

Friends of Killhope

President: Sir Kingsley Dunham, F.R.S.

MARCH 1986

NEWSLETTER No. 4

By the time Friends read this the high Pennines should be seeing the end of a typically long, hard winter during which the radio has frequently informed us that the Weardale/Alston road was blocked by snow. Winters at Killhope a hundred years ago must have been grim indeed and any processes involving water must have come to a halt for weeks on end. However, M.S.C. work on the site has continued when the weather allowed as you will read later.

Friends' winter activities

Friends have also managed some outside work before the weather closed in. A major success being the recovery of a second set of rails, thanks to the generosity of the Godfrey brothers and the help of Kenneth Pattinson and family. About 70 yards of double track was lifted and transported to Killhope. A small amount remains to be moved when conditions permit.

As was recorded in the last Newsletter the first rail track laid from Park level mine at Killhope was wooden. This was replaced in 1862 by "iron rails" - presumably those still in place in the mine, which are rolled rails set in chairs.

We know that at the time W.B. Mines (as the Beaumont mines were now called) used one main supplier for the rails in the main levels of their Weardale mines. The Birtley Iron Company supplied chaired rails usually with a nominal weight of 20lb or 29lb to the yard and in 4 or 5 yard lengths. A number of rail chairs have been found in the mine mouth area at Killhope of the same pattern as those still in the mine; a type which must be the Birtley Iron Company one.

We were therefore very pleased with the rails and chairs given by the Godfrey brothers. These came from a mine and dressing floor developed by W.B. Lead in the 1860s and were exactly the same type as those at Killhope.

Thus when these are laid down at Killhope either in the minemouth or on the washing floor, Friends' can reflect with some pleasure that this contribution to the site development is completely accurate.

A smaller acquisition was a set of rough pony harness donated by a Friend.

Work on a hotching tub has continued in a Friend's garage and the completed article should be on display at the start of next season.

All places on the visit to Blackdene Mine were quickly taken and Friends were treated to a very interesting glimpse of modern mining for fluorspar in this old lead mine.

The Big Wheel and N.E.I. Parsons

Following a Friend's contact, two members of our Steering Committee and a representative of the Durham County Council Planning Department were privileged to visit N.E.I. Parsons turbine manufacturing plant at Heaton. The General Works Manager gave a comprehensive tour of this giant complex and I am delighted to report that the company have arranged to inspect and renovate the bottom bearings and replace parts of the top bearings missing from the big wheel at Killhope. In addition two graduate trainees, Chris Hicks and Stuart Strachan have been assigned to carry out specialised project work at Killhope as part of their training. We are indeed indebted to N.E.I. Parsons for their generosity perhaps especially since their expertise is being directed towards the achievement of what is for many people associated with Killhope, the most cherished ambition of all - to see the big wheel turn again. This is a fine example of how Friends with their contacts can help Killhope in very specialised areas.

If Friends would like to see how modern turbines are made I strongly recommend a visit to N.E.I. Parsons and we can arrange this if we have some indication of the level of interest. Please contact Ian Forbes on Weardale 0388 537470.

Jimmy Pickering

Friends who visited Killhope on our Activities afternoon last summer will recall the concertina music of Jimmy Pickering and I am sorry to report that this splendid old local character passed away during the winter. Jimmy will be sadly missed in Weardale.

a winter holiday for Bobby

On a more cheerful note I am glad to say that in spite of the hard conditions at Killhope, Bobby the Dales pony continued to thrive without the benefit of the stable which he steadfastly refused to enter. However, before the worst of the snows blocked the roads he was moved down the dale to ensure he got his daily feed. He will of course be back on duty as the star of the show at the start of the season.

Archive Material

Our collection of archive material continues to grow. From our President Sir Kingsley Dunham we have received a copy of his submission on behalf of Weardale Minerals Ltd. and Weardale Mining & Processing Ltd. to the recent A.O.N.B. enquiry and Mr. Brian Young of the British Geological Survey sent us a copy of his article, Strontianite from the Northern pennine Orefield which appeared in the Mineralogical Magazine. Friends may know the Shildon Engine House near Blanchland and we now have copies of plans and elevation of this building from Simon Chapman. Mr. Harold L. Beadle has very kindly given us a copy of his excellent book Mining & Smelting in Teesdale. All our archive material, publications, artefacts, etc. are being held by our Projects Officer at Wearhead for the time being and Friends can inspect by appointment.

Annual General Meeting

Preliminary notice is given of our first A.G.M. which will be held on 11th June 1986. More details will be given in the next Newsletter but I can remind Friends that nominations are invited for the positions of all Officers and Committee members. These should be forwarded to the Secretary, Mrs. D. Chambers, 18 Cheveley Walk, Belmont, Durham not less than 21 days before the meeting.

Cap lamps and batteries - a bargain offer!

