



## Newbattle Abbey ( Cistercian ) And The Birth of Scottish Coal The Black Stanis or Black Diamonds

Newbattle Abbey was founded in 1140 by King David I of Scotland, it was situated at the edge of the town of Dalkeith, the Abbey used up a great part of the land beside the river South Esk, it is now no longer an Abbey and is used as a College, today now known as Newbattle Abbey College.

The Abbey was founded by King David I of Scotland in 1240, the Abbey was built due to the overflow of Monks at Melrose Abbey.

A Monk by the name of Ralph was given the job to find suitable land on which to build a new Abbey for the Cistercians, he probably approached King David to ask for his help, this would be easy as King David was a very religious man, Ralph had probably done his homework and found the area he wanted, reported back to the King and was told to go ahead.

The Abbey would, once it was up and running be famous for its wool, it was stated that it was the finest in Europe and the most expensive, the Abbey was also famous for building carts for transporting materials of some kind, they probably cost as much as an average family saloon car today, the carts were sought after from near and far, the Monks would possibly have a production line going to keep up with the orders.

There is a Charter of 1189 whereby they were given the lands of Preston by Roger de Quincy the Lord of Tranent ( East Lothian ) and would have gone through the King as well, to mine the Great Seam at Prestongrange, they were also given the lands of Pinkie and Inveresk, with this evidence the Cistercians are recorded as the first Miners in Scotland, eventually they would cover more of Scotland digging their mines.

At first they were believed to have dug into the hillsides, then they dug Bell Pits, they would dig so far down in a straight line, then work outwards creating roughly the shape of a bell, after they had completed their work on this pit they would fill the old one in as best they could and start again a little further along, this was a dangerous practice as many a time they would dig into the previous mine and the one they were digging would cave in.

Once they had done their homework they would eventually know where dig and procure coal. Once they found the right place then they would work hard to get the coal out, they never had great production going, they took what they thought was enough for that day.

Why did they need the coal, well it was good for keeping you warm as we all know, but they used it mostly for the production of salt, yes they were into this as well, salt in those days was a precious commodity, it was the same in the days of the Romans where it was known for a Roman Soldier to be paid his wages in salt, prior to using coal the Monks used logs and peat.

The Monks had Salt Pans at Preston Pans and at Eastfield/Joppa near Portobello on the edge of Musselburgh, this was known as Magdalene Pans, located near Magdalene

Bridge just off Milton Road East, the coals were used to boil the water in special pans that were made for the job, the coals at certain times of the year were also handed out to the poor, probably as a good will gesture.

On the banks of the South Esk about 500 yards from the Abbey College there is an old mine, I visited it one day but due to not having the correct clothing and safety gear I did not go in, however, I did take photos of the outside of it and poking my camera in took some shots of the entrance. As you will see, this is an elaborately built mine, the entrance arch is beautifully built, in the photos you can make out the doorway leading into the mine, there are two niches in the doorway for candles. On entering the mine at first there is a prayer cell, this is where the Monks ( Lay Brothers ) would pray before actually entering the main part of the mine, several years ago the Miners from the Lady Victoria Mining Museum at Newtongrange entered the mine to test for the presence of gasses, thankfully the tests proved that there were none.

Through the years coal mining would be very productive in Midlothian as well as other parts, Newtongrange, Lingerwood, Easthouses, Mayfield, The Brians, Gorebridge, Arniston just to name a few, but there were many, many others too numerous to mention.

On a visit to the Local Studies Library at Loanhead, the Librarian put me in touch with a Mr. Iain Jamieson, this is what he told me and sent to me.

