

BRITISH MINING No.65

# ALLENDALE, TYNEDALE AND DERWENT LEAD MINES

by

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## INTRODUCTION

This book presents the history of lead mining in the northern tip of the Alston Block. For convenience, the area has been divided into three units: Allendale, including all of East and West Allendale; Tynedale, covering the South Tyne and Tyne valleys and also including one or two mines north of the river; and Derwent, including the rich mining area around Blanchland, as well as the south side of the Devil's Water valley.

A detailed geological account of the mines has already been produced by the British Geological Survey, which recently republished the *Geology of the Northern Pennine Orefield, Volume 1 Tyne and Stainmore*.

Original sources have been consulted where possible. The copious record, including the Blakett Beaumont papers and the Parlour manuscripts, housed in the Northumberland Record Office, have been of particular value. The author was, however, denied access to the original Allendale mine plans and this may have led to errors in interpreting of some of the records.

The author is pleased to acknowledge BEAMISH: The North of England Open Air Museum for supplying some of the photographs used. Other photographs were supplied by M.C. Gill and the N.M.R.S. Records.

The region yielded only lead ore until the late 19th century, when uses were found for its associated minerals, such as sphalerite, fluorite, witherite and barytes. These minerals then became more important than the lead and prolonged the lives of the mines.

It is not known when mining began, but the Romans were active in the region and may have mined there. Both Hexham and Blanchland abbeys owned large amounts of land which later produced lead, but there is no proof that they ever worked mines, though similar religious groups did in other areas.

The closure of Settlingstones witherite mine, near Hexham, in 1970, followed by British Steel's failed attempt to mine fluorspar at Allenheads in the same decade, dashed hopes of retaining a mining industry in Allendale, while the closure of the Whiteheaps fluorspar mine near Blanchland in 1987 ended a long tradition of mining in the area.

Most of the mining sites have now been cleared of buildings and it is left to the reader's imagination to recreate the bustle of industry.

## ALLENDALE LEAD MINES

### LAND OWNERS

There are two major estates in the Allendales, the larger by far being in the ownership of the Blckett Beaumonts, and now known as Allendale Estates. The other is restricted to the West Allen and is referred to as the Whitfield Estate, belonging to the Blckett Ords. Allendale Estates own the mineral rights for almost all of the Allendales, while Whitfield Estate's lands include the small area in the region of Whitewalls Burn, which has the Longcleugh Veins, but very little else.

### EARLY HISTORY

There are records of lead mining in Hexhamshire as early as 1230 when Archbishop Grey leased a mine to five miners at 1/7th duty. Unfortunately the location of the mine is not known, and so it could just as well refer to mines in the Tyne as in Allendale.

In 1518 the archbishop leased the Hexhamshire lead mines to Thomas, Lord Dacre, for 99 years, at 1/9th duty, while the first record of a lead mine in the Allendales was in 1547 when a mine in East Allendale was farmed out to John Shele by the king, who was lord of the manor at that time.

Mathew Bee, who owned Ninebanks, worked three mines on his land from 1565 to 1570. These were Grewslacke, Spartywell and Bates Hill, situated to the south of Ninebanks. The Crown claimed the mines in 1570. When Mathew pleaded that the mines had not paid the cost of working them, it emerged in the evidence that fewer than 200 loads of lead had been produced in the five year period.

Surveys of the mines were made in 1608, 1619 and 1624 and, as the rent of the lead mines of East Allendale was 26s 8d, with a clear yearly value of 43s 4d in 1608, it would seem that the mines were then prospering.<sup>1</sup>

In 1640 Sir John Fenwick leased the lead mines in East and West Allendale to William Pearson. The lease was to expire in 1669, but in 1660 the remainder of the lease was transferred to William Barket (sic), Merchant. Soon after, a moiety of a mine in Red Groves in East Allendale was also transferred to William Blckett.<sup>2</sup>

On December 5th 1667 Sir Thomas Fenwick leased the Allendale mines to Sir William Blckett for 23 years. East and West Allendale Mines and the Tithe and Lott ore were then assigned to Thomas and Timothy Davison, who were acting in trust for Sir William Blckett, on May 2nd 1668 for £1,050. At the same time, Fenwick sold his extensive estates, including the Hexham Abbey lands, to Sir William.<sup>2</sup> Since then the parish of Allendale, including its mineral rights, has been in the hands of the Blckett Beaumonts. This does not imply that there were no ancient enclosures in Allendale, but



in 1818, when six men were paid 70 shillings per fathom, and an air shaft was bored through to the level by the end of 1819.

