

Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald.

Saturday 6th. May 1865.

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Coalpit Explosion at Clay Cross.

Loss of 8 lives.

One of those dreadful calamities which cast a deep gloom over the mining districts, occurred at the New Foundation Pit at Clay Cross on Wednesday last about 2.30 a.m. The mine has been at work about eight years and its project is a five-feet seam of the Blackshale. It is an extensive colliery giving employment to about 500 men and boys. Fortunately the occurrence took place during the period of the night shift which is from 6 at night to 6 in the morning when not more than 20, if so many, men were at work. During the daytime the men at work would number 400 and a similar explosion during the day would doubtless have produced the most calamitous results. The pit has two downcast shafts and about 1,600 yards direct west is an upcast or furnace shaft. Levels run north and south and the deep workings where the explosion took place are on the east side. One of the downcast shafts is 9 feet and the other 8 feet 6 ins. The upcast is 8 ft. 3 ins.

The mine has been regarded as one of the safest in the district. Accidents have been numerous but up to this occurrence there has been nothing, we are told, of a serious nature. The ventilation is spoken of as excellent and this we have alike heard from managers and men, whilst the pit was looked upon as so perfectly safe or free from gas so as to admit of men working by naked candle, a system which, if prevalent, is nevertheless dangerous. There was no "bratticeing" in the mine as in the Yorkshire and North Country mines but the colliers worked in the long-wall system and the fresh air was said to be carried up and down facings. In this system, if we are correctly informed, the old workings are filled up with rubbish as soon as convenient after all the coal has been got out. The ventilation, then, is carried through the pit by three distinct lines passing north, south and east, the current of pure air passing from the downcast shafts and uniting in a central point of the mine is driven forward to the upcast.

As far as we can judge from these details the system of ventilating is one of the best that could be devised in securing the safety of the mine, but in addition there is another precaution which it were well if it be imitated in all the mining districts. About 2 miles south of No. 4 Pit is another mine belonging to the Clay Cross Company called the No. 2 Pit and between the two collieries there is an excellent communication so that in the event of an accident such as that which occurred on Wednesday the escape of the men is provided for and a ready entrance to either is secured. Having disposed of these preliminaries which are of interest to miners we will now proceed with an account of -

The Explosion.

Hosea Marriott, the engine-man, thus left almost alone, conscious of a serious calamity having occurred and unable to render any assistance, at once started for the village or little town of Clay Cross where he aroused Mr. Brown, the manager, Mr. Howe, the engineer and other officials and proceeding on to No. 2 Pit he found a man, William Bower, had come from the scene of the explosion and ascended the latter. Bower was unable to give any very clear account of the affair and at first it was hoped that most of the men were safe and making their way to the same exit. Unfortunately, this was to some extent ill-founded. As it turned out, however, 8 men made their escape the same way as Bower and as one by one made his appearance hope strove

against hope that all would yet be well. For a description of the scene which followed we are indebted to eyewitnesses. In a short time the whole neighbourhood was astir, some of the sleepers having been awoken by the concussion, others by the swift messages of ill-tidings. Both pits were soon crowded with spectators including many wives and children, mothers painfully held in suspense as to the fate of their kindred. By and by the last stragglers from the No. 4 Pit made their appearance, and as the hours wore on there were those who still watched on, incapable of realising the terrible stroke which had deprived them of their relatives. At the immediate scene of the accident thousands of people were gathering, managers, joiners, overmen and most praiseworthy exertions soon to reach such communications with No. 4 Mine. This time there was, as usual on such occasions, no lack of brave fellows ready to risk themselves in search of the missing. The search, however, was conducted by the manager and overman who descended at 3 o'clock and remained in the mine all day. After some hours search the dead bodies of six men and two boys were found.

Bamford and Currey were day foremen and they had gone down the pit at an early hour to examine the works, preparatory to the day hands commencing. It is supposed they had concluded their investigation and that Bamford was approaching the bottom of the shaft for the purpose of communicating the engineman the signal of all-right when the explosions occurred and he was struck down and died near the shaft bottom. Currey's body was found near him. Some more men were found in the first level which dips over a length of 150 yards and the remainder in the next level which extends over 450 yards. All were much burnt and mutilated. The damage to the pit itself was reported inconsiderable and it was stated to our reporter by one of the officials that the gas appeared to have burst from the floor of the pit.

