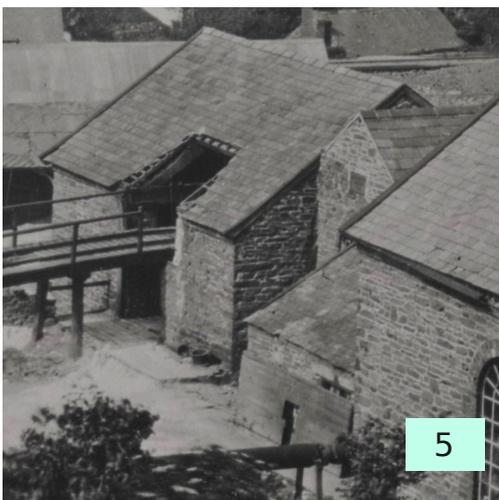


SNAILBEACH DISTRICT NEWS

July 2024
End of an era?

Free



1 – The mine works, about 1885. Far left, pumping and winding engine house, out of use. Centre, George's shaft. Far right, tramway tub ready to tip ore to the dressing floor. M. J. Shaw collection

2 - The crushing complex seen from the carpenter's yard, 2009. Right of centre, boiler house chimney. To right, crushing engine house, perhaps by Jonathan Harrison in 1846. The saw mill drive belt passed between the two buildings. S. A. Leleux

3 – George's shaft c.1900 looking roughly north-west, with men coming off shift. At left-hand edge, 'Blacksmith's shop engine house'. The pale builder's stone is seen part way up. George Hall Collection

4 – In 1991, looking westward in the adit, through the channel in the waterwheel enclosure to the final section of adit under the road. P. Eggleston

5– Narrow gable end of crushing engine house seen here, beside the last crusher house. A builder's plaque is seen at roof level. In the immediate foreground is the compressor house. Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust



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A sad goodbye to a village character. Scoby (Malcolm Griffiths) passed away May 10, aged 77 years. Tracy and his family would like to thank all who attended his funeral.

Snailbeach WI

We meet at Snailbeach Village Hall on the second Thursday in the month at 7.30. (2.00 in January and February).

We are a friendly bunch of ladies and we welcome anyone who would like to visit us to see what we do. We have a speaker most months and always finish with tea/coffee, biscuit and a chat.

Our talks are:- June 13th South Shropshire Climate Action Plan, July 11th Maiden's Garlands, 8th August Annual dinner,



From the editor

Perhaps it is fitting for my last newsletter that this edition is dominated by Andy Cuckson's well researched article on the closing of the Snailbeach Mines.

Maintaining the high standards set by previous editors of the Snailbeach District News has proved a demanding but very rewarding responsibility.

The future of our newsletter now hangs in the balance. If no person or group step forward to take over then the newsletter will be closed down with its assets distributed to local charities.

No decision will be taken until the autumn, when a meeting will be called at the Village Hall to allow contributors, advertisers, distributors and friends to have their say.

I would like to thank all these people and particularly John Gorman, Robert Currie and Carol MacMillan for their support over the last five years.

Without our advertisers there would have been no newsletter and as an extra thank you to them we have produced the Snailbeach District Directory which accompanies the July edition. We hope our readers will keep this by their phones to support our local services.

Geoff Sproson

Snailbeach Village Hall



Stiperstock Thursday Sept 19th 7.30pm

After the regulations of the covid times and uncertainties thereafter Stiperstock are back to promoting events in the village hall! We are a not for profit gang who raise cash for infrastructure improvements for entertainment in the the village hall, eg. lights and curtains. We invite you to join us for a superb double bill on September 19 at 7.30pm

In four decades of broadcasting and making theatre, Chris Eldon Lee has met so many famous and fascinating people his 'name-dropping' has become a standing joke.

From Ken Dodd to The Queen, his one-off anecdotes have regularly entertained dinner tables and enthralled pub gatherings.

In his long career Chris has pinned Tony Blair to a promise, elicited secrets from Dame Judi Dench, been kissed by all of the Nolan Sisters, got drunk with Laurie Lee and passed water with Salman Rushdie.

He has interviewed the first man to drive on the moon, the discoverer of The Ozone Hole, and the chap who wrote the hits for The Shadows.

He's met the authors of Morse, Brother Cadfael and Thomas the Tank Engine .. and he conducted the last ever interview with comedian Arthur Askey (twice!).

Every encounter and more has resulted in a unique and surprising story ... and now he's 70 he's pulling the very best anecdotes together into an evening's illustrated entertainment which is about to tour the county. So catch it tonight!

Since 2002 Gabriela La Foley has been wandering around the Northern Hemisphere with her trusty ukulele, telling tales and singing songs. Her passion is to spread the sunshine and joy of the magic ukulele. An MC once introduced Gabriela to an audience by dispensing with all the usual stage jargon, and announcing her simply as; "Happiness In A Hat". That title stuck, and it has been her morning motto ever since, as she dons her hat and flower, and heads off to spread ukulele joy.

Gabriela is a truly unique entertainer, who has a special ability to include the audience, they may start off wondering what the show will be about, and before they realise it, Gabriela has turned the show around to be all about the audience. She gives every ounce of energy and love to the audience, we are delighted to welcome her back.

"Absolutely fab. Such fun!"

