

Industrial Ownership and Relations at Prestongrange

A resource pack for teachers and students

This Resource Pack is one of a series offering an introduction to local history while fulfilling National Curriculum targets across a number of subject areas. It has been designed for the 5-14 age range and mixed abilities.

Contents

- 1. History***
- 2. Summary***
- 3. Glossary***
- 4. Timeline***
- 5. Curriculum Targets***
- 6. Activities***
- 7. Further Investigations***



1. A short history of industrial ownership and relations at Prestongrange

Prestongrange Colliery lies along the shore between Musselburgh and Prestonpans.

1200-1811: Pioneers and slaves

In a charter of 1184, use of the land was granted to the Cistercian monks of Newbattle Abbey by Robert de Quincy, a local landowner, at 'Preston' or 'Priest's Town'. 'Prestongrange' was where the monks established a farmhouse and granary, or 'grange'. The monks worked the land, aided at first by a system known as 'neyfship', whereby workers were tied to the land they lived on. However, by the mid 13th century, the system of neyfship was no longer in common use.

Coal was an efficient means of heating Scotland's large monastic houses and castles: it also provided fuel to boil sea water in large pans to produce salt, hence 'Prestonpans', or 'Salt-Preston'. Coal deposits may have been discovered by the monks when cutting peat, or, more dramatically, perhaps the fires they lit for warmth while guarding their flocks ignited the coal and resulted in a spectacular blaze. Whatever the circumstances, coal quarrying at Prestongrange is recorded as early as 1210.

Although its use was limited due to the smoke and gases released when it was burnt, coal was increasingly in demand. Seams such as the 'Great Seam', close to the tidal waters of the Forth, were particularly valued and even in 1526, when a harbour was built at Acheson's - later Morison's - Haven, there was a significant export and import trade. Alexander Acheson's involvement signalled a significant change in style of

ownership. During the early 17th century, Mark Ker, first as Abbot, then Baron, of Newbattle, took control of the Prestongrange lands from the Abbey. This change of ownership had significant impact on the circumstances of colliery workers. The crown was well aware of the value of its collieries: in 1592, an Act of Parliament exempted colliers from various obligations, including taxes, and placed them under the protection of the crown. However, it was not so much the workers as the mines themselves which the crown sought to protect. In the same year, another Act made the deliberate fire setting of coal heughs an act of treason and one Lothian coalminer was hanged at the Mercat Cross in Edinburgh for this crime. His head was set on a pole at the pit head as a warning to others. Coal mining was unpopular, since it was both difficult and dangerous. By 1606, it had become necessary to ensure an adequate labour supply and a further Act of Parliament rescinded all former acts and bound colliers and salters - on pain of severe punishment - to perpetual service, whereby they could be bought and sold along with the land they worked on. By the 16th century, when the Morison family owned the Prestongrange Estate, whole families, including women and children, formed part of the labour pool.

1818-1894: Into the Industrial Age

A Royal Commission in 1841, taking evidence of conditions for miners, interviewed families who recalled generations of harsh treatment. Due to the contempt in which they were held, colliers were seen as less than human,

even forbidden burial in consecrated ground.

During the tenure of the Grant (later Grant Suttie) family, the colliery fell into disuse, largely because of flooding. However, even then, permission was rarely granted for colliers to work elsewhere: miners who broke the rules could be severely punished. Wages were basic and expenses had to be paid out of these wages.

Protests against this 'ownership' of individuals were not tolerated. In 1797, during what subsequently became known as the 'Tranent Massacre', 12 people were killed by the militia and a further 20 were injured when local people, including miners, refused to be forced into leaving home for service in the army. However, by 1799, the abolition of serfdom had brought the prospect of freedom to many colliers and by 1843, the date of Mines Act prohibiting the employment of women and children under 10 years of age below ground, public attitudes towards miners had changed.

At Prestongrange, advances in drainage technology in the early 19th century offered an opportunity to resume work on flooded seams. Great fortunes were being made by those whose land included coal seams and Sir George Grant Suttie leased Prestongrange mine to Matthias Dunn in 1830. However, due to the cost of engineering work, which greatly reduced profits, Dunn gave up his lease and the Grant Suttie family took over management of the mine. In 1848, a Notice of Contract with strict rules for employees issued by Sir George Grant Suttie demonstrates that many landowners still persisted in an attitude of ownership in their relationship with their workers. In 1872, he strongly opposed a proposal to

establish a Mine Owner's Association and a regulatory body for miners' wages, suggesting instead that colliers should once again be prevented from seeking employment where they chose.

