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by

PETER JACKSON

Alston Moor lies wholly within the eastern extremity of Cumberland and includes the head of the River South Tyne and its associated tributary, the Nent. The main centre is Alston, a small market town, lying at a height of 1400 feet, with smaller settlements at Garrigill and Nenthead. The area has a bleak aspect and is surrounded almost entirely by high moorland, which renders communication difficult.

The following account is based on field work between 1964 and 1969, most of which has been concentrated in the valley of the Nent, particularly around Nenthead. Work has been hampered by the inaccessibility of the area, but it can be claimed that the majority of the mine workings have been investigated, at least on the surface.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

For the early history of the area we have to rely upon Sopwith (1833) and Wallace (1890), but later history is poorly documented as well. The Records of the London Lead Co., one of the biggest operators [41] in the area in the past are preserved at Newcastle¹ and these proved to be a mine of information, particularly with regard to underground plans.

The geology is well documented, most of this being well summarised by Dunham (1948) and there are several other useful works on the area.

With the relatively recent working of the mines compared to other areas, there is a large amount of spoken information available from the local inhabitants, but some of this should be treated with care.

SURVEY METHODS

Whilst engaged in the field work, it was thought imperative to record the exact location of mine entrances and their present condition as a first priority. Some mines have also been investigated underground, but most of the underground effort has been concentrated at Nenthead. In addition, sketch surveys were made of associated plant and buildings, and a start has been made on producing scale drawings of the more interesting buildings.

PRESENT MINING POSITION

No metal mining is being undertaken, though there are three active anthracite mines. Several mines have been prospected in recent years, though up to the time of writing no further developments had taken place. The Black Burn Level and Roughside mine have been prospected, and the Nentsberry Haggs Horse Level has been reopened, ostensibly for scrap recovery.

Durham Minerals Co. is at present engaged in the recovery of fluorspar from dumps at Rotherhope Fell mine, and from shaft heaps on Rampgill vein, which is processed in a "plant" within the shell of Nenthead smelt mill. This plant also runs on fluorspar from Arkengarthdale in Yorkshire.

THE MINES

The mine entrances are listed in alphabetical order and have been given a reference number for the purpose of correlating with future surveys. In addition, those mines whose names were untraced up to the present time have been given a suitable title, and are indicated by an asterisk.

[42]

Ashgill Force LevelAlNY 757.4041300 ODA small crosscut into the Ashgillfield flats which is blocked after 28 yards,
due to pressure on the arching.1300 OD

Atkins LevelA2NY 7900.42251800 ODAn old level into Middlecleugh North vein which was originally blocked at.the entrance. During November 1966 the block was cleared by Mr. W.Stoddert and. the level was found to be badly blocked 15 yards further inCarrs Cross Vein West is exposed at the level entrance.

Ayleburn LevelA3NY 1270.49851065 ODWhen visited during August 1967 this level was blocked 10 yards from the
entrance, but is presumably now open again due to recent reports of
extensions to the caverns which the mine intersects.

Bayle Hill East Level*A5NY 7525.46901250 ODA very old level whose entrance has collapsed, and is well grassed over.

Bentyfield LevelA6NY 752.4251450 ODIn November 1966 the level was open for 160 yards to a bad block causedby pressure on the arching. The entrance has also partially collapsed.

Bentyfield High Level A7 NY 7250.4255 1500 OD The exit to this level is choked with vegetation causing consequent deep water in the level.

Black Ashgill Level A8 NY 7805.4140 1725 OD The entrance is drystone walled-up: removal of some of the wall gives access to the level which is driven through plate for 40 yards to a bad block consisting of silt and pebbles. To the NE, immediately before the block, is a small low level which would need draining before exploration. The whole level is in bad condition with numerous shale falls.

Black Ashgill Low Level A9 NY 7775.4110 1550 OD The entrance is walled-up except for a small culvert, with affords access. Exploration was carried out for 200 yards to a point where [43] deep mud and water made difficulties. The level is otherwise in excellent condition.

Black Burn Level A10 NY 699.427 1050 OD During 1965 the level was reopened by Mr. W. Stoddert as a fluorspar prospect but abandoned in the same year. The main crosscut is in excellent condition and open to Rotherhope Fell vein. Here the engine rooms for No.1 and No.2 Underground Shafts are visible, and the cages are in position on No.2 Shaft. Both shafts are flooded to the top. To the west the level is open for 179 yards to a complete block, in concrete arching. At one point there is a hole in the level sole, and this showed that the concrete tunnel was floating on the water in the flooded stopes. To the east, the level is blocked after 60 yards. It is quite probable that the level is now blocked beyond Victoria vein due to a strong waterfall which washes debris into the level.

