

Hello Reader.

Welcome to Lanchester Local History Society and our web page additions.

This one will be of interest to people for the contents about Lanchester Colliery and John Dormand. I was contacted by Pat Conibere who wrote the piece some time ago. Below is the email she sent me and yes I did get her permission to upload her article to the web site.

I hope you enjoy the interesting read.

Cheers

Marian Morrison 13 January 2021.

Email 17 Oct 2020.

Dear Marian

I've attached an account of the Lanchester Colliery which I researched and wrote ten years ago. Tracing this story initiated an intense period of family history research which only came to an end (more or less!) when I'd traced every possible line of my family history and unearthed some wonderful stories. It's the stories, rather than a series of dates, which bring your ancestors to life and open up fascinating areas of social and industrial history. I can still remember the thrill of finding my ancestor, John Dormand, described in a census record as a coal owner. He'd become a viewer when I found him in the previous census, and at first I felt great disappointment as I'd misread "owner" as "miner". I had begun to think that the family story of a 2x great grandfather who owned a coalmine in Lanchester was a myth.

For some time I've wondered if there might be anyone who would be interested in this account, and possibly someone who could add something to the story or question any of my conclusions. The Lanchester Local History Society would appear to be a good starting point. I hope you and some of your members find this of interest. I'd be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to comment or tell me more about the people and events connected to this aspect of Lanchester's history.

Kind regards

Pat Conibere

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JOHN DORMAND (1813-1890) AND THE LANCHESTER COLLIERY

Pat Conibere, April 2010

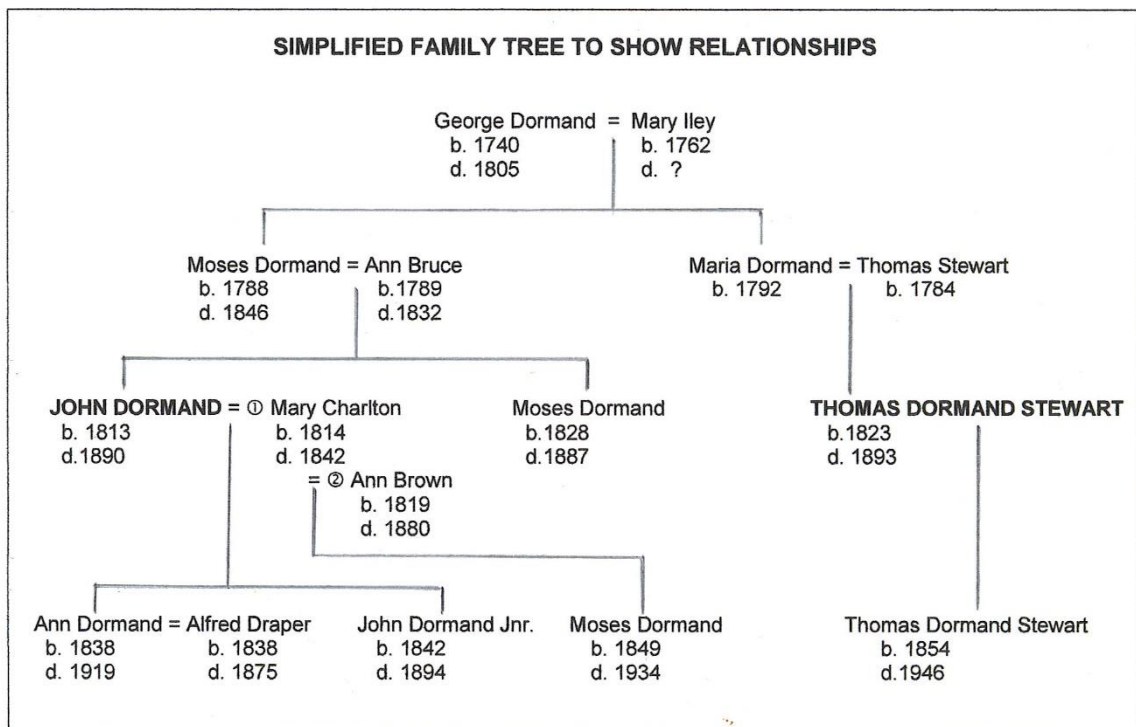
Many years ago a distant relative of my father's told us about our family's link with a colliery in the Durham village of Lanchester. According to "Aunt Nance", I had a great grandmother called Ann Dormand, who had married "beneath her". Her husband was Alfred Draper, a mariner, and the couple lived in Blyth in Northumberland. Ann's father, John Dormand, owned a colliery in Lanchester and had built a row of miners' cottages there which carried his name. When Alfred died, leaving Ann with six young children, she received no help from her father and she didn't ask for help. However, Ann was shrewd and determined and ensured that her three sons were apprenticed to a trade so they would be able to earn a secure living. George, my grandfather, became a saddler, making harnesses for pit ponies in Beamish, County Durham. At the age of seven he had fallen down the stairs, breaking his hip. Rudimentary medical care meant that he always walked with a limp and had to wear a built-up shoe to lengthen his shorter leg. As a saddler, he could sit at his work. Growing up in Beamish in the 1950s, I was captivated by this story. I pictured the Lanchester family in top hats and rustling silks, climbing into a smart carriage. Back in Blyth, my great grandmother, in black widow's weeds, struggled against the odds to bring up her young family.

