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The Newsletter of the Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society

No. 89 November 2007

Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society
Newsletter No 89, November 2007.

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Society Officers and Committee Members Back cover

Cover Picture
Wendy Brown crossing the fourth void in Taylor's Level. See the report by Anthony Holland on page 26.

Editorial

Please note: The AGM and Dinner will be on Saturday the 8th December, not on the 15th as printed in the Meets List.

I've always believed that the Newsletter should provide a means of communication between members, and that it should not only carry information of official of CATMHS meets and projects, but also of un-programmed activities. I am pleased therefore to be able to include several reports from member Tony Holland, reflecting his enthusiasm and wide range of mining related interests. There is also a response from Peter Holmes to Tony's account in the last Newsletter, of conditions at Moss Rigg Quarry. Peter compares the present condition to that which he found when he visited the quarry in 1977. Also, there is a report of the activities of a small group who have been meeting most weeks in order to renovate the connection from the bottom of South Shaft to Deep Level, which was created by LMQT. They are working in parallel to the official exploration of Kernel Level, but may meet up, as there is a possibility that the two groups will end up in the same vein.

IM

Membership

We welcome new member Simon Lowe, a web developer from Y Felinheli in Welsh Wales. Simon's main mining interest is Welsh Slate and, appropriately, he is keen on SRT and photography.

News

Free Training Opportunities in Archaeology and Building Conservation

North Pennines Heritage Trust are offering Free Training Opportunities to individuals and organisations in Archaeology and Building Conservation at either Nenthead Mines or Dilston Castle during June, July and August 2008.

There will be nine distinct areas of archaeological, historical and building conservation skills: Geophysical Survey, Building Recording, Field Survey, Desk Based Research, Environmental Survey, Finds Research, Fieldwork Skills, Lime Mortar, and Dry Stone Walling.

The duration of each training session can be tailored to suit individual needs and numbers involved. The NPHT need to evaluate the scope of the project, so if you think you may be interested please inform Sheila Barker asap.

Working Class movement Library.

The Working Class movement Library is a unique treasure of hundreds of thousands of book, pamphlets, newspapers, posters, leaflets, objects and archival material. It reflects the rich history and aspirations of the working people and relates the part played by the labour movement in shaping modern society.

The WCML was founded in the 1950's by Ruth and Edmund Frow in their home, but now it is in a dedicated building in Salford where it fills 40 rooms! The library is free, but users are requested to make an advance appointment. Phone 0161 736 3601 or visit the web site www.wcml.org.uk

2008 NAMHO Conference

To be held at The Scottish mining museum at the Lady Victoria Colliery at Newtongrange, near Edinburgh from 4th to 6th July. There will be a full lecture programme and field trips are to be organised by Grampian Speliological Group.

Mandalls Office

On Friday I was able to inspect the plans for housing on the Slate Wharf at Coniston and I am pleased to say that the architects have done as promised me and retained Mandall's Slate Office and also the old track-way. They have done this by reducing the number of dwellings from six to five. This has now gained planning consent.

Three of the properties are to the south of Mandall's, on the car park site, and two are to the north. The bottom of the track-way will be accessible from the pavement below. There seems to be a reasonably definite feeling in Coniston that the development should be called Mandall's Wharf, a suggestion put forward by Donald Kelly. We have let the housing association know and they confirm agreement but point out that the final decision rests with the Post Office and SLDC.

Ownership of the site will soon be transferred to Home Housing in Maryport (contact Chris Potts, project manager). I assume ownership of Mandalls will transfer as well. The only sticking point at the moment is ownership of the rock face. The National Park, who currently owns it, want to get rid of it. Home Housing do not want to take it on because, as they say, their business is in developing affordable housing and not looking after a rock face. There is a bit of an impass here but the District Council may step in to take it on, although we will not know until September.

One further thought I had the other day is that you could twist Home Housing's arm to run a electric cable into Mandalls. CAT would probably have to pay for the meter and connection charges but this shouldn't be too steep.

Alastair Cameron

Newland Furnace

Some of you will remember the visit to Newland Furnace of Caz Graham (free lance reporter) working for BBC Radio Cumbria & the simulated work meet that she recorded about 4 years ago. Joan & I were approached at that time when Radio Cumbria cashed in on the interest raised by the BBC TV "Restoration" series of programmes. The item was broadcast on 28/07/2003.

Imagine my surprise when, by accident, I found a NEWLAND FURNACE page on the BBC web site. From this page you can, if you have or if you download," Real Player", play a recording of the broadcast complete with many familiar voices.

For access : Go to www.bbc.co.uk & type in Newland Furnace then under Cumbria Features go to Restoration. After looking at the page (& noting that the photo of the charcoal barn features mainly the lean- to shed complete with corrugated roof which is attached to the barn and that Newland is Newlands which occurs in the full title of the web page; you can click on a spot @ L/H side to listen to the broadcast.

CATMHS Journal Number Six

We expect to publish journal six next Spring. Twelve articles have been promised so far, on a wide range of topics. I have already received two, and Dave Sewart has made a start on the layout. We would still like more articles and it is not too late to begin. I would especially like some more short pieces, as short as you like. You can submit material in any format and we will do the layout Pictures are welcome but not essential. If you are thinking about contributing please contact the Journal Editor, Ian Matheson. Phone 015394 32957, email ian@rothayholme.freeserve.co.uk.

Archaeology in the Lake District 2007. Saturday 13th October.
A day conference held at the Theatre by the Lake, Keswick.

The fifth edition of this annual event, organised by the Lake District National Park Authority, was held, as last year, at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick. The Theatre by the Lake is a splendid venue, and the event is also a good way to meet or renew acquaintance with like minded people, as well as to keep up to date with what has been going on. Of the seven presentations four were concerned with mining and quarrying. It was apparent that there has been a considerable shift in interest, the social implications of archaeology being given more importance than previously.

Introduction, by David Thornton, Chairman Lake District National Park Authority.
Welcome; once again the event is oversubscribed (there were about 200 delegates present, ten of whom are CAT members. IM) The Historical Environment Strategy has been finalised and adopted, and the LDNPA Archaeology Department has been renamed 'Cultural Heritage' in order to reflect a wider cultural approach. The Lake District is well known for its literary connections, but not for it's other attributes; it is felt that World Heritage Status would confer significant benefits so the LDNPA are continuing to work towards an application.

Archaeology in the Lake District National Park 2006–7, by John Hodgson and Eleanor Kingston.
Eleanor Kingston gave an overview of their work, which included liason with local projects and development of the Historical Data Base containing over 7000 sites in the National Park. Heritage Lottery funded projects were the Duddon Valley Project and Access to Archaeology, for which a £170,000 grant had been obtained. A full time developer, Lisa Keys, had been appointed. Her brief is to prepare a travelling exhibition, education packs, provide internet access and outreach. Talks and lectures could be provided for schools and groups on request. A set of six leaflets has been produced, and packs were provided for delegates.
She described the event at Paddy End when a flood caused by a burst United Utilities water pipe caused damage to the dressing floors and exposed buried structures. United Utilities agreed to fund a survey and some repair and conservation work. Oxford Archaeology North was employed to survey the site. CATMHS were asked for some input, and involved in survey training. The next stage is to conserve and consolidate some of the more fragile structures and a stone waller has been approached.

Project to Record the Industrial History of Coniston Old Man, Alastair Cameron, Coniston Local History Society.
Through the Local History Initiative Coniston Local History Society had received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Halifax Building Society to carry out an archaeological survey of Coniston Old Man and to build an oral history archive. They had bought six small digital recorders and made a master list of people to interview, giving priority to those who were elderly. They had acquired some tapes made in the 1960's by James Armstrong, who was for many years the local GP.

The group aims to survey the main sites on the mountain, noting artefacts and photographing everything. It is important to record transport systems, comprising aerial flights, tramways, tracks, sled ways and miners paths. Alastair thanked CATMHS for their help in surveying and photographing the remains of the Spion Kop aerial flight.

Aerial photographs were used as a base for maps and plans. The 2nd edition OS map has superb quality and detail, but has not been digitised, whilst the 1:25000 map, which can be obtained in digital form,

doesn't give enough detail of older structures and remains. The group had been fortunate to obtain some plans of Cove Quarries dated 1903. Five interpretive panels are to be produced for key locations in Coniston Village, and a leaflet entitled Coniston Old Man, Lakeland's Historic Mountain, which was available at the conference. Alastair finished his presentation by playing three short extracts from the oral history archive.

Recent Archaeological Aerial Survey in the Lake District. Peter Holme of English Heritage.

English Heritage have between four and five million aerial photographs which are kept at the archive at the National Monuments Record at Swindon. Many were taken in the 1940's by the RAF. Aerial photos can provide base material for archaeological maps and can provide evidence of change. Oblique photos show up good detail and can be rectified by computer to produce maps which can be layered onto OS maps. Flights tend to originate from York so the Lake District hasn't figured strongly in the record as it is at long range. Peter showed a number of photographs, including some of a flight over the northern Lake District and Carrock Fell, to illustrate how such photos can show detail that would not otherwise be observed on the ground.

Castlerigg Stone Circle, Jamie Lund from the National Trust.

Castlerigg is thought to have been constructed between 2800 and 1000 BC. It consists of an irregular circle of 48 stones with a rectangular group within the circle known as the Sanctuary. Old accounts and drawings from the 18th and 19th centuries record that there were once 50 stones. There were two small ring mounds within the circle, one of which has disappeared. The other is probably the base of a tree circle shown in some old pictures. Castlerigg receives some 200,000 visitors per year, and is at risk from erosion. Some re-turfing has been carried out, but long term measures include controlling grazing to maintain a longer sward, and temporary simple fencing to restrict visitor access to worn areas on a voluntary basis.

