

S. Dewhirst

This mine was worked for coal, ironstone, and possibly clay. It may have begun as early as the 18th century, though the remains visible today mostly date from the 1800s. To the west is a large finger-shaped waste tip, thought to be clay left over from ironstone mining carried out by James Foster and William Exley between 1838 and 1882. A small brook now runs through a culvert beneath this mound.

Old Ordnance Survey maps show two shafts on the site. The southern shaft can still be seen as a shallow dip in the ground. Scattered humps and hollows nearby mark the footprints of mine buildings, which once stood here but had already disappeared by the late 19th century.

History

It is probably one of the mines shown in the Woonhay field on the 1728 Broseley Estate Map, the estate being owned by the Davenport family. From 1771, the mine was leased by John Onions, presumably to work coal and ironstone for the nearby Coneybury Furnace. By 1803, it appears to have been leased to Alexander Brodie of the Calcutts Ironworks and then, from 1822, to James Foster.¹ Foster worked mainly with ironstone initially for use in Barnetts Leasow Furnace and later Calcutts. When the furnaces closed around 1835, the ironstone was shipped out on the river to his other furnaces.

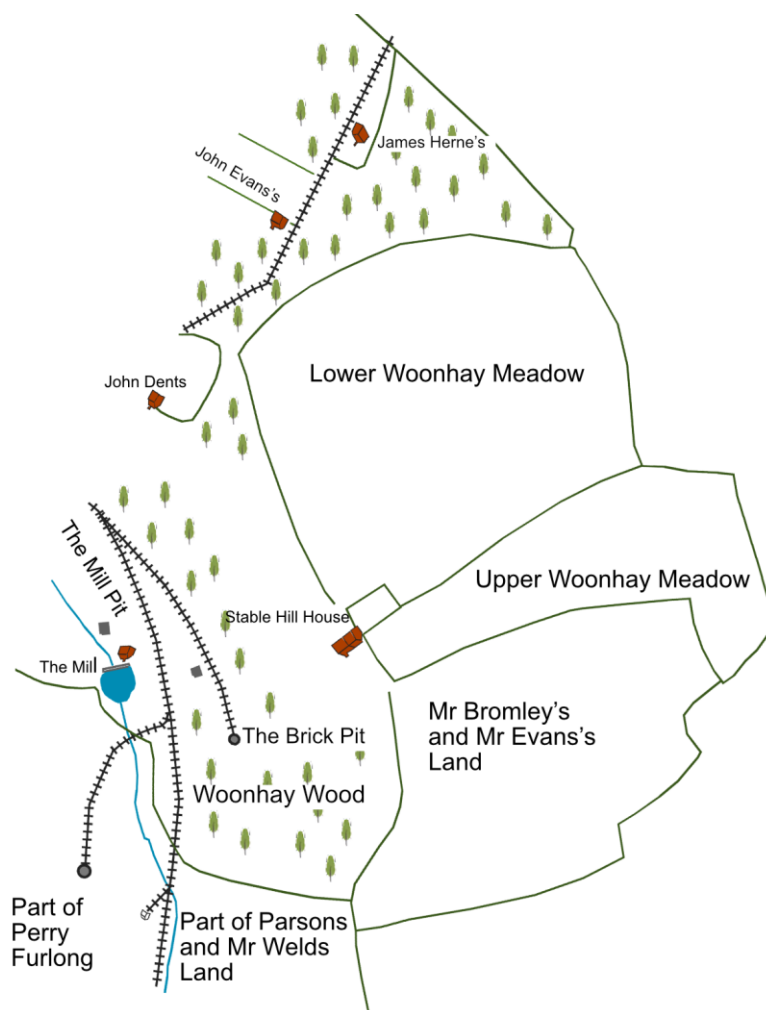


Figure 1. Broseley Estate Map showing the site near Stable Hill Colliery as 'The Brick Pit'. It was connected to the Jackfield Rails, which ran to a wharf on the Severn below the Severn Trow (SJ 687 030)

