

The Mining Industry in North Staffordshire

A Personal Perspective by Jim Worgan



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Silverdale Colliery closed on the 31st December 1998, thus bringing to an end over 800 years of coal and ironstone mining in North Staffordshire. At its height the industry employed over 30,000 men and women and output reached 7 million tons of coal and 2½ million tons of ironstone per annum. Today many buildings and monuments dot the skyline, the most significant being:-

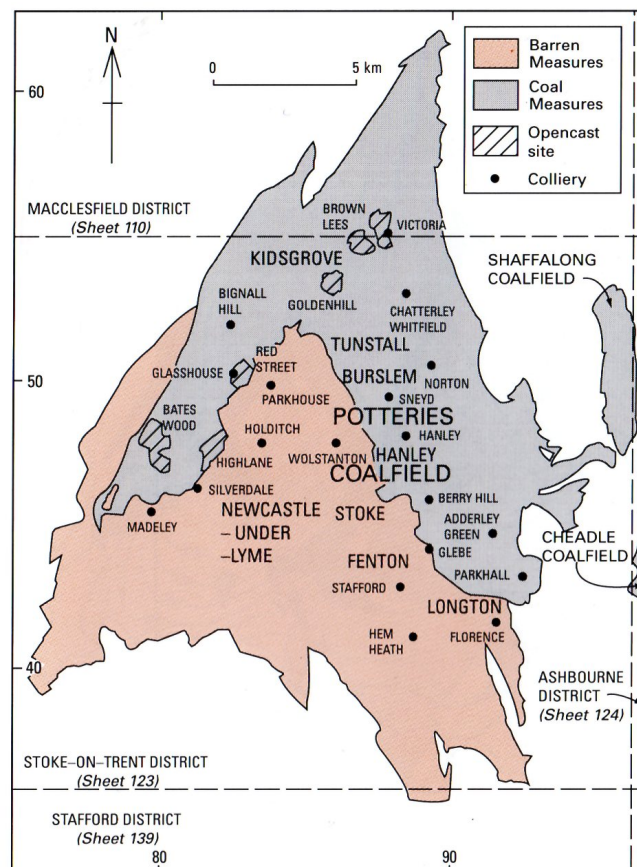
a) Chatterley Whitfield Colliery which closed in 1977 and then opened as the first ever underground Mining Museum in Great Britain in 1979. Shortly before it closed in August 1993 the site became scheduled as an Ancient Monument comprising 34 buildings dating from 1883 to the 1960s, most of which are scheduled or listed. It is the most complete coal mine in Great Britain and possibly Western Europe. Most of the site, which amongst others contains the headgears (metal structures and pulley wheels) of the Hesketh, Platt, Institute and Winstanley shafts, is derelict although two or three buildings have been restored. These are now in use for commercial purposes and by the Chatterley Whitfield Friends (a Charity Organisation) who are doing everything they can “to keep the site alive”. They have a large archive of photographs, documents, plans/maps and artefacts and their Heritage Centre on site is normally open to the public by appointment.

b) Foxfield Colliery at Godley Brook (Dilhorne) in the Cheadle Coalfield where most of the former colliery site survives. Some of it is privately owned. A number buildings including the concrete headgears, (the first I believe in Great Britain), are in the ownership of the Foxfield Railway whose headquarters are in the former National Coal Board (NCB) owned Cash Heath Wharf near to Blythe Bridge. Outside the colliery main gate stands a memorial erected by the employers & employees of the Park Hall Colliery Co. Ltd., in honour of those who left the colliery to serve in the First World War 1914-1919.

c) Apedale Heritage Centre located in North Staffordshire’s Apedale Community Country Park, near Chesterton. This Heritage Centre was founded in 2001 on the site of the Apedale Colliery, formerly owned by the NCB, which closed in 1998. Here it is possible to go underground in an authentic drift mine (‘footrail’ or ‘footrill’ as it is known locally). Access is by two 1 in 4 inclined roadways (or drifts) from the surface and a further drift has been opened to the deeper seams and is connected to the original mine. It is staffed by former miners and offers a unique personal experience of an industry that led the Industrialisation of North Staffordshire.

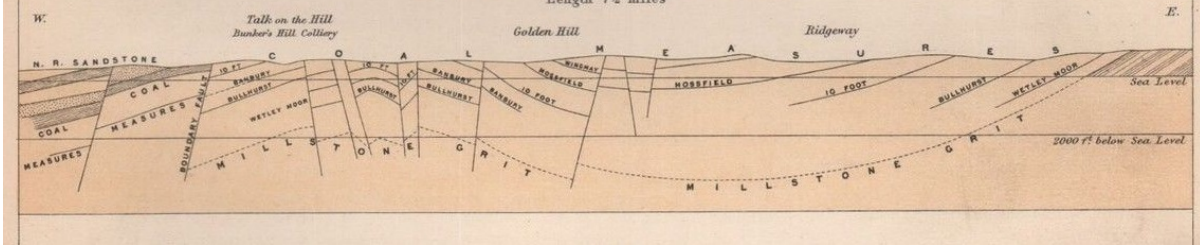
Geological

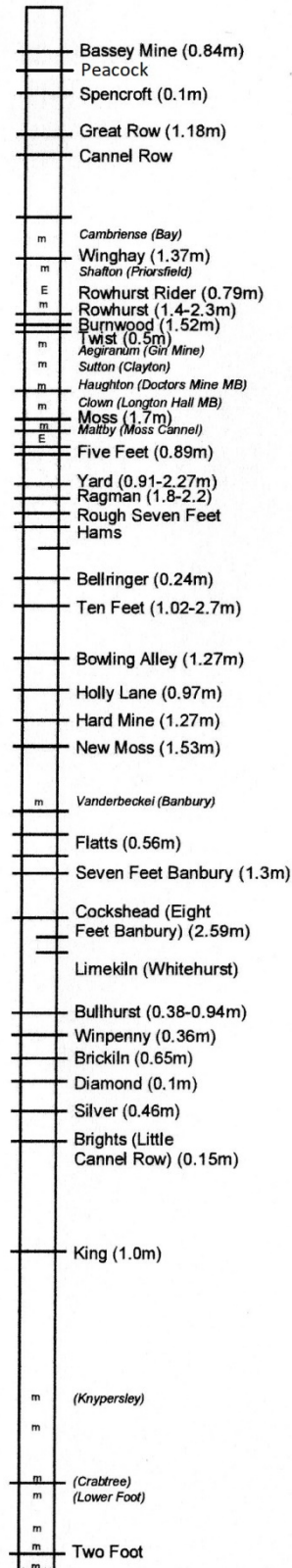
The coal-bearing rocks, the Coal Measures, of the British coalfields are of Carboniferous age some 300 million years old. In North Staffordshire they form three separate coalfields, each named after the syncline (or basin) in which they are present; the Potteries Coalfield, Cheadle Coalfield and the Shaffalong Coalfield at Cheddleton. By far the largest and most important is the Potteries Coalfield where the Coal Measures are 900-1600m thick.



Geological Outline Map showing the principal collieries & opencast sites in the Potteries Coalfield. (*Geology of the country around Stoke-on-Trent, British Geological Survey, 1998*)

FIG. 5
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE COALFIELD
Length 7½ miles





m = marine band

Vertical section of coal seams in the Potteries Coalfield, main seam names and thicknesses. (UK Coal Resource for New Exploitation Technologies, DTI Nov. 2004) The Coal Measures, containing numerous coal seams, are overlain by the Barren Measures (see outline geological map above) which include few coals and comprise

predominantly red shales and sandstones including the Etruria Marl, Keele and Newcastle Formations. The vertical sequence of some of the more commercially important coal seams is shown above.

The structure of the Potteries Coalfield is a large syncline or basin shape, open to the south, but closing in the north due to its axis dipping southward. It is flanked by anticlines or up-folds, the Western Anticline on the west and the Werrington Anticline to the east. The coalfield's western boundary is a complex fault belt known as the Red Rock Fault and other large faults occur within the coalfield itself, including the NNW-SSE trending Apedale and Newcastle faults which both have maximum downwards displacements to the east of 600m & 180m respectively and the High Lane and Florence faults, the latter orientated approximately East-West. The coalfield is terminated to the south by another East-West trending fracture, the Swynnerton Fault. Coal Measures do occur to the south of this fault, but at considerable depth, forming a link between the North Staffordshire and Cannock Chase coalfields.

Historical

The history of the North Staffordshire coalfields goes far back into the mists of time and resulted in the growth of the Pottery industry, due entirely to the right quality of coal being available. Further evidence is the importation of China Clay into the District from the West Country for over 300 years. It took about five tons of coal to fire one ton of clay.

There are many historical references in Britain to the Romans using coal and North Staffordshire is no exception. Archaeologists excavating the Romano-British settlement at Holditch near Chesterton in 1960 found a large amount of charcoal, coal and coal cinder, lead waste, iron ore and iron slag, indicating that some of the inhabitants were probably craftsmen working metal and exploiting the local resources at this location around the second century AD. For seven centuries after the departure of the Romans there is scarcely a mention of coal and there is no mention of coal in the Domesday Book (1085). The earliest written records in North Staffordshire, relate to coal and ironstone being mined in the Tunstall area in the late 13th Century, when in 1282 William de Audleye held an iron mine in the Manor of Tunstall and a mine of sea coal. (originally coal was called 'sea coal' (or sea cole) as it was believed to have its origins in the sea; being found mainly on the shores around the British Isles, particularly on the north-east coast where it is found as rounded cobbles and pebbles of coal, washed ashore from coal seams coming to the surface, or 'outcropping' on the seabed offshore). This mining was taking place on the coal outcropping on the ridge at Bemmersley just to the east of the present Chatterley Whitfield Colliery. (Whitfield Colliery, later Chatterley

Whitfield from 1891 started its life in the 1840/50s working the outcrop in the same area before concentrating on deep mining operations).

From the 13th Century onwards there are many records of the exploitation of iron and coal in the North Staffordshire area. In fact, by the mid-14th Century, Newcastle-under-Lyme had established itself with a reputation as a centre for the marketing of iron, hence the name of one of its main thoroughfares, the 'Ironmarket'.

Mining in North Staffordshire probably started on a commercial scale in the 17th Century.

It was only with the coming of both canals and railways that the industry began to expand rapidly, coupled of course by technical innovations in the 18th & 19th Centuries. Before that it was basically a local domestic industry and even with the expansion the area tended to remain a backwater well into the 20th Century. Coal continued to be worked up to the close of the 20th Century, but ironstone mining had ceased shortly before the Second World War.

With the need for more coal the industry began to change as pits became larger and deeper with all the associated problems of heavy faulting (vertical dislocation of the coal seams), gas and water. However, boreholes put down in the Apedale Valley in the 1920s revealed the existence of over 20 workable coal seams down to a depth of 2,500 feet (approx. 750m).

It is interesting to note that all types and qualities of coal seams found in Great Britain come together in North Staffordshire making it the richest coalfield in the country. The only exceptions being anthracite, found in South Wales, and small deposits of Lignite or Brown Coal found at Bovey Tracey in Dorset and at Brora mid-way between Inverness and Wick in Scotland. What is interesting about the deposit at Brora is that originally the mining of Lignite there was operated and owned by the Dukes of Sutherland of Trentham Hall, substantial coal owners and operators in North Staffordshire. It remained in operation until the late 1960s and finally closed after clearance operations in the early 1970s.

The North Staffordshire landscape soon began to change with the sinking of the new deeper pits and the area became dotted with what some people today might regard as industrial eyesores, but not so to the industrial archaeologist. However, nothing could halt the march of King Coal. Whereas most of North Staffordshire consisted of scattered isolated communities, new facilities, often funded by the mine owners, gradually grew up around the pits on which, to a large extent, the whole economy of the region depended.

Many mining disasters have occurred, particularly within the area covered by the current boundaries of Newcastle-under-Lyme, possibly due to the geology of the

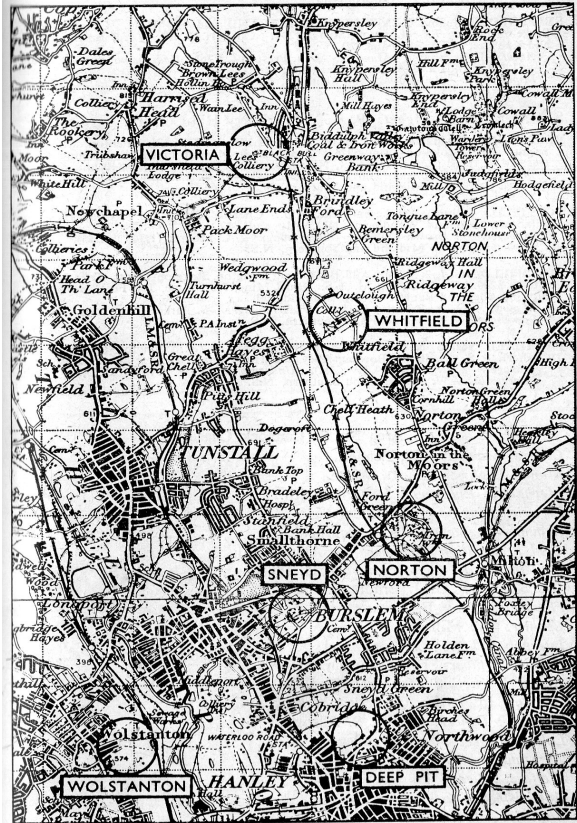
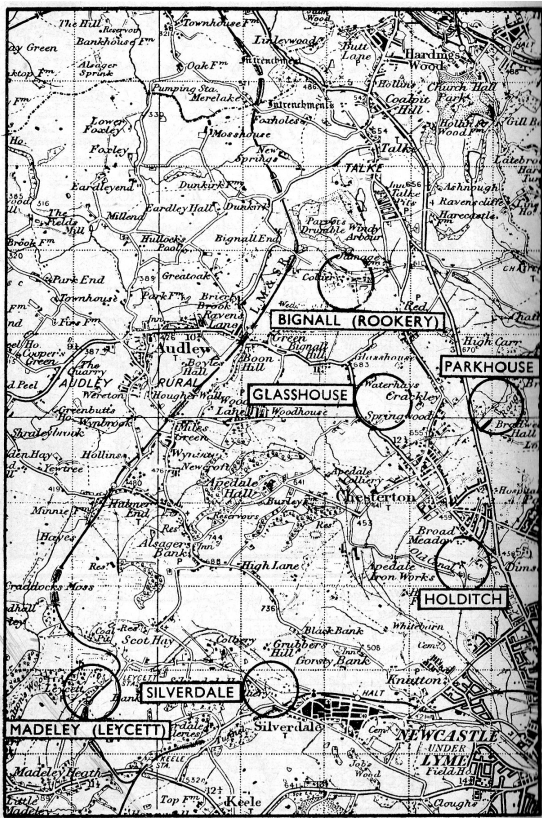
coalfield where the more steeply inclined and gassiest seams occur. Heart-breaking scenes of women and children huddled around the pit top, often in winter, are now thankfully confined to history.

Times were hard, people were poor and they often toiled long and arduous hours, sometimes in taxing conditions for little reward. Mineworkers were also at times at the “mercy of the coal owners” who could, and often did, hire & fire at will. It was considered, however, that anyone who could work in the North Staffordshire Coalfield, be they locals or incomers from other parts of Great Britain or from abroad, could work in any coalfield in the World.

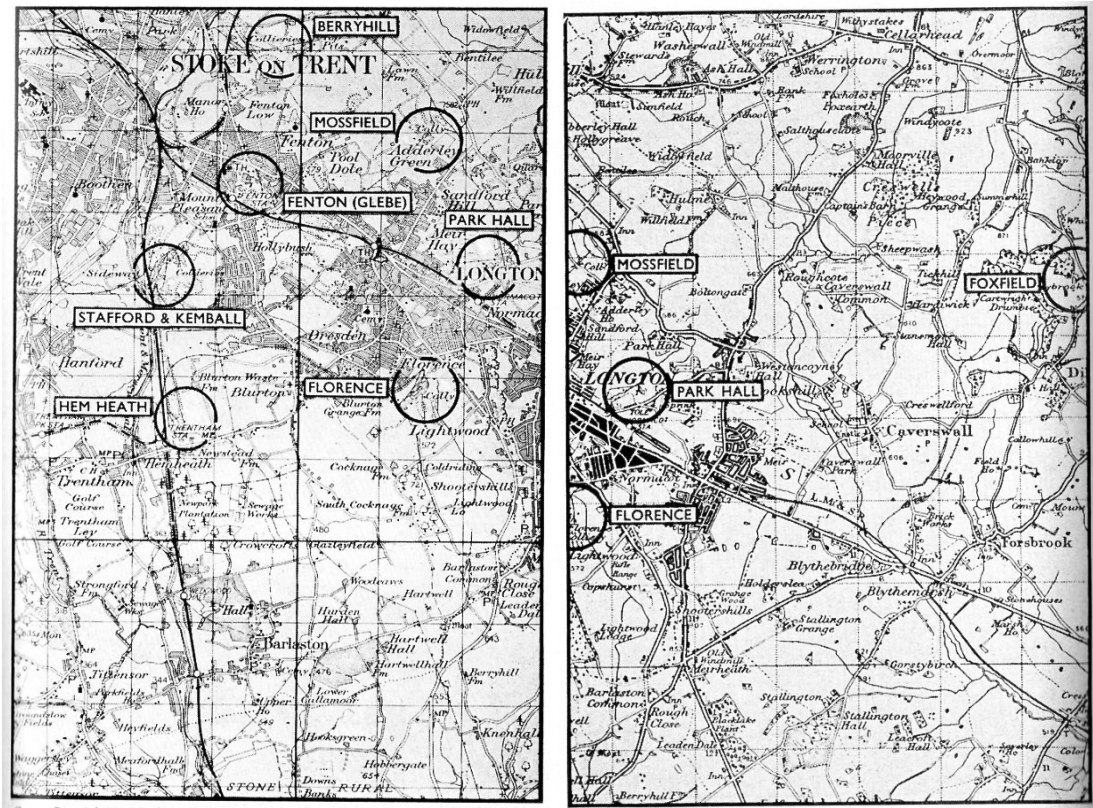
Welfare facilities at the pits were virtually unknown until about the 1920s, but community spirit was very strong. What shone through was the unique camaraderie and comradeship so widespread throughout the Industry. Men were dependent on each other at all time due to the very nature of their work and this often extended to the communities in which they lived. Throughout its long history it was always subject to change, but what remains, however, even though the Industry no longer exists, is the spirit and determination of the miners who always had the will and expertise to succeed, often against insurmountable odds.

The National Coal Board

The Coal Mining Industry was nationalised on the 1st January 1947 by the Labour Government at a cost of almost £400 million. North Staffordshire became the No.1 Area of the West Midlands Division of the National Coal Board with its Headquarters at the former North Staffordshire Coal Owners Association offices at 72, Leek Road, Stoke-on-Trent as well as satellite offices throughout the City. It became responsible for 20 deep mines (Rookery Colliery at Bignall End closing within 6 months of nationalisation without producing any coal) and two footrails (drift mines), Glasshouse and Apedale. What is interesting is that of these collieries, Silverdale Colliery was leased from the Trustees of the Sneyd Estate and Wolstanton Colliery from the Duchy of Lancaster until final purchases took place by the NCB in the late 1970s to early 1980s. The Area was also responsible for former colliery owned housing, engineering works, welfare clubs and grounds, a swimming pool at Smallthorne (ex Sneyd Colliery), brickworks, Red Street Monument at Chesterton (a Grade 2 listed structure I think) and a vast amount of land. The Coal Board refused to pay for the restoration of the Monument following its partial collapse in the 1970s and I believe it is now owned by the Coal Authority. In addition to the 20 deep mines, the NCB also became responsible for 32 Licensed Small Mines, each employing less than 30 men, which were not owned but inspected and administered by the NCB each owner had to pay a Royalty of some 6d (2½p) per ton produced as well as an Insurance Contribution to cover the NCB



for any liabilities which might occur following closure of the mine. They also paid into a scheme which provided rescue services should they be required.



(Guide to the Coalfields, 1950)

The Early Years

Examination of the 1900 Ordnance Survey maps reveals the sites over 400 collieries in North Staffordshire with hundreds of locations marked “old coal shaft”. What is known however from the Annual Reports of Her Majesty’s Inspector of Mines for 1875 (Mr Thomas Wynne) there were 148 mines listed and in the report for 1896 (Mr W N Atkinson) 113 mines employed almost 19,000 men. Annual coal output around this time was 5 million tons and ironstone 1 million tons. The majority of deep mines which survived until 1947 were also working in 1896.

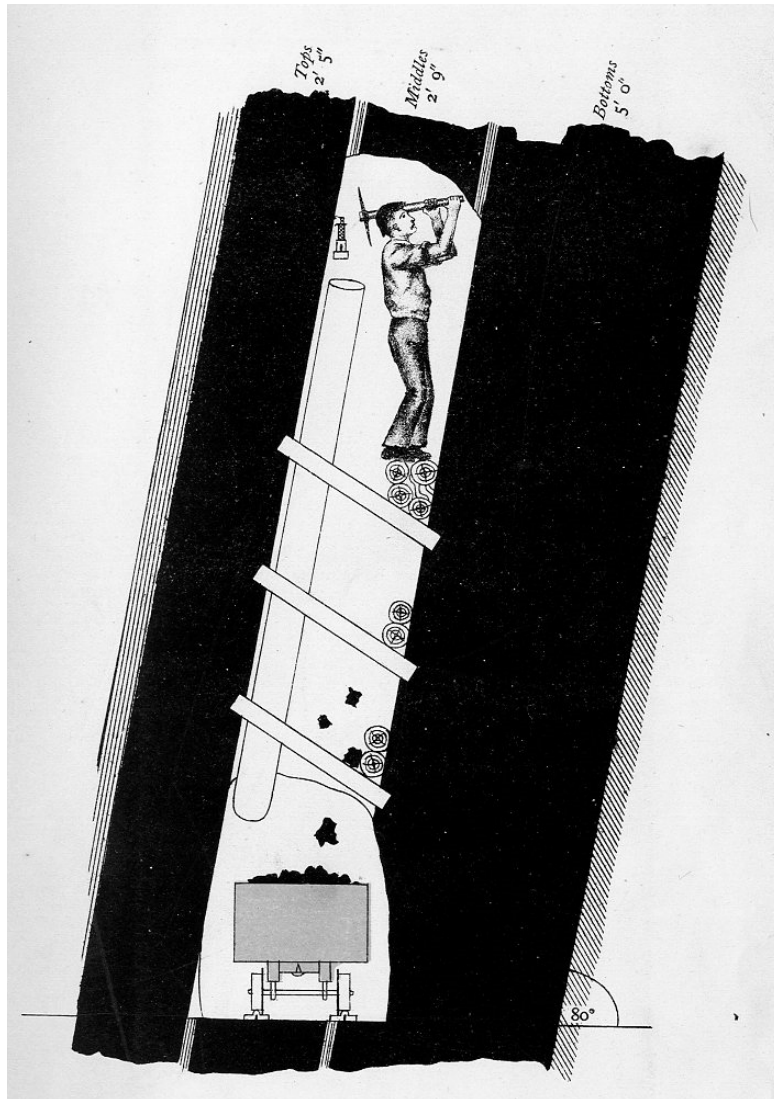
In 1348 “colliers” paid a Royalty of 10 shillings (50p) to the Lord of the Manor of Bemmersley (Norton) whilst the monks of Abbey Hulton were mining on the Ridgeway to the east of Chatterley Whitfield in the early 14/15th Centuries. Shaw’s History of the Potteries tells us that in 1750 Ralph Leigh of Burslem collected coal from Whitfield (presumably Chatterley Whitfield) twice a day. His six horses each carried between two & three cwt of coal along lanes which were impassable to wagons! These draughts of coal were worth about 7d (3p) and Leigh received one shilling (5p) a day for his services.

Early mining in the area was principally by Bell Pits and adits (roadways driven into the outcrop of the coal seams). It was later discovered if one Bell Pit accessed another underground then a primitive source of ventilation could be established.

These were usually worked as a family unit (Father, Mother, Sons & Daughters) and it was only after a Government Commission in 1842 that women and girls were banned from working underground, and the minimum age for boys working underground was 10 yrs.

A record of coal mines in Norton-in-the Moors taken on 12th December 1788 shows that there were 14 working mines. The number across the coalfield at this time can only be imagined but at Norton they were mining high quality coal down to a depth of 80 yards.

The application of steam power to winding and pumping engines as well as ventilation fans (replacing furnace ventilation) allowed mines to go to even greater depths. The establishment of the Silverdale Company in 1792, predating the village and in 1799, Stirrup & Pye Colliery at Adderley Green sinking shafts to a depth of about 400 yards, (closing about 1939 but remaining a pumping shaft for Mossfield Colliery until its closure in the early 1960s), are just two examples of a great expansion which took place in the North Staffordshire Coalfield around the turn of the 19th Century. The coalfield is heavily faulted, with areas of steep dips and gassy seams of widely varying thickness ranging from 2ft 3in in the Diamond Seam at Victoria Colliery, Biddulph to the 10ft thick Cockshead Seam at Wolstanton Colliery. The average seam gradient in the coalfield is about 1 in 4 but towards the western edge of the coalfield the seams become almost vertical and were known as “The Rearers”. An excellent book entitled “Accidents in Mines in the North Staffordshire Coalfield” by Arthur Robert Sawyer, published in Hanley in 1886 shows one method of working in the “Rearers” seams which have to be seen to be believed:-



(Bullhurst Seam, Kidsgrove District from "Accidents in Mines" by A R Sawyer 1886)

In the 1970s so much methane was emitted at Holditch Colliery, Chesterton that it was "shut down" for 72 hours. Although the Minnie Pit at Halmerend closed due to flooding in the 1930s vast amounts of water are still being discharged from the shaft (capped in accordance with NCB Regulations) to a nearby water course. A manhole is positioned in the centre of the shaft cap fitted with a valve which allows the water to be diverted into the former colliery reservoir which is now a fishing pool.

Some Innovations

Accidents and Disasters were commonplace in the coal mining industry up to the early 1920s. The causes of these were very diverse and great attempts were made to mitigate against them. For example, the use of naked flames such as candles diminished considerably with the invention of the flame safety lamp, developed in the early part of the 19th Century by Sir Humphrey Davy, George Stephenson and William Clanny. Although they were not fool proof initially, they provided a safe, if dim, light and also showed whether methane gas was present or not. Nevertheless there were explosions soon after their invention but these were not due to the lamps being defective, but to the slow burning of gas, from the surrounding air, in the lamp itself. They only became totally safe following further development and the addition of a magnetic lock which meant that they could only be opened in the lamphouse on the surface. The application of steam driven ventilation, doing away with coal fired furnaces at the bottom of the upcast shaft was also a great improvement. There was always a risk that the air coursing through the workings could be charged with methane and explode when it reached the furnace. In some collieries at one time no record was kept of how many men went underground. So even though the official death toll at Blantyre Colliery in Scotland in 1877 was 207 it is thought to have been much higher because no check had been made of how many men had gone underground in the morning. This eventually led to miners having a unique number stamped on their lamp and on 2 metal disks or tallies (also known as checks). On entering the cage to descend into the mine he would hand one of the tallies to the man in charge of the pit top, the banksman, and the other on his return to the surface. By recording the tallies and lamps handed out each day both the lampman and the timekeeper knew who had been at work on any given day. This system is still in use on the Crossrail construction in London. At Kellingley Colliery in Yorkshire, the last deep mine in Great Britain, the miners used a swipe card system on entering the mine and returning to the surface.



Chatterley Whitfield Colliery Lamp Check

Accidents & Disasters

As previously mentioned, the majority of the mining accidents and disasters occurred in the area currently within the boundary of Newcastle-under-Lyme, but now, thankfully a thing of the past. Nevertheless they still hold tangible emotions today despite the last major disaster at Sneyd Colliery on 1st January 1942, as demonstrated by the research carried out by two colleagues, Mark Casewell and the late John Lumsdon who have independently identified almost 5000 men, women, boys and girls (from John Grey junior killed in an old Delph in April 1756 to Robert Harley at Silverdale Colliery on 4th September 1995) who died in mining accidents and disasters in North Staffordshire alone.

A Disaster was usually classified as more than three people killed in the same incident and these were caused by a variety of circumstances. The first recorded Disaster in North Staffordshire was at Whitehill in July 1851 in which 9 men died as a result of a firedamp (methane gas) explosion, the ignition of which was caused by a defective safety lamp. They are, however, too numerous to list but I have chosen a few examples to demonstrate the dangers of working in a coal mine. What must not be forgotten are the awful scenes at the pitheads as women and children waited for news of their loved ones. For some there was relief and joy, for others only despair.

a) Talk o' th' Hill Colliery, 13th December 1866
91 killed as a result of an explosion of firedamp, caused probably by a naked light.

The explosion left

11 widows aged 32 to 59

12 dependent adults aged 59 to 76 and

43 dependent children aged 8 to 14

Anxious people gathered at the pithead, hindering the rescue operations. Mr. Johnson, the Colliery Manager, cleared the pithead and the cage eventually brought up 50 terrified lads who were seriously burnt. The rescued were revived with brandy and were tended by Messrs Barnes, Bruce and Greatorex whilst the incumbent of Talke, the Rev M W H Hutchinson comforted the families. Seven or eight horses were also killed and eventually the bodies of the dead, some heavily mutilated, were brought to the surface, being washed before being identified by their loved ones.

There were about 150 men in the pit when there was a loud report, flames rushed up the shaft and the countryside around was covered in soot. The shock wave was felt ½ mile away. No positive evidence emerged as to how the accident had happened but despite irregularities taking place underground, it was known that some men had keys to the lamps which meant that they could be unlocked

underground. This was with the full knowledge of the officials, two of whom were found guilty of culpable negligence. At the inquest, however, the Jury returned a verdict of accidental death. Today there are memorial stained glass windows to the disaster in the Parish Church at Talke.

b) Bunkers Hill Colliery, 30th April 1875

43 killed as a result of a firedamp explosion caused by a naked flame or shotfiring

James Yearsley, one of the victims, aged 27 left a widow Mary and three sons aged 4, 3 & 4 months. Within a week his widow and children were gone, given notice to quit the colliery-owned house in Butt Lane because it was required for another collier. Can you imagine the anguish she must have felt? She no longer had a husband, no means of support and no home. Such circumstances nevertheless were quite common place at this time. On 15th May 1875 Mary received a letter from the Bunkers Hill Accident Relief Fund (one was normally set up after a Disaster) stating that for as long as the money lasted and as long as she remained chaste and unmarried, she would receive four shillings (20p) for herself per week two shillings each for her children until they were 13 years of age. How relieved she must have been to receive 50p per week. In some ways Mary was fortunate in that her and her children did not go into the workhouse; instead she went to live with her mother in Cheshire. The story does not have a happy ending because at the age of 34 Mary died leaving three orphaned sons.

c) Leycett (Madeley) Colliery, 21st January 1880

62 killed by an ignition of firedamp caused by shotfiring.

One of the victims was the Manager's son. Today, five cottages still stand at the site of the Harrison & Woodburn shafts.

One of the difficulties here was the identification of the victims and every facility was given to the relatives who were likely to identify the deceased. Clearly, viewing the victims was very traumatic, but nevertheless necessary. So great was the disfigurement that in some cases features could not be recognised and identification could only be made from scraps of clothing, clogs or scars. 12 were buried in Audley, 12 at Keele, 8 at Chesterton & Silverdale, the remaining 30 in a mass grave in Madeley Churchyard.

On the 27th April 2011 a large memorial stone was unveiled in Madeley Churchyard by the Vicar, the Rev Barry Wilson. It lists the names of the 30 men and was attended by a large gathering, two of whom were direct descendants of the victims. The Disaster left behind 200 women and children (10 of whom were left as orphans) and the Company received a telegram from Queen Victoria, as was customary, expressing her condolences. A Memorial Wheel to the Miners of Leycett

(Madeley) Colliery was unveiled in the early part of the 21st Century at the junction of the road to Leycett and Newcastle at Madeley Heath.

- d) Whitfield Colliery (Chatterley Whitfield from 1891), 7th February 1881
24 men & boys killed in an explosion caused by the misuse of a furnace in an underground blacksmith's shop.

The explosion completely destroyed the Laura Shaft (sunk in 1874 and named after one of the Director's daughters) and severely damaged the Institute Shaft (named in 1874 following a visit by the North Staffordshire Institute of Mining Engineers) which survives on site to this day. In an attempt to stem the spread of an underground fire dirt was tipped into the Institute Shaft and this action was ultimately successful. Contemporaneous reports indicate that only 5 or 7 seven bodies were recovered, leaving 17-19 bodies still below ground. The Colliery immediately sterilized the area, but the estate owner C J Homer (ex Director of the Chatterley Coal & Iron Company which took over Whitfield Colliery in 1872) took the Company to Court claiming loss of income as he was entitled to Royalties per ton mined. The Company lost the case and paid Homer (by now a Director of the Duke of Sutherland's Stafford Coal & Iron Company in Great Fenton) the sum, I believe to be, in the order of £10,000, a massive amount at the time. This meant that the Company now owned the coal and proceeded to mine it on an infrequent basis over the coming years. In 1921 (40 years after the Disaster) the bodies of the Dale brothers were discovered and were buried at Smallthorne Churchyard. This had always been conjecture, but a former NCB colleague and Chatterley Whitfield Friends Member subsequently confirmed that it was true and that the Dale brothers were relatives of his mother.

At the subsequent Inquiry the Colliery Manager, Mr Thompson, was found guilty of failing to clear the pit and sending three men, including his son, into the pit to recover horses. All three were killed. The Inquest into the Disaster was held at the Norton Arms Public House where the Jury found Thompson guilty of Manslaughter. At his trial at Stafford Assizes the Judge ordered the Jury to find him not guilty as he considered no man would send his own son to his death if he had realised the danger. Today a memorial comprising mine cars from Chatterley Whitfield Colliery stands opposite the Norton Arms. The Chatterley Whitfield War Memorial Cross, originally located at the junction of Whitfield and Wildings roads has been moved to Whitley Road. The pupils of Ball Green School hold a service at the Memorial on the closest Friday to Remembrance Day at 11.00am, a tradition I believe that has been carried on for the last 40 years. For the past two years (2019 & 2020) the Chatterley Whitfield Friends have joined them in this wreath laying ceremony.

