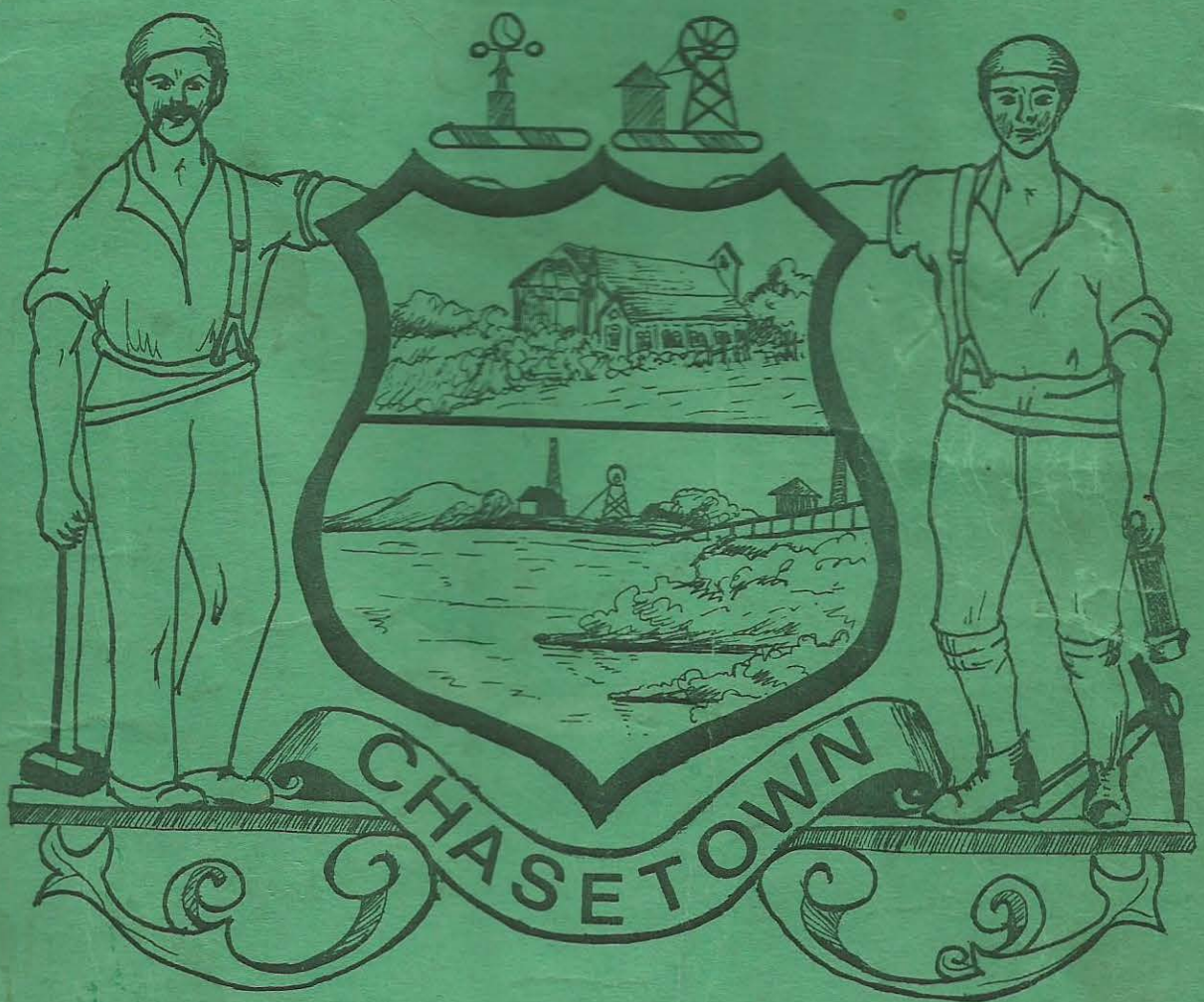


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OLD CHASETOWN



~~STATESBORO COUNTY COUNCIL~~

~~CHASETOWN~~

LOCAL HISTORY SOURCE BOOK L.38.

OLD CHASETOWN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This book of photographs of Old Chasetown has been produced in an attempt to record some of the village's historical past. As part of the expanse of Cannock Chase, the area was a semi-wilderness of scrub and bracken, until the opening of the No.1 and No.2 mines, which encouraged settlement by providing regular work. The village grew up round the mines and soon was covering the whole spectrum of services, which met the daily needs of the miner and his family. Shops, public houses and places of worship rounded out the village, and set it on its path to the growth and extent that we witness as the Chasetown of today.

During 1979, three of the local Chasetown schools were involved in a project to "mine" historical records, documents and photographs of the area, which undoubtedly lay under the depths of "overburden" in drawers, trunks or in attics. Children of the St. Joseph's, Chasetown Primary and Oakdene Schools acted as mining "agents", and many "seams" of interesting material were discovered, unearthed and finally "mined". As editors we would like to thank the children, parents and friends concerned for the interest shown. This little pamphlet is an example of child / adult co-operation which is the basis and substance of the educational style of today. The young learn from those experienced in life who have a story to tell. The enthusiasm of the young and the archives of those older have provided us with the material from which this selection has been made. We are indebted to the many people, too numerous to name, who provided original photographs for us to copy. We must mention Mr. Bert Atkins for his mining photographs, and also for his vital background information on mines and mining in the area. We are indebted to Mrs. Thacker who lent material, and also by correspondence enabled us to loan vital photographs from Miss Sopwith. Mr. Derek Sanders volunteered prints from the family archives, which showed the famous Spot Garage and Silent Knight coaches of the past. Councillor Ernie Lambourne pooled his resources with us, and has helped to fill gaps in our collection.

Our information has been swelled by the observations and memories of many friends, who have willingly contributed their recollections towards this work. To name them all would require another booklet solely for this purpose, so collectively we acknowledge their donations, so willingly passed on orally.

Finally our thanks must go to Mr. R.A. Lewis (County History Adviser), who has encouraged us to produce this booklet for use in Schools, and to Mr. L. Tindall (Audio-Visual Department, Stafford) for his expertise in photo-copying and printing. We are indebted to Gwyneth Devey for her work as general factotum, typist and collector of much original material.

The old Chase villages and communities are now at a crossroads in time. Their previous prosperity, based on coal, has ceased, and they look forward to the technologies of the dawning 21st century as the basis of their future existence. With so much of the historical material of the past going quickly, as the older generation is replaced, it was imperative that we tried to rescue as much material of social and educational interest as we could, before such material was thrown away as irrelevant to modern society and its aspirations. This booklet is a result of the concern shown by many people, children and adult alike, to keep Chasetown tradition, folklore and former way of life, in a photo-montage form, for those who are yet to come. Our final tribute is to the many unknown photographers whose vision and skill in recording these early scenes has enabled us to produce this book. For any photographic copyrights unwittingly broken, we apologise.

E. O'Donnell
W. Thompson
C. Heath
J. Bucknall

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IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF CHASETOWN

- 1849 Hammerwich Colliery sunk
1850 Anglesey Spur Canal cut - cost £6,000
1852 No. 2 Pit opened
1850 - 55 First houses built in Chasetown - near Pool
and cottages in Church Street.
1854 Hammerwich Collieries leased to J.R. McLean
and R.C. Chawner
1855 No. 3 Pit and No. 4 had been sunk
Within the next 25 years, five other pits
were sunk at Chase Terrace, Heath Hayes and
Hednesford.
1860 Boys' School built by Cannock Chase Colliery Co.
1864 First Chapel of Wesleyan Methodists
1865 St. Anne's Church founded by J.R. McLean
1866 Girls' School opened
1866 Queen Street being developed
1881 Infants' School opened
1883 Roman Catholic Church built
1883 Electricity lit No. 2 Pit and St. Anne's Church
1884 New Methodist Church built
1888 Institute erected at a cost of £700
1911 Chasetown Primary School opened (Infants)
1912 Mining Institute opened
1914 Present Catholic School built
1922 Chasetown, Chase Terrace, Boney Hay, lit by
electric lights using power generated by the
Cannock Chase Colliery Company
1940 No. 2 Pit closed
1959 No. 3 Pit closed
1961 No. 8 Pit closed
End of mining era in Chasetown area.

EARLY HISTORY OF CHASETOWN MINES

I wonder if you have ever thought about the origins of the villages of Chasetown and Chaseterrace . Are they several hundred years old like their neighbours Burntwood and Hammerwich, or did they originate more recently ?

On an estate map made for the Marquess of Anglesey in 1820, the area which became known as Chasetown and Chaseterrace is shown as farmland and commonland. The Marquess lived at Beaudesert Hall and owned much of the land in the area. Apart from a few farms and a house called Lamb Lodge, there were no houses at all in the area.

How then did the thriving communities grow up and develop? The answer to this question lies in the development of the Cannock Chase Coalfield. To the south of the Cannock Chase area lay the South Staffordshire Coalfield. In this Black Country Coalfield coal could be obtained easily by fairly shallow working at depths of 800 feet (250 mtrs). The boom time for this coalfield was 1750 to 1870.

To the north of the Watling Street the coal measures were much deeper (about 1600 ft or 500 mtrs), and therefore coal was more difficult to mine and more expensive to obtain. However, the South Staffs Coalfield was unable to supply all the coal needed , canals were being developed, and later railways, which could transport coal from the more remote area north of the Watling Street, to the large towns of the south. Borings for coal were made in 1846 near to Cannock Chase Reservoir (Chasewater), and in 1849 Hammerwich Colliery, "The Marquess" as it was called by the miners, was sunk. This was owned by the Marquess of Anglesey and a letter was sent to him by his agent as follows:-

*Burton,
December 6th, 1849*

My Lord,

The new colliery at Hammerwich was sunk yesterday to a very good seam of coal, and I gave instructions for sending the first cart load to Beaudesert that your Lordship see the quality of the mine.

In all matters concerning it the progress has been most satisfactory and I trust this is the beginning of a most important and valuable concern.

*I am, My Lord,
Most respectfully,
Your very obedient servant,*

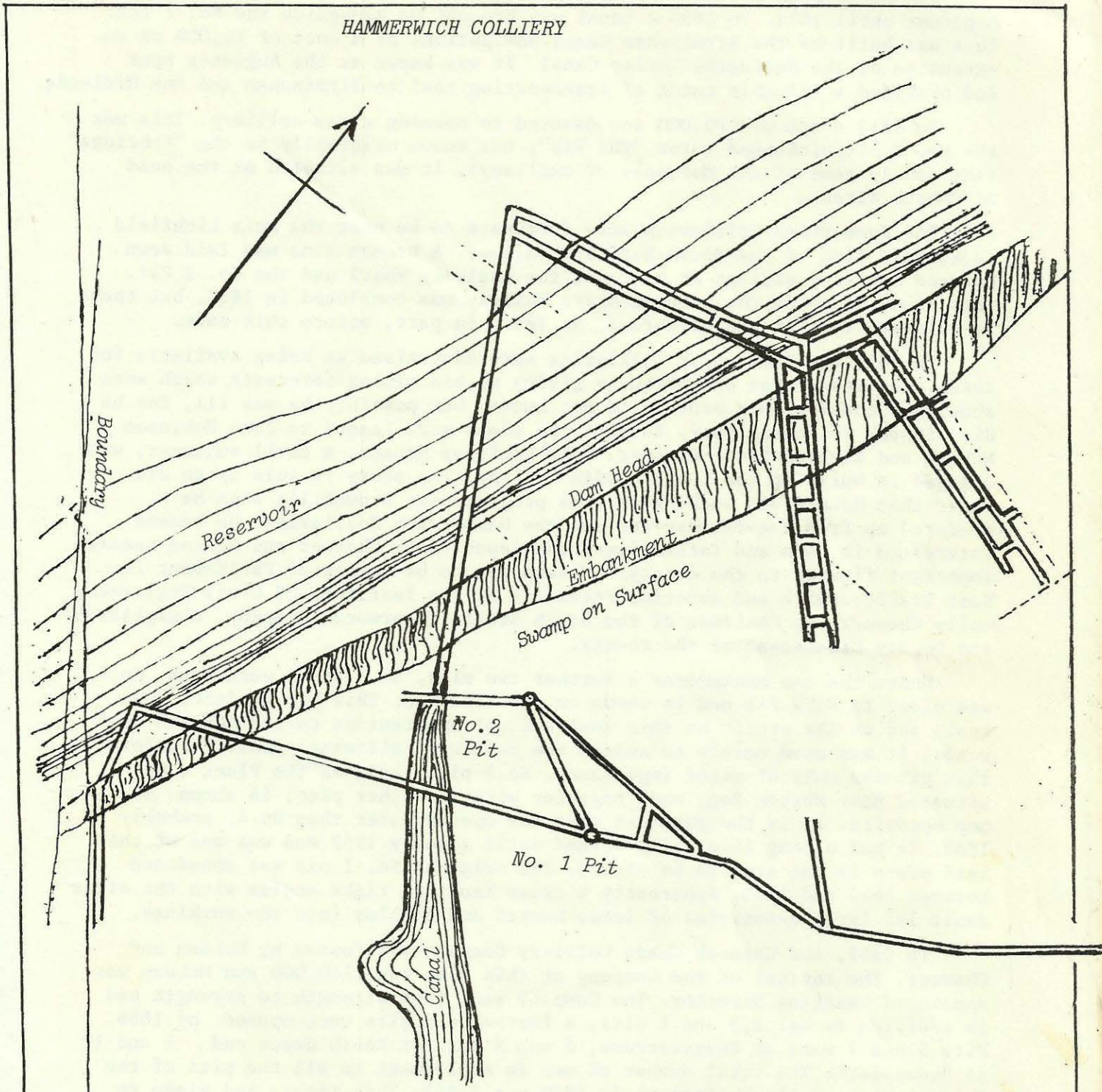
Thomas Landor.

*The Most Honourable
The Marquess of Anglesey*

The position of this mine was at the head of the East Dam of Chasewater on ground called the Long Field, (see 1855 map on page 42) The only evidence that a mine once stood on this site is a few slag heaps and the circular brick wall, built over the old shaft when the mine was closed.

On the opposite page is a sketch map of the working of Hammerwich Colliery which extended under the Cannock Chase Reservoir.

HAMMERWICH COLLIERY



Sketch of workings in the Shallow Coal
adjoining the Head of the Reservoir

Scale - 40yards to an inch

T.J. Woodhouse,
Overseer, Ashby de la Zouche

THE PIT BOTTOM

Ventilation and the adequate supply of fresh air into the extensive tunnels and galleries in mines has always been a problem. The traditional method of solving this difficulty was to provide two shafts (upcast and downcast), in order that air could freely circulate. To aid such an airflow, furnaces were often built underground at the bottom of the upcast shaft. Oxygen for combustion was drawn as a constituent of air from the underground tunnels, this air being replaced by fresh air drawn by replacement down the downcast shaft, and consequently through the workings.

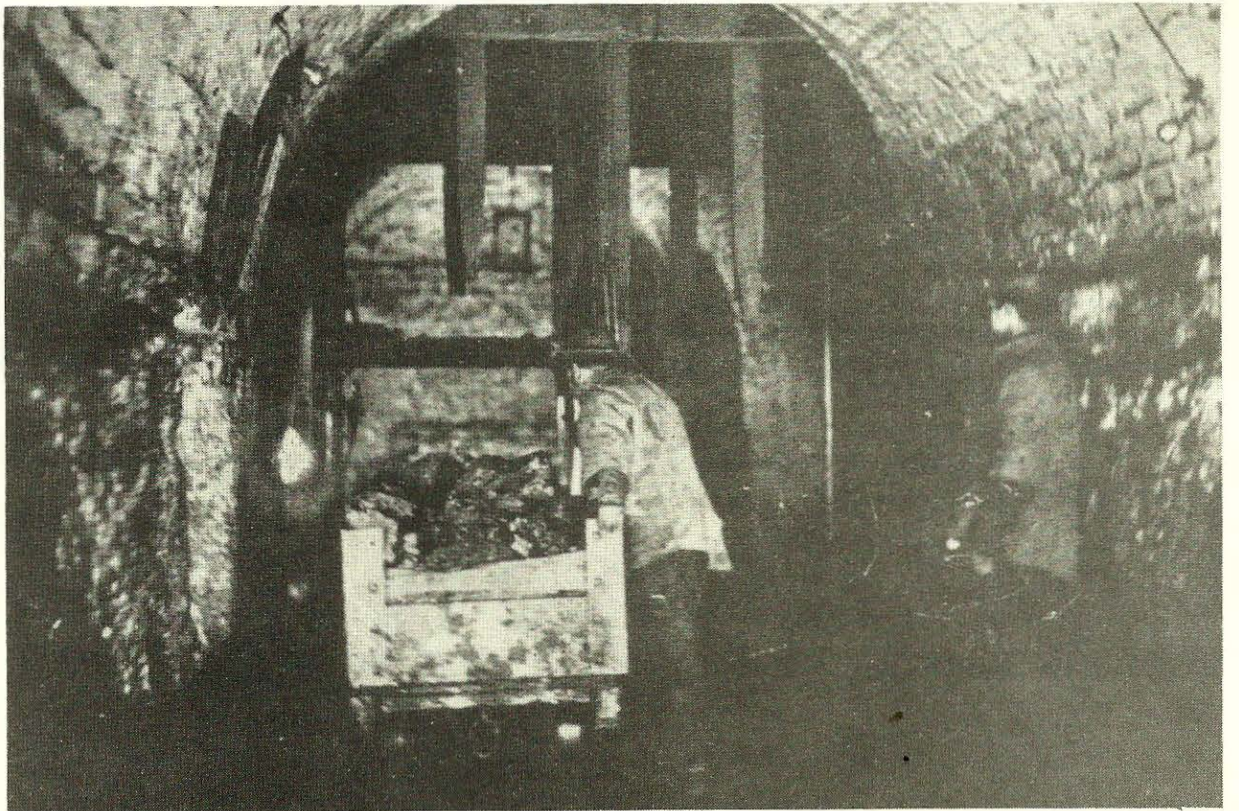
Such an early arrangement is shown here at 2's Pit (the Uxbridge) at Chasetown. The two attendants, illuminated by firelight, rest between the stoking operations required periodically to keep the furnace well lit, thus ensuring an airflow through the pit at the required level. Various long pokers and clinker rods can be seen behind the operative resting on his shovel. Gas at the pit bottom was very rarely a problem. Dangerous gas accumulations could however, accrue in the roof of haulage way or coal face. In early pits such gas pockets would be exploded, on detection, by a fireman wrapped in hessian sacking. By lying on his stomach, with an extendable rod taper, the fireman was able to apply open flame ignition to the gas, a chancy and primitive procedure which worked well enough if performed regularly. Where the operation was performed irregularly, so allowing a large concentration to build up, a real danger of hefty explosion might be experienced. The story of mining is the story of men's lives and even today canaries are kept at pithead stations to be used as sensors for gas concentration. The safety lamp, in its several forms, of course, ensured great advances in underground safety standards. The safest solution to the problem of gas has always been efficient ventilation to flush out and reduce gas concentrations before critical levels were reached. Note the use of brick arches in this pit bottom construction.

Pictured opposite is the bottom of the "drawing" shaft at the No. 2 Colliery. Again liberal use has been made of brick linings to improve safety and efficiency of pit-bottom operation. Bands of clay were sometimes penetrated when shafts were sunk, and some of these were exploited by the company, and several brick making units, produced much of the company's needs for shaft lining, pithead buildings etc. Ironstone bands were likewise encountered, but were not so commercially exploited.

Two miners have the responsibility for shaft-bottom operation, and are depicted man handling a "tub" towards the cage entrance platform. On the wall to the left will be written safety codes, to enable signal communication to be made with the winder on the surface. Electric lighting is installed to enable the operators to clearly see point settings. Minimum turnaround time was necessary to keep the pit bottom clear, especially at periods of peak production. Teamwork was thus vital for efficient offloading of "empties" and consequent replacement of "loads" in the cage. Shafts often continued to deeper working levels, or had water collection "sumps" extending several feet below the cage-loading level, so dangers existed even in this relatively safe underground area. Journeys of several empty tubs were collected on sidings, these trains being taken by pit ponies via the haulage ways to the working faces. What appears to be lump-coal of good quality was about to be hauled to the surface, where it would undergo screening for size and grade. The top plank of the tub needs the carpenter's attention.



Cannock Chase Colliery. — (Old) Underground Furnace.



Cannock Chase Colliery. — Bottom of Shaft.

MINERS AT WORK

The photographs on the previous page, are part of a series taken by Arthur Sopwith, which included this fine view of the pithead at 2's pit. The view depicted the cage which had just been loaded with an empty wooden two-plank "tub". The improvised canopy shelter over the cage theoretically contributed to accident prevention, shielding the miners from masonry accidentally falling down the shaft while the men were in transit.

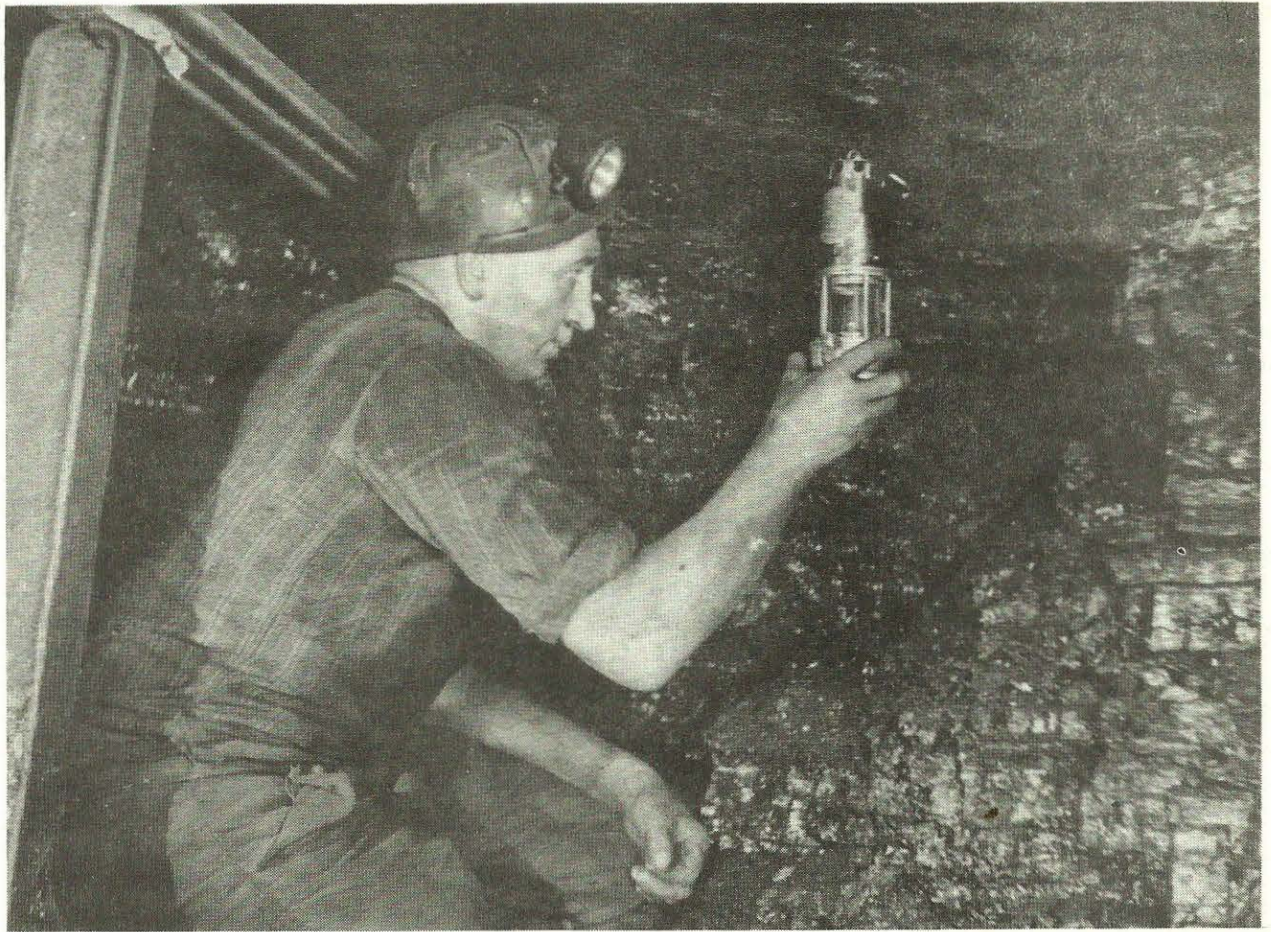
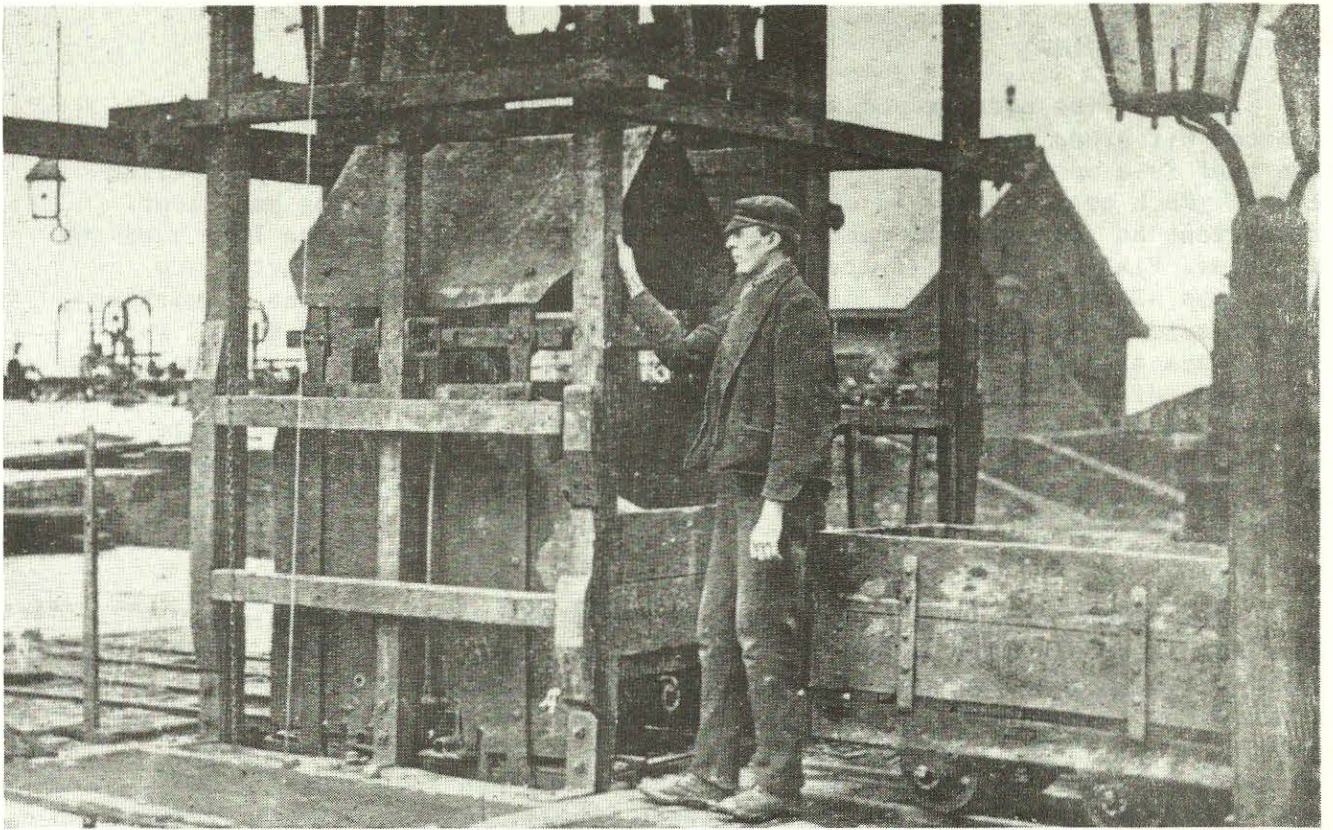
This photograph clearly portrayed the inherent dangers of pithead operation, as there was little in the way of automatic gates and other safety features to be expected in modern mines. To the left can be seen the top of the boilers, while further left and off the picture, were the offices portrayed elsewhere in this work. Huge gaslamps (right) provided the illumination necessary for winter or night-time working, and these gas installations were replaced by S.F. Sopwith as electrical generation was introduced, using steam from 2's boilers. The "Fly", as it became known, was a successful pit, and provided work for many of the early settlers in the Chasetown district.

Crouching at the coalface, the "fireman" inspected for gas at the beginning of a working shift. The scene is more modern, showing the use of "I" section steel props for roof support, while the miner wears a modern safety helmet with headlight.

The older traditional type of miners' lamp is being used in the test for gas concentration. A slow seepage of gas occurred from most coal seams, the concentration being kept down by efficient ventilation. In some areas of new headings, however, gas could become a danger, and regular, thorough testing was vital for pit safety.

The test for gas was easy to carry out. As the gas was lighter than air, any concentration would collect just below the roof of the workings. The safety lamp was raised to touch the roof, and if gas was present, the flame would be extinguished.

A thin layer of coal was left in situ to provide a more even roof above the working face.



MINERS AT WORK

In this fine underground study we can see work on a 4 foot face, steel shafted pit props rest on wooden base supports, while the final contact with the roof is a wooden wedge. Rings on the S.F. props enable them to be pulled clear. Each prop is capable of height variation to suit roofing and floor conditions at its point of operation. The coal face is behind the left hand row of props. Flat-bottom rails are laid with a minimum of wood supports, and take tubs along the face for easy loading. The cramped conditions in working such a seam is obvious, with a crouching working position being needed for long hours at a time. A further difficulty experienced was that tubs had to be man-handled in and out of such low-roofed localities, pit ponies being too tall to work in such a low seam. To the right "gobbin" work, or rock and waste infill, was placed to the rear of the right hand row of props. This would lessen the shock and intensity of roof fall when props were withdrawn and replaced further left, as coal extraction along the face advanced.

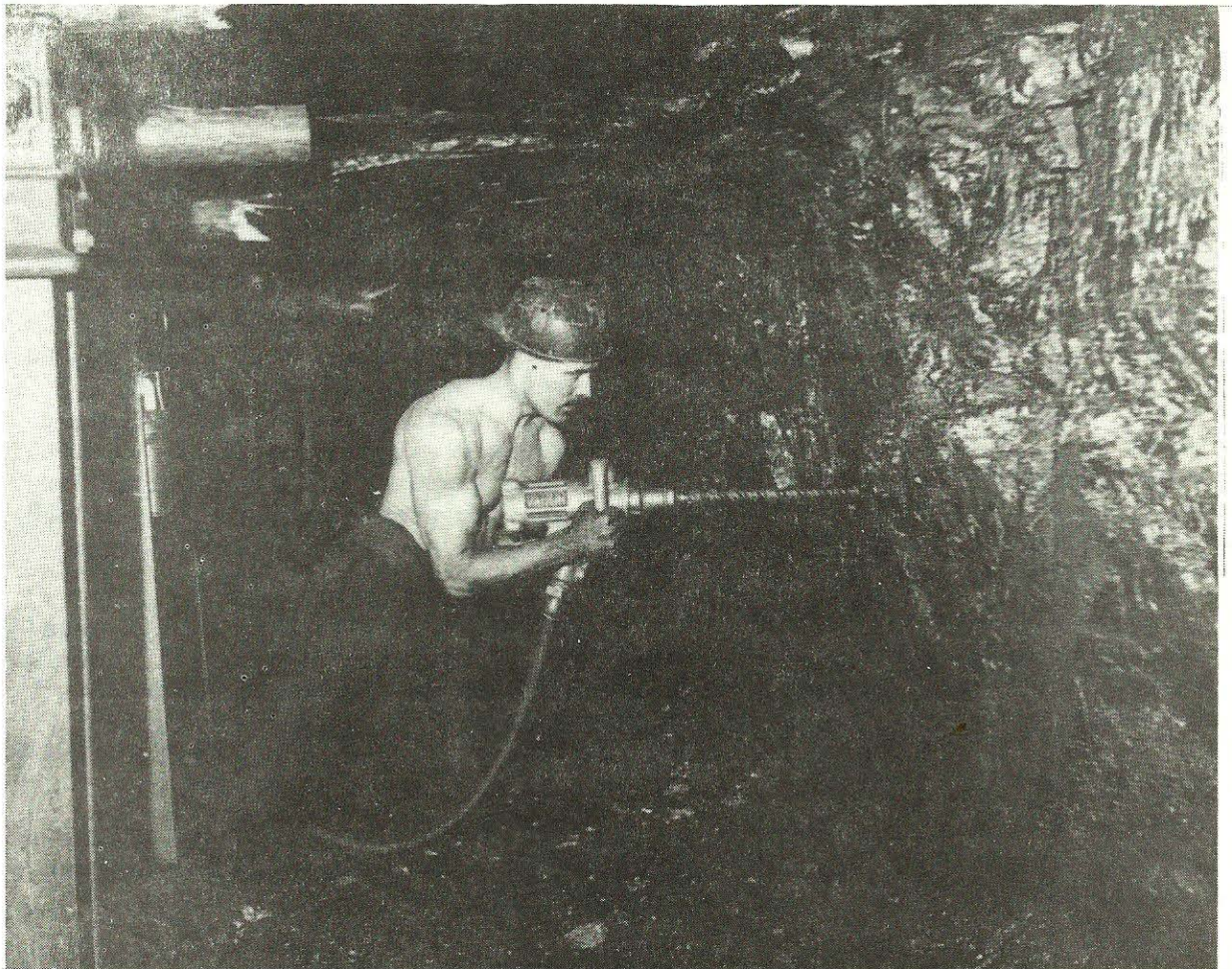
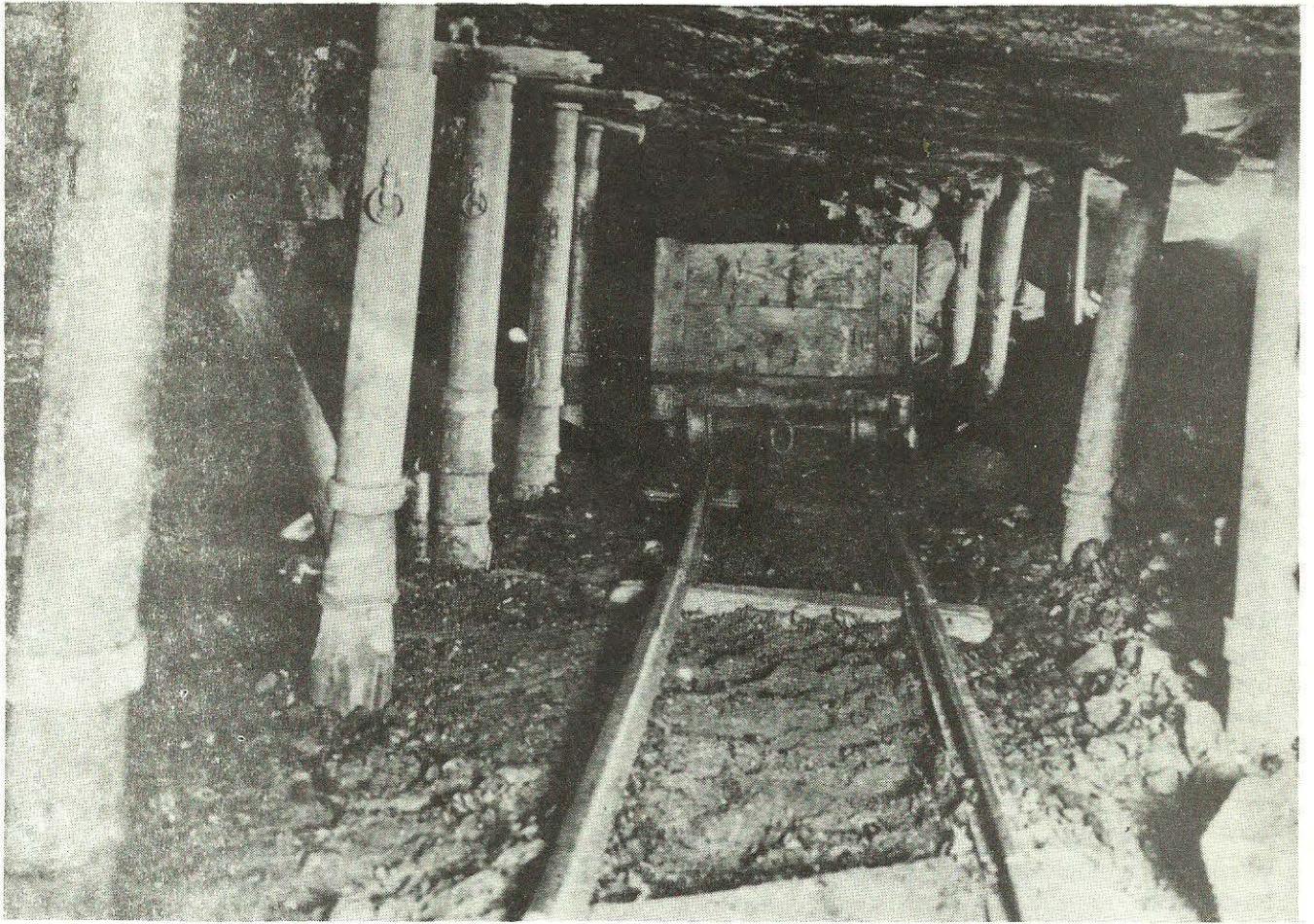
The rock roof looks quite stable in its strata above the haulage way. Rockfalls were always a danger, however, and were part of the risk miners lived with daily. In the early years, compensation for injury was either totally lacking, or difficult to obtain, but the Cannock Colliery extract below shows that by 1872, provision for accidents was made available through a Colliery Accident Fund, to which it is likely, workers contributed a small sum weekly. In the case of death, donations towards funeral expenses were given and where an accident meant absence from work, accident pay was made. For permanent injury a bonus sum was given. Accounts for the Accident Fund in the year 1872 can be found on page 30.

