



# Round About the Pits

*Being a series of recollections and stories from the old pits of St Helens and the surrounding areas, with particular reference to Collins Green and Bold Collieries and the role of the Bamber family.*

By  
Frank Bamber.

## DEDICATION

I take the liberty to dedicate this book *Round and About the Pits* to my wife Elsie, daughter Rita and my sons Brian and Frank.

I also show my appreciation to Mrs. Marj Speight for her help in providing a link with her son, and to Simon for his clever editing of this edition. Many thanks to all three for their efforts and dedication in portraying my presentation of my family's working lives at the collieries at Collins Green and Bold which in all amounted to 181 years.

Frank Bamber  
September 2000

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by arrangement with Sutton Historic Society - with thanks to Simon Speight

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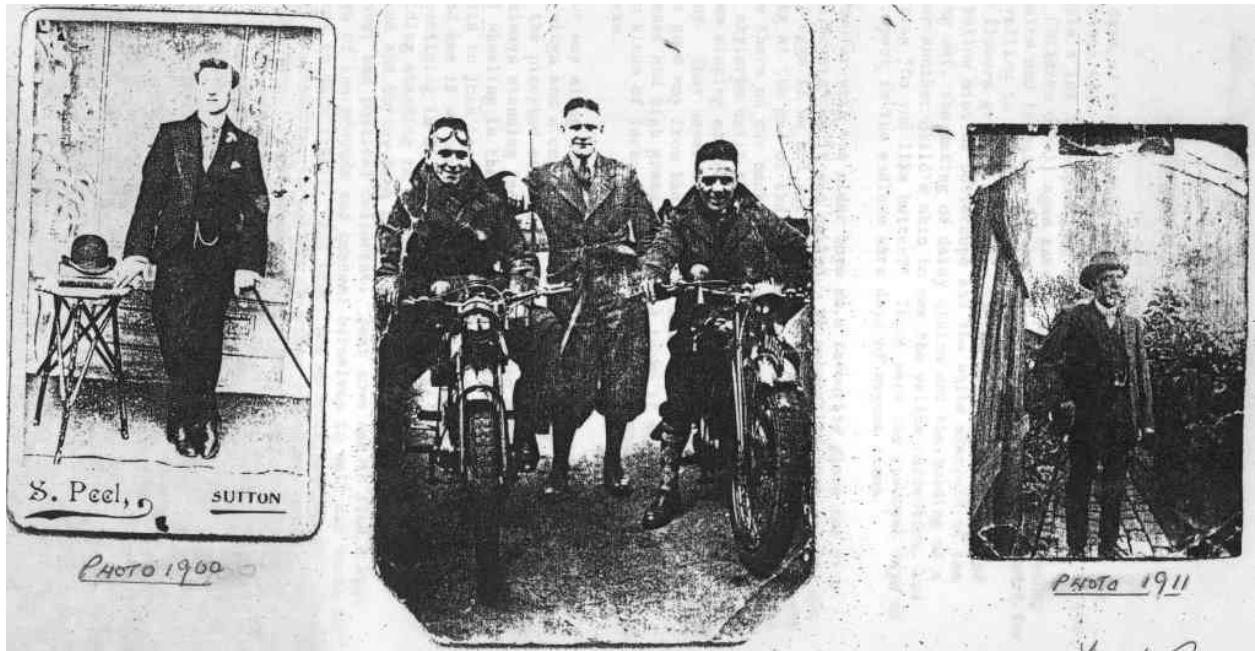


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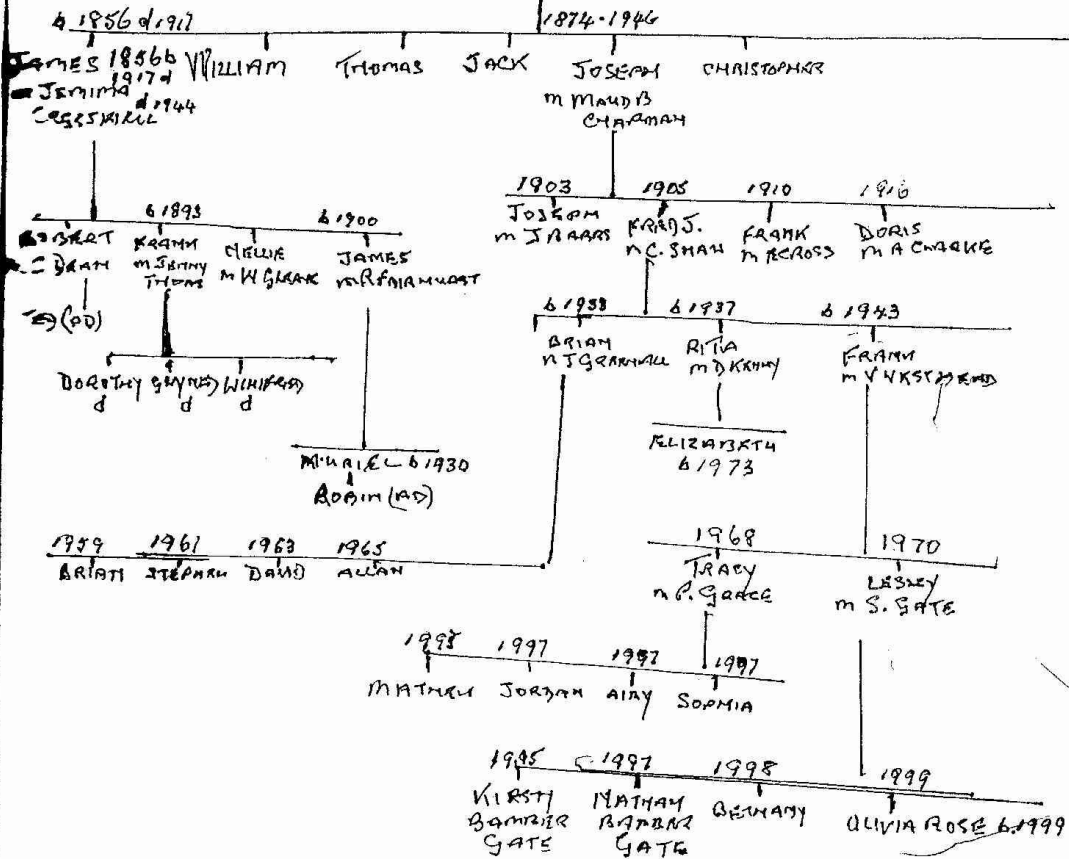


- (1) Joseph Bamber 1874-1946. Hooker-on, Underlooker at Bold and Undermanager -47 working years.
- (2) Frank Bamber b.1910 (centre). Joiner at Bold Colliery – 16 working years.
- (3) James Bamber 1856-1917 (aged 61 years). Collins Green Furnaceman and Head Pony Man and Farm Bailiff – 39 working years.

# JAMES BAMBER'S FAMILY

born ADKINGTON

JAMES BAMBER b 1830 DEPUTY CONSTABLE & DRIVER OF MAIL ON HORSE BACK



DATES & NAMES I RAN FROM MEMORY IN THE YEAR JANUARY 2001  
BY FRANK BAMBER b 1910

DATAS OF THE BAMBER FAMILIES ARE PORTRAYED IN MY  
THIRD BOOK "ROUND AND ABOUT THE PITS"

## **Collins Green and Bold Collieries**

- 1987** Today, the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1987, saw the end of an era when reinforced concrete headgear over the No. 1 shaft and Bold Colliery was brought crashing over, following the fate of No. 2 and No. 3 headgears, which had been previously felled. So ended a period of coal production at Bold Colliery which had lasted 105 years, dating from when the No. 1 and No. 2 pits were sunk in 1881, lasting from 1881-1986

On 26 March 1987, I witnessed the final destruction of the 150 foot high headgear, and the same night at 6pm, the destruction was televised to the people of the north west.

To me, it seemed like the passing of a very old friend, because of the connections and roots of my family having worked for both Collins Green and Bold Colliery from 1878 to the closure of the pits in 1986. During that period of 108 years, my family, in which I include my Uncle's family, by the natural bond of relationship, had totaled up no less than 281 working years.

We all contributed a portion of our lives in different vocations or jobs as farm bailiff, head pony man, under manager, horse ambulance, river, steam locomotive builder, fitter and welder, underlooker, joiner, wage clerk, electrician, assistant engineer etc.

- 1832** **First railway bridge in the world - the Runcorn Gap and St. Helens Bridge, over the Liverpool to Manchester line - "Intersection Bridge"**

One hundred yards to the rear of my bungalow, "Ovada", 75 Gerards Lane, lies the embankment of the old St. Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway, built in 1832 by Charles Blacker Vignoles and John Smith, benefactor of St. Anne's Church, Monastery and schools.

## **Early records of Mining and Collins Green Colliery**

- 1330** Records show that mining commenced about 1330 in St. Helens district, Sutton Heath (1540) and Windle (1600)

The early pioneers of coal were the Bolds of Sutton, the Ecclestones of Eccleston, the Gerards of Windle and the Byroms of Parr.

- 1697** Burtonwood Parish Register disclosed that Moses Shaw of Parr was buried at Burtonwood Chapel on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1697. He was described as "Collier kild in coal pit"

- 1745** Sarah Clayton of Parr Hall Estate grasped the opportunity provided by the cutting of the Sankey Navigation. Pits were sunk and coal was ready for sale well before the canal waterways reached her estate. She exploited the local coalfield and planned the creation of Clayton Square, Liverpool.

- 1839** I have tried hard to find out when Collins Green Colliery sunk its shafts, but without success. However, it is on record "That at the Leigh Arms in Newton 1839 a coalfield

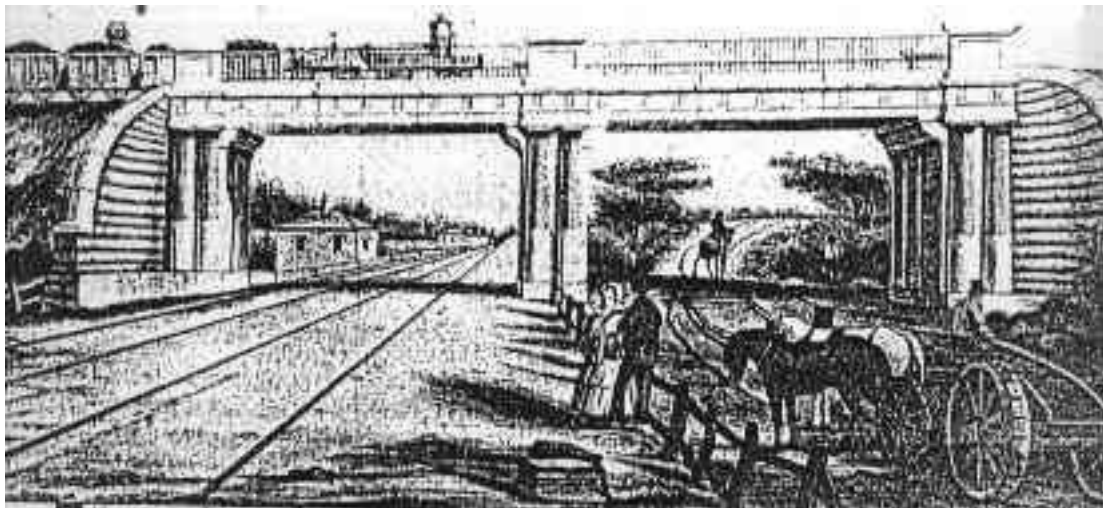
was advertised for sale”: “Valuable and extensive freehold estates and coal mine and is supposed that a valuable coalfield extends through Burtonwood Estates.”

Fifty years later, in 1889, Collins Green Colliery was producing 2,000 tons of coal from its 3 pits, an average of 670 tons of coal per day, by the pick and shovel method of heaving coal from each pit.

How many men took part in this Herculean task from the surrounding districts of Sutton, Parr, Burtonwood, and Haydock? Could this coal pit, as advertised at Newton, be the Collins Green Colliery? It certainly points this way



Intersection Bridge utilitarian structure and foot bridge, built 1880s



The Intersection Bridge and Penlake Lane, 1832. Build by Vignoles. Note the vertical boiler locomotive (Rocket type) on the St. Helens and Runcorn Gap railway mainline.





An old man transporting a heavy larch bar from the timber stockyard to the pit shafts a hundred years ago. Bars like this were used only on main roads, a flat surface generally being sawn on two sides of the bar. Split bars i.e. seven or eight inch diameter props sawn down the middle were used as supports on secondary roads and coal faces.

**1878 “A Wail from Parr” about Collins Green**

My wife’s been lately quite out of fettle  
When I enter the house she starts to shout,  
The Devil’s got into this confounded kettle  
Or else by my uncle he’s gone up the spout.

One time I thought her a gentle fairy,  
As a beauty she once was my queen.  
But lately she’s ever so contrary,  
All through the water from Collins Green

We’ve got a kettle but it’s quite destroyed,  
Sometimes I don’t know what it can mean  
You can bet your boots I’m confoundedly annoyed,  
By the hard water from Collins Green.

Iff every pot could speak they’d unfold a tale  
They’d tell you what I mean,  
Inside the’re covered an thick with scale  
By the beautiful water from Collins Green

You may think I’ve gone a little too far,  
But oh no, it’s plain to be seen,  
Just go and examine the kettles in Parr  
And you’ll never forget Collins Green.

**1878 St. Helens Newspaper**

The above poem was written by an unknown resident of Parr, giving his views about the hard water from the Collins Green Pits.

**1910** I know from my own experience that in my early days at Sutton, pots and kettles were thick with lime scale

**My own recollections of Collins Green Colliery**

I have it on my mind that the Government Inspector of Mines did inspect Collins Green Colliery in the 1870s

**1931** One hundred years later, in 1931, the Collins Green Colliery ceased to produce coal.

**1986** The colliery continued the electric pumping of water from the well shaft until 1986. The water was pumped to the Sutton Road pumping station for St. Helens’ supply. Bold Colliery took over the maintenance of headgear, electric winder, cages and shafts from 1931 to 1986.



Collins Green Colliery 1800s-1931. Finished production of coal 1931.

Fifty years after coal production finished, shaft surrounds are now wild and overgrown with weeds.

Shafts, electric and water pumps were still being maintained by Bold personnel up to the closure of Bold Colliery in 1986.

## **Situation of Collins Green Colliery**

The Colliery was situated in No. 3 St., Helens area on the west of the South Lancashire coalfield. It was adjacent to, and serviced by, the British Railways main line from Liverpool to Manchester, being approximately 14 miles from Liverpool and 18 miles from Manchester.

## **Local Situation**

The colliery lay to the west side of the railway, on the Parr side, and on the opposite side to the Collins Green village and station. Its main gates opened on to Broad Lane, near the foot of the bridge, over the main line (Liverpool to Manchester) and was approximately 3 miles from St. Helens and 6 miles from Warrington. In fact, the colliery lay about 1 mile from Bold Colliery, on the opposite side of the railway, and half a mile from the Collins Green railway station.

## **82 years ago - my earliest recollection**

**1916** I am now approaching my 88<sup>th</sup> year and, looking back, I remember going through the main gates off Broad Lane into the colliery premises on one of the company's farm carts which came under my Uncle Jim's position as farm bailiff for the company. I was about 6 years old at this time.

In front of me was the large, open space which was the colliery yard, and directly ahead, probably 40 yards away, was the pit brow, elevated on its wooden supporting legs. To the left was the protruding "stuff rook", and immediately to the right were the main offices, a lengthy two-storey building which ran parallel to Broad Oak Road. The old mineral road lay in between the offices and the road.

## **The old Mineral Road to the "Crossing"**

I have good reason to know about the old crossing road because my brother Fred was the last person to live and own the old Railway Cottage which was built by Stephenson of railway fame about the 1830s. The garden, which was quite large and included the old crossing road, was overcome with weed. Fred and I uncovered the old road, which was used before the bridge was built over the railway to take the traffic through. What a sight it must have been to see the old crossing keeper holding back the horse traffic until the Steam Monster and its train had safely passed by, and then again, the colliers, with their families, early in the morning, standing by to watch the engines and trains go thundering by before crossing the permanent way.

Memory brings me back to the time when an old man came talking to us and remarked that he was born here, and that his family including his father and mother worked down the mine. My brother Fred indicated his Railway Cottage, but the old man smiled, shook his head and said, "No, you've got me wrong. I was born **down** the pit." We accepted his story and left it at that. However, at a later date, when I was interested in local history, I would have enquired more fully into the details of his family and what went on down the mine on that particular day. In retrospect, one would only hope that when the infant was born, there were other women in that

district of the mine who could have given the mother some assistance in the meagre light of an oil pit lamp.

### **When all the family worked down the mine**

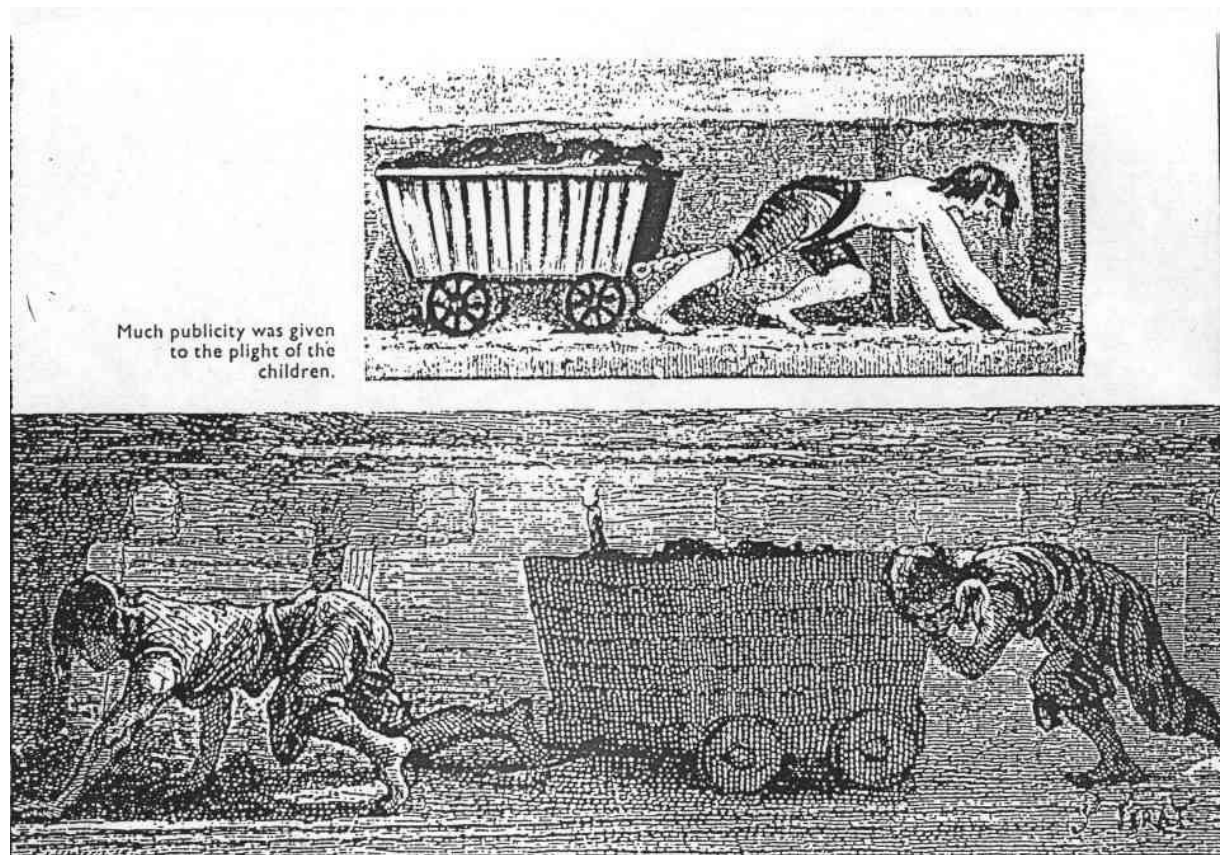
I believe in the days before Parliament made it unlawful for women to work down below, that whole families worked extracting the coal and conveying it first by saucer shaped large baskets, and where possible, by barrows, and later by wooden boxes they called tubs which ran on rails. Girls and boys were used as Drawers, commonly called Thruchers. They wore a belt around the waist called a Dog Collar, which was attached by a rope to the baskets or tubs. Sometimes, in the very low tunnels, they had to pull the coal laden basket up to the Pit Eye on all fours. Children as young as four had the job of preventing the food, which was suspended by twine or cord from the horizontal wooden bar which supported the roof, from being eaten by rats or mice. The children were armed with sticks for the job of beating the rodents away.

### **1786 A poor boy, aged nine, is apprenticed to a collier**

Orphans, or children of the very poor, were adopted by colliers who undertook to teach them the craftsmanship of getting coal, and took them down the pit with them. Very strict conditions were laid down for them to observe whilst they lived with the collier. These indentures were drawn up with leaders of the parish, possibly a Church Warden and Overseers of the Poor.

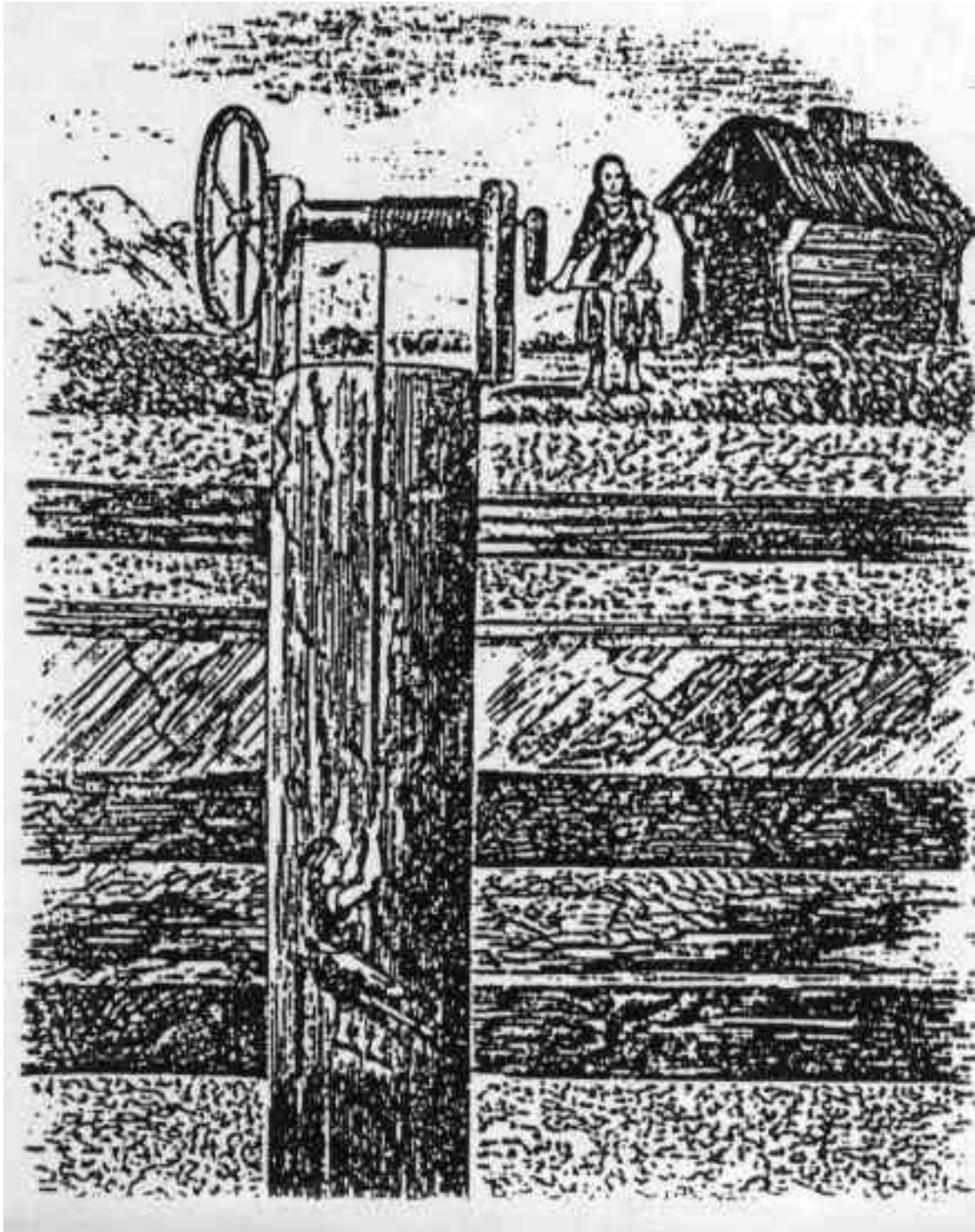
### **1786 A Covenant of Indenture for a period of 7 years**

What follows is part of the text for an indenture made out “30<sup>th</sup> January one thousand, seven hundred and eighty six (1786), between Thomas Speakman, Church Warden, James Naylor and Joseph Rylands, Overseer of the Poor, of the township of Parr in the County of Lancaster of the one part and Frank Lowson of Parr in the county of said county coal mines of the other hand or part. Witnessneth, that the said Church Wardens and Overseers by and with the consent and allowance of two of His Majesty’s Justices of the Peace (one of the Quorum) and for the said County, have put, place and bound, and by these presents do put, place and bind Joseph Topping, aged nine years or thereabouts, who is a poor boy of the said township, as an apprentice to the said Frank Lowson with him to co-habit and dwell after the manner of an apprentice for and during the term of seven years, during which time, his said master he shall faithfully serve, his secrets to keep, his lawful commands obey. At cards, dice or any unlawful game he shall not play, or exercise himself therein. Ale houses, taverns, evil company he shall not frequent. Fornication or adultery he shall not commit, nor matrimony contract during the said term. Neither shall he consume, waste or lend the goods of his said master or suffer the same, and give notice to his said master thereof. Neither shall he absent himself from the service of his said master by day or night during the whole term of his apprenticeship, but in all things behave himself to his said master and all his family as becometh a faithful apprentice during the said term.”



Much publicity was given  
to the plight of the  
children.

Much publicity was given to the plight of children working down the mines.



The general public knew little or nothing of the underground world until the 1842 Parliamentary Committee on Children in the Mines published their report with illustrations.



### **Other matters pertaining to Collins Green Colliery**

The colliery had its own wagon shop, where wagons were built as new, and where wagon repairs took place. Wagons were painted red, and the letters C. G. C painted on them in white.

- 1914** The colliery had fairly extensive farm land around the colliery and the land around  
- Bold Colliery was farmed and provided hay for pony food. The last pit pony, a small  
**1918** chestnut called Billy, was kept in retirement at Collins Green Colliery Farm. I visited  
him as a child during the First World War (1914-1918)

The colliery owned property in Collins Green and Burtonwood. House maintenance was carried out by the colliery tradesman, who had a workshop under the archway and water tower at Burtonwood village.

Building bricks were sold from the Collins Green Colliery Offices. The bricks carried the stamp C. G. C., but they were made at the Bold Brickworks, alongside the Bold Colliery. The bricks were made from rock extracted from the No. 2 pit. The rock was placed on the open ground to weather, before going into the grinding mill.

- 1878** St. Helens Corporation required an increase in water in the town and pumping  
stations were made at the colliery.

- 1931** Pumping was carried on from the disused shafts from 1931 until 1986, when the Bold  
- and Collins Green Co., now nationalised, was closed down.  
**1986**

### **The “Banksman” and Bank House, Bold**

In the early days of mining, a man was put in charge of the mine or mines by the owners. He was supposed to know the business of mining inside and out. He was called the Banksman. He was responsible for the smooth running of the mine, the cost of labour and maintenance of the colliery and the production of coal. He also set the price of coal to be sold. It was a very responsible job and he was answerable to the owners as to whether it was a going concern or not.

