

# Friends of Brandy Bottom Colliery Pucklechurch

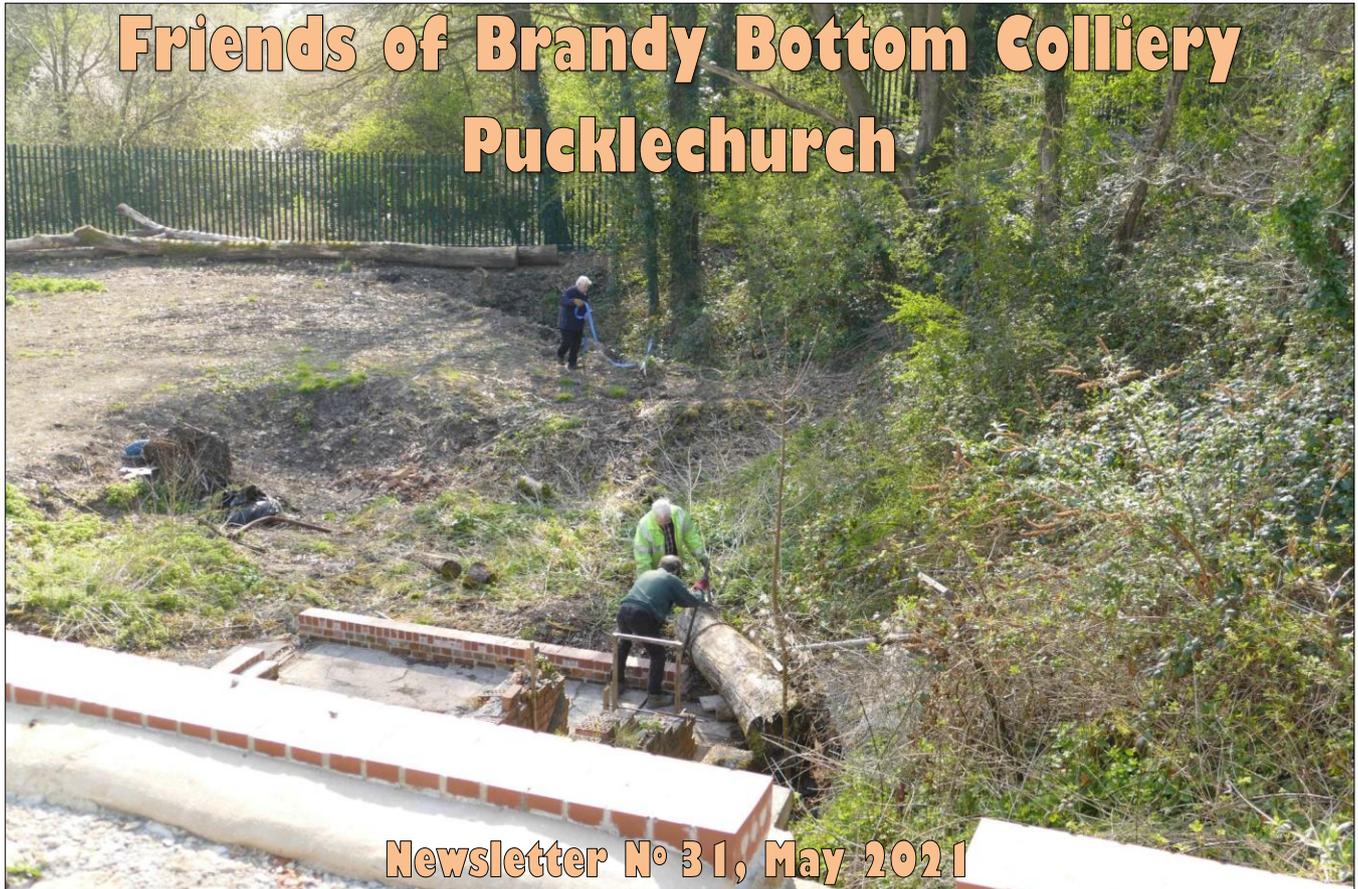


Photo 1 – Jeff, Steve and Pete drag the last log away from the end of the fan ducts, giving access to the remains of the south-east wall of the ducts.

Work at Brandy Bottom resumed at the end of March, when the government’s Covid restrictions were eased. There have been ten work parties since then, bringing the year-to-date total to eleven. A further eight scheduled work parties were cancelled.

