

THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

Reference: South Derbyshire and its people: A History by Oswald Hull, Derbyshire County Council Cultural and Community Services Department 2001

The Coal Measures of Derbyshire lie to the east of the Ashby anticline and those of north west Leicestershire to the west. Deep mining is constrained by severely faulted geology. The seams of coal are very thick however, between 10 and 16 feet.

Coal had been mined in mediaeval times, for example at Swadlincote in 1562. By 1567 the Dethick family owned the colliery in Newhall. The first large scale colliery was at Donisthorpe.

In 1810 pits open were Donisthorpe, Moira Double, Furnace, Bath, Rawdon, Granville, Church Gresley, Hastings and Grey, and Stanton. By 1857 had been added Gresley Wood, Old White House, Swadlincote, Oakthorpe, Netherseal, Cartwrights, Cadley Hill, Matts Yard, Coton Park, Bretby and Granville No. 2.

In 1841 a hewer's wage at Swadlincote was 3s 4d a day, or 3s 8d at Moira. Young boys were often employed down the pit, and this concerned the middle classes.

Miners at Church Gresley went out on strike in 1844 and again in 1892. These often ended with lockouts and dismissal of employees.

At Church Gresley, men were lowered down a shallow shaft in a basket to work two stalls. A maximum of twelve men would work a 12-hour shift.

Output was by rail using the Woodville Loop from 1883. Before then there was a tramway to Cut End and coal was moved thence by canal.

Accommodation was provided in cottages near the village square, with very basic amenities.