The management of supply and demand was a complex and erratic process and by 1873, Sir George handed over management in the form of a 99 year lease with the newly-formed Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company. This company was responsible for the installation of the massive Cornish beam pumping-engine, designed to pump water away from the mine and thereby allow access to greater resources of coal. Unfortunately, the cost of engineering works and a downturn in the coal market resulted in conflict between management and workers. Despite the introduction of an 8-hour day maximum by the government in 1873, the company attempted to reduce its losses by cutting wages and extending working hours. In 1874, 140 Prestongrange miners withdrew their labour for 7 weeks, supported by the recently established Mid and East Lothian Miners' Association. A combination of poor management, labour unrest, fluctuations in coal markets and problems with flooding proved too much for the company and they ceased trading in February, 1879.

Another new company was eventually formed in 1882. Various concessions designed to tempt potential investors, including a reduced sale price and reduced rent, resulted in the establishment of the Prestongrange Coal and Firebrick company. However, for similar reasons, this company also ceased trading.

1894-1962: Growth and decline

It is in 1894, with the arrival of the Summerlee and Mossend Steel and Iron

Company founded by the Neilson family, that Prestongrange began its period of greatest prosperity. This family was an established dynasty of engineers and entrepreneurs who were becoming increasingly involved in production of the raw materials of industrial development such as coal. Prestongrange became part of a business empire which, by 1910, owned eight mines and employed over 4,000 people. The massive personal fortune left by John Neilsen, on his death in 1935 is a testament to the profitability of the coal industry.

However, the pursuit of profit created further discord between workers and owners. In 1912, as part of a national campaign to improve conditions, the local Miners' Association supported the Prestongrange miners in a strike lasting five weeks, until the government introduced a Minimum Wage Bill intended to establish local (though not national) wage boards to set a minimum wage for workers in specific districts. Further improvements in pay and conditions were introduced in 1919, but were badly affected by falling profits in 1920. Disagreements between workers and employers resulted in a three month national strike in 1921. By 1925, strike action was again the response to pressure from owners, culminating in the General Strike of 1926, when Prestongrange miners joined the rest of Britain by withdrawing their labour in an attempt to

force the government to meet demands for improved wages and working conditions. Although the TUC eventually called off the strike, Britain's miners refused to return to work.

Throughout the following winter, the atmosphere of increasing tension and occasional violence was fuelled by resentment that their dangerous and difficult working conditions were not considered worthy of better treatment by owners and the government.

The history of Prestongrange Colliery in the 20th century is essentially one of shrinkage: loss of national and international markets for heavy industry and an increased interest in alternative fuels, meant less demand for coal. The years following the Second World War are typified by a shrinking workforce and increasing obsolescence in equipment. By the 1950s, Morison's Haven harbour was derelict and Prestongrange Colliery severely reduced in terms of workforce and output. Although the establishment of the National Coal Board in 1947 brought improved facilities for miners and a sense of hope for the future, this ultimately proved unrealistic and Prestongrange Mine was finally closed in 1962, along with many others across East Lothian.

Although the mine is closed, its history lives on in the Prestongrange Industrial Heritage Centre, a fascinating monument to 1000 years of mining history.



2. Summary

Pioneers and Slaves

In 1184, the **Cistercian** monks of Newbattle Abbey were given the Prestongrange land. 'Priest's Town' became 'Prestonpans', or 'Salt-Preston'. After the

Reformation, Prestongrange became privately owned. In 1606, **colliers** and **salters**, were made **serfs**. Even small children worked long hours in difficult and dangerous conditions. But in 1843, the Mines Act prevented women and young children working underground.

The Industrial Age

Prestongrange mine closed due to floods in 1746, but by 1830, when Matthias Dunn **leased** Prestongrange, new machinery could drain flooded **seams**. But this work was expensive and

Dunn gave up the lease. After this, poor **management**, low coal prices and flooding eventually halted mining again until the Prestongrange Company arrived in 1850.