- 1881** In later days, the Banksman took over the name of Agent. The Agent, dating from the  
last century to the early part of this century, from 1900 to the 1920s, was a Mr. A. J.  
Thompson, who was responsible for Collins Green and Bold collieries. He lived at  
Bank House, Bold Road. Bank House was a large house standing in its own grounds,  
and containing a drive, orchard and lengthy green houses. Adjoining these were the  
farm buildings and yard, together with stables, storerooms, lofts, traproom,  
ambulance room, pig sties and harness room. It also boasted a horizontal lengthy  
steam engine, complete with vertical steam boiler, used at one time for the cutting of  
chaff. For the feeding of pit ponies and farm horses.

Also on the outside of the farm buildings were the pebble dashed picturesque cottages called Bank House Cottages, in the larger of which my Uncle, James Bamber, lived. He was known as the Farm Bailiff. My father, Joseph Bamber, a younger brother,



lived there until he was married. Never a week went by without my visiting Bank House and farm, from being born in 1910 to later on in my life. I also spent all my school holidays living there.

In His Majesty's High Court of Justice.

The District Probate Registry at

*Liverpool*

BE IT KNOWN that

*Jemima Bamber*  
*of Jew Tree Farm, Burtonwood*  
*in the County of Lancaster*

died *there* on the *24<sup>th</sup>* day of *November* 19*44*

Intestate *a widow*

AND BE IT FURTHER KNOWN that at the date hereunder written Letters of Administration of all the Estate which by law devolves to and vests in the personal representative of the said Intestate were granted by his Majesty's High Court of Justice at the District Probate Registry thereof at

*Liverpool*

to *Frank Bamber of 34*  
*Clay Lane Burtonwood*  
*aforsaid Commercial Clerk the*  
*lawful son and one of the persons*  
*entitled to share in the estate*  
of the said Intestate.

AND IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that an Affidavit for Inland Revenue has been delivered wherein it is shewn that the gross value of the said Estate in

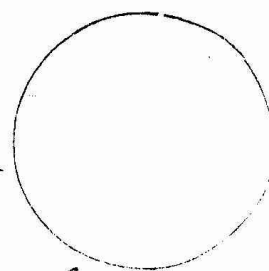
*Great Britain*

(exclusive of what the said deceased may have been possessed of or entitled to as a Trustee and not beneficially) amounts to £ *118-10-2*

and that the said Affidavit bears a stamp of £ *1-10-0*

Dated the *5<sup>th</sup>* day of *January* 19*45*.

*K. Rymond*  
District Registrar.



13907 8/40

Admon.

Extracted by *the Administrator Inland Revenue*

DD<sub>3</sub>

Parish.....*St. Andrew*  
No. of Assessment.....*146*

## INCOME TAX: YEAR 1920-21.

## Notice of Assessment.

**Tax payable on or before the date or dates shown below.**

To Frank Barber of Bank Use Cottages Boston

**TAKE NOTICE,** That an Assessment or Assessments under the respective Schedules specified have been duly made on you by the Commissioners of Income Tax, for the year ending the 5th of April, 1921, as follows:

SCHEDULE E.						SCHEDULE D.	
In respect of Profits of Offices or Employments						In respect of other Profits, viz.:	
£	S.	£	S.				
AMOUNT OF ASSESSMENT.....						238	10
LESS DEDUCTIONS FOR:—							
Expenses	Earned Income Allowance—1/10th of net Earned Income (maximum £200)	Personal Allowance	Allowance granted in certain circumstances:—			Dependent Relatives	
			Housekeeper	Children			
£	£ 23 1/2	£ 210	£	£	£	238	10

TAXABLE INCOME FROM ABOVE SOURCES	at 3/- in the £....
	at 6/- in the £....

*NOTE.*—The first £225 of a taxpayer's taxable income is chargeable at 3s. in the £; the remainder is chargeable at 6s.

TAX CHARGEABLE THEREON.

LESS ALLOWANCES OF TAX (if any) as under:—

- (i) Allowance for Life Assurance:—  
 at 3s. in the £ where the total income does not exceed £1,000, and in any case where the assurance was effected after 22nd June, 1916;  
 at 4s. 6d. in the £ where the total income exceeds £1,000, but does not exceed £2,000, and the assurance was effected on or before 22nd June, 1916;  
 at 6s. in the £ where the total income exceeds £2,000, and the assurance was effected on or before 22nd June, 1916;  
 and further allowance, if any, under the provisions set out overleaf.
- (ii) Relief of 3s. in the £ on any dividends, interest, &c., taxed at 6s. in the £, but chargeable in your case at 3s. only (see Note above).

**NOTE.**  
In the case of offices or employments, and profits of individuals or firms from trade, profession or vocation, the tax is payable in two instalments, on or before 1st January, 1921, and 1st July, 1921, respectively, and allowance under (b) above being given in equal parts from the instalments, and any relief under (c) (i) from the first instalment as far as possible.

In other cases the tax is wholly payable on or before 1st January, 1921.

Net Tax Payable on or before 1st January, 1921....

Net Tax Payable on or before 1st July, 1921 .....

[The Collector will apply in due course for the net tax payable should no appeal be made].

If you intend to appeal against the above, you must:—

- (1) give notice of your objection in writing, within twenty-one days of the date hereof, to H.M. INSPECTOR OF TAXES at his office, situate at

**WINMARLEIGH STREET, WARRINGTON.**

- and (2) appear before the Commissioners personally, or, if the Commissioners for any cause permit, by duly authorised agent, at the time and place fixed for hearing appeals (of which due notice will be given), unless you are previously advised that such appearance is unnecessary.

Dated this..... day of..... 1920

HENRY GREENALL

## **1878    281 years of service to Collins Green and Bold Collieries**

The closure of the old colliery of Collins Green, and later, in 1986, Bold, seems to me like the passing of old friends because of the connections and roots of my family having worked for both collieries, together with my Uncle's family by the natural bond of relationship, totalling up a period of 281 years.

### **The various classes of work**

What kind of work did the 281 years embrace? Maybe some people outside the mining industry would visualise someone wielding a pick and spading coal into boxes or baskets, as they did in the early days of mining, and somehow getting the coal to the surface by means of a winding rope and so on to the railway coal wagons. On the contrary, I will try to explain the various types of work we were committed to in the production of coal, and the time that each member of our families contributed to the Collins Green Colliery Company

### **My Uncle James Bamber 1856 - 1917**

First my Uncle Jim Bamber, born 1856 and died in 1917, aged 61. He started work at Collins Green Colliery at the age of 22 years as a furnace man, at the bottom of the Dumb Drift. The Dumb Drift was a shaft built on an angle to join the Upcast Shaft, approximately two thirds of the way up, allowing the hot air to rise from the furnace and create a draught of air moving upwards to the surface. This created a primitive form of ventilation as cold air was drawn down the other shafts, which were called Downcast Shafts. At that time, the cold air being drawn down the Down Cases was essential for the workers in the mine to breathe more freely and rid the workings of stagnant air and poisonous gases.

### **Head Pony Man**

Pit ponies were used and stabled down the old Collins Green pits, and before long, my uncle was promoted to the fresh job as Head Pony Man. My uncle's experience and "know how" was due to his father's occupation as Mail Deliverer on horseback, and so he saw to the management, stabling and welfare of the ponies - a job he liked due to his love of horses and ponies.

### **Farm Bailiff and Estate Manager**

Again, my uncle was promoted to be the Farm Bailiff at the two farms belonging to the Collieries. Farm labourers, pit ponies and the farming of the lands all came under him, and he was responsible for the ready service of the horse ambulance which served both collieries. The ambulance was beautifully made, well finished and coach built, fully enclosed with two small doors at the rear with small windows in them. The ambulance was well sprung for comfortable riding. It is a great pity it was not preserved to the present day.

I remember the socket by my Uncle's right hand side to hold the long whip and the wheel he turned to apply the brakes, and the wide seat, high at the front for easy

viewing to the front and rear of the ambulance. I remember Paddy, the big Irish horse, whose job it was to pull the ambulance, and the large float that contained the four wage clerks, policemen and wages, which, every Friday morning, were taken from the Collins Green offices to go around the roads to Bold Colliery, to pay the workers there. My uncle was responsible for all this. Paddy, the big grey was, of all the horses, my Uncle's favourite. He was an intelligent animal and did everything that was expected of him.

### **Bank House Cottages and Carriage Rooms**

Facing the south of Bank House farm was a long brick built building which comprised of two pebble dashed cottages and a large carriage room which enclosed the horse ambulance at the end. In the other end were the two-wheeled carriages, about four in number. One was well furnished and used for the top management, directors etc., another was used for carrying machinery from places like Wm. Neill, the Bold Foundry. It was very strongly built for that purpose, and pulled by Paddy.

Another was the large carriage for bringing the wages, clerks and policemen etc. from Collins Green to Bold, and the last was what we called the Governess Float. It was small and neat and pulled by Tim the pony, who had a loose box at the end of the carriage room. It is over eighty years since I first rode in these carriages we called floats or traps, and I am probably the last living person hereabouts who rode in the horse ambulance.

### **The Governess Trap**

The small, neat governess trap was used by the Agent's wife, Mrs. Thompson, for her shopping trips. During my school holidays, when living at my Uncle's home, I accompanied Mrs. Thompson, her daughter, Alice, and her son, Billy, on their weekly trip to Earlestown Market. On Friday mornings, pulled by Tim the pony, we would go through Collins Green and over the canal, up Common Brow and so on to the market. Once shopping was completed, we would go back home again in time for dinner, summoned by the large bell under the archway being rung by the two servants they had at Bank House.

And so, my Uncle Jim's contribution was 39 working years when he died in 1971 aged 61.

### **Robert Bamber, born 1890, Farm Worker**

Bob Bamber, my Uncle Jim's eldest son, worked with his father on the company's land for 20 years, from the age of 14. He then took up a similar position as his dad, as Farm Bailiff, on the Winstanley Estate near Billinge. The estate was owned by Squire Banks. He held this position from 1904 until 1914, when he was a soldier in France during the First World War (1914-1918). On his return from the war, until 1928, he again worked for the company farm.



Company Quarter Master Sergeant Frank Bamber, Royal Engineers serving in France.



Burtonwood A.F.C. Frank Bamber is third from left on the back row.

1915-1916  
 1st World War  
 Mount Corbiere

W. B. Capt. J. P. M. M. R.

Joined army early 1915. Experienced from France and Belgium from Feb., 1916. Awarded (Mentioned in Service Medal).

From 1915 to 1916 - Training, but the main work on Coast Defence works - Kentish Coast.

On first joining up was sent with a Subaltern to the 1st Coy. R.E. under Western Command. After being formed and named the 1st Coy. was ordered to form part of the 57th Division. Completing on justice to itself through its period of

Originally as many other discharged soldiers look back to some happy times - for not always ducking and "wind up" and treasure two sport medals and a map and cricket medals. The map I lost. Company office and interesting because of the different villages which means through on line of March and other have collected in.

Fought with the 1st and Division in Arras from the South of Popering to the Somme - was in at the taking of it after only one night in this place after making it was rushed up to take the town. I was happy to be in at the taking of it - for having spent a considerable time in Arras I often looked across where you see "Lille" from various parts and hoped times to be in at the taking of it. So I must add to those periods I never should. Very little damage was done to the beautiful town - the outskirts only being by our armies.

My worst experiences and where I didn't I should be playing football for Pontonwood was at Gommecourt. Pontonwood - Cambrai Arras. I mention there because they were places I got the most shattering.

**R.S.** **UNIT REGISTER CARD.** **A.G.Z. 509**  
FRANCE.

Regiment or Corps *Royal Engineers*

1. Dispersal Area in U.K. to which proceeding <i>3</i>	9. Service in the Field in years, in the present War <i>2</i>
2. Industrial Group as shown on A.F.Z.8 <i>37</i>	10. Service Category <i>XIC</i>
3. Trade or Profession <i>Electrician</i>	11. Medical Category <i>A</i>
4. Demobilizer or Pivotal Man	12. Specialist Qualification <i>Electrician</i>
5. Date on release slip <i>11.2.1919</i>	13. Year of Birth <i>1893</i>
6. Married or Single <i>Single</i>	14. Corps <i>RE</i>
7. If for Repatriation Overseas (a) Country	15. Unit
(b) Regional No.	16. Number & Rank <i>430041 C.O.M.S.</i>
8. Length of service in years <i>3 1/2</i>	17. Surname & Initials <i>Bamber F.</i>

(See para. 7, Chapter XIX. Army Demobilization Instructions—France.) P.T.O.

4. Military qualifications as shewn in A. B. 64.

5. Special Remarks as to qualifications, work done, or skill acquired during service with the Colours. This is required as a help in finding civil employment.

*The work of this NCO. has been of the very highest order throughout the period 1915-1919. His work as the rank of C.O.M.S. - Commanding officer and his Company was whole.*

Soldier's Signature (For identification purposes) *F. Bamber* Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Rank)  
Commanding \_\_\_\_\_ (Unit)

NOTES.—The object of this certificate is to assist the soldier in obtaining employment on his return to civil life. The form will be completed as soon as possible in accordance with Demobilization Regulations.

As soon as signed and completed it will be given to the soldier concerned and will remain his property. He should receive it as early as is compatible with making the necessary references in order that he can either send it home or keep it in his possession.

One form will be issued to each man, and no duplicate can ever be issued.

19



TELEPHONE NO 42  
WIRINGTON EXCHANGE.  
TELEGRAMS: "FLORIDA, COLLINS GREEN."  
PLEASE ADDRESS ALL BUSINESS  
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE COMPANY.

Collins Green,  
Newton-le-Willows,  
Lancashire. 1st. February 1915

Memorandum from The Collins Green Colliery Ltd

To Officer Commanding  
421 W.I. Field Coy R.E.  
France

ALL OFFERS SUBJECT TO STRIKE CLAUSE AND TO ACCEPTANCE BY RETURN OF POST UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

We hereby declare that, 430041 C.Q.M. Sgt F. Bamber,  
Field Coy. R.E. was in our employ on August 4th 1914, and that  
prepared to offer him employment immediately on his return

Forwarded by the  
Barlston R.A.C.

Arthur Begg

FOR THE COLLINS GREEN COLLIERY  
BARLESTON  
1-FEB-1915  
WIRINGTON EXCHANGE

Army Form Z. 9.

**NOMINAL ROLL (all Ranks).**

Regiment or Corps WEST LANC. FIELD CO. RE.

Date 22.2.19

Place PREES HEATH, PREES

Regl. No.	Rank	Names in full Surname first (Block Letters)	Remarks
430041	C.Q.M.S.	BAMBER	Frank Bamber
430042	Sapper	CORNES	David
430044	Sapper	TROW	Joseph

- (a) Industrial Group No 37  
(b) Trade or Calling Clerk  
(c) Surname BAMBER  
(d) Regimental No 430041 Rank C.Q.M. Sgt  
(e) Address for pay BANK HOUSE COTTAGE, COLLINS GREEN, BARLESTON  
(f) Name and Address of Employer who has undertaken to employ you

20

### **Frank Bamber, born 1893. Office Clerk**

Frank Bamber was my Uncle's second son, born in 1893. In 1907, at the age of 14, he started work in the office at Collins Green Colliery. He worked in the office until 1915, when he enlisted to the Royal Engineers and became Quarter Master Sergeant, until he was demobbed in 1919. Frank did active service in Europe during the First World War, and I have some of his army papers in my possession (given to me - Frank was my Godfather when I was baptised). After he finished his war duties, he was reinstated at Collins Green offices and his contribution of working years to the company was 42 years, Frank died in 1972, aged 79 years.

### **James Bamber, born 1900. Fitter and Turner**

Jim Bamber, the youngest son, was born in 1900 and started his working life at the age of 14 as an apprentice Fitter and Turner at Collins Green Colliery. He became very experienced with all kinds of steam engines and pumps. Jim was transferred from Collins Green to Bold, where he was in charge of the three steam locomotives which were in poor working condition.

He was given a free hand by the manager, a Mr. Eric Richardson. He decided to improve the running of two locomotives and to dismantle the third and build her up as new. When Jim took over, the locomotives were only capable of pulling three wagons containing 30 tons of coal. However, by his efforts he got them running reasonably well. When he finished the third locomotive, it was viewed by the management, all newly painted up with new tyres on and it pulled 30 wagons, which amounted to 300 tons of coal.

Jim was the only fitter I ever saw during my work stay at Bold using the large lathe. He lifted the axles, complete with wheels, onto the lathe and trued them up. Then he made a raised platform under the three legs. The three legs were three twelve inch square baulks of timber set up to straddle the railway line in front of the shops. Their main job was to lift heavy machinery out of railway wagons. The raised platform was made to support a large fire, which, in turn, heated the outer tyres placed on the platform until they were red hot. Once they were red hot, Jim placed the rims onto the wheels he had trued up and they were then shrunk on. This feat of engineering was watched by many of the tradesmen at Bold.. It was the first time it had ever been done at Bold. Some viewed it with interest and complimented Jim; others were tight-lipped and did not like it.

Eventually, Jim was made foreman over the fitting shop. He also maintained the pumps at Forshaws Brewery, over the artesian wells. The Forshaws were near neighbours to Bank House, where my Uncle's family lived. Jim completed 46 years divided between Collins Green and Bold Colliery.

### **Nellie Gleave, nee Bamber, and William Gleave**

My dad, Joseph Bamber, always referred to my cousin Nellie Bamber as "Our Nell". She was my uncle's only daughter, and I looked up to her a lot more as an elder sister

than as a cousin. The closeness of our two families came about when my father, Joseph, was orphaned. He was the youngest in the family, so he finished his upbringing living with his eldest brother, James Bamber - my Uncle Jim and family.

I was christened Frank after my cousin Frank, and my sister Nellie was likewise called after my cousin Nellie. Many people thought that my Uncle Jim and his wife, Aunt Jemima, were my grandparents. I write this to show how close we were to one another.

Nellie Bamber married William Gleave from the village of Collins Green. Bill, as we called him, succeeded my Uncle Jim as farm bailiff for Collins Green and Bold. He was born in 1890 and worked from 1914 to 1942, a period of 28 years, for the colliery companies. Prior to this, he had worked as a drayman for Forshaws Brewery

- 1942** When the colliery was transferred to the new owners, Sutton Heath Colliery Company, in 1942, Bill Gleave and Nellie, along with Aunt Jemima, had to leave the Collins Green Company, and Forshaws, the brewery people offered them the running of the Yew Tree Farm opposite Burtonwood Brewery at Penny Lane. The farm was, and still is, the original house where James and Jane Forshaw lived. James Forshaw died in 1890. His picture was still in evidence, hung upon the living room wall, when my cousin Nellie and Bill lived there. His photograph was of a real old English gentleman, with his top hat, side whiskers and cravat

And so, the total number of years worked by my Uncle James Bamber and family amounted to 175 working years.

### **Nellie Bamber of Bank House Cottage and Yew Tree Farm**

My cousin Nellie Bamber, as she was known before marrying Bill Gleave and becoming a farmer's wife, was known as a dress maker around Bold.

She would visit many of the farm houses and places around Bold for particulars of size and dresses that were required by the wives and girls who lived there.

Nellie, when I was quite small (which is over 80 years ago now), would take me along with her when she went out to see whatever they wanted as regards dress or garment.

She was a friend of Sally Ford, a girl or young woman who lived at Rose Hill Farm, and who, before she married Frank Marnell, carried on a business herself as a milk dairy proprietor, going out herself, driving her milk float and pony, and delivering milk around Bold.

- 1679** Rose Hill Farm at Douglas Avenue was built in 1679. Even when I was very young, I remember thinking how ancient it looked, with its timber work and large stone slates on the roof. I noticed how the floor levels were all either step up or step down - not surprising as it was built over 300 years ago, during the reign of Charles II (1649-1685). The Ford family lived there for several generations - Sally was the last one.

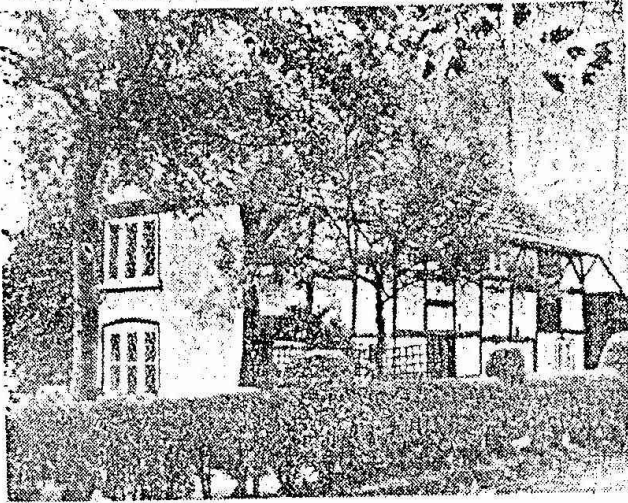
# ROSE HILL FARM THE FORD FAMILY

HOUSES: ROSE HILL FARM

## HISTORY

Reported 27/5/61.

### Growth of St. Helens



Rose Hill Farm, Douglas Avenue, Bold.

**B**OLD today is pin-pointed by the large landmarks of the cooling towers of its large power station. It stands, though, on the fringe of some delightful scenery.

Directly opposite to the power station you can find the remarkably well-preserved farmhouse known as Rosehill Farm. The wife of Mr. Marnell, the owner, was named Ford before marriage and it has been in possession of the Ford family for several generations.

The house was built in 1679, the timber framework resting on a stone plinth with a roof of large stone slates.

#### Large estate

Not a hundred yards away from the farm can be found one of the entrances to the second largest estate in South Lancashire, Bold Estate. The great park was once famed for its oak trees and possessed two halls—Old Bold Hall and the new Bold Hall.

The Old Hall was built in 1616 by Richard Bold and the new one in 1730 by Peter Bold. Both halls had exquisite interiors. The New Hall was built by Leoni, an Italian architect. Its ceilings were painted by Cipriani, a fireplace made of marble from Hadrian's villa and a great

library. Both halls had cock pit rooms.

The last of the Bolds had 500 fighting cocks and paid his setter £500-£600 a year. The Old Hall of many timbered gables and a Jacobean tower possessed a moat, part of which remains today.

The landscape was planned and laid out about 1800 and it survives sufficiently to preserve its outline and general form. The south drive is entered between twin lodges on the Warrington Road and is nearly two miles long.

#### Graceful curves

The west and north drives follow graceful curves and the east drive was known as the "Ladies Walk."

After the death of Peter Bold in 1762, Bold descended to the families of Patten - Bold, Safrieha, and Bold-Houghton, and after other changes of ownership is now held by his descendant, Roger Hesketh, of North Meols.

Some of the Bolds of Bold Hall included Robert Barnes, Bishop of Carlisle 1570-7 and of Durham 1577-88, and Richard Rancroft, Bishop of London 1597-1604, Archbishop of Canterbury 1604-10, and founder of the library in Lambeth Palace.

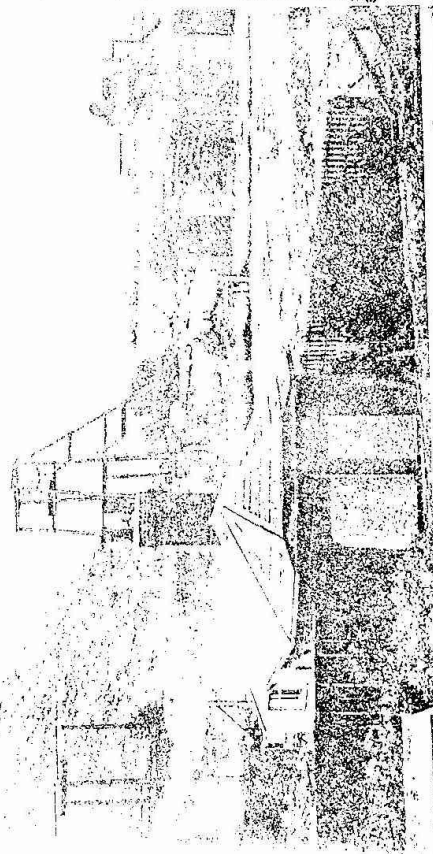
Sir Thomas Bold founded St. Michael's Church, Burtonwood, in 1605 and it was rebuilt in 1716 by Peter Bold. At St. Luke's, Farnworth (Widnes) can be found many of the tombs of the Bold family, and there are some rare erect effigies there of Richard Bold and his wife who died about 1635.

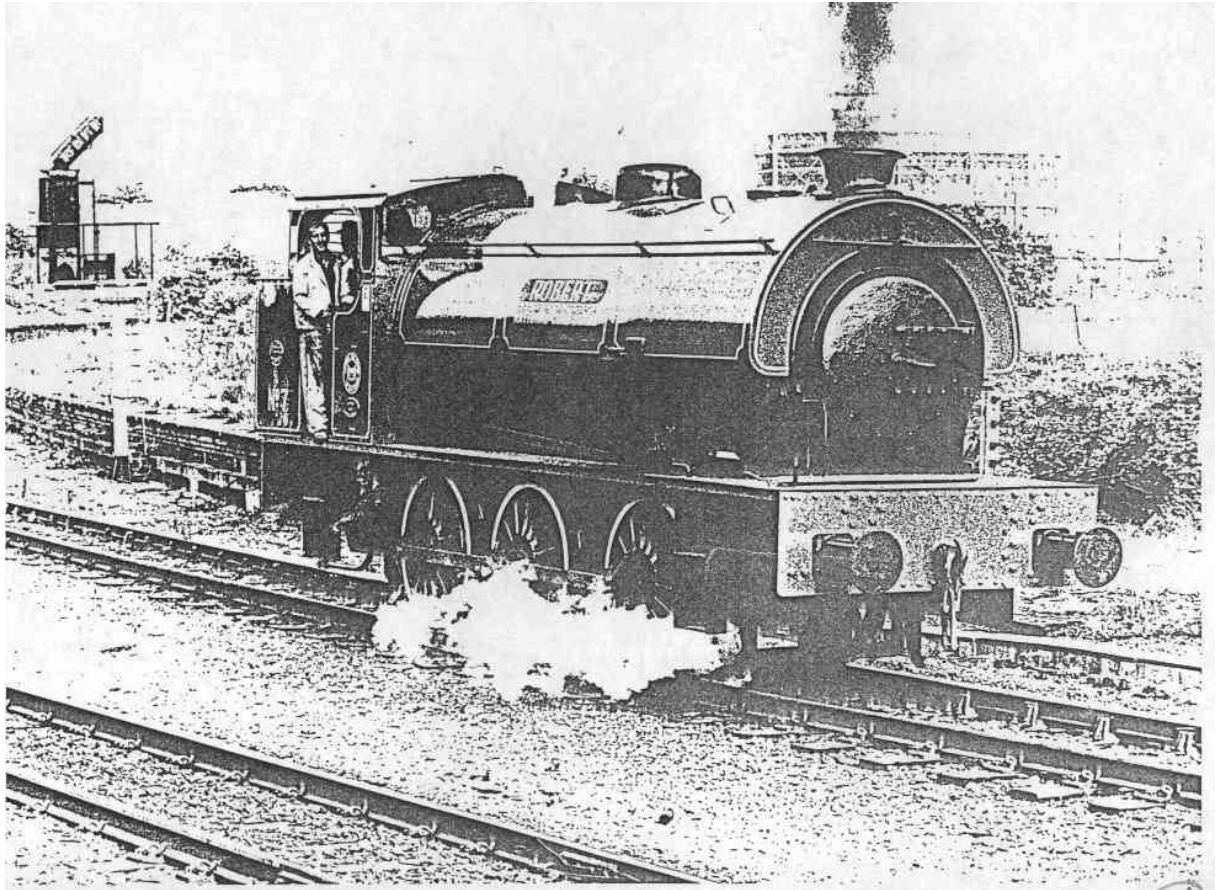
#### Dummy books

In the Bold Chapel is a door of dummy books taken from the library at Bold Hall. The walls of the nave are decorated with an impressive series of hatchments of the Bold family.

