

On This Day – 30th April

Valleyfield-Bo'ness coal tunnel opens



The moment the two tunnels linked up. Photo: National Mining Museum

Valleyfield is one of several mining villages in the Inner Forth area – small communities built around a sole industry, and almost entirely dependent on the mine's operation. But with the coal-processing facilities in Valleyfield declining in the 50s and 60s something drastic had to be done by the National Coal Board to help. They decided to devise a way to get coal from Valleyfield to the more modern colliery at Kinneil.

From 1962 to 1964 two teams of workers dug a tunnel 2.5 miles long and 500 metres down, with one starting from Bo'ness and the other in Valleyfield, with the plan to meet somewhere in

the middle. The construction effort was overseen by mine surveyor Alastair Moore, with all the measurements and calculations done by hand, often using OS trig points. Despite this, there was only 6 inches of difference between the two tunnels when they were connected in 1964. It cost £500,000 at the time (approximately £9,600,000 today).

The initial plan was that the tunnel would Kinneil a century's supply of work, but this was not to be. Valleyfield pit closed in 1978, and Kinneil was closed (also on the 30th April) in 1983. With that, the tunnel was filled in with concrete, and the openings covered over, leaving Moore with a unique boast – being the only person to have walked to Fife and back under the sea.

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