

SURFACE REMAINS OF THE CASTLETON/PEAK FOREST AREA, DERBYSHIRE

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Abstract: The upland limestone area between Castleton and Peak Forest (including part of Bradwell Parish) has a series of NE/SW rakes (Fawcet, Linicar, Dirtlow and Moss) with relatively undisturbed surface-mining remains, mainly of small mines which are described and surveys of sites are presented. They include a Scheduled Ancient Monument, but other sites too are worthy of formal preservation. A postscript by J.H Rieuwerts emphasises the importance of notifying the Preservation Convenor of threats to sites.

INTRODUCTION.

The area of limestone upland between Castleton and Peak Forest has been extensively worked for lead ore for many centuries. This activity has left many surface remains, some such as Odin Mine, being better-known than others. The area is crossed by some of the longest mineral rakes in the Peak District notably Dirtlow Rake and Moss Rake. These rakes have been much worked extensively in recent years for the gangue minerals and, inevitably, a vast amount of the surface remains have been destroyed. Some of the rakes remain virtually untouched since underground mining ceased at the end of the last century. The local area is very popular with tourists from all parts of the world and is much visited by caving groups who explore the many underground systems to be found in the locality. The following article lists some of the less visited mining sites along with several isolated remains, which are shown on Figure 1.

1. Burning Drake Mine. SK 1180 8116 (Fig. 2)

This site is close to the summit of Eldon Hill and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The surface remains consist of a fine example of a coe, complete with a small fireplace built into the corner; a walled crushing circle with a limestone track and small limestone crushing stone, and one, possibly two shafts all enclosed inside a belland yard wall constructed from limestone waste and calcite. The name "Burning Drake" is an old term for a meteorite and superstition believed that ore would be found where the meteorite came to earth. Lower down the hillside, alongside the modern day motorcycle scrambling track, at SK 1191 8120, there is a circular flat area and adjacent depression which could be the location of another horse gin or crushing circle.

