

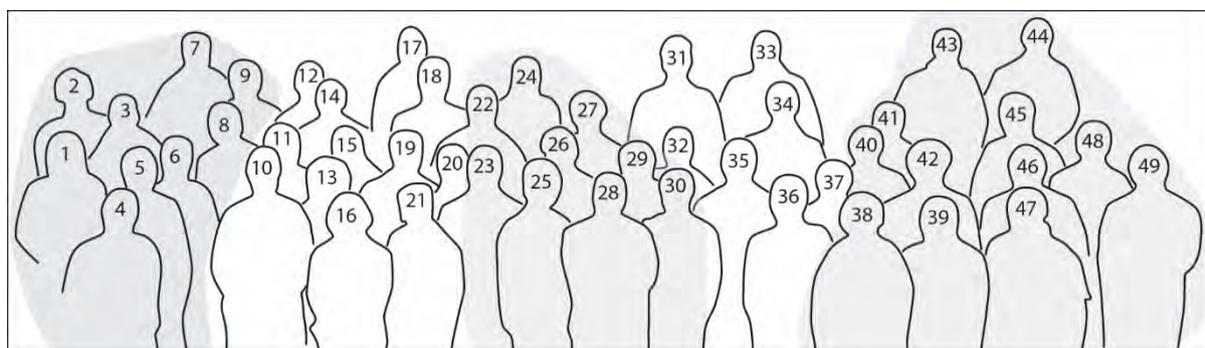
CAT

The Newsletter of the Cumbria Amenity Trust
Mining History Society



Delegates at CATMHS 21st Birthday celebration
at Rydal Hall

Members and guests who attended the 21st Anniversary celebration at Rydal Hall



1 Anne Danson	10 Dave King	22 Dave McAnelly	31 John Aird	38 Liz Bowden
2 Bruce Deane	11 Alan Westall	23 Stan Reed	32 Lesley Aird	39 Liz Bowden's friend
3 Chris Hargreaves	12 Jim Alexander	24 Angela Wilson	33 Brian Marshall	40 Joan Helme
4 Tom McCann	13 Barbara Mitchell	25 Joyce Reed	34 Alastair Marshall	41 John Helme
5 Pete Blezard	14 Michael Forsdyke	26 Terry Dixon	35 Warren Alison	42 Alastair Cameron
6 Margaret Geddes	15 Janet Cresswell	27 Dave Bridge	36 Cilla Cameron	43 Mark Pickhall
7 Don Borthwick	16 Deirdre Ryan	28 Ronnie Calvin	37 Karen Beer	44 Peter Fleming
8 Ken Geddes	17 Phil Meredith	29 Louise King		45 Dave Sewart
9 Peter Wilkinson	18 Clive Barrow	30 Eileen Dixon		46 Ian Matheson
	19 Nills Wilks			47 Mike Mitchell
	20 Liz Wilks			48 John Cram
	21 Sheila Barker			49 Geoff Cram

Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society Newsletter No 63, April 2001.

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Editorial.

This is another bumper edition, and I am grateful to all the contributors. Some items have had to be held over for the next edition, due out in the first week of July. This may well be a slimmer edition, as there will be few meets and field activities to report on, so if you have been meaning to put pen to paper but have never quite got around to it, now is the time to do so.

I had intended to include the whole of Dave MacAnnelly's article, 'A Year of Discontent' in this issue, as I feel that to serialise it out over such a long period has not done it justice. It will now appear in the July edition.

With the launch of Lakelands Mining Heritage on 30th March the way is now clear for CATMHS to publish Journal No 5., and hopefully sales of our latest book and the video will provide sufficient funds to do so. Journal No 4 of the Mine Explorer was last published in 1994, and I think that we should aim to publish No 5 in the spring of 2002. I would be grateful if anyone who may be prepared to contribute would let me know so that we can plan accordingly.

Ian Matheson, Newsletter Editor

News.

'Lakeland's Mining Heritage' now on sale

CAT's new book is now on sale. Members can purchase one copy each at a very reduced price of £9:99 plus £3:60 p&p, (normal retail price £15:99 plus p&p). To take advantage of this please contact Sheila at The Rise, Alston, Cumbria CA9 3DB.

During the past few weeks the book has been distributed to wholesalers and book shops and it has also been well reviewed in the local press. The finished result is extremely good and the book should be an essential addition to the bookshelves of everyone. Only 1,500 copies were printed and one can't help wondering if we shouldn't have had more done.

This is the first CAT book to include a large selection of colour photographs. It is also only the second one we have done which was printed by the technique of preparing all the layout etc ourselves rather than paying the printer to do so. CAT member Dave Sewart was largely responsible for arranging this.

The official launch of Lakeland's Mining Heritage.

We accepted Vicky Slowe's kind offer of the date of Friday 30th March as the launch date, with the launch being held in the Ruskin Museum at Coniston. She is contacting the press and in particular the Westmorland Gazette, over covering the launch.

It will be important to have as many of the chapter authors there as possible as there will be a photographer from the W.G. there. I have prepared some data for the paper to allow them to produce an article about our activities in general as well as the book in particular.

Threlkeld Quarry Museum

Ian Tyler held his traditional open day early in March. I understand that Sheila Barker and Alistair Cameron went, and that, as usual, it was a good day. Lets hope that the foot and mouth crisis will not have an adverse effect.

Foot and Mouth Disease

Due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease and the restriction of access to fells and footpaths it has been necessary to cancel some meets, and the digging activities have also been suspended. It is essential that you telephone the meet leader in advance if you are thinking of attending forthcoming meets. The Nenthead Mines, which are fenced off from agricultural land, are intending to open, so it may be possible to hold the meet in Smallcleugh mine on April 15th. Telephone Sheila Barker if you are interested.

NAMHO Conference cancelled.

In light of the Foot and Mouth and after discussions with the MHTI committee, NAMHO and the Department of Agriculture, we have decided to cancel the NAMHO 2001 event in Ireland. The proposed venue and all access to land containing animals (includes most mine sites in Ireland) are closed at the moment. The Department of Agriculture in Ireland has indicated that restrictions will stay in place until at least 30 days after the last UK case of FMD. This would make it impossible to organise let alone operate the NAMHO conference.

The Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland very much regrets to have taken this step, but felt that an early cancellation would remove the uncertainty before any travel bookings have been made. The MHTI would welcome the chance to organise the NAMHO field meet in Ireland at some future date.

Martin Critchley
Chairman, Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland.

Training Meet, 4th March.

This meet was cancelled due to lack of interest. The meet leader, Jon Knowles sends the following note:

‘If you are unable to go underground due to the foot and mouth crisis now is the time to do some of the jobs you keep meaning to do. If painting the kitchen doesn't appeal why not check your underground kit. This should include inspecting your harness and slings, oiling krabs and ascenders, and if its more than 12 months since you last did it, replacing your cows tails. Don't forget your lamp where the fluid level should be checked and the security of all electrical connections inspected.

Another useful check is a lamp discharge test to check its duration. Charge the lamp and then leave it on until it starts to dim (DON'T LET IT GET COMPLETELY FLAT). I suggest that if its life is less than 10 hours and you are serious about underground exploration or do any SRT, the battery needs changing. A new battery will give 14-16 hours life and could save yours ! ‘

Jon Knowles.

Hudgillburn, March 18th.

Unfortunately this meet was cancelled due to the Foot and Mouth outbreak.. There is still a possibility that the meet in Smallcleugh mine on 15th April may go ahead. Telephone Sheila Barker to find out.

Laser Rangefinder

CAT has recently purchased a Leica Disto Laser Rangefinder in order to improve the ease and accuracy of surveying. It works by projecting and receiving a laser beam, and is accurate to 3mm in 30m. Measurements can be taken very quickly without the need to actually go to the target point, which is illuminated by a red spot. It is easy to take measurements which would be impossible by other means, such as the height of a stope or distance across a void. At first it was found very difficult to hold it steady enough to get good readings, so a cheap tripod was also purchased. The instrument has already been used by Mark Simpson and Dave Bridge to survey part of Middle Level at Coniston, and also to survey the new discoveries on the Paddy End Vein. See Mark's meet report for Jan 25 in this issue.

Ronnie Calvin R.M.

In this issue you will find a report by Ronnie Calvin R.M. of the Memorial Service for the miners lost at Haig pit in 1927 and 1928. The RM stands for redundant miner. Ronnie worked down Haig Pit from 1950 until he was made redundant in 1984. His father was killed in the Whitehaven pit disaster of 1947. Ronnie has been a member of CATMHS since the very early days, and worked at Force Crag mine until it was forced to close in 1987. There is an article about him in the February edition of Cumbria Life

Dr Descender.

Doctor Descender was cross that part of his contribution was omitted from the December Newsletter, and emailed a proportion of the membership with his views. The omissions were partly due to lack of space and partly due to

editorial discretion. In order to inform all CATMHS members the email is reprinted below. Expressions of support should be sent to: jon.knowles@UKOnline.co.uk

'Keep the mining press free. Say no censorship.

The following has been banded from Dr Descender ! but Dr Descender is beyond the limits of editorial control!

Dear Doctor

I have an Eccles Cake that you might like to eat.

Door Bell Man

I don't think so.

COMPETITION

Having recently had a sneak preview, at a secret location, of the new CAT book "Lakeland Mining Heritage" an omission from the credits has been spotted. Whilst it is too late to change the book now, the first person to publicly identify the missing contributor will win a free weekend at a holiday cottage in Coniston.

Send your answer to :-

I'm not that brave competition

P.O. Box 1

Coppermines Valley

Coniston

Cumbria.

The prize for the winner of the competition to see who could leave the most tackle in a mine after a meet is awarded jointly to Dave Bridge, Peter Fleming and Mike Mitchell for their supreme effort on the last Coniston Meet. A total of 3 ropes, numerous krabs, rope bags, rope protectors etc. were all left behind – well done.'

Chairman's Report for the year 2000

As we have now just celebrated the 21st anniversary of CAT it is interesting to look back to the year 1979 when a handful of enthusiasts decided to remedy the lack of serious research and exploration of abandoned mines in Cumbria and form a club for that purpose. In those early days the field was wide open for exploring new ground, opening up old workings and interpreting the sites from what were, in many cases, long forgotten records. Without doubt those were exciting days. As the more immediate and obvious targets ran out more sustained projects emerged such as the Top Level Dig at Coniston, the Logan Beck project, Lucy Tongue, jointly with Moles, and more recently Hudgillburn. Work on surface remains also played an important part such as the Power House at Saddlestones and of course the ongoing restoration of Newlands Furnace, but increasingly there have been obstacles to work of this kind. For example the water leat tunnel under the Triddle incline is now in a scheduled area and we were fortunate that English Heritage could be persuaded to let us do the restoration work before it collapsed completely. Underground there is plenty to get on with free of such constraints, for instance a major dig is now underway to drive through the Grey Crag Level collapse at Paddy End.

Over the years the general public has been made increasingly aware of the work of the Society through publications ranging from the first Mine Explorer in 1984 to recent issues which include Slate from Honister, the Coniston CD-ROM and, thanks to the financial support of a Millennium Festival Award, the forthcoming publication "Lakeland's Mining Heritage". Contact with the public has been further strengthened through the popular Tourist Leaflets which are slowly being extended to cover more areas, the talks and slide shows which members frequently give, the CAT web site and recent collaboration with the Ruskin Museum. Our publications now account for a large proportion of the Society's revenue enabling other projects to be financed and this year in particular the bulk of the CAT funds has been committed to several productions

which will hopefully benefit the Society in due course. It is also important that we continue adequately to fund the Newsletter which, together with the Bulletin, has over the years provided an essential and informative link with the membership on a regular basis. The first Newsletter appeared in 1981 by which time the membership had grown rapidly from 6 to 44. By 1990 it had topped 100 and since that time the membership has been fairly constant with a steady turnover bringing in new faces each year. New members are vital for the success of any society and are always welcome.

So the year 2000 has been as productive in its own way as the early years. As well as sustained efforts by the Furness contingent at Newlands and by the undaunted digging team at Hudgillburn we have had a wide variety of meets including something of interest for prehistorians, caving enthusiasts and even the anti-nuclear lobby. Some of the meets have been very popular (35 at Eskdale must be a record) and I hope we can continue to attract this level of interest. All this has been to the credit of the above members and others who have given up much of their own time, not least Peter for encouraging and organising new projects, Alastair for his publishing commitments which have been particularly demanding recently, Mike for the effort he has put into the illustrations for the new book, and Dave Sewart for preparing it for the printers. Ian (now wearing two hats) and Jon for maintaining a high standard of meets and Newsletters, Nils for organizing the web site, Mark for keeping a strict eye on our spending and of course our hard working secretary.

It remains for me to thank those of you who supported the weekend at Rydal Hall - a first of its kind for CAT - and to extend our thanks to those whose time and effort made it such a success, in particular the visiting speakers for their informative and thought-provoking presentations, the member speakers, and also to Karen, Angela and especially to Sheila who bore the brunt of the organizing with more than a few nail-biting moments and did a magnificent job. We have a strong team and a thriving Society - let's hope it continues that way for the next 21 years.

Dave Bridge, 17/01/01.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome Gerald Goldsborough, of 87 Latrige Close, Keswick. His mining interests include surface meets, underground meets, exploration, and preservation. With Roger Ramsden he has been active in exploring some previously unknown parts of the Borrowdale Wadd Mines. See meet report for 14th Jan.

We also welcome John Craig, 13 Downsview Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, whose main interest is local history.

Please note the following corrections to members addresses:

Dave & Elizabeth Sewart
Ty Gwyn
Crow End,
Bourn
Cambridge CB3 7SY

Damian Mccurdy
Could you please put a correction to my address in the next Newsletter. The house number should be 111 and not 11. This is a common mistake and the guy at 11 is not amused! He sticks them back in the post box with comments like "not here" or "wrong number". This can happen several times before the particular item reaches me.

Donations

CAT 21st Birthday celebration.

The first week in December was looming menacingly, and CAT was in danger of owing a lot of money to Rydal Hall for lack of bookings for the 21st Birthday Weekend. I sent out a letter urging members either to book or to send a donation towards the expected loss. I got a good response, and in the end we managed to make a small surplus, thanks to the raffle. I offered to send the

donations back, but all refused, and agreed that the money should be used for the Paddy End project.

I would like to thank the following members:

Adrian Barrel
John Brown
Trevor Cotton
John Crammond
Ian Forbes
Billy Griffin
Peter Hay
Ian Kerr
Derek Lyon
Phillipa & John Tindall.

