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EAST SNAEFELL MINE.

by Rolf von Arx

The East Snaefell Mine did not rate many lines in anybody's book, if any at all. Lamplugh writes in 1903 that the company was founded about 1864 to test the supposed extension of the Great Laxey Lode, but no "*metal*" found. He also cites Sir W.W. Smyth as reporting in 1865 that "*some short drivings and the sinking of a sump for a few feet have shown that there are lodes in this ground, but nothing of promising appearance, far less productive, has been seen.*" Mackay and Schnellmann dismiss the mine with the remark that no ore was found and the work undertaken in 1864 soon abandoned. Nevertheless, it would appear that the activity at the East Snaefell Mine was longer-lived than generally assumed.

The mine lies in the remote upper reaches of the Cornagh/Cornah/Cornaa Valley, 2½ miles west of Corran, in the Parish of Maughold, in the NE section of the Isle of Man (SC422885). Some 650 yards down the valley, we find the better known North Laxey Mine. The 1:25000 scale map of 1991 still mentions "old levels" in the area. Apparently, a day level or adit was driven into the hillside on a clayey fault-zone dipping east. This, however, is about as far as published sources go.

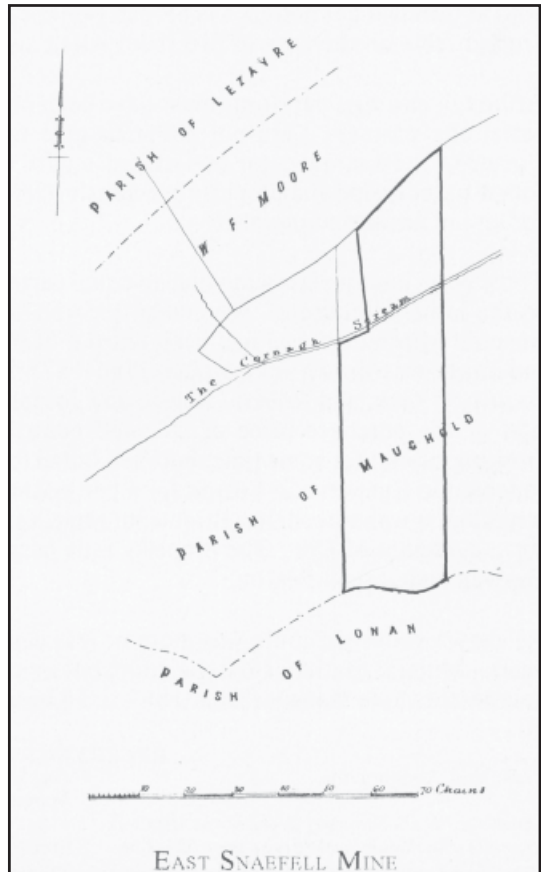
The earliest information we have at hand is that on April 2nd 1865 an indenture to work East Snaefell Mine was signed between Charles Coventry Nelson, 54 Hatcham Park Road, New Cross, county of Kent, of the first part; Elizabeth Allen, 66 Saint Peters Road, Mile End, county of Middlesex, of the second; and Robert Curwen, Merchant and Shipowner, Liverpool, and Joseph Fearon, Merchant, Whitehaven, county of Cumberland, of the third. The indenture stated that William Tuxford, merchant, 106 Upper Thames Street, London, was owner of one fourth of the lease, mine, minerals, premises and machinery.

Whether this existing lease had expired or not is unclear, but a new lease was obviously executed on October 10th 1865 with the contracting parties remaining unknown. Less than two years later, on June 14th 1867, a third lease for the East Snaefell Mine was signed between The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty of the first part; The Honourable James Kenneth Howard, Commissioner of Her Majesty's Woods, Forests and Land Revenues, to whom the Land Revenues in the Isle of Man had been assigned, of the second part; and William Tuxford, Thomas Thompson, Broker, 12 Old Jewry Chambers, London, and Richard Rowe, Mine Agent, Laxey, Isle of Man, of the third part. The lease covered the right to search for, dig and carry away all mineral substances in the parcel of land of 180 acres as shown in the plan. It ran for 21 years, starting from 10th October 1865 (date of the last lease), at an annual rent of £1 and a royalty of 1/12, the minimum royalty being £5 for the first year, £10 for the second and £20 for the remainder of the term. At least six good and able-bodied workmen to be on the mine at all times.

Sometime in the mid 1860s, The East Snaefell Mining Co. Ltd was formed, presumably by Tuxford, Thompson and Rowe, but by the end of the decade it had run out of capital.

BRITISH MINING No.50

At the Extraordinary General Meeting of the shareholders on December 16th 1869, it was found advisable to wind up the Company voluntarily and appoint Thomas William Read liquidator for the distribution of property and assets. A further meeting on January 13th 1870 in the Law Association Rooms, Cook Street, Liverpool, confirmed this resolution. Read agreed to sell the mine to Tuxford, Curwen and Fearon at the price of £90 and James Kenneth Howard consented to this assignment on August 26th 1870. The lease officially passed to them by an indenture dated September 29th 1870.



Tuxford, who seems to have been the driving force behind the undertaking, died on September 3rd 1871. In his will, dated August 18th 1860, he bequeathed his full estate to Elizabeth Allen, a widow. Charles Coventry Nelson was appointed executor and he proved the will in the Court of Probate on 16th February 1872. It appears that Tuxford, Curwen and Fearon had erected machinery and plant on the mine and carried out mining operations until the death of Tuxford. The working resulted in a loss of which Tuxford's share amounted to £28 2s 8d. This was refunded to Fearon and

EAST SNAEFELL MINE

Curwen out of the Chancery Court from Tuxford's estate. In the meantime, two complaints had been lodged with the Court of Chancery. One was by Benjamin Murton and Edward Webb against Charles Nelson and Elizabeth Allen on March 25th 1874, and the other one by Elizabeth Allen against Nelson. The High Court order of June 10th 1874 decreed in the first case that Nelson should deliver to Elizabeth Allen, after the latter had fulfilled the stipulated conditions and except for certain sums of money, the chattels, stores, leaseholds and other personal estate mentioned in the third schedule to the Chief of Clerks Certificate. Morton and Webb were presumably miners who had not been paid and who in turn had got hold of the property on the mine as compensation. No details are available on the case of Elizabeth Allen against Nelson.

Although mining operations must have been on a very minor scale, the principal remaining partners were not about to give up. On April 2nd 1875, Charles Coventry Nelson, executor of Tuxford's will, and Elizabeth Allen assigned the fourth part of mine and property previously held by Tuxford to Curwen and Fearon for an unknown remuneration.

Three years later it was found that an equal partner to Tuxford, Fearon and Curwen in the mine purchase of September 29th 1870 from the liquidator of The East Snaefell Mining Co. Ltd had been left out of the assignment. For this reason an indenture was drawn up on May 22nd 1875 between Robert Hirst, Harrogate, county of York, and Robert Curwen and Joseph Fearon. Hirst had paid an equal part of the purchase price of £90 and contributed his share of the necessary working capital for some time, but then failed to do so. He had, therefore, become indebted to Curwen and Fearon for a considerable sum of money. In view of the situation, it was agreed that Hirst would release all claims in the mining adventure for the amount of £50. The property thus passed fully into the hands of Robert Curwen and Joseph Fearon.

As shown above the mine was more or less active over a period of more than 10 years. Mineral Statistics list the mine, but give no ore entries. According to this source, the mine manager from 1867 to 1876 was W.B. Rowe.

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Paper submitted - January 1st 1994: Rolf von Arx
Buchzelgstr. 39
CH-8053 Zurich/Switzerland