

JOURNAL OF THE



Issue No. 1, 2001

Still only £2.50 to Non-members

COVER PHOTO

Cover photo taken by Alison Davies and shows Tony Davies in Penmorfa.

GOES AGM NEWS

The 2001 AGM took place on 31st March at Queen Elizabeth Court, Llandudno. Thanks go to Hilary Edwards for arranging the venue and for providing an excellent array of home-made cakes and cups of tea.

There were slight changes made to the committee as follows: Erik Sellors remains our chairman, Mark Beardsall the Vice chairman, Steve Lea has taken the position of secretary and welcome to Dennis Abbott who takes on the role of treasurer. John Carpenter remains the public relations officer. All committee members and co-opted members are listed with their contact details at the back of the journal. The position of expedition officer was removed, but could be reinstated if necessary in the future.

Amongst the topics discussed it was agreed that access to all mines on the Orme, excluding Ty Gwyn and Penmorfa, would be denied during the foot and mouth outbreak.

It has become obvious that there is a frequent breakdown in communication between the active underground members so it was agreed that John Carpenter would devise a 'Phone call Tree' to ensure distribution of information efficiently.

There have been objections against smoking while underground as it destroys all chances of radio carbon dating, causes a thick fog making photography impossible and is generally seen to be unsociable. It was agreed that there would be a complete ban on smoking underground.

The Kings Head has kindly allowed GOES to use their locked glass display cabinets in the restaurant area for exhibiting artifacts, photographs and general information on the mining history of Llandudno. Tom Parry will be coordinating the compilation of this display and Mark Beardsall will be providing the photographs.

CONTENTS

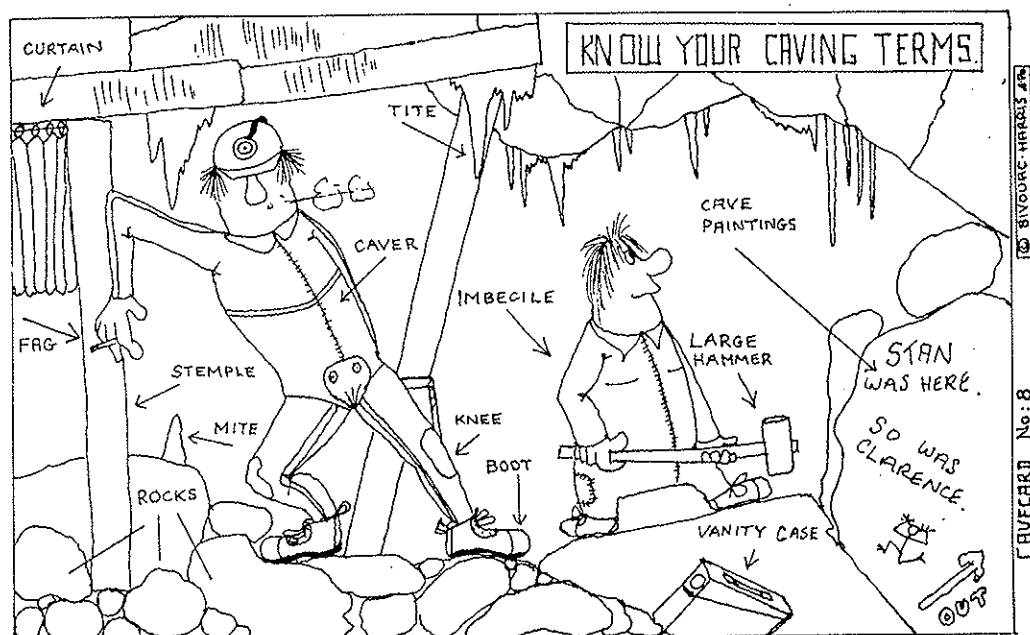
Christmas Dinner 2000.....	2
Adventures in Penmorfa, a Copper Mine under the Great Orme.....	3
Light at the End of the Tunnel.....	6
Trams along the North Wales Coast.....	7
Summer Walks 2001.....	9
The Power of the World Wide Web.....	9
Coupons and a Lifeboat.....	11
The Caving Code.....	12
GOES Committee Members.....	12

GOES GOES DIGITAL

GOES is to feature on a digital Channel 4 morning programme. Angela Roberts from Llandrillo College is doing the research for the short documentary and it is hoped that filming will take place as soon as the foot and mouth outbreak has been cleared up. Further details will be published in a news letter as soon as they are known.

Articles are always wanted! This Journal is important and depends on your contributions, so please put pen to paper for the next journal which is due out in October 2001. No articles, no journal!

GOES on the Web: www.gounder.welshnet.co.uk
This site is maintained by Steve Lea and updated on a regular basis - well worth a visit.





Aerial view of the Orme found on the Web, ©Multimap.com and it's suppliers. Log on to www.multimap.com, if your home appears on this image type in your postcode to bring up a map of your area and then convert the map to an aerial photo by clicking the red button on the left (not all postcodes have an associated aerial view).
Zoom in and out as required.

CHRISTMAS DINNER 2000

Once again this was a very happy occasion, when 25 of us sat down to an excellent meal provided by Sylvia, our Hostess in the Kings Head. A big "thank you" to Sylvia and her staff, and also to Ali for her very efficient organization of the event.

Now comes the difficult part! It is not easy to decipher notes made whilst in a drunken stupor, most of which make no sense at all when sober. For example, "Dennis was a rhino", which I eventually decided must refer to the horn shaped paper hat which adorned his forehead! And so, we will skip these irrelevances and get down to the nitty gritty.

The evening got off to an excellent start with everyone, although still moderately sober, firing off party poppers, pulling crackers and generally making whoopee. Even John Carpenter, who had converted to TT'ism, was full of the jollies, although the rest of us decided TT veggies are a bit much!

Mike Quigley described, nostalgically, how he had imbibed his first illegal drink in the Kings Head at the age of 15. He and Tom reminisced over the old days in the Kings Head and Tom told a story about a man called Bill Roberts, who in the 60's had his own chair, and if anyone else was found to be occupying it, they were in for big trouble.

Surveying the diners, it was interesting to see how very well dressed everyone was. Dennis looked extremely smart and wore his flashing bow tie and some strange light around his middle, which he explained to me, was his navigational aid to find his wallet! Hilary looked very lovely and was wearing an extremely expensive necklace, which was only topped by my own jewellery - a 70p necklace from McKays! Ali looked pretty in a skirt and top, and Shaun seemed amazed to discover that she had legs. This surfeit of elegance contrasted sharply with the attire of a late arrival, Dave Wrenall, who staggered into the dining room, with the dessert, in a muddy state, having been underground. At this stage, Dennis mentioned that he had felt something brush against his legs and it was suggested that it could be the Kings Head Ghost.



It was noted that there were three ex West Shore Arabs sitting at our table - Tom Parry, Mike Quigley and John Carpenter. Mike commented "and not one of us in prison"!!