2. Un-named Mine. SK1179 8065 (Fig. 3)

The remains of this mine are lower down the hillside from the

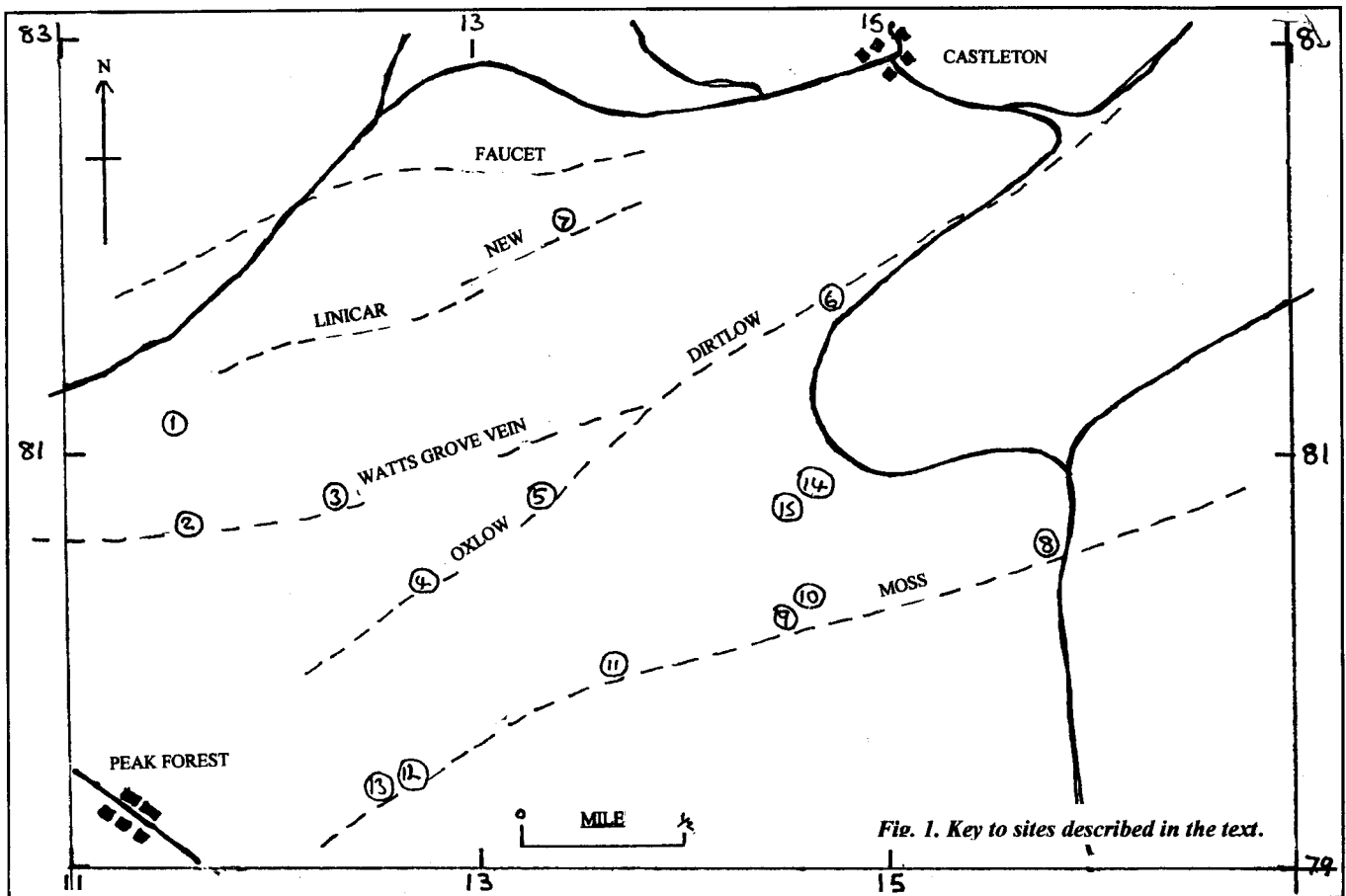
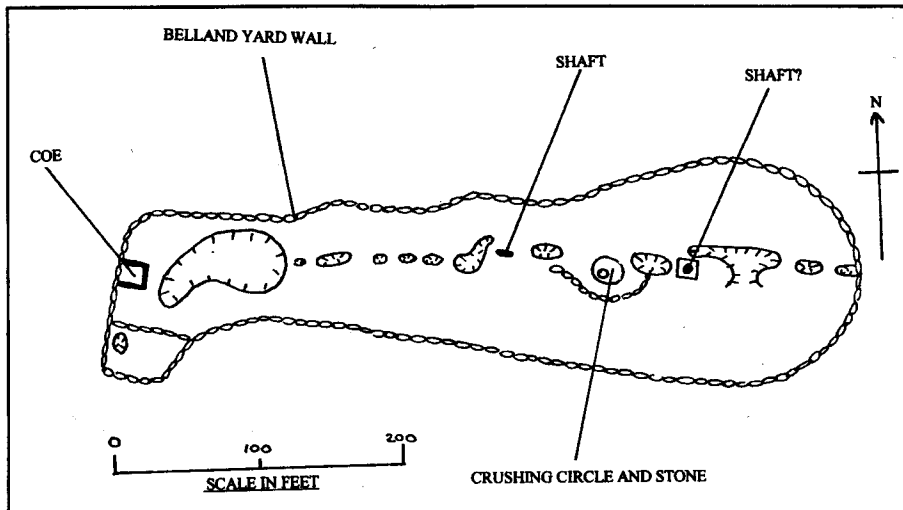
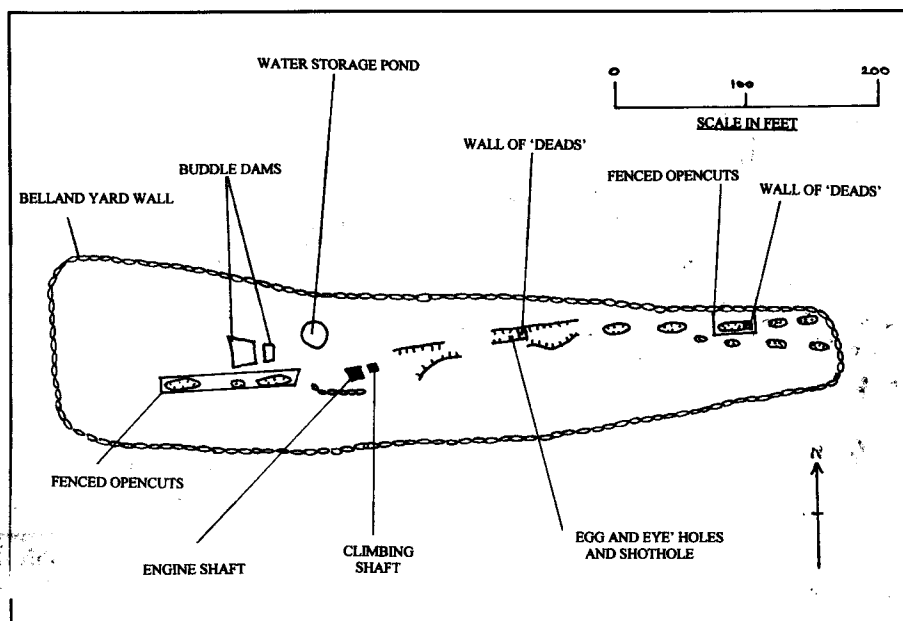


Fig. 1. Key to sites described in the text.

