

## TRUSTEES REPORT FOR THE YEAR APRIL 2016 TO MARCH 2017 INCLUSIVE

### CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL

The Society continues to operate the Nenthead Mine site on behalf of Cumbria County Council, who pays for the public liability insurance. In March 2017 three Trustees attended a meeting with representatives of the Council in order to discuss our continuing operations. Following that meeting we have expressed an interest in taking either a lease or ownership of the Nenthead Mines site.

### EDUCATION AND OPEN DAYS

We held 11 Open days in 2016, which were generally fully booked. Experimentally we tried some midweek days in August, which were reasonably busy. In September we experimented with members role-playing the Smelly Smelter and a Grumpy Miner. Two of our members played these roles and visitors enjoyed this fun based approach to our mine trips.

Feedback from visitors is consistently excellent but this has not prevented us from experimenting with new approaches to Open Days. In support of this work, Dave McAnelly has developed the Brief for Mine Guides and has contributed information from his extensive historical researches.

The consistent message from visitors is the enjoyment and value that they gain from our Carrs Mine visits, whilst also commenting on the quality of our cakes. Several members bake and donate cakes for Open Days and then operate our catering service. Selling hot drinks and cakes is a valuable way of involving visitors in our displays and often leads to discussions about mining history.

Durham and Newcastle University continue to use the site annually. Dr Martin Cooke of the Department of Civil Engineering and Geosciences at Newcastle is also encouraging students to carry out small research studies on site.

### OPERATING THE NENTHEAD MINES SITE

Operating the site on Open days requires a volunteer team of at least four Mine Leaders, two Receptionists, and two in the Catering team. Members have continued to provide that support and new volunteers have joined the team.

We have also worked on 45 Wednesdays and 6 Sundays throughout the year to handle site maintenance, repairs, archiving and cataloguing.

37 members have volunteered throughout the year on site, either on Open days or on Volunteer Working Days. Many of those members also contributed cash and materials.

Alston Moor Community Energy (AMCE) was considering taking over the operations of the privately owned Nenthead Hydro Ltd, which leases Handsome Mea Reservoir, and some of the leats. In meetings with AMCE, the Society offered help and support with the hydro project, whilst making it clear that we placed high importance on the heritage of the site. AMCE have now announced that they are no longer interested in taking over that operation

## CARRS MINE

Dr Keith Williams, Principal Inspector of Mines for the Health and Safety Executive, visited us in June 2016. Peter Jackson had a three-hour discussion with Dr Williams followed by a one-hour visit to Carrs Mine. Our Action Plan drawn up after this visit included 26 mainly administrative points requiring attention. More than half of these points have been dealt with and work continues on the remainder.

Many of these Action Points were driven by regulations that demanded specific actions. As an example, Cumbria County Council arranged and paid for an inspection of the electrical supply system. The Society has also developed its relationship with the Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit, which is an essential part of our Emergency Plan.

## SAFE OPERATIONS

Systems have also been introduced for recording our approach to risk management and we now prepare method statements for any work on site. Nick Green has prepared many of the forms that we now use as part of our approach to safe methods of work.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

We were leading participants in the VMZ Conference in August hosted by the Alston Moor Historical Society. NMCS ran the delegates booking systems and was involved in planning arrangements for the event. Joyce Jackson handled the booking system and Paul Thorne provided and led the operation of his winch on Brewery Shaft. NMCS members were involved in many different roles over the weekend.

Nenthead primary school children visited us as part of the VM Conference and Pinpoint Training brought another group of school children in May.

During 2016 we continued to develop our relationship with Killhope. Museum. Peter Jackson had meetings with the manager Mike Boase that ended when Mike and other staff at Killhope left their jobs when the staffing was reduced. We have continued to offer our cooperation to the current management.

The Society is a member of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Beauty Partnership. We are represented on the Geopark Advisory group and the Historic Environment Working Group. We have contributed to the development of the Oresome and LiDAR Landscapes projects. Nenthead is included in the Oresome programme. We provided a letter of support for the Oresome funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The headgear at Groverake Mine in Weardale was to be demolished. The Society provided a letter of support to the Friends of Groverake.

We have continued our membership of the National Association of Mining History Organisations.

## BREWERY SHAFT

During November 2016 we concluded the legal transfer of the Brewery Shaft freehold site from the administrators of the North Pennines Heritage Trust. Our contribution to the legal costs was fixed at £2000 that was covered by two donations from Society members. A company, Brewery Shaft (NMCS) Ltd, now owns the shaft. That company received a loan for the transfer costs from the Society. Our intention is that the indefinite loan will be secured on the assets of that Company and the society will hold the issued shares of that company.

## ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

We have continued to help the Environment Agency and the Coal Authority with their work on consulting residents about methods of treating the minewater pollution in the River Nent. Our view is that the heritage and legal status of the mines should be protected and that access to the mines for leisure purposes should not be obstructed. The siting of possible water treatment plants is a contentious issue for local people and we have not made any comment on the suitability of sites, other than any consideration of their heritage status and historic value.

In March 2017 the Society was asked to assist the Coal Authority with publicity about the building and operation of flumes in the Rampgill and Caplecleugh Levels.

## DONATIONS

We continue to receive donations of money, time and objects. Examples include Dr John Sibson who donated a copy of Wallace's 1856 vein map and a copy of the book Alston Moor, its pastoral people, its mines and miners. John Crompton donated a collection of rails, including a set of very early cast iron point work. Members have regularly donated tools and materials for maintenance work.

## ASSETS

We purchased a new computer during the year, which replaced an elderly PC purchased from the NPHT Administrator. Electrical equipment has been catalogued and we also have a list of artefacts and mineral specimens. Work is continuing with listing all our assets.

Sheila Barker has lead a team that has sorted and catalogued our collection of site archaeology and historical documents. The team has also listed our collection of plans, drawings and maps. A financial donation by Frank Lowes was used to purchase archive quality storage boxes and materials. Our intention is to publish our catalogues and provide an archive viewing service.

## MEMBERSHIP

During 2016 we changed our subscription year in order to ensure that members subscriptions were paid in advance of the renewal date for our BCA Membership. Prior to being registered as a charity we had a small minority of members who had failed to pay their fees by the due date. The Trustees decided that it was not appropriate for the organisation to bear those costs.

We had 117 paid-up members at the end of March 2017.