1.
The museum is working hard to try and save the historic Head Gear at Astley Green. The last surviving in the Lancashire Coalfield. Although English Heritage Grade 2 listed, it is also on the Heritage at Risk list. We are putting a plan together now to try and get funding to save this iconic structure before it is too late. Time is very short before it is considered too un-economical to repair. We need you help NOW. The museum is run by unpaid volunteers and all monies raised will be used to try and save this structure before it is too late.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

Help us now

We are always looking for volunteers to help with all aspects of the museum. We have plans to develop the museum and site over the coming years and require everyone to help us achieve the goal of turning the museum into a vibrant community asset.

We need everyone because we believe everyone has skills we can use to help us develop the museum.

CONTACT

info@agcm.org.uk with your name, email and telephone number and we will get back to you.

THE PIT WHISTLE

The Newsletter of the Lancashire Mining Museum & Red Rose Steam Society

Donate Now
VELOCETTE RALLY
28th May

The original Astley Green Pit Whistle has been donated to the museum. It was mounted on the Power House which was located to the north of the Engine House. It was removed by Cliff Graham one of our members, when the colliery was closed and given to the local pub, the Ross’s Arms, for display. Some 15 years ago the publican retired and the whistle passed to a local man Jack Lloyd who has given it to the museum. It had been chrome plated and put on a plinth for display, but it should still be operational. It was used principally to announce the start of the shift and any miner coming after that would not be allowed to go down the mine. Some of the older locals also remember the pits and mills sounding their whistles on New Year’s Eve to bring in the New Year.
THE ORMEROD DETACHING HOOK

Edward Ormerod (2 May 1834 – 26 May 1894) was an English mining engineer.

Edward Ormerod (sometimes Ormrod) was born on 2 May 1834 in the village of Church, near Accrington, in Lancashire, England. He worked as a mining engineer at Fletcher, Burrows and Company's Gibfield Colliery in Atherton, Greater Manchester, where he devised and tested a safety device. He was supported by chief engineering foreman, James Rothwell from Hindley. He married Betsy Hope in 1856 and had several children. He died on 26 May 1894 and is buried in Atherton Cemetery. A small memorial stone in front of his grave depicts and pays tribute to his invention.

The "Ormerod" safety link or detaching hook, known in mining circles as a "butterfly". This elegant device was inserted into the winding rope in such a way that if the lift cage was accidentally overwound the link would be pulled into a bell through which the winding rope passed. This action would not only disconnect the cage from the winding rope but also prevent the cage from falling back down the shaft. The device was patented in 1867 and is still manufactured today. It is believed that the lives of many miners have been saved by its use and it has never failed in service. The design was awarded a Gold medal at the Manchester Mechanical & Industrial exhibition of 1875 and a silver medal at the Franco British Exhibition in 1908. There are a number of these hooks on display at the Astley Green Colliery Museum.

Photo - Courtesy of Shurtz Leigh Lancashire
In 1907 the Clifton & Kearsley Coal Co. Ltd. put down a borehole 30 feet from the centre of the intended No.1 shaft. This was 2 feet in diameter and as well as proving the ground was intended to help with the drainage of the site. The surface layers were proved to consist of some 30 feet of stiff clay, underlaid by 99 feet 4 inches of drift, these were then followed by 310 ft. 7in. of the Permian sandstones and marls.

Several eminent engineers were consulted concerning the best method of sinking the shafts down through the water-soaked and loose layers to the rockhead, the principal methods being the Kind-Chaudron boring method, the Congelation method and the drop shaft method.

The Kind-Chaudron and similar methods which used a huge "bit" which descended under its own weight were out because of the loose nature of the ground, the unsupported sides of the shaft being unstable.

The Congelation method consisted of boring a series of holes outside the circle of the intended shaft. These contained pipes through which a freezing liquid was circulated, freezing the ground around them and allowing the shaft site to be excavated. This process tended to be expensive due to the cost of the equipment for supplying the freezing solution, the boring of the freezing holes etc.

The Dropshaft or Sinking Drum Process involved forcing a cylinder through the ground and excavating within it. This had been used for many years, but it was considered that Messrs. Haniel & Lueg of Dusseldorf had brought it to perfection. In view of the German expertise in the latter two methods, a visit was made to Germany to visit Haniel & Lueg and the doyen of difficult shaft sinking, Herr Reimer, whose book "Shaft Sinking in Difficult Cases" remains a classic on the subject.

