

MENDIP SURVEY

1. INVESTIGATIONS IN UBLEY'S RAKES, CHARTERHOUSE ON MENDIP

by R. L. Burgess

About one third of a mile South East of Charterhouse Minery, just within Ubley Parish and close to Ubley Warren Farm, lies a smaller system of Mine Workings. This is known as Ubley's Rakes and forms part of the old boundary between Harptree and West Mineries, as described by J.W. Gough, in Mines of Mendip.

At the end of the main rake nearest to Ubley Warren are a number of features associated with the mining. The most prominent of these is the raised platform of a horse whim, used for raising ore and spoil from a mine. Close under the North West edge of this is another structure within the rake. Further on in the same direction, a built-up trackway crosses the rake and at a distance of about 150 yards from this, is the foundation of a small building.

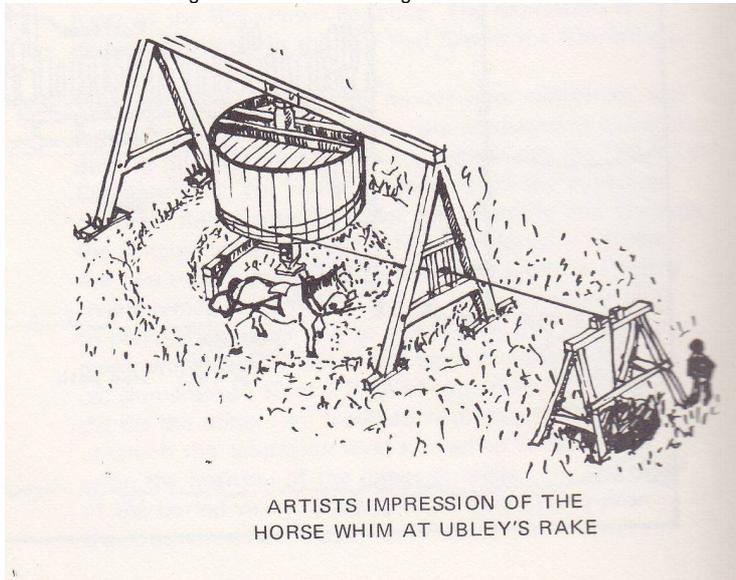
The whim platform is 40 feet in diameter and has a central bearing socket cut into a slab of limestone. Plaster casts of this socket show abrasion marks of a metal pin 2 1/2 inches in diameter. From the positioning of one enlarged hole and three large stones on the top of the platform the framework appears to have been a plain 'A' shape; the more usual design had vertical supports with side braces. This platform has been built over part of an earlier one which is suitably positioned for working a shaft close to the Southern edge of this later platform. These have not been excavated. Archaeological excavations are being carried out within the structure just below and to the North West of the whim platform. This feature, when first seen in 1969, was full of brambles and had the appearance of a drift or inclined shaft entrance. A later examination, when the growth had died down, showed that although it was not a drift, it was not a natural feature. Once the brambles had been cleared, it appeared as an enlarged rift, opened out to a roughly circular plan. Small gaps in the rock faces had been filled with dry-stone walling. Early excavation of the rock and earth tumble exposed a form of fireplace; built of loosely packed stones supported by a Drystone Wall. There was no evidence of its use for smelting although coal cinder and charcoal was present in small quantities. Part of a clay smoking pipe, circa 1850, was found on a ledge here. On another ledge were found two metal wedges 2 1/2 by 3/4 inches and the tip of a mattock. A small pile of good galena or lead ore totalling about 2 pounds in Weight was uncovered recently and iron nails have been found around the inside edges of the feature. J.W. Gough, in Mines of Mendip, mentions but does not describe "Groof Houses" which were miners' temporary dwellings. It is possible that this feature is one of these. Excavations are continuing.

The trackway is about 15 yards from the last mentioned feature and crosses the rake to a well worn layer of sloping bedrock. It is built of small stones or miners' waste. Though not visible in the field above, this track probably connects with the old road between Charterhouse and Ubley Warren, which was surveyed by Messrs Day and Masters circa 1780.

The building foundations are within the rake and form a triangular plan with the base against a small cliff face. There appears to have been an entrance at the apex. As it seems somewhat cramped for living quarters, it is thought to have been a store. Similar features have been noted in the Charterhouse Rakes, on the south side of the Parish Boundary Wall.

Permission to work the site was sought and gained of Mr. Perrett of Ubley Warren Farm. Later it was found that the land belonged to the University of Bristol, who were approached for permission to continue. This was granted provisionally. A Site Book is being kept and a full Report will be published on completion of the work.

The excavations have suffered from vandals and cattle, features having sometimes disappeared overnight. This is a problem on land where the public have access although most visitors show a genuine interest.



ARTISTS IMPRESSION OF THE HORSE WHIM AT UBLEY'S RAKE