The Lake Poets and the Romantics tended to associate Castlerigg with Druidic pagan groups, which were largely imaginary. By the late 19th Century people related it to the stone-age and in the 20th Century it was associated with astronomy, orientated to the sun and the moon. Over the last three hundred years or so therefore it has had several meanings, depending upon the culture of the time.

Discovery of the Earliest Primitive Wagonway in Britain at Silver Gill Mine, Warren Alison of CATMHS.

The earliest documentary record of mining at Caldbeck is dated 13th January 1319 but the exact location is uncertain. Later, Roughten Gill was thought to have been the location of the German workings at Caldbeck but he real site was Silver Gill. Work started there in 1566 and continued for 60 years. A plan has been constructed from the information contained in the written records, and it shows the mine to have had about twice the volume of Goldscope. There are records of wagon-ways in use in 1586 at Grasmere, Caldbeck and Goldscope. It is thought that the Silvergill mine was worked out by the Elizabethans and has remained undisturbed since then. A wooden board was found fixed to the ground and several more found in backfill material. The timber has been carbon dated to 1420 – 1640. It is believed to be part of a rowel tramway, and if so would be the oldest rail track in the UK, perhaps Europe. The National Railway Museum at York propose to hold an exhibit in their main hall.

An unusual wooden artefact (implement?) has been found in the mine. Its purpose is a puzzle, but the wood has been dated 1020 – 1200. The mine may be older than this, as the silver mint at nearby Carlisle was operated from 1130 to 1213. Roman lead has been found in the area dating from 135 AD.

About 340 yards of the mine have been explored but there are still some 480 yards

to find. There is a plan to pump out a flooded shaft and open the lowest level. CATMHS has been asked to support the project and to help with applications for permission.

Excavation of Bronze Age Ring Cairns at Seathwaite Tarn 2007, John Hodgson, LDNPA and Alastair Vannan, Oxford Archaeology North.
John Hodgson began the presentation. Four teans have been working on the site doing level 1 surveys, mainly during the winter months. Thirty or so ring circles have been discovered recently in the Lake District, some in the Duddon Valley. One at Banniside, near Torver, was excavated by W G Collingwood, and a recent excavation near Shap in advance of quarrying revealed that they were of mid Bronze- age origin, from the third millennium.

Alastair Vannan then described the 2007 excavation near Seathwaite Tarn. The aim was to determine what it was, when it was made and how it was constructed. The main building consists of a circular ring of stones and an detached crescent shaped structure. Nearby is a smaller ring of stones which may have been constructed at a later date. No postholes were found, and because of its remote location distant from any walls or other structures it was considered that the remains had not been robbed and were likely to be more or less complete. The main structure seems to have been built all at the same time on a bed of gravel. Base stones have sunk into this and it has become compacted.

Few artefacts were found, consisting of a fragment of Bronze Age pottery, two flints and a piece of worked Langdale tuff that was found beneath the cairn. Some charcoal was associated with the cairn which should yield dates, and a build-up of peat on top should also be dateable. Environmental core samples contained some cereal and have been taken for analysis, but there have been no results as yet.

As to its function, it does not seem to have been a domestic site as it has no entrance, no hearth, and no domestic rubbish. It may have had religious significance, for there is an alignment with Harter Fell, which rises between a notch formed by two nearer knolls. It is thought that there was a proximity to water as there seems to have been two small tarns nearby, now silted up.

The Archaeology of Prehistoric Mines and Quarries, a perspective from Ethnoarchaeology Peter Topping, English Heritage.
Peter Topping began by showing a digitally created fly around of the flint mines of Grimes Graves, in Norfolk, which has been made for a new visitor centre there. He then discussed the pipestone quarries in Minesota in the USA, where ancient extraction of red pipestone to make ritual pipes is still carried on by the Indians of today. Before entering the quarries the Indians undergo a ritual purification in specially constructed sweatboxes. There is rock art on three sacred boulders nearby. This could be compared with the rock art to be seen on the boulders in Langdale, not far from the Stone Age axe factory there. The Indians only use hand tools for quarrying the stone. Breakages are usually returned to the quarry for sacred reasons. Could this practice account for broken rough-outs found at the stone axe sites?

Folklore and mythology has been associated with mining. Examples are known from Cornish mining, from Polish Salt mines, from Australia and Papua New Guinea. Many flint axes have been horded unused – could they have been regarded as something more important than just tools? Was the inaccessible nature of the Lakeland axe sites of significance? Over one hundred Langdale axes have been found in Ireland, and many Irish axes returned. Why? Were their creators just opportunist craftsmen or were they perhaps miner-priests?

Mines Forum, 26th October

It was reported that Florence mine has closed and that the museum has been emptied. It had some items belonging to CAT; Sheila Barker will enquire.

Roundups:

CATMHS reported on the progress of the Kernal Level project and on the results of the GPR survey at Levers Water. CAT proposes to replace some decayed packing boards in Lucy Tongue Level at Greenside. It was reported that the 1969 fencing has disappeared from around the highest working above Levers Water. Eleanor Kingston has a draft of the Paddy End Survey by OAN and she passed round some examples. CAT will receive a full copy when it is finalised.

MOLES reported that work at Yewthwaite mine was progressing OK. Ian Tyler had been on site recording a short item for TV. The LDNPA intends to re-route the bridleway away from the dressing floors, but there has not been any new damage recently.

ALASTAIR CAMERON reported that interpretation panels had been made for locations around Coniston Village and a leaflet was available. The survey of the Old Man slate workings was nearly finished; it is hoped that the oral history project will aid interpretation. The BBC has recorded a piece for the Radio 4 programme Open Country on the effects of Honister Quarry on the local community. A tourism strategy is needed for industrial history in the Lakes, perhaps focusing upon each of the major valleys. A discussion ensued concerning Cumbria Tourism, who have large new offices at Staveley. There was concern over where they sourced their information and that they didn't appear to liase with the LDNPA Archaeologists, nor to engage with the National Trust or the local mining and industrial history organisations. It was felt that indiscriminate promotion may have a negative impact on the environment and the local communities.

NATIONAL TRUST. Vandals had broken into the mill at Force Crag and caused considerable damage. The police had taken DNA samples from drinks cans. English Heritage has completed a survey at Upper Force Crag which should be published by Christmas. Agreement had been reached with the local farmer concerning potential damage of the Goldscope mine site by agriculture. Gorse on the lower dressing floors is to be removed by volunteers. Emergency fencing around the recent surface collapse at Brandlehow to be reviewed.

LDNPA There is to be a site meeting on 31st October at Carrock mine involving the LDNPA, English Heritage, Natural England, the Environment Agency, CATMHS and MOLES with a view to opening and gating the mine and clearing the build up of silt in the main adit

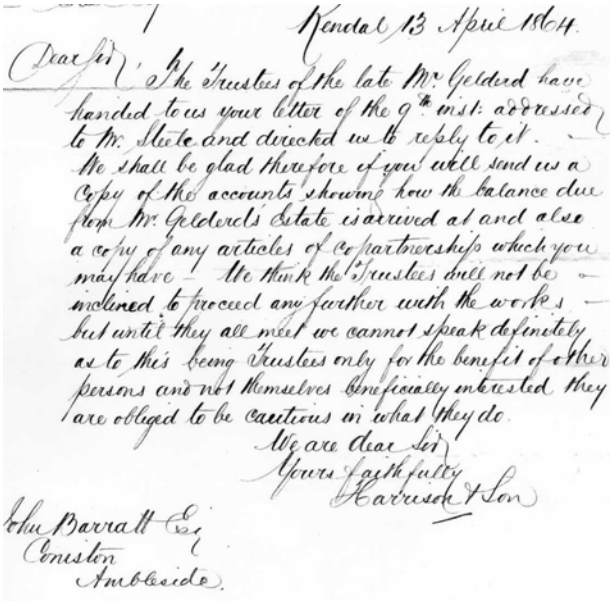
FORCE CRAG MINE. The NT has obtained legal advice which suggests that practical work to maintain water drainage would not incur further legal liability. They hope to develop a partnership solution with the Environment Agency to control and monitor pollution. There has been a recent collapse in No 1 level, which is now blocked and there have been changes in water discharge from the hole above Zero Level. Remedial work is now considered an emergency and they hope to get the water out of Zero by drilling a bore hole and pumping and to re-enter Level 1 and consolidate the drainage. On a longer term basis they will consider management of the water in levels 3 and 7. The NT is to appoint a mine manager to effect the project, who will appoint a drilling company They hope to begin before the end of this year. It is likely that the mine will eventually be re-opened, consolidated and gated.

IM.

Letters regarding mines at Staveley

Warren Alison discovered these letters for sale on e-bay, and bought them. I wonder what else is out there.

John Barratt was of course the man who developed the Coniston Copper mines for John Taylor. He later became the owner of the Coniston mines, and he went on to prospect and develop the haematite mines at Hodbarrow which gave rise to the iron-works at Barrow. As well as the above Barratt was notable for prospecting and developing mines elsewhere. He developed mines at Threlkeld and at Strontian in Scotland, as well as that at Staveley to which these letters refer.



