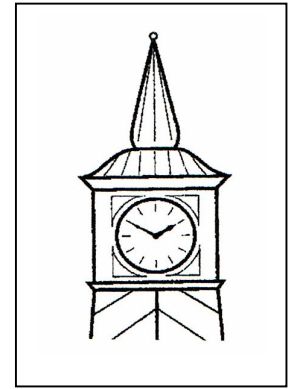
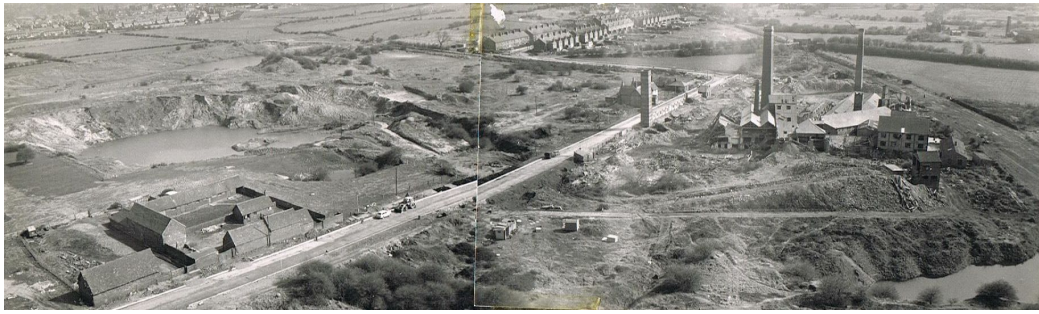


Notes on the History of Bermuda and Paradise

By Peter Lee

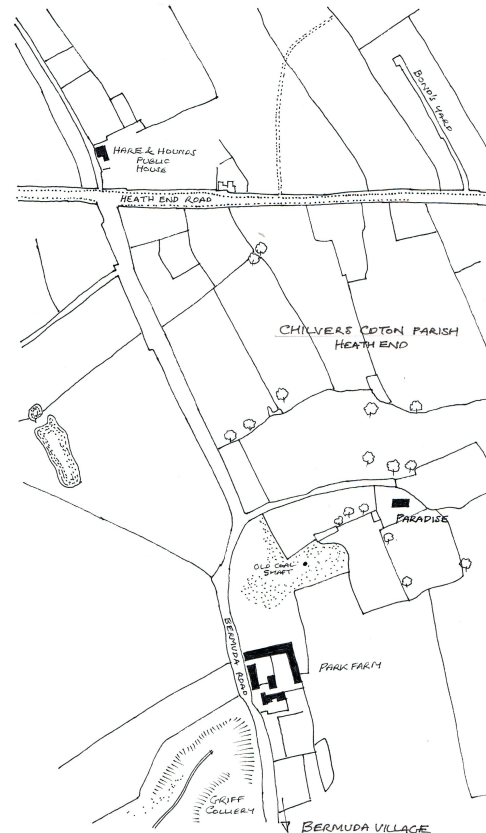
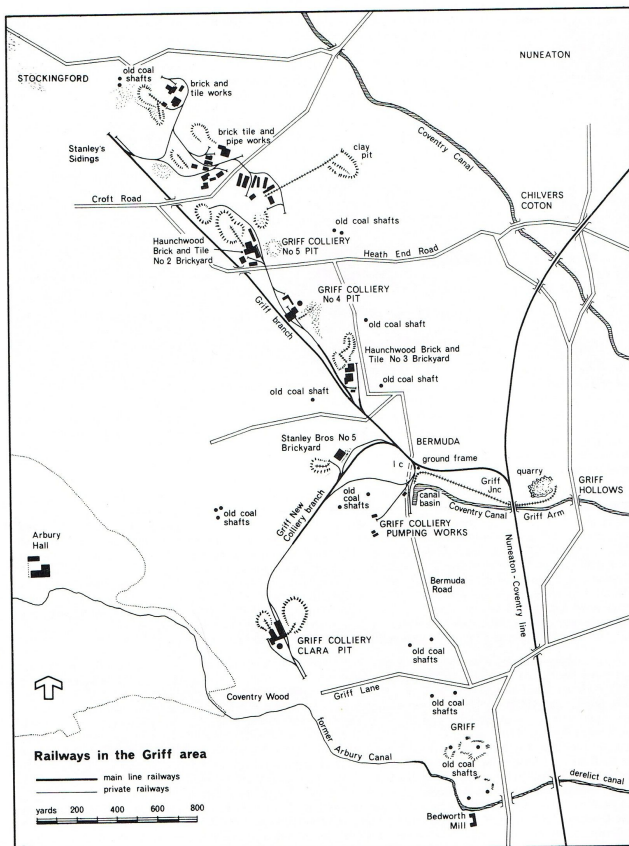


