

5th January 1992
Coniston Copper Mines

DESCENT OF BONSOR EAST STOPE AT CONISTON

ML: Ian Matheson, Dave Bridge.

Participants: Max Doby, Alistair Cameron, Peter Fleming, Adam Gourlay, Phil Merlin, Mark Simpson, Angela Wilson, Ian Wood.

Non Participants: Chris Jones, Mike Mitchell, Anton C.P.Thomas, Paul Timewell, Peter Sandbach.

It was hoped that we would be able to descend Bonsor East Stope, Bonsor East Shaft and the Old Engine Shaft, but heavy overnight rain caused a torrent of water to pour down the Old Engine Shaft, making this impossible. Dave Bridge rigged the Bonsor East Shaft, and Ian Matheson went to fix the rupee down the stope, only to find that here too, there was a heavy flow of water down the line of descent. Some time was spent on the surface diverting the stream running down the fellside and draining the entrance. Eventually the flow was reduced to an acceptable volume and by the time the ropes were fixed, most of the participants had already completed the Bonsor East Shaft through trip, which was accomplished very speedily because, as no ascent was involved, it was decided not to use any re-belay or deviations.

It was possible to communicate by voice between the two descents and occasionally to see reflected light, thus confirming that both lines of descent are in the same stope. There is a small possibility that some as yet unexplored ground may exist to the north of Bonsor East Shaft, but if so, this could only be reached through a small hole in the stacked deads, which would be both difficult and hazardous. The prevailing wet and humid conditions were unsuitable for such exploration.

Bonsor East Shaft is 280 feet deep and the adjoining stope, which is the only access to the eastern extension of Deep Level, involves both a descent and an ascent of 310 feet, so that those members who did both, completed some 900 feet of SRT. Pity we couldn't do the Engine Shaft as well!

Ian Matheson