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OLD MINES AND MINES MASTERS OF THE MONKLANDS

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SYNOPSIS

The Monklands lie east of Glasgow, across economically worthwhile coal measures, which have been worked to a great extent. Additionally to coal it proved possible to work a good local ironstone. Mushet's blackband ironstone proved the resource on which the Monklands rose to prosperity in the 19th century. A pot pourri of minerals was there to be worked and their exploitation may be traced back to the 17th century.

Estate feuding provides the first clue to the early coal working of the Monklands. In 1616, Muirhead of Brydanhill was in dispute with Newlands of Kip ps. Such was the animosity of feeling, that the latter turned up at the tiny coal working at Brydanhill and together with his men smashed up Muirhead's pit head.¹ It is likely that Muirhead's mine had answered purely local needs and certainly if mining did continue it was on this ephemeral basis, at least until the mid 18th century. The reasons are easy to find, fragile local markets that offered no encouragement to invest in mining and a lack of communications that stopped any hope of export. In any case the western markets were then answered by the many small coal pits about the Glasgow district, including satellite workings such as Barrachnie on the western extremity of Old Monkland Parish.

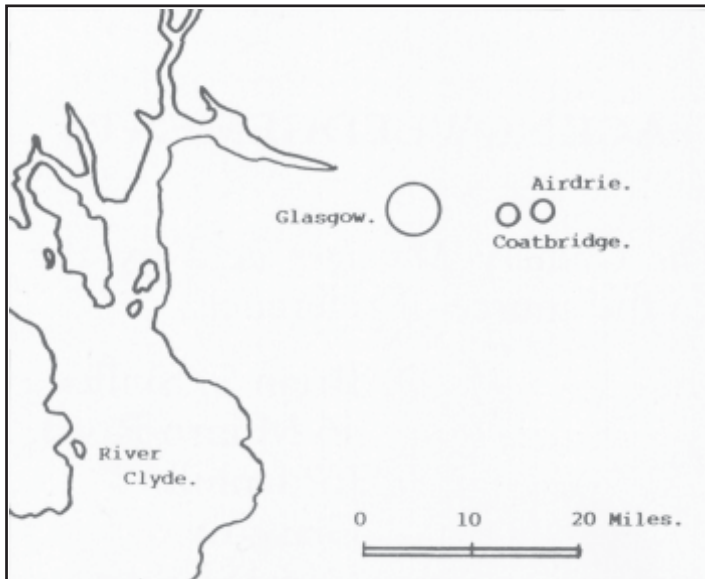


Figure 1. Location map Jor Airdrie and Coatbridge.

It is a wonder that coal mining was carried on, for when the 18th century dawned Scotland was denuded of capital, overstretched and impotent in its trading and barely above subsistence level in its agrarian base. In overview it had suffered the dislocation of its economy time and time again, subsistence crises were the order of the day, either from natural disasters in the primitive farming community, or disease and war, but also from Darien, a failure that sent shock waves through the local economy. Why then did mining continue, even begin, where funding and resources were unreliable. Agrarian disasters of the final decade of the 17th century are part of the answer as they gave the impetus to urbanisation which in turn continued the demand for coal. Urbanisation in the early stages needed the extirpation of famine, both to ensure its own food supply and to put pressure on people to form communities. A spate of short term problems in the “black years of King William” brought migration as refugees from hard hit parishes moved to those less affected. Thus the tiny farming clusters of the Old Monkland district began to grow as they took in migrants from less fortunate parishes such as Blantyre, Bothwell, Glassford and Hamilton all of which showed falling populations by 1700. There was an obvious need for fuel and it was sensible of the Glasgow merchant class, together with local land owners and others, to invest heavily in mining. Even low levels of investment could be expected to make some gain in the small scale mining of the early 18th century. The levels of mining were so restricted that small amounts of capital invested in digging a shaft on a shallow seam, could reasonably be expected to bring a quick profit once the coals went to market, for as John Chamberlayne writing in 1710 commented:

“Scotland is said to be richer underground than above.”²

Therefore there was some impetus to invest, and the contemporary burgh records of Glasgow detail this process with accounts of trials and working of coal around Glasgow, workings which included the western extremities of the Monklands area.

The most dominant of the early Monkland collieries was that at Barrachnie, working by 1730. A roup of 1730 mentions the coal seams as having been 7 quarters thick; rental, process and articles of roup were handled by William Wood, Stockwell Gate, Glasgow, and Hugh Graham, writer in Edinburgh.³ Privilege of working the half of the coal in the 5 Merklands of Barrachnie and its setting was offered once more in 1750. Applications were to Orr of Barrow field, or to Robert Barclay, writer in Glasgow, as his agent.⁴ The Orr connection is the first hint of a coalmaster’s major interest in Old Monkland, for John Orr was a very experienced coalmaster who had bought both Barrowfield and Camlachie from the Glasgow City Magistrates on 29

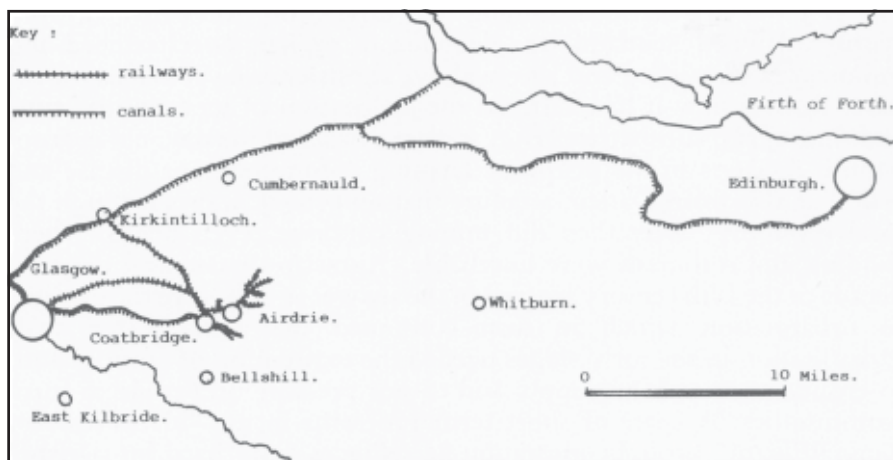


Figure 2. Location map Jor Airdrie and Coatbridge in relation to early canal and railway links and market locations.

