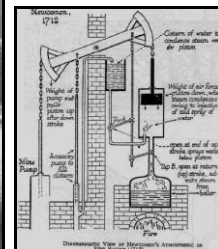
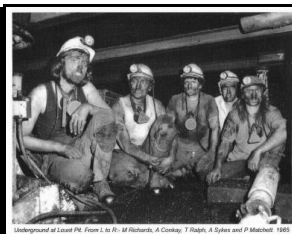
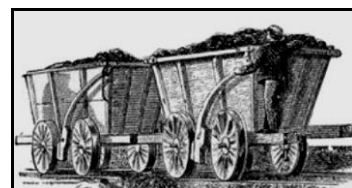
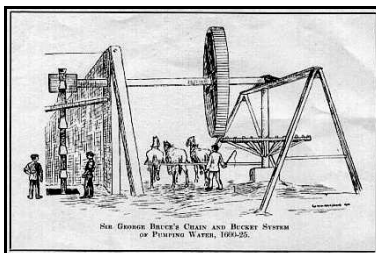
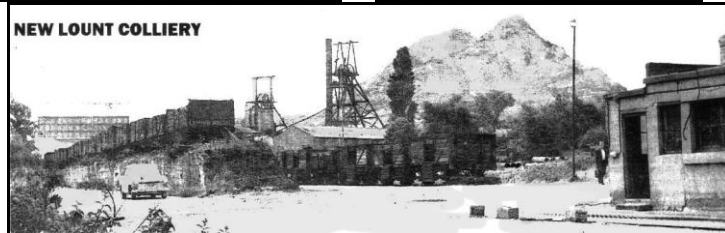
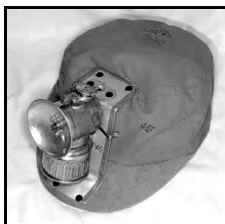
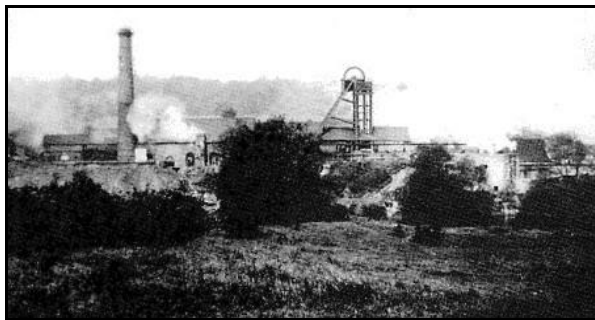
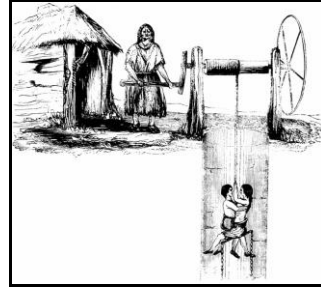
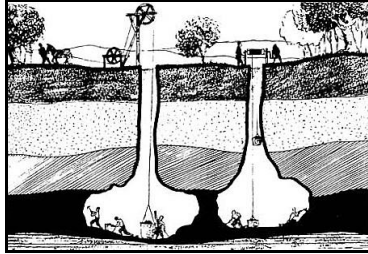


The Development of Coal Mining in the Local Area



Samuel T Stewart - 2019

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The author is indebted to:-

Colin Owen

The book by Colin Owen entitled "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfields 1200-1900", is accepted as the foremost reference book available on the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfields. Certain information in the book relating to coal mining in the area is taken directly from this extensive study, and those wishing to research in more detail, should refer to Colin Owen's book, which also contains detailed reference bibliography.

Colin Griffin

This respected author's book entitled "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners" Volume 1 to 3 has also been used as a reference for certain information contained in this book. Again, anyone wishing to carry out further research should acquaint themselves with this book also.

Fred Hartley

The writer is grateful to Robert F Hartley for allowing information to be used from his paper on "The Tudor Miners of Coleorton, Leicestershire", and his unpublished paper on the Coleorton Railway.

Ashby-De-La-Zouch Museum

For allowing access to their archive material

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Certain information used in the article on William Stenson of Coleorton is taken from the articles published in the Leicestershire Historian dated 1982 by J A G Knight. This has proved invaluable in completing the research on William Stenson.

Further acknowledgements are appended to relevant sections in the book where appropriate

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PREFACE

In addition to addressing the development of coal mining in the local area, this book has also been written to demonstrate to those not acquainted with the mining industry, the bravery of the people, who, particularly in the early days worked under immensely dangerous and difficult working conditions. In many instances, they gave their lives and received serious injuries in order to feed their families, and keep the wheels of industry turning in Great Britain.

Between 1854 and 1909 alone, 558 miners are “recorded” as losing their lives in the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield. The numbers would have been much higher than this due to the fact that official records were not always kept. They should never be forgotten! Compared to other areas of the country, this was a relatively small list of fatalities of course.

Although important to the local area, it should be remembered that in the greater landscape of the mining industry in Great Britain, the South Derbyshire and Leicestershire coalfields were not seen as being particularly significant.

*The celebrated chronicler Camden writing in 1586 stated... ‘Nor must we forget **Cole Overton** the residence of Henry de Beaumont. This place has its surname from the **coal dug here like hardened bitumen**, which yields much profit to the Lord of the Manor and supplies all the neighbourhood far and near with fireing’. In 1607, he noted that coalmining had been thriving at Coleorton for decades “to the lord of the manor’s great profit”.*

From William Burton’s “Description of Leicestershire” published in 1622, we gather that coal was found on the surface before the days of King Henry III, and distributed around the countryside by donkey pannier. Burton tells us that “These coal mines in the beginning of the raigne of King Henry the Eighth (as I have heard reported) did burne many years together, and could not be quenched, until that sulphurous and brimstony matter (whereupon it wrought) was utterly exhausted and consumed”.

**COAL MINING AT STAUNTON HAROLD AND HEATH END IS NOT COVERED IN THIS BOOK IN ANY DETAIL AS THIS IS INCLUDED IN ANOTHER BOOK BY SAMUEL T STEWART ENTITLED:-
‘A SOCIAL & INDUSTRIAL HISTORY STUDY BASED UPON STAUNTON HAROLD, LOUNT, DIMMINSDALE & HEATH END’**

PART 1 - ROMANS TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST

Many of the existing villages in Leicestershire were established in Roman times or earlier as well-dispersed settlements, and besides the few major highways, a large system of secondary roads gradually came into existence to serve local needs. This opened up the partially wooded forests and open moorland, albeit in a small way, to exploitation. More recent archaeological research has indicated that population and settlement in Roman Britain was much more extensive than previously thought, and would have exerted a considerable influence on the local countryside.

The Romans were known to have mined lead, fluorspar and iron ore in Derbyshire from about 80 AD. It is assumed that they mined some coal from outcrops or shallow pits to use in the smelting of the ore, metallurgy and smithy work, lime burning and domestic heating.

The Romans were known to have been active in the Ashby, Ravenstone and Thringstone areas, and it is quite possible that they were also using surface coal in small quantities from the Coleorton area, particularly as the Coleorton coalfield is significant for the large number of outcropping coal seams in this small area. There is very little evidence of pre-historic or Roman occupation, but it is likely that the heaths which dominated much of the area in the Middle Ages (e.g.; Normanton-Le-Heath / Donington-Le-Heath) were cleared of woodland at an early stage of pre-history.

The Dark Ages, between the rule of Rome and the Norman Conquest was a period of disorder in Britain, and throughout this time and beyond, the settlement pattern was constantly changing. There would still have been considerable areas of woodland by the time the Anglo-Saxons infiltrated the area. They were industrious farmers and tackled even the heaviest soils, establishing an agricultural landscape with field systems, route ways and villages. The "ton" and "worth" names are evidence of their settlements, but there was still plenty of room for the "bys" and "thorps" to be founded by the Scandinavian invaders of the 9th and early 10th centuries.

So, by the time of the Norman Conquest, the area was still thinly populated, and we can imagine the area between Ashby, Breedon and Whitwick as being partially wooded with some open moorland, scattered villages, and around these extensive field cultivation. Goats and sheep would have grazed on the open moorland, and encouraged the extension of treeless landscape. Pigs were provided with woodland panage, and oxen were the beasts of burden. The use of timber and woodland products would have been widespread, and it is likely that early exploitation of readily accessible coal from outcrops would have been carried on in small scale operations. An outcrop is where main coal seams meet the surface, and this is illustrated in detail later in the book.

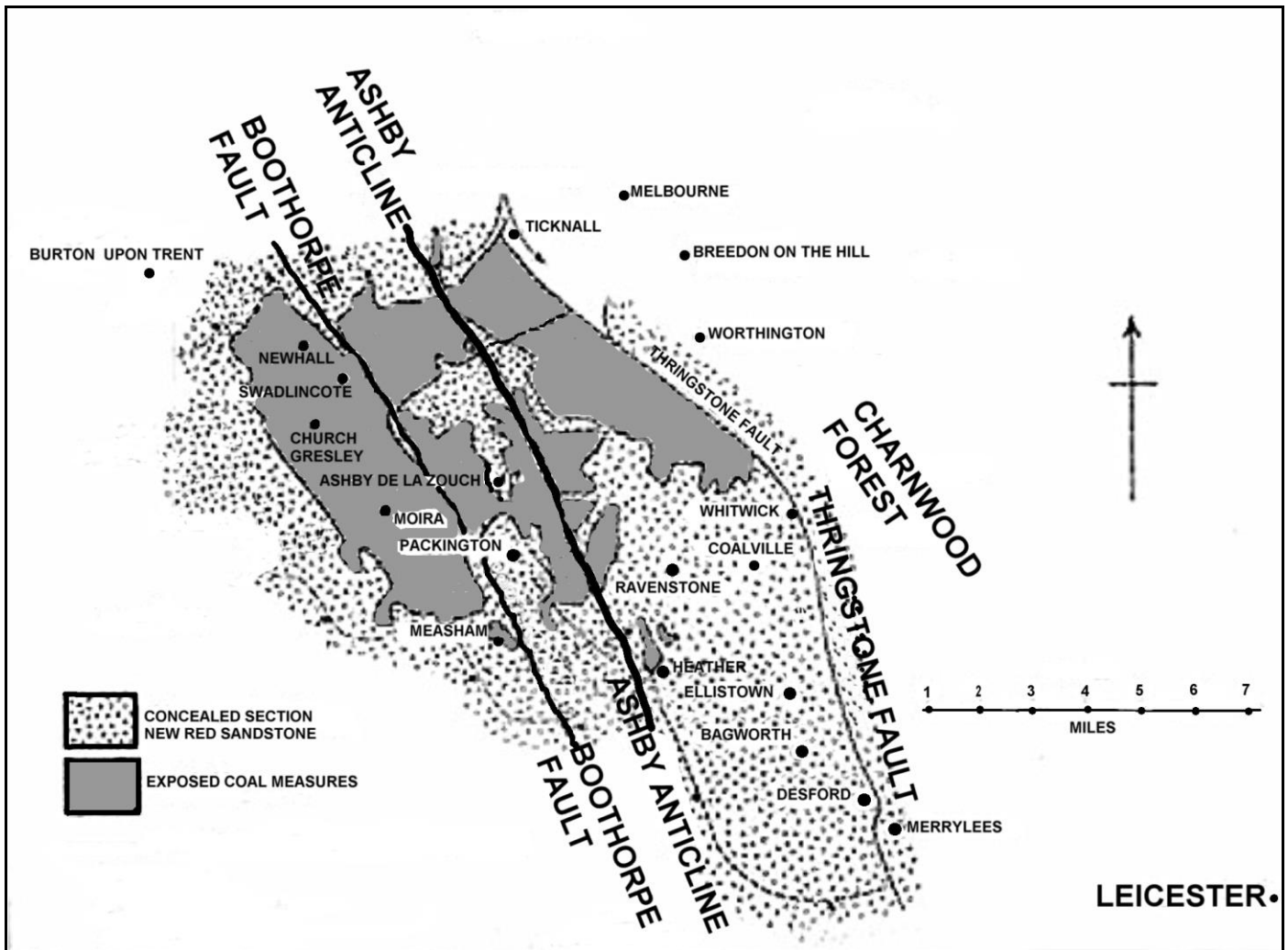
PART 2 - GEOLOGY IN THE AREA OF THE SOUTH - DERBYSHIRE AND LEICESTERSHIRE COALFIELDS

This is an extremely complex subject which is best left to the experts, however, an attempt has been made to provide a basic layman's guide to the geology of the coalfields.

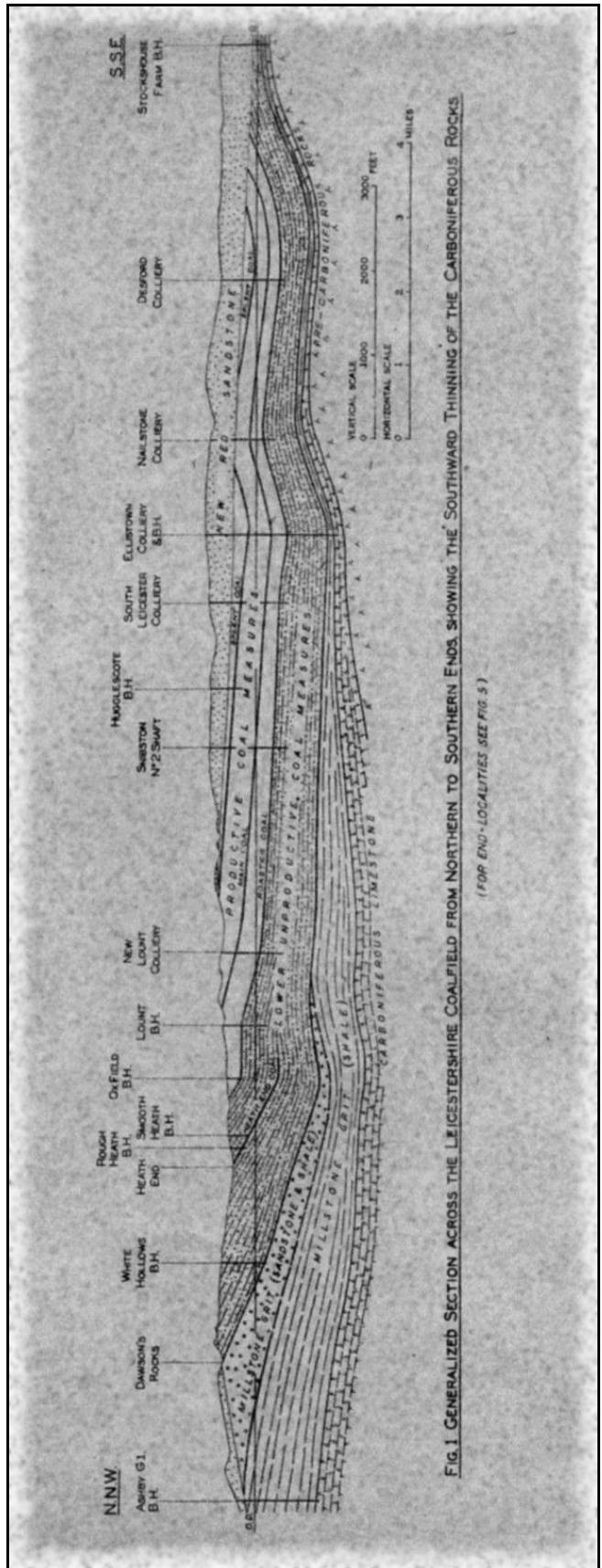
The main reference used is "The Geology of the Leicestershire Coalfield and of the Country around Ashby-De-La-Zouch" by Edward Hull B.A., F.G.S. which was published in 1860.

The following four illustrations are included in order to enable the reader to gain a better understanding of the following text.

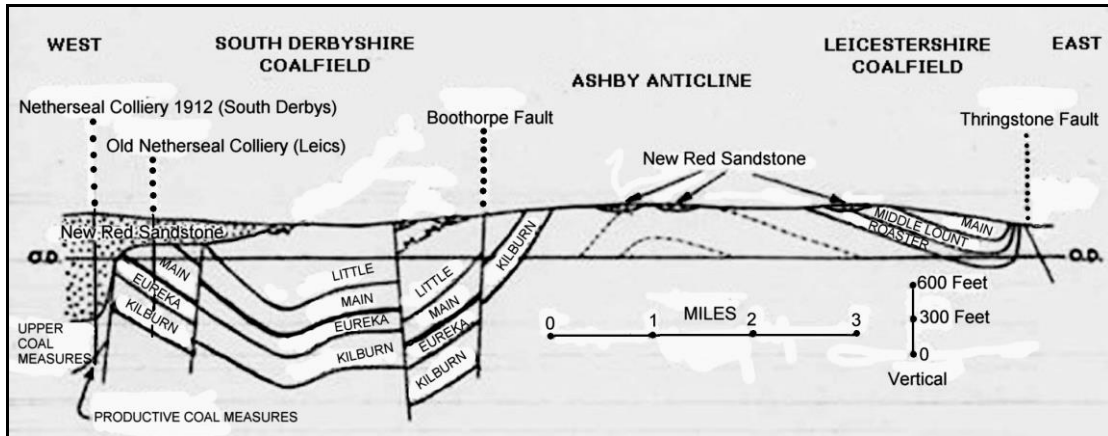
MAPS AND STRATUM



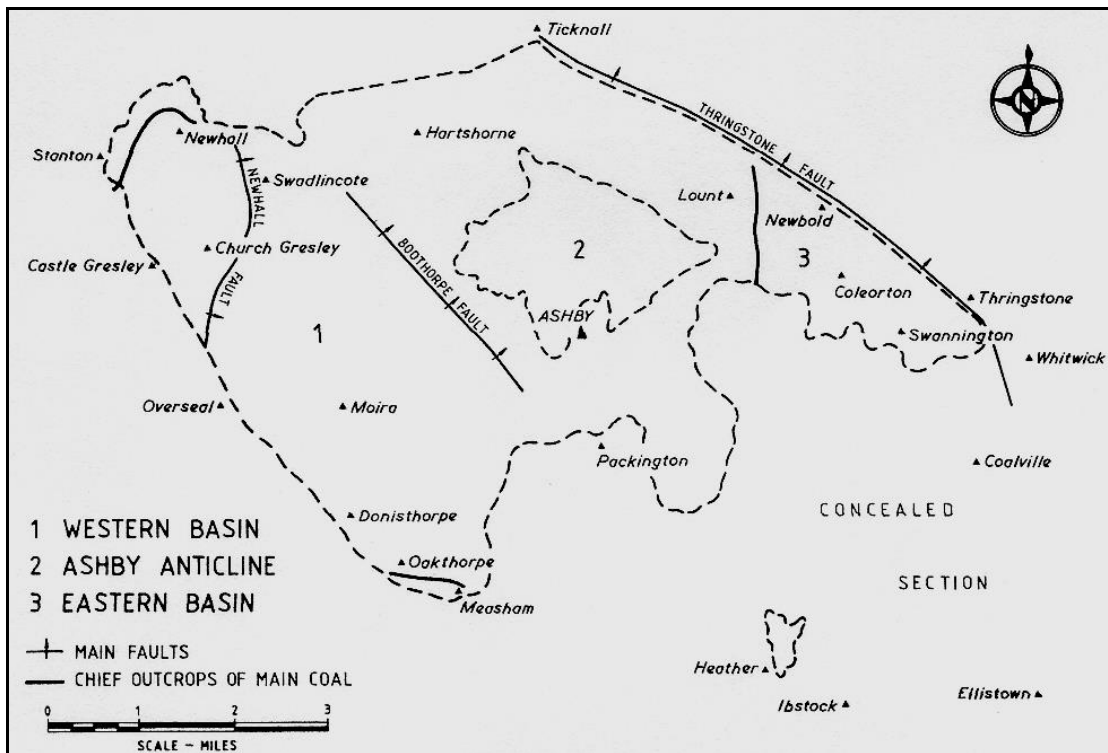
Map showing the extent of the coalfields
An explanation of the features on this map follows later



Stratum of the Leicestershire coalfield from north to south. This can be related to the previous map and is basically a straight line drawn from Ticknall in the north down through Desford in the south



A typical west/east section through the South Derbyshire and Leicestershire coalfields from Netherseal through to the “Thringstone Fault”. This is an attempt to show the complexities of the changing stratum through the “Boothorpe Fault”, the “Ashby Anticline” and ending with the “Thringstone Fault”, as described in detail in the following text.



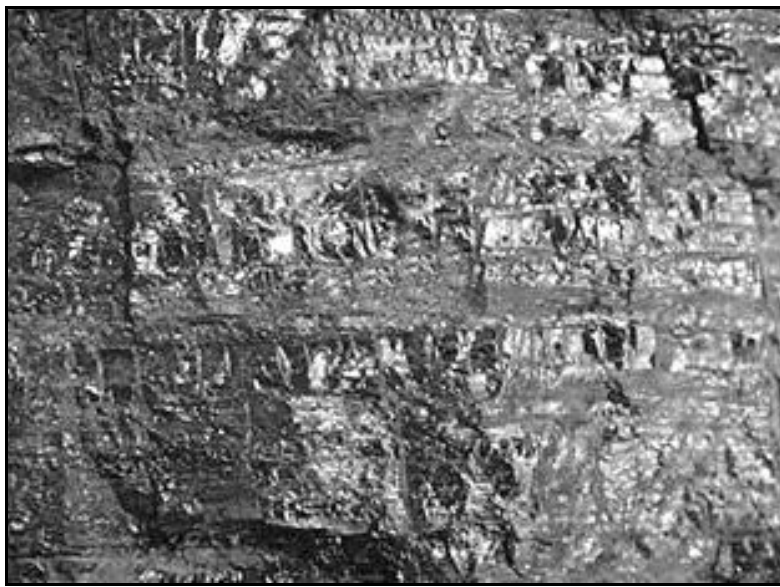
A plan view taken from Colin Owen’s book mainly to show the area covered by the Ashby Anticline

THE FORMATION OF BEDS OF COAL

Coal is a layer of vegetation that has been compressed by overlying stratum over millions of years and is not a mineral, although, it is always referred to as such in the later years of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield consists of a northern section, where the Lower, Middle and Upper Coal Measures of the Carboniferous period are exposed, and a southern section where they are concealed beneath Mercia Mudstone and Sherwood Sandstone, overlaid by glacial till. In the exposed part, an anticline which plunges gently to the south-east, results in the unproductive Lower Coal Measures being brought to the surface around Ashby-de-la-Zouch, so that the coalfield is effectively divided into eastern and western halves. In the western half, fireclays crop out between Swadlincote and Moira and are the basis of the industry formerly centered on Swadlincote. In the concealed part of the coalfield there are extensive deposits of clay suitable for the manufacture of bricks and tiles. On the eastern coalfield margin, the "Thringstone Fault" defines an abrupt boundary with Lower Carboniferous Strata and the Precambrian rocks of Charnwood. To the north east, just outside the area, there are outcrops of Carboniferous Limestone, as at Breedon, which have played an important part in the coalfield's development. The coalfield forms part of the watershed between the Mease and Sence to the south and the Soar to the east, with numerous brooks draining the generally undulating land.

The Carboniferous period was 359 to 299 million years ago. The early carboniferous period had a tropical and humid climate. During this time, there were vast swamp forests of seedless vascular plants across Europe. Dead plants did not completely decay and were turned to peat in the stagnant water. As sea levels shifted, and the swamps were covered by the sea, marine sediments settled over the peat. In the late Carboniferous period (318 to 299 million years ago), this decomposing vegetation was compressed into coal. The description Carboniferous or Carbon-bearing is derived from this. The coal beds can be up to 12 meters thick, though not necessary so in the local area.



Bituminous coal is typically a banded sedimentary rock. In this photograph you can see bright and dull bands of coal material oriented horizontally along the specimen. The bright bands are well preserved woody material, such as branches or stems. The dull bands can contain mineral material washed into the swamps by streams; charcoal produced by fires in the swamps or degraded plant material.

There are four stages in coal formation: peat, lignite, bituminous and anthracite. The stages depend upon the conditions to which the plant remains are subjected after they were buried -

the greater the pressure and heat, the higher the rank of coal. Higher-ranking coal is denser and contains less moisture and gases and has a higher heat value than lower-ranking coal.

Peat - Stage One

Peat is the first stage in the formation of coal. Normally, vegetable matter is oxidized to water and carbon dioxide. However, if plant material accumulates underwater, oxygen is not present and so only partial decomposition occurs. This incomplete destruction leads to the accumulation of an organic substance called peat.

Peat is a fibrous, soft, spongy substance in which plant remains are easily recognizable. It contains a large amount of water and must be dried before use. Therefore, it is seldom used as a source of heat. Peat burns with a long flame and considerable smoke.

Lignite - Stage Two

Lignite, the second stage, is formed when peat is subjected to increased vertical pressure from accumulating sediments. Lignite is dark brown in colour and like peat, contains traces of plants. It is found in many places, and crumbles easily but is used only when more efficient fuel is not available.

Bituminous Coal - Stage Three

Bituminous Coal is the third stage. Added pressure has made it compact and virtually all traces of plant life have disappeared. Also known as "soft coal", it is greatly used in industry as a source of heat energy.

Anthracite - Stage Four

Anthracite, the fourth stage in coal formation, is also known as "hard coal" because it is hard and has a high lustre. It appears to have been formed as a result of combined pressure and high temperature. Anthracite burns with a short flame and little smoke.

GEOLOGY OF THE COAL FIELDS

The following is taken from the publication entitled "The Geology of the Leicestershire Coalfield and of the Country around Ashby-De-La-Zouch" by Edward Hull B.A., F.G.S. which was published in 1860.

There are references to the Rev W.H. Coleman of Ashby in the following text. He was a local highly skilled amateur geologist whose knowledge proved invaluable at the time. The following comments are recorded by Edward Hull in the preface to his book....*My thanks are due to the Rev W.H.Coleman, who for several years had been an accurate observer, and had tabulated a large amount of statistical information concerning the geology of the neighbourhood. Mr. Coleman in the handsomest manner, placed the whole at my disposal, and also rendered me much personal assistance; and it is but due to my friend to state that he had mastered the geological structure of the greater portion of the area included in the following remarks, before the government surveyors commenced their labours.*

The start of the journey.....

Please refer to the previous illustrations when reading this.

Leaving Moira, and commencing our course to the eastward towards Coleorton, we make a diagonal section of the coal-producing district, with which it will be well to become acquainted, in order to gain a proper understanding of the relationship subsisting between its eastern and western portions. After crossing the "100 yard Fault", which traverses the strata not far from the east side of the village of Moira, we arrive at the Hastings and Grey pits, where the main coal is worked at a depth of about 100 yards deeper than in the Bath pit, on the shallow side of the fault. Here the beds are almost horizontal, being at the centre of the trough formed by the strata between the northern and southern basettings. Continuing our course along the railway, we find on passing under the bridge on Willesley Road, Ashby the strata rising rapidly to the eastward, first at angles of about 10 degrees, but increasing in amount till, at a distant of 200 yards from the bridge, they stand in a vertical position, and are broken and dislocated in a very remarkable manner. We have in fact arrived at the position of "**The Great**

Boothorpe Fault”, by far the greatest dislocation on this side of the Ashby Coalfield, and in crossing, we pass at once from a thick series of coal-producing measure into another which is almost unproductive, and far down in the coal formation. As we proceed eastwards, the beds, with two or three coal crops, are found still rising to the east, but at angles which lessen as we recede from the “Boothorpe Fault”. This westerly dip is constant till we have passed half a mile beyond Ashby-De-La-Zouch, where we arrive at the axis of the “Ashby Anticlinal”, east of which the beds roll over and dip towards the east. As we proceed to **Coleorton**, we pass in succession the outcrop of a series of coal-seams, which though representing generally those of the Moira district, are not strictly comparable.

The “New Red Sandstone” overspreads the southern half of the Coleorton Coalfield, and the upper portion of the Whitwick, Snibston, Ibstock, and Bagworth shafts pass through the red marle and white sandstones of this formation. The strata incline at a very small angle to the south-east, and underneath, the Coalville measures preserve a steady dip to the eastward at angles from 4 to 6 degrees, and consequently the coal seams rise and basset against the under surface of the newer and unconformable beds of the New Red Sandstone. The direction of the dip at the northern extremity of the Coleorton field changes by a quarter of a circle, and the coal crops form a series of concentric curves, which are abruptly terminated towards the east by the great fault (“**Thringstone Fault**”) which forms the boundary line of the coalfield.

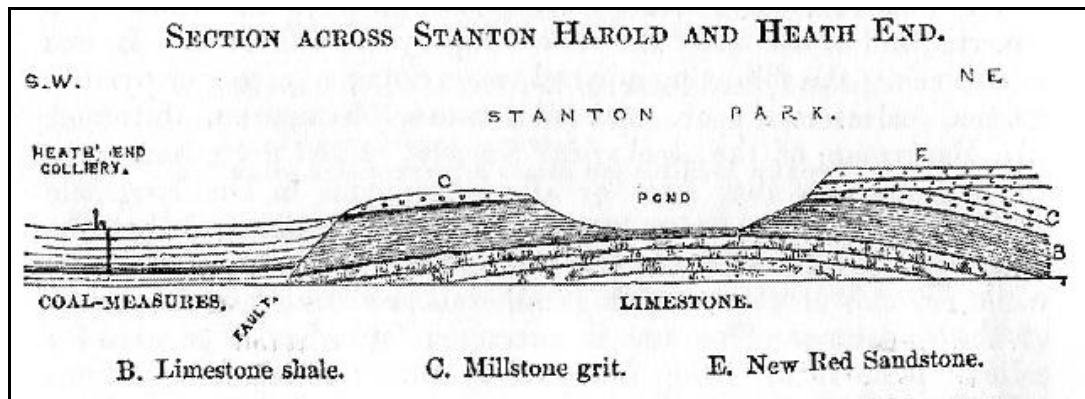
As the coal-measures approach the position of the boundary fault (Thringstone Fault), they are found to rise very rapidly, so as to become almost vertical in the space of a few hundred feet, this produces a synclinal, the axis of which passes at a short distance east of Peggs Green Colliery, through the new Swannington Shaft, and a quarter of a mile east of Whitwick Colliery. In company with the son of Mr. William Stenson jun., (**see later article on William Stenson**) I explored a heading which had been driven in a direction twenty degrees north of east, to a distance of nearly half a mile from the shaft of Whitwick Colliery. Upon reaching the position of the synclinal axis, we commenced ascending along the floor of the coal, at first gradually, but at a rapidly increasing inclination, till the heading passed into a nearly vertical shaft, which had been driven upwards with much difficulty at an angle of about 80 degrees; we measured the interval between the shaft and the place where the coal-seam was horizontal, and found the distance only 60 yards. East of the new Swannington shaft, the rise of the strata is even more rapid, and its effect is to render the coals unworkable east of the pit; the dip is north-east, at 3 inches in the yard, but at 80 yards east of the shaft the coal commences to rise into a vertical position almost instantaneously (for these particulars I am indebted to Mr. Houldsworth, manager of the New Swannington Colliery). At about 100 yards from the pit the beds are probably vertical, between which and the boundary fault there is room for 600 feet of strata, so that were a deep cutting to be opened, we would probably find all the beds, as far as the base of the Lount Coals, rising vertically to the surface in succession.

With the exception of the main or boundary fault of the Coleorton coalfield, and another which branches from it at Heath End, there are no dislocations of importance in this district. The absence of *faults*, properly so called, is however fully counter-balanced by those irregularities in the stratification known as “rock-faults”; to these I shall refer hereafter, preceding at once to the consideration to the principal seams of coal, commencing with the lowest. **Miners and those who ought to be better acquainted with the subject are constantly confounding the two kinds of phenomena here referred to. The distinction is essential. Faults are breaks in the strata, accompanied by a vertical displacement; rock-faults are banks of sand or clay which replace in a coal-seam parts previously carried away.**

Coal seams of the Ashby District and Leicestershire coalfields

Heath End Coals

These constitute, as far as been hitherto determined, the lowest workable seams of the Coleorton coal-field (see later coal seam depth chart). Their outcrop occurs at the entrance to Dimmingsdale, and the seams are broken off against the boundary fault to the north-east of the Heath End pits on the one side, and by large branch faults, which ranges along the west side of Rough Heath, on the other.



Heath End Section

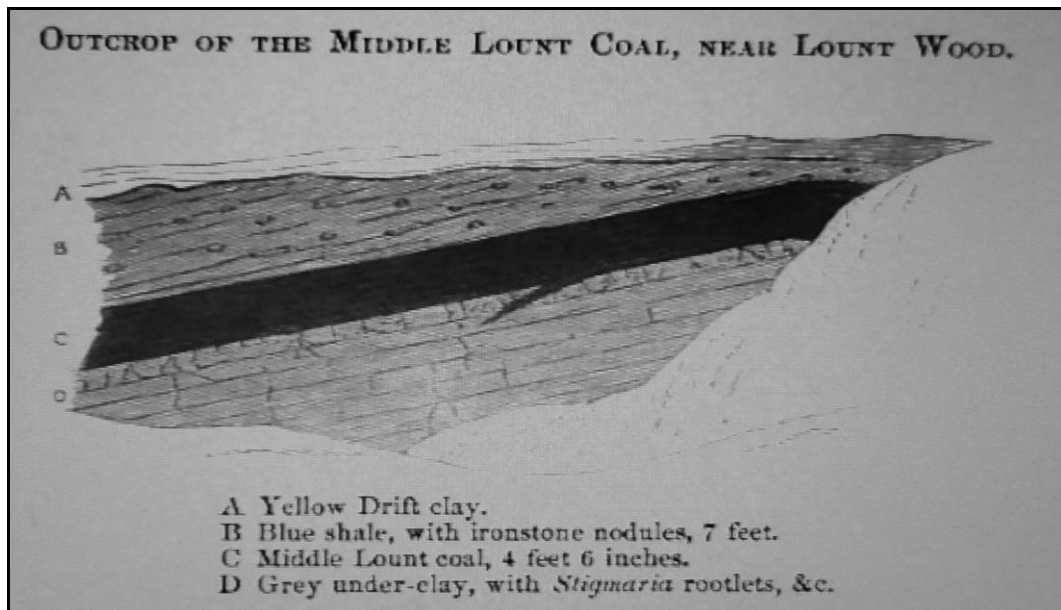
No.	Name of Stratum	Feet	Inches
1.	Bind (shale)	10	0
2.	Stone	4	0
3.	Bind	2	0?
4.	Coal	4	0
5.	Stoney bind	1	0
6.	Coal (Coal, 2 feet, Cannel, 7 feet)	9	0

In some places the 4-feet coal rest immediately upon the thick coal, so as to form a solid seam of **13 feet thickness**. The outcrop is now visible (1860), but though the cannel is somewhat anthracitic so near the surface, there is no reason to infer that its quality improves on the deep, and should this prove to be the case, it will form a seam of great value under the Coleorton district. At Heath End the dip is southward, and it is terminated both to the east and west, by large upcast faults.

Lount Coals – Roaster (No.1). This is a thin seam, averaging only 2 feet in thickness, but of excellent quality. It has been got to a small extent at Lount. The position of the outcrop of this and the higher seam I obtained from the information of an intelligent miner, who had worked in all the pits, which are numerous between Lount Colliery and Lount Wood. I am informed by Mr. Houldsworth of Swannington Colliery that the “Roaster” was found in the cellar of Staunton Hall. The late Earl Ferrers had caused a coal to be laid open alongside the lane leading from Lount to Staunton Hall, in a position one hundred yards north of the brook. The dip was found to the north, and a few yards further towards *the deep* of the coal, a pit was sunk for the purpose of proving its quality, when it was found that the seam had disappeared, hence there would appear to be a roll-over of the beds, accompanied by a fault; and this coal may be the Roaster described as being under Staunton Hall.

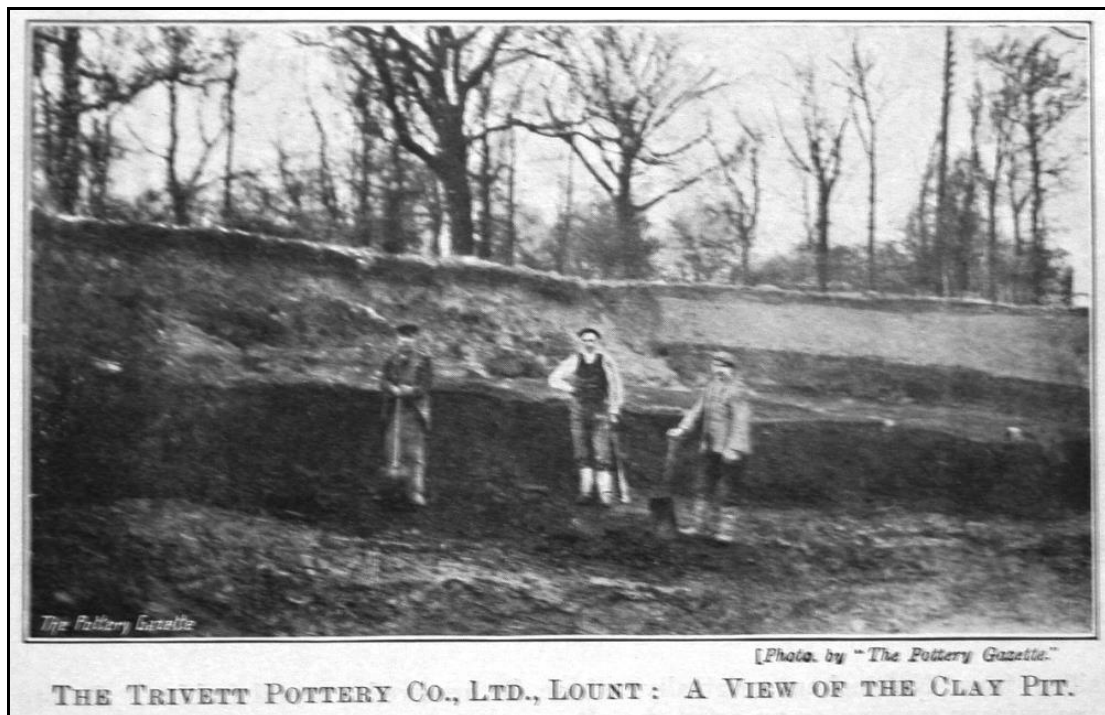
Nether Coal (No.2). This seam is 70 yards deep at Lount pits, and its thickness is 4 ½ feet.

Middle Coal (No.3). This seam at Lount is 4½ feet thick, and the same at Lount Wood and Coleorton Moor. Its outcrop is exposed to view at an open work at the east side of the Ashby and Nottingham road, near Lount Wood, where it is laid upon by the potters’ clay, on which it rests. This clay is full of rootlets (*stigmara ficoides*), which run downwards from the bottom of the coal. (See the book entitled “**Coleorton Pottery 1835-1935**” by Samuel T Stewart, which has further information).



The seam together with the Nether, and to a small extent the Roaster, has been worked out over this district, near the outcrop. Old pits and banks are numerous over and around Lount and Smoile Woods.

The Middle coal is generally divided by a band of ironstone about a foot from the top, and the upper part is occasionally cannel.



Clay for the manufacture of pottery wares was obtained from a clay pit / quarry, situated about half a mile from the hamlet of Lount in the area opposite Lount Wood, closely adjoining the highway. In the clay pit, which was worked by the quarrying method, there were no less than five distinct kinds of clay, as well as a seam of coal, commonly known as the Lount 4 foot seam. The strata's of clay and coal can be discerned in the above photograph taken about 1915 opposite the area known as Lount Wood

Second Lount Coal (No.4). This is 3 feet thick and of medium quality.

The Upper Lount or Smoile Coal (No.5). This is 3 feet thick at Lount, and nearly 4 feet at Coleorton Moor; this, together with the Middle and Nether seams is, I understand an inferior coal, and at present in but little request.

The basset of the Lount seams preserves, in all probability, a continuous course southward to the west side of the village of Heather, but is concealed beneath the "New Red Sandstone". Near this village, there were formerly some coal-pits, and four seams of coal were pierced through, which presented the following section (this information was furnished by the Rev. W. H. Coleman of Ashby):-

Section at Heather Pit

No.	Name of Stratum	Feet	Inches	Feet	Inches
1	Blue bind & c.	36	0	36	0
2	Sandstone	13	0	49	0
3	Blue bind	39	0	78	0
4	Coal	6	6	84	6
5	Blue bind	3	0	87	6
6	Coal	6	0	93	6
7	Rocky bind and clunch	42	0	135	6
8	Coal	4	0	139	6
9	Blue bind	9	0	147	6

Cont'd

10	Coal	3ft 9in - 10/11/12 are			
11	Shales	2ft 3in – Main Coals of Ibstock	10	9	158 3
12	Coal	4ft 9in –			
13	Fire-clay	3	0	161	3

It is probable that Nos. 4,6,8 represent the Lount Upper, Second and Middle Coals, which in case No.10 would represent the Nether, and No.12 the Roaster, or numbers 10 and 12 conjointly may represent, the Nether coal of Lount, and the Roaster be absent. At Heather Colliery, Nos, 4, 6 and 8 were found to be of inferior qualities, whilst Nos. 10 and 12 were good. These two last seams are considered to unite further to the eastward, and form the bottom coal of Ibstock and Bagworth, 8½ feet in thickness. I am informed by Mr. Price that the coal measures at Heather form a synclinal trough, and that the highest coal beds basset both east and west of Heather Colliery. The lowest seams were (I understand) worked westward to this basset under the New Red Sandstone, but it is improbable that they crop in the opposite direction.

Main Coal (No.7). This seam, also known as the **Coleorton Coal**, is the principal seam of the district, and it is got in all the deep pits, from Peggs Green Colliery southwards. Its average thickness is 6 feet, but on approaching a *rock-fault* south of Whitwick Colliery; it reaches 12 feet, caused principally by partings of the rocks dovetailing with it. The outcrop of this seam is close to Lount Toll-Gate, and runs along the west side of Smoile Wood, where it was formally excavated in open works. In this direction, the seam was found to exceed its average thickness by 2 or 3 feet, and tradition records that it was on fire along the outcrop of Lount Wood as far back as the commencement of the 15th century. It was also got in a similar manner along the hill-side west of Rough Park, and I understand it bassets under the "New Red Sandstone" at Coleorton Hall. **In a "spinney" on the hill-top south of Coleorton Rectory, the main coal was formally worked at a depth of 60 yards, with about 20 yards of "New Red Sandstone" a-top. It was followed westward to a large fault under**

Parsons' Meadow, and was there 36 yards deep. This fault is considered, with great probability, by Mr. Coleman, to range along the western side of Coleorton Coal field, throwing out all the valuable coal-seams on the west side. It is probably a continuation of the large Heath End fault already described as terminating the Heath End coal along the west side of Rough Heath. This fracture was produced prior to the deposition of the "New Red Sandstone", and consequently does not appear at the surface.

There is a similarity between the measures which accompany the two seams in the Ibstock and New Snibston sections, as well as in the thickness of the coal-seams themselves, due allowance being made for changes in thickness, consequent on the interval between them.

Section at New Snibston Pit

	Ft	in
1. Strong blue bind	10	0
2. Grey metal stone	37	5
3. Blue bind and	0	9
4. Black stone		
5. Main coal	5	0
6. Fire-clay	4	6

Section at Ibstock Pit

	Ft	In
Stony bind	9	4
White Sandstone	8	4
Strong stony bind	8	6
Coal (top coal worked)	5	0
Clunch	3	0

To my friend the Rev. Coleman, I am indebted for a copy of a very interesting boring made on the land of L. Fosbrooke, Esq., in 1830. The spot is between a pond and two large cottages half a mile north of Hugglescote. It only reached as far downwards as the seam called Rattle Jack, which is about 33 yards above the Main coal. The measures correspond very closely with those in No.2 pit, Snibston Colliery, and the following are the coal seams passed through:-

	Thickness		Depth	
	Ft	in	Ft	In
1. Stone Smut coal	3	4	254	9
2. Swannington coal	4	8	280	4
3. Soft or Three-quarter coal	0	8	325	6
4. Slate-coal Rider	1	1	363	5
5. Slate coal	5	11	387	
6. Yard coal	1	11	433	
7. Rattle Jack coal	3	3	465	9

There is evidently a large area of useful coal-measures overspread by the "New Red Sandstone" as yet undisturbed, and extending from a line joining Coleorton to Heather, and eastward to the boundary fault of the coalfield, which will afford an almost unlimited supply after the Main coal, has been exhausted. To the southward a similar area extends from the western basset of the Heather coals (which will probably continue to Market Bosworth), eastwards to the confines of Charnwood Forest. West of this, little coal is to be expected until we arrive at the deepside of the "**Boothorpe Fault**", which probably continues its course for several miles in a SSE direction from Willesley, throwing up productive coal-measures on the west side.

From the basset between Lount Colliery and Coleorton Hollow, and eastward to the north side of Peggs Green Colliery, the Main coal is said to be exhausted, and, indeed the numerous old pits and banks which abound over this area bear witness to the fact. Over this tract there is

probably not an acre of undisturbed ground. The easterly dip of the strata must, therefore, cause the accumulation of water in these old mines in the direction of Peggs Green., and the greatest precautions are found necessary in order to prevent the flooding of the present mines by the bursting of these reservoirs. At Peggs Green Colliery, before a heading is driven in the direction of these old collieries, a boring rod of 12 feet in length is inserted through the Main coal in a horizontal direction, in order to prove the solidity of the seam to that distance.

On one of many occasions the old mines were tapped, and upon withdrawal of the boring rod, the water gushed forth with great impetuosity; a plug was immediately inserted in the orifice, and it required the strength of two men to hold it in, whilst a third with a sledge-hammer drove it home. As the hydrostatic pressure is proportional to the depth alone, there must evidently be a large accumulation of water for a considerable distance in the direction of the basset, in order to produce a depth proportional to the pressure indicated upon this occasion.

The following chart, showing the quality of the Main coal throughout its thickness was furnished by Mr. Houldsworth, of Swannington Colliery:-

Main Coal, Coleorton

	Ft	In
1. Bright coarse coal	0	9
2. Fine grained	1	0
3. Very bright	0	2
4. Coarse bright	0	9
5. Bronzed spire	0	1¼
6. Coarse bright	0	4
7. Spire	0	1
8. Close-grained bench	1	7
9. Top spire	0	1¼
10. Tod	0	9
11. Bottom spire	0	1
12. Dice	0	3½
13. Floor coal	1	6
Total	7	6

The main coal is overlaid by several feet of strong argillaceous sandstone, which at Peggs Green, Coleorton Moor and Whitwick Collieries rest directly on the coal, while at Snibston and New Swannington Collieries a stratum of bind from 2 to 5 feet thick intervenes. The value of a solid and hard roof is great, as otherwise 12 inches or so of the coal seam must be allowed to remain a-top; but sometimes the sandstone roof is found to soften and give away after long exposure to air, and where interlaced with partings of coal, is likely to break off unexpectedly.

Sulphurous Coal (No.8). This is a thick seam, with partings of shale, but unfortunately so charged with “sulphur2 (iron pyrites) as to be almost valueless, and from the quantity of sulphurous acid produced during combustion is called the “stinking coal”.

Rattle Jack (No.9). From 2½ to 3 feet thick.

Yard Coal (No.10). From 2½ to 3 feet thick.

Slate Coal (No.11). This seam as its name implies, is of inferior quality, and like “the 4-foot coal at Moira”, which it is possible it may represent, is generally parted near the base by a thin stratum of shale, from 3 inches to 3 feet thick. Its average thickness is from 4½ to 5 feet. It was formally got to a considerable extent around Coleorton, and is probably well nigh

exhausted. A thin seam, "the slate coal rider", generally accompanies the slate coal, separated by from 8 to 12 yards of measures, and it is more valuable as indicating the position of the seam, than on account of its intrinsic worth. The following table shows the composition of the slate coal at Swannington. **The information was furnished by Mr. W. Walker jun., Coleorton.**

Slate Coal		
	Ft	In
1. Average quality coal	1	6
2. Black stone	0	8
3. Fire-clay (uncertain)	2	6
4. Coal	2	5
5. Blue bind	0	2
6. Coal	1	6
Total	8	9

The outcrop occurs alongside the brook, which runs by the east side of Coleorton Paddock, where some sixty years ago the coal was extracted in an open work (according to the account of an old collier, Grandsir, of Coleorton). **Please note later section on Paddock Colliery.**

Soft Coal (No.13). Also known as the "Three-quarter Coal" in a seam varying between 1 to 2½ feet thick.

Swannington Coal (No.14). This seam, I am informed, is of good quality, and in olden time was extensively worked. In sinking the shafts of the Coleorton and Swannington new collieries, it was found to have been worked out, as the "gobbins" alone remained. The outcrop may be viewed at the junction of the Swannington Incline with the main tramways at "Orton Quarter Mars" (later Coleorton). The thickness of the seam varies from 2¼ feet to upwards of 4½ feet.

Stone Smut (No.15) and Stone Rider (No.16). These are average coals, and were formerly got at Whitwick Colliery before the existence of the main coal was ascertained. The Stone Smut Rider average 3½ feet; the Stone Smut 4½ feet; and between the two there is an interval of 45 feet of measures.

In sinking the New Swannington shaft, these two seams, together with the Swannington seam were found to be exhausted. From the number of old pits north of Swannington, it is probable that these seams have been entirely worked out over the district. **Mr Houldsworth pointed out to me no fewer than thirteen old banks, within site of the engine-house of the New Swannington Colliery.**

The basset of the Stone Smut occurs at the north side of the tunnel close by the California pit. The Stone Smut Rider bassets at the south side of the tunnel, and is close to the mouth of the shaft of the New Coleorton Colliery, and was cut through in the tunnel at its northern outcrop, where its thickness was found to be 3½ feet.

One Foot Coal

This is a seam which occurs near the mouth of the shaft at New Swannington Colliery, and its basset was marked out for me by Mr. Houldsworth. As the strata are thrown up very suddenly, east of the pit mouth, this and probably a few of the lower seams do not come in actual contact with the Coleorton boundary fault. The "one foot seam", together with several higher, but thin coals were found in the Whitwick and old Snibston shafts, and consequently, the beds through which they pass are the highest with which we are acquainted in the country. It is not improbable that we have now reached a position in the coal formation at or near the top of the productive series, and are now on the confines of the upper unproductive

Coalville measures, which, though attaining a thickness of from 600 to 1,000 feet in Staffordshire, are not represented in the Ashby-De-La-Zouch Coalfield, having either been swept away by the waters of an ancient sea, or covered over by the "New Red Sandstone" in a district further south has been explored by the boring rod of the miners.

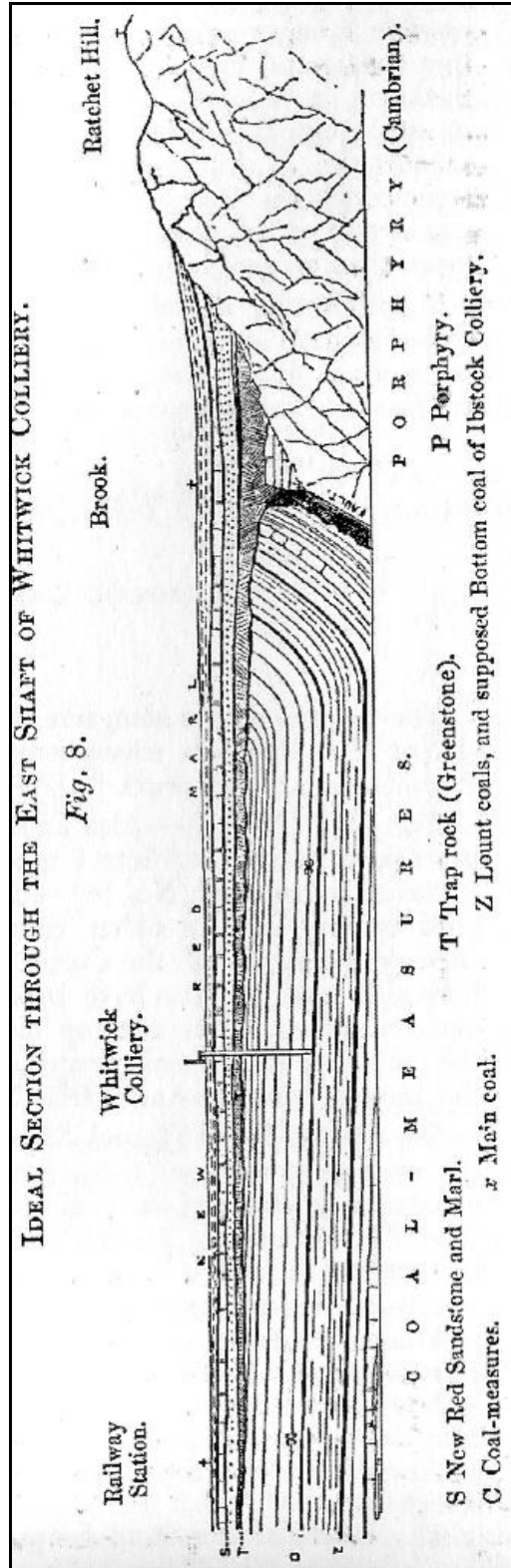
'THE THRINGSTONE FAULT'

It is no uncommon circumstance to find the coal-producing districts of our country walled in, as it were, by faults. The Shropshire coalfield is bounded on its east and west sides by walls of Permian and New Red Sandstone, and the south Staffordshire coalfield is similarly circumstanced. But while in these instances the areas of the coal-formation have been vertically elevated to a level with the newer formations, the Ashby coalfield has been limited along its eastern side by a process the reverse of this. Here the coalfield has either been caused to sink, or the older formations have been up heaved from below, and the line which marks the juxtaposition of the two series of strata is known as the Main or Boundary Fault. **It is more commonly known now as the "Thringstone Fault".**

The line of dislocation commences at Ticknall, and traverses the country in a straight line in a south-easterly direction to the eastern extremity of Bardon Hill. The amount of throw is a minimal at Ticknall, where the Mountain Limestone Shale on the one side is brought up against the Millstone Grit on the other, and becomes a maximum east of Whitwick Colliery, where the Millstone Grit and Charnwood Forest rocks are brought up against strata about 2,000 feet above these formations. This is consequently the amount of throw here, and this amount diminishes in proportion as we proceed towards Ticknall, as will be evident from the manner in which the coal-crops are broken off in succession against the fault. The downthrow at Whitwick Colliery, where it is nearly a maximum, reaches around 2,210 feet.

	Feet
Depth from the base of "New Red Sandstone" to the Main Coal	700
Depth from the Main Coal to the Nether Lount coals	220
Depth from the Nether Lount to the Heath End coals (approx)	350
Depth from Heath End coals to base of Coal-measures (approx)	900
Depth of Upper beds of Millstone Grit	40
Total	2,210

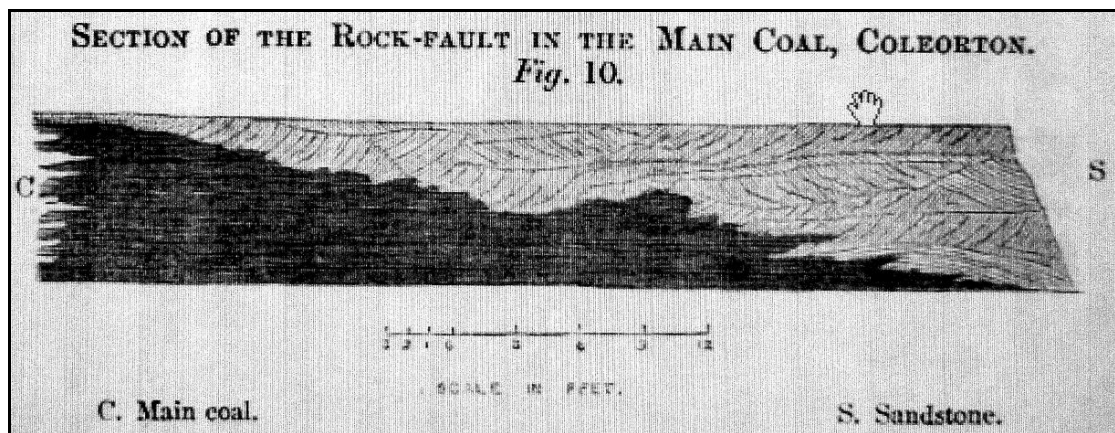
As the throw of the fault increases towards the south-east to a position as far *at least* as Whitwick Colliery, we must either suppose that the beds commence to rise towards the south as they approach Bardon Hill, so as to regain their original position; or else they are broken off by a cross-fracture striking the main fault at right angles. The former supposition cannot be entertained for a moment, as in this case it would be necessary to suppose that the lowest beds have stretched themselves to a length equal to the difference between the curve which they would form and its chord, since there are no cross faults between Ticknall and Whitwick sufficient to equalize these lengths. We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that there is a cross fault in some position south of Whitwick Colliery; and the north side of Bardon Hill, standing out in a direction perpendicular to the ridge of the Forest rocks, in all probability marks the line of this cross fault. The downthrow would of course be along the north side, and would equal that of the main fault at their point of junction, while it might rapidly lessen in amount in a westerly direction. This indeed would appear to be the case, since we find no evidence of the proximity of the fault at Ibstock Colliery, the strata there being found to lie very regularly, with a gentle inclination to the eastwards.



This particularly illustration has been added to show the 'Thringstone Fault' / 'Coleorton Boundary Fault' stratum

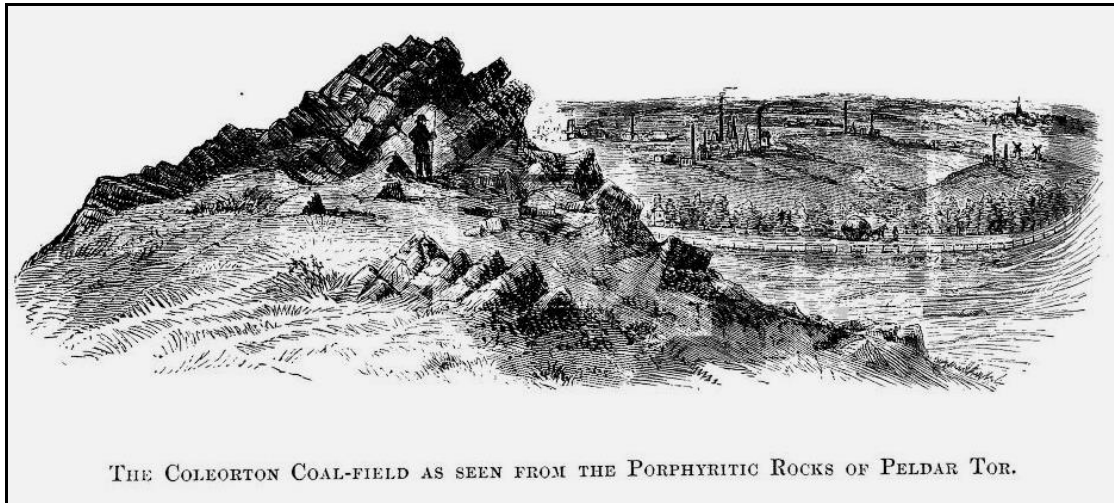
COLEORTON ROCK FAULTS

With the exception of the Coleorton Boundary fault (Thringstone Fault), the supposed cross fault of Bardon Hill, and another striking out from the Boundary Fault, through Rough Heath, there do not appear to be any faults of importance affecting the measures of the Coleorton Coalfield. The absence of these "troubles" is, however, in some degrees compensated by the presence of other sources of annoyance to the miner, namely "*Rock Faults*"- phenomena which, though in their very nature different from faults such as those we have been considering, are often confounded with them, not only by the uneducated colliers, but even by those from whose position a higher amount of knowledge might have been expected. A *rock-fault* may be described as a bank of sandstone, stony bind or clunch, which replaces a bed of coal, and may either fill up a hollow previously formed in the coal seam, or become interlaced with it by a series of wedge-shaped branches. In the former case the bank will be found to come downwards from the roof, in the latter, to rise from the floor; having in one case been produced after the formation of the coal seam, in the other during its formation, both being carried forward, *pari passu*, as the courses of masonry in a wall.



PART 3 -

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COAL MINING THROUGH THE AGES IN THE LOCAL AREA



Actual date of this engraving from Peldar Tor, Whitwick is not known, but was prior to 1860. This pyramid of rocks, were approximately 600 feet above sea level. This area is part of the 'Thringstone Fault'.

OVERVIEW

Coleorton has a long history of coal mining, almost certainly dating back to the 1200's. Evidence of deep shaft mining, dating back to Tudor times (1540), were discovered in the Parish in the 1990's, and coal mining did not come to an end in the village till 1968. In times gone by, Coleorton must have been a dirty and foreboding village, from all the smoke and the grime that would have been produced. From William Burton's "Description of Leicestershire" published in 1622, we gather that coal was found on the surface before the days of King Henry III, and distributed around the countryside by donkey pannier. Burton tells us that "These coal mines in the beginning of the reign of King Henry the Eighth (as I have heard reported) did burne many years together, and could not be quenched, until that sulphurous and brimstony matter (whereupon it wrought) was utterly exhausted and consumed".

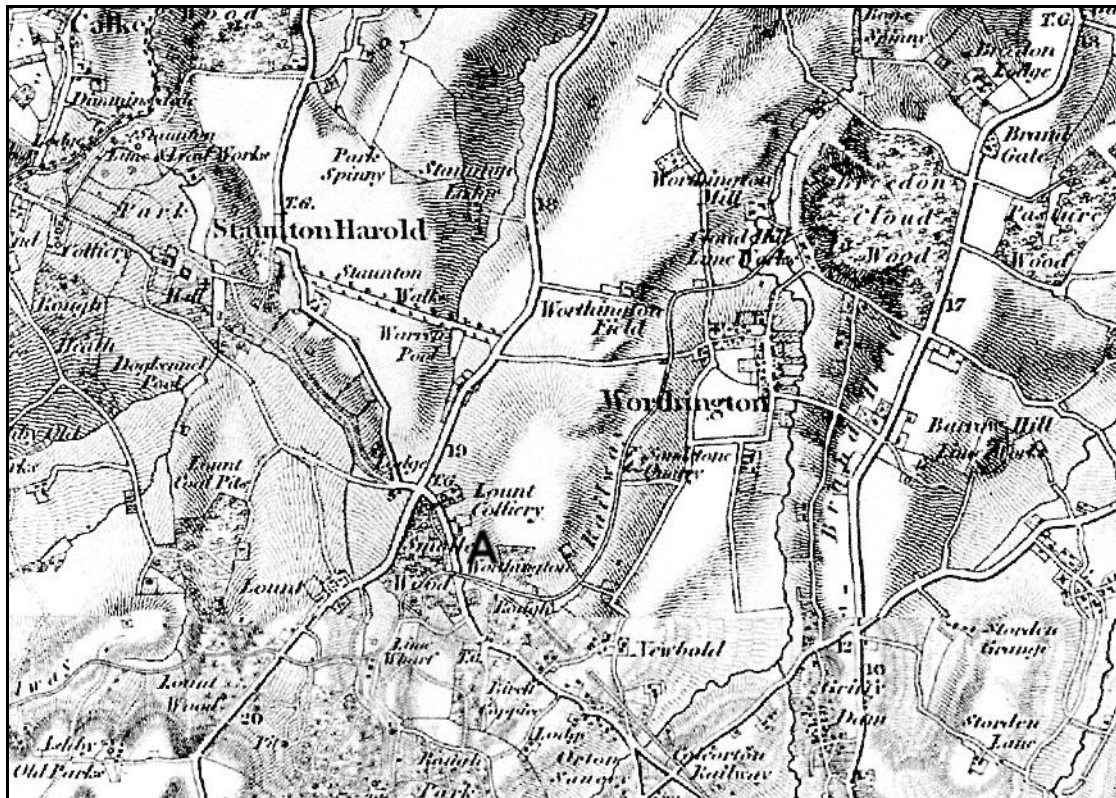
It was 'recorded' that coal was being worked at Swannington (Leicestershire) in 1204 during the reign of King John. This small Coalfield was fairly isolated and eventually bordered the South Derbyshire Field where coal was known to have been mined in 1208. A Charter of confirmation relating to the village of Swannington, formerly preserved in the Tower of London, confirms the gift of one Philip, son of Eilnod, to Rudolf, son of Gerbold of a piece of land, worth 2 shillings per annum, in Swannington "where **cole** is gotten". A lawsuit of 1293 mentions a coalmine operating there also. As Swannington was adjacent to "Overtone" (Coleorton), it can be safely assumed that coal was also being mined / outcropped there as well.

There is reference to coal being mined at Swadlincote (South Derbyshire) in 1208. William de Gresley granted half of his lands in the 5 acres of woods stretching from Leverichgrave to Blakepit where coal was known to be worked, to Robert de Sugkenhull and his wife Petronilla. We are told that two charters of 1374 and 1377 indicate that coal was being mined at Swadlincote.

During the mid thirteenth century one of the most important landowners in the Worthington district was Ralph Bozun. Around 1270, he and his wife granted their lands and coal mines which they contained to Garendon Abbey, probably in the area of "the Smoile" and the adjacent "Worthington Rough" where all the coal seams outcropped. This is to some extent confirmed by the following.

Isabella de Hastings granted certain tithes of coal to the “Convent of Breedon” in South Derbyshire, and worked small diggings at Worthington in 1340, and is recorded in the “Garendon Enspeximus” as follows:-

The gift, grant and confirmation, which Ralph Barron of Claxton and Lora his wife made to the same Abbot and Monks of the whole wood at Worthington with the whole soil to the same adjacent, with the common of pasture, coal mines (minera carboneum) and all other appurtenances”.....This again probably refers to the outcrop of coal workings of “Worthington Rough” and “The Smoile” where the coal seams outcropped. Isabella de Hastings was responsible for the workings of both coal and iron ore at Geismoor in Breedon parish, where all of the coal seams outcropped also.



1834 O/S Map. The area of “the Smoile” and “Worthington Rough” is marked A

In the 14th century Sir William de Staunton worked coal and ironstone near to Staunton Harold where several seams outcropped.

