

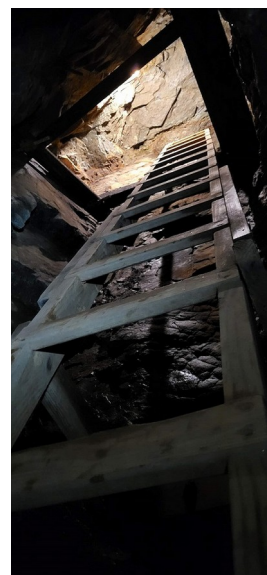
Morefield Mine Trip Report by Dave Lines (and others)  
Photos by Sam and Sharon, Orion, Katie, Bernie, Renee, and Dave



Sam Dunaway giving safety instructions



Entrance to the mine



Getting to the bottom

This special field trip to the Morefield Mine occurred because some of our club members who attended the November 19, 2022, Morefield Open House asked the owner (Sam) if it would be possible for our club to visit and do an underground tour. He responded by saying “Yes, the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club is a great club and would be welcome.” I called Sam in December, and we discussed the possibilities. He had a potential timing problem because the State Mine Inspector planned an inspection in January concerning the preparations to close the mine under a “temporary cessation” plan. So, I agreed to call Sam back in January when things had hopefully settled down.

Fast forward to January 2<sup>nd</sup> when I emailed Sam and Sharon with a field trip plan proposal. Sam called me back on January 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss the plan. Good news --- the mine inspection was postponed to early March. We decided on January 21<sup>st</sup> for a Field Trip date and, since it was winter, it would be totally “weather dependent”. They would offer sales of five-gallon buckets of mine run from the “stock pile” at the mine entrance; allow us to dig in the stock pile and rocks would be priced by the pound; they would have sales of pre-priced rocks in the shop; sales of rocks in other piles outside; Sam would conduct a 1.5 hour underground mine tour for a maximum of 7 people for an additional fee of \$25 each.

It was absolutely a huge success. The owners and their helpers were all wonderful hosts – friendly, patient, and enthusiastic about the mine while ensuring everyone had a good experience. And the good Lord did a fantastic job with unbelievably good weather --- 50 degrees and sunny all day in late January was incredible. Thank you!

30 members attended --- and at least half had never been on a rock field trip before this. And another 5 or 6 had never been to the Morefield. It was an eye-opening adventure for them all. Lasting positive memories were made for some very happy rockhounds. Everyone found plenty of rocks --- the \$40 buckets of mine run were a big hit. Digging in the “stockpile” was very popular --- (Most had no idea how special this was). Folks had great fun finding specimens of many minerals. The store was brimming with beautiful rocks for sale. The large pile of Virginia rocks out back of the shop and the rhodonite stash out front --- all at \$1 per pound --- will be remembered for years to come by all who attended this trip. The buckets of amazonite in the covered carport shed out back was found by several very happy folks. It was hard to resist buying more of everything.

Those lucky eight (up from the initial limit of 7) folks on the underground tour all emerged with big smiles, effusive praise for Sam/Mark and the mineral treasures seen below. All of them were universally very happy they did it. There were a lot of pics and enthusiastic comments from the trip posted on the Club Facebook page. Our entire group really loved the whole experience. I heard nothing but very positive remarks by all.

I asked for additional input for this report from those who attended, and the following is what those who responded had to say (in their own words):

From Renee --- Well, the Morefield mine trip was an awesome experience for me. I am new to the Maryland club, and this was my first club trip along with my first visit to this mine. Everyone was so knowledgeable and educating. The shop was very nice and had wonderful specimens to purchase. The prices were very reasonable! They had hot coffee and bathroom facilities. A short distance from the side of the shop, and next to one of the mine shaft entrance, was a large pile they had brought out of the mine for visitors to collect from. They also had a dollar pile behind the shop with different minerals and rocks to pick through. The amount

of Amazonite there is mind blowing. The trip underground was wonderful! The amount of Amazonite and other gems and minerals down there was vast and beautiful to see.



