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COLLIERS' WAGES IN THE WEST RIDING COALFIELD ca. 1610-1930

John Goodchild

INTRODUCTION

Colliers' wages have obviously been of major significance to a variety of parties. Foremost to the collier and his family, as controlling the quality of their lives – not only their food, clothing, housing and domestic circumstances but also in how they spent their leisure time. Colliers' wages also affected both the prosperity of the communities in which they lived and that of the nearby market towns. Shopkeepers, publicans, cinema proprietors, chapel committees, working men's clubs, speculative builders, even railway and bus companies have been influenced. From the mid-nineteenth century, local government has been concerned with their potential as paupers and ratepayers. The colliery owner too has had to balance the conflict between profitability and discontent leading to strikes and breaks in production and has increasingly co-operated with his fellow coalmasters to achieve this.

This study considers the ways in which wages were paid, how such wage rates came into being and how they changed with time and circumstances. The available source materials are comparatively limited and many of the details have been taken from manuscript sources in the author's collection – these are marked with an asterisk. Auxiliary incomes have not been taken into account. These came as payments for other work and, in kind, from the gardening which many families followed to produce low-cost foodstuffs. The few available manuscript sources show that, particularly up to the end of the eighteenth century, it was normal for some colliers to work as agricultural labourers on the farms of others and in some cases on their own smallholdings.

EARLY ACCOUNTS

The earliest known West Riding Quarter Sessions magistrates' orders set out maximum wage rates for coal getters, apparently under an Act of 1603 (¹James I, c. 6) which enlarged the powers of an earlier Act of Elizabeth I and these rates were altered upwards from time to time. In 1610 in the West Riding, skilful colliers were paid 10d per day; in 1700 this was increased to 12d, in 1732 to 12d plus meat and drink; this was confirmed later from time to time, the last occasion being in 1798.¹ At the Shibden Hall estate's pits in 1714, colliers were paid 10d and 12d per day² and Arthur Young in his Northern Tour of the 1760s reported that colliers' wages at Rotherham were seven to nine shillings per week while those around Wakefield were ten to twelve shillings.³ The former rates sit well with the magistrates' figures set in 1732 but the latter exceed them considerably. Both demonstrate the much higher earnings of colliers compared with agricultural labourers and skilled textile and pottery workers; a situation also demonstrated in the wage rates for 1610.

An agreement made in 1730, shows that on the Lowther family's Swillington estate, wages were to be paid by output and not as day rates.⁴ Negotiations resulted in the

colliers at Great Preston, near Swillington, receiving increased pay; the owner calculated that three pitmen and a barrowman had six dozen corves (ca. 11 tons) of coal per day, for which they were paid 6s 6d, with the costs of winding, leading, timbering and pick sharpening being borne by the owner and bringing the total cost to 9s. The coal sold for 19s 6d leaving a gross profit of 10s 6d on the six dozens. The new agreement of 1730 was unique in the area and was particularly interesting in its detail as the individual men were to be paid 2s 4d for two dozens (3³/₄ tons), wherever they worked in the pit and the pay of colliers and barrowmen was now separated. The colliers were required to clear and timber the workings and do all the by-work (which had previously been included in the day rates). They were to receive specific payments for driving roadways and barrowing props; the corves were to be well filled and an allowance was to be made for coal for home use and for part of the cost of candles. The ventilating fire-pan, the banksman and his machinery, timber for underground work, pick sharpening were all the pit owner's responsibility. The detailed provisions of this agreement of 1730 anticipate later agreements of the nineteenth century.

In July 1709 at the Henry Lake pit at Kippax (Lake was the agent) a set of accounts which are difficult to understand suggest that the pit was worked by eight facemen, six barrowers (at 3s 10d per week each) and four or five ruddlers (probably boys at 1s 10d per week each). The group worked a five and a half day week except for the colliers who worked six days. The faceworkers may have been paid on their total output as a gang, as in three of the four weeks' accounts, three different men among a total of eight faceworkers were credited with a total weekly payment of £2 4s 0d for 44 scores, 73 dozens and 4 corves.⁵

Dishonest colliers were known from time to time. At the end of 1673, one Richard Flower of Sandal Magna petitioned the West Riding magistrates for an order for financial help from his township's poor rate. He had recently been a labourer in a coal pit and had been seriously injured by a stone which had fallen some six yards from the pit side on to his back. He said that he had lain ill under the surgeon's attention with no income for his wife and two children. Sandal township officers were ordered to pay him 2s 6d a month in relief but they reported that he was a man not yet forty and that the family was well able to maintain itself and had an income of 3s 6d per week.⁶

