

Llanymynech Ogof

Location - 1 mile west of Pant (SJ266222)

Minerals - Copper, Lead and Zinc

Working Life - Known working life : Bronze Age-19th century

History ("Mining in Shropshire", Adrian Pearce, 1995)

Llanymynech Hill lies five miles south-west of Oswestry and the summit is just over the Welsh border in Powys. The most obvious feature today is the disused quarry face but the hill was once extensively mined for copper, lead and zinc. Most of the hill is now part of a golf course but some mine entrances and spoil heaps have escaped being "landscaped". One of the entrances is called "The Ogof" [Welsh for cave] and this could be one of the earliest sites of mining in the county.

There were two forts on the hill dating from the Bronze Age and excavations have revealed that copper smelting took place here. Copper is one of the main components of bronze and it would have been visible on the hill as a green stain in the rock. It thus seems very likely that copper was mined here, initially in surface pits and later in small underground passages.

It has already been proved elsewhere in Britain that copper was mined as far back as the Bronze Age, using primitive antler and bone picks to prize open cracks in the rock made by fire-setting. This technique involved lighting a fire against the rock, causing it to expand with the heat. When water was thrown against it, the rock suddenly contracted and split. Copper would originally have been dug out of deep trenches but when the deposit became too deep, it had to be followed underground. Examples of small hand-picked passages have been found in and near to the Ogof and part of a deer antler was found in one, possibly a broken pick. When the Romans arrived in the area, they found an existing copper mining industry and quickly exploited the Ogof for their own use. They would have had engineers with experience in other Roman mines and this allowed them to develop the workings in a more logical pattern. Mining was basically the same with fire-setting and picking, although they used iron picks and wooden shovels with iron tips. Copper ore was placed in small wicker baskets and dragged out along the low passages. Slaves would have been used as miners and labourers and these would rarely see the light of day, being kept imprisoned in the mine. The lack of basic hygiene and ventilation would probably mean that the slaves did not lead long lives. Over the years, a great many Roman artefacts have been found in the mine including a hoard of silver coins found by some schoolboys. Another strange feature has been the discovery of burials in and around the mine and bones may still be found amongst the rubble on the floor.

After the Romans left, the next period of activity was in the 12th century. Most people have heard how King Richard I went to the Crusades and was captured in 1193 on his return. Hubert Walter, the Bishop of Salisbury, had accompanied Richard and returned to England as one of the commissioners to raise money for his ransom. In his efforts to raise the required £100,000, he examined all possibilities and heard of the discovery of silver at the Carreghwfa Mine on Llanymynech Hill [lead ore containing silver occurs in the vicinity of the Ogof]. The Bishop decided to develop the mine and re-open the mint at Shrewsbury to refine the silver and make it into coins. To protect the mine, the nearby castle at Carreghwfa was repaired and provided with a garrison of troops. Despite the work that was carried out between 1194-95, very little silver was refined from the mine and the whole venture made a net loss.

Later mining took place on the hill for lead and zinc but this must be one of the earliest mine sites in Shropshire and, with the ransom connection, perhaps the most fascinating. The hill again became notorious in the 1850s when a mining company duped its shareholders. This was a common occurrence in the 19th century but it is amazing how shareholders never seemed to learn their lesson. Basically, a mining engineer would be paid to write a glowing report on the mine and the public encouraged to buy shares. The minimum capital possible would be spent on the mine and the rest went in fees and expenses to the directors. They could get away with it for a few years by saying that the mine needed to be developed before producing a profit. When the bubble burst, the directors would disappear!

Exploration Of The Hill ("Mines of Llanymynech Hill", David Adams & Adrian Pearce, SCMC Account No.14)

Other than the miners themselves, a number of people have visited the mine workings over the last 200 years. The following is a summary of these visits and their impression of the workings themselves, any references they made to finds are covered elsewhere in this publication. It is apparent how the differing attitudes lead to varying descriptions.

