

The Bundanoon Collieries

Two collieries, the Erith Colliery and the Ringwood Colliery, were opened in the Bundanoon area, and each became known by other names, during their operational years.

Erith Colliery

In 1867 Mr Martin Larkin, having obtained the mineral rights to his property, opened the Rock Roof Colliery on his property, in Bundanoon. In August 1869 Larkin had 200 tonnes of coal mined and ready for delivery, and this coal was transported to the railway by horse teams, loaded into railway trucks and hauled away at night, by train.⁵¹⁹ The Rock Roof Colliery closed in 1871 and remained idle, for some ten years.



A sketch of the Erith Colliery adit in the cliff face and the access ladderway⁵²⁰

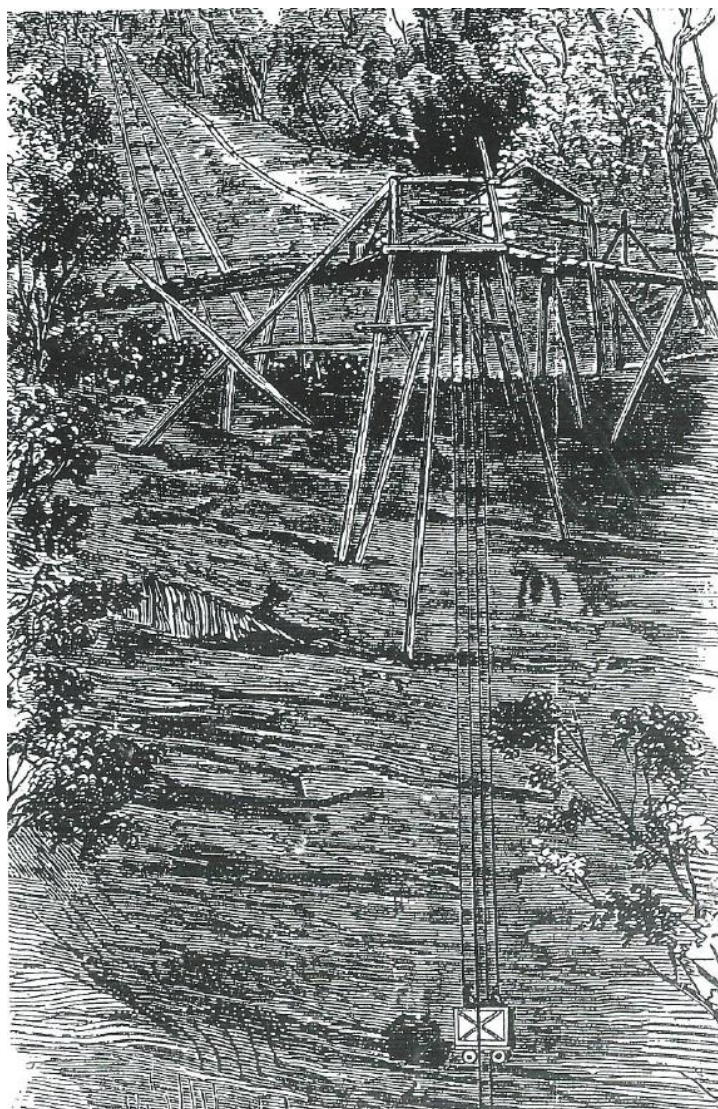
In 1881 the mine was reopened, when it was leased to Mr E. A. Baker, a Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, and Member for Carcoar, and his two sons, Sydney and Ernest Baker. The family renamed the mine the Erith Colliery, after their hometown of Erith on the Thames River. A wooden platform was constructed at the cliff top to project out beyond the edge of cliff face, and above the colliery adit (entrance) below. The empty and full coal skips were lowered/raised by a hoist to/from the mine entrance below, to the cliff top platform. From this platform the

⁵¹⁹ J. Jervis "A History of the Berrima District", 1962, pp. 157-158.

