

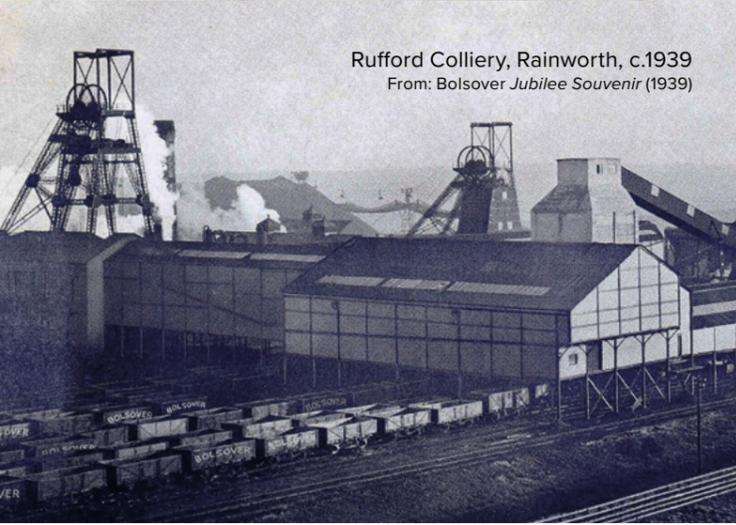
Rainworth Plans, 1920s
Courtesy Nottinghamshire Archives, DC/SW/4/8/23/1



The Robin Hood Inn
Courtesy Inspire Picture Archive & Reg Baker



Bolsover Colliery Company housing
Courtesy © Chris Matthews



Rufford Colliery, Rainworth, c.1939
From: Bolsover Jubilee Souvenir (1939)



Plans for Rainworth Housing, 1923
Courtesy Nottinghamshire Archives, DC/SW/4/8/23/4



The Church of St Jude and St Simon
Courtesy © Chris Matthews



RAINWORTH
Model Villages of the
Nottinghamshire Coalfield
Guidebook 5

COMPANY & VILLAGE

On the eve of nationalisation the Bolsover Colliery Company was the third most successful colliery company in the country. Key to that success was the string of collieries the company established in the East Midlands; Bolsover (1889), Creswell (1894–1896), Forest Town (aka Crown Farm, 1904 -1905), Rufford (1911–1913), Clipstone (1919), and Thoresby (1925). Each of which was equipped with model villages, most famously Bolsover and Creswell. Rufford colliery (in Rainworth) was the Bolsover company's second mine to be established within the Mansfield district, sunk 1912–13. A pit wheel memorial to the colliery now stands beside the former entrance on Kirklington Road (1).

HOUSING

Prior to Rufford Colliery, Bolsover's success had been based on securing leases from the Duke of Portland. At Rainworth however Bolsover worked with a new client, Lord Savile and the colliery was named after Savile's Rufford estate. Although the colliery was located in the Mansfield Town District (2), most of the housing and colliery was positioned just over the border and came under the authority of Skegby Rural District Council. The first houses were located on the Mansfield side on Southwell Road East and built 1912–19 (3). The planning and architectural details were similar to the Bolsover company's previous undertaking in Mansfield at Forest Town; a grid of approximately 128 cottage style houses between First and Fourth Avenue, with front and back gardens and occasional variation marked with facing gables, pantiles and dog toothed lintels supporting the chimney stacks at end terraces.

By 1931 the population of Rainworth had more than doubled in the space of 10 years to 894 people. This was a consequence of further house building activities by the Bolsover Colliery Company, who built approximately 400 houses to the east of the Mansfield Urban District border, in a triangle plot between Kirklington Road, Python Hill Road and South Avenue (4). Given the scale of the development Rainworth was nicknamed 'White City' after the famous international exhibition site in North London. Following new national housing guidelines set out in the Tudor Walters Report, these were more sparsely planned with larger gardens, wider roads and more green space. The architectural details were similar to those on Southwell Road East, such as the steep pitch of the roof designed for supporting pantiles. However, the overall effect of this estate was more varied with two types of roof tile, brick air vents and entrance eadablatures. The geometric plan and housing was designed by the architect, Percy Bond Houfton with Harry Clayton working as his assistant. Houfton's cousin John Plowright Houfton was General Manager of the company from 1911 until his death in 1929.