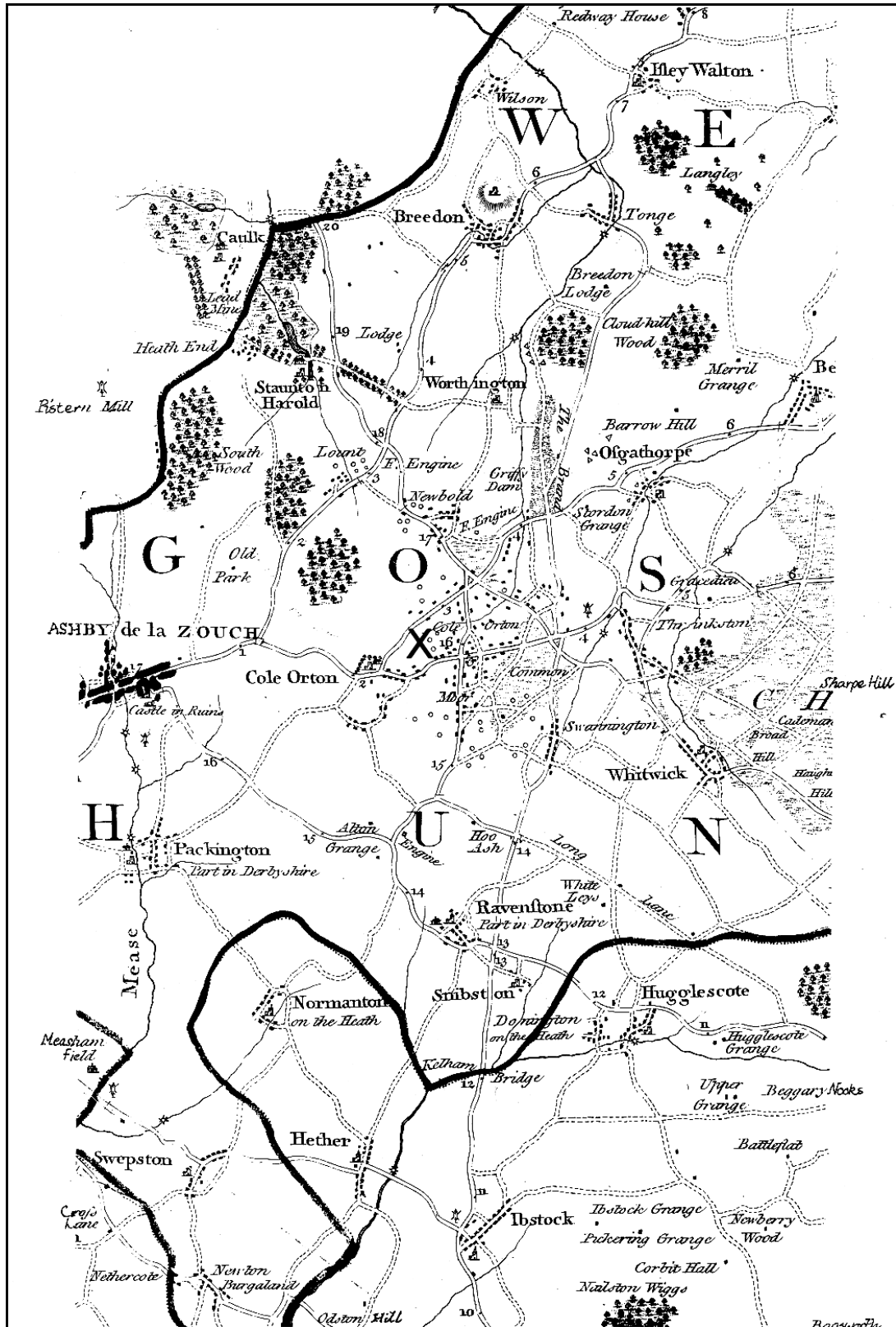
It is not until 1498 that we have actual documentary evidence contained in a law suit of coal mining at Coleorton, when Thomas and Robert Pocock, “**colyers of Overton Saucy**” were charged with cutting down John Beaumont trees and underwood valued at 40s in **Overton Katermershe**. Timber was always a scarce and valuable commodity. Farming was the main livelihoods of the inhabitants of these scattered townships, although, a hundred years later coal mining was an important, though not full-time, occupation of the growing population. This record has the added interest of being the earliest known Leicestershire example of the existence of a specialist group of workers and suggests that mining at Coleorton had by this time become much more than a part time estate activity.

By 1520, there were at least five coal pits being worked in Swannington, but at Coleorton, at least some of the pits were closed by an underground fire.

The precise location of early pits is not known, but in view of the fact that no less than seventeen significant seams outcropped within the area, they were widespread from Staunton, Heath End, the Smoile and Newbold in the north to Swannington in the south.

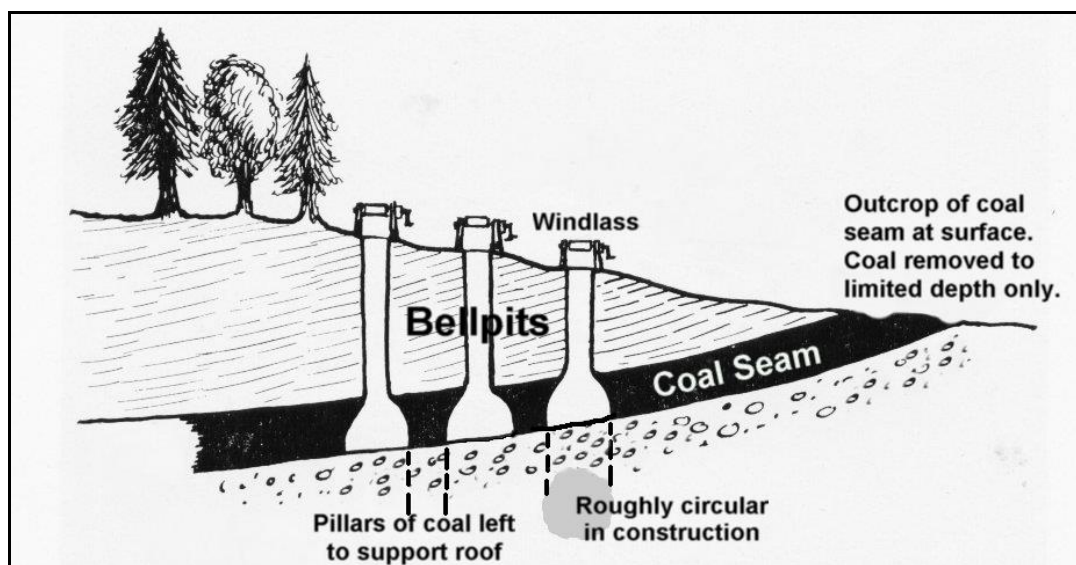
In fact, until the early 1800's it was not possible to know the exact location of colliery's as they were given general descriptions like Coleorton, Lount, Swannington etc, and it wasn't till John Prior's maps of 1777 became available, that we were able to see the approximate geographical locations of many shafts (pits), even though these still did not include any guidance to colliery names or owners.

The Prior map on the next page is included to provide the reader with some idea of the geography of the locality at that time, and the amount of mining activity that was taking or had taken place. An enlarged section of this map, with some details of John Prior is shown later in Section 4 in relation to Paddock Colliery, Coleorton.



The map shows 30 pit shafts (designated by circles) in the Coleorton, Newbold and Lount area, with Fire engines at Smoile Wood, Newbold and The Altons.

It is clear that the earliest centres of coal mining activities in the country were those areas where coal measures lay on the surface with outcropping seams of coal.



An illustration of a coal seam exiting at the surface where outcropping of the coal was carried out prior to Bell Pit workings being developed

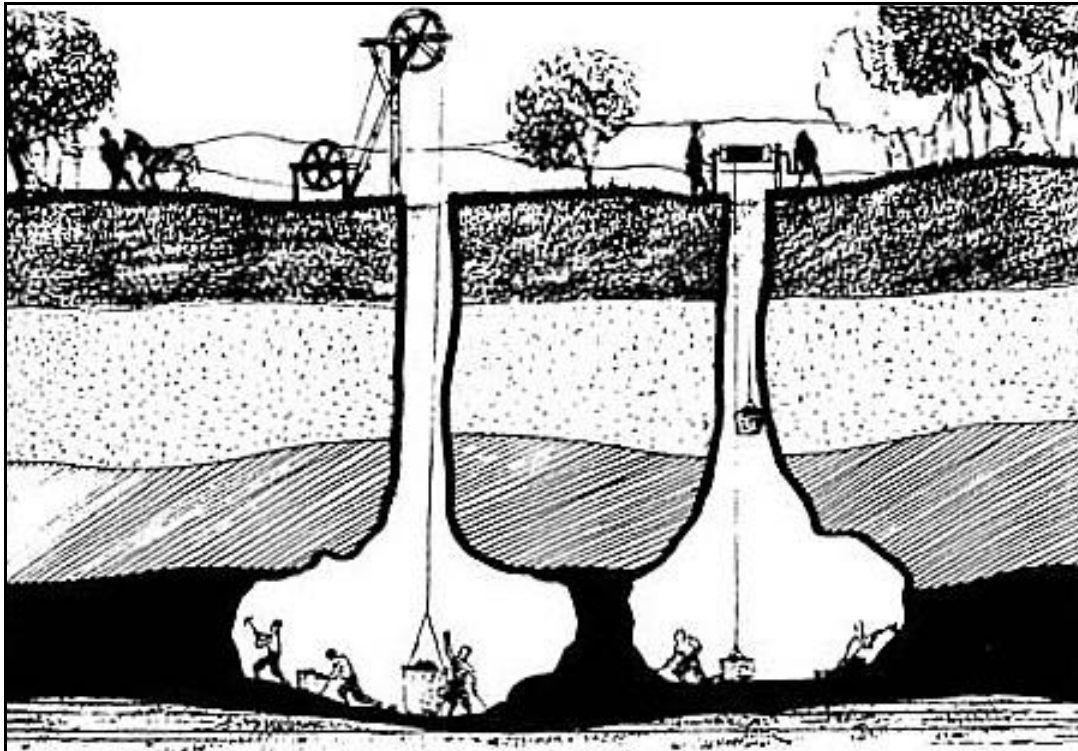
Settlements were usually sited on or around the better agricultural land, which also carried the best timber – a commodity which in medieval times was carefully husbanded and jealously guarded. So, it would be scrub or poor quality ground that would have been used by the peasantry for fuel and building purposes.

Subsequently, overgrazing by commoner's stock prevented re-generation of tree cover, and extensive wastelands were created. Newbold Common, Gelsmoor, Swannington Common and Coleorton Moor must have been such places, and it was fortuitous for those who first realised how extensive the outcrops of coal were in these places. An alternative fuel to the traditional, but scarce firewood was there for the picking.

Coal was not a popular fuel, and only those living near the coal workings burnt it; but since their crofts and hovels had no chimneys, noxious fumes from open coal fires must have been a major problem. Wood was used only by people who were able to afford it, and were able to trade off goods or services for this commodity.

The importance of coal did not become established until the 16th century, when output expanded rapidly until it was curtailed by events surrounding the Civil Wars. Afterwards, there was a steady rise in output until the middle of the 18th century, when production rose dramatically to meet the needs of the steam age and a rapidly increasing population of domestic and industrial users.

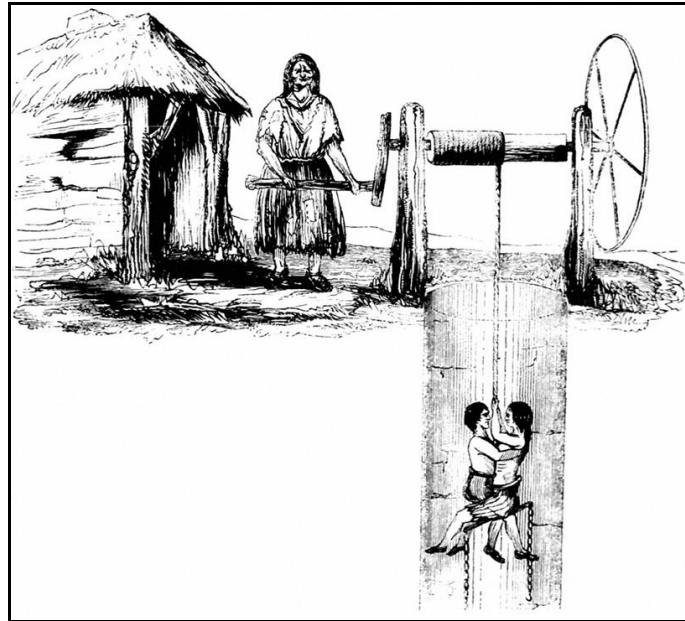
In the earliest mines, coal was relatively simple to extract. Coal was no doubt quarried at first, by removing the immediate overburden (outcrop on the surface – see previous illustration) until this became impractical. The seam would be followed down from the outcrop in tunnels, perhaps for about twenty feet or so until it was unsafe to work, and then the "Bell Pit" system of mining the coal was employed; this is shown in the previous and next illustration. A series of Bell Pits were then opened to follow the vein of coal until it became too deep to excavate by this method; the principle is well known. A shaft is sunk from the surface until it reached the seam of coal which was then extracted in all directions until the roof threatened to collapse. Then it is abandoned and another pit opened up alongside; spoil from the new excavation being thrown into the old workings. In this way, a large area was covered, but at a great cost in physical effort.



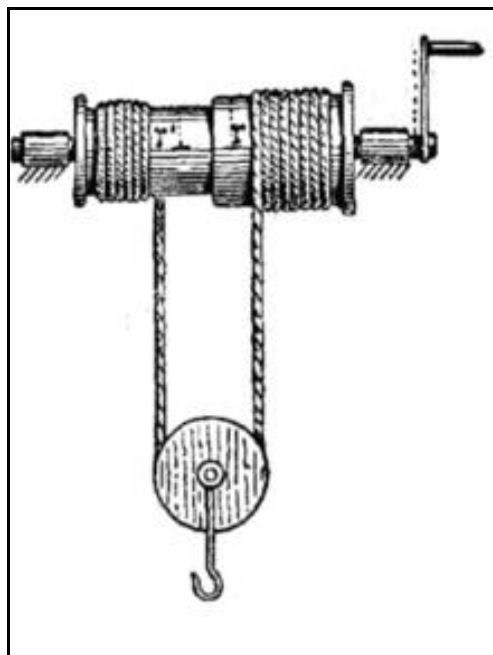
As the seam dipped away from the outcrop, the need to maximise the advantages of access to the coal against the effort put into digging the shaft would dictate some form of support for the shaft-bottom, and it is conceivable that radiating tunnels would be driven into the coal, and these excavations would be joined up as the diggers retreated back into the shaft.

Spoil from the sinking, and then coal, was carried up ladders to the surface in back packs, and later was hauled up in baskets.

The hand windlass was used from a very early date for winding coal, and some had a handle at each end so that two people could operate them. They were also used to wind people into and out of the pit, as the following illustration from the “Children’s Employment Commission Report” of 1842 shows, however, most miners preferred ladders, which they considered a safer means of travelling the shaft.



Children being winched down a shaft. Taken from the 1842 report for The Royal commission on Employment of Children in Mines and manufactories.



The “Differential Windlass” was a further development which incorporated a gear ratio to increase the speed at which people, buckets, baskets etc could be drawn up the shaft.

These primitive methods would have been used extensively in the area, and over several hundred years was the only form of coal-mining. In 1520, it was recorded that there were 5 pits working in a small field in Swannington Parish, and these were almost certainly of the “Bell Pit” variety. Whilst these old methods were continued where outcropping presented itself, the introduction of new techniques in the 16th century enabled the exploitation of deeper veins of coal, where shafts were lined with timber and a more advanced system of heading out was employed, and known as “pillar and bord” or “stall and pillar”. Professional sinkers

were employed and headings were taken out from the pit bottom for considerable distances and in more than one direction before the pits were fully operational. Timber was used in large quantities, probably for shaft lining and roadway supports. In the following 16th century German woodcut illustrations of mining operations, the timbered shafts and roadways are clearly represented, and the naked tree stumps tell their own story.

It is recorded that “shaft” coalmining was taking place in the Oakthorpe village area in 1412 when mining was progressing beyond the stage of outcrop working and bell pits. Open cast mining in the area revealed that timber lined shafts attributed to the 15th century were found. It describes that timber was placed around the shaft in the way a “Cooper” makes barrels and was called tubbing. This held back the strata and made the shaft safe for the passage of men and materials. Where the strata issued water, sheep fleeces were wedged between the boards to stop ingress of water into the shaft as getting rid of the water was not easy, and the only way would be to raise it in buckets etc. Apparently, another name for this construction was “cribbing”, a term was used in later years when wooden or metal rings were placed around the shaft as a form of support to enable the brickwork lining to be constructed.

The following two illustrations are taken from “De re Metallica” (an early German mining text book) by Georgius Agricola 1556, and are included at this stage to demonstrate early forms of pumping water out of the pit bottom and getting fresh air down the shafts. The third illustration shows timber lined shaft mining. The reader should refer to the later section “Advancement in Mechanisation and Steam Power in the 17th and 18th Centuries”, where advances of these basic forms of mechanisation are shown.



A ‘Rag and Chain Pump’ used to pump water from the pit bottom.

Rags are attached to the continuously rotating chain at close intervals and scoop water up from the pit bottom as they pass around the return drum. They pass up through a pipe and the water is discharged at the top into the drain. Circular metal plates replaced the rags in a further development.



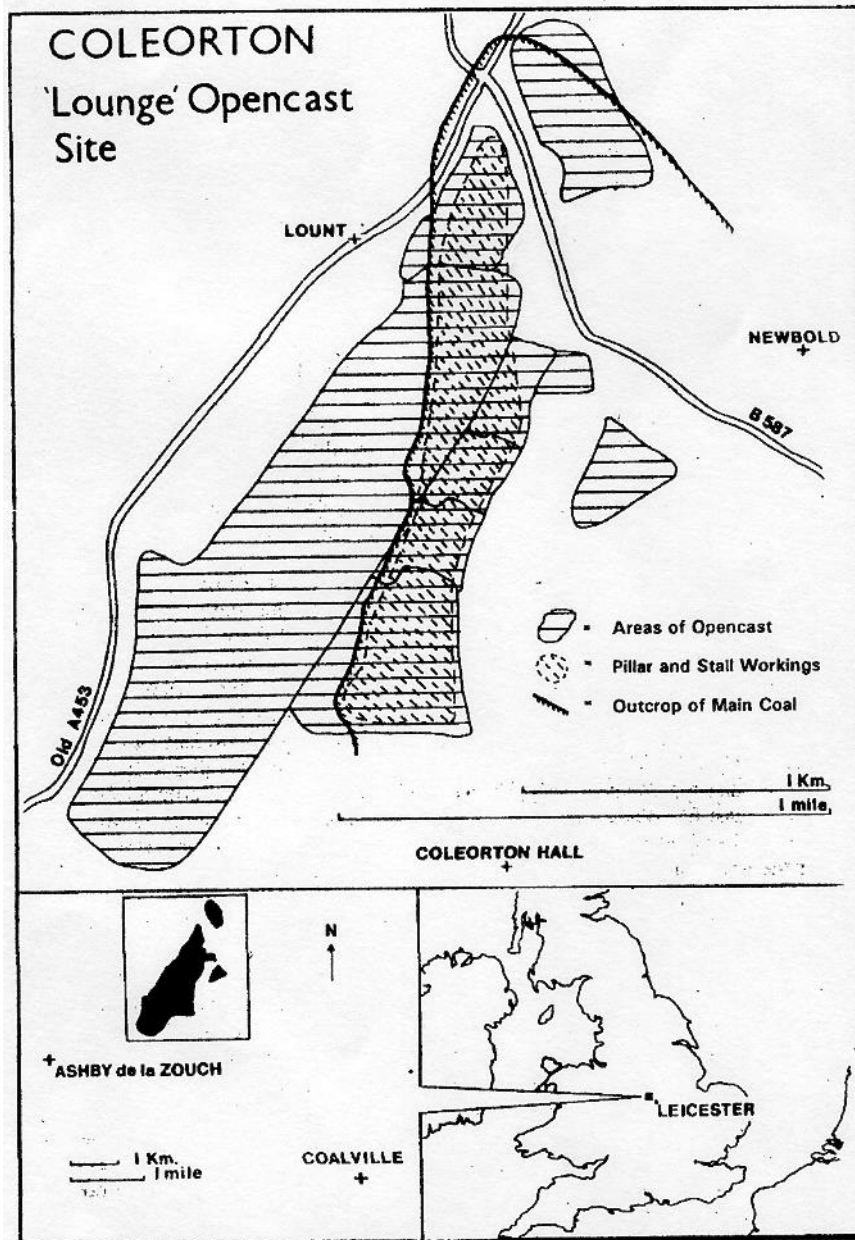
Ventilating a mine using bellows



Timber lined shaft mining

THE COLEORTON 'LOUNGE' OPENCAST SITE

Between 1985 and 1993 the "Lounge" opencast coal mining site removed parts of ten seams of coal from an area of over 1.5 square kilometres in the Parish of Coleorton in the area of Smoile Wood, Lount (see following map). Over an area of half a square kilometre of the main coal seams, the modern excavators uncovered a continuous series of pillar-and-stall workings as far as 30m below the surface, and originally reached by timber lined shafts. It has been possible to date this industry by tree-ring dating of timbers, and stylistic study of other artefacts found, to the period 1450-1600.



For probably the first time, this provided the opportunity to study a medieval coal mining industry in detail, rather than relying on fragmentary and unreliable historical information. Historic mine workings have frequently been observed on opencast sites before, but several factors have combined to make the "Lounge" site uniquely productive of usable archaeological information. The pillar-and-stall mine workings extended for a distance of 2km. along the outcrop of the main coal seams, having removed over **1 million tons** of coal.

All access to the coal seams appeared to have been by numerous shafts, which descended vertically to the seam. Approximately 300 shafts gave access to the area of workings from the

surface. These followed a fairly consistent pattern, with internal timber framing retaining the sides to leave a rectangular open shaft approx 1.5m square in cross-section. The main split oak frames, with carpentered mortice-and-tenon joints, were inserted at 1m vertical intervals during shaft sinking, with small branches or brushwood pushed behind. Later in the period, just planking was used.

On reaching the coal, a final shaft frame rested on top of the High Main Top seam, which was itself supported by wooden props and/or pillars of coal. Sinking was a specialist trade and most likely a full-time job. It would probably have taken a team of four sinkers plus four additional men to assist with other activities up to a month to sink a shaft, and there would probably have been two shafts a year sunk on the "Lounge" site alone.

Another specialist tradesman was known as a "Header", and a team of these would have taken over from the Sinkers when the shaft reached the coal seam, in order to prepare the pit bottom and establish the direction and extent of the galleries, leaving the coal cutting team to concentrate solely on coal production.

In pillar and stall mining, a portion of coal is removed, leaving solid pillars untouched to continue supporting the roof. **"Pillar-and-stall" and "longwall mining" features later in the book.**



15th Century pillar and stall working at 'Lounge' site



16th Century pillar and stall working at 'Lounge' site

To the east, and at a slightly greater depth from the area of pillar-and-stall working already described, were bands of long wall workings of two different periods. The conventional historical view, is that longwall was devised in Staffordshire in the late 17th century, but tree ring analysis of a timber line roadway within an area of "longwall" on the "Lounge" site gave a reliable date in the 1620's. Longwall mining techniques etc are discussed later in the book.

Remains of about ten pairs of sledge-type wooden runners (some with iron strips attached to the base) were found. These would have been attached to bottom boards and there was some evidence of a container of basketwork built on top. These were clearly used for dragging lumps of coal from the face to the foot of a convenient shaft, most likely on wooden rails. The corve or Corve would have contained about 138lbs weight and coal was sold by the "rook" of 18 corves or 22½ cwts (hundredweights). Wooden hooks with a handle through the shaft at right angles were found, and it is almost certain that these were used to haul the corves to the shaft. It is likely that the baskets were disconnected from the sledge and hauled to the surface with ropes and hand turned winches as shown in a previous illustration. The empty ones would have been returned down the shaft. However, horse powered winding devices were widely used from the late 16th century also, and examples of these are shown later in the book



Corves or hazel wicker baskets were introduced from Germany in 1564 and used in conjunction with hemp ropes to haul coal up the shafts.

The main working tools of the Tudor miners were the single-ended pick and one-piece wooden shovel. The picks were of iron, with wooden handles, and the shovels carved from a single piece of oak, probably originally tipped with a strip of iron across the end of the blade. Several of the pick heads found have marks incised in them, presumably identifying the maker or owner.

The miners used tallow candles to light their work, of which several were found, including an unused early 16th century example in perfect condition. In one area of the workings, incomplete remnants of several three-legged stools were found. These were crudely shaped in oak again.

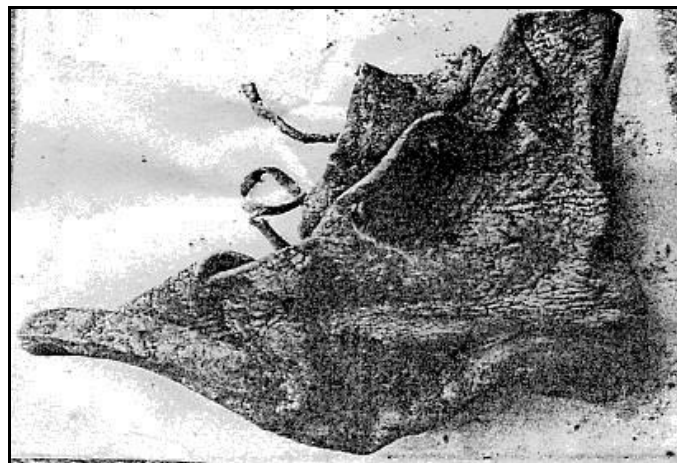
Parts of about 25 leather shoes were found in the workings, many of which could be dated on stylistic grounds with reasonable accuracy. As might be expected, they were mainly worn out, and several had evidence of patching. One child's boot was found, clearly cut down from a full sized one.

The most unusual discoveries were two garments which were given the description of the "Coleorton Tunic" and the "Coleorton Coat". The "Coleorton Tunic" was a find of National importance. It was discovered on May 20th 1988 by Neil Davenhill, an excavator driver, when

clearing out slack and old pit props from a mine gallery. It was quickly taken to the site office, thence to the Leicestershire Museum service for conservation. It is now identified as one of the oldest pieces of working clothing ever found in Britain, and probably dates from the mid-late 16th century, based on the nearest tree-ring dating samples. The garment is made of tabby woven wool. It probably also had sleeves and inset lower strip panels, which may have been made of linen or similar vegetable fibre which has not survived. Traces of a possible yellow dye were found on protected areas of the wool, and blue dye on some surviving fibres of the linen. To conserve this fragile and highly interesting artefact, and the other small finds, a special low light display area was built at the Jewry Wall Museum in Leicester. The Coleorton Coat is one of three long waistcoats of late 17th century found in Western Europe. It came from later longwall workings and makes the point that very important finds on the site are not confined to the Tudor period.



The 'Coleorton Coat'



A leather boot from the 15th century workings preserved down the mine

FURTHER COAL MINING DEVELOPMENTS

There was a universal shortage of timber in Tudor England which became more acute as the population developed and demand outstripped supply, making this an expensive commodity. It was probably at this juncture, that bricks were first used for shaft lining, and there are some very early examples locally.

Once the stage of working by bell pits was passed, problems of miners working in “choke-damp” (**see later explanation**) and or “fire damp” (**see later explanation**) arose unless efficient methods of ventilation were adopted to disperse it.

See later article in this section on the “Ventilation of Coal Mines”

In the Medieval period, the bulk of the capital and initiative appears to have come from the lords of the manor, though they were forced to engage in lawsuits against lesser land owners such as freeholders in order to maintain their prerogative to be sole exploiters of the coal measures. From the early sixteenth century to the early nineteenth centuries, colliery ownership became less diverse. Landowners continued to be a most important source of capital and enterprise. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for instance, the Beaumont's, a Coleorton gentry family, were probably the most active of the large landowners cum colliery owners in the local coalfield.

The celebrated chronicler Camden writing in **1586** stated... *‘Nor must we forget **Cole Overton** the residence of Henry de Beaumont. This place has its surname from the **coal dug here like hardened bitumen**, which yields much profit to the Lord of the Manor and supplies all the neighbourhood far and near with fireing’. In 1607, he noted that coalmining had been thriving at Coleorton for decades “to the lord of the manor’s great profit”.*

As workings went further underground, drainage became a major consideration in the deeper pits. In 1554, Nicholas Beaumont drove a sough across Newbold Moor, but the record does not say for what purpose it was driven, or whether it was on the surface or underground. It is likely, however, that this would have been an open drain to carry away water, which had been raised out of the pit, to a point where it would not drain back into the workings. Labour was cheap in those days, and lading water was a recognised occupation. In 1572, a sough pit was sunk at Coleorton and was probably taken down to a level below the level of the coal workings, and connected to the surrounding pits by soughs (drainage channels).

The small scale coal workings of the Medieval period were run as part of the manorial estate; companies of miners would work the pits and be paid for the coal produced on a piece-rate system by the “reeve” (man appointed to supervise the work done on the land comprised in a manor) who only loosely supervised their activities. By the 1570's, in the larger collieries such as at Coleorton, there running was much more formally organised. The actual colliery operations were conducted on the familiar sub-contract system also known as “charter” or “Butty”, under which a small master cum working miner such as John Boden (or Bodell), employed the other members of the team, and paid them out of the profits which he made by selling their labour power and the coal which they produced to the management at a negotiated piece-rate. The sub-contractors were responsible for organising all the day-to-day operations, but their activities were directed and supervised by the owners over viewer John Speede, who was responsible for “boring” for coal and for such matters as deciding the locations of the pits and drainage channels. The basic system of mine management of contractors supervised in a rudimentary management structure, continued to be characteristic of the coalfield until the nineteenth century. However, there were other systems of management which were applied by the owner-mining engineering managers, such as Huntingdon Beaumont, John Wilkins (in his early career) or the Nadin family. Beaumont for instance, designed the pits, appointed and supervised the subordinate officials, surveyed for coal, and negotiated leases as well as selling the coal and purchasing colliery stores. The Nadins were still performing a similar role in their business at Newhall in the early nineteenth century.

Those who toiled in the mines during the medieval period have left no evidence of the conditions of their employment though it might be speculated that they were drawn, as elsewhere, from among the ranks of lesser tenants and landless labourers and were employed on a part-time basis. Fortunately, material recorded in the various surviving account

books from the 1570's – although difficult to interpret because of the workings of the sub-contract system – suggests that there was a professional class of miners, and that coal getters received average daily rates of 6d. in the 1570's, 1s. to 1s. 2d. in the 1720's and 1s. 8d. in the 1760's. Arthur Young also claimed that average miners' earnings were between 2s. to 3s. 6d. in 1790. Mining labourers were paid 4d. a day in the 1720's and 9d. to 1s. in the 1760's, while the colliery craftsmen were paid the same rate as the skilled miner in the eighteenth century. Miners also received certain additional payments and fringe benefits. The team of miners were given bonus payments when they passed particular weekly outputs, incentive or "earnest" payments when they started work on new major tasks, and "grett money" when they were completed. In certain mines, such as Wilkins and partners' Measham Colliery and Swannington collieries in the 1720's, miners received a wide range of non-monetary awards. These included their tools, candles and gunpowder, also the provision of ale on special occasions or during times of difficult and unpleasant work, such as when a shaft sinking had been completed or "when worter was up" (working in wet conditions). Retired miners received pensions, and injured ones medical assistance and support for their families. A proportion of the workforce also lived in colliery housing at low rents. This practice of providing colliery housing became a normal method of recruiting a stable labour force thereafter being employed, for instance, by Wilkes at Measham in the 1780's and 1790's and Lord Moira at Moira in the 1810's.

Mining was a dangerous as well as dirty occupation, and ventilation and roof problems in particular produced a catalogue of accidents. "Sickness" through exposure to foul air, "burns" caused by explosions of fire damp, and broken limbs produced by falls of stone were all reported during the period. The actual size of the local South Derbyshire and Leicestershire labour force at any time prior to the nineteenth century is completely unknown, but almost certainly has to be measured in hundreds rather than thousands.

In 1571, Nicholas Beaumont decided to award leases on his estate to various lessees for land, coal mines and certain livestock. In fact, he agreed to lease the lordship and manor house of Coleorton to George Willoughby of Amington, Warwickshire for one year. Within a year of the signing of the above agreements pits had been sunk and brought into operation at Coleorton, and it is particularly fortunate that "Collepit" and "Sinking" books relating to pits sunk in November and December 1572 have survived and thus provided economic historians with the earliest known set of detailed mining records for the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfields. It is not possible from the records available, to determine the precise business relationship between the Beaumont's and the Willoughbys, but following his lease of the lordship of Coleorton to George Willoughby, it seems likely that Nicholas Beaumont regained at least some measure of control over the estate, for in 1577 Sir Francis Willoughby paid him £45 12s for mine and ground rent. Nevertheless, the Beaumont's remained heavily in debt to the Willoughbys, and as late as 1590, Sir Francis was complaining that they still owed him several thousands of pounds arising from his settlements of Nicholas Beaumont's debts many years before. It is clear from surviving correspondence, that Sir Francis was at times suspicious of the Beaumont's' motives; on one occasion for example, he complained bitterly that Nicholas's three sons, Henry, Thomas and Huntingdon, had taken advantage of their father's absence in London to place Huntingdon in charge of the Coleorton pits and a man named Armstrong in control of other pits at Bedworth, thus over-riding an agreement that Sir Francis's agent should manage both concerns. For much of the time however, the partners appear to have enjoyed a reasonable working relationship which survived to their mutual advantage. Engaged as he so often was in other activities, including affairs of state, Sir Francis generally seemed content to provide financial backing, whilst the Beaumont's supplied the effort and expertise needed to expand and control their joint mining enterprises.

In view of the dominance of the Beaumont's and Willoughbys at Coleorton and Newbold, it is surprising to discover that even there, other pits existed outside their control. Some of these were referred to with some annoyance by George Willoughby in a letter to Sir Francis in 1570, in which he said "*Mr. Sheldon and Mr. Winter's pits have done much hurt this year than ever they did before, and so I fear hereafter will yearly do hurt*". The Winter family owned the manor of Worthington for many years, so it is likely that some of the pits referred to lay in the Newbold area. William Sheldon was entitled to the rents of **Overton Saucey** as early as 1533, and his successor, Ralph Sheldon, was an extensive property owner in Coleorton

during the last quarter of the century. He and his successors were involved in the coalmining industry in Coleorton for many years.

The need to work coal at greater depths also created other problems, most noticeably in relation to discovering reserves, winding coal to the surface, and keeping the mines free from water and poisonous gases. By the 1570's, exploratory boring to find the depths and thickness of coal seams using an "Augar" was employed at Coleorton colliery whilst boring rods, introduced by Huntingdon Beaumont, in the late sixteenth century, were the basic equipment employed by "the criers of coal" at Measham and Swannington in the 1720's.

According to Owen, there appeared to be a marked upsurge of mining activity after 1560 in the Coleorton, Lount, Newbold, Peggs Green, Swannington and Thringstone area resulting in the output of a substantial coal surplus, which was sold over a remarkably wide area. In the absence of official statistics and complete sets of colliery records, it is impossible to do no more than guess at the total production of the area. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suggest, bearing in mind the details quoted above, that the pits of Beaumont at Newbold and Coleorton, and of Shirley at Staunton had the capacity to produce up to 18,000 tons of coal per annum.

There is every indication that Swannington was as an important centre as Coleorton, and might have been capable of an output of 8,000 tons. If the pits of Sheldon and Winter at Coleorton and Worthington respectively were sufficiently important to cause George Willoughby concern, they must have had a significant output, whilst Huntingdon's pits at Thringstone may well have raised 5,000 tons per annum. Working at full capacity, the sector could have produced around 40,000 tons per annum, and given part or full time employment to as many as 400 men. Later colliery records make it clear that the mining industry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was highly erratic in its output and performance, fluctuating violently in accordance with a wide range of factors, such as changing demand, weather conditions (which affected output), transportation and demand, and civil unrest. In the absence of any contemporary coal sales accounts, it is impossible to comment on the types of consumers other than to say that the domestic market was still dominant, but that industrial users, such as lime-burners and brick-makers, were becoming more significant.

By the beginning of **1572**, three pits were producing coal at **Coleorton**. Two of the pits were worked on the sub-contract system, and run by charter/butty masters Henry Robarte and John Bodell (or Boden) who were paid 1s (5p) a rook. They employed 13 men at one pit and 14 at the other. The third pit leased by Arnold was worked by 17 colliers who had to rely on sales to make a profit. A new fourth pit being sunk by specialist teams took 5 weeks. It was then coupled to a sough pit where water was raised to the surface in metal ladles, then tipped into a surface sough. Three specialist sinkers C Jarrow, H Jarrow and M Clarke supervised the sinking whilst Henry Clark, William Clark and Robert Jarrow plus 3 labourers were paid 18s (90p) or 6 pence (2½p) a day for 6 days work driving the sough pit. All the equipment and tools and timber for lining the shaft and supporting the underground roadways were supplied by the owner, also picks for hewing and wooden barrows for carrying the coal to the shaft. The pits raised approximately 985 rookes in a couple of months. 1 rook was about 1½ tons. Bartholomew Wodderson of Lowdham and John Speede of Cossall were both experienced surveyors and mining experts and employed by the Willoughbys and Speede was asked for advice on the construction of the new **Coleorton** collieries. Miners were earning 3s (15p) for a 5½ day week.

Coleorton Colliery, Output and Sales, Nov and Dec 1572

Pits:	Robarte ¹			Boden ²			Arnold (Old) ³			Arnold (New)			
	Output	Sales ⁴	Stack	Output	Sales	Stack	Output	Sales	Stack	Output	Sales	Stack	
November	8th	37	10	27	34	14	20	30	1	29			
	15th	53	10	70	8	10	18	54	4	79			
	22nd	64	14	120	17	5	30	58	3	134			
	29th	53	7	166	16	1	45	58	-	192			
December	6th	80	3	243	34	-	79	37	-	229			
	13th	60	2	301	64	20	123	Pit Closed		229	19	-	19
	20th	63	16	348	56	3	176			229	45	2	62
	24th	19	7	360	23	6	193			229	15	1	76
Totals ⁵	429	69	360	252	59	193	237	8	229	79	3	76	

¹Henry Robarte was in charge of the pit until 6 December when Bakar replaced him.

²John Boden recorded as John Bodell after 13 December.

³The output figures for Arnold's Old Pit include both his coal rent and the amount purchased from him by the 'Company'.

⁴On some occasions sales include a few rooks sent to Beaumont and others, these were probably allowances to local landowners in lieu of rent or right of way.

⁵All figures are shown in rooks (1 rook = 1½ tons approx)

Total output for the period = 997 rooks

Total sales for the period = 139 rooks

Total stack at end of period = 858 rooks

Entries in the Sinking Book of the Coleorton Coalpits, November 1572

13th November

Pd. to Henry Clark, Robert Jarrow, William Clark and three other workmen with them for 6 days work in the sough pit at 6d. per day 18s.
 Pd. for their candles 3s.
 Pd. more to Christopher Jarrow - wages for sinking a pit etc. 20s

15th November

Pd. to John Boden and his 8 fellows for 5 days and now to 3 of them for 4 nights; 2 heads in their coalpit at 6d. the day and as much the night 32s. 9d.
 Got 8 rooks of coles. Pd. for the carriage of 2 loads of wood to the same pit 6d.
 Pd. for candles 9s. 10d.
 Pd. the smith for making a barrow etc. 16d.
 Pd. Henry Clark and 5 workmen for 6 days at 6d. per day 23s.
 Pd. Christopher Jarrow for sinking a pit etc. 34s.
 Pd. more for breaking up the bottom in the same pit 12s.
 Pd. more for taking up timbering in another pit 6s. 8d.
 Pd. Henry Clark and Robert Jarrow in earnest for 1 pit 10d.
 Pd. Christopher Jarrow and Edward Hethcott in earnest of another pit 10d.

22nd November

To John Boden and his 9 fellows for 5 days; 4 of them 6 nights in 2 heads in Boden's pit at 6d. per day 39s.
 2 dozen, 7 pounds of candles 9s.
 Pd. the smith for sharpening at the pits 23s.
 Pd. to George Robarte and his fellows for getting 60 rooks of coals this week 2s. 8d.
 Christopher Jarrow for sinking their pit 20s.
 William Clarke for sinking pit 20s.
 John Jackson and - for 5 days - wood 10s.
 Pd. to Richard Kneton and John - for getting 9 yards in a head at 3s. 8d. the yard 33s.
 Pd. the smith for 2 new picks at Kneton's pit 20d.

Very little is known of the ordinary colliers who toiled in the scores of small pits scattered across the area. An examination of the Coleorton Parish Registers during the first half of the seventeenth century shows that between 1630 and 1640, colliers outnumbered all other types of employees put together. This was not to say that the men listed as colliers spent all their time working in the pits or that other men, such as husband men, never assisted with the mining in some way at particular times. Some of the men listed could be considered as men of substance. For example Richard Kneton is recorded as a regular employee in the Beaumont-Willoughby pits at Coleorton in 1572 and it is likely that he continued to work there for many years. He died at Coleorton in 1593 and an inventory of his possessions taken shortly afterwards, showed that he not only owned a full range of household goods but also

farmstock, including five cattle, six sheep, six lambs and two pigs, his total assets amounting to £22 6s 4d. In the Coleorton Registers of Baptisms, marriages and burials for 1611-60, the following were recorded as colliers between 1630 and 1641 – John and Richard Barker, Richard Bodle, Richard Boote, William Creswell, Hamblet Dakinn, Humphry Dracs, Robert and William Handley (or Hanley), Richard Osbourne, William Roberts, William Smith, Thomas Taylor, Richard and William Toon and William Wardle (of Breedon). The picture that emerges of this sector during the 1560-1620 period, is of a thriving semi-industrial zone with a basically rural landscape, but with clusters of pits and colliers' cottages superimposed upon it. Even today, this dispersed cluster settlement pattern that developed around the older villages of Coleorton, Swannington, Thringstone, Newbold and Lount during the second half of the sixteenth century can still be clearly observed. What impact the expansion of coalmining had upon the economic prosperity of the area is impossible to say, but the availability of a significant alternative form of employment must have raised the earnings of families and allowed the population to expand.

Huntingdon Beaumont

By the end of the sixteenth century, the main driving force behind the Beaumont family's activities was Huntingdon Beaumont, described in 1622 as *"a man reputed to be very skylfull in coleworkes, having spent a greate parte of his lyfe and tyme in suchlike workes."* Huntingdon Beaumont was born c.1560, in Coleorton, Leicestershire. His parents were Sir Nicholas and Anne Beaumont, – nee Saunders. By Elizabethan standards, the Beaumont's were a well to do family. The family owned coal bearing lands and made their money as mining entrepreneurs. This upbringing in the coal industry played a major impact on the young Huntingdon and he would go on to make his own way in the mining industry.

Huntingdon not only worked in Coleorton mines, but in partnership with his brother, Thomas, opened mines at nearby Bedworth (Warwickshire) in 1597 and Measham 1611. Neither of these enterprises was a real success, and by the 1620's the family was heavily in debt, despite the fact that the Coleorton mine was in profit. In a book entitled "A History of Coal Mining in Great Britain" by Robert Lindsay Galloway published in 1882, the following appeared:- *The improvements introduced into coal mining at this time (referring to the c.1600's) were due to a considerable extent to adventurers, who were attracted into the coal trade by the increased importance now attaching to it, and by the advance in the value of coal. Among those, a gentleman named Beamont or Beaumont makes a prominent figure, many new and ingenious contrivances being introduced by him into the Newcastle-on-Tyne district. The earliest historian of Newcastle, writing in 1649, refers to this matter in the following terms... "Some south gentlemen have upon great hope of benefit come into this country (i.e. district) to hazard their monies in coal pits. Master Beaumont, a gentleman of great ingenuity and rare parts, adventured into our mines with his thirty thousand pounds; who brought with him many rare engines not known in these parts; as the art to bore with iron rods to try the deepness and thickness of the coal; rare engines to draw water out of the pits; wagons with one horse to carry down coals from the pits to the staiths at the river, &c. Within a few years he consumed all his money and rode home upon his light horse." ...It has usually been supposed that the arrival of Beaumont with his "rare engines" took place shortly before the above was written (1649), but it has recently been pointed out by Mr. Clephan, of Newcastle, that this event must have occurred considerably earlier, in fact near the commencement of the century, inasmuch as a payment is recorded in the household books of Naworth Castle, for a set of boring rods bought at Newcastle in July 1618 by a Lord William Howard for £6 15s 9d (this would equate to about £650 nowadays).*

*Regarding this ingenious individual, whose mining venture, though fraught with benefit to the Newcastle-on-Tyne district, proved disastrous to himself, we have no further information. Where he obtained his superior knowledge of mining machinery can only be conjecture. But as we find the engines commonly used for raising water from the coal mines during the seventeenth century **to have been such as he had known** and used in the metaliferous mines of the Continent during the previous century, it is probable that he obtained some of his*

ideas at least directly or indirectly from this source. He appears to have been the discoverer of a new seam of coal which bears the name of the "Beaumont" or "Engine seam" to this day. See the later article on the "Advancement in Mechanisation and Steam Power in the 17th and 18th Centuries", for descriptions of these early water raising machines.

Huntingdon Beaumont's Boring Rod Development

Huntingdon pioneered the search for coal by boring into the strata. This idea took some time to spread to other areas, having been first introduced into Wollaton in 1618.

The boring rods, described as a great ager (auger) and a little ager (auger) were employed to find the depth and thickness of a coal seam, but it was obviously a long and painful process.

Wrought iron rods that could be joined to one another were fixed in a wooden beam supported / pivoted on a wooden tripod. This was bounced onto the ground in order to break through the strata, and at each stroke the rod was rotated a quarter of a turn by the operator. The boring rod had a chisel end which required constant sharpening. As the rod was withdrawn from the hole bits of the strata came up with it and these were examined in a wimble to identify the various strata which the rod passed through.

Huntingdon Beaumont and Britain's First Railway

By 1601 Huntingdon had turned his attention to the Nottinghamshire area and the following article further demonstrates his talents as an entrepreneur, but not as a businessman.

The following is taken from "The Nottingham Hidden History Team" website posted Sept 12th 2012.

"News has reached me of Master Beaumont's efforts to move coal from Strelley to Wollaton Pits. His new invention will carry coal with wagons, with small wheels made from a single slice of oak, running on wooden rayles. I return home enlightened by this insight and possible cure for heavy loads our roads are yet in unmade condition".

Lord Willoughby, 1603. This statement announced the building of Britain's first ever railway, in Wollaton, Nottingham. The idea was the brainchild of 'coal businessman', Huntingdon Beaumont, who, although he was a mining engineer and entrepreneur, was a hopeless businessman.

In 1601, Beaumont turned his attention to Nottinghamshire. He leased 'pits' from Sir Francis Willoughby, the first in Wollaton and two years later in Strelley. While running these pits he introduced various improvements such as boring rods and horse driven pumps. However, his new invention of carrying coal in horse drawn carriages running on wooden-rails impressed Willoughby the most. The exact layout of Huntingdon's new track system is not known. (...but if you go to Old Coach Road, just off Wollaton Road in between the Wollaton Kitchen and Wheelhouse pubs, you'll be pretty much in the right spot). The 'overland' line, made from wooden rails, was approximately two miles long, and ran from Wollaton to Strelley. Work on laying the track started in October 1603 and was completed exactly one year later, at the cost of around £166. The wagon-way was built to carry coal from the Strelley Pits to a distribution point near Wollaton Lane (now Wollaton Road). Most of the coal was then taken onwards by road to Trent Bridge and then on downstream by barge.

The wagon-way continued in use for the next thirteen years and was then abandoned. By 1615, complaints were made that Beaumont was overworking the pits. Beaumont was gaining little profit from his venture. He wrote to Sir Percival Willoughby, – who had inherited Sir Francis's estate after his death....."*this year will prove worse by £1,000 than ever mortal man could have imagined. In respect of the unreasonable weather which has greatly diminished our sale and much increased our charge. I most truly say that it poureth down on me, I fear the very drowning of me.*"

Huntingdon Beaumont was 'let go' by the Willoughbys after the expiration of his lease, and he moved on to try his luck in Northumberland. His coal mining and wagonway activities in the early 1600s near Blythe in Northumberland were, like most of his ventures, unprofitable. However the boring rod and wagon way technology he took with him was implemented by others to significant effect. The wagonway evolutionary chain he started in the English north east was to later encompass George Stephenson and change the world forever.

Regrettably, Huntingdon Beaumont was not a successful businessman. **He cost several of his family member's considerable sums of money, and was eventually arrested in Oct 1618. He was sent to Nottingham Jail where he languished and died destitute in 1624, having been imprisoned for debt.** He may have personally failed in the coal-winning business during his lifetime, but his vision of how to win and transport coal was in the long term proven to have been correct. **Despite his failings his legacy lives on, and his invention went on to influence great engineers like Isambard Kingdom Brunel and George Stephenson. Huntingdon's simple wagonway went on to become the basis of the world's railway systems today.**

Over the next two centuries, the **Beaumont** family continued intermittently to mine coal on their estates, though they were increasingly inclined to lease it to other capitalists rather than take the risk of losing capital in its exploitation. The ranks of the local colliery owners also included other gentry families such as the Willoughbys, and aristocrats such as Lord Hastings of Loughborough. Earl Ferrers is another example of a large aristocratic land owner, who had extensive mines on his estate at Lount and Staunton Harold during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Other members of the landed society too, such as tenant farmers and land agents, were becoming colliery owners by the eighteenth century. Joseph Wilkes, who came from a family of Overseal tenant farmers, was the most prominent colliery owner in South Derbyshire in the late eighteenth century through his ownership of two large, technically advanced mines at Oakthorpe and Donisthorpe. Wilkes was indeed one of the most celebrated entrepreneurs of his day.

Throughout the period, capital was also invested by merchants, industrialists and professionals. A distinguished example of this breed of owner was John Wilkins who became highly skilled in mining operations from an early age, and whose career was greatly advanced in the 1680's on his marriage to "an heiress of the Wollestone of Shenton". He was soon respectively manager and part-owner of the small family mine at Swannington. Coleorton was soon closed down because of drainage problems, but the Swannington mine was expanded to compensate for the closure, and Wilkins also went into partnership with Mr. Sparrow and Capt. Adams to work Measham colliery. By the 1720's, Wilkins had withdrawn from active management of his enterprise, preferring to live the life of a landed gentleman at his recently built Ravenstone manor. When he died, the Swannington mine was acquired by his mine manager William Newarke, and Christopher Cooke, a malster.

Evidence of the amount of capital invested, and the yield which they produced is scanty. In the 1570's, the small pits being sunk by the Willoughby's at Coleorton, cost about 20 shillings each, and the mine produced a profit of £189 and £249 in 1576-77 and 1577-78 respectively, and was still making a profit of at least £300 a year c.1631. At Earl Ferrers' Lount Colliery £511 was "lade out in the new foundation" between 1762 and 1764, but the colliery made a profit in only seven out of the thirteen years from 1763-1776, and overall a loss of £54 was sustained during this period. Indeed it would appear that collieries were as likely to make a loss as a profit, and some fortunes were certainly lost in them. The **Beaumont's** lost £5,000 on their Measham undertaking in the 1610's because they paid £500 a year rent for the colliery, but receipts never exceeded £400 a year and were sometimes as low as £10 to £20.

The Leicestershire coalfield had no difficulty selling coal **within their immediate vicinity during the medieval period**, for as Camden remarked of Coleorton for instance, *“cole is here digg’d up in such plenty as to supply the neighbouring country all over with firing”*.

Throughout the period, coal from the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire mines had to compete with coal coming in from Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire in particular. Whilst the coalfield was land-locked, the former made use of the rivers Trent and Soar, and Warwickshire coal entered Leicestershire up the Fosse Way from pits sunk alongside this superior road. The canal mania of the late eighteenth century which is dealt with in a later section, added to the competition in the Leicestershire coalfield in particular, because the canal built to serve its needs, “The Charnwood Forest Canal”, failed. The successful Ashby Canal served the interests of the South Derbyshire owners and enabled them not only to retain their local markets, but allowed them to develop new ones along the route of the canal system.

THE COALFIELD IN THE 17TH CENTURY

The following pits are listed by Farey as working in 1600:-

- 3 Staunton Harold pits and 4 Lount pits (Earl Ferrers)
- 4 Coleorton pits and 1 or 2 Newbold pits (Sir Thomas Beaumont)
- 4 Swannington pits (Wyggeston Hospital Trust)
- 4 Thringstone / Peggs Green pits (Earl of Huntingdon)
- 5 Packington pits (Earl of Huntingdon)
- 2 Ravenstone pits (Richard and William Barwell)

Although there is a paucity of mining records for Leicestershire and South Derbyshire during the Elizabethan period, there is no doubting the remarkable upsurge in coal production in response to the region's demands. By 1620, there were distinct signs that the impetus of this growth was waning. A number of factors contributed to this, but the disruption of economic life by Political events such as the Civil War of the 1640s and the rising cost and difficulties of mining coal at greater depths were all important contributory factors.

There is a record that c.1606, George Shirley, who was Lord of the manor of Staunton at that time, leased "*the cole delphs and workes of cole to William Wallys, John Yeomans and William Holmes*. The pits were Nether Pit, Olden Pit and Parker's pit.

By 1624, the four Beaumont brothers, Henry, Francis, Thomas and Huntingdon had died, but their mining interests in Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire had been abandoned some years earlier. The status of the family was very similar to that of half a century before when, heavily in debt, Nicholas and his sons had embarked upon their ambitious projects. Sir Thomas Beaumont died in 1625, leaving to his successors the manor of Coleorton, including the coal mines with a total value of £13 6s 8d., and the mines in Gyllesmore (now Gellsmoor) and Outwoods, near Newbold, valued at £3 6s 8d. A few years later, the Coleorton pits were said to yield an annual profit of around £300, but it is not clear whether this referred to all the mines in the area, or merely to those worked by the Beaumont's.

In 1533 William Sheldon owned the chief rents of Overton Saucey (eventually became part of Coleorton) and his brother and successor Ralph was also an extensive property owner in Overton Saucey in the last quarter of the century. Records suggest that the Sheldons continued to own significant amounts of property and coal mines in Coleorton for most of the 17th century.

In view of the dominance of the Beaumonts and Willoughbys at Coleorton and Newbold, it is surprising to discover that even there other pits existed outside their control. Some of these were referred to with some annoyance by George Willoughby in a letter to Sir Francis Beaumont in 1570 in which he said "Mr. Sheldon's and Mr. Winter's pits have done much hurt this year than ever they did before, and so I fear hereafter will yearly do hurt". The Winter family owned the manor of Worthington for many years, so it is likely that some of the pits referred to lay in the Newbold area.

There is every indication that Swannington was as an important centre as Coleorton, and might have been capable of an output of 8,000 tons of coal. If the pits of Sheldon and Winter at Coleorton and Worthington respectively were sufficiently important to cause George Willoughby concern, they must have had a significant output.

In the seventeenth century, apart from the Beaumonts, the Sheldons also continued to operate pits on their Coleorton (Overton Saucey) estate, generally leaving the business in the hands of their tenant farmers. In 1638, William Sheldon, having recently inherited the lands, leased one of the farms to Robert Wilkins of Coleorton. It included arable lands in three open fields and various closes, meadows and pastures known as Ferney Piece, Colepit close, Partree Close, Birchin Close, Nether Close, New Close, and Lying Crofts, some of which contained coal pits.

In 1661, when Robert Wilkin's son William renewed the lease for 99 years, he agreed to pay a fine of £60, an annual rent of £3 6s 8d and to allow Ralph Sheldon free access to any parts of the farm in order to dig coal pits and fell timber. The latter agreed however, to pay William 20 Marks per annum to act as his mine bailiff, provided he would supervise the working and maintenance of the pits whenever they were in use.

Moreover, George Sheldon owned a pit on Thringstone Moor, lying between Coleorton Carr, Swannington Moor and Sir Edward Aston's land, and another pit in Overton Quaternmarsh (became part of Coleorton) between Parson's Close and another "great water pit" developed jointly by Ralph Sheldon and Richard Beaumont.

The last record we have of the Sheldon's in Coleorton was when a Messrs Richard Parrot and John Metcalfe were negotiating for the purchase of the manor of Overton Saucey (became part of Coleorton). In 1730 this was finalised with property changing hands for £3,400, when Parrot and Metcalfe became co-owners, with William Sheldon proving a mortgage of £2,000.

Apart from the Beaumont's, the Sheldons also continued to operate coal pits on their Coleorton estate, generally leaving the business in the hands of their tenant farmers. In 1638, William Sheldon, having recently inherited the lands, leased one of the farms to Robert Wilkins of Coleorton. It included arable lands in the three open fields and various closes, meadows and pastures known as Ferney Piece, Moor Close, Colepitt Close, Partree Close, Birchyn Close, Nether Close, New Close and Lying Crofts, some of which contained coal pits. In 1661, when Robert's son, William, renewed the lease for 99 years, he agreed to pay a fine of £60, an annual rent of £3 6s 8d and to allow Ralph Sheldon free access to any parts of the farm in order to dig coal pits and fell timber. The latter agreed however, to pay William 20 Marks per annum to act as his mine bailiff, provided he would supervise the working and maintenance of the pits whenever they were in use. Moreover, George Sheldon owned a pit on Thringstone Moor, lying between Coleorton Carr, Swannington Moor and Sir Edward Aston's land, and another pit in Overton Quaternmarsh between Parson's Close and another "great water pit" developed jointly by Ralph Sheldon and Richard Beaumont.

The Sheldons were very much involved in the early productive mining of coal in Coleorton from the early sixteenth century which continued for around two hundred years. Although their coal mining activities and extensive land ownership in Coleorton are recorded several times in the book, the catalyst for this more expansive record came as a result of contact between Kenneth Sheldon, a descendant of the family and the writer of this book. Kenneth has kindly contributed details of the history of the Sheldon's from his own genealogical research. This provides fascinating reading and it appears that like the Beaumonts, they are one of the few families in England whose tree is firmly rooted in the soil of the days of "William the Conqueror".

A UNIQUE HISTORY OF THE SHELDONS by KENNETH SHELDON

In medieval England the Sheldons of Warwickshire and Worcestershire were something of a rarity – they were Anglo Saxons who prospered and in time ranked among the wealthiest in the land. Their fortunes waxed and waned over nigh on a thousand years before the line abruptly died out in the early 20th century.

They first appeared in the parish of Sheldon, now a busy suburb of Birmingham, but back in the early years of Norman rule it was a simple rural village. A well-managed village, though, as records show it was one of the few manors to have prospered between the 1066 invasion and the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086.

The family story begins with Owen de Scheldon, who appears in the Warwickshire Pipe Rolls of 1189/90. Then Anselm de Scheldon is documented as lord of the manor in 1220, holding "half a knight's fee". He was succeeded by Henry de Scheldon, who in the 1250s built the first church in the village, dedicated to St Giles.

Sir Henry, as he became later, was entrusted by the king, Edward I, with various duties, including acting as a King's Commissioner, an early equivalent of a circuit judge, in Warwickshire and Leicestershire.

Around the time of the Black Death, a Ralph Sheldon moved his family to nearby Rowley Regis in Staffordshire. During the reign of Henry IV (1399-1413), one of his descendants, John, also moved on, leasing the manor at Abberton in Worcestershire, due in no small part to his marriage to Joana de Cotton, the daughter of the wealthy Norman John Cotton of Cotton Hall, Cheshire.

During the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483), William Sheldon, the eldest son of Ralph and Joyce Sheldon of Abberton, purchased the manor of Beoley.

This was the time of the Wars of the Roses and William was a great supporter of the House of York, which no doubt brought him into contact with Richard Neville, then Earl of Warwick and known as 'Warwick the Kingmaker', from whom William purchased Beoley.

William fought alongside the ill-fated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth and as a consequence was deprived of all his estates by the victorious Henry VII. Fortunately though, his lands were restored to him before his death in 1517.

He died without issue, and Beoley, together with substantial other properties across the county, passed to his brother Ralph (1468-1546) who built sufficiently on his brother's legacy to provide each of his sons with substantial lands and properties for their own families.

The Sheldons had already acquired great wealth through their sheep farming and weaving activities, and Ralph, quite late in life, acquired land at Cole Orton in Leicestershire in around 1533, possibly at the behest of his eldest son William, who benefited from the rental income. Thus began an association with the village that would last for some 200 years.

That Ralph and William could see the potential for coal was far-sighted for Henry VIII's time, since its use as a fuel did not come into general use until the reign of Charles I some 80 years later.

In Ralph's will, "all such Colles as be gotten at Colle Orton" were bequeathed to William (c1500-1575), who took the Sheldon name to the zenith of its power and influence. A contemporary of William described him as "the richest commoner in England", who used his inherited wealth to build a vast portfolio of properties and investments.

He was also fully involved in day-to-day life in Tudor England, serving variously as solicitor to Catherine Parr, the only one of Henry VIII's six wives to survive him, as MP for Worcestershire in the 1540s and 50s, a noted solicitor, a justice of the peace, the holder of a number of crown appointments and a businessman whose interests ranged from salt to weaving to mining.

Though clearly a wealthy and powerful man, William also had a philanthropic side and was keen to see new industries develop to provide means by which future generations might make a living for themselves and their families. He financed the setting up of tapestry weaving at Barcheston, Warwickshire, recruiting those skilled in the art from continental Europe to pass on their knowledge to local weavers.

What became known as Sheldon Tapestries were prized possessions in many of the great houses. To this day some fine examples of the work can be found in many local and national museums.

He also deplored a practice employed by many of his wealthy land-owning contemporaries in the Midlands, by which they purchased large tracts of land and 'emparked' it, force-evicting tenants farmers and, in some cases entire villages, in order to retain the land for their exclusive use. His own father in law had done just such a thing when he secured the manor of Barcheston in 1507, depopulating the village to provide pasture for his sheep.

In his own, lengthy will, William had more to say on the subject of mining, declaring: "Whereas I have compounded with Mr. Winter and the Earl of Huntingdon to make a sough or drain in Cole Orton to get coals therefrom, my executors are to continue making the same as the coal will be beneficial to my heirs and a great commodity to a great number of the Queen's Majesty's (Elizabeth I) subjects to have the said coals at reasonable prices for their fuel, my son, Ralph, to have the issues of my Manor of Cole Orton and of the said Coal mine, in taile maile, with contingent remainders."

There is some evidence to suggest that William also invested in mining in the Warwickshire coal fields, notably around Bedworth.

Mining also continued at Newbold where a survey by Parliamentary Commissioners in 1652 confirmed the payment of royalties to Parliament for the right to search for and mine coal.

A return to more settled times after the Restoration undoubtedly brought about a revival of economic activities, with the Beaumont's operating at both Coleorton and Swannington.

ADVANCEMENT IN MECHANISATION AND STEAM POWER IN THE 16TH, 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

In relatively shallow mines, like those at Coleorton in the 1570's, coal was hauled up the shaft by hand-operated windlass, but from the mid sixteenth century, various kinds of "horse gin" were employed, such as the "whim gin" employed at Swannington in the 1720's. By the 1780's, the output being produced by the largest collieries was becoming so large, that horse-power was becoming inadequate and more powerful winding devices using steam power were introduced. Horse powered winding devices were widely used in the 17th century, and underground haulage was by means of manpowered sledges pulled along wooden rails or by wheel-barrow.

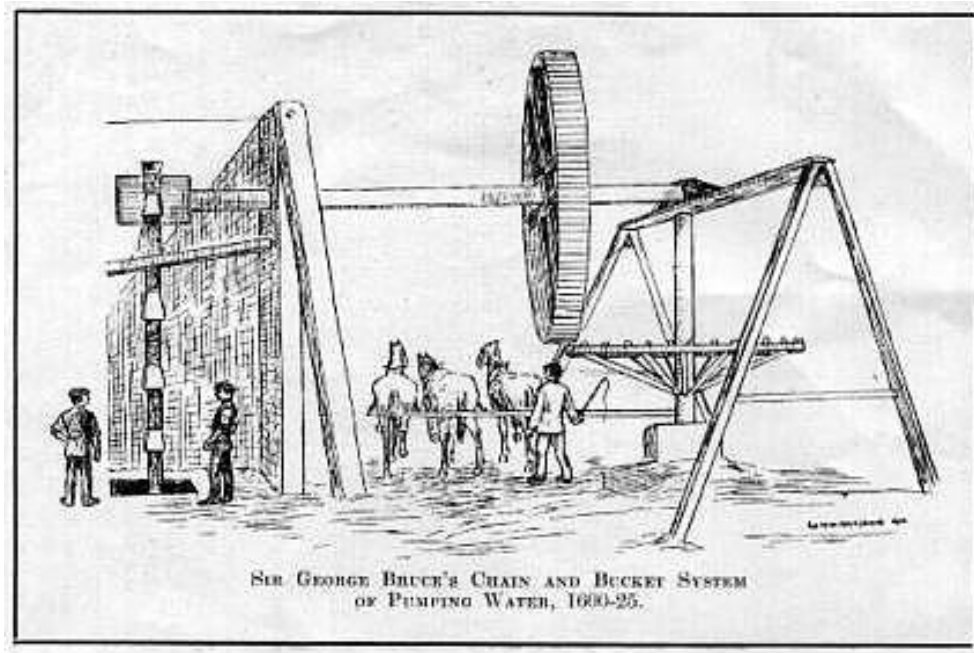


Illustration of coal being pulled along in Corves (hazel twig baskets) on sleds or sledges by a woman and child

Water was a constant problem, and Thomas Beaumont was forced to abandon his Measham mine in the early 1620's for want of an answer to drainage problems there. Towards the end of the century, flooded workings at Coleorton Colliery – despite extensive soughing (drainage) – brought about its closure.

Elsewhere, at Oakthorpe, water was being raised by means of a "water-gin" with assistance from a "windmill gin", and coal was raised by "horse-gin", probably of the cog-and-rung type. These techniques became widely used, and the necessity of employing the latest methods would quickly have spread to and from the neighbouring coal fields.

A "water gin" was said to have been used at a pit in the vicinity of the "Woolrooms", Coleorton (actually in Worthington parish), but no actual records of this have been located.



The principle of how the “Water Gin” (Egyptian Wheel) based on the “Cog-and-Rung”, principle worked. As described below, the chain and buckets could be replaced by a rope and a Corve (wicker basket) to raise coal from the pit bottom.

