

The Neston Collieries 1875-1927

- What Happened When? -

This table lists various important or interesting events, including all known fatal accidents, during the later period of mining at Neston which started in 1875. Where available, operational data from H.M. mine inspectors has been included on a quinquennial basis. This is not intended to be viewed as a comprehensive account of the collieries and will be updated from time to time.

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Key:



Business development



Accidents and tragedies¹



Operational development



Miscellaneous



Industrial Relations

<i>Date of Event or Report of it</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Source</i>
3/10/1874	Announcement that Neston Colliery Co. intends to purchase mineral rights to land in Little Neston from Charles [Mott].	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 3 October 1874
12/10/1874	Neston Colliery Co. (NCC) formed.	TNA: BT 31/2021/3751
22/3/1875	Railway siding connection to colliery in operation.	T. B. Maund, <i>The Birkenhead Railway (LMS & GW Joint)</i> , p. 34
17/4/1875	First sod for new shaft dug. Expected to be 20 ft wide and 220 yds deep.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 17 April 1875
1/5/1876	A failed new borehole, which would have been searching for new, useful coal seams, was reported.	Arundel Archives, MD 1244.
1875-1880	William Hampson , colliery manager	<i>Home Office Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines</i>
4/5/1876	Isaac Fisher , 62, foreman pit-sinker and Joseph Hughes , 23, labourer killed when scaffolding in a new shaft gave way plunging them to their deaths.	<i>Home Office Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines for 1876; Cheshire Observer</i> , 13 May 1876
c.1876	Ellis Roberts and several others buried while sinking a shaft. His right leg had to be amputated; fitted with a wooden leg made by the colliery carpenter. Thereafter know as 'Peg Leg'.	<i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , pp.64-5
20/10/1876	'The collieries expected soon to be putting out coal. Five foot seam cut through last week.'	<i>Liverpool Daily Post</i> , 20 October 1876
21/10/1876	Dinner held at Golden Lion, Neston for workers, management etc. honouring the colliery which would be 'second to none in England'. 'A model colliery, with model fittings and model men.'	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 28 October 1876

1877	Planning application to Neston council for erection of a railway bridge over Colliery Lane (Marshlands Road today).	CALS, LUNe 2004/1/39
25/4/1877	David Alexander , 24, pit sinker killed by object falling to bottom of shaft.	Home Office Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines for 1877
1/12/1877	Men had to run for their lives when flooding occurred in the lower works. Five feet of water in the bottom of the pit.	Wrexham Guardian, 1 December 1877
20/12/1879	John Grimes , 38 killed in a roof fall – carried to The Harp inn where he died. Colleague Richard Davies escaped serious injury.	Home Office Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines for 1879; Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald, 27 December 1879
1/7/1880	Lease granted by Rowland Errington to NCC to mine in Ness	Bangor Archives, Baron Hill Mss 7311
3/4/1881	?Colliery manager: James Fletcher Ramsden	Census
3/4/1881	147 colliery workers listed in census	Neston 1840-1940, p.65
1881-1885	J[oseph?] Miller , colliery manager	Home Office Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines
c.1882-1885	Basil Mott (later <i>Sir</i> Basil, distinguished engineer) was engineer at the colliery, designing underground haulage system and constructing 1000 yards of tunnels. He was later engineer/architect of the Queensway Tunnel under the Mersey (1934).	Obit. Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society, 3 (8), 1940, 23-38.
26/1/1882	Colliery foreman Edwin Hooson , 47, died when crushed between two railway wagons	Cheshire Observer, 4 February 1882
28/2/1882	New, more powerful winding engines fitted; old ones for sale	Liverpool Mercury, 28 August 1882
22/4/1882	New religious sect, the 'Free Gospellers' have arisen at colliery; 97 members; all signed temperance pledge (i.e. no alcohol). Resolved to form a fife and drum band.	Birkenhead News, 22 April 1882
28/4/1882	Water from upper working flooded into lower; at night so no injuries. 9 ponies probably drowned. Large number of men out of work.	Manchester Evening News, 28 April 1882
3/6/1882	3 brothers buried in roof fall. Two dead – George Shone , 22 and Edward Shone , 19; the third brother, Thomas , in 'most dangerous condition'. The men were from Buckley and were buried at Bistre.	Home Office Reports of Inspector of (Coal) Mines for 1882; Cheshire Observer, 10 June 1882
23/9/1882	Neston Collieries band was one of 18 attending an annual fife and drum band meeting, Birkenhead; blue and white colours	Birkenhead News, 30 September 1882
4/11/1882	Two-day strike for 15% pay increase. Most returned after being offered 10%.	Cheshire Observer, 4 November 1882
23/5/1883	All men at Neston on strike. Dissatisfied with payment per box of coals/slack.	Manchester Evening News, 23 May 1883
2/6/1883	Three men charged with playing 'pitch and toss' (gambling game) 'at the colliery' (Harp Inn).	Cheshire Observer, 2 June 1883
1883-4	Neston Colliery Co. in extensive and extensive legal battles with two railway companies over their charges. Discussed in parliament; case lost in Appeal Court	The Times, 15 March 1883, 2 December 1884, 9 January 1890 and others