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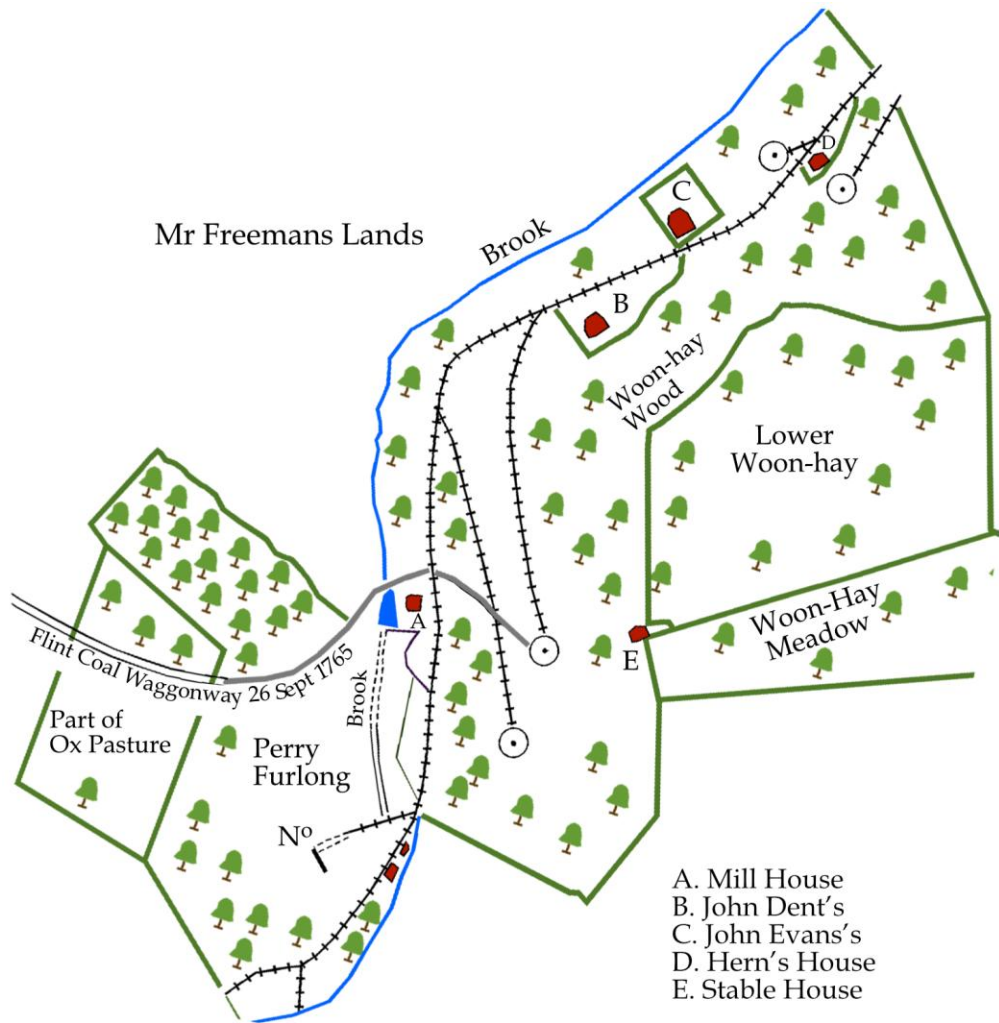


Figure 2. Broseley Estate Map post 1765 and probably later than the previous figure, this shows two shafts. The more northerly shaft appears to be the newer one, and this is connected to the waggonway in the Flint Coal.

A valuation of the Broseley Estate in 1803 lists the Woodhouse Farm as being leased by Alexander Brodie (Calcutts Ironworks), and it seems likely that he also had the mining rights.²

105	Stable Hill Meadow	Formerly a Meadow broken up 3 years ago. (fallow)
106	Stable Hill House, Buildings, Garden, etc	Consisting of a brick and tiled tenement in moderate order, with Hay bay, etc
107	Moor Hays Meadow	Meadow
108	Stable Hill	Stocked and ridded and much improved by the Tenant within the two last years (Arable)
109	Moon (d) Wood	Sidelong and incumbered (rough)

The plot numbers appear to agree with the later 1822 lease map (Fig.3). Moor Hays may be Woonhay as shown on earlier maps.