Nuneaton Local History Group
www.nuneatonlocalhistorygroup.org.uk

The name “Bermuda” gives the impression of a warm tropical Elysium sweltering under a blue sky awash with palm trees and white sandy beaches. As far as our Bermuda is concerned nothing could be further from the truth. Bermuda is a pit village surrounded by old waste tips and the detritus of a moribund extractive industry. Some of this Brownfield land has been extensively redeveloped so you have no idea what a hive of industry it was fifty or more years ago when this area of Chilvers Coton provided jobs for thousands of local people.

Bermuda Village was built in a period of twelve weeks in 1891. It was a pit village housing miners who were to be employed at a new colliery nearby – “Griff New Winnings”, or as it was later called – “Griff Clara”, then starting to be sunk. The new shaft sinking was completed in 1894. Coal mining had been carried out at Griff and the narrow area of coal outcrops which ran in a line from the outskirts of Coventry through the whole of North Warwickshire since the 16th century, maybe longer. Up until 1882 the local landowners – the Newdigates – let the mineral rights to the coal under their estate to mining prospectors who worked the collieries with the best machinery then available. A royalty was paid for every ton of coal raised to the Newdigate family. It was, at times, a lucrative business, but at others there was little profit in the enterprise, due to ingress of water and thin fractured seams. In 1882 a new mining business was formed: The Griff Colliery Co. Ltd which brought coal owners and professional mining engineers into the area to produce coal to a very high state of efficiency using the most modern techniques and equipment. They soon found the old pits on the estate too unproductive and set about sinking a new set of shafts to more productive seams – Griff New Winnings, in 1891. The new colliery owners erected houses for new workers drafted in to work there – Bermuda Village.

Bermuda derived its name from the then “Lord of the Manor” – Sir Edward Newdigate-Newdegate (1825-1902) who was the Governor of Bermuda, an island in the Atlantic Ocean. His governorship lasted four years between 1888-1892.



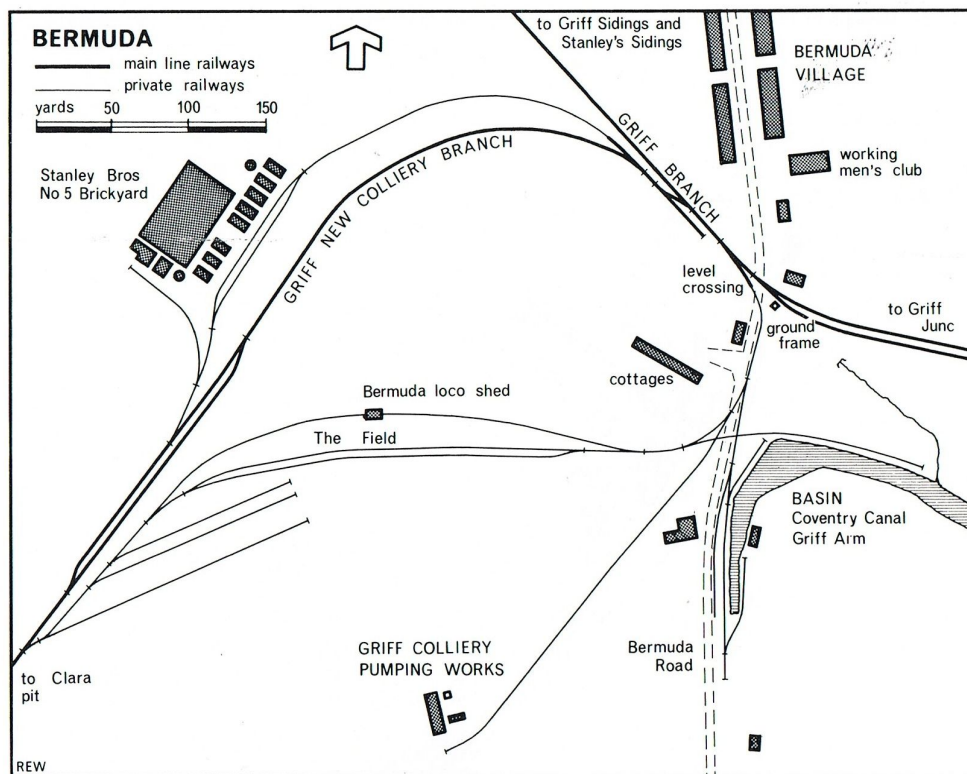
A plan of all the collieries under review

