

Bole Hill Quarry at Longshaw

Why was there a quarry here?

'Bole Hill' is a common name in North Derbyshire, and is a clue that lead smelting might have happened at that place. However, the quarry is best known as the place which produced stone for building nearby Howden and Derwent Dams during the 1900s. You can still see the broad, flat tracks where railways were laid; the steep incline leading down to the railway line just to the west of Grindleford Station was constructed to transport the rock away from the quarry, through Bamford and on up to the dams.

What was it like to be a worker?

Tin huts which housed a hutkeeper, his family and ten men were constructed, along with a recreation room and library. The hutkeepers were responsible for keeping good order in their huts. It seems this wasn't always the case - in August 1905, Benjamin Bradley, the quarry manager, wrote to all hutkeepers stating that 'If there is any more of this rowdyism the hutkeeper will have to give up possession of the hut, as I am determined not to have any more of it.' The quarrymen worked between eight and ten hours a day, depending on the time of year and the hours of daylight. When working hours were shortened, the time allowed for meal breaks was too, although instructions were given the 'young persons under eighteen years of age must have their full meal breaks' - a sign that working conditions were beginning to be taken seriously by employers.

However, many accidents were reported, including several young people being crushed by heavy lifting equipment or hit by runaway train carriages. When a fourteen year old named Charles was crushed by a counterbalance from a crane, the Sheffield Daily Telegraph reported on 4 July 1904 'The boy's father saw the accident and fainted at the dreadful sight.' It must have been a dangerous life.

What affect did the quarry have on the local area?

There was a strike for higher wages in 1904, and a time when workers from Wales were brought in to replace local workers, which caused outcry in the local village of Hathersage. Before production began it was estimated that the quarry contained 2.4 million tons of building stone, and approximately half of this was removed. The quarry closed, and the Trust began to look after it in 1954. Now the quarry is home to wildlife such as fly agaric fungi, pied flycatchers, and woodpeckers, and is the perfect place for walkers, climbers and photographers to imagine the sounds and sights of the past.

For more information about the history of the estate, please contact peakdistrict@nationaltrust.org.uk.