

CABAN

The Magazine of the Oakeley
and Votty Slate Quarries

JANUARY, 1959



CABAN

THE OAKELEY SLATE QUARRIES CO. LTD.,
THE VOTTY AND BOWYDD SLATE QUARRIES CO. LTD.,
BLAENAU FFESTINIOG, NORTH WALES,
4 OLD MITRE COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

"Caban" is the name of the type of mess-room in which the men of Oakeley and Votty meet for their meal-break . . . and which is also the centre of social life, and passing of information throughout the quarries, hence the title of this magazine

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Editorial

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

TEN years have passed since *Caban* first made its appearance. Everyone knows that it derives its title from that much older institution, the stone-built or rock-girt caban, above or below ground, which is traditionally the centre of the quarry's social life and the place where the mid-day meal is taken and information and ideas exchanged. *Caban*, the magazine, has a similar function and we like to think that during the decade of its existence it has in its pages recorded the story of one of Wales's oldest industries in all its facets.

Time has seen many changes, notably in mechanisation and electrification and, in the last ten years, the introduction of dust-extraction equipment, but the basic method of winning slate has persisted through centuries and even today the operation of slate-splitting remains an individual skill demanding the expert eyes and hands of craftsmen as it did when the slated roof was "invented" a very long time ago.

Caban has, too, in work and picture reflected the lives and culture, the hobbies and pursuits of the quarrymen and to turn back the pages is to discover the remarkable variety of their interests. And like other industrial and staff magazines *Caban* has modestly provided testimony in various ways of the quality of the Welsh slate mined at our quarries and now found roofing buildings of all kinds in all parts of Great Britain and many countries overseas.

Floor to Floor

It is no exaggeration to say that in the past ten years *Caban* has described and illustrated every operation in slate quarrying literally from floor to floor. It has also recorded the visits of Ministers of the Crown directly concerned with conditions in this Welsh industry, and of official delegations from cities and towns interested in our products. Its contents have included articles from contributors ranging from professors to school children and their interesting observations have been welcomed for their enlightenment in helping us "to see ourselves as others see us."

But how well *Caban* fulfils its function as a staff magazine depends upon the support it receives from the men themselves; it is the medium through which they can express themselves, whether in poetry or prose, in Welsh or in English, and without that sustained personal interest *Caban* cannot truly reflect life in our quarries. To quote from the first issue of *Caban* in May, 1949: "This is *our* magazine and we want everyone to have a share in it. What is *your* caban going to send us for the next number?"

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In concluding this brief note on the tenth anniversary of *Caban* we hope that it is of interest not only to the men who work in our Oakeley and Votty quarries and their families and friends in the town of Blaenau Ffestiniog, but also that it enables our many customers and associates of our company to keep in touch with the source of the roofing materials which they so widely use.

MAYOR OF SWANSEA WITH THE SLATE-MAKERS

AMONG the many visitors to Oakeley during the summer was the Mayor of Swansea, Alderman William Evans, who had expressed a wish to see something of slate quarrying at Ffestiniog when on his way to fulfil an engagement at Caernarvon.

The Mayor, who was welcomed and shown over C Mill by Mr. Gwilym Humphreys, the Oakeley manager, was accompanied by Councillor Iolo Williams, chairman of the Ffestiniog Urban District Council, and the Clerk of the Council, Mr. D. O. Jones.

Slate splitting and dressing operations captured the interest of the Mayor who, while chatting with slate-maker David Griffith Owen, remarked that in his own work as a ship's carpenter he used very similar tools to those of the slate-maker's and had to have expert knowledge of timber splitting.

Our Mr. Fordham subsequently had the pleasure of calling on the Mayor at Swansea, a pleasure heightened by the kindness of Alderman Evans in personally



The Mayor and his attendant with (from left) Mr. D. O. Jones, Councillor Iolo Williams and Mr. Humphreys

showing him round the splendid Civic Hall. Mr. Fordham was particularly impressed by the magnificent murals painted by the late Sir Frank Brangwyn, R.A.



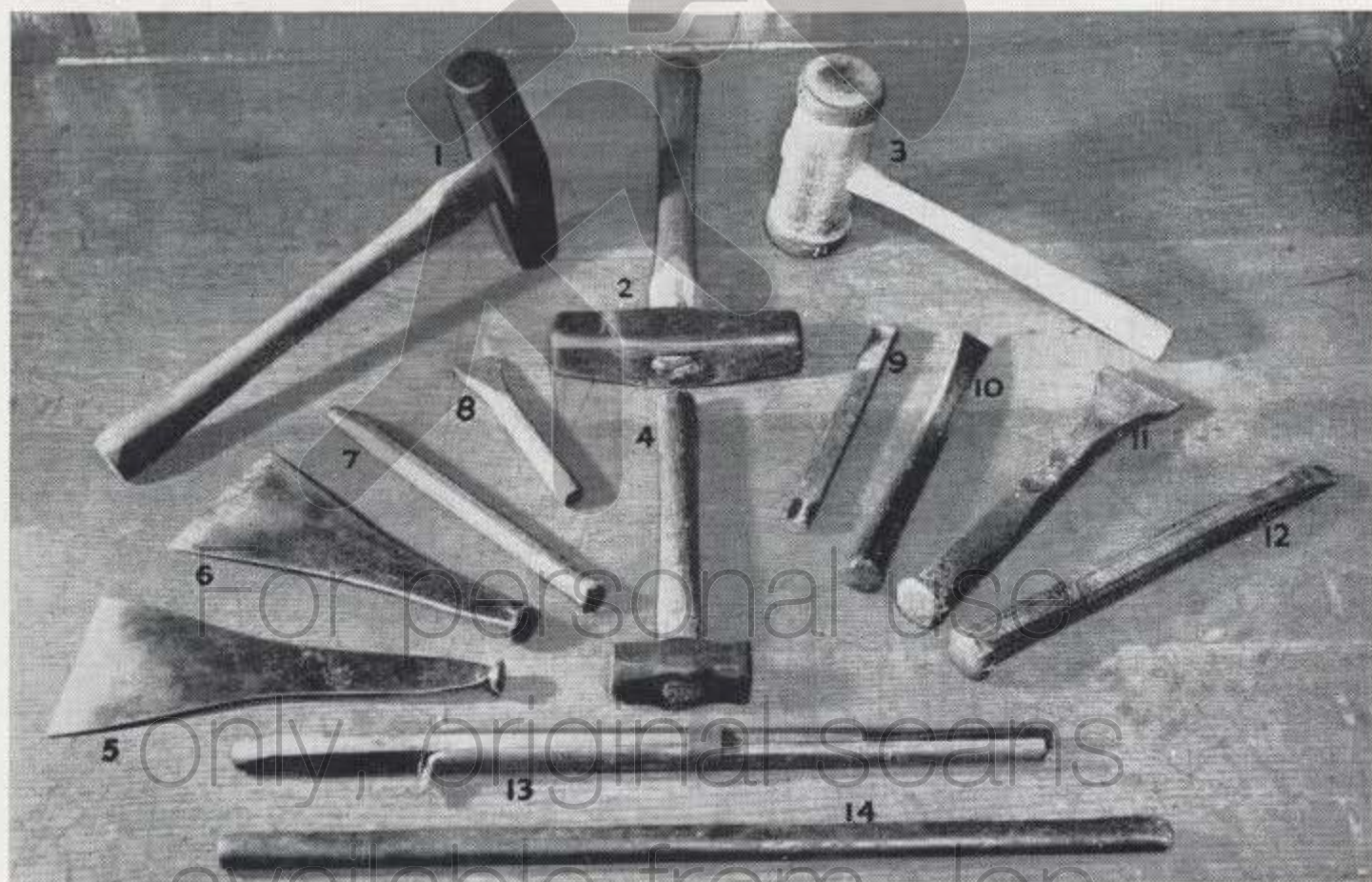
The Mayor discusses with David Griffith Owen the comparable techniques of splitting slate and timber

