

CONISTON OLD MAN HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Saddlestone Main Bank

This Bank was the main processing facility and site office for the Old Man Quarries during the last 30 years of operation. However, prior to that, it was a separate underground working which was initially developed in the 1880's and finally closed just before the 2nd World War. After closure the entrance to the level leading to the underground chambers became blocked but in recent years has been re-opened (but secured) by local industrial archaeologists. The processing site included an electric saw and riving and dressing sheds. The aerial flight down from Moss Head, high above, terminated at Saddlestone. The road up to Saddlestone was improved to allow motor lorries to reach the site to transport finished product away. The story has been told of the day the draw rope of the aerial flight snapped as a large lump of slate had just started its journey from Moss Head. As the runaway load passed over the last flight pylon above Saddlestone the block came off the carrier and embedded itself deep in the quarry bank. No one working in the sheds there was hurt or even saw the mishap. The workforce spent several minutes searching for wreckage as they were convinced there had been a plane crash.



Two other aerial flights terminated on the Saddlestone bank. Slate clog from the higher Light Hole workings was brought down to Saddlestone on an aerial flight that passed over Smithy Bank. A separate flight also descended from Saddlestone and terminated, via an intermediate pylon, on the High Brandy Crag bank. Slate clog was brought down to High Brandy Crag to be processed until the road up to Saddlestone was improved.