The Escapers: -

were Ephraim and John Hatton, brothers, William Bower, James Booth, Samuel Bradley and George Woodward. Both groups, the dead and the living, resided in the various villages round about and small, comparatively speaking, as is the number of killed, there is hardly a village in the neighbourhood that is not placed in mourning through the calamity. Blankets were sent down the pit as soon as the recovery of the bodies was reported and the mangled and charred remains, wrapped up so as to prevent public recognition, was sent to the bank and then transferred to the Clay Cross Hospital, the institution which has been founded and is supported by the Coal and Iron Company of that name, to await the Coroner's Inquisition. Shortly after noon the last of the bodies had been brought out and the pit having been cleared of foul air the artisans commenced repairing the damage.

Mr. Jackson, the M.P., who knew nothing of the accident till he arrived at the Chesterfield Station proceeded to Clay Cross. He was deeply affected at the calamity and ordered that every attention be paid to the dead and the relatives should be temporarily provided for.

Opening of the Inquest.

The Inquiry into the cause attending this fearful catastrophe was opened at the Hospital at Clay Cross on Thursday afternoon at 4 o'clock before C.S.B. Busby Esq., coroner, and the following Jury - Mr. Elliott, Thomas Wilson, William Slack, John Udall, George Askew, William Shemwell, John Smith, Richard Simpson, Joseph Stoppard, Samuel Cutts, George Hodson, William Sears, John Hopkinson, William Hayes and Bryan Nix. The bodies as they lay are frightful and most sickening appearance. First Witness called was Hannah Bamford, wife of the deceased Thomas Bamford, residing at Newmarket near Clay Cross who identified the body of her husband who was a coalminer and worked in the pit where the accident happened. He was 47 years of age.

William Spetch, of Ault Hucknall, identified the body of Thomas Henry Spetch. The deceased left home on Tuesday morning last at 10 minutes to 5 o'clock. He went into the pit with John Currey, the fireman. He was ten years of age last birthday.

Sarah Lowe, residing at Tupton Moor, identified the body of Frederick Lowe her son aged 17. He was one of the family of 7 children.

Ann May, of Tupton, identified the body of her husband, Samuel May, the father of seven of her children. He was a collier and lived at Tupton Moor, aged 42. Joseph Brown, of Egstow Green, said that he was a corporal in No. 2 Pit. He identified the body of John Currey, who was a fireman, and his duty was to go round the workings to make sure there was no gas in the pit. Samuel Bradder deposed that one of the bodies was that of Ralph Stokoe, coalminer, aged 49 years. John Smith of Pilsley identified the body of his son, Thomas Smith aged 12 years. Ann Fox, widow, of Tupton, identified the body of her late husband Thomas Fox, aged 43 years. At this stage of the proceedings the coroner adjourned the inquiry until Tuesday next, to be resumed in a public hall, and the Jury were bound over to appear at 10 o'clock.

As we have stated the bodies presented a most sickening appearance but from the enquiries made on the spot we find the injuries received by the unfortunate men ..... Thomas Byford ..... a wife and only son..... his right hand smashed and his..... in two places, and his right thigh smashed. John Curry, single man, two fractures of the skull, a compound fracture descending in the right orbit and his right temple smashed in pieces, right cheek smashed, frontal bone split, left frontal bone fractured but from the appearance of the body it was evident that death arose not from the injuries received but from the effects of after-damp. Thomas Fox, married with two children, no broken bones but died from the effects of after-damp. Frederick Low, single man, had his face burnt and skull blown off but otherwise injured in a frightful manner but no limbs broken. Ralph Stokoe had his shoulder smashed and frightfully burnt. Samuel May leaves a wife and seven children. The top of his head is completely blown away leaving the brains protruding. Two of his fingers were also blown off. The two boys were frightfully injured, the hands being scorched in such a manner as to give the appearance of a charred stick. Since the time of the accident the church bell has the greater part of the time been tolled, which together with the painful quietness of the place and the spirit of depression which seems to pervade the whole of the population, strikes a feeling of deep melancholy into the heart. Indeed, judging by the great number of men lounging about, it seems as if their spirits were so depressed as to prevent them resuming work until the internments of the bodies.

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Saturday 13th. May 1865.

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Colliery Explosion at Clay Cross.

Adjourned Inquest.