Museum spot for quarry tools

IN response to a request from Dr. F. J. North, of the Department of Geology of the National Museum of Wales, examples of the many tools used in slate quarrying have been despatched to him to take their place in the museum's new Industries Department.

For this department, the museum authorities are building up collections

Dr. North also asked for obsolete tools and appliances "which would fit into an historical series" and particularly interesting among those collected for him is the "jumper" drill, one of the rock-man's earliest tools long since superseded by the pneumatic drill. The "jumper" was used at Oakeley probably up to forty years ago.



of the tools and appliances used in various industries of importance in Wales and Dr. North, inviting our company to contribute mallets, chisels, wedges and the like used at the Oakeley Quarry, intimated that "with some fine photographs out of *Caban*, which Mr. Cutts has kindly arranged for us to have, they would make an interesting record of the industry as it is now."

Some of the tools sent to the museum are illustrated in the accompanying photograph and different types of drills, examples of which have also been supplied, are noted in the following page.

This selection of tools sent to the National Museum of Wales includes: 1, hammer; 2, heavy splitting hammer; 3, splitting mallet; 4, light splitting hammer; 5 and 6, fine cleavage chisels; 7, gouging chisel; 8, marking and measuring chisel; 9, brass stamper (for stemming gunpowder); 10, flat gouging chisel; 11, large cleavage chisel; 12, another gouging chisel; 13, plug and feathers; 14, long brass stamper

A steel bar about 6ft. long, sharpened at both ends and weighted by a bulbous section of some nine inches, the "jumper"

(Continued on page 7)

Drill for every job

WITH so much boring involved in our slate mines—tunnelling, channelling and pillaring—wear and tear on the drills is considerable and their maintenance and renewal is a regular feature of day-to-day work in the smithy.

Here all the drill bits and shanks are made for the different types of drills used — cross-point, single and double chisel, rose-bit and, the largest of them, the pig's foot bit.

Each type is used for a specific purpose, the selection of drill for a particular job depending upon whether a rough or a fine cut is required.

The rockmen use the single or double chisel bit for extracting slate blocks from the rock; the cross-point, used for general purposes, can be tempered for drilling either slate or granite, while the rose-bit is usually employed in "channel" drilling.

When boring through slate, the rockman may use up to five different bits to drill an 8ft. hole, employing progressively smaller sizes of bits in 2ft. changes. For very hard rock, a tungsten-carbide tipped drill can be employed and with this a considerable depth can be penetrated without the need for sharpening.

Bits and steel shanks for the drills are made, and bits sharpened, with the aid of a piece of equipment which is driven by compressed air and is somewhat fearsome in operation—a feeling engendered by the noise it makes and the force it exerts in mechanically hammering the red-hot steel.

It holds no terrors however for those who work with it and our picture shows Iorwerth Jones using the machine in the Oakeley smithy to fashion a steel shank, the hollow head of which is screw-threaded to take the bit.



Examples of drills and bits. From left: 1, part of the tool used in shaping a shank; 2, a shank completed; 3, a "dolly" or former for making a crosspoint bit, and 4, a crosspoint drill; 5, a rose-bit former; 6, a rose-bit drill

DEMONSTRATION by CANDLELIGHT

IN the following pages *Caban* supplements the record with pictures specially posed in an underground chamber to illustrate the use of some of the old-style equipment.

Our first reconstruction recaptures the scene below ground, a candle providing a pool of light as the rockman wields a "jumper" drill to bore a hole for shot-firing.

In our second picture a rockman fixes a fuse after tamping down a stick of gelignite inserted into the hole. Here a candle is stuck on the rock with a lump of clay not nearer than 10ft., the regulation minimum distance from the firing point. Both rockmen carry spare candles in their caps.

Relic

The shot-firer carries a container distinguished by the legend "Warming pan for softening explosives." This is a relic of the days when sticks of gelignite were hard and needed to be softened before they could be used. The pan has two compartments, the gelignite being placed in the inner and hot water poured into the outer to bring about the required softening.

Demonstrating with the "jumper" drill is Owen Evans, who actually used a similar drill when he first worked on

the rock as a boy. "Starting at 8 a.m. we were expected to drill a 5ft. hole ready for shot-firing by noon," recalled Owen Evans. It was a slow job, but he, like other rockmen, employed the tactic of putting soap into the hole, which had the effect of bringing up the dust and debris, a clearing action which made the drilling operation easier.

38 years underground

Owen Evans, whose father worked at Oakeley, started as an apprentice when he was 14 and has now 38 years of underground experience behind him as rockman and securer. He has two sons at Oakeley, Kenneth Evans, aged 22, on Floor O, and Elwyn, aged 18, a slate-maker in the Middle Quarry.

In the role of shot-firer in our second illustration is David Roberts, aged 36, a rockman who entered the Oakeley Quarry at the age of 14 and has worked there ever since except for the period of the second world war. For 6½ years David Roberts served in the Army with the R.A.O.C. and the Royal Artillery. He was in the D-Day landings and found himself in Bremen, in Germany, when the war in Europe ended.

When *Caban* asked him what he did in his leisure time his reply was: "Just wandering about the hills looking for foxes, and fishing."

