

## **PARYS UNDERGROUND GROUP**

### **NOTES FOR VISITING CAVING/MINING GROUPS**

#### ***About the mine***

Modern mining commenced in 1768. There were two mines, The Parys Mine and the Mona Mine with separate sets of buildings and a boundary between the summit windmill and the Parys mine entrance. Initial work was by shallow shafts and bell pits which were later deliberately collapsed in to form the Great and Hillside Opencasts. Deep mining began before 1790 and eventually reached a depth of 900ft. (270m.), well below sea level. Both mines were gravity drained to the Parys 45 fathom level by the Joint Drainage Adit, and this provided the only underground connection between the two. Although Gwen's shaft in Parys Mine is 150fm. (900ft) deep everything below the 45fm. level had to be pumped and is now flooded.

By the end of underground working there were over 100 shafts scattered across the mountain. All haulage and pumping was by these shafts, and some were also laddered for access – Michael Faraday gives an interesting account of coming up one of these in 1819 (<http://www.angleseymining.co.uk/ParysMountain/HomeParys.htm> ). There were also a few footways, and it is the Parys footway we use for access. These descend sub-vertically by ladders and stone steps.

The accessible Parys levels are at 10, 16, 20, 30 and 45fm. with some stopes extending 90ft. between levels. Much of the mine is in good rock, but parts are timbered. These sections suffer frequent collapse and present us with ongoing problems.

In several places on the Parys Mine 16fm. level 18/19th century miners broke into the bottom of Bronze Age workings. Although all trace of these workings on the surface is now buried under massive tips we have several radiocarbon dates from underground, all of which indicate the copper deposits were being mined here around 1900bc. As such it is one of the few proven Bronze Age mining sites known in Britain. (The Great Orme is another, although this is in limestone, and most radio-carbon dates indicate it was mined later in the Bronze Age.)

The mine is exceptionally acid with some pools having a pH value of around 2-2.5. These conditions are poor for the preservation of bone or metal artefacts, but are suitable for some specialised bacteria which leave characteristic snottites as a waste product. For the mineralogist there are a number of unusual minerals - antlerite, pisanite, basaluminite and jarosite for example. Parys Mountain is also the world type site for anglesite although all of this seems to have gone. Have recently (summer 2009) re-opened and made safe the Mona Henry Footway which gives access to the Mona Mine. The Mona Mine is rather different in character to Parys Mine and has few artefacts. However, we can now do a through trip from one mine to the other, although this is wet.

#### ***The Trip***

We currently have access to about 8km.of passage. We will take experienced underground groups pretty much anywhere in the mine, although a four hour trip isn't long enough to visit everywhere. If you have a particular interest (e.g. mineralogy) let us know and we will try to organise the trip appropriately, and if possible even ensure a specialist is available to guide you. Although one guide can manage a group of up to 10, progress is slow, so we try to keep groups down to five or six. Let us know how roughly many people will be coming so we can try to make appropriate arrangements beforehand.

#### ***Clothing and Equipment***

The mine is fairly dry, but the lower levels are very muddy. A caving suit or overalls will be fine. There are often pools of water up to a foot or so deep in the passages so bring wellies. We strongly recommend the use of rubber gloves. There are some opportunities to get into waist deep water if you want, but these are not an essential part of the experience. The trip through Parys to Mona or vice versa involves about 150m of passage waist deep in water, then a short section of passage where accumulation of material on the floor means that you have to crouch, getting wet to chest height. There is no SRT. Cows tails are barely needed: we do clip non-caving visitors to a handline for a short section of false floor, but this is as much for the caving experience as for safety.

The trip on 30fm to see the wheel barrow (our best artefact) involves a two stage climb up a muddy slope. There is a handline with loops on the lower 25ft. On the upper 50ft. there are two ropes, one with hand loops, the other without knots for those who wish to use a jammer. I believe that all experienced individuals should look after their own safety, and therefore leave it up to you to make your own choice of using the handloops and/or protecting yourself with a jammer. Because of the time taken to visit the wheelbarrow this trip is only practical with small groups – say 4 people plus guide.

