

28th June 1986

Exploration in the Red Dell Stopes

Coniston Coppermines

Thirteen members turned out, an ominous number, for an exploratory trip along the Red Dell Stopes via Taylor's Level at Deep Level, the object being to attempt to win into the continuation of Deep Level, and its crosscut to the Paddy End workings, beyond the New Engine Shaft. Exploration would necessitate swimming in very deep water, and for this Ian Matheson provided a number of life jackets and 50' of old climbing rope and a safety line.

It became evident, during the course of the day, that there was growing dissatisfaction among the ranks, particularly amongst members who did not possess wetsuits or those who did not want to get wet. What were they supposed to do while we swam away? They wanted to know. This prompts me to ask the question: What is the concept, or objective, of these exploratory trips, is it a) to further our knowledge of the mines, or b) to ensure all members present have an enjoyable day? Certainly, on past meets at Coniston, meet leaders have gone out of their way to accommodate members not familiar with the mines, to the point that the day's objective had been sacrificed. I personally am of the opinion, having witnessed more than enough meets curtailed in this manner, that it is the feelings of the members that should be sacrificed and not the day's objective which has been advertised previously in the meets list and more or less accurately graded.

However, it is a point which should be discussed in committee and given a good airing; perhaps a more comprehensively graded meets list is the answer.

Everyone arrived safely in Deep Level, with the exception of Anton Chenyl-Procter-Thomas who considered the false floor of Taylors Level to be unsafe and did not want to abseil beneath it. Ian Matheson rigged the pitch, along with myself, from Deep Level to the water (about 25') with electron and rope and the big swim was then ready to commence.

First man in the water was the meet leader who swam the 130' to the rubble pile at New Engine Shaft dragging the safety rope which was belayed to stemples en route. The rope was tied off at both ends and the rest of the members swam through; Ian Matheson, Mike Mitchell, Dave Bridge, Anne Danson. We attempted to climb up to the westerly continuation of Deep Level but found we were without a rope. I swam back for 150' of Blue water (my own personal rope) and we tried, though without success to climb to where railway lines protruded from a rubble heap about thirty feet above the water and at the end of what appears to be a blind stope. We decided that further exploration was impossible so the attempt was abandoned.

Perhaps, we agreed, success might be attained if we were to pendulate from Taylors Level from the pitch beyond the New Engine Shaft.

Members Present

D.Borthwick, Joan & John Helme, Chris Moore, Anton Thomas, Mike Mitchell, A. Wilson, D.Bridge, I.Matheson, A.Danson, A.Lings, A.McFadzean (ML) and Martin

Maher who turned up as we were going out. Derek Furlong who is not a member, also attended.

The following day (which I did not attend), the objective was to explore Lake Stope up at Paddy End. However, so many people turned up that exploration was kicked into touch and members were conducted down the through trip. Mitchell reported that there has been a considerable fall of rock at the lowest boulder slope.

Alen McFadzean