

December 26th 1986
CONISTON MINES

BOXING DAY MEET

Meet Leader, Pete Fleming

Ten members turned out on a damp misty day with a covering of snow on the high fells. The main task was to probe the floor of Simons Nick to see if it would be possible to gain access to the stope below. A lot of effort and time went into digging pits at the two lowest points in the floor. In one of the pits we unearthed the remains of a jackroll and handle which spurred us in our efforts, but at 4 ft down, with no sign of a wooden floor, we gave up the dig.

Meanwhile, two other members had been working at Middle Level entrance but due to the slope above continually running-in and the lack of timber to support it; this too was abandoned for the time being. Four of us then turned out attention to the narrow open section of the Simons Nick stope nearer to Levers Water. A rubble slope led us down to a false floor. Seven feet below this was another false floor and in the corner a gap gave access to a steep, rocky slope. Forty-two feet down another false floor was reached with a vertical pitch below. We arranged an abseil which dropped us down 45 ft to the bottom. On our right at this point stood a jackroll in situ over a flooded sump. It was intact except that the roller had dropped out and was lying over the sump. Going left, following the stope we descended stone steps into a tunnel. Overhead a colourful display of blue and green copper staining covered the walls. Further ahead a cross cut was reached, and an old wrought iron pricker was found here. Turning left, a deep stope opened up on the left, plunging down out of sight. The tunnel continued for a few more yards before ending at a collapse which draughted. Going the other way (N.E.) along the cross cut, the remains of a small dog were noticed. The tunnel ended at another stope with a steep slope of loose rocks going down to the left and what appeared to be a tunnel at the bottom.

Owing to the lack of time we did not push either stope and we prussicked out to the surface well pleased with our new discoveries, which we believe are workings on the Belman Hole Vein above Top Level. The most interesting features of the day were the discovery of TWO jackrolls - one in situ. We therefore declared it to be THE DAY OF THE JACKROLL!!

All artifacts discovered, including the jackroll, pricker, shovels and dead dogs, etc., were left in situ.

Members who attended were –

Ian Tyler, Chris Jones, Chris H.Jones, Anton Thomas, Martin Marr, Alan ? ,
Mike Mitchell, Ian Matheson, Dennis Webb, Pete Fleming.

28th December 1986
Simons Nick Stopes

Two days later six members returned to continue the exploration of the stopes beneath Simon's Nick. They were Peter Fleming, Mike Mitchell, Chris Jones, Gordon Gilchrist, Angela Wilson and Ian Matheson. The day was mild but wet, and a lot more water was falling down the shaft than on Boxing Day.

After placing bolts at the top of the main shaft they made a wet descent to the main level. Mike Mitchell descended the slope of the north east stope through the green arch, and found the bottom to be blocked with stones, a potential dig. At the same time Angela Wilson began to dig into the stope at the south west end of the cross cut, and Gordon Gilchrist investigated a spring rising in the floor of the level which was driven on the vein to reveal that it was in fact a false floor above a flooded sump. The wall of deads which was precariously perched on stemples at the entrance to the stope next to the T junction was demolished, and an abseil rope rigged. Once again Mitchell was first down, and landed about 70' below, at what he soon recognised as the Four Way Junction on Top Level between Lake Stope and the Boxing Day Dig junction. Ian Matheson suggested that we try and make contact between the blockage on the main drive of Top Level and that at the bottom of the north east stope, as previous study of the plans showed their locations to be very close together.

Whilst Mitchell went climbing above a water filled sump on Top Level in the north west branch of the Four Way Junction, Chris Jones and Ian made their way to the blockage and Peter Fleming descended the rubble slope. He quickly reached the bottom, and was able to hear the two approaching below him, along Top Level. The bottom of the newly discovered stope and the collapse on Top Level are indeed at the same place and seem to be only about six feet apart. The length of the blockage is proved to be quite short and there is a relatively small amount of material above it, so a dig here would be most likely to succeed, and should win into the unexplored inner reaches of Top Level which C.A.T. has sought for so long.

Everyone returned to Dead Dog Passage, and before leaving, Peter Fleming maypoled up from the false floor below the main shaft to investigate a blue pool and a possible continuation. He was unable or unwilling to pass the pool, but thought that the level probably ended in a blind heading. Some of the team then continued Angela Wilson's dig at the south west end of the cross cut, whilst Ian Matheson descended the north east stope to the green arch and back and footed about fifteen feet up to peer into the rising passage above. It was about twenty feet long, and the entrance was barricaded by an extremely unstable pile of deads. It looked as though there might be a squeeze through at the end, so, from an awkward position bridging across the stope and fifteen feet above the ground he began carefully to dismantle the barrier. He must have disturbed the key stone, for a moment later the whole lot collapsed with a roar. Entry was now easy, and there was indeed a small way through at the end. Squeezing through and climbing a further six feet he found himself at the foot of a six foot square vertical shaft about thirty feet high and cut from the solid rock. It was completely lined with blue and green copper oxides down

which water trickled, a breathtaking discovery. The shaft appears to be an ore hopper cut out of solid rock, and it is not climbable, but could safely be ascended by a maypole at a future date. The maypole would have to be assembled in place and should give access to a level which cannot clearly be seen, not far beneath the solid rock roof. This just might be a continuation of the level with the green pool, into which Peter Fleming had just maypoled. Shortly after this discovery a halt was called, and all returned to the surface to celebrate a very rewarding day, and indeed a very successful year of exploration by C.A.T.