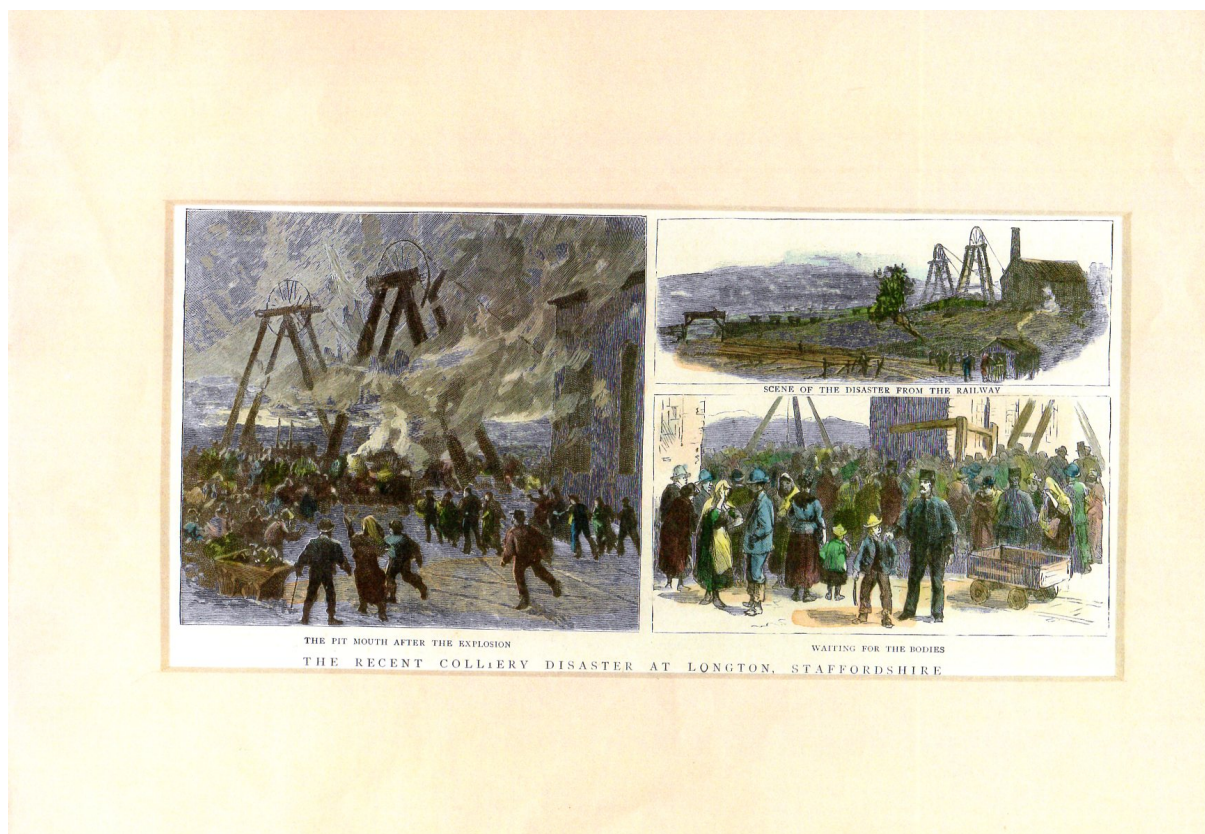
- e) Mossfield Colliery, 16th October 1889

64 men killed as a result of a firedamp explosion, the ignition of which was caused by spontaneous combustion.

One of the problems with coal mining was the large accumulations of very fine coal dust deposited on underground roadways, particularly if the mine was hot and dry. An explosion was further propagated by the dust particles becoming airborne, which because of the confined conditions, made the situation much worse. Eventually it was realised that spreading stone dust on the floor and sides of the roadways and later, in addition, the installation of stone dust barriers i.e. simply planks of wood suspended from the roof, loaded with piles of stonedust, which would be blown down by the explosion front and prevent it propagating further.

To bring this into perspective, in the 1970s I took a party of my son's friends on an underground visit to Holditch Colliery. One of the lads touched a stone dust barrier and virtually disappeared in the resultant fall of stone dust.

A large Memorial stone to the Disaster stands in Longton Churchyard.



- f) Sladderhill Colliery No.3, Apedale, 2nd April 1891
10 men killed in an explosion of coal dust caused by shotfiring.

The Official Report into this Disaster contains the following details concerning the victims:-

Name.	Occupation.	Age.	Nature of Injuries (Doctor's Report).	Hour of commencement of shift.	Working Place.
John Warburton - -	Fireman -	43	Injuries very severe, body much charred, arms and fingers rigid; death apparently instantaneous from force of explosion.	2.30 p.m.	The district.
Frederick Webb - -	Collier -	21	Killed by after-damp, not burnt, little or no injury otherwise.	2.30 p.m.	Thirling, near face of main level.
Samson Knight - -	Do. -	41	Very severely injured, very much charred over face and chest, arms and fingers rigid; death apparently instantaneous from force of explosion.	2.30 p.m.	Thirling, near face of air-head.
Richard Parsons - -	Horse-driver -	13	Singed on the head, clothes scorched -	6 p.m.	Main level.
George Wetnall - -	Taker-off -	19	This boy had injuries, severe, very much charred over face and chest.	6 p.m.	Bottom of No. 4 and No. 5 jig dips.
William Oakley - -	Loader - -	19	Deep cut in right forearm, apparently no other injuries, not burnt, killed by after-damp.	6 p.m.	Up No. 4 dips.
George Hall - -	Do. - -	34	No injuries, not burnt, killed by after-damp.	6 p.m.	Up No. 4 dips.
Jos. Birch - -	Do. - -	19	Fracture base of skull, blood on face, thrown with great violence, hair singed, skin flayed over arms and chest.	6 p.m.	Up No. 5 dips.
Arnold Allen - -	Ridder -	14	Fracture of right humerus; seems to have been thrown with considerable violence; hair singed, burns over front of chest.	6 p.m.	Up No. 5 dips.
James Holland - -	Do. - -	33	Slight burns, singed hair and scalp -	6 p.m.	Far end of air-head.
William Rhodes - -	Collier - -	-	These men worked in two headings from No. 4 back dip, which they left shortly before the explosion.	2.30 p.m.	
Thomas Roberts - -	Do. - -	-		2.30 p.m.	

It is impossible to imagine today what their relatives must have gone through in order to identify them or what affect it had on the men who retrieved them from the mine.

- g) Diglake (Audley) Colliery, 14th January 1895
77 men & boys killed by an inrush of water from old abandoned workings last worked some 50 years previously.

The original Diglake Colliery was sunk about 1818 high up on Bignall Hill and was drained by a gutter (a small shallow near surface underground brick lined drain) and a steam pump was installed in the 1820s to assist with the disposal of water. The mine became uneconomic to work and was abandoned around 1852/3, leaving a large body of water in the abandoned underground workings. With the advent of the North Staffordshire Railway Branch Line from Leycett to Alsager a new second Diglake Colliery, also known as Audley Colliery, was sunk in the late 1860s. It was located adjacent to the Audley Railway Station at Bignall End. The colliery's name

was prophetic, when in 1895 an underground lake, created by the coal extraction from the Old Diglake Colliery, broke through into the new Diglake Colliery workings.

The new Diglake Colliery was, from the outset, regarded as a wet pit, so much so that the miners were issued with special clothing and tin sheeting was used underground for protection from seepages. Immediately prior to this disaster there had been heavy snowfalls with drifts up to 8 feet thick. Rain and a partial thaw had increased the amount of surface water percolating into the mine and made working conditions more unpleasant than usual. Nevertheless, no particular concern was felt on the morning of the 14th January 1895. However, with 240 men and boys in the Pit the vast reserves of water in the abandoned workings broke through into the present workings. It could be described as a torrent which became even worse in the confined conditions underground. In the ensuing horror there were some miraculous escapes with men & boys escaping via the adjacent Boyles Hall Colliery old mine workings and ventilation shaft. But 77 men & boys did perish in appalling conditions. Rescue teams swung into action and the bodies of two miners were soon recovered but 75 remained unaccounted for. All rescue attempts were subsequently abandoned leaving the 75 bodies underground to rest there for eternity.

Mining operations later transferred to the new Rookery Pit, close to Bignall End, and from here in 1932 underground roadways broke through into the Diglake workings. Three skeletons were discovered and recovered and were, with great reverence, subsequently buried in the Methodist graveyard at Bignall End. Today a black memorial stone there commemorates this disaster listing the names of the 77 men & boys who lost their lives. The connection from the Rookery Colliery was eventually sealed up leaving the remaining 72 victims to rest in peace in the place in which they died, but never to be forgotten.

During the last 30 years two schemes have been put forward to opencast the Great Oak Site occupying part of the surface above the mine workings. There was tremendous opposition to both schemes from residents despite the companies declaring that they would go no closer than 300 feet above where the bodies lay. On both occasions the Local Authorities rejected the applications. The residents remain vigilant in case of a further application, which shows the passion and dedication to preserve the last resting place of their loved ones.

To commemorate the 125th Anniversary of the Disaster a series of events were held in Bignall End during the period 11th-14th January 2020:-

Saturday 11th January, 2020

There was a display of historic items from both Apedale Heritage Centre and the private collection of Darren Evans and during the morning an illustrated talk on the Disaster was given by Lloyd Boardman and Jim Worgan from the Chatterley Whitfield Friends.

Sunday 12th January, 2020

A Memorial Walk took place from the Diglake Colliery site to Audley Methodist Church with Councillor Bert Proctor reading out the names of those killed at various stopping points along the route. The walk was led by Audley Brass Band and two new sculptures were unveiled at the Diglake Colliery Memorial in the Methodist Graveyard by the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Councillor Simon White and the newly elected MP for Newcastle, Aaron Bell. The walk then proceeded to Audley Methodist Church for a short Commemorative Service led by the Rev Joy Ventom. During the Service local school children read out the names of the 77 men who perished in the Disaster.

Monday 13th January, 2020

200 children in five groups from Ravensmead School visited the exhibition in the Methodist Church and were enthralled to be informed as to how children had lived and worked in the mines in 1895 and to compare it with how they live their lives today.

Tuesday 14th January, 2020

This was a day of reflection and the actual anniversary day when the Methodist Church was open for people to visit and a minute's silence was held at 11.30am. This ended the momentous four days and I make no apology for describing them because it demonstrates the depth of feeling and affection still held for the Miners of North Staffordshire.

As far as I am aware, this was the first time a Commemorative Service has ever been held for this Disaster. A further one will be held in 2021 and it is hoped that it will become an annual event.

All the above mentioned Disasters occurred before Central Mines Rescue Stations were set up in the coalfield areas under the 1911 Coal Mines Act. At this juncture I think it only right to include the following, a quote from Mr Wynne, HM Government Inspector of Mines at the Inquest into the explosion at Talk o' th' Hill Colliery, mentioned previously:-

“As regards those brave men who assisted me in exploring the mine, no words of mine can express the admiration I feel for such heroism. For I witnessed men, with a full knowledge of their own danger, groping in the dark over dead men in

the strong hope of rescuing a living one. And, what was most admirable of all, a sense of their own danger did not cause them to disobey a single order given”.

- h) Norton Colliery, 24th January 1912
only one man killed & two seriously injured

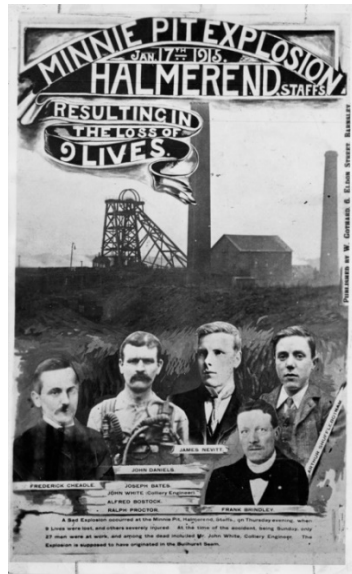
This is not classed as a Disaster, but I am including it, not only because 50 horses were killed, but also the effect it had on the local community.

It was Saturday afternoon, the ventilation fan had been slowed down and the pit fell into silence. Three shaftsmen were descending the shaft when a violent explosion occurred at 3.30pm. One was killed and two severely injured and 50 horses died. It took 120 days to recover the pit before production resumed. The source of the explosion was believed to have been in the Cockshead Seam workings and caused by spontaneous combustion of the coal. Local shops (many Colliery owned) only took cash and “tokens” with no credit allowed. The local people soon rallied around and set up soup kitchens and relief centres to help the miners and their families during the shutdown during which they received no pay from the colliery company. This of course was before the Welfare State. The men went back to work but suffered tremendous hardship both during the shutdown and afterwards.

Rescue operations recovered the bodies of the 50 horses by rolling them onto flat wagons to be taken to the surface. From there they were taken to Beeston’s knacker’s yard at the junction of Bellerton Lane and Leek Road where Joe Ball, Ostler at the Colliery, was sadly searching for his pony called Major. Whether he found it or not I don’t know, but this shows the affection the Ostlers felt for their ponies.

- i) Minnie Pit, Podmore Hall Colliery, Halmer End, 15th January 1915
Nine men killed

There was no apparent evidence to show what had caused this explosion but it is likely that it was initiated by spontaneous combustion. The explosion appeared to have originated in a section of the Bullhurst coal workings about 2,600 yards from the shaft and in which there was no one working at the time but nine lives were lost among men who were working in the Seven Feet Banbury seam. At the time, Halmer End Chapel stopped its service and the Congregation hurried to the scene to render assistance and make enquiries of their relatives. This is often referred to as “The forgotten Disaster” because of what happened here three years later:-



- j) Minnie Pit, Podmore Hall Colliery, Halmer End, 12th January 1918
 156 men & boys killed as a result of an explosion of firedamp and coal dust, believed to have been caused by a defective safety lamp.

The explosion killed 11 of the men and another 144 men died of asphyxiation, whilst Hugh Doorbar, Captain of the Birchenwood (Kids Grove) Rescue Team died as a result of faulty breathing apparatus during the recovery operation. Halmer End Methodist Church was used as the mortuary. Many men at work in the mine at the time escaped up the adjacent Bosted Onion Shaft. The recovery operations lasted many months and it wasn't until August 1919 that the last body was brought out of the pit. This amounted to an average of three bodies a week for 20 months. This was the biggest and most publicised Disaster in North Staffordshire.

A Memorial Service was held in Audley Parish Churchyard on Sunday, August 31st, 1919 and many commemorative events have taken place since then, culminating in a series of events to mark the 100th Anniversary between January 2018 and September 2019, when a Memorial Service was held at Audley Parish Church of St James. There are commemorative plaques at Halmer End Church and seating in the garden opposite the Church. At the Minnie Pit Shaft Site, (Minnie was the name of the Colliery Owners daughter-in-Law) there are two further Memorials and the metre thick reinforced concrete cap of the shaft, which remains open below, is still visible. The Colliery closed in the early 1930s due to flooding and today copious amounts of water are still being discharged to a local water course almost 90 years since closure.

In Audley Churchyard there is a commemorative gravestone. One of the names on this memorial is that of Harry Moss, a victim of the Disaster. The official list of the men who died shows that no one called Harry Moss was employed at the Colliery. So who was Harry Moss? Subsequent research by Audley History Society shows that

when a Martha Wilshaw married George Moss on 14th November 1861 her illegitimate son, James William Wilshaw, was legally adopted taking Moss as his surname. In later years it appears that James William found it hard to come to terms with his new surname, a problem that his future wife and son would inherit. It appears that he reverted back to his original name of Wilshaw, but not legally. He married Emily Dean in 1891 and one of his sons was called Harry, who eventually went to work at the Minnie Pit as Harry Wilshaw. The Parish Records show that Harry Wilshaw, who was killed in the Minnie Pit Disaster, and was listed as such, was buried with his legal name of Harry Moss on the 27th January 1918.

Following the commemorative events of 2018-19 the Minnie Pit Steering Group, together with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO), the Coal Authority and shaft site owners are working together to revitalise the somewhat derelict Minnie Pit site. Two silhouettes of women and children have been emplaced, one large block of stone, funded by Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society, laid at the site entrance where some trees have been felled and a footpath constructed. It is proposed that the shaft cap, in conjunction with local schools, will be painted to resemble a colliery winding wheel. In addition a steel headgear, approximately 10-12 feet high, reminiscent of those used in North Staffordshire will be installed together with the planting of 156 trees, one for each of the men who died.

Whilst recovering in the First World War in Scarborough Hospital from Shell Shock, Wilfred Owen wrote his poem "Miners" in direct response to the Minnie Pit Disaster. It was his first poem to be published on 26th January 1918. Sadly, Owen returned to the Front and was killed just before the Armistice in November 1918.

To view the poem go to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miners_\(poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miners_(poem))

- k) Holditch Colliery, 2nd July 1937
30 men killed by an explosion of firedamp, the ignition of which was caused by a fire at a coal cutting machine as a result of friction of picks in the cut.

The explosion resulted in the death of two men at 5.45am whilst another was killed in a second minor explosion at 6.50am. As rescue operations were being carried out a further 27 men were killed in a major explosion which ripped through the workings at 10.10am. This included the Managing Director, an undermanager, two Inspectors of Mines and five members of the Hanley Rescue Brigade. The youngest was 26 and the oldest 52, but in addition eight men were seriously injured.

The Investigation was carried out by Mr F W Wynne, His Majesty's Inspector of Mines. He said that it was his considered opinion that by the time the Second Plan of Rescue was adopted very dangerous conditions existed and were known to exist. This made the attempt to follow this Plan a matter of imminent peril to the lives of the unnecessarily large number of men required to execute it. This was the motivation for production superseding the Safety Factor. Strong words indeed! Mr Wynne also said that the whole was an epic, worthy to rank with the best traditions of British Mining in which stories of gallantry in the face of immense peril were not lacking.

Azariah (Ezra) Clarke, Captain of the Holditch Colliery Rescue Team was awarded the Empire Medal, later changed to the George Medal. The President of the French Republic gave a blue Sevres Vase, a diploma and medal to the Team which resided in the Rescue Station in Kingsway Stoke before being transferred to the newly built Area Rescue Station in the former pithead baths at Berry Hill Colliery where they were they remained until closure of the Rescue Station in 1994. These items were subsequently donated on long term loan to Newcastle-under-Lyme Museum & Art Gallery. They were received on behalf of the Borough by Councillor George Cairns, a former Rescue Man, who with tears in his eyes said "I passed these items in the glass case every time I went into the Rescue Station never thinking for one moment that I would actually be able to hold them". On the closure of Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum in 1993 Newcastle Borough Council purchased Ezra Clarke's George Medal, which had been presented to the Museum by Ezra Clarke's daughter. All four items now reside in the Brampton Museum & Art Gallery. There are memorials to the Disaster both at Apedale Heritage Centre and Chesterton Park.

Stoke City Football Club's Loving Cup was donated in 1937 to Rangers (Glasgow) Football Club for their generosity in having a benefit match for the Holditch Disaster Fund. They requested that Rangers personnel drink the health of the Reigning Monarch on the first home match of the year. As far as I am aware this tradition still takes place.

In July 2012 a service was held in Chesterton Parish Church to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of this Disaster. Today, a service is held on a Sunday in July each year in the open air at Apedale Heritage Centre adjacent to the memorial. Newcastle Borough Council loan Ezra Clarke's George Medal for the service providing a tangible link to the site where a footrail was sunk in 1943 by Holditch Mines Ltd.

- l) Sneyd Colliery, 1st January 1942
57 men killed due to a coal dust explosion

When I worked at Sneyd Colliery Group Offices in 1962 the Colliery was then part of Wolstanton Mine and January 1st was a normal working day. Absenteeism at Sneyd Colliery on this day was 96%, even 20 years after the Disaster.

I attended the 60th Anniversary Service of this Disaster in January 2002 at Hot Lane Methodist Chapel in Burslem. After the Minister, the Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, the President of the Midlands Area of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and other dignitaries had spoken, the Minister invited members of the congregation to come forward. A little old man stood up, walked to the pulpit, turned around to face the congregation and simply said, "I was there". You could feel the tension in the Chapel as he related his experiences on that fateful day. He told us of a friend who decided that mining was too dangerous and left Sneyd Colliery to join the Army. At the precise time of the Disaster he was killed on active service and had he still been at Sneyd he would have been in the area of the Disaster. I have never felt before or since the quietness in a place of worship as he made his way back to his seat. An annual commemorative service is held in January each year and a Memorial to the Disaster was erected in Burslem town centre during the early part of this Century.

- m) Red Hall (Dales Green) Footrail, Harriseahead, 2nd February 1953
6 men killed and 1 seriously injured following a serious explosion, possibly caused by shotfiring, in the Winpenny Seam, 100 yards from the bottom of a very steep drift.

It is not known precisely at what time the Disaster occurred, there being an interval of nearly four hours between the last load of coal being hauled up the drift from the workings and the raising of the alarm when the men did not return to the surface at 10.00pm. The engineman was not duly concerned because he thought that the men were gathering coal to send up the pit. He had not heard any explosion, neither felt any ground vibration. He contacted the owner who arrived shortly afterwards and went with his son-in-law into the pit. They brought out the only survivor. Rescue Teams were then called out and the site was attended by Rowland Bennett, the NCB's Area General Manager and Ernest Cope, Area Production Manager who went into the pit with the Rescue Teams. Wilmot Wilcox, NCB Sub-Area Agent for Chatterley Whitfield, Norton & Victoria collieries was also involved in the investigation. I have not been able to discover why so many senior NCB officials were involved. There was a great deal of conflicting evidence as to the operation of the mine, particularly in relation to the state of the electrical equipment, ventilation and the presence of a crown hole on the surface which had been there for about four years. It would appear that the farmer had interfered with this crown hole which allowed water and debris to enter the mine causing a blockage which disrupted the ventilation of the mine, allowing gas to accumulate.

The owners were fined £68 with £57 costs, but I have been unable to discover if any action was taken against the farmer.

There were many more Disasters in North Staffordshire but I have chosen the above to give a different perspective of each one which was, at one time, a common occurrence in the Industry.

Before we leave this subject, perhaps the most poignant death underground did not involve an employee, but a party of schoolboys on a visit to Wolstanton Colliery, probably in the 1970s. One 15 yr old boy collapsed, but despite attempts to revive him, he died. At the time the NCB had contracts with local surgeries to complement its own Medical Department to provide doctors for such emergencies. Palmerston Street Surgery in Wolstanton Village was contacted and the only doctor available was a newly qualified female who was absolutely terrified of going underground. Nevertheless she overcame her fears, descending into the mine where, unfortunately she could only pronounce the boy dead. At the subsequent Inquest it was stated, I believe, that no matter where he was on that day he would have died anyway. To put it simply, it is bad enough when an employee is killed, but a 15 yr old schoolboy with his whole life before him is very hard to take. The whole Colliery was completely devastated. A collection was made in his name and his funeral was attended by a wide variety of men from the pit. The service started at 11.00am which coincided with “snapping time” (meal break) underground and the whole Colliery came to a complete standstill for 5 minutes as a mark of respect. I included this in a talk I gave at the Brampton Museum many years later and at its conclusion a gentleman stood up and introduced himself as Dr Fisher of the Palmerston Street Surgery. He confirmed that the story was indeed true and that the doctor concerned was named Marie Jary.

Following major Disasters, Relief Funds were set up to help the bereaved. This did not obviously include single men killed but there is evidence that some collieries did have collections in such circumstances. This continued following the creation of the NCB but it was left to each colliery what to do. In the 1970s, however, in conjunction with the Mining Unions the NCB instituted a scheme where in the event of a fatality at the pit the man’s dependants would receive, without prejudice, a sum of £200. This does not seem much in today’s terms but represented a considerable sum nearly 50 years ago.

Roads, Canals & Railways

I make no apology for including all three together because, since the 18th & 19th Centuries they have been heavily intertwined and subsequently revolutionised

transport which led to the Industrialisation of North Staffordshire, funded by King Coal.

1. Roads

Roads of course came first but in the 18th Century North Staffordshire was remote and isolated communities were connected by roads, if they could be called such, often quagmires in Spring & Summer and rock hard in Winter. As has been portrayed earlier, there was a lack of an adequate transport system, not only to bring in raw materials, but also to “export” finished goods from the ever expanding Coal, Iron & Pottery industries, where, in the latter, breakages were common place.

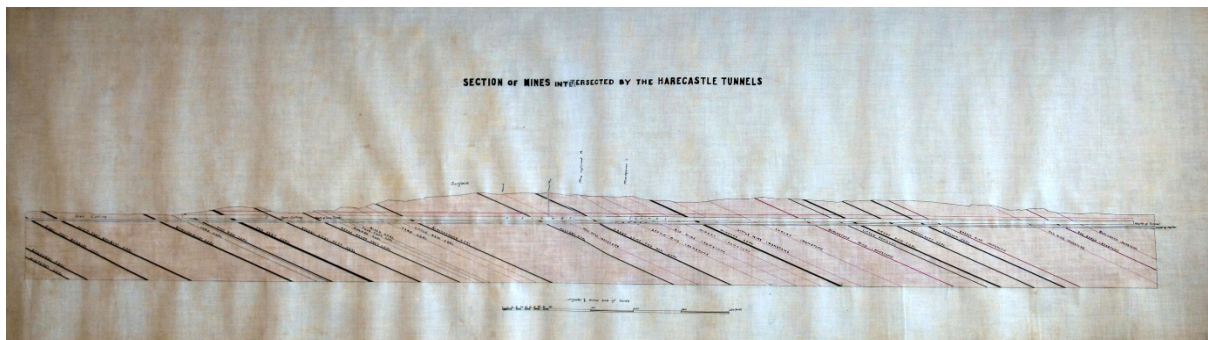
Traces of few old tramways exist in the area but there were two old Roman Roads. One ran from Derby to Chester (or Middlewich) via May Bank, the present Wolstanton Golf Course and Chesterton, the other from Buxton to Leek and probably on to Hilderstone. Later on came the London to Carlisle road passing through Newcastle-under-Lyme. In 1680 Dr Plott, whilst visiting the area seemed to think that the roads were “fair” but due to the steady growth in traffic a more comprehensive system of roads and maintenance was required. The era of the Turnpike with Toll Houses and strategically located Inns had begun. These were lengths of road maintained by a group of individuals who formed a Trust and charged Tolls on all traffic. The first such road came in 1714 when the London to Carlisle Road was Turnpiked from Darlaston to Talke. This was followed by many more in the next few years. The original Turnpike Toll Notice was saved following the demolition of the Blue Bell Inn in Wrinehill and now resides in the Brampton Museum. To give some idea of the benefits of Turnpike Trusts we need to take a look at Newcastle-under-Lyme. In 1700 no coaches were listed as calling in the town, but by 1830 (incidentally after the construction of the canals) there were 40 each 24 hours excluding wagons and local traffic. By the end of the 1850s, due initially to the canals and later the railways, the Turnpike era gradually wound down. The passing of the Highways Acts of 1835 & 1862 resulted finally in the end of the Turnpike which led, over the next 100 years or so, to the growth of the transport network we have today. Toll Houses still survive locally on Crackley Gates between Silverdale and Scott Hay, Pepper Street in Keele and Park Road in Silverdale.

2. Canals

What came first, tramways/wagonways or canals? I have evidence of tramways in the Apedale Valley two years before the completion of the Trent & Mersey Canal in 1777, but were they first? In 1717 a scheme was proposed to link, by waterway, the rivers Trent & Mersey, but not through North Staffordshire and was subsequently

abandoned. As far as canals are concerned, in 1758 James Brindley was commissioned to survey a possible route of a canal from Wilden Ferry on the River Trent northwards through North Staffordshire to Preston Brook on the Mersey, close to the Bridgewater Canal from Manchester. The scheme was sanctioned by an Act of Parliament in 1766 and Josiah Wedgwood cut the first sod on 26th July that same year. The Canal was substantially complete in its entirety by 1777, bisecting the North Staffordshire Coalfield from Red Bull, north of Harecastle (Kingsgrove) to Trentham, where in 1924 the Duke of Sutherland cut the first sod of Hem Heath Colliery.

The main obstacle to construction of the canal was Harecastle Hill through which a tunnel, 2880 yards long and 9ft wide, was driven with no tow path. The boats were conveyed through the tunnel by men lying on their backs using their legs to walk on the roof and sides, a process called “legging”. To cater for the horses, Boathouse Road was constructed to enable them to walk between the north and south portals. This road still exists today. This tunnel was regarded as probably the largest Civil Engineering Project ever carried out in the British Isles and was regarded as the 8th Wonder of the World. It intersected various coal seams which were worked from the outset, some from within the tunnel itself.



Brindley and John Gilbert, Agent to the Duke of Bridgewater leased collieries in the Goldenhill area, just to the east, and connected them to the canal by underground tunnels enabling coal to be loaded directly onto barges. The tunnel eventually became a bottleneck so in 1824 a new tunnel (Telford's) was constructed and opened in 1827, considerably quicker in construction than Brindley's tunnel. It was 2926 yards long and 14ft wide with a tow path of 5ft. Brindley's tunnel eventually closed in 1914 but in 1979 two canoeists entered the tunnel from both ends to a blockage, at times having to paddle backwards to get out. Copies of the photographs they took are held in Kingsgrove Library and the Brampton Museum in Newcastle. Today two Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society plaques commemorating both tunnels are affixed to the Amenity Block at Kingsgrove. The southern portals of the canals are of course in Stoke-on-Trent.

Construction of the Caldon Canal from Etruria, to originally Froghall Wharf and ultimately to Uttoxeter, with a branch to Leek, followed soon afterwards. At Froghall, over a period of time, four separate tramways were constructed to convey limestone for onward transportation to Stoke-on-Trent. Just before Milton crossroads on the A53 Leek New Road remains of a canal branch (Foxley), approximately 800 yards long, constructed to Ford Green Ironworks (Norton Colliery) from the Caldon Canal are still visible under the road bridge.

The Macclesfield Canal was authorised under an Act of 1826 and ran between Kidsgrove (Harding's Wood) and the Peak Forest Canal at Marple, Cheshire. In order to protect its interests, the Trent & Mersey Canal Company built the Hall Green Branch which connected with the Macclesfield Canal where today there is a lock of between 12 and 18 inches deep.

Numerous tramways existed in the Mow Cop/Biddulph area. Of these, perhaps the most important was Robert Williamson's 1842 tramway from his Stonetrough and Tower Hill collieries to the Mow Cop ridge through which a tunnel was constructed, some 380 yards long by 7ft 9in high and 7ft 9in wide. An inclined plane from the west end, Cheshire Plain portal, terminated at the canal at Kents Green Wharf where today the original building still stands flanked by newer buildings (Wharf Plumbers). Parts of the tramway and incline are walkable and in 1993 I traversed the tunnel (which remains open from the western portal to a blockage at the eastern (Staffordshire) portal). Considering it had been part filled with water for over 100 years it was in remarkable condition. Another tramway ran from Hall o' Lee Colliery in Mow Cop to another wharf south of Kents Green and is still walkable for most of its length.

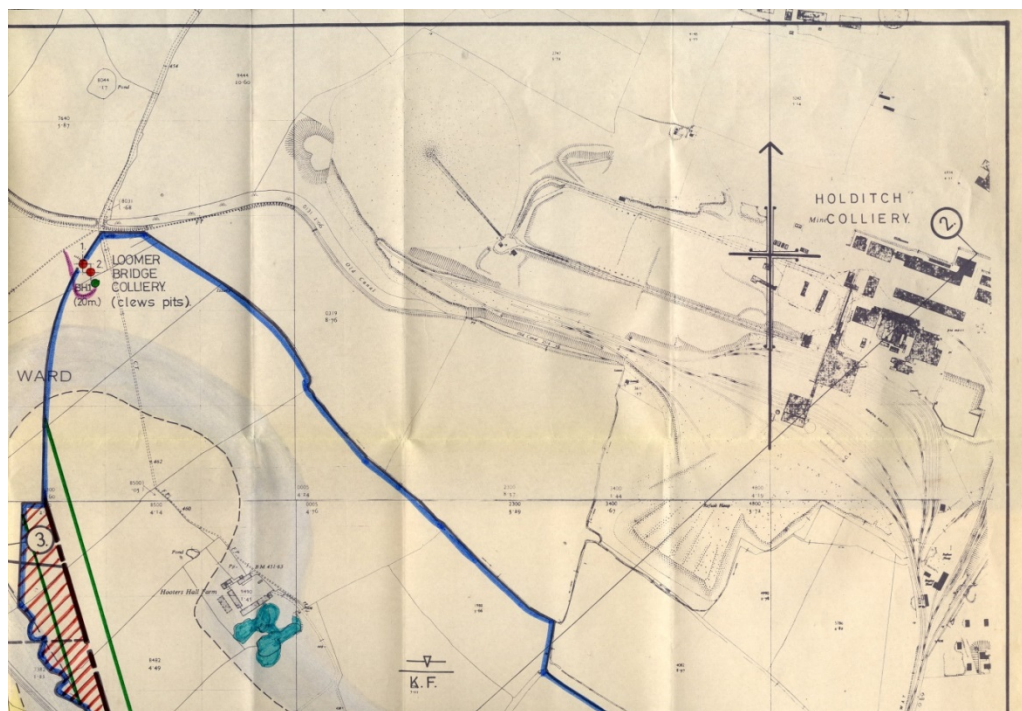
But what of the tramways before the Trent & Mersey Canal in 1777? The first canal in North Staffordshire was constructed by Sir Nigel Gresley under an Act of Parliament of 13th April 1775. It ran north from a wharf (now a newsagents) just to the north of the extant railway bridge, on the A34, of the Stoke to Market Drayton Railway, through Lymedale Business Park (Holditch Colliery) to his collieries and ironworks in the Apedale Valley. He was responsible for its construction at his own cost and with a length of four miles with no locks (except stop locks), with three bridges at Holditch, Loomer Road and Apedale Road near to Burley Colliery, it was completed in the same year. The Act gave him the right to sell coal in Newcastle at no more than five shillings (25 pence) per ton and at five shillings and sixpence (27½ pence) per ton for the next 25 years. As a consequence the output from his collieries vastly increased because of the bulk transport now available. Tramways were quickly constructed from his collieries at Sladderhill, Forge, Watermills and Spring Wood. The base of the Watermills Colliery chimney, now a Grade II listed Building, still stands after the demolition of the stack around 1920. It is a magnificent structure with various patterns of bricks with a motto at the top of each of the corners viz. "Live & Let Live, Regard the End, Be Just & Fear Not and

R.E.H. 1840” The last refers to Robert Edensor Heathcote who took over the Gresley Estate and lived in Apedale Hall. Parts of the tramway to the canal, which fell out of use with the coming of the railways, are still visible today. It appears, however, that during the early part of the 19th Century riots and disturbances occurred over the delivery of coal. Gresley’s operations were also seriously affected by restrictive clauses which had generally benefitted the town of Newcastle, so new arrangements came into force in 1812 which led to the increase in the price of coal at the point of delivery.

During the 1970s & 80s the High Lane Site, which included a large part of the Apedale Valley was opencasted and produced, I believe, in the order of 3 million tons of coal. The operations obviously obliterated much of the mining activity which had been carried out over the last 700 years as in places the void was over 300ft (90m) deep. As part of the project the NCB Opencast Executive provided, at no cost to the County Council, a brand new road from Knutton to Alsagers Bank. This allowed the old Black Bank Road to be excavated as part of the scheme. The new road was opened in a blaze of glory on an embankment of over 300ft in height which allowed operations to continue. However, within a month the new road began to ‘subside’ which took many months to restore. If you travel the road today you can still make out the area affected by the different surface from the rest of the new road. If you know where to look, the original Black Bank Road is just about visible at the bottom whilst at the top the road (High Lane) is still publically maintained serving a group of houses for about 100 yards.