It is obvious that wages can only be considered on a weekly or daily basis: many collieries were worked part-time to fit in with the demands of their markets, not to mention time spent in strikes or lockouts or following breakdowns, accidents or holidays. Often, family income was supplemented by the employment of children and wives until the Act of 1842 prohibited the employment of women and children underground. Females continued to be employed in coal sorting at surface in a restricted way and there is some slight evidence of very occasional illicit work underground. Many collier families suffered a marked diminution in income as a result of the 1842 Act and some of the women resented this. On the other hand, very young children were only really useful when employed in thin-seam workings and it is significant that out of hundreds of inquests into the deaths of colliers held in the West Riding from the 1750s, the first on a female was recorded in February 1799 at Handsworth.⁸ In 1803 a woman was hired

COLLIERS' HOUSING IN THE WEST RIDING COALFIELD

John Goodchild

INTRODUCTION

Until the last three decades of the 20th Century, many colliery villages of Yorkshire remained largely dependent upon the employment of many of their inhabitants as colliery workers. The colliery and the work which it offered had been and continued to be those villages' raison d'etre. The number of such communities is now minute as the decline of the coal mining industry has resulted in a complete change in the working patterns of the inhabitants together with a change in the social cohesion of the community. Previously when collieries had closed, the decline had been more spasmodic and local; there had always been other, slightly more distant pits which had offered employment. The situation was visually exacerbated by the selling-off of colliery housing and the resulting personalisation of the homes by their new owners, as against the somewhat drab uniformity of the housing when it was owned by the National Coal Board or its predecessors; something of the same phenomenon is to be seen on ex-local authority housing estates.

The purpose of this study is to examine how these colliery villages came into existence, when and why they were built, their numbers, locations and sizes and how they were preceded. Their very existence naturally depended upon geological, economic and social factors and it will be necessary to study these in outline as well as the housing and amenities which were also provided – schools, chapels, pubs, clubs and so forth.

This is a complex story but the coal seams of the West Riding are thicker in the eastern part of the area than in the west. The eastern collieries produced a larger output and employed more people, although the western collieries produced associated ironstone and fireclay along with coal. It is also important to recognise that a large firm, such as the Low Moor Company, worked many pits at one time, scattered over a considerable area, so that about 1900 it employed some 1,200 miners in the Bradford area, figures larger than those of smaller colliery companies, partnerships or individual owners in that area and comparable with the numbers employed by many of the larger collieries in the centre and east of the coalfield.¹ The outlying coalfields have not been considered here: Ingleton had a small colliery village and the coalfields of the Dales, Birstwith or the Forest of Galtres had no readily recognisable coal mining housing infrastructure. Their output was small and they appear not to have been faced with major housing issues.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COALFIELD

The growth in productivity of the West Riding coalfields from just north of Leeds southwards into Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and later Lincolnshire, can be divided in general terms into three chronological periods. First, the pre-artificial waterways period originated certainly in Roman times; second that of the inland waterways dated from about 1700 when the River Aire and Calder were opened as a navigation to Leeds and Wakefield with subsequent navigations of the Calder, Don



Figure 1. 2005 Photograph of the derelict 'Top of the Wood' cottages in Middleton Park which, from 1920 until 1997, housed a cafe for visitors to the park. The cottages date from the early 18th century and housed colliery workers employed by the owners of the estate and coalmines, the Brandling family. The cafe occupied the central section and images of how it looked originally can also be viewed on the Leodis Website. [Leeds Library and Information Service]

and the later waterways feeding coal to the Humber and third, the railway era from 1834 which extended the market for Yorkshire coal beyond the region to a national and even international level.

