

Glossary of Terms used in the Historical British Mining Industry

A

Adit	Mine entry tunnel driven near horizontally to intersect workings below ground – frequently associated with coal workings in areas of high relief (South Wales) – see also "level" and "drift"
Adventurer	Share holder in proposed mining operation
Afterdamp	Noxious gases left after underground explosion
Air-leg	Hand operated percussive drill – powered by compressed air
Anfo	Explosive manufactured from ammonium nitrate and diesel (fuel oil) mixture
Anthracite	Coal of high rank (carbon content). Frequently harder than normal coal. Most well developed in UK in western part of the South Wales coalfield
Attle	Cornish term for waste rock of no value

B

- Banjo Shovel** Short handled shovel (Cornwall)
- Bal-maiden** Cornish term for woman employed in surface ore preparation
- Balance Bob** Counterbalance on beam engine
- Banksman** Foreman in charge of works in and around the surface winding gear
- Barrier** Area of coal left unworked to offer protection from a hazard, or ownership boundary
- Bass** Black carbonaceous shale
- Bell Pit** Primitive form of mining – involving sinking of a shaft to a shallow seam, and mining outwards to the point of collapse
- Black band** Ironstone ore (principally iron carbonate) bodies generally associated with Lower Coal Measures strata – frequently associated with early mining pre-dating coal extraction – smelted using charcoal furnaces
- Blackdamp** Asphyxiant mixture of mine gases predominantly carbon dioxide and nitrogen – synonymous with "chokedamp"
- Blackpowder** Earliest explosive used in mining operations (gunpowder in other applications)
- Bind** Synonymous with mudstone
- Bord** The worked area of coal associated with Bord and Pillar style of workings
- Brattice (1)** Frame of ventilation door (Lancs)
- Brattice (2)** Wire or rope support from which ventilation curtains were hung (North Wales)
- Brassey** Term used in association with the occurrence of iron pyrites
- Brow** Haulage tunnel (Lancs)
- Bucking** Crushing ore from gravel size down to sand size for recovery of ore after hand picking (Cornwall)
- Buddle** Mineral processing equipment consisting of a circular basin using a combination of brushes and water to concentrate crushed ore
- Button hole** Connecting channel between base of China clay pit and pump shaft
- Launder** (Cornwall)

C

Caisson	Method of shaft sinking involving a structure sunk from ground surface by continually excavating beneath the bottom of the structure
Calciner	Furnace used to remove sulphides of arsenic from processed tin ore
California Stamps	Heavy duty style of crushing stamps, associated with Cornish tin mining operations (imported from 19 th Century American gold mining technology)
Cannel	Sapropelic fine grained coal, thought to be in part derived from rotting algal matter rather than vegetable matter
Cap	Concrete / steel or other cover placed as permanent protection over an abandoned shaft
Chain	Unit of measure (length) equates to 22 yards, or 66 feet (20.1m). Commonly encountered in mine plans as a scale of 2 chains to 1 inch (approximately 1:800)
Chock	Roof support built upwards to the roof from blocks of timber laid on the floor
Chokedamp	Synonymous with "blackdamp"
Cleat	Jointing / fracture pattern displayed by coal
Clod	Synonymous with seat earth
Cobbing	Crushing ore down to about 75mm size in preparation for hand picking (Cornwall)
Coke	Material derived from partial burning / baking of coal in the absence of oxygen. Used as fuel in iron and steel industry
Country rock	Barren host rock type in which mineralised veins or ore occur
Course	Layer of brick work in a shaft lining
Crib	Foundation footing of a shaft
Cross-course	Mineral vein orientated at right angles to the predominant orientation in a District
Cross-cut	Horizontal access driveway driven though barren strata between veins
Crut	Local term for a drift or level access roadway (Staffs)
Cyclothem	Name for a distinctive type of cyclical sedimentation associated with Carboniferous Coal Measures strata. A single unit (or cyclothem) typically comprises a marine shale followed by an estuary facies sandstone, terrestrial seat earth and coal

