

The Trail above the River

Walk back towards the bridge but before reaching it turn left uphill and pass around the back of the spoil heap to the stile on the edge of the wood. Just over 100 metres beyond the stile, a rock-cut channel begins below and to the right of the path. This is the continuation of the lower leat which passed through the middle of the western mineworkings. It may have taken the form of a wooden trough, cantilevered out over the edge of the rock-face, along the stretch of path from the stile to here. The leat continues to the end of the wood. You will see it as a very prominent ditch below the path.

The path begins to swing left and climb the hill. Stop 3 is at the stile between the wood and the field to the east of it. Do not cross the stile, use it as a view point.



The Eastern Mineworkings

The leat originally continued across this field to a point just this side of the level platform which forms the lower part of the eastern mine-workings. From there a channel or wooden trough carried water downhill to a large waterwheel, measuring 60 feet in diameter, which was installed in 1870. The stone-lined wheelpit still survives. A rope, with a 6 inch diameter, extended from the wheel right back up the hill to a building which can still be seen near the spoil heap at the top of Gundry's Shaft. This housed pumping and drawing machinery. The rope extended even further to Murrays's Shaft.



The lower workings and Gundry's Shaft were also linked by a tramway which brought the mined stone down the hill for processing. The stone was stored in two bins at the front end of the platform and



this whole lower area, like the western mine-workings, was used for processing the lead ore.

Leave Stop 3 and climb the purpose-made steps through Gelli Wood. This is a Larch plantation and some trees have been felled to create the trail. At the top of the slope Bluebells can be seen (at the right time of year) close to the path along with clumps of a small plant called Wood Sorrel. This has leaves arranged in threes very much like clover, and enlivens the sombre woodland in spring by displays of white flowers. The trail crosses a footbridge over a small ravine. On the rocky slope above the bridge, Oak trees cling tenaciously to the rock, their roots seeking sustenance and support in crevices. Keep on through a woodland now dominated by Spruce and you will arrive at a kissing gate into a field at the top of the wood. (Stop 4).



This is the highest point on the trail. Take a breather and look to your right across the fields. From here you can see the top of the spoil tip and the remains of the buildings at Gundry's Shaft.

A better view can be obtained by walking a hundred metres or so up the public footpath. Turning to the left the trail begins its descent to the river. This was originally an incline for trucks carrying stone straight down the hill to

the dressing building. Lower down, the line of the upper leat, which provided water for the dressing building waterwheel, crosses the trail near the stile. Like the lower leat, it started as a channel branching off the river upstream. The channel of the leat can be seen to the right of the path just below the stile as you walk downhill to the western mine-workings.

This trail was developed by the Severn Trent Water Authority with valuable assistance from the Powys Youth Venture, from the Welsh Office (Ancient Monuments Directorate) and the Countryside Commission who gave grant aid.



