

**A SYNOPSIS OF THE BURSLEMS INFLUENCE
ON COAL MINING IN COLEORTON &
THE MANOR OF OVERTON SAUCEY**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - FEBRUARY 2022

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

James Burslem (1695-1766) - From "A History of the Adams Family", by Percy Walter Lewis Adams - 1912

PREFACE

Taking into account the importance of the Burslem's coal mining activities in the south Derbyshire and Leicestershire district, there is a surprising paucity of records regarding them. The Burslems' operated a number of mines in Coleorton, and Godolphin William Burslem sank their most recent coal mine (c.1791) to the south of the George Inn at Coleorton, of which more details are known due to its connection with the ill-fated Charnwood Forest Canal.

RECOMMENDED COMPLIMENTARY READING

the following are free to download and read on the authors website <https://samuelstewart940.wixsite.com/mysite>

- THE DEVELOPMENT OF COAL MINING IN THE LOCAL AREA
- THE MANOR OF OVERTON SAUCEY (1085 - 1786)
- A HISTORY OF THE COLEORTON RAILWAY AND THE CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL

MAIN RESEARCH RESOURCES

- THE ADAM FAMILY - 1905
- THE LEICESTERSHIRE & SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COALFIELD 1200-1900 BY COLIN OWEN (A FACTUAL & HIGHLY REGARDED BOOK)
- THE GODOLPHIN MEMOIRS
- PUBLICATIONS UNDER COMPLIMENTARY READING

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INTRODUCTION

The branch of the Burslem families which is the subject of this publication has a long and complex history. This study starts with James Burslem (1695 -1766) of Stanton, Nr. Burton-on-Trent, which was in the parish of Stapenhill, at that time followed by his son's James and William and his grandson Godolphin William Burslem. James's ancestors had participated in the coal - mining industry for many years and he was the fifth son of William Burslem of Wolstanton who was a very active political figure in Newcastle-Under-Lyme during the first decade of the eighteenth century, and who served as Member of Parliament for the Borough from 1710-14.

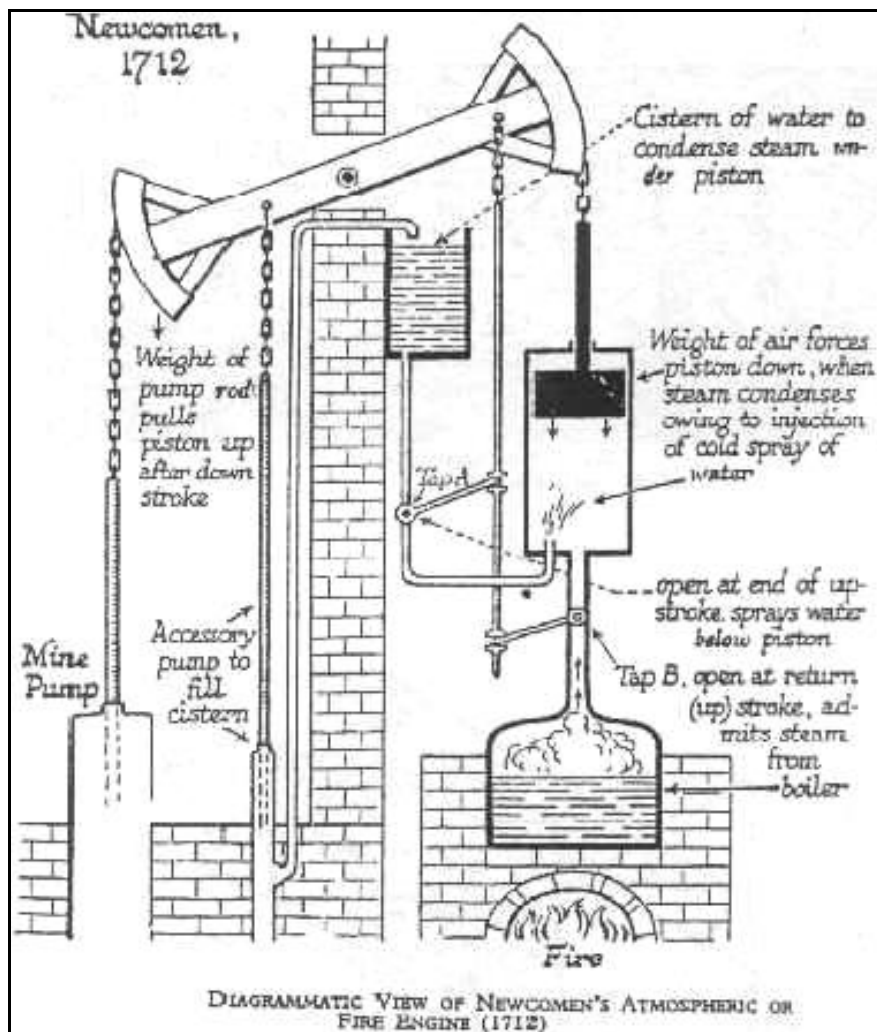
Attempting to follow the history of James, the elder, his son's and grandson referred to above is not made easier by the several bitter internal conflicts that took place between several of the families, resulting in legal suits in the Chancery and even clouded by mental illness in one instance.

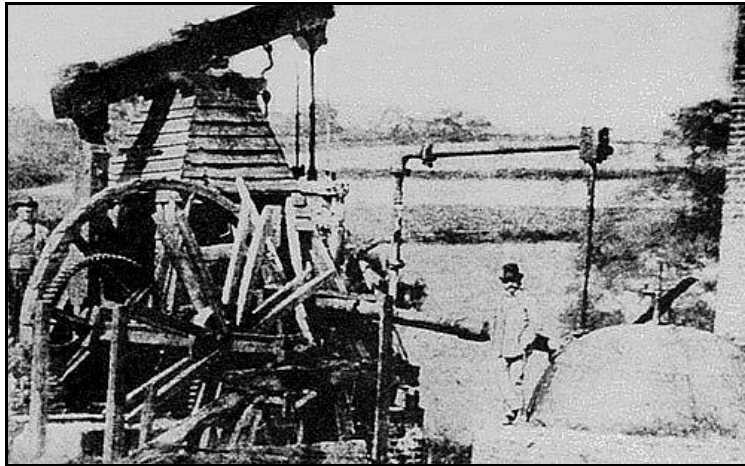
The manor of Overton Saucey is mentioned numerous time in the publication where at one time Burslems' owned the manor house and farm. It is thought that the two manors of Overton Saucey and Overton Quatremars formed the original ecclesiastical parish of Coleorton. The parish boundaries of Coleorton, Thringstone, Worthington, Swannington and Staunton Harold have all been a reflection of manorial systems which existed in the area some hundreds of years ago. Some of these manorial parishes had been established before they possessed their own parish church, although this was not the case for Coleorton. Within these manorial parishes the church was where individuals within the parish would be baptised, married or buried and where they paid tithes and other taxes. These ecclesiastical parishes have developed into the administrative parishes that exist today, with only minor changes being brought about through parliamentary acts.

A SYNOPSIS OF LOCAL COAL MINING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EARLY 1700s AND THE MAIN COAL OWNERS PRIOR TO JAMES BURSLEM (1695-1766)

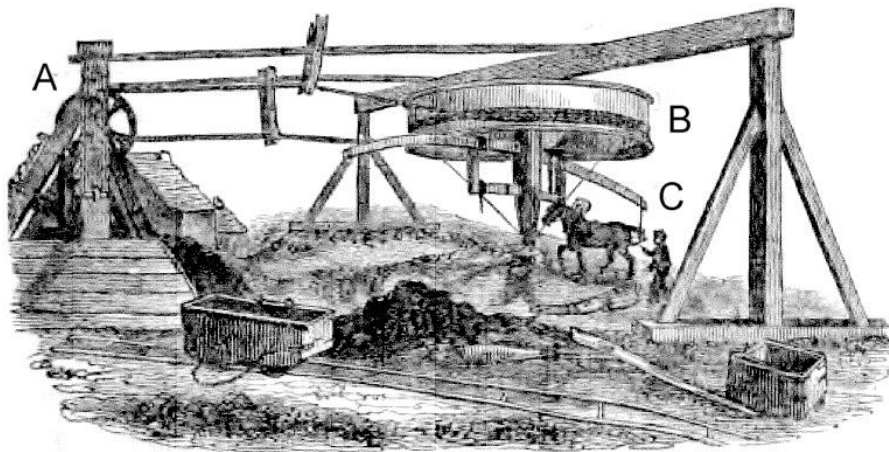
In the early 1700s, the principal coal owners in the south Derbyshire and Leicestershire district, were John Wilkins' and the Beaumonts', who introduced the "Newcomen Atmospheric Engine" - an invention for raising water by fire (used to produce steam) - to try and solve the serious water drainage problems encountered in most of the coalmines. They were often referred to as "fire engines" and always recorded as such on old maps. Wilkins erected engines at both his collieries - Measham in 1720/1 and Swannington in 1723/4. Henry Beaumont installed two engines at his Coleorton mines, one in 1727 and the other in 1724. These engines at that time would have cost in the order of £20,000 to purchase and install. The fire engine at Swannington was apparently only used to drain the deeper workings, whilst "Water-Gin", and sough drainage systems, using a continuous chain of leather buckets, were retained at the shallow pits, close to coal outcrops.

Small steam engines called Whimseys, Wimseys or Whymseys were also introduced, which could raise corves (baskets of coal), containing about one hundredweight of coal dependant on the shaft depth. Like all developments, these machines would have frequently broken down and taken time to repair, so horse driven Gins would still have been retained on standby.





Old photograph of a Newcomen atmospheric / fire engine (the semi-circular haystack boiler to the right indicates that it is a Newcomen design).



