

JOURNAL of the



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From The Editor.....

Welcome to the Journal for Autumn & Winter 2005. Thank you to our contributors for this edition. This edition has been made up largely through the contributions of Twm Parry & Dave Wrennall. Please do let us have articles, its your club!

GOES NEWS IN BRIEF

At the AGM in the early summer Dennis Abbott our Treasurer decided it was time for him to stand down. We would like to record the society's thank to Dennis for all his hard work on our behalf over the last few years. During his time as treasurer Dennis has done some major reorganisation of the way in which our books are kept and our 'year ends' recorded. We have been fortunate in having a treasurer with so much experience of professional accounting. Thank you Dennis!

Our new treasurer is Duncan Neild. Like Dennis, Duncan has a great wealth of experience in the world of banking and finance and we are very grateful that he kindly agreed to take on this work for the society. Duncan's details are given on the back page of the journal with all the other committee members for this year.

Membership Renewal is now due and a membership return slip is enclosed with this edition of the Journal.

We have not been notified of any increase in

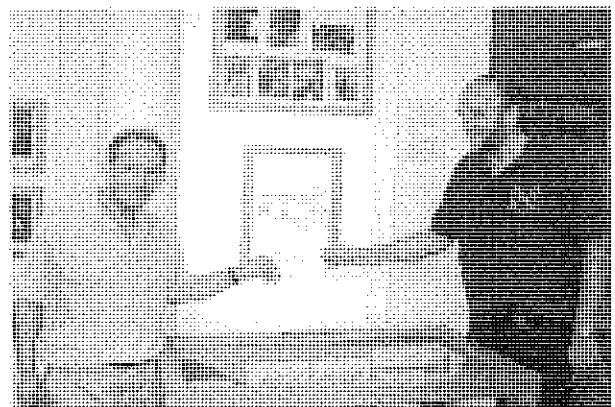
our insurance and so membership for 2006 will be the same as last year. £30 for members who go underground and £15 for all other members. Please send your membership renewal to Duncan Neild as soon as possible **and no later than 31st December 2005** to ensure that you have the insurance cover required on 1st January. Please remember that without renewal you will not be covered by our insurance and therefore not permitted to join any GOES trip.

The Ffynnon Rhufeinig shaft work has been ongoing recently. The steelwork has been ordered for the capping of the shaft and at the time of going to press we are hoping that the work will have completed.

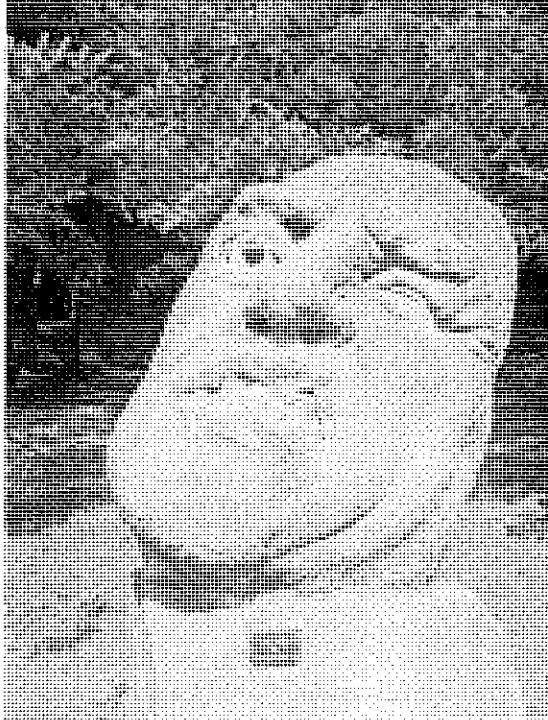
The GOES Christmas Meal has been arranged for Friday 25th November. This year we will be going to the Queen Victoria on Church Walks where we will have the whole of the upstairs room to ourselves. The cost will be £14.95 per head, meeting at 7.30pm. A menu and return slip is enclosed with the Journal.

