

Radstock Whitelands Walk



A circular walk of one and a half miles taking around one hour

One of four walks exploring the built and natural heritage of Radstock

6 Carry on along the road

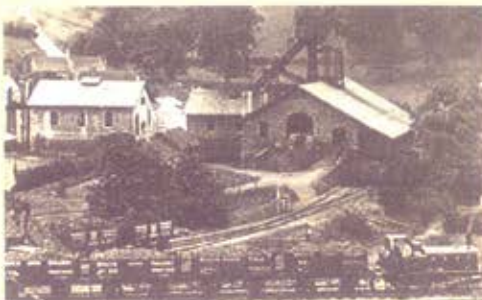
In front of you are two of the original four terraces of Whitelands remaining today. The Upper terraces on the flat ground to the north (now demolished) were conventional two storey terraced cottages. This same flat area was also used in the 1960's as a site for mobile homes to house miners from the Durham area.

The surviving Lower Whitelands terraces are unusual due to the length of the terrace and the three-storey height. Dating from the 1840's, these were the first purpose-built miner's terraces in Radstock forming a separate community shielded from established residents in the old historic core. Radstock miners enjoyed better housing conditions than their more urban colleagues elsewhere. Note the long garden allotments to the front and individual privies to the rear, and most families kept a pig.

Follow on down the hill and cross the former LMS railway line and canal route. Through the footpath sandwiched between the animal feed mill and sewage works. Cross over Wellow Brook and turn right back to Radstock.

7 The woods to the left mask yet more colliery waste, adjacent to the site of the former Upper Writhlington Colliery. Opened around 1805 the pit ceased working in 1898. The offices, owner's house and blacksmith's shop remain as private dwellings. This site is rich in ferns and fossilised remains can be seen in Radstock Museum.

8 Half a mile further on the right is the old Corn Mill. Almost opposite the mill stood four or five cottages which suffered almost continuous flooding during winter months which must have been awful for the occupants.



9 Leave Mill Road.

Almost opposite is the former Ludlows Colliery. Sunk in 1782, the last coal dug here was on 19 March 1954. This was a big pit, employing (in June 1936) 375 men. It was nationalised in 1947 and subsequently modernised. Because of long underground haulage distances (there were over 11,000yds of 2ft gauge track underground) a 1947 report (never implemented) recommended diesel locomotives be used underground. After closure the red brick pithead baths continued to be used by Writhlington Miners, and survive today along with other nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, now converted to light industrial uses.

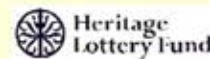
Continue back to Radstock past the timber yard standing on the site of the old sawmill. Around the corner and right over Sheepwash Bridge, so named because sheep were driven through the river here to wash them before they were presented for sale at the market. Back past the Old Bakery to the wheel.



Radstock
Museum



Norton Radstock
Town Council



The Pit Wheel, Waterloo Road

1 The pit wheel is one of two identical sheaves which were situated at Kilmersdon Colliery, one of the last to close in 1973.

Across Waterloo Road is the Market Hall, now Radstock Museum. The Market Hall was built in 1897/8 at a cost of £2,500 for Messrs Coombs the local brewery owners. Used as a covered market on Saturdays, it is said that anything from a parsnip to a piano could be purchased there.

2 Along Waterloo Road and next to the Market Hall is a red brick building, the former offices of the Coombs Brewery Company built in 1898. It is now an electrical shop. The open area opposite this shop was where the Somerset Coal Canal connected Radstock to the Midford Locks area in the 1790's. The canal had fallen into disuse by 1815 and the towpath was subsequently used for horse drawn coal dillies (mini wagons on rails). In 1873, on this same route, the Somerset and Dorset Railway (S&D) connected Radstock to Bath and later became the London Midland Scottish Railway (LMS). The northbound station and platform was closest to Waterloo Road and the southbound platform opposite. A footbridge over the track was provided for the public, whilst railway staff used the trackbed crossing. 1902 records show that on a typical Saturday some fifty trains passed through this station in a 12 hour period, and further traffic of course passed through the adjacent Great Western (GWR) line. The double set of level crossing gates crossing the main road often caused traffic chaos.