Gabriela is no stranger to name-dropping herself. She met Chris Eldon-Lee once. Now, there's a story.....

Tickets are £10 from the pub. We'll have a bar and the very best company!

July 2024

Pontesbury Gardeners' Annual Show

This year's Show will be held on Saturday 24 August. It will be open for staging of exhibits on the previous evening and early on the Saturday morning, and opens to the public at 2.30 on the Saturday afternoon, with prizes presented at 4 pm followed by the raffle draw and auction of some of the exhibits.

Schedules are available at the Trading Post and in several shops in the village.

A Warning...

One of our members wants to remind everyone to keep power tools for the garden - hedge trimmers and blowers, etc - out of sight and locked away. His were in a locked shed but taken recently, even though the shed is out of obvious sight, so someone knew what they were after. Be careful.

Pontesbury & Rea Valley u3a's AGM will be held on **Wednesday the 17th July 2pm** at the Minsterley Parish Hall. It will be followed by a Quiz and refreshments and the chance to catch up.

Our u3a is part of a UK charity of over a 1000 u3a's, where retired and semi-retired people come together to learn for fun and friendship:

- 20 plus interest groups in our local u3a; something for everyone
- start at any level
- a warm welcome
- new groups are formed when sufficient members express interest

Make the most of life, join our u3a

learn, laugh, live

Membership Secretary
Steve Anderson
steve.anderson.u3a@gmail.com
07861 531 186

u3a Pontesbury & Rea Valley
u3asites.org.uk/pontesbury-reavalley

The Trading Post, in Station Road, is open every Saturday from 9.30 to 12 noon until the end of October.

COUNTRYSIDE AWAY DAY FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES



Monday 19th August at Newcastle on Clun

CAN YOU HELP?

Local Quakers have linked with Wolverhampton City of Sanctuary for the past few years to provide a day out for refugees and asylum seekers. This year we shall be hosting over 50 people, many of them families and children, who have fled war and persecution in their home countries, including Syria, Iraq, Iran and Sudan. They have been invited to spend the day with us in the Shropshire countryside with lunch, games, music and a chance to relax

The awayday will run from 10.30am until 5.30pm, but help either morning or afternoon would be welcome (or the day before - preparing the field!). We need volunteers to help cook and serve food, wash up, organise games and art activities, clear up the hall and move furniture! If you can help please ring Lorraine on 01743 791178 or email: lorraine.gawlik@smquakers.org.uk

And if you can't help on the day, donations of food (cakes, salads, fruit...) and second-hand clothes and toys are all needed. Ring Linda on 01588 630409 or email: lindamurray@me.com



Supporting those in food crisis within the Rea Valley Community

Rea Valley Foodbank Appeal

Rea Valley Foodbank has been operating for more than 18 months, supplying food to families in need in the Rea Valley area (Pontesbury, Minsterley and surrounding villages). During that period, we have been working in partnership with Foodbank Plus, the Shrewsbury Foodbank, run by Barnabas Church. Foodbank Plus has provided a storage facility and supplemented our parcels, and as a result we have been able to feed over 200 clients.

From September, our partnership is coming to an end, and RVF will be operating independently to be more responsive to clients' needs, often quite different from those approaching a town-based foodbank. Our vision is one of local people being supported by local people. To this end, we estimate we need additional income of £150 per month to be able to feed all our clients. We are therefore launching a community appeal, inviting our supporters to pledge £5 or £10 a month to ensure we can continue to operate and provide food for families in need.

At this stage, we are looking for pledges rather than cash so that we can plan effectively. Offers of pledges should be sent to Greg Smith at rectorpontstip@gmail.com or by calling 07902 794653.

Greg Smith

Chair: Rea Valley Foodbank

Farewell from Westminster

Following formal dissolution of the 2019-2024 Parliament for the General Election on 4th July, I am no longer your MP for the Ludlow constituency, so write this final farewell in a personal capacity.

The PM's surprise announcement last month brought my parliamentary career to an end a few months earlier than expected! But it felt appropriate that my last act in the House of Commons should be to present a petition on behalf of local residents, in this case calling for road repairs to their lane below Doddington on the Clee Hill near Cleobury Mortimer.

For the past almost two decades, I have striven to be a strong voice for the Ludlow Constituency, raising issues of local concern to the highest levels of national government.

Over that time, I met constituents at hundreds of advice surgeries held regularly right across the constituency (other than during the pandemic), for many years in my old campervan which doubled as a mobile office. I sent over 250,000 pieces of correspondence to constituents who have been in touch with me on a specific issue.

It is difficult to condense 19 years of work into a few highlights. I was particularly proud to have been able to take major strides to clean up our rivers and start the process to end sewage pollution, helping to put the issue on the agenda in Westminster, alongside all my other environmental work. This helped secure bathing water status in May for 3 sites on rivers in Shropshire.

Similarly, seeing Government compensation announced swiftly after publication at the end of May of the report from the Infected Blood Inquiry, which I had launched for the government when Minister of State for Health in 2017, will help bring some closure for families who have suffered. I had also helped in 2017 to secure the Ockenden Review into maternity services in Shropshire, which will have a lasting legacy for mothers and babies for many years to come.

