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THE MINE BUILDINGS OF THE UPPER NENT VALLEY PART I: BUILDINGS EXTANT

by

PETER JACKSON

The mining centre of Alston Moor is the small village of Nenthead, lying at a height of 1440 ft. OD, in the eastern extremity of Cumberland. Mining started in this area before 1200 and continued with varying fortunes up until 1965, and consequently there is a wealth of interest for the industrial archaeologist, with numerous extensive mine workings and their associated surface remains. At Nenthead the most spectacular feature is the remains of the Rampgill Mill, built by Krupps of Germany between 1908 and 1910, and partially demolished in 1965. Next in order of importance is the Nenthead Smelt Mill which has been altered several times during its life and now houses a small fluorspar dressing plant. Beyond the smelt mill up the valley to the south-east lies the most extensive horse-level network in the British Isles with its associated buildings, which are the subject of this article.

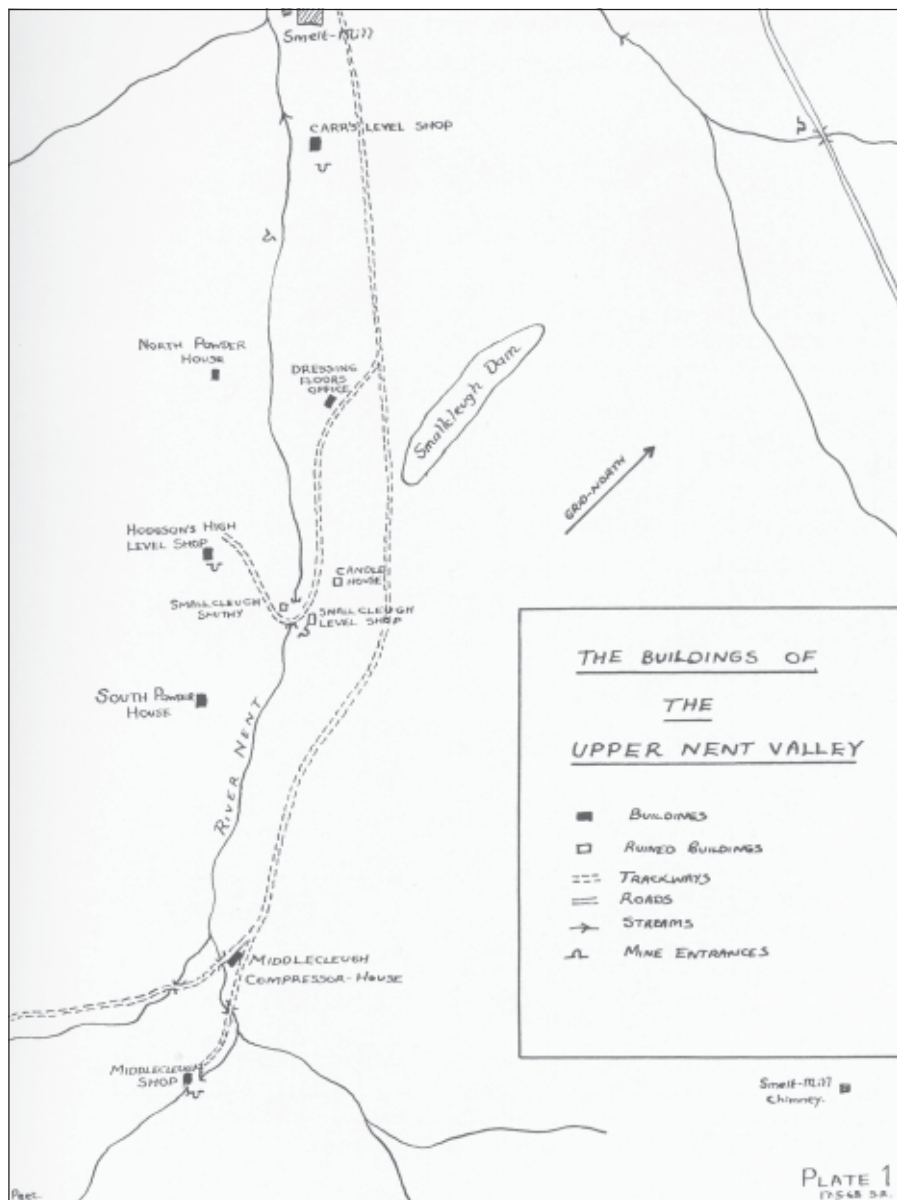
The buildings are in varying states of repair, but it may be generally said that those buildings that are standing are in good condition. The area to be described lies to the south-east of the smelt mill as far as the summit of the hills.

