

SALFORD MINING MUSEUM

Alan Davies

A journey along Eccles Old Road, Salford, reveals the pleasant parkland of Buile Hill. The park is well worth a visit with its mature gardens and popular 'Pets' Corner'. Rather less widely known is the fact that the large neo-classical building in the park's central area is the home of possibly the most comprehensive coalmining museum in the country, Salford Mining Museum.

Museums are often based in historically interesting buildings and Buile Hill is a good example. The basic structure dates back to 1825, the architect being Sir Charles Barry, famous for his work on the Royal Manchester Institution, now the City Art Gallery, and later the Houses of Parliament (1836). The original building was a two floor, rather squat structure. A third floor improved proportions in the 1860s, Edward Walters, who designed the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, being the architect. Also at this time the present lecture theatre was constructed, now also functioning as the Gallery of Mining Art.

Buile Hill's first occupant was Sir Thomas Potter (1774-1845), who served as the first Mayor of Manchester from 1838-40. A textile merchant by trade, Sir Thomas, along with ten other prominent local figures funded the launch of the *Manchester Guardian* in 1821. Occupation of Buile Hill by the Potter family came to an end in 1877 when John Bennett (1817-89), a timber and stone merchant, became the new owner.

For many years Salford Corporation had been interested in acquiring the house and grounds at Buile Hill. The estate was on offer in 1897 for £23,000, but it was to be five years later in 1902 that the Corporation purchased the estate, opening the 80 acres to the public as parkland. Four years later the house began its role as a museum, opening as the Salford Natural History Museum in May 1906.

For over fifty years natural history remained the theme of Buile Hill. Increased activity in the world of science both during and after World War II was reflected in the provision of general science displays in the late 1950s. In 1957 the museum decided to use its extensive cellar area, and with a great deal of assistance from the then North Western Division of the National Coal Board, Buile Hill No.1 Pit was created. The enormous decline of the coal industry in the 1960s provided a steady flow of items, old and new, for the mining collections. The museum was lucky to have a Keeper with an intense interest in the coal industry at this time, Richard Bradbury, now Senior Keeper at Bolton Museum. Many hundreds of objects, documents and photographs were added to the collection, forming the basis for the future History of Coalmining Gallery.

The great popularity of the coalmine reconstruction led to a decision in the early 1970s to extend and specialise this theme of the museum, in order to cover coalmining

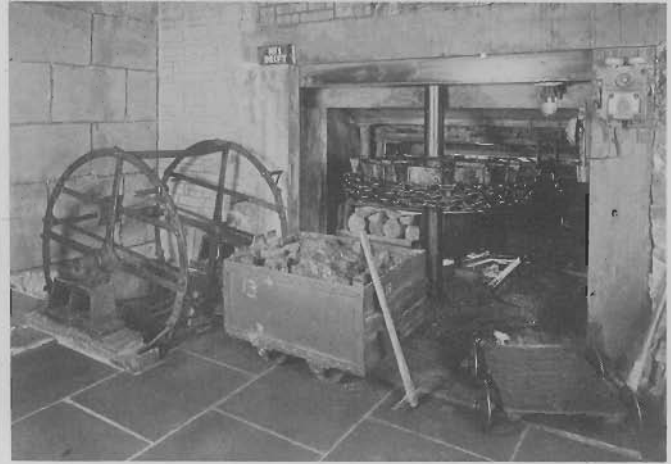


Wagon Repair Shop, Fletcher Burrows & Co. Limited, Gibfield Colliery, Atherton, 1905.

history 'in depth'. As Lancashire was one of the first great manufacturing areas in the world it seemed right to place the Lancashire coalfield in the context of Britain's industrial past in a thorough and detailed manner. As with other coalfields the rise of the Lancashire coalfield has been fairly steady apart from the era of the industrial revolution. Its decline though has been dramatic to say the least. In 1874 some 558 mines were operating in Lancashire. Today only six mines are left with less than 4,500 men at work. For a while financial worries seemed to doom the project of creating a History of Coalmining Gallery. These problems were finally overcome and work began in the late 1970s, starting with the treatment of dry rot. Eradication of this problem opened the way for major structural alterations to be made. These modifications would allow the increased floor weighting needed to display large mining exhibits.