MUSEUM SPOT FOR QUARRY TOOLS *(from Page 5)*

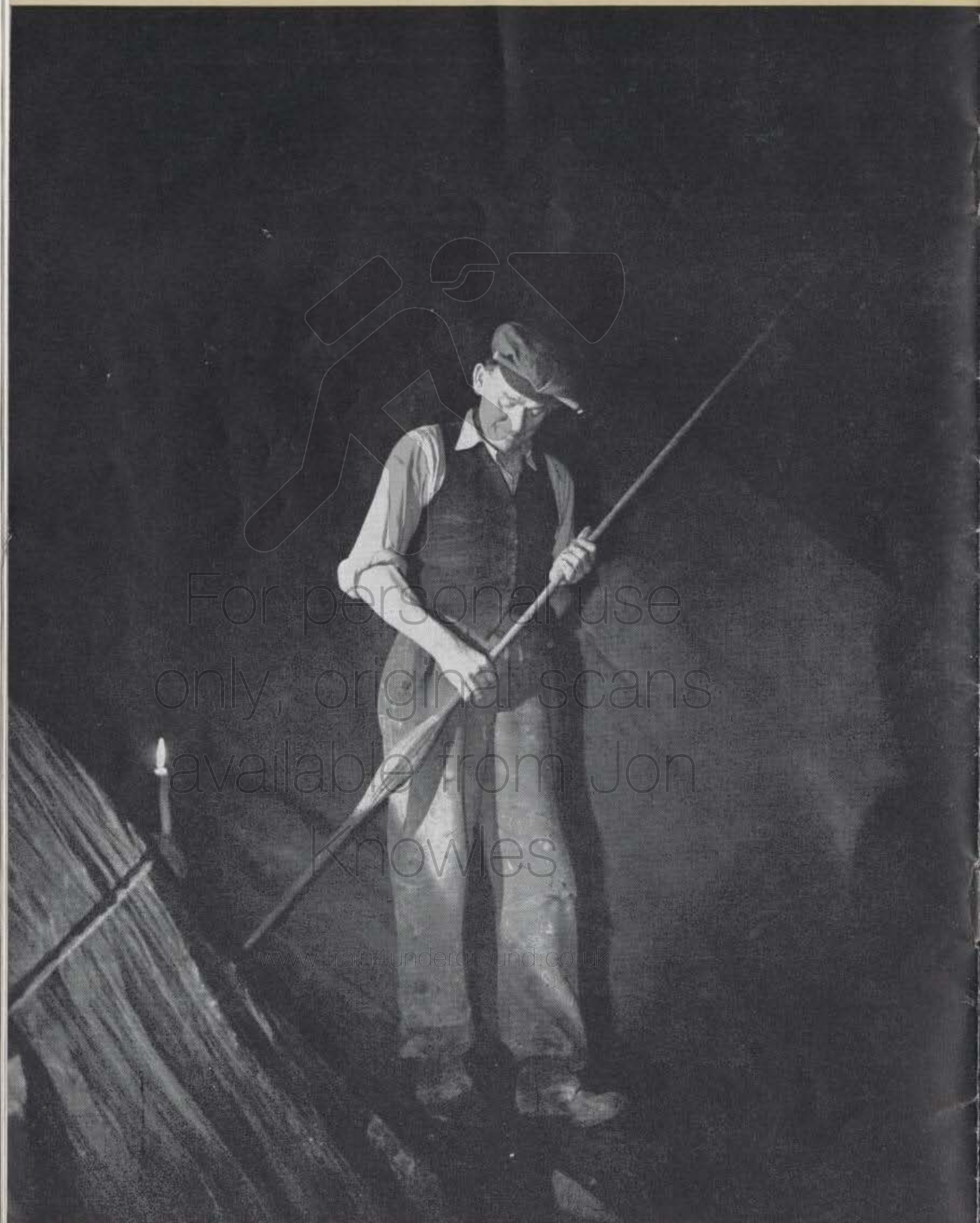
was the tool with which the quarryman of old manually drilled pillaring holes in the rock.

How laborious a task this was in those days is brought home by the fact that a rockman was expected, as his morning stint of approximately four hours, to drill a 4ft. to 5ft. hole with the "jumper," an operation performed by the rockman of today in a few minutes with a compressed air drill.

For deeper holes there was used a still longer tool of a similar type. This was known as the "ladi" (pronounced "laddie") and was about 8ft. or 9ft. in length.

Our Company have been pleased to co-operate with the National Museum of Wales in assisting in the establishment of the Industries Department by contributing in this way to the section devoted to the slate industry.

In underground chambers



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with old-style equipment



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AFTER A VISIT TO OAKELEY

By ROBERT W. STEEL

*John Rankin Professor of Geography in
the University of Liverpool.*

I VISITED the Oakeley Quarries twice during August, first with a party of thirty German geographers from the University of Bonn and a few days later in a smaller party of my own family and some friends.

To us the quarries have long been a very familiar feature in the landscape of this part of Wales where we so often spend our holidays, and it was a great experience to have this closer contact with the industry and to realize what an important contribution Blaenau Ffestiniog makes to the economy of Great Britain.

Perhaps one of the great advantages of the increasing "invasion" of Wales by visitors on holiday from many parts of England is the possibility of the growth of mutual understanding and of a greater appreciation of the many links, social and economic as well as political, that bind us together today.

Founded by Welshman

For me, born and bred in England though I was, this has for long seemed natural enough. For over twenty years I was closely connected with Jesus College, Oxford, first as an undergraduate, then as a research student, and finally as a Fellow. My college was founded as long ago as 1591, by a Welshman, Hugh ap Price (who also founded Ruthin School).

During almost four hundred years the College's connections with Wales have remained very close, and we of this age and generation are glad that this should be so. Welsh is heard rather less often in College than in former times, and only once a year, on St. David's Day, is the service in Chapel read in Welsh (and even then the sermon is given in English!)

But the number of undergraduates from Wales remains high, and the College still retains many of its Welsh properties. Many of the scholarships are available only to those with close connections with the Principality.

Two years ago, when I moved to the University of Liverpool to become John Rankin Professor of Geography, I was soon made very conscious of the close links existing between North Wales and Merseyside. I found myself living within a mile of the Welsh-speaking Presbyterian Church in West Kirby.

Easy journey

I discovered that MANWEB supplied my new home with electricity just as it did to the cottage in Rhyd where we spend our holidays. I realized how short and easy a journey it was into Wales—congestion at the Queensferry Bridge permitting, of course; indeed, were there a lower Dee bridge, as some people would like, our house would be only five miles from the nearest point in Flintshire. I began to understand why I could buy the *Liverpool Daily Post* almost anywhere in North Wales.

Wales has much to offer that does not exist or can be found only occasionally in England: vast deposits of slate, sheep pastures, ample supplies of water, beautiful mountains, remote moorland, and extensive areas suitable for afforestation, as well as all the resources and traditions of Welsh culture and the Welsh language.

