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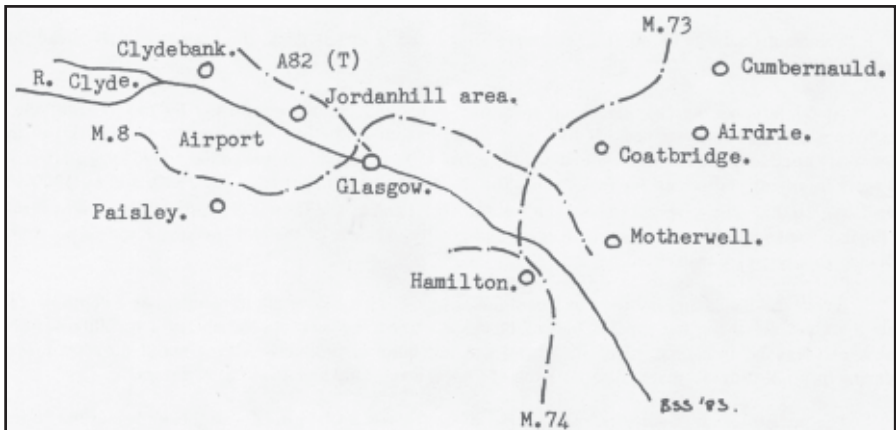
THE JORDANHILL COAL PITS, GLASGOW

Brian S. Skillen

The Jordanhill Coalfield situated in the west of Glasgow was worked from the Greenlea, Jordanhill and Skaterigg pits, now a residential area there are few remains. The workings were of great age, traceable to 1690 and continuing till the 1880s. The length of the field from north to south was about 1 mile and the breadth 1½ miles, about 1,000 acres.

Coal was wrought in the district for over 200 years by room and stoops, examples of which were found in the mid 1800s by a driving breaking into old workings. The stoops were of various sizes and little over 4 feet square at a depth of 14 fathoms. The roads were cut about 6 feet wide and in one of these wooden tools shod with iron, together with wooden shovels, were found.

Sketch Map of location of Jordanhill in relation to the immediate area and principal motorways.



In the soft clay naked foot prints were found, being those of women, employed in the pits to carry coals. There is a story that on Glasgow Fair Saturday about 1690, three women were killed in a pit close to the old North Lodge of Jordanhill House, by the caving in of the roof. The North Lodge was in the vicinity of the Glasgow Academical Athletic Ground.

When workmen were driving a connection from the Greenlea Pit to Skaterigg No.14 they ran into old workings, dating from the 1700s. The rooms were 18 feet

wide, with stoops 12 feet between by some 36 feet in length, the coal seam was 2 feet 2 inches thick.

Messrs. Dunlop, Houston, Gray and M’Nair took coal tacks at Jordanhill in the 1760s and the workings would appear to have been done on a part corporate basis. A masters’ association called the Jordanhill Coal Work Society existed and is mentioned in *The Glasgow Mercury* for the late 1780s and early ‘90s. A meeting listed for the 25 June, 1789, was to do with constitutional changes proposed by the Master Court. This was probably due to the Society having run into financial bother due to the malpractice of some of its members. The Society held regular meetings at Canniesburn Toll House, Anniesland, Mrs. Harvie’s House at Yoker and the Cullich Coal Works in Dunbartonshire.

The ownership of the area rested from time immemorial with the Smith Family of Jordanhill House, tenancy was varied. The Dumbarton Glass Company were working the area at the time of *The Statistical Account*. Two pits were then in operation, one 31 fathoms and the other 38 fathoms in depth, the engine shaft was 64 fathoms. A fault running from south east to north west through the engine shaft left the seam on the north side 4½ fathoms lower. [29] The coal was described as free of sulphur and other impurities. The Clayband Ironstone had 30 to 33 per cent of iron according to tests carried out by Colin Dunlop in the 1800s. The coal works referred to were those in the Skaterigg area. William Campbell, Dixon’s Superintendent of the Skaterigg Coal Work, lived on Woodend in the 1820s.

At this period adjoining farmlands of Skaterigg and Anniesland were tenanted by George Morrison and James Muir.