This photograph is thought to be the first underground picture taken by Bert Atkins in 1919.

Wearing his helmet back to front, in the manner earlier described and adopted by older miners, Billy Holland, is engaged in boring the coalface, in preparation for shot firing to fragment the coal for easier loading. Although not apparent in the picture, it was customary to "undercut" the seam before blasting, by removing a foot or two of coal beneath the remaining coal wall. As the charge was fired, the coal would then fragment and fall into the vacant space, thus limiting the danger of accident, and flying coal.

Steel props with "lids" underlayed the wooden roof supports at the face. On the second prop, a "Thaw" electric lamp gave the fireman/borer adequate illumination as he proceeded to bore the powder hole to required depth using a Victor drill. A controlled collapse of the face was required and experience counted for much as the right amount of blasting powder was inserted and packed home for maximum efficiency. Several types of powder were used in the Chase mines, an especial favourite being "John Hall". Strict check was kept on all explosives issued, each consignment having to be signed for and witnessed. Powder was kept in a small brick and concrete magazine situated some distance from the pit.

As the loose coal was loaded and transported away, a further row of roof support props would be positioned along the length of the face. Obviously, drilling was a very warm job, and Billy was undressed for the action in this "four foot" (1 metre 20 cm) seam.



MINERS AT WORK

Somewhat easier working conditions are noticeable in this photograph of a conveyor-end loading point for "Brooch" coal at No. 9's Colliery of the Cannock Chase Colliery Company. This beginning of the main haulage way is very firmly supported by "I" section steel arch-beams, with wooden cross struts holding up the roof above them. Heavy duty wiring for the underground motors, and hydraulic pipes are seen on the walls, while underground telephone wires are visible at top left. The conveyor end was situated over a point junction in the tracks, and the tubs were being manually pushed beneath the loader. When filled they were re-formed into "journeys", to be hauled to the pit-bottom cage loading area. Standard helmets with front illumination determine that this photograph was taken in the "modern" mining area.

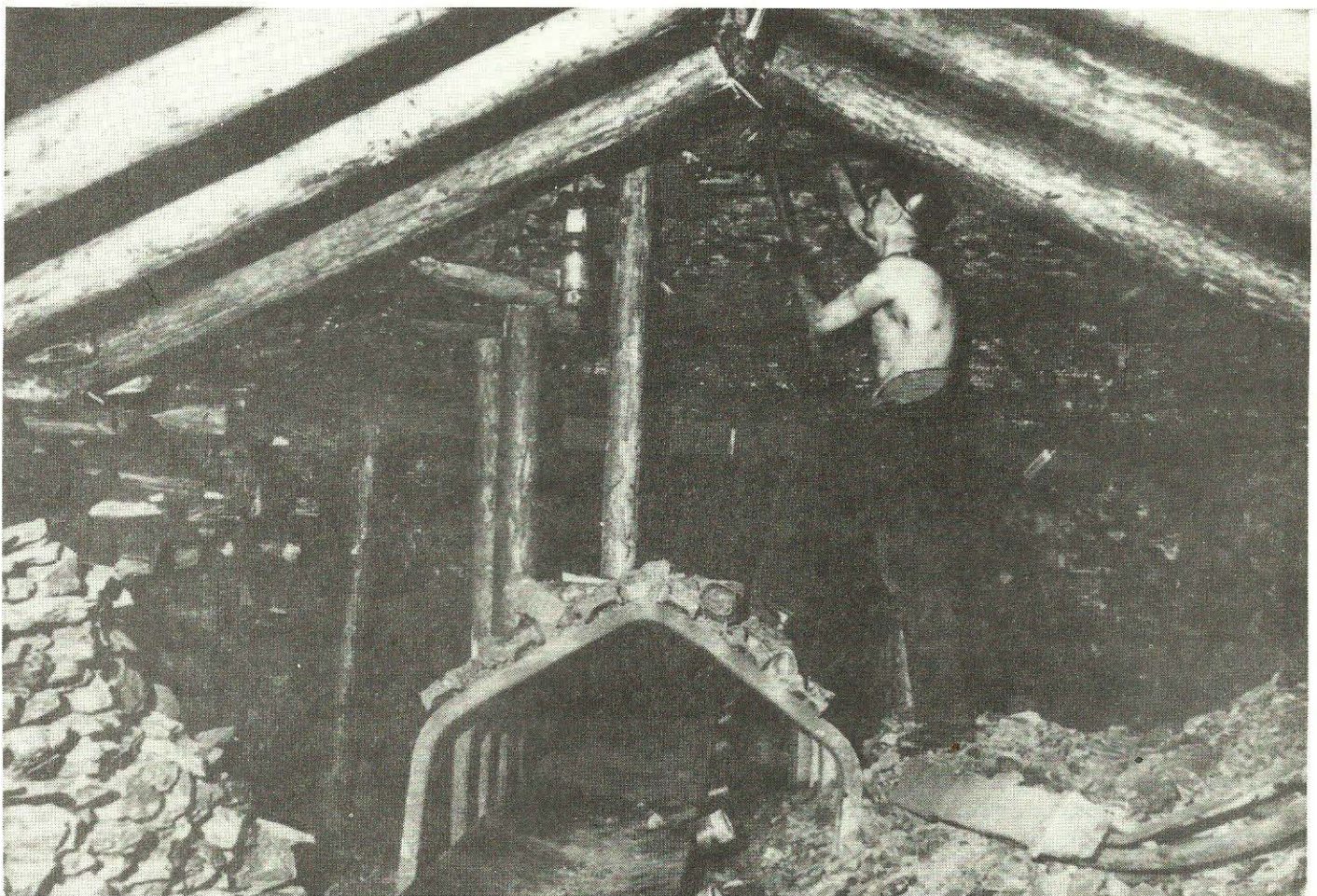
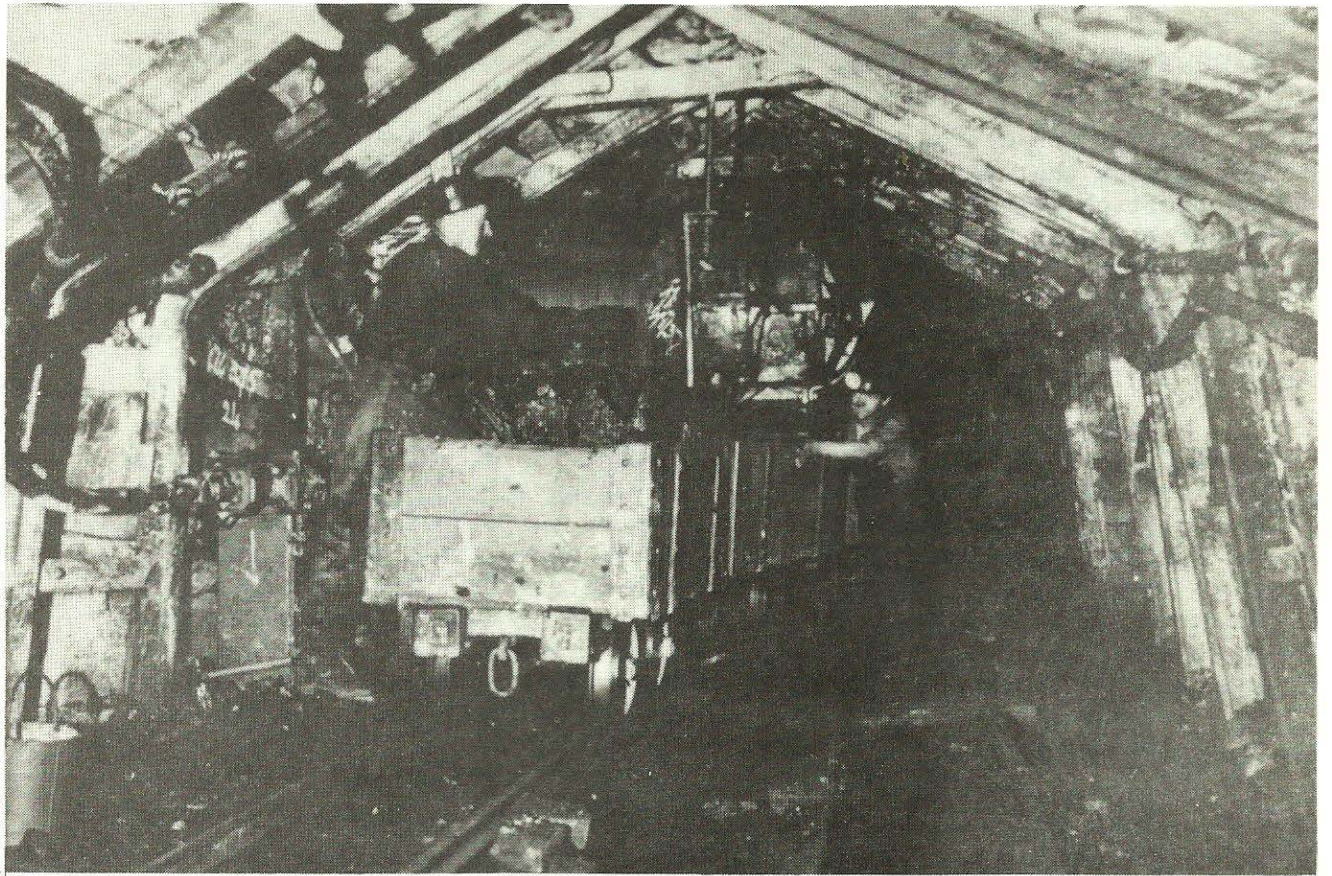
Two buckets for fire-fighting are to be seen in the left hand corner, to comply with strict underground regulations to quickly eliminate the danger of fire. Although mining continued until pit closure with relatively little change in the techniques of extraction, such advances as coal-cutters, loaders, conveyors etc., eased the miners lot and increased efficiency. Today, the ever-present danger of underground fire is reduced along haulage ways by fire doors, and by inert finely ground stone, set along and between the haulage tracks. Roof fire-traps using ground stone dust are situated periodically along the roads to fill the tunnels with inert dust should an explosion occur.

The width and height of the tunnel probably drastically reduced a few yards into the distant gloom to a smaller conveyor tunnel extending backwards to the loading face.

Periodically, as extraction work advanced beyond the reasonable operating distance of the conveyors, either a further conveyor had to be installed, or more usually, the haulage way extended while the conveyor retreated into the new workings. Widening of small passages, or extension of working tunnels was known as "ripping". This view depicts the "Ripper" at work carefully picking down rock and shale to the required height and width of the roadway. A protective cradle guards the conveyor in the area of operations, while a temporary support of wooden props holds up the roof in readiness for insertion of more hefty roof support props, angled and compression-jointed at their apex. The traditional safety lamp hangs in the roof for illumination, while the miner, Clarence Bill of 8's pit, wears his safety helmet and steel toe-capped shoes as protection against intermittent falls of loosened rock. The side-walls of the new extension would be carefully rock-packed (gobbed) and lateral steel and wood supports inserted. Every few yards a deeper cleft was dug into the side wall to provide safety "man-holes" for refuge should a roof fall, or run away journey of tubs, or other danger demand a hasty retreat.

It is said that the roof of the haulage way between No. 2 and No 3 pits at Chasetown showed the fossilised impression of a mussel bed, over its entire distance. With wooden roof support, a journey down its length was akin to a journey through a vast gallery of a million shells, both staggering in its extent and in its primitive grandeur. Many fossil fragments have been recovered during research work undertaken by children at the Chasetown Schools.

Excess debris on the tunnel floor would be loaded into tubs and used either as gobbing material throughout the mine, or taken to the surface for dumping on the spoil heaps associated with the mining landscape.



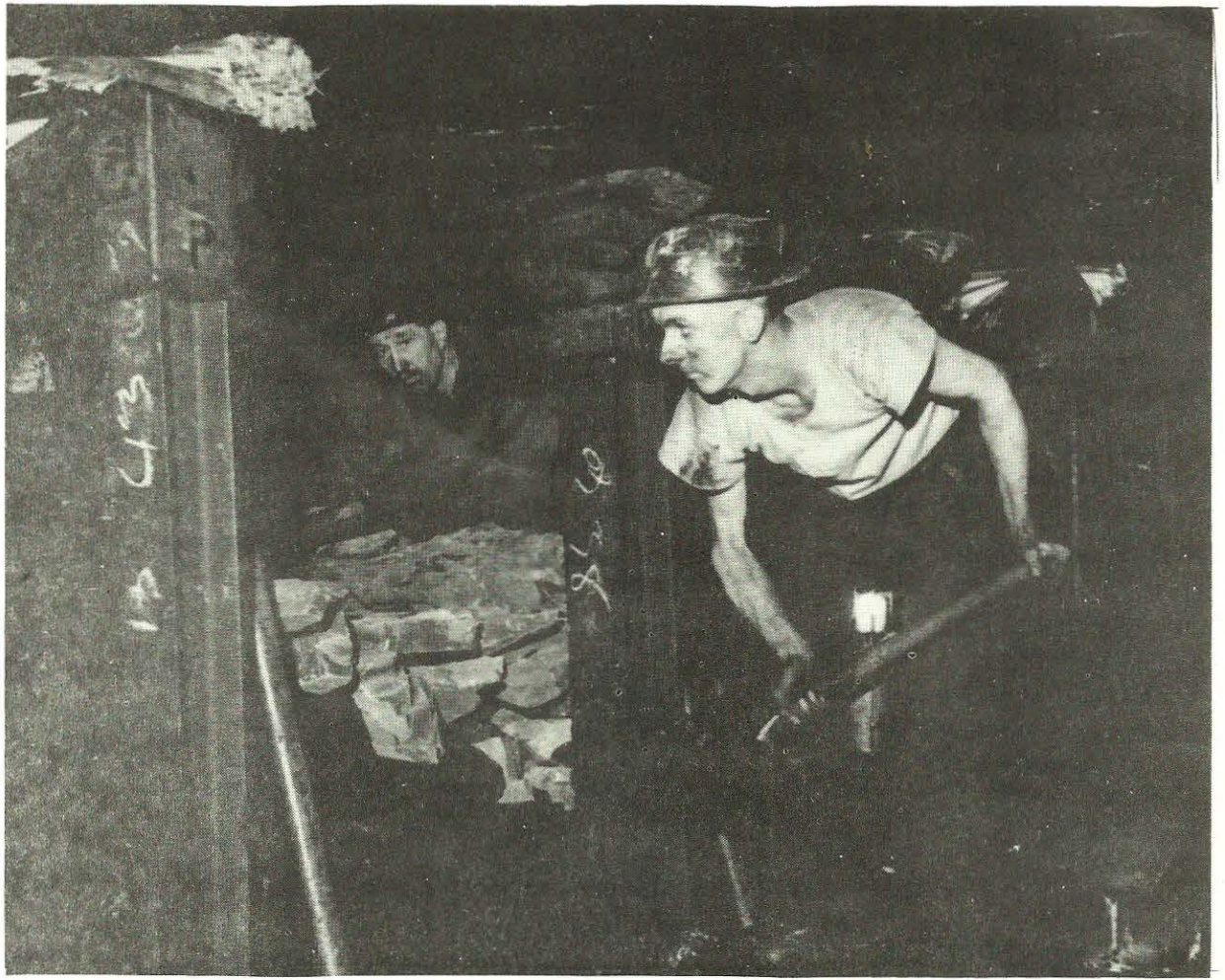
MINERS AT WORK

Hefty "I" section props, with "lids" support an even, flat roof, under which the coal has been extracted. The task in hand was building a supporting column of waste in a conveyor face. The column walls had an outer lining of lumps of shale and stone along their length. The miner between the first two props extends the column using the larger rock pieces to provide a stable wall, while smaller material is being shovelled as infill. Denis Boston, back bent and with lamp hanging from his waist, wields the shovel at 7's pit.

Even when steel props were used, it was customary to place pine or softwood supports above the "lids", so that the weight of the subsiding roof fell on the wooden cushion. The crushing effect on the wood is well seen above the nearest prop, where the wood has been flattened, distorted and shattered. This effect is also visible above the third and fourth props along the face. Where tunnels were determined to be permanent features, to be used over an extended period of time, lining with stone or rock was customary, this being further strengthened by steel side supports with overhead framing to preserve the aperture for its future roll and use. A prop and lid can be seen lying horizontally on the floor (bottom right).

In an attempt to simplify the transportation of extracted coal, an inclined ropeway, known as the "Drift", was excavated from a point near the site of the wharf and No. 1 Colliery, to the bottom of 2's Pit, thus tapping the coal laden tubs at source underground. Additional shaft winding capacity was difficult or impossible to obtain due to limited and often fully utilised winding potential. To increase capacity, the installation of a cable worked inclined plane offered a higher shift/tonnage haulage capacity than another expensive, traditionally worked shaft. As much of the pit's output was already being transported by canal and rail, the drift would also theoretically short circuit the route of the coal via pit head, washers, screens and final transportation to the wharf. The coal could now emerge at the surface at the canal wharf, to be graded and screened at loading facilities installed near the canal.

The "Drift" was completed and opened on 16th April, 1923, and reached a depth of 60 metres below surface level at its junction with the haulage roads of the No.2 colliery. Continuous haulage rope running on surface rollers brought the loaded tubs to the surface. This photograph depicts the excavation gang, ceremonially posed, as the first tub was about to reach the surface. The "donkey" jacket, almost universally worn by contracting labourers in the 1920's, shows well in the portrait, while a group sporting a variety of hatware from trilby to sou'wester, line up on the left of the back row.



COAT OF ARMS

The Chasetown Coat of Arms represents two miners holding a shield between them. Although a modern sketch, depicting modern miners with their battery lamps attached to their headgear, the artist has depicted the miners' traditional tools of the industry. The miner to the right holds the traditional safety lamp in his hand, with his trusty "pick" on the ground by his side. The miner to the left displays a hefty hammer to smash and loosen the coal from the underground seam, but the shovel for loading the coal to the waiting "tubs" seems to be missing. The miners only have one "brace" for their trousers, this single brace held up the trousers while working lying on the side. If the second brace was used, it would be constantly falling off the lower shoulder, on the ground, to the constant annoyance of the miner. Heavy duty trousers and stout leather boots complete the clothing.

The shield depicts (top) St. Anne's Church, furnished and built for the community by the Company, and (bottom) shows a view over Norton Pool (now Chasewater) from the south side of the retaining dam. No. 2 pit, shafts and engine house are shown in the distance.

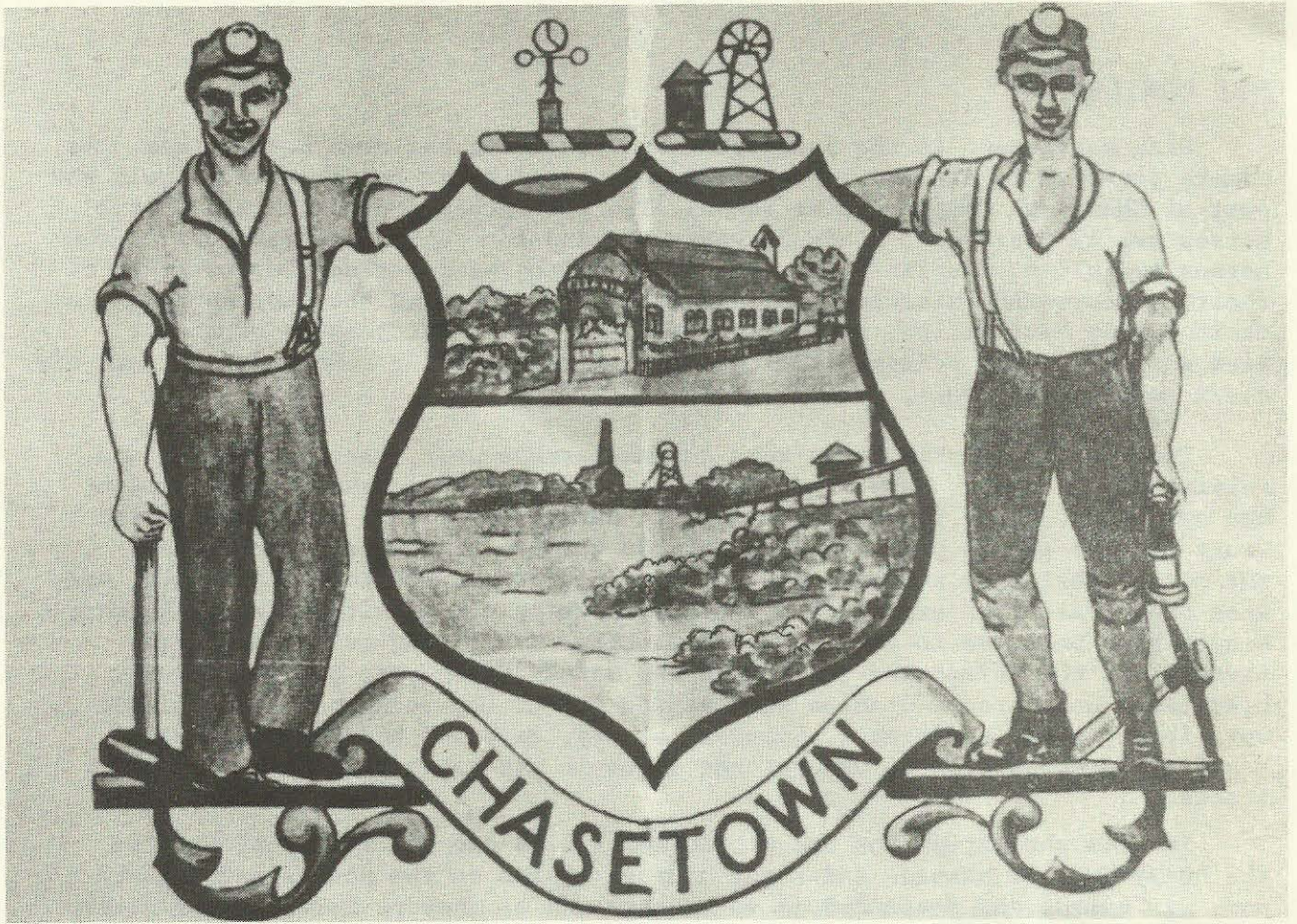
Over the shield are depicted the Chasetown Clock, with its large gas-lit bowls for illumination of the Square, while to the right Chasetown's dependence upon the mines for its existence is clearly shown in the representation of a winding house, headgear and winding wheel of an early Chasetown pit. The cover shows a slightly different version, from a china "fairing".

PIT PONIES

The earliest mines on the Chase were small "Bell" pits, shallow pits worked by one or two men, with another on the surface to wind up the coal "skip" by windlass, jinny or horse. These pits date from very early times. By 1298 the Bishop of the Manor of Cannock was recorded as having interests in coal, and by 1306, was granting rights to remove coal from his lands. Bell pits would be about 1½ mtrs. wide at the top, 4-5 mtrs. in diameter underground, and extend to 8-10 mtrs. in depth.

The early Chasetown pits (Nos. 1 and 2) were much larger concerns, with elaborate headgears, and deep shafts. Extensive surface buildings furnished all the needs of the mines, both in wood and metals. Carpenters and blacksmiths were employed. Steam provided the power for lowering men or empties to the bottom of the pitshaft, or for hauling coal to the surface. With the extension of working productive seams many hundreds of yards away from the pit-bottom, horses replaced human power for haulage. Pit ponies were taken into the gloomy labyrinths of the mines to haul rows of empties from the pit bottom to the coalface, or loads towards the cages, and ultimately to the surface. Miners specialising in haulage were responsible for their own ponies, which they named and looked after well.

Once transported to the pit bottom, the ponies seldom again saw the light of day, except for their annual break, when pit closure meant that for one week they could experience the thrill of fresh grass, and a mad gallop in the adjacent colliery fields. Small, sturdy ponies were used for the hard work involved. Here Mr. Woolridge (centre) and two workmen display a brown pony with three white "socks" and a sturdy dappled grey, to the camera. Note Woolridge's heavy silver watchchain and "fob", and the protective leather headshields of the ponies. The metallic eye protectors seen on p. 23 are not fitted over the eye circles. Note the ear muffs for protection of the ponies ears when working in low seams. Woolridge was Farm Bailiff for the Company, and achieved notoriety in driving the first car in the area when the Colliery Manager pioneered the "Horseless" carriage to replace his more leisurely pony and "trap" as Company transport.



PIT PONIES

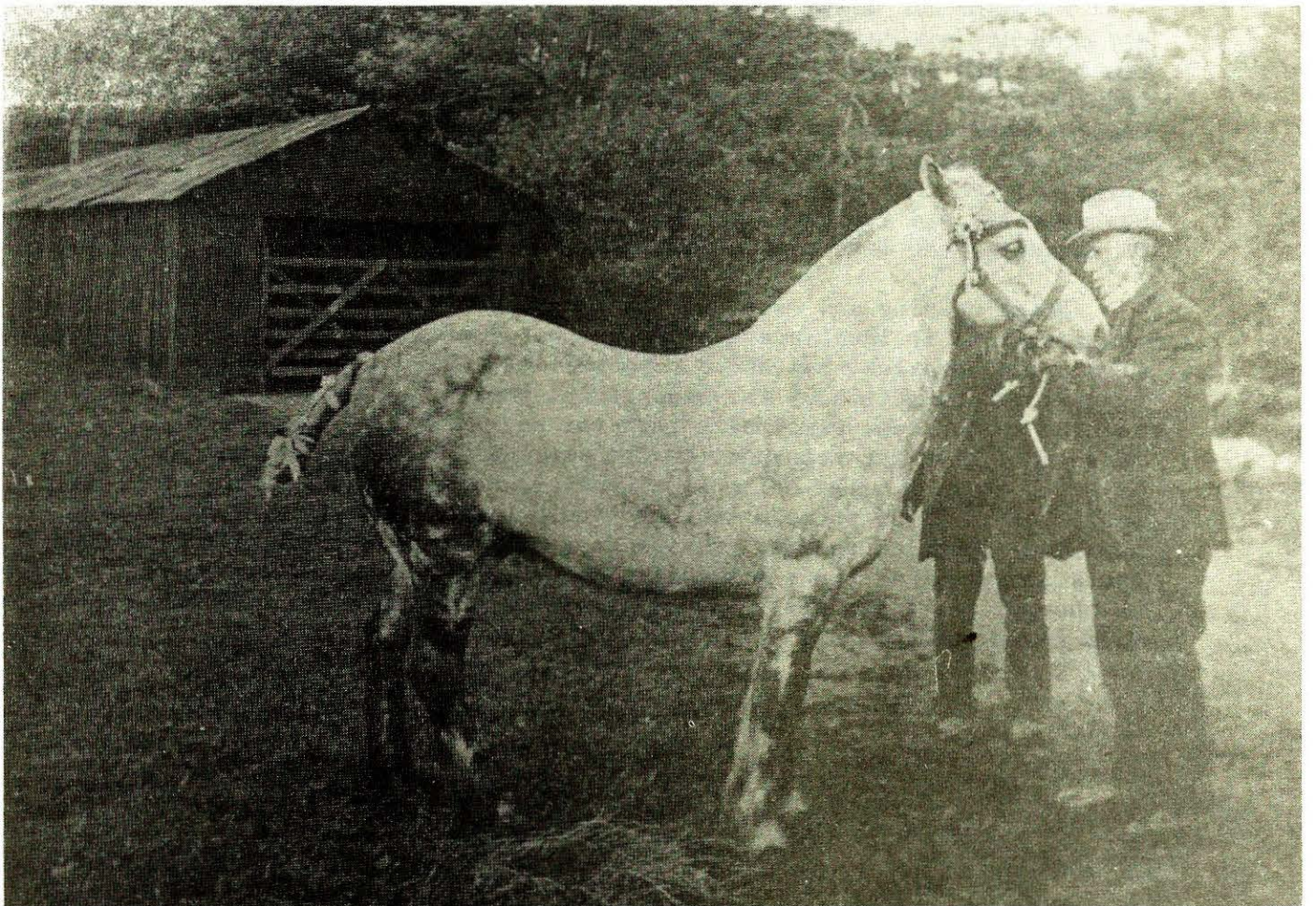
With management in the background and reclining children beyond them, the camera portrays 14 old and experienced horses and their handlers in a field now part of Chasetown Comprehensive School. The photograph captions state that 2 horses are 22 years old, 3 are 21 years old and the rest 20 years. None of the horses are blind, despite their long years in the semi-darkness or twilight of their underground existence. This posed photograph shows the pony handlers in their Sunday best attire, with waistcoats and silver watchchains prominent, ties worn and boots polished. One handler wears a muffler round his neck and his cloth cap back to front, working style.

The handler and his horse were an inseparable unit, each respecting and relying on the other. Many stories are told of the close association between man and horse, where the handler, even in hard times, would ask for an extra crust to give to his pony at "snappin". So used to the haulage routes were the ponies that they negotiated every obstacle or obstruction unflinching, and, when the disaster of explosion or intruding water struck without warning, many miners have been led to safety in the darkness by holding on to the horses harness, as the animal led the way to the safety of the pit bottom. In many pits large underground stables were hacked out of the rock where the animals were fed, groomed and bedded. Supplies of hay, oats and bedding straw were regularly dropped down to underground level in the cages taking down empty trucks.

In this photograph the eye protection grills can be clearly seen, also the heavy leather harness and stout haulage chains on the ponies backs. Each pony was named, and responded to voice commands as they performed their duties reliably and economically over their long working lives.

Another pastoral scene showing "Old Woolridge" with another grey pony, the regular handler unfortunately hidden behind the pony's head. In the background what appears to be a farriery shed, or indoor corral, guarded by a stout six barred gate, shelters under a well grown hedge. The brick chimney on the wooden building might suggest the blacksmith's furnace for preparation and fitting of shoes for the many ponies.

This grey, with darker hindquarters has obviously been well-groomed for some display or procession. The tail has been carefully plaited and ribboned, while a ribboned rosette has been placed at the junction of the browpiece. The sturdy little horse was obviously healthy and well fed, his coat well conditioned and mane short cropped. Mr. Woolridge too is obviously attired for an important function, with polished shoes and a fine straw trilby hat.



PIT PONIES

The fields owned by the Colliery Company seldom hosted pit ponies, except during holiday periods, or strikes. More usually they were used to grow the hay that was the pit ponies staple diet. The photographs on this page show the gathering of a fine crop of hay over half a metre in height. The "hay" was a balanced blend of ryegrass, fescues and clovers which were cut by a mechanical moving machine. Motive power was two medium sized draft horses, and as the mower went forward, the triangular razor-sharp section of the "knife", left a flat even swath of juicy grass and clover, patterning the field in concentric rings. The operative had a rough ride from the machine as the patterned cast-iron wheels struck the angular surface stones. Waistcoat and cloth cap are the apparel for this fine warm day, while the observer to the left wears a "brace and bib" in blue or orange, with a loose fitting hat. The boss poses in the grass with the crop reaching his waist, assessing prospects, the weather, and the quality and food value of his years production, later to be casually consumed by pit ponies below ground at "snappin", or when their day's work was done.

The warm sun having dried out the moisture from the grass stems, the hay crop was now ready for collection. Having been turned two or three times, to aid natural drying in the sun, and finally bundled into handy forkfuls, the hay was elevated by long pitchforks to the four wheeled wagons. What appears to have been an excellent crop, would then be taken to the appropriate yard, where it would be unloaded, and made into a large hayrick. At the time of hay harvest, every pair of helping hands was welcome, and the nine men at work in the field would work until dusk, accompanying the last wagons to the yard.

After feeding and watering the horses, the workparty would quench their thirsts in local brewed ale. Further drying and maturing took place within the haystack, and after several weeks the seasoned hay would be ready for consumption by the underground ponies. A huge flat knife would be used to cut down vertically into the haystack to make trusses of reasonable size for transport to the pit, and storage in a ventilated hayloft, these finally being sent underground as and when necessary. The smell and taste of prime mature hay would be welcomed by the ponies, the hay being chombed readily, chewed to a pulp and swallowed with a relish and a snort. Other foods mixed with the hay for a balanced daily diet would be chopped roots (turnips, swedes) crushed oats and bran (waste roughage from flour production).