Paradise Farm and Paradise Colliery

Source: HMSO: Geological Survey: Sheet 169: Coventry: Eastwood 1924

At Paradise, Heath End, the Yard Coal crops out under the house, and the Thin Coal (Four Feet) about 35 yds farther west. An old shaft 100 yds. south-west of Paradise is said to be 100 yds. deep to the Seven Feet Coal. In the neighbourhood of Griff there are numerous old coal-shafts, but no exact information could be gleaned of the depths to the various seams, while the increase in thickness of the Glacial deposits. around Bedworth completely masks the solid geology. -Near Hawkesbury the Trias sweeps across the Coal Measures, so that south of that place the coals abut against an unconformable cover of Lower Keuper Sandstone. At the Craven Colliery (half a mile north-west of Walsgrave on Sowe) the Slate Coal is-said to crop up. at a distance of 10 yds. east of the shafts, against the base of the Keuper; while at Binley Colliery it is estimated to do the same about a quarter of a mile east of the shafts.

BERMUDA LEVEL CROSSING and the GRIFF BRANCH RAILWAY



The Griff Branch railway was one of those remote locations that rarely received the attention of photographers. The steam engine was a great draw for railway enthusiasts armed with cameras, but such was the obscurity of this quiet branch line few knew about it and turned up to record it for posterity. An elevated photograph was taken on 6th April 1968 from Griff Nr 4's colliery tip some five years after the branch was lifted and shows the raw 'cut' of the track in the centre of the picture. The line used to pass from left to right serving the industries it connected on the way to Stanley Brothers sidings at Stockingford, where it terminated in the pit yard of Nuneaton (Old) Colliery on Nuneaton Common. The road at right angles to it, cutting across, is Heath End Road. It is hard to imagine in the forty odd years since this photo was taken how much has changed. Modern houses and industrial estates have been built over the old works and some of the green fields you see here. The branch itself has now been largely filled in. The photographer, Geoff Edmands, has scaled the still burning pit heap and scanned his camera across to show the site of Griff Nr 4 colliery in the foreground. The shafts have been capped and some pit buildings have been removed. Others such as the colliery offices and miscellaneous old sheds remain. The dark heap of spoil in the foreground is probably shale recycled from the pit tip for re-use in housing developments then just starting. In later years use of this cheap and poor quality base material would damage the value of houses incorporating it in their foundations. New industrial buildings are starting to appear on the colliery site including a car dealer fronting onto Heath End Road. Beyond Heath End Road the cold brick-works chimneys of Haunchwood Brick and Tile's Nr 2 yard still stands, but not for much longer. In the not too distant future after the photo was taken they too would be replaced by a housing estate. Where the branch goes under Heath End Road is an iron bridge, which carried the road over the railway. When originally built it was wide enough for two tracks, in the event only one line passed beneath it. (There were plans for this branch to connect to the Midland Railway at Stockingford Station. These plans were never fulfilled). Beyond this bridge the line passed through a cutting and then under another bridge carrying Arbury Road before it approached Stanley Bros. Siding where it terminated and a fan of sidings led into the Stanley Brothers complex and to the Nuneaton Colliery which closed in 1899. Rail traffic to and from Stanley Brothers finished by 1961.