Under an Act of 1795 the Newcastle-under-Lyme Canal was constructed from the Trent & Mersey Canal in Stoke to Newcastle via Boothen and Hanford. It ran parallel to the A34 approaching Newcastle and terminated in a wharf at Brook Lane, opposite Morrisons, near to the present Boat & Horses Public House, once in the ownership of my wife’s family and still stands today. It was four miles long and was completed in 1797. In later years (of which more later) the Standard Gauge railway line was extended to the wharf from Pool Dam which enabled the transhipment of both incoming and outgoing goods. The canal was initially very successful but with the coming of the railways it gradually fell into disuse and finally closed in 1921. Today part of the canal forms a small Public Park in London Road, Boothen where there is a large memorial to Timothy Trow. He was a tram conductor, aged 21, who in 1894 jumped off a tram, dived into the canal and saved the life of a small child. He however did not survive. Another part of the canal survives, heavily overgrown and waterlogged, just opposite the former City General Hospital on the west side of the A34 in Newcastle where picture boards have been erected giving the history of the canal. At The junction of West Street & Marsh Parade in Newcastle stands a large house reputed to be the Manager’s house of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Junction Canal whose Act was passed in 1798. This Act provided for a canal to link both the Newcastle Canal and Gresley’s. It left

Gresley's Canal close to the present Swift House on the A34 ran parallel to both St Michaels Road and Hempstalls Lane before turning at a right angle through Station Walks to the present Borough Arms Hotel. From there it went past the former Crystal Ballroom, where there was a wharf, and through Stubbs Walks to Victoria Street. It was, however, considerably higher than the Newcastle Canal so George Stephenson was commissioned to carry out a survey to provide an inclined plane to join them. Under this system boats would be raised and lowered between the two canals similar to the one used at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum in Shropshire between the canal and the River Severn. The actual route of the incline was never published and it is doubtful whether it was ever started. The Junction Canal had an even shorter life. When the railway from Stoke to Silverdale opened in 1852 the track bed between the Borough Arms and West Brampton was laid in the canal. I can remember in the 1960s part of the canal waterlogged and with the towpath intact being visible around the Beattie Avenue area of Newcastle before being redeveloped as a housing estate. One of the roads on this estate has a bridge which spans the Lyme Brook on the exact site that the canal crossed the brook.



Gresley's Canal in the Apedale Valley

In 1885 records showed that there had been a large increase in people employed in the Pottery Industry from 13,000 to 20,000 in 25 years. This of course was reflected in the other local industries and there were large increases including the number of collieries. Also this increased industrial activity resulted in larger quantities of imports and exports of both coal and iron and finished pottery goods. The canal system was of particular importance to the latter providing a bulk transport system which led to fewer breakages. Although the canals initially

prospered, as has been seen above the decline set in with the coming of the railways which provided an even greater transport system. To put the final nail in the coffin the newly formed North Staffordshire Railway Company eventually purchased the canal system in North Staffordshire.

To answer the first question, “What came first, tramways/wagonways or canals?”. I have come to the conclusion that canals and tramways evolved around the same time, unless anyone knows any different.

3. Railways

The first Standard Gauge railway in North Staffordshire was constructed in 1839 from Firmstone’s Leycett (Madeley) Coal & Iron Co. to the Grand Trunk Railway at Madeley via a wharf at Madeley Heath close to the present Crewe Arms Hotel. Shortly afterwards Stanier’s railway from his coal & ironworks in Silverdale was built on land leased from Sneyd and terminated at a wharf in Pool Dam opposite the old Orme Boys School (still standing and a Grade II listed building now used for student accommodation). This line was later extended to Newcastle-under-Lyme Canal wharf in Brook Lane.

What is of particular interest, however, is that the Grand Junction Railway originally planned for its line from Birmingham to Manchester to go through Newcastle-under-Lyme where they proposed to build a large engineering and construction works. Needless to say their proposals were turned down by the Council and the line was subsequently routed from Stafford to Crewe via Baldwins Gate (Whitmore) where today a Newcastle Civic Society Blue Plaque commemorates an engine reaching a speed of 114 m.p.h. Their large engineering and construction works was built at Crewe, which at this time was basically a remote hamlet on the Nantwich to Congleton Road close to Crewe Hall, and the rest they say “is history”.

The North Staffordshire Railway (NSR) with its headquarters and locomotive works in Stoke remained independent until the Grouping of the railways in 1923 when it became part of the massive London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS). Thereafter its importance on the national level diminished in company with other smaller railway companies and its locomotive works was closed. In the Midlands the LMS concentrated locomotive building at Crewe and Derby. Two major locomotive builders, Kerr Stuart in Stoke & Bagnalls in Stafford survived and continued building locomotives. Bagnalls, I believe survived until the 1960s.

Much has been written about the NSR. From its incorporation in 1846 until the completion of the “Loop Line” from Etruria to Kidsgrove and the Longton, Adderley Green, Bucknall Railway in 1875, a myriad of both NSR and Private Standard Gauge

Railways criss-crossed North Staffordshire. Almost every colliery and ironworks was connected to the NSR directly or by tramways but some collieries constructed their own private railways. Foxfield Railway left the Stoke to Uttoxeter line at Blythe Bridge, but due to the opposition of a local landowner it was forced to bypass his land and entered the colliery in the opposite direction to when it left Blythe Bridge which led to the infamous gradient of 1 in 19 into the colliery yard. Close to Dilhorne Park Station (current terminus of the Foxfield Railway), a branch went to Bank Top Colliery. It is hoped that, not in the too distant future, trains will once again run into the colliery yard. Florence Coal & Iron Company also built its own private line from Florence Colliery to Trentham via Blurton (where there was a Branch to a brickworks), where it joined the Stoke to Stone Main Line. It was only, following a rationalisation of the internal railway between Hem Heath and Stafford collieries in the 1960s that it joined the internal network. I seem to remember that a serious accident occurred when a train from Florence “ran away” but I cannot recall any other details.

In 1872 Whitfield Colliery, Tunstall, was taken over by the Chatterley Iron Company which had extensive works in the Chatterley Valley between Longport & Talke. In 1873 the Whitfield Railway was constructed from the Colliery, through a tunnel under the High Lane Ridge, passing alongside Tunstall Park to make an end-on connection in Tunstall with the NSR Branch Line from Longport, from which the colliery company operated a Branch to Greenhead Wharf. This obviously enabled coal to be transported directly from the Colliery to the Ironworks, rather than going “the long way around” via Ford Green, Stoke & Etruria and also saved them considerable expense. The HQ of the Chatterley Whitfield Company initially remained in Pinnox Street, Tunstall and each Saturday morning the week’s wages were loaded into a Guards Van and taken to Whitfield Colliery where they were collected in a wheel barrow! and taken to the pay office for distribution on Saturday afternoons. For how many years this continued I am not sure but in the 1930s a new office was built at Whitfield Colliery (now the Enterprise Centre) and operations at Pinnox Street ceased.

Whitfield Colliery also operated Ubbertley Colliery in Bucknall and entered into an agreement with the NSR to operate their own locomotives and wagons between the two pits. They also operated Paddy Trains to convey workers from Tunstall to Whitfield, again with agreement with the NSR, from Ford Green to Brunswick Wharf in Congleton on the Biddulph Valley Line, using vans purchased from Barnum & Bailey’s Circus, who I believe overwintered in Stoke.

One of the major problems at Whitfield was the lack of space to store wagons, both full and empty. I can remember as a small boy in the late 1940s/50s travelling with my parents and sister to visit my grandparents who lived on High Lane and seeing what appeared to be hundreds and hundreds of wagons each side of the

railway bridge at the bottom of Green Bank Road. This area is now part of the Whitfield Greenway.

On the other side of the coalfield, the original line from Silverdale to Leycett was located on the Scott Hay side of the Colliery known as the 'Diggins' and crossed the roads from Scott Hay to Crackley Gates and from the latter to Leycett. I understand that owing to severe subsidence problems the line was never used. Today between Crackley Gates and Leycett the railway embankment with a bridge can still be seen on the left hand side of the road. On the approach to Leycett the embankment, presumably where a bridge once stood, is still visible. The resultant NSR line from Silverdale to Leycett, and on to Alsager, left the Stoke to Market Drayton Line, just before Madeley Heath Garage on the A52 and the bridge abutment can still be seen there. In Silverdale Station the lines to Market Drayton and Alsager were operated as two separate Branches. It was possible therefore to see trains from both places side by side as they entered the Station. Following the closure of the line from Stoke to Market Drayton, to cater for traffic from Holditch and Silverdale collieries, the part of this line between Brampton Sidings in Newcastle to a little beyond Madeley Road Station was retained. It remained in operation until Silverdale Colliery closed in 1998. The two Newcastle tunnels were solid stowed utilising dirt from Wolstanton Colliery. As part of the creation of Silverdale Country Park, both platforms in Silverdale were renovated and restored and a railway signal was installed close to St Luke's Church. An unidentified shaft was discovered at the eastern end of the platform closest to the Colliery which was subsequently treated and capped. The part of the line from Crown Street Halt in Silverdale to the western portal of the Silverdale Tunnel was removed and converted into a footpath. The remainder of the line towards Market Drayton just beyond Madeley Road Station is still in situ.

So far I have not been able to trace any trains dedicated solely to the transport of China Clay until the construction of a China Clay depot at Cliffe Vale by English China Clays in the 1970s. Dedicated trains of China Clay were delivered here for onward distribution by road. It is possible that previously china clay was imported by "wagon" load into North Staffordshire with obvious shunting delays. But I wonder why it took until the 1970s to bring in dedicated China Clay trains? One brilliant innovation in the transportation of coal in later years was the "Merry-Go-Round" system from colliery to power station, introduced in conjunction with British Rail. This consisted of purpose built wagons permanently coupled to a locomotive which travelled at half a mile per hour under the coal loading hopper where the wagons were filled and then discharged at the same speed at the power station. In many instances loops were constructed at both ends which meant that the trains could operate without ever stopping except for changes of shift, fuelling and maintenance.

The NSR always had an “eye” to increase revenue which they often did in a subtle way. The Longton, Adderley Green & Bucknall Railway ran between the Stoke to Uttoxeter and Stoke to Leek lines via Parkhall, Adderley Green, Mossfield and other collieries in the Ubbertley area. The NSR severed the line just after Parkhall Colliery which meant that coal from the other collieries had to travel “the long way round” to Stoke via Fenton. They did the same to the Chatterley Junction on the line from Stoke to Kidsgrove, and Jamage Junction Railway on the Silverdale to Alsager line. The former had branches to Mitchell’s Wood and Talk o’ th’ Hill collieries. Just after the Junction to Talk o’ th’ Hill Colliery they severed the line, so yet again, coal from Jamage & Rookery collieries had to travel “the long way around” via Audley, Leycett, Silverdale and Newcastle. The site of Jamage Junction and railway bridge is still visible on the road from Bignall End to Talke.

Coal from the Minnie Pit in Halmerend (part of Podmore Hall Colliery) was originally sent to Hayes Wood Colliery for screening. Following the closure of Hayes Wood it went via a Standard Gauge line, passing under the Audley Branch (where the bridge is still in use) via Podmore Hall Colliery, around the northern side of the Alsager’s Bank Ridge to the Midland Coal Coke & Iron Company’s screening plant at Apedale. Thereafter it travelled to join the Silverdale to Newcastle line at Apedale Junction.

Many industrial Standard Gauge locomotives operated at the various collieries in North Staffordshire (*Industrial Locomotives of North Staffordshire* by Allan C. Baker, Industrial Railway Society, 1997) but Sneyd Colliery had the only Beyer Garratt industrial steam loco operating in North Staffordshire. One of this type is preserved at Bressingham Museum in Norfolk and another from South African Railways in Manchester Science & Industry Museum.

Following the absorption of the NSR by the LMS at the Grouping in 1923 many NSR Locomotives were scrapped. However, two have survived, an 0-6-2 tank engine No. 2 built in Stoke (believed to be an amalgamation of several locomotives) which was sold by the LMS with others of its class to Lancashire Collieries in 1937, and a Battery locomotive that spent its life at Thomas Boulton’s Copper Works, Froghall. Both locos I believe were part of the National Collection. NSR No.2 was restored to NSR livery in 1960 by the North Western Division (Lancashire) of the (NCB). Along with other locomotives it took part in the City of Stoke-on-Trent Golden Jubilee celebrations at the Railway Exhibition, London and North Western Yard from the 11th to 24th May 1960. It returned to the NCB who in 1965 decided to preserve it and it went to Shugborough Hall, still in NSR livery.

Robert Heath, Norton & Biddulph Collieries, built its own steam locomotives, one of which, No.6 (Robert Heath), a 0-4-0 saddle tank, survived until the closure of Norton Colliery in 1976. It was donated to Shugborough Hall. This mining company

also owned the massive complex at Birchenwood near to Kildgrove. The Colliery here closed about 1928 but the coking plant remained and required coking coal which was supplied, until the coming of North Sea Gas in the 1960s, by Heath's private Standard Gauge railway (NCB from 1947) which ran from Victoria Colliery. At the Birchenwood end, the bridge over the Loop Line cutting is still in use and a short part of the old line from Pennyfields Road towards Victoria Colliery is now a public footpath. In 1984 Shugborough decided to dispense with its locomotives and NSR No.2 & Heath's No.6 were transferred to Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum. No.6 was subsequently restored to working order and ran both at the Museum and at the National Garden Festival in Etruria in 1986 where it hauled a selection of different wagons along a short stretch of track. Following closure of the Museum in 1993 No.2 was transferred to the Churnet Valley Railway at Cheddleton whilst No.6 was purchased by the Foxfield Light Railway Company where it still resides today. No.2 and the Battery locomotive were eventually recalled by the National Railway Museum and put on display at their outstation at Shildon in County Durham. In 2017 the National Railway Museum gifted No.2 to the Foxfield Light Railway where it currently awaits a rebuild. Of particular interest, however, is that in conjunction with the Churnet Valley Railway three genuine NSR coaches have been restored to their former glory and construction of a replica NSR Guards Van is currently taking place. The three coaches form a separate train which is run on special occasions and perhaps in the not too distant future it will be hauled by a genuine NSR



Robert Heath No.6 Locomotive at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum

locomotive. It is not too much to hope that one day the NSR Battery locomotive will return to North Staffordshire.

Norton Colliery had a wharf at Nettlebank close to the present Green Star Public House. It was steeply graded with a reversal point two-thirds of the way up from the Colliery. The locomotive pushed the wagons to the reversal point from where it hauled them to the wharf. On the return journey the locomotive pushed the wagons to the reversal point and hauled them thereafter to the Colliery. The journeys involved very close co-operation between footplate staff and the brakesman.

An NSR branch line was built from Trentham Junction to a point opposite Trentham Gardens and was used by the Duke of Sutherland and his guests including, I believe, King Edward VII. In the 1950s when I worked at Hem Heath Colliery the Branch was used to store coaches for the Wakes Week Holiday Trains. A bridge was built across the A34 at the Trentham Gardens end of the branch line (known as the "Bridge to Nowhere") with proposals to extend the line to Newcastle, but the 2nd World War intervened and it was never built. The bridge was subsequently demolished.

A railway to Cheadle came as late as 1901 when a line was built from Tean (Totmonslow). It passed through a tunnel with which there had been considerable construction problems from the outset. In 1933 a deviation line was built and the tunnel was taken out of use. This meant that the original line to New Haden Colliery, which closed in 1942, now became a branch line. It is still possible at a Waste Disposal Site close to New Haden Colliery (where a lot of buildings still stand) to just make out the tunnel mouth. The other end of the tunnel was sealed, but in the 1980s/90s was re-opened in which a footrail was constructed which eventually became the last coal mine to operate in the Cheadle Coalfield. There was also a Branch to Park Hall Colliery (Cheadle) and parts of the embankment are still visible close to the old Gasworks.

But what of Stanier's Railway to Pool Dam, Newcastle which when constructed was unattached to any other railway until the coming of the Stoke to Silverdale line, when it became a Branch. As I have mentioned, it was subsequently extended to the canal basin in Brook Lane and it crossed three main roads. With the slow demise of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Canal traffic subsequently decreased but with the building of the Gasworks it continued to supply coal for the production of coke. On a number of occasions in the 1940s/50s I can remember, particularly during periods of coal shortages, taking a wheelbarrow to the Gasworks to buy coke. The line also served the Limmer and Trinidad Lake Asphalt Co Ltd depot close to Brook Lane. The line closed in the 1960s and is now a footpath from Half Way House (Knutton) to Homebase where it joins the Lyme Valley Park.

Today imported coal and biomass is still being carried by train to our ever decreasing number of Power Stations which will soon be a thing of the past, thus bringing to an end the mass transport of both coal, and to a lesser extent, biomass.

Bevin Boys

The first ever Reunion of the Bevin Boys was held at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum on the Remembrance Weekend of 1989. This was the culmination of many months of hard graft following an initial approach to the media by Jim Hutchinson, Director of the Museum and his Public Relations Officer Vivienne Slater. The initial response was very positive and a committee was set up with mainly local Bevin Boys, (who I had the privilege of being acquainted with and aiding them when I was Curator of the Museum), who co-ordinated the Reunion. The “Boys” visited the New Underground Experience at the Museum on the Saturday followed by a get-together at a local Working Men’s Club and on Remembrance Sunday they attended a Memorial Service at the Chatterley Whitfield Colliery Memorial in Whitley Road, Ball Green. Several books have been written by ex-Bevin Boys over the years so I am only going to give a brief overview of the system that came into operation in December 1943, concentrating more on the human aspect of the scheme.

A chronic shortage of mineworkers existed during the Second World War resulting from miners enlisting in the Armed Forces and the partial failure in encouraging ex-miners and other suitable unemployed persons to join the Industry. As a consequence certain colliery workers at age 18, 21, 25 and 30 became subjects of a reserved occupation. Eventually an Essential Workers Order came into effect within the Coal Mining Industry in May 1943. By September of that year the problem had still not been resolved and an appeal was made to both men and boys to join the Industry, however this had little effect. As a consequence the Right Hon. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service (later Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), proposed to Parliament a scheme involving men between the ages of 18 & 25, who on call up, would be selected by ballot and conscripted into the Coal Industry as an alternative to service in the Armed Forces. There were however certain exceptions such as men in highly skilled jobs. The scheme was put to the War Cabinet in December 1943 and put into immediate effect with the first ballot being held before the end of the year. The Scheme operated by drawing out one or more numbers between 0 & 9 and those men whose National Service Registration Certificate numbers ended with the figure or figures drawn would automatically be transferred to coalmining. There was no choice. Thus the era of the Bevin Boys was born.

Over the course of the scheme between 1943 and 1948 some 48,000 Bevin Boys were recruited of which about 1,800 were deemed unsuitable as they failed the course. In addition some 40 men were Conscientious Objectors. The recruits came from all walks of life and on receiving the dreaded brown OHMS envelope they were directed to their place of employment with a travel voucher to the nearest railway station. Some remained in their own areas but many came from other parts of the country where there was no coalmining. In some instances there was a Reception Committee waiting to escort them to either their lodgings or a hostel. In North Staffordshire the hostels were initially at Bradley and Knutton which were later used by workers displaced from their own countries at the end of the War. Others made their own way. One Bevin Boy recalls arriving at his lodgings in Cobridge to find there were four lodgers but only three beds. Needless to say there was never a problem with sleeping arrangements as at no time during his stay were the four lodgers together. He soon took a more salubrious lodging, staying there until he was demobbed but kept in contact with his landlord for the rest of his life. Ration books were handed in in exchange for a book of meal tickets to be used in the colliery canteen. They were deducted 25 shillings (£1.25p) per week from their wages which covered their accommodation and meals, two daily and three on Sundays. They were issued with all the equipment they required but at the end of their training period they only retained their safety helmet and boots.

Training consisted of 44 hours per week for four weeks whilst in North Staffordshire additional arrangements were made by the Local Education Authority at the North Staffordshire Technical College and Kemball Pit. Afterwards they were allocated a colliery and worked alongside experienced colliers at all times. I am not aware of any Bevin Boys working on a coal face but they worked in all other areas of the mine under close supervision. They were generally accepted by the miners and close bonds were formed in some instances which lasted a lifetime. I remember one Bevin Boy who was taken short underground, a mile or so from the pit bottom, calling his 'mate' and asking where he should do his "number two". The reply was "Do it on thee shovel and chuck it on the conveyor"! As to be expected, they were subjected to practical jokes but on occasion it was the other way around. A Bevin Boy returning to his house in the East End of London one weekend found that his mother had purchased a set of full evening dress at a local Jumble Sale, top hat, tails, cummerbund, white shirt, dickie bow and wing collar. Yes indeed, he did turn up for work in it the following Monday (minus the top hat) to the utter amazement of his fellow workers. As you can guess their comments were too ribald to be included here. As the time came for their release they were closely watched, as in the words of one miner "in order to keep you safe". It was related to me by a Bevin Boy that "It was one of my lasting memories the way I was treated in my final days". After his last shift he was invited into the office where he was presented with a pipe rack & pipes, simply inscribed "To Joffers from your mates at Norton Colliery", and he later said, "That says it all".

Membership of the newly formed Association of Bevin Boys continued to grow and further Reunions were held at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum in 1990, 1991 & 1992. Following the closure of the Museum in August 1993 the 5th Reunion was held at Florence Colliery Miners' Welfare Club in Longton with over 300 attendees. I was an invited guest at this Reunion. I believe subsequent Reunions were held in different parts of the Country.

Jim Hutchinson left the area in 1994 but Vivienne Slater remained a very active member of the Association serving on various committees taking a great part in its activities as it sought to gain national recognition, which was only finally obtained in 1995. To honour her commitment she was made an "Honorary Bevin Boy". The committee fought long and hard to be included in the Festival of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in London in November. Finally the British Legion relented and allowed them to join. I can still remember the first time I watched them on television and the pride I felt as they proudly marched past the Cenotaph, their white helmets gleaming in the winter sunshine. The Association continues today and details can be found on their official website. <http://www.bevinboysassociation.co.uk/>

It was claimed that the Bevin Boys were the "Forgotten Army" and to a degree they were until the formation of the Association and their official recognition in speeches by Her Majesty the Queen, the Rt Hon John Major, Prime Minister and the Rt Hon Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House of Commons. Recognition at last! Many people who served during the War in far less hazardous occupations received the Defence Medal but the Bevin Boys were not included. Nevertheless, following representations by the Association they were eventually awarded a medal.

No official records of the Bevin Boys survive apart from a 10% sample covering Local Exchange Offices in the Midlands Region only.



At the end of the Second World War the Industry was totally run down having been starved of investment during the time they were under Government control. They reverted back to their former owners until Nationalisation in 1947. It would be many months before members of the Armed Forces were demobilised so the Bevin Boys soldiered on. The need for new recruits, particularly in view of the very hard winter of 1947 where coal froze in the wagons and the wagons froze to the rails, was paramount. As a consequence, the last Bevin Boys were not released until March 1948. Nevertheless many remained in the Industry for the rest of their working lives. The lives of many young men were changed by the Ballot but even after some 40 years the bonds of camaraderie & companionship were very clearly evident, perhaps unique, when compared to other Industries. What must not be forgotten, however, is that the Bevin Boys Association was conceived and started at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum in North Staffordshire.

But what of Vivienne Slater who was at the heart of the Association and was involved in all the decision making discussions. She too marched with the Bevin Boys wearing a white helmet at each of the Remembrances at the Cenotaph until fairly recently. For her services to the Association she was awarded the MBE which she received from her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in 2011.

Before closing this topic I would like to highlight the stories of two Bevin Boys I got to know very well.

Len Pettit

I first got to know Len, who was a Bevin Boy at Chatterley Whitfield Colliery, and his wife, at the 5th Bevin Boys Anniversary Reunion held at Florence Colliery in 1993. On being made aware that Chatterley Whitfield was open to the Public on Heritage Open Days, each September Len, along with his family, travelled from his home in Essex for many years until the time came when he was not well enough. By this time he was well into his 80s. We did though keep in touch by exchanging Christmas Cards and also speaking frequently on the phone. During our discussions I happened to mention an uncle of mine who had collapsed and died of a heart attack at Warley Barracks near Brentwood. I told him I thought he was buried in Woodford Green Cemetery in Essex which Len said was not too far from where he lived. Three weeks later a large brown envelope was delivered to my door containing not only details of the Cemetery and photographs but also of the plot in which my uncle was buried. Unfortunately it was nothing more than a piece of grass because he was buried in an unmarked grave with two other persons, details of whom were also sent.

When I found out that his 90th birthday was approaching I sent him, with a card, my only brass Chatterley Whitfield Miners Lamp Check. Within two days he rang me, not only to thank me but also to say that he would treasure the Check as he never thought he would ever see one again, never mind own one, particularly after over 60 years. Len died in 2019 and I am still in contact with his widow and daughter and her family.

Sydney Purcell, 1926-2006

The following is included by special permission of its author, Sydney's daughter Jill, my good friend and neighbour.

Dad was born in the small village of Norbury near Whitchurch in Shropshire. His older brother Lesley was serving in the RAF and dad was all set to join him, when "his number was called up in the Ballot" which determined who the Bevin Boys were. He was first sent to the Miners' Hostel in Knutton and eventually got a lodging at Leycett and started to work at Leycett (Madeley) Colliery in 1946 after his period of Training. This must have been quite a shock for him as he had been serving an apprenticeship at Wyatts, an engineering firm in Whitchurch. My grandmother was paying him the princely sum, at that time, of 10 shillings (50p) for this. As fate would have it, he met, fell in love with and subsequently married "the girl next door" to where he lodged. She was my mother and her name was May Broadgate. In May 1948 dad suffered a serious accident at Leycett Colliery when a pit prop fell on his head crushing a large part of the front of his skull and his nose. He underwent several pioneering operations at the North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary. These were filmed because it was one of the first times that bone had been used rather than putting a metal plate into the head. (This latter procedure apparently caused dreadful headaches). Despite being registered as "Disabled" dad returned to Leycett Colliery as a fitter in 1948 where he stayed until 1958. Following closure of the Colliery he worked at a number of other collieries in the area including Apedale, Holditch and Hem Heath. He transferred to Trentham Workshops in 1971 where he worked as a mechanic until he retired in 1981.

Jill Goldshaw, May 2020

Sydney often visited his daughter and particularly when I was working in the front garden we would have 'chats' about our working lives in the Industry, memories which remain today.

There is now a memorial to the Bevin Boys at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire.

Mines Rescue

As I mentioned previously in the Talk o' th' Hill Disaster there was never a shortage of men volunteering to rescue or recover their comrades even though there was no formal organisation. It must be assumed, therefore, that individual collieries did to some extent have a 'sort of' rescue operation where underground each man depended on the other with a constant need for vigilance and loyalty to each other even though they might not 'get on' on the surface. They had to trust one another by the very nature of their work.

I believe that the first officially recognised Rescue Station was opened at Howe Bridge in Lancashire. Central Rescue Stations within a 10 mile radius of every mine were not made compulsory until the passing of the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1911. The first Rescue Station in North Staffordshire originated in houses in Leek Road, Stoke in 1911. The equipment at the commencement consisted of six sets of Proto Self-contained Breathing Apparatus, six electric hand lamps, a hand lever pump, several oxygen cylinders and a few spares. The men used to exercise up and down the stairs and sulphur was used for smoke practice in the kitchen. In about 1913 the Station moved to Berry Hill Colliery and occupied some old cottages, on the end of which was erected a wooden gallery for practical training. In 1917 the Station moved to a purpose built establishment in Glebe Street, Stoke, opposite the Civic Offices which closed in 1964. Here there was a large cellar space which was utilised as a training gallery and was ventilated by an electric fan. By the side of the Station there were two garages, one for an Enfield van. The equipment at this time included 42 sets of Proto apparatus, 6 sets of Novita apparatus, 50 storage cylinders, 32 electric Oldham handlamps and 50 birds for gas testing. Teams of rescue men were also organised on a Colliery basis, as evidenced from old photographs but unfortunately no paper records of these remain. They were very professional and effective and within seven years of being inaugurated they carried out magnificent work at the Minnie Pit after the devastating explosion of 12th January 1918.

Following the closure of Berry Hill Colliery in 1960 the pit baths there were converted into a Central Rescue Station for North Staffordshire (opened in 1962) with all the facilities available, not only for training, but also for maintenance and repair of rescue apparatus. It was classed as a "B" Station and was staffed by a Superintendent, Assistant, 3rd Officer and 3 or 4 Rescue Brigadesmen as well as a general handyman for 365 days a year. The latter was usually a miner who had been injured. With the advent of more sophisticated equipment arrangements were made for the GPO to automatically transfer phone calls to the designated Duty Officer at Christmas and New Year from about the mid-1980s, however, it was still necessary for the canaries to be looked after during this period. A house was purchased for the Superintendent on Eaton Park Estate close by whilst later on two

houses were built on site and the Caretakers House acquired for other senior officials. Problems occurred when a GPO line was requested for the Superintendent. It was unable to be fulfilled for about 6 months due to “lack of available lines”. This clearly was unacceptable so the GPO were requested to provide an extension for the Station’s switchboard. This required the erection of some 10 new telegraph poles which was rather costly but nevertheless justified as if there was no telecommunication with the Superintendent and an incident occurred, then the response of many people, including Her Majesty’s Senior District Inspector of Mines & Quarries would have been seriously delayed leading to scathing criticism of the Rescue Service. This extension was installed but removed later when a land line was eventually provided at the Superintendent’s house. A special gallery was incorporated in the new Rescue Station where every underground situation (apart from inrushes of water) could be replicated. They were cramped and at times very arduous going but it enabled the men to be trained in realistic conditions. Each Colliery had themselves between 1 & 3 Rescue Teams and practices were carried out at their collieries and much later at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum.



In the event of an incident a call would be made to the Rescue Station who would then contact the relevant Colliery Team’s Captain who would then contact his Team. As a consequence a certain number of team members had their telephones installed and a portion of their bills paid by the Coal Board.

The Rescue Station also had maintenance and repair facilities where breathing apparatus was regularly checked and tested and a fully loaded van was kept on stand-by 24 hours a day. Each Colliery had a small dedicated Rescue Room containing, amongst other things, canaries. Every 12 months each Rescue man would undergo a rigorous medical examination, which, if they failed, they were reluctantly required to leave the Service. In the Medical Room at the Rescue Station there was what can only be described as a “step-up - step down” piece of equipment which each man had to use on numerous occasions. Each man was monitored both before and after spending 5 minutes in full rescue equipment stepping up and down on this equipment. It was not as easy as it looked as I found out when I completed the 5 minutes with only a 60lb bag on my back. All the equipment in the Rescue Station of course had to be maintained at a very high standard. This was of paramount importance as men’s lives depended on it.

In the 1980s an underground gallery was erected at the back of the Rescue Station together with all the necessary equipment as would be found in an underground roadway, including a roadway junction. This provided a much better simulation of underground conditions compared with the original galleries on site but these were still continued to be used. It played an important and necessary part of the training, not only for Rescue personnel, but also for other organisations which will be referred to later on.

Rescue Competitions were held on an annual basis (as were firefighting competitions) with the first three teams receiving prizes at the Annual Rescue Dinner. In addition they represented the Area at the National Rescue & Firefighting competitions held in different parts of the country. In later years competitions were held with teams from Cannock, North Wales and Lancashire. In the early 1990s two successive National Rescue competitions were held in the galleries at the Training Centre at Trentham Workshops. Following the introduction of self-rescuers in the 1970s everyone who worked underground had to attend a retraining course. For the non-colliery personnel, from the Area Director down, the course was held at Berry Hill Rescue Station. In full kit, with self-rescuers on, the course utilised the purpose built galleries within the Station. As far as I was concerned, it was not pleasant at all, but if you failed the test you were not allowed to go underground.

Over time, as actual incidents began to decline due to better safety standards, a series of mock incidents were introduced without, of course, the knowledge of the Rescue Station. A scenario would be set up at a colliery, the Rescue Station informed, who would then summon Teams to the colliery to deal with the incident. The Teams would not be aware that it was a mock incident. They could be summoned at any time of the day or night. This was very effective and important to make sure that not only the Teams carried out their duties, but also to make

sure that the Service was operating satisfactorily. If I remember an actual mock incident where the Rescue Station received a call out to a “minor explosion (either electrical or gas)” at 3:05 pm requesting the immediate attention of rescue teams. The system swung into action and the first team arrived at the colliery ready to go down at 3:40 pm. This of course proved the effectiveness of the Service.

Rescue men could only serve between the ages of 20 and 45 and underwent continual training and depending on the length of service received medals at 5, 10 and 15 years, with a Long Service Certificate for longer than 15 years. Peter Kenny from Wolstanton Colliery, a Scott, who transferred to North Staffordshire in the 1950s was the longest serving rescue man in the history of the north Staffordshire Rescue organization. He served for 23 years and I was fortunate to be present at his retirement function when he received both gifts and his Long Service Certificate. Many years later I met him at Apedale Heritage Centre where he was a Deputy/Guide. I mentioned that I was present at his presentation and he replied that the only thing he regretted was that he had no photographs of the occasion. When the Rescue Station closed in 1996 I was invited to go and help myself to what was left behind after officials from the National Rescue Service in Mansfield had taken materials they required for their Archives, as what was left behind was to be burned. I obtained a large number of books, disaster reports, plans and photographs. At Apedale Heritage Centre I enquired when Peter was next on duty and presented him with four photographs of his presentation. He was, not surprisingly “over the moon” and presented three of them to Apedale Heritage Centre where I believe they are still on display there today. Despite the nature of the Rescue Organisation there were still a great number of humorous incidents as I will mention in the next two items.

i) The Rescue Station, which was on the site of the NCB Western Area Headquarters, was cleaned each day by two members of the Headquarters Cleaning Staff. One day one of the Brigadesmen fitted a dummy in full Rescue Apparatus and placed him on one of the toilets with his overalls around his ankles and closed the door. You can imagine the shock the cleaners experienced, but they took it in the spirit it was intended.

ii) The Site Electrician was a lovely old man but at times he could be awkward and crotchety. One day his rolled umbrella was filled with small plastic granules when he was going to Hanley before going home. Yes, it rained and when opened it he was bombarded with the granules much to his embarrassment and amusement of passers-by. He too took it in good spirit.

In conjunction with Boothstown Rescue Station in Lancashire the Berry Hill Rescue Station was involved in the training of rescue men at the Winsford Salt Mine in Cheshire. I was fortunate to visit the salt mine with a group of the Berry Hill men

and what an experience it turned out to be. We descended the mine as usual in the cage to a depth of about 200 yards, but then a new world opened up before our eyes. We were directed to a Transit Van and preceded to the working area some 1½ miles distant. The salt was extracted by the Pillar and Stall method with the pillars being some 70 yards by 70 yards. The seam was 75 feet thick but only the middle 25 feet was being extracted. Driving down a very large roadway, 70 yards or so wide, with pillars in all directions, passing large Caterpillar vehicles on the way was a little bit disconcerting because, there were no supports visible apart from the pillars. The whole mine was lit by a strange ethereal orange glow. At the working area the driver invited us to leave the van but one of our group, the handyman, refused to join us and stayed in the van. Although he had worked in North Staffordshire before being injured, most of his working life had been spent in the North East where he never worked in a coal seam thicker than three feet. He said, "I anna getting owt, it inna safe and there's no supports". The driver then uttered the magic words, "it's a salt mine so if you wish you may smoke underground". I've never seen a man move so quickly. He jumped down out of the van and lit up a fag, wandering around as though he had always worked in such conditions. That night at his local club he told everyone he had been underground earlier that day and had a smoke!