The cog-and-rung (Egyptian Wheel) gins were a development of the windlass (shown earlier), and had a continuous rotating chain drum or leather strap suspended over the pit shaft, which went down to a sump at the bottom. A series of leather buckets, called dippers, were attached to the continuous chain or strap, and worked with a dredger action to scoop water up as they rotated around the return drum at the bottom. Their contents were discharged onto an inclined board at the top of the shaft and then into a wooden trough. The water was then discharged into a nearby stream or watercourse. The horses harnesses were attached to a stout lever bolted to the vertical cog-wheel pivot shaft, and were driven around in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction. This caused the rotation of a wooden horizontal rung-wheel pivot shaft and chain / strap drum via the engagement of the rung wheel with the cog wheel. This method of raising water from wells had been used by the Egyptians hundreds of years prior to it being employed in the coal mines in Great Britain.

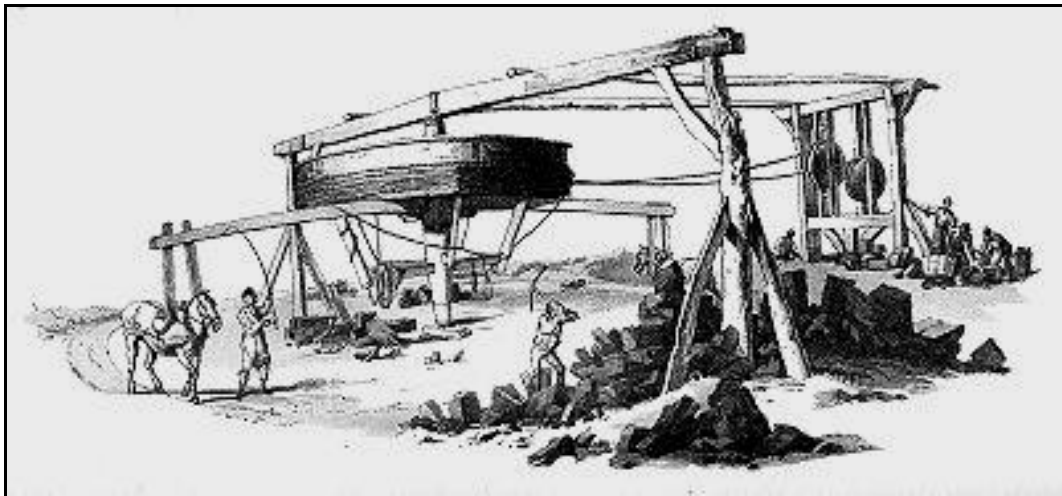
Over a period, the limitation of the chain of buckets method was soon found to be inadequate to meet the ever-increasing wants of the coal miners. The wear and tear was excessive, and due to the vibration of the chain and leakage, much of the contents of the buckets were spilled before they even reached the surface, and water was continually pouring down the pit in a deluge. If a bolt broke, then the whole set of chains and buckets would fall to the bottom of the pit, with dire consequences. The buckets were made out of leather or carved out of solid logs of wood. Wooden barrels were also known to have been used also.

The above illustration of an Egyptian Wheel was developed by the famed colliery engineer Sir George Bruce in order to re-open the colliery at Culross, in Perthshire. A disadvantage to this system was that it needed to be placed near to the pit mouth, due to the limitations in the strength of the components like the rung wheel shaft whose length would be limited.

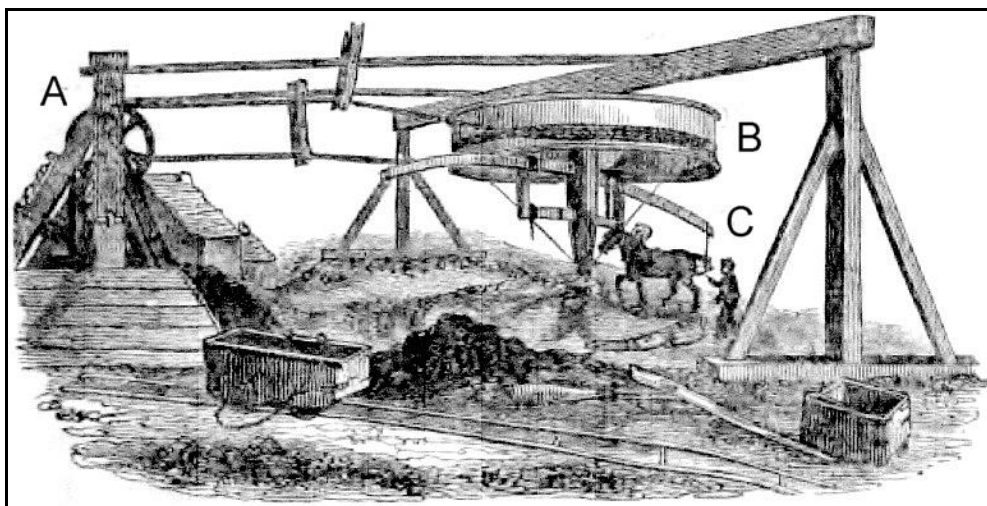
A development of the “Water Gin” system was also used for hauling coal to the surface. In this, the chain drum was basically replaced by a rope drum. The ropes were made of hemp, and were about one inch in diameter. A corve (hazel basket) was attached to the end of the rope. When this system was used for hauling coal from the pit bottom, each corve (basket) contained about 4½ cwt of coal. For the deeper pits, an output of twenty-one scores of such

baskets, or about 90 tons was considered to be a good day's work. A gin was worked by one or two horses at a time, and four shifts or relays of horses were required to carry out the day's work. These figures are taken from "A History of Coal Mining in Great Britain", but they seem rather high.

A further development of the cog-and-rung coal hauling gin was the "Whim / Whimsy Gin", introduced towards the end of the 17th century, and again worked by horses. The drum was sited some distance from the mouth of the pit, with the winding rope taken over pulleys suspended over the shaft. **This gave uninterrupted access to the pit top.** This was a major step forward in hauling coal up the shafts. As well as the pit mouth being left free from obstruction, the diameter of the drum could be enlarged without inconvenience, and the number of horses applied to the levers increased as required. The direction of the horses was reversed dependant on whether the baskets were being raised or lowered in the shaft. At this time of course, the miners were also lowered and raised in the baskets.



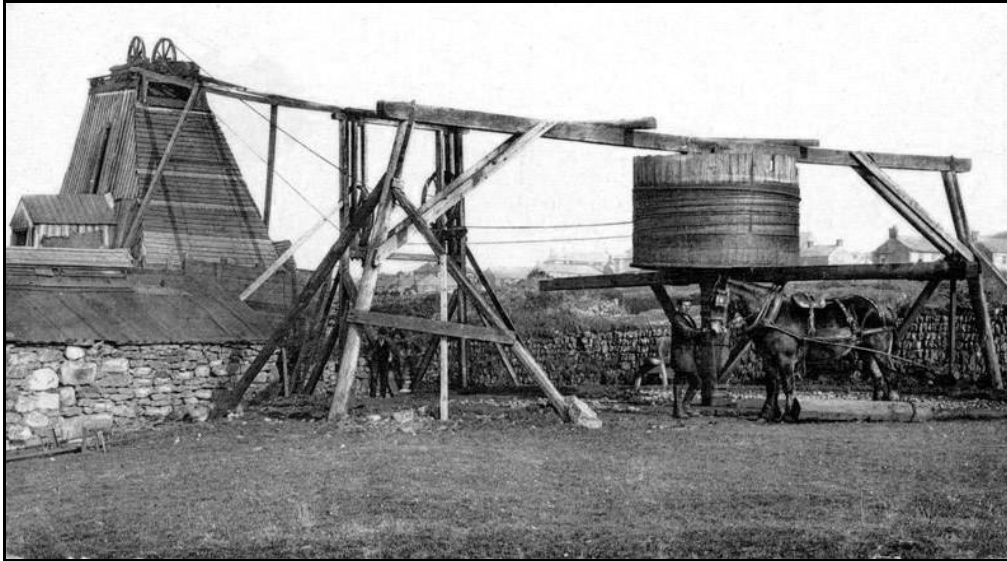
Whim or Whimsy Gin (Horse powered winding wheel)



A - Mine shaft headframe and pulley

B - The hoisting rope is taken up on the reel

C - Horse operating the Gin



An old photograph of a working “horse powered Gin” at a Cornish mine.

Note that this was situated at a distance from the pit head, thereby freeing up the space around it.



Illustration of corves (baskets of coal) being winched up the mine shaft by a Whimsey Gin or steam powered Whimsey. Note - the corves are now being transported in a tram on rails instead of on a sled

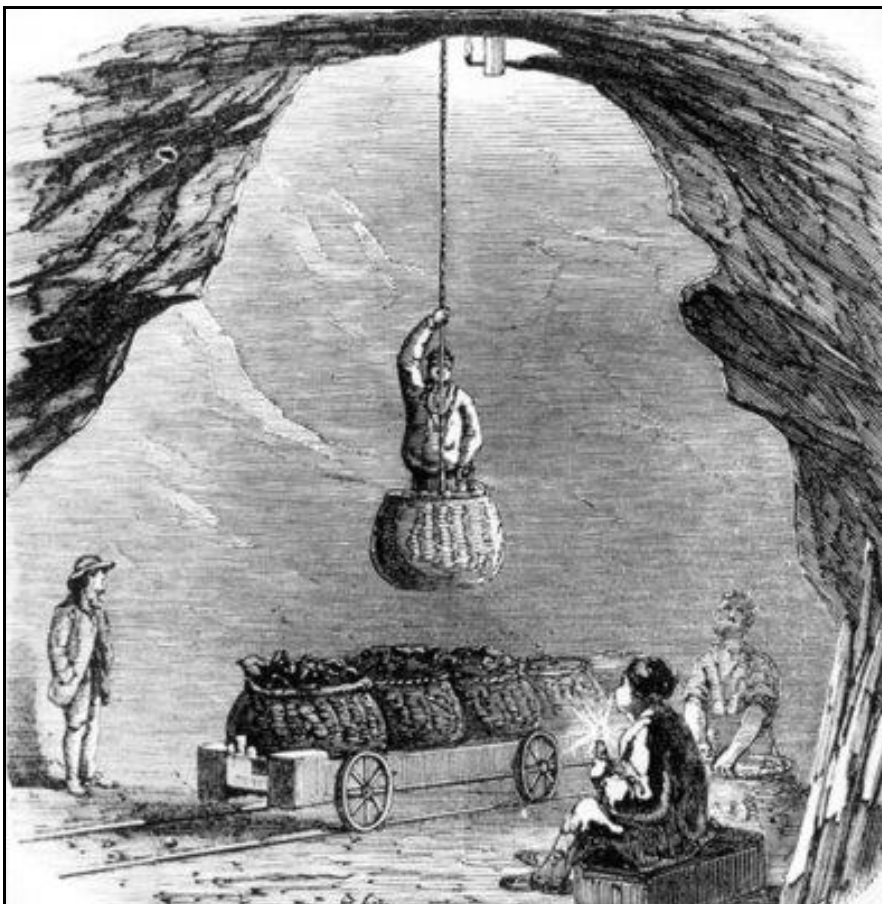


Illustration of descent down the pit shaft in a corve



Photograph taken at the “Gin-Stables”, Coleorton early in the 1900’s. They were situated adjacent to Lower - Moor Road and hired horses out to the mine operators on a shift basis. Evidence of several gin pits have been identified in this area (Sir George Beaumont kept his race-horses at the Gin-Stables see book by Samuel T Stewart)

At a time when most of the upper seams, which would be drained by simple methods, were becoming worked out, the eighteenth century heralded a breakthrough in pumping techniques.

The principle coal owners of the district, John Wilkins and the Beaumont's introduced the "Newcomen Atmospheric Engine" – an invention for raising water by fire (used to produce steam) – to solve their drainage problems. They were often referred to as "Fire Engines". 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 1734. These engines would have cost in the order of £2,000 to buy and install. The fire engine at Swannington was 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 the outcrops.

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

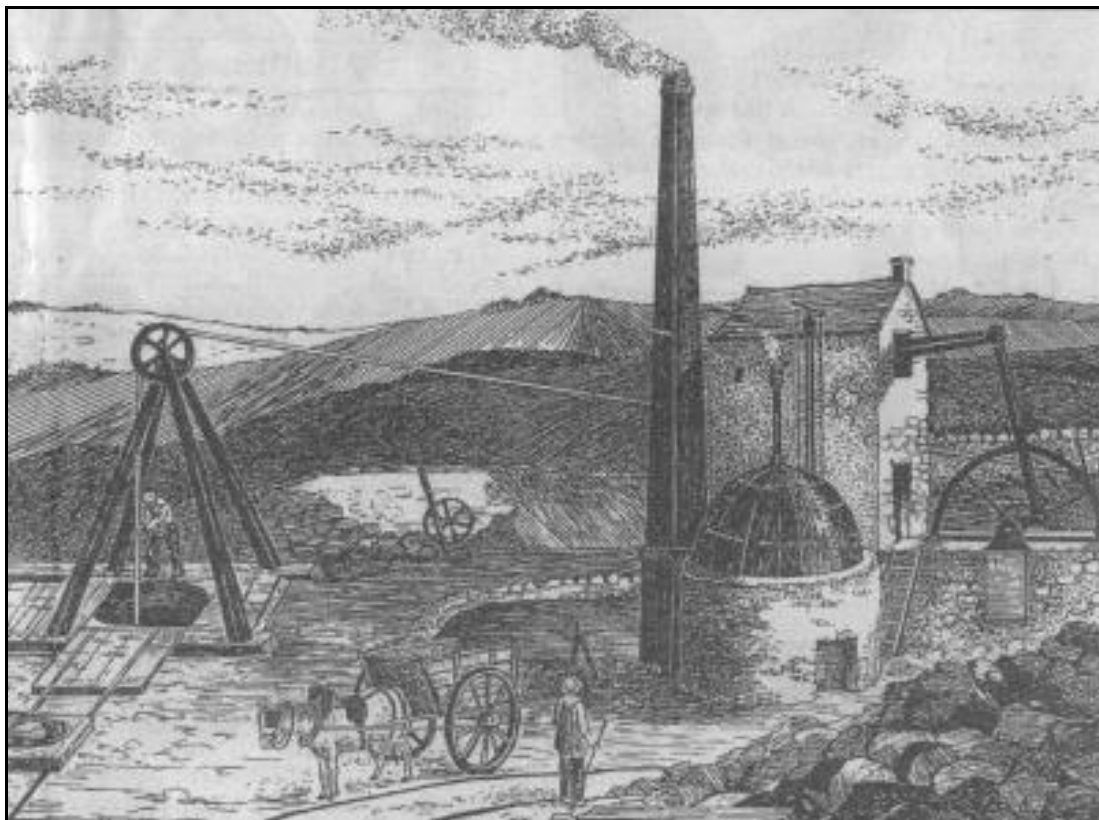
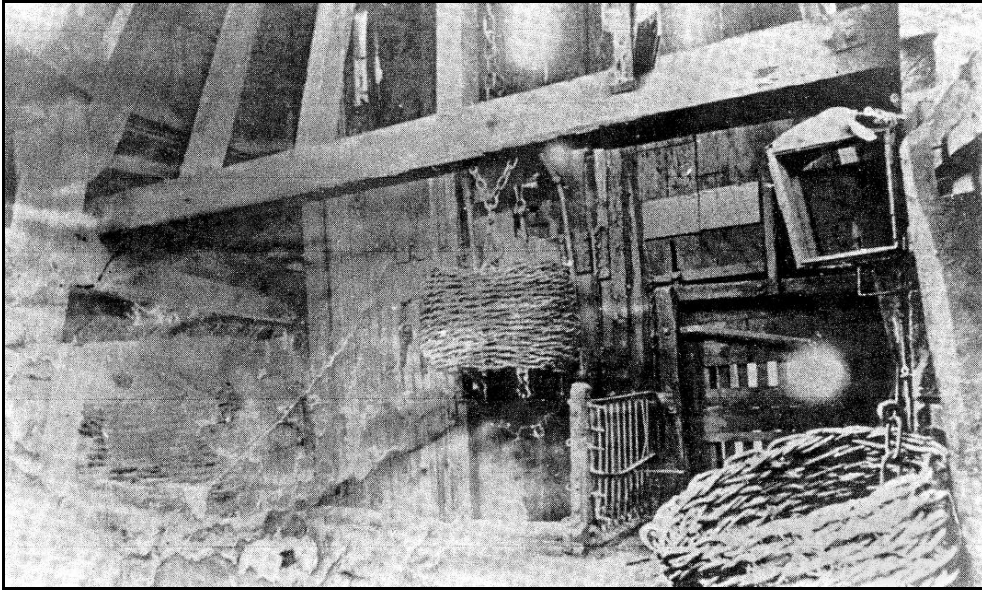
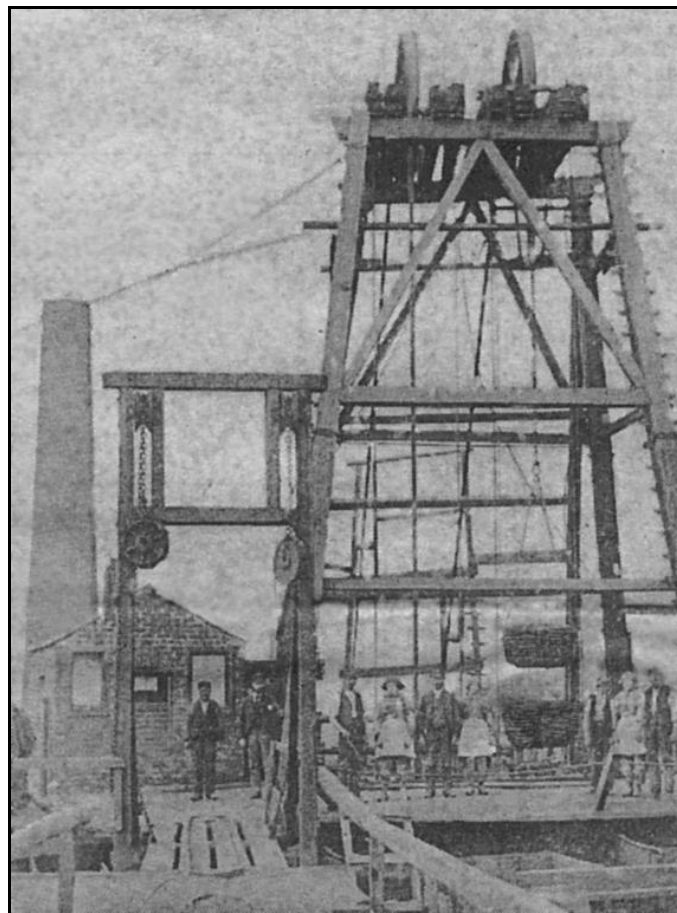


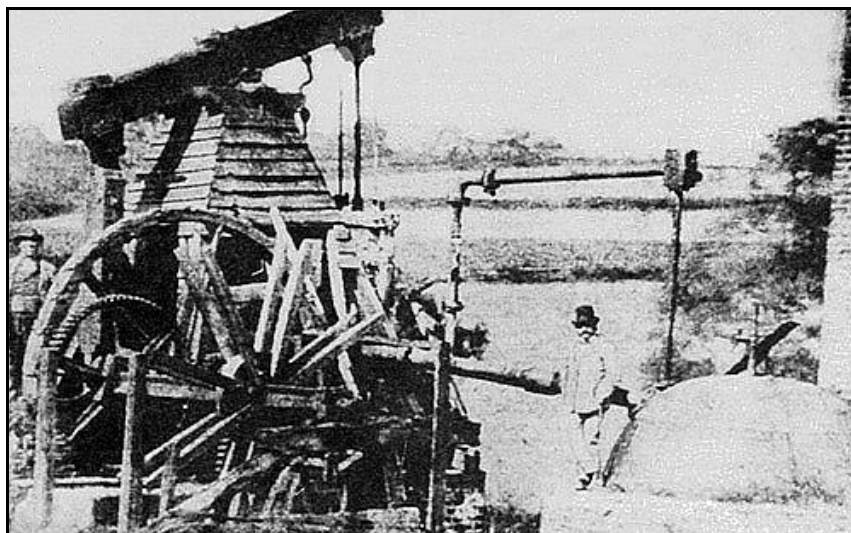
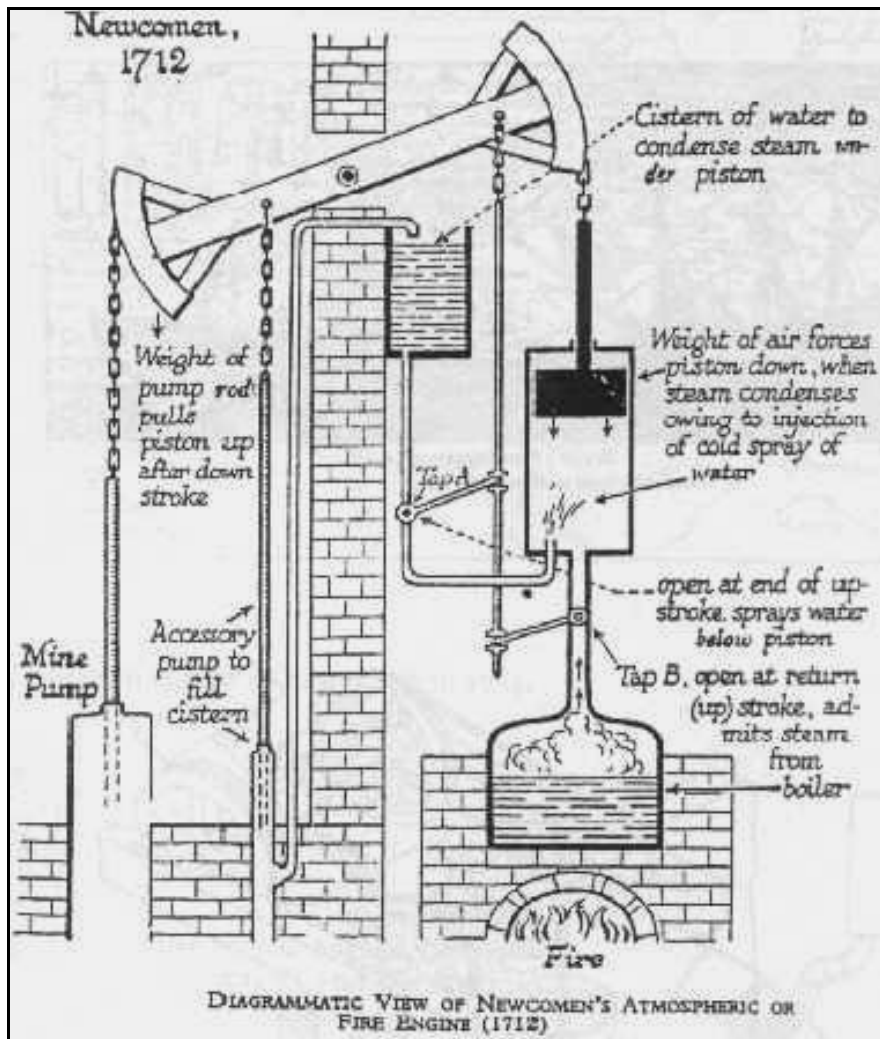
Illustration of a steam powered Whimsey with Newcomen engine



This photograph is thought to be of Heather Colliery pit top c.1860 where Corves (hazel baskets) are still being used, but now hauled up with chains



Corves (baskets) of coal being raised at the pit head c.1880.



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

‘FIRE DAMP’ AND ‘CHOKE DAMP’

Whilst water was the chief enemy with which the miners had to contend during this era, it was not the only one. As the mine workings receded further and further from the surface, the supply of air arising from natural ventilation gradually ran short, and noxious gases became a source of increasing trouble and danger. During the seventeenth century, nearly all mines were more or less subject either to “choke-damp” (suffocating gas), or to the still more perilous “fire-damp” (explosive gas). “Choke-damp” (also referred to in some areas as Stythe or Black-Damp) lay close to the floor as it was heavier than air, and was **basically** a mixture of carbon dioxide and nitrogen. Due to the reduced oxygen levels in the mixture, it would extinguish a candle flame and asphyxiate the miners. “Fire-damp”, whose main constituent is methane, is released from the coal seams. It is only half as heavy as air, and therefore gathers in the roof. Methane is a reasonably stable gas, but when mixed with air, it becomes very explosive and numerous serious explosions have occurred as a result of the unknown presence of this gas.

‘Fire Damp’ – Firing the gas

As the seventeenth century advanced, difficulties with “fire-damp” became widespread, and were made worse by deeper mining taking place. Explosions were reported widely as becoming increasingly violent. At this point, they did not cause a great loss of life, but scorched and maimed the miners, and frequently issued with such force out of the mouth of the pit as to blow away the winding drum placed over it. It therefore became necessary to adopt measures of precaution. By today’s health and safety standards the following solutions to the problem can only be described as criminal.

Prior to the colliers going down the mine, one of their number would be chosen to go down the shaft a while before the rest of the colliers every morning, in order to set fire and explode all the small accumulations of gas. Covering himself with sack cloth saturated with water, this man (termed the fireman) advanced towards the place where the fire-damp was thought to exist, and creeping on his belly, held a long pole before him with one or more lighted candles attached to its end. This ignited the fire-damp and produced an explosion more or less violent according to the amount of gas accumulated. As the flame ran along the roof, the fireman lay flat on his belly till it passed over him. When the operation of the fireman was complete, the rest of the colliers entered the mine, and the motion of the air caused by their working prevented the gas from collecting during the day. It is recorded that a man called a “penitent” (someone who had been convicted of a crime) was often forced to carry out this work.

Around 1750, a less dangerous system of “firing the gas” (concentration of methane or firedamp) was adopted in the Leicestershire pits. The new system involved a series of hooks fixed to wooden posts close to the roof where the methane gas was likely to be concentrated. A wire ran through the hooks and a lighted candle was attached to one end, at a safe distance. The candle was then drawn into the gaseous atmosphere by pulling on the other end of the wire, again from a safe distance, until it ignited any gas present. By today’s standards, this still seemed to be an extremely dangerous operation however.

‘Choke Damp’

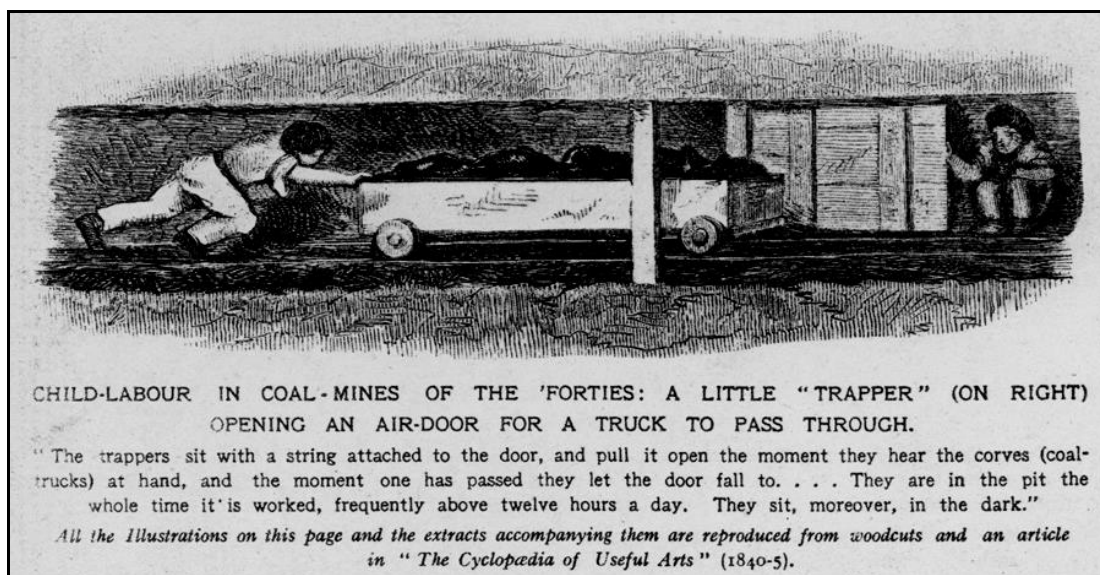
At this time, “choke-damp” was probably the most common threat, and was particularly troublesome in mines where fires had existed, or where fire setting was resorted to for splitting rocks, or in dry mines where there was no laving (ladling), pumping, or drawing of water to set the air in motion. On account of this gas, some mines could not be worked when the wind blew from certain quarters, and hence it was said “that a prudent collier minds the wind”. Before the miners proceeded to work in the pits where this gas was suspected to be present, it was customary at this time to try the air by first lowering a dog down the shaft. The dog would begin to howl as soon as it entered the “choke-damp”. Alternatively, a lighted candle was lowered, which became extinguished if the gas was present.

Often separate ventilation “adits” were driven directly into the seam from the surface, or “soughs” from one level to another. These acted either individually or together as drain and wind tunnels. Between the mid-sixteenth and mid-eighteenth century, reliance was placed on the operation of natural convection currents moving along the various “wind ways” and down and up the interconnected “wind shafts”. This was assisted earlier in the period with the dispersal of impure air by “wind boys” waving cloth or furze in places where it had accumulated. These boys, as young as 5, 6 and 7 would have spent most of their time in the dark as their only means of light was usually a candle, and these would burn away or frequently blow out. These methods were certainly not always adequate, and by the end of the eighteenth century, natural ventilation came to be assisted by the method described by Pilkington in 1789 thus:-

At most works, there is beside the large shaft, by which the coals are drawn up, a smaller one at a distance of a few yards. This is about four feet wide and fifteen or sixteen feet deep, and from the bottom of it a pipe is carried into and down the larger shaft to that part of the mine where the men are at work. A vessel of burning coal, holding about four pecks, is then suspended in the smaller shaft. By this contrivance the air is immediately rarefied and by a fresh column rushing upward, to supply its place, a circulation is produced and maintained in every part of the mine.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE VENTILATION METHODS EMPLOYED IN COAL MINES

As mines became deeper and the roadways and coal seams became longer, the miners working underground needed a constant supply of fresh air. This is important for stopping the build up of gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. Good ventilation can also dilute dust in the air in underground workings, and helps to cool down workers and machinery. Air needs to be drawn or forced around all the areas where men are working. Within mines, the roadway systems are designed so that some carry fresh air into the workings, and others carry stale air back to the surface. Air-doors were introduced to ensure the movement of air through the workings, and it is essential to keep air doors tightly closed. Double doors, with a space in-between were introduced to allow people to pass through, and this allowed one door to be always kept closed.



c.1840

No. 255. *William Pickard*, General Steward to Sir John Lister Lister Kaye's Collieries. Examined at Denby Grange, May 21, 1841:—

No. 255.

I have been a bottom-steward 44 years. We used trappers till lately, and they used to go
30 and begin as early as 6 years old. Now the doors are allowed to fall to themselves. The
men will let the children go as soon as ever they are big enough to addle any wages. They come
at 8 or 9 to hurry; but we have had trappers that begun earlier to hurry. The thinnest bed
we are working is only 10 inches. We cut the gates 26 inches; but they don't stand quite
that at the banks. The youngest children go there. The corf and coal together will weigh
35 28 stone. They will have 250 yards to hurry, on an average; they hurry 16 a-day. They
always fill or riddle. It is a rare thing for the children to go two together; they go singly.
The biggest part of the gates are dry. There is some places where the water is over their
shoes; but very few. It is mostly very dry considering. I don't like to see the poor little
children dabble in water, if it can be avoided. They go down generally at 6, or a quarter
40 after. We reckon to give over pulling at 5 out; they generally give over at 3. The hurriers
will stop to eat their bread at 12; but the bigger ones of 12 or 14 years old will be kept to
work in the hole shovelling muck, or picking it away. When I was a hurrier, they had good
reason to be tired with a belt and chain, and without rails. I do not think now that children's
work is hard work. They have generally play enough after their work is done. If a child
45 does not begin to be a hurrier at 9, he never will do in thin coals; they must be brought up
to it. We could do with them at 9; but it would be better to have them at 8. It would be
possible to cut the gates higher; but it would be a great expense. It is not only the expense
of cutting away, but there is that also of taking the stuff away. We are now paying 6*d.* a yard
extra for straight work in the thin bed, where we cut 16 inches of muck, &c. It would be a
50 capital thing to make the men more regular in their hours of work; but if we were to take a
man and hang him every now and then, it would not make them regular. Nine hours for
drawing coals would be plenty of time. I have known pits in the neighbourhood drawing
coals at 9 at night. The education of the children is very much neglected. The parents
don't value it, and think nothing about. The proprietors of coal-pits don't notice schooling
55 much, except the Stansfelds'. They are the best I ever knew; they are always doing some-
thing for education to the children; and Mrs. Milnes has always done a great deal too; and
Mr. Briggs also is a very good one for that. I don't know how we are to do without girls;
we cannot do without. It would be a good thing to stop girls from going after they are 12 or
13 years old. I have known a married woman hurrying for a man who worked stark naked,
60 and not any kin to her. I fear colliers could not do without the wages of girls; and they
are far better hurriers, and more attentive to their job.

An extract from the 'Child Employment Commision, 1842

There are usually two shafts at mines; the downcast is where fresh air comes into the mine, and the upcast takes the stale air away. In modern times, fans are usually used to draw (suck) air through the upcast shaft from the working coal faces, where in turn it is pulled from the downcast shaft. Some mines can use a fan to force (blow) air into the downcast shaft around the workings and up the upcast.

In the past, a fire or furnace may have been placed at the bottom of the upcast shaft. The heat from this would draw clean fresh air through the mine where it was needed, and the smoke and fumes from the old stale air would go out through the shaft. This type of shaft was known as a furnace shaft. These furnaces could be dangerous due to some of the gases produced during the mining, which could cause an explosion.

By the mid 1800's, steam-powered fans, and by the 1900's electric fans replaced the furnace system. The fan was situated on the surface, and linked to the shaft, to either pull or force air through the workings. Air-doors are still required underground to direct air to those parts of the mine that needed it.

As air is moved around the workings, it gathers heat from the men and machines, and the deeper the workings the temperatures naturally increased as well. Miners found that working nearer to the downcast shaft, the air would be cool, but working nearer to the upcast shaft the air would be hotter and dustier.

It is worth mentioning at this stage, that as late as 1886 an accident occurred at Staunton Harold Colliery because of a combination of "a complete lack of practical knowledge" and "disregard for all rules and regulations" by the management when re-opening old workings. The result of this was that four persons – three members of the management (father and two sons) and a pony driver were overcome by "choke-damp". The ventilation system was deficient in every respect, and all the necessary precautions required, such as making adequate bore holes, were neglected. See the later article on Staunton Colliery for more details.

JOHN WILKINS, THE BEAUMONTS' GEORGE SPARROW, AND STONIER PARROT

John Wilkins was the son of William Wilkins of Coleorton who was actually born in Packington. William was a yeoman farmer whose forebears had worked and lived on the Sheldon's (Overton Saucey) estate for many years. As previously mentioned, Ralph Sheldon had appointed William to be bailiff of the coal pits on his farm in 1661, so that John, who was born around the year 1655, would have received an early insight into the operation of mixed farming and mining economy. Nothing is known of his early life, or the type of education he received, but it is likely that he grew up on the farm and was later employed either by his father, the Sheldons or the Beaumont's. The fact that Dame Ann Beaumont granted John Wilkins certain rights at Swannington shortly before her death may indicate a close connection with the latter. Due to his friendship and subsequent marriage to Rebecca Wollaston, the heiress of a powerful and wealthy Leicestershire family he was given the opportunity to pursue his ambitions as a mining entrepreneur. In return, Wilkins was able to provide the expertise and thrust that the Wollaston's required for the management of their estates and mines at Swannington and Measham.

Shortly after 1680, Wilkins embarked on his chosen career by leasing the mineral rights in the Carr, Cawbecke and Nether Field at Coleorton from Lord Beaumont who had worked the mines there for the last twelve years. Wilkins sank new pits capable of twenty-four loads of coal per day (approx 7,000 tons per annum) and was able to increase productivity by using four or five companies of colliers who could operate the pits through day and night. The coal mined was of better quality than the Swannington Rider and could be readily sold for 6s or 6s and 6d per load. The situation at Swannington was complicated by a lengthy dispute between Wollaston and Villiers on the one hand, and the Beaumont's on the other concerning the mineral rights beneath the Wyggeston Hospital Trust's lands. The outcome of the lawsuit is not clear, but it may have been this, combined with serious underground flooding, that persuaded Beaumont to lease his colliery at Silver Hill (or Villier's Piece) to Wilkins in April 1685 for eight years on the understanding that the former would not attempt to mine coal in any other parts of Swannington or Coleorton during the term of the lease. It was probably at the same time that Wilkins opened other pits on the Hospital's lands at Swannington on behalf of Wollaston and Villiers. Realising that the success of both ventures depended heavily upon an effective draining system, Wilkins constructed a new sough at a cost of almost £2,000, and was later obliged to make another from Thringstone Field at a cost of £300 in order to continue to work the Nether Coal. For a time, the drainage problem was so acute that Wilkins was obliged to mainly rely upon his Coleorton pits which he had operated for seven years and were nearing the end of their lives. Nevertheless, he remained optimistic and in 1687, having taken up residence at Ravenstone Hall, he leased the coal under various parts of Swannington from Wyggeston Hospital Trust for 21 years at an annual rent of £400.

It was probably Wilkins' perseverance at Swannington, and the success of his drainage schemes that eventually led to an open rift with Lord Beaumont, whose tenants were no doubt annoyed by Wilkins' decision to concentrate on the Swannington pits at the expense of those in Coleorton. In order to keep coal prices at an economic level, and thereby maintain the profitability of the venture, it is likely that Wilkins had to restrict output, and found the quality of the Nether Coal somewhat superior to that at Coleorton. In 1692, the dispute came to a head when Beaumont's men blocked the new sough, thereby drowning the Silver Hill mine. In the ensuing lawsuit, Beaumont claimed that Wilkins had deliberately created a monopoly, unnecessarily raising the price of coal, and seriously damaging the Coleorton mines, whilst Wilkins protested that Beaumont had acted illegally, and that the Coleorton pits could not be worked profitably, and the Swannington pits could supply all the coal required. Numerous witnesses were summoned to the hearing from both sides, and provided evidence on oath. But, with Beaumont's tenants on one side, and Wilkins' employees on the other, this was inevitably conflicting. James Hawkins of Coleorton, Wilkins' mine bailiff, and James Adams of Ravenstone, his nephew and colliery manager, confirmed everything that their employer had said, while Joseph Hawkins, a Measham collier, claimed that Wilkins was "the kindest man in England", partly because he had paid both his wages and his surgeon's bills when he had been seriously injured in the pit.

Thomas Wetton, a Measham ironmonger, who had supplied equipment and stores to local mine owners, such as George Ullocke and the Earl of Huntingdon, for many years, considered Wilkins a particularly humane employer. This was supported by the fact that he paid annual retainers and occasional sums to an Ashby apothecary named Thomas Walker, and an Ashby surgeon named Orme. Several Coleorton tenants testified that Beaumont had blocked Wilkins' right of way across Coleorton Field, despite the fact that the latter had always provided them with prompt and adequate compensation for the damage done to their land by his coal carts. In support of Beaumont, at least ten witnesses stated that Wilkins had severely injured them by beating them with a stick or had refused to pay them compensation for damage done to their land, while John Bonsall, a 78 year old miner from the Parish of Breedon, said that, because he had refused to work for Wilkins and had preferred to work a small Delph of his own, the latter had pulled the roof of his cottage. Others claimed that he had forced them to work excessive hours by night as well as by day. No doubt the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes, and all that can be said is that recordings relating to his collieries some years later indicate a paternalistic employer who believed in strict discipline and efficient management, but who had a genuine concern for his workers and was willing to reward them for extra effort. No indication was given in the evidence of the size of Wilkins' collieries, but the fact that he was said to have employed up to 300 men suggests a large concern with a capacity of at least 30,000 tons of coal per annum.

For a time, relations between the adversaries apparently improved, for in 1696, Wilkins extended his empire by leasing the coalmines in Coleorton, Newbold and Worthington for 21 years from Lord Thomas Beaumont at an annual rent of £30 plus sixty loads of coal. By the following year, however, hostilities had resumed, with Wilkins claiming that Beaumont had violated the agreement by trying to lease some of the land and minerals to Sir Thomas Meeres of London, and Beaumont protesting that the validity of the earlier agreement was in doubt, and that Wilkins had failed to pay the required rent anyway. In 1699, Wilkins and his son Francis, leased the Manor of Swannington from the Wyggeston Hospital Trust, together with all the coal mines, including those on Swannington Moor and on 42 acres of Talbot Wood. These two leases effectively secured control over the entire production of coal in the sector, with the exception of that raised by Earl Ferrers' pits at Staunton Harold and the output of several minor pits worked in various parts of the area by small freeholders and leaseholders.

Meanwhile, John Wilkins had been active in several other parts of the coalfield, particularly at Measham, and thus by 1700 or shortly afterwards, John Wilkins had become the most influential mine owner within the coalfield with pits operating either continually or spasmodically at Swannington, Coleorton, Newbold, Worthington, Measham, Oakthorpe and possibly, smaller centres, such as Ravenstone. His marriage to a wealthy heiress, gave him an enhanced social status, symbolised by his country house at Ravenstone. This, together with profits from his mines, allowed him the opportunity to lead an active social and political life which culminated in his appointment as Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1693 and a Knight of the County in 1698. It was no doubt the holding of such offices, as well as his considerable success as a mining entrepreneur that brought him into contact with other men of influence, such as Sir Richard Newdigate, Stonier Parrott and George Sparrow, who were to become associated with him in his industrial exploits.

Little information is available on the precise nature of either Wilkins' collieries between 1700 and 1720 nor his business relationship with George Sparrow and his associates. It is fortunate, however, that detailed colliery accounts relating to Measham and Swannington survived for the 1721-7 period, and these provide a most valuable record of practices which he had no doubt developed over a long period. The two collieries were operated in somewhat different circumstances, and it is therefore more appropriate to consider them as separate concerns, rather than a single undertaking. The Measham records begin with the formation of an equal partnership between Wilkins and Sparrow on Lady Day 1721, which may or may not have been a continuation of an existing partnership. It lasted exactly five years when it was wound-up by Wilkins' trustees following his death, and Sparrow formed a new partnership with Thomas Pilkington who was one of Wilkins' trustees.

While John Wilkins had been largely content to concentrate his mining activities in the Swannington and Measham districts, George Sparrow and his associates had been active over a much wider area. The death of Wilkins, and the disappointing progress of his collieries after 1720 did not reduce Sparrow's interest in the Coalfield, and he quickly found a new partner at Measham.

The death of John Wilkins in 1726, the bankruptcy of Stonier Parrot in 1732, and the demise of George Sparrow ten years later, brought to a close a most important phase in the coalfields development in which a new form of industrial capitalism prevailed over the old order. The activities of the Beaumont's and the Willoughbys over a century earlier had been a step in the same direction, particularly when they leased mineral rights well away from their normal estates. Both families, however, belonged to the upper landed gentry, and Huntingdon Beaumont apart, coalmining was largely regarded as an estate activity. Wilkins, Parrot and Sparrow were not members of the gentry, and their thoughts were dominated by industrial ambitions, with coalmining of paramount importance. At the height of their careers, they controlled a substantial part of that industry at Swannington, Coleorton, Measham, Oakthorpe and Newhall, and thereby, a significant proportion of the coalfield's output, not to mention their many important ventures elsewhere. With the profit motive uppermost in their minds, they constantly sort ways of raising productivity. Their outstanding contributions in this respect were undoubtedly their early introduction of the Newcomen engine and their adaption of the longwall system of mining, wherever appropriate, with the assistance of migrant labour. Important though these pioneer coal owners were, it would be a mistake to believe, however, that they were able to stifle all competition, and thereby monopolise the industry within Leicestershire and South Derbyshire.

THE PURCHASE OF THE MANOR OF OVERTON SAUCY

The precise nature of Sparrow's interest at Swannington and Coleorton are not at all clear from the limited information available. He certainly owned land at Swannington prior to 1727 and may have had some association with John Wilkins and Captain Adams in the operation of the colliery there. Following Wilkin's death, the Parrots, and possibly Sparrow also, acquired an interest in the neighbouring part of Coleorton, which had been owned for many years by the Sheldon family. By 1727, Stonier, Francis and Richard Parrott were working the mines within the Manor of Overton Saucy, which included Coleorton Farm and Coleorton Moor, and in association with John Metcalf of London, were negotiating for the purchase of the manor of Overton Saucy. In 1730, this was finalised with the property changing hands for £3,400, Parrott and Metcalf becoming co-owners, and William Sheldon provided a mortgage of £2,000. In the following year, Metcalf agreed to lease his half of the coal mines to Stonier Parrott for 99 years at £140 per annum, while the latter raised £500 from Richard Parrott by leasing him the other half of the mines for 51 years at a peppercorn rent. The next three years were largely spent in complex wrangles between Stonier Parrott and George Sparrow, and it was not until December 1734 that a dispute over the ownership of Overton Saucy was finally settled. Thomas Sparrow of London agreed to purchase it from Parrot's assignees for the remarkably low sum of £530, with George Sparrow acquiring one-third of the estate. Nothing is known of the workings of the coal pits on Coleorton Moor during this period, but the fact that Stonier Parrot was willing to pay an annual rent of £140 for a half-share in them indicates their importance, and suggests that they were almost as productive as those at Measham.

JAMES BURSLEM (INCLUDING DETAILS OF THE PURCHASE OF THE MANOR OF OVERTON SAUCY)

After 1740, the most important colliery proprietor in the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfield was James Burslem, whose family had participated in the industry for many years. James was the fifth son of William Burslem of Wolstanton and he 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. His earliest known connection with the coalmining industry dates from the year 1715 when he witnessed the very important agreement made by George Sparrow and the Parrotts with the "Proprietors" of the Newcomen Engine referred to previously.

The death of his father in 1716 and the settlement of his estates two years later, probably provided James with the finances to launch out on his own. By 1719, he had moved to Packington, where he may have been concerned in small scale mining in association with the Earl of Huntingdon. It seems likely that he may have been associated also with George Sparrow and John Wilkins in their activities at Oakthorpe and Measham, although it must be said that their colliery records make no mention of the fact. James continued to further his involvement in the coal mining industry over the next two decades, but in 1739, an opportunity arose for him to become involved at Coleorton. James O'Dell of Finchley, Middlesex decided to sell the Manor of Overton Saucy, which he had acquired through a mortgage associated with the financial difficulties of the Sparrows and the Parrots. It seems that Burslem already owned an interest in the mines at Coleorton, including the fire-engines used for drainage, but the precise nature of the partnership is unclear. In 1739, he was able to purchase the Manor and its minerals from O'Dell for £1,300 and thus acquire another very important group of the coalfield's pits.

It is likely therefore, that excluding Measham, Burslem had gained control of the largest group of pits in the coalfield by 1742, thereby becoming its most important proprietor. Unfortunately, none of the detailed records relating to Newhall, Oakthorpe and Coleorton collieries during this period have not apparently survived, but it seems likely that Burslem was responsible for approximately one-third of the coalfield's entire output between 1742 and the time of his death in 1766.

James Burslem does not appear to have profited greatly from his coalming efforts, 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 in 1758 he transferred ownership of his Coleorton estate to his two elder sons, William and James, in order to secure them against any debts that might be outstanding at the time of his death. A bitter dispute ensued with the result that shortly before his death, he revised his will, bequeathing his estates to trustees, and made provision for the suit to be continued, for his wife to be paid £120 per annum for life, and for twenty guineas to be paid to Robert Staley, the bailiff of Newhall Colliery. He died in 1766, and his wife two years later, the three collieries passing eventually into the ownership of his eldest son and business associates.

It seems from the following sale of the manor of "Overton Saucy" that William Burslem became the eventual owner of the manor.

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 compleat 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.....

‘PILLAR AND STALL’ AND ‘LONGWALL’ MINING TECHNIQUES

The shallow pits at Coleorton and Swannington were worked by the “pillar and stall” method, but by the seventeenth century Swannington was using the “Long-Wall” system in its large pits.

Pillar and Stall

‘Pillar and Stall’ was the term generally used where only part of the coal is extracted, and pillars of coal are left untouched to support the roof of the seam. It is also known by other names such as “bord and pillar”, dependant on which area of the country you are in. The coal was mined in a grid like pattern, with the coalface being driven forward by tunnels or ‘rooms’. When these had advanced forward a certain distance, coal was also extracted from tunnels dug at right angles eventually forming a grid pattern; the columns of coal left behind were known as pillars, hence the description “pillar and stall”. The direction of the rooms or tunnels followed the natural fracture lines of the coal, so where faults were present in the coal seam, the positions and sizes of the pillars, and the direction of the tunnels altered to take into account the changing conditions. The pillars were left behind to support the roof, so making the pillars too small could have drastic consequences, so there were very severe penalties for colliers who took coal away from pillars, which was often described as “robbing” the pillars.

The amount of coal that could be taken out depended a lot on the depth of the seam, and the hardness of the roof. When the roof was very hard and so less likely to collapse, or in shallow seams there was less pressure on the roof, the gaps between the pillars could be greater. At best, about a third to a half of the coal could be taken out. Sometimes the pillars were also removed later, but this often led to problems with subsidence.



Photograph of “Stall and Pillar” type working

Once underground roadways were in use, coal had to be transported from the coal face to the pit bottom and from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century’s coal was carried by man-powered “skips” which ran on either runners, or where distances were greater, wheels. By the early nineteenth century, underground railways were used, with men pulling the wagons on the narrow side roads and asses or ponies powering them on the main roads leading to the shaft bottom.

Long Wall

The vast quantities of timber used by Measham and Swannington collieries in the 1720's suggests that the "long-wall" method of mining the coal was being used there, since under this method, roof support was achieved by "timbering" rather than by leaving pillars of un-worked coal as in "pillar and stall" working described previously.

There are many different methods of long-wall mining, however, the most obvious difference is that in early long-wall mining, all the coal is removed, leaving nothing to support the roof. As the work progresses, the unsupported area behind collapses under the weight of the overlying strata above. This came to be known as back-filling. The one place that had to be kept supported, were the roadways leading to the coalface, in order to allow transport of the coal in wagons to the mine shaft. The process of longwall mining was described by John Farey (mining geologist) as follows:-

The work commences by a set of colliers called Holers, who begin in the night, and hole or undermine all the bank or face of the coal, by a channel or neck from 20 to 30 inches back, and 4 to 6 inches high in front, pecking out the holeing-stuff with a light and strong tool called a pick, hack or mandrel; and placing short struts of wood in such places where the coal seems like to fall, in consequence of being so undermined.

When the Holers have finished their operations, a new set of men called Hammermen, or Drivers, enter the works and fell the coal by means of long and short wedges, set into the face of the coal at the top or near it, which they drive by large hammers, till the coal is forced down and falls in large blocks. A man called a Rembler next follows, and with a Hammer-Pick breaks the blocks of coal into sizeable pieces, and the drawing apparatus being ready, the Loaders fill the coals into the corves.

A new set of men now enter the pit, called Punchers or Timberers. Taking with them a number of stout parts of wood, cut or sawed off to a certain length, are set up in a row, in front of and almost touching the new coal face. The work is now ready for the Holers to return, and after another days work as above described, the Punchers return, and in pretty good roofs they take down the punches in succession, and remove them forward almost to the face of the coal as before.



Miners working a "Long Wall" face



Photographs of typical “Long Wall” working in the early 20thth century where iron girders had replaced the previously used wooden pit props, and conveyors were starting to be installed. The first conveyor was installed in Yorkshire in 1902.

THE LATE 17TH TO LATE 18TH CENTURIES

Throughout this period, members of the landed gentry, such as the Earls of Huntingdon and Chesterfield, Earl Ferrers and Lord Beaumont, continued to exercise a powerful influence over certain parts of the coalfield, continuing to regard their mining as one of a number of inter-dependent estate activities. This was particularly noticeable at Newhall and Staunton Harold, where lessees were required to take control of an existing group of fully equipped pits with an established labour force, and to return the plant and equipment at the end of the term. Infiltrating into this established pattern was, however, a new order of professional mining specialists who rose from the lower strata of society to become wealthy and influential men over a wide area. They were keenly interested in maximising the profits of their collieries by introducing superior plant and equipment, better working methods, and the most efficient workers available. At times, their methods aroused resentment, as in the case of John Wilkins, who was criticised for working his pits throughout the day and night, and accused of physically ill treating his colliers. In his case the evidence is inconclusive, but there is no doubting the unscrupulous methods of Stonier Parrott and George Sparrow in North Warwickshire, where at times colliers seem to have spent more time in conducting a programme of industrial sabotage than in mining coal. The new approach to mining was not confined entirely to the new generation of capitalists, for Sir George Beaumont and others were quick to seize on successful innovations, such as the Newcomen engine, in order to improve their collieries. In the face of such competitors, many of the small concerns, formerly run by working colliers and freeholders with special rights at centres such as Swannington, disappeared from the scene. As time went by, even the gentry often preferred to lease their mines to the newcomers at a fixed rent or royalty rather than to invest increasing amounts of capital in an industry that was becoming technically more demanding.

From the point of view of mining technology, the outstanding contributions made by Wilkins, Sparrow, Parrott, Burslem and their associates, were clearly the very early introduction of the Newcomen atmospheric engine to assist mine drainage at Swannington, Coleorton, Measham and Oakthorpe, and the employment of migrant companies of colliers from Shropshire to establish the longwall system of coal extraction. The former achievement runs counter to Galloways' contention that "comparatively few (engines) were employed at first in the shallow collieries of the Midlands district. Newcomen engines were certainly in use at the above collieries by 1720, and were soon afterwards also introduced at Newhall, Lount and Newbold. The introduction of the longwall system into some of the larger collieries also brought about economies, and thereby enabled the industry to remain competitive.

Sinking techniques were well advanced by the early eighteenth century, and a mining engineer was employed to supervise operations. The master sinkers worked with gins, augurs, gun powder and other sinking tools. Shafts were brick lined with spiral garlands to carry water to the pit bottom.

In the 1720s Wilkins worked three seams of coals at Swannington – "Nether", "Stone Smot" and "Rider". The latter two were from shallow seams of inferior quality, and were used as fuel for the fire engine, whilst the "Nether" coal was sold for household and industrial use. By the middle of the century, when Gabriel Holland purchased the colliery, the shallow horizons were approaching exhaustion, and he sank three large pits to work the "deep coal". He erected a "fire" engine to drain them and a whim-gin for winding purposes. Though the whim-gin was used elsewhere from about 1700, this is the earliest reference to it being used in the Leicestershire coalfields.

Despite the new approach to mining and the introduction of important new techniques, there appears to have been little change in the size and depth of Leicestershire and South Derbyshire collieries during the first half of the eighteenth century. **In 1767, the twenty four collieries along the Tyne raised a total of almost one million tons per annum; it is unlikely that any of the Leicestershire or South Derbyshire collieries were capable of producing more than 20,000 tons by this time.** Whilst most of the deeper pits at Newhall, Measham and Swannington normally reached a depth of between 80ft-100ft and never exceeded 170ft, those in other coalfields were often twice or three times this depth, reaching as much as 600ft at Walker Colliery on the Tyne in 1767. In many respects therefore, Leicestershire and South Derbyshire tended to follow a very traditional pattern and relied essentially upon the frequent sinking of new shallow pits with limited underground workings.

There were two likely explanations for this characteristic, firstly, an adequate quantity of good quality coal was still available close to the surface, owing to the coalfields modest output in earlier times, and secondly, there was little incentive to sink deeper pits and raise production, when demand for it was so limited. The long-standing problems of lack of urban and industrial development within the coalfield, and of inadequate internal and external communication still imposed severe limitations on the coalfields size.

Similarly, the lives of working colliers were little different from those of their predecessors a century or more before. Comparing the records of Measham Colliery during the 1720's with those for Measham and Oakthorpe sixty years before, there was a noticeable stability of prices and wages. The chalter rose from 15d per three quarter-load to 2s per load but heading charges remained around an average of 2s 6d to 3s per ell. Many of those who received a fixed weekly wage, earned precisely the same as their predecessors, with the Blacksmiths receiving 6s, the horse keepers 4s 6d and the coal gathers only 2s. Underground workers average 6s per week, as they had done in the earlier period, although the complexities of the payment system made a precise assessment impossible, particularly in respect of "strangers" who appear to have been paid in a totally different way. Coal prices also remained steady, normally averaging 6s to 6s 6d per load for the best coal, except for the Swannington Nether Coal which could be sold for 10s per load. The introduction of the longwall system must have affected the organisation of underground workers and their working conditions, although this cannot be detected in available records. Likewise, the replacement of water, horse and windmill gins by atmospheric coal-burning engines must have resulted in the employment of fewer horse keepers and more enginemen and reduced the need to use teams of underground workers to man the pups in time of excessive rain.

Often living in compact isolated communities, colliers continued to regard themselves, and to be looked upon by others, as a distinct class within society. In 1756, it was observed "*the circumstances of colliers are very different to any other men, not only as they all act in league, and would stand by one another, throughout the Kingdom, and are desperate fellows (which is seen by their attacking gaols to release any that are confined) but besides this they think they can, at any time, hide themselves, and they know that the Kingdom cannot do without coals, and they know that other people cannot do their work*". The activities of the Leicestershire colliers in 1754 certainly confirmed this opinion, for on two occasions they were responsible for civil disorder. It was said that on one occasion, 300 colliers from Coleorton Moor, armed with bludgeons studded with iron spikes, invaded Leicester in order to support the Tory cause when the local Whigs appeared to be gaining the upper hand. On the second occasion, the Coleorton men planned to support their Bedworth colleagues who marched on Coventry to protest about high food prices and the export of corn, cheese and Oxon, but were prevented from doing so when their employer seized their working tools which they planned to use as weapons. The combination of poor harvests, high food prices and extreme wage rigidity has been suggested as the underlying cause of many of the food riots that occurred during the mid-eighteenth century, but there is reason to suppose that, in the case of the colliers of the Coleorton-Swannington area, the situation may have been aggravated by a temporary recession in the local mining industry.

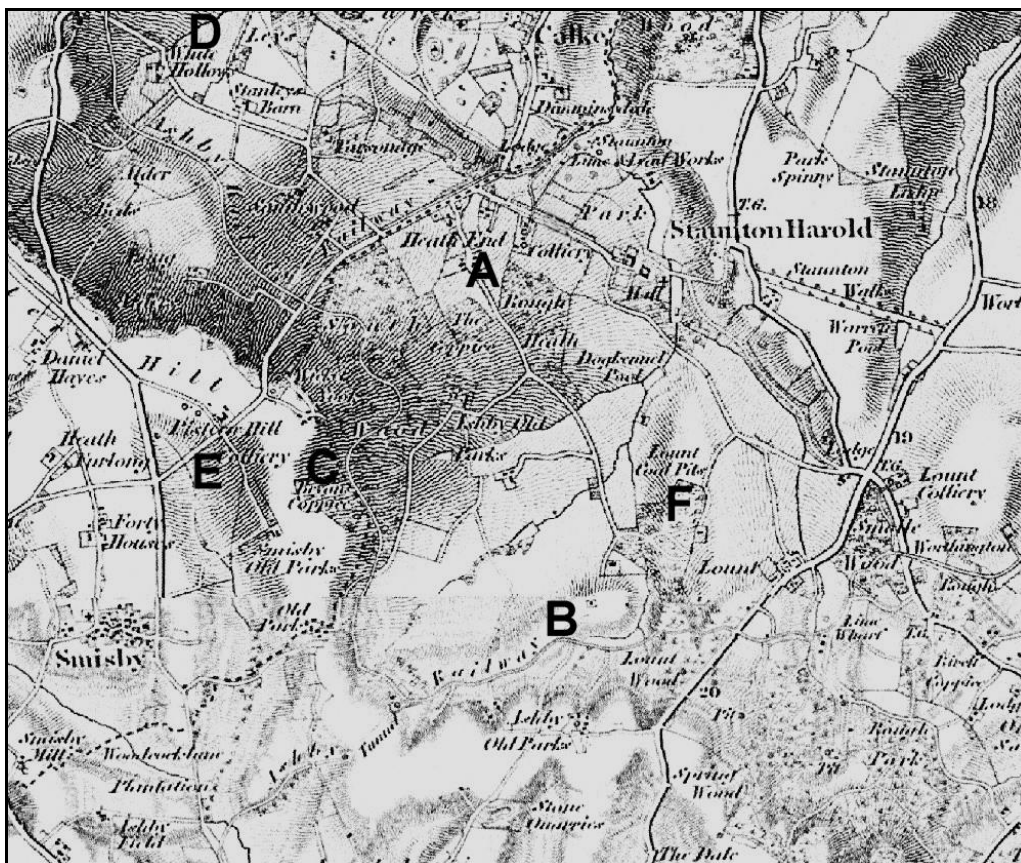
Compared with the Coleorton and Swannington pits, Earl Ferrers' Lount Colliery appears to have been run along somewhat antiquated lines, but this may well have been due to the scale of mining rather than any lack of knowledge on the part of the proprietor. The deepest pit, at least possessed a horse-gin for winding and an atmospheric engine for pumping, the latter required frequent attention and supplies of iron plates from Burton upon Trent. On one occasion when boring rods were urgently required, they had to be borrowed from pits at Newhall. Ventilation of the pits relied upon the presence of wind holes and a natural flow of air, while underground haulage was accomplished by means of sledges, there being no indication of wagon-ways as at Swannington.

Lount Colliery was operated very much as an estate activity rather than as a normal commercial enterprise, and it is impossible to assess its real value from the surviving accounts. Quantities of coal and slack were continually diverted for use in Earl Ferrers' house at Staunton and in his lead mine, lime works and brickworks nearby. Compensating for this, however, the colliery obtained free supplies of timber from the Earl's estate. In 1764, payments totalled £768 compared with receipts of £792, but the subtraction from the

latter of credit sales amounting to £97 left a deficiency of £73 for the year. During the twelve years from 1764 to 1776, six ended in a deficit and seven in surplus, the amount not normally exceeding £200 either way. Names and locations of customers were not recorded, but it is likely that coal sales were confined to local towns and villages lying to the north of the colliery.

Although not a large concern, Lount Colliery was sufficiently important to be regarded by Joseph Boulton of Coleorton as a serious competitor, and to be acquired by him when the opportunity arose in 1788 when Earl Ferrers decided to withdraw from the management of Lount Colliery and other enterprises on his estate. For an annual rent of £315, Boulton was able to lease from him for 21 years the "Lount Colliery", a lime works at Dimminsdale, a smelting house on Staunton Common, and 30 acres of land. Boulton was granted full access and mining rights for both lime and coal, and the right to extract clay in order to make bricks for the colliery, to use water from one of the pools to work the pump for the lime works, and to use up to 21 cords of wood per annum from the estate. He was entitled to use all the existing equipment in the colliery and the lime works on condition that he returned them in good order when the lease expired. The agreement gave Boulton a monopoly of coal mining throughout Newbold, Lount, Staunton and a large part of Coleorton, and during the ensuing years, he was able to operate both Lount and Newbold collieries by employing the same companies of colliers, using Lount to do little more than satisfy the requirements of the lime works.

It is interesting to note that although Ticknall and Dimminsdale were seen as the main centres for limestone quarrying, the industry was also carried out to the south east of the hamlet of Lount, and a "Lime Wharf" is identified on the map below in that area.



Section of 1834 O/S map showing the area of Lount Colliery acquired by Joseph Boulton from Earl Ferrers in 1788 which is marked F

A Prior map dated 1777, which is included later, shows a total of 28 pits of which fifteen were at Coleorton, five at Swannington, five near Newbold and three at Lount, with steam engines at all places (see the Prior map shown earlier also). The survey and map makes no attempt to identify which pits were productive or their relative importance. It is likely that small workings operated intermittently elsewhere were not indicated. Pegg's Green was certainly one such place where freeholders held the right to work coal beneath their land in the same way as their neighbours at Swannington. In 1766, for example, when fourteen houses, a cottage and 38 acres of land were advertised for sale, it was confirmed that the purchaser had the "right of digging, searching for, and getting coal" and that "the best of Nether Coal lies whole under all the said premises which are well situated for the sale of such coal". Small outcrops and shallow seams abounded over the whole area between Heath End and Swannington, but the rising costs of mining and the dominance of the four main collieries probably discouraged all but a few small-scale ventures.

THE BOULTBEES

This section does not include Joseph Boulton's (junior and senior) activities at Staunton Harold and Dimmingsdale which is covered in depth in another book by Samuel T Stewart entitled – 'A Social & Industrial History Study Based Upon Staunton Harold, Lount, Dimmingsdale & Heath End'

The most outstanding colliery owner and manager in the area after 1760 was undoubtedly Joseph Boulton of Coleorton, whose family had been closely associated with the Beaumont's of Coleorton since the early years of the century. One branch of the family continued to occupy Stordon Grange between Osgathorpe and Griffydham, and a history of Stordon Grange is included in the book entitled '**A Social and Industrial History of Griffydham and Peggs Green**' by Samuel T Stewart.

In 1757, Joseph Boulton succeeded Gervase Yarwood as **Sir George Beaumont's** Steward / Land Agent, and the following is only a synopsis of their rather unfortunate relationship:-

Both Joseph Boulton Snr. and Jnr. referred to below, accumulated a fortune leasing mines from the Beaumont's. They were named after Joseph Boulton of Griffydham (grandfather and great grandfather respectively). He accumulated a large fortune, and bequeathed a good estate to each of his sons.

*Joseph Boulton's connection with the Beaumont family and the old Coleorton Hall, is a story whose ramifications continued long after his death, indeed into the next century and also including his only son Joseph. It begins in 1757 when Joseph Senior was appointed as land agent to the Beaumont family estate in Leicestershire by Sir George Beaumont, 6th Baronet. In 1760, Joseph was granted a 21 year lease of a Beaumont colliery (**Paddock Colliery – see following article**), farm and woods.*

This lease, a large parchment document, has survived in the Boulton family possession. In the same year, he leased Coleorton Hall from Sir George, despite it not being occupied since 1702, and not in a state of good repair. In 1762, Sir George died, leaving as heir, his only surviving son Sir George Howland Beaumont (7th Baronet of Stoughton), then aged nine, who lived with his mother at their other family home at Dunmow in Essex.

