

DANE BOWER COLLIERY, WILDBOARCLOUGH

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Abstract: Whilst investigating the surface remains of the Buxton Coalfield the remains of Dane Bower Colliery were visited. An obvious collapsed adit which worked the Ringinglow Coal Seam, was opened and the mine explored as far as practical. The Abandonment Plans of 1922 show a considerable extent of workings beyond the limit of exploration.

Following the publication of the book "The Coal Mines of Buxton" by Alan Roberts and John Leach in 1985, interest was aroused in this previously little recorded facet of Derbyshire's mining history. In exploring the area of this small section of the Goyt Trough coalfield interest was aroused by a chimney standing alongside the Buxton to Congleton road at Dane Bower. This was labelled in a photograph in the book as "an air shaft of the Dane Colliery" as indeed it is on a large scale O.S. map (25 inches:1 mile Cheshire XLIV.4).

On exploring the site it became apparent that the chimney was in fact just a chimney and that a shaft, under a concrete cap, was situated some 30 to 40 yards away. The chimney was connected to the remains of an engine bed in a small quarry hole down the hill by a flue. This engine bed is on the same level on the steep hillside as the shaft and appears to have a slabbed-over trough connecting it to the shaft. The engine may have driven an endlessrope haulage down the shaft and along the adit.

Adjacent to the shaft is a flat area which may possibly have contained a horse gin; there are also the remains of two or three small buildings. Leading away from the shaft and also away from the main road are a series of well-built tracks zig-zagging down the hillside towards the infant River Dane below.

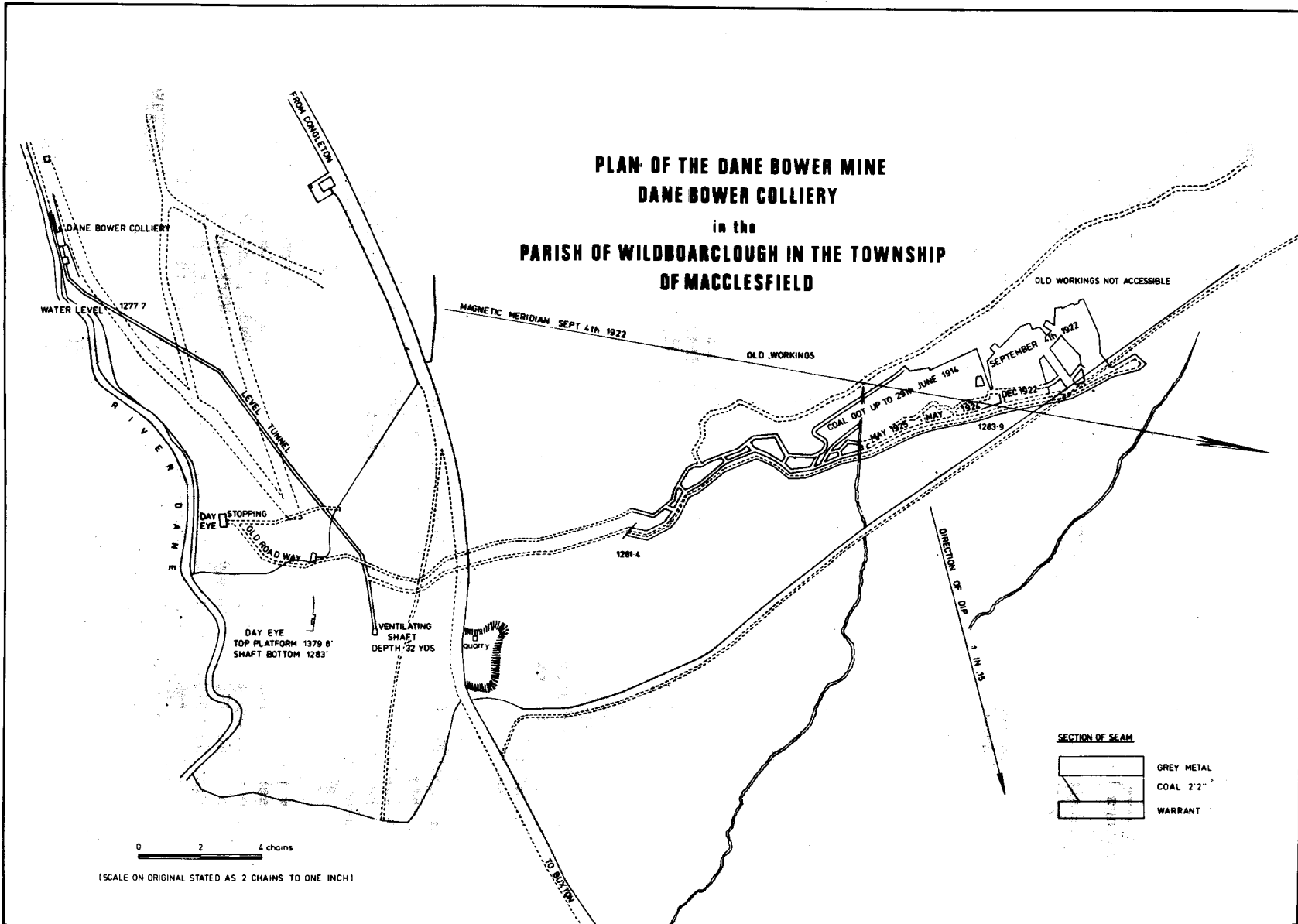
Along the level of the river are the remains of two entrances and a low building. The more impressive of these adits is the lower and main haulage level. This consists of a stone-lined cutting on a platform just above river flood level which leads into a fine stone-arched level entrance. This can be followed for 12 yards to a fall equivalent to a small crater on the surface above. Below the adit a stream of water appears from a small culvert and runs into the river. Further back up the river is the remains of another small building and an area which appeared to be a collapsed adit.

