

HORSECROFT SHAFT, WINSTER

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Abstract: A previously unknown shaft 96.3 m deep was uncovered near the Orchard and Plackett Mines at Winster and descended on 25 August 1991. A description is given of the mostly short levels leading off.

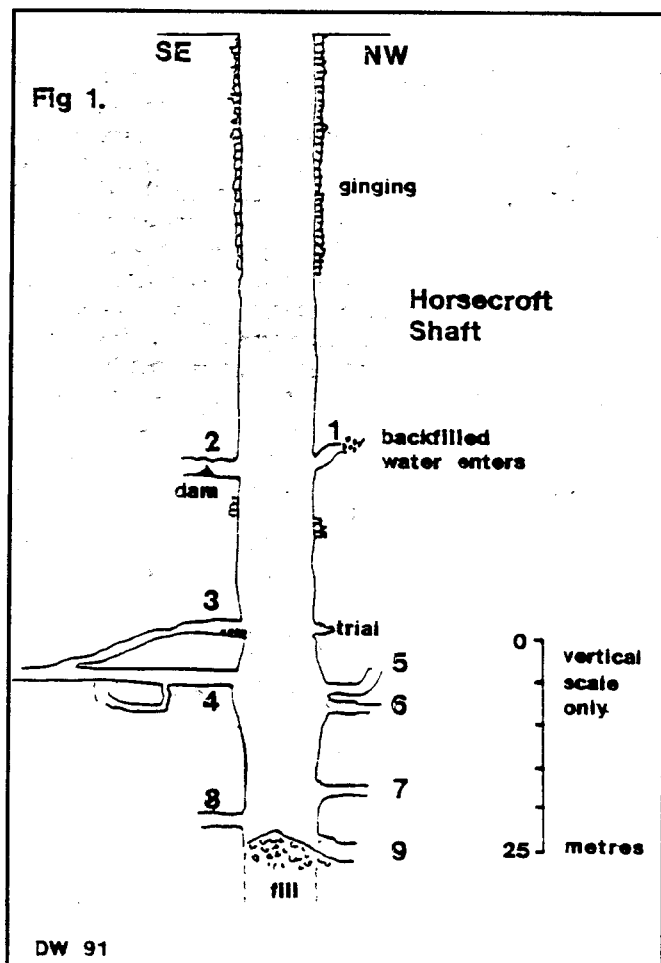
LOCATION

SK24056071. At the west end of the Main Street of Winster, the road forks to the left and straight ahead, with the farm track to Horsecroft Farm almost immediately on the right. Following this track a gate is reached after roughly 50 metres. The shaft is straight ahead from the gate, and was visible after a further 30 metres, though its cap is now buried beneath earth.

SHAFT SURVEY

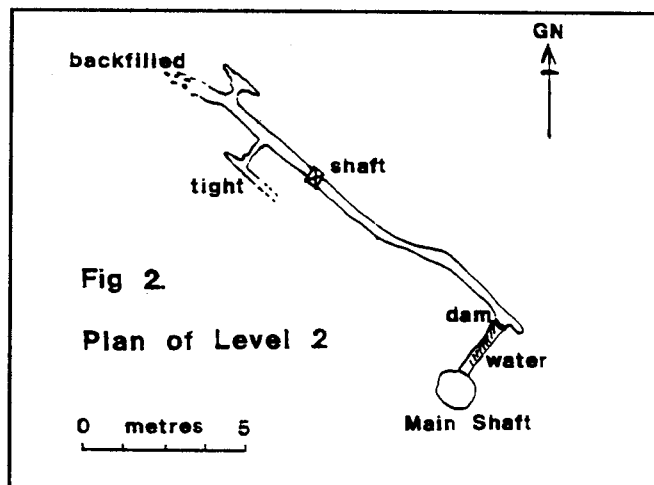
After a few initial problems uncovering the shaft, the large gritstone sleepers were finally removed to expose a fine circular shaft 1.8 m in diameter. This was lined with dressed gritstone ginging to a depth of 29.2 m. Whilst descending through the ginging holes were noticed. These are peculiar as they do not correspond with the holes on the opposite side of the shaft, so it rules out their use for stemples.