Sheila Barker, Secretary.

Thanks also to the following members who included a donation with their membership subscription:

Pete Blackwood
Trevor Cotton
Tim Oulton & Celia Hancock.

Ian Matheson, Membership Secretary.

Email updates

Please note – I am sometimes unable to get my computer to print the first letter of email addresses in lower case. If the e-mail address is in lower case then usually the first letter should also be in lower case!

Dave Sewart:
Sewart@crowend.freemove.co.uk

Dave Bridge:
dbridge2@compuserve.com

William Snaith:
Snaith@onyxnet.co.uk

Clive Barrow:
CLIVEMINER@HOTMAIL.COM

Chris Cowdery:
Chris@cowdery.demon.co.uk

Peter Sedgewicke:
pjsedge@FreeUK.com

Nick Baxter:
nick.baxter@talk21.com

John Ashby
jashby@iee.org

R Quirk:
RQUIRK5@aol.com

Chris Hargreaves:
DAYBREAK_7@QUISTA.NET

Gerald Colling:
Veronica.colling@virgin.net

Alastair Cameron:
a.cameron@lineone.net

Malcolm Charleton;
malcolm@Stationmaster.freemove.co.uk

Tony Simpson
Simpson.aj@pg.com

Trevor Cooke;
Trevor@highhundy.fsnet.co.uk

Malcolm Curtis:
CURTIS.MM@PG.COM

Tony Singleton
TLJSRivendell@AOL.COM
Geoff Cram
g.cram@lmu.ac.uk

Myke Pocock
Myke@talkgas.net

John Scott
Johnwscott@genie.co.uk

John M Wood
johnmwood@wistaston.freemove.co.uk

Jane Moreland,
jane.moreland@tesco.net

Damian Mccurdy
d-j-mccurdy@supanet.com

Peter Sandbach
Peter@prsandbach.freemove.co.uk

Levers Water Mine, Coniston By Jeff Wilkinson 24/2/01

There has been a substantial collapse at the entrance to Levers Water Mine.

This must have occurred before the 23rd of February. Viewed from inside the fenced off area (the narrow path down to the crater) a large section of the hanging wall on the right side of the entrance has broken away. This has always been a rather unstable area due in no small part to the well documented major fault line that crosses Levers Water and continues down Boulder Valley. This has tended to smash up the rocks and left them very friable in places. Although odd pieces have been falling off for years this is probably the largest fall for some time. If anyone had been in it's path it would have been Goodnight Vienna (nobody is reported missing I hope!!)

Although an unknown amount will probably have gone down the Funnel, what you can see is a very steep sided rubble pile that has nearly obscured the entrance although the rubble pile has not blocked it, luckily the main rubble mass is just forward of the entrance.

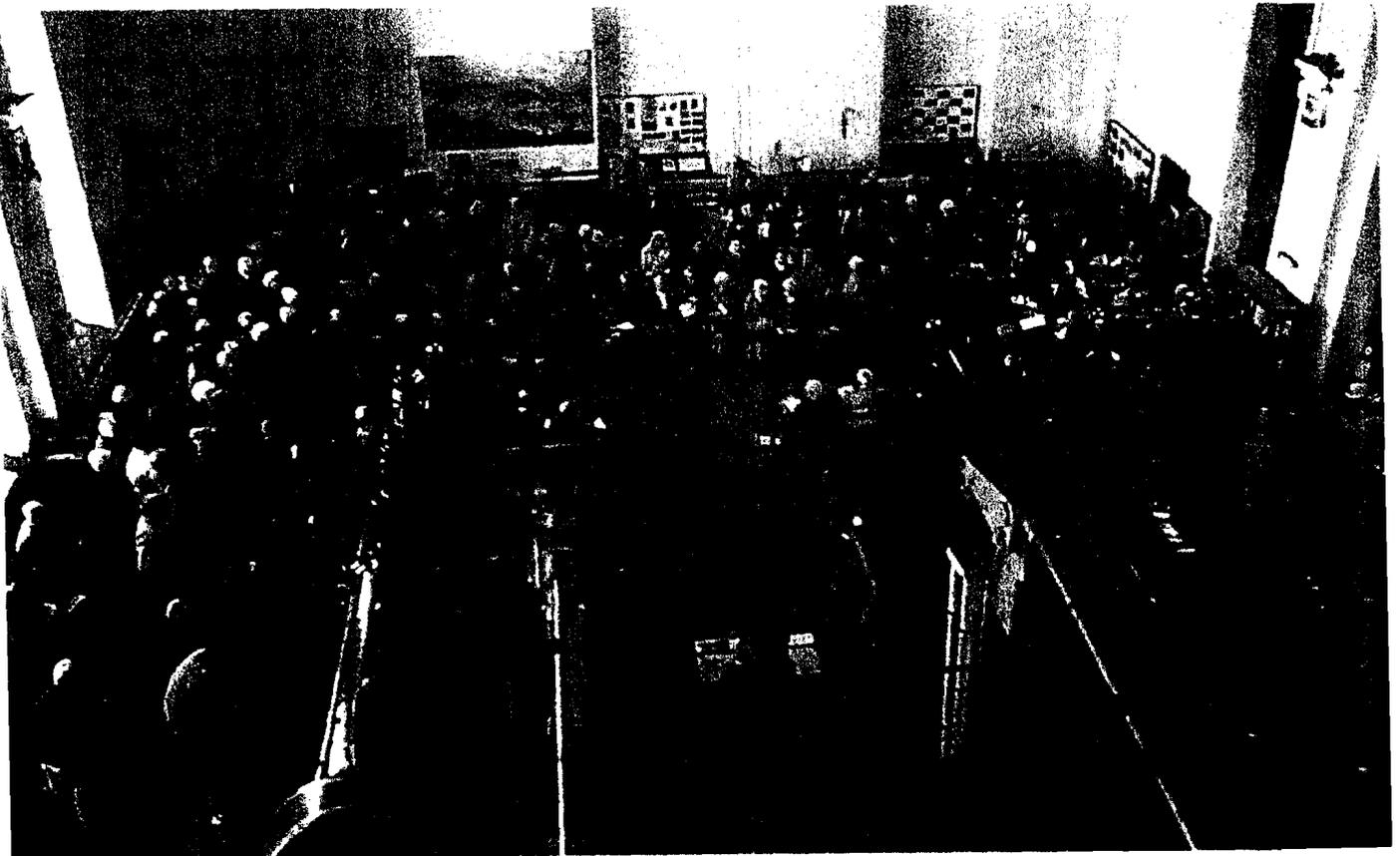
The source of the collapse is now a clean smooth area of rock, which exhibits a small amount of green/blue secondary mineralization. That area is now probably far more stable than it has been for some time but don't quote me on that and of course there are still many large boulders and rocks on the steep slope above seemingly defying gravity as they wait their turn to come down! It is quite likely that frost gave it the final push.

Haig Pit memorial Service.
13 Haig Pit Heroes Remembered.

On Monday 12th February 2001, two hundred people gathered inside Haig's No 4 Winding Engine House to pay their respects to the 14 miners who still lie in the depths of Haig Pit, following the two explosions that took place on Tuesday 13th December 1927 and 12th February 1928. It was a very moving memorial service, which was led by the Rev. Jim Baker and accompanied by the Whitehaven Town Band. John Skelly, a local man, and a miner for 44 years, rising to become an undermanager, recalled his early days in the local mines, and the near slavery the miners worked in; the heat due to poor ventilation; 12 foot seams of coal where all the coal was hand got; the ever present gas in the workings. He said "These brave and courageous

miners had a comradeship not to be found elsewhere". John went on to read his poem 'In Memoriam', which he presented to Haig Museum. I was asked to say a few words to these brave men, who knew there was a risk in entering the sealed off district, but they also knew that Harold Horrick's body was still in the workings, and they wanted to bring him out so he could have a Christian burial. They were aware that the working district was very important to the mine, and if they got it working again it would give work to the local miners and be of great benefit to the local community. Another Haig veteran, Alex Douglas, said that "over the passage of years three of the worst things for the families was nowhere for them to go and grieve". He also said "We should never forget these brave men".

Ron Calvin, R.M.



Memorial Service inside the restored Haig Pit No 4 Winding Engine House.

THE EXPLOSIONS OF 1927 AND 1928, HAIG COLLIERY, WHITEHAVEN

Following the explosion of December 13th 1927 three bodies were recovered before an outbreak of fire prevented the rescuers reaching the fourth victim, Harold Horrocks. It was decided to seal off that section of the pit, which is known as the Development District, and the richest coal seam in the local coal field, the seam being 11 feet thick. Since then the pit has not worked.

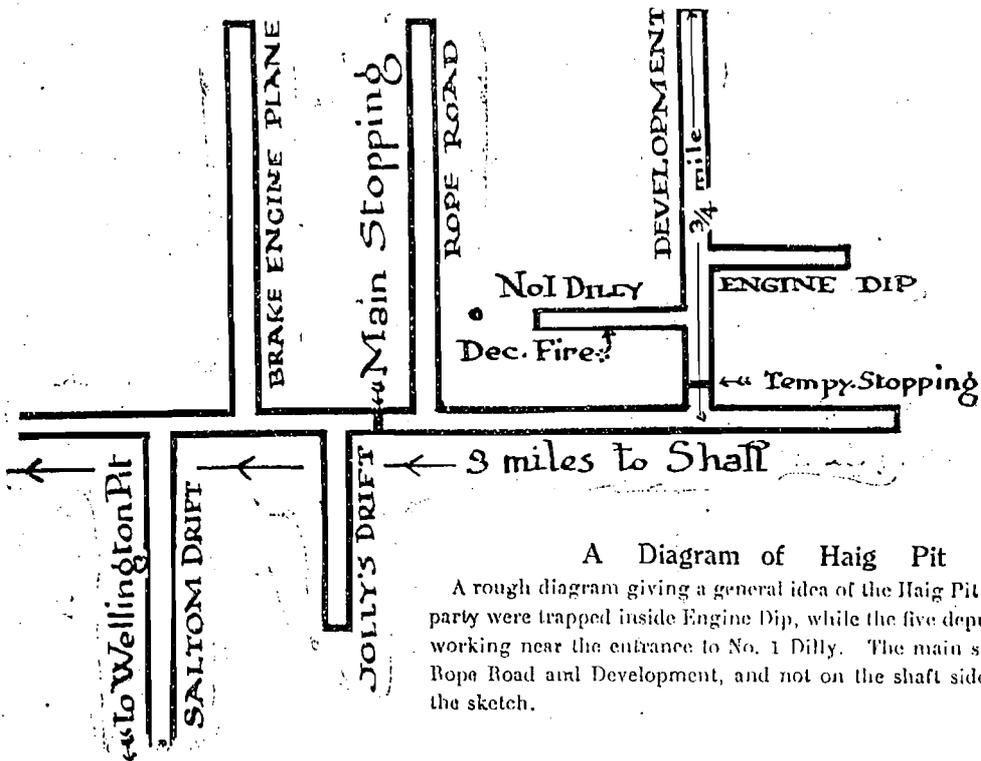
Stoppings were built to seal this area off and the main stopping was of 3 feet of brick and faced with cement, this was built across the main road. During the period the mine was closed, stopping watchers were placed on 3 shift to check on the stoppings and air samples were taken from small pipes built into the stoppings. They were so convinced that all the oxygen had been used up behind the stoppings that on Thursday 9th February 1928 doors were placed in the stopping and locked ready for the exploration work that was to take place on Saturday 12th February 1928.

So at 1.00 pm in the afternoon of Saturday 12th February 1928 a party of hand picked mine officials and Inspectors of Mines descended the mine. Also with the party was Gilbert Tucker, Instructor at the Brigham rescue station. They then entered the sealed off workings using the doors that had been built into the stoppings, and found things in a safe order, good progress was made, and the seat of the December 1927 fire was located in No 1 Dilly in the Development District.

See Diagram. The fire had been of an extensive character. For about 25 yards the coal face was a mass of coke, and the props had been charred to a depth of about 2", but were found to be quite cool. At about this stage around 11 00pm several members of the party were relieved and went to the surface and refreshments were conveyed to the remainder who were joined by fresh miners. Shortly before midnight the conditions were still favourable, and while the rescue party returned to near the temporary canvas stoppings at the entrance to the Development District to recharge their apparatus with oxygen, a section of the party headed by Mr Steel entered the main engine department where it was expected to find the body of Horrocks...Leaving five Deputy's to clear up falls in the main road, and three engineers wiring. At about this time when Mr Steel and his party were about three miles from the pit bottom, there occurred without any warning, a series of three explosions within 10 minutes. The first was comparatively light, described by the survivors as a dull rumble. The second was more serious enveloping the men and covered them in coal and stone dust, which blinded and choked them, while the third was extremely violent hurling the men off their feet, and filling the workings with foul air which penetrated to the shaft bottom. Battered and bruised the eleven survivors groped their way to the pit bottom.

On arrival at the pit top they presented a pitiable appearance. They were all suffering from shock. Several were unable to speak for some time, and in the words of the official who attended to them, with their hair coated with stone dust, they looked like old men.

The area was inspected later in the week but all the roadways were found to have fallen and the district wrecked so it was sealed off forever.



A Diagram of Haig Pit Workings.

A rough diagram giving a general idea of the Haig Pit workings. Mr. Steel and his party were trapped inside Engine Dip, while the five deputies were overwhelmed when working near the entrance to No. 1 Dilly. The main stopping was situated between Rope Road and Development, and not on the shaft side of Rope Road, as shown in the sketch.