A - Mine shaft head-frame and pulley; B - The hoisting rope is taken up on the reel;
C - Horse operating the Gin

A Horse Gin operated remotely from the Pit head

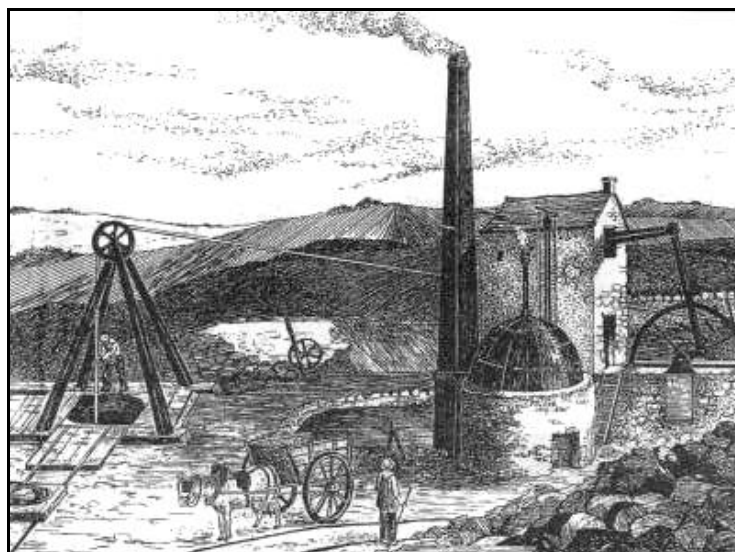


Illustration of a steam powered Whimsey with Newcomen engine

**JAMES BURSLEM THE ELDER (1697-1766),
HIS SONS WILLIAM & JAMES &
GRANDSON GODOLPHIN WILLIAM**

By 1742, the most important colliery proprietor in the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfield was James Burslem, of Stanton (1695 -1766) who held interests in collieries in Newhall, Oakthorpe and Coleorton. His family had participated in the industry for many years. James was the fifth son of William Burslem of Wolstanton who was a very active political figure in Newcastle-Under-Lyme during the first decade of the eighteenth century, and who served as Member of Parliament for the Borough from 1710-14.

James Burslem was born on 5th February 1695 and his earliest known connection with the coalmining industry dates from the year 1715, when Colin Owen tells us, he witnessed the very important agreement made by George Sparrow and the Parrotts with the "Proprietors" of the "Newcomen Atmospheric Engine" referred to previously.

The death of James Burslem's father William in 1716 and the complex settlement of his estates two years later, appeared to have provided James Burslem (1695 - 1766) with the finances to launch out on his own. *By 1719, Colin Owen explains, he had moved to Packington, where he may have been concerned in small scale mining there in association with the Earl of Huntingdon. James had married Elizabeth Godolphin, the sister and coheir of William Godolphin of Coulston in Wiltshire.* Due again to a paucity of records, it is impossible to say where they lived, but as is recorded later in his eldest son's William's will, he owned Alton Grange and Alton Farm, which it is reasonable to assume was passed down through his father, although someone else was resident at the time William made his will.

The following baptism / burial records are taken from the Packington Parish Registers and obtained from the "The Packington Village History group website", for which the author is extremely grateful. They are important in that they help to confirm the statement by Colin Owen:-

Child's Surname	Christian Name	Father / Mother Of All Children	Baptism / Burial	Date
Burslem	Francis	James /Elizabeth Burslem	Baptised	1722 / 3 - Jan 15th
Burslem	Godolphin (William)		Baptised	1723 / 4 - Jan 28th
Burslem	Godolphin		Burial	1724 - May 21st
Burslem	Barbara		Baptised	1725 / 6 - Feb 2nd
Burslem	Arabella		Baptised	1726 - Dec 27th
Burslem	Arabilla		Burial	1726 / 7 - Jan 21st
Burslem	Laetitia		Baptised	1728 - April 2nd
Burslem	Katherine		Baptised	1731 - March 26th

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO THE ABOVE CHART

All of James and Elizabeth's children, except the eldest William were baptised at Packington. There are some omissions in the above chart as follows:-

James, who was baptised at Packington obtained a B.A. from Cambridge in 1743 and an M.A. in 1747, became Rector of Marsh Gibbons, Bucks; Rector of Cadeby,

Leics, and Rector of Wisbech. He was married at the age of 29 in 1752 to Sarah, daughter of Fowler Oldershaw of Bosworth and widow of A. Greswold of Malvern hall, Works. they had issue a daughter Sarah, who became married to the Rev, Reginald Challoner Cobbe, Rectoy of Marlow, Bucks, whose daughter Frances married, in 1803, Hans Francis Hastings, 12th Earl of Huntingdon. The Rev. James Burslem died 30th December 1786.

Elizabeth Maria, who must have been born in 1718; her baptismal record has not been found ; she married a Mr. Parr, in about 1739, and was living, a widow, in 1775 ; she had five children :—Maria, who in 1763, witnessed the marriage of her aunt Katherine, to Joseph Lovatt, at Stapenhill ; Mary, born about 1741 ; Thomas ; Sarah, who, in 1776, witnessed the marriage of her first cousin, Sarah Burslem, to the rev. Richard Chaloner Cobbe, at Market Bosworth ; and Elizabeth. These five were living in 1775 ; one of them, a Miss Parr, seems to have been living in 1833 at Woolwich, with Mr. Burslem, where she is described as his “ sister-in-law.”

William, of Alton Grange ; baptised 18 February, 1718/9 ; died in February, 1781, and was buried at Cole Orton (M.I.) ; married, in 1753, Mary Curzon of Breedon. She was the third daughter and sixth child of the rev. John Curzon, rector of Kedleston, by his wife Anne, daughter of Thomas Toone of Breedon. The rev. John Curzon was son of John Curzon by his wife Millicent Sacheverall, descended from Richard II. Mary Curzon's brother, Nathaniel, was closely connected in colliery management with the Burslems, as is shown in following accounts

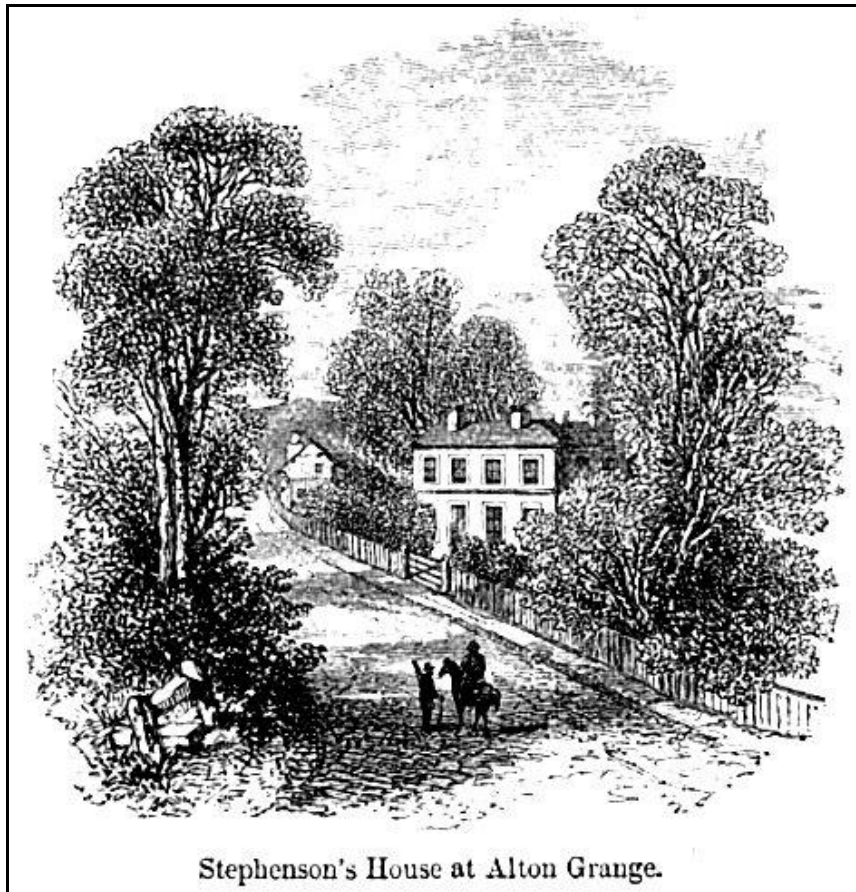
An Elizabeth Maria, married Mr. Parr and there was also a Margaret.

Laetitia married Thomas Spearham and Katherine married Joseph Lovatt

ALTON GRANGE AND FARM

It is worthy of noting something about Alton Grange which has a long history and was part of the lands owned by Garendon Abbey at one time, and was for a long period in the County of Derbyshire. James Burslem the elder owned and resided at Alton Grange and also owned Alton Grange farm. John Curtis recorded the following in 1831 in his "Topographical History of the County of Leicester". **Note the reference to coal mines :-**

de Broke's) sold it to William Wilson, Esq. in 1700.
Alton Grange. Hamlet of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, contains about 500 acres, the owners of which are Mrs. Swinburne, and H. Biggs, Esq.
 Helestone. There are Coal mines on Mrs. Swinburne's estate, recently
 Altere. opened, the depth of which is about 30 yards, and the stratum
 Altone. 5 feet thick.—In 1313 Alan le Zouch held $\frac{1}{2}$ of a fee.¹¹ In 1322 he held the hamlet.¹²
 In 1326 William Bereford and Margaret, his wife, held 51s. rent.¹³ In 1339 William and Robert Herle paid a fine of 20s. for license to assign lands to Garendon Abbey,¹⁴ and they assigned $\frac{1}{2}$ a virgate and 21s. rent, accordingly.¹⁵ At the dissolution the manor of Grange was granted to Thomas Manners, Earl of Rutland, who sold it in 1541 to George Digby ; it then came to Thomas Manners, who sold it in 1549 to Francis, Earl of Huntingdon.¹⁵



Stephenson's House at Alton Grange.

Another, perhaps more well known owner of Alton Grange was George Stephenson who purchased it in 1833 and lived there until 1842 whilst developing coal mining on the Snibston Estate.