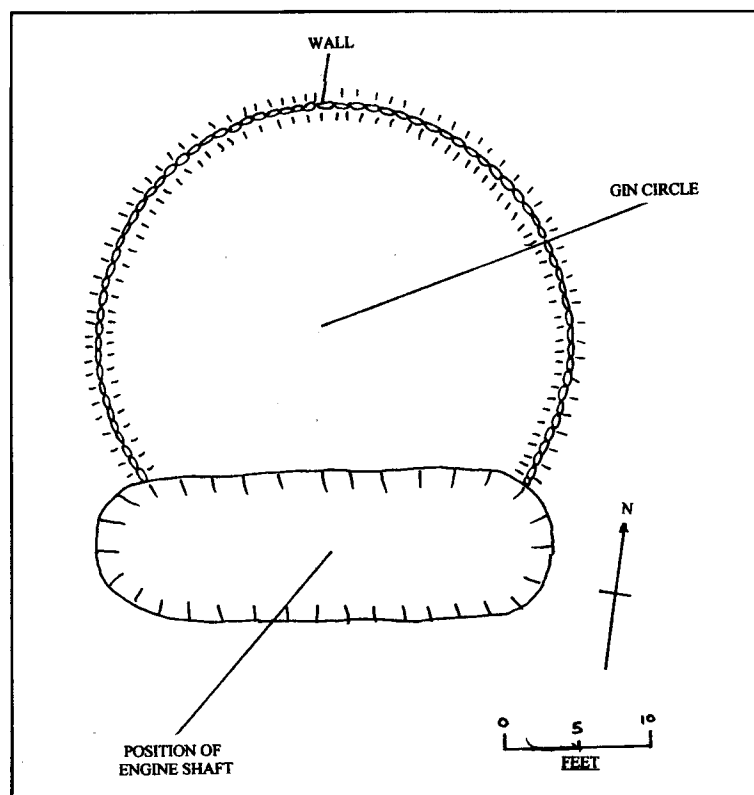


previous site and overlook Peak Forest. The mine is on the continuation of the Watts Grove Vein, but at the present time its name remains unknown. The mine is enclosed within a belland yard wall, with the surface features largely untouched. There are several vein exposures, some fenced for safety, a circular water storage pond and nearby buddle dam, two concrete capped shafts and two walls of "deads" filling the worked-out vein. These walls remain as sound in construction today has when they were built. In the vein exposure alongside the more noticeable wall, are the marks of three "egg and eye holes" and a single shothole.



3. Gin Circle. SK1231 8078 (Fig.4)

This feature is also on Watts Grove Vein, but further northeast, in the direction of Castleton. The circle is surrounded by a low wall and it appears that the engine shaft has run-in leaving a large oblong depression in the vein. This feature is worthy of note because it is one of the last walled gin circles to be found in the district. To the west of this feature there is a small open shaft surrounded by a wall in a very ruinous state, possibly the remains of a coe. Close by is a large circular water storage pond. The proper name of this mine site, known for many years as Watts Grove, is Joule (Jowle) Grove. Watts Grove itself is further along the vein in the direction of Peak Forest at SK1223 8072. Along the vein in an easterly direction there are again several capped shafts, one of which is enclosed within a small belland yard. SK12618099.



4. Ore hopper (ore kiln, bouse teem). SK 1260 8002 (Fig. 5)

This ore hopper is close to the public footpath that follows the course of Oxlow Rake. The hopper is horseshoe shaped, lined with dressed limestone and floored with limestone slabs, built into the side of a large hillock. A grass-covered drainage channel can also be seen leading from the hopper. The feature is in a good state of preservation. The large hillocks and opencuts of Oxlow Rake and a large, circular, rubble-filled depression, possibly a water storage pond or run-in shaft, lie adjacent at SK1260 8005.

5. Old Moor Mine. SK 1337 8079 (Fig. 6)

Remains here, on Oxlow Rake, consist of a run-in shaft at SK 1340 8083, two vein exposures, both containing walls of deads at SK 1339 8079 and 1332 8075, a capped engine shaft at SK 1338 8080 and, nearby, a

Fig. 2 (top). Plan of Burning Drake lead mine surface remains, Eldon Hill (1996).

Fig. 3 (centre). Plan of mine on Watts Grove Vein, surface remains, Eldon Hill (1996).

Fig. 4 (bottom). Plan of gin circle on Watts Grove Vein, Peak Forest (1996).

partly grass-covered crushing circle. All are enclosed within a very large belland yard. At SK 1331 8079 there appears to be a stone-stemple-roofed level, located at the bottom of a surface depression. Parallel, to the south, is the smaller Dayside (Daisy) Rake, containing several small open shafts, one of which is located inside a small coe, SK 1340 8073. This part of the rake, along with its continuation in the direction of Peak Forest has remained largely untouched since mining ceased.

6. Howe Grove. SK 1478 8176 (Fig. 7)

This site on Dirtlow Rake, together with Siggate Head Mine lower down the rake, has survived unravaged by modern-day mining activity. The remains consist of a large coe built into a hillock, a run-in shaft, a grass covered crushing circle and stone, water storage pond and a stone-lined drainage channel. In close proximity to the site can be seen a large opencut in Dirtlow Rake with some poorly defined pickmarks on the vein walls in several places. A short distance lower down the rake is a small fenced enclosure that contains a climbing shaft complete with stone footholds. This shaft, and the adjacent main site is a preservation project undertaken by members of the Society.

