

AN INTRODUCTION TO INGLETON COALFIELD AND COLLIERY.

John Bentley

Richard Lowther, governor of Pontefract Castle, had survived one siege, but on July 19th 1645 he was forced to surrender to Parliamentary forces. Having laid down their arms his surviving troops were allowed to march off to Newark to join Royalists there. Sadly he died shortly after arriving in Newark and was buried in the parish church where he was recorded as "Collonell Richard Lowther governor of Pontefract". He was forty-three years of age and his nineteen year old son who accompanied him had to return to Ingleton to sort out the family problems.

Richard Lowther's inventory of goods and chattels dated 17th January 1646 includes the following items, "In husbandrie gear & Coole pit and Worke Towles" valued at £3.6s.8d.¹ This is interesting as normally inventories list only personal rather than real estate. It is the first mention that Richard Lowther had a coal mine at Ingleton. The same mine is mentioned in his son's delinquency document a few months later where it is valued at £20, the latter value probably being its yearly income. The Lowthers had bought the Manor of Ingleton around 1605 and having interest in coal elsewhere, it seems to have been no coincidence that they took the manor of Ingleton which also contained a substantial coalfield. There must have been good evidence as coal outcropped in several areas especially by the river Greta. The Lowthers mined coal at Ingleton from around 1610 to 1650 but due to the Civil War they had no great success and the Ingleton branch of the family never recovered financially. There was no love lost between the Lowthers and their Ingleton tenants due to regular litigation. When one of the older Lowthers wrote to his nephew Sir John Lowther of Lowther in 1650, he wrote, "As for Ingleton and men of Ingleton I will never have more to doe with either I have lost by Grandfather father & Sonne, losses and Injures intayled upon me from them by desente."²

This article is a résumé of the history of Ingleton colliery with a few snapshots of interesting aspects of its story over four centuries. The village of Ingleton lies in the old West Riding of

Yorkshire, now North Yorkshire, almost on the Lancashire border. The village itself lies in the south-east of the parish on a shelf of land above the rivers Twiss and Doe. The Ordnance Survey have changed the names of the rivers at Ingleton on almost every new map issue, but the Twiss runs down from Chapel-le-dale and the Doe flows down from Kingsdale and Raven Ray. This is outlined in a survey of the boundaries of the Manor of Ingleton and Bentham in Elizabeth I, 34.³ Both join by the railway viaduct at Ingleton to become the Greta. The Ingleton Coalfield lies to the south-east of the village in a wide area of enclosed fields and scattered farms, covering some four square miles. It is a small isolated coalfield lying between the main Lancashire and Yorkshire coalfields. The coalfield is cut into two sections by the river Greta, with the more important Ingleton colliery on the one side and the Burton colliery on the other. At some periods they were divided in ownership while at other times they were in common hands.

In 1648 the Lowthers leased the colliery to their Walker relations and the Walkers passed shares to their four children. Henry Bouch a later Lord of the Manor questioned their lease when they sank two pits at Bull Ing, a seven acre meadow near to the Greta at Park Foot and part of his demesne lands. The Knipes, Walkers, Collins and Watkins employed Leonard Wharton to manage the colliery and due to Henry Bouch's harassment he left. Luckily Eleanor Walker's husband, William Knipe, was a solicitor and took the case to Chancery Court. Two of the others only agreed to pay costs after he won his case in 1678 and two still refused to contribute as they did not consider it a worthwhile proposition. A new Lessee, Cuthbert Kidd of Burton, was appointed and under his management the pits at Bull Ing were restored, made productive and with roadways completed across the field to the road local carts and pack-horses were soon seen back at Ingleton Pits to collect their coal. The pits at Raygill and Faccan also continued some production as they were to do for a further century. No longer harassed Ingleton coal was once again distributed throughout the neighbourhood to Burton and Hornby, to Clapham and Giggleswick and Settle and further afield to Kirkby Lonsdale and Kendal.