Fifty years later, with the internet bringing vast stores of information to our computer screens, I tried to discover whether there was any truth to this tale. Even the identity of Aunt Nance was a mystery so tracing the ownership of one of Lanchester's collieries from my home-base in Gloucestershire appeared especially challenging. Bit by bit the story started to unfold, new pieces of information continually causing me to alter and adjust my interpretation of events. The jig-saw will never be complete, but a collection of letters in the local archives brought me closer to some answers than I had ever thought possible. John Dormand's story opened a door on the amazing history of what was once known as The Great Northern Coalfield and gave me a vivid insight into the lives of my coal mining ancestors.

John Dormand's Background

John Dormand's grandfather, "George Dormand of Newburn" as he is styled on his headstone, became a viewer – a colliery engineer and manager - in the late eighteenth century. He signed his name with confidence, and I suspect that he is the George Dormand who joined two other viewers in writing a report on the "pits known as Spanish Closes and Heaton Collierys" in 1802. This report, copied in an elegant copperplate and now forming part of the Buddle Collection in Newcastle's Mining Institute, is a detailed financial assessment and technical survey of these workings. To the west of Newcastle and close to the Tyne's northern bank, Newburn was the

hub of a group of collieries where some of the coalfield's greatest talent was nurtured. George Dormand died in 1805, too early to witness the far-reaching achievements of that more famous George, who was also in Newburn in the late 1700s. The seventeen year old George Stephenson had joined his father at a new coal winning in Newburn in 1798. Determined to further his ambitions, he spent three nights a week at the age of eighteen learning reading, writing and arithmetic, for which he paid threepence a week to a man in the nearby village of Walbottle. William Hedley, another of the north east's great engineering pioneers, was born in Newburn in 1773 and was a viewer there in 1800. Hedley's first locomotive, Puffing Billy, was built in 1813, just before Stephenson built his own first locomotive.



George Dormand was quick to marry again when his first wife died in 1787. His new wife was Mary Iley, over twenty years his junior and born in the hamlet of Colliery Dykes (now Dipton) in the parish of Lanchester. Moses, born in 1788, was the first child of this second marriage. Moses' working life was centred on the collieries of Percy Main, which also lie on the Tyne's northern bank, but further east near North Shields and the coast in the parish of Tynemouth. There, Moses was a sinker in his youth and an overman in his later years. He may not have achieved the same status as his father in the coal mining hierarchy but an underlying ambition of a different nature surfaced in his free time. During the 1830s and into the 40s, Moses was a member of his local Florists' Societies. At that time a "florist" wasn't the owner of a flower shop but someone seeking to grow the most perfect of blooms. The *Newcastle Courant* reported Moses' successes in the annual shows of the florists in the North Shields area, where he took prizes for his pinks, tulips, dahlias and auriculas. What a contrast between the shiny black coal of his working life and the refined beauty and colour of these flowers. 1839 was a bumper year, with Moses gaining 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th places with his auriculas: Dormand's Lady Hewly, Dormand's Colonel Thompson, Dormand's Don Pedro and Grime's Privateer. The first three names suggest that he was producing his own cultivars. Other exhibitors

had successes in those years with Dormand's Queen Victoria, Dormand's Prince George and Dormand's Blackett of Wylam. With that final name, we are brought back to the industrial north east, and the Wylam colliery, where Hedley and his associates had produced their early steam engines for Christopher Blackett when Moses was a young man.

John Dormand was Moses' and his wife Ann's third child, baptised at Christchurch, Tynemouth in 1813. Five more children were to follow, including another Moses, twelve years' old when the Children's Employment Commissioner visited Percy Main and took his statement in 1841.

