

22nd June 1985

CAT Knockmurton

Meet Reprt By by R.E,Hewer

Having taken some considerable time and effort to produce drawings, plans and maps of the area it was somewhat disappointing to see such a poor turn out. Only 7 members appeared and 4 of them were NMRS members!! So what were the excuses? Saturday wasn't a good day for mining! CAT members don't like iron mines! And the more bizarre - Saturday is shopping day. Now come on gentlemen, what is happening? Are our CAT members getting nesh, don't they like wallowing in dirt, are they all getting too old for all this activity?

The magnificent seven set off. The eighth member, a new face to the society, by the name of Mr. F. Fleming, whose car had suffered the ignominy of casting its timing belt at Cleator Moor arrived after lunch time (with the extra 150 feet of ladders required two hours previous to his arrival). He was forgiven but his vehicle was not.

Our route to the mines followed the Rowrah and Kelton Fell Railway which was constructed between 1874 and 1877 costing £25,000 from Rowrah to Knockmurton. We tried to enter the mine system from the Knockmurton High Bottom Level, later renamed N0 9 level on No.3 vein. Unfortunately there had been a run at the entrance and it was decided to enter via a small split trial level just above and slightly to the west of No.9 by the side of the Forestry Commission track. A rather tight squeeze followed by a mammoth shuttle service got everyone nicely warmed up and ready for a short 25' ladder pitch down onto a section which had been crosscutted from No.9 level. By now super heated steam was issuing from one or two wet suits. We continued our journey by following the internal crosscut eastwards to a cross road where two members continued south to the original entrance and cleared the blockage from the inside. Most of the rest of the party ascended the several stopes nearby and explored the area thoroughly. The roadway which continued to the east ended at a fall where a cartoon may be seen finger lined in clay on the wall. Various theories were put forward describing the scene. I thought it showed one miner blowing smoke from a cigarette into the ear of another with a third face looking on from above, however it was then suggested that the cartoon showed a miner blowing smoke into the miners wife's ear and another member thought it was a picture at the Kaiser etc etc!!

Our main aim on the trip was to attempt a descent to the Cogra Moss level some two hundred feet below. At the far end of No.3 vein, the vein we were exploring, we had previously discovered a couple of small winzes, the first was choked some 150 feet below but the second one had been descended onto the main adit but the way on to the stopes was in deep water, hence the necessity for wet suits. As by now the reader is aware, the ladders were by no way long enough to reach the bottom, however on our original descent we had noted several levels running off the winze so it was decided to

put down what we had and explore these levels. So there I found myself dangling at the end of 120 feet of ladders, with the way down appearing to go on ad infinitum, and guess what? There were no levels off. Well that's the luck of the draw, next time we'll get it right. Anyone wishing to have a go please give me a ring. The way forward along the Cogra Moss level is tantalising for it should lead through the whole series of workings and eventually take one into Kelton mines and there lies another story!

We made our exit through the No.9 level into a camouflage of trees where our super heated members were attacked by millions of mosquitoes, this required a rapid escape and we headed to the nearby stream, which had dried up! By now we had located a grinning Pete Fleming who explained his dilemma. I then made the rather stupid mistake of suggesting we should visit one of the upper levels which had a nice, well preserved ore wagon standing in the level, now I'm sorry but I don't honestly know why all these people started throwing things at me. But we DID visit the level AND we broke into new ground along labyrinths of passageways full of 'hundreds of clog prints, candle holders, scrapers (2), and a broken wagon wheel. There could still be more to explore in this area. A large ore chute going downwards could point the way on unfortunately the ground in this area is very loose.

Well what more can I say. The time was seven o'clock; we were all tired, hot and bothered, so we made our way wearily pack to the cars. Still we had had a great day -----
--- where were the rest of you?