My Father was Edward ( Eddie ) Jamieson, he became a coal miner not long after leaving school, his expertise was driving new mine shafts. In the mid 1950's my father was contacted by a local businessman Mr Brookes ( Mr Brookes owned the mine at Temple ). Mr Brookes was in difficulty and asked my father to help him out at the mine, my father and Mr Brookes later became partners. My father put a team of miners together, some from the Falkirk area and some from the area surrounding temple. One day my father discovered a large coal seam, but when he started to dig the coal he broke into a large chamber. He found that all of the coal had been dug out, all that was left was a honeycomb of chambers, my father was amazed at the technique which he had never seen before, whoever had dug out the coal had dug out room size chambers leaving pillars of coal to hold up the roof. He also found tools, braces and baskets which appeared to very old, he took them to the local museum ( don't know where ) and they identified them as medieval Monks tools, I was told it created quite a stir in the village and it was mentioned in the local paper, my father told me the artefacts were donated to the museum. I think the year was 1956 as my father and the workers were lodging in Temple due to the petrol shortage, my mum said a Temple woman rented them a room in a single end at the end of the village.

We wonder some times if it is worth while handing these things in that we find, I have been told by officials that there is not enough room to store all the finds, just leave them where they are, what a statement to make, after all, this is our history and we should be able to go and see these items, what was the story behind the people who used these tools, and the hardships they had to endure, were they the Monks tools or from another era such as the 16<sup>th</sup>, or 17<sup>th</sup> or even 18<sup>th</sup> century workings, our children are missing out a lot due to this.

Should the weather get better I will make a point to go into the old mine at Newbattle and take further photographs.

When we visit certain historic sites we wonder who started them and who built them, on the pages that follow there is a complete list of Abbots that were in charge of Newbattle Abbey from the beginning to the end.

As you will see, Mark Ker was the last of them, he was a Lay Brother but later on became an Abbot, this was totally unusual and basically against the Cistercian rules, they had seen it happen to other Orders and noticed how they had brought that Order nearly to a halt. The Lay Brother was actually what we would call a labourer today, in the days of Newbattle they were said to be uneducated and rough, they were kept well away from the other Monks, they had their own quarters for eating and sleeping in, they carried out all the hard labour and were possibly the Miners of the Abbey.

Mark Ker near the Reformation of 1560 became Commendator, as far as I can gather this meant he was a Government man, when the Reformation actually took over Mark Ker sacked and chased the Monks off the lands of Newbattle.

Today we would say that he stole the land and would shout about it, he would be given the lands at a very cheap rate like the others of his kind, I am uncertain how many there were like Mark Ker but there was a lot, it has been stated that out of all the Commendators only about three have been able to hand their titles and lands down to their family. Many had daughters and were not allowed to pass their lands or titles on to them, or sons who never saw maturity, some died in battles of some kind, some never had a family, it has been said that this was a curse for what they had done.

I have tried as best as possible to find out all about the Abbots involved, such as their posts, where they came from what they had done plus other information on them, it has taken many hours and to refer where the information came from would be endless.

You will see as you read down the list an Abbot called Gervase ( 1312 ), he was present at the battle of Bannockburn along with several other fighting Monks, is it possible that these were Templars I ask, and how many more like them came from other parts of Scotland, we know that Prior Abernethy from Mount Lothian was an ex Templar and he may have had more at his Priory, Mount Lothian belonged to Newbattle in the Parish of Temple ( Balantrodach ), this I think could be a great indication that no matter what their rank was, the Knights Templar were indeed at the Battle of Bannockburn.

### **List of Abbots ( 36 )**

**Ralph or Radulphus. ( 1140 ) was The first Chief Abbot, a youth from Melrose. ( A legendary vision of the Evil One is recorded of him ).**

**Alfred. ( 1159 )Who greatly improved the Abbey.**

**Hugh ( 1179 ) Famous throughout Scotland as a “ settler of controversies “. He resigned.**

**Adam ( 1201 ) Master of converts.**

**Alan ( 1213 ) Formally sub-prior of Melrose, he returned to Melrose on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1214.**

**Richard ( 1214 ) Formally Cellarer of the house.**

**Adam de Halcarres ( 1216 ) Formally cellarer , afterwards Abbot of Melrose. He died in 1245, he was 84years old and was a Monk for 60 years and 36 days.**