THE DEATH ROLL 1928

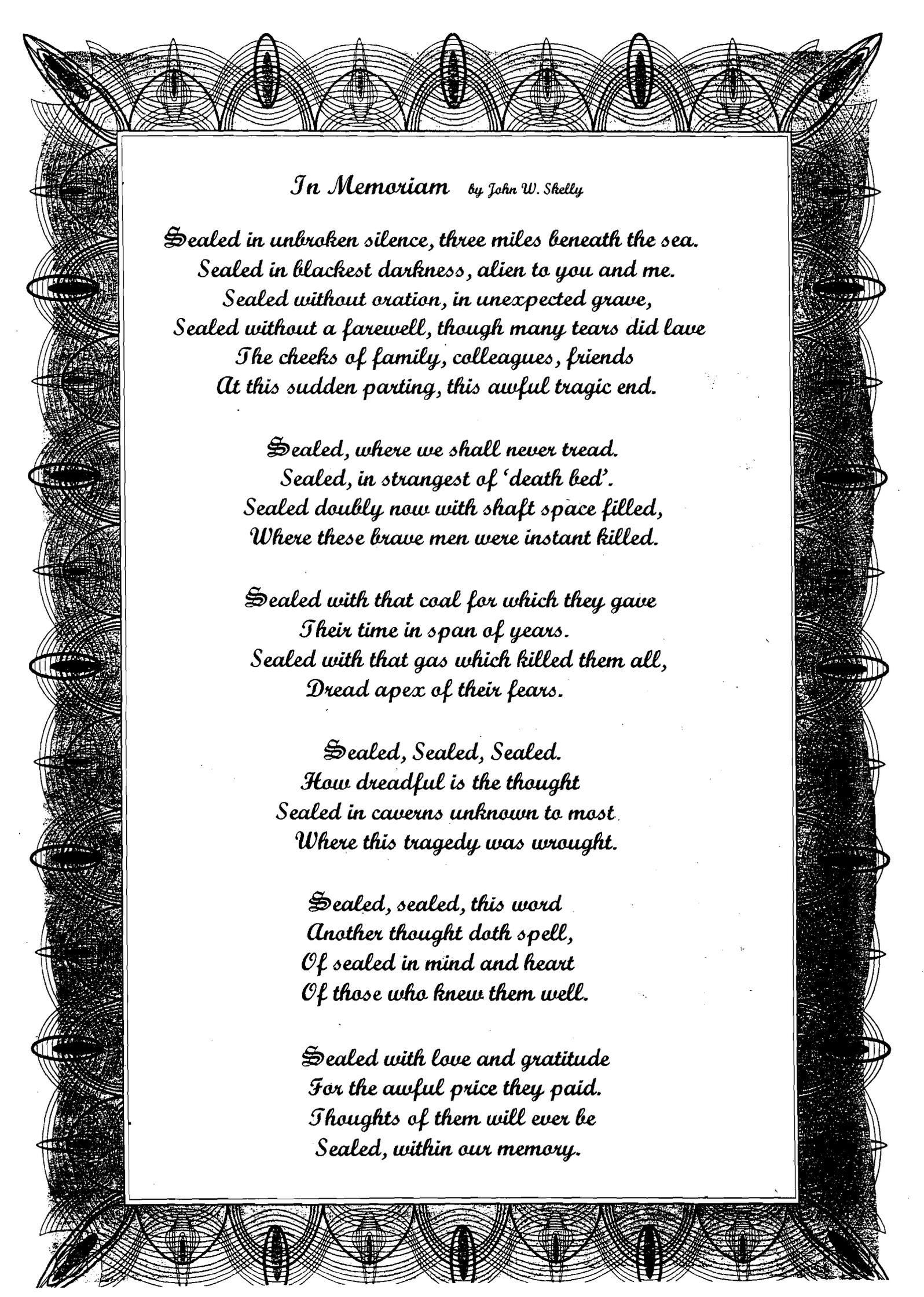
Robert Steel	Works Manager
William London	Inspector of Mines
Peter Burdess	Inspector of Mines
Robert Fell	Under Manager
Henry C Hanlon	Miners Agent
John Tyson	Cumberland Colliery Officials Association
Tom Walker	Overman
George Hodgson	Deputy
James Ruthery	Deputy
Frank Wilkinson	Deputy
Jesse Cresswell	Deputy
Hugh McKenzie	Deputy
William Graham	Deputy

A SHORT NOTE ON MINING DEATHS

In the Lead Mines from 1800 to 1900 there were 30 deaths.

In that same period in one local mine in Whitehaven, William Pit, 72 men, boys and girls were killed in 6 explosions. But that's not all, in a further 4 explosions in William Pit it claimed the lives of 121 more miners, a very high price was paid for coal in William Pit.

R Calvin, R M
3.3.86
0240c



In Memoriam by John W. Skelly

*Sealed in unbroken silence, three miles beneath the sea.
Sealed in blackest darkness, alien to you and me.
Sealed without oration, in unexpected grave,
Sealed without a farewell, though many tears did lave
The cheeks of family, colleagues, friends
At this sudden parting, this awful tragic end.*

*Sealed, where we shall never tread.
Sealed, in strangest of 'death bed'.
Sealed doubly now with shaft space filled,
Where these brave men were instant killed.*

*Sealed with that coal for which they gave
Their time in span of years.
Sealed with that gas which killed them all,
Dread apex of their fears.*

*Sealed, Sealed, Sealed.
How dreadful is the thought
Sealed in caverns unknown to most.
Where this tragedy was wrought.*

*Sealed, sealed, this word
Another thought doth spell,
Of sealed in mind and heart
Of those who knew them well.*

*Sealed with love and gratitude
For the awful price they paid.
Thoughts of them will ever be
Sealed, within our memory.*

Coniston Dig Ian Matheson

Wed 3rd Jan

This was the first visit by the digging team. They began clearing spoil from Paddy End shaft top. The top of the old man way was covered over in order to prevent damage to it and the staging beneath, and a new opening was made so as to be able to tip waste directly down the shaft

Sunday 7th Jan

This was the first of to be a continuous series of Sunday work meets by the digging team, Peter Blezzard, John Brown, Collin & Andrew Woollard, William Snaith, and Peter Sedgewicke. Ian Matheson and Peter Fleming assisted on this occasion, whilst Mark Simpson and Sheila Barker began to lower the level of the debris at the junction of Paddy End Vein and Puddingstone Level in preparation for a dig there which, it is hoped, will provide an alternative route through from Middle Level. Dave Bridge visited during the afternoon to try out the new laser range finder.

A safety line was installed around the side of Paddy End Shaft, and twenty feet of passage was cleared of waste down to rails. One of the wheelbarrows was lost down the shaft when John lost control of it whilst tipping! The remaining barrows were then equipped with slings to clip into the safety line in order to prevent further losses.

Sunday 14th Jan

This coincided with Borrowdale Wadd Mines Meet, so only the digging team attended. John Browns report:

'Made more progress today at Coniston, but, delayed at the start of the day by experiments with 'popping' a rock with nail gun cartridges.

Slightly disappointing, may work a little better with more experience. We managed to put some fractures into a fairly large rock. Anything with quartz in it will be out of the question, but the technique could be useful in areas that do not allow one to swing a big hammer. We have now cleared enough debris to enable us to fit the first set of legs next week and possibly the second set by the end of the day. We have put in a temporary shield above our heads for the present time until we are able to start putting the crash barriers on the new structure.

Sunday 21st Jan.

Full digging team plus IM. Carried in six 12 foot lengths of motorway crash barrier, and two sets of steel head frame. Two hours digging was sufficient to clear a space to erect the legs. It was here that problems arose. The tunnel is neither vertical nor straight, and it was necessary to chisel away the rock, which is very hard.

Sunday 28th Jan

The main dig was called off as some of the team were unwell. Pete Blezzard away in Tucson Arizona.

Sunday 4th Feb

Snowing again! Peter Sedgewicke had to turn back due to road conditions, but John Brown and William Snaith from Durham, and Collin and Andrew Woollard from Cockermouth made it over, thanks to 4 wheel Drive. Pete Blezzard was still in America. Peter Fleming, Mark Simpson, Max Dobie and Ian Matheson also arrived, intending to continue the Pudding Stone dig.

The first team, who had brought a modified leg, set to chiselling away at the hard rock. They succeeded in

erecting the second frame, and installed three motorway crash barrier sections on top and some lagging boards down each side packed in with spoil.

Sunday 18th February.

The digging team brought some powerfull equipment to jack up and support the dangerous boulder at the entrance to the newly discovered stope on Paddy End Vein. At the main dig they cleared some more ground and erected another set of legs, lagging the sides and packing with rock and spoil. Plastic bags were filled with fines and packed on top of the roof to load it and provide protection from future falls

Sunday 25th February.

Peter Sedgewicke was in America, and Pete Blezzard was doing some winter camping in preparation for the forthcoming trip to Patagonia,. Despite concerns about foot and mouth disease, the rest of the digging team journeyed to Coniston on a cold but sunny day, bringing with them about sixty scaffolding planks for use as lagging boards. These were carried into the mine and passed across the two voids in Hospital Level. Mike Mitchell and Clive Barrow, after portering ropes up to Levers Water for the official meet, spent the rest of the day carrying the all the boards as far as the Horse Gin Chamber, over the three hundred yards of awkward terrain. The last bit was the easiest, as it was possible to float them along the flooded passage!

The team had another successful day; a further six feet of ground was cleared and the fourth set of legs erected. Due to the curve of the passage the 12 foot motorway barriers had to be cut into four foot sections. This was done in the Horse Gin Chamber with a Still saw, a

apectacular sight, with showers of sparks illuminating the scene.

Towards the end of the day the powerfull pillar jack was used to support the end of what was believed to be the six foot long boulder which used to constrict the exit from the through trip. This was expected to be a major problem, but as the level was cleared down to the sole it was found to be above roof level, and can be left in situ.

Sunday 4th March

Work halted voluntarily due to the foot and mouth outbreak. Access to the fells was subsequently prohibited by law. It is to be hoped that we can resume before too long, but it seems unlikely that it will be possible for several months, and perhaps not this year.

New discoveries at Coniston

The dig at the junction of Puddingstone Level with Paddy End Vein

Ian Matheson

On 20th Dec 1987 (Newsletter No 20) Dave Bridge, Angela Wilson and Ian Matheson descended the stope on South Vein from Middle Level, attempting to explore the continuation of Puddingstone Level and perhaps to bottom out in Deep Level 390 feet below. On the climb out they noticed a steep rubble slope at the south end of the stope where there might just possibly be a level.

On 30th July 1989 (Newsletter No 25) Dave Bridge and Angela Wilson boldly penduled onto the rubble slope and found a short level which ended on a 'balcony' looking into a new and immense stope thought to be on the Paddy End Vein. In September of that year Mike Mitchell, Peter Fleming and Chris Jones investigated further. Peter descended to the bottom of Balcony Stope beneath a huge detached flake and a jumble of blocks, and was convinced that the lowest point of the stope must coincide with a blocked but venting hole in the roof of Puddingstone Level between the Great Cross Course and South Vein. 3 weeks later a group consisting of Peter Fleming, Ian Matheson, Sheila Barker, Phil Merrin, Mark Simpson and Dave Bridge confirmed the connection by dropping rocks to the bottom of the big stope, which were heard through the blockage by some of the party standing in the Pudding Stone level.

Since then there have been one or two half hearted attempts to dig through this blockage, but they were defeated by the quantity and size of the rocks. Now, inspired by the achievements at

Greenside and at Hudgill, and stimulated by the presence of the digging team a short distance away beside Paddy End Shaft, Peter Fleming suggested that we should undertake a proper dig here, clearing the level properly, using wheelbarrows to tip the spoil down the South Vein stope.

A cone of fairly fine debris fills the passage nearly to its roof. The slope from the blockage towards South Vein is about forty feet in length, and the blockage itself consists mainly of very large jammed boulders. The plan was to clear the debris down to the sole of the level, to bring the boulders down, and, if possible, to break them up. One boulder in particular looked as though it would provide a challenge!

Sunday 7th Jan

In preparation for the dig Mark Simpson and Sheila Barker began to lower the level of the debris at the junction of Paddy End Vein and Puddingstone Level in order create sufficient headroom to get a wheelbarrow through.

Wed 24th Jan.

Peter Fleming, Alan Westall Mark Simpson and Ian Matheson began clearing waste from the passage in Pudding Stone Level, barrowing it to South Vein and tipping it down the stope. It was fairly easy work, shovelling off the floor. They cleared about 25 feet, and at the end of the day the height of the workface was about four feet.

Tuesday 30th Jan

Peter Fleming, Alan Westall, Mike Mitchell, Ian Matheson and Max Dobie continued the dig in Pudding Stone Level, and mucked out as far as the boulder, clearing around it to investigate the extent of the problem. It seemed to be perched on the remains

of a crushed pack wall, and they were worried that if it came down then the debris above it might then block the passage. The only safe way to move it was from the inby side, so the person doing the deed might become blocked in. They tentatively removed debris to reveal that the boulder was indeed perched on a small block of stone. Chipping away at this with a long bar brought the whole thing down about six inches, with some stone fall from above. At about 4.00 pm they decided that it would be wise to leave it for another day.

Sunday 4th Feb

They set to to clear as much of the passage as possible, in order to make space for the debris which it was thought would fall when the big boulder was brought down. Once this had been achieved they excavated the boulder further, to reveal that it was resting on the pack wall, with a contact area about four inches square. Mark set about prodding up the stope and succeeded in bringing down large quantities of debris, mainly rocks which were easy to clear away. When it looked reasonably safe above they tried again to dislodge the boulder, but it was a dead weight. The only way to move it was to worry away at the supporting pack wall from the inby side until something gave way. Ian volunteered for this interesting task, and after a few minutes achieved a result. The boulder dropped out onto the floor, accompanied by a small rock fall, which failed to fully block the passage, and was easily cleared to provide a way out. The outcome was not what had been hoped. Although there was now a void above there appeared to be another boulder choke out of reach about twenty feet higher up. Disappointment!

It now being nearly five o'clock they decided to leave it to settle, in the faint hope that something might give and it would clear itself. The plan was to return on Tuesday to see. If nothing has happened it will require a rope descent from Levers Water to investigate from above.

Tuesday 6th February.

There was still snow lying nearly down to the valley bottom. Pete Fleming, Alan Westall, Mike Mitchell, Mark Simpson and Ian Matheson turned up to see what they could achieve. The tools had been left on site after the previous session, so it was easy to walk in to Hospital Level. So easy that one of the team who, to avoid embarrassing him, we shall call Nala Stewall, attached his cows tail to the traverse line above the ninety foot drop, but neglected to clip the other end to his person, leaving it dangling on the safety line as he walked away from the end! (What would Doctor Descender make of this if he knew!)

There had been no change at the dig site, so they began to muck out, tidy up and improve access and safety. Mike investigated a small hole in a nearby blind heading with a hammer and chisel, enlarging it enough to see loose rocks behind. Mark was keen to clear the waste away from the left hand wall, which seemed to curve around and gave the promise of a continuation. A few barrow loads created a hole leading to a void. Those who remembered the site from earlier times felt that this was just a small blind heading, and were more interested in Mike's progress, which seemed to provide an audible connection with South Vein. Ian however decided to enlarge the hole, and was quickly able to crawl through into a large stope!

