

THE MINERS' TALE: GOLCONDA, 1916-1957

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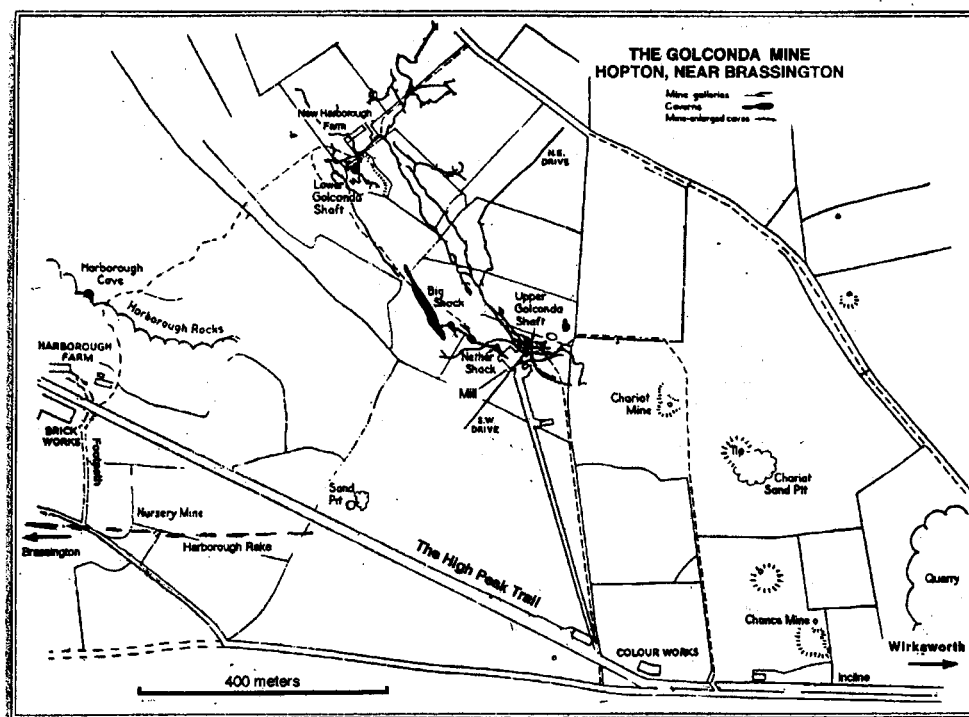
Abstract: Golconda Mine was worked for about 200 years, latterly for baryte. The search for minerals after 1916 was described by the mine's manager in 1949 and the mine and its staff are now recalled by former Golconda miners, one of whom describes archaeological by-products of later quarrying and mineral processing elsewhere.

GOLCONDA HISTORY

It is not known when Golconda Mine (SK249 551), in Griffie Grange, near Brassington, was opened. There is a published account by Miss Nellie Kirkham that the mine deputy, George Stanley, claimed to have seen the date 1678 in old workings (Cullingford, 1953) and a statement in a newspaper report of the re-opening of the mine in 1916 credits its founding to a seventeenth century miner called Woodin (Matlock Visitor, 1916). However, lot and cope accounts for the mines in the Griffie Liberty, then privately owned by the Gells of Hopton Hall, cover the years 1656-1663 and 1681-1706 (DRO D258/20/7/1-40), with a separate list of lot and cope payers for the earlier period (DRO D258/20/6y). These accounts give proprietors' names only, and the name Woodin is not among them. The mine was not marked on a 1725 map of the Griffie mines and rakes (Slack, 1999). In a speech at the 1916 ceremony the manager said that he had seen the date 1760 "burnt into the limestone", and the date 1777 and the inscription 'I [or E] Rawlinson 1796 April' were noted during investigations in 1963-64 (Dr TD Ford - private communication). An eighteenth century origin is suggested by the fact that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 1780 was the date of the first appearance in print of the word Golconda as a synonym for any wealthy mine - the original was the famously rich diamond mine in Hyderabad. The mine may have been opened between 1725 and 1769, when the owner of the Griffie Grange liberty, Philip Gell, made an agreement with his unmarried sisters, Maria and Isabella and ten others to work

Golconda (Slack, 1999). Griffie Grange had been mined for centuries and the late opening of what was to prove its biggest mine may have been due to the fact that there seems to have been no surface vein. The deposits were deep and how they were discovered is not known.

