

## **Children in Shropshire Mines**

*Below are extracts from the 1841 Children's Employment Commission on the employment of children and young persons in the coal and iron mines of Shropshire.*

### **Ages and numbers of the children**

Children are sent down to work in the coal-pits and iron-pits at a very early age and probably much earlier than the proprietors of the great companies can be aware. In fact, neither the proprietors nor lessees of the mines come into direct contact with the miners, but they make their contract with the charter-masters or, as they are called in Staffordshire, the butties to pay a certain charter or price for every ton of coals or ironstone raised to the top and it is the charter-masters who employ and pay the work people and all the proprietors or lessees have to do with the charter-masters is to cause their ground-bailiff to see that the mine is properly worked, so as to get as much as possible of its contents. The charter-masters may be induced at the pressing instance of the men working under them to give employment to very young children, and neither the proprietors nor perhaps even their ground-bailiff be aware of it. A remarkable instance of this became known to me when exploring the Hill's Lane Pit belonging to the Madeley Wood Company; the ground-bailiff, two charter-masters, and a labouring collier, accompanied me:

"I say, Jonas," said the ground-bailiff to one of the charter-masters, "there are very few children working in this mine, I think we have none under 10 or 11." The collier immediately said, "Sir, my boy is only a little more than four." This was said, "Well, I suppose that you take good care of him. You take him down and up when you go yourself."

Mr. William Tranter agent of the Coalbrook Dale Company, was requested by Mr. Alfred Darby, one of the partners and managers, to give full information in reply to the questions put to him. He states that "he has occasion to go down into the mines both of coal and iron. There are many children in the mines but only boys go below. Some are as young as about six, and they are at various ages up to manhood. Boys of from six to seven may earn in pits about 6d a day; about nine they may earn from 10d to 1/-, according to the work".

Mr. Matthew Webb, a medical gentleman residing in a mansion at Coalpit Bank, states, "There are very few under six or seven, who are employed to draw weights with a girdle round the body, and those only where the roof of the pit is so low for short distances as to prevent horses of the smallest size, and asses, from being employed."

The lowness of the roof or thinness of the bed of coals, as this gentleman says, is no doubt the cause of employing boys instead of horses or asses, which

otherwise would be more convenient and cheaper, but at least two-thirds of all the beds of coal in the Coalbrook Dale district are of this thin description. From other evidence there is every reason to believe that very few so employed as substitutes for the animal creation are under six or seven. It cannot however be but a matter of regret that any so young as six or seven should be so employed, and nothing but long familiarity with the practice could reconcile the mind to the employment of children of still higher age at such labour.

### **Hours of work.**

The hours of work according to the evidence of Mr. John Anstice, of the Madeley Wood Company, are from six in the morning to six in the evening. Mr. William Tranter, of the Coalbrook Dale Company, gives evidence to the same effect and it is confirmed by all the witnesses, the young men and boys working in the pits, who have been examined.

### **Meals.**

In most of the mines of the Coalbrook Dale district there are no regular times for meals, the principle being to keep the steam-engine constantly employed in drawing up coals or ironstone. The charter-master is paid according to the number of tons brought up to the bank, and in his arrangements with the men he subdivides the work with a view for a certain number of tons to be dug. Accordingly all parties look to the quantity of coals or ironstone which can be sent up in a given time. The people manage to relieve each other in their work, so as to allow time to sit down by the side of the horse-way and speedily eat their victuals. It is usual to take one good bait between 11am and 12am, and to defer any further meal until the work is over.

It is not possible to name any custom or practice amongst the miners in any district to which there are not exceptions. In some of the Coalbrook Vale mines the people stop one hour to dinner.

The evidence of Mr. John Anstice is as follows:- "The usual working hours are from six to six during which time they relieve each other to allow time for their meals." Mr. William Tranter states, that "In some pits the work ceases for an hour to dinner but in others not, and the people take refreshment as they can, and in such pits it is the custom to leave off an hour earlier."

### **Nature of the employment**

The various purposes for which boys are employed are stated by Mr. William Tranter as follows: "In the coal-mines some boys are employed in bringing the coals in small carriages called dans, to the horse-road and others in pitching them into the carriages drawn by horses. Some boys are employed to open doors. Some boys are employed to hook on the carriages to the chains in the

shaft. Some boys go errands for the miners to another part of the pit and fetch what the men have occasion for. Boys are employed to drive the horses. Some will begin at 13 or 14 to work like men with the pick but the greater part from 14 to 16."

### **Drawing by the girdle and chain**

The most remarkable part of the work of the children is drawing by the girdle and chain. It is not totally unknown in South Staffordshire in working some thin seams of coal and is still more in use in the thin beds of ironstone but it is not nearly so common as in Shropshire.

About 30 years ago it was a very general custom to employ young boys, both in the coal-pits and iron-pits, to draw carriages by means of a girdle put round the naked waist, to which a chain from the carriage was hooked and passed between their legs and the boys crawled on their hands and knees drawing the carriage after them. This custom is not yet entirely out of use, though the respectable companies have many years discontinued it and have substituted instead small iron railways and small carriages called dans, which the boys push before them. All persons who have spoken of the girdles both in Staffordshire and Shropshire have described the labour as very severe, and the girdle as frequently blistering their sides, and occasioning great pain.

Mr. John Anstice, of the Madeley Wood Company, states on this subject, that:- "The employment of girdles by which boys in former times usually drew the carriages is now very much gone out in Shropshire." Mr. William Tranter, an agent of the Coalbrook Dale Company says, "The company does not employ any boys who draw by the girdle and chain. It was formerly so but has not been for many years. Formerly the girdle was employed when there were no rails and the labour was very severe but now that there are rails there is no longer any necessity for boys drawing by the girdle."

Mr. William Lloyd, an old miner who was sent to me to the inn at the Iron Bridge with specimens of coal and ironstone on being asked his opinion of the girdle, replied, "Sir, I can only say of it what the mothers say, it is barbarity!" All the great companies have made an advance in civilisation and have substituted the railroad and the dan for the girdle and chain; but there are still some persons, generally of small capital, who lease a small pit, and instead of a steam-engine use a horse and a gin, and instead of laying down a small railway in their pits, employ boys to drag with the girdle and chain. Whilst we honour the desire of these persons to advance the interests of themselves and their families, it is too much for them to expect that society can any longer tolerate such an antiquated barbarism and allow them, for the sake of saving a small outlay, to make a sacrifice of the health and happiness of helpless children whom all men are bound to protect. The Legislature has prohibited under severe penalties the

drawing of carts by dogs, and cannot therefore allow the more inhuman practice of drawing of carts by boys.

The examination of the children shows there is much more of drawing with girdle and chain, in the smaller pits in this district than what from the evidence of the managers of the large companies we should have supposed. The great cruelty of the system is, when there are no rails laid down in the road and which poor masters from a difficulty of finding capital are unwilling to provide, whilst rich companies most readily and cheerfully spare no expense which their own interest, as well as humanity towards the work people, prompt them to undergo.

A perusal of the evidence of the children will amply show the severe pain which this manner of working inflicts, yet they endure it with great fortitude and resignation. Nevertheless this is no reason why the same means which the humanity and good sense of the larger companies prompt them to adopt should not be adopted by all. That the work can never be accomplished without suffering, there is too much reason to fear, but no means should be spared to render it the least possible.

In the course of this inquiry I have not been able to find any instance where machinery was substituted in place of boys in drawing coals from the thin beds of the mines. Some engineers have thought such a thing practicable, and others not. The following is an instance in which animal power was employed near Alfreton, in Derbyshire as stated in evidence by Mr. Joseph Tomlinson:

In Summercoats pit, formerly, when working in the hard coal, which was a bed 40 yards below the surface, we had a gateway about four feet high, sufficiently high for asses to drag the waggons on a railway and at the corner of the gateway at the side of the workings there was a wheel, around which went a rope, by which the waggons were drawn from the workings down to the gateway. The workings were only 2 feet 7 inches high. It was too little room for boys. We should never think of putting boys to such work: I should consider it inhuman.

No such thing would be thought of in this part of the country. We found this mode quite convenient. We every morning shifted the frame in which the wheel was fixed, and the work went on very regularly. We got on fully as quick as when the men drove the carriages before them.

An empty carriage was drawn back by a boy without difficulty, and another lad led back the ass to the proper place. It was quite easy and comfortable. The bed got so thin at last that it would be a loss to continue working. In fact, it was a loss at last. We have left off working this bed about a year. It was not until the bed got too thin for the smallest asses we could get that we took to this plan, and we kept to it till the bed got too thin to be worth working at all.

### **State of the place of work**

The state of the place of work has already been sufficiently explained in the description of the mines and the manner of working them. The ironstone mines have in general thicker beds than the coal-mines and are therefore, in many respects, more comfortable. The mine, with all its disadvantages, is not a disagreeable place. When it was observed to the men at work in the farthest part of the Hill's Lane Pit, that it would make an excellent gaol as the prisoners could not by any means make their escape, one of the miners said, that he would greatly prefer dwelling there day and night, than going into Shrewsbury gaol; for by being in the mine he should have his liberty.

Persons who have done actions not deemed very heinous by the miners have been known to take shelter in the mines, and there are few constables that would willingly go down after them. The boys in the pit were lively, cheerful, and playful and seemed to consider their work to be no hardship. Mr. Jones, the ground-bailiff, stated, that he had two sons, who became negligent of their lessons at school and he proposed to take them into the mine to drive the horses. They seemed not to dislike it; however, at the end of six weeks they very willingly went back to school and stuck to their books, as after all the easier employment of the two.