AREA WORKSHOPS

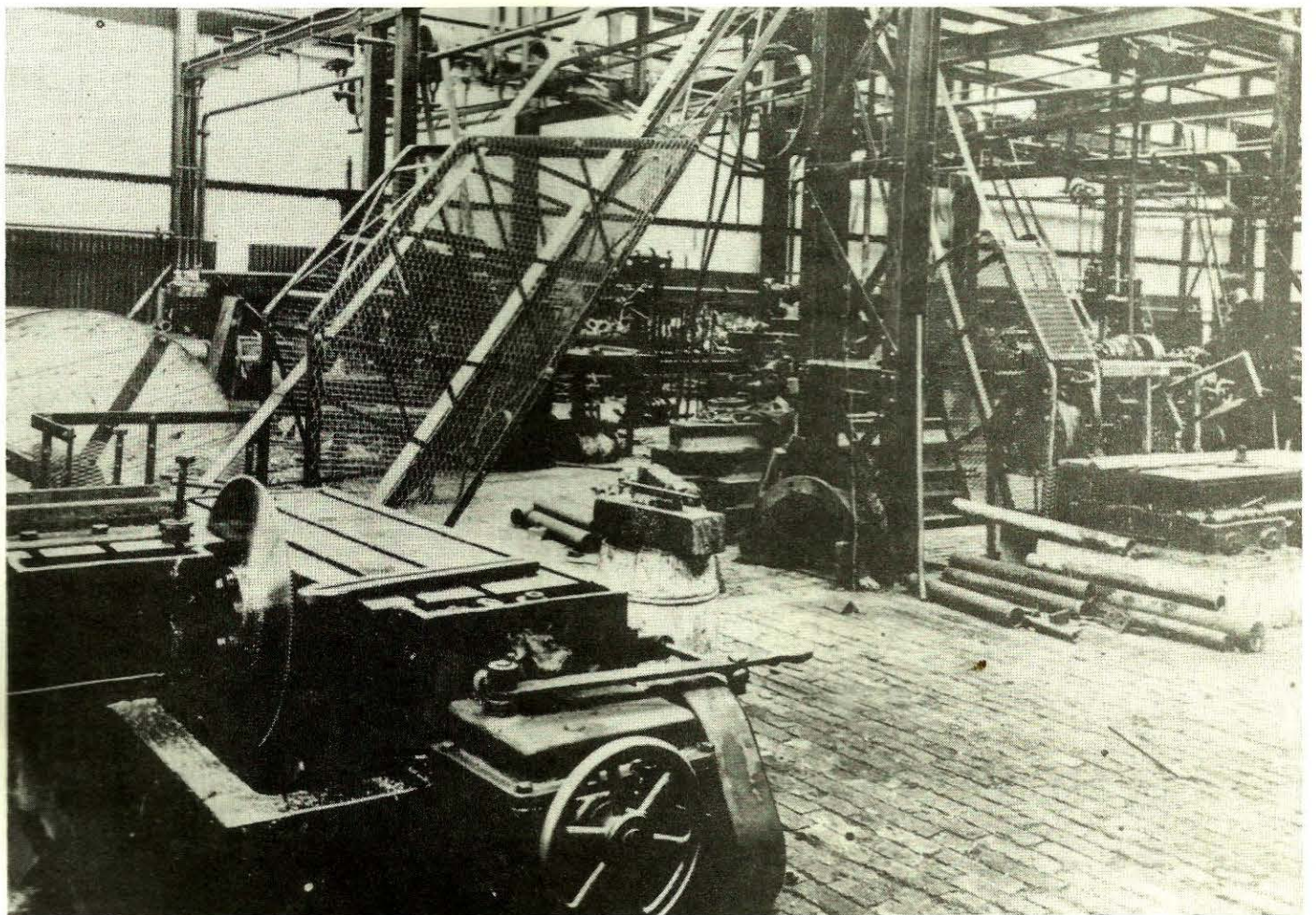
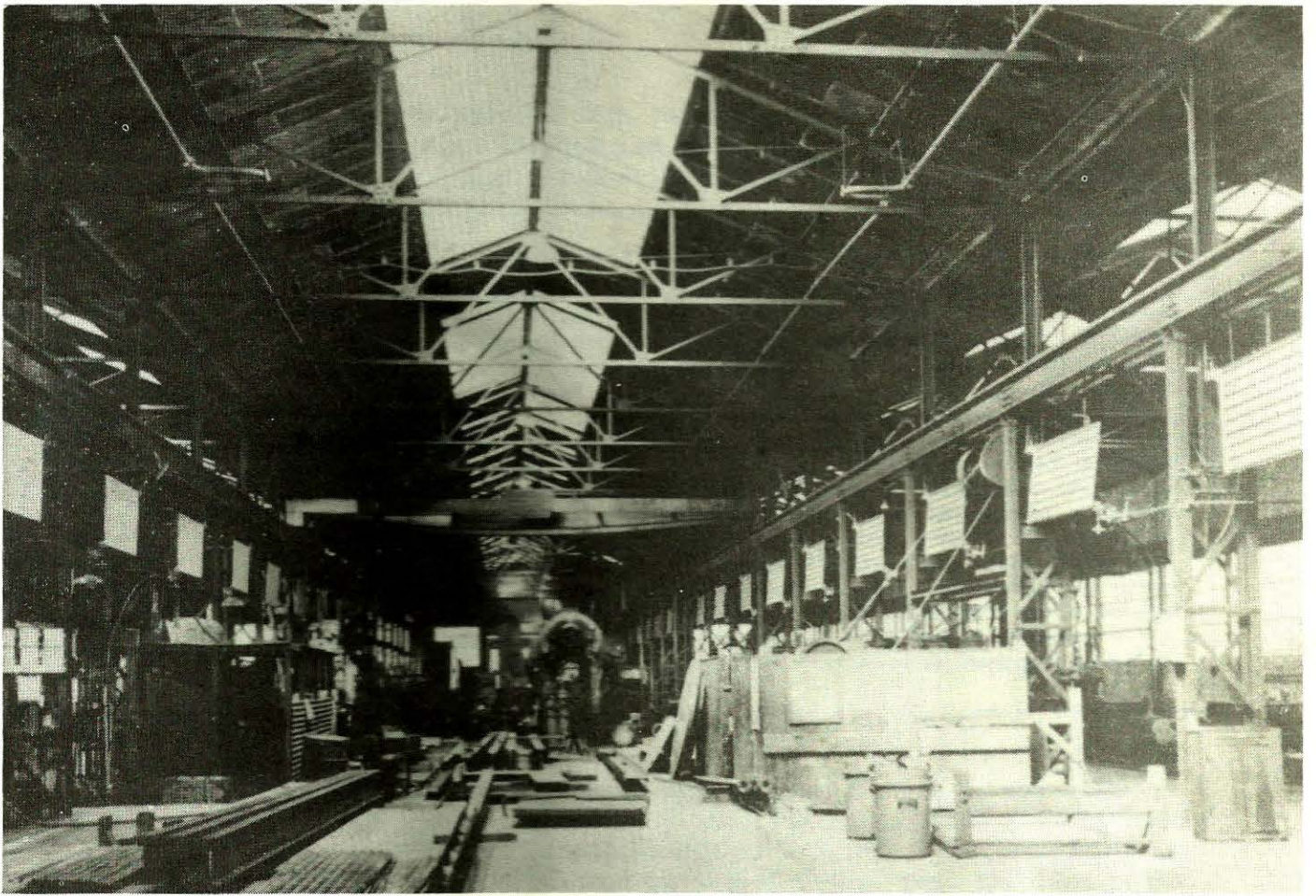
The Cannock Chase Colliery Company's interests, centred on Chasetown, developed until finally some 10 sites were in existence. The transport of coal was mainly by rail to the canal outlet at the Anglesey Wharf, near the No. 1 pit site, and a fleet of locomotives were used for this work. Heavy repair and fabrication shops were erected, which could cope with the heaviest maintenance work, these well equipped shops becoming known as "The Plant". Various specialist shops catered for fabrication, pattern making, and heavy machining of parts, for all types of machinery. The large erection shop had a heavy duty overhead crane, and repairs to the locomotive fleet was facilitated by a fine skylight roof, which gave the erection floor adequate overhead lighting. The giant size of this shop caused it to be known affectionately as "Wembley", and in this photograph, the long-boilered 0-6-0 Saddletank locomotive No. 6 has been stripped in readiness for heavy boiler repairs.

Over the years, the shops were developed, to become finally known under National Coal Board management as "Area Workshops", which could deal with anything from an electric motor, to an underground conveyor belt. With the decline of the coal industry, the workforce at the shops has been reduced, but the skills of engineers and trained machinists still maintain the high standards expected, and demanded by "the Company".

The complexity of the machinery at the area shops is apparent in this view of the machine shop. The wire-mesh guards form safety cages to guard employees from the dangers of drive belts, which provide the overhead power source for machinery on the shop floor. The brick floor formed a serviceable and dry base for operations.

The Cannock Chase Colliery had several sites for the production of its own bricks from clays mined from its collieries. Bricks of different areas bore varied markings such as C.C.C., C.C.C.C. or C.C.C.CO. Finally brick production was centred and expanded on the site of the No. 10 pit near the Cross Keys Hotel, Hednesford, which indicates the extent and area of the C.C. Colliery Company's interests.

A large rotary saw is shown in the foreground of the picture, while metal tubes of various diameters are stacked, as offcuts, on the floor near the reciprocal heavy duty saw to the right. Spare parts of all types could be fabricated, milled machined and the skill of the workforce was often put to the test in producing pre-production samples of various inventions thought out by the colliery management. The blue-prints and designs of the inventive genius of many colliery servants never held any terrors for the dedicated workforce. These plans were painstakingly fabricated or machined, soon to be put to the test in practical trials under the rigours of normal mining conditions.



MINING MANAGEMENT

This photograph and biography of S.F. Sopwith appeared in the Colliery Guardian, 17th February, 1928, when Mr. Sopwith was in his fifties, as part of a series "Men of Note in the British Coal Industry"

No. 127.—Mr. S. F. SOPWITH.

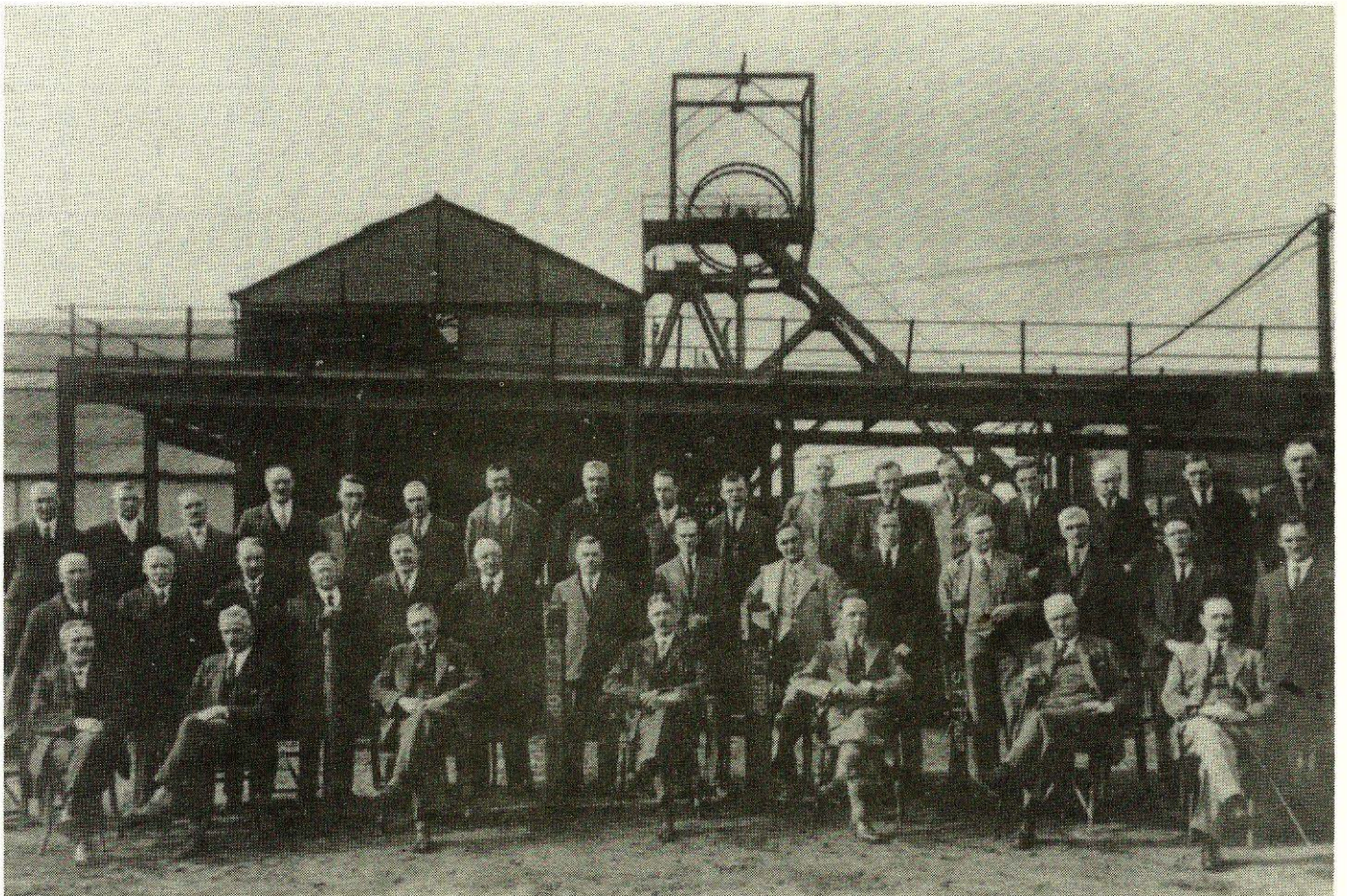
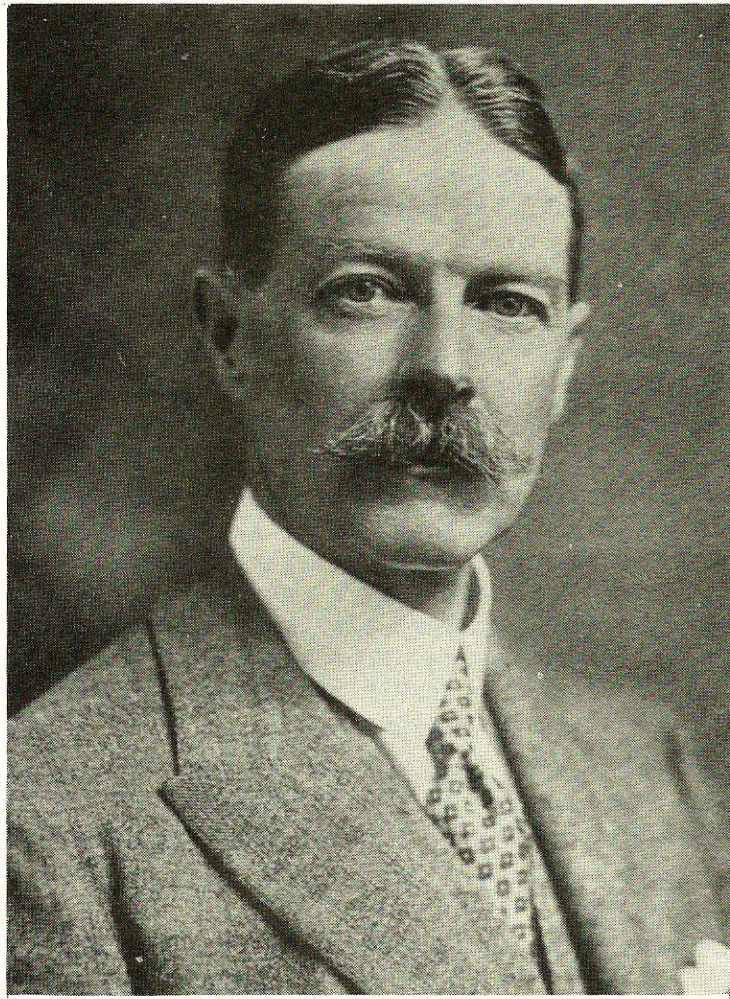
Mr. Shelford Francis Sopwith was born on July 11, 1876, being the second surviving son of Mr. Arthur Sopwith, M.Inst.C.E., F.G.S., and grandson of Mr. Thomas Sopwith, M.A., F.R.S. He was educated at King's School, Canterbury, and received his early mining training under his father at the Cannock Chase Colliery, at lead and zinc blende mines in the Halkyn district of North Wales, and at Camborne, Cornwall. He took up an engagement with Messrs. Bewick and Moreing, the well-known mining engineers in London, in September 1895, and, proceeding to Western Australia in August 1896, acted as mechanical draughtsman and surveyor at their head office at Coolgardie, later being in charge of their branch at Cue, in the Murchison gold field. Mr. Sopwith returned to England in May 1901 to take up the post of assistant to his father at Cannock Chase Collieries. After acting as certificated manager and agent, he succeeded his father as general manager in 1918, which post he still holds. He has been responsible for extensive developments at the colliery of electricity as applied to all surface and underground plant and machine mining. A further development has been the supply of electrical energy for lighting and power purposes to the surrounding villages and townships. Mr. Sopwith is a member of the West Midlands Joint Electricity Authority, and general manager of the Cannock Chase and Wolverhampton Railway Co. A past-president of the South Staffordshire and Warwickshire Institute of Mining Engineers, he has taken a large part in the proceedings of that body.

Opposite is a photograph of the Cannock Chase Colliery Company officials, taken in 1935, and featuring, as background, the pithead gear of the No. 3 Colliery. S.F. Sopwith is centre front, together with M.J. Foggo (front row, 3rd from left). These two combined their inventive skills to produce the S.F. pitprop, which was basically a steel shaft with a broad base, and top capping which was angled rather than flat, so allowing the prop to be wedged into position by a heavy hammer blow. Featured in the photograph is a range of S.F. props with both cylindrical and box columns, and both standard and heavy duty versions are shown. Column height could be varied according to the height of the seam being worked. The S.F.'s proved exceptionally strong and safe in operation, and was generally adopted in many areas of the country.

Front row:- C. Holland, I.J. Daker, M.J. Foggo (General Manager), S.F. Sopwith (Agent), W.H. Richards, (Manager), J.B. Beacon (Secretary), E.G. Fenn (Sales).

Second row:- W.C. Sharratt, W.Wright, A.J. Fearn, S. Davis, J. Black, D. Begley, J. Fairbanks, G. Arnott, A.V. Fenn, T.W.J. Kendrick, W.W. Arnott, O. Cowlshaw, H.J. Pointon, C. Cheatham.

Third row:- T.Perks, H. Woolridge, A.J. Plant, S. Sann, J.P. Beacon, D. Barnes, J.W. Walker, C. Morton, H.A. Richards, E. Lees, A. Sanders, A.T. Jones, W. Stewart, G.T. Earp, R. Harvey, J.W. Earp, T. Phillips.



MINE RESCUE TEAM

Wherever there were mines, there was, even in the most efficiently run pits, an ever present danger from the unexpected. A sudden roof fall, influx of water, a sheared haulage cable or a thousand other misfortunes, could quickly endanger life and limb. The Cannock Chase Colliery Company had strict rules and a fine safety record in its mines. Never complacent, it provided facilities for the training and competitive practice of rescue teams in each of its colliery interests.

This photograph depicts the Cannock Chase Colliery rescue team fully equipped at what is thought to be the Heath Hayes Colliery, used on this occasion for the inter- colliery rescue and safety competition. Such competitions would simulate one or more of the mining tragedies that could be experienced in real life, and ensured that rescue teams were fully trained and experienced.

The mine rescue car is in the background as the team members and their instructor / officials, pose in their goggles, with mine-breathing packs and air purifiers on their chests. Lamps, first aid cases and a two man stretcher are seen in the picture as part of their operational kit. Much spare time was voluntarily donated by the team for self imposed rescue training, attendance of First Aid classes, lectures and demonstrations in the latest rescue techniques. For this activity, the Mining College in Queen Street was utilised as well as pithead facilities at the mines.

Membership of the rescue team was esteemed a high honour. Many a Chase miner could thank these dedicated men for their devotion to duty, skill and expertise when disaster befell them in the Chasetown mines.

Team - back row:- Harry Merritt, Jos. Payton, Billy Neville, Payton Jnr.
Jim Davies (George Medal)
Front row:- Alfie Wright, George Roberts, Charles Holland

CANNOCK CHASE COLLIERY - Expenditure of the Colliery Accident Fund in 1872.

	£.	s.	d.
Total Accident Pay for the year on Surgeon's Certificate	394	17	6
" Sick Pay ditto	141	0	0
" Dr. Clarke's salary (four quarters)	308	14	0
" Hospital Subscriptions	11	11	0
" Funeral Donations	68	0	0
" Nurses attendance	12	11	7
" Stimulants for injured men	15	0	8
" Bonus for permanent injury	20	0	0
" Printing and Stationery	8	12	6
" Sundries	17	3	9
December 31st, 1872, Balance in 'Treasurer's hands	1028	5	8
	<u>2025</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>8</u>

Committee of Management

James Dainty , chairman
William Jackson
Thomas Randle
Charles Gee
Samuel Clarke
William Atkins
John Bailey

Samuel Miles, secretary
George Arnott
Walter Stonier
Alfred Fearn
Thomas George
Eli Birks
John Pickstone



MANAGERIAL RESIDENCES - CANNOCK CHASE COLLIERY COMPANY
MR. FOGGO'S HOUSE (LEFT) THE DIRECTOR'S HOUSE (RIGHT)
RAIN GAUGE IN THE FOREGROUND BEFORE GARDEN WAS RE-LANDSCAPED

COLLIERY LOCOMOTIVES

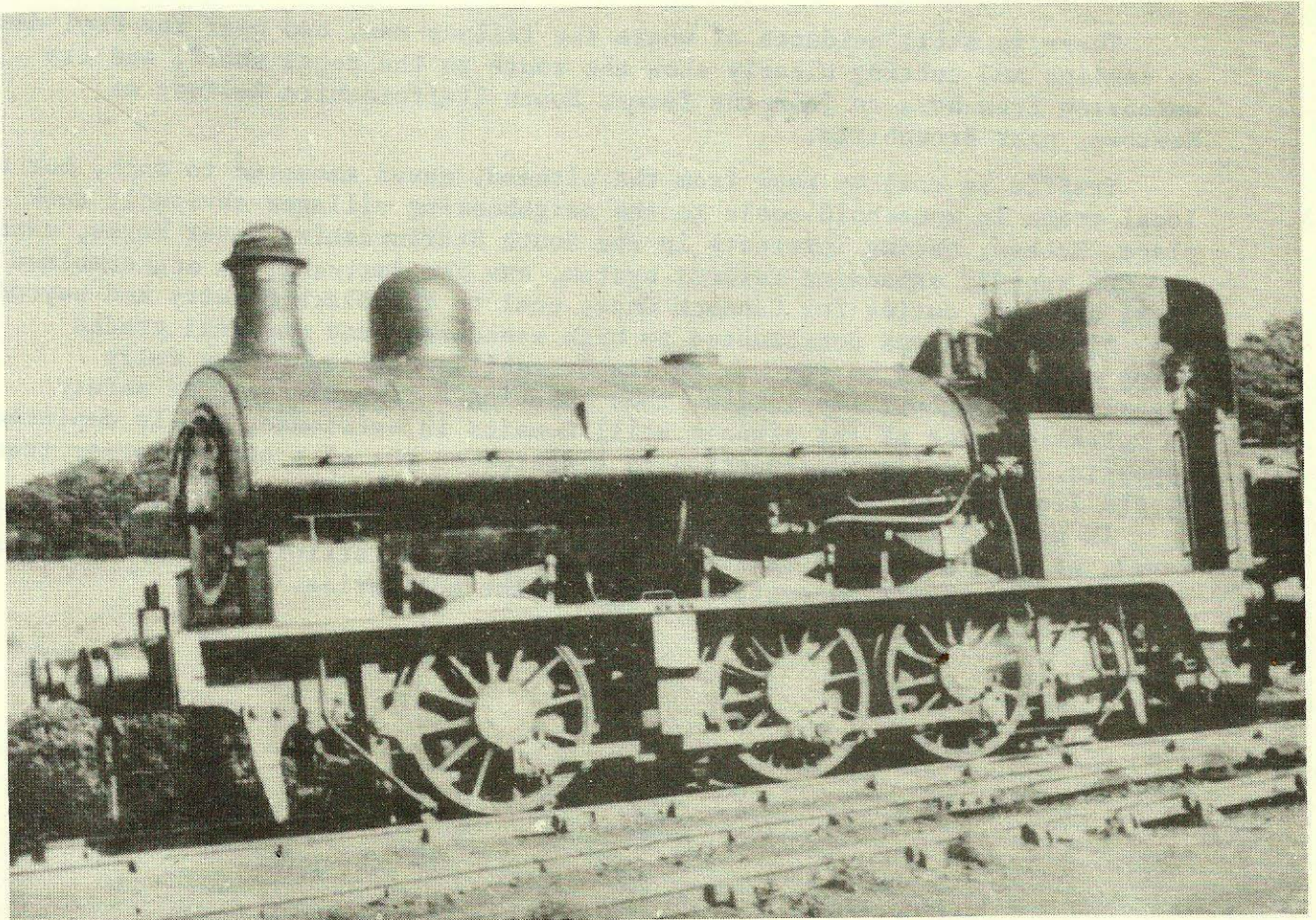
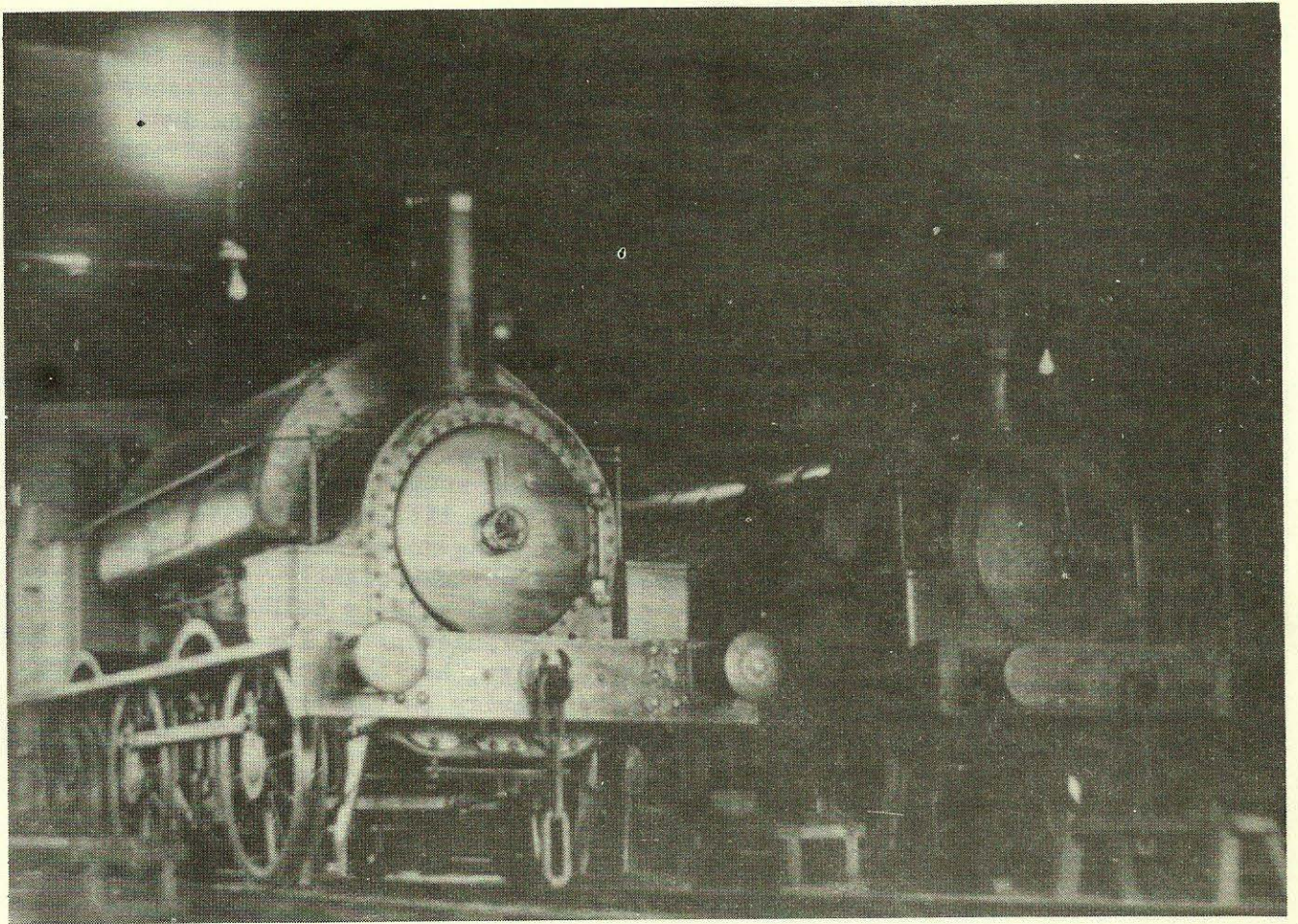
Cannock Chase Colliery Company favoured the 0-4-2 wheel arrangement for its locomotives. The early "Chawner" and McClean" locomotives complied with this rather unusual trend . With only four out of the six wheels coupled with the rear pair, situated under the cab, acting as load carriers only, these locomotives should theoretically have been prone to slipping. The 0-6-0 , or 0-4-0 , with all wheels coupled, was a much more numerous and generally accepted design for a locomotive chassis for coal haulage as the total weight of the locomotive would be available for tractive purposes.

In this photograph, early Cannock Chase locomotive "Chawner" and McClean" line up inside the locomotive depot, and clearly show the standard of maintenance and cleanliness typical of Cannock Chase Colliery operation. Pictured during their overnight period of inactivity, the locos stand over pits giving access to the valve gear and the unusual brake gear, the two sets suspended between the driving wheels of the 0-4-2 chassis. The front end sand boxes are evident to the side of the smoke box, and this resource was a necessity when operating on gradients with greasy or frosty rails. Various wooden "donkeys" are shown, their function to give access to the high running plates for cleaning, or otherwise to act as general purpose shelves for tools and materials should the locomotive be under repair.

Bolted access plates to the inside cylinders and valve chests can be seen below the buffer beam. Standard buffers and three link spring haulage chains are fitted. McClean was built by Beyer Peacock in 1856, being scrapped in 1956 after chalking up a century of service.

The long boilered No.6 saw many years of active service on the Chase. The old engine, with its unique wheelbase distribution was characterized by its rather squat appearance, which was made even more exaggerated by the way that the dome sat on the first boiler ring, immediately behind the chimney. A rather elaborately fabricated chimney, with a brass cap and flat spark arrester, sat proudly atop the long tank, extended over the firebox, but not continued over the firebox to the rear. Its venerable age is given away by the wooden front buffer beam, which has a steel strengthening plate attached to its front, while the crews position at the rear is simply covered by a piece of bent steel with forward spectacle windows pierced in it. With little or no room on the footplate for storage of coal, this old-timer ran semi-permanently coupled to a converted truck. This was merely a standard coal truck with the front taken out to give easy access to the coal fuel. An iron "pricker" or long poker rests in this improvised tender and this tool was used to break up the clinker which sometimes formed in the smokebox. The flat topped water filler can be seen on top of the saddle tank, while sizeable safety valves, and a steam whistle are shown just in front of the tank.

As with many other industrial concerns, careful choice of locomotive design before purchase ensured that a long and useful life was almost assured. With many designs offered by many different builders, management had a wide range of choice. Longevity in service is a justification of sound initial choice, and many old Chase locomotives performed their tasks over many decades, and many were still on the active roster when the mines closed, thus bringing the activity of these sturdy servants to an untimely end.



COLLIERY LOCOMOTIVES

"Foggo", built in 1946 is an interesting throwback to earlier times. On Nationalisation of the mines, it was obvious that the Company workshop had spares available for the older engines operated. The war having just ended, many heavy Austerity War Department 0-6-0's had returned from service abroad, and were admirable modern power for coal mine operation. It was an obvious opportunity to standardise the Riddles design built by several construction firms to Government contract.

On adoption of this policy, so the story goes, an edict went out to all NCB maintenance centres to clear out all old and unrequired parts in readiness for standardisation. This was put into effect at Chasetown, and it soon became apparent from the collected pile, that enough spares were on hand to produce a new locomotive. Being well schooled in the tradition of thrift, very shortly a "new" locomotive was built, to be known affectionately as "Foggo", after the Colliery Manager. Thus "Foggo" was a somewhat odd machine for its 1946 building date. The most dated part of this little locomotive's anatomy is undoubtedly the 1880's style tapered coupling rods. However, "Foggo" had many more modern features, and proved to be quite sprightly, especially over sharp pointwork, where its short, four coupled chassis seldom became derailed. Note the Company's version of the sanding arrangement on the front buffer beam, and the spark arrestor was fitted to the short, but ornately capped chimney. One of the nameplates is preserved for posterity to the Stafford Railway Circle. "Foggo" had a short but active life hauling its share of Chase coal.

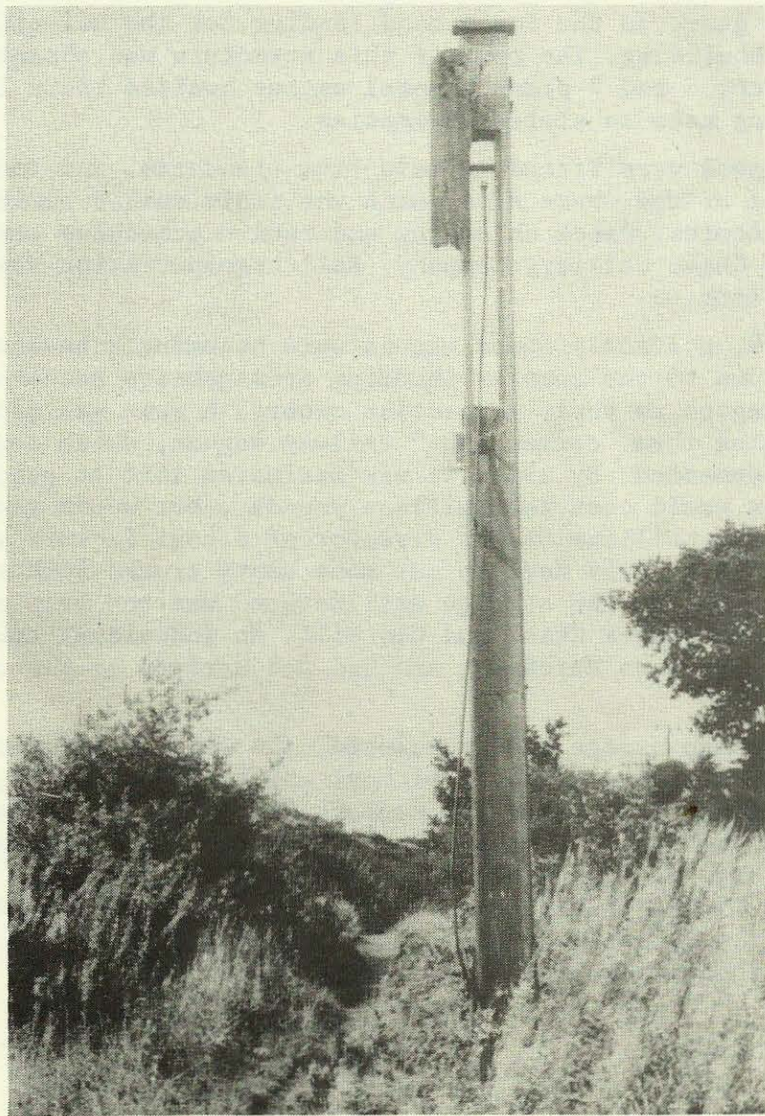
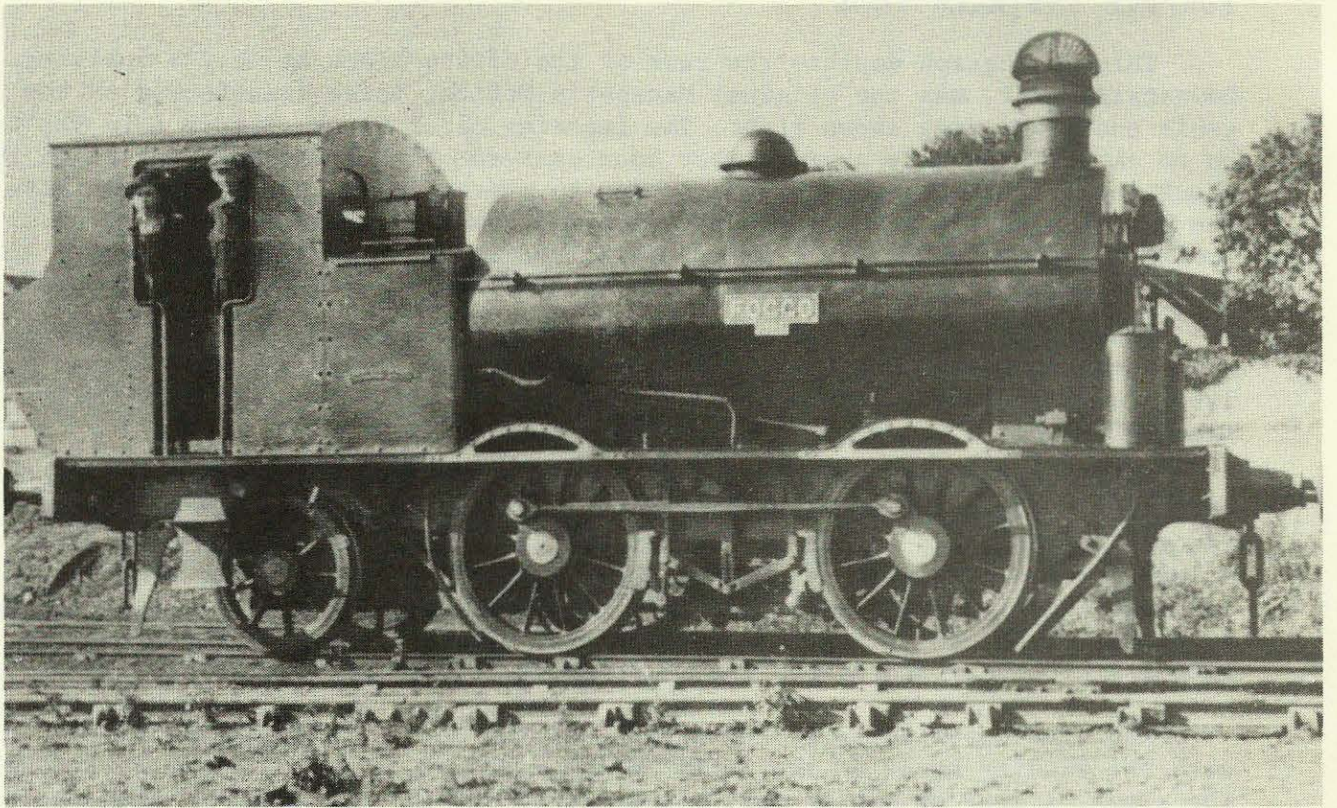
THE LINE

There is still evidence of where the railway ran, and near the Pool dam, an incline and cutting clearly show the route to the canal wharf, and its extension from here to join the former South Staffordshire Railway at Newtown, near Brownhills.