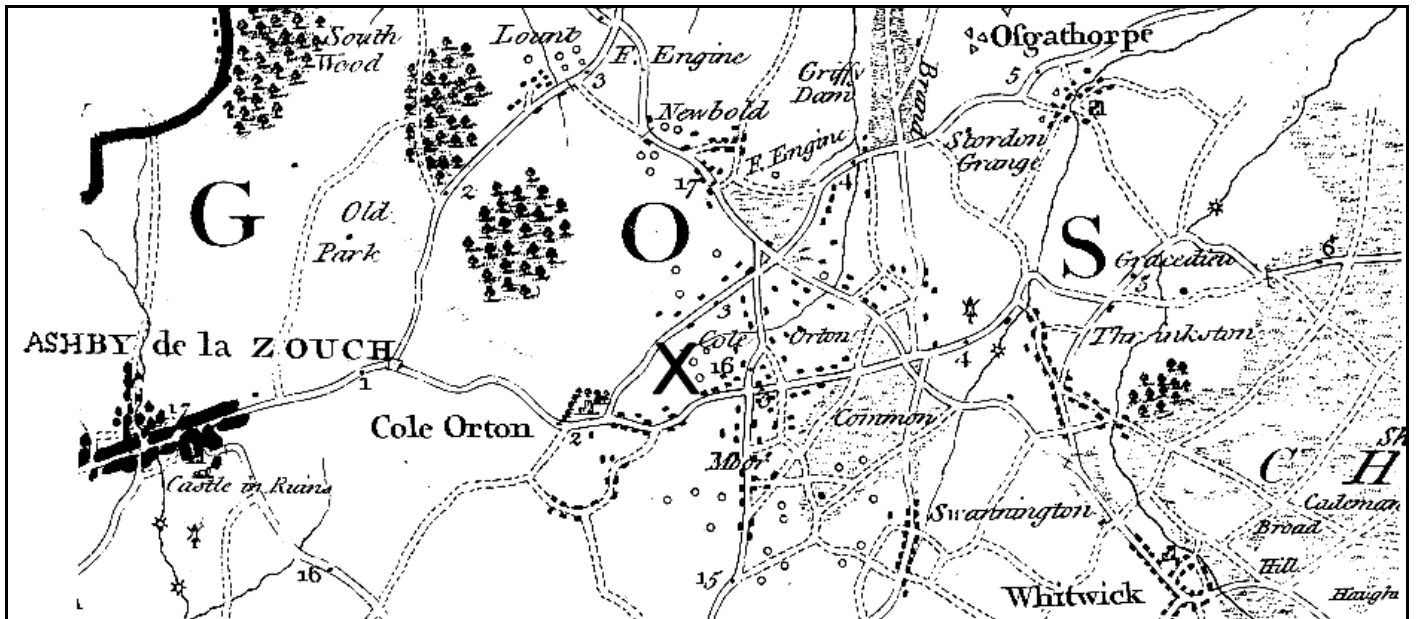
The above engraving of Stephenson's house, Alton Grange, is dated 1857 and appears in "The life of George Stephenson and his son Robert Stephenson" by Samuel Smiles.

Alton has been described as a deserted *medieval* village between Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch in NW Leicestershire.

The earliest documentation of the village is found in the Domesday Book where it appears as *Heleton*. The land was rented out to someone by Hugh de Grandmesil and had a total value of 60 shillings. There were 25 villagers, one being a man at arms and four smallholders. There were eight ploughs, one mill, four acres of meadow and a woodland one league long. The name is probably derived from *ald* and the suffix *tun*, meaning "old settlement".

It is one of only four villages in Leicestershire that appear to have been deserted as a result of grange formation, the others being Dishley, Ringlethorp and Weston. The most important possessor of granges in Leicestershire was the Cistercian Garendon Abbey whose economy was largely based on sheep farming. Nothing remains of the village other than a few vague topographical features.

James, the elder (1695-1766) continued to further his involvement in the coal mining industry in the south Derbyshire district together with the addition of a brick making enterprise, but in 1739, an opportunity arose for him to become involved in the Leicestershire coalfield at Coleorton, when, James O'Dell of Finchley, Middlesex decided to sell the Manor of Overton Saucey, which he had acquired through a mortgage associated with the financial difficulties of the Sparrows and the Parrots (Coal mine owners). It seems that James Burslem, at this time, already owned an interest in the mines at Coleorton, including fire-engines used for drainage at this time. However, In 1739, he was able to purchase the Manor of Overton Saucey and its minerals from O'Dell for £1,300 and thus acquire another very important group of the coalfield's pits in the area.



The above is an extract from John Prior's 1777 map of Leicestershire and this defines a group of James Burslem's four coal mines to the south of The Moor? These are shown at centre bottom directly above the figure 15. There is no mention of The Moor on the 1836 O/S map but it does mention "The Common". Much like the Beaumonts' coal mines, there are no records available for the output of Burslem's mines. There is some conjecture as to whether this area was part of Overton Saucey. James Burslem. The following extract of a newspaper advertisement below when it was put up for sale in 1782 following the death of his son William leads one to think that James had originally owned the manor and a farm in Overton Saucey which had later been inherited by William his son.

There is no conclusive evidence however, to confirm where James Burslem and Elizabeth actually lived. James Burslem died in the winter of 1765/6, and his widow Elizabeth who died on the 16th December 1767 aged 79 was buried at Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent. No record of James Burslem's burial has been found. As his will stated his address to be Stanton, in the parish of Stapenhill, it is not unreasonable to assume that is where he lived with his wife during the period from 1739 till his death.

Comprising one undivided Moiety of the MANOR, or reputed Manor, of Coleorton, alias OVERTON SAUCY, in the County of Leicester; and of a capital and genteel MANSION, with Gardens, Coach House, Stables, and an infinite number of correspondent and farming offices, in complete repair; together with a compact and valuable FARM, consisting of 60 acres of rich old enclosed land, 80 acres of open field land, 155 acres of inclosed and open land on "The Moor" within the said Manor, and 120 cottages, now standing on the said Moor

within the said Manor, in the bosom of which is a stratum of 62 acres of the finest and best coal in the county, with stratas of fine coal under the open field land.

The author is of the view that the mansion and farm was possibly in the location marked in red on the following extract from the 1836 issued O/S map, which shows Gin pits, Gin stables, numerous buildings and it is known that a farm was included. A known history of the site is included in the publication on the author's website entitled "A Horse driven Gin Pit With Associated Gin Stables and Farm in the Parish of Worthington".



Possible site of the manor house of Orton / Overton Saucey

James Burslem the elder (1695-1766) does not appear to have profited greatly from his coal mining efforts, and indeed, towards the end of his life, he appears to have become increasingly desperate for capital. It was through his attempts to safeguard his business interests, and to make provision for his wife, that he eventually became involved in a bitter dispute with his sons, and he changed his will shortly before his death, bequeathing his estates to trustees, Joseph Letch and John Blake, instead of his sons William and James, and made provision for the legal suit to be continued. His wife to be paid £120 per annum for life, and for twenty guineas to be paid to Robert Staley, the bailiff of his Newhall Colliery.

James Burslem died in the winter of 1765/6, and a transcription of the will he made shortly before his death follows :-

**Transcription of the Will of James Burslem, the elder,
of Stanton, parish of Stapenhill, Derby, gent.,
dated 26 December 1765. which reads as follows.**

Proved in the P.C.C.

I have conveyed all my real & personal estate to my two sons, William & James Burslem to pay my debts & then reconvey the same to me, which they unjustly refused to do and I have been compelled to commence a suit in the High Court of Chancery against them & Richard Ireland who has a mortgage on some parts of my estate & against Nathaniel Curzon, who has colluded with my said sons to deprive me of my estate, which suit is still depending in the said court, so now I bequeath all my lands, &c., before conveyed to my said sons, to Joseph Letch, of the Middle Temple, London, gent. & John Blake, of Essex Street, St Clement Dane's, co. Middx., gent., in trust to continue the said suit & bring the same to a conclusion & to pay my wife, Elizabeth, such sum yearly as is necessary for her maintenance, not exceeding £120 a year, & to give my grandson, James Richard Doston & my granddaughter Maria Parr, each a sum not exceeding £200; & said trustees to be executors. I bequeath to my brother Rev. Daniel Burslem, & to his two sons & daughter, Mrs Young, ten guineas each to Robert Staly, bailiff of Newhall Pitts, twenty guineas.

Nathaniel Curzon, who has colluded with my said sons to deprive me of my estate, which suit is still depending in the said court, so now I bequeath all my lands, &c., before conveyed to my said sons, to Joseph Letch, of the Middle Temple, London, gent. & John Blake, of Essex Street, St Clement Dane's, co. Middx., gent., in trust to continue the said suit & bring the same to a conclusion & to pay my wife, Elizabeth, such sum yearly as is necessary for her maintenance, not exceeding £120 a year, & to give my grandson, James Richard Doston & my granddaughter Maria Parr, each a sum not exceeding £200; & said trustees to be executors. I bequeath to my brother Rev. Daniel Burslem, & to his two sons & daughter, Mrs Young, ten guineas each. To Robert Staly, bailiff of Newhall Pitts, twenty guineas. The rest of my trust monies to be divided among my son, Capt. Francis Burslem, my daughters, Elizabeth Maria Parr, Margaret Burslem, Laetitia Spearham & Katherine Lovett.

Signed: James Burslem

Witnesses

Edward Baker, John Ponstord, Samuel Garnett.

Nathaniel Curzon who was the brother-in-law of James's Burslem's eldest son William, who had married Judith, the daughter of the Rev. John Curzon, Rector of Kedleston, joined the partnership. It was his fraudulent activities that was the catalyst that caused the bitter dispute, which continued until the following commission was issued in 1775, almost ten years after James Burslem's death. During that period, the trustees had presumably thought it prudent to allow the collieries to continue working.

TRANSCRIPTION OF COMMISSION

On the 8th of May, 1775 (almost 10 years following the death of James Burslem), a commission (an instrument issued by a court of justice, to authorise a person to take depositions) was issued to the **Rev. James Burslem, & William Burslem, sons of the deceased, to administer goods of said deceased; Joseph Letch & John Blake the trustees renouncing** (renounce the right of administering the estate of the testator); as also the residuary legatees, Elizabeth Maria Parr, widow, Laetitia, wife of Thomas Spearham, Katherine wife of Joseph Lovatt & Maria & Mary Parr, spinsters & Thomas Parr & Sarah & Elizabeth Parr spinsters, children of Elizabeth Maria Parr; & Thomas Sparham, guardian to James & Elizabeth Sparham, minors, & Maria Sparham & Susannah Averilla Sparham infants, children of said Laetitia Sparham alias Spearham; & Joseph Lovatt, guardian to Elizabeth, Joseph, James, Margaret & Mary Lovatt, children of Katherine; Elizabeth Burslem, the widow, dying (at Stanton in the parish of Stapenhill) without taking out letters of administration.

Francis & Margaret Burslem, son & daughter of deceased, also renouncing.

The trustees appointed by James Burslem, the elder (1695-1766) having renouced their trusteeship resulted in the following suit brought by William Burslem the eldest son of James Burslem, the elder (1695-1766), principally against his brother-in-law Nathaniel Curzon, as follows:-

TRANSCRIPTION OF CHANCERY PROCEEDINGS

The suit was brought by William Burslem, in 1776 [Ch. Pro. Whittington and Sewell, Bundle 429/27), against his brother-in-law, Nathaniel Curzon.

These proceedings demonstrated that Mary, William Burslem's wife, was a woman of some aptitude in business.

William Burslem, the complainant and "Orator," complains as follows :—

Your Orator's wife carried on the said Lime works, as your Orator and the defendant had before done, during the time your Orator was in London under confinement.

Nathaniel Curzon did, about Midsummer, 1773, give notice that he would quit the Lime works at Christmas following. In about 1772, after your Orator was returned home from his confinement in London, and before he was suffered to look into his affairs, (here follow certain accusations against Nathaniel) Nathaniel Curzon also managed the Oakthorpe Colliery in 1766, during the Complainant's absence and retained the profits.