Black Moss Wood Level*A11NY 758.4261520 ODAn ancient level which is blocked at the entrance.1520 Here1520 OD

Blagill Moss Level* A12 NY 751.472 1250 OD Driven directly into the main limestone, this level has collapsed at the entrance.

Bloomsberry Level A13 See under Brownley Hill Low Level.

Browngill Level A14 NY 7515.4245 1425 OD The entrance, a few yards to the east of the A1ston-Midd1eton road, is walled up, and could probably be easily opened.

Brownley Hill High Level A15 NY 779.449 1500 OD Blocked 10 yards from the entrance, in shale.

Brownley Hill Low Level A13 NY 776.446 1375 OD Accessible for long distances, and very extensive. Little work has been done here due to heavy demands by other mines.

Caplecleugh LevelA16NY 7865.42301775 ODOriginally blocked at the entrance, this level was dug out and [44] found to
be blocked under a run-in surface shaft a few yards from the entrance.

Caplecleugh Low or Horse Level A17 NY 781.435 1430 OD This level was originally blocked by a fall on the crosscut to Black Ashgill vein which was subsequently cleared to give access to the main workings at the head of the valley. The journey is rather arduous and combines deep water with dangerous falls. On the main vein the workings to the east are

flooded due to a collapsed rise holding water back, whilst to the west the workings are open, though often up to 4 feet deep in water. The exploration has been discontinued for the time being to allow other work to be completed.

Carr's LevelA18NY 7850.43151525 ODAn old level open for a short distance with several interesting workings. It isreported that a collapse has blocked off the innermost workings.

Cash-well LevelAl9NY 717.3681950 ODWhen visited in November 1965 this level was walled up at the entrance. It
was subsequently reopened by Mr. M. Maddison as a fluorspar prospect, for
79 yards to a point where a bad blockage occurs, and subsequently abandoned.

Cocklake Level* A21 NY 7560.4695 1400 OD A small flank level has been driven into a string here and is blocked at the entrance. Probably very ancient.

Colonel's LevelA22NY 726.4251500 ODIn November 1967 the level was open for 59 yards to a fall holding back 3feet of water. The first 33 yards of the level are arched, and the archingcommences again at the fall.

Coulson's Level A23 NY 787.423 1775 OD An old level into Middlecleugh North vein with a small stoping in the vein. An attempt was made to reopen it as a fluorspar prospect during 1966, but it was soon abandoned.

Cowperdykeheads LevelA24NY 7415.42601400 ODThis level is the water supply for Garrigill, and consequently inaccessible.

[45]

Cross Fell High LevelA25NY 711.3582300 ODOpen and in good condition at the entrance.2300 OD

Cross Fell Low LevelA26NY 715.3612200 ODBadly blocked 10 yards from the entrance, due to ground subsidence.

Eden Braes LevelA71NY7605.45401185 ODEntrance open and level appears to be in good condition.1185 OD

Farnberry LevelA72NY 732.4481385 ODWalled up at the entrance, and very close to Holyfield Low Level. Would be
opened up fairly easily.Would be

Flowedge LevelA73NY 736.4441400 ODA large level which is open and in excellent condition.1400 ND

Firestone LevelA29NY 7875.43501650 ODDriven into Rampgill vein and in good condition at the entrance.The dumps are at present being turned over for fluorspar.1650 OD

Fistas Rake East Level* A30 NY 744.476 1440 OD An old high level on Fistas Rake which is blocked at the entrance, but could be reopened comparatively easily.

Fistas Rake High LevelA31NY 741.4731250 ODOpen and slightly wet, though reported to be blocked not far from the
entrance. Barytocalcite is abundant on the dumps.1250 OD

Fistas Rake Low Level A32 NY 7395.4725 1125 OD A very old level of small cross-section, which is partially walled-up. Water flows out over the wall.

Fletchers LevelA33See under Hundybridge High Level

[46]

Fletchers Low Level A39

See under Hundybridge Low Level.

Force Level*A34NY 7860.43051550 ODLies on the west side of the river Nent close to waterfall above Nentheadsmelt mill. It was revealed by floods in 1968 which washed away dumpscovering the entrance.