John Geddes’ report of 14 December, 1843, gives an interesting portrayal of the state of the mines at that period,

“The main coal workings fall to be viewed rather as a gathering up of remnants of coal left by former pits than a uniform field of coal ...”

The strata of the area consisted of brick clay, boulder clay and shale. In the No.8 pit, to the rear of Jordanhill House and grounds, a post of white sandstone was found some 12 feet thick.

The boulders enclosed by the clay found their origin in the traps of the Kilpatrick Hills, the Silurian hills of Dunbartonshire and Argyll and the granites of the Highlands.

The first seam of coal was worked in the Greenlea Pit at a depth of 9 fathoms, known as “Wee Coal” it was worked out by 1860. The seam was 22 inches thick, lying on a bed of “faiks” or thin layers of Sandstone.

The Main Coal was found at 25 fathoms, being 2 feet 2 inches thick, this household coal spread from Drumchapel to Kelvinside.

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At 37 fathoms the Old Blackband Ironstone was found, known until 1837 by the name of the “drugget stane” from its striped appearance. It had been found in four of the pits, but only the visit of staff of the Carron Ironworks, caused its value to be recognised and identified as an ironstone. It was concentrated in Skaterigg, being only 200 acres in extent and about 1½ feet thick. The ironstone was wrought from the 1830s and by 1860 was almost worked out, 10,000 tons were still to be taken from No.6 Pit and in 1867 it was exhausted. The cost of Blackband on the Finance Banks in 1860 was 19s 4d. It was good quality, 42 cwts of the stuff making 1 ton of pig iron, it being smelted at Dundyvan Ironworks.

Below the Blackband lay the Gas Coal, similar in area to the covering ironstone. At a depth of 27 fathoms below the Gas Coal there, lay another bed of Blackband Ironstone, between which lay a fossiliferous bed and an expanse of Clayband Ironstone. This Blackband was not quite as productive, being about 60 acres in extent and producing from 2½ tons raw material about 1 ton of iron, it was locally known as “brown stane”

The next to occur in this descending series of layers, was a Clay band Ironstone, known as the “Garibaldi” so named by M M’Luckie, manager at Jordanhill in 1860. It was wrought up to the year 1892, and about 45 cwt of the raw material made 1 ton of iron. Below this there was a variable seam of thin coal, passing into Blackband Ironstone around Jordanhill; it was found in 1879 when proving a 16 feet downthrow in No.8 Pit and known locally as Jordanhill New Blackband, it did not occur elsewhere. Immediately below, at 86 fathoms, a 14 inch seam of coal was found, this progressing into ironstone toward the south of the field. It proved difficult to reach, the problems of the mining field were beginning to tell.