After the meal, Erik gave us a nice short speech. I, personally, think he is the best Chairman we have ever had. Mark then entertained us with a slide show. Many of his slides were of

the Park Mine, and he told us how he had sadistically made his fellow explorers stay in very awkward positions, so as not to muddy the water, until he had finished taking photographs. There were more slides of the inside of the Penmorfa Adit, in which Gaz was suffering for Mark's art, balancing on a trolley, face down. A trolleydite, in fact! I have it in my notes that Tom remembered the break through in 1842 - a mistake surely? Although I don't know! On displaying one slide, Mark told us that it had been very windy at the time. Tom said, yes he could see the screen shaking.

A story was told about the Galena Silver Mine and a prosecution for fraud when someone, in the old days, stuck pieces of galena on the walls of the mine to convince visiting Londoners that it was a worth while investment.

It was mentioned that when a slide show was given to a local Society about the Llandudno Copper Mines, on seeing a picture of Ali in her gear, an amazed voice shouted out, "It's a girl". An accurate description! A very enjoyable show, Mark, and thank you. I wish I could describe more but, unfortunately, at this stage Tom and I had to leave, our taxi having arrived at the front door. I cannot answer for any naughtiness thereafter, or for anything that might have happened at the other tables, but an account by my spy follows below. Tom and I certainly had a good night, and by the time we reached home Tom was in good voice, singing Welsh hymns.

Tales from the better end of the table by SuperSpy 003, licensed to fall over when tired and emotional: The company and exhilarating conversation at the better end of the table (i.e. away from the Arabs from West Shore) resulted in a truly pleasant evening and double vision the next day. All those observed were red blooded meat eaters or at least claimed to eat only vegetarians. Personally I was tense and anxious before the food arrived, had they forgotten my meal? Had I chosen the nicest thing? Would I have the biggest portion? Others around me were concerned about the availability of beer. Were three pints at a time enough? Could they reach the emergency access route to the bar? But once the food arrived (and yes I did want what the person next to me was having!) the evening rolled merrily along to stories of driverless cars terrorising the good citizens of Glanwyddan, tight fitting harnesses and which is the most dangerous tunnel we had been in (Conwy tunnel in my case). Hard, unforgiving sprouts caused some concern during (and after) the meal, apparently that is how johnny foreigner likes them, which clearly explains the pinched expression the French often have.

As the lights and my memory dimmed the mince pies arrived but failed to pass the brave member of GOES who offered to finish any leftovers (true GOES spirit there).

Things then get a little fuzzy, I remember thinking how much I liked wine, but perhaps it needed some vodka to compliment it, and lots of images of men's (and some women's) bottoms going through holes and up ropes appeared before my eyes. I was eventually taken home with a full belly and a happy heart and missed the drunken orgy that followed.

Eve Parry and 003 (who has now been promoted to 004. Or should it be 002 for promotion?), Great Orme, December 2000

ADVENTURES IN PENMORFA A copper mine under the Great Orme

Getting in...

Our first trip into the Penmorfa system for many years was made on the 27th of August 2000 after gaining official access. Since then for half an hour each Sunday morning the road next to the entrance is likely to be the busiest place on Llandudno's West Shore. Up to ten vehicles might arrive with somewhat odd yet friendly individuals dressed in scruffy apparel. Helmets, lamps and harnesses are produced, whilst ropes and climbing equipment are packed into bags along with food and drink. Most (the lucky ones) carry wooden boards with wheels! Entry to the system is gained by unlocking a gate and scurrying through 135m of pipe-work (750mm in diameter) recently inserted by the council to prevent collapses in the ginging (stonework surrounding the tunnel) blocking the regular flow of water. Crawling was bad for the knees and consequently the motley collection of trolleys were developed to make light of the journey. Lie back on the board just above the pipe-water and use your legs to push on through. Listen to the clatter of the other trucks (no overtaking!), catch the jocular remarks, relax and watch the pipes go by. Last one in lock the gate.

When you emerge from the pipe-work, park up and start to wade along the adit. If you are approaching 6ft tall the good news is that the water may not reach your crutch. The bad news is that your back and neck will be bent awkwardly for about fifteen minutes whilst you stagger down 664m of straight passageway. Check out the watermark on the wall and think of earlier explorers braving neck deep water. After 250m find the natural cavity in the roof that must have attracted some to have a 'warm up' and perhaps a rethink.

Eventually the water level lowers to a more acceptable knee then ankle height as excavations extending upwards into a mineralized vein are reached, the north to south fault line of the 'first rift'. This is the point where the Penmorfa adit, begun in February 1834, finally broke through on Oct 14th 1842 into older flooded workings. An estimated 66m of water was subsequently drained. Some areas lower than the adit, extending below sea level are still inundated. Avoid the worst of some water cascading noisily from above, on the other side a tally system is in place on the wall. Log in by adding your name tag or risk being overlooked later and possibly getting locked in for a week or more!

There is a split in the adit at this point.

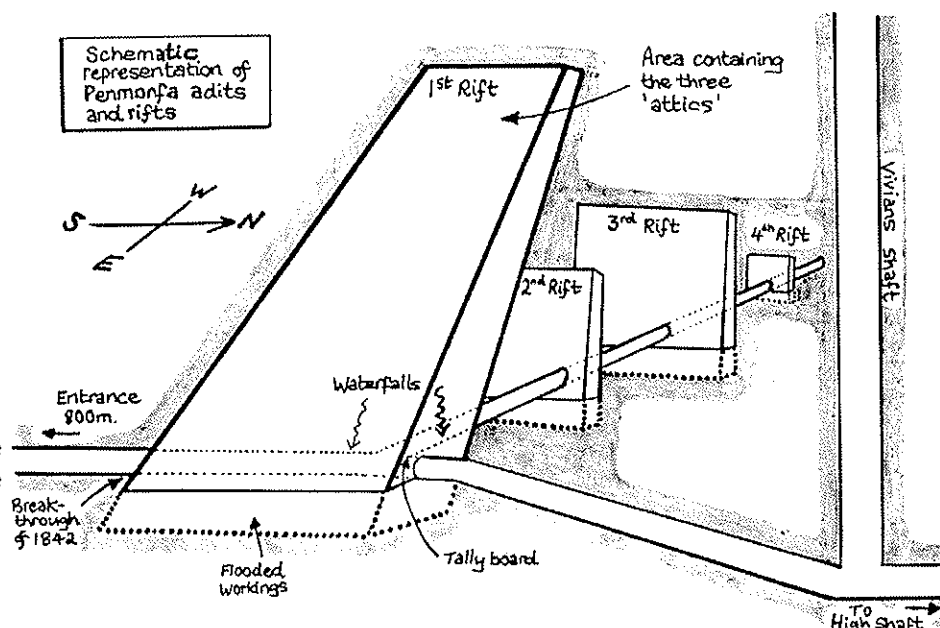
Right soon leads to the filled in Vivians shaft and continues northwards with much wading to pass the blocked Higher shaft before eventually reaching a dead end after a total of 272m. (This was just short of a planned link up with Treweeks shaft. All three shafts being accessed from near the summit of the Orme). Keeping to the left at the tally board a substantial waterfall requires careful negotiation to avoid a soaking, beyond this the passage leads northwestwards reaching

further workings in fault lines at 20, 41, and 66m. (The 'second', 'third' and 'fourth' rifts). The passageway itself ends after a total distance of 75m. The workings off this level have been investigated although vertical stopes have made height gain difficult. Clearly there is much potential above but no easy way to get there. As a consequence it is the system first encountered immediately above the tally board that has been explored to the greatest extent.

