

4th January 1987
Gutterby No3 Pit

West Cumbria Mines Research Group – Letter sent 24th January 1987 from Dave Banks

Dear Alen,

In accordance with your chastisement of errant meet leader's reports, I thought I had better write one for your visit to our Gutterby Mine Project.

The day started well enough, I waited in the car at the allocated place at 10:30 am on the 4th January slowly freezing to death when salvation! A van bearing a legend referring to Lakeland Heating rolls up and Mike Mitchell pops his head out. "Is this it?" he cried. I assured him it was and he just managed to turn round and park, when a locust swarm of cars, land rovers, and vans arrive, the road filling with strange-garbed people of all sexes. They brought with them a slight drizzle for us to dress up under, but it soon passed. I passed a clipboard round with a hurried drawn sketch map on it, which was inwardly digested and at about 10:50 we all started moving to the excavation.

I explained to the gathering, the rules by which the WCMRG operate, namely, that all artefacts found, are expected to be left with us for museum display, but they could, under certain circumstances, returned to the finder after display and also that as in coal mine practise all those entering the mine would be issued with a white plastic square with a number on it which was to be left at the entrance on leaving, to ensure that everybody was out. We issued 13 of these to the CAT visitors and descended the incline into the mine.

The party moved carefully down the rather low roofed incline, passing Barkers Old Level (1820's) on the right, and clambering through some fallen roof that had fallen out of a fault, which crossed the E-W incline in a N-S direction. Here the roof gets even lower and one is forced to pass under a large slab perched precariously above the incline. We always move a bit quicker here! We then assembled at the main crossroads. Here is the focal point of the mine, with a large worked out flat spreading out from a level to the South, which is only half explored and which with some crawling and scrambling gives access to workings in the SW of the mine. These workings contain a large drop shaft and a number of small rises and rise workings which have a number of interesting features like an old ladder, bogey, wheel axles, stopes, secondary mineralization etc.

North of the crossroads lay the main workings in the 1st limestone. We split up into three groups, each led by a WCMRG guide. My own party descended the incline to the 16 fathom level and examined some old shovels and a rotted jackroll and viewed the second incline down to the 19 fathom, 2nd limestone workings which are present under water. We then moved North along the 16 fathom level about 50 yards to a ledge which previously gave access to a stoped area which sloped down under the water table. Unfortunately the water table had risen about 5ft since October and was only just short of the ledge. Returning south about 20 yards we then ascended the slope of the bed plane and into higher workings which gradually slope down to the N

and to water again. Whilst checking a short level we discovered a small gallery which opened out into a stoped area with a lot of broken ground which was traversed to a small rise with a short level at about 18ft up it. I attempted to scale this without success and was joined by Mike Mitchell, who, with me providing extra footholds, gained access to a level which went a few yards and after turning a corner, stopped. We descended through fallen roof and into the water which led us back to the end of the rise workings where the roof is very bad and the floor is covered in sharp flakes from the roof.

We returned to the 16 fathom level and a number of the party checked out a small stoped area before returning up the incline to the crossroads.

This area gradually sloping down to the NW is the most interesting, containing high stoped workings and fine examples of timbering and underpinned timbered stone-built pillars on the well defined bed plain. This working is L shaped in section with the stope and rise workings forming a vertical and the main bed the other leg. The base of this bed to the NW was a tramway and eventually descends below the water. Near the water level a small chamber is cut out below the main working but on the same plane, with a drop shaft in it. This shaft has an “eye?” just above the water level and below some fallen timbers underwater, can be seen another level, presumably in the 2nd limestone are body.

Just before the tramway level descends into the water, a gallery working starts above it, which is connected to the level by ore chutes. At the far end a second gallery could be seen above a water-filled chute, which proved impossible to enter without gear.

On returning to the top of these workings, we ascended an upward drift into the older workings along a stone-troughed level. Between Barkers and Hills shafts, both filled, lies a stoped out level ascending almost to the surface. A series of old levels around Hills Shaft were run in or enterable only through badly broken ground which all but Alen McFadzean and Nolan Merrill had declined to enter! I showed Nolan the foot of another filled and un-named shaft and we returned, collecting the rest of the party on the way. We spent a little time debating the identity of an object which resembled a human stool but may have been an unusual fungus.

On returning to the crossroads the party split up, some returning to surface for dinner the rest sitting down to eat where they were.

Thus replenished, Anne ____ and Mike Mitchell began “eying up” an ore chute and it was decided to set up the WCMRG maypole to scout it. Mike offered me first place, but being naturally cautious I let him go first. Curses! He found a nice clay pipe, which proved to be made by W White Believed to be of Glasgow of which we had only found a stem previously. This gallery gave access via a hole to another, both about 6 yards in length, between them we ascended to another higher gallery. This gallery continued south and over the crossroads on the main incline and joining the top of the ladder shaft in the roof of the main level, South side. It continued for a few more yards to the forehead. A short level ran S. East beside the ladder shaft but not far. Returning to our point of ascent we found that two tunnels led North one along a ledge above the 1st gallery, gave access West into a short level also N-S, and to a shaft down, and North met another shaft down, but a crawl around the eastern side of a

shaft pillar gave access to the continuation North, this soon splitting into two tunnels. One sloped down to a forehead, the other sloped up to another forehead.

The second arm of the Northern levels from the ascent point, gave a second access to the shaft enterable from the other arm. After pulling up the maypole, the team then descended this shaft and then down again to a lower level. Here was found a part-bogie chassis with one axle and wheels intact and after a bit of digging a full bogie chassis was removed from the rubble in a filled ore chute. This had both axles and all four wheels intact and was an excellent find. Mike took some photos whilst the team looked around.

Above, from the foot of the shaft, had run a level of timber-floored construction part of which was still intact. But between the shaft foot and the intact floor, the timbers had collapsed and seemingly deposited the bogies down to their present position. If this is so, one assumes that the higher level must be extensive, for two bogies to have been installed for ore removal, and promises some rewards to further exploration.

Having spent some hours in this venture we all struggled back up the shaft and back down the ore chute, after which Mike et al ascended to surface.

As Anton and Sheila were still photographing various features, I stayed down with them until they had finished and we ascended the incline to the surface, last at about 4pm.

All thirteen tallies had been left, which was reassuring and when we reached the cars at least half the party had left for home and a good wash.

I think all those CAT members who went underground, enjoyed the experience of viewing and exploring another district's hematite mine. Our group certainly enjoyed meeting kindred spirits and showing off "our baby" and some useful contacts have been made.

Post Script – Since the visit two CAT members from Lancaster made contact and returned to collect mineral samples, leaving us some of their own in exchange. Anton and Sheila have sent us some duplicate prints of photographs taken during the meet, and Chris Moore of Millom who wasn't able to make the meet, has applied for membership and now as a member is joining the project.

Chris and any others who would like to join our group or visit us at Gutterby will be welcome any weekend. Arrangements can be made by contacting myself or Tom Coulthard.

Cheers Dave Banks

PPS. Can you provide a list of CAT members who attended this meet? It will help our own records or the project. I'll send you our newsletter/annual review when I've typed it. Is your Journal No 2 ready yet?

RISE WORKINGS ABOVE CROSSROADS
GUTTERBY MINE (No 3)
AS AT 4th JANUARY 1987