Moses Dormand, a Trapper

12 last September. Keeps a door and a switch, and rings the bell down the incline bank; Flatworth Pit. Has been down pits (at this colliery) 4 years last binding. Was down Flatworth Pit when the machine was broken, which kept the pit off a week. Kept a door first for a year and a half. Cleaned the way for a year or so. Then went to what he is doing. Has never had any pain except the toothache, and when he got a crush from the rolleys, by which he was kept off a week. Does any odd jobs that are wanted besides his usual work and if the rolleys get off the way, he assists to get them on again. Can read (well). Can write his name. Goes to a night-school pretty often. Goes to the (Ranters') Sunday-school and chapel.

Hundreds of children were interviewed for the government report and their accounts often contain harrowing details. John, like his younger brother, must have been working underground by the time he was eight years' old. His working hours would probably have been longer, as a reduction to a twelve hour day was only achieved with the strike of 1831. He'd have reached the shaft bottom suspended in a basket or by clinging to a rope or chain. Like the other boys, he would have spent his first year or so as a trapper, sitting in the dark during those long hours, opening and shutting a trap door. Opening the door allowed trolleys loaded with corves (baskets) or tubs of coal to move past. The doors were essential for safe ventilation, with fire damp (methane gas) explosions the price that might be paid for any dereliction of duty.

The rolley, mentioned by Moses, was a larger tram or trolley, travelling on rails and pulled by a pit pony along the main roadways. There are horrific accounts of accidents in mines caused by very young boys falling asleep at work. That any of these boys found the energy to go to night school at the end of their day's work must say something about the ethos of their particular families. After leaving home at around 3 a.m. and getting back by 5 p.m. they somehow managed to wash, have their meal and then make time for that vital opportunity to acquire literacy. The fact that Moses could read well was perhaps due to his being the son of an overman. The Commission reported that "the children of the overmen and deputies certainly secure a larger amount of instruction than ordinarily falls to the lot of others". It wasn't until the Mines Act of 1860 that boys under the age of twelve were barred from working underground unless they could read and write.

Moses' statement includes the information that he attended the Ranters' Sunday School and chapel. The Ranters were Primitive Methodists, a group that had broken away from the original Wesleyan Methodists. They became especially strong in working class areas. According to an account of northern Primitive Methodism, published in 1909, "Percy Main society was born in revivalism". Percy Main was

“evangelised” by the North Shields Mission in 1822 and a chapel was built in 1829. The experience of communal responsibility for building and running their chapels has been seen as having played a part in the development of the Trade Union movement. Thomas Hepburn, who led the miners of the north east in their bitter strikes of 1831 and 1832, was a Primitive Methodist lay preacher.

Moses snr. would surely have known of Cuthbert Skipsey, an overman from Percy Main Colliery who was shot dead by a special constable in 1832, towards the end of the strike in that year. Skipsey appears to have been an innocent victim, killed while trying to defuse an angry confrontation between miners and constables. A major cause of these nineteenth century disputes was the “binding”, referred to in young Moses’ evidence. This was the annual Bond whereby the miners in Northumberland and Durham contracted to work continuously at one colliery for a year. The colliery owner wasn’t obliged to provide continuous employment and he had the power to impose fines and conditions. Since the miners’ housing also belonged to the coal owner, the fear of eviction was a further deterrent to any united protest against harsh or dangerous practices.

Marriage and family

John Dormand married Mary Charlton on Christmas Day 1834 at St Hilda’s, South Shields. He was twenty-one and his bride was twenty. By 1841 they had three children, all girls, including my great grandmother, Ann, born in April 1838. John was now a fully-fledged collier, still living in Percy Main. He was working at Chirton colliery when his son, another John, was born on 12 August 1842. A week later, he watched his wife die from the complications of the birth. The new-born son survived, and John remarried in October of the following year. He continued to work as a collier and parish records for the baptisms of the children of this second marriage reveal his movements round the coalfield between the years 1844 and 1854 - South Shields, the Norwood Colliery at Whickham and Crook Bank near Tanfield. By the time his seventh child, Thomas, was baptised at Newburn in August 1856, John had become an underviewer, living in Walbottle. In this period, the harsh measures taken against the miners during and after the “Great Strike” of 1844 had included the introduction of a monthly bond, whereby the coal owners hoped to be able to rapidly rid themselves of any worker who might disrupt the unremitting production of coal. In reality, it was to the miners’ advantage that they were able to move on quickly without notice, and the annual bond was eventually reintroduced in 1864. By that time, John Dormand had been a viewer for some years. Did he feel any ambivalence at being identified with the owner’s interests when for so long he had shared the lives of the men who were now under him?