The Summer Walks were, once more, a great success and our thanks are due to Dave Broomhead and Ali Davies for their hard work in putting the programme together. If you have any good ideas for summer walks please let Tony Davies know in good time so that they can be incorporated into next years programme.

A GOES EXHIBITION has been on display in Llandudno library and will continue until the middle of November. Its well worth a visit! Our thanks to Dave our PRO for all his hard work and to **Dignity** funeral directors who kindly sponsored the framing of the display items. The photo below shows Dave Broomhead handing over the cheque from Dignity to our Chairman Tony Davies



A Distant Observer



This stone giant can be found at Beacon Fell Country Park in Lancashire 9 miles NNE of Preston. It commemorates the park's 25th anniversary in 1995. His contorted face is straining to look westwards across the patchwork of local fields down to the Fylde coastline and into the Irish Sea beyond. On a clear day he can see as far as the Great Orme.

You can share in his perspective by going behind and peering through the drill hole at the back of the eye.

If you are lucky the dark cloud like lump on the far horizon may be the 207m block of limestone above Llandudno. Let's hope that any future wind turbines won't be getting in the way!

Beacon Fell is 266m high and approximately 65 miles from the Great Orme. The sculpture 'Orme Sight' lies close to the information centre and tea-rooms at 225m.



Dave Wrennall



Klondyke, near Llanrwst.

"Salt : Mining slang. To make a mine appear to be a paying one by fraudulently introducing rich ore." Oxford English Dictionary.

In the period after the first World War mining in the Gwydyr Forest area suffered a serious decline and many of the old workings were closed and abandoned. This was the fate of the Pandora Mine until in 1920 it was taken over by the Devon and Crafnant Mining Syndicate Ltd.

During this period became infamously known as the Klondyke Mine. The driving force behind the syndicate was Joseph Aspinall, a complex and flamboyant character, who, despite the mining recession current at that time forecast a brilliant, highly profitable, future for the venture. His company had procured the rights to extract ore on the land stretching from the edge of the old Parc Mine to the northern end of Llyn Geirionydd. The area included two old levels which had been driven from each end of the mountain.

Aspinall employed a number of local men and set them to work thoroughly cleaning out the old tunnels. At the completion of the work not a trace of mining spoil could be found at either site. He then arranged for about twenty tons of lead concentrates from Cornwall to be delivered to Llanrwst station.

In, "Tales from the Gwydyr Forest" published in 1977 D L Shaw describes how this ore was bagged and surreptitiously delivered to the mine, usually at night. There, instructed by Aspinall, the workers smeared the tunnel walls with an adhesive liquid and threw handfuls of crushed lead ore over them. The result was astounding. The tunnels looked like two silver tubes which shone brightly in the light of the workers' lamps.

Meanwhile Aspinall set about attracting investors in London. Having found parties willing to put up money he arranged for them to visit the Klondyke mine. Shaw describes the Operation.

"Aspinall planned well. Parties interested in his mining schemes were met in London and brought to Conway in a first-class railway carriage as his guests. Arriving at Con-

way Aspinall installed his guests in the fine mansion he'd leased just outside town, and wined and dined them. The house was filled with excellent furniture. In attendance were coachmen, butlers and chambermaids. In the stables were some race-horses; out in the bay a modest sized yacht which took guests on a short cruise up the river of an evening, after which a banquet was held on board. The prospective investors must have been very suitably impressed."

Once the stage was set Aspinall then implemented the next phase of his cunning plan, a visit to the mine. He employed a gang of miners who were not called upon to carry out any mining duties. They were however required to react immediately when Aspinall approached the mine in his car with potential investors, and sounded the horn. When this happened the men immediately leapt to their feet. A group armed with cudgels stood menacingly guarding the tunnel entrances. The remainder started up the, noisy mine machinery and generally scurried about 'looking busy'. The overall impression on the visitors was one of frenzied activity. Aspinall would explain that amazing amounts of silver had been discovered in the area between the two tunnels and that the company intended to extract it and realise huge profits.

