Coalmining in the Community

It's difficult to be precise about when the first coal or ironstone was dug in Kilburn but records suggest that by the early 13th century, mining for both minerals was well established.

Mark Fryer's book entitled 'Some Chapters in the History Of Denby', gives some instances of the early mines.

These records were obtained from the Victoria County History of Derbyshire and have often been quoted.

They show that at the turn of the 12th century, coal and ironstone were being mined to the north and west of Kilburn.

Old Tramway to Little Eaton

Coal was being mined in Morley Park, and ironstone mines were leased out by the monks of Darley Abbey, which at the time extended as far as Salterwood.

There is some archaeological evidence that an early charcoal fired furnace once existed in Openwood, or more probably Morrells Wood in Morley Park.

Both places are situated on streams that feed into the Bottle Brook near Kilburn.

There are ancient cinders at Morrells Wood and John Farey's book 'A General View of Agriculture and Minerals in Derbyshire' published in 1817, mentions a chain-making forge somewhere in the area.

Kilbourne Colliery
Kilbourne Colliery was sunk on land owned by the Ray family of Heanor, the first owner being the Reverend Ray.

The shaft was 375 ft 5 inches deep and sunk to the Kilburn Seam; a valuable house coal which outcrops along the western boundary of the parish.

In 1834 the colliery was leased by the Rays to the firm of T H and G Smalls who also held leases on the South Normanton colliery and the Stanley-Kilburn Colliery.

The Kilbourne Colliery was to be at the centre of a dispute known as 'The Great Derbyshire Colliery Flooding Case' but more about that in a later article.

Muddy Island
A substantial coalmine once existed at Muddy Island, in the fields west of the Grand Turk public house (now a private dwelling) at Lower Kilburn. This mine was actually in Holbrook, but its workings extended under Kilburn.

It was one of the early deep mines that exploited the lower coal measures.

One man who worked as a seven-year-old boy at this pit was Abraham Bell who was born at Coxbench.

He worked in the Muddy Island pit until it was drowned out in the late 1860s when it was said that the water from Ben's Well in Booth's Wood broke into the pit, resulting in a total loss of all the donkeys and mining gear.

Kyleburn Historical Society meet at the Kilburn Baptist Hall – contact chairman Keith Staley on 01332 881853 for further information. Talks commence at 7.30pm:

November 20 Medieval Times in Derbyshire by Derek Harley

December 11 Derbyshire Disasters by John Hughes