(This division into four rifts resulting from the extraction of ore from four fault lines is a simplification. There are a large number of mineralized veins, the majority running north to south. When these veins are grouped close together they form zones of mineralization, as is the case in Penmorfa. The extraction of ore from these areas leads to the formation of large open spaces or rifts).

Getting to grips...

The extraction of copper ore in the heart of the Great Orme has left a huge labyrinth of stopes, passages, shafts and caverns. Its size and complexity, full of twists and irregularities can be very disorientating. Dark corners and recesses lie everywhere. It is a stunning and inspirational Tolkien world. The Holy Grail of our exploration is to establish a connection to the surface 130m above, this could be made by finding a link through to one of the mines presently accessed from the summit such as Pyllau or Treweeks. The regular route up and down the 'first rift' is marked by occasional rope-work and strategically placed compact discs. These incongruous items, no doubt containing all the knowledge possessed by humanity, act as surreal guides, although a wrong turn can still be made, even after several visits.



Early trips covered known ground with new members being introduced to old haunts. Gradually however, other areas were being probed, though a discarded coke bottle, a cigarette butt or a scrap of clothing would indicate we were not always the first. It was the frequency of our visits together with the use of bolting techniques and various ladders that would hopefully open up entirely unknown areas. In addition an accurate survey was started.

Visitors began to divide into two factions. A surveying team and the ferrets. The slow methodical approach of the surveyors (Steve Lea, Ali and Tony Davies) will accurately map the complicated workings, perhaps for the first time. Eventually they should be able to point to those areas in Penmorfa that come closest to the mines presently descended from near the Orme summit, improving the chances of a successful link up. The ferrets meanwhile are sticking their heads into all the nooks and crannies that they can find, pushing back the known, always hopeful of something new.

Getting nowhere...

A trip on November 5th summed up our ferreting endeavors. A short section of aluminum ladder would be used to allow us to get up into some previously inaccessible shafts. Working as a team the ladder was carried, pushed or pulled, clanking and scrapping en route. Three times the ladder was set up below an uncharted opening, perhaps seated in a bolted sling to gain extra height. Three times Gaz would disappear off the top of the ladder whilst the rest of the group awaited a verdict. These operations took some time and on each occasion partly out of curiosity and partly from boredom I drifted off to explore. After gaining a certain amount of height I attempted to drift back in approximately the right direction to re-establish contact. At times I switched off my light and sat still, listening for the faintest noise, watching for the smallest flicker before moving to another area. Each such sortie eventually proved successful, a triple whammy. A bemused Gaz kept finding his new area occupied.

The news relayed to those still waiting below must have seemed bizarre. The lesson for the day was that the stopes, shafts and passageways reached so far in our warren all inter-linked, they were unlikely to yield much that was new. Perhaps the future lay in pushing the highest points of the system in the 'attics'.

Getting up high...

The 'first attic' lay at the top of an impressive circular 12m stemple shaft. Its regular double set of wooden beams providing an access route for the miners were still in place. It had been found and explored with great excitement. Unfortunately the workings above were disappointing, considering the grandeur of the access. In one direction a passage was blocked by a fall and in the other only a small network of blind stopes was found. A rope left in place down the shaft that day was frequently seen in passing and the shaft viewed fleetingly with some awe, but no further ascents had been made.

The 'second attic' found on October 15th was several minutes from the previous shaft at the top of a small, damp climb containing a few stemples. It was hidden beyond a crawl at the far end of a stope. It was a space left after infilling rather than a shaft, one side consisting of stacked deads. This 'attic' started as an open area with several ways blocked by large calcited rocks or mud covered boulders. It suggested that work had been done above with debris left to drop. Unfortunately no way up could be found, but dropping into a short passageway past clog prints and some bucket rims, a large abyss was encountered funneling down into a narrow section below. Immediately to the right wooden beams had been placed over the walkway supporting infill. These had collapsed, blocking the passage.

Crawling underneath to dig looked suicidal but up above the platform at the top of the debris slope a small hole in the roof proved interesting. It seemed to be the source of the supported material. In ten minutes a large amount had easily been extracted. At the same time an unsuccessful attempt had been made to create a way over to a tunnel beyond the abyss. Some big rocks bridged the chasm holding up a vast amount of waste rubble. Large quantities were sent thundering into the darkness in an attempt to make a path. One keystone took with it several tons. It was clearly very unstable and too dangerous to cross.

The 'third attic' found on November 12th was at the top of a seemingly separate network of damp passageways and small climbs. These began quite low down in the system near to the top of a waterfall. This issued from a rock filled cavity, the water eventually dropping to adit level next to the tally board. Our interest had been heightened firstly, by the fact that this network lay to the north the most likely direction in which a link upwards might be made and secondly, by a discovery. This consisted of an old piece of rope hanging out above a void. It was tied to a beam and looked as if it had been reached from above. There were also the remains of a boiler suit nearby on which 'Tom and Nigel 1978' was decipherable, written in clay. Who were they? Had they come down from the surface?

On a second visit I managed to climb up to the beam. Being belayed from below offered some security but little margin for error.

Above, the area opened out and looked promising but the gritty slope I was climbing had steepened into a wall of tottering deads. The place felt creepy and very ominous. Within 3m of a possible ledge it seemed prudent to retreat. Two steps down and I had a lucky escape. A few rocks fell, they hit my helmet, dislodging the lamp but not me.

Getting it together...

The visit made on December 3rd was to lead to a substantial change in our perception of the system. It started with the discovery of an alternative approach to the 'third attic' with its beam and hanging rope. The connection made at a higher level close to a tiny pond known affectionately as Llyn Penmorfa, proved this 'attic' to be close to the more frequented areas.

While we were still contemplating this revelation Gaz was struck by a vague recollection. During our visit to the 'second attic' two months before had he not seen a similar beam at the narrows down in the abyss? Half an hour later and we were there again. Far below we could see the beam garlanded in the reflective tape we had added. His memory was correct. We were happy to have established the connection but the quest for new territory via the 'third attic' was at an end. My climb up the deads above the beam to within metres of where we now stood had been both dangerous and a waste of effort.

