

WRYSGAN QUARRY



Sunday 27/08/06

After overnight rain, the sun broke through creating a glorious day and I headed off to Cwm Orthin for a good rummage high up in the old workings of Wrysgan.

For some time I had wanted to find a round trip through the mine without repeatedly retracing my steps. Surely this is achievable, I'm sure many know of a route through, but I don't and I want to find one!

The car park was busy with people in various states of dress, readying themselves for a days rock climbing tuition. After several greetings and 'good morning's' I made my way upwards. Whoever invented inclines???

Arriving at the floor 1 adit, I took advantage of the cool breeze coming from the tunnel. I pondered my plans on how best to achieve my goal. I made no progress thinking about it, so helmet on and lights fixed. Most, if not all, of the progress would be climbing rock falls. Wrysgan's only underground incline is long gone and therefore no use as a route for swapping levels.

The short splash through the tunnel to the first chamber was completed mostly with my eyes closed to get them performing more efficiently in the dark. I had been to the far end of floor 1 previously, and I deemed my best chance would be to ascend the tip in the first chamber and see what's there. There are the scant remains of what would have been a thin wall that at one time separated the first two chambers. This has been quarried away creating one big chamber. Looking upwards towards the highest pillar remains is where I headed. After a brief scout round I located a tunnel just to the left of the pillar which I entered and continued along floor 2.

The next chamber has the remains of an old fence installed for safety, which is very odd considering the amount of unsupported chambers in this place. It seems that years ago, it was ok to be crushed by falling roof, but not to fall over!!!

This chamber caused me a spot of confusion, there was no obvious way on. I wandered back and forth, thankfully a pair of rails protruding from a fallen boulder gave the game away. The boulder from a short distance appeared to be part of the wall, or was I not paying attention? At the back of this boulder was a tunnel with a short stretch of rail neatly in place. Why were they left here? I haven't got a clue.

I continued on into yet another chamber to be met with tons of waste that met a nice smooth continuation going up. I concluded that this was not a good one to climb in search of floor 3. So onward to the next chamber which had suffered a massive collapse. I wriggled over and round several huge boulders, this did not seem a good way to go. This chamber does have what appears to be the remains of the incline, the steel rope looks brand new but then Wrysgan is very dry.

I returned to the previous chamber and weighed up the options. I settled for the idea that the only grip to free climb this would be to climb tight against the right hand wall. I made the climb amongst the tip easy enough then, what a stroke of luck, a rope! Floor 3 gained.

This area of floor 3 is wide and flat, suitable for a chocolate break so a brief pause was in order.

I resumed away to the left only on the basis that I seemed to have gone on a right hand bias up until this point. Passing the remains of what looks like the frame to a hand winch, I headed off into the tunnel, emerging to find another chamber full of waste. The tips are easy to climb so after spotting a hole in the top wall - this chamber did not break through as the others have - I was away and soon on floor 4.

I pondered for a while looking left and right, both chambers either side appeared to have suffered big collapses. To the right was daylight from the top, illuminating collapsed rock and waste with a big drop down. I didn't fancy my chances here so I took a look in the chamber to the left. This one is completely destroyed, so back to the right chamber for a very close look. I began to climb in order to get a better overview. Scanning around with my 55 watt lamp gave the overall impression of Very dodgy! Fall over here and the ground is a long time coming! I continued upwards keeping as tight to the left as possible, I thought about cream cakes, Kate Bush (?) anything to take my mind off falling to my death. A scramble around to the left following the wall of the chamber and there was the tunnel on floor 5 Phew! I looked back at the way I had had come, and from this angle it didn't look that bad, what a wussy I thought to myself.

The only thing now separating me from floor 5 was a six foot climb on an awkward angle. With plenty of wriggling using shoulders and back to form a wedge, I made it, although in a very odd position.

Two tunnels led away from here, to the right I recognised as the flooded adit that sits in the tips and straight on headed towards daylight, I chose the daylight option and entered a similar chamber to the one I had earlier found a rope. This one had no rope, so I stuck with my plan from before and climbed the tip on the right hand side then use the wall as grip to

conquer the flat slate and head for the daylight. Well, lady luck strikes again, At the top of the tip was an adit unseen from below and leading out to the left, excellent! I had entered at floor 1 and emerged at floor 6.

I sat at the adit entrance thinking about the possibilities of floor 7. I concluded that from the dodgy chamber, there may be a way up towards the daylight.

Having read again the two reports by Miles, it would appear that the high level he enters and finds a row of day lit chambers is indeed floor 7. The adit he enters is above the dodgy chamber, and he has also noted evidence of a higher worked out level. This would be floor 8.

It all seems to fit together perfectly!

Barney