The first recorded visit was by a Gwallter Mechain in 1795, "... In some places the whole face of the rock is covered with calcareous incrustations part of which is in the process of being converted into a substance similar to 'lac lunae' or mineral agaric. Petrified shells of various genera are found here".

The next was by J.Dovaston during the early 19th century, "... The entrance for 15 yards is high, but afterwards a person must stoop very low, and sometimes even crawl. It contains many sinuosities, sometimes but a yard, and generally about three yards wide; having many turnings and passages connected with each other; so that a ball of thread, or chalk is necessary for the facility of a return. None of the paths go more than 200 yards from the place of entry ... It is now seldom explored farther than the mouth, which is of considerable extent,

dark and dismal; the entrance is overhung by the stump and branches of a Wych Elm, and great fragments have in many places fallen from the roof ... The passages are cut through the rock, which is of red limestone ... everywhere appear :-

'.....the inner vaults of the rude cavern,
Green with copper tinge, where pendant glisten,
Curled stalactites, like frozen snakes,
Where leathery crust and vegetable film,
Hoar with their fungus fringe the dripping roof'

... The water that drops in some parts of this cave, is of a petrifying quality, and forms stalactites, resembling very long icicles, which on being touch, ring with a brilliant sound; and drops of water hanging on the point of each, catch the light of the candle, and give the surrounding space a glittering illumination extremely beautiful, and in a variety of colours".

All traces of the Wych-Elm which formerly overhung the entrance have now vanished. His statement about great fragments fallen from the roof is open to a certain amount of question. While this is not impossible, there being a number of boulders in both Mandible and the Shaft Chamber which may have fallen, the survey generally has produced few signs of roof collapse and the ceiling appears to be in excellent condition. His dimensions are slightly exaggerated but, if one considers that these were more likely to be paces and not yards, they are probably reasonably accurate. His suggestion about the ball of thread or chalk seems unnecessary today, as it would be difficult to lose oneself in the Ogof. It must be remembered, however, that his sole illumination was that of a flickering candle which, in the event of it being extinguished, would necessitate him having to feel his way out along the thread. Modern day battery lamps make light of this problem.

It is a great improvement on 'passages that go for miles', which was the belief of the time. The poetry is very apt, particularly with regard to the Entrance Chamber, where there is a quantity of fungus in a variety of colours and tiny copper-stained stalactites. One wonders whether he took this from some other work to suit his purpose or whether he made it up himself with special reference to the Ogof.

In 1877, John Fewtrell made the first attempt at an accurate survey "... At a short distance from the entrance is found the first chamber, the roof of which is supported by means of a pillar. ... Two passages lead out of this chamber, in one is found a large pool of water so as to be impassible, the other is comparatively dry. This passage I proceeded along and found that there was a strong draught of air, showing that it would ultimately open into one of the vertical shafts. This passage leads to the largest chamber from which five passages branch, one of the largest is about the size of a man's body and nearly round ... The water which

percolated through the limestone is in many places highly petrifying and forms many beautiful stalactites possessing a clear metallic sound when struck. The colour of these is generally a greenish tinge owing to the copper solution being carried through by the water. A beautiful effect is produced when the chambers are lit up".

The pillar is really to one side of the Entrance Passage but, in view of his poor lighting, this statement is understandable. He notes the water filled entrance to the Great Circle and proceeded along the Dovaston Series into Five Ways Chamber, which he describes as the largest chamber. He was obviously not aware of the existence of the Shaft Chamber, which must therefore have been cut off at the time of his visit. It would seem that the Dovaston Series was the only passage open at this time. Again, we have the mystery of the many beautiful stalactites, which are certainly not to be seen in this part of the Ogof today. These were probably destroyed by the first parties of the hordes of modern explorers.