We are able to offer for sale a small number of ex colliery cap lamps and batteries in good serviceable condition at the competitive price of £6.50 each set. These have all been checked over and will be offered in a fully charged condition. We hope recharging facilities will be available but in any case I understand this can be done by means of a car battery charger and a simple adaptor. Lamps and batteries can be had from either Ian Forbes (Weardale 0388 537470) or Bryan Chambers (Durham 68491.) They will also be available at the first lecture of the season and the A.G.M.

Representation of Friends of Killhope

Occasionally it might be in the interest of our organisation to attend meetings of groups such as C.B.A.3 and the Vernacular Architecture Group. Up to now Steering Committee members have arranged this between themselves though this has not always been easy. We wondered whether there might be Friends, probably in the east of our area, who might be prepared to represent us from time to time? If you are interested would you contact the Secretary, Mrs. D. Chambers (Durham 68491) who will put you on a list of people prepared to help.

Value for money

I am informed by the Durham County Council Planning Department that from the beginning of this season the charge to enter the site will go up from 40p to 60p but this will allow access to the whole site rather than just the mineshop. The car park will still be free. Thus, our Friends subscription represents even better value for money since your membership card will continue to afford you unlimited access to the whole site. We will again offer a varied and interesting programme of lectures, visits and field trips as well as access to our growing collection of archive material. The newsletter will continue to be published as before, three or four times a year. Could I now urge all Friends to renew their membership and perhaps even persuade a friend to join us so that we can continue our efforts on behalf of Killhope and to spread the word about leadmining in general? I think we can justly claim to have achieved much in our first year but we will need ready cash if, for example, we are to be able to continue to make purchases of materials and artefacts as they become available. In addition of course, we have the normal running costs of stationery, postage, publishing newsletter, hire of rooms, etc. Subscriptions become due on April 1st. PLEASE RENEW PROMPTLY.

Weardale Field Study Society and Weardale Museum of High House Chapel

Friends might be interested in two Weardale organisations which are complimentary to ourselves. The Weardale Field Study Society offers a varied programme of lectures and outings which often contain items on leadmining. Lectures are usually held in the Barrington School, Stanhope and visitors are welcome. The 1986-7 programme is given below:-

- 24th March 1986 - Frosterley Marble - lecture by Mr. Basil Noble.
- 14th April 1986 - Dales life as it was - but is no more - lecture by Mr. Frank Atkinson.
- 12th May 1986 - County Records - their value and how to use them - lecture by Miss J. Gill.
- 9th June 1986 - The history of Stanhope, Part 2 - lecture by Mr. Peter Bowes.
- 28th June 1986 - Coach trip to Cragside House and Wallington Hall.
- 15th Sept 1986 - Meeting to be held in Dean & Chapter Library (details to be given at June meeting.)
- 13th Oct 1986 - Hill farming - its present and future - lecture by Mr. D. Dent.
- 10th Nov 1986 - Forestation in Killhope and Wellhope - lecture by Mr. P. Robinson.
- 8th Dec 1986 - Members Night - slides and objects of interest to be discussed by all.

Further details may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. J.K. Forster, Kentmere House, Market Place, Wolsingham, DL13 3AE.

The Weardale Museum at Ireshopeburn is well worth a visit in the summer months. The exhibitions reflect dale life and include a superb mineral collection and a section on leadmining. Further details from Mr. & Mrs. W. Proud, South View, Ireshopeburn, Weardale (telephone 0388 537417.)