### **Accidents**

Accidents are in this district very numerous. Mr. Webb, of Bankhouse, states, that he has had as many as 500 cases from accidents in one year. Another surgeon estimates the accidents from explosions brought for relief to the Union surgeons as being about 100 in a year. The particulars of the deaths by violence for the year 1838 were obtained from the Registrar General, and the results are subjoined.

### **Deaths by Violence**

The mode in which the registrars in this district have performed their duty is exceedingly defective. We have 19 cases of deaths by burning, but we cannot, in any one of them, tell the mode of burning, whether by clothes catching fire, or whether by explosion in mines, or any other mode. Many of them, no doubt, are attributable to the explosions, but it is kept entirely out of sight. In the same spirit 11 cases are merely entered as accidental but nothing is told of the nature of the accident, whether falling down a shaft of a mine, or crushed by the fall of coal, or of the roof. In the seven deaths entered as occurring in the coal-pit, no explanation is given. All this is very different from the manner in which the registrars have done their duty in Staffordshire, and is very unsatisfactory.

There is only one case of death entered as taking place, by being 'sulphured,' that is killed by carburetted hydrogen gas, or explosive gas; but as 100 cases of injury from explosion annually come to the Union surgeons, there can be no doubt that several must come to the coroner.

Nearly the same remarks which were made about the deaths by violence in Staffordshire are applicable to this district also, and need not be repeated.

***Deaths by Burning***

Broseley - 2 (ages 3 and 11)

Dawley - 8 (ages 2, 3, 3, 3, 7, 13, 22, 35)

Madeley - 3 (ages 3, 5, 8)

Wellington - 3 (ages 2, 3, 5, 5)

Wombridge 3 (ages 4, 15, 42)

***Deaths by Drowning***

Broseley - 3 (ages 41, 45, 49)

Dawley - 4 (ages 3, 27, 38, 43)

Madeley - 1 (age 9)

Wellington - 1 (age 9)

***Deaths called Accidental***

Broseley - (age 4)

Dawley - 1 (age 9)

Madeley - 6 (ages 18, 20, 22, 33, 44, 51)

Wombridge - 2 (age 10 and 13)

***Deaths in a Coalpit***

Dawley - (ages 12, 17, 18, 25)

Wellington - 2 (ages N/K, 14)

Wombridge - 1 (age 30)

***Deaths in a Stone-pit***

Dawley - 2 (ages 25, 42)

Wellington - 1 (age 32)

### ***Deaths by Scalding***

Dawley - 2 (ages 2, 2)

### ***Death by a Turnstile***

Wellington - 1 (age 4)

### ***Death by Explosive Gas***

Dawley - 1 (age 11)

### ***Death at a Lime Rock***

Madeley - 1 (age 44)

### ***Death by falling into a Coalpit***

Wellington - 1 (age 10)

### ***Death by falling into a Stone-pit***

Wellington - 1 (age 16)

### **Holidays**

Mr John Anstice states that the boys on the average do not work above five days in the week. The miners are not certain of constant employment. If there be a large stock of coals and ironstone on hand, they will not be allowed to have 11 or 12 days' work in the fortnight, until the quantity on hand be somewhat reduced. About Christmas last the miners belonging to the Lawley furnace, near Wellington, stated that there was then only nine days' work in the iron-mines, and 10 days' work in the coal mines in the fortnight. They work solely to supply the furnace and it is not the interest of the proprietors to have a disproportionate amount of capital lying unproductive, in coke and ironstone, of which there cannot for some time be any immediate need.

### **Hiring and Wages**

The boys who open doors are paid by the coal-masters. Those engaged in pushing dans, attending to the horses, and at the foot of the shaft, are paid by the charter-masters. "Boys from six to seven may earn in the pits 6d a day. At nine they may earn 10d to 1/-, according to the work. About 12 a boy gets 6d to 1/8d and some as much as 2/- a day."

## **Treatment and Care**

The treatment and care of the children and young persons, as far as the present system of the work will permit, seemed to be unobjectionable. Mr. Joseph Prestwich who resided long in the district, says of the treatment of the boys, "Respectable masters, like those of this district, would not allow any cruelty to be exercised." Mr. Tranter says, "The company would not allow any men to beat the children, and there are very seldom any complaints." Mr. John Anstice says, "The boys are a lively, cheerful, and apparently healthy set of lads as are to be seen anywhere, and when they leave work they are frolicsome as boys coming home from school." Mr. Robert Bailey says, "The boys are lively, cheerful, and playful after their day's work. They are generally fond of the employment. In frosty weather, at the dinner-hour and after work, they are fond of going to slide on the ice."

## **Apprentices**

The system of taking apprentices in the mines, and binding them to work until 21, if not totally unknown, is at any rate exceedingly rare; and witnesses who were examined on this point stated that they had never heard of such a thing. That apprenticeship is very rare is best of all proved from the fact that no applications are made for apprentices to the mines by any of the charter-masters of the district; but charter-masters do come from the county of Staffordshire, and it is grievous to think that pauper or orphan boys should be delivered into their hands, to be compelled, for their benefit, to work until 21 years of age. From the Madeley Union children have been so bound, under 10 years of age, but in the Wellington Union not until some years afterwards. Such is the evidence of the clerks of these Unions. All the charter-masters in Shropshire, of whom inquiry was made, spoke of it with horror, and said it was as bad as the African Slave Trade.

Mr George Jones, the agent of the Wombridge collieries, gave evidence as follows: "It was formerly the custom of the butties to take apprentices from distant parishes, by indenture for seven years, to work in collieries till 21 years of age. The lads were usually 13 or 14. It was unjust, as the youths for three or four years were full-grown men and were working for the benefit of butties, and getting nothing at all, except sometimes a small gratuity. It was no trifle at last, and I put a stop to it in our collieries. I am not aware that apprentices are taken at all into collieries in this county. I should consider it very wicked to allow it."

## **Physical Condition of the Children**

In reporting on Staffordshire it has already been noticed that out of 1,000 deaths occurring from July 1 1838, to June 30, 1839 amongst the people of all ages in the mining district of Staffordshire, with the part of Worcester which is included within Staffordshire, and of Shropshire, there were 467 of children under three years of age. On inquiring of the medical men the cause of such mortality, not on

of them seemed to be aware of it and the reason assigned for not knowing it was, that medical men are very seldom called in to children of that age. The lady of a surgeon at Wellington attributed much of the sickness and mortality to want of cleanliness and also to the children being frequently left by the mother in charge of a young girl, who perhaps had several to take care of, and consequently they were sometimes neglected. But there is another cause which probably operates more efficiently still and that is the administering of quack anodyne medicines.

Mr. Cooper, a surgeon, of Bilston, stated in his evidence respecting the children that the chief evil which they have to endure is, that when very young their mothers injure them by quackery, and give opiates, such as Godfrey's Cordial, which is a mixture of treacle and opium. Many deaths are caused by quack medicines. Medical men seldom see the children until they are benumbed and stupefied with opiates. Mr. Matthew Webb, a surgeon, resident at Bankhouse, in the parish of Wellington, in Shropshire, says: "Much injury is done to very young children by giving them spirits in their food, and anodyne quack medicines - Godfrey's Cordial, also Dalby's Carminative, which consists of magnesia, tincture of asafoetida, penny-royal water, and opium, and various other medicines into which opium enters. The children are frequently injured by not obtaining a supply of milk, which is scarce in the district in winter, and by being fed with scalded bread, coarse-brown sugar, and gin. The extreme sweetness injures the stomach, and takes away appetite. Sometimes the girls left in charge of children give them gin to keep them from crying".

When the young children pass through such an ordeal as this, of opium and gin, it is no wonder that so many of them should die. The children who have good natural constitutions, and little sickness or pain, will not cry much and will seldom have these popular medicines administered to them, and will of course pass unimpaired. Mr. John Gray at Dudley told me that it was usual amongst the working people for nurses to give a teaspoonful of gin to a new-born child. To children a little older gin is often administered 'to break the wind off the stomach.' Godfrey's Cordial is known by the name of 'comfort,' and is an article in constant demand. A little girl will come to the chemist's, and ask for a dose of it to give to the baby next day, telling him that her mother is going out to wash. A respectable chemist of the town stated that he made twenty gallons of 'comfort' in the year and that there were chemists who lived nearer the market-place and more in the way of the country people, who made a great deal more.

It must not be supposed, however, that such medical treatment of children is peculiar to colliers, or only prevails in places far remote from the light of the metropolis for, on making inquiry of a medical man, and of a chemist at Croydon, in Surrey, the same things were found to exist there, and in the country around, though not nearly to such an extent as in the mining districts. After such a thorough drafting off by the use of gin and opium, it is no wonder that the survivors should be a very healthy race until they have arrived at that period of life when the constitution yields to the effects of severe labour, and the air of the

miners. That the miners, men and boys, are healthy, all the medical men assert. I went to see the Sunday-school at the Methodist chapel, said to be 700 in number and certainly a more healthy set of children could nowhere be seen. The boys were all substantially and decently clothed. On the female side of the school the girls, more particularly the elder ones and the teachers, understand how to show themselves off to the best advantage. At the same time it must be admitted that the miners, as a body, are of small stature. This is stated in the evidence of Mr. Tranter, and is a matter abundantly obvious even to a casual observer. There are many instances of men never exceeding the usual size of boys.

An ordeal which takes away the weak and leaves the strong has not only an influence on the existing generation, but also on generations to come. This early mortality of the feeble has also a tendency to increase the number of marriages, as the parents are speedily relieved of that part of their offspring which would be most troublesome and expensive, whilst the strong grow up and, as has been shown, are soon able not only to gain their own living, but to yield a surplus profit. A young miner, therefore, sees no terrors of poverty beset the path of matrimony, and speedily finds an associate who concurs with him in opinion. The colliers do not perhaps speculate in this manner, but although these things enter not into their thoughts, they are fully capable of feeling the practical effect. They see that marriage is not a burden and instinct does the rest.