4/9/1884	Miners on strike over proposed pay reductions. Many men are moving to Lancashire.	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 4 & 6 September 1884; <i>The Times</i> , 5 September 1884.
9/9/1884	Notice posted of winding-up petition for Neston Colliery Co.	<i>Manchester Courier</i> , 10 September 1884
2/10/1884	Thomas Hughes killed at Carrs Lane Colliery, Whiston, having moved there with his family from Ness three weeks earlier.	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 2 October 1884
11/12/1884	Attempted auction sale in Liverpool of Neston Colliery Co. assets including land, machinery, fittings etc. There were also three shafts, 450 feet deep. There were no bidders	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 13 December 1884; <i>The Times</i> 28 November 1884
22/1/1885	Wirral Colliery Co. incorporated and bought freehold of mining land from Neston Colliery Co. now in liquidation: price £7,750.	TNA: BT 31/3429/20652; <i>Flintshire Observer</i> , 22 January 1885
1885-1911	James Platt is manager at Wirral Colliery.	<i>Chester Courant</i> , 21 January 1903; <i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 23 June 1911
7/1/1888	A complaint that the company's steam whistle, which was sounded each morning, was a nuisance was rejected by the Neston and Parkgate Local Board!	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 7 January 1888
19/10/1889	Daily-paid men and pony drivers on strike for pay increase to match piece-rate workers.	<i>The Times</i> , 19 October 1889
30/8/1890	William Rugman severely injured when thrown out of one of several underground wagons which were derailed.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 30 August 1890
25/2/1891	Collier Edward Price severely injured in a roof fall.	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 26 February 1891
23/1/1892	Liberal election candidate descended into the mine to canvas for support, speaking to the men. (The Conservatives won!)	<i>Manchester Evening News</i> , 23 January 1892
16/5/1892	Collier George Wright broke his ankle when he became tangled in chains drawing underground wagons.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 21 May 1892
17/5/1892	Collier William Mealor broke his leg in a roof fall.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 21 May 1892
7/7/1892	A gold watch was presented to colliery manager James Platt for 7 years, following successful erection of new pumping engines at the colliery.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 16 July 1892
1892	Output of about 100,000 tons per annum.	<i>Transactions of Fed. Institute of Mining Engineers</i> , Vol. 4
24/2/1893	Unnamed employee convicted of mishandling explosives after being reported by manager.	Home Office Returns of Prosecutions under the Coal Mining Regs. 1877 (1894)
12/8/1893	George Bell sustained injuries to back and legs while at work at the colliery.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 12/8/1893; <i>Birkenhead News</i> , same date.
17/11/1893	Colliers promised a 10% pay increase due to 'extraordinary demand for coal'. Men being recruited from Lancashire pits which are on strike.	<i>Manchester Times</i> , 17 November 1895
6/7/1894	Thomas Abel , 26, 'getter', injured when underground explosives misfired	Home Office Reports of Inspector of (Coal) Mines for 1894