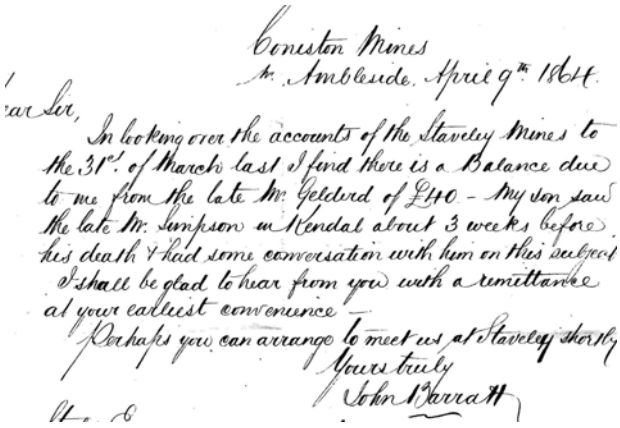
Kendal 13 April 1864

Dear Sir

The Trustees of the late Mr Gelderd have handed to us your letter of the 9th inst: addressed to Mr Steele and directed us to reply to it. – We shall be glad therefore if you will send us a copy of the accounts showing how the balance due from Mr Gelderd's Estate is arrived at and also a copy of any articles of copartnership which you may have - We think the Trustees will not be inclined to proceed any further with the works – but until they all meet we cannot speak definitely as to this being Trustees only for the benefit of other persons and not themselves beneficially interested they are obliged to be cautious in what they do.

We are dear Sir
Yours faithfully
Harrison & Son

John Barratt Esq
Coniston
Ambleside.



Coniston Mines
Nr Ambleside. April 9th 1864

Dear Sir,

In looking over the accounts of the Staveley Mines to the 31st of March last I find there is a Balance due to me from the late Mr Gelderd of £40 – My son saw the late Mr Simpson in Kendal about 3 weeks before his death & had some conversation with him on this subject

I shall be glad to hear from you with a remittance at your earliest convenience-

Perhaps you can arrange to meet us at Staveley shortly.

Yours truly
John Barratt

Steel Esq

Adams: A lead mine situated on the east side of the River Kent about halfway between Stavely and Kentmere at NY457017. It was abandoned no later than 1895.

Kernal Level Project Update
Since NL no.88 there has been steady progress to explore and survey the mine. More detailed information will be contained in Journal No. 6. J.B.

Sunday 19th August
Work resumed after a four week break. Colin & Andrew Woollard, John Brown and Mark Simpson continued the exploration of the collapsed adit level using Ian Matheson's aluminium ladders set on their side to span one gap and descending and ascending another, they reached a short rock section at the end of which was a hole which seemed to drop down for at least 100 feet. Beyond this they could see the end of the stope. Andrew Woollard undertook the difficult task of removing the original bolted traverse, which is now redundant. Further exploration will involve descending the first shaft beyond the viewpoint and the hole at the end of the rock tunnel.

These probably connect with some part of Deep Level, though exactly how is a mystery at the time of writing. There are currents of air, and the water that drips into the working all seems to drain away. Some years ago members of the now defunct Lakeland Mines and Quarries Trust cleared a way through from the bottom of South Shaft to reach a section of Deep Level, from which an ascent was made up a debris slope and through a hole into a stope which in turn connected with a parallel vein via a short cross cut. Numerous false floors stacked with deads threatened the way out so no proper exploration was done. Either of these stopes might connect with the Kernal level workings that are our current focus.

An independent group is currently trying to reinstate the LMQT route from South Shaft bottom down to Deep Level. IM

6th September (email JB to EK)
After a break of about one month, work to explore the stopes of Kernal Level is continuing and I think that another few weeks will see an end to this. Some surveying work has been carried out, but conditions have not been favourable due to the damp conditions in the mine over the summer months. High humidity levels in the atmosphere have meant that the measuring equipment has not been able to function properly. This work will continue when conditions permit.

Could you please let me know when you think that we will need to halt our activities at Kernal Level for this year. Activity in the area where the bats were hibernating is now limited to a very small number of our members passing through to access the rest of the mine for exploration and surveying.

We are finding lots of collapsed false floors and little in the way of artefacts and the whole mine is not quite as we expected it to be. We have found what we think is a leather liner which was probably used in a barrel used to carry explosives. This remains where it was found as will any other artefacts if discovered. A piece of hessian on the edge of a false floor is the only other item we have seen. We think that we have reached the end of the vein and this area shows more evidence of mineralization in the form of blue staining in the walls. Work to explore the depths below this area is yet to be carried out.

Following this and after concerns expressed by Pete Blezard during our last visit, the increase in draught, now that the mine has been opened, might

give rise to an increase in the deterioration of the timber. J.B. telephoned E.K. and asked "would there be any objections to us fitting a draught door?" E.K. said that she did not think that there was a problem with us continuing to enter the mine and that she would consult with Natural England about this request to install a door. J.B

9th September (email JB to IM)
We pushed on at Kernal Level with Andrew descending to the floor that I had reached last visit. He then bolted the wall above the man-way and descended approximately ten metres to another floor and a further five metres to another floor below that. From this point he could see yet another floor approximately twenty metres below, but did not have enough rope. This area is extremely dangerous with many of the floors in very poor condition and danger from the rubble slope above. We can get better access, according to Andrew, further in-bye at a point just before the end wall. At this location, there is water running down the foot wall from the level that runs in on that side at the adit horizon. This we need to get to and investigate. This may be the link with the stopes under the crag. The part of the stope that we are in at the moment appears to kick to the North and I don't know if this computes with your survey, but I am not sure if you have got that far.

10th September e-mail reply from Eleanor Kingston.
I have just spoken to Sue Evans and then Pip Kirkham at Natural England regarding the bats and the draft door. Unfortunately, they believe that bats could be entering the mine and travelling as far as you would like to put the draft door. As a result, they are not keen on you just going ahead and adding the door, as it may result in bats being trapped. They have suggested that you contact Andrew Gardner again, who originally came out to survey the level. He would be able to advise whether he thinks the bats are in the level and what action to take. It may be that there is a route they can get out and therefore it isn't a problem. I think the worse case scenario would be adding some kind of wooden baffle to the draft door to enable the bats access. I'm sorry this isn't a simple answer, please give me a call if you would like to discuss it further.

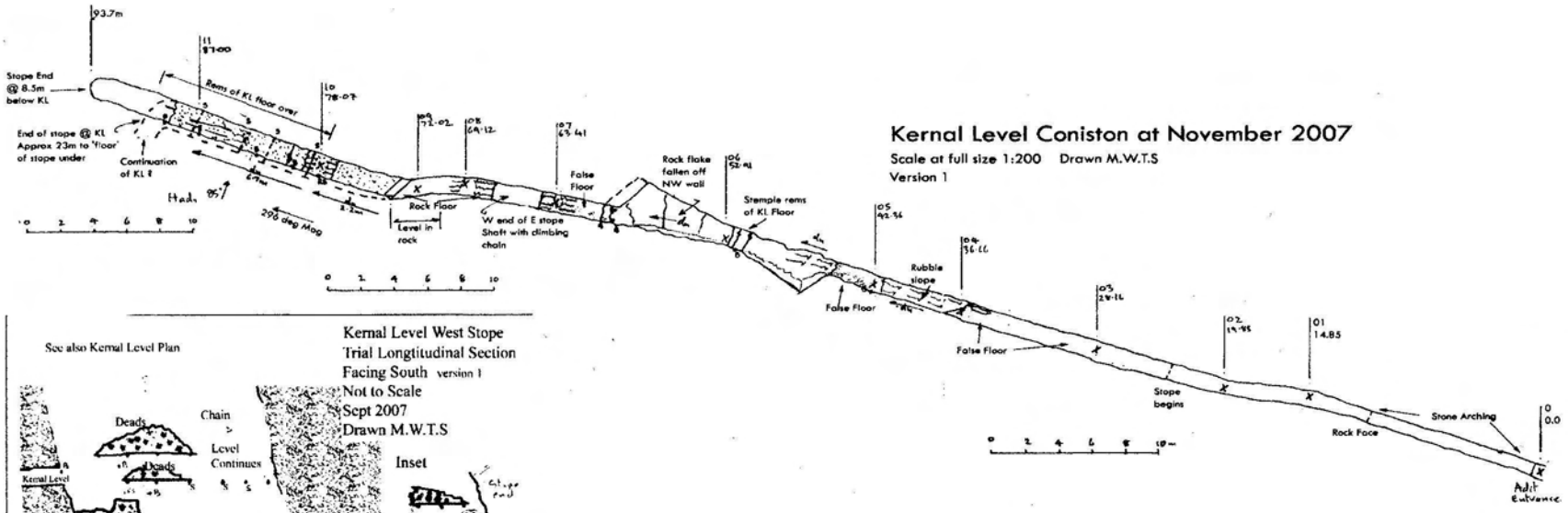
16th September. Visit to Kernal Level by Eleanor Kingston.
C.W., A.W. & J.B. took her in as far as it was deemed safe and she was delighted with what she saw. This was followed by a tour of features on the surface. It was agreed that the fenced off area could now be removed and the depression levelled. Any work to consolidate the support in the level would have to be left until the spring.