John’s daughter, Ann, married in September 1861. Her husband, Alfred Draper, was a mariner born near Lowestoft in Suffolk in 1838. He came from a line of agricultural labourers, seemingly hardy men, both father and grandfather living until they were almost eighty. Grandfather Simon received the princely sum of two sovereigns from the East Suffolk Agricultural Association in 1835 for bringing up seven children without the assistance of parish relief, apart from “a few shillings in sickness”. There is no mention in the citation, of course, of the three children who died in infancy and

the first-born who died aged five. Like so many young men, Alfred must have been drawn to the Great Northern Coalfield in the mid nineteenth century by its booming trade and industry. He registered as an apprentice seaman in Blyth in 1856 then went on to sail on collier brigs carrying coal from Blyth to the Mediterranean, the channel ports of France, and the Baltic. Ann had met her sailor when she was housekeeping for her uncle, Robert Charlton, the older brother of her dead mother and now an unmarried miner living at Cowpen, near Blyth. Even if her father didn't approve of the match, there seems to have been no total breach. The couple named their first son after Ann's father: John Dormand Draper.

Alfred had returned from a voyage to Denmark and the port of Swinemund, now known as Stettin in Poland, on board the *Ocean Child* in June 1861. He didn't rejoin the ship, and a list of his voyages show him regularly moving from one ship to another, sometimes with other members of a crew, sometimes not. The *Ocean Child* was shipwrecked off the coast of Sweden later that year. On that occasion, all the crew were saved, but the incident highlights the highly dangerous nature of the work. It has been estimated that between 1830 and 1900 70% of all the sailing ships carrying coal from the Tyne were lost at sea (*Turnbull, 2009*).

The Purchase of Lanchester Colliery

John Dormand had become a viewer in Walbottle, one of the colliery villages near Newburn, the former home of his grandparents. To the east, in North Shields, his cousin, Thomas Dormand Stewart, was prospering in the building trade. The two of them became business partners in the late 1860s. Stewart provided the finance, Dormand the expertise, and by late 1867 they had invested in a colliery in Lanchester.

Lanchester's origins are Roman, but the historic core of the village is medieval. These two aspects come together in the fine 12th Century church. Monolithic pillars taken from the Roman fort support the north aisle arcade, and a stunning Norman chancel arch speaks of Lanchester's importance in the Middle Ages. Coal was being taken from the land surrounding Lanchester by the mid seventeenth century, and probably earlier, but the village and its environs continued to maintain a substantial farming community during the Victorian era. It's recorded that a colliery was opened on Lanchester Common in 1769 and another near Lanchester, possibly the Towneley Drift in 1837. By 1842 a local colliery was employing forty men, with an additional fifteen boys aged thirteen to eighteen, and fourteen boys below the age of thirteen. This made it the smallest of the forty-six collieries in Northumberland and North Durham listed in the Report of the Children's Employment Commission. However, very few miners were recorded as living in Lanchester village or its surrounding hamlets in the census returns of 1841, 1851 and 1861. If the mine was indeed functioning in Lanchester in those years (*it doesn't appear on an 1850 map of Lanchester and its immediate surroundings*), then it must be assumed that the colliery workers were walking there from more established pit villages or that it had formed a separate community at some distance from the village itself.

In February of 1868 the *Newcastle Courant* reported on *NEW COAL WINNINGS IN THE LANCHESTER VALLEY*:

Messrs. Dormand & partners have succeeded in getting coal at the depth of a few fathoms from the surface at the Lizard's Colliery about half a mile from Lanchester. The coal is stated to be of excellent quality, and the seam 4'10" in thickness and 1'1" of splint at the bottom. The works are making rapid progress.

The Colliery Cash Book records loans from T D Stewart in the first quarter of 1868 to the value of £500. Much of the cash paid out in that period was for sinking, while the largest single sum was paid to Consett Iron Works. John Dormand had directed the sinking and, according to the *Durham Chronicle*, "everything progressed favourably, and without injury to anyone". Three seams of coal had been reached, with the principal seam nearly six feet in thickness and of first-rate quality. To the north of the Lizard's Colliery, a branch line had been opened by the North Eastern Railway in 1862 to connect Consett Iron Company to the main line at Durham. Lanchester now had a station and the railway would be an essential part of Dormand & Partners plans for their coalmine. They intended to ship their coal from Tyne Docks.

