

28th October 1990
Brandlehow Salt Level

The Salt Level was the Adit Level of Brandlehowe Lead Mine. According to Postlethwaite, it was commenced around 1819 and was a cross cut driven north from the margin of Derwentwater for 100 fathoms. The water which springs in the northern end of the mine was impregnated with salt, hence the name. It has recently been dug by the LMQT tunnelling team, and Roy Garner offered to show us around.

Roy warned us that it would be wet, and that wet suits would be advisable. What he didn't say was that it was also low, and whilst the water was not much above waist level the roof was at shoulder level. After crawling backwards into the two feet high entrance the floor drops a little and one proceeds for about a hundred meters at a stoop with ones head scraping the roof and ones chin in the water. This part of the adit is coffin shaped, and is narrow as well as low. The LMQT team had to clear two blockages in this section. Dig one, about 50 meters in, took two days work, whilst dig two involved seven days. The roof was timbered in both places to prevent it running in again. The water level was even higher than at present, and the diggers were immersed in water the whole time. The spoil had to be dragged back along the adit, causing the floor to rise so that now one has to crawl over it on the approach to each dig.

The mine is dry after dig two and one is seen able to stand upright. A wooden kibble was found on a ledge nearby and has been removed for exhibition at Threlkeld when the museum opens. A hundred meters further on there is a flooded sump on the left from which a ladder protrudes. Looking down through the clear blue water one can see a staging below with another ladder rising through it. The hole in the top staging has its sides cut away in a curve, making it roughly circular in shape to give clearance for a kibble or perhaps just for a mans shoulders. After passing wooden launder and a flooded sump the end of the main drive is reached and this seems to correspond with Postlethwaites remark that the Salt Level was driven along the vein for a hundred fathoms.

At this point however the roof is stoped upwards for about ten meters, and the level branches to the left and now continues for another two hundred meters to a forehead 470 meters from the entrance. This second part is much more spacious than the first and feels much more modern and was presumably driven not long before the mine closed in 1891. There was speculation that it might be even more recent. A small piece of rubber coated detonator fuse was found on the floor which may confirm this if it can be dated. There are several candle stubs on the walls and clog prints on the floor.

After a thorough exploration of the adit and some photographs the party returned to day, where it was found to be raining heavily and many difficult and complex contortions were performed in the back of steamed up cars whilst members tried to change out of their sodden clothing in relative comfort. It would have been interesting to walk around the surface remains and to interpret them and locate the sites of the 34 foot water wheel, the 30 h.p. steam engine and the 350 h.p. beam engine which once worked there, but the

weather was not nice so we all went home.

Roy Garner (Meet Leader)

Sheila Barker

Angela Wilson

Ian Matheson

Sally Smith

Andy Porter

Mark Simpson

Dave Blundell

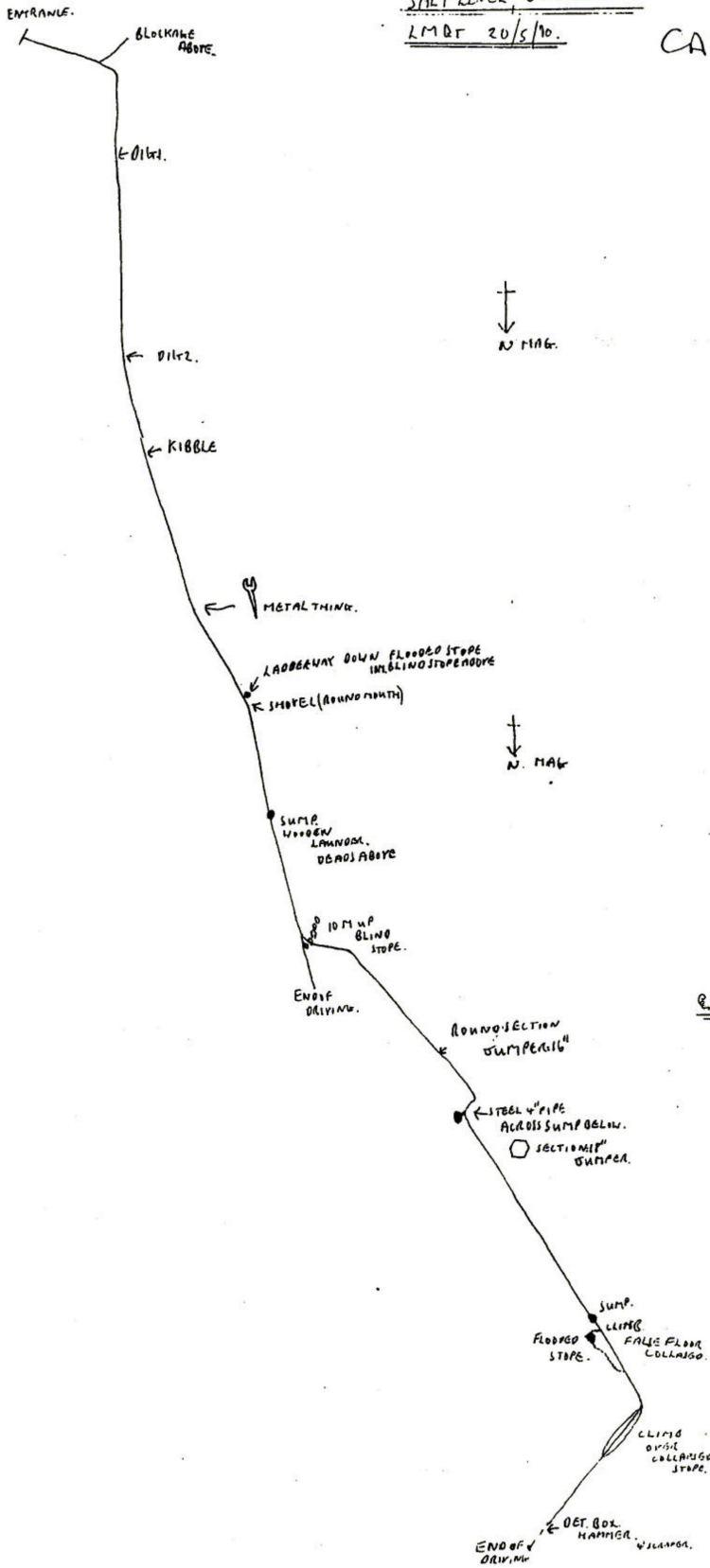
Peter Fleming

Don Borthwick

Paul Timewell.

SALT LEVEL BRANDLE HOLE
LM BT 20/5/10.

CAT met 28/10/90



Return to end of Ring: 470 METRES.

SCALE: 50 METRES
(1:1000)