

This has been re-produced from a pamphlet  
published in 1993 by the late Boothstown & District Local History Society

**Chaddock Colliery  
(Engine Row)  
& Boothstown's own  
Navigable Level**

by  
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OS map from 1842



Entrance to the Chaddock Level

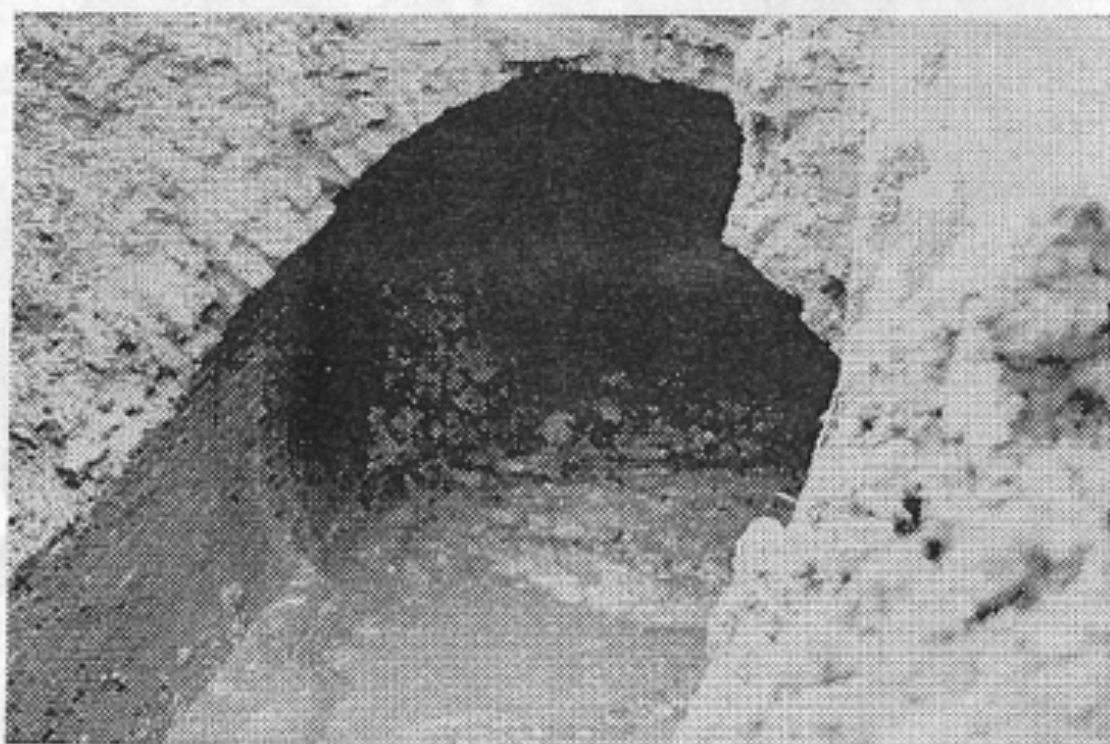
**M**ost people, and rightly so, have heard of the Canal Duke and Worsley Delph, with its fifty miles or so of underground canals, but much less known is Boothstown's Colliery and its Chaddock level with its own entry/exit direct to the Bridgewater, close to Boothstown Bridge.

I first came upon it in 1952 when new sewer pipes were being laid in Vicars Hall Lane. Workmen broke into the roof of an underground canal close to the junction of Vicars Hall Gardens and Vicars Hall Lane. It is thought that this caused the pipe laying a few problems, but these were soon overcome, and work went on. The tunnel was then forgotten.

Five years or so later, while playing in the fields at the end of what was then a cul de sac of terraced houses known locally as 'engine row', I came across two circles of mine spoil. I went home later and told my grandfather (a retired collier), who told me that it was the site of engine row pit (Chaddock Colliery). I thought nothing much about it at the time, but about three years later, while exploring near Boothstown Bridge, I came across a low sandstone archway. On looking up the tunnel, I could see a brick-lined tunnel curving into darkness. Intrigued, I once again told my grandfather, who said that the old underground cut to engine row pit passes under the corner of our garden.

Over the next ten years, local disused flooded claypits were filled in, collieries closed and pumping ceased. The water level rose while the ground sank even more, and the arch (except for the top few inches) disappeared out of sight. The old colliery site was built over and was all but forgotten by most people.

**I**n the summer of 1993, excavation for new drainage pipes once again broke into the roof of the underground canal, about forty yards north of the entrance. The exposure to daylight gave a good view of a double brick arch in fine condition. A steel ring U bolt was clearly visible in the roof, and pipe of about twelve inches in diameter was visible at the side of the tunnel plus a couple of what looked like field drains. However, the level was to all practical purposes full of a clay-like sludge which the contractor spent a long time trying to remove.