After your Orator's wife's death, in December, 1772, on searching his, or her, papers which were kept from your Orator during her life, the Complainant found that she had, in 1766 and 1767, paid out a great sum of money, his one-third share of which the Complainant then demanded from Nathaniel Curzon and Joseph Wilkes, his partners.

An arbitrator appears to have decided that the Complainant was entitled to £3,992. It further appears that Nathaniel and his mother, Mrs. Curzon, paid a visit to Cole Orton, as William Burslem's guests. The more serious charge then appears :—

In or about the beginning of January, 1765," (Note. This was the year in which James Burslem, the elder, made his will and accused his sons and Nathaniel Curzon of collusion against him) your Orator being seized with a complaint, which occasioned a

great Lowness and dejection of spirits, the said Nathaniel Curzon, brother to the late wife of your Orator, who had always been your Orator's attorney and agent, did, in consequence and under colour of that trust, possess himself of divers (*Divers is a collective term used to group a number of unspecified people, objects, or acts. It is used frequently to describe property, as in divers parcels of land*), parts of your Orator's effects, money, bank notes, etc., and did take the sole or principal management of all your Orator's affairs and your Orator further showeth that, after your Orator was released from his confinement in the year 1768, he still continued afflicted with a great lowness and dejection of spirits, and the said Nathaniel Curzon, taking advantage thereof, did repeatedly tell your Orator that it was necessary for your Orator's health that your Orator should not engage in any kind of business and that it would be necessary again to place your Orator under confinement. And your Orator, under the terror and apprehension that the said Nathaniel Curzon would cause these threats to be carried into execution, did for a considerable time avoid inquiring into the state of his affairs.

“ Regarding the £300, paid by the said Nathaniel Curzon in December, 1765, to your Orator, in promissory notes and bills, drawn by Messrs. Heath, bankers, in Derby; your Orator deposited them in an iron chest, in his dwelling house at Cole Orton (*Overton Saucey?*), and was, about this time, seized with a complaint and thereupon the said Nathaniel Curzon caused your Orator to be sent to London and placed in a private Madhouse .. and Nathaniel Curzon possessed himself of the said notes and bills ”

Nathaniel Curzon's Answer to these charges is as follows :—

.. and this Defendant further sayeth that, the said Complainant having been for some time before Christmas, 1765, in some respects disordered in his mind, he about that time became totally insane and made several attempts to destroy himself; the Complainant's wife, who was this Defendant's sister, and the Rev. Mr. James Burslem, the Complainant's brother, in consequence of the Complainant's request in his lucid intervals, caused the said William Burslem to be carried up to London in a post chaise and put him under the care of Doctor Battie, in a private Madhouse and, upon the Complainant's going to London, his wife, who was a very sensible woman, took upon herself the management of the said colliery at Oakthorpe and the other properties .. and Nathaniel Curzon used to assist her .. and when William Burslem came back, having hopes of his speedy recovery, and to avoid the expense of a Commission of Lunacy and the prejudice his children might sustain by the public notoriety of his insanity, which would be occasioned by such Commission, the said William Burslem and his sister declined to take out such commission . . he remained under Battie in London for two years .. then to Nottingham, until he recovered, in February, 1770.

The defendant attached to his answer a Schedule of expenses incurred by him on the complainant's behalf ; the total sum amounted to £700 ; against this bill he had, in 1771-2 received of Isaac Hawkins, by a written order of the Complainant, towards the discharge of the above, ^000 ; balance due, ^100.”

The following items in this Schedule are of general interest :

1768. April 14. Mr. Dixie's bill for Miss Parr, who died £l 7 6

1766. Yearly charge (up to this date) for rent of house and land at " Stanton " (Stapenhill, where James and Elizabeth Burslem had lived) £12 0 0

1766. July 30. Paid Butterfield of Derby for Phillip's clothes £1 4 0

1767. May 26. Clothes for P. Burslem £1 8 0

1769. August 16. Bill for P. Burslem's clothes .. £2 11 6

1772. September 13. Mr. Orme, a bill for Schooling £15 17 6

1766-7 Mr. Lanch, for William Burslem's Board at Islington £80 0 0, £117 5 0,
£235 1 0

Mr. Bailey, Surgeon at Nottingham .. £12 1 7

Mr. Swaine in London .. £20 2 0

Mr. Nailer, for Board at Slims Wells £38 1 6, £18 1 0

Charges and expenses, up and down to London, of Mr. Burslem and Nathaniel Curzon, and Mr. Curzon's stay there on many different journeys, in 1766-7 .. £96 6 0
Stay in London at 7s. 6d. per day £< 17 6

1766. April 7. Expenses up and down, Mr. Curzon £5 10 0

Stay there 28 days, settling Answers in his father's suit in Chancery and getting his answer put in by Guardian £10 10 0

Expenses at Reigate, 30 days' visit for change of air for Mr. Burslem and a new wig for Mr. Burslem [£\ 5 0)

From 2 January to 12 January, 1766-7, William Burslem appears to have been under the care of a Dr. Munro in London.

It can only be assumed, although we have no details of the legal outcome, that the judge found in favour of William and James and they inherited the estates and coal mines etc.

James Burslem's coal mines in the south of an area loosely known as "The Moor", eventually passed into the ownership of his eldest son William (b.c.1722) and business associates after his brother James in 1779 conveyed his half share of the Overton Saucey estate for £900, including the coal pits on Coleorton Moor plus his half share in a mortgage with James Pestell of Ashby for a further £500. James it seems was not interested in coal mining and was content to pursue his profession in the church.

Nothing is known about the output of these mines or the exact period they operated over, except that they were in operation in 1779 when William Burslem's brother James conveyed his half share to him. The shafts for these would have probably been sunk in the 1730s so they had a considerable life. They appeared to be still in operation in 1786 when Godolphin William Burslem purchased the estate, including the coal mines 6 years after his father William's death in 1780, but probably only in a limited and unprofitable capacity.

Fire engines were employed at these mines for drainage as influx of water in this area was a well recorded problem.

William died on 28th February 1780, his wife having pre-deceased him in 1772. Shortly before his death, he made provisions for his eldest son, Godolphin William, and his (William's) two friends, Timothy Clarkson and Charles Pestell of Ashby, to become executors and to be responsible for disposing of his extensive estates, coalmines, brickworks and limeworks he owned, using the proceeds to settle his outstanding debts with Isaac Hawkins of Burton and to divide the residue amongst his three sons and two daughters.

William Burslem

A transcript of his will, proved in the P.C.C.

3 November 1781, follows:

**William Burslem, of Overton Saucy, parish of Cole Orton - co. Leics., gent. ;
dated 4 January 1781.**

I bequeath my manor or reputed manor of Alton Grange in the parish of Ashby de la Zouch, co. Leics. & the messuage & lands called Alton Grange Farm, now in the occupation of William Wilder & Richard Spencer subject to £4,000 mortgage & interest thereon payable to Isaac Hawkins Esq. & all my half part of the Manor of Overton Saucy & the farm in Overton Saucy & lands there & 120 cottages there & a bed of coal there & all my other manors, lands, &c., in the said places & in Oakthorpe, Measham, Newhall & Hartshorne, co. Derby & Osgathorpe, co. Leics. & all my other property to my eldest son, Godolphin William Burslem, and my friends Timothy Clarkson & Charles Pestell both of Ashby de la Zouch, gents., in trust to sell the same & discharge the said mortgage & to pay as follows:

To my eldest daughter, Mary Burslem a fifth part of what remains after the mortgage settled, debts paid, &c.

To my daughters, Judith and Ann Burslem such sums as are necessary to maintain them until their ages of 21 and the same to my sons, John & Nathaniel, when each shall have a fourth part.

Executors: Said trustees. Signed: Wm. Burslem.

Witnesses: E. Toone, Joseph Toone, Joshua Cowdall.

Although he refers to his half share of the manor of Overton Saucy in the above will, his brother James in 1779 had already conveyed his half share of the Overton Saucy estate for £900, including the coal pits on The Moor plus his half share in a mortgage with James Pestell of Ashby for a further £500.

James it seems was not interested in coal mining and was content to pursue his profession in the church.

THE SALE OF WILLIAM BURSLEM'S PROPERTY AND ESTATES

There follows details of the auction of William Burslem's estates and property which took place at Ashby in March 1782.

The following is an extract of a sale notice for the Manor of "Overton Saucy" which was recorded in the **Leicester & Nottingham Journal - March 1782:-**

At the "White Hart", at Ashby De La Zouch, in the County of Leicester, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, on Tuesday the 12th of March 1782, in one or more LOTS, according to conditions to be produced at the time of the SALE. Being part of the ESTATES and PROPERTY of WILLIAM BURSLEM of Coleorton, in the County of Leicester, Esq., deceased.

Comprising one undivided Moiety of the MANOR, or reputed Manor, of Coleorton, alias OVERTON SAUCY, in the County of Leicester; and of a capital and genteel MANSION, with Gardens, Coach House, Stables, and an infinite number of correspondent and farming offices, in complete repair; together with a compact and valuable FARM, consisting of 60 acres of rich old enclosed land, 80 acres of open field land, 155 acres of inclosed and open land on "The Moor" within the said Manor, and 120 cottages, now standing on the said Moor within the said Manor, in the bosom of which is a stratum of 62 acres of the finest and best coal in the county, with stratas of fine coal under the open field land.

Also FIVE TWELTH SHARES of a lease of a genteel messuage, tenement, and homestead, together with a new erected messuage, work shops, barns, gin stables, graneries, every other requisite office for the use of a colliery and farm, and a desirable little inclosed farm, of 65 acres, situate at Oakthorpe in the County of Derby.....

Regarding the 120 cottages now standing on "The Moor" within the said manor. If we look at Prior's map of 1777, numerous buildings are shown, but it is difficult to imagine that even if these indicated terraced rows they amounted to 120 on "The Moor" alone. As it refers to "*within the said manor*", this presumably indicates that "The Moor" was within the manor of Overton Saucy. It is therefore possible that 120 cottages existed within the whole area of "The Moor" and the manor of Overton Saucy.

In 1831, Coleorton was a scattered village divided into three areas, Called "Old Town", "Church Town" and "Farm Town". The ecclesiastical parish contained nearly 2,000 acres of land, and had 848 inhabitants, but they were reduced to 601 in 1841, owing chiefly to the demolition of 35 cottages, in consequence apparently of the exhaustion of a colliery. The 1841 census records 585 inhabitants (278 males / 307 females). So, over a period of 40 years the population of Coleorton nearly halved. This confirms that a large number of miner's cottages existed in Coleorton.

