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MARTHOLME PIT, GREAT HARWOOD

B. Bond

SYNOPSIS

The paper outlines the history and development of a group of workings in the Burnley Coalfield. The geology of the area is discussed and reference is made to the peculiar inclination of the seams which resulted in the local collieries being termed "Rearing Mines".

The author indicates at the end of the paper the extent of visible remains on the sites.

Introduction

Situated 70 yards N.W. of the junction of Martholme Lane with the A680 at Cop Hall are the remains of Martholme Colliery. The shafts are at N.G.R. S.D. 747334, alt. 210 feet at the respective depths of 210 yards and 105 yards being the Lower Mountain Mine and the Upper Mountain Mine. Martholme, or Cock Pit was also known of as Cop Colliery, taking this name from the old Cop Hall at the nearby road junction.

The colliery was sunk in 1848 and after subsequent development (1864) continued coal production until Thursday 7th July 1921.

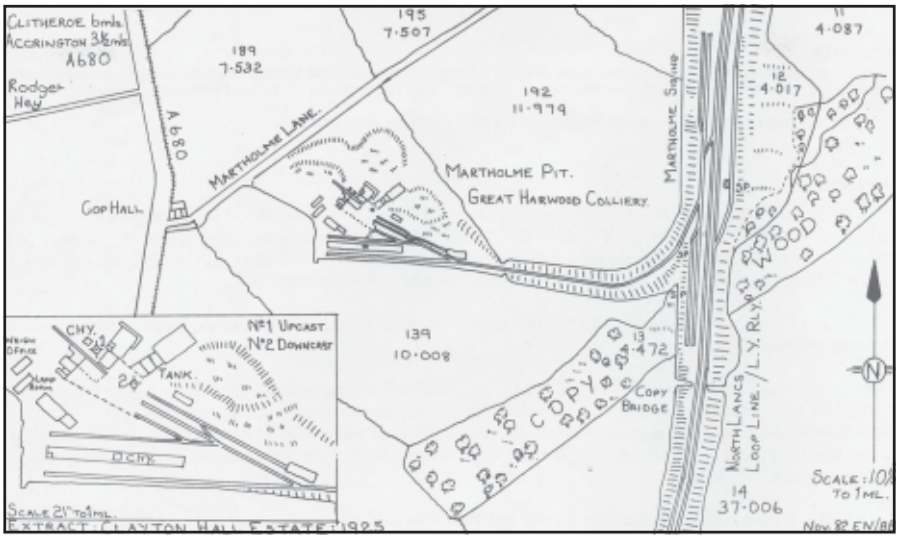
Lancashire coal ranged from 14,000 B.T.U's to 15,000 B.T.U's per pound. The colliery was to sell coals of three grades best, mixed and slack, the coal was also of low volatile matter content making high class coke. Martholme Colliery situated at the most westerly point of the Burnley Coalfield was termed a "Rearing Mine", truly uncommon to the Burnley district. The miners 'won' the coal from seams worked above them and not by common practice in horizontal seams.

The collieries of Martholme, Bridge Hey and Park were to supply the needs of the local twenty two textile mills working in Great Harwood and various local "coke fuelled" industries established in the towns of Padiham and Burnley. Some of these foundries are still in production.

Ownership

Martholme Manor and Estate has been the home of the Hesketh family from 1577, the estate being known as the "Leeches", now known locally as "Harwood Bar". The Hesketh leased rights to extract coal from their estate until 1848. These coal pits (bell type) were worked mostly by the Lomax family who lived in the nearby Clayton Hall. Along with other interested parties – the Taylors, Forts, Birtwistles, Rippons and Barlows – the Lomax family's interest in coal mining led to a "coal boom" in 1850. At the southern boundary of the estate by the River Hyndburn (Hindburn) there were until 1858, a total of 14 shafts in operation.

A brief colliery account exists showing John Lomax purchasing coals from the Hesketh dated 3rd August 1661. To the year 1778, such leases are for periods of six and twenty one years, by 1786, Hesketh had 10 to 14 agreements and leases from such areas of the estate as New Barn, Mill Brow, and Cop Meadow. Coal prices at this time amounted to six pence per $1.^{1}/_{5}$th cwt.



