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DESCRIPTION OF A SHAFT AND WORKINGS IN THE GARDEN OF MOORESFOLD, WINSTER

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Abstract: The shaft and workings were surveyed, and mining and geological features found are described.

INTRODUCTION

The shaft is situated in the garden of Mooresfold (SK 24016065), a large house on the opposite side of the road to Elton from Winster Church. It is covered by a large concrete slab which now contains an access hole fitted with steel lid. The mine is roughly on the range of the Orchard Vein and mineworkings.

THE SHAFT

At its entry, the shaft is circular in section (1.5m dia). The first 0.5m of ginging is made up of rough limestone blocks and the remainder is dressed gritstone: the change may suggest raising of the surface subsequent to the original sinking. In the walls there are numerous holes and timber slots at about metre intervals which may have held ladders but the pattern is rather complicated and unclear. The ginging continues in good condition to -5m after which the next 2m are displaced and the blocks are severely crushed.

At -10.5m the ginging has been built up off three arches to the north, west and east with loose shale visible behind. These have however been infilled and the ginging continues to -15m where it rests on two more arches to the north and south which rest on the top bed of limestone. Examination behind the southern arch reveals a small chamber formed by breakdown of the roof which is in "weathered" shale. It seems likely that the lower part of the ginging was built up at a later date to support the area above which had become unstable due to this weathering.

Below the ginging the shaft continues in blocky, siliceous limestone and assumes an irregular rectangular shape 1.8m by 1.3m. At -18m a joint filled with a muddy sediment has been excavated to the south for about 3m. At -20m several 40mm diameter and up to 400mm long shotholes are noticed which continue below.

At -35m the limestone becomes more uniform and the shaft becomes more oval hut continues at about the same size with more shotholes as above and numerous pickmarks.

At -45m the only accessible workings are reached via a landing to the south west, and two metres below this, at -47m the section of the shaft changes to a truncated ellipse 3m by 2m with the northern side terminated by a smooth face which appears to be a fault, although the displacement is unclear.

At -47m another landing to the north east is built on a large pack but is blind within a few metres. At -50m the current bottom of the shaft is reached. It is covered with an indeterminate amount of assorted household waste with no way off visible. It is feasible that the true floor of this shaft is about 50m below this at the same horizon as the Orchard and Placket mine workings in this area.

THE WORKINGS

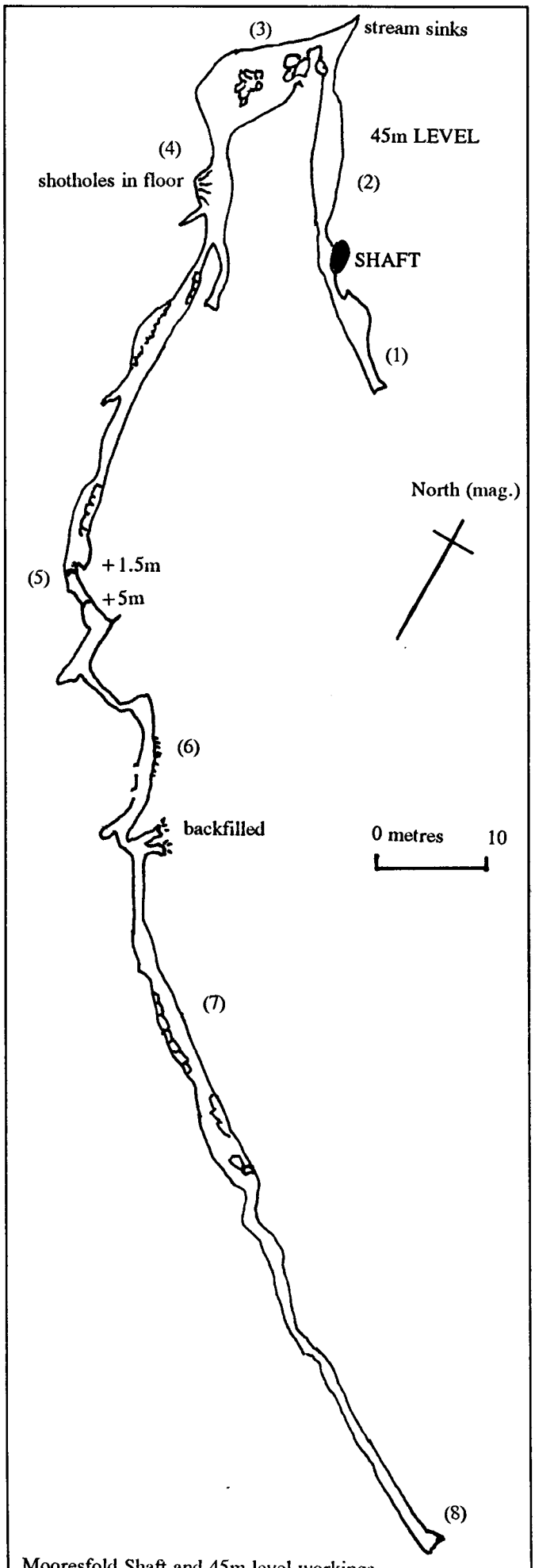
The accessible workings are entered by the landing on the south west side of the shaft at a depth of 45m. To the south (1) is a natural passage 1-1.5m wide and up to 1.5m high from which the "old man" has removed much of the original fill of light brown clayey material containing lumps of barite, galena and chert with small quantities of fluorite. After about 5m the passage widens out to the east where a small flatting of barite and galena has been worked. After 10m the floor of the passage rises where a pocket of clay has fallen from the roof and a short continuation of the passage is visible but appears to be blind.

