Memoirs of the West Cumbria Mine Research Group
Collated by Roy Fellows 2007
Part 2: Smallcleugh Mine

Foreword
The West Cumbria Mine Research Group were very active in the 1980s and early 1990s at Nenthead, and everything was written up in their journal. As I feel strongly that this valuable information should be freely available to all, I have digitalised my copies of the journal so as to be easily available for distribution, particularly as downloads from the popular websites.

I have reproduced everything as it was originally published; only attempting to correct mistakes of spelling and grammar plus adding little notations of my own as appropriate.

Some of what is here will not be to some peoples liking as there is a lot of references to mineral collecting, and a lot more controversial, the removal of artefacts. I do have to state that I do not find this to my own liking; however this was necessity to populate their museum at Florence.

There is also quite a lot of what one can only describe as ‘irrelevant chat’ that many will find annoying. Basically, everyone will have their own style of writing, and I have no doubt that my own is not to everyone’s liking!

However, the fact remains that what is reproduced here should be a valuable resource to both mine explorers and historical researchers.

The groups explorations in the Smallcleugh mine did not reveal anything like the amount of new ground discovered in Brownley Hill, however routes to such interesting places as Barrons Sump engine chamber are described in detail. This has been reproduced by scanning and O.C.R. so please excuse any errors.

Roy Fellows July 2007

Addendum 2009
I am now advised that all clay pipes removed from the workings have been given to the NPHT museum and now back at Nenthead.

Smallcleugh Mine 14th October 1990

Another big party ventured on this trip, this time only nine-strong, but including two newcomers, Dave Makin and Derek Wilde, and also the return to the fold of the fabled Chris Moore.

The aim was to push through to look at New Cross Vein, at the furthest reaches of the Smallcleugh system, having been given some interesting gen. by Richard Hewer, some time ago but our efforts in Brownley Hill having distracted us for 18 months

We took the Horse Level route, through knee-deep water and 30 yards of belly-crawl immediately before the junction with the Middlecleugh Vein, from where a short walk led to the Gypsum Corner junction with 1st Sun Vein. From here, the party diverted and visited the famous Ballroom Flat and Elliotts String, before moving off down through the squeeze into the 2nd Sun Vein.
Upon reaching Cowhill X Vein, the RH level was followed past the wooden ducting in the ceiling to a large understope crossed by rails, which somebody had now installed an old wooden mine ladder into, and which we took advantage of. Once down, the stope was followed left (west) to a 25ft wall down, which was left, and then right to a series of collapsed stope workings, which Mike Banks explored as far as was safe.

Whilst Mike was taking all the risks, DKB, Mick and Karen had found a large vug full of calcites, which could be wriggled into, and from which DKB passed out sufficient samples for Mick to "Go for it". He then proceeded to loosen a 2’X 3’ slab, which proved impossible to remove from its vug, and it was some reluctance that Mick was dragged back up the level kicking and screaming!

The others, having got bored, had wandered off to the other branch of the Cowhill X, and when everybody had assembled the high stope was followed west over suspended rails to a slope down to a 10ft sump, footed by a X-cut to a sub-level. This then ran to the east over two deep laddered sumps, and ended just beyond a laddered shaft up to the Horse Level above, a pair of wheeled axles were found here.

Returning west past the X-cut, a bogie chassis was found underwater, the level continuing past a few hoppers to a blockage

Having failed to find a way through, the party returned to the main level at the Cowhill X junction, to try the tight squeeze through the blockage. This squeeze had been widened slightly since our last attempt on it, and was now reasonably easily negotiated. Beyond the squeeze the level was double width for 20 yards before becoming standard, and beginning to incline down. It curved about a bit, and had a few blocked hoppers in it, both down to the sub-level, and further along, up to higher workings, before a cut left descended a set of steps into a counter level which we deducted was the other side of the fall in the sub-level

Just before the incline stopped, a laddered sump was found in a LH cut, which turned out to be Pickering’s Sump to Capel cleugh mine.

It was just west of the sump that we came to the y-junction, where Longcleugh Vein crossed 2nd Sun, the LH branch being known as New X, which we duly followed.

New X was a fairly recent driving and had concrete arching, and numerous rises and hoppers up to the stopes above. We pushed right on to the end, where Richards warning of bad air was proven and a hasty retreat advised by DKB who was leading at the time!

All the climbable rises were searched on the return along New X, and the stopes followed, where the explosives boxes and wheelbarrow recounted by Richard were found and photographed.

One of the later rises ascended to a larger stope, where Mick & Mike had found a route up a ladder into a whole series of workings. DKB & CM joined them in exploration, discovering a large rise pouring water further outbye, but were dragged back to look at workings above a slope reached by Mike, after shining up a pipe. Mike persuaded DKB that his advanced skills in climbing were needed (His version of Mick’s "Go for it, Dave") and DKB climbed up to a level above, to be joined by Mick, before beginning to climb a series of wooden ladders in a rise. At the top of the third ladder pitch (30ft+) the rise was blocked at a platform by fallen timbers, so the intrepid Dave thankfully returned to the others. Returning through the stopes, more areas of exploration became obvious, but DKB’s knees were still a little trembly, so a descent was made of a ladder shaft at the end back down to the Horse Level.

The party had split up at 15.10, when Noel and 3 others left for surface, but those remaining tried the RH fork on Longcleugh Vein (although the plan calls it Browngill Vein).

The Horse Level went a short distance past hoppers from above, to a collapse, where the stope was entered about 15ft up, and found to be also blocked inbye, and outbye.

Returning to the junction, a stonelined shaft had been spike and an ascent was made of about 25ft to a large stope, which was followed upwards to an 8ft arched level in the roof, divided by a large stone-walled rectangular slot, ascending beyond the range of our lamps.
At the western end of the level, Mick and DKB found a sloping “rat hole” that descended 20ft to a low level. Dave descended part-way and doubted whether, once entered, the return would be possible, but after a "Go for it, Dave" from Mick, he dropped into the level which was only 4ft high, and followed it 15yds to a walled step at the start of a stope.
Here the two explorers found two shovels, a pick and a load of lead-coated fuse. Dropping down the wall and moving into the stope, a couple of sumps (hoppers) were crossed, and the floor followed up a slope to a suspended pile of deads, which were very carefully crept under to find a deep slope down beyond into a choked hopper, with more workings visible above.

The boys returned to the rat-hole, and sure enough, were unable to climb out!

First Mick tried, the Dave, but the hole was too narrow, and too high to manage to wedge a body into. Eventually sense was to prevail, and Mick hoisted Dave up on his back, where he then jammed himself in the hole and hauled Mick up with him. It was two rather tired and sheepish men who returned to the others in the level above.

Back at the vertical slot, the outbye side of the 8ft level was reached, but it ran only about 30yds to a collapse, with a choked hopper at half-way. Having got up there, Dave needed a piece of rail to get back out, as his spike belay came out.

Having managed to return to the stope, Dave joined Mick & Chris, and they climbed back down to Mike and Karen, waiting at the Y-junction, leaving for surface at 16.15.

Whilst negotiating the belly crawl on the Horse Level, Dave met three members of Subterranea Britannica halfway, the ensuing “crack” being rather intimate with two of them being jammed in a wider section with him, one of whom was a real big 'un!

They had little idea of the layout of the mine, and hadn't even heard of the Ballroom, so Dave gave them a photocopy of the PDMHS map we use as a guide, to try and prevent them from getting lost. This done, surface was reached at 17.20.

Smallcleugh Mine 21st October 1990

This trip was only a five strong group with Myself, Noel and Mike from the West Coast, and Mick and Karen from Bolton.

Upon meeting up at Nenthead Car Park, we met John Lawson and party, who were going into Capelcleugh. He gave us a lot of information on the area, and we detailed our explorations of Brownley Hill, to clarify that given by myself on the phone, and that from Roy Fellows. He showed us a compilation plan of the Smallcleugh workings, especially those on the Longcleugh Vein, and its access from Old Carrs Level. We went on to explain our finds of last week, which he was interested in, especially the rat-hole section, which he had not seen.

I left three membership forms for John, his son, and their companion, a Robert Bunting from Matlock, all of whom have now become members.

(Robert Bunting fitted the iron ladder up to Bog Shaft from the stope above Smallcleugh. Also the steel work in Scaleburn mine RF)

Entering the mine at 11.10, we quickly made our way through to Pickerings Sump, and rigged electrons, for the first 10ft which is no longer laddered. This led into a sub-level, from which, more electrons were added as insurance while descending the installed wooden ladders, which were under constant flow of water, down to another sub-level 20ft down. From this level, the ladders continued down to Capcleugh, and Mick descended to find waist-deep water, which he waded in for a short distance in each direction, while the others of us, explored the level and small stopes we were on.

Nothing of particular interest was found, so a return was made to the Horse Level.

When Noel and Mick had first entered the sump, water was a problem, so, while they were descending, I, Mike and Karen had created dams to guide away the water for the climb back.

These Noel and Mick kindly removed on exit, to give the others the full benefit of "a sporting meet". Very good of them! Moving on, considerably damper than before, we ascended the spiked shaft in the RH fork, and climbed up into the stopes, to rig our rat-hole with electrons for an easier climb out.

Photos were taken by Mike of the tools in the level below, before the stopes beyond were further explored. Here, the hanging deads were crawled under, and this time, with Mick and Karen accompanying me, I descended the slope down at the end, over the choked hopper. I found nothing
new, but was able to see an open hole in the roof directly above, and a sloping hole, choked, in the end wall. The hole above seemed to have a level beyond it, but appeared to be unreachable from below. Meanwhile Noel had climbed up to a vug I had pointed out on the way in, and found it to be full of beautifully formed calcites both of the blade type, and stacked column type. Mike helped him by installing a rail up to the stemple beside the vug, and Mick climbed it and perched suicidal on the stemple until Noel came out of the vug, when he disappeared, re-emerging periodically with more calcites, to join those passed out by Noel.

Two very large calcites of display quality were collected, one for our Museum collection and one for Mick, plus a number of smaller but fine specimens, before moving out. With myself and Mick carrying the big samples, the rat-hole was a little awkward, but the electrons were a great benefit.

On reaching the stope again, photos were taken of the arched levels and the vertical slot, before leaving for surface. (The slot photo later showed a level about 20ft up, but the top was even out of the reach of my big flashgun.)

On the way back up the incline, I climbed a hopper using spikes we had been collecting for the purpose, and discovered a level about 25ft up, leading into a large stope running west, 30ft high and 20ft across, and possibly 100yds long. This too had a small hole in the centre of the roof, with a level above, but no way of reaching it. The walled area around the climbing shaft/ hopper had run-in stopes behind, presumably from these higher workings. As usual, if there is a clay-pipe to be found, it was Noel who found it, and it was lodged in the wall, beside the shaft, and marked "The Workman". (Fancy Noel finding one with that on it!)

We looked at three open hoppers outbye of Cowhill X, but all were about 40ft high, and appeared to be timbered over at the top.

We then climbed up into a large flat above the level just inbye of Carrs X Vein, which ran in line with 2nd Sun, and across it. A high stope north of 2nd Sun appeared choked over timbers at 40ft up, and stone-lined sumps were also found in the floor of stope in line with 2nd Sun Vein. These were about 20ft deep, but no level was visible without a descent.

We finally reached surface at 16.40, with some excellently formed calcites, and one clay-pipe.

Dave Banks.

Smalcleugh Mine 26th October 1990

The members arrived from all parts of the country, and assembled at Nenthead car park. There was Mick and Karen from Bolton, Del and Sean from West Cumbria, Noel from Wales, and Rod our chief M.C. winched himself in from Gosforth.

Primarily a mineral appreciation visit, it was Seans' first introduction to the delights of underground. We drove up the track and geared up, entering the portal at 1040. Proceeding along the horse level, which, although much tighter, is less much quicker and less arduous in the long term.

We made a quick detour to show Sean the impressive Ballroom flat then off along the Second Sun Vein to Cowhill Cross vein. There is a tight crawl at this stage for about six feet, then off down the slight incline towards the Browngill vein. Turning right at the fork and climbing an ore chute got us in to some old workings above the Horse level, where members had been the previous week.

Pressing on, and passing some tools on the left (spades and pick), over an ore chute, brought us to the famous VUG. It was full of Calcites, beautifully layered types (tabular, I think they are called) as well as the normal prismatic types. Some of the crystals were deeply discoloured. Could this be due to secondary mineralization or replacement by siderite?

We spent quite a time in the Vug, with myself and R.C. passing interesting specimens to the wasters below, (Noel doesn't like to be at the front when work is being distributed). We eventually prised R.C. away from the Vug, (we were thinking of setting up a drip feed for him while-he was jammed in there) and made our way out, leaving plenty of specimens for any one else who cares to drop by.

Back through the crawls and along the Horse level saw us out into a typical Alston sleet storm for about 1600. Sean had enjoyed it so much, (although his feet didn't thaw out until Penrith) he became a member, and it was nice to see the return of the infamous Chiltern M.C.
Del

Smallcleugh Mine                                                                     4th November 1990

This trip, another five strong one, included self, Noel, Mick & Karen, and Del’s mate, Sean Bailey. (This details a trip to Barrons Sump, which utilised an underground water hoist similar to that used in the slate mines except it ran vertical rather than up an incline. The water tank of wood was still there until a few years ago, but since smashed by rock fall. RF)

Again we met up with John Lawson & Co. who gave us a copy of his composite Smallcleugh plan for future reference. This was studied before entry at 11am, as we intended to try to find the Longcleugh Vein workings that John had detailed.

Having got as far as Carrs X, we turned left (south) and in only 20yds, reached a set of falls, with two very low crawls one after the other. These are sections of almost filled arching between piles of fallen shale, and are reached from both sides by sliding down into the arching. Just beyond these I ascended a small rise into a small stope with bait cabin area but without artefacts. Another stope was gained further on, and explored to a hopper down to the crossroads, then descended by returning to an earlier side hopper.

As we had been instructed by John, we turned right at the X-roads, and ascended the first hopper/man way, up to an arched sub-level which ran under a rise to a right turn at a fall, and then into a series of arched levels. This consisted of two LH levels, and a stone-lined rise at the end, ascending 20ft to a small slot into a level at the top - exactly as described by John’s son.

Ignoring the two side levels, I ascended the shaft, and gained the level above, asking Sean to pass up my bag. Having climbed part way, he asked me if I was in the hole he could see, and being answered in the affirmative, chucked my bag into it. The problem was, he meant a hole in the shaft lining, and I meant the one I was in at the top!

Luckily Mick, who followed him, clambered into the hole and retrieved my bag from a small side stope.

At the top of the shaft, the level went right for 10yds to a forehead, and had a little wooden shelf near the rise, with a detonator box and nails on it, but left it went about 10yds to a 15ft drop into a chute hopper. There were levels above ours, and the hopper went upwards to a visible level, with a choked chute ahead and to our right.

We climbed down into the hopper and had lunch, Mick having concocted something that smelt like dead dog sarnies! (Garlic, I think) After our sustenance, we slid down the boarded chute, into a stope extending to our right, which became a long flat, with a large board-floored chamber in the RH wall, a railway and hopper chute to the left, with a bogie chassis still on the rails, and an arched level at the end, now run-in.

Just prior to the arching at the end, a stope ran left, with arched level beneath deads to a climbing shaft, which Noel and Mick climbed to levels at the top, neither running very far.

Beyond this rise, the arching continued, turned left, and down some steps into another arched level. To the left a 3ft square shaft lifting -box with lifting yokes, lay on the floor, with a short length of dog-legged level beyond, to a collapse.

To the right after 10yds was a huge stone walled chamber, John Lawsons’ Barrons Sump Engine House!

Huge, doesn't begin to describe such a construction so far into a mine. The width was about 30ft, between what were once presumably the vein walls, but the height must be about 70-80ft high, with large wooden stemples across at 30 and 60ft, with the remains of other timber construction on them. The end walls were entirely stone-walled, and the ceiling stone-arched, with large arches at the bottom, perhaps 20ft radius, and normal-size levels beyond them. In the LH wall a level ran 10yds to a junction.
What was not immediately obvious then, on entry, was that beyond a large stemple crossing the chamber at 6ft, the sump descended below a load of rotten timbering and rails. This was rounded, and a pair of large iron hooped wooden kibbles found.

Upon entering the normal level beyond, the LH side-cut led back around the shaft to the side level from the chamber. Two parallel levels connected to it, but only a wooden ventilation fan, lying in one of them was worth noting.

The level inbye of Barrons Sump was followed for some way, past a level running back from a Y-junction and on our RH side, under a large wooden hopper/ladderway (without ladders), to a widened area beyond.

Here, a large hopper/ladder shaft descended to the RH side, with a wall between it and the level, but with an entrance to one side. A number of rails had been piled opposite, which could be used for a future descent, the sump being about 60-70ft deep, and apparently dry, with stemples in a line down the middle.

Moving inbye, a broken pick head was found, otherwise in good nick, and with its shaft beside it.

About another 25yds further a large fall from above and to the right, blocked the forward progress, but access could be made into a level running south to the left of this fall. (Later found to be the Cowhill Cross Vein X-roads).

This level ran for a long distance with a number of very high rises, stone lined, two of which were ascended a short distance to low cross-cuts apparently trying the vein. It is assumed that these rises go up to Middlecleugh Level. A fall on the level forced us to return to a sump in the level floor at 100yds from the X-roads, where Mick free-climbed down the 20ft deep hole using a rail, and entered the level below. This, he followed in both directions to falls, and found nothing of note.

Returning back up the Longcleugh level, we tried the LH fork at the Y-junction through two collapses to a rise which was not attempted. Karen used her advantageous stature to good effect through these collapses, joining me in this exploration.

Having returned to LL, we returned through the levels around Barrons Sump, took photos of the bogie, then climbed back into the sub-levels to try the two side levels we had passed.