Locally, it was satisfying in May to get confirmation of my long-standing campaign to improve health services in Shropshire for final investment approval of £312m for transformation of our acute hospitals. I have spent years fighting to sustain services at our community hospitals in Bishop's Castle, Bridgnorth, Burford and Ludlow, and helped secure building two new GP surgeries in Cleobury Mortimer (ten years ago) and Highley, which opens in coming weeks. Over 19 years I helped save 10 of our rural primary schools from closing, and helped two of our secondary schools, in Much Wenlock and Ludlow, secure state of the art buildings.

But the most satisfying aspect of my role has been getting to know thousands of folk across South Shropshire, engaging with you as best as I have been able, and helping where I can. While I have few specific plans yet, I expect I shall keep myself busy for the foreseeable future, I shall always keep a keen eye on goings on in South Shropshire. It has been the greatest honour of my life to represent so many good people in such a wonderful part of the world, where I have spent most of my almost 66 years.

So I say a final farewell to all my (now former) constituents in the Ludlow constituency, whether you voted for me or not, with fond memories of the privilege of representing you in the mother of all Parliaments. I wish you well, with bags of good luck for my successor, and hope for a bright future for us here in what has become the constituency of South Shropshire.

Rt Hon Philip Dunne Former MP for Ludlow (2005-2024)

Notes from the hill

The species of the month this month is the small pearl-bordered fritillary. This is a beautiful butterfly that I will have featured quite a lot in past 'Notes from the Hill', as it is one of the special species found on the Stiperstones and the east side of the hill seems to be its stronghold in this area. For the Stepping Stones project, it is a good flagship species for upland flushes and springs, one of the most precious and threatened habitats in the Shropshire Hills. These springs or issues as they are often called on maps are where ground water comes to the surface and in many cultures are revered as being the source of life itself. And indeed, they are as the clean water spreads out across the hillside, they are the areas that remain green throughout hot summer days and are alive with a variety of wetland plants that make up the wet flushes that form below these springs. It is in these wet marshy places that the food plant, of the small pearl-bordered fritillary grows, the marsh violet.



The marsh violet is a delightful pale lilac plant that thrives in natural flushes, where the water cascades gently down the hill. It will also grow on the edges of wet areas but doesn't like standing water and like many wetland flowers can be out competed by dense rushes. It is the round kidney shaped leaves that the butterfly's caterpillars find so tasty in the spring when they are waking up from their winter slumbers in a rushy tussock. Once the caterpillars have fattened up on their marsh violet salad they pupate, and it is inside this pupa or chrysalis that the magic happens, and the butterfly is created.

Whereas the caterpillar's job was to eat, the purpose of the butterfly stage is to mate and lay eggs, where colourful wings help attract mates and flight allows for the dispersion of the eggs and the expansion of the colony. Most of the food that the caterpillar consumed was used in the transformation into the adult, so the butterfly now gains its energy from feeding on nectar which in a good wet flush is readily available in the form of flowers such as ragged robin, marsh thistle and devil's bit scabious.

The small pearl bordered fritillary is best seen in late June/early July and in some years has a second brood of adults in August. It is a bright orange butterfly which is best identified by seeing its underwings when they are folded and the numerous white pearls on the hind wings, the outer ones bordered by black chevrons and from the larger black central dot.

The Stepping Stones project have been busy restoring some of the wet flushes, through the planting of the first of 20,000 marsh violet plugs that have been grown on from cuttings. This along with better management of the flushes to break up the dense rushes will hopefully expand and join up the scattered colonies of butterflies and allow them to thrive along with a range of other plants, invertebrates and birds that rely upon this important habitat. Perhaps once again showing that we value these places as they used to be, as the sources of our water and of life itself.

Upcoming events at the Stiperstones include the Blakemoorgate cottages open between 11am and 3pm on the 14th July and the 11th August and a bat and moth evening from 8.30pm on the 16th August. Also, the invitation for any scythers to come out and join me with some scything on the hill on the week of the 30th July. For more details see our Facebook page or email: Stiperstones.events@naturalengland.org.uk.

Simon Cooter and the Natural England staff at Rigmoroak

Summer Celebration Service in St. Luke's church

St. Luke's Snailbeach is hosting a summer celebration at 3pm on Sunday 14th July followed by afternoon tea in the Village Hall. It's possible we will be celebrating a British victory at Wimbledon and praying for England's success in the final of the Euros that evening. What we can guarantee is that we can celebrate the goodness of God's love for us and pray for the needs of our community.

Oh Lord. It is election time again...

Many years ago I attended a girl's grammar school. Most of the young ladies of this excellent institution wore a smart navy blue uniform. The rebellious girls wore their ties fat-knotted and at half mast, daringly adapted the standard pleated skirt in a way that endangered morality, and sported pierced ears and wedge shoes. The scruffy oiks, of which I was one, technically wore the right things, but in a manner that was at least subversive of the dignity of the school. We just didn't care.

In the 6th form, despite my disregard for matters sartorial, I was elected Head Girl. The day my head girliness was announced I had abuse shouted at me by a 4th form mob. When I besought the reason for their hatred it emerged they had heard that I was going to change the uniform policy so that we would have to wear white knee socks with ankle frills. Anyone less likely to care what sort of socks were worn could not be imagined.