Amazonite at the 50 foot level



Kim taking pictures at the 60 foot level



Sam explaining what they were seeing

We began the underground tour at the 50-foot depth and was shown different mine shafts and areas where the Amazonite was found in larger quantities. Very surreal walking through a wet tunnel with the walls lined with Amazonite, Smoky Quartz, Mica plates to name a few. We then descended another ladder to the 60-foot depth where we explored and were able to collect specimens to commemorate our trip down. The whole day was so exciting and wonderful! I'm so thankful for the opportunity to visit the Morefield Mine and am looking forward to more trips with the Maryland club!

From Theresa E. --- I really enjoyed my first field trip with the group. As a novice I was totally ecstatic to see such a beautiful variety and display of minerals and petrified wood. Thanks!

From Katie M. --- So, I'll start by saying this was not my first trip to an underground mine. This past summer I went to the Kongsberg Silver mine in Norway. However, when I compare my experience at Morefield to my experience at the Kongsberg silver mine, I have to say Morefield was so much more authentic. I appreciate that it was more of a "working mine" and not a commercialized mine "idiot-proofed" for tourists. I feel so lucky to have experienced one of the last tours! Truly a great experience with great owners. I especially loved bonding with Sharon over Maine.

I think feeling so lucky made the entire experience unique. There's just something about being in places most people will never have access to. Dave S. told me he had been waiting to explore Morefield Mine for about 7 or 8 years now and once we saw this opportunity, we decided to drive the four and a half hours. It was worth it! Meeting the owners Sharon and Sam was probably the best part, and the tour of the mine was just a bonus. My favorite mineral would have to be the aluminum fluorite I was lucky enough to find (not 100% sure of the name, I just know it was very light purple and I kept confusing it with another mineral). I also picked up amazonite, topaz, cleavelandite, REALLY nice books of mica, and some zircon. Most should be easy to label and having "Morefield Mine" listed as a locality should be a nice conversation starter.

I haven't cleaned the specimens off yet, but only because I'm not 100% sure of the best way (also I'm banned from using muriatic acid in my house, another story for another time). It might be helpful to include a guide as to how to clean off some minerals. I know muriatic acid would destroy some minerals but clean others and iron off would do wonders for others but not even touch some rocks. Or maybe some minerals just need soap and water! I always have trouble with that, and Google never helps. I believe Dave got a bucket to take home and I'm starting to wish I did!

Everyone in the club was super helpful! Kim took some awesome pictures and Ralph (I believe that's his name) identified minerals and told me what made amazonite green! It was also cool to learn that some (not all) of the orange on amazonite was due to radiation exposure.

This was such an amazing experience. Thank you again for finding room (on the underground tour) for the both of us even though we were a day late signing up!



Mark, Sam, Dave S., and Katie M.

From Noah --- The Morefield Mine was my first trip as part of the SMRMC after joining the club at the show in Waldorf last November, and what an enjoyable way to start off my membership. Coming off the main road, I turned onto a narrow road lined by pine trees and drove up to the lot where some of the other members were already parked. Around 10am, we gathered for a team photo then proceeded into the shop. The shop had tons of specimens in display cabinets, not just from Morefield but from all over -- even as far away as Utah. The mine's owners, Sam and Sharon, along with their son, were kind enough to welcome us with a briefing on the history of the mine and detailed some of the specimens we might find. After that, we descended to the mine which was slightly downhill in an open area. To get there, we passed an old, enclosed mine shaft. I tried to look down it and couldn't even see to the bottom, at least 30 feet. Some of the materials from the mine were pulled out into an open area where the group voraciously started picking through them.



