

Claxby Ironstone Mine

Ironstone mining in the Lincolnshire Wolds began at Claxby in the 1860s. The Claxby Ironstone Mine was situated on the north side of the village and the entrances were about 50 metres below the top of the escarpment. The area mined was about 150 acres, on land rented from the Earl of Yarborough.

Mining started production in 1868 by the West Yorkshire Iron and Coal Co. and was sent by rail to the ironworks at Ardsley near Leeds. In 1873 the mine was employing about 250 men and produced 70,000 tons. It was referred to by the local Rector as “a gloomy cavern of disaster” because of numerous injuries and deaths associated with the site.

The mine closed in 1885 when it became uneconomic because of the low iron content in the ironstone (the ironstone at Nettleton was discovered and thought to be of better quality).



Just under the hill there was a Powder House for keeping explosives in. This photo was taken in 1965 but unfortunately the stone has been removed to back fill a ventilation shaft.

The stone wall that was constructed using Tealby Limestone and Carstone was built to retain the hillside to form the rail sidings for storing empty wagons and for calcining the ore before transporting to the ironworks.



During WW2 the mine and surrounding area was used as a training site for the armed forces and much of the site was damaged. The flat area can still be seen where a few bricks are all that remain of the Blacksmith Shop and Stables.

The winding drum was used to lower the full railway wagons down the incline and to pull the empty wagons up. The steel bands around the two drums were manually operated to control the speed.

There are six steel supports visible today that would have supported the winding drum.



Landowner John Brant demonstrating the art of using a crowbar that was found by his Father on the mine site. Because of its weight and size, about 8 ft. long, it could have been used to move the railway wagons.

Filling in the shaft with a “Grey Fergie” and bucket – no mean feat but nothing compared with actually digging the shaft by hand in the 1860’s!



The mine was ventilated by a bricked air shaft which was about 12 feet in diameter and 120 feet deep. A fire would have been lit at the bottom of the shaft to create a draught in order to supply fresh air to the mine.



In 1871/2 the Earl of Yarborough built two sets of ten terrace houses to accommodate the miners. These were condemned in 1971 and were demolished.



Each pair of cottages had to share one outside water tap and toilet. The two photos are of paintings by Joan Mostyn-Lewis.



The mine managers house on Pelham Road is now a private dwelling.



The Down Your Wold volunteers would like to thank H Bourne & Sons, the Brant family and the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology for their help and assistance. There is no public access to any of the above sites. All images are copyrighted.

Further information: 200 Hundred Years of Claxby Parish History Papers by Stewart Squires and Rex Russell (S L H A)

