

Monthly dig report for members of Leicestershire Industrial History Society and Swannington Heritage Trust.

Morning dig with 13 LIHS members in attendance.

Engine House near Califat Shaft - Excavation 2006-2016 - Ventilation Fan / Winding Drum Pit

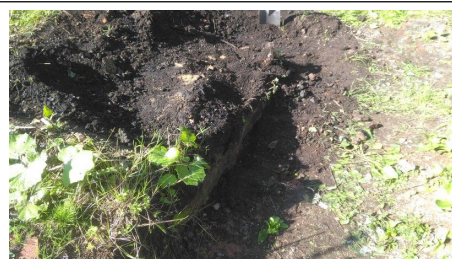


The stabilisation of the east wall of the pit (the engine house side) continued. A lime rich cement mortar was used as the lime helps prevent damage to the bricks and the cement provides the strength. Stabilisation will be the prime focus of the diggers in October as it would be good to finish stabilising the wall before the winter frost.



The south west corner of the west wall is being rebuilt as some of the bricks were loose. The bricks were numbered with chalk so that each brick will be replaced in the correct position and orientation during the stabilisation. The bottom left photo shows cement blocks being used inside the hole to strengthen the structure. The bottom middle photo shows the original wood support.

Engine House near Califat Shaft - Excavation 2006-2016 - Tunnel From Furnace To Chimney



Material to the south (pond side) of the exposed chimney tunnel was removed so that rainwater from the ridge of soil will sink into the ground before reaching the bricks. The clay was taken to line the bank of the centenary wood pond.

Miners' Cottages



Swannington Heritage Trust had cut down the trees since the August dig, thus making it much easier for the diggers to work the site. Small metal sheets were found near what may be a fire place on the eastern wall. The eastern wall was exposed to near the northern site boundary.

Shaft to East of Califat Boiler House



One digger (harnessed to a tree) excavated the area inside the shaft and the rectangular building surrounding the shaft. Other diggers exposed the outside of the rectangular building. The heras fencing was replaced at end of the session.

The north wall of the rectangle was built on clay, without the foundations that support the other walls.

At the north east corner a wide spur juts out to the north. This needs further investigation.

Weather



It was a very hot dig day.

Some diggers wore trendy hats and several breaks were taken.

Refreshments were in the wood to enjoy much needed shade.

Three articles from the British Newspaper Archive were circulated before the dig, some key points are listed below.

Leicester Journal, Friday 5th June 1863, Shocking accident at one of the Coleorton pits

Accident happened about 5.30pm Friday 29th May 1863. Without authority Foreman / Overman Robert Lakin operated the winding engine to raise two miners to the surface. Engineman William Walker was collecting a bucket from the pumping engine. Lakin failed to stop the engine before it hit the pulley wheel and one of the miners, John Hutchinson, fell to his death.

Description of pit, management and operational activities:

- Engine house had a winding engine that operated a cage to raise men and coal tubs.
- Shaft is 130 yards deep and John Hutchinson seems to have fallen headlong down the shaft without touching the sides.
- Cage made of iron bars.
- William Clements held onto a crosspiece or beam at the top of the works under the pulley.
- James Waring was a blacksmith at Coleorton colliery and had his shop at the No 2 pit.
- The pumping engine is 60 to 70 yards from the engine house. (*Measured, from north east corner of engine house to Alabama shaft, the pumping shaft, it is 70 yards. From pumping shaft to winding shaft is 60 yards*)
- Signal bell rings in the engine house for the cage to come up. Signal bell also rings when cage 25-30 yards from the top and again immediately before emerging.
- William Walker had been the engineman at No 2 pit for about 8 years. He shared the role night and day with his brother John. (*8 years engineman, equates to starting in 1855 or late 1854*)
- Stoker Levi Baker was left in charge of the winding engine and was cleaning the indicators.
- Lakin pulled a lever/handle to start and stop the engine. Lakin took the steam off and clapped the brake on to stop the cage, but the crank coming over on the swing took the cage up higher. (*could someone draw this?*)
- There was a man in charge of the pumping engine.
- William Walker had returned from the pumping engine via the pit mouth to the engine house.
- G Lewis manager of Coleorton colliery was at number 1 pit when accident occurred.
- The damaged cage was removed and a new one attached to enable Lewis to be lowered to the bottom.

Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, Saturday 10th October 1863, Alarming Coal Pit Accident In Leicestershire

The pit flooded on a Thursday morning. Description of pit, management and operational activities:

- Inundation of the Califat, California and Pegg's Green pits. (*Pegg's Green genuine or mixed up with Calcutta?*)
- The pit is known as Califat, No 2.
- Califat is worked with a double shaft. (*Is this two shafts or one shaft divided into two?*)
- Califat is 130 yards deep.
- The pit is connected by underground roads with Calcutta, No 1, about three quarters of a mile south east. (*Swannington No1*)
- The pit is connected by underground roads with California, about 700 yards north. (*Coleorton No1*)
- The roadways from the bottom of Califat to Calcutta and California are down an incline with a 1:12 gradient.
- There is another roadway from the bottom of the Califat shaft, it descends to the east and is known as the dip, it ascends to the west on a like graduation to the other roads.
- There are numerous stalls off this west/east roadway.
- The Linby Hall workings had been abandoned about 70 years ago (*1793*).
- Large number of men working at 3am when alarm first raised.
- A shift took place at 6am when the day men went on.
- About 50-60 men brought to surface as concerned over safety, others still working, some above ground. (*Shift = 80-100?*)

- The accident took place at the summit of the hill which was about a mile from the bottom of the shaft. The water rushed down the incline faster than the men could run. (*1 mile up a 1:12 gradient = 147yds above 130yds shaft bottom*)
- The Califat, California and Calcutta pumping engines were set to work. Roads were 6ft high, water nearly reached the roof.
- 10 horses were rescued, 16 were still in the pit.

Leicester Journal, Friday 20th November 1863, The Coleorton Colliery Accident

Coroner's court resumed with technical evidence. Description of pit, management and operational activities:

- Messrs Walker and Worswick were the proprietors.
- Mr William Walker had been manager until two years last March (*March 1861*). He had been succeeded as manager by Mr Bailey whose nephew, Mr Lewis, resided on site and took instructions from Mr Bailey. William Pickering the elder took instructions from Mr Lewis. (*1861 census, George Lewis, 24, Mining Engineer, born Northampton, lodger The Moor*)
- William Pickering the elder was bailiff of the California and Califat pits. He had two deputies at the Califat, one for day and one for night, plus another pair of deputies for California. This meant that there was always someone in charge. There was also an assistant night deputy.
- Stalls heading towards the former Linby Hall workings included No 8 & No 14. No 2 stall adjacent No 14. Also No 6
- William Walker had been manager at the collieries for 11 years until March 1861. (*This fits with California opening in late 1849, the year of the California gold rush, or early 1850.*)
- William Walker believed the old Swannington workings had closed about Christmas 1784 (*79 years earlier*).
- Geo Lewis - There had been a break in No 2 stall in August. Water gathered in breaks in the coal and Lewis had believed the initial water at No 8 had been a break and not the Hollows. Had found breaks continually in the coal of the district.
- Geo Lewis - They were working in the deep 130 yards away from No 8 and 170 yards to the deep of Linby Hall level.
- Geo Lewis - On day water broke in could not get further than 400 yards because of the damp.
- Geo Lewis - The rising of the water in the other shafts stopped the ventilation. Attempted to pipe air into the No 2 shaft but this was insufficient.
- Geo Lewis - Brattice cloth from Manchester used to brattice the shaft and level for 800 yards. Put in some powerful steam jets to create some air.
- Geo Lewis - Found the men on the 12th day (20th October) they were more than 800 yards from the shaft and 130 yards from the No 8 stall. They were in an old gate road that had been gobbed within 10 yards of the bottom. (*930 @1:12 = 77yds rise*)
- Geo Lewis - The breach had cut into a three feet four inches coal head driven from the old Linby Hall level. The hole was six yards from the left and eight yards from the way ahead. The old Linby Hall bottom was about four foot high. It was about six yards from where the head strikes the level to the old Linby Hall shaft.
- Geo Lewis - The water broke through four feet of coal and made a breach 15 inches high and three feet six inches wide.
- Geo Lewis - The hollows are about 300 acres. There was 90-100 yards of water pressure equal to 150lbs a square inch.
- Geo Lewis - Had been in the office about 10 minutes when he heard the water was rapidly coming in.
- Geo Lewis - In No 5 stall, part of California, boring had been taking place for 12 months. There were two men who did very little other than boring.
- William Walker - The water in the old Linby Hall hollows had not been pumped out because it would have cost over £3,000 to install a pump and £800 a year to run it. This would have greatly befitted an adjoining colliery.
- Worswick - The No8 stall had not been fully opened out when the previous bailiff Mr Lakin had left (*presumably after the 29th May fatality*).

Do not confuse Walker proprietor, William Walker ex manager, William Walker engineman.