Amazonite was everywhere, so bright and green that to my novice eye I thought it could be emerald. I took a gem class online to learn about the various types of precious stones so after hearing that garnet had been found there before, I focused my search. The main pile was getting a pretty good picking over and I hadn't seen anything that looked like garnet, when someone mentioned that lower on the hill were some old tailings from the 50's or 60's. I went over and searched for about 15 minutes and eventually found a small piece of garnet. I referenced it against my gem book and wasn't convinced of its identity, so I took the small piece of stone, about 1.5cm in length and a few millimeters wide, into the shop to check with Sam. He said that it was definitely garnet.

I was pretty happy to find something I had read about in my textbook and thankful to have a veteran eye to confirm it. When I returned, a woman from the club was still at the big pile with her two small children. They were thrilled with all the different stones they had found, so I handed my find over to them to add to their collection of treasures that they had stashed on top of a large wooden spool. As a first timer, I didn't want to take any stones especially since I still have a very limited understanding of what to collect and hadn't purchased a bucket. After getting ready to leave empty handed, Dave L. dragged me into the shop where Sam was generous enough to give me a large piece of Amazonite (\*) to take home. My collection now totals 2 pieces; Unakite from Rose River around Madison, VA that one of the shop owners at the show gave me, and the similar sized Amazonite, supposedly mined about 30' to 40' deep, also donated. I was just happy to explore the outdoors, meet other members of the club, and share my first small piece of success. \*(The amazonite that Sam gave Noah was the refund of Noah's \$10 admission fee --- everyone paid an admission fee which was refunded in the form of rocks when they purchased some. It was a win-win.)

From Bernie --- The trip to Morefield Mine was very enjoyable. This was my second trip to this mine. While I am still a newbie at this hobby, I am finding that the people and places it is bringing me in contact with are very enjoyable and I know I would not have had these opportunities otherwise. My "prizes" are the rough material that appeals to my eyes. I cannot envision the cabochons, spheres, and other finish products that others see. However, the rough stones are still beautiful. While I have plenty of rocks to sort through, the piece pictured here is one of my favorites from this trip. .



I believe it is Muscovite in Plagioclase

From Orion:

It was nice short two-hour drive to Morefield mine for my wife Kimberlynn and me. This was our first time at the mine and when google maps sent us down this unpaved road in the woods, we weren't certain we were in the right place (Kimberlynn was certain we were lost) until we saw another SMRMC club member.

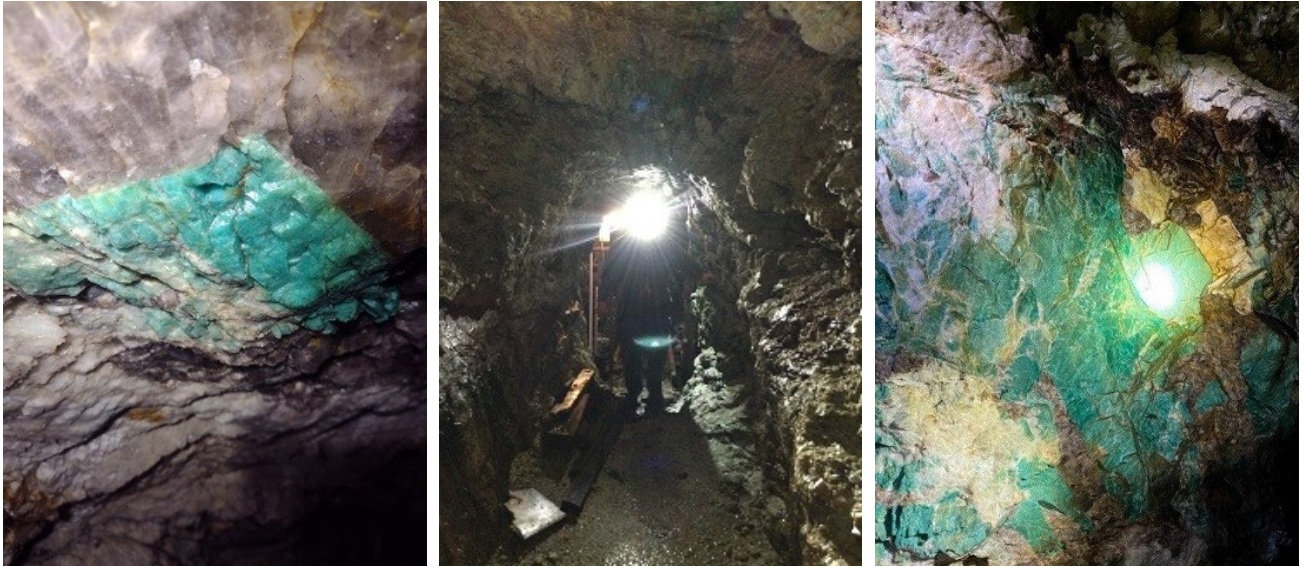
The first part of the day we spent hunting through the spoils pile. The most abundant minerals in the pile were Amazonite, Quartz, and Mica. Kimberlynn was interested in the Amazonite and found a few nice pieces. I found some nice pieces of smoky quartz with splashes of Amazonite. Some of the quartz have some rust staining. I have not decided if I am going to clean the rust (soaking in Rust-out) or just leave it as it is. My goal for collecting this day was to find a nice couple of specimens to display at work and home to serve as mementos of the day. I am especially interested in how minerals form in the host rock and think the Amazonite on the quartz is more interesting than just solid Amazonite.

