

Two Old Miners

by Peter Naylor

A conversation with Stan Webster of Tideswell, born 1907 at Youlgreave, yielded the following narrative, evoking an age now gone. Stan's first job, on leaving school at 13 years of age, was on the Duke of Rutland's estate at Haddon Hall, where he cleared woodland. He lived with his father in a gamekeeper's lodge at Eagle Tor, his father being employed by the Stanton Estates. He recalls a gin circle by a "hole in the wall", now lost, from whence came noises and was known locally as the "Shale Hill Boggart". A boggart is dialect for the devil, e.g. Boggart Inn Farm at Wirksworth. This circle was probably a drawing shaft on the Amos Cross Vein near to Hawley's Bridge.

About 1920 whilst clearing browse, he discovered an old boat complete with paddles lying in the leat from Hillcarr Slough.

Mawstone Mine, which he knew as Shining Gutter Mine, employed him from 1930-31. He was set on to drive a level using first an Ingersoll drill and later a Holman bar machine, which he had assembled with a Cornishman named James Porter, later to die in the same level in the disaster of 1932. He worked the level with Ralph Brassington, for a distance of 20 or so yards, for which he was paid the rate of 1/3 (6p) per hour. They struck gas and complained to the manager Kenneth A. Seville, who dismissed the claim with the comment, "there is no black damp in lead mines". The two men suffered from running eyes and vomiting, and they left the mine, Stan Webster to work at Shining Bank Quarry for 1/- (5p) per hour, and Brassington went to a quarry on Stanton Moor. This probably saved their lives, for they were spared the subsequent tragedy. They did consider working at Mill Close Mine, but decided against it.

During his period at the Mawstone Mine, Stan Webster, together with Seville, explored the sough in a rubber boat, as far as Pienet Nest Shaft (Pienet is dialect for a Magpie; the Revolution House at Whittington was once the Pienet Inn). Seville wished to proceed further but Webster insisted on returning. Between jobs Stan drove lorries for Siddals of Stanton-in-the-Peak and for Shirley and Proctor of Rowsley.



Barmaster A.Hodgkiss, jurymen and claimants at an Old Mine near Youlgreave, Derbyshire (photo by the late F.Brindley).

From 1956 on, he carted Baryte to Hopton Mining from hillocking operations round Monyash, and fluorspar from Mogshaw Mine where a John Knowles was working a vein, then owned by the late Roose Alsop of Bakewell. The latter owned the chert mine and quarry on Monyash Road, Bakewell. He recalls a Captain (name not a rank) Waterhouse, who had an adit driven in 1949-50 using ring arches, to intersect Mogshaw Mine. When he sold his interest, he asked for £2000 for the value of the work done.

Stan Webster gave the writer the photograph reproduced here. For information about it, a cousin of Stan Webster's was consulted in Winster, one Horace Johnson, born 1896, a very spritely and lovely old man of 88 years. There is a complementary picture to this one reproduced in "Derbyshire's Old Lead Mines and Miners" by J. H. Rieuwerts, (Moorland, 1972). The present writer would like to know: the date of the photograph, and the photographer. The date is certainly 1932/3, and the photographer was F. H. Brindley, of Abbeydale Road, Sheffield, who made a good living by touring Derbyshire on his motorcycle combination, taking and selling photographs. His wife invariably travelled with him and often posed in the picture. Horace Johnson gave the name of the mine as the Bramhall Lane Mine, and Jim Rieuwerts thinks it was on the Bacon Close Vein, Bradford, Youlgreave. Apart from the Barmaster, the others in the picture have been a mystery, but Horace remembers them all very well, and they are from the left:

1. Benjamin Grace, Manager of the Long Rake Mine; his trilby hat can be seen on the pile of stones to the left. He was said to have lost his job for poaching game on mine property!
2. Benjamin Birds, miner at the Long Rake Mine.
3. Walter Oldfield, quarryman at Hawleys Quarry and a miner.
4. Norman Brassington, miner at the Long Rake Mine.
5. Albert Toft, blacksmith at Youlgreave and a claimant.
6. Alfred Hodgkiss, Barmaster, resplendent in 'plus-fours and with his leather gloves resting on the barrel of the stoce.

F. Brindley wrote on the back of the photograph: "Barmaster & Jury and New claimants at Old Mine, Youlgreave, Derbyshire", so it appears to be an example of the hand-over of a mine, perhaps following Nicking the Stowes.

The pleasure of talking with these old men cannot be under-rated. They are so willing to welcome us into their homes and tell us of their experiences. I commend this type of research to you, for it is so rewarding.

Further information can be obtained from:

Bulletin of the PDMHS, volume 8, number 3, Summer 1982 page 173
Derbyshire's Old Lead Mines and Miners. J. H. Rieuwerts. Hartington 1972
Lead Mining in the Peak District. Ed. Ford & Rieuwerts. Bakewell 1983