At this juncture one of the miners would bring a small quantity of galena (lead ore) to the crusher. There it was ground down. Aspinall would then explain that it was pure silver and give a grain or two to the visitors as a souvenir of the visit. Mr Aspinall always ensured that he had enough genuine grains of silver for this purpose.

The money flowed in from the investors and the scam realised over £160,000. However the proprietor of the nearby Parc mine, Charles Holmes, suspected a serious fraud and having observed the constant stream of visitors to the Klondyke contacted Scotland Yard.

(His, rather pompous, account of his actions is to be found in, "Mines of the Gwydyr Forest. Part 6.)

"On arriving home I typed a lengthy letter to the Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, explaining what I did in Wales, and that some operations were going on in my neighbourhood and in London which I thought should be investigated, for they looked to me to be a large scale fraud."

As a result Aspinall was arrested and the whole operation closed down. He was committed for trial at the Old Bailey. A report in the North Wales Pioneer of a preliminary hearing in November 1921 refers to the money raised by Aspinall,

"The defendant lived in luxury. He had a flat in Kensington Gardens, where he kept a valet and chauffeur. He also had a large house called Beechwood Court in Conway where his wife and two sons lived, and a seaside house in Rhos on Sea. Counsel said that the money subscribed was used for the rent of defendant's flat and other houses, payment of servants and for furniture, clothing, jewellery, guns and motor cars."

'He was living like a fighting cock upon this money' said counsel, 'so no wonder it has gone'.

A report of the trial in the North Wales Weekly News in January 1922 refers to the effect of the 'silvered tunnels' on prospective investors.

"Defendant would then bring the persons interested to see this great and valuable property. With the lights produced the place shone like a jeweller's shop, and people went away thinking there was untold wealth in the mine."

In January 1922 Joseph Aspinall was sentenced to twenty months imprisonment with hard labour for the misappropriation of the funds of the mining company. Apparently the sentence did nothing to cramp his style. Upon completion of his term he moved to Paris and set up the New Grozny Oilfields Scheme, a similar scam, which in 1927 earned him a sentence of four years penal servitude!

Today the old Klondyke mill where gullible punters were given grains of silver is in ruins. The 'silvered tunnels' no longer gleam and Joseph Aspinall's fraudulent scheme is just another forgotten incident in an area of which must have many stories to tell.

Twyn Parry. September 2005

Under A Western Sky

It was to be no ordinary walk in the park. Five of the finest flew on and inward, storming through escape tunnel, past chain hung floors and chasms aplenty. Here were explosives wrapped in a 1957 newspaper, a side-tipping truck and more. They then scurried down ladder after ladder to reach a chest deep river of stagnant brown mud. It was an ominous place, a Styx that had long waited for their arrival.

Cold wading upstream thankfully led to drier conditions. Further on they endured squeezes to arrive at more ladders, old friends. Ascending excitedly, ever higher they climbed. Where next? Some guesses and several ropes guided them to their destination, a hallowed spot where they could bathe awhile in the sacred blue light and bask in their achievement.

Contented and renewed they retraced their steps down to the lower levels and back along towards Hades. Intrigued by stories of another way out downstream beyond the stygian ladder, they passed its offer of deliverance, resolving to continue their fight with the mud and chill.

All too soon, only head and shoulders were seen of each battling soul, for some, perhaps less. Neither walk nor swim was possible, each held tight, entombed in the life sapping sludge. With force of will they reached distant air pipes. Now arm over arm they pulled laboriously along the wall. Ahead the mud and the gloom were uncompromising. With each passing minute aching limbs were cramping and the groans increasing. Disillusionment became despair. Nobody wanted to go back but it would have been insane to continue into the unknown. They could have died in there.