Gell was to take a royalty of one ninth of all ore measured, plus a cope of 6d per load. In the absence of production figures, his financial accounts surviving from the early years indicate that, typically for lead mines, the amount of ore raised fluctuated considerably. For the years 1771 to 1775 Gell received a total of £814-10-5d in lot and cope payments from Golconda. The price of lead at the time was about £2 per load (Wood, 1999), indicating that Gell's ninth share was about 400 loads making the total production for the six years about 3600 loads (900 tons). The highest payment, £362-11-5d, came in 1773, and the fact that by 1775 the annual receipts had dropped to £40-8-7d suggest that a large deposit had been worked out. The same accounts suggest that the large amounts of ore mined there had not recouped the money spent in developing the mine, since they include "By cash paid for loss at Golconda Mine, beginning 22nd May 1773, and ending 30th June 1776 - £33-15-8d". Another note reckons the total profit from Philip Gell's two shares between 1769 and 1776 at £127-10s, offset by losses of £65-6-2d, leaving a total profit for the seven years of £62-6-2d. Since this was a dry mine, needing no drainage, the development costs were presumably related to the depth of the workings.



The mine was bought by E.M. Wass in 1878. In 1879, 1880 and 1881 the Nether (Lower) Golconda Mine produced 85, 160 and 84 tons respectively of baryte (Burt et al 1981). The Upper Golconda produced 392 tons of baryte in 1879 and 377, 404 and 324 respectively in the next three years. Lead production in Upper Golconda was a total of 179.5 tons between 1878 and 1883, plus 24 tons in 1887. This was an annual average of under 30 tons for the seven years for which the mine returned lead production figures, compared to the 150 tons a hundred years earlier. The two mines employed about six men. Wass died in 1886 and his trustees put the whole of his mining and smelting estate up for sale, including 21/24 of Golconda (DRO D2461 Z/ES2)



Plate 1. According to its owner, the photograph shows Joseph Repton (1840-1920), his father, also Joseph (1816-1903) and a member of the Bacon family who, judging by his apparent age of about seventy, was Matthew Bacon (1788-1862). The older Repton married twice and the photo has come to his descendants via Sarah (born 1868), a daughter of his second marriage. Sarah said the mine was on Carsington Pasture and the photo dated from about 1880. The occasion is variously described as a celebration after an ore sale, and a visit to the mine by the two Reptons, returning home from a meeting of the Barmote Court at Wirksworth. They, and particularly the younger man, are formally dressed, in contrast to Matthew Bacon, the presumed title holder, who is dressed for work.

Sarah was clearly wrong about the date, which the apparent ages of the three men suggests was about 1860, making it one of the earliest mine pictures, taken when photography involved wet collodion plates and a portable darkroom. The winding gear in the background, probably part of a horse gin, was unlikely at one of the small Carsington Pasture mines and it may have been Golconda, which was still using a gin as late as 1910.

Samuel Sheldon, who owned the mine in the early years of the 20th century, sold the mine to R.H. Key, managing director of the Via Gellia Colour Works in 1915, after Key had assessed the mine's resources in baryte (*Matlock Visitor*, 1916). Until the mine's closure in 1953 baryte was the main product, with lead as



a by-product, and Key modernised the mine's operating practices and ran a tramway to a siding on the Cromford and High Peak Railway. This served both the mine and the colour-works by the railway, which ground red oxide. A survey map was drawn in about 1940 by the mine manager, Ernest Weightman, who confessed that there were many old galleries which he had not entered. Golconda is currently being surveyed by the Wirksworth Mine Research Group (WMRG) who produced an interim map in 1985 which extends further to the north and differs in some areas from Weightman's. The geology and the accessible workings were described by Ford and King in 1965 and 1966. The whereabouts of any records of the mine other than the ones quoted above, if they exist, are not known, but it is clear that very extensive work had been carried out in the two hundred years of the mine's working life - by 1953 the miners had reached a depth of 420 feet and driven three miles of galleries. It was estimated in 1945 that 75,000 tons of baryte had been produced since 1916, and that lead amounted to 1% of the mine's production during the period from 1916 until 1950, when lead production ceased (Ford and King 1965).