Groove Sike Level is driven to the south-west on top of the Firestone Sill. A line of shafts (NY83374544 to 83354517) indicates the supposed line of a vein running north to south. The name Groove Sike, and the close spacing of the shafts, suggest early workings.

## THE WEST ALLEN

### COALCLEUGH MINE

NY801452

At this mine the early workings, in the strata above the Firestone Sill, were by shaft and, in 1769, Wallace wrote that it was "*said to be the deepest mine in England, 100 fathoms, a subterraneous wagon way of a mile in length leading to its ostium*".<sup>12</sup> As the upper strata were exhausted, the need to sink to the Great Limestone (in which most veins carried ore) became more pressing, and was followed by the need to drain the mine. Accordingly, William Frostier, a Beaumont agent, designed and installed a hydraulic engine to work pumps at Coalcleugh Mine in 1765.

In 1684 Sir William Blackett drove Shield Ridge Level, from the south side of the burn and along the West Cross Vein, to drain the Coalcleugh veins, but it was too high to allow access to the Great Limestone. It is often said that Barney Craig Level was started in 1760, but, while a level may have been driven at Barney Craig then, it was not the one which now goes by that name. The mine relied on pumping by the early 19th century and the following remark, dated April 18th 1806, illustrates the problem:-

*"Coalcleugh in general is prosperous there being a prospect of regaining a good part of the limestone east of the Cross Vein by pumping which must be submitted to until a better [way] can be found."*

Dickinson wrote in April 1806, that:-<sup>5</sup>

*"the old level at Carr Shield [Shield Ridge Level] will never be of service in opening the east end of Coalcleugh Vein being at too great a distance to the north."*

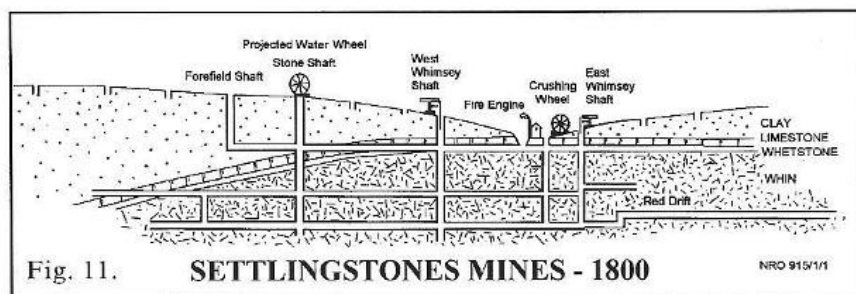
He went on to describe a proposed new level situated at:-

*"The place which I mentioned beside the Limekiln [which] will be much the shortest by directing it to the Low Coalcleugh Vein on what is supposed to be the east side of the Knoar Cross Veins."*

This was Barney Craig Level and it was begun in July 1806. It was referred to as the *Great Level below Coalcleugh* in July 1809, by which time it was 430 metres long and was being driven "*with all the expedition possible*". A

On July 30th 1861 Hugh Taylor, the Duke's agent, reported that Mrs Matilda Hall, who was then 80 years old, had succeeded her brother as the mine's owner. The workings were heading west, and Mr Winter's Shaft had been recently sunk. Output, at 721 tons 8 cwt in 1860, was disappointing.