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D

Dam	Roadway stopping capable of sealing off water and or saturated materials
Deads	Worked out / abandoned pillar and stall workings
Dibhole	Sump hole at the bottom of the shaft (Lancs)
Double hand	Act of two miners working together on a steel
Downbrow	Act of working coal in the direction of the local dip
Downcast	One of a pair of shafts used for ventilation – downcast shaft draws in air <i>cf</i> "upcast"
Dressing	Ore preparation
Drift	Synonymous with "level"
Dry (1)	Miners changing room
Dry (2)	Room used for drying out China Clay

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E

**Engine
house**

Headworks building housing the main (usually steam) boiler used to power the winding equipment

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F

Fathom	Unit of measure (length) equates to six feet, or 1.83m
Fines	Fine grained mineral bearing product of processing operations
Fireclay	Clayey seat earth – used historically for refractory brick manufacture
Firedamp	Explosive mixture of mine gases including methane
Firesetting	Method of breaking rock by setting a fire against the face, followed by quenching with water to induce cracking
Flatrod	Beam used for transmitting horizontal movement from an engine
Flume	Inclined timber construction used to convey water
Flotation	Method of processing ore by separation based on specific gravity separation
Footrid	Local term for an adit (Shropshire)
Footwall	Compare with hanging wall – the underhanging wall of an open stope
Furnace	Fire at the base of the upcast shaft

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G

Gangue (1)	Residue / waste material left after flotation method of ore processing
Gangue (2)	General term for non mineral bearing element of an ore
Garland	Seal / gasket installed at base of shaft lining to prevent, or minimise water infiltration to workings
Gannister	Arenaceous (sandy) seat earth
Gelly	Abbreviated form of gelignite - explosive
Gin	Usually horse driven windlass used to operate lifting equipment in the shaft
Goaf	Area of worked out mineral where roof is allowed to collapse
Gob	Waste material separated underground, and frequently packed into the "goaf"
Gullet	Water bearing fissure (Durham)
Grizzly	Grid used to sort oversize pieces of ore / coal for breakage

H

Hade	Dip direction of a fault or mineral vein
Hanging Wall	The wall of a sub vertical stope that overhangs the open stope, as opposed to the "footwall"
Headgear	Construction erected at the top of the shaft including winding gear etc
Heading	Local directional working
Hewing	Removal of coal by hand tools (pick / shovel etc)
Holing Coal	Inferior band of coal removed by collier using pick in a working seam
Hoo Cannel	Cannel coal with high clay / mudstone content, often laminated (Lancs)
Hooker-on	Foreman in charge of pit bottom operations (synonymous with "on-setter")
Hoppet	Large bucket used to raise lower material in the shaft
Hush	Shropshire term for mining by "scouring"

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I

In-bye	Directional indicator – towards the working face, away from pit bottom
Incline	Sloping access tunnel
Iron Balls	Ironstone nodules

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J

Jelly

see Gelly

Jig (1)

Contraption involving pulley wheel used to haul tubs in an incline – operated by the "jigger"

Jig (2)

Oscillating sieve used to concentrate crushed ore

Jumbo

Percussive drill rig mounted on a hydraulic boom used to drill blast holes

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K

Keeker

Foreman responsible for inspecting coal quality at surface (Durham)

Kibble

Iron lifting bucket – sometimes associated with shaft construction activity.

Kist

Colliery Deputy's work station below ground (Durham)

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L

Lander	Foreman at shaft top responsible for winding gear operations
Launder	Elevated channel for diverting water in mineral processing operations (Cornwall)
Leat	Man made surface water course
Level	Horizontal drive or passageway, sometimes used synonymously with adit as a mine entrance
Leys	Synonymous with shale (Lancs)
Lin, Linsay, Linstey, Lin etc	Interbedded shales and siltstone – striped shales – name derived by association with textile textures (Lancs)
Lining	Permanent shaft construction through soil and soft material. Often brick, but may include masonry, or timber
Lode	The mineral bearing vein (associated with metal mining)
Longwall	Method of removing large panels of coal or ore by removing all the coal between two development headings. Can be carried out away from pit bottom (longwall advance), or back towards the pit bottom (longwall retreat)

