

GLOGFACH AND GLOGFAWR. BY ROY FELLOWS

These mines are situated near Ponrhydygroes from where the deep adit is driven, the upper workings have several open levels and shafts. Underground access is possible from several places, however many of the shafts are in a dangerous condition and have been used for the dumping of rubbish. Also, the depth of many of the shafts has to be a factor, which would deter the explorer from an S.R.T. descent. The Ponrhydygroes adit gives about 700ft of dry backs.

These were my points of entry.

1/ Pen-y Bwlch Shaft of Glogfawr.

2/ Two upper adits to the south, adjacent to the track, which passes through the main site.

3/ A deep adit to the south.

4/ Open workings at Glogfach.

5/ The Ponrhydygroes Deep Adit, also known as 'Proberts Level Fawr'.

Pen-y-Bwlch Shaft.

This is a huge yawning chasm situated at SN753710, and sunk on the footwall of the vein.

At the time of my explorations back in 1992 I drove a length of scaffold pole into the ground to form a decent belay; however I would counsel some caution to anyone thinking of making a descent now. This shaft has been used over the years for the dumping of rubbish, which has now included some broken glass. The fact that it is sunk at about 62degrees rather than vertical gives rise to foul rope conditions.

There is an adit to this shaft, which is collapsed at the portal, and can be seen to come in from the west just below the track. It connects with the shaft at a depth of 80ft and is in waist deep water for about 50 yards to the collapsed portal. Descending the shaft for about another 120ft reaches a level going west towards the main workings, this must be the No 1 level shown on old plans. At this point is the top of a rising main.

Exploring the level reaches a forehead at about 40 yards. I was able to descent another 50 ft or so before I ran out of rope and looking down there was still a long way to go.

I think that I could see a mass of rubbish, rocks thrown down would produce an occasional splash, again I think.

The two upper adits. SN748705 and SN749705

Both are driven as cross cuts, the one lower down the track reaching a collapse at about 15 yards. The first connects with the vein at about the same distance, at this point there is a winze. It is possible to explore stope workings to the south for some distance.

The winze is an easy descent of about 50 feet down the footwall, the bottom opening into a large stope going to the east. It was possible to explore for about 15yards to a point where the floor has collapsed, in fact this area has large sections of the hanging wall which have come down over the years. Also at one point it is possible to climb up into working where there are the initials SCMC 1977, does anyone know anything about this?

It was also possible to climb down about 20 ft or so, I think that this was the limit of previous explorers.

By belaying a rope to a wooden stemple I was able to do a swinging traverse of the section of missing floor, not very daunting as the drop was only about 15ft. I have left a traverse line in situ, as is my usual procedure. Of course, conditions underground can change dramatically, so the leader of any exploration party should assess the condition of both the rope and the stemples it's attached to before using it. The level gained went in two directions, like a letter Y, in this area there is a packwall with an old paraffin tin and the first clay pipe that I have discovered in Wales. Exploration of the right fork took me to a window into a huge stope. Two bolts were placed here, one at the end of the passage, another through the window at the head of the pitch. A descent was then made using S.R.T. techniques.

As these workings are very loose and dangerous, the route down is very complicated, the descent being down the footwall and consisting of short verticals and steep slopes. An initial descent of about 50ft took me to some very large boulders, here I decided to free climb down past these on slack rope. Once past I fitted another bolt, rebelayed, and continued down a few feet to the head of an incredible 'avalanche slope' of very loose rocks, which included some fair sized boulders. A rock thrown down would produce an incredible roar as this mass went on the move. At this point there is a very impressive view of the stope, in places there are huge stemples made from complete tree trunks up to 15 feet long. By clearing ground at the top, I was able to swing across and rebelay to a stemple at the other side, this was done by lassoing it with a long tape weighted with a crab. Next, a descent of about 25ft to a stull piled with loose rocks. It was necessary to descend directly on to this and do some clearance work. A further descent of about 25 feet barely reached the floor of the stope. Here, I was at the end of my 40metre rope. I then discovered that the floor was a mass of boulders wedged into the stope, this was the cause of some disappointment to me as I had hoped to reach a main tramming level. I joined on a second rope and continued my descent through the boulders, however I had to abort this descent as the ground was far too dangerous.

