

## A NOTE ON THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF MINING STUDENTS 1876-1910

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This Sheffield based Society held an important position in the training of mining engineers during a major period of mechanisation in the mines. It also nurtured a fair number of budding authors who went on to produce the mining reference books adorning the shelves of enthusiasts today.

The Society appears to have its origins in a short-lived society of a different name *The Criterion Society of Mining Students* which first met in the offices at the Nunnery Colliery, Sheffield, on the 22nd August 1876. The Society's principal founders seem to have been pupils of an eminent engineer, Mr Emerson Bainbridge and a logo depicting the Bainbridge Safety Lamp was adopted for its publications (Fig 1). The reason for the group's name *The Criterion* has not been established. The founders were H. Palmer, E.F. Melly, A. Merfyn, E.P. Rathbone, R.B. Mawson and T.R. Stopford.

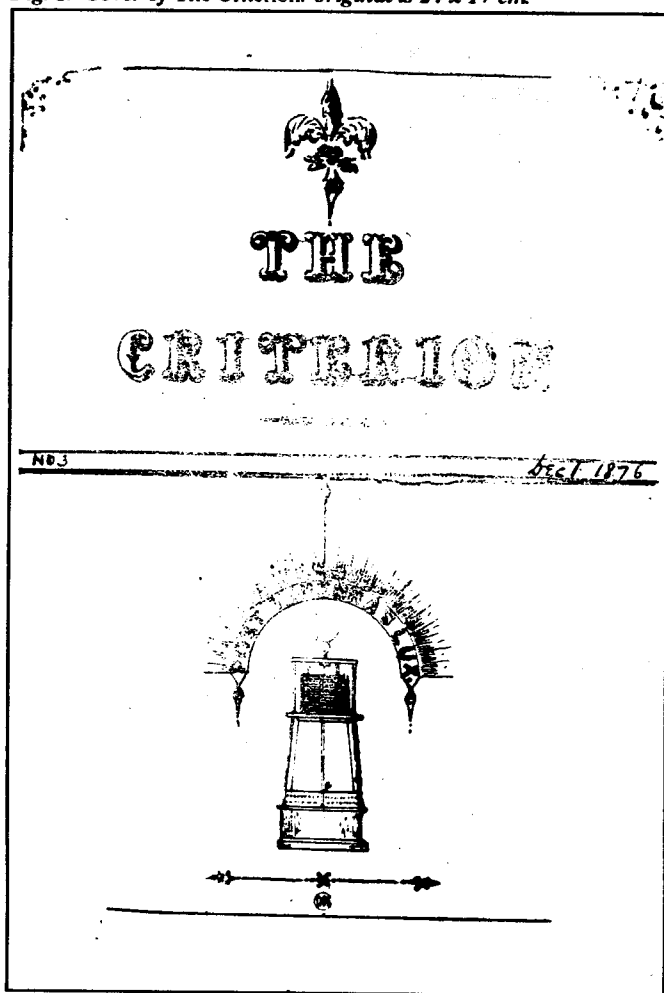
According to their *Rules and Regulations* the objects of the society were "to form a closer and more intimate connection between students engaged in mining by the interchanging of notes and generally helping one another in all questions bearing on mining engineering thus establishing a healthy feeling of *esprit de corps*. Contributing to their 'manual', *The Criterion* as produced

monthly, would also provide experience in preparing papers, in critical review, sharing "novelties or improvements" at their collieries and providing a forum for questions and answers.

The rules were strict: No. 2 limited the society to 20 members, then 40, then more as this was seen to be unreasonable. Similarly, Rule No. 5 required each member "to contribute something to the Manual every month" but limited it to three pages. Again this was dropped where the first volume reached nearly 500 pages and 51 papers were contributed by 29 members in the second year.

Membership more than doubled in the first year and was 124 by June 1878. Initially the journal was "papyrographed by a multiplying machine" with maximum capacity for sixty copies. It appeared in manuscript on ordinary quarto size paper (Fig. 2). "The *modus operandi* consisted of first rewriting with suitable ink the papers received for publication, then transferring to an evenly prepared surface of gelatine from which a limited number of copies could be taken, similar to the ordinary lithographic process". When membership exceeded sixty the journal was lithographed, then rewriting necessary for transferring to the litho stone being done by the committee members themselves.

Fig. 1. Cover of *The Criterion*: original is 24 x 17 cm.



While there was no shortage of members and papers for publication, actual attendance at the required half-yearly meetings (Rule 12) seems to have been sparse, six only on one occasion. It was thought that this was because even though membership was mainly aimed at students in South Yorkshire and Wigan areas, many now lived at much greater distances, so it was decided to include Newcastle upon Tyne and later other towns as a meeting base. The papers were mainly on coal mining topic but also include contributions on coke, coal-gas and firebrick manufacture, Cornish mining and Cleveland Ironstone.