The mine water is acid. In places it can be as low as pH 2 – 2.5. As you will be aware acid is not good for nylon equipment, or aluminium alloys. Although you are unlikely to get it in anything this acid we recommend that you wash or soak your safety critical kit in tap water as soon as possible afterwards to minimise any risk of damage. One electron ladder suffered irreparable deterioration through not being washed promptly after use. The acid water can also strip the P.U. proofing layer off P.U. proofed caving suits so these should be washed as soon as possible after the visit. The PVC suits (e.g. Petzl) appear to be unaffected.

### **Insurance**

We have an absolute requirement, for the protection of our Club Committee and the landowner (Anglesey Mining PLC), that all visitors have third-party **CAVING** insurance, either with the BCA, or with a private insurer who insures specifically for caving/mine exploration. Current BCA membership cards are ideal proof, but knowing how long they can take to arrive, a BCA list, or a personal guarantee by the leader that all members of the group have appropriate cover will suffice. Anyone with a commercial insurance policy should bring a copy as proof that it specifically covers caving/mine exploration. Anyone who does not have insurance can join PUG as a temporary member on the day of the visit. This provides 17 days BCA insurance cover and costs £10.00. We also provide temporary members with LED caving lights and helmets for the duration of the trip at no extra charge. A Temporary Membership form is provided below for anyone who needs it. Completing it in advance of your visit reduces the time spent on administration, and means we can get underground sooner.

### **Other Notes**

You are welcome to take photographs (except for commercial purposes, which would require permission from Anglesey Mining and ourselves). Bear in mind that light painting or tripod photography does slow a trip down considerably for everybody. It may be best to organise a specific photography trip, or at least a photography group. We have a policy of not permitting mineral collection. Please leave geology hammers at home. *(Note: Much of the mountain top is covered by geological or biological SSSI and/or Scheduled Monument status which protects it against disturbance or the collection of samples).*

If you have any medical condition that could affect you while underground please inform your Party Leader at the start. We will make every effort to accommodate you providing that it will not affect the safety of the rest of the party.

### **Meet**

Meet in the public car park at the top of the mountain, beside the B5111 (Amlwch to Rhosybol/Llanerchymedd road). Grid Ref: SH438906. This is also the starting point of the surface Heritage Trail (car park sign refers to this), which is worth looking around if you have time. We look forward to seeing you.

For more information about Parys Mine and our group go to our website <http://www.parysmountain.co.uk/>

### **Contact**

Either contact me, or our Access Officer, John Harris: (e-mail [gwynant@phonecoop.coop](mailto:gwynant@phonecoop.coop) or phone 01407 832189)

# Parys Underground group

## Temporary Membership Form

**We hope you will enjoy your trip underground. Sorry about the form filling but we have to do this for our own protection. For your own safety and that of others with you please read this sheet fully and then sign at the bottom.**

- Everyone going underground must be a Full or Temporary member of PUG. This provides you with third party liability insurance. Like third party car insurance it covers you for injury or damage you cause to others, but **does not** provide protection against personal injury.
- Your route is not dangerous, but this is **not a show mine**. It is very much in the state it was when abandoned 100 - 150 years ago. There is no underground lighting. There are unprotected drops and deep pools of acidic water. The passage floors are muddy, wet and uneven.
- Your visit will involve climbing some ladders (max. 20 feet high), passages where you have to stoop, and a couple of short "hands and knees" crawls. You will not be roped, although in places there are handlines to hold on to. We usually descend about 55m.(180ft.) and spend 2 -3 hrs. underground.
- **TAKE CARE UNDERGROUND.** Look to your own safety and that of others. You **must** follow any instructions given by your Party Leaders. Do not leave your group.
- We regret that youngsters under 15 are not permitted underground. Those aged between 15 and 17 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who will take responsibility for them.
- The mine is an area of scientific, archaeological and historical research, please take care not to damage anything. **Do not touch the formations.** They are fragile, and we want to be able to show them to others next week! **We do not allow the collecting of specimens.**
- If you have any medical condition that could affect you while underground please inform your Party Leader at the start. We will make every effort to accommodate you providing that it will not affect the safety of the rest of the party.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read the above notes and will abide by them.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_

Payment      £10        Students / Unwaged    £5   

You may revisit the mine within 17 days from this date at no further charge.

Money taken by
----------------