

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Old Millclose engine house and associated features, 570m south west of Cowley Hall

PARISH: SOUTH DARLEY

DISTRICT: DERBYSHIRE DALES

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 30953

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SK25786182

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument lies 570m south west of Cowley Hall and includes the ruined buildings, earthworks and buried remains of the Old Millclose engine house complex and Watts engine shaft.

The engine house was built in 1859-60 by mine proprietor Edward Wass, to house a Cornish engine (a beam-type steam engine) ordered from Thornewill and Warham of Burton-on-Trent. The engine pumped water from the Old Millclose lead mine, via the Watts engine shaft adjacent to the building. This was an old shaft, which was reopened in 1859. The engine was operated until the early 1870s, when it was moved to the new Millclose mine, some 450m north east. It was this new venture which became renowned as the largest lead mine in Britain. Details of the original building are well-documented, and photographs exist of the engine house in the 1870s.

The engine house survives as a ruin, with foundations and one standing wall, to the east, visible. This is the bob wall, which was thicker than the others in order to support the beam of the pumping engine. Standing to a height of 9m, it is built of substantial gritstone ashlar 1.5m thick, pierced by two main openings; an arched plug door for access to external condensing equipment, and a smaller opening below it, through which steam exhaust pipes ran. A larger arched opening would have originally existed above these, which accommodated the pivoting beam of the engine. Other walls survive only as foundations or bases. These are thinner than the eastern wall, and also of dressed gritstone. West of the bob wall and inside the building is a pit containing a three-tiered engine bed, whilst outside, stone foundations for the condensing chamber, including iron fixtures, are visible. East of these foundations is the shaft itself, stone lined and now capped and gridded.

The foundations of a chamber built against the south side of the engine house represent a boiler house, whose north west wall is built against the foot of slope to the west. Three arches in this wall led to a chimney, the brick base of which, 1.4m square, survives a few metres above on the steep hillside.

South of the boiler house, the foundations of an irregularly shaped chamber interpreted as a winding house are seen. These foundations are believed to extend beneath the modern track, and are included in the scheduling.

The surface of the trackway is excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Approximately 10,000 lead industry sites are estimated to survive in England, spanning nearly three millennia of mining history from the later Bronze Age (c.1000 BC) until the present day, though before the Roman period it is likely to have been on a small scale. Two hundred and fifty one lead industry sites, representing approximately 2.5% of the estimated national archaeological resource for the industry, have been identified as being of national importance. This selection of nationally important monuments, compiled and assessed through a comprehensive survey of the lead industry, is designed to represent the industry's chronological depth, technological breadth and regional diversity.

Nucleated lead mines are a prominent type of field monument produced by lead mining. They consist of a range of features grouped around the adits/and or shafts of a mine. The simplest examples contain merely a shaft or adit with associated spoil tip, but more complex and (in general) later examples may include remains of engine houses for pumping and/or winding from shafts, housing, lodging shops and offices, powder houses for storing gunpowder, power transmission features such as flat rod systems, transport systems such as railways and inclines, and water power and water supply features such as wheel pits, dams and leats. The majority of nucleated lead mines also included ore works where the ore, once extracted, was processed.

The majority of nucleated lead mines are of 18th to 20th century date, earlier mining being normally by rake or hush (a gully or ravine partly excavated by use of a controlled torrent of water to reveal or exploit a vein of mineral ore). They often illustrate the great advances in industrial technology associated with the period known as the Industrial Revolution and, sometimes, also inform an understanding of the great changes in social conditions which accompanied it. Because of the greatly increased scale of working associated with nucleated mining such features can be a major component of upland landscapes. It is estimated that at least 10,000 sites, exist the majority being small mines of limited importance, although the important early remains at many larger mines have been greatly modified or destroyed by continued working or modern reworking. A sample of the better preserved sites, illustrating the regional, chronological and technological range of the class, is considered to merit protection.

The Old Millclose engine house complex survives well and provides evidence for the complete layout and many technological details of a Cornish engine house of the mid-19th century, whilst buried deposits will provide further information. The engine house makes a valuable contribution to the archaeological record of this important mining area and its exploitation over a period of around 400 years.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 18th April 1979 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Derbyshire 254

NAME: Old Millclose Engine House

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 30953

NAME: Old Millclose engine house and associated features, 570m south west of Cowley Hall

SCHEDULING AFFIRMED ON 24th February 1998