There was also connection to the Coventry Canal for waterborne coal traffic, which handled traffic until the Griff branch closure in 1961. The Griff arm of the Coventry canal was 1320 yards long and was completed on 29th July 1787. In 1850 when the Coventry to Nuneaton branch railway was opened a new standard gauge spur line was connected and this terminated at the Griff canal basin.

The short stub to the Coventry line sufficed for twenty years. By the 1870's a large increase in coal and brick production, together with the modernisation of mining methods, created a need for the line to be extended. In 1860 Griff Colliery was the largest coal business in Warwickshire. Deeper pits in the area had gradually replaced ancient shafts. Lack of a rail connection was hampering development of the coal and brickfields so the LNWR. board was contacted to seek the railway company's extension of the Griff Colliery stub branch from the original Griff Basin, through to Stanley Brothers collieries and brickyards in Stockingford by way of Griff (In 1865, only 20 tons of coal had been delivered to London from the Nuneaton Colliery on the Common. All by canal). A rail connection was desperately needed.

On 28th June 1877 an Act of Parliament was obtained for extending the Griff Branch. By 1878 work had begun modernising the 1850 trackage and building the line to Stanley Brothers yards situated about a mile and a half distant from the junction with the Coventry to Nuneaton line. The extension was 2 miles 6 furlongs long, and was built with bridges wide enough for a double track in case a second line of rails was needed in the future. [The branch was fenced for its whole length by cast iron railings. (Contracted to Charles Parsons, the Nuneaton ironmonger)]. Griff lime works was opened in June 1878. On 22nd June 1881 the new railway extension was formally opened to traffic. Several sidings and connections were put in. A very heavy freight traffic developed. Bricks, tiles, clay pipes, chimney pots, lime and coal. On 11th September 1889 the Midland Railway obtained running rights over the branch as well. The steepest grade on the branch was a short section of 1 in 44 about a mile and a quarter from the Griff junction end.

In 1892 a spur off the Griff branch was put through to a new colliery then being sunk – New Winnings. Sinking at this location had started the previous year. The new line was about three quarters of a mile long with an extensive and complicated array of sidings. The new connection gained separate access to the canal wharf and its extensive lime-works.

There was a crossing keeper's ground frame hut here as well. In later days the branch foreman employed the main line company (LNWR, later LMS) opened and closed the gates. These gates interlocked with the branch starter signal, which was controlled by the Griff Junction box.

Several sidings served the canal basin and nearby were cottages mostly occupied by Griff colliery miners and boatmen on the canal. There was a row of pit cottages called the 'Old Row' which housed several Griff families before Bermuda village was built in 1891. These continued to be lived in until the closure of the pits in the area.

The LNWR. built a standard pattern company house close by, to accommodate the crossing gatekeeper and his family. (Blackie Bayliss was the name of the last one I believe) Beyond the level crossing another fan of sidings accessed the Bermuda works of the Haunchwood Brick & Tile Co. Their Nr 3 yard and a little further along Griff Nr 4 colliery. This was an older pit than Clara. Nr. 4 was sunk in 1851. It was originally served by a horse drawn tramway, which connected to the canal wharf. (3ft. 4½" gauge) Where the standard gauge line reached this colliery there was a branch to allow the colliery siding to enter the pit yard and then crossed the Heath End Road by an ungated level crossing. This colliery siding served Haunchwood Brick and Tile's Nr 2 yard and Griff Nr 5 colliery (known locally as 'Metz's pit'). Griff Nr 5 colliery was sunk c. 1870 but was short lived and closed in 1900. Later the siding over Heath End Road was used to move wagons into position to tip the colliery waste into disused clay holes worked out by Stanley Brothers.

The LNWR. line continued in cutting under Heath End Road, and further along passed under Arbury Road to approach the reception sidings for Stanley Bros. Nrs. 1,2,3, 4 & 5 yards. The main line company engines could not pass beyond a stop board in these sidings. Stanley Bros. had their own fleet of steam locos to move wagons down to the exchange sidings, and then distribute them around their light railed and tightly radiused internal network of lines inside the works. One of these internal sidings crossed Croft Road (formerly Swan Lane), on the level, before it gave access to Nrs 4 and 5 yards. Here the sidings were extensive, ending near the Griff Nr. 5 colliery head shunt, which they faced a few hundred yards away across an open clay hole.

