

Derbyshire Times.

Saturday 6th. June 1857.

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Melancholy Death.

On Saturday last a painful accident occurred in a coalpit at Clay Cross, which resulted in the death of a young lad, 16 years of age, named Thomas Purdy. It seems that about twelve o'clock on Saturday deceased, with others, was at the bottom of the shaft. They were getting coal from the shaft below the ironstone. The coal is twelve or thirteen yards below the ironstone. There is a scaffold put across the shaft at the bottom of the ironstone level and this is boarded over. There is a red signal board at the top of the shaft, which is worked by a wire at the bottom. It is a signal to go on when it is up, and to stop when it is down - when the chair is coming down, the board has to be let down to tell the engine-man to stop. Deceased was told to let the board down. There was a loaded skip coming down from the siding towards the shaft, which deceased ought to have scotched. He didn't scotch it fast enough, and when deceased jumped on the chair, the loaded skip ran out of the siding and threw the empty skip off the chair. Deceased did not let the signal-board down, and the engine-man went on and drew the chair up a piece, and it caught the bumpers of the empty skip and drew it against the brow, and nipped the lad between the empty skip (on which he was standing) and the brow. He died on Monday, and at an inquest held on the Wednesday following, before Mr. Busby, coroner, a verdict of "Accidental Death" was returned.

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The Colliery Explosion at Ince.

Two other deaths have occurred from the explosion on Tuesday, viz, Samuel Yates, and John Jollie, both boys. There are, thus far, seven deaths in all from this disaster. The number of colliers employed at the time of the explosion was considerably below the average, in consequence of "Wigan Pleasure Fair", having been held on the previous day. The inquest was held on Thursday, but only one witness was examined, John Nuttall, a collier, who said that no gas had been observed in the pit for a long time: and on the day of the explosion he noticed nothing different from usual. The fire appeared to occur about 400 yards from the pit mouth. Mr. Higson, the Inspector, had been busy making an inspection of the mine at the request of the coroner. On Tuesday evening, inquests were held on the bodies of Yates and Jollie, which were also adjourned. Both the firemen were on duty at the time of the explosion. The general arrangements of the colliery are said to be excellent, and all the pits belonging to the Kirkless Hall Company are remarkable for their freedom from serious accidents. A man named George Ellison, of Factory Fold, had the presence of mind to throw himself flat on his face, as so escaped serious injury. The violence of the explosion forced him along, and so produced abrasion of the skin, but beyond this he is but slightly injured. It is remarkable, also, that in the case of the men killed, they are all "blown" and not "burned". A collier named Rosbottom, whose "place" of work is situated in that part of the mine where the explosion was most powerful, was absent from his employment under singular circumstances. He had requested a fellow workman to call him in the morning, but on being so called, said he should not go to work that day, as something had come across his mind that he had better not. He therefore remained at home, and by means of this vague presentiment escaped almost certain death.

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Fatal Colliery Explosion in Monmouthshire - 12 lives lost.

The whole district is again panic stricken by the frightful catastrophe of a colliery explosion, by which 12 lives have been sacrificed to that terrible element - firedamp. On Wednesday morning, 27th. ult., the inhabitants of the village and district of Abertillery and Cwmtillery - one of those spots of secluded beauty among the western valleys which abound so numerous above Newport - were thrown into consternation by the rumour that an explosion of fire damp had taken place in the colliery of Mr. John Russell, known by the name of the Tyr Nicholas - a pit commenced about 14 years ago by Mr. Thomas Brown, and taken up by Mr. Russell about nine years since. Two or three explosions, but of a comparatively trifling nature, have occurred in the colliery since operations were first commenced. At about seven in the morning, a cloud of smoke was suddenly observed ascending from the pit. John Carpenter, an overman, who was on the surface, saw this indication of an explosion, and immediately descended. About 80 men were at work underground, but the workings were divided into two portions. Carpenter discovered reasons for apprehending that the explosion had taken place in the "Five Feet Vein". He called men from the other workings, and, with much courage, proceeded in search of the injured and the dead, amidst much danger arising from the "Choke Damp", and being obliged to supply canvas doors for those blown away in the air courses. Carpenter and his companions undauntedly proceeded, and at length came suddenly upon the bodies of eight poor fellows who had been struck down at a moments warning by the terrible choke damp. Extending their search, they presently found the bodies of two men and two boys. Three had met their deaths by burning. The fireman, Samuel Merrifield, whose duty was to proceed his fellow workmen to ascertain the state of the pit as to gas, had fallen a victim. The dead bodies were got out as soon as possible, and the distressing spectacles witnessed at the pit's mouth as each was recognised by widows - children, or other relations were most affecting. Among the dead, the master of a house and his two lodgers were found together. The officials of the colliery lent every aid to the survivors who were injured, three of whom were said to be in a very dangerous condition. One poor fellow, named Henry Clarke, was said to have become delirious, although physically uninjured, from the shock received by him in the pit from the explosion, in which state he yet remains. Conjecture has been hazarded that as poor Merrifield, the fireman, was found in the spot where the explosion must have taken place, with his Davy Lamp lying near him, the top separated from the bottom, he must have been "trying for gas" with a naked light, hence the explosion. The following are the names and ages of the killed: William Williams, aged 42; Samuel Merrifield, 29; James Brown, 52; John Silcox, 30; John Hawkins, 51; William Wyatt, 58; Thomas Boswell, 18; John Jones, 13; Thomas Parry, 53; George Taylor, 58; James Gregory, 23; and Charles Merrifield, 58. Orders for coffins were immediately dispatched to Mr. John Palmer, undertaker, Newport, and the poor fellows are to be interred on Saturday or Sunday. We shall not omit to mention that surgical aid was very promptly rendered by Mr. Williams, surgeon, and his assistant. On Thursday morning, the 28th, Mr. W.H. Brewer, the deputy-coroner, visited the place to make his preliminary enquiries, and after viewing the bodies, and investigating the circumstances of the case, arranged to open the inquest formally and to adjourn for a few days, to await the reply of the Home Secretary, and the attendance of Mr. Herbert Mackworth, of Culton, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for this district.