A further visit was made in 1896 by the Reverend Elias Jones, "... The entrance to the mine is about 350 yards from the south side of the hill and about 150 yards from a cottage. The level is approached through an artificial cavern 12 ft high and of oblong shape 18' by 15'. The entrance is partly blocked up with stone to keep sheep from wandering in. The level is slightly above the floor and measures about 2' by 5'. A careful exploration of the mine and a survey of the whole hill might be made with good results if undertaken by competent persons."

Although the Entrance Chamber of the Ogof measures 12 feet in height, his measurement of the remaining dimensions was somewhat short, as the chamber actually measures 34ft long by 24ft wide at its widest point. The surveyors did not find the floor of the level to be slightly above the floor of the chamber, almost the reverse in fact, possibly due to later disturbances of the rubble floor. The level dimensions given are about right. It took 70 years for his final statement to be realised and, in many cases, this survey must have been undertaken 70 years too late as much has disappeared in the meantime. However we have tried our best to wrest the secrets from the Ogof as no doubt he would have wished.

We now leap ahead to 1941, when there was a visit by P.Cleator and some other cavers, "... We marched boldly in.. I, poor fool, led the way. The first 30 odd yards are easy going. Thereafter, one crawls on a bed of the sharpest stones it has ever been my misfortune to encounter. And thereafter, one continues to crawl for evermore. The whole damned cave is a series of such crawls. What happened was this: We crawled and cursed for maybe 20 yards...and found ourselves in a chamber from which three or four passages led off; all proved duds but one, along which we crawled and cursed for maybe 20 yards... and found ourselves in a chamber from which three or four passages led off,... and this sort of thing happened at least six times. Always we got to some damned chamber with several passages, and always one of those passages led to another chamber.

But we got to the end at last...a choked passage. Very likely it could be opened up? And most probably it leads to a chamber from which three or four passages led off?

We reached the end just an hour after entering, and out in half the time, as we were able to avoid all the dud passages. Then, on the left of the entrance going out, we noticed an uninviting hole which Fryd insisted upon poking his nose into. he reached a fair sized cavity, and insisted upon our joining him, as several passages led off. With many groans we did so.... and all the passages promptly petered out. After a rest, we entered the main cave again. About 25 yards in, on the left just past a rock pillar reaching from floor to ceiling, we'd noticed a side passage, and had promised ourselves a look at it. It began with a crawl, and after a few yards abruptly dropped 6ft ... into the inevitable chamber from which led three or four passages. Two of the passages proved in reality to be one. Fryd entered at one end, did a semi-circular tour through the rock, and emerged at the other, and great was the cursing thereat. The other passages also led nowhere. But in the floor was yet another drop which led to a chamber from which three or four passages led off."

It is rather difficult from his account to decide where they went on their first entry but presumably they must have gone in during a dry spell and traversed the Great Circle right back to Mandible Chamber, then returned without knowing that they were within a few feet on the Entrance. He does tend to exaggerate the number of chambers which had three or four passages leading off, it is not quite as bad as that, but it certainly can be confusing on a first visit. They certainly visited Mandible Chamber on their way out and would probably have kicked themselves had they known that they were only a few feet from what they presumed was the final reaches of the system! Their final visit was obviously to the Dovaston Series and the S.C.M.C. were apparently were not the first to discover the ox-bow in Five Ways Chamber, although this has now been connected through to the Shaft Chamber. Certainly the continuous flat out crawling and kneeling on the sharp stones in the Ogof passages is very tiring and theirs was a fair trip. In all he gave a fair summing up of the discomforts and difficulties which were encountered during the exploration and survey of the Ogof 20 years later.