⁵²⁰ Australian Town & Country Journal NSW, 16th September 1882, p. 555.

coal skips were lowered and hauled along a 275 ms in length inclined tramway to the top of a Ridge. From this point a Tramway ran along the top of the Ridge to a Screening Plant, where the coal was loaded in to rail waggons and taken to rail sidings, constructed in 1881 by the State Railways, on the Great Southern Rail line.

The underground workers at the mine, accessed the mine entrance by climbing down an up wooden ladders, attached to the cliff face. The Erith Colliery employed 15 men underground in 1881 and 1882, 27 men in 1883 and 1884, and 12 men in 1885, when regular work was interrupted, due to lack of sales.⁵²¹ During the period 1881 to 1885, there were between 10 and 13 men employed on the surface, in addition to those working underground. The colliery ceased as a working mine in the year 1886, only to be reopened later that year, employing 17 men before being closed for the last time at the end of 1896. Erith Colliery was advertised for sale in 1887.

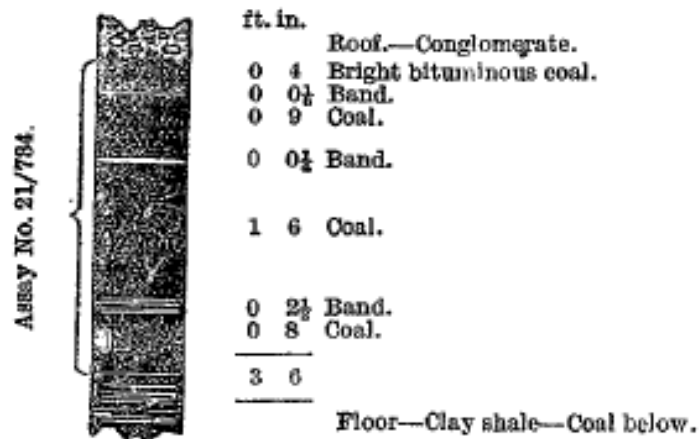


Erith Colliery Hoist and Inclined Tramway in background⁵²²

⁵²¹ NSW Mines Department Annual Reports (MDAR) 1881-96 inclusive, reviewed by the late G. R. Mould.

⁵²² J. Longworth "Hung Out for Coal - Tramways of the Ringwood and Erith Collieries", Light Railway Research Society of Australia, "Light Railways" magazine October 1995, p. 24.

Section of Top Seam, Erith Colliery, Bundanoon, from western heading about 75 ft. from Tunnel mouth.



Coal seam section for Erith Colliery showing 3 ft 6 inch (1.07 m) seam thickness⁵²³

Ringwood Colliery

The Ringwood Colliery at Bundanoon was opened in 1884 by a Company formed by Thomas Saywell. A Prospectus was issued for the Great Bundanoon Coal Mining Company and a Share issue of 20,000 ten shilling shares was arranged.⁵²⁴