September 1730, not only as a “country seat” but also as a mineral investment.⁵ The Barrachnie territory attracted another coal master Archibald Burns as tenant, who had partnership with John Burns of Brown hill, by Bothwell, suggesting the beginning of regional coal exploitation. On Burn’s death, Robert Cross of Barrachnie became trustee on the estate in 1755.⁶

The other main colliery of Old Monkland at that time was Aikenston, lying near to Bargeddie. In 1756, a 58 year lease was offered, a tack covering a 50 acre coalfield, whose principal tacksman was John Duncan Jr., the Glasgow printer, together with Gabriel Park of Aikenston.⁷ The pits of the area were probably wrought by several coalmasters as Archibald Mason was also noted as a tacksman in the area, when a sub-lease was offered in 1758, hinting at several sub-leases if John Duncan was then active as coalmaster in his own right. Workings were on a 4ft seam and in the Mason sub-lease rent could be paid with cash or with coal.⁸ John Duncan Jr’s involvement suggests that mining was not just dominated by moneyed merchants but had also a range of small investors participating in mining. Aikenston coal was also probably directed toward the Glasgow markets and the higher prices that could be got there, but it is just as likely that coals found local use. It was local demand that generated colliery activity in New Monkland, answered from the long established Mochriesinch Colliery and Darn gavil Colliery,⁹ but Old Monkland then truly dominated the mining scene.

Barrachnie and Glenduffhill collieries were major suppliers to the Glasgow markets. James Dinning, a Glasgow horse setter by trade, took in payments

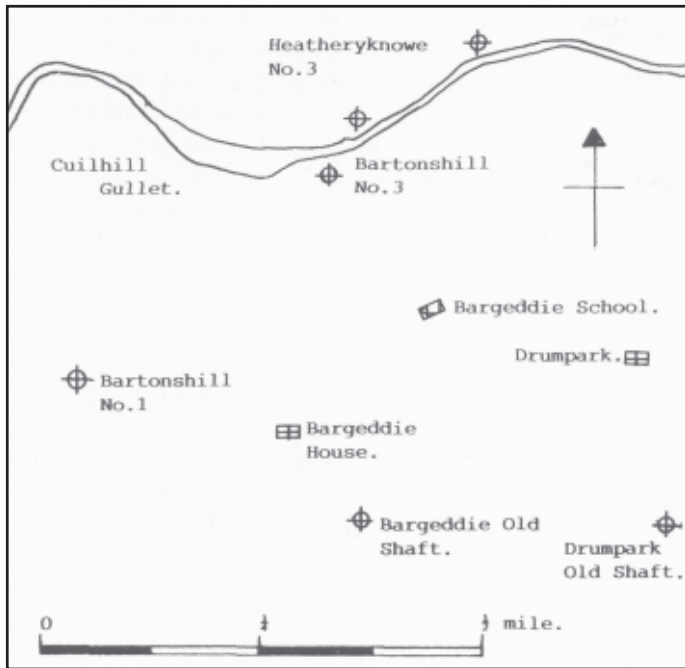


Figure 3. Location of main shafts about Bargeddie, the Monkland Canal and Cuilhill Gullet.

for the coals from these collieries until his business failed. Thereafter the Glasgow agent for Barrachnie and Glenduffhill was George Reid at William Loudon's stables in Gallowgate. These men had connections with the collieries as suppliers of carts and horses for taking the coal from the pits into Glasgow; Dinning's failure does though suggest all was not well and certainly the distance to market probably overstretched the limited resources of these then country collieries. The sale of half of the Barrachnie minerals and all of the Glenduffhill minerals, by roup on 6 May 1762, reinforces this conclusion.¹⁰ Indeed poor sales forced the tacksman to give 5% discount at the pit for cash to encourage people to come for their coals and thus save transport costs for the minerals masters, apart from encouraging sales with offers. George Reid who had joined up with Robert Davie campaigned vigorously for his customers to send out their own carters to the pits. In any case discount was not offered for carting coal as the two coalmasters paid the carters money so it was sensible to cash and carry, even for the customers. Coals booked after delivery were allowed no discount; it is interesting that market opportunity was so limited that customers would put up with such

treatment.¹¹ Aggressive selling was necessary to survive with exceptionally long leases, designed to encourage investment simply by the term of occupation but also creating problems if returns proved poor from geological difficulty or distance or lack of market. There were therefore many cases of lessees bailing out before the termination of the lease, that of Barrachnie running from 1726 for 40 years was offered for sale in 1763. It had then just 3 years to run and as a result got no takers, for such a lease had no future to it and investment potential if any may well have been discouraged by the distance of any possible market. The return for any major investment would in any case have been slight in such a length of time and new machinery would have been necessary for the pit was fitted with an elderly “bobb engine”.¹² Orr of Barrow field almost certainly kept the Barrachnie colliery ticking over and his son retained his mineral interest in the area. John Orr of Barrowfield, advocate and town clerk, inherited from his father the properties of Barrowfield, Camlachie and Gateside in 1775. On succession he formed a partnership with his brother, Matthew Orr, to work coals on their estates. In 1789, their interests were auctioned and included Sandyhills, Glenduffhills, Barrachnie and White Cranhill, apart from the aforementioned properties.¹³ The collieries failed and were sequestrated in 1791.¹⁴