Each of these transport developments resulted in the opening of larger collieries after a decade or so, once the capitalists had recognised the opportunities they offered. The available labour force became increasingly insufficient and by the second half of the 18th century advertisements for colliers outside the West Riding were being made. The larger number of colliers required to work these much larger pits, often located in hitherto rural and sparsely occupied areas, demanded that housing be provided for the immigrants. The new coal mining situations of the 18th and mid-19th centuries, therefore, gave rise to a widespread demand for colliery villages.²

Before about the middle of the 18th century, the small scale colliery owner was able to largely utilise the local housing stock, often adding a few cottages such as at Crofton in the 17th century.³ Coal mining at this time was apparently part of a dual economy, the collier being occasionally referred to as being, for instance, as 'at plough' as illustrated by probate inventories.⁴

KILNSEY LEAD SMELTING MILL - SURVEY OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

Sonia Wilkinson

INTRODUCTION

A survey of the buildings on the site of the Kilnsey lead smelting mill was undertaken in August 2102 by a team consisting of: Frances Bland, Phyllida Oates and Sonia Wilkinson of the Upper Wharfedale Vernacular Buildings Study Group. The work was part of a wider study of the buildings in the area carried out by the group.

The Kilnsey Tithe Award map of 1845 shows an enclosure, numbered '72', which is described as 'Smelt Mill Hill'. In the enclosure is a building which is shown with a water flow both entering and by-passing the building suggesting that the structure may have been a mill (see Figure 1).

HISTORY

Perhaps the earliest reference to a mill at Kilnsey is in 1515, when the Memorials of Fountains Abbey listed: '*Milnez, Item there be ij water mills, werof one is a corne mill, xxxs and the other a fulling mill, xxs*'.¹ The fulling process used water and beating to shrink and clean pieces of woven woollen cloth to create a thicker, denser fabric. The resulting cloth was both stronger and warmer. In the 15th century the export tax on raw wool was raised to 33%, whilst the tax on the export of finished cloth was only 2%. Shrewd businessmen would soon have changed to exporting finished cloth rather than wool and consequently more fulling mills would have been required. It is possible that the Kilnsey fulling mill dates to around this period.

At the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, Kilnsey was sold to Sir Richard Gresham, a London merchant but was soon sold off to the Yorke family in 1547.² In 1575, Thomas Tennant purchased *'a water mylne at Kylnsay'* from Dame Anne Yorke.³ As the corn mill at Kilnsey is referred to regularly in deeds around this time as being in the hands of other people, it seems likely that the mill which Tennant purchased was the fulling mill. The Tennant family purchased land around Chapel House in the 16th century but only appear to have this one holding, numbered 72 on the Tithe Map, in Kilnsey village itself until later.

When John Lambert's smelt mill at Janet Foss, Malham closed, John Tennant appears to have converted the fulling mill to smelt lead.⁴ The mill operated probably from around 1725 to about 1827 and there a considerable amount of slag in the field to the front of the property. The field is still contaminated with lead and animals are only kept on the site for limited periods of time. Ore from mines in Arncliffe and Hawkswick was crushed and smelted here, later followed by lead from the veins on Kilnsey Moor in the 1850s and early 1860s. The mill was certainly working by August 1729 when the Grassington barmaster recorded the 'carriage of 7 loads of coal to Kilnsey smelt mill at 4d per load'.⁴ Gill pointed out that there is little or no peat in Kilnsey, so the



Figure 1. Kilnsey Tithe Award map 1845 [Borthwick Institute for Archives, TA 491L].

mill must have burned 'chopwood' which was branch timber, dried in kilns. The reference to 'coal' is ambiguous as this term was generically used at the time for any sort of fuel. Coal was usually referred to as 'pit coal' or 'sea coal' and wood often as 'white coal'.

Raistrick gives several accounts of smelting at Kilnsey between 1735 and 1813.⁵ The 'Smelt Mill' is named on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1856 but not on later editions, although buildings are shown.

The mill was used by Kilnsey Angling Club and is first references in the earliest club minute books as the 'Hatchery' (or 'The Spinney' as it was otherwise known), when the keeper's name was Emmott. In 1874, the club records mention rent paid for a cottage for the head keeper.⁶ Although it cannot be confirmed that the smelt mill became the keeper's cottage, it seems highly likely that this was the case.