The colliery opened officially with a dinner on 1st June 1868, for which the partners paid fifteen guineas to innkeeper William B. Walton of Lanchester's Blue Bell Inn. The *Courant* recorded the occasion, claiming that a new colliery at Lanchester "was opened amidst great rejoicing." The *Chronicle* described the event in much greater detail, referring to the formal opening "in the presence of a numerous gathering of spectators". Thomas Stewart, with friends and family from North Shields, had left Newcastle's Central Station at 10.30 that morning, arriving in Lanchester "after an hour's pleasant ride." They were met there by John Dormand and his party, and the two partners then led the procession through the village. Flags hung from the windows of many of the houses, with the flag at the Blue Bell Inn proclaiming "Success to the Coal Trade". The colliery, too, was decorated with flags and banners. There were cheers as the ceremony of filling the first wagon with the first of the hewn coal was performed, then the company returned to Lanchester for their "sumptuous dinner" which "did great credit to the cuisine of Mrs Walton."

Numerous toast and "hear hears" followed the meal. A Mr Adamson, who had descended the mine and brought to bank "a piece of coal of his own hewing (hear hear)", proposed the toast to Thomas Stewart and John Dormand. Mr Stewart, whom he had known for a number of years "had always been characterised for zeal and industry", while from what he had been able to learn of Mr Dormand "he felt that he also was zealous and industrious, and his co-operation with Mr Stewart in the important undertaking of a new colliery would, he doubted not, be attended with marked advantage (hear, hear)". Thomas Dormand Stewart's wordy response was full of optimism and pious hopes:

He might say that in the conducting of their business they would attend to the good old adage – "Honesty is the best policy." If they could not succeed with their undertaking by conducting it with uprightness, integrity and sterling honesty, he felt convinced they should never succeed at all (hear, hear). He might say that, to all human appearance there was every probability – indeed likelihood – of success in connection with their new undertaking, which he trusted would develop and extend

itself as time went on (hear, hear.) He hoped that the new undertaking would be beneficial not only to themselves, but to their children; and not only to them, but to all who might be employed at the colliery, as well as those connected with the village of Lanchester (hear, hear.)

It was a fine day, and after yet more toasts, some members of the party left the inn with a local guide to visit Lanchester's Roman fort. Finally, there was "an excellent tea" at the Blue Bell before the return journey to Newcastle, where the company arrived "at the Central Station, about half-past nine o'clock, highly gratified with the interesting proceedings of the day."

The Early Years

In the same month that the colliery opened with such high hopes, *The Mining Journal's* report for Northumberland and Durham revealed a broader picture that gave little cause for optimism:

Owing to the great depression in the Coal Trade and the consequent short employment afforded to many of the workmen, many have left their employment without notice, even in cases where a year's engagement had been entered into.

By the end of July, the *Journal* was proclaiming that "the state of trade certainly does not encourage the development of new undertakings at a rapid rate at present."

The trade improved a little as summer ended. The Watson papers archived at Newcastle's Mining Institute include a report dated October and December 1868 of boring carried out near Lizards Farm House for Lanchester Colliery. The three boreholes were at distances from the pit of 200 yards south west, 130 yards east and 120 yards north. However, by December the *Mining Journal* was again sounding pessimistic: "The coal trade here has not had so many difficulties to contend with for many years as at present."

The partners supplied a number of local industries in 1869: Washington Chemical Co., Consett Iron Co., Stockton Gas, Hylton Bottle Works, Stockton Iron Co. They must have remained confident because by the end of 1870 they had built houses for their workers. The *Durham Chronicle* had reported in June 1868 that a number of workmen's dwellings were to be erected, the men and their families being housed meanwhile in Lanchester. Elizabeth Whaley has written in the "Durham Miner Project" about the "terrace of twenty houses ... built in 1870 by John Dorman (*sic*) to house miners". Known as Dormand's Cottages, they stood near the colliery at a right angle to Kitswell Road and were surrounded by fields. They were inhabited into the 1940s and a former occupant remembered them as "'basic two-up two-down' cottages with a cold water tap in the pantry. Toilets, coalhouses and areas for ashes were on the other side of the back street." Over £80 was spent by the company on brick-making in September 1869. The mine, according to the *Durham Chronicle*, supplied an abundance of fire-clay and it becomes clear in letters written by T D Stewart later in the 1870s that the company had erected a brick works and coke ovens. No brick makers or brick moulders appear in the 1861 census but there were

at least fifteen of these workers by 1871 in Lanchester and its surrounding hamlets. Similarly, by 1871 the number of miners and other colliery workers had increased, but there were still fewer than twenty-five underground workers in and around the village. Lanchester couldn't be said to have turned into a colliery village.