The local farmer, Mr. Ben Kidd of Holt Farm was contacted, and gave permission for limited excavations on his land. Initially a hole was dug through the roof of the collapsed adit to gain easy access to a low level. This level was explored for approximately 70 yards and became most unpleasant as the shale plate roof was hanging above and decomposing to a thick slime below. The slabs were replaced in the day eye roof and it was decided to enquire about the Abandonment Plans of the Colliery.

Subsequently three plans (Nos. 8142, 10195 and 13639) were obtained from the Mining Record Office near Leigh, Lancashire. The first of these showed the mine to have been abandoned during May 1922. The Lessees of the colliery are given as J.W. Sanders and T. Naden, and the earliest date on the surveyed area is June 1904, although areas are marked "Old Workings not Accessible" up dip from those surveyed. Plan No.10195 reveals that a small amount of pillar robbing went on during the period 1926 to 1928 whereupon the mine was again abandoned with the signature of T.A. Oakes dated August 1928 on the declaration. The last plan shows that another small amount of investigation was made during 1943 before the colliery was abandoned for the last time.

All these plans showed that the main and obvious lower adit level was the main route into the mine and it was decided to attempt to dig into this. Members of the Society L. Riley, T. Worthington, D. Clucas, A. Gillings, R. Harrison, C. Bull and M. Luff with H. Parker as photographer met one Sunday morning and excavated a way through the collapse into the adit after about three hours work. The adit was found to still have the remains of rail track in it although these had largely been rusted away. The adit was of fairly small cross-section and had been driven in the Chatsworth Grit below the Ringinglow Coal.

**PLAN OF THE DANE BOWER MINE
DANE BOWER COLLIERY**
in the
**PARISH OF WILDBOARCLOUGH IN THE TOWNSHIP
OF MACCLESFIELD**





Danebower Colliery, Wildboardclough. photos by Harry Parker

There was a strong flow of water in the adit and the drain further downstream discharged sufficient ochre to turn the river bright orange. There were various articles abandoned along the adit including several pot land-drain pipes. Approximately 300 yards along the adit a shower of water rained down from a small hole in the roof. This appeared to coincide with the first junction in the level. Just beyond here the coal was seen for the first time dipping down at about 15° from the east.

The coal seen is the Ringinglow Seam which lies in the Marsdenian strata above the R. superbilingue Band (R2c). This is described by Aitkenhead et al (1985) in their "Geology of the Country around Buxton, Leek and Bakewell" on pages 86 to 90. It should be noted that whilst the seam is described as being up to 2.13m thick at Orchard Farm approximately a mile away it thins out towards Dane Bower where it is described on the Abandonment Plans as being 2ft. 2in. thick and is underlain by "Warrant" and capped by "Grey Metal". These are the miners' terms for the Chatsworth Grit below and a silty mudstone above.

Where the coal is seen there was the remains of a tub of fairly primitive nature. At this point another level crosses above the main adit and there may well have been an air-crossing here. To the right a low level with packs on either side leads back towards the day eye but is blocked by a fall. To the left the level is dry and passes a place where it seems that sampling of the coal took place probably during the last war. This level continues for some 300 or 400 feet before the air becomes too bad. Forwards at the crossing leads to a junction where the level gets wetter and the air becomes worse. At this point the exploration was terminated in the interests of safety. The excavation into the adit was backfilled and the colliery left in peace.

Dane Bower Colliery is a surviving representative of a type of colliery of which thousands were worked during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the remains of which have largely been opencasted away today. There are other levels into this coalfield which are reputed to still be open and it is hoped to examine these at a later date.

Acknowledgments.

To Les Riley for obtaining the Abandonment Plans and to John Beck for redrawing the last of these.

Note. The Abandonment Plan used as an illustration of the mine does not entirely agree with what we saw in the area of the shaft but it is the Abandonment Plan and shows the general layout of the mine.

References.

Mining Record Office, British Coal, Leigh. Abandonment Plans 8142, 10195 and 13639.

Aitkenhead, N., Chisholm, J.I. and Stevenson I.P. 1985, Geology of the Country around Buxton, Leek and Bakewell. Memoir British Geological Survey, Keyworth, Notts.

Roberts, A.F. and Leach, J.R. 1985 The Coal Mines of Buxton. Scarthin Books, Cromford.