It is assumed that the manor house at Overton Saucey did not sell, as twelve months later the following for sale advert appeared in the Derby Mercury:-

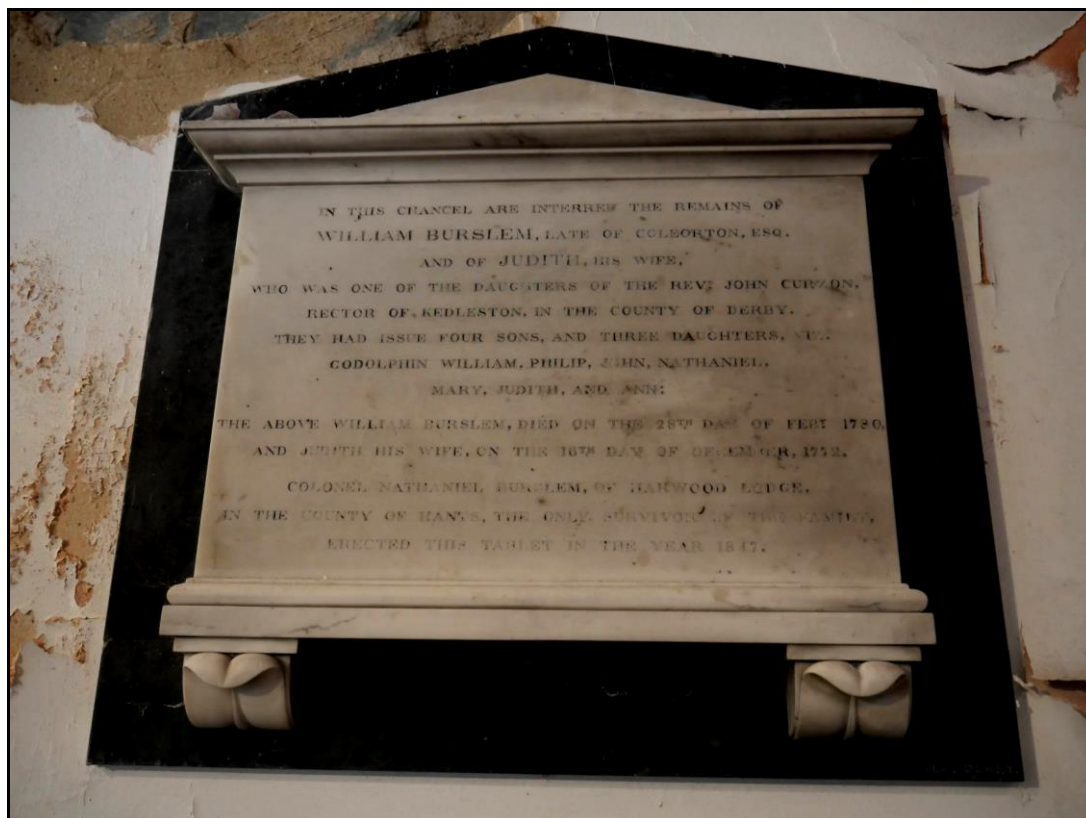
Derby Mercury - Thursday 13th February 1783

TO BE SOLD

By GEORGE BANTON at the DWELLING HOUSE OF THE LATE MR. BURSLEM, at COLEORTON, on Monday the 3rd day of March next:

All the household goods, books, & furniture, live and dead stock, corn grain, hay and implements of husbandry. - The sale to begin at ten O'clock in the morning, and the first day's sale will commence of the stock and implements. - To continue till the who is dispersed of.

**IN REMEMBRANCE OF WILLIAM BURSLEM WHOSE
REMAINS WERE INTERRED UNDER THE CHANCEL
FLOOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, COLEORTON**



WORDING ON THE MARBLE WALL PLAQUE IN THE CHANCEL AT ST. MARY'S

**IN THIS CHANCEL ARE INTERRED THE REMAINS OF
WILLIAM BURSLEM LATE OF COLEORTON, ESQ
AND OF JUDITH HIS WIFE
WHO WAS ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE REV. JOHN CURZON
RECTOR OF KEDLESTON, IN THE COUNTY OF DERBY
THEY HAD ISSUE FOUR SONS, AND THREE DAUGHTERS
GODOLPHIN WILLIAM, PHILIP, JOHN, NATHANIEL
MARY, JUDITH AND ANN :
THE ABOVE WILLIAM BURSLEM DIED ON THE 28TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 1780
AND JUDITH HIS WIFE ON THE 16TH DAY OF DECEMBER 1772
COLONEL NATHANIEL BURSLEM, OF HARWOOD LODGE
IN THE COUNTY OF HANTS, THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF THIS FAMILY
ERECTED THIS TABLET IN THE YEAR 1817**



It is rather interesting the plaque (left centre) in memory of William Burslem was placed next to the ornate memorial plaque of Joseph Boulton, his greatest coal mining competitor in the immediate area.



**Joseph Boulton Snr., Memorial
in St. Mary's Church, Coleorton**

*SPERO IN DEO
In a small Vault
under these Steps
lie the Remains
of JOS^H BOULTBEE Esq^r
many Years resident of this Place.
Who died upon the 25th day of Sep^r
1789. in the 89th Year of his Age.
And of ELIZTH his Wife
who died in Augst 1771.
in the 75th Year of her Age.
This Monument
was erected in the Year 1794
by their Son JOS^H BOULTBEE
In Remembrance
of Parents eminently distinguished
by their Christian & Moral Virtues
and by him most deservedly Honoured
and esteemed.*

Transcript of Memorial

Joseph Boulton Sn'r married Elizabeth Ward in 1735 at St. Peters, Derby. Elizabeth died in 1771 and Joseph died in 1789 at the age of 88. It is rather ironical that William Burslem and Joseph Boulton who were competitors in local coal mining should both be buried next to each other under the chancel floor at St. Mary's church, Coleorton. Read more about the Boultons in a free to download and read book entitled "The Development of Coal Mining in the Local Area" on the authors website :-

<https://samuelstewart940.wixsite.com/mysite>

The preceding map shows a track leading from the former Loughborough to Ashby turnpike to the colliery and further confirmation of this is shown on the 1835 O/S map below, but as two straight lines. This is to the east of the figure 9. The turnpike



The author's initial view was that this was a short length of tramway but this would not make sense as the tramways from the Charnwood Forest Canal approached from a different direction (see diagrammatic sketch on page 25). It was more likely to be a track to allow the miners, pack horses or carts etc to enter the colliery and stockyard from the Loughborough to Ashby turnpike. It was over three years between his coal mine being sunk and the Charnwood Forest Canal being opened in October 1794, so during that period coal would have been taken from the colliery for more local deliveries, although it could have been delivered as far as Leicester by these means.

Godolphin Burslem installed a Fire engine adjacent to the George Inn next to Boulton's Fire engine for pumping water out of the mine. This was capable of raising 760 gallons of water per minute. Apparently, at some point prior to opening his new colliery, Godolphin relinquished his coal mining interests at Oakthorpe and Newhall, which he probably regretted as we will learn later, as it is doubtful if he made any money from this venture. The money from Oakthorpe and Newhall was no doubt used to purchase the Overton Saucey estate There follows an advertisement regarding the sale of a fire engine related to this sale, prior to leaving Burton.

Derby Mercury - Thursday 24 October 1782

**FIRE ENGINE.
TO BE SOLD,**

An exceeding good FIRE ENGINE, with the Boiler, Cylinder, &c. in good condition. For particulars apply to Mr. BURSLEM, at Burton-upon- Trent.

At some point Godolphin purchased Ravenstone Hall, but by 1802 he had sold the contents and moved to Hampshire where he died in 1809.

PACKHORSES

Before the development of the turnpike roads, preventing the efficient use of wheeled vehicles, goods of every conceivable kind needed to be carried on the backs of packhorses or sumpters (horses, donkeys, ponies or mules). Heavy goods like coal were mainly carried in basket work panniers slung on either side of the horse and mounted on wooden pack frames. Packhorses were a flexible and reliable means of transport, able to carry upwards of 400 lbs each dependent on their size over long distances.

From the earliest times coal was transported from local areas to Leicester by pack horse, via Ibstock, Bagworth, Desford and Kirby Muxloe to Aylestone. Here the track crossed the Soar by means of a pack horse bridge before entering the town of Leicester and thence to Coal Hill (or Berehill), a site now occupied by the Clock Tower. The cost of transport was considerable; in 1603 coal purchased at the pit-head for 1s 7d a ton sold for 10s in Leicester. This method was still being used in the early nineteenth century. Higglers purchased coal from stock yards at Swannington, Coleorton and the Smoile by the pack-load. Throsby gave a vivid picture of the heavily laden horses, - "groups of crawling beings, enfeebled by oppression and often sinking under their loads, subject to the execrations and violent kickings of their masters".

There is little recorded history about packhorses in the local area so we are fortunate to have access to a copy of a story by the historian H. Butler Johnson who wrote c.1910 several articles about trades carried on in the area of Coleorton.

An occupation in the Cole Orton district which came to an end c.1850 was the hawking of coal carried on donkey's backs in large panniers. These donkeys were generally run in droves of fifteen or twenty, and the burdens they carried, so old residents have informed us, were almost unbelievable, as much as four hundredweight of coal being at times placed in the panniers of one of the little animals, a weight that bent it's spine into the form of an inverted arch.

The last drove, we believe, of these pack animals, nineteen donkeys and one small pony, was that of William Bakewell, who lived in the Bakewell's lane now named after him. Bakewell, who seems to have been the last man in Cole Orton to habitually wear a blue smock frock, was in the habit of fetching his supply of coal from the old Lount pit (presumably in Worthington Rough).

On the way back home through the Woolrooms,, the drove of burdened animals always lay down for a rest when they arrived at the bridge under the Coleorton railway (on [Aqueduct Lane](#)), and, until they had it, refused to pass the spot. Here the burdens were re-distributed, and the contents of the panniers to some extent lightened, not so much we fear for humanities sake, as for the fact that the coal was sold by the pannier, and not by weight, as the present law requires. For which relief, the donkeys, and not the customers gave much thanks.



The above could well have been similar to the blue smock frock described by Butler Johnson as being habitually worn by William Bakewell

The following 1841 and 51 Coleorton census information shows a senior and junior William Bakewell with a variance in ages recorded between the two censuses, who both carried on the trade of coal carrier. Sadly this couldn't have been a profitable business as William senior is recorded as a pauper in 1851, but still survived to a remarkable age for those times. Neither appeared in the 1861 census. They were living with Mary Wright (daughter & sister) who was a widow and her children.