BUILDINGS PAST AND PRESENT.

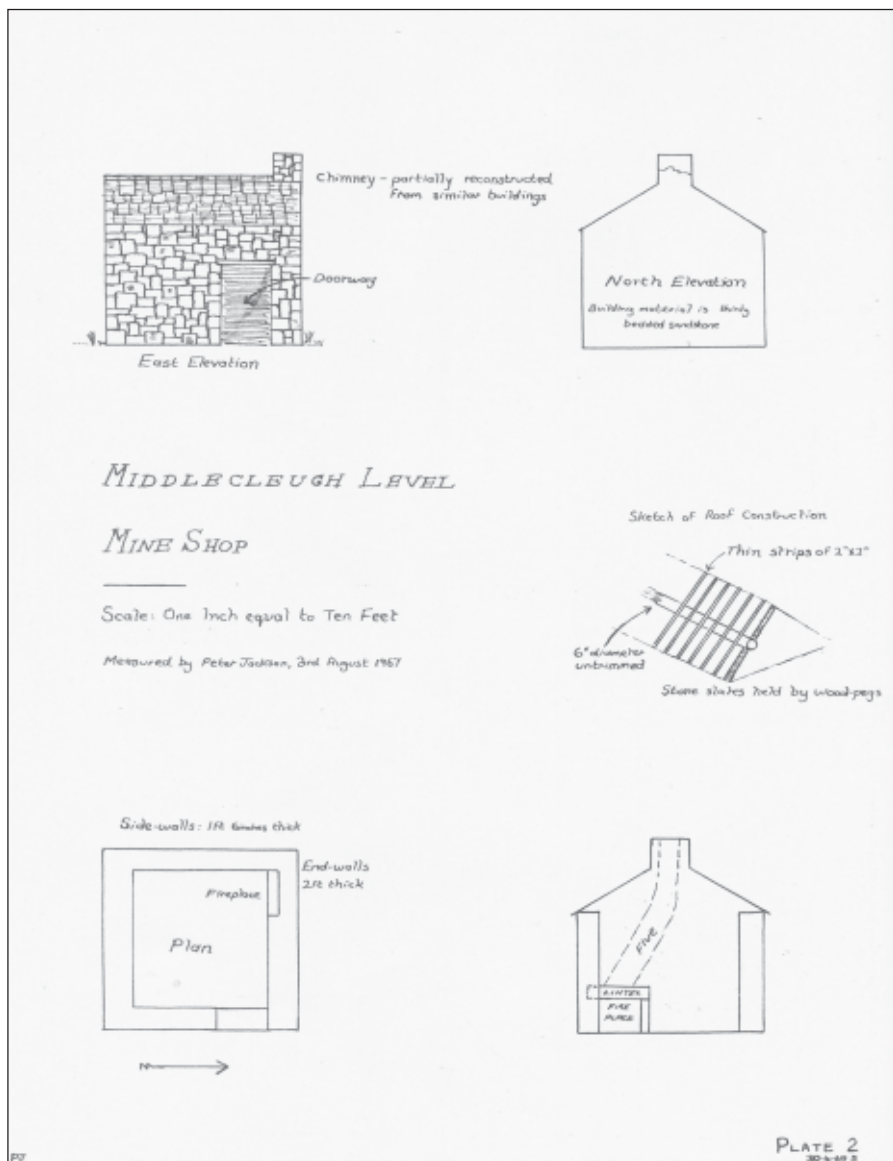
Listed in order from south to north

Middlecleugh Level Shop	
Middlecleugh Compressor House	
South Explosives Store	
Smallcleugh Level Smithy	- demolished.
Smallcleugh Level Shop	- demolished.
Candle House	- demolished.
Hodgsons High Level Mine Shop	
Dressing Floors Office	
North Explosives Store	
Carrs Level Shop	

Of the buildings demolished, the Candle House was standing until 1967 but was demolished before this survey was carried out. The two other buildings were demolished many years ago and their ruins have recently been cannibalised for building stone.