At Melling, in May 1701, Dr Thomas Moore of Lancaster married Marianne Walker, the widow of Edward Walker and daughter of Isaac Knipe of Giggleswick. Soon after their marriage the Moores went to live at Wakefield where Thomas built up a successful practice in Kirkgate. Having married into the Ingleton colliery and having money to invest Thomas Moore arranged to buy out all shareholders of the Ingleton colliery and between 1702 and 1711 brought it into his sole ownership. Cuthbert Kidd continued to manage the colliery until his death in 1730 when the Foxcrofts became lessees and ran both the Ingleton and Burton collieries. Thomas passed the ownership of Ingleton colliery to his two daughters Anne and Susannah. Susannah married William Sergeantson and as Anne never married ownership passed to the Sergeantson family of Wakefield and Hanlith.

The Sergeantsons owned Ingleton collieries for four generations, the last being George John who was born in London in 1800 and educated at Eton and Oxford. He came home to Yorkshire in 1826 to find that his father W.R.L. Sergeantson had been neglecting both his farms and colliery interests. George took over, taking the advice of Mr Blenkinson of Middleton colliery, who recommended a young colliery manager called Joseph Hunter. Joseph was only twenty-three when he came to Ingleton and everyone was impressed by his enthusiasm. He demolished the old water-wheel at Parkfoot which was both massive and unsightly and the brought he first steam engine to Ingleton colliery. He sank a new shaft and building his house close by he named both house and pit the New Winning. The pit at New Winning was worked from 1834 until 1857.

A new colliery was also begun at Wilson Wood in 1853 and began working in 1855 and worked the four foot, yard coal and the six foot seam. In 1865 when John Singleton was killed at Wilson Wood a remembrance ceremony was held for him underground. We are lucky that the press reporter present noted more than the ceremony - "A few words about the works might not be out of place, the large engine lifts 80 gallons of water at every stroke, and makes 7 strokes a minute, and is incessantly working night and day. 20,000 cubic feet of air passes through per

minute - the shaft is 180 feet deep, and at a distance of 20 yards from the bottom the coal is reached, which lies at an angle of 16 degrees, and is 6 feet thick, and in addition to a large number of men and boys, two ponies were employed to convey the coals for 400 yards on a tram-way to the pit's mouth. A ponies train consisted of 7 tubs, each tub contains two loads of 4 cwt. At a distance of 400 yards from the shaft, we came to an incline on the left hand, which rises one yard in three for 100 yards, where is fixed a gig board, where by means of chains etc., the descending tub of coal brings up each time an empty tub. In this small chamber measuring 14 feet by 7 feet the men and boys assembled to hear a hymn sung, and prayer, and words of soberness and truth. Near to where John Singleton was so recently killed, this most interesting meeting was held."

FLOOD AND DISASTER.

On 6th January 1866 the Ingleton Colliers Club held their annual meeting at the Bay Horse Inn, Ingleton. After an excellent supper, George Willis, the colliery viewer gave the usual toasts which included "success to the Ingleton Colliery." However, before the end of the year disaster struck twice at Ingleton. One Sunday night in October a feeder at Wilson Wood broke into the workings and began to flood the mine. In spite of all available pumps working day and night by the following Thursday the water had risen ten yards up the shaft, the two pit ponies were drowned and the pit was given up for lost. On 27th October the Lancaster Guardian reported, "What a change has come over the place in a short week-the puffing of the steam, the hissing of the boilers, the rattling of the chains, the clang of the shovels, the banging of the furnace doors, the rushing noise of the sliding coals into empty carts, the clanking of the pumping and pulling engines, the running banter and chatter of the men with blackened faces and garments, the clamour of sonorous voices, the leaping flames of the perpetual fires, and the dense columns of curling smoke have disappeared and left silence to reign around."