The floor appeared to be a boulder choke, and was covered with large broken rocks. Above, it disappeared into darkness well over a hundred feet above, and there were two small wooden stagings. The sides were fairly clean, and in places there were areas of mineralisation, including some patches of pinkish mineral, which were thought likely to be cobalt. The stope curved out of sight to the far end, which on investigation proved to be in solid rock with the vein showing clearly and a large patch of green malachite. Above the entrance hole was a horrendous pile of crushed rocks, the top of which was a triangular shaped block about forty feet high with a fifteen foot base, which had dropped out of the roof thirty feet above. It must weigh tens if not hundreds of tons! The impact of this huge collapse had fractured the roof and wall of the entrance, and a chunk about ten feet long and ten feet high was supported by a bit of broken pack wall and not much else.

Peter was puzzled, for although he felt sure that this was the place where he had previously communicated with Alistair Cameron, he recognised nothing. All were concerned about the integrity of the whole area, and after a rather brief examination it was decided to leave it to settle.

Tuesday 13th February.

They went back to investigate further, but no three wanted to spend more time than was necessary in the stope. The rocks forming the roof of the entry point seemed to have moved, and there was a fracture. Mark Simpson and Dave Bridge carried out a quick survey, using the laser range finder, and left a reflector which would be visible from above.

The rest of the time was spent tracing the vein, and they concluded that the Paddy End Vein runs through the

newly discovered stope, a trial on the vein of Grey Crag Level, the Horse Gin Chamber, and the No 1 dig at the foot of the through trip.

Monday 19th Feb

Email from John Brown to Ian Matheson:

‘I don't know if you have spoken to Peter Fleming or in fact visited the mine yesterday, if so you will know that we put the jack under the block to provide support. Later in the day on Sunday we went back to replace the jack with a timber support when the jack was required on our dig. The timber in my opinion, is a temporary measure and should provide some degree of protection from further slippage of the block to allow survey work to be carried out in the newly discovered stope. I am not sure that I like the look of all the 'hung up' material immediately above the entry point in the stope! ‘

Sunday 25th February.

Mark Simpson led the official CAT Coniston Project Meet, graded EXP, and descended from the Balcony in the stope below Middle Level. A team of five, Mark Simpson, Peter Fleming, Jane Moreland, John Aird and Mark Picthall succeeded in completing the first and probably the only through trip from Levers Water to exit from Paddy End Vein into Pudding Stone Level. They landed on top of the major collapse, and had to abseil down over it. This confirmed that it was indeed the same place at which Peter Fleming and Alistair Cameron had first made voice contact. It is believed that since that occasion there has been a huge rock fall, which has change the place beyond recognition.

Coniston Meet, 25th Jan

The meet was originally to descend from Levers Water via the old through route (Arrete Chamber/Middle Level) and down South Vein to Brimfell Xcut and out by Grey Crag Level. Events before December last made this idea redundant (see last newsletter). I had several other thoughts such as, either descending to Grey Crag Level via Paddy End Stope, and thus down under the Twin Tunnels Area, or, which was more interesting, the descent of Avalanche Stope from Earthquake Passage. A place where very few people have gone, and only one person (Ian Matheson) has been to the bottom. A serious undertaking and not for the faint hearted.

In the event neither of these trips were undertaken, since access into Balcony Stope from Brimfell Xcut had been dug out by the Tuesday People.

The intention now was to descend from the Back Strings by Levers Water and thence to Middle Level via South vein to Balcony Stope, but all would depend on who turned up. On the appointed day there were five of us, including Peter Fleming, John Aird, Jane Moreland and Mark Picthall. I outlined my intentions for the day and every one agreed to the project, even when I pointed out that the bottom of Balcony Stope was likely to be quite interesting

Several hours later we were dining in Blue Rock Chamber, after touring the delights of the stopping round about. This being an area of the coming together of Paddy End Stope and Stope 4, as well as being in a zone of lateral faulting.

After debating the geological points of the area, it was time to descend South Vein, and I led off down to the landing point about 30m down and 5m across. I also intended to take Disto measurements on various identifiable points on the way down. (Gone are the days of guessing

distances). John came second with drill and another belay was put in to aid pulling across. The rock was very hard, (or the drill bits less than perfect) it taking two bits to obtain a deep enough hole.

When all had arrived the points of interest were shown i.e the big heap of debris which is on a false floor 10m up, an arch of deads, the old ladder way, and the faulting showing lateral displacement of the vein.

Whilst I was setting up the belay at the Balcony (putting in new bolts) it was noticeable that the rock was softer, and the back wall had some cracks in it. There was another belay position but I wished to bring the descent point as near over the exit point as possible, which was fortuitous as it turned out, though not quite as I expected.

Peter led off, brave soul, anyway he had been down there before and knew theoretically what to expect. Ha! The others followed with varying degrees of trepidation, me being last. Before I went I took several Disto measurements to the far (SE) wall. This descent is from the NE corner of the balcony and just as you start off there is some stemming with deads on just beside the pitch. Looking up I saw the remains of a chain ladder hanging down the NW end of the stope with a level some 10m higher. Further down some 6m I looked for the level that I knew was there in the NW end of the stope. I did just see it round a bend to the W of the stope, access to it is very difficult, I wondered how anybody had found the thing in the first place.

Inspection on the stope roof with a big lamp revealed a hole with timbers over the SE end, probably at Middle Level. After a few more metres the NW stope end receded into the distance and I reached the foot wall and could see the rest of the party seated on a large block some 10m below. Yes the one that seems

to overhang the bottom access to the stope. I was advised to pendulum some 4m NW around a stemple to bring me down on this boulder. This stemple, being very soft, and seemed to be busy holding up the hanging wall. Closing my mind to unpleasant possibilities, as indeed had every one else, the boulder was reached.

There were some not happy people seated on this thing and I could see why. This rock was not wedged across the stope but resting on a whole load of other rocks that had peeled off the hanging wall. This wall towered over us, and it was obvious that the parent rock was less than homogenous, and it was not easy to see what was holding the balcony up. The situation was not helped by the knowledge that this fall had happened in the last 10 years.

Nobody fancied retreat so a way off was chosen at the NE end of this boulder, the way being eased by removing some protruding flakes with several scientifically placed whacks with a hammer. The rock shattered easily, which did not inspire confidence in the rest of the blocks. A bolt was put in the foot wall, the only sound bit of rock around and the group made off down.

Whilst this was happening I did some surveying with the Disto. On a tripod this time, as over 10m you cannot hold the device steady enough. Also you take compass bearings sighting along the device and the laser spot. (The device is slightly magnetic so a compass has to be held half a meter away). To tie in with previous surveys of Brimfell Xcut a sighting was made to a reflective plate left on a survey point at the bottom of the stope, bearing and clinometer readings taken. By the time I had done all this, every one else had descended and disappeared into the Brimfell Xcut, the bottom of the pitch being in direct line of fire from rocks falling off the boulder.

After leaving a reflective plate on the survey position I descended and joined the rest, who all agreed that it had been an interesting day but probably the route would not qualify as a useful through trip owing to the dubious nature of the hanging wall. By this time it was about 6.00 and it was agreed to retrieve the ropes the following weekend – all agreeing to come and assist in this operation (Peter would be at the other end of the world in Patagonia by this time). Foot and mouth has put paid to this scheme for the time being.

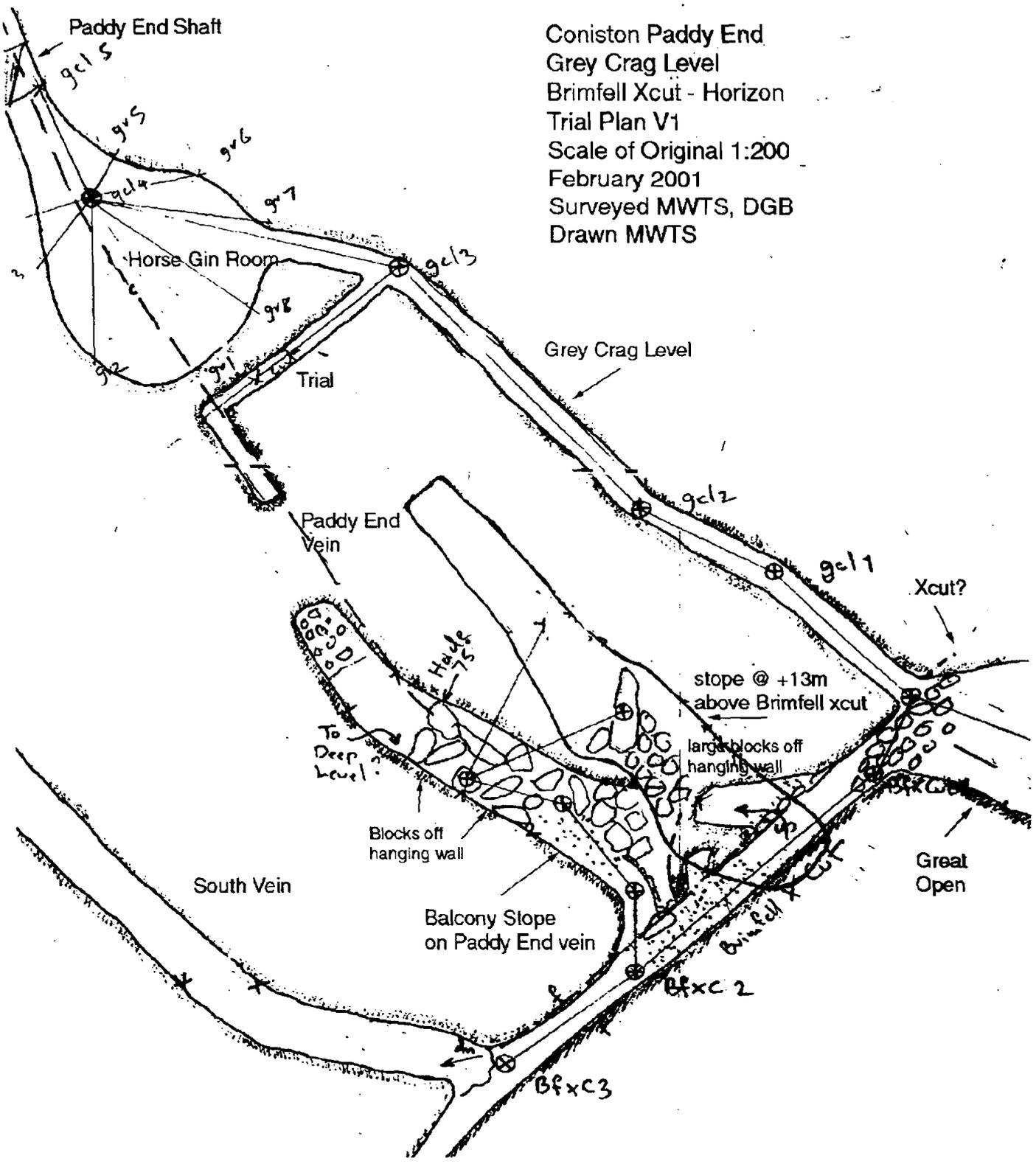
Hopefully, when we return, more measurements will be taken of the bottom (SE corner of Balcony Stope) and it is intended to rig South Vein from Middle Level to Brimfell Xcut so that people can prussick up, saving a lot of time, for there are several areas at this end of Middle Level that need active exploration and surveying i.e. The NW and upper regions of South vein.

The Disto referred to is the Leica Disto Lazer range finder, bought by CATMHS from Yorkshire Survey Supplies, with the help of Mike Mitchell. This device will take out all the guesswork of estimating distances, i.e. if you can see a recognisable feature, and this thing is accurate to 3mm in 30m, then you can fix the features position. (Note: The Disto *can* be handheld, but as stated above a Tripod is needed for long distances, also it does not like sighting onto water/spray and wood). Not quite the total solution, but quite an advance on our surveying capability's, though for standard compass traverses we still use tape.

Mark Simpson – March 2001

The good Doctor may be scandalised at ropes being left in again. This time, however they are all CATMHS ones, which may make a difference.

