

Brandy Bottom Colliery, Pucklechurch

The remains of the surface buildings of the Brandy Bottom colliery are located to the west of Pucklechurch. They are part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, No 1019400, as Brandy Bottom is considered to be a rare example of the surface layout of a 19th Century steam-powered coal mine. From 1871 to 1936 it was worked as the satellite mine of the Parkfield colliery to the north, which may have contributed to the survival of the surface buildings in their original layout. It is sometimes referred to as 'Parkfield South'. The colliery was located on the Dramway, and later the main line railway, which were used to transport the coal to customers. The Avon Industrial Buildings Trust is currently working on the conservation of the buildings.



Avon Industrial Buildings Trust

The Avon Industrial Buildings Trust (AIBT) is a charity that was formed in 1980 to promote the conservation of industrial buildings in the old Avon region. It usually works with other organisations, such as local councils and other voluntary associations and aims to hand over the long term running of sites to local groups. Its current projects are Brandy Bottom and Brunel's Other Bridge. The latter is located at the entrance to the floating harbour, and the AIBT is working on it in partnership with the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society and the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society.

Brandy Bottom History

The original shaft was sunk between 1837 and 1838, when it was known as 'Lord Radnor's Pit'. The first reference to the name 'Brandy Bottom' comes in a coroner's report of 1856. It was one of the pits, and at 225 yards the deepest, visited by Handel Cossham when he surveyed the area prior to sinking Parkfield in around 1851. In 1871 Cossham took over the lease of Brandy Bottom, and sunk the New Pit shaft. He then connected Brandy Bottom and Parkfield underground, allowing him to use the former for hoisting coal from both sets of workings, as well as for ventilation and pumping. Brandy Bottom was then referred to as 'Parkfield South'. Cossham died in 1890, but his coal mining interests were not sold until 1900. His estate was used to build the Cossham Memorial Hospital in Kingswood.

Coal hoisting had ceased by the time of the 1915 Ordnance Survey, as the railway lines that can be seen running alongside the New Pit in the 1903 map no longer appear in the 1915 one. Parkfield installed electrical pumps around 1920, and it is probable that the Cornish Engine was decommissioned at that time. A Sirocco ventilation fan was attached to the New Pit shaft at sometime between 1915 and 1936. It is assumed that Brandy Bottom was closed at the same time as Parkfield on 15 August 1936. It is now the property of Ibstock, who had worked the nearby clay pit before it was converted to landfill use.

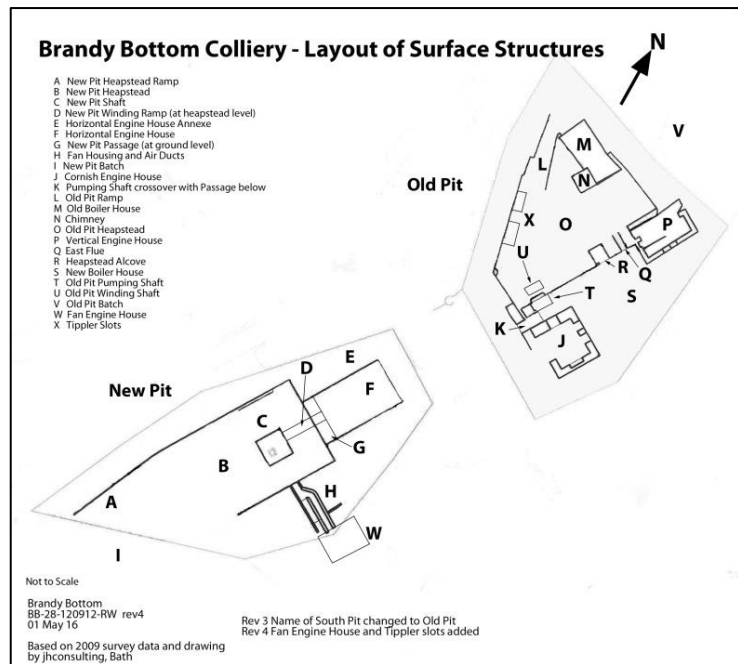
Brandy Bottom is known to have worked 4 seams of coal: the 2 ft thick Hard Seam located 512 ft below the surface; the 2 ft Top Seam at 608 ft; the 2 ft 6 in Hollybush at 638½ ft; and the 2 ft 6 in Great Seam at 674½ ft. The workings are now inaccessible as they are flooded to just below the surface. An official return shows that there were 155 underground workers and 17 surface workers in 1896. There is evidence that the work force lived in Pucklechurch, Siston, Mangotsfield and Soundwell.



The results of research into the history of the colliery were published by the AIBT in 2013 in a report entitled *Brandy Bottom Colliery Historical Research Report*. Copies are available from the AIBT at a price of £7.00 plus postage. Further research by AIBT and SGMRG members may uncover more of the colliery's history.

Site Layout

The AIBT's lease covers the area around the surface buildings, but not the waste tips, known as batches, and the area around the pond. The buildings are in two groups, separated by a public right of way. The northern group is based around the original, Lord Radnor's, shaft and consists of the Heapstead, the ruins of Cornish Engine House, Vertical Engine House, and Old Boiler House, together with the distinctive chimney. The second group is based around Cossham's 1871 New Pit shaft, and comprises the Heapstead, Horizontal Engine House, and the remains of the Ventilation Fan structures. The Horizontal Engine House, seen in the photo at the bottom of the previous page, is the only roofed structure on site.



Conservation Project

The aim of the conservation project is to prevent any further deterioration in the fabric of the buildings, with the object of handing long term conservation over to a local group. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the AIBT is working under a Scheduled Monument Consent issued by Historic England. This requires all work to be approved in advance by Historic England. The trust leases the site from Ibstock.

The AIBT would like to thank Ibstock, Historic England and the Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust for their financial and material assistance to the project.

Work started on site in 2008, using contractors to clear the vegetation growing on and around the buildings. The volunteers started in 2010, clearing spoil down to a working surface in several areas to allow for ease of access and provide information on the structures for use in developing the conservation plan. This has uncovered a number of features, some of which have been covered up again for protection against the weather.



Initially conservation concentrated on emergency works, including the rebuilding of the north-east wall of the Cornish Engine House in 2012 by a contractor. The two photos to the right show the wall before (top) and after the repairs. In 2014 the same contractor covered the roof of the Horizontal Engine House with a waterproof membrane to protect the structure from frost damage, and rebuilt the top of the chimney. Then in 2016 there was a major programme of rebuilding of the tops of walls in the Old Pit by contractors. The next stage will be to work on the walls of the New Pit heapstead and the Horizontal Engine House.



There are working parties on either a Wednesday or a Saturday throughout the year, and the dates are advertised on the AIBT's website. As these may be cancelled or changed at short notice, it is suggested that newcomers first make contact through the info@aibt.org mailbox.