

# NEW LOUNT COLLIERY HERITAGE TRAIL

## THE COLLIERS

Brought to you by  
Newbold Heritage Group  
[www.newbold-heritage.org.uk](http://www.newbold-heritage.org.uk)



### Overview

When the colliery was launched in 1924 it was claimed that it would create employment for over 1,000 local people. This was certainly achieved, but as the colliery became more mechanised so this number decreased to around 600 employees in the final years. Of these employees the underground workers represented between 75% and 80% of the total workforce. The colliery operated 24 hours a day and produced coal for five days a week, with the employees working across a range of different shift patterns. Working conditions, as with most collieries, were difficult and dangerous, but despite this the colliers managed to build a reputation as "big hitters" and the colliery acquired the nickname "Clash".



The following quotations are from Colin Griffin's book "The Leicestershire Miners" Volume II 1914-1945. They therefore relate to the period when New Lount Colliery was owned by The Leicestershire Colliery & Pipe Company Limited.

"When you're down the pit, at snap time, you just take the top off your snap tin and you can't wash your hands and you've probably just been to relieve yourself, or something like that – its disgusting, I know, but what could you do about it? – there's no toilets down there. (New Lount did have toilets on the main road, but there were none in the districts)."

"Des Jackson believed that the biggest enemy of any miner was the dust ... the dust problem was terrific then (pre 1947 during the earlier years) and unfortunately a lot of the old miners have died through dust..."

"The worst mine for wet working conditions was New Lount, we used to have pockets of water at Lount, it was a terrible wet place."

"The results of working in wet conditions for long periods were rheumatism and all these ailments due to wet conditions, and skin complaints ..."

"You could risk your neck because the rule of stripping was that you filled a yard of coal off and set a support. On occasions when the roof was good you used to go three yards without setting support. Sometimes you'd get caught out and get a crack around the head, or back or ribs or whatever ... it used to frighten you to death..."

"The work was hard but there was a strong feeling of camaraderie."

"I enjoyed my time working underground; the miners got on very well with each other and we worked as a team. The more experienced miners would help the newer miners to progress and the Deputies also worked well with their teams."

"The Trammers (miners who moved the tubs about) wore clogs as standard equipment – and it was common for men to be working in a foot of water – kneeling in it to shovel coal."

"Oh, yes, rules and regulations were broke there more than any other pit in my opinion. All the guys were hand in glove with the officials to increase productivity and get the higher rates of pay..."

"There's a shilling to be got at New Lount, let's go and get it."

"We were working in the Jackie Seam, which had an operational height of 1ft 9ins – the men used to blow their own coal though they were not supposed to do it – the deputy or shot-firer would stand at the lip end and give the men the detonators."

"The New Lount "Lot" were a breed apart" New Lount was an isolated occasion, it was a new pit owned by a pipe company. Planning was at a minimum and you ran into water all over the place." "They used to call it "Clash" because of all the clash banging, everybody was clash banging, the coal came from anywhere you know .. the men were good miners with adventurous spirits who'd left your solid pits – Whitwick and Snibston and they'd gone there because it was always 2s.0d a day more for the day worker; there was not enough local labour so they had to get men from other collieries."



### Daily Routine

The colliers would arrive at the colliery, having walked, cycled or by bus from their home. Some will have gone to the canteen where they will have had something to eat (e.g. breakfast) before starting their shift. They would then go to the clean side of the pit head baths and take off their clean clothes; they all had their own lockers. The colliers then walked through the showers to the dirty side and put on their work clothes. They walked down the main road to the tally office to collect their two tallies for the shift, and then collected their helmet lamp and safety lamp, if required, from the lamp cabin. They then walked the short distance to the pit head cage where they handed in one of their two tallies. The cages held about ten colliers and took them down to the main roadway. The colliers would then walk to wherever they were working, which could be more than a mile away.

There was a strong tradition of families being employed down the pit; this photograph shows Jimmy "Mighty" Wardle and his son Willie underground at New Lount in 1955.



Colliers spent the whole of the shift, usually seven and a quarter hours, in the location of their particular task and would take a refreshment ("snap") break in a suitable location near to where they were working, usually in the supply route, where it would be warmer. At the end of the shift the colliers would retrace their route back to the pit head cage, where they would hand in their second tally to register they had left the pit. They then went to the lamp cabin and handed in their helmet lamp to be charged for their next shift. Finally they would return to the pit head baths to "scrub-up" before redressing in their clean clothes ready to go home.



The Colliery also had its own Sports & Social facility on Gelsmoor, where football, Cricket, tennis, bowls and other sports were played. The ground was also used for the annual fete, which was very well supported by the surrounding villages.

### Social Life

New Lount was regarded as a "family pit", partly due to members of the same family all working at the pit, and also because it was a little bit out on a limb, being 4 or 5 miles from the nearest pits, Snibston and Whitwick. This tended to give the pit a greater sense of community and many of the miners and their families took part in a number of social activities organised around a Sports and Social facility on Gelsmoor. There were a number of colliery teams representing the colliery in football, cricket, tennis, bowls and other activities. Such activities also involved other members of the local community who may have not been directly associated with the colliery.



New Lount Colliery Football Club Team. The team was Leicestershire League Champions in the 1934/35 Season. The team were also successful in winning the Coalville Cup.

Conditions could be extremely cramped; these two colliers are setting up the "Midget Miner" in the Yard Seam in July 1960. The Midget Miner was an automated machine which was experimented with at New Lount, but did not prove to be very successful.



A small distance in front of you is the concrete cover over Shaft No.1 and further over is the concrete cover for Shaft No.2. The majority of the colliery surface buildings would have been in front of you.

There was a great camaraderie amongst the miners who worked together in teams to get their specific tasks completed, and many miners were capable of carrying out a number of different jobs. Here is a group of colliers underground at New Lount.