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No Headline.

Out of the 13 persons injured by the recent explosion at Kirkless Hall Colliery, 4 have died, and two other are not expected to survive.

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Advert - Messrs. Fletcher and Cheetham, Alton, Ashover, near Chesterfield.

Beg to announce to the public that they are now manufacturing firebricks of a superior quality, which have been tested in the hottest places, and have given ample satisfaction as to their durability in standing heat and cold.

Also, ground fireclay, quarries, white and coloured, blue tiles, for roofing, firebrick, all shapes, used in steel and iron furnaces.

Samples may be seen at Mr. T. Irving's, Glumangate, Chesterfield, where orders also may be given.

Ashover, June 10th, 1857.

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Eyam.

Among the hardy miners of the district there is an inkling of superstition in connection with the working of mines. The fair-famed "Dusty Pit" - the richest mine of the present day in England - was the property once of Thomas Benson, of Eyam, a most singular and eccentric character. At his death it passed into the hands of James Sorby, of Sheffield, who had, however, some shares in it before Benson's death. From James Sorby's hands it passed, with numerous other mines, into the hands of the present lucky company, the Eyam Mining Company. Benson many years worked his mine with little or no success, still insisting that it would prove the richest mine in England if he could but overcome certain obstacles, which, however, he did not live to surmount. He died rather suddenly, believing up to his last moment that the riches of his long-cherished "Dusty-Pit Mine". Sometime after Benson's death the working of the "Dusty Pit" was resumed with extra vigour and spirit, although great difficulties presented themselves, in the overcoming of which the miners were most materially encouraged by the supposed voice of Benson, which was heard ever and anon, in their imagination, bidding them proceed in their work. The miners at sundry times down in the bowels of the earth heard (in fantasy) the well known voice of Benson calling on them "to come on" and "go on", etc. This they assert, with the greatest gravity of countenance, positively declaring that they heard his voice as distinctly and audibly as when living. Benson's ghost ceased to speak any more, reaching which some declared that they heard his voice for the last time in a kind of triumphant laugh, which died faintly away in the cavernous deeps of Dusty Pit.

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Coal-Pit Legislation.

A Birmingham correspondent writes:- I notice with pleasure your remarks on Lord Granville's Poison Bill. The enormous and needless loss of so many more valuable lives in coal-pits than by poison, is a ten times greater evil more easily remedied. Compel the owners of the works to pay £100 to the next of kin of every man or boy killed in the pits from any cause whatever, and very few, if any more of these "accidents" will take place. Although Lord Granville is a very large colliery proprietor, I flatter myself, from his reputation for kindness and benevolence, he would hardly support such an Act of Parliament.

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A Derbyshire Curiosity of Literature.

We give below a curious document of local interest dated 1777, which was found under one of the rafters of an old house which has been recently pulled down in Brampton Parish.

"July 22nd. 1777. This is to acquaint the public that David Barnes, of Ashgate, takes this opportunity to inform his friends who are kind enough to buy their coals at Brampton Moor Pits, that whenever they come for coals, he desires that they will bring in their carriages, any kind of bones, whatever, and by calling at his house in Ashgate (at which place the bones must be left), they will receive for the same, the sum of fourpence per strike, for whatever quantity they shall think proper to bring, and if they chance to stop at Ashgate, either going or coming from the pits, while their horses eat, they may depend upon being accommodated with both meat and drink."