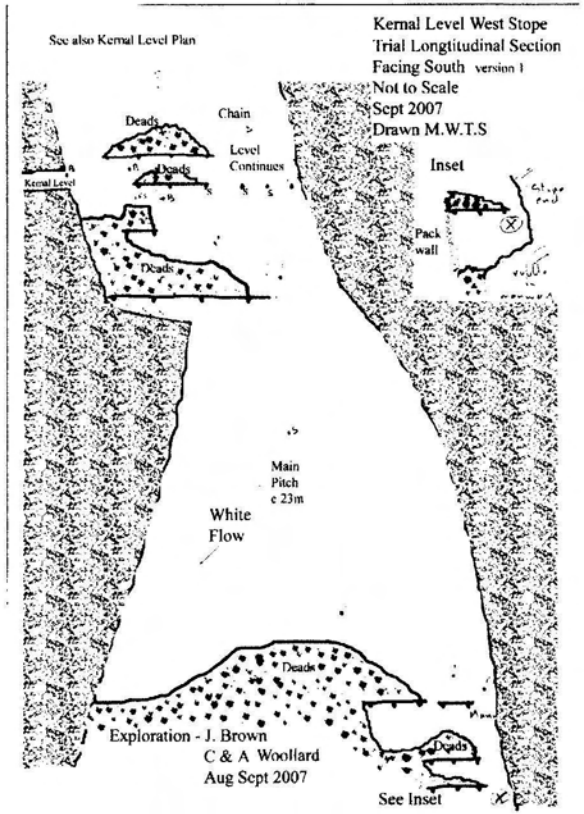
Thursday 20th September.
Visit by John Aird, Mark Simpson and Roger Ramsden who visited the lowest part of the stope.

The stopes at the far end of the mine have now been de-rigged for safety reasons and during the next visit, it is intended to bolt up the footwall to a crosscut which comes in at the adit horizon and explore this.

J.B.

Tuesday 9th October
Visit by Mark Simpson and Ian Matheson to complete the survey as far as the headwall of the third stope. As the adit floor is mostly collapsed, this involves two short abseils and two rope ascents in each direction. The big pitch at the end was not descended, but measured as 23 meters by lowering a tape with a weight on the end. IM.





Plan and section of Kernal Level from CATMHS survey, drawn by Mark Simpson.

Coniston South Shaft Dig Update

Courtney's Cross Cut has a good solid floor until one reaches the hollow sounding timbered over section, below which the South Shaft plunges in 3 sections to the base of a large stope. Originally the stope was open all the way down to a short spur off Deep Level but material from various collapsed floors (The evidence of which can be seen at various points on a descent of the South Shaft) currently lies in a very large heap at the bottom, blocking all access to Deep Level.

During 1989, the LMQT (Lakes Mines & Quarries Trust) completed their 60' vertical excavation at the base of the South Shaft that allowed access and exploration of Deep Level but some 10 years later the dig had unfortunately collapsed. Earlier this year, the idea of re-excavating the LMQT dig was considered and work commenced after it was agreed to be a worthwhile project.

For the past few months, a small team of members have been digging away every Sunday. The first meeting in June, attended by Roger Ramsden and Gerry Goldsborough, was to prepare the ground by clearing away a substantial quantity of rubble. The next meeting in July saw the addition of John Aird to set in place a row of vertical scaffold poles that would hold back the waste and prevent a catastrophic inrush of material into the dig.

Most Sundays since then, a small team has been busily working away taking the excavation deeper. At first, the dig was vertical, but at a depth of about 10ft the hanging wall began to undercut at about 45deg which we have followed. Loose material in the dig has been retained with a combination of timbering and John Aird's very fine walling. However, as we have progressed deeper, we have become victims of the law of diminishing returns. The deeper we get, the longer it takes to raise buckets of material up the convoluted route from the bottom. Working methods are dictated by the nature of the site. A simple bucket, rope & pulley system is used to raise the waste material to the top of the excavation from where it is dumped behind a purpose built pack wall. As the dig has progressed, so has the pack wall grown, meaning a longer distance to transport the waste after it has reached the top of the dig site. It is very apparent that progress has slowed markedly although the time & effort invested at each visit remain constant. The material itself is quite loose & easy to dig, however progress has been slowed a few times when we have encountered very large rocks that were too large and heavy to be raised using slings and ropes. A few ideas have been employed to deal with these large lumps, some exotic but usually they were finally overcome with brute thuggery and a lump hammer.

All our timber has had to be lowered down the 150ft deep South Shaft to the dig site using a relay system with 4 people at various stages in the shaft, passing the timbers down to the person below. This task has been made very "interesting" during those occasional

periods when rainwater running into Courtney's Cross Cut from the portal has poured down the South Shaft, transforming what is normally a mellow, harmless tinkling trickle into a mini Niagara Falls. Other hazards have included (as Roger will testify) nails in the timbers. These little demons are expert at piercing expensive waterproof trousers and leaving large holes (as Roger will testify). Bicycle puncture repair kits are actually quite useful things…. (as Roger will testify).

One Sunday whilst making our exit myself Roger & Wendy were at the top of the South Shaft waiting for Gerry to appear. Suddenly we were alarmed to hear a loud repetitive booming noise that seemed to resonate horribly in the stope. Swiftly, Roger made his way to the portal to investigate, whereupon he saw a female fellwalker looking skywards at a circling helicopter apparently involved in a mountain rescue practice. Reportedly, the poor woman was deeply shocked and startled to see man wet from top to toe trussed up in strange ropes & shiny pieces of metal suddenly emerge from a hole in the ground…..

Currently we still have quite a way to go. The dig is draughting very strongly and has done so since we progressed to the angled section. The LMQT estimated their original dig to be 60ft deep but we are unsure from where they are measuring this depth from. We are measuring our progress by counting Petzl hangers on the hanging wall, three so far. We don't know how many more we have yet to uncover but there can't be too many more … can there??

Tony Holland.

Editors note:
Officially this project has nothing to do with the nearby Kernal Level project, indeed the two parties involved seem determined to remain independent from one another. However their interests may yet combine. Once the South Shaft reaches the short spur off Deep Level, it will give access to the main level, which in the out-by direction is blocked by a large and rather unstable slope of fine material. Some years ago I led an evening meet to descend the Old Engine Shaft. Only Mark Scott turned up, and we decided instead to have a look at the then recently completed LMQT dig in South Shaft. We ascended the loose slope and climbed through a small vertical rock hole into a stope containing several false floors, supporting (just) considerable quantities of stacked deads. A short cross cut led to a parallel stope. We didn't explore it properly due to the risks involved, but from a rough assessment of the distances and depths it seems likely that this area is very close to the vein that has been worked down from Kernal Level, and there may even be a connection. IM.

Meets

Forthcoming Meets:
18th November, GPDS Training Day
The venue has been changed in case the weather is poor. The programme will commence at the BMSC Cottage in Coppermines Valley, 10 am.

AGM and Dinner
The AGM and Dinner will take place on Saturday 8th December, not the 15th as printed in the Meets List.

Boxing Day Meet
A volunteer has been found to lead this meet. Join Mark Scott for an interesting ramble to recover from any over indulgences Meet at Tilberthwaite Ghyll Car Park at 10.00 am.

Threlkeld Quarry Museum and Vintage Excavators, 16th September
ML Ian Matheson. Paul Timewell. Sheila Barker, John Helme, Jon Knowles, John & Lesley Aird, Mark Simpson.

Threlkeld Quarry Museum has been developed by CAT members John and Phillipa Tindal, from their original display of slate quarrying which used to be included in Ian Tyler's mining museum. When Tyler moved on, the Tyndals, together with Donald Angus, took over the museum and re-developed their exhibit to include mining as well as slate quarrying. Between them they keep it open to the public during the tourist season. As I understand it the site belongs to Ian Hartland who has laid a substantial length of two foot guage track to develop the Threlkeld Museum Railway. He has restored a 1926 0-4-0 saddletank locomotive, Sir Tom, which is now in steam and runs on the line.

It is intended that it should haul passengers, but it cannot be licensed until the rolling stock has been fitted with modern air brakes. The quarry is also home to a collection of about 50 vintage excavators, owned and occasionally operated by the Vintage Excavator trust.

Our meet, which was intended to demonstrate CATMHS' interest and support for the museum, was arranged to coincide with a Vintage Excavator Trust working weekend, and they had about six machines operating, moving great piles of spoil from place to place, an impressive and nostalgic sight and sound, especially as the weather was somewhat windy and wet. The Treasurer became quite excited!

Meanwhile, Sir Tom steamed up and down the track. Home made cakes, bacon butties and mugs of tea were available in one of the machine sheds.

John and Philipa Tindall were responsible for the slate displays in Ian Tyler's museum. When Ian left Threlkeld and set himself up in Keswick, John and Phillipa took over the Threlkeld Museum and, at short notice, set up mining displays to complement their existing quarrying exhibits. They are a dedicated couple and have done an excellent job. The museum closes over the winter months, and they intend to spend time reviewing and updating the displays. It was suggested that CAT might like to be involved, especially in regard to the Coniston display.

Lesley Aird, Sheila Barker and Phillipa Tindall in the Museum.

Phillipa gave us a guided tour of the underground mine feature. Totally realistic, this isn't a real mine but has been constructed in a part of the quarry where stone was loaded into lorries via a hopper system. It is on two levels with a ladderway and shaft, there is an underground waterwheel, two winches and a coffin level. It is damp and smells like a mine, and some of the concrete has begun to form stalagtites! Various aspects of mining are replicated, and the regular tour groups are given the experience of total darkness and of candlelight. Although no one pretends that this is an actual mine it is so realistic that people ask questions like "when was the mine last worked?"
Our thanks to Phillipa and John Tindall for their hospitality. Bear in mind that they are always looking for volunteers to operate the museum during the tourist season.

Ian Matheson.

Middlecleugh Exploratory Meet 30.09.07

John Aird, John Ashby, Sheila Barker, John Brown (ML), Chris Cowdery, Jon Knowles and Mark Waite

Thompson's Level and the Treasurer in discussion with the rest of the group (out of shot) about the mix of timber and steel rail here.

It was unusual to arrive at Nenthead and for the sun to be shining (Sheila will tell you that it always shines). Arriving at the car park I could see that the troops had already beaten the ML there. The day before there had been the meet at Wanlockhead. Flooding had prevented anyone being able to reach the hydraulic engine which was the main attraction, so everyone assembled for this meet was expecting great things.

