Society website is at [www.nentheadmines.com](http://www.nentheadmines.com)

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Remains of Underground Whimsey in Scaleburn Mine  
Photo © Colin Fowler

## NENTHEAD COMMUNITY

Nenthead has a community village shop, which is run by the people of the village. Opening hours are 0800 – 1730 on weekdays, 0800-1500 Saturdays and 0900-1400 Sundays.

A village group runs the Public Toilets. They welcome donations towards their costs. Donations are accepted in the village shop and at the Miners Arms.