By November some miners had left Ingleton to work in the Burnley Coalfield and others left their families at Ingleton and went to Barnsley. On Wednesday, 12th December 1866 one of the greatest mining disasters in the history of this

country occurred at Barnsley when Oaks Colliery blew up killing three hundred and sixty men and boys. Ingleton miners were working there and were killed both in the first major explosion and as rescuers in the second explosion. From 1866 there were five sad years for Ingleton colliery, output dropped, miners' wages were cut and hours extended from eight to nine each day. There was a walk out at the colliery and the men turned against the owner, George Sergeantson and the lessee, Joseph Hunter. Both were ageing and had little appetite for further struggle. In 1872 two new shafts were sunk at Newfield. From the rough notes of a later colliery owner, James Barker, we know that the pits were sunk by William Metcalfe, Robert Lindsay, Thomas Lindsay and Robert, James and John Tomlinson. The road to the pits was made by William Metcalfe senior, into the old coal pit road. The Metcalfes, Lindsays, Tomlinsons and Remmingtons were the elite miners of the Ingleton Coalfield who mined for generations and held the historical knowledge and folklore of the coalfield.

Before any coal was drawn from the Newfield pits the ownership of the colliery changed. William Bracewell, a Lancashire mill-owner already had interests in Ingleton and bought the Ingleton Colliery to supply his mills in Barnoldswick and Colne. He was locally known as "Owd Billycock" because of the hard hat similar to a bowler which he wore. He opened the Newfield pits, one to the four-foot seam and the second to the six-foot coal. Then he began the gigantic task of restoring the flooded Wilson Wood colliery where he also began producing bricks. He was soon employing one hundred-and-twenty men and thirty horses. Twenty horses and carts were employed to transport coal to the Midland Railway sidings. About half the coal production went by rail to his mills while the other half supplied local needs. When William Bracewell died in 1885 his trustees ran the colliery into difficulties and in 1887 they turned off the pumps at Wilson Wood rendering the colliery useless, even though they were negotiating a sale. This gave the opportunity for local miner James Barker to take the royalties cheaply and began working handpits to supply coal locally. He named some pits after his family such as Nellie pit and Richard pit. Jimmy Barker had come up the hard way, many

of his family had been killed in colliery accidents and he himself had been injured several times, but he was tough and resilient. He worked the colliery with enthusiasm, suffered losses through litigation with the local gentry, and finally dropped dead of a heart attack on Ingleton station having run to catch the train for Leeds.

Before his death in 1913 Barker had sold his interests in the Ingleton colliery to a syndicate and the New Ingleton Colliery Company was eventually formed. Two new shafts were sunk alongside the Keighley-Kendal Turnpike road to a depth of 265 yards and by 1926 three-hundred and fifty miners were employed at the colliery. The following seams were found:- at 127 yards the ten foot seam (10ft 7½ ins) first class house and steam coal, similar to the Barnsley seam; at 134 yards the nine-foot seam (9ft 9½ ins) of moderate steam and house coal; at 160 yards the steam coal (3ft 10ins) of medium quality; at 233 yards the four-foot seam (4ft 4ins) excellent house and gas coal; at 236 yards the yard coal (5ft 9ins) also of excellent quality; and finally at 260 yards the six-foot seam (6ft 9ins) of fair steam and house coal.