I mentioned earlier that an "underground roadway" had been constructed on the surface to the rear of the Berry Hill Rescue Station. In addition to being used by Rescue Teams it was also used by Hanley Fire Brigade, amongst others. The Duty Officer was startled one afternoon when a fireman dashed into the Control Room and asked for the immediate attendance of a fire engine. Apparently, the fire they had lit for training purposes had got out of control. The appliance duly arrived and doused the fire. I related this story many years later at a talk I gave to Audley History Society. At the conclusion of the talk I was approached by a gentleman who confirmed that the story was true and announced that he became a member of the Hanley Fire Brigade 'A' Team who raced to the Rescue Station and put out the fire, much to the embarrassment of his 'B' Team colleagues.

Rescue Teams were often called out to assist their colleagues in other areas in the West Midlands. On one occasion a Team was deployed to a major fire deep underground at Coventry Colliery in Warwickshire where they had spent four consecutive days without returning home. On leaving the M6 at Hanchurch early in the morning after completing their duties at Coventry the Rescue Van was stopped by a Police Car. On hearing where they had been and for how long, the officer proceeded to put on his flashing lights and siren and escorted them to the Rescue Station. Yet again, another example of one rescue service helping another.

Following the Disaster at Lofthouse Colliery in Yorkshire in 1973 when a new coalface was excavated too close to an abandoned, flooded 19th century

mineshaft, resulting in the deaths of seven miners, the Hednesford Rescue Subaqua Team was deployed to the Colliery, but unfortunately to no avail. As a direct consequence of this incident, every Rescue man had to undergo underwater training in full kit. In North Staffordshire Hanley baths was used for this purpose. One Rescue man who had never been swimming in his life was petrified at the thought, but with a helping hand and gentle cajolement he successfully carried out the Test. This shows the commitment and camaraderie which prevailed throughout the Service, and indeed the Industry. Following this disaster, The NCB put out a nationwide appeal for any organisation or individual who had any "old mining plans" to loan them for copying and subsequent return. As far as I can remember the response in North Staffordshire was quite good with a number of previously unknown plans being loaned.

In my capacity as Office Manager at the NCB Western Area Headquarters at Staffordshire House, on the site of the former Berry Hill Colliery, I had a lot to do with the Rescue Station including being the Secretary of the Western Region Rescue Committee. On the occasion of my leaving the Board at the grand old age of 48½ my wife & I were once again invited to the Annual Rescue Dinner Dance at the Grand Hotel in Hanley. To my great astonishment and amazement I was presented with a figure of a Rescue man in full kit bearing an inscription which read "J T Worgan, many thanks, Mines Rescue Service". I really treasure this. I was also presented with a green Mines Rescue helmet which I have taken to funerals of Rescue men who have died in recent years.

Berry Hill Rescue Station closed in 1994 which brought to an end 83 years of service to the Mining Industry in North Staffordshire. I have every admiration for those who served during this time who, like the Talk o' th' Hill men of 1861, were always ready to put their lives at risk in order to rescue or recover their comrades. Indeed, some made the supreme sacrifice as at the Minnie Pit Disaster in 1918 and at Holditch Colliery in 1937. I believe the last time the Rescue Service was called out to a major incident was at Fenton Colliery in the early 1960s when three men were killed in an explosion in a heading.

I make no apology for stating that what must never be forgotten is the tremendous help and support the Rescue Men received from their loved ones. Mothers, fathers, wives, girlfriends and families who waited for their kin to return from incidents, thankfully most of them doing so.

The Fall and Rise of the Apedale Heritage Centre

The idea of a mining and heritage centre at Apedale, Chesterton had developed during the late 1990s by a group of three businessmen/mining enthusiasts who were involved in the foiled attempt to save Chatterley Whitfield. As Silverdale was

on the list of mine closures and was responsible for pumping mine water out of both Silverdale and Apedale, the small privately owned drift mine at Apedale would have to close because the bulk of their coal reserves would now be below the water table.

Two members of this group moved onto the Apedale site, the home of Aurora mining, setting up a part-time business producing coal briquettes and in the mid-1990s, together with the two directors of Aurora formed the Apedale Heritage Centre, a limited company and charity. At this time, a further group arrived on-site, the Apedale Light Railway Company Limited. The third member from the original group became ill during this process and subsequently passed away.

The dream of a new centre to celebrate North Staffordshire's proud mining history was now underway, money was available in abundance. The conversion of the working mine into a safer environment, the development of the workshops into a modern museum, the addition of an extension of this building to turn it into two storeys, a café and reception area, the demolition of Silverdale Railway Station, its removal to Apedale and a rebuild, once a pipedream, was now a reality. The funding bodies that leapt onboard were RECHAR and THE STAFFS ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST, both funded by the EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND set up to soften the blow of the almost complete closure of the U.K coal mining industry and its devastating impact economically and socially on the coal producing areas of Britain.

Grant applications were successful, re-development work commenced, new buildings appeared, everything in the garden looked rosy. The Country Park in which the centre was situated was also being returned back to nature, a part of the park had been the site of a huge open cast mine, three million tons of coal had been extracted by Crouch Mining, thousands of trees had been planted, the wildlife was returning and the residents of Chesterton could put their washing out to dry at last.

THEN DISASTER STRUCK!!

Rumours started that the project was overspent, a rift was developing between the mining group and the railway group and debts were growing. Then the totally unexpected happened. The whole country, particularly the rural areas went into total lockdown (sounds familiar?) FOOT AND MOUTH!! 6 million cows and sheep were slaughtered, areas including Apedale Country Park were closed to the public during the summer months. The effect on tourism was cataclysmic and Apedale was to have opened to the public that summer.

Towards the end of 2001, solicitor's letters, court cases, and the possibility of claw-back clauses in the funder's agreements were imminent. Some of the suppliers who were owed money were now removing their equipment because

there was little likelihood of them being paid. All but one of the Trustees had now resigned together with the mine manager. Meetings of interested parties were now being held at Chesterton High School and when circumstances allowed at the Aurora Mine office. A public appeal was made for support.

The response was overwhelming, 30 people turning up at one meeting. They included, the company accountant of Foden's, Sandbach, who had seen the appeal in Chesterton when visiting his parents, a former Coal Board solicitor from Stafford, a fully qualified former Coal Authority surveyor from Trentham, who had his own office in Alsager, a qualified Mine Manager from Audley, a Roman enthusiast and many local people who offered their help in recovering the situation. A management team was elected on the night, to come to terms with the debt and legal implications, also to come clean with the funders, Companies House, The Charities Commission and all the creditors. An examination of the previous accounts was necessary and the documents to be obtained from the former trustees, not the easiest of tasks.

To avoid bankruptcy, a little-known solution was offered to the creditors i.e. an Insolvency Voluntary Arrangement. (I.V.A). By this method, the total debt can be repaid over an agreed period, each creditor allowed to vote £1 for £1 for the agreement needing a vote of 51% or more for it to become a legal agreement. The vote in favour was almost unanimous. £612 per month over a period of 5 years was offered. The alternative was liquidation and it was likely that the creditors would leave empty handed, just like Chatterley Whitfield. Two members of the management team would guarantee the first three months payments. They opened a new bank account the next morning and deposited £1500 each for this purpose. The Museum, Mine Tours and Café would open immediately, schools, universities, church groups, rotary clubs, history societies would be contacted, no stone was left unturned. It did mean that apart from insurance and electricity bills all the monies had to be divided up and paid to the creditors until the debt was settled.

December 2001 was ending on a high with Santa down the mine, a rock 'n' roll evening and a pudding plod arranged for early January 2002. The year had been saddened by the tragic death of a young mine volunteer, killed in a road accident on his way to work, after leaving the Heritage Centre. Confidence was now re-established in the management team, who had professional help advising and opening doors for them.

The next five years was to be spent repaying the creditors. However, turnover was increasing each year, and this allowed the settlement of all debts in 4 years and two months. It was now onwards and upwards, OR WAS IT?

2004 to present was to be full of ups and downs, pitfalls (literally), moments of great joy, sadness and amusing episodes. It is impossible to mention them all, but a selection of the more interesting ones, good and bad will be chronicled next.

In July 2004, Staffs County Council, who owns the Country Park and all access rights, made an ambitious offer to purchase the whole of the Heritage Centre, complete all outstanding work and put right all dilapidations. They would grant to the Heritage Centre a 99 yr lease on the downstairs, unfettered access free of charge and they themselves would occupy the upstairs of the building. The Heritage Centre would still own the land, ancillary buildings and underground experience. At the July AGM a proposal was made and seconded, and was voted 21 in favour, non against for negotiations to commence and for the trustees to obtain the best possible deal.

THE NEXT BOMBSHELL WAS ONLY A FEW MONTHS AWAY...

Staffs County Councils' Task and Finance Committee had discovered that there were two mineshafts beneath the building, which would have to be dealt with before any agreement could be reached.

One was a horizontal shaft (No.7 drift) where coal had been mined by Aurora until Christmas 1998. This was known about by the original trustees, but as mining was still happening when the building was under construction, with inspections taking place daily and repairs carried out as necessary, it was at that time no threat to the building.

The second shaft had been discovered on some old Coal Authority documents by the Committee and it was vertical and right in the middle of the Museum floor. It was a narrow ventilation shaft, possibly connecting two levels in an old abandoned mine, probably between 40 and 60 feet deep. It would have been no threat to the single-storey workshops originally there, but the added weight factor of a second floor with council staff and visitors involved, it now became a concern to the project.

The Trustees now had some important decisions to make. Dealing with the vertical shaft first, mining consultants Wardell Armstrong were called in, the Coal Authority was advised and our own surveyor, solicitor and mine manager were also involved. The first task was to follow the advice offered, which meant to employ the services of a drilling company to obtain a series of core samples under the building to firstly prove the existence of this shaft and the quality of backfill used. This was carried out during January 2006 by M&J Drilling Services from the West Midlands. The shaft was found and so if the upstairs was to be used for anything other than light storage, the floor would have to be opened up and the shaft grouted with liquid concrete under high pressure. All the trustees agreed with this course of action.

The horizontal shaft however became a contentious issue. There were a number of solutions here, including grouting at an unknown cost. Wardell Armstrong could only give an estimate of approx. £40,000 for both projects. The Coal Authority

Inspector felt that the trustees needed to gain access to this roadway at minimal cost to assess its condition before making a decision.

This option had also been mentioned briefly in Wardell Armstrong's original report and was considered to be Plan B. The trustees then approached various funding bodies to grout the roadway under the building, but nothing was forthcoming and it was now becoming increasingly obvious that the only solutions left were (1) to walk away from the project, (2) to investigate Plan B. A special meeting of trustees was called and a vote taken on the motion "to locate the original entrance of No. 7 drift, now under 40 feet of compacted landfill, examine and repair as necessary, and maintain weekly inspections carried out by a competent person/s". This motion was carried, the vote being 5 for the motion, 2 against. **WOULD THE MINING TEAM BE UP TO IT? (NOT HALF, THEY COULDN'T WAIT).**

New mine volunteers wanted to join us, from locals, ex mine workers from the Cannock, South Staffs, Shropshire and North Wales coal fields. Cave rescue members from the West Midlands and Derbyshire also offered their services. The challenge ahead was going to be enormous, turning out to be way beyond anything the team were prepared for.

The entrance to the drift was probably directly under the huge septic tank that served the Centre. A digger was brought in to clear the landfill away. Three of the Centre's management team were members of The North Staffs Geology Association, who held their meetings at Keele University. The University's Geology section had already visited Apedale on numerous occasions and had already been investigating deeper areas using GPS. One of the students was given the task of locating the entrance for his dissertation and eventual degree. From the information he provided excavations began and huge amounts of earth were removed. After a few days, the contractor was now rightly expressing concerns that the sides of the excavation, which had buildings situated close by and the septic tank, were precariously perched on the edge of these excavations. No evidence of the entrance could be found, and it was considered too dangerous to proceed.

Seeking an alternative route, the Centre's own mine team decided they could enter No.7 from No.4 drift (the tourist mine), as the roadway ran underneath it at right angles. A short shaft was constructed. The Mines Rescue Team from Winsford Salt Mine were contacted, and they entered No.7 drift 'under oxygen' as a training exercise to establish its condition. It still however needed its own entrance from the surface. We now discovered that one of our member's son-in-law was the team leader of The JCB Dancing Digger Team who appeared at charity events free of charge. An audacious approach was made to JCB for them to carry out a training event on the site. They entered the excavation area after the sides and septic tank had been secured. "EUREKA!" the entrance was there, some ten feet lower than

we had previously thought. Whilst this work was happening, a huge steel cage was constructed and immediately lowered into the hole to support the weight surrounding the mine opening and the hole backfilled. The concrete stopping, sealing the shaft a few yards in, still had to be removed cautiously, but we could now ventilate this roadway by the air doors in No.s 3 & 4 drifts. The University student was awarded his degree. **PROBLEM SOLVED.**

This now opened up some fantastic opportunities, deeper mine tours could now take place for specialist groups, training sessions could take place for our friends in the Mines Rescue Services (yes, we still have many mines and they have Rescue Teams). The avenues open to us were now enormous. We had an in-date development licence, which allowed a small amount of coal to be removed when necessary to keep the mine in good order. We cannot sell it. It belongs to the Queen, and at the moment we owe her £1.80. Small pieces are given away to visiting schoolchildren, quite often they don't know what it is or what it represents.

Once this project was completed, it is sad to say that the two trustees that opposed this action decided to resign and one whose collection of artefacts was the mainstay of the museum display, decided to start removing them, claiming that the museum was not a safe place and they were not adequately insured. Two years of claims and counter claims and legal letters followed, until a sensible solution was finally found, good friends and colleagues in this long journey were lost. But then, other collections were now offered to us. Two of our members own homes were museums in their own right, and the Shropshire Mines Trust brought to the site their own collection of large artefacts including the Hem Heath reserve winding engine. These large artefacts are on display both on the surface and underground in situ. They are on a long-term lease, as are some of the original trustee's collection.

By now, the agreement with the County Council was cancelled, so they built and opened their own energy station at the top of Blackbank Road. A beautiful building now closed because they can't afford to run it. During the above events, the original railway group, probably in frustration, had relocated to Oswestry and the search was on for a replacement group. A grant towards the rebuild of Silverdale Railway Station was promised by Staffs Environmental Fund as they were impressed by our recovery. **ANOTHER AMAZING SITUATION WAS ABOUT TO UNFOLD.**

A narrow- gauge railway group based at Moseley Grammar School, Disley, South Manchester, had been forced to leave their original site on the school playing fields. They had moved their loco collection (approx. 60) to Buxworth, pronounced Bugsworth, in North Derbyshire and occupied an old derelict mill in the village. They had circulated a request to any interested parties in the North West of England to come to their aid. **SURPRISE, SURPRISE!!** Their request landed on the

desk of one of our members previously mentioned, now a trustee, in his office at Foden's, Sandbach. It was with the other trustees the next day. Meetings were hastily arranged at both sites, in their case at the famous Navigation Inn, the licensee being Pat Phoenix a.k.a Elsie Tanner in Coronation Street. This was the perfect fit and they were soon on site. They operated short steam rides from a platform only, but on the 10th October 2010, the station had been built and was officially opened by the Sheriff of Staffordshire and Civic Dignitaries. Sad to say, 10 years on what appears to be a simple agreement, as both parties agree with the heads of terms, a small piece of land owned by the Heritage Centre needs to pass to the Railway Trust to allow them security of tenure and to enable them to secure funding for their own museum has still not happened. It has been in the hands of Solicitors of both groups for ten years!! With no apparent end in sight, only false promises to complete the legal work are offered.

Eighteen years of being a member of the management team, mostly as a trustee has given the writer some fantastic moments, sometimes sad, sometimes amusing, always challenging. There have been many changes to the trustees, management team and volunteers, many have come and gone during this time, some sadly to the great "bagging shed" in the sky, but every one of them either friend or foe has contributed something to enable the Centre to be where it is today.

A couple of poignant moments are the appreciation, particularly from the school children who have visited the site. We have thousands of letters to prove this. The visits of older students from places as far afield as China, Australia, Canada, The Philippines, Chernobyl, Argentina, Holland, Spain and a group of orphans from Mombasa in Kenya, who gave a very moving rendition of "I've got the whole world in my hands" Tears were streaming down the faces of some of the hardest men you could ever meet.

On an amusing note, when we circulated invitations to all schools in Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire, we discovered that all our local schools in Newcastle-under-Lyme were described as being in Newcastle-upon-Tyne but with an ST postcode. This document is available from the Department of Education in London. Also, in 2008, having negotiated an incredible electricity supply contract with Scottish Power, the Treasurer revealed that when setting up the deal, the sales rep asked to visit the site, she said "she could be with him in half an hour" when asked where she was at the moment, she said, "North Shields." Obviously, the Treasurer declined. To date, Scottish Power have never been told. They have different tariffs for different regions and the Centre had obtained the lowest tariff in their book. You couldn't make it up, could you?

Annual Railway Galas, occasional Mining Galas and Roman weekends, Music Festivals, Vintage Car and Omnibus Rallies and Tracks to the Trenches have been taking place on the Arena, developed on a further 9 acres of land acquired in April

2006 by a jointly owned company, the Directors being from The Heritage Centre and Railway. The Company is named Bugsworth Navigation Limited (readers of this chapter now know where the name originates). All these events have added significant income to the Company coffers. Record income will shortly be declared at this coming years AGM. Against this, the Centre has suffered more roof-falls, floor collapses and regular itinerant incursions. The first two dealt with swiftly and professionally by the volunteers, the latter eventually by the Courts.

All of this effort culminated in the Heritage Centre receiving on 22nd August 2013, The Queen's Award for Volunteer Services. This was presented to the Centre and invited guests by the Vice Lord Lieutenant, in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress at Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Centre. For some inexplicable reason, the trustees were never invited to the Palace to meet Her Majesty (perhaps she didn't fancy a group of hairy -sed miners treading on her lawn, or the invite was sent to the other Newcastle). This award is recognised as the civilian MBE.

However, ending on a cautious note, the writer is looking out of his living room window in total lockdown, unable to leave his house because of his age, the Coronavirus Pandemic is in full swing and the Centre and Railway has been closed for the past 12 weeks and been deprived of at least half of its total income. This income comes from the most profitable months of the year, April, May and June and on conservative (apologies for that word) estimates will probably take 5 years to recover its financial position.

Would anyone reading this, now like to join us for yet another roller-coaster ride as a volunteer for the next few years to come? If so, contact the Centre at: info@apedale.co.uk or call at Reception when the Centre re-opens. Thankyou.



The Apedale Valley Light Railway

Phil Robinson

Chairman, Moseley Railway Trust



If you came to the Apedale Country Park today, you would find a tranquil countryside scene as you stroll through its 284 acres of parkland. You might pause and admire the view from the Miners' Wheel monument at the top of the hill, and gaze across the industrial landscape. The scene before you has an air of permanence which belies how much it has changed in the last 100 years. Had you gazed across the same view in 1920 it would have been very different. The valley immediately below you would have had a haze of smoke emanating from the Apedale Ironworks of the Midland Coal, Coke and Iron Company's works. Towards Chesterton you would have seen the brickworks belching black smoke from its kilns, and the tang of chemicals would have been strong in the breeze. In the valley below, between you and Chesterton, was the MCCI chemical by-products plant, from which those chemical smells would have originated, and a little further to your left was the Burley Pit, with the rumbling clattering noises from the screens. You would hear the clank of railway wagons being shunted, the rattle of mine tubs running up and down the incline between Burley and Watermills pits, and the panting of the small locomotives busily hauling wagons to and from the colliery, and around the ironworks yard. In the distance other locomotives would be hauling clay from the claypits to the distant brickworks.

The crash of 1929 on Wall Street in the US eventually rippled through the industrialised world, and hit North Staffordshire area around 1930, causing the loss of almost 3000 jobs in Apedale as the MCCI succumbed to the crisis. The same year, a few miles to the east, the California Works of locomotive manufacturers Kerr Stuart & Co., off Whieldon Road, closed their doors, costing another 800 jobs. The decline of local industry was arrested for a while, as coal continued to be drawn from the various pits in the area. Shelton Bar continued to produce steel, and a huge boost of spending occurred with nationalisation of rail, coal, road transport, and steelmaking. From the 1970s the decline of the area continued albeit less perceptibly although today almost all heavy industry has vanished from the local area. At Apedale, this vanished industrial activity has left a moonscape on the land.

But not all activity has gone from the valley. On summer weekends you can hear the toot of train whistles and the purr of diesels as trains on the Apedale Valley Light Railway draw visitors along the border of Apedale Country Park - a short journey which will soon be lengthened towards a mile. Yes, even today the valley is changing day by day imperceptibly as volunteers wrestle order into a landscape which man has been changing to suit his needs during the last centuries.

This small railway was not always in Apedale. Its genesis was at the Moseley Grammar School in Stockport around 1967, as an after-school club for boys between the ages of 11 and 16, using old narrow gauge railway stock from a local brickworks under the guiding hand of one of the teachers at the school. The club survived a change of location as the school moved to a modern site in Cheadle, Stockport, and continued to thrive as the 70s changed to the 80s. The school

became a comprehensive school and, later, with changing population needs and falling birth-rates, the school closed and became a tertiary college. With the railway membership no longer consisting of schoolboys, a group of older volunteers became its core, and the club evolved into a formal railway society. This group met each weekend to work on various railway restoration projects, and to run trains in the grounds of the college. That was, until the end of 1996 when the society's landlord requested that the nest of ramshackle buildings and rusting artefacts be moved away from the former school site to allow it to be redeveloped for the needs of 21st Century education.

I was looking for somewhere to operate a small 2ft gauge diesel locomotive which I'd purchased in early 1996. Having made contact and joined the Society in mid-1996, I took part in the epic quest for a new home - a quest which took in over 300 potential sites in an ever widening search centred on Stockport. That search took us into the Pennines to the east of Manchester, to the north of Manchester at Rawtenstall, to Horwich in Lancashire, then south into Cheshire and Staffordshire. Meanwhile, the narrow gauge railway system at Cheadle was dismantled with over half a mile of track being lifted before the site was finally vacated in the summer of 1998. Temporary homes had to be found for the 30 or so locomotives and 50 plus wagons of various types and a rental agreement for a storage site was entered into with a landlord at Whaley Bridge in Derbyshire. Only two years later, this site too had to be vacated since it was to be redeveloped for housing, and a move to another site at Buxworth, about 2 miles away, took place. We became experts at moving heavy locomotives, ranging in weight from 2 tons to 5 tons each, the many wagons, track, and other items which we would need to build a tourist railway on a new site... when we finally found it!

That search came to an end in early 2003 - a search which had started some six years earlier in 1997. The location we found was at the Apedale Valley Community Country Park, in collaboration with the Apedale Heritage Centre off Loomer Road in Chesterton. Their site and the adjacent 8.5 acre site to the north and east of the Heritage Centre had been where the Apedale Ironworks had operated until 1930. Later, it had been the operations base for the Aurora Mining Co. coal mine, which had closed in 1998 following the end of mining at the NCB mine at Silverdale in the next valley when pumping of water from that mine ceased.

Negotiations to purchase the site at Apedale took until April 2006, while obtaining planning permission to construct a tourist railway and bringing the former mine buildings back into service took until the end of 2006, when finally a start on the construction of a more permanent railway could commence. March 2007 saw the first section of track laid at what is now called Silverdale Station and by late summer the track had been connected up to the first locomotive storage shed - the corrugated iron building known as the Red Shed. By the end of the year, construction progress meant that the next phase of the project could commence, and this saw the construction of a new locomotive storage building - the large

green shed alongside the main line known as Aurora North. This is 140 feet (42.5m) long and 25 feet (7.6m) wide and was completed in July 2008, following which, all of the remaining locomotives in store at Buxworth were moved to Apedale and housed in the new shed. This relieved a huge financial burden on the Trust since the storage rental had been costing around £600 per month, not all of which was covered by charges made to individual locomotive owners for the use of the storage building.

Opening for passenger trains would take another two years to achieve, the delay being due to a public footpath having to be legally diverted away from the route of the railway. Working with the Rights of Way department at Staffordshire County Council, the diversion was finalised in the summer of 2010, and shortly afterwards the railway was completed. The official opening to passenger trains took place on 21st August 2010, and the railway has operated every year since then from April to October, with Santa trains for the children running for two weekends in December.

But an observer viewing the site would notice many changes since 2010. The Silverdale Station, unfinished when the railway opened, has been completed and serves as an information point and shop for the railway. Next to the station is the base for what will become known as “the Narrow Gauge Railway Centre” - a museum to tell the story of narrow gauge railways and show visitors how such equipment was used by industry. To the east of the site, a field railway has been installed for demonstration trains, and an events area constructed, which saw widely acclaimed commemoration events showing the use of light railways during WW1 - the Tracks to the Trenches series in 2014, 2016, and 2018. The railway’s workshops continue to repair and overhaul the historic equipment, and breathe new life into newly arrived locomotives and wagons as they are restored to operational condition. The collection now has around 90 locomotives, including five operational steam locomotives, with the remainder being petrol, diesel, and battery powered. The wagon collection has close to 100 different types, representing various industries which used to rely on narrow gauge railways as part of a fully integrated goods transport system between quarry, mine and factory, and there is a dedicated library which charts narrow gauge railways, not only from the UK, but worldwide. Yes, Apedale has become a nationally known institution, and indeed internationally known, with connections to France, Germany, Scandinavia, and the USA. If you want to know more about us, and when the trains are running, please visit our website at www.avlr.org.uk



Water and Gas

Both water and gas were inherent problems in the North Staffordshire Coalfield and at times a destructive force as outlined previously concerning the Diglake Colliery at Audley (water) and Holditch Colliery, Chesterton (gas).

With regards to water, it has on occasion proved to be a more intractable problem and at times a destructive force. Early methods of mine drainage included the drawing up of water in the shafts in barrels or in tanks suspended below the cage, by suction or buckets attached to an endless rope or chain with the power provided by a horse driven Gin. In addition, soughs or gutters were constructed to drain the water to below the level of the mine workings. Two such installations come to mind, the Madeley and Sneyd gutters. Water problems could also arise from the closure and abandonment of the mines when the drainage was suspended as well as from subterranean water sources. Such a situation as the former occurred when Scotia and Pinnox collieries in the Tunstall and Burslem areas were abandoned resulting in many collieries close by to be flooded out. In the middle part of the 19th Century William Heath took out a lease at Sneyd Colliery and in order to work the lower seams new pumps were installed with the shafts being widened and deepened to a depth of 600 yards. Also, all access to the old waterlogged seams was sealed off. Water percolating from the Upper Coal Measures was often pure enough to drink and was often collected and used by the

colliery. In other areas, however, some waters were toxic and special measures had to be taken before it could be discharged to surface water courses.

In 1712 Thomas Newcomen, a Cornish engineer, introduced his steam or fire operated pumping system which, I believe, was carried out at the Coneygreve Coal Works near Dudley Castle, Staffordshire. It worked on the principle of atmospheric pressure to push the piston against a partial vacuum evacuated in the cylinder by condensing the steam! It was not very efficient but could lift about 5,000 gallons of water per hour. In succeeding years much more efficient steam engines and eventually electrically operated pumping systems were adopted in North Staffordshire which to some extent greatly reduced the hazard of water to mining, but it never went away. One notable innovation was the successful operation of the first submersible pump into the Yorkshire Coalfield in about 1943.

North Staffordshire was in part a particularly wet coalfield and in 1947 when I joined the Industry as the Manager's Clerk's Assistant at Hem Heath Colliery every colliery in the Area was pumping water, with the possible exception of, I believe, Glasshouse and Apedale footralls. When Parkhouse Colliery closed in 1968 (which was a particularly wet pit) pumping capacity at the adjacent Holditch Colliery was tripled in order to protect the Colliery. I seem to remember a large settling reservoir into which the water was pumped before some of it was used by the Colliery with the rest being discharged into a local brook. Most collieries had reservoirs and at Foxfield Colliery in Godley Brook near Dilhorne and at the Minnie Pit at Halmer End reservoirs still exist with the latter being run by the Audley Angling Society. In 1819, according to the "Gentleman's Magazine", Cockshead Colliery, Norton, cased coal production but continued pumping water to top up the Caldon Canal. Today there is hardly any trace of the colliery left, unless you know where to look! As you approach the southern end of the Harecastle Canal Tunnel via a trackway which crosses over both tunnels (Brindley's & Telford's) from the junction of Lowlands Road, Hollywall Lane and Chatterley Road a small stream appears on the right hand side. This then proceeds to flow in a cast iron trough over the old railway line and discharges, I believe, into the Fowlea Brook. According to an old photograph in my collection it is a natural discharge from the former Clanway Colliery in Tunstall. Staff from the Area Laboratory at Chatterley Whitfield monitored every outflow of water from every colliery on a regular basis to ensure that they came under the proscribed quality limits. I can recall problems occurring at Norton Colliery in the 1970s on the site of the old Ford Green Ironworks close to Leek New Road. Tar from the old works started to leak into the Ford Green Brook causing environmental damage. As a consequence a remediation scheme was implemented to remove all the tar and landscape the area at the same time.

To give an example of problems with water in North Staffordshire I need to refer to the creation of the Wolstanton Mine Complex in the early 1960s whereby underground roadways connected the Colliery to both Hanley Deep and Sneyd collieries. The shafts at Deep Pit were filled and capped and all other operations closed down. The No.4 Shaft at Sneyd Colliery remained open as the second means of egress (escape) from the Northern area of workings at Wolstanton Colliery and also for pumping. In 1968 an underground connection had been made between Sneyd and Norton collieries in order to improve ventilation and to enable excess methane gas to be piped to Wolstanton (of which more later). Norton Colliery, however, also remained a pumping pit and following closure in 1976 continued to pump because of its connection to Sneyd. In the mid-1970s an underground connection was made between Chatterley Whitfield (also a pumping pit) and Wolstanton Colliery where a new coal face was opened up specifically for the Chatterley Whitfield men who continued to use the shafts at Chatterley Whitfield. Following the development of the second such face the decision was made to close Chatterley Whitfield and to transfer the men to Wolstanton and other collieries and more importantly to switch off the pumps at Chatterley Whitfield. Because of the connection a large dam was constructed underground which of necessity could control the water from either direction. Between Chatterley Whitfield and Victoria Colliery (which was also a pumping pit) there was only a 12 meter wide barrier. This meant that in order to protect the workings at Wolstanton Colliery pumping took place at four collieries. The Hesketh Shaft at Chatterley Whitfield was left open but sealed with an NCB specification concrete cap in order to measure both water and methane gas levels using special pipes, which, believe it or not, is still taking place today. Even though it closed in 1982, Victoria Colliery continued to pump water to protect both Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum and Wolstanton Colliery, but was finally switched off following closure in 1986. Until the final day Victoria Colliery had been pumping an average of 7.5 million gallons of water a week, just one colliery alone.

The underground section of Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum (of which more later) was closed on the advice of HM Senior District Inspector of Mines and Quarries following the closure of Wolsatnton Colliery in 1986. This was because of the possible migration of water and gas from Wolstanton. At the time of the closure of the Mining Museum in 1993 the water in the Hesketh shaft was 580 yards below the surface. Today the level is only between 20 & 30 yards below the surface but will not rise any higher because it now corresponds to the level of the water table in the Whitfield Valley floor. Some years ago a TV survey was carried out in the Hesketh Shaft down to a collapse at around a depth of 380 yards. Despite being out of use since the late 1970s and being flooded for many years the shaft is in very good condition above this localised collapse area. This obviously reflects great credit on those who constructed it at about the time of the First

World War. The top 30 yards contained cloudy water but from here down to the collapse the water is crystal clear and I believe of drinkable quality.

Ironstone mining in the Red Mine Seam at Silverdale Colliery resulted in the water being pumped at the No. 17 Shaft to be highly ochreous and yellow. In the 1970s, in order to alleviate the problem of disposal of this water, two coal preparation engineers designed a scheme in which the water was passed through a dedicated local treatment system where the iron ochre was removed and disposed of on the colliery tip, allowing the residual clean water to be discharged into the Silverdale Brook. The scheme was forwarded for consideration to the NCB's National Awards Panel who awarded the engineers £2,500, the maximum award at that time. The system ceased operation before the Colliery closed in 1998 and was replaced by a channel which ran some half mile towards Newcastle. It then turned through 90 degrees to the left followed by another 90 degree turn before a 6 or 10ft cascade into a large settling pond. It then flowed back towards the Colliery before passing via a narrow channel into a large reed bed before being discharged, as clean water, via a pipe under the channel from the Colliery to the Silverdale Brook. No. 17 Shaft is still open today and is equipped with a submersible pump which operates on an automatic "as required" system. It is owned and operated by the Coal Authority.



Silverdale Water Treatment Plant

In the 1930s Park Hall Colliery in Cheadle, which was connected underground to Foxfield Colliery, ceased production but remained as a pumping pit to protect

Foxfield. This continued until the end of the Second World War by which time the connection to Foxfield had been sealed and Park Hall was closed. During the sinking of Hem Heath Colliery in 1924 a large flow of water was encountered which seriously delayed the shaft sinking operations. Special equipment was installed to freeze the water and extra shaft supports were used before shaft sinking recommenced. Similar problems were encountered in sinking the No.2 Shaft in the 1940s-50s but obviously it was catered for in the specification for the shaft sinking operation.

Water caused many problems which were mostly overcome but dangers still did exist. Many collieries both utilised and sold water to many industries some of which used vast amounts. Today no collieries exist but pumping still takes place at Silverdale Colliery on an infrequent basis. Most of the industries of North Staffordshire have virtually disappeared and the volume of water being used has significantly reduced. As a consequence the water table in North Staffordshire is very high and I understand that water is naturally percolating to the surface in at least five or six places in the area.

