

21st June 1989
Grasmere Mines

These mines are to be found in Greenhead Gill at NY3509, (Greenhead Gill Trial, Grasmere Mine) and at Tongue Gill, NY3410, (Providence Mine and Fairfield Mine).

The best account is to be found in Wythburn Mine And The Lead Mines Of Helvellyn by Alen McFadzean, page 36, but information may also be found in Mines Of The Lake District Fells by John Adams, page 139. Postlethwaite's Mines And Mining page 127. and Mining In The Lake Counties by W.T.Shaw, page 102.

Providence Mine and Fairfield Mine. Prior to 1709 good quality iron ore was supplied to the Langdale Furnace (Hacket Forge?) from Tongue Gill and Red Tarn. At the same time haematite from Ore Gap (Ewer Gap), which lies between Bow Fell and Esk Pike at an altitude of 2500 feet, was supplied to the furnace at Langstrath. The site of this furnace can be recognised by the considerable remains of charcoal and slag together with some kidney ore fragments at the junction of Langstrath Beck and Greenup Gill. (273130)

In 1873 the price of iron ore rose from 14s per ton to 32s and several small mines were opened to take advantage of this, but by 1875 the price had dropped back to 14s 6d. Captain John Muse opened Providence Mine in Tongue Gill in 1873 where there were three levels. The vein of solid haematite was 16 feet wide. A miner was killed in the top level in December 1873. In 1874 300 tons of ore were produced.

Nearby to the east the early 17th C Fairfield Mine was also re-opened in 1873, by John Hall. There were two levels and 204 tons were produced in 1874. Fresh water issuing from one of the levels once used to supply Grasmere village. Both mines carted their ore to Windermere Station in the 19th C and both had closed by 1877 because high transportation costs and falling ore prices made them uneconomic.

Greenhead Gill Trial and Grasmere Mine These Elizabethan lead mines were operated by the Company of Mines Royal from 1564 until they closed in 1573. A packhorse road leads up the side of the Gill to the dressing floor where, in 1569, a waterwheel driving a stamp mill and box buddles was erected. The outlines of the walls remain. There is a trial 30' long at the 600' contour, (346085), a cross cut from the north bank of the Gill at 900' and two shafts and some open works at 1000'. (350087)

Ten members took part on a fine summers evening and first visited Fairfield Mine where one level was found to be open. This is a cross cut about a hundred yards long ending in a blockage which appears to have run from a stope. Part way along the cross cut a short trial right and left follows a clay vein. Anton found a small rock drill in a hole and this was left in situ. Next the party visited Providence Mine. A pony track can be traced which zigzags up the fellside and a gateway in the stone wall has been filled in since the mine closed. There are several substantial spoil heaps but no sign of an opening. A dig might be worthwhile one day. There was no time to visit the Elizabethan mines.

Those Present Were:

Anton & Sheila C.P.Thomas

Mike & Barbara Mitchell

Dave Bridge

Angela Wilson

Mark Scott

Sheila Barker

Dave Blundell

Ian Matheson (ML)