
54 Newlands

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

54 Newlands Valley — lead, silver mining — link to German miners and Q Elizabeth 1. Park at Chapel Bridge south of Little Town and walk 1 kilometre through Low Snab farm to the mine [NY 228 186].

Description

Newlands Beck and its tributaries, Scope and Keskadale becks, flow down three of the most beautiful valleys in the Lake District.

The valleys, and the long ridges of Robinson and Hindscarth that divide them, are superb hiking country; they also have a lot to say about how the Lake District landscape evolved. In the south and east the summits of Dale Head and High Spy are volcanic ash and lavas, erupted over 450 million years ago. To the north are older Ordovician rocks, mudstones and sandstones; these were once sediments in a deep ocean separating two continents about to collide. Overprinted on this bedrock foundation are millions of years of erosion, that culminated in powerful glaciers, carving out their characteristic 'U' shaped valleys. A new technique, which uses cosmic rays to assess how long boulders moved by glaciers have been at the Earth's surface, has revealed that the last glaciers melted from these valleys less than 12,000 years ago. Since then mountain gullies and streams have transported and re-deposited debris on the valley floor.

The human influence on this landscape began with Stone, Bronze and Iron Age communities who progressively cleared the forests which had colonised the area as the climate warmed. By the 16th century man recognised another natural resource in the valleys; cutting through the mudstones were mineral veins, containing copper and lead ore but with iron and silver too. In 1564 the first Queen Elizabeth set up the 'Company of Mines Royal' to mine the ore; she needed money to balance the books and fight a war. Expert German miners were brought over and settled around Keswick. So rich was the mine that the Germans called it Gottsgabt or 'God's Gift'; we know it today as Goldscope. Quite a history for three peaceful little valleys blessed with ancient woodlands of sessile oak and carpets of moss and liverworts in their shade; and we've not even mentioned Beatrix Potter, Little Town and Mrs Tiggy-Winkle.

Photographs

(Photo 54-1) 54 Looking down Little Dale from Littledale Edge.

(Photo 54-2) 54 Newlands Valley.



(Photo 54-1) Looking down Little Dale from Littledale Edge.



(Photo 54-2) Newlands Valley.