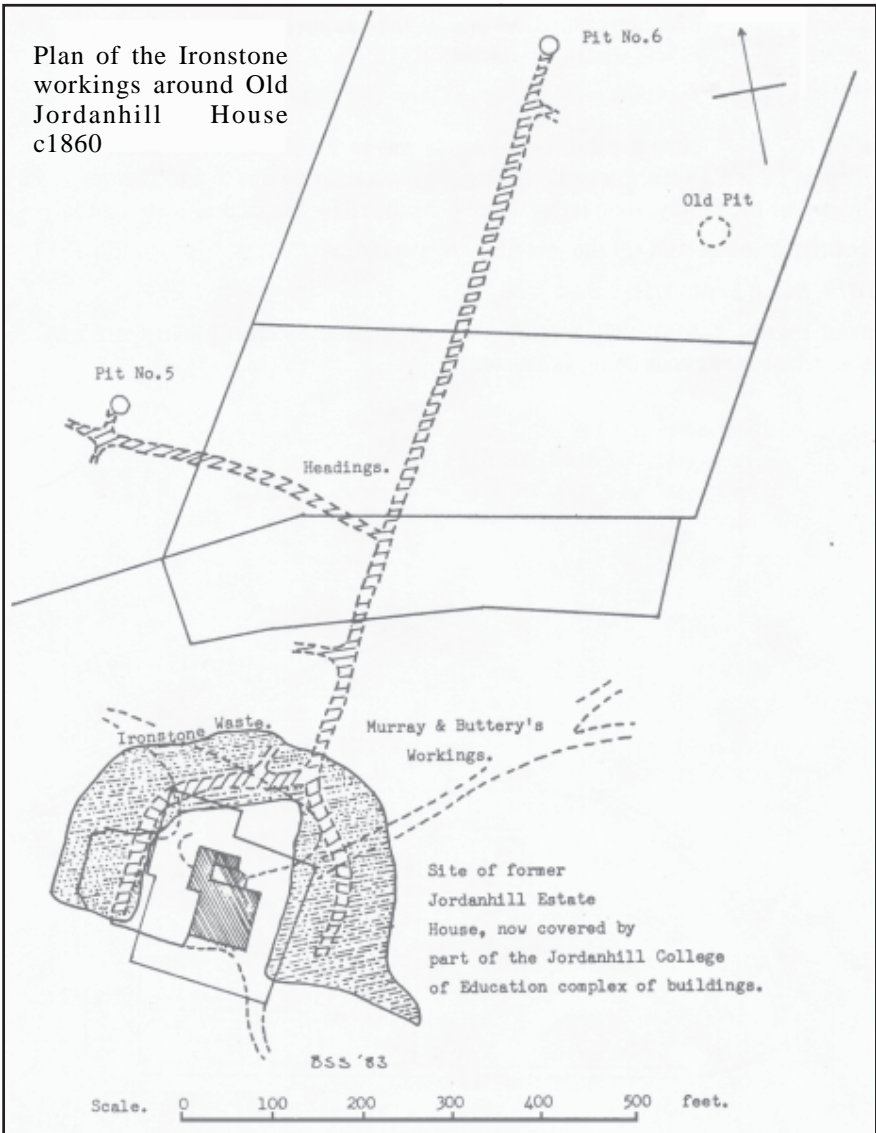
In a report for the Skaterigg Pits, it was stressed that the future was bleak, 9,000 tons still remained to be worked in the 1860s and was envisaged as about 2½ years work, the tenants had powers to relinquish the leases once it was exhausted. The Jordanhill mines were similarly in bother, though some 8,000 tons of Gas Coal were still to be taken from the Greenlea Pit. Had the Claybands proved good mining the workings would have gone on for far longer. The prices of Clayband, on the Finance Banks in 1860, was 14s 9d.

A contributory factor to mining problems was that of drainage, Geddes’ Report of 1843 states,

“... they are drained by a syphon pipe laid along the coal pavement and down No.2 pit toward the splint coal, where the water is discharged and passes off to the Skaterigg Engine Pit, where it is lifted to the surface.”

In the decade after Geddes’ Report both Jordanhill and Skaterigg were worked by John Pearson. By 1859, Jordanhill had passed to William Dixon and Skaterigg was worked by the Monkland Iron Company. At this time 14 acres or so were wrought in the area of No.3 Pit. The Skaterigg No.1 Pit coals were also taken from Jordanhill No.3. At Whitsuntide 4 October 1862, the out-put was,

Plan of the Ironstone workings around Old Jordanhill House c1860



| | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|---------|
| Blackband Ironstone | 789 tons | 5 cwt. |
| Clayband | 940 tons | 18 cwt. |

In a letter, 8 October, 1869, from A. Simpson to James Ritchie, an appreciation of the mines is given. The Monkland Company worked Jordanhill mainly from the "Gin Pit" the area covered being about 4 acres, consisting of Gas and a mixture of Superior Gas and Common coals.

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“The value to the proprietor of these coals at the Lordship of one shilling for Gas and sixpence for the other coal will be £327. 10s.”

The thickness of the coal was about 25 inches, it dipped at 1 in 7 to the north of the “Gin Pit” its course being parallel with the north and south walls of the old Jordanhill House Estate gardens. The depth below the south wall was 10 fathoms and below the north wall 17 fathoms. The Blackband Ironstone was described as wholly removed by 1869, though there were two known seams of Garscadden Blackband and Garibaldi Clayband still to work, the latter being worked from the Woodend Pit.