### **Moral Condition**

Having very fully gone into the subject of education in the neighbouring district of South Staffordshire, it becomes unnecessary to say much about the district of Coalbrook Dale, both being so much alike. The children of the colliers go to work at a very early age, and must chiefly depend for what little education they receive on the Sunday-schools, of which there is an abundant supply. One of the largest of these is held in a large Methodist chapel at Coal-pit Bank, at which from 500 to 700 attend, boys and girls, but have to come out before divine service commences, to make room for the congregation. They assemble again at two o'clock. They appeared as fine a set of children as anywhere we might expect to see.

Two or three day-schools were mentioned as existing in the district, but with an exceedingly small number of scholars. There is an infant-school in the Dale, established and supported by Mrs. Darby and family, which I visited. The children appeared exceedingly happy which is the chief thing to be desired in an infant-school and in their examinations they manifested a knowledge of many things which it would be highly useful for growing persons to understand. There is another school in the same place for girls more advanced in age, in which reading, writing, accounts, and sewing are taught, and seemingly taught well. There is one good point in the conducting of these schools deserving imitation. No parents are ever asked to send their children to them. The branches of education, times of attendance, fees to be paid, are all settled and parents are

not led to believe that it is any benefit to the founders that they should send their children. The good to be obtained is placed within their reach, and they are left to guide themselves by a sense of their own interest and that of their children. This independent course is considered as having had the best effect.

The evidence of the collier children of this district will show that those who acquire a capacity to read do not in fact make use of that faculty in after-life. Unless some elementary knowledge be communicated to excite curiosity, and lay a foundation of knowledge the experience of every district tends to show that merely learning to know the letters, and to pronounce syllables and words, does very little good.

The Rev. Thomas Ward, of Dawley, on this subject says: "Many do not learn to read or write before they leave school, and have no time to improve afterwards, being employed all day in the mines, or works, or on the pit-banks. There are a great number of the miners who are unable to read and very few can write. There are not sufficient for instruction of the children of the poor."

### **Feeling Between the Employers of Labour and the Men**

In the South Staffordshire coal-field, and in the Shropshire or Coalbrook Dale coal-field, there is the very best feeling existing between all ranks of society. Proprietors, iron-masters, ground-bailiffs, charter-masters, and men in office of every rank, uniformly expressed kind and respectful sentiments towards the men. The statements which both parties gave of the wages and advantages entirely agreed. This good understanding between the employers and the employed is productive of the happiest results to both parties.

Mr. Joseph Prestwich Jnr, who resided several summers in this district, says in his evidence, that he found the miners civil and well-behaved which he attributes to the district not being extensive, seven miles long by two broad, and a considerable number of gentry residing in it, by which means a degree of refinement and civilisation is kept up. No doubt every person who visits Coalbrook Dale will leave it with an equally favourable impression. That the great companies are disposed to do whatever is right there is no reason to doubt. The managers of the Coalbrook Dale Company, and Madeley Wood Company, most readily showed their works, and gave instructions to their people to afford every information. Mr. Alfred Darby said that it was a very proper inquiry and that if they were doing any wrong it was right to point it out to them, that they might avoid doing so any longer. Mr. John Anstice, on the day following, in like manner, made a declaration to the same effect.

### **Iron-Mines**

The carriages or waggons containing the pennystone are drawn to the foot of the shaft and are then hoisted up by the steam-engine or gin, and afterwards pushed

by men, or drawn by horses, along a railway to a part of the pit-bank, and emptied out. Here may be seen at all seasons of the year a number of young women and girls breaking up the pieces of clod and gathering out the pennystone and putting it in baskets as they are called but which are small vessels made of iron, when one of these is filled a girl, with the assistance of another girl, takes it upon her head and carries it and empties out the ironstone into a large heap in a place by itself where it lies exposed to the sun and air.

In cold weather the young women and girls are clothed in warm flannel dresses and great coats like those of men, with handkerchiefs round their necks, with hats or bonnets on their heads and seem to be comfortably protected from the weather. They are always smiling, laughing, and singing and when observed at their work manifest a consciousness of how well they would appear if in better attire. The employment seems very healthy, being light and in the open air. It has been stated by one medical gentleman that the loads which they took upon their heads were too heavy for them and caused injury but if so that might easily be remedied by giving to the smaller girls baskets of a less size and, besides this, it is their own fault if they load them more than they find agreeable. Young women at this employment earn about 8/- a week.

Crawstone ironstone is found in a bed considerably lower than the pennystone and consisting of a friable sandstone, in which the cakes of crawstone are embedded. It is brought upon the bank and afterwards separated from the measure by the young women in the same way as the pennystone.

Occasionally an old woman is seen on the bank working amongst the young ones. An old miner, William Lloyd, who brought to me specimens from Madeley, stated that he considered that young women on the banks led a far happier life than servants in a gentleman's family and would make far better wives for miners. They had their own liberty after their day's work and on Sundays they might dress in the morning and go about where they pleased. They were not spoiled, like women in a gentleman's family, by seeing extravagance which a miner could not afford. Their notions of things agreed better with those of the miner and when they married they studied economy and if they had no families they would go out to the bank to work without a murmur. In all this it is very probable that the old miner was right. Many of the young women who work on the banks in Shropshire come up to London in the month of May, and go for about three months into the service of the market gardeners, being employed at first in weeding, and afterwards in carrying vegetables, strawberries, and other descriptions of fruit to market. They are reputed to be very economical, and to make a great deal of money, which they bring back with them into Shropshire.

### **Steeraway Limestone Mines**

In an iron-smelting country, limestone is as necessary an article as coal and ironstone. When all the three are smelted in the furnace together, the limestone

and clay and silex of the ironstone combine together and the iron being thus disengaged glides down to the bottom. The Steeraway Limestone Mines are about a mile and a half from Wellington, on the side of a hill which flanks the celebrated Wrekin. About 100 men and 20 boys are employed. There is the usual apparatus of a mine the steam engine, the chain over the pulleys which goes down the shaft to bring up the carriages loaded with stone. The depth down to the bottom of the shaft is about 120 feet, the lowest 45 feet of which are through the limestone stratum, which is worked.

The usual mode of working the lime-mines is to drive forward a level from the foot of the shaft a considerable distance and then to work backwards towards the shaft and all the limestone is cleared out, except the pillars left to support the roof. The pillars also are at last cleared away. They then go forward and open another shaft. The level must be worked so as to allow the water to run off, for there is always water in the mine and after long-continued heavy rain there is strong stream running along which finds its way into crevices of the rock, The limestone is got down by undermining and then boring a hole and exploding with gunpowder, when an immense mass will fall down at a time. There is always temptation to run risks and to undermine more than is prudent.

The bottom of the mine being only 120 feet from the surface and the being now several shafts, there is abundance of air and in winter the cold is sufficient to render a fire necessary. Ice is even formed at the foot of the shaft, which is very different from the coal-mines. The Lilleshall Company are the lessees of the mine. They employ four charter-masters, paying a charter of 20d. a ton, and these charter-masters employ the men and boys. The company finds the drawing power, that is the steam engine and its accompanying apparatus, the engine-man, the machine-man at the mouth of the shaft and also the railway down in the mine. The charter-master arranges the work so that the men are paid in proportion to what they do. The men work in parties, sometimes two together, sometimes six, eight or ten. The average earnings are from 16s. to 18s. a-week. At present, Christmas 1840, the men said that they had plenty of work and that they had not stood for work for these two years.

The employment of the boys is to fetch things to the men, go with tools to the blacksmith and to drive the horses from the workings to the foot of the shaft. Some go down as young as seven. A lad of 10 years of age gets about 10d a day and the older lads get more but they have not constant employment, as the stone can be carried off faster than the men can get it ready. A lad continues driving the horses until the men begin to jeer him, and then his ambition is to take his tools in hand, and play the man. The work commences at six in the morning. The men and boys take what they call their bait about 11, after which they work till four and then come up for the day. Occasionally they may work until five, or half-past five, but only seldom. The two witnesses examined, Mr. Robert Rennie and Mr. William Bennet, said that the work being hard the strength was exhausted by four and of what use could it be to remain below any longer.

The roof of the mine being 45 feet high, whenever anything falls from it the consequences are serious. Stones also fall down on the miners engaged in under mining; accordingly, men are constantly meeting with accidents, some slight, some severe. Mr. Rennie estimated that the deaths out of the 100 men employed were about two in the year. Mr. Bennet stated that formerly fatal accidents were very common but there had been no fatal accident for the last two years. The first witness observed that a man who was killed in the mine might have been killed at the same time if he had remained on the bank and the second witness expressed his strong conviction that He that is above orders all those things. Such is a very consolatory creed to a miner.

About four years ago three undergoers were crushed by a heap of stones of 20 tons weight, at one time. One of them was killed outright - protruded from his body. Another called out that he was saved, but he died as soon as he was taken out. The third man recovered. There is a field-club to which the men contribute 8d. a-month, and the boys 4d. a-month. There is a surgeon on a salary, whose duty it is to attend to all cases arising from accidents or diseases from the work. The sick and wounded are also allowed 5/- a week for the first twelve months if they continue to require it, and that money for other six months, when their claim on the club ceases. Mr. Bennet belonged to two other benefit clubs. He once had £10 in the savings bank but that was too great an effort of abstinence for him and he felt compelled to withdraw it.

