

Coal Mining and the Victorians



Mining Vocabulary

The following words and terms are often used to describe workers, equipment and parts of a coal mine. Many of the words continue to be used today.

Banksman	Someone at the pit top or surface who was responsible for loading and unloading the cage and signalling to the engineman .
Bell pit	An early mine where coal was dug a short distance around the shaft to form a bell shape.
Bottom-steward	Somebody who would have been in charge of the colliers at the pit bottom.
Cage	The lift used to bring people up and down the mine shaft.
Coal face	The part of the seam currently being worked.
Collier	Someone who works with coal, usually the getter .
Corf	An early wooden tub or basket used to move coal.
Day hole	<i>see</i> Drift
Drift	A horizontal or sloping roadway leading from the surface to underground workings.
Engineman	Person in the engine house who is in charge of the winding engine. He would take his instructions from the banksman .
Furnace	A coal fire at the bottom of the shaft which would help with ventilation. The hot air created by the fire rose and up the shaft and drew cold fresh air in through another shaft.
Gate	An underground roadway.
Getter	Person who worked at the coal face cutting coal from the seam.
Hurrier	Person who pulled tubs of coal from the seam to the pit bottom. <i>see also</i> Thruster

Motty	Iron tags that colliers would tie on to the tubs of coal that they had mined. This would let mine managers know how much coal each of their miners had mined. Miners' pay was linked to the amount of coal got out.
Pit top	The area around the top of a mine shaft.
Pit bottom	The area at the bottom of the mine shaft.
Riddle	A large sieve used to sort different sizes of coal.
Roadway	An underground tunnel.
Seam	Underground layer of coal between other layers of rock.
Shaft	Vertical tunnel which leads from the surface to the underground roadways.
Snap tin	A metal container made the same shape as a slice of bread, used to carry miners' lunch.
Tallow candles	An early source of light used underground. Tallow is a hard waxy substance made from animal fat.
Thin bed	Thin seam or layer of coal.
Thruster	Person who pushed tubs of coal from the seam to the pit bottom. <i>see also Hurrier</i>
Tipple tin	A pay tin. A single miner could collect the wages for all his men and distribute them from his tin.
Trapper	Child who opened and closed underground ventilation doors.
Tub	A wooden or metal cart usually with wheels, and sometimes ridden on rails used to carry coal.
Ventilation	System of getting fresh air into the mine and removing stale air.
Ventilation Door	A wooden door that directs the flow of fresh air around the workings of the mine.
Winding gear	Machine used to wind people and coal up and down the shaft. This could be powered by a horse, steam or like today, by electricity.