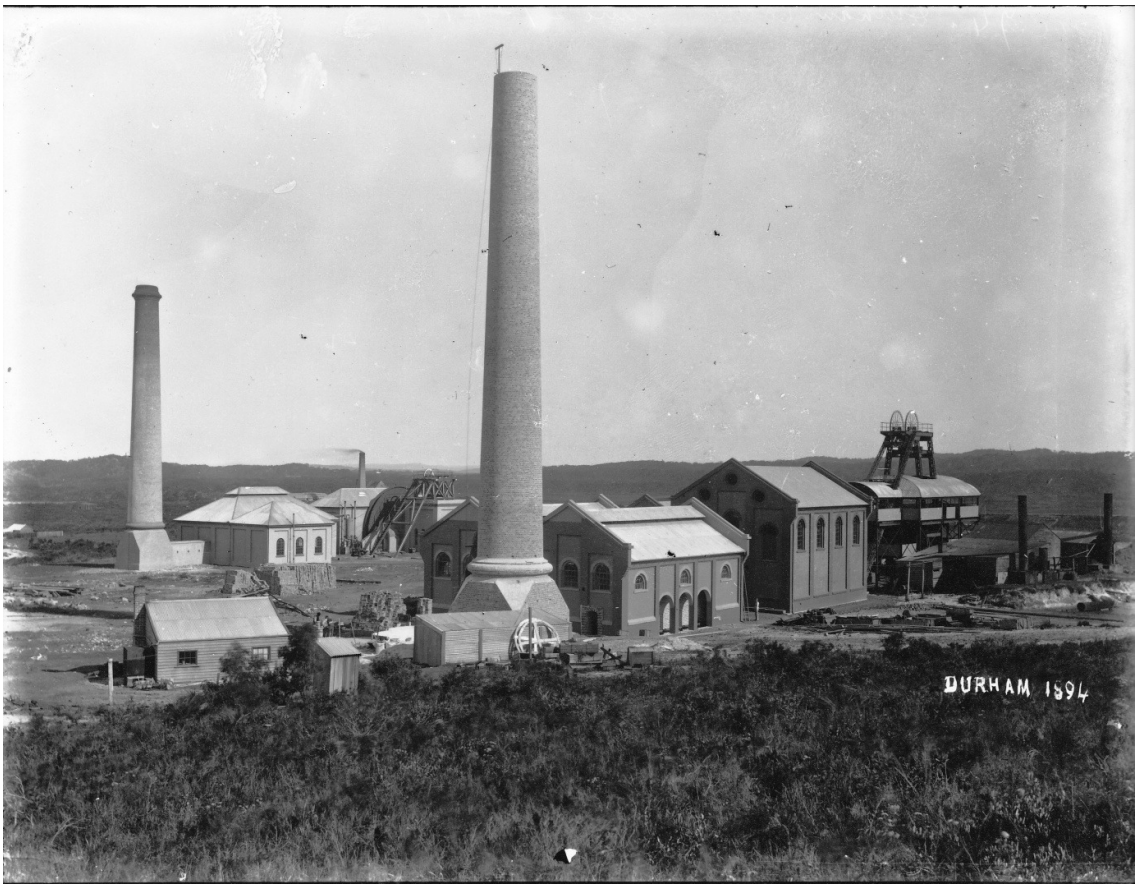
LAMBTON COLLIERY.

The last train left Lambton Colliery on 19 December 1991 thus bringing to an end the operational life of the last colliery on the Newcastle Coalfield with 19th Century functional buildings. During its long life the colliery has frequently changed names and owners.

