

3B James Ray Eddy

Summary of James Ray Eddy's achievements

- Came with his father, Stephen Eddy in 1857 to manage the mine
- Remodelled dressing floors
- Refitted mine
- Built Engine House and installed steam pumping engine
- 1859 installed new steam pumping engine at Nag's Head Colliery

James' Tale

My family came from Skipton in Yorkshire. My father Stephen was an experienced mine agent working for the Duke of Devonshire in the northern Pennines and he brought me into his business. You could say I grew up with mining, and we have seen some huge advances during my time. When my father was appointed to Snailbeach in 1857, I came too. In fact I was doing most of the work. This was just as well because my father died just four years later, and I took over full responsibility for the mine. My job was to make a profit, and our pay depended on big profits. The contract paid £100 a year, plus 5 per cent of all mine profits up to £4,000. After that it was 7 and a half per cent on mine profits beyond £4,000. Well, that's what brought us from Yorkshire. It was a bigger mine than the ones there.

First we brought the mine up to standard. I didn't assume that the Yorkshire miners knew it all. There was a lot I could learn from miners in Wales, and in 1858 I made a thorough tour of inspection to see what we could learn. We needed to improve the dressing floors, that is, the place where we sort out the lead ore from the waste rock. I saw new designs for Buddles, in which a stream of water washes the waste away, leaving the denser Galena, the lead ore in place. It's important to remove all the waste before smelting begins. The other thing we needed to do was separate Barytes from other minerals, because there was a growing market here, and we had plenty on hand.

Just at the right time the railway came to Pontesbury and Minsterley. This made it easier to get the lead to market. It also meant we could buy good quality coal cheaper than we could mine it ourselves. Nag's Head Colliery didn't have good quality coal. I closed the pit, and closed the old smelter. The biggest investment was to bring the smelting of lead ore in house. The secret

of profitable smelting is to have a long flue, and to collect the lead from this flue on a regular basis. I am proud to say we built one of the longest flues in the whole country, a tunnel a mile long, going from the new smelting works over on the north side of the spoil heaps, and extending to the new chimney on Resting Hill. This took all the dangerous fumes away from the area where we worked, and allowed us to collect the extra lead from the flue every few months. We had a French visitor who wrote a report about our smelter, and he was most impressed with our modern efficient and economical ways of working. He called it the 'Yorkshire method' – but then, Yorkshiremen don't waste their money.

One of the first things we started was the selling Barytes as well as the lead ore. They just thought it was rubbish on the white tip. But a Yorkshireman knows better. 'Where there's muck, there's brass.' we say, and I know something profitable when I see it. There was a good market for Barytes. Now we could take it to the new railway. It was already there on the spoil heaps and all we had to do was dress the material again. It was almost there for free apart from the cost of dressing. Within 10 years we were producing 360 tons and it later went up to a thousand tons a year.

Well, with a careful check on the manning levels in the mine, I managed to increase the profits tenfold. With this we were able to install new machinery for pumping and winding, and we had a new engine for taking coal up an inclined plane to the Resting Hill Shaft.

My dad had an old Yorkshire expression that you would do well to learn, because there isn't a word for this in any other language. If you asked him to spend money on something, he'd think about it. He'd weigh up whether it was worthwhile, and whether he thought it would make a profit. And then, like as not he'd say 'No, lad, I can't thoil.' Now, you've never heard that word, have you? "Thoil" what you say when you've got the money, but you're not going to waste it. 'I can't thoil.' It means I'm keeping my money in my pocket, and not throwing it away on something I don't need. As I say, it's a good Yorkshire expression that could come in handy, so think on.

We were able to reduce the workforce. When I came it must have been 500, and by the time I left in 1870 the number at the mine was down to 130. But that doesn't mean we laid people off. We had built the smelter, so we were employing people there as well. More productivity, fewer workers, more

profit. And with those 130 men we still turned over 3,000 tons of lead ore every year. Productivity per man had never been so high.

One change here was the eight hour shift. Until I came, the men had only worked a six hour shift. By the time you get down the mine, you have used half an hour. It takes an hour to get up. You take an hour down there for lunch. So, work it out. How much work is actually done in a six hour shift? I told them their shifts would be eight hours. They complained like mad, and they went on strike for a fortnight. But then they saw how much money they made in a longer shift.

Fewer men, longer shifts, more work. I get more lead. My profits go up, the company's profits go up, and everybody's happy. We did that in 1862 and we've never looked back.

How would I like to be remembered? As a good Yorkshire businessman who understood mining and knew how to get the best out of a profitable mine. I was always interested in modernising, but never overspent on rash projects. I never had to go back to the shareholders for more money, and we always paid a dividend.