How they laughed as the water poured out of their clothes on the first of those liberating ladders. This was the point of salvation, extremely cold, exhausted but safe, a drier route would take them home. Outside they were greeted by concerned friends; it had been a long trip. Muddy bedraggled and thoroughly trashed they had a good story to tell and were full of smiles in its telling. **Dave Wrennall** Oct 2005

Underground team: Gaz Davies, Dave Flowers, Dave Wrennall, Ben Atkinson, Paul Fox.
Surface team: Steve Lea, Brian Williams.

Ore from the Ty Gwyn Mine.

It all started when Dave Wrennall visited a Cardiff museum. Displayed there was a quantity of malachite, bearing the legend, "Ty Gwyn Mine, Llandudno."

Since 1986 when GOES members first gained access to the Ty Gwyn no mineral has ever been found there. The accessible part of the mine consists of a tramming adit and a few access tunnels. Unlike the other workings on the Orme no evidence of actual ore extraction is apparent. How, and when, had the specimen got to Cardiff?

Following a flurry of e-mails between Dave Wrennall, Tony Davies and Tom Parry it was decided to contact the museum. I wrote to the National Museums and Galleries of Wales suggesting that the mineral in the display was either part of a pre 1886 collection or from some other source. I indicated that as considerable quantities of malachite are still to be found in other workings on the Great Orme, it was likely that the specimen comes from one of these sites.

The following reply was received:

Dear Mr Parry,

Thank you for your recent letter enquiring about specimens from the Ty Gwyn Mine Llandudno. I am attaching a list of specimens from this locality in the National Museum of Wales collection. These are all specimens that were acquired in 1983 from the collection of Dr Bob King. Although some of Dr King's collection was derived from that of Dr Harwood of Deganwy, none of the specimens on this list appear to be part of this set. I am therefore unable at this stage, to provide any further detail as to when or by whom they were collected. However, as Dr King is a very experienced collector and meticulous in his documentation, I would suspect that the specimens were collected pre-1886. I will pass your letter onto Dr King and enquire if he can provide any more details as to their origin.

Yours sincerely

Jana Horak Acting head of Mineralogy & Petrology

To date Dr King has not replied, nor has any information concerning " Dr. Harwood of Deganwy" come to light.

The question remains, but keep watching this space. Who knows?



GOES members re-open the Ty Gwyn Mine, 2nd May 1986.

Twm Parry October 2005

That Sinking Feeling

The hoped for link between Tyn-y-Fron shaft and Ty Gwyn adit continues to haunt us. The route is still blocked by a confusing collapse consisting of large rocks and soft mud. Using metallic hammering, contact has even been achieved between groups on either side of the obstruction. Surely a big effort would lead to a breakthrough.

Getting to the Tyn-y-Fron side of the obstruction involves a daunting 255ft abseil followed by an arduous climb back out. A team is also required to stay on the surface. Our last visit was in December 2004. Getting to the Ty Gwyn end of the blockage on the other hand is a much simpler affair. A group can amble there in minutes, no ropes and no hassle. On July 31st 2005 I had my first encounter with the joys and sorrows of digging here.

To reach the furthest point of the Ty Gwyn level you first have to bypass a minor col-

lapse. This is done by clambering up into a grubby hole on the left and slithering down on the far side to enter what must be a mud lover's paradise. The whole of the final 9m section including walls and roof is heavily encrusted in damp sticky mud, bearing testament to a once higher water level. You can't avoid the pools of sludge on the floor as you wallow towards the main blockage, they suck you in. The mud starts to dominate sticking where it touches. Clothes change colour, footwear grows ever more cumbersome and gloves start to 'cement' up.

