

19th August 1984
CONISTON MINES

Meet Leader Peter Fleming

The purpose of this meet was to probe some of the holes at the Back Strings Levers Water. It was a perfect day - for sunbathing, some members had a dip in the Tarn. However, the main objective was to descent the open fenced off stope on the col between Boulder Valley and Levers Water at the base of Raven Tor. It has become known as Brow Stope. It was hoped to locate down there, the extensions to Top Level and Middle Level. Messrs. Mitchell, McFadzean, and Wickenden drew the short straws. Eighty feet down, a second hanging belay was made at the bottom of a thirty foot boulder slope. A further 75 ft brought them to a ledge and then another 20 ft boulder slope. From there a third belay and an 88 ft pitch landed them on a rubble pile at the bottom of a wide opening. Walking to the north, the remains of a ladderway sticking out of the rubble were noticed, and beyond some staging what appeared to be a run-in stope or rise was seen. Going in the opposite direction down the slope a short tunnel in solid rock was found which was blind after a few yards. At this point they were about 290 ft below the surface, which is still some thirty feet short of the Middle Level Horizon. On prussicking up the 88 ft pitch, it was decided to try to gain access to a tunnel half way up to the south. A fresh belay was made at the top and a short pitch descended. A 40ft, tricky pendulum followed and all went well. The tunnel was entered but was blocked by a collapse after a few yards. This was disappointing as it could well be the key to the extension of top level.

Meanwhile, another team were probing the small hole at the top of Tarn Crag, near to Simon's Nick. It was known that this dropped down to Arête Chamber on the Paddy End through trip, as daylight could be seen when looking up from that point. Dennis Webb abseiled down, keeping a look-out for tunnels or workings, which in this part of the mine would be ancient. He was able to make contact with other members who had descended via the paddy end through trip route to Arête Chamber before he ran out of rope. His continued line of descent would have taken him down to Middle Level, which from the surface would be over 300 ft. Unable to continue, or get off the rope, he prussicked back to the surface. He was assisted in this probe by C. H. Jones, Dave Blundell and myself. Not content with doing this, Dennis rushed over and joined the other team in Brow Stope.

Other members present were Chris Jones, Mark and Clare Doby, Andy Carter, Alan Westall, and Ian Tyler and daughter.