ERNEST WEIGHTMAN (Report, 1949)

Ernest Weightman was the Golconda manager from 1916 until the mine's closure. His father, Moses, had been a previous manager and Moses's sister was married to GH Key. Ernest Weightman was therefore the owner's nephew. He presented a report on his work at Golconda, entitled *Mineralization of the Golconda Mines and those adjacent*, as an addition to his annual report for 1949/49.

The report is concerned with Weightman's search for economic mineral deposits. He describes the main deposits as being at the edges of the ore-bearing area into which Golconda was sunk - at the far end of the Flatts (sic) which run west on the 60 fathom level; to the SE above the Chariot mine workings; 50 yards north of the shaft and to the south on what he calls the "50 [fathom] landing". There were many other small deposits "found by persistence, determination, sheer good fortune and, last but not least, a good knowledge of the rock formation, including many features peculiar to the mine". Some, particularly of galena, were not economic, and he describes a deposit which yielded two tons of lead from a wide joint. This was left on the mine floor because the price of lead at the time made it uneconomic to bring it to the surface. He says that every find was a surprise to the miners, and describes one large deposit found by driving a rise in the roof in old workings. It was some way from the shaft and he had deduced its existence from his observations of the strata. The miner doing the work "was on the verge of open mutiny" before he

Plate 2. From 1896 the mine was owned by the Golconda Mining Company, whose agent was J Stevenson and secretary Samuel J Sheldon (Burt, 1981). Sheldon, barmaster for the Crich liberty and former deputy to the Wirksworth barmaster, was the mine's owner in 1910 and the photograph of the interior of the coe, showing Frank Bacon on the left and Sheldon (second left), breaking ore by hand, demonstrates the very low level of activity at a time of low lead prices. A newspaper account of a conducted tour of the mine in 1910 includes the information that the mine was winding ore by horse gin and that access to the workings was by stemples in 'the small end of an eight-foot pear-shaped opening, the larger part called the "engine shaft" being used for haulage purposes, and was partitioned off, for safety's sake' (Puttrell, 1960).

eventually found the vein twenty feet up. There was a two feet band of clay, a layer of lead and a four feet vein of white baryte. This find provided work for two years, and "my prestige rose considerably in the various rendezvous places after that remarkable discovery".

Weightman conducted surveys to the south east which discovered evidence of lead in the Chariot Mine area, but he could not justify setting men on to search for the large deposit which he thought was there. He describes a major find after "a stroke of the pick" broke into a large cavern containing large quantities of pure lead. The break-through created a draught which made "a noise like an express train running by, and it continued for several days". A level was driven to give access to the new find, and Weightman had a block of pure lead, several cwts in weight, placed at the entrance to the cave "like a gate post at a Chinese Mandarin's entrance". This inscrutable measure was taken, he says, because of the danger of collapse. On a number of occasions parts of the mine floor collapsed during the night, though it is difficult to see how the Mandarin would help in coping with this danger. The mine was dangerous. Weightman was buried twice and knocked out several times. During one of his inspections of the mine he noticed a miner standing under a rock which he thought dangerous. He warned the man, who "muttered that he was just as safe in bed". As Weightman was turning away a piece of rock fell on the miner's big toe, provoking unprintable language which omitted "all commas, colons, semi-colons and full stops". Another danger was that of getting lost in the old workings, "which are so extensive that I have not been through them all during thirty-three years service". Weightman was lost once and, he says, "gave way to despair".

In 1929 the *Matlock Visitor* reported that a local mining engineer and his two sons had discovered radium in disused lead mines, following an initial find in Golconda – they stated that in the early part of 1914 at Golconda Mine, Hopton, they were exploring when they got into a part where the air was bad and the candles would not burn. They had no matches, and roamed about trying to find a way out. "Eventually we reached a cavern", said Mr Joseph Hodson, "where we could divine each other's forms by the light of radium. The radium was shining through the rock, and lit up the cavern sufficiently to show our forms". They described the light as stars and flashes. Weightman comments on the brief period in the late-1920s when Golconda was famous as the "Radium Mine of the Peak". He experimented by sitting in the dark in the cavern claimed to contain radium "but the only stars I saw were those caused by bumping my head on the rock" when groping for a light"

Weightman's search for what he thought would be a single large mineral deposit – the "mother lode" – occupied him for the whole of his time at Golconda. He had



Plate 3. Golconda, about 1908 – Frank Bacon on the left, Samuel Sheldon second left.

published an article in 1940 on the theory of mineralisation but, in spite of seeking the advice of local mine engineers, managers and academics, he never resolved the question of how the minerals had been deposited in the faults and joints of the Golconda area, the "mineralised flow" in his words. (This was later explained by Drs Ford and King in articles published in 1965 and 1966).