I had to announce that the newly refurbished artefact gate for the Middlecleugh entrance was in my van and needed carrying up to mine. This

was met with a collective groan and it was not until I told the volunteers that we would be taking the van and one other vehicle up to the compressor house that calm returned. After looking at some mine plans, which Sheila had brought along, we set off for the Weardale road and then the quarry road to Middlecleugh.

Looking into Thompson's Level with Smallcleugh mine shop in the background.

We had already decided to visit the newly reinstated foundations of the Smallcleugh Mine Shop, located opposite the newly opened Thompson's Level, complete with its unusual combination of wooden and steel rails coming out of the mine.

It is remarkable to see that the flagstones which have now been uncovered in the floor of the Smallcleugh shop are all still intact despite the rest of the building becoming a ruin. After staying to take a few photographs we continued on our way to the Middlecleugh compressor house. With the gate unloaded, we made our way to the mine shop and had a look at the N.P.H.T. renovation that had taken place on this building. Someone commented, "What a shame that this had not been done before the start of the work on Middlecleugh level".

Part of our mission was to test some of the sumps on the North vein to see if they accessed the Smallcleugh Mine. Due to the amount of historical graffiti around these sumps we would use a rail to belay off rather than bolt and risk damage to the walls in this area. We tried picking up a length of rail to carry in with us and it was quickly returned to the ground again. Whose idea was this? I suddenly remembered that there were rails used to support the arching former during the reconstruction of the portal, and these were in the compressor house. They were made out of substantial angle iron, so I went and collected one of them and this seemed a more sensible choice, that is until the crawl over the collapsed ground in the North Vein, when it proved behave like a reluctant child being dragged along to school.

We made our way down the main level until reaching the arching which is approximately 350 metres from the portal. It is here that the North vein crosses the main level and turning left takes you onto the north vein. It is thought that this continues to the right, but has been closed off by the arching. At one time this would have led to the Bog Shaft. We pressed on down the North Vein and very quickly came across the broken ground where the shale has become much more unstable. A stooping walk/crawl needs to be adopted. After about 200 metres and shortly after passing the sump with graffiti, which includes a camel and dates of 1794 inscribed in the walls, we turned right onto the Smallcleugh Vein. Here we stopped at the sump with the Mathew Hall inscription, among others, dated 1798. First in to bat was John Ashby and the length of angle iron was deployed and used to belay off. Disappointingly this only went down about 10 metres to a blockage. Convinced that there may be a way through what he thought might be a level off the shaft, John came out and

let Chris go in to have a look. He confirmed that the shaft was completely blocked. Still on the Smallcleugh Cross Vein we moved back towards the North Vein to a walled off sump, and again John Ashby made the first descent with pretty much the same result as before. There was no graffiti at this sump and some bolting was necessary for safety reasons.

*John Ashby having his boots inspected by Chris Cowdery. (photo Jon Knowles***)**

John Ashby noticed that the wall, on which one or two of us were leaning, was partly supported underneath by timber and that it was not going to provide this service for too many more years. In fact, upon inspection, the wall was starting to lean in towards the sump. It was disappointing that this did not go anywhere, because, looking down this sump, it looked as though it may have led to a sub level.

After this second unproductive sump, it was decided to go and look at the man-way/ore hopper, a right turn just past the Mathew Hall sump. This was on a short drive through some impressive arching, but unfortunately the right hand wall has collapsed and care moving through was required. John Ashby, John Aird and Mark Waite went up this and came to an end when Mark reached a short vertical shaft at the top of the man-way. As time was pressing, this would need a separate meet to bolt it and it is thought that it leads to a small flat working.

One last attempt at a sump was suggested by the ML and so we all made our way back to the North Vein and to the 'Camel sump'. The angle iron was deployed one more time and a little bit of dam work was carried out to halt the flow of water that was going down this sump. An additional belay was fixed to the wall on the opposite side of the level for safety. The depth was tested with a 35 metre rope with a bag on the end and it was estimated to be about 30 metres. This should just about be on the Smallcleugh Mine horizon we thought. Guess who volunteered again? Yes, you guessed correctly, John Ashby. He made a very quick descent this time and upon reaching the bottom, gave out some loud expletives. We were unsure about his outburst, but when we realized

Man with camel. Below it is written 'Dromaderry'. Above it - H. Spott 1794 (photo Jon Knowles)

he was on his way back up, we made the assumption that this one did not go anywhere either. This he confirmed upon reaching the top. The graffiti on the back and right hand wall of this sump chamber is quite impressive.

Time had run out and after de-rigging, we left the mine and met Sheila with some of the artefacts which she had cleaned, photographed and recorded before bringing them back into the main

level and carefully placing them to one side. With the tub pushed back in, gate locked and gear washed in the burn, we returned to the car park at Nenthead and went our separate ways.

John Brown.

Newland, 29th August

Present: Peter Fleming, Ian Matheson, Mark Simpson, John Helme, Dave Robson, Peter Sandbach and dog

At some time between 1891 and 1981, someone took away at least 6ft of firebrick lining from the top of the furnace stack. The material behind it, which seems to be crushed firebrick, slid into the hole to make a lethal funnel and nature covered the area with sycamore, ivy and wild raspberries.

The intention of NFT is preservation rather than restoration, but to preserve the lower levels of the furnace we need to stop rainwater percolating through the furnace stack. The plan was to lay a waterproof membrane and cover the whole area in concrete. To do this we would have to replace the missing firebrick, making our best estimate as to how it should taper down to a chimney of unknown diameter. The mock-firebrick plant was operated to capacity, blocks tapered in two dimensions were produced and a cement mixer was worn out.

When we began to raise the furnace lining, the rubble had to be cleared from the top layer of blocks. As this was removed, the funnel, now clear of ivy, began to expand, revealing the top of a stone wall on three sides. As it was intended that this area would be filled in and concreted over, OAN were called in to record the remains before they were hidden.

Chris Wilde arrived on 19th March equipped with pony tail, laser recording devices and expensive cameras. He wanted to photograph the whole of the walls, but they were only partly exposed. The NFT members present were not fit for digging at the time, so he had to do most of it himself. The walls were exposed to their foundations and recorded..

Chris had left us with a hole to be filled. The membrane-and-concrete plan would need the rubbish on top of the stack levelling, so we began to move it into the hole. As we did so, we saw that there was a good deal of the original structure of the furnace intact under the demolition rubble. It slowly became apparent that the stone walls were about 3 ft thick and around the outside of the wall there was a brick walkway. There were five limestone blocks standing above the rubble. Three of them are in their original positions. A quick trip to Duddon was made to see how their furnace compares. They have a parapet wall surrounding a walkway and a shed in the centre to shelter the loading point. Just what we found at Newland.

The top of the stack at Newland, showing the re-built furnace lining and revealing part of the base of the walls. One of the limestone blocks can be seen bottom right.

Extra work meets were arranged for 21st and 24th July. Two skips were filled. We saved any re-useable slate, a few bricks and 1m^3 of half bricks. The

walkway and the base of the shed were exposed on three sides. On the fourth side, nearest the charging house, there seems to be nothing but soil, with bits of haematite. One small area has not yet been excavated. This is in the middle of the east side of the stack, where the chimney is seen on the 1897 photograph. It is hard to tell what part of the pile of rubble is original structure, what are later rebuilds and what is just rubble. It will have to be taken apart carefully.

The skips were filled with soil and half bricks. There was not much stone in the rubble, a few bricks and some scraps of roof slates. Several trailer loads of tree stumps were removed, Dave risked his chainsaw to reduce one of them to manageable pieces although it was full of bits of stone. It is likely that the bricks from the old building were re-used to build a new end wall to the charging house, leaving the broken bricks where they fell. They were used again in the 2005 rebuild.

Chris was called back to survey the new discoveries on 6th September.

The CATMHS meet was arranged to show off the cleared area. It was timed close to the open day when the site is briefly presentable to visitors. The party was suitably impressed with the new discoveries, then we went on to view the wheel pit. A reliable source states that there was a 39 ft waterwheel. There is a piece roughly hacked out of the furnace stack to accommodate a larger wheel, but that is about 14 ft from the axle. The 39 ft wheel cannot fit the site. We then moved on to the blowing chamber and talked about what the blowing cylinders might have looked like. By the time we got to the blacking mill and the dam it was too dark to see anything.

The dog misbehaved as usual. He is banned from the site until the neighbours can be placated.

Later in the Swan, the party was keen to support the Newland project by any means short of turning up to work meets. An exploratory dig in the wheel pit was proposed to find the bearings of the waterwheel and establish its width. Supposing that the spoil could be removed, a hole in the wheel pit might solve several problems. As well as finding the centre of the wheel, it could allow us to repair the area of broken stonework below ground level, then the hole could be used as a soakaway for rainwater, or backfilled with spoil from inside the blowing chamber. My opinion is that there is much more to be discovered at Newland, but we cannot afford any diversions at present. When we have stopped the rain coming through the stack, rebuilt the parapet walls and repaired the outer walls, then we can explore the wheel pit and the floor of the blowing chamber.

Andrew Davison of English Heritage came to consider how the top of the stack might be preserved on 5th October.

5th October 2007. Considering the options. Peter Sandbach, John Helme, Andrew Davison and David Smithson.

It was generally agreed that the membrane-and-concrete option was now unworkable. The next idea was a

roof over the whole area. The supports for the roof would damage the area we were trying to preserve and a roof with open sides would be vulnerable to gales.