At the side of the church is a sundial which formerly stood in front of Bold Hall bearing the arms of Peter Bold and his wife, Anna Maria Wentworth.

The New Hall was demolished about 1900 by the colliery company which then owned it, while the Old Hall was only demolished a few years ago. Stretches of the original park wall remain, their entrances and a stable wing. Long may they remain to remind us of the grandeur and nobility that once belonged to Bold.—J. F. SHEEN.





"Robert", one of three locomotives at Bold.

HAYDOCK, ASHTON, EDGE GREEN, PARR, AND GOLBORNE  
COLLIERIES.

DUTIES OF THE UNDERLOOKERS ENGAGED  
AT THESE PITS.

- 1.—The Underlooker shall have the daily supervision and responsible charge of the Pit, under the direction of the Manager.
- 2.—To enter the Pit Daily at 5.45 a.m. and to leave at 3.45 p.m.
- 3.—To meet Night Firemen at the Pit each night at 5.45 p.m.
- 4.—To see the General and Special Rules are duly observed, and to suspend any one infringing any Rule, and to order him out of the Pit, and immediately report the non-observance of the same to the Manager; to receive the Reports of the Firemen, and daily advise with and instruct them. To give immediate attention to any complaint, and inspect personally such part of the Pit as may be reported unsafe, or need his attention thereto, and to remedy any defect.
- 5.—He shall immediately send notice of any Accident to the Manager.
- 6.—Not to leave the Pit during working hours without written permission from the Manager.
- 7.—To adjust the Barometer and Thermometer daily, and register their indications, and when any unusual fall of the Barometer has taken place, to caution Firemen, Furnacemen, and Shot-lighters.
- 8.—To visit and examine every working place in the Pit at least once every other day, and order all Props, Chocks, Timber, Stores, and other material, from the Manager, and see them sent into the districts where needed, and to report any deficient supply to the Manager.
- 9.—To measure and examine the air currents daily, and if there be any deficiency in the ventilation, to take proper steps for having it remedied, also from time to time to travel the returns and all accessible parts of the Mine, examining all Doors, Stoppings, Air Crossings, and Regulators, and to see that they are kept in good order.
- 10.—To see that all Entrances to any place not in actual course of working and extension, are properly fenced across the whole width of such Entrance, so as to prevent persons inadvertently entering the same.
- 11.—To see that the Stations for re-lighting Lamps are well attended to, and that the person in charge keep the Box locked, to prevent any person having access to the same.
- 12.—Before "holing" into any place not working to use additional caution and to carry out General Rule 9.
- 13.—To provide Manholes, or places of refuge, in all Engine-planes, Jig-brows, Balance-brows, and Horse-roads, and to keep them constantly clear, as per General Rules 10, 11, and 12.
- 14.—To examine daily the Report-Books at the Mine, and see that the Reports are properly recorded therein.

We also visited the North Lodge at Bold Park, a sandstone-built lodge with entrance gates on Gorsey Lane, facing Neil's Row, and again at Helsby's Farm, Penny Lane, Collins Green, and Stephenson's Cottage where, at that time (1914), the Adamsons lived with daughter Mabel. Later on, my brother Fred bought the cottage in 1950.

**Joseph Bamber, 1874-1946, aged 72 years. Hooker on, rope splicer, Underlooker, Undermanager, St. John's Ambulance and Rescue Certificate and Fireman.**

- 1892** And now my family's working history at Collins Green and Bold Collieries, starting, of course, with my father Joseph Bamber, who was born in Adlington in 1874, and died in 1946. At the age of 12, he attended one half day at school and one half day at one of the Lancashire mills. He was orphaned at the age of 18, and went to live with his eldest brother, Jim, at Bank House Cottage.

His working life commenced in 1892 at Bold Colliery, and soon, he got the position of hooker-on at the pit bottom. This job called for a certain amount of responsibility and speed in loading the cages with full boxes of coal and retrieving the empty boxes, then signalling to the winder in the engine house to lift the cages to the surface for unloading. The job also required him to search all personnel on vacating the cages at the pit bottom for cigarettes, pipes, tobacco and matches, indeed anything that would endanger life and cause an explosion. These items were called contraband, meaning articles and substances brought in illegally. Anyone found with any of these in his possession was liable to be prosecuted by law.

Joseph Bamber became experienced in the job of rope splicing and was put in charge of all haulage and inspection of winding ropes and shaft maintenance. He also inspected the steel wire rods which steadied the cages when being wound up and down, and did the ordering of ropes from William & James Glover, the wire rope makers off Liverpool Road, St. Helens.

His training to pass his St. John's Ambulance Rescue Certificate involved him in quite a number of really bad accidents. Although my dad had a good head of black hair, he had a small grey patch of hair over his left temple, the cause of which is given below.

- 1905** **Cage Disaster at No. 3 pit Bold Colliery. Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 1905. Five killed and 18 badly injured.**

My dad, Joseph Bamber, was most times in the first cage in the morning shifts, but in this cold morning in January, as the bleak wind swept the colliery brow, he was detained and this delay probably saved his life, or kept him from being seriously hurt.

He was standing with the Brow Man and a queue of mine workers, all standing there with their safety oil lamps in hand, looking forward to getting out of the cold to the warmth of the pit below, when the cage full of night workers came up and crashed and lifted the shaft gates up into the head gear to enter the Bell, which in turn compressed the Butterfly to release the capping of the winding rope. At the same time, this moved the two hooked panels over the rim of the bell, suspending the cage full



of shouting miners at the top of the head gear. The engine winder had overwound, either through a mechanical breakdown or human error. However, the horrified thoughts of those standing on the brow turned to the crashed cage full of their workmates, boys and men.

Joe Bamber, Underlooker, was now in full charge - he told the brow man to send word to the engineer of the disaster, and then asked any St. John's ambulance men or first aiders in the queue to follow him to No. 2 pit, which lay 60 yards away.

The miners waiting to go down No. 2 pit readily gave way to the rescue party, which descended to the mouthing (a tunnel opening cut into the side of the shaft which led from No. 3 to No. 2). A tunnel led to No. 3 pit haulage way, approximately 40 yards to a drop of 3 feet into the haulage way, which led to the pit bottom - the scene of the disaster.

My dad had to take charge. He ordered stretchers, bandages and splints to be brought out of the Under Managers cabin, and then proceeded to the cage to see what could be done.

First of all, the night workers were still gathered at the pit bottom. They were only impeding the rescue work, so they were directed to the inlet at No. 2 pit shaft to wait there to be wound up.

#### **Some details about the disaster**

Five people lost their lives:

John McHendry, aged 14 years  
Thomas Rothwell, aged 14 years  
John Caveney, aged 14 years  
Evan Davies, aged 15 years  
John Swift, aged 24 years

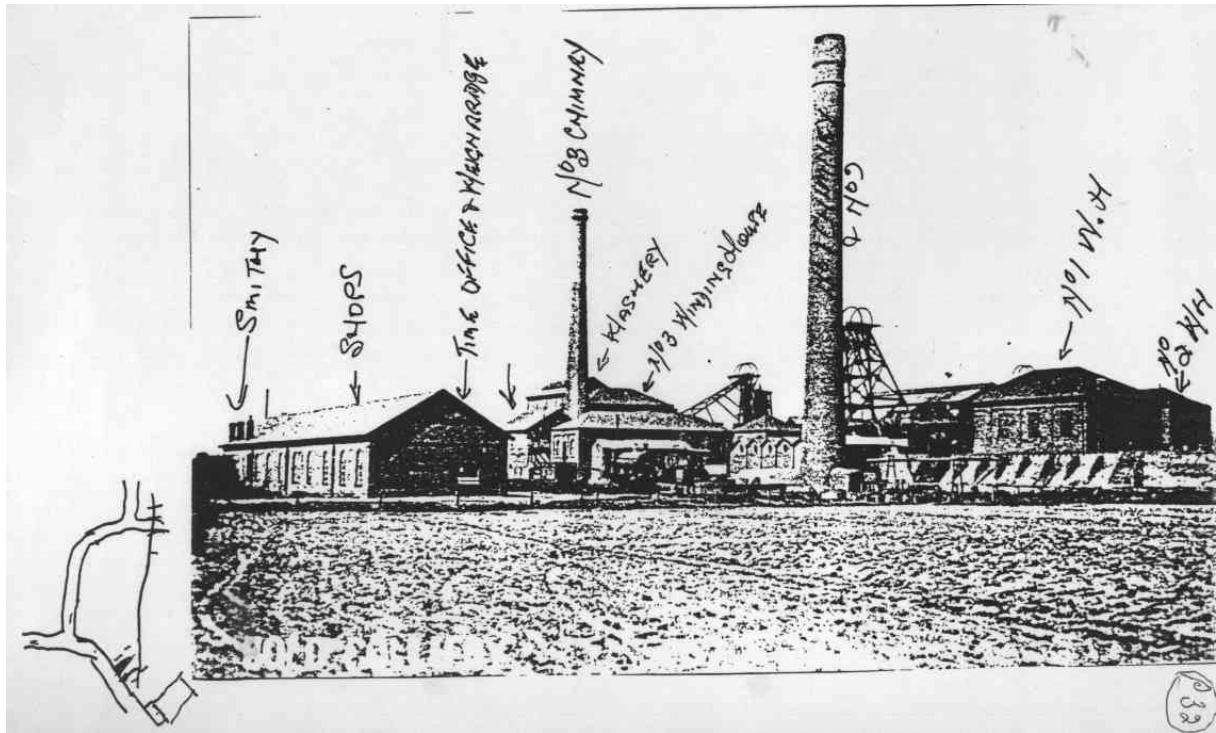
Nine people were seriously hurt, and others suffered from shock.

Cages were approximately eleven feet long, four feet wide and eleven feet high. Usually about 20 persons could be packed in the upper deck, with a rail running down the centre to hold on to, and, at either end, a chain door, which could be easily dropped and raised to ensure safety. Tumblers were used when winding coal, to keep the boxes in.

Usually, the cages for man riding were set at a drop or climb at 40 feet per second, which works out at about 27 ¼ miles per hour.

The accident was put down as an over-wind, but some men at that time were working at an inlet to the shaft and had iron girders displaced. One man in the cage became aware that something was wrong on the descending cage, and shouted "Brace yourselves". The cage carried on and fell onto scaffolding at the pit bottom, which was strong enough to hold them up. If that had failed, they would have drowned in the sump below the pit bottom.





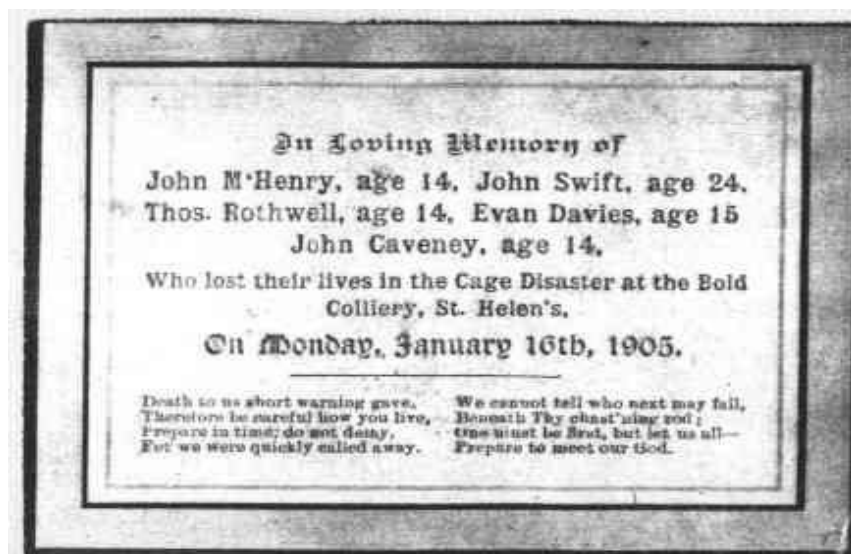
Picture detailing the location of various buildings at Bold Colliery.



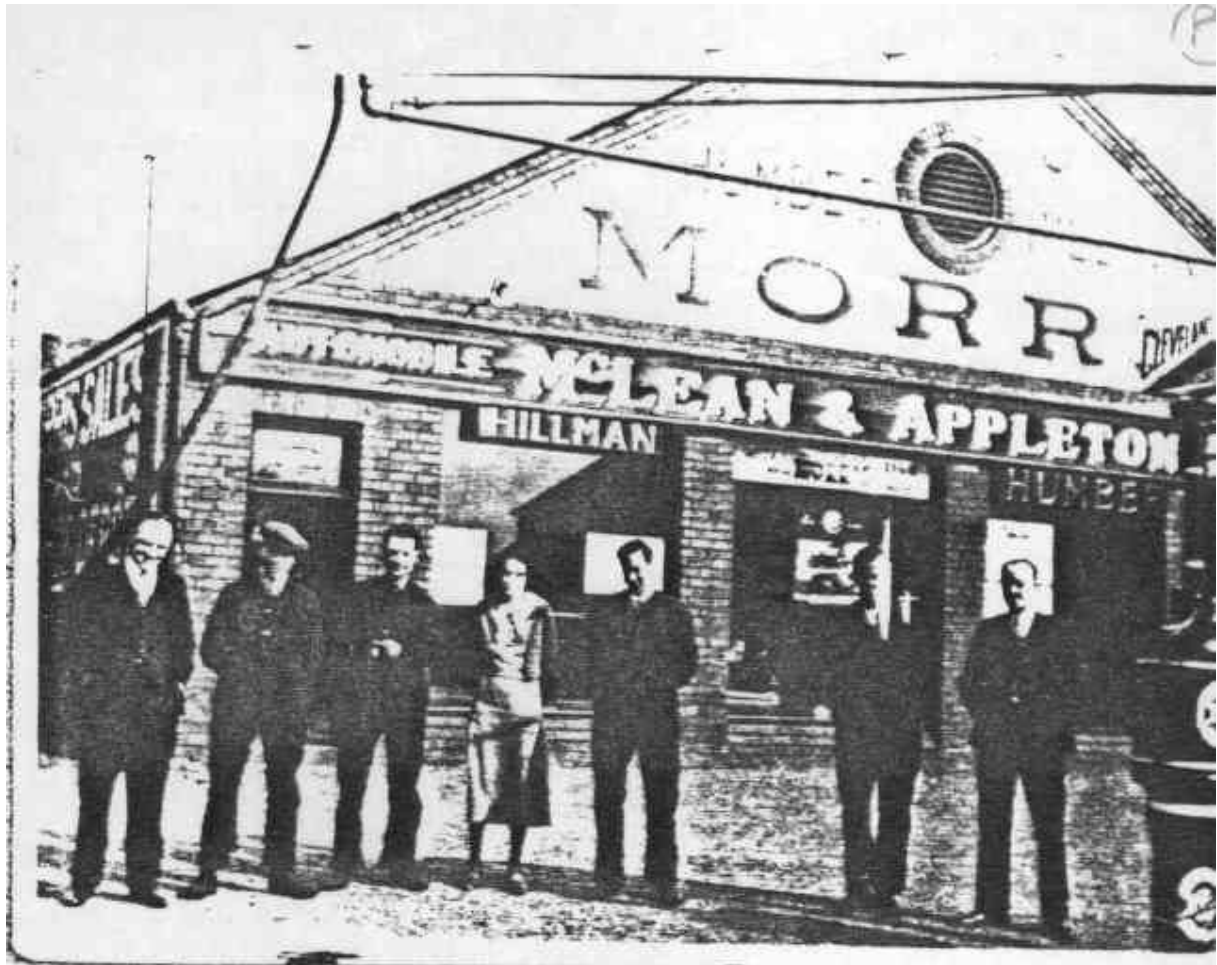
A more modern view of Bold Colliery.



Joseph Bamber of Sutton c.1890s. 1874-1946, aged 72 years.  
Undermanager and Underlooker, Bold Colliery.



Tragedy at Bold Colliery No. 3 pit – 5 killed, 18 injured.



J. C. Bamber, H. Morris, T. Lowery, E. Johnson, T. Owen, W. Langworth. They were, respectively: Manager, mechanic, mechanic, clerk, mechanic, mechanic, Foreman and mechanic at McLean and Appleton's, before it was taken over by Hatton's (photograph - 1930)

Joseph Bamber's service at Bold was 40 years below surface and 7 years when his eyes began to fail.

**Joseph Chapman Bamber 1903-1971, aged 68 years**

Joe, my eldest brother, started work in the office of Wm. Neil & Sons Ltd., the iron foundry at Bold in 1917. He then left the office to serve his time as an apprentice fitter, but after three years, Neil's and other works in general had a very lean time and hit a very bad slump. Joe, along with a lot more, was suspended. Hundreds of people at that time became out of work, and my dad took him on to work down No. 3 pit at Bold. Joe always kept up his studies, both at clerking and now mining, and after spending 5 years down the mine, he was introduced to Mr. Crooks, the manager of Glovers' Rope Works, and began work in the Rope Works office. After a period of time, he became manager and salesman at McClean and Appleton's on Prescott Road, which later became Hattons. Later, in 1946, he bought a wartime storage warehouse in Liverpool Road, Prescott, and formed a company called the Brook Bridge Garage Company. Joe was there 21 years. No-one could doubt his popularity and his organising capabilities. He became Managing Director in the business and continued his studies to keep abreast of the various jobs he held down. Joe was a great fellow and brother.

He contributed 5 years at Bold Colliery 1920-1925.

**Frederick James Bamber, 1905-1975**

- 1905** Fred was my second eldest brother. He attended Sutton National School and later the Higher Grade School at College Street, St. Helens, where he passed his Junior Oxford. His certificate was framed and hung up at home. Fred took it with him when he got married, and somehow it disappeared when his last home was vandalised and set on fire.
- 1975** His home was one of Stephenson's Railway Cottages by the Collins Green Colliery on the Liverpool to Manchester Railway. It was totally destroyed in 1975. The police brought him to my home, and a month later, Fred died aged 70 years.
- 1919** Fred followed my brother Joe into the office at Wm. Neil's Iron Foundry at Bold. Later, he followed Joe's example and took an apprenticeship as a fitter and served his time until 1926, when aged 21, he moved to Bold Colliery.
- 1926** Acetylene burning and welding was being instructed at the Gamble Institute, and Fred was chosen, along with Jack Addison, a fitter at Bold Colliery, who was the son of the landlord of the Pear Tree Hotel, Collins Green, to go along in works time to get the "know how".

The old method of cutting and riveting of metals was done by boiler makers and blacksmiths in a small way, by heating metals in blast fires, but acetylene welding and burning was of great benefit to the engineering trade.

## COLLINS GREEN COLLIERY

There were shafts on the site from early date. The colliery only appeared in the Inspector's Reports in the 1870's and was recorded as being owned by the Collins Green Colliery. By the 1880's this Company also worked Bold colliery.

In 1894 the number of people employed was 841 in the No.1 and the No.2 pits. There were also two other shafts, Nos. 3 and 4 which were used exclusively for pumping. The colliery closed in 1931 when it employed 256 people.

From 'THE REPORT OF THE MINES INSPECTOR'.

8th. February 1897.

Michael Mullam aged 57 years, an ostler was going down the pit and the banksman, though on duty, was not present. Through some misunderstanding the cage was lowered before he was safe and he was crushed by the descending cage.

From 'THE REPORT OF THE MINES INSPECTOR'.

2nd. August 1923.

At 9 am. in the second hour of the shift, James McGrail, a drawer aged 34 years was killed while filling coal tubs and a stone fell from the roof on him. The place was well

timbered and the stone fell from between two slips.

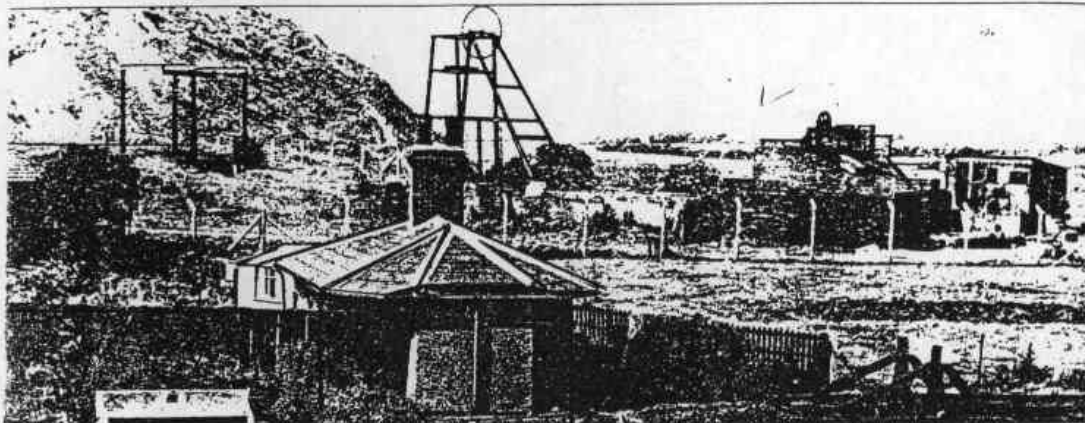
From 'THE NEWTON AND EARLESTOWN GUARDIAN'.

13th. March 1931.

COLLINS GREEN COLLIERY.

Additional claim fails.

Judgement was given in a colliery compensation case held in St. Helens Court on Wednesday by Judge Morris. John Houghton was injured at the colliery on 22nd. March 1923 when top coal fell on him and hurt his head severely. He was off work for several months and received compensation but he returned to the colliery on 3rd. March 1925 when he was certified



THE OLD COLLINS GREEN COLLIERY (Bartonwood Brewery) 'STEVENSONS COTTAGE' 'HAMPSON RAILWAY COTTAGE'

In 1878 the St. Helens Corporation wished to increase the water supply of drinking water to the town and pumping stations were made at the colliery. Drinking water for the town is still pumped from the disused shafts and the water is of excellent quality.

We are informed that the building in the foreground was one of the cottages along the Liverpool Manchester railway line that George Stevenson built. Sadly it has been demolished.

From 'THE REPORT OF THE MINES INSPECTOR'.

23rd. November 1875.

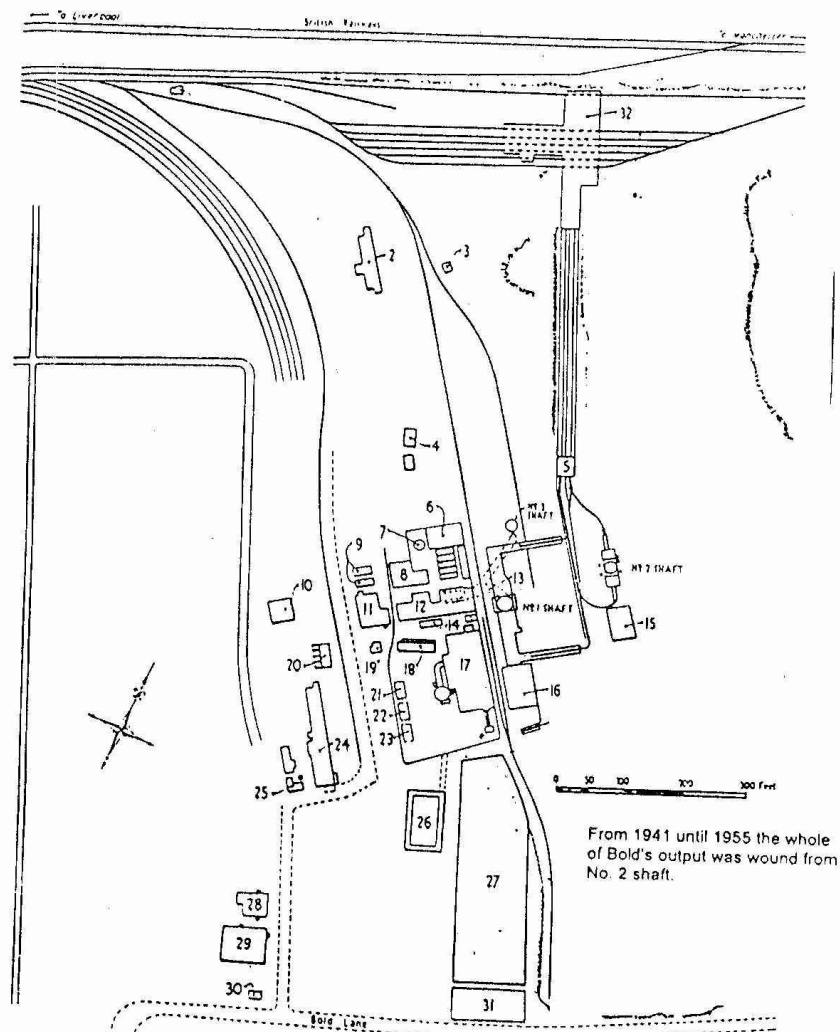
It was reported that Matthew Hampson aged 45 years, a sinker and James McDonald aged 27 years, also a sinker were killed by bricks falling down the sinking shaft.

Wednesday 28 Jan 1946  
do whom at my concern  
I hereby give permission  
for my brother Frank  
Bamber to remove any  
goods from Railway  
Cottage  
H. Bamber  
St. Helens  
Pen. 26.11.46  
W. Bamber

RAILWAY COTTAGE. BROAD LAKE, COLLINS GREEN WAS OWNED BY MY BROTHER FRANK. IT WAS VANDALISED & SET ON FIRE JANUARY 1946  
H. Bamber

MARCH 1995

## SURFACE ARRANGEMENTS at BOLD COLLIERY IN THE 1940's.



## KEY TO FIG. 5.

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1—Weigh machine                      | 17—Boilers                   |
| 2—Canteen                            | 18—Offices                   |
| 3—Unused weigh machine               | 19—Engineers office          |
| 4—Electricians shop                  | 20—Substation                |
| 5—Endless-chain-haulage engine house | 21—Conference room           |
| 6—No. 3. Winding engine house        | 22—Surveyors office          |
| 7—Water softener                     | 23—Wages office              |
| 8—Cutter repair shop                 | 24—Workshop                  |
| 9—Huts                               | 25—Office and ambulance room |
| 10—Cooler                            | 26—Lamproom                  |
| 11—Compressor                        | 27—Reservoir                 |
| 12—Fan motor house                   | 28—Canteen                   |
| 13—Fan drift                         | 29—Cycle shed                |
| 14—Pump house                        | 30—Bus shelter               |
| 15—No. 2. Winding engine house       | 31—Bold Villas               |
| 16—No. 1. Winding engine house       | 32—Screens                   |

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**F Bamber**

LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE COAL ASSOCIATION  
18, KING STREET, WIGAN.

ENCLO.

Dear Mr. Lindley,

**COLLIERY TRADESMEN & KINDRED WORKERS.**

I enclose herewith a statement showing increases to the wage apprentices and junior strikers, and labourers which have been agreed Lancashire & Cheshire Coal Association and all Collieries have been notified.

Faithfully yours,

ARTHUR RATCLIFF

JOHN T. LINDLEY, Esq.,  
415, Manchester Road,  
Clifton, Nr. Manchester.