2/5/1894	'Important discovery' of the 'best five feet seam of coal'. Colliery will now be able to 'compete with the best in Lancashire'. Previously only working the 7' seam.	<i>Chester Courant</i> , 2 May 1894; <i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 28 April 1894
6/7/1894	Thomas Abel , 26, 'getter', injured when underground explosives misfired	Home Office Reports of Inspector of (Coal) Mines for 1894
13/12/1894	Edward Williams , 23, drawer, seriously injured when hit on head by winding handle	Home Office Reports of Inspector of (Coal) Mines for 1894
30/11/1894	Joseph Oxton , drawer, convicted of assaulting under-manager John Platt ; fined 10 shillings plus 8s 6d costs	Home Office Reports of Inspector of (Coal) Mines for 1894; <i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 1 December 1894
c.1895	An Elliott coal-washing machine was installed to separate out dust and small pieces of coal – an advanced technology for the time.	Ian Norris: <i>BNHS Bulletin</i> (18), 2002-3 ²
14/9/1895	Colliers' wages reduced by 15% due to 'depression in the coal trade'. Follows a recent previous 10% reduction.	<i>Liverpool Mercury</i> , 14 September 1895
22/5/1897	Liverpool Science Students Association given an underground tour of the colliery. The stables, 450 feet down, attracted particular interest.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 22 May 1897
6/8/1897	(Part of) Two-foot seam abandoned	Home Office List of Mines, 1905
24/2/1898	John Henry Weaver , 16, a wagoner, killed in a roof fall.	Home Office Reports of Inspector of (Coal) Mines for 1898
9/6/1899	Body of John Whitehurst, convalescent home patient, found at bottom of pumping shaft; believed to be suicide.	Home Office Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines for 1899
11/12/1899	Strike over pay ended, though for less than the men had been demanding.	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 11 December 1899
1900	205 men employed (141 below ground; 64 above). Working the 7' seam. Manager James Platt , Under-manager William Platt .	Home Office List of Mines, 1900
1/8/1900	James Jones , 15, severely injured by runaway underground 'miniature train'	<i>Chester Courant</i> , 1 August 1900
3/10/1900	A.G. Grenfell of Mostyn House School, in an election address, described the housing Neston colliers had to put up with as 'pigsties' for which they paid 5s (25p) per week; William Lever's workers living in Port Sunlight and Thornton Hough paid half that for bright roomy cottages.	<i>Birkenhead News</i> , 3 October 1900
13/2/1902	A 36-year old woman, Jane Millington , amongst twenty 'poor people' picking over the coal spoil heaps, suddenly collapsed and died while being chased away by police	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 15 February 1902.
August 1902	Strike for several weeks, eventually settled 'amicably'. 'Enormous loss' of wages and 'much distress and suffering' to men, wives and families	<i>Birkenhead News</i> , 27 December 1902
21/1/1903	William Johnson , 36, crushed to death in series of roof falls. Manager James Platt said in his 18 years	<i>Chester Courant</i> , 21 January 1903; also <i>Birkenhead News</i> , same date.