The next possibility was to build a shed over the central area, trusting the walkway to drain through the original drain holes in the parapet walls. At the time of writing, this is the option most likely to be approved by English Heritage. If they do approve, it will need planning permission, plans drawn up by Blackett Ord and, of course, some money.

What if the shed had brick walls and a slate roof? That would be more restoration than we ever intended but the furnace would look as it did in 1897 and it might be the most practical way to divert the rainwater.

Peter Sandbach.

Wanlockhead Hydraulic Engines
29th September 2007

John Aird (ML), John Ashby, Wendy Brown, Chris Cowdery, Tony Holland, Jon Knowles, Simon Lowe, Mark Waite.

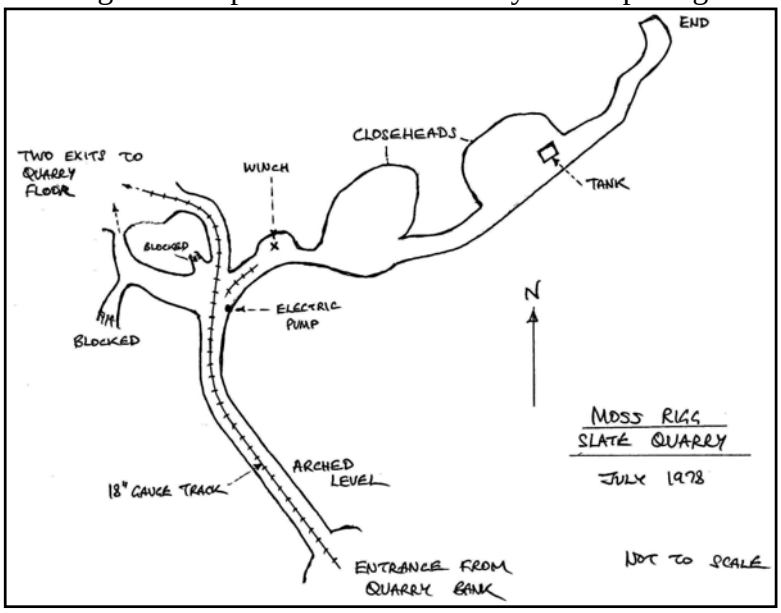
A good turn out (three new members!), a remote location, fine weather, everyone on time and the party left the vehicles at exactly 10 o'clock. Only a short walk to the entrance, minor difficulties there with the ML managing to drop both spanner and locking nut in the water but entering with both arms soaking wet must really be par for the course. Through the door and on to the head of the 120 foot first pitch, a scaffolding frame with a boarded floor so rigging takes all of 3 minutes, just one minor obstacle in the shape of the original wooden cistern but that's no real problem and then it's a perfect free hang in a solid rock shaft. At the bottom horizontally for about 10 metres to the top of the 80 foot pitch, which has the same arrangements at the pitch head. Again a perfect free hanging descent in a clean shaft, however at the bottom grim reality intruded. Finding that the water level was at thigh depth when on the previous visit it had been less than ankle deep, the ML cautiously advanced into the level to find it was chest deep and cold enough to cause some difficulty with breath control. A quick glance at the squeeze convinced him that there was no way on and he was rapidly on his way back up the pitch. Messrs Cowdery and Ashby were unwilling to accept defeat and descended to see for themselves but again discretion was the better part of valour and they returned agreeing that 50 mm airspace was insufficient (not to mention the further several hundred metres of chest deep wading without wetsuits). Slowly a return was made to surface, the entrance secured and the party returned to the vehicles. At this point the three new members showed their quality by driving off back to Coniston to do some proper underground stuff in Taylor's and Fleming's level.

The subdued ML was grateful for the fact that his past history of failure to achieve the stated meets aims at South Vein (the ropes, the ropes), Rampgill (the route through the flats) and Greenside (the Boulder) leading to multiple visits was only mentioned once or twice.

A small part of what was missed!

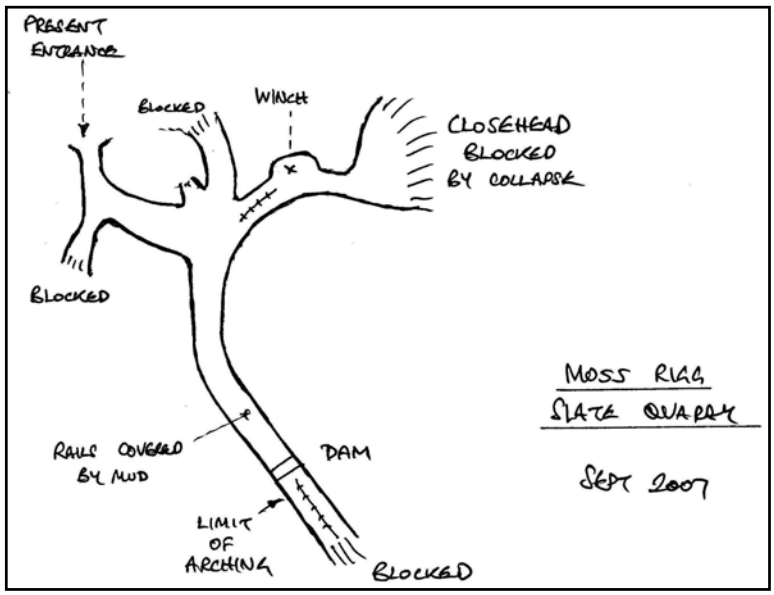
Moss Rigg Slate Quarry then & now
By Peter Holmes.

Tony Holland's article in Newsletter No 88 (pages 17 – 18) prompted me to get out some notes from the 1970's. One grubby little notebook tells me that I explored Moss Rigg with colleague Phillip Coates on 2nd July 1978. at that time the surface installations were still in operation, although the underground workings appeared not to be in use. I made a rough sketch of the underground layout, which makes an interesting comparison with Tony's more recent observations.



In 1978 the level entrance was intact and I estimate the eight figure grid reference to be NY 3130 0234. The level was quite wide and had a semicircular stone arch which extended for some distance; this is the arching that appears in Tony's upper photo on page 18 of Newsletter 88. I had the impression that the arching had actually been built outwards from the original rock entrance, to support waste tipped from above. The level gave access to a chamber from which two separate exits led onto the floor of the open quarry. An 18-inch guage rail track ran through the level from the shed area, and emerged onto the quarry floor by the more easterly of the two exits. West of the two exits was a collapsed passage.

Running approximately north-east from this chamber, a passage led to two close-heads and then continued on a winding course until coming to an end. In the further close-head was a large sheet steel tank, which didn't serve any obvious purpose unless it was a water supply for keeping down the drilling dust. As the explorer approached this chamber along the connecting passage a regular pat, pat, pat sound was clearly audible but the acoustics made its source impossible to guess. It was a strange effect, but the sound turned out to be nothing more mysterious than a slow drip of water from the roof landing on the top of the tank. I wonder if it is still gong on now?



There were no rails in this part of the system, which suggests that these close-heads had been abandoned at an earlier date than the 'open' quarry.

Close to the central or 'five-way' chamber was an interesting relic in the shape of a hand winch; this appears in Tony's lower photo on page 18 of Newsletter 88. The cast iron end units carried the name WESTRAY & FORSTER – FOUNDERS – ULVERSTON. Maybe not that exciting, until you consider that Westray & Forster (later Westray & Copeland) moved their business from Ulverston to Barrow in 1866. When I saw it I thought that this winch would make a worthwhile museum exhibit at some future date, if permission to remove it could be obtained. I filed this thought away in my head in the full knowledge that such things are, invariably, easier said than done.

Turning now to the present day scene, Tony has described how the former entrance level from the sheds has become blocked by loose material from above. About half way along the level is a concrete dam with the initials 'C.F.C.' I don't remember this from 1978, although I would hesitate to state categorically that it wasn't there. The layer of mud on the inner (north-west) side of the dam indicates that it has held water for some time. From the five-way chamber the rail exit to the quarry bottom is blocked, and the only remaining access to the underground system is through what was formerly the western opening. Inside, the level that leads east is blocked by a substantial collapse in the first close-head, and in the five-way chamber a large number of blocks have come down from the roof, making access awkward. The ancient winch is still there, but would be difficult to recover now in view of the tightness of access.
I feel the changes that have taken place over the last 29 years demonstrate just how impermanent such workings can be. When I walked through in 1978 everything seemed as solid as a rock, not that I'm qualified to judge. I suppose we just have to be thankful as explorers that we aren't there when the changes happen!

The Westray & Forster winch continues to intrigue me. When I saw it in 1978 and thought that it might be worth recovering 'one day', the track out to the sheds was still intact and there were some wagons standing about. It might just have been possible, given sufficient muscle, to bring the winch out on a wagon. It's too late now to do it that way, and Tony reckons that it would be next to impossible to bring it out via the quarry bottom entrance, but if anyone fancies a mission-impossible recovery operation I commend the idea to them.

Another memory from 1978 is an old level at Moss Rigg containing wooden rails. This was west of and above the recent buildings, and the eight figure grid reference I estimate as NY 3122 0236. The level was only a few yards long and emerged high up in the south face of the open quarry, so I assume it was an early access level which had been quarried away at its inner end as the quarry went deeper.

That's it; lets hope it creates a bit of interest. Two plans are enclosed, one based on my 1978 sketch and one based on Tony Holland's description of the place as it is now.

Peter Holmes

The Rampgill Horse Gin
Members Present: Tony Holland & Wendy Brown.

