MERCIAN NEWS

Erratum

In the supplement Geology of the Mines of Lathkill Dale and the Wye Valley, distributed with the previous issue of Mercian Geologist, small errors crept into three of the figures. In the interests of accuracy, corrected images of Figures 24 and 27 are available on the Publications page of the Society website (www.emgs.org.uk); these are jpegs of correct size that may be downloaded, printed, cut out and pasted in by anyone wishing to perfect their Mercian collection. In Figure 1 of the same supplement, two key items were transposed: EL is the Eyam Limestone, and the grey shading is the Edale Shales. Editorial apologies to honourable author and to respected readers.

That old car

The query about the old car, raised in the Archives note in the last issue of Mercian Geologist, did raise a response; thank you to Jonathan Wood and Mike Rosenbaum for the following.

As the photograph dates from 1904 and the car looks fairly new, we can assume that it was built at about that time and is either French or of Gallic inspiration. Although the motor car was a German invention, dating from 1886, it was the French that took up the concept with the greatest alacrity. On account of its wealth, Britain was France's largest overseas market prior to the First World War, and nearly all pre-1914 British cars were heavily reliant on French designs.

It is difficult to identify the car at the quarry because any distinctive radiator is obscured, and the bodies were often produced by local coach builders to be placed on a chassis constructed elsewhere. But it is fitted with a rear entrance tonneau body, which dates from after about 1897, as earlier cars had bodies largely derived from their horse-drawn predecessors. Note the absence of weather protection and the fact that front and back wheels are of the same size. In the early days of the motor car, front wheels were invariably smaller than the rears; this was to allow the entire axle to swivel to permit the car to turn a corner, before same-sized wheels on a static front axle with swivelling stub axles arrived around the turn of the century.

A loss at Long Rake

Some members may remember the dramatic open stope on Long Rake, west of Youlgreave in the Peak District. It could be seen within the woodlands immediately west of the car park beside the Limestone Way (at SK194645), and was a beautifully clean, vertical cut along the vein still, spanned by a few timber stemples. There were once plans within the Peak District National Park to place a concrete viewing platform across the end of the open stope nearest to the convenient car park; this would have been welcome, as any approach for a good view did require some care. Recently some Society members went to visit the site and were greatly saddened to find no trace of the stope, with its site now lost in new-growth woodland.

It had not been back-filled, but (some years ago now) was covered with massive concrete beams and slabs, which then had a thin soil cover placed over them. This does look like another tragic win for the safety culture that has needlessly destroyed yet more of the great mining heritage within the Peak District. It could well be viewed as heritage vandalism. Is it again a failure of geo-conservation in a field where so many of those involved are aware of little more than bio-conservation? One may wonder if the old mine would have been closed off had it become a bat roost. Conservation policies are much trumpeted, but they have failed at Long Rake. This splendid artefact has already been forgotten, and too many folks even with local concern for the mining now know nothing of it.

A sight now lost - the view west along the open stope on Long Rake as it was in the late 1970s. The opening was about 5 m wide, and here about 30 m deep, though the visible floor was formed by piles of waste "deads" stacked on timber platforms above open stopes that descended another 60 m or so.