Foreshield LevelA35NY 752.4721265 ODBadly blocked at the entrance, and almost obliterated.

Foreshield ShaftA36NY 7485.46751110 ODOne of the air shafts for the Nentforce Level, now capped with concrete.

Galligill Sike No.1 High Level*A74NY 757.4431500 ODA very small level which is walled up at the entrance.1500 High control of the entrance.1500 OD

Galligill Sike No.2 High Level*A75NY 7575.44301490 ODA small level, which is open and dry.1490 OD

Galligill Sike Low Level A37 NY 7585.4550 A very large horse level, which is open and relatively dry.

Grassfield Level A38 NY 7670.4460 1332 OD The entrance is well concealed and almost walled-up, lying immediately to the north of the road: very little water issues forth.

MEMO	IKS 19	/09	
High Raise High Level Walled up at the entrance.	A76	NY 76770.4585	1500 OD
High Raise Low Level In use as a water supply for some loca		NY 764.458 s, and consequently ina	1390 OD ccessible.
[4	47]		
Hodgsons High Level Open for about 370 yards to a fall he level is lined with concrete and there has given way.		back about 4 feet of v	
Hodgsons Low Level Accessible for a reasonable distance Also known as Cowgill Hodgsons Le	with s	NY 785.432 everal interesting old	1525 OD workings.
Holyfield Level Open, but small collapse at entrance		NY 7342.4505 ding back about 4 feet	1372 OD of water.
Holyfield Low Level* Securely walled up at the entrance, ar wall.		NY 7325.4480 uised as part of a field	1285 OD boundary
Hudgill Burn Horse Level Completely collapsed for the first 25 ground.		NY 751.424 from the entrance, in v	l460 OD ery boggy
Hudgillrigg Level* Entrance collapsed and well grassed	A79 over.	NY 748.461	1250 OD
Hundybridge High LevelA33NY 7380.42851410 ODThe entrance has collapsed, but a hole over a nearby wall allows access to the flooded level, which is blocked again, almost immediately.1410 OD			
Hundybridge Low Level The entrance is walled up, but the l Scar limestone, appears to be in exce	evel w		1182 OD y into the
Little's Level See under Cross Fell Low Level.	A26		
Lovelady Shield Level The entrance is in loose shale and p		NY 729.461 y collapsed. Conseque	1210 OD ntly [48]

The entrance is in loose shale and partially collapsed. Consequently [48] the level contains about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water.

Middlecleugh LevelA45NY 789.4241750 ODIn November 1965 the level was blocked 10 yards from the entrance. This
block was. subsequently cleared by the lessees and the level was surveyed
during June and August. During a visit in June 1967 the level was blocked
again. In one of the foreheads of the level are the dates 1790 and 1798.

Middlecleugh High Level* A46 NY 7885.4775 1950 OD An old short level to the east of Perrys Dam, which is open to the forehead and rather wet.

Middle Fell Level*A80NY 744.4611325 ODBlocked at the entrance and well grassed over.1325 OD

Mill LevelA47NY 715.3642050 ODThe level is open, but the first 20 yards of the arching has collapsed, and is
holding back about 2 feet of water.

Nattrass LevelA81NY 735.4481400 ODThe entrance is walled-up, but a collapse on the line of the level indicates a
probable block.Item of the level indicates a

Nattrass Low LevelA82NY 7315.44751275 ODOpen and in good condition with a small amount of water flowing out.

Nells Well Level A48 NY 7825.4375 1455 OD A small crosscut level which is open for about 125 yards to a block. It intersects most of the major cross veins of the area, and these are well exposed in the level.

Nenthead Fields North Level	A49	NY 7770.4385	1430 OD
Blocked at the entrance.			

Nenthead Fields South Level A83 NY 7785.4370 1430 OD Blocked at entrance, and well grassed over.

[49]

Nentsberry Haggs Horse Level A50 NY 766.450 1250 OD Entrance is immediately east of the main road, and is gated. (See opening paragraphs.)

Rampgill LevelA51NY 782.4351432 ODOpen for a long distance with 3 feet of water in the levels for long distances.The main level on Rampgill vein is blocked by a run-in rise immediatelyafter Rampgill Cross vein. This block was dug during August 1967, but theattempt to clear it was unsuccessful. A large kibble lies by the Engine Sumpwhich comes to surface immediately north west of the Nenthead-Coalcleugh

road. The workings on Scaleburn vein are accessible for a fair distance and the main crosscut south to the head of the Nent valley is blocked on Smallcleugh Cross vein. The crosscut known as Hangingshaw level has not been fully explored. A survey has been produced based on the V.M. Mine Co. survey.

