

# FRIENDS OF BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY, PUCKLECHURCH

Newsletter N<sup>o</sup> 21, November 2018

(Photos 1-36 will be found on page 5 onwards)



There have been 10 work parties since the last newsletter, bringing the total to date in 2018 to 37. Rebuilding work has continued on the walls of the Vertical Engine House, there has been considerable progress made on conserving the brickwork around the stairs just outside that engine house, and spoil and bricks have been removed from the area under the floor of the Horizontal Engine House.

Brandy Bottom was open on the Heritage Open Days weekend of 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> September, when there were a total of 134 visitors. One visitor gave us some old photographs of miners, and we have also received copies of some 1977 photos of the site through the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS).

## Progress: August – November 2018

Work continued on rebuilding the tops of the walls of the winding drum pit in the Vertical Engine House. This has been spread out throughout the quarter, with a break for a site tidy-up before the Heritage Open Days weekend. The main aims are to seal the walls against water penetration and any resulting frost damage, and to repair damaged or missing walls where it is obvious what is missing, using matching salvaged material. The photo on the right shows the progress made at the north-eastern end of the building by mid-November. A large slab of stone, seen lying against the far wall in photo 4, has been returned to its position in the gap on the north side of the engine bed. Photos 1 to 4 were taken at various times during the quarter. The bricks that were missing from the edge of the platform in the western corner of the winding drum pit have been replaced (photo 5).



There has also been progress in conserving the area around the steps outside the entrance to the Vertical Engine House. As can be seen from photo 6, the mortar had weathered away, and the stone slab at the top of the stairs was unsupported at its left hand end. The photo on the right shows the progress made by mid-November. At the end of

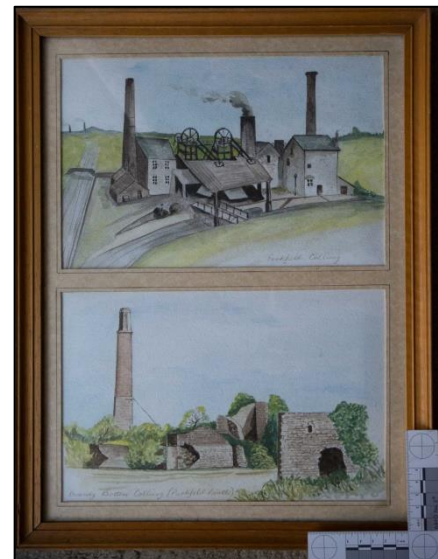


that work party the stone slabs, seen here in temporary positions at the top of the photo, were re-laid on top of the flat platform. An attempt was also made to find the eastern end of the flue bricks, as this might give us clues about the position of the boilers. We did not find the end, just a tantalising sight of some more bricks (photo 9). We also found what is thought to be a metal pipe support, seen in photo 10, in this area. Work had to be stopped as the excavations got in the way of the movement of people and wheel barrows going to and from the Vertical Engine House.

The late Robin Stiles, a BIAS member, was a keen photographer. His family gave his collection of industrial photos to BIAS, and we have been given scanned copies of the ones relating to Brandy Bottom. There are also some black and white photos by A D Wadley in the collection. We would like to thank Maggie Shapland and Mike Taylor of BIAS for sharing the photos with us. Examples of both sets can be seen in photos 11 to 15, and all are dated around 1977. We have pored over the original of the photo on the right (© R Stiles, 1977), which shows the north-east wall of the Horizontal Engine House. The aim was to find out more about the detail of the window surrounds of the Horizontal Engine House. The consensus is that the stones extended to the inner edge of the bricks in the window surrounds. That was not done at the recent rebuild, so is another item on the list of 'things to do'. The view of the New Pit heapstead in photo 13 was taken long before the fences were put in place and the cycle path tarred. At the Heritage Open Days weekend we were told about motor cycles being ridden up the path to the top of the heapstead. What is noticeable is the amount of vegetation covering the walls of the Cornish Engine House in photos 12, 14 and 15. While these photos have extended our knowledge about the site further back in time, we have still to find photos which show the pit when the headgear was in place.