During 1886 Scottish Australian Mining Company (SAMCo.) obtained land at "The Red Head", south of Newcastle. Company intended to call the new colliery "Ryhope". The next year name was changed to Durham Colliery. Shafts were sunk and buildings erected during the 1890s. The colliery was laid out and designed by Thomas Croudace, foundation colliery manager of the SAMCo. During February 1898 the name changed again to Lambton Colliery B Pit. During 1900 Lambton B Junction laid in to transport the colliery's production by rail. Colliery employment listed as 66. In January 1924 following sale, Lambton Colliery at Lambton became known as Old Lambton. Lambton Colliery B Pit at Redhead officially retitled Lambton Colliery. SAMCo called tenders for construction of manager's house at Redhead. "The Gables" still stands as a private residence. During 1932 BHP Co Ltd purchased both Burwood and Lambton Colliers from the SAMCo. Under BHP ownership Lambton Colliery became the first fully mechanised colliery in Australia when production commenced in the Victoria tunnel Seam in 1935. A significant landmark, the main shaft chimney dating from the 1890s was demolished in April 1961 to enable the sinking of a cross measure drift or inclined tunnel. In 1964 production commenced in the Dudley Seam. Conveyor haulage housed in the cross measure drift became operational. Redhead thus received another local landmark; the green 2000 tonne storage bin. Shaft haulage rendered redundant and main headframe demolished. During the first half of 1971 workforce listed as 335; possibly the highest employment total since BHP acquired the colliery. May 1988 saw the end of rail traffic south of Redhead Station. In consequence new working practices introduced for trains entering the colliery yard. In May 1989 Lambton became part of the Bond Corporation's subsidiary, Pacific Copper. This ownership did not last long as in January 1990 FAI Insurances took over as part of that company's acquisition of Pacific Copper's coal mining interests. On 19 December 1991 last coal transported by rail from Lambton Colliery. Two trains ran that historic day. 4881 ran early in the morning with seven CH wagons. Later in the day 4861 and 4881 worked twelve CXD wagons in a "Push and Pull" configuration. In February 1993 demolition work began on post 1920s structures. At least one pre 1920 building demolished. April witnessed the demolition and cutting up of the 2,000 ton storage bin. On 12 May the Land and Environment Court gave FAI Property Services authority to demolish "forthwith" the remaining pre 1920s structures at the colliery. In consequence the main shaft group of 1890s buildings, the last of its type in Australia, was demolished within an hour of the court's decision. (The upcast shaft group of buildings were not demolished). Towards the end of 1993, in October, FAI Property Services agreed in principle with Lake Macquarie City Council to incorporate the remaining 19th Century upcast shaft buildings into the company's development plan for the former colliery site. In the period 1996 to 1998 the colliery site was progressively cleared, levelled and streets formed for residential development. By August 1998, streets and housing lots formed on estate. On 1 August an auction sale of the "best" fifteen sites on the "Redhead Grange" Estate was held in the winder house of the upcast shaft group of buildings. By 25 October 1998 construction work was well advanced on the first house to occupy a block on the Grange Estate.



Durham Colliery is well under construction as on 27 June 1894 when recorded by the camera of Lambton based photographer, Ralph Snowball. To the left the upcast shaft buildings and structures appear complete. To the south of this group of structures the chimney stack of Redhead's other colliery, Burwood Extended can be seen. The downshaft or main shaft group of buildings is also well advanced. However the chimney of the main group of boilers is yet to be completed. Bricks, templates and other evidence of construction litter the landscape. A hoist can also be seen at the summit of the progressively advancing chimney.