William Bakewell	80		Coal carrier	Born Leics
William Bakewell	30		Coal carrier	Leics
Mary Wright		32		Leics
Jane Wright		8		Leics
John Wright		5		Leics
William Wright		7		Leics

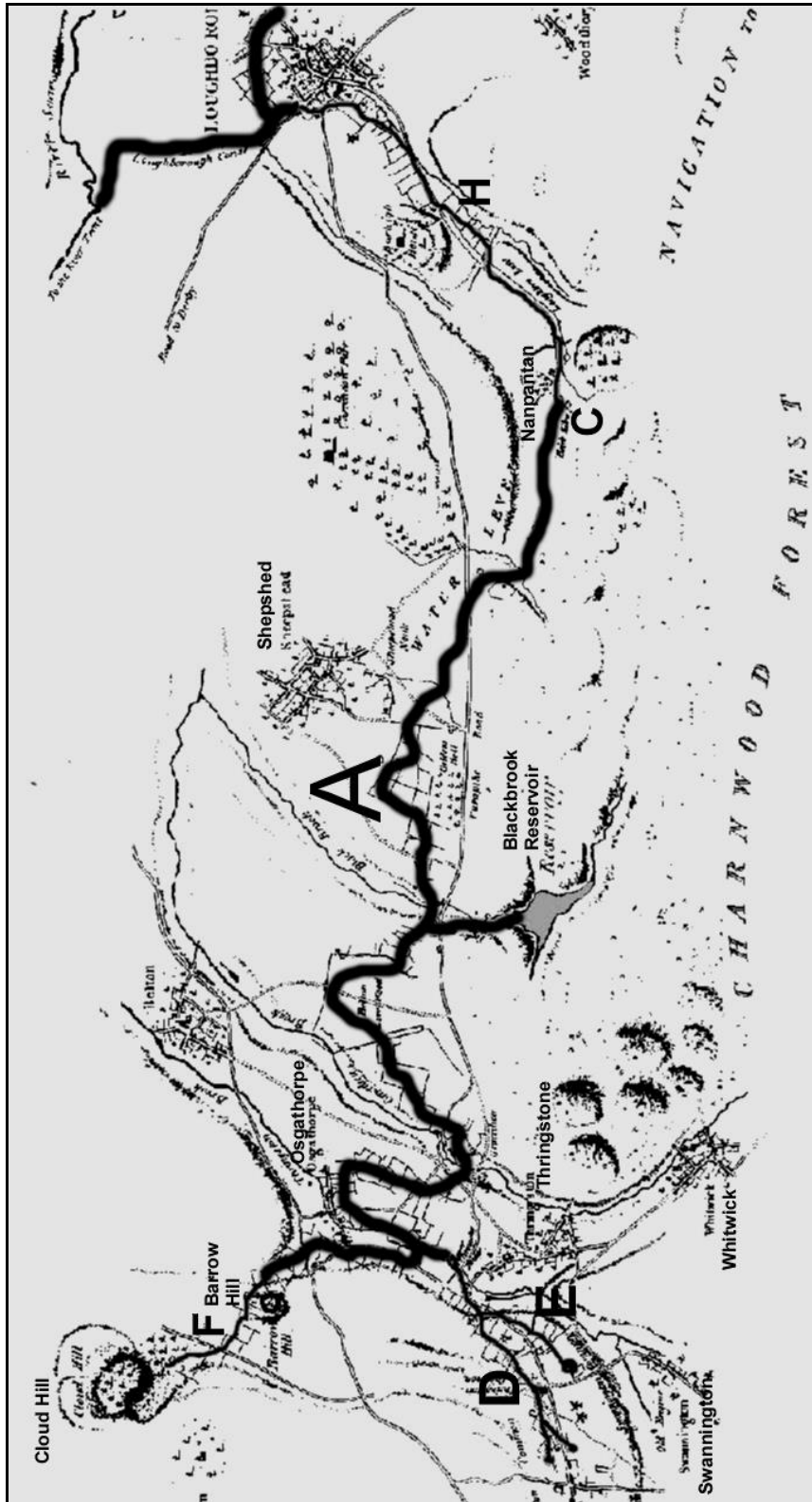
From the 1841 Coleorton census

William Bakewell	88	Head	Widower	Pauper (former coal dealer)	Born Coleorton
William Bakewell	43	Son	Unm	Coal dealer	Coleorton
Mary Wright	42	Daughter	Widow	Lace worker	Coleorton
Jane Wright	18	Grand Daughter	Unm	Lace worker	Coleorton
John Wright	15	Grandson	Unm	Coal miner	Coleorton

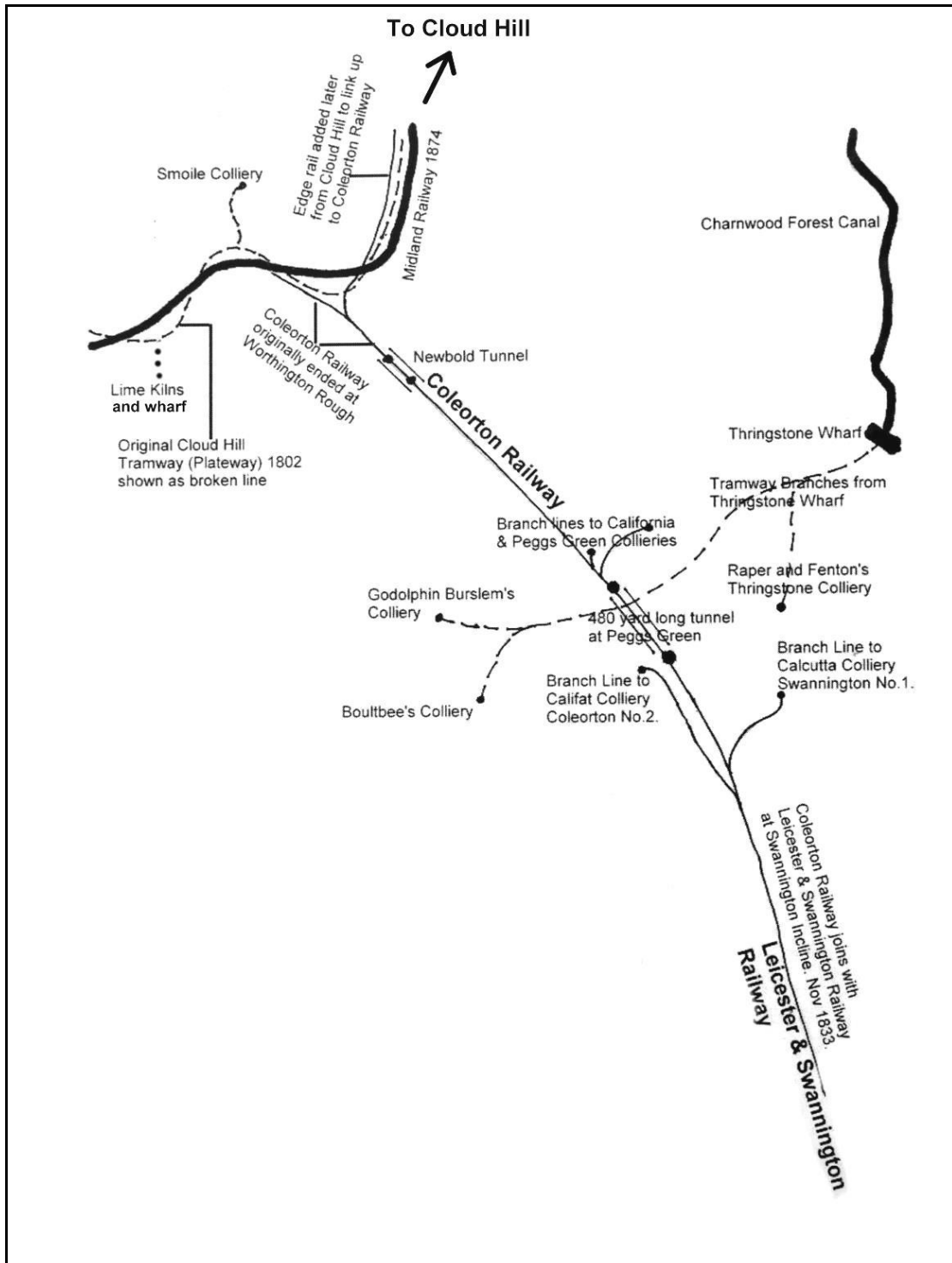
From the 1851 Coleorton census

GODOLPHIN BURSLEM AND THE CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL

ORIGINAL MAP OF THE CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL DRAWN IN 1791 BY THE CANAL'S ENGINEER CHRISTOPHER STAVELY AND ANNOTATED BY THE AUTHOR