*The former lessee of the colliery had neglected it, the pit shaft was decayed and the mine water-logged. Joseph installed a Newcomen engine to pump out the water, and carried out other work also at his own expense (**The Newcomen atmospheric steam engine, which had been developed in 1705, helped to revolutionise the mining industry overnight, and provided an immediate solution to drainage and ventilation problems**). Joseph Boulton's rent was fixed at £140 per year with output set at 10,000 loads of coal annually. He also took over a second Beaumont colliery at £50 per year rent, but this colliery was said to be worth £1,000 a year. It was known as the "Newbold Field Colliery".*

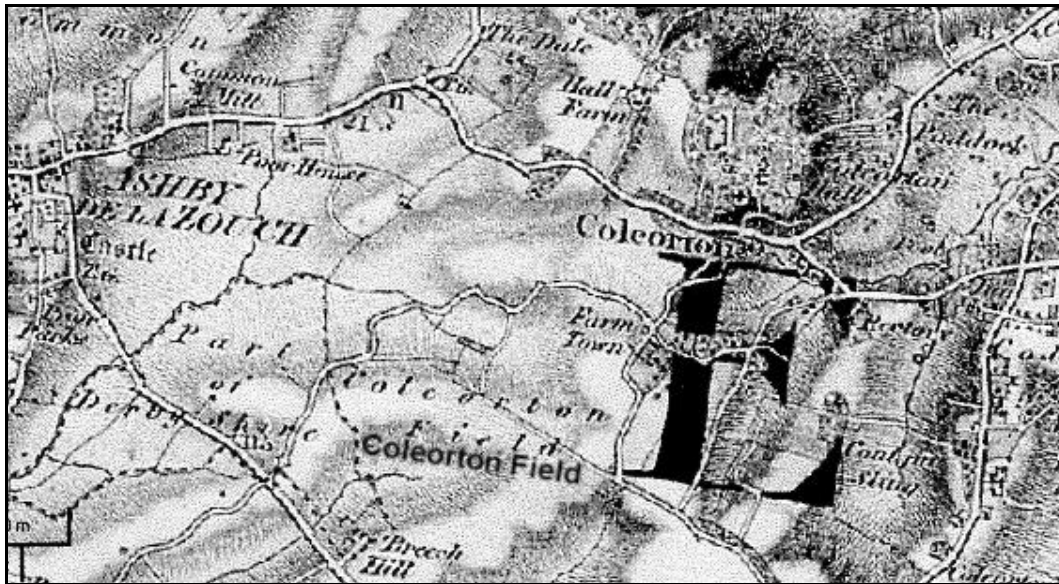
The local mines were, however, producing too much coal for the available market. Joseph leased one from Earl Ferrers, and in effect, closed it down, supplying the market with approximately 13,400 loads of coal annually altogether (about 33,600 tons). His mining operations required capital to run them, and in 1771 he was loaned £10,000 by Sir Charles Sedley, who had initially borrowed it from Drummond's Bank.

By 1777, Sir Charles had repaid the Bank, so we must assume that Joseph had repaid him. Joseph's financial transactions are quite astonishing, even today. In 1776, Thomas Noel, 2nd Lord Wentworth, raised a loan of £15,000 from Joseph and a further £5,000 a year later. In contemporary terms, these were enormous sums.

By 1782 or 1783, Boulton, without authority, removed the Newcomen engine from the colliery described above, and erected an engine in "Coleorton Field" at some distance from the former colliery, and began to work this colliery as well as the other one.

Sir George Beaumont was travelling abroad at the time the 21 year lease was due for renewal on Paddock Colliery and didn't return till 1784. Being informed of Boulbbees application to renew the lease, and also learning of Boulbbees establishment of a new colliery on Coleorton Field refused the application.

The following section of the 1834 O/S map shows the area of "Coleorton Field" which appears to be an extensive area, and no boundary lines are shown. A cluster of five shafts have been identified in a wooded area to the south east of "Farm Town" and it is possible, but not certain, that this was the site of the colliery referred to.



By 1784, the Beaumont lease of the mines, etc., had been renewed, though after prolonged negotiations with the Beaumont family lawyer regarding the large difference between the permitted number of coal loads to be extracted and the actual number. The difference was attributed by Joseph to the difficulty of separating extractions from adjoining Beaumont and Boulbbe coal seams. In 1789, Joseph Senior died, and his only son Joseph took over the Stewardship, having been associated with his father in the management of the estate and collieries. We shall now deal with Joseph the younger's career out of its proper sequence, and only here in so far as it relates to the continuation of the Beaumont connection.

Matters went on as before until 1791 when Sir George, whose interests were primarily artistic and political, visited his Leicestershire estate, probably for the first time. The reason was, that a new canal nearby, facilitating new markets for his coal, would be profitable to him. The state of the Hall must have been a shock for Sir George as it was in ruins, little was left of its park, and the whole estate was in a distressing condition. Subsequent inspections by a surveyor he employed, revealed further irregularities; timber had been sold off from the Beaumont woods, and brick making had used clay from deposits on the estate.

Sir George was then faced with leaving things as they were, which provided him with an income of £2,000 per annum, or resorting to law for compensation. In 1793, Joseph was summoned from Bath to give account of his stewardship. However, it was not until 1797 that he was dismissed, and in the following year, legal proceedings for compensation were started by Sir George. The case finally came up in July, 1800, and Joseph was ordered to pay £20,000 as compensation for underpayments. This was not forthcoming, and the case came up again in the Court of Chancery in August, 1802. Joseph appealed unsuccessfully against that part of the verdict being back dated to his father's time, though he was allowed to hand over one of his collieries as part payment. The original compensation was now reduced to some £15,000.

The whole matter was not finally settled until 1805, the year before Joseph's death, when the Lord Chancellor, Lord Eldon, refused him increased wages or legal costs, though he allowed .Sir George interest on under payments only from 1798. With reference to wages, part of Joseph's defence was that his salary as steward was only £20 a year, the same as that his father had received for thirty years! These are the facts of this extraordinary story.

In the judicial reviews of *Beaumont v Boulton*, the following information is given which the writer felt was of interest - Joseph Boulton Jnr. (defendant) stated, that soon after the commencement of the lease, an estate called "Rotten Row", and the Manor of Thringstone, which was adjoining the Plaintiff's (Sir George Beaumont's) estate at that time, was held forth for sale. That estate was supposed to contain valuable mines of coal, which might at a future time, be worked in competition with the Plaintiff's estate. The price demanded was £2,000, though it produced a rent of no more than £10 per annum. The defendant's father (Joseph Boulton Snr.) proposed, that it should be purchased for the Plaintiff's benefit, but that proposal being refused, the defendant's father in 1764, purchased it for his own use for £1,600 from Mr. Busby. He later stated that Rotten Row and the Manor of Thringstone, ought undoubtedly to have been Sir George Beaumont's purchase, and not mine, as his deep coal adjoining to it, can never be got to advantage without it. The area known as "Rotten Row", was at that time part of the parish of Thringstone, but in 1834 became part of the parish of Coleorton.



**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 ELIZ^IH 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.

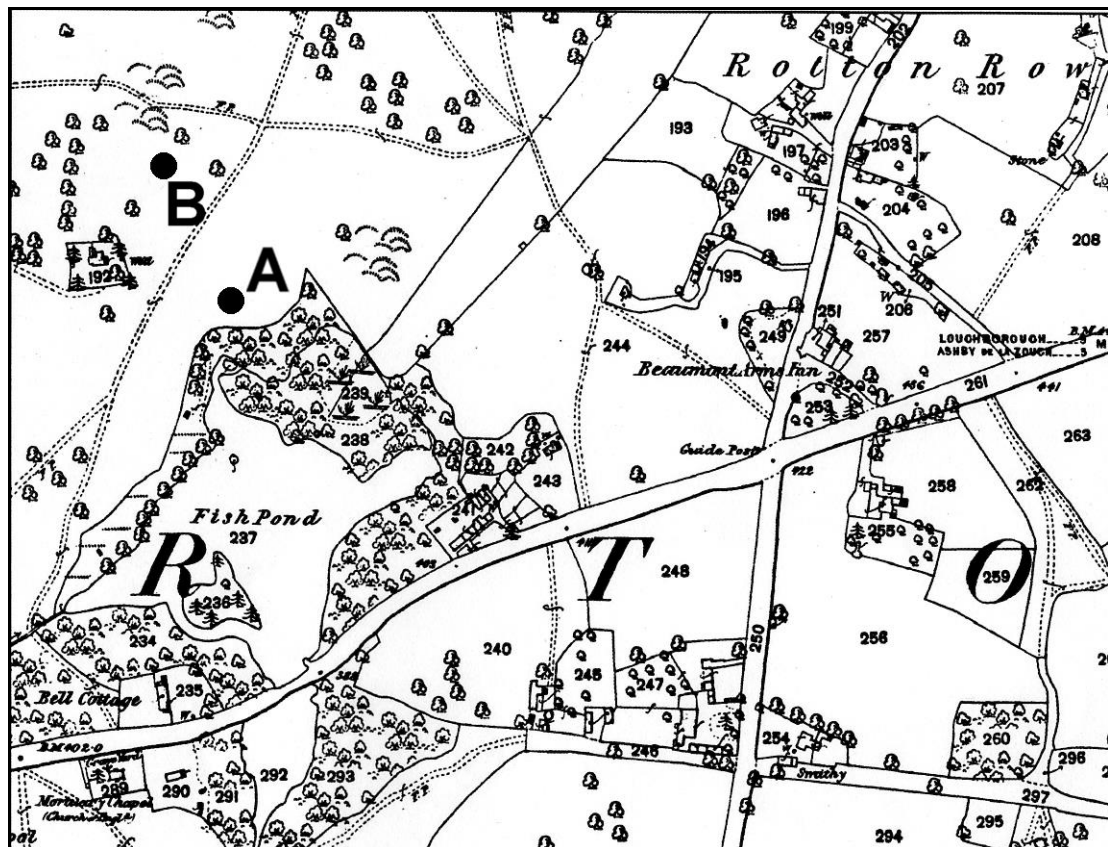
Paddock Colliery, Coleorton – Boulton's Mine

Paddock Colliery was an important mine in the second half of the 18th century. It mined high quality coal and used the latest technology of the day, including atmospheric steam pumps. The shrubs covered mounds visible today, are the remains of the dirt tips, and down towards the brook, reportedly stood the main Newcomen pumping engine.

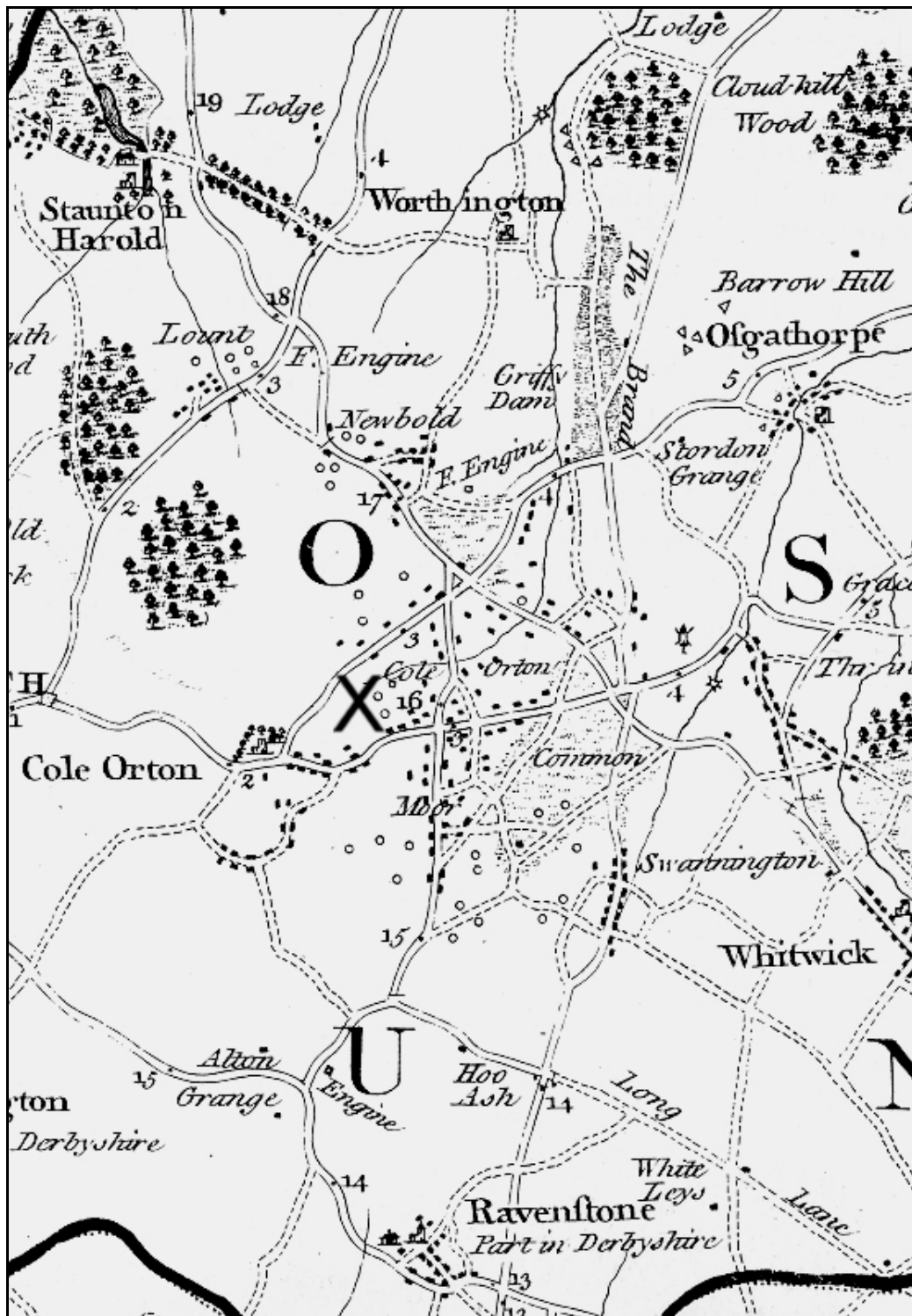
The approximate location of two currently recorded shafts thought to be associated with the colliery, are designated by the letters **A** and **B** on the following section of the 1884 O/S map. These shafts can be related to those on the following 1777 Prior Map in the area marked **X**.

The fishpond of course had not been created at the time the Paddock colliery was in operation, and the Coleorton bypass (A512) now runs between the fishpond and where the colliery was situated. *The landscape at the time was clearly very different from what it is today, and it would have been an extremely dirty environment.* Two other shafts are recorded just south of where the fishpond is now shown, and another one directly north and adjacent to where the Coleorton war memorial is now situated. A further shaft was sunk just over the old Ashby Road, south east of where the fishpond is now. This demonstrates just how much mining was taking place in this small area alone.

The writer believes that Paddock Colliery is the mine referred to in the previous article on "The Boulton's", and which was leased from Sir George Beaumont and subsequently became part of the acrimonious court case.



Extract from the 1884 O/S map



The above map was produced by the Rev. John Prior in 1777. He was an Ashby clergyman, who was a master at the grammar school at Ashby-De-La-Zouch. It was the first detailed map of the County since Saxton in Elizabethan times. The surveying, which lasted from 1775 to 1777, was carried out by Joseph Whyman who lived at Aston on Trent, Derbyshire and was a former pupil of John Prior. It shows **30 pit shafts** (designated by circles) in the Coleorton, Newbold and Lount area, with Fire engines at Smoile Wood, Newbold and the Altons. Adjacent to the area marked **X**, two shafts (pits) are shown which is where Paddock Colliery was situated as described previously.

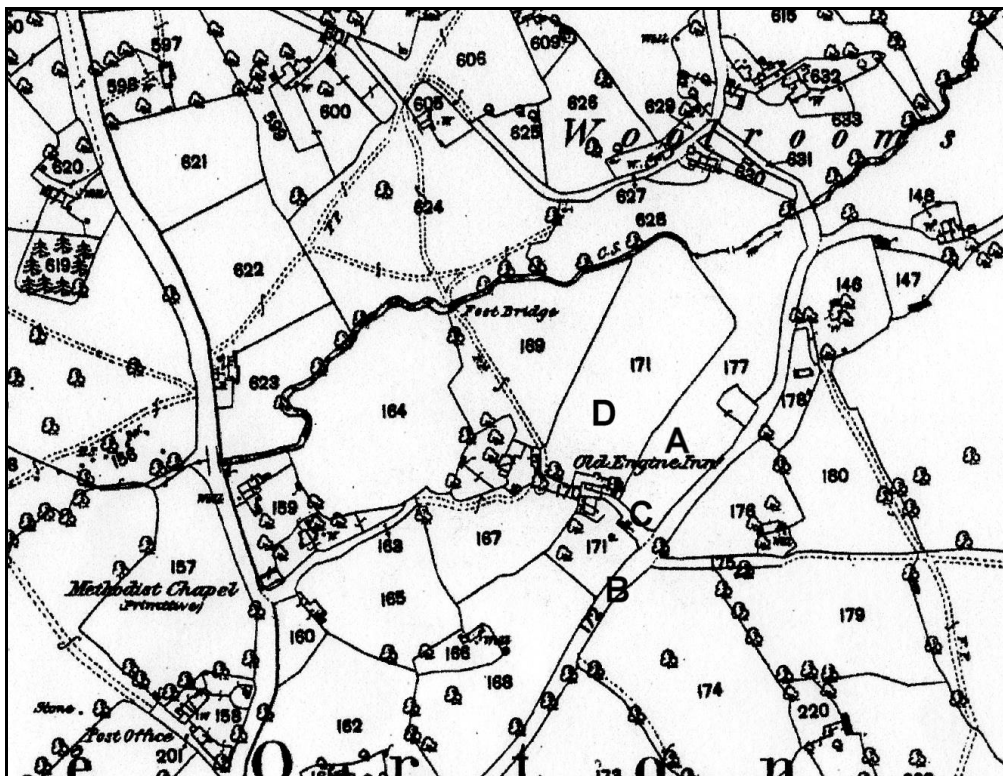
BOULTBEE'S COAL MINE ADJACENT TO ELVERSTON'S YARD, STONEY LANE, COLEORTON

About half a mile from Paddock Colliery, the Boultbrees operated another mine in a field beyond the end of Elverston's Yard, which branches off Stoney Lane, Coleorton. The history of Elverston's Yard is included in the book entitled "A History of Coleorton and the Locality" by Samuel T Stewart.

Although little in the way of records is available about this particular mine, its approximate location is shown on the following 1884 O/S map (marked D). It is recorded that a Newcomen Atmospheric Fire Engine was installed at the end of the existing row of cottages in Elverston's Yard. At this time of course the area was part of "Rotten Row" and Joseph Boultbree would have owned the land on which the colliery stood (see previous article on the Boultbrees and the book entitled "A history of Coleorton and the Locality" by Samuel T Stewart).

It was customary to build public houses close to coal mines, and on the following map the "Old Engine Inn" is highlighted. This was once, what is now the right hand of a pair of existing cottages, currently named "Willow Cottage". It is not unreasonable to assume that the pub was named after the engine situated at the end of the cottages to pump water out of the mine, which presumably went into a sough to the brook at the bottom of the field. It is thought that this was the **first** of several pubs built adjacent to collieries in Coleorton. Other examples are the "New Engine Inn" built next to Peggs Green Colliery (this features later) and the George Inn on Loughborough Road, which still exists, and was adjacent to another of Boultbree's coal mines.

North



- A – Old Engine Inn
- B – Stoney Lane, Coleorton
- C – Elverston's Yard
- D – Approx location of Boultbree's Coal Mine

A SYNOPSIS OF THE ROADWAY NETWORK

Little can be said of the ancient roads of Coleorton Parish at this time, except that there must have been a complex network of trackways criss-crossing the waste, and communicating with manorial settlements. These dirt tracks would have served the need of medieval transportation within the immediate vicinity of the settlements, but some improvement had to be made to the through roads, which eventually were taken over by the turnpike trusts.

With the increasing importance of the coal trade and the growing population, the sixteenth century saw the first steps to a gradual improvement of the roads. Legislation of 1555 placed the responsibility for maintenance upon the Parish. Little was done to actually improve the situation, but it at least prevented further decay. Only two kinds of traffic could use the roads – pedestrians and horses. Travellers had to ride on horseback or walk, and although farm carts had been in use in the locality for several centuries, the roads would not have been able to carry these for more than a few months in a year.

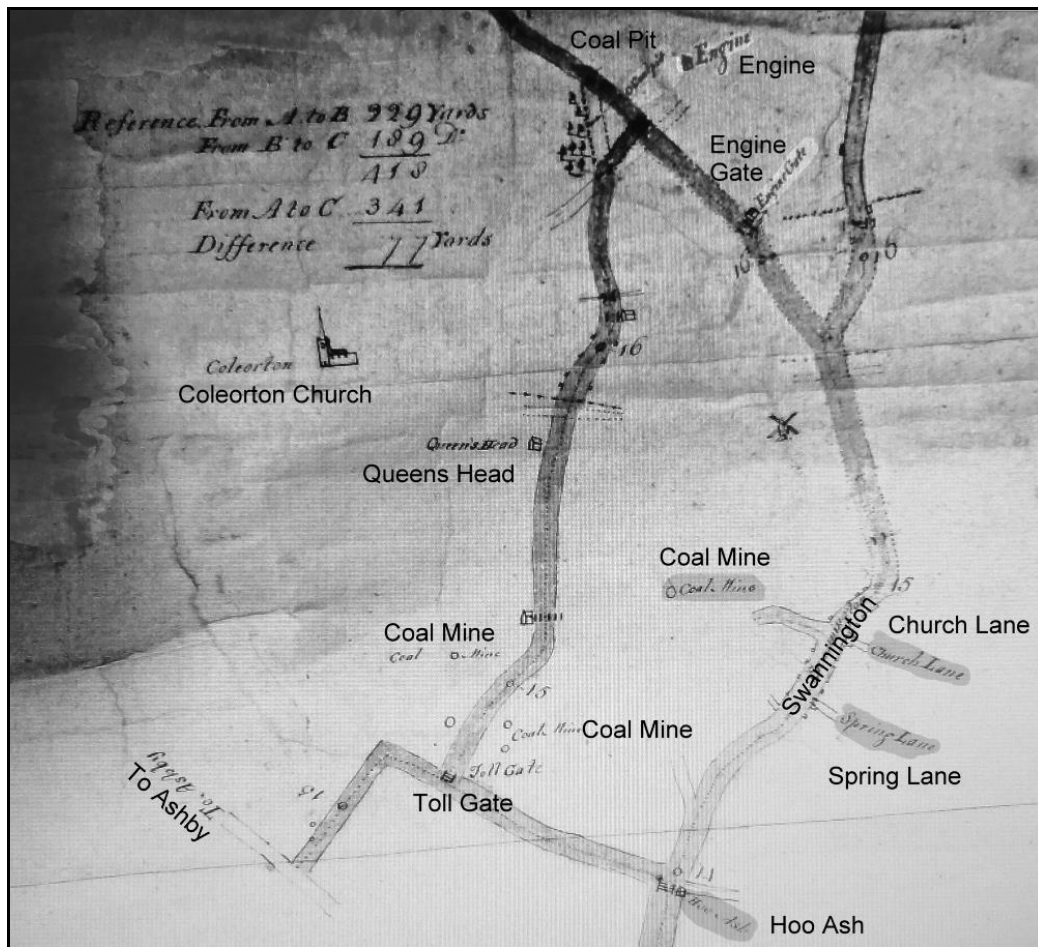
As far as Leicester and Loughborough, coal had to be carried from the pits on the backs of horses and mules (**see the following article on “Hawking by Donkey Pannier”**). This process doubled the pithead price of coal on the Leicester market. The coal road between Ashby and Leicester was known as “Slough Lane”, and no doubt reflected local opinion on its state of repair

Elsewhere, the alternative of river transport was no better. The river Soar and its main tributary, the Wreake, were little more than sluggish streams, of no use for water traffic without artificial improvement. This was attempted in 1634 by Thomas Skipwith, who was granted authority to make the river navigable from its junction with the Trent up to Leicester. Although work was carried out over about five miles at the Northern end, it was abandoned through lack of money, and what was done, had no lasting effect.

The first major improvement on the road system in this area followed on the 1725 Act of Parliament, which established a turnpike trust for the chief road of the County between Loughborough, Leicester and Market Harborough. Similar legislation was passed soon afterward for the Leicester to Ashby road, the Markfield to Whitwick road, and the Ashby to Loughborough road. The system was completed in 1760 by a turnpike from Hinckley to Melbourne Common, with various branches linking it to the two Ashby roads. Surveyors of the time reported that these roads were generally kept in good repair by the use of Charnwood roadstone, but users often complained either that maintenance was inadequate, or that the tolls were too high.

The creation of turnpike trusts in Leicestershire from the 1720s gave rise to another type of map or plan. The trusts were local initiatives which took over the running of an existing stretch of road, and had to be approved by Parliament. The appointed trustees were given the power to collect tolls from travelers over a certain number of years, which would be used to pay for maintenance and to provide a return to their investors.

From 1807, plans of all proposed new turnpikes and alterations to existing turnpikes had to be deposited with the county clerk of the peace, and the deposited plans for Leicestershire are now held by the Record Office for Leicestershire and Rutland. Each shows the proposed roads which crossed the turnpike and their destination, plus buildings, towns and villages along the way, and sometimes also details of landowners or land use. **Please refer to the following map, depicting an area of Coleorton.**



Section through Coleorton for the turnpike road from Hinckley to Melbourne Common (Derbyshire), showing coal mines, pumping engines, public house and a proposed toll gate in the Coleorton area. Courtesy of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, T/Ma/10/2. Date – post 1807

1. The turnpike running north on the left is Coleorton Moor up to where it met the Melbourne turnpike at Newbold.
2. The turnpike on the right, running north is the Hinckley to Melbourne Common turnpike running through Swannington, down Zion Hill, Peggs Green to Newbold and onwards.
3. The Ashby to Loughborough turnpike is only indicated, but not fully shown.
4. The Ashby to Rempstone turnpike is also only indicated, but not fully shown

In 1784, it was brought to the attention of the Hinckley-Melbourne turnpike trustees that loads of coal from the Fenton and Raper coal mine, were illegally passing through the grounds of a Mr. Burton at Swannington, near the Hoo Ash Toll Gate, thereby avoiding the tolls. A strong letter was sent to the colliery owners, since it was suspected that they encouraged these evasions in order to enhance their coal sales. In the following year, the turnpike trustees discovered that toll keepers regularly left their toll gates unlocked at night, and illicit nocturnal coal traffic had grown up. After that, toll keepers failing to lock up at night were dismissed. In December 1822, the Hinckley-Melbourne turnpike trustees raised the toll at Newbold toll gate, which was at the north end of Birch Coppice Wood. This precipitated Sir George Beaumont into building a private road across his land from his colliery to the Ashby-Loughborough turnpike, where rates were lower, so that the carriers would not be deterred from trading with his colliery and driven to the rival Peggs Green concern instead. Realizing they had gone too far, the trustees offered to return to the old rates if Sir George would close his new road, but this offer was rejected.

Before the arrival of canals and railways, all medium and long distance traffic was carried – albeit inefficiently – by the turnpikes, but the construction of the canals and railways reduced the function of the turnpikes to short-haul carrying, particularly in the case of bulky materials such as coal. This is shown in the returns of the Hinckley-Melbourne turnpike for the late 1830's, where income was only half that of the 1790's.

PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE TRANSPORTATION OF COAL THROUGH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE 'SOAR NAVIGATION' AND THE 'CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL'

The years 1778 and 1779 witness a decisive change in the fortunes of the Leicestershire section of the coalfield that had for centuries relied for its prosperity on the market provided by Leicester, Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, Market Harborough and other Leicestershire towns. In 1778, the Soar Navigation was completed as far as Loughborough, whilst in the following year the opening of the Erewash Canal completed the link between the collieries of North Derbyshire / Nottinghamshire and the Leicestershire market. This had the immediate effect of exposing the Leicestershire collieries to fierce competition, accompanied by a dramatic reduction in the price of coal at Leicester and elsewhere. By May 1779, West Hallan coal brought by 30-ton barges in three and a half days, was available at Loughborough Wharf for just over 9s per ton, and by the following August, Denby coal was being sold there for as little as 6s 1d per ton. As many as 60 barges were being loaded per day, with the tonnage amounting to £120 per month. By the end of the year, the Leicestershire collieries supplied only half of Leicester's supply of 30,000 tons per annum, despite reducing their prices by 3s and 4d per ton. Taken unawares by the rapidity and severity of the change, Leicestershire colliery proprietors had no choice other than to reduce the price of their coal, and to join together in opposition to the new competitors. In 1785, Earl Ferrers and the Earl of Moira, plus others, strongly and successfully opposed a proposal to extend the Soar Navigation to Leicester. Their opposition gradually acquired a more positive approach, leading them to consider the linking of their collieries to the Leicester market, using either a branch from the Soar Navigation or one from Joseph Wilkes' proposed Ashby Canal. The promoters of the Soar Navigation extension were eventually able to enlist the support of a sufficient number of Leicestershire owners by adding to their scheme provision for the construction of a branch canal leading from the Soar near Loughborough to Thringstone, where it would be in easy reach of the Coleorton and Swannington collieries. Opponents of the "Charnwood Forest Canal" as it became known, claimed that the Coleorton area sent approximately 13,000 tons of coal to Leicester and 4,000 tons to Melton Mowbray annually, compared to the 12,000 and 8,000 tons contributed by Erewash Valley collieries, and that as it was unlikely that Coleorton coal would be sold for less than Derbyshire coal, demand for it would decline, Supporters of the scheme claimed however, that at least 30,000 tons of coal from Thringstone Wharf and 10,000 tons of lime from Osgathorpe Wharf would pass along the canal, with the price of Coleorton coal falling by almost 50 per cent in Leicester.

Before examining attempts that were made to establish branch canals and tram roads after 1790, a survey of colliery developments in the area after 1778 is necessary. Following the demise of Swannington Colliery in 1761, it was not until 1774 that an interest in the area revived. In that year, three Yorkshire industrialists and merchants made a tentative agreement to lease the Manor of Swannington, excluding the minerals, from the Wyggeston Hospital Trust.

For various reasons, it was not until 1777 that the agreement with the hospital was finalized, the new lessees of the Manor being John Raper of York, Thomas Fenton of Rothwell Haigh, Yorkshire, Henry Walker a grazier of Thurmaston, Henry Burton and William Walker, farmers of Swannington and Thomas Pares (junior) a banker of Leicester. A new colliery was opened at Swannington by John Raper and Thomas Fenton in the following year, and began to participate in trade with Leicester. In 1784, the partners were involved in a lengthy dispute with the Trustees for allowing vehicles passing to and from their colliery across Henry Burtons' land, thereby avoiding the toll-gate at Hoo Ash, where the Hinckley-Melbourne and Ashby-Leicester roads crossed. They were strong supporters of the proposed Charnwood or Forest branch of the Soar navigation, it being agreed that the canal would terminate approximately half a mile to the north of their colliery, and be linked to it by a wagon-way. Their colliery lay to the north of Swannington, mid-way between the village and Thringstone Mill, and from this they were able to work the coal both under the hospital's land and that lying within the Manor of Peggs Green, over which they had secured control. It was probably sunk to work the deep or Nether Coal, and therefore consisted of a single establishment rather than a collection of scattered temporary pits.

Little detailed information on the above colliery has survived, and this is equally true of the group of coal pits worked on Coleorton Moor by the Burslem family. Shortly before his death in 1781, William Burslem had made provision for his eldest son, Godolphin William, and two of his friends, Timothy Clarkson and Charles Pestell of Ashby, to become his executors, and to be responsible for disposing of his estates, coal mines and lime works, using the proceeds to settle his debts outstanding with Isaac Hawkins of Burton, and to divide the residue amongst his three sons and two daughters. After his father's death, Godolphin William in 1786 purchased the Coleorton Estate / Manor named Overton Saucy including the mines for £3, 800, (with the help of a mortgage of £1,500 with William Abney) and further mortgages totalling £2,000. The estate comprised a mansion house, a farm containing 60 acres of enclosed land, 80 acres of open field land and 155 acres of open and enclosed land on Coleorton Moor, 120 cottages on the Moor and 62 acres of coal beneath the open fields. Clearly, the cottages on the Moor were designed primarily to house colliers and thus give some indication of Burslem's Coleorton Colliery. The 300 colliers from Coleorton Moor who had invaded Leicester in 1754 were no doubt from these cottages and others attached to the adjoining Beaumont Estate. G.W. Burslem lived at Burton upon Trent till 1782, but subsequently moved to Ravenstone Hall in order to be closer to his Coleorton estate. He was a strong supporter of both the Ashby and Charnwood Forest Canal projects, seeing them as the only long-term solution to the coalfield's traditional isolation problem. Like Raper and Fenton, he made provision for a wagon-way to link his Coleorton Colliery to Thringstone Wharf, and he also began to make plans for a new colliery closer to the end of the canal. His personal knowledge and interest in the technical aspects of mining were probably slight, but he was greatly assisted in this respect by his steward and agent, Willis Bailey of Coleorton, who latter became an eminent mining surveyor and colliery proprietor.

After 1778, Joseph Boulton, still the leading colliery proprietor in the local area, now had to face rigorous competition from several directions. The establishment of a large new colliery at Swannington coincided with the opening of the Soar Navigation and the resulting fall in coal prices, whilst his position was made more difficult by having to deal with a land owner, Sir George Beaumont, who spent long periods out of the country, leaving his affairs in the hands of his London agent. When the leases of Coleorton and Newbold expired in 1781, Sir George Beaumont endeavoured to increase his profits from the estate by trying to persuade Boulton to agree to pay a royalty of one-eighth of all receipts from coal sales in addition to mine rents. Boulton made a counter proposal that he should continue to pay £300 for the farm and minerals at Coleorton, a reduced rent of £50 for the declining Newbold mine, and royalties of one-twelfth on coal sales up to 6,000 loads per annum, and one-eighth sales in excess of that

amount. Beaumont appeared to be in no hurry to come to terms, but Boulton, impatient to develop his business further, somewhat unwisely proceeded to plan the sinking of a new colliery at Coleorton (thought to be the one referred to earlier in "Coleorton Field"). By the end of 1783, with the new lease still unsigned, he had invested £1,829 14s in the new project, including £412 1s allowed for parts taken from the old Newcomen engine at Newbold. He suggested to Beaumont, that if a new lease was not forthcoming, the latter should reimburse him in full, but that if a satisfactory agreement was concluded, he should pay only for the materials.

The new colliery started to raise coal in 1784, and by April had produced and sold 3,277 loads. During the ensuing decade it proved to be somewhat of a disappointment, its sales averaging only 4,550 loads per annum, if Boulton's figures are to be believed. Newbold Colliery on the other hand, took on a new lease of life, sales averaging 2,669 wagon-loads of best coal and 4,392 cart loads of slack per annum until its closure in 1792. In a subsequent law suit concerning royalties described earlier, Boulton claimed that his total sales never exceeded 17,000 loads in any one year, whilst Beaumont was of the opinion that in some years, total sales amounted to as much as 40,000 loads. Boulton's view of Newbold Colliery in 1781, as an almost exhausted concern certainly appeared suspicious, particularly in view of its continued output, and the fact that the Land Tax Commissioners rated it at £250 in 1790.

Appendix to Chapter 5			
<i>Sales of Coleorton and Newbold Collieries, 1783-1796</i>			
Date	Collieries		
	Coleorton	Newbold	
		Best Coal	Slack
1783/4	3277 ¹	1924 ¹	1825 ²
1784/5	6895	2346	4232
1785/6	4798	2268	4450
1786/7	4369	2068	4095
1787/8	3062	2039	4201
1788/9	4526	2625	5464
1789/90	4490	3627	4474
1790/1	5201	3167	4897
1791/2	2889	5288 ⁴	8085 ⁴
1792/3	4025		
1793/4	3947		
1794/5	5878		
1795/6	836 ³		

¹ Wagon loads, probably containing 1½-1¾ tons (sold in most years at 12s per load).
² Cart loads (sold at 2s 9d to 3s per load).
³ Colliery closed 15 August 1795.
⁴ Sales from April 1791 to September 1792.

Source: PRO C12/255/1.

It may have been in anticipation of an approaching dispute at Coleorton and Newbold, as well as to further his ambitions, that Boulton began to plan the establishment of further collieries in the area. When the proposed line of the Charnwood Forest Canal was surveyed in 1785, recognition was made of his plan to establish a colliery on his land at Thringstone, close to the boundary with Peggs Green. In 1788, a further opportunity arose when Earl Ferrers decided to withdraw from the management of Lount Colliery and the other industrial enterprises located on his Staunton estate. For an annual rent of £315, Boulton was able to lease from him for 21 years, the colliery, a lime works, a smelting house on Staunton Common and 30 acres of land. Boulton was granted full access and mining rights, and the right to extract clay in order to make bricks for the colliery, and to use water from one of his pools to work the pump for the mine works, also to use up to 20 cords of wood per annum from the estate. He was also entitled to use all the existing equipment in the colliery and the lime works on condition that he returned them in good order when the lease expired. The

agreement gave Boulton a monopoly of coal mining throughout Newbold, Lount, Staunton and parts of Coleorton, and during the ensuing years he was able to operate both Lount and Newbold collieries by employing the same companies of colliers, using Lount to do little more than satisfy the requirements of the lime works. He was later accused of deliberately restricting output and selling around 13,500 loads of coal per annum at the inflated price of 12s to 15s per load. Whilst there may have been an element of truth in this, it seems unlikely that he could have maintained such a policy for long in view of the competition provided locally by the collieries of G.W.Burslem and Raper and Fenton at Swannington, and the highly competitive situation in the Leicester area.

When Boulton died around 1790, his collieries and his office of Steward / Land Agent to Lord Beaumont passed to his eldest son Joseph. Both father and son were strong supporters of the Charnwood Forest Canal project, and made arrangements with the Soar Navigation Company for the construction of wagon-ways to their collieries.

Thus, despite the opening of the Soar Navigation, and the strong competition provided by the collieries close to the Erewash Canal, the Leicestershire section of the coalfield continued to thrive in anticipation of the introduction of its own canal network. When the Hon John Byng travelled through the area in 1789, he commented on the numerous coal pits near Coleorton, the badly rutted roads made worse by the passage of coal wagons, and the devastation caused by mining: "*the quantity of coal pits about Staunton Harold is amazing, and the land itself is as black as if the coal lay above the ground*". With the Charnwood Forest Canal branch of the Soar Navigation likely to reach Thringstone, and to be linked to all or most of the collieries by wagon-ways, prospects seemed bright for the industry, with the likelihood of regaining all the ground that had been lost in the Leicester market. The area was sending at least 17,000 tons of coal per annum to Leicester and Melton Mowbray alone and it was estimated that the proposed canal link would increase this to 30,000 tons, despite the competition from the north. Similarly, at Measham and Oakthorpe, Joseph Wilkes remained confident, despite the many setbacks, that the Ashby Canal would shortly be completed, and that branch canals or wagon-ways would be added to link the main waterway to collieries and lime works throughout the area.

THE 'SOAR NAVIGATION' AND THE 'CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL' (FOREST LINE) PROJECTS. A MAP IS INCLUDED AT THE END OF THE ARTICLE.

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 in their scheme, a 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, or Forest Line as it was called, was to begin at Thringstone Bridge, close to the Coleorton and Swannington pits, and was to pass north of Shepshed and Loughborough to join the Leicester Navigation, via a series of locks, at Barrow-On-Soar.

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.

Various bills before Parliament between 1785 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.

The act of 1791 meant a major change to the original proposals, since the vexed question of water rights owned by watermills at Gracedieu, Shepshed 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 Nanpanton near the Priory Hotel, 170 ft. above the Soar. The final route of the Forest Line began at Thringstone Bridge, running north as far as Osgathorpe, before turning sharply south again to pass behind Gracedieu Priory. Here it turned east to run (roughly) along the line of current Ashby Road, before passing under Tickow Lane and coming into Shepshed. From here it continued south east under Ashby Road and the line of the present M1, and on across the site of Longcliffe Goal Course. The canal part of the line ended at Nanpanton, in an unloading wharf just behind "The Priory" pub.

This necessitated horse-drawn tram road connections at each end, one to Loughborough from Nanpanton (marked H on the following 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 (marked D and E on the following map) were two lines each about one mile, 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 (**see following details on these collieries**), and the other to Raper and Fenton's Thringstone Colliery.

The level canal was seven and a half miles long from Nanpanton to Junction House, from where a mile long branch arm took the canal through Osgathorpe to Barrow Hill lime works basin. Land was purchased for the intended tramway from Barrow Hill to the lime works at Cloud Hill, but this part of the tramway was never built.

After delays and financial problems, which were to beset the project right through to the end, and although much work needed to be completed, the Forest Line 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. 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.

Canal details cont'd later.

The Godolphin Burslem and Boulton collieries near the George Inn, Loughborough Rd, Coleorton..... 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 the George Inn. It was drained by a new engine capable of raising 760 gallons of water per minute. It was said, that this, and **Boulton's** new colliery just to the west of the George Inn, were capable of producing a lasting supply to the whole county. As a result of Burslem's dissatisfaction with the new canal when it was opened to traffic in October 1774, 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.

It was soon discovered that three transshipments of coal were necessary in order to reach Loughborough, and that the plan to carry it in railroad trucks all the way was not practical. 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.

Nevertheless, Burslem had solved his immediate problem, and in June 1775, John Gildart, the manager of Thringstone Wharf, reported to the company that 330 tons of 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. However, ten years later he was reputedly working a new colliery at Peggs Green.

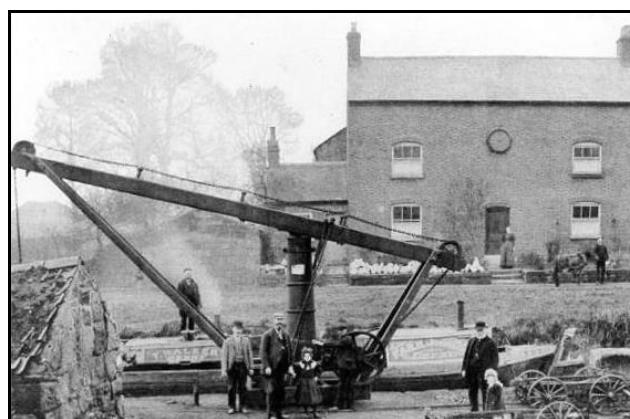
A fully-equipped colliery, designed to work the Swannington coal and situated at Coleorton, was advertised to let in June of the following year, and it is likely that this was his new colliery opened in 1791. Early in 1802, Godolphin Burslem sold the contents of his home Ravenstone Hall and moved to Hampshire, where he died in 1809.

Canal details cont'dCompletion of the header reservoir at Blackbrook was postponed due to further financial difficulties. Exceptionally severe and prolonged frosts in the first 3 months of 1795 had seriously reduced income from the canal.

In May and June 1796, tolls on the Forest Line 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 later 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. 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 Forest line closed in 1804, the Ashby Canal was opened to traffic in the same year. Even though the 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. 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 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.



Loading / unloading of coal barges by crane



A horse drawn canal barge, but in this case carrying lime



Typical coal barges



Photograph of coal barge alongside waggonway



Photograph of coal barges being loaded



The remains of Junction House alongside the Charnwood Forest Canal, at the junction with the Barrow Hill branch south of Osgathorpe. This is the last remaining building of the Charnwood Forest Canal



The now derelict and dried up Charnwood Forest Canal south of Osgathorpe

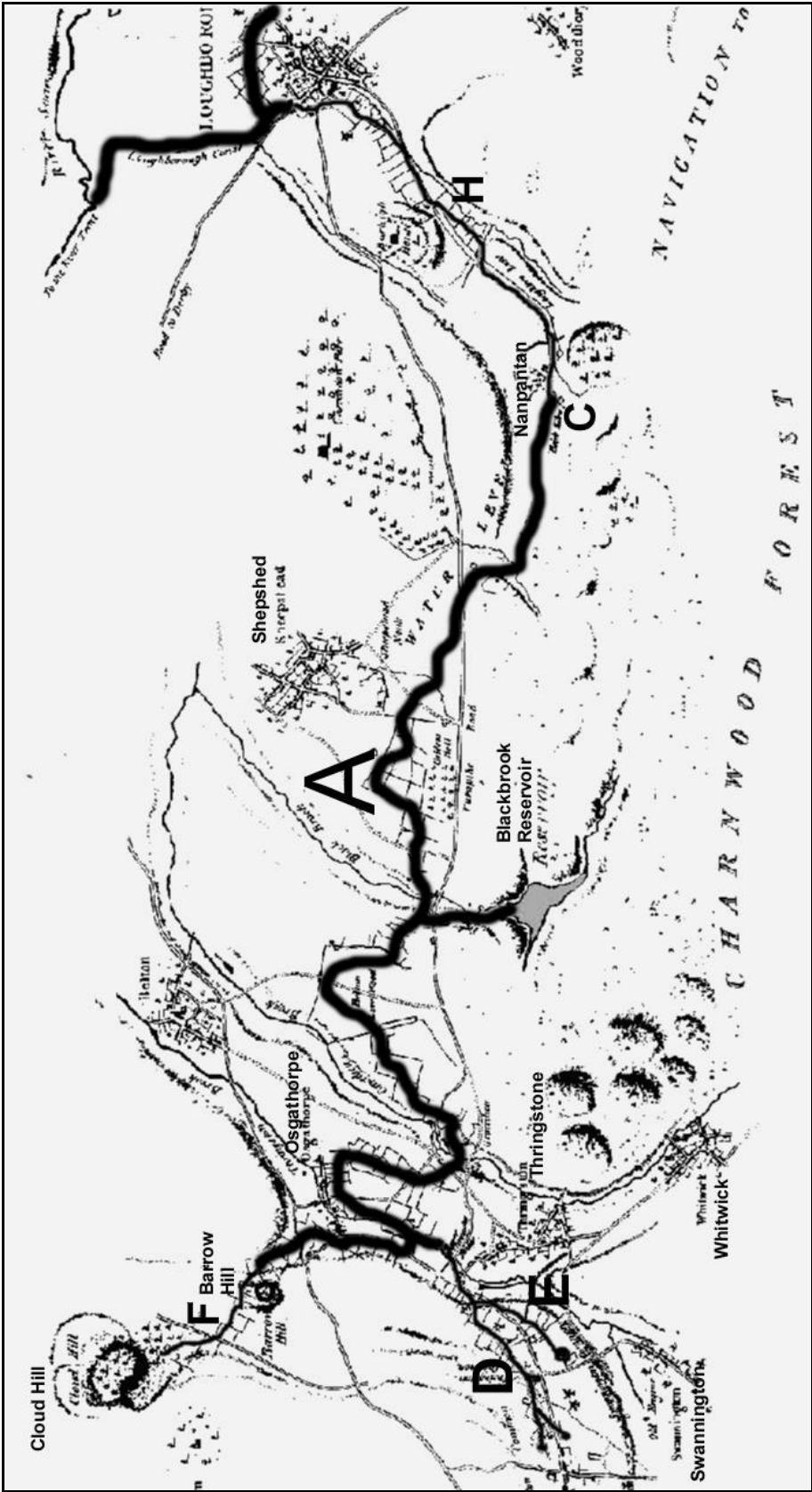


The now derelict Charnwood Forest Canal alongside the entrance to Longcliffe Golf Club in Nanpanton

Key to the following Charnwood Forest Canal map:-

- 1. The central heavy line marked A shows the approx path of the canal and the feeder from Blackbrook Reservoir.**
- 2. A thin black line marked H from the eastern end of the canal shows the path of the tram road linking it with the Navigation at Loughborough.**
- 3. At the western end, a thin black line marked F shows the approximate path of the intended tram road from Barrow Hill to Cloud Hill, but as far as we know, this was never built.**
- 4. The thin black lines marked D and E, indicate the tram roads to the Burslem, Boulton and Raper & Fenton coal mines. See the schematic diagram at the end of Section 4.**

**THE CHARNWOOD FOREST CANAL (FOREST LINE)
ORIGINAL MAP PRODUCED IN 1791 BY THE CANAL'S ENGINEER
CHRISTOPHER STAVELY**



CONTINUATION OF BOULTBEE'S ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING THE DISPUTE WITH SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT DESCRIBED EARLIER

At Staunton Harold and Lount, Boulton continued to operate the lime works and Colliery on the Ferrers' estate which he had been content to run well below capacity in earlier years. In 1793 he offered the lease of the lime works to the Ashby Canal Company for an annual rent of £450, provided he was allowed to supply the twelve kilns with sleck. This was scarcely a tempting proposition, which, not surprisingly, the company turned down. He was still working the sleck pit there in Oct 1799, and in the following year urged the canal company to build a branch line to it. This they refused to do, but the colliery did benefit from the opening of the railway (tramway) from Willesley basin to Cloud Hill lime works in 1802. Sir George Beaumont also owned a colliery at Lount, advertising best coal at 4s 6d per ton, slack for lime works and breweries at 2s 6d per ton, and "coaks at 18d. per qr." In 1799. It was probably during his dispute with Beaumont that Boulton opened up a new colliery, originally proposed in 1785, close to the boundary between the manors of Peggs Green and Thringstone. Boulton's family had owned the manor of Thringstone for many years and his right to the minerals under the commons was confirmed by the act of enclosures drawn up in 1802. The manor of Peggs Green and its minerals had been purchased by him from Messrs Raper and Fenton at the time of their departure to Yorkshire. Thringstone or Peggs Green Colliery was a well-planned works incorporating 120 acres of coal and 70 collier's cottages with extensive gardens built on land taken from the common. It was linked to the Hinckley-Melbourne Turnpike by a private road.

1790 TO 1800 DECADE

The decade after 1790 was, therefore, one of considerable distress for the local mining communities, with the Forest Canal a total failure and the closure of at least three large collieries at Swannington and Coleorton, proprietors found it extremely difficult to complete with the Erewash Valley owners and, with the exception of Beaumont and Boulton, withdrew from the contest. The effect on local colliers must have been traumatic, and it is not surprising that the area experienced several unfortunate events. In 1793 they protested strongly about the high price of coal, and were responsible for a serious disturbance which required speedy action by the local magistrates, and the despatch of a detachment of troops from Nottingham. Subsequently, John Williamson of Thringstone, and Richard Jenks and Samuel Read of Coleorton were committed to Leicester Prison. Rioting broke out at Coleorton again in 1795, which resulted in James Edwards being sentenced in July of that year to seven years transportation for damaging the pumping engine at one of the collieries. The extent of unemployment is not known, but although new collieries were opened by Beaumont and Boulton, some colliers may have moved to other parts of the coalfield or to the expanding mining areas further north.

THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1800 AND 1825

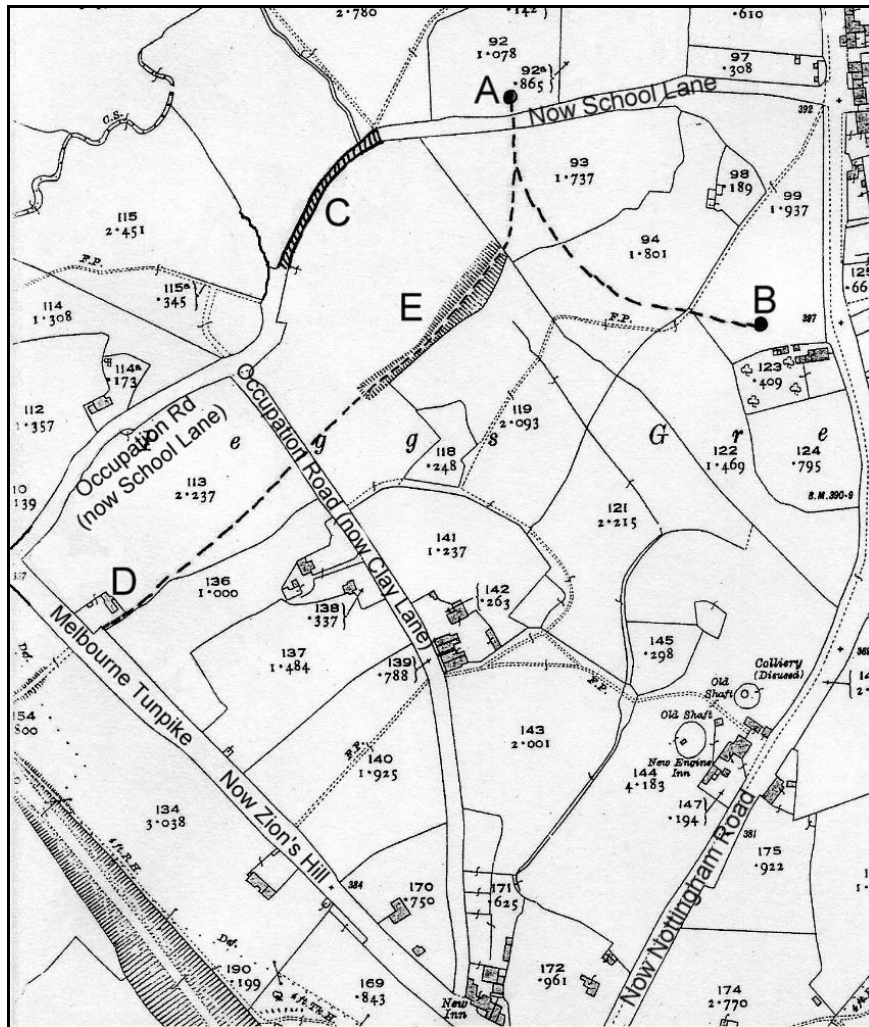
This period was even more depressing, although there is no question of the industry becoming extinct, as has sometimes been suggested. The Leicester market continued to be dominated by the North Derbyshire collieries, many of which leased private wharfs in Leicester. During the early 1820's they were able to command the high price of 17s 6d per ton for coal collected from the wharf and 18s 9d for coal delivered within the town. The seriousness of the situation was often reflected in the effect on turnpike tolls. In July 1808 for example, the Trustees of the Ashby-Leicester Turnpike were recommended "to make what reduction they may deem necessary from the said arrears of certain toll gates, in consequence of the discontinuance of the working of the coal pits". Similarly, toll receipts on the Hinckley-Melbourne Turnpike rose slightly from £776 in 1802 to £915 in 1814, after which they fell to £718 in 1823 and £476 in 1830, by which time the "The Toll of Lime Teams" had become the main source of revenue.

JOHN FAREY 1766-1826 (ENGLISH GEOLOGIST) RECORDED THE FOLLOWING LOCAL PITS WORKING OR RECENTLY CLOSED IN 1810 :-

This confirms the sorry state of the industry as described above.

Alton Grange – closed prior to 1810
Coleorton – east of Coleorton village, working
Heath End / Staunton Harold – ½ mile west of Staunton Harold, closed prior to 1810
Lount New (Sir George Beaumont) - north of Coleorton, working
Lount Old (Earl Ferrers) – north of Coleorton, working
Peggs Green, working
Packington – ¼ mile south west of Packington, closed prior to 1810
Pistern – Smisby, working
Southwood Colliery, closed prior to 1810

LOCAL TRAMWAYS FOR THE TRANSPORTATION OF COAL WITHIN THE MANOR OF PEGGS GREEN – EARLY 19TH CENTURY



The above map is an early representation of the area enclosed between what is now Nottingham Road, Zion's Hill and School Lane. It should be noted however, that in 1836, the upper portion of School Lane was not joined to Nottingham Rd due to the escarpment in that area and School Lane was not joined in the middle

The coal under the Manor of Peggs Green was worked by a small private company of several local residents in the early part of the 19th century, and they constructed a network of tram roads including those shown by dotted lines on the above map. An embankment marked E on the map, was constructed to allow the coal to pass through to the **Melbourne Turnpike** at a weighbridge marked D. These mines were located in the areas marked A & B. The last one to be opened was at A, which is just below where the Griffydam Senior School which was built in 1915 was situated. This has now been converted into a private residence.

The weighbridge was located in the area where "Weighbridge Cottage" currently stands on Zion's Hill. The cross - hatching in the area marked C, shows where the road, now known as School Lane, was not joined up at that time. Horse drawn carts would have been used to transport the coal on the rails at that time. The tram road sketch and information has been taken from a book entitled - "Coalville, the first 75 Years", by Denis Baker, however, it can also be found in "Records of Whitwick Parish" by the Rev. F Mereweather, who was the incumbent at St. George's Church, Swannington.



**Photograph of the embankment as it is in 2013. The tram rails have now gone, but the line of the embankment is highlighted by the white dots.
A section in the middle has been taken out where marked A.
The Griffydam Senior School building is in the distance marked B**



**View on end of the embankment from Clay Lane, Peggs Green direction
in 2013**

Joseph Boulton continued to work his collieries at Lount and Peggs Green until the time of his death in 1806. He died a relatively wealthy man despite the disputes with Sir George Beaumont and the many difficulties encountered after 1790. He left lands and properties at Worthington, Thringstone, Earl Shilton, Peckleton and Belgrave in Leicestershire. Also in Dordon, Whately and Dostill in Warwickshire, plus lands in Northamptonshire together with 100 shares in the Bank of America which had a nominal value of £5,000. The manors of Thringstone and Peggs Green, including coal mines with "the cylinder implements and other utensils therein" passed to his five sons, Joseph, Thomas, John, William and Charles jointly, whilst John alone, received his leasehold colliery and lime works at Staunton Harold and Lount. An attempt may have been made to keep both collieries open, and it was not until 1822 that William Boulton offered for sale his share of the manors and colliery at Peggs Green. When the lease at Lount expired in 1809, it was renewed by James Orme of Sutton Bonnington, Nottinghamshire for a period of 21 years and an annual rent of £350. This entitled him to the privileges previously enjoyed by Boulton and the right to use the new railways or tram roads to the lime works at Ticknall and Cloud Hill. Orme was still working the colliery in 1827 when the Ashby Canal Company agreed to pay him £39 compensation on condition that he refrained from mining a section of land immediately beneath the Cloud Hill railway.

HAWKING OF COAL BY HORSE / DONKEY PANNIER c.1850.

Horses were first used in the coal mining industry to deliver coal on the surface. Paths were too bumpy for carts, so coal was carried on a horse's back in a pannier. As the quality of pathways improved, horses were able to pull carts loaded with coal. However, as we can see from this article that coal was still being transported in some areas by donkey pannier even after roads became suitable for horse and carts, and canals and railroads had been built. The record suggests however, that William Bakewell was only delivering coal around the local district.

There follows an extract from H. Butler Johnson's (Leicestershire historian) publication c.1910. :-

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 lane now named after him. This is Bakewell's Lane which runs from Stoney Lane to Loughborough road and exits near the George Inn. 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 the Smoile**).*

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, miss-called the Aqueduct, under the Coleorton railway, 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.

CONTINUATION OF LOCAL COAL MINING BECOMES DEPENDANT ON SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

With the disappearance of Raper, Fenton, Burslem and the Boulbbees, it was largely left to Sir George Beaumont to keep the coal mining industry alive at Coleorton. Willis Bailey, who had acted as Burslem's agent for many years, is said to have sunk his own pit to the "Main Coal" close to the George Inn, although it is possible that this was a redevelopment of Burslem's earlier colliery. Beaumont certainly kept at least one pit working at Coleorton, and in 1820 he is said to have opened a new colliery there, a shaft sunk to a depth of 300ft with the aid of improved pumping engines. In 1823, he was involved in yet another lengthy dispute with the Trustees of the Hinckley-Melbourne Turnpike because he had made a private road from his colliery to the Rempstone Road, thereby avoiding payment of tolls.

Further evidence of the survival of the industry, is provided by a survey of the Beaumont estates by Edward Knight shortly after the death of Sir George Howland Beaumont 7th Baronet in 1827. This showed that Benjamin Walker's farm at Newbold was in a reasonable state apart from the condition of the fields and fencing around his colliery which suffered from the "unruly conduct of the people at the coal pits". At Lount, Smoile Farm belonging to Thomas and James Walker was in a similar state; they also worked an adjoining colliery, and it was hoped to eventually convert James' house into accommodation for colliers. Throughout Coleorton there existed a chaotic pattern of cottages, small holdings and rights of way and it was considered desirable to invest around £1,000 in the construction of a compact block of colliers' houses close to the colliery so that many of the dilapidated scattered residences could be demolished. The report thus indicates the presence of collieries at Coleorton, Newbold and Lount, at least two of which were operated by tenant farmers on lease from the Beaumont's. Nevertheless, the reduced status of the industry around Swannington and Coleorton was commented on by consumers. In Leicestershire, which had been one of the key areas of production throughout the coalfield's long history, the industry experienced a sudden and almost total collapse after 1795 owing to its failure to establish effective links with its traditional markets. Particularly remarkable was the village of Swannington, whose name had almost been synonymous with coal mining for over five centuries. Following the closure of its colliery in 1798, it was to have to wait for over 50 years before enjoying a brief revival of its traditional activity. Elsewhere, within the sector at Coleorton, Lount and Newbold the industry survived as a pale shadow of its former self. The days when Coleorton Moor and the commons of Swannington, Thringstone and Newbold were dotted with clusters and rows of miners' cottages, and when 300 colliers could be mustered at a moments notice to march to Leicester in support of their cause, was gone forever.

In "The Rise of the British Coal Industry, London, 1932" by J.V.Neff he states the following:-

"The Beaumont's were reckless adventurers, who poured all their own savings which had accumulated over several generations of prosperous landlords into coal pits, and then borrowed until they had strained their credit to the breaking point".

COAL MINING IN THE AREA OF THE SMOILE AND WORTHINGTON ROUGH

Over a long period of time, numerous old mines have been worked in the Smoile / Lount / Newbold area, some of which are referred to in this book. John Priors map of 1777 shown earlier identifies 10 shafts, and of course numerous shafts had been sunk on the “Lounge” site between c.1450 and c.1600 when it was estimated that around 1 Million tons of coal had been removed. Little in the way of records has survived for many of these old mines to make them suitable for inclusion. Due to the fact that no precise locations of the collieries mentioned are available, and the same names were often used for different locations, it can all become rather confusing, and the reader needs to bear this in mind.

Smoile (Coleorton) Colliery

In 1828, Lady Beaumont described Benjamin Walker, rather dismissively, as a “butty collier”, however, he was clearly a man of ability and ambition confirmed by his future involvement in local coal mining. On Oct 11th 1830, he took the lease on Coleorton or more commonly known as Smoile Colliery, and by July 1832 he had become described as a “coal master”, and was arranging to lease 25 cottages in Coleorton, Worthington and Thringstone from Sir George Beaumont.

The colliery was in the area of the Smoile, which is shown on the following map to the left of the letter A.

Walker redeveloped the colliery in anticipation of the new “Coleorton Railway” which features later. New shafts were started in June 1833 prior to the railway being built, and some coal was actually carted to the Leicester & Swannington line. By June 1835 there were three pits, two going down to the Middle Coal and one going down to the Nether Coal. There were 924 yards of heading underground, but work had been delayed by a “swamp” or depression in the Middle Coal seam, which prevented the water draining back to the Engine Shaft, and meant that additional pumping had to be done by hand underground. Without this delay, two further shafts would have been completed, nearer to the termination of the railway, and indeed the whimsy and engine for these shafts had been purchased. In the meanwhile, the coal was being moved northwards underground and then shipped back on the plateway system at the surface at a cost of ½ d per ton, before being conveyed onwards over the Coleorton Railway for 1d per ton.

Another report, this time by Willis Bailey, was completed on June 8th 1835. This says the colliery was working two seams, the Middle and Nether (Lount) Coal, which were 53 and 70 yards deep respectively at the Engine Shaft. Bailey confirmed that Walker was intending to sink two more shafts, one to the Middle and one to the Nether Coal, and that he had made or purchased railway wagons for use over Coleorton Railway.

Bailey’s report revealed the nub of the problem, when he states that “before the passing of the Leicester and Swannington Act”, i.e. in 1830, Derbyshire coal sold for 15s 10d per ton in Leicester, but at the time of writing (1836) this had been cut to 7s per ton. Coal from the Smoile could not be sold profitably in Leicester for less than 9s 10d per ton. It was simply not worth shipping it at this time. A note from Benjamin Walker himself on Feb 15th 1837 says he could put best coal into wagons “at the pit mouth for 6s 8d per ton”, and hard coal 5s 10d per ton. Another set of figures dated December 1837, indicates that it was costing 6s 6d to produce a ton of coal at the pit mouth, and 4s 9½d to ship it into Leicester, giving a total of 11s 3 ½ d, when the going price was just 11s.

In February 1837, there seems to have been an attempt to form a new company to develop the mine. A draft prospectus shows that two new shafts of 80 yards depth were planned (presumably the ones Walker was planning to sink in 1835) and that these would need a pumping engine of about 50 horsepower and a winding engine of 14 horsepower. The prospectus paints a rosy picture of the Colliery’s ability to produce 40,000 tons of coal and 16,000 tons of slack per year, and in theory make a profit of £2,750 a year.

Presumably, over the next couple of years, the price of coal in Leicester did increase to some extent, because a surviving account book for Smoile Colliery, covering the period of April 1839 to March 1840 indicates over 80 customers in the city, including private households, shops and factories.

At some point, Benjamin Walker entered into business with William Worswick in the running of Smoile Colliery which resulted in them both subsequently developing new collieries in Swannington and Coleorton. Worswick was a wealthy property owner, coal merchant and contractor from Leicester, where he also owned the manors and halls of Normanton and Birstall and extensive lands at Thurcaston and Syston.

In the 1840s, the colliery was despatching coal over the Coleorton Railway by horse drawn wagons until it reached Swannington at the rate of 250 tons per month – less than an eighth of the optimistic estimates issued in 1837. The figures were erratic, suggesting production difficulties or problems obtaining an adequate price. Tonnages dwindled away to nothing in the mid 1850s, although at this time 20 or more tons of lime were being despatched each month. There is a record that Walker stopped mining at Smoile c.1853. However the colliery was reopened in 1857 and was working the Nether Lount Coal below the west and south edges of Smoile Wood between 1859 and 1865. At the beginning of 1865, work began in the Roaster or Yard Seam, continuing for the next four years. The colliery sent out modest amounts of coal and lime over the railway until 1867. A note on the plan of the Roaster Coal says “Pit stopped working Jan 27th 1869”.