Traffic in coal by road from the pithead, never amounted to much, but some local trade in household coals to the neighbouring villages obviously took place. McLean, having interests in the South Staffordshire Water Works, canals and the rapidly expanding railway system, saw the desirability of a combined canal and rail outlet for Cannock Chase coal to the Black Country and beyond.

His railway was constructed to high standards, and was well graded using deep cuttings on its way to its Brownhills outlet. It was fully signalled throughout its length, thus ensuring a high standard of safety in operation. One of the signals still remains in existence, and is depicted opposite. This solid construction is situated on the site of the former trackbed of the line between Wharf cottage and Newtown.

In general the line from the Collieries to the Newtown Junction was fairly level, or with gradients falling, thus ensuring the efficient working of loads downhill, and returning empties uphill to the collieries.



SURFACE INSTALLATIONS

This photograph depicts the rear of the office-block at No.2's Colliery. Downstairs left, was the original Manager's Office, later transferred to the gable ended building shown right. The imposing clock tower clearly told the time, so no excuses for late arrival were countenanced. The centre building below the clock tower held the company stores, and to appropriate the desired requisite, one had to pass the word to the Storekeeper, Sammy Davis, housed in the small roofed building to the right of the door. The message would then be passed along to the Storeman, Bill Bailey, who had a standard reply "They is ----- none".

Today the old 2's site has been reduced and flattened to ground level in a featureless waste of pit soil. In its heyday, the clocktower was a noted landmark, especially useful on foggy mornings to guide the miners to their place of work.

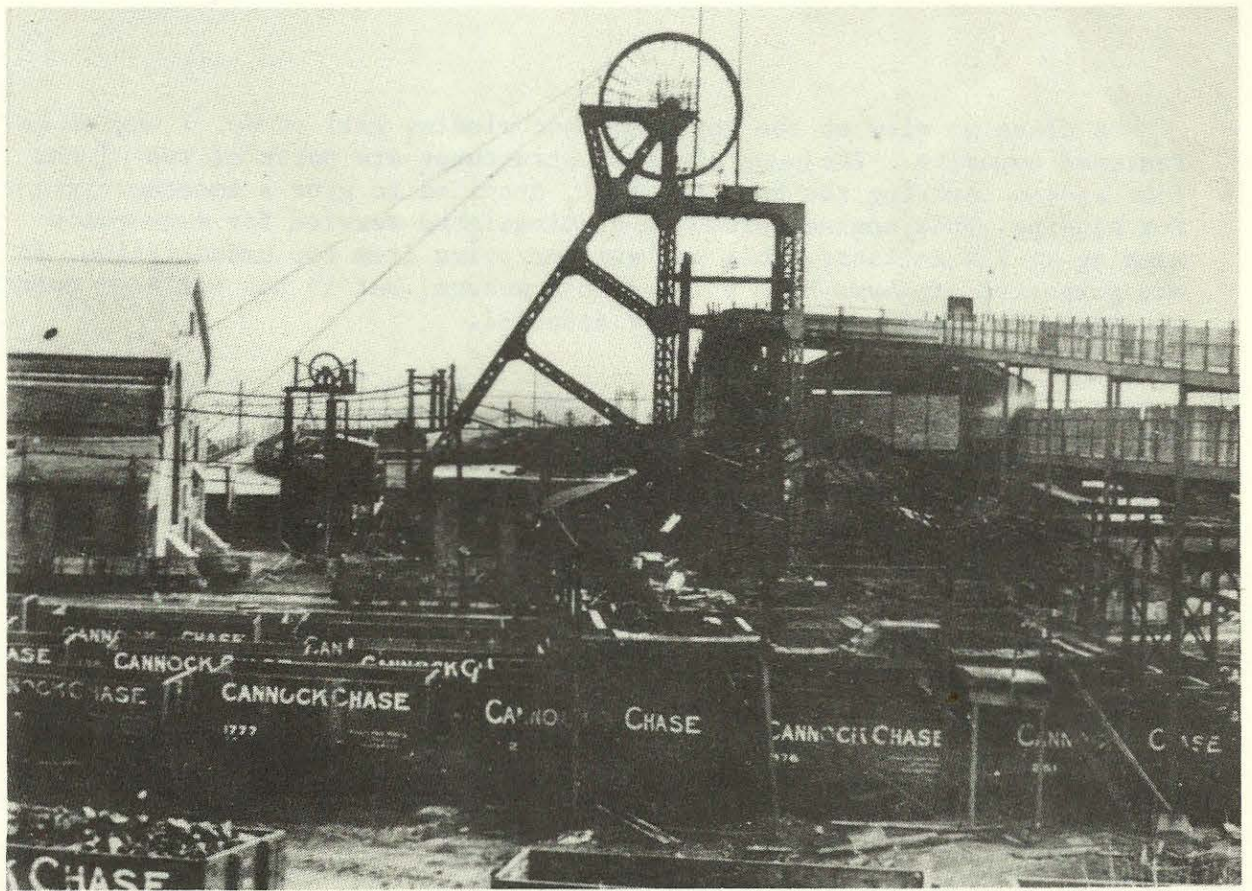
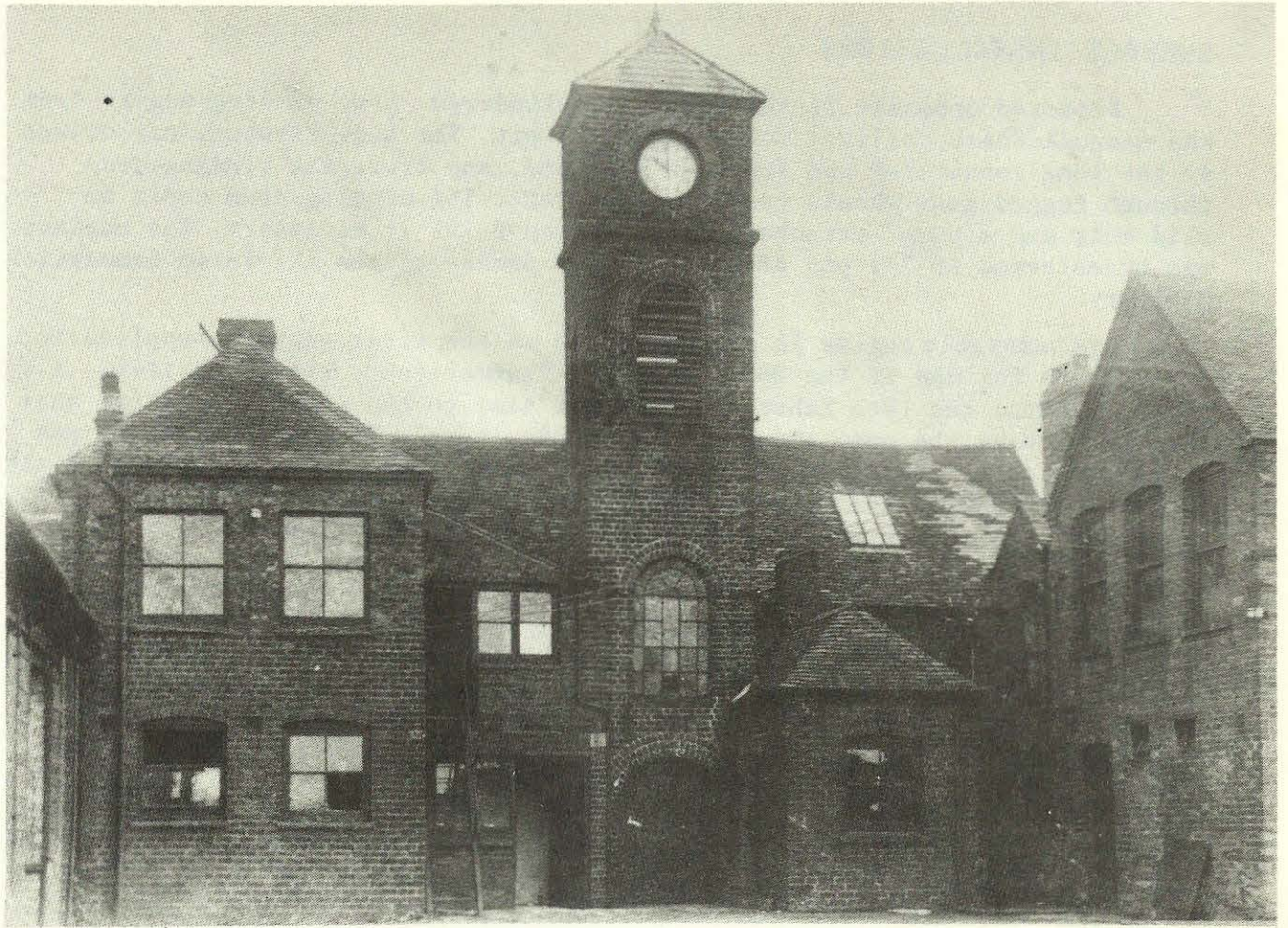
In 2's early days , it was usual for miners to decorate the bushes along their daily paths through bracken and heather with white rags, to give them identification marks across the barren waste. This was especially necessary in winter, as at this season miners would go to work early in the morning, in darkness and similarly return to their homes in late afternoon or early evening. In winter, wild deer would frequent the area around 2's pit, often being fed with dry crusts by the miners who welcomed their company in this isolation.

The view opposite is of the pithead at the No. 3 Colliery (the "Plant") with the winding house on the left. To the right of the winding house, and above the steps, a line of mining cars stretch from the screens into the distance, while further "tubs" on narrow gauge lines are visible in front of the winder and pithead gear. In the foreground loading for the main-line wagons was in a phase of rebuilding. The roof of this structure was absent but many Cannock Chase Colliery 5 and 7 plank mineral wagons awaited their loads, at least five sidings being used to store the empties.

The wagons were fitted to main-line standards, and took loads to beyond the confines of the Chase area. Each was individually numbered for loading and transport records. Quick unloading and return schedules were encouraged by the Cannock Chase Colliery Company. Rail transportation was, however, causing severe problems.

By 1929, privately owned wagons were becoming a headache for the railway companies, due to the complex shunting arrangements necessary to return each company's wagons to their respective owners. A move was afoot to take over all wagons, making them "common user" railway wagons, which could be sent anywhere as traffic demanded. By 1930, it was estimated that to purchase all privately owned trucks would cost four million pounds , but would save the railways ten million pounds. William Clare, director of a coal factors at Cradley Heath, stated that it took 59 days to get some empty trucks back to the Chase Collieries from Cradley Heath. The average utilisation was one trip per month for a coal wagon between Cannock Chase and Old Hill. An individual truck, it was quoted, left Rowley Regis on March 1st and had not arrived at Cannock on the 16th of the month.

When common useage was introduced, the Chase Collieries were better served with returning empties, without which the collieries distribution schedules ground to a halt. The Cannock Chase Colliery Company, however, never experienced the full impact of the rail fiasco, as its canal facilities were adjacent to its No. 2 pit. By 1927, the main collieries of the Company (3,8 and 9) were linked underground, so coal output from Heath Hayes (8's) and Hednesford (9's) could be directed , through 3's pit (the Plant) direct to the wharf at Chasetown, a distance of 4½ miles.



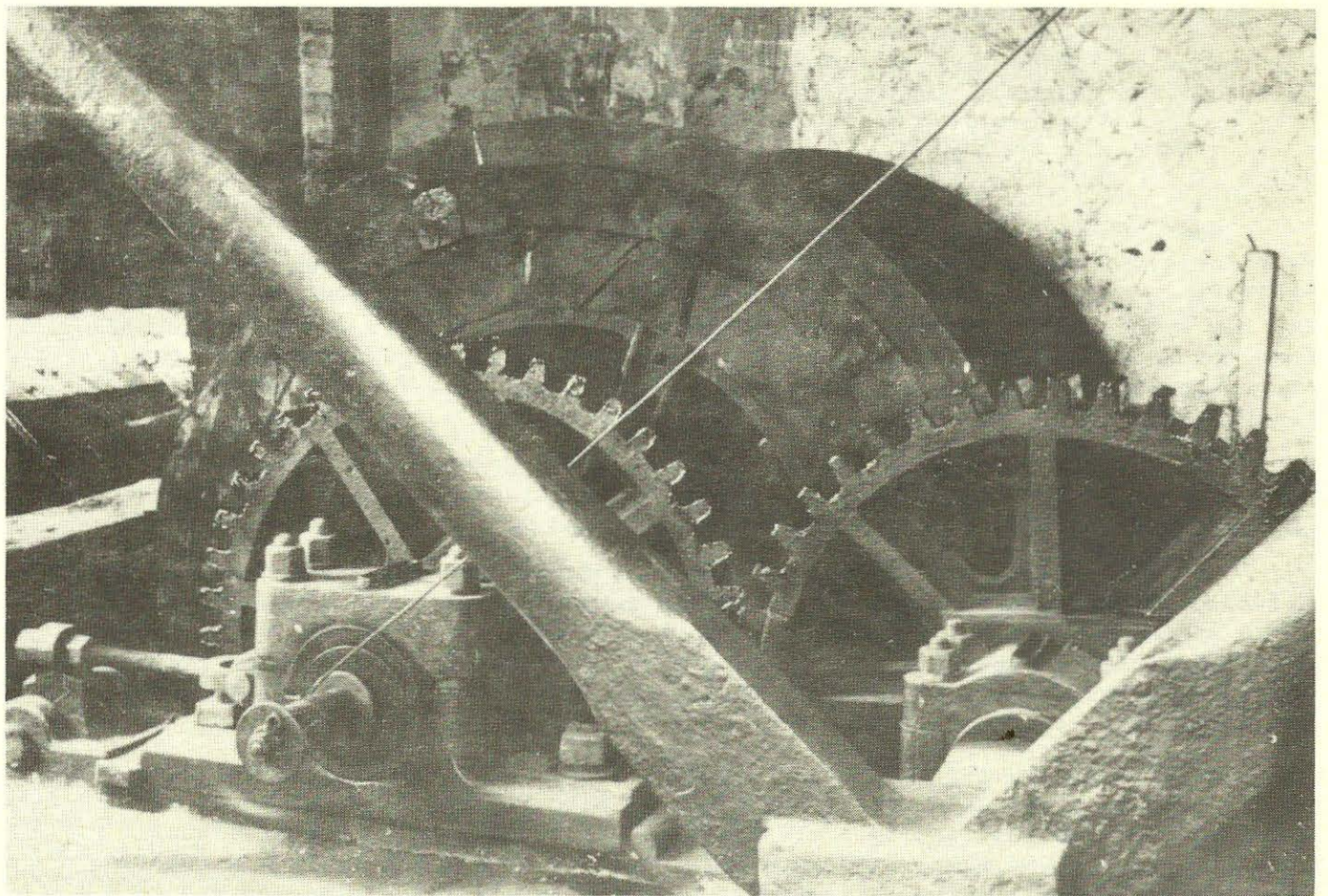
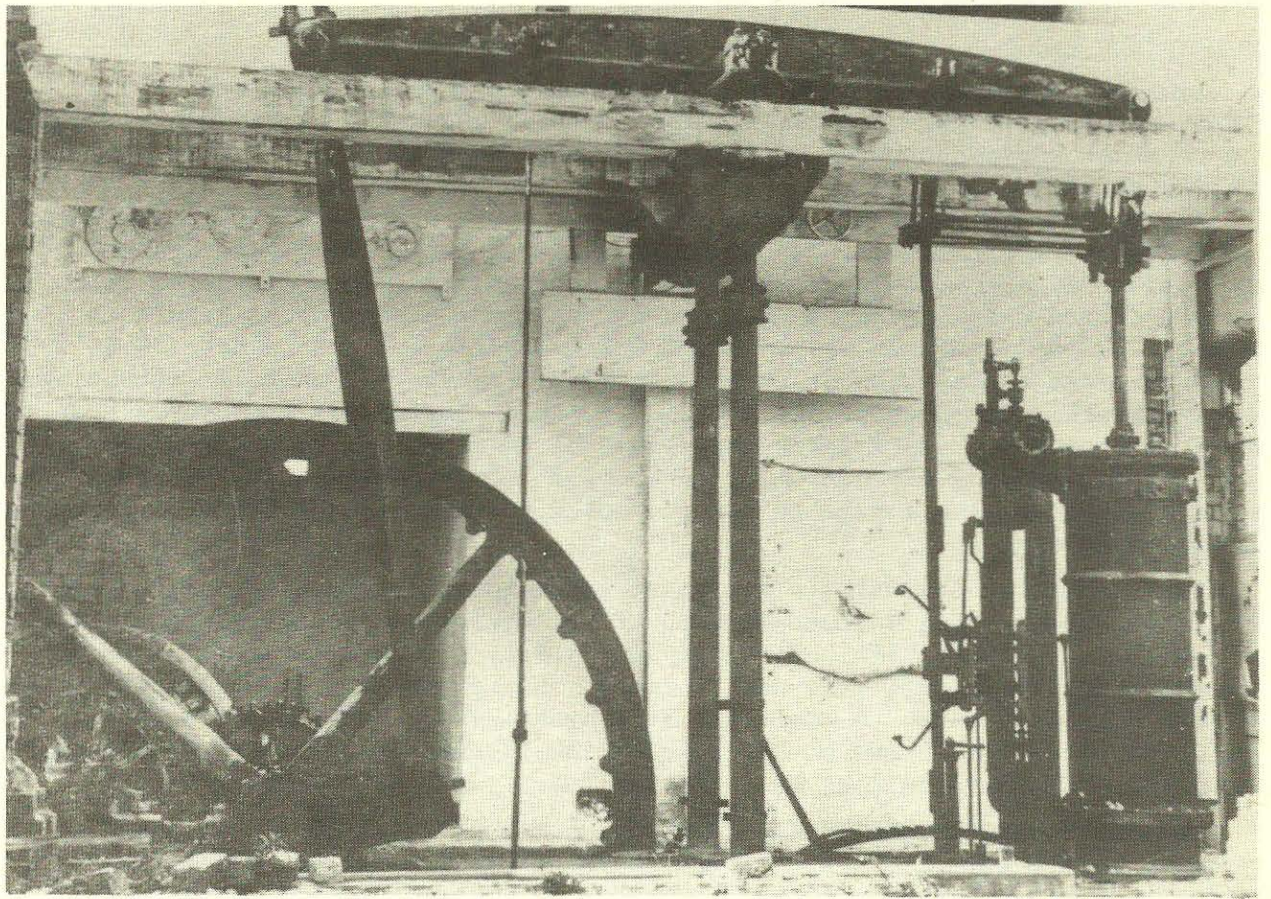
SURFACE INSTALLATIONS

Depicted opposite is the vertical cylindered, beam winding engine from the Cannock Chase Colliery Company's No. 7 pit. The huge flywheel was driven by the long connecting rod from the beam end, and drove the winding drum through cogged gear wheels visible lower left. The winding drum could be slid out, and a pump attached to the geared drive if necessary. The engine was transferred to 7's pit after the early demise of the ill-fated Hammerwich Colliery.

This venerable engine is of importance as the first engine supplied to the Company for use at the No. 1 pit, the "Hammerwich", opened in 1849. A letter, dated the 10th February 1851, was sent to the colliery stating that "You shall have the pump and gear on Saturday next". Drainage machinery was to follow later, from Messrs. Thorneywill and Wareham, the originators of the letter. Thorneywill and Wareham specialised in steam winding engines, so it is assumed that these details described the vertical engine shown.

Another letter, 6th October, 1851, from a Goscote (Walsall) supplier, mentioned "Horizontal engine to T. Figgins, will make 10 horse power. A "Brights" type, Cylinder 12 inches x 3 feet". This engine complete with "facts", that is control gear, connecting rods, etc., was to be coupled to a wrought iron flywheel. As this was a horizontal engine, this letter presumably refers to an engine ordered for the No. 2 colliery, then being sunk by "gin" at Hammerwich (30th October, 1851). This shaft is mentioned in detail in a letter (12th February, 1852) from G.N. Lander to Thos. Lander, stating that an engine removing water was to start on Saturday.

A close up view of the cog-drive and winding reel of No. 7 engine is featured opposite. The hefty diagonal structures are parts of two of the four spokes centring the huge flywheel, provided to give a smoother torque for winding. This engine worked in distinguished service for many years winding at 7's colliery. This was another prime item for preservation. It was purported to have been offered to a museum, but it has not been possible to trace its final resting place or disposal.



CHASEWATER LAKE

Smoking lazily on the horizon above Chasewater Lake can be seen the chimney at 2's pit. The view depicts the overflow channel (foreground), the dam, much of which was constructed of furnace clinker brought into the area, and the concrete retaining wall.

The photograph shows the old pumphouse with its associated brick chimney, to the East of the dam wall. The pumping house was built to conserve water when canal dredging or repair had to be undertaken, for the pump lifted water from the dammed canal, over the Eastern dam wall of Chasewater to return it to the lake. So important was water conservation considered, that a huge "Watt" type beam steam engine was constructed to power the pump, the whole unit being housed beneath a substantial brick building. When pumping was undertaken from the canal, the periodic pump strokes sent waves of pulsed water across the cast iron trough, bridging the dam wall. As a child, one member of the editorial team remembers playing a game to see who could be last beneath the iron trough without a soaking.

Visible on the dam wall is the small valve house controlling the rate of feed to the head of the Anglesey branch of the Wyrley and Essington Canal. It has proved exceedingly difficult to provide a date for the construction of the Chasewater retaining wall. The pool, probably being formerly of lesser extent, was providing feed water to the canal at Brownhills by 1800. In its heyday, a steam boat plied the waters of the lake, which likewise provided a relaxation for miners and their families as they strolled around its shores.

Mention has been made of the fossil mussel beds which formed the roof of the main haulage way of 2's pit. Today, huge quantities of the smaller fresh water mussel can be found attached to waterside vegetation, where their occupants died within their shells as the water level receded in summer drought conditions.

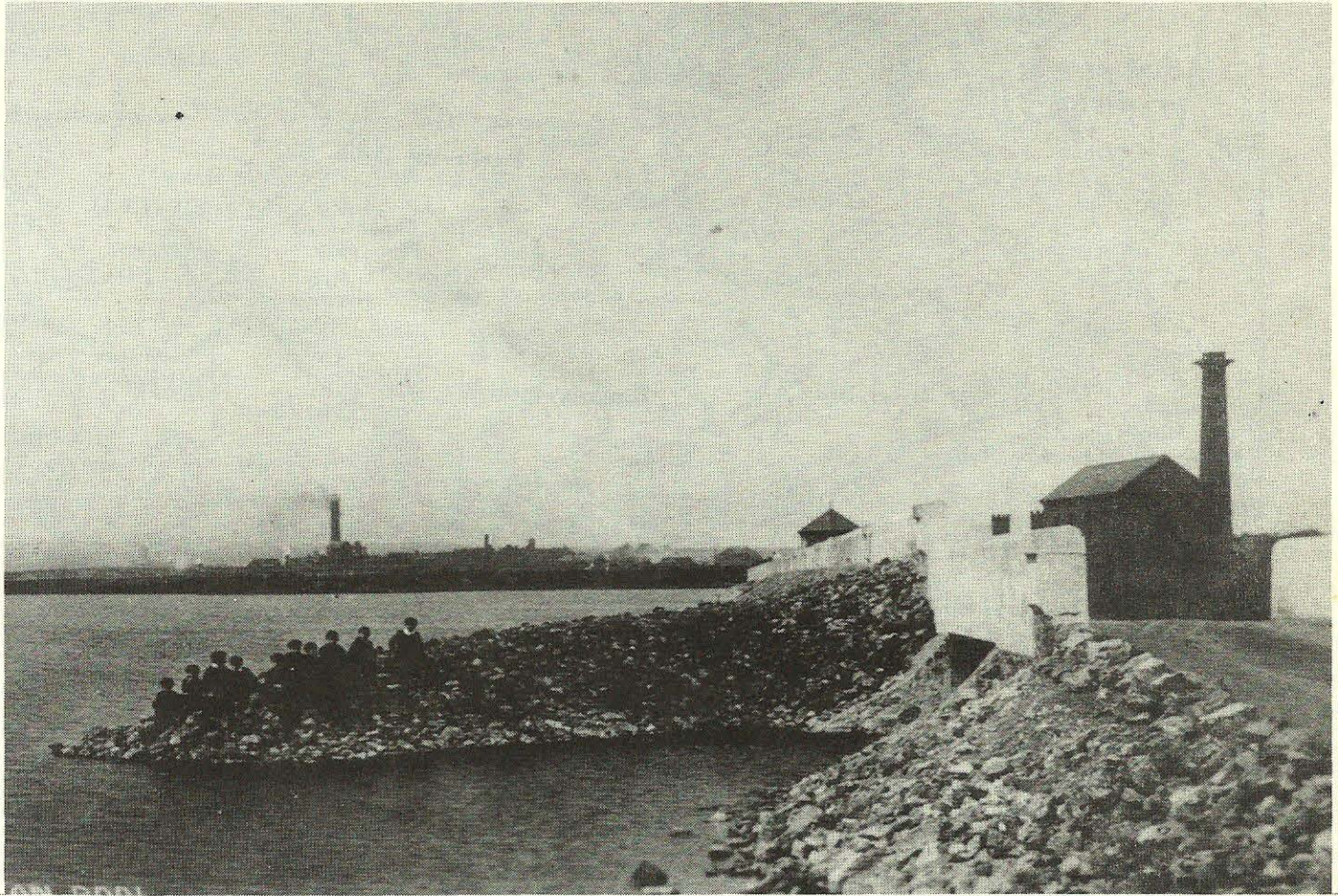
The group of little boys, all appearing clean tidy and capped, is a mystery, possibly the church choir specially posed for the "panoramic" view.

The pathways around Chasewater gave access to many grassy knolls suitable for family picnics. The gently sloping banks of the lake also provided a children's paradise where they could paddle safely, if they were not deterred by the pebbly bottom at the edges of the water. Caps were the order of the day for the boys and pinafore dresses for the girls. The photograph taken at the northern edge of the Eastern Dam shows four gentlemen out for an evening stroll along the pathway embankment (above the children).

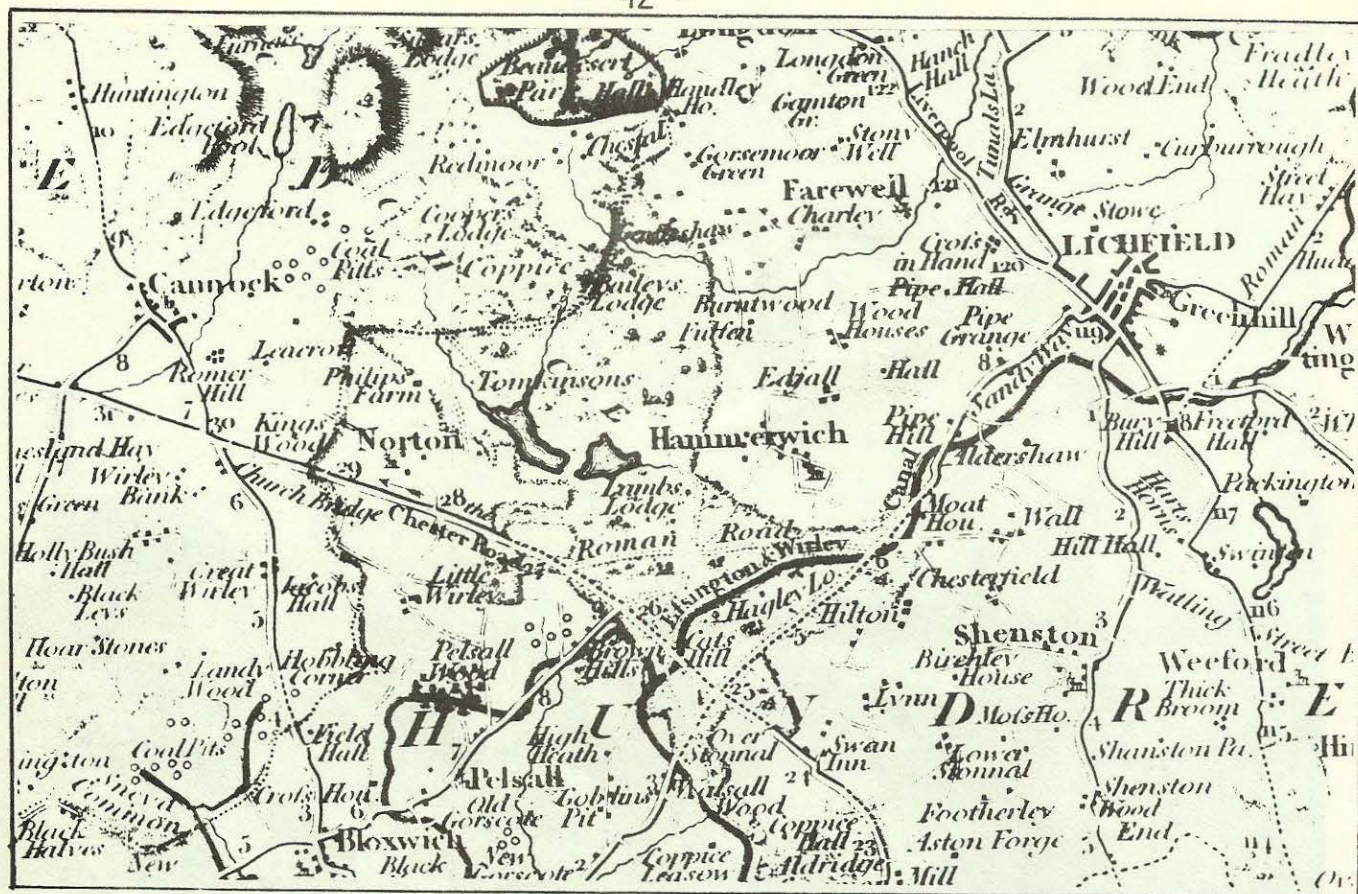
The woodland above the dam wall effectively hides the few small miners' cottages, the first manager's house, and the vicarage. Pavier's Row can just be seen between the fencing posts by the four men.

The lake varied considerably in depth, and has over the years claimed many lives of more venturesome swimmers. Recorded depths approach 15 metres off the dam, with soundings of about 10 metres in the middle of the lake. From these depths the lake shallows to the Fly Bay, and the various creeks. Research has shown no evidence of "unfathomable" depths of ancient pitshafts or the strong undertow currents of story and legend.

Used sensibly, the pool has provided a vital social amenity to the area over the years, as a relaxing area of natural, if wild, beauty, and for the enjoyment of families taking a stroll in the fresh air at the end of a busy working day. At one time, fishermen used punts in an attempt to land a reputed giant pike inhabiting the lake. Limited fishing still takes place as an old established pastime of the area.



Norton Pool



THE CANAL

This map makes no mention of Chasetown, Chase Terrace or Heath Hayes. The area of Chasewater (note 2 pools) is known as Tomkinsons, while the area between the pools and the present A5 road is Lambs Lodge.

This map shows the Wyrley and Essington canal junction at Brownhills. The water from the "Tomkinsons" Pool was used to maintain Essington and Wyrley canal levels, water being taken to the canal by feeder streams. The Wyrley and Essington canal was important for transport of coal from the Brownhills pits, linking the Black Country and beyond.

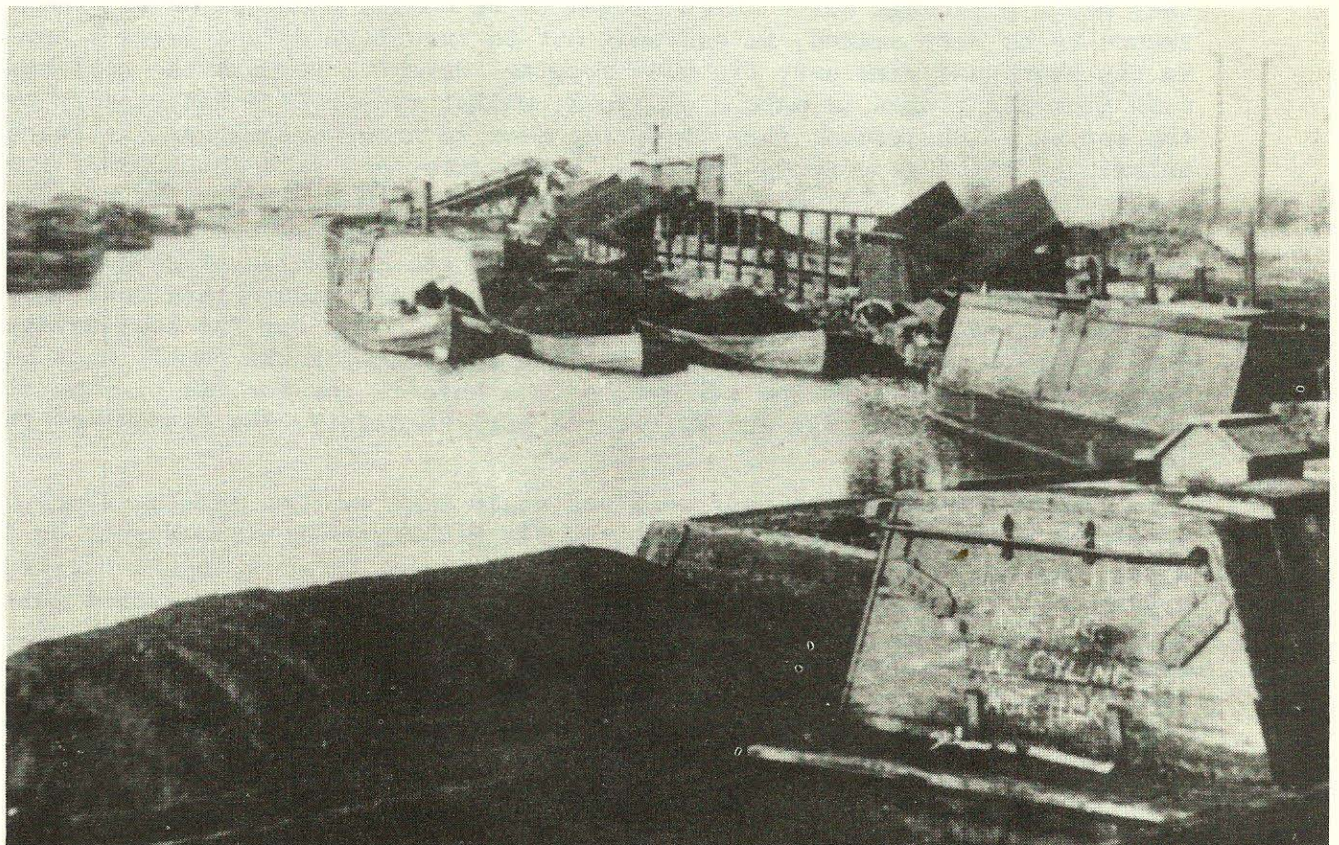
The Anglesey branch of the Wyrley and Essington canal, constructed from Brownhills, brought the canal barges right up to No. 1 colliery east of the Chasewater dam. John Robinson McClean soon became a leading figure in the early history of the Chasetown mines. It was while McClean was supervising the building of the South Staffordshire Railway (Dudley, Walsall, Pelsall, Lichfield, Burton) during the late 1840's, that he became interested in the coal mining activities on the Chase. The story is told that he ventured from Brownhills, to view the Marquess of Anglesey's newly opened Hammerwich Colliery in 1849. McClean was obviously impressed. In 1853, in partnership with Chawner, (Chairman of the South Staffordshire Waterworks), he took over the Hammerwich venture by signing a lease agreement with the Marquess, taking a large area south of the Cannock-Lichfield road for mining exploitation. The farsighted McClean also leased a long finger of land from the No. 1 Colliery to his South Staffordshire Railway, and some of this land was used for building the canal wharf and basin which served the Chasetown collieries for over a century. The canal was fed from the enlarged and dammed Chasewater Lake (Norton Pool).

The picture shows barges and tugboats loaded and awaiting dispatch from the Anglesey Wharf. A large turning lagoon, adjacent to the No.1 pit site, enabled the 70ft boats to be reversed before threading their way beneath the overhead loading facilities. Other boats were loaded from canal-side tipples, two of which remain on the canal bank.



General View, Chasetown.