SAM BACON AND OTHERS (conversations, 2003)

Sam Bacon was born in August 1912 at Carsington and went to work at Golconda mine in 1926, on leaving school. He left in 1931, at the age of nineteen, and joined the Marines. He was invalided out soon after completing his training after injuring his cartilage playing football. Cartilage damage could not at that time be repaired. He served in the Palestine Police from 1938 until 1941, when he joined the Australian army and served with them in Australia and Palestine until the end of the war.

Plate 4. Golconda about 1910 – Frank Bacon on the left, Jim Warrington fourth left, possibly Sam Maddocks fifth left, Len Booth on the right.





Plate 5. Standing by the loco at Golconda – Sam Matkin (2nd left), Harold Dicken (3rd left), Harry Matkin (4th left), Hiram England (6th left), George Repton (far right, with pipe).

After the war he worked successively at Ballidon and Ivonbrook quarries and at the laboratories at Ryder Point Works operated by Magnesium Elektron and later by Guilini's.

Mr Bacon's family had been lead miners since at least as early as the eighteenth century, when Matthew Bacon, landlord of the Miners Arms at Carsington, was the proprietor of the Childrens Fortune mine. The Matthew Bacon who was probably the old man in Plate 1 was Mr Bacon's great-great-grandfather and was the son and grandson of earlier Matthews. Sam Bacon's father, Frank, worked at Golconda in Sheldon's day, left when the mine was moribund and, after working as a road mender and serving in the army during the First World War, went back to the rejuvenated Golconda after the war.

Mr Bacon believes that his grandfather Samuel owned the mine at one time, and Keith Maddocks of Carsington, son of another Golconda miner, also says that "the Bacons" once owned Golconda. This is certified by an entry in the accounts kept by the landlord of the Miners Arms at Brassington of credit he

Plate 6. Golconda about 1938 – left to right Chris Wigley, Alfie Fearn, Bill Greatorex, George Higton, Harold Dicken, Wilf Pearson, Reg Bacon, Viv Stevenson, Harry Allen, Les Milner, Jim Steeples.



supplied to the miners and others (DRO D2629 x1/1). In an account of John Bacon of Carsington, who was working in partnership with Matthew Bacon, an entry for 1823 refers to the "Golcondy Co". Mr Bacon was told that his grandfather paid out the Golconda men's wages at the Miners Arms and that one of his stories at that time concerned a Middleton miner, who was in the habit of bringing two thick slices of bread for his dinner and making a dripping sandwich by biting off a chunk from one of the mutton fat candles used in the mine and spitting it out on to the bread. Mr Bacon's father told him that when he started work there he was not tall enough to span the distance between the stemples in the Upper Golconda climbing shaft described by Puttrell. He went up and down the shaft on his father's shoulders.

In Mr Bacon's time the 'pear-shaped' shaft at Upper Golconda had been modified to allow the passage of a cage, which winched men, five at a time, and minerals. The five men squeezed into the little cage (now in Peak District Mining Museum) only by two of them sharing one space – the first man into the cage sat against the wall with his legs apart and knees up while the second stood between his legs. The crushing plant and the smithy were on either side of the shaft, with a roof connecting the two across the shaft. The climbing shaft at Lower Golconda, near Griffé Gol Farm (labelled Griffé House on Weightman's survey map and now known as New Harborough Farm), was used only in emergencies and as a ventilation shaft.