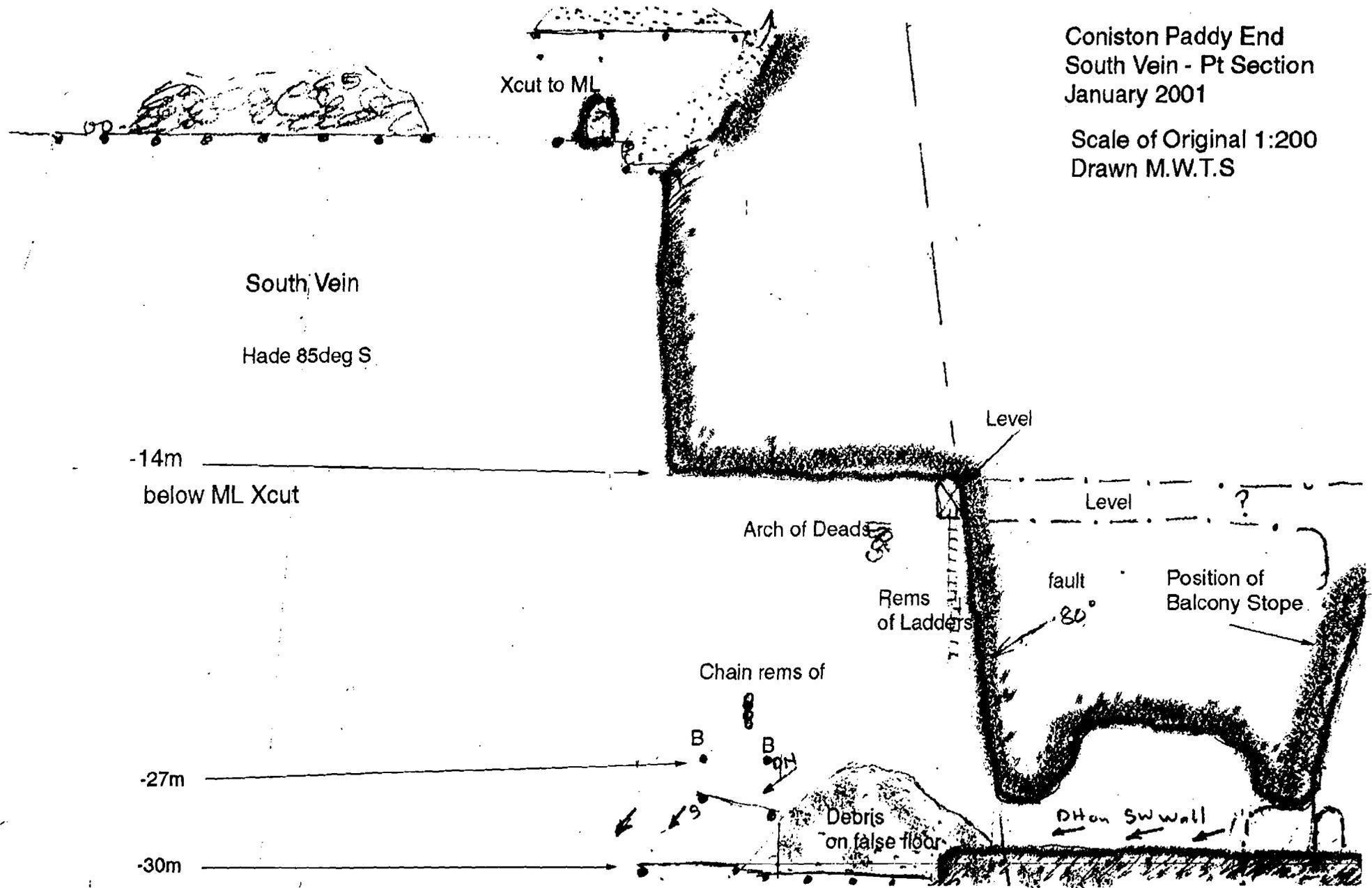
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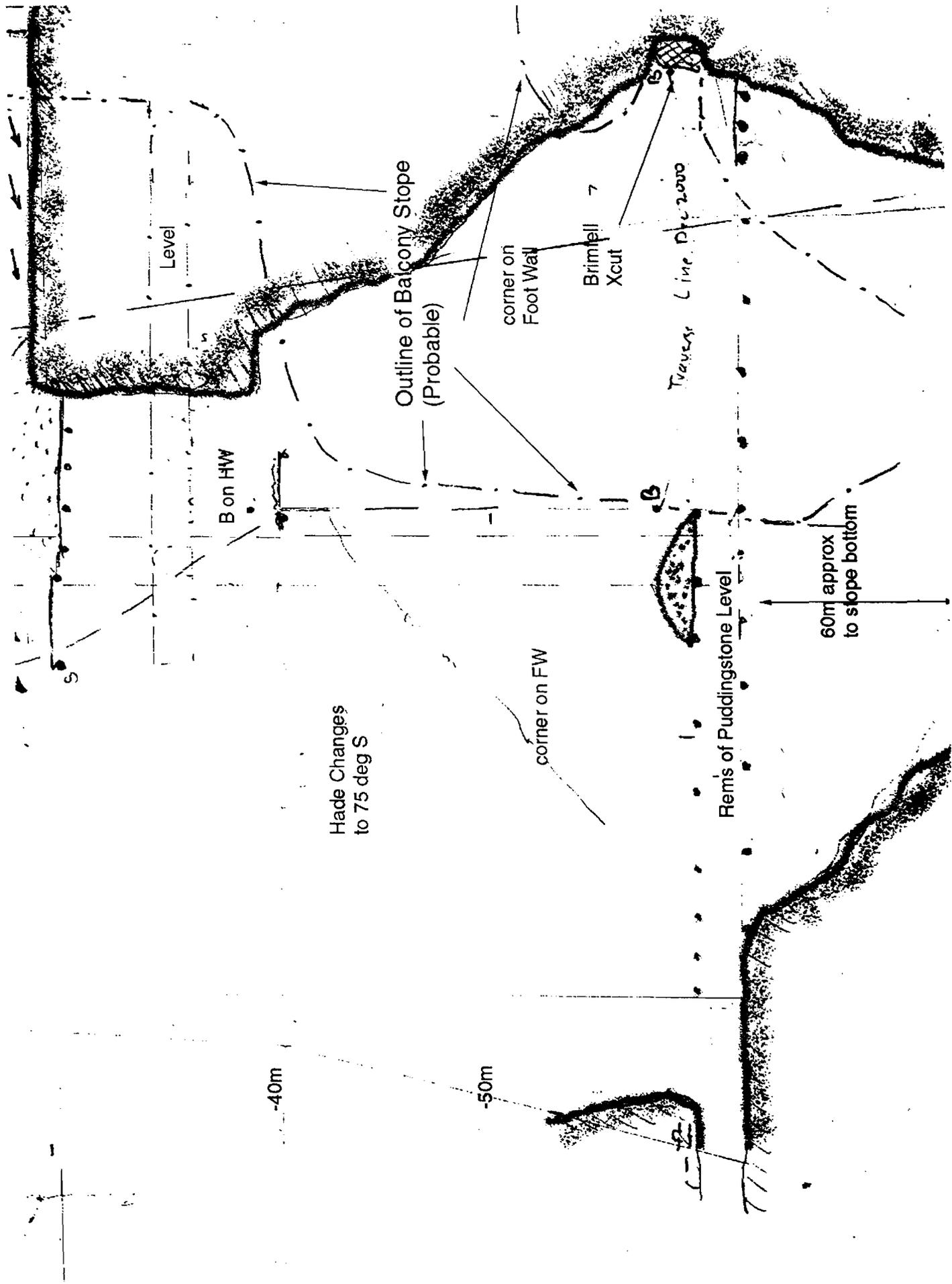


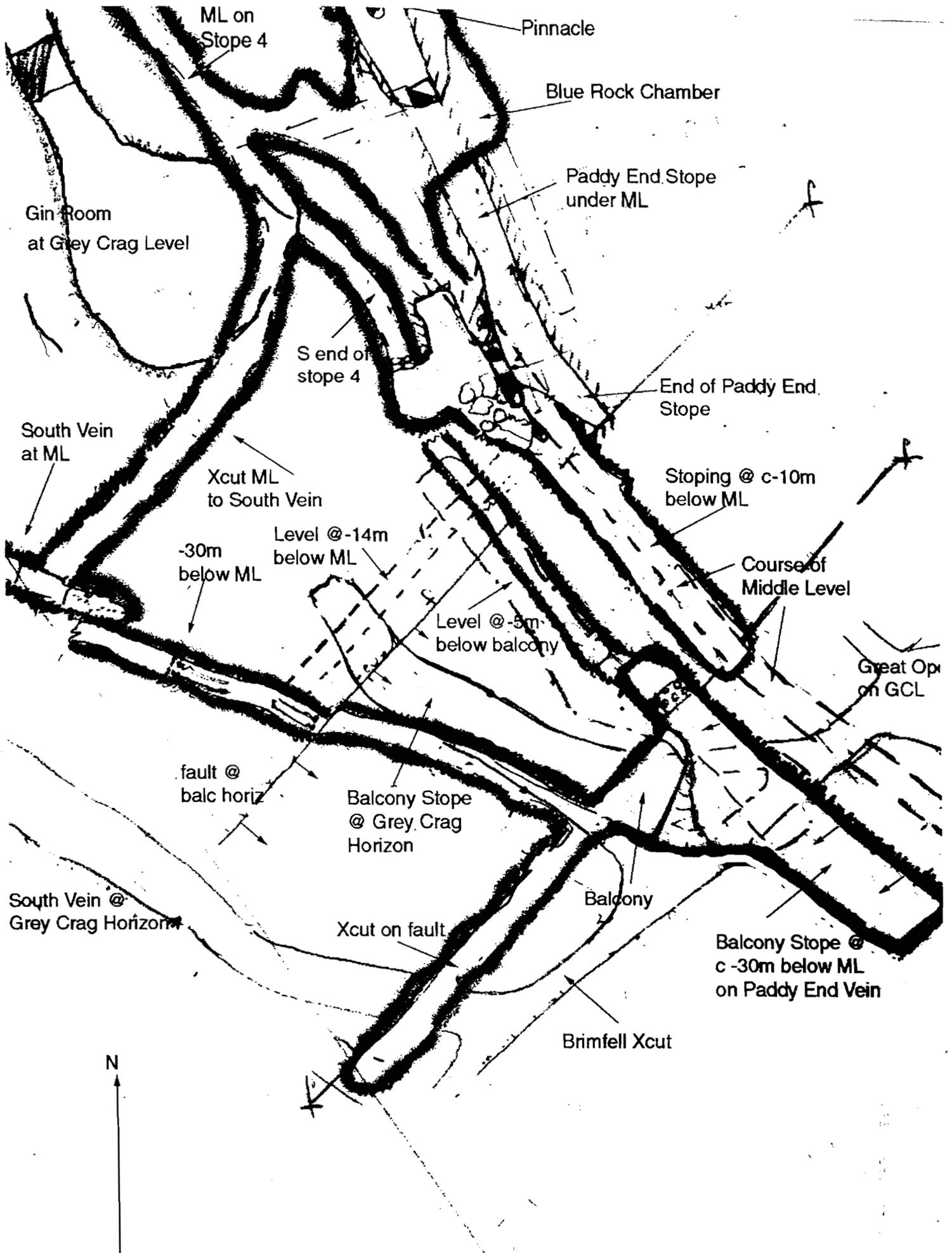
Coniston Paddy End
 Grey Crag Level
 Brimfell Xcut - Horizon
 Trial Plan V1
 Scale of Original 1:200
 February 2001
 Surveyed MWTS, DGB
 Drawn MWTS

Coniston Paddy End
South Vein - Pt Section
January 2001

Scale of Original 1:200
Drawn M.W.T.S







CORRIS SLATE DISTRICT MEET 9TH & 10TH OCTOBER 2000

This meet was based in the Corris Slate District in southern Snowdonia. Although this area was small in terms of output when compared to the principal slate producing areas of North Caernarvonshire, Dyffryn Nantlle and Blaenau Ffestiniog it retains a unique charm and, as a whole, still has much to interest the Mine Explorer and Industrial Archaeologist alike.

Saturday 9th October Tyn-y-Berth

Mark Waite
Steve Brown
John Ashby
Tristan Goldsack
John Aird
Jon Knowles (ML)

Saturday's exploration was centred on the Tyn-y-berth slate mine in Upper Corris. This is a site which despite its closeness to the road seems to have been little visited by Mine Explorers. This omission is probably explained by the dense tree growth which covers the site. There is little published history of this site although what little there is, is recorded in "Slate Quarrying at Corris by Alun Richards" from which the following has been gleaned.

The site is believed to have been worked before 1848 when the G.W.Hills took a 99 year lease. The Tyn y Berth Slate Quarry Company started major work in 1852. By the end of that year the bottom tunnel was being driven and roofing up had commenced to the pit and that roofing for 3 had commenced. Roofing was said to be continuing on 4 whilst at 5 a tunnel had been commenced and a 6th was proposed. (It is assumed that the numbers refer to adits – the relationship with the adits as they are now is not known – JK)

By 1853, "6 tunnels with roofing to pits" were completed. The working was closed between 1867 and 1875. A lease to John

Hughes Jones in 1875 is not thought to have resulted in any extraction. The Gaewern Slate Quarry Company of 1877 and the Tyn y Berth & Corris Valley Slate Company were subsequently linked with the site although it is unlikely that either did any work. In the 1890's it was bought by a Towyn company which did some limited work but was closed by 1897.

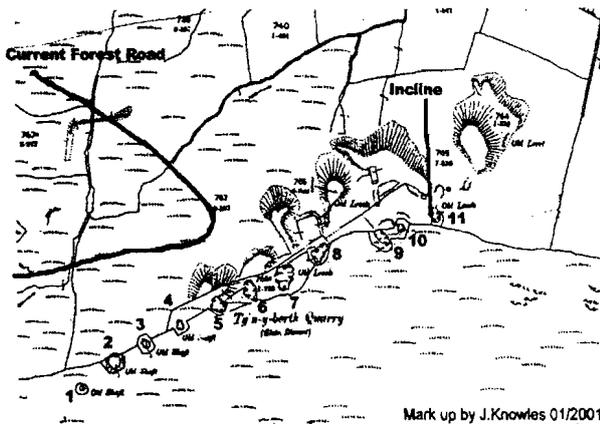
The site lies on fairly steeply sloping forested land and is little visited despite its nearness to the main road. The initial evidence, apart from the tips, is a series of open chambers running up the hillside and a number of blocked adits. The underground workings have been little explored presumably due to the lack of open adits and the daunting nature of some of the open chambers.

An initial reconnaissance of the site in February 2000 by Peter Hay and the author identified a suitable chamber to descend however on the meet a chamber even lower down the hillside (see No.11 on plan) was found. Working on the assumption that the lower you started the less distance it is necessary to descend, a rope was rigged for this descent. John Ashby went first down the wet moss covered face before landing on a lot of fallen material on a shelf part way down the chamber. A small hole almost obscured by fall was seen.

The author joined John on the shelf and few minutes of pushing blocks out the way soon produced a hole for the author to slide through into initially knee but quickly waist deep water. This water passed under the debris through which we climbed before cascading down into the chamber below. After calling to the others to descend John Ashby and the author headed quickly inbye to escape the water. Outbye the level was straight with no obvious chamber entrances but with a very obvious ever increasing depth of water – exploration of which was deferred. We were soon joined by Tristan but despite repeated shouting the remainder of the party were reluctant to enter the water

and seemed to want to wait for the CD of the mine to be published before deciding whether to wet those parts which are best not wetted !

The level progressed inbye passing 7 chamber entrances on route, which are assumed to be 4 to 10 on the plan below. The level ended in a mass of material which appeared to have been washed down from above – other chamber may lie beyond. Only 5 and 10 could be entered the remainder of the chambers being filled with fall. Chamber 5 was entered but this **did not connect with above** although a ladder could be seen high in the workings – see discussion.



Mark up the OS 1901 Second Edition Map

Returning to the shelf in the first chamber everybody returned to the surface for lunch whilst John Ashby, who didn't have any lunch, keenly stayed underground to put in a couple of bolts for the next pitch. Returning to the darkness we found the pitch rigged and John at the bottom out of the torrent of water falling down the rope. The author descended next dislodging two large rocks which had appeared to be an integral part of the chamber wall in the process - Steve Brown headed for the surface at this point. Once clear of the waterfall we were joined by Mark.

The lowest level drains outbye although the collapsed entrance was not seen from the

inside due to the depth of water. Inbye a small chamber was entered which did not connect with anything above. A small amount of 2' rail was in situ. The most interesting thing about the lowest level was its height it being reminiscent of level 6 in the nearby Braich Goch workings although unlike that mine there was no obvious reason for its approximate 10 foot height. Once all had been seen a prompt return to surface was made. Its amazing how quickly you can prussick when water is pouring onto your head.

Discussion

Assuming that the chamber numbered 5 on the plan which we entered relates to one of the chambers which are open to surface then clearly the workings were being worked up underneath existing chambers which were already open to surface. This also means that there must be portions of the mine higher up the hillside that may be accessible but we did not see. To confirm this suspicion it would be necessary to abseil down one of the small wet open chambers at the top of the site which must surely open out into a large chamber.