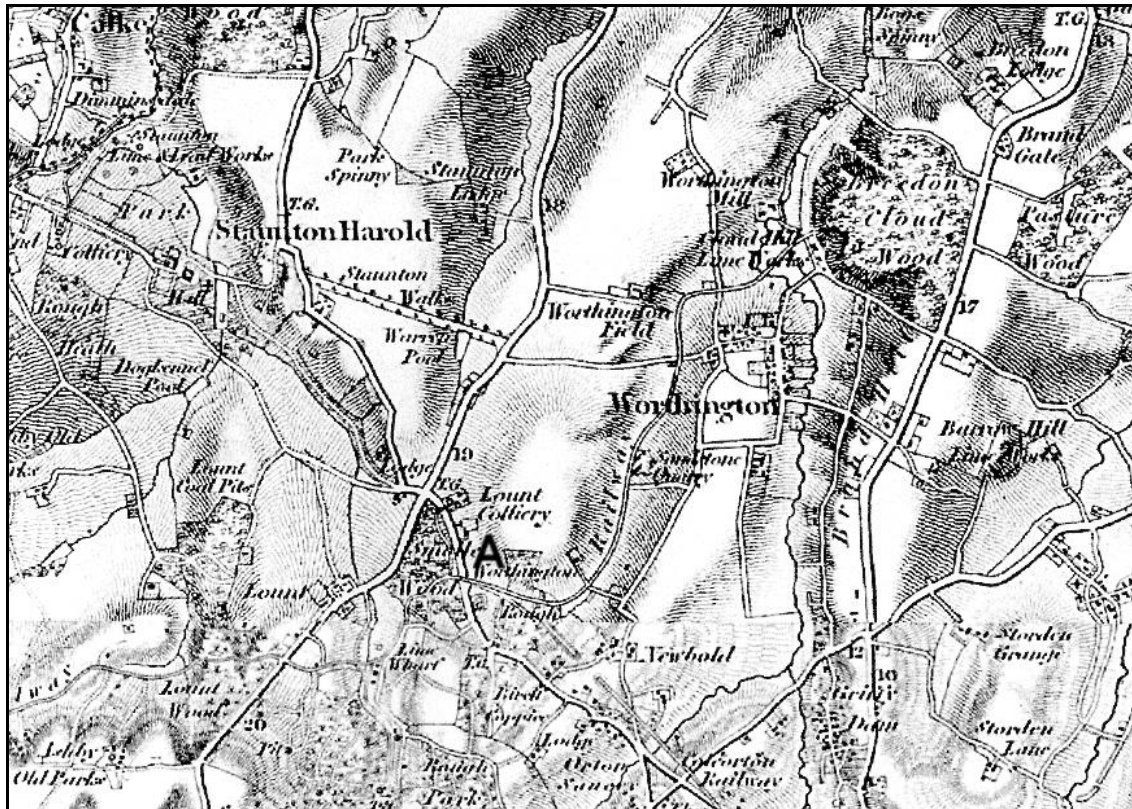
Old Lount Colliery (see following map)

Please note the previous comments under “Continuation of local coal mining becomes dependent on Sir George Beaumont”.

Two other members of the Walker family, Thomas and James, leased Smoile Farm and Old Lount Colliery from Sir George Beaumont. They were both across the road from Smoile Wood, in an area known as “Worthington Rough. The colliery known as Old Lount Colliery is marked **A** on the map, adjacent to the Toll Gate (marked T.G.). **This was not the Lount Colliery on Lord Ferrers estate or any other Lount Colliery referred to.** The farm is the building next to the colliery to the south.

Little more is known about this colliery except that it was being worked around 1827 at the time of Sir George Beaumont’s death, and it was intended to convert James Walkers’ house into accommodation for the colliers.

It is believed that this was the Old Lount Colliery that Worswick and Benjamin Walker became involved with and was finally closed in 1864 prior to the colliery in the Smoile. However, there is a record that the colliery was re-opened in 1900 by John Smith and company but it is not known when it finally closed.



1834 O/S Map. The area of “the Smoile” and “Worthington Rough” is marked A. ‘Old Lount Colliery’ is the building to the north, next to the Toll Gate, and across the road from Smoile Wood. Smoile Farm is immediately to the south.

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY AGE, RESULTING IN THE RE-SURGENCE OF EXISTING COAL MINING IN THE LOCAL AREA, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW COALFIELD.

The ten years from 1824 to 1833 were unquestionably the most significant in the South Derbyshire and Leicestershire Coalfields in that they witnessed the appearance of four totally new mining centres and the construction of the area's first locomotive-powered railway from Leicester to Swannington. If the railway had not been built, it is most unlikely that the exploitation of the concealed coalfield to the south of Swannington would have proceeded so extensively and rapidly. On the other hand, it is likely that the railway would not have been constructed so early, had it not been for some tentative efforts to open-up the new part of the coalfield and to demonstrate its considerable potential.

Credit for bringing the two together must largely go to William Stenson, a colliery proprietor, who was born in Coleorton. Details follow of this important figure in the Leicestershire coalfield, and his contribution to the building of the "Swannington Leicester Railway", which later provided the opportunity for the "Coleorton Railway" to be built and linked up with the Swannington Railway at Swannington Incline.

WILLIAM STENSON
(Mining Engineer, Colliery Developer, Manager and Owner)
b. 1771 – d. Nov 27TH 1861.

A “Native of Coleorton” and subsequently known as “The Father of Coalville Town”.



WILLIAM STENSON - ENGINEER
A Lithographic portrait from a drawing by H. Denham
July 5th 1841
(copyright Leicester County Council Museums)



William Stenson's and his wife Hannah Varnham's vault in the old Hugglescote Baptist cemetery (photograph taken August 2014)

INSCRIPTION ON VAULT

THIS MONUMENT

IS ERECTED TO PERPETUATE THE MEMORY OF

**WILLIAM STENSON OF COALVILLE THE ESTEEMED FOUNDER OF
THE WHITWICK COLLIERY. HE DIED IN PEACE NOVEMBER 27TH 1861**

AGED 90 YEARS

**BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD. ALSO
HANNAH, WIFE OF WILLIAM STENSON OF COALVILLE CENT.**

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE NOVEMBER 12TH 1843

IN THE 66TH YEAR OF HER AGE

IN HER CAPPAICE ? (CAPACITY ?) SHE WAS PLAIN, FRANK AND OBLIGING

AND A WILLING WIFE. A MOST TENDER AND AFFECTIONATE MOTHER

AND EVER KIND AND BENEVOLENT TO THE POOR

TO WHOM HER MEMORY WILL LONG BE DEAR

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH



Oil painting of William Stenson held at “Leicester New Walk Museum and Art Gallery”. Gifted by Mr. J Stenson Turner in 1960. (copyright Leicestershire County Council museums)

William Stenson was clearly a mining engineer of some talent and repute. Only limited and fragmented information about his life is available, but in all of the research material to hand, including genealogy information from his descendants, **he is accepted as being born in Coleorton**. William was a non-conformist, and he was buried in the old Baptist cemetery at Hugglescote near Coalville, having died at his home in Coalville on Nov 27th 1861.

The following information regarding William Stenson's marriage and children has been put together from various descendants' genealogy information on the internet, **but the facts cannot be guaranteed by the writer of course**. William Stenson was born in Coleorton c.1771, and he married Hannah Varnham in Coleorton on July 25th 1796. She was born on Feb 22nd 1777 in Coleorton, and died on Nov 12th 1843 in Heather, Leicestershire. Her parents were Thomas Varnham and Rebecca Varnham (nee. Bonser).

William and Hannah are recording on descendants genealogy websites as having had the following children:-

Rebecca Stenson b.1797 Coleorton, d. March 1873 Coalville, Leicestershire.
Ann Stenson b.1798
John Stenson b. circa.1799
William Joseph Stenson b.1800 in Thringstone, Leicestershire d.1851 Birmingham
Charlotte Stenson b.1801
Hannah Stenson b.1803 Shipley, Derbyshire, d. May 3rd 1870 Coalville, Leics.
Thomas Alexander Stenson b.1804, Derbyshire, d.1867 Coleford, Gloucestershire.

William (Towndrow ?) Stenson b.1807, Shipley, Derbyshire, d. Feb 9th 1870, Coalville, Leics
Selina Stenson b.circa 1808 Riddington, Derbys d. circa.1889 Ashby-De-La-Zouch, Leics.
John Forester Stenson b.1811 d.1863.
Caroline Stenson b. circa.1813 Coleford, Gloucestershire, d. Oct 12th 1862 Donnington-Le-Heath, Leicestershire

Colin Owen's book suggests that William Stenson trained as an engineer in the North East coalfields, but no proof of this has been found by the writer. There is, however, good reason to think that in the early 1800's, he was working for David Mushet who had moved from Scotland to become manager of the Alfreton Ironworks in 1805 in Derbyshire. By 1808 Mushet was involved in the design and supervision of a major rebuilding of the "Whitecliffe Ironworks" near Coleford, Gloucestershire, having been approached by Thomas Halford, a wealthy investor from London to carry out this work. These thoughts are based on the fact that in 1809, William Stenson was working as a "mine bailiff" at Bixslade near Coleford, Gloucestershire and employed by Thomas Halford and David Mushet. This implies that Stenson was working for Mushet in Alfreton and was invited to work in their coal mining venture there. In a letter dated Sept 23rd 1809 from Thomas Halford to Mushet, he states..."*would not Derbyshire people proceed with more activity at Bixslade than our foresters*". In 1814, Stenson was resident in Coleford, where he leased "Mill Cottage" from George Dew, and there is a record of a schedule of deeds for this property made out to William Stenson by the solicitors in 1821. **William's daughter Caroline was born in Coleford in 1815.**

In 1816, a William Stenson of Coleford, Gloucestershire was granted a patent for an "Improved Engine", this is listed in "A Descriptive History of The Steam Engine" by Robert Stuart.

In Volume 19 of Parliamentary papers, House of Commons & Command, it records that William Stenson and Samuel Hewlett were awarded a license on Nov 25th 1817 to erect and continue 2 steam engines to be called "Old Mill Engines" at the "No coal and Church way coal veins" for a period of 31 Years from Michaelmas 1817.

In 1818, Stenson became a "coal master", when a colliery was opened in Bixslade in partnership with Arnold and William Willis Bailey of Coleorton. Willis Bailey was a mining surveyor of some repute in Coleorton and the locality, and is mentioned several times in this series of books. Bailey probably knew Stenson, having both spent their childhood in Coleorton, and in the partnership articles he described Stenson as a good friend.

There is evidence that William Stenson was active in the Heanor, Derbyshire area prior to 1820, even though he was apparently still resident, or kept his house in Coleford. The Derby Mercury of Oct 4th 1820 gives details of a "festival" at the opening of a new coal mine in Shipley, Derbyshire owned by E. M Mundy Esq. - "*A noble steam engine of 120 horse power, constructed under the direction of Mr. Stenson, now wields its ponderous limbs on the spot in mighty aid of manly labour.*" *At the party (where they got through 400 gallons of ale), "Mr. Stenson the Engineer, was chaired."* In 1823, he was requested by the Rev. Whinfield to sink another mine in the Heanor, Derbyshire area with a view to taking out previously waterlogged coal, but following disputes about boundaries etc., he subsequently gave up his interests.

In the early 1820's, William was active in the local area, and carried out trial borings into previously unexplored coal reserves at Long Lane, which was a track from Whitwick. William Stenson established what was to eventually become Whitwick Colliery c.1826, and in 1827 the "Leicester Chronicle" reported that two shafts had reached a depth of 26 yards. In 1824, it was initially known as "Long Lane Colliery" but then became Stenson & Co., and was operated / owned by James Whetstone and William Stenson.

William Stenson was in his late 50s in April 1827, when he entered into partnership with James Whetstone of Dudley, Staffordshire and Samuel Smith-Harris, a coal merchant of Leicester, as colliery owners to form "Stenson & Co". A contribution of £2,700 of initial capital was made in the ratio of three ninths for William Stenson, four for James Whetstone and two for Samuel Smith-Harris. James Whetstone then sold two of his shares to his nephew Joseph Whetstone, who was a yarn spinner in Leicester. Stenson agreed to live close to, and manage the colliery for a salary of £200 per annum, plus a percentage of between 10% and 15% of the profits depending on the output.

It is worth mentioning at this point that no actual proof has been found that William Stenson was related to the business people and land owners in Whitwick named Stinson, although much has been written to suggest that was the case.

The land on which the colliery was first sunk, was owned by a wealthy hosier from Coleorton named William Sherwin, who had become the sole surviving trustee of the will of John Bonnet of Whitwick who had died in 1823. The deeds to this land showed that in 1808 a Samuel Towndrow of Leicester had interest in these lands, and a further indenture, dated 1816, shews Edward Towndrow as a party to a transaction concerning the land. William Stenson had a son with the middle name Towndrow, which presumably indicates that William Stenson had some involvement in the purchase or lease of this land on which the colliery was sunk. In January 1833, he did in fact purchase the Bonnet lands for £1,590, through a mortgage funded by William Sherwin, for which he charged Stenson £1,100 to do so. The mineral rights, however, still remained in the ownership of William Sherwin as he was trustee of the Bonnet will.

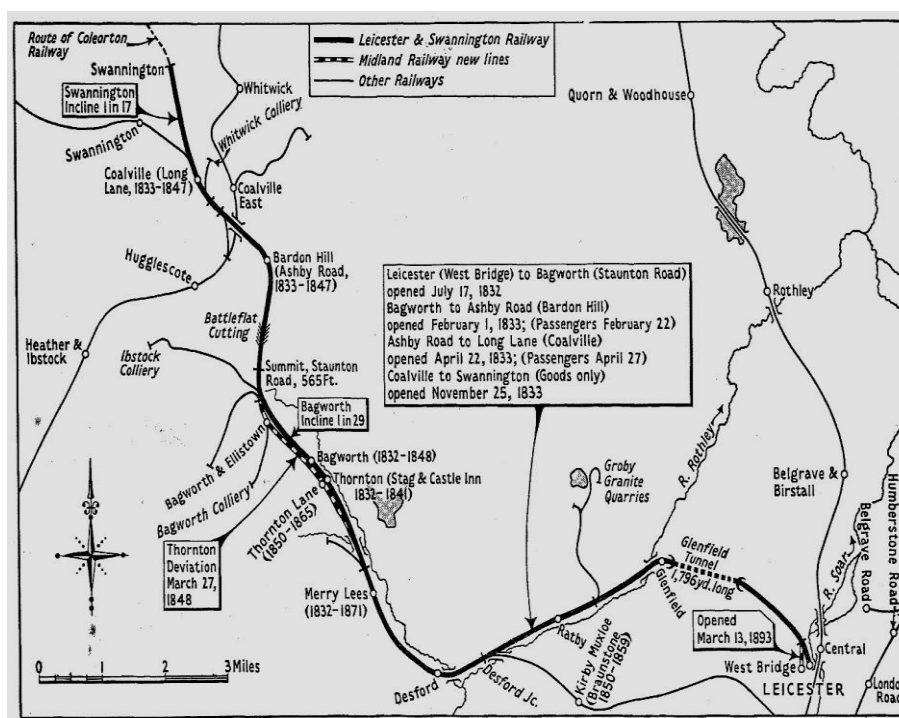
Further leases were purchased in the 1830's. In 1832, 15 acres (including mineral rights) near to the "Red House" and adjoining Long Lane were leased from Thomas Stinson of Whitwick for 31 years at an annual rent of £100 per acre, plus £4 per acre for any surface land used or damaged by the mining. In 1832, 30 acres were leased near the "Red House" from William Sherwin of Coleorton for 40 years at a rate of £160 per acre for all coal not exceeding 180 yards in depth, and a further £20 for coal below this level. Early in the following year, Sherwin agreed to sell the partners 30 acres of coal under Whitwick Waste for £1,590, while a further 160 acres were leased from Messrs Peake and Chapman. **Stenson apparently became stretched financially and was forced to sell shares in order to meet his share of the required company capital, and eventually Joseph Whetstone became the single most powerful partner in the colliery company.**

By April 1828, the "Minge" seam, 3ft 6ins thick, had been reached at Whitwick, some 100 yards below ground, and later that month, a waggon laden with Whitwick coal was drawn about Leicester, preceded by a band. In May 1834, the main coal seam was reached at a depth of 780 feet, and great celebrations were held at the "Railway Hotel" on Long Lane. This heralded the official opening of Whitwick Colliery, and it was reported that 50 gentlemen dined, and 200 colliers ate roast beef and plum pudding, with due allowance of ale. The celebrations were further enlivened by music and cannons! In support of the above success, an agreement was made with Samuel Bonnet of Whitwick in 1835 where he agreed to sell Whitwick Colliery Company 140 acres of coal below the former open fields of Whitwick for £1,350. This purchase basically completed the first phase of the company's development, for which they had secured possession of nearly 700 acres of land.

Soon after founding the Whitwick Colliery Co, and during a visit to the North East of England, Stenson saw the new Stockton and Darlington Railway. He immediately realised the potential in the Whitwick area for this revolutionary mode of transport to take coal to Leicester. He therefore contacted George Stephenson with his proposal, who invested £2,500 in the enterprise, and Stephenson's son Robert, was appointed the railway's engineer. Robert Stephenson and Thomas Miles subsequently surveyed the route of the railway, and presented their findings to the railway promoters at the Bell Hotel, Leicester on June 24th 1829. Following this, the "Swannington and Leicester Railway Company" was founded.

The railway eventually reached Long Lane by 1833, and enabled Whitwick coal to be sold at a profit in Leicester. On the 22nd of April 1833, the first coal train to run from Whitwick Colliery,

arrived safely at Leicester. See the following map for further details of the railway. The building of the “Leicester and Swannington Railway” was followed by the construction of the “**Coleorton Railway**”, which joined it at the incline in Swannington. The “**Coleorton Railway**” features in a later article.



Route of “Leicester and Swannington Railway”.

Platforms for Railway Stations were not provided in those days, and nearby Inns were often used for railway business. At Long Lane, the “Railway Hotel” served this purpose. A local businessman and historian Edgar Hawthorn recorded in the 1950’s, that a room to the left of the front entrance was used for the issuing of tickets, whilst a bell fixed behind the front door gave warning of an approaching train to intending passengers. This arrangement lasted till 1848 when the “L&S Railway” was sold to “The Midland Railway”, and a new station named “Coalville” was built.

It was thought that Coalville was named after William Stenson’s house named “Coalville House” (described later) but the following evidence certainly discounts that theory:-

Examples of records found of the name Coalville first being used are:-

- An advertisement in the Leicester Chronicle dated March 4th 1836 – “*All trains from Coal-Ville or Long Lane would now convey passengers throughout the summer*”.
- In the Leicester Chronicle dated the 4th and 19th February 1836 a wedding between John Stenson and Elizabeth, daughter of James Stephenson at Coalville is reported, and also an advertisement for the sale of a bakery near to the “Red House” in Coalville.
- In the Leicester Chronicle dated 16th November 1833 – *Owing to the traffic which has been produced by the Railway and New Collieries on Whitwick Waste, land which twenty years ago would not have fetched £20 per acre, is now selling in lots at £400 to £500 per acre, for building upon. The high chimneys, and numerous erections upon the spot, give the neighbourhood quite an improved appearance. We hear it is intended to call this new colony “COALVILLE” – an appropriate name. The area referred to, is undoubtedly the Collier’s Cottages referred to in “Coalville Place” described below.*

Even though William Stenson was having difficulty in meeting his existing financial responsibilities, he continued to operate independently of his colliery partners in the development of land in the fledgling town of Coalville. In 1839, William Sherwin's son, William Jnr., conveyed him twenty seven perches of land, which was to become the site of "Club Row", "Stone Row" and Mammoth Street in Coalville Place. This area was situated between Whitwick Colliery and Snibston No.1 Colliery, and all these streets were recorded in the 1851 Census of the Coalville Ecclesiastical district. Stenson profited by selling off individual plots of the land to developers who built on the plots, and then let the houses to tenants, who were mostly miners working at Whitwick Colliery Co. James Cort, an ironmonger of Leicester, and John Field, a shopkeeper of Whitwick, were typical of the trader and merchant class who brought plots from Stenson.

In 1841, following the poor financial situation of Thomas Cooper of Thornton, who had large land holdings in Hugglescote Parish, he was forced by his creditors to sell a large parcel of land fronting Long Lane which totaled over eight acres. Stenson obtained a further mortgage of £500 towards the purchase price of £600. The mortgage on this occasion was provided by his old associate in Coleford, Thomas Halford of Leicester. This mortgage was not paid off till August 1860, presumably from the settlement obtained on his retirement from Whitwick Colliery Co. This land, which then formed part of the main street of Coalville during the 1860s, was later sold as prime building plots as directed in Stenson's will.

In 1852, it was reported to the trustees of "Wyggeston Hospital", a charitable institution which owned land in the Swannington area, that about 575 acres of the Main Coal had been leased to William Stenson, which again confirms his willingness to go it alone.

William Stenson was clearly a man of some standing in the coal mining industry, and appeared to have been well off financially, although the aforementioned does not always bear that out. In 1860, Stenson, now in his ninetieth year, and house bound and infirm, retired from the colliery company partnership, and was paid a sum of £6,750 for his share in the estate and interest of land in Stenson & Co., and Whitwick Colliery Company. In addition, he was to receive one ton of coal per week delivered to his house. William Stenson was a member of the "North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers" (NEIMME), although the date of his actual election is not recorded. He appears in their lists until c.1860. when he retired from Whitwick Colliery.

Following William Stenson's development of Whitwick Colliery, George Stephenson saw the potential for mining in the area, and Snibston No.1 and No.2 mines were sunk, which is another story.

William Stenson is rightly credited with initiating the birth of the nearby mining and industrial town of Coalville, which developed around these local mines, and which he lived to see. He was later to become known as "The Father of Coalville Town". The "Trade Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland" 1846 by F.White, states that "*Colliery-owners such as Whetstone and Stenson (Whitwick) and the Stephensons (Snibstone) contributed towards the erection and upkeep of Methodist chapels and schools*", presumably in the well founded belief that Methodist teaching propounded the virtues of honesty, conscientiousness and sobriety.

William Stenson built his own home on land next to where the Council Offices on London Road now stand. This reportedly had a stone plaque on the front with the name "Coalville House" carved in it. Unfortunately, the house was demolished in the 1950's. In 1999, the plaque shown below was unveiled on London Road, Coalville at the site of "Coalville House" in William Stenson's memory, by his family.



The Plaque states :-

Site of Coalville House
 1770-1861 (*born / died*)
 Here Lived
 William Stenson
 Mining Engineer
 Founder of Whitwick Colliery
 And
 Father Of Coalville Town
 Erected in Loving Memory
 By His family
 July 1999

According to “The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers records”, his son, William Stenson Jnr., was elected to the NEIMME on Aug 5th 1853. Both father and son appear together in the NEIMME listings until c.1860, when William Snr. retired, and his son took over as manager at Whitwick Colliery. William Stenson Jnr., died in Coalville in 1870. He clearly inherited his father’s engineering talents, as it was recorded in the July 24th 1857 edition of “The London Gazette”, that William Stenson Jnr., of Whitwick Colliery, mining engineer, was granted a patent (No. 1182) on May 27th 1854 for “Improvements in Steam Engine Valves”.

The Loughborough Monitor of the day described William Stenson as follows on his retirement.....“A master warmly respected by his numerous workmen; and although strict and apparently occasionally harsh in his demeanor, he was at all times a sincere friend of the working man”.

William Stenson died sixteen months following his retirement. On Nov 27th 1861, he died at his house in Coalville, the town which he had been so instrumental in founding.

As a final tribute to this great man, the Loughborough Monitor published the following obituary:-

The whole country knows that Mr. Stenson was the originator of Whitwick Colliery many years ago, what he made it, and how celebrated he left it; and thousands have, through him been provided with daily bread, and thousands more to this moment continue to enjoy a warm fireside.

No man can question but what he was the founder of Coalville, or that Whitwick, directly or indirectly, through him has grown into importance and profited greatly.

At length, full of years, he was called away, and this great man, in common with all others had to obey the summons. On Wednesday week a solemn paraphernalia stood before his door, the house which once knew him, knew him no more, and the mournful cavalcade, consisting of the hearse containing the body, eight morning coaches containing his family, his grandchildren, Joseph Whetstone of Leicester, one of his respected partners, with a few friends and long procession of coal miners, and the tradesmen of Coalville, slowly and sadly wended their way to Hugglescote, where he was interred in the vault that had received his wife 18 years ago. The deceased for several years had been a rigid adherent to the doctrines of Calvin, and was instrumental in rearing a chapel at Coalville, in which the gospel continues to be preached. It provides so much satisfaction to find that the aged deceased was respected for the firmness and consistent views he professed, combined with a sense of his own utter unworthiness and unbated trust in the Saviour who sustained him in his dying hours.

Rev. Mr. Foreman, in the evening preached the funeral Surmon, the Baptists kindly lent the use of their Chapel, in order to accommodate the very numerous congregation. The preacher ably discharged his last office for him. To say the deceased had no faults or failing would be a mistake; both sides were fully expatiated on; not a word of exaggeration or suppression relating to his character was supplied or omitted, and the congregation were satisfied with the impartiality of the oration.

In concluding our observation we can only hope that many men may still be raised up to serve their day and generation as well and as faithfully as Mr. Stenson has done.

THE CHILD EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION 1842 (REF WILLIAM STENSON)

One might assume that by this time, the working conditions in coal mines had improved considerably, however, much to the contrary, as the following has been included to give the reader an appreciation of just how diabolical conditions were.

A "Children's Employment Commission" was established in 1842, and the following extract is taken from a report by James Mitchell, Esq., on the employment of children and young persons in the mines of the Warwickshire and Leicestershire coal-fields, and on the state, condition and treatment of such children and young persons. The following text and illustration are taken from the report:-

The following questions were put to William Stenson (No.80):-

You are an engineer and have the management of the Whitwick colliery? - Yes.
Having read the evidence of Michael Parker respecting the Snibston colliery, will you be so good as to state if the same will apply to your colliery? - To a considerable degree the same. We have 110 boys under 10. We support a day-school, to which the children under 10 go, and we have a Sunday-School also. Men who act together as butties (similar to agents who employ several men to whom the men are responsible) get great wages, as much as 28s. a week. We do not put the boys to push or draw the trains. We employ horses and asses. We do not use iron chains but flat ropes, which we consider much safer. Ropes will tell a tale before breaking. Our people begin work about seven, and leave about seven at night. In other respects, the description of Mr. Parker will apply to us.

The following questions were put to Michael Parker (No.77) of Snibston Colliery:-

What occupation do you follow? - Ground bailiff to the Snibston Collieries.
At what age do children commence going down the pits? - Some at seven and all ages afterwards.
How are boys under 10 employed? - Opening doors, sweeping railroads, driving ponies and asses, according to a boys activities.
When do they begin to fill skips? - About 18.
Why do they not go to this work sooner? - Our coal is all in large pieces, and they are not equal to the work.
Are other boys employed at other employment? - Some work at what is called putting the coal, that is pushing and drawing the coal from the face of the work to the crane at the horse-way. Two boys are able to draw a train, or the one draws and the other pushes. A large basket is put on the train and the basket is filled. It will hold about seven cwt.
When do they take the pick in hand to dig the coal? - About 20, but some much sooner if very active. Our coal is very hard and some young people are not capable of doing it.
Do the baskets when once loaded go all the way to the shaft, and afterwards are they lifted up without being emptied? - When the trains arrive at the horse way, the baskets are lifted up by a crane and put on the great horse-wagon and then are conveyed to the foot of the shaft.
Do the boys enjoy good health? - Exceedingly good.
To what age can a man hold out to work? - Some work well at 60 years, but some are knocked up at 50 and 45. 50 may be the average.
What is the cause of a man being knocked up as early as 50? - The severe labour, and on some constitutions the bad air takes considerable effect.
Are the mines much exposed to bad air? - Only at chance times. The wind is carried through the mines.
What are the hours of work? - The holers (shot firers?) go down at two in the morning, and return about two or three in the afternoon. The others begin to go down about half-an-hour before six and are ready by six to go to work. They finish at six and take half-an-hour to come up.
How many go down together and come up together? - About four men, and if all boys, five or six. They go in the basket. We have had no accidents in our pits going up and down.
To what do you attribute freedom from accidents? - To have good tackling and taking care. There is a man whose duty is to see the boys safe in the skips coming up and that there

are no more in numbers than four men, or more than five or six boys. They are particular to have a steady man at the engine.

What precautions do you take against fire-damp or choke damp? - Strong ventilation.

What time do the men take their meals? - The engine stops about half-an-hour at one o'clock, then the people all rest.

What are the wages of the fillers? - 3s. a day, no beer and the company allows 10 cwt. or 12 cwt. of coals in the month and the men have free cottages and gardens or a very small rent of 1s. a month.

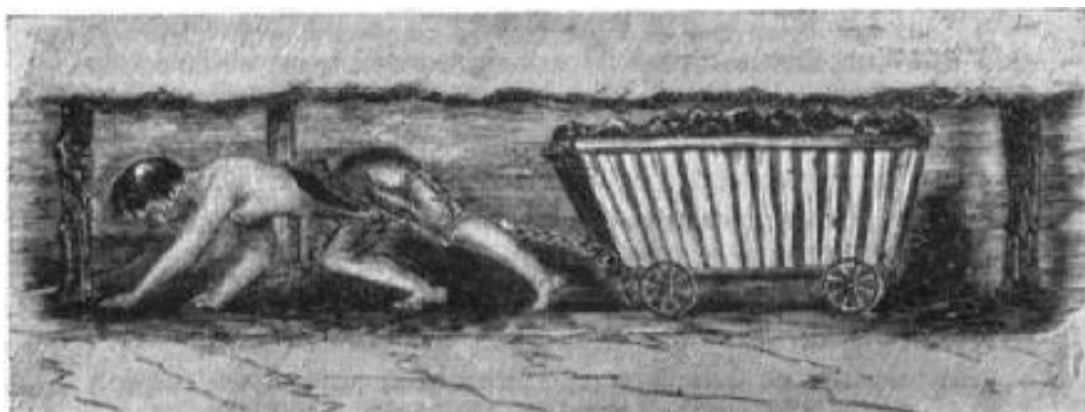
Are they often out of employment? - Some time in the summer when there is a small demand for coals.

Are the people tractable, and is there a good feeling between masters and men? All quite friendly.

Do the people attend public worship? - Most of them do.

Do the children go to school? - They in general go to day-schools, and all go to Sunday-Schools. Mostly all learn to read and many to write.

Have they a Field-Club? - Yes. They pay 8d. a-month and receive medical attendance and 7s. a-week when sick. The boys pay 4d. a month, and receive 3s. 6d. a-week when sick. If the fund falls short the company makes it good. There are few accidents from the falls of stone or coal from the roof. We have not had any such for years past.



A girl draws along a truck load of coal by means of a girdle and chain. "The beast of Burden" is naked, there are no rails for the truck and some of the passages are no more than 16 to 20 inches high

COLEORTON RAILWAY

Sir George Howland Willoughby Beaumont, 8th Baronet, was responsible for the promoting, building, and a substantial part of financing the “Coleorton Railway”, and also for the promoting of the “Coleorton Railway Act“, passed by Parliament on June 10th 1833, which allowed the railway to be operated. It appears that most of the land on which it was built was owned by Sir George, so his contribution to the cost would have been more than what it appears. The total money raised was apparently £15,240, of which Sir George contributed £5,500 (36%). He held 109 of the 340, £50 shares, and was the major shareholder. **The primary purpose of the railway, was to serve Beaumont’s collieries in the Peggs Green and Coleorton areas, however, other key people like the owner of Cloud Hill Lime Quarry and Lord Ferrers with his mining and quarrying interests would have been involved.**

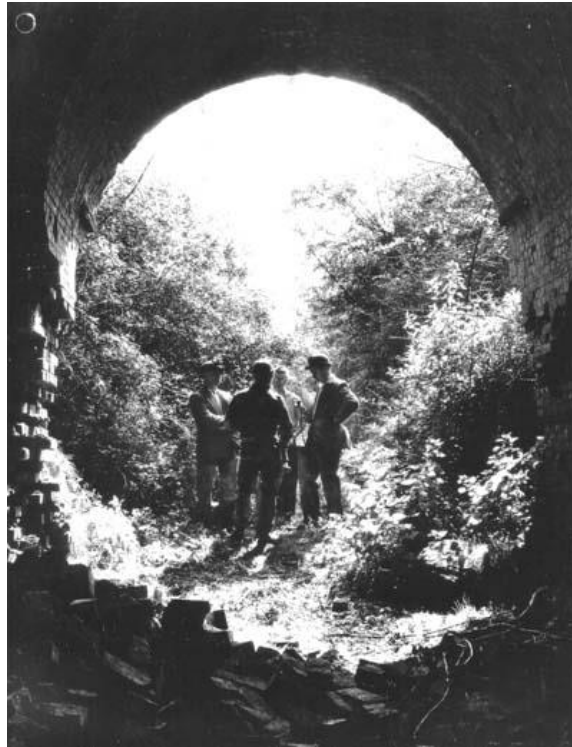
Sir George had seen the Leicester & Swannington Railway project as containing both potential and threat. Yes, it would bring the new railway network into the Leicestershire coalfield, but it would stop short of serving his collieries. Beaumont was fairly new to the area, having inherited the estate in 1827 (**see the book entitled “A History of Coleorton and the Locality” by Samuel T Stewart**). He had previously lived in Surrey, and it seemed that he did not know, or was more likely misled by his agents, about the extent to which the Coleorton coal reserves had already been mined. However, he still had inherited wealth and perhaps some political influence, as his father, the 7th Baronet had been MP for Bere Alston in Devon.

Before the Bill was presented to Parliament in March 1830, Sir George spoke to a number of MPs asking them to oppose the line unless it extended to serve Coleorton too. On behalf of the Leicester and Swannington promoters, Sir Charles Hastings and Mr Keck responded to the danger of this threat. They agreed with Sir George.....” *to render you every assistance in their power to enable you to communicate by a Branch to the main line of the Railway, and that in the case of your being compelled to apply to Parliament to effect that objective, that the expenses to be thereby incurred, should be repaid to you out of the tonnages which might become payable for Coals and other minerals conveyed from your works...*”. On the last day of March 1830, the Coleorton agreement was confirmed, and on June 10th 1833 the Leicester & Swannington Railway obtained its Act.

Sir George had not managed to persuade the promoters to build his line, but he had at least ensured that legal costs associated with it would be refunded to him. In fact, the L & S Railway Company was rather shrewd in all its dealings, only actually paying for two (Bagworth and North Bridge) of the six branches which brought additional traffic over its route in the coming decade. The main line from Leicester to Bardon and Bagworth Colliery was completed in two years, and was officially opened on July 24th 1832. By 1833, it had reached Long Lane, Whitwick, and was soon extended to the 1 in 17 Swannington Incline.

George Stephenson reported to the Board on his survey of the extension beyond Swannington, including levels. Samuel Smith Harris later stated that these included inclined planes and a branch to Cloud Hill Lime works. In August, Sir George Crewe requested that any such extension should serve his Ticknall Lime works. At the end of September, Sir George expressed a willingness to promote a railway from the Coleorton and Peggs Green Collieries, under the terms of the Coleorton Agreement, and the Coleorton Railway project was officially announced in the Leicester Chronicle of November 20th 1832. During the winter of 1832/3, Samuel Harris (an architect and surveyor, as well as being a partner in Whitwick Colliery) drew a section of the route. William Dicken was then appointed engineer and finally drew up the plans for submission to Parliament. The “Leicester and Swannington Railway Co” actually supported the project, by paying the costs for processing the Act of Parliament, and also supplied technical knowledge in building the railway.

The contractors for the railway were Messrs Nowell and Son, and one of their first major tasks was to build a 480 yard long tunnel at Peggs Green, which the line from the bottom of the incline passed through.



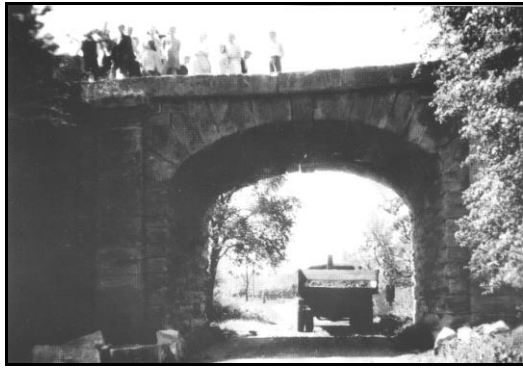
The entrance to the circular brick tunnel at St. George's Hill, Swannington, which has now been filled in

From the estate records, we know that "Coleorton Brickyard", managed by Thomas Thirlby at that time, supplied some 868,000 bricks between August 1833 and February 1835, mainly for the building of the Peggs Green tunnel. The price for these bricks started at 22 shillings per thousand, reducing later to £1 per thousand. *The brickyard was owned by Sir George Beaumont, and had a reputation for making high quality bricks, many of which were supplied to St.Pancras station. 5,800 common bricks were supplied to Coleorton Pottery in 1841 at 25s. per thousand for the start of building the first kiln.* **See the book entitled "Coleorton Pottery 1835-1938" by Samuel T Stewart.**

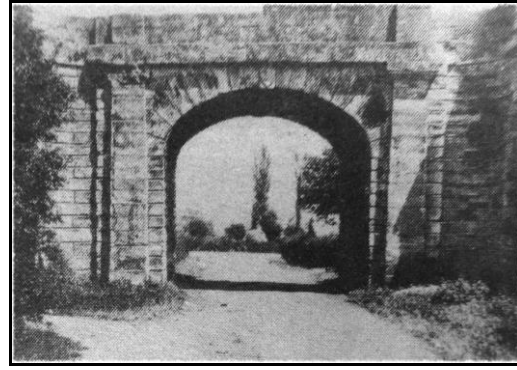
In September 1835, Nowell & Son and Thomas Platts were paid for fencing, hedging and dyking along the route.

The line continued onto Gelsmoor via an embankment, which crossed the bridge on Aqueduct Road. This was originally called Aqueduct Lane, and always referred to as *Acadoc Lane* by the locals. It is thought that it got its name from a wooden sough on stilts which was created at one time to bring the pumped water from a mine shaft which was sunk in the field to the north of what was once Providence Chapel and is now Providence House on Gelsmoor Road, down to the brook at the bottom of Zion's Hill. The shaft was approx 200 meters from the current Rempstone Road and 15 meters in from the current Gelsmoor Road. However, this does seem a rather fanciful story.

The following photographs are of the former bridge on Aqueduct Lane, which the Coleorton Railway once ran over. The first photograph was taken as the bridge was being demolished; note the group of people standing on the top. The bridge, in dressed sandstone, was constructed as part of the Coleorton Railway project c.1834. The side walls of the bridge are still there.



The bridge being demolished



**The bridge as it looked c.1900
viewed from Gelsmoor Road**

A circular brick tunnel had to be constructed through the embankment at the bottom of Zion's Hill to allow the brook to pass through, and which still exists today. The embankment then continued on to a point close to the "The Gelsmoor" on Rempstone Road. "The Gelsmoor" restaurant originated in the 1840's as the "Railway Hotel", the licensee being George Crabtree. It later became the "Railway Tavern" and then the "Railway Inn". Apparently the road crossing at this point was controlled by a keeper, who was provided with a wooden box. Following pressure from Sir George Beaumont, the line was extended to continue along another embankment to cross the road just below Newbold School, and then via a cutting and short tunnel (c.90 yards long) to the terminus at the Hinckley-Melbourne turnpike, which was originally built in 1750. At this point, the railway had reached the Cloud Hill tramway (plateway) at what was also known as Worthington Rough, and ran alongside it in a westerly direction for a short distance, but did not connect with it at this time (see schematic diagram at end of this section). It was thought to have been completed to this point from Swannington Incline in early 1835. For a relatively short railway (c. 2 ½ miles long), a high degree of civil engineering was involved in its construction.



Newbold Tunnel

The railway also had a wharf at Gelsmoor, next to the Rempstone Turnpike, which was run by George Crabtree (also licensee of the "Railway Inn"), and operated transferring coal, slack, lime and any other items that could be conveyed on the railway, such as pottery from "Coleorton Pottery", which is the subject of another publication by the writer. Although the line was the standard 4 feet 8½ inch gauge, and used edge rails, it was worked by horse drawn wagons with flanged wheels and there is no documentary evidence that steam engines were ever used on the "Coleorton Railway" (see later photographs).

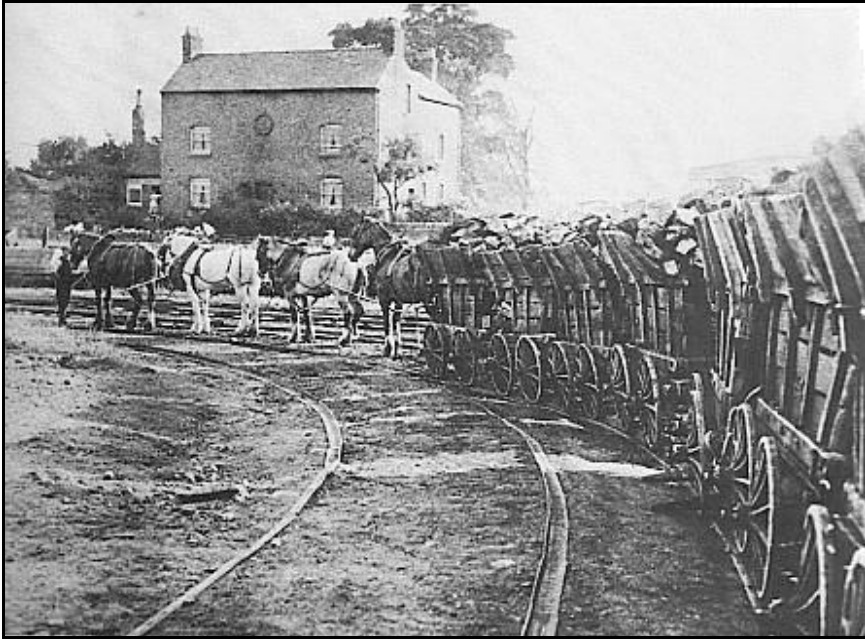
The failure of the original aim to reach "Smoile Colliery" which was leased from Sir George by Benjamin Walker proved costly, and initially coal wagons had to be double loaded from the coal shaft to reach the railway for transportation to Leicester. This was clearly inefficient. It is possible, that an extension of the line to one of the Smoile Colliery shafts was constructed c.1836, based on the submission of a bill from George Chubb for 2 guineas for surveying the extension. He was the surveyor and resident engineer of the railway.

Lime from "Cloud Hill Quarry" would have had to be transshipped onto the "Coleorton Railway" due to the fact that the Tramway was in fact a 4 feet 2 inch gauge plateway (see later photograph). The L shaped line plateway, used narrower wagons with plain rimmed wheels, and therefore this did not match either the rail type, wheel type or gauge of the "Coleorton Railway". The "Ashby Canal Company" which owned the tramway had anticipated this, and considered Lord Stamford's (owner of "Cloud Hill Lime Works") proposal in Feb 1833 to lay a compatible rib (edge) rail from Cloud Hill, to connect with the "Coleorton Railway" at Worthington Rough. This was not carried out, and the "Ashby Canal Company" then considered a proposal in 1837 from the "Leicester and Swannington Railway" board, who had become concerned about the lack of traffic over Swannington Incline from "Coleorton Railway", to lay down rib (edge) rails parallel with the tramway from its intersection point with the "Coleorton Railway" to "Cloud Hill Lime Quarry". The canal company went one step further, and requested their company engineer to prepare costings for relaying the whole of the tramway from Willesley basin to Ticknall and Cloud Hill with rib (edge) rails, and also to prepare an estimate for the likely increased traffic. Clearly, this proved too expensive, and the final solution, agreed by the "Ashby Canal Company" on Dec 4th 1838, was to lay a rib (edge) rail on the tramway from Cloud Hill to "The Smoile", the cost of which was borne by "Bostock & Co" (Lord Stamford's tenant at Cloud Hill), and "Coleorton Railway" via loans from the Swannington and Leicester Railway of £600 and £633.13s.11d respectively. The work was recorded as not being completed till Aug 5th 1840.

The "Coleorton Railway" and "Leicester and Swannington Railway", clearly stood to benefit from considerable extra traffic over the line, which proved to be the case. The rib (edge) rail proved to be a success, and traffic from Cloud Hill continued steadily over the line until Sept 1st 1869, when the Midland Railway opened its extension line from Melbourne to Worthington, from which time no further shipments from Cloud Hill over Coleorton Railway were recorded.

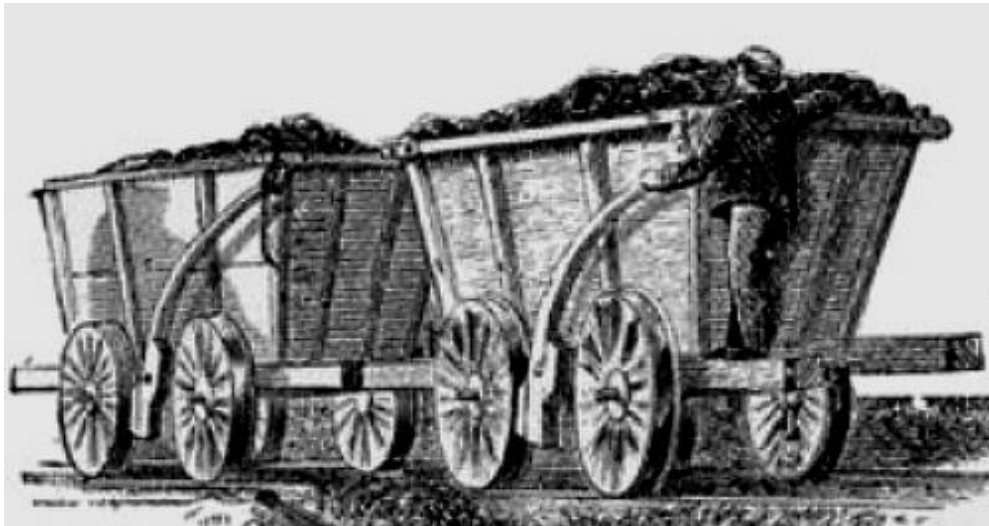
Although the information available is somewhat sketchy, it appears that "Coleorton Railway" was latterly (by 1862) extended to another of the "Smoile Colliery" shafts in an effort to improve its financial viability. It is recorded that by c.1849, a short branch line had been added to take coal from the "California Colliery", and in c.1853 and c.1855, two further short branch lines had been added to the "Calcutta" and "Califat" collieries and another to the "Peggs Green Colliery". The following recorded statement was made in Oct 1857 by Charles Smith who was the receiver for "Wyggeston's Hospital" (a charitable institution) on whose land the Califat and California Collieries stood - *"Mr. Worswick has erected two collieries on the estate (Califat and California), and has far exceeded the minimum quantity of 12 acres per annum. He has recently erected a private railway nearly parallel to the Coleorton line from the terminus of the old Swannington to his newest pit on the common"*.

The "Coleorton Railway" survived for c.40yrs, and had a somewhat roller coaster life, with some high points of profitable traffic, and a lot of lows when traffic was inadequate. Overall, the line was a financial failure, in part, as a result of the very competitive prices being achieved in the Leicester coal market, due to a price-cutting war between the Derbyshire collieries and the new collieries at Coalville, which is covered in detail elsewhere in the book.



Coal being transported along a plateway rail system by horse drawn wagons. This would have been similar to how it would have been on “Coleorton Railway” except that it was a single track rib (edge) rail line, and the wagons would have had flanged wheels.

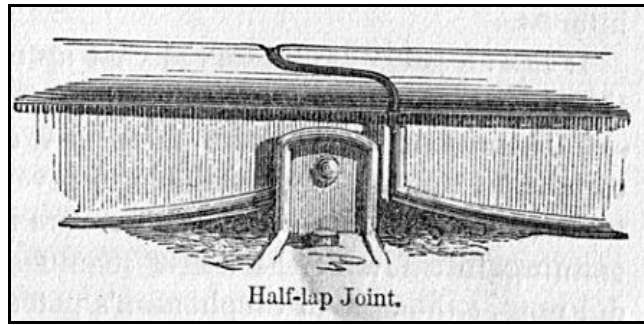
The “Original Cloud Hill Tramway” was a plateway rail system as per the above photograph of course.



A typical design of horse drawn wagons with flanged wheels that would have been used on “Coleorton Railway” running on rib (edge) rails

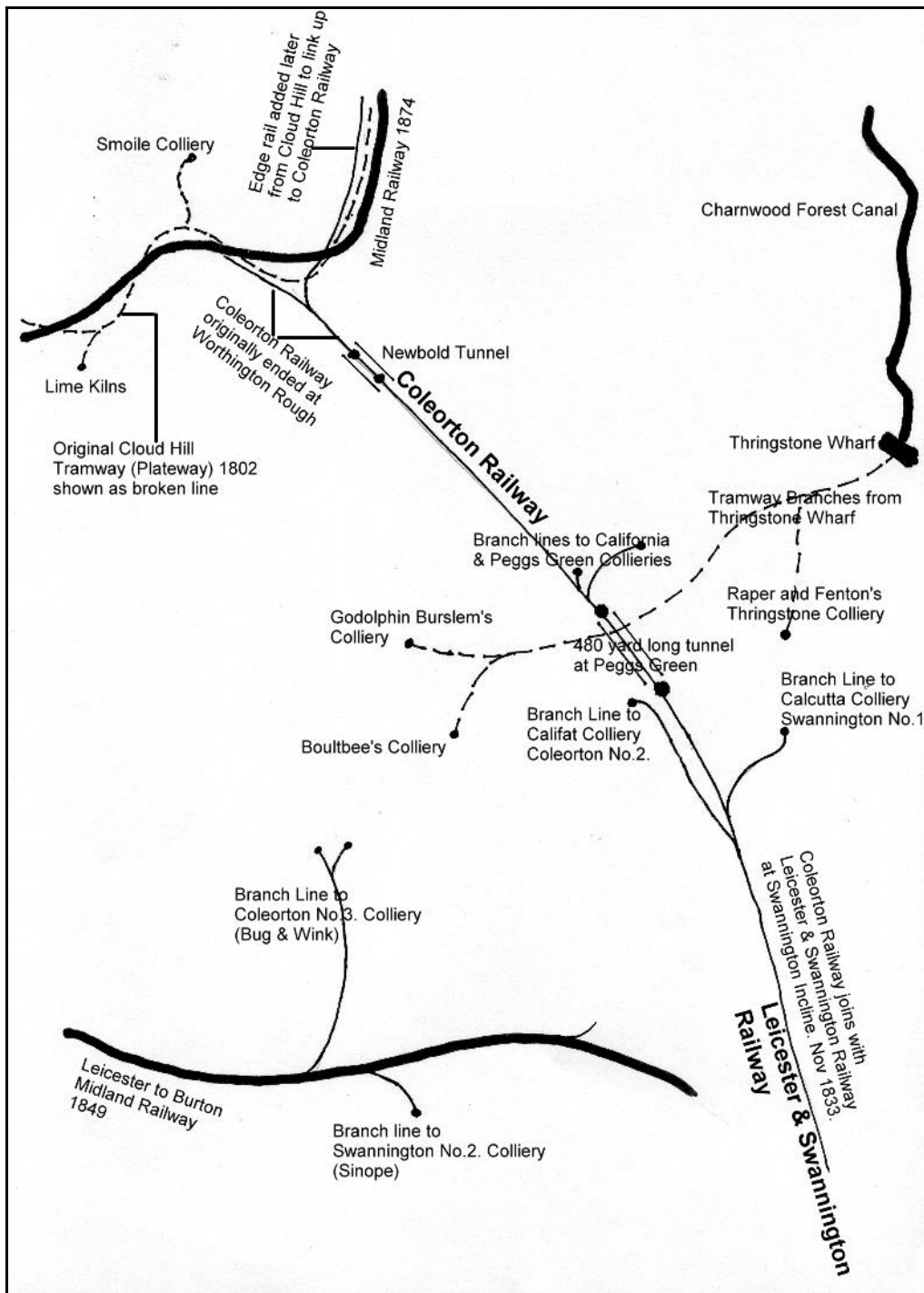


**Section of typical
Plateway rail**



**Cast iron, fish belly, rib (edge) rail.
Stephenson 1818 patent.**

In the early 1800's, George Stephenson held the patents and rights for the best cast iron rib (edge) rails (see illustration above), which were typically only 3 feet in length. These tended to be brittle and broke easily. John Birkinshaw in 1820 developed and patented a method of rolled wrought / malleable iron edge rails which could be made in 15 foot lengths. These were technically better in all respects, and Stephenson used these rails on the "Stockton and Darlington Railway" and they were also used on the "Leicester and Swannington Railway". It is therefore likely, although no records exist, that the same rails were used on the "Coleorton Railway".



Schematic diagram of Canal, Tramway and Railway links to various collieries referred to in the text elsewhere.

**PART 4 - A SYNOPSIS OF THE ACTIVITY RELATED TO
VARIOUS 19TH CENTURY MINES LISTED BELOW IN
THE LOCALITY OF GRIFFYDAM, PEGGS GREEN,
SWANNINGTON, COLEORTON AND SINOPE.
THOSE MARKED * BENEFITED FROM THE
BUILDING OF THE COLEORTON RAILWAY.**

* Peggs Green (Pear Tree) Colliery	1830 - 1859
* Coleorton No.1. (California) Colliery	1849 - 1873
* Coleorton No.2. (Califat / Alabama / Windmill) Colliery	1855 - 1873
Coleorton No.3 (Bug & Wink) Colliery	1875 - 1933
* Swannington No.1. (Calcutta) Colliery	1853 - 1866
Swannington No.2. (Sinope) Colliery	1851 - 1902
* Swannington No.3. (Clink) Colliery	1863 - 1877
Joseph Smart & Son (Colliery & Brickworks)	1874 – 1880

SEPARATE ARTICLES ON THE COLLIERIES LISTED BELOW FOLLOW :-

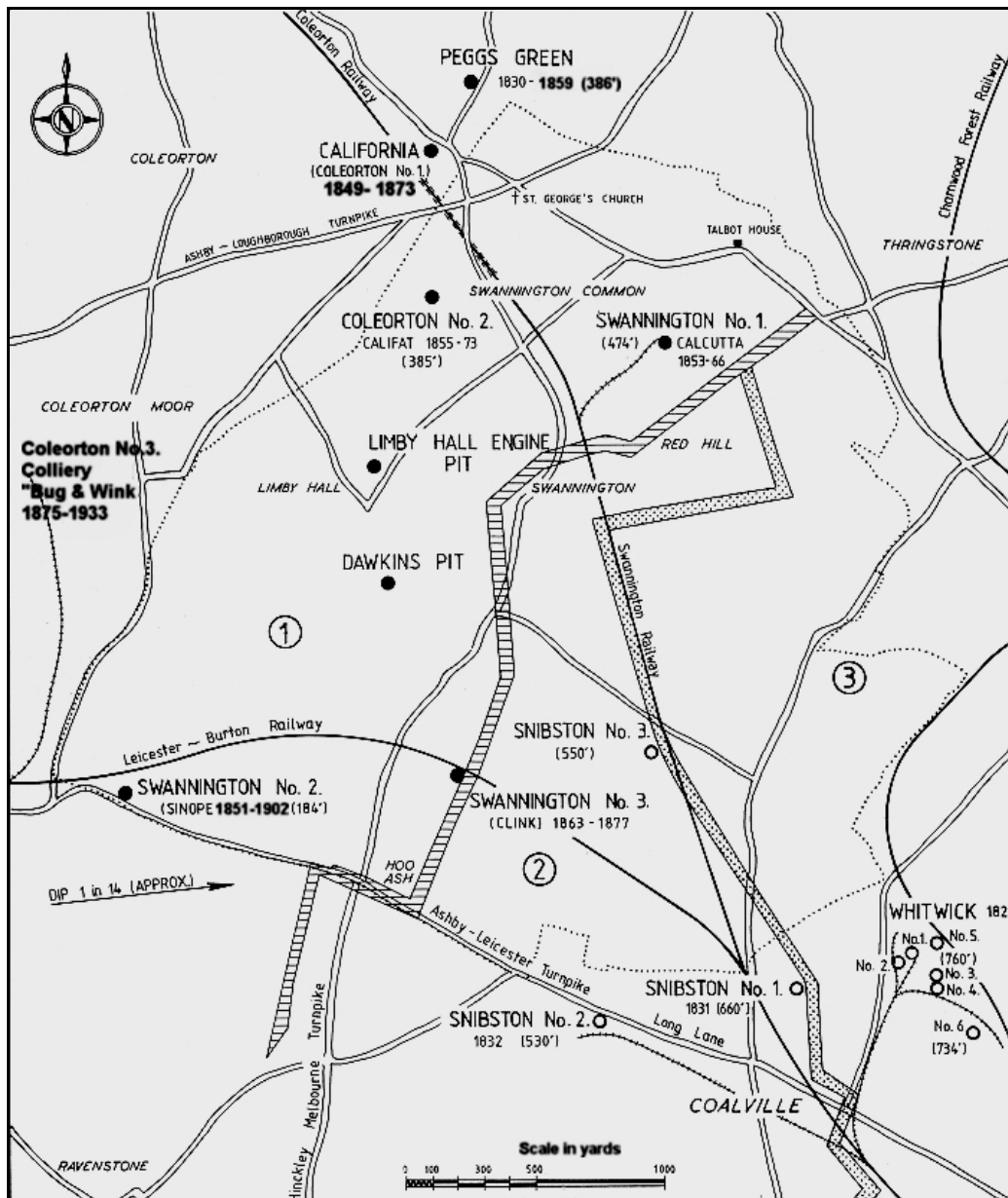
Peggs Green Colliery

Coleorton No.1. (California) Colliery

Coleorton No.3. (Bug & Wink) Colliery

Swannington No.2. (Sinope) Colliery

Joseph Smart & Son (Colliery & Brickworks)



Map showing location of collieries

Swannington Parish Boundary designated by.....

Sir George Beaumont's determination to extend the Leicester and Swannington Railway beyond Swannington, stemmed from his desire to revive coalmining on his Coleorton estate and to serve the small collieries operated by Benjamin, Thomas and James Walker on his lands at Newbold and Lount. Around 1830, Benjamin had opened another small mine at the north-west corner of Smoile Wood, which was generally referred to as **Smoile Colliery**. Much of the coal from these pits were used in local lime and brick and tile works, and it was coal and lime that accounted for much of the freight carried on the new Coleorton Railway from 1834. Beaumont himself may have continued to work some coal at Coleorton, but its continuing decline is well illustrated by the Census returns which show a fall in the population from 848 in 1831 to 601 in 1841, of whom only twenty were listed as coal miners. The demolition of 35 miners' cottages there during the same period adds further support, the inhabitants probably moving to the thriving collieries at nearby Snibston and Whitwick. Swannington also continued to play little part in the industry at this time, with only forty-five coalminers amongst its forty-five inhabitants in 1841.

By 1835, there were collieries operating at **Peggs Green, Newbold, Lount, Smoile and Heath End**, and possibly at Coleorton and Swannington, but there is no actual proof of the latter two working at this time.

With the availability of rail transport, coal mining in the sector was clearly enjoying a revival, but without attaining its previous status. **Peggs Green** was without doubt the most important of the group in terms of both quality and quantity of coal mined. Owing to the centuries of coalmining that had taken place in the area, all the collieries were therefore difficult to operate. Many of the upper seams had been wholly or partially worked out, and the area was honeycombed by old workings containing copious amounts of water. In the absence of old mine plans and survey records, mining tended to be even more hazardous than normal, as several later reports relating to accidents demonstrate. The collieries in this sector thus tended to be very much the poor relation, overshadowed by their deeper and larger neighbours to the south. Apart from several brickworks, lime works, an Earthenware Pottery in the Parish of Coleorton, near Lount, and the lead works at Staunton, the area failed to develop any major secondary industries.

The status of the industry in the area changed very little until 1850, with the relatively large **Peggs Green Colliery** of Price and Company, and the small collieries at **Lount, Newbold** and **Smoile** run by various members of the Walker family contributing all or most of the output. Increased quantities of coal under Swannington were worked after 1840 by the **Whitwick** and **Snibston Collieries**, but there was a notable revival of colliery development in the area after 1850. This was brought about largely by the efforts of Benjamin Walker and William Worswick, a wealthy property owner, coal-merchant and contractor from Leicester, where he owned the manors and halls of Normanton and Birstall and extensive lands at Syston and Thurgate. Initially, Worswick associated with Walker in the running of **Smoile Colliery** which was a small concern producing low grade coal mainly for the use in local lime and brick works. It was probably in 1849 that they decided to sink a large new colliery a short distance to the north-west of St. George's Church, Swannington. **Coleorton No.1.** or **California Colliery** as it became known was developed under an agreement with Sir George Beaumont in which they agreed to pay him a half-yearly rent of £693. It was well sited along the Coleorton Railway, and by 1856 was despatching 62,000 tons of coal by rail per annum. Owing to its rapid success, Walker and Worswick had closed **Smoile Colliery** by 1853, and it was probably in the following year that Walker stopped mining at **Newbold Cylinder Pit**.

Encouraged by his success at Coleorton, Worswick turned to Swannington, where he decided that there were large quantities of Main Coal and other seams remaining, particularly to the north and west of the village, and beyond the immediate reach of the Whitwick and Snibston Collieries. In December 1852, he accordingly concluded an important agreement with the Trustees of Wyggeston Hospital who owned the land in the area, whereby he agreed to lease the Main Coal under 747 acres at £111 per acre for 35 years, subject to an annual deed rent of £1,332. By the following February, he had started work on the shaft of a new colliery on the east side of Swannington Common which eventually reached the main coal, 7ft 5in thick, at 474ft. From the outset, **Swannington No.1.** or **Calcutta Colliery** suffered from two serious disadvantages, firstly, the important seams above the main coal were found to have been worked previously, secondly, it had a very cramped site, being restricted to the north-east by the Thringstone Fault and to the south by underground barriers that had to be left between Calcutta workings and those of Whitwick and Snibston collieries. Nevertheless, by effective organisation and adequate investment in plant and equipment it became an important colliery, its rail and canal sales amounting to 64,000 tons in 1856 and 79,000 tons in the following year.

Two years later in 1855, possibly recognising the limitations of the Calcutta mine, Worswick associated with Walker to sink yet another large colliery known most commonly as **Califat**, but was given the official name of **Coleorton No.2. Colliery**. It was also known as **Alabama and Windmill**, the latter presumably relating to the smock windmill standing nearby on the Swannington-Thringstone boundary. Although given the official name of **Coleorton No.2. Colliery** it was actually sunk within Swannington Parish boundary.

Shortly afterwards, Worswick and Walker re-opened **Smoile Colliery** and also became partners in **Lount Colliery**, thereby bringing under their control practically the whole of the areas coal production as will later be seen. **Califat Colliery** proved to be a difficult one to operate on account of the numerous old hollows filled with water that lay between the shafts and the old **Limby Hall Colliery**.

It is clear therefore, that between 1825 and 1860, with the early introduction of rail transport, the Leicestershire Coalfield experienced a remarkable transformation, which changed it from a demoralized group of outdated collieries to a highly productive zone of deep modern collieries that were able to make a significant contribution to the fuel supply of the south-east Midlands and the Home Counties. Further west, the Derbyshire section of the coalfield had to wait until 1849 before a through-railway from Ashby to Burton was opened, and until then, had to continue to rely on canal and road transport.

In an attempt to work the deeper seams, and to extract the remnants of seams worked previously, a somewhat bewildering array of short lived pits were sunk in Swannington and Coleorton districts after 1860, particularly by William Worswick. In addition to those already mentioned there was **Swannington No.2. (Sinope)**, **Swannington No.3. (Clink)** and **Snibston No.3.**

Swannington No.2. (Sinope Colliery) was sunk in 1851, but by 1877 it had closed. It had sidings to the south side of the Leicester to Burton Midland Railway line.

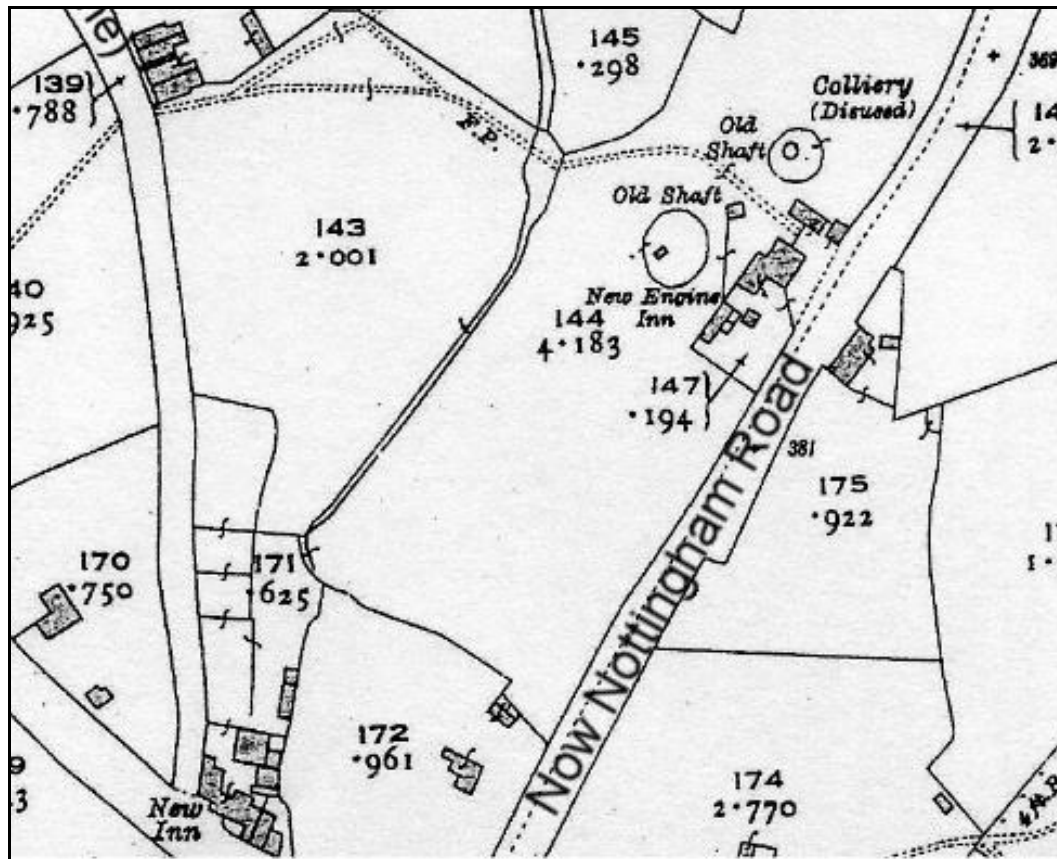
Following their successful opening of **California, Calcutta and Califat collieries** between 1849 and 1855, Walker and Worswick became two of the most important proprietors in the coalfield. In 1860, their collieries dispatched 140,000 tons of coal by canal and rail, compared with 146,000 tons by the Snibston Company and 108,000 by the Whitwick Company. Worswick, probably in association with Benjamin or William Walker, continued to operate the collieries at **Lount** and **Smoile**, although these were closed in 1868 and 1864 respectively. By 1864, Worswick thus owned or held an interest in at least six local collieries which between them had a productive capacity of 200,000 tons. At the same time, he was also the owner of two collieries in Derbyshire and one in Nottinghamshire. When he died in 1871, his estates and collieries passed to his eldest son, William, who displayed little knowledge of, or interest, in the mining industry.