A similarly lighthearted but more informative account which poses a number of questions was given by A. Johnson in 1948, "... The walls of the chamber are covered with a green transparent jelly which sticks to your clothes like glue and makes a hell of a mess. The place stinks of sheep so they may be the cause. There are several very small holes high up in the walls but there is an obvious way through a rectangular hole about 3ft high at the far end of the chamber. This leads to a second chamber with two or three tunnels leading off. I have explored up one of them but as I only had a baby torch I did not go very far, but to my surprise I found myself at the bottom of an aven about 3ft by 2ft, leading up to the surface. Search on the surface revealed a wired off area containing a natural

shaft which by its' position should be the right one ... The other cave on the hill is about one third of a mile north of the first under some hawthorn bushes and just inside the entrance is a stream which disappears down what appears to be a very promising tunnel. According to the locals there is always water there but no-one has explored it. At the base of the cliffs at the southern tip of the hill is a cave entrance which has been blocked some ten feet in as the sheep use it as a shelter. In all these caves there is only a little formation that I have seen and is mostly white with slight brownish streaks. Also on the same hill are two open lead mine shafts about 80ft deep. They are circular about 4ft in diameter and the walls are built up with dry stonework. There are a lot of small depressions filled with loose stone which may be covered in mine shafts as they have the same appearance as the open ones.'

This is an interesting account of a visit, which took place only 12 years before the S.C.M.C. commenced its detailed exploration of the Ogof and surrounding district, but it does pose a number of questions. He, like some later writers, was obviously convinced that the Ogof was a natural cave, which of course is not the case. The green transparent jelly had diminished somewhat by the time the survey took place and it no longer stinks of sheep. The most surprising statement is his discovery of an aven measuring about 2ft by 3ft leading up to the surface, which he apparently found not far from the entrance, together with his wired off area containing a natural shaft. Certainly nothing remotely resembling this description was found during the survey. The only possibility is that he must have gained access to the Shaft Chamber, although we are fairly certain that it must have been blocked at that time. If a typing error has occurred and his dimensions should read 30ft by 20ft, these are very rough dimensions of the Shaft Chamber. Even then, the 4ft square shaft looks anything but natural. A final possibility is that, with his poor light, he did find that the entrance to the Chamber was not completely blocked and that peering under the aperture he might have observed a hole of the dimensions given, with daylight visible above. If he went no further, he may not have gathered the fact that he was only on the floor of a large chamber and that the daylight was coming from a mined shaft that he could not see.

His story of the cave under some hawthorn bushes with a stream disappearing into it is a complete mystery. Although it would be unwise to say that we have seen everything on the hill, we have spent a great deal of time searching for this type of feature without success. However, the cave at the base of the cliffs at the southern tip of the hill has been examined and found to extend for about 50ft. Whether it is a very early level or a natural cave it is nearly impossible to say. By the time the survey was undertaken, the golf club had filled in nearly all the old shafts and leveled out the features which must have been visible then.

The group of friends calling themselves 'The Shropshire Mining Club' first visited the Ogof in 1960. They were somewhat more fortunate than Messrs Cleator and Clay and succeeded in finding the entrance without much trouble. The party

found their way though to the Terminal Chamber via the Dovaston Series. Here could be seen numerous indecipherable chalked names and dates of earlier explorers. During the second visit in 1961, exploration of the Ogof was restricted to the area of Mandible Chamber. The adit leading to the Winze Series was thoroughly explored but not the upper workings.

The following month, the party climbed the slope above the entrance and found the entrance to the Pit Series. They only entered Badger Chamber, so named because it was evidently the abode of some animal whose bedding was strewn about. The animal, presumably a badger, apparently had a passion for golf balls, of which three were found. Luckily the owner of this dark domain was out. This was presumably the pit mentioned by Miss Chitty in 1927. During a discussion with an elderly local man in the Cross Guns Inn that morning, the party had learnt of a shaft which dropped into the Ogof itself. This square shaft was found by a small bush, some yards to the east of the pit, and was descended by ladder. The finding of an Ordnance Survey map and a packet of Woodbines proved that the shaft had been descended previously.