There were two cottages, known as 'Windy Arbour', with a set of steps up to the much higher ground where the angling club ponds were located; the name was changed

HIGH WIND BANK LEAD SMELTING SITE, HAWKSWICK PIPELINE, LITTONDALE

Gav Robinson

INTRODUCTION

A possible lead smelting bale was recorded during archaeological monitoring associated with a new potable water pipeline at Hawkswick, Littondale, in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The monitoring was undertaken by Northern Archaeological Associates for Morrison Utility Services on behalf of Yorkshire Water Services Ltd in July and August 2011.¹

The visible remains of the bale comprised a low L-shaped earthwork mound measuring approximately 5m long by a maximum of 2.5m wide by up to 0.5m high. It was located at the foot of High Wind Bank (SD 9705 6933), approximately 2m to the north-east of the modern road. Upon excavation of the pipe trench the mound was found to be composed of a mid-grey brown gritty silt containing lumps of lead-smelting slag. The pipeline route avoided the majority of the mound which, based on the small area exposed within the pipeline easement and the assessment of the slag by Dr Simon Timberlake, may represent a slag mound from an early lead-smelting site. Charcoal fragments extracted from within the slag produced a date range of cal AD 1315 - cal AD 1356 or cal AD 1389 - cal AD 1409 at 68.2% probability and cal AD 1298 to cal AD 1420 at 95.4% probability (SUERC 38046 - 580±35 BP).

DISCUSSION

The discovery and dating of this previously unknown medieval smelting site is significant as few such sites have been recorded in the Yorkshire Dales and fewer still have been scientifically dated.² The majority of these early bales were identified in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale;^{3,4, 5, 6} but recent work in the region and the Northern Mine Research Society (NMRS) funded programme of radiocarbon dating has demonstrated medieval smelting in Nidderdale,^{2,7} near Pateley Bridge and Bishopdale,² to the northeast of Kettlewell.

The High Wind Bank site is the first medieval lead-smelting bale to be identified in Littondale and thus extends the distribution of such sites recorded within the Yorkshire Dales. Littondale is rich in medieval remains; Hawkswick was first recorded in the Domesday survey of AD 1086.⁸ Further medieval remains in the vicinity include field systems, enclosures, barns, cultivation remains, trackways and other possible settlement evidence.⁹ None of these sites have been accurately dated and are only broadly assigned to the medieval period; it is therefore difficult to place the bale site within its contemporary landscape.

It is likely, however, that Hawkswick was the main area of contemporary settlement and at least some of the surrounding fields were under cultivation during the use of the High Wind Bank bale. Furthermore, the northern slope of Littondale and Hawkswick

MINES, TRIALS AND PROSPECTIVITY ALONG THE TYLWCH ANTICLINE, POWYS, WALES

David M.D. James

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. Location map for the mineralised areas of the Tylwch Anticline (TA) and the Rhiwnant Anticline (RA) relative to the principal productive area of the Central Wales Orefield around the Plynlimon Dome (PD). Legend to principal mines and trials: B, Brynposteg; BT, Bryntail; C, Cwmfron; CB, Cwm Bach; CE, Cwm Elan; D, Drosgol; DR, Dalrhiw; EC, East Cwmfron; F, Fedw; G, Gorn; N, Newchapel; NG, Nant Garw; NN, Nantycar North; NS, Nantycar South; P, Penclyn; V, Van; WF, West Fedw.

The map of the Central Wales Mining Field¹ produced by the Institute of Geological Sciences (I.G.S.), shows two groups of mines and trials between Llanidloes and Rhayader, each forming an outlier clearly separated from the main productive area to the W centred on the Plynlimon Dome (Figure 1). The northern group, centred about 4 km SSE of Llanidloes, has long been known to lie in the core of a regionalscale anticline² and this has recently been confirmed in moderate detail by the British Geological Survey $(B.G.S.)^{3}$ The southern, centred about 4 km NNW of Rhayader, is less clearly defined in structural context⁴ but it is now apparent that both groups lie on one major fold, the Tylwch Anticline, which may be an extension of the Rhiwnant Anticline to the SW or more probably link with it

en echelon. The distribution of the workings invites the question as to whether their grouping along the Tylwch Anticline has genetic significance and, if so, what may be the predictive implications.

The principal workings in the northern group are true mines, namely Gorn, Brynposteg, Cwmfron/East Cwmfron and Fedw/West Fedw. In the southern group even the largest workings are no more than trials. The recorded production of lead concentrates is all from the northern group where several of the mines carry barytes and witherite as around the well-known Bryntail and Van mines to the NW.^{5,6} None of the mines were operative

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after 1878 and able to benefit from the upsurge in zinc prices in the 1880s. Substantial reserves of sphalerite appear to have been left standing, particularly at Cwmfron.