Obvious market

England has perhaps greater facilities for manufacturing industry, better crop land, a drier climate and deeper soils. She is also an obvious market for many of the products of Wales and the source of the majority of visitors to the seaside

towns and villages of the Welsh coast and to the mountain districts inland.

Each community stands to benefit greatly from proximity to one another, provided there is a willingness to give as well as to take and a determination to see the other fellow's point of view.

There have, I believe, been real advances towards a better understanding in recent years. The drain of young Welsh folk to England has not stopped by any means—perhaps nothing could check it entirely—but at least it is not on the scale of the decade before the Second World War. Most Governments in recent years have given some attention—however inadequate it may still have seemed to Welsh eyes—to the peculiar needs and problems of Wales and have increasingly recognized their special responsibilities towards a relatively remote part of Britain. Developments associated with places like Ebbw Vale, Margam, Milford Haven, Tan-y-Grisiau and Trawsfynydd—especially the last two—will serve to illustrate the way in which the resources and potentialities of Wales are being appreciated and put to the common good today.

Mutually beneficial

If these new developments bring new employment, more money, and even new people to the areas concerned, and if they in their turn encourage other economic activities, then some at least of the harmful effects of the depopulation of the Welsh countryside during the inter-war years will have been checked.

Wales has nothing to fear, I am sure, from the increasing number of English visitors who thereby learn to appreciate Wales and its inhabitants and to concern themselves more intelligently in its special problems. Your interest in us, and our interest in you, are bound to have mutually beneficial results.

The welcome visitors get at the Oakeley Quarries is very real, and warming to the heart. Our hope is that we, in turn, may be able to show a proper understanding of the difficulties and possibilities of the Blaenau Ffestiniog area in general and of your own great slate industry in particular.

ARTISTRY IN SLATE

A RARE, if not a unique, example of the quarryman's art, a slate overmantel of intricate design made by the late John Owen, an Oakeley slate-maker, has been presented to the Oakeley Quarry by his daughter, Mrs. K. M. Jones, of Bodawel, Ffestiniog.



Our illustration shows a section of one part of the overmantel which is made up of several pieces, each carved out of solid slate, a task which, as may be imagined, demanded a great deal of painstaking work.

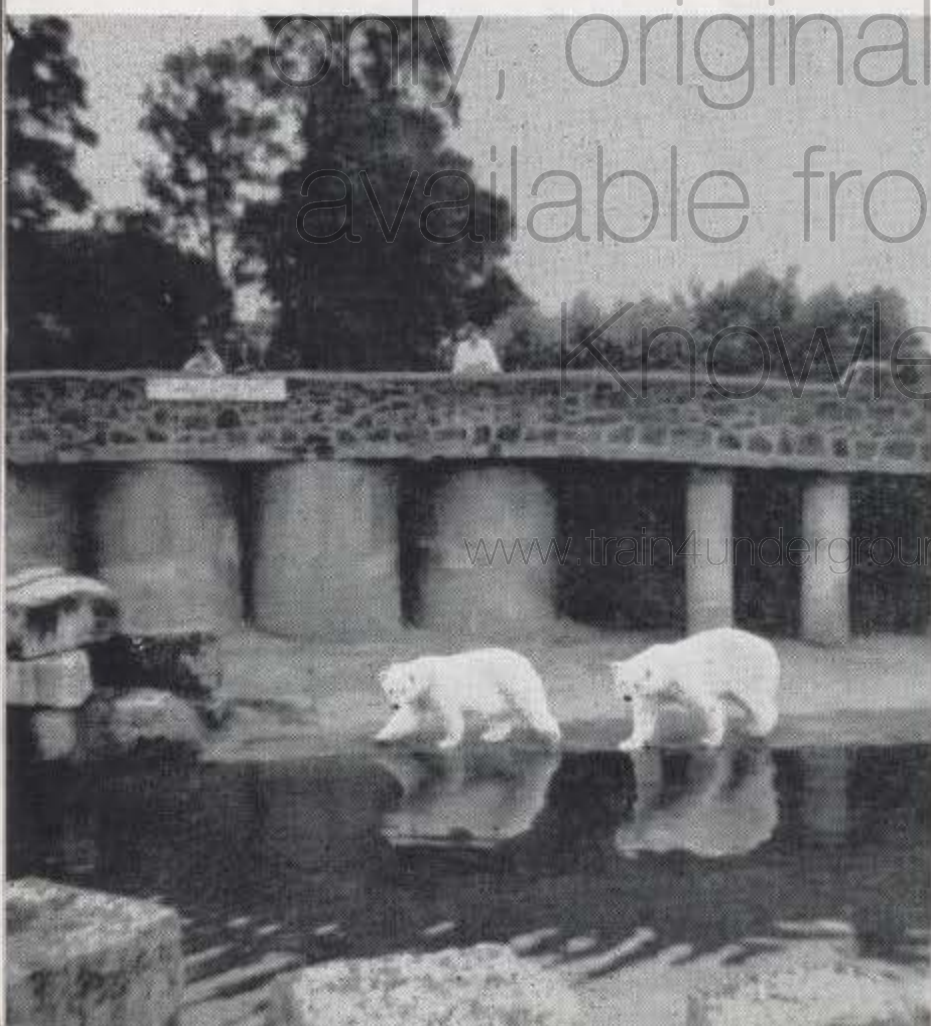
The overmantel was made by John Owen as a hobby many years ago and in its assembled form occupied a place in his home before its presentation to Oakeley.

Our holiday snaps competition



On the fairground

At the zoo



ALTHOUGH our 1958 holiday snaps competition drew fewer entries than in the previous year the task of determining the order of merit was not made any easier. All the prizes go to Oakeley, the first to John Arthur Jones for a happy picture of a little lady on a very big hobby horse, taken during an outing to Colwyn Bay. Cynwal Williams wins second prize for his snap of polar bears at the zoo, and the third is awarded to Joseph Williams for his photograph of a familiar London scene, the Tower Bridge.

50 YEARS AGO



CABAN reproduces for "memory corner" this old photograph lent by J. O. Williams, Middle Quarry, Oakeley, of a group of Oakeley quarrymen pictured about 50 years ago.

First row: William Rowland Jones, John Pari Hughes, William Rowland Owen, Sam Davies, Bron Barlwyd, Dafydd Lloyd (Ynys Fawr), Ned Davies, Cromwel Davies (dau frawd), Rich Hughes, Bob Jones (Tai Muriau), William R. Williams, Will Peacock, Gt. Jones, Garn.