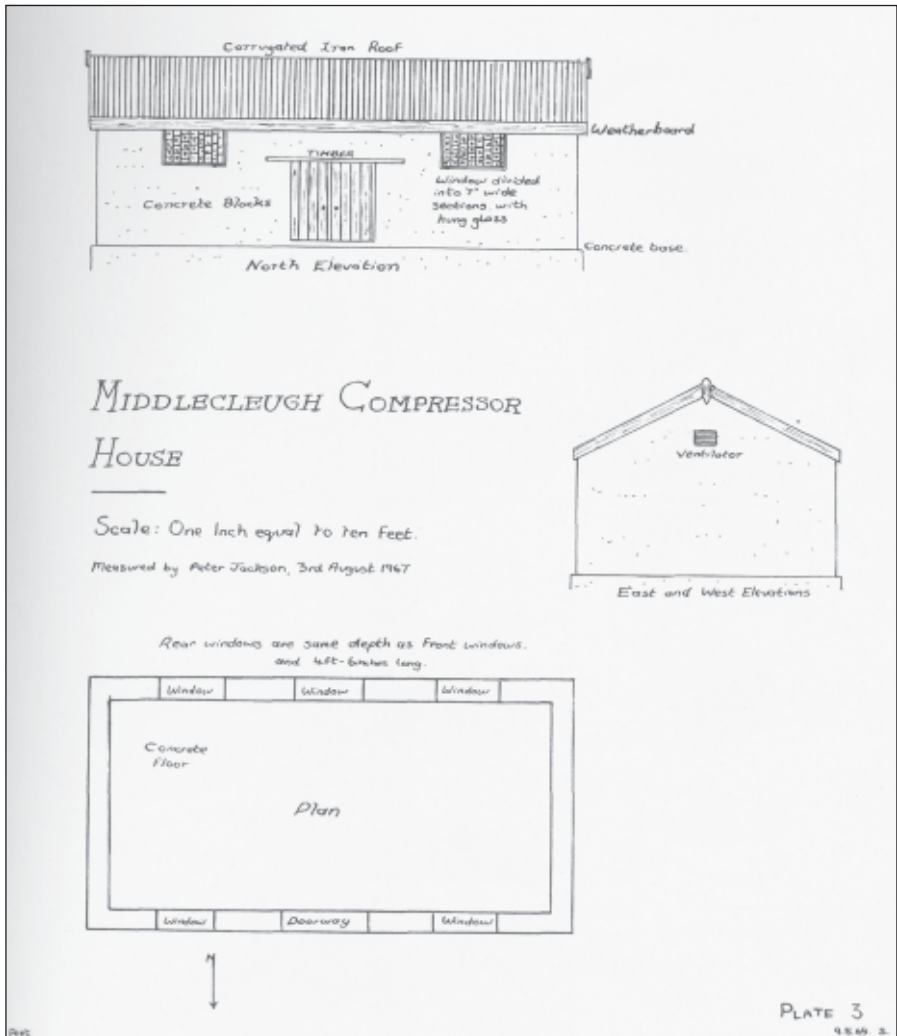


MINE BUILDINGS OF THE UPPER NENT VALLEY - BUILDINGS



Middlecleugh Level Mine Shop. (Plate 2)

A small building, now disused, but in a fair condition. The roof is almost complete and the walls are in good condition, though the chimney has partially collapsed. If one assumes that this building was erected during the time that Middlecleugh Level was being driven, then a date of around 1750-60 would be reasonable. Its small size confirms other evidence which suggests that Middlecleugh Level was driven purely for ventilation and exploration.



