

Geology and Industrial Archaeology - The South West Shropshire Metal Mines

Dr. Ivor Brown¹

BROWN, I.J. (1983). Geology and Industrial Archaeology - The South West Shropshire Metal Mines. *Proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society*, **3**, 11. The talk was based on a comprehensive series of slides taken by Dr. Brown over many years, as a record of the mining history of the Stiperstones area.

Several of the slides consisted of old photographs taken of the mines and miners during their heyday in the late 1800's and up to as late as the mid 1900's. Original pictures of the remaining minehead gear and buildings, taken over the last two decades, now form an invaluable record.

¹Shrewsbury, UK. E-mail: editor@shropshiregeology.org.uk

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Most of the photographs, together with a brief explanatory note, can be found in Dr. Brown's book on *The Mines of Shropshire*. However, for those (few?) members without a copy, a geological synopsis is given below.

The metal mines of South West Shropshire lie in a small and compact field, roughly within a 6 mile radius of the village of Shelve. Mineralisation occurs mainly in Ordovician strata, although there is some in the Precambrian in the eastern part of the ore field.

The distribution of the ores suggests some form of arched depth-zoning, the outer zone being barytes and witherite, below which lies lead, then zinc. The crown of the arch has been eroded away so that the deeper zone minerals now outcrop in the centre of the field, west of the quartzitic Stiperstones ridge.

As far as mining is concerned, the chief minerals, in chronological order of importance, are ores of lead, zinc, witherite, barytes and calcite, with small amounts of fluorspar and copper. Lead mining reputedly began in Roman times, whilst limited calcite extraction continues today.

A LECTURE BY IVOR BROWN GIVEN TO
THE SOCIETY IN 1983.

Anne Dugdale