These were years that saw the country's miners finding new strength to protect their interests and fight for their rights. The Durham Miners' Association was formed in 1869, and in 1871 the first Durham Miners' Gala was held. Miners' delegates from all the country's mining areas attended a Miners' Conference in January 1871. On the question of safety, the chairman commented that the visits of mine inspectors "were like those of angels, few and far between." A number of safety measures were subsequently introduced in 1872 and it's in this context that in 1873 John Dormand and his thirty year old son, John Dormand jnr., both obtained a First Class Certificate of Service as a Manager of Mines granted under the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1872. The Act also ensured that the colliery was inspected in 1873. The coal trade was booming again in the early 1870s and in February 1872 the Durham miners achieved the final abolition of the yearly bond. At the same time they were able to negotiate a 20% pay rise for underground workers, gaining a further 9% rise later that year. In 1874 Thomas Burt, born near North Shields in 1837, became one of the first of two miners to be elected to Parliament. However, the period of prosperity was short-lived, and in 1874, after arbitration, the miners accepted a 9% pay cut.

Conflict and Decline

Thomas Dormand Stewart's letter book, covering the years from 1875 to 1878, has survived. The name of John Dormand's son Moses, his first son by his second wife, first appeared in the colliery cash book in 1870. In 1871 Moses was lodging in Newcastle and working as a clerk. It becomes apparent in one of Stewart's 1875 letters that by that date Moses was working in the business in Lanchester. It was in the mid 1870s that Dormand's eldest son, John jnr., left Lanchester for work as a mining engineer in the Yorkshire Coalfield, taking with him his Lanchester-born wife and three children. In Stewart's letters, we see the inexorable decline of the colliery. His writing becomes more and more erratic as he addresses his cousin with increasing impatience and anger. Of course, this is a one-sided account and there is no way of knowing what his "Cousin Dormand" thought or felt as their business and personal relationship deteriorated. I have amended punctuation and spelling in the letters where it helps clarify the meaning.

1875 opened on an ominous note. Stewart records meeting an acquaintance in Newcastle who asked him how the business was doing: "I told him we were showing very little just now but that we were going to sink down to the lower seam. He said 'let me advise you to spend as little money as possible just now.'" There was growing unrest throughout the country in mining districts as coal owners responded to depressed trade by proposing severe wage cuts. By March the *Mining Journal* was reporting that the "coal and coke trades in Durham have been in a feverish state owing to the fear of a miners' strike." The Durham coal owners wanted to reduce wages by 20% from mid March, leaving the miners only 10% above the wages paid

in the early 1870s when the first increases were achieved. The tense situation was summed up by the *Liverpool Mercury* on the 27 February 1875:

The resolution of the Durham miners to resist the reduction of 20%, which the masters propose shall take effect on the 15th of next month, is causing a good deal of uneasiness and anxiety in that county, seeing that only three months have elapsed since the wages were reduced, and that there has been a considerable decrease in the cost of production. The miners assert that the colliery owners can have no other object in view in pressing for a reduction than the breaking up of the miners' association. Thousands of miners in the county are now working for 4s per diem, and the majority of the lodges are in favour of a strike rather than submit to further reduction. A number of collieries have for some months past worked short time, several owned by Messrs Hedley and Company having stood still several days during the last fortnight, whilst others have merely worked sufficient coal for the use of the collieries. The reason assigned by the masters is want of orders. Yesterday afternoon upwards of 1000 men in the Lanchester Valley were paid off, their fortnight's notice having expired.

By 6 March, plans were being made to take the pit ponies out of the Durham collieries in anticipation of a strike. Tension subsided two days' later when it was agreed that the dispute should be referred to arbitration. Finally, it was agreed that from 26 April there should be a reduction of 5% in the rate paid to underground workers and 4% to surface workers.

The Final Years

Meanwhile, in Lanchester, it appears from Stewart's letter to John Dormand of 18 March 1875 that the Company had gone ahead with the new sinking. Stewart was writing from the Isle of Wight – a later letter suggests he was in poor health - and his underlying anxiety must have been compounded by his distance from events:

I require you to answer me a few questions respecting the water you had got in sinking, but up to this moment I have not received the slightest word as to what you are doing. I do not think this treatment is either kind or right, here I am and do not know what you are doing. I also requested Moses to send me an account of what you are making, what prices you are getting ... but not a word in February.

