



Cathedral Quarries, Little Langdale

A guide By Allan, David & Linden

Materiel extracted: Green slate.

Grid Reference: NY308028

The Cathedral quarries are a small network of inter-linked quarries above Little Langdale near Ambleside, Cumbria. The system is best known 'by walkers for it's main chamber, which still stands forty feet in height, and is nicely lit by two windows off the main quarry.

Access

The cathedral quarry is best reached from Little Langdale, via the Tilbertwaite road. Having crossed a bridge 'beside a ford – you turn right, and follow the footpath beside the river. You will soon pass a slate tip, where there is a track on your left leading up the hillside. You will soon come to an entrance, which had a sign titled 'Cathedral Quarry'. Having now read the sign, and accepting it's conditions, you will then enter the tunnel. For this first tunnel you will probably not need lighting. At the end of the tunnel you will enter a forty ft. high chamber what is known as "The Cathedral". This is what most walkers come in to see, and is nicely lit by two windows. The larger of the two opens onto the second level of a pit quarry. The smaller opens out into a narrow, cutting like quarry, which eventually leads back to the tip where you started.

The chamber has many interesting aspects, including a massive, firm pillar, which supports the roof. At the base of the chamber is a large, clear pond.

To depart from this chamber, and reach the other workings, you will have to go through a small section of tunnel below the bigger of the two windows, which leads you to the base of the large pit quarry. 'with a little scrambling – you can then climb up to the second level of the pit, where you can look through the window into the Cathedral Chamber. There are also a number of tunnels in the sides of the pit (three to be precise). The very low tunnel leads to the cutting, which opens into the Cathedral Chamber. Another flooded trial leads along a passage to a small working area (not even big enough to be called a chamber). At the far end of the pit, there is another tunnel leading off level one of the pit. This tunnel leads to the Ahd Al quarry. The tunnel is perfectly safe to explore, but is pitch black and requires sensible lighting, and helmets. After about 15 m. into the tunnel, you will enter a small chamber, with walling on one side. From here there is another small tunnel leading into the Ahd Al Chamber. The chamber is closed off, because of the possibility of slabs falling from the roof, although you can still enter (with caution). The chamber is tall, with steeply sloping sides; with no other way out. There is a small tunnel that goes on for about 20m, before coming to a dead-end.

After passing the access tunnel to this chamber, the original tunnel continues for about 400 ft, before arriving out on the hillside in the Tilbertwaite Valley. You then continue on a path 'above the tunnel you've just emerged from, which will lead you to another small level and quarry. For the best part of the year the level is flooded, and leads about 60m. into the hillside, before leading to a collapse from the small chamber it once entered. The collapse can be traced a little further up the hillside by a depression in the hillside. It was possibly originally intended to connect with the Ahd Al chamber, from a higher level. A little further up the path you will reach the top of the pit quarry you were in earlier. Be careful, the quarry is unfenced! The path then continues around the chamber, to a lower elevation, where it is possible to climb walk down into the quarry. Just to the left of the path is another small, cutting like quarry. At the end of the quarry there is a small, low trial chamber, which goes underground for about 16 ft.

