

23rd August 1987
Old Gang Mines

MEET REPORT
SWALEDALE WEEKEND AUGUST 22nd & 23rd 1987

Sunday 23rd Aug. Old Gang Mines.

Members present.

A C-P-ThomasMeet Leader.

A Wilson

D Bridge

S Sparkes

D Borthwick

M Mitchell

A Danson

S C-P-Thomas (+Imogene)

C wood-Johnson....guest.

Having assembled at the Surrender Smelt Mill, we walked up to the portal of Hard Level where approx 1 ½ hours were profitably spent in removing a significant quantity of debris in attempt to lower the water level for the benefit of those members unequipped with wetsuits. After a short dinner break the waters were braved (middle waist deep, after lowering about 10") and in we went. After a few hundred metres a fall is encountered (someone has attempted to stabilise this fall) behind which the water is again dammed up (chest deep). Several hundred metres beyond this an inclined level enters the level roof. This level was not investigated but may connect up to higher workings. Continuing on, several leads were inspected with a view to finding our way through to the bottom of Brandy Bottle Incline but, as both these were through deep water they were left out of consideration for those amongst us without wet suits on. Angela and Cheryth, having been well doused on the way in, were getting a bit cold so they, shortly followed by Mike, left to return to day. Those of us remaining then decided to push the wet leads to Brandy. Starting with the North continuation of the main Hard Level (straight across at the first major junction) we followed through deep water to a collapse in the shale beds. Returning to the main junction we then followed east along the old rake vein. Partway along here the level has become dammed up to within a foot or so of the roof, with water flowing over it and access beyond involves a flat out squirm in several inches of water. After this a neck deep prolonged wade takes you up to the first crosscut north from this vein. Straight on here is the Bunton Level connection (worth a future investigation) but as our object was the Brandy Bottle Incline we turned right at this junction. A little way along this crosscut and you emerge into the North Rake Vein. Here a little climb up takes you into "Geode Passage" where the shale beds are literally studded, like currents in a bun, with geodes. Continuing northwards again, and after climbing over a half buried ore tub (of interest) you emerge in another vein. This vein must be on the line of a fault as the shales from which the level has emerged are replaced directly opposite, on the other vein wall, by solid limestone. The level continues through

this limestone bed but unfortunately debris has come down the vein and almost totally obscured the continuing level. This debris of course now controls the level of the water in this level and it is here where the most sporting element of the trip may now be experienced. Squirring over the debris one now finds oneself semi-buoyant, chin deep in water and with ones helmet almost permanently scraping on the level roof. This level continues in this way for approx 2-300ft and leads directly to the foot of the Brandy Bottle Incline. Anne, in her usual spirited way, was first to experience this "sporting element" and thus it is to her perhaps that we are indebted for the successful conclusion of the day. There had been mutterings, you see, of how this particular bit of level obviously flooded up to roof just around the corner, obviously didn't go anywhere anyway and obviously it was time to go home now please, so it was indeed a surprise to hear Anne calling back that the incline was there.

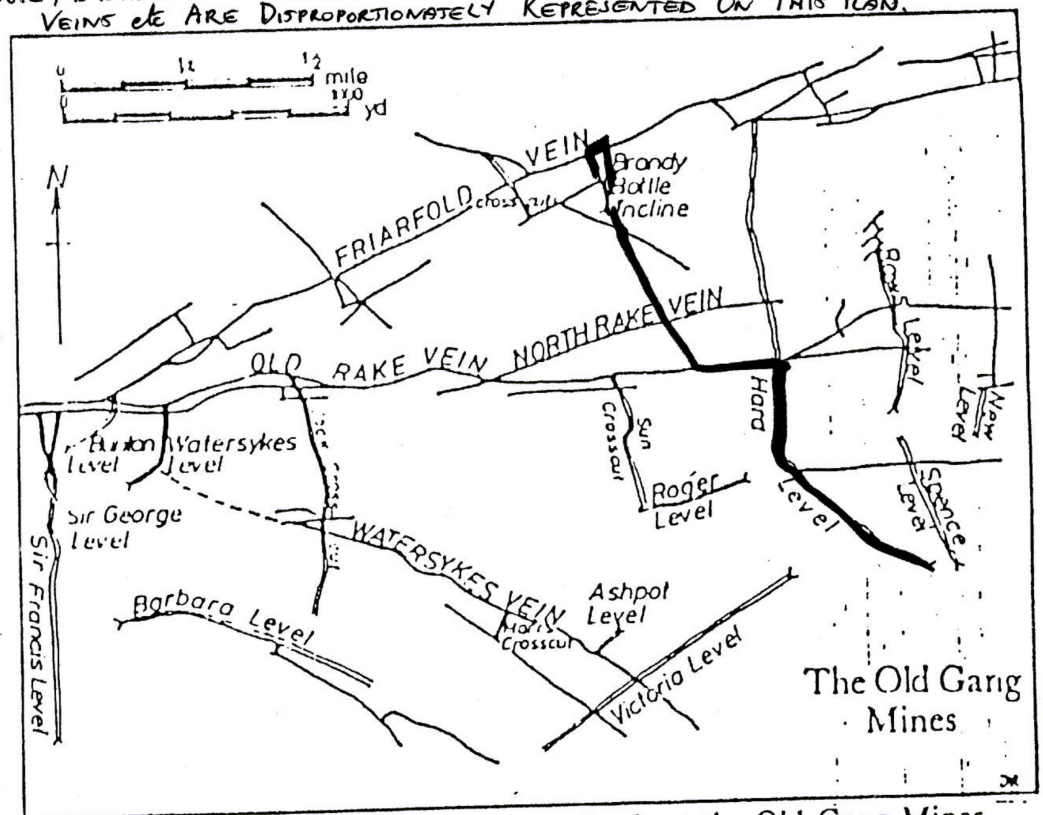
Following through to the foot of the incline (incline tubs here) and up, it was even more of a surprise to see daylight streaming in from the top. It is worth mentioning here that to our knowledge on entry to the mine, the incline was closed. The entrance had once been bulldozed in and it was our intention merely to find the incline from below, if possible, and maybe undermine the blockage from below to create some indication on surface (for a future surface dig) and then return out the way we went in. It was very satisfying indeed then to find that someone had already gone to the trouble of re-securing the entrance with a 45 gallon oil drum, thus enabling us to complete, unexpectedly, a classic sporting through trip.

The levels approx half way down the incline were inspected on the way out, the one to the east exhibiting a classic example of stress fractured rock. The level to the west was explored as far as to what appeared to be a pool of Hydrogen Sulphide, a dark bluey puddle which at first sight looked like a flooded winze and, if agitated, released significant quantities of gas. Exploration was not continued beyond this point.

Total time underground approx 6 hrs, although someone already knowing the route could probably do the trip in about 2 hrs. For future reference, and so the incline portal is not "lost" again, the portal is at SD9605 0195 directly opposite the second tributary beck flowing from the east into Hard Level Gill above the junction with Ash Pot Gutter.

A C-P-Thomas.

SHOWING THROUGH TRIP ROUTE.
 NOTE, DISTANCES & ANGLES OF INTERSECTION OF LEVELS WITH
 VEINS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED ON THIS PLAN.



Map 3 Plan of the network of veins and levels at the Old Gang Mines.

ruinous. A mill was working here in 1771, the present mill being