The Inquest on the bodies of the eight persons killed by an explosion of firedamp on the 3rd. inst. at one of the collieries of the Clay Cross Company was resumed on Tuesday last at the Public Hall, Clay Cross before Mr. Busby, coroner, Mr. Evans, the Government Inspector of Mines for the District, Mr. Charles Binns and most of the agents of the Company were present. Mr. Brown, the underviewer, Mr. Wilson, the deputy and other parties engaged in the mine gave evidence that on the evening of the explosion after the men had left work there was no evidence of gas in any part of the mine, that after the accident they examined the mine and found a crack in one of the stall floors down which Mr. Brown said he could put his walking stick without meeting with obstruction. It was in the form of a letter V upside down thus . Such an occurrence had not been known by them to have occurred in the getting of the Black Shale Coal and their experience amounted to eighteen years. Several other witnesses were examined but their evidence merely went in corroboration of the managers Brown and Wilson.

In opening the proceedings the coroner invited any relatives or friends of the deceased or any persons interested in mines to volunteer evidence or ask questions of the witnesses if such evidence or questions would in anyway tend to throw light on the lamentable occurrence.

Richard Wilson, Furniss Hill, Clay Cross, deputy underviewer of No. 4 Pit was called and said "I was in the pit up to 6 o'clock on the night before the accident. My duties were to visit the workings and to see that the ventilation was right and to see that the coal was properly got. I attend to the deep workings more especially and also go into other parts of the pit. I was in the stalls on the south side in the deep workings on the night before the accident. There were four men at work in stalls where the fire broke out. (At the request of the coroner the plans were here produced and shown to the witness who pointed out the locality of the stall in which the explosion took place). I noticed nothing particular in the stall that night. The ventilation was good and the current of air was downward. I commenced at the bottom of the drift and walked right on. I found no traces of gas whatever. I was not in the north workings. Mr. Cook, one of the corporals, had been through them previously to my going down. I came out of the pit at 6 o'clock and was relieved by John Curry one of the men who had been killed. Since the accident I have been down every day. I have been once in the rise workings the day after the explosion. There were no signs of the explosion there but there are signs in the north flat. The doors in that part were blown inward towards the north. There were two doors, both were blown in the same direction. There is no further damage on that side and there is no damage done on the south side. The three first doors going down the engine plane were blown upwards. Further down on the third flat were three more doors and they were blown downwards. I noticed a tub at the entrance of the first flat after the accident. It was blown nearly to pieces. We found two bodies in the first engine flat. The first was that of Thomas Fox and we found him near the entrance to the flat and the other was Fred. Lowe. The bodies were about six yards apart. There was a horse there also. Fox was found on the top of the pony. Lowe was very badly burnt in the face and Fox only slightly. The horse was very badly burnt. These men worked with naked lights. On the engine plane we found six more bodies. Thomas Bamford, foreman, we found about 30 yards from the level down the engine plane. John Curry, fireman, about 50 or 60 yards below. Ralph Stokoe about 260 yards below and the next two little boys Spetch and Smith who were only a

few yards below and Samuel May was found a few yards further on. All of them were burnt. There was a quantity of "pades" and "bind" and "brattices" blown down below the third flat. Stokoe and May also used naked lights. The boys has lamps and so had the fireman. The lamps had been found and I have seen them. Curry's lamp was found just below him. Since the explosion I have noticed the breaking up in the floor in the second stall in the first flat near to the face of the coal. The crack is from seventeen to eighteen yards long. I am perfectly sure that at six o'clock on the night before the explosion there was no such crack. In my opinion it has been formed by the gas. It goes down pretty deep. It can be seen from eighteen inches to two feet but it goes in a gliding direction and we cannot see it further. If the gas did come from that it would go into the air. If there was more gas than the air would have diluted it would have come into contact with Fox's lamp as he was nearest. Supposing this to have been the case the indications that I have alluded to would likely to arise from this cause. I have never before known gas to have come in large quantities in the Black Shale Coal. I have been acquainted with it for eighteen years. There is no other place down the incline, I think, that could cause the explosion.

By the Coroner; Was there any considerable fall in the barometer the day of the accident or the day before?

I was not aware there was.

By a Juror: Is the stall at work now or has it been since the explosion?

No.

Do you think that if there was a good current of air the gas would have caused the explosion?

It is evident that it has done.

By Mr. Binns: How long before the explosion do you think the fireman had been there?