The last two work parties before the Heritage Open Days weekend were spent tidying up the site, mowing/strimming grassy areas, clearing vegetation and trip hazards but especially from the paths, and cutting back the shrubs growing along the boundary fences. There were 51 visitors on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September and 83 on the Sunday (photos 17-20), compared to the grand total of 78 in 2017. We would like to say 'thank you' to those who gave us a donation, as we collected over £80. We would also like to say a particular thank you to one visitor - Keith Gardner. He gave us framed watercolours he had painted of Parkfield and Brandy Bottom (photo right, 5 cm x 5 cm scale), plus 9 photos of miners underground (some of which can be seen as photos 21-25). He did not know where they had been taken, but he assumed it was Parkfield as his father



and grandfather had worked there. Some of them have already appeared in Doreen Lindegaard's book<sup>1</sup> *Killed in a Coalpit*, or her article<sup>2</sup> in a South Gloucestershire Mines Group newsletter. Her research confirms that they were taken at Parkfield, and also puts a name to one of the miners. She suggests that they were taken in 1933, by which time coal mining had ceased in the area around the Brandy Bottom shafts. As Brandy Bottom was connected underground with Parkfield and worked the same seams, they illustrate the working conditions at Brandy Bottom. Photo 22 shows how they mined the coal in the 2 ft and 2 ft 6 in seams that were found at both pits. At present we do not know who the photographer was, so cannot acknowledge their work. It is something that we are still investigating. We still have to decide where the safest place is for both the paintings and the photos – leaving them permanently out at Brandy Bottom is not an option as they would soon deteriorate. While the paintings can make a trip to Brandy Bottom for special occasions, we would like to find a home for the photos with a county archive so that they are preserved for future historians.

One of the new items on display over the weekend in the temporary visitor centre, so new that it had not been fully finished, was Hamish Orr-Ewing's 1:50 scale model of the New Pit (photo right). It represents what the New Pit might have looked like in its heyday, complete with headgear, loading screens and loaded 'coal' skips on the top of the heapstead – it survived being played with as a toy by some of the younger visitors. The three 'Local Industrial Heritage' boards, which were produced



for the Lyde Green show earlier in the year, have been fixed to the inside walls of the Horizontal Engine House where they can be seen by visitors during work parties. We may also have a model of the Cornish Engine House to display at next year's Heritage Open Days. A visitor at this year's event thought that modelling the engine house would be a suitable project for one of his university students.

One of our banners, acknowledging the financial and material assistance given to the project by Historic England, Ibstock and the Ibstock Enover Trust, has been permanently fixed to the wall of the Old Pit heapstead (photo 26). It can now be seen by passers-by at all times.

It was raining on the first work party in October, something that is not a good idea if you plan to continue the rebuild of the masonry of the East Flue or the Vertical Engine House. Instead work started on clearing the rubble from the area under the concrete floor of the Horizontal Engine House. It was one of those tasks that had been 'saved for a rainy day' as it was under cover, though the diggers in the undercroft found it was warm work. The south-west end was cleared down to a brick floor (photo on top of next page), and a start was made on clearing the oil/grease-soaked debris from the central aisle. It is thought that the oil/grease came from a combination of the oil used for lubricating the machinery and the grease used on the winding ropes. Some more views of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Killed in a Coalpit*, Lindegaard D P, South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group, 2016

<sup>2</sup> *Just when you think there is nothing more to add ...*, Lindegaard D P, In: South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group Newsletter N° 48, Winter 2016/2017





the area can be seen in photos 28 to 30. The bricks are being recovered and stockpiled for future use. They included a number of bull-nosed bricks and also two tapered firebricks. One is marked 'Rufford Stourbridge' (photo 32), while the other one has a 'B' (photo 33). We have found a number of 'Rufford' bricks elsewhere in the site, but this is the first brick marked with a 'B'. Some bricks marked with 'Bovey' have been found in the past, so it is possible that the latest brick carries a variation of their mark. Further progress with clearing the undercroft will depend on the arrival of rainy days, as there is still plenty of work to be done elsewhere. Nobody is looking forward to removing and cleaning the large numbers of bricks that have been dumped in there.



### Visitor Access and Future Work Parties

At present visitor access to the site is limited to days when there is a work party in progress. It is usually possible to give small groups a guided tour during the work parties on a 'turn-up on the day' basis though this cannot be guaranteed as it depends on there being sufficient volunteers present. Special arrangements can be made for parties of 10 or more people by making contact through our email address of [info@aibt.org](mailto:info@aibt.org).

The dates of work parties for the rest of 2018 are: Saturday 01, Wednesday 12 December.

The dates for 2019 are: Saturday 05, Wednesday 16, Saturday 26 January, Saturday 02, Wednesday 13, Saturday 23 February, Saturday 09, Wednesday 20, Saturday 30 March, Saturday 06, Wednesday 17, Saturday 27 April, Saturday 04, Wednesday 15, Saturday 25 May, Saturday 08, Wednesday 19, Saturday 29 June, Saturday 06, Wednesday 17, Saturday 27 July, Saturday 03, Wednesday 14, Saturday 24 August, Saturday 07, Heritage Open Days \*, Saturday 28 September, Saturday 05, Wednesday 16, Saturday 26 October, Saturday 02, Wednesday 13, Saturday 23 November, Saturday 07, Wednesday 18 December.

