

29th November 1987
Coniston Copper Mines

BROW STOPE/ TOP LEVEL CONNECTION

Ian Matheson, Peter Fleming, Mike Mitchell, Chris Moor, Gordon Gilchrist Chris Jones, Cheryth Wood-Johnson.

The purpose of this meet was to try to prove a connection between the blocked ladderway at the bottom of Brow Stope, where there is a hanging iron chain, and the Four Way Junction on Middle Level, which can be reached via the Shattered Stope in the Top Level Extension.

Chris Jones went into the Funnel with two visiting cavers to establish the traverse across MAG's Catwalk and said that he would climb down the shattered stope and try to make contact through the Four Way Dig on Middle Level. The rest went down Brow Stope from the surface via the wheelbarrow level. A quantity of rubbish was discovered at the bottom of the stope, left by a previous party of mine explorers and this was cleaned up.

The proposed dig was not promising, as the large boulders looked impossible to shift. However Peter Fleming and Ian Matheson set off up the ropes and round to Top Level to try to prove the connection by voice contact. On the way up they met CJ, who was very displeased about the abrasion which had occurred to some of the ropes, one of which was his own new one. Their ascent was accompanied by the sound of much crashing of falling stone in the stope below as Mitchell and Co. went about their work.

When they reached the Ore Tub in the Top Level Extension about an hour later they were hailed by Mike Mitchell from below! Shortly after their departure he had been looking at the blocked ore pass at the end of the stope when he saw amongst the stones the lens of his headlamp, which had been broken when he was partly buried in a run of stone beneath the Ore Tub on February 8th. He immediately recognised it, realised where he was and set about clearing the ore pass. By the time Fleming and Matheson reached the other side they had already cleared a hole through. The two above spent an hour making this safer by pushing the loose rocks down through the hole and then Cheryth and Chris Moor climbed through and completed the through trip via Top Level and MAG's Catwalk. Fleming and Matheson also went out that way with all the spare gear, whilst Mitchell and Gilchrist ascended through Brow Stope to strip out the ropes there. All met on the surface, well pleased with the days discovery.

This connection completes yet another link in the ramification of Levers Water Mine, Brow Stope and Top Level and provides an escape route from all three. It also provides an alternative way in to Brow Stope without the need for an abseil. Finally, Mike recovered all his belongings which were lost in the stone chute last February, including his watch, which was still going when found!

Ian Matheson.