Flooding stopped work in February 1868, but, less than ten months later, a second-hand Cornish pumping engine, costing £8,000, had been erected at Ellen's Shaft. The engine, which was transported by sea to Newcastle, was built by Harveys of Hayle Foundry in 1864 and had been used for six months at Chiverton Mine. It was 60 inch bore with 10 foot stroke and the beam was 17 feet 4 inches inside and 15 feet 8 inches outside. The pump stroke was nine feet and steam, at 35 psi, was supplied by two 30-foot-long Lancashire boilers of seven foot diameter. At three strokes a minute, the engine developed 36 HP, but it was said to be capable of much more.<sup>9,13</sup>



Such was the strain on the mine's finances then that, on the Duke of Northumberland's advice, the certain rent was reduced to £500 pa until the mine returned to profitability.<sup>9</sup>

By 1878, witherite, raised from old stopes, was becoming the main product and the mine produced 2,000 to 3,000 tons of barium (mainly witherite) ore per year at this time. Much of the witherite was exported to France and Germany, though some also went to America. The English glass industry also used the product.

Winter's Shaft was the main working shaft then, with ore being extracted from the 50, 60, 70 and 80 Fathom Levels. The workings continued to be driven to the west, mainly in the Whin Sill. It took a while for the owners to realise that the future of the mine lay in barium not lead, and in 1877 it was reported that:-<sup>4</sup>

*“exploring work is being done in a quiet way, without spending further capital and awaiting an advance in the price of lead — on which the future of the mine will depend”.*

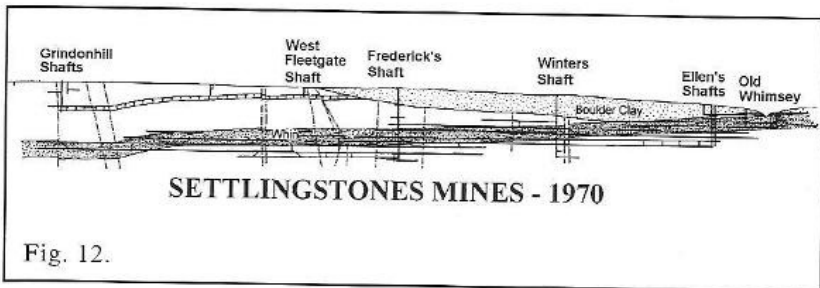


Fig. 12.

The mine remained in the hands of the Hall family. Frederick W. Hall succeeded Matilda, and, after his death in 1907, the concern became a company known as The Owners of Settlingstones Mines Limited.

Around 1850, a partnership headed by Mr Dodsworth and known as the Grindon Hill Mining Company sank Grindon Hill Shaft, in the adjoining royalty, to a depth of 50 fathoms. The Greenwich Hospital helped by lending the company its 'Stublick Engine', but asked for its return when the lease was surrendered in October 1859. Mr Dodsworth sought a six months' extension to allow him to form a new company, but it appears that no more work was done. Workings from Settlingstones Mine passed below the shaft, but did not connect with it.