7. Ore hopper (orekiln, bouse teem). SK 1381 8206 (Fig. 8)

This hopper on New Rake is smaller in construction than the one previously noted on Oxlow Rake. It is oblong in shape and is also built into the side of a hillock. Nearby can be seen the remains of large water-storage ponds with grass-covered drainage channels leading from the now-cultivated fields lying on the south side of the rake.

8. Hallam's Venture or Hartledale Bottom Mine Gin Circle. SK 1581 8052

In the past there were at least fourteen gin circles to be found on Moss Rake. These, apart from the circle at Hallams Venture Mine, have been destroyed by 20th century opencast-mining of the rake. The circle is to be found near to the entrance of the large, present, workings of Starmin plc. The grass covered circle survives along with the capped engine shaft. The present day opencast miners have indicated they will not obliterate this feature.

9. Old Man's Crosscuts. SK1471 8022 (Fig. 9)

Recently (1995), during opencast excavations in Moss Rake, three handpicked cross-cuts were discovered in the northern cheek of the vein, approximately six metres below the surface. The side of the vein in this location is covered in sweeping pickmarks. The cross-cuts, of coffin-level type, were driven in an attempt to locate ribs of ore running parallel to the main vein. They are believed to be of the late 17th or early 18th century period. Two of the crosscuts have since been obliterated by opencasting operations, though photographs were taken before destruction. Also to be found in this locality at SK1491 8028 is the Upper Cross Engine Shaft, topped by a small iron framed headgear. The shaft is approximately 149 metres (490 feet) deep

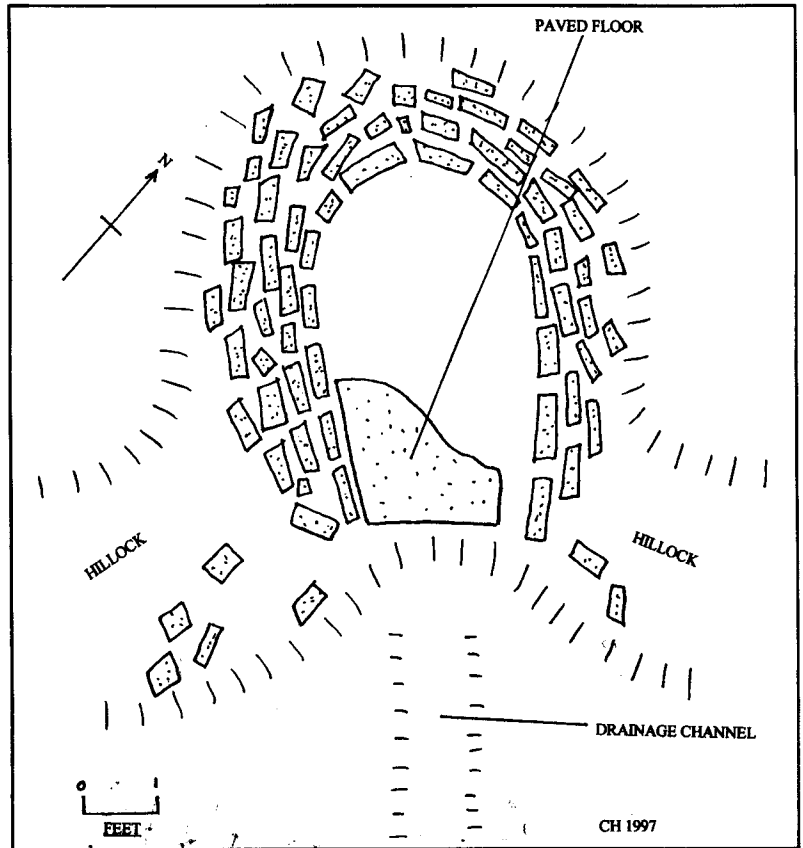
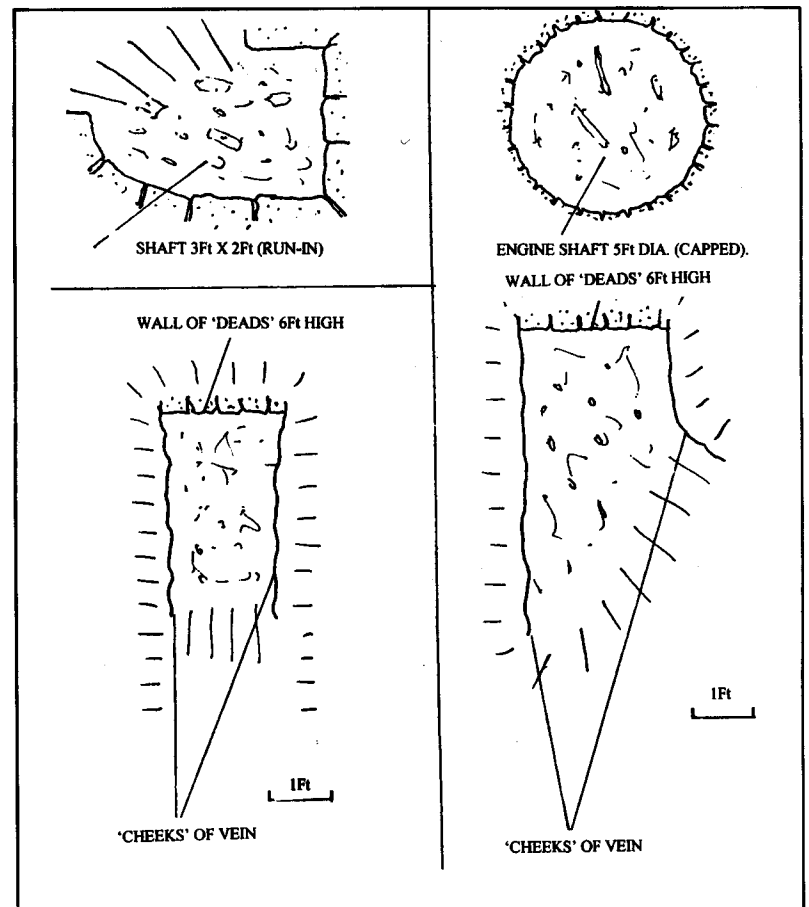


