

17th November 1991
Forthcoming Restoration Project
Taylor's Level

Around 1824 John Taylor, mining innovator and entrepreneur, took an interest in the Coniston Coppermine and began development which was to remain profitable for the next 50 years or so. His successes in the organisation of mines all over Britain were marked by the naming of important infrastructures after him and Taylor's Levels, Taylor's Shafts and Taylor's Inclines are found mines in Cornwall, Wales and Yorkshire.

In keeping with this tradition there was a Taylor's Level at Coniston, which was commenced in January 1824 from an entrance in Red Dell Beck. In December 1825 it cut the Bonsor Vein at 65 fathoms and was then driven as far as the New Engine Shaft, where it split into two. The Western branch went on to intersect Triddle Shaft, where it is now blocked, but its continuation can be reached with difficulty from Triddle Shaft and contains the spectacular blue cascade featured on the cover of CAT journal No 1. The eastern branch has not yet been fully explored by CATMHS. Long after the Copper Mine had closed, John Willy Shaw worked some slate in a closehead a short distance in from the Red Dell Adit.

Unlike most of the major levels at Coniston, Taylor's Level does not run straight, but twists and turns along its length. It is 210 feet below Flemings Level and 90 feet above Deep Level and connections can be made with both these. The Adit was dug open by CAT on Boxing Day 1983 and is still open. Two blockages were cleared and safeguarded by the insertion of 40 gallon drums with the ends removed. Further in a collapsed floor gave access to Deep Level and more discoveries. The photograph on the cover of journal No 2 is of the traverse of this collapse. A few feet beyond this is another collapse which has never been crossed.

The central section of Taylor's Level can be reached from Triddle Shaft, from Flemings Level, or more easily, from the open stopes of Red Dell. It is thought that the gap between this part of the level and that previously described is less than 50 feet wide, but the stope curves at this point and one cannot see across it. We hope to settle the matter at the CATHMS meet on November 17th, by placing parties on both sides of the gap. It should be possible to bridge it with a rope traverse and then to build a catwalk of stemples, thus making Taylor's Level continuous. A third party might build another short catwalk across the rope traverse in the outer section in order to ease progress and some work is required to clear debris which has blocked the oil drum in the day level.

This is an interesting and worthwhile project which will restore the continuity of one of the major levels at Coniston Coppermine and which will also make it possible to carry out through trips from Triddle Shaft or Flemings Level to Taylor's Level and walk out to day. It is hoped that there will be a good turnout on November 17, so that we have sufficient people to work simultaneously at various tasks.