Following the official foundation of the Shropshire Mining Club in 1961, the first visit of the new founder members was to Llanymynech Hill. It was agreed to begin a survey of the Ogof, which was realised as being an important and necessary undertaking. During subsequent visits, a number of bones and artefacts were discovered. In 1962, the Hereford Caving Club succeeded in entering the Pit Series and this was soon surveyed by the S.C.M.C. In 1963, the club managed to gain access to the upper workings of the Winze Series and in 1965 discovered the second set of Pit Series workings.

In 1965, the greatest discovery so far made in the Ogof came to light. A party of school children with a master had been conducting an exploration of the Ogof. A number of them had passed through the connection between Five Ways and the Shaft Chamber when one of them, helping himself out by clutching at a projecting rock conveniently protruding from a stack of calcined rubble, pulled the rock away. From behind it fell a quantity of silver coins which were eventually passed to the National Museum of Wales.

Between 1960-66, at least 17 visits were made in order to complete the survey, no less than 75 hours being spent doing the actual underground work.

Folklore Surrounding The Ogof ("Mines of Llanymynech Hill", David Adams & Adrian Pearce, SCMC Account No.14)

Dark, cave-like openings have always fascinated people and they are often associated with legends of the more fanciful kind. Writers in the 18-19th centuries seemed to be particularly susceptible to such tales and it is likely that many of these were devised in the local inns rather than being based on genuine beliefs.

True to form, the Ogof at Llanymynech has its fair share of legends and these have been described below for the reader's entertainment.

In 1694, Llwyd visited the area and recorded "... I have observed in several mountainous places, small brooks issue violently out of ye ground; and always judged them subterraneous currents, having seen such at Wokie Hole and Ogof Llanymynech and some other caves".

That he should remember the Ogof in this way seems strange, as there is no other reference to water issuing violently out of the mouth of the Ogof. At present, there is no sign of there ever having been a stream running out. In any case, as can be seen from the survey, the water would have had to run uphill to appear at the Ogof entrance! It is possible that the Mandible Chamber entrance was fully open at that time and, being lower than the main entrance, might have allowed the accumulated ground water (which can still be found in parts of the Ogof) to escape in times of heavy rainfall. Even so, the description 'violently' and the comparison with Wookey Hole would still seem inept. One other possibility is that he was not referring to the Ogof itself but rather to the hill, around the sides of which are a few small springs which probably flow with strength in wet weather.

In 1795, Mechain mentions "... the 'Ogov' or cave about which the neighbouring peasantry abound with fairey legends". This is perhaps based on a genuine local belief, since lead miners throughout the country were always somewhat superstitious and believed in mythical creatures called 'Knockers'. These were said to live underground and, if treated with respect, led the miners to good ore. Alternatively, those miners who were not respectful could meet with a nasty end!

It is often the case that locals who have not ventured underground greatly increase the size of workings in their imagination. They often take two completely unrelated entrances and assume that they connect underground. This seems to have led to a belief that the Ogof was a huge maze and Bingley wrote in 1804 "... The windings of this cavern are very numerous and intricate. Some years ago, two men of the parish endeavouring to explore it were so bewildered by its mazes that, when they were discovered by some miners who were sent to search for them, they had thrown themselves on the ground in despair of ever reaching light".

It was explored by Dovaston in the early 19th century and he relates "... Superstition, ever prone to people in darkness with the progeny of imagination, has assigned inhabitants here, such as Knockers, Goblins and Ghosts; and the surrounding peasantry aver, with inflexible credulity that the aerial harmonies of Fairies are frequently heard in the deep recesses. ... Tradition says this labyrinth communicated by subterraneous paths with Carreghova Castle; and some persons aver that they have gone so far as to hear the rivers Vyrnwy and Tanat rolling over their heads, and that it leads down to Fairyland".