Back at the landing a further small hole can be followed northwardly over backfill for about two metres until it drops down a slope into a large natural passage (2). This passage is 2-3m wide and almost 2m high with large quantities of dark, and very fluid, mud. The walls and roof of this section are also covered with mud suggesting that this area may flood to the roof in wet weather.

After about 15m a fall of boulders from the west wall and roof almost blocks the passage, but it is possible to squeeze past these where another much larger natural chamber is entered (3). This is up to 7m wide and 3m high with a considerable stream running from the south to sink in an impassable hole in the far north of the chamber.

Following the stream to the south the chamber narrows and a mined passage is entered after about 13m (4). The stream appears from a heap of rocks at the west side and the passage begins to climb with several 20mm diameter shotholes visible in the floor. At this point the passage widens out again exhibiting natural features with some fine mud formations and a small aven to the west.

The passage continues at about 1.5m wide and high excavated through clay fill and breccia. A side passage to the east climbs to a small pool which appears to have been used for washing ore but it soon ends at a forefield in bedded sediments.



Mooresfold Shaft and 45m level workings

Continuing to the south a small flatting of barite and galena has been worked in the west wall and a small pack has been built. This soon ends and after a 5m high aven is passed the passage narrows to about lm. After a further 8m the passage widens out to about 2m and several large blocks have fallen from the roof. A small flatting has been tried to the east and contains bright pink barite but very little galena.

At 1.5m a step-up leads to a short length of passage followed by a further climb (5) of about 5m between boulders until a small chamber is entered. Here a large block about 10m square has fallen from the roof blocking the original route on but a way on can be found by following a tight slot around the west side. The passage now descends down a muddy slope (6) until it levels out by a small pack and an extremely irregular section is followed to a sharp bend in the passage. Here three trials have been driven. To the east, one ends in a forefield with a small flatting of barite again visible at floor level, whilst to the west both trials are backfilled,

Continuing southwards the passage climbs over piles of fallen blocks where it widens to about 3m and continues over a jumble of fallen hlocks for about 25m (7). It now begins to dip again until a rectangular mined passagc about 1m square is entered. This appearsto be driven in a flatting 0.5-lm high containing pink, cream and white barite, some calcite, chert and fluorite with small quantities of galena and spalereite. This continues for about 30m but after crawling over two falls of clay from roof pockets it finally ends in a forfeield with a small trial to the east (8).

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