

16th March 1986

Dalehead Copper Mine

Some Brief Notes on Dalehead Copper Mines, Newlands, Keswick C.A.T. Meet, 16/3/86

Geology

Dale Head Copper Mine consists of II veins, which range in direction from North · Eastwards, to nearly East – West & hade South-East, or South, in the direction of the dip of the country rock, at angles of 20-40 degrees, from the vertical. The main veins are those just above Castle Nook, which course slightly North of East, through the Skiddaw Slates & one lying between Dale Head & the Gables, which ranges North · East to South - West in the rough ashes & Lavas of the Borrowdale Volcanic Series. The veins vary in width, from quartz strings, to 3 - 5 ft wide & the minerals they contain include Malachite, small quantities of Copper Pyrites, Chrysocolla & Iron - Pyrites.

Brief History

The earliest recorded working of these veins occurs in the reign of Elizabeth I, by German miners from the Tyrol, under the leadership of Daniel Hechstetter. The veins had names such as 'St. Thomas' Work', situated on the Eastern side of the valley, between Castle Nook, & the waterfall. The main working, across the valley bottom, was known as 'Long work' & was worked to a considerable depth as an open stope. The Duke of Somerset was the next operator, to be followed by a Scottish company at the end of the 17th Century. The next owner was a Mr Tebay, who owned other mines in the area, followed in time by a Mr Barron of Keswick. It is alleged that Mr Barron was very successful in operating the mine, but that he tried to increase his profits by smelting the ore, but ended up by rendering the ore useless, due- to the incompetence of his employees. A company of 'Local Gentlemen' (Postlethwaite's description) were the last owners of the mine. In 1919, a Mr Johns drove a cross-cut level South · West from the west bank of the Newlands Beck, to undercut the ancient stope known as 'Long Work'. This had the effect of draining the formerly flooded stope, although the level was not directly connected to it. This X-cut was unsuccessful, in as much as all the worthwhile Copper ore above the horizon of the level had been removed by the 'Old Men'. Production from the mine was erratic, with the bulk of the production was produced prior to the keeping of formal records in 1845.

The Mine Today

The accessible remains are spread out over approximately 3/4 mile of the upper reaches of the Newlands Beck, at heights varying between 800ft & 2100ft A.O. Da mere 373ft below the summit of Dale Head Fell.

From North to South, the workings still accessible are as follows:-

1. NGR NY 228163, 800ft AOD, X-cut level driven South-West from Newlands Beck, knee- deep water, approx. 100yd.s long, rise up (blind after 50ft) above is part of Long Work open stope, (dry), which has been descended for approx. 60ft, chocked by deads, somewhat unstable. Adjacent is flooded section of Long Work.

2. NGR NY 224161, 1200ft AOD, X-cut level, driven west, nr Far Tongue Gill, short trial level, 30 - 40yds long, water knee - to mid-thigh depth.
3. NGR NY 222157, 1700ft AOD, Slight remains of former mine buildings & hand dressing floors.
4. NGR NY 225155, 1800ft AOD. Level driven on vein Westwards under Dale Head Crag, water from level is source of waterfall on crags. Approx. 200yds long, wooden rails in situ, ends in collapsed stope.
5. NGR NY 222155, 2050 ft AOD. Recently dug open level in screens below Dale Head, crawl entrance, level driven South West, approx. 160yds long, with access to level above, collapsed at entrance, up 60ft rise. Wooden rails in situ, level ends in collapse.