

A LETTER ABOUT MILL CLOSE MINE IN 1918

The following letter was passed round the men at Mill Close Mine in 1918. It has been passed on to the editor by Mr John Millwood of Winster.

To the Derbyshire Miners' Association

Gentlemen,

As instructed by Mr Lee on behalf of the Derbyshire Miners' Association, I visited the Mill Close Lead Mine, Darley Dale on Tuesday the 2nd October, and Wednesday 3rd October, and inspected the places in dispute, as seen by your delegate and the Minister of Production's Engineer, Mr Collins. I presumed from information that I was allowed to visit the places mentioned without recognition of Mr Collins, the Government Engineer, and the Mine Agents, and therefore unable to demand and peruse the Working Costs Account, sales of concentrated ores, methods of cleaning and concentrating on the surface, whether efficient and up-to-date or otherwise.

The following brief report is therefore from personal observation and sifting of conversations between the active parties concerned, and my personal practical knowledge of general mining conditions.

HISTORY. and peculiar methods of payments, old servants, and length of service, petty jealousies, and other matters incidental to an old family mine are very much the same, especially in places whether other mines for work are not available to men with a grievance, causing spirited miners to think a good deal, say nothing, and lose efficiency. These matters you will be aware of, and it is useless for me to say more on the subject.

THE MINE. This is a system of rake veins, pipes, and fissures opening out into small and large cavities running out in all directions and inclinations, the general body of ore making above the hard limestone floors at the 70 fathom level, and cutting out above at the junction of the Black bed, the Millstone grit series being immediately above.

The pipe veins appear as horizontal expansions, running from one rake vein to another in the neighbourhood, and in the past open out into small and large caverns, which are rich and are lined; and sometimes filled with mineral matter, which forms the matrix of the ore - Galena, Blende, Spherytes, Fluor Spar, Calc-spar, Pyrites, Limestone, Clay etc.

The general country rock is limestone, with intrusions of Toadstones, and from the walls of the country the ore is easily broken, the matrix being tough and not hard.

I noticed in particular the length and width at various points, the manner in which the ore terminates and ramifies, and the order in which the matrix and ore are crusted or formed; also the fragments of rock and ore, blende, etc. found mixed in the cavities, and the nature of its adherence to the walls of country rock.

The decomposition of the rock leading to a cavity, and its impregnation of metallic particles of blende, galena and pyrites, and also the course of a series of cavities from rich ground to a mere thread, and from mere threads and small leaders to rich cavities; a host of other details I was unable to note, not having full authority to go deeply into all details.

The general run of good ore showing in the mine at present is not good, or really poor, but moderate. It must not be forgotten that this system of mining is speculative, and that the miner cannot see beyond the blow of his pick or the depth of his drill, a fact which is applicable to both man and master.

I am now of opinion, after carefully thinking over the matter and noting many phases of cavities and leaders, that leaders point to cavities, and rich ground as well as poor, and that in the speculative nature of the ground there is fair scope without bias or feeling in the matter from either side, for bargains to be let as follows:-

- Bargains.
- 1st. Bateman's, north and south in cavity.
 - 2nd. H. Bargh's place; Ingman's Coy - wet hole
 - 3rd. Moseley's; under big lumps.
 - 4th. Goodall's Drive; beginning on leader, Taylor's section.
 - 5th. Baum's Drive; to open out on promising leader, and slope to Black Bed.

30 men breaking and loading; plus waggoners.

EFFICIENCY. Horses should be installed on 70 fathom levels, and waggoners put on loading and waggoning to ore pass.

Old customs and expectation must die out; petty jealousies and pent-up feelings also, and I must impress upon you that each and every man must put out all his best work and skill for all parties concerned, and it would be better for your officials and delegate to impress this thoroughly upon the workmen at a mass meeting.

REMARKS. Bateman's Coy. Ore pass should be cut to bottom

level.

Bergh's place, Ingman's Coy. follow water line, good prospect.

Moseley's. Good show of ore, leave strut, or bridge in, small blocks more dangerous than large blocks.

Barn's Drive. Fair leaders at points in roof of drive, and every prospect of opening out to good ore.

Goodall's Drive. Taylor's section; good leader of ore here, and smoke would come out - bye - ventilate with leak of compressed air.

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

John Saxton

A.I.M.M.,

Mining Engineer.

Malin Bridge
11 October, 1918

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