Another new gallery was created at this time — Buile Hill No.1 Drift, occupying the ground floor of the museum. When this display was opened along with the cellar coalmine in 1977 only school parties were at first allowed to visit as part of a phased programme of public re-opening. The History of Coalmining Gallery was opened to the public in June, 1980, with Sir Derek Ezra, then Chairman of the National Coal Board, performing the formal opening ceremony on 4 September 1980.

The museum now has three floors of mining displays. At present the museum maintains these and also attempts to continually improve and add to them. Beginning with the basement we have Buile Hill No.1 Pit. This gallery recreates underground scenes to scale, consisting of a pillar and stall coalface of the 1860s, a mechanised coalface of the 1940s, complete with coalcutter and hydraulic props, a shotfiring display with drilling equipment, the Officials'



Builehill No.1 Drift. An exhibit based on Old Meadows Colliery, Bacup, which closed in 1969, showing the endless chain haulage system at the top of the drift mines, plus the tippler which empties the coal tubs.

or Deputies' cabin, filled with tools and equipment, a pit bottom display with cage and signalling equipment, and finally, a well stocked lamproom with charging racks and maintenance equipment. Many of the items on display in the lamproom came from the long established local manufacturer Protector Lamp & Lighting of Eccles. Leaving the lamproom brings you to Buile Hill Pit Yard, consisting of a blacksmith's shop, fan room and general stockyard filled with many examples of mining equipment. Of special interest is the old wooden chest of hand boring tools c.1850, collected from Old Meadows Colliery, Bacup in 1969. These were used percussively beneath a tripod laboriously chipping away at the strata and can be compared with a 'suite' of modern rotary drills standing nearby.

Passing through the Pit Yard brings you to Buile Hill No.1 Drift. Based on the Old Meadows Drift Mine at Bacup, closed in 1969, this features surface and underground displays, with the drift-head winding drum, Manager's Office, checkweigh machine, baths entrance and tub tippler. A nearby roadway leads to underground drift mine displays of a manriding carriage heading down an inclined roadway and a collier's stall based on Old Meadows.

An important feature of the Ground Floor displays is the Pit Pony, definitely a favourite with children, who enjoy sketching the display. The pony is a reminder of the times when over 70,000 were employed below ground at the end of the nineteenth century. Only a handful now work in private mines, their welfare being protected by a special section of the Mines and Quarries Act.

A new feature of the Basement and Ground Floor is the provision of tape commentary points, each giving a three minute description of the area where it is positioned. These help to demystify the, at times, strange technology of coalmining. The Ground Floor also contains the Gallery of Mining Art. Housed in the Lecture Theatre, which also functions as a mining film cinema, the gallery contains works of art in various media by miners, examiners, and professional artists. Exhibits include a Sutherland war-time commission of an opencast coal mine, and a L.S. Lowry pencil sketch of Wet Earth Colliery, Dixon Fold, famous for its association with James Brindley and his pumping scheme using the power of the River Irwell. Temporary exhibitions are periodically mounted in the gallery space also. A video

May 12th, 1830.

COAL MINES.

To be Let,

BY PRIVATE TREATY,

The Mines of

COAL,

Within two Closes of Land, called Whelley Crofts, situate near the Round House, Top of Scholes, Wigan. These Mines are of superior quality, and lie well for sharing the consumption of the Town of Wigan and its Vicinity; and the Canal is within a short distance, by which an extended Sale may be opened to the Town and Port of Liverpool.

