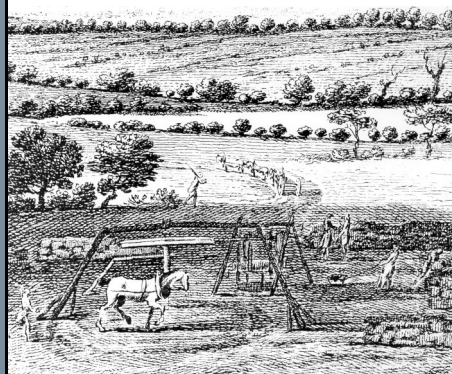


# Local Coal Mining

It is likely that coal was mined in Prescot as early as 1510, but the first reference to coal came from the court roll of 1552.

Coal at that time was mined for industry such as the salt workings in Cheshire, and later for the local potteries, glass and sugar manufacturers.



1743 Prospect of Prescot detail

One of the reasons for the wealth of the manor was the fact that Prescot lay above rich seams of coal, which were quite near the surface, making it easy to mine. It was brought up by sinking a new shaft every year, these shafts were known as 'coal pit eyes'.

The early mines had no means of pumping out water, so once the shafts flooded they would be abandoned. They would also be closed for winter and a new one started up the following year. As a result of this seasonal closure, winter was a time of unemployment for many miners.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the invention of the steam pumping engine meant that flooded mines could at last be used. Shafts could go deeper and the mines could be opened all year round. One of the earliest pumping engines in the North West was bought by Whiston Mine in 1719. By 1746 Prescot Manor owned one and throughout the 18th century the local mines flourished. The engine was replaced with a new one in 1753, and productivity further increased, producing 75,000 works of coal compared to 60,000.

<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/things-to-see-and-do/galleries-and-museum.aspx>

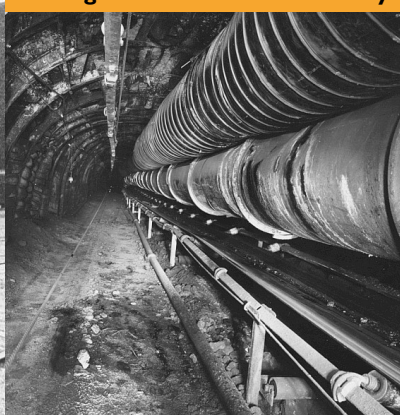
It was a hard life for the miners. They were paid by the amount of coal they could bring up in one day called a 'work' which was normally 3 tons.

To bring up as much coal as possible and to make a living, the miner's family often worked together. The men would dig the coal at the face and the women and children would drag the coal up to the surface to be weighed and loaded into wagons.

Cronton Colliery

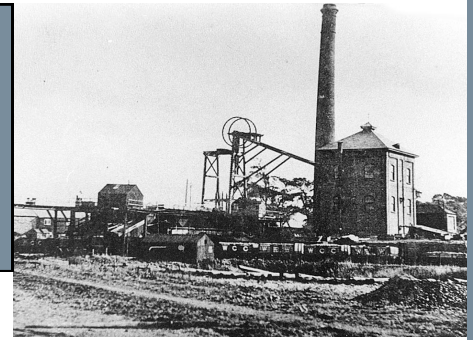


Underground at Cronton Colliery



Pit brow lasses

# Local Coal Mining



Whiston & Cronton Colliery

While landowners were allowed to dig coal on their own land, the main local mine was at Prescot Hall, which lay at the bottom of Hall Lane.

During the 18th century local colliery owners had a monopoly on the sale of coal to Liverpool. They were the nearest to the rapidly growing port, so their coal could be transported to Liverpool on the turnpike road. Nearby Whiston is historically linked to coal mining, with the first reference in 1521. Many shafts were sunk around the area including Carr, Whiston, Halsnead and Cronton Collieries.

The mine at Prescot Manor continued to prosper until the building of the Sankey Canal in 1757, which made transporting coal to Liverpool cheaper and easier from other mines around the St Helens area. As a result the power of the local mines was lost, Prescot Manor mine closed in the mid 1800s, Whiston Colliery closed in 1897, and Halsnead in 1900.

However, some local mines were more fortunate. In 1915, during the First World War, Cronton Colliery was opened on the old Halsnead site to meet the growing demand for coal from shipping companies such as Cunard. It was finally closed by The National Coal Board in 1984 due to mounting costs.

Over the years there have been many strikes in support of wages and welfare for the miners. In the 1921 and 1926 strikes, many people went picking coal on the waste tips to support their income. Miners also sunk their own 'outcrop' mines, using their local knowledge to identify where the coal seems lay. During these times miners suffered great hardships, finding it difficult to feed their families. Soup kitchens and special funds were often set up to help bring some relief.

Coal mining was a dangerous job, particularly before the explosive mixture of naked lights, coal dust and mine gases were clearly understood.

Large disasters occurred fairly regularly. It was not until 1908 - 1909 that mine owners and engineers discovered the influence of coal dust in major explosions, publishing their findings in 1910.



Bromilow & Co. pit brow lasses and workers



Miner's General Strike 1926