

THE HISTORY OF COAL MINING IN BENWELL & SCOTSWOOD



A new exhibition about the history of coal mining – now at the West End Library, Condercum Road, Benwell.



Today there is little to remind you of the coalmining industry that was once so important here. Yet Benwell stakes a claim as the first area in the world to produce coal. It was mined during the time of the Roman Empire.

In the 12th & 13th centuries coal mining spread along the river valley from the Forth and Gallowgate to Benwell once again. In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries dozens of pits were being worked and a network of waggon ways ran down to the staithes used to export the coal by Keel, then ship, to London and beyond. Benwell was amongst the first places to see one of the new 'fire engines' that pumped pits dry and John Buddle modernised methods of mining, driving pits deeper to new coal seams buried hundreds of feet below river level.

Amongst the first places to develop waggonways to move coal. Benwell Colliery also had the world's first workable inclined plane railway. It also lays claim to the first railway map in the world! Despite this industry, Benwell and Scotswood were still very rural places, where rich families chose to live in big houses. This exhibition briefly traces the development and loss of coal mining here.

The exhibition has been produced by the Mining Institute in collaboration with St. James' Heritage & Environment Group and local residents, and has been funded by Make Your Mark.

St. James' Heritage and Environment Group is a local community organisation that maintains the graveyard at St James' Church, Benwell, The Group runs a range of events and projects about the history and environment of the area. Contact c/o Search Project 74 Adelaide Terrace, Benwell. By email: stjamesbenwell@gmail.com or visit us at St James' Church Tuesday afternoons from 1-4pm.

The Mining Institute is the world's largest coalmining library and is a global resource for the study of mining, the development of railways and the industrial revolution. You can visit its magnificent Library free every Monday-Friday 10am-5pm at Neville Hall, Westgate Road, just two minutes along from Central Station. Tel 0191 233 2459. You can visit the website at www.mininginstitute.org.uk or e-mail: librarian@mininginstitute.org.uk



St James' Heritage and
Environment Group