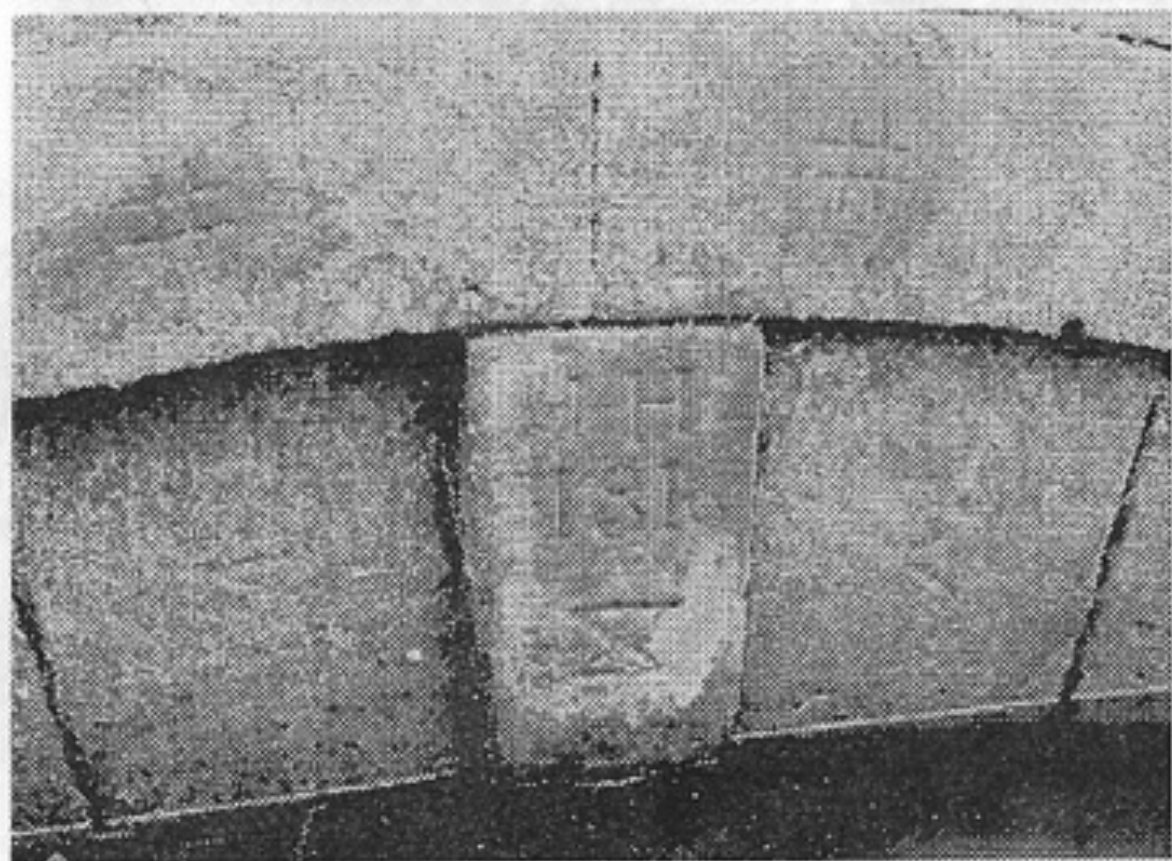


Tunnel entrance

Eventually, they sealed off the level on both sides of their new concrete drains and filled the hole in. The only good thing about this was that the water level at the stone arch entrance dropped rapidly exposing the keystone of the arch with the date of 1816,

plus a number of mason's marks. This renewed my old interest in the Chaddock level and Chaddock Colliery (Engine Row), and I decided to try to find out anything I could about its history.

A local man I spoke to who still lives a short distance from the entrance told me of how, when a boy in the 1950s, he had gone with a friend in a home-made canoe up the level for quite some distance, and that it divided into two some way along and that



Keystone showing date and mason's marks

there are ventilation shafts every hundred yards or so. However, discretion overcame valour, and they turned around and sailed back before reaching any obstruction. Intrigued even more, I

went along to the Lancashire Mining Museum for help and was able to discover the following from their collection of papers: the shafts were first registered 1810-20. Although these dates are not necessarily correct; what is certain is that the pit was in full operation in the early nineteenth century. There was also a shaft at Cowshill Meadow which I have not been able to locate with any accuracy, and also a pit called the Queen Anne which I think is quite close to the Queens Arm Pub on Chaddock Lane. While the Chaddock Colliery is clearly shown on Ordnance Survey maps of around 1850, the Queen Anne and Cowshill are not. The entrance to the Chaddock level is clearly shown close to Boothstown Bridge, and records show that the level to Chaddock Colliery was extended to the Queen Anne.

Certainly, with its two shafts Chaddock Colliery was sizeable pit for the time. It is recorded that £10,000 was invested in 1828, quite a sum for those days; it was originally connected to Worsley main navigable level by a low level canal terminating at a point just to the north of the Worsley Delph. The congestion of the main navigable level at this time is well documented, so that is probably the reason for deciding to build the Chaddock level at the standard level (82 feet above sea level). When this work actually commenced is open to conjecture, with dates of 1820 and 1822 being stated, however the date of the keystone is 1816. Having seen this with my own eyes and photographed it, I know this is accurate, but whether the workman got the date wrong, or whether this the commencement of the work or the finishing date, one can only guess. The actual production of coal from Chaddock and Queen Anne must have contributed to the large increase in coal production of the Bridgewater pits of this time, but the actual closure date is also a difficult one. Articles state that the levels

were largely abandoned by 1842, which would have meant a very short life. However, another article gives the date 1868. The only thing that is certain is that coal reserves were still large, but that the shallow levels were probably worked out; depth, heat and water would be a problem, and later pits line Asley Green and Mosley Common. Modern technology would enable the area to be worked for another eighty years or so, although by 1993 the entire Lancashire field was derelict.

**W**hat can be seen today? The site of the Chaddock Colliery shafts are close to the junction of Linden Road and Vicars Hall Gardens. They were recapped in the 70s, and hopefully will give no cause for concern. The archway of the Chaddock stands at this time about one third exposed, and it is to be hoped that in the near future, some organization will admit to owning it, and perhaps make a feature of it as a reminder of Boothstown's industrial past and as a memorial to those great engineers who built it, not forgetting the hardworking colliers who earned their living from it.

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