There was a large fixed compressor on the surface for compressed-air winches and drills. The lead plant, consisting of crusher, grading drum, jigs and rolling mill, was driven by a large engine, (presumably the 85 hp Kynock engine mentioned in the 1916 report of the opening ceremony). The machinery included shafting and a "vast" flywheel. There was a separate drying hearth and bagging area. When Mr Bacon started work at the mine he was in the lead plant. The lead plant foreman,

Harold Dicken, used to say "George Henry's coming round this morning" to spur the lads on when they were barrowing ore to the drying hearth. Key often used to walk round the works, wearing knee-breeches. The different departments were small empires, which the foremen in charge guarded jealously. Annie Dicken, of Brassington, tells how her father, Harold, came to Brassington from his home in Newton Solney, near Burton, to work on a local farm. He had intended to be a school teacher, but failed one of his exams and went into farming instead on the advice of his mother, who was a farmer's daughter. He married a Brassington girl, and went to Golconda in 1918. In addition to his week's work, he pumped out lead plant water tanks at weekends. After 1953 Golconda processed minerals brought to the plant, including some from nearby spoil heaps, and Harold Dicken stayed there until 1957. He was then sixty-six and had suffered for several years from an illness

which was later diagnosed as lead poisoning.

After his spell working on the surface Sam Bacon was transferred underground. This move was promotion. The pay for a boy was 14/- a week instead of 12/-, and the underground men stopped work an hour earlier than the surface men. He thinks the men's wage was about 50/-. The mine worked a two shift system, 6-2 and 2-10, and he worked his shift with Bill Webster or Harry Matkin, alternating between mornings and afternoons with Jack Webster and Harry Repton. He remembers walking across Carsington Pasture in the dark on his way home after the afternoon shift.

His first job at the start of the shift was to take dried clay balls, together with sticks of gelignite and fuses, down the shaft with him for the shotfirer. The clay had been collected by another boy who rolled it into balls and dried it on the ore-drying hearth. (Joan Brown, of Carsington, daughter of Viv Stevenson, describes her father's first job at Golconda as digging clay from nearby claypits for use in the Swan and Ratcliffe brick works at Harborough. He had been a naval gunner during the First World War and found that his workmate in the claypits was an old comrade from the war. He left in the early 1930s, returning later to work there through the Second World War, becoming a surface foreman. He assisted Weightman in surveying the workings). The disc system of counting men in and out was used. There was competition for the early discs as the first into the mine were the first out at the end of the shift and Mr Bacon remembers a miner being tricked out of his place in the queue for discs by being told that the manager wanted to see him.

He worked as a trammer, pushing the waggons of ore from the face to the brigginn, the cavern at the shaft bottom. The waggons, or trams, ran on a metal tramway on the 60 [fathom] level and tram loads from the lower levels were dragged up by winches on an endless belt arrangement driven by compressed air. Mr Bacon and his mates then pushed the trams along the railway to the shaft bottom on the 60 level. There were about 60 tram loads of baryte and other ores per day. George Dakin, who worked as a trammer from 1935, when he was fifteen, until he joined the army in 1939, says that the minerals began to run out during his time at Golconda and he and others were transferred to surface jobs, leaving a smaller underground workforce.

There were six or seven trammers and the flow of ore to the brigginn was continuous. At one time the mine used piecework and work ceased after sixty loads had been lifted, though this system was not used in Sam Bacon's time. The trammers tipped their loads down a chute into what the manager called "hoppets" in the brigginn. These, positioned at right angles, ran sideways on rails which extended into the cage. They held about three tram loads and the responsibility for their loading and dispatch to the surface lay with the "onsetter". (The winch was not always reliable. Another former Golconda miner, the late Joe Gould of Brassington, five years older than Sam, recalled in 1986 how he worked as the onsetter during the 1920s and how on one occasion the winch failed. The loaded cage leapt several feet up the shaft and then fell back. He had to wait there most of the day for the winch to be repaired). At the top of the shaft the job of pushing the loaded hoppets to the crusher and sending empty ones down was carried out by the banksman. The ore was tipped out in a heap for another workman to shovel into the crusher. The ore was then jigged mechanically and the wet ore dried before being passed through a Raymond rolling mill. The resultant fine dust was bagged, trammed to the sidings and loaded on to the High Peak Railway for despatch, primarily to paint works.

The tools used in the mine included compressed-air drills for drilling shot holes in the limestone and traditional tools for getting the minerals. Mr Bacon remembers Frank Watson, tall

but agile, climbing rapidly up a dangerously insecure bank as he hacked baryte, to be loaded up by Sam standing by the tram below. Frank worked so quickly that Sam had difficulty in keeping pace and a mate gave him a chance to catch up by throwing gravel high up the bank so that it fell on Frank from above, frightening him into thinking it was the beginning of a rock slide. He slid down the bank like lightning. The ore getters used carbide lamps, hung on the walls and the trammers fixed candles in lumps of clay to the fronts of the trams.