Even as the curtain began to come down on the early 18th century mining the balance of influence was shifting away from mining near to Glasgow toward the heart of the Monklands. The principal cause had been the creation of a new economic infrastructure, which contributed to the improvement of communications. In the late 18th century the conversion of the River Clyde from a tidal backwater to an important ship canal had taken place, the Forth & Clyde Canal had also opened up new opportunities. Glasgow's route to the east was related to the Tobacco Lords' need to reach European markets, while the Monkland Canal was financed by the same group to relieve the City's coal shortages by opening up the North Lanarkshire coalfield about the Monklands. Initially far from successful, financial difficulties had forced the canal shares on to the open market in 1781. Glasgow bought a percentage but the issue was eventually acquired by the Stirling Brothers, merchants in Glasgow, who turned the enterprise into a success once it joined up to the Forth & Clyde Canal. Stirlings saw the canal as a means to an end rather than an end in itself and this general attitude brought increasing trade to Glasgow, as coal became a major constituent of total cargoes. Indeed so successful were the Monklands pits and the Monkland Canal that coal prices in Glasgow tumbled, forcing the established local coal masters to attempt a combination to maintain price levels. The outcome was a division of interests between those who saw profit from mining itself and those who invested

profits from lands, trade and other industries of which the most notable was the iron trade, in opening up new coal seams as sources of additional investment and return.

The new mining ethos was evidenced at Drumpellier with only one pit ticking over in 1778 and two in limbo,¹⁵ which by 1781 was working four pits and had a powerful pumping engine, and just as importantly coal boats to take the pits' output along the Monkland Canal to the markets in Glasgow.¹⁶ The Moorend Colliery also made use of the canal to send its coal to Glasgow, its pits sunk within 90ft of the canal bank.¹⁷ Similarly the workings of Neuk and Palacecraig used the canal to forward their coals to Glasgow markets.¹⁸

This last area was typical of the new mineral territories that attracted new power groups, nearby Faskine linked to Govan by the Govan coalmasters was such an example of extension of control out of old areas into new ones. The changing shape of mining created a linear zone of development east of Glasgow along the canal banks and with it, new opportunities for enterprise, an interesting example being the development of local agriculture in the Monklands area in response to the need to feed the colliery workforce and their pit ponies. But more importantly it provided the impetus to open up new mining territory as a field for profitable investment, seen in the development of the East Monkland mining district.

The Airdrie district was dominated by a range of tiny collieries which mainly answered local needs. These were collieries such as the two shafts workings on Colliers Farm, close to Airdrie.¹⁹ Also active about that time were the workings of Riding and Gartmillan, prosperous enough to even employ a steam engine for pumping.²⁰ Windhill Pit, Airdrie, was another working, a winding shaft on an upper seam which coals sold for 5/6d per ton in 1793.²¹ Coals from the district were by then finding markets as far afield as East Kilbride and Cumbernauld and to within two miles of Whitburn, being used mostly for smithy work. This hints at improved communications that allowed coal to be sold cheaply enough to be economic in areas where there was already some coal exploitation. It was this improvement that allowed the exploitation of the Monklands to really get under way in the 19th century.²²

The roller coaster fortunes of the Barrachnie Colliery featured once more in 1801, when a lease was offered. Ell and Main coals were wrought and 24 acres of the latter then remained, two pits were down and a third was being sunk, suggesting a return on investments. But it must not have been too encouraging for the life of the lease on offer was only for four years on what was then an old mine, suggesting there was little ground for futures planning.²³ Fierce competition for collieries to the east, exploiting comparatively fresh