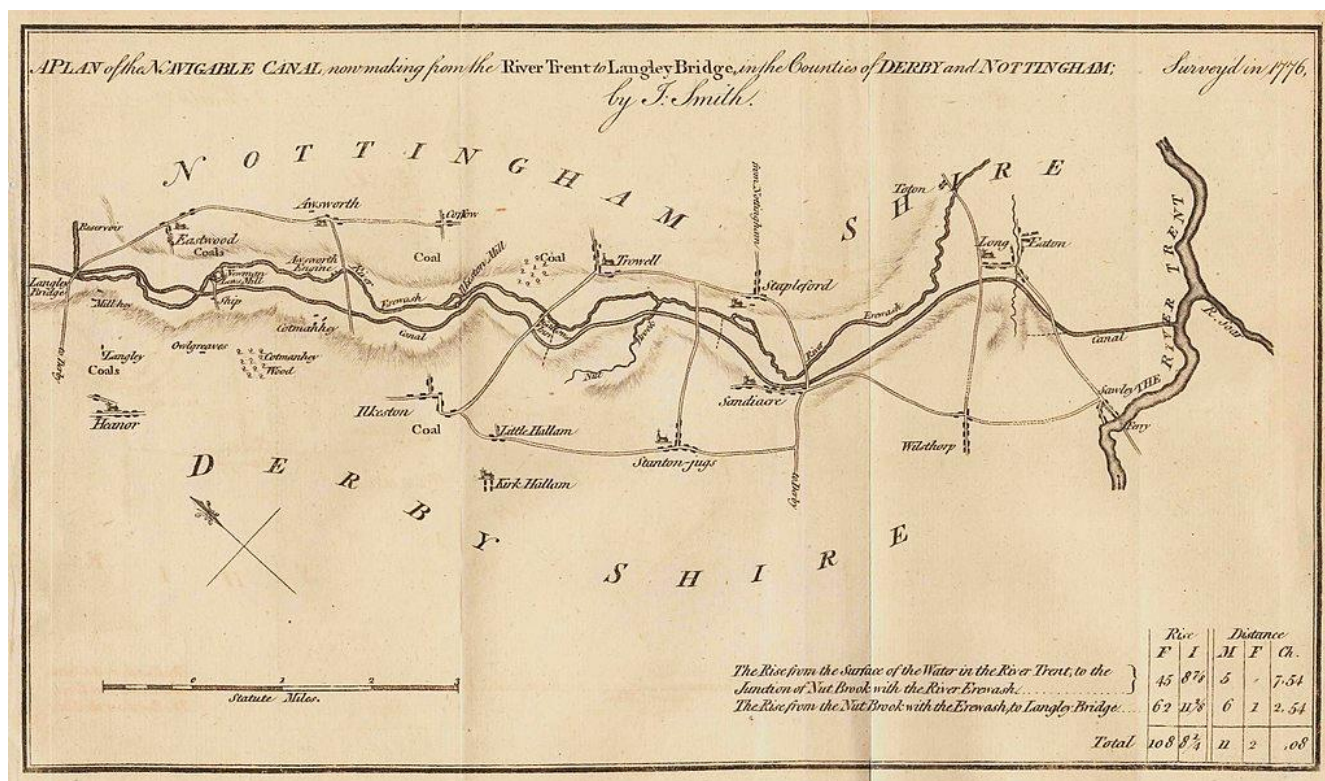


A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM (NOT TO SCALE) FOR THE PURPOSE OF SHOWING THE ROUTE OF THE COLEORTON RAILWAY TO THE LEICESTER TO SWANNINGTON RAILWAY AT SWANNINGTON INCLINE FROM WORTHINGTON ROUGH & ITS TRAMWAY BRANCH LINES. INCLUDED ALSO ARE THE TRAMWAY BRANCH LINES FROM THE CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL AT THRINGSTONE WHARF TO THE COAL MINES OF RAPER AND FENTON AT THRINGSTONE AND BURSLEM AND BOULTBEE'S MINES AT COLEORTON



About the time that the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire turnpike system was becoming effective, business men and financiers applied themselves to a new concept of inland communication – the canal – which culminated in the notorious “canal mania” of 1791-3. Sponsors of the various canal projects believed this new form of transport would drastically cut costs, and open up new distant markets, particularly for bulky commodities such as coal and lime.

Following the successful completion of the Duke of Bridgewater’s canal, a new interest was awakened in the ill fated Soar Navigation project, with the desire in Leicester for cheaper Erewash Valley coal. The Erewash Valley Colliery owners had built their canal to the Trent by 1779, and the Soar Navigation had completed the section from the Trent to Loughborough the year before. By 1779, the Erewash canal had opened from Trent Lock to Langley (Mill) Bridge. By May of that year, West Hallam coal was being transported in 30 ton barges to be delivered in 3 to 4 days at Loughborough Wharf at plus 9s 0d a ton. Denby coal sold for 6s 1d a ton soon afterwards. This brought huge competition for the coal owners, as now those on the Derbyshire side of the River Erewash were able to sell their output in Nottingham at a reduced rate by transporting it by barge along the new canal and onto the River Trent. Canal boats carrying 30 tons of coal, manned by a crew of three, and pulled by one horse, could complete the voyage from Erewash pithead to Loughborough Wharf in three and a half days in calm weather. At Loughborough, coal had to be transferred into carts to complete the journey to Leicester by road, and serious attention was again being given to extending the navigable waterway through to Leicester. The Leicester Navigation was proposed, but was met with violent opposition from Sir George Beaumont and other Leicestershire pit owners, whose interests had already been damaged by the Soar Navigation. The sponsors, however, of the proposed Navigation were able to buy over the Leicestershire coal-owners by agreeing to include them in their scheme, a proposed canal from the Soar, near Loughborough, to the Coleorton coalfield. This, on the face of it, should have given the Leicestershire pits a small advantage, and probably would have done so if the original proposals for a continuous waterway had been carried through.



The original Charnwood Forest Canal was to begin at Thringstone Bridge, close to the Coleorton and Swannington pits, and was to pass north of Sheepshed and Loughborough to join the Leicester Navigation, via a series of locks, at Barrow-On-Soar.

The reader should note that the Charnwood Forest Canal was principally built for the transportation of coal, from the mines at Swannington and Coleorton. Burnt lime from Barrow Hill, Osgathorpe and Gracedieu lime quarries only formed a small percentage of the tonnage transhipped via the canal during its short life.

A prominent part in the negotiations which followed was played by the now wealthy Leicester banker, and coal mine proprietor Joseph Boulton, who was also a tenant of one of Beaumont's mines at Coleorton, adjacent to the George in at Coleorton and only a quarter of a mile from Godolphin Burslem's mine.

Various bills before Parliament between 1786 and 1789 were thrown out under pressure from landed interests, but the Bill finally gained assent in 1791, and the Leicester Navigation Company, of which Sir George Beaumont was a shareholder, was formed. There follows an extract and copy from the original petition made to Parliament in 1786:-

A petition of the several Noblemen, and the humble petition of the several Gentlemen, Clergy, merchants, Tradesmen, manufacturers, and others whose Names are thereunto subscribed, on Behalf of themselves and others, was presented to the House, and read; Setting forth, That by surveys lately made, it appears, that a Canal, for the Navigation of Boats and other vessels with heavy Burdens, may be made from Thringstone Bridge, in the Parish of Whitwick, in the County of Leicester, to the Town of Leicester, to commence at near Thringstone Bridge aforesaid, and to proceed from thence through or near the several Parishes, Townships or hamlets, of Thringstone, Whitwick, Osgathorpe, Belton, Sheepshed, Garrendon, Thorpe Acre, and Loughborough, and there to cross the Loughborough Canal Navigation which communicates with the Trent Navigation, or instead thereof, if it thought to be more beneficial to the Public, to pass on the South Side of Loughborough aforesaid, and to proceed from thence, in either Case, through or near the several Parishes, Townships or Hamlets of Loughborough, Woodthorpe, and Quarndon, to or near Barrow upon Soar, there to communicate with River Soar, from whence a Navigation may be continued, by Means of widening, deepening, and cleansing the said River Soar, and making necessary Cuts and Deviations by the Sides thereof, to or near Lady's Bridge, in the Parish of Saint Margaret, in or near the said town of Leicester, or to or near West Bridge, in the Parish of Saint Mary in the said Town of Leicester, or to or near both these places; and also, that one or more Rail or Waggon Way or Ways for the conveyance of Coal, Stone, Lime, and other Goods, to or near the several Coal Pits and Lime Works opened, or to be opened, or worked, in the several Parishes, Townships, or places of Swannington, Coleorton, Thringstone, Staunton Harold, Osgathorpe, Breedon, and Grace Dieu, contiguous or near to Thringstone aforesaid, and the line of the said intended Canal, may be made and completed from the said Canal Navigation; and that from making the said above-mentioned Canal and Navigation, and Rail or Waggon Way or Ways, the Petitioners conceive that great public advantage may be derived, by extending the Intercourse of Trade and Commerce, as well as many local Benefits produced to several local Towns and Places, and particularly in the articles of Coal and Lime.....

Christopher Staveley was brought in to survey the area and came up with a seven and a half mile long contour canal between Thringstone and Nanpantan, near Loughborough (**see Staveley's map of the canal at the beginning of the article**).

The 1791 Act meant a major change to the original proposals, since the vexed question of water rights owned by watermills at Gracedieu, Sheepshed and Dishley, prevented the use of water for heading the lock system, so it was agreed to run a level canal along what is the 300 feet contour, so far as it would go, which was at Nanpantan near the Priory Hotel, 170ft. above the Soar. The final route of the canal began at Thringstone Bridge, running north as far as Osgathorpe, before turning sharply south again to pass behind Gracedieu Priory and skirted the edge of the lime quarry there. Here it turned east to run (roughly) along the line of the current Ashby Road, before passing under Tickow Lane and coming into Sheepshed. From here it continued south east under Ashby Road and the line of the present M1, and on across the site of Longcliffe Golf Course. The canal part of the line ended at Nanpantan, in an unloading wharf just behind "The Priory" pub.

This necessitated horse-drawn tram road connections at each end, one to Loughborough from Nanpantan (marked **H** on the preceding map), which was two and three quarter miles long with a section of 1 in 30 down-hill gradient. At the other end, between the pits and Thringstone Wharf were two lines marked **D** and **E** on the preceding map each about one mile long, with gradients in places of 1 in 24 and 1 in 26 which were in favour of the loaded wagons. [One leg ran to Burslem's and Boulton's collieries near to the George Inn, Coleorton and the other to Raper and Fenton's Thringstone Colliery \(See the schematic diagram on page 25\)](#)

John Nichols, the Leicestershire historian, tells us c.1820 :-

A branch of ¼ of a mile proceeds almost S, and level, to Thringston-bridge Wharf and Warehouses; and thence Rail-way proceeds SSW ¾ m to Swannington-common Colliery; and another such branch SW, ¼ m. to Cole-Orton Colliery; and another branch from the last, of a ¼ m. to another colliery in Coleorton, was also provided for in the Act: and any other Rail-way branches are allowed to be made to Mines, &c. within 2000 yards: these Rail-way branches rise considerably from the Water-level, but I am unacquainted with the particulars: except that the descent is so considerable from Cole-Orton, that the Trams of coal descended without Horses, regulated by means of a clamp or logger, acting on the wheels, by a man who rode on each, and the empty trams were drawn up again by Horses.

The level canal was seven and a half miles long from Nanpantan to Junction House, south of Osgathorpe, from where a mile long branch arm took the canal north to Barrow Hill lime works basin, from where a 130 yard long tramway continued into the lime works. This was built in order to allow burnt lime (quick lime) to be transhipped onto the canal barges. Land was purchased in order to build a tramway to connect Barrow Hill lime works to Cloud Hill (marked **F** on the preceding map), but this never materialized. This would of course have enabled Cloud Hill lime works to tranship burnt lime onto the canal via Barrow Hill to Leicester, both lime works being owned by Earl Stamford at this time of course. When the tramway from Willesley basin to Cloud Hill limestone quarry was built in 1802, this allowed Cloud Hill to tranship lime to the national canal network via the Ashby Canal when it was opened in 1804, and later by the Coleorton Railway to Leicester.

John Farey described the edge rails and trams that were used on the branch lines as follows:-

The railways belonging to this company are single, have bars (rails) flat at the top, and the wheels cast with flanches, inside, for keeping the trams upon them. The

bodies of the trams were made to lift off, or to be placed on their wheels, by cranes erected in the Forest-Lane and Thringstone Bridge wharfs, so that the bodies of the trams only, stowed close together could be carried in the boats on the water level.....It is not thought that this system was ever used, although the description he gives is not dissimilar to that used on the Little Eaton Gangway from the Derby Canal which was in use c.1795.