I shall now return to the level above, gained by the traverse. Here, I explored in the other direction to reach a rubble slope of about 30ft. This looks an easy free climb, but its looks are deceptive. I have fitted a bolt for a hand line. This descent does actually reach a level, which can be explored in both directions. West leads to what can be best described as a void, there is a face here suitable for bolting, and it looks about 60ft freehanging. However, it would be necessary to squeeze down past a fallen stemple of uncertain stability, also there is a mass of rock coming down from above. I therefore decided not to do this one. In all probability, this is the Glogfawr Engine Shaft.

The other direction led to a fall of loose rocks coming down the footwall from the right. I returned another week, and was able to get some timber in and clear a way through, however it was only about 10yards to another fall.

In 2002 I returned with Dave Seabourne and together we descended the winze from the upper adit. The traverse line was still in good condition and we were able to descent the big stope gained through the 'window' at the end of the above described right hand branch.

The “avalanche slope” had cleared considerably, and large stemples had dropped since my previous visits in the 1990s. The whole place is very unstable with sections of the hanging wall as big as motor cars breaking away. We were able to descend to the bottom to find that the boulder chokes I had previously found had now dropped. Dave was able to descend much further to a short section of the 45 fathom level.

The deep adit, further down. SN745702

This is the only level driven from the base of the hill that I was able to discover in the vicinity, and is driven from a point several hundred yards to the west of the workings, it being only a trial. It is entered in water, which is chest deep and crystal clear. This seems to be a major breeding ground for frogs. It is about 250 yards of cross cut to the vein, where the vein has been driven on in both directions for a few yards only. There is no connection with the main workings.

Open workings at Glogfach

These are a waste of time and lead nowhere.

Proberts Deep Level (Level Fawr) SN741728

This level is situated on private ground, which at the time of writing belongs to Mr Peter Harvey, who owns the Llangynog Mining Museum. So permission must be sought. The late Damian McCurdy was kind enough to arrange permission to visit this level, therefore I am able to give a description.

From the portal, it is driven as across cut, in a dead straight line for about 780 metres. Here, at this point the level was (until recently) blocked by falls. This is the bottom of the Logulas workings, however it is a mass of collapsed boulder and impossible to climb up into any of the workings. This has been dug through and lengths of plastic sewer pipe installed to keep the level open. From here the level continues for another 70-80 metres to cross cut the workings of Pen - y-Gist. Here there are levels going east and west. To the east the level is seen to be exploratory, and it ends at a forehead. To the west a level follows the vein where short exploratory rises have been put up to test the lode. Eventually, the level enters an area of high stopes, here there is an in situ S.R.T. rope. Passing through the stopes, the level divides. Both directions being an attempt to relocate the vein. Both end at foreheads.

The S.R.T. rope presents a relatively easy ascent of about 50ft, however there is a small amount of difficulty getting off at the top. Here, the rope passes over a timber platform. A short level is gained here, which leads to a hopper. In the level is a low timber ore truck which served the aforementioned hopper, and close by a stack of miners tools. It is possible to climb up through the hopper, and up into a stope. Here a point is reached where no further progress is possible.

Back in the main Level Fawr, the level continues for another 700 metres, to a sudden rise in the level. At the time of my original exploration I thought that this was the result of faulty dialling, with the level must have been driven from both directions. However this is not so. Level Fawr was driven under the existing end of Glogfach 118-fathom level. That level drained back in the other direction to the Glogfach Engine Shaft, therefore it was necessary to take the floor out of the level to cause it to drain in the other direction, i.e. into Level Fawr. This gives the level a noticeable height.

At the point of connection there is a chamber, where there is a short climb up some old ladder reaches the continuation of the level. At this point ore was transferred from

normal underground trucks to big one tonners which were hauled in trains of about 4 by donkeys or ponies. (This information kindly provided by Peter Harvey). From this point the level continues for another 120 metres to the point where it intersects the workings of Glogfach and Glogfawr. Here there is a short level to the right where there are two wheelbarrows with wooden wheels. These are similar to the one in Frongoch. This level probably leads to Glogfach Engine Shaft, but is now silted up. Straight ahead there is a tight crawl leading into a collapsed stope. The only way on is by way of a steep and very loose rubble slope to the left. It reaches a point where there is a very strong draught, and it is theoretically possible to continue upwards in a southerly direction. However, this area is so unstable as to make any such move highly undesirable. Apart from the personal risk, there is the real danger of a collapse blocking off the exit at the bottom, however, with a little timberwork, this area could be secured.