I am reminded of this as we endure electioneering. Slander is justified by allegedly righteous anger; winning arguments are valued more than truthful ones; dissension and vitriol are stirred up by people who want to destabilise rather than work for unity.

Here are a few thoughts about how Christians might engage better in all this:

Media owners get rich when headlines instil fear. Check the facts. Take the ideology with more than a pinch of salt and make decisions based on fact, not gossip and opinion. There may be no white socks conspiracy at all.

We are called to love our neighbours, even if they have poor taste in hosiery. Thinking your party's platform is unflawed is folly. Manifestos are made by ambitious people feeding tribal fears. White socks might be the right way to go.

**WELCOME TO STIPERSTONES
CHURCHES**

Scripture tells us to pray for our leaders and respect those in authority. Deriding them on Facebook is wrong. Pray for their wisdom and that their hearts may be right and perhaps they will see the light and abandon the white socks manifesto.

Do not be paranoid. The world will not end if your candidate loses and white socks are temporarily back in fashion. Whatever your preferred sock colour in this election may you know that you are for Him before party, and be filled with God's peace.

Sarah, Dean of Hereford

Greg's birthday party

Greg is hosting a 64th birthday party in Minsterley Parish Hall at 7pm on Saturday 27th July and you are invited. It is a bring and share supper, and Mary Worrall worrallwaverley@hotmail.co.uk is coordinating this. Please advise her of what you're intending to bring.

Mad Hatter's Tea Party Minsterley Vicarage

Saturday 13th July
Afternoon Tea at the New Vicarage.

All welcome for tea and scones. You can come in fancy dress, Sunday best or just as you are.

The Gathering
An evening of Praising & Worshipping God
"Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing"
1 Thessalonians 5:11
Everyone welcome
Refreshments from 7pm | Tues 30th July 2024, 7.30pm start
Marton Village Hall



Have a go at archery
Everyone welcome 8 to 80+

Dates: £10/hour
10am to 12pm

Sat 11th May
Sat 8th June
Sat 13th July
Sat 10th August

All equipment is provided



No booking required, just turn up on the day, or for more details:
www.longmyndarchers.co.uk
secretary@longmyndarchers.co.uk New House Farm,
Church Stretton, SY6 7JH



Have a go at Archery

Travelling on the A49, just this side of Church Stretton, have you ever wondered about the field with all those archery targets in it? Well, it is the home of Long Mynd Archers, one of the most successful, and certainly friendliest, archery clubs in the area. As part of a national scheme the club is offering the chance for anyone to try the sport for themselves. On Saturday mornings, on 8 June, 13 July and 10 August, for a small charge of £10 you will be advised and helped by County and National Coaches and experienced archers, some of whom you may already know as many club members live in this area. For more details see a copy of the accompanying flier, which you may have already seen displayed at various venues nearby.

Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group Swift Watch 2024



Do you have swifts flying in or about your house? If yes, the Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group would like to know! Just post your sightings to Steve Oates using the email address **reavalleycwg@gmail.com** listing the date/time, location, numbers and what they were doing (screaming or flying into a possible nest site).

These birds fly thousands of miles from Africa to breed and only stay with us for 12 weeks. They build nests in the eaves and gables of houses but do no damage as they use existing access points to get in. If these are blocked they have difficulty in finding new sites to nest in. Let's do what we can to help them!



Snailbeach mine: development & mechanisation c.1781-1856

By Andy Cuckson

Part 4

6.3 A rotative engine for pumping and winding

This engine appears to have replaced the 1784 pumping engine, and was probably installed in the 'Blacksmith's Shop engine house' to pump and wind down Old Shaft to the 192 Yard Level only. It had a vertical 30-inch cylinder driving an overhead beam, and an outside flywheel and winding drum on a crankshaft. An L-bob was positioned '*midway between Eng. and shaft head.*'

The discovery in 2015 of a heavily weathered builder's stone on the engine house, inscribed 'Jones & Co.' but with no legible date, makes it post-1808 and pre-1846, when John Jones of Oswestry was the senior partner. Post-1808 this engine would have been double acting. There were already several makers of suitable engine parts in Shropshire, and Boulton & Watt in Soho, Birmingham. It is also quite possible that the 1784 engine was re-erected in this engine house and converted to a double-acting rotative engine by adding the extra parts. Working down to 192 yards is very little deeper than Aikin found the mine in 1796, so the old engine might have been quite adequate for the new task. According to a cash book, there was an engine completed in 1832 (see section 7.1), and as this date fits the 'Jones & Co.' date bracket, perhaps this 1832 engine is the 'Blacksmith's Shop' rotative beam engine. But the author still leans to his earlier proposal that the rotative engine was installed quite early and was partially superseded by the waterwheel pumping system which followed in 1837.

The Lancaster University report notes that the building style of this engine house ('uncoursed flagstone with hand-made brick quoining and window/door surrounds') is common to the earliest parts of the 'Old Office complex' (the possible 1784 engine house). The mine's Agents from c.1784-c.1827 were John Naylor Sr followed by John Naylor Jr. Everything suggests that both these buildings and engines are of one historical period of the mine, and they both fit the Naylor period. John Naylor Jr perhaps wished that his own new buildings matched his father's. If the rotative engine was indeed built by John Jr, it would cut the build date range to 1808-c.1827.



