

NAMHO CONFERENCE 2025

VENUE

The conference in 2025 was held in North Wales at the Nant Conwy Rugby Club near Llanrwst from 27th to 30th June with a couple of extra trips before and after these dates. The conference was arranged by NAMHO officers with help from Les Williams (technical) and the North Wales clubs: UCET, GCC, PUG and GOES who helped guide delegates on trips. Below, I have described the sites I visited over the long weekend.

Friday

On Friday morning, I drove over to Llandudno and parked up close to the Pen Morfa adit. I met Richard Timms (DCC and UCET), Dave Jones (UCET) and the other four delegates on the trip and we soon went into the concrete pipe on the skateboards and headed into the mine. Pen Morfa mine is the lower part of copper mines which originally connected to the surface of Great Orme above. The trip involved a lot of climbing as we clambered around the complex series of passages above adit level. There is very little mineral to see but the mine was apparently worked for malachite. After a number of climbs and a couple of short abseils, we returned to the adit and out to a nice warm day by the sea. Of course, this was North Wales so by the time I had reached the conference base, near Llanrwst, it was drizzling and cloudy! Camping was very easy as we could stay the car park or around the playing fields (not on the pitches!).

As usual, the evening was spent getting up to date with other delegates who I had not seen for a year or more and enjoying a buffet laid on by the rugby club along with local beer.



Above: Skate-boarding in the Pen Morfa adit.
Right: False floors and calcite in the mine.



Saturday

On Saturday morning, I drove round to Croesor to meet up with a large group visiting some slate mines. The roads are not exactly suitable for motorhomes but I was lucky to do the last two miles of very narrow road without meeting anyone. The trip was led by a certain UCET member whose reputation as a leader is not ideal – as it proved on the trip when several of us got very cold and wet in the persistent drizzle. We walked up hill and over two (or was it three) barbed wire fences to a tramway tunnel leading into the hill with a couple of workings off it. After this, we climbed further up an incline and along to the lowest of a number of levels of the Pant Mawr mine. Here, there was a muddy entrance and knee deep water leading



Above: Lancashire boiler at Pant Mawr mine (note Welsh weather!).



to a few larger caverns and a lot of what looked like trial levels. Coming out, we waited for our leader who was convinced we had not seen everything (we had!) and then we emerged into the relatively warmer air outside. That was enough and six of us rebelled and set off back to the cars and to comfort.

Left: In Pant Mawr mine.

That evening, Liz joined for the night and we enjoyed a sit down meal of steak pie, chips and peas before retiring after 11.

Sunday

Sunday saw a distinct improvement in the weather and I joined Badger and half a dozen others for a trip into Aberllyn zinc mine just outside Betwys-y-Coed. By contrast with Saturday, there was only a short drive and a moderate walk to the entrance. Inside we explored three of the levels, one above and one below Level 4 where we had entered. There are a number of interesting artefacts in the mine which was last worked in the early 20th century. There are also some very spectacular formations of hydrozincite (zinc carbonate) down the walls, looking like a good coating of white Dulux.



The trip was enjoyable for being in good company and with a variety of different passage types and artefacts.

Later, quite a few people had left but we still kept the bar open until midnight!



Above: One of the ore chutes in Aberllyn with 2-man gate still in place.
Left: Hydrozincite on the walls in Aberllyn.
Below: Slate cutting machinery in a workplace in the Maenofferen mill.

Monday

On the last day, I went to Blaenau again but this time visited Maenofferen mine with Jon Knowles and Mark Waite. Jon is engineer for the Llechwedd site as a whole so is very knowledgeable about the mines. We started on Floor One then dropped down three floors to Floor C and back up again. The route took us in and out of the two main veins – Old Vein and Back Vein – as well as up and down inclines and stairways between the levels. Unlike some slate mines, there are no bridges across the chambers; instead, levels would be re-routed through solid rock until the chamber was backfilled with waste when the level could resume its former route. Sadly, the mine has suffered badly from theft and vandalism and many of the pieces of equipment that were left in



the mine have been smashed to extract the copper. I have a number of photos but Jon asked that we keep these for personal use only.

After the underground trip, we had a look around the main incline winding house, the mill and the workshops. These are scheduled historic buildings but lack of funding means they are now in a very poor state.

That was the end of the conference for me and I returned home in bright sunny weather.

Below: Camping at the Rugby Club; Saturday evening before the meal; one of the lectures



Lectures

I only caught the end of a couple of lectures but, over Saturday and Sunday, there were 18 talks in total which about 30-40 delegates attended. The other 60-70 (plus guides) went on the field trips.

Next year, the conference is in Swaledale and promises to be a great event run by Moldywarps SG and North York Moors CC. These conferences are well worth attending as not only do you get to see a number of mines in one weekend but also you can meet and make friends with people from a wide range of clubs. This year, we even had four members of an Italian club: ESCA-Padova Sotterranea at the conference.

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