

Analysis

A small pit which worked an area under the Birch Meadow playing fields, the spoil heap comprises grey clay, suggesting that some Pennystone ironstone was mined.

Although much of Birch Meadow has been landscaped, the site of the mine and its spoil heap appear to remain intact; there are, however, no above-ground remains of the mine buildings or shaft. A skate park may cover part of the area where the buildings stood, and foundations probably remain.

The exact layout of the mine is unclear from the map evidence. The tithe map shows a pool adjacent to the mine, suggesting there may have been a steam winding engine. This pool has been destroyed by landscaping. A circular structure, which may be a haystack boiler, is shown near the location of the shaft. This had gone by 1876.

History

The mine seems to have been worked mainly for coal by John Onions and later his daughter Penelope Thorn. The area was mined from the late 1600s by insets (horizontal levels) driven from the Severn near the present Jackfield Bridge, but there is no record of a shaft in the area at that time.¹ The land was owned by the Bromley Family, and Robert Bromley sold it to John Guest in 1788, and it eventually passed to Henry Bathurst through his wife, Elizabeth Sarah Thorn, the daughter of Penelope Thorn, nee Onions.²

The first modern reference to the pit is when there was an accident at the Birch Leasow Pit. In October 1807, Henry Beddow died when he was buried under a roof fall of 'clunch or spoil'.³ In 1817, John Onions Junior leased the coal under Parrimore's farm, which included the Birch Meadow, from his brother-in-law John Guest for a term of 900 years.⁴ Around this time, the depths of the minerals were recorded as:

Sulphur Coal	58 yards
Bider Coal	None
Pennystone Measure (ironstone)	95 yards
Ganey Coal	100 yards
Clod Coal	123 yards
Crawstone Measure (ironstone)	137 yards

The distance between the Crawstone and the Lancashire Ladies coal, the latter being regarded as the last seam in the sequence, was about 9 yards.⁵ This, along with the Deep Pit, was the deepest recorded mine on the Broseley side of the river.

Penelope Thorn inherited the mining interests of her father, John Onions and is mentioned as the owner of the pit in a coal-stealing case in November 1862, and at this time, it was being worked for coal and slack.⁶ The next month, the (winding) ropes were cut halfway through as an act of vandalism. Fortunately, the damage was discovered before an accident occurred.⁷ As coal was being sold by land sale, it is likely there was a weighbridge, but none is shown on the maps.

In 1874, the mine was being worked to supply clay for Penelope Thorn's brick and encaustic tile works, which at that time were managed by son-in-law Henry Bathurst.⁸ At the time of Thorn's death in 1876, she still leased the mining rights. An 1877 sale map shows the mine buildings and shaft, but no engine. On the 1882 OS map, the mine is marked as disused, and there is no reference to further working. Part of the area under the northern end of the playing fields was later worked from the Fishhouse mine.

