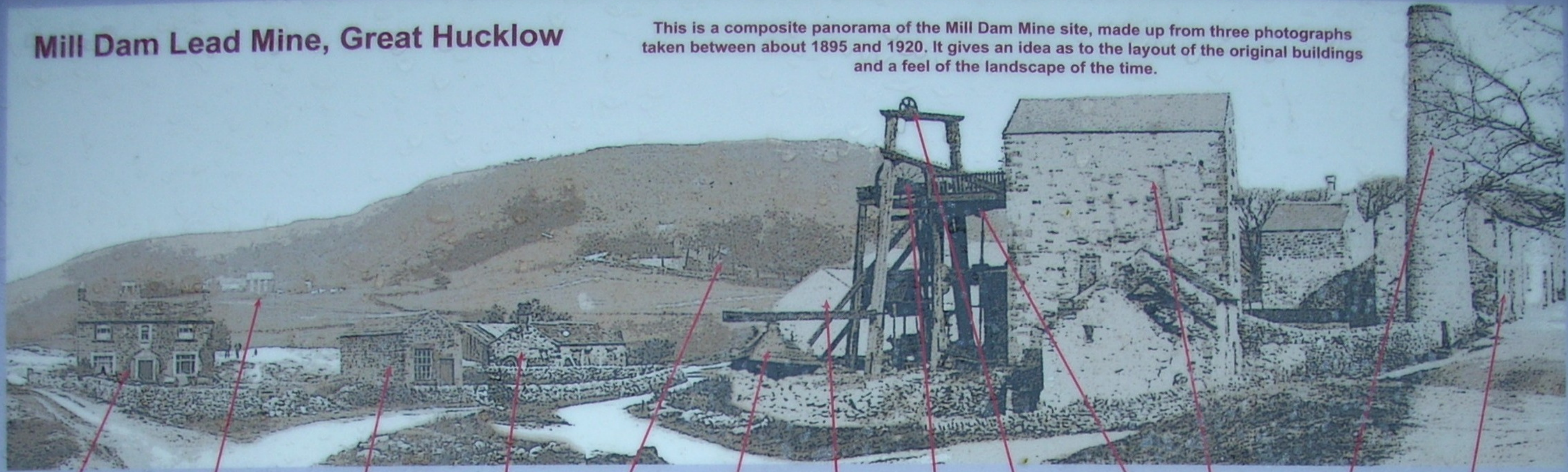


# Mill Dam Lead Mine, Great Hucklow

This is a composite panorama of the Mill Dam Mine site, made up from three photographs taken between about 1895 and 1920. It gives an idea as to the layout of the original buildings and a feel of the landscape of the time.



Mill Dam House – originally the mine offices and weighbridge  
 Burrs Mount Farm House – built with the stone from the demolished Mill Dam Mine chimney  
 Winding engine house (whimsey)  
 Blacksmith's Shop  
 Village School  
 Man-powered capstan (for hauling heavy wooden pump rods)  
 Cupola building – later converted into the Playhouse, now the Foundry Adventure Centre  
 Headframe and winding wheel  
 Pulley wheel for handling the wooden pump rods  
 Beam of Cornish steam engine used for pumping water from the mine  
 Engine house  
 Chimney flue for the steam engine  
 Buildings, now the modern Bank Cottage

## Mill Dam Lead Mine

Many buildings near this board were originally part of the lead mining enterprise known as the Mill Dam Mining Company formed about 1855 by a consortium of investors all hoping to make a handsome profit.

The company was constantly beset with drainage problems and disputes with its neighbouring companies. It was mining the same vein as its rival, the Great Hucklow Mining Company, and the only natural cavity in the limestone convenient for disposing of the water underground was ruled to be in this rival's property. After considerable expenditure in the 1870s the company failed to solve its drainage problems, became bankrupt and was forced to close in 1884.

It is possible to identify the remains of some of these buildings from the composite picture above.

To your left is Milldam House, now a private house, so please respect its privacy, but formerly the weighbridge and offices of the mine. It used to be possible to see the shape of the arch round the centre door where the ore waggons entered to be weighed. To the side there were steps going up to the offices above.

To the right of Mill Dam House close to the lane is a stone shed which housed a small steam-powered winding engine or whimsey. On the east wall of the shed it is just possible to make out the marks of the winding drum, and in the garden there was once evidence of the chimney, now demolished. Before the installation of steam engines there would have been a gin engine powered by horses.

The main shaft was in the present garden of nearby Bank Cottage and was used for both pumping and winding. The rear wing of Bank Cottage was the boiler-house for the pumping engine served by a chimney, since demolished. The engine house, also demolished, stood in front of these. When Bank Cottage was recently renovated a climbing shaft was found beneath the floor of its dining room.

The main building of the current Foundry Adventure Centre was a store for the smelting mill. In 1874 Caleb Heginbotham sued the smelting company for damage to his crops caused by the poisonous fumes emitted from the 60 foot high chimney and won £11 10s 6d in damages. However, the smelter was allowed to continue until at least 1891 in spite of the alarming report of the medical officer of the Sanitary Authority. Eventually in 1938 the store was sold to the Great Hucklow Village Players and served as their Playhouse until 1971.

The building to the right of the stone shed housed the blacksmith who was important for making and repairing the miners' tools and equipment. The great-grandson of one of the blacksmiths still lives in the village.

Behind Mill Dam House and the cupola building are the extensive hillocks of waste material from the mines.

### 1600s-2009

From explorations made in the 1960s, when it was still possible to descend a nearby shaft, it became clear that the early miners must have been active from at least the 1600s, but even from that time it seemed that flooding of the lower workings had been a problem.

Further evidence of their activity has been revealed by the new mine which was opened in 1987 by Glebe Mines to extract fluorspar, and it is amazing just how far and deep underground those old miners managed to reach with only hand tools and candle-light. How they would have envied the modern mining techniques and equipment.

The entrance to the new mine is hidden from view behind Mill Dam House. This mine was closed in 1999 but is currently preparing (in 2009) to begin operating again.

Thus, the long history of mining in Great Hucklow continues.



The view today of the original Mill Dam Mine site from a similar angle as in the old photograph above.



Mineral extraction methods old and new:

1. modern fluorspar mining in Mill Dam Mine.
2. the decaying remains of an ore waggon in an old working in Black Engine Mine on Eyam Edge. This scene would be typical of working conditions in the old Mill Dam Mine – but carried out in light from candles or oil lamps.

(Photos Paul Deakin)



The modern Mill Dam House  
 (Note the archway round the door through which waggons went to be weighed)



The old blacksmith's shop in the garden of Mill Dam House.



The cupola barn as it appeared in the 1960s after its conversion to the Village Players' Playhouse, now the Foundry Adventure Centre.



A piece of lead ore extracted from a mineral vein in Mill Dam Mine.