A further legend was described in a periodical of 1878 "... A writer in Brayley's 'Graphic and Historical Illustrator' signing himself 'Vyvyan', contributes four interesting chapters on the 'Popular Superstitions and Customs of Wales'. In one of these he says, 'Many marvelous traditions are afloat in the Principality regarding caves; one in North Wales is supposed to extend for an endless distance under ground, and was invested with a character of so fearful in nature, that it was reported that any person venturing within five paces of it's mouth would infallibly be lost. In consequence, the immediate vicinity remained untrodden by the foot of man for a long series of years; and it was said that animals had also so great a dread of approaching it that a fox with a full pack of hounds in full cry at it's brush, has been known to turn short round with his hair bristling with terror, and run into the midst of his canine enemies, rather than encounter the horrors of that wild and yawning recess; and that the dogs shrunk away and could not be prevailed upon to touch him in consequence of the infernal odour which he had imbibed from his near vicinage to the powers of darkness. Several human beings were believed to have been lost within it's 'ponderous and marble jaws', one of whom was an old minstrel, who fell a victim to a rash bet on the subject. He danced towards the cave, till he came within the limits of it's charmed circle, when he was suddenly seized by an invisible power, and hurried away for ever from the gaze of man'. Where is this cave?"

Another correspondent replied a few weeks later and claimed that the site was that of the Ogo Cave on Llanymynech Hill. He went on to say "... The entrance is large, solitary and dismal in appearance and would naturally inspire with terror some of the superstitious. It was allowed to have been the abode of the fairy, who became the wife of King Alaric, whose palace is said to lie at the bottom of Llyncllys Pool. As a proof that persons were afraid to explore the maze, until the middle of the last century, several human skeletons were then discovered entire, with articles of the chase, battlefield and the household, in addition to a number of coins. Even in the present day I have not known any old inhabitant, who in his youthful days has ventured far into the passages. ... It should have been mentioned that the main passage is said to extend beneath the village, passing near the Cross Keys {Guns} Hotel cellar. An old blind fiddler is said to have penetrated thus far, and was heard from the cellar, performing upon the violin".

The same journal published a further account in 1896 "... The Roman Cavern in Llanymynech Hill, called Ogo, has been long noted, as the residence of a class of the fairy tribe, of which the villagers relate many surprising and mischievous tricks. They have listened at the mouth of the cave, and have sometimes even heard them in conversation, but always in such low whispers, that their words have never been distinguishable. The stream that runs through it is celebrated as being the place in which they have been heard to wash their clothes and do several other kinds of work".

The final written record of legends appears in 1896 and refers to Ned Pugh "... Ned then asserted that he could walk from the Ogo to the Lion Inn at

Llanymynech. He was not believed, and then he made a wager that he would on the following Sunday, play a tune, at the usual time that the choir sang, that he should be heard by all the congregation in church. His boasting challenge was taken up. On the following Sunday Ned went to the entrance of the Ogo on the hill carrying with him his harp and he disappeared into the Ogo. As the time came on for the choir to sing, everyone was intently listening for the sound of the harp, and sure enough out of the earth proceeded it's sounds. The people distinctly heard a tune, which the singers took up and when they had finished the harpist too ceased. The poor man though never emerged out of the Ogo. The tune in consequence was called 'Farewell Ned Pugh'.

Archaeological Finds ("Mines of Llanymynech Hill", David Adams & Adrian Pearce, SCMC Account No.14)

1. Approx 1750 - entrance passages? Present location Shrewsbury School. Two iron picks possibly of Roman date. One was just over 9 inches and the other nearly 14 inches long. The latter had been longer but a considerable proportion of the pointed end had been broken off. From the weight of the iron, the handles appear to have been very short.

2. Approx 1750 - entrance passages? Present location unknown.

a) entire human skeletons

b) culinary vessels

c) hatchet

d) Roman copper coins

e) bracelet of glass beads, found on the arm of one of the skeletons

f) battleaxe.

3. Approx 1750 - in a cave 'a distance from the Ogof'. Present location unknown. Bones of a man, woman, dog and cat.

4. Approx 1775 - entrance passages? Present location unknown. Gold bracelet around wrist of a skeleton.

5. Before 1810 - Found by J.Dovaston. Present location unknown. Roman coins including an Antoninus & Faustina (149-156 AD).