The first level we met, ran only 10yds or so to a small chamber working, but the second ran downhill on wheelbarrow boards, to a 10ft rise into a small stope, then on into a much bigger stope. A level that ran left, also curved round and then entered the same stope, after passing under an unclimbable rise up to higher workings.

This flat was 100yds long, 20yds wide, by 20-30ft high, and had a X-cut left to a hopper down to a lower level, with a level running right to a second hopper down to a level. In the flat I attempted some slave-flash photos, before re-entering the sublevels.

On the way out, I climbed the 20ft rise, but it led into a small choked stope, so descended back down to the Horse Level.

This level was then followed south on Carrs X, past the hoppers found above in the flat area, and on for some distance to a Y-junction. Noel checked this, and informed us that it went to a T-junction with a climbable rise to the RH side. Going on, we found another Y-junction, where I tried the RH side to find it stoped up into a level visible above, but it was very wet and no attempted. The M went on to a fall, with a M cut up into some workings, which were also left due to available time.

On the way out, just beyond the X-roads, I nipped down a LH level to a Y-junction, the M fork being run-in, the RH fork leading to a high rise with a rail leaning in it. This was left as I was solo, the others having pressed on.

The two squeezes were passed with a little more ease, and surface eventually re-gained at 17.30, after a long but very rewarding trip in new ground for all of us.
This one was a trip laid on by Noel, which myself, Mick and Karen agreed to try. We had originally arrived, equipped to attempt a descent of the walled sump on Longcleugh Vein (known now as Atkinsons' Sump), but more realistic thinking on ability levels in the party, led to the adoption of the lesser 55ft descent electron pitch of Prouds' Sump instead.

On the way to meet Mick and Karen, Noel and I had stopped off at Brownley Hill, to crack with John Lawson, who was leading a party to Jug. This party of about 6 or 7 included Norman Thompson who was a friend of Ian Tylers in his Caldbeck ventures. We told John of our Longcleugh Vein trip, and gave him some points of clarification on his questions about the Jug, before moving off to meet M & K at the car-park.

Having rigged the pitch with an SRT rope, I abseiled down to the top of a pile of debris, which separated two sumps. Once down, I moved to one side while Noel fixed the electrons in place, and waited for Mick & Karen, belaying them when they got to my position. Having been joined by Noel, the electron was lowered over the eastern sump, and descended to a slope about 20ft below, which led to a large sump with rails over it.

This area, was taken to be the Carrs Level, as it was stone -arched, although the passage was blocked after a few yards. The sump had a level running south, about 15ft down, but our electrons couldn't quite reach it. There was, however a X~cut from the sump, which went west for a few yards to a short drop and Mick disappeared down it, while I guided the others to it.

When I got to the drop, there was a rail leaning in it, so assuming Mick had used it, I started to shin down it, and landed in a heap about 10ft down, the rail having snapped!

Nothing was damaged other than my pride, and once I was able to look around, I saw that it was possible to climb down using the rail as a handhold only, which is presumably what Mick had done. Still, I got the compensation of guiding Karen down using my knee as a seat at one point!

The drop led under the X-cut into the side of the large sump, and down a horrible muddy slope of about 30ft, down to a X-cut to a large level. A piece of the rail I had snapped came in handy to arrest progress when descending the slope.

The new level reached was a large one cut in rock, and running a lot of water, with a bogie chassis propped up on the corner.

We began to move south against the water flow in thigh deep water, and through a crawl under stone-arching, to a collapse that had been dug out to one side. The arching beyond was chest deep on Noel when he braved this in his new super waterproof coverall, as far as a fall beyond. At this point he discovered that the suit kept water in as well as it kept it out! Walking out of the water was a little difficult with a suit half-full of water. Once the water had drained out, he had a little go at the fall, but water was backed up for a long distance beyond, and too big a job for one man.

While Noel was doing this, the other three of us, began to deepen the channel and succeeded in dropping the water another 3-4 inches.

Returning to the connecting rise, dinner was begun, while Mick disappeared off outbye, returning to report deep water, but continuation for a long way.

He didn't say how deep! Having got cold while eating, and deciding that the presence of only hopper-bottoms and running water meant we must have reached Rampgill, we began moving off north towards the entrance.
The water deepened to waist depth on the men, and a much more uncomfortable horizon on Karen, passing under arching to a X-cut left, about 7ft up, this led slightly uphill to a forehead about 15yds on. Back into the deep water again, we moved outbye, eventually coming out of the water and into a low level that the water ran down, with a stope up into levels, which Noel and Mick climbed up to, but they did not go far, although higher levels could be seen but not reached.

By this time we were all feeling the cold, especially Karen, so we decided to take her to the portal, and began to hurry a little to warm up. Mick climbed a slot further on, to a stope, but again found nothing. The Whisky Bottle junction was reached and quickly passed, until the weir at Brewery Shaft was found, the portal being visible in the distance. This gave the party a little boost, enough to inspect the system of water management, and the huge shaft itself, visible from the eye, just around the corner.

Mick then escorted Karen to the entrance, and confessed on return that he felt like going with her, which was a comfort to me; because I thought I was the only one! We had to return the way we came to help the insulated Noel to de-rig the electrons and rope.

On our hurried way back, we met seven NORPEX diggers on the way out from their secrets behind the iron door, but they didn't have a lot to say.

The trek back was completed in remarkably short time, and after a cast about for pieces of metal to insert into the wall up the muddy slope, the climb was made with only a little difficulty.

The inbye side of the level at Carrs horizon, was checked past a couple of falls, but led nowhere, and the ascent was made in short order and de-rigged.

The gear --as packed, and Noel pulled his usual trick, by loading Mick with the rope bag that he had got Karen to carry in!

On reaching surface again, Karen was waiting; now dry an warm, with Pat Newman, once County Council officer for the Nenthead project, and a male companion, who offered to show us the Assay House on the way out.

Three people, two male and one female, then arrived at 4.3 and stopped for a crack. They planned to do a dig in the Horse Level to lower the water. We plugged the Group as usual, and left them a card, and off they went.

Pat and friend showed us the Assay House and its display, which was quite impressive, and we then headed for home.

Dave Banks

Smallcleugh Mine 2nd December 1990

A six strong team entered the mine at 10.45 and this time decided to try the route through the flats, which only Dave and Del, of the team, had covered before. After an initial problem in the stope bypassing the fall in the Horse Level, the route was no problem, and quickly covered as far as the southern end of Wheel Flat, where we discovered a ladder made up from two vertical rails with small pieces of wood bound up as steps with baling twine. Mick was encouraged by Del to "Go for it", and up he climbed, to be turned back by some rotten timbers that even he wouldn't try. He tried to persuade me to have a go, but I've experienced his prompting before, and decided if that mad b….. wouldn't do it, I wouldn't either!

Disgruntled by Mick's failure, I led off down Heterinqtons X Cut, which although a long low crawl, has now been mainly cleared of stones, and indeed small guys like me can most of its length on haunches or bent double. Having reached 1st Sun Vein we turned right and made our way via Gypsum Corner to Elliots String.
Having crossed the railed sump, Del climbed up into a vug in the LH wall and began passing down sphalerite/calcite samples down, while the rest of us dossed about. When he got tired of this he came down, only to be replaced by Mick. When my pet-lip became so pronounced at the delay that people were tripping up over it, the decision was made to press on.

Before they could change their minds I rushed off, and they then punished my eagerness by stopping for lunch before the journey down 2nd Sun Vein.

The 2nd Sun was followed to Carrs X, then the two squeezes negotiated, and the climb up through the sub-levels to end up at Barrons Sump, where time was taken to re-take some photos. The timbers over the shaft were moved and it was then possible to see that it was stone lined and circular, with no level visible above the water visible about 60-70ft down.

During this, two bogie axles were uncovered that had a gauge about twice normal, and did not look as if they could fit into any of the nearby levels. These would have to be measured on a future trip.

Moving on to Atkinsons Sump, the rails were used to belay a 45ft SRT rope, which Del then abseiled down, to get a better look at the bottom. He abseiled down the RH side of the timbers first, and found it choked with timber, and no level where, from above, it looked like there might have been one. He then moved back up, and looked down the LH side, and reported being able to see dry ground at the bottom.

While Del was hanging about, Mick was persuaded by me to free-climb the timbered ladder way/hopper just outbye of the sump. This was no doddle, as the ladders were missing, and the timbers were wet. He climbed about an estimated 70ft to find that it was choked at the top. He was a very pleased man when he got back to the main level!

The return journey was made to the sub-level flat, and I used Seans' excellent little tripod to attempt an open shutter photo. This might not come out, as I had forgotten my cord-release and Sean had to hold the shutter release down.

Dropping back down to the X-roads, the eastern arm was then checked, and Mick and I climbed up into a small stope near the collapse below Armstrongs Rise. Moving south, with Mike, I found that where we had found a cut to the left just before the collapse at the end, there were workings above, and a points rail had been erected to gain access. Two sets of workings were found on my climbing up the rail, running parallel N-S, but shortage of time prevented extended exploration.

On the way back, we joined Del, Sean, Mick and Karen, who had begun checking the LH fork that Noel looked at last time. The RH side of the T-junction was followed up into a small stope by Del, Sean and I, until it ran out, and Mick climbed the rise 20ft to short levels each way, blocked by falls.

Mick and Mike then turned M.C. and started prising the wall down at the junction to obtain some small pyrite samples, on a lead string. They were aided by Del (a closet M.C.) who seemed to become possessed by an urge to rive great chunks of rock out of the wall!

On the way out, I again went left at the junction outbye of the X-roads, and myself, Mike and Sean conspired to let Mick, “Go for it” up the rail into the 40ft rise. About 15ft up, he stuck, there being no footholds to continue above the rail, Mick using his great command of the English language to describe it as “smooth as rock”! A box-like set of timbers and deads seemed to divide two parts of the rise for the top 10ft, and a level could just be made out at the top.

After getting through the squeezes first, I heard voices, ahead, and found five men, who described themselves as cavers, to whom I chatted to for some time, while the others were left standing in knee-deep water, and I was sat on a pile of rock. Who said typical? The cavers seemed to be based in the Potteries and were on their way to New Cross, so we gave them some information on that area and advised them not to attempt the through trip via Capelcleugh, due to the lack of knowledge as to current state of levels down there.

On the way through the Horse Level, I was very pleased to find that our friends of the other week had considerably dropped the water, such that it is now all below welly depth, having cut a large slot
through a fall to drain out down a nearby sump, fitting a garden-hose siphon to ensure it remained low. A very good job done.

We were changed and away by 5.25, and made good time on the return, despite dense mist on Hartside Pass.

Dave Banks
Smallcleugh Proud's Sump

Arriving at Nenthead early, I called in at the Crown to pickup an FX2 charger that my brother had inadvertently left in the cottage a few months ago. While in the car park, I met Stewart Chester of PDMHS, up from Nottingham for the weekend. By coincidence I had spoken to Stewart the week before, inquiring about the flats off Proud's Sump.

It was Stewart who first aroused WCMRG’s interest in the farther reaches of Brownley Hill, back in July 1989 when we met him and others from the Nottingham area at Nenthead. It was he who had originally installed the SRT rope in a rise on the Guddangill Burn Cross Vein, allowing access to Brownley Hill High Level and the Jug Vein. We had always been grateful to Stewart for enabling us to enter the high level and in return have always kept him informed of our explorations in Brownley Hill. In fact Stewart had the previous day visited Jug via our dig on High Cross and recognised the area just in-bye of the dig from his visits via the high level route. It had not appeared diggable when viewed from that side of the blockage.

While discussing our recent trip via Proud's Sump to the Hangingshaw level of Rampgill (see 11th November meet), Stewart informed me that he had been involved in the dig on this level. This was in the region where further progress along the level was prevented by roof depth water. Having wetted our appetite with tales of the wondrous artefacts to be found in the Proud's Flats, we said our good byes and parted.

Just before driving up to Smallcleugh we nipped down to Brownley Hill for a quick crack with J1, et. al. who were preparing to go underground.

On arrival at Smallcleugh there was one car already parked up, and on entering the mine the now familiar aroma of pipe tobacco could be detected. Our Cornish friend was once again in residence. On reaching Proud's Sump, existing bolts were used to rig the pitch for both electrons and SRT. Mick and Karen descended the first 50ft pitch using electrons; my top-roping duties over I then abseiled down to join them. We took the 30ft sump to the west, all of us descending the second 30ft pitch using the electrons.

With Karen taking the lead the next two hours were spent exploring the flats with '1Goferit' being sent to tie up the loose ends. The various artefacts included detonator boxes, tallow candles, the double skinned explosive containers, and explosive labels etc. Also found was a pencilled note left in a level in the western end of the flats noting a survey carried out by AL, SJ and PJ on the 27-02-90, PJ = Peter Jackson? There was a note requesting visitors to take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints (stating the obvious? Perhaps not these days) was also found left by the Alston Moor Mines Research Group. This is the first time I've come across AMMRG, can anyone throw any light on them? We eventually re-ascedended to the base of Proud's Sump and descended the 20 ft sump to the east. A short slope was followed to the railed covered sump, which we had last visited on 11/11/90. This sump had a level running south approximately 15 ft down which we had not been able to check out due to a shortage of ladders. This time we had brought in ample ladders and Mick entered the level to report that it was in fact just a stone lined recess.

We then returned to the base of Proud's Sump and 1 prusiked back up to the Horse level, and since this was a straight forward pitch, a Petzl stop was used as the top rope controller. This was Karen's first electron ascent of any note, she having sneaked out via Rampgill on our previous visit down the sump.

While de-rigging we came across a chap and two lads carrying only torches and only two hard hats between them, heading in along the Horse Level. Apparently, two were father and son and were looking for samples of sphalerite, as the son was studying A-level geology. We warned them against the dangers of not wearing protective head gear and quoting the story of the first recorded British caving fatality, where a stone tossed down Alum Pot by a passer by fractured the skull of a caver.
Another enjoyable day over we left Nenthead glad that we had at last visited the Proud Sump flats.

Noel Wood

Smallcleugh Mine,                                                                       19th January 1991


Another weekend meet at Nenthead with members travelling up from Wales, the Midlands and S & W Cumbria. An achievement in itself, since on arrival at Overwater on the Friday night, spaces for parking had to be dug out of 2ft deep snow in the Crown's car park. Both the Friday and Saturday night were spent in the Crown's two bedroom cottage, thus all spaces had to be utilised with two members actually sleeping on the landing. The fire in the cottage doesn't draw very well with not much heat being given out, this combined with an extremely cold night resulted in ice forming on the Inside of the windows by morning.

I had recently acquired, on loan, water proof housing for the camcorder and so R was intended to film the trip through to Barons Sump with a slight detour to the Ballroom Flats.

Due to the snow it was considered by the majority to be impossible to drive up the valley so we walked up to the Smallcleugh Level. However one member of the party who I won't name did make an abortive attempt to drive up the track, and as a result he had to endure some “mickey taking” from the rest of us.

On entering the level, the journey along the Main Horse Level past Middlecleugh 1st Sun Vein to the Ballroom was filmed. As usual we came across another party in the Ballroom. Returning from the Ballroom the short drive along Elliott's String was taken on over the Hydraulic Shaft to show the party the mineralization in the vugs near the forehead.

On returning to 1st Sun I inadvertently took a right turn and briefly headed towards Hetherington's X-cut. I soon realised my mistake and had everybody back-track to Gypsum Corner where on arrival noticed that we had lost Mick and Karen. They had last been seen at the rear of the party and I assumed that they had not followed us to Hetherington's but would be waiting for us with grins on their faces, somewhere on the route to Carr's Cross Vein. This was not to be; MI- & KM were not to be seen again until the evening when we returned to the cottage!

On reaching Carr's X-cut we headed south by turning left and passed through the two low crawls, which provided some entertaining video material. The usual right turn was taken at the cross roads and the first man way/hopper ascended, where after passing through the series of arched levels the flats were reached where lunch was partaken. Lunch over I climbed the 20ft rise and installed an electron. The rest followed and we descended the chuted hopper and on to the large engine chamber above Baron's Sump. The chamber, kibbles and a fan were photographed before we moved on along the
Longcleugh Level to Atkinson's Sump. I had another look at the sump since we intended to descend it on the next meet and I was a little upset to see that rails had been positioned for belaying since my last visit. (What I hadn't realised was that these had been placed by Del on a previous meet that I had missed, see Review No. 8 page 20. Del at that time had only a 45ft rope, which he had descended to try and get a better look of the bottom of the 80ft sump.)

The trip out was uneventful and on arriving at the cottage we were reunited with Mick and Karen. They must have been in an energetic mood as apparently they had visited most of the accessible parts of the Smallcleugh complex with the exception of Baron's Sump area (see also 3rd February's Meet).

The camcorder was connected to the TV and the day's events played back, thus keeping the bathroom queue entertained.

Leaving Nenthead on the Sunday morning the Lawson's Land Rover was again seen parked outside the Brownley Hill Level. Have they at last found the ever elusive Alstonite?

Noel Wood

Smallcleugh Mine, 3rd February 1991

Present:- Dave Banks, Noel Wood, Mick Lomas, Karen Molyneux

This was a trip to Middlecleugh Second Sun Vein in Smallcleugh, to ascend to the higher levels above the stopes. This was not to be, as Rod's tame scaffolding friend didn't produce the goods on Friday. Rod immediately withdrew from the trip, heaping sackcloth and ashes on his head, muttering truly Fagin-like, "It was not my fault, my dear."

Noel leapt into action, saying "Let's do a video shooting session through to Barons Sump." I was made-up, (that's Liverpudlian for pleased), and began to fantasise over camera-angles, film sequences etc. for the various underground features on the way, and got quite excited.

So Noel and I duly arrived at Nenthead at 10:15 to find it still under X of snow, with John and Robert Lawson wafting for a crack, huddled in their white Land-Rover. I presented John with copies of all eight journals, he having got his No.8 before me!

