

MEMOIRS

1966



Guthrie, R.G. 1966
"Hurst Lead Mine, Swaledale"
Memoirs, NCMRS, pp.44-45

Published by the

THE NORTHERN CAVERN & MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY
SKIPTON U.K.

© N.C.M.R.S. & The Author(s) 1966.

NB

This publication was originally issued in the 10 by 8 inch format then used by the society. It has now been digitised and reformatted at A5. This has changed the original pagination of articles, which is given in square brackets.

HURST LEAD MINE - SWALEDALE

N.G.R. N.Z.050022

R.G. Guthrie

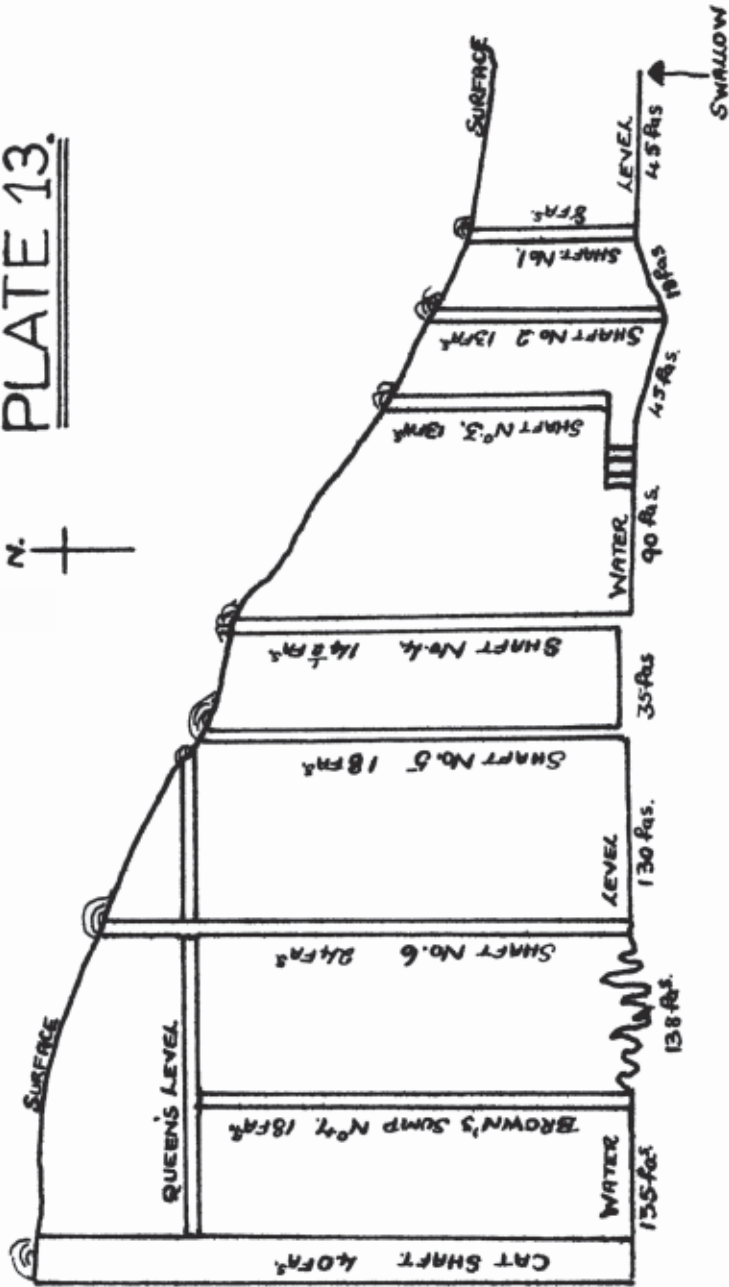
One of the pleasures of acquiring old plans and maps of lead mines is the interesting conversation one has with the previous owner. When I obtained permission to trace and reproduce Jackson's 1774 map of the lead mines and intakes of Swaledale I was told quite a few of Jane Pegley's stories. This time I thought I was after a map of Old Gang Mine, instead I obtained an old sectional drawing of Hurst Lead Mine which, though quite crude, is probably of more interest to the Society, as Hurst area is pretty barren of documentary evidence. (Plate 13).

Mr. Kearton kindly gave the N.C. & M.R.S. the drawing as soon as he realized that it would be taken care of and used for record purposes etc. without any quibbles or ties. Naturally I talked with him for quite a while and think that you may like to know some of the things I learned from him.

He and his son farm Nun Cote Nook, Marrick, which is a typical hill farm [44 of that area. His first job at the age of 13 was at Lolly Scar Mine, Nidderdale, starting at midnight. This seems to be an unusual hour to start a shift unless a 3 x 8 hour shift was operating. This he was unable to confirm as he is now over 74 years old but he did state that they were working the mine for the full 24 hours on a shift system and naturally enough he was very definite about his first days work which started at mid-night and ended at 8 a.m. As he did not smoke tobacco one of his jobs was to draw dynamite from the powder house where it's keeper wore soft slippers. Two parcels of explosive each about 28 lb. in weight were carried slung back and front by a piece of rope from the powder house to the mine. I don't think he ever got really used to the actual explosion of the charges even though he worked at Limley, Nat. Grid 757.052, and Blayshaw Gill, Grid Ref. SE.098.728, Mines, and later at East Scafton in Wensleydale. Another job was the rough sorting of galena by hand. Whilst doing this he often came across unexploded pieces of dynamite which he placed clear of the rubble for safety, remarking to me that after handling it one had to be careful not to rub ones hand over the forehead or a severe headache invariably followed.

An amusing incident happened whilst he worked at East Scafton Mines. One warm but very wet drizzly day in June he was going to work carrying an umbrella for protection and as lads will, when he came to a turf-pit he jumped into it to test the parachute action of the umbrella. That is when the fun started, he jumped on to a partridge and a half-grown brood of young. Up flew the partridges with terrific squawks of protest and flapping of wings only to be trapped under the canopy of the umbrella and his falling body. It was all over in a minute but it's dubious who got the biggest fright.

PLATE 13.



A DIAGRAMATIC SECTION OF HURST LEAD MINES
 SHOWING QUEEN'S LEVEL AND THE WATER LEVEL
 FROM CAT SHAFT TO IT'S SWALLOW INCLUDING THE SHAFTS 1 TO 7.

The levels at East Scafton and Melmerby are driven from the actual water level of the river (Otter Holes N.G.R.SE.079548 - mentioned in Pennine Underground - is one) and as these river banks are well wooded I should imagine the umbrella would have more nuisance than protective value.

Another thing of interest is the fact that he believes himself to be the last person to drive the old Swaledale hearse at an actual funeral. This old hearse is now in the possession of Bowes Museum.

A visit has been made to Queen's Level. The entrance is easily found as it is just through the gate 50 yards or so west of the telephone kiosk in Hurst. The entrance is a usual horse level, dry stone arching through shale for 50 feet to a bit of tatty timbering, then limestone for 50 feet to a complete roof fall. The whole of the surface West of No.5 Shaft; has been thoroughly turned over by the miners and two chimneys have been built. A round chimney about 40 or 50 feet high with the tiniest flue I've ever seen leads from the remains of a building 10 or 12 feet square close to No. 6 Shaft. Cat Shaft chimney is square and is about 60 ft. in height.

—oOo—