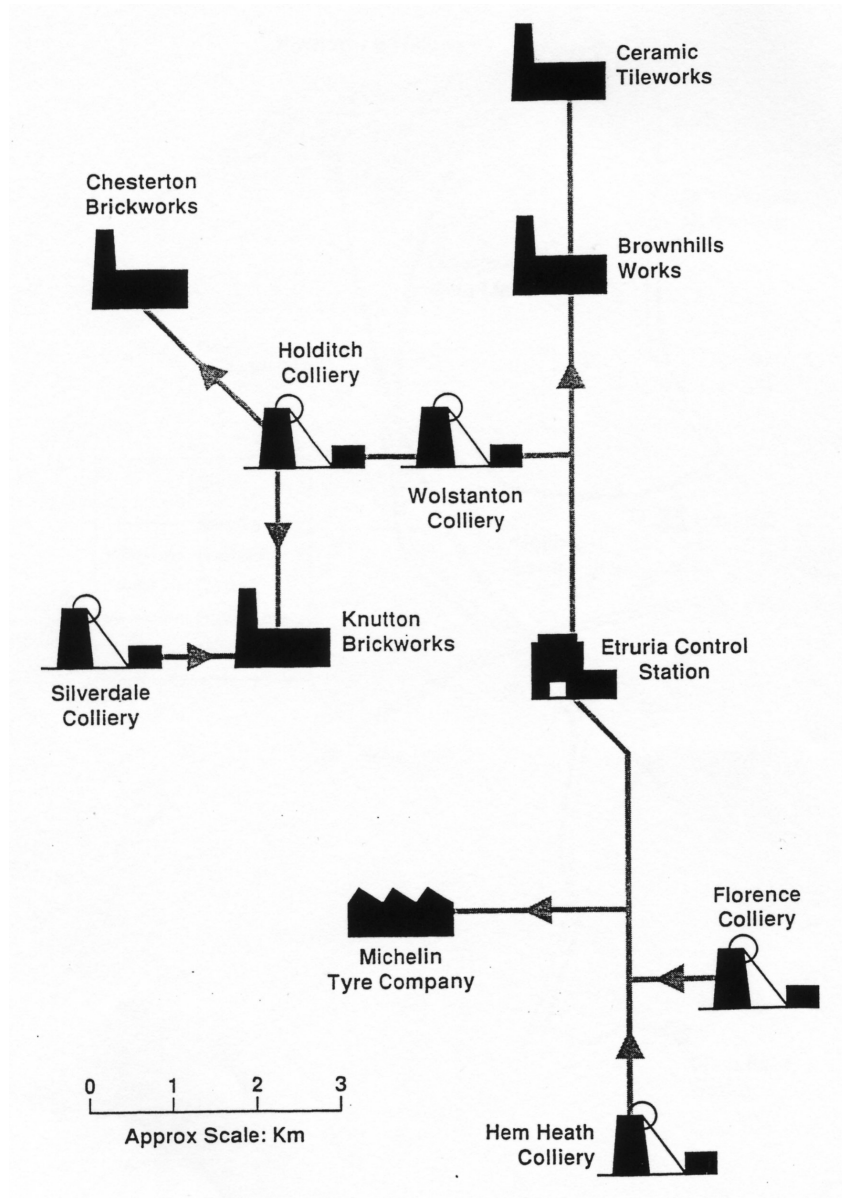
Gas

Holditch Colliery consistently drained more than 6 million therms of methane a year making it one of the gassiest coal mines in Great Britain. In the 1970s it became the first colliery in the area to sell gas, via a pipeline, equivalent to 1.25 million therms a year (approximately equivalent to 4,000 tons of coal at an average selling price of about £30 per ton) to G H Downing's brick & tile works at Chesterton. This subsequently led to the creation of the highly profitable North Staffs Gas Grid (of which more later).

Methane in coal mines is the trapped marsh gas of the chemical and bacteriological processes completed millions of years ago in the formation of the coal. It could and did escape under pressure as the colliery's underground workings were developed, particularly at times of low atmospheric pressure. Periods of abnormally low or rapidly falling barometric pressure sometimes preceded underground explosions. Berry Hill Rescue Station regularly received notification from the Meteorological Office of both rises and falls in pressure and collieries would be notified accordingly. Methane is lighter than air and under normal conditions is odourless and invisible. The danger from this flammable gas has always made lighting in mines problematical to say the least. Early forms of lighting were flaming torches, crude oil lamps and tallow candles, all 'naked lights', which led to many explosions and indeed some miners preferred to work in the dark. Many papers and articles have been written on the causes of accidents and disasters from the ignition of methane gas so I do not propose to discuss them here. Nevertheless great care was required at all times, despite the introduction

of the more sophisticated methods of detecting methane, and the Flame Safety Lamp and the use of canaries remained until the end. Despite all the precautions taken dangerous levels of methane could accumulate in a mine, particularly if the ventilation was disrupted. Hence the need for stand-by fans at collieries. It was therefore essential to ensure that not only fans but also pumping systems were kept running during Holidays and Strikes. Before the start of each shift underground District Deputies carried out an inspection of the workings, which included testing for gas, before the men could start or resume work. The observations of such inspections were recorded as reports in writing. In addition great care had to be taken that all machines were in working order and to this end Mid and End Shift inspections were also carried out. Such was the authority of the Deputy and no one was allowed to enter his District without his consent. This included the Colliery Manager! Great care was also taken where falls of the roof of underground excavations had formed cavities where methane could accumulate. In order to test for gas in such circumstances the Deputy would insert his safety lamp into the cavity on the end of his yard stick or later use a rigid extension tube. Methane drainage was introduced in the 1950s and proved very successful. Angled boreholes were drilled into the roof, and/or floor and sides of the underground roadways or headings and connected to a dedicated pipe range which ran to and continued up the shaft to a methane extraction plant on the surface which contained a series of suction pumps. Here it could be vented safely to the atmosphere, but this was a potential source of power that was being wasted. It was subsequently agreed that where the content of the vented gas was between 30 & 40 percent methane it should be utilised at the colliery. This resulted in many boilers being converted to burn methane with the consequent reduction in the use of coal.

As mentioned above, the North Staffs Gas Grid was set up following the success of the sale of gas from Holditch Colliery in the 1970s with every colliery connected via near surface pipelines to a surplus gas holder at Etruria which had been purchased by the NCB. A control centre operated 24 hours per day and the gas was sold to Brick & Tile Works, Potteries, The Michelin Tyre Co. and other industries. So successful was the system that in one year the amount of gas sold was equivalent to one million tons of saleable coal. The revenue generated was credited to the individual collieries (Chatterley Whitfield, Norton, Victoria, Wolstanton, Holditch, Silverdale, Hem Heath & Florence). As collieries closed sales of gas obviously diminished and the last colliery to sell gas was Silverdale. Before this time, however, the main control centre had moved to the northern end of Wolstanton Colliery and still, I believe, continued to sell gas after Privatisation. Today though there is no trace of either the gas holder at Etruria or the Control Centre at Wolstanton.



The North Staffs Gas Grid

Following the closure of Hem Heath Colliery the No.1 Shaft was left open, but capped in order to monitor both gas and water. Steel pipes some 30ft tall still protrude from the cap.

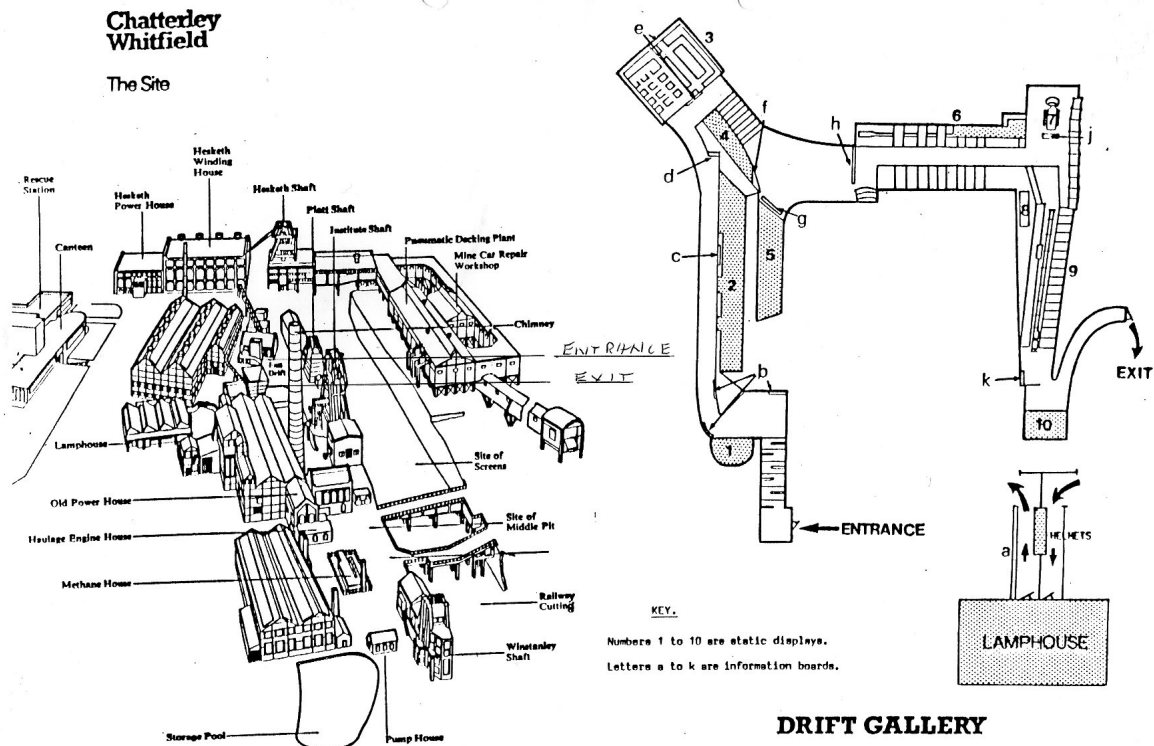
The No.2 Shaft and the Drift were filled and capped, but steel pipes protrude at both locations. Some years ago I was photographing the sites of the shafts when I was approached by a man who commented that the pipes looked awful and asked what they were for. I told him the reason and to my astonishment he said that he was not aware of this even though he lived just around the corner from the No.1 Shaft. Subsequent investigations revealed that there were sufficient quantities of gas venting through the pipes which led to the construction of a small gas powered power station on Stanley Matthews Way between the site of the Colliery and the Bet365 Stadium. Florence Colliery, which became part of the Hem Heath Complex and subsequently names Trentham East Colliery, closed on Privatisation but Hem

Heath (Trentham West) continued in operation for a couple of years. All the shafts at Florence Colliery were filled and capped, again with gas vent pipes protruding from each one. An approach was made to the Coal Authority for permission to drill into the old underground roadways to determine whether there was sufficient gas available for another power station at Cocknage Wood. This station was subsequently constructed and as far as I am aware both are still in operation. I believe that because at Florence the shafts were close to a housing estate the pipes from the three shafts were removed but connected to a shallow underground pipeline which goes to the top of the reclaimed tip where the gas is vented to atmosphere.

So, although gas could of course cause many problems for the mines, nevertheless, here we have shown it became very profitable to the Area and similar systems were also set up in both the North Wales and Lancashire coalfields.

Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum

The Mining Museum, the first underground mining museum in Great Britain, opened in 1979 and utilised a 240 yard deep section of the Winstanley and Institute shafts (far higher than the current workings at that time) and was constructed in a purpose designed area in the Holly Lane Seam. At the same time an “underground museum” (also known as the Drift Gallery) was created in the reinforced concrete Fan Drift. As mentioned previously, the deep underground section closed in 1986 following the closure of Wolstanton Colliery and a new “Underground Experience” was constructed in the former Railway Cutting, accessed via the Platt Shaft and exited via the existing “underground museum” in the Fan Drift.



The Museum subsequently went into Liquidation on 9th August 1993 and closed the same day. The reason that the site has survived is that just prior to closure the last Museum Director contacted English Heritage who scheduled the site as an Ancient Monument. It was and still is considered the most complete coal mine site in Great Britain (possibly even Western Europe) containing a range of 34 buildings dating from 1883 to the 1960s, most of which are scheduled or listed.

From a gem of an idea it grew and grew! The idea of a museum at Chatterley Whitfield originated from a passing remark made by the NCB Western Area's Deputy Director of Administration, an Accountant by profession. Initially it was viewed with scepticism but gradually the idea took hold. A presentation was made to the Area Director who approved the setting up of a Working Party to come up with substantive proposals. He also acquainted the NCB's National Headquarters in London of the proposal. The Working Party comprised senior NCB Mining, Mechanical, Ventilation and Methane Drainage Engineers as well as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Mines & Quarries and was chaired by the Deputy Director (Administration). Eventually resulting in a fully costed comprehensive scheme which met the requirements of all concerned based on utilising the Winstanley and Institute shafts. After being approved by the Western Area Executive Committee the scheme was submitted to National Headquarters. Final approval was eventually given but by this time Chatterley Whitfield Colliery had just closed. As part of the costs of the closure the Board (NCB) agreed to fund the entire cost of setting up the Museum. It was agreed that a Charitable Trust be set up to run the Museum and discussions were held with Stoke-on-Trent City Council who agreed to become

actively involved with the proviso that they would not contribute any funds to the project. The Trust was chaired by the Leader of Stoke City Council and the Town Clerk was appointed Secretary with the incumbent Lord Mayors being Honorary Members during their time of office. Other members included Local Councillors, senior NCB officers, H.M. Inspectorate of Mines & Quarries and representatives of all the Mining Industry Unions. The City Council agreed to carry out all the administrative duties associated with the Museum relating to Staff Members but not Volunteers.

The first Director was a retired Colliery Manager but unfortunately he died shortly afterwards and succeeding Directors were recruited generally from the Museum Sector. As the Museum was officially classed as a coal mine a fully qualified Mine Manager was still required in order to comply with The Mines & Quarries Act. Various sections of the NCB such as the Area Laboratory, Geological Services, Shaft Team and Mine Car Repair operations remained on site and the Board agreed to pay 60% of the total running costs. This, however, was to have serious implications much later on. Interviews were subsequently set in motion for the recruitment of Administrative and Canteen Staff following which an appeal was made for volunteers to act as guides as well as carrying out statutory duties. The response was tremendous from retired miners, mechanics and electricians, officials such as Deputies and fully qualified mechanical and electrical engineers, who were paid £5.50 per shift. Work commenced to create the underground part of the Museum in the Holly Lane Seam occupying an area of 40 x 20 yards with two “see through” coal faces representing the 18th and 19th Centuries whilst visitors passed through a fully equipped 20th Century Coal Face. Various items of equipment were placed at strategic points which included a huge electric haulage engine previously used to haul both tubs and mine cars up the Hardmine Dip (Inclined roadway) some 2,400 yards long. I made frequent visits during construction on behalf of the Deputy Director (Administration), having finally conquered my fear of going underground, often accompanying officials from other organisations.

In order to save costs a ventilation fan was installed at the top of the Winstanley headgear which blew air down the shaft. This meant that the fan was switched on between 7.30am and 8.30 am each morning to enable both shafts and underground inspections to be carried out. It also meant that the fan could be switched off between 4pm and 4.30pm after the last party of visitors had ascended the shaft. During its operating period I can only ever remember the Winstanley Shaft being used for visitors. The Institute Shaft was required as a second means of egress (escape) should it have been required.

The Trust also took over responsibility for the Lamphouse, Canteen & associated offices, top floor of the Pithead Baths (for storage purposes), the Hesketh Power House which contained Bells & Morcom Electric Compressors from both Norton

Colliery and the Michelin Tyre Company. In addition, following the closure of Cronton Colliery in Lancashire, a Walkers Reciprocating Steam Compressor with a 25ft diameter flywheel was installed to full working order, operated by an electric motor (still in situ), by two volunteer mechanics. At the southern end of the complex is the Winding Engine House which contains the original 1914 3500 HP Worsley Mesnes Steam Winding Engine which was kept in pristine condition (though not in working order). Also the Platt Winding Engine House containing the fully restored ancient Steam Winding Engine ex Silverdale Colliery, operated by compressed air (see "Bits and Pieces", Silverdale Colliery) and in later years the former colliery offices, Building 30, ex-Colliery Stores and the newly constructed Middle Pit Engine House. The "underground museum" in the Fan Drift was co-ordinated by the Manpower Services Commission who took on redundant and unemployed persons and taught them new skills such as painting & decorating and bricklaying etc. In some cases people were sent to the Museum at no cost, each person, in addition to their unemployment pay also, I believe, had his/her bus fare paid and an additional £10.00 per week. In later years this function was taken over by the Laing Employment Training Organisation who relinquished the site just before closure.

The Museum was an immediate success with visitors coming from far and wide reaching 70,000 - 80,000 per year. Many were from schools from many parts of the country and were shown around by volunteers who had spent a lifetime in the Industry and were now able to pass on their knowledge and skills to future generations. In addition the Museum also visited schools taking with them, amongst other items, a pit pony and trailer which was very popular. The Museum was also used by Television & Film companies and it had an excellent Education Department which showed visitors around the surface either before or after going down the mine and commissioned plays such as the 1842 Commission into Women & Children in the Mines and the 1881 Explosion at Chatterley Whitfield in which both teachers and pupils took part. Initially it was intended to collect material specifically relating to North Staffordshire but the policy soon changed and items were taken from any coalfield. A large amount of books, documents, photographs, the NCB Film Archive and mine plans were included in the collection and were catalogued and archived creating a resource centre for study purposes. In later years many plans were donated by the NCB after the information on them had been incorporated in the official Abandoned Mine Plans. Pit ponies and Shire horses came to the Museum and were very popular at events such as the Annual Steam, Bus & Car Festivals where visitors were given rides around the complex. The Museum also had a large collection of narrow and standard gauge rolling stock, steam and diesel locomotives, not only giving rides in Brake Vans but also hauling coal wagons painted in the liveries of various local collieries. This was undertaken by the very active Chatterley Whitfield Locomotive Society who also held very successful open days.

All in all the Museum was a very successful enterprise which fundamentally changed following the closure of Wolstanton Colliery in 1986, particularly as far as the underground section of the Museum was concerned. It had little effect, however, on the surface operations which continued as normal. As part of the closure of Wolstanton the NCB entirely funded the “New Underground Experience” which was constructed in the former colliery railway sidings alongside the Platt Shaft and incorporated the former Fan Drift “underground museum”. Visitors at the start of the tour entered the Platt Shaft cage and descended some 30ft, the walls were revolving giving the perception of continuing to descend in the shaft simulating a much greater descent, then exited the cage into the “New Pit”. Unfortunately, the way out to the exit up 29 steps in the Fan Drift somewhat spoiled this perception. This new experience was officially opened by HRH The Princess Royal in October 1987 who named the small Drift the Princess Royal Drift in the Holly Lane Seam. Although it radically altered the Museum it nevertheless remained quite successful, but with reduced numbers of visitors.

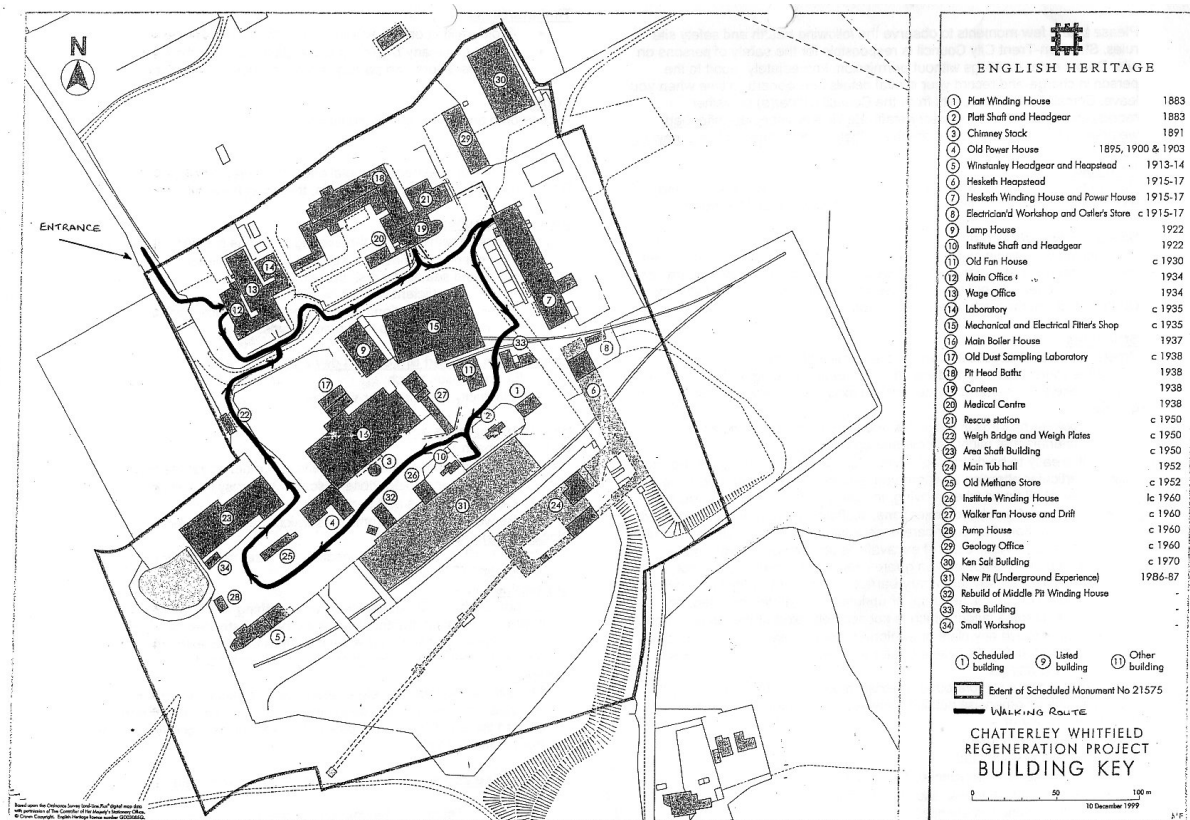
In 1989 the NCB announced the closure of its National Mining museum at Lound Hall adjacent to Bevercotes Colliery in Nottinghamshire. The Museum successfully bid for it to be transferred to Chatterley Whitfield on a permanent basis. It was a massive collection of objects, books, plans & photographs and as Curator of the Museum I spent many months either physically moving items or arranging to transport the larger items. Building 30 was converted to house many of the artefacts along with those from the Chatterley Whitfield Collection whilst many smaller items went into storage on the top floor of the pithead baths. A horse operated gin (winch) was erected in full working order close to the Institute Shaft and two steam locomotives were housed (not in working order) in the Loco Shed. Around this time the NCB withdrew from all the activities on site which meant that the Museum was now responsible for 100% of the site costs.

Visitor numbers began to decline in the early 1990s and concern began to be expressed about the viability of the Museum. It all came to a head on the 9th August 1993 when it was placed into Liquidation with debts of £83,000, despite receiving grants from various organisations, and it closed the same day. Some members of staff had to stay on to let proposed visitors (and much more importantly the volunteers who had given their time over some 15 years) to know of the closure. The Chairman at the time, who was no longer the Leader of the Council, stood by both staff and volunteers to the very end even when Trustees were resigning before closure. He also made sure that Stoke City Council’s Administrative Department interviewed every member of staff to acquaint them of their redundancy payments and other benefits. The Liquidators subsequently held an auction of many artefacts on site which caused, I believe, considerable disquiet amongst some of those who had donated items to the Museum. The National

Collection, along with quite a number of Chatterley Whitfield items were transferred to the National Coal Mining Museum at Caphouse Colliery in Yorkshire. As the last Curator at the Museum the Liquidators hardly ever consulted me and when people rang me and asked me what had happened to their donated items, I could only refer them back to the Liquidator. It was a sudden end to a brilliant concept and after the Liquidators had added their costs the Museum closed, I believe, with debts approaching £¼ million and as part of a written agreement the site then reverted back to the ownership of the City Council. Following closure the Liquidators decided to preserve the pristine Hesketh Steam Winding Engine by coating it with oil. Unfortunately vegetable oil was used with the result that rusting was accelerated.

After closure a consortium of local businessmen and mining enthusiasts approached the City Council with a Business Plan to re-open the Museum as a going concern, but it came to nothing. (see Bits & Pieces - Foxfield Colliery). I seem to recall that around this time the City Council purchased the loss making Gladstone Pottery Museum which still maintains today.

The fact that the Chatterley Whitfield Colliery site was scheduled as an Ancient Monument has resulted in its survival but total estimated repair costs in 2004 were estimated at £54 million. (see English Heritage Site Plan). The buildings are still standing but obviously in worse condition than when the Museum closed and what about the "Underground Museum" in the Fan Drift. It is still there with most of the original artefacts in situ?



Chatterley Whitfield Regeneration Project

Chatterley Whitfield Colliery is the largest historic coal mine site in England. It is situated on the north-eastern outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent and comprises a cluster of 34 buildings surrounded by the open land of its waste tips and coal stocking areas. The landscape is now mostly green but still recognisable for its industrial past. This was the first pit in England to produce a million tons of saleable coal in a year, a feat it accomplished in 1937 when it employed nearly 4,000 people. The mine itself is now flooded and three of the four shafts are filled. The surface buildings and structures include four sets of headgears that is everyone's mental picture of a coal mine together with the impressive winding machinery. Other buildings portraying the large scale and advanced technology of the operation include two power houses, the ruins of the boiler house with its ten boilers, the lamphouse, ventilation fans, extensive workshops, stores, laboratories and offices. The growing concern for workers' welfare is portrayed here by the 1930s Art Deco pithead baths, canteen and health centre.

The mine closed in 1976, then re-opened as a major museum operated by a Trust. However, this failed financially in 1993, most of the museum collection was dispersed and the site reverted to the ownership of Stoke-on-Trent City Council. By 1999 the future of the site was still in doubt so the Chatterley Whitfield

Partnership was formed by Stoke City Council, Joan Walley MP, English Heritage and Advantage West Midlands. The primary aims of the Partnership were:-

To create a sustainable basis for the long term future of the site.

To achieve economic and social regeneration to benefit the local community through an appropriate mix of activities.

To conserve, interpret and develop the potential of the site to the highest international standards as a beacon of best practice in heritage led regeneration

To involve the local and specialist communities in the development and outcome of the project

The first phase of the Project was to gather the information necessary for decisions on the future, then produce and agree a master plan. This would include a business plan and identify uses, funding and arrangements for executing the plan. Meanwhile a programme of emergency repairs and other works was in progress to slow decay and safeguard the site. The Partnership secured a grant of £463,000 to develop the Master Plan from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The site itself has an area of 7.36 hectares and lies within the City's Green Belt. Most of the buildings are adaptable and suitable for a variety of new uses - there is at least 15,000m² of floor space of buildings. The whole site area and some of the less adaptable buildings are scheduled as an Ancient Monument whilst others are Listed Historic Buildings.

Although not mentioned above, the Partnership included the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield as a Substantive Member. I was the Friend's representative on the Partnership and attended every meeting, the last one of which took place in June 2004. No minutes were ever produced and as far as I can remember I was never notified as to why the Partnership was eventually dissolved. As part of the Partnership the City Council set up the Chatterley Whitfield Community Group which met on the first Monday of every month alternating between Ball Green and Fegg Hayes Workingsmens' Clubs. Its prime aim was to keep local residents fully informed of proposals for the site with particular reference to the two major schemes i.e. the Enterprise Centre and Heritage Country Park. The meetings ceased, as far as I can remember, around 2010-2012 (see Bits & Pieces - Chatterley Whitfield). As part of the initiative Members of the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield visited various locations, both in Great Britain and Europe such as Chatham Dockyard and a complex in Lanark in Scotland.

Training

Although it was always assumed that boys followed their fathers into the pit as soon as they were old enough it is not necessarily true, although the great majority did. Training on an organised basis was virtually non-existent and skills and camaraderie were handed down over various generations, often generating fierce loyalty to the Industry despite the absence of specific Rules & Regulations. In the 18th & 19th Centuries there was what might be called a “pecking” order and succession policy. Most boys going underground would possibly start as “Trappers”, boys opening and closing air doors as required, graduating thereafter as a Pony Driver hauling sets of tubs from the loading points to the Pit Bottom. Depending on his ability he could then progress to manhandling both full and empty tubs to and from the coalface and the loading point for outbye haulage by pit pony. The next stage, again dependent on ability, would be to progress as a “hewer” (a collier) by the age of 21 or so and as such his training was complete, only for him to do it all again with the next generation. Before 1842 however, such tasks, other than that of hewer could also have been undertaken by his mother and sisters. Later successive Acts of Parliament introduced mandatory training throughout the Industry and many papers and books have been written on this subject so I don't intend to enlarge on this subject here.

Kemball Colliery & Training Centre

Like Stafford Colliery, Kemball was sunk by the Stafford Coal & Iron Co. Ltd. Sinking commencing in 1873 and the colliery was in production by 1878. It was situated in close proximity to Stafford Colliery and its two shafts, equipped with steam winding engines, were named Pender & Bourne after two directors of the Company, Bourne being the previous owner of the Great Fenton Estate before it was purchased by the Company. Sir Arnold Kemball joined the Company as a Director at the same time as C J Homer (ex-Chatterley Whitfield) in 1876. In 1884 a third shaft named Kemball was commenced close by and completed in the following year, I have no knowledge as to the operation of this particular shaft nor when it was taken out of use but following the sinking of the first shaft for what was later to become Hem Heath Colliery an underground connection was made with the Kemball Shaft which served as the second means of egress. Kemball continued as a working colliery until 1946 when a scheme was drawn up by the North Staffordshire Colliery Owners Association proposing a Central Training Centre for the North Staffordshire Coalfield under the Coal Mines (Training) Regulations, 1945. One of the advantages of a central training centre was that it would relieve individual collieries of the training tasks allowing them to concentrate solely on coal production. Kemball Colliery at this time was already in use as a centre for pre-entry training. There was in existence a small area of unworked coal in three seams close to the pit bottom which formed the basis of the scheme. Plans were drawn up with this object in view and it was expected that the Training Centre could adequately accommodate the maximum number of persons requiring training

over a period of 15 years. The North Staffordshire Coal Owners Association undertook to meet the capital cost of the extension of the scheme to comply with the Training Regulations. This was on the assumption that this cost would be refunded by the Ministry of Fuel & Power or the NCB on the Nationalisation of the Industry in 1947. It was estimated that the output would be about 2000 tons of coal per week which would make the Training Centre “self-supporting and at the same time be capable of maintaining the highest state of efficiency both in Training and equipment” The estimated cost of the scheme was £86,562 and at this time the total number of persons employed underground was approximately 15,000. Following the recruitment of the Bevin Boys into the mining industry during the Second World War all those coming to work in North Staffordshire received their initial training at Kemball.

Underground training, which was highly successful, continued at Kemball until 1963 when a decision was made to close the underground section and this training was therefore transferred back to the collieries. The shafts were filled, but the distinctive stone winding engine houses, minus the winding engines, remained as part of the Centre. The underground connection with Hem Heath Colliery was inspected for the last time in 1959 and sealed off at both ends. By this time however, the surface facilities at the Training Centre had been extended with the construction of various sections relating to underground & surface operations, always equipped with the latest equipment and training continued here together with many specialist courses and conferences until closure in 1989/90 when new facilities were introduced at the former Trentham Workshops. With the rundown of the Industry these facilities closed around 1994.

Welfare

I can just about remember the Sneyd Colliery open air swimming baths at Smallthorne roundabout in 1946, by which time it was derelict and abandoned. Decay had set in during the Second World War and they were demolished and filled in shortly afterwards.

In 1919 the Government set up an investigation into the conditions in the Coalfields. The result was the formation of the Miners' Welfare Scheme to build such institutions as canteens, libraries, welfare clubs or Institutes, playing fields as well as other facilities funded by a levy of 1 penny per ton of coal. (They were also licensed to sell alcohol & tobacco). In 1926 an additional levy of 6 pence per week was introduced specifically for the provision of Pithead Baths. In 1922 Chatterley Whitfield Collieries Ltd. built the Miners' Institute at Fegg Hayes on similar terms to a Workingmens' Club. Facilities included a large concert room and smaller rooms to accommodate things like snooker & darts and outside sporting activities such as bowls, tennis, football & cricket. Many other collieries also provided such

facilities and the last Miners' Club built in North Staffordshire was at Hem Heath Colliery around 1969-70. This was because, until the closure of Stafford Colliery in 1968, Stafford and Hem Heath collieries had joint welfare facilities and clubhouse at Stafford Colliery. As far as I am aware, the following Miners' Welfare Clubs are still in existence:- Florence, Knypersley (Victoria Colliery), Leycett, Scott Hay, Silverdale, Holditch and Bignall End.

Coal Owners

There were both good and bad coal owners (who owned the mineral rights on their land) who either leased their land to private owners in return for a Royalty per ton mined or ran the mining companies themselves. Prior to Nationalisation there was a depressingly high proportion of coal owners who worked their men often for little pay and with minimal rights. Benevolent owners, however, cared for the wellbeing of their workers and provided housing, schools, chapels, free coal, electricity and water as well as some of the welfare schemes mentioned above before the advent of the Miners Welfare Scheme. Canteens were set up at many collieries by the coal owners in the 1920s & 30s and by the NCB thereafter. Most provided hot meals, cold snacks, soft drinks, soap (stamped PHB), towels, as well as sweets and chocolate and many other items. They also sold snuff and tobacco (for chewing) as a substitute for cigarettes, which of course were banned underground.

In the late 1920s I believe a firm of architects was contracted to draw up plans for pithead baths and canteens to a uniform design. I think the first pithead baths erected in North Staffordshire were at Victoria Colliery in about 1932. Chatterley Whitfield opened their baths & canteen in 1938, the plaque from which survives in Building 29b (Chatterley Whitfield Mining Heritage Centre) at the colliery. These baths incorporated 3719 clean and 3719 dirty lockers for which each man paid 6 pence per week prior to Nationalisation. They also had to provide their own soap & towels. The baths (showers) and lockers were heated by warm air to ensure that their clothes were dry at the start of every shift. Before the advent of baths the men would go home "in their dirt" and pit clothes and would probably have a bath at infrequent intervals in either their kitchen or back yard. I remember when I started work at Hem Heath Colliery in 1957 there were still about five men who did not use the baths. One of them told me that his mother had told him that having too many baths would weaken his back! When he got home he would wash his hair, face, neck and arms up to his elbows, put on a clean shirt and go to the pub. He would have a bath once a month either inside or out depending on the weather.

After Nationalisation in 1947 under existing Legislation the output levy was due to cease at the end of 1951 and consequently the NCB and National Union of Mineworkers opened discussions in 1950 to consider how welfare should be organised in the future. Agreement was reached for a division of welfare to be into Colliery and Social Welfare. The NCB agreed to assume responsibility for Colliery Welfare and by an Act of Parliament in 1952 the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) was established. This required the NCB to provide sufficient funds to CISWO for the purpose of Social Welfare facilities. An Area Welfare Committee was set up (becoming Staffordshire in 1967 and Western in 1974). There was equal representation from both the Board and Unions, six members each, and one member was elected Chairman for a year, alternating between the Board and the Unions. Each welfare committee had two joint secretaries and the committee submitted their proposals to the CISWO National council. Once the budget was agreed the committee distributed the funds for the various activities such as sports competitions, Youth Welfare, and the Russel Hotel Convalescent Home in Blackpool. The scheme was amended in 1985 and following the dissolution of British Coal in 1995 CISWO became a Registered Charity and still provides help and assistance to retired people across a wide range of the Industry.

Miners' Hostels

The hostels were introduced in North Staffordshire towards the end of the Second World War to house both Bevin Boys and refugees from Europe. Two were built at Knutton and Bradeley and I distinctly remember my mother telling me not to go near the hostel at Knutton, but not why! Like all good boys I did go to see the hostel which was situated at the bottom of Black Bank Road which to me just appeared to be a collection of prefabs. A friend recently contacted me to ask if I knew anything about a Polish Miners' Hostel in Trentham Park but I had never heard of it. There was, however, a hostel for Free French servicemen there who I believe killed most of the deer in the park. He sent me a newspaper cutting from the Sentinel which contained the following:-

- 1) 18-Oct-1947. Stone Rural District Council notified by the NCN that it proposed to utilize Trentham Park for housing Polish miners.
- 2) There is also a letter dated 30-May-1948 relating to activities at the hostel, signed by L Gurica, Chairman of the Residents Committee, Trentham Park Miners' Hostel.
- 3) 18-May-1950. Sale - Huts of all description and sizes - apply on site to Miners' Hostel, Trentham Park. Telephone 818.