\* As the Heritage Open Days for 2019 are spread over a 10-day period in September, we have decided to open on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15, though this choice is still provisional.

Please note that work parties, and their starting and finishing times, may be altered at short notice. The nominal opening times are between 10.30 am and 3 pm, but these timings are not hard and fast so we may start later and/or finish earlier. Because of this, newcomers who would like to join a work party are advised to first make contact via the AIBT's email address of [info@aibt.org](mailto:info@aibt.org). Youngsters must be accompanied at all times by a responsible adult.

There is a location map on a dedicated page of the website [www.aibt.org](http://www.aibt.org), together with directions on how to reach the site. This page can be found by using a link on the main Brandy Bottom project page.



## Photographs



Photo 1 – Working on the scaffolding across the top of the winding drum pit, Vertical Engine House.

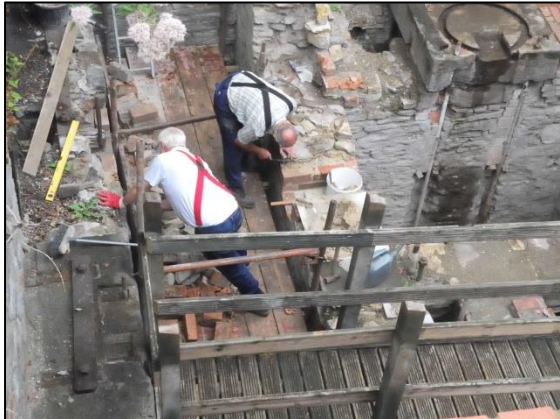


Photo 2 – Rebuilding the walls of the winding drum pit ...



Photo 3 – ... During the rebuild, the edge of the rebuilt beam slot in the south-eastern wall was aligned with that of the existing slot in the north-western wall.



Photo 4 – Rebuilding the wall between the winding drum pit (on the left) and the engine bed in the Vertical Engine House.



Photo 5 – Missing bricks have been replaced on the platform in the western corner of the Vertical Engine House.



Photo 6 – The brickwork at the end of the East Flue and the steps outside the entrance to the Vertical Engine House in May 2018.





Photo 7 – Rebuilding in progress of the brickwork under the steps outside the entrance to the Vertical Engine House.



Photo 8 – Another view of the same area, taken in early November.



Photo 9 – View of the excavated area at the end of the East Flue. The left hand arrow marks the end of the brickwork attached to the flue, while the right hand one shows the start of the newly discovered brickwork. There are signs that the bricks were originally laid across the gap. The flat surface in the foreground is the base of the flue. (30 cm scales)



Photo 10 – Iron pipe support, found at the south-eastern end of the East Flue. The central rod is 16" long, and the clamp on the left could accommodate a 2" diameter pipe when fully closed. (30 cm scales)



Photo 11 – The Brandy Bottom chimney can be seen in the centre of the photo, with those of the Shortwood brickworks are on the left. (© R Stiles, 1977)



Photo 12 – The Cornish Engine House from the top of the New Pit heapstead. (© R Stiles, 1977)



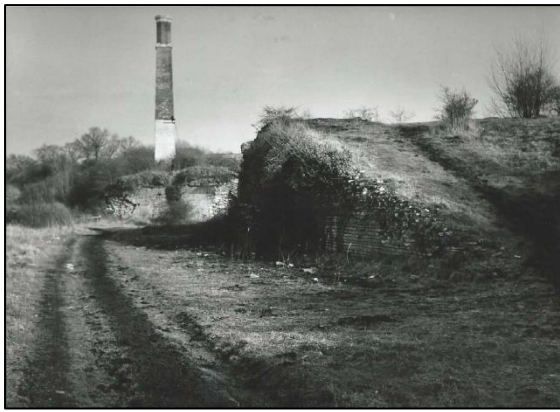


Photo 13 – View looking north-eastwards from the bottom of the New Pit heapstead ramp. (© A D Wadley, 1977)

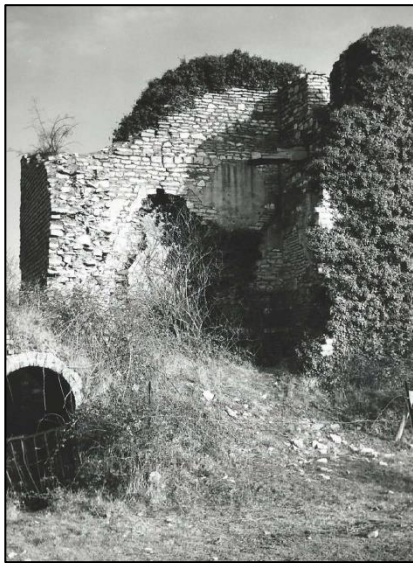


Photo 14 – The Cornish Engine House, viewed from the south-west. (© A D Wadley, 1977)