An account dated Nov. 2nd 1805, shows the Third Hole (boring), Smalley Thorn, Great Harwood reached a 6" coal seam found at a depth of 33 yards 1 ft. 6 ins. In 1818, the Hesketh sold most of the estate to James Lomax, but retained the mining rights. Of the other two borings the Hesketh had drilled he advertised and sold the coal rights to Mr. Richard Fort, M.P. of Read Hall. This advertisement dated 23rd Sept. 1848 appeared in the Mining Journal and stated:-

Coal to be sold or let, approved valuable coal mine, found at a depth of 77 yards, 5 feet thick and of good quality – named as Upper Mountain Mine extending to some 1,000 statutory acres. Sections of borings may be seen by applying to the coal viewer, Mr. Boosie, Rufford Hall, Ormskirk.

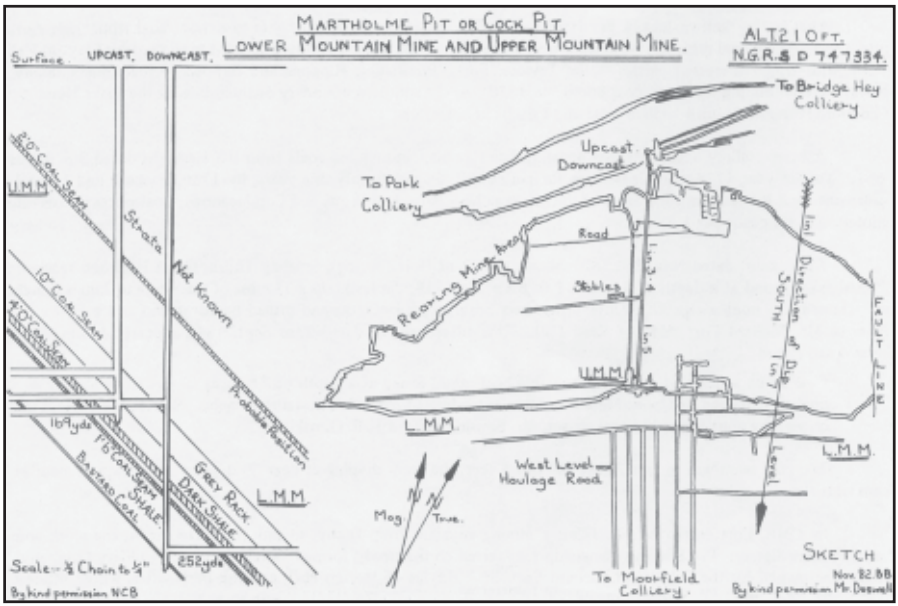
The coal seam was in fact 2 feet and not 5 feet, the seam dipping at near 50 degrees and giving an incorrect seam width.

In 1848, Fort employed Mr. Jillet, a mining engineer from Derby, to sink the three shafts, the work commencing immediately. In 1864 the ownership transferred to the newly formed "Great Harwood Colliery Company", which was owned by the families of Richard Fort, John Taylor of Morten Hall, and the Bertwistles, whose interests already lay in local textile mills. By this time the downcast shaft had reached 210 yards and opened the Lower Mountain seam. On Dec. 22nd 1892 the "Altham Colliery Company" purchased the "Great Harwood Colliery Company", the former created by Taylor and Rippon. This transaction was completed by their manager, Sir George [31] W. MacAlpine, Mech. Eng., who was later to become the owner. In 1898 the "Great Harwood Colliery Company Ltd." was formed as a subsidiary of the Altham Colliery Company. The colliery continued to trade as a limited company until 1921.

During the first few months of 1921 the miners complied with the wishes of the Mining Federation and joined a nation-wide strike, which lasted for 94 days (1st April to 4th July). Then on Saturday 9th July 1921, an item in the Accrington Observer and Times read as follows:-

> Cock Pit Closed
> 350 Men Out of Work
>
> "The directors of Martholme Colliery, familiarly known as Cock Pit, owned by the Great Harwood Colliery Company Ltd on Thursday issued a notice stating that owing to the present condition of the mine it is permanently closed.
>
> During the strike no pumping operations were carried out, as owing to the nature of the mine it was only possible to do this work by skilled labour, so that the pumps could not be manned by volunteers. The decision of the company will affect almost 350 employees, the majority of whom are from Great Harwood, Clayton-le-Moors and Accrington district."