VIEW OF CHASETOWN SHOWING THE TURNING LAGOON, AND THE CANAL FEED FROM THE CHASEWATER LAKE (LEFT). TOP LEFT CAN BE SEEN PAVIER'S ROW AND BLOXHAM'S COTTAGE ON THE NO. 1 PIT SITE. TOP RIGHT, THE INCLINED CONCRETE OF THE "DRIFT" IS PARTIALLY OBSCURED BY PIT SOIL.



MRS THACKER REMEMBERS THE 1930'S

Forty years ago Marjorie Thacker spent her childhood in a cottage near to the canal at Chasewater. Still a resident in Chasetown, she recalls life beside the canal, and, as a maid to Mr. and Mrs. Foggo, one of the managers of the Cannock Chase Colliery Company.

"I was born near Chasewater, Norton Pool it was called then, and a beautiful place it was too, for walks, gathering wild flowers, seeing many birds, animals, hearing the cuckoo, and seeing the swans arrive each year.

Although it was a lovely place to live, it was also lonely, and dangerous; lonely because there were no other children to play with except for my own brothers and sisters, and dangerous because we were almost surrounded by water and marshland. Our house stood in a hollow beside the canal, facing the pool dam, and to the right, the path to Chasetown. This path went over a little stream, past a large sandhole and over the railway lines. We would play in the sandhole, where mother could see us from the garden gate. Today it has changed, but I expect there are still some people who had to have their clothes dried out at our house, after falling into the canal, or can remember being chased by my dad for not having a fishing ticket.

Every day my mother warned us of the dangers, the water, the marshes, old pit shafts, it must have been a nightmare for her, but none of us came to any harm. Perhaps this was because we took heed of the warnings and didn't go looking for trouble. Instead we used to help with the garden allotment, feed and look after the animals - we kept rabbits, ducks, geese, fowl and goats.

We would go for walks along the canal bank to pick blackberries, or read the names on the side of the barges moored alongside waiting to be filled with coal from the wharf. A favourite pastime of my sister Margaret was seeing how many names she could spot before me. We made our own kites to fly and sledges in winter. We played football and cricket, and any passers-by were welcome to join in, which they often did.

There was one Sunday evening, when my brothers were coming home from Church after singing in the choir, which I well remember. The boys had said they heard a strange noise which seemed to be coming from the marsh. They seemed to be very scared, so dad went out to investigate, and found a horse in the quicksand with only its head showing. Quickly, he took the coal-house door from its hinges to make a platform, whilst my brothers had gone to tell the police at Chasetown; then using the door to crawl on, managed to reach the animal and put a rope round it, after a struggle, and with the help of two passer-by, rescued the poor thing just as the police arrived. Another rescue operation was carried out by my brother Fred one winter. This time it involved a young girl that had fallen over the edge of the ice while sliding on the frozen canal. The canal was one of the main ways of transporting coal, and in winter the ice breaker would come along to clear a way for the coal barges. During one of these operations my brother was watching the canal, when he saw, to his horror, someone struggling in a hole in the ice. He crawled along on his stomach to the edge and pulled the girl to safety. She was one of the lucky ones.

I didn't like school very much and would take my time getting there, but sometimes I would hear the clock at the Fly Pit strike 9 o'clock only to find a train would be due, then I would have to wait for it to go by as the crossing gates would be closed. This would make me late for school and I would get a telling off. After school we would have to run errands for my mother, fetch the bread and groceries, also the oil for the lamps, as we didn't have electricity then. I remember the lovely smell from the bakery in the High Street, where the bread was baked, and sometimes it would still be warm to take home. We would get a pennyworth of sweets for doing this.

One event we looked forward to was my brother Len's birthday on November 5th. We would build a huge bonfire on the common and ask some of the village children to bring their fireworks to share with ours. Mother would roast us all a potato in the oven to eat round the fire.

My sister Margaret and I were not allowed to go out much during the winter nights. We would go to the pictures alone once a week, but then we were faced with the long walk home. Dad would have to meet us as we were both scared of the dark.

Daily life seemed to carry on the same for years, the trains used to carry the coal from the pit to the wharf, where it was transferred via chutes from a construction spanning the canal, into the waiting barges. We knew all the train drivers and the names of the engines, most of the boat people and the names of their boats. We would look forward to the coalman coming with his horse and cart to bring our coal, as he would sometimes give us a ride after he had tipped it up. We had never heard of dustbin men. We used to take our ashes and rubbish to a tip we made ourselves near the house.

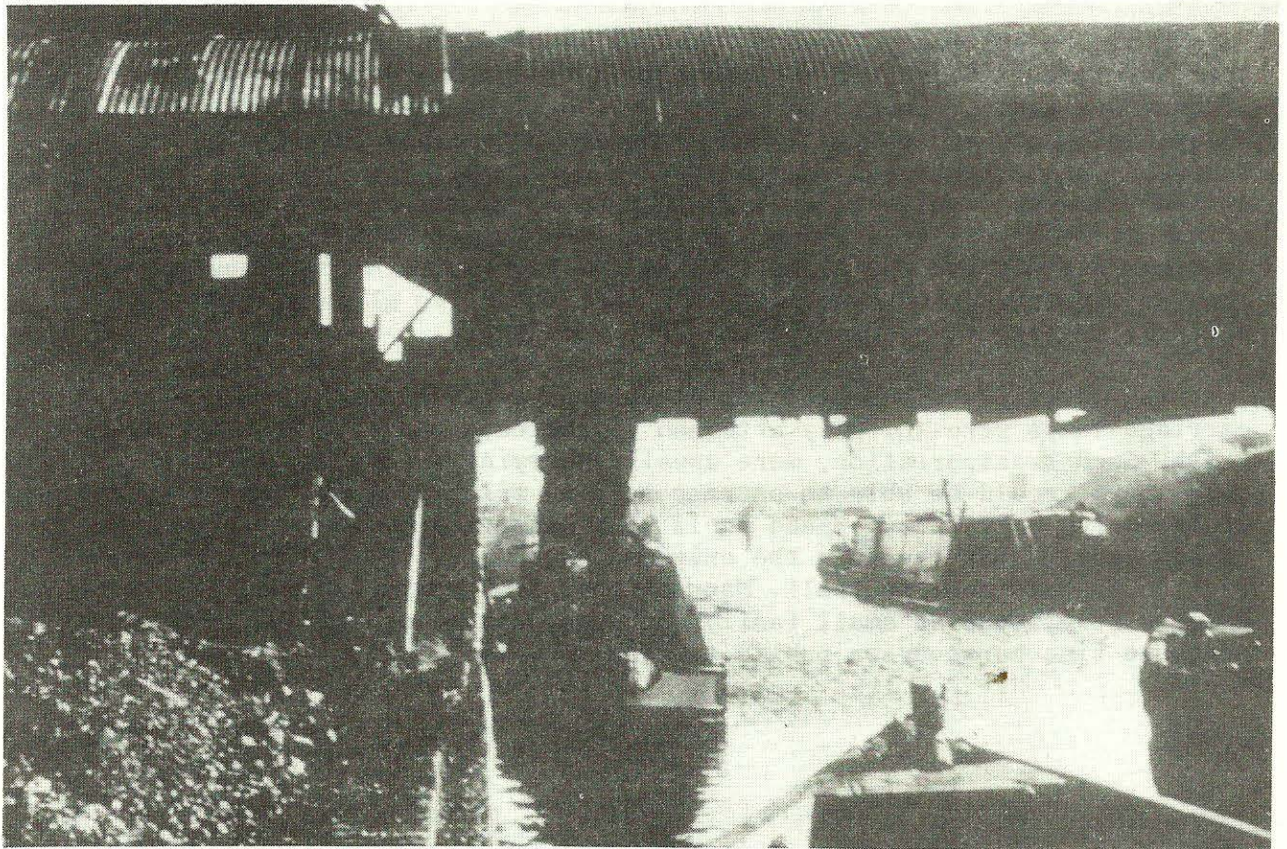
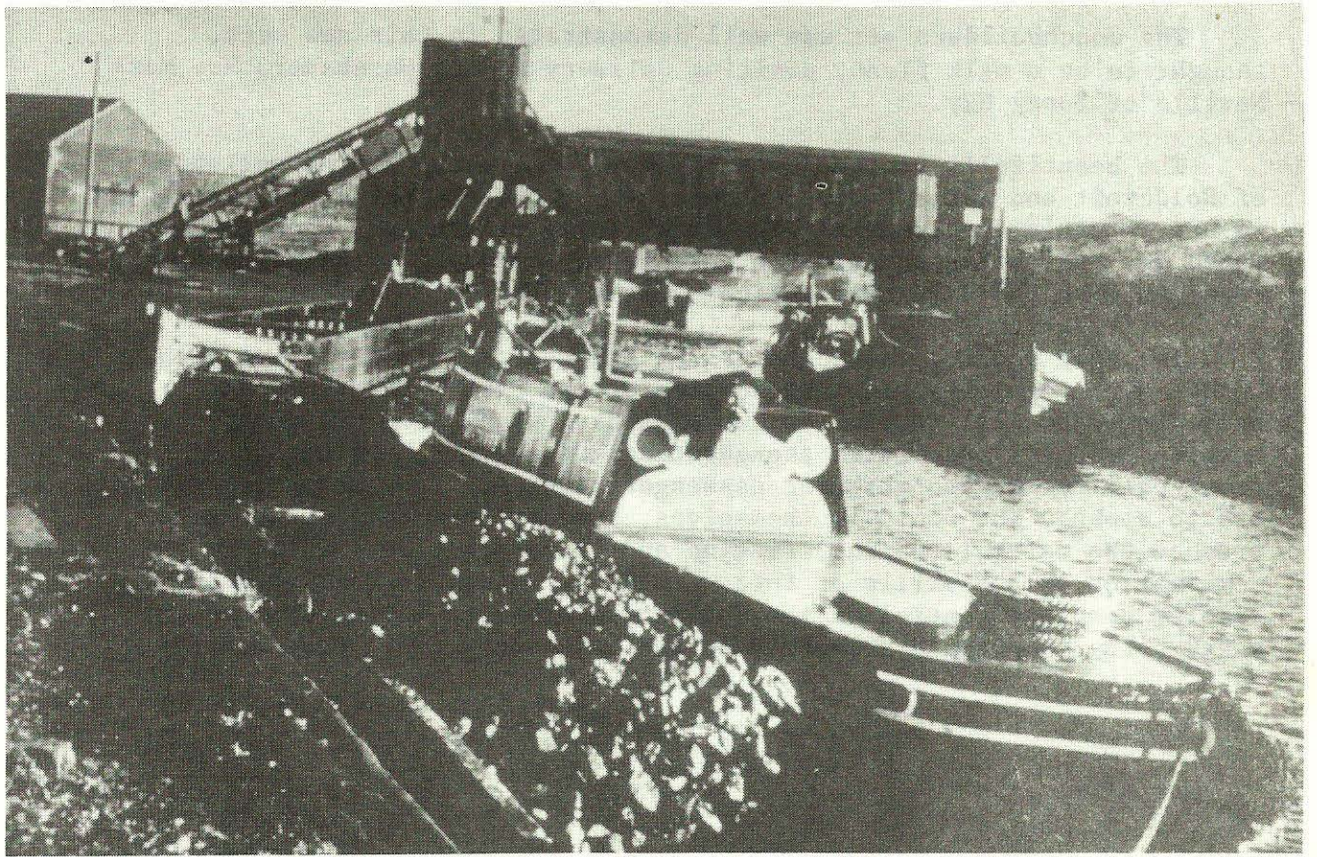
Then came the time for me to leave school and go to work. I left school at fourteen and went to work as a maid to Mr. and Mrs Foggo. She was very good to me, but I missed my family, because I had to live-in there. I did see my dad every day as he used to milk their cows for them.

Mrs. Foggo did most of her own cooking, making jam, preserving fruit, pickling, and cooking the daily meals. I would help by preparing the fruit and vegetables and doing the washing up. I also had to make the beds, dusting and cleaning the silver. This took some time as they had rather a lot of silver. I enjoyed the garden parties they used to hold. They were grand occasions when the gardens were opened to the people of the village to have a look round and have tea on the lawns. I had to wear a black dress, white cap and apron. My wages were 10/- a week, which I sent home to my mother. The days were long, and even though Mrs. Foggo let my sister come to stay with me, I still felt homesick and had to leave after about eighteen months.

By this time, my two elder brothers had joined the forces and were out in the Middle East. My younger brother and father joined the A.R.P. and were patrolling the pool dam the night seven bombs were dropped in there. My mother was relieved to see them walk in safe.

The war came to an end and so did the pits. All that remains of the house I lived in for twenty five years is just a few old bricks and rubble now".

Mrs. Thacker's cottage can be seen on page 43, in the top photograph. The cottage is visible in the left centre of the picture, above the canal.



HORSEDRAWN VEHICLES

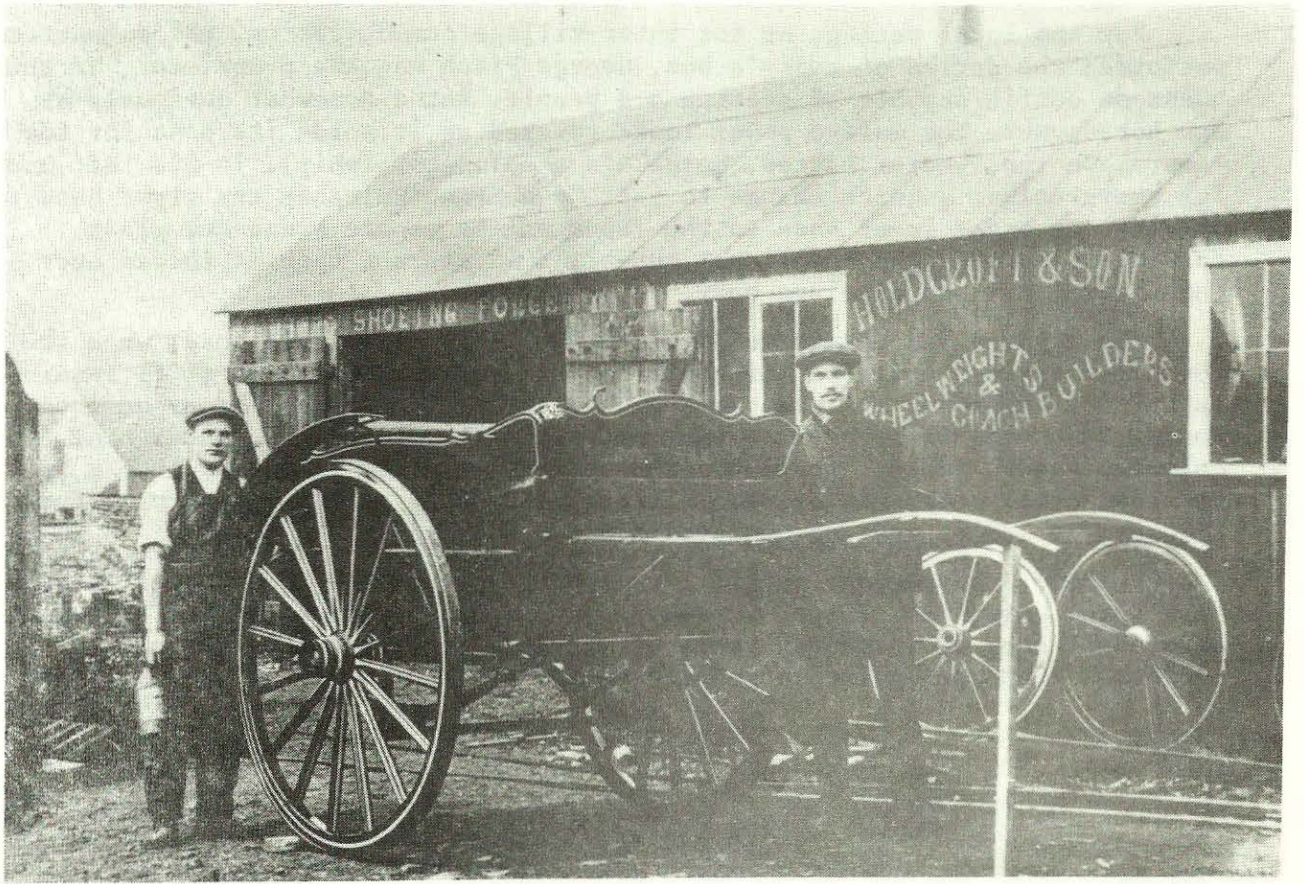
The coachbuilders art was well demonstrated in this new cart, thought to be a milk float, awaiting delivery to its purchaser, Mr. Mark Neville of Boney Hay.

The beautifully finished vehicle was constructed at the workshops of Holdcroft and Son, of Queen Street. The young Mr. Holdcroft, following in his father's footsteps as blacksmith, wheelwright and coachbuilder, posed for the photograph with an unknown workman, who appeared to be ready to give the axle hubs a final greasing before delivery.

The open doors gave access to the blacksmith's forge, where local horses were regularly shod. Production of the next projected cart seemed already well in hand as two 12 spoked wheels are propped up outside the premises. It is thought that these might have been the front pair for a wagonette for passenger transport. The larger cart wheels are 16 spoked, and would in themselves, have taken many hours work to produce the careful shaping, fitting and lined painting involved. The combination of the skills of three crafts in one small family business enabled complete control of the building process to be maintained, all parts being shaped and assembled to the customer's exact requirements.

"This is our football team taken by Alec's front with the cup they have won." So stated the message on the postcard from which this picture was taken, thought to be in 1912. W.T. Morgan of High Street, Chasetown, owned and operated the vehicle. The solidly constructed two horse bus with twenty passengers crowded aboard was on a triumphal tour of the village, displaying what is thought to be the Fazeley cup. The driver of the overloaded conveyance paused outside the Cottage Spring pub in Queen Street, and for a few seconds the high spirited passengers stared towards the tripod and camera as the light sensitive glass plate was suitably exposed to record the scene for posterity.

The vehicle was equipped for nighttime operation, and the huge carriage lamps were suitably attached to indicate the vehicle's extreme width. Such transportation, more usually carrying twelve to fifteen passengers, would be able to operate some 20 miles from its Chasetown base if hired for a full day. Speed would be a leisurely 6 miles an hour (a steady trot). This then was the original "supporters coach" in the Edwardian era of Association football. Many of the firms operating today's luxury coaches originated as small family concerns, operating one or two examples of these fine horse-drawn public service vehicles .



HORSE DRAWN VEHICLES

For the local outing, or for inter-village communication, the wagonette performed the duties of today's bus. George Fitch was the proprietor of this handsome outfit capable of seating 6-8 people. Rated somewhat obviously at one horsepower, the motive power looks relaxed as it holds its pose for the camera. George, bowler hatted, holds his accelerator (whip), in his left hand. For emergencies, a quick change to left hand drive released the right hand to operate the brake lever seen to the front of the ornate brass and glass carriage lamp. For the occasional shower, a waterproof cape is folded over the siderail of the carriage body.

The high bodied design would settle somewhat under full load, when the four leaf-springs would be more flattened in aspect, but would still remain capable of absorbing at least some of the shock of rutted or stony earthen roads. Such vehicles were made very attractive by the use of contrasting coloured woods. Perhaps for many, the attraction ended there for access by the rear metal steps was extremely difficult, being especially awkward for the elderly, or ladies wearing the traditional long skirts.

Overall, the elegant outfit proved very serviceable, and a great boon to a rural community. Fares would be a mere penny or twopence, but such rigs were challenged in the early years of the 20th century by the petrol omnibuses then coming into vogue and excitingly new.

BUSES

Here is such a bus. In order to generate passenger traffic from populated areas, and transport this traffic to its railway stations, the London and North Western Railway introduced a fleet of double-deckers. These elegant machines mirrored the North Western's plain, but striking "plum and spilt milk" livery, adopted for its railway coaching stock.

BM 2597, a standard design with a chassis built by Commer cars, was operative about 1912, and the photograph taken in Lower High Street. The headboard clearly shows Chase Terrace as the destination, the point of origin being Brownhills station. Driver and Inspector/instructor occupy the open cab, while the conductor lines up with a few locals for the photograph. Fleet number of the vehicle was almost certainly No. 45, as a photograph is known of BM 2596 running as L.N.W.R. fleet No. 44

Access to the top deck was by a winding rear stair. Immediately to the right of the conductor's shoulder is the metal ladder that gave access to the wiremesh parcels area, with one package shown obscuring part of the "L" of L.N.W.R. The lower passenger compartment has six ventilator lights above the windows. Headlights are fitted, a feature absent from BM 2596, and although these appear small by modern standards, their illumination was probably adequate for 12 m.p.h., the permitted maximum speed, a fact painstakingly written on the lower panel of the passenger compartment for passenger assurance. Unfortunately this piece of information is not noticeable in this portrait, as it is hidden by the group, none of whom look very camera shy. Another legend embossed on the casing of the rear chain drive to the back axle simply gave instruction to the operative "Keep chain oily". Such were the beginnings of early public transport in the area. Exposure to the elements of both crew and fare-paying public was taken for granted. Fully enclosed accommodation for both driver and passengers was still a few years away.



"SILENT KNIGHT" COACHES

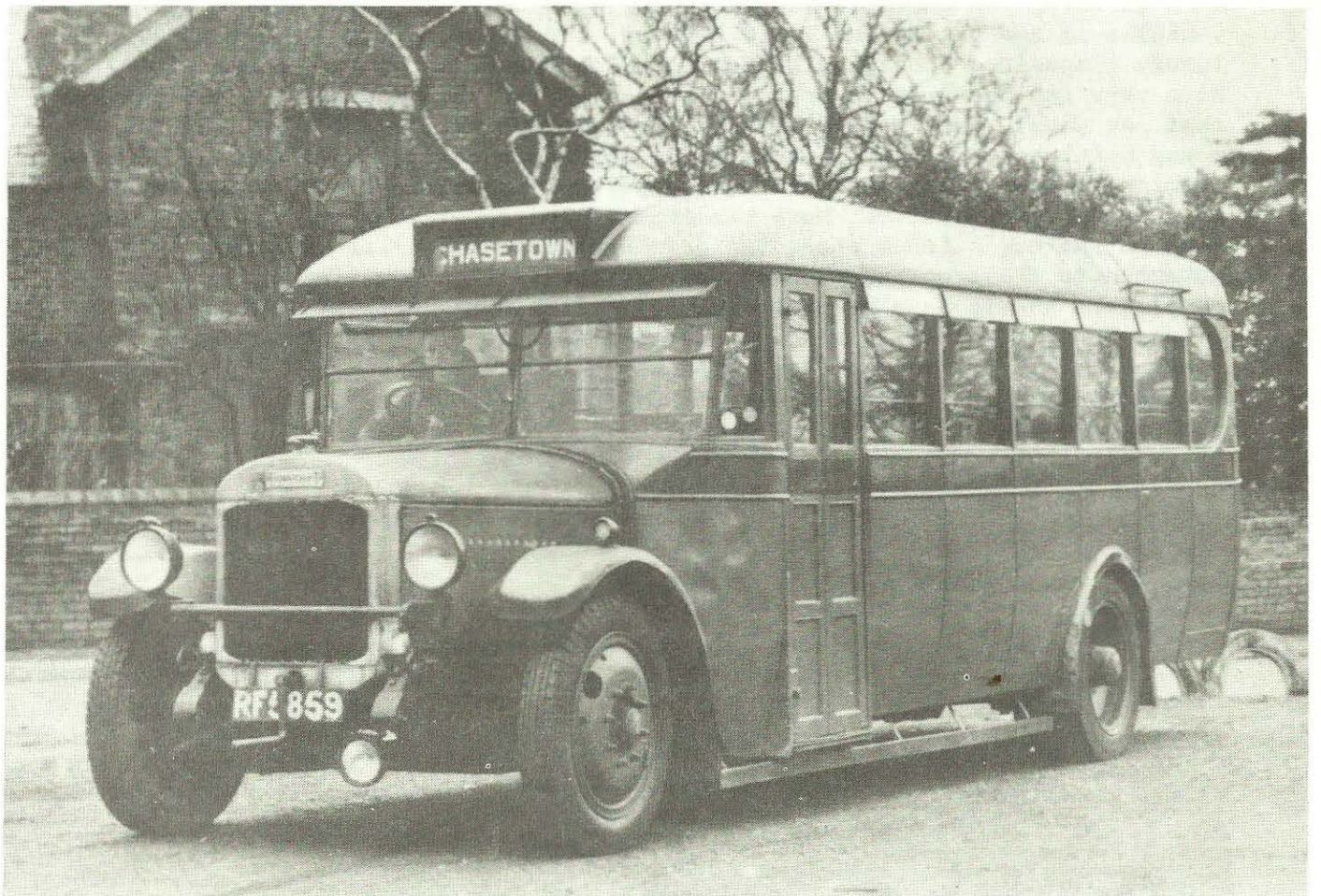
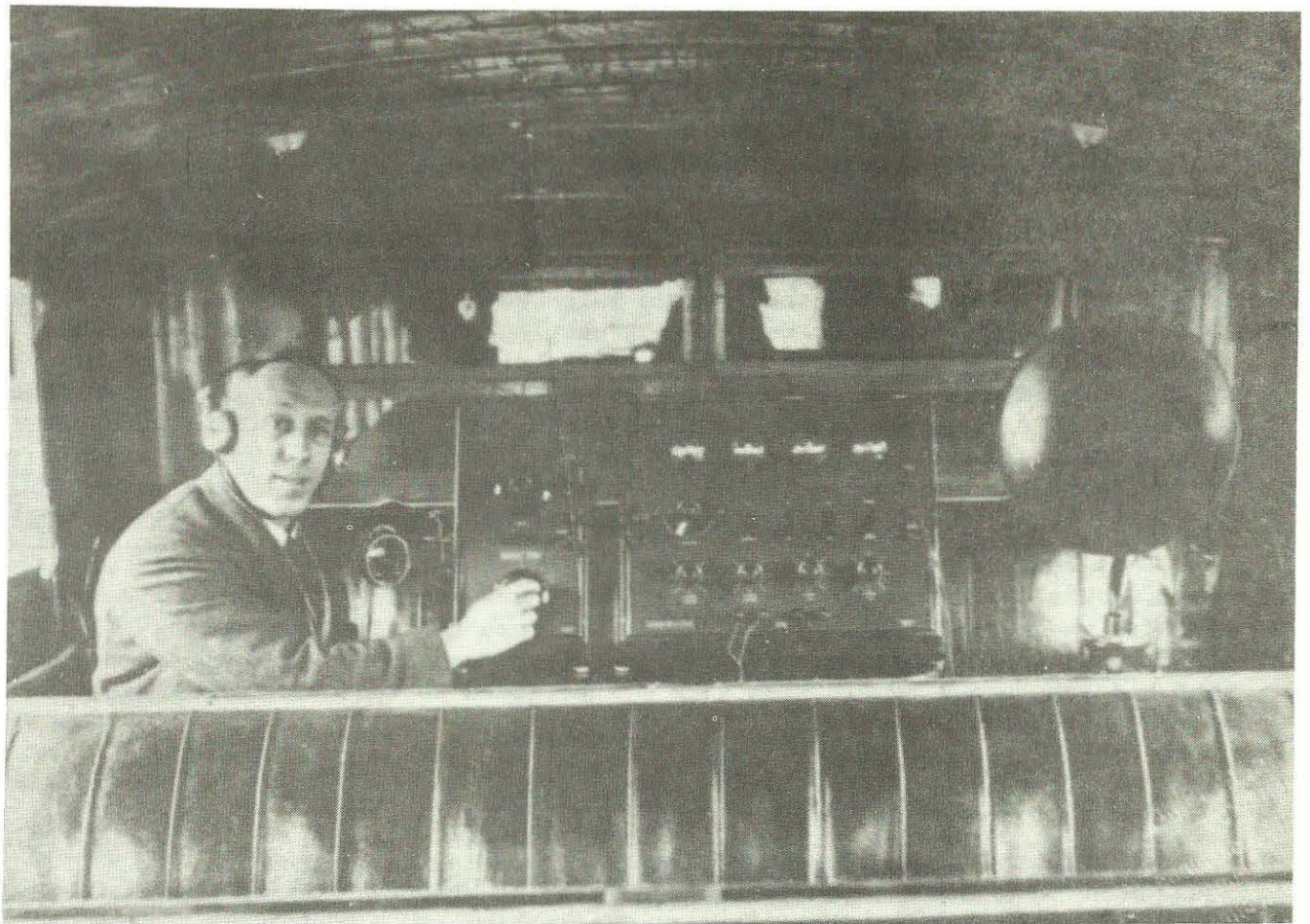
Earphones on his head, A.P. Saunders tunes in to the early transmitted broadcasts from the seat of the vehicle portrayed on the previous page. The massive control console is shown centre, with the large Amplion horn speaker to the right. What appears to be a microphone, apparently to provide commentary while the vehicle is in motion, is seen in Gus' left hand. A leather or canvas partition appears to separate the driving compartment, seen through the four large horizontal openings above and to either side of the amplifier/receiver.

This technology from another age strongly contrasts with the modern radios, or radio-cassettes fitted to today's cars. The modern counterpart of this massive set-up measures but about 12 x 4 centimetres, easily and neatly fitting into the console of the modern car.

This photograph is of interest from the coachbuilding aspect, as it shows the solidarity of these early vehicles. The roof is of substantial and elegantly grained oak, supported by shaped varnished oak struts. The full width seats are shown with their padded leather upholstery. The photograph is impressed with the stamp (bottom right) of John Thorneycroft & Co. Ltd., Engineers, Shipbuilders and Motor Manufacturers, London, Southampton and Basingstoke. It would seem that the vehicle was returned to Thorneycrofts for a more substantial wooden roof to be fitted to house the expensive radio equipment. An article on the pioneer installation of radio appeared in the Commercial Motor at the time.

Gradually, the fleet of Sanders' "Silent Knight" coaches became updated with more modern designs, and more sophisticated chassis to provide a more comfortable ride. Solid tyres gave way to pneumatic, and the fleet was expanded. The Thorneycroft shown opposite lined up with both Bedfords, a Morris Dictator, a Dennis, a Dennis Lancet and finally a flat fronted Maudsley, which was pride of the fleet until its demise in the post war period.

The Thorneycroft, pictured in front of the old Spot Garage, and using the "Doctor's House" as background, is a fine example of the Coachbuilder's art. The traditional bonnetted design, with its hefty chassis, typified the pre-war approach to public service vehicle, and coach chassis construction. The individually and handbuilt vehicles had a character and solidity lacking in more modern mass produced vehicles, relying on body-pan strength for structural rigidity. The starting handle depicts the Thorneycroft as a petrol engined vehicle, while its origin in Staffordshire, denoted by its registration number RF 5859, is further pinpointed by the Chasetown destination blind on the leading edge of the roof. Sun visor, a prominent radiator water-filler, and louvred air vents on the side of the bonnet are features no longer seen on modern coaches. Road safety regulations were complied with by the fitted guard rail between front and rear wheels.



STEAM AND PETROL

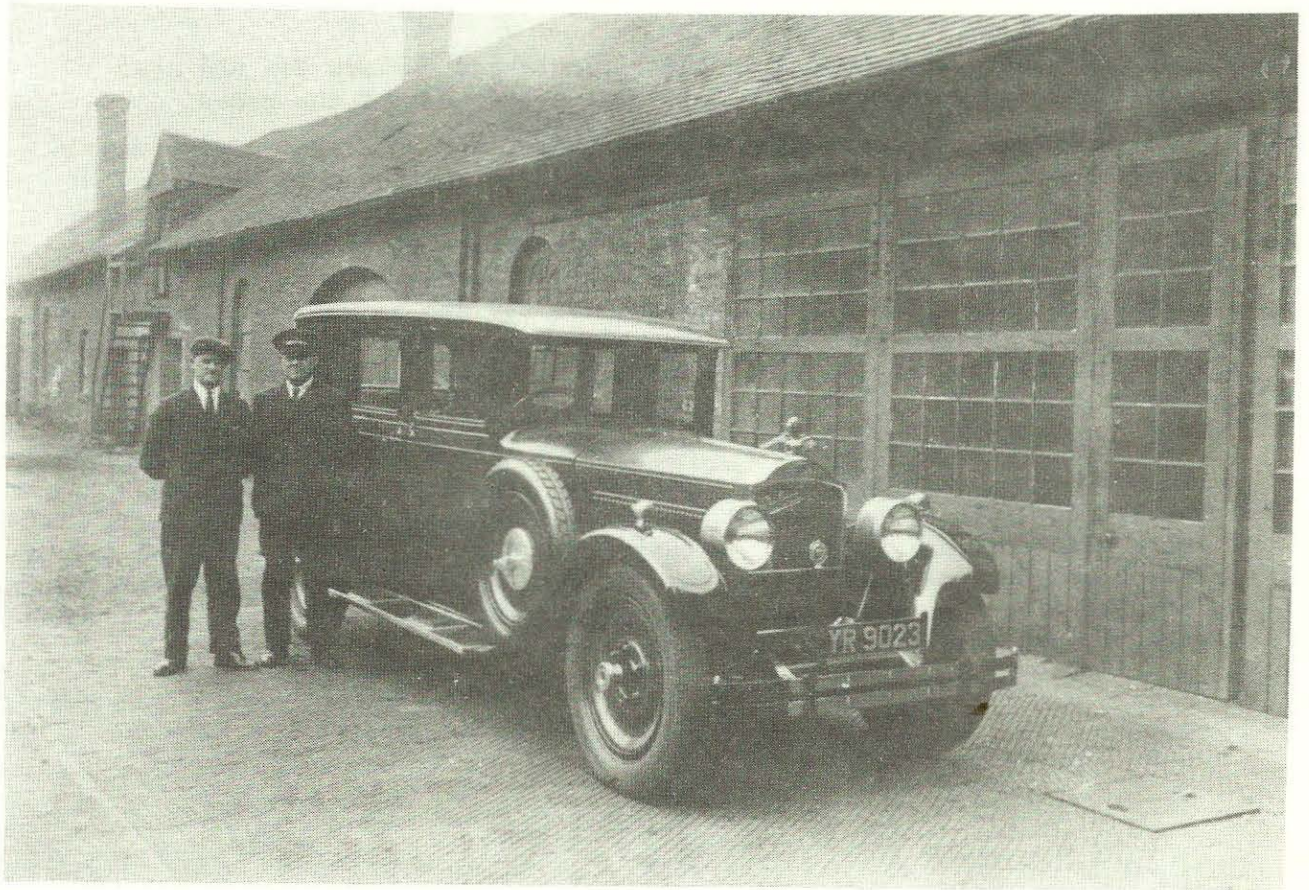
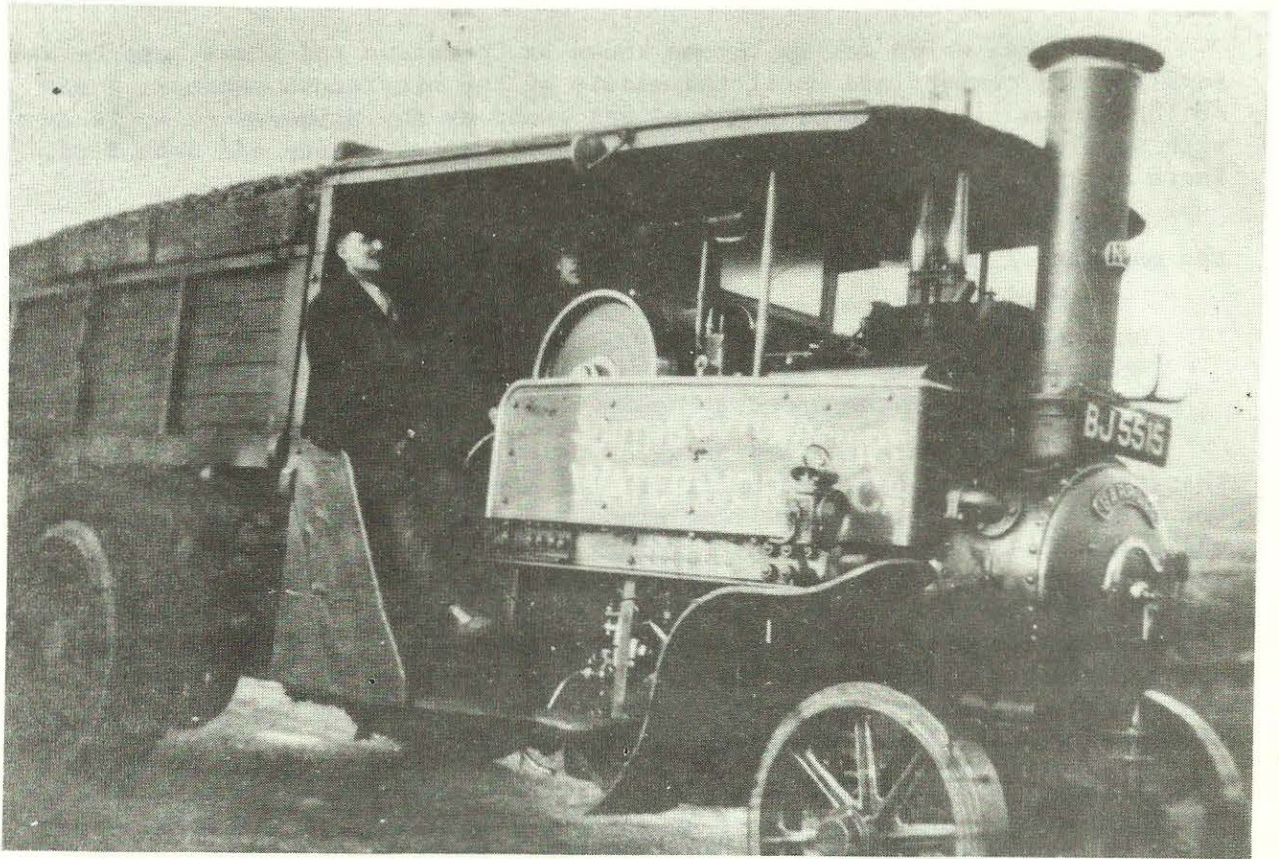
Until the 1930's relatively little road traffic passed through Chasetown apart from coal traffic of a local nature only. Some traffic, however, became quite regular, and a few interesting vehicles appeared, replacing the horse and cart.