When the Lawson's had gone off for their trip to the Jug Vein in Brownley Hill mine, we slowly froze while getting changed. Eventually Mick and Karen arrived at 10:40 in a four-wheel slide on the snow-covered car-park, and after a quick exchange of insults, they also got changed and we began to walk up the path to the mine.

Arriving at the entrance at 11:20, Noel checked the video lamp and found that K had packed up! We took turns fiddling, rattling and dismantling until it lit-up again, and then entered the mine. Halfway along the Horse Level, Karen and I realised that Mick had started walking back, Noel having disappeared. When we got back to them, Noel was in deep despair, having broken the bulb in the video lamp. After a struggle to prevent him doing the honourable thing and committing video producer's hari-kari, he opted to return the camera to the car. A short debate decided that Karen should crawl up a nearby rat-hole and hide the lamp & battery-belt, the camera being stashed in a rucksack as too valuable to hide.

So, no maypoles and now no video either! It was beginning to look like one of those days. Even so, we managed to get through to the X-roads on Carrs X Vein, where Mick asked us to let him lead, as on the last trip here, he had not been able to find the rise to the sub-levels.

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The rest of us helpfully wafted at the junction and watched Mick take the RH level O.K. and then walk straight past the rise and on to the fall at the end! When he sheepishly returned to the X roads, a failed navigator, Karen gleefully pointed out the rise he had just passed twice! (I told you I wouldn't tell anybody, Mick, but I lied)

We ascended as usual, and I shinned up the small rise into the second and higher sub-level and wafted for the others. Noel came up, and said Karen had found a clay-pipe bowl. It was a delighted Karen that clambered up the rise, to be dragged through the small arch by Noel and I. The pipe was of the small
fluted type, but had a raised pattern around the bowl above the fluting, with a worn leaf pattern above that. A nice find.

Having negotiated the hopper down into the lower flat, we stopped for dinner, Noel having an attempt at digging the fall in the arching with the entrenching tool, while the rest of us ate. Mick was most impressed with my tool, wishing he had one, so I said I would ask Chris Moore to get him one!

When we reached Barons Sump, I examined the two sets of bogie axles lying between the shaft top and the kibbles, measuring the gauge at about 30% and speculating as to their use, as they had a heavy wooden frame on them and were too wide to enter the levels around the Engine Chamber. Presumably it was some kind of kibble-trolley, of what type, was not apparent.

A look down the sump, revealed that an eye ran off on the outbye side at about 25ft down, and a pair, opposite each other, at about 80ft down, the water-level being estimated at 120ft.

Time was running a bit late, so we pushed on to Atkinsons Sump, where a Draeger Oxygen Meter was first lowered down to the bottom to gauge the air content. This having been done and without the meter going into alarm, the pitch was equipped for SRT, and Noel abseiled down, while Mick and I fitted the electron ladders. On the way down, approximately half way, Noel had to tie off in order to clear away some of the wooden partitioning. This meant hauling up the remaining stack rope to prevent it from being damaged by the failing woodwork. On reaching the bottom he reported the oxygen level as 19.4% away from the sump, and that he would scout a little each way up the level. The sump took three electrons, and when I had top-roped Mick down, he reported that it was roughly 80ft deep. I then top roped Karen down, before abseiling down to join her. We met Noel having just arrived back from the eye on Barons Sump. Mick arrived back from a trip inbye to the forehead, and decided to descend a twin sump about 50yds inbye from the sump-foot.

I went inbye to the forehead myself, and found a ladder way/hopper rising about 15yds from the forehead. On a ledge opposite, I found a load of nails and another clay-pipe. (That really narked Mick!) On the return, I paced the distance to Atkinsons Sump foot at about 165yds in total.

Mick had descended the first sump on a ladder, and found that it descended about 25ft to a second ladder into a flooded level running north. The second sump, only about 2yds inbye from it, appeared to be a separate level, but was not entered as we had no spare electrons. While the others were ascending Atkinsons, I pushed on to Barons Sump, through thigh-deep black muddy water. Once there, I found that rails had been put up as a barrier across the level, but a level ran around the shaft into a stone walled chamber opposite, about 15ft high by 6ft across, with large square timbers set in it, at floor level and from the holes, about 3 & 6ft above in threes. It seemed to be a pump station or something. From here, the water was about 25-30ft down, with the roof of a level just visible below water on the opposite side.

On the way out, a X-cut ran north to a 30ft blind rise at 35yds, and on the south side, at 50yds, an open rise ascended out of sight.

When I reached Atkinsons again, Karen was suffering on the long electron climb, and after a wait I tied on for an SRT ascent which I made very heavy weather of, until I mastered the trick of gripping the trailing rope with my feet as I moved up. I thought I was going to get stuck down there! I was shattered when I eventually arrived at the top of the pitch.

Having packed up, I paced the Longcleugh Level to the west, at 40yds to the fall on Cowhill X Vein crossroads. So the double sumps are at a point beyond Cowhill and in line N-S, the laddered rise/hopper being 125yds beyond the fall, to the west.

Returning to the Carrs X Vein crossroads, Mick and I went south to look at the workings in the LH X-cut just before the fall at the end, that I had found with Mike Banks. We found a pair of N-S workings about 25ft above the main level, but although the eastern set went some distance, about 40yds north and 100yds south, nothing was found, the southern working being connected to the west with the other set, but a fall outbye forced us back the way we had come.
The western set went only about 10yds from the rise to the south, and west about the same, but did not go anywhere, so we climbed down and began to head out. At the y-junction outbye, the western arm was checked, but the rise up to a higher working of 35-40ft, was too sheer to attempt to climb.

The others having made their way out while all this was going on, we pushed on after them, reaching the surface at 5:30pm, to find that it had been snowing. It was a long cold walk back to the cars with boots full with water and wet legged overalls. The changing was made difficult by frozen fingers, and it was not until Alston that I regained the feeling in both hands and feet.

So, we had entered some new ground (for us, as the sump-foot had initials and dates from 1988 & 1990), and had found two more clay pipes for the collection. Although we started off badly, we had persevered and made a decent day of it.

Dave Banks.

Smallcleugh Mine, 17th February 1991

Lomas, Karen Molyneux, Rod Chilton, John Lawson, Robert Lawson, Robert Bunting

This trip was, at last, the awaited ‘maypole’ trip, and was eight-strong, the four from the last trip being joined by Rod, John and Robert Lawson and Robert Bunting. The last three were all experienced, but were on their first trip with us.

Rod arrived with four loft alloy scaffold poles with their connectors, but like me and RB, had to park in the village at the junction due to foot-deep snow. Mick ignored the snow and parked in a space earlier cleared by RB, but left, due to doubts about being able to get out of ft again. Mick doesn't have worries like that! The Lawson’s just charged in last in their Land-Rover and parked as if the snow wasn't there.

The walk up to the mine was difficult in the deep snow with the scaffold poles, and ft was a relief to enter the nice warm entrance. A return to the womb?

The journey through the crawls on the Horse Level with the poles was difficult, but apart from Cowhill X where we had to do a little manoeuvring, the rest was trouble-free.

Where the level forked at the foot of the Incline on 2nd Sun, John persuaded Mick to have a go at climbing a slot in the arching. This was extremely narrow, but with a little assistance he managed to gain access, only to find that ft only went up to the void above the backfill on the stone-arching. Mick was very impressed with John's powers of delegation!

Having recovered from his indignant spluttering, Mick joined us in climbing up the spiked climbing rise into the first slope. We had a quick look up the slot in the roof, and then broke for lunch to discuss tactics.

Using the Lawson's stepladders, the maypole was assembled and after three lengths were used, Noel climbed on to test it for weight. After an adjustment to make ft more vertical, he climbed on again and began to ascend. He reached the arched X-cut about 25ft up, and stepped off to explore ft. Unfortunately, after a few feet ft met a level running in line with the slope, but this ran only a few yards each way to falls. After adding another length, Noel remounted the electron and ascended to the lip in the slot about 15ft higher. Unfortunately, this was not another level as first thought, but just a lip from which the slot got wider. He did think that he could see a possible level about 25ft higher, but we had problems with bending at 40ft with Noel having to quickly leave the electron and chimney back down to the first level where he waked while we removed a section of the maypole before continuing his descent back on the electron. If this rise is to be attempted again then the maypole will have to be lifted from the 25ft X-cut and located there in order to gain any further height.

Once Noel had descended, the rig was quickly dismantled, and the move made to rig the rat hole with an electron. All the gear was then transferred to the lower stope. Where we had previously found the mine tools, a hopper/ladderway descended, and above ft a hole could be seen to re-enter the higher level. This was fitted with a shorter maypole, and I attempted to climb into ft, with some difficulty, as I
had kept my rucksack on, and it was a little tight. Mick free-climbed up behind me as moral support until I struggled up into the level, where I found that it ran about 25ft outbye to a collapse in the arching, and loft inbye to a similar fall. John joined me, and we had a quick look round, but found only a couple of bronze tool ends in a dirty calcite vug in the wall over the hole, together with a pair of drill steels, also broken. John pointed out some decayed reinforced air hose in the inbye fall, which I had not seen before in a mine, so this may have been from the last period of working.

Having descended back to the hopper top, the hopper was rigged with electrons and descended by John and Noel, in the hope that it descended to the main level, but beyond the fall near Bogg Shaft. This was not to be, as it was quickly discovered to just rejoin the level short of the fall.

During all this, the two Robert’s had been crawling about in the calcite vug in search of some decent pieces, and hardly noticed as John and I began to assemble the maypole, with a view to trying to reach the hole above the slope at the end. This hole, once looked at properly, seemed to have a large vertical pipe running past it, and John expressed his belief that it may be the Bogg Shaft. Using this to entice Mick to join us, we managed to erect the maypole up into the hole, which Mick duly climbed up. He did have a little trouble at the top, which required a rearrangement of the pole while he jammed himself in the slope, but eventually he was able to reach the lip of the hole.

This was to be the high point of the trip, as Mick found himself sitting on the edge of the shaft, which sure enough was full of large and small pipes, and was definitely Bogg Shaft. The shaft ascended out of sight, but in front of him sloped down in a dog-leg. We encouraged him to pull up the electrons and lower one half down the shaft, while I hung on the other half, our side, to counter-balance him. This done, he got down to a point where we could see his legs through a lower hole, originally thought to be a hopper, but now apparently another hole-through by the slope into the shaft. Mick had to ascend to add another section of ladder on before descending again, and after encouragement from Noel, began kicking debris through the hole into the stope, while Noel filmed him with the camcorder. Once through, he dangled the electron through, back into the slope, and went off to scout a level that he could see opposite.

After some time, just as we were planning to go after him, he returned to report that a large working could be reached by traversing the shaft around large pipes and ladders, and it went for about 120yds. In very short order he was joined by the whole team who moved off to view the extent of the working guided by Mick. He showed us three dry stone-lined sumps about 3ft across and 40ft deep, partially covered with timber, and a fourth in the side of a raised platform of deads about 80yds in. At 15yds beyond this, just short of a loft wall at the end of the platform, a fifth sump, with a canopy of rail-supported deads, also descended into the depths. Beyond the wall, the stope working (it was roughly 30ft square section) ran another 25yds to a fall of large blocks masking the forehead.

It was evident that Mick was the first into this area since the miners left it, as we found a number of pieces, amongst them a lot more lead-covered fuse and oil can. Above us in the roof of the working had once been a higher level, but some false floors had fallen, and material had fallen into this level from above. A search was made by the M.C. contingent for minerals, but nothing of interest was found.

By this time, it was running a little late, so the party began to return to the stope we had come from. Mick climbed up to his original perch, and aided by John and I began to try to reach the continuation of the higher level. After a number of attempts, he had to admit defeat, and descended back into the stope, while John, Rod and I dismantled the gear.

Moving back to the hopper, the party descended the electron and Mick and I de-rigged, ascending the rat-hole, and descending via the spiked rise.

On the way out, John and the two Roberts left us at Gypsum Corner, to move into the Flats in search of a way up into a higher flat they had read about during research. The rest of us moved on towards the cars, the journey being cold and tiring, but otherwise uneventful, and I left for home at 6:15pm.

The various interesting parts of the trip were videotaped by Noel, and the results have turned out quite nicely, if anybody would like to see this film, contact Noel. Dave Banks.
Smallcleugh Mine 10th March 1991

Present:- Dave Banks, Mick Lomas, Rod Chilton, John Lawson, Robert Lawson, Robert Bunting, Norman Thompson George Farr, Kevin Farr

I arrived at 10:25, alone, due to Noel being unavailable and Mike Banks having a bug. John Lawson and Co were there with Rod, Mick having arrived earlier and gone straight up to the mine. John had brought with him, as well as the two Roberts, three guys we had last seen him with, when Noel and I chatted with them before they went into Brownley Hill Jug Vein. They were Norman Thompson, George Farr and his son Kevin.
John showed us a copy of his plan of the western end of the Longcleugh Vein system, beyond Bogg Shaft, which he then gave me. Before going up to the mine, we had a quick chat with some NE cavers, about to enter Capcleugh for a through trip into Smallcleugh.

We then formed a convoy, and drove up to the mine, changed, and entered at about 11:10. The usual awkward trip with the poles for the maypole, and the extra bags of electron ladders, was made, all the way down to the fork at the foot of the incline beyond Cowhill X Vein, where we went right, and on to the hopper/ladderway that we had descended last time.

Mick won the vote to free-climb the rise, on the stumped side of the hopper, and rigged the pitch with an electron for the others. I climbed free-style also, for ease, and once John had ascended half-way, we began to pass the poles etc up. Moving up to the slope at the end of the stope, we assembled the maypole, using only two poles this time, and after a struggle Mick and I got it in position in the centre breach-hole, into Bogg Shaft.

The route we had used before, around the pipes in the shaft, had collapsed, leaving a gap which we had to negotiate, spanning it with a short piece of wooden ladder and a rail.

Once in the stope beyond the shaft, we agreed to miss the first sump as being too near to Bogg Shaft, and looked at No.2. This was clearly blocked, so we moved on to No.3. This had a large kink in it (No, it wasn't Mick) and would have meant a lot of free-hanging electron. The 4th, was in the side of the pile of deads, and was dodgy, as the top of it was loose, so eventually, rather than go on to the covered No.5, we returned to No.1, and rigged electrons belayed to a scaffold pole.

Once rigged, Rod began the descent of the 30ft sump, and found that he was 5ft short of electrons at the bottom. Luckily, he was able to jam himself in the narrow sump, while I attached another ladder on at the top. He then reached the bottom, and began to clear some rails and pipes in the chute. This done, he dropped through, reporting a fall about 10ft away towards the Bogg Shaft, and a long clear arched level the other way. Before the younger Lawson could move, I was in the sump and climbing down to join Rod. When I reached the lower level, it was to find a mass of clog-marks on the floor between the rails, and Rod just back from a scout down the level. I shouted up for the bags to be lowered, and was rewarded by a noise of something coming down, which turned out to be Robert L, not the bags! He disappeared off up the level, so again I shouted up for the bags, this time to be greeted by Lawson Snr! He followed his son, and this time bags were sent down. Mick followed the bags down, but by the time I had taken photos of him with the clog marks, (both profiles) everybody else had moved off.

The level contained many hoppers to the right, some beyond the stope above. At a wider section of arching stood the chassis of a bogie, and on the vein wall were written a number of dates and initials from 1910 and 1911. Just beyond this, was a large pile of debris beside a very large rise, presumably originally an ore chute/ladder way, judging from the timber left. This appeared to be an access to a stope beyond that by which we had just come through.

Past the debris, the level was watered for a way, but this receded as the level rose slightly. At one point the water running in the level descended a hole beneath the rails, and is now thought to be Rutherford's Rise. Also along this stretch of level, a second pile of debris was encountered beside a laddered rise. This was beneath a hopper-mouth sited above the level, rather than alongside it, and contained material suspended in it, the hopper doors having collapsed, hence the pile of debris! The two Lawson's had already gone past here, so I plucked up courage to follow them, warning Rod, who had by then caught up after examining the large rise with Mick, not to let Mick climb up, in case the hopper collapsed. Rod demonstrated his confidence in the security of the hopper contents by heartily banging the side of the hopper with his hand, while I winced! He then shouted my cautionary advice to Mick who was in the distance, just as I was traversing under the hopper! You can't help liking some people, can you?

Pushing on, I came to a fork where the level was crosscut from Longcleugh Vein to Middlecleugh North Vein. Hearing voices down the X-cut, I went right and came across a cutting to the left, containing a lavatory box and a few tins. The box was of the characteristic sedan-chair style, and contained a foot of its intended contents! When Rod and Mick had joined me, we took a couple of photos and moved on, past a laddered sump, to where an understope on North Vein, crossed the level. The other three were busy trying to climb up a precarious slope into the slopes on North Vein.
Tiring of waiting, I wandered off, back to the junction, and took the other fork, past a laddered rise and hopper, to look at a mine bogie just beyond. The main level only went 15yds beyond this, so I went back for Mick and Rod, to get somebody to pose while I took a photograph of the bogie. Mick, ever eager to oblige in this role, was joined more reluctantly by Rod, and the photos were taken, Rod and I changing places for him to record the event also. (Mick always seems to appear in all of them!)

On the way back, I asked Mick to pose at the foot of the ladderway, a mistake, because as soon as the flash went off, he had climbed up for a look. Rod and I followed him, and found ourselves in a stoped level, the floor of which was railed, a trapdoor being fitted over the hopper beside us. We seemed to be roughly 35ft above the level below, with the slope running outbye about 25yds to another bogie, in a timbered section of suspended deads, with a step up over deads beyond, to a low section getting smaller until progress was impossible after another 20yds.

