

Derbyshire Times.

Saturday 1st. August 1863.

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Clay Cross - Colliery Accident.

On Thursday last, a young man named John Johnson, of Clay Cross, collier, aged 20, was at work on the south side of the No. 2 Blackshale pit, with a young man named Haslam. A piece of bind from the roof, called a "pot-hole", several hundredweight, which was considered perfectly safe, partly fell on him, from which he received such injuries as he lingered in great pain until Saturday night, when death terminated his sufferings. An inquest on the body of the deceased was held at the Star Inn, Clay Cross, on the 28th. instant, when the jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death".

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Sudden Outbursts of Gas in Coal Mines.

On Tuesday the 21st. inst., another of those occurrences (the second within eighteen months) took place in the Hard Coal Seam at Shipley Colliery, the property of A.M. Mundy, Esq. About 11 o'clock in the day gas was discovered issuing from the floor of No. 2 stall, about half way up the bank. As soon as the men perceived it in their lamps they went to the pit-bottom, and the bailiff went back and found the No. 2 gate full of gas for a hundred yards from the gate end. It was nearly two hours before the banks, gates, etc., were free from the gas, and thanks to the use of safety lamps and the free ventilation, it all passed off without accident of any kind.

Sudden emissions of gas in large quantities occurring like the present at intervals, and without any kind of warning are a sufficient refutation of the theory that such outbursts do not exist, and at the same time ample proof of the absolute necessity for the use of safety lamps for daily work in pits in any way subject to their influence.

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The Colliers in the Methley District.

About 1500 men and boys are now out of employment in this district. It will be remembered that a few weeks ago there was a dispute between the coalowners and their men, resulting in the men agreeing to accept a reduction of 7½ percent on their wages, instead of 15 percent as proposed. Since then it is said that they have been required to riddle the coal at the pit bottom, and as the men say that this is equivalent to a reduction of 7½ percent, a renewal of the dispute is the consequence, and there are the number of men stated above now "out" on the point.

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Stealing Coal at Killamarsh.

John Gee, 46, boatman, was charged with stealing 15 stones weight of coal the property of Mr. Francis Rokeby Appleby, of Renishaw. The boat of John Fullwood got aground at Killamarsh and he asked prisoner to take half a ton of coal and leave it at Norton to lighten the boat which he consented to do, when Fullwood said he would give him a lump of coal for doing so. The prisoner took other coal beside this which he was now charged with stealing. Guilty. A previous conviction having been proved he was sentenced to four months imprisonment.

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Derbyshire and Yorkshire Mining.

There is no material alteration in the tone of the iron trade this week, everything connected with it, except in some departments, being in a very depressed state. We have had a few more orders from the continent, and America is putting in the market for a large supply of munitions of war, and this fact, coupled with the recent events in the States, render it probable that the war will not be of a short duration. We are in receipt of information which enables us to state that a new company is about to be formed in Yorkshire, on a large scale, for the manufacture of malleable iron. The steel trade is, on the whole, improving, but there is slackness in the demand for several descriptions of manufactured cutlery. The coal trade is, as usual, very depressed, and the prospects, so far as the home trade is concerned, are very gloomy. There has been a better enquiry for coal for exportation, and the demand for hard Derbyshire coal for coaling our steamers is on the increase. It has been found to be superior in many respects to the Welsh coal, and it can compete in point of cost of transit with the coals of South Wales. The enquiry for coal for household purposes has been very dull, but during the last week the demand from the south has been on the increase. Science has been again brought with advantage to the coal-pit. Mr. Barton, of Alfreton, in the county of Derby, has invented an apparatus to prevent the danger of men on the bank falling down the shaft. It is a lever applied to the sides, upon which the chair of the pit works, by which, supposing the mouth of the pit to be fenced round, leaves only a opening sufficiently wide to admit of the chair to be loaded and unloaded. This aperture is opened as the chair ascends to the surface, and closes as soon as it begins to descend. By the adoption of this invention the engine man and the men on the bank know, by seeing the gate open, that the chair is nearing the surface, and vice versa, thus obviating the danger of falling down the shaft. The invention, which has met the approval of the Government Inspector, is now being attached to the collieries at Kilburn. A week or two ago it was stated that a dispute pending between the colliers in the Methley district and their employers had been compromised, the men agreeing to a reduction of 7½ percent on their wages instead of 15 percent, as had been proposed by their masters. Since then they have, in most of the collieries, received notice to riddle the coal at the pit-bottom; as they declare that the additional labour is equal to another reduction of 7½ percent, there is a renewal of the dispute, and already 1500 men and boys in Methley district, between Wakefield and Leeds, are out of employment. In proof of the increasing reputation of Derbyshire lead, it may be stated that the lead smelting firm of Thomas Wass and Son have alone produced in their leadworks during the year 1862 no less than 33,669 pigs of good soft lead, equal in weight to any but W.B. The aggregate weight of metal was 2,104 tons; the price of the ore was in all instances determined by the quotations given in the Mining Journal. The judge of the increase of the production of lead in Derbyshire, it is only necessary to consider the amount given in Mr. Hunt's official return for 1861 as the quantity produced by the whole of the Derbyshire smelters in that year, was but 5,178 tons 9 cwts., or little more than double that produced in 1862 by Messrs. Wass and Son alone. The lead mines in Derbyshire are much in the same position as last reported. The North Derbyshire plant is being taken up preparatory to being sold by auction, the hope of forming a new company having been abandoned.