At first sight the area is unpromising for study. Data on the lodes is sparse and mostly to be derived from the Mining Journal as outcrop control is generally poor and at some sites non-existent. Most of the mines lie on farmland and archaeological remains are scant or obliterated. Most adits of potential geological value are long collapsed or have been rendered inaccessible. However, our understanding of ore habitat can now be significantly augmented in several respects: in two cases from mine plans not previously published. There is also data from a few open adits from which any previous survey has not survived. Additionally, recent B.G.S. mapping³ has brought stratigraphical knowledge up to date and in line with adjacent areas to the S and W, thus allowing better comparison with the main orefield in the Plynlimon Dome where recent work⁷ is argued below to afford useful analogue insights for the Tylwch area.

PREVIOUS WORK

The only previous geological description specific to the mines is that by O.T. Jones⁵ who gives summary data for Gorn, Brynposteg and Cwmfron/East Cwmfron but not for Fedw/West Fedw which lie in the former Radnorshire, a county not covered in his memoir. His production figures of lead concentrates for Brynposteg (614 tons) and the two Cwmfron mines (105 tons) differ from Bick⁸ who gives 570 and at least 208 tons respectively although their figures for Gorn (331 tons) agree. Appreciable production may well have occurred at Gorn and Brynpostig before records began. The northern group of mines and two of the associated trials, with the exception of the Fedw area, are concisely described by Bick⁸ and the southern group, with the Fedw area, in much greater detail by Hall⁹ who also gives full descriptions of the mines of the Rhiwnant Anticline. Hall notes production of 216 tons of lead concentrates for the Fedw mines.

Several of the workings receive brief mention by Foster-Smith¹⁰ who notes an unsuccessful trial reopening of Gorn in 1912-3 not mentioned by other authors. Most of the sites were surveyed by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) about twenty years ago. Many of their descriptions are now seriously out of date and some are now known to contain inaccuracies. Additionally the recent B.G.S. mapping of the lodes at several mines is at variance both with the mine plans and with my surveys, discussed below. Figure 2 details the location of mines and trials in the northern Tylwch Anticline together with my interpretation of lode extent and sense of dip. The mineral parageneses have not been studied in detail but appear largely to be of the 'late simple' (A2) type.¹¹

THE MINES

Gorn

The layout of workings at Gorn is unclear and any geological detail is currently impossible to reconstruct. Present day remains are very few and no contemporary plans are known. Curiously, in view of his involvement in many of the local mines, John Kitto's 1876 lode map¹² does not show Gorn; the mine is reputedly very old. There





Figure 2. Detailed map of the mines, actual and putative trials of the northern Tylwch Anticline with interpreted positions and sense of displacement (where known) of faults and lodes.

are reports in the Mining Journal between 1849 and 1873 but little that is geologically definitive and none that gives positions and distances. Surface operations lay in two areas; to the W on the high ground by the road junction to Gorn farm around SN 974 840 and to the E in a dingle around SN 980 840 containing the principal adit, Price's Shaft, the wheelpit and the dressing floors.

In the western area the surface workings lay primarily in what are now two small stands of fir trees along about 270 metres of 'gruffy' ground which formerly hosted deep opencuts or stopes to surface on the main E-W lode. These were still visible fifty years ago when visited by G.W.Hall (personal communication, 2010) but are now totally infilled. The dates of these workings are not known but the vivid report of a visit and

THE STRONTIAN MINES OF ARGYLL

R.M. Callender

INTRODUCTION

As a boy in wartime Lanarkshire, I learned my grandmother had come from Strontian but thirty years later, my involvement with Wanlockhead Museum Trust revealed a different claim to fame for the small village in the West Highlands of Scotland. I had received



Figure 1. The road from Strontian to Loch Doilet provides Web, little has been added in *excellent access to the veins; footpaths (on either side of the* the last decade. An early *mountain) connect with the Corrantee Vein. The Fee Donald* memoir by Jeremy Landless, *Mines are reached by a Arrivalle Nature Trail.* which was published by the

a Kodak Bursary based on an application to document lead mines at five important sites in Scotland. Strontian was high on the list of priorities and preliminary research disclosed an interesting but important mining history which began in the early 18th century.