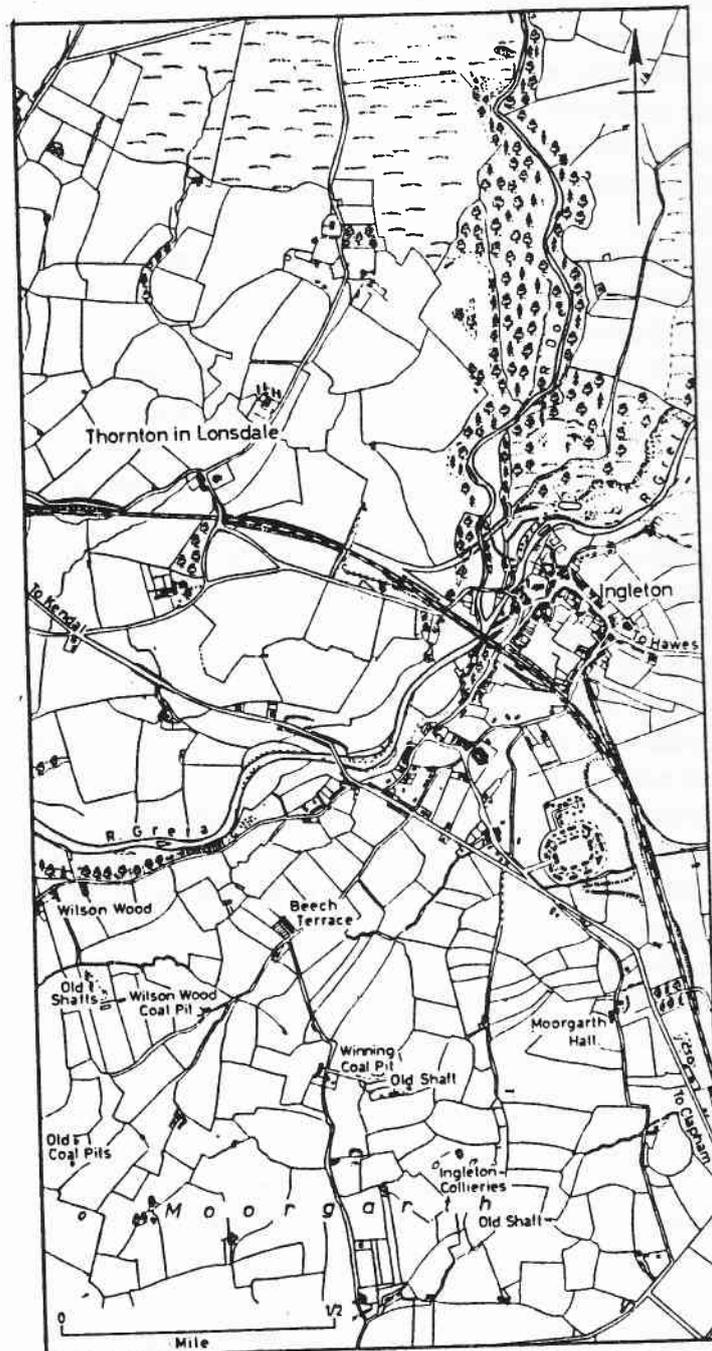
The regular seams at Ingleton were the four-foot seam, the yard coal or three-foot seam and six-foot seam. The ten-foot and nine-foot seams at the New Ingleton colliery brought problems to Ingleton. Firstly they were only found in a small area and soon disappeared. Secondly they were the cause of considerable subsidence and the reason for the iron bridge near Bridge Inn where the Keighley-Kendal road leaves Ingleton. When the old stone bridge subsided the County Council claimed from the colliery and the road was closed. However, with the colliery running into financial straits the council had eventually to foot the bill.

The colliery finally closed in the 1930s and now there is little evidence on the surface that Ingleton had been a mining village for several centuries. However, scratch below the surface and mining evidence appears; the land produces rails, battered lamps and copper horse shoes; cottage deeds show they were built for the colliery; and many people have fathers and grandfathers who were miners. The "New" or "Model" village which was built in 1913 still

survives intact today as a memorial to the New Ingleton Colliery Company.

For those who would like to know more about this little known coalfield, the writer will be taking part in the Mining and Quarrying CNWRS day school at Lancaster University on 11th May 1996, when his subject will be "Ingleton Colliery-Mine Ownership 1600-1940." It is also hoped that the story of Ingleton Coalfield and collieries over four centuries will be published in the not too distant future.

1. Lancashire Record Office. ARR (Archdeaconry of Richmond Probate Records).
2. C.R.O. D/Lons /L1 /1/8/
3. Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record, BRA 910 DD. 123.
4. Craven Weekly Pioneer, 30th Sept 1865.



Part of the Ingleton coalfield at the present day. The site of New Ingleton colliery lies on the south side of the New Road, almost opposite the circle formed by the houses of the New Village (Crown copyright reserved)