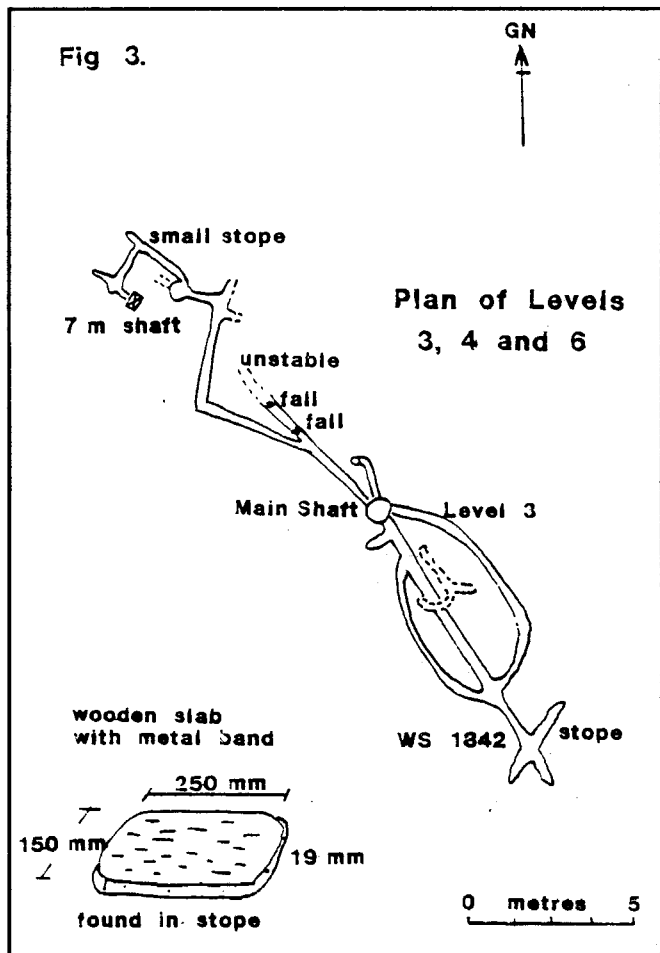
Below the ginging the shaft widens out to 1.9 m in diameter and it maintains this section down to the 50 m mark, where it contracts to 1.8 m. The first level from the shaft was encountered at 52.5 m from the collar (all the levels off the shaft will be described later). This left the shaft at a bearing of 190°. The next level was found at 53.5 m, bearing 40°. Down at 57.8 m depth a stone wall or ginging was found, which started at 220° on one side of the shaft and 40° on the other, being slightly higher at 57 m on the 40° side. Further down the shaft, at 72 m depth another level leaves the shaft at a bearing of 359°, with another at 72.5 m at 180°. At this depth the shaft closes down to 1.7 m. Proceeding down further the next level is the 78.5 m, at 170°. At this point the shaft widens markedly to 2.3 m in diameter and is rather uneven in section. The next level, at 79 m, is at 320° degrees, and a little further down the shaft the 80 metre level leads off at 320°, with the shaft still maintaining the 2.3 m diameter section at this point. At 92 m another level is reached on 170°, and a short final descent from here leads to the shaft bottom at 96.3 m. At the base of the shaft it had narrowed to 1.7 m in section and was filled with much agricultural waste and other rubbish which had accumulated.