By 1873, **California, Calcutta** and **Califat** pits had closed, and shortly afterwards in 1875, a new Colliery officially named **Coleorton Number.3.**, but known locally as the "**Bug and Wink**" was opened by G. Checkland and Co.

It is recorded that between 1874 and 1880, **Joseph Smart & Son** also worked a small pit and a brickworks at Griffydham which feature later.

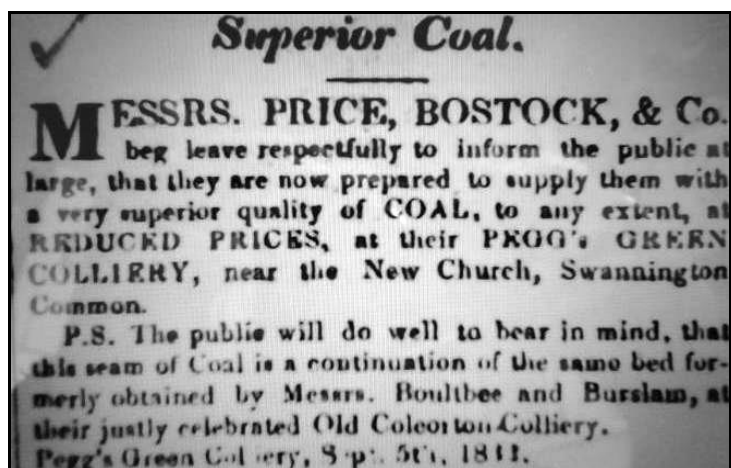
PART 5 – LOCAL 19TH CENTURY COAL MINES

PEGGS GREEN COLLIERY 1830 – 1859



**Peggs Green colliery 1903 O/S map with the adjacent “New Engine Inn”
(the “New Inn” pub is shown bottom left)**

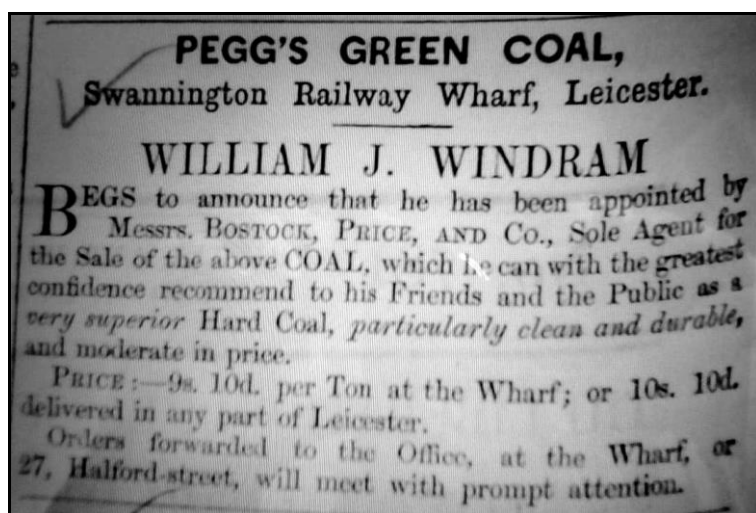
In anticipation of the introduction of the **Coleorton Railway**, Edward Price, who was the senior partner in the “Heather Colliery Company”, developed plans for a new colliery at Peggs Green by leasing the underlying coal from the Boulton family in 1830. Some years earlier, Price had assisted the Boulton family in the running of their colliery at Thringstone (formerly Raper & Fenton Colliery), and was allotted a small area of land at Peggs Green in 1805 under the Whitwick and Thringstone closure award. In 1830, he formed a partnership with his son, plus Joseph Bostock (a lime manufacturer of Breedon), and William Cowlshaw. They sank a shaft to the main coal at 385 feet, and although it passed through several workable seams with a total thickness of over 30 ft, it is likely that most of them had been worked previously. By 1832, the company was working the bottom 5ft 9 in of the Main Seam, which was sold at the pit-head at 8s 4d per ton. **Edward Price is listed in the 1841 Peggs Green census as a Coal Master’, aged 70.**



An 1832 Advertisement

The 'Butty System' would have been in operation at Pegg's Green Colliery. A Butty was a contractor who agreed with the owner of a mine to raise coal at a given price per ton, delivered into carts and wagons at the bank (surface). The Butty was thus a middleman intervening between the working miners and the owner. He would have come up from the ranks of workmen and saved some money, as his business required capital to provide tools, timber, horses etc. A Butty was not recognised by law and carried no weight with a government inspector. He took no responsibility either for firing shots, or in the supervision of safety. His duties were to get the greatest amount of work out of the smallest number of men, and to keep down the cost of coal and repairs. He paid the colliers etc, who were usually engaged by the week or day. Many Butties were notorious for paying wages in goods and not in cash, a practice known as 'Truck' or 'Tommy'.

In 1834, the colliery had been in dispute with the Leicester to Swannington Railway Company over its temporary withdrawal of a drawback of one-fourteenth on the tonnage rate for coal. By this time, Pegg's Green Colliery was raising around 30,000 tons of coal per annum, and because it was considered to be the best coal mined in the county, it could be sold in Leicester at the high price of 13s per ton.



Leicester Mercury – May 16th 1840

During the time Price and Co were operating Pegg's Green Colliery (c.1854), they were anxious to avoid payment of extra Hinckley-Melbourne Turnpike tolls and agreed to maintain a stretch of road between the colliery and Swannington Common for seven years in return for

the removal of the Turnpike toll gate bar. However, the Trustees were careful to ensure that any coal sent northwards passed through the Toll Gate at Newbold

The owners in 1856 were Kidger and Co. Joseph Kidger was also involved with Hall and Boardman's Colliery in Swadlincote. He was also a coal merchant with his own private owner wagons.

By 1857, control of the colliery had passed to Benjamin Walker and William Worswick. It had a short branch rail connection to the Coleorton Railway. For a time, Peggs Green Colliery remained outside the Worswick-Walker Empire, but it must have felt constantly threatened by the developments to the south. Expansion northwards was difficult owing to its proximity to the Thringstone Fault, but this was accomplished in a limited way in 1852 when Price and Company leased 23 ½ acres of main coal at £75 per acre under part of Griffydham from the Curzon family. Working of coal was made particularly difficult at Peggs Green by the easterly dip of the strata which caused the accumulation of large quantities of water draining from the old workings between there and Lount. Testing by means of a long boring rod was essential when driving headings towards the west. It was probably such difficulties that persuaded one of the main partners to withdraw from the company in 1857, thereby allowing Messrs Walker and Worswick to secure control, but by the end of 1859 the colliery had closed. A shaft was maintained for pumping until c.1950.

The following notice appeared in "The London Gazette"- Jan 10th 1860

*Notice is hereby given, that the partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, Thomas Bostock, John Price, William Kidger, John Knight, Benjamin Walker, and William Worswick, under the style or firm of Bostock, Price and Co., and sometimes called the **Peggs Green Colliery Company**, or under any other style or firm whatever, has been this day dissolved by mutual consent - dated the third day of December 1859.*

Public Houses were often built next to a colliery, and there are numerous examples of this in the area. As can be seen on the following maps, the "New Engine Inn" was built next to Peggs Green Colliery. This is not there anymore and the writer's last memory of this pub was when it was being run by Mrs. Blakey. The forerunner of this pub was the "Old Engine Inn", which was built close to Boulton's Colliery in Elverston's Lane off Stoney Lane, Coleorton, which is described earlier.

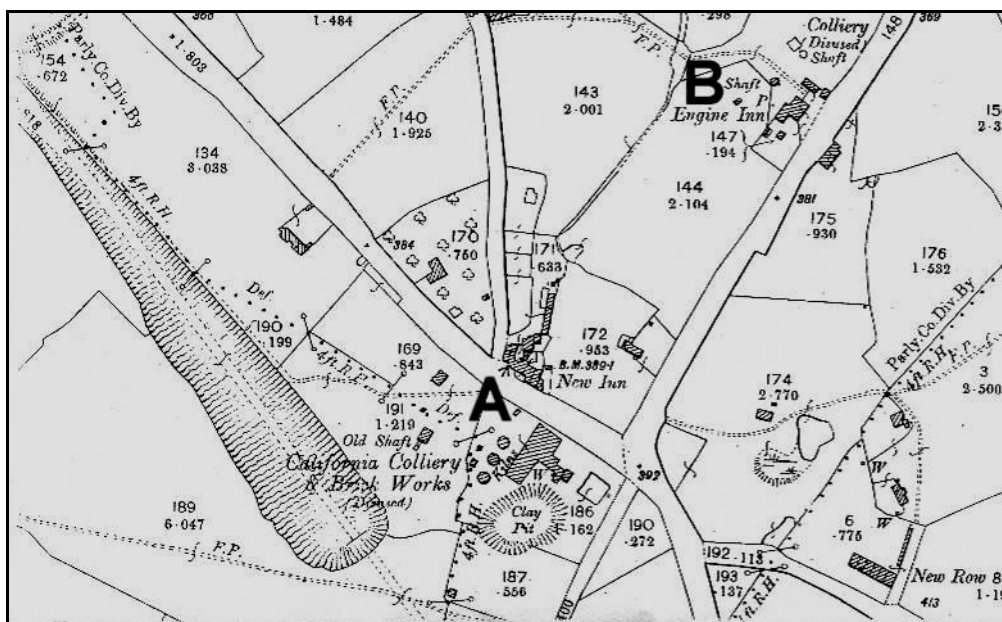
CALIFORNIA COLLIERY (COLEORTON No.1.) AND BRICK WORKS 1849-1873

1849 was the year of the California gold rush, and a rather smaller rush for riches took place the following year adjacent to the Coleorton Railway, when Benjamin Walker and William Worswick constructed the California Colliery at Peggs Green. However antiquated the Coleorton Railway may have appeared by this time, it proved its worth in transporting materials to the colliery site, despite the fact that this had to be reached by a short branch line on a gradient of about 1 in 30. In March 1850, iron bars, fish belly rails and building materials were delivered, presumably for the branch line and engine house. They were followed on April 26th by 7¼ tons of “engine works”, and in October by “engine castings” and a beam weighing 10 tons 12 cwt, presumably for the colliery pumping engine. The following May saw a boiler and flywheels taken to the site of the “machine fan”.

The California “coal rush” began in February 1851, with production rising quickly to about 3,000 tons per month. It peaked at 3,878 tons in March 1854, the high water mark for both the colliery and the little railway system. Presumably, to help with the haulage of this coal, Walker built a stable for his horses alongside the railway at Swannington. This era of prosperity was unfortunately short lived. The mining areas below California were riddled with old workings, impeding progress at every turn, and by the end of the year production of coal had fell away to a very low level. The California Colliery does not seem to have closed completely, and between 1865 and 1873 was shipping an average of about 100 tons per month over the railway. A surviving plan shows that during this period, they were taking coal from the Main Seams under Coleorton Moor. The galleries stretched out in awkward fingers between areas of old workings. One can only feel admiration for the courage of the miners who went to work each day in such dangerous conditions.

It should not be forgotten that California also had its own brickworks adjacent to the colliery but little is known about them.

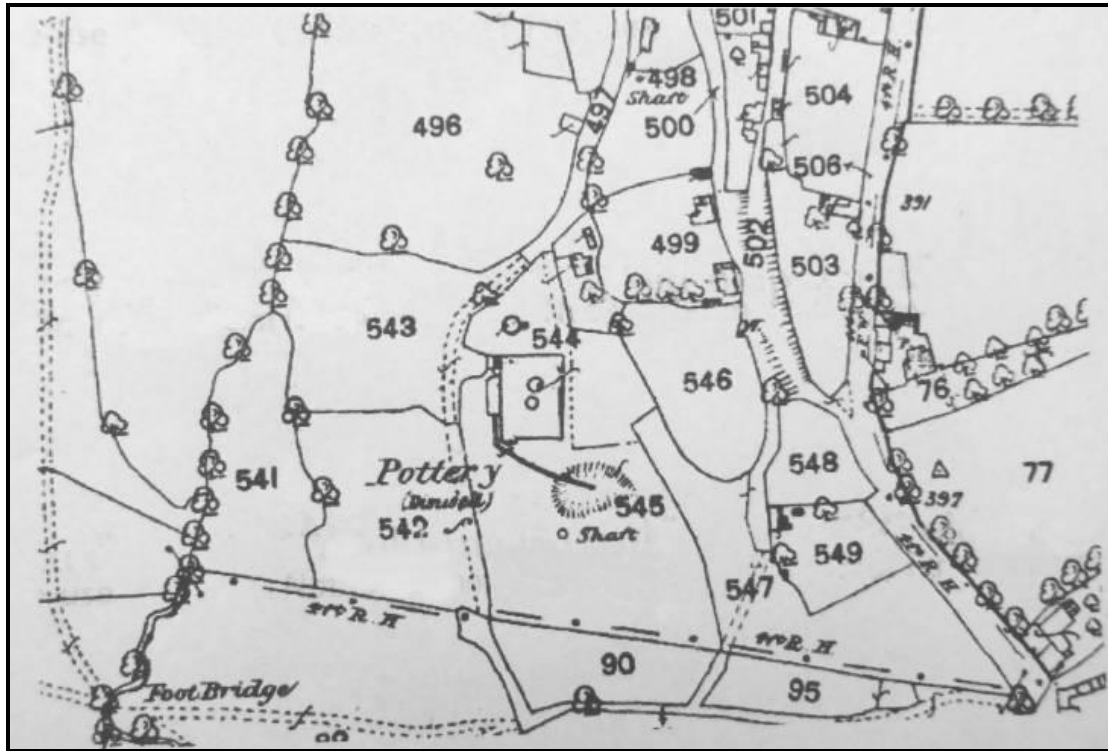
The New Inn was built across the road from California Colliery and Brickworks, and along with the George Inn on Loughborough Rd, are the only surviving pubs now in the locality which were built adjacent to a colliery. The Angel and the Kings Arms on Coleorton Moor may be considered to be colliery pubs as they were not too far from the Coleorton No.3. Colliery (“Bug & Wink”) and Swannington No.1. Colliery (Sinope), respectively.



Section from the 1903 O/S map showing the location of California Colliery (Coleorton No.1.) and Brick Works (marked A) plus the Coleorton Railway embankment

JOSEPH SMART & SON COAL MINE 1874 – 1880

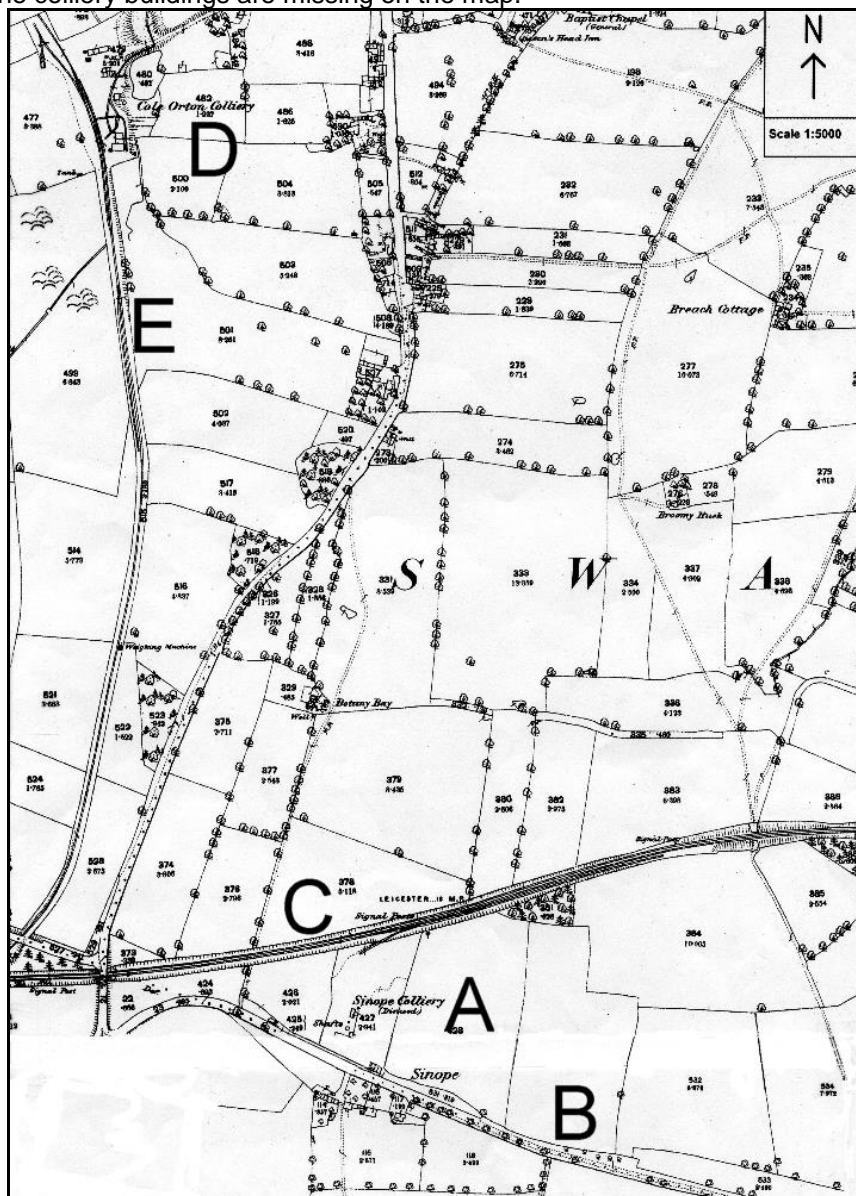
It is recorded that between 1874 and 1880, **Joseph Smart & Son** worked a small pit at Griffydam, probably extracting coal leased from the Curzon family of Breedon. It must have been severely limited by the Thringstone Fault to the north, and the workings of the former Pegg's Green Colliery in other directions. The author believes that this pit was sunk either to provide coal for their brickworks on The Lower Brand at Griffydam, or, to support a Pottery at Griffydam that is shown on the 1901 O/S map below, **next to the shaft**.



1901 O/S MAP

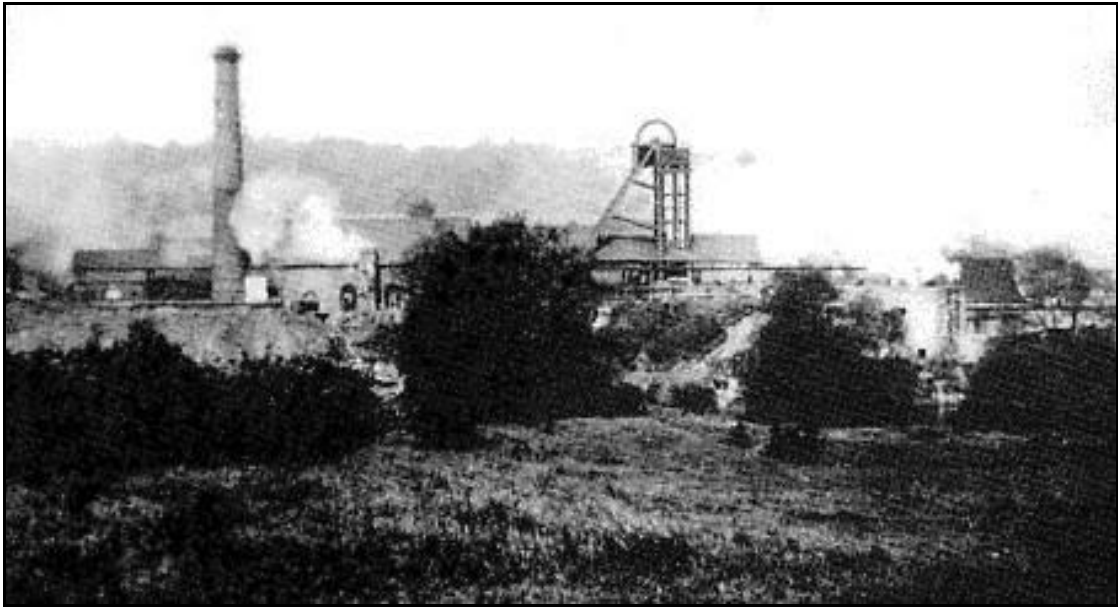
SWANNINGTON NO.2. COLLIERY (SINOPE) 1851 – 1902

This colliery was located at the extremities of Swannington Parish, and was sunk in 1851, but by 1877 it had closed. Following abortive efforts to rework the Main Coal at Swannington, a small mining company by the name of Cox and Turner, who had previously leased the Sinope Colliery buildings, decided to deepen the shafts of the Colliery from 189ft to the Roaster Seam at 348ft. During the following two years, small quantities of the main and Middle Lount Seams were worked at a royalty of £30 per acre on each. In March 1894, working was suspended, and the business sold to D. & J. Woollatt, coal merchants of Derby and Burton upon Trent. They in turn sold it in 1895 to the Swannington Colliery Company Ltd for £2,000, but the colliery lay idle for several years owing to a dispute with the Snibston Company over flooding. An attempt was made to work the Middle, Nether Lount and Roaster Seams, but limited reserves finally brought an end to the colliery in July 1902. As can be seen from the following map, it had sidings to the south side of the Leicester to Burton Midland Railway line. Some of the colliery buildings are missing on the map.



- A – Swannington No.2. Colliery (Sinope Colliery)
- B – Ashby-De-La-Zouch to Coalville Road
- C – Leicester to Burton Railway (Midland line)

COLEORTON No.3. COLLIERY (BUG & WINK) 1875 - 1933



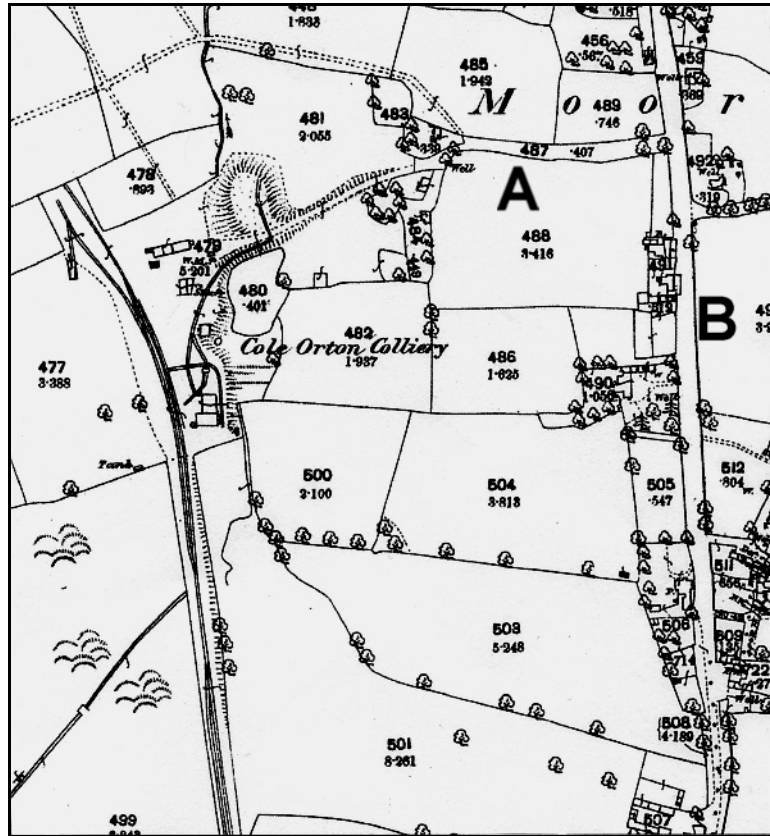
Coleorton No.3. Colliery - photograph taken in the early 1900's.

The following paragraph is taken from "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield 1200-1900" by Colin Owen :-

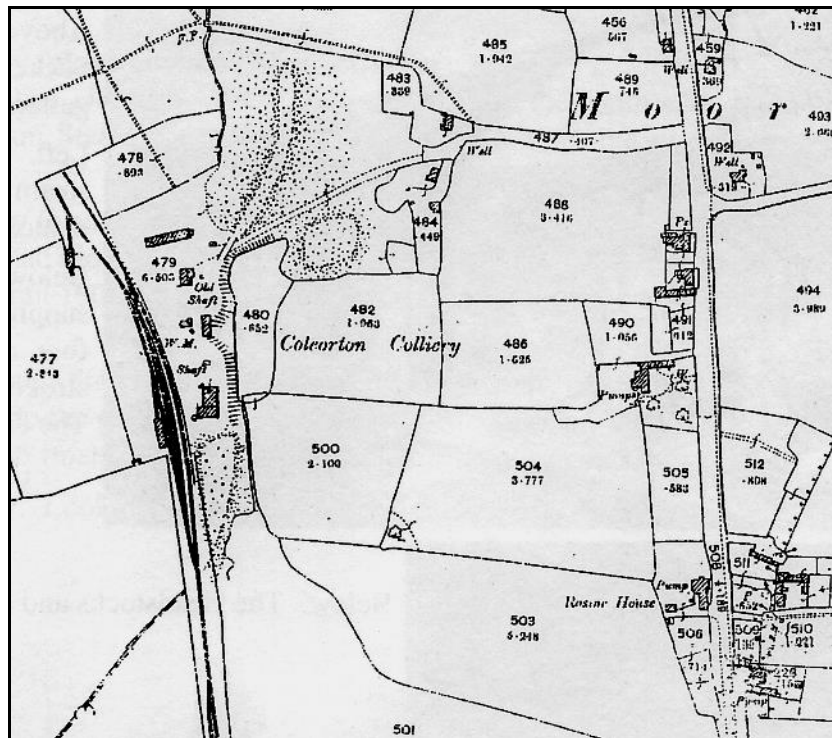
In 1875, a new colliery was established on the south side of Coleorton Moor by G. Checkland & Co, a relatively large company with collieries at Donisthorpe and Mapperley, and other industrial interests elsewhere in the Midlands. In 1875, they sank two shafts to a depth of 315ft, passing through the main coal, 5ft thick, at 183ft and the Roaster Coal, 2ft 10 in thick, at 312ft. The mineral rights were leased from Sir George Howland Beaumont 9th Baronet, at £40 per acre for coal worked, irrespective of the seam, the modest royalty no doubt reflecting the many years of mining that had taken place there in previous centuries. During the first three years, efforts were made to work the Main, Stinking and Nether Lount Seams, but in each case it was found that little coal remained. After 1880 however, considerable reserves of the Middle Lount and Roaster Seams were located, and the colliery raised its annual production to between 40 and 50,000 tons per annum. George Spencer, who acted as consultant engineer for the company a few years later, was of the opinion that this output could be doubled by further investment in a better underground haulage system, and improved banking facilities. During the second half of 1889, Spencer reported favourably on the colliery, which was benefiting from the high price of coal. Coal royalties amounted to £180 10s in respect of four acres of Middle Lount and just over half an acre of Nether Lount. The colliery also worked ironstone which could be sold at 10s or 11s per ton, and upon which a royalty of between 9d and 1s per ton was paid. Although it was efficiently managed by John Turner, who became general manager of the Moira Company in 1893, it was unable to attain its target of 75,000 tons of coal per annum. As time went by, it became increasingly difficult to locate workable areas of coal, but the colliery was helped by the lease of 190 acres of Middle and Nether Lount and Roaster Coals beneath Peggs Green in 1896. Nevertheless, between then and the end of the century, its output declined steadily, and working conditions became increasingly difficult.

The colliery had its own rail connection to the Leicester / Burton Railway and this is clearly defined on the following maps.

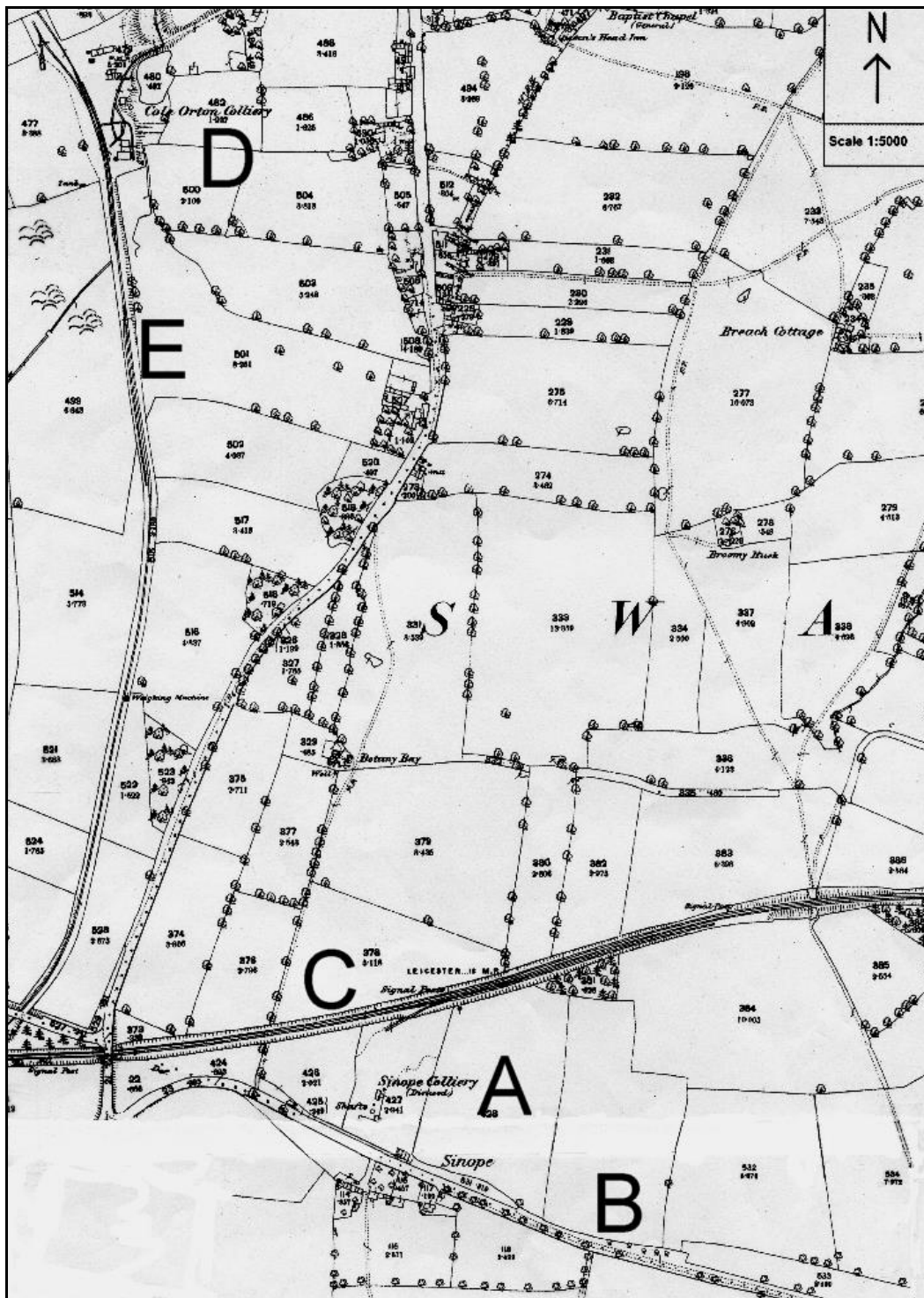
NORTH



1884 O/S Map showing location of Coleorton No.3. Colliery
A = Pit Lane, B = "The Moor"



Later map showing the further development of the colliery



- A – Swannington No.2. Colliery (Sinope Colliery)
- B – Ashby-De-La-Zouch to Coalville Road
- C – Leicester to Burton Railway (Midland line)
- D – Coleorton No.3. Colliery (Bug & Wink)
- E – Rail connection from Coleorton Colliery to Leicester / Burton line

Eventually, the high cost of extracting the lower coal seams after the main coal reserves had been exhausted forced its closure, and it was eventually sold to the Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company of Ashby (owner's of New Lount Colliery) in 1933 with the view that they would :-

1. Acquire some 2,000 acres of land, with the associated mineral rights, which would safeguard the life of New Lount Colliery.
2. They would use the "Bug & Wink" site as a pumping station to keep the seams free of water.

There were 500 men working at Coleorton Colliery when it was closed, and not one person was reportedly transferred to New Lount.

Unfortunately, very soon after they had acquired the site, the shafts collapsed, making it impossible to use the site as a pumping station. Obviously they still needed to remove the water from the seams (a major issue with the coal seams in this coalfield) and they set about doing this by other means. In 1953, the NCB installed a drift (footrill) at the Bug & Wink site, as part of the air circulation system. This was used by the colliers who lived at Coleorton to access the New Lount Colliery. It is also likely by this time, that there would have been pumping facilities in this area to remove the water from the seams being worked. In 1975, the mine shafts were sealed, the buildings demolished, and the area reclaimed for pasture land. In 1991, the site was planted with trees. The preceding 1884 O/S maps show the location of the Colliery.



The above photograph is of a private owner's 8 Ton wagon built early in 1894 by E. Eastwood. Note the underlined lettering on the side door of the wagon which reads "Empty to New Lount Colliery". Presumably the wagon had been purchased by the "Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company" and transferred to New Lount Colliery after this was opened

The colliery purchased a 0-6-0 inside cylinder saddle tank from Manning Wardle of Leeds in 1877 and named it Agnes. A second 0-6-0 outside cylinder saddle tank followed in 1901, this time from Andrew Barclay of Kilmarnock and named Samuel Thomas. Three other second hand locos were acquired, two in 1929 and the other in 1931. All three were sold in 1934 after the colliery closure.

THE DEATH OF THOMAS AND NATHAN LORD

Thomas Lord was tragically killed in an accident at Coleorton Colliery, on the 19th of August 1911 at the age of 32, leaving his wife Margaret (nee. Barkby) widowed with her three young children - Robert, Eunice and Alec. This sad event had aroused much public sympathy, the deceased being so well known, and a large number of people attended the funeral as a last mark of respect. A copy of the Coalville Times newspaper report and a report on the accident is appended. Thomas was a member of the "Coleorton Beaumont Cricket Club", and he can be seen in the photograph of the team which features in "A History of Coleorton and the Locality" by Samuel T Stewart. **Thomas Lord, his brother Nathan and his cousin Samuel Matchett were all killed at the "Bug and Wink".**

An official accident report on the death of Thomas Lord :-

At the time of the accident, Thomas was working as a "Stallman", and the colliery was owned by Checkland and Co. Thomas was ripping in the gate road, five or six yards from the coal face, when, without previous warning, a part of the roof which was two to three feet wide and two feet thick, fell from two unseen converging slips, killing him instantly.

Fatality at Coleorton Colliery

100 YEARS AGO – 1911

THE funeral took place at Coleorton on Saturday afternoon of Mr Thomas Lord, the unfortunate young man who was killed in the Coleorton Colliery on the previous Tuesday.

The sad event had aroused much public sympathy, deceased being so well-known, and a large number of people attended the funeral as a last mark of respect.

The service was conducted by the Rector the Rev Harold Robinson, the first portion being in the parish church, and at the close, the hymn

"Thy will be done" was sung. The chief mourners were deceased wife, daughter and two sons. Mrs James Lord (mother), Mr and Mrs Barkby (father in law and mother in law), Mr James Lord (brother) and Mrs Lord, Mr John Lord (brother), Mr Nathan Lord (brother) and Mrs Lord, Mrs Harding, of Leicester, Mrs Matchett, Elizabeth, Florence and Maria (sisters), Mr T Matchett, Mrs S Shakespear, of Shirebrook, E Barkby (sister in law) and other relatives.



An official accident report on the death of Nathan Lord, who was brother to Thomas above :-

Nathan Lord who worked as a "Stallman" was killed on Apr 25th 1912 - "The deceased was travelling along the endless rope haulage road to his work, and, when nearing the end of it, a large stone displaced a stretcher and fell upon him from a height of 7 feet, and killed him. The rail track had been lifted several feet so that the roadway was in solid stone. Some coal was being worked some distance away, and there was a slight movement in the strata.

THE EDWARD MEDAL (THE MINER'S VICTORIA CROSS) – PRESENTED BY KING EDWARD VII TO WILLIAM BIRCH OF COLEORTON

The Edward Medal 2nd Class, was awarded to William Birch, by King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace for an act of bravery in trying to save a fellow miner Charles Marshall during a roof fall at Coleorton Colliery, on Dec 16th 1910.

The **Edward Medal** was a British civilian decoration which was instituted by Royal Warrant on 13 July 1907 to recognise acts of bravery of miners and quarrymen in endangering their lives to rescue their fellow workers. The original Royal Warrant was amended by a further Royal Warrant on 1 December 1909 to encompass acts of bravery by all industrial workers in factory accidents and disasters, creating two versions of the Edward Medal: Mines and Industry.

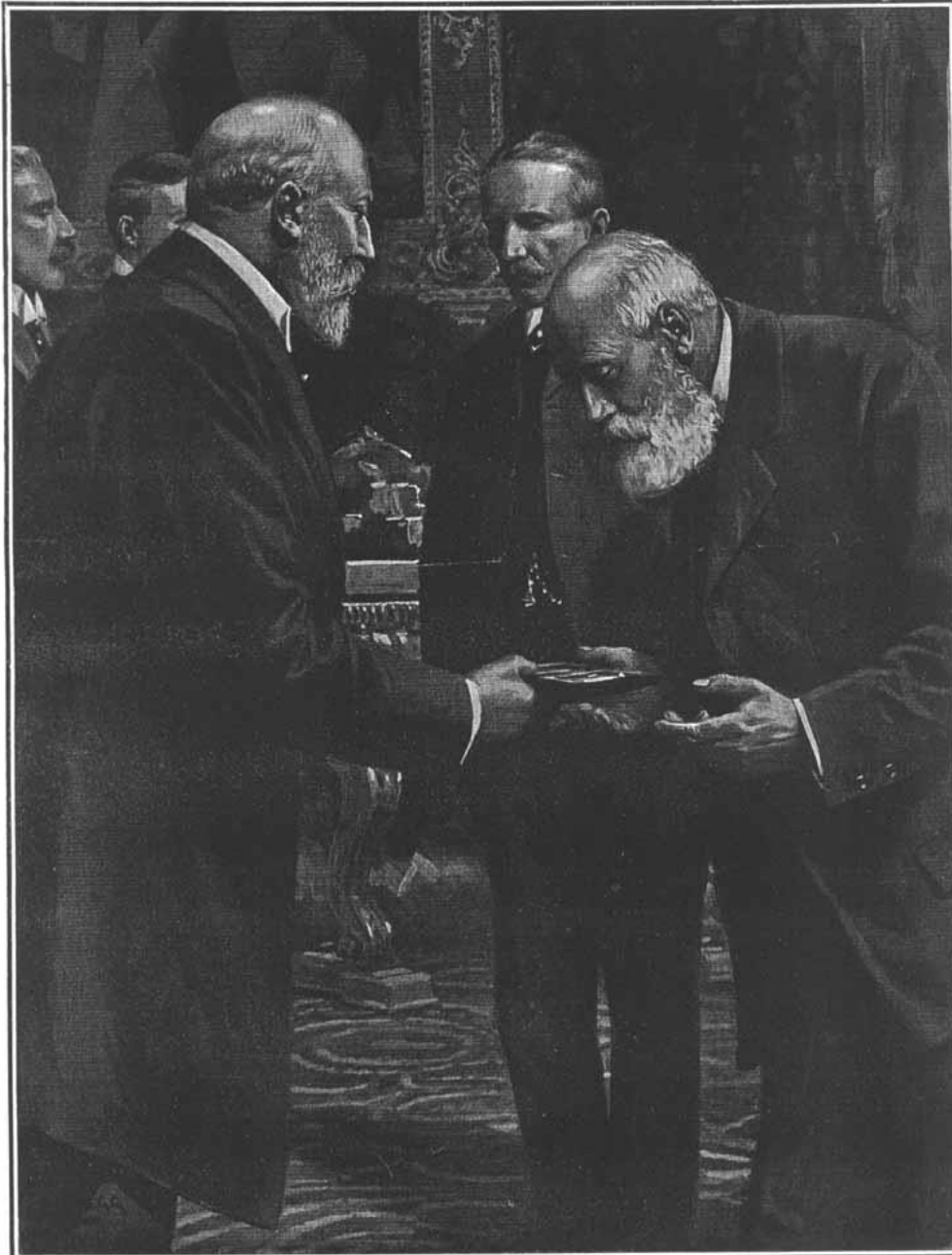
In both cases (Mines and Industry), the medal was divided in two grades: first class (silver) and second class (bronze), with the medal being a circular silver or bronze medal (as appropriate to the class awarded) suspended from a ribbon 1 3/8" wide and coloured dark blue and edged with yellow. Peculiarly, the cost of the Edward Medal (Mines) was borne by a fund established by a group of philanthropists (including prominent mine owners) and not the state. The Edward Medal (Mines) has been awarded only 395 times (77 silver and 318 bronze).



An example of the “Edward Medal (Second Class Bronze)” awarded to William Birch by King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace. The reverse showed a portrait of King Edward VII.



THE MINERS' VICTORIA CROSS:
THE FIRST PRESENTATION OF THE KING'S MEDAL
FOR HEROISM IN MINES.



Everson.

Chandler.

THE KING DECORATING FRANK CHANDLER AND HENRY EVERSON WITH THE MEDAL FOR CONSPICUOUS BRAVERY IN MINES.

On February 21 the King made the first award of his Majesty's new medals for conspicuous bravery in mines. Two working colliers, Frank Chandler, an old Yorkshire miner, and Henry Everson, a Glamorganshire miner, were decorated at Buckingham Palace. Chandler, who had been terribly scalded after an earth-fall at Barnsley, crept back under the loosened rock and earth, hoisted an injured man on his back, and crawled with him to a safe place. Everson climbed down a four-inch pipe in a shaft, reached water at a depth of 340 feet, and rescued a man who had fallen down a shaft and was clinging to a signal-wire. The King received the miners in the Council Chamber, where they were introduced by Mr. Herbert Gladstone. His Majesty said that he was very glad to meet two such brave men.—[DRAUGHT BY S. DICKIN.]

The King making the first award of the Edward Medal to two Yorkshire miners in 1908.

Official Accident Report on the death of Charles Marshall :-

Charles Marshall and William Birch were on road repair work when a fall occurred. Birch freed himself and was attempting to free Marshall when a second fall buried the two men almost up to their armpits. Birch freed himself once more but Marshall was still trapped and Birch tried again to release him.

Marshall was nearly free when a third fall completely buried Marshall and partially trapped Birch by his legs. A miner called Witham was on his way from the coal-face and Birch shouted to him. Both were trying to release Marshall when a fourth fall occurred. Witham rushed to get more help, while Birch carried on with his efforts to free Marshall. Within five minutes Witham returned with extra help; after approximately half an hour Marshall was released but he was dead.

Charles Marshall's occupation was a "Shifter", and he was aged 23 when he was killed. The following notes were included in the report:-

The deceased and another were engaged in repairing a gate-road. They had taken out a low bar and set another after ripping about half-a-yard of roof, and had ripped far enough to make room for a second bar, a yard further along, when a fall occurred from above the timber, and reeled the new bar and an old one set three weeks previously.

In the 1911 Census, William Birch (55) and his wife Mary Ann (56) were living in Gelsmoor with **10** other family members, with ages ranging from 6 to 30. His occupation was given as "Below Ground Coal Miner Chargeman".

The following is a transcript from a 1911 edition of the Coalville Times :-

Heroism in the Coleorton Colliery

SEQUEL TO THE RECENT FATALITY

BRAVE MINER DECORATED BY THE KING

ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION AT COALVILLE

The King received at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday, a number of persons recommended to him for decoration with medals for bravery for saving or attempting to save life on land.

The prospective recipients of the decorations were driven to the Grand Hall of the Palace and conducted to the Throne Room, where the ceremony took place.

As each was presented, the Home Secretary read a brief account of the deed for which the recommendation was made. The King personally affixed the medals, shook hands with the recipients and spoke a few words of hearty recommendation.

Among the men who were honoured was William Birch, who was given the Edward Medal of the second class, for bravery during a fall at Coleorton No.3. Colliery (Bug & Wink) on December last, when at the risk of his own life, Birch endeavoured for some time to save a comrade named Charles Marshall, a youth of Ashby-De-La-Zouch.

Birch was commended at the inquest by Mr. Hepplewhite - H.M. Inspector, by the Coroner – Mr. H. J. Deane, and by the manager of the Coleorton Colliery, Mr. F. Tatham, who had taken a great interest in the case, and accompanied Birch to London on Tuesday.

An enthusiastic welcome awaited the hero when he arrived at Coalville by the 8 o'clock train on Tuesday night. A number of miners had arranged to have a band to play him to the Market Place, and thought it had not been made public. The news of this arrangement got out, and when the train steamed into the station, there was a crowd of three or four thousand people waiting in the street. In the crush, Birch got separated from Mr. Tatham and others who met him on the platform, and he appeared in the street alone. But he was wearing the medal, which had been affixed to his coat by the King, and he was soon identified and escorted to the market place by the crowd, with the Coalville Town Band playing "see the conquering hero comes". Many a stalwart miner pressed through the crowd to give Birch a hearty handshake as the King had done some hours before, and Birch, who is a very unassuming man, took it all quietly.

Much curiosity was shown by the crowd in respect to the medal Birch was wearing, and there was much eagerness to get a glimpse of the same. It was a round shaped medal with a portrait of King Edward VII on one side, and figures representing one miner succouring another on the other side, with the word "Courage" above.

In the Market Place, a platform had been erected and this was mounted by Birch together with the miner's agent, Mr. L. Lovett, Mr. T. Y. Hay, Mr. F. Tatham, Mr. F. Blow, Mr. Geo Brooks and Mr. Bollard.

Mr. Lovett said it was a proud day with them. As they all knew, Birch had been presented with a medal for trying to save the life of a comrade, and the circumstances showed that there was among miners, as among other classes, a certain amount of courage when it came to assisting anyone in distress. They were pleased that the King himself had placed this medal on Birch for the bravery he displayed in an accident at Coleorton Colliery, and they could say that they as Leicestershire miners were nearer the Crown that day than they had ever been before (applause). Narrating the circumstances leading up to that day's event, Mr. Lovett said that on the night shift of December 16th 1910, Birch was working in the Coleorton pit with a young man named Charles Marshall. They were removing timber, and had nearly finished the night's work when a fall of roof occurred and brought down two settings of timber. Both Marshall and Birch were knocked down. Marshall had a large stone on his legs and asked Birch to remove it. He tried to do so, but a second fall occurred, burying Marshall and also Birch up to his shoulders. Birch got free, and still worked away trying to liberate Marshall and would have succeeded in another minute or two, but a third fall occurred knocking Birch's light out. Another man came up with a light, and then a fourth fall occurred, completely burying Marshall, and they heard no more of him. It took forty minutes to get him out, and then he showed no sign of life. At the inquest, the Inspector and the Coroner commented on the plucky manner in which Birch tried to liberate his mate, and Birch's reply in simple language, was that he had never known anything like it before...." *A poor lad begging to be set at liberty, and twice getting it all off but the last stone, and then for it to be of no use*". The unfortunate youth was killed, but Birch could not have done more (applause). No doubt many of those present new something of pit work, and they would know that when a fall had taken place and there was loose stone hanging above, there was real danger for anyone going under, but in spite of that, Birch had tried to extricate his comrade. The circumstances of Marshall's death, he said, were very sad, but it had its bright side, inasmuch as it showed what a man would do to save his fellow man. It was not the first time it had been done in mining, but he was glad that a Leicestershire man had received this recognition from the King for the first time (applause). There was a bravery born of ignorance, but Birch knew of the great danger to which he was exposing himself, when he was doing his best to extricate his comrade. There were among miners many brave men. They knew that when explosions occurred or when there were rushes of water in the mine, there were always rescue parties willing to do what they could. He remembered the late Mr. Stokes, H. M. Inspector of Mines saying that when courage was wanted, give him a miner. And it was so. He (Mr. Lovett) was pleased to testify to the gratitude he felt, that the King had recognised the bravery of Birch in the risk he ran in trying to save his comrades life (cheers).

Mr. T. Y. Hay (manager of the Whitwick Colliery) said that as secretary to the Coalville Owners Association, he endorsed all that Mr. Lovett had said, and he was pleased to take part in the welcome of Birch that night. It was the first case he knew of the Edward Medal being awarded, and he was proud that it had come to Leicestershire. It was in accidents in mines such as falls of roof and explosions that man had to be brave. There were hundreds of miners who had done brave things which had never been heard of (hear, hear), and they were pleased that Birch's act had been recognised. He was glad that Mr. Tatham had taken such great interest in the same, and when it was mentioned to him (Mr. Hay) on Saturday night, he said he would only be too pleased to be there that night to welcome Birch. With all the legislation and inspection, he was afraid they would still have accidents in mines. He would welcome anyone who could come and save them from accidents, but while they went on ripping millions of tons of coal out of the earth every year, with thousands of men employed, they would have accidents. It was nice to know, however, that there were men like Birch, to do what they could to save a comrade, and to show such courage, as he did when required (applause). He (Mr. Hay) had been in Coalville for twenty years, and he regarded himself as a Leicestershire man, and he felt proud of Birch as he was sure every owner and every man in Leicestershire would. If there were other cases of bravery in Leicestershire mines, they must see that they were recognised. It was like the "Victoria Cross", and a great honour to any man. He hoped Mr. Birch would live long to enjoy the honour conferred on him that day by the King (cheers).

Mr. F. Tatham, manager of the Coleorton Colliery, said that he would like them all to understand that he did not take any honour for this to himself, but at the same time, he was pleased to know that he had one brave man working for him (a voice: above one). He would be sorry to think he had one who was not brave (cheers). He must say that he had done his best in regard to this case, but he felt that every brave act of that description should be recognised in a similar manner. When a man risked his life two or three times over to save a comrade, it was only right that something should be done to recognise it. Probably some of them had done similar things without being rewarded – he himself on one occasion saved three lives – but it showed they were getting better legislation and were getting nearer that situation in which every man realised that his fellow man was his brother (cheers). That was a principal he would very much like to advocate. He was pleased to be able to stand there with the miners' agents, for whom he had as much respect as he had for the secretary of the Coal Owners Association (cheers). He hoped it would become more and more the aim of them all to work together on both sides, avoiding friction (hear, hear). In some districts the operation of the 8 hours Act caused a tremendous amount of trouble, but he was pleased to say that in Leicestershire, as a result of sound common sense on the part of leaders of the Miners' Association and Coal Owners Association, they had been able to steer clear of difficulty in regard to that. He hoped that this feeling would grow (applause). In regard to Birch, he hoped that it would be an inducement to other men to put forward a hand to help a brother in distress as the occasion arose. Birch had asked him to thank them on his behalf as he was no speaker. He told him (Mr. Tatham) that he could do a lot better down in the kitchen at Buckingham Palace than he could do on a public platform (laughter and cheers). On behalf of Birch, he thanked them for the splendid reception they had given him. He had not expected to see such a big crowd.

Mr George Brooks said that he would like to say that when the matter was mentioned to Mr. Newberry, Mr. Blow and himself, they at once took the matter up and approached the "Town Band", who readily complied with their wishes. Mr. Lovett and Mr. Hay also said they would be delighted to be there, which showed that whatever was said in the Press about the relationship between masters and men, there were times when both could combine to give honour when honour was due (cheers). With all the mining legislation that could be brought in, they would never prevent accidents. Miners had, as it were, to face death, but a good practical miner would never allow another man to go into danger where he was afraid to go himself. He could say that from what he knew of Leicestershire miners. He moved a vote of thanks to the band and Mr. Hay, Mr. Tatham and Mr. Lovett for the interest they had shown in the matter. He added that Mr. Birch knew nothing of these arrangements for his reception. How it had got out to the extent it had, he, (Mr. Brooks) could not understand.

Mr. Newberry seconded the vote of thanks which was heartily accorded.

Mr. Lovett responding, said it was as Mr. Brooks had said – there was a common ground on which they all could stand, whether they were colliery managers, colliers or miners' agents, and that was in the cause of humanity and doing the best they could for their fellow men (cheers).

The Band played the National Anthem and the gathering then dispersed.

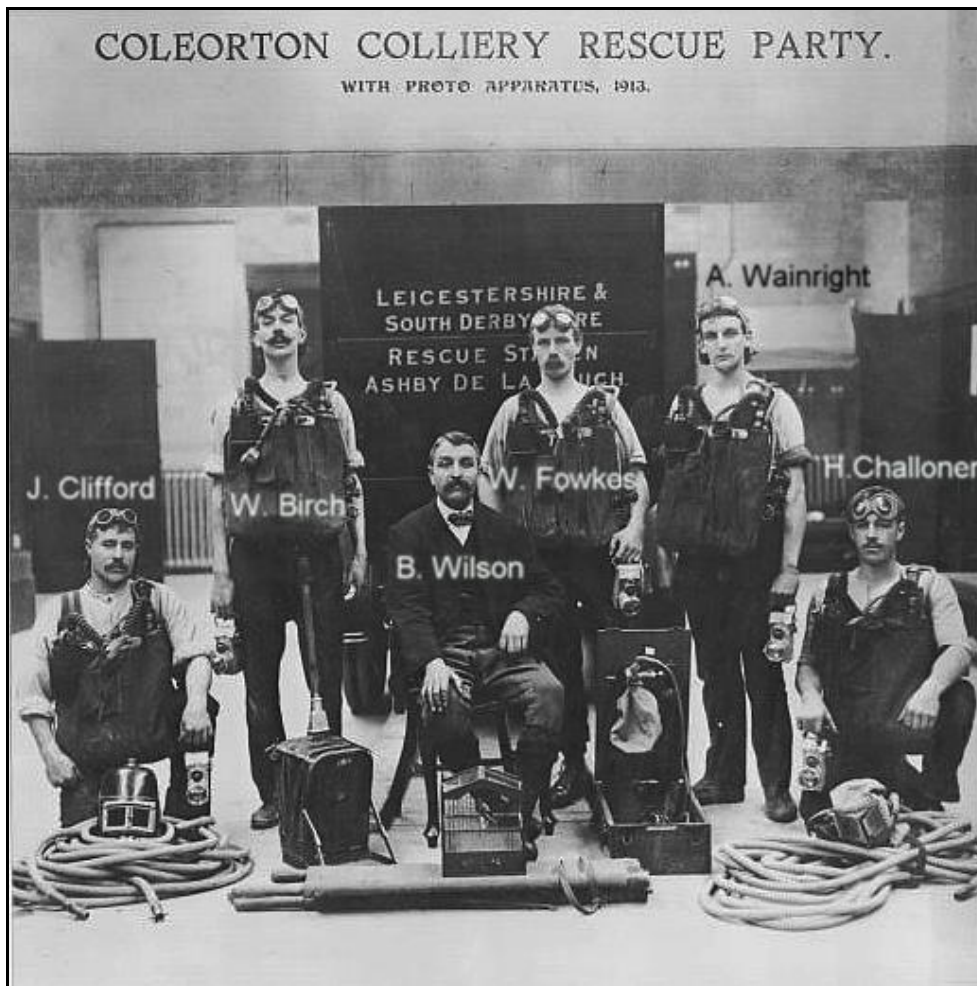
In 1883, the manager was Henry Taylor and the coal being worked, was the "Upper Main Roaster". In that year, the total number of employees listed was **638**. In 1885, the old Coleorton "Yard Seam" was abandoned and the future of the colliery became uncertain. In 1894 the manager was Jesse Armson and the Under Manager John Barratt. In 1896, Jesse Armson was the Manager and Richard Booth was Under Manager, the coal being worked was the "Middle Lount Roaster", and at that time, there were **212** under-ground workers and **69** on the surface.

In 1898, the average cost of a Ton of coal at the pit head was 6s 0d (30p). Wages were 4s 6d (22p) a week for boys aged 11 to 12 and 18s 6d (92p) for colliers. Beer was 4d (1.66p) a quart. At some pits in the country, in the past, beer was given as part payment of wages. In the 1911 "Coal Mines Act", all alcoholic drink was banned at a mine. Cold tea in bottles or Dudleys would be a favorite drink to slake (quench) thirst. Along with a "Snap Tin", a miner also carried a "Dudley", this was a small glass bottle that hung around his waist by a piece of rope. As there were no canteen facilities under ground, miners ate their "snap", near to where they were working. They carried their food in a metal Snap Tin clipped to their belt. This tin was shaped like a slice of bread, so it was just the right size for sandwiches. It was in two halves which pushed together and had rounded corners, to make it capable of taking bumps and knocks. It also protected the miners snap from vermin. A miner's diet usually consisted of bread and dripping (mucky fat) or bread and jam. Money was scarce in those days, so food was very basic.

By 1910, Coleorton Colliery was still employing in the order of 400 men. In 1918 the manager was A. C. Greensmith and the under-manager G. E. Francis, with 250 employee's u/ground and 67 on the surface. In 1921, there were 300 u/ground miners and 78 surface workers. A local man, Mr. William Stacey, recalled that he remembered the time when a deputy at the "Bug and Wink", would account himself well off on a wage of 4s per day (this would have been in the late 1800's). The salaries and working conditions were extremely poor, and below is an example of the miners average earnings per shift, and annual salary, which was taken from "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners", by Colin Griffin:-

Average per Shift	Average Annual Salary
1914- 6s 4d	£18 12s 1d
1918- 13s 0d	£199 18s 4d
1923- 9s 0d	£125 2s 0d
1928- 9s 10d	£111 2s 01d

The salary stayed pretty well the same until 1936 when it went up to an average of 11s 0d per shift.



The above photograph shows Coleorton No.3 Colliery (Bug & Wink) rescue team in 1913.

William Fowkes was aged 33 at the time this photograph was taken, and was the son of Newton Fowkes (A Coleorton Methodist Stalwart). He lived at Moor Lane according to the 1901 census.

James Clifford was 44 years old at the time the photograph was taken, and was employed also as "an underground hewer". He was born in Thringstone but was living in Coleorton at this time with his wife, seven children and father-in-law. He was the father to Laban Clifford who features in the book entitled "A History of Coleorton and the Locality" by Samuel T Stewart, in connection with the "Coleorton Toc H". Laban became a pony driver down pit at the age of 15. James Clifford's father Alfred was also a miner at the Bug & Wink.

Alfred Wainwright was aged 25 when the photograph was taken. He was born in Belton and was living with his parents there at this time. He was also employed as an underground hewer.



A Coleorton Colliery Tally or Check



Photograph of the Snibston Colliery Rescue Team in 1913. Frederick Barkby depicted in the photograph was born in Coleorton and lived there all his life. At one time Fred was a carpenter and Medical Officer at Coleorton Number 3 Colliery (“Bug and Wink”), and was responsible for accompanying injured people to hospital in the ambulance.

Both the above photographs show an instructor and his team of men. In the first photograph they are wearing their breathing apparatus and safety goggles, and in both are carrying flame safety lamps. In the foreground can be seen other items of rescue equipment, including a stretcher and ropes. Note the caged canary in the Coleorton rescue team photograph, this was an important part of their equipment, and was used to sense the presence of Methane which unfortunately killed the canary.

The mine rescue team became a legal requirement for all collieries in the Coal Mines Act of 1911. The teams were made up of volunteers chosen for their physical fitness and experience underground. Rescue stations and teams like the ones shown above had to be within 10 miles of collieries to ensure a fast response to any accidents or emergencies. The rescue teams rarely found any survivors in the event of underground explosions or fires. “Afterdamp” immediately poisoned the air after a mine explosion or fire, and regularly claimed the lives of miners who were nearby.



Two Coleorton “Bug and Wink” miners enjoying a glass of ale. Photograph taken in Pit Lane c.1910. Tom Fairbrother is seated, and he is recorded in the 1901 Coleorton census aged 23 and living with his wife Ada in ‘Rotten Row’

**The following table shows the Gross Earnings of John Brassington at
Coleorton Colliery for the year 1924-1925 (Wife and 7 children to
support)**

Week Ending	Wages
1924	
19.7	2 4 3
26.7	2 13 5
5.8	2 4 3
11.8	1 5 4
16.8	2 1 3
23.8	2 09 10
1.9	2 09 10
6.9	2 09 1
13.9	2 07 5
20.9	2 07 5
27.9	2 07 5
4.10	2 07 5
11.10	1 17 3
18.10	2 5 0
25.10	2 5 0
1.11	2 5 0
8.11	2 5 9
15.11	2 6 5
22.11	2 6 5
29.11	2 6 5
6.12	2 6 8
13.12	1 19 10
20.12	Away illness
27.12	Away illness
1925	
3.1	0 14 09

John Brassington was born in Blackfordby in 1883 and would have been c.41 years old at this time with a wife Edith (24 years his junior) and seven children to support. They were living at Anwell, Smisby at this time

The First World War and the restocking boom that followed created an enormous demand for coal which the industry found difficult to meet because of a shortage of labour. Because miners were required to work all hours god sent, wage rates increased dramatically. Average earnings per shift rose from 6s 0d. in 1914 to 13s 0d by the end of the War, with average annual earnings rising from about £82 to £200. By 1923, average annual earnings had slipped back to about £125 and 10 years later they were little more than half their 1918 level due to the depression and short time working. From the mid 1930's, re-armament and the demand for coal saw earnings rise once more, and earnings up to £5 a week were not unusual. By the 1940's, the miners were becoming among the best paid manual workers. Underground workers were generally better paid than those on the surface, though the small number of winding enginemen were an elite, and were amongst the highest paid at the collieries. Weekly and annual earnings within the workforce therefore varied considerably. In a week in which the collieries were working flat out prior to the mining dispute, the elite of the workforce were earning £5 per week whilst the poorest were paid £2, though the vast majority were earning between £2 and £4. Weeks of this kind were rather exceptional though. The proportion of miners earning £2 or less was far higher for most of the inter-war period as the L.M.A. (Leicestershire Miners Association) claimed. **The wage experience of John Brassington was therefore probably quite unexceptional.**



A miner filling a typical Wooden Tram, Tub (local name) or Jottie at the coal face. Note the safety lamp hanging on the roof support, which would have only provided very poor lighting.



Ponies were eventually used to haul the tubs from the face



Timbering Up

The above pictures give some idea to the dangerous work that miners did c.1920s. Most men would find the optimum gap between props/supports before the roof became unsafe, so that supports were not in the way of cutting or loading the coal. Unfortunately many men did not cater for the unexpected, resulting in thousands of deaths over the years due to roof falls.

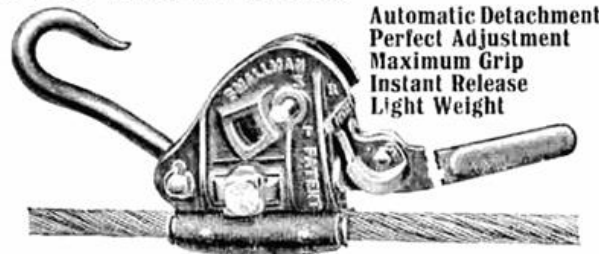
The first underground conveyor was apparently introduced in a mine in Yorkshire in 1902 but was not in use widespread because of the cost. The common method used was to fill Wooden Trams or Jotties at the coal face as shown in the above photograph, where they were hauled by ponies. We can assume that these photographs were representative of the conditions at the "Bug and Wink".

After rope haulage systems were introduced, the trams / tubs were hauled to the main road

by ponies driven by young lads. They were transferred so many at a time, and then clipped to main rope haulage systems leading to the pit bottom. **Numerous accidents were caused by tubs / haulage systems and many of these can be observed in the appended fatality lists. In fact, as the following table shows, it was the second highest, following falls of roofs or coal.**

Smallman Patent Haulage Clips

21 Sizes to suit all conditions.



A typical Haulage Clip

The most important single cause of death, was underground falls of roof or coal which accounted for 47% and 61% of all deaths in the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfields respectively between 1854 and 1909. The second most important cause of death were accidents on underground roadways – particularly being crushed by tubs or kicked by horses – though workers were occasionally mangled by machinery, suffocated by emissions from gob fires and drowned or scalded to death. Between 1854 and 1909, these accounted for 43% and 28% of fatal accidents in Leicestershire and South Derbyshire respectively. Shaft accidents were another important source of loss of life. In all deaths recorded between 1854 and 1909, they accounted for 10% and 11% of them respectively in the two coalfields, as the following table makes clear:-

Accident Mortality in the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield 1854 -1909

Cause of Death	Leicestershire		South Derbyshire	
	Deaths	% of deaths	Deaths	% of deaths
Falls of roof and coal	138	47	162	61
Deaths in shafts	30	10	30	11
Crushed by tubs and all other causes (e.g. killed in fires, Explosions and on the Surface)	125	43	73	28
Total deaths	293		265	

Loss of life in explosions, although a major cause of death in some coalfields, was relatively low in Leicestershire and South Derbyshire and there were only 16 fatalities from explosions of fire damp between 1854 and 1909. One hazard which was peculiar to the coalfield at this time was “gob fires”. This was a fire occurring in a worked-out area, due to ignition of timber or broken coal left in the gob. This could be caused by spontaneous heating of the coal itself, and which may be wholly or partly concealed.

Coal mining was an extremely hazardous occupation in these early years, and many deaths occurred in the local collieries. Not all deaths were recorded officially. The examples of Thomas Lord, Charles Marshall and William Birch have been highlighted, not only as a memorial to the men involved, but to serve as a reminder of the huge debt that this country owed to its brave miners.