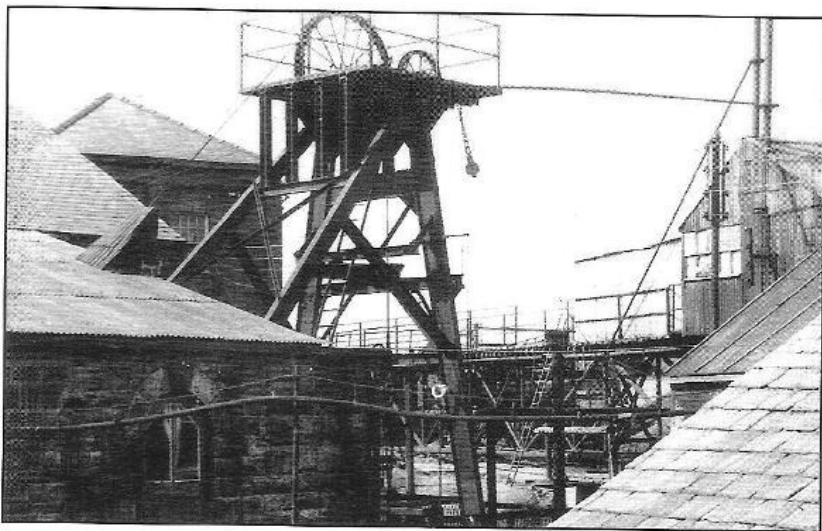


PLATE XX. *Ellen's Shaft, Settlingstones (R. Guthrie, c.1965).*

## DERWENT AND DEVIL'S WATER MINES

### INTRODUCTION

The area described includes the upper reaches of the Derwent and Devil's Water valleys, to the west and south of the Derwent Reservoir. Most of the lead mines are situated above the 300 metre contour on rough heather and grass moorland. Three small villages nestle into the Derwent valley. To the west is Blanchland, at the confluence of Shildon Burn and the River Derwent. Edmondbyers lies south of the Derwent Reservoir, near the junction of Burnhope Burn and the Derwent, and about two miles further to the east is Muggleswick. The eastern limit of the region is Healeyfield and the adjacent town of Consett. The highest village on the Devil's Water is Whitley Chapel and even this is only just large enough to deserve such a description. The area gives an impression of remoteness, even though the heart of it is only 13 kms south of Hexham and 35 kms south-west from Newcastle. No main roads serve the region, the only roads through being the B6306 from Hexham to the Wear Valley and the B6278 Newcastle to Stanhope road, neither of which are notorious for traffic congestion, except on hot weekends in the summer when the tourists make for Blanchland.

Very little has been written specifically about the history of the lead mining industry in the region and even Westgarth Forster, despite his family association with the area, gives us very little information. Smith, writing in 1923, deals with the region more fully, though, as he was writing a report for the Geological Survey, he could not dwell on the history.<sup>1</sup> The same is true for Dunham, though both Dunham and Smith are valuable sources of information.<sup>2</sup>

One reason why the region may not have attracted researchers is that, unlike the Allendales, Weardale and Alston Moor, it has never been owned by a single family or organisation. This has resulted in the records becoming scattered and, in many cases, lost. For this reason, the historical record is patchy. For some mines and smelt mills there is a surfeit of information, while for others there is next to nothing. Wherever possible, however, primary sources of information have been consulted, most of them being preserved in either the Northumberland or the Durham County Record Office.

With the closure of Whiteheaps mine in 1987 the last link with a long mining tradition was broken. Many of the sites and buildings associated with the industry have crumbled into decay, and some have been destroyed by recent activity, akin to vandalism in a mining historian's eyes, but which was considered to be a restoration of the ground.

### GEOLOGY

With the exception of Healeyfield Mine, almost all the veins have been worked in about 160 metres of strata from the Great Limestone up to the Upper Felltop Limestone. Healeyfield is unique in that lead ore was won

## BELDON ROYALTY

This was once part of the Newbiggin liberty which, on the marriage of Nicholas Forster to Anthony Radcliffe's daughter, Jane, became part of the estate of the Forsters of Bamburgh. Sir William Forster, of Bamburgh, sold Newbiggin to Francis, the fourth son of Thomas Forster of Adderstone. The latter left Newbiggin to his two daughters in his will. One of them died a spinster, but the other married one of the sons of Edward, Earl of Sandwich. Before 1720, their only son, James Montague, sold Newbiggin, Newbiggin Hope Ridding and Mount Royal to John Ord of Newcastle and Fenham. John left Newbiggin etc, together with Hunstanworth, in tail male to his son Ralph. On his second marriage, however, John gave the estate to Ralph, who died in 1724. The estate then passed to Robert, Ralph's younger brother. In 1814 Robert Capper, son of Robert's eldest daughter, inherited the estate which remained in the Capper family until about 1863, when it was sold to Edward Joicey.<sup>13</sup> It is not known when the Beldon Royalty was split from Newbiggin, but, by 1858, Henry Silvertop of Minsteracres held the area north of the enclosures as part of his Manor of Bulbeck.<sup>54</sup>

### REEDING (READON) BURN MINE

NY94325057

The burn, which forms the royalty's north-east boundary, is about 900 metres south-west of Shildon Burn. The veins from the latter place can be traced nearly to Reeding Burn, but correlation between them is open to interpretation. Reeding is spelled in various ways, including Readon and Reading, and occasionally the burn is called Birkside Burn, after the farm 460 metres west of Reeding farm on the north-east side of the valley.