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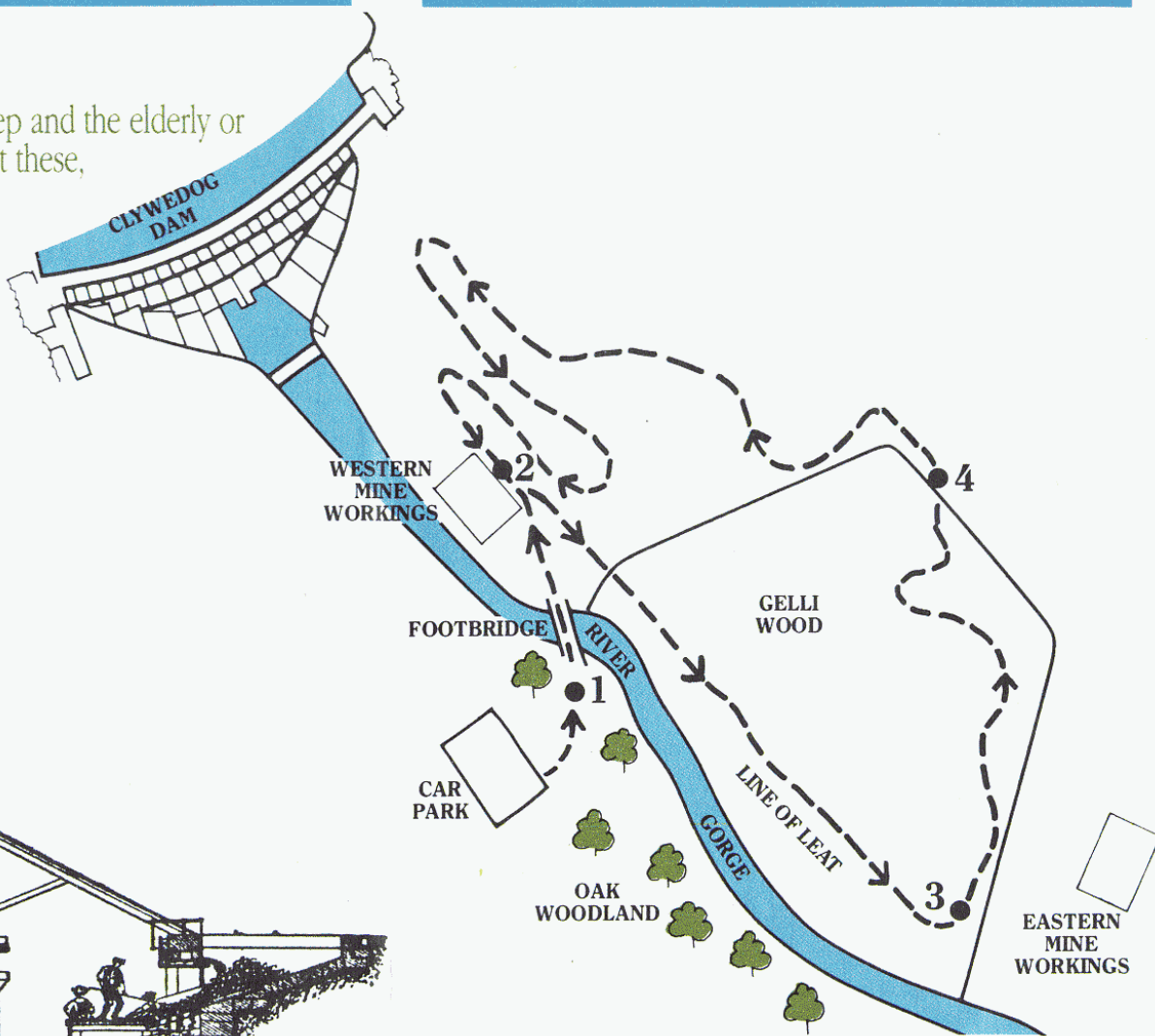
Clywedog Gorge Trail and Bryn-Tail Mine



Parts of this trail are rather steep and the elderly or infirm may not wish to attempt these, although steps are provided. The whole route will take 20 to 40 minutes depending on your pace.

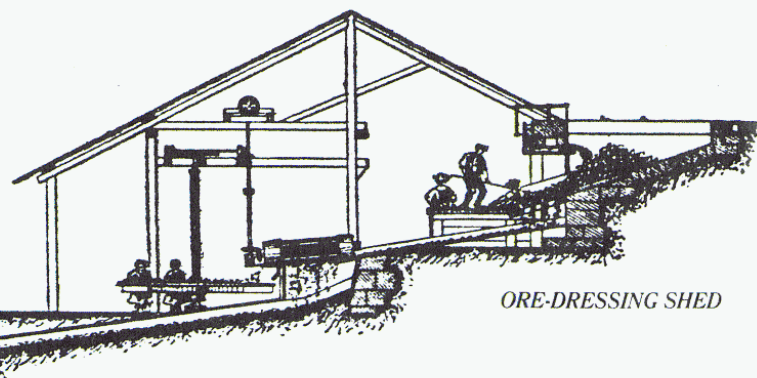
Follow the way-marker posts through the strip of woodland and you will emerge at a narrow and spectacular footbridge which crosses the tumbling River Clywedog. (Stop 1).

From here you can appreciate the way that the soaring concrete buttresses of Clywedog Dam dominate the gorge and the remains of the Bryn-tail Mine below it. Clywedog Dam was built between 1964 and 1967 and towers 72 metres (237 feet) above the river bed. It is not for the direct supply of domestic water but acts as a control



recorded output of lead ore was 384 tons in 1851 but this level of production had dropped off dramatically by the 1860's. From 1869 onwards much emphasis was placed on mining and processing barytes

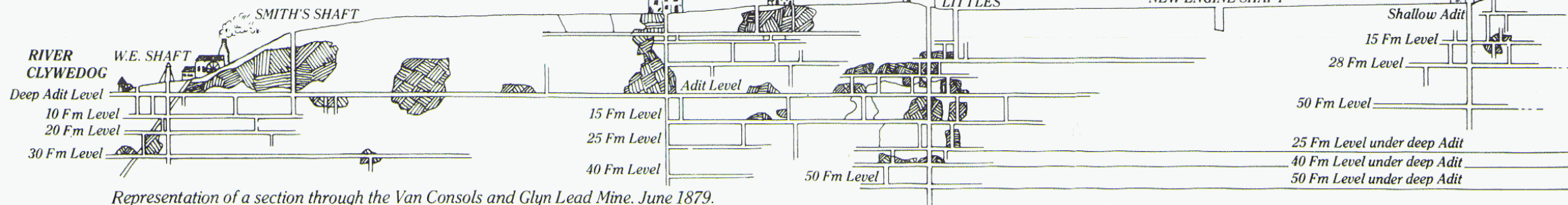
which was used in the manufacture of paint. After struggling for many years the mine venture eventually collapsed in 1884. All the surviving buildings date from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.