The South Staffordshire Waterworks was an obvious customer for Chasetown coal. Indeed, McClean and Chawner had avested interest in both companies. BJ5515 was an "Overttype" Garrett steam wagon regularly used by S.S.W.W. to convey coal nuts from Chasetown to Maple Brook pumping station, via Boney Hay. The steamer was photographed here pausing on the climb to Boney Hay, getting up steam to climb the bank. A two-man crew was necessary to master the intricate driving/stoking demands of the vehicle, and Messrs. Talbot and Gill were the regulars entrusted to this duty. The steersman is seen in his box-type seat, his left hand on the wheel. The second crewman is just seen above the large flywheel. His duty was stoking, fire cleaning and general control of the "engine" .

This four tonner was a fine example of the early steam lorry. Carrying capacity was obviously limited due to the length required by the engine unit, so extra wooden side-rails were used to increase the carrying capacity of the solid tyred vehicle. Brass safety valve columns and a brass capped chimney, a fine old lamp and a simple rear view mirror added to the charm and character of the solid old workhorse.

YR 9023 the Company's elegant Packard, was regularly used by management to attend the weekly Board Meeting at the Company's offices in Warwick Chambers, Corporation Street, Birmingham.

Packard, the American manufacturer, produced some very classic and solid vehicles in the pre Second World War era, and YR appears to be one their luxury limousines specifically designed for chauffeur driven, company use. With very few Packards in Britain at the time of the picture, one can assume that, as usual, many models were considered, and what seemed best value for money purchased. The spare wheel would appear to be for show only, its treads seemingly elaborately decorative, and perhaps impractically offering poor traction characteristics. More traditional and serviceable treads are to be seen on the car's front wheels. A hefty double steel buffer is firmly attached to the front section of the solid main frame, while the large headlights should have provided adequate illumination for nighttime journeys across Chase roads. Sliding door garage accomodation looks extremely generously lit for natural light maintenance and cleaning work indoors, in inclement weather. Treaded , blue, heavy duty bricks provide a solid well drained floor.



CHASETOWN - ITS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The area which was to become known as Chasetown and Chase Terrace was farmland and common land until the middle of the nineteenth century. A map of 1820 shows that much of the land was owned by the Marquess of Anglesey with smaller amounts owned by William Flavel, Samuel Glover and John Bird. There are no houses in the area except one called Lamb Lodge.

About six months after the mine was opened near Chasewater in 1849, the manager of the pit, Mr. Landor, wrote saying that:-

"£600 will be required to build an overlooker's house, an underlooker's house and a few cottages; as there are no houses within one or two miles and no accomodation for persons to take care of the property accumulating round the pits."

These houses were the beginning of Chasetown. By 1855 a house larger than these cottages had been built for the manager and four small cottages for miners were built nearby. They stand near the top of the dam at Chasewater and although the manager's house, "Bleak House", is still lived in, the tiny cottages with two rooms upstairs and two rooms down, a kitchen and outbuildings, are now empty. Old people still remember an old lady living in one of them who often sat outside by the door smoking a clay pipe. The Manager's house is marked on the map on page 63 and can be seen in the photograph on page 31. The cost of this house and a house for the cashier was £1,646 whereas a terraced cottage cost about £90.

At about the same time six other cottages and a public house - "The Uxbridge Arms" (the Marquess of Anglesey was also Earl of Uxbridge) were built in what was later called Church Street. These can still be seen today. At the back of the cottages stood a wash house where all the families did their washing. There was also a bakehouse where the miners' wives did the baking. These houses are all shown on the map attached to the agreement between J.R. McClean and R.C. Chawner.

By 1861 there were houses at the Triangle and Paviers Row had also been built. Today nothing remains of these houses except the names.

At this time Chasetown had no proper name. When the 1861 census was taken all the houses except the Triangle and Paviers Row were simply described as Cannock Chase. Perhaps the town on the Chase became Chasetown. It is said that Elijah Wills, who came to Chasetown as the schoolmaster in 1863, was the first to describe the area as Chasetown.

When the census was taken Chasetown was divided between Hammerwich and Burntwood. The growing population can be seen from the fact that Hammerwich had 781 inhabitants in 1851 and 1,634 in 1861. The increase was entirely due to mining.

In 1860 the land on the Chase here was enclosed and divided into plots as shown on the map on page 61. At that time High Street was still the Brownhills and Rugeley Road and Queen Street was known as Colliery Road. Lists of those allotted land in place of their rights on the unenclosed land and of those who bought land sold to pay for the cost of enclosure are on pages 59 and 60. The list also gives the plot numbers, which can be located by the map on page 61, and where the purchasers came from.

Those who bought land in 1860 :-

Plot No.	Name of Purchaser	Acreage	Cost
28	Joseph Baker, Bloxwich (Coalmaster)	2 acres	£354
29	James Gardner, Rugeley	6 acres	£215
30	Rev. George Pool	4 acres	£160
31	William Bickley, Hammerwich (Miner)	1 acre 2 roods	£76
32	Joseph Baker, Bloxwich (Coalmaster)	1 acre	£69
33	Robert Hall, Norton Canes (Miner)	2 roods	£38
34	John Gough, Hammerwich (Miner)	1 rood	£19
35	John Edward, Brownhills (Miner)	1 acre	£114
38	William Davies of Cannock Chase Colliery (Miner)	1 rood	£39
39	Charles Cockayne, Great Wyrley (Wheelwright)	1 rood	£33
40	George Bird, Great Wyrley (Tailor)	1 rood	£34
41	Isaac Aulton, Dudley	2 roods	£44
42	ditto	2 roods	£44
43	Matthew Williamson of Cannock Chase Colliery by direction of John Beard and Emily his wife (formerly Emily Edwards)	3 roods	£62
44	Matthew Williamson of Cannock Chase Colliery (Clerk)	3 roods	£58
45	Isaac Aulton, (Victualler)	1 acre	£46
46	ditto	1 acre	£48
47	Thomas Seedhouse, Ogley Hay (Provision Dealer)	1 acre	£48
48	Charles Horton, Shire Oak (Bricklayer)	1 acre	£48
49	John William Littlehay, Shire Oaks, (Miner)	1 acre	£48
50	George Horton, Ogley Hay (Bricklayer)	1 acre	£48
51	Henry Wall, Triangle Terrace (Innkeeper)	1 acre 1 rood	£53
52	Alfred Wood, Triangle Terrace (Miner)	1 acre 1 rood	£53
53	Joseph Hiden, Chorley (Yeoman)	1 acre 1 rood	£53
54	John Lancashire, Ogley Hay Cottages, Hammerwich (Miner)	1 acre 1 rood	£53
92	Isaac Aulton, (Victualler)	4 acres 2 roods	£215
91	Joseph Baker, Bloxwich (Coalmaster)	6 acres 1 rood	£280
93	John Carlile, Dudley (Brickmaster)	1 acre 2 roods	£132
94	ditto	3 acres	£182
95	ditto	3 acres 2 roods	£210
96	ditto	5 acres 1 roods	£330
97	Wm. Middleton, Hammerwich (Farmer)	9 acres 2 roods	£382

Those who were allotted land :-

Plot No.	Allotted to	Acreage
8	John Wood (Nag's Head)	51 acres
27	Stanley Wolferstan, Tamworth	134 acres
55	Mary Ann Smith, (Widow), Lichfield	6 acres 2 roods
56	ditto	30 acres 2 roods
57	Stanley Wolferstan, Tamworth	46 acres
58	George Hitchenson, Burntwood (Farmer)	7 acres
59	The Sub Chamber and Vicars Choral of Lichfield Cathedral	13 acres
60	William Aldrich Cotton, Bedford (Gentleman)	
88	John Mann, Longdon (Farmer)	35 acres
89	Mary Ann Smith (Widow)	15 acres
90	Thomas Webb Flavell, London, (Solicitor), Rev. John Webb Flavell, Norfolk	17 acres
36	Marquess of Anglesey	2 roods
37	ditto	4 acres

The 1851 Census records where the head of each family was born and this tells you where the new families coming into the area came from.

Place of Birth	Paviers Row	Triangle
Staffordshire	6	5
Warwickshire	2	2
Worcestershire	1	2
Cheshire	2	-
Nottinghamshire	1	-
Leicestershire	1	1
Shropshire	-	1
Somerset	-	1
Surrey	-	1
Ireland	8 (3 as lodgers)	

Clearly many of the families who moved into the area came from elsewhere in Staffordshire but more than half came from much further afield. The strong Irish section is particularly noticeable.

The majority of the men were miners in 1861 but other occupations found in the area were engineer, mine surveyor, machine clerk, brickmaker, railway worker, agricultural labourer, blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter, bricklayer, farmer, domestic servant and shopowner. Some of these obviously worked at the Colliery and the craftsmen like the blacksmith and the carpenter may also have been employed there.

The map on page 63 shows how the village has continued to develop after the land was enclosed in 1860. The school (built 1860) and St. Anne's church (built 1865) are signs of a growing community. A little later Church Street took its name from St. Anne's Church.

Chase Lodge was a large residence built at this time (1866). This was the doctor's house, situated in an imposing position on the corner opposite the Uxbridge Arms. This red brick house with pleasant gardens still stands, and remained the residence of the local doctor until recently. The other large house built at this time was the Vicarage (now the Old Vicarage) which has no date on it but is mentioned in 1870 as being the residence of the Vicar of St. Anne's Church.

The few larger houses belonging to the professional class of the village were in direct contrast to the homes of the miners. From the 1866 map opposite it can be seen that Queen Street had already begun to be developed with the rows of red brick terraced houses, so much a feature of mining villages. These houses were very plain in style with the usual two rooms up and two down, but in addition they had a cellar. They can only be described as stark and austere, for they were devoid of decorative features.

The redbrick of which all the houses in the district were constructed came locally from brickworks at Cannock, Hednesford and Aldridge. There are very few of the rows still standing in Chasetown or Chaseterrace today.

Cottage Lane, which according to the map was no more than a trackway, illustrates the third type of home in which the miners lived. These were tiny cottages with perhaps two rooms and a kitchen, but no upper floor. If the families who lived in them were large, as was the case with many miners, conditions must have been very cramped indeed.

The Cannock Chase Colliery Company built only a small number of houses for their employees in Chasetown. A number of houses were taken over from the Marquess of Anglesey, four houses were built in Church Street about 1870 and after World War I houses in Upper High Street were bought for mine officials.

Who built the other houses? Probably most of the larger terraced rows were put up by local builders who sold them as soon as completed. They were sold to businessmen or those with some savings to invest who bought a complete row and let them to miners. Junction Row and Chemists Row were built and sold in this way and others were probably built for the same purpose.

In Union Street the houses, built by a local builder, were sold individually or in pairs to individual families - usually miners - who raised the money by a mortgage.

A few of the more enterprising of the miners bought a plot of land and had their house built - probably they built part of it themselves. Sometimes a pair of houses was built so that the rent from the second house paid the interest on the mortgage and in later years when the miner had to retire the rent of the second house provided a sort of pension.

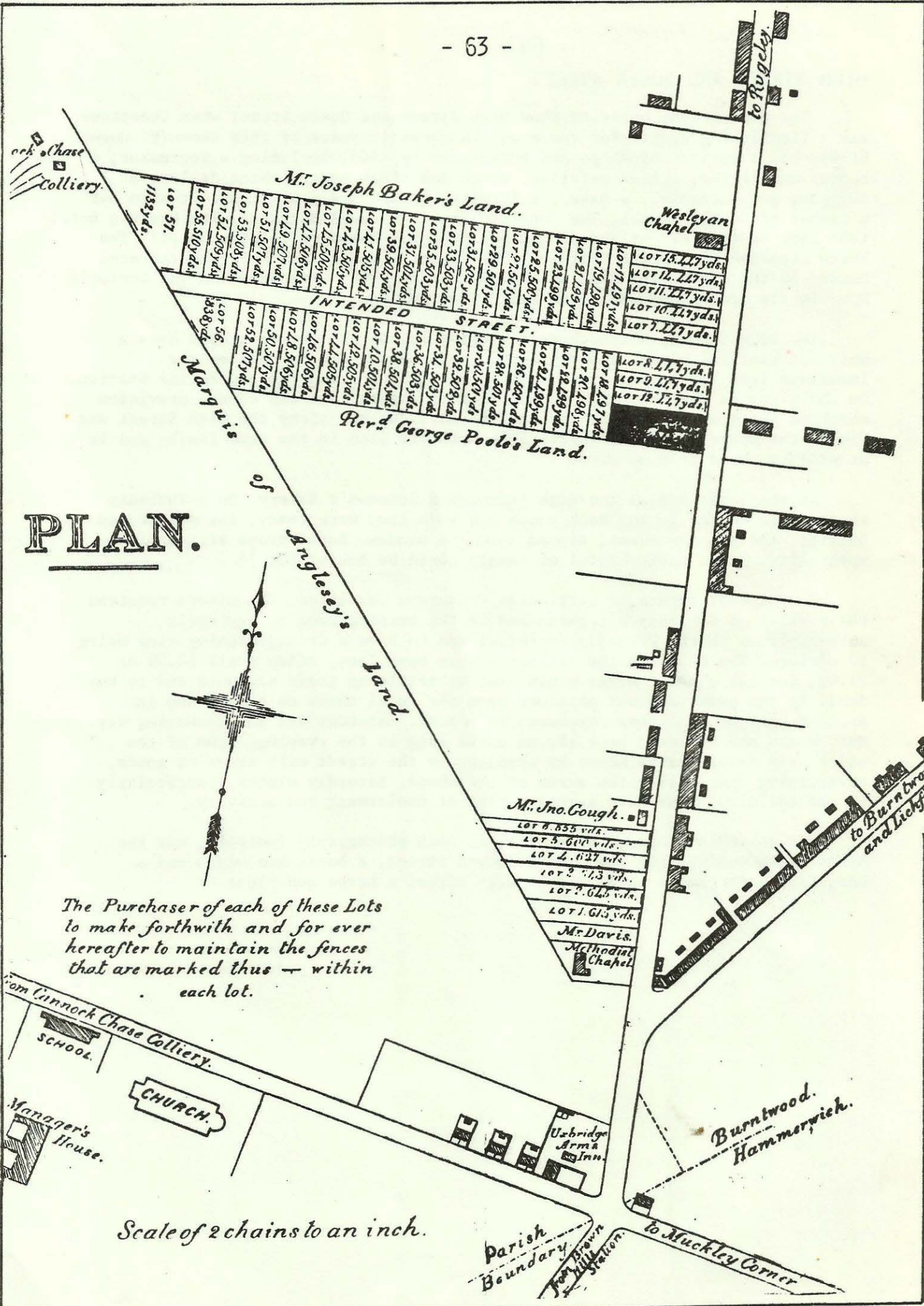
In an 1870 directory for Chasetown three general builders are named - Charles Cockayne, Charles Horton and Joseph Price. The 1860 map shows that both Cockayne and Horton became owners of enclosed land. Horton was then described as a bricklayer.

The 1870 Directory also lists Joseph Baker, after whom Baker Street is named.

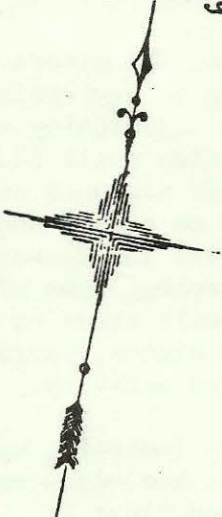
By 1870 a number of tradesmen, shopkeepers had settled in the village to provide a service for the expanding community. In High Street and Queen Street were grocers, butchers, and ironmonger, four drapers, a post mistress, a painter and plumber, a boot and shoe maker, a blacksmith, carpenter, tailor, and a surgeon.

In 1892 Chasetown was described as a "centre of activity" and by 1900 as a "thriving and rapidly increasing village". The population of Burntwood, which included much of Chasetown, increased from 4,525 in 1871 to 8,195 thirty years later.

The map opposite dates from about 1866. It shows how James Gardner's plot 29 (page 59) has been divided into building plots round a new street. John Edward's plot 35 has also been subdivided for building. Other houses have been built since 1860.



PLAN.



The Purchaser of each of these Lots to make forthwith and for ever hereafter to maintain the fences that are marked thus — within each lot.

Scale of 2 chains to an inch.

from Cinnock Chase Colliery.

Manager's House.

CHURCH.

Uzbridge Arms Inn.

Parish Boundary
for Brown Hill Station.

Burntwood.
Hammerwich.

to Muckley Corner

to Rugeley.

to Burntwood
and Lichfield

Wesleyan Chapel

Mr. Joseph Baker's Land.

Rev. George Pool's Land.

Margis of Anglesey's Land.

Mr. Jno. Gough.

Mr. Davis.
Methodist Chapel

Cinnock Chase Colliery.

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HIGH STREET AND QUEEN STREET

The photographs opposite show High Street and Queen Street when Chasetown was a flourishing centre for the area, in the early years of this century. Queen Street had a variety of shops and businesses by 1900, including a bootmaker, a cooper and carrier, a beer retailer, watch and clock maker, china dealer, a surgeon, a tobacconist, a baker, a furniture store and a milliner. It also had a number of Public Houses, The Junction Inn, The Royal Exchange, The Queen's Hotel (the lamp on the left of the photograph probably belonged to this hotel), The White Lion and The Spring Cottage. The doctor's house was near the terraced houses on the right hand side of the photograph which were known as The Doctor's Row. In the background open countryside can be seen.

The High Street, although fairly quiet in the picture must have been a busy and bustling place. The Greyhound Public House can be seen on the immediate left and beyond this, (out of the picture) was the old Police Station. On the right is Cooper's. This is now an ironmongers, but was then a provision merchant and grocers, run by the same family. Further along the High Street was Gibbs' the drapers and milliners. This shop is also in the same family and is at present owned by Mrs. Ward.

At the lower end of the High Street was Stanton's Bakery. On a Thursday sweets were boiled in the back rooms and when they were ready, the window was emptied, and all the sweets tipped into the window. Butterdrops were their speciality, and a whole bagful of sweets could be bought for $\frac{1}{2}$ d .

On Saturday nights, in particular, Chasetown was alive. The miners received their wages on Saturday afternoon and in the evening came to pay their subscriptions to the Friendly Societies and to have a drink, closing time being 12 o'clock. The shops in the village stayed open late, often until 10.30 or 11.00, for the miners' wives would come to settle up their accounts and to buy food. In the week food was obtained from the local shops on credit and an account kept of the items purchased in a book. Saturday was the reckoning day. Men, women and children were abroad until late in the evening. Some of the older boys earned extra money by standing in the street with trays of goods, advertising and selling the wares of the shops. Saturday nights, particularly to the children, must have seemed a time of excitement and activity.

The commonest form of transport, as both photographs indicate, was the horse drawn vehicle. In the view of Queen Street, a horse and wagon and a horse and cart can be seen, and in High Street a horse and float.



HIGH STREET

The photograph opposite shows the lower end of the High Street at a later date, probably in the 1940's. It gives an interesting view of the cycle shop owned by A.P. Sanders. Note the petrol pump by the roadside.

On the lefthand side of the photograph is the Wesleyan Methodist Church, now demolished. The Methodist movement in Chasetown and the surrounding districts was strong and well supported. Its less formal service and emphasis on singing appealed to the working people, and it played a leading role in the religious and social life of the village. There were two Methodist Churches in Chasetown, both in the High Street. The Wesleyan Methodist Church became known as the "bottom" chapel, and the Primitive Methodist Church higher up the hill was the "top" chapel.

As early as 1860 the Wesleyan Methodists met together in the "Club Room" of the Queen's Hotel in Queen Street, and by 1864 the first Chapel was opened at a cost of £259. The building shown opposite was built later, in 1884, because the original chapel was "not adequate for the needs of the virile congregation". Friendly rivalry existed between the "top" and "bottom" chapels, over the numbers in the congregation, but both were well attended. On Sunday evenings the street must have resounded with hearty singing. The chapels were usually full with extra seats in the aisles.

Associations with the Temperance Society seem to have existed and in 1897 the Chasetown Temperance Brass Band was formed. One of its first engagements was to give the Sacred Concert on Whit Sunday afternoon at Norton Pool. Despite wet weather about 700 to 800 people were present. The open air services were a feature of Methodism, and after Sunday Service, an open air service was held when various churches in the movement joined together. The Temperance Brass Band attended such occasions as the Sunday School anniversaries, when it led the procession round the neighbourhood. The chapels also held social events like Tea Meetings.

SANKEYS CORNER

This photograph was taken probably in the war years, in what appears a totally different age. A leisurely stroll across the Bridge Cross Road /Cannock Road junction could be enjoyed, while a cyclist chats casually outside the Sankeys Corner Cinema situated at the rear of the cyclist's trilby hatted companion. "Belisha Beacons" stand four square on each corner denoting pedestrian crossing areas, marked by metal studs on the road surface. The large chimney (left) is that of Chasetown Electric Company's plant at the former No. 5 pit site.

The heavy cast iron bus shelter (right) was for many years an important feature of the locality. Its primary function was utilized for perhaps five minutes every half hour, as bus services tended to be infrequent. The old shelter perhaps saw more intensive usage by the village's young folk, especially on wet Saturday nights, when it became a shared sanctuary long after the departure of the bus.



Old Hudson



J.R. MCLEAN AND ST. ANNE'S CHURCH

In the church of St. Anne, Chasetown, stands the bust of John Robinson McLean (shown opposite), and also an inscription.

In Memory of
JOHN ROBINSON McLEAN
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
For East Staffordshire
Fellow of the Royal Society
Sometime President
Of the Institution of Civil Engineers
THE FOUNDER OF THIS CHURCH
And Benefactor of this District
Died 13th July, 1873
Aged 60

McLean was a leading figure in the development of Chasetown (see page 6) He founded St. Anne's church and the consecration must have been a grand occasion for, as well as local dignitaries, McLean invited members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Special trains were laid on to convey them to the church. The invitation read as follows:-

MR. J. R. McCLEAN

requests the honour of your company at Luncheon, on Thursday, the 14th September, at 2 o'clock, in the tents adjoining St. Anne's Free Church.

To.....

Member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

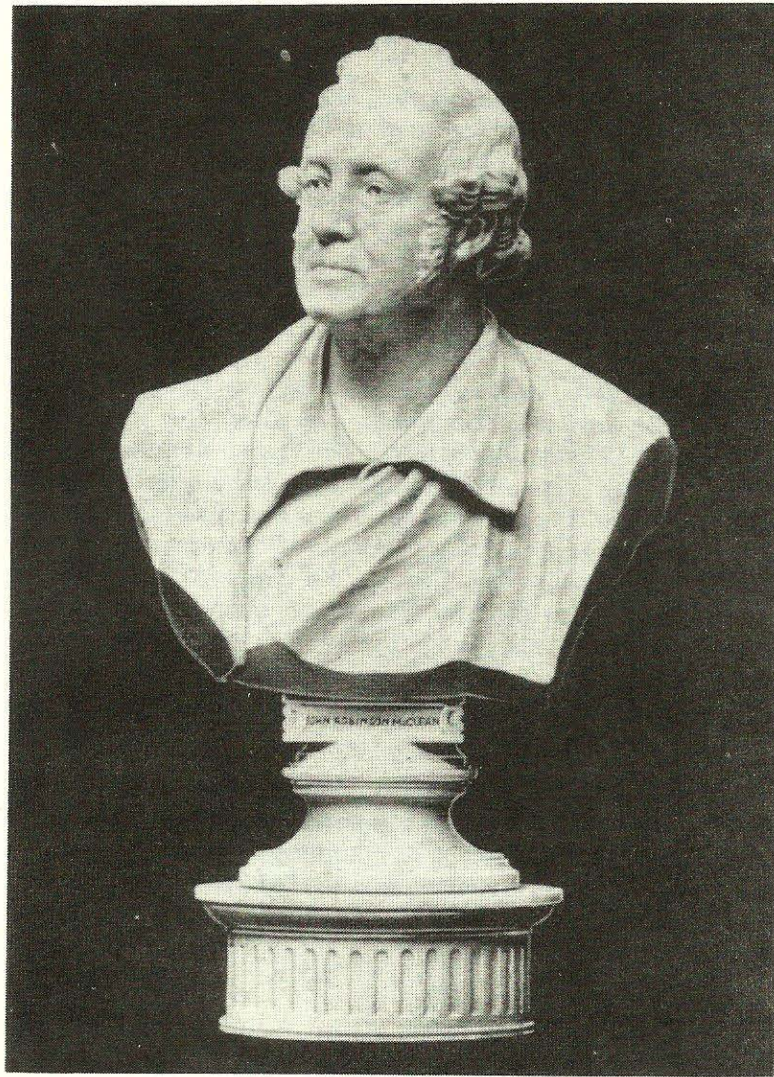
Note. On the 14th September, 1865, a special train will leave Dudley at 12 noon, returning to Birmingham at 4-30 p.m., and persons attending the ceremony will be conveyed in the railway carriages to a platform near the Church.

The ordinary train will leave Dudley at 10-30 a.m., in time for the service.

All of the seven hundred sittings in the church were free, to encourage every strata of local society to worship here. The church was built in Lombard-Venetian style using both blue and red bricks externally. It had no tower, but was still imposing. In 1892 it was described as being :- "of special interest to visitors, on account of its brightness and beauty".

The photograph opposite shows a harvest festival in 1934. The walls of the chancel are clearly visible. Managers of the Colliery regularly attended services here. The clergy had considerable influence at the school, which was also founded by the Colliery. The children were expected to attend Sunday School, and an annual treat was given to them. Other treats were magic lantern shows and a Christmas tree with a present for every child. When Rev. McLean (the first Vicar) was married there was a special tea and sports day.

The Clergy gave encouragement to the children in other ways, usually to give incentive for good attendance and cleanliness. Prizes for good work and attendance were also given by the Committee (members included from Cannock Chase Colliery) for distribution by the Clergyman at a Prize Giving Ceremony. Apart from attending Sunday School the children from the School attended Church on important dates of the Church Year, such as Easter and Ascension Day. Thus the Anglican Church, because of its close connection with the school, played a significant role in the lives of the children of the village.



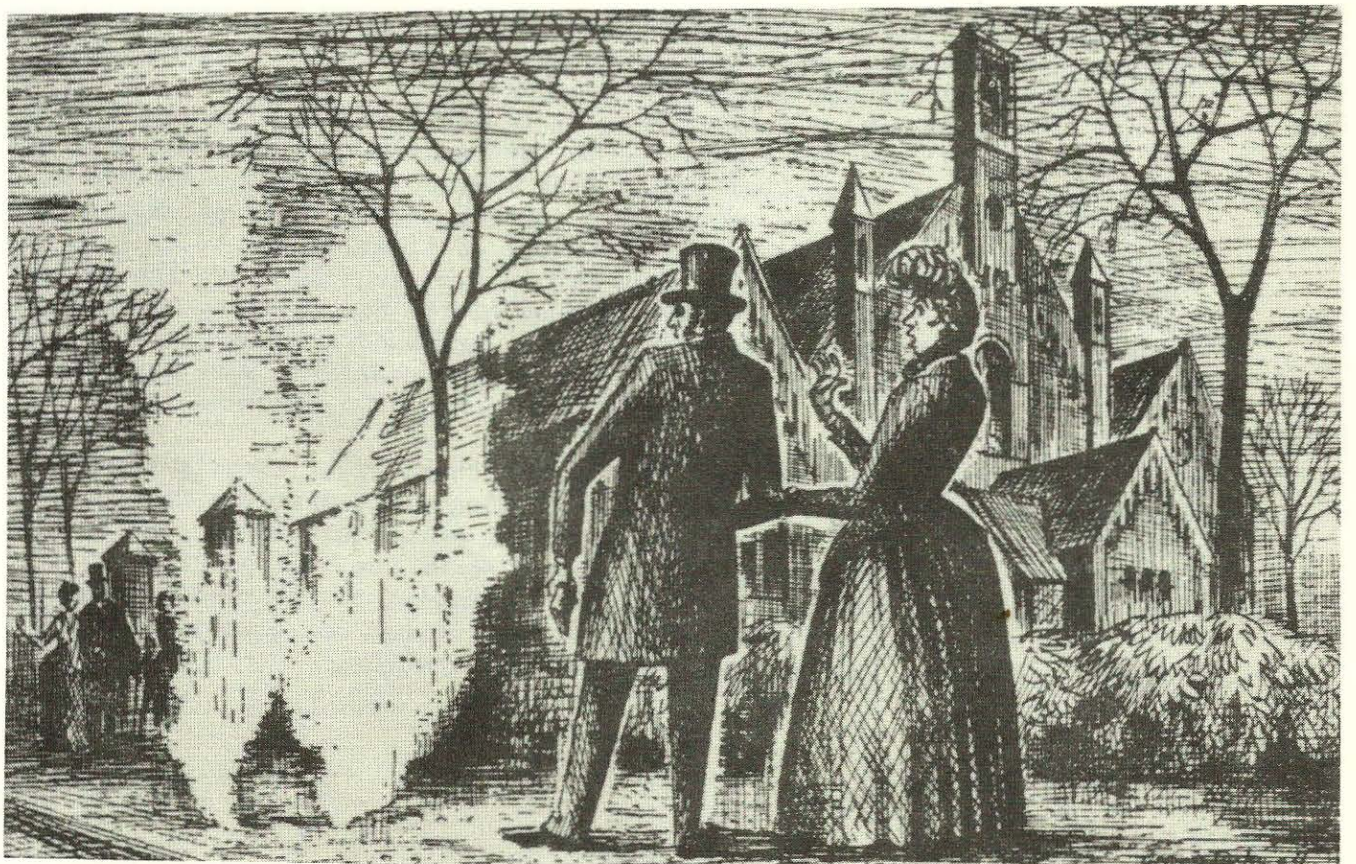
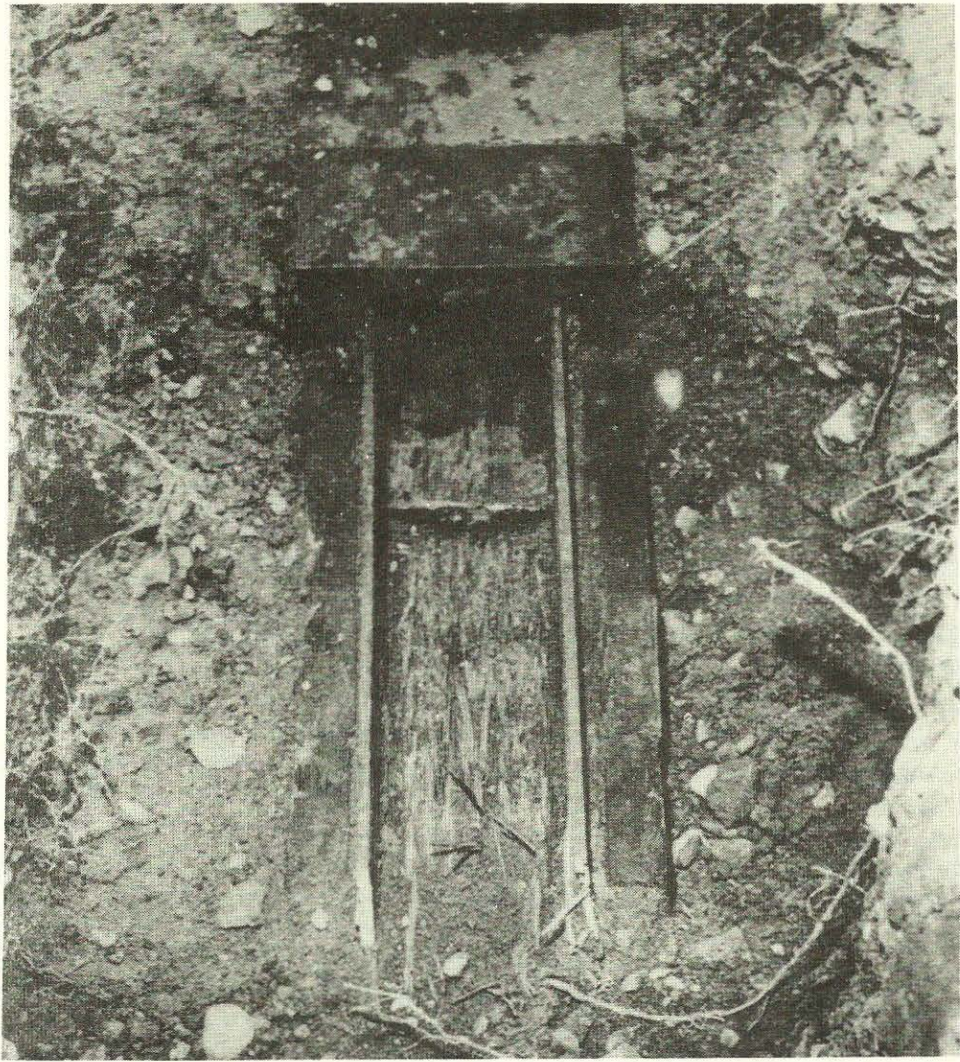
ELECTRIC LIGHTS

In 1883 S.F. Sopwith, Mine Manager, and related to the Sopwiths of early aeroplane design fame, introduced electric lighting at the 2's Colliery, and extended its use by lighting the church, the manager's house and the school. To reach the church, the cable (flat winding cable) was laid in brick troughs, which enclosed the cable over the 700 yards distance. The flat cable was wrapped in cloth with a binding layer of tar and coaldust, before being laid into the brick cover, the whole then being liberally coated with further "insulation".

The current at 80v D.C .was generated by an Elwell and Parker (Wolverhampton) dynamo, driven from the end of the shaft driving the fan used to extract air from the underground colliery workings. The fan, driven by steam generated in the colliery boilers, recirculated fresh air through the underground passages and tunnels. Sopwith gave a paper (1886) to the British Association, and was eager to show the advantages of the method of generation, using steam power at practically no cost, as the steam had to be raised for winding and air circulation. The Edison-Swan Carbon Filament lamps gave out a dull red light similar to that of a modern electric fire. Davies (the electrician) "had lots of excitement to deal with - sharp explosions and resulting flames on the surface cables plunging worshippers at the church into darkness".

The picture shows the flat winding cable with its support trough, and over-trough of bricks affording reasonable protection. The photograph was taken during an excavation of the pathway opposite the Chasetown Junior School. A section of the cable and its insulation is mounted in St. Anne's Church.

The sketch opposite depicts the scene outside St. Anne's Church after a heavy downpour of rain. Water seeping into the troughed insulation, caused electrical discharges of considerable voltage beneath the path, steam rose eerie and spectre-like in the evening gloom. Certainly the lady shows considerable alarm in the picture, and would probably have missed church on that particular evening, when St. Anne's would adopt the illumination of standby candles and lamps for evening worship. The "return" for the electricity circuit was reputed to be via a wound cable situated beneath the pathway on the opposite side of the road, but this has not been confirmed.



