

# 30 years since Langwith Pit's graceful closure . . .



## Report by Adrian Hardy

**THIS** year marks the 30th anniversary of the closure of Langwith Colliery.

Unlike the fate that many of its neighbouring collieries faced in the next decade, Langwith closed gracefully after providing for the country's industry and domestic market in both war and peace time for over 100 years.

The Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company first sank a shaft at Langwith in 1876 and this was completed within four years.

The shaft went 1,600ft underground to the rich coal seam known as the top hard where the harvest of coal took place until 1934, after which production was moved to the High Hazel seam.

In 1943, work began on the High Main seam, then in 1963 the Clowne seam and the main bright seam was worked in 1957.

The production of coal before the introduction of modern machinery reached its peak at 584,796 tons. In 1962, with modernisation, the colliery produced 845,392 tons.

In the 1970s, coal reserves at the colliery were nearly exhausted and the decision was eventually taken to close the colliery.

Despite being slowly run down, the miners still kept up the high productivity that the colliery was renowned for.

In the mid-1950s, after nationalisation, Langwith took a lead in introducing some of the machinery that revolutionised the industry, such as the rapid loading bunkers.

With the creation of the colliery came the villages of Langwith and Whaley Thorns, and prosperity to the local community.

Houses were built and local schools, pubs and shops followed. Land was made available for recreation and locals took part in sport such as cricket and bowls.

Family roots were firmly set and everyone in the community knew each other.

By 1920, electricity had been installed at the colliery and by 1947, generators were also supplying power to many parts of the village, including the school and fire station.

The pithead baths were opened in 1931 at a cost of £21,000 and in the mid-1960s, around £500,000 was spent in modernising the old village properties to provide bathrooms and indoor toilets.

With the closure of the colliery, Langwith has had to adapt to life without its main employer. Many miners got jobs at other local collieries or left the industry.

The community spirit of Langwith is still strong and that special bond between people still exists, but like many local mining villages it has become a dormitory village with people travelling to nearby towns and industrial estates to work.



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