Our viewpoint at the abyss was immediately next to the collapse blocking the walkway and I still held a fascination with that hole in the roof at the top of the infill slope. In anticipation of another encounter I had put in my bag a garden trowel together with a makeshift aluminum extension

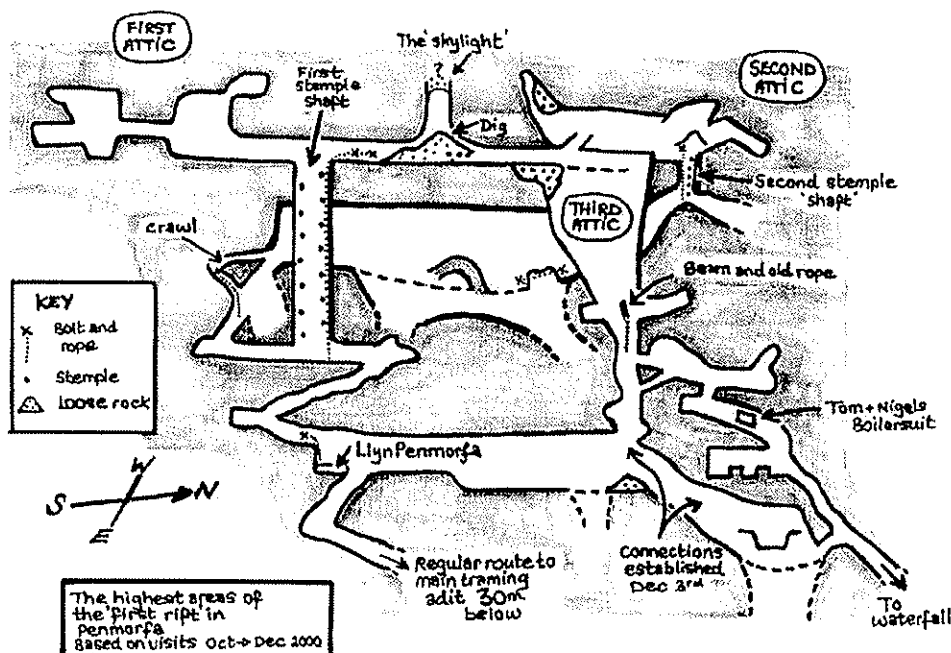
for the handle. Soon put to work it loosened debris higher in the hole whilst allowing me to stay protected under the solid roof. The infill fell down in small bits with occasional minor collapses. As work progressed and the cavity enlarged it was necessary to partially enter the hole, anticipating each fall and retreating rapidly. Dave Flowers was by my side helping to push debris down the slope into the corridor and to intervene quickly if I was engulfed. The other spectators watched with interest from below dodging the larger projectiles. The trowel, which had bent several times, looked likely to fatigue before I would although I sensed it was time to be finishing. A few more quick stabs at full stretch, which removed another rock, were followed by a warning flurry that suggested retreat. A light shower immediately became a thunderous accolade. The roar continued for a several seconds heightening our senses to finish with cheers and jeers. My excavation had vanished. A 1m long portcullis of a rock now blocked the way supported by a wall of others.

'We're not going near that for a few months' said Erik.

Perhaps it was time to go but I didn't want to be greeted by that portcullis next visit. One side was undermined and the other given a hearty pull, the rock turned and picked up speed before crashing into the corridor. All the onlookers survived and seemed pleased so I removed some more rocks. The loosened infill was now easier to shift and the pace of extraction picked up. Suddenly there it was, to the side, blackness, a hole with empty space beyond. An energy surge followed. With pounding heart and bated breath, not daring to tell anyone just yet, I continued pulling, rolling, pushing and kicking debris.

The hole disappeared but I wasn't finished. The anticipated blackness reappeared but higher this time. There was an empty shaft above! I invited Dave to look, it was something to share, a buzz was discernible from the onlookers. Within minutes the extent of the find was revealed, the shaft a metre square was up to 3m high with a solid roof and the outline of a level running off at the top, filled with larger rocks. The excitement continued when darkness was seen running down beyond the cleared shaft. It clearly led back to the walkway and would enable us to bypass the entire collapse. A final large unstable boulder, was wheeled away down the far side and everything appeared safe. Checking carefully that there was a floor below, I slid feet first down the debris and through a slight constriction to see what lay beyond. It only took a few moments to realize where I was, even though I had never been there before. Straight away I was confronted by two bolts, a karabiner marked with red electrical tape and a rope leading off. It had to be the top of the 12m shaft. The rope dropping past the many stemples to the floor below immediately confirmed this.

The news spread and soon everyone had pushed through the dig to take in the discovery. All three 'attics' had now come together. There was only one. The three highest areas in the 'first rift' had come together. It was a satisfying days work.



Getting further...

But what about the excavated shaft? Clearly the debris had been placed there from above. Had those miners as is likely, dropped back into the Penmorfa complex by some still to be found connection or had they climbed up to the surface in a system yet to be revealed? If we were in the 'attic' was this shaft to be the 'skylight' to the world above? Initial findings at the top of the shaft suggest the solid roof is in fact compacted infill. Further digging will need some thought and care but the potential remains.

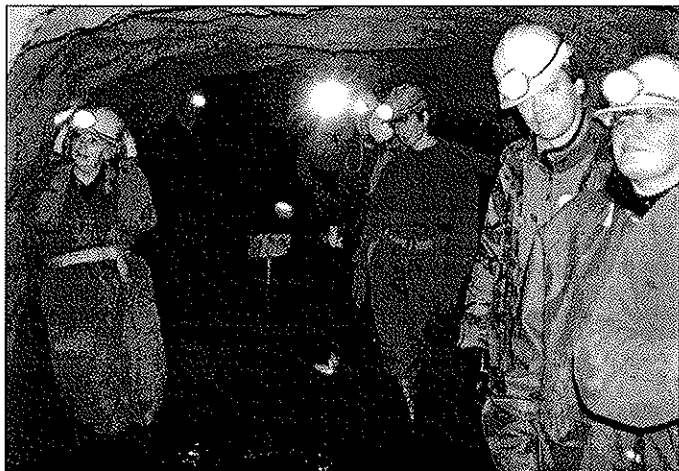
Attention has meanwhile shifted elsewhere in the system. The waterfall issuing next to the start of the 'third attic' is being investigated. Further waterfalls have been found in the 'third rift' where new areas are opening up. Additional passages are even being discovered at adit level. The map of Penmorfa is being revised weekly. No doubt much lies around the next corner or just the other side of some rubble. Certainly there is enough happening to maintain our interest in the near future and perhaps eventually lead us to that Holy Grail, the elusive connection to surface.

Access to the Penmorfa mine had been lost for many years. It was largely through the efforts made by the late David Edwards (Club Secretary) that an agreement was finally secured with both Mostyn Estates and Conwy County Borough Council. The Society is indebted to his work. This article, and indeed all the exploration recently done by G.O.E.S. members in Penmorfa, should be seen as a tribute to him.

David Wrenall, Llanddoged, March 2001

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

I read recently, in the North Wales Weekly News, of the Great Orme Exploration Society and decided to take up the invitation to pop along to the Kings Head to meet the group. I have always been intrigued and fascinated by mines and have fought the temptation to go wandering down them as, without saying, such places are incredibly dangerous and should only be explored with such people such as the guys from GOES. Much to my delight I, with others, was invited to go down the Ty Gwyn mine the following Sunday - a day for which I had been waiting a long time.



A group visiting Ty Gwyn, author 2nd in from right!

Armed with hard hat, light and old clothes, the several hours we spend underground just blew me away. The sense of excitement and adrenaline pumping was absolutely superb along with a rapidly growing respect, not only for the old men who once worked there, but for our guides and companions who's knowledge and experience of these mines is second to none. To be underground, to sit in the velvet of pure darkness, was an experience which I would replay in my mind in the coming days, almost to the point that I had made this up.