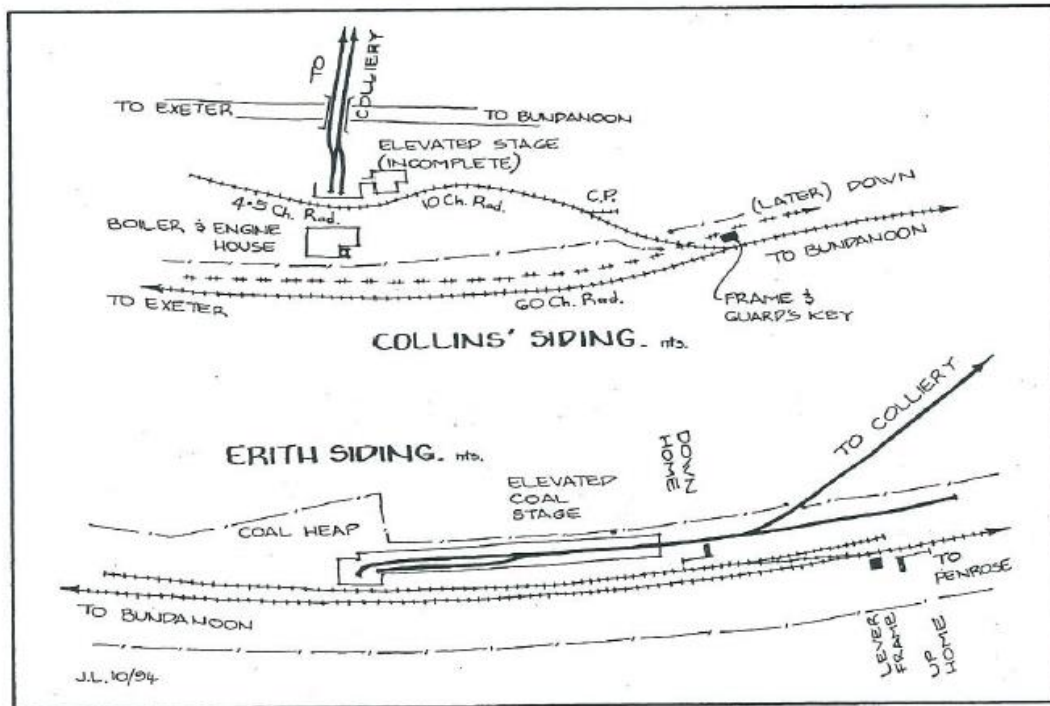
Ringwood Colliery platform and poppet head used to hoist coal up the cliff face⁵²⁵

⁵²³ NSW Mines Department Annual Report 1924, p. 96.

⁵²⁴ Australian Town & Country Journal NSW, 31st January 1885.

⁵²⁵ J. Longworth "Hung Out for Coal - Tramways of the Ringwood and Erith Collieries", Light Railway Research Society of Australia, "Light Railways" magazine October 1995, p. 5.

In 1884 the Colliery adit was opened in the coal seam at the base of a cliff on Stonequarry Creek, a tributary of Bundanoon Creek. The top of the cliff was 85 m above the adit. The sophisticated platform and poppet head located at the top of the cliff, was designed and constructed by Mr Thomas Bertram, a Mining Engineer who had migrated to Australia in 1883. From this platform, the coal skips were pulled by an endless rope haulage for 2.4 km along a tramway to a railway siding on the Great Southern Rail Line.



Erith and Ringwood/Collins rail sidings⁵²⁶

The Ringwood Colliery employed 22 people, and closed in 1885 when a dispute arose between the freehold owner of the property, Mr Martin Atkinson, and Mr Saywell's Company, the operators of the mine, over the £15 pounds per week royalty payment being demanded by Mr Atkinson. An offer of £1000 pounds, to purchase the property from Mr Atkinson was refused, and in 1885 the Company went into liquidation. The abandoned mine Plant was acquired by Mr Saywell who subsequently made use of that Plant, to open the South Bulli Colliery, and the South Clifton Colliery Shaft mine in 1891.⁵²⁷

After lying idle for about a decade, the abandoned Ringwood Colliery was purchased by Mr Joseph Collins who carried out an extensive reconstruction of the tramway, and in 1896 reopened the colliery and named it the Collins Colliery.⁵²⁸

The Collins Colliery commenced operations and in the 1896-97, eleven persons were employed and 3,282 tonnes of coal had been produced. Coal production was consistently between 3,000 and 3,800 tonnes per annum from then until 1904, according to the NSW Mines Department

⁵²⁶ J. Longworth "Hung Out for Coal - Tramways of the Ringwood and Erith Collieries," Light Railway Research Society of Australia, "Light Railways" magazine October 1995, p. 4 and 10.

⁵²⁷ G. Sellers "The Illawarra Coalfield - A History to 1905" AusIMM Conference, Illawarra, May 1976.