Most of the large industrial concerns referred to have their own steam locomotives. Griff had a total of ten steam engines over the years, which were shedded separately at both Clara and Griff Nr 4 collieries. In Later years Griff Colliery built its own mineral wagons from parts supplied by the wagon suppliers. These incorporated wooden bodies made in their own joinery shops. Axle boxes, boilers, pit equipment and various iron parts were also made at the Chilvers Coton Foundry on the Bull Ring. At one time Griff had over 1000 wagons in service. These wagons were latterly painted black with GRIFF in large white letters on the side.

Another local rail connected business, worth mentioning for completeness served by the LNWR. at Griff, whose siding was adjacent to the branch junction, was William Griffiths & Co. Ltd. Griff Granite Quarries, Nuneaton. They also had a narrow gauge line, which fed stone from outlying

areas into the quarry complex. The main line siding went out of use in 1954. The trackwork was lifted in January 1964. The narrow gauge line ceased to be used about 1963.



One of the few photographs I have seen of an LMS loco on the Griff branch is this fine view of Hughes 'Crab' Nr 2936. All LMS heavy freight types could be used on the Griff branch as there were no weight restrictions on bridges and the locos needed to be powerful to deal with up to 50 loaded wagons of coal at a time. Nr. 2936 is pictured in the sidings near Griff Nr 4 Colliery. The crew are having a break during a spell of shunting in the colliery sidings. The driver is Horace Beers. (Photo courtesy Mrs. Betty Melbourne – Horace Beers' daughter)

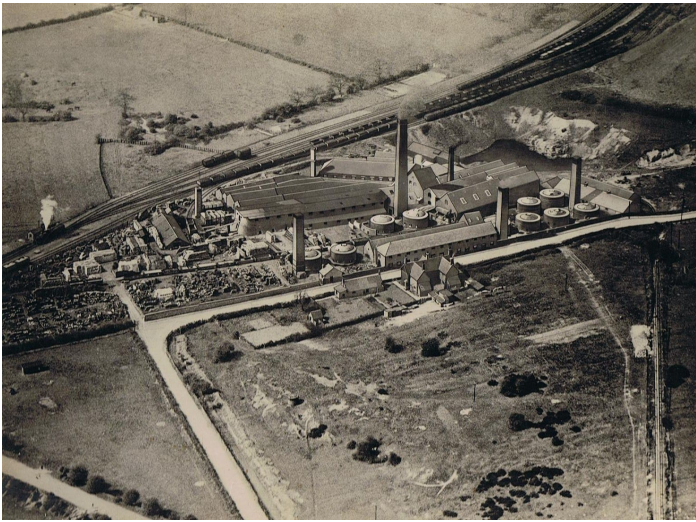
Even in the 1950's, when Griff Collieries were near to closure, they had a considerable output of coal. As many as 150 fully loaded wagons of coal and up to five trains per day set out to various power stations and gas-works in the Midlands. Some reached Willesden. The canal wharf at Griff also shipped large quantities of coal to destinations reached by boat. A customer of the Griff company was Cadbury's the chocolate manufacturer at Bournville, Birmingham.

Loaded trains setting out from the Griff colliery sidings had to be handled with care as they made a run for the junction with the Coventry line. There was a grade up to the junction leading to the curve out onto the main line from Bermuda village crossing which needed good judgment on behalf of the engine crews to drag their heavy load out of the branch. If they were held at the signal for the main line they could not get speed up for a run at the grade. In this case the engines set back to the level crossing where they could get a good run at the junction. Speed and handling had to be very carefully judged by the engine driver. If the rails were wet and the engine wheels lost their adhesion a great deal of slipping took place which could cause the loose coupled trucks chain couplings to snatch. This could lead to the chains that held the wagons together to break. The result was enormous delay as the train was re-shunted, the errant wagons removed, and loss to the colliery through despatching a late and deficient load, which had to be compensated by the railway company.

