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NEW LOUNT COLLIERY HERITAGE TRAIL

UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES

Overview

The prime activity underground was to work the coal seams and to bring the coal successfully to the surface for processing. Over the 44 year working history of New Lount Colliery the following four coal seams were worked:-

From 1924 the Seams worked were:-

- **Middle Lount -** produced quality house coal, was about 5ft thick at New Lount and had an associated clay seam.
- **Nether Lount -** produced good steam coal and was about 5ft thick at New Lount
- **Upper Roaster -** (Also called Yard Seam), produced quality house coal was only just over 3ft thick at New Lount and had an associated clay seam.

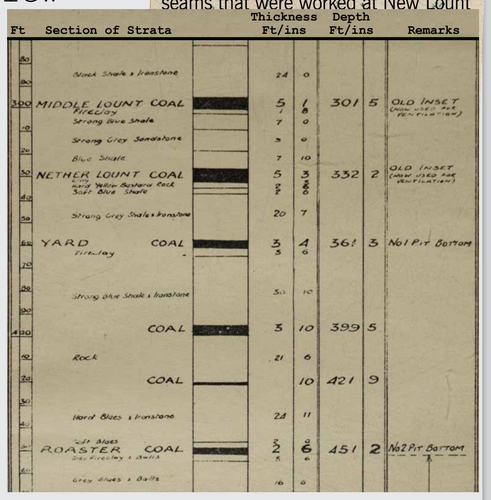
In 1933 further development of the Upper Roaster seam was uneconomical and attention shifted to:-

- **Lower Roaster -** produced quality house coal but was only 3ft thick at New Lount.

The basic structure of the colliery consisted of two similar sized shafts, No. 1 the "Downcast" and No.2 the "Upcast" (Later called "Jackie Pit"). These shafts were the primary means of getting men and materials into the colliery as well as coal and other materials out. At the bottom of these shafts roadways were driven into the coal seams with air passing down one shaft and returning up the other. The labyrinth of roadways were constructed to give good air circulation around the colliery and in particular along the working coal faces. As the coal seams were worked further away from the shaft bottoms so new haulage methods were installed to get the coal to the surface as effectively as possible.

With the growing complexity of the underground colliery a whole range of jobs and crafts would have been employed – electricians and fitters to service and maintain plant as well as supervisory structures to manage across the range of areas being worked. Approximately three quarters of all of the colliery employees worked underground and they worked across a number of shift paterns.

This diagram illustrates all of the seams that were worked at New Lount



In this area you can see the location where the tub tracks are crossed by railway tracks, which allowed goods delivered by rail to be off loaded into the tub stock yard.

Mining Methods at New Lount

Mining methods changed significantly throughout the life of the colliery. In the early years almost all activities were manual with the coal being hand stripped from the face, loaded into tubs, which were then pushed to the bottom of the shaft before being elevated to ground level. Two of the seams were initially mined using an old technique of "Pillar and Stall" whereby "pillars" of coal were left to support the areas where coal had been removed from, the "stalls".

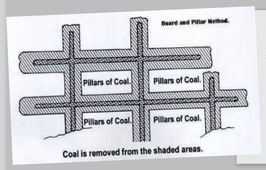


Illustration showing the Pillar and Stall method of working a coal seam

The main method employed was "longwall faces". This type of mining would have utilised a 3 shift system in which:-

The **first shift** would undercut the coal face along its total length.

The **second shift** would use explosives to blast down the coal, which would then be loaded onto a conveyor; although up to 1928 the coal was manually loaded into tubs. Supports would then be set along the length where the coal had been removed. At Lount each miner was responsible for loading 10 yards of coal.

The **third shift** moved the conveyor forward into what had been the cutting track.

A "drilling team" would have worked between the cutting shift and the filling shift to drill the whole face ready for the explosives.

As the face was moved forward, the supports at some distance behind the face were removed, allowing the roof to safely collapse, although in some cases permanent supports may have been left.

In the Roaster seams, which were only three feet thick, all of these tasks were completed with the miners working on their knees.