Returning inbye, we passed the rise, and found a wheelbarrow lying on its side. Whilst the others were examining vugs, I moved on until the stope stopped at 11 5yds, and a step up of loft gained entry into a level running another 65yds to a T-junction. This went left for 10yds to a forehead and a collection of tin cans (a toilet?), and right for 50yds to a sump and rise. About 35ft down, I could see water, but I could not see upwards at all. The plan we had, did not show this X-cut or the sump, so I cannot, be sure where it went, as Capcleugh would be nearer 100ft down, than 35ft. Perhaps there is another level at the Smallcleugh random, above the Capcleugh Level?

When I returned to the others, Mick also had a look down the level, and then some time was spent in mineral collecting, before we began to make our way out. As we reached the hopper, we were hailed by George, Norman & Co, who let us descend before taking our guidance as to what was up there, and climbing up to look for themselves.

Back down the X-cut, we descended the laddered sump, onto a platform about 15ft down, and down another ladder into a level perhaps 15ft lower. Outbye, below the X-cut, a forehead could be seen about 10yds away, and water was pouring down a hole on the right, beside an air pipe. Inbye, another bogie stood on its rails, before reaching the junction on North Vein, below the understope first seen from the X-cut, where the others had ascended. A short heading opposite contained a coil of fuse wire, a pile of gelignite and sundry bits of pipework and valves. To the left, the level ran only 20yds, but Mick found a tallow candle lamp in it, which we put to one side. Also, at the junction, we found a box of bits and pieces of bolts; fuse wire etc with a set of tins containing grease. To the right, a pile of debris from above partially blocked off the entrance to a watered level running under the North Vein slopes. Above this pile, we found a lot of calcite in vugs, which we were removing when the Lawson party arrived back.

They began to shower us with rubble, as they descended by electron, through the rails of the X-cut, into our level. They brought tales of fabulous finds of calcites, far superior to ours, above us in the slopes! John and I looked at where the air pipe went down, and after a little rubble clearing, discovered a trapdoor beside it. I left him to it, and joined Mick and Rod in moving up into the stopes above. (John later told me that he succeeded in opening the trapdoor, but the sump was too deep to see the bottom)

A short length of level led into a large stope, starting at 20ft and ascending as the floor descended. The first length of floor had timber on it, which on examination proved to cover a large sump. A nasty surprise for the unwary! After a while, just after the floor began to descend, we found a large collection of calcites on ledges, left by the others, and began to remove pieces of our own from the large vug on the LH side. Mick, ever the enthusiastic one, wriggled into the vug, and collected a large sample, on his head! It fell out of the vug above him, but luckily his forehead broke its fall, preventing it from being too damaged! Mick vowed that no matter what, that bit was going out. (As it happened, I ended up carrying it most of the way!)

I went on along the stope, which further on became about 60ft high. It ascended towards the end, to within 20ft of the roof again, and then descended into a dip, the roof also sloping down. At the foot of the slope, below stemples, a small passage led upwards again, but was blocked about 20ft up. The floor here was perhaps once a hopper. On reaching the top of the slope again, I met Mick, and we began to head back, Mick climbing up on my back at one point, to reach a rock shelf about 20ft above the floor. This looked as though it had once been a level, that had been mined into from below, and now contained a lot of pipe, a shovel and sundry other gear. Also seen, in the roof above the ledge, about
15-20ft higher, was a rise containing timbers. Back at the vug, another rise could be seen in the roof, this one still containing ladders, but none below roof level. Presumably a working level must have existed above the stope. This may be worth attempting a maypole ascent.

We then collected samples of the pure-white calcite, which were as good as the others had indicated, some being coated with pyrite, which attracted the magpie in me, before deciding which we would carry out. Mick would not leave any of the big ones, and ended up loading his bag, stuffing his suit, and finally, loading me with the last one!

We staggered out with our load, collecting Mick's lamp on the way past the laddered sump, and on back to the hopper from which we had entered, discovering that Norman & Co had already got back
and ascended. I climbed up, and was followed by Mick, climbing with one hand, his rock being cradled in the other!

As we were bringing bags up from Rod, the Lawson party got back, and we had some difficulty hauling their bags out, due to the vast weight of minerals they contained! I had to top-rope Robert L, as he had gone down the flooded level beneath North Vein, and on ascending the 13th rise, had taken a fall and injured himself when the ladder came off the wall with him on it. (I have had a similar experience myself, so I can understand him feeling a bit wobbly.) Norman and Co began to make their way out with the two Roberts, while Mick and I brought Rod & John up, and after de-rigging, we followed them. I got down through the hole from Bogg shaft back into the stope, and retrieved the two spare ladders that had been left on the slope. Mick agonised over how to bring his rock down, so I advised him to chuck it onto the mud slope below me. To my amazement he did! Luckily it had a soft landing, and even landed the right side up. John, assisted by Rod, left a loop of wire in the hole before we de-rigged, to pull a rope through in future, and we then dismantled the maypole, and followed the others.

The sump in the stope was fitted with electron ladders, and all the stuff passed down, the final man free-climbing the stemples after de-rigging. I picked up my bag, a pole, two electrons and a belay that somebody had left, and chased after Mick, who had gone off similarly laden, leaving Rod, John, and the two Roberts to follow on. I eventually caught up with Mick at the squeeze where 2nd Sun joins Smallcleugh Cross Vein. I caught up with the other three in the squeezes on the Horse Level, and they let me carry on ahead, before reaching surface at 18:37. The others were all outby 18:50 and I left for home at 19:00, phoning the missus from Langwathby, to warn her of the late finish.

Notes:- John later sent me a 1910 plan and section of North Vein, which shows only 9 rises, and a second plan dated Dec 1920 shows 12 rises, the last listed as 1 9ft high, but he also says that he & Robert entered a level shown on the section as beginning at No. 12 rise, from a 13th rise, finding a 311 vein of galena in the forehead.

Smallcleugh Mine 13th July 1991

Present:- Dave, Banks, Noel Wood, Nod Wood. Rod Chilton, Mike Banks, Mick Lornas, Karen Molyneux

This meeting was to polish off any untried arms in the area beyond Bogg Shaft, before the issuing of our next newsletter which might have prompted others to follow our lead.

Having waked half an hour for Mick and Karen to arrive, we gave up at 1 lam, and drove up to the mine, got changed, and then mooched about until they eventually came hurtling up the track, after a spending spree in the Tyler emporium in Carlisle.

We eventually entered at 11.35, and proceeded down the Horse Level as usual, meeting a couple about half-way along, who were trying to find the Ballroom. We offered to guide them if they wanted to follow us, but they gave up after a little way.

Arriving at the rise along the Longdeugh arm of the fork at the foot of the Incline on Middledeugh 2nd Sun Vein, we found an SRT rope belayed in the rise, which after I free climbed up, I found to be identified with a tag marked R.F. by our old friend Roy Fellows. Moving on through the slope to the breech-hole Into the Bogg Shaft we found a sectionalised metal ladder had been eroded up to the hole. Robert Buntings ladder RF

This was very useful, and I climbed it and pulled two of our maypole sections up after me, before traversing the shaft to look for Roy. I searched the slope beyond, but found no further sign of him, the hopper tops being still covered or without any belay points for a descent, so perhaps he had been rigging his entry in stages, as he normally explores solo.

When the rest had reached the slope, I persuaded Mick to join me in attempting to erect a maypole in the shaft, to ascend about 25ft to what I thought looked like a level running inbye. After about an hour of fighting with it we gave up, mainly due to the realisation that one of the large pipes in the shaft, was only resting on the detached section in front of us, by the link of one rusty bolt! As this pipe rose out of sight, presumably to the top of the shaft, we preferred not to disturb it. We tried the maypole each side
of the pipe, and eventually Mick climbed the outbye side of the shaft to try the outbye higher level, but his precarious perch on the crest of a vee-shaped breech-hole, proved too dangerous so he returned to the inbye stope. (Mike Banks later ventured the suggestion that the larger diameter pipe in the shaft, which was surmounted by a large elbow, was actually the return feed pipe from the shaft-toot hydraulic system, that took the water out along Caplecleugh High Level, and that the outbye higher level was almost certainly R. (Clever lad, our Michael!).

While we had been futilely engrossed in shaft climbing, the others had been trying various holes in the slope root, which we joined them in. One such hole had a load of suspended deads in it, which provided an entertaining diversion in attempting to dislodge them to gain entry. After this and two other trials, we decided that as time was getting on, we should transfer the gear down to the lower level.

I descended the sump into the level and determined that the fourth sump would allow the passage of the maypoles, and while walking, took photos of the graffiti and along the level. When the gear was down, we all moved off towards the slope, Noel continuing his video filming of the trip past the shaft. After Mick had shown Mike the artefacts in the lower level, they joined us, and a maypole was inserted into a little hole in the rise to the slope opposite the main working, in the hope that this led to the level shown on the mine-plan, as the area next to the hole had been packed with deads. Mick climbed the electron, and wriggled into the hole, but was again thwarted by a narrow opening only 7ft long.

Undaunted, the maypole was set-up again into a ladderway in the root of the stope, and again it was the fearless Mick who climbed up, reporting a slope running at right angles to the main stope, and also outbye and then in line with the other part. I joined him in the stope and found that the entire area was covered in material from the roof, and that there was no sign of any mineralization. Mick had meanwhile found a wheelbarrow and a bucket containing odd pieces of gelignite. Disappointed, we then carefully descended the wooden ladders back onto the electron and joined the others.

After collecting a couple of calcites from the vug nearby, I joined the others descending back to the level. Noel then joined me in photographing in the sub-level below, he with the video camera, before we waded down the level below the main slope.

This level was concrete-arched most of the way and contained some interesting straw stalactites. Reaching the end, we ascended the rise where the younger Lawson had come a cropper on a previous trip, and found a level hill of artefacts. Spare bogie wheels and axles, a barrow wheel and axle, boxes, valves and a bogie still on the rails, made good footage for Noel's video.

Well satisfied, we hurried back and rejoined the others who had been exploring the stopes above the horse level on Longcleugh Vein. They reported a number of different workings at different heights, which they believed could even give access to the level that was above the inbye slope next to the shaft.

Having ascended back into the slope, a second attempt was made on the hole with the suspended deads, after a little clean-up, Mick climbing up to discover it blocked at the top. He was justifiably pleased with “tying off another loose end”, loose end”, albeit without finding anything again!

We returned through the shaft and slope, descending the rise and left Roy's gear as we found it, before moving off to surface, and exiting at 6.05pm. The daylight and warm weather (for Alston) was helpful in the cleaning of bodies and equipment in the river before I eventually set off for home at 6.40, arriving at Mike Banks's house at 8pm and home at 8.10 pm to find that the family had gone to Frizington! So after collecting them, I eventually tucked into my Special Curry from the Chinese at 8.50, well tired after a day of unaccustomed exercise.

Dave Banks

Smallcleugh Mine, Nenthead 10th November 1991

This trip was to follow up some information provided by Stew Chester (PDMHS) on an area of workings above the incline beyond Cowhill Cross. He had heard that it was possible to reach the level running off the foot of Barron’s Sump from these workings, i.e. this was then a connection between Middledeugh 2nd Sun and Longdeugh Veins.

On reaching Proud’s Sump we came across the backup team for the ‘Weardale Wanderers’ who were wafting by the rigged sump for the team making the through trip from Capelcleugh to Nentsberry Haggs Mines (see WCMRG News). While talking to them the Wanderers themselves appeared and since this was a planned bait stop they had time for a crack.

Moving on, we decided to check out a 20 ft sump on Second Sun that appeared to have dried out recently, this was the second sump on the right 125yds beyond the squeeze Just inbye of Gypsum Corner. Our curiosity having been further increased by the appearance of a sign labelled ‘Danger Deep Sump’, however, when Mick reached the bottom he found it blocked.

We moved on beyond Cowhill X and down the incline towards Bogg where we reached the point described by Stew Chester. It was just as well that we had been supplied with a detailed location as the rise had been extremely well disguised.

We climbed 25ft up the rise into the workings above and found a crossroads; taking the southern level we arrived at a ladderway which took us up about 15 ft into a level running south east. This was followed via stoped out areas to a large stone arched railed level which eventually curved off to the south east, through a squeeze at the base of a large rise. Along the way we identified a few rises and ore chutes for may-poling on a future trip, some of the ore chutes had been walled up and one of these was dug out but again would need either pegging or may-poling. All the ore-shoots on this level were, however, extremely high and climbing them may prove quite an undertaking.

Progress was eventually halted by a blockage; however, a sump was descended a few yards back from the blockage into a sublevel 20ft below, again one direction blocked by presumably the same material/reason as the above level. The other direction to the NW was taken fora fewyards to a ladderway continuing down. The level beyond was terminated in a forehead. The ladders were descended in stages for approximately 60ft into a watery level. This was followed for about 40 ft to a forehead, and then taking the opposite direction we eventually reached a twin sump in the floor of the level. It was at this point it started to twig that I had been here before and this opinion was further reinforced by the knee high grotty mud. I pushed on and my suspicions were soon confirmed when I found myself at the base of Alkinson’s Sump which we had descended earlier in the year from the Barron’s Sump area of Longcleugh Vein.

We then returned up the ladder rise and moved back to Longcleugh Sun Vein where a rise was climbed into a stope using pegs. The slope was 20ft high by 50 yds to a forehead to the west and 25 yds of lower slope over a sump to a fall, east of the rise. A tea pot was seen together with some graffiti “I.A. & J.A. 1856”.

Just prior to us climbing back down to the level Mick suddenly started cursing, at first I thought that perhaps his foot had started giving him some jip, since only 30 minutes before I had 'inadvertently' dropped a rock on it while clearing a walled up hopper. However, the cause of his discontentment was once again lamp failure (Again I explained to Mick that although the Oldham was stamped ‘maintenance free’ you still need to charge them). With me illuminating him from above and Karen from below he eventually made it back down to the level.

On return to the car park at Nenthead we again met the Weardale team who had now completed their through trip.

Noel Wood

Smallclough Mine, Nenthead 24th November 1991

Present: Dave Banks, Noel Wood, Karen Molyneux, Mick Lomas, Mike Banks, Rod Chilton, Dave Dickson, Brian Harrison, Stove Robinson, John Lawson, Robert Lawson
Another maypole trip planned to follow-up some possible new ground in an area recently scouted by Noel and Co.

This area had been pointed out to Noel by Stewart Chester, and was a connection between Middledeugh 2nd Sun and Longdeugh Veins. It was reached by removing some boards over the foot of the incline beyond Cownhill Y, and ascending a ladderway concealed above.

(This is common knowledge. RF)
Having arrived at Nenthead Car Park with Mike Banks at 10am, we found that Noel, Rod and Dave Dickson had already arrived. Around 10.15am two Volvo estates arrived, closely followed by the Lawson Land Rover. A MC charabanc trip!

When I compared notes with John, it turned out that they were going to the same area. Two of our recent friends from the Weardale Wanderers arrived then, Brian Harrison and Stove Robinson, and John joined me in welcoming them. I pointed out that although the two Lawson’s were members, they were on an MC trip, separate to ours. (You can't be too careful, can you)

By 10.30, Mick and Karen had still not arrived, so we headed up to the mine entrance, to get in the mine before the slower MC party. We had changed, and were just entering the mine when Mick and Karen arrived at 10.50, so we carried on, knowing that they would catch us up, as we were carrying maypoles and electrons.

We duly arrived at the disguised rise, just outbye of the sump down to Capeldeugh, and having removed the boards, climbed up into the ladderway and into the workings above. We emerged in a crossroads about 25-30ft above the main level, the northern arm running 10yds to a forehead, the western arm 10yds to a fail, the southern arm an open level, and the eastern arm containing a fall with a series of large ascending stopes beyond.

Taking the open level about 15yds in, we ascended a ladderway up about 15ft into a level running east for a similar distance, to a level running off to the right (SE). This level was 6ft + high, stone-arched, and was railed for much of its length, continuing to a tee-junction. This was Longdeugh Vein beyond the fall on Cowhill X Vein.

We finally reached a level running west, shown on the plans as Grahams Vein, and followed it to a rise at the end, labelled as ascending to High Flat. This was maypoled, and I was encouraged by insults into ascending to check it out. About 30ft up was a small ledge with a small working a few feet into it, but no flat or oven a level.

Moving back to Longdeugh Vein, we moved south east again to the fall at the end, well choked by large greasy boulders, similar to the Infill encountered from the other side which blocked the Cowhill X Vein crossroads. Noel entered an adjacent ore-chute and began to fit the maypole, while Mick and Dave D entered another near the junction with Grahams Vein. Having climbed as far as he could and found nothing, Noel descended and the maypole was transferred to Mick's chute, where he and Dave D then gained entry Into a short arched level about 15ft up. I joined them, and the maypole was extended up the shaft and I climbed up another 15ft to the same lack of success. About 25ft above me I could see that the rise began to curve away, and was stone-lined, but without any other visible openings.

We de-rigged the pitch and moved back west, Mick trying two other rises without success, and a number of us following Luke Halls X- cut to two parallel lines of stopes; on Middlecleugh 2nd Sun Vein. The first line went about 30yds east in poor ground and 10yds west, the second, about 10yds further north, went around 25yds, east and west, all in bad ground, although I found a hole in the southern wall of the western arm, which Steve entered, nearly disappearing down a sump that he reckoned descended into the incline. (We must check this from below, next time) We then returned to the Longdeugh Vein and stopped at the T junction for lunch.

While taking lunch, we were passed by members of the MC team going inbye, although only Robert L spoke. Strange lot (they did speak to the rest of us Dave, Ed.)

Lunch over, Brian, Steve and I moved west along Longdeugh Sun Vein, under three large rises, and past the tee-junction at Barrons X Cut, to a rise of 25ft up into a slope. This was free- climbed up rock and pegs in the walling, to find a 10-20ft high slope of 50yds to a forehead west of the rise, and 25yds of lower slope over a sump to a fall, east of the rise. In the western slopes I photographed graffiti on the wall, marked “I.A. & J.A. 1856”. These initials were also in the east end, but without a date.

