

Calf Hill Area – Old Lead Mines near Nick of Pendle

Field walk, 27/03/20.

Old map = MARIO 1:10 500

New map = MARIO 1:2500

The old lead mines are described as such on the old map so may be pre-19th C. They are situated about 0.5 km SW of the Nick of Pendle car park. Moving east to west, there was very little to see at first – just the occasional piece of what looked like sandstone and no signs of building foundations; I've called the rock sandstone, but it is clearly a mixture of substances. The sandstone appeared dense for its size, possibly due to lead content. A piece of the 'sandstone' was examined closely and was seen to consist of granular yellow and grey bands dotted throughout with coarser white particles. Some of the sandstone contained tiny pieces which sparkled like diamonds in the sunlight.

Moving to the west, the frequency of the stones increased and there were signs of the stone having been worked, but not to a high standard; pieces of stone with shallow obtuse-angled marks and parts of circles. Two mortars/quern bases were found at the west end of the scattered stones. A sunken feature, covered with grass was noted approximately 1.0 x 0.6 m and 0.3 m deep, some stones around edge – possibly a well top or site of a trough?

At the western end of the site was a depression about the size of two or three tennis courts, possibly where ore was extracted. It can be extracted by open-cast mining as well as tunnelling. In this area the two querns were found. If the size is typical of those used to grind the ore to a coarse powder, then the operation must have been on a very small scale.

The first quern was higher up the slope and light-bulb shaped; there was second stone adjacent to it, though whether these are related is unknown. The second stone showed some angular features, as mentioned above.

The second quern was of a different shape. Along the visible edge measured about 1.5 m and about 0.5 m exposed along the other edge; the bowl was about 0.3m diameter and 0.15 m deep. The bowl was shallower on the near edge and also sloped downwards left to right as viewed, so if material were continually fed in from above it would overflow – I imagine! Note the angular edge top right.

It is possible the angular and round pieces of stone, mentioned earlier, came from broken querns. Both the querns were made of coarse-grained material.

Lower down the slope was an isolated lead mine, alongside the track past Parsley Barn to Wilkin Heys. This appeared to be a true mine – a vertical shaft. The site was fenced off and marked with a (hawthorn) tree as is common with old lead mines in Derbyshire. The tree marks the site in case the fence is destroyed.

Comments

There is very little visual evidence remaining of the mining activity in this area. The location does not seem an ideal one. For example, a water supply is necessary to purify the ore after grinding, but unlike the eastern side of Clitheroe Rd there is no surface water visible. This suggests the ground ore may have been taken elsewhere to extract the lead. No obvious spoil heaps were noted.

No similar querns were found in a brief internet search. The nearest contender was a Japanese domestic percussion mortar, where the pestle is a long-handled hammer. Perhaps the ore at this site was used for pigments, which might explain the small quantities?



'Sandstone' sample, about 3 x actual size.



First quern, with related (?) stone above.



The stone above quern one.



The second quern. Note the angle, top right.



Close up of bowl, quern two.



The isolated mine – the entrance is the darker area directly below the tree trunk.

Additional photographs, CALF HILL NOP LEAD MINES 27/03/20.