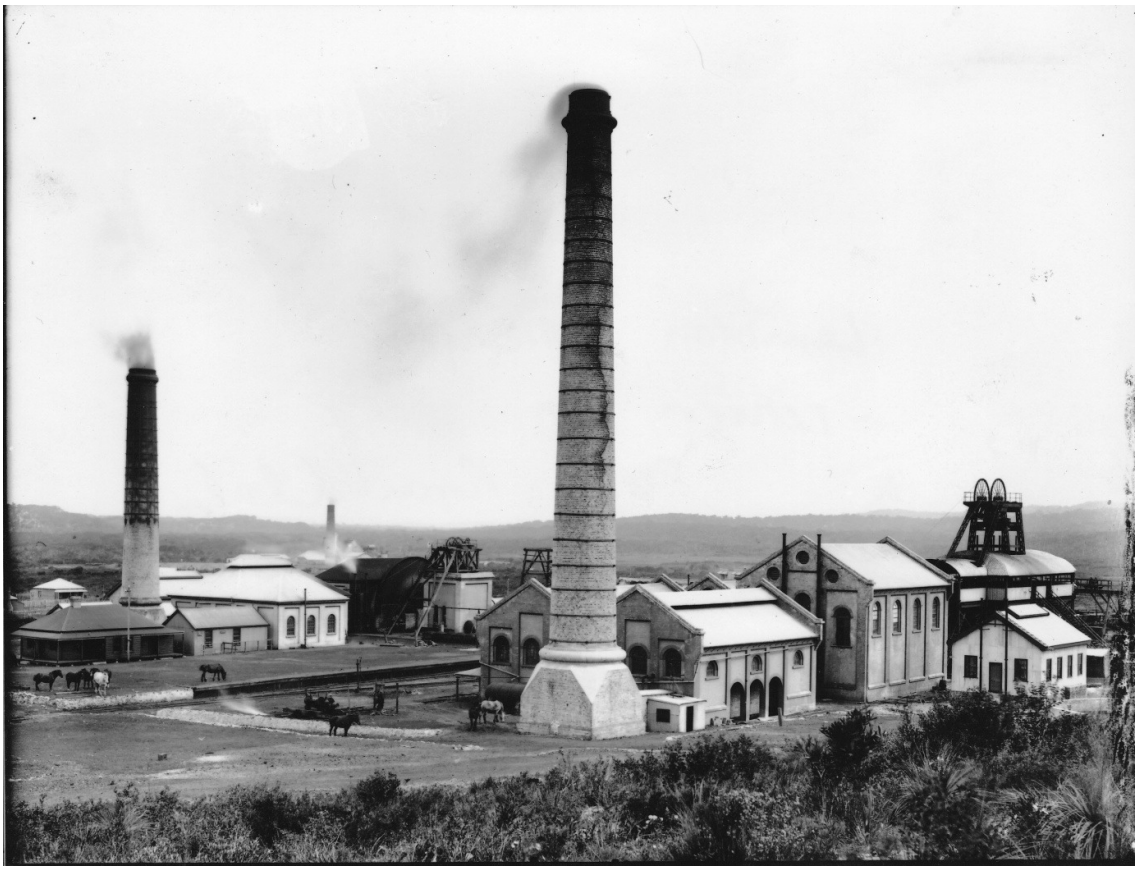
Photo. Ralph Snowball Collection, Newcastle Regional Library. From"Lambton by the Sea".

On 27 June 1894 Ralph Snowball's camera also captured the southern aspect of Durham Colliery's pit top (heapstead), screens and loading points and other functional buildings. This view, the foreground of which is dominated by stone raised during shaft sinking operations clearly highlights the incomplete nature of the "main" chimney. It has been recorded that the screen structures and their associated metal work were products of the Grange Iron Company of Durham, England.The magnificence of these colliery buildings and structures was emphasised by the Newcastle Morning Herald on 7 November 1903.

Photo. Ralph Snowball Collection, Newcastle Regional Library. From "Lambton by the Sea."

Ralph Snowball returned to Durham Colliery on 2 July 1894 and photographed the upcast shaft group of buildings which were developed some 60 metres to the south of the main shaft group of buildings and structures. Features to note include the chimney, winding house, boiler house, timber headframe above the shaft, Waddle fan and fan engine house. Durham's Waddle 42 feet diameter fan was the largest on the Newcastle Coalfield. Its installation was the result of two explosions of methane gas during sinking operations. One in Sept. 1889 and the other in May 1892. Fortunately no one was killed. Over time both the small timber headframe and the Waddle fan have been replaced. However the Waddle fan mountings can still be seen. In fact the majority of the upcast shaft buildings as photographed by Snowball well over a hundred years ago can still be seen today. The shafts at Redhead were sunk by the use of "Tubbing"; caste iron metal rings pushed down through the semi fluid sub surface material until solid rock was encountered. Evidence of this ingenious 19th century engineering approach is visible in the capped upcast shaft.