The highlight of the day was most certainly the mine tour. The mine was an actual working mine and we had to make sure we had the right clothes and safety equipment. We already had the steel toed rubber boots and hard hats. These we had purchased for previous trips. The rubber boots were necessary as the mine was wet and muddy. There was standing water everywhere and many sources of dripping water. The hard hats not only kept my head dry from the dripping water, but served their purpose when I brushed past low beams. I purchased the head lamps, and they arrived several days before the trip. When I put the headlamps on the hard hats, I realized that it would easily slip off. I purchased zip ties and Velcro straps to try to secure the head lamp but settled on wire loops that I had previously purchased for a different purpose. The head lamps were necessary as there was no lighting in the mine.



The most intimidating part of the tour was the ladders. There were three levels of the mine with a ladder of approximately 18 feet for each ladder. The ladders were a mix of aluminum expanding ladders and built in wood and steel. A slip and fall on these ladders would most definitely result in major injury. Except for the first ladder, our boots were wet and muddy, so we had to use extra caution on the ladders. We also brought work gloves in anticipation that the ladders would be rough and dirty. We also made sure we were not carrying anything in our hands, so our hands would be free for the ladders. I had my phone on a lanyard around my neck, which I tucked in my

jacket when climbing the ladders. Climbing the ladders was intimidating, but we took our time and made it safely through and got a workout doing so.



It was totally dark underground with no lighting except that provided by headlamps

The mine itself was an amazing site. There was abundant Amazonite on the walls and ceilings in the host rock. We took many pictures, but the pictures only captured part of the majesty of what we saw with our eyes. Our tour guide explained all that we saw and answered all our questions as we slowly made our way through the mine. After about three hours, we emerged from the mine a little tired and a little wet and muddy.

“Our” (Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club) thank you note to Sam and Sharon read in part:  
“You were generous and friendly hosts as always. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Thank you!! And thank you for your willingness to not only share your mine and its treasures, but to do all the hard work (before and after) necessary to make our trip a reality. In your 26 years of ownership, you made the Morefield Mine a beloved icon in the hearts of thousands of rockhounds.”  
As for the future of the Morefield, I heard Sam mention (a bit nostalgically) as he emerged with the last part of the underground tour: “This is probably the last group who will ever do this.”



amazonite and massive topaz



Some of the 168 pounds of rhodonite purchased



Small pieces of amazonite for kids (all from stockpile by mine entrance)