Within the Burnley coal-fields, Towneley, Clifton and Hapton Valley collieries suffered from similar flooding but survived. In 1920, the year the post-war depression made itself felt, sudden drops in the demand for all grades of coal had far-reaching effects upon the coal industry. By the year end it had become near impossible for the colliery companies to dispose of their produce on the market. Combined high outputs and high wages created a false sense of security and even as late as October, miners in some fields had come out on strike in support of a demand for higher wages. Their



demand was based on the industry's ability to pay and the rising cost of living. It was to reach national levels and April 1st 1921 saw the beginning of a 94 day strike. The price of "Home" coal at January was £1. 13s. 0d. per ton, by March its price dropped one shilling per ton. Their wage claim was finally accepted by Union and Government officials with work to resume on July 4th. For persons over 16 years of age a basic wage rise of 2s. per day was accepted, for those under 16 years a rise of 1s. 3d., the agreement to remain in force until September 1922. Martholme was compelled to close due to severe flooding and the nature of the mine. Previous local strikes may have affected the history of the pit, in 1910 there was a "Pit Prop" dispute – this concerned the removal of timber props in worked out areas to which a separate rate of pay was agreed. In 1893, this dispute prevented a general reduction in miner's wages throughout the North West area.

The Register of Disused Mines and Mine Shafts report that the Lower Mountain Mine was to be considered exhausted, with abandonment on December 31st 1927 and its owners were the Altham Colliery Company (1924) Ltd. The Upper Mountain Mine was considered unprofitable with abandonment on the 30th April 1930 and its owners were the Hargreaves Colliery Ltd., Burnley.

Printed in the year 1865/67 the Great Harwood Colliery Company produced bye-laws to be observed by the workmen – each employee signed a contract of employment. The bye-laws consisted of 26 rules, one of which authorised the Agent, Mr. Thomas Redfern, and the Underviewer to place fines upon any workman responsible for a breach of any of the 26 rules. The levy not exceeding ten shillings, nor less than one shilling, Rule 26 stated the amounts received for fines be set apart for the benefit of any workman that may be injured by accident at the colliery, the sums to be allowed being proportionate to the amount in hand.

Examination of the colliery Wages Book show a deduction of 1s. 6d. to 3d per fortnight, 6d being the average. With 64 employees being registered May 30th 1865 the rates read as follows:-

Name	**Position Held**	**Daily Rate**	**Amounts Removed**
	Headers	5s 6d – 4s 6d	
	Coal Getters	5s 0d – 4s 6d	
	Fireman	4s 6d	
	Putting/Loading	3s 6d	
	Putting	2s 9d	
	Putting Boy	1s 0d	
	Engineman	4s 0d	
	Joiner	4s 0d	
	Blacksmith	4s 0d – 3s 8d	
	Banksman	3s 4d (various lowest being 1s 2d)	
	Striker	2s 8d	
	Stoker	2s 6d	

With the first entry being April 5th, the workmen were paid fortnightly on Saturdays. A method of piece work was recorded several weeks after this entry, the last daily entry was on March 18th 1868. The colliery Sales Book which was kept by the book-keeper, Mr. George Wood, showed fortnightly accounts dated May 30th, 1866 as follows:-

Total coal drawings out of Pit	408 tons 2 cwt.
Total coal sold – Best coal	35 tons 2 cwt.
Total coal sold – Mixed	180 tons 2 cwt.
Total coal sold – Slack	226 tons 5 cwt.
Total coal sold out of Pit	441 tons 9 cwt.
Burnt at Engine fires	22 tons 15 cwt.
Cash received for coal sold	£58. 2s. 0½d.
Bills due at fortnight end	£150. 3s. 5½d.