**Colliery Tradesmen & Kindred Workers—Schedule of Rates**

APPRENTICES					JUNIOR STRIKERS AND LABOURERS				
Present Rates		Amended Rates as from 1.3.40			Present Rates		Amended Rates as from 1.3.40		
Age	Rate per Hour	Weekly Wage	Rate per Hour	Weekly Wage	Age	Rate per Hour	Weekly Wage	Rate per Hour	Weekly Wage
	d.	£ s. d.	d.	£ s. d.		d.	£ s. d.	d.	£ s. d.
14	2.47	13 6	—	—	14	2.81	14 11	—	—
15	2.98	15 8	—	—	15	3.13	16 3	—	—
16	3.72	18 10	—	—	16	4.71	1 3 0	—	—
17	4.22	1 0 11	5	1 4 2	17	4.85	1 3 8	6	1 5 5
18	5.41	1 6 0	6	1 8 5	18	6.40	1 10 1	7	1 12 8
19	6.40	1 10 1	7	1 12 8	19	7.06	1 12 11	7.5	1 14 9
20	6.90	1 12 3	8.5	1 19 0	20	7.23	1 13 8	8.5	1 19 0
21	10.50	2 10 6	11.51	2 13 11					
	or to grade		or to grade						

N.B.—It should be noted that in the total weekly wage figures shown above, the War Advances have not been included. The appropriate war advance will, however, continue to be payable for each shift worked, subject to a maximum of six payments of War Advance in any one week.

Write to: The  
Old Colliers, D.  
Mirror, 33 Holb.  
London EC1P 1

**PITS**

FRANK BAMBER, G.  
Lone, Sutton Lech 5  
len's, Lancs, writes:

A NOTICE I have  
from the Lancast-  
Cheshire Coal Assoc-  
dated April 6, 1940  
pay rises but says  
Advances have not in-  
cluded.

What were they?

★ A reward, Frank  
coal production for  
many young men left  
mines to join the Serv.  
Miners were placed  
an Essential Work 1  
and not allowed to qu-  
pits except on the grounds  
of old age and ill-health.  
In recognition, those  
sent to the front received  
War Advance bonus.  
In 1944 it was fin-  
incorporated in reg-  
wages.



LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE COLLIERY TRADESMEN & KINDRED WORKERS.

Registered Office; - 415 Manchester Road,  
CLIFTON,  
Manchester.  
9th April 1940.

Dear Sir & Bro.

WAR ADVANCES.

At the Meeting of the Joint District Board, held in Manchester yesterday, the latest War Advance of 4d. per shift for adults, and 2d. per shift for non-adults, was confirmed, to come in operation as and from the 1st of April 1940; and the hope was expressed that Collieries would be able to pay the arrears from the 1st of April, on the coming pay-day. Friday the 12th instant.

WAGES for the month of April, therefore will be paid at the 1938 Basis Hourly Rates, plus 6 per cent thereof, plus the 1938 Flat Rate advance of 1s.0d. (or 6d., as the case may be) plus the War Addition to Wages of 1s.5d. (or 8½d., as the case may be). The figures of 1s.5d. and 8½d. include the recent War Advance of 4d. and 2d.

The first payment under the above new rates will commence on Friday the 19th instant, and wages will continue at these rates until Friday the 17th of May.

Yours sincerely

John T. Lindley.

General Secretary.

1924  
JOHN T. LINDLEY (AGE) 4 yrs.

CHIEF 49 hrs & 20 minutes for 8/9.

PROX 2½d put has

Day Shift Monday to Friday 7am to 16p  
20 minutes BREAK  
Sat 6.40 to 12.00

Arrears 1938  
May to Paid. 7am to 11.00 4  
11.20 to 16.00 4  
This 20.00 23  
Net 6.00 to 12.00 5  
27

So, with the advent of air compressors being installed at Bold to drive the mechanical coal cutters and pan engines, there was a great demand for steel air pipes to be installed from the air compressors on the surface and down the shafts to the various coal faces. This called for thousands of yards of steel pipes to be cut and angled, and my brother Fred moved from Neil's Foundry to work with Jack Addison on this new class of work.

Acetylene welding and cutting at first was a semi-skilled job, but later, together with electric welding, it became accepted by both management and unions as a fully skilled trade.

**1942** Fred worked from 1926 to 1942 - a period of 16 years - at Bold Colliery. When he left, he became a foreman in the Aeroplane Propeller Department at Burtonwood Air Base

**1910** **Frank Bamber of Sutton, born 1910**

**1924-1942** I myself started work at Bold Colliery at the age of 14 years in 1924 as an apprentice joiner, and worked there until 1942, when Sutton Heath Colliers took over Bold Colliery, prior to the National Coal Board. Yes, it was a job! I suppose I was a lot better off than many a lad in those times, but it left a lot to be desired.

The practice then was to bring in another apprentice at the age of 14 when the preceding apprentice reached 17. It was he who instructed the newcomer on what jobs he had to do. These included:

*Monday morning 7am:* gather all tea cans - about a dozen in number - and proceed to the reservoir with a can of sand and two good handfuls of cotton waste. Using the hot water of the reservoir and the sand on the cotton waste, you had to endeavour to clean the brown tea stains from the inside of the cans.

Next, a walk to the only cold water stand pipe situated by the ambulance room to swill the sand etc. from the cans.

*9.45am:* Gather all cans and tea wrapped up in twists of paper (when you were new to the job, you marked the papers with the owners' initials. Later, you knew them off by heart by the way they were wrapped.) Take them to the stand pipe and fill each can with cold water and then carry them all to the smithy with a bottle and use the smithy forge and fire to boil the kettle and brew the cans.

Next, the cans were taken into the joiners' shop and placed on the joiners' bench. A 4' by 2' iron plate was placed down on the floor, with two bricks set apart on their sides to support a 3'6" railway metal which was taken into, and placed in the smithy forge. Coke was added to the fire and the air line was turned on full blast. The time was now 10.30am, and the railway metal could be expected to be red hot and dragged from the smithy to the joiners' shop by 10.45am.

Before this happened, I was expected to run to the fan house, climb up the steps, find the assistant engineer's dinner, unwrap it, and place the tin with bacon and egg onto

the warm cylinder cover, together with a can of tea, so that it would be ready for him to eat at 11am.

Back to the joiners' shop to find what wanted cooking and setting everything onto the bench. Some things just needed warming, others had raw bacon with an egg. At odd times, the charge hand brought in a lamb chop, and then a Catholic joiner wanted his two eggs boiling on a Friday.

*10.45am:* A dash to the Smithy to see how the heated railway metal was faring. If it was red hot, a pair of tongs were borrowed from one of the blacksmiths to seize the metal, and it was dragged out of the smithy to be placed on the two bricks above the iron plate. To move the cooking tins round, a pair of pincers were used to handle them around the red hot metal, and a couple of six inch nails were used to turn the bacon or chop over and to crack the eggs in time for the 11am break called Snap Time.

A last minute task was to boil the eggs on the smithy fire in an old pan, ready for 11am. The dinner break lasted 20 minutes, from 11am to 11.20am. To indicate this, the fanhouse buzzer blew at these two times.

### **Frank Bamber's conditions at Bold, prior to NCB**

Following my account of how we coped with the snap time break, I draw attention to the fact that there was no canteen provided for the workers, either below ground or on the surface. Also, there were no toilets provided for men - there was an old type of small, brick toilet built a good distance away from the pit brow, in a secluded spot for the women and girls. Hand washing facilities consisted of an iron bucket filled with hot water which came down from the boilers and was discharged into the reservoir. This was brought to the shop by me or the youngest apprentice. Everybody used the same bucket, and hands were dried with cotton waste. Soap was the semi-liquid type you could get from the stores by taking a tin. So, conditions were no better than camping out in the woods.

The winders, who could not leave the engine house whilst on duty, had toilets of a kind placed near them. They were the same as the old-fashioned pail toilets, which had to be removed manually. The only privacy the male workers had for toilet use was an avenue of trees, which led from Bold Road - probably the old entrance to the farm which preceded the colliery. Alternatively, they could make their way under the wagons in the sidings.

### **The Pick Sharpener**

I mentioned about using one of the forges in the smithy up to 11am. The smithy was also used by a man named Jack Barr. He was the colliers' pick sharpener, and was employed by the Colliers' Union. The colliers picks would be released from the shaft and socket and placed or threaded on a ring and left in the stores with a tally number attached. The pick sharpener would gather these up and put each end of the blade in the forge. Using a small pipe, placed over each end, he would lift it out of the fire once it was red hot and sharpen the blade using his hammer. He would then rub a piece of rock along the blade, which would reveal colours along it. When the colours

indicated a certain point, he would immerse the blade in the water tub alongside the forge. This was called tempering the blades. After finishing, he would take the blades and rings back to the stores for them to be picked up by the colliers in the morning. The pick sharpener was never there above two hours before he left- probably to visit another colliery.

#### **1924- 1942 Personnel working in the maintenance shops**

*Stores:* Timekeeper and 4 stores men - **total - 5**

*Fitting Shop:* 10 fitters, 2 turners and 2 apprentices - **total - 14**

*Joiners Shop:* 5 joiners and 2 apprentices - **total - 7**

*Blacksmith's Shop:* 5 blacksmiths and 5 strikers - **total - 10**

**Total Personnel: 36**

#### **Other personnel on maintenance away from the main shops**

*Electric Shop:* 3 electricians and 1 apprentice - **total - 4**

*Plate Layers:* 1 plate layer and 1 mate - **total - 2**

*Coal Box Repairers:* 3 box repairers and 1 apprentice - **total - 4**

*Saw Mill:* 1 Sawyer and 1 Back Man - **total - 2**

**Total Personnel: 12**

You can gather from the above figures that approximately 50 workmen were responsible for Bold Colliery maintenance, and were therefore eligible for membership of the Colliery Tradesmen and Kindred Workers, which came under the jurisdiction of the Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Association, 18 King Street, Wigan.

There would be about a 25% membership in the above union, but there would be several workers among the 50 who were members of the miners' union, having been drafted to work with tradesmen from other surface jobs or pit brow. One in particular I have not included in the above was a young compensation pit worker who was given the opportunity to learn to weld and burn with acetylene. He became proficient and was later accepted as a tradesman. His name was Jack Cassidy - a likeable fellow.

#### **The changeover and its effects**

Prior to the 1920s, the engineer was a colliery joiner. The main big job at that time was to place in position new winding ropes, steel rods and cables. This had to be done quickly and safely, so as not to interfere with coal winding. These were put into position by the use of both steam locomotive and the winding engines. Head gear and the pit brows were all timber, and the large wooden frames down the pit for haulage were made by the joiners, and the engineer was a joiner experienced in this kind of work.



## **1924 An engineer loses his life**

Just prior to my starting work at Bold, No.2 pit had trouble with the two large haulage return frames. This resulted in the engineer, a Mr. John Webster, being called out to remedy the problem. He rushed down the mine and, without giving time to allow his eyesight to adjust to the dark conditions, he stumbled and fell into the spokes of the return pulleys and met his death.

### **Groomed for the job**

The man who had been groomed for the next engineer was a man in his late 30s named Jack Badeley, a joiner. He had drive, was forceful, and got to the point very quickly - some described him as “blunt”. For all that, he was fairly popular and looked on as the next engineer for Bold.

### **“Jobs for the boys”**

However, unknown to him and the others at Bold, wheels were set in motion for a dramatic change. William Southern, the Secretary for Bold and Collins Green collieries, had three sons - William, Sylvester and Leslie. He fixed William up as a salesman on the clerical side of the firm, and now he had the chance to install Sylvester and Leslie, who both had engineering experience, at Bold Colliery. Sylvester was given the post of colliery engineer and Leslie was in charge of the Bold Brickworks.

### **Point blank refusal of Jack Badeley**

**1920s** Jack Badeley was offered the position of assistant engineer by William Southern. Jack, however, turned it down, even though his father Fred Badeley, the timekeeper at Bold Colliery, remonstrated with him and argued that he should accept the position. Jack stood firm, even though it would have meant a better wage.

At that time, in the 1920s, the weekly wages were as follows:

*Engineer:* £6-10-0

*Assistant Engineer:* £4-4-0

*Tradesmen:* £2-15-0

Yes, times were hard in those days, when you realise that unskilled workers at the mines and on the surface took home £2-0-6, and plate layers on the railway took home £1-19-6 to feed a family and pay the rent.

### **No hesitation - Arthur Heyes steps in**

When Jack turned down the assistant engineer's job, another man had to be found to help out on the headgear and timber jobs, and Arthur Heyes, an older joiner, readily accepted the position.

### **1913    The Joker in the barber's shop**

I was 13 years old at the time, and working in Lawrence Fowles' barber's shop. It was closing time at the Red Lion, commonly called the Glass Barrel, in Robins Lane, and one of its valued customers decided to call in at Lawrence Fowles' for a haircut. He had had his fair share of "refreshment", and was in a very jovial mood. Indeed, after he had had his haircut, when the barber's back was turned, he was stuffing the clippers, combs and scissors into his pockets! I nudged Lawrence, the barber, and nodded towards the merry fellow. Lawrence made an effort to retrieve his belongings, but the inebriate, laughing, denied having anything in his pockets. At last, he put them back on the table and departed, having a good laugh, and no doubt in a merry mood.

#### **Another meeting with the joker**

I had got myself a job as an apprentice loco fitter at the engine sheds on Baxters Lane. I went home to tell my dad, only to be told that there was a job at Bold Colliery for me as an apprentice joiner, and if I wanted to start at Bold, I was to present my self at the Time Office at Bold and ask for Mr. Pilling. I plumped for the job at Bold, and was signed on by Mr. Pilling, a short, tubby man with a large, grey moustache, and, set squarely on his head, a hard hat, which we called a bowler. He took down my name and birth date and then said "Are you Joe Bamber's lad?" I confirmed I was, then he smiled and said "Start in the morning at the joiner's shop. Be there at 7am sharp, but call here at the Time Office first to receive your tally, which is number 137."

The following morning, I had drawn my tally and proceeded to the joiners' shop, where I met Jack Badeley, the Chargehand, who directed me to a lad about 17 years old named Arthur Heyes. He greeted me, asked me my name and told me who he was and that he would show me my job. He then said, "Come on, we had better look busy. We'll empty those nail bags and stack the nail bins up, as my dad will be coming in the shop any minute. He always comes in to give orders, or to see if anyone is missing. My dad is the assistant engineer, and is Mr. Heyes to you."

The wicket door in the large sliding door opened, and a short, thickset man with a cap on, stepped through and stood gazing round at everyone. I looked at him and then thought "Am I seeing things? He's the joker from the Barber's shop in Waterdale Crescent." But now, there was no joviality expressed in that face. The red, weather-beaten face with the large brown eyes which had a prolonged blink as he gazed around - this was a serious looking Winston Churchill type of fellow, who was ready to take anyone on. He looked towards me, but I could tell he had not recognised me. When he left the shop, I did not mention to his son that I had encountered his father a year earlier in the barber's shop - I kept "mum" about it.

### **1931    Apprenticeship served and union matters**

To give an idea of how poor wages were in the 1920s, I started work at the age of 14 years, and received 8/9<sup>d</sup> (eight shillings and nine pence) per week, and when I was 20 years old, I received 25/- per week. Tradesmen earned £2-9-0, which was increased to

£2-15-6 per week. When I started, I worked Mondays to Fridays from 7am until 4pm, with a 20 minute break. Saturdays, I worked from 6am to 12pm. This works out at 49 hours and 20 minutes per week, or 2 1/7 per hour (two old pennies and 1/7).

### **I take on the position of Steward**

Coming out of apprenticeship, I became aware of the lack of union members. James Webster, a box repairer, had kept the membership of the Colliery Trades and Kindred Workers going, "but it was only thin on the ground."

### **1932 A visit by J. T. Lindley, Union Secretary**

J. T. Lindley was the General Secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Colliery Tradesmen and Kindred Workers, which had its registered offices at 415 Manchester Road, Clifton, Manchester.

Harry Webster of Mill Lane, Sutton - a wagon builder at Sutton Heath Colliery - was the St. Helens Branch Secretary. Monthly meetings were held at the Swan Hotel, St. Helens. J. T. Lindley was given permission by the management at Bold to approach the tradesmen as regards membership. It was found that several fitters and blacksmiths, who had come to work at Bold from the local engineering works, were members of the AEU.

Jim Webster had also reported that it would improve matters relating to membership if a tradesman from the shops were elected Shop Steward. However, J. T. Lindley was unable to persuade any of the tradesmen to accept the responsibility of Steward. So, he approached me and asked if I would mark cards and take subscriptions to the monthly St. Helens branch meetings. Instead of tackling the management on any problems, I would report matters to the Branch Secretary, who would then contact J. T. Lindley himself, who would come down and address any problems at Bold. He also asked me if I would try and recruit new members, to which I agreed.

I was successful in finding new members, but when I sounded out Frank Badeley, the foreman fitter, he refused to join. He thought he was so much in favour with the engineer that he did not need to be in the union. His motto was "I'm alright Jack, b\*\*er you". This approach by me, coupled with my cousin Jim Bamber coming to Bold to take charge of the locomotives, which was a blow to him, caused him to greet me when we met as "Hello, friend", with the emphasis on the "friend".

### **1942 The Collins Green Colliery Company hit hard times, and a man, "Billy Sword", as he was known, was brought in. He represented the "Banks", and he soon made wholesale changes by demoting the manager, engineer and assistant to low positions, and making it clear that he wanted them to leave, which they did after a period of time.**

The company was put up for sale and Sutton Heath Colliery Company bought Bold and everyone at the colliery was given notice.

Meanwhile, when we all finished, the "big man", Frank Badeley, insinuated himself with Sutton Heath officials and was given the job of Surface Manager, and helped out



in creating the new workforce under Sutton Heath. Needless to say he left me out, which was reported to me, and I was asked what I thought about this omission. I said I was quite happy at being left out, and that I was enjoying my new found employment at Burtonwood Air Base, so I hoped there would be no trouble at Bold.

And so, Badeley became so big and greedy in his new position and thought he was a law unto himself, that he started to provide heating at a horticultural grower's firm at Billing with pipe work and fittings belonging to Sutton Heath. Badeley's son, who thought he could do as he liked, offended a man named Jack Oakly, a turner who lived at Billinge, and he informed the management of Sutton Heath what was going on as regards the theft of materials and working hours. Badeley was prosecuted and lost his job as Surface Manager.

## **1924 From 1924 to 1942: Eighteen years of service**

**1924** The eighteen years I spent at Bold was, I suppose, a very mixed bag. When I look back and compare my apprenticeship with the present day, it seems full of shortcomings. No-one ever took you in hand in those days to show you how things were done - you had to find out for yourself. And you really were exploited as cheap labour - but then you had to admit that you were lucky to have a job at all.

There was no adult male labourer in the shop, so, at 14 years old, I had to brew and cook for all members of the joiners' shop, and to race to the fan house to see to the assistant engineer's mid-day break, to fetch and carry from the stores all the materials, bolts, etc. for the joiners, to stack all timber which was delivered, fetch hot water from the reservoir, to wash hands and brush all round the large shop which had an old, uneven floor, and to empty the sawdust hold under the large circular saw.

**1930** I did this for three years, until I was 17 years old, and I was only paid at the rate of 2 old pennies and 1/7 an hour at 14 years, progressing to a rise of two shillings and six pence a week, so that when I reached 20 years old, I was earning 23 shillings and 9d. I graduated from 8/9d per week to 23/9d at 20 years of age.

## **1926 1926 Miners Strike**

Yes, I remember the colliers' strike. It was 6 months of beautiful summer weather - the first month I was laid off with other members of the joiners' shop, but was recalled on special permits to work on the back stays of the No.3 wooden headgear, which had to be renewed. I also remember when the back stays were in position, I was asked to fasten climbing spills up the headgear leg and, when completed, to go to the top of the headgear and drill through the great baulks of timber with an auger bit with turning handles - all this without any safety precautions at all. This was on an afternoon shift. I was on my own I could have fallen off the headgear and down the shaft and no-one would have been the wiser.

## **1930s The old rook haulage and new McLane Tipper**

The old Stuff Rook was being done away with, its old, endless rope drawn with a steam engine at the base of the rook. The old rook must have been one of the highest rooks, if not the highest in the South West coal mining area. I have climbed the rook

on occasions, and it possessed a very fine view of the surrounding district. Indeed, one clear day, I could see the River Mersey, the Welsh hills and the Pennines. But now the old stuff rook had to give way to a more modern method of loading the rock etc. from the mines. The more modern way was by a machine with two pans which, when reaching a set position, rotated and emptied the pans. It was supposed to build its own foundations for the rails it ran on, but it could not do this because of a railroad which fed the saw mill with larch bows, timber props etc., so it had to climb over the railroad before ascending further to discharge its loads. Some of the old rook hands were to work the new method, but were strange to the new job, so it was decided that three of us joiners should take charge on afternoons and nights for a time. There was timber involved which was bolted on to a frame at the summit, which the run of the pans turned on, and which had to be renewed at intervals. They were called skid boards and measured 14' x 4" x 3".

### **Saw mill and solo activity**

Arthur Heyes, the Assistant Engineer, not content with being in charge of the new McLane Tipper at night time, came up with the idea of sawing timber in the timber yard, a distance of two hundred yards away, even though you still had to keep an eye open in case anything went wrong with the new Tipper. From a safety aspect, this was totally wrong. In the dead of winter, the uncovered timber was, at times, full of frost, snow and wet through. You had to handle this on the large saw, which was 4' in diameter, but the danger was you could have sawn your fingers or hand, and being on your own, without assistance, you would have bled to death.

These were the days before the N.C.B took over. We had no safety helmets, no jackets, no safety boots, no amenities, no baths or showers, no lockers for clothes, and no canteen or toilets.

- 1938** At last, primitive toilets were erected after the style of toilets you would find on the old farms. The building was approximately 12 feet long and 6 feet wide, with a return screen on each side made of timber 3 feet x 3 feet, clad with corrugated sheets. Inside, the men could use the toilets at the same time, but there was no partition for privacy. The waste was caught by four pails, and the contents were buried outside, behind the shops.

### **The bringer of bad news**

Between the ages of 14 to 17, the time of my apprenticeship, the Assistant Engineer would come into the shop from time to time and tell me that "so and so" had met with a serious accident, and had been stretchered off in the ambulance to the hospital. I was asked to get on my bike and let the relatives of the injured or deceased man know. I was given the address if I said I did not know where they lived. I always knocked on the door and told them that their relative had met with an accident and would they go to the hospital as soon as they could, as it was urgent. I never mentioned it if the person had already died.

**1942    1924 to 1942: Eighteen years pass**

And so, eighteen years passed, from being a youngster of 14 years, to a man of 32 years. I don't regret them. I saw a side of life which was rough and crude, but it was a job in the hard 1920s and 1930s. Some were worse off than myself - they never had a job to go to. Writing this about Bold takes me back 56 years. My old joiner mates - Cyril Thomas, Charlie Richardson, Tom Simms, George Mullery - will have passed on now, but I still have fond memories of them. I will conclude this section with a humorous story about Tom and George.

**'Er's flapped 'er wings laddie**

**1926** Tommy Simms came from Wigan to Bold in about 1925. He was a grand fellow to work with. He liked his tippie on a Friday night, and you could always find him in his favourite pub - the Pear Tree at Collins Green. In fact, at 6 o'clock on a Saturday morning, he was still not sober, and I remember when he and I were carrying a baulk of timber alongside the reservoir, he lost his balance and rolled down the bank! I followed him down and just managed to grab hold of him, otherwise he would have gone into the water.

Another thing that was special to Tom was that he only drank out of a gill glass. He never drank out of a pint glass. Jack Addison, a fitter I worked with in the Washery, was the son of the landlord at the Pear Tree, and he used to wait on at weekends and on a Saturday morning. Jack used to tell me his feet were red hot, carrying gills of beer to Tommy on a Friday night, and said to Tommy "why don't you drink pints", but Tommy said he preferred gill glasses, not pint glasses.

My story begins with the time the colliery tradesmen got a rise of 6/-, raising the wage packet from £2-9-0 to £2-15-0 a week. Everyone thought this was good news, especially Tommy. It was a boost to his spending at the Pear Tree.

As I've already mentioned, after a while, I could tell, from the way it was wrapped which parcels of tea and sugar belonged to which worker. On this one occasion, however, I noticed that Tom's tea and sugar were wrapped in a different way, and when I saw him, I asked him was there something wrong at home. Tom looked hard at me and said "Why do you ask that?" I said to him, because his tea and sugar was wrapped in a different way, and his wife could not have prepared it. Tom laughed and said he had put it up, then said "'Er's flapped 'er wings laddie. She's gone back to her mother at Wigan". I said "Why? How's that?" It appears that George Mullony, a joiner in the same shop as Tom and myself had received his raise and, as a dutiful husband, handed his wage packet to his wife.

A fortnight later, Tom Simm's wife and George Mullony's wife met in the local grocer's shop, and Mrs. Mullony said "The 6/- rise in George and Tom's wages will be a good help. It will make a world of difference to our housekeeping, won't it?". Mrs. Simms looked grim, and said "This is the first thing I've heard about a rise. Wait till Tom comes home today."

And so, Tom and his wife had words, and she packed her bags and took off to Wigan.

Tom took it in his general stride and said to me “She’ll be back soon, laddie. Everything will be alright.”

**1942** And so, all in all, I spent 18 years of my life at Bold Colliery. Although I have fond memories of the time I spent there, I was not sorry at the time that I found alternative employment at Burtonwood Air Base - the work was cleaner and more interesting, and conditions at the base were excellent.

**1975** As the old saying goes, “As one door closes, another opens”, and so it was with me throughout my working life, up to the age of 65 years, when I concluded my working life at Bold Power Station

### **Frank Bamber Junior, Assistant Electrician and Assistant Engineer**

Frank was my youngest son, born in 1943 during the Second World War. He started his apprenticeship at the age of 15 years at the N.C.B training centre at Haydock. It was situated at the old Boston Colliery (an historical Roman road at one time ran under the colliery). The lads at the training centre were graded according to their capabilities or aptitude, following tests. Some of the jobs offered were mining, engineering, machine engineering and electrical engineering.

Frank was offered and accepted an apprenticeship as an electrician. He moved around gathering experience at the following collieries (all now closed): Lea Green, Clock Face, Ravenhead and Sutton Manor. He became a chargehand electrician at Ravenhead Colliery, and later moved to Bold, where he took charge of the electric winders and was promoted to Foreman Electrician. Frank studied at the St. Helens Technical College, where he obtained his Engineer Certificate, whereupon he became Assistant Engineer at Bold. He remained in this position until the colliery closed down in 1986.

He remained, for a short while, at Bold and Collins Green Colliery, and his last responsible job was to take the submersible pumps out of No.1 shaft at Collins Green, prior to the capping of the shafts. These pumps were the last of the pumps which, for the last 100 years, had pumped water from the sandstone strata, approximately 100 yards below ground level to a height sufficient for the water to gravitate to St. Helens for the town’s use.

The water levels were inspected from time to time to prevent adulteration over-pumping and possible adulteration from the River Mersey. In 1890, there was a problem of water in the workings, and John Slee and Co. of Earlestown built a pumping engine to raise water from 100 yards below ground to 20 yards above ground to enable it to gravitate to St. Helens, where it supplied a large part of the town with good drinking water.

### **1875 Water at Bold 1875**

Water nearly put an end to the early days of mining at Bold Colliery, which was called Bold Hall Colliery until 1878 when Collins Green Colliery took over and purchased Bold Colliery and sank two more pits.

And so, Frank worked a period of 20 years around Bold and Collins Green collieries, although he worked in the coal industry from 1958. He worked at the following collieries: Old Boston, Sutton Manor, Ravenhead, Collins Green, Bold and finally at Bickershaw Complex of Bickershaw, Golbourne and Parkside, where he took up his new position as Assistant Electric Engineer.