ALSO THE

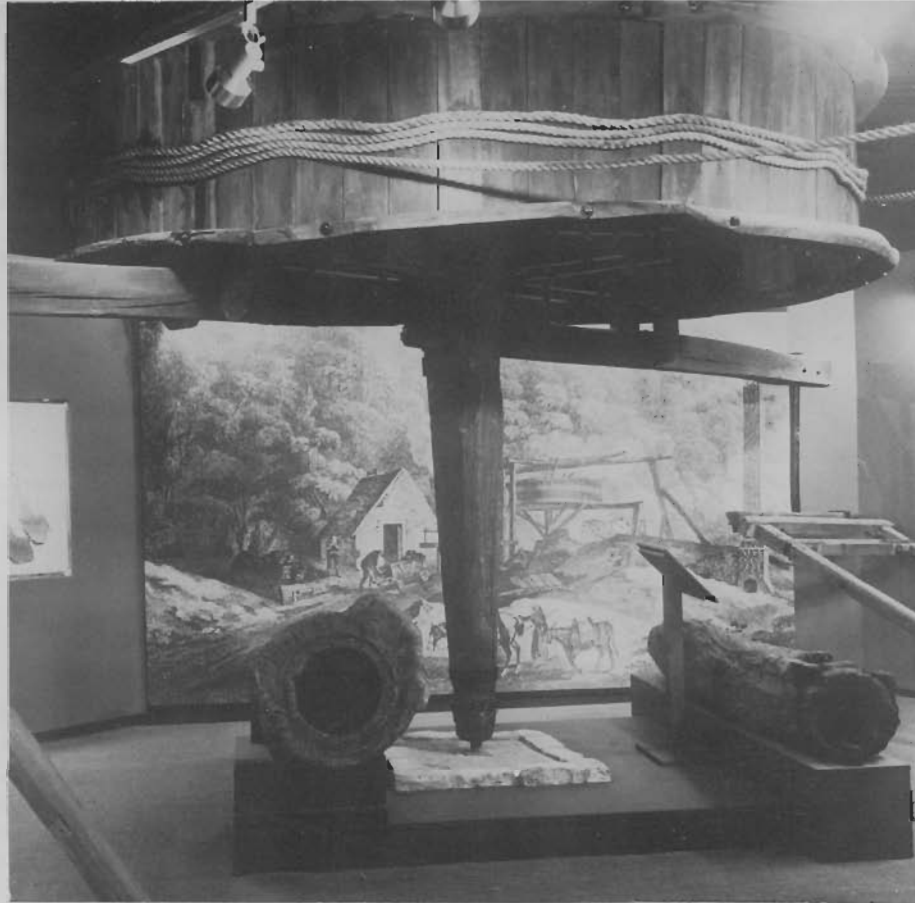
Mines of Coal,

Within several Closes of White Hall Estate, in Shevington.

For Particulars apply to WILLIAM WRIGHT, Land Agent, Wigan.

J. BROWN, PRINTER, STANDISHGATE, WIGAN.

Original Poster in the collection of the National Coal Museum.



Horse winding gin used at the Rothwell Haigh Colliery, near Wakefield. Erected in the early 1780s and last used in the 1920s. Note the gin in use in the background illustration.

installation has just been acquired enabling a selection of the museum's 300 strong mining film collection to be more accessible to the public. The recent closure of the N.C.B's Old Boston Training Centre at Haydock resulted in many important additions to the film collection including Humphrey Jennings' *Cumberland Story* of 1947 which described the arrival of mechanised mining to the area.

The ornamental staircase close to the Gallery of Mining Art leads to the First Floor and the History of Coalmining Gallery. The layout is roughly chronological in treatment of mining history covering the following aspects: geology and coal formation; early mining history; the Industrial Revolution; steam; canals; railways; working the coal; labour mechanisation; drainage and ventilation; gases and explosions; miners' lamps; disasters; safety; rescue; trade unions; health and welfare; social history; communities; technology; the modern mine.