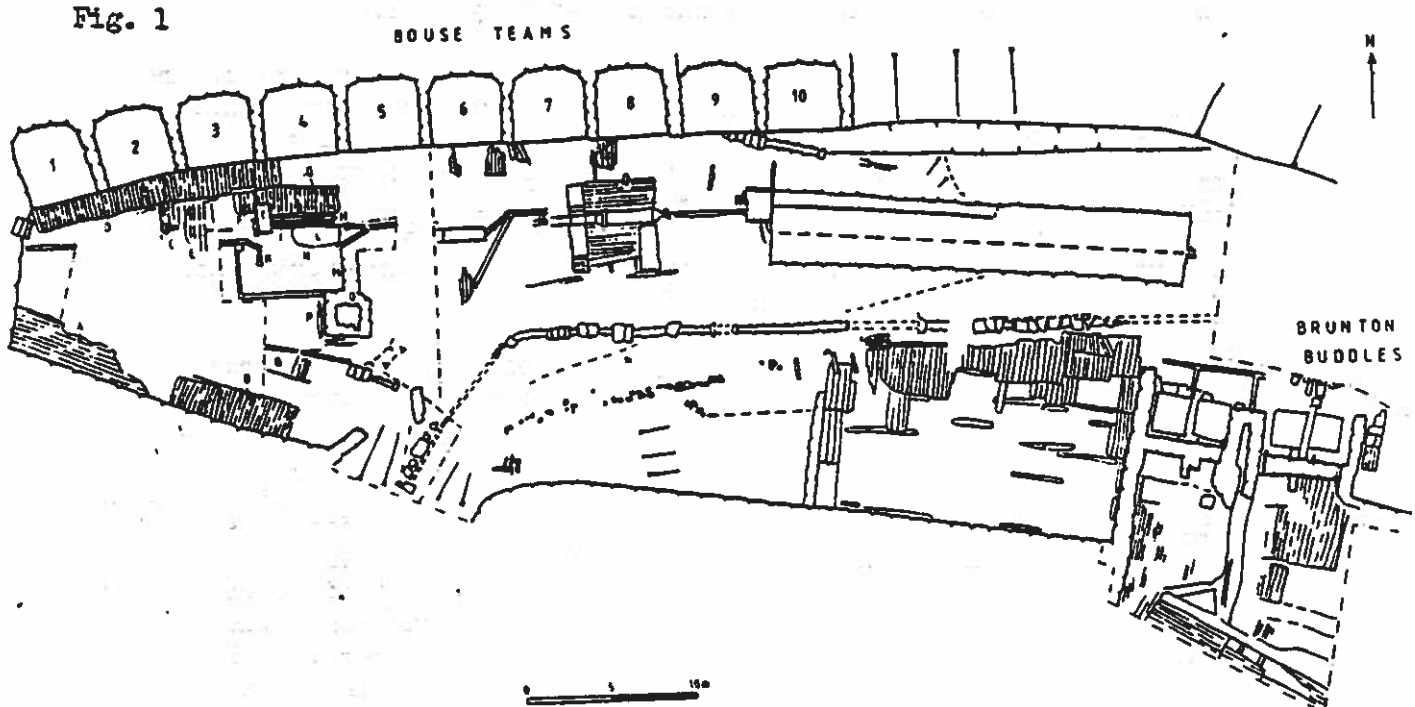
Newsletter material

I am pleased to report a good response to my request for items for the Newsletter but of course I can always use more. Perhaps some Friends might have articles which are too long for a single newsletter so I would be pleased to serialise these or shorten them - with the author's permission of course. The Steering Committee suggested that copies of long articles might, with the author's consent be left in our archives as valuable research material. Once again our thanks are due to all those Friends who have submitted articles to make these Newsletters possible.

Bryan Chambers, Newsletter Editor, 18 Cheveley Walk, Belmont, Durham (telephone Durham 68491)

The 1985 excavation season at Killhope was in many ways very successful, despite the severe problems of limited time combined with unlimited rain (unlimited midgies were laid on for the Friends' visits, but were not too bad at other times.) Before this summer, we knew we were excavating an area of complex and interesting structures, but had little idea what they were actually used for in detail. Now, with the excavation of a group of particular well-preserved structures, and the stimulus of a lot of information and comment from visitors (many of them Friends) I can at least attempt a detailed interpretation of the washing floor (if only as an Aunt Sally for readers to pick holes in; I would welcome any comments.)

Overall plan of washing floor and adjacent areas as excavated. Letters in west end refer to an earlier report.



The north side of the floor is formed by the row of ten house teams, the eastern two of which are an addition to an original row of eight. In front of the teams, the whole length of the floor had been floored with re-used wooden rails, forming a continuous platform, on which preliminary picking of the bouse probably occurred. Much of the eastern part of this platform had been ripped up, with some evidence that this had already occurred by 1896. The western end of the south side of the washing floor had also been lined with similar platforms, now very rotted. Further east, the central part of the south side (from the access ramp eastwards) contained virtually nothing interpretable on excavation; I suspect that it had had a timber floor, which had been removed, the area then being sufficiently disturbed to destroy the fragile traces of the bedding of the floor.

The southeast corner of the floor was much more satisfying, as it had been floored with heavy planks, and much of this planking survived. In an effort to save time, we gave this floor a quick and rather perfunctory clean, and I was duely highly embarrassed on the Friends' tour when Ian and others pointed out a railway across the floor, which I hadn't noticed! The evidence consisted of two parallel lines of paired peg-holes, where iron chairs had been pegged directly into the floor; there were a couple of sleepers at the east end of the floor and just beyond, which were not attached to the floor at all, or bedded properly into the earth beyond it - if these sleepers had been robbed off, there would have been no trace at all of this part of the railway.

The railway is shown on a map of 1896, with another along the north side of the floor; we have never found any convincing evidence of this, but having seen how easily a loose-laid sleeper railway could vanish without trace, I have no doubt that the line along the north side did exist; we did find some possible sleepers and ballast on the right line, which had been laid down after the robbing of the platform along the north side (hence the suggestion that this had happened by 1896.)

