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PRYS MINE

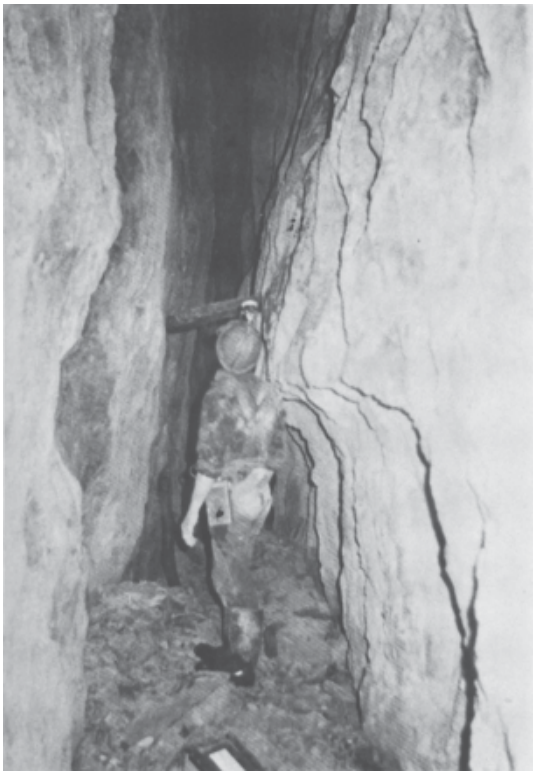
By L.O.Tyson & R. Hewer.

Prys Mine is situated near Marrick in Swaledale, south-east of Hurst at NZ 063025. It lies on the Hurst plateau at 1,000 ft. O.D. The mine site consists of a jumble of shafts and tips much turned over. One or two distinct shafts stand out and these are the main workings of Prys Mine. These shafts worked the Prys North Vein, Prys Sun Vein and Shaw Vein, but problems with water made it necessary to drive an adit.

Prys Mine Low Level (NZ 06640252) starting at 850 ft O.D. was driven in 1859 as part of the last major development at Burst and was aimed at Prys Shaft where the two main Prys Veins came together. The site, lies below White Scar in a sheltered valley through which Shaw Beck runs, and is relatively intact with a shop, a well engineered tramway from the level mouth over a bridge and onto the bouse teams with a branch onto the tips before the bridge. A waterwheel pit and powder house all go towards making this a fairly complete and what must have been a very efficient mining operation.

The level was driven for 832 ft. in the Black Beds which are almost flat up to where the level cuts into Shaw Vein. Here the fault was I-fain Limestone where cut but beyond the sandstone (Quarry Hazel) and shale beneath this limestone was entered. The vein was tried to the south-east but was found to be poor and was backfilled. The level was then turned south-west and followed the Prys North Vein for a distance of 1400 ft. until it cut Wallnook North Vein. On both sides of Prys North Vein the Undersett Lime and Chert Beds lie beneath the soles of Prys Level and to explore these beds a sump was sunk 550 ft. S.W. of where Shaw Vein was cut. The sump was sunk from an engine house hewn into the Plate Beds overlaying the Underset Cherts. The sump was sunk through the beds on the hanging wall of the vein for a distance of 19 fms. Here the vein was cut and a drift put out which was called the High Rolleyway. At this point the hanging-wall is gritstone and the footwall is plate. The sump was continued through the beds on the vein's footwall for a further 11 fms where another drift, the Low Rolleyway was driven probably to try the lower beds of Underset Chert and U.Lime thrown down on the 600 throw Shaw Vein fault. The shaft was equipped with an hydraulic engine and it is from here that most of the ore was got. The main gangue material was barytes and the abundance of chert on the tips is a good indication that work was in the Undersett Chert since the Main and Richmond Cherts have been eroded away in the area over the two main veins. The engine was served via a 24 fms. shaft (pipe shaft).

In 1938 another attempt was made to continue Prys Level north-west along Wallnook Vein. After driving a short distance beyond Prys Main Shaft (Prys Whim) a sump was made on the downthrow side of the vein and a string of ore was found in the Underset Lime but owing to water problems the venture was abandoned. It was during this period that the engine house and the cross-cut leading to it were completely backfilled with deads.