Working here leads to an even closer encounter with the ooze, lying down to wield digging tools and passing handfuls of mud to each other. The stickiness inhibits progress and saps energy. Tools become heavy, buckets will not empty, and every part of your body has to be prized away from the mud's 'magnetic' attraction. Lying under unstable rocks adds to the feeling of discomfort and unease. In 1998 several months were dedicated to this dig. A line of 12 pegs used to support the roof ginging were unearthed along the left wall, but after each session the mud was found to have flowed back. During our visit we managed to excavate as far as the 7th peg before time, stamina and enthusiasm all ran out.

After labouring in the mire I was virtually unrecognisable, a muddy version of the Michelin Man meets the Incredible Hulk. If I appeared on Llandudno promenade the tourists would most likely stone me and, if I survived, my kit would still need an awful lot of cleaning. It occurred to me that a quick swim in the flooded Ty Gwyn shaft was the only sensible solution, clean off a bit before I got to surface. As everyone started to make their way out along the level I took a right turn into a narrow side passage and headed towards the shaft.

One light followed me; it was Brian's. He was going to a deep puddle within the tunnel for a bit of a wash, but decided he had better accompany me to the shaft. Soon I was squeezing through a hole in the floor to reach a small metal ladder, leaving globules of mud behind on everything I touched. A short passageway then gave access to the Ty Gwyn

shaft at water level. Brian meanwhile stayed at a higher window intending to collect water with a bucket and rope.

I was determined to get the swim over quickly, no time for second thoughts. I had a length of climbing rope with me, one end of which I fixed to a conveniently placed bolt. I then tied into the middle of the rope using a bowline and jumped in. As expected it was freezing and a bit of a shock but that wasn't my main concern. As the bubbles and the excitement subsided I suddenly realised that I was still underwater, that the rope was tight, and that I wasn't going back up unless I made an effort. Fortunately despite fumbling for the correct rope at my waist I was soon back on the surface somewhat stunned and able to contemplate my mistake.

I was wearing a heavy battery pack, my clothes were saturated and every inch of me was coated in mud but I hadn't given my buoyancy a moment's thought! Tired after digging, I had switched off. If I hadn't had the rope would I still have jumped in? Would a redeeming alarm bell have been triggered deep in my subconscious? I don't have the answers. But thankfully I had a rope and although the alarm bell remained silent I had survived. I had been extremely lucky. I was able to shorten my rope and 'enjoy' a few adrenaline filled minutes of scrubbing down secured on the surface, shouting up to Brian about my perilous adventure.

It would be great to explore the deeper flooded sections of the Ty Gwyn shaft, but not with a one way ticket. Thoughts of the forensic team following my trail of mud, police divers and perhaps a major dewatering operation all crossed my mind. I was certainly a lot cleaner when I climbed out onto the promenade and a little wiser. Hopefully others will remember my story if they find themselves in similar circumstances. Finally, can I thank the person who placed the bolt; it was a good one, if you know otherwise, don't tell me!

Dave Wrennall.

The following article was first published in the Spring/Summer journal of 2005 but without the accompanying diagrams. It has been reprinted here in full together with a sequel entitled 'Fights and Frights' bringing the story up to date.

A New Frontier

An observation...

So far as we know this 1850's section through the Old Mine is the only underground plan of any of the Great Orme mines to have survived. As such it has been mullied over by all the experts and many an interested individual over the years. I was no exception. Although clearly simplistic the section showed one particular detail which plagued me. Above that much frequented connection from Romans to Treweeks Shaft, namely, 'Wagongate' (at 125m Above Ordinance Datum) a tunnel was depicted running between Treweeks and Higher Shaft. Surely this must represent a lost section of the mine?