6.4 Horse-powered pumping & winding engines

Either horse gins or whims for pumping were used at Snailbeach, even after the atmospheric engine was put in use, and they were being installed at the same time. Lovett wrote on 26 Feb 1784: '*Joseph Hanley engaged in making a whimsey which he is to complete including sawing for six pounds*' Fri 27 Feb: '*Began to make preparation at J. Dewin's pit to receive the whimsey; the shaft will be at standstill till the whimsey can be erected on account of heavy water.*' To put this in perspective, water in the workings then was perhaps worse than usual, and it was winter. That day he also wrote: '*Alarmed by the water raising in the bottom of the work and at night filled six yards. ... This I attribute on some measure to a farmer turning the land floods into one of the Pits on the old Level.*' This indicates sinking below the Old Level.

In April 1784 at least one pit was well below the 'old level'. On 16 April, Lovett reported that Hampson's pit was about 70 yards deep, and the water was being trapped in a cistern, drained by horse whim, to allow sinking to continue. Lovett wrote: '*the men cannot stand above 4 hours before the cistern runs over and it will take a horse 3 hours on full trot before the men can go down; ... notwithstanding do not doubt but Hampson will get his pit down next month.*' Continuous working by the horse indicates a rag and chain or bucket chain pump. No doubt horse engines were also used for winding, since the indications are that the 1784 engine was only for pumping.

6.5 Pumping and winding in 1827

Francis gives us little or no information about drainage or winding machines in use at Snailbeach in 1827. He mentions 'the Engine Shaft' when describing the relative positions of the main ore bunches of the Snailbeach vein. But 'engine shaft' was a term applied to a shaft with any form of machinery, although generally pumping, whether worked by steam, water power or horse. Nothing is certain other than the shaft had machinery working in it. As noted earlier, there was stoping below 112 yards at the time, so there must have been some mechanical drainage as well as winding gear. The engine shaft referred to by Francis might be the shaft known today as Old Shaft or George's Shaft, or the undetermined third shaft discussed above. 'New Engine Shaft' was sunk much later.

6.6 Engines of the 1848 development

These were a 60-inch Cornish pumping engine, now known to have been built in 1855, and a winder. In June 1863, James Ray Eddy reported to the company the replacement of the 'Main Engine Shaft' winder by a more powerful one, to cost about £2,500, which was probably the 22-in vertical winding engine I have written about in other articles.

N.B. A note of the 1855 installation of the 60-in engine was found recently in *Mining Journal* 9-6-1855.

7. The 1830s slump & mechanisation

How the slump affected mine work is shown by a cash book showing payments and receipts between 1830 and 1833, including details of wages. From 1830 to March 1832, no 'engineer' or 'engine tender' was employed, and then one begins work. So for at least this time prior to March 1832 no steam engines were used. This suggests that the mine was allowed to flood to the 112 Yard Level and for some time only reserves above it were worked. Cash was paid for working expenses, including wages and subsist to miners, ore dressers, labourers and tradesmen. Ore was raised and royalties paid.

Adjustment by British lead producers to the slump was difficult, since during the Napoleonic Wars they had traded well on the home market and profit was made easily. This included the Snailbeach partners, selling lead at Shrewsbury prices of at least £22 a ton and often much higher. As described earlier, in 1826-7 the partners sought advice from Absalom Francis of Halkin in a bid to combat the pressure from increasing foreign lead imports. The price had already started falling, and reached a low in Shrewsbury of £11-£12 per ton in spring 1832.

After Francis' visit, on which he reported in March 1827, the continuing price drop was accompanied by the national economic and social crisis which began in 1830. In the early 1830s there was a slump in demand for lead and a consequent fall in production across the country. Although Snailbeach mine then had steam pumping and probably steam winding machinery, it was also in the enviable position of having good reserves of ore above its main drain, the 112 Yard Level. In comparing

the economy of mines with deep drainage and haulage adits to those needing shafts, the pioneer geologist R. I. Murchison wrote in 1839: *'It is quite evident that mines ... like those of Nant-y-moen [sic – Nant-y-mwyn], where vertical shafts or steam-engines are not required, the whole being drained by an adit, must always be of high value, and accordingly I found the works in full activity in 1833, a period when, from the low price of lead, so many mines had necessarily been abandoned.'*

Like Nant-y-mwyn, Snailbeach could continue working, not being wholly dependent on shafts and engines. When low prices squeezed profits, it seems that the partners switched to 'adit mining', to cut mining, maintenance and exploration costs by allowing flooding to the adit but raising ore from shallow reserves. The cash book supports the idea in numerous ways besides there being no steam engine in use for some time. Ore was raised perhaps by combined manual labour and horse gin or whim. Extensive teams of labourers were employed doing unspecified work. No horse work or hire is detailed, but this might have appeared in a separate farm account. The monthly pay totals for working Snailbeach mine between September and December 1830 were erratic. From January to July 1831 payments climbed, but then stabilized through to December 1833. Wages for waggons and the cash drawn by Pontesford Agent Edward Plimmer for smelter and colliery running costs roughly reflected the lead mine costs. Before starting to build the crushing plant which Francis had suggested four years earlier, the partners preferred to wait until October 1831 for better profits before investing capital. Then in March 1832, when building was finished, an engineer or 'engine tender,' Charles Harrison, was employed. As well as his wages, the engine would need coal, raised at Pontesford and hauled to Snailbeach. In this way, operating costs were gradually increased as prospects improved for the sale of ore and lead. Bucking of lump ore continued, being part of the existing scheme of cheap manual labour, until the new engine was running. The mine was recovering, survived the slump, and even traded well between 1832 and 1833.