In February 2007 I had paid a visit to the Rampgill Mine to inspect the excavated access shaft down from the ***** to the to the horse level on the Scaleburn Vein. This has been gradually deteriorating for many years, as the original digging team did not allow for countless explorers using their steel bracings as a climbing frame. The result of all of this traffic is that those bracings have become dislodged and are now far less efficient at holding back the shaft walls. Indeed at that time I could see how the shaft had narrowed alarmingly.

Facing the prospect of the Horse Gin becoming inaccessible in the near future, I thought it a good idea to photograph the artefact and also to more closely inspect the access shaft whilst making a descent of it.

Sat 21st July
A rather grim Saturday morning found us at a deserted Nenthead car park, where we quickly kitted up & made our way into the Rampgill Mine. We were soon on the ***** vain where we rigged the access shaft with a wire electron ladder and climbed down. I was pleased to note that the shaft did not seem to have deteriorated at all since my February visit, and hopefully it may have stabilised. On reaching the horse level, we explored its length, noting any side passages to explore on our way back. Eventually we reached the collapse through which steel drums have been inserted, but surprisingly I found that unlike 10 years or so previously, I was unable to fit through. I spent quite a while trying to shrink myself enough to squeeze my way onwards, during which Wendy was concerned that I had become stuck inside the drum. Eventually I retreated.

Below the horse level at this point, a slot in the floor gives access to a worked out vein, which in turn leads onto an ore flat. We rigged the slot and descended down to explore this sub level area, narrowly avoiding a soaking from the water that was coursing down the slot from above. A continuation of the slot led on down to a sump, and also to a minor passage that opened out into a shaft, the top of which can be found in the horse gin chamber.

Wendy Brown examining the Horse Gin

After spending time exploring, we climbed back up to the horse level and enjoyed lunch before photographing the horse gin. On our return we explored the various side passages but found nothing of note, except a couple of shovels and a trio of detonator boxes.

Back outside in the car park, the rain was heavy & persistent, but the man who braved it to come over and have a chat turned out to be Roy Fellows!

Tony Holland

Brownley Hill Mine

Location : the Brownley Hill portal. 8.45am and the clouds of midges waiting for us on a humid Saturday morning were merciless, as me & Wendy kitted up in preparation for a days exploration in the further reaches of the mine. A distant onlooker would have been amused to see what would have appeared to be two crazy people fighting with some unseen enemy, dashing around and struggling with harness straps. It was with a sense of relief that we dropped the mine's swing gate behind us and set off along the Bloomsbury Level.

We turned left along the Wellgill X-Vein and then right along the Brownley Hill North Middle Vein. We easily located the roped rise that would take us up to the BH High Level which we both ascended without incident. Moving southwards along the High Level we inspected 3 sumps on the left of the passage. At the first we found the clearly engraved initials "I H" and the date "1798". The second sump had no engravings but did contain a fine metal wheelbarrow wheel. The third sump contained the remains of a wooden ladder. We agreed that a descent of these three sumps would be an interesting future project.

We continued along the High Level, taking the second turning on the left and proceeded to stoop and crawl our way eastwards for the considerable distance to where the Day Shaft comes in from near Roughside on the surface. A branch passage to the left here is blocked by a fall, but access is possible from the base of the actual shaft. Whilst crawling over the debris at the shaft base, Wendy squealed with horror at the sight of the remains of a partly decomposed suicidal mole. The branch passage heads northwards thru the shale along the course of the Jug Vein, but at a higher elevation, and is in a horrendous condition. It is so badly shattered that in places there is barely enough room to crawl through. Before long we decided that Wendy should wait while I went on alone to investigate the passage. As I made progress, I could hear lumps of ceiling falling off behind me. I ignored a branch passage to the right, leaving it for another day and pressed onwards finally arriving at a sump that descended down into the limestone. This had an old rail placed over the top but unfortunately, I had not brought a rope. I crawled my way back to rejoin Wendy & together we made our way back out onto the BH High Level.

We abseiled down the nearby roped sump, to arrive at the Jug Vein in the limestone. Above us, as we walked northwards along the very fine level; we could see high, narrow stopes and, unable to resist, I managed to climb up into one. I explored the stope in both directions but found nothing of note. Progressing further along, we eventually arrived at the tricky climb down onto the BH Horse Level. We passed the pair of clogs that lie near Grahams Sump before climbing up into a worked out vein which we pushed to the forehead. Near its end we were able to look up a rise and recognise it as the sump with the rail across that I had seen earlier.

We returned the BH Horse Level and moved northwards along the BH West High X Vein to arrive at a cross roads. A climb up here gave access to a small passage, the arching of which, was formed using deads. Along here a

manway leads higher and on previous visits, I had dismissed it as being inaccessible because of the large boulder that had come down, blocking the way in. A closer inspection however, revealed that the boulder was easily climbed over, to enable us to climb up the manway. This gave access to an interesting stoped out area. A high packwall appeared to be the way on, but at about 20' high, I decided to leave it for another day. We found five pairs of clogs in this area, some in very fine condition. We also saw many balls of clay that the miners used for holding candles in place and the remains of a few old tallow candles.

Returning to the BH Horse Level we made our way further northwards to where the passages of the West High X Vein and the High X Vein meet. After a bite to eat, we headed south along the High X Vein, inspecting the various rises. All except one would require a maypole to scale, the other having the benefit of a ladder which we used to climb up and explore the narrow stope above. We followed the passage on to the forehead before retracing our steps to eventually reach BH North Vein, turning right here, heading North East to explore the extremities of the vein. There have a number of shale collapses that require crawling over and the air quality here is really quite poor. We were both panting and breathless before we climbed up into a very nice stope where the air quality was far better. Time though, was once more not on our side and we decided to make our way out, our route taking us South West along the BH North Vein and then along the Wellgill X Vein.

Yet again we left Brownley Hill having failed to explore a significant area of West High X Vein which I had visited only briefly on one occasion about ten years ago. Clearly, we decided, we would have to make a trip with this specific goal in mind. The seven and a half hours since we entered seemed to have passed in a blink of an eye but happily the clouds of midges had lost patience waiting for us and had no doubt flown away in search of some other unfortunate prey.

Tony Holland

Taylor's Level Traverse

It was on an exploratory trip to descend from Taylor's Level down to Deep Level to investigate the collapse that has blocked access to the Red Dell Stopes via Deep Level and the old LMQT dig, that I became intrigued by Taylor's Level itself. I had been as far as the second floor collapse of the outbye section of the level and I had been to the top of the rubble pile near to where Taylor's Level passes the New Engine Shaft, but I had no idea of what lay between these two places or what distance separated them.

Taylor's Level is in parts, unfortunately, in a shockingly poor condition. The middle section was mainly false flooring and the continuing process of deterioration & collapse has resulted in very little of the floor remaining. Currently, small "bridges" of flooring separated by numerous much larger voids is all that remains. Stones dropped down these voids rattle alarmingly down through the darkness to Deep Level below.

If it were somehow possible to cross those large gaps in the floor, it would be possible to enter Fleming's Mine and exit via Taylor's Level, an interesting and satisfying thru trip that would also provide a useful third means of entry into the inner reaches of Taylor's Level, the others being Flemings Mine and the Red Dell Stopes.

In the outbye section of the level, just after entering the stope via the oil drum, a handline reaches across the first void and this is still safe and useable. After this a crawl leads to a further floor collapse, again with an installed handline, but here the hangers looked badly corroded. The line had obviously been in place for many years and looked like it had been installed whilst it was still possible to walk along a ledge of remaining floor. Clearly another solution was required.

Crossing the Second Void

Early in August 2007, inspired by Mark Simpson's rope traverse in the South Vein Stope at Paddy End, I commenced installing a similar arrangement in Taylor's Level with the objective of safely crossing the sections of collapsed floor. The work was carried out over a number of evening visits throughout August. I intended that the traverse should last long term and with this in mind, I used M10 stainless steel anchor bolts and hanger plates. The work progressed reasonably smoothly and despite occasional inconveniences such as blunt drill bits and shortages of rigging gear, by 15th August the first two voids were successfully rigged and crossed. This led to a rare section of solid floor. Here the vein was displaced 10 feet to the left and at the end of this short section of passage is where the third void was encountered. In the distance I could see a further section of

false floor but this was about 15 to 20 feet higher than the Taylor's Level horizon. The rigging of this void looked difficult due to the upwards route that would be necessary and indeed it was not without incident. On the first visit, after placing only three anchors, I dropped my spanner in a display of dazzling ineptitude. As it rattled its way noisily down to Deep Level, many curses and expletives echoed throughout the stopes. On the 21st August I completed the rigging of the third void and found myself at the top of a reasonably solid looking rubble slope. I carefully descended this until I was once more on the Taylor's Level horizon, looking into the fourth void. Below, the stope disappeared into the black depths, but along the stope wall I could see a curious ledge about one foot wide that had been carved into the footwall forming a recess. This offered an obvious way forward but I began to wonder just how much further I would need to go. The terrain looked unfamiliar and I could see no daylight coming in from the open stopes somewhere above. I realised I needed more information about the course and layout of Taylor's Level.

On 22nd August I phoned Peter Fleming and asked if I could consult his Coniston Copper Mines Plans. He generously agreed and later that evening Wendy and I left his house with a much clearer understanding of the course of Taylor's Level even though it appears to be poorly documented in the plans.

We decided it might be a good idea to have a look from the inbye section of the level and to see if anything was recognisable. And so with this in mind, we entered Fleming's mine the following weekend with intention of descending down our pre installed ropes to Taylor's Level. This plan was almost ended at the second pitch where we discovered there had been a recent fall of material. Miraculously, the rope was untouched, but clearly some material had indeed gone down the "narrow stope". More importantly there was still a quantity of material left that had not come down but was now without its supporting timbers and looked very precarious indeed. It looked bad. It looked damned dangerous actually. But on the other hand, it had survived the noise and vibration of the collapsing deads and timbers adjacent to it, so it could not be so fragile, could it?