Frank's contribution of 20 years brings my family's total to 106 working years, and, coupled to my Uncle James Bamber's family total of 175 years, giving a total of 281 years in the service of Collins Green and Bold Colliery, during which time, aspects of working life and conditions changed considerably.

### **Some occupations peculiar to Bold Colliery**

The Smithy at Bold had five forges, manned by four blacksmiths and their strikers. The odd forge was used by the youngest apprentice in the joiners' shop and fitting shop as a means of heating and cooking for the tradesmen, and would be in use from 9:30am to 11am. The official breaktime was 11am to 11:20am, allowing 20 minutes for a mealtime. The works buzzer would be blown at 11am and 11:20am to signal the start and finish of the break.

### **The collier's pick sharpener**

The pick sharpener was not an employee of the Colliery. He was paid by the Miners Union to sharpen and temper the blades of the handpick which were used by the colliers at the coalface before the coal-cutting machines were introduced. However, he was allowed to enter the works and use the forge after 11am each working day.

His name was Jack Barr, a small man, sporting a moustache when I knew him (1924-1940s), and he was then about 50 years old. He would arrive at the smithy carrying a small bag containing a hammer, a small length of pipe and a piece of grinding stone big enough to hold in his right hand. His first job was to go to the work's stores and see if any of the colliers had left their pick blades, which would be threaded through a circular ring (similar to a large keyring). He would then take them all to the smithy and, doing one ring at a time, so that the blades would not get mixed up, he would place each end of the blade in the forge fire and put the blast on. When the blades were heated red, he would insert the end of the pipe he had over the blade (the pipe was sharpest at the square end to embrace the blade), and on the anvil, he would hammer the blade into a sharp point.. Once he had sharpened it, and the red heat was cooling off, he would rub the blade with his grinding stone and watch the different colours moving along the steel blade. When he observed the right colour, he would immerse the blade into the tub containing water and cool it off. Then the other end of the pick blade would go into the fire to be heated while he drew another pick off to be sharpened. After sharpening and tempering, he would restore all picks to their respective rings, making sure the right tally was on the rings, and take them back to the stores, where the colliers would call before their next shift down the pit.

### **Maintenance of handtools for pit work**

Saws to be sharpened, axes to be sharpened and new shafts to be made for them, broken pick shafts and spades without shafts were brought to the stores with either a tally attached or a tally number chalked on. These would be collected by the youngest apprentice and taken to the joiners' shop to be repaired. New shafts would be supplied from the stores and booked to their respective owners. The cost would be deducted from their wage packets.

### **The lamp shop girls**

Under the old way of things, under the private ownership of Bold, before the new organisation of the National Coal Board in January 1947, the positioning of various parts of the colliery was haphazard. A case in point was the oil stores, which was on

the ground floor, under the Manager and Engineers' offices. The oil store was kept under lock and key, and to obtain oil, you had to go to the main store, where the store man would send an assistant store man to open up.

The store had stillages, on which the barrels were stacked, containing dynamo, engine, cylinder and lamp oil. It also contained soft soap and bales of cotton waste. This cotton waste was the only means with the soft soap, of cleaning hands and faces, as washing facilities were non-existent.

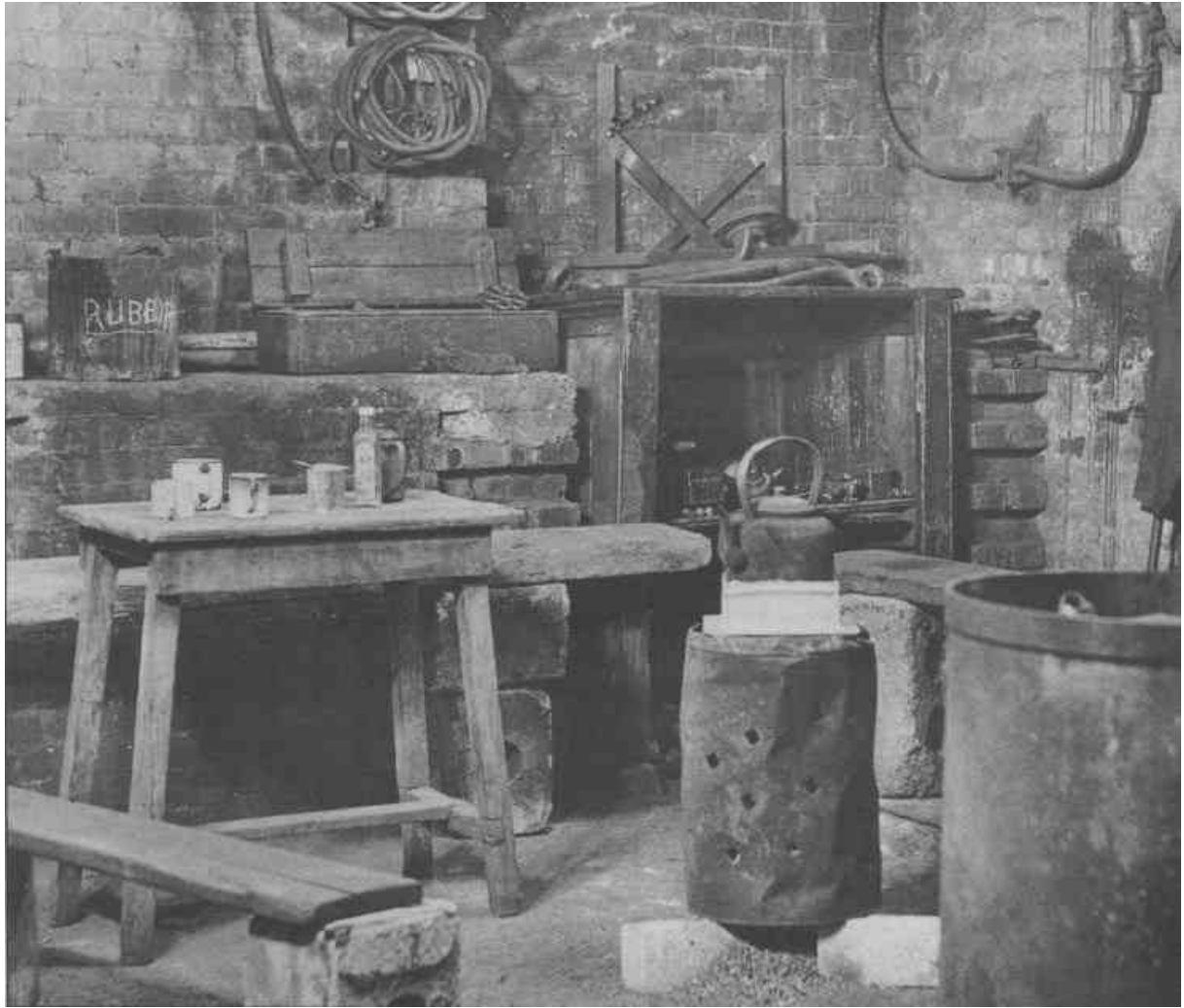
### **Yokes and pails**

The lamp shop was situated at one end of the colliery, with the timber yard and the stuff rook, whereas the oil stores were at the other end of the colliery. Why the lamp oil was put there I don't know - perhaps it was the rule under the old Mines and Quarry Acts, similar to explosives, where the powder had to be kept in a concrete magazine in the fields, some distance from the colliery.

To make the walk along the gantry from lampshop to oil stores would only be about 300 yards, but there was only room of a yard space for one to walk alongside the box rails. So, the alternative for the girls carrying pails full of lamp oil was to go along the Bold road, a distance of approximately half a mile.

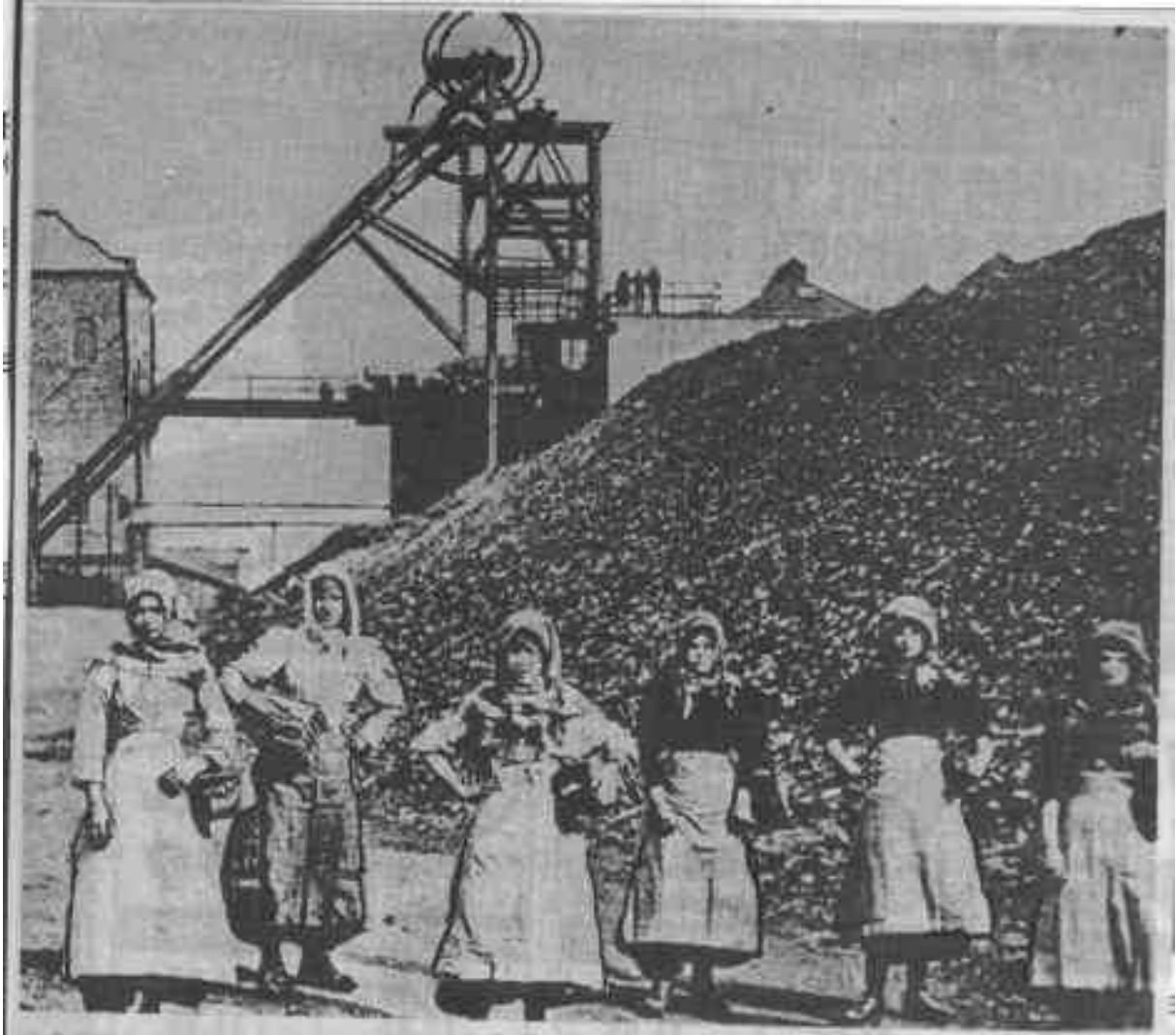
The two girls I can remember were Tam Taylor and Gladys Pennington. They were both strong women and would carry the full pails of lamp oil. They would do this in the same way as old-fashioned milk maids, with a shoulder yoke and a wooden frame to keep the pails away from their legs when carrying. They carried out this task every working day in all kinds of weather. I very much doubt if you could persuade anyone today to do a job like that.

One of my first jobs as an apprentice was to go, whenever required, to "tap the barrels" - a job requiring a brace and  $\frac{7}{8}$ " bit to be bored in the end of the barrel, and a tap or plug to be inserted, then a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " bit to be bored in the top of the barrel for a vent, without which the oil would not flow through the tap quickly enough.



Condition for workers in the 1940s. Conditions were worse when I started work in 1924.





A long gone sight. These pit lasses were pictured at Ashton Long Lane Colliery.

*Picture supplied by St. Helens Local History and Archives Department.*

### **“The get sheets”: mining history at Bold**

One of the people I can remember from my time at Bold is Johnny Lawrenson. Johnny was a very small man who had travelled the world over. He had run away to sea when he was still a schoolboy and could speak seven different languages, which he had been quick enough to pick up on his travels around the world. He finally settled down in Sutton and obtained work at Bold Colliery, becoming a Check Weigh Man.

My brother Fred was five years older than myself. He was, at this time, 12 years old. He generally (with me in tow), ran all the errands for us at home, but now he was leaving Sutton National School to go to Higher Grade School at College Street in St. Helens. He would now be travelling to town, along with other girls and boys who attended Cowley, Higher Grade and Catholic Grammar, by train from Sutton Oak station. Some from over the Junction area would catch the train at the Junction station and these scholars would not be coming home until evening time.

Contracts could be obtained from the station officer at a cheaper rate for a period of time, rather than paying for single day and return tickets.

So now, at seven years of age, I would be donning my brother's mantle and would be chief errand runner at our house.

I climbed up the steps to Johnny Lawrenson's house and knocked on the door. I said to the lady who opened it "My dad has sent me for the Get Sheets". She told me to come in and indicated that I could sit in the rocking chair by the fire. This was Johnny's chair, and he was now sitting at the solidly built kitchen table with several sheets of paper in front of him and a pen and ink on the table. He had a union shirt on and a pair of braces over the top, fastened to his trousers, and a pair of spectacles halfway down his nose. He nodded towards me and asked "Are you one of Joe's lads?", to which I agreed.

He then started to copy figures from his own books onto the sheets of paper he had on the table. This took him about five or ten minutes to complete. He then handed them to me and said "Give them to your dad, and don't lose them. And think on, no stopping on the way home."

From my recollections, I would guess he would be approaching 60, probably born around 1850-1860 and so was much older than my dad. He was a typical old-timer: sharp-looking and straight to the point. He was a man full of character and, I suppose, he could tell humorous stories about his travels around the world, in contrast to a lot of people living in Sutton in those times, who very rarely moved outside of the place in which they were born.

Back home, I handed the sheets to my father who remarked, with a twinkle in his eye. "Johnny hasn't persuaded you to run away to sea then?" "No," I replied "only as far as his rocking chair."

He then took me to the washhouse and lifted his work coat down from the hook behind

the door, and took two large books from the capacious pockets which were stitched on the inside of the jacket and said “These are my poacher’s pockets. Just right for my job of bringing my books home. Follow me into the kitchen and we’ll work the colliers wages out and I’ll explain to you about the “Get Sheets”.

Back in the kitchen, my dad put the books on the kitchen table and handed me the Get Sheets. He told me to read out the collier’s tally number, starting at the top. These numbers corresponded to names in the book. It also contained the weights in hundred weights, quarters and pounds. These had to be totalled and worked out in pounds, shillings and pence - so much for each weight of coal, which my dad arrived at by consulting the Ready Reckoner.

This method of working out each collier’s pay was used at Bold Colliery from the last century up to the time I left there in the 1940s, the time of the Second World War. I suppose it carried on until the National Coal Board took over when the colliery was modernised.

I take up the story of the Get Sheets again when I started as an apprentice joiner in 1924 in Bold. The collier’s time and pay books were taken by my father and deposited into the main Time Office at Bold. From there, they were sent to the General Offices at Collin’s Green Colliery, which was the parent colliery of both Bold and Collin’s Green. The wages were worked out and placed in pink packets to be claimed at the Pay Offices in Bold. The following procedure then took place:

By the Thursday night, the wages clerks at the Collins Green Offices had worked the wages out to be correct, and they were ready for the Friday morning, when my Uncle Jim, who was the Farm Bailiff, would arrive at the Collins Green Offices with the large two-wheeled float or carriage, pulled by Paddy, the big Irish grey horse. Also waiting there would be the local policeman, who saw to the wages, which were packed in a box with handles placed safely in the float. Next in the float came the wages clerks, four in number.

So, now there was my Uncle Jim, the four clerks and the policeman, complete with his baton, all ready for the journey from Collins Green to Bold. The big Grey jogged out over the bridge which stood over the railway and down to Four Lane Ends to turn right up Penny Lane, passing my cousin Nellie’s farm, the Yew Tree Farm, with Forshaws Brewery on the right, into Bold Road, and passing the Bank House on the left, where the managers and agents of Bold Colliery lived in the two cottages and farm buildings. Fifty yards on, you came to the old boundary by the S bend, which brought you in full view of Bold Colliery.

The old boundary was between Burtonwood and Bold, and ran around the old Stuff Rook and embraced a section of the Old Moss and Travers Entry Farmlands, which now belong to Bold Power Station, to return by the Boundary path which ran alongside the St. Helens and Bold boundary.

One hundred and fifty yards down the road, the large Trap, or Float, turned right into an avenue of hawthorn hedges, which led you into the colliery yard, where clerks, wages and the policeman would all disembark at Number One and Number Three Pay Offices.

Preparations were made by the clerks for the Pay-Out, which started at mid-day to enable all shift workers, afternoon and nights, to come early and draw their wages. This meant that the night-workers had to come to the colliery, collect their wages, make their way home, then return to the colliery again at night for their shift. After 2:30pm, the pitworkers came, eagerly queuing up at the pit bottom to get the early windings to the surface so that they could deposit their lamps in the lamp shop and make their way to the pay offices.

Here it was customary for my father and two other pit deputies (one for each pit) to stand by the Pay Office window on the outside and shout the names out for each man or boy to step forward to draw their wages, or to identify them as being the person to draw the wages, or to verify a person who produced a note to draw them for a pitman who could not appear in person for some reason. Also my father had within his inside pockets the books to produce if a query arose about the amount of pay received.

In the event of some wages not being claimed, the wages were taken back to Collins Green main offices to be placed in the safe, and claimants had to travel to Collins Green to claim them. Later, payments were made at 3pm and 4pm for all surface workers. At 4.30pm my uncle came with the large two-wheeled carriage and the clerks, policeman and unclaimed wages were driven back to the main offices.

Later, the company car, driven by the chauffeur James Shaw, replaced the old way of transport of the horse and carriage, which had done many years of faithful service for the Company.

### **The weigh machine caller**

On the pit brow were two weighing machines, one for numbers one and three pit, and one for number two pit. Number two weighbridge had a comparatively easy time, for only six boxes of coal passed over it each winding, in comparison with the other had to cope with eighteen boxes passing over it every winding.

Number One had two large two-decked cages, each holding six boxes in the top and bottom decks, making twelve in number, while number 2 and three cages had two double decks, holding six boxes, three on each deck. The diameter of Number Two and Number Three pit shafts were sixteen feet, whilst Number One, one of the largest in South West Lancashire at this time, measured twenty-one feet in diameter. This meant that the men at Number One and Number Three weighbridge handled three times as much coal in boxes as the one at Number Two pit.

Each weighbridge had a wooden cabin which housed the mechanical scales which had a long iron lever that was marked off along its length in hundred weights, quarters and pounds, with a sliding balance weight to bring the indicator level into a horizontal position when each coal box was temporarily positioned on the steel bridge, outside and in front of the cabin.

Inside the weighbridge cabin at Number Two pit was the operator, who worked the weights out and booked them down to each collier, and the Check Weigh Man, who represented the collier. He also booked down each tally number and the correct

weight of each coal box. This made three men at the weighbridge - the operator for the colliery, the Check Weigh Man for the colliers, and the Brow Hand on the outside who regulated the flow of coal boxes over the weighbridge and called off the tally numbers.

It differed at Numbers One and Three in as much that two pit coal boxes had to be dealt with, so that on the inside was the operator for the colliery and two check weighmen, one for Number One pit and one for Number Three pit. The weighman for Number Three pit was Johnny Lawrenson and the one for Number One pit was Jimmy Dixon, the Mine Workers Union Secretary, so you can see from this that a union member represented the colliers to check that each collier had a true weight of coal credited to him at the end of the shift. No doubt this privilege of representing the colliers daily output was brought about by the unions who had to see that its members had a fair deal, otherwise unscrupulous colliery owners would, no doubt, take advantage of the colliers by short falling the output if there was no check on the weighing of the coal.

The tally caller at Number One and Three weighbridge was called Freddy Dodd. The first time I saw him I fell about laughing when he passed the joiner's shop window at the front of the workshops after drawing his check number tally. All surface workers in those times drew the copper tally with a number stamped on it. I recollect mine was 137. You handed this in at the end of your work day. The absence of this from the Tally Shelf indicated to the main timekeeper that you had reported to work on that morning, so you were booked in.

Passing the window I noticed about a dozen pit brow girls with their head shawls and polished clogs on. Over their arms were the large wickerwork baskets with the large wickerwork handle. This fastened to each side of the basket, which contained their dinners and belongings, so different from the smaller wicker baskets with the handle on the top lid, used by most workmen at that time, and carried by hand or strapped onto the carrier of the bicycle which most workmen used in those times.

Amongst the girls was a lad with red hair showing under his cap. He also had polished slipper clogs on his feet, and without showing any signs of embarrassment he carried on towards the pit brow, chatting with the girls as if it was a perfectly natural thing to do. I ran to the door of the joiner's shop to get another look, and I could hear him talking - a voice you would never forget once you had heard it. I would describe it as a sweet, dulcet voice, a carrying voice which was to hold him in good stead, a voice that you would hear for hours on end each working day on approaching the pit brow, calling out each colliers' tally number from 1 & 3. Freddie was tailor-made for the job. He had a quick eye to read the number of the tally secured through the hole at each end of the coal box, to hold the box back, or ease it forward onto the weighbridge and to call out the number so the operator and the Check Weighman on the inside of the cabin could weigh and book down the number. Freddie did everything just right. His timing was perfect and it was non-stop from 7am in the morning until 11am when the pits stopped winding for twenty minutes, to resume again at 11:20am until 2:30 in the afternoon.

From 1924 to 1940, a period of sixteen years, which was the length of time I worked at Bold Colliery, come Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, in all kinds of weather

conditions, Freddie Dodd was there, his dulcet voice ringing out over the pit brow, calling out each collier's tally number. I doubt if you could have found another lad who grew up from teenager to manhood as dedicated to his job as this odd lad from Burtonwood.

To conclude, I think I should explain some of the old pit terms used at the local collieries. The Get Sheets were so called after the old colliers of previous centuries, who were referred to as "getters of coal", and so the record of the day's output were written on sheets called Get Sheets.

Tallys belonged to each collier, and in my time you could obtain them from the local iron mongers. They consisted of a round disk of tin, about one and a half inches in diameter, on which was stamped the collier's number. It had a hole in the top and a loop of strong fibre cord was passed through it and before the collier or his drawer filled the coal box with coal, they would pass it through a  $\frac{7}{8}$  hole, which each coal box had on each end on the left hand side, and secure it on the inside using a small stick pushed through the loop. The left hand side was always used, as, when it arrived at the weighbridge, it would be easier for the caller to identify the number on the tally.

After the coal had been tipped at the Tipplers, a rotating cage which stood above the screens, the empty boxes were shunted along to come in at the rear of the pit cages, where lads and girls pushed the three empty boxes against the three full ones inside the cage, thus emptying the cage full of boxes and replacing them with empties. The brow man secured them in each cage before signalling to the winder to drop the cage to the pit bottom to repeat the same process.

### **The tally snatcher**

I left school when I was fourteen years old, and at that time, it was generally accepted as the correct age to start work. There were exceptions to this. If it could be proved that a family were in very poor circumstances, say the father or breadwinner was unable to continue working through ill-health, or had died to leave a widow struggling to exist and support the family, then a boy or girl was allowed to start work at the age of thirteen to help out with the family income. On the other hand, people who could afford it allowed their children to continue their studies at the secondary schools to further their education.

Some children, quite small and late developers in a physical sense, found their way into the local works and pits, and certain jobs were earmarked for them. One such job at a colliery was for them to start off as a Tally Snatcher. When the coal boxes had been emptied of coal and were being shunted towards the rear of the Pit Head gear, the small lad or girl would, as quickly as possible, release the stick or peg holding the loop and gather the tallies together. These were then taken to the covered, open-fronted tally sheds, three in number, one for each pit.

Battens went round the interior of the shed with hooks screwed onto the battens, and each collier's number was painted over the hooks. The Tally lad would hang each batch of tallies to the hook corresponding to the tallies he had retrieved. These tallies would then be gathered by each collier or drawer early next morning before he

entered the cage and taken with him to the coal face, to be used again to number his coal boxes, before filling the boxes with coal and sending them to the surface.

Up to the time when the collieries were nationalised, when pit head baths were introduced, the colliery workers could be recognised as they came home with black faces. When washed, you could tell the ones who did not take the washing of faces seriously by their coaldust-rimmed eyes, blue scars on their faces and hands, and pale skin, due to the time spent below in semi-darkness and the absence of sunshine and fresh wind on their skin.

The blue scars were caused by wounds to their faces, hands, arms and bodies during the course of their work. There were no washing facilities down the mines, so coal dust filled in the scars and healed over. The surprising thing about this was that the wounds did not turn septic. Usually, if the miner could get to a fireman, who carried iodine with him, the wound would be dabbed with a pad of cotton wool soaked with iodine. That was considered sufficient until the miner got home and made up his own mind about whether to visit the doctor. A visit to the doctor meant that he would have to pay for treatment.

### **The “Doctor’s Man”**

The treatment and the cost was booked down. This resulted in a man calling round at people’s homes for payment. He was called “The Doctor’s Man”. He would, in those hard times, take small payments off the bill, such as 3d or 6d or a shilling; whatever the family could afford to bring down the cost of the patient’s treatment by the doctor.

### **The Odd Fellows**

Working class people formed “Friendly Societies” to ease the burden of being off work with no money coming into the house. The practice was to pay a shilling a week when working, and this entitled you to seven shillings or ten shillings when you were unable to attend work.

The main friendly society was the “Odd Fellows”. These meetings were held in back rooms in public houses, sometimes in secrecy, because friendly societies were the forerunner of the working man’s unions and the labour movement. These were frowned upon by employers, who did their best to stamp them out. To become a member could lose a man his job.

To prove you were unable to attend work when asking for benefits, you had to pay the doctor a shilling for a note stating why you were off work. You took this to the Society, who inspected it at their meetings and decided what to pay you.

My father and my two brothers and myself paid into the Odd Fellows, to a Mr. Woods, the Secretary who lived at 74, Edgeworth Street. In his parlour, where I often stood while he opened his large book which lay on a stand and into which he entered the subscriptions, were many antiques which now would be worth a small fortune. Mr. Woods, an old man with a beard when I was a schoolboy, was a retired coffin maker who lived with an elderly daughter. They were both very quiet and reserved people. No-one seemed to know much about them. To me, both could have stepped

out of the pages of a Victorian book.

### **The beginning and end of a miner's working day**

An important feature of the work of a coal miner, not fully understood by those people outside the coal industry, is the fact that no underground worker could be late for work at the mine. Workers outside the industry could travel from their homes to the factories or their offices and large numbers of workers could arrive and be at their place of work in a short period of time, or, indeed, arrive late.

But when underground workers arrived at the mine, they had to walk to the lamp shop to obtain their pit lamp and record their presence before walking to the shaft to be lowered by cage down into the mine. Then again, pit cages could hold only a limited number of men - four people in a cage at a small colliery to 100 at a large one - so only a limited number of men could enter the cage at each winding. This time of entry and exit from the mine was known as "the men's riding time". That means that men were lowered down to the shaft, and those who had completed their shift below were brought up to the surface. As the men left the cage at the bottom of the shaft, they were searched by the "hooker on", and then again recorded their presence with the fireman who was in charge of their district. They then began the walk to their place of work. Prior to the 1940s, this meant anything from one to two miles, along roadways which were inclined and often too low for a man to stand upright.