No.4 level. Large narrow old stope, widened at a later date for tubs. Photo at ‘E’ on section.

Photo taken at ‘P’ on plan and section. Old elm rails with steel strips nailed to upper surfaces, also part of joiner made curve.

Plate 1 Sets and extra supports installed during the 1938 period of working. The arching finally gave way beyond the figures in the distance.

Plate 2 Member reversing into newly opened section. Note the disintegrated shale bursting through the arching above.

Plate 3 Distorted arching. A short way along the level looking towards the dig. The pressure and distortion on the arching can be clearly seen.

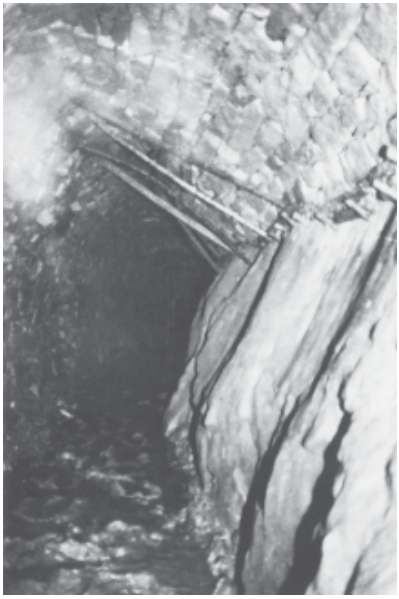
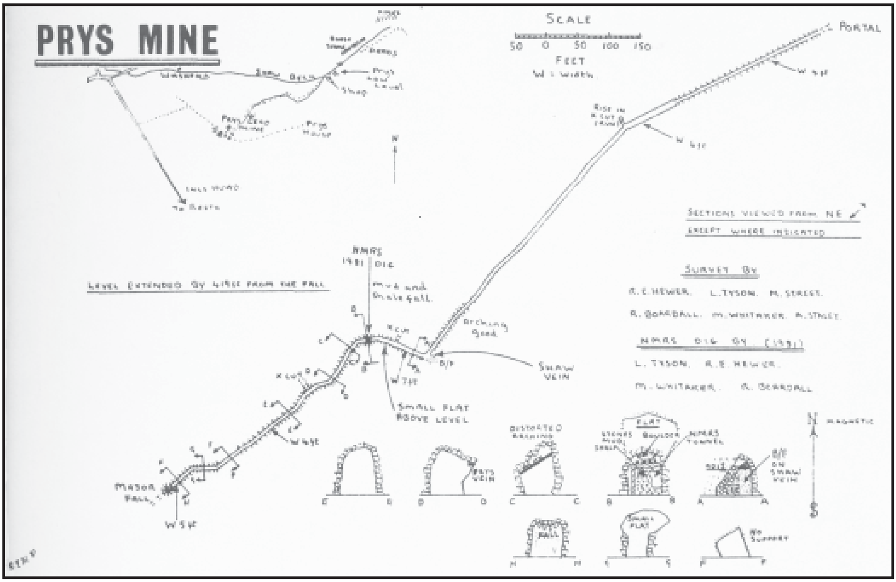
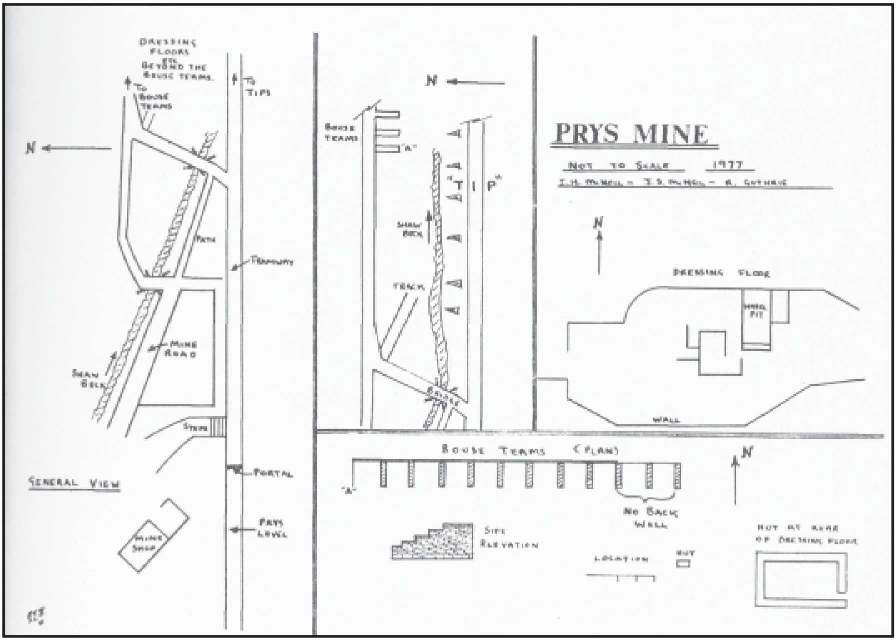
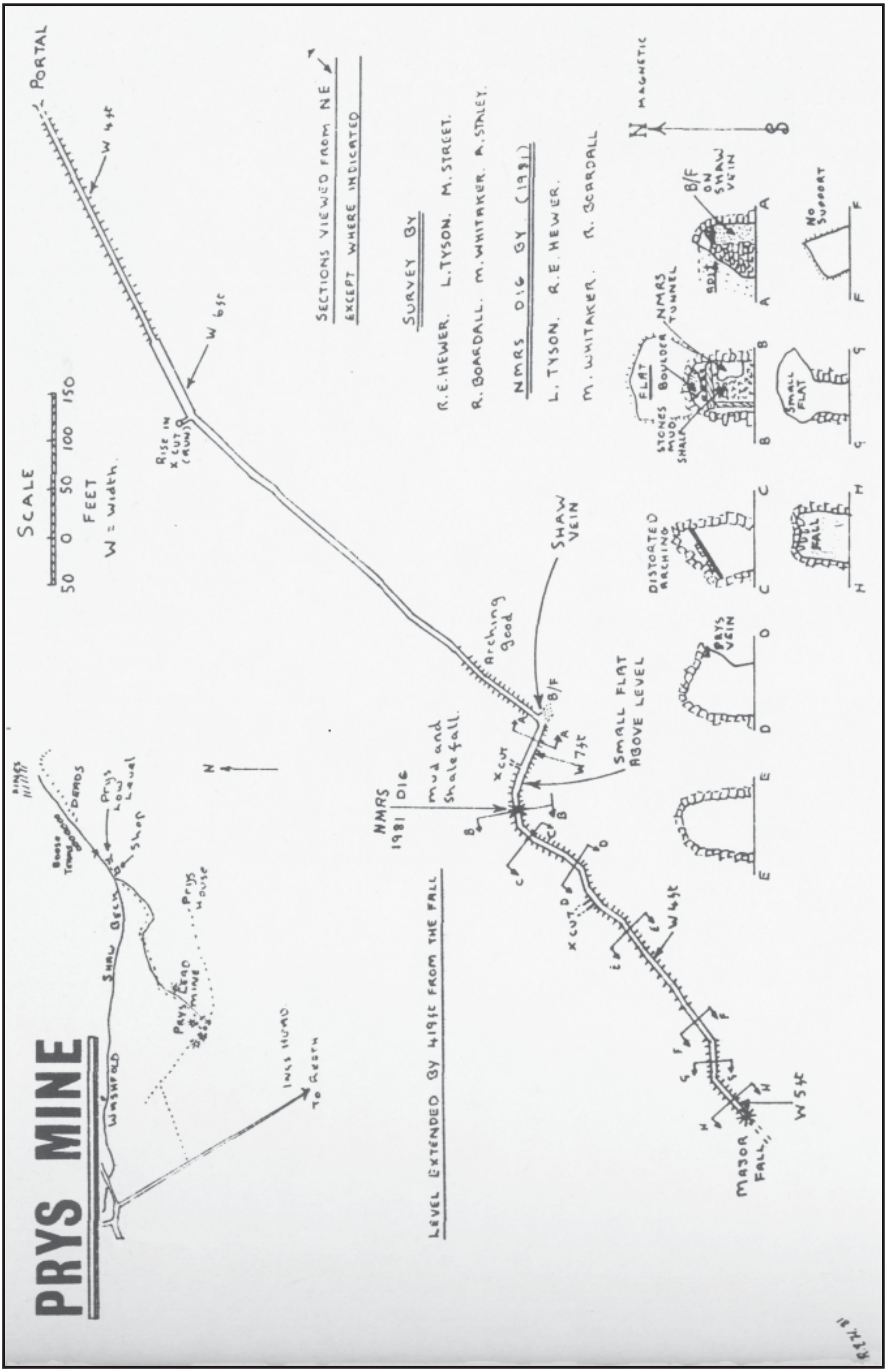


Plate 4 Level along Prys Vein.