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M

Magazine	Building used for storage of explosives
Make	Quantity of water "made" into workings
Man Engine	Mechanised method of raising / lowering men in shaft, based on step on / step off system with staging
Mattock	Hand tool similar to a pick but with one flat bladed end and one point
Measures	Strata other than coal or "rock" associated with coal mining
Metal	Used to describe strata between coal seams comprising shales / mudstones as opposed to "rock" (sandstone)
Mill	Surface buildings where ore preparation was carried out
Mine	Local term for a coal seam (Lancs) eg Arley Mine
Musselband	Mudstone or shale strata associated with fossilised shells

N

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O

On-setter	Foreman in charge of pit bottom operations (synonymous with "hooker-on")
Old man	Earlier generation of miners (hence "Old mens work" on mine plans)
Ostler	Man in charge of pit ponies and stabling
Outburst	Devastating explosive gas emission and collapse of working coal face – Cynheidre Colliery in the western Anthracite producing area of South Wales was notable for suffering in this regard
Out-bye	Directional indicator – towards pit bottom, away from the working face
Outcrop	Location where coal seam reaches the bedrock surface, or "crops – out"
Overhand	Method of "stoping" by removing ore from the roof
Overman	Shift supervisor – especially in coal industry

P

Pack	Stone or gob support pillar built in the goaf to limit or control subsidence
Panel (1)	A thin band of hard rock
Panel (2)	Defined area of working in a coal seam – generally associated with longwall mining methods
Parting	Dirt band separating two leaves of a coal seam
Pick	Miners hand tool, wooden shafted with steel two points
Picking	Final stage of surface processing (sorting) where coal is "picked" off a conveyor or belt by eye
Pillar	A column of unworked coal left to support the roof – as in "pillar and stall" working
Pins	Locally occurring ironstone fragments, in a mudstone host rock
Pit	Synonymous with "shaft"
Post	The "pillar" of intact coal associated with post and stall style of coal workings
Pricking Dirt	Waste material removed along with coal by hand tools / pick
Prop	Timber (occasionally steel) structural member used to support the roof

Q

Quill

Early black powder fuse, manufactured from goose feather quills

R

Raddle (1)	Ironstone
Raddle (2)	Deeply iron stained strata
Raddle Balls	Ironstone nodules
Rag	Flagstone – closely bedded fine grained sandstone
Rag – frame	Equipment used in final stage of ore processing to recover ore from slimes (Cornwall)
Raise	Steeply inclined permanent access passageway used to work metalliferous ores by stoping
Rank	Measure of carbon content of coal. Lower rank coals (lignites) have less carbon than higher rank bituminous coals and (at the far end of the range) anthracite
Refuge	Place of safety – for example place where men could stand to allow tubs to pass in narrow tunnels (also used to house breathing apparatus in mine prone to gas emission / outburst)
Rider	Small seam in the roof of a larger seam – hence seam name such as "Two-foot Rider"
Ripe	Condition of imminent collapse in an undercut coal seam
Robbing	Practice of removing coal from support pillars on completion of mining in an area of workings, in extreme cases could bring the pillars to the point of collapse
Rock	Sandstone strata between coal seams
Rock bind	Competent sandy shale strata
Rockburst	Devastating explosive loss of the working face – generally only associated with deep mining in hard rocks <i>cf</i> "outburst"
Roll	Miners term for a geological "fold"
Roofers	Top most portion of a coal seam, sometimes left unworked
Rubbish	Waste / unsaleable material left beneath ground

