

appear side-by-side but in the middle types of the reign (BEH types E and F c. 1050-56) forms predominate in which the vocalic glide is represented by I instead of G; see SCBI 28, Index of Personal Names, s. Æthel-.

24. There is a general tendency in late OE for f to disappear when it occurs between consonants; see O. von Feilitzen, The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book (ut supra), 92.
25. B. E. Hildebrand, op. cit. no. 925-6.
26. Ibid. nos. 892, 894; SCBI 13, no. 951.
27. A slightly different local development appears in names at western mints such as Chester, Gloucester, and Hereford where forms in AELE-, ELE- are found, earliest at Chester c. 980.

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## COAL-MINING NAMES IN THE NORTH-EAST OF ENGLAND

When an eighteenth or early nineteenth century colliery viewer (the overseer of one or more collieries) wished to know the problems and potentialities of a proposed 'new winning' there was little he could do other than 'set away an exploring drift', that is, get his hewers to drive an exploratory tunnel into the coal to find out what lay beyond the face. This article will be like a viewer's preliminary exploring drift into the thick seam of mining nomenclature in the North-East of England.

The sources I have investigated are:

- 1) a slim file of papers called Post Dissolution Loose Documents Box 10 (Dean and Chapter Archives, Prior's Kitchen, Durham Cathedral). This is the sole source of names before 1700.
- 2) The Catalogue of Plans of Abandoned Coal Mines (published by the National Coal Board, Durham Division, 1958) which is regularly updated. This is a very useful source of pit-names, but unfortunately the only dates one can be sure of finding are the years when the pits ceased working. Information as to when the workings were started is never given; so the period during which the names were in active use cannot be discovered from this source.
- 3) The Library of the North-East Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineering in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It would take years to explore the vast quantities of maps, plans, view books, diaries and legal documents in this collection, but my own limited search suggests that almost everything discoverable about the names connected with coal-mining in the North-East is to be found there.
- 4) The Northumberland County Record Office, Gosforth.
- 5) Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Library.

The first main distinction to be made is between the use of the words 'colliery' and 'pit' and thus of the names they generate. 'Colliery' carried a range of meanings in the eighteenth century from 'the right to work coal', through 'coal-working' (potential or actual) to the physical workings themselves consisting of pits, shafts, drifts, engines, etc. This is perhaps best illustrated by quotation:

'I desire to treat for the Colliery of Heaton'  
(William Coatsworth writing to the Mayor of Newcastle, January 18th 1717);<sup>1</sup>

'An Acco<sup>t</sup> of what pitts may be sunk annually in Heaton Colliery from 25th March 1726';<sup>2</sup>

'A PLAN being a Side Plan of the Present Wining of the South End of Heaton Colliery . . . Knab & Thistle Pits'  
(Amos Barnes's View Book 1736).<sup>3</sup>

As the right to work coal was normally governed by the lease by a landowner of a defined area of land, a colliery-name almost invariably consists of a pre-existing place-name plus 'Colliery'. The names are often those of parishes (Heaton, Kimbleworth, Lanchester), townships (Coundon Grange, Heworth), or minor surface names (Prior Close 1627, Tanfield Moor Edge [almost invariably abbreviated to TME] 18th). Only occasionally are they named after their owners (The Deane and Chapters Colliery 1692-8). A colliery-name is thus a name given to all the workings on and

under a defined area of land and is normally retained from the moment when planning the workings starts until the final abandonment, no matter what the actual physical state of the working.

The naming of individual pits is a much more complicated matter. To begin with, though pits must have been given individual names - or at least descriptions - from the time when more than one pit was sunk in an area covered by one surface place-name, these names are not recorded in any documents before 1692, probably because these names were only of interest to the people who were concerned with the actual working of the pits, the viewers and pitmen. Lawyers and owners whose documents survive from an earlier period were only concerned to identify whole collieries, e.g. Fenkeloe & Prior Close Colliery 1627.

The earliest documents referring to the working of pits, rather than their ownership, are in the Post Dissolution Loose Documents Box 10 cited above, and as they refer only to the pits in the parish of Jarrow 1692-9, there is no way of knowing how typical they are of the naming practices of the North-East as a whole, or of the earlier period of pit-naming in general. They certainly do not reflect most of the commonest naming practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though the kinds of naming in them never entirely died out. We seem to catch the naming process at a time when it is just on the point of crystallising from descriptive phrases into genuine place-names: The Deane and Chapters Colliery in Jarrow parish, The Dean and Chapter Colliery at Heworth Swards, the Coale pits on Heworth Swards, heworth more Collyarry, Jarroe Colliery, The Swards Colliery, all 1692-8 and all referring to the same workings. So also with individual pit-names: Coales wrought near Gatsid Road . . . in the deane and chapters liberty 1698; at street pit and Stobb pit 1699.

