

NOTES ON THE WESTERN ELTON MINING FIELD

by

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The veins to the west and south west of Elton are of predominant NW-SE direction with the exception of the very powerful Coast Rake which passes from east to west almost beneath Elton Church.

The village has a rather remote appearance but during the 18th and 19th centuries was the scene of much mining activity, a fact borne out by the intensively worked ground accompanied by the usual signs of "beehives", shaft hollows and hillocks which are to be seen in almost every field.

Elton is bounded on its western side by Gratton Dale which is a typical dry Derbyshire valley. To the north, the ground falls away to the valley of Dudwood Brook whilst to the south it rises to just over 1000 feet O.D. with the village at 900 feet O.D. mark. Thus, there were many opportunities to work the mines with the help of soughs, but owing to sparse information, there are difficulties in placing some of them. In brief, these soughs range both north-east and north-west making use of the lower land which flanks the village in those directions.

Coast Rake has already been considered in detail by Miss Kirkham in her article on Yatestoo Sough (1962). It is known at its most westerly end as Hardwood and its course can be traced from the village. There used to be a shaft next to the Smithy on the north side of West End road, which was sunk onto Coast Rake but no trace of it is now to be found. From here the vein crosses beneath the road to run parallel to Hardwork Lane and Oddo House farm. The hillocks along the vein can be traced here to Gratton Dale.

Another green lane branches off Moor Lane south of the village and is known as Hungerhill Lane. This runs roughly parallel with Hardwork Lane, and terminates to the south west at the now defunct Hungerhill Farm.

Between these lanes lies much disturbed ground containing from east to west, Old Sough Vein, Water Rake, Cowleshaw Pipe, Smiling Fancy, Prikett Seats, Who Can Tell and Cowlica Rake; the latter is a N.W.-S.E. vein of greater length than the majority in this area.

It was to these veins that Gratton Sough was driven. The tail of this sough has totally run in (Rieuwerts 1966, p 15) "On the floor of the dale is a small building which looks as though it may have contained a ram pump. Water flows out of a pipe and in dry weather it sinks to the north on the floor of the valley and the stream bed is dry. Just above the building there is a run-in back into the hillside. As with many hollows it becomes less defined with the course of years but some years ago it definitely had the appearance of a run in sough tail. Above it is a circular hollow which could have been the first shaft on the sough". This, and other information is quoted from an unpublished manuscript by Miss N. Kirkham. At the end of Hardwork Lane is a small enclosure with a barn to the north. In the next field (field 290) is the Sough Shaft (Level Shaft, Hard Shaft) (Nat. Grid. Ref. SK 209608). This shaft is covered with large weathered limestone blocks but, unfortunately, a stone dropped between the blocks strikes an obstruction about 10 ft down so one can presume it has run in. The same applies to the next shaft to the east. Gratton Sough was driven about 1770. To the west of the Sough Shaft in Gratton Dale at about 800 feet O.D. in the side of the dale, a large cave like opening is the point where a vein marked on an old plan as Wasp Nest comes to day, (SK 208608)

This ranges towards the Sough Shaft and is obviously a very old working. There is much calcite in the walls and after some fifteen feet of hands and knees crawl one is able to stand up in a stoped rift. A strong draught can be felt issuing from the mouth of this working. Wasp Nest vein has its continuation on the west of the dale and is marked in field 127 as Old Lead Mines on the Ordnance Survey 6 inches: 1 mile map SK 26 SW. There is no evidence of a similar level entering the hillside however.

Further down the dale opposite the remains of a drystone wall to the west, is another opening. It is a narrow sloping rift in appearance not unlike a draining level and this, no doubt, was part of its function, it corresponds to the position at which Cowlica Rake enters the dale from the south east. It is probable that the vein was worked and drained from this rift (209609) for some distance, as the first indication of a shaft on the vein does not appear until just before the east wall of Twigg Close to the north of the end of Hardwork Lane behind the barn.

"On the east side of Gratton Dale, about 800 feet from the road, near the small side valley coming down from the east, I once saw a steady flow of very clear water coming from a stone drain (1 foot 2 inches high by 1 foot 6 inches wide) with a flat slabbed top. This was at the bottom of the wall which borders the stream on this side, and could have been an outlet from an underground stream coming down under the side valley but above it there is a mound (marked as "shaft" on the O.S. map) about 150 feet to the east. Workings come down from the side valley and following these up, the vein branches and joins again and appears to be a break from Coast Rake. So evidence appears to be that this is a small sough".