Mining Journal.

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Derbyshire Mining.

The intelligence from America is still confirmatory of a prolonged war, so that the hopes of commercial men of a speedy termination to it do not at all appear likely to be verified. Considering the depressed nature of trade generally throughout the provinces, we have signs of improvement in the demand for home consumption. The orders from the colonies are, on the whole, satisfactory, and so far as machinery is concerned, there is a positive activity. Enquiry for sheets and plates is good. For armour plates the demand is still greater than supply. The steel trade is progressing in improvement gradually, and at Sheffield the railway spring makers are very busy with orders; indeed, there is quite a new trade in Sheffield carried on in that department, and so successfully, that few firms in other parts of the country can compete with the Sheffield manufacturers. The pig iron trade is dull, and the paucity of orders clearly indicate the depression which prevails throughout the iron trade. In the Leeds district machinists have a large number of orders in hand for steam engines and other machinery.

Now that the prospectus of the Whittington Freehold Colliery Company is before the public, it is very favourably received, notwithstanding the depressed state of trade. The land and minerals have been secured by the present proprietor, Mr. Pierce, on very favourable terms, and the plant is of a most permanent and durable character. Mr. Pierce has made very liberal arrangements with the new company, and as everything is in working order, the company with ordinary management cannot fail to succeed.

We hear that the Lockoford Colliery, Derbyshire, which was commenced by the late Mr. Stevenson, C.E., is about to be worked again. If such prove the case, it will confer a great advantage upon the neighbourhood of Chesterfield.

The coal trade is very dull, and there is no prospect of any immediate improvement. There are loud complaints as to underselling, and most coalmasters are not working their pits more than half time.

The new Chesterfield and Silkstone Company have not succeeded in developing their works with the capital which was originally subscribed, it is pretty confidently anticipated that they will require further capital. They have found a greater quantity of water than what they calculated upon, and where this great enemy to coal mining is abundantly found both capital and skill are frequently tested to the utmost.

The railway traffic, so far as minerals are concerned, are on the increase; and, doubtless, if trade were to revive, it would far exceed in amount the returns of any previous year.

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Breaking Colliery Rules.

A respectable looking boy named Alfred Martin was charged by Martyn Seymour, with having, on the 22nd. of July, at Staveley, broken a Special Rule of the Colliery, in leaving a door open at the bottom of the shaft and not giving warning of his so doing, whereby the men's lives were endangered. He pleaded guilty. Mr. Seymour said he did not wish to be severe with the lad, he wanted it to be an example to others. The defendant was fined 7-6d. costs, and dismissed with a reprimand from the Bench.

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No Headline.