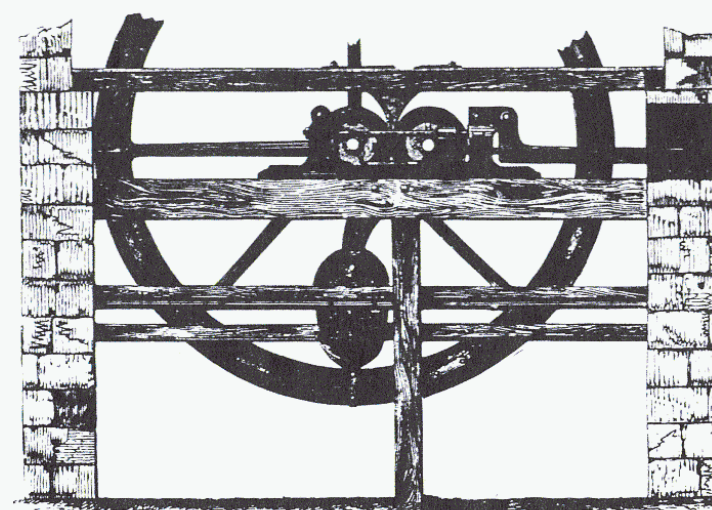
ORE-DRESSING SHED

here on the headwaters of a tributary of the Severn. The heavy rainfall of winter is stored so as to prevent flooding further downstream, whilst in summer water is released to be transported by the river to serve consumers in the lower reaches of the Severn.

When the dam was built, great care was taken to prevent damage to the Bryn-tail Mine remains. These are now in the care of the Welsh Office. Bryn-tail is a very old lead working and the best ore had probably been extracted before the mine's revival in the nineteenth century. The highest



Representation of a section through the Van Consols and Glyn Lead Mine. June 1879.



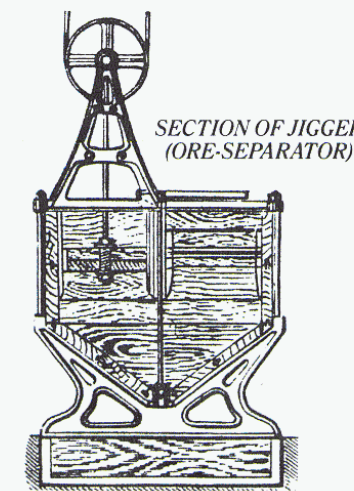
MID-19th CENTURY ORE-CRUSHER

Cross the bridge and enter the Western Mineworkings (see map). These can be best appreciated from a high vantage point so walk past the foundations of a stone cottage or office on your right and up towards the gable end of the long dressing building. Continue up between this building and the ore bin on your right, across a stone slab bridging the leat (water-channel), to a point near the top end of the dressing building. From here, looking down towards the river, you can obtain the most complete picture of the layout of the site. (Stop 2).

On your right is the dressing building. This was two storeys high at its upper end. It seems to have originally been used for crushing and processing lead ore from the nearby shaft and also possibly from other shafts on this hillside. Later it was converted into a barytes mill. The ore-bearing stone (either lead or barytes) was brought down the hillslope in trucks on an incline. These passed through a gap in the top end-wall of the upper storey and the stone was fed into a crusher driven by a waterwheel. This was housed in a pit on your

right and water to power it was carried down in a wooden trough from an upper leat. The barytes was bleached in the stone tanks in the lower part of the dressing building (barytes mill) and dried in earthenware pots placed in the coal-fired ovens, the remains of which can be seen further over to the right (west).

On your left, in the fenced area, you will see the top of the Western Engine shaft. This reached the 30 fathom (180 feet) level in 1864. Walk back down over the leat, turn to the left, and look into the shaft.



The top of the original pump-rod, which extended down the shaft to pump water out of the mine levels, can still be seen. This was connected to a T-bob, the pit for the counterweight of which is behind you on the other side of the leat. Before walking downhill, look at the leat itself. This started as a channel branching off the river well upstream of the mine-workings. It passes through the site and continues on down towards the wood, although later dumping has blocked its course just beyond the mine shaft. Passing downhill, between the counter-weight pit and the remains of a cottage or office, you come to another small stone-lined pit. This held the rocker-beam support for the long metal rod which extended downhill from the mine shaft to a waterwheel, which powered the pump, and would have been in the waterwheel pit below you near the river bank. Below the dressing building and between it and the counterweight pit there are bins or hoppers which were used for storing stone awaiting crushing. The lower bin can be seen to have been built at two different dates.

GLYN SHAFT