A little difficulty was encountered descending the rise, as Brian's lamp was fading, and the route was a good test in balance and bridging even with a lamp! We turned off down Barrons X Cut to return to the
crossroads, and moved into the stopes to try and locate the others, assuming that they had gone to
maypole into the levels visible in the roof.

We clambered up the very loose slopes of rubble to the eastern end, but didn't come across them, so I
climbed into the lowest of the three visible levels, this one in the northern wall. This had been a minor
vein, separate from the main stope, and was cut out as a minor stope, with a 2ft slot 10ft long in the
floor, a floor of 10ft then a slot about 10-15ft wide and 30ft long, with a platform and ascending
ladderway visible on the other side. There was no way to reach it, so I returned to the others, and we
precariously descended the slopes back into the slope. The other two visible levels were both in the
southern wall, one in rock about 40ft above the slope, which might be reachable with a fourth pole, the
other an arched level about 25ft above the slope. At the foot of the slope, partly hidden in boulders, a
wooden trap-door was visible in the floor.

(While the three of us were doing all this, the others had stopped just east of Barrons X Cut to maypole
a rise estimated to be at a position shown on the plan as R Armstronsg X Cut. When the three lengths
of maypole were assembled, the climb was tried by both Dave D. and Noel but neither could quite
manage to climb onto the level at the top, the rise being just over 30ft high. Noel did see, from his
higher advantage point, that a stone-arched level went off at the op on the east, there are possibilities
here for another go with a fourth pole.)

We made our way back into the levels to locate the others, and met them coming out. We attempted to
ascend a 25ft stone-lined rise just north of the crossroads, not previously noticed, but when Noel had
maypoled it, he found that it was very loose with the arching of the level at the top having ruptured, so
he came back down. The wooden ladder removed from the access ladderway had been used to enter the
rise, so Mick then began to replace it, but it slipped off its platform and disappeared into the incline
below! Luckily no-one had been passing underneath, so he dropped down, and he and I replaced it.

Most of the party then moved into the stope and assembled the maypole up to the arched level, which
Steve immediately climbed up, beside a rather nicely calcified ladder hanging in mid-air over the edge.
As the two-pole set-up was a little short, Steve pulled the maypole up to allow us to attach a third pole,
and the lower one slid off....Whoops Some embarrassing minutes of juggling arid tightening sections
of maypole resulted in another four of us climbing to join Steve in the arched level, which had timbers
across it., and some old wooden ducting on the floor. At 15yds in, the level was partially blocked by a
fall where the level forked. We crawled through Into the LH side and followed ft to a minor stope,
slotted In the floor, which we traversed into a level. As I followed the others down the level, somebody
came down the stope and followed me. I thought it must be Steve, as he was the only man behind me,
but when I stopped it turned out to be one of the MCs! We had climbed up back into a level off the
main level that we had left the MC's in. Suitably disappointed, we returned back to the crossroads over
the entrance ladderway, and the maypoles were removed from the stope.

I climbed onto the ladder to help pass down the poles, and was straddling the airline that crossed it,
when the ladder started to disappear. I thought it had collapsed, but when I looked down from where it
had me dangling on the pipe, I could see it disappearing down through a slot in the platform it had been
standing on! Luckily it stopped when it hit the floor of the incline below, so I climbed down to the
incline, and Noel moved onto the platform, and we hoisted it back up. Everybody agreed that it should
have been videoed, even me, as it would have made a great comic sketch to relieve a rather uneventful
trip, but I don't intend to recreate the shot, I've been in that position once before, of having a ladder
come away on me, and I didn't like it much!

(I had one come down while I was on it in Capleeclough, I fell 12 feet onto my back, but water broke
my fall. The ladder missed my chest by inches, and my head struck the back of the level splitting a
fibreglass Joe Brown climbing helmet. I got up and walked away. RF)

Once we were all down, we began the walk back to the entrance, a trip that became increasingly hard,
as I had twisted my arm in the fall, and the leg muscles were aching when dragging the legs through
water in places. For once I was glad to reach surface, and obviously out of condition from my three
month lay-off from exploration. When changed, Brian and Steve came over and obtained membership
forms to join our happy band, but I advised them to join in the New Year, else our lovable Treasurer
would expect two membership fees! Mike and I left for home at 6.15pm, after seven hours
underground.
Present:- Noel Wood, Karen Molyneux, Mick Lornas, Pat Gunson

The choice of this meet was two fold, one to introduce Pat Gunson (recently moved into our area from Dent) to mine exploration, and secondly to video the Proud's Sump Flats. Pat although a keen caver, hadn't tried his hand at mine exploration before.

The first 50 ft pitch was rigged for SRT using two existing bolts with additional backup, and electrons for the last 30 ft pitch. When we reached the top of the second pitch, numerous larger than normal shiny bolts were observed set in the far side of the pitch which must have taken much effort to place. Why so many, and why so large, I don't know?

Once down, the next couple of hours were spent exploring the flats and filming the various artefacts. The artefacts filmed included detonator boxes, tallow candies, Mick, the double skinned explosive containers still containing explosives, and explosive labels. The pencilled note book page requesting visitors to “take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints” left in the western end of the flats, has had a further message added since our last visit. A member of CATMHS had added after footprints the quip “and pages from notebooks”, which is just what I thought when I first came across it.

It should be pointed out that Mick once again excelled himself in the operation of the video, in managing to film several interesting minutes of footage without having to waste any battery power for the 100 watt lamp. The resulting captivating pictures of total darkness punctuated by the odd flicker of a cap lamp were made all the more interesting by Mick's self praising commentary of his technical competence in the operation of such basic equipment.

Noel Wood

I picked up Rob at gain in Kirkland, and spent the journey acquainting him with the Group and its activities, before arriving at Nenthead at 10.15am. Noel and Pat were waiting In the Landrover complete with maypole sections resting on his new purpose-built roof bars.

After a chat, waiting to see if anybody else was out that day, we made our way up the track to the mine portal. Having changed, we entered at 10.15am.

Following the Horse Level, we stopped to view the horse whim chamber, and then moved off past Proud's Sump, finding a new collapse in the level near Blaylocks Sump. This consisted of a number of large slabs that had fallen off the RH wall, the biggest about 6ft long by 3ft square, and another couple about half that size. It was the first major fail we had awn on this level, and is of sufficient size to make the going a little awkward.

Further inbye where the rails span a hole In the floor, somebody has now erected a timber support for them, with extra rails to walk on. Quite a nice piece of work.

Pat and Rob then experienced their first trip through the squeezes before Gypsum Corner, where we detoured to view the Ballroom Flat, which they were impressed with until we showed them the one down the LH level at Cowhill X Vein.

Moving on, we descended the incline as far as the ladderway at about halfway, where I climbed up into the stope. Somebody had removed some of the spikes that we used last time, so Noel and Pat looked for more. Noel found one and managed to insert it in a convenient place for Rob who followed him up. Pat arrived with two more and the rise was again properly equipped.
In the stope, which is about 30yds long by 30ft high and 20ft wide, we erected the four maypole sections up into a 3ft diameter breech-hole in the roof. This hole had a stemple visible above it, and what looked like a level above a wall beyond.

After a little repositioning and weight testing, Noel gave up trying to persuade me to go up first, and had a go himself. He managed to enter the hole up to his chest, but was unhappy with the deads suspended above the hole each side, and said he thought there was no level above, just a wall.

Being sure I could see a level up there, I climbed up myself, (he know how to get me up there, that Noel) and after a little hesitation climbed through the hole, and up to the top of the maypole. From here, I could see that inbye there was only sloping deads and no level apparent, but outbye, the deads sloped about 3ft to a 4ft packwall, with an apparent level visible at the top.

A stemple across the slot above the hole had a board resting on R that seemed to be lodged into the packwall, and although it looked possible to chimney up the slot above the breech-hole I was hesitant to try it, as the deads, the board, and the packwall all moved when tried. So I too gave up and descended.

Pat then tried his luck, climbing up to my vacated position In the slot, belayed the cows tail on his harness onto the maypole and began to chimney up. From this higher position he cleared some of the slope, but when he tried the board, the packwall appeared to move also, so rather than try to remove the stemple and board to give access to chimney higher, he ascended enough to see into the level, reporting it to be a normal sized level that went on In visible distance. Perhaps Mick might be tempted to attempt to chimney up and over the stemple, where his longer legs might allow access?

The maypole was dismantled and the descent made back to the level, Rob being guided down, followed by Pat, who then re-climbed the rise, having forgotten his bag! We then moved off down Middlecleugh 2nd Sun Vein towards New X Vein as far as the X-roads near the end, where we turned right to look at a rise John Lawson had suggested we should climb. Beyond this rise the level went back outbye to a rise into a small stope, with a fall just beyond.

Noel chimneyed up the rise about 20ft until the gap was too wide and then came down. Pat took his place, and using the air-pipe in the rise and two spikes in the wall he managed to gain the level about 25ft up. Here a ladderway ascended a short way up into a 10ft high slope which ran only a few yards. Descending, he then climbed down through a hole into a working behind the walled rise, but this too contained nothing, so he returned to descend the rise, but found that he would have to sacrifice a sling to tie the air-line in position to use to descend. We did likewise at the bottom, securing the pipe to a convenient staple in the wall, and Pat was down in no time.

Returning back along the concrete-arched level, we ascended the shortest rise up into the stope, moving inbye to view the abandoned wheelbarrow and explosives boxes. The explosives were once in a box stamped with the makers name, (which now contains –fuse wire,) but had been re-housed in a smaller box with the initials “AT.” carved in the lid. Both the gelignite and the larger box were marked with Cotton Powder Co. Ltd., London - Gelatine Dynamite.

The same slope outbye of the rise had a collection of tools in it, consisting of two wooden tampers, a pricker, scraper. pick and an oil can.

Back on the Horse Level, we moved past the Y junction to a ladderway which was ascended into a series of slopes. We spent a while revisiting the features seen on the last visit, until we climbed up a ladder on a wooden platform in the stope, and into a level, where we found the wet rise that Chris Moore and I had attempted to climb previously. I spent a while getting wet installing a maypole up into it only to find a level about 15ft up, choked with deads. We know that there must be higher workings due to a ladderway that Mike Banks and I had found during the last visit; I having ascended it to at least 30ft above the level, which is in line with the top of the wet rise. This ladder-shaft had been choked at the top.

Workings seen in the stopes further outbye could connect with this ladder-way, and might be worth a further maypole trip when we have more time. We moved back down the ladder to the lower stope, and
moved inbye, rigging a maypole up to a level at the end, about 20ft up. This level ran about 25yds to a fall, and contained nothing much, although it was one of the few bits of new ground entered.

Time having run out, we made our way back out. Noel collecting a piece of clay-pipe he had found earlier. (How does he do it?)

We exiled the mine at 5.15pm into a snow shower, and after changing, left at 5.40pm.

Dave Banks.
Smallcleugh Mine Sunday, 12th January 1992


I made my way solo to Nenthead, passing Pat and Noel at Winscales, and arriving at 9.55. The others arrived fifteen minutes later, with Mick and Karen turning up at 10.15 complete with a new engine in the Astra, following Mick’s dunking it in floodwater at Xmas. As we were extending New Year pleasantries, the two Lawson’s arrived and stopped for a crack, intending to move on to Heights Quarry, possibly calling back later.
The rest of us moved up to the mine entrance, and having donned mining gear, entered at 11.00, with the intention of following-up the last trip, and re-attempting the climb into the hole in the roof of the stope, accessed from a rise halfway down the incline beyond Cowhill X Vein.

Having arrived there, we set up the maypole with three sections, and carefully positioned it in the hole, and after much agonising Mick was eventually persuaded to try the ascent.

He climbed up the electron, and wedged himself in the slot above the breech-hole and tried to lift the maypole for us to attach a fourth section to the bottom. As he did this, the third section fell off! A lesson in needing to have proper alignment when tightening the connecting clamps. When the sections were finally assembled, and Mick had recovered his nerves from having been marooned for a little while, he pulled the maypole up while we positioned it as best we could to have three points of contact for stability (top, bottom and hole rim). He then very carefully climbed the electron, stepping over the stemple spanning the slot, and onto the top of the packwall, viewed on our last visit.

After a second recovery period he explored outbye and reported it only went about ten metres, but that a ledge crossed above the hole inbye to another level, not seen on our last attempt.

At this point the two Lawson’s arrived and during the explanations Mick slipped off to explore. Some of us went inbye to the end of the stope to look at another breech-hole blocked by rubble, in the end wall. We were then hailed by Mick from the other side of this blockage, who had made his way along the levels and had heard our voices.

An extended period was spent in trying to clear the breach-hole from both sides. Much rock was moved with the MC’s long chisels, and a length of rail that the two Lawson’s had gone off to find on the incline below. Towards the end of this work Mick sloped off. So we attempted to clear more from below, John going off to find a stronger piece of rail. We could see a section of stone-arching crossing the hole above, but three large boulders wedged in the hole effectively prevented access.

Being a little concerned at Mick not re-appearing, Pat climbed up the electron to locate him. No sooner had he done so than both Mick and John hailed us from the hole! Mick had realised that where he had got to, was in fact part of the Longcleugh Vein system recently visited, and in making his way down to the incline (to try and surprise us by appearing from below!), he had met John.

We dismantled the maypole, knowing Pat would be met by the other two, and sure enough Pat appeared at the hole for us to pass up to him the poles and rucksacks.

When Noel, Karen and I followed Robert down to the incline, John had returned and announced that they would be going off to look at the northern section of the Cowhill X Vein.

We then ascended the ladderway beside Pickering's Rise, into the Longcleugh Vein system, and divided up to find the others, John having described the location of the breech-hole as near the junction with Longcleugh Sun Vein. I went along Barrons X-cut and east along the Sun Vein, while Noel and Karen followed Longcleugh Vein. Reaching the Y-junction I turned towards the others and almost immediately found the poles lying beside a partially collapsed section of arching in the RH (northern) wall. Noel and Karen were wafting in the X-cut junction just beyond, which led to a narrow slope previously visited. This had been when we had followed Steve Robinson up the maypole from the main stope on Middlecleugh 2nd Sun Vein, and had reached this stope via a set of arched sub-levels.

Pat showed us that the route back to the maypoled breech-hole was east along the narrow stope, up into a small flat, from which a hole in the southern wall led up into a parallel level, along which a crawl led to a series of small workings around the breech-hole. We explored all these just to say we also had been in the "new ground", and then moved back to the small flat.

We then found that Pat had climbed across a rail spanning the narrow stope, into a large flat/stope above, previously unnoticed. This working, when entered, proved to extend into the big stope on Middlecleugh 2nd Sun, and in fact was the area we had not managed to maypole into from there!

An air pipe which ascended from the sub-levels below us, crossed the floor and into a level running north above the main stope. This level entered a higher stope on 2nd Sun, and contained the ladder I
had seen from a side vein when exploring the main stope with Brian Harrison and Steve Robinson on our previous visit.

I climbed up the ladder, and found a large wooden box or tank at the first landing, the air pipe ascending a rise above it. Also, running beside the ladder, was a square wooden conduit with a funnelled top. The rise above had the second ladder missing, but a third ladder could be seen on the next landing. Noel advised me on arriving, that Mick had been up already, and that the rise was blocked above this. Disappointed I climbed back down, and Noel had a look and posed for photos.

We made our way back down into the narrow stope, and Mick, Pat and I had a look down the arched sub-levels to confirm directions for the drawing of the area. Following this, we had a conference, and opted to hide the maypole sections in the sub-level with one of our WCMRG plastic identification tags, hiding the clamps separately, to prevent the maypoles being used.

Having all reached a point where weariness overcame enthusiasm, we left for surface at 15.30, observing on the way down that the hopper beside the ladderway down from the X-roads to the incline, in fact, continued down Pickerings Rise to Caplecleugh, and not into the incline on the Smallecleugh horizon. We reached the cars at 16.15.

Shock horror! It was still daylight, and it wasn't summer! Quite an unusual experience for us, so I celebrated by washing my kit in the bitterly cold beck.

Changed, I left for home at 16.40 and had a good run home, without terrifying any policemen (see last review!), arriving home at 18.05, an hour earlier than usual.

We had only been underground for five hours, but had entered some "new ground", and made a whole (hole) series of connections between stopes, tying off a few loose ends, and leaving the maypoles behind, to attempt the rises on Longcleugh Sun Vein at some future date.

One thing we had done, was to discover that the stope entered first, was in fact at an angle between the incline and Longcleugh Vein, and not as we thought before, above Middlecleugh 2nd Sun!

Dave Banks

Smallecleugh Mine 26th January 1992

Present:- J & R Lawson, K & G Farr, J Salmon, & N Thompson

Dave Banks suggested to me that MC subgroup No.1 of WCMRG should tell other members about some of the recent discoveries on the exploration front, and as our sub-group has 3 WCMRG members, I felt a little twinge of conscience; so here is our first written report. (We actually write up all our trips, but not in a form that anyone else can read, and it is locked away in my study, so there!) (Perhaps in hieroglyphics? - Ed.)

This trip was really a follow-up from a visit of two weeks previously, after we left the WCMRG exploration in the Longcleugh Vein system, (see report) to examine the sump at the northern end of the Cowhill X Vein level, previously scouted by WCMRG in October 1990.

This sump drops in two stages, the first on a wooden ladder of about 12ft into a small stope collapsed to the east, visited on the WCMRG meet; but a second descent of 25ft, by electron, led on into a larger stope. (This is Middlecleugh Vein, and has been stoped to the full height of the Great Limestone, and is about 30ft wide)

Going further inbye, an even larger and wider vein joins it from the north; this is now thought to be Middlecleugh 1st North Vein. (The vein commonly known as Middlecleugh North Vein, in fact seems to be 2nd North Vein) This vein has also been stoped to the full height of the Great Limestone, and is about 100ft wide! (Presumably some replacement of the limestone has taken place to account for the great width) This stope slopes upwards to the N.E. and ascending it is like climbing a scree. After leaving the mine later, we decided to see if this vein was accessible from the Horse Level on Smallecleugh X Vein.
Accordingly, we met up at the usual 10.15, and after the usual "crack" moved up to the mine, part of the group journeying via the main flats, the rest along the Horse Level on Smallcleugh X Vein, meeting up at the start of the X-cut next to Bells Sump (about 20ft down originally, to a sub-level along 1st Sun Vein, but now blocked at 15ft down).