In Blyth, John Dormand's daughter Ann was facing personal distress and financial hardship. She gave birth to her sixth child, William, in late 1874. At the beginning of September 1875 her husband Alfred died in Blyth, aged just thirty-seven. His death certificate describes the cause of death as "chronic bronchitis, 1 year". Ann's father's own problems were coming to a head, so it's doubtful whether he was able to give his daughter much support. The first hint that the colliery was to be sold appeared in a letter sent by Stewart to Dormand in mid-October 1875:

I am no better yet and will not be up this pay. You come down. I ordered the pump. I thought the pit would sell better with the water out than in.

A dispute over a consignment of bricks had been rumbling on through October, culminating in a substantial loss for the Company. In November, Durham coal owners were again pressing for a 20% reduction in their workers' wages because of the poor state of trade. The month ended on a gloomy note in Lanchester:

Dear Cousin Dormand

.....I hope you will get your money in. We now owe the Bank £700 – this is a bad state of things, we cannot go and ask them for more and no prospect of paying them. I cannot see how we can go on unless you reduce some of the old hands such as the Smith, Ponies Horse Keeper or old Charly and the like. If you cannot do without these men then we must consider whether it would not be better to close the concern for a year or two, and we will all go out of pay. We cannot sink money this way; there will be an end to it very soon.

By the end of the year, Stewart concluded that it was either “cut down or stop or give the Colliery away, sad state of things now.” His impatience with his cousin flared up again at the end of March 1876:

I again ask you to let me have an inventory of all the plant, stores, etc. at our works and Colliery at Lanchester. This is the fifth time I have applied for it and you have had three months and a half to do it in. You must have some motive for withholding this document.....

Two prospective purchasers of the works decided not to buy that summer. As August drew to a close, Stewart's letter to John Dormand appears to hint at uneasiness about his cousin's probity:

As we arranged last fortnight the pay this week must be the last one for you and me, as the works are now stopped and as there is nothing to prevent Moses from finishing this week, he will be done. Every penny must be saved and as two honest men we must pay every one his just debt whether we have anything or nothing left.

A sale to Messrs. Ferens & Love was agreed in September 1876, and a letter Stewart wrote to Ferens in October makes clear how far the relationship of the cousins had deteriorated:

I should like to get all things put right and settled so that I might know I was done with Dormand and had the account paid as far as possible.

The Sale and it's Aftermath

Ferens & Love paid £3,250.00 for the colliery, and a further £24.00 for a horse and two ponies. Estimates of the equivalent value of this sum today vary wildly according to the criteria applied. The National Archives' “buying power” equivalent in 2009 produces the sum of around £153,000.00 while Measuringworth's 2008 calculation based on average earnings gives a figure in excess of £1,700,000.00. The cottages weren't sold, and in March 1878 Stewart was commiserating with Ferens over the state of trade:

I am sorry to learn that the prospects of trade for the future is still so bad and that since you bought Lanchester Colliery it has continued to decline. Let us hope we have seen the worst of it. Under the circumstances I will agree to the reduction of the rent of the Cottages to £55 – the field and stables £10 at Lanchester – until you recommence work again. I am not unmindful of your great kindness to me – and I think never shall. Accept of my best wishes for your true happiness and that of your household.

His tone to his cousin in letters sent in the summer of 1877 was much less amenable. A meeting was arranged at Newcastle's Central Station, and Stewart instructed Dormand to "bring your interest money with you. I will have to find money on Saturday to pay the N E Rail Co – the pointsmen wages – they will not wait any longer." Two more letters were posted in July stressing the need for a meeting, and in the final letter Stewart's suspicions were brought out into the open:

I did not say in my last the reason I wished to meet you in Newcastle. I now inform you that I have found that a quantity of Goods were sold and sent from Lanchester Colliery that were not entered in the Books and which I have gone carefully over, and if a satisfactory account cannot be given it may be serious both for you and Moses.