LEVELS OFF THE SHAFT

- 1) The 52.5 m level is only a short trial. It extends inwards for 1 metre and it has water entering from the back.
- 2) The 53.5 m level entrance measures 1.2 m wide by 1.2 m high. It extends for 5 m and then turns to 320°, and after 38 m is backfilled (Fig 2). A side passage is found 8 m before the backfill leading off at 220° to a "T" junction. To the right is just a small trial, but to the left the passage dips down after 3 m into a fairly tight hole which was not

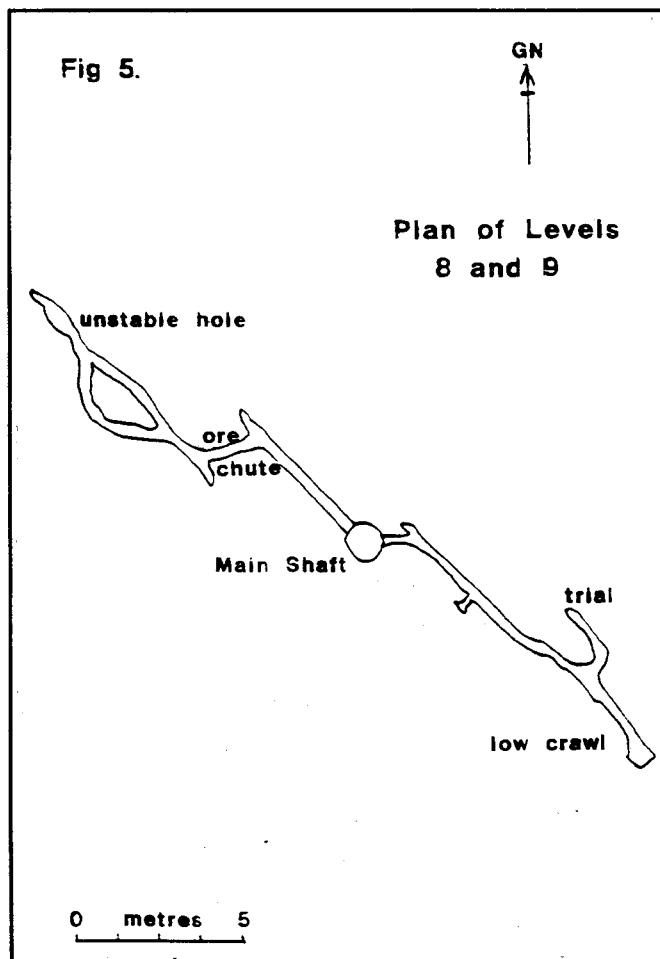




explored. Towards the shaft a further 18 m there was a shaft in the floor which was estimated to be 6 m deep, but was not explored. In the passage off the shaft a clay dam had been constructed across the passage, with, peculiarly, the water on the shaft side, and not in the level behind the dam. In the water of the dam a short length of ladder was found, the purpose for which is unknown. There were also lengths of track or skid rails along the 38 metre length of passage.

3) The 72 m level entrance is 1.1 m wide by 1.2 m high, and only extends inwards for 2 m to a blind heading. It was obviously just a trial. The 72.5 m level is partially backfilled, resulting in the present day entrance to it being only 0.9 m by 1 m high (Fig 3).

The 78.5 m level (Fig 3). This leaves the shaft from a ledge in the side and extends inwards for roughly 15 to 20 m into the bottom of stope workings which run from left to right at right angles with the main passage. The passage continues straight ahead out of the stope, but was found to be blind after roughly 2 m. Back towards the shaft and in a chamber, the initials "WS" were found carved on the wall with the date "1842". It is suggested that these could represent Will Shaw. The same initials, with the full name adjacent, have been found in the workings of the Old Millclose Mine at Wensley. From the chamber a passage exits on the right, which after roughly 15 metres enters the side of the main shaft at a higher level. Also from the chamber a passage on the left runs for 7-8 metres before oxbowing back into the main passage. A hole was found in the floor of the main passage between the shaft and the chamber, but was not descended. Various other trial levels trying to locate the mineral deposits were present. In the end of the main stope, pieces of wood were found which were roughly 25 cm long by 15 cm wide surrounded with an iron band.