On meeting up, the party moved off, reaching a fairly major fall at 20yds, at about the position of Chadey's Sump. (This can just be made out as a long narrow arch at right angles to the main level, but is completely blocked.) After making our way through the shale, another crosscut leaves the main level to the left, about 25yds long, terminating in a blocked sump.

Continuing up the main level, a large open area was reached after 30yds; here the LH fork was followed, turning left again to another sump and collapsed man way up to a small stope. Continuing further up the 1st Sun Vein, two further sumps were noticed (both blocked), and small stopes above the level were examined without finding very much and after a 100yds, they had obviously lost the vein and the level terminated in a forehead. (There was no sign of it joining up as Dunham suggests, with the 2nd Sun Vein).

Returning back to the cleared area, the group sat down for their bait, and so presumably had the Old Man, for behind a pile of shale, John Salmon found a clay pipe, complete with tobacco.

After feeding, we took the RH fork, which I knew would lead to the large roof fall, where on a previous trip, a large piece of shale had landed on my back; not a pleasant experience! This area was reached after another 30yds, and here we set about moving large shale blocks, to allow us to pass somewhat easier than I had done on the last occasion. Once this had been done we continued on down the passageway, through a crossroads, and after 90yds or so, back into the limestone. (It is thought that Carr's Vein is responsible for this) After another 30yds, a junction was reached and 30yds along the LH fork, a large stope on Middlecleugh Vein was reached, but not climbed.

Back at the junction, the RH fork led into an arched chamber, which is thought to be the remains of a drawing sump. Again, stopes above were not climbed. There is no sign of a sump in the floor, so it is thought that the sump was backfilled when the mine was reworked by the Vieille Montagne Co. This is difficult to assess because there is also a large heap of debris - presumably fallen from the roof/stope, and which partially blocks the way on, and is also on top of the site of the sump.

Once over the debris, and a collapsed hopper beyond, the level quickly regains its original height and you pass through a limestone area full of holes, yet completely devoid of any mineral. Fifty yards on, the passage turns through 140deg; straight on should lead to the flat on Carr's, which has not been entered since the closure of the mines. A few minutes digging the debris made the author realise that this would be quite difficult; for in fact you are digging through a major fall on Middlecleugh 2nd North Vein. The passageway to the right is similarly blocked and would appear to be a continuation of Middlecleugh 2nd North Vein going east. If Dunham (P147) is correct, then this vein terminates here, on Carr's Vein, so even if the passageway was opened it wouldn't go far.

Continuing down the level (west) on 2nd North Vein, a rise was noticed, which will presumably go up to a sublevel on top of the ore body, and a little further on there is a detour mined around a collapsed hopper in the main level (V.M.again?) About 10yds on a wooden ladder descends in two stages to the top of a sump, (down to Capelcleugh?) and also to a small Old Man's level, half-filled with water and less than 4ft high, so we left it well alone.

Going further inbye, a door was met and a 20-30ft drop down into a large stope. The level could be seen continuing some 50yds ahead, but when we realised we were standing on nothing (false floor) - retreat seemed the logical step.

Just before the door a rise leads up to a stope, and a right turn leads into limonitic flats, which seem to spiral down to the right. These seem to be devoid of mineral, but I tried the LH spiral, and found a crawl which I entered hoping to try and by- pass part of the understope in the main level. I crawled through, and guided by Kevin from the door side, was just about to jump down, when a sixth sense said "look first". So I did, to find below me a 50-60ft drop into the bottom of the understope! (Nice bit of guiding by Kevin, John! - Ed)
I was fairly well committed to entering the stope by this, perched on a pile of deads on the edge of the drop, and taking a big breath, hoping the deads did not slide, taking me with them, I edged back. As you can see, they didn't, or I would be telling you this by rapping on the table!

(I like your humour John. RF)

We returned back to the arched sump, and took the first left on the way out, which led to an enormous arched chamber, perhaps 20ft off the ground, and obvious vein workings/stopes. The ground had been
heavily timbered, and is probably V.M. working. We think that this vein is Middlecleugh North Vein. On reaching the Vein, the horse level veered to the right and was blocked soon afterwards. According to the plan, the next left junction down the Middlecleugh horse level should reach the other side of the fall, and this was confirmed by Kevin.

We retraced our steps, and on the way out John Salmon encountered a roof fall going through the falls on the main horse level (Smallcleugh X Vein), perhaps Hetheringtons X-cut is better after all!

John Lawson (MC extraordinaire!)

Smallcleugh 28, 29th February and 1st March 1992

Present:- Noel Wood, Mick Lomas, Karen Molyneux, Paul Wood, Simone Barbaresi, Rosa Ma, Bob Lewis, Gilles Hosch, Andy Edwards

This was another weekend up at Nenthead with the party being supplemented by five of Paul's colleagues and students from LICNW Bangor.

I travelled up to Nenthead on the Friday afternoon going via Carlisle where I spent some time having a crack with Jean at the Tyler Emporium.

This was to be a meet with an international flavour with members representing France (Luxembourg), China, England, Wales and Pwilheli.

Once again I arrived at the cottage first and I ended up making and coercing the fire into life before the others turned up in three groups.

Yet another Friday night darts match in the Crown so to the miners for evening bait once all arrived.

Saturday morning saw seven people pile into the Land rover for the short trip up to the Smallcleugh portal with and ML & KM as usual abusing the company car up the track once again.

The usual route was taken to Cow Hill Cross then on down the incline to Bogg. A slight detour was taken up the rise just out bye of the sump top Smallcleugh to retrieve the May poles. These had been left on a previous trip into this area (Rod wanted them back for a paint job on his house. We have since added significantly to our collection of alloy scaffolding poles so this problem shouldn't arise again).

Returning to the incline we continued on to Bogg. The man way was climbed and laddered with the majority of the party being top roped up. Use was made of a 'Bunting' ladder to gain access into and through the Bogg shaft. ('Bunting' ladders have recently been introduced to the mining scene and are an excellent innovation from Matlock.)

The party moved on through Bogg dropping back down to the main level and on to the inner reaches where some time was spent exploring the recently opened up ground.

On the return a brief detour was made to show some the party the Ballroom Flats.

Noel Wood

Smallcleugh Mine 15th March 1992

Present:- Dave Banks, Rob Scott

All the other members contacted having found something else to do; Rob and I braved the snow and ice on Hartside and arrived in a snow covered Nenthead at 10.15. We got geared up and stopped to chat with some MC's from Tyneside in the car-park until their leader arrived with a set of sketch maps of Smallcleugh. We told them of the benefits of longer distance trips in the mine, but they preferred the nearer main flats. We left a card and an offer to lead them further in on another occasion, before tramping off across the virgin snow up to the mine.
The tracks left by an exploring rabbit, and also a mouse-type creature burrowing in and out of the snow-drifts were observed before entering the mine at 10.45.

Although our intention was to scout the Middlecleugh Vein system outlined by John Lawson, I decided to show Rob the main flats on the way. The entrance water was low, only welly depth, so most of the trip was a dry one.

Rather embarrassingly I did my usual trick of losing my way through the workings into the main level through the flats (now three out of three!) forgetting that one must turn right from the first flat, before turning left back towards the level. The rest of the trip to Gypsum corner was uneventful, and we spent a little time taking photographs of features along the way.

Having reached the required level leading into Middlecleugh Vein, we made our way through some collapsed timbering to a Y-junction, taking the LH fork, and then a second LH to a sump. Above and to the right, a slope led up into a small iron-stained slope with a rise continuing above it. Returning to the level we turned inbye and soon reached the vein, (Middlecleugh 1st Sun) where we found a side cut on the right containing fluorite. Following the level along the vein we passed two sumps, the water level in each being different, eventually reaching a forehead. Returning along the level I climbed a 20ft rise into a higher level, to find that it ended inbye roughly above the other forehead, but the last ten yards were a couple of feet deep in water. I attempted to lower this by digging, but only made my return more uncomfortable in the process!

On our return, we stopped off in an area of collapse at a chamber on the level, finding more fluorspar, and on the outbye side an old bogie body. A short dig exposed a wheel, and with both of us bracing against a wall and pushing with our feet, we managed to shift some large slabs, and exposed the full chassis. A little more time was spent clearing debris and attempting to reassemble the crushed bogie, before photographs were taken to record the find.

Having returned to the original Y-junction, we had dinner, and then took the RH fork towards Middlecleugh Vein, past a crossroads, finding "Carrs X Vein" written in chalk on the arching, before reaching a junction where we went straight on, west, to a blockage stoped above.

This we assumed to be the rise into a slope that John hadn't tried, so I climbed up for a look. The stope, about 20ft above the level, was 15ft high, 10yds long, sloping up to the north, with a slot in the west end near the roof, and a hole in the LH or southern wall. I attempted to squeeze through the slot, but the loose slope of material and a spur of rock in f, prevented access. The hole in the LH wall led through into a large stope, the outbye side being collapsed. Across from the entry hole, a flat, with extensive roof collapse, spread from the southern side. This, when followed looped back into the main slope, just inbye of the entry hole, where a sump and rise was found. The rise led up to the slot I had tried to enter, with an apparent level opposite it, perhaps 15-20ft up. The sump appeared to be blocked about 10ft below. I then went back into the 1st stope to assist Rob to join me.

Returning to the No.2 slope, about 5-10ft high and 25ft across, we moved west to find the end had collapsed perhaps 30yds inbye. On the way back, Rob found a nice sphalerite vug in the roof, which we were sampling, when a chunk of rock about 4ft long by 2ft square fell, brushing my arm as it went past. Withdrawing discreetly to the side wall, I discovered another hole in the southern wall, which led through to a 3rd stope.

No.3 stope, about 6-8ft high and 20ft across, ran about 15yds outbye and south, but ran slightly above and to the south of No.2, and contained two large limber roof supports in line along it. About 30yds inbye, a large collapse was climbed, and beyond, another stope entered.

No.4 stope was only 8-10ft high, and 15yds square, but had a walled area in the RH (northeast) corner, and timbered supports along the northern side. Beyond this, a slope of rubble led up into a shattered vein about loft cubed. Any access beyond this must have been under the slope, and judging by the shattered vein above, would be impossible to dig. I estimated that we must have reached the other side of the collapse reached via Cowhill X Vein, but am uncertain of the comparison in horizons.
We found, in No.3 slope a yellow plastic-coated steel pipe, its end flattened, and a couple of mineralised vugs, together with some fossilised coral (?) in mudstone.

Returning back to the main level, we turned north into a 12ft wide by 6ft high stone arched chamber, running E-W about 20ft long, spanned by three large stemples, that look like platform supports. At the western end, a stone wall stepped up about 30ft to an apparent level, the eastern side being a 45deg slope up to a stope. The foot of this rise was a slope of muddy debris that had left the stone wall fairly smooth, and apparently unclimbed. The wall wasn't climable without spikes or maypole, so we went north again through two squeezes, and back into a level.

This level soon turned west, and at this point led off in two or three sections of arching, apparently choked, and a possible lined man way, all ignored due to pressure of time. Inbye, past a muddy section of floor, we found a man way sump, with two ladder stages visible, but again ignored. We pushed on, following Middlecleugh North Vein now, to find the main level blocked by a collapse, but a mined bypass avoided this to the LH side.

Not far beyond this was a RH level, with a ventilation door beyond, and then a large understope, the level continuing about 30yds away. About 20yds away the stope was timbered across at a wide point, as had the whole area been, we assumed, as we found that the level we were standing on was a false floor.

We straddled the stope while we assessed the problem, and saw that about 15yds on, a "horse" of vein rock, or perhaps stacked deads, spanned the slope about 10ft lower. A ledge, a foot wide, ran along the LH wall as far as the timbers, but stopped there and would not give access to the level opposite.

We decided to try the RH level, which led into a small flat, which descended round to the right into a spiral of small workings ending in a blockage. A similar feature led from the flat and around to the left, ending in a slot through into the main understope, which, when cleared a little, allowed a view into the understope inbye of the "horse", the floor being visible about 30ft down. To try and confirm an actual floor, I carefully removed rocks from around this slot and cast them into the void. I say carefully, as I was lying on perched rock, and to my right these were held in place by timbers.

The descent of the rocks appeared to be short, consistent with the visual evidence, and after a little more clearing, I climbed onto the "horse".

After a little clearing there, it appeared to be solid, but did not help in the assessment, so I returned to the slot and back up to the flat. I would say it would be possible to lower a may- pole into the sump beyond the "horse", climb down it, and re-climb it into the level beyond.

Leaving the flat, we found that a rise may allow access above the stope on the vein, but this too was left. We did find a nice pointed chisel, which we removed from its ledge in the flat.

Having done all we could in the time we had, we made our way out, and along the Horse Level towards day, stopping off for a look at the Horse Whimsy on the way. The water in this level was also lower than normal, allowing me to retain my dry feet.

We emerged into bright sunlight, and a whole mess of footprints in the snow, arriving at the car at 16.00.

Hartside had been cleared of ice by the sun, and so we had a very pleasant drive home.

Note. I later found out that the Escort estate parked near the gate beyond the egg-farm, was left by Norman Fieldhouse and friend, who had turned up for a little MCing. He had been advised of our presence by the Geordies, but they had told him that we were deeper in the mine than we in fact were. Anyway, he has since requested membership for himself again, and also for his mate, so we are claiming back one of our own, and I expect they will both be featuring in these columns in future.

Dave Banks.
Smallcleugh Mine

Sunday, 5th April 1992

Present:- Dave Banks, Norman Fieldhouse, Wayne Barnes, Tom Newby, Mike McCrickard

All the regulars having again found other things to do, after planning this trip for 3 weeks, I had to get Mike Mc. to transport the maypoles to Nenthead on his roof-rack.

I met up with him and Tom at Cockermouth on the A66, before guiding them over Hartside. Though the road had been cleared, there were still 6ft banks of snow beside the road in places, and only two days before Alston had been cut off by snow.

(I have seen this 14 days before Whitsun, and on the Whitsun holiday when down Cornwall, people I told about it thought me mad. Mind you a lot of people do anyway. RF)

We drove from Alston to Nenthead with me pointing out of the window at the mines on the various veins as we passed, arriving at 10.20am.

About 10.45am, Norman and his mate Wayne arrived, and after introductions we drove up past the chicken farm and parked by a mini-bus. Norman and Wayne, being made of sterner stuff, drove on past the gate and up the hill, but gave up and parked in the snow alongside the fence at the top of the hill, just before the fork to the mine.

We followed a multitude of tracks up to the mine, presumably from the mini-bus, and took the Hard X-Cut route into the flats, to be greeted by squeals as we negotiated the first flat! We had apparently turned up, with our maypoles clanging, at the climax of a mine ghost story being told by the kids' teacher! Having reassured the kids, and answered a few questions, we moved off into the flats. For once this had been a well-equipped and well-supervised group.

The trip through the flats was slow, as Norman kept up a conducted tour for Mike and Tom. (Makes a change from me doing it!) The crawl through Hetheringtons X-Cut caused problems with the 10ft maypoles, and the poor guy had some curses heaped upon him for creating such a tortuous connection into 1st Sun Vein.

We dumped the poles at Gypsum Corner and went for a look at the Ballroom Flat before moving into Elliotts String to collect some sphalerite that N & W had left two weeks ago. Of course somebody had scarpered with them in the intervening time, so we had to content ourselves with some stuff that Norman extracted from the large vug he had been working. (The same one that Rod, Noel and Mick had opened up last year, but considerably enlarged by Noel)

We made our way to the Middlecleugh Vein system, hiding the sphalerite outbye of the first fall. As we went through this fall, Norman found a green fibrous mineral which he went into ecstasies about, claiming it was some rarity called "Milanke", which he reckoned lost its colour in daylight.

We eventually reached the Y-junction at 1 pm, and had lunch before pushing on through all the areas covered two weeks previously, to the understope at the end. (We had decided that due to limited time, we would take the maypoles as far in as we could, and work back with them on following trips.) Possible future areas include 1) the stope over the "engine chamber 2) a ventilation rise on North Vein, and 3) a slot in the root outbye of the by-pass.

We finally reached the understope and flat area, where 1 ascended a rise inbye of the ventilation door, but the chamber above was run-in both sides. I then ascended a second rise in the RH level which turned out to be a hopper/chute from a stope above the understoped area, collapsed inbye, with a rat-hole outbye into more stoping on the vein, also run-in.

The lads below, having finished exploring the flat workings reached from the RH level, helped me assemble the four maypole sections, but we found that they were too long to push from the level, across the deads platform in the understope, and into the second sump.

With Norman and I on the pile of deads, we removed one section, and lowered the rest into the sump, and found that when grounded, the top of the maypole just reached the top of the platform we were on.
We tried to refit the top pole, but with it on, the maypole was too long to pass under the stemple above us!

Norman and I debated alternatives until I eventually decided to try and climb down the first sump, to see if it connected below us with the second sump. Using the fourth pole as a handrail, I tested the large slab wedged across the first sump, found it to be solid, and squeezed down the side of the slab and under the deads into the foot of the second sump. This sump had a 4ft wall across it inbye, with a small working beyond, and a slope of material which went down through a hole in the LH wall to a short railed level, topping a chute/ladder way sloping down 25ft to a sump. Ten feet above this, to left and right, was a level running east-west.
Wayne and Norman followed me down, and we ascended the 4ft wall onto a platform of deads which continued about 15yds to a collapse, a little hole being visible about 15ft above. A level in the LH wall turned east, crossing the chute top, and by using ledges I was able to cross over and follow it for 45yds, in stone all the way, to a fall. Nothing was found in this level.

