

THE MOELWYN MINE

Alternative names Gwaith Mango

Gwaith Mein [GAT SMR: 20775]

Moelwyn No. 2 (presumably to distinguish it from Moelwyn No 1 slate mine)

Location SH676437

Parish Llan Ffestiniog

Worked

Total output

Owners 1892–1893 Ellis Pritchard

1893– Moelwyn Mining Co. Ltd (agent J L Symonds)

Samuel Holland's diary [NLW MS4987] has an entry for January 7, 1823. "Went ... to look at Manganese on Revd Jones'." An entry for November 12 shows that this was the Rector of Criccieth's land at Glanrafonddu, on the site of the later Moelwyn zinc mine, the local name of which is Gwaith Mango.

It is possible that manganese was mined at a later date. The company registration papers of Moelwyn Mining Co. Ltd shows that the company bought the mine from the manganese merchant Ellis Pritchard, who, with Samuel Sutcliffe and Alexander Barratt, held it under Crown lease of 29 Dec 1892 [PRO BT: 31 5628/39227].

In 1908 a new siding was laid to the mine from the Ffestiniog Railway for Ellis Prichard [Boyd 1975: 177]. (Boyd indicates the site of this siding on his plan [1975: 200].)

The mine siding closed shortly after the end of WWI [Boyd 1975: 203].

The mine is recorded as being worked for zinc ore from 1917.

Two small photographs of the mine exist. They show views of ruined processing buildings and a tip and were probably taken in the late 1950s or early '60s [GAS CAO: XS/1608/39, 40] The reverse of one of the photographs carries the annotation "Disused manganese quarry on the Blaen Ffg - Portmadoc light railway - near Tanygrisiau".

Source: Dave Linton at <http://www.hendrescoed.org.uk/Merioneth-Manganese/>

North Wales Caving Club Newsletter no. 13 December 1973 stated:

Moelwyn Lead and Zinc Mine

All buildings at this mine (NGR 677437) have been completely demolished, only evidence of the various floors remaining. The entrance to a level at the top floor, which has a fine granite and mortar facing wall, has had a load of rubble dumped in front of it and no evidence of the entrance portal can be seen. However, it is felt that enough debris could be removed to gain access. Above this location in a SW direction is an inclined plane and three levels at 60 foot intervals, stoped into each other at about 60 degrees.

It is assumed that the mine buildings were razed and the level blocked by the C.E.G.B., perhaps getting the wind up after the Croesor explosives scare, decided that all doubtful holes were to be made no go. The extension-to the Ffestiniog Narrow-Gauge Railway will eventually pass in front of the mine.

The following information from Mem Geological Society Survey:

Special reports on the Mineral Resources of Great Britain Vol 23 (1922) pp 53-54.

MOELWYN MINE, BLAENAU FFESTINIOG.

Owned by Union Zinc Mining Co. Ltd., 19, High Street, Portmadoc.

Levels situated in Nant-ddu, on the eastern lower slopes of Moelwyn Bach, and about 2 miles south-west of Blaenau Ffestiniog.

The country-rock consists of Ordovician sediments, felspathic ashes and felstone. There are said to be six lodes, but in 1919 work was being done on only three. These lodes course nearly east and west, end dip north at 5 in 7.

Lode No. 1, which lies near Llyn-Stwlan, nearly a mile to the north-west of the works in Nant-ddu, ranges in width up to 7 feet, but not much work was being done on it in 1919.