The published history of the site, the Ordnance Survey map and the evidence on the ground do not agree. If as Richards states that the working closed in 1897 why is the incline not shown on the 1901 Second Edition map - which was produced in 1901. The answer could lie in the fact that this map was actually surveyed in 1886 but significant changes such as the incline would have been included in the 1900 revision. Those that doubt this only need to look at the sheet to realise that the Quarry is one of the most significant features on the sheet – the majority of it being bare hillside.

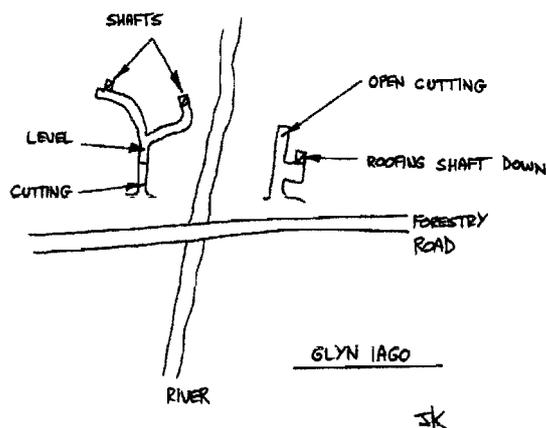
What is even more intriguing is that from the evidence on the ground it would be reasonable to assume that the incline was a feature of the earlier working of the site prior to the lower levels being driven. With lower levels it would be possible to bring

material out directly to the dressing areas at the lowest part of the site. One possible explanation which would cover all these anomalies is that the incline was a late feature and that the later workings were the upper workings and that these did not connect or were not used to take material down internally – the problem (?) with this argument is that we have yet to explore them since they would lie above the workings we entered !

In summary a small brave team needs to return.

If anybody has any photographs of the site prior to afforestation I would be very interested in seeing them.

Once all were back on the surface and de-rigged time was pressing on so we decided to leave the kit and walk to the Glyn Iago workings which lie deep in the forest between Tyn y berth and Bryn Eglwys. A quick inspection of the site revealed that there are two shafts and a roofing shaft which would need to be descended on a return visit.



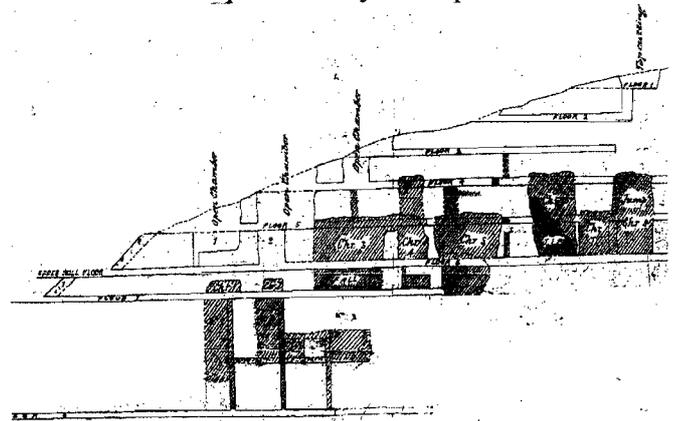
Saturday night was spent at the Braich Goch Hotel and later at the Slater Arms. As is usual on these trips the discussions was wide ranging but these were punctuated at regular intervals by the bleeping of Steve's watch which reminded him to do his neck exercises (reminiscent of a nodding dog) to prevent his head falling off.

Sunday 10th October Ratgoed

Mark Waite
 Steve Brown
 John Ashby
 Tristan Goldsack
 John Aird
 Ken Geddes (NL)
 Jon Knowles (ML)

The abbreviation NL stands for No Lamp.

The purpose of the meet was to revisit the sub-level which lies between floors 7 and 8 at the Ratgoed Slate Mine. After meeting in Aberllefenni and then driving nearer to the site we walked up the valley and up the site.



Part Section of Ratgoed from Abandonment Plan

The entrance to floor 7 is extremely poor and people following in our footsteps should be prepared to have to exit from floor 8. Passing quickly through the water three chambers are entered the middle one being the best for descending. On the wall at the head of the chamber there is a fine carving of a ship which is reproduced below.

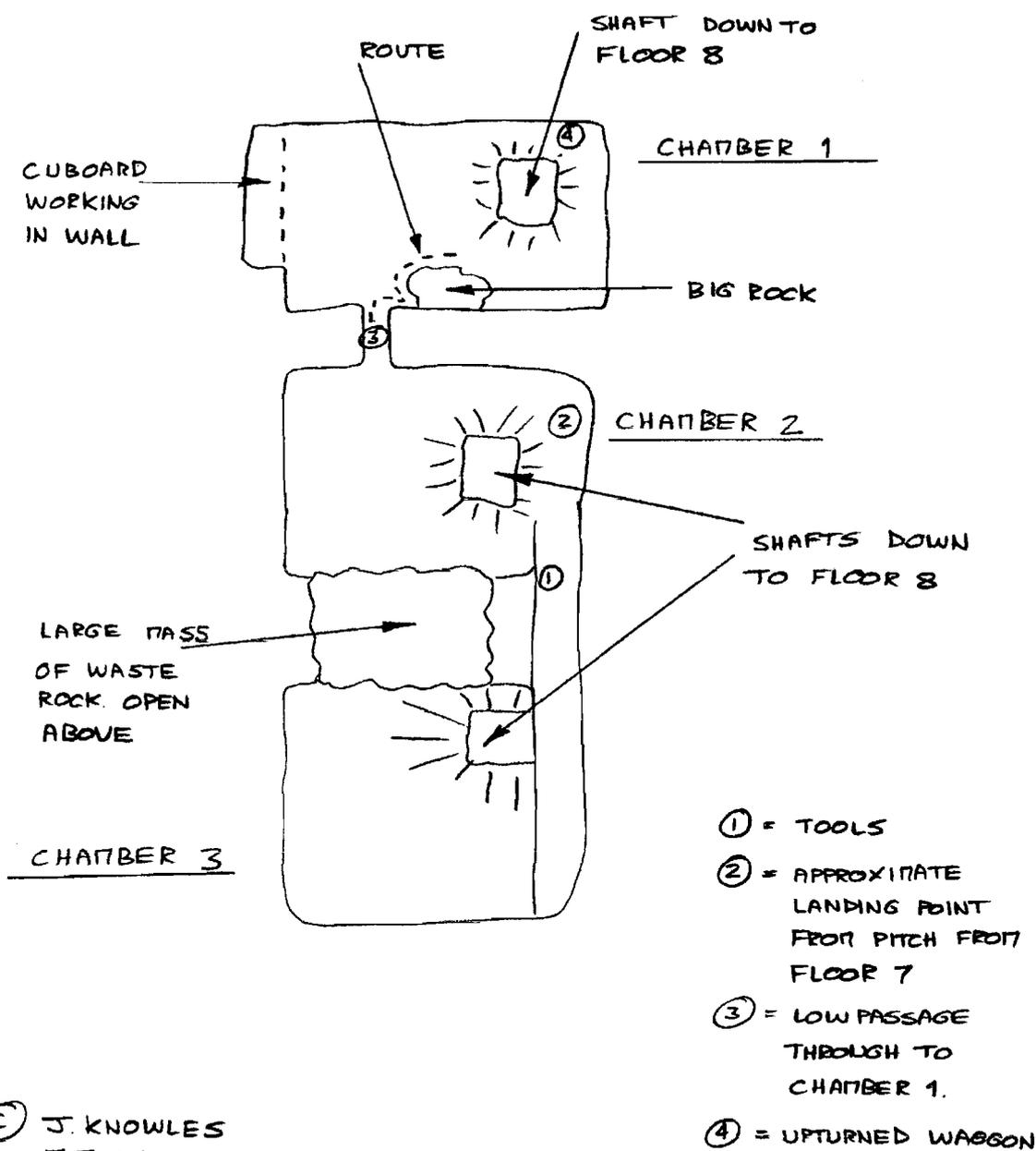
After a descent of approximately 40 feet, between two old ladders, a ledge is reached from which there is a further descent of approximately 15 feet to the working level which has no adit access. During the descent it was possible to look across to an alcove which contained a winch, this was high in the pillar between chambers 2 and 3. A ladder led up to this alcove but it was in too

poor a condition to climb. It was clear that more people had visited this part of the mine since Tristan and the author last visited the site in 1996. However much remained from when the mine was working, including newspapers from 1943. Other artefacts including gunpowder and detonator boxes and an oil can complete with cork stopper

were seen. Details of this area are shown on the attached sketch.

Regular readers will recall the working methods used in the chambers since it was explained in an earlier newsletter but for newer members the following is a quick resume.

ROUGH SKETCH OF SUB-LEVEL BETWEEN FLOORS
7 & 8 AT RATGOED SLATE MINE.



© J. KNOWLES
7.7.96

NOT TO SCALE

When opening a chamber the first task was to open the chamber across the width of the vein for the desired length. Once this had been completed a crane would be fixed in place and a shaft sunk to the level below. The chamber would then be worked as a conventional pit quarry as is very popular in the Dyffryn Nantlle area but with the slate and waste being lowered down the shaft for transport to surface along the lower adit. This explains that whilst Ratgoed was clearly working between levels 7 and 8 when it closed in 1946 waste from above had been partly tipped over the tramway into level 7.

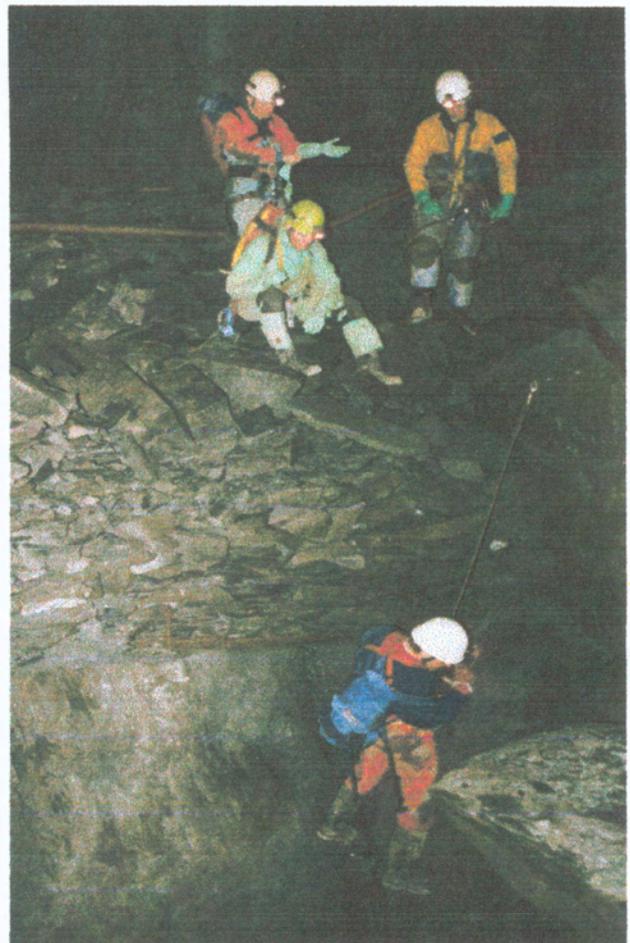
All three chambers have shafts down to floor 8 below. The depths vary with the depth to which the chambers have been worked, that in chamber 1 being approximately 30 feet above floor 8.

All three chambers have shafts down to floor 8 below. Interestingly the shaft in the first chamber has had a rough ladder installed in it since our last visit. This looks like it might have been made by a retired builder . . . (we know who you are!) Not being convinced by the ladder two bolts were installed for the descent of the middle shaft. The descent was made without incident even by Ken who did it without a light ! The meet leader and Tristan prussicked back up to de-rig.

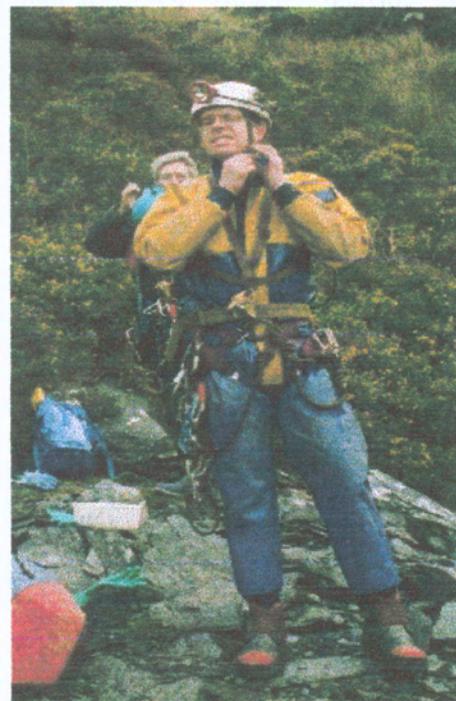
Jon Knowles



Carving of Ship – Floor 7



Ken Geddes (NL) Descending the Shaft



The Meet Leader

**CAT Visit to Loughrigg Quarry, 2nd
December 2000.
AD Cameron**

This is a brief (and rather late) report on the field-trip that took place on the day after the CAT event at Rydal Hall on December 2nd 2000. At the present time, with the fells completely out-of-bounds, we tend to look back on short strolls such as this with great envy.

The morning was wet and rain fell steadily throughout the day. The group set out from Rydal Hall and over the Rothay Bridge. About 15 delegates in wet weather gear wandered round the back of Rydal Lake up to the Loughrigg Quarry. The big cave at the quarry gave good temporary shelter from the rain.

Loughrigg Quarry is unique. It is the only complete example of a 'light-hole' working remaining in the Southern Lakes. Light holes were once a common way of extracting slate. They were created by extracting along a slate band from where it outcropped at the surface. There were many examples of light holes in the area most of which have now collapsed, those on Coniston Old Man spectacularly so. The light hole at Loughrigg appears to be sound but at venues such as Thrang Quarry, Langdale or at Tilberthwaite the large overhanging roofs were prone to collapse along the bedding planes, especially where the bedding plane was nearly vertical.

Having dried off a bit the group started off again along the path towards Loughrigg Terrace. A short distance further on another working was reached. This was a narrow cutting that once may have lead to a level, but from the quantity of spoil on the bank the

overall working was not extensive. However there is interest in all old workings however small and this one was found to have two unusual features. The first was that it appeared to have worked a band of silver-grey slate unlike the nearby light hole which was clearly on a light green slate band. The second point was that the slate was extremely well banded, the markings were at least as pronounced as those found at the Walna Scar Quarries.