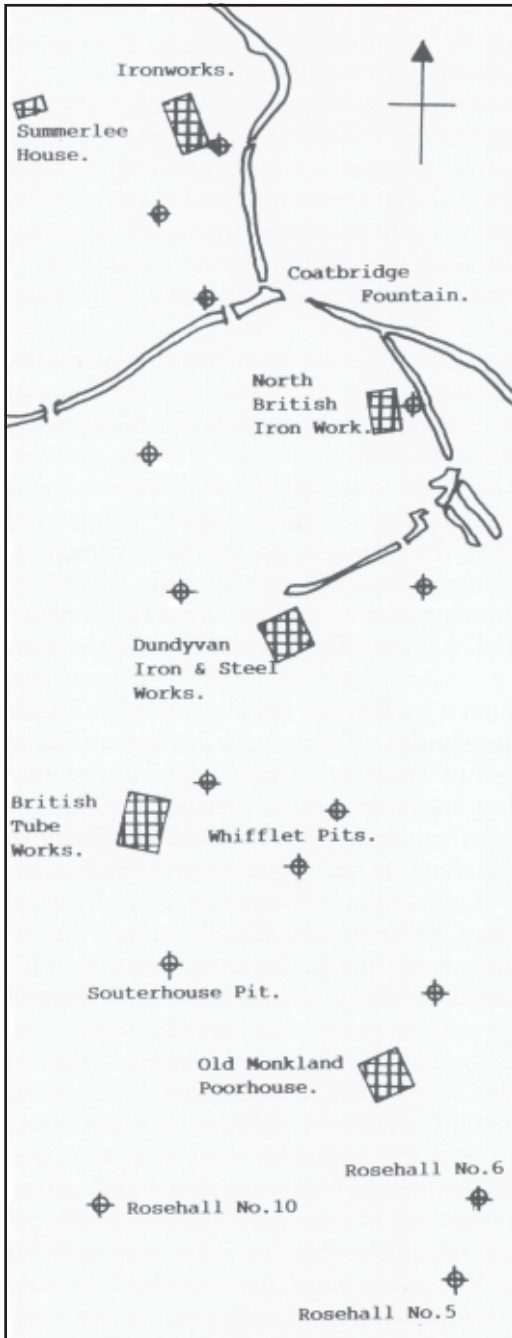


Figure 4. Location of shafts from Rosehall to the Summerlee Ironworks, in relation to the main iron and steelworks to the immediate west of Coatbridge Fountain. The map also shows the Monkland Canal and some of its branches immediate to the town area of Coatbridge.



coal reserves, would have denied Barrachnie the confidence of a long term lease. The eastward collieries included Kipps,²⁴ Ballochney,²⁵ Faskine,²⁶ and Rosehall,²⁷ all with proven track records but also having fresh coal reserves not till then having been wrought to any great depth. Rosehall had only been worked to the rise and attention then turned to the dip of the mine in 1805, when a 4ft coal seam was being wrought from two pits.

The Calder Coal Company was also active and had interests in Dundyvan, Garturk and Hows, lands owned by Houston of Clerkington, by Haddington,²⁸ symbolic of the east to west link up of Scottish minerals investments, and seen also at Ballochney where there was reference in leasing to Bissett at the Govan Colliery, Glasgow.²⁹ This does not deny the parochialism of some workings such as Arden, where coal was not only offered for local sale but worked for the tenant's own use (sic).³⁰ William Cowan's workings at Mavisbank were probably responsive to local demand and limited in opportunity leading to his bankruptcy in 1809.³¹ Faskine epitomised the progressive approach to mining with its emphasis on getting coal to market with distance no object. The offer of lease in 1818 detailed scows, sloops and gabberts as colliery property and that its coal was being shipped as far as Ireland.³²

About this time the Baillieston area grew in importance, principally as a direct result of capital investment in the Monkland Canal, which was in truth a "coal route" and hence the opening up of relatively new coalfields to provide coal, to feed along the canal to markets in Glasgow. Andrew Stirling, the domineer of the Monkland Canal, capitalist and coalmaster, not only invested in the exploitation of his Drumpellier Estate, but more importantly in the canal to give market access from his mines at Faskine and Hallhill. At its conception Stirling acquired all but eleven shares in the canal for his family interests,³³ which included ferrying coal to Glasgow. Andrew Stirling and then latterly his Trustees had extensive interests in the mining of the Hallhill area, slightly to the north of Baillieston.³⁴ The extent of the investment was considerable for it covered 76 acres in total, with an annual rent of £600 per annum and a lordship of 6d per ton on ironstone outputs; the landlords also had an option of 9d per cart on gross output or 1/5th of the value of the coal in lieu of rent. Included in the lease as inducements to prospective lessees were two steam engines and the hire of coal boats, rented at £12 per annum. The inclusion of the machinery and the boats in the bargain suggest that the site was of real value with its waterway link to Glasgow. It is also clear that in Stirling's time, management had shifted away from a local emphasis to the Faskine Colliery's Counting House in Brunswick Street, Glasgow.³⁵ Faskine had first really featured in colliery politics with the 1813 Coal Combine, when it had been bought with Govan to rid the Combine's members of cut throat competition.³⁶ It illustrates clearly how closely the development

of Glasgow and Monkland mining were related to the improvement in communication made possible by the canal.

Opportunity created by the canal had brought coals flooding to market, with at least 12 successful proprietors and tacksmen sending coal from the east to Glasgow, by the second decade of the 19th century. These were John Rhymer, William Young, James Merry, William Dixon, Alexander Baird, James Monro, John Cairns, Robert Simpson, David Buchanan, Peter McAdam, George Nisbet and Archibald Frew & Company.³⁷

But as new faces appeared on the scene so old ones began to disappear with a spate of failures c1820. The post Napoleonic War trade depression had brought great stress to the coal industry immediate to Glasgow. Weapons manufactories had boosted iron demand with a consequent demand for coal to feed the furnaces. Once peace came, over capacity had a devastating effect on the traditional mining areas east of Glasgow, that had grown briefly prosperous on the demands of ordnance. It hit the 1813 Combine's members