Boys have medical attendance, and half the allowance of money received by the men. If the funds of the club should get low by an unusual number of accidents, the company liberally assists to enable to keep up the payments. The limestone miner may justly consider that he has a favoured lot. Instead of working on his side in a space less than three feet between the floor and the roof, in a close air, he has plenty of room for his work and abundance of pure air to breathe and he can enjoy his pipe in the pit, which the witness William Bennet, considered the only enjoyment left within the poor man's reach. Instead of toiling like the agricultural labourer for 11/- a week and being at the call of his master every hour in the four-and-twenty, he comes up early in the afternoon, and sits down like a gentleman to his dinner after the business of the day and has his whole evening to himself to enjoy the company of a friend over his tobacco and beer. It is the danger which secures these advantages and he gets the reward of his valour.

Some of the limestone-miners will occasionally make an arrangement with charter-master, and go down to the mine at six o'clock on Sunday evenings, and work all night in order to get money and to have time to spend at their pleasure on the Monday all day. The witness, Mr. Robert Rennie, a Scotchman, was on one occasion tempted to go down to this Sabbath-breaking work but when he looked up, and saw the stones in the roof, as he supposed, ready to fall on him, and thought what must become of him if he should be killed when so employed and also thought of the pious instructions of his father and mother and minister in

his he felt himself totally unable to work and got up the shaft as soon as he could and never since has ventured into such a scene of danger on the Sabbath.

There is a long tunnel, which descends by a gentle incline, by which the horses are introduced in the morning and go up every night of themselves as soon as they are ungeared. One of the witnesses, Mr. William Bennet, when a boy, drove a Welsh pony which has an acute ear, and when he heard the least noise of a stone he would observe, and jump out of the way.

### **Individual Interviews**

#### ***No.38 - Joseph Prestwich, Jun***

*You are a Fellow of the Geological Society, and author of a long paper, (upwards of 100 pages) in the fifth volume of the 'Geological Society's Transactions,' descriptive of the Coalbrook-dale coal field? - I am.*

*What were your opportunities of being acquainted so minutely with that district? - I resided part of several summers in the neighbourhood of Coalbrook-dale, and devoted much time to geological pursuits.*

*Did you ever go down into the coal-pits? - I went down into a great number of them, and observed the mode of working them.*

*What may be the thickness of the seams of the coal? - Some are as much as six feet in depth that is not often the case. Some are only three feet, other seams which are worked two feet some inches and there are seams wrought which are only 18 inches thick.*

*After sinking a shaft down to the seams of coal which are thought worth working, in what manner do they then proceed? - They commence two or more levels, which are spaces sufficiently wide and sufficiently high to enable them to lay down a railway and drive horses and carts, and men may walk upright. These levels they carry forward in a line as straight as possible, working as they proceed to the right and left but removing no more of the overlying shales or sandstone than sufficient to enable the men to work in a sitting posture. Where the seam is very thin, they will have to work almost lying on their sides. Sometimes the space they have to work more than two feet high. When the seams are still less, and the coal is sufficiently good to make it desirable to work it, the men cut away a little below the coal, but chiefly above it, so as to make room but they are content with the smallest room possible, so as to conduct their work with as much economy of labour as possible. In all the seams the men first cut away a few inches of the indurated clay under the coal and so undermine it, and then get it down in as large blocks as possible.*

*What is done then?* - Boys put the coal into wooden sledges and draw them along to the levels where it is put into carts and drawn by horses to below the mouth of the pit, where it is hoisted up.

*How are the boys equipped and how do they draw the sledges?* - The boys are dressed like the grown men in trousers, shoes and stockings but with no other clothing, the heat not rendering more necessary. There is a rope put round the waist; when the height of the work will not admit of their standing upright, boys run on all fours, drawing the sledge after them.

*The boys do not go on elbows and knees?* - They go on all fours, hands and feet.

*Of what ages are the boys?* - They are quite small. I speak from their appearance, they are 8 years of age to 12.

*Are any girls employed at such work?* - I never saw nor heard of any being so employed.

*By whom are the boys employed?* - By the charter-masters.

*Will you explain what they are?* - The proprietor usually employs a ground bailiff who acts for him and marks out the work to be done and he employs men who contract to do portions of it and to deliver the coals under the pit's mouth at a certain price. These men who so contract are called charter-masters. They work themselves, and employ other men to work for them.

*Do they work by night as well as by day?* - I never heard of work being done by night in this district.

*Have you heard what were the wages?* - I have understood that the charter-masters paid to the men 1/9d and 2/6d or even 3/- a day, depending upon the nature of the work, and the boys from 8d to 1/3d.

*How many hours a day do they work?* - From 6 to 12 hours, according to the description of work.

*The breathing must be difficult in the narrow seams, there being so little open space?* - I never felt any difficulty; at the same time, certainly the space is small, not only from its small depth, but the system of throwing the rubbish behind them into the space from which the coals have been taken. The strata above are usually supported by wooden props but after the coals are dug out the props are removed and brought forward to near the place where the men continue their work and into the empty space the rubbish is thrown. After the removal of the props, the roof falls in, and there may be seen in many large works a great subsidence of the ground above.

*How did the children look as to comfort?* - They generally appeared cheerful and looked healthy.

*Did you hear of cruelties inflicted on them?* - No, I never did. There might possibly be hardships of which I know not, but on the surface all looked well. Respectable iron-masters like these of this district would not allow any cruelty to be exercised.

*What sort of men were the miners?* - They were civil and well-behaved men, generally. Certainly not brutal, as I have heard that the miners were in some districts.

*What education do the children receive?* - They attend the Sunday-schools.

*Do you know any cause for the miners of Coalbrook-dale being more civilised than the miners are in some other districts?* - The district is not extensive, only seven miles long, by from one to two broad. The surrounding country is very beautiful and populous, and contains a considerable number of resident gentry, by which means a degree of refinement and civilisation is kept up. There were formerly nine iron furnaces on the south side of the Severn, but these have been blown out, as they express it, from the exhaustion of the proper description of coals in that part.

*Are any children employed above ground?* - Girls are employed to separate the ironstone from the shales. It is hoisted up from the mine and emptied out on a mound. The girls kneel on the edge of the mound and pick out the iron-stone and put it in baskets placed before them; and when the basket is full, the girl places it on her head and carries it to the heap or stock of iron-stone. The shale they throw behind them down the slope of the mound. The girls work in companies, and seem cheerful and contented.

*Are any boys employed above ground?* - Some are employed in the foundries in assisting the men, and doing any work for which their strength is adequate.

*Do the boys become miners when they grow up?* - Many of them do so.

### **No.39 - John Anstice**

Is a partner in the Madeley-wood Iron Company, and son of William Anstice, the manager. Is thirty years of age and has resided all his life about the works. The company began about 25 years ago to allow the people employed about their furnaces to discontinue labour for certain hours on the Sundays and have so continued to do ever since. The usual number of hours on which the works stand is from six to eight, being from nine or ten to four or five, the time being longer or abated according as the state or the furnaces will allow. We have found most decidedly that we have not sustained any loss by so doing, but on the contrary, it

does good, because there is more care required before the stand commences, to see that the furnaces are in good order, and that care is of great benefit. We would willingly give more time if the nature of the manufacture could admit of it; but if the furnace stops longer the heat abates and there then is an inclination in the material in the furnace to set and become stiff and cloggy. The men feel the stand a great comfort to them, and greatly prefer it. The stand takes place during the double turn, which is a greater relief, as there are only 16 or 18 hours labour instead of 24.

The coal-pits in this district have beds of various thickness but very many are very shallow, in consequence of which it becomes necessary to employ boys to push the carriages on railing, as it would be impossible in such beds to introduce horses or asses for the purpose. Wherever horses can be employed, it is much more advantageous for the proprietor and for his own interest, if he had no higher motive, he certainly would not employ boys. The employment of the girdle, by which boys in former times usually drew the carriages, is now very much gone out in Shropshire.

Our boys in the collieries on the average do not work above five days a week. The usual working hours are from six to six, during which time they relieve each other, to allow time for their meals. The boys are a lively, cheerful and apparently healthy set of lads as are to be seen anywhere, and when they leave work they are frolicsome as boys coming home from school. The boys usually begin by driving horses, and when they are at a more advanced age, they are put to the carriages.

Many of the boys attend evening schools kept by masters on their own account, after the hours of the day. The Sunday-schools are most numerous attended by the children of Church, and of the connection of the Wesleyan Methodists, which are the schools which we have in this neighbourhood.

#### ***No.40 - Alfred Darby***

About a dozen of years ago the Coalbrook-dale Company, knowing that the Madeley-wood Company had discontinued blowing their iron furnaces for certain hours of the Sunday, determined to try what could be done in the same way and adopted the practice, which has been continued ever since, of letting the furnaces stand every Sunday, from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon. They are not sensible that any loss has been sustained thereby, excepting that during such time no iron is made and the capital employed in the furnace department is for such time unproductive. They would willingly extend the time of cessation from labour on Sundays longer if they could but this they fear they cannot. The furnaces would in such case become too much cooled and great injury would arise.

As a proof this it often happens when an accident occurs to the engine, by which the furnaces stopped for several hours (say eight to twenty hours), that it takes several days to recover before they come to as good and efficient a working state as previously and during this time not only produce a less quantity but with a greater consumption of coal. The coal used at these works is not of the best quality but experience only would show whether with the very best coal the blast furnaces might stand longer than six hours.

***No.41 - William Tranter***

Is the agent to the Coalbrook-dale Company, and in that capacity has occasion to go down into mines both of coal and iron. There are many children in the mines, only boys below. Some young as about six and they are at various ages up to manhood. In the coal-mines, some boys are employed in bringing the coals in small carriages, called dans, to the horse road, and others in pitching them into the carriages drawn by the horses. The mines are too low for men to do such work. Some of them are two feet in thickness but there are places to go through at times no more than 18 inches, or perhaps 20 inches. The boys crawl on their hands and knees. The face of the work along which the dans are drawn is made as straight as possible, in order to get out the coal in as good a state as we can. There are no complaints of injury, except when a boy may meet with an accident and then he leaves off he gets well. The boys do the work cheerfully, and have no dislike to it. The dans are pushed on rails; it is very low, but the work is not heavy. The company does not employ boys who draw by the girdle and chain; it was so formerly, but has not been for many years.