Clara pit ceased winding coal on 28th May 1955. The land-sale had to be cleared so rail traffic continued until September 1956. In the intervening period most of the track on the Griff Clara line was dismantled leaving a single line of rails in for emergency use and wagon storage. Griff No 4 closed on 22nd July 1960. That effectively brought to a close the everyday use of the Griff branch. The official closure date was 31st May 1961. Permanent staff was withdrawn from the line from this date. The branch foreman's job was dispensed with and his telephone equipment recovered. A portion of the track was retained as a siding for use by the proposed Nuneaton Trent Valley electrification scheme to store truckloads of engineering equipment. The old crossing keepers hut at Bermuda crossing was out of use and any engine crews using the branch had to open and close the gates themselves.

When maintenance ceased the track quickly became covered in weeds. For a couple of years it was used for crippled wagon storage, and as a siding for cabling trains engaged on electrification works on the main Trent Valley line nearby. Track lifting started in November 1963. Dismantlement commenced at the Stanley's siding end, working back to the junction. This was completed in February 1964. The track bed has now been swallowed up by new industrial estates and in part is used as a footpath, or has disappeared into the undergrowth..

For further information see the: Industrial Railway Record No. 47, April 1973. *Griff Collieries* by M.J.Lee (now available online on the Industrial Railway Society web site – The maps are extracted from this publication – M.J.Lee was a great friend of your current author, sadly passed on now, but I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mick Lee and a handful of enthusiasts over the years – the late Fred Phillips, Maurice Billington who were true old school local historians).



Haunchwood Brick & Tile Nr. 3 Yard The brickyard once stood in Bermuda Road and is now covered by an industrial estate. The road that makes a right angle in the middle of the picture is Bermuda Road. The railway line at the top is the old Griff branch of the L.M.S., which connected to various industrial sidings along its short length. A steam loco is resting between duties on the left hand side of the photo, and appears to be alongside a lineside cabin, which might be an engineman's bothy where they could stop to brew a can of tea. Shunting the sidings on the Griff branch was a leisurely affair accompanied by many mugs of tea from chipped enamel mugs, and maybe even a fry up on the shovel. The Griff branch shunt was known to local railwaymen as the "old man's link". This was the railway equivalent of a 9-5 job. No good for young men with expensive girlfriends, young families and mortgages, who needed to work all hours that were possible on long haul jobs, but alright for old timers whose big expenses were over and they were eking out their last years in the "old man's link". The lines of coal wagons are in Griff nr. 4 colliery sidings. The colliery buildings are out of the picture top right. Griff nr. 4 collieries dated back to 1851 and closed in 1960. The Haunchwood Brick & Tile Company was a large undertaking employing many local people. They had three yards. Nr 1 yard at Whittleford, Nr. 2 yard on Heath End Road and this one. Haunchwood made a huge portfolio of different clay products, this yard was dedicated to salt glazed drainage pipes and chimney pots. Most of Haunchwood's products for distant customers were shipped out by rail in wooden crates packed with straw in railway company wagons. If they got broken in main line railway company wagons the railway had to compensate Haunchwood, but if they had their own dedicated fleet of wagons, the brick company took the risk. Nrs. 2 and 3 yards borrowed Griff Collieries shunting engine for positioning the wagons in the sidings, although at the Whittleford yard they had their own shunting engines. Nr. 3 yard led a largely uneventful life until it closed down in 1965. It stood derelict for another three years, a paradise for adventurous school boys. Demolition was complete by 1969. On the opposite side of Bermuda Road was an old farmhouse, and the land beyond part of Paradise Farm. The farmstead and outbuildings was pulled down in the 1970's. A rope worked wagon way led to an open clay pit at the bottom of the picture, which was later filled in with unsorted household waste from the City of Coventry.

An extract from Spennell's directory of Nuneaton & District, 1912/3

BACK STREET (continued).