Learning of the 1790 discovery of strontianite,¹ (from which strontium,² Sr, was produced by Sir Humphrey Davy in 1808) triggered a personal fascination, as it was the first element to be named after a geographical location.³ Up until 1976, three authors had dealt with the historical narrative and, in spite of the dominance of the World Wide Web, little has been added in the last decade. An early memoir by Jeremy Landless, which was published by the

Northern Mine Research Society⁴ in 1975, is a good starting point for any investigation but note that a map printed in 1733, also provides an eye-witness account of rare information, although the narrative may have been deliberately embellished.

EARLY HISTORY

Early in the 18th century, the former Member of Parliament for Perthshire, Sir Alexander Murray⁵, 3rd Baronet of Stanhope⁶ & Broughton,⁷ discovered lead at Strontian and, in 1724, he formed a consortium with another twelve persons to mine the mineral. His partners, who included the Duke of Norfolk⁸, General Wade and Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, signed a lease for thirty years and agreed a rent based on the value of one sixth of the lead



Figure 2. In 1980, this area was being mined for barytes for use in the oil industry but in a recent visit (June 2013) the location has been given over to rubble collection. The historical landscape delineating the main east/west vein is now being erased.

raised. Although the enterprise received a Royal Charter in 1729, Sir Robert Clifton (from the Monymusk estate in Aberdeenshire) assessed the mines on behalf of his partners in Edinburgh and his report confirmed there was a dearth of mining activity at Strontian.

The following year, a mining engineer engaged by the York Building Company visited the mines and observed that the management was inadequate but, furnished with better resources, the mines could be profitable. Francis Place's report was greeted enthusiastically by one of the directors, Colonel Horsey and by July, the York Building Company had annexed the lease for £3,600 a year, plus a tithe of one sixth part to Murray's consortium. In addition the York Building Company also agreed to pay £6,000 as a contribution for the outlay already spent on development of the mines.

One month later, the York Building Company engaged Messrs Grant and Burroughs to work the mines, with Francis Place as the manager. The York Building Company addressed the long term needs of the venture and sunk shafts and drove levels, discovering in places that the veins were rich in ore and varied in width from 750mm to 3 m. The company built a new smelting mill and furnaces and also began to stockpile bricks, coal, wood and other essentials to build a small company town positioned between the mines and the village of Strontian. In time, it took the name New York and appears as a pictograph decorating one corner of a map drawn up and dedicated to Lieutenant General George Wade in 1733.⁹

THE NEW BRITISH IRON COMPANY

Nigel A. Chapman

G.W.R. Dudley No. 2 Black Wagon Canal Bearmoor G.W.R. Railway Codsal 1111/1111111 Corngreave Timbertree Iron Works STAFFORDSHIRE River Stour W New Hawne WORCESTERSHIRE Figure 1.

EARLY DAYS IN SOUTH WALES

The British Iron Company was formed on 28 April 1825 by a group of wealthy businessmen in London with the intention of buying and operating ironworks and mines across the country. They wanted to develop as one of the major iron producers in the country, proposing to employ experts in their fields to develop and operate the proposed ironworks. With the support of major finance houses in London, they began looking at the coalfields of the country with an eye to purchasing a large ironworks to fulfil their ideals. To run the company four trustees were chosen, they were Robert Small, James Henry Shears, John Taylor and Stuart Donaldson. Taylor was the well known mining engineer who is said in some sources to have been the main promoter of the company.

During 1826 they purchased an estate at Abersychan near Pontypool Gwent and proceeded to erect six blast furnaces with forges and rolling mills to produce iron products, especially rails for the up and coming railway system. Under the estate were seams of coal and ironstone which the company was quick to develop. Shafts were sunk on the hillsides above the works permitting coal and ironstone to be lowered by self acting inclines down into the ironworks yard. Four pits were soon in operation supplying up to 900 tons of coal per day from the Meadow, Three Quarter and Big Vein Seams. Ironstone was raised from two shafts to the quantity of about 400 tons per week from the Bottom Vein seam for smelting in the furnaces. The first iron goods despatched from the works was 113 tons sent on the Monmouthshire Canal in 1827. By 1829 the output has raised to 12,481 tons of iron making a profit of about £20,000. It was decided in the early 1850s to concentrate iron making on the plants in North Wales and Staffordshire, so in 1852 the works were sold to the Ebbw Vale Iron Company. They operated the plant until 1881, then after unsuccessful attempts to sell as a going concern the furnaces were demolished.

Today the hillsides are littered with the spoil heaps, inclines, shaft collars and remains