7.1 1830s mechanization – the crushing engine and crushing complex

In 1827, Snailbeach ore was still being broken by hand using buckers (large flat-headed hammers). Following a suggestion by Francis, ore breaking was eventually mechanised. He wrote: *'the Bucking or Crushing of Ore ... is affected in many instances by Rollers worked by some great power, in some instances by a Water Wheel, in others by a Steam Engine, instead of being Bucked by Hammers, but I think yours might be done by a Machine worked by Horses.'* The partners eventually decided to invest in a steam-driven roller crusher.

In October 1831 work began on foundations for an engine, chimney, boilers and a drain, with masonry work continuing into 1832. Diarist Thomas Poole wrote after visiting the mine in June 1834 that *'They have a large Steam Engine.'* His observation of a solitary working engine suggests, although inconclusive, that steam pumping or winding had not restarted, although prices had begun to rise again.

On the basis of the 'Jones & Co' date bracket of 1808-1846, the engine completed in 1832 could have been either the rotative pumping and winding engine (6.3 above) or the crushing engine. But as the rotative engine is likely to have been built and working before Francis visited in 1827, and the mine had no crushing machinery then, it seems far more likely that the 1832 engine was the crushing engine. Possibly the newly employed engine tender operated the new engine and a reinstated pumping and winding engine alternately, when the market had recovered enough.

Assessments of construction date for the crusher house complex by the LU study and the SCC archaeologists are contradictory, with the latter mentioning possible inaccuracy in plotting of mine buildings on the 1838 Tithe map. Work with the Tithe maps leans this author to the latter view, and these maps seem generally unreliable. The alignment and positioning of a possible retaining wall shown on the Tithe map is questionable, and it is not clear which mine buildings many of those plotted on it are supposed to depict. The archive evidence still leans the author to the date 1832 for the crushing complex.

Further evidence contrary to LU's view includes a Snailbeach Mine Co. building plaque dated 1846, reputedly from 'the crusher,' which is now owned by Shropshire Mines Trust. Any building of that date will be by Jonathan Harrison. Since earlier published discussion (*Below!* Iss.2020-2) of ore crushing development, it has been noticed in a photograph that a rectangular plate was built into the gable end of the crushing engine house at roof height. If this is the 1846 plate, it shows the need for a replacement engine in Harrison's development plans.

7.2. The crushing engine – saw mill drive

Holes in the surviving masonry, finished in the original materials, show that the engine drive shaft protruded through the engine house south wall, facing the boiler house, as well as on the crusher house side. In the gap between the engine house and the boiler house, mounting bolts were found for a drive shaft bearing, the stonework below had grease deposits, and there were long bolts suggesting that this space was covered originally by a timber floor.

The SCC archaeologists noted that a drive belt might have come off the drive shaft next to the boiler house, running east to the carpenter's yard. Historic records show that this engine drove a saw mill, but it was also used later to drive ore dressing machinery by Henry Dennis. The various points confirm that the saw mill belt-drive was an original use for this engine. If this engine and its house were Harrison developments, then he was also responsible for this mechanization of the carpenter's work in 1846.

7.3 1830s mechanization – waterwheel and flat-rod pumping

Probably in 1837, the partners installed a 35ft 10in diameter waterwheel driven by surface water in a pit a few yards back from the Wagbeach adit portal. By means of flat rods and cranks installed in the adit, the wheel drove pumps which lifted the water up to this adit from a sump. According to Moissenet this was the system in use *'for a long time ...[until]... replaced by a steam engine and a main shaft.'* The flat-rod system was perhaps the last in use before the Resting Hill engine, but it has also been suggested that the rotative engine was kept as an alternative to the waterwheel in dry spells. The rotative engine became known as the 'old 30in Winding Eng', perhaps pointing to its main later use.

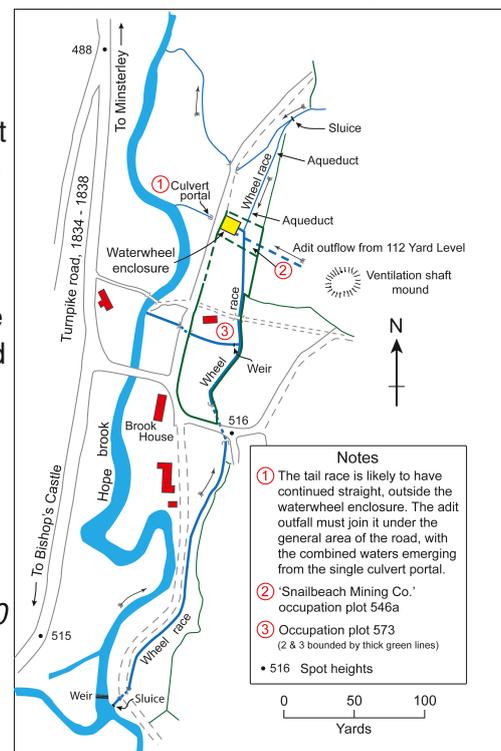
With recovery from the slump, the price improved between 1834 and 1836, peaking at £26 a ton (Hull) in 1836 but later settling lower again. Improved profits allowed investment in waterwheel-driven pumping. Their early 1830s experience perhaps led the partners to reduce mechanised drainage costs, using a wheel driven by water supplies independent of Snailbeach to minimise the use of steam. They might even have foreseen a future trend of lower prices, and recognised the need for lower cost drainage of lower levels as the upper reserves became exhausted.