On the north side of Waterloo Road are two remaining cottages. For many years Herbert Yelling ran a local taxi service here serving the railway station. The modern flat roofed two-storey building is the telephone exchange standing in the grounds of the former Market Yard. In this yard, before the market hall was built, wheeled market stalls were stored. These were wheeled along Waterloo Road on Saturday for open air markets outside the Bell Hotel. The market yard housed a weekly cattle market and many other events including travelling entertainers, fairs and boxing prize-fights. Small workshops and retail shops lined the perimeter of the yard, one of the better known being the workshop of Walter Phillips, carpenter and undertaker. Opposite the Market Yard, the imposing red brick Radco Furnishing



Centre (circa 1915) dominates this space. This building was originally Radstock Co-operative Bakery, and the car park is where the LMS railway serviced the bakery, supplying flour mainly from Bristol.

3 The new houses of Pine Court stand on the site of the former S&D railway line and train sheds, and Pine Court is named after the Pines Express that passed through Radstock twice a day on its journey between Bournemouth and Manchester. Beyond these houses is the waste tip of Ludlow's Colliery, where spoil was tipped before a tramway was built to take waste up to the Tynning area at the top of the hill.

Further along Waterloo Road, to the north (left) are terraced cottages, built of local white liassic limestone ('white lias') and originally with Welsh slate roofs. These cottages, which are very characteristic of the area, were built in the late 1800's by the Waldegrave family to house the increasing need for local workers (mostly miners). The terraces have both architectural and social interest. The projecting houses at either end were originally occupied by colliery officials, watching over the workers in the rank and exercising a subtle form of social control. Waldegrave Terrace, higher up the side of the hill, is a good example of the local style. Manager's houses were typically detached and located in aloof positions above the town.

The houses in Pines Way lie adjacent to the perimeter area of the Radstock Wagon Repair Company. An embankment formerly ran along the back of Pines Way and Pine Court carrying the tramway for the coal dillies and the waste to be taken up to the Tynning waste tip. Beyond Pines Way a buttress wall that carried the tramway across the railway line is still visible.

4 Climbing Tynning Hill on the left-hand side are new houses standing on the site of the former Co-operative transport depot. Just beyond this and now converted to flats, is the former Radstock Co-operative processing dairy serving the many Co-op owned farms in the area. At the back of the yard are the stables where the delivery horses were stabled. The pair of houses further up the hill housed the Co-operative Society Transport Manager. The modern housing development to the left of the hill covers former meadows used to graze the Co-op horses and cattle.

Continue to the top of the hill where spoil heaps, known locally as batches, dominate the landscape.