However, such a trip turned out to be a walk in the park compared with the experience of Penmorfa!!! I turned up at the West Shore and first met with Gareth, who was sorting throughout the hardware that would be needed for the trip. The lads had previously told me of the tunnel and of the level of water within it, and it was with some trepidation, mixed with excitement, that I kneeled my way along the pipe. I was glad to have my kneepads and a cracking pair of waders that Gareth lent me, and which kept me dry going along the rest of the tunnel.

I had tried to imagine what it would be like underground and came to realise that just looking at the cross-sectional maps doesn't give you a proper handle on what was at first glance a maze of passages and stopes, accompanied with huge amounts of mud! The whole area seemed riddled with twists and turns and I was very glad to be with people who knew exactly where they were going, and what they were doing. Also, the guys pointed out amazing features and were on hand to point out where NOT to step - there's some serious holes down there! Perhaps it was because this was my first time down, but the sense of disorientation was quite strong and now I fully understand the acute dangers of going down such places without guys who know exactly the score - and great respect to them.

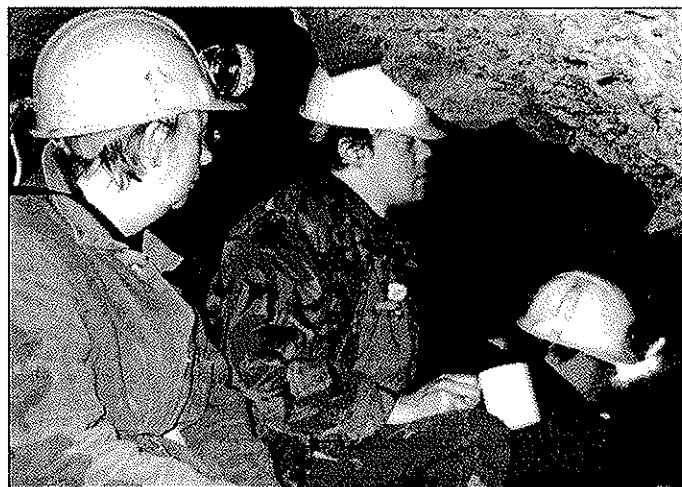
We climbed our way up to a shaft which we then climbed using a hand jammer - interesting, as I had never done this before. With a lot of very useful advise, and patience on behalf of the lads, I made my way up without knocking the stemples, or myself, out! This was really ace, and great fun, once I got the hang of it!

For me it was very poignant to sit and listen to the whir of the modern drill biting into the rock for a bolt placement. I wondered how the old men would react to such a tool considering how they used to remove the rock by the light of a candle.

As the time, of which I had lost track, was moving on we worked our way back down the main tunnel. This was really groovy and required an abseil back down the shaft. It was great - I really enjoyed this bit once the rope had been freed of mud allowing me to abseil!

By the time we reached the ice bridge I must admit to getting very hot and tired, but the support from the lads was great. We worked our way through the stopes and passages and found ourselves back at the main drainage adit. In the distance we could see a pin point of light. It seemed so far away - but that was our way out so we set off. I was somewhat off pace, but managed to get through the 'O Zone' and out into the daylight - at which point I realised just how hard the life of a miner must have been, going in and out every day in all weathers and in minimal protection gear.

Sitting in the car, destroying a Mars Bar, I was just amazed at the last few hours. How intense it is underground; the water, the shafts, the stopes, the prize of copper itself, and above all the camaraderie of everyone within the group who share such a fascination with these hidden places.



The author, centre, enjoying a mug of tea in the Ty Gwyn!

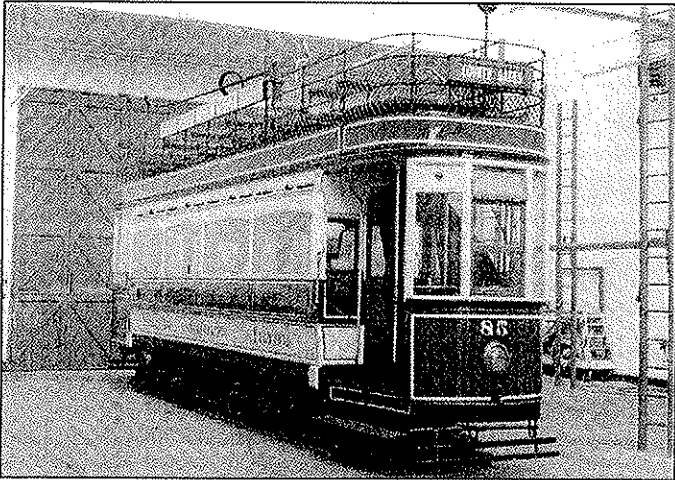
Again, I almost doubted that I had been down such a place and wondered - as the silt settled in the water, the darkness returned to the passages and stopes, the silence pervading every corner and twist - if the old men who worked the mines know of our visits, and of the great respect that they deserve and earned in the hardest of ways.

I hope to return, and again, to marvel at the secrets that lie behind the light at the end of the tunnel.

Eric John Harley, Rhôs-on-Sea, December 2000

TRAMS ALONG THE NORTH WALES COAST

Saturday, 19th October 1907 was an exciting day for the residents of Llandudno when their long-promised electric tramway opened between the town's West Shore and the tramway company's Rhôs-on-Sea depot. Crowds cheered and church bells were rung. Over 4,400 passengers journeys were made on the day as two cars commenced a limited half-hourly service. Even the breakdown of one of the cars on Penrhyn Hill failed to deter their enthusiasm.



One Llandudno car survives in pristine condition at Bournemouth, where it has been restored.

First ideas for a tramway had been much more ambitious. An earlier scheme proposed trams from Deganwy (opposite Conway) through Llandudno and then beyond Colwyn Bay to Rhyl and Prestatyn. It was backed by a Scottish electrical manufacturer Bruce Peebles of Edinburgh under Light Railway Orders of 1898 and 1903. The idea failed but had it succeeded it could have produced a system to rival many already then operating in the UK.

The opening at Llandudno came as a relief to all concerned. A company registered as the Light Railway & General Construction Co. Ltd., had been formed as early as 1897 but many problems had followed. These included squabbles with councils and landowners, shortage of finance, false starts and even bankruptcy making earlier completion impossible.

At one point in 1903 a company managed to complete a 1,000 yard section of reserved track near Rhôs whilst Llandudno Urban District Council was separately planning to build its own tramway. It was not until July 1906 that the Llandudno & District Electric Tramway Construction Company was formed and construction could seriously go ahead.

Initially fourteen single-deck eight-wheeled cars were used with vestibuled end platforms and entrances each side. Their bodies were built by the Midland Railway Carriage & Wagon Ltd of Shrewsbury and the running gear by Mountain & Gibson Ltd of Bury. Livery included maroon below the waist and cream above, with the legend LLANDUDNO & COLWYN BAY in gold on the waist's centre.

The cars were 3ft 6in gauge and seated 42 passengers having internally two compartments, one reserved for smokers and the other for non-smokers.