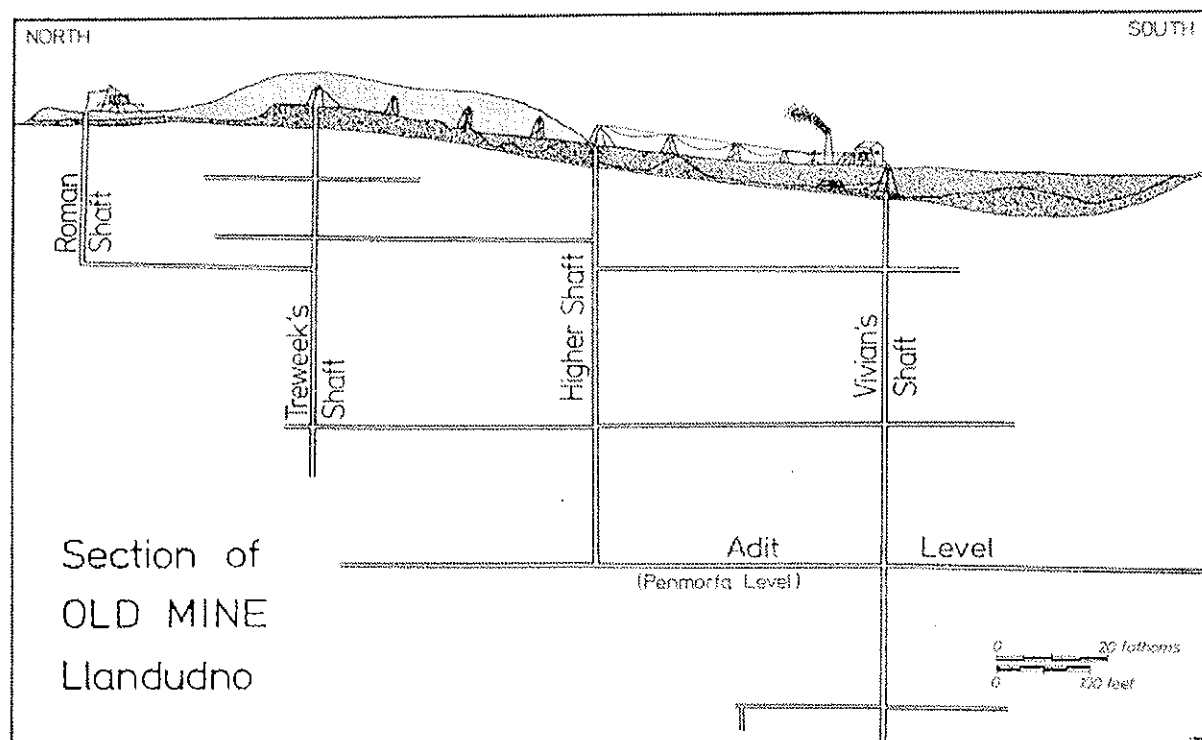
Voicing my 'discovery' I was told that the plan was inaccurate in many respects and that a high level link between Treweeks and Higher Shaft was out of the question. The tunnel depicted was simply artistic licence. Certainly there did not seem much scope for the connection, the two upper levels leading off Treweeks having been well explored and surveyed in the past. However

the 135m AOD level at least showed some development and so might offer the possibility of more. It also lay directly above Wagongate as the 1850 plan indicated, so it was the obvious place to look for the mysterious tunnel.

Dream chaser...

On the 20th of June 04, whilst preparatory work was being done for the proposed Treweeks ladderway, I got the opportunity to check the level out for myself. It was a location that I had abseiled or jumared past on more than half a dozen occasions. We were paying a visit in the hope of diverting water cascading into the shaft, an obvious damper on the scaffolding scheme lower down. Perhaps with some old sacking it could be induced to flow down the shaft wall? In anticipation of doing some digging I took along my trusty shovel.

I was the first to abseil and had to keep a sharp look out, dropping and spinning into the darkness. I travelled past the first level, a bit of a crawl and no water. Down still further, much further, perhaps too far, had I missed it? Another level arrived well proportioned with a grab handle and some water. It looked much like Wagongate. Damn I had gone too far! Thankfully I was



still exists. Needless to say a lot of work, some luck and a great deal of optimism may be required.