Formerly the girdle was employed when there were no rails and the labour was very severe but now that there are rails, there is no longer any necessity for boys to draw by the girdle. Witness does not see any way by which the labour of pushing the dans can be avoided but considers that the labour by the girdle is not now necessary, not the least. The witness has never seen the bye-chain. Some few boys are employed to open doors. Some boys are employed to hook on the carriages to the chains in the shaft. Some boys go errands for the miners to another part in the pit, and fetch what the men may occasion for. Boys are employed to drive the horses. Some will begin as early as from 13 to 14 to work like men with the pick but the greater 14 to 16.

The usual hours of work are from six to six. In some pits the work ceases for an hour to dinner but in others not and the people take refreshment as they can and in such pits it is the custom to leave off half-an-hour earlier. Boys of from six to seven may earn in the pits about 6d. a-day; about nine they may earn from 10d to 1/-, according to the work about 12, a boy may get 1/6d, 1/8d.and some as much as 2/- a day. The generality of the colliers are small. In the iron-mines there is not so large a proportion of boys and the reason is that the mines are in general higher and consequently there is room for men and boys are not so much wanted. There is room for small horses and donkeys and in some of them for

large horses. The earnings are much the same as in the coal-mines. The company would not allow any men to beat the children and there are very seldom any complaints.

***No.44 - Joseph Jones***

Is now 58 years, and has all his life from a boy been engaged in coal-mines. For some years he was a charter-master, and for 12 years past he has been ground-bailiff to the Madeley-wood Iron Company, which is one of the largest in Shropshire, employing from 500 to 700 persons of all ages in the mines. Many of the beds of coal which are worked in Shropshire are very thin, and are under two feet and oftentimes it happens in beds which are thicker that at particular parts the roof and the bottom may consist of hard rock, and may bend so as to approach nearer to each other and in such parts as these the mine is very low, though it may not be so generally.

There is a large roadway made through the pit, at a heavy expense, where there are carriages drawn by horses but the coals must be brought from the workings on each side in small carriages in this district called dans and horses and asses could not get in or walk alone and the dans are pushed before them on iron rails by boys. He is not aware of boys under 10 being employed to drive dans in the Company's mines and boys of 10 to 14 are employed for that purpose. Boys even approaching to 15 sometimes drive dans but in general their size makes it very inconvenient for them when arrived at about that age. Tommy-shops, which are said to be usual in some other districts, are not so in Shropshire; and all the great companies would be totally above having anything to do with them, and would discourage all improvidence in their workpeople as far as in their power.

Sometimes in the Company's mines a workman will take down his child under 10 and the boy will be used to go errands from one part of the pit to another, such as bringing candles and opening doors, and such like.

***No.45 - A Surgeon who did not wish his name to be published***

Has practised 13 years in the district. There was no epidemic in 1835 in this district, except scarlet fever, which was not very fatal. Cannot state any distinct reason why deaths within the first three years of life should be more than in other districts, as very few cases of the very young are brought to surgeons. Children go to the iron and coal-works at as early an age as from 6 to 10. They carry on their heads loads of iron-stone and of limestone. They are frequently diseased, chiefly of chest affections, that is of the heart and lungs. Scarcely one in 10 escapes. They work beyond their strength. He has almost always cases under his care of vomiting of blood, frequently brought on whilst actually employed at their work. This he thinks arises from exertion beyond their strength, and takes place in children between 8 and 13. The children are not fit for such work until 13, or at most only some few who are exceptions.

Down in the pits the children draw the carriages when the beds are so that asses cannot be employed. They are geared like beasts of draught. In afterlife they suffer from the same diseases, as the suffering at their early age lays the foundation of diseases of the heart and lungs. Can see no mode of putting an end to such work, as the size of men makes it impossible for them to do it

Most colliers at the age of 30 become asthmatic. There are few attain that age without having the respiratory apparatus disordered. They are subject to hypertrophy of the heart that age, no doubt laying the foundation of such disease at the early age of from 8 to 13 years. Few colliers attain the 51st year. This may be said in every respect the same with persons of all description.

Does not know how machinery could be substituted, as the roads in the pits are so intricate. The children being injured in early life continue to suffer all their lives after. Many die young from consumption and suffer all their lives from diseases of the lungs. There is very little difference between the coal-mines and the iron-mines. There is no danger to persons who do such work after 15. Apprentices are seldom bound till 15 and then for five or six years. Girls do not go below into the pits but they work on the top, and suffer from the same causes but not so much. A child of eight or nine will gain 6d a day and the expense to his parents will not be 2/- or 2/6d a week.

Accidents in the coal or iron-pits are not very numerous. There are few accidents from broken limbs but chiefly from contusions and explosions. As many as 80 or 100 may suffer from explosions in a year. On the average about 40 a-year in one of the districts, and 40 to 60 in other parts of the coalfield. He has known of no case of death from carbonic acid, nor has he heard of any case of death from water, not in 20 years. It is exceedingly rare for the chain to break and it is exceedingly rare for the miners to be drawn over the pulley. Scarcely any accidents happen by pieces falling from the roof of the pits but one accident occurred by a brick falling out of a shaft.

#### ***No.46 - George Marcy***

Is clerk to the Wellington Union, in the county of Salop and has been so since its formation, which is now five years. There are about 30 children in the workhouse. Children are bound out as apprentices at about the age of 14. Some have been bound to colliers in the neighbouring district and others have been bound to the colliers in Staffordshire but not exceeding six in number during that period. It is not considered that the children are fit to be sent out until towards 14 years of age. Many applications are made from miners for relief on account of sickness and chiefly from asthmatic complaints when arrived at an advanced age. At 40 perhaps the generality suffer much from asthma. Those who have applied have been first to the medical officer, who has confirmed what they said. About 40, the greater part of the colliers may be considered as disabled and regular old men, as much as some are at 80.

#### **No.47 - George Potts**

Is clerk to the Madeley Union, which comprises the parishes of Barrow, Benthall, Broseley, Buildwas, Dawley, Linley, Little Wenlock, Madeley, Much Wenlock, Posenhall, Stirchley, and Willey, being 12. Of these, Madeley, Dawley, Broseley and Stirchley are in the mining district, the others are agricultural. There are about 20 children in the workhouse. The guardians bind out boys as apprentices to the collieries but only three such have been bound within the last two years to colliers in Staffordshire, being about ten years of age, and were bound till 21. The other was bound to a shoemaker in the neighbourhood about the same age and for the same period. The colliers often apply for relief on account of accidents in the mines and from sickness. They begin to apply on account of permanent debility at about from 45 to 50, and after that time it is considered that a man is unfit for his work as a collier, but can still work on the bank or attend to an engine or other less laborious work than going into the pits.

#### **No.48 - Matthew Webb**

Resides at Bankhouse, in the parish of Wellington. Has been in practice in the neighbourhood 36 years and has a large general practice amongst the colliers. Has had 5,000 people at one time under his care, including workmen of all descriptions. Has had as many as 500 cases from accidents in a year. Considers that there is very little illness or disease, beyond mere accident, arising directly from mining operations. There are very few under six or seven who are employed to draw weights with a girdle round the body and those only where the roof of the pit is so low for short distances as to prevent horses of the smallest size, or asses from being employed and knows of very little injury from the use of the girdle. There is less deformity than in manufacturing towns. In the manufacturing towns, deformity arises from diseases principally scrofula and the constrained position in which many of the artisans are compelled to work.

In the collieries the people have the free use of their limbs; the air in the pits generally speaking is not unwholesome and the children are not over worked, nor suffer in their health from the labour. There is no disease to which their labour has a peculiar morbid tendency. Very seldom consumption brought on. When witness first commenced practice there was much deformity from bad clothing, bad food, bad nursing in infancy, and premature work but not so now. Scrofula has much diminished within the last dozen years and when it does appear it is less destructive. This is proved by it being much less frequent to have perform operations to remove diseased joints. Of hernia there is only the usual proportion, as in agricultural or manufacturing districts. There is abundance of employment with good wages, and therefore ability to live so as to support strength and respectability.

Much injury is done to very young children by giving them spirits in their food and anodyne quack medicines, such as Godfrey's Cordial, Dalby's Carminative,

which consists of magnesia, tincture of asafoetida penny royal water, opium, and various other quack medicines into which opium enters. The children are frequently injured by not obtaining a supply of milk, which is scarce in the district in winter, and by being fed by scalded bread, coarse brown sugar and gin. The extreme sweetness injures the stomach and takes away appetite. Sometimes the girls left in charge of children give them gin to keep them from crying. Malt liquor is the favourite beverage but there is a good deal of spirit drunk as well. Thirty-six years ago within a mile of Bankhouse there were 12 public-houses but now there are 50; the population, however has increased three-fold. Thirty-six years ago, there was constantly typhus fever as an epidemic, and also scarlatina in its most destructive form but now there are occasional cases of typhus, and also of scarlatina yet they are comparatively rare. This is attributable to the moderation of the price of soap and consequently greater cleanliness, the cheapness of cotton linen and woollen apparel, the improvement in building colliers' houses and the superior ventilation.