ELECTRIC STREET LAMPS

Cannock Chase Colliery Power Station at No. 5 Pit Site, Cannock Road, Chase Terrace is shown here. The line ran roughly parallel to Princess Street, and crossing gates guarded the access to the No. 7 Pit.

SWITCHING ON THE ELECTRIC STREET LIGHTS FOR CHASE MINING DISTRICTS

There were memorable happenings on the Chase on Friday night, whilst the adults celebrated them with cheers, the children danced round the standards from which hung the brilliant electric street lights. Chasetown was glad enough to get electricity instead of gas, but Chase Terrace and Boney Hay were more jubilant still, because theirs was a substitution of electric lamps for miserably inadequate oil lamps. The total number of street lights switched on was 75.

This new era in the public lighting of Cannock Chase mining villages is due to the commendable enterprise of the Cannock Chase Colliery Co., Ltd., who, having spare electric current at their disposal, decided to offer it to the various local authorities for lighting and small power purposes.

The Burntwood Parish Council for Chasetown, Chase Terrace, Boney Hay, Burntwood was the first of the local authorities to give its support to the proposal, and later the Brownhills Urban Council followed the example.

SUB-STATIONS . It was only in May last that the Company commenced the work of erecting sub-stations at Chase Terrace, Chasetown, Norton Canes, Brownhills West, fixing the standards for the street lamps, and carrying the miles of over head cables through the scattered area of supply. That so much has been achieved in so short a time is due to the remarkable enthusiasm and determination of Mr. Chris. Jones, the electrical engineer to the Colliery Co., who has done everything in his power in order that the district should have the promised electric light by the autumn.

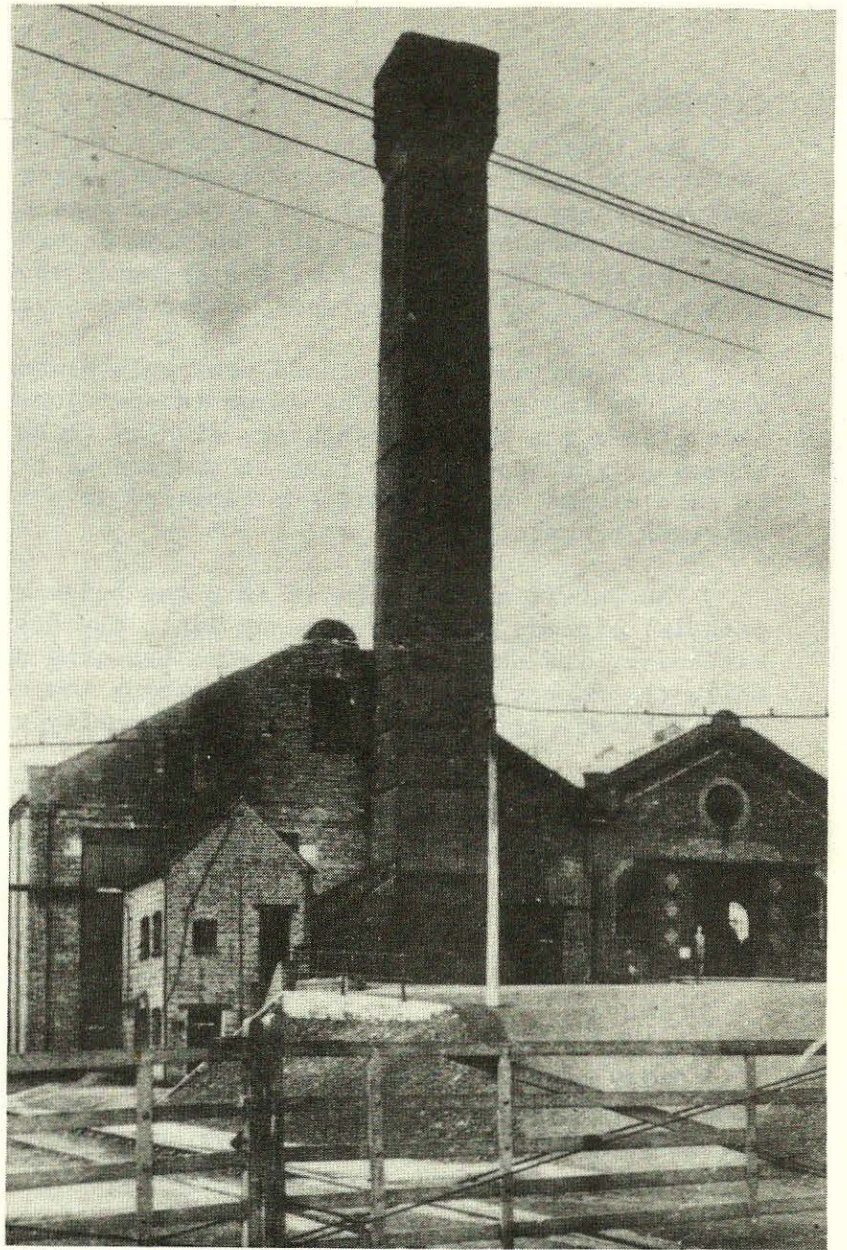
The current is generated by the Colliery Company's power station at Chase Terrace, which is a splendidly equipped building, with a plant capable of producing sufficient current to light the whole of the Cannock Chase District. The fact that between 2.30 p.m. and 11 p.m. the Company's own demand for electricity purposes is at a very low ebb enables it to dispose of the surplus current for public lighting at a nominal charge, and there is the prospect of the local mining villages getting electricity cheaper than is to be had in any of the neighbouring areas.

The charge of public lamps is to be £3 or £3.5s each, according to the locality, and the lights are 60 watt gas-filled lamps for ordinary streets, 100 watt gas-filled lamps being placed at special junctions or cross-roads. They will be switched on and off by means of automatic clocks, located in the sub-stations, and the hours of lighting are to be from an hour before sunset to midnight, and from 6.a.m. to 7.30.a.m., the latter period being intended for the convenience of the miners going to work on the dark winter mornings. Steel standards are used for the lamps in the main streets, whilst in the other roads wooden standards have been provided.

Express and Star 23rd September, 1922

The photograph of the 1909 Sunday School treat clearly shows the villages enthusiasm for pageant. With bunting aloft over the High Street, the Silver Band led the procession past the Methodist Church (left) diverting into Queen Street. This picture shows the huge glass bowls of the gas lamps, portrayed on a columned chandelier at the village centre.

Gas was made locally off Queen street. It has not been possible to find a picture of the Gas Company's Chasetown works.



CINEMAS

The local villages were well served with pubs, clubs and more interestingly, Picture Houses. Chasetown, Chase Terrace and Heath Hayes each had their own share of the Jervis cinema chain, and these cinemas were commercial successes, especially busy on Saturday evenings, when the locals would be strongly augmented by the incoming youth from such villages as Norton, Boney Hay and Burntwood, where there was no cinema.

The distribution of cinema newsreels demanded some hectic work on two wheels, as the film would be shown in one cinema, rewound and hurried to the next cinema for its next showing, finally to be screened in the third cinema at the appropriate time at the end of a feature film. The main films in each cinema were therefore screened to a timetable demanded by the newsreel transport.

The Jervis cinemas stayed into the television age, when they joined more palatial cinemas on the redundant list. The Heath Hayes cinema became a carpet warehouse, its Chasetown counterpart becoming part of a car spraying unit, while the Sankey's Corner cinema, perhaps the most imposing and most frequented of the three, still soldiers on for community recreation as a Bingo Hall/Social Club.

At the date of the photograph, films advertised were "In Love and War", "A Question of Adultery" and "I was Monty's Double". The two old timers on the tree shaded bench, perhaps contemplate the old days, with more activity at Sankey's Corner

This picture was taken at the junction of Church Street and Highfields Road. Traffic in this post war photograph has increased with a British Road Services Bedford 5 tonner parked by the Memorial Gardens and Bowling Green hidden by the trees to the right.

Chasetown's small and homely cinema defunct and largely forgotten, is shown to the left, with its balcony fire-escape railings intact. Further up the street, and noticeable by its bicycle advertisements, is A.P. Sanders' shop, while above the cab of the Bedford can be seen the Junction Arms. Street furniture is simple. Very tall poles for telephone and power lines dominate the village centre. Just visible in front of Sanders' shop is the gable of the Methodist Church, for long an important stronghold of Non-Conformist faith in the village.

The signpost points the route to older and more prosperous centres of population, Brownhills being a mere $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles away, and the dominant shopping and manufacturing areas of Walsall a further 5 miles distant.



SCHOOLS

Chasetown school photograph of 1920. It is difficult to find a portrait of this period showing any expression of satisfaction or pleasure on the children's faces in this seemingly pleasurable event. The early years of this century were not memorable for pleasurable occasions, frivolity or fun. To the working class family these were trying years, and the outlook of the times seems to be shown in the hard faces, the near grimace and for some the scowl.

Lace up boots were almost universal. The children of Chasetown always had a tradition of good schooling, and many of Chasetown's young citizens furthered their educational standards by evening study, a fact always encouraged by the Colliery Company. The Mining Institute enabled youngsters to acquire higher academic awards locally, and still fulfils a useful function for specialised further education.

The map of the Chasetown area (estimated 1866) clearly shows the original school, provided by the Company, sited on the opposite side of the Church Road to that occupied by the present site. This original colliery school was built and in use in 1860, daily records being kept from 1864. Even before 1850, it is thought that there were some "Dame" schools in the Burntwood/Chasetown area.

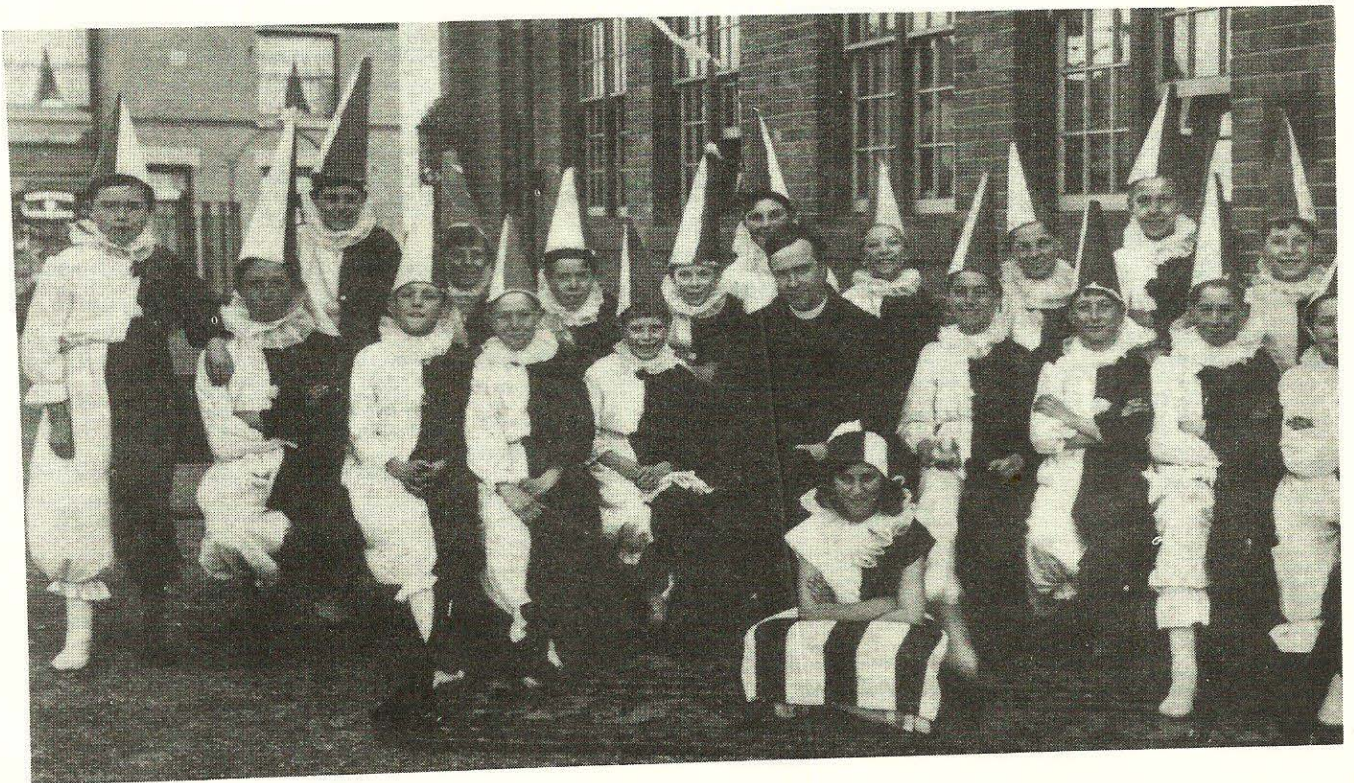
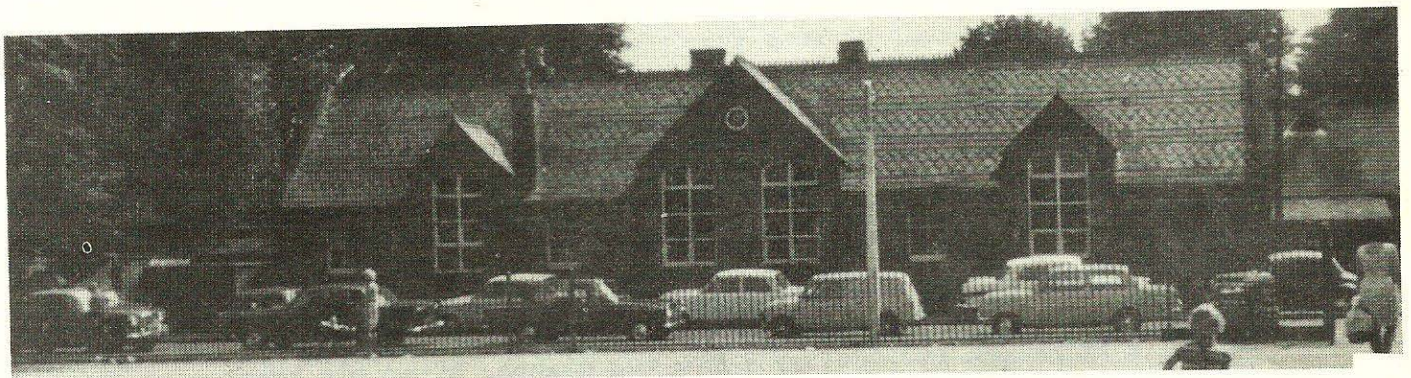
The group from St. Joseph's Catholic School depicted opposite obviously enjoyed the experience of dressing up in Pierrot clothes in contrasting colours. Unfortunately the date is not known but is thought to be 1924, as Father Little is shown. Details of the production are not available either, but it is apparent from the photograph that a lot of hard work went into making the costumes.

One solitary girl sits on the magic carpet, with a happy group of boys surrounding the Catholic Priest of the day.

The early mining community brought with it its Catholic followers, and children from these families, from 1860 onwards, attended the school built in Church Street. An entry in the Chasetown School Logbook reads:-

"Mon. 3rd Dec. 1883. Attendance very low. Several girls of the Roman Catholic faith have left for the Roman Catholic school just opened."

The Roman Catholic church was at first utilised as a school, the altar being covered by a cloth. Catholic school records date from 1901, but the first log book is thought to have been lost in earlier years. Catholic education in the village, utilising its own school premises, dates from April, 1915, but the school building in High Street was under construction during 1914.



BEAUDESERT

Social life of the Company's employees was catered for. From its early beginnings, the management was keenly interested in both the welfare and the educational advancement of its labour force. A piano and library were installed as part of No. 2 colliery offices. "For the enlightenment of the miners", and a school was built in what is now Church Street for the miners' children. In 1865 a "Free" church was built and later an Institute for the miners at the south of what is now the High Street.

With the development of the village, and because of the poor roads, the population seldom ventured from the village confines. Any journey more venturesome was an occasion of note. This photograph shows the 0-6-0 Saddle-tank locomotive "Griffin" about to leave Chasetown for an employees outing to Beaudesert Hall. The spacious grounds and splendour of the big house provided, on a fine day, a beautiful setting for a family outing. As the company did not own, or need, passenger vehicles, it was necessary to improvise transport using low sided, three plank, general purpose wagons, no doubt scrubbed clean. This group of ladies in their Sunday attire no doubt enjoyed the trip, but should the locomotive have "primed" some of those Sunday bonnets would be liberally spotted with a mixture of soot, oil, and water.

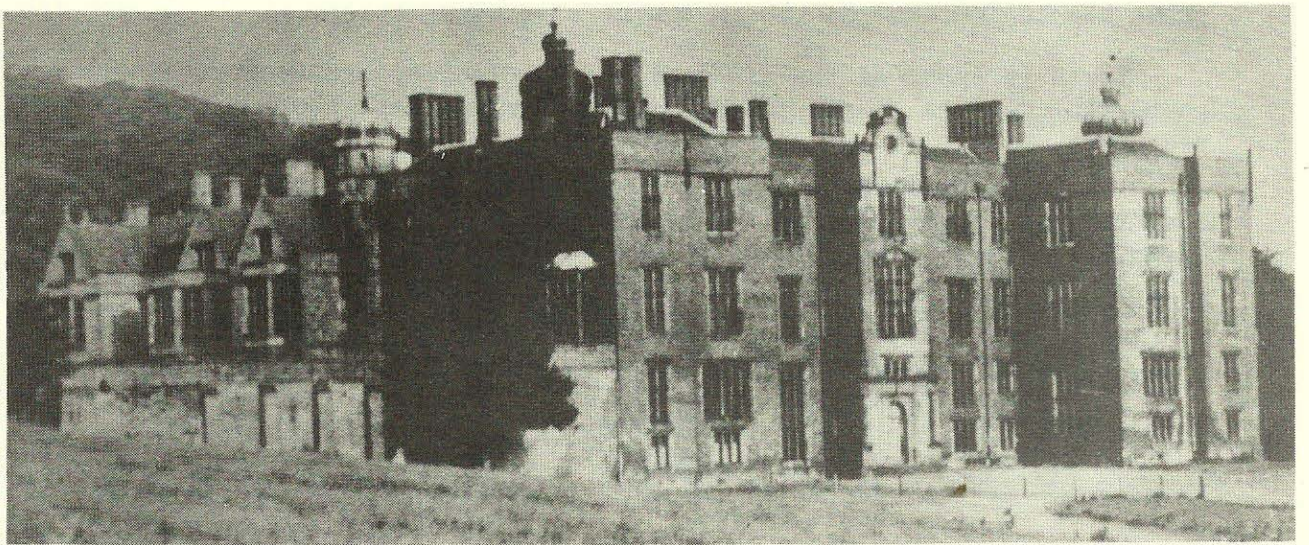
The party would follow the Colliery Company's route, and disembarked at 7's pit, from which point the journey would have continued by wagonette or cart. As no picnic hampers or bags can be seen in the photograph, it could be assumed that some kind of meal would have been provided at the venue. The children do not seem to be dressed for sports or exploration and undoubtedly they would be expected to keep very close to the adult supervisor, easily spotted by the singularly distinctive style and decoration of mother's hat.

Colliery staff in the picture are Joe Sanders (driver), Tom Phillips and Reece Plant.

Pictured opposite is the East front of Beaudesert Hall. In Medieval times, the Chase and its Manor houses, its villages and hamlets were part of the vast church properties. Henry the Eighth, after his break with the Church of Rome, desired Beaudesert for one of his ministers. In return for impropriation valued at £183 per year, the King acquired Beaudesert from Bishop Sampson of Lichfield and Coventry, in September, 1546, handing it over to Sir William Paget one month later. He later became Lord Paget of Beaudesert, further becoming Lord Privy Seal when Mary became Queen.

Erdeswick, in his survey of Staffordshire in 1593, wrote of Beaudesert, that it had been "of late enlarged and new re-edified by the late Lord Pagett".

Such is then the brief history of this imposing structure from Medieval times used by the Bishops of Lichfield as their country retreat. Prominent on high ground, and overlooking much of the wild and rugged beauty of the Chase, its attraction was obvious. On a fine day, the views over Rugeley and Brereton, extending to Burton and beyond, would be enthralling, while the huge house would contrast starkly with the small miners' cottages which were home for the ladies entertained in the picture above.



SPORTS AND GAMES

After the miner's work was completed for the day, his time was his own. With little facility for travelling more than a few miles from his home, leisure activities were essentially local, and self-made. As well as the traditional gardening, and walking, sport and sporting pursuits were enjoyed. The early miners enjoyed cock fighting and other vicious sports, and wagered heavily on the outcome of many bouts, but as this pastime was outlawed, it slowly decreased, finally becoming extinct.

It was replaced by the more peaceful arts of pigeon fancying and flying, while many miners were often accompanied everywhere, even in the pubs, by their terrier dogs. For the energetic, athletics and football allowed some display of physical prowess, and boxing - barefist or Queensberry rules - still allowed the gambler latitude for a small flutter. This old photograph shows an intricate version of "pitch and fob", the origin of many marble variants.

The arena was a painted circle, and contestants tossed their heavy steel marbles to dislodge targets from the ring. Of interest is the early "Trainers bench" (left). The officials, one pointing, another fourth from left with hand raised, and yet a further judge standing upright with a measuring tape, control the contestants (bowed right) who are about to show their skill. Any level site might be chosen, but a well secluded combat area proved most popular, its earth and stones, becoming by constant use, as hallowed as the famous Wembley turf. Wagers on the play would be taken, money won and money lost, all disputes being finally settled over a pint at the Uxbridge or other local pub. The loser paid his round while the victor enjoyed his triumph in free ale.

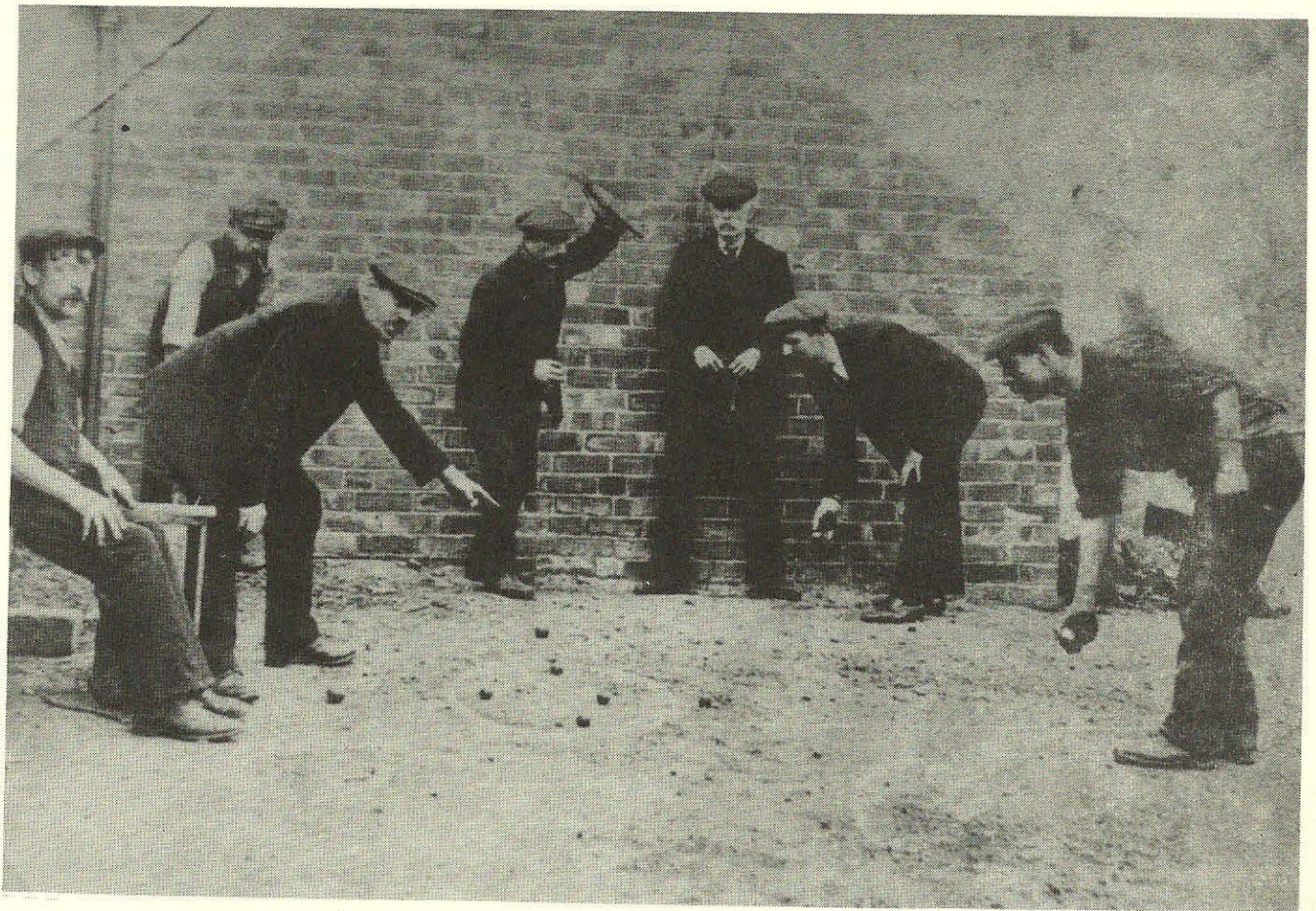
<i>Back Row</i>	?	?	<i>Mr. Waldron</i>	<i>Mr Nutting</i>
<i>Front Row</i>	<i>Mr. Wright</i>		<i>Stanley (Union St)</i>	<i>? Lewis (Hooter) (High Street)</i>

The miners' competitive spirit was channelled into football, bowls and to a lesser extent cricket. The Cannock Chase Colliery Company, to cater for the social and sporting interests of its workforce, provided the sports and recreation ground, which was well used. Over the years many fine players were produced, some achieving higher grade sport within the Midland area. This print was copied from No. 65 in a cigarette card series, by the Ardath Tobacco Co.

Taken in front of the stand with its colourful and decorative awning, the photograph depicts committee members, team management and the team in the year 1936.

This was obviously a successful team, then playing in the Walsall and District League. During the 1935/6 season, they won the District League Championship, the Fazeley Charity Cup, and the Walsall Senior Cup.

<i>Back Row</i>	<i>L. to R. C. Bailey (Comm.), P. Cheetham (Comm.), W. Williamson (Comm), J. Dennis (Chairman), G. Lewis, W. Earp (Comm), R. James, T. Williamson (Sec.), G. Reynolds (Comm), H. Wright (Trainer)</i>
<i>Middle Row</i>	<i>A. Profitt, A. Whittaker, P. Coyne, F. Eccleshall, W. Lewis, H. Wilton</i>
<i>Front Row</i>	<i>H. Heath, W. Hassall, B. Maiden, W. Tasker, W. Evans.</i>



THE CHURCHYARD BRIGADE

Depicted opposite are members of the Churchyard Brigade, "having snap". The helpers were more intent on posing for the photographer and having themselves recorded on film than in tucking in to their sandwiches and pies. It is not known whether the Colliery sent the labourers, or whether their task was a voluntary effort, helping to keep the churchyard mown and in good array. Gardening tools were prominent, while three fellows seem to be the first to tap the contents of the tea urn, held aloft.

The young man, extreme left, proudly displayed his silver watch-chain and fobs for the occasion, these presumably being family heirlooms worn in daily use. The photograph clearly depicted the hat craze. It seems that a head cover was necessary for any head, working, resting, or at any time during the hours of waking. A variety of neckties, neckerchiefs and mufflers graced the individual necks of the company, while a bowler hat appeared fourth from the right, a single flat hat showing centre. The universal heavy duty trousers and waistcoats were standard labouring attire.

The graves appeared ill kept, without headstones. The project looked like a containment job, keeping the dominant grass to reasonable length, rather than one of beautifying the solemn, final resting place for Chasetown's citizenry.

WEDDINGS

Throughout its corporate life, a village community shares all shades of feeling, the sorrows of bereavement, but more importantly, the joyous occasions of betrothal, marriage and birth. The delightful wedding group opposite posed for the camera to record the wedding of Henry Edward Osborne to Beatrice Emma Smith, on Christmas Day, 1923. The portrait was taken in the garden of 103, High Street, Chasetown, then the home of Mr. & Mrs. John Smith, parents of the bride.

The group typifies the wedding photographs cherished by each family or household. The wedding portrait suitably framed and displayed on the sideboard, or mounted in a Wedding Day Album, featured in every home on the Chase, kept for posterity as a record of family life and its roots in former years.

Mrs. Osborne, calm and confident, combined with her sister-in-law to make the wedding dress for her marriage. Hours of careful work went into the decorative white piping used to edge the heavy pale blue full length dress, her displayed to its best advantage as the centre-piece of the portrait. The bride's four sisters attend the bride, three of them holding beautiful arrangements of roses, the bride's own bouquet being white chrysanthemums with contrasting foliage.



GYMNASTS

The young men of the Chase had, over the years, a fine record of achievement in many sports and pastimes. Many fine bowls players have graced the Chasetown Green over the years, while equally skilled ball players confined their talents to the indoor sports of billiards and snooker. Every pub had its own fancied darts players, and, in the early days especially, some fine boxers demonstrated the art under both prizefighting and Queensbury Rules. A lesser known pursuit from the past, but one formerly having a high regard, was that of gymnastics. The local Gymnastic Club, based in the Institute, invited the agile young to train regularly under expert supervision, thus offering them a wholesome recreation with little expense. Enthusiasm and dedication were the qualities thought basic to the sport, skill, fitness and strength came with constant training. The gymnast was encouraged to develop his prowess as an individual, but the varied techniques also demanded a high degree of teamwork and group co-ordination.

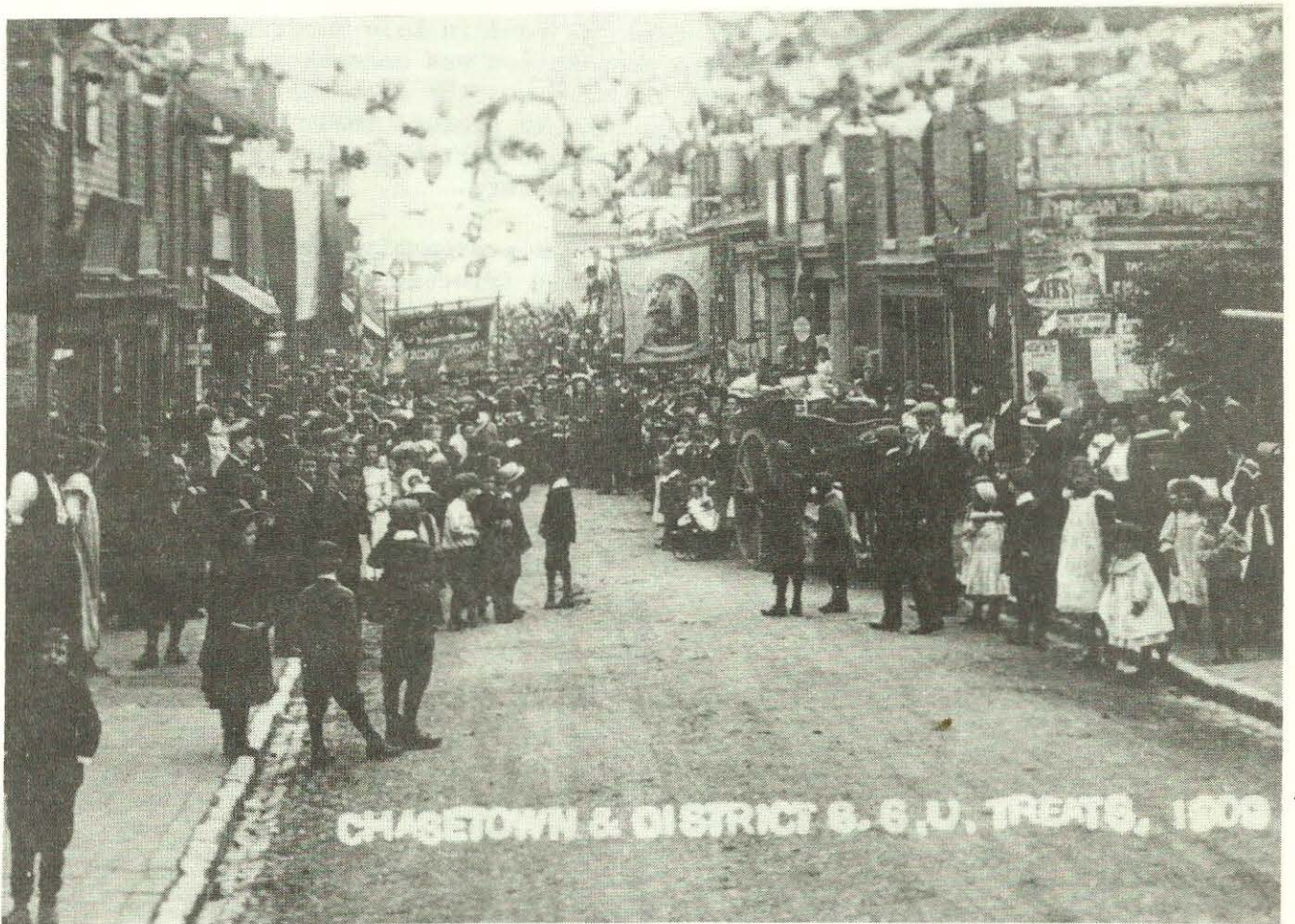
During the Summer season, the club put on several displays locally, where the physical prowess of its members was displayed both in individual competition and in group displays such as the one depicted in the photograph.

A large audience gathered outside the display square to watch enthralled as the display ended with a formal tableaux. In the background, the fairground rides and sideshows prove that the demonstration was part of the festivities which over the years became locally known as the "Chase Wakes". The postmark of the card gives the date as 1910.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROCESSION

The Sunday School treats of 1909 brought the populace to High Street to witness the celebration and procession. Large Sunday School banners proclaimed each religious group, the banner to the left clearly belonging to the Trinitarians. The Chasetown band in the centre of the road, was almost enveloped while waiting to lead the display along the processional route. Strangely enough, everyone seemed quite happy with their ground-level view. No-one leant out of the upstairs windows of the shops. Bunting and streamers added to the festive array.

Shops down the left hand side of High Street from this viewpoint were a chemist, a millinery, Golder's sweet shop (advertising lamp oil), Hedley Smith's shoe shop (with canvas awning) and then the Crown public house. On the right, beyond the wall posters were the Midland Bank, followed by Hardwick's grocers, Hardwick's drapery, Coopers grocery, and finally Webb's drapery and household materials, while Hartshorne's confectionary was hidden behind the pictorial banner.