Mr. Wood's first entry being February 19th 1866, and last entry on March 6th 1867.

Description

The further development of the Lower Mountain Mine involved a triple shaft, in the first instance one downcast, one upcast and the third receiving a Cupola and Pit Bottom Furnace. Ventilation was by the furnace method, later to be replaced by the "induced draught" method. The upcast was known as "One Wheel Pit", the cage for this shaft was of square wooden construction and able to carry 18 men. Its shaft porch was installed with Signalling equipment. With a plentiful supply of local timber from The Nab each head gear was constructed of wood. illumination of the shaft porch was by safety oil lamp which was later replaced by electricity. Owing to disastrous results, the cabling was removed and the conventional oil lamps reinstated.

The shaft porch layout received a great deal of planning, the cage faced north and the porch length was 30 to 40 yards, 10 feet high and 10 feet wide – sufficient to hold fifty tubs of coal. By 1912 twelve coke ovens were in use at the colliery and under consideration was the construction of an aerial flight to the nearby Moorfield Colliery (opened in August 1881) and Altham Coke Works, but the project was dismissed.

The Altham Coke Works had 24 coke ovens each taking 13 tons of coal daily to produce 9 tons of finished coke. The delivery of coke and coal from the Moorfield Colliery was carried (firstly) by horse and box carts to the sidings of Simonstone Railway Station, then being sent to its final destination. This railway link being a matter of miles from the Martholme Pit Siding.

The O.S. Map of 1910 shows a rail connection to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Loop line. With other goods traffic running on this loop from June 1st 1877, twelve months after the line's opening, the bulk of coals and coke left the yard by the Martholme siding.

In 1913 Mr. Walter Garner became the colliery manager, his forward approach led to the introduction of electric stand lamp and he installed sixty of them. He dispensed

with the six horses and two ponies employed and stabled underground – one horse being on the surface to shunt the wagons to the sidings. At Harwood Fair week these much-loved animals were winched to the surface, grazed and rested in the surrounding fields. He introduced the wire rope haulage system, dispensing with the old endless chain haulage commonly used throughout the Burnley Coalfield. The engine house engaged to run the 1,600 yard endless rope was situated 50 yards east of the coal winding downcast shaft. The rope travelled along an elongated brick box, two feet below surface, to descend the shaft side to the lower level of engine brow. Attaching tubs to this moving rope by "rope clipping" now came into being. This operation could be carried out without stopping the haulage with 2 or 4 loads at a time being sent up to the pit bottom.

The clearance of water from the shaft sump was accomplished at each ascent of the "three (decked) level Cage". Each of the two upper decks, held four miners, whilst the bottom deck was a tank. At pit-bottom, the miners stepped out onto a steel sheeted platform and the tank submerged into the shaft sump. The tank was filled by means of a non-return lid. At the surface the water was discharged into drainage channels dug from the pit head to the River Calder.

Underground, the levels combined to form perhaps one of the most interesting collieries in the whole Burnley Coalfield. Both coal seams dipped fifty degrees south east; bridge rails were fabricated as cage guides, the downcast shaft was out of alignment at 65 yards and reached the Lower Mountain 10" seam at 169 yards. Extended to 210 yards the shaft pierced the Lower Mountain four foot seam to a final shaft depth of 252 yards.

One Wheel Pit, the upcast shaft, lies 30 yards north-west, this shaft reached the same Lower Mountain 10" seam or seating at 135 yards. The shaft passed the Upper Mountain two foot coal seam at 77 yards; the final shaft depth was 169 yards.

From pit bottom, levels were worked north to the Read Fault line, north-east to link eventually with Bridge Hey Colliery, south-east to the north-south Martholme Fault, (which at this point was a down throw east 70/80 yards towards the junction districts of the Calder Colliery, also south-west eventually to link with Park Colliery.

From the pit bottom to the bottom of engine brow level, the "Galloways" were stabled. With some of these "Gall" roads 1½ miles long the horses towed trains of fifteen tubs containing four to five cwts of coal, the two ponies being employed to haul from the advanced workings (Far Ends).

