

# Greenside Lead Mine

## Where is the mine?

Greenside Mine is located on the northeast side of Helvellyn, at the foot of Green Side ridge. It overlooks Ullswater and the village of Glenridding.

The water from Swart Beck was crucial to the functioning of the mine, as a power source and a means to wash the ore.

Find the mill on an  
OS map at grid reference  
NY364177

## A brief history of the mine

Greenside was first mined in the late 1600s. The Greenside Mining Company was formed in 1825. During the 1850s Greenside became the largest lead mine in the Lake District with over 300 employees.

In the 1860s a railway line was built linking Penrith to Keswick. This made the moving of lead and heavy machinery much easier and cut transport costs.

In the 1890s Greenside became the first mine in Britain to use hydroelectric power.

The mine closed down in 1962 and most of the buildings were demolished.

## What was mined here?

The lead ore galena was mined at Greenside. When smelted it produced over 80% lead, and 350g of silver per ton.

Underground, in the mine, a chisel and sledgehammer were used to make a hole in the rock, then gunpowder was used to blast the rock apart. The broken pieces were taken up to the surface, where they were dressed, washed and crushed before smelting.

Lead was used to make pipes, roofing, bullets and in the glass-making process. Much of the silver went to the Bank of England.

## Who worked at Greenside?

The core employees were the miners. Other men were employed to dress and smelt the lead ore and refine the silver. There were also carpenters, woodsmen, blacksmiths, masons and washer boys. Many of the men came from Keswick, Penrith and Grasmere and lodged in the village, where relationships with locals were sometimes tense.

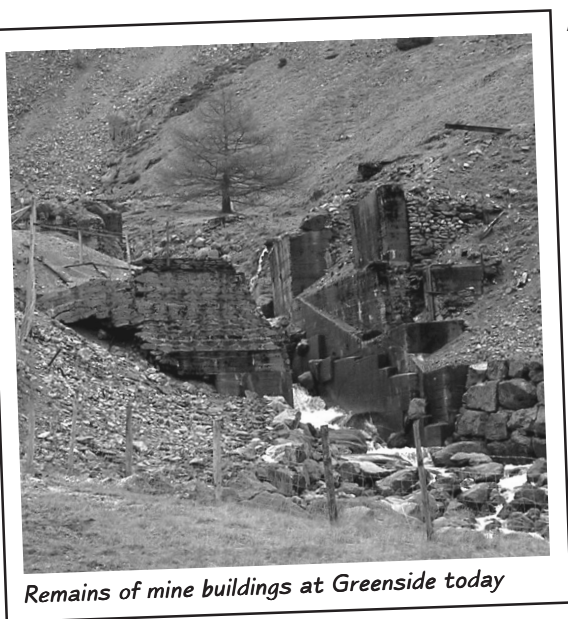
Over fifty-two miners' houses were built in the 1850s for the men and their families.

## Glossary

**Dressing** – separating ore from waste material before it is smelted

**Ore** – a naturally material (often a rock) which can be processed to release a metal or valuable mineral

**Smelt** – extract metal from its ore by heating and melting



Remains of mine buildings at Greenside today

## CHARLES EDDY, Washer boy My life in 1833

<b>Age:</b>	17
<b>Place of work:</b>	Greenside Lead Mine
<b>Hometown:</b>	Penrith
<b>Family:</b>	father – William Eddy , miner mother – Margaret Eddy siblings – William (21), Joseph (18)

"My job is to wash the lead ore clean in the beck. It's exhausting, and bitterly cold in the winter with no shelter from the freezing rain.

Every Monday morning my brothers and I leave home at 4 o'clock in the morning and walk fifteen miles to the mine to start work. We walk back on Saturday and have Sunday at home with Mam and Dad.

I carry my food from home in my leather satchel. Breakfast is oatmeal porridge, lunch is bread and bacon, and dinner is potatoes, bacon and butter. Best of all is when someone has poached a bit of hare or pheasant!

During the week we live in the bunkhouses, with fifty men sharing sixteen beds. It's cold, filthy, smelly and full of fleas! We cook our dinner over the fire and then try to sleep. Luckily my bed doesn't have water dripping on it, like William's.

My brother Joseph is a washer boy too. When we're twenty-one we can be miners like William. Some washer boys are only ten and it's really hard for them working the long hours.

Many of the miners have back and hand injuries. One of the lads in the bunk above me is off with rheumatism. He had a bad fever last week and kept us all awake."

### **Living conditions improved over time...**

From the 1860s, new bunkhouses, called 'shops', were built and conditions were more carefully regulated, with a rota system for cleaning and tidying. The washing floors were roofed over to keep the washer boys from the worst of the weather.

The miners also set up an informal school for the younger boys and gave them lessons between shifts, especially when the becks froze over and prevented the washing.



*Workers' cottages near Greenside Mine*

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**Coniston Copper Mines & Honister Slate Mine**