

Clifton  
Colliery  
Company

Illustrations by  
children at  
Clifton Primary  
School

# Clifton Wet Earth Colliery

Salford City Council

Commissioned by  
Salford Ranger Team



LOTTERY FUNDED

## MAP



The lake has nothing to do with Wet Earth Colliery; it was created through gravel extraction to make the M62.

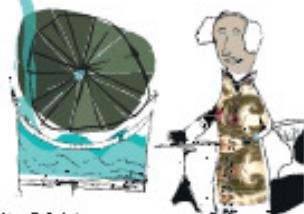
### Gal pit

"This was the first deep shaft in the Irwell Valley. John Heathcote had it dug in the late 1740s. It's called "Gal pit" after the Galloway ponies that walk around the gin winding up the coal. They also wind baskets to get us workers down to the coal. Adults go in the basket and us children have to hang on the rope. It's scary because the basket swings and hits the wall. We can get knocked off and fall or get crushed. Sometimes stones fall down on us. I know two children killed like that. It's a long way down, 330 feet I'm told."



### Wheel chamber

"This mine's always had a lot of problems with flooding. In 1750 I, James Brindley, was paid to engineer a water wheel nearly seven metres across to bring floodwater out of the mine. It would turn, like the ponies at gin winding, but my wheel wouldn't need rest or feed and would be much more powerful. Some say I engineered for water to flow up as the river level was lower than the wheel! I predict that in the future, man will so recognise the power of nature that there will be scarce a stream or river in the country whose power is not being harnessed for man's work."



### Fletcher's folly

"I'm glad Mr Fletcher's built this chimney. I'm six and a Trapper, opening and closing the door for the wagons to pass by. Some places the roof is 26 inches high and I can't even sit then. I go down five in the morning and am out sometimes eight at night. My head often hurts, and colds, coughs, sore throats. 1805 Mr Fletcher's got a new steam engine to wind the coal out the mine that's why he needs his new chimney but my Dad's told me that the engine has driven away some of the ghosts too. That's why I'm glad. My Mum doesn't believe in them."



### Penstock arch

"Built in 1752 for the water to reach and drive the mighty waterwheel. In 1790 it was widened perhaps to be a canal for boats to get to the pit top so coal could be loaded straight on to boats without having to be hauled over ground. Ponies walked alongside pulling the boats. Now, a hundred years later, 1890, twelve ponies spend all year at the bottom of the pit; stabled down there. Everyone looks for the ponies down there; bringing them something to eat – a mouthful of grass or rotten apple. They are well-groomed and better cared for than most above ground. The feeling between a pony and handler is strong."



### Cottage

"Built in about 1800 but I've been living here since about 1863. I'm John Whitehead, called Farmer Jack on account of my hens, pigs and vegetables and fruit, apples and pears, that I sell to earn my living. Workers from the colliery lived here before me I think. There's a fireplace. Part of the house is brick and some stone. Some think it was two different cottages and some that the brick was an extension but, either way, still a small home for a family."



### Fan house

"It's so hot down in parts of the pit that we strip down near naked. So, when we're stooping along we bang our backbone and most of us have what's called "buttons down the back" with a permanent scab on each bump in our spine. Air doesn't flow down there and there's always the danger of poisonous gas and explosions. Used to be a large furnace at the bottom of a shaft to blast out stale air and draw in fresh, supposed to. But this year, 1889, there's been a fan made by the Walker Brothers of Wigan that will keep the air moving without making it hotter down there!"



### Train shed

"The Pilkingtons bought this train, called a "Clifton", in 1896. Seven years later they bought a second engine. Mostly the engines take heavy machinery and like about the colliery. We also have to haul the coal to Robin Hood Sidings if it's to be washed and sorted there. The tracks can link up with railway lines to Manchester and around the country. There's a gutter along the centre of the shed so that we can get under the engine and fix it if need be."