On Saturday last an inquest was held at the Union Workhouse, Chesterfield, before C.S.B. Busby, Esq., coroner, on the body of Edward Cook, aged 22 years. The following evidence was adduced: - Sylvester Bircumshaw, Ludbrook Hall, Newbold, examined - I am Under-Steward for Messrs. Jeffcock, Senior, and other proprietors of the Nesfield Colliery, Barlow, the Chesterfield and Midland Silkstone Colliery. It is my duty to go through the pit every morning before the men go from the bottom. I went down between four and five before the men went down. Clarke's stall was the first place I went into. The men come at six o'clock. It was alright when I got to it. I tried the roof with a pick, it was sound, there was timber set up, but not at a regular distance. The coal where deceased and Clarke were working lies in three beds, about 6 feet from top to bottom. They take out the two bottom beds first, and leave the top bed standing and propped. It was part of the top bed that fell down and killed deceased. I have been to the place since the accident. About two tons had fallen, about four feet broad, and three or four yards in length. They work the top bed by withdrawing the props. John Clarke, Whittington, said: Daniel Warwick and I were contractors at Stall No. 11. Cooke worked under us, and came to us on Thursday last, August the 6th. We set him to cut tops - I.e., cutting the top coal so as to let it down behind the props. Deceased was at that work yesterday morning. He came into the pit at half past six a.m. About three p.m. I and Warwick stood up, and deceased finished his work and sat near us on some stuff. He had cut the coal ready to come down when the props were withdrawn. The props were to have been drawn forward on Monday. We were talking together when I heard the top coal stirring as if were coming down. I said we must run. I ran about 6 yards, and deceased about 4. Our lights went out: and I heard the coal fall. I cried for assistance, and three men came. I saw Cooke sitting, when some coal fell on him and bounced off. I had to fall six or seven feet. The coal swayed from behind over the props and threw the top of the props outwards standing. It scarcely gave a seconds warning. Deceased was got out of the pit as soon as possible, and put in a cart to go to the Chesterfield hospital. No-one was to blame. Thomas Newham, Stonegravels, said: I assisted in removing deceased from the place of accident, and in bringing him in a cart to Chesterfield. His left leg was broken against the ankle, there were severe bruises on his left hip, also on the groin, and on the left arm and shoulder, and down his left side. Deceased died on the road between Newbold and Chesterfield, and was left at the Union. He was talking on the way, and sensible to the last. He complained most of his left side. He parted with a great deal of blood mostly from his left leg. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death, from a fall of coals in a coal-mine".

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Fatal Pit Accidents near Chesterfield.¹

About half past four on Saturday morning, a serious accident took place at Hunger Hill Pit, belonging to the Wingerworth Company, by which two men named John Stocks and John Hester were dreadfully injured - Hester mortally. It appears that at the time above-mentioned the men got into the cage to descend the pit, and proceeded alright until within twenty yards of the bottom when the rope gave way, and cage containing the men fell with a fearful crash to the bottom. As soon as possible assistance was obtained, and the men were brought to the top. Their injuries were very serious, and they were at once removed to the Chesterfield Hospital and dispensary. On examination being made, Hester was found to be very seriously injured, having sustained a large fracture of the skull. Stocks is very much injured about the chest and on the hip. At nine o'clock on Saturday morning, ?????? ?????? ?????? held a consultation, and it was then expressed that there were no hopes of Hester's recovery. Later in the day he was trepanned, to relieve his brain from compression; but despite all that could be done, he sank, and died the same night.

On Friday night an accident occurred in a pit at Barlow², which has resulted in the death of a man named Crookes. Deceased was working in a pit, and a large quantity of bind fell upon him. He was liberated as soon as possible, and some men procured a conveyance to convey him to the Chesterfield Hospital and dispensary, but he died on the way.

Inquests have been held on the bodies and adjourned, to enable the Government Inspector to examine the causes of the accidents.

¹ See Item 27 in the Inspector's Report for 1863. Fall of cage in descending shaft. Wingerworth Iron Company. - Deceased and two others were descending the shaft, and when about half way down, the cage was suddenly stopped (the engine going the meanwhile), and immediately fell the length of the slack rope, which shook the men off. Deceased fell to the bottom, and was killed; the other two fell on to the guide stays and escaped. The shaft and guides had been examined that morning; and several persons had passed down the shaft on the cage, The actual cause of the accident could not be ascertained. It is my opinion that one of the guides had got displaced at the joint, and the slide of the cage caught upon it.

² See AUG15.001 for details.

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The Late Accident at Hunger Hill.

The inquest on the body of John Hester, who was recently killed at the Hunger Hill Ironstone Pit, was resumed on Monday, before Mr. Busby, coroner. Mr. Hedley, Government Inspector, was also present. There was a great deal of evidence taken, but although the working arrangements at the mine were stated to be all that could be desired, there was no satisfactory reason assigned as to the cause of the accident. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death".