Since the mines were nationalised on January 1 1947, the National Coal Board policy was, wherever possible, to provide "man-riding trains" to convey men to their place of work. As a result, when the men arrived at their working place, they were in much better physical condition.

Miners working in a Lancashire pit sixty or more years underground would know that they would not be allowed underground if they were late arriving, due to a tram breakdown or any other delay in public transport, or a puncture on their bicycle wheel. If late, they would have to return home and miss a shift. From my own experiences in the 1920s and 1930s, a day in the life of a miner might go as follows.

### **The beginning of the day**

He would probably rise from his bed anytime from 4:30am and would have his breakfast, which his wife would, in most cases, have been up with him to prepare. He would place his sandwiches in his "Tommy Tin", with water or cold tea in his "Tin Bottle". He would then walk, cycle or travel by tram to the nearest stopping place to the mine, and walk to the colliery lamp shop. At 6:30am, he was expected to reach the shaft after collecting his tally from the Tally Shed. He would then stand in the queue to enter the cage and would go down to report to the fireman and start his journey to his place of work. How long this took would depend on the distance, the gradient, the height of the roadways and the temperature. Generally, after working four hours, he would stop work and snatch a hurried meal and drink, to fall in line with the surface and haulage workers. In the case of Bold and Collins Green collieries, this break lasted for twenty minutes, from 11am to 11:20am. This break was called "Snap Time". The signal for this break was a buzzer blowing from the Fan House where the works clock was kept. The Fan Man was responsible for the



signalling of the break.

### **The end of the day**

The working shift would end at about 2pm, giving the miner about 30 minutes to travel and recover his clothes and make his way to the pit bottom, where he would take his turn with many other men from different parts of the mine, to be raised to the surface. On the surface, he would return his safety lamp to the lamp shop, and collect his brass tally (a numbered disk). This recorded his return from underground. Then he would make his way home, arriving there any time between 3pm and 4pm.

His last meal would have been about 11:20am, so he was certainly ready for his main meal of the day, which would have been waiting, prepared for him by his wife.

### **A four to eight mile walk**

One can assume from this that many miners would walk or travel eight miles each day, there and back, and work their shift between their travelling times. These were indeed hard times.

### **The 1960s**

In the 1960s, the picture was a different one. Pit head baths were provided at all collieries operated by the National Coal Board. The mine workers would take off their clothes in the warmth of the bath's changing rooms, and change into their working clothes. Then again, a covered walkway extended from the baths to the pit head, whereas in the earlier years under private ownership, the men were expected to stand exposed to all kinds of weather waiting for their turn to be lowered down the pit.

Canteens were now attached to the pit head baths and (time permitting), men could get a hot drink and light refreshments before going underground. Then again, many collieries provided small trains which would take the mine workers from the bottom of the shaft to close to their working place.

Miners could also travel to work on the buses and, as times changed, came to the pit in their cars.

And now, all is gone. The Lancashire coal field is finished, leaving millions of tons of coal lying underground. This is the "dogma" of this present government - they prefer the unemployment of all mine workers and the import of coal from foreign countries to sustain our industries. So much for our so-called democracy.

(35)

*H. Marshall*

NATIONAL COAL BOARD - NORTH WESTERN DIVISION  
NO. 3 (ST. HELENS) AREA

BOLD COLLIERY REORGANISATION

1. SITUATION OF THE COLLIERY

The colliery is located in No. 3 (St. Helens) Area in the west of the South Lancashire Coalfield. It is adjacent to and serviced by the British Railways main Liverpool to Manchester line, being some 13 miles from the former city and 19 miles from the latter.

It is accessible by good roads from the neighbouring industrial towns and is three miles from St. Helens and six miles from Warrington. (See Plan No. 1).

It should be noted that the colliery is situated about two miles by road from Clock Face Colliery and the future coal preparation plant at Bold is planned to take and wash the minus 4" coal from Clock Face, an amount approximating to 1,200 tons per day.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLLIERY

The sinking of Bold Colliery shafts Nos. 1 and 2 was commenced in 1881 and completed to the Higher Florida level in 1884. The sinking of No. 3 shaft was commenced in 1890 and completed to the same level in 1892.

No. 1 shaft was then widened and both Nos. 1 and 3 deepened to the Wigan Minos level, at a depth of 730 yards.

Shortly after the original sinking was commenced, the Collins Green Colliery Company came into being and worked the colliery on a profitable basis until the early 1930s.

During the 1930s when the workings in the seams then being exploited (Crombouke, Higher and Lower Florida) had advanced to a considerable distance to the dip of the shafts, the economic position at the colliery became increasingly difficult.

## BOLD POWER STATION

(3)

In 1940 the Collins Green Colliery Company went into liquidation and their assets were acquired by the Sutton Heath and Lea Green Collieries Limited. This Company started the present workings in the Yard Seam and embarked upon a limited scheme for redevelopment.

Nos. 1 and 3 shafts were deepened to the Mushy Park horizon, the total depth now being 918 yards.

Larger tube of 15 cwt. capacity were introduced, a new screening plant built, new sidings laid, and some of the older surface buildings removed.

Plan No. 3 shows a section of the shafts, and Plan No. 4 shows the general surface layout at Vesting Date.

### 3. REASONS FOR REORGANISATION

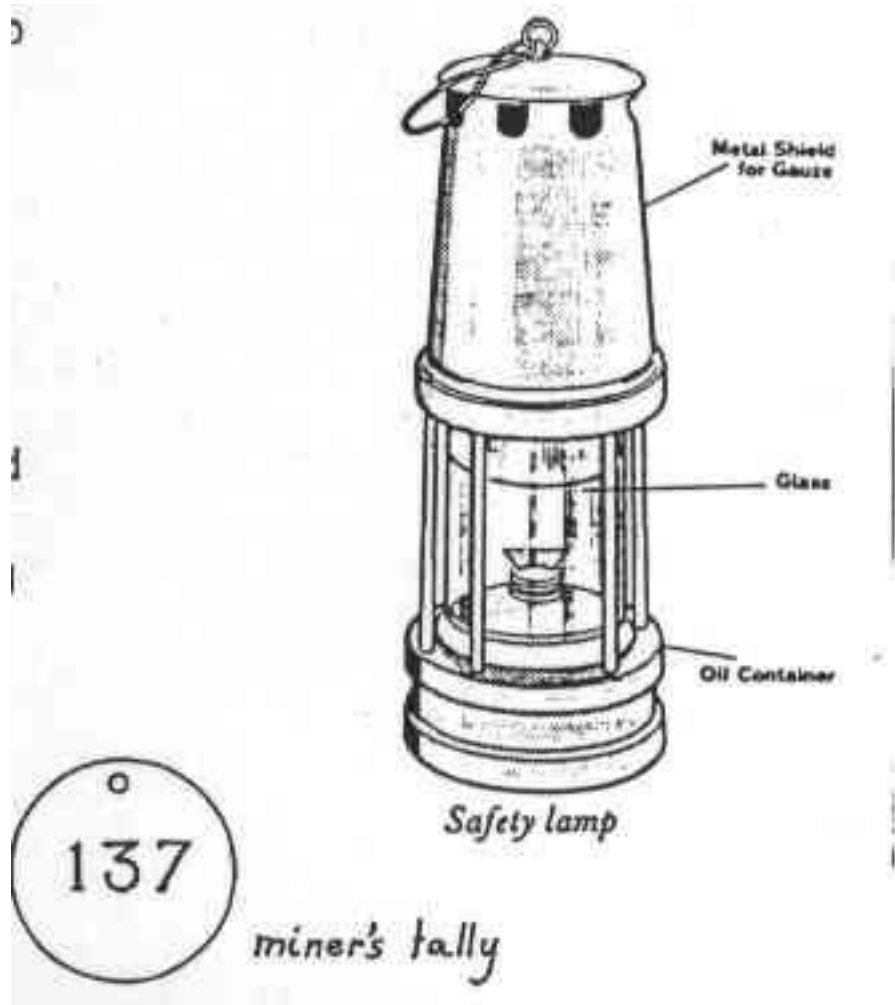
- (a) The geological features of the Bold area were known to be more favourable than those elsewhere in the St. Helens Area.

Three deep boreholes were put down to the south of the colliery and these have confirmed the impression that the favourable conditions known to exist near to the shaft do extend a very considerable distance to the south.

From the geological evidence obtained from the borings it has been possible to get a reliable estimate of workable reserves, calculated at 61 million tons.

- (b) The production from Bold Colliery is of paramount importance to St. Helens Area, as several of the old pits are nearing exhaustion, particularly those of the No. 4 Sub-Area.
- (c) The British Electricity Authority, after consultation with the National Coal Board as to the availability of coal supplies at Bold, are constructing a new power station on a site adjacent to the colliery.

The first part of this station will be completed by 1957 and will require some 200,000 tons of coal washed smalls 1 1/2" - 0" per annum. The ultimate requirements of the power station will probably be 500,000 tons per annum.



A miner's lamp and tally.

## Mines and Mining

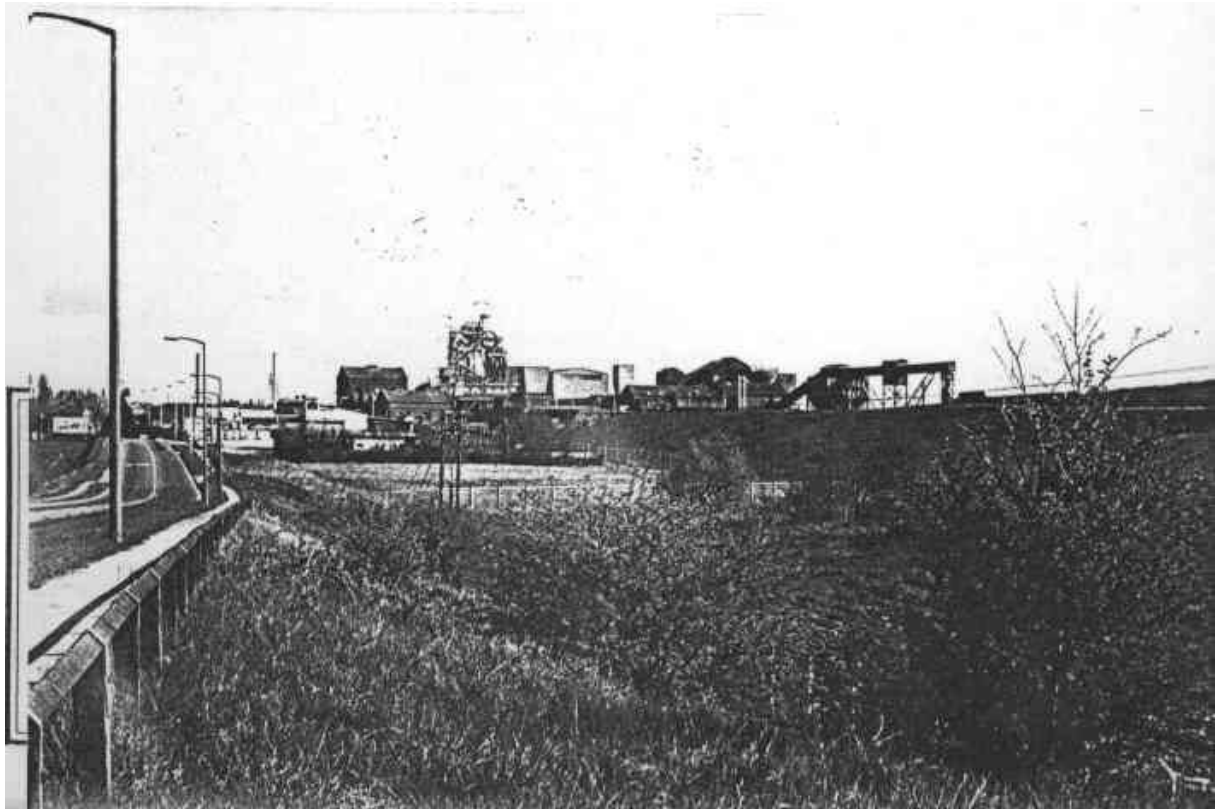
*The following pages are taken from the Wasteland to Woodlands Schools Information pack*

The men who made or “drove” the tunnels with explosives were contractors who went from pit to pit and charged so much for every yard of tunnel drive. Contractors, and the gang of men they had working for them, were also responsible for putting up pit props. These were horizontal bars and uprights (props) of varying sizes, placed at regular intervals along the tunnel to support the roof. They were made out of the trunks of larch and spruce trees, and were cut and trimmed on the surface in the timber yard.

To help ventilation down below, air doors were incorporated every so often along the tunnels and by opening and closing them, air could be diverted in different directions throughout the workings. These were made out of two layers of tongue and groove boarding by joiners on the surface, and were heavy and tight fitting - hard to pull open against the air pressure. As a temporary or economy measure, brattis cloth, a coarse canvas covered in tar and sand, was used instead. Ventilation for the mine as a whole was assisted by a mechanically operated airlock and fan connected to No. 1 shaft. Clean, cool air flowed down Nos. 2 and 3 shafts which were downcast shafts and foul, warm air drawn up No. 1 shaft which was an upcast shaft.

The collier and his team would either work on the morning shift (from 7am to 2:30pm) or on night turn (from 10pm to 6am). The afternoon turn was worked by contractors and day wage men, or maintenance men who carried out small repairs underground when necessary. Buzzers would go off all over the mine about halfway through each shift and everyone would stop working because this was the signal for break time. Only 20 minutes were allowed for this, and it was known as “Snap Time”, because it went so quickly.

When a collier reached the mine to start work, his first destination was the lamp shop to pick up his brass safety lamp, which had been cleaned, checked, filled with oil and locked in the safety position. On the lamp was the collier’s brass tally, a round disc with the collier’s own personal number stamped on it. On his way home, he would return the lamp to the stores and it would be hung on a hook with his number on it. This was a way of checking whether a miner was missing underground.



A photograph of Sutton Manor Colliery in the late 1980s. The photograph was taken from the South.

Jubits Lane, with the incline taking the lane over the motorway can be seen to the left of the picture.

## Processing the coal

Coal was taken to the surface by wagons, Once on the surface, the wagons went on more box rails to the weighbridge, where a tally caller regulated the flow of boxes over a weighing machine and shout out the tally numbers to the weighmen inside the cabin. These two men operated the weights and recorded the weight of each box alongside its tally number. One man worked for the colliery owners and the other - the Check Weighman, was a union representative, who worked for the colliers, making sure a true weight of coal was attributed to them at the end of each shift. *“If a colliers box was excessively heavy, they’d guess there’d be rocks inside... so they’d chalk all round the box and tip it up by the hedge near the cage for everyone to see, and the collier would get nothing for that box.”* (Frank Bamber)

The full boxes of coal would then be taken along a gantry to an elevated position above the screens by means of chain haulage, known as the Creepers. At the high point, the boxes went into the tipplers, which were two-box, circular, rotating cages - the weight of the full box was used to swing the tippler down and bring the empty one up. The empty boxes would go back down to the cage via the creepers where a tally snatcher would be waiting to take the tallies off each box and bring it back to the sheds. At the cage, boys and girls would push the empty boxes against the full ones, the Brow Man would secure them in the cage, signal to the winder to take them down and the process was repeated.

From the tipplers, the coal dropped down onto shakers, which were metal belts covered with holes. They were shaking forward all the time and making a terrific din! The small coal went down a chute through the holes and the big coal stayed on top. The small coal went down into a chute to wagons below and was taken to the washery, where it was washed, separated and categorised into what was called cobbles, nuts, beans, peas and dant. These small pieces had a variety of uses. For instance, cobbles were used for domestic burning and dant or slack to fire industrial boilers.

The big coal passed along onto screen belts, where “compensation men” or elderly men out of the pit, along with women and girls, would stand either side of the moving belts and pick out any rubbish, like old pit props, or anything that wouldn’t burn, such as rock. The good coal dropped down onto wagons waiting below and was taken by a small locomotive across another weighbridge. A sticker stating the weight and destination of the coal was stuck on the side of the wagons and the loco man shunted them to the railway sidings by the main Liverpool to Manchester train track.

All the waste - the dry “pay dirt”, such as clinkers from the boilers, rock from the screens and that brought up from underground by contractors during the excavation of tunnels, and wet tailings or slurry, the muddy residue left after the coal was washed, all was transported by endless chain haulage up onto the two enormous slag heaps and dumped. It was loose-tipped, not compacted like later tips were, and so was susceptible to spontaneous combustion - it used to glow and fires would break out round its sides. The older “stuff ruk” was the highest one on the Lancashire Plain - you could see the River Mersey from the top!

Not all the rock was discarded. A certain kind of rock which came out of No. 2 pit was laid out on a field to weather and go soft. It was then crushed to dust and the dust formed into the shape of a brick and fired in the kilns at Bold Brickworks, with the name Collins Green imprinted on each brick. The brickworks were situated close to Bold Road and were a favourite place for tramps to call in and spend the night above the warm kilns.

In between the brickworks and the avenue of hawthorn hedges that formed the main entrance to Bold Colliery was a large reservoir. The water from the reservoir was drawn along pipes into water softening tanks, then fed through boilers. Here, it was heated up to produce steam, which powered the engines that worked the haulage, winding and ventilation systems. The spent water came back round via a water cooling plant, to the reservoir where the water was always warm to the touch. In the Boiler House there were twelve Lancashire Boilers, which were fuelled with slack and kept almost constantly alight by boilermen or stokers. For breakfast, the stokers used to cook bacon and eggs on their spades held inside the boilers!

Bold, like other collieries, had the constant problem of large quantities of water collecting and filling up in the workings underground. It drained naturally off the countryside and collected at No. 2 pit. Every day at 3pm, the winding rope was extended with a tail rope and a tank put in the bottom deck of the cage. This was wound down to an area below the bottom of the shaft known as the sump or dib hole, where the water was filling up. The tank caught the water and brought it up to the surface where it was let out into a chute and diverted into a brook running towards the moss, around the main tip.

During the Depression, in the 1920s and 1930s, there was often not enough work to keep a miner employed full time. Sometimes he would go into work only to be told there was no work for him that day - he called this "knock out" or "walk over" because then he had to walk over to St. Helens to sign on. He had to sign on every day he was off to show he was willing to work. If the miner worked for three days or less, he was entitled to dole money to make up for the days of the week he was not working - known as "play days". Three days dole money was 7/6d (37 ½ p), but initially, he did not receive his money until a week after he had first signed on. If he worked for four days, he was entitled to no dole money at all.

*20s and 30s times were never so bad  
Small money coming in made people right sad  
A knock on the door. A voice shouted "Rent"  
Behind that shut door a voice shouted "spent!"*

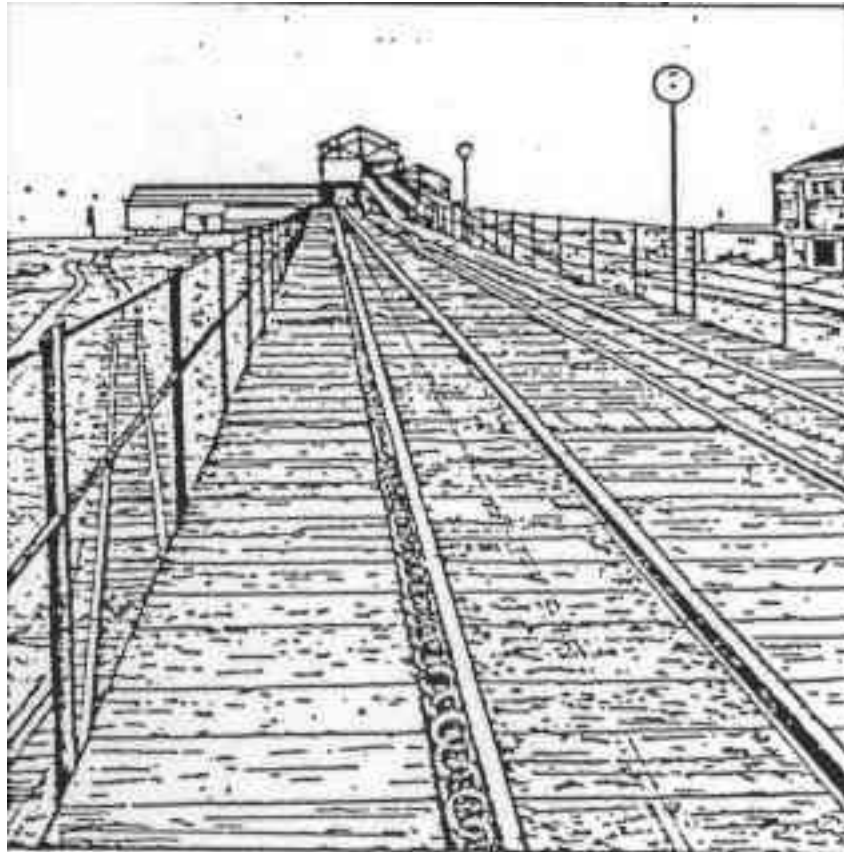
Frank Bamber

When a man went down the pit he was entitled to so much coal, apart from a wage. A collier's load was three boxes of coal a month - each box was 3 feet 4 inches x 14 inches and 18 inches deep. Surface workers weren't entitled to a load and had 24/- (£1.20) stopped out of their wages if they wanted one. The load was taken by horse and cart and tipped up in the entry at the back of the collier's house. It was his job as soon as he got home, or his wife's and children, to spade the coal as quickly as possible into the coal place, or it would block the entry. There were no pit baths for the collier in those days, and no hot water when he got home. He used to have a wash



in a tin bath that had been filled with water boiled up on the stove.

In the 1930s, Bold Colliery became less and less profitable, and in 1940 the owners (the Collins Green Colliery Company) went into liquidation and the colliery closed down. It was re-opened four months later by the Sutton Heath and Lea Green Collieries Company. They began a limited development scheme and deepened No2. 1 and 3 shafts to the Rushy Park seam - a depth of 918 yards (839 meters)



Chain haulage to the Screens.



The Screen Belts.

### **Ashtons Green Colliery**

Ashtons Green Colliery, Derbyshire Hill, was one of the earlier local coal mining ventures, the first mention of it being in the 1780s when it was purchased by a Mr. Blackburn from Liverpool for £5,500. By the early 1800s, it was owned by James Orrel and Thomas Claughton, when it was selling coal at 8/4d (42p) a ton. At this time in the pits, a local proprietor would engage a collier to excavate the coal, who, in turn would employ assistants - often members of his own family - to convey the coal from the workings to the pit shaft.

Known as “drawers” or “waggoners”, these were generally women and children - indeed, a third of all people employed down the mines at this time were women. Children as young as seven would work eight to twelve hours a day, along with the adults! Around their waist, they wore a belt to which a chain was fastened. This passed between the legs and hooked onto the coal basket or “tub” and ran on a kind of railway laid along different levels. The tunnels the underground workers had to go through to get to the place where the coal was “got” were usually not high enough for them to stand upright - they had to crawl - often through water and sometimes for two miles or more.

In 1842, it became illegal for women and girls and boys under 10 to work in the mines underground. However, in 1861, it was reported that a boy aged seven was crushed to death by a coal wagon at Ashtons Green.


Bromilow Foster and Co. purchased the mine in 1883 and worked it until the company went bankrupt in 1931, when it employed 1,126 men.

### COLLIERY ACCIDENT AT ST. HELENS. 1891

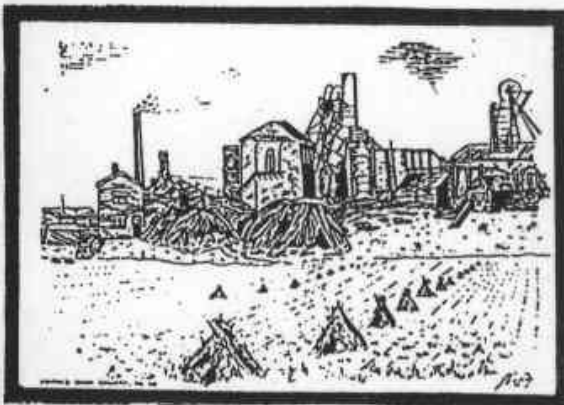
#### 200 MEN IMPRISONED.

An extraordinary accident, which for a time occasioned considerable excitement and alarm, occurred at the Ashton's Green Colliery, St. Helens, belonging to Messrs. Bromilow, Foster, and Co., on Friday. As is generally known every pit shaft contains two "cages," one ascending while the other descends, and these cages are used for lowering the colliers and empty boxes into the pit, and for bringing up the coals and men during the day. The winding rope is of wire, over an inch in diameter, and is fastened to what is technically known as the "cap" of the cage. On Friday forenoon one of the cages, containing four full boxes of coal, was being drawn up the shaft, when, without any warning, the "cap" of the cage gave way, and the heavy load—some three or four tons—crashed to the bottom. Several men were at work near the bottom of the shaft, and had an almost miraculous escape.

The miners in the pit were imprisoned at the bottom of the shaft for several hours after the time for ceasing work, but one who suffered the inconvenience informed our representative that no alarm nor fear as to their rescue was entertained. The men gathered in one of the tunnels near the furnace, and here they spent the time in singing and reciting.



A girl miner wearing a dog belt, pulling a tub



Ashtons Green Colliery, amid the wheat-fields of Derbyshire Hill, just before its closure in 1931. (illustration by Rev. E. Warina)

Report of a colliery accident in St Helens from 1891.

## **Mining poems and songs**

### **The Colliers and the Witch**

#### **The 1920s and 1930s**

20s and 30s times were never so bad  
Small money coming in made people right sad.  
A knock on the door, a voice shouted "Rent",  
Behind that shut door, a voice shouted "Spent".

Three days work was a poor collier's lot  
Twenty seven and six was the grand sum he got.  
For his walk to St. Helens, he was up with the lark,  
To write in his signature, or just make his mark.

To arrive one day late or miss just one day  
He'd forfeit his three days and nowt was his pay.  
He'd beg for relief and pocket his pride.  
For a few crusts for family o'er a few days would tide.

The government and owners worked this foul racket,  
A collier for three days, just £1 in his packet.  
His three days from dole ran 7<sup>1/2</sup> times one shilling,  
He'd sign on each day, to show for work he was willing.

The collier and family prayed to Our Lord above  
For help and compassion and for children some love.  
Remove greedy men, please, Dear Saviour of my soul  
So we work all six days and no longer beg from dole.

#### **The 1950s to the 1970s**

At last every collier was paid what he's worth  
For toiling in darkness underneath Mother Earth.  
For a third of his life, he lived like a mole,  
His single endeavour was to bring out more coal.

Unfettered and free from capitalist yoke  
Life was worth living for all colliery folk.  
But plots were hatched and plans were writ  
To kill off the good life and close every pit.

#### **The 1970s to the 1990s**

The witch from Westminster flew north on her broom  
She shadowed each pit to bring disaster and gloom  
She spelled out hatred in a black cloud of hate  
And cackled with glee at the coalfield's dire fate.

This creature of hate was spawned in the South  
Vehemence and spite poured from its loud mouth.  
She bid one of her creatures, its name was MacGregor  
Destroy pits and Union, and make each collier a beggar.

Collieries are closed and the foundries are gone.  
Who will be the next victims as the Tories carry on?  
Back will come pawnshops, three balls on display,  
A means to keep living and poverty at bay.

Thatcherism and the Tories have closed most pits,  
For colliers the dole, and to live on their wits.  
No work for our young ones under this government of greed,  
More money for the rich is the Thatcher creed.