PRYS MINE


PRYS MINE
SCALE
50 0 50 100 150
FEET
PORTAL
SHAW VEIN
SMALL FLAT ABOVE LEVEL
MAJOR FALL
SURVEY BY
NMRS DIG BY (1981)
MAGNETIC


PRYS MINE
NOT TO SCALE 1977
DRESSING FLOOR
WALL
BOUSE TEAMS (PLAN)
NO BACK WALL
SIDE ELEVATION
LOCATION
HUT
"TIP"
TRAMWAY
PORTAL
PRYS LEVEL
MINE SHOP
MINE ROAD
SHAW BECK
PATH
STEPS
GENERAL VIEW
TO TIPS


PRYS MINE
SCALE
50 0 50 100 150
FEET
W = width
PORTAL
W 4ft
W 6ft
Rise in X CUT (RUN)
SECTIONS VIEWED FROM NE
EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED
SURVEY BY
R.E.HEWER. L.TYSON. M.STREET.
R.BOARDALL. M.WHITAKER. A.STALEY.
NMRS DIG BY (1981)
L.TYSON. R.E.HEWER.
M.WHITAKER. R.SCARDALL
N MAGNETIC
SHAW VEIN
Arching good
B/F
W 7ft
SMALL FLAT ABOVE LEVEL
X CUT
NMRS 1981 DIG
mud and shale fall.
X CUT
W 4ft
W 5ft
MAJOR FALL
LEVEL EXTENDED BY 419ft FROM THE FALL
Prys Low Level
DEADS
Shop
Prys House
SHAW BECK
WASHFOLD
PRYS LEAD MINE
To Keld
DISTORTED ARCHING
PRYS VEIN
STONES MUD SHALE
FLAT
BOULDER
NMRS TUNNEL
B/F ON SHAW VEIN
SMALL FLAT
FALL
NO SUPPORT

A dig was commenced in 1981 at a fall a short way past where Shaw Vein was cut in an attempt to reach the engine room and sump. Just before the fall there is a small flat type working above the level from a crosscut. We dug out part of the crosscut to gain access to the flat which was 6 ft. high and 20 ft. long and some good specimens of Galena in Barytes were found. We could not find a way over the fall from the Flat so it was decided to dig. The stone arching had collapsed and it appeared that during the 1938 working the miners had supported the loose ringing with wagon rails and timber. Some of the rails which were bent to a U-shape remained but the shale and loose blocks had broken through, filling the level for a distance of 15 ft. with black glutinous mud with old timbers and ringing mixed in for good measure. There was a strong draught issuing from the left side but the arching was in good condition on the right (the line of slip being from left to right) we decided to dig through on the right.

A rail was hammered and pushed through the fall to support a large block which hung precariously over the whole proceedings. After four weekends of [37] digging a hole appeared ahead and another week passed before we finally made a safe way into the next section pushing the level a further 420 ft. to a second major fall.

The level turns south-westwards from our dig and is in parts arched and in others very shaky, being supported with wagon-rails and rotting timbers probab1y put in during the 1938 attempt at reworking. Partway along the level an area is reached where there is well made arching with a crosscut made into the arching. This is backfilled and there is a strong possibility that this could be the engine room. The level has run in with a massive shale run and it is hoped this will be dug this year.

By the side of the track to Prys House there is a shaft covered with large loose stone blocks and after pulling these to one side we found a shaft open with stone ginging at the top; the rest of the shaft in natural rock. Set across the shaft at approximately 30 ft. intervals were thick wooden beams. We laddered the shaft and found it to be 125 ft. deep and blocked with rubble at the base. There was a small 2 ft. square backfilled opening to one side about 30 ft. down. This shaft is probably the pipe shaft for the engine and could also have been used as a ladderway down into the mine, being a quicker route than going down to the lower level entrance.