Many landowners opposed changes to working conditions and kept up **profits** by reducing **wages**. In 1874, the company experienced the first of many **strikes**.

Growth and decline

1894 brought the Summerlee Company to Prestongrange, but the pursuit of profit continued to create **discord**. In 1912, there was another protest. A three-month **national** strike in 1921 and another in 1925, built up to the General Strike of 1926, when British workers, including those

at Prestongrange, attempted to force the government to improve wages and working conditions. The early 20th century saw a huge increase in the mining operation at Prestongrange, but a loss of **markets** for **heavy industry** and **alternative** fuel sources meant less demand for coal. By the 1940s, the **workforce** had shrunk and equipment was unable to cope with flooding. By the 1950s, Morison's Haven harbour was **derelict**, The **takeover** by the **National Coal Board** in 1947 brought some improvements but by 1962 Prestongrange Mine was closed, along with many others in East Lothian.

3. Glossary

Cistercian

Monks who live by the rule of St. Benedict

Reformation

The establishment of the Protestant Church in Scotland (late 15th century)

Collier

A coal miner

Salter

A salt worker

Serf

A labourer who is owned by the owner of the land he lives on

Lease

An agreement allowing someone to make use of land owned by someone else, usually for a regular payment of money

Seam

An underground stretch of coal

Management

The way a business is run

Profit

The amount remaining from the sale of goods after any payments have been made

Wage

Money paid for doing a job

Strike

Refusal to work for your employer until a disagreement has been settled

Discord

Argument

National

Across the whole country

Market

A place where a seller can find someone to buy goods

Heavy Industry

An industry which produces metal, machinery etc

Alternative

A substitute. Alternative energy sources include gas, oil and wind power

Workforce

The workers employed in an industrial activity

Derelict

Abandoned and decaying

Takeover

Taking control of a business away from someone else

National Coal Board

An organisation set up by the government to run coal mines

4. Timeline

- 1150s** - Charter grants the Cistercian monks of Newbattle Abbey by Seyer de Quincy, Earl of Winchester to establish a coalworks and quarry between Whytrig Burn and the boundaries of Pinkie and Inveresk.
- 1308** - Act of Parliament forbids the use of coal in London due to smoke and fumes. Coal is used to heat large monastic and nobles' houses in Scotland whilst being associated with trade and industry.
- 1300s** - James V allows construction of Acheson's (now Morrison's) Haven. The Abbey is granted the right to transport coal from the workings beside the River Esk for shipment in small boats. Packhorses make the return journey with salt and with goods traded for the salt and coal shipped at the harbour.
- 1450s** - Accessible supply of coal diminish while demand for coal increases.
- 1500s** - Scottish coal output is approximately 40,000 tons, but still from small scale workings. However, 6 tons of coal were needed to produce one ton of salt (salt was very profitable).
- 1609** - Export of coal forbidden.
- 1606** - Law reduces colliers to a form of slavery (serfdom).
- 1700** - Annual output of coal c4 million tons
- 1705** - Thomas Newcomen patents the steam engine.
- 1707** - Union of the Parliaments of Scotland and England sees the decline of the Prestonpans salt industry.
- 1722** - Tranent and Cockenzie Waggonway laid.
- 1741** - Evidence of the use of horse gins at Prestongrange.
- 1743** - Morrison's Haven harbour ceases trading.
- 1746** - Mining temporarily ceases at Prestongrange due to flooding.
- 1780** - James Watt successfully modifies Newcomen's design.
- 1800** - Total coal output for Britain is 10 million tons
- 1812** - William Murdoch perfects a method for extracting gas from coal for lighting.
- 1814** - Sir John Hope's Pinkie Railway between Pinkiehill and Fisherrow is constructed.
- 1815** - Tranent and Cockenzie Waggonway replaces wooden rails with cast iron.
- 1830** - George Grant-Suttie leases land at Prestongrange to Matthias Dunn
- 1830** - No 1 shaft sunk, re-opening the mine after more than 65 years.
- 1831** - Edinburgh and Dalkeith Railway ('Innocent Railway') constructed.
- 1838** - Waggon road at Prestongrange runs from pit bottom to working. Bearers replaced by wheeled rails.
- 1838** - Matthias Dunn gives up the lease of Prestongrange.
- 1840** - No. 1 shaft flooded.
- 1850s** - Turnpike System is introduced in Scotland.
- 1850** - The Prestongrange Company takes over the Prestongrange lease.
- 1850** - Opening of the mineral railway junction links Prestongrange Colliery with the main East Coast line.
- 1870** - Total output of coal in Scotland is 15 million tons.
- 1874** - The Cornish Beam Engine is installed at Prestongrange.
- 1878** - The Mining Institute of Scotland is established.
- 1893** - The Prestongrange Company fails.
- 1895** - The first mechanical washer for cleaning coal in Scotland is installed at Prestongrange.
- 1900** - 439 employed at Prestongrange Pit: 61 above ground and 378 below.
- 1905** - The Cornish Beam Engine has its pumping capacity improved.
- 1910** - 873 employed at Prestongrange: 153 above and 720 below (including many Irish immigrants).
- 1910** - An electric turbine pump is installed to pump water from Prestongrange.
- 1913** - Total coal output for Scotland 42 million tons.
- 1915** - total coal output for Scotland 35.25 million tons.
- 1945** - Total coal output for Scotland less than 20 million tons.
- 1946-7** - Nationalisation. The government takes over the coal mines.
- 1962** - Prestongrange Pit closes.