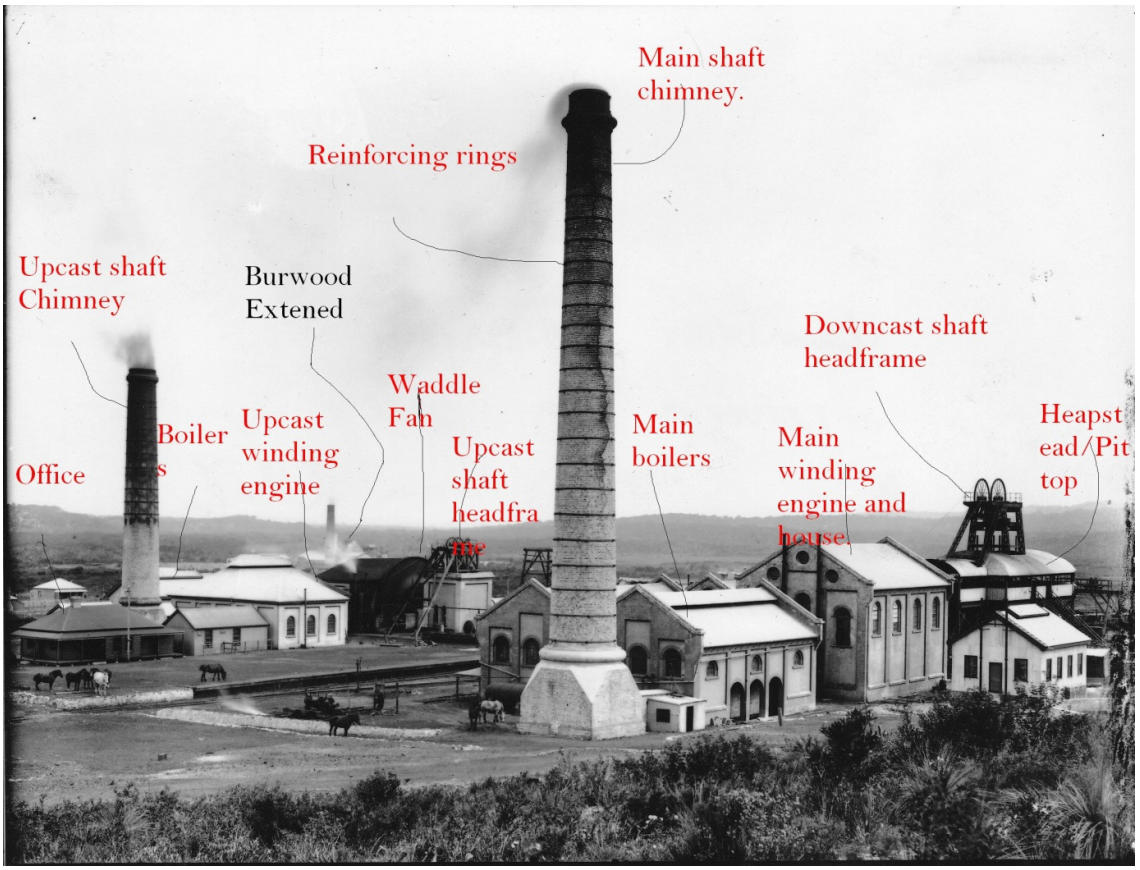
Photo. Ralph Snowball Collection, Newcastle Regional Library. From "Lambton by the Sea."



Lambton Colliery B Pit as recorded by Ralph Snowball on 9 September 1909. Colliery workforce was then listed as 222. From August 1898 Durham Colliery was referred to as Lambton Colliery B Pit. Of particular interest is the soot stained vertical crack in the main chimney. Research has revealed that the Scottish Australian Mining Company paid 40 pounds in 1907 to a steeplejack to attach the reinforcing metal rings around the exterior of the chimney.

The compiler, Ed Tonks acknowledges information supplied by Brian Robert Andrews.

Photo. Ralph Snowball Collection, Newcastle Region Library. From “Lambton by the Sea.”


Main shaft chimney.
Reinforcing rings
Upcast shaft Chimney
Burwood Extened
Downcast shaft headframe
Waddle Fan
Boiler s
Upcast winding engine
Main boilers
Heapst ead/Pit top
Office
Upcast shaft headfra me
Main winding engine and house.

Lambton Colliery looking east on 13 August 1946. Redhead Station would virtually have been beneath the photographer. The building this side of the main shaft was the colliery stables. Horses were not used underground at Lambton following BHP ownership. However in its earlier days on 14 August 1907 the stables caught fire with the loss of some nineteen horses. The colliery's undermanager, Bennett Williams who lived close by was able to save three horses that were in loose boxes at the back of the stables. Some of the past character of sea side Redhead can also be seen in this view. To what extent has the town changed since the late 1940s?

Photo. BHP Collieries. From "Lambton by the Sea."