Thirty-six years ago, the houses were a sort of barracks in long rows, with no upstairs apartments, but entirely on the ground-floor and very damp and dirty; their privies and piggeries too near to the dwellings and there was not proper drainage but within the last 20 years great improvements have taken place. The houses have all well ventilated upstairs chambers and several roods of garden ground and the piggeries and privies are put at the extremity of the premises. Every man now has from a sixth to a quarter of an acre to grow cabbages and potatoes and the cultivation of these greatly benefits the health and morals. There are many amateur cultivators of flowers and most of them feed a fat pig. There was not much cholera, only 15 cases in Wellington parish, containing a population of 12,000. At Madeley the cholera was very destructive. The cheap and plentiful supply of salt has been very beneficial to the health. The meat is better salted than before. The general use of aperient medicines of late years has been of great use in preventing typhus and other infectious diseases. There are few colliers' houses not well provided with Epsom salts, and where a pound was taken 40 years ago, a ton is now consumed.

Cases of suffocation from carbonic acid gas or carburetted hydrogen are very rare. Has seen only one case in the last six years and that case was in the open air. Smallpox is much diminished, from the liberality of medical men vaccinating all parties gratuitously.

#### ***No.49 - George Jones***

I am the agent of the Wombridge Collieries in Shropshire. It was formerly the custom for butties to take apprentices from distant parishes, by indenture, for 7 years, to work in the collieries till 21 years of age. The lads were usually 13 or 14. It was very unjust, as the youths for 3 or 4 years were full-grown men and were working for the benefit of the butties and getting nothing at all, excepting sometimes a small gratuity. It was no trade at last and I put a stop to it in our

collieries. I am not aware that apprentices are taken at all into collieries in this county. I should consider it very wicked to allow it.

### ***No.50 - John Phillips***

I am 28 years of age. About 8, I went into the coal-mines to open doors I had 6d a day. I went to the bank at 5.30am and sometimes a little before. About 6pm in the afternoon we gathered at the foot of the shaft to come up. We came up about 10, say 7 men and 3 or 4 boys. If all boys, we came up 15 or more. We came up in chains. Men sat down in the chain and laid hold with their hands, and little boys jumped between. We seldom had any accidents going up or down. I opened doors about 2 years. I then assisted a man to load coals. I had 10d a day. I worked the same time as when a door-boy. When a door-boy I fell asleep very often and if the horse came against the door the young man would lace me. The butty coming along and finding me asleep would give me a slap. I deserved it. Filling the coal was harder work but I had more money. We were paid every fortnight on the Saturday when we came up out of the pit. The man laid the coals in the skip, and I built them in order. It was easier than filling. When I was about 12 I went to draw with the girdle and the chain. We went down at 5.30am and worked till 6pm. I stripped off all but trousers, stockings, and shoes, and had a small cap round my head. I had a girdle put round my middle. The chain was about 3 feet long, or hardly. It was fastened to the girdle, and we hooked it to the skip. It was very hard work.

### ***No.51 - Thomas Hale***

I am between 14 and 15. I went down 4 years ago at Lawley to pump in the pit. I had 10d a day. I took my money home to my father. I was paid on the bank. I was half a year at this. I then went down and hooked on the skips to the chain at the bottom of the shaft, and got 1/- a day. I went to the pit bank at 5.30am and got down by 6am. At 6pm at night we began to come up. The big ones shove the little ones to one side and get in themselves first but sometimes the little ones will pop in notwithstanding. If I hooked on the skip on the wrong link it would overturn the skip and then they would beat me. I deserved it. If I complained of other boys they would beat me for it, that I might not do the like again. I now draw a dan with a girdle and chain. I do not like it at all. It is hard work but I have 1/8d a day now. I have marks on my side. It was cut by the girdle. The work is too low for dans. It is only three-quarters high. I never saw any dans pushed. That would be a deal better. I have heard the men say so. We have no time allowed for meals.

I do not go to Sunday-school now. I do not like it. It is too much confinement to us, who have been at work all the week. I read a little of the Testament every Sunday to my father I had read Ready-ma-daisy (Reading-made easy). Nothing else that I know of. I cannot say the Lord's Prayer nor any of the Catechism. There have been fires in the pit but I was never burnt. I have had coals fall upon

me and hurt me. A man, Samuel Beech, was killed by a tree falling down the shaft upon him. They were sending trees up and, standing watching for the other chain coming down, a tree tipped and came down and killed him.

### ***No 52 - Samuel Ball***

I am 14. I was so a month ago. I went down to the pit at 8 years old. I went to draw. Before that I went to a horse in a gin at 7 years old. I had 8d a day. I worked from 6am to 6pm but had half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. I had a hovel and a fire in it in cold weather. I used to stand in the hovel and throw stones at the horse to keep him going. If master saw me he would tell me to use the stick and when he saw that the horse behaved roguish he would tell me to thresh him the more. When it was very wet it was disagreeable but in fine weather I liked it pretty well, particularly if I could sit on the side of the ring and make the horse go. I gave over. It was too much of a thing to give only that much, 5d a day. So I went down into the pit and got 10d a day. That was something worth having. I wore the mobby when I went down, that is the girdle and drew with the chain. I had on trousers, stockings and shoes and a cap on my head. I drew iron-stone with the help of another. I was sometimes behind and pushed, but some part of the way it was and I held the skip back from going too fast. I was down 12 hours nearly, but I a quarter of an hour for breakfast and half an hour at dinner. I think it is not easy work The skin was often chafed. It was not much blistered. I did not like the work at all and I was glad when I could get away from it. It was very hard.

The mine was very I had colds from the work. We had a down shaft and an up shaft, but sometimes we could hardly live in it; that is, in summer-time. I have been at that work 6 years. I have often got hurt by the skin being rubbed off. Boys often leave through it. They cannot stand the pain nor the fatigue. Many are taken through it. We sometimes have foul air in the pits. Very bad air in summertime. In the winter it is much better air, better a deal than in summer-time.

I can read only very little. I can write my name. I go to Sunday-school at 9am in the morning and at 2pm in the afternoon. The school is at Coal-pit Bank. At 11am they turn us out, to make room for the congregation. I go to church, to the new church. I come back dinner, and then go to school. I cannot read the Bible much. I am learning to read the Testament at a school at night. When we have a holiday I go to school. I have read in the spelling book. I have read a little at Jack the Giant Killer. I never sleep in the Sunday-school for fear of being beat for it. If I was to go to sleep in the church, the beadle would come with a stick as long as from this to the door, with a knot at the end it and come and knock on your head and make you clap your hand to it. The boys do not like to have it themselves, but they like to see other boys get it, and they laugh at them. We always have a good dinner on Sundays; it is very wicked to omit that. After tea on Sundays I go to church again. It is for our own good when we go. I like to go sometimes. My

father sometimes threatens us but he does very little, although he threaten. I go for fear. Perhaps when he threatens it comes all at once.

Last Sunday I began to play with other boys but my father called me in, and bade me sit down in the house and he read to me, and talked to me about it. He is a Wesleyan. There are a great many Wesleyans and Wesleyan Chapels. The people flock to them.

### ***No.53 - Isaac Tipton***

I am 16 years of age. I work in the coal-mines; I went down nine years ago; I waited on the holers; when their picks went wrong they gave them to me and I went to the shaft and sent them up and when they came down I went and fetched them. I fetched candles or anything they wanted; such as wood to keep up the roof, to keep them safe. I worked 4 months at this. I got 1/- a day. The men did not thump me very often. I was not very bad only middling. I sometimes deserved it because I could not do as they told me. They sometimes thumped me with the fist and sometimes with the stick; they made marks; I seldom complained unless they gave it me too bad. The butties gave it me sometimes when I neglected to do what I was told. There was nobody to whom I could complain of the butties. I often fought with the other boys. I generally thrashed them; I never began with them unless I thought I could. I always fought with boys as big as myself. We never went to tell of each other. If the fight did not satisfy us we used to fight on the bank when we went up and all the boys and men came to see it. I have not fought for the last 12 months and do not expect to have to fight any more.

I next went to draw with the girdle and chain. I had a girdle round the middle and chain under my legs; it was very hard work. If I had a bit of time in the pit I laid myself down on my back. We had no time unless something was the matter with the engine, Long before night we were so tired that we could hardly walk home sometimes. In some pit there is no time for meals; in other pits it is done different. When I went home at night got a hot supper. Before supper I washed face, neck, and hands. After supper I slept a little by the fire and then went to bed and slept sound; and sometimes they were forced to come and shake us before I could wake to go to work. The girdle often makes blisters. I have had pieces like shillings and half-crowns, with the skin cocking up, all full of water and when I put on the girdle the blisters would break and the girdle would stick and next day they would fill again. These blisters give very great pain.

There is no railway in the pits in which they use the girdle and chain. In all the pits about this part they use the girdle and chain. In some pits the butties give beer the Saturday after the reckoning only; 2/- worth; it is pretty good stuff. I have now 2/6d a day. I attended the Sunday school; I read middling. I understand when I hear reading. I sometimes go to church. I read the Bible sometimes. I can say the Lord's Prayer, and say it every night before going to bed. I could say all belonging to the Catechism when I was at the Sunday-school, but I have almost

forgot all since I left off attending. I have read Reading made Easy. I have read about Turpin and Jack Sheppard I have read about Robin Hood. I read song-books; I have not sung a great while now. I have read a bit of Robinson Crusoe. I have read about the pigs and the cows dying of distemper.

I have had a holiday to see a fox-chase. I have gone to Shrewsbury races. I have seen many a fight at these races. On holidays I used to play at marbles. When I am tired on holidays I go and lie down anywhere for two or three hours on my back, with my hands under my head; sometimes sleeping and sometimes dozing. On Sundays I lie in bed till towards the middle of the day; I do not get breakfast until I get up. After breakfast I sit down an hour or two, and then get dinner. I then clean myself and go to church or chapel. There is no difference between the one and the other. I then go and have my tea; then I walk out and come back and go to bed at 7pm. There are 10 or 12 lads who draw with girdle and chain; some 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18. A fortnight's notice is sufficient when we can leave. The Company never gives notice.