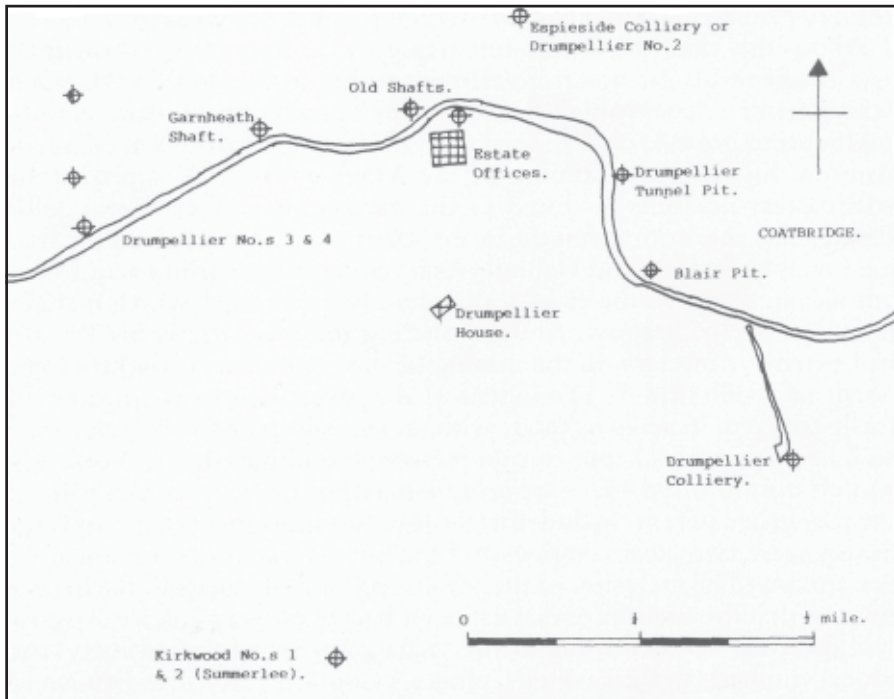


Figure 5. Location of main shafts in relation to Drumpellier House and the Monkland Canal.

particularly hard, the Combine itself ended and with it much of the regulation of the coal industry. James Sword Jr., one of the Combine's principals bankrupted in 1818 from a variety of causes,³⁸ expediting the major shift of power that brought William Dixon to dominance and gave encouragement to the coalfield proprietors of the east. Sword's failure broke the power group that had dominated colliery politics from Faskine to Govan. Robert Gray, James M'Nair, James Farie, Colin Dunlop and Sword withdrew from Faskine on 15 February 1819 and then from Govan on 3 July 1819.³⁹ Dixon then emerged as the dominant coalmaster by acquiring their shares in those collieries. The upheaval continued with several Glasgow coalmasters departing from the scene and perhaps predictably Barrachnie came apart with the bankruptcy of its then tenant Peter Mann.⁴⁰

The mining district east of Glasgow was therefore in some turmoil and some other causes may be suggested. Mining enterprise demanded incorporation to share risks and to assemble very large and premobilised capitals, these probably came under pressure with post war trade depression. Under capitalisation was one of the problems of the credit crisis provoked by the Napoleonic War and partnership financing problems could arise through inefficient management by members of kinship groups in each others interests. Entrepreneurship brought its problems too, for its dispersal between partners meant that decisive voices were commonly and often in dispute with the collapse of the partnery when expressed too fully. The majority of the partnership failures over this time suggest this with one partner leaving some months ahead of the collapse of most of the aforementioned collieries. Indeed inadequate personal management could never hope to respond to economic pressures, a lack of confidence which was to be further exhibited in the vicious suppression of the miners and the steady rise in accidents, where a life was less important than saving a few pounds.

An aspect of the change and turmoil in the growth of the coal and ironstone mining industry was the benefits of lease handling. Old time legal practitioners or writers found they had new horizons of influence. Thus Dunlop & Dickson, Writers to the Signet, were letting agents for Edinburgh clients interested in a bit of speculation in the Monklands, about Blackridge,⁴¹ and Faskine.⁴² It again shows how investment in mining had taken on a Scottish rather than local context, though the Monklands did remain Glasgow biased. Lang Mailing Colliery identifies another kinship connection in the domination of estate leasing as with the Rutherglen law agent Robert Simpson and the Glasgow writer James Simpson's mutual interests in this colliery. The lease also tied in an agent local to the Airdrie area, George Waddellland measurer by trade.⁴³ All handled the let of the single shaft working of Easter Moffat on a 5ft coal seam.⁴⁴ Similarly, Tennent's Kilgarth Colliery lease of

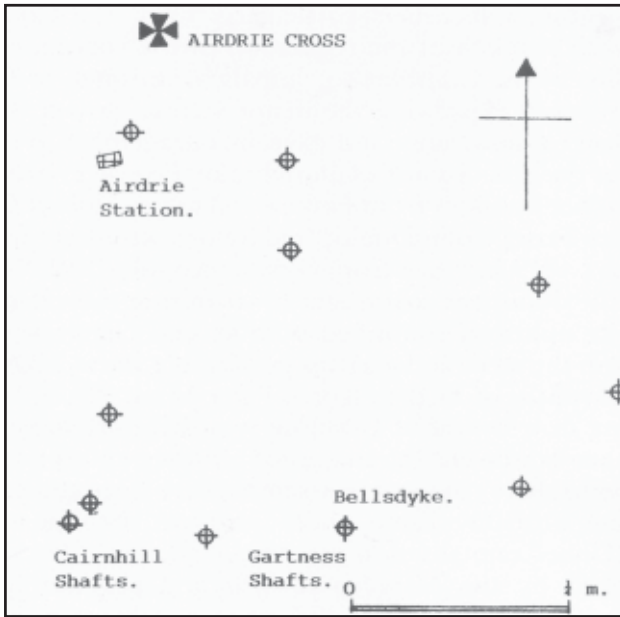


Figure 6. Shaft locations south of Airdrie Cross.