There is some evidence to suggest that there is an old sough driven from Dale End with a view to unwatering Coast Rake and/or the odd vein ranging almost north-south in Peas Furlong, a triangular stretch of ground between Hardwork Lane and Gratton Lane. This stretch is marked on a plan

from near the footbridge over the stream at Dale End on the footpath to Cliff Lane, through Devils Den (field 199) to run parallel to Gratton Lane finishing at a shaft mound near the road in field 232 at 750 ft O.D. No evidence of a sough tail has been found and it may be that this level was never completed. This may possibly be Wrath Sough, (Rieuwerts, 1966, p.39).

Cow Close Sough, started in 1702, was directed to the Cow Close Mine, the main shaft of which lies in an enormous hillock 300 yards due south to Back Lane on the 1,000 ft. contour (225606).

The Sough tail (224614) has run in and only a damp muddy channel is to be seen beside Dudwood Brook. In the field above the tail are one or two shaft mounds and the first open shaft lies on the top west corner of the field near the stile (224613). In summer it is difficult to see as vegetation masks the collar which lies in a barbed wire enclosure. cursory inspection revealed that the ginging had collapsed and its depth was about 20 feet to water.

The sough continues in a S.S.W. course to cut Hackwood vein just beyond the field boundary. The Hackwood Sough, mentioned in reckonings of the 1740s (Rieuwerts 1966, p.15), is probably another name for Cow Close Sough, as it is unlikely that two separate soughs would have been driven.

The Hackwood vein is delineated by one or two small shaft mounds which have recently been half obliterated by pipe-laying activities; no open shafts on the vein are to be seen.

The Cow Close Sough then ranges due south and parallel with Hackwood Vein to Stevens Shaft (224610) on Coast Rake. This large shaft is situated just east of the Elton-Dudwood Farm footpath 25 yards north of East End Road. It is covered with large gritstone blocks but one can peep between them to see a beautifully gritstoned lined shaft of large proportions. This inspection is made most unpleasant by the fact that Elton finds this shaft a wonderful place to get rid of sewage so one cannot hang about too long. Dudwood brook seems to be similarly polluted. Elton would do well to invest in a filter bed! The sough then continues due south to cut the Cow Close Vein. Assuming a sough loses 10 ft. of level per mile this means that the sough should cut the shaft at 320 feet below the collar.

Miss Kirkham states that "Cow Close Sough is also known locally as Bateman's Sough also that it was later extended beyond the Cow Close Title to drain mines to the south east round Leadmines Farm, through to Cheney's Venture Mine and Bullstake Turn Mine. The sough is also called Fengals Sough and Lord Scarsdale's Sough. Farey says that in Cow Close pipe in Elton (evidently in later times Cow Close and Elton or Raithe Mine in the churchyard were worked as one) there was a toadstone floor 180 feet wide. Cow Close title in Coast Rake ranged west wards from the shaft in the churchyard, which was the forefield of the Sough, to within a few yards of the road to Alport (Cliff Lane) where there was a pipe working. They also held title to many veins sough of this line. Here Raithe Title in Coast Rake began. Many veins were given to Cow Close title in 1808." (Bagshawe Collection 587-39-1, 587-34-1, 431 A)

It is probable that the name Batemans Sough mentioned above, refers not to Cow Close as a whole but merely to the Leadmines farm extention.

Before the sough reaches Stevens shaft, a level branches off the sough (under field 181) to drive south west beneath Well Street, Elton to Smithy Shaft (221609) on Coast Rake mentioned previously. It is driven along Old Sough Vein and continues to Dark Lane first cutting Level, Wrights or Silver Vein and then Water Rake just north of the junction of Dark Lane and Hunger hill Lane. As the sough relieves Wright's vein it is more than likely that this branch is the Wright's Sough mentioned in Farey's list (1811); although if this is so, some confusion arises because Farey stated that this sough was driven "from the brook near Gratton" which is not the case if this theory is correct (Rieuwerts, 1966, p.39).

Confusion is very easy in placing soughs particularly when a sough is referred to under different names and branch levels are driven from the main sough and are also given a separate name.