5. Curriculum Target: Knowledge and understanding of people in the past

STRAND	LEVEL C	LEVEL D	LEVEL E	LEVEL F
<p>People, events and societies of significance in the past: Developing an understanding of distinctive features of life in the past and why certain societies, people and events are regarded as significant</p>	<p>Describe the diversity of lifestyles of people in the past, eg the life of a peasant as opposed to a landowner</p>	<p>Describe some features of societies, people and events of the past and suggest why they might be considered significant</p>	<p>Explain the motives or actions of people in particular historical situations Explain the values or attitudes that characterised various societies in the past Explain why particular societies, people and events from the past are thought to be of significance</p>	<p>Apply knowledge and understanding of the motives or actions of people in particular historical situations and/or the values and attitudes of particular societies in the past to reach conclusions on a given historical issue or question</p>
<p>Change and continuity, cause and effect: Developing an understanding of change and continuity over time and of cause and effect in historical contexts</p>	<p>Make a comparison between present and past lifestyles/circumstances/features. What is different? What is the same? Give some reasons for differences and for aspects of continuity</p>	<p>Identify important features of a development that have changed over an extended period of time eg transport, role of women Explain in simple terms why these features were important and describe what effects they had on people's lives</p>	<p>Demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the main features of a particular event/development/attitude with regard to change and continuity Give some reasons to explain why a specific historical event/action/development took place and what the specific consequences were</p>	<p>Apply knowledge and understanding of the process of cause and effect to provide detailed explanation as to why a particular development/event took place and give balanced assessment as to the significance of its consequences</p>
<p>Time and historical sequence: Developing an understanding of time and how events in the past relate to one another in chronological sequence</p>	<p>Put a series of events with their dates in chronological order Use the words 'decade' and 'millennium' correctly</p>	<p>Explain the meaning of the terms 'bc' and 'ad' Place a number of events from a specific historical development on a timeline that crosses BC/AD divide</p>	<p>Explain the relationship between specific dates and the relevant century Name and place significant historical periods in chronological order</p>	<p>Compare and contrast timelines from a significant historical period in different parts of the world</p>
<p>The nature of historical evidence: Developing an understanding of the variety of types of historical evidence and their relative significance</p>	<p>Describe ways in which people remember and preserve the past, eg war memorials and suggest reasons why they should do this</p>	<p>Suggest a variety of sources of information about the past and what use they might be to someone studying a particular topic Explain the meaning of the term 'heritage' and give some examples, eg castles, literature</p>	<p>Suggest ways in which society's awareness of its own past can affect its present and future development eg devolution in Scotland, conflict/peace in Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Describe how heritage and evidence can be used in both positive and negative ways eg to promote social, economic or political ends</p>