The work has concentrated on site maintenance, though there has been exploration to the south of the fan ducts. The routes taken by some underground pipes were traced, and a drawing has been made of the foundations of the building at the batch end of the Old Pit heapstead.

The South Gloucestershire Council is proposing to stop rat-running along Coxgrove Hill by closing a stretch of the road between the old railway bridge and the first cottage up the hill. (There is also to be a second closure under the motorway bridge) If implemented, this will affect our access to the site as the road verges by the bridge are the nearest parking places on public roads. We have raised our concerns with the council and are waiting for the outcome of the consultation period.

## Progress: February – May 2021

The first work parties after the restart concentrated on site maintenance. This included laying a hardcore slope at the vehicle entrance to the New Pit enclosure (photo [5](#)). Jeff constructed a set of steps to make it easier to reach the woodstore on top of the fan ducts roof, and photo [2](#) on the right shows the steps in place after Mick had finished painting them.

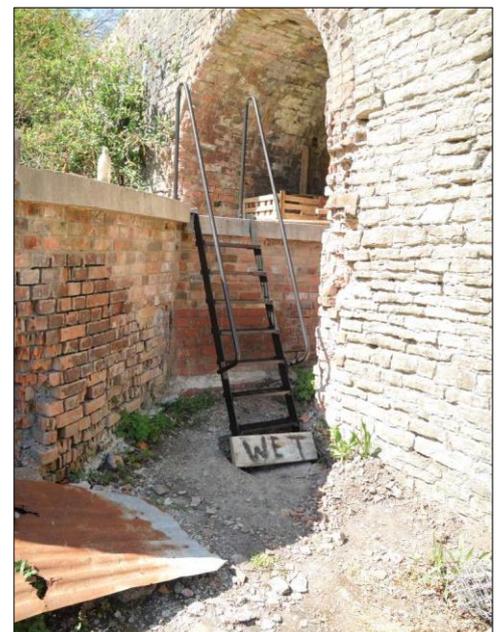


Photo 2 – Steps leading up to the woodstore on top of the fan ducts.



While most of the fallen tree trunks were cleared from the area round the Fan Ducts by a JCB last November, the last one had to be winched out by hand in April (photo [1](#)). (It can also be seen lying in place in photo [6](#)) The logs had been lying in the open for a few years, so not surprisingly we found a large bracket fungus growing on one of them (photo [7](#)). Moving the logs has given us easier access to the back of the fan ducts. Photo [9](#) shows the view along the southern duct towards the shaft. Over time the brick wall of the duct has bowed outwards. Steve started to clear away the spoil from behind the outer wall (photo [10](#)) and discovered the object seen in the photo on the right. This is a triangular frame covered with heavy-duty metal mesh. We have still to work out what it did, but one suggestion was an external screen over the fan inlet, used when it was forcing air into the shaft. The base of the supporting triangle is 5 ft 6 in long, and 25-26 in high. The upper scale in the photo is lying on the area of mesh projecting at right angles to the frame.



Photo 3 – The metal frame and mesh found in spoil outside the southern wall of the vent ducts. (30 cm scales)

Test pits were dug around the New Pit shaft capping with the aim of finding the position of the headgear (photos [11](#) and [12](#)). Nothing was found, so the pits are being filled in again.

Ken returned to the remains of the building on the top of the Old Pit heapstead (photo [4](#) right), clearing away the protective winter coverings so that he could measure and draw the structure (photo [14](#)). Its function is at present another of the site's mysteries. Ken has divided it into seven areas, six of which are marked by numbers in photos [4](#) and [16](#). There is a mixed stone and brick floor in areas 1 and 2, and an example can be seen in photo [15](#). The remains of a wooden floor were found in area 3, while there is a pit (photo [17](#)) in the south-west corner. Area 4 has a brick floor with a raised brick plinth on the south-west end (photo [18](#)). Photo [19](#) shows the floor in areas 5 and 6. The trench in the brick floor to the left of the N° 6 marker held decayed wood.



Photo 4 – Remains of the building at the batch end of the Old Pit heapstead, seen from the south-west. (30 cm black/yellow scale and North arrow near the N° 1 marker, and 2 m black/white ranging pole towards the rear of the photo)

Jeff moved the metal tank onto the foundations built for it on the cycle path end of the New Pit passage (photo [23](#)), using the old-fashioned combination of metal bars as rollers and a high-lift jack. Hamish connected the outlet of the drain from the winding ramp to the tank (photo [24](#)).