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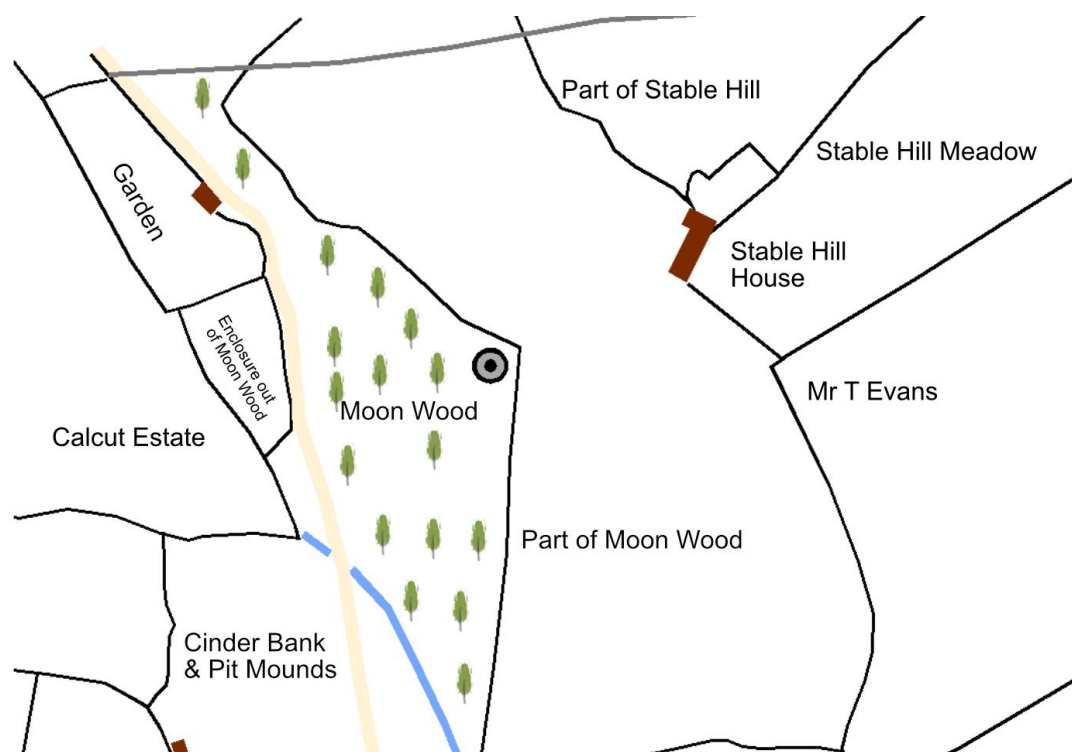


Figure 3. William Yalverton Davenport to James Foster, 1822. Stablehill mine shaft is shown in Moon Wood. From Shropshire Archives

Plot	Description	Occupier
105	Stable Hill meadow	Messrs Wellings and Onions
106	Stable Hill House	Messrs Wellings and Onions
107	Moor Hayes Meadow	Messrs Wellings and Onions
108	Part of Stable Hill	Messrs Wellings and Onions
109	Moon Wood	Messrs Wellings and Onions

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The mine appears to have been disused by 1838, but by 1854, William Exley of the nearby Rock Tileworks was operating a coal mine, which in 1856 was listed as Stablehill.⁴ In 1857, the Shrewsbury Chronicle reported that Exley was in court:

IMPROPER INDICATOR. —Mr W. Exley, mine-owner, Stable-hill, was then charged with not having a proper indicator to show the position of the load in the shaft, was adjourned for six weeks, and opinion being expressed by one of the magistrates that the usual indicator, a bell, was sufficient. The question will then be raised and decided if that gentleman is not, on enquiry in other districts, satisfied that a bell is not a proper indicator within the terms of the act of Parliament, in which case no further proceedings will be taken, as all the defendants appeared to have acted in ignorance of the act of Parliament.—Mr. Wynne expressed his intention to have the act literally carried out, but at the same time, intimated his readiness to give every coal owner the benefit of his advice and experience in doing so.—After hearing of the several charges he had a long interview with the defendants and other coal owners in the district, together with Mr. John Pritchard, M.P., and Mr Thursfield, the agent of Lord Forester, both of whom were present, and took much interest in the proceedings. The utmost wish was expressed by the coal owners to do all in

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their power to avert accidents in the future, and as far as possible to comply with the provisions of this important act of Parliament. The above proceedings cannot be too extensively circulated.⁵