PART 6 - PIT PONIES

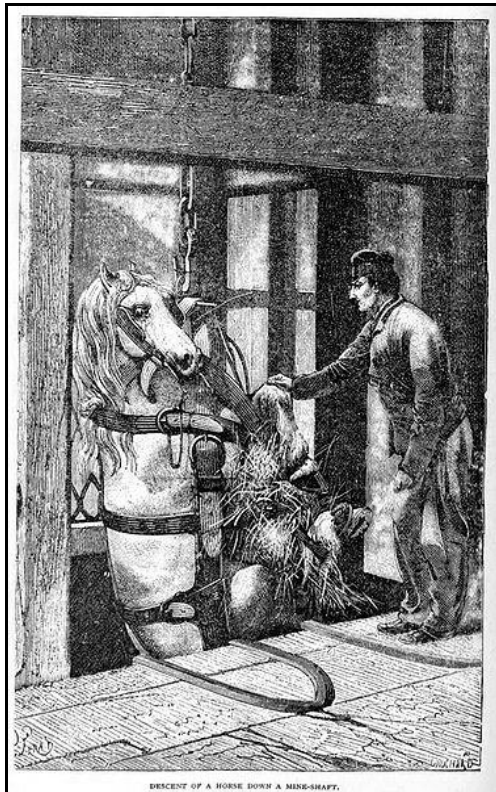
Coleorton No.3. Colliery (Bug & Wink) used ponies' underground, which was not the case at New Lount Colliery. Moving coal from the face to the shaft used to be left to the women and children, and many examples of this are shown and discussed earlier. During the first half of the nineteenth century, women and children transported coal in seams too low for horses, however, following the coal mines regulation act of 1842, women and girls and boys under the age of ten were forbidden to work underground. Therefore, the number of ponies used in the mines increased. They pulled the tubs, and took supplies to the coal face. The introduction of iron railed waggon ways meant that tubs / trams could be pulled by horses or ponies more easily. More horses came into use as distances from the face to the shaft increased. Because horses were capable of pulling heavier loads than men, this offset the higher cost of using horses. For example, in the early part of the eighteenth century the cost per day of keeping a horse was in the order of 5s 0d, whilst a drivers was about 1s 2d. Some stallions were used but geldings were preferred, whilst mares were very unusual underground. Both Shetland and Welsh ponies ten to twelve hands high were common, as were Dale horses but breeds varied throughout the coalfields. Of the large breeds of horses, Percherons were preferred to the British Shire horse due to the lack of feather on their legs which could clog up with coal dust and mud and cause infection.

In order to accommodate the horses, the height of the roof in some roadways needed to be increased much against the will of the mine owners, who insisted on keeping roof heights to a minimum still. In order to stop the ponies scraping their heads in such cramped conditions, special headgear was developed for them, but that was not always the case. The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1877 was the first legislation relating to the treatment of ponies underground. The fact that Coleorton Colliery was not opened till 1875 means that the ponies would have at least had to be looked after in accordance with this standard. Inspectors checked how the animals were treated. This resulted in the Coal Mines Act of 1911 in which the pit ponies Charter provided further legislation to regulate the condition of the underground stables, and the competence of those responsible for the ponies. The provision of eye guards and headgear became compulsory, and pit ponies should not start their working lives till the age of four with some capable of continuing into their twenties. Also, daily records had to be kept about the conditions of the stables, and a competent horse-keeper was required for every 15 horses. It was naturally necessary to provide the ponies with good training before they went underground in order to get maximum efficiency from them. Later, in 1949 and 1956, further regulation was brought in to control working conditions for pit ponies, and rules governing their welfare. Unfortunately, injuries to pit ponies were very common, and they frequently had to be put down because of broken legs and their feet getting stuck or damaged in the tub rails. The miners respected the sixth sense that the ponies seemed to have for danger. Many miners were saved from death or injury because their ponies suddenly stopped and refused to go on, then suddenly the roof would collapse in front of them. Their stable conditions were very important, and much was done to keep the ponies as comfortable as possible, which in turn lengthened their useful working lives. The ponies had to be able to raise their heads in the stables, and the height of the roof had to be seven feet when a five foot horse was in use. The horse should be able to relax its muscles, because it had to be able to work all day with its head low.

The ponies were lowered into the pit in a cage and by various other unsavoury apparatus and methods. The ponies lived underground, and only came to the surface for holidays or if the pit was closed for any reason. There were myths that ponies went blind through being in the dark underground for so long. This was not the case, however, the keepers had to be careful to introduce them to the light slowly, and it could take up to twenty four hours for them to become accustomed.

As more mechanisation was introduced into the mines, particularly with haulage, the need for so many ponies in the mines declined. In 1913, the records showed that there were 70,000 horses working underground. By the 1930's this had reduced to c.32,000. When the coal industry was nationalised in 1947 there were only 21,000 pit ponies. The numbers continued to dwindle, and by 1973 there were only 490. By 1984, a mere 55 ponies were still working. It may be surprising to learn however, that ponies were still in use in some mines till the early

1990s. The end of the ponies in Leicestershire was in 1968, and the last pony, named Sandy, was brought up from Snibston Colliery by Wilf Hall and Joe Whittaker, and retired to Barratt Mill in Moira.



Descent of horse down a mine shaft



Pit pony with skull cap and eye shield



Typical underground stables



Horse being tied up for sending down shaft

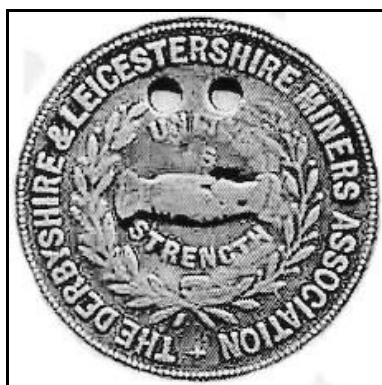
PART 7 - THE STRUGGLE FOR UNION RECOGNITION AND SURVIVAL 1842 - 1875.

The early 1840's were memorable years for the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire miners, for it was during that time that the general public first became fully acquainted with their way-of-life, through the publication of the Children's Employment Commission and the newspaper coverage of the industrial disputes of 1842 and 1844. Before 1842, the Leicestershire miner had no formal organisation to represent his interests, but in the face of the disastrous slump of that year, and encouraged by the activities of miners elsewhere, they formed a strike committee, led by Samuel Smith of Whitwick, Robert Howe of Snibstone and **William Walker of Coleorton**. On August 31st, the newly formed union struck against the colliery owners' insistence on a wage reduction by asking the miners to produce 24 cwt to the ton instead of the prevailing 21 cwt. The miners also wanted the owners to abolish their practice of confiscating tubs of coal without payment if the owners' weighman considered they were deficient in terms of the quality or quantity of coal brought to the surface. The owners argued that the reduction of the tonnage rate was necessary because of a sharp fall in the price of coal which was threatening to "annihilate nearly all profits" and that under the circumstances they could no longer afford to pay the miners for any slack or "sods" (small coal) which their tubs contained.

The outbreak of the dispute threw the whole coalfield into a state of confusion. There were rumours and reports that the miners were attacking railway and colliery property, and the magistrates panicked and called for assistance from the troops and policemen from Leicester. Troops of yeomanry moved into Coalville and Coleorton, and policemen descended on Lount and Peggs Green under the pretext of an imminent outbreak of Chartist inspired disturbance, or even insurrection, as was supposedly occurring in other coalfields. The magistrates' fears were not entirely without substance since the Leicestershire leaders who had been visited by miners from the Potteries, and South Staffordshire were bitter, and Chartist supported strikes were in progress. Leicestershire Chartists, too, were very active in many areas of the country, and extended their activities into the coalfield in the third week of August. John Pepper of Loughborough held meetings at Whitwick and Coalville during which he explained the Chartists' political programme. He also prophesied that a Chartist uprising was imminent, and urged his hungry audience to seize food from shopkeepers. None of these efforts influenced either the leadership or the bulk of the strikers. The leaders condemned Chartist agitators and urged the strikers "to shun them like the plague" and both of Pepper's meetings were concluded prematurely because the strikers "did not want anything from Chartism or politics". Rather, the strikers' mass meetings were opened with prayers for the political establishment, and "more particularly for the masters whose hearts they implored Heaven to open". When the strike was three weeks old, and the condition of miners and their families were reported to be "depressed in the extreme" – so much so that the police were not uncommonly found relieving them out of their own pockets - the managers of the two largest collieries, Stenson and Vaughan of Whitwick and Snibstone respectively, attempted to end the dispute by offering a compromise. The tonnage rate was to remain the same, but the miners were to be paid nothing for slack or "sods" and were to receive only 2d for a tub which contained light weight. The strike committee could not agree among themselves, and the miners, hitherto solid front now, crumbled as the Snibstone miners returned to work on the owners' terms, while those at Whitwick supported their representatives' call to remain on strike until "forfeits" were abolished altogether and the miners paid the same amount for every ton of coal which they produced. Within a few days, miners throughout the coalfield were back at work on the Snibstone terms, and the first organised coalfield-wide industrial dispute was at an end.

PART 8 - THE ORGANISATION OF ' THE LEICESTERSHIRE & SOUTH DERBYSHIRE MINER'S ASSOCIATIONS' 1887 - 1914

The forerunner of the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire branches of the National Union of Mineworkers (N.U.M.) – The Leicestershire Miners' Association (L.M.A.) and the South Derbyshire Amalgamated Miners' Association (S.D.A.M.A.) – were both formed in 1887 respectively, and had a similar organisation. The basic unit was the "colliery lodge", which elected officials who were responsible for organising union activities at the colliery. Each lodge was also responsible for electing one of its members to the council, and for nominating and electing officers. The council was the supreme government of the Association and consisted of a full time salaried secretary / agent (responsible for the general running of the union and negotiation with employers), a honorary president, the treasurer of the association, and a delegate elected by each of the lodges. The council had an executive committee which comprised the officers and a small number of other members elected from amongst the ranks of the council. The secretary was undoubtedly the most powerful member of the council, though he was far from being its master, as in the case of Thomas Chambers, agent for the L.M.A., shows. In March 1900 he was suspended for a fortnight for "inefficiency" and was informed that "he should not neglect his duties for more than a week under pain of expulsion". In July 1902, he was again suspended for "neglect of duty", and following a district ballot on the question, he was dismissed and Levi Lovett the honorary president elected in his place. The activities of the lodges were carefully regulated by the council. No new lodge could be formed, nor one disbanded, without its sanction. **One lodge, Newbold Glory, was "discontinued as a lodge of the Association" in February 1890 for returning to work during a wages dispute, but was re-admitted in March 1892. (See the later article on Newbold Glory / Staunton / Worthington colliery).**



Membership Token for the 'D&L Miners Association'



Membership token for the local 'Coalville & District Miners Association' (Coleorton Colliery)

The services the miner received for his 6d a week (3d for boys) were considerable. The union was responsible for protecting and advancing wage rates and working conditions, an activity which was particularly effective during upward movements in the trade cycle. It provided dispute pay during stoppages, while generally effectively preventing blacklegging, and out of work pay for members who were unemployed, victimised, on really short time working or suffering from industrial injury. The Associations also fought compensation cases and the S.D.A.M.A. in addition provided funeral and orphan benefits.

Both unions advanced their members' in other ways, vis-à-vis the owners. **In May 1914, for instance, a boy at Coleorton was paid unemployment benefit and legal proceedings were taken against a deputy for striking him. Travelling expenses were also given to miners who went in search of work in other coalfields, such as William Brooks of**

Coleorton who eventually returned to the coalfield after finding only temporary work elsewhere. On several occasions, the owners raised the price of the miners' concessionary coal contrary to agreements with the union, and were persuaded to lower them again by union pressure.

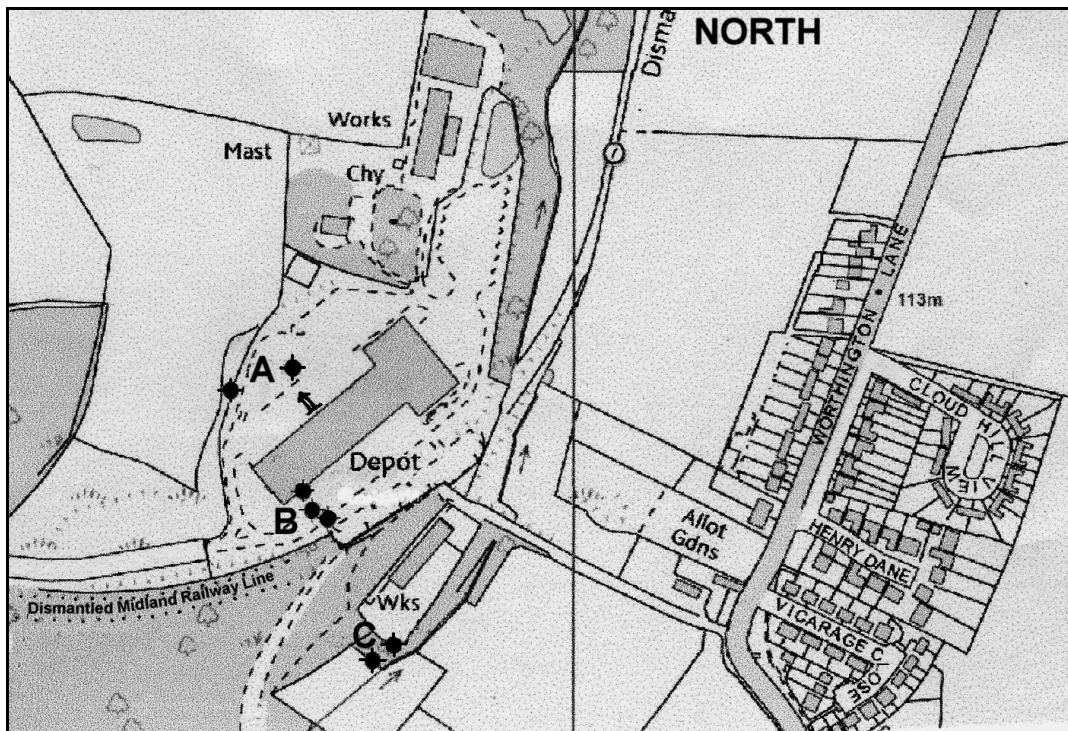


Outcropping / Coal picking during the 1893 lock-out at Donisthorpe Pit

It was decided to include the above poignant photograph as a reminder of why the miners needed to have organised representation against the colliery owners. The photograph speaks for itself.

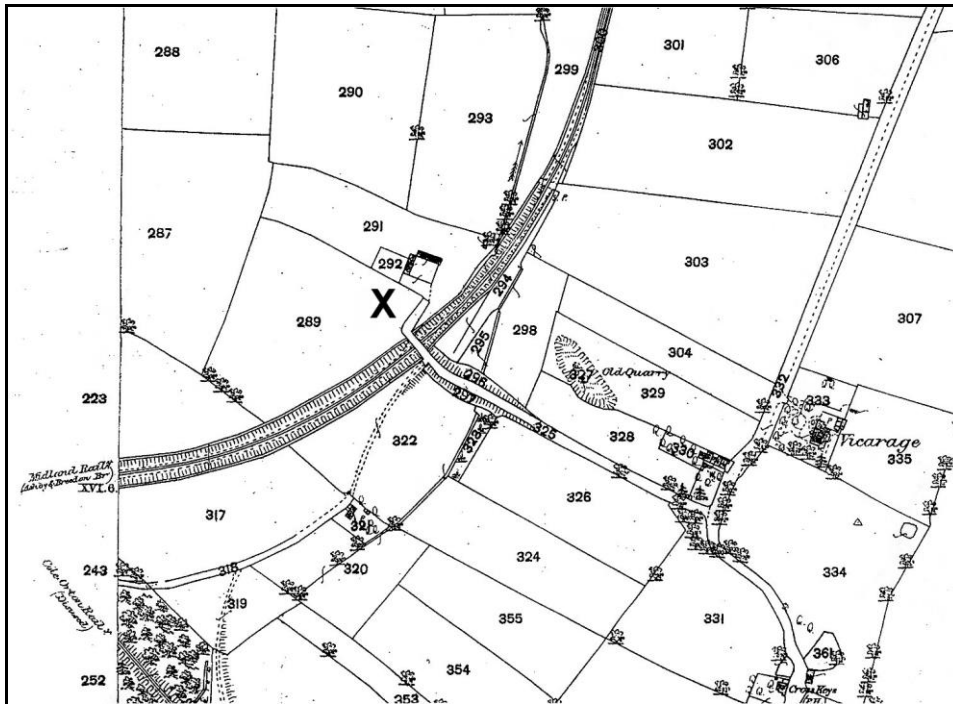
PART 9 – COAL MINING ACTIVITY ADJACENT TO WHAT BECAME THE ‘NEWBOLD PIPEWORKS’ SITE

The author has decided to include those Newbold Colliery's that were adjacent to the site of the subsequent 'Newbold Pipeworks' complex, as some records have been located for these, and it is considered that this area was an important part of Newbold's industrial history. The following maps have been included in order to help the reader gain a better understanding of the geography of the area in relation to both the past and present.



An extract of an up to date map showing the various coal mining shafts that were sunk on the old “Newbold Pipeworks” site, and which are referred to in the following text. The shafts are accurately located on the map, and in order to give an idea of scale, the distance from the first shaft at C to the site entrance road is 113.5 Metres.

NORTH



An extract of an 1882 surveyed map, which can be related to the previous map. Note the old quarry, which presumably supplied clay and coal, for the ceramics activity which was first thought to have started on the site. The building shown at X may have been related to this.



An old aerial photograph of the Newbold Pipeworks site and Midland Railway line. This shows the old buildings related to the "Worthington Colliery" which is described later and are marked W on the photograph

STAUNTON COLLIERY 1885 – MARKED A ON FIRST MAP

The original name of this mine was “Staunton Colliery”, although it was known by other names such as “Worthington Clash” and the “Newbold Glory Mine”. It is marked **A** on the first preceding map and the aerial photograph. The mine was originally sunk and opened in 1885 by John Lakin. Two 9 feet diameter shafts were sunk, and the following extract from the healeyhero website provides details of the shafts, cages, coal seams and depth. There was also an adit from this colliery which is designated by the arrow on the first map and is thought to have discharged water into the stream to the south:-

2 shafts 9ft (2.74m) dia, 101 yards (92m) deep. (Colin Owen states in his book that the shafts were originally sunk to the Middle Lount Coal at 263 feet, but later deepened to the Nether Lount at 307 feet).

2 single deck cages, DC pitch pine 33 ft (10m) high and UC 15 ft (4.57m) with portable engine.

Stinker coal 4ft (1.2m) at 17 yards (15m).

Main 6ft (1.8m) at 45 yards (41m).

Smoile 4ft 6in (1.37m) + 3ft (0.90m) clay at 52 yards (47m).

Upper Lount 2ft 6in (0.76m) at 67 yards (61m).

Middle Lount 5ft 6in (1.68m) 3ft (0.90m) good house coal + 3ft (0.90m) clay at 85 yards (78m).

Nether 6ft (1.8m) hard steam coal at 97 yards (89m).

Roaster seam 2ft 10in (0.86m) good house coal + 4ft 6in (1.37m) clay at 105 yards (96m).

Fireclay 4ft (1.2m) at 117 yards (107m).

Stanhope 3ft 3in (0.99m) good house coal + 3ft 6in (1.07m) clay at 125 yards (114m).

Presumably, the colliery was developed on this site due to its proximity to the Midland Railway line. However, there was thought to be some industrial activity on this site at that time, most likely associated with brick making.

The site was highly unfavourable in several respects, lying close to the Thringstone Fault, and the outcrop of the Trias. All the strata dipped steeply, and in fact, were vertical on the eastern side of the workings. The difficulty of mining was greatly increased by the presence of numerous old hollows filled with water. It was conditions such as this that contributed to the following disaster only eighteen months after the colliery was opened.

On Oct 6th 1886, a fatal accident occurred at Staunton Harold Colliery because of a combination of “a complete lack of practical knowledge” and “a total disregard for all rules and regulations” by the management, when re-opening old workings, with the result that four persons – including John Lakin (aged 60) and his two sons William (aged 30) and George (aged 35), plus a pony driver named John Stewart (aged 14) who were all overcome by “choke-damp” and died. The ventilation system was deficient in every respect, and all the necessary precautions required, such as making adequate bore holes, were neglected. The Lakins are all buried, along with their mother and wife in the Wesleyan Methodist Cemetery, Griffydham. The following report is taken from the healeyhero website:-

*On 15 Oct (should say 6th) 1886 a tragic accident occurred when a Mr Lakin with his son George, the Underviewer, entered the mine and went into some blackdamp escaping from an old mine. William and a Mr Stewart (pony driver) entered the **Staunton** mine to search for them and all four were overcome by blackdamp or carbon dioxide gas and died. **Lakin's widow continued to work the colliery with William Richards as Manager (previously Manager at Coleorton).***

It is thought that the colliery became known as the “Newbold Glory” mine for the following reason. When “The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners’ Associations” was formed in 1887, “Colliery Lodges” were established around the district, which elected officials who were responsible for organising union activities at the colliery etc. **One lodge, “Newbold Glory”, was “discontinued as a lodge of the Association” in February 1890 for returning to work during a wages dispute, but was re-admitted in March 1892. It is assumed that this is how the pit was referred to as “Newbold Glory”.** The output of the colliery was small, as it generally employed no more than 30 men.

The 1896 list of mines in the Midland District shown previously, confirm that the colliery employed 26 surface and 8 underground workers at that time, and only household and manufacturing coal was being mined from the Middle Lount Seam. The manager at that time was James Richards. He was also recorded as being the under manager in 1897 with 25 underground miners working the Middle Lount Seam and 8 surface workers.

A colliery described as Staunton Colliery is shown on the 1903 O/S map alongside “Newbold Brick Co Ltd”. It is thought that the colliery closed c.1910. According to Colin Owen’s book, Lakins executors had, at the end of the nineteenth century, already sold Staunton Colliery to “The Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Co. Ltd” of “Sutton and Company”. They eventually constructed the large sanitary pipe company nearby, and presumably ran the brickworks on the site which eventually became known as “Newbold Brickworks”.

British Coal records show that outcropping / open casting was carried out extensively around the site of Staunton Colliery at one time.



Hand drilling holes for explosives (photographs from the healeyhero website, thought to be of Staunton Colliery)

WORTHINGTON COLLIERY – MARKED B ON FIRST MAP

Following the takeover, and subsequent closure of Staunton Colliery by “The Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Co. Ltd”, they still found it expedient to raise coal on the site. The author feels confident that the following information, combined with the records of the three shafts marked **B** on the preceding map which are listed as belonging to “Worthington Colliery”, proves the existence of this new colliery. Further evidence is shown on the 1923 O/S map which shows “Worthington Colliery”. This colliery had an upcast shaft and a downcast shaft. It is thought that the third shaft shown on the earlier map was a “bull shaft”, used to pump water into from the pit bottom which was then discharged out of this shaft, presumably into the stream to the south.

Some of the following information was taken from the healeyhero website:-

The mine was sunk in 1911 and the main seam opened Jan 1912.

Shaft Depths 364 ft 5 in (111 m) and 238 ft 3 in to Nether Lount Coal 5 ft 3 in (1.6m) thick seam. The workings in this seam were very uncertain and it would appear that there are no known surveys of the workings to be able to plot same, therefore all works in that seam to be treated with suspicion.

Seams Worked and dates.

Smoile – April 1913 to 1916

Nether Lount – 1914 to 1916

Roaster - 1914 to 1916

Middle Lount – 1917 to 1919..... coal 4 ft 0 in (1.22m), bastard clay 1 ft 0 in (0.33m), fireclay 3 ft 0 in (0.91m)

Some coal leased from Sir George Beaumont and some freehold. Workings met old works.

Manpower

1913 – 56 underground / 13 surface

1914 – 42 u/g, 10s/f

1915 – 72 u/g, 22s/f

1916 – 115 u/g, 40 s/f

1917 – 122 u/g, 29 s/f

1918 – 131 u/g, 33 s/f

1919 – 175 u/g, 29 s/f

Managers

1912 – 1917 Robert Miller (301)

1917 – 1919 J. Robinson (3970)

Under manager

1917 – 1919 D. Ross (570 /2nd)

Surveyors

1919 – James Tonge, first surveyor, James Meakin (1794)

Fatal Accidents – None known

Mining on the site was finally abandoned in 1919, putting 200 colliers out of work, but both shafts were kept open until the 1940's to maintain a check on water levels.

The buildings to the extreme left of the Pipeworks, and marked W on the preceding ariel photograph, are thought to be those of the old "Worthington Colliery"

LOUNT BRICKWORKS PIT? – MARKED C ON FIRST MAP

We have no real evidence about this pit, except that two shafts were sunk in this exact locality, and are recorded as such in Coal records. However, the following appears on the healeyhero website, and the author believes that this was possibly referring to these shafts, although clearly the colliery could only have been working for a few months if this information is correct :-

Colliery's sunk or opened in 1901

Lount (The Lount Brick and Sanitary Pipe Co Ltd) - Main, Smoile and Fireclay. Under manager W. Cooper 4/3.

Colliery's closures in 1901

Lount Brickworks Pit (The Lount Brick and Sanitary Pipe Co Ltd.)

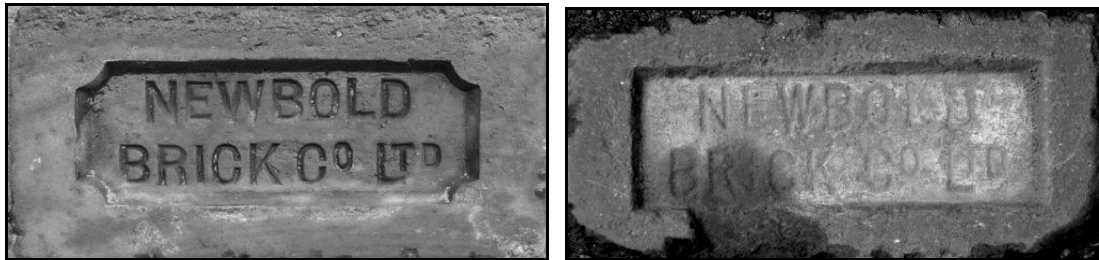
Main seam, mouth and 5 yards (4.5m) deep shaft - AJA Orchard Surveyor.

NEWBOLD BRICK CO LTD

“Newbold Brick Co Ltd”, is shown on the 1903 O/S map alongside “Staunton Colliery. It is thought to have been owned by “The Lount brick and Sanitary Pipe company” prior to being taken over by “The Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Co. Ltd”. Presumably, both clay and coal were being extracted for use in the making of the bricks and sanitary pipes and for firing the kilns, as these were both being manufactured on the site at some stage.

Presumably the “Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company Ltd” went on to develop the “Newbold Pipeworks” on the site also. The writer is of the opinion, that when the Worthington Colliery on the site closed in 1919, Old Lount Colliery 1920-1924 and New Lount Colliery 1924-1968 were sunk and opened. We know that the latter, by 1929, was delivering over 31,000 tons of Stoneware-Clay to Newbold Pipeworks. Details of these colliery’s follow.

There is a record that the brickworks were still operating in 1939, but it is not known exactly when they finally closed. Presumably, the substantial brickworks and pipeworks industry developed on the site due to the local availability of raw material (clay and coal) and the advantage of its immediate proximity to the Midland Railway line.



Examples of Newbold Bricks



Newbold Brick Co Ltd chimney

PART 10 - CYLINDER PIT c.1835 – c.1860

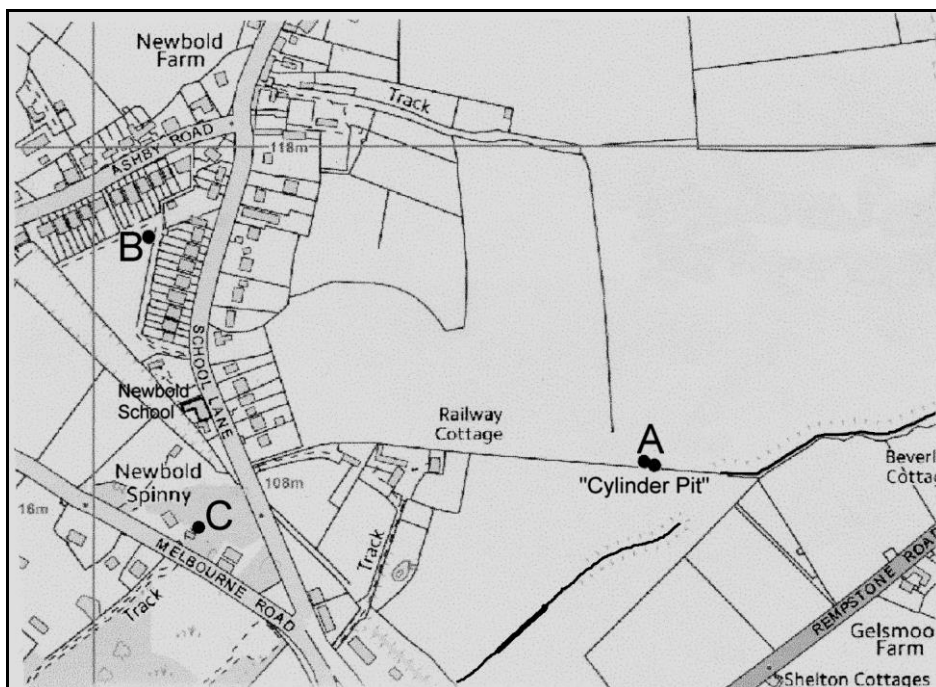
It is recorded that a colliery was being worked in Newbold in 1835. Evidence suggests that this colliery was in fact named "Cylinder Pit" which is the name appended to the shaft information. Two shafts were sunk which were 1.5 metres diameter and 70.5 metres deep. Because of the severe water problems in that area, it is more likely that one of them was a pumping shaft. They were approximately 10 metres apart and are marked **A** on the map below. They are approx 360 metres from School Lane following the field boundary line and approx 207 metres in from the Rempstone Road in a direct line.

Benjamin Walker owned a farm at Newbold which is presumed to be Newbold Farm, on the basis that the surrounding field on which the shafts were sunk, were part of the farm at that time. The farm is shown on the 1884 O/S map on the next page. It can be assumed that Benjamin worked the Colliery based on the statement below. The colliery was of course adjacent to the Coleorton Railway. Although we do not know the exact dates during which the colliery was in operation, from the following statement, it was clearly being worked by 1827, and abandonment records suggest that it would probably have closed in the mid 1850s. Benjamin Walker had developed various mining interests by this time, and is mentioned earlier under articles on collieries in the are of "The Smoile" at Lount.

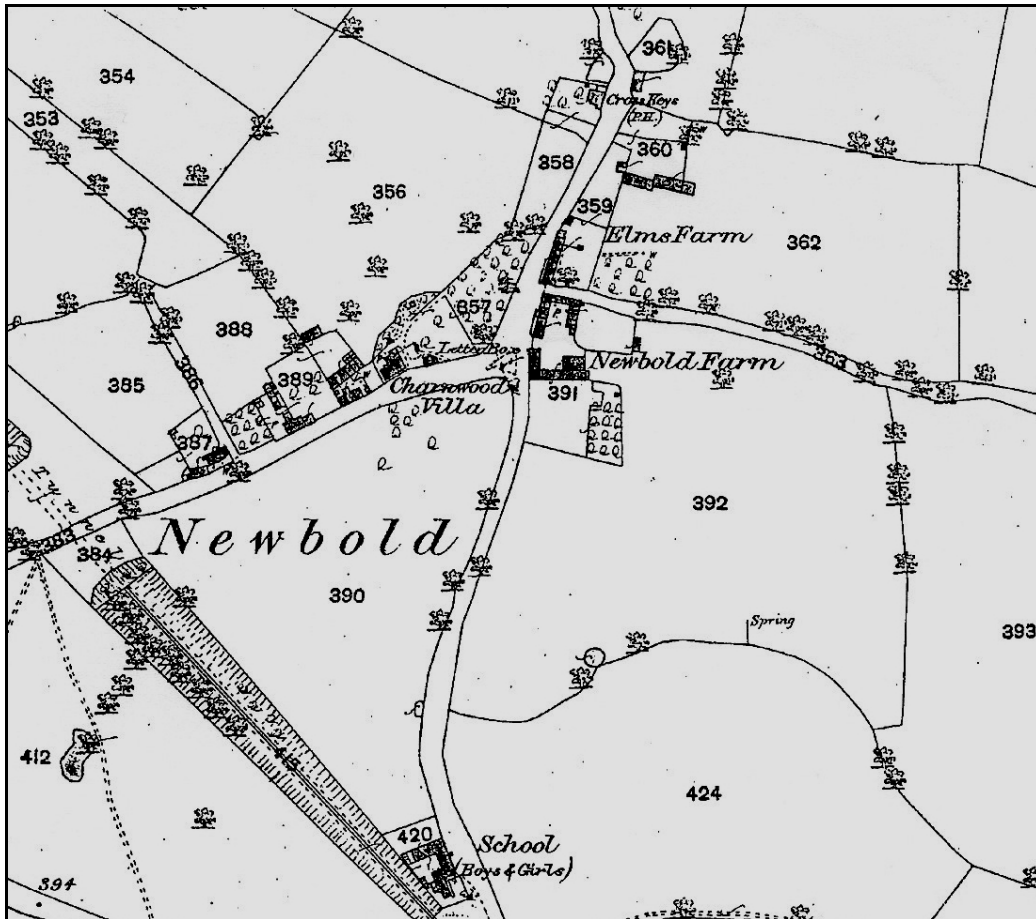
Please note the following, repeated from an earlier section:-

Further evidence of the survival of the industry, is provided by a survey of the Beaumont estates by Edward Knight shortly after the death of Sir George Howland Beaumont 7th Baronet in 1827. This showed that Benjamin Walker's farm at Newbold was in a reasonable state apart from the condition of the fields and fencing around his colliery which suffered from the "unruly conduct of the people at the coal pits".

Trade Directories of 1846 and 1861 list Benjamin Walker (b.1785 in Coleorton) as a coal master and farmer and living at "White House Hall Farm", Coleorton. This is confirmed in the 1841 /1851 census also. He had a large family with him (wife and 7 daughters), and had clearly moved from Newbold Farm by this time. Six of his daughters were born in Worthington, and one in Coleorton. His wife was born in 1791 in Worthington.



Map based on recent O/S Map although it should be noted that the location for Newbold Farm is miss-leading (see following 1884 map for correct location).



Section from an 1884 O/S map showing Newbold Farm which was owned by Benjamin Walker together with the adjacent field in which “Cylinder Pit” was located.

It is interesting to note that on the 1777 Prior Map shown earlier in the book, that an atmospheric fire engine (Newcomen) is shown in the vicinity of cylinder pit, suggesting that mining activity could have been taking place at a much earlier date in this vicinity.

PART 11 - LOUNT COLLIERIES 1920 - 1968

OLD LOUNT COLLIERY 1920 - 1924

Little seems to be known locally about this colliery which was sunk in 1920, and closed in 1924. It was recorded as being sunk the year following the closure of the "Staunton / Newbold Glory / Worthington Colliery" referred to earlier. The author believes that this was the pilot mine for "New Lount Colliery, particularly as it eventually had the same owners – "Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company Ltd". When it was first sunk, W J Hardy was given as the owner, and it changed hands to the "Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company Ltd" in 1922 of which Hardy was a director. J. Banborough, who was the manager of this colliery was transferred to New Lount as under manager, and he worked there from 1924 to 1933. The coal originally mined was "Middle Lount Seam" and there were three mine mouths. It was apparently abandoned when old mine works were met.

There is a record of a shaft being sunk in Newbold Spinney which was 30 metres deep and 2.7 metres diameter. In 1963, a 40 feet plus diameter hole opened up and was filled in. On the map in **section 11**, the approximate location of this shaft is marked **C** in Newbold Spinney. The author believes this was "Old Lount Colliery". An air shaft is shown at **B** on the same map, but it is not known which pit this was associated with.

Apparently, the old locals referred to the field behind Newbold School as cylinder field, and it could have been associated with some form of cylinder engine used in association with the air shaft. Alternatively, the air shaft could have been connected with Cylinder Pit workings described previously.

There follows a list of the number of workers (information taken from the healeyhero website):-

1921 109 Underground 36 Surface

1922 123 Underground 38 Surface

1923 123 Underground 38 Surface

1924 Suspended / Abandoned

Management

Manager 1920/1921 John W Lyon (670)

Under Manager 1920/1921 E Pilkington (8209 2nd). No under manager appointed after this date

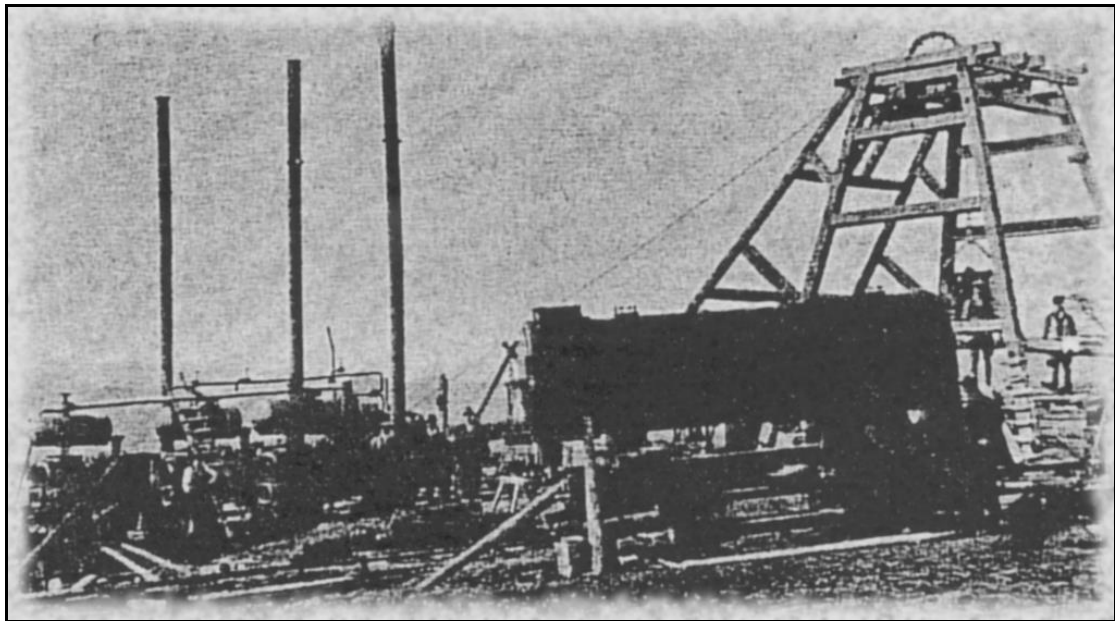
Manager 1921/1924 J Banborough (3530). Subsequently transferred to New Lount as under manager

Surveyor D M Morley

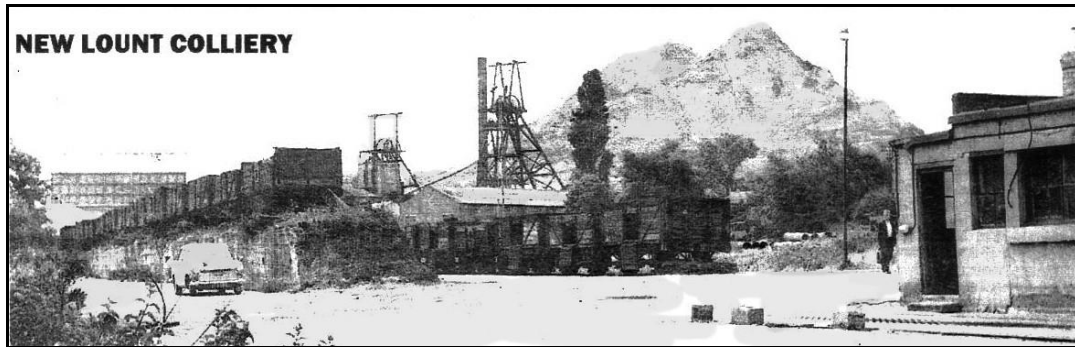
NEW LOUNT COLLIERY 1924 - 1968



Photograph probably taken c.1930, based on the size of the Spoil Heap



The sinking of New Lount colliery in 1924



Photograph taken from pit yard showing head stocks, coal wagons and pit banks (spoil heaps). In the distance is the conveyor system which took the coal from all the seams to the screens. Photograph early 1960's



Pit Head Baths Check pre 1947



Pay Check

New Lount was the last traditional deep mine colliery in the local area, although it was the shallowest pit in the Leicestershire Coalfield. The owners were "The Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company Ltd".

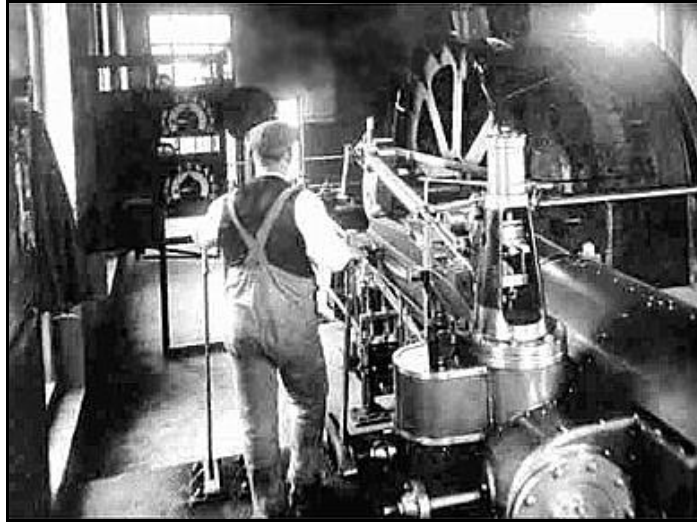
The site of the colliery was in the extreme north of the Leicestershire Coalfield, and initially comprised of some 775 acres in lease from Sir George Arthur Hamilton Beaumont, and 62½ acres of freehold owned by the company. This was extended by a further 695 acres leased from Earl Ferrers in 1929, and additional areas of Sir George Beaumont's land in 1930 to the north and west, which consisted of 288 acres.

The main boundaries at this time were on the North and East - the "Thringstone Fault", and on the North and North West - "Outcrops". On the South, the arbitrary line between New Lount and Coleorton, approximately from Outwoods Farm to Springwood formed the boundary.

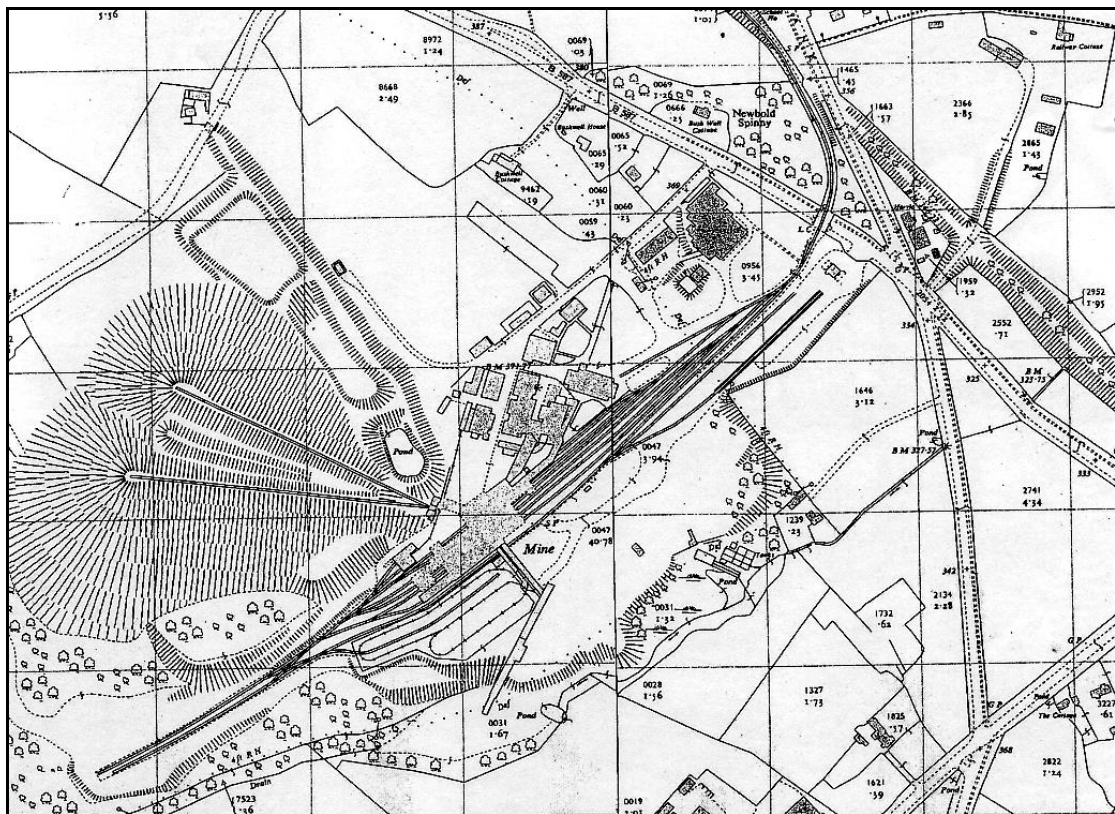
According to a brief official history given by the company, the sinking of the first shaft, No.1 (the downcast), was begun in March 1924. The second shaft, No.2 (the upcast), later called the "Jackie Pit", which was the normal Leicestershire description for the upcast, was started in May 1924. The completion date of both shafts was end of September 1924. Unfortunately, the Coalville times issued on Sept 26th and Dec 26th 1924 gave different dates, however, it is assumed the companies official version to be the correct one.

Both shafts were 15 feet internal diameter and brick lined, and initially sunk to a depth of 225 feet, as far as the "Upper Roaster Coal Seam". **The official announcement of the start of coal turning at the pit was March 21st 1925.** The winding engines for both were supplied by John Wood of Wigan. Below is a photograph of one of the winding engines in 1957.

It should be remembered that shortly after New Lount Colliery opened, the 1926 miners strike took place and this is featured later



Employee statistics follow later, but in 1926 there were 598 men (underground and surface) employed at New Lount, and by 1935 the number had reached 1035, by which time the annual output had reached 356,219 tons, the second largest output in the Leicestershire Coalfield.



Section of 1928 O/S map showing New Lount site layout

The names of the various seams of coal mined at New Lount were –

Upper Roaster

Lower roaster

Roaster

Nether Lount 5ft 3in (1.60m)

Yard Bat 4in (0.1m) coal 2ft 8in (0.81m)

Middle Lount Coal 1ft 0in (0.30m), dirt 1in (0.02m), coal 4ft 0in (1.22m)

The last three seams were abandoned on 23/7/1968.

There is also a record of a high main seam being started in 1957- 6ft 6in (2.0m)

Like all the numerous older pits in this area, there was large quantities of high quality stoneware clay to be had, for which there was a considerable demand in the manufacture of salt glazed sanitary pipes, which had been made locally for many years. Two local companies, “Lount Pipe Works” followed by “Newbold Pipe Works”, used the clay from New Lount. Newbold Pipeworks was also owned by “The Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company”, and the bulk of the clay went there by lorry. By May 1929, the latest dry cleaning plant and screen had been erected, and the two shafts were capable of raising 2,000 tons per day. Annual output was now 256,341 tons of coal and 31,851 tons of stoneware clay. By 1933, the clay output had dropped to 6,000 tons and clay production from New Lount Colliery ceased. **At this point, it is worth mentioning that in 1930, the output of Leicestershire pits was 2.02 Million tons, against 45.9 Million tons for Yorkshire.**

New Lount Colliery became known locally as “Clash”, and apparently this came from the fact that it was a very busy and productive colliery with many different projects undertaken, resulting in clashing of these taking place on a regular basis. Unlike “Coleorton No.3. Colliery (Bug and Wink)”, there were no ponies used underground at New Lount, as mechanized haulage systems had been introduced by this time.

“Pillar and Stall” working was reportedly carried out at New Lount till c.1933, and prior to mechanized drilling of boring holes for explosives (electrical,hydraulic,compressed air leg) all holes had to be drilled by hand as is shown in the following photograph, thought to be taken c.1930.



“Mighty” Jim (Jack) Wardle with his son Willie, “manually” drilling holes in the coal face for explosives

Various locos were used to haul coal to the LMSR line South West of Worthington Station, and for half its length it followed the route of the old "Coleorton Railway". **This can be seen clearly on the following 1962 O/S map.**



The first 0-4-0 saddle tank engine, originally named Lount, but later changed to George Stephenson, was purchased from Hawthorn Leslie of Newcastle on Tyne in 1924 followed in 1929 by the second 0-4-0 saddle tank engine from the same company, which was named Lady Beaumont. Another loco was acquired second hand from Exhall Colliery in Warwickshire around 1938 and named Jane. All locomotives carried a green livery. All three locos were scrapped on site in the early 1960's. Two 4-wheeled diesel hydraulic locos also worked at the colliery, these being acquired in 1963 and 1964.



A New Lount private owner wagon delivered by the "Central wagon Company" of Wigan in 1939



Locos at New Lount - George Stevenson on the left and Thomas Hill Diesel No. 1. on the right, with the colliery in the background

TELEPHONE TELEGRAMS | ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH, 101.

HOUSE, STEAM, AND MANUFACTURING COALS.

HEAD OFFICE:

STONWARE CLAYS.

NEW LOUNT COLLIERY,

NR. ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH,

18 NOV 1936 193

LESCOL
VITRIFIED STONWARE
PIPES & FITTINGS.

IN A/C. WITH
NEW LOUNT & COLEORTON COLLIERIES.
(THE LEICESTERSHIRE COLLIERY AND PIPE COMPANY, LTD.)

Kindly cross your Cheques 'National Provincial Bank, Ltd.'

54 OCT 1936	To Coal	£ 28 18 10
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908 THE LEICESTERSHIRE COLLIERY & PIPE CO., LTD.,
RECEIVED WITH THANKS FROM FOR & ON BEHALF OF THE COMPANY.

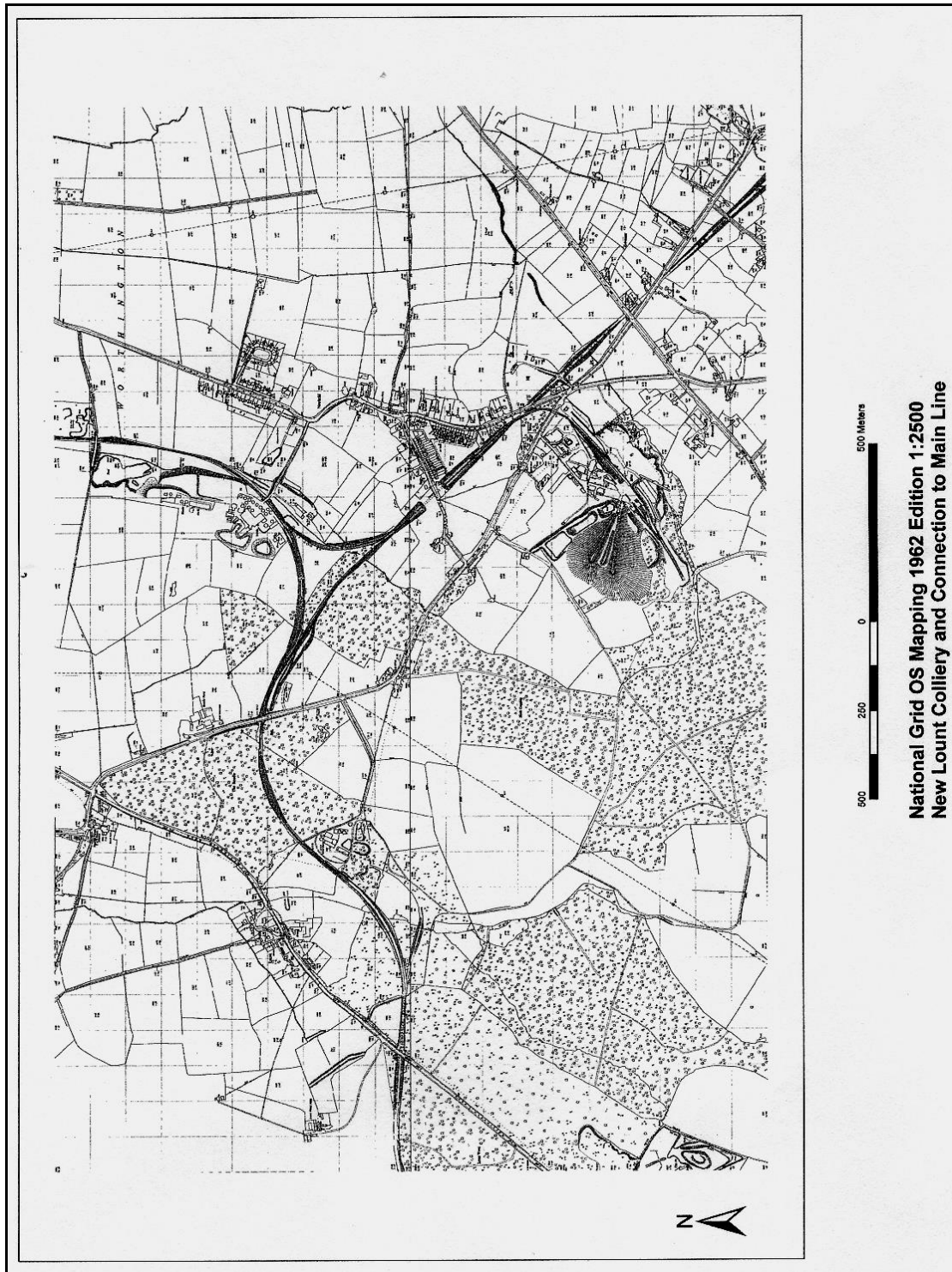
The Hauxfield Bricks & Pipe Works

DATE 17 DEC 1936

THE SUM OF			THE SUM OF		
£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
28	18	10			

Coal and Clay Accounts Net, due for payment 15th of the following Month.

It is rather interesting that the above bill and receipt has “New Lount and Coleorton Collieries” as the account name. As Coleorton Colliery had closed in 1933, they presumably still hadn’t ordered new paperwork.



National Grid OS Mapping 1962 Edition 1:2500
New Lount Colliery and Connection to Main Line



The above show the remains of the weighbridges adjacent to the old Coleorton Railway tunnel which passed under Ashby Road, Newbold. The train pulling the loaded wagons, passed by the weighbridge into the tunnel, and then reversed over the weighbridge in order to record the weight of each individual wagon. A photograph of the tunnel at Newbold, is included in the section on the history of Coleorton Railway.

There are also remains in the form of a few bricks, for the “signal box” which controlled the railway line junction from New Lount Colliery.

New Lount was the first colliery in the Leicestershire Coalfield to have pit head baths, and these were opened on July 12th 1930 by Frank Hodges, who at this time was not shown as being on the board of Directors at New Lount. However he was recorded in the press as officially being appointed Managing Director and Chairman in 1933.

The following are interesting miner's recollections, partly referring to New Lount baths, which appears in "The Leicestershire Miners", Volume 2 by Colin Griffin :-

If the accident record was disappointing between the wars, so was the record on an essential element in the improvement of the miners' health and well being: the provision of the pit head baths. In 1937 there were only two collieries with pit head baths in Leicestershire despite the widespread belief that "the pit head baths is an extremely sound investment from every point of view". Frank Smith recalled that "Before there were baths.... I used to get so wet and stinking wet we used to walk over the fields to where I lived to avoid coming through the streets, because you looked so filthy and stank". Moreover, if the miner was "freezing cold" when he arrived home in wet clothes and simply stood in front of the fire "to thaw out" then "your trousers would stand up like they were made of concrete". Washing facilities at home varied enormously "If you'd got a bath at home you were lucky....otherwise they used to take their clothes off and just stood there round the fire drying, filthy clothes and everything else and only a bit of sink to wash in....they hadn't got anywhere to wash properly....they'd perhaps got no facilities for hot water or they just boiled the kettle on the fire and that sort of thing. There were scores of places like that there were". Eric Saunders lived in a house without facilities for boiling water: "You'd have to go round the back and wash in a tub, a great big tub of cold water. I've washed in snow when there's been ten foot of snow, my brother used to bath me in it. The Summers family boiled water in a big iron pot and since there were seven miners in the household washing arrangements had to be adjusted accordingly, "me Dad, for he'd have anything to eat and drink, would take his shirt off and wash right down as far as he could....I'd have me meal without washing....it used to be 9 or 10 o'clock at night before you'd wash you....I'd eat then go footballing, go out dog-training and all such as that".

In some households, the lack of privacy was as much of a problem as the lack of easily available water. "You know you could not have a proper wash unless you locked yourself away....I don't know how some of them managed, they must have been real embarrassed, in front of the children and everything else, you know, must have been naked....Must have been, had got to do it".



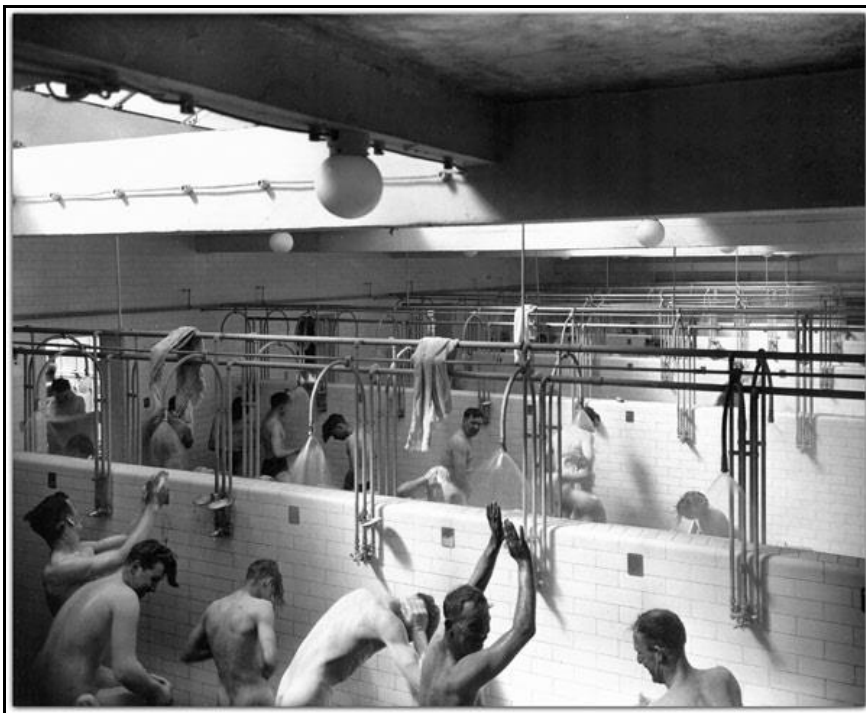
Miner bathing at home

*It is little wonder under these circumstances that most miners' believed that "baths was the finest thing ever brought out for miners' and that the opening of pithead baths was an occasion for a public celebration. **Frank Hodges boasted at the opening of the first pithead baths in Leicestershire, New Lount, that "they accommodated 1,008 men each of whom is provided with two lockers, one for his home clothes and one for his pit clothes. I have seen them described in one of our daily papers as "baths de luxe". Well, is there no reason why miners should not have a little luxury as well as other members of the community? There are 72 cubicles, with separate sections for the clean and dirty***

clothes, for the unwashed miner and the washed miner. The plans would have enabled a canteen to be added but the Welfare Committee cannot pay this out of the Bath Fund. Time was when pithead baths were regarded as an impossible dream. It is not so long ago since their introduction into this country was opposed by the men for many reasons. Many popular superstitions were behind this opposition. The first was that nobody could wash the miners back like the "missus" or that too frequent washing of the back resulted in muscular weakness, that no-one could dry clothes like the good wife and perhaps lurking behind these superstitions was the thought that the miners would be called upon to pay the cost of installation and upkeep. I believe the demand for cleanliness and hygiene among the miners of this country is now practically universal....

There is no reason why a workman should not leave the colliery spick and span in absolutely clean dried clothing, with resulting improvement in his health, and I believe an improvement in his "morale and social standing".

Thomas Gowdridge, the miners' leader "felt sure that the baths would be appreciated by the miners and also by their wives and mothers", while George Brooks, one of Lount trustees, urged that "in using the baths they would be kind and courteous to one another. Don't use bad language and if you see a brother in distress, assist him. The miner in the past has been looked upon as someone who produces coal. After today....the whole world will say: these men are not only miners but gentlemen".



A typical pithead baths scene

Pit head baths tokens became available after the 1920's (see earlier photograph). The baths were free for the miners, although they had to pay for the use of the colliery's soap and towels (2d or 3d per week) unless they provided their own. **In 1938, an extension to the pithead baths and a new canteen was opened.**



THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE PROBLEMS WITH VOLUNTARY ABSENTEEISM

The national realisation of an impending coal crisis in the spring of 1941 raised the spectre, as in the First World War, of the miner prospering from the requirements of "total war" and not giving of his utmost to win the tonnage of coal that his country required for survival and victory. The L.M.A. (Leicestershire Miners Association) of which T.Gowdridge was the secretary, stoutly defended its members, but the debate on the extent and cause rumbled on in the press. It commenced with a letter at the beginning of March, which suggested that absenteeism is as bad now as at any time in Leicestershire mining history, and was the product of hundreds of young single men saying that they were not going to work regularly to pay income tax.

Legal proceedings brought by New Lount management in the autumn of 1941 revealed that there was some evidence to support this claim, and in 1942, a persistent New Lount offender received 6 weeks hard labour.

Various correspondents put forward other reasons for absenteeism such as - "the introduction of machinery had intensified the speed and pace which the hewer had to keep up, and unless he was 100 per cent fit, he had to stay away to recoup his energies". **Frank Hodges, who was Managing Director and Chairman of New Lount Colliery**, would not accept any of the points or excuses made. He said "that there were simply too many men on the colliery books who were "work shy", with the result that 34,167 shifts had been lost in Leicestershire on account of avoidable absenteeism for 13 weeks ending Feb 22nd 1941, and output was an estimated 200,000 tons less than it should have been". **Gowdridge then attacked Frank Hodges** for this gross misrepresentation, observing that 83 per cent of these shifts lost were due to unavoidable or justifiable absenteeism. In his view, only 33,037 had been lost, and he reminded the public that the vast majority of Leicestershire miners responded magnificently to the call for increased production by returning a 22 per cent increase in output the previous year, and he appealed to the few who willfully or habitually absented themselves from work to pull their weight in these critical times.

Following a propaganda war during the summer of 1941, **Frank Hodges** claimed that the effort had reduced absenteeism by 50 per cent, and it reflected credit on those workmen who had been influenced by it, and whose consciences had been awakened by having the hard facts brought home to them. Gowdridge, was not, however, prepared to congratulate him on what he considered was **Hodges** earlier statistical slight of hand and told him..."This is a problem that must be tackled in a practical and progressive manner, for miners are human beings, not automatons, and as such can only work within the limits of their physique. No, Mr. Hodges, your theories are without substance. Everyone connected with the mining industry would welcome a satisfactory solution to the absenteeism problem, but this cannot be achieved by shouting Improvement! Improvement! Improvement! when there is no improvement. Remember that the nation is at war **Mr. Hodges**, and that in the problem of speeding up output, there is no place except for those who can promote ideas that will lead to ultimate success".

New Lount had the reputation of having an ill-disciplined work force compared to "settled" collieries like Whitwick, and race meetings at Doncaster and Nottingham in September pushed the absenteeism rate up to 8 per cent once more which was sufficient to close down production on a whole coal face.

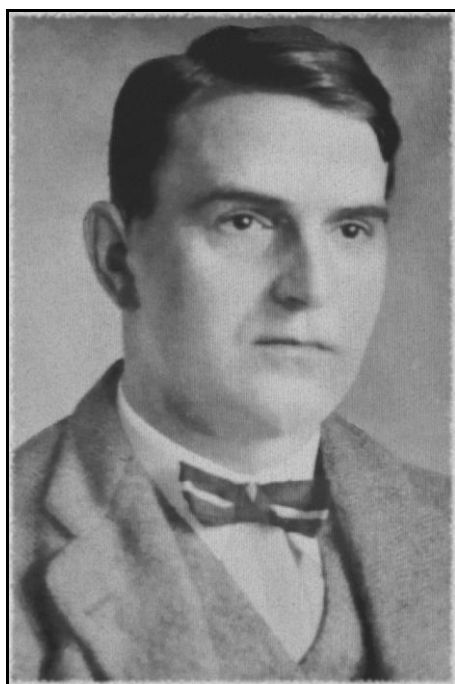
The continued Hodges-Gowdridge confrontation, gave public expression to a continued difference of opinion on absenteeism between the L.C.O.A. (Leicestershire Coal Owners Association) and the L.M.A.

FRANK HODGES

Frank Hodges was a considerable benefactor to the village of Newbold, where he provided houses for managers and miners, and also installed street lighting.

He was also seen as somewhat of a “poacher turned gamekeeper” being a former secretary of the MFGB (elected 1919) who fought for the miners interests and negotiated their terms and conditions with the government of the day. However, in his own collieries he is recorded as developing a sound reputation as an employer, and was judged to have “marked vision and business capacity” in his colliery concerns.

On Jan 1st 1947 (at which time Frank Hodges J.P. of “Rotherwood House, Ashby-De-La-Zouch was chairman and M.D.) New Lount Colliery was nationalised and became part of the N.C.B. East Midlands Division, Area No.8.



By the time Frank Hodges died from 'heart trouble', at the age of sixty in June 1947, he was living at Rotherwood House, Ashby-De-La-Zouch, Leicestershire. He had been ill for two years, and seriously ill for about eight weeks. He passed away at a convalescent home in Ruthin, Denbighshire, on the morning of Tuesday 3rd June 1947, leaving his widow, daughter and a granddaughter.

1887 - Born in Woolaston, Gloucester.

1947 June 3rd Died

1901 - Commenced work at Powell Tillery Pits, Abertillery, Wales, after leaving school at age 14.

1903 - Became a Methodist at 16 and began preaching.

1909 – 1910 Through his trade union links, he secured a Scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford.

After a time in Paris, he returned to work as a hewer in the mines. This was hard work and he wanted something more intellectual. He successfully applied to be a trade union agent. He now felt he could change people's lives for the better, and started reforming the organisation.

1912 - Appointed Miners' Agent, Garw Valley South Wales Miners' federation

1919 - Appointed Secretary, Miners' Federation of Great Britain, He negotiated terms and conditions for miners, with the government and Lloyd George.

1923 - He won a seat as the Labour candidate for Lichfield under Ramsay MacDonald in the first Labour Government, and held the post of First Lord of the Admiralty. He lost his seat in the 1924 general election, so was only in Parliament for a short time.

1924 - Resigned as Secretary, Miners' Federation of Great Britain, on appointment as Civil Lord of the Admiralty. During this time he played golf with the Duke of York before he became George VI.

1925 - Appointed Secretary of the International Miners' Federation. Had performed this role in an honorary capacity since 1920. Resigned in 1927.

1926 – Vice Chairman, National Fuel and Power Committee.

1927 - Appointed member of the Central Electricity Board.

1933 - Appointed Chairman and MD of The Leicestershire Colliery & Pipe Co. Ltd and M.D of New Lount Colliery which was in their ownership.

1933 - Joined the board of L & N Coal Distillation Company Ltd (owned by The Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company Ltd), and became M.D. of Rockwood Colliery.

1936 - Purchased a 300 Acre dairy farm in Leicestershire and the tenancy of another farm nearby. He became noted for his modern methods of farming, and was active in the National Farmers' Union.