Mr Bacon worked on the Flatts with Harry Matkin, in the area described by Weightman as one of the four areas with the largest deposits, going as far as Griffe Gol Farm, where the air was bad and shortage of oxygen meant that they could only work for short spells. He remembers chunks of pure white baryte. They also trammed on an exploratory drive down a 3:1 incline to the south-west which passed under the High Peak Railway and the Wirksworth Road and under Carsington pasture. The trams were winched up the incline. This gallery flooded overnight and was pumped out daily to the sump and then to the washing plant. (The 1985 survey map shows this drive choked at about 200 yards from the shaft, and Dr Trevor Ford remembers that in the 1960s there was a pump on a trolley, hand winched up or down according to the water level. The drive may have been blocked at some time between 1931, when Mr Bacon left and 1936, when George Dakin started. Mr Dakin does not remember it but does remember blocked drives and thinks there were drives to the west, toward Harborough Rocks). There were occasions when the night-shift winchman slept on the job and did not respond to the signal from Mr Bacon and his shift at 10 o'clock. They then had to walk along the Flatts to a meeting of levels called Bottom Golconda Junction and from there to the Lower Golconda climbing shaft, up the shaft and back up the fields to the coc.

The mine was not a wet one, apart from a pool of clear drinkable water by the side of the tramway on the 60 level, used by the miners and known to them as the Quiet Woman (described by Puttrell and by Viv Stevenson to his daughter, Joan Brown). Water also accumulated on a watergate on the 50 level, and was pumped from there to the surface, where it was used in the dressing process. The dressing plant also used water from the windmill on the Hopton side of the Carsington Pasture boundary wall (SK 252544), which raised water from a well or old mine shaft – Mr Bacon cannot remember which. George Dakin remembers water on the 70 level. His jobs included starting a pump there to lift water to the 60 level, where he started a second pump to lift it to the surface, for use in the dressing plant.

Mr Bacon went dialling with Weightman in the south-east part of the workings. His role was to hold the candle while the manager carried out his survey. They turned left out of the brigginn up a difficult stemped rise and south-east along a gallery driven through the limestone toward Chariot mine and past the watergate onto an incline which ended at an airshaft known as the Dump. This may have been Chariot Sandpit. The Chariot mine workings were connected to Golconda – slurry from Guilini's plant was later found to be running into Chariot mine and back into the south-west drive at Golconda. The 50 level sloped down to join the 60 level, a slope described by Dr Ford as a rather steep climb on sand and clay. Mr Bacon remembers that one of the levels running from the Bottom Golconda Junction was called Bonserman's (Bonsallman's) Level. The 70 level was partly exploratory, driven through the limestone. Dr Ford describes the 70 level as being reached by a decline driven from the 60 level which doubled back and eventually led to the cavern known as the Big Shack.

Speeches at the 1916 opening had emphasised the importance

of the mine to the economy of Brassington, Carsington and Middleton, and G.H. Key promised good working conditions - "He was not holding out special inducements to the working men there, but they would find some who had worked for him 20 and 25 years, and he did not think they had fallen out yet. He did not like falling out. He did not particularly like fresh faces on the staff, so he could assure them that men who came to work there and proved to be ordinarily intelligent and diligent and did a fair share of work, he would guarantee them liberal treatment". Mr Bacon said that although the wages were low the mine was indeed valuable since there were few other jobs to be had between the two world wars. This sometimes provoked a degree of politeness toward authority which he thought excessive - the workman at the sidings for instance who made a point of greeting Colonel Gell with a salute as the Colonel rode along Manystone Lane, and shouting "Good morning, Sir". The pay was about the same as it had been before 1914, when his father had brought up a family on 50/- a week. Mr Bacon himself augmented his mine pay by occasional work for a Hopton farmer. He remembers thinning turnips with a three-cornered "spud" and transplanting the thinnings as he went, which was not supposed to be possible. Farm work was occasional and insecure. His brother Frank and a workmate were once spreading muck in a field near Rider Point for the same farmer when an aeroplane came over. This was a rare event and they stood and watched it until it had disappeared. Meanwhile the farmer had come up behind them and as they lowered their eyes he said "Right. You've watched it come and you've watched it go. Now you can go and get your cards".