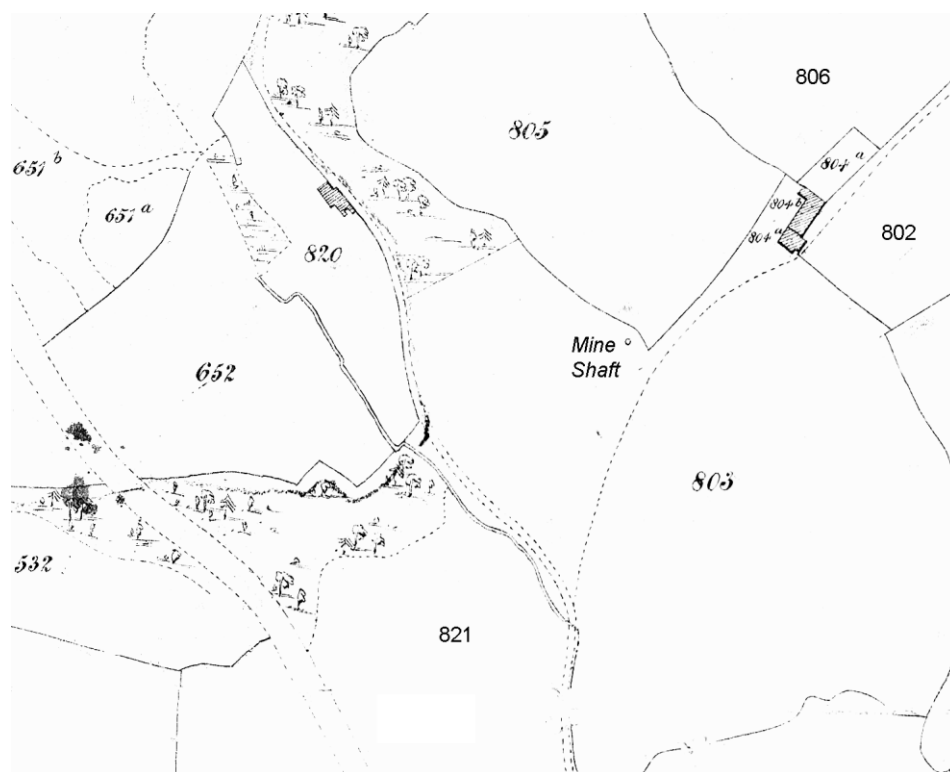


Figure 4. Broseley Tithe map of 1838.

Tithe Map Apportionment

Plot	Occupier	Relet to	Cultivation	Description
802	John Rose		Arable	Stable Hill Field
803	John Rose		Pasture	Far Stable Hill Field
804a	John Rose	Michael Howe		House & Garden
804b	John Rose			Stables
805	John Rose		Arable	Stable Hill Bank
806	John Rose		Pasture	Stable Hill Meadow
820	Samuel Davies			House & Garden
821	Francis Blythe Harries		Waste	Spoil Bank

Exley reopened the Wallers Pit at Jackfield in 1869 and was extracting coal from there in addition to Stable Hill.⁶ In 1880 he wrote to Mr Groves of Bilston, who was the mining agent for the Broseley Estate, complaining about the royalties: *'We think you are asking too much for royalty for this class of coal and more than we can afford to give. Taking everything into consideration, we had not ought to be charged anything for it. We are willing to pay £12 yearly or 6d per ton and this price is 2d more than is charged in the Shropshire coalfield for sulphur coal where it runs 4ft thick and ours is only 9.'* Working a 9" seam must have been very difficult, and Exley says it can hardly have been economic.⁷ At the Wallers, he was working the 1'6" Sulphur coal and the Black coal of the same width.⁸

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In 1880, when the proposed railway to Broseley was surveyed, the plot was described as 'Rough pasture, pit, mound and machine house' being occupied by Joseph Arrowsmith Exley.⁹

Exley was still working the mine in 1881 when he extracted 180 tons of coal and slack in 6 months¹⁰. In Exley seems to have surrendered the lease by 1883 but continued getting coal from the Wallers Pit in Jackfield which he had reopened in 1869.¹¹