MANAGEMENT

In 1913 during sinking operations 14 lives were lost when a heavy water barrel accidentally fell down the shaft, killing the sinkers. The disaster at Rufford highlighted the risks associated with mining and the necessity for diligent conduct.

Despite this Rufford Colliery was a highly successful enterprise often at the forefront in mining techniques, such as breaking record outputs in 1933 with a double unit conveyor system. Success generated secure employment, high wages and company loyalty; in 1936 Rufford had the highest membership of the breakaway Nottingham Miners Industrial Union (aka 'Spencer Union'). This was a non-political union that had broken away from the Miners Federation of Great Britain following the events of the Miners' Lockout of 1926.

That loyalty was underpinned by the company's shrewd management of its tied housing; if tenants' upkeep was negligent they stood to lose their house and job. Evictions were conducted swiftly. This top down approach was reinforced in the layout of the housing estate, with managers residing close to the colliery 1½ miles to the north of the village at Elmsley Villas (5). These houses have since been demolished but it appears these were older tenant farm houses belonging to Lord Savile. Census records suggest that colliery deputies mixed with hewers on each street, reflecting the mixture of parlour or non parlour houses throughout the estate and which were mostly 3 bed with an upstairs bathroom.

AMENITIES

During the 1920s Rainworth experienced a significant improvement in the standard of amenities conducive to village life with a new Drill Hall (6), Methodist chapel (demolished) and Recreation Ground (7) in place by the late 1920s. Rainworth Picture House (8) could seat 400 people and was designed in 1920 by W. W. Wheatley. Sports and social activities appear to have been planned at an axis to the entrance of the estate on South Avenue. This is a neat example of how sports were an essential part of the Bolsover colliery company ethos. Building dates are difficult to ascertain but certainly by the late 1930s the village had acquired a new Miners' Welfare on North Avenue (9) (later extended in the post-war period) and the Robin Hood Inn (10) had been upgraded to accommodate more customers. The Church of St Simon & St Jude (11) on Southwell Road East was complete in 1939 to the designs of Claude Howitt of Nottingham. The overall effect is modest but attractive with Romanesque Art Deco motifs, soldier courses, Flemish bond brickwork, orange tiles and bell turret. Python Hill School (12) was built in 1925 by Nottinghamshire County Council. The building is in a brick classical style on a quadrangle plan with pitched roofs and slate tiles.

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Nottinghamshire Coalfield
Guidebook 5

The development of coal mining around Mansfield (Welbeck, Warsop Vale and Rufford) had to wait until the turn of the century when prospects improved. Everything about these collieries was conducted on a large scale.

Only traces of the Nottinghamshire coal-mining industry remain but what have survived are the colliery villages. Together they reflect the evolution of mining in the region and the ambition of the colliery companies who built them.

This guidebook is the result of a research project on the Nottinghamshire Coalfield set by the Miner2Major Landscape Partnership Scheme, managed by Nottinghamshire County Council and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Research was undertaken by Clare Hartwell and Chris Matthews. Design work by Chris Matthews.

For more information please visit:
<https://miner2major.nottinghamshire.gov.uk>

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Model Villages of the Nottinghamshire Coalfield

Guidebook 5

LOCATIONS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Rufford Colliery Memorial | 7 Recreation Ground |
| 2 Site of Rufford Colliery, Rainworth
Sunk 1912–13 by the Bolsover Colliery Company. Closed 1993. | 8 Former Picture House
Built in 1920 and designed by W. W. Wheatley |
| 3 1912-19 Rufford Colliery Housing Estate
128 houses between First and Fourth Avenue | 9 Miners' Welfare
Originally built in the 1930s and later extended |
| 4 1920s Rufford Colliery Housing Estate
400 Houses between Kirklington Road, Python Hill Road and South Avenue | 10 The Robin Hood Inn
Re-built during the inter-war years |
| 5 Site of Elmsley Villas
Demolished | 11 Church of St Simon & St Jude
Built in 1939 to the designs of Claude Howitt |
| 6 Drill Hall
Now Rainworth Village Hall | 12 Python Hill School
Built in 1925 by Nottinghamshire County Council |

BUILDINGS



3



4



6



9



10



11