The Gallery where possible highlights links with Lancashire and the North West in the course of mining history. Examples include a detailed treatment of the Duke of Bridgewater's underground canal system at Worsley. Two local tragedies feature in the colliery disaster display, Clifton Hall of 1885 where 178 men and boys died and Pretoria Pit of 1910 where 344 miners lost their lives. One of the premier exhibits at the museum, an eighteenth century wooden horse winding gin, stands in the gallery. Other fascinating items include 5,000-year-old antler miners' picks from Grimes Graves Flint Mines in East Anglia, a human tub haulage harness from Northumberland and extremely rare eighteenth-century wooden miners' spades from the Bury area. As in the 1960s the museum was lucky to have an enthusiastic and knowledgeable Keeper during the construction of the History of Coalmining Gallery, Geoff Preece, now Museums Officer, Tameside M.B.C.

Collecting over the years has built up a fine reserve

collection of mining objects, documents, books and photographs. These collections eventually grew so large that a purpose-built library now exists, containing over 5,000 volumes. Maps and plans also are now housed with the large archives collection in the Archives Room. The Keeper's Office contains the 5,000 strong photograph collection (catalogued up to 1985) and colliery reference files. The amassing of these various collections has led to the National Coal Board regarding Buile Hill as the Regional Centre for Mining Research, with enquiries being passed to the museum on historical and technical aspects of the industry.

Of particular interest in the library is a large proportion of Joseph Dickinson's personal mining library. Dickinson (1818-1912) was one of the first Inspectors of Mines appointed in 1850. This collection contains many early 'classics' of the world of mining. The library covers every aspect of coalmining and is possibly the finest collection of its type in the north of England.

Archives deposits vary from a ledger of the 1780s for Walkden Moor Colliery to 20,000 engineering drawings covering the late nineteenth century up to the late 1960s, formerly belonging to the world famous mining engineers Walker Brothers of Wigan. Nearly 600 mine plans cover colliery workings in the North West from about 1800 to 1984. To the local historian with an interest in mining the research collections cover all aspects, documentary and visual. A small industrial archaeology collection will also be of interest to the general reader.

Recently published studies which have drawn upon the museum's archives include Geoff Hayes, *Collieries in the Manchester Coalfields*. This covers the period after the formation of Manchester Collieries Ltd. in 1929 and its concise accounts of individual pits make it a useful work for quick reference. The work is available price £8.00 at the museum and contains many illustrations from the museum's photographic collection of local pits.



George Bissill, Loading Coal, c. 1930



ANNO DECIMO TERTIO & DECIMO QUARTO

VICTORIÆ REGINÆ.

An Act for Inspection of Coal Mines in Great Britain. [14th August 1850.]

WHEREAS it is expedient that Provision should be made for the Inspection of Coal Mines in Great Britain: Be it enacted, therefore, by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That it shall be lawful for One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State from Time to Time to appoint any fit Person or Persons to be an Inspector or Inspectors of Coal Mines, and from Time to Time to remove any such Inspector or Inspectors; and Notice of the Appointment of every such Inspector shall be published in the *London Gazette*.

II. And be it enacted, That it shall be lawful for any such Inspector as aforesaid to enter, inspect, and examine any Coal Mine or Colliery, and the Works and Machinery belonging thereto, at all reasonable Times and Seasons, by Day or Night, but so as not to impede or obstruct the working of the said Coal Mine or Colliery, and to make Inquiry into and touching the State and Condition of such Coal Mine or Colliery, Works and Machinery, and the Ventilation of such Coal Mine or Colliery, and the Mode of lighting or using Lights in the same, and into all Matters and Things connected with or relating to the Safety of the Persons employed in or about the same; and the Owner or Agent of such Coal Mine or Colliery is hereby required to furnish the Means necessary for such Entry, Inspection, Examination, and Inquiry; and if such Inspector find any Part of such Coal Mine or Colliery, Works or Machinery, or any Aircourses, Airdoors, Waterways, Drains, Pits, Levels, Shafts, or other Matter or Thing in or connected with such Coal Mine or Colliery, or the Mode of lighting or using Lights in the same, to be dangerous or defective, so as in his Opinion to threaten or tend to the bodily Injury of any Person employed in or about such Coal Mine or Colliery, such Inspector shall thereupon summon before him the Manager or principal Colliery Viewer or Agent having charge of the said Coal Mine or Colliery, in order to his being heard upon the Matter giving rise to such finding as aforesaid; and if such Manager or principal Colliery Viewer or Agent shall not attend after reasonable Notice, or having attended shall fail to satisfy such Inspector, then such Inspector shall serve Notice in Writing of the particular Grounds on which he shall be of opinion that the said Colliery or Coal Mine is dangerous or defective, on the Owner or Agent of such Mine, and shall also report the same to One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