The hostels provided basic accommodation with individual bedrooms, curtains, recreation and leisure areas for which residents were charged. With, however, the

large scale house building programme carried out by both the Coal Industry Housing Association and Local Councils, I believe they had gone by the early 1950s.

The earliest record I have of the North Staffs Welfare Committee's Convalescent Home, Russell Hotel in Blackpool, is a photograph of staff and residents in front of the hotel with a large Alsatian dog around 1952. How far back the Hotel went before this I have been unable to ascertain. At this time miners underwent rehabilitation at both Horton Lodge in Rudyard and at Betley Court. The Hotel was initially subsidised and for miners only who were recovering from sickness or injury. In the late 1950s, when I worked at Hem Heath Colliery, the Colliery Welfare Committee gave a small grant to each man who attended. Over the years, however, changes were made and eventually anyone who worked in the Industry could visit the Hotel for either one or two weeks. What fundamentally changed was that



RUSSELL HOTEL

men could take their wives, which originally they could not, but more importantly, women could take their husbands. With the decline of the Industry from the late 1960s numbers began to fall and a decision was made to sell the Hotel. Agreement was made with the Lancashire Miners' Welfare Committee and the funds from the sale were invested in the large Lancashire Miners' Convalescent Hotel. Like the Russell Hotel it provided all the facilities required for rehabilitation. This large hotel was fitted throughout by a glorious red carpet and had oil lamps interspersed throughout at various intervals. A small piece of the carpet survives in the boot of my car today. In 1988 it celebrated not only 60 years of service, but also the opening of "Sherwood", the new paraplegic miners' holiday unit. Again, due to

colliery closures and the subsequent reductions in demand and funding the Hotel was sold and a smaller one purchased for disabled miners in the same area and this is still in operation today.

CISWO also employed (and still does today) Social Welfare Officers who visit retired sick and injured miners and advise them what benefits they may be entitled to. They also provide considerable help to bereaved families both in the event of a fatal accident and natural deaths. They ran the Coal Queen competitions when young ladies, both those working in the Industry and daughters of employees, were encouraged to enter often in conjunction with Annual Miners' Galas or Picnics. Contests were held in each Area and the appointed Coal Queen carried out many engagements during their year in office at both colliery and Area functions. In 1980 the North Staffs Coal Queen placed hand cut Holly Lane Coal from Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum into the firebox of the replica "Rocket" steam locomotive at the 150th Anniversary of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway celebrations which were based at Bold Colliery in Lancashire. Winners of the respective Area Coal Queen competitions entered the National Finals at either Blackpool or Skegness with the winner representing the Board on a national basis. As far as I can remember the competition ceased after the 1984-5 Miners' Strike.

Many individual collieries had their own welfare schemes and arranged competitions such as darts, bowls, cricket & football etc. for which prizes were awarded at annual get-togethers. They were very popular throughout the Industry. Many collieries had cricket grounds with teams in top level local cricket leagues in North Staffs & Cheshire. Today some teams still play on former colliery welfare grounds such as Knypersley, Bignall End, Scott Hay and Silverdale.

First Aid

It was compulsory for all junior officials to have a valid first aid certificate as did many others "higher up the chain" who had progressed to junior management. In addition many men also took training in First Aid even though it was not mandatory. Every colliery had at least one First Aid Team who not only practised but were also available as part of their normal working shift. Initial training, I believe, took place at Kemball Training Centre and the certificate lasted for three years. At Hem Heath Colliery in the late 1950s many First Aiders were also members of the St John's Ambulance Brigade and every year the Area held a First Aid Competition either at a local colliery or an outside location with volunteers acting as "victims". The winners and runners-up spent a weekend in Scarborough where the National Finals were held on the Saturday with prizes being presented at a Gala Dinner Dance in the evening.

To replace an old vehicle, CISWO purchased a new luxury mini-coach with a power operated lift at the rear and because it only had two seats (and space for four wheelchairs) it could be driven by Board employees. It was used for a variety of purposes such as taking trainers on outward bound courses as well as transporting disabled miners to the Russell Hotel in Blackpool or Kemball Training Centre where they often joined courses run there, their ability and skills & experience becoming an integral part of the courses. In addition, I understand, a small workshop was set up where they produced both wooden and metal objects for sale. Following the closure of the Training Centre they moved to a new facility at Trentham Workshops until closure.

Firefighting

Every colliery had men trained in firefighting techniques who were always available should they be required, many were members of the Rescue Teams, but not all. In the 1950s at Hem Heath Colliery I was a member of the Staff Firefighting Team and took part in the Colliery Competition. Needless to say we came last but at least we participated. The winners entered the Area Finals but whether the winners went to Scarborough or not I have been unable to ascertain.

Civil Defence

In the event of the possibility of Nuclear War the NCB had a department at National Level devoted to Civil Defence. Each Area had a Civil Defence Officer (ACDO) with teams at both collieries and the Area Headquarters. Training took place under the guidance of the ACDO with outside assistance from professionals. There was a large stock of equipment kept at Berry Hill Rescue Station in case of an emergency and each colliery had an underground supply of drinking water contained in large tanks as well as items such as biscuits. Competitions were held at both collieries and Area Headquarters with the winners (Hem Heath won in the late 1950s) attending the National Competition held at Easingwold in Yorkshire. The service was discontinued by the Board in 1964. In each colliery switchboard room there was a small box which if switched on would ping at various intervals. Four times a year each colliery would receive forms from a Government Department located close to Shrewsbury and notification that on a certain date at 0900 1200 & 1500 hours the machine would become active. The forms had to be filled in giving the time and the messages received before being returned. When I left the Board in 1989 the Box was still in situ at the Area Headquarters where it was known as "The Early Warning System".

This is just a short account of the many welfare facilities carried out by both CISWO and the Board and I would like to finish off with one example of many showing how the Board looked after its employees. An acquaintance of mine was

blinded in a shotfiring accident at a local colliery. After a period of recuperation and recovery (provided by the Board) he was taken on as a telephone switchboard operator (with a specially adapted switchboard) initially at an Area outstation office in Stoke. Following closure of this office he was transferred to work at the switchboard at a local colliery where, accompanied by his dog, he remained until retirement. Despite being blind he was a brilliant skittles player!

Iron & Steel

It is believed that coke was first manufactured in the 16th Century by setting fire to coal placed in earth mounds laid on the ground and by the 17th Century in dome shaped ovens. Coke is a hard grey porous, strong yet light weight, carbon rich substance suitable as a fuel in blast furnaces for the production of iron & steel. Prior to the 16th Century charcoal had been used in the smelting process using vast amounts of timber. In 1709 Abraham Darby became the first person to use coke in the smelting process in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, a major factor in the Industrial Revolution in the British Isles.

Following the use of coal and ironstone by the Romans at Holditch in the 2nd Century AD there is little evidence of further activity until towards the end of the 13th Century when it is believed that there was a furnace at Madeley (Furnace Lane today). By the middle of the 14th Century Newcastle-under-Lyme was the centre for the sale of iron goods, blacksmithing and more importantly, the manufacture of nails. By 1671 Newcastle had one of only two “frying pan manufacturers” as evidenced by the Ironmarket in the town today.

The first coke burning furnace in North Staffordshire is believed to be at Springwood (Partridge Nest) off the Audley Road close to the roundabout at the present Waterhays Housing Estate in Chesterton, in operation from 1790 to 1801. It survives today as a listed building on the unadopted Springwood Road and is heavily covered with vegetation. Many rich seam of ironstone are present in the area and many collieries were originally sunk for ironstone. Because it was more expensive to mine compared with the lower grade opencast ores found in Eastern Britain the local mining of ironstone eventually ceased in the late 1930s. Many collieries had ironworks and coking plants as an integral part of their operations including Silverdale, Apedale, Biddulph, Ford Green, Chatterley, Birchenwood, Stafford & Florence. In fact in 1888 Robert Heath & Sons (Ford Green and Biddulph) was described as the largest ironmaker in Great Britain, if not in the World. The Company combined with the Lowmoor Ironworks of Yorkshire in 1912 but this amalgamation did not last long. It went into Liquidation in 1928 but the collieries continued to operate.

3 The Partridge Nest Blast Furnace at Springwood is a scheduled ancient monument, and Grade II listed building. It was built in the 1790's, owned by Sir Edensor Heathcote and operated by Thomas Kinnersley, a local businessman and mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The blast was steam powered, though the steam engine was taken out of use in 1833. It was restored in the early 1980s by Newcastle Borough Council, but remains in private ownership. Iron-smelting activity is evident elsewhere in the Borough, and the remains of a blast furnace was recently unearthed in Market Lane, Newcastle. This may have led to the naming of a nearby shopping street, the Ironmarket.



Shelton Bar

The first blast furnaces here were erected about 1838 and first blown in 1841. Contemporary reports record that the fires never went out until closure. In addition there were a number of collieries associated with the vast site and a railway line was constructed across both Cobridge and Waterloo Roads to connect with Deep Pit Colliery. Special crossing gates were erected across Waterloo Road and following closure of the line they were donated to Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum. Unfortunately they were set on fire and destroyed.

Coke ovens were introduced on site in the 20th century and the company was acquired by John Summers of Chester in 1919. It owned Deep Pit, Holditch, Florence and Silverdale collieries at Nationalisation in 1947 and the company became part of British Steel in 1967. A conveyor was constructed across the 'D' Road (A500) taking coal direct from Wolstanton Colliery to the Steel Works. As time went by it became clear that British Steel wanted to concentrate steel works close to the major sea ports and despite a long fight for Shelton the furnaces were closed down for the last time in 1978 and a close friend was the supervisor at the very last casting. The rolling mills remained, however, and a new system of steelmaking was introduced namely the oxygen fired Kaldo System where steel was produced within 1½ hours of the system being charged. This system subsequently closed leaving just the rolling mills using steel imported by rail from other plants until final closure in 1986.

At this time the site became the first National Garden Festival site which was opened by Her Majesty the Queen. Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum had a short length of standard gauge railway line with wagons in the various liveries of the local collieries hauled by an

0-4-0 Norton & Biddulph Collieries built steam locomotive (Now at Foxfield Railway). Today part of the site is occupied by the Festival Retail Park and other parts remain as a green oasis.

I can remember my mother complaining when an easterly wind was blowing which carried particles of dust from the works which settled on her washing hanging out to dry in May Bank. At such times it was also necessary to keep the windows closed. Who can remember the dark winter nights when the eastern sky turned red as wagons of molten slag were tipped? This is also mentioned by H G Wells in "The Cone" (1895) and a plaque has been installed on a house in Victoria Street, Basford where he lived for a short time.

In addition to the Partridge Nest Furnace there is one other reminder of the Iron & Steel Industry and that is the chimney of the Latebrook Furnace in Goldenhill, if you know where to look.

This is but a brief glimpse of what was once a great Industry which was heavily dependent upon the raw materials available in vast quantities in North Staffordshire.

Bits & Pieces

Bentilee

As I have mentioned before many parts of the area were riddled with old shafts. A lady in the early 1960s contacted the Board stating that going through her side door she noticed a large hole about 10ft by 5ft and 10ft deep with what she described as "railway tracks" going both ways at the bottom. As a consequence the Area Shaft Team were called out to treat the "hole".

Berry Hill Colliery

During the 1970s a special task force was set up in North Staffordshire by Stoke-on-Trent City and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough councils to deal with the vast amount of derelict land in the area. Many other organisations were involved including the NCB which ultimately led to both the landscaping and removal of colliery spoil tips. One such scheme was at Berry Hill Colliery where the material from two tips was disposed of into an adjacent marl quarry (marlhole). It was removed by 40 ton Caterpillar trucks and the sight of them hurtling down the tip at

a gradient of about 45° was a sight to behold. After periods of rainfall the tip “smoked” because of internal heat. One day a workman at the top of the tip jumped out of the way of an approaching vehicle only to fall into a pool of very hot water. He was quickly taken to the Medical Room at the adjacent NCB Area Headquarters where his clothes were cut off by the Duty Nurse and one of the First Aiders before being taken to hospital. I believe he made a full recovery. The Caterpillar trucks had tyres pumped under high pressure and on one occasion a truck went through one of these pools of very hot water and one of its tyres exploded sending a small piece of tyre some 8 x 6 inches crashing into and shattering one of the office windows some 200 yards away. Fortunately only minor injuries were sustained by a small number of staff. It seems unbelievable that such a small piece of tyre could have caused so much damage.

I believe that in the past outcropping coal had been extracted during an extension of the marlhole and during the 1972 or 1974 Miners’ Strike digging for coal took place on the outcrop on a fairly regular basis. During the latter, unfortunately one young man was too far into one of the excavations when the roof collapsed burying and killing him. I am not aware whether the Board knew that such activities were taking place but following this accident the site was filled and sealed. I understand that the incident was the subject of a report on the BBC Midlands Today programme.

Brindley Pit, Brindley Ford

Following the closure of Victoria Colliery the Brown Lees Opencast Site commenced operations and many parts of the Ironworks as well as numerous old shafts were uncovered. In an underground engine house close to the former Brindley Pit (near to Bull Lane) a very early steam engine was discovered around 1992. During recovery it sustained damage which meant that only about 60% survived. It is believed that it is an Aveling & Porter chain driven engine, formerly used at Turnhurst Colliery and purchased when the Colliery closed. The engine was subsequently transferred to Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum and an article appeared in the Old Glory magazine. The Museum was contacted by two enthusiasts interested in restoring it to full working order. They came to an agreement with the Museum to take it on loan to secure storage in Warwickshire. I believe there was a clause which stated that if the Museum closed, then they became custodians, which of course they eventually did. Some 10-12 years ago I contacted them to see if anything had happened to the engine and was informed that it was still in storage but because of its uniqueness it had been decided not to restore it but to leave it “as found”.



Aveling & Porter chain driven engine

Burley Colliery, Apedale

The introduction of the Newcomen and later more sophisticated pumping engines led to the much deeper coal mine workings. Burley Colliery shaft was some 240 yards deep but by dint of an inclined plane (dip) the workings continued down to about 660 yards by 1830, the deepest at that time in the Coal Mining Industry in Great Britain. It is believed that there was a steam engine at the bottom of the shaft which drew the loaded coal tubs up the incline.

Chatterley Whitfield Colliery

On the final day of operation in 1977 the coal washery plant was “emptied” which allowed black sludgy water to migrate to the Ford Green Brook. Several days later a Severn Trent Water Inspector visited Lea Hall Colliery near Rugeley and noticed some “discolouration” in the River Trent. He traced it all the way back to Chatterley Whitfield which resulted in the Board receiving a substantial fine for polluting a waterway.

In the early 1990s a local small mine owner obtained a lease for a small drift mine (footrail) at the rear of the Hesketh Complex where several seams outcrop, some up to 9½ feet thick. He drove an inclined roadway, some 40 yards long, from the surface in the Ten Feet Seam but then encountered what he called “barren ground”. It appeared that he had entered the area which the colliery had worked over the years since the disaster in 1881 (see Chatterley Whitfield 1881).

In the 1920s, in order to comply with the Law, the pitch pine headgears of the Institute shaft were replaced by steel. Part of the wood was used to create the Lychgate at St Bartholomew's Church at Norton. Just inside the churchyard is the grave of E B Wain, the person credited with "saving" Chatterley Whitfield in the 1890s- 1900s.

A £4.5m scheme, funded by English Partnerships, was approved in 2003/4 for the creation of a roundabout at the Biddulph Entrance to the colliery, the renewal of the colliery road and the installation, where necessary, of the concrete posts and winding rope to complement the existing fencing and the refurbishment of the former Chatterley Whitfield Collieries Ltd. Registered Offices, a Grade II listed building, now the Enterprise Centre. This scheme was overseen by Fielden Clegg Bradley, Architects of Bath, in conjunction with English Heritage. Many of the original features had to be incorporated including the laying of new block floors as well as the replacement of windows, skylights and doors to the original specification. All windows were double glazed with the exception of the curved ones in the former Managing Director's Office. A large crack in the front door remained whilst the concrete plaque above was simply painted over. When asked why the individual letters had not been highlighted English Heritage said that checks proved that they never had been so they were simply painted over. Outside the toilets on the ground floor was a wall comprised of many cracked green tiles and because they were part of the original construction, they had to remain. As part of the scheme the wooden building erected as part of the Area Laboratory expansion was removed.

The Ford Green Brook ran in a culvert under the Chatterley Whitfield Colliery Tip, part of which was over 100 years old. A TV survey revealed that the culvert was in "reasonable condition" But? As a consequence a £8.5m scheme was funded by English Partnerships which involved the sealing of the northern end of the culvert, the construction of a new cutting under the approach road from Biddulph and the creation of a channel in the open air around the western toe of the tip into which the Ford Green Brook was eventually diverted. It joined the original brook just past the southern end of the culvert which was left open, but gated, because of bats. The scheme also included the complete restoration and landscaping of the surrounding area including the tip and the construction of many footpaths including one to the top of the tip. The whole area was designated a Country Park through which passes one of the National Cycling Routes. It has provided a superb amenity for the local residents, visitors and wildlife. Memorials were erected on the site, viz. three replica standard gauge railway wagons on rails, painted in authentic Chatterley Whitfield livery and numbers and a memorial stone to the miners of Chatterley Whitfield Colliery. Access to these is gained from the main colliery entrance. There is also a memorial to members of the Bevin Boys which is

a simple brick structure with a small wheel and is accessed via the Chell Heath/Fegg Hayes entrance.

The Winstanley Shaft Winding Engine House and Headgear is unique in British Coal Mining. It is a brick built structure to a German design with the engine house being an integral part of the headgear. Work on construction commenced before the outbreak of the First World War and it is understood that the German workers were interned for the duration and the Company refused to pay the German contractors.

Following the closure of the Colliery in 1977 the Board entered into an agreement with the Pottery Manufacturers Association for the disposal of pottery slip into the Hesketh Shaft. A special pipe was installed into the Brights Seam which I believe was the lowest worked seam at the Colliery. It was a very profitable operation for the NCB but ceased following a blockage in the disposal pipe.

During the time of the Mining Museum the top floor of the original Colliery Stores adjacent to the Weighbridge was used as storage space for the New Victoria Theatre who put on a display of manikins in mining attire in Building 30. Owing, however, to problems with the roof leaking this arrangement was terminated. The NCB Area Shaft Team occupied the ground floor for many years, even after Privatisation when it became part of a firm from South Wales called Lletty Shenkin. They remained on site well into the 21st Century until they lost their contract to treat old shafts. Also, a blacksmith set up a business in the building adjacent to the former Colliery Stores whilst a firm operated in Building 15 for many years repairing heavy duty vehicles.

Free Concessionary Coal

Most colliery companies granted a free allocation of coal to their employees who were householders. Following Nationalisation of the Industry in 1947 the NCB agreed to standardise the allowance of either 3 or 5 tons (I cannot recall which) to householders. In the late 1940s early 1950s our next door neighbour, who was Head Timekeeper at Holditch Colliery, received his allowance on a regular basis which was literally “dumped” on the pavement outside his house. I well remember helping him to carry the coal by bucket to their coal house. In later years the practice was banned and the coal was delivered in bags.

When the person I worked for retired around 1965 he received the standard NCB coal allowance. Before Nationalisation he had been a Colliery Manager for the Butterley Company in Derbyshire. He wrote to the Company (still in existence today, I believe) asking what allowance he would have received on retirement. He subsequently sent the letter he received in reply to the NCB and was granted an allowance of 11 tons per annum. On Privatisation in 1994 Concessionary Coal was still being delivered to beneficiaries (some of whom had taken the “cash in lieu”

option) and, I believe, the total cost at that time was in the region of £86m per annum, which is still being paid to the beneficiaries today at a cost to the taxpayer.

For the record I took Voluntary Redundancy at the grand old age of 48½ years and thereby lost my coal allowance. I still have a coal fire today.

Fenton Colliery

As far as I can recall a major incident occurred at Fenton, also known as Glebe Colliery, in the early 1960s when a cage went down the shaft during recovery operations. Most of the men were transferred to development work at Hem Heath Colliery. Fenton closed in 1964.

Foxfield Colliery

Following the failure by the Consortium (see Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum) to re-open Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum following closure, they discussed with Foxfield Light Railway Co Ltd. to look at the possibility of establishing a "Footrail Mining Museum" in a railway cutting at Foxfield Colliery. Following many discussions the proposals were eventually abandoned (see Apedale Heritage Centre).

Hem Heath Colliery

As part of the City of Stoke-on-Trent Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1960 the unused top floor of the pithead baths at Hem Heath was used as an exhibition centre for the Coal Industry in North Staffordshire. Members of the public were escorted around the site by Hem Heath Colliery personnel. On one occasion a small group of ladies became detached from the party and took a wrong turn and entered the pithead baths proper at change of shift. They beat a hasty retreat and thereafter an official was posted to prevent such an incident happening again.

In July 1959 an incident occurred in the No.2 Shaft where 3 cages (2 Kope and one conventional) crashed to the bottom. Fortunately no one was injured. I believe that one cage became stuck and was struck by one of the other cages. The colliery was out of action for many months and most of the men were redeployed onto development work. This, however, stood the pit in good stead when production eventually resumed. The accident occurred just before the Annual Holidays and I worked 14 consecutive days, often for 9 or 10 hours, until the office staff returned from their holidays.

The Head Lampman at the Colliery was a tall, austere-looking man who took a great pride, not only in the way he ran the Lamphouse, but also in his demeanour and dress sense. He was bald and always wore a cap, even at work. On arrival at the Colliery at 6.30am one morning in the late 1950s he rang the Police Station in Stoke asking them to pop around to let his wife to let her know that he was fine. It transpired that his cap had blown off his head and landed in the canal and he knew that eventually it would flow past his house and he didn't want his wife to worry if she saw it. He also asked them to ask her to make sure that his spare cap was available for him when he returned home from work. I never found out whether or not the Police complied with his request.

Holditch Colliery

During the construction of the M6 Motorway through North Staffordshire in the 1960s an approach was made to the NCB concerning the possibility of using material from the Colliery's tip as "bedrock" for the Motorway. The material proved to be suitable and, following a financial agreement, thousands of tons were utilised during the construction period. The direct consequence of using the material was responsible, I believe, for the setting up of a new company within the NCB called the "Minestone Executive" whose sole purpose was the identification of suitable tip material that could be used in the Construction Industry. This ultimately proved not only very profitable for the Board but also led to the removal of many ugly scars from the landscape.

This colliery operated the last ever steam winding engine in North Staffordshire which was scrapped in 1980, being replaced by an electric winder. These winders, although fully automatic, still required a winding engineman to be in attendance.

During the 1950s & 60s a fitter/mechanic, W H Colclough, wrote a weekly article for the Sentinel entitled "Colliery Cameo by W.H.C.". In one such article he describes sitting on the face eating his "snapping" when a lovely smell of lobby came wafting down the coalface. It transpired that one of the faceworkers had taken a small vacuum flask of lobby for his meal. As W.H.C remarked, "never had lobby smelt so good".

Maryhill Colliery, Kidsgrove

This Colliery was working steeply inclined coal seams, called locally "Rearers". It closed in the late 1920s as a result of flooding in which 3 men were killed. In the early part of this Century the shaft cap collapsed leaving an opening of about 10 yards by 15 yards and about 10-15 yards deep. This necessitated the immediate attention of the Lletty Shenkin Shaft Team from Chatterley Whitfield who treated

and capped the shaft to NCB specification. The cap can be seen today opposite Maryhill Comprehensive School on Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove.

Mossfield Colliery

Shortly after the shafts were capped, following the closure of the Colliery in 1964, a report was received of a fire at the cap. It transpired that methane gas had ignited which not only required the services of the Area Shaft Team but also the mines Rescue Service and the local Fire Brigade.

Parkhall Colliery, Longton. (Not to be confused with Park Hall Colliery in the Cheadle Coalfield.)

A rope hauled tramway was constructed about 1890 from the Colliery to a Landsale Wharf at the site of the Meir Hay Colliery in Longton which remained in operation until the closure of Parkhall Colliery around 1962. The Wharf remained as Kendrick Street Wharf and was operated by the Board until operations were transferred to a wharf close to Wolstanton Colliery just before Privatisation.

Parkhouse Colliery

The colliery was served by a spur from the standard gauge Chesterton Branch railway line which went under the A34 Trunk Road. The bridge abutments still survive today just before the Parkhouse Roundabout going north with a path about 100 yards either side of the road.

Shafts

It is claimed that in the 1950s the NCB recorded the existence of over 2,000 shafts in North Staffordshire sunk before 1850, many of them both narrow and shallow. Following the creation of the Western Area of the National Coal Board in 1974 comprising the coalfields of Cumberland, Lancashire, North Wales, North & South Staffordshire and Shropshire there were over 52,000 known coal shafts and adits. (drifts or footrails).

Silverdale Colliery

No.16 Shaft at Silverdale Colliery was constructed as a “Furnace Ventilation Shaft and Pumping Pit” and, as I understand, never used to transport men or coal. Consequently a very small cage was installed and only used for inspection purposes. Two engines were utilised, one of which was built by John Warner & Son of Hanley in the 1920s. It had three drums and was believed to have been used for

both surface and underground haulage and coring the pipes in the shaft. It was possibly constructed from the cylinders and motion from one or two colliery steam locomotives (0-6-0 Manning Wardle tank engine “Silverdale” dating from the 1860s-70s) under the noted Silverdale Colliery Engineer C T Minshall. The writer was directly responsible for the engine being removed from Silverdale and subsequently transferred and installed to full working order using compressed air in the Platt Pit Winding Engine House at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum where it remains today. I understand the sister locomotive to “Silverdale” named “Newcastle” is in the Beamish Museum in County Durham.



Stafford Colliery

This Colliery retained steam winding engines until closure in 1968 and they were the last vertical steam winding engines in North Staffordshire, housed in their original massive stone winding engine houses dating from 1873. The colliery had a coal wharf adjacent to the Trent & Mersey Canal. Three men had a lucky escape when the canal bank on the western side collapsed and the barge they were working on was carried into the breach where it became jammed. The breach was eventually repaired after a thorough inspection to check for any other faults in the banks.



Stafford Colliery from the canal

Victoria Colliery

The Salisbury Shaft, some 240 yards deep, was the main pumping shaft at the Colliery. During the 1950s & 60s a workman in charge of the pumping arrangements whiled away his spare time by painting a series of portraits of Royalty, bathing beauties, various people and Mow Cop Castle to name but a few, (all of which were photographed), on the walls of the pump house at the bottom of the shaft. It is believed that there were at least 14 but I cannot recall whether all were in situ at the same time. When the Colliery, which closed in 1982, finally switched off the pumps following the closure of Wolstanton Colliery in 1986, the paintings were still on the walls and presumably are still there today.

Friends of Chatterley Whitfield 2001-2013

At the beginning of 2001, in connection with the Regeneration Project, Stoke-on-Trent City Council held discussions with residents of Ball Green with a view to setting up a Friends of Chatterley Whitfield Organisation. Details of the proposals

were discussed at a very well attended inaugural meeting of residents from the surrounding area held at Ball Green Workingmen's Club in November 2001, following which the Friends Organisation was set up. In conjunction with the City Council a Constitution was agreed and a Committee formed at the first meeting, again held at Ball Green Workingmen's Club in January 2002. The City Council's Chatterley Whitfield Project Leader was appointed an ex officio member of the Friends but with no voting rights. This continued until he resigned from his position with the City Council in 2004, following which, despite requests from the Friends they declined to appoint a replacement to the post.

The Friends were allowed only two hours on the Chatterley Whitfield site each Thursday morning. Work commenced on retrieving document and plans from various buildings which were taken to the cold and damp Building 30 for storage. In conjunction with the scheme, which included the office building renovation, two large surveyors plan stores were emptied with all the contents being stored in a shipping container in Building 15. These were removed much later and taken both to the old Deployment Centre building and the new Chatterley Whitfield Mining Heritage Centre set up in Building 29b. Prior to this all documents were removed from Building 30 and taken to the Deployment Centre where, with the permission of the City Council, oil filled radiators were provided and switched on from October to April which slowly dried out the documents. At about the same time the Friends commenced recording video recordings of ex miners and their relatives.

On a number of occasions the Friends show groups of visitors around the site, particularly school children. In addition visits have been made to local schools which included "question and answer sessions". In one such session a pupil asked the question "where did you go to the toilet underground?" There were groans of disgust and laughter at the answers! On such occasions a selection of mining artefacts were taken along for illustration purposes.

Groundwork UK based in Burslem became involved with the Friends and seconded an ex-teacher from Congleton to work with schools, in particular Sandon High in Meir Heath. Numerous visits were made by both the Friends to the school and the school to Chatterley Whitfield over the course of a year. The pupils gave presentations of their projects at Chatterley Whitfield, which were videoed, and certificates were presented.

Following the partial collapse of the abandoned "New Experience", part of the closed Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum, the Friends were invited by the City Council to put forward their ideas for the future. Although they recommended that the "Experience" should be repaired and retained the Council subsequently demolished it. As part of the demolition contract the Friends requested that as much as possible be salvaged and placed in storage in the compound between Buildings 29 & 30 for possible use on site. Needless to say the majority of items

were scrapped as witnessed by the Friends when lorry after lorry left the site. The very few items that were salvaged were put in the compound where they still remain.

The City Council indicated that they were prepared to formally lease a building on site to the Friends and they entered into a “pro bono” arrangement with a local solicitor. After about 18 months of discussion the City Council abruptly terminate the discussions and no lease was issued. However, the Friends were still able to utilise both the Security Lodge in the old Colliery Weighbridge building and Deployment Centre on Thursday mornings.

The friends were involved in the Mining Memorial outside the Norton Arms Public House at Norton crossroads and the Memorial to the Miners of Chatterley Whitfield and Bevin Boys both installed in the Heritage Country Park.

Throughout this period, Heritage Open Days were held each September which the Friends organised and ran on behalf of the City Council. In the early stages visitors were taken into the Pithead Baths and Canteen Building, Building 30 (part of the old Museum), Hesketh Power House & Winding Engine House, Platt Winding Engine House, Lamphouse and the “newly” erected Middle Pit Winding Engine House. These were very successful, usually vastly oversubscribed - a situation that continues today despite not be able now to gain access to buildings above with the exception of the Lamphouse.

Following the closure of the Mining Museum in 1993 the Chatterley Whitfield Photographic Archive amounting to over 7,000 photographs was taken to the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery in Hanley. Following discussions between the City Council and the Friends some 18 months ago this Archive was transferred back to Chatterley Whitfield where it has been scanned and catalogued and is now kept in secure storage. The scans (including those of a large number of documents and maps) are held on a large computer database which is continually being updated with new material, principally donated photographs, documents, maps and plans.

Chatterley Whitfield Friends 2013 - 2020 by Nigel Bowers (Chair).

I first became involved with the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield in 2012, when I joined as a member, so that I could get some photographs from inside the perimeter fence. However it soon became apparent, that once you got through the main gate the ‘Chatterley Whitfield BUG’ started to take effect. Usually a small group of like-minded people, who were either ex miners or had an interest in mining and the site, would meet weekly on a Thursday morning for a couple of hours. As the site is owned by Stoke-on-Trent City Council the 'Friends' had a concession to be on site for two hours per week, which was not a lot of time.

Occasionally we would venture onto site and I soon saw what the 'Friends' had achieved over the years. The 'Friends' had somehow amassed a vast amount of archive material, plans, maps, documents etc, that somehow never got sold in the auction in 1994.

In 2013 the 'Friends' looked at rebranding and with the help from students at Staffordshire University, a new logo and website was created. We became known as Chatterley Whitfield Friends and we started getting noticed globally with our new website and Facebook page. Our membership started to increase and our H.O.Ds (Heritage Open Days) suddenly became very popular.

Since 2013 the 'Friends' have maintained a presence on site, despite issues in 2018 when access was withdrawn, because of the installation of CCTV cameras. However, we were compensated and given access to a building (29b) outside of the site, which was developed into our Mining Heritage Centre.

The 'Friends' are now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and more active than ever, developing partnerships. We have secured grants from the Council which has enabled us to buy items for archiving, but we still have that age old issue of the preservation of the site. We are actively Preserving the Past for the Future and are engaged with our local Member of Parliament, local Councillors and Historic England.

MISSION STATEMENT:

"To archive, share and preserve memories and practices of our coal-mining heritage through active participation of members, associates and the community working in unison"

VISION STATEMENT:

"Grow to become a leading Heritage site within Stoke- on- Trent and the UK, which will educate and involve people in preserving the cultural importance of coal-mining for future generations".

For further information see <https://chatterleywhitfieldfriends.org.uk/>

More Bits & Pieces

Adderley Green Colliery

The Adderley Green War Memorial plaque, which for many years stood at the entrance to Mossfield Colliery, was removed and taken to the Laboratory at Chatterley Whitfield where it was cleaned and restored. It was subsequently presented to Hanley & Berry Hill Workingmen's Club in Ubbertley and following

closure of the Club presented to the Parish Church in Sandford Hill where I believe it still resides.



Jim Birch with Adderley Green Colliery Memorial

Berry Hill Colliery

A large Victorian building within the curtilage of Berry Hill Colliery was converted into an Engineering Training Centre (Workshop) for North Staffordshire. Following the transfer of training facilities to Kemball Training Centre the building was, for quite some time, used for the storage of both machinery (supervise by the Storekeeper) and office furniture. It also housed the road hauled Emergency

Winding Engine. The house was subsequently sold, clad in galvanised sheeting and is still in use today.

Brickworks

North Staffordshire is rich in clay, particularly the so called Etruria Marls which overlie the coal seams in many parts of the area. There is evidence of brickmaking in the 2nd Century at Holditch, whilst Plot in the 1680s mentions Brickworks which had been carried out for some considerable time because of the large number of brick built buildings in the area. Prior to this time brickworks would have been small and close to building sites because of the problems with transport. By about 1850 there were a large number of brickworks, many of which were owned or connected with local collieries. By the end of the Century many had become separate businesses operated independently. I can recall brickworks being operated by Berry Hill, Sneyd and Stafford collieries although of course there were possibly many others. The most famous product was probably the Staffordshire Blue Brick produced by firing them in a reduced oxygen atmosphere at high temperature. The area was littered with the traditional "Beehive" kilns, unfortunately none of which survive.

Casualty Recovery Unit

The Assistant Superintendent and a Rescue Brigadesman from Berry Hill Rescue Station designed the Unit constructed out of fibreglass. It consisted of a "Box" some 7ft x 2ft x 2ft which contained a removable stretcher and blankets as well as First Aid Equipment. The "Lid" of the lower 2/3 of the Unit contained insets for small oxygen bottles and masks. The "Hood" which occupied the remaining 1/3 of the Unit was about 1ft higher. Strong ropes were attached both at the top and bottom as well as each corner. It also had wooden runners moulded into the base which made it easier to manoeuvre in confined spaces. They presented the prototype to the Area Awards Panel and were awarded the maximum amount of money the Panel was allowed to grant. The idea was referred to the National Awards Panel in London and, following a demonstration by the inventors, they were again awarded the maximum amount the National Panel was able to grant. A contract was awarded to a company in Nottingham and an order placed for sufficient units to allow either one or two for every colliery in the Area. Unfortunately they were not universally accepted, being described as a "coffin" and were rarely used.

