

**20<sup>th</sup> September 1987**  
**Sandbeds Mine**

Six members turned out for this meet, but unfortunately the Meet Leader was not amongst them. Don Borthwick had travelled over from Newcastle, Ann Danson from Ravenstonedale, Dave Bridge and Chris Moor from West Cumbria, Paul Timewell from Barrow, and Ian Matheson from Ambleside. We waited at Calebreck for guidance until eleven fifteen before setting off hopefully in the general direction of the mine. Whilst we knew it's location we had no idea how to get in, so the day began without any great expectations.

The mine site has been thoroughly demolished, leaving little that is recognisable on a bare, bulldozed landscape. Above on the fellside are a number of spoil heaps and many small fenced enclosures containing craters where the boulder clay has collapsed into cavities, the workings beneath. We wandered about the site finding little to encourage us. A large adit was well blocked and another issued water through the remains of an old car at the bottom of a ten foot deep pool. Two holes were partly open, but to dig in would be dangerous without timbering, as they passed through unsupported and structureless boulder clay.

We followed a line of fenced enclosures through the mist. Most contained only a depression, though one very unstable crater did have a hole in the bottom. It was time for lunch, but Don suggested that we should first check out what seemed to be the last enclosure. It proved to contain a small hole about three feet across which looked more inviting, so half the party returned to the mine site to fetch their gear, whilst the rest, who had had the optimism and the energy to carry it with them, settled down to lunch.

The pitch was rigged using Ann's hauser laid climbing rope and she was first down, followed by Dave and when things began to look promising, by Ian. Later Don and Chris followed, but Paul had to remain on the surface because as the meet had been billed as non SRT he had not brought his gear.

The first pitch ended about thirty feet down on a floor in a vein of barytes which had been stoped out to within three feet of the surface. The hole was probably driven through to surface for ventilation. From here a short traverse and a twenty five foot pitch down through two tight squeezes gave into a tramming level containing several hoppers, a wheelbarrow and a number of wooden stemming rods. This led to a ladder way which was abseiled, for the ladders did not look trustworthy. Fifty six feet below was another level containing another row of ore hoppers, many of which still contain baryte. The level was followed to a sump, near which was a hole through which the water drained. The vein had been lost here, and a cross cut which had been driven in an attempt to locate it had failed to do so.

In the other direction a collapsed floor delayed us for a while, but it was passed by

stripping the rope from the ladder pitch in order to descend and by using a miners ladder to ascend back into the continuation. Further on, past a long row of hoppers, we came upon another ladderway leading downwards. Having no more rope this was descended cautiously, but was found to be sound except for the occasional broken rung.

The mine has been systematically stoped out for barytes from the bottom up. Ore was tipped down rows of chutes onto tramming levels, each approximately fifty feet above the last. There are about a dozen chutes on each of the four levels which we explored. From the level with the collapsed floor forty six feet of ladder descended to the next, then sixty feet, then fifty five feet to the lowest that we were able to reach. This was a foot deep in water and was blocked by a collapse a short distance each side of the ladder.

In all we descended fifty five feet of rope from the surface, followed by two hundred and fifteen feet of ladders, a total of two hundred and seventy feet. We concluded that we had probably found the system for which the meet had been intended, but we were unable to find any other way in or out other than by SRT from the surface. A subsequent conversation with Ian Tyler confirmed this, as he recognised a description of the level where the floor had collapsed. It would seem however that the area between this level and the surface above had not been explored in recent times.

Ian Matheson. Sept 87.