8. Ore dressing and surface working conditions

Lovett's diary gives some indication of surface working conditions in 1784. On Thursday 5 February he wrote: *'The washing totally at a stand on account of the frost and about 150 tons of ore on the bank in the rough.'* Then on Wednesday 24 March there was *'a deep snow. The washers prevented from working except a few waste washers under cover.'* The February entry suggests that the water supply was frozen, but in

March the problem appears to have been a lack of shelter for workers and equipment. In June 1834, diarist T. F. Poole noted that the mine had *'Sheds for sifting & breaking the ore under.'* From the start there was some cover for ore washers, but many worked in the open. As late as 1900, many sheds at Snailbeach were still only a roof, but fully enclosed sheds had begun to appear.

During most of the 18th century, for example in Derbyshire mines, dressers were mostly women and children, with working miners paying daily wages for dressing ore they had raised. Lovett noted girls working at Snailbeach on Thursday 25 March 1784, although it was still very cold: *'A few poor girls washing ore almost putrified.'* [sic] Later, dressers were employed direct by the mines, as a result of increasing mechanisation and communal dressing being needed. This was the case by the 1830s at Snailbeach, where women and men were heading ore dressing 'companies' which were separate from the underground men and paid directly. By the 1840s, female dressing floor labour in British metal mines was almost unknown because of mechanisation, the need to tend smallholdings, and changing social



conventions and family pressures especially on married women. In 1856, Stephen Eddy witnessed only men and boys working on the Snailbeach dressing floors. This was increasingly the case countrywide in the mid-19th century, but there was no legal restriction yet.

Absalom Francis said about ore dressing at Snailbeach that it '*is as good as any thing that I can recommend.*' Around 1820, he had been employed by the Duke of Westminster to manage some of his mines in Flintshire, and made them profitable by introducing better methods. This work commended him to the Snailbeach partners as a credible adviser. Some thirty years later Stephen Eddy was very critical of the ore dressing, and as the company's new Manager made large savings. Eddy did not criticise the methods but rather their cramped arrangement, which created excessive labour:

The general arrangements have been laid out without regard to economy, either of time or manual labour— The floors are much too crowded to obtain a fair amount of labour from the men and boys employed here. I have no hesitation in saying that, with room, and a proper arrangement for the different processes the Ore should be washed for *less* than *one half* of the present cost.

9. Developments in ore dressing and storage

Evidence suggests other work on ore dressing facilities between Francis' report (1827) and Harrison's appointment (1842). A cash book entry for September 1830 reads '*Samuel Nealor Washer £40.*' This is a big cost compared to the current captain John Owen's annual salary of £60. Samuel Naylor (or Nealor) was a former miner and later a captain at Snailbeach, and was still involved with local mining and smelting. His payment was probably for a commission to provide some new ore washing plant. Then in 1831 a bing was built, for which wages were paid of £6 0s 7d for 65½ man-days' work.

10. Tramways

The first known record of tramways being used at Snailbeach mine is dated 1834, but were probably used much earlier. All these rail types: portable cast iron plateways (a 1787 innovation); cast iron inverted T railways (first made around 1800); wrought iron bridge rails (first made c.1820s); and flat-bottomed rails (c.1850s) were used there. Inverted T-rail was used as fireplace lintel in a cottage built before 1844 and in the old office. Plateway rail was in use as tread edgings on a flight of steps before conservation began, and as lintels in the blacksmith's shop, there being plenty of such old rails for mid-19th century building work. Tramways were an essential part of the 1848 development, and even using outmoded technology were used until the end of mining at Snailbeach.

11. Conclusion

It seems that in the period covered, the mine was never worked to best practice, even after Francis' report was received and then under Jonathan Harrison's management. The partners relied heavily on the general quality of the main vein, the rich pipes of ore and the reserves above the 112 Yard Level, combined with the usually high sale price of lead and low labour costs, for their large profits. Although there were means for efficient deeper working from 1848, still scant attention was paid to economy of labour, as it stayed a small cost compared to the price of lead. If the mine had been much better run, the reports of Francis and Eddy might never have been needed, leaving almost nothing to say on the subject.

12. Acknowledgements

I owe huge thanks to the staff of Shropshire Archives, and to Longueville Gittins for depositing their historic documents there; to James Lawson for Longleat House estate records; and to the late John Taylor and Fiona Highcock for genealogical research. Thanks also for various contributions to SCMC members, past and present, Richard Haszard, Kelvin Lake, David Poyner and Michael Shaw.