5. Curriculum target: skills in social subjects

STRAND	LEVEL C	LEVEL D	LEVEL E	LEVEL F
<p>Preparing for tasks: Planning tasks in a systematic and logical way Identifying appropriate sources of information</p>	<p>Plan a sequence of activities for tackling an enquiry, class or homework task</p> <p>Suggest relevant sources of information that might assist in a particular task</p>	<p>Plan a sequence of tasks or procedures, adapting as required</p> <p>Identify a variety of straightforward sources from which relevant information might be collected</p>	<p>Plan appropriate strategies, resources and sequence of tasks or procedures, adapting as required</p> <p>Identify a variety of sources from which relevant information might be collected and give reasons for choice</p>	<p>Plan appropriate strategies, resources and sequence of tasks or procedures, adapting as required</p> <p>Identify a variety of sources, including complex ones, from which relevant information might be collected and give reasons for choice</p>
<p>Carrying out tasks: Selecting relevant information and/or equipment. Observe, measure, find, select, record Processing information in a variety of ways Evaluating the usefulness and reliability of information</p>	<p>Select and record specific information for a given purpose from a variety of sources available in the school or local community</p> <p>Select simple techniques to process/classify straightforward information in a variety of ways</p> <p>Distinguish in an elementary way between fact and opinion, fact/truth and fact/fiction</p>	<p>Select and use known enquiry methods and/or equipment to access, select and record relevant information from a variety of straightforward sources</p> <p>Select techniques to process/classify information in a variety of ways eg the results of a questionnaire</p> <p>Make simple judgements about usefulness/reliability of information/evidence</p>	<p>Select and use methods and/or equipment to access, select and record a range of relevant information from a variety of different types of sources</p> <p>Select techniques to process/classify information in a variety of ways, justifying choice</p> <p>Make judgements about what evidence is relevant/reliable, eg by reference to bias, exaggeration and selective use of information</p>	<p>Make independent use of suitable methods and techniques to access, select and record information from a range of sources, including complex ones</p> <p>Make independent use of techniques to process/classify information in a variety of ways, justifying choice</p> <p>Recognise when information is likely to be irrelevant, biased, or unacceptably inaccurate</p>
<p>Reviewing and reporting on tasks: Presenting findings in an appropriate and coherent way Presenting conclusions that are relevant to the purpose or issue</p>	<p>Present findings in a report, communicating key points clearly</p> <p>Present conclusions giving reasons</p>	<p>Present findings in an organised and appropriate manner</p> <p>Present conclusions and justify these with reference to evidence</p>	<p>Present findings in report (orally or in writing) showing clear organisation and appropriate specialist vocabulary</p> <p>Present conclusions that are well supported by reference to presented information</p>	<p>Present an extended report (orally or in writing) showing a clear and coherent argument or analysis</p> <p>Present detailed conclusions, or conclusions on more complex issues, that are well supported by reference to presented information</p>

6. Activities

Activity 1:

As a mine owner, you pay 50 pence for every ton of coal cut. You have 50 miners. How much do you have to pay them if each cuts 5 tons of coal in one week?

Answer _____

You sell the coal for £1 per ton. How much money is left after you pay your miners?

Answer _____

Your water pumping equipment needs repairs. These cost £40.

How much profit remains?

Answer _____

You decide to increase your profits, either by paying less to the miners, or by not repairing

your equipment. List the disadvantages for each choice

Answer _____

Activity 2:

Sir George Grant-Suttie, owner of Prestongrange made a set of rules he expected his workers to keep.

As a Prestongrange miner, what rules do you think you would make for your employer?

Answer _____

Activity 3:

!9th century mining families often lived together in a single room, sharing water and other facilities with other families.

Using lego etc, design and build a home for a married couple with two children. Put in everything you think is needed, such as a bath, kitchen etc.

Make a list of what you have included which was missing from the miners' homes:

7. Further Investigations

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Prestongrange Estate, especially the Industrial Heritage Museum, try the following websites:

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/museums/index.html

www.prestoungrange.org

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT MINING in Scotland, try the Scottish Mining Museum website at:

<http://www.scottishminingmuseum.com/>

FOR IMAGES from Scottish history:

www.scran.ac.uk

FOR AN EXCELLENT HISTORY website, try:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/>

FOR A FLAVOUR OF LIFE in a miners' community during a strike, read **The Revolutionary's Daughter**, by Gwen Grant, published by Heinemann, or watch **Billy Elliot**, the story of a boy who wants to be a dancer

