

1991

Carrock End Mine

Carrock End is an old copper mine situated beside the road which passes beneath the steep eastern face of Carrock Fell. It is thought that it was discovered by the Elizabethans and worked prior to 1692, when it was known as Dutchmans Moss. It was last worked in 1869 and consisted of four cross cut levels, a shaft and a hush. The shaft was 23 fathoms deep and according to W T Shaw, water was brought from Carrock Beck for working pumping and winding machinery. After driving the winding and crushing wheel the water crossed the main road and was used to propel the pump wheel. Rods from this came back under the road and across to the shaft.

After a week of bad weather we were fortunate to have a pleasant evening for this visit. There was a wide clear sky with splendid views over the Solway and a low sun threw the surface workings into relief. Noisy sheep were all around and there were lapwings, curlews and midges! These investigative meets benefit by the collected wisdom of those present and it is a pity that so few attended. They were Sheila Barker, Dave Bridge, Mark Simpson and Ian Matheson. Alistair Lings was there too, pursuing a parallel project of his own – something to do with looking for copper wire or slag in the nearby Bronze Age site!

We were able to trace the leat taken from the stream east of the road and follow it to the site of the pumping wheel, which must have been a free standing structure fed by a wooden launder. A trench marks the course of the pump rods running directly towards the mine, keeping them low and clearly passing under the road. Having followed this to workings we speculated on the exact location of the shaft and the arrangement of the crushing and winding wheel and machinery. There are the remains of two buildings, the feed race from the water leat and a rock with a hole in the middle which seems to have been the base of a dressing floor. Below this there is an area where absolutely nothing grows and we mused that copper must be even more poisonous to plants than lead.

Next we followed the hush, which in turn follows the course of the vein and looked at the neat little earth dam at its origin. Higher still is another small dam with a deep trench running from it. This seems to be another hush which perhaps predates the other. The size of the trench is quite disproportionate to the amount of water held and it must have taken hundreds of releases and years of endeavour to excavate. One can imagine men hurrying up to work on the hush after each heavy rainfall, lest the water might leak away without being put to work.

Finally we examined the four levels. Two are run in and two open. These were entered by Mark and Dave. Number three contained deep water which kept Mark near the entrance, but Dave pressed bravely on into neck deep water to report that it went about 75 yards to the vein, where the timbers had collapsed. By the time we returned to the cars it was after ten o' clock and so, all of us having some distance to drive, we went our separate ways, agreeing that it had been a most pleasant and interesting evening.