The 80 m level left the shaft via an entrance measuring 1.2 m wide by 2.4 m high. This passage extends for roughly 10 m until a "Y" junction. To the right a fall is reached after 5 m, to the left is an incline up-dip at an angle of 45°. At the top of the incline the passage turns to the right and after 3 m a junction is reached with passages left right and straight ahead. To the right and straight ahead were followed to their ends, but were found to be nothing more than trials. To the left the passage enters a chamber, and from there slopes up-dip at an angle of 30°, after 2 m a junction is reached. Straight ahead is blind, but to the left a chamber is entered after 3 m, with passages leading off left and right. The right is blind after a short distance. To the left the passage ends in a 7.55 m deep winze which was not explored. Back in the first chamber a calcite-bottomed channel was found in the floor. This series of passages follows pipe workings and mineral has been extracted from small chambers, which are now devoid of their contents.

4) The 92 metre level (Fig 4). This entrance is 1.8 m high by 1.5 m wide. It extends for roughly 9 metres to a "Y" junction with passages leading off both left and right which both lead to blind headings after a short distance.

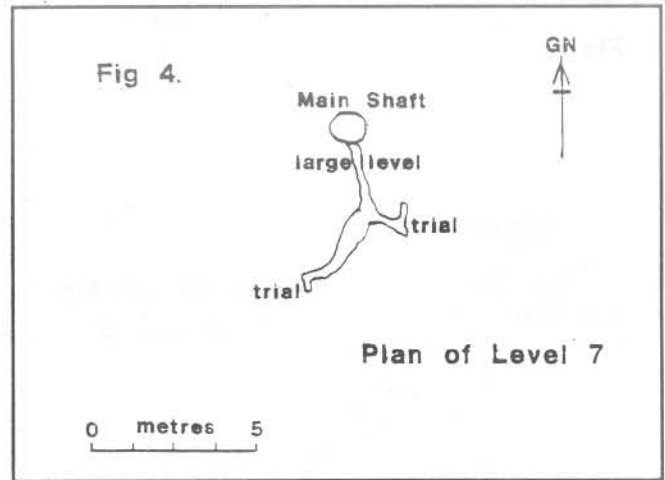
5) The 95 m level heads away from the side of the shaft for 8 m to where stacked deads end progress in this direction (Fig 5). A short dig above the deads there showed there to be no apparent way on. A metre back from the wall of deads an ore chute comes down from the left. This ascends at an angle of 60°, at the top



Descent of Horsecroft Shaft in August 1991

of which the passage is 1.5 m wide by 1 m high. The passage continues at a bearing of 320° for roughly 20 m through collapsed ground, where timbers which were supporting stacked deads had rotted away, and letting the deads fall into the passageway below. At the end of the passage a hole in the floor was located which was sunk in beneficiation fines, which was not descended owing to the instability of the area.

The 96.3 m level - shaft-bottom. At the foot of the shaft there is much rubbish, largely agricultural waste, e.g. steel-work and farm refuse. A level leaves the shaft at a bearing of 100° , 0.4 m high by 1 m wide and dips down at an angle of 45° degrees for 5 m to the original level of the floor. Signs of water backing up are noticeable at this point, such as pieces of wood which have floated down on to the floor of the level from the base of the shaft. Along the passage it turns to a bearing of 130° for roughly 20 m following vein workings, which includes a flat-out crawl for 7 m into a mud coated chamber 3 metres in diameter which was blind.



SUMMARY

This shaft appears to be unrelated to the other mines in the vicinity, viz. Plackett and Orchard. The large size of the shaft is also a puzzle. There seem only two possibilities why so many workings go off of it. First that the shaft was at one time part of the Plackett system, but the connecting passages have collapsed, or secondly, the shaft was sunk narrow at first and then enlarged in an attempt to try and locate the vein.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks are due to Mr. Gilbert Heathcote for his kind permission to descend the shaft, which is on his land. John Wilmot, Keith Anderson and Brian Saville for their help with the descriptions of the underground workings, and lastly the surface party which was comprised of Andy Gillings who operated the winch, Norman Birkett, Dave Williams, John Peel, Terry Worthington, and Steve Gould.

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