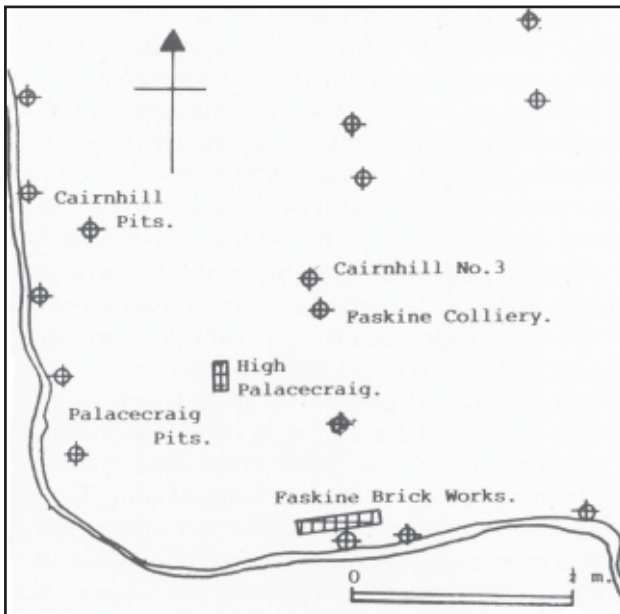


Figure 7. Shaft locations about Faskine and the course of the Monkland Canal.

1825 was handled by the Glasgow writers H. Blair and W. Fullarton.⁴⁵ Mineral leases were an important source of income to the professional writers, lawyers and accountants who ran the bureaucracy of state in increasing numbers. They fulfilled the factorial duties of many estates and illustrate how administrative boundaries were breaking down, with Edinburgh accountants, clerks and lawyers happily involved in the leasehold of territories neighbouring Glasgow.⁴⁶

The 1820s were to be a period of widening boundaries for markets too, principally through canal use but also increasingly with slowly developing railways. The Kilgarth lease noted the proximity of the Monkland & Kirkintilloch Railway, as did the Gartqueen lease of 1827,⁴⁷ a realisation of the breaking down of market boundaries and the opportunities arising therefrom. Certainly the Monkland & Kirkintilloch opened up the Edinburgh domestic coal market to the Monklands' coal masters. Perhaps it is reading too much into historical actions but the Edinburgh legal field's interests in North Lanarkshire estates were an advantageous action if not plain speculation.

Old Monkland also received a boost at this time with a major mining investment at Kenmuir, close to Carmyle by the River Clyde. Pit trials had located accessible coal seams and so hopeful were the speculators that they had the trial pit finished in mason work. Then a water course was cut at great expense from the River Clyde near the falls at Carmyle, so that water power could be used to drive the mine's machinery.⁴⁸ It may be assumed that the whole business was related to supplying coal to the nearby Clyde Iron Works, which had generated a considerable number of satellite collieries to meet its never ending demand for fuel. Less successful was the mineral lease offer of Brownrigg, owned by John Marshall of Baillieston, for it lay thirty years in limbo from its original offer in 1830.⁴⁹ Obviously success was quite dependent on location and an old pit like the Nettlebank Colliery, on the road from Airdrie to Bellshill and on the door-step of local heavy industry offered more scope. Cairns & Simpson's pit also enjoyed a sub-lease to Thomas Johnstone, hinting that it had proved both responsive to markets and productive.⁵⁰

The Faskine and Palacecraig lease of 1831 also illustrated the national importance of "door-step" collieries, where proximity to industry attracted investment in the lease. The lease once more attracted Edinburgh law agents, in this instance Tod & Romanes,⁵¹ an agency that had its nose in the leasing of many of the West of Scotland collieries at that time, notably Govan.⁵² Similarly the lease of Carnbroe and Unthank minerals, lying near to the Calder Iron Works, was handled by Denniston & Christie, Writers to the Signet,

Edinburgh.⁵³ In both instances there are elements of the national interest in the developing links between coal, ironstone and iron making.

Bairds of Gartsherrie epitomised the 1830s drive toward mass exploitation of the minerals resources of the Monklands, an attitude almost taken to extreme by this important Scottish mining family, whose interests spread across eight Scottish counties at the height of their power. In the 1830s it was their concern to guarantee fuel and raw materials to supply their Monklands based interests that dictated purchasing policy.

Sale of mineral lands of Co allies, Drumgelloch, Pendicle, Eastertown, Mailing of Airdrie and Lands of Drumbathie, show the urge to area exploitation.⁵⁴ The Monkland Canal continued to provide market access to many coal workings such as Woodhall, which had tramways from the pit to the canal to ease conveyance of its Parrot coal and also the then more important ironstone.⁵⁵ All self-respecting coalmasters had by then some investment in the Canal, even if it were only the ownership of a couple of coal scows, as with William Jenkins of Springvale.⁵⁶

Whilst ironstone and coal supplies for iron working was the predominant interest of East Monkland, the collieries to the west of Old Monkland, with the exception of those about Clyde Iron Works, remained dominantly domestic coal suppliers to Glasgow. Barrachnie continued to have a role, especially after 1833-34 when a series of bores across the north of the district located new coal reserves. It is likely that this was in old wastes and the coal referred to had been support pillars; in the early room and stoop systems over a third of the coal was lost to working as it had to be left in for support. Secondary workings became common in the 19th century, a suspicion in this instance enhanced by a reference to waste waters draining off to the dip of the workings, to the south of Barrachnie.⁵⁷ Total exploitation was to become the order of the day with local and industrial demand on the steady increase. The same pattern of going in again and again after remnants of coal was shown at Netherhouse, though the Greenwell minerals opened up in 1841 were probably fresh. In this instance the workings drained off to Cuilhill and Bartonshill pits, hinting at the underground maze of mine workings developing as a result of continued exploitation.⁵⁸

This underground maze contributed to increasing problems of support, with recourse by surface land holders to court when their assets took a tumble into old workings. Airdrie Court Records identify John Brown as coalmaster from 1835-1844 at Ballochney in dispute over surface damage caused by his Splint coal workings.⁵⁹ Damages cases took a heavy toll on coalmasters' incomes and some idea of the investment necessary to sustain a lease can be gained from the example of Burniebrae Colliery at this time.

