

THINGS TO DO

At the 1977 AGM I made remarks to the effect that on looking through the Society's Bulletin there seemed to be a remarkably small proportion of the membership who contributed results of their researches, and that surely others either should not hide the outcome of their efforts behind the proverbial bushel or should get down to doing something constructive. "There was so much to be done and the few stalwarts could not do it all" I said. "What about finding yourself a project, surface, underground, documentary, historical or whatever, and working on it as a constructive hobby, as others have found so satisfying?"

Afterwards a number of people, members but regrettably strangers to me came and asked "What can I do?". It is not easy to advise when nothing is known of their ability or personal circumstances, but I can make a few suggestions.

Surface work: we may well have maps and plans of most of the veins and mine locations in the Peak District, but details are lacking in quite a number of the outlying areas. Adrian Pearce is working on a mine registry so any survey of such areas could add to the latter, and he could perhaps advise on suitable areas, but for a starter: Take any parish or similar area, a 6" or 25":1 mile map (contact Adrian Pearce for guidance on maps available) and simply walk the ground, every track, path and field, plotting every mining feature, groove, shaft, coe, crusher, gin circle, etc. If shafts are open, record this fact, and the depth if practical with plumb-bob and cord. Check with old maps and plans and add the names of veins, mines, etc. wherever possible. Add field names if you can get talking to farmers. Talk to old miners and people with local knowledge, with a tape recorder if possible. Before you know it, you will be "the expert" on your parish!

Underground: While we have fairly comprehensive coverage of most of the more accessible mines, there are gaps where known mines have as yet no known plan or survey, even of the simple compass and tape variety. Don't be put off by imagined difficulties in surveying or drawing up. You can always get help from other members. But don't forget that underground work should never be attempted solo. What mines need surveying? We are short of adequate records of the accessible workings of the Alport-Elton-Winster and Wirksworth areas.

Documentation and historical: Detailed studies of single mines or groups of mines, such as that of Odin Mine (Bulletin PDMHS vol. 6, no. 4) or of personalities who have been involved. Studies of the Barker family, or of John Taylor are but isolated examples of the many such studies that could be made. The records and archives are more accessible than they have ever been in the past, so why not take a mine, an owner, a family, a business and follow through the maze of correspondence in the archives to produce a history or biography. Take any of those names which keep cropping up in mining records, such as Ashton, How, Hurt, Milnes, Wager, Wolley and Wyatt, and see if you can trace their family history, particularly the part they played in mining enterprises.

It is well-known to the Society's officers that some researches have been done but have never seen the light of day. People are secretive about their survey of such-and-such mine, or their collection of old photos of so-and-so. Data collected but hidden like this is no good to anyone in the long run and is too often lost as interests change. Bring it out and let us see it, via the pages of the Bulletin, if appropriate but at least let those who can make good use of such studies have the chance to do so. Much mining research is co-operative work so we must all help one another.

In any of these enterprises you will find yourself following a new purpose in life, and making new friends, both in and out of the society. Much mine research is like a detective story, where one gradually assembles clues with the great satisfaction of a solution at the end. The solution we seek as a Society is to have complete documentation of where every mine and vein is, who worked it and when, how much lead they obtained, how it was drained, what methods and machinery were used, where was the ore smelted, merchanted, what price did it fetch, how was it used. To have such a complete record is doubtless a pipe-dream but together we can move towards it.

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Chairman