Prys Level is the lowest of the six known Levels driven into the Hurst mining field and it is hoped to publish more on this level and the others at a future date as information becomes available. We would like to thank J.R. Foster-Smith for his initial help in tracing the information given here. Acknowledgement must also be given in the I.G.S. Leeds for supplying information extracts below:-

REF:
Mineral Resources of East Swaledale and adjoining parts of Wensleydale.
Information supplied to Dr. Earp by Mr. W.S. Ryder I.G.S. 1944.
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K.C. Dunham & A.A. Wilson (extract by K.C. Dunham).
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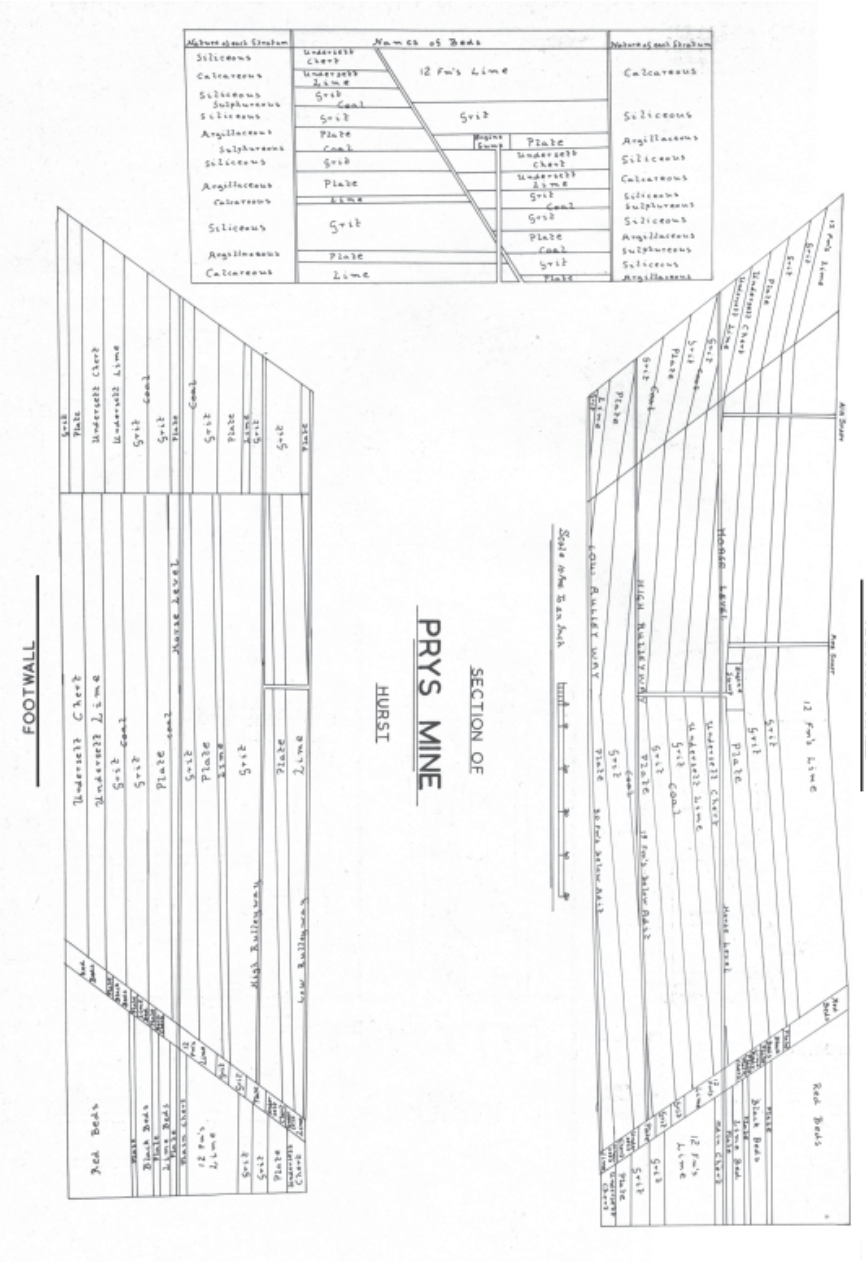

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