

What Happened When?

A summary of the main events at the early Neston collieries

- 1757 First known borehole dug at Ness
- 1759 Ness Colliery opens, owned by John Stanley Massey, George Clarke, Richard Richardson and two others. Probably has a steam engine, the first in west Cheshire. First lease granted to Ness Colliery to mine on the Cottingham family's land in Little Neston
- 1761–2 James Brindley visits Ness Colliery – to discuss building a canal to Chester?
- 1765 Emy Lyon, future Lady Hamilton, Nelson's mistress, is born at Ness, probably to the colliery blacksmith
- 1769–70 Richard Richardson dies. Major rejuvenation at the colliery
- 1775 First lease granted to Ness Colliery to mine on the Earl of Shrewsbury's land in Little Neston
- 1776–7 Producing over 22,000 tons of coal in twelve months
- 1777 Four men killed in an accident
- 1786 Ness Colliery enquires about acquiring a newly invented winding engine from Boulton and Watt
- 1780s–90s Ness Colliery probably has a near-monopoly on the coal trade from Chester to Ireland (several Flintshire collieries have very limited sea access)
- 1789–90 Thomas Stanley Massey takes over the business
- 1790 Underground canals ('navigations') opened
- 1791 Building of Denhall Quay begins
- 1795 Thomas Stanley Massey dies – ownership of Ness Colliery in hands of executors for eighteen years
- 1795 Advertisement for 'Coal Mines to Let' in Neston (possibly at Parkgate)
- 1796 Ness Colliery advertised to let
- 1806 The 'very valuable colliery at Parkgate' advertised to let
- 1812 Ness Colliery advertised to let again
- 1813 Sir Thomas Stanley and Charles Stanley jointly acquire the business; some colliery assets sold
- 1819 First letter from George Stephenson to Joseph Cabry at Ness Colliery
- c.1820 Little Neston Colliery opens, owned by Thomas Cottingham senior
- 1821 First Cottingham v Stanley court case for trespass – Stanley loses
- 1822 Second Cottingham v Stanley court case for trespass and wilful damage – Stanley loses

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- 1822–3 Sales at Ness Colliery apparently at all-time low
- 1823 Thomas Cottingham junior takes over Little Neston Colliery. Forced to abandon main pit following deliberate flooding by Ness Colliery
- 1826 Attempted sale of Little Neston Colliery – fails
- 1826–31 John Watson, leading colliery viewer (surveyor/engineer), advises Ness Colliery
- 1828 ‘Lancashire System’ of coal working introduced at Ness to increase the volume of coal obtained
- 1830 George Stephenson proposes to bring a Chester–Liverpool railway close to the collieries (later rejected)
- 1841 Sir Thomas Stanley dies; Charles Stanley now sole proprietor
- 1842 John Buddle, leading colliery viewer (surveyor/engineer) advises Ness Colliery
- 1845 Four proposals made to bring a railway to Neston, two to the colliery area
- c.1845 Little Neston Colliery closed
- 1847–
c.1852 Boreholes dug in Great Neston (Parkgate) to find coal
- 1851–3 Auction sales of Little Neston Colliery
- 1852 Attempted sale of Ness Colliery
- 1854 Rowland Errington becomes proprietor of Ness Colliery
- 1855 Ness Colliery closed; equipment sold

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