



Journey through the Valley of Stone

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Thurns Head Quarry

Thurns Head Quarry lies between SD 872 190 and SD 878 185, on the southern edge of the Cwm valley with Cow Clough Pasture to the west and Goats Hill Rough to the south. Historically, the quarry lay within the Whitworth Lower End subdivision of the Spotland township (Rochdale parish, formerly the manor of Rochdale).

Historical Summary

What now appears as one quarry was historically developed as three quarries: Thurns Head, Hey lane and Goat's Hill.

Working Life: All three quarries were established by 1844-7. they were disused by 1928.

Quarry firms: Robert Jackson and Sons (Davies 1985-96).

Geology: Lower Haslingden Flags.

Transport: A tramway (single track) ran $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to Hall Fold staithe. (Allegedly A. Baldwin - it was 2' 6" gauge and had iron wagons which carried 4 tons, with a loose body that was lifted off by crane. It ran by gravity (hand-braked) down to staithe, and was hauled back up one wagon at a time (davies 1985-96).

Methods: Hillside outcroppings and mining (Davies 1985-96, Bill Kearns- pers comm.).

Products: Details not known - presumed same as neighbouring quarries.



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Events: 1844-7: OS 1st edn (sheet 80) shows three discrete quarries; 'Thurns Head quarry (Sandstone)', 'Hey Lane Quarry Sandstone' to the north of Hey Lane and 'Goat's Hill Quarry (Sandstone)' south of Hey Lane. A 'Smithy' is marked at Cow Clough (where work was done for the quarry see Douglas 1983).

1890: accident involving blasting (Davies 1985-96).

1893: OS 25" map (sheet 80.8) shows 'Thurns Head Quarry', 'Hey Lane' and 'Goat's Hill', now merged, and Hey lane itself now a track into the quarries and possibly following the line of the earlier workings of Hey Lane Quarry (see OS 1844-7). A tramway is shown running through the quarries and leading south (on high barn Lane) to Hall Fold; one branch of the tramway continues north to the quarries on Ragstone Brow. Buildings and 'Cranes' are also marked.

1906: Accident to foreman, Robert Mills, engaged in 'mining' work at quarries of 'Messrs Robert Jackson'.

1909: OS 25" map shows 'Thurns Head quarry', 'Hey Lane' and 'GoatsHill', only slightly enlarged. Former tramway routes now apparently shown as trackways. A length of new 'Tramway' is shown at south-west corner of Thurns Head quarry running to a small marked 'Quarry', possibly a drift entrance. The main area of extension to the quarrying, since 1893, is the central north of Goat's Hill quarry, where routeways had been constructed.

1923: OS 6" geology map shows a quarry in Upper Haslingden Flags.



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1928: OS map shows 'Thurns Head Quarry (Disused)', 'Hey Lane (Disused)' and 'Goat's Hill (Disused)', less tramway. A small quarry to the south-west of Thurns Head also appears disused. The extent of the quarries appears to be the same as that on the 1909 map.

Field Components Summary: Overview Thurns Head quarry comprises a moderately sized area of hillside outcropping and open pit works, with mine entrances for underground extraction of stone. The three main working faces of Goat's Hill Quarry, Hey Lane Quarry, and Thurns Head Quarry all survive and there are several smaller working faces and five pit extraction sites. The remains of the tramway and trackways were clearly visible and the spoil heaps were well preserved with many multi-fingered heaps. The quarry may be approached by trackways from the east which follows the tramway leading to Hall fold. The quarry is extremely rich in associated quarry features. These include the remains of numerous structures and earthwork platforms (representing quarrymen's shelters, storage buildings, and processing areas), heaps of part finished quarry products and stone offcuts, crane bases, and extensive tramway remains, which continues beyond the survey area.

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Ab Top Quarry

Ab Top quarry extends from NGR: SD 871 196 to SD 874 196 and lies at c. 350 m O.D. The quarry can be accessed by following the line of the mineral tramway which connects Ab Top with Ragstone Brow and Thurns Head quarry.

Historical Summary

Working life: Operating by 1844 (OS 1st edn). Possibly disused by 1930.

Quarry firms: Abraham Sanderson? Maxwells (Collins 1960).

Geology: Haslingden Flags.

Methods: Hillside outcropping and open pits. Techniques included blasting to clear turf, shale and hand digging with picks (Collins 1960, 29-33).

Transport: Loading area served by horse and lorry. Four line tramway later served the quarry using a steam locomotive at first, but then reverting to horse power as the gradient was too steep. Gravity tramway near Hallfold for taking away the coal mined from a seam near Ab Top Quarry (Collins 1960, 29-33).

Products: Engine beds, kerbs, flags and setts (Collins 1960, 32).

Events:

1844 OS 6" 1st edn shows 'Ab Top Quarry (Sandstone)'.

c. 1910 35 men employed at Ab Top quarry (Collins 1960, 32).



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Field Components Summary: This moderately sized quarry has evidence for open pit working in the form of a large arcing working face situated on the summit of Ab Top and hillside outcrop working, which is confined to the slopes of Walstead Clough. The spoil mounds associated with these workings are visible and consist predominantly of spoil fingers, particularly within a large infilled extraction pit, which appears to have been filled with quarry spoil between 1893 and 1910. Throughout the majority of the quarry many of these spoil fingers are, however, obscured through recent episodes of spoil tipping associated with the workings at Britannia quarry. Other features related with the early workings at Ab Top include a sections of partially spoiled over tramway , with visible sections of kerbing, which terminates within a well defined processing area. Two substantial ruinous quarry buildings, which might have functioned as quarry manager's offices, and the possible settings for a crane and travelling crane are also associated with this processing area. At the eastern end of the quarry are also other smaller processing areas and two quarrymen's shelters.

