

# TRIP REPORT – NAMHO CONFERENCE 2022

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June to Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022

The conference was organised by Cleveland Mining Heritage Society with North York Moors Caving Club on behalf of NAMHO. The centre of events was a church in Grosmont used as a village hall where lectures took place and there were social events on Friday and Saturday evenings. There was camping at a nearby Guides bunkhouse (none present at the time) and in a car park near Grosmont.

The conference was attended by Nigel Dibben, Pete Johnson, James Johnson and Sarah Bergin from the DCC.

## Friday

The conference started with field trips on the first day. We selected the visit to the foreshore at Staithes where there had been iron mining for the last couple of centuries. The guides were very knowledgeable in local mining history and showed us much that we would not have been able to recognise on our own. Some of the mining was in the cliffs and ore was tipped down to the foreshore but the ore was also collected from the shore itself. On the rocky shore, there was evidence of rail tracks which would be covered at high tide as well as a large quarried area which could be worked when the tide receded. The workings in the cliffs had mostly collapsed but some which had been untopped were still visible (see picture below). The rocks dip down gently from north to

south so the iron beds were well above sea level at the start of our walk in Staithe but were below sea level as we reached the far end. At first, the iron ore beds looked like limestone beds – they were not the typical rusty colour of iron-rich rock – but it was explained that this is the case in the area where the iron content is not particularly high.

After the trip – and a cup of tea and a cake – we all went back to Grosmont to sign in and chat for the rest of the evening. Fish and chip suppers were provided in the church.

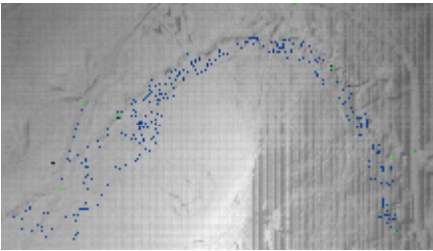


## Saturday

The plan for Saturday was to visit two mines, an iron mine in the morning and a jet mine in the afternoon. The first mine we visited was Coate Moor Iron Mine where we met leaders Colin, Geoff and Peter. We went in by a drift which, it seems, was driven just below the productive level and after a short while we climbed a short distance up into the more profitable workings. Here, there were a number of artefacts such as an air door, hinges, a spade, a hat and bottles as well as graffiti from the 19<sup>th</sup>



century. The mine only worked for a short period from around 1870 to 1876 and there is a fascinating sale bill from 1876 at <http://cmhs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Coate-Moor-Catalogue.pdf> showing all the items used at the mine such as 152 Miners' Drills and a Jim Crow. The trip was not too long which was as well as the passages are not very high! The picture shows a typical passage.



In the afternoon, we moved over to Hutton Lowcross jet mine. The jet mines were worked in from the hillside all around the hill. This can be seen in the Lidar plan to the left. The levels only went in for between 50 and 100 metres but were connected by an intricate network of side passages. We entered and exited by

different ways and fortunately there was a piece of blue coullene along the whole route which can be seen on the picture to the right. ("Don't stray from the rope" we were told!) Jet is fossilised wood and it is mixed in with shales in a bed about 3-4 metres thick. The miners start at the bottom and dig upwards so that the passages we were in were less than 1.5m high near the top of the jet-bearing bed. As well as some evidence of jet, there were also a number of fossils and shale balls and discuses. The mines appear a bit unstable but the trade route seemed to be quite safe and there were only a couple of crawls. All in all, it made a fascinating contrast to the morning trip.



That evening, there was a curry laid on in the venue as well as a bar which naturally was drunk dry by about 9 o'clock. Fortunately, there was a back-up plan and trays of pints kept arriving from the nearby pub.

### Sunday

Another early start! We were off to visit Seaton Drift which is a tunnel driven to connect Grinkle Mine to the coast at Port Mulgrave. Unusually, this drift is shown on the ordnance survey maps as a tunnel because it carried the railway down to the port. However, it is of further interest as the tunnel was an enlargement of a mine gallery and there are connections from it into the adjacent iron mines. We met in the car park of what



is now a caravan site but which was once the engine house and workshops for the railway. We had a good description of the site from Neil before we started and then slid through the entrance into the easy walking height tunnel. It's hard to judge how far we went but before we turned back, we went into some workings on the north side of the drift. These could not be penetrated far before we hid low oxygen levels and had to retreat. The picture shows the bed of iron ore in the wall of the drift. Back up the drift and out to fresh air and we then had time to kill before our last trip so we spent a bit of time in Staithes.

Later we went back to Grosmont for Sarah and James to pack up tents and then up to Eskdaleside Mine, another iron mine. Here we were met by Eric and Steve and we changed and walked down past three other levels (one open) to the main entrance with its ventilation chimney alongside. We were joined by the landowner, Robert, for whom this was his first trip. Once through the shoring at the entrance, it was reasonable walking, a bit higher than Coate Moor although some of the side passages showed evidence of considerable collapse. The route we followed was the main tramway and presumably had been chosen for

having better roofs. We did a bit of a circular tour which took in a number of artefacts such as rails, clay pipes, clog prints, bottles, etc. The picture on the right shows the owner looking at dead-walling in the level.

Following the trip, we got cleaned up and then joined some of the other delegates in the pub for an evening meal and drink until late.

### Monday

On the Monday, there were no underground trips but we split up to join surface visits. Pete went to the alum workings while Nigel went to the museum at Skinningrove mine. The museum is undergoing a major refurbishment and rebuilding so there was no underground experience but we did have a guided tour round part of the village which had built up around the mine.

Overall, it was a very good event in an area where NAMHO has not previously held a conference. We (the DCC crew) only went on field trips but we got a really good insight into mining in Cleveland. There was a programme of talks and anyone interested could read about these in *Descent* (287 – August/September 2022) where Pete Burgess has provided a summary.

I would like to thank James for chauffeuring us around the area up and down some pretty steep hills, along narrow roads and through the ford at Grosmont.

===