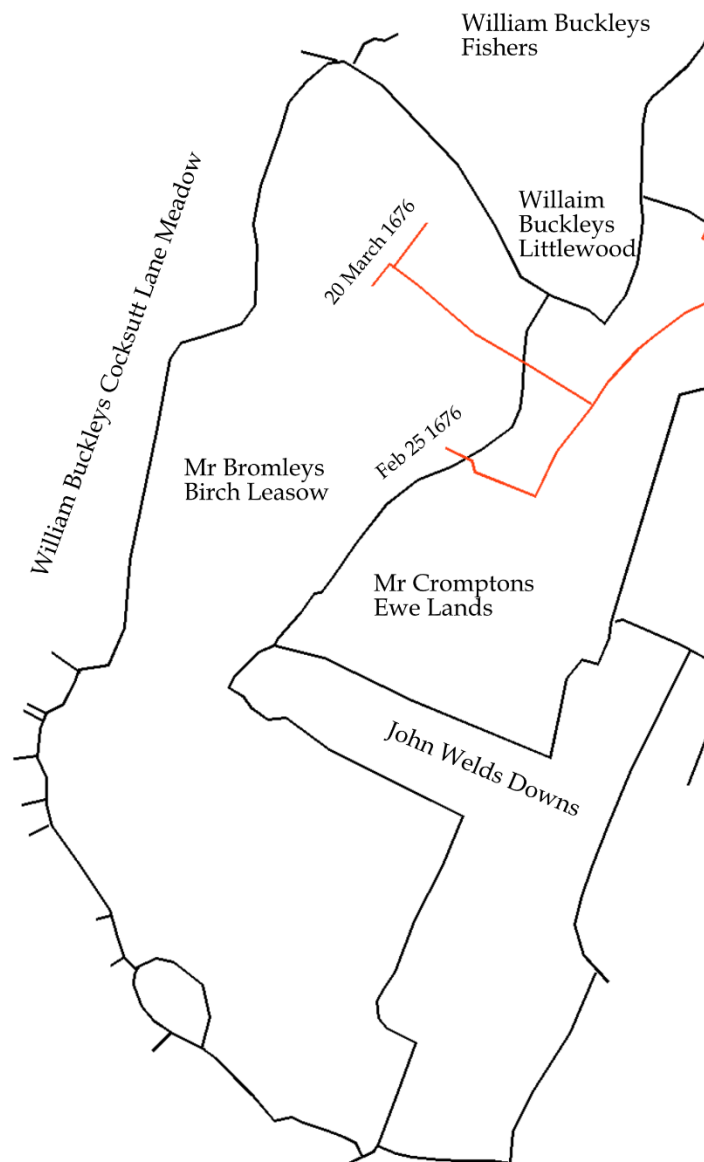


Figure 1: Section of 'A map of those lands Broseley through which Sev Insetts do Pass taken 1676'. The red lines represent the extent of Insetts (horizontal mine tunnels), showing that they had started to mine coal under the Birch meadow. At that time, Birch Meadow was one large field. By the time the land was sold to John Guest in 1788, it had been split into three: Lower, Middle and Town Birch Meadow. Town Birch Meadow is now the Haycop Rise housing Estate. Based on Shropshire Archives 6001/2366