**Frank Bamber 1992**

**The Pit Brow Lassies - a folk song**

*Melody: trad. - Three Score and Ten*

You've 'eard tales about coal minin', disasters, pits afire,  
Of heroes an endurance, them things whey aw admire.  
Wheer ever coal wer gotten, wheer ever coal wer wound,  
Women allus tuk ther place, bi t'menfolk underground.

**Chorus**

So cum yer Pit Brow Lassies, yer worked like any a mon,  
Whoams un kids t'luk after, no time fert gaze at t'sun.  
Wi' picks in hond, shawls closely tied, bonnets clean un fine,  
They worked on t'screens at t'pit head and not down in the mine.

When aw t'laws were awter'd, deaunw t'pit fer them 'ad stop,  
Gaffers geet chep labour, employed um aw on top.  
Fro' draggin' coal I'baskets, whey children far below,  
T'pooshin' tubs on t'surface, writ pages cannot show.

They toiled from seven in t'morning', till very late in t'day,  
A pickin' great coal pieces, fer very meagre pay.  
Th'owners paid um two an' five, fer ev'ry day thi worked  
Fer shovelin' coal in t'buckets, else separatin' dirt.

Just what them wimmin suffer'd, in t'struggle just to live,  
Ah wonder if yon Mon up heigh bad owners did forgive.  
Fer when thi' went t'church a Sunday, i'carriages so fine,  
N'er care o'er much fer them poor souls a workin' in their mine.

### Another Pit Dees

Pulleys us stopped, th'engines gone cowed,  
Mi job as neuw finished, ah'm not really owd.  
Warked aw mi life fer a mon cawed King Cole,  
Ah don't fancy goo'in on wot thi caw t'dole.

Coal's neuw shoved eauwt, bi oil un bi gas,  
They'n tan o'er I'front (p'raps a matter o'brass).  
Smooke they aw say kills so many folk,  
Coal is neuw hopeless; unless it's cawed coke.

But it's seent'country thru - i'war un i'crisis,  
Public who pay neuw strike o'er its prices.  
Just cawn't bi bothered abeauwt movin' ash,  
They'd sooner press buttons, regardless of cash.

Chimney sweep's goo'in, he'll soon be a fable,  
Like soot fer mi onions, produce fer t'table.  
Ashes un clinker get dearer bi far  
N'er fert t'come back - unless there's a "waar".

Life'll goo on beauwt me an' beauwt mines  
Today they ne'r bother abeauwt poo'in t'blinds.  
Fer sumthin' that's dee'd, be it mon, be it thing  
T'King is neuw gone - long live t'new King!

Ah'm sorry coals goo'in, so what tak's its place?  
Sorry fer its workmen, gud stock of eauwr race.  
When ther bree dees eauwt, fergetten un lost,  
This country is poorer - fer t'breed cawn't bi cost.



### **Cummin Wom from Pit and Gooin Modern**

I recall in my younger days  
When I geet wom from Pit,  
I'd walk reet in tot kitchen  
An' beart a word I'd sit.

But neaur we've geet modern lark  
It's nowt but nag and grouse.  
Wi "Fayther tek thi clogs off",  
"Don't smoke thi pipe in' th' house."

Dost see wiv ad ar kitchen done,  
It luks a bloomin' scream.  
Wi' red and gold striped paper,  
Just lark a pasha's dream.

Tha knows it's yon new neighbours,  
As bowt owd Maggie cross street,  
Wi their blinkin' hardboard panels,  
An leet oak dining suite.

Thowd girl's geet jealous lark.  
'Er tossed in't bed for neets.  
A'll gie um Yankee curtains.  
A'll gie um leaded leets.

So as I towd thi' early on.  
Who's ad a reet good spree.  
'Ers sowd my grannies sideboard,  
An watched it goo with glee.

So neaw wiv geet a new three piece.  
It's on easy payment touch.  
If I comes sick or art o' work  
Sick club won't pay so much.

'Er geed a new tiled grate an' all,  
Sum say it looks a treat.  
It's as ar sed, "thar off thi yed,  
Arv no weer warm mi feet!"

An then oo's bowt a chandelier,  
Tha knows, it's geet three leets.  
Just wait till cums lecky bill,  
I'll bet she throws three fits.

Ne'h it's "Tek thi feet off graate.  
Don't ang thi coat on door.  
Don't sprawl o'er ort cushions  
Don't spill thi ash on't floor."

"Mind me new Haxminster  
Don't maul wi that new leet.  
An' tek thi mug off polished top."  
It's nag from morn to neet."

But just thee wait till Friday.  
It's warfs bingo neet.  
A'l kick al't blinkin' cushions  
As high as any keet.

A'll put mi feet o'er yon grate.  
A'll mek yon three piece squeak.  
But as to wot she'll say 'nt mornin'  
A'll let thi know next week.

**The Miner**  
*By a Wigan Collier*

There is a workman we all know, whose name should ring with praise,  
'tis he who keeps our home fires bright on cold, dark, dreary days.  
He may be rough and ready, while others may seem fine,  
But we must admit, he does his bit, when he goes down the mine.

Some say he causes trouble, but that is hard to say;  
For who is more contented if he gets a fair days pay;  
The rich don't seem to realise the dangers he goes through,  
Because his work is down below, and hidden from their view.

One lady called him "earth worm", little sympathy did she show;  
But what a difference there would be if she had to get her own.  
Let 'Live and let live' be our motto, for that should be our aim,  
Although he is a collier, he is a Christian just the same!

He works all day for little pay, to earn his daily bread,  
Not knowing when the earth may fall, which hangs above his head!  
But there is One who watches, with sympathy and love,  
That miner working down below, from his heavenly throne above.

And when his work is o'er, and his limbs are tired and sore,  
He guides him safely back again to light of day once more;  
His children, they await to hear the clatter of his feet,  
Then run to meet him eagerly as he comes down the street.

He steps inside the door way, then his thoughts begin to roam,  
'tis only a humble cot, he thinks, but to him is Home, Sweet Home.  
And when the day is ended, to bed again he goes,  
To rest his tired body in a peaceful night's repose.

He wakes at four next morning, to work he means to go,  
When he hears the cry of "Pit on fire" the night shift down below;  
He quickly hastens to the mine, makes ready to descend;  
To save his comrades down below, through fire-damp he will wend.

He steps inside the cage again, not thinking of his doom,  
He rushes to the rescue but the mine explodes again;  
His life is lost, his comrades too; his task was all in vain.  
So just think of the miner, and help him when you can;  
He may be rough and ready, but he's a hero and a man.



A Wigan collier posing for his photograph on a sunny day towards the end of the last century.

His face and hands are dirty, as if he has just come up the pit, but his clogs are polished – very unusual for pit clogs. He probably worked at Rose Bridge Colliery, as the photograph was in a series that was taken at that colliery, and judging by the size of his can, this could be right, as at that time it was Britain's deepest pit at 815 yards. The workings were very hot in the Arley Mine, the strata temperature being high and the ventilating current circulated by means of a furnace, which though a large one, would hardly be adequate.

When he went to work in the morning, the collier's can would be full of either water or cold sweetened tea without milk. In his "Tommy Tin", there would be cold bacon sandwiches with plenty of butter on the bread, or perhaps ham sandwiches if work rates were low.

The lamp is of the Marsaut type, made by J. H. Naylot of Wigan. He would have to pay for lamp oil, wick etc. But the practice of allowing men to take their lamps home with them was a dangerous one, as although the gauze could be readily examined, the state of the washers between the bottom of the glass, the oil vessel and the top of the glass and the gauze could not be easily checked. Our collier is carrying his pick, which unlike the more modern socketed one, has the blade fixed to it. It was the usual practice for a collier to own several picks, some of which he would take down the pit with him, whilst others were at the pick sharpener's cabin at the pit head. He paid the pick sharpener for keeping his picks sharp and well tempered and there was an art to this job. During this century, since socketed picks came into use, making it possible to remove the blade easily, it was the practice for a collier to carry several pick blades on a thick wire ring which was more convenient than having to carry complete picks, or manage with a dull blade. This man was at work during the era of the great colliery explosions, when there were daily accidents from roof falls and in pit shafts etc. If he survived all that, he was still condemned to hard labour for 11-12 hours a day in hot, dusty conditions in virtual darkness.

### **A story of the “Landings”**

The Landings was the name given to the Junction of two tunnels down the mine. Plates were laid down flat between the two tunnels and boxes either full of coal or empty were unlashd from the haulage motion, run onto the plates and moved into the direction required to engage the rail tracks. Sometimes, to help the haulage hand to feed the boxes onto the two rails, a circular ring of iron, standing up and welded down, two inches less than the railway gauge, was used.

Sometimes just one haulage hand was required to manage a landing, and my father, Joseph Bamber, Underlooker at that time, told me a true story about one of the pit lads who worked on a landing. My dad was on one of his rounds to see if everything was working satisfactorily on the haulage system, when he came to this particular landing. At first, he could not see the young fellow on the job, but a closer look saw him lying down. First my father thought he had had an accident, came upon him and saw he had his head on one of the rails. My dad spoke to him and the lad got on his feet and in reply to my dad's questioning said "I very often do this. The sound of the boxes coming to me tells me to get to my feet and unlash them." He was told that this was a very dangerous practice, and he must not do this in future.

Fortunately, no mishaps occurred after this warning, much to my dad's relief. My dad was told afterwards by some of the pit men that he had been doing this for a considerable mount of time.

## **Letter to the Editor of the St. Helens Star**

Dear Sir,

You will remember when I was last in touch with you, you asked me to jot down any past memories of the old days which would be of interest to you and your grand feature "You May Like to Know". Some may be of interest, and some may not. Nevertheless, here are some of them.

### **"John the Baptist" at Bold Colliery 1925 (a true story)**

I wonder what an outcry there would be from some present day workers in contrast to the reaction to danger from the old type of worker. For instance, three shafts were sunk at Bold Colliery with the idea of winding coal and men from top to bottom and back. However, in addition, one shaft, No. 2 pit, was used for winding water due to the accumulation of water in the dib hole (bottom of shaft). This was done by catching both cages at the bottom deck (ground level) and attaching a tail rope to the top of the cage and the capping, thus enabling the cages to be submerged into the water and drawn out by two tanks which were placed at the bottom of the cage. The cages were then wound to the surface again, where a bow on the delivery end of the tank was struck and the water released down a wooden chute and into a small brook that made its way towards Sutton Moss.

When winding water, the winder let the winding engines have full speed, so it was not as steady as when winding men, and it was not usually the case to break off winding water to wind men.

I should have gone down No.3 pit to do a job with a joiner called Charlie Richardson, but at the last minute, the older apprentice, Arthur Heyes was taken instead. (Arthur is still alive and lives at Moss Bank). For some reason, they could not travel down No.3 pit, so they went to No.2 pit where they were winding water. The Banksman accepted them and signalled to the winder that there were men in the cage. The winder dropped the cage down the shaft into the water, submerged it and then remembered the signal and promptly wound the cage up again. The two men came out of the cage, as they themselves put it, "like two drowned rats." They dried themselves out in the warm engine house without making a fuss or serious complaint.

About a fortnight after this, an elderly undermanager named George Martlew was treated exactly the same - dropped into water, submerged and pulled out again. When he reached the surface, he said "Who the \*\*\*\*\* is winding today?" The Banksman said "John Woods", to which George Martlew replied "His name should be John the Baptist after this lot!"

### **Mull and Loll**

We had formed a rugby team by Bold Colliery, and after training, we had many a laugh by the hot stove. Two of our forwards who worked at the colliery were called Mull and Loll. Mull cared for nothing, and the pair of them were not the best of

timekeepers. They were cutting down staff at Clock Face Colliery and both of them got the sack. Leaving the colliery, Mull said to Loll "Wat at luckin down in'y marth abart?" Loll said "Ah'v geet go wom an tell um." Mull said "They'll be woss off than us." Loll asked "Whoy?" Mull said "Clock will - thiv just lost two of their best men", and burst out laughing.

A fortnight later, at training, the "grapevine" said they wanted men at the Green, so Mull and Loll were told of this and one of our players said "Th'undermanager who teks um on for that pit is a sonofabitch. E meks um tek their caps off." Mull said "Ah'v niver dun that yet to any mon, wot dus tha say Loll?" Loll just nodded.

There were several outside the Pay Office when Mull knocked on the door and a voice barked "come in". Mull went in and stood there. The Undermanager said "take your cap off". Mull said "Wot fur". The Undermanager was furious and said "I'll show you how to ask for a job. " He went out and knocked on the door. Mull shouted "Come in". The undermanager said "I've come to ask for a job. I've took off my cap to show respect. Mull said "Nowt doin. Wiv geet enuff of tha sort here oredy!"

### **True stories of Bold Pits and the men who worked the pits.**

Despite the darkness around them lit up by each man or boys safety oil lamp, there was a special kind of bond between the pit workers down below, away from the sunshine and the fresh breezes on the surface.

And so wit, good humour and any titbit which would raise a laugh was readily received and welcomed by men and lads working under these dark conditions. My dad, the Underlooker at the time, was noted for his wit and leg pulling which he himself referred to as 'The Science of Codology'

### **No. 3 pit at Bold**

It was about the time when one of the old songs was quite popular called 'Silver Threads Amongst The Gold' and the brow man that received the boxes of coal in the cage at the surface was named Harry Silver. This prompted my dad to chalk on the sides of the boxes which appeared at the surface 'Silver Treads amongst the Coal' which caused laughter on the surface and down below.

Then on the surface worked three men who repaired the tubs or boxes. These three were known as 'Box Fettleers' and named Webster, Winter and Lilley and so on this occasion my dad chalked on the boxes, "Why did the Web Stare, because of the Lilley so near Winter.

Then again there was the time when we had a visitor at our house who outstayed his welcome which I recount below.

### **The lovely stars on the gravy**

On Sunday mornings it was the general practice for the Undermanager, Underlooker and some firemen to visit the pit to see maintenance had been carried out correctly and that the pit would be ready to bring coal out without any difficulty on the Monday morning. It was after one of these Sunday visits to the pit when the officials usually came up number 3 pit about 12 o'clock midday and made their way home for Sunday dinner with all the family at 1 o'clock, that the incident happened.

On this occasion my dad came up the pit with the Undermanager and after leaving the colliery and about to go their separate ways the Undermanager said "I suppose you will be going home for a good Sunday dinner Joe", to which my dad said "Yes I am looking forward to it". In reply, the Undermanager said "Well! I won't, because the wife's away". My dad took pity on him and said "You can come home with me I'm sure there will be enough for one more". With that, the two of them entered our house in time for dinner. They tucked in with the rest of us around the table and when all had eaten and sat back the Undermanager said. "There's one thing that stands out about this enjoyable dinner and that is the Lovely Gravy with all the lovely stars floating on it. By gum Mrs I don't know how you make it like that. After this praise he departed no doubt well satisfied with his visit.

Well! he must have been, because a month had gone by and he was still coming home



on a Sunday with dad. After he had departed on his now 4th visit my mother said to my dad “How long is this going on? When is his wife coming home? I think it is becoming a regular thing.”

Our dad went quiet, no doubt feeling he was between the devil and the deep blue sea, if the Undermanager was told he had overstayed his welcome for Sunday dinners, he might be offended and possibly working conditions would be strained between them. On the other hand if he still accompanied my dad home, a strained atmosphere would exist between my mother and my dad.

The weekend order had been made out for me to take to the Co-op stores. My dad looked at it and said, “Lad, when you go, ask for two wax candles to be added to the order. I want them for Sunday morning. It was Saturday night when our dad briefed us. Tomorrow after 12 o’clock I want one of you three to be at the back gate watching out for me and the Undermanager and when you see us, give warning to the two of you in the back kitchen. And to my mother he said “Will you make two bowls of gravy for tomorrow’s dinner?”, to which my mother said “Why two?” to which query dad unfolded his plan.

My eldest brother, who was fifteen, was appointed as ‘look out’. My other brother aged fourteen and myself aged nine were to stand beside one bowl of gravy and proceed to drop shavings of wax, shaved by a sharp knife, from each candle into the bowl of gravy. The back kitchen door leading into the dining room was to be kept shut so that the Undermanager would stop and get a good look at the preparing of the gravy. He instructed my mother to keep the other bowl of gravy out of sight which was to be used for our dinner.

At a quarter to one Sunday dinner time my eldest brother rushed in and said “They are here” and so we two started paring the wax off the candles into the gravy. The back door opened and our dad and his boss stood there looking at the pair of us busy with the candles. I then said to my mother “Will you want some more wax in the gravy as the Undermanager likes plenty of stars floating on top of his gravy. Before she could speak the Undermanager said “I’ve just remembered, I’m expecting my wife home today, I had better not stop otherwise I will miss her and she will not be able to get in the house.” My dad said “You can stop and have dinner with us if you like” but the offer was hurriedly declined and he bade us all goodbye and left us, which cheered up my dad and us all no end, and so he never came back on a Sunday with my dad again. I often wondered whether he ever dreamed about those stars on the gravy or did he have nightmares!

### **Beano, rope splicer and joker**

Dowd met with an accident whilst working as a drawer for his dad who was a collier down number 3 pit. A stone fell out of the roof onto his head. He was taken to hospital by the horse ambulance and the surgeons inserted a plate into his skull.

When he came back to work at the colliery he stated he would rather go down the pit again rather than work on the surface in the screens.

My dad, who generally spliced the steel haulage ropes when they needed new pieces,

decided to teach Tom the job as Rope Splicer. Tom travelled the haulage ways as a 'Pusher on' and could examine the steel haulage proper for loose strands etc. Now everybody knew him as 'Beano' rather than Tom Dowd. He was an apt pupil of my dad in the way he could get the best out of the men and lads and could always raise a laugh and raise spirits down below. I remember the occasion when a fitter who came on occasions to do jobs down below arrived down the pit. The fitter had a speech impediment in fact he stammered quite a lot. Beano was required to give him a lift on this job, so now the stage was set for some fun down below.

The pit lads gathered round the job expecting to see the funny side of the operation. They were not long to be disappointed. Fred the fitter wanted a chisel handing to him. He put his hand out to Beano and stammered "Ch, Ch, Ch" to which Beano said "Ast browt thi cat dearn with thi?". "What colour is it Fred?", keeping his face perfectly straight and turning to the pit lads gathered round, he said "Come on lads let's look around for Fred's cat, he'll want to take it back up top.

### **Breakdown and caps off**

Beano was looked up to and admired in more ways than one, by the lads on the haulage ways. There were bad times in the 20's and early 30's and men and boys were in constant fear of losing their jobs. Some bosses took advantage of this and this Undermanager was disliked and feared by some. He was foul-mouthed and belittled men and boys especially if they were inclined to be religious. An example of this was one of his fireman who was a kind, inoffensive man and a local preacher, and in front of other pit men he would refer to him as Jesus Christ.

If there was a breakdown in the haulage system at any time, he would make matters worse by rushing out from his cabin and hurling abuse at all and sundry who were trying to straighten things out. Then he would grab a cap off the head of one of the haulage hands and either jump on it or skim it as far off down the tunnel as he could, but there came a day when Beano was trying to sort things out after a breakdown. It was a difficult situation. If one wasn't careful, it would lead to further damage to the supporting props and a danger of bringing part of the roof down.

Rushing up came the Undermanager swearing what he would do to all and sundry and made a bee-line for Beano, and his arm went up to grab Beano's cap, but Beano beat him to it and seized the Undermanager's cap and flung it back in the direction of the Undermanager's cabin and shouted, "Get back in't cabin, tha only makes matters worse when tha shows thi face", Yes! Beano was loved and respected by all the haulage hands. He proved himself a better man than the Undermanager.

### **A call for help from the coal face**

Word was relayed to the Undermanager's cabin which was situated near the pit bottom that a collier had been pinned down under a fall of rock and coal. Other colliers and the district fireman had extricated him but it was feared that he had broken his back. My dad had taken a course under the St John's Ambulance and Rescue Station work. He had experience of setting broken limbs etc down below.

So armed with stretcher, first aid box and splints he set off with the assistance of the

nearest “Pusher On” towards the Coal Face. The collier was lying on the floor and to make matters more difficult for the bearers was the fact that he was a well built man weighing 14 to 15 stones in weight. After treatment to bind the extent of his injuries he was gingerly lifted onto the stretcher. The collier was in a great deal of pain, but now the most difficult part was to come. They had a mile and a half to go along the main haulage ways whose timber and supports under the roof was, in places, barely a foot above the moving boxes being pulled by the steel haulage rope.

It meant carrying the stretcher in a stooped position at times which was back breaking work and furthermore full boxes of coal were moving towards them. So at times my dad signalled for the haulage to stop whilst they manoeuvred the injured collier and stretcher around the boxes. Conditions down the pit at number 3 were very warm and my dad and the other stretcher bearers were wringing wet through with perspiration when they came in sight of the pit bottom and were exhausted and only kept going by the groans of the injured collier whenever the stretcher was carried out of balance. Imagine their feelings when the Undermanager rushed out using profound language and accusing them of holding the pit up by stopping the haulage system. He didn't care a damn for the injured collier's plight.

That was the last straw for my dad. He stepped forward and gave him the length of his tongue and what he thought about him, all in front of the workers at the Pit bottom who nodded their approval. This was the second time he had lost face before his own pit men and shortly afterwards he was transferred to the afternoon shift where he came to a sad end when he was killed and buried under a large fall of roof. The way his life ended makes one think of his earlier actions down the mine, his insensitivity, towards his fellow men, didn't at all contribute to his end?

### **All greased up at the coal face**

Friday nights Bill Grice generally made it to the Railway public house and his wife went to the second house pictures at the Sutton Empire picture house, known to the locals as the ‘Sutton Bug’, as Friday in the old days was known as ‘Pay Day’. But now Bill had started work on the night turn and Bill's wife, through Bill being at home during the day, was late with her shopping. It was after eight that night when she arrived home laden with the weekend's supply of food. She knew Bill would have gone for a drink before going on work so she decided to put the groceries away and was halfway through this when a voice shouted through the front door “Come on Lizzie there's a queue forming at Pictures. It's a good picture they say. It was her friend she always went with to the pictures. “Come in a minute” Lizzie replied “I'm in a bit of a rush, I've got to put Bill's snap up. He likes it wrapped up in two newspapers, one for each pocket till he gets down pit”.

She completed that and then noticed she had not put the two separate 1 lbs of butter away so she wrapped them up in newspaper and decided against going to the pantry where her ‘Meat Safe’ was (no refrigerator in those days), she would put them away when she came home from the pictures and off she went with her friend to the pictures.

Bill Grice knew time was getting on and was tempted to play another game of dominoes and decided he would risk it, but the game dragged on. He was all at sea

with one eye on the clock and the other on his dominoes. At last it was over and Bill shouted a hasty “Good Neet” and raced out of the pub.

Bill noticed some of the night turn Pit men coming down Junction Lane and shouted to them “tell the ‘oojah’ bloke to hold on for a few minutes It will give me time to catch it when it comes”. (The Oojah was the colliers’ pet name for the Bold Colliery Narrow Gauge Railway which ran on 22” gauge rails which ran from Sutton to Bold Colliery for all Bold Colliery workmen who lived in Sutton. The fare was 6d old pennies a week. It no doubt owed its nickname to the periodical of that time call “The Oojah”).

Bill dashed into his house, threw his night clothes off and donned his pit clothes and clogs, grabbed his snap packages, thrust them into his coat pocket and was way, just in time to catch the Oojah. Arriving at Bold Colliery, he now walked about 3 hundred yards to the lamp shop, drew his lamp, climbed up onto the Pit brow, gathered his tallies from the open tally shed, took his place in the queue and entered the cage with the other colliers.

The Browman knocked (signalled) the cage away and the cage was dropped down the shaft at about 40 foot per second. Arriving at the Pit bottom he made his exit from the cage to be searched by the ‘Hooker On’ and given the all clear, that he had no matches cigarettes etc on him. Away from the pit bottom Bill hung his jacket on a nail which had been driven into the roof supports, took out his snap parcels and as he always had done, placed them under his shirt above his pit belt. It made it much easier to travel like so, with his safety lamp in one hand and a short travelling stick in the other for his journey into the district No. 22, a distance of 2,200 yards, where the coal face was situated.

Off he went with the other colliers and drawers down the tunnels and main haulage way. It seemed warmer than usual this night. He started to perspire and called out to his mates, “By gum it’s warm down here tonight, can’t you feel it?” They said “It’s no warmer tonight than other nights”. Several times Bill complained about the heat. “I don’t know about you chaps but this pit’s either over-heating or else these is something up with me. Sweat is running down me legs into mi clogs.” They all laughed, “Tha’I be all right when tha gets to the coal face and gets thi pants and shirt off.”

Arriving at the coal face they all stripped off to start with picks on the coal face, when Bill gave out a bellow and shouted “I’ve lost mi snap how the ell’s that ‘appened, and look at mi legs they are shining like nothing on earth, I told you something’s gone wrong wi me.” Undoing his pit belt for relief and further investigation, two grease wrappers fell out at his feet. His drawer picked them up and said “What’s these? Owd on, they are two butter wrappers. Th’as fetched weekend butter deart pit instead of thi snap.

Everybody on the coal face came and had a good laugh at Bill’s discomfort and Bill declared there and then that it was the last game of dominoes which had caused it all.

Obidia Jones was a heavy built man with a large walrus moustache. He had some ways peculiar to himself. He was well liked and he travelled the pit with a word of

advice here and there to his pit men and boys. After showing how a job should be done, instead of saying “do you understand me?”, he would say twice repeating “Follow me lad, follow me lad”.

A new lad started at the pit bottom working the squeegee’s, Obidia watched him and then decided to show him how it should be done. After the demonstration, “Owd Obi” said, “Follow me lad, follow me” spoken very quickly. Obidia left him and travelled away from the pit bottom down the haulage ways. After about 400 yards in, he noticed a lamp shining behind him so he waited to see who it was. When he drew near he saw it was the lad he had been instructing shortly before, so he said “Now lad what’s tha doing here? Thi place of work is at pit bottom”, to which the lad replied “It was till you came Mr Jones showing me how to work the squeezers and then you said ‘Follow me. Twice you said so now I am following you. ‘Owd Ob i’ as the pit men and boys called him said “Get back to the pit bottom, when I said “Follow me I meant do you understand me, any fool knows that!”

### **Owd Obi thinks we’re working!**

Owd Obi detailed some lads to come in on the Saturday morning to do some straightening up down the pit. The lads worked for a while and then decided to have a rest as there was no break or snap time at the pits when working from 6am to 12pm and so the story goes that after a short time they sat in a ring and started to sing:

Owd Obi thinks we’re working  
But we’re not, not, not

But Obidia had made a journey down to see how the cleaning up went and stopped and shaded his lamp so they would not notice him and when they had sung the verse a couple of times Owd Obi came in on them and sang:

You think owd Obi will pay you  
But he’ll not, not, not

### **How Otty stopped the pits**

Ottoman Lomax lost a leg while working down the pit. I remember him coming to the joiner’s shop to try his crutches out and to measure him for a kind of sentry box. He was to stand in it as a kind of shelter from rain etc. His job, when he returned to work was to operate a switch to the run of the empty boxes when they left the tippers in the screens to the respective pits to 1, 2, 3.

When he resumed work he was the life and soul of all the lads who worked around the Tippers and on the boxes. He always had a smile and a joke to tell and liked to do a leg pull now and again. In fact he was the counterpart of “Beano”. At odd times he brought comics and other times a bag of sweets or nuts and offered them around.

### **The bag of chocolates**

Then one day, I shall never forget, began with “Otty” producing from his jacket a bag of chocolates. It was a special treat for the lads working the Tippers and other brow

lads who were responsible for keeping the flow of empty boxes towards each pit. As each cage brought the full boxes of coal up, the same number of empty boxes went down.