Meanwhile Mike and Tom had joined the others, who had found a lot of mineralization in the vein above the platform. Tom and Mike were impressed by the new ground, especially the chute/ladder way, which we assumed must descend to Capelcleugh about 60ft below, near its terminus, which plans show was once connected by a shaft with the end of Carrs mine.

A number of samples were collected, while I attempted to re-climb the slot beside the slab. This was quite difficult, and when I eventually managed it, I rigged an electron to hang down inbye of the slab for the others to climb.

We left the maypole in position in the second sump, and concealed the fourth section and clamp for the next trip.

The exit from here to the main level was made in 15 minutes and was followed by the introduction of Wayne, Tom and Mick to the delights of the 30 yards of crawls in ft.

At Prouds Sump, we came across five people de-rigging the pitch, who informed us they were from the Dales/Ingleton area, but were not very communicative, and were assumed to be potholers! They passed on the walk down from the mine, and only one of them even acknowledged us. Funny people!

After changing, I set off for home at about 5.30, arriving home in a record 1hr 15minutes.

So, more new ground has been entered, new mineral finds made, and new members initiated, Tom and Mike having thoroughly enjoyed their first trip underground.

Dave Banks

Smallcleugh Mine                                                                   12th April 1996

Present:- Dave Banks, Rob Scott, Mick’ Lornas ,Karen Molyneux, John and Robert Lawson, Robert Bunting.

Having rung around for companions for the trip to no avail, it was left to me and Rob to head off for Nenthead.

We waited until 10.40 for any others to arrive, and then gave up and drove up to the mine, where we found the Lawson’s Land-Rover already there.

Entering at 11 am, we were at Middlecleugh Vein by 11.30, and at the foot of the foot of the rise up to the stopes, found John Lawson and the two Roberts fitting an electron. As they were checking over the stopes that Rob and I had visited 3 weeks before, we moved on to the understope, fitted an electron onto the top of the maypole left the previous week, and climbed down to the foot of the shaft, via the slab, and under the platform of deads.

We then fitted the second electron and a fourth maypole section, and after a little re-positioning to lay the maypole on the 60deg slope up to the inbye level, we ascended it, and proceeded inbye, over a small collapsed floor, into a section with small workings to the right and stone arching beyond.

I found a clay-pipe in the wall before moving on to find a collapse ten yards further in. Returning to the arching I found another pipe only six inches away from the first, and to Rob's delight he also found one in the end of the wall next to the rise. This third pipe had footballers on the bowl, and 'Football Pipe" on the stem, and was a very good specimen.
We then climbed the rise into a stope about 15ft up, finding another rise adjacent to it, presumably to a higher slope, and a level running south. The stope running east-west above and to the south of the level below.

The outbye side of this stope led past another south-running side level, into an ascending slope to the left and a pinched out stope ahead, both badly collapsed. Returning inbye past the levels and the rise, we moved through the stope, and then down and to the right, into a second stope above and in line with the level. This stope had a set of small workings in the RH (north) wall which pinched out, and a 6ft step up inbye, with another level in the southern wall, and a slope inbye over a fall to a very large sump. This was roughly 20-25yds across, and an estimated 60ft deep, seeming to slope down on the outbye side below us. Also visible was a timbered level on the opposite side, about 30ft down.

Returning to the stope, we took the southerly level into a parallel working, half-blocked inbye by a large slab, with a collapsed working beyond, but outbye the working led back parallel to the stopes past the southerly level from the rise, and on to the one outbye of the rise. Nothing of interest was found.

Back at the first rise, we climbed up the second rise adjacent, and into a higher slope. This had a small clearing outbye and an ascending slope to a fall beyond, in line above the tramming level. Inbye it also sloped upwards, over a fall and through the roof of the second slope, again nothing was found of interest.

Having descended the rises back to the tramming level for dinner, we were hailed from the understope area, and discovered that Mick Lomas had found us. After the usual abuse exchange, we guided him through the route we had taken, during which Karen arrived followed by the Lawson party.

Mick and Karen scaled the maypole to join us, Mick moving off up the rise to have a look around while Karen stayed with us for dinner. John and Robert B. arrived, and followed Mick, John doing an excellent piece of cabaret while we ate, first knocking Karen flying by ripping out a support timber, followed by landing on his back in the middle of the level like a sack of potatoes!

Shrugging off our concern, and muttering dark curses, he disappeared off up the rise, leaving Karen to remove bits of wood from her apparel, luckily more shaken than hurt by the incident.

When Mick returned, I led the way carefully back down the maypole, clearing some of the rubble slope on the way, followed by Rob, Mick and Karen, and later John and Robert B., who then ascended out of the understope.

The rest of us, including Robert L. then set up two poles in an X-shaped belay, to which we fitted our two 30ft electrons. Mick then, in true pioneering spirit, began his descent of the sloping chute. After a little look around, he began a descent of the vertical hopper until he discovered that the end of the ladders was alongside a sub-level, with a 12 inch ledge across the hopper level with it. With a little difficulty he edged along the ledge holding the ladder and made an entry into the sub-level. He shouted up for another electron, and while I was getting it, Karen went down also. Robert L having joined the M.C's, Rob and I fitted the Lawson electron to the top of the pitch, and re-secured the belay with rope before I descended to join Mick and Karen, noticing that the eastern side of the hopper had another sub-level in it, about 10-15ft lower, and that 25ft below me the Caplecleugh Level was now reachable due to the extra electron.

Meanwhile Mick and Karen had discovered some nice quartz and galena vugs, past a small sump in the floor, flanked by some rather precarious slabs, and asked me to tell Rob to bring down their sacks when he descended.

In shouting up the instructions, the M. C's scenting goodies had returned, but by the time I had guided Rob down, relieved him of the bags, and shouted guidance up to the others, most of the good stuff had been collected! (That'll teach the M. C's to wander off!) Having pocketed a couple of pieces when I first got there, I began to dig out the continuation of the sub-level to the west, and after a while gained entry to a second sump, large and rectangular in shape, which was not passable without gear, so I returned to find that John and Robert B had arrived, but were not impressed with the minerals, and soon re-climbed the ladders.
Being in an exploratory mood, I climbed down to Caplecleugh, to find that the arching was about 10ft high by 15ft across, and after moving west into the waist-deep water, found that a short heading ran a few yards north. I waded along the level under the others in the sub-level, past the first rise and on to the larger rectangular one, but beyond that I was up to the chest in water, and realised that although moving inbye in the Smallcleugh system, the Caplecleugh system approached this area from the opposite end, and I was therefore now wading outbye, and hence into deeper water, so I back-tracked, shouting for Mick to join me.

I waded past the hopper, and ascended the first rise into the eastern sub-level, and returned along it to the hopper, in time to help Mick swing across on the ladder to me. The two of us then moved along the sub-level past a number of rises, to a minor fault line, where the arched level beyond had collapsed. A little way beyond this, we dug through a fall which was venting, and I ascended into a small chamber to find that the vein, stope and level were all in a complete collapse, and returned. I waded back, through
the level this time, looking for artefacts, while Mick stayed dry by using the sub-level. At the hopper, I ascended up to the ledge alongside the higher sub-level, and swung the ladder over for Mick to grab, before ascending back to the belay-point above.

Rob followed me up with a little difficulty, followed by Karen, who got another scare when a rock dislodged above her, but Micks warning prompted her to tuck herself in so no harm was done.

When Mick also joined us, we de-rigged the gear and ascended the slot beside the slab, and into the side-stope, where we left the poles for a follow-up trip.

We left there at 5pm, reaching the cars in just over half an hour, emerging into bright sunshine.

Halfway through changing, a grey cloud swept up the valley, and we were hit by a violent hailstorm of 4-5mm hailstones which covered everything immediately. This was followed by snow. We packed up quickly, leaving the Lawson electron under their Land-Rover, and left for home at 5.45.

So, another WCMRG first into "new ground", another connection made with Caplecleugh, and the recovery of clay-pipes and minerals, so everybody was well satisfied!

Dave Banks

Smallcleugh Mine Sunday, 3rd May 1992

Present:- Dave Banks, Noel Wood, Rod Chilton, Mick Lomas, Tom Newby, Mike McCrickard, Norman Fieldhouse, Wayne Barnes and Rob Scott. (+ Karen Molyneux on surface)

Having arrived within minutes of each other at the Nenthead Car Park at 10am, Noel, Rod, Rob and I found Robert Bunting there, waiting for the M.C.'s who, we informed him, had stopped at Nentsberry Hags. He began re-packing, Tom and Mike and then Mick and Karen arriving shortly afterwards.

Rob and I shot off up to the mine, to get a parking place, to find Norman and Wayne already there, who opted to go through the flats to our destination in the Middlecleugh Vein system; the rest of us taking the Horse Level along Smallcleugh X Vein, Karen being wooed away from the trip by the beautifully sunny day to remain on surface.

We made our way to the laddered sump on Middlecleugh North Vein, Rod, Noel and Mick descending to begin rigging for the descent of the large sump from the sub-level at the foot of the 20ft of ladders, while Tom, Mike and I collected the maypoles and clamps left further inbye on our last trip. These were passed down, Wayne and Norman arriving as we did so, they joining me in a little exploration further inbye.

Past the by-pass, above a small fall, a rise on the LH side, which was very loose, led to a timber-braced stope area about 25ft up, which I gingerly entered. The stope was about 8-10ft high, leading E-W but to the south of the level below, running inbye for 10yds before crossing back into the vein over the level, running only another 5yds to a collapse. Outbye of the rise, the stope ran only for 15yds, to a collapse, but again after 10yds crossed to a small chamber in the vein above the level. This chamber and part of the side stope was timber supported. On the return trip I found two small round and lidded detonator tins 2 inches diameter by 1 inch high, and a small mineralised vug in one wall.

Rejoining the others in the level, I opted to join the abseiling group in the sub-level, arriving as Noel was about to descend to join Mick, who was already down. Rob also came down, and after looking down the small watered level running east, asked Rod and I what was down there. After being told we didn't know, (Well, we didn't!) he braved the 2ft of water in the 4ft level only to reach a blockage, returning muttering something about conmen when we told him we knew it went nowhere. (Well, he hadn't asked that, had he?)

The other four having also joined us by then, and it being a little cramped in the sub-level, it was suggested that the westerly part of the sub-level be dug out. Mike set to with great gusto, and in short order, Rob was disappearing down that one as well! Of course, this also was blocked after 10yds, but we really hadn't known about that.
We sat about for about another 15 minutes, without a report having been made by those below, bar the odd rumble and thump of level clearing, and Mick’s distant insulting of Noel, before I got a little edgy and allowed myself to be persuaded by Rod to go and find them. I had only my descending gear with me, but was told that an extra electron could be added if the two fitted did not reach the bottom, so that I could get back up. So, like a fool, I clipped in and abseiled down, to find that the sump belied-out 20ft down from the lip of the 10ft slope from the sub-level. A large slope on the eastern side was apparently blocked, with a small ledge opposite it on the western side. The total depth would be about
75ft to a large pile of debris in the sump foot. This pile was a few feet above the roof of the arching of the Capelcleugh Horse Level, but had been cleared for descent both ways by the other two.

Assuming that they had had enough time to have explored outbye (west) and then gone inbye, I opted to go east, and slid down the slope into the 3ft of water, wading about 10yds to a fall, which I scaled into a small stope another 10yd’s long to a second section of watered level. I was removing some loose rock and was enlarging the hole, when I heard the others returning, and assisted them to join me.

They were highly amused that I had abseiled all the way down for nothing, as they reported that the next arched section only ran another 10yds to another 10ft of collapse, followed by a complete collapse of the arching with about 15ft of crawl above it.

Returning to the sump-foot, Mick donned his ascending gear, and began his ascent, promising to lower his gear for me to follow him. (Only after he and Noel had told the others not to add a third electron!) Being less SRT experienced than Noel I persuaded him to allow me to ascend next, which was just as well, as I had some difficulties in doing so! After a lot of puffing and panting, I eventually reached the sub-level, and ascended the ladders shakily, (only partly because of the ladders condition) to join the rest of the team for dinner.

Suitably refreshed, Tom, Rob and I began to assemble the maypoles for the ascent of the 15ft slot in the roof just inbye of the laddered sump. Due to the restricted space, we could only enter two assembled poles into the slot, so I climbed up about 20ft, to find that we were about 5ft short of the level above, but was able to stand on a ledge and pull up the maypole far enough for a third section to be added. This was accomplished by Rob climbing into the slot, and wedging himself in it to tighten up the clamp. When into the level, I found that it had wheelbarrow running boards laid on the floor each side of the slot, and outbye (east) about 10yds on, a step up of 8ft led into the main stope.

The stope had a series of workings along its northern side, which enabled the slot to be by-passed inbye, but the main stope outbye, revealed a number of nice clog-marks in the now hardened mud of the floor.

Directly behind these clog-marks, a steep rubble slope led upwards, with passages to the south, both level with and below the stope floor (of deads). Numerous small workings, both in rock and through deads, were explored as we moved east. The slope up, taken by Noel, rose about 40ft to a rise in the stope roof, about 15ft above the slope, and maybe 30ft in rock to an apparent ledge just short of the top, before sloping back down to a larger stope, also reached by others of us who had used the side passages. This stope dropped about 20ft below the entry point, before sloping up again, beyond which we found a chamber on a cross-vein, presumed to be Carrs Vein, and which had about 60 deg. The stope having culminated here, we returned, finding two separate passages through the deads under the area we had first entered. One had a rotten ladder up a rise into the entry point, and was carefully entered by Rod, Rob and myself to find it only 30ft long and a roof fully timbered as a false floor in the style of the Old Mens workings, looking so bad that we didn't even stop to photograph it! The second was entered by Mick via a sump of 15ft from the entry point, but found to be of similar dimensions to the other one.

Noel and I explored a series of small workings in the south wall, which appeared to be re-workings of deads, as we now assumed the other workings to be. One real surprise was the discovery of a 3ft long wooden fish, carved from a stemple to form the body and tail shape, but without top and bottom fins. A little argument followed as to whether we should remove this find (mainly because they expected me to carry it out!), but this was finally settled by Mike, who offered to transport his "priceless artefact".

The M.C’s of the team had to make do with a very poor mineralised vug in the entry slot, as most minerals had been mined out, while I traversed the slot inbye to join Noel, finding a saw-blade and a spout-less conical jug with a fancy handle just past the lip of the slot. Here, the stope ended, but a hole in the south wall led into parallel stopes which curved back onto the vein, ascending a slope about 15yds to an apex, which descended into a rat-hole tried earlier by Mick to no avail. A side level at the entry point of this side-stope led south a few yards to a low forehead containing a little suspected witherite.
Quite disappointed with the finds in such a large piece of "new ground", we began our descent, dismantled the gear, stowing it just inbye of the "engine chamber" for a follow-up trip, before moving back to Smallcleugh X-Vein where Wayne and Norman left us for a bit of mineral collecting.

The rest of us continued out as normal, through the crawls, until Mick and I, in the lead, came across five strange people near the Horse Whim, the first with a bike-lamp and bare head, the second with a hurricane lamp and a woolly hat, two more bare-headed torch wielders, and finally one wearing an open-faced motorcycle helmet!

I was speechless, Mick managing to splutter a few amazed expletives, before they moved past us without acknowledging us at all. We thought we must have been having some sort of joint nightmare, but the stench of the hurricane lamp lingered, and we emerged to find Karen equally gob-smacked by their passing her before entry. No wonder accidents happen.

We had re-emerged at 4.30pm after over five hours underground into a lovely sunny day, marred only by the limited finds in so much "new ground".

Dave Banks.

Smallcleugh Mine Sunday 28th June 1992

Present:- Dave Banks, Rob Scott.

This trip was set-up to finish off the explorations in the Middlecleugh Vein system. We arrived at 10.20 and wafted to see if anybody else turned up, amusing ourselves by visiting the exhibition caravan and being charmed by the young lady guide into buying a new book published by the Friends of Killhope. While we were chatting, Roy Fellows turned up and I was grudgingly dragged off by Rob to chat with him.

Roy told us of some secret scouting of new ground in Capelcleugh that he was doing, having been recently assisted by the Lawsons in assembling maypoles, promising that all would be revealed shortly. We wished him well in his chest deep water activities, and moved off up to the mine.

On our way in, we were a little perturbed by a number of fresh roof fails in the main Horse Level, and although they were all small, we took a little more care. The Middlecleugh Vein was undisturbed and we wasted little time in assembling a couple of lengths of maypole and installing them into the rise above the "engine chamber". Unfortunately as I climbed up, the maypole sank into the mud, so I had to descend to add another section. With the longer length, I reached the lip of the level above, only to find a slope up into the roof from higher workings. There was however, a level cut through rock running south, which I managed to reach by carefully traversing the slope, but this too was blocked from above by debris. Perhaps this might repay a dig, as it is in solid rock, and therefore stable, and also had some timbers in it suggesting past supports, possibly a man-way?

Anyway, I descended and we then set up the maypole to ascend the other side of the rise, which was a slope up to the east. This was managed with a little difficulty, only to find a set of collapsed stopes running about 30yds.

Back in the Horse Level, we moved to the rise into the stopes just outbye of the "engine chamber", and took the maypole with us to attempt the sump and rise in the first stope.

We positioned the maypole up into the rise from the stope, so that the electron hung down into the sump below, then set up the spare pole to belay another electron to descend into the sump. I then climbed the 10ft down to find the sump blocked, before climbing up into the level above. Outbye, this led 10ft to the squeeze from the first chamber that I had failed to enter on our first trip, but contained nothing. Inbye the level was choked by another pile of debris leading up into a small stope, and then back above the rise, but still leading nowhere.