Fig. 5 (top). Plan of an ore-hopper on the surface at Oxlow Rake, Peak Forest (1996).

Fig.6 (below). Plan of surface remains at Old Moor Mine, Castleton (1996)



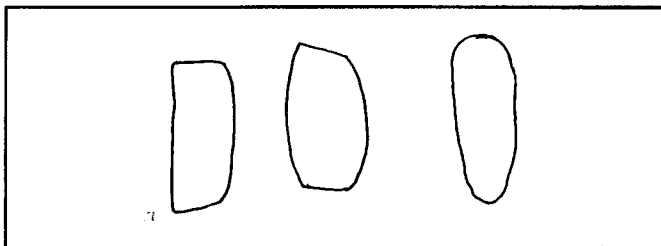
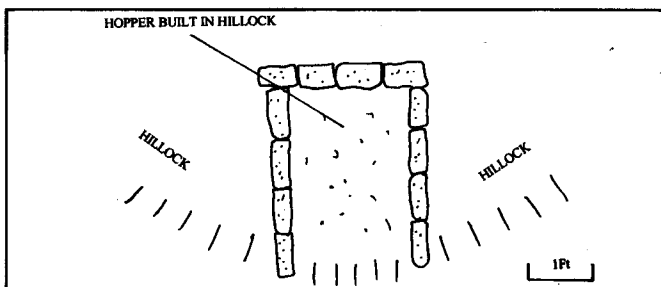
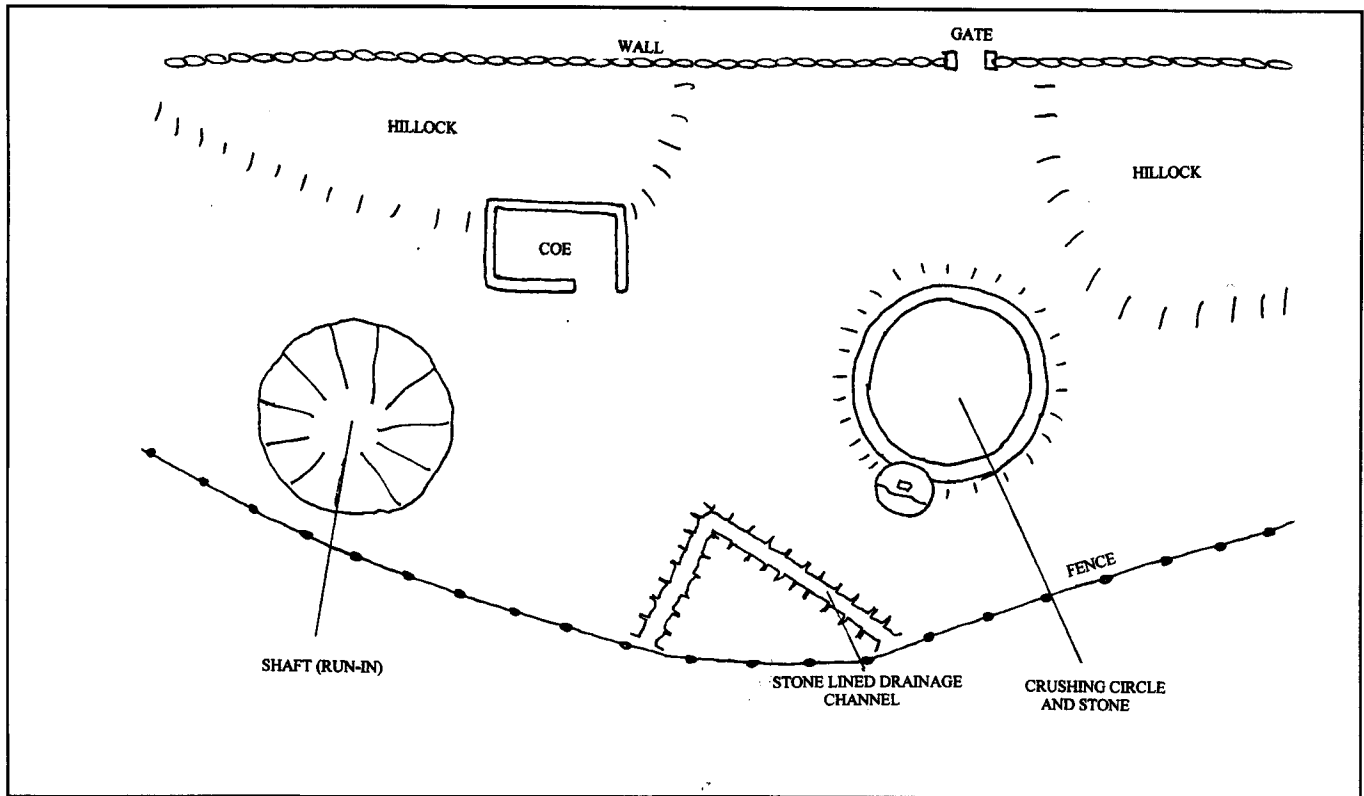
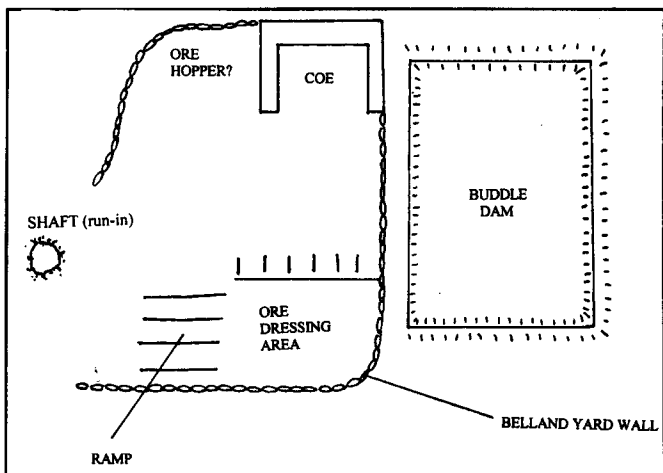