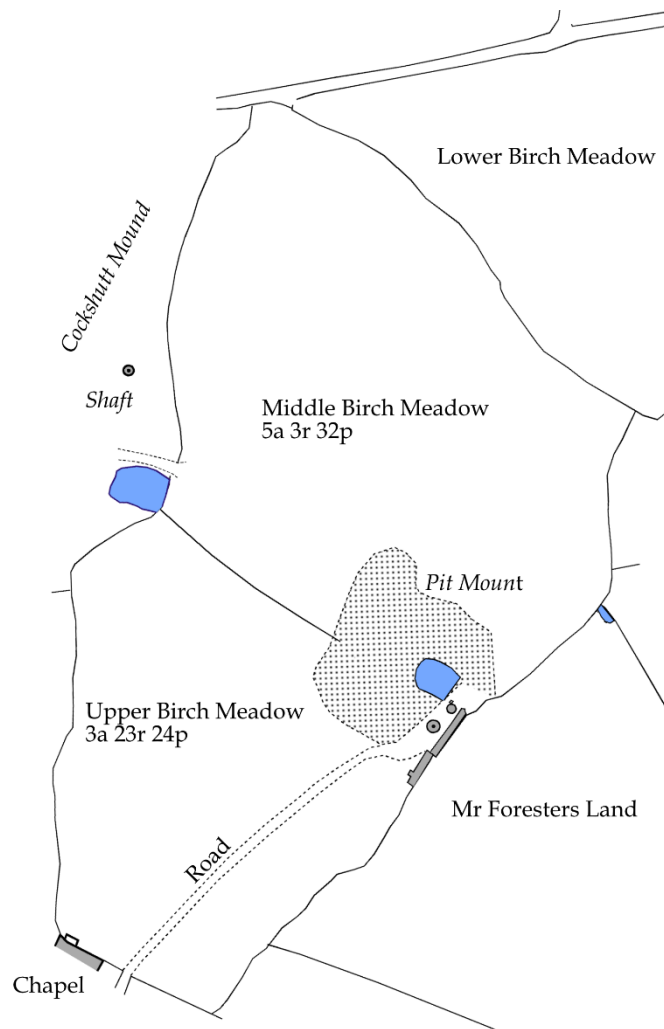


Figure 2: Map of the Birch Meadow Lands in 1834
(from Shropshire Archives 1190/4/527)

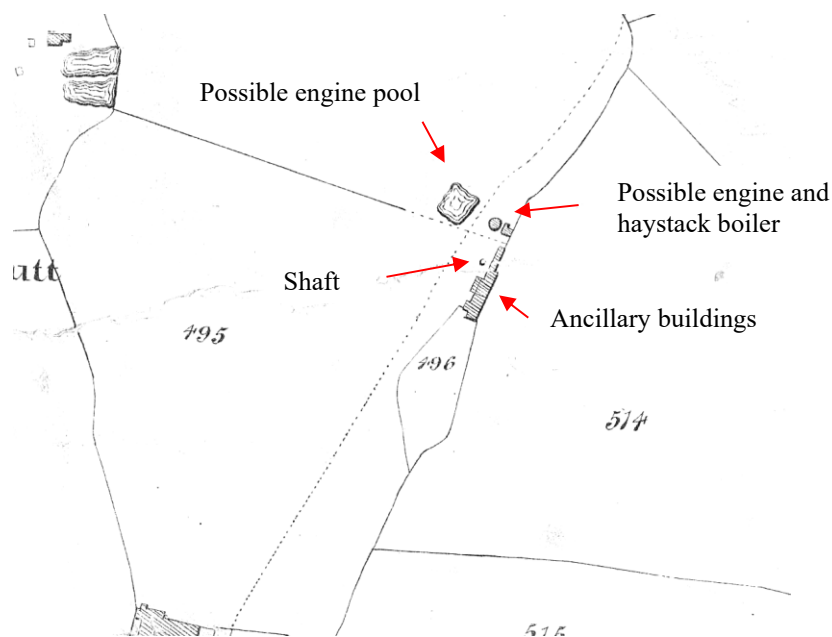


Figure 3: Broseley Tithe Map 1839. The plot details are missing from the Tithe Apportionment.