The Golconda workforce, about twenty men, included five from the Repton family and six Bacons in Sam's time - George, senior and junior, two named Harry, and Archie Repton, and Frank, senior and junior, Sam, Reg, Jack and Isaac Bacon. The deputy, George Stanley, was an ex-coal miner. The winchmen included George Repton senior, who was taken off after he suffered a heart attack, Robert Allsop, Donald Gratton and ? Spencer from Middleton. (Pat Repton of Carsington describes how his father George was given the job of driving the loco on the tramway to the sidings, after his heart condition had made it unsafe for him to be winching the miners up and down the shaft. He also, according to Miss Dicken, helped her father in his weekend job of pumping out the lead plant water tanks. George Repton emigrated to South Africa in the late 19th century. He prospered there and eventually owned a large hotel. He married a Carsington girl while on holiday in England, but was stranded when he was in England again at the start of the First World War, and lost his South African property). Donald Gratton also worked as the banksman. The onsetter in Sam Bacon's time was Herbert Evans from Middleton. Others working at Golconda were Jack and Bill Webster, Harry Matkin, Thurston Matkin, Frank Watson and Joe Maskery (Keggy). Sam's brother Reg worked on the winder for a time, and after the war, in which he was badly wounded at El Alamein, he returned to the mine, where he operated a lathe in the engineering workshop. The engineer was Wilfred Pearson and the blacksmith was Edward Saint.

The mine was a dangerous place. Mr Bacon remembers an accident when Harold Dicken was adjusting an eccentric shaft when the wrench he was using slipped and he fell awkwardly, damaging his elbow. He sued the firm and was awarded compensation. Two years before Sam started work the *Matlock Visitor* reported an accident where a workman, Ted Monger, fell from a ladder into the lead plant machinery and "was whirled round about a dozen times before the engines could be stopped, and he could be extricated": Monger recovered from broken ribs and lacerated face and limbs, and was back working at Golconda when Mr Bacon was there. Annie Dicken remembers an accident at the windmill, where Bob Allsop was repairing the roof and fell off. He broke his neck but survived a bumpy journey back to the

mine in a wheelbarrow and made a full recovery.

Mr Bacon left Golconda after successive rows with the deputy George Stanley and the surface foreman, Hiram England. He was trying to replace a tram which had come off the rails when Stanley shouted at him for holding the job up and threatened to have a word with his father. Sam lost his temper, went back to the shaft bottom and demanded to be taken to the surface. He stayed on for a while, back on the surface wage of 12/-. The end of his work at Golconda came one day when he was painting a shed and was caught taking a smoking break. England told him that there were plenty of men who would like his job. Sam told him they were welcome to it and left the mine.

Mr Bacon went to work at Ballidon after the war at the request of Herbert Hardy. Hardy was in charge of a gang driving a level at Ballidon and used to call in the Jug and Glass at Longcliffe, where Mr Bacon's wife was the licensee. He asked Sam if he was a shot firer and when he said yes he asked him to join him. Hardy, the future founder of the DFS furniture company, had a pet shop in Matlock at the time and had days off. Eventually the quarry owner, Herbert Plomley, sacked him because of this absenteeism and gave Mr Bacon his job. Sam was almost killed one day when he walked along a catwalk and grabbed a handlamp hung on the rail. It was live and he was saved by a workmate, Hawley Lounds, who saw what had happened and ran up and knocked his hand off the rail. The doctor said that he must have a strong heart to have survived. He remembers a blast at Ballidon Quarry which blew up a thin line of trees on a ridge and dislodged a quantity of human bones from a burial mound. The bones fell into the quarry and the men, after trying to assemble them into skeletons, bagged them and gave them to the vicar. He gave them a christian burial. Plomley set Mr Bacon and another workman to make an exploratory drive in the hillside below Roystone Grange. They had a good engine and a cabin and Plomley came every week with their wages and a bonus. It was a good job while it lasted, but the drive was unsuccessful.