Burniebrae was part of the Airdrie House series of leases to William Baird & Company. In this lease the lordship on Ell coal was 5d per cart; Main coal it was 4d per cart; Splint coal it was 7d per cart and on ironstone 7d per miners' ton. The land lease was £25 on a 19 year lease from martinmas 1835.⁶⁰ Both Splint coal and ironstone were important industrially, hence the high lordship and the lease reflected the opportunity of returns from this relatively productive mine. Leases reflected the expectation of the proprietor of success for his lessees, who in their turn would take on pits for longer periods for maximum investment and return for capital outlay. In 1836 the lease of Arden coal was offered, the ironstone was already worked and the lease was taken up by John Wilson of Dundyvan who worked it till his death in 1851 when his son took up the lease.⁶¹ The ironmasters prepared for the future of their industry by the securing of leases for extensive supplies of coal and ironstone; the capitalisation of the Monklands mineral field was begun.

The Summerlee Iron Works was also then active taking in Kilgarth in 1838.⁶² Their Greengares Ironstone mine in East Monkland was though somewhat off the beaten track. Therefore to capitalise on their investment, the Summerlee Company offered a contract for a railway to connect to the Ballochney Railway, which would have allowed access from the pit to the furnaces at Summerlee. The Glasgow civil engineer Andrew Thomson was involved in this 1840 scheme.⁶³

Small coalmasters still played a role often contracting out to iron works, and principal ironmasters, at the very least selling much of their coal to them for furnace use. A new breed of entrepreneur to appear at this time was the ironstone contractor, a breed that evolved from the small pit men jumping on the ironstone band-waggon, it being more lucrative than coal and coom. Carnbroe Ironstone Mine was worked by one such man, Matthew Carruthers, who to build on his little empire was advertising for additional labour in 1841.⁶⁴ Actually there was opportunity for all, from major areas such as the coal and ironstone and limestone reserves of Croftfoot,⁶⁵ to the working out of scraps of coal often found by chance, such as the coal seam found and worked below the Chapel Street Quarry, Airdrie.⁶⁶

The principal operatives consolidated their hold and extended their leasing. The Dundyvan lease of Sir James Boswell of Auchinleck's ironstone was such an example.⁶⁷ The acquisition of the Bredisholm Coal Company by the Bartonshill Coal Company was another example of consolidation of power. The Bredisholm Coal Company partnership of John Ferguson, William Robertson, Colin D. Donald, and James Young was dissolved on 26 December 1842, all plant appears then to have passed to the Bartonshill Coal Company.⁶⁸

Bairds of Gartsherrie had Gartcloss and a part lease of the Rochsolloch Ironstone. At the latter the rent was £2,750 per annum and the lordship of 8/6d. per calcined ton of raw ironstone. The 19 year lease from 1835 was still actively pursued in the mid 1840s. Dixon of Calder, held another portion under similar terms, this important ironstone field rented also to the Dundyvan Ironstone Company, the Monkland Iron & Steel Company, and also the Summerlee Iron Company, all in particular lots.⁶⁹

The ironmasters progress in mining was a story of constant acquisition, for example Robertson of East Meadowhead Colliery was selling char to the Summerlee Iron Company in 1846 and within a year they had got the upper hand at the colliery.⁷⁰

The Langloan Iron Company took over Ballochney in 1846 with a sublease to John Robertson & Son. Robertson was the owner by 1873 and between the 1840s and the 1870s, Ballochney had also been wrought by Todd & Colquhoun of the Airdrie Hill Coal Company.⁷¹

The Monklands mining area came to be wrought not just by the iron companies but also a range of small partnerships of varying strength and success. Drumshangie was worked by a partnership of Robert & Thomas Young, Andrew Rankin and Robert Aitken, trading as the Rochsoles Coal Company.⁷² Other small operatives at that time included William Jack, coal master at Avonhead and Greengairs in the 1850s,⁷³ and John Baillie at Coathill,⁷⁴ as well as Robert Simpson at Arden.⁷⁵ When Simpson retired in 1856 the colliery was then run by Miller & Stark, coalmasters.⁷⁶

Bredisholm was divided between what can be called the new Bredisholm Coal Company and Charles Tennent & Company. Both worked the Main and Pyotshaw coals, the Bredisholm Coal Company also working the Splint and Gas coals. The pit workings on the Farm of Langmuir was intersected by the Drumpellier Railway. There were also sinkings on the Farm of Aitkenhead and the colliery area employed four engines for pumping and winding. The miners lived in 20 dwelling houses, to which was attached a licensed spirit store. Coals raised were taken to market on the canal by Company boats or by private railway waggons, of which there were 28 belonging to the Bredisholm Coal Company.⁷⁷ Connections existed between the old and new Bredisholm Coal Companies through the Young Family, the 1850s Bredisholm Coal Company being John Young, Stewart & Reid and others.⁷⁸