I remember going into the Hesketh Power House at Chatterley Whitfield and finding one of these Units (in bright orange) under the stairs. Whether it is still there or not I don't know, but if it is.....!!

The Central Office of Information borrowed a Unit and subjected it to stringent tests including floating it and suspending it at various heights from where it was dropped. A film was produced but whether the Units found uses outside the Board I never found out.

Chatterley Whitfield Colliery

Boilers

Whilst visiting the Colliery after closure, but before the Mining Museum opened, the then Director of Ironbridge Gorge Museum (who was a Trustee of the Museum) was taken into the Boiler House, which at that time had a roof. Having been told that the bank of 12 Lancashire Boilers had been sold for scrap he said that under no circumstances must that be allowed to happen. He commented that the boilers at Blists Hill had been scrapped which meant that it would be impossible for their beam Pumping Engine to be restored to working order. As a direct result the Board held discussions with the contractor and bought out the contract at a cost, I believe, of £30,000. Today the boilers remain but in a totally derelict state.

Iron Jack

Around 1957 the first ever computer in the NCB was installed at Chatterley Whitfield, primarily for the payment of wages using a punched card system. It was known as D.E.C.O.N.S. (Digital Electric Computer of North Staffs) and christened "Iron Jack". It was later used by all collieries in the Area before being transferred to a purpose built Computer Centre at Cannock, known as W.E.M.A.C.S. (West & East Midlands Area Computer Services). It later became one of such centres in Great Britain from which the computerisation of the Industry began. At the dissolution of British Coal I believe the organisation was sold as a going concern.

The Cheadle Coalfield

Coal Mining took place in Cheadle for over 300 years but was unusual in that it had many seams outcropping with numerous footrails driven as a consequence. The only deep shaft mines were Foxfield, Park Hall (not to be confused with Parkhall at Weston Coyney) and New Haden and I seem to recall Cheadle Park and Cheadle Mill as well. Most of the coal produced was used, I believe, in the local area and only some of the coal from Foxfield and New Haden being supplied outside the area. There were numerous smelting mills in the Churnet Valley and I believe the Consall Haematite (local iron ore) was the richest found but only in relatively small quantities. The coalfield has often been neglected and was never connected underground to the Potteries Coalfield. The excellent book by Herbert A Chester entitled "Churnet Valley Iron", 2nd Edition 2002, is recommended.

Contraband

Why would a miner take a Mars Bar underground but not a Kit Kat? The reason is simple because a Kit Kat is wrapped in foil which is contraband and not allowed underground, neither are cigarettes, pipe tobacco or matches. There are other items such as crisps, mobile phones digital watches and cameras (unless specially adapted for use in a gassy environment). Meat pies purchased at the canteen needed to be taken out of their foil container if they were to be taken underground. Each man was physically searched before going underground and there were large notices displayed around the pithead advising men to check their pockets. Some men hid cigarettes and matches in various places between the lamphouse and the pit top so they could have a quick smoke before going to the Baths on returning to the surface at the end of their shift.

Gas Pipeline, Florence Colliery.

In the 1970s the Board received a subsidence claim from the Gas Board for damage to their 36 inch main gas pipeline from Birmingham to Warrington by mine workings from Florence Colliery. The Board imply replied, "What gas pipeline?" It transpired that the Gas Board had installed the pipeline without consulting the Board. Subsequently an agreement was reached where both organisations shared the cost of repairs on a 50/50 basis.

Goldenhill

During the late 1960s, at the time not only of colliery closures, but also collieries being put into "jeopardy", a Planning Application was made to the NCB to extract marl in Goldenhill which overlaid a coal seam. The operations were to include extracting the coal as well as the marl. The Board objected and the Planning Application was refused. In the 1970s the Board made a Planning Application to mine the coal in the same area which of course included removing the marl. The Application was subsequently approved and the marl was sold to local industries.

Hem Heath - Weekend Activities

In the late 1950s at Hem Heath Colliery there was a small group of miners working on the same coal face, who, after picking up their wages, would meet their wives and hand over part of their money. The next time their wives would see them

would be on the following Monday afternoon after they returned from work. They had spent the entire weekend having what they called “a good time”. I remember asking them why they did it, to which they replied that they never knew what might happen next week. The practice eventually died out.

Hollywood Colliery, Silverdale

The Colliery was situated between Pepper Street and Crackley Gates, between Silverdale and Leycett. When I knew it, it only consisted of large tip and part of the old site was used as a scrap yard guarded by a very large Alsatian dog with a fearsome reputation. I was asked to lead a guided walk and talk in the area by the Silverdale History Society and as we approached the site the dog appeared and instantly everyone stopped. I slowly approached the dog, holding my hand out with a biscuit and spoke quietly to him. I then asked the party to pass by, which they did very gingerly. They were amazed by what I did but what I didn't tell them was that I had been in the area a couple of times before the visit and made friends with the dog. But what has this to do with Hollywood Colliery? The scrap yard eventually closed and sometime later the tip caught fire in quite a spectacular way. It was not only full of red hot smoking fissures but also many of the trees were set on fire. It looked like a battlefield and a pungent smell pervaded the air. It continued burning for many years but the last time I passed the area in June 2020 the fire had been extinguished and the whole area landscaped. There were numerous tramways in the area connecting various collieries to Kent's Lane (Silverdale Colliery) and just before the entrance to the old Hollywood Colliery the bridge abutments on both sides of one of the trackways were still in situ.

Housing

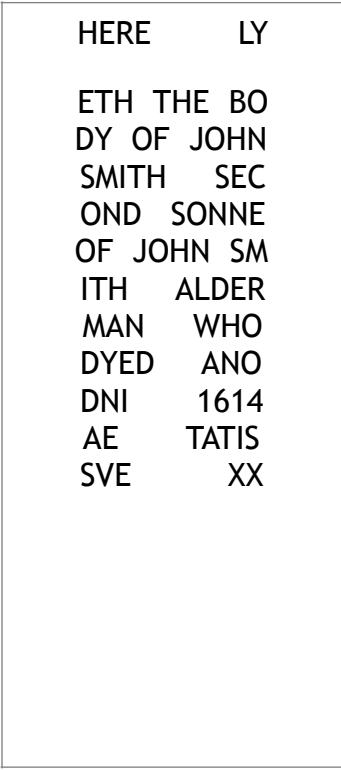
As mentioned earlier (Bunkers Hill Colliery Disaster) many colliery companies provided houses for their workers and these went into ownership of the Coal Industry Housing Association at Nationalisation. In the 1950s/60s many housing estates were built in the area in such places as Madeley, Knypersley, Biddulph, Norton, Silverdale, Kidsgrove and Crackley (Chesterton). The houses were let at a subsidised rent to employees but if a tenant left the Industry and wished to remain he would be charged an economic rent. In the 1970s the Board decided to sell off their housing stock and houses were offered to sitting tenants at 50% of their value as provided by local Estate Agents. Many tenants took up the offer which was repeated at least two or three times later on. The remaining properties were later sold off at auction, often to absentee landlords.

Knockers-up

Before the advent of alarm clocks and telephones, knockers-up would be employed by colliery companies to tap on the bedroom windows of employees to ensure that men got to work on time. They were usually ex-miners or young lads, but as technology advanced, the practice died out.

Newcastle

A cast iron grave stone relating to a death in a local coal mine (unknown) was removed during the restoration of St Giles Churchyard in Newcastle, where it had stood for many years, and taken on permanent loan to the Brampton Museum. The inscription reads:-



HERE LY

ETH THE BO
DY OF JOHN
SMITH SEC
OND SONNE
OF JOHN SM
ITH ALDER
MAN WHO
DYED ANO
DNI 1614
AE TATIS
SVE XX

Unfortunately, the bottom half is illegible

New Hem Heath Colliery, Chesterton

This colliery closed shortly after a disaster here on the 25th February, 1915, in which 12 men lost their lives. Harold Bickerton received the Carnegie Medal for bravery during recovery operations. One of the shafts (the site is immediately behind the Nat West Bank on Parkhouse West) was retained as an air shaft until closure of Parkhouse Colliery in 1968. During the time I worked at Hem Heath Colliery at Trentham in the late 1950s on occasions letters addressed to the

Company Secretary, New Hem Heath Colliery, Chesterton would be re-routed to Hem Heath. Unfortunately they were all thrown away.

Opencast

It is often not realised what an important role Opencast Coal Operations had in the Area (with voids, deep excavations, up to 300/400ft deep). They mined coal with a low chlorine content and this was often mixed with deep mined coal in order for it to be suitable for the boilers of coal fired power stations. Opencasting took place in many locations including Brown Lees (Victoria & Brown Lees collieries), Goldenhill, High Lane (Silverdale & Apedale collieries), Red Street (Jamage Colliery) and in the Cheadle Coalfield. Two separate Planning Applications to opencast at the Great Oak Prospect in Bignall End (see Diglake Colliery Disaster) were both refused as was one for an area from the ridge at Bemmersley (above the present Chatterley Whitfield Colliery site) northwards to Knypersley.

Park Prospect

Following publication of the NCB's Plan for Coal in the 1970s proposals were drawn up for a brand new colliery initially called the Park Prospect. It was centred on a village called Salt between Stone and Stafford. Drilling operations subsequently revealed that the chlorine content of the coal was higher than that mined at Hem Heath and Florence collieries and the project was abandoned.

Shaffalong Coalfield

This small Coalfield was located close to Cheddleton where all mining ceased following the failure of the Westwood Manor Colliery Company in 1912. Most of the surface buildings had been completed before a lavish sod-cutting ceremony took place prior to shaft sinking. At a depth of about 240 yards a vast quantity of water was encountered which could not be contained and as a result the prospect was abandoned. Staffordshire Potteries Water Board (SJ 958518) was operating the shaft for pumping purposes in 1947 which continued for many years. I am not aware as to whether or not pumping is still taking place, but the site eventually became a pig farm. Today little evidence remains of operations, but if you know where to look



Spare Time

Because of the very nature of their work miners often played hard and fast and some had a reputation for drinking, particularly over weekends. Many, however, were “God Fearing” and would attend Church with their families and had pastimes such as whippet and pigeon racing, the latter being still significant today. Again, because of their work, miners remained routed in close knit communities which lasted basically until car ownership increased around the 1960s. This allowed them to work at greater distances from home and to meet people from other communities. However, still existing today, but to a lesser extent, are the communities of miners from other coalfield areas who were transferred and housed in new housing estates provided by the Board.

Tips (Colliery Spoil Heaps)

From about the 1870s large spoil tips began to dot the area following deeper workings with increased amounts of production producing increasing amounts of dirt. Washeries were also installed around this time which produced clean coal but also more dirt. Following the creation of the Derelict Land Committee and the setting up of the Board’s Minestone Executive (see Bits & Pieces, Holditch Colliery) in the 1970s both restoration and removal of tips took place throughout the area. Major landscaping took place at the following tips which remain as Country Parks today; Chatterley Whitfield, Sneyd, Deep Pit and Fenton. At the last-mentioned a minecar with a commemorative plaque placed on the southern side of the restored tip marks its association with coal mining. The Fenton Tip Reclamation Scheme was

officially opened by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Edward Heath MP in October 1971. The resulting Glebedale Park was officially opened by the Chairman of the NCB at the time, Derek Ezra, in May 1973. Trials were carried out with various grasses after landscaping of the tip at Florence Colliery and proved to be successful with the land being leased to a farmer for sheep grazing.

The construction of the 'D' Road (A500) from the Talke roundabout towards the M6 bisected the former Jamage Colliery tip and during periods of heavy rain spoil was carried onto the east bound carriageway. Major restoration works took place to alleviate the problem and the area was seeded with grass. The tip is just about visible today where the 'D' Road make a slight right hand turn just to the west of the Talke roundabout.

Water & Electricity

As mentioned previously, many colliery companies provided housing for their workers which often included free water and electricity from the local colliery. I remember being at a meeting in the 1980s when it was revealed that an investigation had been carried out as part of a review of the Boards owned houses, some of which had been sold. It transpired that there were still a significant number of houses, not just in North Staffordshire, where tenants and owners were still receiving free water and electricity. They were subsequently notified that this practice would cease and they would be responsible for the cost of these services in future with supplies coming from the Utilities. I believe that the Board came to an agreement with the Utilities resulting in a considerable cost saving. It was never revealed why this had not happened before.

Watermills Colliery, Apedale

Deep in the woods in the Apedale Valley close to an area known as "The Isle of Want" stands the base of the Watermills Colliery furnace chimney, a Grade II listed building. It is constructed with very ornate bricks with various patterns throughout and was not affected by the High Lane Opencast Site. When the Colliery closed in about 1920 the chimney was demolished with the bricks being disposed of down the shaft and the top of the base was covered in a metal grating. The base is square and has inscriptions on each side:-

Live and Let Live,
R.E.H. 1840

Regard the End,

Be Just and Fear Not,

The latter refers to Robert Edensor Heathcote, Coal Owner of Apedale Hall and the Colliery

opened in 1840. During the last few years the base has been restored following vandalism,



Watermills Colliery Chimney

the area around it landscaped and a number of seats provided. Part of the tramway from the Colliery to Burley Colliery is still visible today.

Unity House

During the excavation for the foundations of Unity House in Hanley a shallow coal seam was uncovered and a license was issued to the contractor to extract the coal

which was purchased by the Board under the normal arrangements for Licensed Mines.

Mow Cop

Finally, and out of alphabetical sequence we come to an area which you might wonder what has anything to do with coal mining. The prominent feature known as Mow Cop Castle is a folly and summerhouse built for Randle Wilbraham around 1750. From here you can observe a breath-taking vista, to the south the North Staffordshire Coalfield laid out to the horizon, to the east the Biddulph Valley including the sites of the former Victoria and Chatterley Whitfield collieries and to the west the flat Cheshire Plain. This to me remains a truly magical and mystical site which constantly draws me back again & again. The ridge also contains Robert Williamson's coal carrying standard gauge railway tunnel, a part of the tramway from Stonetrough and Tower Hill collieries to the Wharf at Kent Green on the Macclesfield Canal.



Mow Cop Castle (folly)

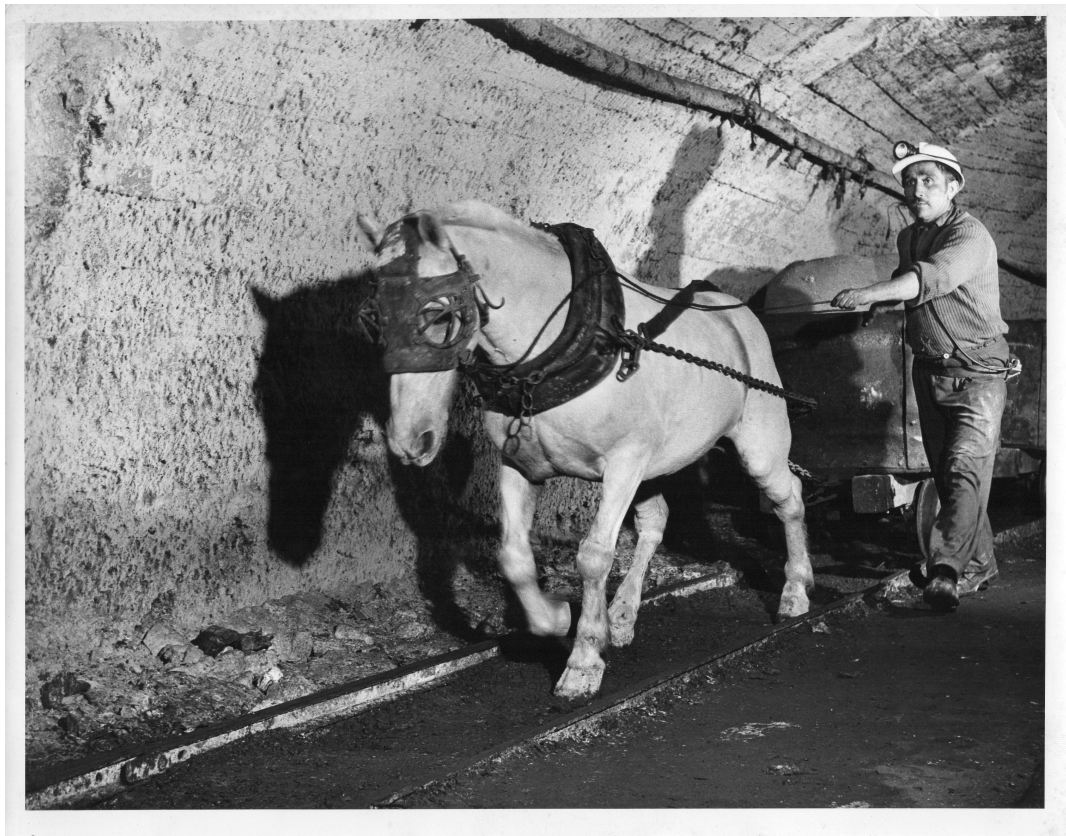
From Bell Pits to!!

With the advent of deeper shafts and workings extending further & further from the pit bottom an effective system of underground transport was urgently required. This eventually came from the use of mans' most faithful friend, the Pit

Pony. Over the years I have gathered a selection of phrases, proverbs etc. two of which are relevant here:-

The wind of heaven is that which blows between a horse's ears
-old Arab proverb

To look into the eyes of a horse is to journey into a secret place that unites one with the spirit of integrity and wisdom
-Native American saying



The use of pit ponies really took off after the 1842 Commission which banned women and girls from working underground. Not only were ponies able to pull far heavier loads but they were cheaper to run as basically all they needed was an adequate supply of food and water. Pit ponies can be seen underground today at Big Pit Mining Museum in South Wales. Special legislation was passed to protect them and great care and attention was paid to ensure that at the end of the shift they were fed and looked after and that they were ready for work on their next shift. They were generally worked hard and as a result of their working environment did sustain injuries. This of course was of great concern to the Ostler whose bond with the ponies was legendary. Both miners and ostlers were very proud of their charges. The ponies were very clever too, refusing to move if an additional tub was attached to their normal load. They could also sense danger and

there is evidence of them stopping and refusing to move shortly before a fall of roof or side of a roadway. Nevertheless they were well cared for and the services of a veterinary surgeon could always be called on if required. Legislation in the 1940s required all pit ponies to be brought to the surface during colliery holidays, usually in August. There is a wonderful photograph in the Chatterley Whitfield Mining Heritage Centre Photo Archive of ponies “enjoying” themselves on the surface. Despite the introduction of more sophisticated underground mining transport the use of pit ponies at Ellington Colliery in County Durham did not cease until the 1990s.

Nationalisation

The 19th Century and early part of the 20th saw a very large increase in output and in 1913 Great Britain’s saleable coal production peaked at 287 million tons, a figure never achieved again. Many problems continued to occur and there were various strikes in the run up to the First World War and in 1916 the Government “took over” the Industry to ensure continued supply of coal. Although it was expected that the Industry would be Nationalised, this did not happen and in 1919 it was handed back to the private owners and a decade of strikes and unrest followed. This was surprising since in 1923 the Railway Industry was organised into the Big Four, the London Midland & Scottish, London & North Eastern, Southern and Great Western railways.

Occupational Hazards

It may never be known how they entered the mines but problems began to occur with rats and mice who survived on food provided for the ponies and scraps of food discarded by the miners. So sealed metal snap tins were introduced but many miners still took their snap (food) wrapped in paper which they often hung by string from the roof arched supports. Yes, of course, the rats & mice were clever enough to climb down the string!

As well as injuries sustained during their working lives, miners also suffered from a number of work related diseases such as nystagmus of the eyes, emphysema & bronchitis and “white finger” from the use of vibrating tools. The most widely known though was pneumoconiosis caused by the inhalation of minute dust particles. As a consequence, over the years the application of water by various means was introduced to suppress the dust. Regular medical checks on the workforce were carried out and if a miner with signs of the disease was found to be working in “unapproved conditions” he was given the opportunity to move to a workplace with “approved conditions”. Coal dust was credited by some with “healing powers” and it was rubbed into wounds and grazes! Small pieces of coal were sucked by a few to alleviate their thirst.

The great strike of 1926 decimated industry and as far as the Mining Industry was concerned it lasted for six months. As was usual the mining communities got together to provide soup kitchens etc. during this great hardship. Concern was being expressed at this time, particularly in the run up to the Second World War, concerning the recruitment of miners and the Government declared coal mining a Reserved Occupation and all coal reserves were vested in the Nation, apart from those of the Free Miners in the Forest of Dean, even though the Industry remained private. In 1942, once again, the Government took control of the entire Industry as it had done in the First World War.

Innovations

Many articles, papers to learned institutions and books have been written by eminent engineers from all sectors of the Industry but I would like to give below a very brief overview of the innovations in the Industry.

1. From Bell Pits to the newly deepened No.2 Shaft at Wolstanton Colliery which at 3434ft was the deepest in Western Europe at the time.
2. Outcropped coal to the last coal face worked in the Cockshead Seam at Wolstanton Colliery at 3900ft below the surface using refrigeration.
3. Pick & shovel, coal undercutting machines to sophisticated coal cutting machines with ranging arms and cutting discs, some 3ft 3in wide, equipped with hollow picks through which water passed under high pressure for dust suppression.
4. Picking belts on the surface (beware where you put your hand) to computer controlled coal preparation plants.
5. Hand pushed tubs to pit ponies to endless rope haulages to conveyors and locomotive hauled trains of mine cars, the last two also being used for manriding.
6. Wooden props and bars (which 'talked to the men') to steel props and bars (which didn't) to single hydraulic props, self-advancing hydraulic powered supports and armoured face conveyors to shield supports.
7. Cloth caps to compressed cardboard helmets to hard plastic helmets as used today.
8. Candles to flame safety lamps to battery powered lamps and methane detectors. It must be remembered, however, that canaries were still used to the end.

9. From compressed air to electricity.
10. Hemp ropes to “wire” ropes up to 2 inches thick (but always called ropes).
11. Underground and surface furnaces to steam and electric fans, which at Hem Heath Colliery drew 500,000 cu feet of air per minute through the mine.
12. Baskets and women & children climbing ladders to 4 deck cages and skips.
13. Clogs & hobnail boots (problem with potential sparking) to designed leather boots with steel toecaps.
14. Own clothes to free workware (overalls & boots etc.).
15. Hand drilling to percussive compressed air & electric drilling (for shotfiring).
16. Pen and ink hand drawn plans and drawing boards to computer aided design (CAD).

There were, of course, probably many more innovations.

What must be borne in mind is that for every five men employed in the Industry it was estimated that this provided one in the service industries. The Industry generated many large and successful companies throughout Great Britain and I can recall in North Staffs these included:-

Cowlshaw Walker of Knypersely
Walkers Century Oils, Hanley
Walter Sylvester Ltd, Tunstall (famous for “the Sylvester” or “Walter”, the namesake
was a former employee of Chatterley Whitfield Colliery)

At this point I would like to draw attention to a major incident which took place in Central Europe during the Second World War. Reinhardt Heydrich, one of Hitler’s most senior officials known as the “Architect of the Holocaust” was assassinated in Prague by two Czech nationalists in 1942. They were subsequently hunted down and shot and I believe there is a plaque on a building in Prague commemorating this event. In retaliation Hitler ordered the complete destruction of the small mining village of Lidice. Not only were the buildings but also the graveyard were reduced to rubble and removed from the site. 173 men were shot and buried in a mass grave including an injured miner who was taken from a local hospital. A priest from a neighbouring village administered to the men before they were

shot after which he was offered freedom but chose to refuse and he too was shot. A number of children were “gassed” and others who “looked Germanic” taken to Germany for fostering. The remaining women & children were transported to a concentration camp from where the survivors returned after the war. But what has this to do with coal mining in North Staffordshire? The people of Lidice had done nothing to deserve their fate and on the 6th September 1942 a meeting was held in the Victoria Hall, Hanley and the “Lidice Shall Live Campaign” began. The N. Staffs miners led by Dr Barnett Stross, who set up a practice in the Potteries and successfully launched a media campaign to obtain financial compensation for miners who suffered serious occupational lung disease, vowed to rebuild Lidice. They, along with people from other industries, donated a day’s salary to the campaign which ultimately raised £37,000, an incredible amount during wartime in today’s money almost £1million. The village was completely rebuilt on the original site and was officially opened in 1947. One of the streets is called simply “Dr Barnett Stross Strasse”. People were asked to donate a rose and it now has the largest rose garden in the World.

I was taken to Lidice by my son and his wife whilst on holiday in Prague and escorted around the site by a young German boy called Karl who was working there for 12 months as part of his college education. He said that many other young Germans also volunteered to spend 12 months in Lidice. There are many memorials scattered around the site which was very tranquil despite the past horrors. I cannot really describe in words what it was like but if you are ever in Prague take time to visit Lidice. Inspired Film & Video of Stoke-on-Trent were commissioned to make a film about Lidice and I was invited to join the Project Team. The World Premier was held at the Czech Embassy in London at which the whole Project Team were present. I heard a lady ask one of the Directors of Inspired Film & Video if he knew one of the people who had helped in the translation. He replied “see Jim”. She explained to me that she had gone fruit picking with him in Czechoslovakia in 1968. I replied that I did know him and two days later gave him her details and he did remember her. They made contact which I believe still carries on today. The film was to a degree aimed at schoolchildren and was shown to over 300 pupils from schools throughout the area at the Bet365 Stadium where the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield put an exhibition on show. What was surprising was that many of the pupils had no idea what coal was.

Dr Stross coined a wonderful motto, which I quote:-

“The miners’ lamp dispels the shadows on the coal face. It can also send a ray of light across the sea to those who struggle in darkness”.

He was subsequently knighted and became the Member of Parliament for one of the Stoke-on-Trent constituencies.

Contrary to what had been expected, the Coal Industry was not Nationalised at the end of the War but once again returned to private ownership. However, the incoming Labour Government nationalised it on 1st January 1947 when signs appeared at every colliery

“This Colliery is now managed by the NCB on behalf of the people”.

with a new motto “ E Tenebris Lux” - out of darkness comes light.

The National Coal Board

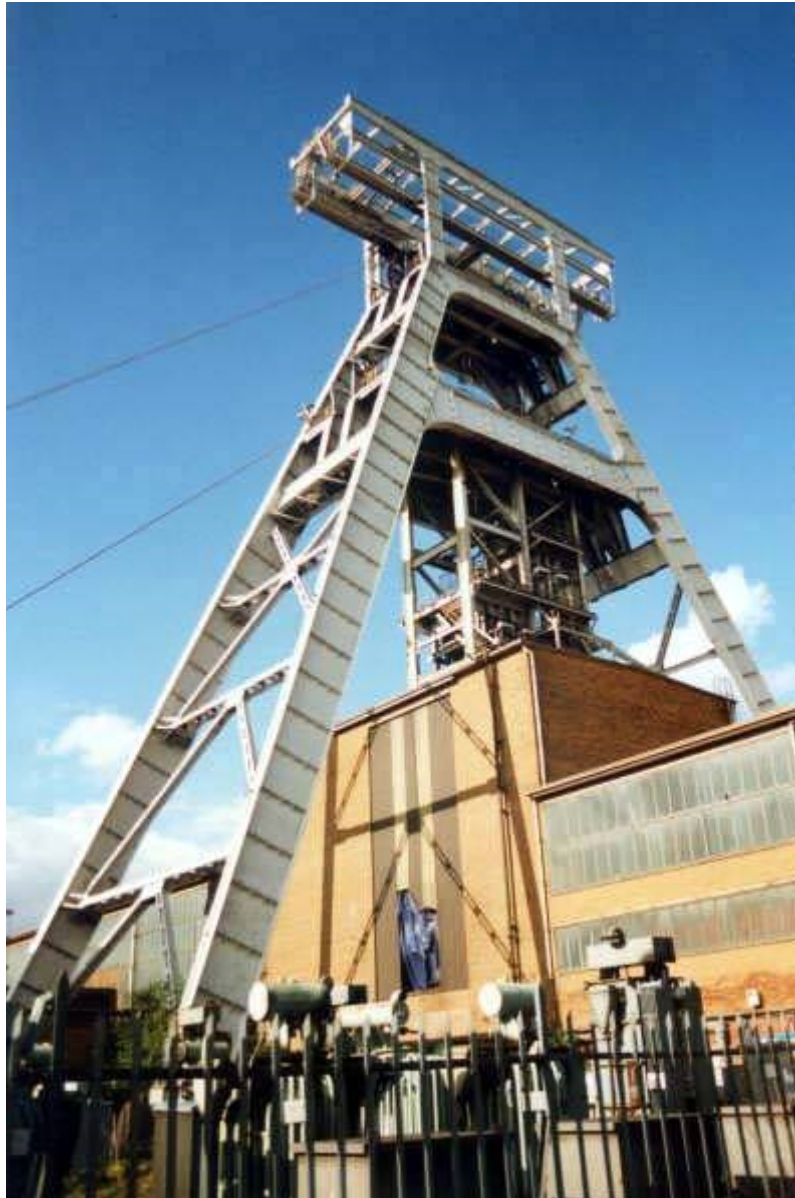
The 1st January 1947 dawned bright and clear, very cold and heavily snowbound. In fact it was one of the coldest winters for many years. Just around the corner from where I lived the drifts were higher than the railings of Wolstanton Grammar School, whilst the compacted snow on both Taylor Avenue and Belfield Avenue were perfect for sledging. That was until the local Council sent a lorry with two men on the back shovelling salt onto the road spoiling our enjoyment.

The Industry overnight became one of the largest in Europe with almost 1,000 collieries employing around 900,000 workers. It had been starved of investment during the War when it was “coal at any cost”. In order to kick start the recovery, because other industries had suffered as well, it was accepted that major investment was needed, not only to safeguard the Industry, but also the Country. Little had changed, however, because almost all of the appointed officials in the North Staffordshire Area of the new NCB together with management at the collieries were all ex-employees of the private coal companies. The Board therefore needed to review its organisation and gradually investment began to filter through to start to overcome the run down state of the Industry they had inherited. The Area was headed by a General Manager who reported to the West Midlands Divisional Board at Himley Hall near Dudley. He was supported by Production, Planning, Surveying, Electrical & Mechanical Engineers, Safety and Finance staff. In the No.1 North Staffordshire Area there were originally 22 collieries, split up into six Sub-Areas led by a Group Manager with supporting staff. Rookery Colliery near Bignall End had closed by the end of the first year ‘without turning a cobble of coal’ leaving 19 deep mines and two footrails. A number of major projects were formulated over the coming years one of which was abandoned and another went ahead which perhaps shouldn’t have.

The sinking of the new No.2 Shaft at Hem Heath Colliery (the famous ‘A’ Frame) heralded a bright new start to the future during which the industry would have to

cope with competition from the growing oil industry. Major reserves had been proved prior to the sinking of the No.1 Shaft at Hem Heath in 1924, but never fully exploited. This new coal winding Shaft was 3,400ft deep with four cages, two on the eastern side which wound to the 462 yard & 612 yard deep insets (places where the shaft and main horizontal tunnels met) whilst on the other side two cages served the 912 yard & 1062 yard deep insets. The steam winding engine in the No.1 Shaft was replaced by a Tower Mounted Kope Winder and the Shaft deepened to 3400ft with a single cage used mainly for manriding and supplies. In addition a new Coal Preparation Plant was constructed with the railway layout completely changed and the mineral line from Florence Colliery joining the internal system rather than the Main Line. The washery at Stafford Colliery closed as a result and all coal was transported to Hem Heath for processing and sale.

In the Spring of 1957 my father told me that I was wasting my time at Newcastle High School and suggested I apply for a “clerking” job with the NCB. As a dutiful son I did so and on 19th August 1957 after cycling 5½ miles from home I reported for duty at Hem Heath as the Manager’s Clerks Assistant. This was regarded as a general “dogs body” job making tea, opening and recording mail amongst other routine things. With my sister and younger brother I had led a rather sheltered life. My father worked in the Pottery Industry and did not drink and my mother was a full time housewife. It was a fabulous upbringing which stood me in good stead for the future. What it did not do however was prepare me for the



Hem Heath No.2 Shaft ('A' Frame) Headgear

culture shock as I came into contact with what I could only describe as a group of foul mouthed beer drinking individuals. My initial perception changed, however, when I realised that the Overman who came to see the Manager every day, who used swear words that I had never heard of, was a Pillar of the Local Society and a Churchwarden to boot. This then was my introduction to the Industry which I was to serve for 36 years and which I would not change a single second if I had to do it all again. I soon began to realise that the miners of North Staffordshire were a breed apart who I came to both admire and respect.

In 1957 Madeley (Leycett) Colliery closed with most of the men being transferred to Hem Heath Colliery. A Coal Board van was available at 5.00pm each evening to take home the men who had worked overtime. This closure was quickly followed

by that of Berry Hill Colliery and Glasshouse Footrail in 1960 (which brought to an end almost 300 years of mining in the Chesterton area). As mentioned previously the underground section of Kemball Training Centre closed in 1961. A large number of men were transferred to other local collieries to maintain manpower levels. Around this time a scheme had been prepared for a brand new colliery at Bradwell which would have resulted in the closure of Parkhouse, Wolstanton, Sneyd Deep Pit and possibly Holditch collieries. This, however, was politically sensitive and in the light of cheap oil was subsequently abandoned.

In 1961 I was appointed to a post in the Area Production Manager's office at 72, Leek Road in Stoke. My principal duties here were to open and file the large quantities of mail received each day and to contact every colliery daily after about 3.00pm to obtain production outputs for the previous 24 hours for presentation to the Area Production Manager. This put me in contact with many people with whom I had the privilege of working with for many years. Following the abandonment of the Bradwell Colliery Scheme a major project was approved (but which probably should not have gone ahead) for the creation of what was to become the Wolstanton Complex whereby underground connections were made to both Deep Pit and Sneyd collieries with coal washing concentrated on the Wolstanton Colliery site. The No.2 Shaft at Wolstanton was deepened to 3434 feet, which was then the deepest coal mining shaft in Europe, a new No.3 Shaft was sunk to a depth of 3417 feet on site, the Colliery operating on the Horizon Mining Principle and a new Coal Preparation Plant was built with both rail access to the Kidsgrove to Stoke-on-Trent Main Line and a conveyor link taking coal directly into the heart of Shelton Bar Steelworks. At the outset the complex had eight coal faces but by 1966 all operations at Deep Pit had ceased with the No.4 Shaft at Sneyd being the second means of egress. By this time all the manpower at Sneyd had been transferred to Wolstanton.

By 1963 I had taken on a new job as Secretary to the Group Manager with responsibilities for Wolstanton, Fenton (Glebe), & Foxfield collieries. The Group Manager was the Manager at Hem Heath Colliery when I started in 1957 and in 1963 Wolstanton became the first colliery in the West Midlands Division to mine 1 million tons of saleable coal in a calendar year beating the newly opened Lea Hall Colliery at Rugeley by four days. Major investment took place at Florence Colliery which became the most productive and profitable pit in North Staffs following shaft deepening and the introduction of tower mounted electric winding at two of the three shafts.

