

A PRIDE OF PANNERS

where Scott resided and in Walter Scott Pend which would have been the route taken by him for sea bathing.

At Prestonpans he continued to seek out local tales and legends and made the acquaintance of two men who were to have a significant influence on his later writings. They were family friends George Constable and Captain Dalgety, a retired soldier who continued to take a great interest in military campaigns. George Constable had a fund of interesting tales from many sources particularly including memories of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745. Young Walter also spent many hours debating the progress of British military campaigns with Captain Dalgety.

Prestonpans had of course been the site some 34 years earlier of the battle at which the Young Pretender Charles Edward Stuart had routed the Hanoverian forces led by Sir John Cope and opened the way for a victorious advance towards the City of London. To the young boy this must have given the area strong romantic associations. It provided the source for one of the most dramatic episodes in *Waverley*, his first novel published in 1814. That his early visits to Prestonpans influenced his description of the Battle of Prestonpans is clear from the wealth of local detail he includes in his description of the battle. This includes his precise account of the death of Colonel James Gardiner, a local landowner who fought courageously for the Hanoverian cause that day.

Other memories of his days at Prestonpans appear in Sir Walter Scott's writings such as *The Antiquary*, where the title character is based on George Constable who spent a great deal of time with the young Walter and his aunt during their time at Prestonpans. Sir Walter Scott died in 1832.

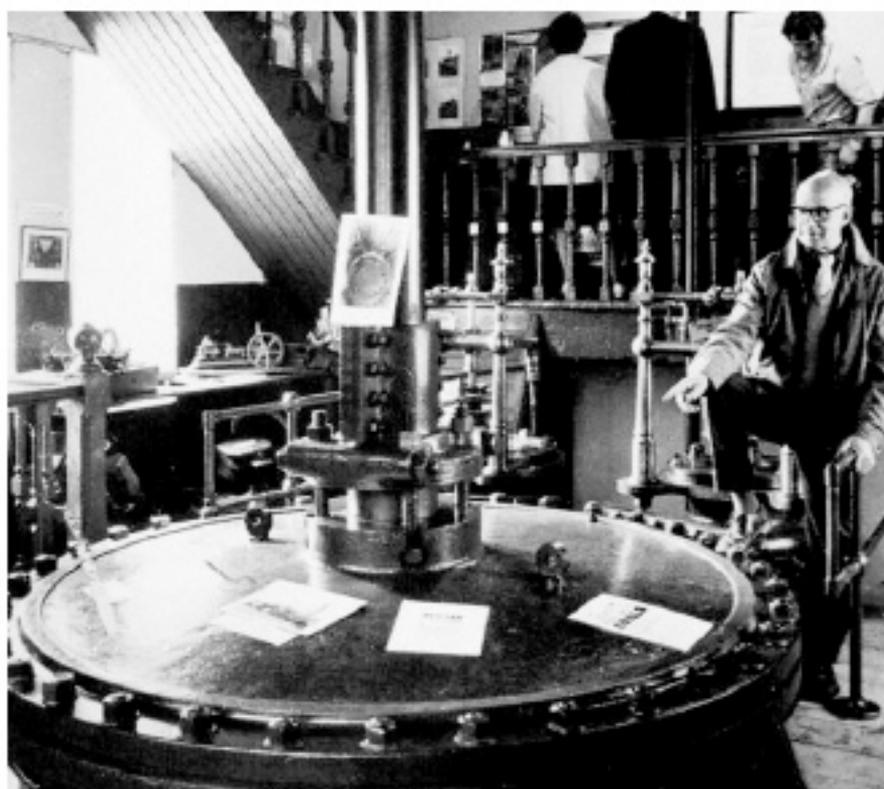
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12 DAVID SPENCE

David Spence, M.B.E., is famed not only in Prestongrange and East Lothian but throughout the Scottish mining history. His long association with mining in The Lothians and Fife for most of the 20th century, together with his enduring passion to ensure the creation of Prestongrange Heritage Mining Museum, is comprehensively recorded elsewhere. The major source is the David Spence Archive within East Lothian Library headquarters at Haddington.

'Davie' Spence was not a native of Prestonpans. His association began as a local employee who eventually went on to have a lasting influence on the area. He was born at 10 Arniston Place, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian on 2 October 1900 to David Spence and his wife Margaret Gordon. His father was a miner as indeed were the majority of workers of the time in that area and it was certainly by choice that Davie Spence followed in his father's footsteps.



*David Spence in the Beam Engine Room at Prestongrange Colliery
Courtesy East Lothian Museum Service*

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The young David showed early signs of academic ability which could, had he been so inclined, have removed him from involvement with mines and mining industry. The family moved to Tranent where David attended primary school. Some of his class mates were Bertie Wood, Archie Buchanan, William Sheddan, Adam Shields, James Yorston, Alex Tennant and Thomas Watson. At the age of 13, David obtained a bursary to cover three years study at Broughton High School in Edinburgh. Among his papers Davie Spence kept newspaper cuttings regarding that Traill Bursary which was open to all children attending schools in East Lothian during the early part of the century.

Determined to be a Miner

Broughton School did not retain Davie Spence long as a pupil. After a relatively short experience of Edinburgh education he returned one evening to Tranent to advise his parents that he had “left school and was going to the pits.” The motivation for what some might see as a foolish decision is unrecorded. Young Davie was told by the Broughton headmaster: “Spence, you will regret this day for the rest of your life.” Happily, although his decision to abandon education was also a big disappointment to his mother, there is no evidence that Davie ever did regret his chosen way of life. However, the unused part of his bursary was necessarily refunded and the used portion repaid which would have been difficult for a mining family.

On the Monday following his momentous and life changing decision, Davie Spence joined his father working underground in nearby St. Germain's Colliery then owned by the Ugston Coal Company. His father stripped the coal which Davie loaded on to hutches before manhandling those conveyances out to a main underground despatch point. He remained at St. Germain's until becoming unemployed, without warning or notice, when the mine ceased production and shut down in 1922. The closure certainly cannot have been for lack of coal reserves. Coal was still being produced from open cast operations in the adjacent area of Blindwells some sixty years later. Indeed when David Spence was given a conducted tour of the East Lothian Open Cast Mine project at that location during the early nineteen eighties he was able to identify the same seams of coal which he had worked from underground at St Germain's.

There were however many coal mines in the East and Mid

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Lothian area which could provide alternative employment. Davie soon found a new job at Oxenfoord Colliery near Pathhead, Midlothian. That pit was between five and six miles from Tranent and the travelling was scarcely convenient and after only a year at Oxenfoord Davie moved again. This time he went to the old Fleets Colliery owned by the Edinburgh Coal Company located between Tranent and Ormiston. He was still in that employment during 1927 when the Fleets mine was temporarily flooded. Under ground water in that pit, as with most of those in East Lothian, was a continual hazard. Davie was not himself underground when the flooding occurred and fortunately all those who were reached the surface safely. The colliery was however out of action for some days until all the floodwater had been pumped out.

Many sporting and social activities were available to young men during the early 20th century. Local track and field Games were regularly held in Tranent and surrounding villages and every village had its own football team, often affiliated to the Scottish Junior League. Davie Spence excelled as a wing half with nearby Macmerry St. Clair apparently attracting the attention of senior clubs which, had he chosen, could have provided another exit from a miner's life. He was also a dancer of considerable ability and won numerous medals in local competitions.

Despite the privations created by the Miners' Strikes of 1921 and 1926 David Spence continued in his chosen occupation. On 2 January 1931 when he married Violet Hastie Beale