Fig. 7. Surface remains at How Grove Mine, Dirlow Rake (1997).
 Fig. 8. Ore hopper on New Rake, Castleton (Figs 8,9,10 =1996).
 Fig. 9. Sections of "Old Man's" cross-cuts, Moss Rake, Bradwell.
 Fig. 10. Sketch Plan of surface at New Rake Bottom, Bradwell..



round and ginged at the top. Nearby is a well-preserved, open climbing-shaft at SK 1503 8029.

10. New Rake Bottom. SK 1484 8034 (Fig.10).

The remains at this small mine are located a short distance from the previous site, about 90 metres to the north of Moss Rake. They consist of a small coe, blocked shaft, crushing floor with a limestone access ramp and what is thought to be another example of an ore hopper, all enclosed within a belland yard wall. Adjacent to the site are the grass-covered remains of a large buddle dam. A short distance along the vein from this site can be seen very narrow (un-fenced) stopes at SK1478 8032, open to the surface and thought to be very old workings.

11. Moss Rake (west end). SK1376 7971 (Fig. 11)

This part of Moss Rake remains virtually untouched by modern opencast miners, although the hillocks further along the rake in the direction of Peak Forest were removed about 30 years ago. The remains include large opencuts in the vein, several sleeper-capped shafts, a coe and, nearby, a large buddle dam. This dam is one of the best examples of its type in the area. Alongside it there is an unusual, oblong shaped depression with two different floor levels. This could be the site of a shallow shaft and adjacent pump for water for use in the ore dressing process. In the immediate vicinity, there is another unusual feature, in the form of a circular shallow depression surrounding a deeper depression at the centre. The author believes that this was once the site of a crushing circle. The circular depression marks the now removed stone track and the central depression is where the pivot post has been removed. The author is open to any other suggestions to what this feature could be. Between this site and Royal Oak Mine there are several open shafts, one of which is inside a small coe at SK 1344 7963. Also in this field is a branch of Moss Rake which has an isolated, ruinous mine site enclosed within a belland yard wall. SK1350 7955.

12. Royal Oak Mine. SK 1279 7939

The remains, on this westerly continuation of Moss Rake, comprise numerous sleeper-capped shafts, some enclosed in small coes. A large crushing stone has been placed in an upright position, but when and by whom is unknown. The shafts at this locality are dotted about the site, apparently not on any definite vein and may be very old shallow shafts known as "castholes". These shafts were sunk in an attempt to locate the main vein or branch veins from it.