By this time the rain was becoming heavier and the group decided to call it a day and make its way, by a number of routes, back to Rydal Hall. There were several other small workings in the area which we decided would warrant a return visit, perhaps on a sunny day in the Spring. Little were we to know how impossible this would prove to be.

**Boxing Day Meet,
Tilbertwaite Mines.**

About fifteen people met at Tilbertwaite Ghyll Car Park on a bright and sunny Boxing Day for a sociable walk around the Tilbertwaite mines. We set off up the path on the right hand side of the ghyll, crossed over above the top waterfall and went to examine the horse gin gear outside Wetherlam Mine. Several other mines in the area were visited, including a small trial beside the miners track, which was entered. Lunch was taken outside Borlase Mine, and a few hardy souls waded in for a look around. Some called it a day after this, but the main group carried on through the Tilberthwaite valley quarries to finish with a pint at the Three Shires Inn. Thanks to Peter Fleming for leading the meet.

**Borrowdale Wadd mines, 14th
January 2001**

This meet was originally intended as a through trip of the main workings from Gill Stage to Farey's Stage but the opportunity of a guided tour of the workings on Seatoller Common by two members who have been researching that area in depth was too good to be missed. After a leisurely ascent from Seathwaite farm by the zig-zag miner's track inspecting various surface features on the way up, including three John Bankes boundary stones (two reconstructed) we joined the rest of the team at the upper wad hole beyond the boundary wall. Seatoller Common is literally peppered with small trials and prospecting trenches and these were eventually undercut by levels known as Common Stage (1811), Moors Stage (around 1830) which is above Common Stage and connected to it by a 50ft shaft, and a third close to and connected to Moors known as High Common Stage. A little to the north of these are two copper trials distinguished from the latter by the gosseny material on their substantial spoil heaps. After inspecting these workings we set off in the direction of Grey Knotts to a place where a John Shepherd boundary stone can be seen if you know where to find it.

It is reported that in about 1750 a miner of the name of William Hetherington started a small copper trial adjacent to the upper wad mine and drove a secret level from this trial to the wad mine. One plan shows this working as Jopson's Level at the head of the Wadhole Gill with a branch leading off R at 10 yards but on inspection the working was found merely to be an unbranched short level in solid rock. More promising is a level in a shallow depression several paces to the west of the gill, which was found

to be collapsed at about 10 yards and merits further investigation.

In view of the fine weather a surface walk with the option of short subterranean excursions into what was largely new ground made an interesting and rewarding meet and thanks must go to those who prepared and led the tour of the Seatoller Common workings. For those who prefer to dangle on ropes - watch out for the next visit to the Wad Mines.

Dave Bridge.

**Brewery Shaft Nenthead, 4th
February.**

After the difficulties encountered on the previous CAT meet to this shaft a few years ago I was slightly apprehensive regarding the meet. With one lane of the A1 closed at Scotch Corner due to snow these apprehensions grew deeper especially as the roads were white almost immediately after leaving the motorway. When I spun the van round in a very snowy Weardale doing more than 360 degrees before coming to rest and narrowly missing a wall they became reality!

Arrival at Nenthead was eventually achieved about 30 minutes late, having had to stop and fit snow chains in St. Johns Chapel. Fortunately a strong team of John Ashby, Chris Cowdry and John Aird were waiting whilst Sheila Barker and Don Borthwick were removing Radon detectors. Others (we know your names!) had arrived taken one look at the weather and then left. The bad news was that the long rope was with Dave Bridge on the wrong side of Hartside - where it was to stay.

At times when I have to bare my naked body to a North Pennine snow storm I

wonder why I don't put my undersuit on at home. It's a pity that the cold you feel at these times could not be offset by the facial warmth when standing in the queue to pay at a garage dressed only in a pale green undersuit, wellies and a weak smile!

Once inside the level the pitch was rigged with two ropes and 4 re-belays so that a quick descent could be made. For those that have not been down to the bottom of the 328ft (from surface, approx 270 ft from Rampgill Horse Level) concrete lined shaft, it is a real gem. There are numerous artefacts which due to their inaccessibility have largely remained untouched, including pelton wheels, the remains of a Broom & Wade compressor, a generator, and an underground waterwheel. Most of the machinery is housed in a workshop complete with benches and tools. The only jarring note was sounded when I compared the photographs of the recent trip with those taken approximately 5 years ago, and the number of minor artefacts which had disappeared had increased alarmingly, although the anvil much coveted by the membership secretary a few years ago is still in place.

The waterwheel is reached by a short but wet walk to the wheel chamber. When discussing the waterwheel two pertinent questions were asked; what did the wheel do and where did the water come from? The answer to the second question may be the hole in the roof through which much water falls, but where does it come from originally? If anybody can answer these points please advise the Newsletter editor so that we can all read about it. The only article I know about which explains anything about the shaft is "The Nenthead Mines" by Martin Critchley ISSN 0031-3637

approx. £6 from PDMHS although this does not answer these questions.

The current Brewery Shaft is of large diameter and is concrete lined. This must have been considerably enlarged from the original used when driving the Nent Force Level with which it connects, particularly since by the time the Nentforce Level reached Nenthead the benefits of the whole scheme were being questioned. I assume that the shaft was enlarged when it was incorporated into the Vieille Montagne Zinc Company's developments at Nenthead early in the 20th century. In this scheme Brewery Shaft was part of a large and complex scheme to use water power to produce compressed air using the Smallcleugh, Coalcleugh and Perry's dams together with numerous shafts and levels. This ultimately produced compressed air at Brewery Shaft partly through the use of compressors and partly through air being pressurised by being entrained in falling water and in the process becoming pressurised. This process is explained in more detail by Critchley although to my mind, as a Mechanical Engineer working in the Pump Industry, not fully enough so I must confess that I am not 100% clear on exactly how the system worked.

Once we had all taken our fill of the artefacts the slow descent to surface was made. The wooden spoon for descent goes to Mr Cowdry who complained bitterly about the rope - a problem which did not seem to trouble anybody else . . . Once back on the surface an extremely rapid change into dry clothes took place before venturing out through the blizzard to home.

Jon Knowles

CHECK YOUR LEG LOOPS - A WARNING FROM LES SYKES

A little word of warning when wearing harnesses. I recently purchased a new Petzl harness, one of the ones with the purple webbing. I was amazed to find that while prusiking up the big pitch in Gavel Pot, the legs loops came undone; not completely, but the safety double-over buckle did undo so that the engraved word DANGER was visible.

Worried by this I contacted Lyon Equipment (main importer of Petzl equipment). After examining the harness their comments were, 'some slippage of the webbing is acceptable' and that, 'the buckles of harnesses should be checked at regular intervals'. I'm not too sure about 'some slippage of the webbing is acceptable', but I do check my harness buckles regularly. The question is how often is regular? I would certainly expect to get up a pitch without having to check the buckles. When asked, Lyon didn't

respond to define what regular was.

Recently it has been brought to my attention that a number of cavers are having problems with their new(ish) Petzl harnesses, and yes, it's the leg loops working loose. Some have even come undone. Currently Petzl are looking at the problem, I doubt whether they will want to give refunds on the 1,000's of harnesses they have sold.

So, beware! Check the buckles more regularly than you think that you need to, especially if you own a new(ish) Petzl harness with the purple webbing. Models where loosening of the buckles has occurred are the Petzl Fractio and Petzl Superavanti. I will keep you posted on developments.

If you are experiencing problems with your Petzl harness, let Lyon Equipment or Petzl know, it's the only way to get the improvements that cavers deserve.

THE GAPING GHYLL FATALITY, JULY 1995

Back in 1996, the BCRC report included the report of a fall in Gaping Ghyll:

30. Tuesday, 25th July 1995 at 15:00 by CRO (3½ hours)
Jib Tunnel, Gaping Ghyll, Fall, Scout Group
Walker (m11) ventured into Jib Tunnel and fell 340ft down shaft into Gaping Ghyll Main Chamber. Fatal.

The parents of the deceased, Mr. and Mrs. Craddock, subsequently took an action against the landowner (Dr. John Farrar) and the Scout Association for psychological damage and losses incurred as a result of the accident. This eventually came to court on Monday 13th November 2000.

On the Monday, the judge (Judge Appleton) and the barristers for each of the parties visited GG in somewhat inclement weather conditions. The beck was in full spate - very different from the day of the incident. This was recognised by all concerned. The following days were concerned with the evidence.

The BCRC, CRO and the Mountain Rescue Council had provided evidence regarding incidents that had occurred at Gaping Ghyll, and on rescues involving young persons of all backgrounds that mountain and cave rescue teams had attended.

Pete Allwright had been called to support this evidence but in the event the written submission was accepted without examination. The barristers summed up for each of the three parties on Thursday. The judge then reserved his judgment to the Friday.

On the Friday, the Judge reviewed the evidence presented. He described GG as 'quite like nothing he had ever seen before'. He said that such a site would require natural caution.

He then described the events of the day. The 37th Blackpool Scouts were at camp and had planned a visit to the Ingleborough Show Cave, walking up through the Ingleborough Estate. Finding a queue at the show cave, the party went on to view Gaping Ghyll. He said the deceased was permitted to explore the area around GG when he entered Jib Tunnel and fell.

The judge pointed out there were 4 themes:

- the existence of warning signs, their position and relevance
- lack of organisation and supervision in the group
- the boy's initial request for a torch
- the boy's further requests for a torch followed by the entry into Jib

He summarised the lack of warnings provided by the scout leaders. The scouts were told not to get too close to the shaft, but these were not reinforced whilst the scouts were there. He

said it was the responsibility of the leaders who took them there to give sufficient warnings. From this and other evidence he concluded that the scout leaders had not sufficiently briefed themselves on the trip they eventually undertook.

The judge referred to the warning signs posted by the National Park in the car park in Clapham and to a handbook (Northern Caves) available from outlets in Clapham.

Further, he described examining the OS map submitted in evidence and the many potholes and shakeholes marked there on.

He concluded that 5 minutes reading would have provided the background needed to be safe. He referred to evidence of some scouts throwing stones down the shaft. Further evidence indicated how disorganised the group was and the lack of supervision.

He finally summarised the organisation and supervision of the group had been woefully inadequate.

The final outcome was:

- that there was no liability for the accident against the 1st defendant, Dr Farrer. Coupled to this, the judge said that he was not convinced a barrier across Jib Tunnel could be easily made and fitted into place, and that reading the literature would have provided the necessary protection.
- that the father was completely without blame. He was in a strange place and had a great ignorance of the area due to a lack of proper briefing. He had discharged his duty as a parent in a "most unfortunate way".
- that the case against the second defendant, the Scout Association, was unanswerable. He said he would expect children to visit under the supervision of a parent or a group, and that at GG it was reasonable to expect children to be kept away from the edge.

He likened standing at the top of the shaft to that of a steeplejack on top of a chimney.

He cited the change in nature of the trip from a visit to the show cave to a trip into the countryside and the lack of preparation of such.

Clearly, the above is but a brief summary of the week's events based on some notes. The judge's summing up took over two hours and could have had serious effects on access to caves in the event of an adverse judgment.

Pete Allwright

[Reprinted with permission from the British Cave Rescue Council Newsletter, No. 13, Jan. 2001]

Collector makes millions from minerals

A MINERAL dug up from a former working Barrow mine helped a collector scoop more than £2.5 million at auction.

American businessman Joseph Freilich sold his collection of mineral specimens at auction on Friday night in New York.

Two of his 433 specimens for sale were minerals extracted from the defunct iron ore mine at Stank, on the outskirts of Barrow.

The more valuable of the Stank items, which was described by auctioneers Sotheby's in its catalogue as Calcite with Hematite Inclusions, measured six and three quarter inches by six inches.

A spokesman at Sotheby's, casting an eye over the sample, said: "It is

a magnificent group of modified scalenohedral calcites with two thirds heavily including with a staining of hematites."

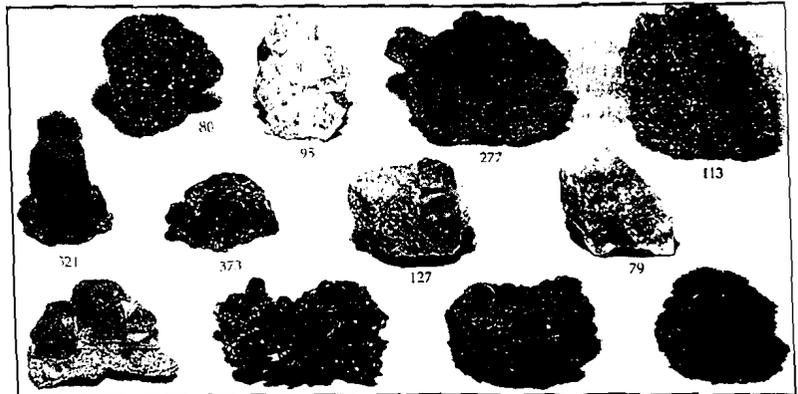
The specimen attracted a great deal of interest from collectors and sold for \$2,160, about £1,500.

The other lot from the Stank mine, described as a Calcite twin on cluster of scalenohedral crystals, was expected to fetch up to £1,000 but did not sell at the auction.

Mr Freilich sold 264 of the 433 items and made £2.6 million from the event.

The iron ore mine at Stank, which employed hundreds of people in its heyday in 1890, closed about 80 years ago.

It was the first international auction in more than



BEST SELLERS: Lot 113 (top right) Calcite with Hematite Inclusions dug up from Stank Mine fetched £1,500 at the auction which included these other specimens

25 years of a major collection of minerals.

The examples were valued depending on factors

such as size of crystal, unusualness of formation and aesthetic appeal.

All the minerals in the col-

lection exist in their natural state. On average each one is between 20 million and 40 million years old.

EVENING MAIL 16-01-01

Cash boost for Ruskin museum

A MUSEUM dedicated to the life of John Ruskin - one of the Lake District's most-famous intellectuals - has been given a cash boost to help keep its doors open all year round, reports Beth Broomby.

The Ruskin Museum in Coniston, which opened to the public on May 1999, is only open for 32 weeks a year, mostly during the tourist season.

But, following an £850,000 re-development project, the museum, which celebrates the work of Ruskin - a Victorian artist, critic, writer and social revolutionary - wants to branch out into year-round opening.

In an appeal to Cumbria County Council's South Lakeland area committee, museum curator Vicky Slowe asked for £1,000 towards the cost of longer opening, the remainder of the money is expected to come from extra ticket sales.