Second row: William Hughes, Llan, John Hughes (Pen Bryn, Tanygrisiau), Rt. Morris (Harlech), Evan H. Owen (tad Wm. Owen), Tom Hughes (Teiliwr, Tanygrisiau), Gwilym Morris, Thomas J. Jones, Penrhyn, Owen Roberts (Flambo), Tom Hughes, Ty Newydd Ffynnon, James bach Ty Gwyn (brawd i fam E. a R.J.), William Ed. Jones (Gloddfa Ganol), Evan Evans (clochydd).

Third row: William Williams (Beddgelert), John Thomas Jones (brawd Orthin), Evan Gabriel, Thomas Hughes (Band), Morris Jones (Dolwyddelan), John Hughes, ieu., Pen Bryn, Gt. Hughes (brawd Jack Hughes, Pullheli), William Ellis (Gors).

Front: William Owen (Manod), Watkin Jones, Dinas Road, W. E. Williams (Will Llew), Tanygrisiau.



This picture of a Thames-side scene with Tower Bridge gained third prize for Joseph Williams

Wales Festival scenes

THESE pages of pictures illustrate some of the highlights of a week's round of events held by the quarrymen of Blaenau Ffestiniog to celebrate the Festival of Wales. The climax on a Saturday in July was a carnival during which Judith Jones, 12-year-old daughter of Oakeley slatemaker John Gwilym Jones, and Mrs. Jones, was crowned the "Slate Queen."

This quarrymen's festival, the idea of which emanated from the Oakeley Club, was acknowledged to be one of the most successful community enterprises locally for many years. The programme was too extensive to detail here; suffice it to say that Oakeley and Votty men did not fail to bear their share of the joint effort for a memorable celebration of a notable year in Wales.

A happy picture of "Slate Queen" Judith with her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. John Gwilym Jones



"Queen" Judith receiving gifts from members of her court

at **Blaenau Ffestiniog**



Above: Fancy dress competitors were in the long procession which passed along the main street of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Below: People gathered on the hillside outside the enclosure to watch the celebrations. Conway morris dancers make their exit after dancing to the music of the Royal Oakeley Silver Band, conducted by Robert Morgan



CROWNING CEREMONY



The crowning ceremony was performed by Mrs. T. W. Jones, wife of the Member of Parliament for Merioneth



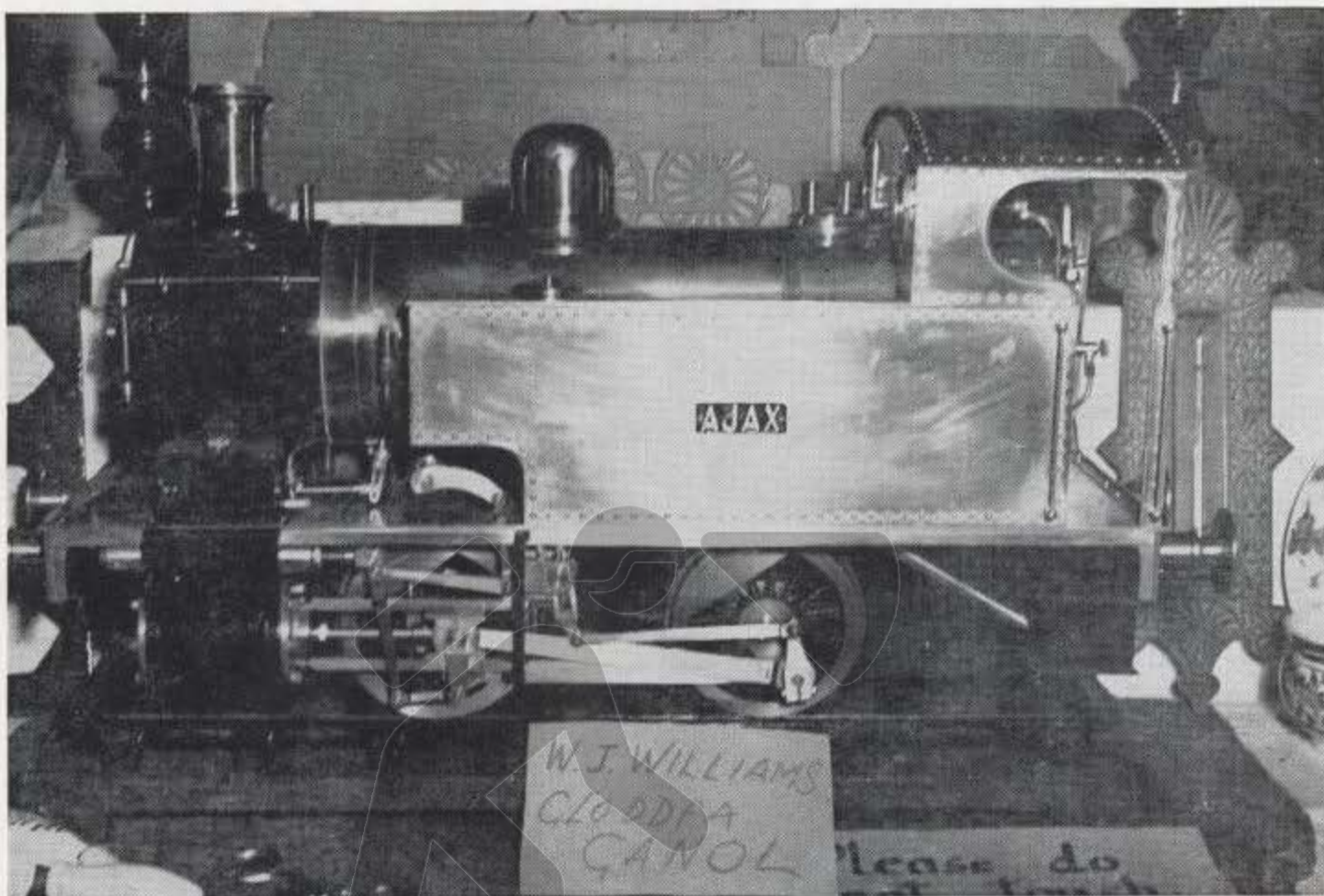
Two of the winners in the fancy dress competition class for children under the age of 10 were (right) David John Williams, whose father works at Oakeley, and Lydia Rhian Jones

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On an earlier Festival of Wales occasion—the Folk Festival at Dolgellau — two Oakeley slate-makers, Arwyn Williams (left) and David Lloyd Jones, demonstrated slate splitting and dressing



— ARTS AND CRAFTS



A feature of the festival week was the crafts exhibition and the outstanding exhibit was this perfect working model of a saddle tank locomotive made by William John Williams, compressor attendant at Oakeley, in his own well-equipped workshop. He also exhibited a fine model of a steam traction. More than 3,000 people were reported to have signed the visitors' book at the exhibition. In the background of the picture is a plaque of the "Royal Scot" engine carved in slate, the work of the late Griffith Jones, Oakeley rockman

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In another corner of the exhibition were examples of art needlework, embroidery and dressmaking

OAKELEY'S WILD GOATS "CAUGHT"

BY OUR CAMERAMAN



HERE are some of the elusive wild goats that haunt the Moelwyn mountains and venture into the precincts of the Oakeley quarry only when the weather is bad. The interest of the quarrymen in these animals is proverbial, for the older generation firmly believe that their appearance is a portent of high winds and rain.