If Wright's Sough was a branch of Gratton sough, the Wright vein would have been intersected by this level at about 20 or 30 feet higher than if a branch was driven from Cow Close. Cow Close Tail is a 675 feet O.D. and Gratton has its tail at 725 feet O.D. Wright's vein is nearer Cow Close range than Gratton sough and in addition to obtaining a slightly lower drainage from Cow Close it would not be as far to drive. The sough continues to the Water Shaft (218607) which is to be found in a mound next to and south of Hungerhill Lane a few yards west of its junction with Leys Lane.

The Water Shaft is covered with railway sleepers but appears to be open to its original depth. On the other side of the lane are some water tanks and there is evidence to suggest that the shaft was or is a farm's water supply. There is a small trap door set into the covering of the shaft which would appear to be the exit for a rising main, though none exists to day. The shaft is on the northerly end of the Blakelowfield Title. The sough may also have relieved the Fillbarns Title, a little to the south west. This eries of veins are denoted by very disturbed ground and here, near the lane is a very large "beehive" on the hillock, there are also remains what appears to be a coe built into the hillock.

Beyond Hungerhill farm ruins, a large tract of ground aptly known as Warren Side contains the workings of the Bosenhole Mines (208604).

To add to this highly involved and confusing state of affairs, one can be reasonably certain that Yatestoop Sough was also extended to the Coast Rake (Kirkham Bull P.D.M.H.S. Vol. 1, No. 7, p 6).

There is also the unsolved problem of Tweenwood Sough recorded in 1752 and 1758 (Rieuwerts, 1966, p.36). In documentary references "Tweenwood Sough to be driven south wards out of Tweenwood Close to Elton Mine (west of Stevens shaft) or to near Honey Pot Mine. Tweenwood Close is fields 69, 70, 71, which lie immediately to the north east of Cow Close Sough tail field. Information from Mr Haywood of Dudwood farm states that the area is peculiar in that it abounds with drains which may include a sough tail (flagged or bolt variety). It is possible that Tweenwood sough may have been started here and abandoned for what is now known as Cow Close. Honey Pot Mine, on the

hand is, according to local information, near Westhill Farm on the opposite side of Islington Lane (field 162). If this is so we are confronted with the situation that Cow Close and Tweenwood are totally different soughs, a situation which the writer favours.

Little is known of these workings but they appear to be very old and are typical of early workings with their closely pitted shafts and hollows. Being on the brow of Gratton Dale it would not be surprising if there exists levels driven in from the hillside as at Bincliffe in the Manifold Valley but no search has been made and this has yet to be proved.

- Cow Close Sough (224614) Position and range known. Southerly extensions also known as Batemans Sough, Lord Scarsdale's Sough and Fengals Sough.
- Wright's Sough Not proved. Perhaps extension of Cow Close to Wright's vein contradictory evidence that it was driven from Dale End.
- Yatestoop or Cowley Sough Position and range known. Continued in later 19th century by Mr Wass manager of Mill Close Mine, to drain mines on Coast Rake west of Elton.
- Gratton Sough Probably from near pump house, Gratton dale.
- Wrath Sough (Rath, Raithe) Not proved. May be sough from Dale End.
- Tweenwood Sough (Locally, Queenwood) Not proved. May have been started from Dudwood brook N.E. of Cow Close Sough Tail to Honey Pot Mine near Islington Lane or may be another name for beginning of what is now Cow Close.
- Cuckoo Dick Sough Not proved. Local information sough from Gratton Dale.
- Hackwood Sough Probably another name for Cow Close Sough.
- Cookies Sough Local information that sough of this name driven from near Dale End. May be another name for Cuckoo Dick Sough.

Little has been written on this area and it is hoped that this introduction will be of use as a base for further research. Ideally, the exploration of a few remaining open shafts in this area would perhaps repay the trouble but unfortunately much of the underground evidence, to add support to what has been written here, is inaccessible due to flooding and the running in of draining levels. One can only hope that further documentary evidence will come to light eventually to throw more light on the area.

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References:

- Kirkham, N., 1962, Yatestoop Sough. Bull. P.D.M.H.S., Vol. 1, No. 7.
- Rieuwerts, J.H., 1966, A List of the Soughs of the Derbyshire Lead Mines. Bull. P.D.M.H.S. Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.1042.

Editors Note:

It is known that a considerable amount of exploration of the Elton mines has been carried out during the last few years, but little information has been published. Anyone having unpublished surveys or reports is requested to contact the editor.