13. Hills Venture Mine. SK 1253 7925

A small mine located on the side of a dry valley that leads down to the village of Peak Forest. The remains consist mainly of a well-preserved crushing circle currently partially covered by rubbish. Hopefully, permission will soon be obtained to clear away this rubbish and uncover the feature. Moss Rake, from here, continues down the side of the dry valley in the direction of Peak Forest, marked by several sleeper capped shafts and associated hillocks that end abruptly when the rake encounters the outcrop of the Peak Forest Sill.

14. Un-named Mine. SK 1481 8090 (Fig.12)

This is found on the continuation of the New Venture Vein, a short distance from the eponymous mine. At surface is a coe, shaft, ore dressing area and a shallow buddle dam, all enclosed within a belland yard wall. Nearby at SK1492 8093 is a large coe and at SK1503 8090 there is a small oval-shaped, open shaft. The vein here remains untouched and can be seen crossing the head of a dry valley and the fields beyond, in a westerly direction.

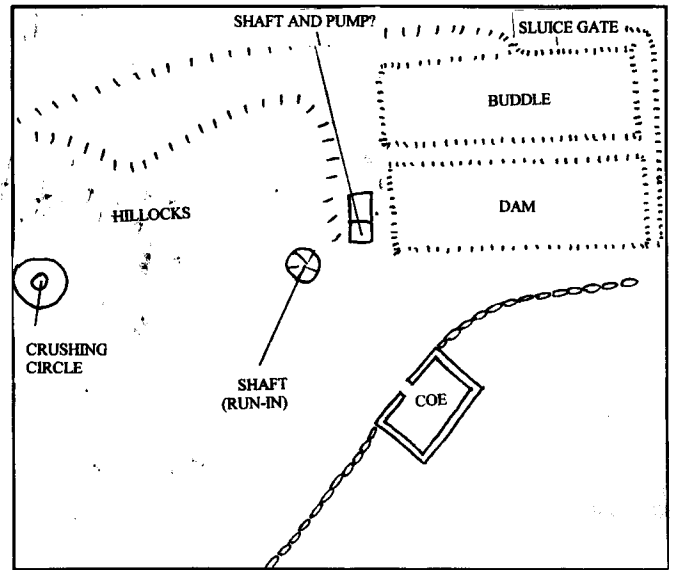
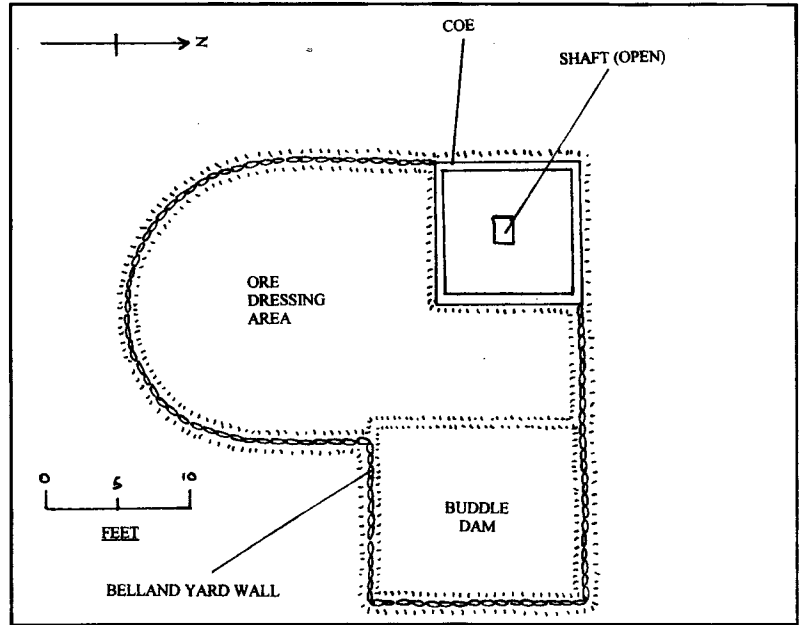
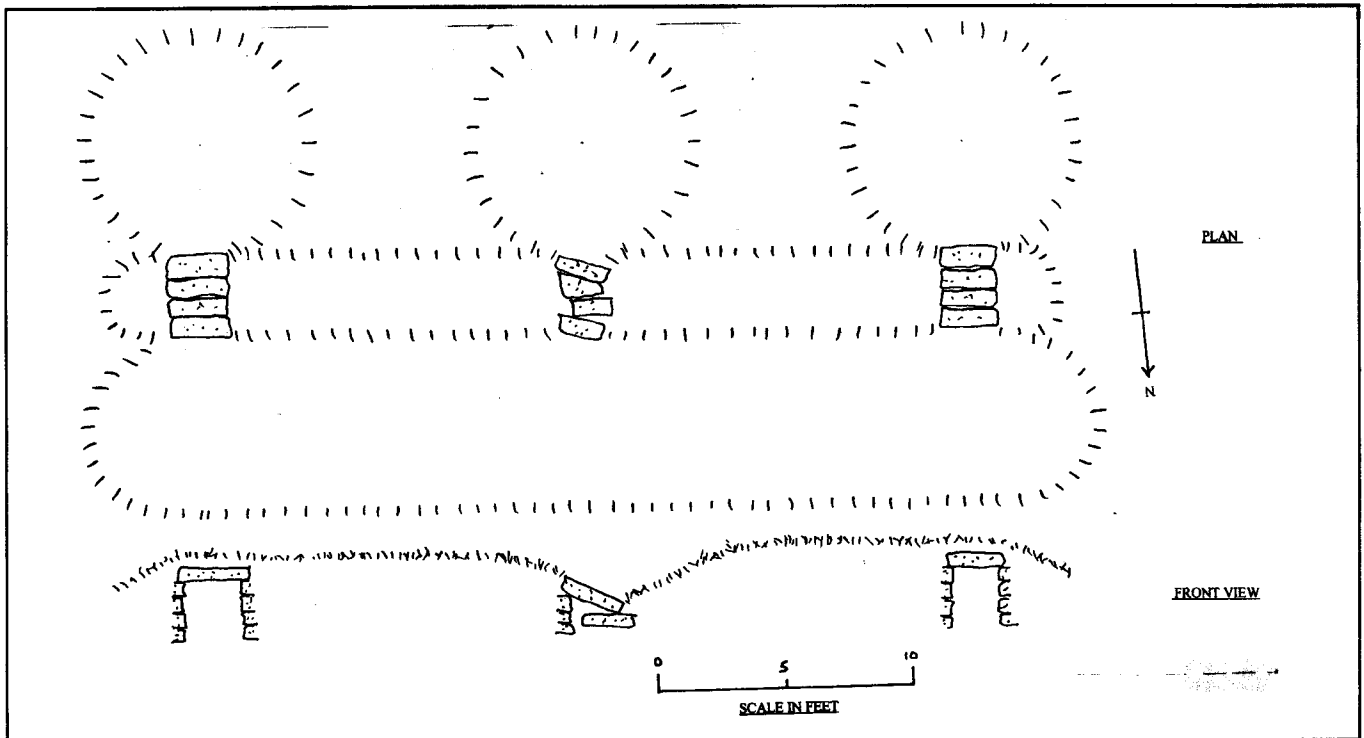


