

# NEWSLETTER

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### **NB**

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**SARAH LEAD MINE, GRASSINGTON MOOR.  
CAVENDISH VEIN, 40 FATHOM LEVEL.**

by

J.M. Dickinson.

The remains of Sarah Lead Mine on Grassington Moor, (N.G.R. SE 036673) at least on the surface, are rather un-impressive as the dressing floors and most of the spoil heaps have been turned over in the search for fluorspar in recent years. On the 9th. June 1963 the scene was, however, rather more industrious, members of the Society joining employees of the Dales Chemical Limited in an exploration of the shaft and workings.

The descent of the shaft was made in a specially constructed tubular steel cage suspended on 400 ft. of British Ropes "Bluestrand" steel wire rope of 5/8ths inch diameter powered by a "1/2yd Priestman Panther" excavator having a Dorman 2 cylinder 51 h.p. diesel engine driven by Mr. 'Bert' Davis of Otley. Communication between cage and surface by means of a set of ex W.D. field telephones.

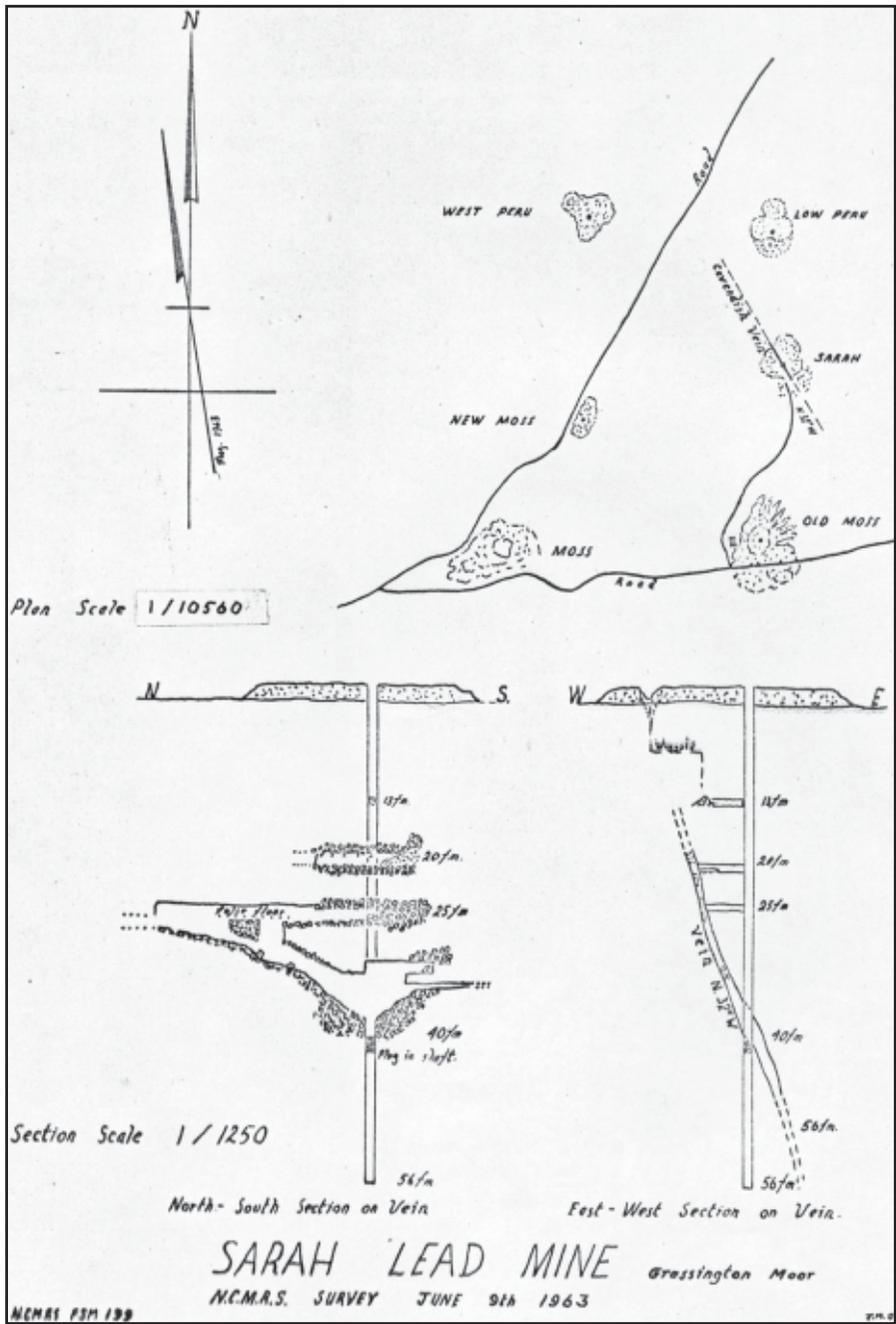
The objective of the descent was to try and enter the 40 fathom workings on Cavendish Vein and to explore this level as far as possible. Some five feet of the shaft and surrounding area had been taken off, as the shaft ringing was not safe. The shaft is oval in shape being approx. 6ft. x 4 ft, at centres and has been sunk plumb throughout. Dry stone ringing in the shaft extends for some 50 ft. where it rests on a wood circle let into the solid rock. Apart from the first 5 ft., this ringing is in excellent condition.

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From the walling the decent continues through the Top Grits with the shaft walls retaining the oval section. Just above the 13 fathom level the remains of an iron water garland still cling to the shaft walls, although the fall pipe is missing. The 13 fathom level would appear to have been the entry point of a collapsed waygate which can be traced on the surface. A few tired looking timbers protrude out into the shaft and behind them a large fall of clay and shale can be seen.

From it spacious landing at 20 fathoms a 38ft. passage leads into a stope. At the southern end of the stope a total collapse has occurred. Northwards packed deads and heavy timbering put us off exploring this stope. Descending from the 20 fathom level the junction of the Top Grit and the Bearing Grit is reached at a depth of 25 fathoms, marked by a 2 inch seam of coal. The stope at this level is again in a state of collapse at its southern end. To the North the remains of the supports for a timber floor can be traced, crossing over two large jagged holes in the floor (packed deads).

SARAH LEAD MINE, GRASSINGTON MOOR



It is estimated that one could see some 150 feet along the stope, which shows no trace of minerals whatsoever. On the shaft landing to this level a quantity of 4 inch cast iron piping (presumably from water garlands) could be seen.

At 40 fathoms the cage langed on a “plug” or false floor in the shaft. To the North and South 30 slopes of debris and collapsed floors presented a difficult exit from the cage. The North slope was climbed for approximately 60 ft. the vein continuing for a further 150 ft. or so at a width of approximately 4 ft. The view upwards was rather sobering - a rare collection of “Rock bridges” and “hanging pendants” supported by nothing filled the “roof” of the vein. In view of this no further exploration was attempted.

The checks of the vein had been picked clean, in fact it was some time before a very small patch of fluorspar was found and not a single trace of lead was found in the entire mine.

It is becoming apparent from explorations of other mines in this area that it was the practice to back fill the workings as they became worked out.

Throughout the operation all mechanical equipment worked well, except for a fault on the telephone cable during the last descent when the cage was at the 40 fathom level! Fortunately two of our members, who were making a prolonged if not detailed study of the 20 fathom level were able to relay instructions to the surface.

In conclusion I would like to thank Mr. F.A. Smith, Managing Director of Dales Chemicals Ltd. for this unique opportunity of descending a deep working. Also I feel that all who made the descent will join me in thanking Mr. Davis (especially his right leg) who sat at the controls without a break for five hours and for, giving us all a smooth ride.

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