In such conditions the goats may be seen sheltering in old working levels on the slopes of Allt Fawr and men who

catch sight of them never fail to be impressed by the swift and sure-footed way the animals negotiate apparently sheer rock!

The goats are wary and difficult to approach, but when the "bush telegraph" reported on a rainy day in November, with Allt Fawr shrouded in mist, that seven fine specimens were to be seen on the hillside behind Bonc Shafft Mill *Caban* photographer stalked them with success enough to get this picture.

"EASY TO LIVE WITH"

THE Oakeley manager, Mr. Gwilym Humphreys, was quoted for a description of the quality of Welsh slates in an article in the magazine *Ideal Home*, in which the writer, Eric Ambrose, B.A.(Arch.), F.R.I.B.A., described a visit to our quarry.

Discussing the respective merits of Scottish, Irish, Norwegian and English slates, and their characteristic colours, the writer observed that he had always felt that slates bore a peculiar affinity to the people in whichever country they were found.

We quote from the article: "The manager smiled. 'I think you are right,' he said, 'and there is a word for Welsh slates. It is a word which describes the way we prepare them and the same word we use for rich agricultural soil. It will describe also a good woman to marry. That word is 'rhywiog.' It means 'easy to get on with—easy to live with.'"

And the writer added: "Personally, I think it is almost worth ordering Welsh slates for your roof just for the joy of trying to pronounce the names of the quarries from which they come."

Our quarries were also the subject of a two-part article which appeared in the September and October, 1958, issues of the widely-read technical journal *Mine and Quarry Engineering* under the title "The Oakeley Slate Mine."

Aptly illustrated with diagrams and photographs the article described in detail the character of the quarry workings and the operations and processes employed in winning the slate underground.

The following short extract is the author's descriptive and historical note on the Oakeley quarry:

"The workings of the Oakeley mine extend from 4,000ft. from east to west and 2,000ft. from north to south. The mine, which at its deepest point is more than 1,000ft. below the surface, has over 35 miles of underground roadways connecting hundreds of slate working chambers on 31 levels. Of these cham-

★★★★★★★★★★★★

Snapshots

Caban Lefal Galed

FOR the individual snapshots which appear on the following two pages our photographer went to the DE caban, better known as "caban lefal galed," meeting place of a cheerful group of men who carry out a variety of jobs on a floor which might be described as an intermediate stage between the surface and the mine.

First group (from left): Richard Owen, David Roberts, Vincent Jones; William Samuel Evans, Owen Evans, Robert John Hughes; John Arthur Jones, Ben E. Jones and David Hughes

Second group: John Wood Ellis, William Jones, Jeffrey John Osborn; Kenneth Daniels, John G. Edwards, Tom Roberts, Edgar Daniels, Robert G. Parry, William H. Lewis and David O. Williams

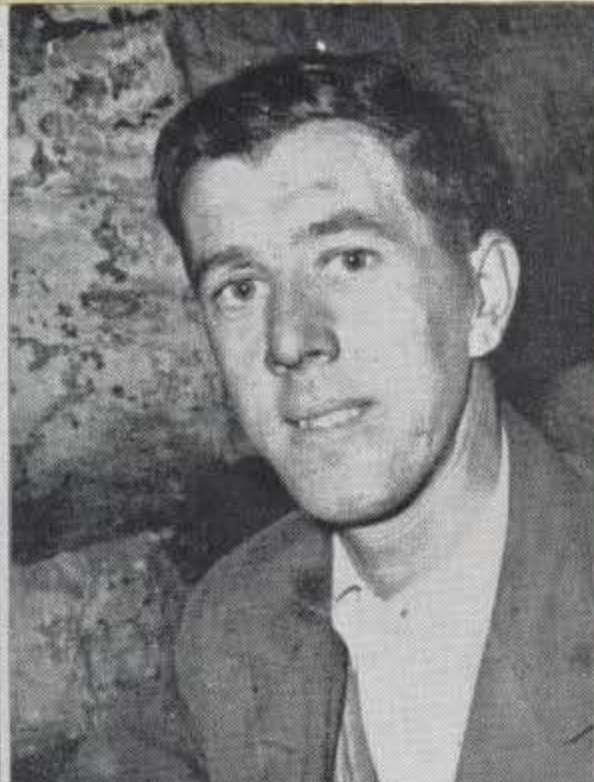
★★★★★★★★★★★★

bers some 40 are concerned in the present operations.

"Relatively large-scale operations were commenced in the area about 1755, these being mainly confined to open quarrying of the slate outcrop for local building. Earlier small-scale activities in the area, however, are thought to go back to the period of the Roman occupation of Britain, and records have been found of workings back for 450 years.

"Underground methods were first used when the present company, who operate other slate properties including the Votty and Bowydd mine, took over the workings in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The original development work carried out by the company comprised the excavation of the slate on the quarry floor to form the underground incline following the dip of the slate bed. The slate workings were then developed by cross headings and mined by the pillar and chamber method. The strata from which the slate is won dips at an incline of from 30 to 40 degrees."