Colliery closures continued during the decade with Parkhall, Mossfield, Fenton, Foxfield (last deep mine in the Cheadle Coalfield) and Stafford Colliery by 1969. The closure of Stafford Colliery saw the last vertical steam winding engine in the area. In addition the upper horizon workings at Wolstanton Colliery were

abandoned despite roadways being driven into an area called Westlands Farm. Apedale Footrail also closed in 1969 shortly after achieving the highest ever output per manshift in the Area. It was taken over by a private company who for about five to six years produced coal in part by robbing the pillars previously left behind. It remained in production until 1998 when it subsequently became Apedale Heritage Centre where today it is the only place in the area where you can visit underground. In the meantime a national scheme had been introduced where miners could retire with a lump sum and pension at age 55. Many took up the offer and others transferred from closed collieries to other collieries in the Area.

In 1966 I was appointed to a post in the Secretary's Department at Leek Road and assisted with the redeployment of staff from both Leek Road and various other locations in the Area to the newly built HQ at Staffordshire House on the site of the former Berry Hill Colliery. This resulted in the closure of the Purchasing & Stores and Coal Trade offices in Stoke together with the Planning & Surveying office at Fenton Colliery, the Estates Department remaining at Sneyd Colliery until transfer later. In 1967 a major reorganisation took place throughout the Industry with the abandonment of the Divisional Office in Dudley whereby the North Staffs Area merged with the Cannock & Shropshire Areas to form Staffordshire Area with HQ at Staffordshire House. A separate Regional Services organisation was set up which took control of Scientific Department and Geological Services, both of which remained at Chatterley Whitfield, Civil Engineers and Internal Audit.

In the early 1970s a major scheme was proposed for an underground connection to be driven between Hem Heath and Florence collieries together with a new surface drift at Hem Heath of about 2,800 yards length at a gradient of 1 in 4 up which coal from both collieries would be conveyed to the surface. This was necessitated by the fact that both collieries required new coal preparation plants. It was therefore very cost effective to construct a new plant at Hem Heath (connected to the Stoke to Stone main railway line) and to dispense with the internal mineral line which ran between the two collieries. I believe the new plant was capable of processing in the region of about 3 million tons per annum. When the scheme started both collieries retained their individual status until it became classified as one mine, Trentham, in the 1990s.

On the west side of the coalfield, Silverdale Colliery, which had I believe been scheduled to close in the 1960s, took on a "New Life" with the appointment of a new Manager who with improved mining techniques and equipment boosted production considerably. This inevitably led to problems with shaft capacity (the ability to wind the coal up the shaft fast enough) and a scheme was approved for the construction of a surface drift to connect with the underground workings. This ultimately led to a new scheme involving the drivage of two additional drifts and the extension of the abovementioned one to access a new area of reserves to the

west of the colliery which became known as Silverdale New Mine. This eventually became the most productive colliery in the history of the North Staffs Coalfield.

Following the enactment of the Coal Mines Tipping Regulations in 1972, Scientific, Geological Services and Civil Engineering departments transferred to become part of the Staffordshire Area and a further re-organisation in 1974 saw the North Western Area (Cumberland, Lancashire and North Wales) merge with the Staffordshire Area to become Western Area, again with Headquarters at Staffordshire House.

Two strikes occurred in 1972 and 1974, the first since 1926, and in 1984 but I decided many years ago not to comment on these for personal reasons. At the end of the 1972 strike Stoke City won the League Cup by beating Chelsea 2-1 at Wembley and I was there!

Problems occurred with subsidence in many parts of North Staffs and I believe special precautions had to be taken before working under some land, particularly that belonging to the Duchy of Lancaster (The Queen) and the large gas fired kilns at many pottery firms. Any claims for damage were routed to a specialist department in the Area Estates section which worked in consultation with the Area Surveying Department who produced Mining Reports for such circumstances as also for solicitors and others acting on behalf of sellers and buyers of land in the coalfield area. To compile the Mining Report it was necessary for the surveyor to inspect every mining plan relevant to the property concerned, a very time consuming job. I think that at one time some 1,200 reports were being prepared every year for the whole of the Western Area. During the 1970s/80s a pilot scheme took place in the Area whereby every mining plan was scanned and computerised significantly reducing the time required to produce the report. It was so successful that it eventually was applied to every Area in the country and today is still being used by the Coal Authority based at Mansfield.

When a coal seam at a colliery was abandoned or a colliery closed Abandoned Mine Plans were produced to a standard format and forwarded to H M Inspector of Mines. All the available mine plans were carefully examined to ensure that all the relevant information was incorporated in the Abandoned Mine Plan. By the time this had taken place at Staffordshire House I was Curator at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum and was invited to collect their original mine plans (hundreds of) which now form the basis of the collection held by the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield today.

Going back to the mid-1950s a Central Stores & Central Workshops were constructed close to Hem Heath Colliery. Once operational large stocks of many items were readily available on call by the collieries. This eliminated the lengthy

delay that could occur between placing an order and subsequent delivery. The Central Workshops also took over many functions previously carried out by the collieries including the repair of many items of machinery. I remember one occasion visiting the Workshops and noticing chalk marks on the floor. This system was being used to re-create a set of points which had originally been fabricated at the colliery. Neither Workshops nor Stores were part of the Area at this time and were administered by Regional Services. A number of Transport Garages were scattered throughout the Area but in the 1970s they were all closed and a central garage established at Staffordshire House. The Road Transport Department was sold to a local businessman towards the end of the 1980s who took over the contracts for local delivery for the whole of the Western Area.

In 1982 I was promoted to Office Manager at Staffordshire House and, in addition to my other duties, became responsible for the Print Room, Typing Pool, Registry, Mail Room, Canteen, Switchboard, Records Office, Caretaker, Cleaners, General Handymen & Chauffeurs. One of the offices in the complex was a large open plan air conditioned room in which over 300 people worked. The Records Management System came late in the life of the Board and I remember being at a Seminar on Records Management in the 1960s held in Droitwich at which a number of representatives from various collieries stated that when their records storage facilities became full they simply “chucked” the oldest down the shaft. The new system laid down the rules for the retention of documents with periods of retention varying between 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, 15 years and indefinite (the last mentioned including Training Records and Accident Plans). Today many of the records from North Staffordshire, including those of the rest of Western Area, are in the custody of a firm called Iron Mountain at various locations in Staffordshire. Other records are held by The Coal Authority and the British Geological Survey.

The 1970s brought no respite from colliery closures with Norton closing in 1976 and Chatterley Whitfield in 1977, becoming Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum. Victoria Colliery closed in 1982 but the Salisbury Shaft was retained for pumping, as was one of the shafts at Norton Colliery, to protect the workings at Wolstanton Colliery. A major scheme was undertaken at Holditch Colliery in the early 1980s with skip winding (skips or large metal box-like containers in place of cages) with electric winders replacing the last two steam winding engines in the Area. In addition a new Coal Preparation Plant was brought into use. The colliery used one of the last colliery owned railway branch lines to Apedale Junction where it connected with the Stoke to Market Drayton Line. Following the closure of Wolstanton Colliery in 1986 only Holditch, Silverdale and the soon to be merged Hem Heath & Florence collieries (known as Trentham West and East) remained in operation in North Staffs. So much so that the Western Area was disbanded with the collieries in South Staffs, Lea Hall & Littleton going under the jurisdiction of South Midlands Area with HQ in Coleorton Hall in Leicestershire. The three North

Staffordshire collieries together with those in Lancashire and Point of Ayr Colliery in North Wales were amalgamated into a new Group called the North West Group with HQ in Northard House in Northwich. Holditch Colliery closed in 1989 and coal production at Hem Heath ceased in October 1992, closing a year later on a 'care and maintenance' basis, but the site and equipment was taken over by Coal Investments Ltd in April 1994 and the colliery reopened for a short period, only to close again in May 1996 when this company went into receivership. Discussions, I believe, took place with Stoke City Council to preserve the famous 'A' Frame headgear to commemorate coal mining in North Staffordshire which unfortunately came to nothing. The whole site was demolished and is now a housing estate and the Donna Louise Hospice. Large shed-type buildings also dominate part of the perimeter of the site.

As previously mentioned Silverdale closed at the end of 1998 and in the last week of its working life Newcastle Museum were virtually given free range to photograph the site copies of which are held at the Museum. So, after just over 700 years, coal mining ceased in North Staffordshire.

One interesting fact is that the NCB, created in 1947, ceased to exist 47 years later in 1994.

But what about me? When my boss retired in 1986 it was automatically assumed that I would get his job. This though did not happen but it turned out to be a bonus for me. In April 1989 I was made an offer I couldn't refuse and at the grand old age of 48½ years of age I took voluntary redundancy. Within two weeks I was volunteering at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum three days a week and in the August I was taken on as full time Curator. One of my first big jobs was the transfer of the NCB's National Museum Collection from Lound Hall in Nottinghamshire and the subsequent display of many of the items. One of the most interesting aspects of the job, as far as I was concerned, was having daily contact with the volunteers who were all ex-employees of the Industry. I considered it a privilege to work with a group of men who I have the highest regard for who, in retirement, were prepared to give up their time for at least three days a week imparting their knowledge of the Industry to visitors to the Museum. It was a wonderful experience and I treasure the time I spent with them. Usually, when time permitted, I went for a "brew" with them at 11.00 am each day. I still consider them to be the finest group of men I have ever known and much to my surprise one day they told me that "you are one of us", an accolade I felt I did not deserve.

The end came at 2.45pm on the 9th August 1993 when the Liquidators were called in and the Museum closed with debts of £83,000. By the time the final accounts were produced, taking into consideration the Liquidator's expenses etc. the Museum loses had increased to

£1¼ million. How do I know?, because the Liquidator sent to all employees of the Museum a copy of the final accounts. I do not intend to comment on the reasons for the closure of the Museum, but at the same time the City Council purchased Gladstone Pottery Museum to prevent it from closing. Within six months of the Museum closing a brand new substantial metal fence was erected over 95% of the site with the uprights encased in concrete. Following closure I sent every volunteer a Christmas Card each year, attended their funerals and wrote to their widows. Today there is only one volunteer left aged 93 with whom I am still in contact. I spent 32 years in the Industry before going to Chatterley Whitfield and today I still thank my father for taking me out of school in 1957 and encouraging me to join the wonderful world of mining in North Staffordshire. Many memories remain and I treasure the time I spent in the Industry and if I had my time over again I wouldn't change a single second.

I dedicate this to everyone who worked in the Coal Mining Industry of North Staffordshire.

Does the story really end here? I have been going to Chatterley Whitfield almost every week since 2002 (apart from the recent lockdown) and started writing this piece after returning from there on the 2nd July 2020. As I left it was raining but Mow Cop Castle was just visible. Do visit Mow Cop and see for yourself the whole of the North Staffordshire Coalfield laid out before you. No, the story does not end here! Many of the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield visit every week and are actively engaged in various aspects of the site with the ultimate aim of preserving this great industrial site, which is a significant part of North Staffs's Industrial Heritage, for future generations.

Finally, this has been a labour of love for me and during the last three months. I have contacted many friends and former colleagues to sound them out on various sections of my Perspective as well as seeking advice which they have freely given and for which I am very grateful. They know who they are! A number of sections have not been written by me so I give my special thanks to:-

Jill Goldstraw, my good friend and Neighbour for her article about her father's life (Sydney Purcell) as a Bevin Boy

Nigel Bowers, Chairman of the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield CIO

Phil Robinson, Chairman of Moseley Railway Trust, the Apedale Valley Light Railway Lloyd Boardman, my friend and also Friend of Chatterley Whitfield, for transcribing my hand written notes - how he could read my horrible scribble I'll never know - for the help and advice he has given me, for correcting my errors and additional information.

Note: I disclaim any connection with the “Fall and Rise of the Apedale Heritage Centre”.

Jim Worgan
August 2020

Appendix 1

COLLIERY MANAGERS OF NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

1947 – 1998

In October 2000, I decided to try and recall from both reference books (my own and those belonging to Eric Durose) and memory, the Managers of those Collieries which were working when I joined the No.1 North Staffordshire Area of the National Coal Board as a Grade II clerk in the Managers Clerks Office at Hem Heath Colliery on the 19th August 1957.

I have put them in chronological order although there may be some that I have missed, particularly prior to 1949 for which no reference books were available. I have subsequently confirmed, however, that W.Wilcox was the Manager of Chatterley Whitfield Colliery in 1947. The Collieries are listed in the order in which they appeared in the statistics produced by the National Coal Board and the owners are those shown at Nationalisation on the 1st January 1947.

There were, however, 2 additional Collieries, Jamage, which closed on Nationalisation, and Rookery which had closed by 1948. Both were owned by The Bignall Hill Colliery Company Ltd., but I have been unable to determine whether any Managers were appointed by the National Coal Board.

CHATTERLEY WHITFIELD COLLIERY

NR. TUNSTALL

STOKE ON TRENT

CLOSED 1976.

Previously owned by: The North of England Trustee, Debenture and Assets Co. Ltd
Midland Bank Buildings
Spring Gardens
Manchester

MANAGERS

W.Wilcox 1947	S.Hay 1949	E.C.Johnson 1953
T.Fowke 1957	P.Smallman 1958	D.Dorn 1975 until Closure

Upon closure in 1976, the Colliery was managed by the following Colliery Managers until Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum opened in 1979:

B.Skelding 1976 J.Cummins 1977 – 1979

CHATTERLEY WHITFIELD MINING MUSEUM

CLOSED 9th AUGUST 1993

MANAGERS

G.T.Wood 1979 D.W.Alexander 1980 B.Macur 1985
D.J.Wheelhouse 1986 until closure of underground section

Following the closure of Wolstanton Colliery in 1986, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines and Quarries ruled that as there was a physical underground connection between Chatterley Whitfield and Wolstanton Collieries (with further underground connections between Wolstanton, Sneyd and Norton Collieries, the latter 2 being pumping shafts) the underground section of the Mining Museum would have to close because of the danger of both water and methane migration from Wolstanton Colliery. As a consequence all the shafts at Chatterley Whitfield Colliery were filled and "capped" with the exception of the Hesketh shaft which was left unfilled but "capped" in order to take both water levels and methane readings. It was only in 1999 that water levels reached a point some 30 yards from the top, the level of the Whitfield Valley floor. A 'New underground' opened by H.R.H. The Princess Royal, was constructed in the former railway cutting at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum, which H.M.I.M& Q. ruled did not require a fully certified Colliery Manager under the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 even though the 'New underground' was regarded as a Mine. Access to the 'New underground' was via the 'capped' Platt Shaft with a cage ride to simulate a 700 foot drop, even though the actual drop was only 30 feet. Responsibility for the 'New underground' was vested in the Manager of the Mining Museum who was a fully qualified Engineer.

MANAGERS

K.Salt 1987 A.Lawton 1989 K.Salt 1992 until
Closure

NORTON COLLIERY

NORTON IN THE MOORS

STOKE ON TRENT

ALSO KNOWN AS BELLERTON

Closed 1977. The shafts remained open for pumping purposes because of the underground connection with the closed Sneyd Colliery which served as the 2nd means of egress for the northern section of Wolstanton Colliery. The shafts were filled on closure of Wolstanton Colliery in 1986.

Previously owned by: Norton and Biddulph Collieries Ltd
Biddulph
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS G.J.Downend 1949 S.Hacking 1955 R.Jones 1959
R.T.Thorneycroft 1963 J.V.Blaiklock 1965
G.Gillatt 1968 J.P.L.Bacharach 1969
G.F.Ward 1975 until closure

VICTORIA COLLIERY
BIDDULPH
STOKE ON TRENT

Also known as: **The Bull**
Biddulph Valley

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY; Norton and Biddulph Collieries Ltd
Biddulph
Stoke on Trent

Closed 1982. The Salisbury Shaft was kept open for pumping purposes to
Protect the workings at Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum
Until the closure of Wolstanton Colliery in 1986.

MANAGERS W.T.Archer 1949 M.Gittings 1955 R.F.Louth 1958
D.Dorn 1963 E.Blakeley 1976 D.E.Lane 1979
B.Dyer 1982 F.Bridgewood 1982
Until closure

DEEP PIT (HANLEY) COLLIERY
HANLEY
STOKE ON TRENT.

Closed 1962 – merged underground with Wolstanton Colliery
and all surface operations ceased.

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY; Shelton Iron and Steel Co. Ltd
Etruria Hall
Shelton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS L.W..Fletcher 1949 T.Seabridge 1953 E.C.Johnson 1956
W.G.Irwin 1961 until closure

SNEYD COLLIERY
BURSLEM
STOKE ON TRENT

Merged underground with Wolstanton Colliery in 1962 to form Wolstanton Mine. No. 4 shaft was retained as the 2nd means of egress for the Northern Section of Wolstanton Mine and also for pumping purposes because of the underground connections with both Wolstanton Mine and Norton Colliery. The shaft was filled following the closure of Wolstanton Mine in 1986.

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY; Sneyd Collieries Ltd
Burslem
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS G.W.Sanders 1946 R.Boote 1953 C.J.Power 1960
Until merger in 1962

In the mid 1960's, because of falling output at the complex, the Sneyd section was taken out of the Wolstanton Mine complex and **MANAGED** a short time by;

J.A.Belcher 1965

It was subsequently returned to the complex following the appointment of G.A.Schofield as **MANAGER** of Wolstanton Colliery, as the Mine was then called and all operations were transferred to Wolstanton apart from limited maintenance services.

WOLSTANTON COLLIERY
WOLSTANTON
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY; Wolstanton Ltd
Wolstanton
Newcastle under Lyme
North Staffordshire

Closed 1986

MANAGERS; E.H.Vallis 1949 T.Seabridge 1950 P.J.Murphy 1953
J.E.Wood 1955 D.W.Alexander 1957 C.J.Power 1962

In 1962 the Colliery merged with Sneyd and Deep Pit Collieries to form Wolstanton Mine

MANAGERS: C.G.Power 1962 G.Hopcraft 1964

In 1966 the Mine once again became Wolstanton Colliery.

MANAGERS: G.A.Schofield 1966 W.G.Irwin 1975 G.F.Ward 1983

Until closure

APPEDALE FOOTRAIL

NEW APEDALE

CHESTERTON

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Also known as Holditch No. 2 until Nationalisation on 1st January 1947

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY: Holditch Mines Ltd
Etruria Hall
Stoke on Trent

Closed 1969

MANAGERS J.R.Bull 1949 D.W.Alexander 1954 W.S.Jones 1957
K.Harp 1968 J.A.L.Bland 1969
Until closure

At closure in 1969, the mine was taken over by several companies as a ‘small mine’, licensed by the National Coal Board/British Coal. It finally closed in 1998 and re-opened as an underground mining museum within the Apedale Countryside Park and known as Apedale Heritage Centre in October 2000. It is the only authentic piece of mineworkings left in Staffordshire.

GLASSHOUSE FOOTRAIL

CHESTERTON

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY: Glasshouse Collieries Ltd
Chesterton
Newcastle Under Lyme
North Staffordshire

Closed 1960

MANAGERS J.S.Worthington 1949 D.W.Alexander 1955 W.S.Jones 1957
J.V.Blaiklock 1960
Until closure

HOLDITCH COLLIERY
CHESTERTON
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Previously known as Holditch No.1, but more commonly Brymbo because of the previous owners, Brymbo Company from Wrexham North Wales.

Closed 1989

PREVIOUS OWNERS Holditch Mines Ltd
Etruria Hall
Shelton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS T.Roach 1949 P.Smallman 1955 F.Stephens 1958
G.Morris 1962 D.Allcock 1969 D.Hardman 1975
R.C.Hollins 1977
Until closure

PARKHOUSE COLLIERY
CHESTERTON
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY; Parkhouse Collieries Ltd
Parkhouse, Chesterton
Newcastle under Lyme
North Staffordshire

Closed 1969

MANAGERS J.G.Bromilow 1949 E.Bedson 1959 J.R.Bull 1955
G.Morris 1960 G.Hopcraft 1962 D.W.Alexander 1963
G.Morris 1969
Until closure

MADELEY(LEYCETT) COLLIERY
LEYCETT
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Also known as Harrison and Woodburn

Fair Lady and Bang Up, which were the 4 shafts in use.

Closed 1957

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Madeley Collieries Ltd
41, North John Street
Liverpool 2

MANAGERS GJ.Venn 1949 J.E.Wood 1962 E.A.Hopkins 1955
R.T.Thorneycroft 1957
Until closure

SILVERDALE COLLIERY
SILVERDALE
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Also known as Kents Lane

Closed by British Coal in 1993

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Shelton Iron,Steel and Coal Ltd
Etruria Hall
Shelton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS F.Allen 1949 GF.A.Schofield 1963 J.A.Belcher 1966
B.Hampshire 1982 Dr.D.R.Hodgkinson 1987
K.Leech 1991
Until closure in 1993

The Colliery then reverted back to the Coal Authority.

MANAGER N.Hunter 1993

The Colliery was reopened by Coal Investments Ltd. and later Midland Mining

MANAGER M.Arthur 1993
Until closure in 1998

The Colliery finally reverted back to the Coal Authority on 1st January 1999.

MANAGER R.J.Divers of International Mining Consultants during salvage,
Shaft filling and capping operations.

No. 17's shaft remains unfilled after capping operations were completed to enable pumping of water to take place from the upper horizon to allow for the continuous drainage of methane gas from the lower horizon. Methane drainage ceased in 2007 but shaft pumping operations will continue for the foreseeable future.

HEM HEATH COLLIERY

TRENTHAM

STOKE ON TRENT

Originally sunk in 1924 with only one shaft with the 2nd means of egress being via an underground connection to Kemball Training Centre some 2 miles to the north. Following major reconstruction during the 1950's including the sinking of the No. 2 shaft (the unique 'A' frame) the underground connection was sealed in the late 1950's. **(See Kemball Training Centre)**

Closed by British Coal in 1993

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Stafford Coal and Iron Co. Ltd.
Great Fenton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS R.Barker 1949 E.Mawdesley 1956 R.Beighton 1961
W.H.Crossland 1964 G.L.Beard 1966 L.Hall 1974
J.A.Belcher 1984 R.F.Sales 1989

In the 1970's, a surface drift was driven from the surface at Hem Heath Colliery and an underground connection was made with Florence Colliery. All the coal winding operations were concentrated at Hem Heath Colliery where a major new coal preparation plant was built. Both Hem Heath and Florence Collieries were under separate Managers until in the late 1980's a decision was made to combine the Management structure of both Collieries and to rename the complex Trentham Mine. Hem Heath Colliery became the Administrative centre and was renamed Trentham West whilst Florence Colliery was renamed Trentham East.

TRENTHAM MINE

MANAGERS Dr. D.R.Hodgkinson 1990 J.Sorbie 1993
Until closure in 1993

At closure in 1993, the complex reverted back to the Coal Authority

MANAGER N.Hunter 1993

The complex was taken over by Coal Investments Ltd in 1994 who subsequently decided to abandon the former Florence Colliery workings (Trentham East) and was then renamed Hem Heath Colliery.

HEM HEATH COLLIERY

Closed 1998

MANAGER J.D.Wilcox 1994 M.Moreton 1997
Until closure in 1998

The Colliery reverted back to the Coal Authority in 1998 and the No. 2 shaft and the drift were filled and capped. No. 1 shaft was left unfilled after capping to enable measurements of both water and gas to be taken. Gas pipes mark both shafts and drift.

MANAGER R.J.Divers of International Mining Consultants

STAFFORD COLLIERY

GREAT FENTON

STOKE ON TRENT

Also known as: Stafford No. 1
The Dukes Pit

Closed 1969

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY: Stafford Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
Great Fenton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS J.A.Preston 1949 D.Allcock
Until closure

KEMBALL TRAINING CENTRE

Also known as: Stafford No. 2

Closed Underground section 1963 - surface section 1987/8

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY: Stafford Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
Great Fenton
Stoke on Trent

In 1945 Kemball Colliery was converted into Kemball Training Centre, the first in the coalmining industry in Great Britain. Technically, the Centre was classified as part of Hem Heath Colliery (until the underground section was closed in 1963) under the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. The Managers at Hem Heath Colliery, up to and including R.Beighton were also classed as Colliery Managers of the Centre under the same Act. Managers were however appointed at the Centre.

MANAGERS J.A.Preston 1949 L.Hull? 1949 G.W.Royal 1963
At closure

Following the closure of the underground section in 1963, surface training, including a purpose built "Underground" section on the surface continued until 1987/8 when a purpose built Training Centre was constructed in the former Trentham Workshops, adjacent to Hem Heath Colliery. These facilities closed in about 1993.

FLORENCE COLLIERY **LONGTON** **STOKE ON TRENT**

Closed 1993 See also Hem Heath and Parkhall Collieries

The Colliery was named after one of the Daughters of the Duke of Sutherland.

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Florence coal and Iron Co. Ltd
Florence
Longton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS A.E.Nicklin 1949 L.Brookes 1954 T.E.Smales 1958
R.Boote 1961 G.Gillatt 1969 L.Hall 1973
D.Hardman 1977 J.A.Belcher 1982 A.V.Plant 1984
Until merger
with Hem Heath
Colliery in 1990

The sites of all three shafts are marked by gas pipes all of which have been connected and buried underground and the gas is piped to the top of the Colliery dirt tip where methane is vented to the atmosphere.

FENTON COLLIERY
FENTON
STOKE ON TRENT

Also known as: Glebe

Closed 1964

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Fenton Collieries Ltd.
Fenton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS J.D.S.Swift 1949 P.J.Murphy 1959 R.Beighton 1959
Until closure

BERRYHILL COLLIERY
FENTON
STOKE ON TRENT

Closed 1960

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Berryhill Collieries Ltd
Fenton
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS F.Stephens 1949 P.J.Murphy 1959 R.Beighton 1959
Until closure

MOSSFIELD COLLIERY
ADDERLEY GREEN
STOKE ON TRENT

Also known as: Old Sal

Closed 1963

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Mossfield Collieries Ltd
Adderley Green
Longton
Stoke on Trent

A connection underground with the former Adderley Green Colliery, closed in 1939, meant that it was retained as a pumping shaft until the closure of Mossfield Colliery.

MANAGERS G.A.Priestly 1949 E.Mawdesley 1955 H.J.Dennis 1957
R.Beighton 1960 R.T.Thorneycroft 1962
J.V.Blaiklock 1963
Until closure

PARKHALL COLLIERY
LONGTON
STOKE ON TRENT

Closed 1962

An underground connection was made with Florence Colliery shortly before closure which was subsequently sealed off when the shafts were filled.

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Mossfield Collieries Ltd. (see Mossfield Colliery)

MANAGERS T.Seabridge 1949 J.K.Walker 1950 R.R.Kennedy 1953
P.J.Murphy 1959 J.V.Blaiklock 1961
Until closure

FOXFIELD COLLIERY
DILHORNE
CHEADLE
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Closed 1965

PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY Foxfield Colliery Ltd.
Piccadilly
Tunstall
Stoke on Trent

MANAGERS P.Brown 1949 D.Allcock 1958 R.F.Louth 1963
Until closure

J.T.Worgan

November 1992, Updated August 2007

Appendix 2

THE COLLIERIES OF NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE
AS ADMINISTERED BY THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD

LIST OF PREVIOUS OWNERS

CHATTERLEY WHITFIELD COLLIERY

WHITFIELD COLLIERY

1838 - 1867	H.H.Williamson
1868 - 1872	The Gentlemen of Tunstall
1872 - 1891	The Chatterley Iron Co. Ltd.

CHATTERLEY WHITFIELD COLLIERIES

1891 - 1920	The North of England Trustee, Debenture and Asset Corporation, Manchester
1920 - 1922	John Slater - Amalgamated Industries Ltd.
1922 - 1947	James Edge Ltd.

1948 Tonnage	944000	Manpower	2700
Closed	1977		

NORTON COLLIERY (ALSO KNOWN AS BELLERTON)
VICTORIA COLLIERY (ALSO KNOWN AS THE BULL)

NORTON

1860 - 1888	Robert Heath
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VICTORIA

1857 - 1888	Biddulph Valley Colliery
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BOTH

1888 - 1894	Robert Heath and Sons
1894 - 1920	Robert Heath and Sons Ltd
1920 - 1929	Robert Heath and Lowmoor Ltd
1929 - 1947	Norton and Biddulph Collieries

1948 Tonnage (Norton)	387800	Victoria	511700
Manpower	1300		1480
Closed	1977		1982

SNEYD COLLIERY

1851 - 1860	C.B.May and Co
1860 - 1881	J.Heath and subsequently Sneyd Colliery Co
1881 - 1900	Sneyd Colliery and Brickworks Co. Ltd
1900 - 1947	Sneyd Collieries Ltd

1948 Tonnage	401000	Manpower	1460
Closed		Merged with Wolstanton Colliery	1962

DEEP PIT COLLIERY (HANLEY)

1850'S - 1920 Shelton Iron and Steel Co. Ltd
1920 - 1947 John Summers and Sons (Shotton)
1948 Tonnage 350000 Manpower 1290
Closed Merged with Wolstanton Colliery 1962

WOLSTANTON COLLIERY

1919 - 1947 Wolstanton Ltd
1948 Tonnage and Manpower NOT KNOWN
Closed 1986

PARKHOUSE COLLIERY

1850's - 1888 Stanier and Co. Ltd
1888 - 1906 J.H.Pearson
1906 - 1913 J.H.Pearson and Sons Ltd
1913 - 1920 Robert Heath and Sons Lts
1920 - 1929 Robert Heath and Lowmoor Ltd
1929 - 1947 Parkhouse Collieries Ltd
1948 Tonnage 231400 Manpower 720
Closed 1968

HOLDITCH COLLIERY (ALSO KNOWN AS BRYMBO)

1916 - 1930 Brymbo Steel Co. Ltd (Wrexham)
1930 - 1947 Holditch Mines Ltd (Subsidiary of
Shelton Iron and Coal Co. from 1932).
1948 Tonnage 437300 Manpower 1420
Closed 1989

APEDALE FOOTRAIL (ALSO KNOWN AS NEW APEDALE
AND HOLDITCH NO.2)

1941 - 1947 Holditch Mines Ltd (Subsidiary of
Shelton Iron and Steel Co. Ltd)
1948 Tonnage 73600 Manpower 130
Closed 1969 by N.C.B. - remained as a small mine
until the mid 1990's

GLASSHOUSE FOOTRAIL

1931 - 1947 Glasshouse Colliery Co. Ltd
1948 Tonnage 31200 Manpower 120
Closed 1960

MADELEY (LEYCETT) COLLIERY

?1838 - 1856 Thomas Firmstone
1856 - 1861 Lloyd and Pearson
1862 - 1865 Lloyd and Co
1865 - 1880 Crewe Coal and Iron Co. Ltd

1880 - 1905 Madeley Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
 1905 - 1924 Madeley Coal, Coke and Brick Co. (1905) Ltd
 (Acquired in 1920 by Robert Heath and Lowmoor
 Ltd).
 1924 - 1947 Madeley Collieries Ltd
 1947 Tonnage 186430 Manpower 840
 Closed 1957

SILVERDALE COLLIERY (ALSO KNOWN AS KENTS LANE)

1792 - 1815 3 local business men - Lease from Ralph
 Sneyd
 By 1830 - 1851 Francis Stanier
 1851 - 1860 Stanier and Heath
 1860 - 1882 Stanier and Son
 1882 - 1888 Butterley Co.
 1888 - 1903 Butterley Co. Ltd
 1903 - 1918 Silverdale Co. Ltd
 1918 - 1947 Shelton Iron, Steel and Coal Co. Ltd
 1948 Tonnage 287600 Manpower 860
 Closed 31st December 1998

HEM HEATH COLLIERY

1924 - 1947 Stafford Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
 1948 Tonnage and Manpower combined with Stafford Colliery until 1950
 Closed 1997
 Merged with Florence Colliery in 1990 to Form Trentham Colliery

STAFFORD COLLIERY (ALSO KNOWN AS THE DUKE PITS)

1873 - 1947 Stafford Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
 1948 Tonnage (Joint with Hem Heath) 606500 Manpower Not known
 Closed 1969
 KEMBALL COLLIERY/TRAINING CENTRE)

1873 - 1947 Stafford Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
 1948 Tonnage and Manpower not known
 Converted to underground and surface Training Centre in 1947 approx.
 Closed 1963 (Underground Training Centre)
 1989 (Surface Training Centre)

FLORENCE COLLIERY

1872 - 1891 Duke of Sutherland
 1891 - 1896 Florence Colliery Ltd
 1896 - 1947 Florence Coal and Iron Co. (Subsidiary of
 Coking Co. Ltd from 1911 which was part
 of Shelton Iron, Steel and Coal Co. Ltd
 1948 Tonnage 417600 Manpower 1430
 Closed 1994
 Merged with Hem Heath Colliery in 1990 to form Trentham Colliery.

FENTON COLLIERY (ALSO KNOWN AS GLEBE)

?1850 - 1900 John Challinor and Co. Ltd
 1900 - 1910 John Heath and Co. Ltd
 1910 Glebe Syndicate
 1910 - 1947 Fenton Collieries Ltd (Subsidiary of
 Settle Speakman and Co. from 1931

1947 Tonnage 172000 Manpower 650
 Closed 1964

BERRYHILL COLLIERY

1841 - 1861 W.T.Copeland
 1861 - 1880 W.E.Bowers
 1880 - 1918 Henry Warrington and Son
 1918 - 1922 John Slater Ltd
 1922 - 1947 Berryhill Collieries Ltd. (Subsidiary of
 Amalgamated Industries Ltd. until 1934)

1947 Tonnage 295000 Manpower 1100
 Closed 1960.

The Colliery was originally a number of shafts within the Berryhill area and became Berryhill Colliery I believe sometime in the 1880's.

MOSSFIELD COLLIERY

1850 - 1888 Hawley and Bridgewood
 1888 - 1892 " Ltd
 1892 - 1897 W.Rigby and Co.
 1897 - 1902 " Ltd.
 1902 - 1947 Mossfield Collieries Ltd (Subsidiary of
 Settle Speakman from 1928)

1947 Tonnage 340000 Manpower 1100
 Closed 1963

PARKHALL COLLIERY (ORIGINALLY WESTON COYNEY COLLIERY)

?1850 - ?1889 The Weston Coyney and Cinderhill
 Colliery Company
 ?1889 - 1907 Parkhall Collieries Ltd
 1908 - 1947 Mossfield Collieries Ltd (Subsidiary of
 Settle Speakman from 1928)

1947 Tonnage 233000 Manpower 750
 Closed 1962

FOXFIELD COLLIERY

1880 - 1893 J.& E. Mann
 1893 - 1927 Foxfield Colliery Ltd
 1927 - 1936 Parkhall Colliery Ltd., Cheadle
 1936 - 1947 Foxfield CollieryLtd

1947 Tonnage 167500 Manpower 550
 Closed 1965

I have obtained the above information from a number of sources, more particularly the National Coal Board as well as my great friend and mentor, the late Bill Jack

Any errors are my responsibility

Jim Worgan
February 2005