

A visitors guide to Parc Mine for Mine Explorers

Guide to Level 2

Warning: Parc Mine is for experienced Mine explorers with appropriate safety equipment. There are many hazards in the mine, but those with the right experience and skill will find the mine both interesting and informative. Please take care and report any issues or problems to Cave Access Limited. Don't forget to cancel your emergency call-out when you exit and remember that mobile signal reception in the forest is practically non-existent...

Entry to the mine is via the level 2 portal which follows the Fuchelstas lode for 100m till it intersects with the principal lode. This has a barrier made of welded RSJ with the top piece missing. It's a pain to climb over if you are rotund. It's easiest to climb up a bit, stick a leg through and then your top half and drop down. If you cannot manage that then you may be able to hang onto the shoulder of someone already inside who can drag you in so you land on your feet. Once inside the passage heads towards the junction with the principal lode. There have been a couple of collapses on the way so the water backs up in a couple of pools just over welly depth. There is a noisy pipe spewing water from the upper level. After a short while the going is dry and passing over more rubble you will reach the junction with the principal lode.

.Beware that the passage junction is not on solid ground and there is a hole in the middle of the floor between the rails which drops 40m to level 3.

There should be a safety line attached to the compressed air pipes which can be used to clip cows-tails for safety so you can move away from the danger. Just be careful here, the danger is pretty obvious but should be taken seriously!

Turning left the passage heads towards the eastern ladder-way to level 3. Turning right heads towards Llanrwst and Cwffty mines and the western ladder-way.

Heading left

This takes you towards the Bidston Tidal experiment area, the ladder-way to level 3 in-by, the collapsed floorway on the principal lode and the air shaft. There are air pipes on the LHS as you walk along. Just before the experimental area there is a low hole on the LHS which drops to a sub level. There is a 12mm anchor, use this and the air pipe as a belay for ~20m rope if you want to descend using SRT. You end on a pile of rubble with an interesting artifact which is best left untouched... There is not much to see except a load of fine tailings in bags. I guess these were used as stemming to contain the explosive in shot holes. The level slopes off in two directions, which probably lead to vertical drops down to level 3 – if you want to explore then make sure you are on a solid safety line.

A little before the experimental area doorway there is an easy climb on the LHS up to a sub-level with a few brackets etc. There are some bolts for a safety line for the climb, but it's easy.. The passage goes a fair way horizontally to the surface with a fixed RSJ grille which you cannot exit. There are some stopes and these have reached the surface in one place so daylight is visible some distance above you. There is no way out unless you can fly!

Going into the experimental area there is a load of insulation, concrete bases and bits of metal etc. where the pendulums and monitoring equipment were fitted. Towards the end, on the RHS, Parc Air Shaft comes in from above and you can see light and greenery up it. The ladders are untested, but you cannot exit anyway as there is a substantial RSJ cap on the surface. Carrying straight on leads to a section with collapsed flooring. **This is all false floor over a big drop and so this marks the limit of exploration.** A few years ago brave (or foolhardy souls) could carry on along the lode as the flooring was in slightly better condition, but still very risky as there were many holes to step over.

Returning through the Bidston area doorway there is a hole on the LHS (care!) and just after it there is cross-cut on the left. Along here is the ladder-way to level 3. The ladders are OK

and take you to the Parc shaft level – if you want to drop down to level 3 you need a 20m rope and SRT gear as described in the guide to level 3. The floor near the ladders is rotting, but over mostly solid ground so care should be taken crossing it. Carrying on leads into a blind crosscut with various short branches – there is not of much of interest.

Be careful when you head back along the main passage to the junction – keep right here and mind the hole in the floor!

Heading right

Heading west along the principal lode, keep to the headwall (LHS) as the footwall has holes which drop to level 3. Some of the holes are covered with short lengths of timber which is completely rotten! The floor has some rubble and timber on it so take care. The railway lines generally give a clue to where is safe to be. There is some impressive stoping above and with a good light you will be able to see a few remaining stemples which are waiting to rot and fall down to join their comrades. After about 250m there is a little workshop area and siding on the left with an old drum which used to have some tools. There are some passages off to the right which intersect the stopes (care!). Somewhere here you can get down to a sub-level which (reputedly) had a set of loaded wagons. It needs re-bolting as what is there is not adequate.

Continuing along the passage a wagon base on the rails is encountered and there is a more substantial pile of debris further on. Take care crossing this and keep to the left. After another 200m there are some ore chutes complete with some interesting bacterial formations (ochre coloured snottites) and a blockage is met. This was probably caused by a collapse of the timber supports in the older parts of Llanrwst Mine. The blockage has a well engineered tunnel through it and this leads to a timbered platform with a ladder ascending and one dropping down a metre or so to the continuation of the passage.

At the side of the ladder is a pump rod and this was attached to the pump at the bottom of Llanrwst New Shaft. Ascending the ladders (**one person at a time**) leads to the top of 'New Shaft' complete with a crab winch. Here the impressive Victorian engineering can be appreciated as there is a big balance bob which converts the horizontal motion from the flat rods into a vertical one for the pump. It is possible to follow the flat rods along a short passage and enter a chamber to the side of Endeans shaft. Here there are two angle bobs which originally connected the flat rod to the main pumping rod which runs down Endeans shaft and provided the motive power. Endeans shaft had a ladder-way to one side, but a fall in the upper reaches knocked some of the ladders away, blocked the base of the shaft and displaced one of the angle bobs. **Do not attempt to climb down into Endeans shaft as the floor is may be unsupported and there is loose material overhead.**

Returning along the flat rod passage to the crab winch there is a passage behind which leads into the Llanrwst workings. This area is very old and unstable. In one of the stopes there is a rope leading up to a hatchway which gives access to a passage on the same horizon as Llanrwst deep adit. If you have SRT gear this is accessible, but there is not a lot to see of interest and no way out. Instead, head back down the ladders to the platform and then down onto the continuation of the main passage. Heading further west another blockage is encountered with a short tunnel on the left. The debris which completely blocked the passage almost certainly came from a collapse in Diagonal shaft. Take care here as some of the pools of reddish liquid on the floor are strongly acidic due to the decomposition of iron sulphides.