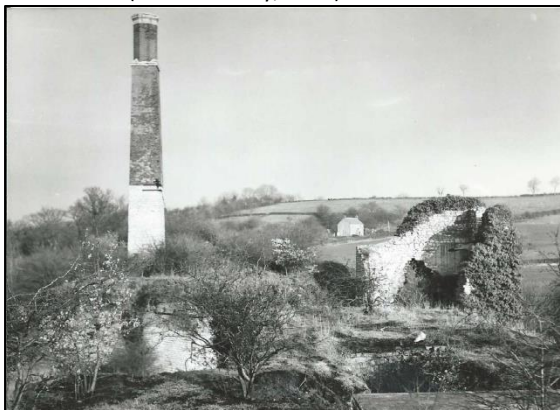


Photo 15 – The chimney, Old Pit heapstead and Cornish Engine House, taken from a spot on the New Pit heapstead. Close examination of the original shows that the masonry at the top of the chimney was just starting to deteriorate. (© A D Wadley, 1977)



Photo 16 – The work of tidying up the enclosures before the Heritage Open Days has brought one volunteer to his knees.



Photo 17 – One of the tour parties at the southern end of the Old Pit heapstead during the Heritage Open Days weekend.



Photo 18 – A tour party in the Cornish Engine House during the Heritage Open Days weekend.





Photo 19 – Visitors on the Heritage Open Days weekend looking at H Orr-Ewing's 1:50 scale model of the New Pit heapstead. (See photo on top of page 3) The three 'Local Industrial Heritage' display panels can be seen on the wall behind the visitors.



Photo 20 – The display boards were placed in the Horizontal Engine House on the Heritage Open Days weekend, with some of the artefacts found over the years on the table in the left background.



Photo 21 – A group of miners having a lunch break, called bread time, in the stables at Parkfield. (Photo from the K Gardner collection and caption based on the work of D P Lindegaard)



Photo 22 – Working underground in a narrow seam at Parkfield. These would have been 2 ft or 2 ft 6 in thick. (Photo from the K Gardner collection and caption based on the work of D P Lindegaard)



Photo 23 – Miners with a tub loaded with coal underground. DPL thinks the writing on the timber above their heads could be interpreted as 13 Sep 1933, which would date when the photograph was taken. (Photo from the K Gardner collection and caption based on the work of D P Lindegaard)



Photo 24 – Underground worker in an electrical switch room at Parkfield. (Photo from the K Gardner collection and caption based on the work of D P Lindegaard)





Photo 25 – Ted Powell, on the right with measuring stick and carbide lamp, was one of two under-managers at Parkfield. (Photo from the K Gardner collection and caption based on the work of D P Lindegaard)



Photo 26 – One of the sponsors' banners has been fixed permanently to the Old Pit heapstead, so that it can be seen by passers-by at all times.



Photo 27 – Spoil being removed from the undercroft of the Horizontal Engine House.



Photo 28 – View along the south-eastern side of the undercroft, showing the pile of bricks that will have to be removed.



Photo 29 – Bricks stacked up on the north-west side of the undercroft. Judging by the view from the other end of the undercroft, they appear to be stacked against a pillar.



Photo 30 – The underside of the false floor of the Horizontal Engine House, taken at the south-western end of the central bay of the undercroft.





Photo 31 – It is hard work clearing the oil/grease-soaked spoil in the central aisle of the under croft, so one volunteer did not mind lying back on the rubble when taking a break.



Photo 32 – Tapered firebrick, found in the under croft of the Horizontal Engine House, with the maker's mark 'Rufford Stourbridge' stamped onto one face. A similarly marked brick was found in the Vertical Engine House in 2016. The other tapered firebricks found, with the exception of the one seen below, have not been marked with a maker's name.



Photo 33 – Tapered arch firebrick, found in the under croft of the Horizontal Engine House, with the maker's mark 'B' stamped onto one face.



Photo 34 – Common Darter dragonfly outside the Horizontal Engine House.



Photo 35 – A fine crop of plums growing beside the pond, which were harvested and eaten over lunchtime at a work party. The tree would have been planted in the garden of one of the now-abandoned cottages.



Photo 36 – Brambles ripening on the Heritage Open Days weekend. Many visitors were seen plucking brambles from the bushes during the weekend.

Unless otherwise stated all photos are by R H Whitworth (© R H Whitworth, 2018)  
All the photographers have retained the copyright of their photos.