However, the most interesting part of the site was along the centre, where we found a group of wooden tanks and structures containing lead concentrates; they had clearly been used for ore-dressing of some form. Comparing the site evidence with various early descriptions of manual dressing methods, and in particular with contemporary plans of Grove Rake washing floors (my thanks to Alan Blackburn for showing me these,) I have formed a working reconstruction of how our structures worked, which is as follows:- (refer to Fig.2)

At the west end, water was fed in by a 'riser' from the underground wooden launders, the water inlet being supported by a stone foundation. The water poured onto a small grating, on which the house was raked around. The undersize fell through the bars onto a sloping iron plate, which channelled it into a small iron-plated box. Here the material was stirred around in a current of water, so that the fines were washed on into a settling trunk, leaving the medium-sized material in the box; this would be shovelled out and concentrated on a set of hotching tubs, which I think lay south of the east end of the trunk (on a timber base with a water supply, and vertical posts near the corners.) Repeated batches would be stirred up in the box, until the trunk (a tank 2.9m long, 0.8m wide, and 0.6m deep) was almost filled with fines. Work on the grate and box would then be stopped, the fines shovelled out of the trunk onto the timber floors alongside and the trunk reused as a trunking buddle; small amounts of fines would be shovelled onto the headboard of the trunk, and stirred in a gentle current of water to wash the waste away, while leaving the ore particles on the board. Those who know the site will realise that I have left several questions unanswered and that the interpretation I have just suggested is an opinion, not a proved fact!

The group of timber structures excavated in 1984 bears many similarities to the 1985 complex and I now think this was a second array of grate, box and trunk and hotching tubs; the square stone foundations to its south may have been a 'knocking wall.' Between the two sets of dressing apparatus, the west end of the 1985 site contained a small flat buddle, consisting of a timber floor sloping down to the east, with an outlet at the lower end, and the mark of a headboard at the upper. To the south of this lay an area of planked surface, on which a circular tank had rested; this may have been a dolly tub, or a header tank of fresh water for flushing out the underground launder system.

The floor as a whole was clearly a carefully designed layout, rather than the higgledy-piggledy arrangement traditionally associated with washing floors (but not in fact seen on most of the contemporary washing floor plans that I have seen, which may of course represent floors as designed; rather than as built or as modified during use.) The layout, both of detail within the washing floor and of a hand operated dressing process alongside an integrated mechanised dressing mill, bears striking resemblances to Grove Rake, while having little close similarity to any other plan that I know of. It may be therefore that Killhope was laid out according to a Beaumont-Blackett 'house style.'

Can I end by thanking all Friends for their comments and information during the excavation; I would welcome any comments on the ideas I have set out above. For anyone wanting more detailed information, I am at present finishing a full report for the County Council, and when this is ready I (or, I am sure, Ian Forbes) would be happy to send a copy on request.

Footnote

Due to pressure on space we have had to withhold some of Dave Cranstone's drawings for the above feature but some copies of these could be made for anyone interested. The drawings we have used were used in Dave's report to Durham County Council and were not purpose designed for our article. Some of the annotations have been modified to suit. Regrettably financial constraints mean that no archaeologist will be working on the site this year which is a great shame since professional expertise is certainly needed to interpret the Killhope washing floor. (Editor)

