



Collieries, quarries and brickworks 1890. Coal had been mined in the Blackburn area for centuries but by 1890 only a few collieries were still working. However, brickworks, quarries and clay and sand pits still provided employment.

MAP BY DR ALAN CROSBY



Grimshaw Park brickworks (1893). Much of nineteenth-century Blackburn was built from local materials – stone quarried on the hillsides to the south of the town or on the slopes of Revidge and Beardwood, or bricks which were made at a series of brickworks in the Grimshaw Park and Audley areas. That area was pockmarked with quarries and claypits, many of which were worked for only a short period. Indeed, some of them were opened simply to supply the material for a particular housing development, and were themselves later built over.

DETAIL OF THE 1893 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP, REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE COUNTY ARCHIVIST, LANCASHIRE RECORD OFFICE

BOROUGH OF BLACKBURN. STREET SWEEPINGS.

PUBLIC NOTICE.

WHEREAS, the Town Council of this Borough has appointed and employed a sufficient number of Scavengers to sweep and cleanse the public Streets within this Borough,

AND WHEREAS, by the Towns' Improvement Clauses Act, 1847, (incorporated with the Blackburn Improvement Act, 1854) it is enacted and declared that the Street Sweepings shall be the property of the Corporation.

THIS IS TO GIVE NOTICE, That any person or Persons whatsoever (other than the Scavengers) hereafter found collecting and carrying away from the Streets within the limits of the Borough,

HORSE DUNG, or other Street Sweepings,
will be Prosecuted and dealt with according to Law.

BY ORDER,
HENRY SAWARD,
TOWN CLERK.

Dated the Twenty-Ninth day of September, 1864.

H. WHARTON, PRINTER, BLACKBURN.

Most transport used horses in some form or other, and the amount of dung on the streets was considerable. This poster of 1864 warns that the town council employ street cleaners and that anyone who removed such dung would be prosecuted. The sale of manure for market gardeners and farmers was quite lucrative.

BLACKBURN LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

easy to assess. There is some evidence, for example, that mills clustered along railway lines, but this is perhaps not as obvious as their concentration close to the banks of the canal. In contrast to Oldham and Bolton, where the mills built in the 1880s and 1890s were often directly served by rail, with their own coal sidings, few Blackburn mills were so favoured – mainly because the land alongside the lines was densely built up at a much earlier date.

One obvious effect of transport improvements was the changing nature of the coal industry in the Blackburn area. A number of small pits had been worked in and around Blackburn since at least the seventeenth century, but the coming of the canal meant that coal could be brought from both the larger South Lancashire and Yorkshire coalfields and sold here at a lower price than the local output. Since the coal from the area around the town tended to be of inferior quality, and was much harder to work, being in thin, fractured and very wet seams the superior quality of coal from elsewhere was also readily



Coal was delivered around the town by horse and cart. This was still being done in 1920. The firm of Crook & Thompson had thirty-six horses at this time. It was the Second World War that saw most horses disappear, as feed for them was difficult to obtain and horsemeat was in demand as the usual cuts of meat were rationed. Note the young boy working. No doubt he is a 'half-timer', with a certificate allowing him off full-time education.

COTTON TOWN PROJECT

appreciated. In the week that the canal opened in 1810, 380 tons of coal were brought to Blackburn by barge. The hub of the trade in the eighteenth century had been the Northgate coalyard where virtually all the locally mined coal was brought and sold on. By 1814 the trade had been transferred to Eanam Wharf where imported coal brought by canal was unloaded. Within a few years many pits in the area had closed and the few that remained served only local needs. None of their output was taken and sold beyond the borough. But as the mining of coal contracted the rapid expansion of the town brought other work for the unemployed miners. Many pits became quarries for fireclay, which was used in brick, tile and earthenware manufacture. Quarries were still being opened at the beginning of the twentieth century, as at Messrs Whittaker's site on Coal Pit Moor, where new workings were started in 1900 and fireclay was extracted up to 50 feet below the original depth of the old coal workings. That quarry was filled in during the late 1960s and early 1970s with the rubble from the demolition of the old Blackburn market.

Some coal mining did continue to the end of the nineteenth century. Livesey

Colliery, beside the A674 at Cherry Tree was still working in 1879, a pit at Little Harwood operated as late as 1883, and the colliery at Whitebirk was only abandoned in 1895.³⁹ Only seven years before, that mine had employed 140 men and boys and its galleries extended for almost a mile from the shaft bottom. But it was a wet pit, with engines pumping out 500–600 gallons of water every minute. Relatively few of the miners employed in Blackburn pits after the 1830s came from the town, because employment in the mills was the preferred choice for local children. There, they could start working part-time two years earlier and the wages were higher. Instead, boys were obtained for the mines from schools in Liverpool.⁴⁰ Local coal pits had always utilised child labour, as at Little Harwood mine in 1841, when three of the thirteen people employed below ground were aged 10–12. Their job was to haul the coal from the face to the shaft bottom so that it could be hauled up. The tunnels were four feet high and tubs were hauled using a girdle and chain, a leather harness worn by the child to which a chain was attached. This ran between their legs and was hooked to a wheeled truck filled with coal.⁴¹ Accidents were common. The area of the Little Harwood pit and the cottages alongside was known locally as Blow Up because of an explosion that occurred there in 1819.

Last Thursday an inquest was held at Little Harwood on John Landlass, Thomas Pilling, John Tithrow and William Wood whose deaths were caused by the bursting of a boiler belonging to a steam engine of a coal mine there. The explosion was tremendous. Fragments of the boiler were carried to a considerable distance, and the building enclosing it was completely dispersed. One man was carried along with a portion of the boiler to a field some distance away, and another, who was working in the Engine Pit, was killed when the stones of the building fell in to it. Three other persons were badly injured.⁴²

Flooding was the result of an accident at the Higher Cunliffe pit near Bank Hey in 1836.

Last Monday while several men were working in Mr. Clark's coal mine at Cunliffe near Blackburn, a large quantity of water suddenly broke in upon them and, before they had time to escape, they were immersed up to the neck. Fortunately there were no lives lost. Shortly after this, the earth above for a considerable distance sank about two yards and was instantly covered in water.⁴³

Gas was also a constant danger. In 1885 an explosion of firedamp occurred at the Whitebirk colliery. One worker opened his safety lamp to light that of a fellow worker and the resultant explosion burnt the faces and bodies of both men.⁴⁴ Such accidents, and safety hazards, were of course ubiquitous in mining, and there is nothing to suggest that Blackburn was notably worse