Dave Wrennall October 2005

The Golden Cape of Bryn yr Ellyllon.

In 1830 a farmer's wife, returning from Mold market, saw a wondrous sight. On the hillside known as Bryn yr Ellyllon, which is situated alongside the Mold to Chester Road, she had a vision of a giant. He was dressed in golden armour and shone with a strange golden light. Eventually he disappeared into a barrow on the opposite side of the road, and the golden light was no more. For as much as 100 years before this incident, the area was said to be haunted and avoided by the local people.

Thus goes the legend, and in 1833 workmen, who were quarrying for stone, discovered some pieces of gold, together with human bones and amber beads buried in the hillside. Some of these objects were taken home by local people. Many of them have come to light over the years, and eventually a much battered golden object was discovered. The British Museum in London painstakingly restored the object, which was found to be a golden cape, and they retained it as a much valued part of their permanent collection. The date of the cape is said to be between 1900 and 1600 BC.

On the 26th of September, this year, the Cape was returned to Wales for the first time since its discovery, and is on show in the Wrexham County Borough Museum until 17th December. The day after the return of the Cape, I was thrilled to read about the exhibition in the local paper. I was staying with my Daughter near Gresford at the time, from where Wrexham is only a short distance away. Because I had recently undergone an operation for a bunion, it was necessary to wheel me to the Museum over the terrible cracked pavements of Wrexham, with many bumps and bangs. However, it was well worth the ordeal.

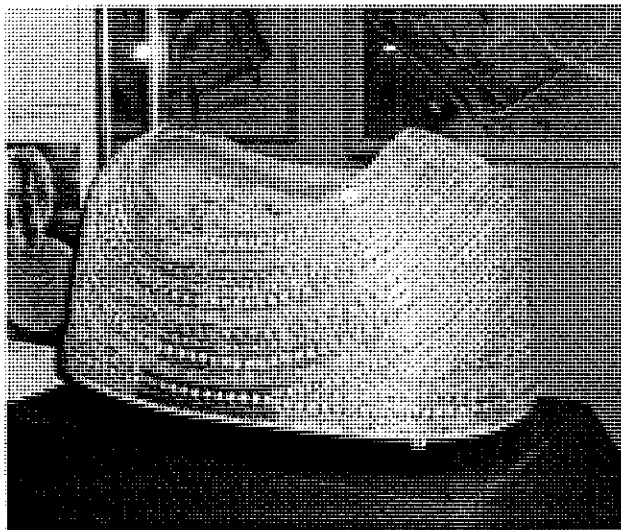
The cape is made from one ingot of gold and is the equivalent of 23 carats. It is decorated with ribs and bosses and gives the impression of folded cloth. The wearer of the cape would have found arm movements severely restricted, and it

is therefore thought that it could only have been worn on ceremonial occasions.

The golden cape is displayed in a glass case, which is, no doubt, protected by sophisticated alarm devices, and is guarded 24 hours a day by a very large minder! It is lit in such a way that the observer is dazzled by its magnificence. Although there are signs of the many repairs which must have taken place during its restoration, one can well imagine its original perfection. Who could have worn such a cape? Was the wearer male or female, and were they some Princely figure or, perhaps, a religious leader?

There has been much controversy over the years about the housing of the Cape in London, rather than in Wales. The British Museum, apparently, legally owns the Cape. A copy of the Golden Cape is on view in the heritage Centre above Mold Library. I have strong opinions about this. What do you think?

There are a couple of lectures about the Cape in Wrexham Museum during the month of November. I would have dearly loved to have attended these, but unfortunately they are fully booked. Instead I hope to go with my Daughter, on the 17th November, to hear a lecture about the recently discovered Rossett hoard. Rossett is the next village to where my daughter lives and is of



especial interest to us. There are lectures in the Museum every Thursday, and if you are interested, the telephone number is 01978 317 970.

Eve Parry October 2005.