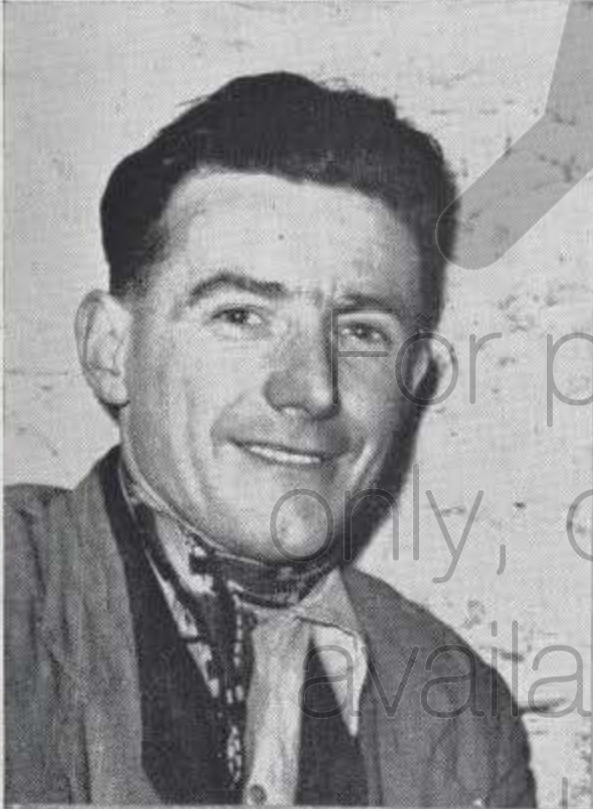
STUDIES IN



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EXPRESSION



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DATHLU'R NADOLIG YM MHONG GOEDEN

DATHLWYD y Nadolig yng Nghaban Bonc Coeden gyda chyfres o gyfarfodydd amrywiaethol, ym ymestyn dros wyth niwrnod. Llywyddwyd y cyfarfodydd gan Richard Jones. Y trefnyddwyr oedd D. Griffith Owen a Austin Lewis.

Dechreuodd y cyfarfodydd ar ddydd Llun, Rhagfyr 15, gydag anerchiadau gan Evan R. Jones a Ben E. Jones.

Y diwrnod canlynol bu John E. Roberts, o chwarel y Foty, yn adrodd, ac Anarawd Jones a David B. Williams yn rhoddi deuwawdau offerynnol.

Dydd Mercher, ymwelodd y Parch. Easter Ellis, gweinidog eglwys y Tabernacl, Blaenau Ffestiniog, â'r caban, a rhoddodd anerchiad ar y testun "Y pethau yr wyf yn eu credu."

Ffilmiau o Ffestiniog ddoe a heddiw gafwyd dydd Iau a Gwener gan Mr. Gwilym Jones. Mwynhawyd y rhaglenni diddorol.

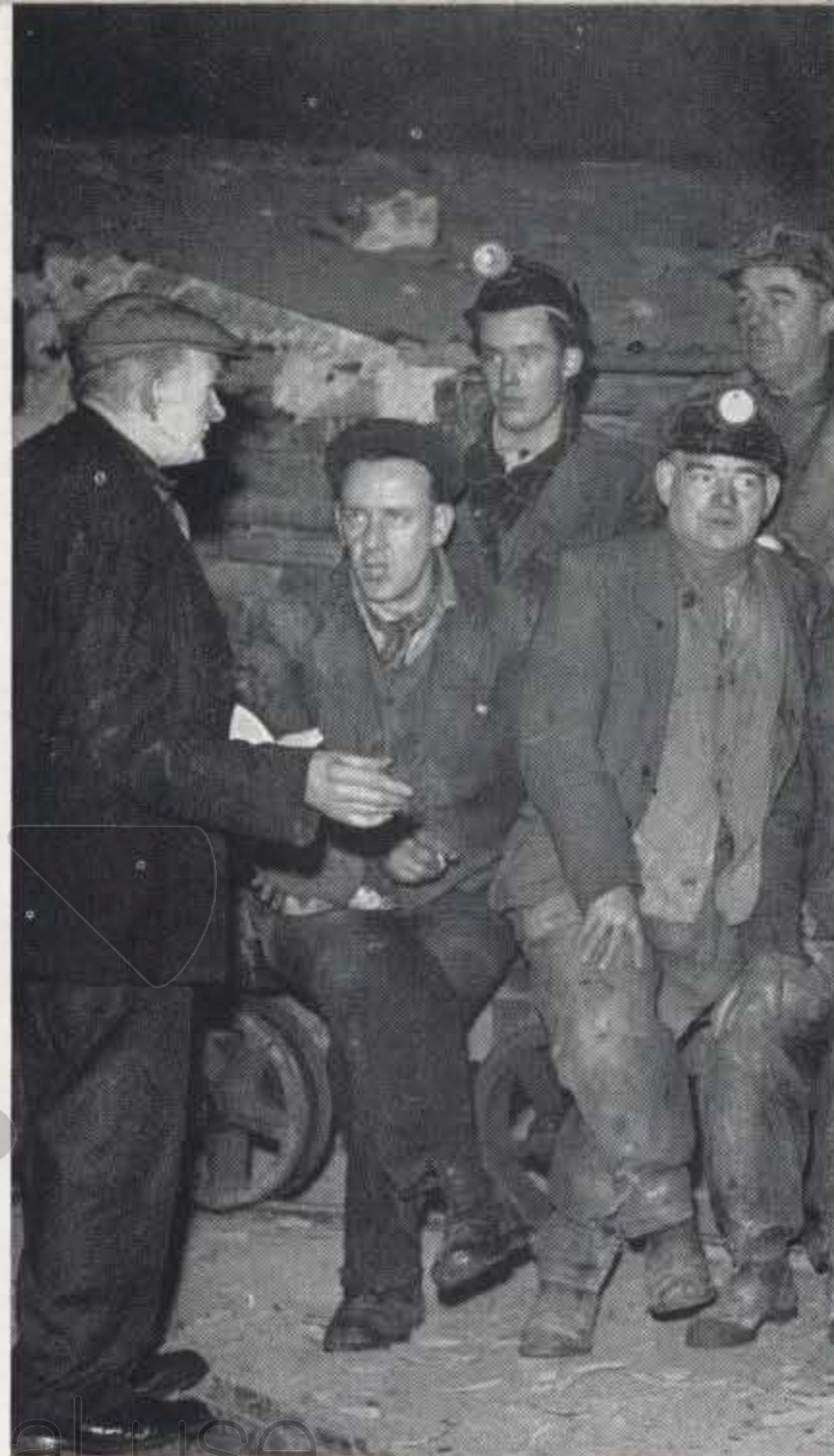
Rhagfyr 22, gwrandawyd *tape recording* o ran o'r cantata, "The Story of Bethlehem" (gan Robert Morris Williams). Cyflwynwyd y *recording* gan Mr. Wilfred Davies.

I gyfarfod dydd Mawrth daeth Mai Wyn Roberts, o'r Manod, a Beryl Jones, Wendy Thomas, Mair Wyn Jones, Michael Jones, David Stead, i gyd o Dalwaenydd, i ddiddori y caban gyda rhaglen ddifys iawn o ganu ac adrodd. Diolchwyd i Mrs. Davies o Dalwaenydd am hyfforddi'r plant.

Canu carolau a beirniadaeth ar y llinell goll gafwyd dydd Mercher. Y pennill i'w orffen oedd :—

"Anniddig eu byd yw dynion,
Ymhob gwlad trwy'r oes oedd maith
Beth iddynt rydd wir foddlonrwydd?
....."