Many of the pit-names in this source, like the above, derive from ordinary place-names: quarry pit, well pit, Ridding pit, Robson's House End Pit, Snowdon's house End pitt. Others appear to derive from personal names: Hepplestons pit, Ramsays pit, woolfes pit(?). Others derive from the names of the seams that the pits worked: The Maine Coale pitt, the first thre Quarter Cole Pit, the New three quarter Coale pitt (all 1692). The latter names come from the practice of naming seams by their thickness in fractions (more rarely multiples) of a yard.

The above three modes of naming continued to generate names in the succeeding centuries, but during the first half of the eighteenth century new fashions of naming arose which generated pit-names even more prolifically. Two of these fashions seem to have more in common with the naming of ships than with the naming of places. They tend toward the arbitrary rather than the descriptive, and insofar as they are descriptive at all, they are descriptive of the states of mind of the givers of names rather than of the pits themselves. (All the names in this section are to be found in The Catalogue of Plans of Abandoned Coal Mines, see above, and thus, unfortunately, the dates of their use cannot be given without further research. The lists in the catalogue are arranged alphabetically and are cross-referenced from pit to colliery; so the names themselves are as good a source-reference as page-numbers.)

The most prolific of these new fashions was the practice of naming pits with abstract nouns indicative of the aspirations (or fears) of the namers. (Who were they? Owners? Lessees? Viewers? Pitmen? The only time I have come across someone at the actual point of naming, it was a viewer - see below.) Generally these names indicate optimism: Hope, Providence, Delight, Endeavour, Vigour, Success, Good Luck, Venture. Others suggest more ambivalent feelings: Chance, Speculation,

Hazard - even Haphazard. Yet others presumably represent re-namings: Misfortune, Needless, Folly may originally have had optimistic names. And what is one to make of pits called Dainty, Good Sport and Laugh?

Many of these might be compared with such ship-names as Resolution or Victory (itself also found as a pit-name). Other pit-names might be compared with the Mary Rose. It is intriguing to speculate what there is in the male psyche that causes men to give women's names to ships and pits. There were hundreds of pits named after women, only a few of whom can have had any direct connection with the pits. All levels of familiarity (and social class?) are represented, from Bess, Bessie, Lizzie, Peggy, Nanny, through Alice, Jane, Margaret and Mary to Alexandrina, Caroline, Charlotte and Lindsay (if not a man's name; Christian name or surname) and then to Lady Alice, Lady Isabella and Lady Seaham. A few are in the possessive, but I doubt if Kitty's and Aunty's indicate that these ladies were the owners.

Men's names are not so common, but they exhibit a similar range: Harry, Charlie, Willie - not to speak of Nobby [Clark?] - as well as Adolphus and Thorald. Straight titles occur: Earl, Duke, Prince. Surnames in the possessive presumably do indicate, if not ownership, some direct involvement with the pit named: Armstrong's, Arkley's, Manner's, etc. Ownership is certainly indicated by Dean and Chapters and perhaps by Iveston Villagers.

Commemorative names are fairly common, but the events commemorated suggest that this was a mid-to-late-nineteenth-century development (Alma, Inkerman, Lady-smith) but it is hard to guess whether Klondyke or Ballarat are commemorative or indicative of entrepreneurial hopes.

More utilitarian and less evocative names are common also: First, Second, and Third Pits, etc. proliferate as do Nos. 1, 2, and 3, etc. and A, B, C, etc. My impression based on the Jarrow and Heaton names that this is a nineteenth-century development may not be universally true.

Names connected with the technicalities of mine working are also fairly common. The machinery used often lends its name to the pit: Fire Engine [i.e. Newcomen Engine used for pumping], Bob Engine, Chain Engine and Rumney's Gin Pits are found in many collieries. Furnace and Upcast Pits refer to the method of ventilation used whereby a furnace at the bottom of one shaft induced an updraught in that shaft and a down draught (downcast) in one or more others. Dyke Pit derives from the word used for a major geological fault, whereas Clinty, Cinder and Damp presumably indicate the underground conditions in the pits.

Names derived from vegetation are surprisingly common: Blossom, Broom, Clover, Ling, Maple, Pea, Wheat, Whinn, etc. These may represent what was growing in the area when the pits were sunk, but some, I think, must have been chosen arbitrarily (cf. the ship Mayflower). Birds' names (Duck, Cuckoo, Nightingale, Swan, etc.) also seem likely to be arbitrary.

All types of minor place-names give rise to pit-names, field-names being particularly prolific: Intake, Nettlebed, Potatoe Garth and Glower Ower Im (a common name in the North for a field overlooking a neighbour's). This practice certainly goes back to 1730 when pits in the Haver Close, Robinsons Close, and the Whinney Leases in Coundon Grange and Byars Green are recorded.<sup>4</sup> How long it continued I do not know. Other minor place-names also give their names to pits: Hedge, Huts, Lane, Lodge, Moss, etc.

There are also a large number of pit-names whose origins I can as yet only guess at. Cuddy Pit presumably derives from the name Cuthbert, but it seems more likely to refer to the pet-name for pit ponies, otherwise called 'Galloways', than from the patron saint of the North. Arm, Blue, Bone, Cellar, Green, Loud, Straightneck, Virgin, and Wham are but a few examples of pit-names whose origins could only be discovered by further research.