- 8 Wallace Henry A., factory hand
9 Gum Arthur, bricklayer
Back of Empire
LEICESTER ROAD INTERSECTS.
14 Whetstone William, miner
14 back, Gamage Benjamin
15 Croxall N., miner
16 Barton William Henry, bankman
16 back, Nightingale John, miner
17 Webster James, confectioner
17A Marston John, miner
18 Bayless William, labourer
19 Terry Daniel, sawyer
20 West Joseph, labourer
21 Whetstone William
22 Barnes Charles, wool dyer
23 Ballard John, carter
24 Gulliver Charles, hatter
Gulliver James, painter
JOLLIES' KIN.
ALAB STREET.

Left-hand side from Wheat Street.

- 27 Marlow William, stud groom
28 void
29 Buckler Mrs.
30 Edwards George, miner
31 Gunn M. S., labourer
32 Minton Henry, labourer
33 Williams John, miner
34 Batchelor Bert, shoemaker
35 Yates George, labourer
36 Beasley J.
37 Jackson Henry, fireman
38 Waring John
39 Warren John, engine driver
40 Mann Arthur, baker
41 Smith A., collier
42 Morris Charles, labourer
43 Cope Mrs.
44 Ball Jim, gas fitter
CHAPEL SQUARE (see below).
LEICESTER ROAD INTERSECTS.
Jeffcoat's corn stores
Back of Theatre
BOND STREET.

Glaston Square (from 4 Back st.).

- 1 Baker Mrs.
2 Court Samuel
3 Coleman Ernest
4 Brinley J.
5 Hemming J.
6 Gilliver George
7 Maxfield James
8 Reed Dominic
9 Colledge Mrs.
Chapel Square (near 40 Back st.).
1 Lindgate Joseph
2 Bartholomew Richard
3 see 40 Back st.
4 Gould Edward
5 Lees Thomas

BERMUDA ROAD.

Coten Ward and Parish.

Right-hand side from Griff Lane to Heath End Road.
Pountney William, miner

Varney Arthur, carpenter
Humphrey A. W., railway foreman
RAILWAY CROSSING.
GARDENS.

- 39 Critchlow Henry, miner
41 Arnold Samuel, miner
43 Lees William, miner
45 Lither Joseph, labourer
47 Cooper Thomas, miner
49 Stringer Alfred J., miner
51 Cooper Joseph, miner
53 Morris Charles, miner
55 Kent William, miner
57 Brown Thomas, labourer
59 Sparrow Thomas, miner
61 Cooper William, greengrocer
63 Bannister Charles W., miner
65 Willis John, miner
67 Gibbs Thomas, miner
69 Haycock Thomas, miner
71 Moore Peter G., miner
73 Davis Benjamin, miner
75 Dyall George Wm., miner
77 Parker Joseph, miner
Stidwell Mrs., shopkeeper
Payne John, dairyman, haulier
Mission Room (Parish Church)

- 79 Kibbun Albert, miner
81 Loveridge Sylvester, miner
83 Loveridge Noah, miner
85 Fowler William, miner
87 Hughes George, miner
89 Deacon John, fitter
91 Tomlinson Frederick, smith
93 Askill Joseph, miner
95 Perry Frederick, miner
97 Varny Richard, miner
99 Morris James, miner
101 Jones Samuel, miner
103 Walker John, miner
105 Dickens James, miner
107 Jacques Mrs.
109 Askill George, miner
111 Nordon William, miner
113 Harper Albert, stoker
115 Jones Philip, miner
117 Harper John, miner
FOOTPATH.
Griff Brick and Tile works
Cooper Thomas, foreman
Askill Wm. Hy., fitter
Woodridge George, Park Farm cottages
Rose Edward, Park Farm cottages
Coldicott James, Park Farm cottages
Bates Edward, Paradise
PARADISE STREET, facing Heath End Road.
8 Garratt Joseph, blacksmith
6 Malbone John, brickyard hand
4 West Samuel B., gardener
2 Stores Mrs.

Right-hand side from Griff Lane.
Harrison Frank, miner, Griff fields
Mawby A. H., Griff Pumping Station
Clay Thomas, bankman

BERMUDA ROAD (continued).

- Hazlewood George, miner
Rowe Ernest, miner
Mockford Joseph, miner
Harper Joshua, miner
Omer Thomas, miner
Richards John, miner
Rowe William, miner
Mockford Joseph, miner
Clay Mrs.
Coleman Edward, labourer

RAILWAY LINE.