Coalmasters would often work one colliery to their own end whilst contracting out their expertise to others. Bairds were proprietors for Arden Colliery, their No.5 being contracted for by James McCarthy, McCarthy being a coalmaster in his own right at the Cotton mill Colliery.⁷⁹ There was a maze

of other business connections as well, Rochsoles Coal Company being a typical example. Robert Young was an iron merchant, Alexander Young was a general business man and Thomas Young was the coalmaster. The two former became the trustees in his estate in 1860, the interest being sold to Robert Aitken, who was a Glasgow wine merchant initially and followed the more lucrative coal trade, firstly as a secondary investment and then in time was a coalmaster.⁸⁰ The number of co-partneries which shared in mining and other industries is quite impressive, but in the speculative and often unprofitable business of the time, seldom were there sole investments and businessmen in general diversified their interests as widely as possible. The financial potential of economic geology was recognised at a regional level and this was to be evidenced further in links between mining and the early shale and paraffin oil industry in lowland Scotland. In the 1860s the Airdrie coalmaster William Black established Whiterigg Oil Works,⁸¹ and the paraffin oil manufacturers James Struthers & Company were involved at Drumshangie workings.⁸² Clarkson & Spence, coalmasters and oil manufacturers were at Roughcraig Colliery, near Airdrie, but were defunct by 1867, at which time the plant and colliery fittings were sold off, having failed in the trade depression of 1866.⁸³ Diversification could obviously have its dangers for the dramatic fall in the shale oil industry at that time sent shock waves right across the extractive industries sector; though for coal mining this was confined to the shale coal producers, mining in general continuing at a pace with a constant movement of small operators in and out of the industry.

Easter Glentore was quite typical of workings through the 1860s into the final decades of the 19th century. Leased from Dr Patrick Rankin by the coalmaster James Hunter from 1864 for 19 years, the death of Hunter in 1870 put the colliery once more on the market. The benefit of the lease was offered for a double seam working with pits sinking to fresh new seams in the sandwich of geology that contributed to the pockets of the Monklands capitalists. A branch line connection to the North British Railway encouraged export to local markets and further afield. The Airdrie accountant George Gentles, together with Rankin & Motherwell, also local law agents, handled this lease, suggesting that local industrialisation had generated its own “native” bureaucracy for estate management.⁸⁴

The recovery of the shale oil and shale coal mining industry generated new partneries. One of these was the Avonhead Coal Company, a partnery of Colin Campbell, James Gray, Gray & Wylie, as coal and shale oil masters and distillers. Campbell had formerly been a miner at Coatbridge,⁸⁵ illustrating that it was possible to rise up through the ranks.

Entrepreneurial talent remained divided between coal and iron masters, demand and supply guaranteed continued exploitation, with large areas being set aside for ironstone working. One such example was at Auldshield and its owner Rankin also held the minerals of Muirhead and Greengairs. Bairds were a customer of Rankin from at least 1856 and the Summerlee Iron Company also exploited the area for their raw material. Rankin's workings ceased in 1872.⁸⁶ The Drumpellier Coal Company, carried on by Robert Henderson and Richard Dimmock, coal and iron masters, also attracted the interest of an ironmaster though in this case an irate one and with good cause. Robert Addie & Sons had to take action to stop the Drumpellier Coal Company burrowing under their furnaces after coal, an interesting dispute that suggests that industrial land values and minerals were almost equal, that the Drumpellier Coal Company should have even considered such a risk worth taking. Even had they managed to take out the coal without a sit on the coal workings from the furnaces above, they could have expected a damages claim from Robert Addie & Son. One can only assume that they thought that coals would pay for such eventualities.⁸⁷ Coal remained of such importance to fuel iron furnaces, industrial premises and domestic fireplaces, that the come and go of colliery lessees and leases were an almost monthly occurrence.

Greengairs Colliery working on Virtuewell coal in 1874 was offered for sale in that year. The workings extended over 70 acres and the average daily output was about 100 tons. The Dykehead branch of the North British Railway had a spur connection to the colliery and thus with access by rail to markets it was a most attractive investment.⁸⁸ The Monkland Canal continued to play its role and the plant sale of Dungeonhill Colliery, following the death of Robert Robson, the coalmaster, mentioned canal coal boats.⁸⁹ Contracts for shaft sinking at Drumpark, from the Main coal down to the Splint coal seam, suggest continued demand for coal supplies.⁹⁰ Similarly Messrs Dunn were to sink their No.2 pit near the Baillieston, much deeper in 1896. But that fact that mines were driving deeper suggests that coal seams were no longer easily accessible, that the best seams were worked out and that working costs were probably rising in the search for new resources. This generated work for specialists such as the Faulds Brothers of West Marston, who were sinking contractors for amongst other shafts Dunn's No.2.⁹¹ But it also meant that when new coalfields began to open up with fresh workings in the Bothwell, Hamilton and Motherwell areas, then investment moved away from the Monklands mining area and it ground slowly to a halt in the 20th century.

Briefly some comment must be made of the closing of the Monklands mines, if indeed they have closed. The big mines lost out to the deeper collieries of the Scottish mining area and a legacy of flooded workings and periodic subsidence was left to the district. What mining remained reverted to something of its old form, to the back garden how king out of coals to boil the pot. Tiny mines continued to be worked, perhaps with an old industrial hauling engine, that had been rescued from a scrapper, or taken when the guard dog was looking the other way, the equally aged boiler fed on coals from the scratchings; the level perhaps driven in a few feet on a coal crop and ventilated by a primitive fan unit driven by an old car engine; simply stuff that worked for a few days a week; then potato bags of coal would be hawked around town on a borrowed lorry, cost cutting for profit. Coal scraps still encourage a free dig for the home fires, with the kids keeping a watch for the police, the coal sacks carted across the back fences for fear of snoopers and the cameras of the D.H.S.S. Subsistence mining in the 20th century in a world just as hard for many as the black years of long ago.

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