Whilst he was working at Ivonbrook Quarry in the early 1960s Mr Bacon noticed a gate stoop which had fallen over to reveal a quern underneath. At the end of the working day he and a mate dug the quern out and managed to roll it down the quarry to the road side. As they moved it he noticed a fossilised lizard-like animal under the quern. He took this and picked up the heavy quern by lorry and took them both home. His wife was so taken with the fossil that she used it as an ornament. However he showed it to a college lecturer who lived in the village and who borrowed it to show his students. Every time he asked for its return he was told that a student had borrowed it. It was never returned. The same thing happened with a limestone disc he found at the quarry. He showed this to a museum curator who identified it as a coin mould, borrowed it and never returned it. Mr Bacon swapped the quern with a neighbour for a spade guinea.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the staff of the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), and of the Local Studies Library, Matlock.

The original print of Plate 1 is owned by Mr Barry Robbins, who supplied the information about his ancestor, Joseph Repton. Plates 2, 3, 4, inside and outside the Golconda coe, c1910, are from original prints in the possession of Mr H.M. Parker, and the identifications are by Mr S. Bacon and Mrs K. Maddocks; the map is from *Lead Mining in the Peak District* by Ford and Rieuwerts (2000); Plate 5, the group by the Golconda loco, is from an original in the possession of Mr P. Repton, Carsington; the 1938 Golconda in Plate 6 is from a

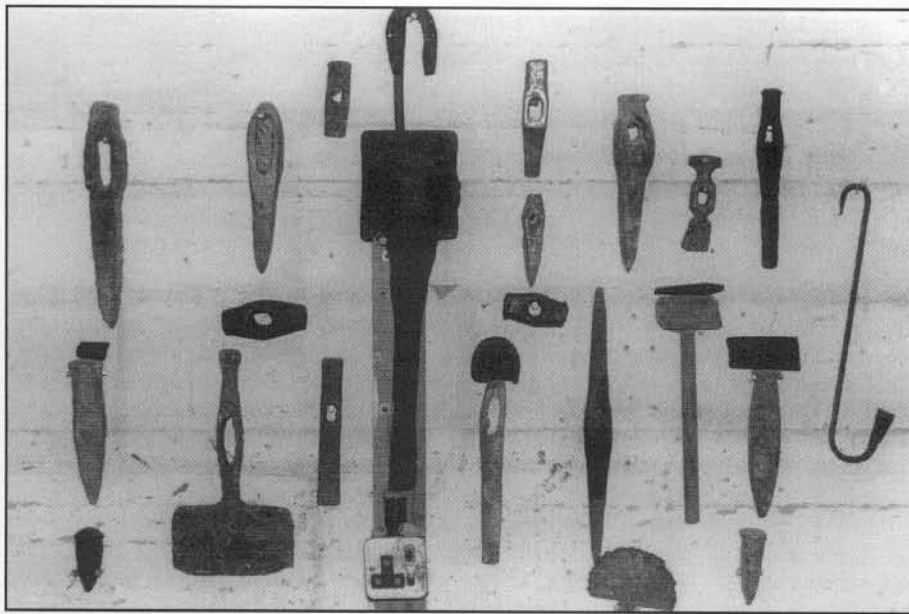


Plate 7. When Sam Bacon worked at Guilini's the magnet over the conveyor belt picked up a number of mining tools, some of which may have come from the spoil heaps at the Watts Shaft at Mill Close, as some of the mine waste processed at Ryder Point came from there. He collected these tools, and the resident director, Mr Hardeau, passed on to him any objects he had recovered. He once got an lead object like a tall beer mug which he cleaned out and found was a battery, with the core in the middle. He took it down to the pub and put it by him when he was playing crib. Various guesses as to what it was included a Saxon drinking horn. Among the tools he collected was a bucket (centre in the picture) and a scalping pick, which he said was the type of pick used on the walls of coffin levels. The object on the right is a candlestick.

print in the possession of Miss Annie Dicken and the men pictured were identified by Mrs Joan Brown. The photograph of the tools collected by Mr Sam Bacon, (Plate 7), is by A.J. Holmes.

I am indebted to Roger Flindall, who supplied the newspaper references, to Dr Rieuwerts for the reference to Nelly Kirkham's account of the reported 1678 date, to Doug Nash for Miss Kirkham's note of the occasion, to Dr Ford for a copy of the Weightman article and other information from his investigations into Golconda in the 1960s and to Roy Paulson, who sent copies of the survey..

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