Derek was able to trace the route taken by several buried metal pipes using borrowed equipment and his work confirmed our ideas about the direction of two of them: the one outside the alcove at the southern corner of the Cornish Engine House (photo [25](#)) and the one at the base of the New Pit heapstead below the northern tippler slot. The former leads to the Horizontal Engine House (HEH) though we have still to confirm that it connects to the pipe discovered in the undercroft of the engine house in 2019 (photo [26](#)). (We have still to decide what it was used for, but it might be a steam feed to the HEH) The pipe heads in the direction of the conduit lying between the cycle path and the eastern corner of the pond. This pipe appears to have been part of the shaft drainage system, as there is a corresponding pipe on the top of the heapstead which is aligned with the shaft capping. The pipe found in the pit at the southern corner of the fan engine house does not appear to have any connections outside the pit, and the remains of the electrical cable found in 2016 (photo [27](#)) beside the fan ducts was traced as far as the eastern corner of the HEH when the tracing equipment ran out of power.

The dry brick wall near the egg-ended boiler (photo [28](#)) was rebuilt (photo [29](#)). This had been disturbed by a combination of vandalism and some passers-by using it as a seat.

Finally, Mick created the item of modern art seen in photo [30](#), using pieces of scrap metal lying around the place. It later suffered the fate of many similar installations in museums – removal by the cleaners!

## Heritage Open Days – September 2021

After last year's hiatus, we intend to take part in the 2021 Heritage Open Days. At present the intention is to open on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 September, but these dates will be confirmed later in the year.

## Visitor Access, Future Work Parties, and Joining In

There is no visitor access to Brandy Bottom until further notice. This exclusion is part of our Covid-19 working protocol to keep the volunteers safe. As a result, we are not publishing the dates of work parties. Anyone who is thinking about joining us as a volunteer should first make contact through the AIBT email address of [info@aibt.org](mailto:info@aibt.org). The AIBT would like to thank the volunteers and near-by residents who kept an eye on the site when it was closed.

## Information on the AIBT Website

There are copies of all earlier newsletters on the Archive page of the AIBT's website: [www.aibt.org](http://www.aibt.org). The Brandy Bottom section has pages covering a brief history of the pit and reports on work parties, as well as many photographs of the buildings, work parties, artefacts and structures discovered, and of some of the wildlife and wildflowers.

## Photographs: February - May 2021



Photo 5 – Derek and Hamish building the hardcore entrance to the New Pit storage area.



Photo 7 – A large bracket fungus growing on the piece of tree trunk lying behind the log seen in the preceding photo.



Photo 6 – The last log is still lying at the southern corner of the Fan Engine House.



Photo 8 – The outer, south-west, wall of the Fan Engine House after the logs were cleared out of the way.



Photo 9 – View along the southern fan duct, looking towards the shaft.



Photo 12 – Mark working on test pits on the north-west side of the New Pit shaft capping.



Photo 13 – Grey-haired Miner Bee on top of the New Pit heapstead, April 2021. Several bees were seen flying close to, or resting on, the ground. They might have been newly emerged males waiting for the females to appear from their burrows. The bees were found in the area at the bottom of the preceding photo (12).

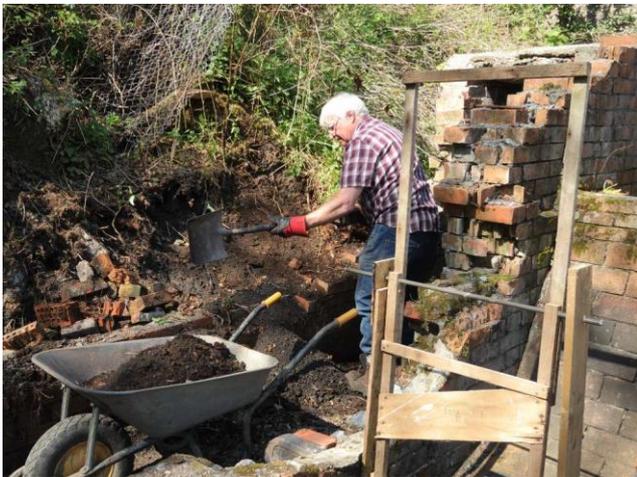


Photo 10 – Steve clearing spoil away from behind the wall of the southern fan duct.