All went well as usual during the morning but after the break or 'snap' times which was from 11am to 11:20am a short period of 20 minutes when the pits stopped winding coal, it was noticed that one or two lads had vanished from their jobs after calling at Otty's 'sentry box' to ask for a page or two from Otty's old comics to which 'Otty' with that large humorous grin on his face commented, "This is no time for reading comics during working time". But the lads were not interested in reading. They fled down the gantry steps in the direction of the brickworks where some primitive kind of toilets were situated. Now things got worse on the pit brow. There was no room left on the rail roads for the full boxes of coal, the tippers had stopped and now the main creepers had stopped.

The main brow boss had come running up followed by the assistant engineer trying to find out what was causing the stoppage. There was no mechanical break down and the screen steam engine was OK, but it was noticed that the tipper lads and brow lads were missing. Then the undermanager came up pit from down below to ascertain the cause of the stoppage. A confab took place and then one of the brow men told them that the lads had deserted their jobs because they had been eating chocolates first thing in the morning which were in fact chocolate laxatives with such dire results and the blame was traced to Otty who confessed to the joke which had got out of control. He was reprimanded and told not to play such jokes again. Otty, as a compensation hand, could not be sacked for the offence. He still carried on work for many years.

## **The Sherdley Colliery or Mine: April 2000**

In answer to Mrs Rita Halliwell of Queensland's request for any information regarding the Sherdley Mine, I am only too glad to put down what notes about Sherdley Colliery I have in my possession.

I have never been inside the colliery itself, but in the 1920s, myself, an apprentice joiner, and a fellow apprentice from Bold Colliery would, after we had finished work, ride our bikes to the Sherdley Dam or reservoir, and wash ourselves down there. (Remember, there were no pit head baths at Bold, and various other collieries until 1947, when the National coal Board took over.)

## **Location of Sherdley Colliery**

The miners and work force from Sutton would enter Green End Lane off Marshalls Cross Road, at the end of which were two tracks - one left to the score, the other right to the colliery. The miners from the Peasley Cross area and town would travel down Sherdley Road and, leaving Ormonde Street on the left, would leave the road to gain access to the colliery.

Walking down Marshalls Cross Road and standing with your back to the St. Helens Hospital, you could get a full view of the colliery across the field. This was before the houses were built. The colliery extended from approximately Green End Lane to the St. Helens Sanatorium.

## **Past History at Sherdley**

The colliery is first mentioned in the Inspectors' Report for 1973, with two pits (shafts) being listed. At the time, it was owned by Bournes and Robinson, and mined extensively in St. Helens in the nineteenth century. In 1879, the colliery was managed by William Lee, who was also the manager of the Peasley Cross Colliery. In 1882, Robert Turner managed both collieries. During the 1880s, the colliery was purchased by the Whitecross Co. Ltd. of Warrington, and during this period, manpower exceeded 500 men.

## **Reports of the Mines Inspector**

On 9<sup>th</sup> January 1874, John Glyn, a collier, aged 37, was crushed by a stone in the main mine.

On 27<sup>th</sup> April 1894, James Cliff, a pony driver aged 15 years, was killed at 12:20pm, in the seventh hour of the shift. While waiting for full tubs near the coal face, a layer of coal and shale fell from the slip carrying a prop and crushed him.

## **Servicing the mines**

Contractors were employed to do the servicing work in the mines. They were paid by the Colliery Company, and they in turn paid the men employed by the contractors.

### **Old headgears**

Many people will remember the old headgears that stood for a long time after the colliery ceased to work. Even after the colliery was closed down, water was pumped out of the mines for cooling purposes at the United Glass factory. After a while, the water ceased to be taken from underground, but the surface water was taken from the site and used as a sprinkler system at the UGB factory.

### **The “lanky man”**

The Lancashire collier was a brave fellow, and so was his family. They were people of great character. The collier was one who was prepared to undergo danger and to carry out his duties to the best of his abilities. He would always do anyone a good turn. We must always regard and have the greatest admiration for the Lancashire collier. He was the foundation of the industrial revolution



**Glossary: Some dialectic terms common to Bold and Sutton, including the pits.**

Food eaten in and around the pits was known as **Meight, Jack Bit, Tommy or Snap**

**After Damp** - poisonous gasses left behind after an explosion in the mine, mainly carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, which is suffocating

**Banksman or Browman** - man in charge of the pit bank, responsible for loading and unloading the coal from the cages and for signalling to the winder, who is the engine man responsible for winding the cage up and down the pit shaft.

**Billy Can** - can for water . Also known as **Bottle Tin** or **Snap Tin**

**Blower** - large amounts of methane gas, trapped under pressure in the coal. When broken, it blows out of the coal.

**Brattice** - stiff cloth, tarred and sanded to aid ventilation in mines instead of air doors.

**Brow** - inclines in the mine, described as Down Brows and Up Brows. Also pit brow on surface.

**Coal Face** - where the seam of coal is exposed and the collier can work on it to extract the coal.

**Cobbler** - finishing time at end of shift

**Collier** - the skilled man who actually worked on the coal face and extracted the coal.

**Colliery** - name for the mine, pits and all buildings sited on surface.

**Cut Through** - a short tunnel connecting two roads

**Dataller** - pitman working on day to day employment. Derived from old Viking speech “daga a day “

**Delph** - the Lancashire term for a coal seam

**Dib Hole** - the lowest part of the pit shaft, below the pit bottom where the coal is loaded into the cages. The No. 2 pit at Bold was used in afternoons and night time after coal winding in the day shift to wind water by means of water tanks in the lower decks of both cages. This was released at the bottom deck at surface

**Downcast Shaft** - fresh air is drawn down these shafts to give good ventilation to the men and workings in the mines. The headgears are not enclosed.

**Drawer** - a workman who is employed by the collier to take the full boxes of coal from the coal face to the haulage and bring the empty boxes or tubs back again for refuelling

**Dumb Drift** - An inclined tunnel or drift cut into an opening in the shaft 50-60 feet above the furnace to enable foul air containing fire damp to escape up the upcast shaft from the workings, thus preventing the danger of ignition from the furnace.

**Fan Drift** - a tunnel or drift is connected to the large fan from an opening in the upcast shaft near the surface of the shaft, and set at an incline to allow the revolving fan to expel the foul air into the atmosphere.

**Fire Damp** - methane gas found in coal which is inflammable in itself, but when mixed with air can cause an explosion.

**Fire Man** - an official who has charge of a district in the mine.

**Furnace Ventilation** - At the beginning of the nineteenth century, furnaces were fed at the bottom of the upcast shaft, connected by a short tunnel or drift, to cause the hot air to rise up the shaft and thus draw cool air from the downcast shafts.

**Hooker On** - man in charge of pit bottom, cages, signalling to surface, loading of cages and searching of all persons on leaving cage for contraband such as cigarettes,

matches or other inflammatory material.

**Jacky Page** - wooden lid on top of a set prop.

**Jim Crow** - long iron bar originally used for barring coal down.

**Mine** - the tunnels containing haulage roads and coal faces.

**Nock Art** - colliers and surface workers dismissed before end of stipulated time of finish, generally due to a shortage of wagons.

**Pit** - the shaft from surface to the coal faces.

**Pit Bank** - the area at the top of the shaft and all around it.

**Pit Eye** - the area around the bottom of the shaft.

**Pusher On** - charge hand on haulage (to keep motion of haulage going).

**Shorves** - rounds of bread.

**Snap Time** - midday or night break lasting 20 minutes.

**Stoppings** - walls built across roads and tunnels to seal off areas of mine.

**Stuff Ruk** - waste material such as rock and boiler ash, deposited to form high tip.

**Tail Rope** - an extra length of rope was attached to the capping of the winding rope and to the shackles on each end of the cage to enable the cage with water tanks to submerge into the dibhole to draw water from the sump.

**Tala** - to count.

**Tally Snatcher** - small boy employed for collecting collier's tally from empty boxes of coal.

**Tentor** - someone who looks after a particular job, eg Furnace Tentor, Door Tentor, Pony Tentor.

**"Thowd Slorht"** - a sloping tunnel or brow.

**Tommy Tin** - tin for containing food.

**Underlooker** - an official in charge of the mine who supervises all the firemen and mineworkers.

**Undermanager** - an official who is responsible for the output of coal who reports to the Manger of the colliery costs etc. and the requirements of his mine in materials and manpower.

**Upcast Shaft** - the headgear over these shafts is totally enclosed, thus preventing the surface fan from drawing air from the outside atmosphere.

**Winder** - man who worked the steam engine to move the cages up and down the shafts.

**Old song: lay my head beneath a rose**

*Darling, press me to thy bosom,  
As you did in days of yore,  
Press your lips upon my forehead  
'Ere I reach the golden shore.  
Life is swiftly from me fading,  
Soon I'll be in sweet repose  
'Ere I go I ask this favour  
Lay my head beneath a rose.  
Lay me where sweet flowers blossom  
And where the dainty lilies grow  
Where the pinks and violets linger  
Lay my head beneath a rose.*

# Gallery

*A selection of images from the mines in days gone by*

# BYGONE MINING DAYS

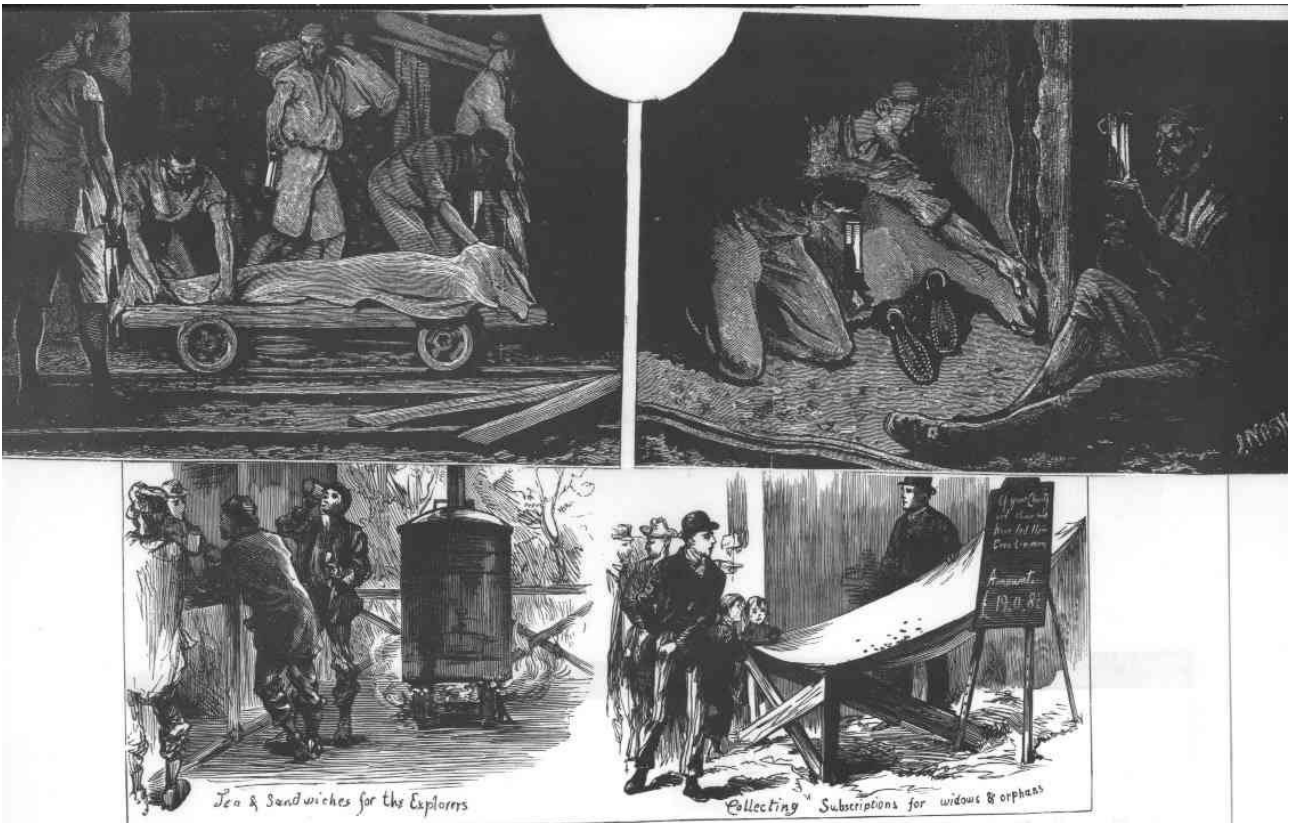


Bygone mining days.



Workmen repairing a cage at Linby Colliery, Nottinghamshire, c.1895. Note the small safety gates about 2ft high and the ornate gas lanterns for lighting. The bearded men are probably officials and the clean-shaven men were ordinary workers. The capes worn were fashionable in the 1890s.

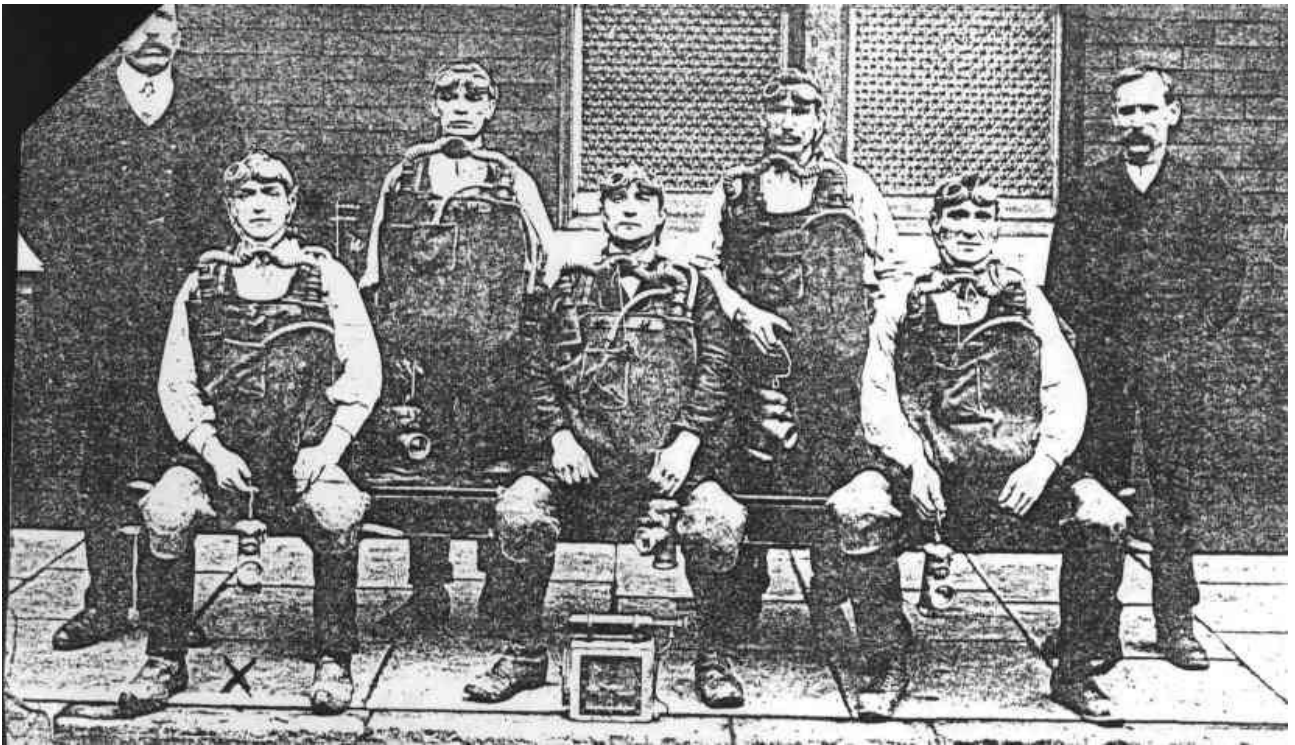
*Photograph: John Cornwell Mining Photography Archive, Bristol.*



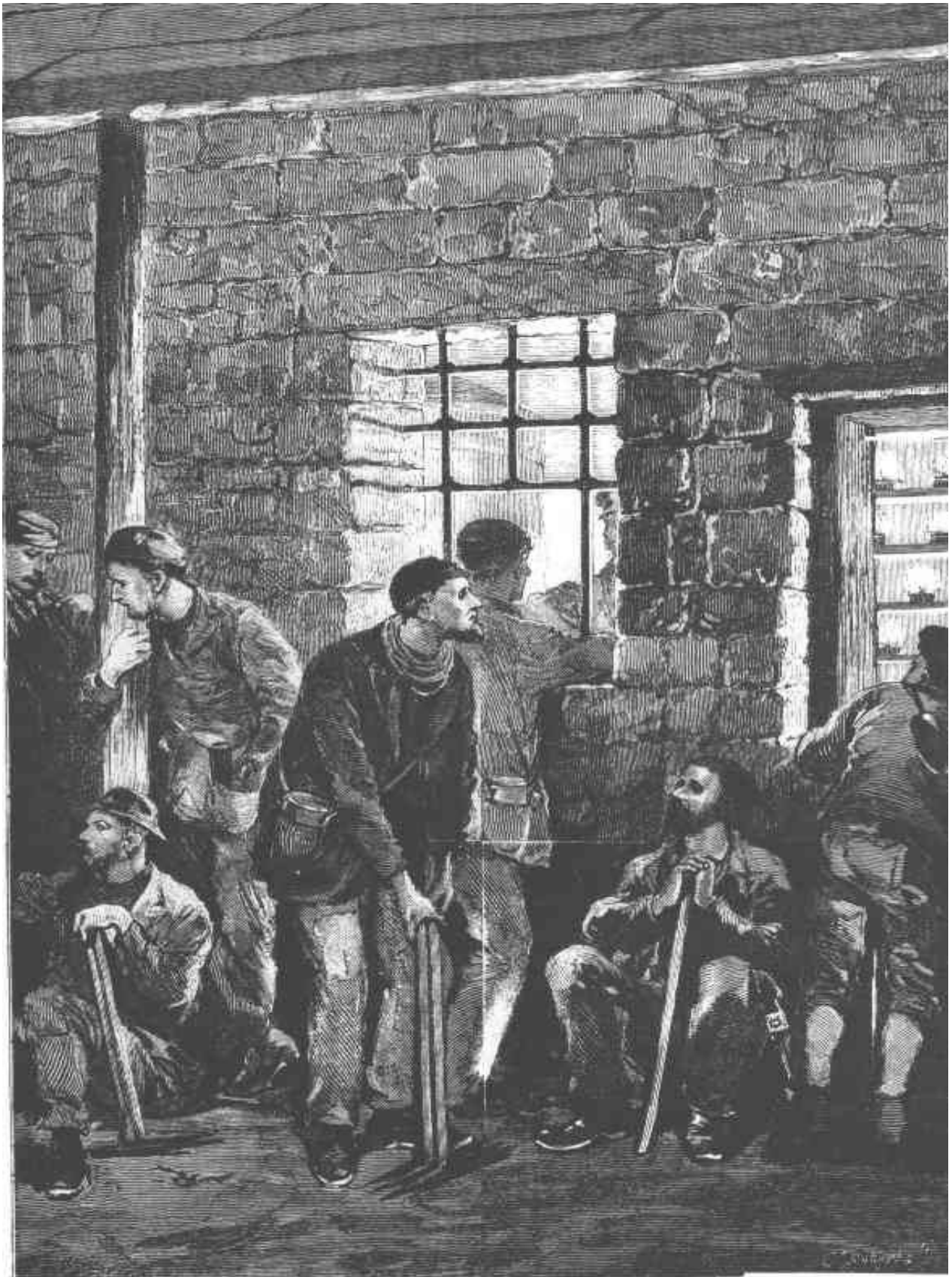
Explosion at the Wood Pit, Haydock, near Wigan.







Sherdley Colliery Rescue Team.



Early morning – giving out lamps.



Pitmen hewing the coal.

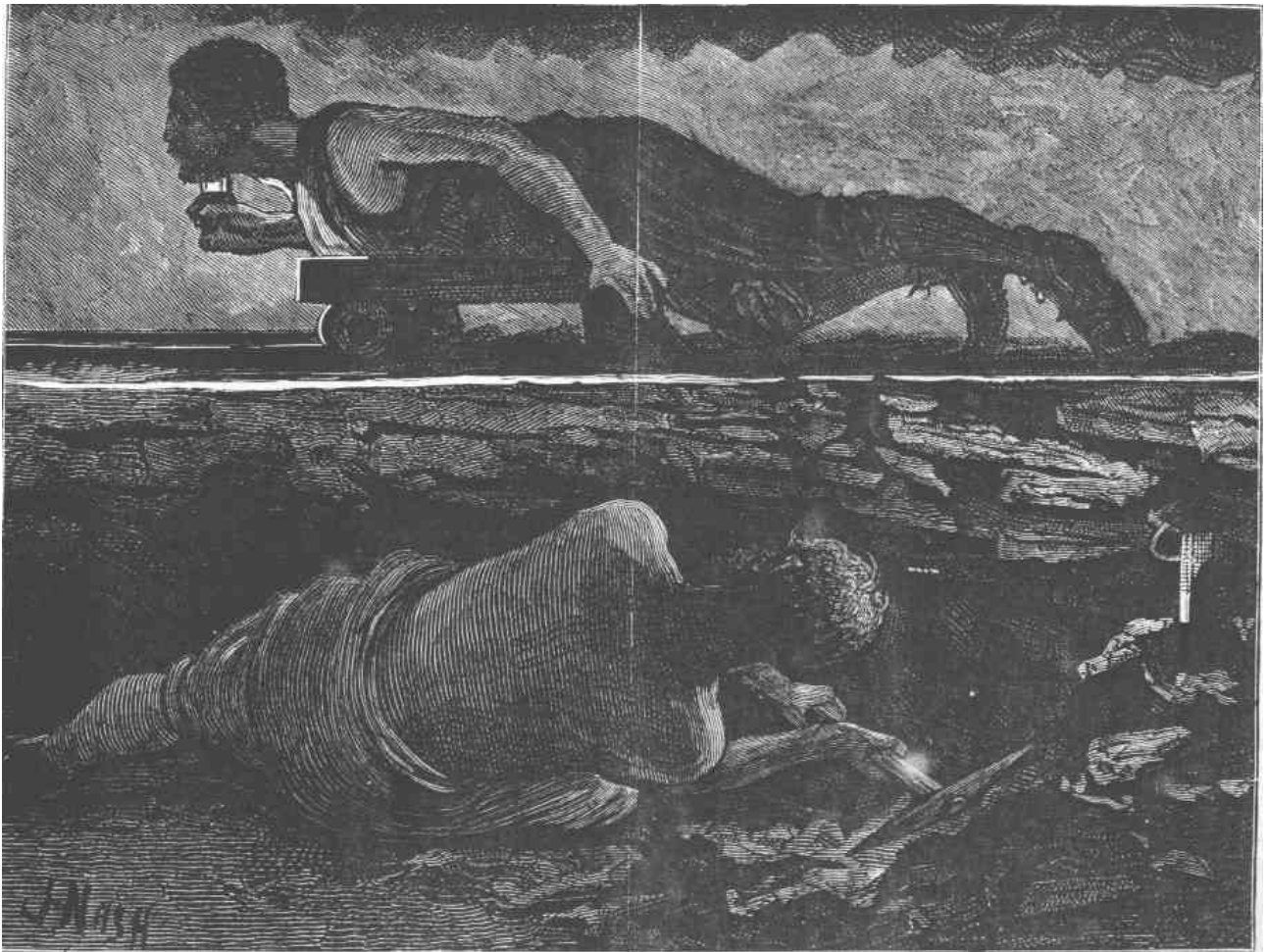


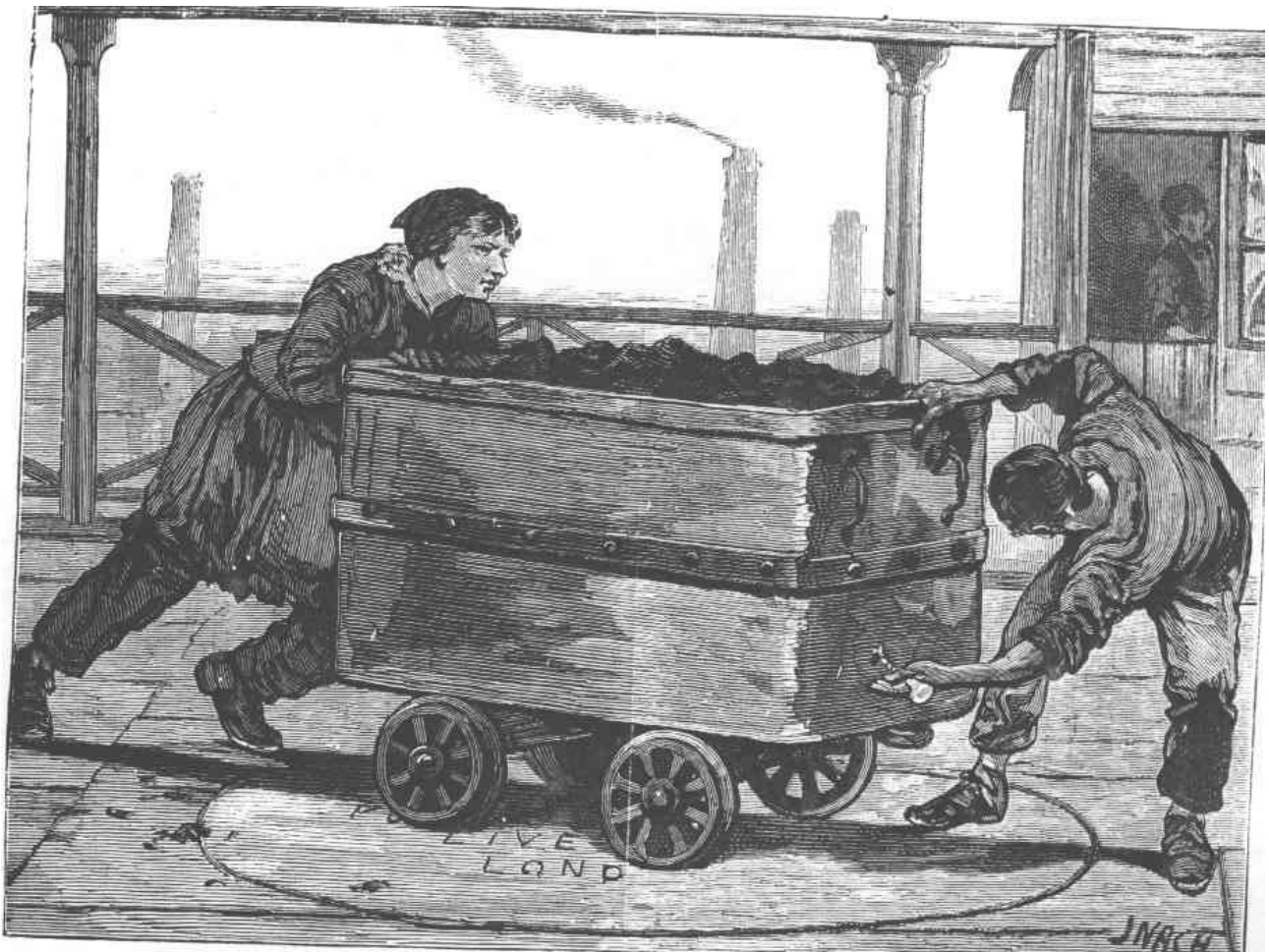
An awkward passage.



Surveying under difficulties.







On the pit brow – weighing the coals.



"Screening"