

Dent Main Colliery (Birley Wood)

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Dent Main Colliery was granted an operating license by the National Coal Board in 1947.

Dent Main Colliery was opened in 1924 and had three directors, Colin and Albert Pemberton and Brian Hutchinson.

It was situated on Birley Moor Road, between Frechville and Mosborough. The site is now occupied by Birley Garden Centre.

The audit (entrance) to the drift was approximately 100 yards from the main road, and the drift dipped to a gradient of 1 in 3.3 into the working of the Parkgate coal seam.

The Coalmining History Resource Centre states that there were 27 men working underground and 11 on the surface in 1945; the manager at the time was J.H.Heslop.

The pit was gas-free so the colliers were allowed to use acetylene lamps as working lights.

There was no mechanical means of cutting the coal; holes were drilled into the coal face at intervals along its length, shots were fired which brought down the coal and it was then worked by pick and shovel and loaded into the tubs, which were of 10 – cwt capacity.

Pit ponies were used in the roadways to transport materials to the workings from the pit bottom, the average height of the roadways being only 5 feet. The ponies were also used to haul the full coal tube from the workings up to the bottom of the drift, where they were then attached to a haulage rope to be hauled up the drift with petrol engine winch.

On reaching the surface the tubs were detached from the haulage rope and derailed by one man using a long pole, tipping the coal onto the screening belt, where he then joined two other men in sorting the coal until the next tub reached the surface.

Dent Main was one of the last pits in the Sheffield area to use pit ponies; they were well looked after and regularly taken to Hackenthorpe village to be re-shoed.

The pit was known locally as Diamond Row Pit due to a row of miners' cottages that were built topside of the colliery entrance and had diamond design leaded windows.



Diamond Row houses Moor Valley with diamond shaped chimneys.



Map of Dent Main Colliery just passed Diamond Row (where the Birley Garden Centre is today 2021).

The pit worked in wet conditions, and orange coloured 'ochre water' was continually pumped out due to iron deposits in the workings.

The colliery was successful, and supplied its coal to the steelworks in Sheffield, the main hauliers being Robinsons of Sheffield. Local coal dealers, M. Heath, Jones of Intake and Keeton & Richardson, were also used for nearby small businesses and household coal sales.

The colliery had two 7 – ton Lorries, which took coal to Blackburn Meadows power station in Sheffield.

Mr. Brian Hutchinson was the sole remaining director when the pit closed in the early 1970s. He was the one who drew up the plans for working districts in all areas of the mine. Great credit is due to him, as the only instrument available to him at this time was a handheld compass.

The map and the compass are the only remaining artefacts from the colliery and are now in the safe hands of his daughter, Mrs. Margaret Bennett.