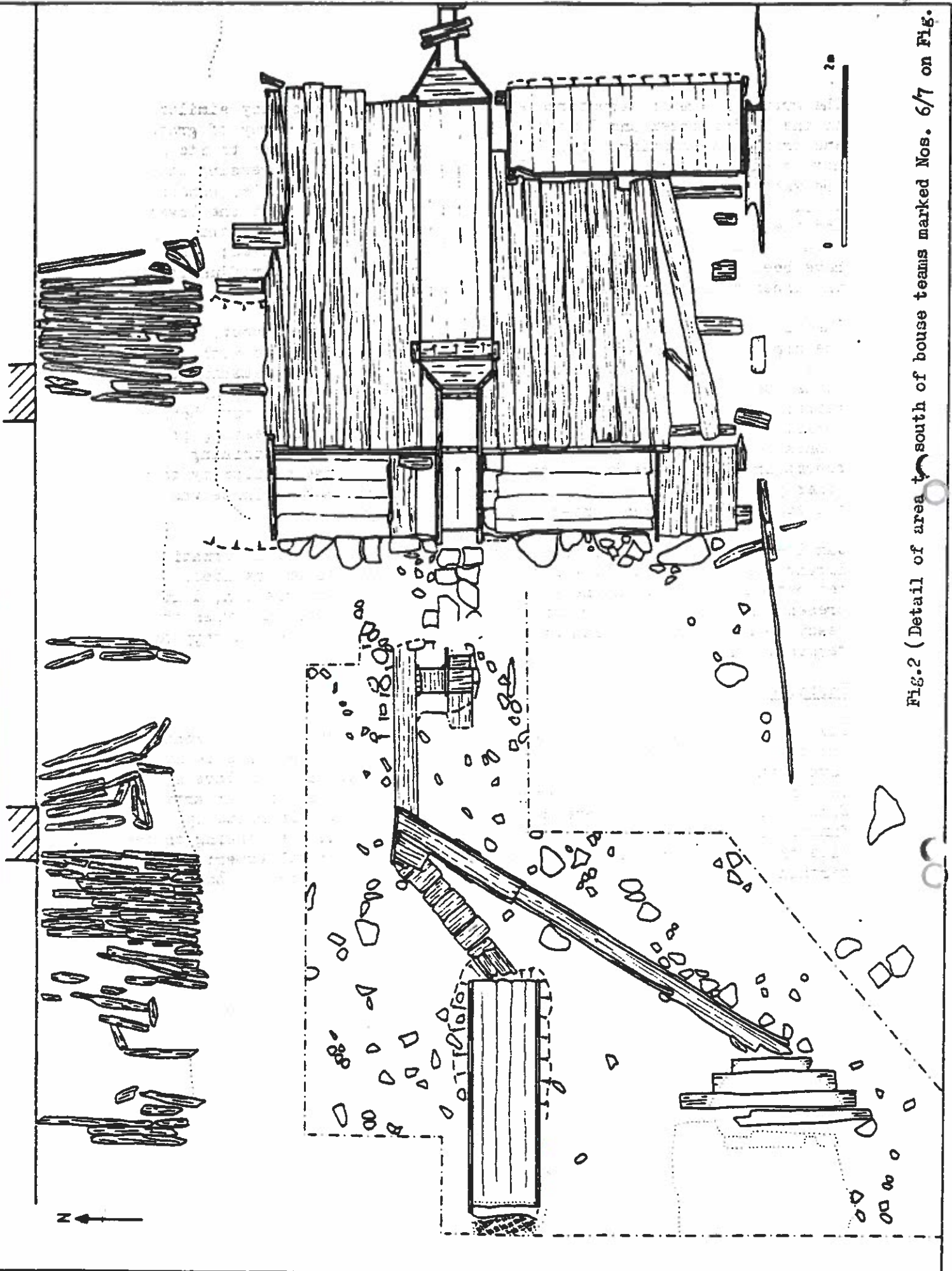


Fig.2 (Detail of area south of bouse teams marked Nos. 6/7 on Fig. 1)

Many Friends of Killhope will know of Boltsburn Mine in the Rookhope Valley, which became famous for its extremely rich lead 'Flats' discovered in 1892, and worked until closure in 1932. Back in 1830, however, the mine was neither very old nor very rich. At this time the workings consisted of the East and West levels, on either side of the Rookhope Burn, at Boltsburn village. The fortunes of these levels had been fluctuating from good to poor for several years and in an effort to find better ore, a trial was made below the level sole (or floor) in the East level. This looked promising but it had a major problem - water. "June 1834 Have sunk 7 fa. below waggon level at the pump sump. Very good ore but a lot of water. Could be worked for 15/- per bing free of water, instead of 30/- now." At the time there were 12 men working, 6 raising ore and 6 pumping!

This situation could not last, and by September 1834 the trial had been abandoned, but not before the Underagent had made the following request to the Chief Agent:- "I strongly recommend a water engine to be put in at this place, and more particularly on account of the favourable situation and the small expense an engine might be erected for. We have a good engine at Crawlaw with 2 stands of pumps which is entirely out of use, that might be removed and fitted up without any expense for new castings, timber etc., so that the only expense would be labour and building a new wheel case, sinking the shaft, etc. We have always a sufficient supply of water at all seasons, at a trifling expense."

This letter, stressing how quickly, simply and cheaply the engine could be built, obviously struck home, as by December of 1834 "have commenced cutting water courses and making preparations for putting in an engine." In June 1835 "Masonry work for wheel case nearly finished, have commenced sinking the shaft," and in September 1835 they had started putting up the wheel, which was by December "built and ready - except for water troughs, which will be put up in a few weeks." It is interesting to note the timing of the sinking of the shaft before the completion of the engine. At this time they were sinking using hand pumps, and were "nearly thro the Grt Lime," about 15 fathoms down. The hand pumping stopped in March 1836, when "the engine was set to work," with the shaft already "thro the Quarry Hazel, and heading for the 4 fathom limestone." It was to take a year to complete the shaft as the 6 fathom Hazel was to prove "very hard and slow to work," so in March 1837 "Engine shaft complete, now cutting a water standish (sump) at the engine foot, in the plate below the 6 fathom Hazel." (I do not have the accurate depth to hand but it was about 40 fathoms.)

The sump was finished by June and cross cuts from the shaft were begun, which were to eventually link the shaft with the East and West levels.

So it was to take about 2½ years to complete the engine, races, and shaft. We do not know how many men were involved, but was this about average for the period? It is unlikely that the Blakett-Beaumont workers were allowed to slacken, but they would be badly affected by winter snows, which could hold up work for months. Does anyone have records of a similar piece of work, as it would be most interesting to compare the rates of construction of shafts or buildings?

One final point of interest is the water wheel. This was 36ft. in dia. with iron rims and axle, wooden spokes and buckets. It worked at Boltsburn for 96 years, until the mine was abandoned in 1932. It was still in good condition in 1948, just before being scrapped, 112 years after installation. BUT, it came from Crawlaw mine, where it must have worked for many years. To add to the interest, it was made in Aberystwyth. Could it have worked first in a Welsh mine, been dismantled and carried the 280 miles north to Crawlaw, and if so, how old was it before it started its 96 years at Boltsburn? Perhaps someone may be able to add a piece to this jigsaw - it would certainly be worth trying to trace its history, or do you know of any similar movements of water wheels in the North?

