

A few notes on Parc Mine

Parc Level 2

Enter via the level 2 portal. This has a barrier made of welded RSJ with the top piece missing. It's a pain to climb over if you are rotund. Its easiest to climb up a bit, stick a leg through and then your top half and drop down. 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 about (or over) welly depth. There is a noisy pipe spewing water from the upper level. After a short while the going is dry and over more rubble. You will meet the principal lode where there is a hole in the floor which drops 200+ feet to level 3. There is a bit of rope tied to the air pipes for safety. Just be careful here, the danger is pretty obvious but should be taken seriously.

Heading left

This takes you towards the Bidston Tidal experiment area, the ladder-way to level 3 in-by the collapse 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 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. 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, but I have not explored them and you need to be on a safety line as they probably lead to vertical drops down to level 3.

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. It doesn't go very far and has been stoped out. The stopes have reached the surface in one place and daylight is visible some distance above you.

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 and you can see light and greenery up it. Not sure what the ladders are like, but you cannot exit anyway as there is a substantial RSJ cap. Carrying straight on takes you along an old section of the principal lode and is not recommended as it is all false floor with an obvious big collapse just in front of you. This has happened within the last 10 years and if you find a way to cross this you have the delight of stepping over numerous holes which drop 2-300 feet to level 3 below with no safety lines. Been there, done that, before I realised it was all false (years ago!)

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, but the bottom one or two are missing so there is a rope in-situ. Use your SRT gear to drop down. You are now on the Parc shaft level and can make your way to the Parc shaft gantry and have a look. A bit back from that is a black fixed rope which drops down to level 3 and you exit in an ore hopper onto level 3 floor. The rope is 12mm so thin people with new stops may find it difficult to get started moving down without bouncing :-). Its OK shunting back up. The rest of the crosscut on level 2 is quite extensive, but blind and there is not a lot to see.

Heading Right

Keep to the headwall (LHS) as the footwall has holes which drop to level 3. 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 a little 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. Note: I haven't been down!

Carrying on in-by you encounter a set of wagon bogies and there are some more collapses, some of which have stacked deads above them and deep holes in front, so take care as a slip might drop you down to level 3. After passing some ore-chutes (some with nice snottites) you get to Roy's dig. This is a crawl of about 15' - its well shored up, but best do it one at a time. You end up on a platform – no more than 3-4 people on it at a time. There is a bit of busted ladder to drop you down the 5-6' to the continuation of level 2 (see later).

There is also a ladder up which leads up Llanrwst New shaft towards Endeans shaft. This is worthwhile doing. One person on a ladder at a time and try not to kick material down. There is a safety rope for jammers. At the top is a crab winch, the angle bob and a horizontal passage. Follow this to Endeans shaft and you can see the pump rod and rising main. An old collapse in the upper section of Endeans shaft has blocked the main shaft and disturbed the chain couplers which transferred the vertical motion to the horizontal member (which then drove the angle bob at the top of the shaft you climbed and ran the pump). Back at the crab winch, the passage behind gives access to Llanrwst mine which is old and dodgy. You can work your way along various side passages and there is a rope up. This leads up to the Llanrwst deep adit and was put in by Miles Moulding. It's probably not safe, I free climbed it in March by wrapping the rope around my arm, but bottled out getting through the hatch as I would have been seriously injured if I fell. The adit level could be more safely accessed from Endean's shaft – it just needs a bit of work and some fixed bolts.

Head back down the ladders onto the platform and down onto the main level. Carrying on you encounter red pools of liquid on the floor – these are very acidic. A bit further on is a blockage which occurred a couple of years ago. Llanrwst Diagonal shaft suffered a collapse probably due to water ingress and slumped which completely blocked the passage. Fortunately it had been dug through by Roy and so the level continues to be accessible. The passage carries on over more debris. The rails appear to be supported by chains in one section, but the floor is solid and the chains were to prevent the rails moving sideways. There are a few 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 where there has been a significant set of rockfalls is reached. It is possible to crawl through the three short blockages and once out you are back in walking height passage with ore chutes and a curious wagon with a steel plate fixed at 45 degrees. This 'ore deflector' wagon was used to divert ore from the level 2 ore chutes so it dropped down holes to level 3 and represents one of handful of these artifacts still in existence in the UK. Carry on and another ladder-way on the RHS is reached. This drops down to level 3 in-by of the collapse on the principal lode. The ladders are sound and drop into deep ochreous water. The level varies with rainfall, 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 very deep ochre which could be extremely dangerous. After a couple of hundred feet the water subsides and the passage is dry. Level 3 ends after another few hundred feet, but not before the climbs up to Western Cyffty are reached. This would need a separate description and needs SRT gear.

Carrying on past the top of the ladder-way marks the end of level 2. There are some dangerous holes in the floor, but by sticking to the LHS you can enter a cross-cut from behind an ore-chute (safety line in-situ). Follow the passage and there is a short ladder up which gives access to the East

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. **BEWARE THAT YOU ARE ON FALSE FLOOR HERE.** Best go one person at a time. In the older days there was a hair raising trip down Pulley shaft and across the planks to the place you are stood – this was before all the collapses took place.

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. The other ladder-way is marked by some compressed air pipes going up. The ladders are gone, 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 shotholes 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.

It's a long way back to the surface so a trip along level 2 will take a good few hours and if you intend to then visit level 3 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.

Parc Level 3

Descend the ladder-way near from the crosscut near the experimental area. You exit via an ore chute. If you turn left you will eventually get to the choke dam which then leads to Kneebones Cutting and the Parc 3 portal. You cannot get in or out via the portal as it collapsed a few years ago. The water levels before the choke dam are OK, but after it the water levels will be waist deep or higher. If you want (and are a good climber) you could brave this and try and get out via Kneebones cutting, but it will be very hard without a hand-line from above...

If you turn right the passage splits off in various directions. If you take the passage with the water flowing out then you will eventually get to the collapse in the principal lode. There was another collapse just before it which has been dug out, but the water is held back by rubble and so is about waist deep. If you brave this then you end up in the pretty passage with lots of coloured snottites and formations. Take great care as these are very fragile! Carrying on the water level drops as the ground rises and you encounter the main blockage in the principal lode where water escapes from various holes. Originally it was thought that the blockage could cause millions of gallons of water to pound up within the mine and that is why the choke dam was made – just in case the collapse failed catastrophically. In the event, the volume of water retained by this collapse is quite low and on the far side (towards Cyffty) the depth is unlikely to exceed 10'.

This is as far as you can go – you could try climbing over the collapse but this is not recommended as you would fall into deep gloom on the other side and would drown as swimming is impractical so return back to the main junction and explore the other passages. One note of caution: The main passages and most side passages have a solid roof and are safe, but some of the side passages lead to the bottom of the stopes reaching level 2. These passages were used to extract the ore dumped from the upper workings and load it into wagons using Eimco shovels. Be aware that if you stand in the stope areas then you could be struck by timber or rubble disturbed by explorers on level 2.

One of the passages heads off to reservoir lode and a continuation towards Hafna. There is quite a bit of water coming out the stope and a rather wet ladder-way. The water gets deeper and I haven't explored the passage to the end. Back near the compressed air tank is a passage with a cross cut containing the flooded incline to level 4 and a lot of timberwork on the floor. This area is probably a bit iffy as there are still a lot of weak stemples in the upper areas in addition to those that have rotted and fallen.

If you get lost on level 3 just follow the water flow out and you will encounter the compressed air tank. The ore chute has a tail of the climbing rope hanging down so it is obvious where to head up.

Sketch Plan of Level 2 and Cyffty Connection