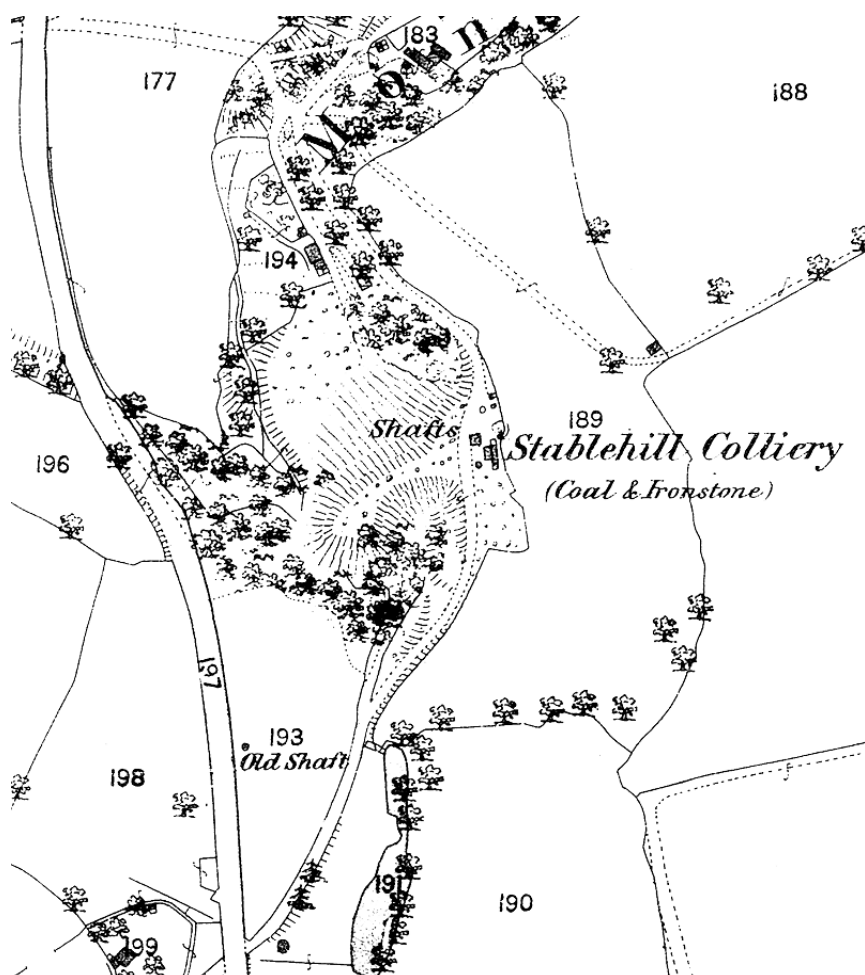


Figure 5. O. S. Map Shropshire LI.2 Published: 1882. This shows the mine as working with two shafts, one possibly being for ventilation. The tip to the west of the mine would be spoil from ironstone mining and has cut off the old road, which ran at the bottom of the valley.

In November 1890, Donald Prestage wrote of William Groves, mining agent to the Broseley Estate, that he had just come across some old workings which led him to believe that most of the coal under OS Plot 188 had been worked out from Stablehill.¹² Later that year, he wrote, 'We would also like to drive a road into plot 188 to prove the clay which we suspect runs out to nothing not a few yards for our Boundary, we have met with a seam of inferior clay corresponding with that found in the Stable Hill Pit above and separated from our seam by about 2yds of rock. As there is no seam corresponding to ours in the shaft at Stable Hill Pit there is a probability that it runs out beyond our Boundary. We have already asked you and obtained

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provisional sanction to our working the coal under part of Plot No 188 and we would now ask for your formal sanction.'