Soon we were safely down, having just made the quietest descent we had ever done. We progressed on down to Taylor's Level and made our way along the level to the New Engine Shaft. At this point there is a difficult climb up some large sections of collapsed stope wall which involves a balancing act on a small pile of rocks, so here we installed a knotted hand line. At the top of the climb we could see daylight above. This is the place where an old CATMHS stemple way commences, but the first one or two were missing, and the rope and hangers looked far too dangerous to trust. It was also at a higher elevation than Taylor's Level.

I rigged a rope and descended down to see what, if anything I could recognise. Down I went, wondering at what point I would admit defeat, turn around and come back up again, when suddenly I saw the carved ledge. I had found myself at the far end of the fourth void!

I secured my position and began to rig the traverse along the ledge, however I found that I was wielding the heavy drill

and hammer with my left hand. This was very tiring and I knew it was certain that I would damage the thread on an anchor if I continued, so after 3 anchors I called a halt to the days work, and resolved to continue and finish the traverse one evening the following week.

Wendy negotiates the ledge on the fifth void

The rigging of the fourth void was subsequently completed without incident allowing explorers to safely enter and exit from the inner section of Taylor's Level via the traverse. I think it is a neat and tidy installation that does not impact too much on the fabric or aesthetics of the mine.

It was to be some weeks later before the route was first completed as a through trip. On Saturday 29th September, Wendy Brown, Simon Lowe and myself entered Flemings Mine and made our way down through the stopes to arrive on Taylor's Level, noting on the way that happily, the site of the recent collapse at the top of the "Narrow Stope" seemed to have stabilised, it having not deteriorated at all since our last visit. After stopping off at the Thriddle Shaft "viewpoint", we continued on down to Taylor's Level.

We proceeded along here to where the level meets the Thriddle Shaft, crossing this using the installed line and continued along this colourful section of level, finally reaching the Blue Cascade. We were alarmed to see that on one side, the Cascade has developed two large cracks, one vertical and one horizontal. I don't think it is a coincidence that the cracked side of the Cascade seems to be very dry. Unfortunately, Simon was unable to take any photographs because of camera problems.

We made our way out-bye along the Level, as far as the New Engine Shaft and climbed up the large rock pile to the descent point that would take us down to the start of the traverse. This was the only un-roped pitch, but we had with us a 20mtr rope kindly donated by John Aird earlier that day at the Wanlockhead meet. Unfortunately, we had neglected to bring any hangers, but we were able to improvise the rigging, utilising an existing hanger and hand line. Whilst not ideal, it was sufficient, but I made a mental note to make sure I returned soon to re-hang the rope correctly.

Having clipped onto the first line, we now proceeded via-ferrata style along the traverse, crossing the various voids on our way to the Taylor's Level Portal, which we reached at about 7.45pm. It was completely dark when we emerged and made our way across the Red Dell Beck and on down the footpath, reflecting on a sensational and exhilarating afternoon underground.

Tony Holland.

CUMBRIA AMENITY TRUST MINING HISTORY SOCIETY

Committee Meeting held on the Monday 23rd July 2007 at the BMSC Hut at Coniston, starting at 6.30pm.

Agenda.

1	Apologies for absence	2	Minutes of the last meeting
3	Matters arising	4	Secretary's Report
5	Treasurer's Report	6	Membership Sec. & Newsletter Reports
7	Field research policy	8	Meet Report
9	Publications	10	Library
11	Coniston Coppermines & Quarries	12	GPS
13	Hudgillburn	14	Middlecleugh
15	Mines Forum meeting	16	CATMHS website
17	Date and venue next meeting	18	Any other business

Present M. Simpson (MS), J. Aird (JA), S. Barker (SB), I. Matheson (IM), D. Borthwick (DB), D.G. Bridge (DGB), J. Brown (JB), P. Fleming (PF,) M.Mitchell (MM) & A. Wilson (AW).
The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm. 10 committee members attended.

1 Apologies for absence from: M. Scott (MSc).

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the committee meeting held on Monday 21st May had been previously circulated to members**.**

It was **PROPOSED** by JA and **SECONDED** by IM that the minutes be signed by the chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings. This was carried unanimously.

3 Matters arising

3.1 Item 3.2 Correctly dated BCA PLI cards had been sent to members.

4 Secretary's Report

Received since last meeting. None, that was not covered by separate items.

5 Treasurer's Report

JA had circulated the balance sheet to committee members covering the period from 21st May to 23rd July. Income was from: subscriptions, donations and publications. Expenditure exceeded income due to purchase of a GPS. On a vote it was decided not to insure the new GPS equipment, as the cost was high. JA asked for approval of expenditure of £215.26 for Kernal Level and £12.50 for hangers in South Shaft, agreed. Types of hangers and bolts for the traverse in Kernal Level was discussed and agreed.

Thanks were expressed to Jon Knowles for providing and setting up a photographic display at the NAMHO Conference.

The current a/c stood at £2028.13 and the Scottish Widow a/c at £13000.00.

6 Membership Secretary's Report & Newsletter

IM reported he had sent out Newsletter 88, and that the new Epson printer had produced good quality prints; at a cost of 40p per newsletter, plus 25p for paper and envelope and 65p for p & p - £220 for 130 copies.

JB congratulated IM on an excellent newsletter. PF had been contacted by member Derek Lyon who wished to donate a full set of CATMHS newsletters and other papers. JA took them to check if he had everything on the CAT newsletter CD.

7 Field Research Policy

SB would write a draft for approval at the next meeting.

8 Meets Secretary's Report

Jon Knowles had sent out the next meets list. It is required to complete a risk assessment form for underground meets. JA reported that the rope left in Greenside Mine had been retrieved. PF reported that the Lindal meet had been very enjoyable. He had acquired an oral history tape of an interview with a man who worked at the dressing mill at Lindal. DB mentioned tapes in CAT library, which must by now be deteriorating. DGB said he could rewrite them on CDs.

9 Publications

MM was still working on our new Coniston copper mines leaflet, quotes for printing would be needed.

IM still needed more items for Journal No.6, to be produced in spring 2008.

PF now has 129 old photographs of CAT members (dated1970 to 1990), on a disk. He gave a copy to IM for NL use and one to the CAT library.

10 Library

A start had been made to add locations of books etc. to the records (please replace items in same place). The contents of the filing cabinet had been checked, all in order. It is still intend to put records into PDF files, which will be searchable**.**

11 Coniston Mines & Quarries

Kernal Level A breakthrough had occurred two weeks after the last committee meeting, the collapse had been at the junction of the arching with the bedrock. After about 15 m the level enters stoped ground, both up and down, with false floors in various states of collapse (see CAT newsletter 88 for full description).

JB to contact LDNPA regarding date when work will have to stop when bats start to hibernate. A decision as to the method of repairing the arching will have to be made before next spring.

A report on the Simon's Nick geophysical survey by Jack Walpole had been received (see report in CAT newsletter No.88).

PF had been contacted by OAN for any further information available on the buildings on the Paddy End dressing floor. They are preparing their report.

JA reported that Levers Water Mine needed a visit to clear debris from the portal.

12 GPS

MS had drafted guidelines for the use of the Mobile Mapper by members. The office software is DigiTerra Explorer V4 CE, which resides on the CAT laptop; MS will hold till others have learnt how to use it. DB and SB are taking the equipment first. MS had also produced written instructions, which are available to any member; training can also be arranged.

13 Hudgillburn Mine

Nothing to report, this item to be taken off the agenda.

14 Middlecleugh Mine

JB had completed the work on the old gate and will be fitting it in the near future. An exploratory meet has been arranged on 30th September.

15 Mines Forum meeting

Next meeting on the 26th October at Threlkeld Quarry Mining Museum at 10.30am.

16 CATMHS Website – Nothing to report.

17 Any Other Business

17.1 PF and IM have been invited to attend a presentation arranged by Cumbria Tourism and other partners, to identify ways in which to conserve the unique industrial heritage of Honister Quarry.

17.2 Member T Holland had emailed committee members suggesting CAT should join the discussion forum of a mine exploration website. After consideration it was decided that our website and NL provided adequate provision for discussion.

17.3 DGB had received a progress report from Dave Millward (BGS) regarding the research into the origin of the Graphite deposit in Borrowdale. DGB took members of Madrid University and BGS into the Graphite mines earlier this year.

17.4 PF had written to John Hodgson (JH) regarding repairs needed on the Thriddle Incline, who agreed with PF's comments about wear and tear by walkers. PF had suggested we should try to include the consolidation of the incline in a future funding package for the area, or as part of the 'Fixing the Fells Project'. JH had agreed with the suggestion and would also like to include the Middle Level incline, as this year's budget was already allocated, it would be considered for next year.

17.5 PF asked if he should order more of our current trail leaflets. Agreed.

17.6 JB had been given copies of letters written by John Barrett by Warren Allison, copies to go in our library.

17.7 DGB reported that the MOD were doing archaeological work in Scordale, a definite switch of attitude! SB reported that the NPHT Archaeological Ltd. had been employed to do exploratory work on the dressing floor, which had proved very interesting.

17.8 DB asked for information regarding Irish miners working at Coniston - JA said that the Catholic Church at Coniston was built for them.

18 Date and venue of next Meeting

This to be held on 1st October 2007, at the BMSC Hut Coniston at 6.30 pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15 pm

CUMBRIA AMENITY TRUST MINING HISTORY SOCIETY

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