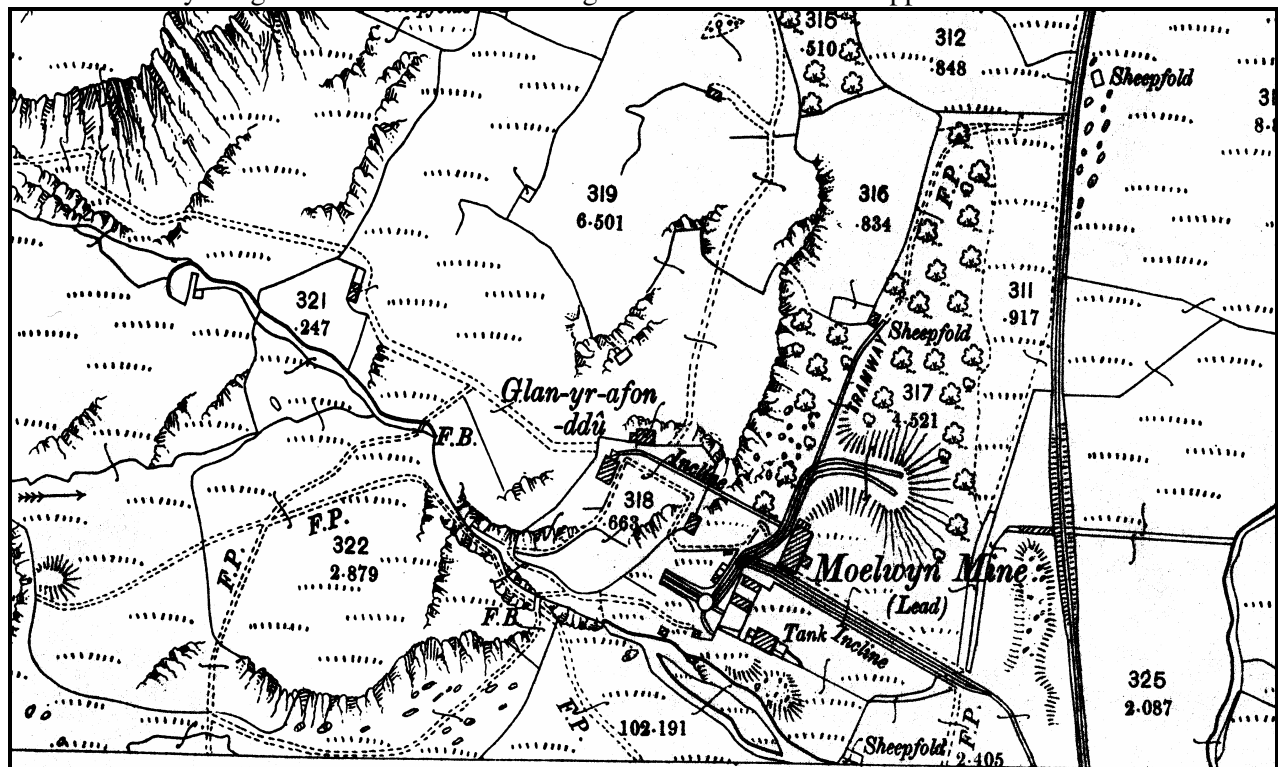
Lode No. 2, which averages about 20 inches in thickness, consists of a quartz-cemented breccia with streaks and veins of brown zinblende. Much of the lode is of low grade. The ore is mined by stoping along the footwall, which is very ill-defined and contains stringers here and there of blende. It is all removed and shot down the winze. The hanging-wall is better defined and shows slickensided rock. Lode No. 2 is worked along four levels, driven into the southern side of Nant-ddu, the first at an altitude of 842 feet above O.D., the second at 932 feet, the third at 1,008 feet and the fourth at 1,072 feet. The main level has been driven westward for about 1,304 yards, but not along a lode. It runs 400 yards north of Lode No. 2, which was to be reached by a cross-cut, driven at a level of about 700 feet O.D. but as the distance between the two would take three years to penetrate by hand-labour, the scheme has not been carried out.

At the edge of the second platform on Lode No. 2 the ore is hand-picked and heaped, and the gangue rejected. Both are thrown down a slope to the trams, which convey them either to the mills or to the dump.

The dressing-plant adjoins the mills, which are situated in front of the main level, beside the Ffestiniog Narrow Gauge Railway.

There are no figures available as to the richness of the ore or the capacity of the plant. In October 1919 there were some: 1,700 tons of zinc blende in stock, and several thousand more in sight.

Thanks to Tony King of the North Wales Caving Club for information supplied.



Section of O.S. 1:2500 scale map Merionethshire 1901 edition

A recent visit to the site by Mel ap Iorwerth and Keith Vaughan aimed to recognise the features mentioned in the 1922 report.

Starting at the stiled crossing over the FR just south of Buarth Melyn ruins the first level inspected was that just above Nant Ddu. A small tip is visible at the mouth of an adit which reaches underground on the level for only 3m. To the right there is a near vertical shaft sunk on the vein. The angle and depth, estimated by "rock-drop", would seem to indicate a connection to the main level driven from the portalled adit on the site of the ore processing plant near the FR.

To be completed.

What is really needed is a mapping expedition to cover all levels and find a connection if existing between the main deep level and the rest of the workings.