

Directors' wives

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cut first sods for pit shafts

IT was the Clifton and Kearsley Coal Company which began the sinking of the two new shafts off Higher Green Lane, Astley, on May 7, 1908.

The wives of two directors, Mrs C. Pilkington and Mrs L. Pilkington cut the first sods for No. 1 Pit. Mr James Fildes was the first manager and lived at Astley House, Boothstown until his retirement, when he left the area to go to the Isle of Wight.

Some of the early servants of the pit were Percy Wood, William Caldwell, David Hodson, Frank Warburton and Cornelius Ellison.

In 1910, Thomas Oliver Cross built in one of his fields the First, Second and Third Avenues, which, if one counts the houses built for miners around the pit, constituted the main dwellings for most of the miners.

WATER TROUBLE

Most of the superstructure of the pit was built by Canone Froude of Worcester. During the sinking of the pit, geological difficulties were met owing to the great amount of water entering the shaft.

German engineers were called in and they suggested building concrete rings around the shaft. This was done and the entering water stopped. A full account was supplied by Percy Wood to the Manchester Geological Society of the great

difficulties met sinking both shafts.

The first load of coal brought up was purchased by Elizabeth Barlow and Sons, who have remained customers of the pit right up to today.

The site of the pit was considered ideal, because of the canal passing right beside the coal reserves, thus enabling barges to transport coal in bulk to many places.

Most of the original directors have now died and the independant original company now only survives as Pilkington Glass Company. In 1930 the mine merged with the Manchester Collieries which with great difficulties continued to operate until nationalisation in 1947.

The Arley, Crombouke, and Trencherbone seams at Astley Green were considered the finest producing coal in the Lancashire coalfield.