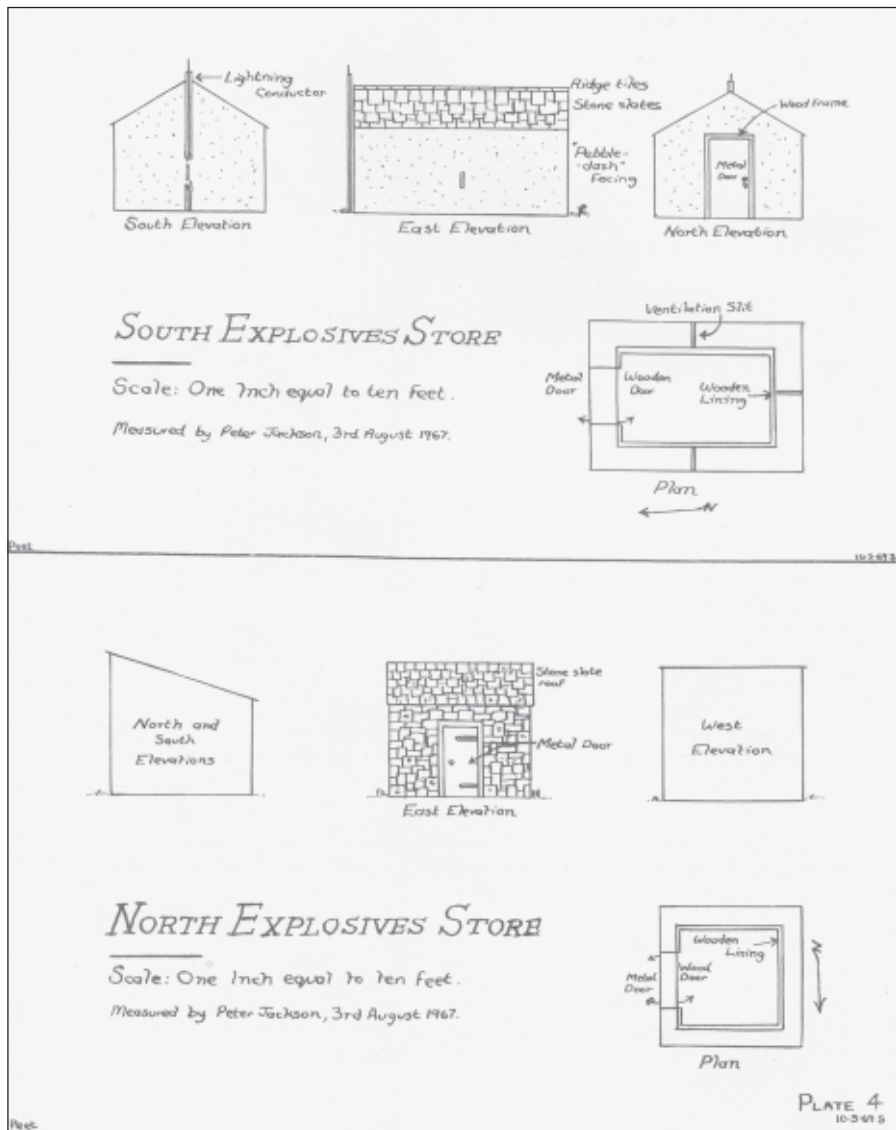
Middlecleugh Compressor House. (Plate 3)

This building formerly housed water-driven air compressors which were supplied from Perrys Dam on the moor top by a surface pipeline. It was built sometime during the Vieille Montagne Zinc Co's tenure of the area, but the exact date is not known. At present it is used for hay storage and is consequently well maintained.