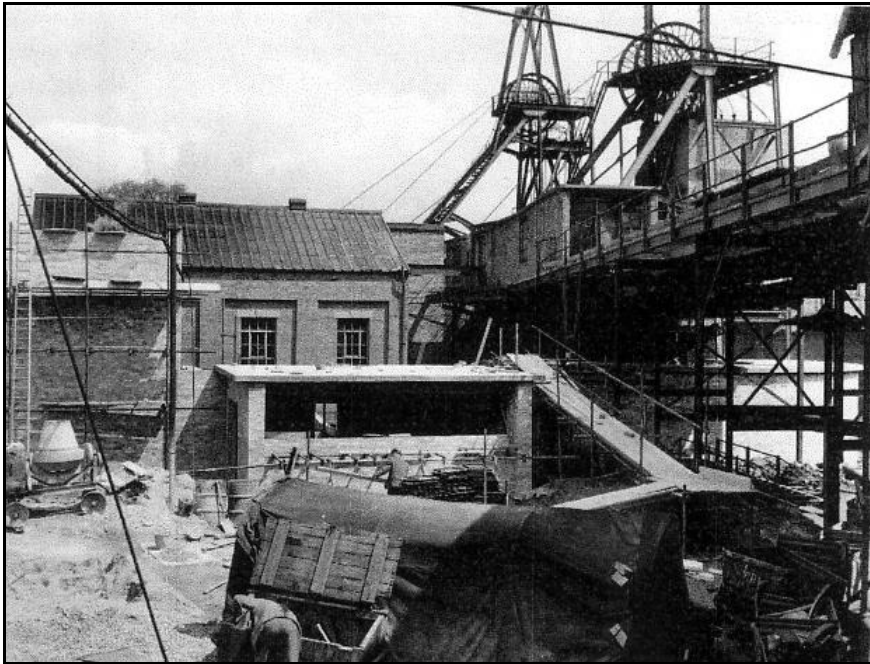
1947 – Left a substantial fortune of £132,959.

Frank Hodges was a director of many other companies – The Securities Management Trust Ltd (a subsidiary of the Bank of England), National Combustion Engines, International Combustion Ltd, William Beardmore and Co. Ltd, Granville Shipbuilders, Co-Operative Printers, the Glasgow Iron and Steel Company, The Lancashire Cotton Corporation, **The Newbold Brick Company Ltd**, and Motherwell Brick Company Ltd.

Little is known about Frank Hodges later life, but he had a remarkable career, and his death was the occasion for substantial obituaries in several national papers and journals

It is recommended that anyone interested in knowing more about this remarkable gentleman should read “The odyssey of Frank Hodges” by Chris Williams.

In the first year following nationalisation, New Lount Colliery employed a total of 1,118 men (underground and surface) and turned 480,000 tons of coal. In 1953, a drift was driven from the site of the old Coleorton No.3. Colliery (Bug and Wink), which features earlier, and was about one mile South of New Lount. This had a gradient of 1 in 4, and provided a new ventilation circuit and an alternative emergency exit for New Lount. It was also used by the colliers who lived in the Coleorton locality to access New Lount on foot. By the mid 1950's most of the faces at New Lount were mechanized, and by 1960, although the manpower had decreased, output was still over 400,000 tons per year.



New headstocks and fan housing were built in 1958 and are shown in the photograph under construction



The above photograph taken c.1957 shows the structure which housed the conveyor belt taking the coal from all the seams to the screens which had opened a couple of years earlier

THE MIDGET MINER

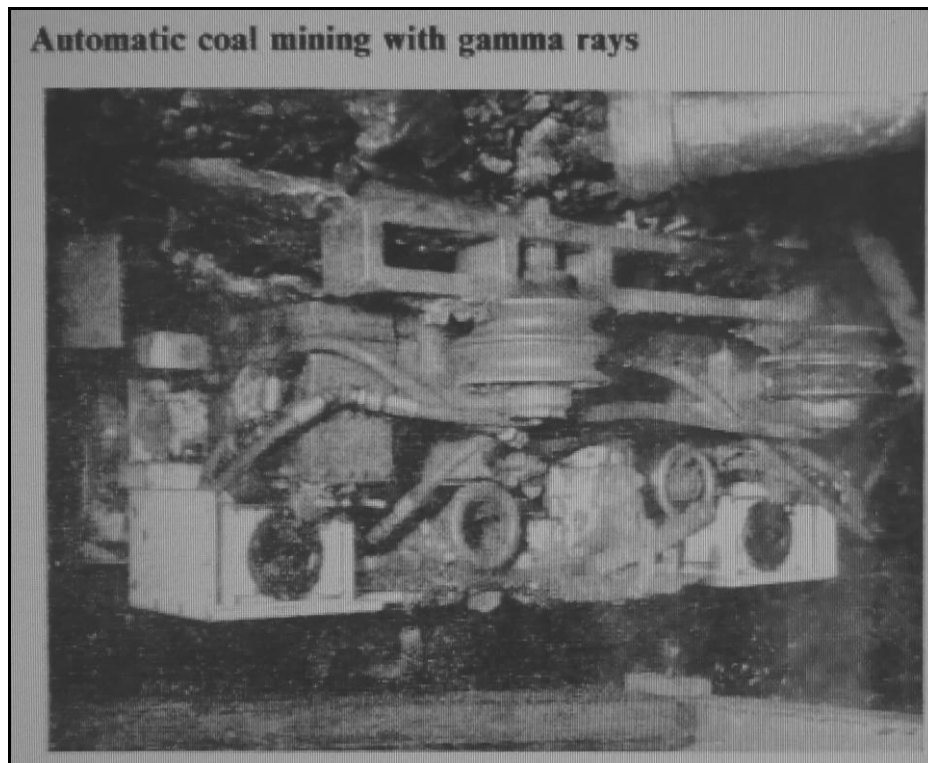
Synopsis of an article in the New Scientist (No 216) 5 Jan 1962

Mechanisation of coal mining doubled in the three years or so from the end of the 1950's and by 1962 was accounting for 40 per cent of the tonnage won from British coalfields every year. The next logical step was to develop remotely controlled cutting machines which did not need the supervision of a human operator.

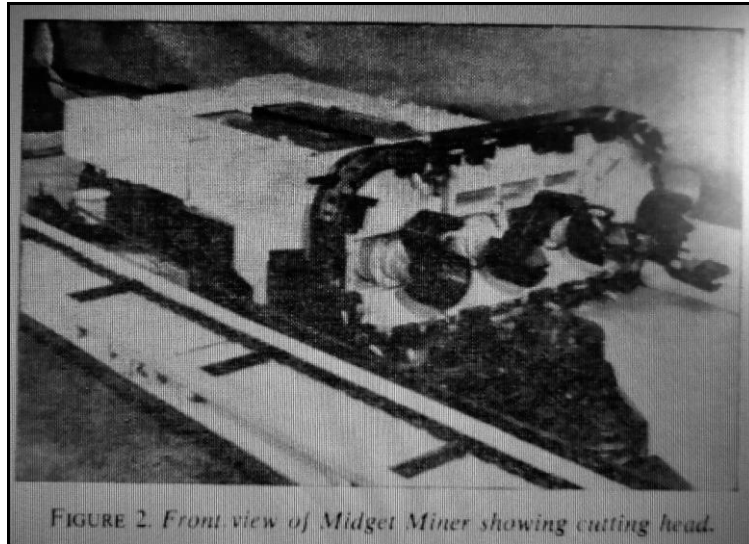
The Mining Research Establishment at Isleworth, Middlesex, had made considerable advance in this direction by producing an apparatus which sensed the thickness of coal being left on the floor of the coal face as the cutting machine advanced. The principle on which the device is based, is the difference in the back-scattering of gamma radiation from coal and rock. The gamma rays are emitted by a small radioactive source contained in the sensing device. The total back-scatter from both media, measured by a Geiger counter, can be related to the thickness of the coal, which can be measured with an accuracy of $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ inch up to a maximum thickness of 4 inches. Greater thicknesses are indicated simply as being in excess of 4 inches.

A machine called a "Midget Miner" which was installed at New Lount Colliery, was fitted with the device (possibly the first installation of its kind in the world). The machine was capable of cutting 2ft 3in of coal from a 2ft 7in thick seam. The device on this machine was not used as a remote control system and the signals from the Geiger counters were displayed on dials graduated directly in inches of coal, for the benefit of the operator. These dials can be seen in the following photograph at the bottom on either side.

The author believes that the Midget Miner was the development machine for the "Collins Miner" coal-cutting machine which follows.



Rear view of the "Midget miner" coal-cutting machine fitted with the new coal-sensing device.



The “Midget Miner” operated by cutting its way head-on through the seam of coal, making a cut 4ft in depth and 2ft in diameter. The overall length of the machine was 13 feet.

The following statement appeared in the New Scientist (No. 219) 15 June 1961 – *New Lount Colliery has been the scene of the first successful vertical control of a machine in a coal seam underground by use of instruments, although a recent Russian paper, indicates that experiments in the Soviet Union have reached a similar state of advancement.*

The following is taken from “The Leicestershire Miners” book by Colin Griffin :-

*As thicker coal seams became exhausted, there was a need to develop machines which were efficient in thin coal seams and New Lount was selected as the test bed for the so called Midget Miner, an adaption of a Russian machine. Since the coal at Lount was of high quality but thin, there was a need to produce a reasonably high proportion of graded and larger coal. Experiments during 1962/3, although they used the most advanced technology available, including the **nucleonic coal sensing method** of keeping the cutter following the contour of the coal seam, were not very successful since experience at Lount indicated that the economics of installation depended to a large extent on obtaining an adequate length of drivage, in a reasonable time. Geological problems (including severe convergence) appeared to be responsible for about half of the failure to reach these economic drivage lengths. The knowledge gained, **though it could not save Lount from eventual closure**, was sufficiently encouraging to result in installation of the technology in other collieries in which geological problems were less severe.*

THE COLLINS MINER

The following appeared in the “New Scientist 29th March 1962”:-

*The first **production model** of a new mining machine which is raising the NCB’s hopes of producing coal from “Thin Seams” at an attractive price is undergoing its first trials at the “Swadlincote, Derbyshire Surface test Site”. If the trials are successful, and the NCB is optimistic that they will be, the machine will then be installed underground at New Lount Colliery, where a site has already been prepared in the mine there.*

Synopsis from an article in the New Scientist (No 377) 6 Feb 1964

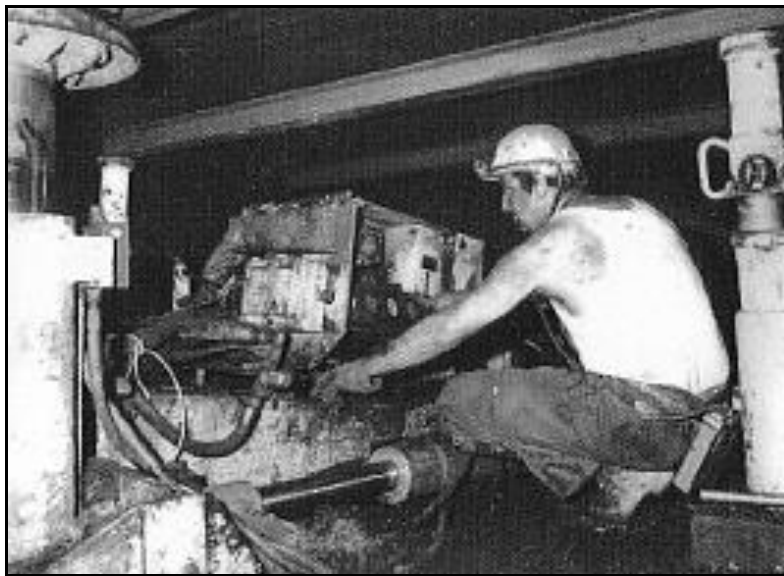
The machine was taken underground at New Lount and worked away in a seam 2ft 7in thick. The machine cut a slot into the seam about 6 or 7ft wide and the coal was carried back from the cutting head on a conveyor belt. The cutting head was forced into the seam by push rods as it machined the coal out, and the general idea was to cut a “stall” to a maximum length of 100 yards, move the train on and cut the next, and so on. At the end of the roadway, the train is turned round and the miner cuts stalls down the other side.

In spite of some unforeseen circumstances at New Lount – for example, the machine ran into rock only 40 ft along on its very first stall and ruined the cutters, the results were most encouraging for the NCB.

On its best day, the miner's output was 25 tons per man shift, and over one week it averaged 16 tons per man shift.

The NCB were confident that that the machine could be scaled down to operate in only 18 inch thick seams, and as there were large reserves of coal in Britain with thin seams, the potential for the machine was attractive.

The more important snags that came up during the New Lount trials were concerned with steering the miner in a vertical direction. One of them was overcome simply enough by moving steering jacks from the back of the machine to the front to cut down steering movement. How much the machine moved up and down to follow the coal seam, was shown by the **radioactive** source underneath it, as with the "Midget Miner"



Arthur Conkay operating the "Collins Miner in 1965 in a 4ft 6in seam



Underground at New Lount from L to R – M.Richards, A. Conkay, T. Ralph, A. Sykes, P. Matchett. – Photograph taken 1965

NEW LOUNT COLLIERY SPOIL HEAPS



Photograph taken from Stoney-Lane, Coleorton in 1947 which shows New Lount Colliery Spoil Heaps on the horizon.



A similar photograph, but taken in 1962 from a garden on the Top Road, Griffydam

The colliery Spoil Heaps, a local landmark, on which villagers spent many hours illegally coal picking, were levelled and planted with trees by Leicestershire County Council c.1975. People recall, that during World War Two there was concern that they would alert German aircraft because there was always a large fire-glow from them due to the residue of coal combusting. The tips were known locally at one time, for obvious reasons, as "Sabrina Pass" after the 1950's well-endowed English glamour model.....a typical coal miners sense of humour.

See the later recollections of Des Jackson when he was working on the New Lount pit banks

THE IMPENDING CLOSURE OF NEW LOUNT COLLIERY

By 1963, most of the collieries output was being transported by road, and five special loading points had been installed under the screens to deal with this. In 1967 the output was 406,000 tons with a workforce now down to 590, of which only 443 men worked underground. The colliery had been profitable for its entire life, and in that year made £306,000 profit.

In 1968, the N.C.B. prepared a report on the future of New Lount, a copy of which follows this paragraph. The "good news section of the report" noted that the colliery had been continuously successful for most of its life; the "bad news" stated that the current reserves of the thicker seams were being rapidly exhausted and so the fate of the colliery was sealed. New Lount officially closed July 26th 1968. Men under 55 were transferred to other collieries and men over 55 had two options.....they could retire or transfer to another colliery if an over 55 man would retire there in their place. In 1968 there were 399 u/ground and 138 surface workers.

The following is the N.C.B.'s New Lount closure proposals, and is taken from Colin Griffin's book entitled "The Leicestershire Miners" Volume 3.

Appendix 3
N.C.B.'s New Lount Colliery Closure Proposals

1. This colliery commenced operating about 1924.
2. It has been almost continuously successful. Since 1962, results have been as follows:—

Year	Average Manpower	Output	Face O.M.S.	Overall O.M.S.	Profit	Per Ton	Proceeds Per Ton
1962	618	439,000	159	58.2	480,000	21/10	76/9
1963/4	623	375,000	159	52.3	174,000	9/2	74/2
1964/5	629	437,000	208	61.1	347,000	15/11	75/6
1965/6	599	414,000	208	70.5	321,000	15/6	77/10
1966/7	575	403,000	205	61.0	363,000	18/1	80/2
1967/8	545	406,000	244	62.6	506,000	15/1	78/2

Current cost per Therm 3.3d.

3. This colliery has never had a marketing problem. All the coal produced has been readily sold. Low costs have enabled prices to be kept down.

4. Current reserves of the thicker seams in good areas are rapidly exhausted. By September 1968 the last mechanised face in the Nether Lount Seam (C.6's) will have finished. There will then be left only a hand-filled face in the Nether Lount with a somewhat doubtful life (N.15's), together with reserves in the Yerd Seam, which varies from 2' 6" to 3' 0" in thickness. Many attempts have been made to mechanise the Yerd Seam with varying success, but it has not been possible to achieve consistently good results.

The Board, therefore, are of the opinion that the exhaustion of economically workable reserves will prevent the colliery operating economically after about the end of September 1968 — though see para. 7 below.

5. The current manpower is 527 (w.e. 27th January, 1968) made up as follows:

Category	Manpower
Surface	132
Underground	395
Total	527

In the Leicestershire Coalfield, including New Lount, the following numbers of men are over 55 years of age (+34 on 28th October, 1967),

Bagworth	107
Nailstone	134
Desford	274
Ellistown	222
New Lount	199
Snibston	214
South Leicester	133
Whitwick	181
Total	1,464

Excluding New Lount (199) — 1,265
New Lount Manpower — 199 = 327
excluding over 55: 527 — 199 = 328

These figures show that there should be ample scope for placing New Lount men at other pits on a 'one for one' basis (taking advantage of the Government's proposed 'over 55's Scheme') if this were necessary — though on latest indications (see below) it is hoped to be able to offer other work to under 55's from New Lount

without resort to 'one for one' arrangements except perhaps in a few individual cases.

6. It is the case that Marketing Departments are keen to maintain outputs from all the Leicestershire Collieries, as the coal is readily saleable.

7. At the meeting on 10th January 1968, the Board envisaged that coal-winding would cease at about the end of September 1968. However, owing to the successful phased working during the past few months it now appears that full economic production may cease during August.

8. In order to avoid disturbing customers any more than necessary, the Board would wish New Lount to produce the best output possible until coal winding ceases.

9. The Board also wish to replace New Lount output from other Collieries in Leicestershire as far as this is possible to preserve markets.

10. Acceptance of this policy means that such men as can be spared from New Lount now, and from time to time in the next few months, should transfer to development work at those Collieries who are to produce extra output when New Lount finishes so that face room and other facilities can be made available.

11. The Board would like the Unions to agree to the following transfers being made as soon as possible.

To Snibston — 10 underground workers (including 2 under officials)
South Leicester — 15 underground workers (including 3 under officials)
Whitwick — 15 underground workers (including 3 under officials)

12. The forward picture for New Lount manpower now looks approximately as follows:—

	Surface	U/G	Total
Present men on books	132	395	527
Less proposed transfers	—	40	40
Less wastage to August	11	21	32
(including age 65 retirements)			
Will be left	121	334	455
If New Lount over 55's retire	80	100	180
Left for transfer	41	234	275

These will move to:—
South Leicester 5
Whitwick 7
Snibston 14
Ellistown 7
Desford 8

41

110
58
16
43
7

115
65
30
50
15

234
275

13. It may transpire that a number of over 55's will remain on salvage and retire as convenient during or after the salvage period.

14. The detailed arrangements for movement of men will be co-ordinated by Industrial Relations Department in consultation with Union representatives at New Lount Colliery and the receiving collieries.

B.A.M.
14th February, 1968

EMPLOYEE STATISTICS FOR NEW LOUNT COLLIERY

• 1924:	96 u/g, 77 s/f
• 1925:	368 u/g, 113 s/f
• 1926:	466 u/g, 132 s/f
• 1927:	622 u/g, 164 s/f
• 1928:	786 u/g, 194 s/f
• 1929:	877 u/g, 234 s/f
• 1930:	731 u/g, 215 s/f
• 1931:	807 u/g, 227 s/f
• 1932:	960 u/g, 232 s/f
• 1933:	822 u/g, 190 s/f
• 1934:	871 u/g, 172 s/f
• 1935:	851 u/g, 184 s/f
• 1936:	868 u/g, 179 s/f
• 1937:	833 u/g, 192 s/f
• 1938:	805 u/g, 211 s/f
• 1939:	845 u/g, 266 s/f
• 1941:	781 u/g, 253 s/f
• 1942:	815 u/g, 247 s/f
• 1945:	852 u/g, 251 s/f
• NCB Leicestershire Area 1947	858 u/g, 279 s/f
• 1948:	850 u/g, 250 s/f
• NCB No7 Area 1950	864 u/g, 208 s/f
• 1951:	770 192 s/f
• 1955:	777 u/g, 170 s/f
• 1956:	753 u/g, 167 s/f
• 1957:	703 u/g, 159 s/f
• 1958:	690 u/g, 158 s/f
• 1961:	569 u/g, 135 s/f
• 1962:	546 u/g, 123 s/f
• 1963:	532 u/g, 126 s/f
• 1964:	514 u/g, 118 s/f
• 1965:	483 u/g, 158 s/f
• 1966:	443 u/g, 147 s/f
• South Midlands Area: 1967:	443 u/g, 147 s/f
• 1968:	399 u/g, 138 s/f.

Agents:

- W Taylor (3338) 1928-1933
- J Johnston (873) 1933-1936
- T Gray (2758) 1936-1937
- LD James (2806) 1937-1939
- WH Napier 1939-1946.

Group Managers:

- John J Torrance (2803) Area Manager 1947
- Jabez Emmerson **JP** (1212) 1948-1957
- Jack EM Chapman (1734) 1957-1965
- Arthur Summers (4896) 1965-1967.

Managers:

- W Taylor (3338) 1924-1933
- J Johnston (873) 1933-1936
- T Gray (2758) 1936-1937
- LD James (2806) 1937-1939 and Agent
- CWL Dudgeon (1823) 1940-1945
- Peter L Richardson (3242) 1945-1966 (promoted to Group Manager)
- Ken Bradford (5553) 1966-1967
- Jim A Tait (5758) 1968.

Under-managers:

- J Bamborough (3530) transferred from Manager of **Old Lount** 1924-1933
- MA Greenhall (8172 2nd) 1925-1936
- FG Cutts (1487) 1929-1930
- R Learmouth (1432 / 2nd) 1930-1933
- CWL Dudgeon (1823) 1936-1940 (promoted to Manager)
- WH Jones (4006 / 2nd and 3632 / 1st) 1941-1943
- J Steele (2759 / 2nd) -1947
- H Burnett (3971 / 2nd) 1947-1955
- C Shaw (2835 / 2nd) 1956-1958
- F Gregory (5757 / 2nd) 1948 - 1960
- Len Collier (7222) 1959-1961
- Ken Bradford (5553) 1958-1962
- D Nev Rady (7297) 1962-1966
- Tommy D Richardson (8265) 1966-1967
- Terry F Gregory (7955) 1968 (to Manager **Tilmanstone**, returned as Area Safety Engineer).

RECOLLECTIONS FROM MINERS WORKING AT NEW LOUNT COLLIERY IN TIMES BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS. THESE WERE PERSONAL INTERVIEWS BY COLIN GRIFFIN AND TAKEN FROM THE 2ND VOLUME OF HIS BOOK ENTITLED 'THE LEICESTERSHIRE MINERS 1914-1945'

The following are experiences recollected by Des Jackson who was working at New Lount Colliery at the time around the start of the Second World War :-

The introduction of coal cutters in coal mines created a class of "fitters" or mechanics required to service the machinery. These men were in short supply as the rearmament boom progressed and were recruited on quite a different basis from the traditional informal progression from pit bottom to coal face. Des Jackson an apprenticed plumber, applied in 1939 to New Lount and was "set on immediately as a trainee fitter". His experience was not untypical: - *"Now, the first day I went to the pit I went down the pit with the underground foreman and carried his tool bag and we went to this cutter and I was frightened to death because we went through all these old roads and this was the first time I'd ever been down the pit. And I gave him a hand – we went to repair an old A.B. cutter with a 5 feet 6 inch jib on...And the next day there was a job to do on the haulage- there were still haulages then, there were no horses down New Lount – and he sent me to repair a haulage the second day. I was there on my own. "There you are, me lad", he says, "you'll learn how to do it – somebody'll show you whats what". This was "on the job" training with a vengeance in which lads were not gently eased into the "mysteries of the mine" but on day two had to find their way from pit bottom to a task miles underground bent double with a bag a tools on your back along miles and miles of road only just tall enough for the tubs to go through". The old traditions had been broken down and not yet been replaced by the organised training methods that came subsequently and to be regarded as essential.*

Des Jackson recalls working on the spoil heap at Lount, "a couple of hundred feet high. I had to put a light on it during the war for the aircraft (English) though you could see the heap glowing for miles around." The spoil was taken up to the top of the heap by a bogey (hopper) travelling on rails to a 60 square foot steel plate at the top from which the spoil was tipped "down the mountain as it were". The tray had to be frequently advanced over the heap by means of a winch and the rail extended to fill the gap between the new position of the plate and the existing railway. Winching the tray forward was a back breaking job "everybody out of the fitting shop used to get on this winch because they used to have four each side and once round was enough and another eight, including the gaffers, would take over". Inserting additional rails was even worse because "the tip was all on fire at the top...we were allowed a new pair of boots for this job because by the time you had finished this job your nails would be out of your boots...it was red hot and the leather would be burnt away from the nails". Dust was added to the heat "we had to wear goggles because the wind used to whip the stuff up into your eyes and it still got under your goggles, we all used to have bad eyes. And the smell used to be absolutely terrible. It was sulphur you know. And you'd take it home with you, inside your body, and when you broke wind, which you had to do, that smell would be there". Working conditions on the heap deteriorated still further when war broke out because flames had to be damped down to conform with the blackout regulations. Water and boiler flue dust were used to try and quell the flames but the heap continued "to boil like soup" whilst the men were nearly asphyxiated with steam and dust.

Such was the lot of some of the fitters at Lount, who worked periodically on the heap, but that of the "spoil heap man" was even worse. He had to travel up with the loaded bogey in order to empty it off the plate at the top and return with it empty. "He never used to stop up there because he could not stick it". On one trip he did not return, he slipped whilst emptying the bogey and fell to his death.

The number of fatal accidents in or about the mines was bad enough, though it was small in comparison with the number of non-fatal accidents. In the pre-war years, when only imperfect statistics were recorded, there were five times as many serious non-fatal accidents as fatal ones reported to the Mines Inspectorate. When detailed statistics began to be collected in the inter-war period, the real extent of non-fatal injury was revealed for the first time and its dimensions were staggering to anyone not acquainted with colliery work. In 1924-25, an

average of 5.5 miners were killed whilst 1,643 received an injury which disabled them for more than three days. In 1937-38 the same statistics were 8 and 1,369 respectively. The actual causes of injury closely followed those of fatal accidents with falls the greatest culprit and injury on underground haulage some way behind. Shaft accidents were very few as were those caused by explosions. Probably only a minority of miners left the pits completely unscarred and most had witness accidents and had their fair share of near misses.

Des Jackson recalled the time when he was repairing a coal cutter in the Jackie seam at Lount which was a naked light area of the mine "when there was an explosion at the main gate lip and six men got burnt...three of them very severely through having these naked lights". On another occasion "we had a break-in of water which was a very serious affair, in fact I nearly got drowned that particular time. I had to run for my life and only just got out in time, the water was up to me chest".

Eric Saunders had the following recollections. Eric spent weeks working in a "waterfall" at Whitwick:-

"wet through, water running down my back and coming out of the side of your shoes, it were coming out that thick,...it was clean water but smelled awful...that's what brought the pneumonia on"

The worst mine for wet working conditions was New Lount...*"We used to have pockets of water at Lount, it was a terribly wet place. The trammers wore clogs as standard equipment and it was common for men to be working in a foot of water...kneeling in it to shovel. And we had to put a pump on the face itself so we kept it down to that level. It was not very good working conditions but it was either that or nothing in those days. The result of working in wet conditions for long periods were predictable, you got rheumatism and all these ailments due to wet conditions, and skin complaints, a kind of dermatitis – eczema we used to call it – through wet conditions. You had creaky knees, skin rubbed off your hands and blisters...Men you always saw wet, men you saw coming out of the pit with the dirty grey sludge on them, absolutely sopping wet through, you know they've succumbed to these chest complaints subsequently".*

Further Des Jackson recollections:-

He believed *"that the biggest enemy of any miner was dust...the dust problem was terrific then and unfortunately a lot of old miners have died through dust...pneumoconiosis, but when it come to a bit of compensation, you've either had pneumonia or something like that you know, a chest condition"*. Dust was created when roadways were blasted, coal undercut or overcut in the "dirt", or work was proceeding through faults. Ventilation currents should have been strong enough to dilute the dust significantly to reduce the health hazard. Miners recollect working on coal faces where the current was strong enough to perform this role but it was not universally the case. Eric Saunders remembers, for example, whilst working at Snibston *"there was a fault in the three foot seam and by god it was a fault an' all. Now, you see the colour of your paper, that's how our bodies were, white with dust. It fell on us and, there used to be two inches of stuff on your stomach, limestone and it was red hot...you used to get more money for limestone than you did for coal but when you get that on your chest it burns you...I could not face it in the end, I said, "if you cut my throat there'd be no blood". It were that dry and your eyeballs full of filth and your eyelashes were white". Mine management appreciated that "the use of coal cutters and conveyors results in an increase in the amount of fine coal dust produced", but they certainly did not always give "that increased attention to stone dusting that is needed" until, as at New Lount, an explosion compelled them to do so. Rather there was a tendency to continue the traditional practices in which "there was always an area of the mine where the air was not pouring through the face very well, bad ventilation...so that when a shot was fired, it was John Hall's powder then, it caused so much smoke it was like a thick blanket of fog. It took quite a while to clear away and you had to work in that...You had to get coal in all that smoke and dust, you swallowed tons of it, conditions were terrible then.*

The following are recollections by Alf Grocock :-

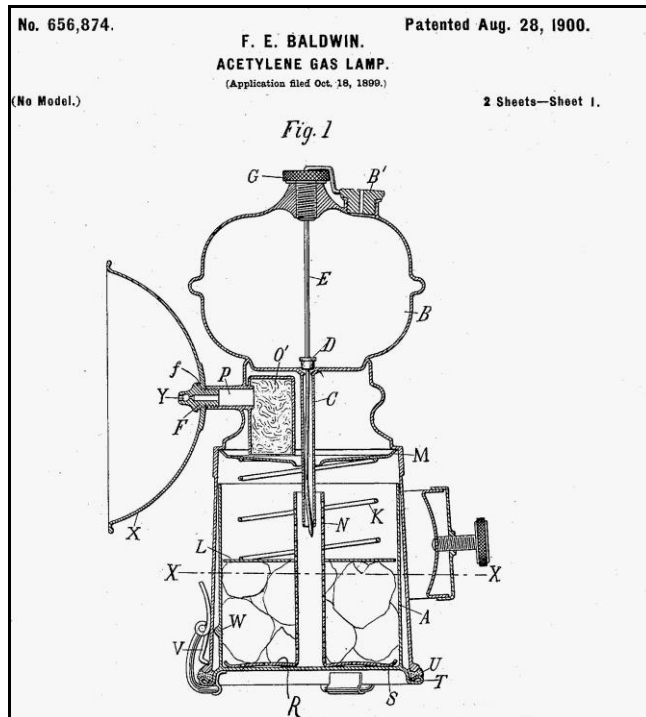
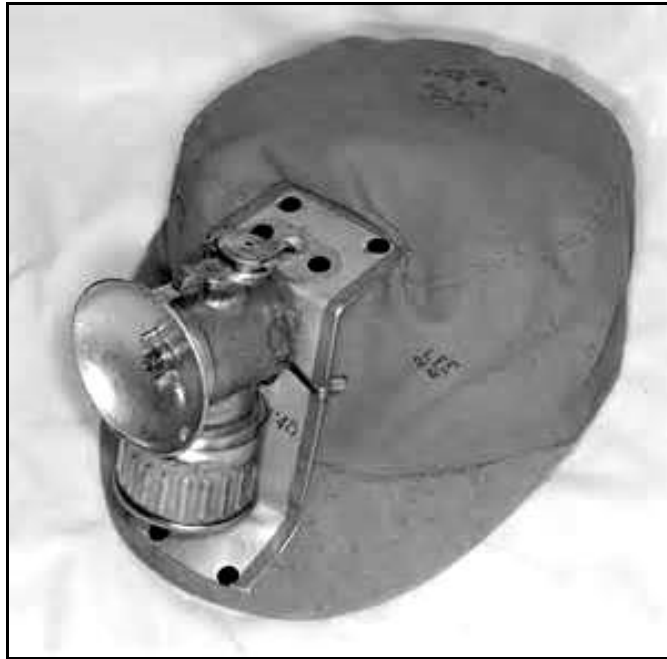
Alf Grocock remembers “one night a deputy came and asked me to go through the airway with him... Now we went through this small airway an’ it was no more than eighteen inches and we got to one part where if a piece of stone fell out of the roof as big as your hand and dropped on your back you could get your hand behind you to lift it off, see...confined in this close area you know and I was frightened. And I was frightened to the extent that I came home one night and went to bed as usual and in the night saw the biggest stone coming out of the roof at me and I shot back you know like to miss it and fell on the bedroom floor”. The following day he chucked working underground for several weeks because his nerve had temporarily broken.

*Underground lighting remained primitive away from the pit bottom and in naked light areas were unpredictable and the cause of the occasional minor explosion. At New Lount and other pits for instance “they used to wear shookies (see following photographs). That was a cloth cap with a peek on and a piece of plate fastened to it a carbide lamp with a little flint and a wheel incorporated. They used to get the carbide and put it in the lamp and carry a can of water to put in which made the acetylene gas which was then lit to give them a flame. But you found many a bloke who’d got no matches and no flint for his lamp and they’d be in the dark and they went along by keeping hold of the rails”. Safety lamps gave a feeble light at best which tended to deteriorate as the shift wore on because the glass became increasingly discoloured (smoked up). “If you could see a yard that was about as much as you could see... You worked with your touch you might say mostly”. **The carbide / acetylene lamp flame was approximately 6 times brighter than a safety lamp***

Newcomers to the pit could also find the conditions in which they had to perform their “natural functions” off-putting. “When it’s snap time, you know, I mean if your in an office or anything like that you go out for a meal or something...when you’re down the pit you just take the top off your snap tin and you can’t wash your hands and you’ve probably just been to relieve yourself or something like that...It’s disgusting, I know, but what would you do about it...there’s no toilets down there. Eating, drinking, urinating and defecating continued as they always had “to go on side by side” though at New Lount “we did have some toilets on the Main road which I put in myself...But there was still nothing in the districts...though there could be if they wanted to put them in”.



Typical miner’s hard and soft variety of “Shookie hat and lamp”



Section through a typical Shookie Lamp where controlled droplets of water onto carbide pellets produced acetylene gas which went to the burner and provided a flame 6 times brighter than a candle flame or safety lamp for example.

The original **Davy lamp** was a safety lamp for use in flammable atmospheres, consisting of a wick lamp with the flame enclosed inside a mesh screen. It was invented in 1815 by Sir Humphry Davy. It originally burned a heavy vegetable oil. It was created for use in coal mines, to reduce the danger of explosions due to the presence of methane and other flammable gases, called *firedamp* or *minedamp*. Sir Humphry Davy had discovered that a flame enclosed inside a mesh of a certain fineness cannot ignite firedamp. The screen acts as a flame arrestor; air (and any firedamp present) can pass through the mesh freely enough to support combustion, but the holes are too fine to allow a flame to propagate through them and

ignite any firedamp outside the mesh. If flammable gas mixtures were present, the flame of the Davy lamp burned higher with a blue tinge. Lamps were equipped with a metal gauge to measure the height of the flame. Miners could place the safety lamp close to the ground to detect gases, such as carbon dioxide, that are denser than air and so could collect in depressions in the mine; if the mine air was oxygen-poor (asphyxiant gas), the lamp flame would be extinguished (*black damp* or *chokedamp*). A methane-air flame is extinguished at about 17% oxygen content (which will still support life) so the lamp gave an early indication of an unhealthy atmosphere allowing the miners to get out before they died of asphyxiation. The expression "Davy Safety Lamps" tended to be applied to all lamps of the variety shown below on the right, of which there were numerous versions produced.

By 1922, hand held electric lamps were being issued, but electric cap lamps were not introduced till the 1940s. From around the 1930s, almost all flame safety lamps were replaced by electric lamps for lighting. However, safety lamps still continued to be used for detecting and measuring gas long after their use for lighting was obsolete.



On the left is an old type of Davy safety lamp with apertures for gauging flame height and on the right the more familiar version of safety lamp which became available later on in the evolution of these lamps. However, they were still referred to as Davy safety lamps.

Further recollections on New Lount by Frank Smith (became local Union Secretary):-

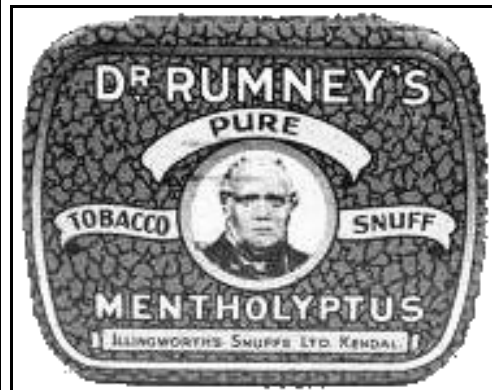
It is generally accepted that New Lount was in a class of its own when it came to safety standards because there was so much connivance between management and men in the breach of regulations. The New Lount "lot" were a breed apart or as Frank Smith explains *"New Lount was an isolated occasion, it was a new pit owned by a pipe company... Planning was at a minimum and you ran into pockets of water all over the place, you didn't know what you were going to meet even on the Main Roads...they used to call it clash, clash because of all the clash banging, everybody was clash banging, the coal came from anywhere you know...the men were good miners with adventurous spirits who'd left your solid Whitwick and Snibston pits and they'd gone down there because it was always 2s. 0d. a day more for the day worker, there was not enough local labour so they had to get men in from Whitwick and Coalville...And I've seen some conditions there...we were working in the Jacky seam which had an operational height of 1 foot 9 inches...the men used to blow their own coal though they were not supposed to...the deputy or shot-firer would stand at the lip end and give the men the dets (detonators), because they'd changed from fuse to detonator wire with batteries...and they'd put a couple of dets with a lifting power of 30cwt, crawl up the face and then take an ordinary bike battery and lie down on soft coal and then just a woof which would blow down all this twelve yards of coal".* Moreover, *"you could risk your neck because the rule of stripping was that you filled a yard of coal off and set a support. On occasion when the roof was good you used to go three yards without setting a support. Sometimes you'd get caught out and get a crack round the head, or back or ribs or whatever...it used to frighten you to death, when it took weight it used to bump, you see, and at 1 foot 9 inches it has not got to bump much and you're squashed...when the convergence came and we hadn't set enough*

props we'd scabble off like rabbits on our hands and knees, snaking our way out if that's the right word for it...when the roof was not moving some often would be half-way up their ratches (six yards) before you knew where you were without any supports. Oh yes, rules and regulation were broke more at Lount than any other pit in my opinion. All the guys were hand in glove with the officials to increase productivity and get higher rates of pay...it hadn't the stability, the working traditions, like you got at Whitwick or Snibston or South Leicester and those places...the miners were all strangers, drawn from all over the place, individuals with the adventurous spirits who said "There's a shilling to be got at New Lount, let's go and get it". And, of course, the management was similar, they were, I don't know, bandit kind of people, they didn't bother too much about the Coal Owners' Association, their rules and regulations, they were there to make a profit and profit they made...it's a well known fact that in the two years up to nationalisation they made two and a half million pounds profit.

Des Jackson confirmed Smith's opinion..."things were a bit lax in those days...If they were a bit late in getting there or starting the deputy would probably fire the shots before he tested for gas and all the rest of it because they'd never had a lot of gas, if you understand me...the biggest majority of miners had to do it properly otherwise they got killed or injured but there was a certain amount of sloppiness as you know in those days because things were not so tight...You could cut more corners, if you understand, I mean, for instance, we had a break in of water which was a very serious affair, in fact I nearly got drowned that particular time. I had to run for my life...as a rule we used to contain the water but this particular time we did not contain it until it shut a whole area of the pit off. We had to contain it then. Well, we moved what they called the non-smoking board from where it was in the pit bottom right in bye where we were working. And we were down the pit at least three shifts, twenty four hours and never went out of the pit...he sent us baskets of food, beer and cigarettes down and they moved the board forward so we could have a cigarette while we were putting this big pump in...we'd got to do it to save the area...it was a very big coal producing area at that time...two or three big faces...the water was beating all the rest of the ordinary pumps, you see".

This particular attitude to danger seems almost to have become a point of pride..."Now the ingenuity of the New Lount miner was such as they could improvise on anything...when they used to have wooden supports up in the rear in the gob...instead of finding as you were supposed to do some cleats to pin at the top, they used to put their ringer at the bottom and shove some muck under it...not altogether too safe but ingenious". It is perhaps a little wonder that "it was said eventually that if you worked at New Lount successfully and did not get killed you could work any place on earth...and I can believe it", though Lount miners were not the only ones who boasted of their "versatility and "ingenuity". Moreover, the men continued to gang up with management against the Inspectorate on the question of outlawing the use of naked lights underground or as the Inspectorate put "This resistance is based on the argument that whilst accidents from explosions might be prevented, a number of accidents from other causes, such as falls of roof and on haulage, would be increased".

It should be remembered that candles and naked lights were banned from the coal face in 1922 and Ackroyd & Best hand held electric lamps were introduced in 1922. Instead of sucking or smoking a pipe, or a cigarette, the men now had to rely on chewing "Bacca" (a screw of pigtail twist tobacco), chewing wood, a piece of hawthorn hedge, small lumps of coal, and later chewing gum to help slake (quench) the dust or the craving. Of course, the usual "pinch of snuff" was refreshing, and generally cleared the throat and helped to get rid of the dust clogging the nose. It also became a gesture of goodwill to offer anyone passing a pinch of snuff – mainly to pass the time of day and form a system whereby next time they would offer you a pinch in return. Polo mints also became very popular later on.



From what we read in these various miners' recollections the rules were clearly not being observed at New Lount Colliery.

Such an attitude by the men was understandable, for as Harry Sheffield explained - *"They were murder as you might say, the safety lamp area because they weren't the good lamps they are now. They used to smoke up very often early on in the shift and you couldn't do anything about it. If you could see a yard that was about as much as you could see...It was much more dangerous, some of them would not do safety lamps work at all"*.

Working with naked lights was seen as the lesser of two evils in a coalfield in which explosions were infrequent in spite of the Inspectorate's insistence that "the argument is in our opinion unsound, and there is much evidence against it". The Inspectorate were particularly sensitive on the issue, and it is surely not a coincidence that their two prosecutions for breaches of mine regulations were both related to the issue of the danger of explosions. In August 1929, eleven Whitwick miners were fined a guinea each for the possession of cigarettes and matches underground.

In October 1936, owners and senior managers of New Lount were successfully prosecuted for not introducing safety lamps into a "fiery" area of the mine, and failing to record and report a minor explosion to the Inspectorate. Methane gas had been detected in an old drift, but men were not prevented from entering it wearing acetylene gas cap lamps. One man, William Ottey... *"stood up, and the flame came into contact with gas hanging from the roof and ignited the gas. Ottey was badly burned about the arms and face...when he returned to work three weeks later he was then told that he must travel about the road with his safety lamp"*. The Inspectorate was not as required by law advised of the incident nor was it recorded in the colliery records. The prosecution was the result of an anonymous letter to the Inspectorate, who was not apparently unaware of the colliery's reputation, as the following exchange between the defence lawyer and inspector infers: -

"Apart from what we are investigating this morning, whenever you have visited this colliery, you have always found it well equipped? In the main yes.

It is a modern colliery? I should call it fairly modern.

The management consists of all fully qualified people? Quite.

Is it the most modern colliery in the Leicestershire Coalfield?

The Clerk – Are you asking for a testimonial? (laughter). When the question was repeated, Mr. Fenton said he would rather not answer".

NEW LOUNT COLLIERY FOOTBALL CLUB - 1935

“New Lount Colliery Sports Ground” at Gelsmoor was in Worthington Parish, and situated on Gelsmoor Road opposite Aqueduct road. This is where the football club played their matches.



The above is a photograph of New Lount Colliery Football Club Team - It is thought that this shows the team that were “Leicestershire League Champions” in 1934/35 - see league tables below

1st Row seated LH side

Mick Bradford

2nd Row Left to Right

First person Les Bradford,

Third person Matt Rowell

Top Row Left to Right

First person possibly Jack Richards, Stoney Ln, Coleorton

Sixth person John Wilton

New Lount Football Team were the newly - reformed Leicestershire League Champions in 1934 / 35 as shown in the table below. Information taken from Leicestershire Senior league website 1894-1950

		P	W	D	L	F	A	P	POS
1934-35	Leics League	22	15	3	4	84	37	33	1/12
1935-36	Leics League	29	11	2	16	83	99	24	10/16

There is also a reference to the team winning both the Coaville Cup and the League Title in the 1930-31 seasons.

SHOPS IN NEWBOLD WHICH SERVICED THE MINERS AT NEW LOUNT COLLIERY

Stewart's Shop (known locally as Snips Shop)



William (snip) Stewart aged 20 in 1901

William (Bill) Stewart married Lill Richards from Coleorton in 1903. He was the uncle of the author of this book. Their first home was in one of the rented cottages "in the hollow" adjacent to the track of the old Coleorton Railway on the north side of the Rempstone Road. Their second home was a new bungalow shown above; this was situated on the corner at the junction with School Lane and Melbourne Road (see following map). The right hand side of the bungalow was converted into a general village store and was run by Lill. The store catered for the local villages and trade from the New Lount Colliery miners who purchased such things as cigarettes, bacca, and Polo Mints. The shop closed after the New Lount Colliery finished coal production. Len Benson, a former resident of Coleorton recalled c.1930, that Lill made the best ice-cream ever. This was made in a barrel with a central container surrounded by ice.

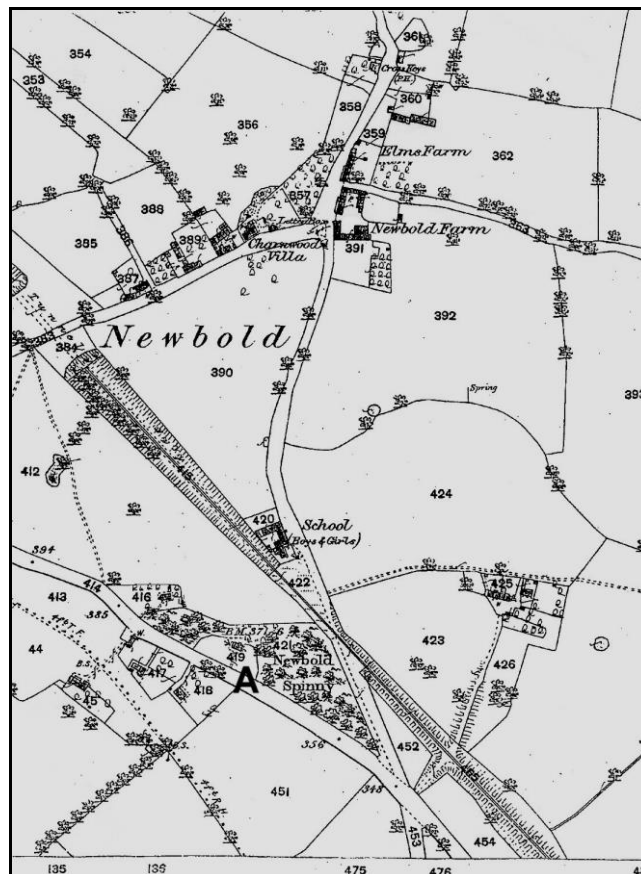
William, who was known as Bill or Snip, one of a family of eleven children, was born Feb 9th 1881 in Gelsmoor, and died in 1960. He played cricket for Staunton Harold Cricket Club in his younger days (see photograph in "A History of Coleorton Pottery 1835-1935 by Samuel T Stewart). He was a keen gardener and also a regular and enthusiastic imbiber at the "Cross Keys", a convenient hostelry on route to the Newbold Pipeworks, where he worked as a labourer. Bill and Lill had three daughters – Ivy, Violet and Elizabeth, who was a teacher, and taught at Newbold School for many years.

Gertrie's Cottage Shop

Gertrude (Gertie) Stewart was born June 5th 1884 in Lount, and died in 1968. She was the auntie of the author of this book, and brother to Bill Stewart above. She lived in a cottage on the opposite side of Melbourne Road to the later entrance to New Lount Colliery, in what was called "Newbold Spinney" (see map below). She married Bill Menzies who was an electrician at New Lount Pit following the death of her first husband Jack Hogg, who broke his back in an accident at pit. The cottage also served as a small shop after the colliery was opened, from which they sold carbide (for the miners shooke lamps), chocolate, cobs, sandwiches etc to the miners. Gertie also looked after the miners bicycles. She apparently did quite well out of the shop, and there was a competitive element between her enterprise and brother Bill on the opposite side of School Lane.



Gertrude Stewart aged 16 in 1920



Newbold in 1882. As can be seen, it was little more than a hamlet at that time. Opposite Newbold Spinney marked A is where New Lount Colliery was sunk. The northerly continuation of this map is shown earlier under Staunton Colliery

PART 12 - THE 'OIL PLANT' AT LOUNT / NEWBOLD

The following information was taken from a book entitled "Mining in the East Midlands 1550-1947" by A.R. Griffin.

In the 1920's and 30's special investments were being made in coal by-product plants of various kinds. Coke ovens (producing metallurgical coke as their main product) and tar distilleries (like the one at Pinxton) were fairly common prior to this time. Now, however, new smokeless fuels were being developed. The most successful of these was coalite (manufactured by "Low Temperature Carbonisation Ltd",) a re-active fuel suitable for open fires and much more pleasant to burn than ordinary gas coke. This firm opened its third plant at Bolsover in 1936.

The New Hucknall Company invested considerable sums in a subsidiary company which erected a plant at Welbeck Colliery, for the production of petrol from coal. The plant started operations in 1927, when it was designed to produce oil from cannel coal for re-sale to tar distillers for blending with creosote oils. However, when the price of creosote fell from 9d. to 3d. per gallon, it was decided to try to produce petrol. After two years research, a workable system was developed and "Welbeck Engineering Spirit" was put on the market at 1s. 2½d. per gallon. Some twenty six gallons of petrol were obtained from one ton of cannel coal. Petrol stations were opened at the four pits of The New Hucknall Group.

*At around the same time (c.1927), a new enterprise for the direct distillation of oil from coal was promoted in Leicestershire. The original partners called their undertaking "**L and N Coal Distillation Ltd**". Unfortunately, before their process was perfected, the price of natural oil fell drastically so as to make coal distillation uneconomic, and the project languished for a time. Then the company concentrated on perfecting a smokeless fuel with oil as a by-product, and considerable sums of new capital were injected into the enterprise. The new company, which came to be called "**The British Coal Distillation Ltd**", had its pilot plant at Newbold, Leicestershire. The chairman of the company, Mr. R. D Hardy was a director of the "Leicestershire Colliery and Pipe Company Ltd" the owners of New Lount Colliery which had opened close by in 1924. The majority of the coal for the plant was supplied from New Lount.*

Frank Hodges, who is mentioned earlier under the section on New Lount Colliery, also joined the board. As early as 1920, at a time when coal was indisputably "king", he suggested that oil presented a serious threat to the mining industry's long-term future and that "it might hasten out the coal era in a shorter period than we are prepared to admit" (from "The odyssey of Frank Hodges" by Chris Williams").

The pilot plant, which had a capacity of 100 tons of coal a day eventually proved successful and a joint subsidiary was then formed with B.A. Collieries Ltd under the title of Suncole (Nottingham) Ltd, and a large plant, called the "Suncole Plant", was erected at Cinderhill. This plant came on stream just before the outbreak of the war, but technical problems dogged it from the start and it never came fully into production. The plant was designed to consume 220,000 tons of coal a year, but it closed down in 1940. It is assumed that the Newbold plant closed down around this time also.

The Lount / Newbold Plant was situated on the right hand side of the Melbourne Road, just before the railway bridge when heading north towards Lount cross-roads. Unfortunately no photographs of the plant can be located

PROPOSED 'L & N COAL DISTILLATION' IN NEW ZEALAND

In a newspaper entitled "New Zealand Truth" (issue 1199) 22nd November 1928, page 2, the following extract appeared under the heading :-

A Valuable Proposition
L & N Coal Distillation
New Zealand Ltd.

In June of 1928, a complete L & N plant was erected at the pit head (wrong location!) of New Lount Colliery, Leicestershire, which is owned by the Leicestershire Colliery & Pipe Company Ltd". The plant was supplied by L & N Coal Distillation Ltd and was guaranteed to treat 100 tons of slack coal per day.

In operation, the plant actually treated 150 tons of slack per day, and on account of its successful results, the colliery company has been reorganized with a capital of £850,000 to put in additional plant with a capacity of 750 tons per day.

They are mighty hard headed people in Leicestershire, and if four months working of the new process produces this amount of enthusiasm, this critic's opinion is that New Zealand investors need not hesitate to follow the lead.

PART 13 - THE 1926 MINER'S STRIKE

British industry stopped on 4th May, 1926 when between 3 and 4 million workers obeyed their Trade Unions and stopped work when a General Strike was declared in sympathy with the miners who had come out on strike because of poor pay and working conditions. Mine owners wanted the colliers to work longer hours for less pay. The miners themselves wanted a national basic wage, seven hours work per day, and the pits to be re-nationalised as they had been during World War I. Due to the lack of coal, which was needed not only for domestic use, but for factories and all the other things such as railways etc., the country was in a perilous situation. Men, women and children had to resort to coal picking from pit banks, and anywhere else it could be found, together with wood from the countryside. Stick collecting became a major pastime, particularly for the children. Anything with wheels was used to transport the coal, such as prams, bicycles, trolleys etc. Eventually, the miners returned to work with some slight improvements in pay and conditions - concessionary loads of coal as part of their wages, perhaps being the most important. The miners' strike lasted for six to seven months, and the miners gradually returned to work on the basis of district wage settlements, and an increase in working hours.

It is recorded that around 400 miners were employed at the Coleorton No.3. ("Bug and Wink") colliery at that time, which shows how important it was in terms of employment to the locality. A Mr. William Stacey recalled that he remembered the time when a deputy at the "Bug and Wink", would account himself well off on a wage of 4s per day. The salaries and working conditions were extremely poor, and below is an example of the miners average earnings per shift, and annual salary, which was taken from "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners", Volume 1, by Colin Griffin:-

Average Per Shift	Average Annual Salary
1914- 6s 4d	£18 12s 1d
1918- 13s 0d	£199 18s 4d
1923- 9s 0d	£125 2s 0d
1928- 9s 10d	£111 2s 01d

The salary stayed pretty well the same until 1936, when it went up to an average of 11s 0d per shift.

The Coleorton Viscount Beaumont School log book records that a relief committee had been set up at the school, to provide food vouchers of varying values, dependant on the number of children in any one family. On the 19th of July 1926 therefore, free school meals were provided, despite the fact that the school had no facilities to supply these meals. This meant that 69 children had to march from the school at 12.15p.m., down to the old Coleorton Primitive Methodist Chapel built in 1839, where they had the facilities to provide the meals.

It was recalled by a senior resident of Stoney Lane, that during the 1926 miner's and general strike, due to coal being near the surface, hoards of miners came coal picking on the old railway embankment on both the Coleorton and Swannington sides of the 480 yard tunnel. All types of transport such as prams, trolleys, bikes, push chairs etc were used to take the coal away.

It wasn't until a gentleman by the name of Bill Clarke, a charge man shifter at Whitwick Colliery, lost his life while getting a bag of coal one evening on the Swannington side, that the authorities put a stop to this practice.



1926 Strike - A group of local miners

(The above photograph was taken from "The Leicestershire Miners" Vol II by Colin Griffin and the names appended from the Swannington Heritage website)

1. George Wheatley 2. Jim Hough 3. G.Birkin 4. Hardy Curtler 5. Jim Birkin 6. ? 7. ?
 8. Bill Hicken 9. Jack Armstrong 10. Cutch Curtis 11. ? 12. ? 13. "Tadsa Walker"
 14. George Robinson 15. Reuben Whyman 16. Bert Stacey 17. Oliver Curtis
 18. Albert Robinson 19. Percy Hicken ? 20. Bill Johnson 21. Albert Walker 22. Jack Smith
 23. Jack (Mugger) Smith 24. ? 25. Bill Bird 26. Bill Collier 27. Fred Johnson 28. Jack Neal
 29. ? Hicken 30. "Sixer" Collier 31. ? 32. Teddy Wright 33. "Sailor" 34. ? Armstrong



Photograph of coal picking during the 1926 miner's strike (location not known). This is probably how the coal picking on the Coleorton Railway embankment described above would have looked

PART 14 - STATISTICS

The following statistics are taken from the tables compiled by Arthur H. Stokes, H. M. Inspector for the Midland District in his Report for 1896

The initial letters attached to the word "Coal" in the column "Minerals Worked" indicate the kind of Coal produced, as C Coking Coal; G Gas Coal; H Household Coal; M Manufacturing Coal; S Steam Coal.

List of Mines worked under the Coal Mines Regulation Act, in the Leicestershire Coalfield, during the Year 1896.								
Name of Mine	Situation	Owner and Postal Address	Manager	Under-Manager	Workers		Minerals Worked	Remarks (Seam of Coal worked, &c.)
					U/G	Sur.		
Albion	Woodville	Albion Clay Co., Woodville	Robert Lawton	Charles Simpson	8	6	Fireclay	
Bagworth	Bagworth	Bagworth Coal Co., near Leicester	A.B. Emmerson	William Reed	212	69	Coal, M	Lower Main
Blackfordby	Woodville	Executors of Lord Donnington, Ashby-de-la-Zouch		Daniel Bacon	9	3	Coal M, Fireclay	Nether
Boothorpe	Woodville	Boothorpe Pipe Co.	John Ward		4	2	Fireclay	Fireclay
Coleorton	Ashby	Coleorton Colliery Co., Ashby-de-la-Zouch	Jesse Armson	Richard Booth	212	48	Coal, M	Middle Lount, Roaster
Donington	Woodville	Donington Sanitary Pipe Co., Overseal						Fireclay
Donisthorpe, "No. 1"	Moira	Checkland, Son, and Williams, Donisthorpe, Moira	Henry Taylor	William Bestwick	256	50	Coal, M & H	Little, Four Feet, Moira Main
Donisthorpe, "No. 2"	Moira	Checkland, Son, and Williams, Donisthorpe, Moira	Henry Taylor	William Gascoyne	70	13	Coal, M & H	Stockings, Eureka
Ellistown, "No. 1"	Bagworth	Exors. of Joseph Joel Ellis, Ellistown, via Leicester	George Hall	Wm. Bettison	305	134	Coal, M	Lower Main
Ellistown, "No. 2"	Bagworth	Exors. of Joseph Joel Ellis, Ellistown, via Leicester	George Hall	Matthew Catron	173	25	Coal, M	Upper Main
Ibstock, "No. 1"	Ibstock	Ibstock Colliery Co., Leicester	John Hay	Thomas Petcher	267	99	Coal, M	Low Main
Ibstock, "No. 2"	Ibstock	Ibstock Coal Co., Leicester	John Hay	W. Price	376	43	Coal, M	Upper Main
Marquis	Moira	Moira Colliery Co., Ashby-de-la-Zouch	T.A. Wilson	Henry Bradford			Coal, H & M	Moira Main
Measham Main	Measham	W. Tate, Measham, Atherstone	Wm. Tate	T. Jones	19	6	Coal, H	Main
Nailstone, "Nos 1 & 2"	Nailstone	Nailstone Colliery Co., near Leicester	Samuel Wheatley	Edward Smith, No. 1 Henry Ball, No. 2	265	73	Coal, H & M	Upper Main, Lower Main
Netherseal	Netherseal	Netherseal Colliery Co., near Burton-on-Trent	G.J. Binns	Joseph Percival	511	120	Coal, H & M	Main, Stockings, Eureka
Newfield, "Nos. 1, 2 & 3"	Woodville	John Knowles and Co., Woodville, Burton-on-Trent	Alfred Eley	W. Pickering	29	3	Fireclay	Fireclay
Oakthorpe	Ashby	Henry P. Skidmore and Co., Oakthorpe, Ashby-de-la-Zouch	H.S. Smith	John Kirk	42	17	Coal, H	Main
Pool, "No. 4"	Ashby	Edward Ensor and	G.S.	T. Leech	6	2	Fireclay	

	Wolds, Woodville	Co., Woodville, Burton-on-Trent	Bragge					
Pool, "No. 5"	Ashby Wolds, Woodville	Edward Ensor and Co., Woodville, Burton-on-Trent	G.S. Bragge	T. Leech	3	2	Fireclay	
Rawdon	Moira	Moira Colliery Co., Ashby-de-la-Zouch	T.A. Wilson	Henry Bradford	279	85	Coal, H & M	Moira Main, Eureka
Reservoir	Moira	Moira Colliery Co., Ashby-de-la-Zouch	P. Beaumont	W.F. Clamp	302	69	Coal, H, M & S	Moira Main, Little
Snibston, "No. 2"	Coalville	The South Leicestershire Colliery Co., Coalville, via Leicester	W. Melling	Wm. Glover	341	108	Coal, M & H	Roaster
Snibston, "No. 3"	Coalville	The South Leicestershire Colliery Co., Coalville, via Leicester	W. Melling	Samuel Bettison	96	40	Coal, M & H	Middle Lount
South Leicestershire, "Nos. 1 & 2"	Coalville	The South Leicestershire Colliery Co., Coalville, via Leicester	W. Melling	Geo. Glover, No. 1 John Underwood, No. 2	449	153	Coal, M & H	Lower Main, Upper Main
Staunton Harold	Ashby	Staunton Colliery Co., Ashby-de-la- Zouch		James Richards	26	8	Coal, M & H	Middle Lount
Swannington	Ashby	Swannington Colliery Co., Ashby- de-la-Zouch	Mylles Hardwick		131	30	Coal, M	Middle Lount
Whitwick, "No. 2"	Coalville	Whitwick Colliery Co., Coalville, via Leicester	T.Y. Hay	Samuel Smith			Coal, M	Roaster
Whitwick, "No. 5"	Coalville	Whitwick Colliery Co., Coalville, via Leicester	T.Y. Hay	James Clamp	162	96	Coal, H	Main
Whitwick, "No. 6"	Coalville	Whitwick Colliery Co., Coalville, via Leicester	T.Y. Hay	Samuel Smith	511	92	Coal, M	Roaster
Woodville	Woodville	Woodville Sanitary Pipe Co., Burton- on-Trent	J.W. Moreton		6	4	Fireclay	
			Total		5070	1400		

The following statistics show the Leicestershire Coalfield pits operating in 1921, together with manpower (men and boys) for underground /surface

- **Bagworth Deep** 317 (67)
 - **Bagworth Main** 267 (57) (New Bagworth Coal Co Ltd)
 - **Blackfordby Boothorpe** (CW Outram and Co) 5 (2)
 - **Clay Mine** 5 (1)
 - **Coleorton** (Checkland and Co Ltd) 301 (78)
 - **Desford No1** (Desford Coal Co Ltd) 493, **No2** 427 (213)
 - **Donisthorpe No1** (Donisthorpe Colliery Co Ltd) 604 (99), **No2** 379 (73)
 - **Ellistown No1** 495 (124), **No2** (Ellistown Collieries) 398 (97)
 - **Ibstock No1** 418, **No2** 436, **No3** (Ibstock Collieries Ltd) 147 (/ 222)
 - **Lount** (W J Hardy) 109 / 36
 - **Measham Main** (Measham Collieries Ltd) 323 / 76
 - **Nailstone No1** 369, **No2** 393 / 183 (Nailstone Colliery Co)
 - **Rawdon** (Moirra Colliery Ltd) 1,002 / 364
 - **Reservoir** (Moirra Colliery Ltd) 434 / 106
 - **Snibston No2 and Stephenson** (South Leicestershire Colliery Co Ltd) 728 / 191
 - **South Leicestershire No1** 407, **No2** 379 / 253 (South Leicestershire Colliery Co Ltd)
 - **Whitwick No2 and No6** (Whitwick Colliery Co Ltd) 533, **No5** 277 / 196, **No3** 501 / 67
- **Total 10,147 underground and 2,505 surface men and boys. This compares with 5070 / 1400 for the year 1896 shown previously.**

The following is the weekly budget of a typical agricultural labourer and coalminer in the South Derbyshire Coalfield in 1841. Similar figures can be assumed for the Leicestershire.

Agricultural Labourer (income 12s.)

	s	d
Flour 2 ¼ stone	5	7 ½
Meat	1	0
Cheese ¼ lb		2
Butter ½lb		9
Rent	1	6
Coal	1	0
Milk, 7 quarts		7
Sugar ½lb		4
Soap ½ lb		3 ½
Beer		1 ½
Extras (has had his suit of clothes 12 years)		7 ½
Total	12	0

Miner (income 18s)

	s	d
Flour 1 ½ stone	3	6
Oatmeal		1
Meat (5 ½ lb consumed Saturday to Tuesday)	2	8 ½
Bacon ¼ lb		2 ½
Cheese 1lb		7
Sugar ¾ lb		6
Rent	1	6
Potatoes		6
Beer 3 gallons		9
Coal (carriage only occasionally)		7 ½
Butter ½ lb		9
Milk 7 quarts		7
Peas		2
Tea, Salt, pepper, coffee, mustard	1	6
Extras (clothing etc.)	4	0 ½
Total	18	0

Both the above had a wife (not working) and three young children. The agricultural labourer rented an allotment for 2d. a week which provided all the household vegetables, the miner cultivated a garden attached to the house which provided additional vegetables.

Table 1: Miners' Earnings in the Leicestershire Coalfield 1914-1943

	Average Earnings per shift		Average Number of Shifts worked	Average Earnings			(G.B.) £ s. d.
	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
1914	6	4	259	81	12	1	
1918	13	0	294	199	18	4	
1923	9	0	278	125	2	0	
1928	9	10	226	111	2	1	
1929	9	5	237	111	11	10	
1930	9	10	233	114	10	6	
1931	9	8	234	113	2	0	
1932	9	8	224	108	4	6	
1933	9	10	217	106	14	0	
1938				150	2	6	144 19 0
1939				165	14	6	154 14 0
1940				218	8	0	178 15 0
1941				259	12	2	208 0 0
1942				304	4	0	242 1 8
1943				347	12	4	260 0 0

Source: *Sankey Commission 1919; Buckmaster Report 1923; Miners Dept., Statistical Digest of the Coalmining Industry from 1938, Cmd. 6538, 1944; LMA Records, Leicestershire Miners Earnings 1928-1933.*

The above information is taken from "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners" by Colin Griffin.