

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

Morning dig with 19 LIHS diggers in attendance, then lunch for 11 at the Bull's Head.

Red Cinders Pile Area



The pile of red cinders was moved slowly and carefully to ensure that any evidence of the area's origins was retained. There was a small number of clean bricks in the red cinders. Under the red cinders there was a thin layer of grey material then a deeper layer of black coal dust with small pieces of coal. Possible explanations for the three layers of material are:

- 1 A surface furnace for furnace ventilation. This is based upon the ash being between the tunnels and the chimney. However there is as yet no evidence of any structure that could have been the furnace and the size of the tunnels may be too small. Perhaps a furnace would be nearer to the the shaft.
- 2 Ash dumped from the boilers. However the boiler holes for stoking and cleaning are around the other side of the engine house, so its not very likely anyone would bring the ash all the way around the boilers and chimney or round the engine house.
- 3 A brick making operation as the ash contains some new and very clean bricks. However the size of the ash heap and the locations indicate that the operation would have been far too small to be viable.
- 4 Spontaneous combustion of coal dust and small pieces of coal. This seems most likely as there is coal dust under and to one side of the ash and the boundary between the ash and coal dust is distinct indicating that the boundary is where the combustion ran out of heat, leaving the coal unburned. The perfectly preserved brick could have been new ones discarded by builders (as they do today, see any building site) that fell into the the coal dust and then got partially refired and preserved in the ash.



The area next to the bricked off tunnel was carefully cleared to reveal the drain. The drain pipe was covered with a large stone.



Between the red cinders and the exposed chimney there was evidence that part of the tunnel had collapsed under a heavy weight. This could have been from a horse and cart or heavier 20th century machinery.

Engine House near Califat Shaft - Excavation 2006-2017



South of the engine house more of the clay was dug out of the area around the bbq, bringing the dumper truck close (but not anywhere it would damage the excavation) helped with the removal of material. The pile of red cinders to the west was moved onto a membrane in the corner of the boiler house and chimney, thus providing an option to return it after the cinder area has been fully excavated.



We were a bit concerned about the smell - was it a suspicious gas? Then we spotted the cause, a dodgy guy reliving his youth with a spray can. But as he only painted the white foam (covering the holding down bolt holes) green, we left him to it.

Old Shaft to East of Califat Boiler House



The eastern end of the north wall was built on a large stone, the rest of the wall was built on clay.
Deliberate or just happened to have a large stone handy.
Further east the wall did not extend into the area formerly occupied by the oak tree.



Digging out the area around the (water?) pipe we identified a small hole, possibly leading to some form of chamber.

Whitwick colliery Co, Coalville, Leicestershire - would be good if we could date the brick.

Miners' Cottages



The loose jumble of bricks and other material in what was found to be the porch doorway were removed.

The floor of the porch at the front of the cottage was revealed. It is possible that the floor tiles were added at a later date.

The porch walls were also visible.

Alan used a sophisticated set of improvised instruments to determine that the floor level of the porch was 6.5 inches (16.5cm) higher than the floor or pavement to the left.



There was also progress at the rear of the cottages working along the north wall. A stepped pavement has been revealed.



A couple of metal brackets were found. The centre photo shows how the rusting process has pushed the two right hand pieces apart. The brick is marked Whitwick Colliery.