
GEOLOGY AT ECTON

A. The Stories at Ecton Hill

Introduction

The Ecton tutors have been provided with a set of notes describing some of the “stories” which have been worked up over the years, covering aspects of the history of the mines. Some points in this material can be woven into an introduction to the day – scene setting, either by the roadside or at the Centre. There is Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Geography, History, Physics, Social Sciences – and some Maths if you wish!

Details are not given here, but the tutor will match the “stories” to the stated interests of the group.



Fig A1 Ecton Hill, with mine dumps among the trees. Salt's Level lies behind The Folly, with the green spire.

In its heyday in the late 18th Century, Ecton was possibly the largest copper mine in Europe, and one of the most innovative. Some 400 people worked here, about 70-80 as miners (all men), with more in other jobs underground (many as boys), and the rest on the surface involved in dressing the ore – mainly women and children.

The mine was owned by the Duke of Devonshire, and was a major source of the family wealth. He was a good example of a paternalistic landowner, taking an interest in workers' conditions.

Peak output and profits came in late 1780's, with the installation of a Boulton & Watt steam engine. Profits in 1788-89 were said to be £150,000, worth 100 times this in today's money, (£15,000,000), so highly profitable. The profits are thought to have paid for some of the buildings constructed by the Duke in Buxton, as well as developing his landscape work at Chatsworth.

Figure A2 shows a map of the main workings at Ecton.

Figure A3 shows a section through Ecton Hill, along an approximate north-south line.

