WOOLLEY'S first mine shaft at Wheatley Wood was sunk to a depth of 220 yards to open up the Winter and Beamshaw Seams. It was connected to roadways from the old adit workings to provide a through ventilation system.

By 1878, nine years after the shaft sinking, water seepage was becoming a serious problem and a beam pump—probably the largest in Yorkshire at that time—was installed. This dealt effectively with the water for many years until the introduction of electric pumps.

Water from surrounding strata is still a feature of mine working in this part of the coalfield and the 1869 Wheatley Wood shaft remains in use for pumping purposes. Although a modern steel headgear now tops the shaft one of the original pine baulks has been retained inside the structure. In 1912 the colliery owners, Fountain & Burnley, sank two further shafts on the present colliery site. These two, known as Nos. 1 and 2 shafts, went to a depth of 425 yards intersecting the deeper Parkgate, Thorncliffe, Silkstone and Blocking seams.

The doubts and difficulties surrounding the working of thin seams were already in evidence. After the 1 and 2 shafts were completed the mining engineers had second thoughts about the viability of working the thin seams. They decided to fill in the shafts up to the Parkgate level and work the thick seam only. But before this work began there was a change of management; the order was rescinded, and a vigorous programme of thin seam working began in 1915.

A further shaft (No. 3) was sunk in 1942 to develop the Lidgett seam at a depth of 130 yards.

But Woolley's multi-shaft story was still not complete. After nationalisation in 1947 production began to increase rapidly. With the opening of new faces and longer roadways an improved ventilation system became necessary. And so in 1959, along-side the first little shaft at Wheatley Wood a new large diameter shaft was driven. This is for ventilation only and has none of the conventional headgear. All that can be seen on the surface is a concrete "lid" to the shaft and the housing of the giant ventilation fan. This operates at 1,300 h.p., and has an output of 470,000 cu. ft. of air per minute.

**Mechanisation**

Woolley Colliery has done a great deal of pioneer work in mechanising the coal-getting operation in thin seams and has a nationwide reputation in this respect. As far back as 1932 it claimed to be the first colliery in Britain to be completely electrified. When the National Coal Board instituted experiments in the remote-operation of coalface equipment Woolley was chosen as the location of the thin-seam trials for ROLF (Remotely Operated Longwall Face).

For almost three years the Woolley miners gathered valuable experience of the problems associated with electronically controlled coal-winning in the most difficult conditions, and also achieved very creditable production figures from experimental equipment.