Dyfarnwyd y llinell ganlynol yr orau:
"Crefydd Crist mewn dillad gwaith."
—Pererin.



[Photo by courtesy of "Y Cymro"]

Above:

Carolau o dan y ddaear ar lawr y K

Right:

Canu hymnau ym Mhong Goeden



Y bardd buddugol oedd Evan R. Jones, Caban Bonc Coeden, a chyflwynwyd y wobwr iddo. Y beirniad oedd Mr. Huw G. Jones.

Mae diolch yn ddyledus i bawb a gymerodd ran yn y cyfarfodydd, i swyddogion y chwarel am bob hwylustod, ac i Mr. I. Knight Griffiths am roddi cerbyd yn rhad ac am ddim.

Cofnodwyd yr adroddiad am yr wythnos gan Austin Lewis.



NEWS EXCHANGE

In Honours List

IN the New Year Honours List appeared the name of Mrs. Gwen Evans, of Portmadoc, wife of Stanley Evans, who is in our Despatch Office at Erwfair. Mrs. Evans received the British Empire Medal in recognition of her work for the National Savings Movement extending over a period of 40 years. Formerly on the staff of the Portmadoc Primary School, Mrs. Evans has represented the local Savings Committee at North Wales regional conferences of savings workers and before the inauguration of the National Health Service helped to raise substantial funds for the local hospital.

Oakeley bridegroom



Joseph Williams, an Oakeley man, and his bride, nee Miss Carol Cunnington, of Blaenau Ffestiniog, pictured after their wedding at Blaenau Ffestiniog in July.

Festivities for the children

CHRISTMAS festivities for the families of Oakeley and Votty men would not be complete without the children's parties and for 1958 about 150 invitations went out.

Every child received a present and to entertain all the children who wished to attend, two parties were held, one on each of the last two days of the year, at the Queen's Hotel, Blaenau Ffestiniog, where sumptuous teas were provided.

The parties were jolly affairs and the guest of honour was Mr. William Lloyd, who was accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. Winifred Jones. A notable absentee through indisposition was Mr. Humphrey Lewis, whose lively participation as master of ceremonies was missed by everybody.

Some of the highlights of the first party are pictured in the opposite page.

Top left: Mr. William Lloyd cutting the cake.

Top right: Children singing carols by candlelight around the Christmas tree.

Centre, left: Lots of fun as balloons are released from the ceiling.

Centre, right: Kisses for Father Christmas from Memma Roberts, aged 14, and her sister, Buddug, aged 12. Master of ceremonies Dennis Roberts holds the mistletoe.

Below: All eyes on the camera!

In the centre, the Christmas cake given by Mrs. Doris Whale bore the inscription: "Dymuniadau goreu i chwi blant oddiwrth chwareli Oakeley a Votty. Blwyddyn Newydd Dda!"

Apprenticeships

FOUR new names were added in January to the Oakeley roll of apprentices—David Brynmor Williams, David Wyn Hughes and David Griffith Williams—all aged 15 and entering the quarry straight from school—and Richard Davies, aged 16. The four were apprenticed to the craft of slate-maker. Our best wishes to them.



Between Ourselves



Glyn Roberts and Glynne Williams

ANOTHER brother partnership at Oakeley is that of Gwynfor and Leonard Jones, who not only work together in Q9, but also play together in the same football team. Both served in the R.A.F. but at different times, Gwynfor, who is 26, for two years, and Leonard, aged 23, on a three-year engagement. On the football field they appear for the Dolgellau Club in the Cambrian Coast League, Gwynfor at inside-right and his brother at outside-left.

WELCOMED back to Oakeley in the autumn were these two young slate makers, Glyn Roberts (left), who is 25, and Glynne Williams, aged 19, who had been occupied in other spheres for some time. Both entered the quarry after leaving school and remained until National Service called them, Glyn Roberts served with the Royal Artillery in the Suez Canal Zone between 1951 and 1953 and subsequently served for a time in the police force before he decided that he preferred to rejoin the Oakeley "family."

Glynne Williams also served in the Army and returned to quarrying on his discharge on medical grounds. Both are working in the Middle Quarry and both intimated to *Caban* that they were happy to be back.



Oakeley Choir's woman conductor

THE Oakeley Male Voice Choir have bestowed the conductor's baton on a woman—their accompanist, Mrs. J. M. Ellis, who comes of a musical family well known in Merionethshire. She succeeds Mr. T. O. Thomas, who relinquished the conductorship on his appointment

as music master at Ysgol Sir Ffestiniog. The services of the choir have been, and continue to be, much in demand. Forthcoming engagements include one at St. Helens in March—their fourth visit there in successive years—and another in Birmingham in April.

Brothers and rockmen all

LEAVING the Oakeley mine after their day's work are the four Williams brothers—John, the eldest, Morris, Reuben, the youngest, and Evan. All have returned to quarrying after a fairly long absence during which they pursued other forms of livelihood. Both John and Evan previously worked at Oakeley. All are rockmen: John and Morris are partners in R 10 on the lowest floor of the quarry 1,000 feet underground, and Evan and Reuben form a partnership in Q 11 on the next floor up.



*Pictured at the top of DE incline —
John, Morris, Reuben and Evan Williams*

Parting gift to Votty man

ON his retirement in September Votty rockman Richard Pritchard, received a gift from his colleagues, presented on their behalf by John Gwynedd Griffiths. J. H. Williams, Votty under-manager, expressed the good wishes of the staff and felicitations in verse were recited by Howell Williams, who had composed the lines specially for the occasion.

Richard Pritchard had served for 30 years at Votty, where his late father, Elias Pritchard, had worked for most of his life.

Two Oakeley employees retired also in 1958, Robert Thomas ("Bugail"), aged 68, incline man, after 38 years at Oakeley, and, after 40 years, 71-year-old Elias Roberts, of Betws-y-Coed, who was a clearer.

Snooker prize

VOTTY slate inspector R. J. Pritchard, who is 65 this year, earned the congratulations of his colleagues for winning the Christmas snooker handicap at the town's Young Men's Institute. There were 40 entries and an Oakeley man, Dewi Lewis, was runner-up and also second in the billiards handicap. Bridge is another of R. J. Pritchard's pastimes; he won first prize in the institute's bridge drive, too.

OUR BACK COVER PICTURE

OUR back cover picture shows an overflow of more than 20 blocks waiting their turn to go under the diamond saw at Bonc Shafft. On the right, David Richard Jones, one of the slate-makers, marks out a partnership block as a guide for the men working the saw. Also in the picture is Evan Morris, slate inspector, judging the quality of the slate.



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Rush of blocks for the diamond saw

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