

**29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1983.**  
**Coniston Coppermines**

Following the discovery of 633ft of passageways on Top level in December '82, four members met for further exploratory work. These members were: P. Fleming, A. McFadzean, P. Murphy and M. Wickenden.

We descended from Levers Water, following the route of the Paddy End Through Trip, to Top Level only to find the dig into the new extension had collapsed. Undeterred, McFadzean and Wickenden set about clearing the rubble while Fleming and Murphy scoured Top Level for timbers. After a while Wickenden was able to climb up through the collapse into the stope. He reported that the deads stacked above the dig (which we had noted as being unstable on the previous visit) had subsided and were threatening to cut him off. McFadzean joined him and together they collapsed all dangerous material into the dig while Fleming and Murphy cleared it out below. The remaining deads were then made safe with timber.

The drastic reduction in the height of the stack of deads had revealed a hole leading north-west along the stope. We explored this through some very shaky ground to its conclusion at the foot of a boulder slope. Some fine colouring was noted on the walls; also a ceiling of blue stalactites. Fleming and Wickenden took photographs.

McFadzean and Wickenden attempted digging at the foot of the slope into what appeared to be a level though this was abandoned when it became apparent it was blind after a few feet.

Meanwhile Fleming and Murphy attempted digging through the foot of the incline on the Belman Hole Vein into the adit level, which is known to run from this point. This dig too was abandoned for the incline was continuously running-in and could not be held back without extensive timbering.

We channelled our efforts into finding a vertical connection with Middle Level. McFadzean descended an old ladderway into a stope which was littered with debris, though was forced to turn back for the shaft was completely blocked at the top of the second ladder.

Wickenden abseiled into an enormous stope down a rope which was not long enough to reach the bottom, and found himself dangling in the big chamber on Middle Level where the double extension can be viewed from the window near the head of the Gin Shaft. He was dangling within ten feet of the window. Regarding the double extension in the opposite, and inaccessible wall of the chamber – an almost identical situation at the top of the pitch is to be found, across from where Wickenden's rope was belayed; here two tunnels can be viewed about sixty feet along the stope, the right-hand tunnel running into the stope where the laddering is situated.

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On Sunday we were joined by D. Blundell, P Dawes, Martin Maher, and M Mitchell for a trip down Triddle shaft. It was agreed, on the advice of P Fleming, that a stout timber should be lowered down the shaft to bridge a gap in the extension of Fleming's

Level. The timber was acquired and duly transported to the adit at the top of the Red Dell incline.

Maher positioned two bolts in the wall next to the beam of the balance-bob and abseiled down to Fleming's Level. All members joined him with the exception of Blundell who was complaining of a sore stomach. Murphy returned to the top of the shaft for he had to go home early.

The timber was sawn to length and, with a valiant effort on Maher's part, secured in the stope. We crossed into the extension of Fleming's Level using an elaborate network of ropes installed by Dawes and Mitchell. The level was fully explored. Fleming discovered the remains of a powder keg which he said should be removed and preserved though nothing was done about it on this trip.

Maher and Wickenden abseiled down a stope and proved a connection with Plank Passage, sixty feet below. The rest joined them at the Plank Passage – Triddle shaft junction. There appears to have been a shaft station at this point for the stope is completely floored over. At first this was thought to be a solid floor and that the shaft was dog-legged, for the next pitch is off-set by about thirty feet. But McFadzean discovered, while abseiling between the stemples immediately below, that the floor is in fact a timber platform with a square hatch in its centre to allow passage for the pump rods. The hatch is blocked by a large rock.

We alighted on the shaft station above Taylor's Level and had a brew. The party then split, Maher and Wickenden prussicking back up the shaft to retrieve the ropes, the rest making for Red Dell stopes via Taylor's Level. Armageddon Pitch had been rigged earlier in the day by Dawes and Mitchell and we climbed out into a cold, dark, and snowy night.

Meet Leader: Alen McFadzean