This idea was later abandoned following complaints that smoke found its way through the communicating door - or the door had been left carelessly open. The trams collected a current of 500/550 volts DC from overhead wiring with a single trolley pole although two trolleys per car were later found to be more efficient.

The following year, 1907, proved a time for expansion. In November 1906 the company had applied for a further Light Railway Order to alter and extend the tramway route and when this was agreed in September 1907, 2 1/2 miles of new track was constructed. It was now possible for trams to reach Colwyn Bay crossing the Chester-Holyhead railway by road bridge and with a terminus in Colwyn Road convenient for the railway station and Colwyn Bay pier.

Public services on the new route now totalling just over 6 1/2 miles began on 7th June 1908.

In the book *North Wales Tramways*, Keith Turner wrote that the company was now handsomely meeting the expectations of its long-suffering supporters. Even during the non-tourist season, almost 175,000 passengers were carried in the 21 week period up to mid-March 1909 with a total car mileage of 46,400. Encouraged by the trams popularity, the company ordered four further single-deck cars and in the same year changed its name to the Llandudno & Colwyn Bay Electric Railway Ltd. (L&CBER). Its actions were more than justified for during the whole of 1909 some 1,356,323 passengers were carried. But it was not long before further problems arose.

In Llandudno the public were very unhappy about the 'screeching of cars' around the sharp corner from Mostyn Street into Gloddaeth Street at Hooson's Corner in the town centre. Efforts to quieten the trams included the regular greasing of the rails but the problem was never properly overcome. At a Llandudno Urban District Council meeting, a member described the screeching as 'like the shrieks of Kilkenny cats'!



Open top trams on Llandudno's Mostyn Broadway.

In Colwyn Bay the council was very unhappy that a proposal to extend the tram route to Old Colwyn was being unnecessarily delayed and threatened to carry out the work itself.

This spurred the Light Railway Commissioners which, in 1912, finally granted approval subject to certain roads being widened. Construction was slow with the new line not opening until March 1915 and with the total route mileage now reaching 8.35 miles. Meantime at the other end of the line the L&CBER dropped a proposal, originally approved in 1898, to extend its route to Deganwy and in 1917 cut back its existing route removing the West Parade section. Trams now terminated at the end of Gloddaeth Avenue - the wide avenue that linked Llandudno's promenade with West Shore.



Cars pass in Gloddaeth Street. Llandudno's trams survived until 1956 giving almost 50 years of service. (Lens of Sutton).

With part of the route between Llandudno and Colwyn Bay crossing behind Little Orme's Head on reserved track across fields, the tramway had much to offer holidaymakers. In 1920 four open eight wheeled 'toast rack' trams were acquired each capable of carrying 60 passengers. As could be expected these proved popular - though only in the better weather! The trams' popularity continued through the 1920s but already further problems were arising. Motor buses were making an appearance posing a threat which became common to tramways throughout the UK.

Colwyn Bay was the first council to operate buses, which was not surprising bearing in mind its previous precarious relationship with the tramway company. The L&CBER countered this by endeavouring to run its own buses but was later compelled to abandon the idea. By 1930 competition from buses was such that the tramway extension to Old Colwyn was closed and of course Crosville buses were quickly there to take their place. During the 1930s however, the trams, instead of going into decline, were strengthened when five more single-deck cars were added to the fleet having been acquired secondhand from Acrrington. Further cars came from Bournemouth in 1936 comprising ten open-top double-deck trams, the open tops proving highly popular for good weather coastal runs.

The trams were now enjoying reasonable prosperity and, when World War II broke out in 1939, this increased when bus services were reduced due to strict petrol rationing. In addition numerous Government offices were evacuated to the area and trams provided suitable transport. After the war the L&CBER remained confident ordering two secondhand double-deck cars from the Darwen Corporation in Lancashire, which abandoned trams in 1946.

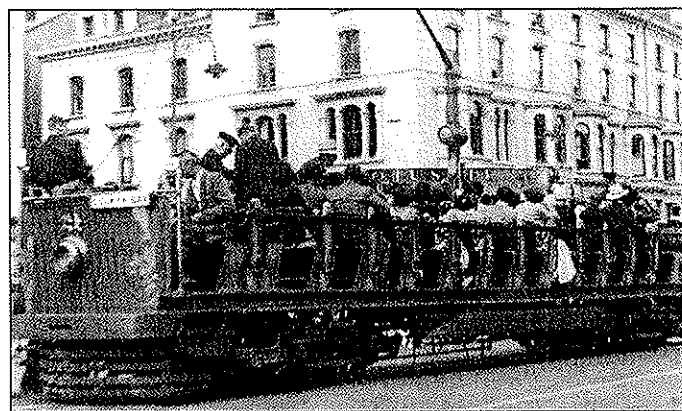
These were of modern design but there were problems. After regauging from 4ft to 3ft 6in, the Ministry of Transport tested the cars and would not permit their use along open coastal stretches because of the possibility these high-sided, closed vehicles might overturn in strong winds. So the two cars became familiar sights in Llandudno and Colwyn Bay respectively where they operated local shuttle services.

Surprisingly the L&CBER survived well into the 1950s. Still confident, the company updated track and more than once repaired damage when heavy seas caused problems along Penrhyn Bay. The number of passengers remained high with almost 2,750,000 during 1953.

Despite this maintenance work and increasing costs meant that 1953 showed a loss of £1,222. This state of affairs continued until in September 1955 came the announcement that the tramway was to close.

Efforts were made by enthusiasts to preserve the trams but in vain. The end came on Saturday 24 March 1956, when cars were packed throughout the day. At 10.20 pm the last tram, ex-Bournemouth No 8, made its way from the Rhôs depot to the West Shore terminus watched by large crowds along the route. After almost half a century the trams had finally gone.

Many relics remain to recall the past. The former tram sheds at Rhôs still stand, today in industrial use. In the building evidence of tram tracks can be determined and in an office can still be seen pasted on a hatch door a time table reading Llandudno & Colwyn Bay Electric Railway Limited giving details of all weekday and Sunday services. Next door to the sheds stands the former L&CBER office building also refurbished for its present use.



Toastrack trams became very popular along the seafront between Llandudno and Rhôs. (Lens of Sutton).

In 1974 the Llandudno & Colwyn Bay Electric Railway Society was formed endeavouring to keep alive the memory of the trams. Unhappily for the society the last surviving L&CBER tram, double-decker No 6, went to the former Clapham museum in London and later to Bournemouth where it originated. It stands today in pristine condition, restored to Bournemouth 85 colours. The society is however determined to restore a vehicle to L&CBER colours and presently on site is an ex-Southend tram being converted from third rail to overhead operation and to be numbered 25.

The area today remains highly popular with holidaymakers. Only too often the streets are congested with traffic and one can only consider how popular the trams would be had they survived to the present time. With trams making comebacks elsewhere in the UK, here surely was an opportunity to retain the service, not only to reduce motor traffic and provide a useful fume-free commuter service, but also how many visitors would enjoy a tramtop run along the promenade and beyond Little Orme to Colwyn Bay and back? The Great Orme tramway is of course well known and remains popular. What is perhaps less well known is that a proposal was once considered to extend Llandudno's trams to provide a circular route round the headland of the Great Orme parallel to the present Marine Drive toll road. A 15 minute service was considered with both open and closed cars and a fare of 6d (21/2p).