6. Before 1822 - washed down hillside. Present location unknown. Finger bone with ring on it.

8. 1849 - in a trench adjacent to Ogof. Present location unknown. Two large human skeletons and battle axe of mixed metal but sharp at the edge.

9. Before 1855 - Present location unknown. Roman coins of Vespasian (69-79 AD).

10. Before 1877 - entrance passages? Found by quarrymen. Present location unknown. Several skeletons with very large hands.
11. 1877 - Agony Crawl? Found by J.Fewtrell. Present location unknown. Large bones, apparently human.
12. Before 1879 - Present location unknown. Twenty Roman copper coins dating from the early Emperors to a tolerably late period of Imperial sway in Britain.
13. Before 1937 - Present location unknown. Single bladed iron pick.
14. June 1962 - Mandible Chamber. Found by J.James & C.Lears. Present location Rowley House Museum, Shrewsbury.
 - a) piece of black burnished ware of Romano-British type
 - b) human lower jawbone, possibly young female
 - c) two whetstones similar to ones found in the forum at Viroconium.
15. August 1962 - Mandible Chamber. Found by T.Morris. Present location Rowley House Museum, Shrewsbury. Human femur 9.25 inches in length.
16. February 1963 - Mandible Chamber. Found by C.Lears & R.Meeson. Present location Rowley House Museum, Shrewsbury. Bones & black burnished ware.
17. February 1964 - Shaft Chamber. Found by C.Lears. Present location Rowley House Museum, Shrewsbury. Piece of black burnished ware cemented into stack of miners' deads.
18. April 1964 - Mandible Chamber. Found by P.Griffiths. Present location Rowley House Museum, Shrewsbury. Human clavicle, incomplete tibia & remains of sheep.
19. December 1964 - Burial Chamber. Found by various SCMC members. Present location Rowley House Museum, Shrewsbury.
 - a) 2nd century black burnished ware
 - b) incomplete human lower jawbone, possibly elderly person
 - c) quantity of human teeth
 - d) various human bones
 - e) Roman copper coins of Faustina (149-156 AD).
20. December 1964 - Burial Chamber. Found by I.Forrest. Present location with finder. Bone pin 3.75 inches in length, 0.1 inch in diameter, carved at both ends and coated with remains of blue glaze.
21. December 1964 - Burial Chamber. Found by I.Forrest, P.Payne & P.Renney. Present location with finders.
 - a) piece of terracotta unglazed pottery

- b) pottery fragments with black glaze
- c) pieces of pipe stem and inscribed bole of clay pipe
- d) bones of mammal, possibly dog
- e) various human bones. (These were examined by Prof Harrison of Liverpool University and declared to be from a person aged 18-20).

22. March 1965 - Burial Chamber. Found by I.Forrest, P.Payne & P.Renney. Present location with finders.

- a) various human bones
- b) base and side of terra cotta pot
- c) pieces of black glazed pottery
- d) 1 oz fragment of black flint
- e) piece of clay pipe.

23. November 1965 - Shaft Chamber. Found by Oswestry schoolboy. Present location National Museum of Wales. 33 Roman silver coins.

- Antony [legionary] (30 BC)
- Vittelius (69-70 AD)
- Vespasian (69-79 AD)
- Titus (79-81 AD)
- Domitian (81-96 AD)
- Nerva (96-98 AD)
- Trajan (98-117 AD)
- Hadrian (117-138 AD)
- Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD)
- Faustina (149-156 AD)
- Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD).

24. April 1966 - Mandible Chamber. Found by D.Evans. Present location with finder. Head of human femur.

Recent Finds in Llanymynech Ogof (Pete Owen, SCMC Annual Journal No.5)

During the four months up to the end of September 1997, members of the Shrewsbury Underground Exploration Group have made several finds in the Ogof's Mandible Chamber that could bring us a step nearer to finally dating the mine.