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Having read this fascinating item, Friends will be interested in Alan Blackburn's talk on Rookhope which is also to be followed by a guided walk. Please see 'coming events' (Editor)

DURHAM DALES MINING SOCIETY

by Colin Robinson

The Society was formed early in 1985 in response to a letter in the local press suggesting that people with an interest in lead mining in the area should join together and pool their knowledge in order to maximise their efforts and achieve something worthwhile.

From the start it was obvious that the group was going to be very active as all the members were keen to get out and do something rather than just read about the subject. Indeed, most had been pursuing their interests over many years and could consequently bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise. This has enabled us to look at sites from different angles and so arrive at conclusions which might easily escape the individual researcher.

Because our members either live in or have associations with Teesdale this has tended to become our main sphere of operations, just as the "Friends" seem to be concentrating on Weardale. That there is room for both groups is quite evident from the vast amount of work needing to be done in the North Pennines. Links have been established and several of our members are also Friends of Killhope and of other mine research organisations, but much remains to be done to ensure that both information and activities are properly recorded for the benefit of all concerned.

Perhaps our major achievement during the last year has been to gain the recognition and support of a number of landowners for the work we are doing. Farmers are not renowned for their generosity towards mine researchers, due in no small part to the attitudes of some of the researchers themselves. It is a tribute to the tact and diplomacy of our Chairman, John Harrison, that we were allowed to survey the dressing floor at High Skears and all levels and shafts associated with it. There is still work to be done here but we have made a good start on what is a compact and fairly well preserved site. (In order not to sour relations could anyone wishing to visit High Skears please contact the D.D.M.S. beforehand.)

We are currently arranging a series of visits to places of interest, in addition to our work locally and, time and weather permitting, will have a full schedule for 1986.

If any Friends have an interest in Teesdale and are keen on practical work they will be made more than welcome at our meetings.

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary, Colin Robinson, 40 North Green, Staindrop, Darlington, telephone Staindrop 60638 after 6 pm.

A GAZETTEER OF LEAD-MINING REMAINS?

Last December some Friends of Killhope and members of the Durham Dales Mining Society held an informal meeting to establish contacts between the two groups and to discuss possible future co-operation on projects. The wide knowledge in the two groups that could be pooled was recognised and it was particularly noted that both groups possessed surveying skills. The view was expressed that the widest possible shared knowledge of lead-mining remains in the North Pennines was desirable; for such knowledge would help us select sites for detailed attention and enable us to argue the merits of those thought worth saving. Although some concern was expressed about the danger of jeopardising the always delicate relationship with owners of lead-mining sites and about unrestricted public access to any list, it was generally agreed that a register of known lead-mining remains in the North Pennines would be something the two groups could usefully co-operate on.

It was decided to hold a further meeting to discuss the proposal in detail. Watch the Newsletter for further report.

Meanwhile other members have been working in the field of site recording for some time. One such is Simon Chapman who raised the idea of a gazetteer of sites in the last Newsletter.

Among the sites surveyed in detail by Simon is the Shildon beam engine house near Blanchland. This fine early 19th century building was erected by Easterly, Hall & Co. in an ill-fated attempt to use steam power to un-water their lead mines. The results did not justify the capital outlay, but Shildon remains an interesting relic which deserves preservation. It should be said that Friends can only argue the merits of such cases with the aid of detailed drawings such as Simon's. We are grateful to him for lending them to us. For those interested in Shildon, Simon's brother Nigel has written a most informative article about both Shildon and Boldon engine houses and their Boulton and Watt engines. This can be found in British Mining No. 28, the 1985 Memoirs of the Northern Mines Research Society.

EARBY MINES RESEARCH GROUP - PARK LEVEL PROJECT

The E.M.R.G. continued their work for Durham County Council in Park Level through last summer and we are indebted to their Secretary, Dave Carlisle, for the following report.

Earby Mine Research Group spent five weekends working underground at Killhope this year, putting in well over 500 man hours. We succeeded in our allotted task of opening up first one and then a second roof fall to examine the adit beyond.

The second fall was harder to manage than the first being 18ft long in all and composed of boulders and clay. The last 4 ft was almost through solid Quarry Hazel sandstone which made a brief appearance in the roof and had subsequently 'sagged' somewhat.

There were many times when we thought we wouldn't succeed within a reasonable timescale - like the fourth weekend when the normally icy water seemed colder still and was certainly deeper than usual following heavy rain. Working in 1m height has definite disadvantages with a water flow like that in Park Level. Wet suits were essential for everyone working at or near the face and even then a "thaw out" every 2-3 hours proved absolutely necessary. On that particular weekend the water depth almost brought progress to a standstill - putting timber caps in meant lying on one's back with water covering your face! However, after a very wet summer with the aforementioned consequences, we were extremely lucky on the fifth, and last weekend to have a dry spell and a return to reasonable water levels. Lowering the floor by 6", boarding it out, and pressing forward another 2ft. or so got us through by Sunday lunchtime when a celebration pint would have been welcome. We couldn't be bothered to get changed to go to the pub, though, and had to make do with tea and butties for bait.