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Old Whittington - Fatal Pit Accident.

An inquest was held before Mr. C.S.B. Busby, Esq., coroner, at the house of Mr. George Bargh, Old Revolution House, Old Whittington, on Saturday last, to enquire into the death of Joseph Whetton, ironstone miner. Deceased was 29 years of age. On Thursday afternoon he was engaged in sinking a shaft at Foxley Oaks Colliery. Having fired a shot, he went down to remove the loosened rock and bind, at a depth of twelve yards. After working about three-quarters of an hour, he prepared to ascend, but, when within four yards of the top, the man winding him up missed his weight, and he was found insensible in the shaft, and died soon afterwards. The men working in the pit said they had met with "Sweetdamp" coming out of the rock. This was explained by Mr. Mycroft, the manager, as different from foul gas, as it affected the head and made men dizzy, especially when they came to fresh air. One of the jurors said it was very desirable that blow-pipes, with linen pipes, at a cost of about sixpence a yard, should be used after every shot, so that the shaft might be cleared of the gas. The manager said that it was intended to have belts made to fasten round the men, when they went up and down the shafts to prevent them falling out. Verdict, "Accidental Death".

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Accidental Death at Whittington.

On Thursday last an inquest was held at the Wellington Hotel, Whittington, before C.S.B. Busby, Esq., coroner, on the body of John Henry Baker, aged 13 years. George Robinson, ironstone miner, Old Whittington, said: At ten minutes past eleven yesterday morning I was at the bottom of the shaft of a Bell Ironstone Pit at Glasshouse Common, Whittington. John Rogers and deceased were at the top. The shaft is thirty yards deep. Men go up and down the pit in a corf, by means of a turn-barrel worked by hand. Deceased had to pull a loaded corf from the pit-top, take it about four yards and turn it over, and then bring it back and hook it onto the rope to go down the pit again. At the pit-top we have four planks - two on each side - to land the corves on. Deceased used a piece of iron with a handle on at one end and a hook at the other for drawing the corves backwards and forwards, and for landing the corves at the pit-top onto the bank. About ten minutes past eleven, when I was at the pit bottom, deceased fell down the shaft, on his face. There was a corf at the top and one at the bottom. We have two ropes in the shaft. I put deceased in the empty corf and brought him up directly. He died nearly as soon as we got him to the top of the pit. He was hurt under his throat, and his left thigh was broken. He was used to the work. Joseph Rodgers said: I was on the pit-bank at the time of the accident. I was turning the turn-barrel, which was drawing up a corf, whilst deceased was emptying another which had last come up. I heard a noise, and on looking round saw deceased tumbling backwards down the pit. He caught the surface of the ground on the other side of the pit, and then fell down. He had left his empty corf about four yards from the pit mouth. The hook was lying on the ground, between the corf and the pit. I think he had either been trying to draw the corf and the hook missed the ring and he had fallen backwards, or that he had been stepping backwards and his foot had tripped against the landing board. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death".

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Wages.

Thomas Higginson, collier, summoned James Yates, contractor, for £2-8-0d., for wages due to him. Complainant said that he was employed by defendant at 4-6d. per day, and he worked for him from the 18th. of May to August the 5th., and was paid up to July the 20th. Defendant said he was not in the employ of the West Staveley Company, his month's notice having expired on July the 24th., so that there could really be no claim on him. He was never on the premises between the 24th. of July and August the 5th. He never gave complainant notice. Ordered to pay the £2-8-0d. and costs.

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No Headline.

George Marshall, of Clay Cross, was charged by Samuel Richardson, of the same place, collier, with assaulting him on the 25th. ult., in the Cliff Colliery, Clay Cross. The Bench after hearing the evidence pro and con, dismissed the charge, ordering him to pay costs, 5-6d.

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No Headline.

More bodies are almost daily being recovered from the Edmunds Main Colliery. The greater portion of them are found from 400 to 600 yards from the bottom of the shaft. During the present week no less than ten of them have been recovered. Three were brought out on Wednesday. Altogether about 17 bodies, out of about 60, have been recovered up to the present time.

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Springwell Colliery.

The annual tea meeting was held at this colliery on Tuesday last, and addresses were given during the day by workmen, who are local preachers amongst the Wesleyans, Free Church, and Primitive Methodists. After tea a love-feast was held in a tent. From 200 to 300 workmen and their wives attended the services.