Herr Reimer was emphatic in his preference for the freezing process, but as this was considered too expensive, it was decided to go for the Dropshaft method, and Messrs Haniel & Lueg undertook to supply the necessary equipment and materials. Work began in earnest on site early in 1908, the foundations were laid for the sinking engine houses and construction of the other essentials began.
The "First Sod" Ceremony to celebrate the start of sinking of No.1 shaft took place on May 9th, 1908, Lady Pilkington doing the honours. This was followed by the construction on the cleared surface of a temporary wooden ring in which 26 equi-distant holes were bored on a radius of 13'9".

Brickwork was then built up on this to an inside radius of 12'5.5", 5ft. high, with a second wooden ring on top. Bolts 1.5" in diameter and 6' long were pushed through the holes in the two rings and into the underlying clay. A reinforced concrete block 50' across and 3.5' thick was then laid around the brickwork.

Sinking into the clay commenced on May 11th. A bricking platform being placed in position round the bottom of the shaft when the depth reached 17 feet. Construction of a brick collar on the concrete platform, and a brick pillar within the shaft then commenced, the pillar being reinforced by extensions to the original bolts as required. All construction lifting at this stage was carried out by a long jib crane to avoid any disturbance to the growing pillar which might cause it to stray from the vertical, as it would form the guide through which the metal "Tubbing" of the shaft would be forced downwards.

When the 25' level was reached, a cast iron "Anchor-ring" was laid, and connected by 4" bolts to a second "Pressure-ring" at the top of the collar. The Pressure-ring was also locked into the collar by skew bolts, rendering the whole into a single solid mass. The weight of the whole collar and pillar amounted to 2200 tons, the anchor-ring weighing 25 tons and the pressure ring 45 tons.

Hydraulic jacks were then hung from the pressure ring. These were 6" diameter by 22" stroke and were fed from a steam driven pump via an accumulator. Water was supplied at a maximum pressure of 5 tons per square inch, giving each jack a force of 150 tons over its stroke. Thus the total force exerted by the jacks amounted to 1800 tons - hence the massive brickwork!

With the sinking engines ready, it only required the construction of the sinking headgear and the necessary pulleys and supports before sinking proper could begin. The cast-iron tubbing to be used was heavy, each segment was 3" thick, 5' deep and weighed 2 tons. As the stroke of the jacks was less than the depth of a ring of tubbing, two shorter "make-up" rings were used at the surface until each ring of tubbing had been forced down sufficiently to place the next on top of it. To handle the
tubbing, a circular rail was laid around the top of the shaft, and H-section girders laid to run on these. This structure supported an electric crane worked by two motors whose task it was to manoeuvre the plates into position beneath the jacks. These first plates had a smooth outer side to follow the brick pillar, there being lugs on the inside to bolt them together. 11.5' below the pressure ring was the brickling scaffold, which supported the men working on the tubbing etc. This had a central hole 8ft. square to allow the "hoppit" or kibble to pass through. Also suspended below this were the pumps to remove water from the shaft. These were of the Ellison "Pulsometer" type - and were essential once the shaft bottom was below the water table which lay about 18 ft. below the surface. The water was conducted over the shaft collar in a large pipe which discharged into wooden troughs laid across the ground towards the canal.

**TO BE CONTINUED.... in the Next issue......**
NEW WEBSITE ACTIVE:

The society website has not been updated for a number of years. With this in mind it was decided that a complete overhaul of the website was required, to bring it up to date with new features, and make it workable with all new devices, including phones and tablets.

The site has many new features including a gallery of Old Astley Green Photos and a section for visitors to submit their own photographs of the colliery.

There is also a News and Blog page and a list of events which will help you keep up to date with all the events planned for the site.

Please come and have a look at our new site and like it and share it, so we can get the message out to as many people as possible to try and save the site and its iconic headgear.

The new website can be reached using the following link

www.lancashireminingmuseum.org

FOLLOW THE WEBSITE @ www.lancashireminingmuseum.org and follow us on FACEBOOK @ https://www.facebook.com/TheRedRoseSteamSocietyLtd/ for dates and times the engine will be running in the future.

The more followers we have on both the website and facebook pages show hard evidence to the grant funding bodies that there is a groundswell of support to save this site for future generations.
Without doubt the greatest treasure the museum owns is the magnificent 3300hp Yates and Thom winding engine. Due to the efforts of many people at the time, the NCB did not demolish all the colliery. The engine house, winding engine, along with the winding gear was left in situ when the colliery closed in 1970. Little apart from boarding up the windows not much more happened and it was not until 1983 that the Red Rose Steam Society were given a lease on the site and began the job of restoring the engine back into running condition. A team of dedicated volunteers began the task of restoring the rusted and seized engine and finally in 2013, almost 30 years to the day when the society took over the lease on the site, the engine ran for the first time. Now operating on high pressure compressed air, the engine runs on a regular basis to allow visitors to view this magnificent engine.