Suitably refreshed and with safety in mind we split into two groups, one to stay outbye of the falls and the other to explore, to cut a fairly long story short Park Level is open for about 450 paces beyond the second fall, with chest deep water all the way. We expected the water, of course, but were disappointed to find further progress barred by a comprehensive fall of ground from a fissure where the adit seems to enter limestone. About 150 yards outbye of the actual fall silt started to build up on the floor, gradually becoming so deep that progress could only be made by "wallowing." Very near the fall the silt is hard with the water running in a channel through it, like a river. There is about 1'6" of air space at that point.

We cannot be too far from Middlegrove Vein and I think that the silt may be coming from the N.E. drive on that, which may go back under the river higher up than Killhope Sike. Silting of this extensive nature is not usually associated with an ordinary roof fall and there was little or no water coming down the fissure already mentioned. Inflow from the river would account for the low water temperature well below the 52-54° F usually associated with minewater which has spent a long time underground at shallow depth.

The Group has submitted comprehensive reports to Durham County Council and members have taken many photographs at various stages of the work. As I write, I don't know whether the last lot, taken inbye of the falls have come out or not, but let's hope so. Some of our photographs and a brief description, will be on show eventually at Killhope.

What happens next? Well, the public obviously cannot go into Park Level at present - they wouldn't wade in chest deep water and there would not be much for them to see if they did, leaving aside the safety aspects. In order to proceed further towards a possible public opening the first two falls will have to be taken out full height and the top properly supported. With the spoil outbye of the first fall included there must be 150-200 tonnes to shift here.

This operation will release the water from the open part of the level which is in shale. The silt in front of the second fall which I calculate at 350 tonnes will then need to come out.

CONSERVATION OR RESTORATION?

The fate of the washing floor at Killhope following its excavation by David Cranstone (see elsewhere) has aroused considerable controversy among Friends.

The policy of the County Council towards the washing floor is broadly, to conserve original timber where practicable, to replace rotten and decayed timber and to arrive at an interpretation of the site that enables the Community Task Force workforce to replicate in full those parts where surviving remains are fragmentary.

The aim is to produce a complete working washing floor which can be seen, walked on, and used by the thousands of people who visit Killhope each year. This means that the policy is directed towards interpretation and rebuilding rather than traditional archaeological consolidation of remains as found.

A number of Friends have expressed reservations about this approach, usually on the grounds that replication is no substitute for "the real thing."

Perhaps debate could be joined in these columns by those who want to air their views for or against the policy at Killhope, because it raises issues central to any Industrial Archaeology project. Please write to Ian Forbes, Fieldfare, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham.

THE CLEVELAND INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

Many Friends will share common interests with the C.I.A.S. which has been prominent in the field of Industrial Archaeology in and around Cleveland for over 20 years. We acknowledge receipt from Dr. Jake Almond of their two most recent Newsletters, which are most interesting and informative. Their next meeting is the A.G.M. and members evening on Tuesday 22nd April at 7.15 p.m. in the Leeds University Centre, Harrow Road, Middlesbrough. Further information from Paul Winstone on 0642 587878.

THE TRACTION ENGINES

Let's not think that at the time of major development at Killhope in the 1870s Weardale was an isolated backwater.

In 1873-4 W.B. Beaumont bought 2 traction engines for his lead mines. We know that at least one of them came from Fowler's of Leeds; it was based at Allen Mill at Allendale Town and was used to haul lead ore from upper Weardale to the mill for smelting. With its wagons it cost £709.19.6d. We can be sure that it was used to take ore from Killhope and wonder how much damage it must have done to the roads for W.B. Beaumont to feel obliged to make a donation of £20 to the Weardale Highways Board for additional road metal between Killhope Mine and Allenheads fell top!

We can guess that the inhabitants of Weardale felt in the forefront of technology as they all turned out to watch the first engine's stately progress up the dale from Stanhope in November 1873 and when the second arrived in April of the next year many must have muttered that W.B. Lead were spending money like water!

Perhaps an enterprising Friend might like to look up the Fowler company records at Leeds to see if they can find out more about these engines.

AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS AT KILLHOPE - by a Planning Department Spokesman

In November 1985 the County Council agreed to extend the programme of restoring the Park Level Mill and developing displays in the woodland. The works on the mill were to have finished in March 1986 and the woodland development was to have gone on for a further year. Now the project will continue until March 1989 with extra finance available to achieve a more ambitious programme.

The main additional item at the mill will be the restoration of the Buddle House. When that building was made safe, the gable walls were demolished. They will be rebuilt and the roof replaced. The archaeological digs that have taken place on the washing floor and at the mine entrance have revealed a much more complex water supply system than was envisaged. This will all be restored together with the extensive timber flooring of the washing floor. The extra finance means that it will now be possible to have far more replica machinery, artefacts, etc. on the site.