South Explosive Store. (Plate 4)

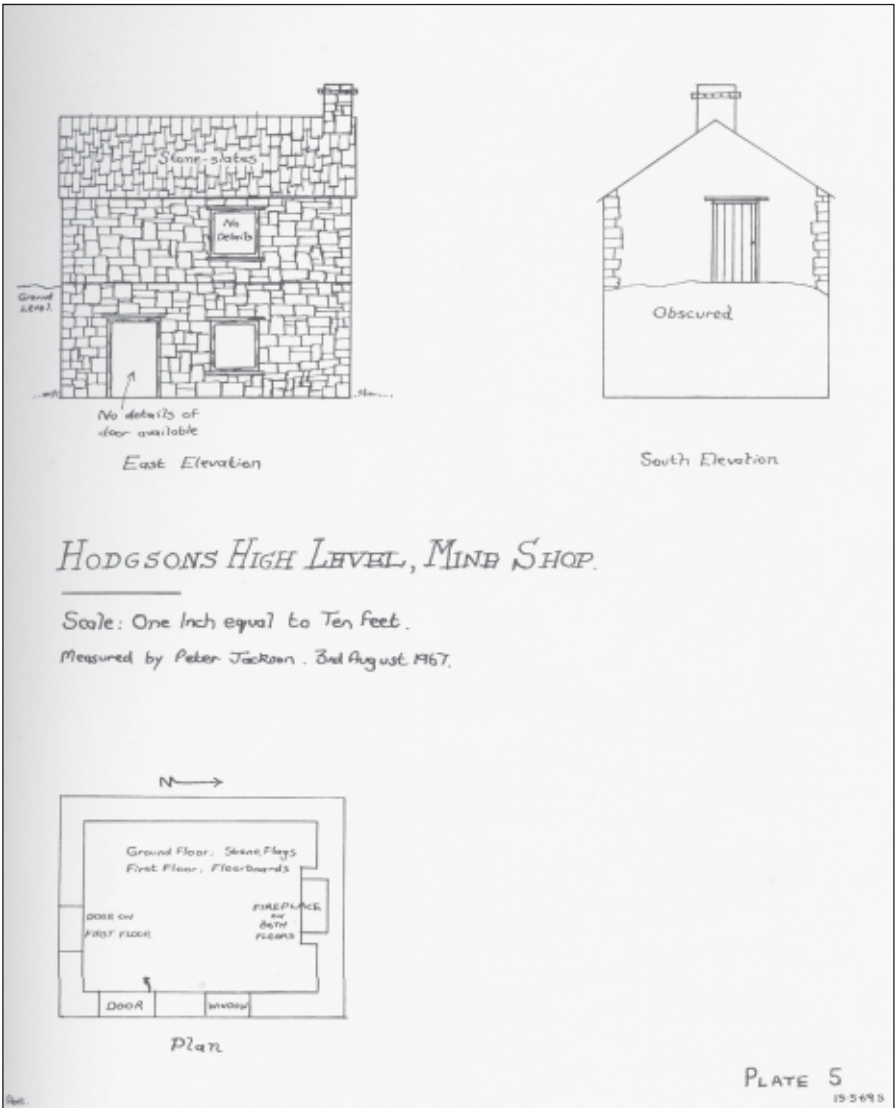
Built by the Vieille Montagne Zinc Co. and is identical to another building to the east of Nenthead village. The wood lining and the storage shelves are still in Situ, though recent damage to the roof has caused some decay.