Having de-rigged, we moved inbye to find the sump that the Lawsons had descended on our last trip, which we found in the second stope, in the RH wall. This was a squeeze into a small chamber, leading
Two sections on "Engine Chamber" vein, Middlecleugh System 1992

Original level heights appear equal, but all blocked from above. Section C
to a short length of badly damaged pressure-bulged stone arching and a hopper of 10ft into the Horse Level. This was a nice stone-arched affair, running E-W, and had a miners bait area in the west end, with seats and back-rests set up, where we found a clay pipe. (A William Tennant - Newcastle one, with footballers on the bowl, but damaged)

Moving east, we came across a large sump covered with heavy timbers and boards, but which extended to the north side a couple of feet in what may have once been a hopper or man-way, but which was now bare of timber. This allowed a view of a submerged stone-arched level about 20ft below, which is a bit of a mystery. Just beyond this was the hopper mouth of the sump I had electroned into earlier, with a complete arching collapse outbye.

We returned to the stopes, and in desperation due to the lack of decent finds in our new ground, we resorted to a little mineral collecting, finding a few nice galena/sphalerite clusters in the vein. I also found the little vug which, as I had no hammer and chisel on our first trip, I had blocked-up with a stone, and removed a nice sphalerite/calcite cluster. (I had expected this to have been taken by the Lawson’s on their visit, but was pleased to find it undisturbed.)

Having exhausted possibilities for that day, we returned to the Horse Level, collected all the maypole bits and stashed them, and moved outbye to the arched junction, turning left into small stopes on the northern side. This led west past a length of wooden ducting above arching similar to the “engine chamber”, to a rise into an apparent false floor running E-W above, with no access. We assumed this stope area was in line with that above the “engine chamber”. A short level ran north to a forehead outbye of this arching, but nothing else was found so I took a few photographs, and we followed the level round to the east, past a small rise up into a little stope, and on to a fall. This I dug out to gain access to a stope above, but the area was also all collapsed.

From here we made our way back out to surface, exiting at 16.15, the heat was very oppressive until we were changing, when it began pouring with rain, which developed into hailstones! We completed our change in the car, and drove down to the Smelt Mill, where the rain stopped. The journey home was plagued with caravans, coaches, Sunday drivers and foreigners, but we eventually won through, arriving home at 18.15.

A very disappointing day, entering new ground but finding nothing, our only finds being in already visited parts, our every attempt being thwarted. Still, it did tie up the last few “loose ends” of that area. (I like to put that phrase in to cheer-up Mick!)

Dave Banks.
Smallcleugh Mine, Sunday, 20th March 1994

Present:- Rob Scott, Mike McCrickard. Neil Wroe.

An early morning phone call from the Meet Leader, Mick Lomas, led to the planned club meet to Harnisha Mine, near Stanhope, being postponed, due to Karen failing ill. (Overenthusiastic socialising in a Dent hostelry! - Ed) Unfortunately, by this time, Bill Griffin and Co. had already left for
Middleton-in-Teesdale for the rendezvous at the Information Centre. (See Bill's report of their activities)

In an effort to make the most of the day, when Mike arrived, we decided to opt for Smalleleugh, both as a tourist trip for Neil, and to recce the Longeleugh system beyond Ballroom Flat, the Middlecleugh system being mainly complete.

Neil arrived at 9am, and drove us over Hartside to Nenthead. Over Hartside the verges were snowed-up and Neil expressed in no uncertain terms his dislike for twisty, slippery roads. An opinion reinforced by the iced track up to the mine portal, which finished him off completely, my offer to drive back down the track later being greeted with enthusiasm (very strange really, as he obviously doesn't know that I belong to the Del/DKB/Mick Lomas school of driving).

Geared up, we entered the portal at 10.45am, and proceeded along the main Horse Level. I chose to go through the direct way as we were wet anyway. We had a brief look in the whim chamber, and then along to the High water blast shaft. Here, we turned left over a filled-in sump and began to explore the North end of Old Fan Flats. Descending into the workings below, we explored the full extent apart from a 10ft step into higher workings, which proved impossible to climb up.

Returning to the Horse Level, we proceeded further inbye to the Drawing Sump; here we turned left again into the Old Fan Flats, this time the southern end. More exploration and mineral collecting ensued before we discovered that the southern flats gave access to the top of the previously mentioned un-climbable step to the north. This accomplished, we had dinner.

Returning to the Horse Level once more, we carried on through the crawls and arrived at Gypsum Corner. Mike was upset that someone had nicked our maypole sections, left behind the wall at the top of G. Bell's Sump, until we realised they had been removed by Mick for the Brownley Hill explorations.

We visited the Ballroom Flat before proceeding southwards into the Longeleugh Vein system. Towards the end, we found a collapse of shale, with a 30ft sump to the left A small opening was visible through the collapse, and a bit of scraping provided a hole big enough to squeeze through. I had one go and chickened-out, but then summoned a bit of courage and slithered through the 8ft long blockage. Once through, I shouted for Mike to join me, leaving Neil outbye for back-up.

Mike and I entered chest-deep water (shoulder-high for Mike) and proceeded along the level for some 200 yards, passing a flooded sump on the left after about 100 yards. At 200 yards there was the remains of a ventilation door-surround, followed by a stone-lined rise immediately inbye, cascading water. Peering up we guessed it was about 30ft high, and could be may-poled. Passing under the rise, we scrambled over several fails before being confronted with a forehead. To the left, a chamber opened out, but was completely collapsed. It may have once been a sump, but I think it more likely to have been a small working. The rise, ventilation door and forehead are all omitted from the PDMHS map, blockages being shown at this point I think this section may be new ground, certainly for WCMRG, and by the total lack of modern boot-prints, for all.

We retraced our route back to Neil, and informed him of the good news, before returning outbye. In doing so, I noticed a small opening above a short arched section supporting some deads. I attempted to climb up, but realised my large, but perfectly formed frame wouldn't go through, so, having measured Mike up, I decided his stature was ideal for the job! With some persuasion he agreed, and supported by my shoulders, clambered through the hole muttering small oaths under his breath; something about my parentage I think!

Once up, the usual thuds and scraffling was heard, until five minutes later he returned with the news that inbye the stope finished some 20-30 yards on at a forehead, and similarly outbye, just above the hole. His exit down was, in principle, easy; just put his feet on my shoulders, and Id low Returning to the Horse Level once more, we carried on through the crawls and arrived at Gypsum Corner. Mike was upset that someone had nicked our maypole sections, left behind the wall at the top of G. Bell's Sump, until we realised they had been removed by Mick for the Brownley Hill explorations.
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We retraced our route back to Neil, and informed him of the good news, before returning outbye. In doing so I noticed a small opening above a short arched section supporting some deads. I attempted to climb up, but realised my large, but perfectly formed frame wouldn’t go through, so, having measured Mike up, I decided his stature was ideal for the job! With some persuasion he agreed, and supported by my shoulders, clambered through the hole muttering small oaths under his breath; something about my parentage I think!

Once up, the usual thuds and scraffling was heard, until five minutes later he returned with the news that inbye the stope finished some 20-30 yards on at a forehead, and similarly outbye, just above the hole. His exit down was, in principle, easy; just put his feet on my shoulders, and I’d lower him down. What in fact resulted was a spectacular piece of unscheduled acrobatics by Mike, which would have put a Russian gymnast to shame, even landing on his feet for full marks from the judges! We thus proved there was no connection back to the waterfall rise from this point, again good news!

Further outbye I climbed into some flats about 15ft above the Horse Level, which contained a forehead inbye and a rising stope outbye (un-climbable without a maypole). The flats also contained a collapsed sub-level in the deads, and a calcited stone-lined rise of about 40-50ft. At the base of this were cast iron pipes scattered on the floor.

We returned to Gypsum Corner, after visiting Elliots String to get Neil some sphalerite, and then back along the Horse Level through the crawls. At Luke Hall's Sump, we turned right and along into Smallcleugh Main Flats. Through the flats my training provided by DKB failed, as I didn’t get lost! (See earlier DKI3-led meets) We arrived at the north end and proceeded outbye to the portal via the Hard X-Cut

A most enjoyable day was had by all, and our five hours underground passed very quickly. Even Neil’s furrowed brow disappeared when we reached Melmerby, something tells me he’ll be getting a lift with us in future!

Rob Scott

Smalleugh Mine, Nenthead 7th February 1999

Billy Griffin, Ian Hebson, John Lawson, Roy Fellows

The principle aim of the day was to dig through a collapse in the level on Old Carrs Vein, off the 2nd Sun Vein in Smalleugh.

We arrived at Old Carrs, and carried straight on at the crossroads, where the level meets Longcleugh Vein. Along here we then turned left, noting a wooden arch former at this point, and quickly came to a T-junction with X-points in the rails. We had already explored to the right here, the level becomes half-filled with backfill, and eventually progress is stopped.

To the left, the level is blocked with limestone deads collapsed from a rise. We drove a couple of long rails into this, and put some short lengths in as cross pieces, and were soon through the collapse.

The level only went 10 yards to a shale fall from a stope above; digging into this revealed an apparent forehead with no way forward. We climbed up over fall material into the stope, which was badly collapsed in shale. We got a few yards further, but the stope did not go on.
We then left the area and moved right back up to the Hard Crosscut (the first LH junction from the portal). At the far end of this, we turned left along the level, and continued to the end where there is a sump down to Rampgill.

We rigged the pitch, and descended about 50ft, to find three ways off at the bottom. One was 9ft to a forehead, the second 20 yards to another forehead; the third is a level leading to a rise up from Rampgill. The sump we had descended was very muddy.

Crossing a fall in the level, we came to a hole in the floor spanned by a length of fish-bellied rail. As no-one wanted to risk crossing on this, John and Ian went back up the rise and returned with another rail, which we then crossed with. The hole sloped down at a steep angle, and then dropped away 60-70ft at a rough guess, but this was not actually looked at.

We continued on to a sump/rise where we descended about 15ft to another level; the rise has a wooden mine ladder sitting on a stemple, leading up to a small opening into the stope above. The wooden portion is still in situ, but is rotten, so the ladder was not tried.

We headed along this lower level, passing another hole in the floor, this time set to one side. We could see more arched level about 15ft down here, but we stayed on the level, and continued inbye, passing 4 or 5 rises. At the end of the level, we climbed up a 10ft pack of deads into the stope, and worked our way back above the level, noting the rises we had passed on the way in. Eventually we could go no further, and returned to the climb down.

Back at the hole in the floor, we used the footloop off Ian’s SRT rig, to climb down the 15ft to the arched level. In fact, to the left was a hopper/man-way top, spanning the level; the wooden partition and ladder still in position. Across the top, but inaccessible, a level in shale could be seen curving to the left, further in. The partition is positioned such that tipping down the hopper could only have taken place from the other side, ie. The shale level.

The arched level on our side went about 20 yards to a complete collapse. Part way along here is the framework from a ventilation door in situ. At the foot of where we climbed down, were the remains of a miner's shovel, and the bowl of a clay pipe, was seen in the arching.

Following this exploration, I returned to this area on further occasions, tying up loose ends. With Steve Irving and Joe Rothery, we took an extending aluminium ladder with us, and removed the wooden mine ladder at the top of the second pitch. This had led up into a small hole, directly above the drop, and using the aluminium ladder, this was accessed to a small area that was blocked by a run from the stope above.

We then descended the second pitch, and then the one that Ian's footloop had been used on. The ladder was extended across the hopper/manway, and we crossed into the shale level. This level curves on round to the left, eventually coming into an arched level just before it meets a sandstone lined sump and rise..

I have since discovered that the top of this rise is the hole in the floor crossed by rail that is encountered after the first pitch from Smallcleugh, and the bottom of the sump is in Rampgill.

Bear in mind that the partition of the hopper/manway that we had just crossed, was situated such that the hopper could only be used from the shale level side and there are no hoppers along it; so what was the point of the hopper itself?

In the arched level here (with the ventilation door frame), there is a hopper mouth, so the bogie from this must have gone the other way. If the shale level was driven from this end, the waste could have gone the same way, making the hopper we had crossed, unnecessary.

On another occasion, in the stopes above the level, a hole was passed into a badly collapsed stope. At the far end of this, totally buried, the top couple of stones of what appeared to be stone-arching was found. This was dug a little, and entry gained into about 10ft of arched level, which was blocked at the end. This was dug, and in two minutes we had a breakthrough. I squeezed through, and looked over the
top of the collapse to see I was some 40ft above the level below. Across the other side of the sump, but 20ft down, a hole was seen that may be a level.

Bill Griffin

We were returning to the sump to Rampgill (left, where the Hard Crosscut meets the Great Vein) to try for some new ground.

With us, we had Ian's extending aluminium ladder, which would be very useful in getting to this new ground.

We descended the sump, and climbed up into the stope, moving back over our way in, to the final collapsed stope. Entering the short section of buried arching, we looked at the situation; about 40ft below was the level we had just left, but about 20ft below us, an opening could be seen on the far wall of the hopper/manway we were looking down.

Only a couple of stemples were left of the timberwork, and the hole was about 10ft across from our side and impossible to reach, except that we had a ladder!

We moved back into the stope, set up a belay, and ran the SRT rope back through the short level, and down the sump. I went down the rope, taking the ladder, for about 20ft, then, with difficulty, I extended the ladder from my side across to the hole on the far side. By now, I could see that it was an arched level, and once the ladder was in place, I walked across into it, and called for Heb to come down, so we could explore the new ground.

Several yards of arching led into a small flat in limestone, approx. 4 yards by 16 yards.
Unfortunately, there was no way out of the flat; I had been hoping to get over and beyond the collapse in the level below. Over in the far end of the flat, a hollow in the floor turned out to be nothing, and round the corner a rise was seen in the roof, but this had only been driven up a couple of feet. We searched for a piece of clay pipe, but found nothing, the flat being barren, save for a large vug over in the far wall.

We returned to the collapsed stope, and I showed Ian a small hole off to the right. By a bit of contorting, it was possible to see an upright timber further in. We enlarged the hole as much as possible, but it barely looked passable. The problem was a large block of side-wall that appeared ready to peel off, to the right and above the hole.

Ian took of his battery and helmet, stuck a torch in his mouth, and managed to force his way through into the area beyond. This went a few yards, and then to the right, but that was it - a solid wall.

We made our way to the rope back up to Smallcleugh, ascended, and left the mine.

Bill Griffin

Smallcleugh Mine May, 2001

Bill Griffin, Ian Hebson

A couple of years ago, I had been on a through trip, and was at the bottom of the ladderway in Caplecleugh, leading up to 2nd Sun Vein in Smallcleugh. Before climbing up, I took a quick look inbye to see how far Caplecleugh went. This was only yards before a collapse blocked the way on, but according to the plan, Caplecleugh runs almost to Carr's X Vein, so there is some ground here.

Anyway, I told Ian I had an idea that a sump I had seen some time before in the sub-level higher up, might give access to this ground. The purpose of today's visit was to find out.

We entered Smallcleugh, and made our way to 2nd Sun Vein. After a slight meander that took us too far inbye, including through, and then back through, the squeeze at Cowhill X Vein, we eventually found the top of the sump to the sub-level (my fault). Three wooden ladders are still in situ, but the bottom one is ready to collapse. Once down, we headed outbye to another sump top which should take us down to Caplecleugh beyond the collapse. The ladders are also in place at this sump, but unsure of their condition, we rigged up a belay with an SRT rope, to descend the ladders while clipped into this. The ladders were sound, in fact there is so much calcite about, that it was difficult to get a foot in the rungs in places. There were, I think, five ladders to the bottom, so obviously were not down to Caplecleugh yet. Inbye was collapsed and blocked; outbye required a low, wet crawl into yet another sub-level. This was not arched, but in various stages of falling apart. We came to the top of a sump that was taking the water coming down our ladderway. The bottom couldn't be seen, as it curved down, but a rock we dropped down, fell into water. We pressed on, looking for a drier way down. To the right, we came to a slot near the floor in the RH wall; this was entered into a small stope, and appeared to be VM workings, judging by the stuff lying about, mainly fuse wire.

We climbed out, and continued the search, coming to another sump. This was built in deads, but was very narrow, and again we couldn't make out the bottom, as it also curved.

Further along, the level roof was supported by small timber work; these had given way at the end, virtually blocking the level. Here, to the left, was another stope, rather shattered, with the remains of a wheelbarrow, partly buried. We had a go at digging the collapse, and eventually we dug through, to find another sump top spanning the level, and barring our way on. This could have been stepped across, but we didn't have the headroom to do this.

We returned to the previous sump, and decided to take a look down this. We went back upstairs for a length of rail to use as a belay; this was laid across the sump top, and this time Ian SRT'd down first. I could hear the splashing about, as he had a look; then he called me to come down. I descended the beautifully-built sump, to emerge through a hopper-mouth into arched level (there was no man-way with this hopper).
We were now in Capcleugh, and we headed inbye; the water being just above our knees. Passing a hopper (the one we had been unable to step over), we came to a man-way with ladders still in place, then three more hoppers, before halting at the next. This had collapsed above the level, leaving a pile of debris which could be looked over to see open level. At roof height, the contents of the collapsed hopper were hanging in the air, so it appeared an awkward wriggle to continue.

We returned to the laddered man-way we had passed, and climbed the ladders back into the sub-level, which was now more stoped than previously. The remains of a wheelbarrow was seen, then a wooden explosives box. This was open, and inside it was a padlock, together with a key. We passed a couple of sump tops, and then the stope divided, and met up again at the top of another sump. Across the top of this, the way on was blocked. We were not yet beyond the hanging stuff in the hopper we had turned back from. Returning to the ladder-way, we descended, and went back to the hanging hopper; this was passed to find the level blocked farther in. This cannot be far from the forehead of this section of Capcleugh.

Heading outbye, we passed our rope, and noted another two choked hoppers, and then the complete collapse that I had looked at from the other side, a couple of years ago, wondering what was behind it. Now we knew.

Having achieved the aim of the day, we made our long way back to day.

Bill Griffin