In a report, CCC's acting head of

community, economy and environment Ralph Howard, said: "The community enterprise officer believes this is a risk worth taking because if, as is anticipated visitor numbers are increased, then two permanent full time jobs will have been created for a relatively small sum of money."

Committee chairman Coun John Ladell said he was pleased the committee was able to support the venture.

He said: "The museum has been sustained by a number of partners, statutory and voluntary, working together. It links closely with other tourist attractions and works with schools to provide an innovative learning environment. Working alongside local traders, cafes and other businesses to expand the economic base of the village beyond the traditional summer tourist time is an excellent idea."

Quarry plans

TWO hundred tonnes of slate will be extracted from a Coniston quarry each year if plans to deepen the existing hole are given the green light. The Lake District National Park Authority's development control committee is considering an application to extend Peat Field Quarry, on Hodge Close, from M.W. Gibson and M. Askew, of Coniston. Planning officer David McGowan explained that green slate was already being extracted from the site and processed into a range of products, but existing reserves from which the applicants have permission to take slate were diminishing. If granted planning consent, they expect to remove about 200 tonnes of green slate from the site annually and use it mainly for roofing slate as well as tiles, flags and walling stone.

Westmorland Gazette, Feb 2 2001

CUMBRIA AMENITY TRUST MINING HISTORY SOCIETY

Committee Meeting held on the Monday 15th January 2000 at the BMSC Hut, Coniston.

Agenda.

1 Apologies for absence	2 Minutes of the last meeting
3 Matters arising	4 Secretary's Report
5 Treasurer's Report	6 Membership Secretary's Report
7 Meets Secretary's Report	8 Hudgillburn Mine
9 Coniston Coppermines Site	10 Lakelands Mining Heritage
11 Publications	12 CAT's 21st Birthday
13 Date and venue of next committee meeting	14 Any other business

Present D. Bridge (DB), I. Matheson (IM), P. Fleming (PF),
M. Mitchell (MM) M. Scott (MSc) & A. Wilson (AW).
6 members in total. The meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from S. Barker (SB) and M. Simpson (MS).

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the committee meeting held on Monday 13th November had been previously circulated to members. MSc wished item 9 to be amended to read "water works" instead of "South Shaft" This amendment completed, it was PROPOSED by MM and SECONDED by AW that the minutes be signed by the chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings. This was carried unanimously.

3 Matters arising

3.1 Item 3.1 MM had purchased a Leica Disto rangefinder from York Survey Supply Centre which will meet with our requirements - cost £346. This has now been tried out and tested underground where it was found that before useful readings could be made a tripod was necessary for stability etc. DB has since purchased a suitable tripod for £25.

4 Secretary's Report

The secretary had received:

4.1 Letter from LDNPA about their 50th birthday celebration requiring a reply. After discussion it was decided that:

- a) We would be willing to display a poster - possibly at the BMSC cottage.
- b) We have no plans of our own to celebrate the anniversary.
- c) We could involve CAT in the National Park in Action weekend (6/7th May). Offering a surface walk around the Coniston Copper Mines- action A.D. Cameron.

4.2 Latest Charity Commission News.

4.3 Speleoscene. DB pointed out an article warning that leg loops on the Petzl Super Avanti and Fractio harnesses are liable to work loose.

4.4 Peter Sandbach's list of Furness Survey Work outstanding was noted.

4.5 Letters to and from Anton Thomas concerning the CAT library etc. were discussed:

- a) Regarding the library budget, the last major expenditure was in January 1995 when £272 was spent on books from Dave Blundell's collection. Since then the only purchases have been RCHME surveys and Sam Murphy's 'Grey Gold'. We decided that the library should be brought up to date but in view of the present state of our accounts we would have to limit the amount spent this year. IM agreed to visit the library and see what gaps there are in the recently published books relating to Cumbrian mines and in CAT newsletters and Bulletins. PF and IM in consultation with other members will draw up a list of books we need to purchase (plus our own publication not yet deposited) and this will be considered at the next meeting. DB offered to photocopy for the library any missing newsletters and bulletins that we need.
- b) It was decided that an updated library list should be made available to members in the form of a floppy disk. In 1995 Anton produced a disk containing a CATMHS Library Index

which was effectively a 'card index' of the library enabling cross referencing of the archive contents when used with the appropriate software. This was written in Windows 3.1 using MS Cardfile but unfortunately Cardfile is no longer part of the Windows suite. It would be a very useful data-base if it could be converted for use with Windows 95/98 and brought up to date-Action ACPT/DB/MS to look into. The library contents were printed in Newsletter No 42.

c) Regarding the whereabouts of D. Blundell's gear the general opinion was that it went to Chris Jones who was Tacklemaster at the time.

4.6 SB had renewed the 'Magpie' insurance policy for the CAT Library-cost £47.

4.7 A draft of the Corporate Plan from the LDNPA -PF will address this.

4.8 NAMHO publications.

5 Treasurer's Report

5.1 The bank balance at present stands at £1410.31. There are still some outstanding subs to come in. Apart from the newsletter and secretary's expenses the main outgoings for this year will be an immediate £500 for materials for the Grey Crag Level dig, plus a further £500 (approx.) in due course to include the cost of preparing steel-work. In the long term, revenue from the books and CD-ROM will stand us in good stead but in the immediate future funds will be running low. Mark Scott has very kindly offered an interest free loan to cover the cost of the laser rangefinder. Although this has already been paid for, the offer of a loan still stands in case we need the extra funding to cover. The Building Society balance stands at £9000 awaiting the bill for 'Lakeland's Mining heritage (estimated cost of the 15000 copy print run is approximately £8700).

5.2 SB had pointed out that it is a requirement of the Charity Commission that we should have our registered number on our cheques - MS to note.

6 Membership Secretary's Report

IM reported that the paid up membership now stood at 88 and there were a few (about 12) who had not renewed. We had gained one new member so far this year.

7 Meets Secretary's Report

Nothing reported.

8 Hudgillburn Mine

SB will be removing the second set of radon detectors on Saturday and will be sending them off to Tony Denman of the Northampton General Hospital Trust. In view of the high levels of radon registered in the mine TD has expressed an interest in visiting the mine in the near future to take on the spot measurements.

9 Coniston Coppermines

9.1 PF reported that the Grey Crag Level dig is progressing well thanks to the enthusiastic team headed by Pete Blezard. Radon detectors have been placed in Grey Crag Level and Puddingstone Level.

9.2 DB reported that the geological survey of Grey Crag Level had begun using the new laser rangefinder to measure stope profiles.

10 Lakelands Mining Heritage, the last 500 years.

10.1 ADC reported by e-mail that, thanks to Dave Sewart (DS), the CD_ROM containing the whole book was passed to the printers in Cambridge on 7th December and a laser copy was produced by them for proof. Final corrections were subsequently inserted at the printers by DS. It is hoped that the book will be out by the end of January when arrangements will need to be made for its distribution. The copies will be delivered to Alston. AC would like to thank all the contributors to the book for all their hard work and their help.

10.2 PF had received a letter from the Millennium Fund acknowledging that we had carried out our commitment and wishing us every success with the new book.

10.3 PF **PROPOSED** that we should offer one copy of the book to each CAT member (inc. family membership) at cost price. MM **SECONDED** this and it was the general opinion that this arrangement would not contravene the Charity Commission rules.

10.4 Use of the books dust jacket for fliers was once again discussed and it was the opinion of those present that these were cheaper to produce, even in large numbers, than A4 folded

fliers, which would require a separate print run. The dust jackets and an updated publication list will be sent to SB for advanced publicity. Action ADC.

- 10.5 It was decided that copies should be sent to all the local papers, NAMHO members and the Cumbria Magazine.

11 Publications

- 11.1 The committee commended IM on the December Newsletter and were particularly in favour of the use of colour for the cover design. IM gave a breakdown of the cost of producing 120 copies which was £30 for stationary, £47 for photocopying, £23 for printer cartridges (cover and illustrations and £65 for postage -i.e. a total of £160. Decembers was an exceptionally large edition (35 pages), partly due to the report on CAT's 21st celebrations. The future aim would be 20 pages (i.e. sides) maximum, possibly by printing one lengthy "feature article" per edition. IM had minimised the costs by producing the NL himself.
- 11.2 It was decided that the 5th issue of the CAT Journal should be seriously considered as a vehicle for more lengthy articles submitted by members. Production early 2002 would be a good time to aim at as we have no other publications in the pipeline at present. By the end of this year our finances should be in a healthy state, in view of the large stocks of 'Slate from Honister', 'Lakeland's Mining Heritage' and the CD-ROM waiting to be sold.
- 11.3 It was decided that the John Ruskin Museum's monopoly over the sale of the CD-ROM in the Lake District (apart from the Threlkeld Museum) should now be lifted but that they should retain their monopoly over sales in Coniston till the end of June 2001. The publicity which they have given the CD-ROM has been greatly appreciated.
- 11.4 In future a copy of the Newsletter will be sent to the Museum along with membership application details.

12 CAT's 21st Birthday Celebration

All agreed that it had been a splendid do and appreciated the hard work that Karen Beer and Sheila Barker had put in to achieve it - Action MM. SB had worked out that there had been a loss of about £30, in a total cost of £3575. This would be covered by the raffle money.

13 Date and venue of next Committee Meeting

In view of the fact that three members of the committee will be away for most of March this would be held on the **2nd April 2001** at the BMSC Hut at Coniston.

14 Any other business

- 14.1 Jon Knowles had e-mailed his concern re the availability of a long rope for the 4th February Brewery Shaft meet and offered to shop around for another 100m rope for CAT. DB promised that the existing 100m CAT rope, at present in Paddy End, would be removed before then. It was agreed that ropes must not be left in situ in mines if at all possible.
- 14.2 ADC had e-mailed his concern that most of the CAT ropes were now over 4 years old and we should be considering purchasing new ones. IM claimed that ropes are now considered quite safe to use for up to 5 years if well looked after. DB assured the committee that he kept a close eye on the state of the CAT ropes in Mandall's and cut, re-sealed and re-labelled them as necessary. The ropes in **red/yellow** bags are less than 5 years old and can be used for CAT meets. There are 5 such bags containing ropes of 100m, 55m, 35m, 28m and 24m. The ropes in the **blue** bags are older but sound and properly labelled. These should **NOT** be used for CAT meets but are available for use by members at their own discretion. There is also a bag of short lengths labelled "**oddmments**" suitable for handlines etc. The committee decided not to purchase any more rope at the present time.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.30 pm.

Blast from the past.

This article is one of an occasional series of previously unpublished material taken from the CAT meets log. It is an account by Chris Jones of a descent of Tilberthwaite Mine on 21st August 1983. The entrance is below the waterfall at the head of Tilbertwaite Ghyll, and involves a long wet thrutch over several partial blockages to the head of the first pitch, followed by 540 feet of abseiling.

‘A fair number of members put in an appearance at Tilberthwaite, but as soon as the big trip to the Horse Level was mooted many recent heart attacks, game legs, etc were mentioned, and even veteran Mine Explorer Mike Mitchell claimed he was too poorly to attempt it.

So, it was left to the stalwarts, Chris Jones, Alen McFadzean, Mark Wickenden, and Phil Murphy to do the job. The party set off with the poorly members as sherpas, and after the usual scrabble the head of the first pitch was reached and the four adventurers set off down. The first big (150') pitch was quickly rigged and descended. The next pitch involved a great deal of gardening, and Chris Jones and Alen McF did most of this. It is now much safer with much less hanging death. The final pitch had the half tree trunk removed (Alen had dubbed this The Sword of Damocles on a previous trip I think) and the Horse level was reached. The water level seemed not to have dropped much, but as we waded along it had, by about a foot. Mark had turned back at the head of the last pitch, due he said, to too much of a head cold, the type that comes out of a tap.

So then there was three. As we continued along the Horse Level the water slowly deepened until it was neck deep. It appeared to sump ahead, and

the three were about to turn back when Phil Murphy thought that a short duck might lead into pastures new The sod! Was that water cold – it certainly was. However, the duck proved very productive. we entered a large stope at right angles to the tunnel, containing no artefacts and 5 – 6 foot deep. The level continued on but was sumped. A small level in the back of the stope led to a forehead.

The sump back was just as cold, and especially bad for Chris Jones, who had a carbide lamp and no wet suit! The climb out was a welcome relief – anything to get warm. The three finally reached day about seven hours after setting off.

The remainder had gone to dig in the other end of the Horse Level, but alas no hope of getting through without timbering. A definite project for the future.

Chris D Jones, 21.8.83.

NB. CAT did return several times to dig out the Horse Level from the entrance at Penny Rigg Mine, but the task proved too big for the technology of the day. The level was subsequently gated when George Tar began to mine slate from the adjacent underground close head, and is now not accessible. Tilbertwaite Mine contains many artefacts. There are wheel barrows and jackrolls, some very large ore tubs lie beneath the water in the Horse Level, and a square wooden ore shoot accompanies the ladders all the way down the shaft. When he was a young lad Major Hext walked along the Horse Level and climbed up the ladders. When he reached the top, some 600 feet above, he found the trapdoor to be locked. Rather than face the awesome descent he forced the hinges and escaped to the surface!

I.M

CUMBRIA AMENITY TRUST MINING HISTORY SOCIETY

- Honorary President: Lord Egremont
- Vice President: Major J.W.B. Hext
- Chairman: Dave Bridge, 28 Abbey Vale,
St Bees, Cumbria, CA27 0EF.
Phone 01946 822484.
- Secretary: Sheila Barker, The Rise, Alston
Cumbria, CA9 3DB. Phone 01434 381903.
- Treasurer: Mark Simpson, Rantree Farm,
Keasden, Clapham, LA2 8EZ.
Phone 01524 251426.
- Membership Secretary
and Newsletter Editor: Ian Matheson, 1 Rothay Holme
Cottages, Ambleside, LA22 0EE.
Phone 015394 32957.
- Meets Secretary: Jon Knowles, 46 Dukewood Road
Clayton West, Huddersfield, HD8 9HF.
Phone 01484 860662.
- Publicity Officer: Alistair Cameron, Linden Lea,
Pass Street, Eckington, Worcs,
R10 3AX. Phone 01386 750494.
- Librarian / Archivist: Anton C P Thomas, 145 Abbey Road,
Barrow in Furness, Cumbria LA14 5EZ.
Phone 01229 823776.
- Committee members:
- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Sheila Barker | Dave Bridge | Peter Fleming |
| Ian Matheson | Mike Mitchell | Mark Scott |
| Mark Simpson | Angela Wilson | |
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