The meeting took place at the beginning of August, but a letter sent by Stewart on the 18th makes it clear that there hadn't been a satisfactory resolution. He insisted that "interest and principle due to me" must be paid in fourteen days, and threatened that otherwise "I will take proceedings forthwith – and such a course may necessitate such explanations as you will not like the World to know." A subsequent letter sent by Stewart to Moses makes it clear that the money owed was principally a loan for the purchase and extension of John Dormand's home in Lanchester. By November, the anger appears to have subsided. Stewart now owed Dormand for some bricks but pointed out that Dormand still owed him £129 12s 3d and "as money is bad to get in ...you must let it stand against the above." It was a sad end to an enterprise that had begun with "great rejoicing". No doubt John Dormand had aspired to all the trappings of prosperity when the colliery was acquired in 1867. Instead, he had to watch his dreams crumble as the year 1873 ushered in an era now known to economic historians as the "Great Depression". He and Moses moved to Jarrow where they set up as Brick and Pipe Manufacturers. There was no will when John Dormand died in 1890. I can only conclude that the wealth hinted at in the family story never materialised.

Lanchester Colliery is shown as "Disused" on the Second Edition O.S map of 1886. With the demolition of Dormand Cottages in the 1960s or 70s, the Dormand name disappeared from the public eye. John Dormand's partner's name lived on. Thomas Dormand Stewart's second son, another Thomas Dormand Stewart, was Councillor for the Linthorpe ward of Middlesbrough from 1911 to 1927, becoming mayor of the town in 1920. His rainwear shop on Linthorpe Road promoted his goods with the slogan "We shall have rain"! In 1923 he bought Marton Hall, which was then in a state of disrepair but forty years earlier had been the palatial home of the Victorian ironmaster, Henry Bolckow. Stewart then presented the Hall and 124 acres to Middlesbrough council. The council bought the remainder of the estate and Stewart Park was opened by Councillor Stewart in 1928. The Hall burnt down while it was

being demolished in 1960, but the park remains a popular amenity in the town and is also the site of the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum.

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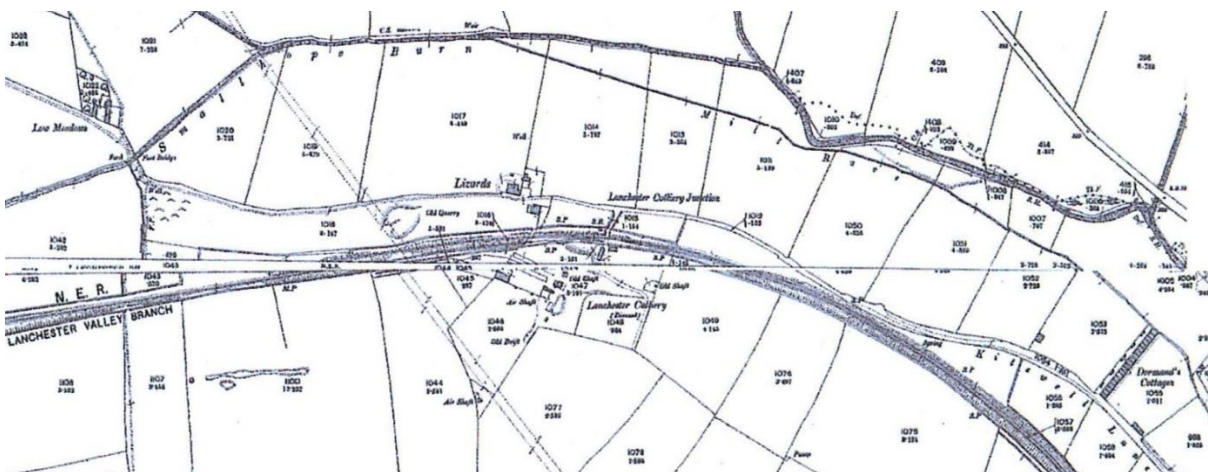
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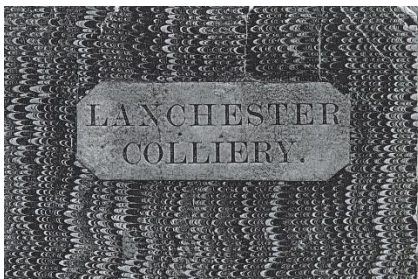
Thomas Hair's watercolour of a shaft bottom at **Walbottle Colliery's Coronation Pit** in the 1840s. Corves of coal are seen on a rolley and a corve is being raised up the shaft on a chain (Smith & Smith, 2008)



Lanchester Colliery, centre, and **Dormand's Cottages**, RHS. The route of the Roman Road, Watling Street, can be seen to the left of the Colliery. Ordnance Survey map, 1896



*Kitswell Road, with part of the row of **Dormand's Cottages** just visible at the end of the later houses on the RHS Dormands Cottages, built by John Dormand in 1870, for the housing of miners. It is stated that over 100 villagers lived there.*



The Colliery account book.

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