After delays and financial problems, which were to beset the project right through to the end, and although much work still needed to be completed, the Charnwood Forest Canal was declared open for the transportation of coal and lime on 24th October 1794, and with it the whole of the Leicester Navigation to Leicester.

In October 1791, Godolphin Burslem, full of optimism over the starting of the Charnwood Forest Canal, opened a new colliery at Coleorton which was leased from Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Baronet, and was able to raise thick coal of excellent quality. The colliery was situated just to the north of what is now the George Inn, on the Loughborough Road. It was drained by a new engine capable of raising 760 gallons of water per minute. It was said, that this, and Boulbees' new colliery just to the west of the George Inn, were capable of producing a lasting supply to the whole county.

Initially, the Derbyshire barges had to wait at Loughborough whilst Burslem's' coal was transferred, once at Thringstone Bridge from coal wagons into barges, then at Nanpanton Wharf back into wagons, and again at Loughborough Wharf back into barges. Goodness knows what degraded state the coal was in when it finally arrived at Leicester.

As a result of Burslem's dissatisfaction with the new canal when it was opened to traffic in October 1794, the Navigation Company agreed to buy £40 worth of his coal immediately, and up to £20 worth per week thereafter at a price of 8s per ton, and to carry it free of charge to Thringstone Wharf, on condition that Burslem would buy back any unsold coal once the canal had become effective. Three days later, two barges arrived simultaneously at Leicester – **one laden with coal from Godolphin Burslem's mine at Coleorton**, and the other with best Derbyshire house coal.

Burslem's immediate problems were now solved, and in June 1795, John Gildart, the manager of Thringstone Wharf, reported to the company that 330 tons of **Godolphin Burslem's coal** had arrived and was awaiting collection. Sir George Beaumont, however, carried on a lengthy dispute with the company over tonnage rates, maintaining that he could not deliver coal to Thringstone Wharf for less than 8s 4d per ton, and that when tonnages had been added, it was more expensive than the north Derbyshire coal when sold in Leicester. It was some time before the company reluctantly agreed to reduce the tonnage on coal between Thringstone and Loughborough from 1s 6d to 10d. During the three months of April to June 1796, only 195 tons of coal was sent along the Forest Canal, and the collector at Thringstone Wharf was shortly afterwards relieved of his post. It was claimed that the colliery proprietors were unable to produce coal at a competitive price.

Godolphin Burslem was apparently having "cash flow" problems owing to the inability of the Navigation Company to transport his coal, which was piling up at Thringstone Wharf. By July 3rd 1796, there was a stack of about 300 tons of coal, which the Navigation Company actually purchased and resold at cost.

At the end of 1796, Burslem probably decided that there was little point in

continuing and he went out of business shortly afterwards, due to geological difficulties. A fully-equipped colliery, designed to work the Swannington coal and situated at Coleorton, was advertised to let in June of the following year, and it is likely that this was his new colliery opened in 1791. Early in 1802, Godolphin Burslem sold the contents of his home at Ravenstone Hall and moved to Hampshire, where he died in 1809. There is some mention of him being involved at a colliery in Peggs-Green which probably delayed his move to Hampshire.

It was soon found that more water was required for the canal resulting in the building of a new header reservoir at Blackbrook. Presumably, in order to reduce costs, the engineers decided to incorporate an earthwork dam using local materials. Work was postponed due to further financial difficulties, and exceptionally severe and prolonged frosts in the first 3 months of 1795 had seriously reduced income from the canal. The reservoir finally reached completion in 1796

In May and June 1796, tolls on the Canal were down to a few pounds, making it uneconomical to keep a collector there, and whatever hopes the Leicestershire coal-owners had entertained of the canal venture, they were bitterly disappointed, for although the reservoir was completed in 1796, the whole enterprise was vastly under-utilised and threatened to become a "white elephant". For two years, negotiations between Sir George Beaumont's' agent and the company failed to establish an acceptable shipment charge, and it was not until 1798 that an agreement was reached, one of the conditions being that the company would help Beaumont extend the railway 200 to 300 yards from his pits to meet their own rail head at Thringstone. The tramway was extended to Boulthees' mine near the George Inn at Coleorton. Surface evidence of the mine and tramway can still be seen today. Announcements were made in September 1798 that Coleorton coal would shortly be available at Loughborough, but in December, tolls of only five guineas were received for the conveyance of some 12 tons of coal.

Shortly afterwards, following heavy falls of snow and freezing rain, the great thaw in February brought massive quantities of water down the valley into the Blackbrook reservoir (see map of canal), which on February 20th 1799 at 11 o' clock in the morning, burst the dam and carried all before it, including a great section of the Canal Aqueduct, wreaking horrifying damage all the way down to Dishley Mill at Loughborough. Apparently, it took just eleven minutes for the reservoir to empty. In an article in the 'Leicester Mercury' dated 15.12.75. there featured a letter written on February 21st 1799, by Mr. Herrick of Beaumanor Hall, giving a vivid account of the tragic floods which swept through the Shepshed and Loughborough area at that time, devastating crops, farm animals and property. Mr. Herricks account was recorded as follows:-

When we got to within a mile of Garendon, it was like a sea which roared as if to be heard. It swept all before it – cattle, sheep, houses, hedges, cornfields – and large oak trees were torn up by their roots.

We saw cheeses, loaves of bread, furniture of all sorts, beds, tables, ridge tiles off houses, doors, window frames, etc., all brought down in the torrent.

People were up to their neck in water saving sheep of which vast numbers were drowned. Whole fields of turnips were washed away and wheat fields the same. A more dreadful sight I never beheld.

The Leicester Navigation spent over £6,000 on repairs, but the canal continued to be both a technical failure and an economic disaster, leaving the Leicestershire collieries at the mercy of their northern competitors. The Canal was eventually written off in 1804. This put an end to any hopes the Leicestershire coal-owners still entertained of

competing with their Derbyshire rivals, and many of the foundations cut their losses and closed down. For a generation, until the dawn of the railway age, there was a depression in the Swannington / Coleorton coalfield, whilst Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire coal enjoyed a monopoly in Leicester and its neighbourhood. As the Charnwood Forest Canal closed, the Ashby Canal was opened to traffic in the same year. Even though the Ashby Canal Company had spent £184,000 on the canal, its late arrival undoubtedly retarded the economic development of the coalfield and limited the profitability of the canal itself.

The tramways laid to and from the Charnwood Forest Canal by William Jessop in 1793 were cast iron, fish belly, flat-headed edge-rails for use with flanged wheels, and there is an example in Leicester Museum. They were 3ft long and weighed 28-30lbs. The contract indicated that the gauge of the rails was between 4ft 8ins and 4ft 10ins. The rails were to be laid on 6 ft long oak sleepers with a pad at each end to which the rail was to be fastened with oak pins. This was a totally different system to that used on the Cloud Hill tramway where the rails were laid on stone sleeper blocks, many of which have survived unlike the oak sleepers. It has often been stated that these lines were the first edge-railways, but this is not so, since cast iron edge-rails were first made and used at Coalbrookdale foundries in the 1760's. However, this may have been the first time fish-belly rails were used. With the failure of the canal, Jessop's' railway lines were taken up and sold, bringing to an end any hopes of an alternative to the expensive and inefficient road transport system of the day.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

An interesting commentary by John Farey, the respected geologist, on his visit to the area in 1807 reads as follows. **The reader should note that John Farey should have been talking in the past tense as the Canal had been closed for over seven years prior to him visiting:-**

.....From the Loughborough Basin to Forest-lane Wharf, is 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles of Rail-way, with an ascent of 185 feet: thence to the foot of Barrow Hill, NW of the village of Osgathorpe is 8 and $\frac{5}{8}$ s miles, and level: and thence there is a Rail-way extension of 130 yards rising into the Barrow Hill limestone quarries; and a further extension of $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of a mile of Rail-way is provided for in the Act, to Clouds-Hill Limestone Quarry; where had this last extension been executed, junctions would have nearly been effected, with the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Rail-way, and also with the proposed Breedon Rail-way (the latter never materialized as explained earlier). From the SE of Osgathorpe Reservoir (must be referring to the canal itself as there was not a reservoir at Osgathorpe. Apparently, a small stream from the moat surrounding the long gone Stordon Grange ran into the canal as did Thringstone and Gracedieu Brooks) a branch of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile proceeds almost S, and level, to Thringston-bridge Wharf and Warehouses; and thence Rail-way proceeds SSW $\frac{3}{4}$ m to Swannington-common Colliery; and another such branch SW, $\frac{1}{4}$ m. to Cole-Orton Colliery; and another branch from the last, of a $\frac{1}{4}$ m. to another colliery in Coleorton, was also provided for in the Act: and any other Rail-way branches are allowed to be made to Mines, &c. within 2000 yards: these Rail-way branches rise considerably from the Water-level, but I am unacquainted with the particulars: except that the descent is so considerable from Cole-Orton, that the Trams of coal descended without Horses, regulated by means of a clamp or logger, acting on the wheels, by a man who rode on each, and the empty trams were drawn up again by Horses.

The Rail-ways belonging to this company are single, and have bars flat at top, and the wheels are cast with flanches, inside, for keeping the Trams upon them. The bodies of the Trams were made o lift off, or to be placed on their wheels, by means of Cranes erected on the Forest-lane and Thringstone-bridge Wharfs, so that bodies of

the Trams only, stowed close together, could be carried in the Boats on the Water-level. The width of the side-cuts for avoiding the Mills, and the Locks, on the main line of this Canal, are adapted for the Barges that navigate the Trent river..... At a branching of the Black-brook vales, about ¼ of a mile above the Canal, there is a large reservoir for supplying the Water-level, the head of which gave way, soon after the works were completed, and occasioned such an inundation, that Mr. Jester's Farm-house and premises were destroyed, and a Hay-cock was borne down by it, and wedged in the Aqueduct Arch, by which means, the Valley above the Embankment became filled, and by the pressure, a breach in the same was effected, which emptied the whole Water-level, whereby such an enormous flood was occasioned in this Valley(which passes through the late Mr. Robert Bakewell's Farm at Dishley), that a great many sheep, &c. were drowned thereby, and other serious damages were done..... I believe when I viewed the Forest in 1807, the Canal was without any water in it, Cattle were rapidly treading in the banks, the Bridges were fast dilapidating by mischievous boys &c.

The canal was officially abandoned by an Act of Parliament in 1848.