#### ***No.54 - James Pearce***

I am 12 years of age. I went down to the pits about 7 years and a half to open doors. I had a candle and a fire beside me to show me light. There was one door. The horse coming with empty basket and skip could open it with his head, but when he returned with his load I opened it then. I was 12 hours a-day, and got 6d a day. I attended and got the money. When I was paid I took it home to my mother. I was a year and a half at this work. I once fell asleep and was well threshed by a driver. The horse was fast. It was down-hill and the horse could not draw back. He laid well into me; I cried out, but nobody would come and help me. I did not tell my father. I never thought anything about it afterwards.

About a year and a half I went to walk with a candle before the horses and pick the coals off the road; I had 15d a day. About a year and a half ago I took to the girdle and chain; I do not like it; it hurts me; it rubs my skin off; I often feel pain. I get 15d a day. I do not go to the Sunday-school. I go to chapel sometimes. I cannot say the Lord's Prayer, nor the Creed nor the Ten Commandments. I cannot read. I never heard of Liverpool, nor of Manchester, nor of Bristol, nor of Birmingham. I have heard of London.

I had not time to eat a bit of meat from morning till night I often had blisters on my side but, when I was more used to it, it would not blister but it smarted very badly. The chain was made of the same stuff as the rope that goes down the pit. I crawled on hands and feet. I often knocked my back against the top of the pit and it hurt it very sore. There was not room to stand to that height. The legs ached very badly. When I came home at night I often sat down to rest me by the way I was so tired. The work made me look much older than I was. I worked at this drawing with girdle and chain 3 or 4 months. I thought that if I kept at this work I

should be nothing at all and I went and worked upon the bank. I had 1/6d when I first went to draw, and had at last 2/4d.

I went to drive two horses on the bank, and got 12/- a week. I was three quarters of a year at this. I then took to the pit. I filled the skips for the boys to draw. A boy must go 4 or 5 times to bring a horse-load. I got 3/- a day. I made up the day's work by holing a little. Many boys draw with girdle and chain now. They draw in Ketley fields and in Lawley fields still. The seam in Lawley field is about a yard thick; in some places less. There is not the railway and the dan. It is like drawing on the roads. I think it is a great hurt to a boy: it must be, to draw the same as a horse draws. A great many boys find that they are unable and give over drawing with girdle and chain. It is very hard, very hard, sir. If they were to lay down rails and push the coals on dans, it would be very convenient for the boys though the expense might not be convenient for the masters. I now work in the iron-mine. It is 6 feet thick. We work by the piece. We get done by 5, or half-past 5. We have 3/3d a day. The mine is filled upon dans and the dans run upon a railway and are brought to the foot of the shaft.

#### ***No.55 - John Richards***

I am between 17 and 18. I came to this country 5 years ago, and went down to draw in Ketley fields with the girdle and chain. I had 2/- a day. It is hard work. It did not hurt me much. Some boys complained of it. Some young chaps, not used to the pits, it will hurt; strong ones do not mind it so much. The coal was 2 feet 4 inches thick. I was obliged to leave because it was wet. It would be much too low for me now. I have seen a boy of 8 employed to open doors. I have seen a boy of 10 drawing dirt against the wall. Boys are scarce. I now work with a pick, and get 2/4d a day. It is driving a road a yard and a half wide, and 5 feet high. I worked 3 months at Steeraway pits and two men were killed. I then left. I went again and worked a fortnight, when one man was killed, and I left, and never went to work again.

#### ***No.56 - Robert North***

I went into the pit at 7 years of age, to assist to fill the skips. I stopped at this work a year and a half. I got 6d a day the first twelvemonth and was then raised to 10d. I then went to drive a horse and got 10d a day and after twelve months I had 13d a day and I continued driving 5 five years and at last got 20d a day. I then took to drawing coal by girdle and chain and got 20d a day. We cannot stop at what work we like: we are shifted I drew about twelve months. I then took to filling skips for half a year. I then took to holing, and have taken to fill again. I now get 3/- a day. When I drove the horse I got hurt. The first time was this on my head, of which the mark like a horse's foot is still to be seen very conspicuously. I was laid up a month. The second time was on the leg; the skip was drawn over my leg. I was laid up 4 months. The third time was a great coal, which fell off the

skip on my arm and some more fell upon it. I was laid up 5 months. I felt no pain for two days, but afterwards I was alarmed lest I should loose my arm.

When I drew by the girdle and chain, the skin was broken and the blood ran down. I durst not say anything. If we said anything, they, the butty, and the reeve who works under him would take a stick and beat us. Men could not do the work and they compelled us. I seen lads of 9 drawing with the girdle and chain. I have seen many draw at 6; but they were not able to draw the full day out. If they are put to do the work, they must do it beat. The butty must not beat big ones. I was beat when I was drawing, and I did not deserve it. I had been ill and was exhausted and could not work longer but the reeve beat me. I complained to the butty. He said that he did not allow a boy to be beat unless he deserved it. He said it was not likely that he could get boys if he let them be beat when they did not deserve it. I was once beat by a man who bullied me to do what was beyond my strength. I said I would not do it, because I could not. The man threw me down and put out two of my ribs. I had to keep from work 11 months. My father was too quiet to go before a magistrate. I have seen little boys get a slap, to make them mind but never to hurt them.

I had two fingers broke at one time and one at another all on the right hand. It was my right arm that was cut. I have nothing the matter with my left hand at all and it is as strong ought to be. (Witness showed the marks of his wounds.) I have been singed by gas twice, but nothing to hinder me from my work. I was burnt a little yesterday but it was not much. The roof had fallen and we were clearing the horse-way more of the roof fell in, and sent down a body of gas. The fall was 9 yards in height 9 yards in length and 4 yards in width. Our road is wide where we work and we make it narrow after we have gone farther off by side walls on each side, which leaves only 6 feet width. Gas came down and exploded. It did but little harm.

I can read print some little, but not much. I cannot read the Testament I say the Lord's Prayer every night and every morning before I go to work. When we go to our work we do not know how we are to come back, whether or dead We have often a great deal of water in the pit and have to work in our wet things. We go down 7, 8, 9, and even 10 at a time. We had 8 chains to sit upon, and the others were in the chains and between us. One was on the hook and the other two sat on the lap. I once saw a man fall; something had broken the chain, but it was not seen when the man got in. It suddenly gave way when he was near the top and he dropped down. I saw a man killed by the coal falling on him as he was sitting at his work. I once saw a man have back broke when at his work. I once was in an old working with another young man, and we lost our way and were not able to find the shaft for two days and a half. At last we did fond out the water engine shaft and shouted up and we were taken up. My companion next day had his leg broke.

***No.57 - James Brady***

I do not know exactly what age I am. It is 16, 17, or 18. I have been a year and three-quarters down in the pit. I like it very well. I stand at the slobbs to which the lads bring the dans. I turn over the dans on the slobbs, and then put the coals into the skips, in which they are brought by the horses to the foot of the shaft and drawn up. I get 2/2d a day and we work 5, 9, or 10 days a fortnight. I take the money home to my mother. I never take a farthing out of it first. I like it very well. We have sometimes accidents; sometimes it fires but it has not killed anybody since I went down into the pit; but when I work upon the bank, it has. It sometimes burns people. It never burnt me. The men holing and getting the coals are more likely to get burnt than persons who stand where work. We have boys of 9 and 10 years old. Sometimes the turn begins at 5.30am, and ends at 5.30pm. We never work beyond 12 hours. The engine never stops. We must go on. We have no regular time for meals. We must take them when we can. Sometimes we are very wearied, sometimes not.

I cannot read much, some little. I have read the Testament. I have read the Spell book and Reedy-ma-deasy. I cannot write. I can say the Lord's Prayer. I sometimes say it, but not regularly. I go to church keep awake. I go home to dinner. I do not go out to play. I never go to the public-house on Sundays.

### ***No.58 - Henry Canning***

I am 13 years of age. I went to work about 8 years of age. I went to carry stones on top of the bank. I had 6d a day. It is heavy work to carry the ironstone. I was always tired at night. I found myself get stronger as I grew older. I was 2 years at this work. They were all girls on the bank, except myself and another; six girls and two lads. The girls were tired at night. They were stunted. So many had so much to do. They gained about 8d a day. A young woman will get 1/- and 1/2d. Some of the young women say the work is hard, they have nothing else to do.

I then went down to draw coals with a mobby and chain in Thomas Roden's pit. There was a railway in the bottom of the pit. It was a moveable railway shifted from time to time about every week, and brought close to the workings. I like very well to draw with the mob-chain but sometimes it tore the skin. I was obliged to work all the same and come back next day. It sometimes made large blisters. I had 1/- a day when I went down first, and 16d a day when I left it. I am now pushing a dan for Mr. Anstice at the Madeley Wood Company. There are some mobbies in their pit. I liked it very well. We worked 12 hours. If we work hard so as to get coals enough for the horses, we may stop to eat.

We have no mice in our pit but there are many in other pits. We have many rats, almost as big as rabbits, quite as big as half-grown rabbits. They rob our bait bags and tear candles sometimes. They have caught a lighted candle in their mouths and run away with it and have exploded gas. They eat the horses' corn. We had cats down, but they took them up. We have thousands of gnats and many spiders at the farthest part of the pit from the shaft and forty-legs, and

earwigs, and black bats (beetles). Nothing else, except the four horses. Mushrooms will grow in the stables fifty yards from the shaft. I can read a little. I read the Psalter. I never read anything else. I cannot say the catechism. I can say the Lord's Prayer. I go to the Wesleyan Methodists' Chapel and their Sunday-school. I cannot write.

