

31st May 1987

Borrowdale Quarries and Closeheads

Members present

Paul Timewell

Peter Sandbach

Anton C-P-Thomas...acting meet leader, standing in for D. Blundell.

Sites Visited

Starting off at about 11:00 am, we first inspected Quayfoot Quarries, the quarries in which the car park is situated. One hole was detected in the south face just above the uppermost car park. This hole entered a level through the faulted and collapsed zone now concealing the level proper. Inside, the level led for a short distance (20 ft) through a chamber infilled with deads to a collapse. After a nervous exit, we made an attempt to better concealing the level from casual public interest.

Again, just south of the carpark, midway up between the road and the upper car-park, a second level was entered. This level, which was strewn with litter and rubbish for some way in, led through 3 or 4 closehead chambers and finally to a fall from surface (assumed by the quantity of soil amongst the rock). Above the level, in the opencast/collapse crater on top of the knoll, a level was identified (in the south face of the crater) but not entered.

Continuing on, we walked around the now collapsed Quayfoot Lower Quarry. One short blind level noted in south face. The concrete seat in the quarry bottom was deduced to be an ex-pay and display machine pedestal.

A few hundred yards North of Quayfoot Quarry, perhaps Quayfoot North, a small slate working with only one short accessible level, was investigated.

After adjourning for lunch, we forded the river and headed up towards Castle Crag. One small opencast quarry was noted in the woods above the campsite.

On the fellside West of and directly opposite Castle Crag Quarries, (which were not visited) perhaps Low Scawdel Quarries, we investigated three levels of small and uninteresting closeheads.

Contouring round Southwards we next visited High Scawdel or Rigghead Quarries. Visiting in turn Levels 1, 5 and 4 (according to survey enclosed, courtesy of D. Blundell) we worked our way up the gill to Dale Head. Level 2 was filled with a disgusting assortment of domestic rubbish from the climbing hut (shame on the sods) but was accessed via Level 5 above. Level 5 was not deemed the effort (it being shown shorter than level 4 on the survey). Level 6 was collapsed shortly inside, and Level 7, although apparently open, required a low crawl entry into water, and one member of our large party was unequipped with proper headgear and lighting. Levels 8, 9 and 10 were left un-investigated as they were down- hill from level 7 and we had already determined to go over and down via Yew Crag Quarries.

Back to Rigghead Quarries. On surface we noted the various ruins of buildings and the aerial ropeway headwheel (assumed double acting gravity powered as there was no obvious source of power, wheelpit etc).

Underground

Level 1 Short uninteresting drive, presumably to test the slate vein low down.

Level 5 Leading directly to a reasonable sized chamber infilled with deads. Level passes under a large slab which has detached itself from the hanging wall and is now supported by these deads. Just beyond, a gap between the infilled deads and the hanging wall leading down to the left suggests that the deads have compacted since their infill and also that the vein is worked out and infilled right down to level 2.

Level 2 Level 2 is accessed from level 5, over a bank of deads and down perhaps 50-40 feet. The level leads back out under level 5 for its entirety (apart from one small chamber) through an arched level built through the infilled deads.

Level 4 Hardly worth the effort of switching a lamp on.