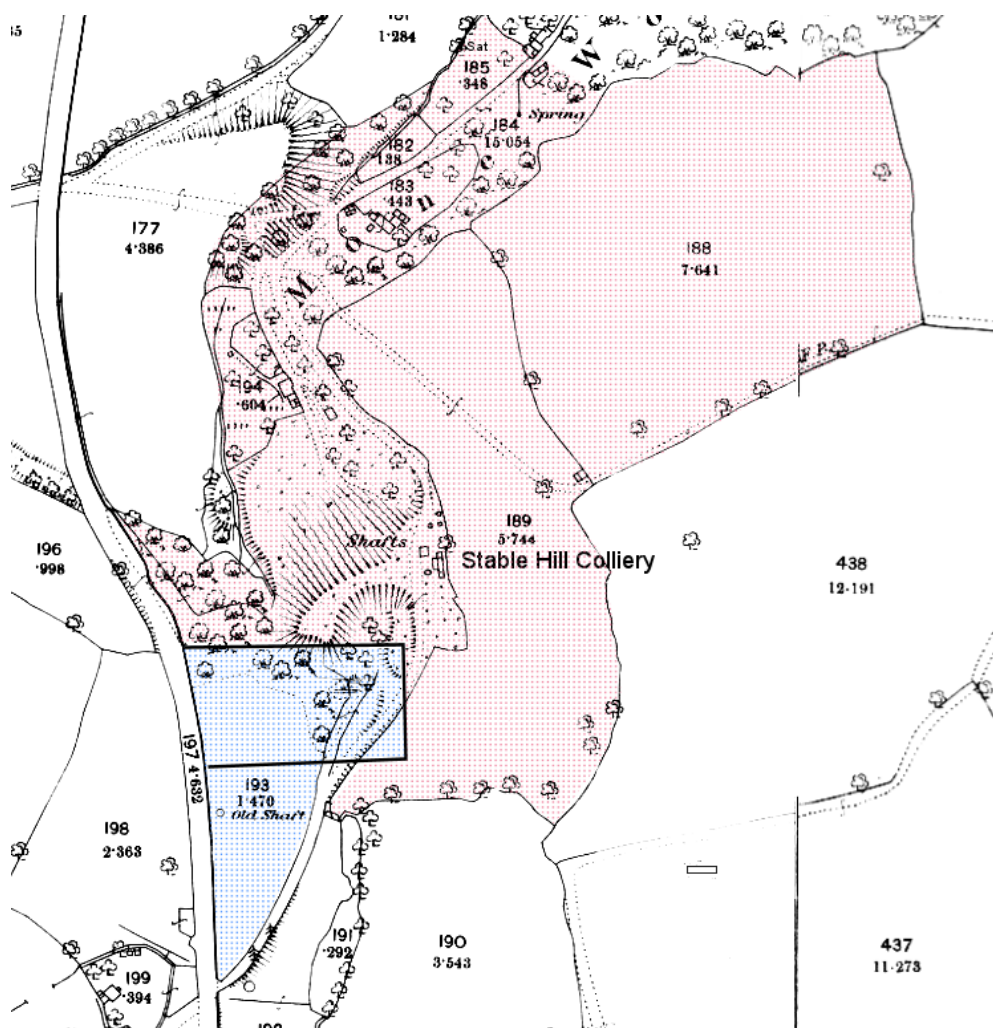


Figure 6. Proposed 1904 lease for Oakes and Pumford. The extent of the mineral lease is shown in red. (from Shropshire Archives 1681/189/40)

By 1896 the mine was being worked for clay by Edwards Oakes and Abraham Pumford for the Holywell Tileworks but they must have stopped by 1898 as Prestage of the Milburgh tileries wrote that *'We are now deluged with water from the Stable Hill Pit old coal workings and we are in consequence quite drowned out of a great part of our clay seam, to the East of our present workings. I shall be glad to learn that you have taken steps to put a stop to this expensive nuisance and to guard our interests.'*¹³

In 1898, Prestage wrote that *'on Monday we shall start working the clay that you at one time wished reserved for Messrs Oakes & Pumford.'*¹⁴

There were discussions over the lease until at least 1902, so the working may not have been continuous.¹⁵ The next year, Prestage was complaining that *'I have now spent some thousands of pounds in hunting for clay and the best bit I have found, namely plot 188 has been given to someone else. Oakes and Pumford have plot 188 under lease but have no works at which to work up the clay. He also wanted to use some of the Penny Measure clay in the mount to mix with clay at Milburgh but there is no evidence that this was done.'*¹⁶

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The exact date of closure of the mine is unknown, but it is shown as disused on the 1902 OS map and does not appear in the Mines Inspector's reports for 1908.

Accidents

Only one accident was reported at the mine.

10th November 1871

FATAL ACCIDENT. —An inquest was held on Tuesday last, at the Hand and Tankard Inn, before E. G. Bartlem, Esq., coroner, on the body of John Barker, 38, who died on Saturday last, from the injuries he received in a pit belonging to Mr Exley, on the 1st inst. The first witness called was Thomas Brittain, who said: I am a miner. I was at work in a pit belonging to Mr Exley, on the 1st inst. The deceased, John Barker, was also at work there. He was shovelling up some dirt or soil when some "spoil" fell from off the face of the workings upon him. I should think what fell upon him was half a ton in weight. I had tried the roof with a dresser about 15 minutes before. It was properly timbered. We took deceased home after the accident and Dr. Hartshorne attended him. In answer to a juryman witness said it was no portion of the roof that fell. Benjamin Evans was next called, and said he was at work in Mr Exley's pit on the 1st inst., hauling, about four or five yards from where deceased was shovelling dirt up. He saw Brittain by the roof before the accident, and it seemed to be safe. Soon after he heard deceased cry out " Oh dear," and Brittain shouted, "Come here, Ben." They removed the earth from deceased who was doubled up by the blow he had received. This witness said he should think the weight of earth that fell on deceased was 2 cwt. Dr. F. H. Hartshorne was the next witness. He said he was sent for to see the deceased about 8 p.m., on the evening of the 1st. inst. Deceased was suffering from injuries he had received, and he complained of internal injuries. He vomited blood, which showed his stomach was injured. He lingered till the 4th inst., when he died from his injuries. Upon examination found that his ribs were not broken, but his lungs were ruptured. His thigh and back were badly bruised, and one ear was nearly cut off. The coroner briefly summed up, and the jury returned a verdict of " Accidental Death."¹⁷