Along with many others, I have for a long time suspected that the Ogof predates the Roman occupation period. Until June of this year stone tools, the initial pointer to a possible Bronze Age working, have never been discovered in the mine or, if they have, it has never become common knowledge. It should be stated at this point that the Ogof is a scheduled site under the control of CADW. Although it is an offence to dig in the mine, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that digging has been going on quite recently. Not only is archaeological

evidence being destroyed but any finds made are disappearing into private collections without being recorded. Having said this, without illicit digs the first group of stone tools would not have been found.

On a visit to the Mandible Chamber in June along with Gareth Owen, Patrick Owen and Russell Hill, we recovered four stone tools near to the floor groove in the old entrance adit. They were subsequently removed for safe keeping and were carefully cleaned, weighed and recorded. I have, for my own records, given each stone a reference number. It is these numbers that will be used here.

HS.1/1 : 0.8 kg. A small maul which has been modified to accommodate a better grip during use. Being micaceous sandstone, modification by rubbing on a hard surface would have been an easy task. One end shows classic bruising and has cracked through use. A flake has been chipped off the opposing end.

HS.2/1 : 0.2 kg . The smallest of this first group of stones. It is a round pebble with bruising to each end. Is this stone a possible indication that children worked in the Ogof?

HS.3/1 : 1.2 kg. A flat stone heavily chipped on both edges. The one end shows signs of heavy usage as flakes of the stone have been knocked off.

HS.4/1 : 6.1 kg. The largest and most versatile stone yet found. This stone is pear drop shaped and very similar to one on display at the Great Orme Mine in Llandudno. It has been used for grinding, as is evident on the underside. Bruising to the sides indicate its use as a hammer and it has been suggested that it may, due to its shape and marks it exhibits, have been used as a lap held anvil.

All the stones in group one were handed over to the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust shortly after discovery.

In July three more stones were recovered from the Mandible Chamber. This second group are far smaller in size to the first group and, with one exception , rather difficult to suggest what they may have been used for.

HS.5/2 : 0.25 kg. A flat axe shaped stone which may have been used as a whetstone.

HS.6/2 : 0.25 kg. An interesting stone as it has been suggested that it shows signs that it could well have started out its working life as part of a Neolithic hand axe. Once broken in the Ogof, this flake appears to have been used as a scraper.

HS.7/2 : 0.27 kg. A small hand sized micaceous sandstone pebble ground flat on one end. It may have been used for grinding however being so small this would seem unlikely.

In early September the Mandible Chamber yielded three further stones. They are unfortunately rather similar to group two in that, apart from HS. 8 / 3, it would be difficult to suggest their use.

HS.8/3 : 0.5 kg. A flat stone that fits into the hand so well it would most certainly have been used as a maul. Straight grooves on one face are possible evidence that this stone was also used for sharpening some type of pointed implement.

HS.9/3 : 0.21 kg. Although smaller than HS.7/2 it is somewhat similar in shape. It would be hard to attribute specific use for this stone.

HS.10/3 : 3.25 kg. The second largest of the stones recovered from Mandible chamber. Although a large piece has been broken off there are no markings on this stone to give any clue to its use.

The discovery of these stones does not prove that the Ogof is a Bronze Age mine but it is the closest connection with this period found there. It may be of some significance that, although we have looked throughout the mine, the only place where these stones have been found is in Mandible Chamber. Of the ten stones we have recovered, six show clear evidence of having been utilised by man. Any use that could have been made of the remaining four is not clear. I must stress that all of the stones we have found were not buried, they were just lying in the surface rubble.

Surface Remains

There are no surface remains apart from some grassed over tips, a fenced open shaft and an open adit entrance to the Ogof. To the north is an open 19th century adit which leads to the bottom of earlier stope workings. South-west are some smaller workings which are very difficult to find.