At the peak of coal raising, the south-west area, with its seam at a more acceptable working gradient, lifted 350 tons of coal per day. Both "pillar and strait (straight)" and "bord and pillar" methods were used to win the coal. The year 1915 saw the introduction of long wall coal cutters, nicknamed the Iron Man, but this was to be short-lived. Its replacement was the SISKOL and the HARDY, short wall-heading machines. Using bord and pillar roads cut through solid coal, averaging fifteen feet

wide and two feet six inches high connected with Moorfield Colliery. Along some of these roads ran compressed air lines connected to surface compressors at Whinney Hill Colliery, Clayton-le-Moors.

Due to the nature of strata, the system of packing roadway walling, meant stone had to be imported. Gritstone brought from a quarry worked on the lower reaches of Pendle Hill, Wiswell, N.G.R. S.D.755373, provided hand picked stone. The steam-driven cranes working at the quarry used coal from the pit and by exchanging coal for gritstone, this agreement continued. It was transported in bow fronted steam waggons travelling to the pit and returning with coal.

The flooded Lower Mountain Mine began to affect working in Moorfield. Pumping of water after the strike was re-started but was never able to restore coal production. The re-opening of Upper Mountain Mine by a team of 17 miners from Moorfield was in the period of 1927/30. The contract price of this Top Bed coal was 5 shillings per ton. The "rearing coals" (see below) proved to be of an inferior quality and thickness and the project was halted.

The final capping and filling of the Martholme shafts, 8 feet 6 inches wide, consisted of removing the "heaps" from the yard and tipping into the shafts. The miners nicknamed the heap the "White Elephant". The capping at the surface was a final webbing of girders and concrete.

Geology

In the area of "One Wheel Pit" most of the Upper Mountain seams climbed beyond the dip of 48-500 to reach almost vertical, some levels being named "Scuttle Brow". Truly uncommon to the Burnley Coalfield district the nearest equivalent of these "rearing Mines" are to be found in the Scottish Coalfields.

Horizontal roads driven through solid rock from the shafts reached acceptable gradients of the Upper Mountain seam. In extremely difficult and humid conditions the miner would progress along the other area of rising coal seam, termed "over one's head". When reaching such areas he would cut steps and also form wooden platforms across the timber props as he climbed the seam. These "rearing coals" would be picked and shovelled and allowed to gravitate to empty wooden hutches or tubs below. One such road was driven from the Engine Brow, through to Bridge Hey travelling road, which also allowed ventilation, and a permanent chain climbing ladder was attached.

A general outline of the geology is provided in Geology of the Burnley Coalfields by Hull 1875.

"Coal measures, due west of Simonstone are drift covered except for a few isolated exposures of the Woodhead Hill Rock, travelling throughout Lancashire, Cheshire and North Staffordshire, this being a coarse yellowish sandstone. The Martholme shafts pierced into the Lower Mountain seam dipping 50^{o} S.E. they worked from a depth of around 1,000 feet up to the outcrop."

Mountain Mines
The outcrop of each seam traversed along the southern flanks of the Pendle Range to Colne and eventually southwards to the Cliviger Valley. From Great Harwood to Wheatley Lane, the lower coal measures, although of an absolute thickness of around 2,000 feet form but a narrow slip interposed between the Millstone Grit and the outcrop of the Arley Mine. This is owing to the steepness of the dip about two thirds of the width of the belt which may be taken at an average angle of 45 degrees S.S.E.

[35]

"Further reading on these Middle Coal Measures from Stubblefield J. and Trotter F. 1957, Divisions of the Coal Measures on Geological Survey Maps of England and Wales, it may be followed and quoted: The base of the Middle Coal Measures has now been redefined for Geological Survey purposes to coincide with the base of the marine band which has Anthracoceras vanderbecket (Ludwig) as its characteristic goniatite. The horizon of this marine band is probably slightly higher than the highest measures recorded in the all Burnley Coalfield, and consequently the whole of the sequence now falls within the Lower Coal Measures.

