

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE MINING DISTRICTS OF
ALSTON MOOR, WEARDALE, AND TEESDALE,
IN CUMBERLAND AND DURHAM; COMPRISING
DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES OF THE SCENERY,
ANTIQUITIES, GEOLOGY, AND MINING
OPERATIONS, IN THE UPPER DALES OF THE
RIVERS TYNE, WEAR, AND TEES**

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T. SOPWITH

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BY T. SOPWITH,
LAND AND MINE SURVEYOR.

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Age Group	Percentage
18-24	10
25-34	35
35-44	25
45-54	15
55-64	10
65-74	5
75-84	2
85+	1

20

10

PREFACE.

THE Lead-Mining Districts of the north of England comprise an extensive range of highly picturesque scenery, which is rendered still more interesting by numerous objects which claim the attention of the antiquary, the geologist, and the mineralogist, and, in short, of all who delight in the combined attractions of nature, science, and art. Of these districts no detailed account has been given to the public; and a familiar description of the northern lead-mines, in which so many persons in this part of the kingdom are concerned, has long been a desideratum in local literature. The present volume aspires not to the merit of supplying this want; but, by descriptive notices of the principal objects of attraction, is intended to convey some general ideas of the nature of the lead-mining districts, and to afford some information which may serve as a guide to those who visit them. The red lines on the small frontispiece map denote the routes, which are more particularly described. These are, from Hexham to Alston, both in the vale of TYNE; from Alston down the TEES to Barnard-Castle, the first point where the dale is traversed by public conveyances; and from the city of Durham, the highest coaching place on the WEAR, to Alston. In these routes, which comprise in all a distance of about 100

miles (including the journey from Barnard-Castle to Durham) the antiquary and architect may find the following objects deserving of notice.

The venerable remains and beautiful architecture of Hexham Abbey Church;—the stately Castle of Langley, and the romantic fortalice of Staward Peel;—the vast and exceedingly perfect remains of a Roman station covering nine acres of ground, and having the bold contour of seven ditches in excellent preservation;—the massive pavement of a long unbroken line of Roman road;—the stately ruins of Barnard-Castle in Teesdale, and the more perfect castellated mansions of Auckland, Durham, Brancepeth, and Stanhope, seated in the mining dale of Wear;—one of the finest English Cathedrals, abounding in rich examples of the Norman style, and numerous other architectural and antiquarian objects, which abound throughout these interesting districts.

The geologist and mineralogist have ample stores for inquiry and admiration, presented by the geological structure and mineral treasures of the mining dales, and the lover of landscape scenery will find a succession of views which cannot fail to afford the liveliest gratification. Among these may be briefly enumerated the fine scenery of the Tyne above Hexham, and near West-Boat Chain-bridge; the romantic cliffs and woody banks at Cupula and Whitfield;—the magnificent prospects from Cross Fell and Hartside;—the waterfalls of Nentforoe, Eshgill, Caldron Snout, and Tees Force;—the scenery of Teesdale and Weardale,

abounding in the greatest variety of landscape views, from the wild and solitary mountains, whence the sister streams of Tees and Wear arise, to the more fertile and umbrageous lands through which they pass on their way to the German Ocean.

The machinery and curious processes used in preparing the ore for smelting, and the beautiful specimens of subterranean riches displayed in the shops of mineral dealers, all tend to combine the most rational enjoyment with the most agreeable exercise, and to fill up a succession of those intellectual treats which it is the object of the tourist to obtain.

This rapid sketch may evince, that the mining districts possess numerous sources of gratification to the inquiring traveller, and the author of these pages is convinced, from the opinion of highly intelligent persons who have visited Alston Moor and its vicinity, that it deserves more notice than it has hitherto received. The situation of this district renders it particularly suited for summer excursions. An easy and pleasant day's journey conducts the tourist from the heart of the mining districts to Newcastle, Durham, or Barnard-Castle on the one hand; or, on the other, to Carlisle, or Appleby, or to the far-famed and much-frequented Lakes of Cumberland. The readiness of access to most of the objects deserving attention, and the civility and intelligence of the inhabitants, together with the comfort of the inns, greatly enhance the pleasure of traversing this alpine range of country.

The following notices were chiefly collected in a private diary kept by the author during a residence of four years in Alston Moor, and have been arranged at leisure times in their present form. The ascent of Cross Fell and the visit to Ale-Burn Cavern are retained in the narrative style in which they were written at the time. The progress of the work (trifling as it is) has been delayed by various causes, and the entire manuscript is presented by the author to his much-esteemed friend, the printer and publisher, who, with more of admiration of the country it describes, than any prospect of pecuniary recompense, offers it to the public in its present shape.

T. S.

Newcastle, May, 1833.

ERRATUM.—In page 25, line 22, for 12,000*l.* read 1200*l.*

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