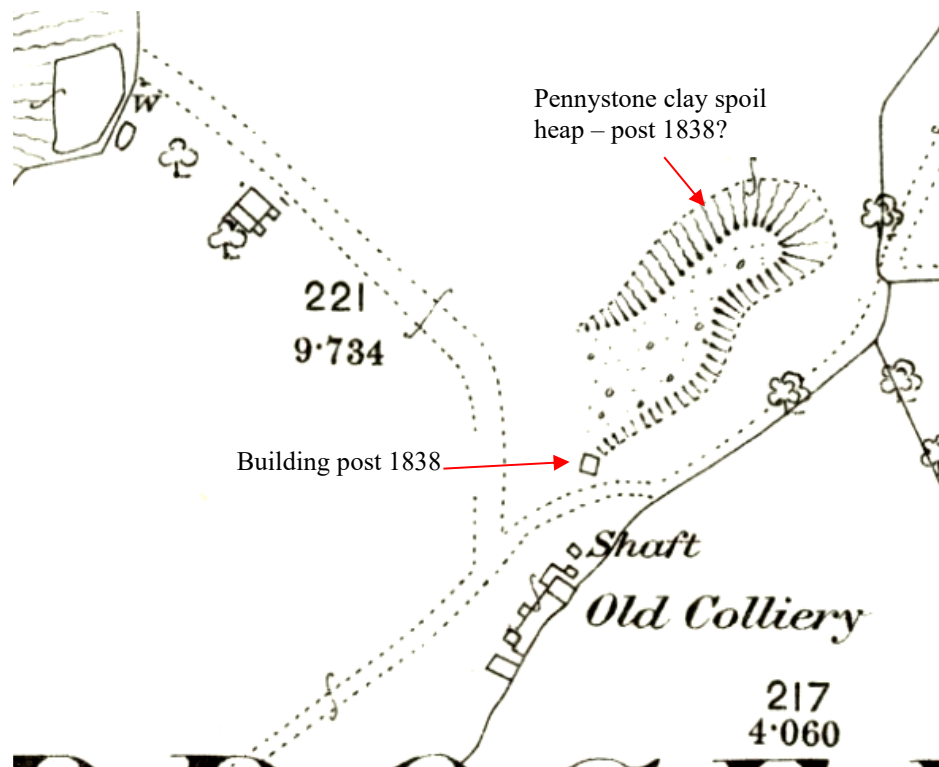
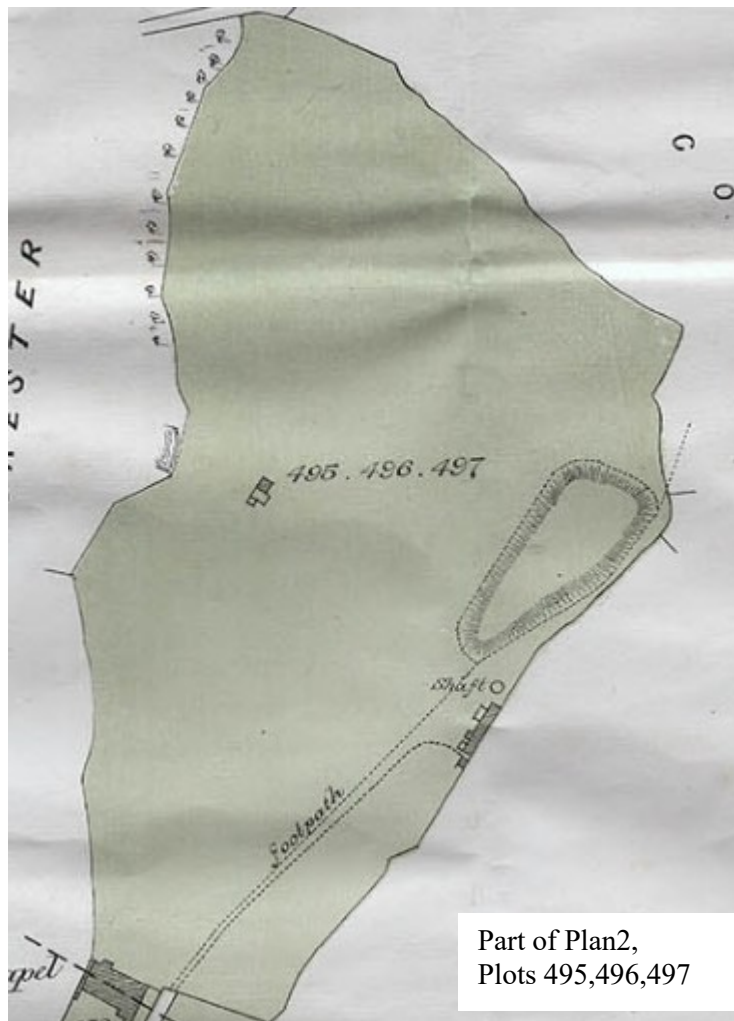


Figure 4: 25" O. S. Map Shropshire LI.2 (includes: Benthall; Broseley; Posenhall; Willey)
Published: 1882



Comprises the MINES underlying certain Lands nearly 23 acres in extent, adjacent to the Town of Broseley, which Lands belong to the Trustees of Mrs. H. M. Bathurst and the Representatives of the late John Onions.