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West Mercia Police

BISHOP'S CASTLE & RURAL Safer Neighbourhood Team

Team details

Safer Neighbourhood Sergeant: Sgt 0640 Jenni Price
Safer Neighbourhood Police Constable: PC 3331 Stuart Cooté
Police Community Support Officer: PCSO 6160 Shaun Culliss
Police Community Support Officer: PCSO 40516 Calvin Brown
Team Email: bccar.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

West Mercia Police contact numbers

Emergency: 999 **Non Emergency:** 101

Bishops Castle Police Station (not for reporting): 101, Extension 7704901

Report online: www.westmercia.police.uk/ro/report/

Crime stoppers: 0800 555 111

Website: www.westmercia.police.uk

Twitter: @SouthShropCops

Facebook: Bishop's Castle Policing Team Rural Watch



CRIME/INCIDENTS TO NOTE REPORTED CHIRBURY, WORTHEN, HOPE, SHELVE & STIPERSTONE

16th May 2024 – 15th June 2024

CRIME REPORTED	DETAILS	LOCATION	NOTES
Criminal damage	Domestic related	Bromlow	
Allowing dog to be dangerously out of control	Victim bitten by dog	Hope Valley	Owner identified
Harassment		Worthen	
Assault		Stiperstones	

County lines

County lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal groups (OCGs) use phone lines to move and supply drugs, usually from cities into smaller towns and rural areas.

They exploit vulnerable people, including children and those with mental health or addiction issues, by recruiting them to distribute the drugs, often referred to as 'drug running'.

OCGs often use high levels of violence and intimidation to protect the 'county line' and control them.

There are several signs to look out for that may indicate someone is involved in county lines:

- Repeatedly going missing from school or home and being found in other areas
- Having money, new clothes or electronic devices and they can't explain how they paid for them
- Getting high numbers of texts or phone calls, being secretive about who they're speaking to
- Decline in school or work performance
- Significant changes in emotional or physical well-being

If you're concerned about drug-related crime in your area or think someone may be a victim of drug exploitation, please call us on 101, email bccar.snt@westmercia.police.uk or report online www.westmercia.police.uk



A medium and a tricky puzzle this month.

Sudoku

OF THE DAY

			3					7
6	9				2		1	
		7					9	
2				3		8	5	
1				2				6
	7	9		5				4
	8					1		
	3		6				4	5
7					9			

"Retirement is wonderful. It's doing nothing without worrying about getting caught at it." — Gene Perret

"The best time to start thinking about your retirement is before the boss does." —Unknown

"A retired husband is often a wife's full-time job." —Ella Harris

"Retirement: That's when you return from work one day and say, 'Hi, Honey, I'm home—forever.'" —Gene Perret

"I enjoy waking up and not having to go to work. So I do it three or four times a day." — Gene Perret

			5	7	8			
	4	9						
5			1			2		
8				2	3			
4		3				6		2
			6	9				8
		1			7			9
						8	7	
			3	5	2			

"Retirement: It's nice to get out of the rat race, but you have to learn to get along with less cheese." —Gene Perret

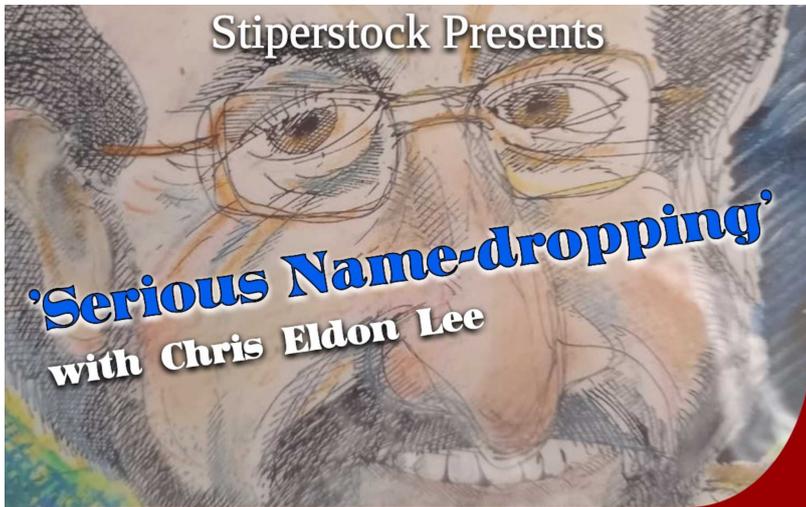
"What do you call a person who is happy on a Monday? Retired." —Unknown

"When a man retires, his wife gets twice as much husband for half as much money." —Chi Chi Rodriguez

"Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save." —Will Rogers

Good bye





An evening of comedy and community in two halves!



The Stiperstones Inn Upcoming Events

Knitter Natter
10am Every Tuesday!

Big Money Bingo
7.30pm Monday 1st July

Quiz Night
8.00pm Monday 29th July

Big Money Bingo
7.30pm Monday 5th August

Quiz Night
8.00pm Monday 19th August

Tel. 01743 791 327 to book!

THANK YOU!

The Stiperstones Inn would like to thank Geoff Sproson and all previous editors and the many volunteers behind the scenes who have been involved in producing the SDN for so many years.

CRAFTY MONDAYS

CRAFT AND CHAT

2ND MONDAY OF THE MONTH

LOUNGE AREA

AT

MINSTERLEY METHODIST CHURCH

7 PM TO 9 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

LESLEY ON 01743-791045

OR SANDRA ON 01743-891861

OR

JUST TURN UP ON THE NIGHT
AND JOIN US!