Work on the permanent house for the No.1 shaft winding engine seems to have begun early in 1909. The correspondence at the time indicated this was to be equipped with an engine large enough to handle the whole of the output of the colliery. The engine contracts for this and the No.2 engine were let to Yates & Thom of the Canal Ironworks, Burnley, who had also supplied the initial boilers to the site. The total building cost for the winding house in 1910 was £4133 (Approx. £400,000 today.) The winding engine was completed at a total cost of £9677 (Approx £1 million today)

The last 12 months have seen record levels of visitors attending the running days of the engine with the resultant increase in donations. The compressor on site has been fully serviced which should ensure the problems of the past, running it in cold conditions, are over.
THE ANATOMY OF A MINER’S LAMP

With Thanks to James Lamb via Facebook
ARTISTS AND THE MINES

Roger Hampson (1925–1996)

was born in Tyldesley, Lancashire, England. He was a teacher, painter and printmaker, taking inspiration from everyday surroundings, people and the industries prevalent in the area where he lived and worked.

Roger Hampson was born in Union Street Tyldesley and moved to Johnson Street when he was three. He attended Leigh Grammar School and served in the Royal Navy during World War II. After the war he attended Manchester School of Art before becoming a teacher. He spent a short time in Hereford before returning to Manchester where he worked as a graphic designer and began to exhibit paintings as part of a group of post-war artists who developed the realist tradition established by L S Lowry and Harry Rutherford.

He spent most of his life in Tyldesley, an industrial town surrounded by collieries and dominated by Caleb Wright's Barnfield Mills. He moved to the cotton town of Bolton where he became head of Bolton College of Art.
Mike Shardlow in the last pit whistle (Spring 2017) was wondering what could be done to save the society and the museum, as it had a declining membership base, a low volunteer base, and a declining income stream. All of these points needed to be addressed urgently, to keep the site open. In April 2017 we decided to rebrand the museum as The Lancashire Mining Museum and relaunch not only the society but its social media and website presence. We now have a new website which has attracted over 17,000 visitors and over 85,000 views since we launched it a year ago. Our Facebook page now has over 4,000 followers. This has lead to a significant increase in membership of the society and record levels of donations and corporate sponsorship. So what else has been achieved over the past 12 months?

I suppose the starting point has to be bonfire night. You have probably heard that we thought about 450 people would attend and in the end, it turned out to be 1,800! with a few hundred more outside the gates. It created a lot of discussion but before analysing the pros and cons, we must not lose sight of the fact that it was a fantastic success, which raised over £3000 profit. Perhaps the most successful thing was that a lot of families came to see us, even those that could not have afforded a firework display and had a thoroughly enjoyable evening before the rain started about 8.00 p.m. Dave and his squad got stuck in the day after the bonfire and you wouldn’t have known that there had even been one!

Corporate sponsorship was also obtained to allow us to light the headgear, over the Christmas period, for the first time for a number of years. Maxilead Metals provided the full cost of 3 new 300w LED lights and covered the full running costs for the period it was lit.

We have also carried out, in conjunction with Wigan Council, a Remembrance Crowdfunding Project in relation to the miners who lost their lives back in June, 1939 and the brave men who tried to rescue them. We ran a crowdfunding campaign over the Christmas period which raised over £2500 which will be used next year to have a permanent memorial installed. The remaining extra funds raised will be used to install a series of picnic benches across the site. This was a fantastic success and the public support has been amazing.
On a positive note, we would like to mention some of the volunteers and sponsors who have gone the extra mile this year. Alan Shaw and his team, who dress the sets for Peaky Blinders on TV, is leading on our Museum upgrade. We are turning the Museum from being the traditional one, into a tea room with an upgraded disabled toilet as well as the really exciting project of recreating a Miner’s house as it would have been in the 1920s. Astley Hire have been very helpful in relation to the provision of equipment and Alan’s squad is making great progress, assisted by a local, qualified electrician, Gary from GTS Electrical Services. This should be open in mid May.

Meanwhile the museum display has been re-located into the engine house and tells the story of coal from prehistoric times to the present day. We are presently looking at security of the collection but generally this has been well received by our visitors as it appears more logical and interactive than the old displays with the small writing on the boards in the original museum.