On the opposite side of the Burnley trough these same beds, although somewhat reduced in aggregate thickness, spread out to more gentle inclination of the beds towards the axis of the trough. The change from the high to a low dip, descending from the Pendle hillsides into the plain, is remarkable for its abruptness. The line or axis along which this change takes place from an angle say of 40 degrees may be traced from Finncliffe Bridge, west of Blackburn.

Drawing a line through the Market Square to Little Harwood Hall, through Side Best, Lower Cunliffe and along the south side of Harwood Lower Town. Passing Martholme, crossing the River Calder, west of Dunkirk Farm, the line ranges between the "Read Park" fault and the fault which passes under Simonstone Hall to the south of Padiham reservoir. Thus to Fence church, Wheatley Lane and Higherford, south of this line the angle of dip is seldom greater than 10 degrees, north of it seldom less than 40 degrees. The outcrop of the Mountain Mines along the slopes of Pendle is generally indicated by heaps. None of these workings are deep, for the coal all along its outcrop, in the language of the country, is a "rearing Mine" rising to the surface and then dipping with great rapidity.

Site Remains
Approached from Martholme Lane, through the gateway the cobbled and red brick road leads to an extensive cobbled yard. Still standing is first the Weigh House - 46' x 17' - constructed of random walling with a roof of half grey slate and asbestos sheeting. (No obvious alteration, in the addition of asbestos sheeting to the building can be seen internally or externally. Enquiries to Turners Asbestos Manufacturers, Manchester, indicate that 1913/18 saw the development and introduction of asbestos sheeting, flat type and corrugated, into the building construction industry.) The building consists of office, weighing area and miners' cloakroom. Next stands the Lamp Room

- 50' x 14' - constructed of red Nori brickwork with roofwork in grey slate. The building comprises two offices and a lamp room with repair benches.

The Engine beds are in a demolished area of 50' x 24' with red Burnsall brick and stone blocks standing at foundation level. There is an abundance of girders and bullhead rails which were possibly used on the pit head buildings. A cylindrical condenser, 10' 6" x 4' 6", lies amongst the debris. The embankment carrying the rail connection from the mine to the loop line, may be followed with the various other heaps.

Bridge Hey Colliery
Also known as Read Pits is situated in Bridge Hey woods, ¼ mile west of Read at N.G.R. S.D. 758.343 at an altitude of 262 feet. There. are two shafts, both stone lined, with the coal winding shaft 77 yards deep. Reaching Lower Mountain seam, the colliery connected with Martholme at the eastern end of this pit. Using an endless chain haulage system, until the date of the two pits connecting, the Bridge Hey's coals were then passed along to Martholme. The coal winding shaft then became a "Man Climbing Shaft", using a fixed chain ladder.

Worked by the Great Harwood Colliery Company, using "pillar and strait" method, the colliery eventually closed to coal production in January 1884. The Register of Disused Mines and Mine Shafts report that the abandonment was on Apri112th 1884. The winding of water and ventilation continued after this date. Other references show coal to have been extracted from coal pits (bell type) in the Bridge Hey wood in 1588.

Site Remains
Leading from the gateway on the A671 roadside, the colliery road is obscure. At 30 yards, and in a southerly direction, stands the engine house and heaps. Reports show the buildings to have been standing in 1890. In close proximity are three noticeable depressions; these are heavily overgrown. A section of wrought iron flanged pipe stands four feet above the general overgrowth, this air vent stands 200 yards south from the engine house. In the lower fields a 3 foot high broad arched drainage level discharges water to the River Calder.

Park Colliery
Also known as Great Harwood Colliery or Pits, worked two shafts to the Lower Mountain Seam from the depths of (No.1 pit) 210 feet and (No. 2 pit) at 99 feet, the seam being 3' 6" width. Worked by the Great Harwood Colliery Company, owned by R. Fort, M.P. of Read Hall, the Register of Disused Mines and Mine Shafts report that the abandonment was Dec. 1887. Site remains: none.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Mr. Ridgeway – N.C.B. Mining Record Office, N.W. Area.
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Mr. Doswell of Great Harwood who worked at Martholme Colliery.

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B. BOND,
1 Beech Terrace,
Ingleton,
Carnforth,
Lancs.

MERE MINING LADS AT MARTHOLME c.1910