By July 1878 it was clear that the Society had become a national body, so from this time all publications were headed *The British Society of Mining Students*. Assistants were then employed at £5 per year to do the laborious re-writing but the litho-reproduction method continued in use and the pagination continued - then standing at page 474. In September 1878 there was another change, the journal reached page 500 and was started again (although pages 1 to 60 of the new volume have not been found and are not listed in the Index). The Index Lists actually include everything up to page 480 as Vol. 1 and page 480-500 as Vol. 2. From here it was decided to have 240 -page volumes in future and to call the first 500 pages, Volumes 1 and 2. At the end of 1878 a further major change occurred. It was found cheaper to have the journal printed professionally (Fig. 3) provided that they continued the earlier method for producing illustrations (Fig. 4). The year 1879 began with the new name, new printing method from page 147 of Volume 3 and a membership of 150. The volume went further than just items on British coal to include the description of Stonecroft Lead Mine in Northumberland and of the French coalfields.

The Annual consists for this month of the following papers:-  
 J. R. Stopford on Thermometrical Observations p. 3  
 N. Oatman on The 'Butty System' in Longwall Working. p. 4  
 J. H. Kelly on Safety Lamps p. 12  
 E. O. Hathorne on The Rosebridge Winding Engine p. 14  
 J. R. Stopford on Dungenham Corresponding No. 17

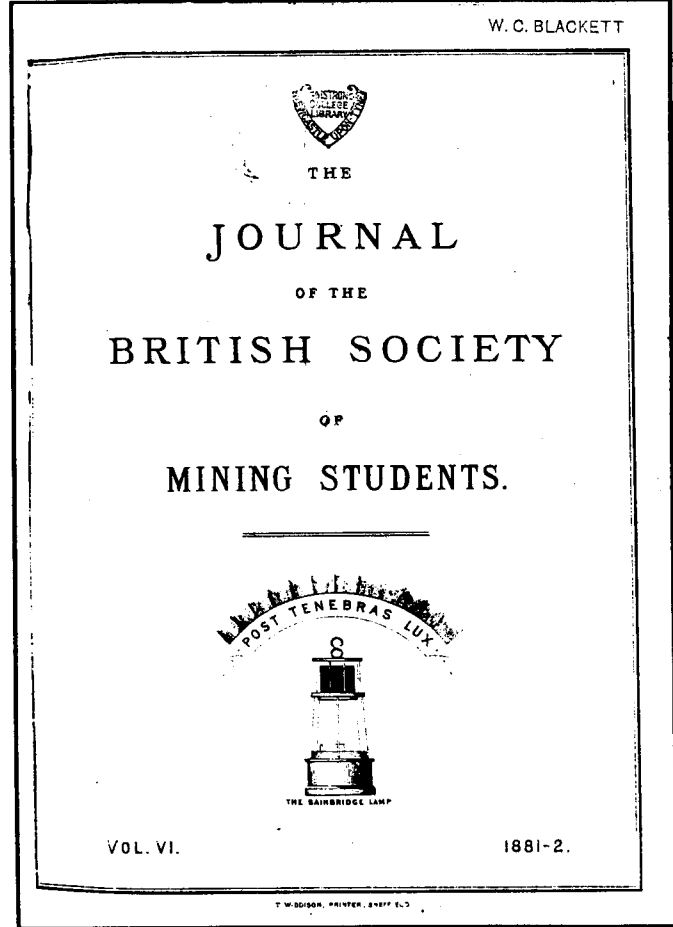
Thermometrical Observations taken at Rosebridge Colliery  
 J. R. Stopford

These observations were taken in the Deep. Your hole, which is 670 yards from the surface, on May 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> 1869 -  
 On Saturday May 8<sup>th</sup>, two holes were drilled in the coal, each 2' 6" deep.  
 No. 1. At 60 yards from the shaft in a pillar that had been exposed to air for sixteen months. The thermometer, after remaining in the hole from 8 am. May 8<sup>th</sup>, to 8 am. May 9<sup>th</sup>, registered 70°. Taken thermometer in open airway 60°, with 10000 cub. ft. of air passing per minute in a place 15 ft. x 4 ft. Hole dry.  
 No. 2. At 150 yards from the shaft, 1 yard from the face of a pillar newly cut. The hole remained 30 minutes after being drilled before the thermometer was put on.

Fig. 2. Typical page of The Criterion.

The next 30 years saw few major changes and a pattern was set of a bimonthly journal (from 1882) containing excellent papers on

Journal of the British Society, original 24.5 x 17 cm.



mining topics and of descriptions of collieries or coal fields with an occasional glimpse at other mining (Minera Lead Mine) and quarries (Tideswell Limestone). The half-yearly meeting became an annual one with a meeting in a major centre e.g. Sheffield, Nottingham, Birmingham and Cardiff with excursions over several days to local mines and mining manufacturers, all written up and published. In 1899, for example, the Nottingham meeting included visits to Shireoaks, Creswell and Bolsover Collieries whilst in 1905 the Sheffield meeting included visits to Rotherham, Dalton Main, Silverwood and Cadeby Collieries (Appendix 2).