Another aspect of mining-names that seems to be worth exploring is that of names for underground features, but as yet I have looked only at the underground names of one colliery, Heaton in Northumberland, as recorded by the Viewer, John Buddle, in the diary he kept from 1807 to 1821,<sup>5</sup> and I have no way of knowing how typical these names are of other places and times. As with the early pit-names, it is difficult to decide where descriptive phrases crystallise into genuine place-names. This may be illustrated by a selection of the main types of names in the colliery. The colliery was worked by the 'board and pillar' method of working, in which the term 'board' was given to each cutting in the direction of the advance into the coal-face. These were joined by narrower passages or 'headways'. On occasions it was necessary to indicate a particular board or group of boards: the West back narrow Board in the D pit 1810, the W Boards 1810, East Boards in Middle Pit Dip 1814, Innermost West Board 1814, the bie way Board 1816, the Galloping Board 1820 (? one that advanced apace). Similarly a 'drift' was a passage driven horizontally into the stratum: The West exploring Drift 1810, 1811, The Stone Drift 1810-13 (i.e. one driven into stone not coal), Old Pit North exploring drift 1813, The East Water Level Drift 1814, Barrier Drift 1814 (a barrier of coal was left between the workings and the 'waste', or disused workings, to prevent the water from the waste flooding in), The Regent exploring Drift 1814, The Wellington Drift 1815 (presumably the year explains the name), The Stable Drift 1815 (from the stable where the horses were kept), the back Chance Drift 1818 (from the Chance Pit). 'Way', presumably in senses parallel to those found in surface place-names, is another productive element: Campbles way in D pit 1807, the S<sup>o</sup> way 1807, E pit SE way 1810, NE way Far Pit 1810, Rolley way 1811 ('Rolleys' were trucks for carrying corves of coal), the bieway (sic) 1812, Misfortune Way 1820, Endeavour Way 1820, The Galloping Board way 1820.

Board, Way and Drift are the elements most productive of underground place-names. Others, more briefly, are: Crane, a hoist used to lift corves from the trams to the rolleys, and thus used of the junction between the branch railways and horse roads in a pit (The old ~ 1815, Gibson's ~ 1816); Dyke, a fault interrupting the working of a seam, (Thistle Pit ~, 5 fathom ~ e18th); Headway (see above) (the NE ~ 1812, The Stable ~ 1815); Mothergate, roughly an underground main road (The West ~ 1810, Old Pit ~ 1816); Staple, a pillar of coal left to support the weight of the overlying strata (Gardiner's ~ 1821); Waste, disused workings (The Old ~ 1807, Old Heaton ~ 1807, The drowned ~ 1811); Winning, a place where coal was won (The North ~ 1811).

Twice in Heaton Colliery we actually get a glimpse of a place-name evolving. John Buddle records in his diary<sup>5</sup> the great disaster that happened at five o'clock in the morning of 3rd May 1815, when the long-feared accidental holing into Heaton Old Waste occurred in the Stable Drift. The accumulated water of decades burst in with mighty force. The lucky were drowned within minutes; the unlucky escaped to the higher workings around Gibson's Crane where they died a slower death. 75 men and boys (including a 'very little boy') perished. Buddle did what he could to save them, but it was to no avail. It was not until 9th February 1819 that Buddle, having 'set away the back Chance Drift', went on to explore 'the waste where the accident happened'.

Extracts from the diary reveal the evolution of its eventual name:

4th May 1819

'I could not examine the fracture where the water burst in at the misfortune. . . . It is in the face of a Single Board which had been worn out and put a few yards down to the E and the misfortune Drift had cut a Back [i.e. a crack in the stratum, without vertical displacement] which ran into the face of this board. Had the Drift been a yard to the E and the accident would not have happened'.

6th January 1820

'Misfortune way, D Pit.'

And Misfortune way it presumably remained while anyone needed to use a name for it.

Apart from the emotional impact the accident must have had on Buddle, he would have been influenced in his choice of name by the fact that names from abstract nouns were by then long established in pits in his area. On another occasion he writes, 'Named this District Endeavour' — an apparently arbitrary act of naming, and yet, formally, very similar to Misfortune Way.

Now if anyone has followed my drift, I think they will see there is a thick seam to be won in this as yet largely unexplored area of onomastics, and, to drop the metaphor, the maps, plans and other documents relating to the coal industry, especially those in the Library of the North East Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineering in Newcastle-upon-Tyne would be a rewarding source for intensive study.

TETBURY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

#### NOTES

1. Northumberland County Record Office, ZC 10/3.
2. North East Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineering, Watson 10/3.
3. Ibid., Forster 49/4.
4. Dean and Chapter Archives, Prior's Kitchen, Durham Cathedral, Post-Dissolution Loose Documents Box 10.
5. North East Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineering, Buddle 32 A, B, and C.