Fig. 11. Surface plan of mine site at west end of Moss Rake, Peak Forest (not to scale) (1997).

Fig. 12. Surface plan of site at New Venture Vein, Bradwell (1996).

Fig. 13. Plan and elevation of limekilns near New Venture Vein, Bradwell (1996).



15. Limekilns. SK 1472 8082 (Fig. 13)

These three small kilns, built into the side of the dry valley, are quite an unusual feature. The size of the kilns suggests that they were built to supply the local area with burnt lime, perhaps using limestone obtained from the local mines (?). Another well preserved limekiln in the vicinity is at SK1422 8048, close to a large ruined building.

CONCLUSION.

The sites and isolated remains described in this article are all worthy of documentation although they are not unique in the context of the whole Derbyshire mineral field. As several of the sites/remains are the last examples of their kind in the area and are therefore especially important, they should be preserved if at all possible. Several of the sites are being considered for minor attention to assist long-term preservation. This is an ongoing programme by a small group of Society members. It is hoped that this article will generate interest in the mining remains that are to be found in the area, perhaps previously overlooked. The author would be grateful to hear of any other remains in the area of which he is not aware

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of the remains noted above are located close to public rights-of-way, but where otherwise, I am pleased to thank all of the landowners who have allowed me to visit and survey the remains to be found on their land. I would also like to thank Dr J.H. Rieuwerts, who has drawn my attention to various remains, noted in this article and for the many informative discussions that we have had regarding the area and its mining history and surface remains. Last, but not least, my thanks are due to the numerous people who have accompanied me during several walks in this fascinating area..

Chris Heathcote,

Postscript (by J.H. Rieuwerts)

The mining remains in the Peak District ore-field are under constant threat and are disappearing at an alarming rate. A recent survey by the writer, on behalf of the Peak Park Planning Authority, compared the number of significant sites extant in 1950 to those remaining to-day, which illustrated the rapid rate of destruction. Taking only two examples to demonstrate the point, in 1950 a total of 93 horse-gin circles remained (from a recorded total approaching 200); 49 survive, whilst the number of crushing circles has declined from 15 to 5 respectively.

This article by Chris Heathcote is, therefore of particular significance and importance in the range of publications issued by the Society. Recording of conservation activities is rarely seen in detail and it is hoped that Chris' contribution will stimulate further submissions from members of the Society.

Finally a plea to members - if you see, or know of mining sites under threat, **please** let the Convenor of the Preservation Study Group know, John Barnatt, know (see Membership Services page for address). There is very good communication and co-operation between the Peak Park Planning Authority and the Society, and also with some mineral operators. We may be able to save for posterity a threatened site, or at least a part of it.

J.H. Rieuwerts.