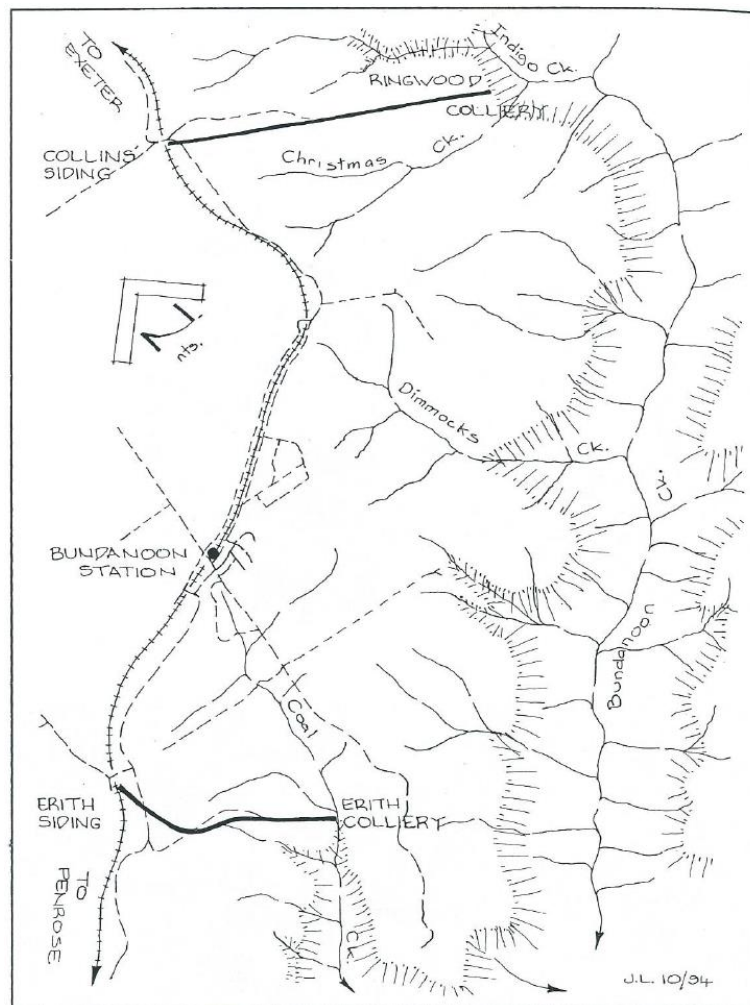
⁵²⁸ NSW Mines Department records name the owner as Mr Joseph Collins, not Mr James Collins, per B. J. Andrews "Coal Mines of NSW", 2011, p. 114.

Annual Reports.⁵²⁹ Operations were suspended during the first half of 1905, due to disastrous bushfires that destroyed most of the woodwork associated with the mine infrastructure. In 1908 the Collins Colliery employed seven people underground, and four persons on the surface.

The Colliery ceased production in 1912 when the NSW Government Railways introduced new long boiler steam locomotives, that could not handle the steep gradient of the Collins railway siding, due to the water in the boiler moving to one end. As it was too expensive to regrade the siding, the Collins siding was officially closed, in January 1913. The Colliery reopened briefly in October 1923 as the Federal Colliery, however, it closed again in May 1924. The timber platform and poppet head pictured above was burned down for the final time, in the 1939 bushfires.

Bundanoon Colliery

A small coal mine known as Bundanoon Colliery was opened in 1880, however, little is known about this mine. NSW Mines Department records⁵³⁰ state that it was abandoned in August 1897.



Ringwood/Collins Colliery and Erith Colliery rail lines to the Main Southern Railway⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ NSW Department of Mines Annual Report 1903, p. 37.

⁵³⁰ B. J. Andrews "Coal Mines of NSW" 2011, p. 88.

⁵³¹ J. Longworth "Hung Out for Coal - Tramways of the Ringwood and Erith Collieries," Light Railway Research Society of Australia, "Light Railways" magazine October 1995, p. 4 and 10.