Roughside LevelA52NY 781.4251600 ODAn old level first worked during the 1600's and reopened by the A1stonBarytes Co. in 1961, and closed in 1965. A full account is to be publishedlater. The entrance is gated at present.

Skelgill Low Level*A84NY 736.4601300 ODAn old trial level whose entrance has collapsed, and is well grassed over.

Smallcleugh Level A56 NY 785.432 1580 OD This mine can safely be claimed to be the most extensive horse level network in the British Isles and is too large to be described in a few paragraphs. Exploration has been completed at the horse level horizon, but little has been done elsewhere. Access has been gained to Caplecleugh Horse Level by an 80 foot sump, and various other small sumps and rises have been investigated. The chief interest of the mine are the large areas of flat-workings which are accessible over long distances. A survey has- been produced of the southernmost workings and work is still going on in the northern part of the mine.

Thompson's Level*A59NY 788.4291590 ODThe entrance was originally partially blocked by later dumps which weredug through in order to drain the level, which was found to run for 43 yardsto a complete block.

[50]

Thorngill East Level*A60NY 743.4721300 ODThe level which runs straight into the limestone is walled up at the entrance.

Thorngill Low LevelA61NY 740.4731130 ODEntrance is open and wet, though a fallen tree has disrupted the first fewfeet of the arching.

Tynebottom LevelA85NY 7385.43801090 ODThe entrance is in the side of the river South-Tyne and has been affected by
recent erosion. A large volume of water flows out of the mine.1090 OD

Tynebottom West Level* A86 NY 7380.4380 1100 OD A small old level, to the west of Tynebottom level, which is open and relatively dry.

Watergreens Level*A62NY 7450.46651100 ODThe level entrance is open but there are several collapses in the field above
and it is known that the first section of the level was driven through boulder
clay.

Wellhopeknot LevelA63NY 7690.40851500 ODThe level is silted-up to within 3 feet of the roof, but is otherwise in goodcondition.

A14

Whitesike Level See under Browngill Level.

Whitewell LevelA87NY 7495.46151300 ODThe level entrance has collapsed and is well grassed over. Probably a very old trial.

[51]

Additions

Ashgill East Level*A94NY 7810.41351750 ODSmall old trial, collapsed at the entrance.1750 OD

Birds Nest Level*A101 NY 755.4921190 ODWalled up at entrance; otherwise in good condition.1190 ND

Brewery Shaft A95 NY 7835.4350 1525 OD The final shaft on the Nentforce level: it is open at the top but covered by timbers. It is best seen in Rampgill Level, which intersects it.

East Wellhopeknot Level*A90NY 777.4111600 ODEntrance collapsed and the level contains about 4 feet 6 inches of water.

Little Gill LevelA93NY 777.3951725 ODEntrance collapsed and well grassed over.1725 OD

Little Gill South Level* A96 NY 777.394 1740 OD An old drift exposed in the side of the stream, and flooded up to 2 feet from the roof.

Nentforce LevelA92NY 7190.4675890 ODIn use as a water supply for the Alston Foundry Co.

Nentsberry No.1 Level*	A97	NY 7625.4545	1350 OD
Blocked at entrance.			

Nentsberry No.2 Level* Blocked at the entrance.	A98	NY 7630.4535	1250 OD		
Nentsberry No.3 Leve1* Blocked at entrance, and very old.	A99	NY 7635.4525	1350 OD		
[50]					

[52]

Nentsberry No.4 Level*A100 NY 7640.45251350 ODEntrance collapsed, and is well grassed over.1350 NY

Nentsberry Bridge Level*A88NY 768.4491275 ODWalled up at the entrance; very little water coming out.1275 OD

South Nentsberry Level* A89 NY 765.449 1225 OD The level appears to be in good condition; the entrance section was once used as an explosives store for Haggs Level.

South Tyne Level* A102 NY 754.403 1170 OD Open and in excellent condition, this is a small old-mans level, which is not documented elsewhere.

Wellgill ShaftA91NY 7775.44351375 ODThe shaft top is in a small building, and is covered with closely spaced rails.The ladders are in position in the shaft.

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