

BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY

The surface buildings of the Brandy Bottom colliery near Pucklechurch represent a rare example of the layout of an early 19th Century steam colliery. For this reason, they were made part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, N° 1019400, and are currently (2018) on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register.



Aerial view of the site in April 2018, with the New Pit on the left and the original pit (Old Pit) on the right around the chimney. (Photo: © P Hodson)

The first shaft at Brandy Bottom was sunk in 1837, when it was known as 'Lord Radnor's' pit after a local landowner. The origin of the name 'Brandy Bottom' is unknown, and the first recorded instance of its use is in a coroner's report of 1856. The lease of the pit was taken over by Handel Cossham in 1871, and he sunk the New Pit shaft. Cossham joined Brandy Bottom underground to his nearby Parkfield Colliery, and at some time renamed the complex as 'Parkfield South.'

Brandy Bottom worked four seams (veins) of coal. Their depths and thicknesses at the shaft were: Hard Vein, 2 feet thick at a depth of 512 feet below surface; Top Vein, 2 feet at 608 feet; Hollybush Vein, 2½ feet at 638½ feet and the Great Vein, 2½ feet at 674½ feet. The coal quality was said to be "very good to excellent"

and was used for gas manufacture in and around Bristol. Little is known about the tonnages of coal produced. A sale notice dated 1865 states that there are four seams in operation, and that the hoisting capacity, for coal and waste, was between 20 000 and 30 000 tons/year. After 1871 Cossham included the production from Brandy Bottom within the declared production from Parkfield.

Coal was originally taken to market by the Dramway, a horse-drawn railway that ran a few yards away. This was later converted to a steam-hauled main line railway.



This photo of miners working underground at Parkfield is thought to have been taken in 1933. Parkfield worked the same seams as Brandy Bottom, so this shows similar working conditions to those at Brandy Bottom. (Unknown photographer, one of a set of photos given to the AIBT by K Gardner in 2018)

According to the 1896 'List of Mines worked under the Coal Mines Regulation Act', there were 155 underground workers and 17 surface workers. Other records show that the miners came from Pucklechurch, Siston, Kingswood, Mangotsfield, and Soundwell.

Brandy Bottom was just one of Cossham's mining interests that were sold at auction in 1900. The auction raised a total sum of £60 000, which was used to build the Cossham Memorial Hospital in Kingswood.

It is thought that Brandy Bottom was closed at the same time as Parkfield in 1936. It then lay derelict and a scrap metal merchant is known

to have been working on the site at the end of the 1960s. They would have removed all the machinery and fittings that were left. At some time after closure it became the property of the nearby Shortwood Brickworks and is now owned by Ibstock.

The AIBT leases part of the Scheduled Monument area from Ibstock. It works on the conservation of the buildings under the terms of a Scheduled Monument Consent issued by Historic England, with the aim of arresting the deterioration in the fabric of the buildings. Ibstock, Historic England and the Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust have given financial and material help to the project. Work started in 2008, initially on clearing vegetation and then finding out what had to be done and what the priorities were. Contractors have been employed to rebuild several areas, including the north-east wall of the Cornish Engine House, the top of the 23 m high chimney and the tops of the walls of the Cornish Engine House and both the Old and New Pit heapsteads. Conservation work is continuing.



Volunteers installing a bracing beam in the Old Boiler House, April 2015.

The trust has published a report of the history of Brandy Bottom. There is more information about the AIBT's work at Brandy Bottom on its website: www.aibt.org.

The site is open between 10.30 am and 3.30 pm on days when there is a work party, and these dates are published on the AIBT's website.

AVON INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS TRUST



BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY PUCKLECHURCH

The Avon Industrial Buildings Trust (AIBT) was formed in 1980 to promote the conservation of industrial monuments in what was then the County of Avon. It was a joint initiative between the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS) and the County of Avon Conservation team. In its early years, the trust was funded by the Community programme of the Manpower Services Commission. This ceased in 1988, and since then the trust has received grants from bodies such as Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund for work on specific projects.

The Brandy Bottom Colliery was worked between 1837 and 1936, firstly as an independent pit and then from 1871 as a satellite operation to the nearby Parkfield Colliery.

The trust normally works with partners, such as local councils and other heritage organisations, on its projects, and aims to hand over the long term running of the sites to local groups. It is also a limited company, N° 1483387, which allows it to execute contracts, such as those in the restoration of the Midford Aqueduct. Many of its members are also members of the societies or groups involved with other restoration projects. Further details about the trust and its work can be found on its website: www.aibt.org.

The remains of the buildings, and some of the surrounding area, were made a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 2001, N° 1019400. The Avon Industrial Buildings Trust has been working on the conservation of the buildings since 2008.

If interested, please contact Hamish Orr-Ewing, the AIBT Chairman, through our email address of info@aibt.org. He will then pass on your enquiry to the most suitable member of the management committee.



North-east wall of the Cornish Engine House at Brandy Bottom in 2011 before rebuilding by contract masons.



North-east wall of the Cornish Engine House at Brandy Bottom in 2011 after the rebuilding.



Contract masons working on the top of the chimney, February 2015.



Horizontal Engine House at Brandy Bottom in 2014

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