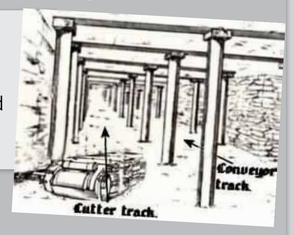


Illustration showing the Longwall Face method of working a coal seam.

There was an increasing use of mechanisation and conveyors throughout the life of the colliery and with the introduction of the main drift in 1955 all coal was eventually conveyed from the coal faces to the surface by a system of haulage conveyors.

Danger Underground

Mining was a dangerous occupation; in 1952 there were 3,505 accidents, with 28 serious injuries and 5 deaths in the whole of the NCB's Area 7. Working conditions were difficult and dirty, especially in those seams that were only 3 feet thick. Most of the serious accidents were caused by roof falls, with the conveying systems being another significant contributor.

Deaths at New Lount Colliery

Whilst records are difficult to find the following all occurred at New Lount Colliery:-

?	Edward Williams is thought to be the first miner killed at New Lount
1929	Three deaths were reported on 4th February in Hansard, although names are not known.
1933	Bernard Rennocks died on 3rd November after a roof fall
1936	Joseph Robinson died on 29th May from blood poisoning as a result of a cut he received in the pit on 2nd December 1935.
1941	Edward Marshall was buried on 13th November after an accident at New Lount where he was struck on the head by a large rock.
1941	James Henry Cowell Liquorish also killed on 13th November by a fall of large rock.
1953	Andrew Law Ford was killed in a fall of rock in October 1953
1955	William Eaton was killed on 22nd March after a roof fall.
1957	Ralph Ernest Liquorish died on 18th February 1957.
?	It was reported that the "Spoil Heap Man" slipped whilst emptying the bogey and fell to his death.

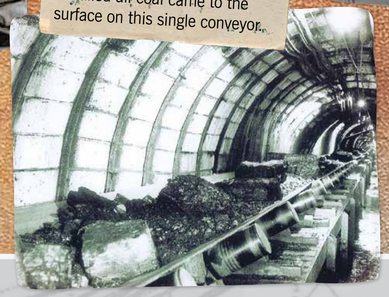
We found 12 deaths in the 44 year history of the colliery.

"Getting to and from the coal face"
This photograph shows miners reaching the surface at the end of their shift. Some can be seen carrying safety lamps.

The Use of Timber Supports on an Undercut Face.

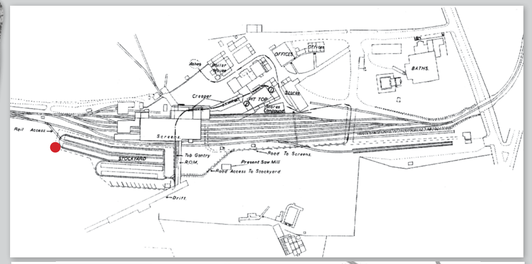
"Supports at Coal Face"
This photograph shows power supports (hydraulic chocks) being moved forward along a coal face with the panzer conveyor positioned in front of the supports. Moving these supports was a specialist job within the coal face team – "a Chocker".

Hand Drilling of Holes.
This photograph shows a father and son team hand drilling holes across the face for future blasting. These hand drills were replaced by electric drills once power was installed underground.

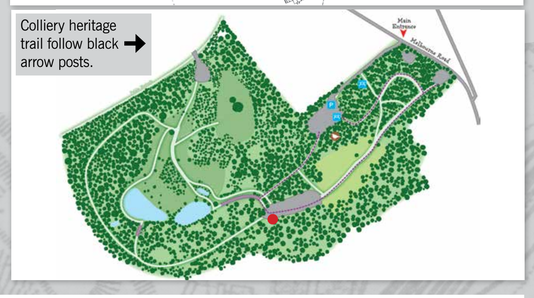


The New Lount Drift
This photograph is a view down the New Lount drift, which is almost completely filled by the single haulage conveyor; once installed all coal came to the surface on this single conveyor.

The Main Roadway taken 1963 showing continuous haulage of coal and tub tracks used to move materials underground.



Colliery heritage trail follow black arrow posts.



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