MINE BUILDINGS OF THE UPPER NENT VALLEY - BUILDINGS



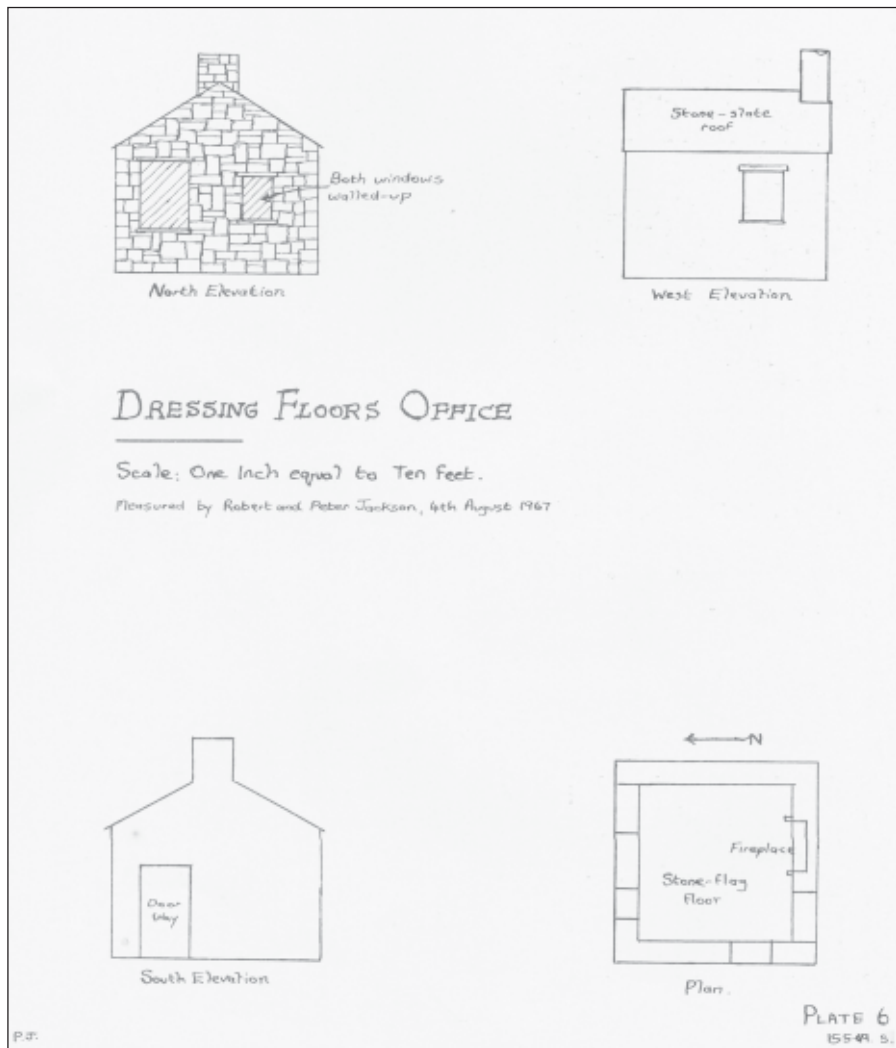
North Explosive Store. (Plate 4)

This building is in a different style to the South Explosives store and may have been erected by the London Lead Co. It was presumably utilised by the V.M. Co., and is still in reasonable condition except for the ravages of sheep inhabitants.



Hodgson's High Level Shop. (Plate 5)

At present this building stands in the middle of a swamp due to bad drainage around the mouth of the level. The roof is in excellent condition though the interior has suffered some decay. Access to the first floor is via an outside door which is rendered possible due to the building being set into the hillside.

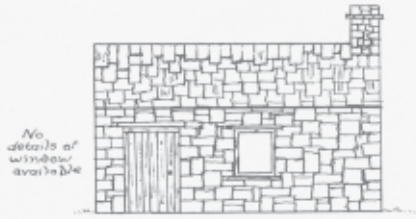


Dressing Floors Office. (Plate 6)

The correct title of this building is not known, but its size suggests an office. It has a concrete floor which has been laid over stone flags and one window has a concrete lintel suggesting that it was utilised during the V.M. Co's time of working. The south end is in danger of collapse.



North Elevation

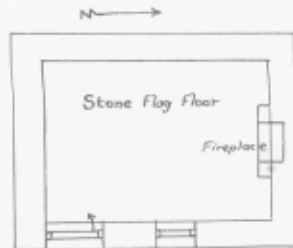


East Elevation

CARR'S LEVEL MINE SHOP

Scale: One Inch equal to Ten feet.

Measured by Robert and Peter Jackson, 4th August 1967.



Plan

PLATE 7

Pict.

11-5-68 5

Carr's Level Mine Shop. (Plate 7)

Standing in reasonable condition with a well preserved fireplace. The building was utilised by Italian miners who worked in this area during the Great War, and the door bears several Italian names carved in the wood.

Conclusions

It is apparent from the illustrations that the buildings are built to a standard set of dimensions or proportions. This style was originated by the London Lead Co. and is also reflected in the buildings of Nenthead village. Preliminary work on the smelt mill indicates that the buildings conform to these proportions and it is hoped that these may be tabulated at a future date.

Sheffield.

17 May 1969.

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