**Richard ( 1218 ) Master of converts. he had previously been a Prior. He received Alexander II. On 19<sup>th</sup> May ( 1223 ) his Queen lies buried at Newbattle, as well as that of David II.**

**Constantine 1230. He resigned 1236.**

**Rodger ( 1236 ) From Melrose, cellerar there, afterwards went to France. He died at Vaudey 1256.**

**William ( 1256 ) Aquired for Abbey properties in Leith and Greenside.**

**Adam ( 1259 ) From Melrose, afterwards became Abbot of Melrose.**

**Guido ( 1261 ) Was a porter to theAbbey .**

**Patrick ( 1269 )**

**Walter ( 1272 )**

**Waldeve ( 1273 ) was previously a Cellerar at Melrose, “ He departed to the Lord, leaving his house in full peace, and excellent condition. “**

**John ( 1275 ) Did homage to Edward I in prison. His seal is in Westminster Abbey Chapter-house.**

**Gervase ( 1312 ) Sat in Scottish Parliament at Cambuskenneth 1314, and Ayr 1315, present at Bannockburn, where several churchmen fought, and the Abbot of Inchffray blessed Bruce and the Scottish army.**

**William ( 1328 ) Got privileges from Melville.**

**Andrew ( 1330 ) Commissioner for the Pope.**

**William ( 1350 ) Commissioner for the Poe regarding Paisley Abbey.**

**Hugh ( 1360 ) Monastery burned down by the English under Richard II and John of Gaunt.**

**Nicholas ( 1390 ). Abbey restored. 80 Monks and 70 lay brethren.**

**John Cugy ( 1402 ).**

**William Manuel ( 1413 ).**

**William Hyrrot ( 1458 ).**

**Patrick Meadow B.D. ( 1460 ). Royal Commissioner for holding and continuing Parliament. ( Clicantiate in Theology ).**

**John Crechtoune ( 1470 ). Brought the Abbey to the height of its magnificence. In Glasgow University records he is referred to “ A venerable father in Christ.**

**John Crechtoune, ( 1474 ). Abbot of the Monastery of Neubotil “ He was considered one of the best Abbots, and in the same year, Patrick Sluthman, was a Monk of his convent.**

**John ( 1479 ). Greatly adorned abbey. In his reign America was discovered.**

**Andrew ( 1494 ).**

**John ( 1512 ). ( Entertained James V. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1526. ) The king granted the Monks Prestongrange, where they shipped their coals. Morrison’s Haven is their old port, as the “ Salters Road “ is their old highway to the sea.**

**Edward Shewill or Saewill ( 1526 ). Grants few-charter for Craighouse lands to Hugh Douglas.**

**James or John ( 1531 ). Developed coal working at Newbattle. Contracts with Dunfermline monks regarding Prestongrange workings. The Newbattle Abbots’ residences at Inveresk are still standing, now called Halkston House and Inveresk Lodge, containing crypts, chambers, and subterranean passages. Prestongrange Salt Works and Salters Road.**

**John Haswell ( 1542 ) Abbey burned by the English under Earl of Hertford. The Abbey was never quite rebuilt again. He remained Abbot till 1547. He worked on until 1554**

**Mark Ker ( 1547 ) ( Son of Sir Andrew Ker of Cessford. ) Reformation 1560. Mark Ker made Commendator. He was not a Priest he was a Lay Brother.**

The coloured photographs are the ones taken by me, I have graciously been given permission by Mr. Bill Bryson to use the black and white photos from his web site on Dalkeith,

The group photograph of the Miners, these are the Miners who discovered the old mining tools and apparatus, Mr. Eddie Jamieson is on the far right at the front of the photo, I have been kindly given permission from his son Mr. Iain Jamieson to use the photo for our site.

<http://www.btinternet.com/~William.Bryson/>

Esk means Valley.

Ref: Sketches of Early Scots History and Social Progress and Loanhead Local Study Centre.

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