	as manager just one person, a boy [John Henry Weaver?], had previously been killed.	
2/5/1903	'Important discovery' of the 'long sought-for' seven-foot seam of coal	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 2 May 1903
1905	149 men employed (106 below ground; 43 above). Working the 7' seam. Manager James Platt , Under-manager William Platt .	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1905
15/3/1905	Two men injured in roof fall: David Jones and William Evans	<i>Chester Courant</i> , 15 March 1905
March 1906	New coal seam discovered, 'about 5 to 6 ft. thick', near Old Quay House and running under the Dee Estuary.	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 27 March 1906
17/12/1909	'Large and enthusiastic' meeting at the colliery gate re the forthcoming election. Speaker has a sheet metal business in Ellesmere Port taking 200 tons of Neston coal p.w.	<i>Birkenhead News</i> , 18 December 1909
1910	180 men employed (133 below ground; 47 above). Working 7' & 6' seams. Manager James Platt , Under-manager William Platt .	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1910
25/1/1910	Pay dispute between two workers adjudicated in London's High Court. Oxton (a checkweigher) vs. Williams (a day-rate miner)	<i>The Times</i> , 25 January 1910; see also <i>Birkenhead News</i> 26 June 1909.
11/8/1910	Man injured when explosives misfired	Home Office <i>35th Annual Report of MH Inspector of Explosives</i> for 1910
1911	Man injured by firedamp (gas) explosion while standing 11 yards away	Home Office <i>Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines</i> for 1911
3/8/1911	Dispute starts with workers over payment terms for six-foot seam	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 3 August 1911
12/8/1911	Fifty men on strike against proposed new terms. A 'general strike' anticipated	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 12 August 1911
23/9/1911	Wirral Colliery Co. into voluntary liquidation	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 23 September 1911
c.11/1911	A new Wirral Colliery Co. formed	TNA: BT 34/3723/119379; <i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.65
1912	Extensive renovation and development carried out including two new engine houses, a coal separating plant, installation of automated machinery and upgrade of the railway sidings. Three shafts in use and a new 1000-foot tunnel dug. Mr Arthur Rushton, is Managing Director of the company and Mr. Prescott, resident manager	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 16 November 1912
1913	196 employed at the colliery	<i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.69
1914-18	Increasing government control of mines during First World War leading to virtual nationalisation	<i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.66
6/2/1914	William Barnes , 49, a day-rate worker, killed by a rock fall.	<i>Chester Chronicle</i> , 14 February 1914; Home Office <i>Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines</i> for 1914
10/10/1914	Thomas Hughes , 40, a drawer, killed after being hit in the head by a coal tub being moved underground.	Home Office <i>Reports of Inspectors of (Coal) Mines</i> for 1914

28/11/1914	Wirral Colliery Co. land, buildings and equipment offered for sale by auction; company in voluntary liquidation..	<i>Wigan Observer and Cheshire Observer</i> , 28 November 1814.
29/3/1915	Wirral Colliery (1915) Ltd. formed	<i>Mining Yearbook</i> (1916)
1915	222 men employed (172 below ground; 50 above). Working 7', 6', 5', 2' seams. Manager John Watts , Under-manager William Picton .	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1915
13/2/1917	William Duckers was seriously injured when a large stone, about 2 cwt. (100 kg), fell from the roof of a tunnel onto his legs. He managed to crawl to get help.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 17 February 2017
9/3/1917	Richard 'Dick' Roberts , 18, killed by falling under the wheels of a coal wagon in the colliery sidings. Witnessed by his mother.	<i>Chester Chronicle</i> , 17 March 1917
1917	John Davies , Colliery Manager	<i>Chester Chronicle</i> , 17 March 1917
5/5/1917	James Hollis fined £2 plus costs for sleeping while on duty attending machinery at the colliery; George Anyon fined £2 plus costs for striking a 14-year old boy, S. Sharpe . 'Boys are now doing men's work.'	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 5 May 1917
8/4/1921	Men out on strike 'in common with [national] mining community'. Strike ended in July but another Neston strike in December.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 9 April 1921; <i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , pp.68-9
1921	James Wilde retired as sales manager for the colliery after 35 years.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 26 January 1935.
1920	309 men employed (241 below ground; 68 above). Working 6', 5' and King seams. Manager John Williams , Under-manager Fred Aldous .	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1920
1921	337 employed at the colliery (largest ever number)	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1921
1922	62 injuries at the colliery (largest known number)	<i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.71
1923	Annual output of 60,000 tons of household, manufacturing and steam coal.	1923 <i>Colliery Year Book</i>
2/6/1924	William Jones , 54 killed in rock fall (on night shift); Tom Price injured. £300 compensation paid.	Home Office <i>Report of H.M. Inspector of Mines</i> , 1924; LRO, DDX 381 15/52
1925	87 men employed (60 below ground; 27 above). Working 7', 6' seams; 5' and King seams apparently abandoned. Manager Joseph Taylor , Under-manager William Williams .	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1925
4/1925	Owners announce mine to be closed unless agreement made between owners, miners and Neston townsfolk to bear ongoing losses. Agreement fell though.	<i>The Times</i> , 8 and 11 April 1825; <i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 28 February 1927; <i>The Guardian</i> , 7 April 1925
8/1925	Death of William Briscoe , 67, thought to be the delayed result of a colliery accident in March 1821	<i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.72
22/1/1926	Frederick Able [Abel] , 24, coal-getter killed by a rock fall. £200 compensation paid.	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 30 January 1926; LRO, DDX 381 15/52
1926	UK general strike: Neston miners on strike from early May; pit re-opened 5/10/1926 when the first 45 men returned and others followed. Much support,	<i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.70; <i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 6 October 1926; <i>Neston 1840-1940</i> , p.70; Abandonment Plan H/S 3741.