Edward, Jacqueline and Steve are going great guns on the green side and Marilyn and Eric turn up regular as clockwork to do their painting and general liaison with visitors. The regular team in the winding house and the bricklayers on the headgear again just relentlessly carry on their fantastic work.

Balfour Beattie has been back again on site for the second time and seem to really enjoy their volunteering days with us. They are also due to visit again in May. We are slowly removing years of accumulated discarded items and we have managed to shift umpteen tins of paint, seven fridges, lots of scrap metal etc.

We have also managed to install, with the help of an £8000 grant, our new toilet block on site which cater for both Male and Female visitors and the disabled toilet in the museum building has been completely refurbished with he support of Redwaters Construction to provide a modern disabled toilet complete with baby changing facilities. A new modern visitor centre has been opened which will allow us to track visitor numbers more closely and provide a central location for all visitors to the site, as well as allowing us to sell merchandise to increase the financial support for the museum.
Included with the upgrade of the museum a new tea room will be installed which again will only help support the museum financially over the coming years. The 100 year old floor in the museum has been wonderfully restored thanks to Harry Hemsley and his wife and a new kitchen for the tea rooms, donated by McLauchlins kitchens, will be installed in the second week of April, ready for the tea rooms to open mid May.

All planning permissions have been brought up to date with Wigan MBC for all the developments both past and present on site and the insurance cover has been increased to take account of the possible increase in visitor numbers for the coming years.

We have had some great meetings with people from the Carbon Landscape, the Local Authority, the Bridgewater Canal Towpath people and we have a large number of organisations still to talk to. Schools are beginning to ask for appointments for this forthcoming year and behind the scenes, we are busy writing bids for various bits of funding.

Over the years some farsighted members started to lay down a railway line and we have some of the finest examples of mining locomotives to ride on the track. You can see that, in the next few months, we are hopefully going to create a platform and a very attractive half-mile experience into some very pleasant countryside. We think this will become a major attraction and might even spawn a Heritage Tourism venture. Once the platform is completed which is being lead by Derek and the two Daves we can start on the Health & Safety aspects such as Training Records, service records and safety records and then invite the railway inspectorate on site and finally, after a number of years, get the public travelling on the railway.

Last year the accreditation for the museum was up for renewal and had unfortunately lapsed. We have formed a new team to ensure this accreditation is renewed. Neil Kinsella is leading this team and hopefully we will be successful when it comes up for renewal in May.

With regard to the biggest project on site the refurbishment of the headgear we have made some progress over the past few months. Historic England have agreed to fund another structural survey similar to the one done almost 8 years ago. Structural engineers have been asked to quote for the work and hopefully their report can be completed in the next few months. From there we will need to make a further bid for funding for the emergency repairs required which hopefully will be successful.
The National Lottery Awards for All has agreed a fund to the tune of £10,000 a complete survey of the woodland on the site. The City of Trees will be visiting the site shortly to complete an initial survey of our woodland to suggest ways to manage it for the benefit of the community as a whole.

We have had numerous meetings with all aspects of the local authority regarding the extension to the lease for a further 25 years and all the indications so far are positive, that an extension to our lease will be granted. This will ensure that funding bodies will have confidence to award further grants, once the society has a secure tenure for a significant time.

We have had a couple of visits, from both the BBC to film an episode of Peaky Blinders and also from Sky television to film a new drama for release next year. These two events brought significant funding into the museum.

We are working with Lancashire Traction Engine Club on a joint venture to bring a steam heritage rally back on site for this year. The event will be held over the week-end of the 19-20th May and will include all the normal steam engines, steam rollers, fairground organs and other attractions. Admission is £4.00 / adult with under 16 accompanied children FREE. Its wonderful to be able to bring an event like this back on site after a number of years.

These are just some indications of the progress made on the site in the last 12 months and coupled with a more professional structure in the societies organisation, this has seen the membership increase, the donations and funding increase to record levels and the liaison with the corporate sector of the community bring in funding and improvements to the site with no direct cost to the society. If we can make similar progress in the next 12 months the society will have turned the corner and be heading for a much brighter future, where the site becomes a major heritage location for the whole community. Culture change is always difficult and can lead to resentment but if we are to save the work done by everyone over the past 35 years it has to happen, otherwise the site will be lost forever and all the hard work of the past will have been in vain. Next years plans are already coming together to ensure the site continues to grow and goes from strength to strength.