

was walking 'wisely in his footsteps'. I thought it hard work going down before I got to the bottom, but I found it much harder and more tiring coming up. The whole weight of the body has to be lifted from stave to stave by the arms and legs, besides which a most unwholesome, heavy, and sickening smell arises in the bottom of the mines. I should like those who are fond of talking at the Great Laxey half-yearly meetings - who say that twenty-six shillings per week, with the enhanced price of everything, is too much money for miners to get - I should like them to be forced once a day for a week to descend on the ladders to the 220 level and back again. I would not want them to strike a blow with a hammer or touch a jumper, but I believe before the week was out their opinion would be considerably changed, both as to the nature of the work and the remuneration for it. People generally, in listening to a report of the mines, or hearing that the mine is now sunk to 230 fathoms, have very little idea of the great depth it is to the bowels of this mine, the whole of which depth is to be climbed upon ladders nearly straight. We shall give a better idea of the difficulty and toil by making a comparison. Snaefell, which is the highest Manx mountain, is 2,034 feet above the level of the sea. The depth of the mines is about 250 fathoms from the level of the Big Wheel - i.e. equal to 1,500 feet in depth - so that, within one quarter, the depth of the mine is equal to the height of the top of Snaefell from Laxey Beach.

Bradbury's Guide to Laxey (1876)

Questions

- 1 Manx miners worked 8-hour shifts. Why does this writer speak of 'the driving where the men had been working for about six hours'?
- 2 Name the shaft where he first saw the pumping machinery.
- 3 What were the two kinds of ore he saw on the rock face?
- 4 If the writer had visited Laxey Mine ten years later he would have found it easier to go up and down. What improvement had been made? Why would the mine owners have gone to the expense of making this improvement?