These Mines have been worked to some extent from time to time, and a portion of them, indicated in the following particulars, are now being worked by the Coalbrookdale Co., under a lease, which will expire on the 25th day of March, 1879.

NO. ON PLAN.	DESCRIPTION.	QUANTITY.			
		A.	R.	P.	
190	Clench Acre	2	3	16½	Mines in lease to Coalbrookdale Co.
194, 195, 196	Little Clench Acre, &c. ...	1	0	21½	
518	Lower Downs	1	1	6½	Mines in lease to the Coalbrookdale Co.
206, 223, 516, 517	Birch Meadow, Doctor's Yard, &c....	7	3	2	
224	Garden	0	0	26	
256	Ditto	0	0	20	
258	Chapel	0	0	33	
495, 496, 497	Birch Meadow, Lower Birch Meadow, &c.	9	1	26	
	Total	22	3	31½	

Figure 5: Auction of Properties, mines and minerals in Broseley, 3rd July 1877, on the death of Penelope Thorn, successor to John Onions. (Copy in Shropshire Archives)

Figure 6:

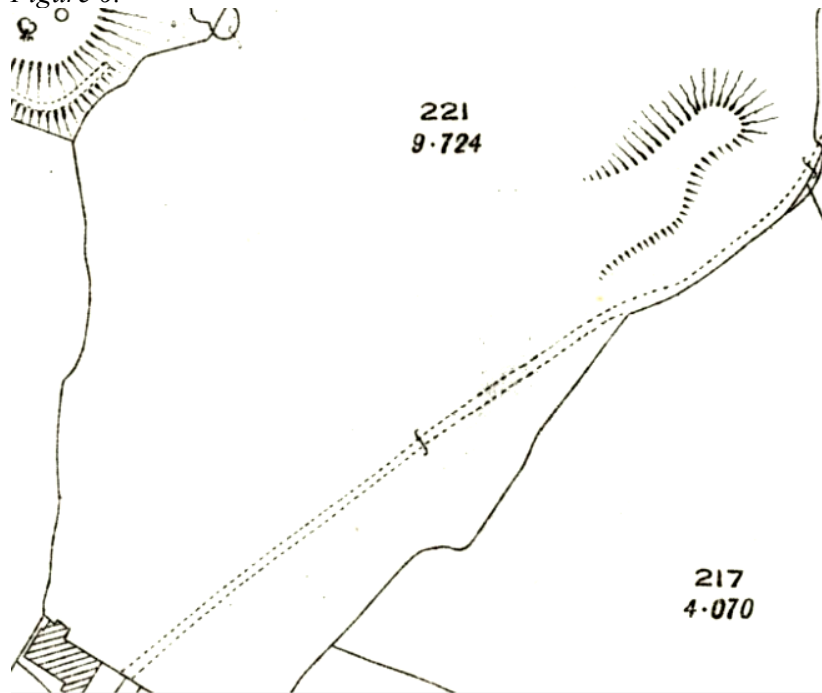


Figure 6: 25" O. S. Map Shropshire LI.2 (includes: Benthall; Broseley; Posenhall; Willey)
Published: 1902. All traces of the mine, except for the pit mound, have disappeared.



Figure 7: Site of the mine buildings looking SW. They would have been located to the left of the picture in front of the trees.



Figure 8: Birch Meadow Pit mound looking SW.

¹ Maps of Widdow Compton's Insetts taken in 1675. Nuffield Survey of Jackfield from maps in Shropshire Archives.

² Shropshire Archives 1190/4/9,10

³ Shropshire Archives WB/F/3/2/27

⁴ Shropshire Archives 1190/4/92

⁵ Shropshire Archives 1190/4/390

⁶ Shrewsbury Chronicle 14th November 1862, 19th June 1863

⁷ Wellington Journal 6th December 1862

⁸ Shropshire Examiner 18th July 1874.