The passage continues past more ore chutes in various stages of decay and an area is reached where there are chains attached to plates bolted to the walls. The floor in this area is sound, the chains are 'belt and braces' as there was thought to be some possibility of damage to the floor from tub movement.. Keep to the left and then be careful crossing a big pile of debris with a large hole nearby, there is a fixed safety line to clip into. There are a few more significant holes in the floor and at one point it is necessary to shuffle along a railway line over the drop - take great care here! Eventually a section is reached where there has been a large rockfall and continuation is by crawling through the three short blockages on the RHS. After these you are back in walking height passage with ore chutes and an unusual ore divertor

wagon with a sloping shield. This is in excellent condition and was used to divert ore from the level 2 ore chutes so it dropped down holes to level 3. While level 2 was used as a haulage level early on in the mines history, as work progressed it was more cost effective to drop the ore down to level 3 where it could be loaded into tubs with an Emco shovel. The diverter wagon could be moved around the various ore chutes on level 2 depending on where miners were operating.

A little further on the level ends with a ladder-way on the RHS, a blank wall ahead and a crosscut to the left accessed behind an ore chute. **Take great care as near the ore chute there is a hole in the floor dropping to level 3.**

The ladderway takes you down to level 3 inbye of the collapse on the principal lode, the ladders are sound and drop into deep ochreous water. The level varies with rainfall and season, but is never less than waist deep and can be neck deep or higher. There is a guide rope in place as keeping too far left in the water leads into deep orche which very dangerous. Ahead is the end of level 3 and a climb up into western Cwffy which is a serious undertaking and beyond the scope of this description.

Keeping to the LHS into a cross-cut from behind an ore-chute (safety line in-situ) leads to a passage and a short ladder up gives access to the eastern Cyffty workings. It is possible to follow these via a convoluted route to a stope where there are the remains of some planks on the headwall which connected this passage to the far side many years ago. The passage ends abruptly at a drop. **You are on false floor here** so if you want to get to the end you need a safety line and just have one person at a time on this section. In the older days there was a hair raising trip down Pulley shaft and across the planks on the headwall to the place you are stood – this was before all the collapses took place. There are some nice snottite formations and some gypsum crystals in some of the side passages.

That concludes the tour of level 2, save to say that there are one or two things to look for on the way back. Before you get to the collapses there is a ladder-way which goes all the way up to level one – you cannot get off it as there is nothing to step onto, but the ladders are in good nick (but check first!). The other ladder-way after the collapses is marked by some compressed air pipes going up. The lower ladders are missing, but you can climb the pipes and eventually find some dodgy ladders going up. These lead to a sub-level with a fully loaded tipper truck. There are also some newspaper wrapped sticks which could be mistaken for gunpowder. They are not – it's just tailings formed into tubes and these were used as stemming to help direct the blast in shot holes from escaping. If you do find and go up this way be very careful on descent. If you look at the plan at the end of the document it gives a few clues. The placement of the tipper truck is pretty bizarre as the floor ahead is mined away...

It's a long way back to the surface so the trip back along level 2 will take a 1-2 hours and if you intend to then visit level 3 as well you will need a long day, some food and good lighting with backup. Remember that accidents happen more frequently when people are tired so take it slowly and carefully on the way out keeping to the RHS till you get to the main junction and make sure you use the safety lines provided.

Guide to Level 3

Access to level 3 is via the ladder-way accessed near the Bidston experimental area. The ladders drop you down to a sub level where the parc shaft gantry is located. After examining this, a vertical shaft a little way back leads to an ore chute and provides access to level 3. A 20m rope is adequate and should be rigged from the compressed air pipes nearby. Once down level 3 can be explored in several directions. The main level had several side passages and there is a flooded incline down to level 4. Be aware that the nearby cross cut is littered with old timber that has dropped from above and exploring it is fraught with danger! Following the flow of water downstream will lead to the choke dam and access to kneebones cutting. Note that water levels after the choke dam are likely to be chest deep. Following the water upstream will take you into the main haulage level. There are side passages on the right which connect to the stopes which have reached level 2. It was here that the ore was

tipped down from above so you need to be aware that if anyone knocks material down from level 2 it will appear here and may hit you!

Carrying on the passage enters an unstable area where a major collapse occurred. The ceiling and upper walls are riddled with rock bolts – evidence that this area has always been problematic. The collapses have been dug through and carrying on ahead in increasing depth of water leads to a pretty passage with lots of coloured snottites – take great care here not to damage the formations. Ahead the passage opens out and there is a big pile of rubble with water trickling underneath. This is the collapse which occurred many years ago and split level 3 into two halves. It is possible to climb up and peer down into a great pool of ochreous water. Do not be tempted to descend into it as it's very deep and you will drown. **Swimming in thick ochre is not practical!**

After you have explored level 3 you can return to the surface via the ore chute and your rope. If you are lost, find the flowing water and follow it till you reach an area with a compressed air tank, the ore chute you descended is adjacent.

Sketch Plan of Level 2 and Cyffty Connection

