

21st August 1983
Tilberthwaite Mine

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, gammy legs etc were mentioned and even veteran mine explorer Mike Mitchell claimed he was too poorly to attempt it.

So it was left to 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 4 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. This is now much safer with much less hanging death. The final pitch had the ½ 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 seemed not to have dropped much but as we waded along, it had by about 1 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 M 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-angle to the tunnel containing no artefacts and the water about 5'6" 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 wetsuit. The climb out was a welcome relief – anything to get warm.

The three finally reached day about 7 hours after setting off. The remainder had gone to dig in the other end of the Horse Level but with no hope of getting through without timbering. A definite project for the future.

Christopher D Jones