

THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY OF TWERTON

DID YOU know that Twerton once had its own coal mines? The coal pits provided fuel for riverside industries along the Lower Bristol Road, and helped shape the landscape of Twerton for a time.

Early developments

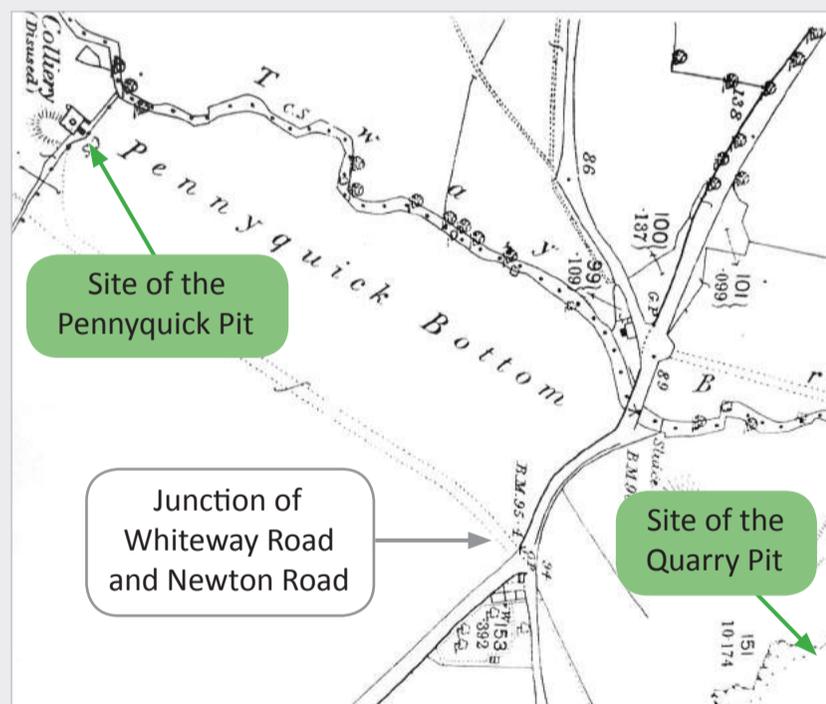
Coal mining was already being carried out close to Twerton in the 18th century. A map of 1742 shows coal works present in the fields near The Globe Inn at Newton St Loe. The city of Bath was growing as a centre of industry, which in turn generated an ever increasing demand for coal.

The Twerton coal pits

The two coal pits to appear in Twerton became known as the Quarry Pit and the Pennyquick Pit.

The Quarry Pit was established in about 1834 by Charles Wilkins, the owner of the Twerton cloth mills. The pit was sited near a quarry that he opened at the west end of Newton Road.¹ Later a second shaft, the Pennyquick Pit, was sunk on land at Pennyquick Bottom.

Map showing the sites of the Quarry Pit and Pennyquick Pit



The Twerton mines operated with men working by candle light, in underground passages that had to be continually pumped clear of water by steam powered machines.² An incident of flooding at the mines was recorded from the memories of a Twerton collier named Joe Button:

Joe was working a 20 inch seam by candle light when water broke through. Although the pumps were working they could not cope with the inflow... The workings had to be abandoned because the water was coming in too fast. The miners got out safely but did not have time to collect their tools and "they are still down there".³

¹ Mike Chapman, Twerton High Street: An Historical Survey
² Most of this content is from Naish, The Story of Twerton, Vol. 2
³ Note attributed to Ray Newman, at the Bath at Work Museum

At the pit shafts a steam powered winding house lowered the miners in a cage suspended by a cable into the mine. The winding house was then used to raise the coal to the surface. At the Quarry Pit there was a day shift and a night shift.



This mining reconstruction at Radstock Museum shows the 'hand got method' of coal mining that would have been used at Twerton. The use of candle light suggests that these mines were free from flammable gases.

Some coal seams at Twerton were believed to be connected with those in the mines at Easton and Kingswood.⁴ The network of miners' tunnels was extensive and stretched beneath Newton Road to what is today Cameley Green.

When Charles Wilkins retired in 1847, the Carr family purchased from him the Twerton Woollen Mill as well as other properties, and also acquired the mining rights. Prone to flooding and producing low quality coal, the colliery was closed under Johnathan Carr in 1874. In times of hardship, people would still forage for pieces of coal left around the coal pits.

After the mines closed

By the 1930's some Twerton residents could still remember the miners coming up from the pits with candles in their caps, as well as the donkey boys who were paid to haul the coal away.

Demolition material from the 1942 Bombing of Bath was used to fill in the site of the quarry and Quarry Pit.⁵ The heap of spoil from the Quarry Pit was later levelled off to form Pennyquick Park. Meanwhile, traces of the *Pennyquick Pit* can still be seen.



Traces of the Pennyquick Pit. The mine shaft is now covered by a concrete cap containing a metal vent (pictured left). Behind it are the remains of a stone building (pictured above). Presumably this was once the winding house.

⁴ John Anstie, Coalfields of Somerset and Gloucestershire, 1873, extract at the Bath at Work Museum
⁵ Carrs Woodland Forum, Carrs Woodland leaflet