	including food vouchers, was given to the strikers by the socialist Bulley family, owners of what is now Ness Gardens. 6' seam abandoned.	
1927	Bolton Shaw , consulting engineer and manager of the colliery	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 18 November 1827
1927	Joseph Taylor , manager of the colliery. Owner William R. Davies .	<i>Cheshire Observer</i> , 8 January 1827
28/2/1927	Announcement that the colliery would be closed, Reported losses of about £250 p.w.	<i>Liverpool Echo</i> , 28 February 1927
12/3/1927	Last shift at the colliery. Reported 180 jobs lost.	<i>Birkenhead News</i> 2 and 29 March 1927
1927	37 men employed (21 below ground; 16 above) – presumably a residual force after the main closure? Working 6' seam; 7' & 2' abandoned. Manager Rd. Arnold Evans .	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1927
30/4/1827	Former Neston collier and member of the colliery football team, Sam[uel] Wynne, died on the pitch whilst playing professionally for Bury against Sheffield	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i> , 2 May 1927; British Army Service Records 1916-1918
18/7/1928	'Abandoned July 1928'. 54 men employed (33 below ground; 19 above) – presumably a residual force after the main closure. Worked 6' & 4' seams. No manager listed.	Home Office <i>List of Mines</i> , 1928; Abandonment Plan H/S 4631
30/6/1928	Railway siding agreement to the colliery terminated	Maund (<i>supra</i>), p.51
6/10/36	Wirral Colliery (1915) Ltd. still operating as coal retailer (but not mining)	LRO, DDX 381 15/9

¹ The 'Injuries Record Book' exists for the period covering 13th June 1911 to 4th April 1927. Covering both fatal and non-fatal accidents, it has been scanned by the Burton & Neston History Society for online viewing and provides a fascinating insight into the operation of the mine. The book and various related enclosures and clippings can be found at:

Pages 1-40: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1115VwzeYZxXvILR7IY7fwcaYuuZBKZLz/view>

Pages 41-79: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lcc5CjocumZpTzgjQFI94Z-M-OeKbII/view>

Loose inserts: https://drive.google.com/file/d/14kEHxPj4E_y7xC4GFcITdEBtFXrDsv_c/view

² The article by Ian Norris on 'Coal Preparation at the Wirral Colliery, Little Neston, in 1896' is available at: <https://www.nestonpast.com/coal-preparation-at-the-wirral-colliery-little-neston-in-1896/>