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OLD MINE TIMBERS

J.M. Dickinson

During opencast mining operations for Fluor Spar by the Clay Cross Co. Ltd, on Greenhow Hill, Yorkshire, some examples of early mine timbers have been uncovered in Nebcastle and Wright Veins.

Wright Vein SE06082625. 1,400 yds. S.S.E. of Dry Gill.
The timbers were uncovered as the open cut passed an old shaft in the hanging wall of the vein at a depth of 20 ft. from the shaft collar. At this point the vein is 6-7 ft. wide, the old level had been driven from the shaft crosscutting the vein to the footwall, the latter then being followed for 25 ft. The matrix of the vein is very soft Fluor Spar with a band of Barytes 1-2" wide on the hanging wall. This matrix had forced the 'Owd Man' to box timber his work.

The timbers were arranged as shown in Plate 12, the head tree being a piece of 4" x 3" timber 4ft 9ins in length, one end being sharpened to a point, this point being stuck into the Fluor Spar, the other end being square cut was driven tight on the rock of the footwall. An oval mortice 2½" x 1" was cut 6" in at either end of the timber, this was to take the tenon joint cut at the top of the supporting legs. The inside measurements of the level were 4ft wide and 5 ft high. The timber sets were spaced two feet apart, and as lagging between the sets, silver birch or birch twigs were laid across the head trees, the gap between these and the roof of the level being packed with square cut peat sods. A small section of headtree and support is preserved in the N.C.M.R.S. museum. No date can as of yet be given to these workings, but at the head of the vein on the moor is a large Gritstone Boulder bearing the initials "RE AT MM DC TL GW 1857", a little nearer the described workings another boulder bears the date 1833 or 38.

Nebcastle Vein SE06074623 North side of Burhill.
A large opencut for Fluor Spar in 1965 uncovered several levels at different horizons running along and across the vein (which at this point is 15-20ft wide) from several small shafts mostly sunk on the hanging wall of the vein. Although these levels were badly crushed their timbering could be seen to have been identical (even to type of wood) to those in Wright Vein. Here again no definite date can be given for these works. At the foot of Burhill near the head of Trollers Gill a flank level (Hopewall or Hodwell level) has been driven into Nebcastle Vein, this level is shown as being well developed on plans dated 1857. When ore from the open cut was being milled at Dry Gill Mill (Clay Cross Co. Ltd.) a halfpenny dated 1675 was picked from the picking belt.

