

15th May 1983
Cobbler's Hole (?)

Yet another attempt to find a way down to Deep Level via the open stopes at Red Dell Foot, this time successfully pioneered by Blezard, Danson, McFadzean, Murphy, and Wickenden.

We belayed the long rope (300ft) to the wooden "DANGER" sign by the second stope and used the fence as a back-up. McFadzean descended to the pinnacle and was joined by Wickenden who put a bolt in at this point. It was possible to drop down either side of the pinnacle. The western route would have taken in to the hole beneath the Big Block, and the eastern to a yawning black chasm hitherto unexplored. We plumped for the eastern and McFadzean abbed down about 100ft to a tiny ledge, just wide enough for two people. Wickenden joined him again and put in another bolt.

Then Wickenden continued the descent and after a short pitch of about 40ft landed on Taylor's level, or what is left of it. McF joined him and they found a short heading in which to shelter from stones while the remainder of the party abbed down.

Here we were faced with a dilemma. Deep Level was another hundred feet below us and we had run out of bolts. But as luck would have it we found an iron bar just long enough to join across the heading. Belay arranged, we inflated the dingy (full marks to P Blezard for his splendid exhibition of what lung power can do) and lowered the beast down the stope to water. The rope, which was 130ft long, was just the right length.

Mark abbed down and found Deep Level running east through good ground, about 30ft above the water. He had landed at the eastern extremity of the stope where the vein is displaced several feet to the north. There were solid walls on three sides, and on the fourth collapsed deads and bad ground stretching back to the New Engine Shaft. The rest of us joined him.

Deep Level ran east for about 400ft. On the whole it was found to be in good condition but most of the timbers, and there are plenty of them, were badly contaminated with dry-rot.

We explored what we believe to be Cobbler's Hole as far as we could but were stopped by a large boulder pile. We needed tackle to descend the further side of it. The roof was far above us; we couldn't see it at all.

Deep Level continued beneath the boulder pile for quite a way and it became clear that the pile was composed of dead matter than collapse material. Here the level roof was heavily timbered with 1ftsq woods resting on a dry-stone wall which ran the length of the big stope on its southern cheek. The timber had collapsed at the point which cannot be far from the junction with the north crosscut.

We gained access to about 150-200ft of what we believe to be Cobbler's Hole, but there is more beyond the boulder pile. It varies in width from a bout 8ft to about 15ft

at the top of the boulder pile. There is not enough unexplored ground left between Bonsor East Shaft and New Engine Shaft to support a stope larger than this.

Wickenden took photos and McFadzean did a rough survey.

On the return to daylight McFadzean paced out on the surface, with the aid of Murphy, the distances and compass bearings he had taken underground. The position of the collapse on Deep Level roughly corresponds with the waterwheel tower at Engine Shaft.

Alen McFadzean