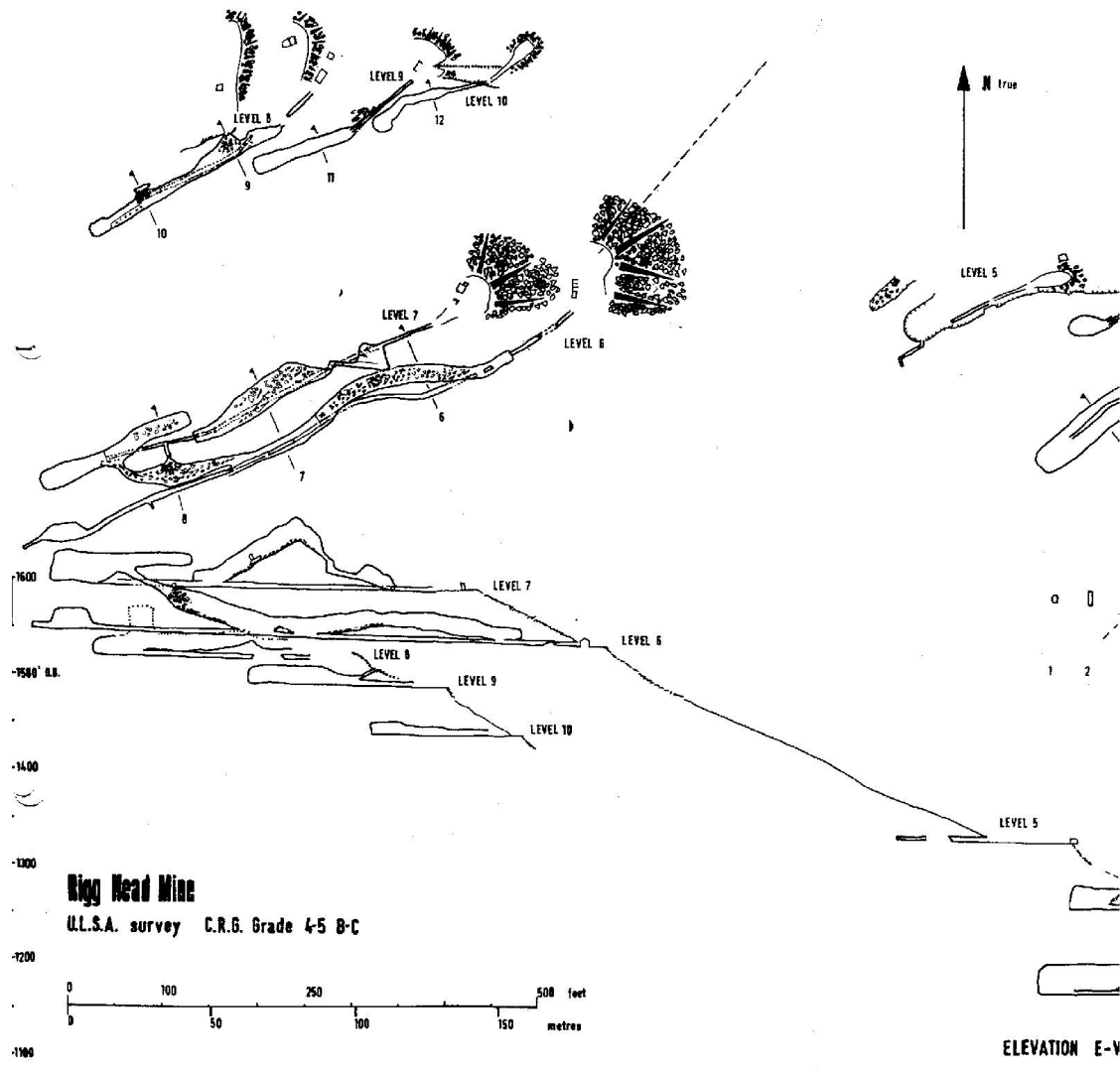
Passing up and over Dale Head, we then descended the Yew Crag Honister Incline. Obviously we missed the main attraction of the place for we only looked at the short, slumped in not far from the portal levels, those which lead off directly from the incline.

Two artefacts were removed (by myself) from one of the incline levels. Two steel, galvanised wire strops, spliced and thimble eye at one end, hook at the other, complete with bottle screw and both unused, still coiled and bound as if straight from the chandlers/riggers works. These were removed for the sole purpose of facilitating some future safety/preservation work at a mine site within our sphere of activity. One further wire strop, identical to those removed, was noted and left in situ as found.

As intimated in the meets list, this meet provided an opportunity to get to know the topography of Borrowdale (and develop some blisters), offering I only occasional refreshment... in terms of cooling off, by means of sticking ones neck down the odd small hole. Total round trip 8-10 miles on surface 3-400 ft underground.

A C-P-Thomas

25/6/87



PLAN