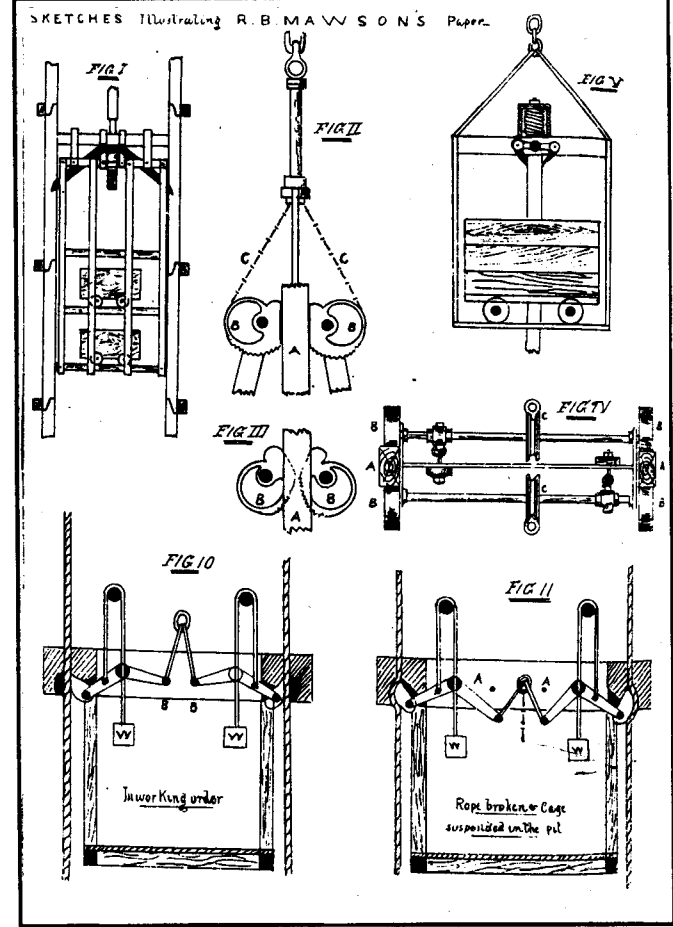
During the 1900s difficulties began to be experienced as the earlier 'students' were getting older and fewer and less enthusiastic younger students were joining. In 1907 it was decided to change the society's status to a *Federated Society of Mining Students* which would include other groups such as Birmingham University Society of Mining Students, the South Yorkshire Mining Students and the original British Society. But it did not work, South Yorkshire withdrew on the grounds that it was too expensive and the remaining partnership was dissolved in June 1909.

The British Society tried to continue but failed after a further year. In July 1910 the following resolution was passed:

*That in view of the difficulty of keeping the society going owing to the apathy of the general body of younger members this General Meeting decides . . . that the Society is hereby wound up at the end of the present financial year, namely 30th day of June 1910.*

The society had achieved a great deal during its 34 years, many excellent papers remain to show the thinking and practices of their time, and many of the contributors went on to become influential persons in the mining field (Appendix 1). It was perhaps a little unfair to refer to the apathy of the younger members. Things had

Fig. 4. Illustration from the Journal of the British Society.



changed since 1876, the professional Institutes of Mining had now amalgamated and were encouraging their own junior sections, many more universities and colleges were offering mining courses and forming their own societies, and persons interested in mining were even getting together in 'local' societies. In Yorkshire the successors to these, the societies of Barnsley, Normanton and Castleford, Doncaster, North Yorkshire and Huddersfield and District and others have only just been wound up but this must be another story.

For most of its life the Society had an office at 50 New Porter Street, Sheffield. It also had an unusual rule (No. 7 of 1876) "that no member shall allow the manual to go out of his possession - should this rule be broken expulsion will immediately follow". Perhaps this explains why so few journals can be found today, particularly the early issues. The present writer would like to know of surviving copies especially anything from 1876 to 1880.

## REFERENCES

The Criterion 1878-78.  
Journals of British Society of Mining Students 1878-1907.  
Journals of Federated Society of Mining Students 1907-1900.  
Journals of British Society of Mining Students 1909-1910.

## Appendix 1. Some major contributors:

W.C. Blackett, H.F. Bulman, M. Brown, C.Z. Bunning, H. Bramwell, C.H. Cobbold, F.H. Cockin, H.S. Durnford, A.W. Grazebrook, W.S. Gresley, H.W. Hughes, A.H. Leech, E.F. Melly, R. Makepease, H. Palmer, R.A.S. Redmayne, E.P. Rathbone, W.S. Routledge, S.F. Walker, G.W. Westgarth.

## Appendix 2. Some of the collieries visited (England):

Whitburn, Nunnery, Rosebridge, Aldwarke, Hebburn, Harton, St Hilda, Bold-on, Clifton, Sandwell, East Howle, Lyecross, Walsall Wood, Barrow, Denaby, Cadeby, Chopwell, Linton, Rotherham, Ackton, Garswood, Shireoaks, Cresswell, Ashington, Maypole, Newdegate, Agecroft, Bradford, Springs, Strangeways, Grange, Moss, Langley, Dalton, Silverwood, Norton, Sneyd, Florence, Glasshoughton, Littleton, Baggeridge, Griff, Langley Park, Derwent, Horden, Gedling, Sherwood, Hamstead.

Many others are described in general articles as are workings for other minerals.

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