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S

Scale	Carbonaceous shale
Scouring	Method of surface mining involving damming a suitable valley, releasing the water to erode the superficial strata, and open casting the exposed surface materials (South Wales). Also used historically to clear tipped waste in stream courses
Screens	Riddles used to sort coal by size
Seat / Seating	Floor of a coal seam
Seat Earth	Fossil / relict topsoil horizon, typically clay / mudstone, frequently hosts fossil root material (stigmara)
Shiver	Specialist hoe like tool used in processing China Clay operations
Shotfirer	Colliery official responsible for blasting operations (Shotlighter in Lancashire Coalfield)
Shothole	Small diameter hole drilled for placing explosives
Shearer	Mechanised cutting tool used to cut coal – associated with longwall methods of extraction
Sinkers	Crew employed in shaft sinking operations
Skip	Waggon or tub used with crane or incline to haul or lift ore
Slack	Waste material left after surface processing operations have removed saleable coal
Slimes	Fine grained saturated residue left on completion of metal ore processing, on removal to tip becomes "tailings"
Slip	Miners terms for a geological "fault"
Smut	Thin seam of soft, friable or carbonaceous shale
Sprag	Short prop, frequently used when undercutting
Squarework	Particular form of pillar and stall coal working developed to minimise risk of spontaneous combustion
Soapstone	Very fine grained shale / mudstone – smooth to the touch
Soot	Synonymous with "smut" above
Sough	Drainage gallery (Lancs)
Spar	Colloquial miner's term for light coloured minerals such as "calc-spar" – calcite
Sprag	Temporary support or prop used during undercutting of a seam, preventing premature failure of a "ripe" seam
Stall	The worked area of coal associated with "pillar and stall" style of extraction
Stope	Area of mined ground with vein / ore material removed (metalliferous mining term – broadly equivalent to "goaf" in coal areas)
Stopping	Wall built within workings to seal off abandoned, or dangerous areas of workings
Stamps	Heavy percussive crusher used to break ore
Steel	Length of tempered steel used in percussive drilling between hammer and drill bit
Stemming	Material placed around the collar of the shothole

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Stemple	Cross braced support between footwall and hanging wall of a stope
Stinkdamp	Noxious mine gas including hydrogen sulphide
Stoping	Method of mining, generally associated in the UK with metal mining, involving extraction of ore in steep veins
Stringer	Poorly developed vein or seam close to and parallel with economically viable vein or seam
Stull	Large timber prop and strut arrangement used to support open stopes (Cornwall)
Stythe	Mine gases (Durham)
Sump	Shaft driven below the lowest level of workings to aid in drainage
Sylvester	Ratchet hand tool used to remove props

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T

Tailings	Fine grained waste residue from mineral processing
Take	Defined limit of potentially workable mineral
Tip	Location where surface waste is discarded
Toadback	Unlaminated marly sandstone
Tops	Topmost section of a coal seam
Trammers	Crew employed to move wagons / trams below ground
Tub	Tramway cart used for hauling mineral
Tubbing	Beams or rings placed inside shaft to support the walls

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U

Upbrow	Act of working coal up the local dip of strata
Upcast	One of a pair of shafts used for ventilation. The upcast shaft was associated with the furnace, and was used to expel air from the workings
Upper	Hole drilled in roof of a stope prior to blasting during over hand stoping
Underclay	Floor of clay or shale beneath a coal seam – see also "Seat –earth"
Undercut	Act of taking out the lower portion of a seam first
Underhand	Method of "stoping" by removing material from the floor

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V

Vein

Synonymous with lode. A tabular or sheet like body of ore, often associated with faults or joints in the bedrock

Vug

Small cavity in rock usually associated with crystals (often quartz or calcite)

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W

Wall rock	Rock immediately around the vein or lode
Wailor	Individual employed in picking work (Durham)
Warrant	Generalised term for unbedded clays, shales or siliceous rocks characteristic of the base of a coal seam – seat earths etc
Washout	Area where coal is missing due to a sandstone horizon cutting down into the seam from above
Whim	Winding machine
Winding house	Headworks building above the shaft housing the main cage used for raising and lowering men, product and equipment
Windlass	Hand operated winch
Winze	Ore pass allowing tipping of ore between levels
Wisp	Trace of sandstone strata appearing in "measures"
Wool	Sandy shale with characteristic wave and ripple bedding

X

Y

Z

Zinc-blende Synonymous with zinc-sulphide, primary constituent of sphaerelite, ore of zinc