

colliery reclamation at Hetton

Reclaiming landscapes

Throughout the United Kingdom there are dozens of sites which are the result of industrial wastelands. However during the last 50 years many of these sites have been reclaimed and what was once hideous industrial wastelands there now exist gentle undulating countryside landscape in which most people would be happy to live in. Some sites have been converted to lakes or recreation facilities while others now support housing and the ugly scars no longer exist. Much of the land was derelict (untidy and littered with broken buildings and machinery), while other areas were seriously contaminated (poisoned through the use of chemicals and fuels) and dangerous to any form of life. These areas are now in a usable condition.

In Hetton, green fields had been taken over during the early years of the 19th century and tons of waste stone and coal had been tipped on the land in the form of pit heaps. A green and pleasant landscape appeared to be spoilt for ever. However, when the final colliery in the town closed (Eppleton Pit) in 1986 the land surrounding it was ready for reclamation and some of the land has been reclaimed while the rest is still being reclaimed and improved.

The two photographs below of Sherburn Hill colliery heap, firstly as it was in 1975 and then ten years later in 1985 following a programme of reclamation. The landscape was restored to something like it would have been before the colliery opened in the 19th century.



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There were 3 streets in Hetton which were very close to the pit heap of Eppleton Pit. They were Blossom Street (north), Minor Street (middle) and Hutton Street (south). In fact the end of each of the streets were just 20 metres from the edge of the heap. During heavy rain a lot of waste stone from the heap was washed down into the street, as the following photographs show.

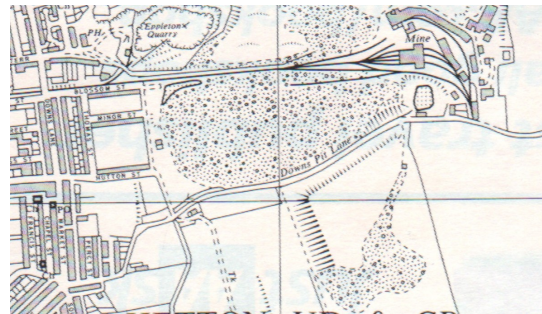


Hutton Street

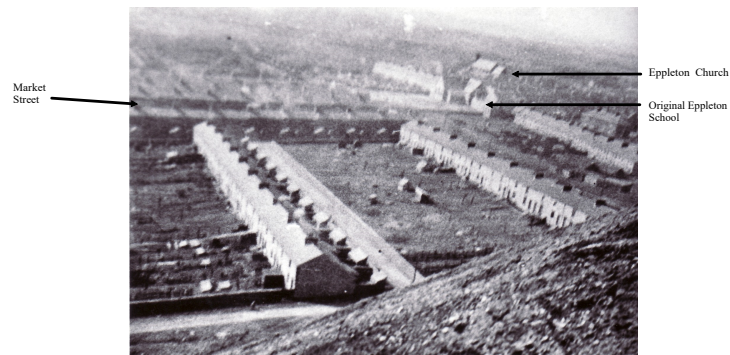
Minor Street

Minor Street

Thankfully all three streets have now been demolished and the waste heap has been tipped into the original Eppleton Quarry but not until about 1996. Today the area where the houses were built has been grassed over and the waste heap has been landscaped in 2004-2006 following years of work to extract limestone and sand.



The map above shows the extent of the waste heap of Eppleton Pit and its closeness to the houses in Blossom Street, Hutton Street and Minor Street.



This photo taken from the top of the pit heap shows Minor Street directly below and Blossom Street to the right. Thus a town landscape can change just as a countryside landscape changes. Landscapes in towns are known as "townscapes".

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Landscaping Hetton Collieries 2



This photograph shows Eppleton Colliery headgear still standing on the hill before it was demolished. It shows the heaps on the right being landscaped and a road built on it; The lake is just beginning to fill while many of the waste heaps can still be seen middle left. Photo taken in January 1992.

The lake is partially filled in January 1992
Note the absence of trees



The heaps in the foreground have been flattened and a car park fenced off. The pit headgear still remains and the heap on that side of the road has been left to be completed during phase 2 (after 2000) once quarrying takes place and waste can be dumped in the hole.