The history of these workings is poorly documented. Some of them give the impression of being early, which is not surprising considering the number of north-east bearing strings and veins seen in the burn. In Thomas Forster's report to Thomas Skottowe, dated October 18th 1745, there are several references to the mines of the region being worked by William Forster and Partners. This William should not be confused with the second Sir William Forster, for the document refers to a tack note, "*from Mr Ware before the present Lord was at age*". This indicates that some of the mines were being worked around 1700 when Thomas Forster the younger inherited the estate.<sup>27</sup>

A partnership of Errington, Sopitt, Baker and Robert Allgood worked the area from about 1745. Their Reeding trial was disappointing and most of the partners, except Allgood, wanted to try Beldon Shield. Robert Allgood's sketch plans and notes, dated January 23rd 1749, show their works.

The Reeding trial was from a 15 fathom deep Gin Shaft, with a crosscut at 12½ fathoms driven to the north-west, i.e. below the Hipple Sill. The Upper Level cut No.1 (E) Vein 3½ metres north-west of the cross cut from the shaft, and No.2 (F) Vein was cut two metres further to the north-west. They were aware that 73 metres further to the north was a No.3 (H) Vein, and that 47

## BURNHOPE BURN

This area, to the south-west of Edmondbyers and to the west of the Stanhope to Edmondbyers Road, was part of the extensive lands owned by the Dean and Chapter of Durham. None of the several veins in this area were rich.

### SANDYFORD MINE

NY96934704

Sandyford Vein was worked around 1850 at the confluence of Burnhope and Sandyford Burns, when a shaft (NY96934704) was sunk to a depth of 23 fathoms. The vein was about 450 millimetres wide and contained amber and purple fluorite with galena and sphalerite. According to G. Benson, a level driven close to the top of the sill found good ore, but the water was too great for the horse whimsey to deal with.<sup>86</sup>

The Derwent Mines Company plan of 1852 shows the vein and a drift, called the Discovery Level, driven south about 365 metres from the south-east side of the burn, presumably looking for the continuation of some of the Whiteheaps veins, but none are shown to have been found.<sup>87</sup>

The mine was tried by George Beaston in about 1926.<sup>75</sup>

### EUDON BURN VEIN

NY98254590

A trial on Eudon Burn Vein is said to have been made by working miners with little capital, probably early in the 19th century.

### COLLEGE EDGE VEIN

NY99384904

Worked in the First Grit at NY99404910, this vein is from 100 to 300 millimetres wide and contains iron-stained barytes. A level, driven at the base of the grit, failed to reach the vein.<sup>75</sup>

### PEDAMS OAK MINE

Here, a shaft tried Pedams Oak Vein, which is a cross vein bearing to the north-west. It was also tried from a level, driven 550 metres from Burnhope Burn, near Pedams Oak wood.<sup>1</sup>

### SWANDALE MINE

NZ00404912

Swandale Vein is a cross vein, bearing to the north-west. It was worked from three mines after 1850, but was never a major producer. The galena at this mine contained up to 12 ounces of silver per ton of lead, whereas ore from nearby Harehepegill was said to have about 5 ounces per ton.

It is said that an adit at Swandale broke into old workings, but no plan of them is available.<sup>1</sup> In 1875, the Swandale shaft reached a depth of 35 fathoms on the north side of Burnhope Burn. The workings were in the Grit Sills.

Swandale Mine was worked by the Hexham and Edmondbyers Lead Mining Company Limited from 1881 to 1887. The manager in 1883 was John

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