Photo 11 – Exploratory pits at the eastern corner of the New Pit shaft capping, with the winding ramp at the top of the picture. (See comments on p.2)

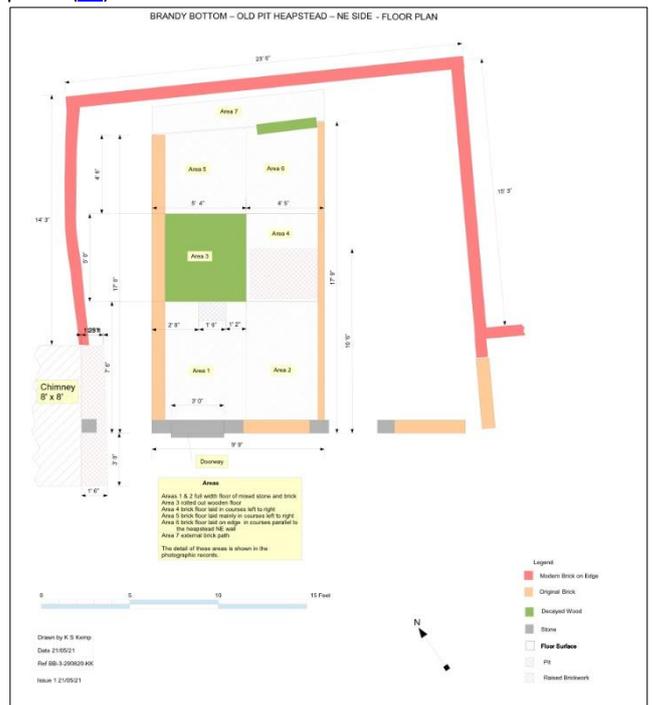


Photo 14 – Drawing of the floor of the building at the north-east end of the Old Pit heapstead. (See comments on p.2, BB-3-290820-KK, © K Kemp)



Photo 15 – An example of the stone and brick floor in areas 1 and 2. Here the N° 1 marker has been turned 90° from its position in photo 4. (Part of 2 m black/white ranging pole)



Photo 18 – Area 4 from the Old Boiler House side (the N° 4 marker has been blown over by the wind while the N° 1 marker has gone walkabout).



Photo 16 – Areas 3-6 at the north-eastern end of the building. (30 cm yellow/black scale and North arrow in foreground, 2 m black/white ranging pole in centre)



Photo 19 – Areas 5 and 6 from the Old Boiler House side.



Photo 17 – Pit in area 3, located below the N° 3 marker in photo 16. (30 cm scale)



Photo 20 – An overhead view of the trench seen to the left of the N° 6 marker in photo 19. (©K Kemp)



Photo 21 – A low level view of the brick layout at the eastern corner of the building, seen from a position to the left of photo 20. (©K Kemp)



Photo 24 – The tank in place. Rainwater collecting in the winding ramp on top of the heapstead now drains into the tank through the black pipe.



Photo 22 – Martin and Ken take the easy route for getting scrap bricks to ground level, tipping them over the edge of the Old Pit heapstead.



Photo 25 – Pit under the archway at the outside of the southern corner of the Cornish Engine House One end of the pipe referred to on p.2 can be seen at the bottom of the pit with the handle of a spade lying on top of it ... (July 2017)



Photo 23 – Jeff getting ready to move the metal tank into its final position beside the New Pit passage, while in the background Hamish and Ken discuss other matters ...



Photo 26 – ... and what is thought to be the other end enters the Horizontal Engine House undercroft through a brick archway at the base of the north-east wall. (November 2019)



Photo 27 – The remains of an electrical supply cable found to the right of the motor plinths in February 2016 (p2). The cable has been traced as far as the eastern corner of the Horizontal Engine House. (30 cm scale)



Photo 28 – Neil working on the bank near the egg-ended boiler ...



Photo 29 – ... The same area after he, Hamish and others had re-laid the bricks forming the wall and finished gardening.



Photo 30 – Mick's sculpture made from scrap metal lying around the place.

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Website: [www.aibt.org](http://www.aibt.org)

email: [info@aibt.org](mailto:info@aibt.org)

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