How popular this would have been today had such an idea materialised and survived.

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SUMMER WALKS 2001

There will be a limited amount of walks this year as a result of the ongoing Foot and Mouth outbreak. The following list may change due to poor weather or unforeseen circumstances, so please check the North Wales Weekly News community news section for confirmation of walks each week and for the confirmed meeting place, or phone Ali on 01492 877960. Walks start at 7pm and are gentle strolls that last for a couple of hours, returning to the Kings Head for refreshment.

7th June	Hunt for the North Shore Tree Stumps (Meet on prom opposite the "Washington")
14th June	Llandudno Town Trail (meet outside Llandudno Library)
21st June	West Shore Beach to Bishops Palace Ruins (meet West Shore Yachting Pond)
28th June	Opencast Workings at Parys Mountain (meet at entrance gate SH4365,9050)
5th July	Bryn Euryn (meet at the track on the junction between Tan-y-Bryn & Rhôs Roads, Rhôs on Sea)
12th July	Walk along Conwy Quay (meet at the wishing well, Castle Square)
19th July	Stroll along Llandudno's Pier (meet at the amusement arcades)
26th July	Dowsing in Haulfre Gardens (meet outside the Kings Head)
2nd August	St Trillo's Church, Rhôs on Sea (meet on the Rhôs Promenade opposite College Avenue)
9th August	Little Orme Memorial (meet Little Orme end of Promenade - 7pm prompt as this depends on tides)
Date Unknown	Possible boat trip to the lighthouse (this will need to be confirmed and there will be a small charge)

THE POWER OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Steve Lea, who spends many hours managing and updating the GOES Web site (www.gounder.welshnet.co.uk), recently received the following e-mail:

Many thanks for your excellent site. I lived in Llandudno until I was 18 and with my friend, Harry Pike from Prospect Terrace, spent many hours looking for holes on the Orme. We may have found a cave not listed on your site. If you go up from invalids walk alongside the stone wall at the edge of Haulfre, about halfway up there is an obvious spoil heap at the top of which is a small flat area. There was (45 years ago!) a very small opening at the back of this: a tight squeeze for a skinny 13 year old. Once inside there was a filled passage slightly upwards to the right which had been filled with spoil, there was approx 18" clearance below the roof which had the odd root growing down from it. This side was so blocked that we never got very far along it. To the left there was a slide down over the spoil to a chamber approx 20' square. There were 2, perhaps 3, blind tunnels in the left wall about 10' deep. At the far end, behind a large boulder, was a squeeze into an obvious mine tunnel. On the right it looked partly natural being a cleft shape, there was a beam, possibly iron?, holding up a collection of large boulders. This looked dodgy so we never tried that direction. To the left there was a regular oval tunnel which sloped downwards. This tunnel continued for some tens of yards (30 to 40?) before it became flooded. At the end of one dry summer there was no water and we found the tunnel did not continue much further before a blind ending. I remember we used our candles (we never had torches) to embed a penny on a small rock to show we had been there (we were only 13, fair play). A few years later we entered again and found the beam had collapsed which put us off somewhat.

Another cave was one at the bottom of the gunsite, about 30 yards to the left at the bottom of the gunsite steps. This was stone lined and had partly collapsed about 10 yard in. We managed to squeeze past the collapse, mainly earth, and the stone lining continued for several more yards before the tunnel reverted to earth walls. It was very confused with tunnels going in several directions with some also being interconnected. In general there seemed no obvious line and all tunnels we found were blind. There was one chamber in which natural stone showed through which seemed to lead to a tunnel at roof level (approx 15'). This turned out to be blind also. We never liked this cave as the unsupported earth walls always worried us. We guessed it was a fairly old mine because the stone lining at the entrance was covered with flowstone.

We also waded, rolled up trousers and barefooted, up the stream which feeds the boating lake. This tunnel was stone lined and we could feel rails with our feet. There was a vertical shaft in the roof about halfway in I remember. We got to a very muddy chamber but our candles were not much use in illuminating too far ahead so we chickened out at this point and retraced our steps. I remember getting a clout from my mother for coming home very muddy with very wet trousers (John Bright School uniform) due to long trousers, short legs and deep water. Thanks again for your site.

Brian Hughes, formerly of Taliesin St., March 2001

COUPONS AND A LIFEBOAT

What is the link between the launch more than 100 years ago of the world's first gift wrapper scheme - a business which now counts its coupons in millions - and the launch shortly afterwards of a new lifeboat? Edmund Williams reveals that the answer is a bar of household soap and the North Wales resort of Llandudno:

More than 100 years ago William Hesketh Lever, the Lancashire wholesale grocer who became the first Lord Leverhulme, hit upon the simple but original idea of giving household soap a brand name, producing it in handy tablets, and wrapping it up attractively. Previously, this homely product had been sold in long anonymous bars which the shopkeeper sliced into pieces on his counter.

With Mr Lever one good idea almost invariably led to another. Initially, each tablet of his Sunlight Soap was enclosed in imitation parchment. That was not good enough. He decided to contain the parchment-wrapped tablets in an outer carton with a striking design. Thus his soap would be doubly protected. And, equally important, Sunlight would outshine all its competitors on the cluttered shelves of the nation's small shops.



Advertising image taken from the Web

Wrapping things up, however, cost money, and the canny Mr Lever was anxious to extend the promotion of his product. It was while pondering on this problem that Lever thought of prize wrapper schemes - a marketing gimmick that persists

to this day as millions of wrappers and coupons on countless products sold all over the world are exchanged for free gifts.

The precise date of Lever's inspiration is not known, but his claim to have invented prize wrapper, or coupon, promotions is entirely creditable. He had registered 'Sunlight' as the brand name of his leading make of soap in 1884.

Two years later he introduced its outer card-box, the design of which became a carton classic. Shortly afterwards his first prize scheme - the offer of £2000 to religious and benevolent institutions chosen by consumers' votes recorded on the cartons - was launched. Certainly his gift scheme had become widely known by the time he had completed, at the end of 1887, the negotiations for the purchase of the Mersey land on which he developed his famous factory at Port Sunlight.

Earlier in 1887, the Press reported that 'the gift of a lifeboat had been made to Llandudno, North Wales, by the votes of the users of Sunlight Soap in the Sunlight Competition'. The popularity of Lever's gift scheme and the power of his early advertising is reflected in the fact he was able to present two lifeboats at the time. The second boat was stationed at Brighton.