An extract from the Coal Mines Act of 1850.

In Memoriam

OF THE FOLLOWING

SIX COLLIERIES

WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AT THE
NELSON PIT, TYLDESLEY,
 ON TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2ND, 1883.

Thomas Aldred, aged 24, single.
 Jonathan Williams, aged 17, single.
 William Liversage, aged 21, married.
 Patrick Maguire, aged 27, married.
 Edwin Wilde, aged 23, single.
 Ashton Hayes, aged 23, single.

THE season of fasting and pleasure was over,
 They had us'd it with the thoughtless a few hours
 before;
 From the Lessons of death to the pleasure of
 death,
 It seems like the wink of an eye or a breath.

Oh, check not the tear that would start to your
 eye,
 When you feel the full weight of a loving good bye:
 You've perchance but some hour's rest, if so, you can
 tell
 The full depth of grief is a final farewell.

Let us look at the sorrowful picture again,
 And bring not the mourners what we grieve for
 the men;
 Yes, true men are those who risk their own lives
 To sustain by their labours their children and
 wives.

With Christ for our leaders we can stand every blast,
 And when death comes, with pleasure can look on the past;
 We our hearts are but pure and blithe, let me hear,
 We shall meet with our loved ones just over the stream.

May the blessing of heaven rest on those who are
 left,
 On the widows and orphans of guardians bereft;
 Would they place their dear forms 'neath the roof
 cloudless and,
 May they leave their dear souls to a merciful God.

"Be ye also ready" how seldom the text,
 But the time, and we know not whose turn may be
 next,
 Our comrades so recently taken away
 Were cheerful and merry a week more to-day.

When would but turn from the pathway of sin,
 What grief they would lose and what joy they
 would win;
 Oh, that we had the help of our God would rely,
 And the All-merciful, show how a Christian can die.

WRITTEN BY ALBERT CRAIG.

One Penny Each. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
 Salford Mining Museum

In Memoriam : a broadside ballad, 1883.

A large proportion of the museum's 40,000 visitors a year are school parties. Teachers collect guide cards which describe the Basement and Ground Floor displays. A 25-minute film on Progress in the Industry is also available. Follow up projects often use the museum's work-sheets, based on displays the children have seen during their visit.

The museum also periodically publishes books on coalmining, these include: *Coalmining* by Geoff Preece and Peter Ellis (based on the display texts) and *Coalmining in Salford, A Photographic Record* by Geoff Preece compiled from the photograph collection at Buile Hill and other sources. Souvenirs, postcards and works by local historians are also on sale at the museum. The museum continues to collect material related to every form of mining, quarrying and opencast working. Recent closures such as Cronton Colliery, Bold Colliery and the workshops at Walkden and Kirkless, Wigan have resulted in many van loads of objects and documents being rescued for the public and mining historians of the future, when the Lancashire coalfield finally ceases to exist.

The museum is open as follows:

Monday — Friday 10.00 — 12.30; 1.30 — 5.00; Sunday 2.00 — 5.00. The museum closes on Saturdays and major public holidays. Schools and parties larger than 10, please write or telephone for booking to:
 Salford Museum of Mining, Buile Hill Park, Eccles Old Road, Salford M6 8GL. Tel. 061-736-1832.