In the woodland the original intention was to restore the two reservoirs and the water courses that served them; to illustrate early ore-dressing in Hazely Hush; show what a shallow pit was like; and have a display of early smelting. There will now also be a horse gin on the plateau above Park Scar. Ideally there will be a crushing circle nearby - obtaining the stone crushing wheel is not the problem, but getting it up the steep side of Himer's Hush will be. The solution may have to be a helicopter, providing that Durham County Council don't have to pay for it! The display at the top of Hazely Hush is likely to be more complex than was previously envisaged. It will probably have a couple of pits, a couple of levels, bousesteem, knocking wall, bingstead and a small shop. Lower down Hazely Hush there will be a display of later ore-dressing, portraying what happened at about the time that the Burn Bottom Mill was built.

At the time of writing there is well over half a metre of snow at Killhope. There's little happening at what looks like an Antarctic base camp. If the weather had been better, the bridge over the Killhope Burn would have been completed by now. The beams spanning the stream are in position and little more is needed to complete this large and impressive structure other than the decking. The approach to the bridge from the direction of the mineshop has had to be built up by importing several hundred tons of fill (by courtesy of one of our sponsors, Blue Circle Industries, who also donated the cement for rebuilding the bridge abutments.) This approach track was built on the dead heap and the replacement of the heap certainly adds to the appearance of the site.

Part of the washing floor has now been boarded out and the area now contains a replica dolly tub and replica hotching tub, both of which can be worked by the public. The completion by Friends of the hotching tub whose base came from Beamish will give further life to the washing floor and allow Friends' activity days to be more active.

The trestle bridge, which carried the railway to the crusher, is taking shape. The two large trestles have been erected and, when the decking is installed, the wheel area will look far more impressive. The next structure to be completed this Spring will be the water race bridge which carried the mine water and wheel tailrace water over the burn and down the valley. The pier in the Killhope Burn is complete so that, even if the snow melts late and the stream is running high, there should be no delay in replacing the launder.

In the woodland work is continuing on thinning and brashing the trees and a start has been made on the footpath network. The thinnings are providing additional cash to purchase materials for display. The first project to be tackled will be a launder across Himer's Hush which originally supplied the Burn Bottom Mill. To help with the movement of timber out of the wood and material into it, an access track has been created into the middle of the wood. It is sufficiently wide to allow Bobby, the Dales pony, to pull a cart along it.

COMING EVENTS - 1986 PROGRAMME OF TALKS AND OUTINGS

- 9th April "Lead Manufacture in Britain - a History"
Dr. D.J. Rowe, (Senior Tutor, Economic Studies, Newcastle University)
Bishop Barrington School, Stanhope - 7.30 p.m.
- 4th May Friends' Activities Day at Killhope.
Bring the family and see what's happening.
There will be a barbecue. From 1 p.m.
- 14th May "The Story of Killhope"
Ian Forbes (Supervisor, Killhope Lead Mining Centre)
Samuel Kings School, Alston at 7.30 p.m.
- 1st June Visit to Skears Mine near Middleton-in-Teesdale.
We will be the guests of the Durham Dales Mining Society for this all day trip, starting at 10.30 a.m. An underground tour will be included if time permits. There is a limit of 15 persons; the first 15 names submitted with subscription renewals will be accepted.

- 11th June Annual General Meeting - details in next Newsletter.
- 15th June Friends' Activities Day at Killhope including Quits Championship - come and have a go - from 1 p.m.
- 25th June "Mining Adventurers of the Rookhope Valley"
Alan Blackburn (local historian) in conjunction with Rookhope Primary School.
Rookhope Primary School, Rookhope - 7.30 p.m.
- 5th July Visit to Associated Lead Manufacturers Limited plant at Elswick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. A rare chance to see a modern lead smelting operation and the largest sheet lead production unit in the world. Meet at 11 a.m. at the works gate cabin.
- 13th July Friends' Activities Day at Killhope. From 1 p.m. Demonstrations of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling head the list of activities.
- 19th July "The Adventurers' Mines"
Field trip led by Alan Blackburn to visit some of the sites discussed in his talk. Meet at 1.30 p.m. at Rookhope Nurseries, Rookhope (west of the village on the Allendheads road.)
- 20th September Visit to Broadwood Fluorspar Processing Plant at Frosterley. Weardale Minerals Ltd. have generously given permission for us to tour this modern works. Further details nearer the date.
- 8th October "Underground at Nenthead"
John Crompton (NORPEX)
Bishop Barrington School, Stanhope - 7.30 p.m.
This photographic tour of the Nenthead mines will be followed by the real thing - a guided tour of Smallcleugh Mine - details will be given on the night.
- 12th November "Lead mining sites of the Northern Pennines"
Arthur Roberts and Peter Bowes (local historians)
Black Horse, Newgate, Barnard Castle - 7.30 p.m.

All meetings and outings free to members; admission 50p to non-members.

Regular work parties will also be arranged to press on with work at Killhope. Your help is needed if you are willing to be called on, or have skills and knowledge you can offer, please indicate on the subscription form. Even if you can only lean on a shovel you will be welcome!

Further information from the Projects Officer, Ian Forbes on 0388 537470.

SECTION of the first 375 ft of PARK LEVEL, KILLHOPE.

N.T.