The Wellington Journal of 11th November also included a report of the accident:

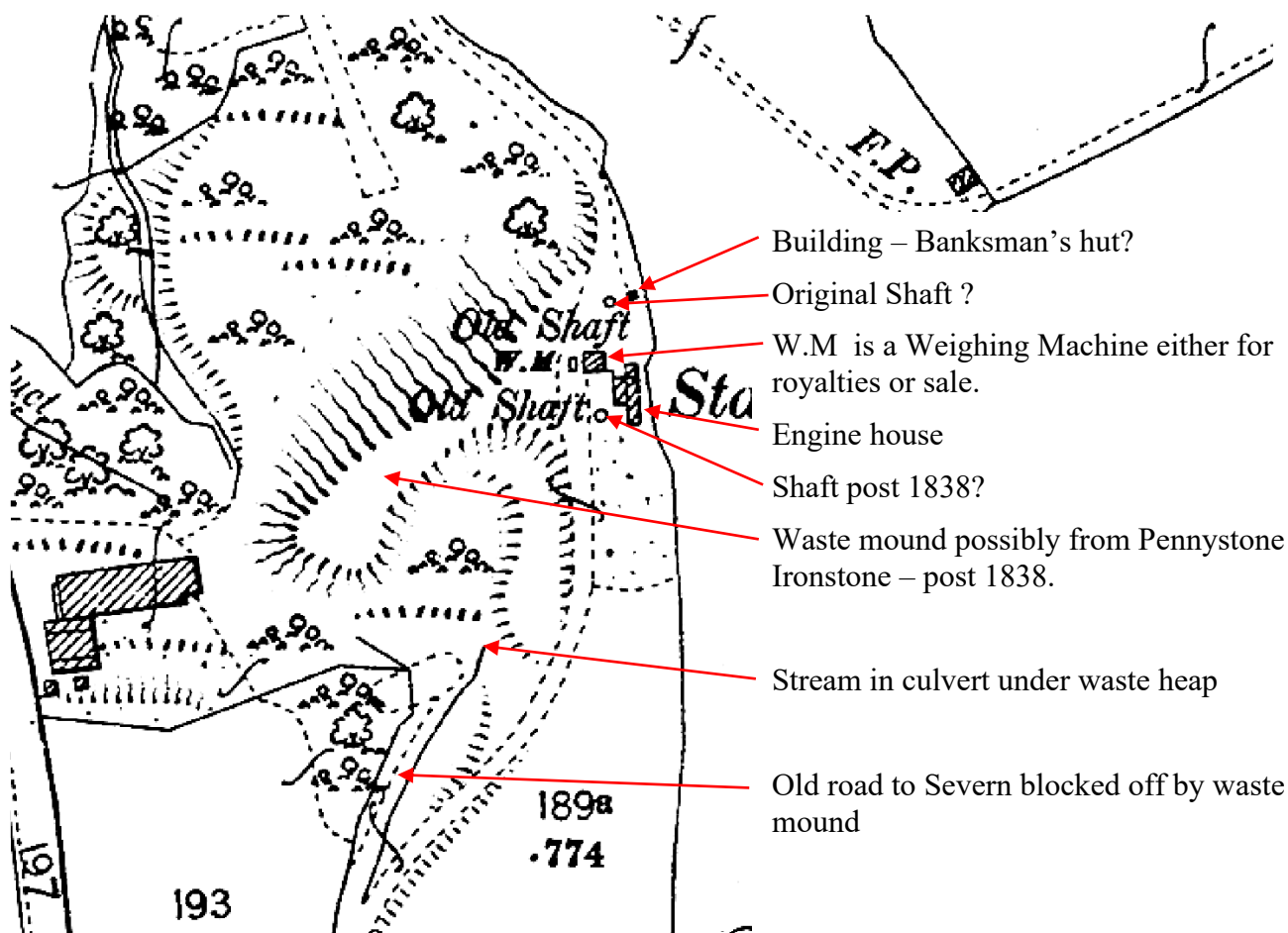
INQUIRY. On Tuesday last, an inquest was held at the Hand and Tankard Inn, before E. G. Bartlam, Esq., coroner, on view of the body of John Barker, who was fatally injured in the Stable Hill Pit, the Wednesday previous. The following tradesmen were sworn on the jury, Richard Matthews (foreman), John Bentley, James Evans, Stephen Hill, William Gough, N. T. Hartshorn, Robert Doughty, Joseph Garbett, Josiah Thomas, Thos Davies, James A. Burnet, and Thomas Jones. The following evidence was adduced:- Thomas Brittain deposed that about seven o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, the 1st instant, he and deceased were at work in a stone pit belonging to Mr. William Exley, situate in the parish of Broseley. They were at work in the wall, which was 2½ feet wide, and 5½ feet high, and which at the time of the accident was properly timbered. Deceased was shovelling some spoil from the face of the wall, when a lump fell on to his back, forcing him forward and doubling him up on his belly. The lump that fell was about half a ton. Witness was about a yard from him at the time, and he and Benjamin Evans got the lump off deceased, and had him conveyed home immediately. About an hour before the timber had been shifted, and about a quarter of an hour before the accident occurred, witness tried the face

