Trefonen Heritage Group

Have you connections with our mining past?

Our green environment, tinged with black

There was a time when coal mining, brick making and quarrying were at the heart of our community. Our Jubilee Playing Field includes a pit mound. Our footballers are known as pitmen. The hairdresser’s was the Band Box.

We want to celebrate and promote an interest in our industrial past. The Heritage Group is developing two new interpretation panels for display on the Jubilee Field, to replace those we installed in 2011. We shall be working to draft the new panels in the new year and we are inviting you to contribute to our research as we prepare the boards. If you can give us any links to the miners and their families, please contact:

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Here are some brief **extracts from the earlier panels:**

**Mining -** For two centuries during the 1700s and 1800s Trefonen shared its traditional and long standing agricultural pursuits with coal mining and brick making.

First bell pits and then more developed shaft and tunnel workings were used to extract rather poor quality coal from thin seams. There was as much profit from the clay that was dug out as an obligatory by product – but at least they had the fuel to fire the brick and pottery kilns.

**Howell’s Brickworks** – this was a considerable business that manufactured ornamental as well as the distinctive ordinary yellow bricks which can be seen in many of the finer buildings in Oswestry. The Brickworks also produced tiles, pipes and chimney pots as well as tombstones – one can still be seen on the south side of the church.

Brickmaking is labour intensive and requires plenty of space for all the various processes needed to transform what was in essence a waste product into a building material. Luckily coal for firing the kilns was in plentiful supply!

**Clay crushing wheels**. In order to reach and extract coal large quantities of clay had to be brought to the surface and used or disposed of. This clay was impure and full of stones. To render it suitable the clay was crushed by giant rotating stone wheels pulled round by horse though possibly latterly by a steam engine. Three stone crushing wheels lie near the car park. Originally they were almost certainly located across the road in Howell’s Brickworks.

**Trefonen National School** – opened in 1826. One headmaster – John Hughes – also served as parish clerk, grave digger and general factotum. After a funeral he would adjourn to the Efel Inn leaving the older children in charge resulting in ‘high jinks’ for the rest of the day.

**Payday in the Pub -** After their Saturday morning shift Trefonen mineworkers would make their way to The Efel – one of the village pubs – to be paid. Two rooms – nicknamed ‘The Rogues Hole’ and ‘The Devil’s Nook’ - were set aside for this purpose

**Play the Brass, not tilt the Glass -** In response to a general rise in ‘deplorable drunkenness’, the Rev D P Evans recognised the need to provide an active recreational alternative to drinking in the local pubs and formed the Trefonen Band. The small, square building on the main road in front of the church – now a hairdressers – was known as the ‘Band Box’ and was used for storing the band’s instruments.

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