
55 Roughton Gill and Silver Gill

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

55 Roughton Gill — Silver Gill metal mines. Park at Fellside and hike 3.5 kilometres south beside Dale Beck [NY 302 345].

Description

South of Caldbeck in the fells that form the northern perimeter of the Lake District are mines for metal ores that go back centuries.

At the head of the Dale Beck valley are the steep, rocky gullies of Roughton Gill and Silver Gill. Evidence of mining is everywhere; old tunnel entrances (levels), piles of mining waste, and the remains of structures used to process the ore. These mines extracted ores that produced a large amount of lead and copper, and some silver too. Some of the workings may go back 700 years; they were certainly worked by Elizabethan miners (part of the 'Company of Mines Royal') in the 16th century and did not close until 1878. As well as the ores worked for metal over 30 different and often rare minerals have been identified here. As a result the valley is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and mineral collecting is illegal.

The geology of this area is complex. In the north are Ordovician rocks called the Eycott Volcanic Group, in the south these were cut by vertical sheets of molten magma, that produced both granite and gabbro (a rock that is usually associated with the Cuillin Mountains of Skye). Near vertical fractures in these rocks (faults) became conduits for mineral-rich fluids, which then crystallised out as veins. The veins criss-cross adjacent fells and valleys too and in Mosedale is Carrock Fell mine, one of only two places in England that produced tungsten. These hills are a quiet place now and it is hard to believe that for several hundred years they were a hive of industry, one that earned the Caldbeck Fells the accolade of being 'worth all England else'.

Photographs

(Photo 55-1) 55 Roughton Gill mines at the head of the Dale Beck valley.

(Photo 55-2) 55 Roughton Gill.



(Photo 55-1) Roughton Gill mines at the head of the Dale Beck valley.



(Photo 55-2) Roughton Gill.