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with a dresser and found it safe. There were four in the pit at the time, and they were doing overtime in order to get ready for the next day.- Benjamin Evans corroborated this statement.- Dr. Hartshorn deposed that about eight o'clock on the evening of the 1st instant he was sent for to the deceased. He found him suffering from internal injuries. On examination he found that his ribs were not broken, but his lungs were ruptured. Blood came up his throat, and he could hear it gurgle when deceased breathed. He also vomited blood, showing that the stomach was injured. His body was bruised in several places. He lived till the Saturday following. Deceased stated to him that the shovel was under him at the time the accident occurred, and it was that which caused his death. There was no doubt but deceased died from the injuries received.- The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death.

In the 1871 census, Barker was living in Hockley Road with his wife and four children, the youngest of whom was 4 months. Aged 35, he was buried at Broseley on 8th November 1871.

Site Layout



Appendix 1

Royalties to the Broseley Estate.

	Coal & Slack	Cost 6d	Ironstone	Cost 1/-	Balance of rent
Mar 1878			603	£30.3.0	
Sept 1878	205.5	£30.16.6	616.10	£33.3.6	Ironstone 616.10
Mar 1879		£32	643.5		
Sept 1879					½ yrs min rent £20.0.0
Mar 1880					½ yrs min rent £20.0.0
Sept 1880	183.12	£4.11.10			6d per ton
Mar 1881	180.6	£4.10.1.5			£15.9.10.5
Sept 1881					½ yrs min rent £20.0.0

Quantities in tons.cwt.

¹ Lease and attached map. Shropshire Archives 6000/11420

² Valentine Vickers Leger Vol5 P234-253 Shropshire Archives 515/5

³ Lease and attached map. Shropshire Archives 6000/11420

⁴ H.M Inspector of Mines reports. Reports before 1856 do not give the name of the mine.

⁵ *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 2nd January 1857

⁶ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 8th April 1869.

⁷ Shropshire Archives 1681/191/10

⁸ Abandonment plan 3477/1,

⁹ Plan and book of reference for proposed Broseley Railway, November 1880. Shropshire Archives DP486

¹⁰ Plan and book of reference for proposed Broseley Railway, November 1880. Shropshire Archives DP486.

Royalties to Jenkins 31/03/1881. Shropshire Archives 1681/191/10

¹¹ Royalties to Jenkins 06/06/1883. Shropshire Archives 1681/191/10. *Bridgnorth Journal* 27th Marh 1869

¹² Shropshire Archives 1681/189/4

¹³ Shropshire Archives 2865-7.

¹⁴ Shropshire Archives 1681/189/4. 19th November 1898.

¹⁵ Employing 4 workers. H.M Inspector of Mines report for North Staffordshire 1896.

Correspondence Oaks & Pumford re lease Shropshire Archives 1681/189/38

¹⁶ Shropshire Archives 1681/189/4. July 23rd 1903

¹⁷ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 11th October 1871. The Mining Inspectors reports states Barker was an 11-year-old boy, Brown, Ivor, Shropshire Caving and Mining Club