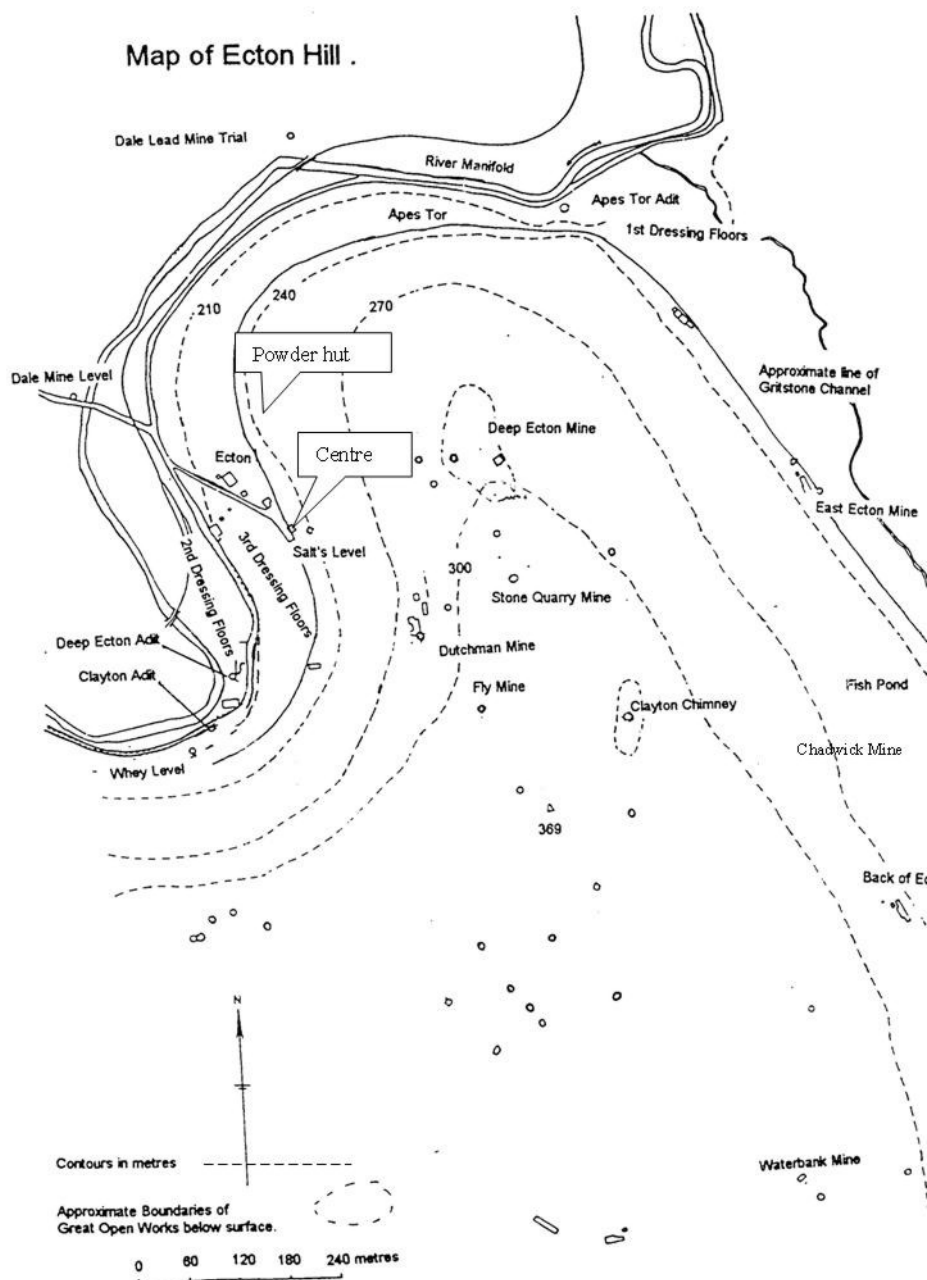


Fig A2 Map of Ecton Hill and the mines

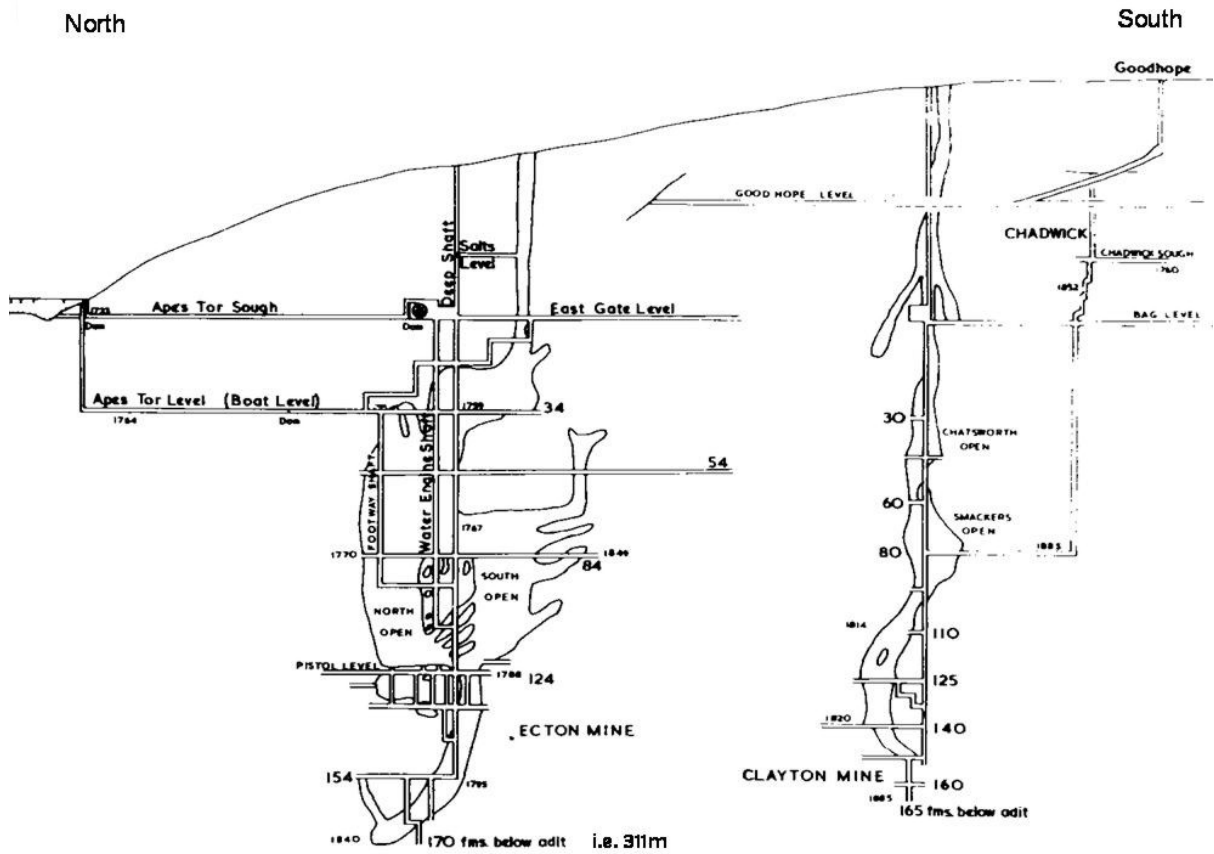


Fig A3 A composite section through part of Ecton Hill showing the main ore deposits and the principal workings (Robey and Porter 1972)