The Monkland Iron Company proposed working the area of the garden by long wall, had this been done it would have caused localised subsidence, due to the shallow depth of the workings.

[31]

The fear of subsidence was very real, a decade earlier the Jordanhill Estate House had begun to settle, and the engineering firm of Robson, Forman & McCall were brought in. They inspected the then tenants’ workings, finding that Murray & Buttery’s miners had encroached on one of the support pillars for the house, which necessitated rapid remedial action. A letter to Archibald Smith of Jordanhill, 15 April, 1859, expressed the fear that damage would be caused by further careless working.

A realisation that the mineral value of the lands was in decline is reflected in many of the letters from the Jordanhill Estate Papers of the 1870s, particularly those between Susan Smith and Charles S. Parker, then Member for Parliament, and a friend of the family. In a letter dated 6 April, 1874, Susan Smith stated that,

“the lands should not be sold till the minerals are worked out.”

but, by 14 May, 1879, Susan Smith stated that,

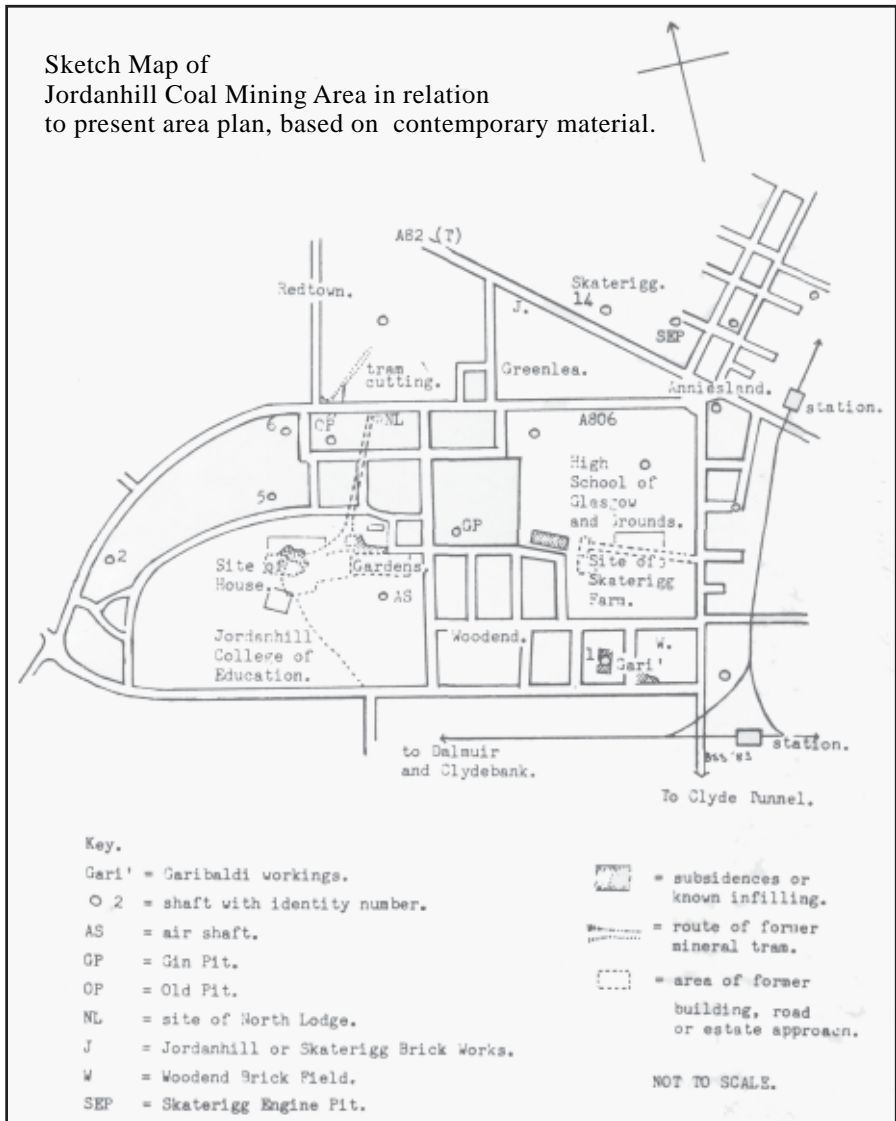
“the mineral rents [of Jordanhill Estate] have diminished by nearly half, partly by concessions and partly by the most valuable minerals being exhausted.”