### ***No.59 - William Canning***

I am the brother of Henry Canning. I am turned 15. I have heard my brother give evidence and it was all true, and will in general apply to myself, as I have gone to the same work and to the same school and chapel. I now get 19d a day. I like the work very well. It is rather wet. I never got cold through it. I have been only 5 or 6 weeks. I have known other people get cold through it. Some are laid up, so that they never get any better in it. The butties never threshed me. I have seen them thresh other boys and the lads have threatened to get warrants and the lads have done so, and the magistrate has made them pay. The boys often quarrel amongst themselves but they never tell of each other. If a boy tell of another boy, they will serve him out and be hard upon him. The boys quarrel about dans and things but they are good friends with each other for all that.

Some young women work on the hank after they have married, until they have two or three children if their husbands cannot support them. It is thought more respectable to leave working on the bank when they marry. The boys at the Sunday-school are obliged to mind what is said for fear of the cane. If they misbehave in chapel, they have no tickets of me and they may have the stick, or a pinch of the ear. We have no preaching or singing praying in our pit. I have heard of it in Staffordshire.

### ***No.60 - Samuel Edwards***

I am going 12. It is going on to 4 years since I went down to the pit. When I first went down I pitched the draught of coals, that is, I placed the lumps of coal so that they should not fall off. I came on to the bank at 5.30am. If we were not to come in time, we would be obliged to go home again and would lose the day. If one stops away, they take another in his place. I had 4d a day. I took it myself and I then brought it home to my father. I worked a year at this. Next I went to draw clod-coal in the pit belonging to Mr. Harris. I put the girdle, called the mobby, round me. Some are made of a strap and a chain. Some of a rope and chain. It is hooked to the dan. There is a railway. The boys crawl between the rails. Drawing is easier than pushing. I draw upon my hands and feet. I like it very well. I get 10d a day. We have lately worked only 8 or 9 days the last two or three fortnights. They reckon on the Saturday. Sometimes we work the Monday after the reckoning day and sometimes they go to the alehouse and drink, smoke, sing songs sometimes and make knocks on the table when the song is done.

I cannot read. I never go to the Sunday-school. I do not like to go. I get up at 6am or 7am on Sundays; I wash I put on my Sunday trousers. I have no other Sunday clothes. I take breakfast. We have tea and coffee for breakfast. On other mornings I have gruel. I then go and play about. We run after one another, and catch one another; spin tops. I never go to church or chapel. Sometimes my father goes, but I do not go with him. We dine at 1pm. We have always a good Sunday dinner. After dinner I go and play. I have tea at 4pm and then go out and play again. I go to bed at 8pm or 9pm. I never heard of Birmingham, or Manchester, or Liverpool, or London. I know twelve pence make a shilling. I do not know how many shillings make a pound. I sometimes throw stones at dogs. I call drink a pint and a half of strong beer. I do not feel very tired before the work is done. I play sometimes after work is done at take, that is running after one another. I sometimes play at marbles.

### ***No.61 - William Sankey***

I was 15 this month. I am tall and strong of my age. I worked on the bank at 7 years old. I worked at the brick-kiln. I assisted to bear away the bricks. I got 8d a day. I worked at the brick-kiln 3 years, and got at last 7d a day. I then went down into the pit to draw with the girdle. I began at 6am and left off at 6pm at night. We came up sometimes 10, sometimes 12 men and boys. There were sometimes accidents. A man was coming up by himself and when he was near the top the chain in which he hung unhooked and he fell down and was killed. The shaft was upwards of 200 yards and he was near the when the chain unhooked. The chain has broken in many a pit. Many chains and ropes have been broken and people been killed. At Dawley, about 2 years ago, the people were down dropped, and it appeared that the rope had been cut.

I am now in an iron-stone and push a dan to the horseway, to the place called the levels. The dans are turned and the ironstone is collected into another larger carriage and drawn by the horse to foot of the shaft. I like the work very well. I get 20d a day and work sometimes 9, 10, or 11 days a fortnight. We generally play on the Monday after we get the money. After money is received at the butty's house, most of the men go and drink some drink. On Sunday very few drink but a good many more on the Monday. On the Tuesday morning all come to work. There are teetotallers, but not amongst the miners. We call the teetotallers water-bellies. A miner could not do without drinking beer. It is good for the constitution.

I can read very well. I have read the Bible, and the Prayer-book, and the Pilgrim's Progress and I can say the whole of the Catechism. I always say the Lord's Prayer before go to bed, and in the morning when I waken. I have read many other books, such as Bunyan's Holy War, and some sermon-books. I do not know where America is. I have heard of France. I do not know what sort of people the French are. It is my duty to fight them. An Englishman could beat seven Frenchmen any day. I keep my health well in the mine. We strip to our work. We put our clothes on again up. We have a cabin and a fire at the top of

the shaft; but we get no beer but we warm ourselves and go home. We then strip off our upper garments, coat, and shirt, and wash face, neck, breast, hands, and half up the arms, with cold water and soap and wipe the rest with a towel. We put on our working clothes again, and sit down to victuals. It is generally a hot supper and the principle meal of the day. The engine in the pit never stops, and we eat when we can. Between 8 and 9 I go to bed, and sleep very, sound.

I get up at 4 or soon after. I get some warm coffee, and some bread and butter, and sometimes a bit of cheese or some ham. I then go off to the pit, taking with me something eat when I can. We wash all down to the middle on Saturday nights sometimes with hot water. On Sundays I get up at 7am, and wash face and hands. I breakfast about 9am and go to Iron Bridge Church School a little after 9am and after school the boys walk into church at 10.30am. We come out at 1pm and go to dinner always a good dinner on Sundays. We sometimes have not much in the week. After dinner I go to school and remain till 4pm. I go home and have tea. Then I go to church at 6pm and come home and have supper and go to bed. I have no idle time. On holidays I gather horse-muck off the roads, and put it on our garden. It is a small garden. We grow potatoes in it and cabbages, and greens, and nothing else. I dig it and like to see the things growing. I cannot write. I never went to school but on Sundays.

### **Women Underground Elsewhere**

The following extracts from *Parliamentary Papers of 1842* give an insight into working conditions for women in other parts of the country.

"In England, it is only in some of the colliery districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire that female children of tender age and young and adult women are allowed to descend into the coal mines and regularly to perform the same kinds of underground work, and to work for the same number of hours, as boys and men; but in the East of Scotland their employment in the pits is general; and in South Wales it is not uncommon.

*West Riding of Yorkshire: Southern Part* - in many of the collieries in this district, as far as relates to the underground employment, there is no distinction of sex, but the labour is distributed indifferently among both sexes, except that it is comparatively rare for the women to hew or get the coals, although there are numerous instances in which they regularly perform even this work. In great numbers of the coalpits in this district the men work in a state of perfect nakedness, and are in this state assisted in their labour by females of all ages, from girls of six years old to women of twenty-one, these females being themselves quite naked down to the waist.

Girls regularly perform all the various offices of trapping, hurrying (Yorkshire terms for drawing the loaded coal corves), filling, riddling, tipping, and occasionally getting, just as they are performed by boys. One of the most

disgusting sights I have ever seen was that of young females, dressed like boys in trousers, crawling on all fours, with belts round their waists and chains passing between their legs, at day pits at Hunshelf Bank, and in many small pits near Holmfirth and New Mills: it exists also in several other places. I visited the Hunshelf Colliery: it is a day pit; that is, there is no shaft or descent; the gate or entrance is at the side of a bank, and nearly horizontal. The gate was not more than a yard high, and in some places not above 2 feet.

When I arrived at the board or workings of the pit I found at one of the sideboards down a narrow passage a girl of fourteen years of age in boy's clothes, picking down the coal with the regular pick used by the men. She was half sitting half lying at her work, and said she found it tired her very much, and 'of course she didn't like it.' The place where she was at work was not 2 feet high. Further on were men lying on their sides and getting. No less than six girls out of eighteen men and children are employed in this pit.

We saw another girl of ten years of age, also dressed in boy's clothes, who was employed in hurrying. She was a nice-looking little child, but of course as black as a tinker, and with a little necklace round her throat. In a pit near New Mills, the chain, passing high up between the legs of two of these girls, had worn large holes in their trousers; and any sight more disgustingly indecent or revolting can scarcely be imagined than these girls at work - no brothel can beat it.

On descending Messrs Hopwood's pit at Barnsley, I found assembled round a fire a group of men, boys and girls, some of whom were of the age of puberty; the girls as well as the boys stark naked down to the waist, their hair bound up with a tight cap and trousers supported by their hips (at Silkstone and Flockton they work in their shifts and trousers). Their sex was recognisable only by their breasts, and some little difficulty occasionally arose in pointing out to me which were girls and which were boys, and which caused a good deal of laughing and joking.

In the Flockton and Thornhill pits the system is even more indecent: for though the girls are clothed, at least three-fourths of the men for whom they 'hurry' work stark naked, or with a flannel waistcoat only, and in this state they assist one another to fill the corves 18 or 20 times a day: I have seen this done myself frequently.

When it is remembered that these girls hurry chiefly for men who are not their parents; that they go from 15 to 20 times a day into a dark chamber (the bank face), which is often 50 yards apart from any one, to a man working naked, or next to naked, it is not to be supposed but that where opportunity thus prevails sexual vices are of common occurrence. Add to this the free intercourse, and the rendezvous at the shaft or bullstake, where the corves are brought, and consider the language to which the young ear is habituated, the absence of religious instruction, and the early age at which contamination begins, and you will have

before you, in the coal-pits where females are employed, the picture of a nursery for juvenile vice which you will go far and we above ground to equal."

The following extract is from the same source and is from an actual interview. "... I work from 6am in the morning to 6pm at night. Stop about an hour at noon to eat my dinner; have bread and butter for dinner; I get no drink. I worked at drawing when I was in the family way. I know a woman who has gone home and washed herself, taken to her bed, delivered of a child, and gone to work again under the week."