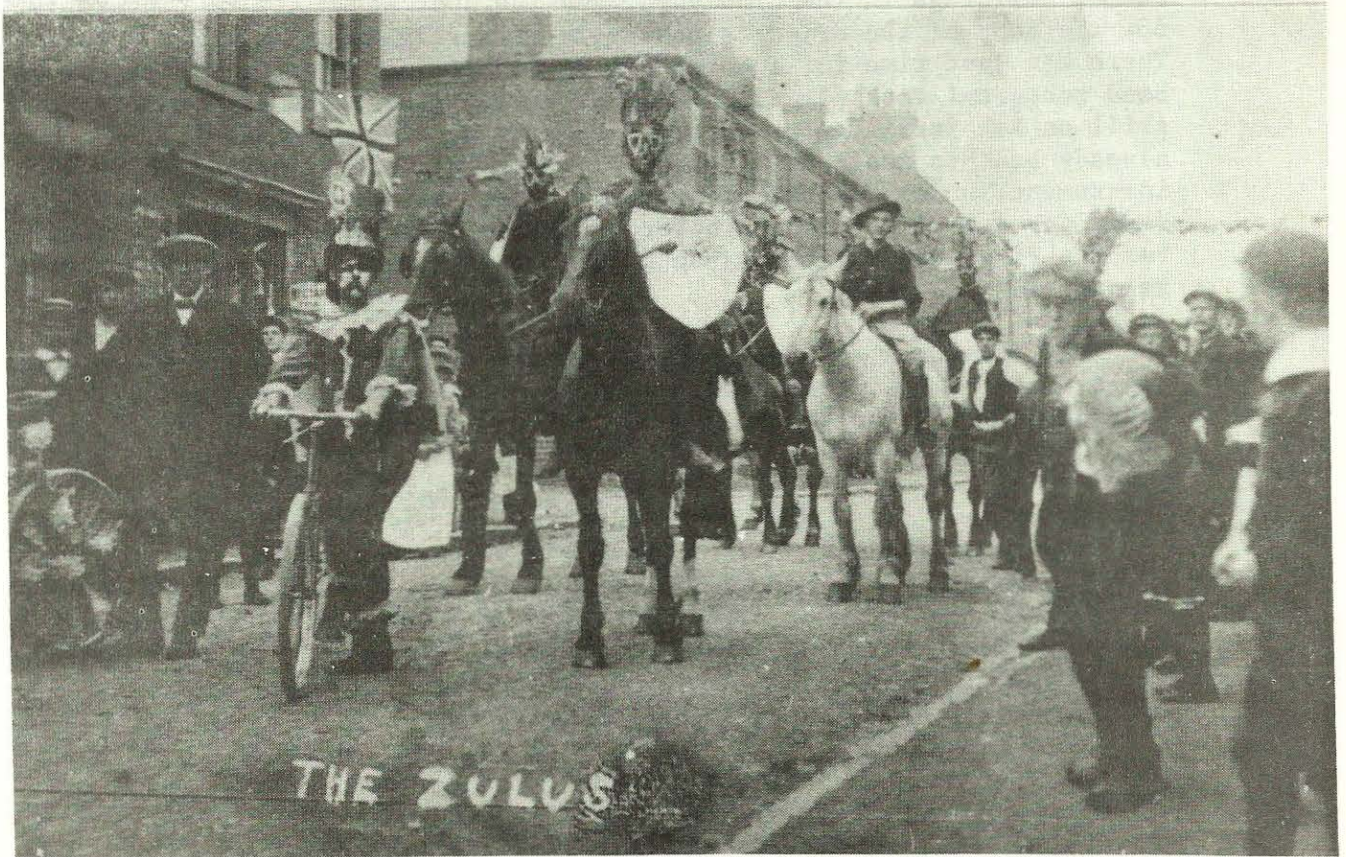
THE TREATS

Sunday School treats of 1910 and 1911 showed that religious feeling in Chasetown was not only a state of confidence in the Creator, his handiwork, and his influence on peoples lives , but also that the joy of the Christian gospel could be enjoyed and demonstrated by the community at large. "Treats" were times of festivity, high spirits and, although a day specifically for the Sunday School children, the whole village joined in to put on the parade and carnival. High Street was festooned with overhead bunting and steamer decoration, while flags waved from strategic points along the processional route.

A gay and demonstrative populace gave vent to their feelings in decorating the various floats and displays for the procession. The road in the top picture was solid with people. Anything mobile tagged along in the display as it threaded its way along the main thoroughfare. Note the flower festooned cycles, the young "Beaux" with their flat caps, no doubt eager to be mounted again as they lead the pageant before the crowds, keen, and waiting to see the display along the processional route. Summer hats were certainly intended to be noticed at the turn of the century. Sheer bulk and size of the straw "boaters" was fashionable.

Another decorated cycle graces this photograph taken in High Street at the Junction of Union Street. Again flags and bunting are evident, while the mounted contingent take the road in Zulu headdress and make-up. Much painstaking and elaborate preparation was necessary, but perhaps the most important feature of the "Treats" was the fact that people collaborated on a basic idea, then worked together to produce their communal theme for display. Another feature was that adults participated and enjoyed the festivities every bit as much as youngsters.

The "cowboy" on the white horse is presumably the marshall keeping in check the warlike instincts of the Zulu tribesmen, while the rider of the cycle in the foreground gave a fair impression of Patsy Kilgarriff's pose on page 99 , no doubt imitating and demonstrating Patsy's title, "King of the Chase".



COLLIERY BANDS

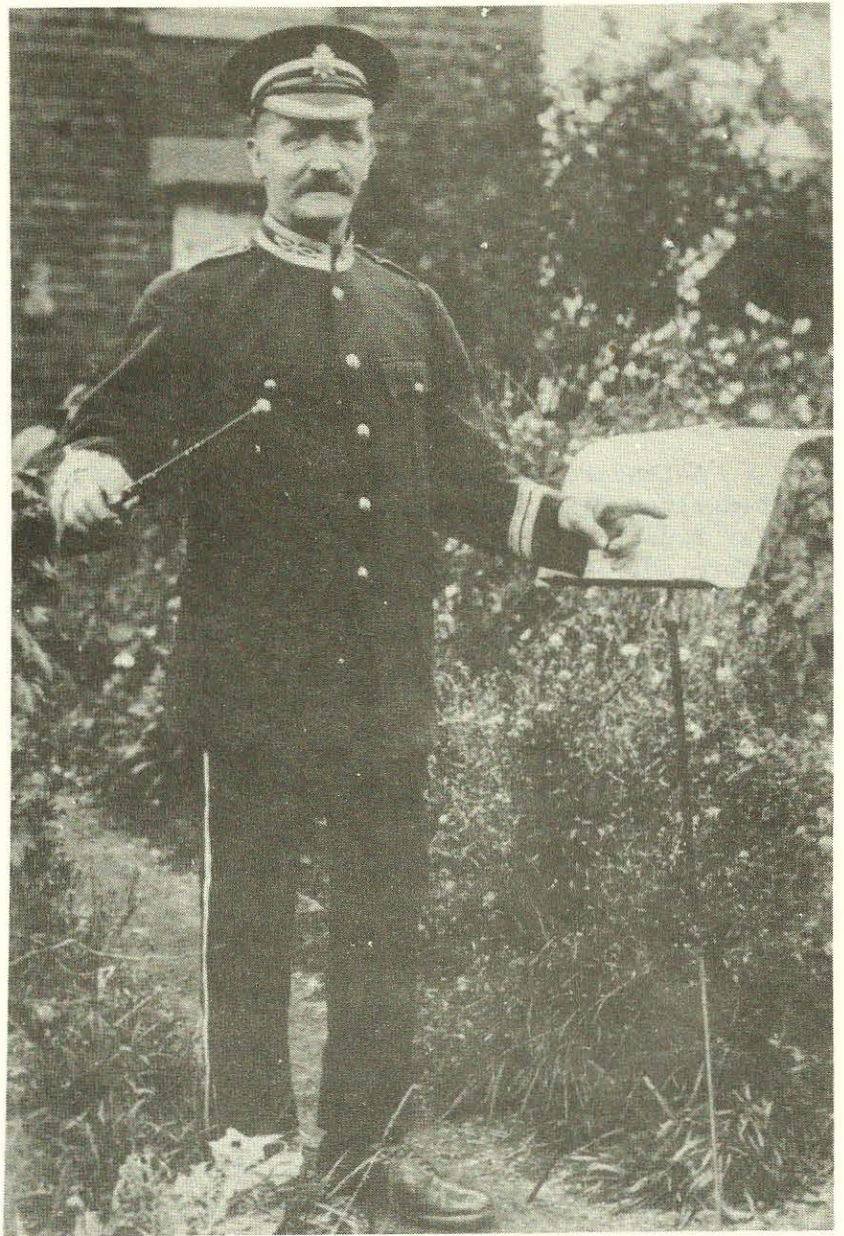
An affinity has always existed between miners and music, either choral or instrumental. Such a link has distinct roots in Chase lore, for the miners not only sang lustily in the Church choirs, but also practised and perfected their music in several local bands and choirs.

In the portrait opposite, Joseph Hooper proudly displayed his conductor's uniform, with its intricate piping and edging. Originator of the Boney Hay Mission Band, he was also a member of the Temperance band, then under the active conductorship of Mr. Richards. The history of Chase bands is complicated, and it would appear that eventually the Colliery Company sponsored what became known as the Chasetown Colliery Band. They engaged a conductor to raise standards in order that the band could represent the Company at the great Crystal Palace Band Festival.

After winning a major prize, the band became known as the Chasetown Colliery Silver Prize Band. A further extension of the tradition occurred when the Heath Hayes Colliery band also vied for the talents of young musicians willing to dedicate themselves in practice to achieve high performance standards. The various bands provided the men with a challenge, and a standard to be achieved by those who worked in the dusty confines of the mines by day, but enjoyed the comradeship and teamwork equally necessary on band practise nights. The local bands became famous, giving many performances and concerts throughout the Midland area and beyond.

The Chasetown band was based at the "Gentleman's Club", in High Street, and the arrival of band members is depicted opposite. The band practised in the buildings in the Club yard, and the door shown centre picture is now the door of the driver's mess-room at Martin Mealey's H&M Coaches. There was just time for a quick cigarette before the serious business of band rehearsal took place. In the photograph T.H. Mason demonstrates his skill on Bob Kerr's motor-bike, thought to be a veteran Raleigh. He already had his music firmly affixed in its accustomed clip on his instrument, which demonstrated clearly that, although the boys were always ready for a joke or a caper before practise, they were similarly ready for the first wave of the baton which demanded their every concentration for the task in hand.

Each man took a pride in his own musical skill, and in the collective image that the band commanded in the area. The turnout was smart, with buttons polished and shoes shining.



STRIKES

The tragedy of men reduced to take strike action over their pay and working conditions, was more immediate, and damaging, in the past. Any strike today can bring severe difficulties to family life, but in the past there was no Welfare State to cushion such setbacks. Long-fought strikes were experienced among the village's mining community, in 1912, 1921 and 1926, when the withdrawal of labour left its scars on the village for many months. No work, no wages, was the elementary fact of life in earlier times, and with management intransigent, and with miners equally resolved to achieve a better deal, the scene was periodically set for long and bitter conflict.

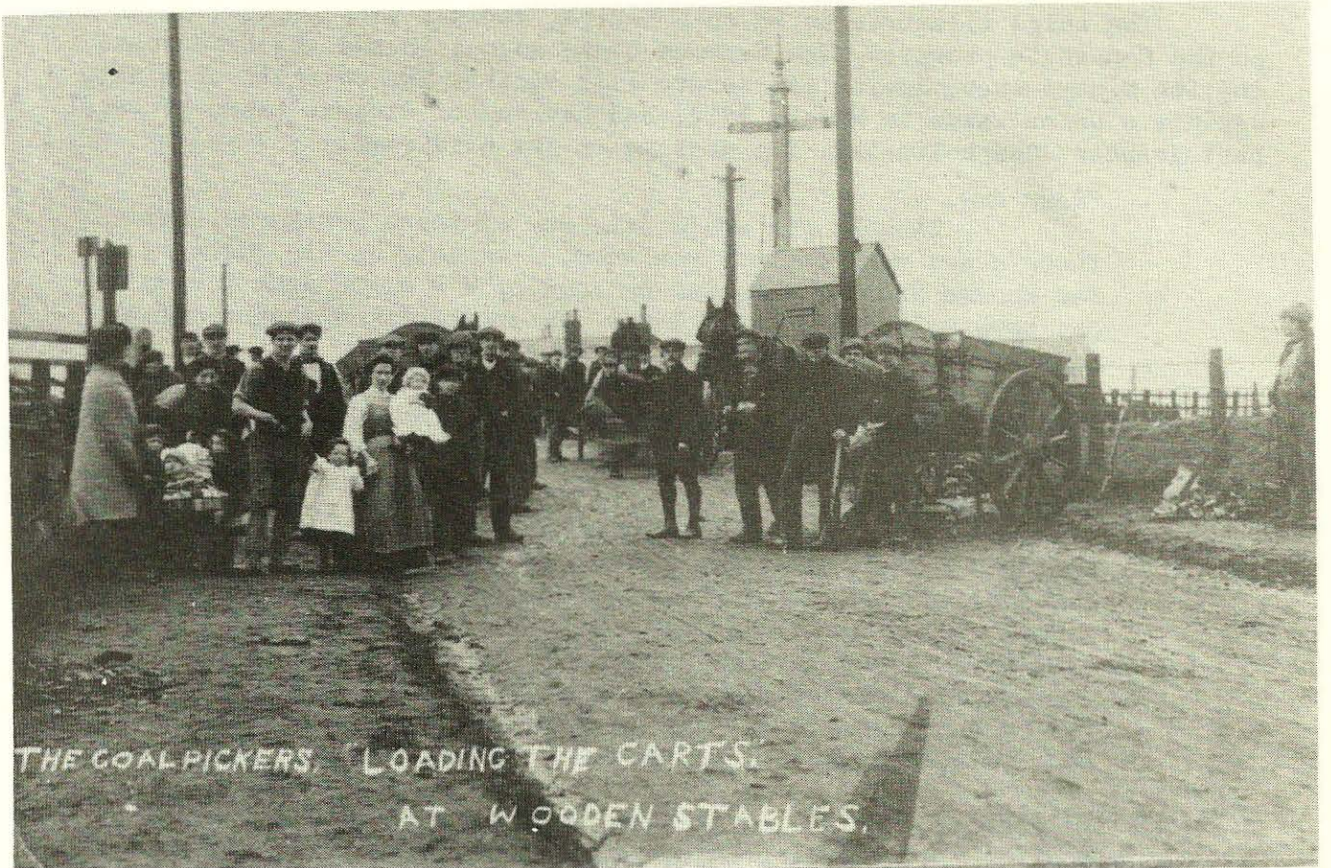
A feature of Chasetown self-help was the miners determination to provide themselves with coal during 1912. Coal was available very near to the surface near Biddulph's Pool, and this scene shows the miners and their families before they set to work to recover these shallow coals. Miners were allocated permits to enable them to recover coal. At the "Wooden Stables" the Cannock Chase Colliery mineral line crossed the Cannock Road shown here. The railway crossing was guarded by a typical Cannock Chase Colliery double armed signal, atop an elegantly finished post. This crossing was the rally point for the miners who were about to commence work at the many shallow "bucket pits", which were dug into the earth to reveal the shallow coal. What appears to be "Wilker" Walker's cart is shown foreground, ready to transport the coal for distribution to the miners' homes in the Chase area. Even in these difficult times, at least three miners still manage to smoke a pipe or cigarette.

Difficult times were depicted in this view from the village's past. Thought to be taken during the 1912 strike, this queue at the back of the Crown Hotel in the High Street was waiting for relief aid. The photograph was taken from a postcard sent from Chasetown, and the message written on the reverse, clearly defined the difficulties experienced in a village which was largely tied to mining operations, and affected by the General Strike.

"Dear Amy,

This is a strike scene at the back of Donaldsons. They are waiting for relief tickets. The Marquis of Anglesey sent the money. I am glad to tell you the strike is over here. They have been at work today. Shall be glad to see you but there aren't many trains running yet."

Although the management refused to concede the miners demands, it is obvious that there was concern shown from the top, and this was demonstrated in practical monetary aid. The women, shawled and many wearing Sunday hats, patiently waited for their relief tickets. The strike proved disastrous, not only to the populace, but also to shopkeepers and their suppliers. The effects of the turmoil were felt for months after the men went back to work.



THE COALPICKERS. LOADING THE CARTS.
AT WOODEN STABLES.



A SCENE AT CHASETOWN. CROWN HOTEL.

STRIKES

The third illustration in this series, depicts coal picking operations on the Company's property. The Cannock Chase wagons formed the background for the miners shown during the severe 1912 strike. The postcard original, depicts a scene taken in March, 1912, and was one of several taken by local photographer Joseph Tinsley. The message on the card read:-

*"Dear Amy,
Thought you would like one of these postcards, but there's not many on that you know, I expect, as its taken by the Wooden Stables. The one he took of 4's mound didn't come out very well. Will write later. We are still on strike and no signs of a settlement."*

An interesting item in the log book of the St. Joseph's school cited the following difficulty experienced during the 1921 strike:-

*"June 23rd , 1921
Owing to a huge and angry mob of miners collected at Sankey's Corner, with the purpose of waylaying other miners who had gone to work, several parents came for their children before school closed in the afternoon. The parents are afraid of the smaller children getting trampled on by the horses of the police. Consequently fourteen children's marks were cancelled. The parents were told, that in future, children would all be kept in school until disturbances of this kind were over."*

For its effect, the 1926 strike was the most difficult for the mining community, as it developed into a national strike with much of industry and communication halted for many weeks. During this extensive and bitter dispute, communal self-help schemes were set up in some areas of the Chase. These included "Soup Kitchens", run by the miners and their wives. Miners would visit butchers, bakers and shops asking for various commodities, and these, as no money was being earned, were entrusted to the "slate". Huge cooking cauldrons were used to produce stews from whatever produce was available, either donated, begged or borrowed with a promise of payment later.

BELGIAN WOUNDED 1914

During the First World War, the Hammerwich Hospital was utilised for the medical treatment and recuperation of wounded Belgian soldiers. Several arm slings are visible on the group photograph which was centred round the Catholic Priest of that period, Father McDonald, who ministered to the spiritual needs of this small community. On the front row left, uniforms were worn, and third from left an interesting helmet can be seen. It would appear that several of the local children also pushed into the camera's field of view.

The photograph was taken outside the Presbytery of St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Chasetown, so the group portrait was presumably taken after the Belgians had attended morning Mass at the church.



Wounded Belgian Soldiers at Hammerwich Hospital

WORLD WAR 1

The girls of the Chase Terrace school proudly displayed their knitting output for the photographer in this First World War picture. Long dresses, and white over-pinafores were the fashion in vogue at this time, and the girls, some dressed in darker attire, appeared to be knitting warm woollen body-belts for the soldiers. With the bitter European winters, the troops, engaged in hand to hand trench warfare, welcomed any extra clothing made available by such voluntary effort as that undertaken by the girls. All of the garments then being knitted, seemed to be about the same stage of completion, presumably completed, or nearing completion for the display. Backing the group, the Union Jack was proudly displayed against the wall.

The group was lined up on the grass which has now been built upon to provide kitchen facilities for the Chase Terrace school.

The school depicted, was firstly a Girls' Secondary School, then an Infant/Junior, and now houses children of the Chase Terrace Middle School, since the three tier re-organisation programme was implemented in 1977.

WORLD WAR 11

The Parade shown passing down Upper High Street, is thought to have been a combined Air Training Corps and Auxilliary Fire Service venture, to mark a special day of prayer in 1943. Leading the group is Mr. D.H. Gardiner, then Headteacher of the Burntwood School. The main buildings seen across the road are now Collis' Furniture showroom, part of the original frontage has been retained.

The parade was marching down the main thoroughfare of the village, probably heading towards the St. Anne's Church in Church Road. Its passing was obviously known in advance, as many small groups stood at strategic places to watch the columns of young uniformed men marching in rank, with a discipline and resolve demanded by a nation at war.



The Girls of Chase Terrace School working for the Soldiers



WORLD WAR 11

"We've got to be prepared!" declared the placard held by the ladies standing at the front of one of A.P. Sanders "Silent Knight" coaches. The Morris Dictator was dressed overall with appeals for volunteers for the Air Raid Precaution Group, the Civil Nursing Reserve, and the Women's Ambulance Service. The roof luggage rack at the rear of the vehicle has two huge horns to get over the message to the Chasetown populace. The photograph was taken on the frontage of the Old Spot Garage, with the "Doctor's House" behind.

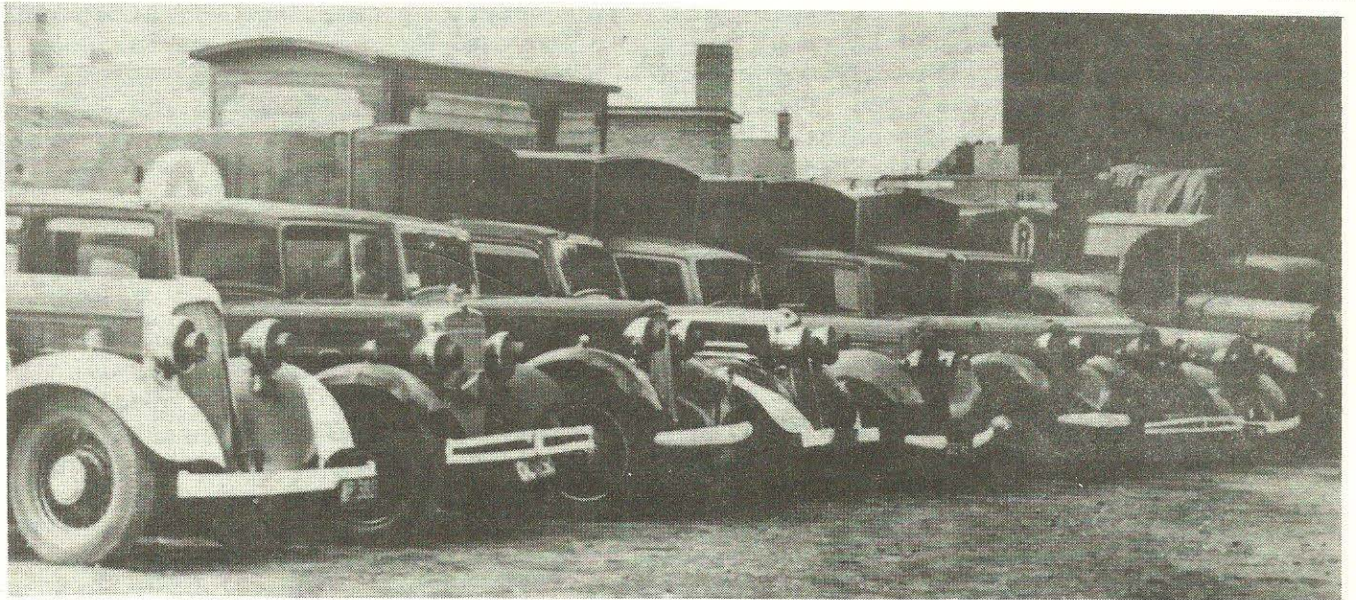
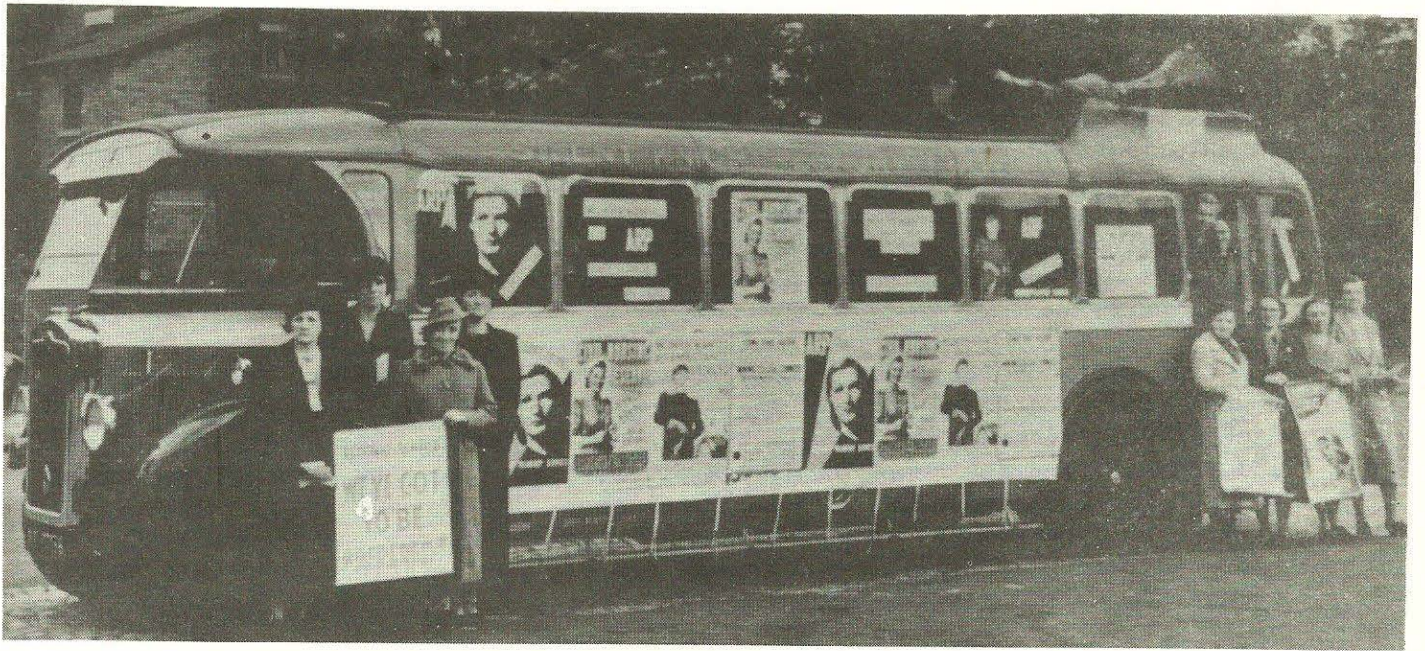
This fine array of cars, ambulances and rescue vehicles were lined up sometime between 1939 and 1945 at the A.R.P. yard at Chase Terrace. From left to right, the vehicles are Rover, Morris, Hillman, Vauxhall, Humber, Austin, Vauxhall, Standard and an Albion lorry. This varied array of vehicles managed to meet every contingency and situation which arose. Although the equipment now seems extremely antiquated, many of the vehicles were reasonably new in this war-time period. The Albion, however, was much older, possibly a late twenties vehicle, solid, but must have ridden like a board. Note the masked headlights to restrict light emission.

The 1939-45 war demanded in Chasetown, as elsewhere throughout this country, women to do men's jobs while many of the men were engaged on military service. The production of coal and food was of prime importance to Britain's survival, and so mining and farming were reserved occupations, in which active participants were not called up. Firewatching and Air Raid Precaution were daily and nightly undertaken by both men and women in the area, and on clear nights, the horror of war could be seen vividly emblazoned across the southern skyline as much of Birmingham and Coventry were systematically razed to the ground. A few bombs fell locally, but the Chase escaped the worst ravages of war. All of that generation still remember carrying Identity Cards, the Ration Books, the shortages and the queue for what meagre weekly allowances could be purchased and allowed by the quota system.

OUR AMBULANCE

The Chasetown area required an up to date, reliable ambulance, and the local people were determined that the area would be served by such a vehicle, fully equipped, and having the most modern specification. They dedicated themselves to raising the money to purchase the vehicle. Money was raised by local organisation skill. Bazaars, carnivals, dances and whist drives, were held and a tremendous amount of the work was gladly and willingly undertaken so that the populace's needs could be better met. The communal effort was successful, and the ambulance was delivered.

The ambulance was built in 1934/5, using a Morris Commercial chassis supplied new by Bird and Yates Ltd., of Cannock. The coachwork was built by John Short, Funeral Director of Chasetown, who had previously built a hearse to equally high standards. G.R.E.364 was the collective pride of Chasetown, and was kept at Short's during its active life. It remained at Chasetown until the local Ambulance Service was taken over by the Health Authority in post-war Britain. It remained in local service, until spirited away to the Areas pool of vehicles for "common useage" operation. The people of Chasetown vehemently objected to this, but bureaucracy had its way in the end. The ambulance was seen by locals several times at Walsall Hospital, but never returned to Chasetown. Feeling still runs high among the community "robbed" of their beloved ambulance.



DEBATOR OF THE CHASE

"I remember very well Mr. Emberton's grandfather, Dick the Dancer, and recall last seeing him in the bar of the Staffordshire Knot, Chasetown, in August, 1927. He was in his 50's or 60's, a slim, hard bodied, middle-weight of a man. He was indeed an unforgettable character. He could pounce on a proffered pint, like a peregrine on a prey. I cannot be sure of this, for I am turning a rusty key in an even rustier lock to my memory - in a Tipton pub there was once a coloured picture (possibly oils) of Dick as a teenage Clog Dancer."

"Another unforgettable character was his relative, "Professor" Hancox, a well read, and quick witted, dogmatic bar parlour politician, a feared heckler at election time. He always attended a meeting dressed in a frock coat and top hat, and the heart of many a platform speaker must have dropped right through his boots when he saw that frock coat, resplendent in the audience, and the polished topper carefully placed upon the floor. The "Professor" operated throughout the Black Country, and was so invincible in debate that the opposition paid all his expenses plus! "

"The "Professor's" hours of glory were before my time, but my father and my eldest brother told tales of his wordy prowess. He once had a verbal duel with Patsy Kilgariff, and impassioned Liberal and King of the Chase. Said Patsy, exasperated by the "Professor's" delaying tactics, "Keep to the point, Professor, keep to the point". "Keep to the point", said the "Professor", scornfully, "and get stabbed, points was made to be missed. I use my fence to cut and thrust, Patsy, not like you, to sit on".

"It has been said that G.K. Chesterton and "Professor" Hancox were the only public debators to score off George Bernard Shaw. The "Professor's" victory was achieved in this manner. It was at a Fabian Society meeting at Walsall in the early 1900's. The "Professor" was tackling Shaw via Benjamin Disraeli. It became apparent to G.B.S. that this top hatted collier had read at least one of Disraeli's books and was skillfully and very effectively paraphrasing certain passages. At last Shaw could take no more, and said, "You have dazzled and dizzied yourself with reading Disraeli. Come and talk to me when you have read another book. I suggest one of mine, or have it read to you." "Talking of books", replied the "Professor", "And don't forget it was yoh who brought it up. What yoh know would fill a book, and what yoh doh know will fill another, and I know which'll be the biggest. Now which one do yoh suggest I read?".

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Pictured opposite are the two staunch Liberals, "Professor" Hancox above, and Patsy Kilgariff seated below. They were both rivals for the title of "Debator of the Chase", and frequently the sparks would fly as they scored points off each other in no-holds barred debate. However the appearance of a Tory Minister at election time brought the two firmly together for the common cause. Together they were invincible, and many a lively meeting resulted in the routing of the Tory opposition.

Patsy, suitable wrapped in a scarf portraying his favours, proudly holds his stick, which was used not only as a walking stick, but also as a baton to force home a valid point.



VICAR SEATON

Vicar Seaton, and his wife, were respected and loved by the villagers, during his residence at the Old Vicarage. Mrs. Martin, well remembers her early visits to the Church during Vicar Seaton's years in the Ministry. It was customary to curtsy to Mrs. Seaton who was always early at Church at her husband's side.

The Vicar's journey from the Old Vicarage by the Pool Dam took him past the Watchman's hut by the railway. From there the route crossed over the Green, and passed through the Kissing Gates to go up the "Blackboards", and so over to St. Anne's.

As the pubs opened at 6 p.m. it was not unusual for the menfolk attending evening service to disappear momentarily from the family group, which continued sedately, and without heads turned, until the worker of the family joined the group just before turning into church. Vicar Seaton always approached the worshippers with a welcoming greeting. He was known as scholar, vicar and gentleman, his one passion was for everything to be of "the best". "The children must have a proper treat," he would simply affirm. He served the parish faithfully from 1871 to 1905, as their second ordained vicar, following Vicar McClean, who ministered to Parish needs from the 1867 opening of the Church devoted to St. Anne, Patron Saint of Miners.

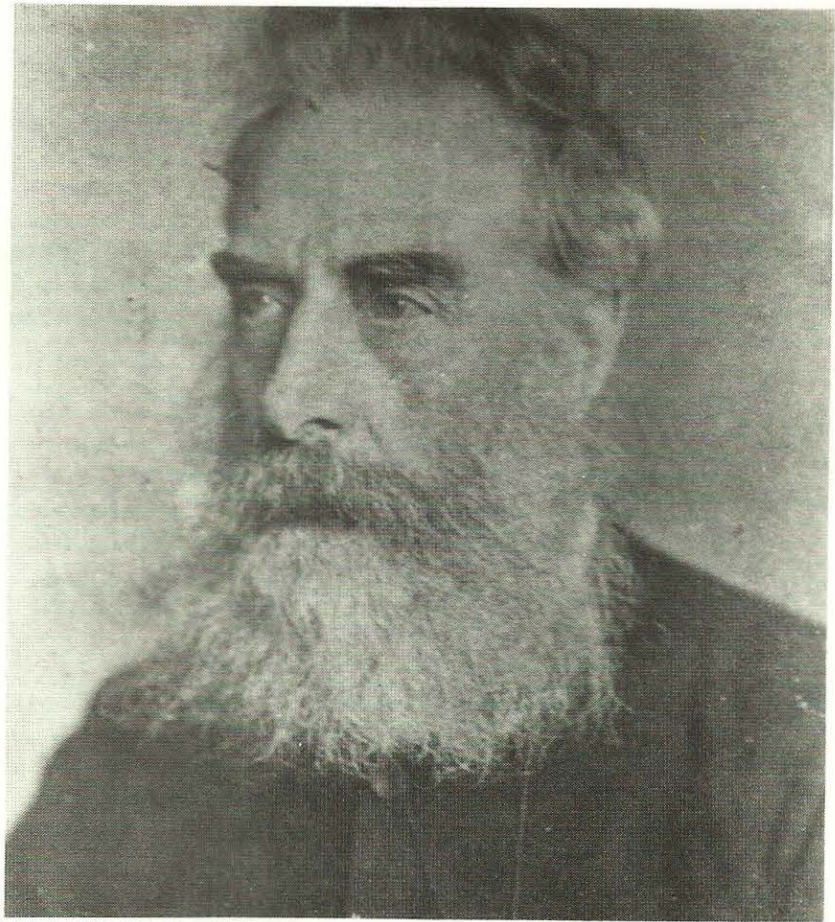
John Montague Seaton, M.A., was educated at Hertford, Oxford. A tablet erected by his friends and parishioners notes his scholarly attainments, and poetic powers, and recalls his deep reverence with sacred scriptures and the spirituality of his life.

DRESS

Although this uniformed officer was not a Chasetown man, several Chasetown inhabitants of the past wore such uniform in the course of their duties. Very few Chasetown residents could recognise the uniformed man's service. This uniform was the ceremonial or Sunday uniform of a warder at the Burntwood Hospital about the turn of the century. The ever present whistle to summon assistance was hung hidden from view on its chain attached to the top button. The cap shows style in its simple but smart outline.

The young lady's outfit was, both simple and attractive, and apparently home-made. Plain but elegant decorative piping, gave contrast to the colour of the long dress, which was smart and practical for shop service.

The shop front is that of Mary Clewley, a little business situated next door to the old Greyhound Public House. This little shop is typical of many in the village - small family establishments selling the basics, and a few luxuries to the locals. Lyons tea can be seen advertised, while the top shelf of the display window had a range of bottled wines and large ornate storage jars for boiled sweets and peppermints. Fruit and vegetables occupied the display space at the bottom of the window. The village shop, in times past, was an institution which held the village together both economically and socially, for for its potential for provision was often equalled by its potential for chat, gossip and news of both village and the villagers, for as clients bought goods, they traded information simultaneously. Such homely little institutions are now being missed in a Supermarket age, but a few of the old style businesses remain in Chasetown, courteous, obliging and stocking what locals have tried for themselves, over the years, instead of what modern advertisement tells us is best.



THE POST

Walter Bell was for many years the postman at both Chasetown and Chase Terrace. Delivery of the mail was an important daily social occasion, for Walter could often spare a minute for a chat as he delivered the mail. He was also an unofficial, unpaid private messenger in time of need. If a cottager or aged person was off colour, or needed a doctor, the postman would pass the information along. In old Chasetown, neighbourliness was a feature of its close-knit society. The bonds of togetherness were often strong although the occasional family feud added to the variety of life.

Walter Bell's pony and trap could be expected with the mail in all weathers. Based at Walsall, he would bring out the letters, cards and parcels and deliver them early, probably finishing his rounds by 10 o'clock in the morning. He then had several hours to spare before picking up the return mail at about 6 o'clock in the evening, probably returning to Walsall about 10.00. His round covered a roughly sketched triangle, embracing Chasetown, Brownhills and Rushall, with of course his final drive to the Walsall sorting office.

Walter's day was a long one, but then long hours of work were usual years ago. It is of interest that Chasetown and the postal service developed together, Rowland Hill's famous "Penny Black" being first printed in 1840, some few years before the first houses at Chasetown were built.

Arthur Sopwith. M.Inst.C.E.F.G.S., for long associated with the Cannock Chase Colliery Company, and father of S.F. Sopwith, was not only a fine pit manager, but also pioneered photography of the working conditions of miners under his company. His plate camera was of an odd size, something between half and full plate. We are indebted to his skill and expertise for the early photographs of activity at 2's pit.

At least eleven of his prints appeared as a postcard series showing activities at Chasetown Colliery. These cards, reduced in size from the glass plate negatives, have proved very valuable, providing scenes of working conditions at the end of the 19th century. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to include more of Mr. Sopwith's photographs within the limited scope of this work. With the slow film emulsions, which were the standard for his day, and with difficult lighting conditions underground, many of his fine photographs must have required lengthy exposures, and consequently demanded posed portraits.