Even with such pessimism the pits of Jordanhill survived till 10 June, 1892. Interest in Skaterigg continued for blaes was worked from the bings in 1912 by the Coltness Iron Company Ltd., taking 32,245 tons 16 cwt., at a value of £73. 8s. 7d. The former mining offices of the Skaterigg Coal Company, 37 Ropework Lane, survived well after the workings had disappeared, being demolished only with the redevelopment of the St. Enoch Square area of Glasgow.

Jordanhill and Skaterigg suffered numerous mining accidents, principally by roof falls but also fire damp as in the case of Skaterigg No.15 which exploded on 8 March 1884 and again on 17 July of that year, though causing only minor injuries.

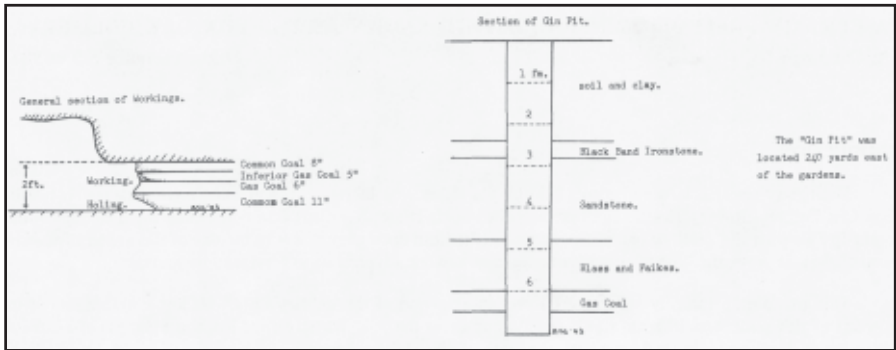
[32]

Sketch Map of
Jordanhill Coal Mining Area in relation
to present area plan, based on contemporary material.



Associated to the mining industry were two Brick Works, those of Jordanhill and of Woodend. The former was established about 1890 producing building bricks. It survived until 1928, by which time the raw material, the local bings, was exhausted. This Coltness Iron Company enterprise was then closed and the machinery transferred to the Giffnock Brickworks, on the site of the then recently closed Giffnock Colliery. The works at Giffnock remained till 1942, when the lease ran out, and the plant was then dismantled. The Woodend Brickfield supplied building bricks for a series of cottages on Crow Road, built c1885 for Scotstoun Estate.

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Though the cottages on Crow Road are often referred to as colliery cottages they had very little to do with the mines. The colliery rows proper have long disappeared and consisted of Blue Row, Red Town, Skaterigg, the Double and Store Row. The Blue Row was so named from the blue tiles used on its walls, conditions were very bad, and it was said,

“... the only way to improve them is to sweep them away.”

Red Town was connected to the Jordanhill pits, being rows of one apartment houses, in some instances shored up by heavy wooden timbers. The interiors were very bad, the floors of black earth muddy and foetid. Described in contemporary journals as “a great stink”.

The two churches in the area were both closely linked to the mines, the Jordanhill Free Church formerly on Knightswood Road, near Red Town, was a major social focus for local workmen. Munro Place was named by local miners in honour of a former minister of the Church, which was later re-established on Woodend Drive.

The Episcopal Church on Woodend Drive finds its origin in a mission begun in 1853 for miner’s children by Jane Smith of Jordanhill House.

When looking round the Jordanhill of today it is very difficult to appreciate that it was once a thriving mining community, of whose miners, William Campbell in his memoirs in *The Western Leader*, said,

“The old Jordanhill miners were a cheery lot, humorous and shrewd to an extraordinary degree.”

The writer would like to acknowledge the staffs of The Mitchell library Glasgow, and Strathclyde Regional Archives.

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