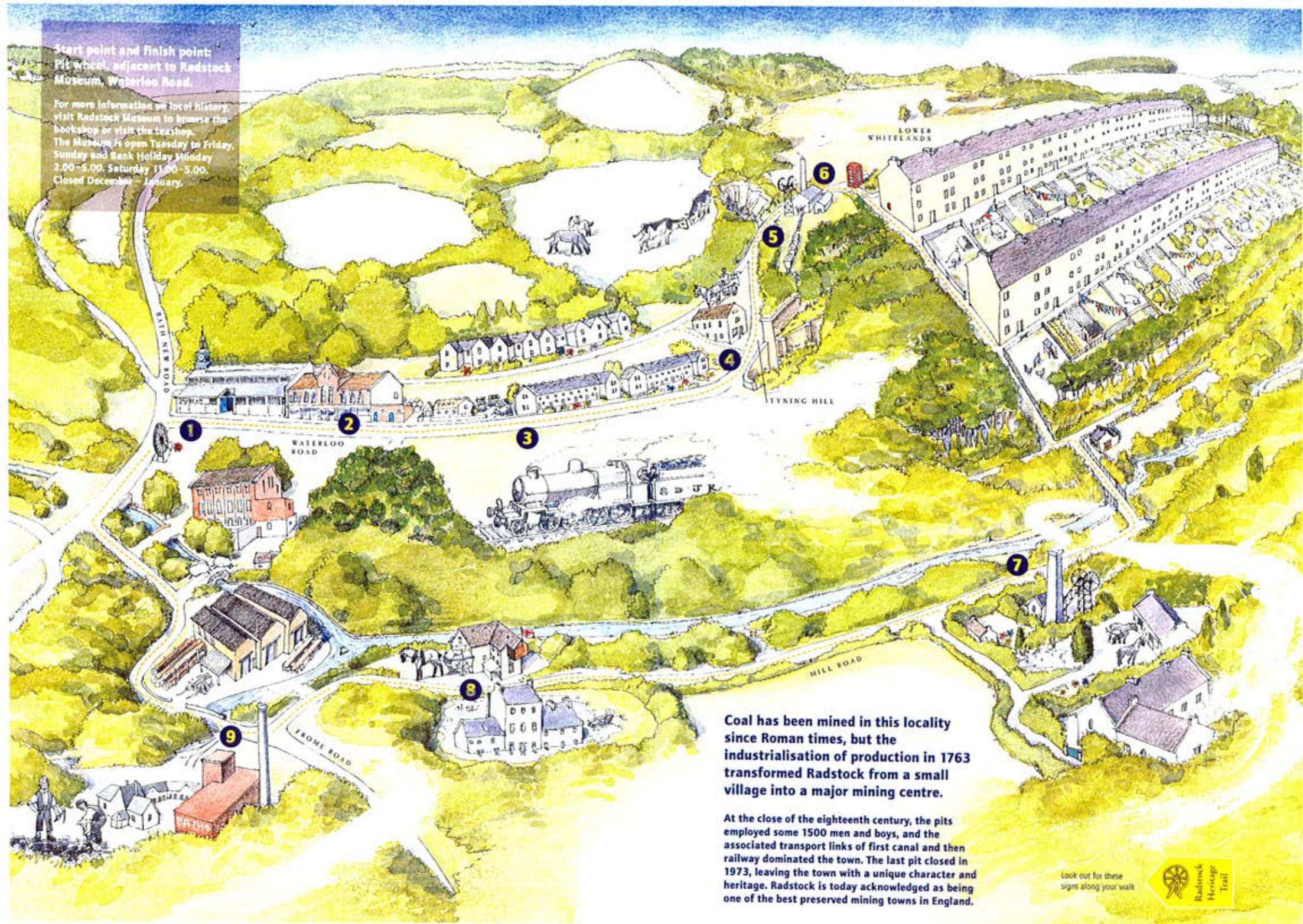
5 An estimated two and a half million tons of waste from Ludlows, Tynning and Middle pits was dumped here. In 1881 it was estimated that a third of output was waste, caused partly by the fact that the coal seams here are very thin and in order to create a workable space much waste had to be removed. The batches were planted with Scots Pine and Larch. These trees favoured the soil, enhanced the appearance of the waste tips, stabilised the waste against slippage and provided a ready supply of timber for pit props to shore up underground workings. Three further batches in this area have recently been levelled and grassed since the demise of the Coal Board and the closure of the Collieries in the 1970's. The land closest to Stoneable Road was once the Limestone quarry where white lias building stone was excavated around 1830/40.

To the right (east) was the site of the original Tynning Pit, sunk in 1837 and bought by the Waldegrave family ten years later. This was a deep working pit (1007 feet) with two pit shafts and a Cornish Beam Engine to pump out water. Underground flooding caused problems, and on 9 October 1876, men were drowned here when water broke through from the adjacent Writhlington Pit workings. The last coal was 'wound up' on 11 November 1909. No trace remains of the large colliery site.



Start point and finish point:
Pit wheel, adjacent to Radstock
Museum, Waterloo Road.

For more information on local history,
visit Radstock Museum to browse the
bookshop or visit the tea-shop.
The Museum is open Tuesday to Friday,
Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday
2.00-5.00, Saturday 11.00-5.00.
Closed December - January.



Coal has been mined in this locality since Roman times, but the industrialisation of production in 1763 transformed Radstock from a small village into a major mining centre.

At the close of the eighteenth century, the pits employed some 1500 men and boys, and the associated transport links of first canal and then railway dominated the town. The last pit closed in 1973, leaving the town with a unique character and heritage. Radstock is today acknowledged as being one of the best preserved mining towns in England.

Look out for these signs along your walk