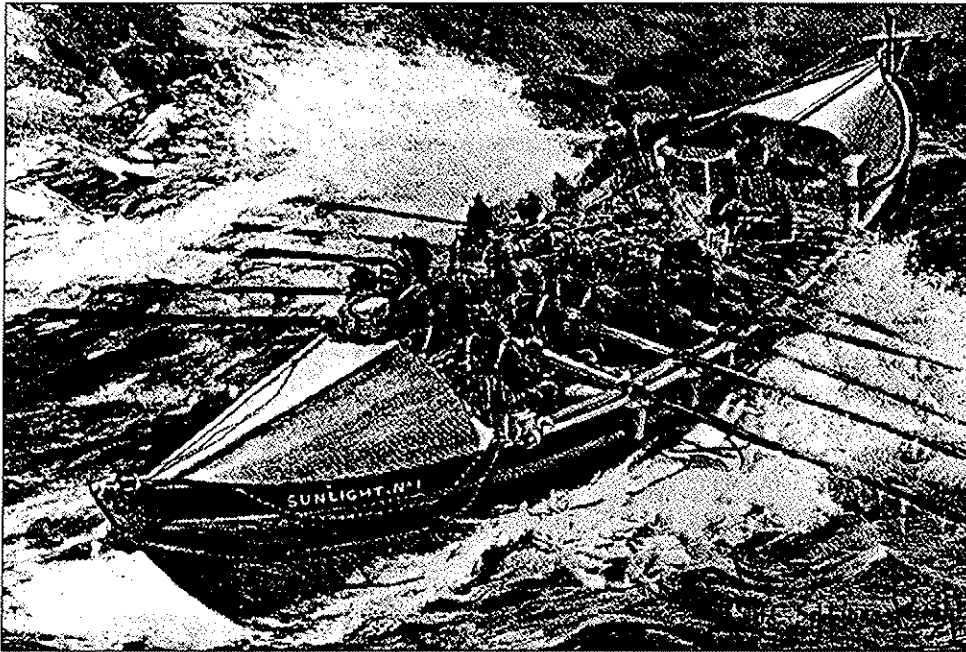
Some lifeboat records were destroyed during the second world war; pulped as salvage to help the war effort. No documents survive to reveal why Lever chose to give the lifeboats, first to Llandudno and then to Brighton. Perhaps his decision was influenced simply by the needs of these stations.

Llandudno was, however, a town well known to him. It had grown from a fishing village in the shadow of the Great Orme's Head into a Victorian seaside resort which attracted holidaymakers and day trippers, especially from the industrial towns of the Midlands and Lever's native Lancashire.

Another consideration may have prompted Lever's choice. At that time an increasing number of ships were passing Llandudno with cargoes of raw materials for Merseyside where the grocer turned soapmaker was contemplating building his vast new factory. And, outward bound, the same ships could carry, among their other consignments, the soap he was determined to export in ever-increasing quantities.

The Lever gift to the Llandudno lifeboat station was predictably christened Sunlight No.1, and her sister vessel in Brighton, Sunlight No.2. Each boat was 37ft long and had 12 oars. Sunlight No.1 was put to the test in 1889. During a fierce south westerly gale on 9th October she went out twice to rescue the crews of stricken fishing trawlers. The illustrated London News reported: 'A heavy sea was running... but the lifeboat behaved splendidly, this being her first real service'.

Even today, with mechanical assistance, hauling the Llandudno lifeboat from its house in the town and then launching it into the water from the beach can be a challenging operation. Launching Sunlight No.1, and, for that matter, a long line of its successors, was fraught with greater difficulties.



Rescue of fishermen by the lifeboat Sunlight No.1 at Llandudno from the 'Illustrated London News' (taken from www.voxcomm.co.uk/jjgreen/lifeboatwebsite/stationhistory.htm)

The boat had to be dragged on a carriage over the shingle and sand by men and horses and then manoeuvred into the sea. It was launched in this way one December night in the Eighties when it went to the rescue of a schooner in distress.

The Lifeboat, journal of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, recalls how the Llandudno lifeboatmen rescued the schooner's crew of five, and had just hauled their own boat ashore when they were called out again. As the boat was being relaunched, one of the helpers fell in front of the carriage wheels and was crushed to death. Now distressed as well as temporarily exhausted after their long pull at the oars in an angry sea, the lifeboat crew refused to go out with the coxswain in charge, claiming that he was incapable of taking proper command. This dispute must have been one of the shortest in British maritime history. The bowman promptly offered to take command and by immediate common assent Sunlight No.1 was dragged into the water again. But after many hours of weary searching in the wild Irish Sea, the mission was called off.

Sunlight No.1 might have been a sturdy and efficient craft - she carried out a total of 19 rescue missions and saved 26 lives - but she was an unlucky boat for her helpers. In 1892, another man assisting a launch fell under her carriage wheels and was killed. This did not, however, deter the lifeboat's helpers. By 1899 the station was having great difficulty in finding a sufficient number of horses to draw the launching carriage, and at five shillings each (25p in today's money) horses were becoming too expensive to hire. So more voluntary human helpers were recruited instead!

Before Sunlight No.1 was replaced in 1902, the coxswain and two of the most experienced crew members were invited by the RNLI to visit other stations around Britain's coast to choose the type of boat they thought most suitable for Llandudno. It is interesting that their choice was a boat in many respects similar to Sunlight No.1 - a self-righting vessel with 12 oars, powerful and large enough to stand up to the seas around the Welsh coast but not too difficult to launch and bring ashore again.

Clearly, lifeboats and lifeboatmen were often in William Hesketh Lever's mind. A new household soap which he launched in 1894 was called Lifebuoy, and his advertising for the product in that year shows an archetypal lifeboatman clad in oilskins and sou'wester, 'symbolising', according to the caption, 'mankind's struggle for preservation against the tidal wave of disease'. A struggle which, one gathers, Mr Lever's soap was an indispensable lifeline.

But as Lever's prize wrapper schemes grew in size, the motive behind them became less public spirited; they simply offered something for nothing. They were still organised, however, on an impressive scale.

In one, a customer exchanged 25,000 Sunlight Soap wrappers for

a motor car, price £250, and 9 or 11 bicycles (oddly, the record is uncertain of the exact number), price £9 each. How the customer gathered such an enormous number of Sunlight wrappers in a comparatively short time remains a marketing mystery, but as Lever wryly remarked at the time, 'You will see that he got my soap for nothing'.

In 1897, Lever became disenchanted with wrapper schemes. He decided that not only would he stop advertising prizes, but that 'he would commence a policy of discouragement of that system of business'. To achieve his aim he fell back on the rather reprehensible practice of offering prizes which, on his own admission, were 'little better than rubbish, cheap so-called leather purses proving to be made of paper and so on'. Thus the trade had the curious spectacle of the inventor of gift schemes trying to abolish them.

Perhaps, equally curiously, Lever thought that his customers would soon tire of applying for these tawdry gifts and yet go on buying his soap. He was wrong. Many of his customers, particularly among his thrifty fellow Northerners, instead bought his competitors' products that offered free gifts, for by now the other soapmakers who had once protested so vociferously about Lever's advertising methods, and notably about his wrapper promotions, were flagrantly plagiarising his ideas.

It would have been contrary to Lever's nature, to say nothing of his business philosophy, to let such behaviour go unchallenged. With characteristic agility he did a quick somersault. 'Instead of giving away cutlery and articles of doubtful value', he blandly announced, 'we will give away our soap!' Critics of the idea were soon confounded. The new gift campaign - free soap in exchange for wrappers from his soap already purchased - was a resounding success.

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