

Haig Colliery 1927-1928

Words and Music: Nigel Harbron

Bm A F#m Bm F#

Haig Coll - ier - y sits on the cliff, a - bove White - hav - en town, Twixt

Bm D Bm A F#m

La - dy - Smith and Well - ing - ton, both pits of some re - nown. It had

Bm A Em A

pit - shafts deep and long roads reach - ing far be - low the sea, Yet

Bm A Em Bm A Bm

min - ers at the coal face found it damp, but wa - ter free. Haig

Bm A F#m Bm F# Bm

Coll - ier - y, Haig Coll - ier - y, The last of the town's deep mines.

Haig Colliery sits on the cliff, above Whitehaven Town,
Twixt Ladysmith and Wellington, both pits of some renown.
It had pit shafts deep and long roads reaching far below the sea,
And miners at the coal-face found it damp, but water-free.

*Ch: Haig Colliery Haig Colliery,
The last of the town's deep mines.*

The colliery opened to acclaim at the start of the First Great War.
All safety issues had been addressed, or so the owners swore.
At first it seemed that all was well, and its yields were usually high,
But families had second thoughts when they saw their loved ones die.

All soon awoke when a horn was heard one cold December night.
One long blast and six short ones meant that all was far from right.
The pit-yard soon was full of folk, their faces pale and drawn,
But as miners staggered from the pit, not all remained forlorn.

A rescue team went down below two miles from the pit-head.
It reached the site of that powerful blast, and found there four men dead.
They had but time to recover three before the fire began,
And they only just escaped the flames as back to the shaft they ran.

Brick walls were built in coming days to starve the fire of air,
And two months later men went back to see what was left there.
Although they thought the fire out, they knew that there was gas.
Three further blasts occurred that day, as miners died *en masse*.

Their thirteen bodies lie unclaimed in Number 3 District deep,
But their deaths were not the only ones to cause bereft to weep.
By the time Haig Colliery was shut down in 1986,
Over fourteen hundred men had died - all now mere statistics.



Haig Colliery was a big one, and quite a lot of the buildings have recently been restored to form a museum. Whitehaven is an interesting town. It expanded rapidly towards the end of the 17th century as the port was developed to allow the shipment of Cumberland coal to Ireland. As a result, I believe it has the highest percentage of Georgian buildings of any town centre in England, and here are some of them.