- 20 Storor Mrs., milk seller
22 Wilson Charles, miner
24 Proctor George Hy., miner
26 Bradley Ernest, miner
28 Keshaw James, miner
30 Richards Thomas, miner
32 Davis William, miner
34 Sparrow John E., miner
36 Little John, bankman
38 Gibbs William, miner
40 Addison John, miner
42 Addison Stephen, quarryman
44 Gibbs George, miner
46 Mithcupp Alfred, miner
48 Warts Charles, labourer
50 Chandler Enoch, miner
52 Wilson Willoughby, miner
54 Moore B., miner
56 Omer William A., miner
58 Smith Thomas, brickyard fireman
60 Hazlewood George, miner
62 Mockford John, miner
64 Neale Thomas, miner
66 Lees Thomas, miner
68 Chandler John, miner
70 Cooper George, miner
72 Dorkins William, miner
74 White Thomas, miner
76 Cooper Thomas, miner
78 Woodward Horace, miner
WALL LETTER BOX.

- 80 Darlaston William, miner
—Darlaston Mrs., general dealer
82 McCreath John, miner
84 Wilson Herbert, miner
86 Poole Henry, labourer
88 Sill Thomas, mill
90 Harris John, miner
92 Clews Thomas, miner
94 Boffin Charles Henry, miner
96 Jacques William, miner
98 Cooper Samuel, miner
100 Shuttleworth Frederick, blacksmith
102 Hodson John Hy., miner
104 Atkins Edward, miner
106 Walker Luke, miner
108 Ingram Frank, miner
110 Gibbs Charles H., miner
112 Spare C., miner
114 Marshall Joseph, miner
116 Gunn Joseph

BIRMINGHAM ROAD.

- 118 Lovering William, carpenter
Private Road to ABBEY HALL.
The Haunchwood Brick and Tile works
(see Heath End rd)
HAUNCHWOOD TERRACE.
31 Lees George, miner
29 Lawley John, miner
Hankinson Harry, Colliery House
5 Cooper Thomas, miner
1, 3 Hopkins John, ostler
HEATH END ROAD TERMINATES.

BIRMINGHAM ROAD.

Off Buck's Hill, adjoining Hartshill Parish.
Stockingford Ward and Parish.
Shumfobottom Joseph, miner
Reynolds George, labourer
Gadsby James, labourer

BOND GATE.

St. Nicholas Ward and Parish.
From Bridge Street, Nuneaton, to Bond Street.
Left-hand side from Bridge Street.
London Millinery Co., milliners
Hawley & Co., tobacconists
Hanson A. & F. E., tinoforte dealers
Marston Hy., tobacconist (Tel. 856)
Marston Charles H., hairdresser
Jeffcoat Arthur, fruiterer
New Bridge Street to LEFT.
SOLDIERS MEMORIAL.

- Whittingdale & Watson, horse repository
Left-hand side from Bond Street.
Leicester Road to LEFT.
4 Clay Mrs., fruiterer
Cover 1 or HERBERT'S BUILDINGS (see below).
5 Beasley George, factory hand
6 Austin Arthur, bootmaker
7 Freeman James, chimney sweeper
8 Whitmore William, labourer
Coleman & McCormick, Ltd., printers
Observer office
Ecliptic Gas Light, Ltd., art metal workers, etc. (Wire, Ecliptum; Tel. 29)
—Floie Walter, manager
Marston James, fruiterer
13 Williams Dr. G. E. B., surgeon dentist
Courer (LAVENDY ROAD).
Grotto Sanitary Laundry Co.
14 Harvey George, clothier
WHEAT STREET to LEFT.
Lee G. A., butcher
15 Clump George Henry, boot repairer
16, 17 Manscote James, jeweller *
Cover 2

- 18 Clay Mrs.
19 Baker Arthur, china dealer *
20, 21 Payne James, bazaar *
22 Claver & Sons, saddlers *
HERBERTS' BUILDINGS (back of 4 Bondgate)
1 Smith Miss
2 Butler Charles
3 Lenton William