"N.B. - any person who comes to the coal pits that pleases to bring bones, and whose road does not lead through Ashgate, may leave them at the pits, and receive their money from W. Wilcockson, who is the banksman, and as they will have no opportunity to call at Ashgate for refreshment, W. Wilcockson will give them money to buy a quart of ale, over and above paying for the bones, providing they do not bring less than six strikes - (Signed) David Barnes."

Englishmen, all the world over, are famed for their love of eating and drinking. There is hardly a charitable institution in the county that does not owe half its prosperity to its annual dinner. At the close of the banquet Alderman Gobbleit and my Lord Guzzleton subscribe with almost prodigal liberality. Our Foresters, Freemasons, and Oddfellows, would never survive the abolition of the yearly feast. There isn't a foreigner in Europe who doesn't hold the words "John Bull" "Roast Bif" - and "Plum Pudding" to be synonymous terms - in short take away the eating and drinking part of our institutions and curiously enough, you rob the social fabric of that cement, without which it must inevitably totter to its very base. And with this fact Mr. David Barnes, to his credit and no doubt to his "profit" also, was well acquainted. So the reader will have no difficulty perceiving, that although there is nothing very striking (we won't say original) in the apparent simplicity and insignificance of this promise "entertainment to man and beast", with which David baited his customers, it proves that he was at any rate a shrewd trader, knew at least one of his countryman's weak points by heart, and profited by it in his *****, as many a Lord Mayor, many a diplomatist, many a politician, and many a priest has done both before and since his time - we honour him for his sagacity and can only say, in conclusion, "Peace to his bones and the bones of his customers too".

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Midland Railway - Resignation of Mr. Allport.

Our readers will learn with regret that the active manager of the Midland Railway has very much to the regret of the directors and the heads of the departments, resigned. Mr. Allport has possessed the entire confidence of the Board of Directors, with whom he has ever acted most cordially, and between whom feelings of strong personal friendship exist. The immediate cause of his resignation was the opportunity presented to him of joining a prosperous and respected firm in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. One of the partners of Palmer Brothers, shipbuilders, having resigned, his share of the business was offered to Mr. Allport on favourable terms, and that gentleman, after much reflection, felt it to be due to his family to accept the offer. So high a value, however, do the members of the Board attach to Mr. Allport's abilities and tact as a railway manager that they unanimously agreed to request him to become a director, and thus give him the benefit of his experience and advice, and I believe Mr. Allport has consented to do so. On the simple fact may be mentioned as creditable to Mr. Allport's management. Notwithstanding that 588 trains run daily on the Midland lines and their tributaries, no accidents requiring the attention of a Government Inspector has taken place during the last year to nine months.

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A Dangerous Practice.

On Saturday evening about half past eleven o'clock, as Mr. Marple, of Staveley was returning with his wife from inspecting the colliery, they met a light cart near the Nags Head Inn, with two men in it who as they passed Mr. and Mrs. Marple, fired a pistol, it is supposed with a view to frighten them. The ball hit the cinders near Mr. Marple's feet, a piece of which struck his lip and cut it severely. This is a dangerous game to play at, and the scoundrels who were guilty of it may congratulate themselves if they escape without being brought to justice.

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No Headline.

A coal mine at Cobridge, Staffordshire, has been inundated by the bottom of a fish pond giving way, the excavation having been carried too near its surface. The water fell like a cataract from a height of 90 feet. Fortunately only one man was drowned.

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Upwards of 132 bodies have been dug out of the ruins of the Lundhill Colliery explosion.

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No Headline.

Clifton Colliery went on strike last week, the masters seeking to reduce their wages 2-6d. per man per week.

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Carling v Pierce.

The defendant, who is proprietor of the Whittington Colliery works, was sued by the plaintiff for £3-13-0d. for labour performed. The plaintiff, it appears, with other parties, contracted to get out ironstone at a certain rate, but not by day, and had drawn more money than was due to him.

Mr. Blackburn, a mineral agent and colliery viewer, deposed to setting one pit at 7-0d. per ton, of 28 cwt., which plaintiff abandoned, and went to another where there was less water, on the same terms.

His Honour gave judgement for the defendant.

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Advert - to Coke Burners.

The Wallsend Colliery Company require an experienced Coke Burner, to take the charge of 50 ovens, and a number of hearths. Tenders, stating the price per ton for burning each description of coke, with testimonials to character and ability, may be left at the Wallsend Colliery office, Chesterfield, on or before the 6th. of July.