I do not know but according to his regular times it would be an hour before. I found the marks on the shovels that he would usually make. In the ordinary course of his duty he would be there an hour before and he was apparently on his way to the shaft to give the signal that all was right and the men could come down.

Answer: Yes Sir.

The Coroner: That is - you suppose so from the position in which he was found.

Yes Sir.

Mr. Evans: Do you think that he had examined the second stall of the first flat?

I think not. I found no marks. The men had left off working between five and six on Tuesday night and the explosion took place at about twenty minutes past two in the morning.

Then the stall had been left about eight hours or eight and a half hours without examination?

Yes Sir.

That would give a long time for gas to accumulate?

It would Sir.

John Brown, Clay Cross, underviewer of the No. 4 Pit was then called and corroborated the evidence of the first witness as to the doors and other indications of the explosion. He pointed out on the plan the way in which the air travelled through the colliery and then said "I have been at the colliery every day since the explosion. I account for the explosion by the gas bursting through the floor of the second stall of the first flat and thus the gas coming into contact with the naked light of Fox who was working close by. I was there some seven or eight hours after the explosion. There was no gas then coming through the crack. I have not seen any from it since the explosion. It took some days to get the gas from the pit".

Question: Is there not a little gas now coming out?

Yes Sir. In the far stall but not where it can touch a light. The crack apparently does not extend so far as that. We have cleared away from the top of the crack some fifteen or sixteen yards along the face. I can put a stick down it nearly a yard in one direction.

Could that crack be made by anything but gas?

No Sir, nothing else would do it.

Would the weight of the roof do it?

There was no weight on it. The indications of the explosion are consistent with it having arisen from this cause. I have had charge of the pit for 16 years. I have never known gas to escape from the Black Shale Coal before. There is no other part of the workings in which the explosion could have taken place but this. I have examined everything very carefully and could find no indications anywhere else. If it had happened elsewhere the doors would have been blown in different directions. There was a good deal of damage done in one of the shafts. Fox was a little burnt but Lowe was much more burnt. I think Fox fired the gas and the fire went on towards Lowe and the other men. The fireman, Curry, had evidently not been in the flat where the crack was as there was no marks on the shovel there.

If he had been there is it not probable that he would find this gas?

Yes, it is probable. The marked shovel is about 200 yards from the place where the crack is but it is not on the direct road.

Mr. Binns: Can you account for Curry not having been there?

Yes Sir, I think that he had been too late to give the signal at 2 o'clock and that he had come out to give the signal intending to go back and examine the place. He was found about 50 yards from Bamford.

Was he a man you ever knew to neglect his duty?

No Sir, I never heard a word against him.

Did you not always consider him to be one of the best and most reliable men to have about the colliery?

Yes, he was the best and steadiest man in the pit. I have never heard a word against him.

The Coroner: Ought he to have gone into the stalls and made his examination before signalling the men to come down?

Yes, he ought to have done that.

Mr. Evans: How long would it take him to go around?

He came in at about 6 o'clock and it would take him seven or eight hours to go round.

The Coroner: You assume that he did not finish the deeps but he intended to return them after he had signalled the men?

Yes.

Was not that wrong according to the rules? Ought he not to have given the signal after examining the stalls?

Yes he ought to have done but I think he was intending the return to the stalls after giving the signal.

Mr. Evans: He did not give the signal?

No Sir.

What time did he usually give it?

About two o'clock or a quarter past.

Well this was about 20 minutes past so he was late?

Mr. Binns: Are there not many men working in all parts of the pit?

Yes.

Are they not instructed to give notice when they see anything wrong?

Yes.

By a Juror: Could the explosion have caused the crack in the floor?

No Sir.

John Springthorpe, Clay Cross, miner, said he was in the second stall in the first flat on the night before the explosion. He went on a little before three in the afternoon and came off at night. He saw the first witness in the stall. There was no gas there. He had a naked light at the time he left. There was no crack in the floor but it sounded quite hollow as though it was heaving up. He did not know what was the cause but he thought it was the weight of the roof. He apprehended no danger from it nor did he mention it to anybody. He knew it was his duty if he perceived danger to mention it. He was bound by the rules to give notice to the deputy if any danger existed. About a fortnight ago when he went through the bank they had a weight and the

roof broke and sank down nearly a foot. That would relieve the weight on the face. He had never known gas in any quantity in that part of the pit before or in the stall. He had heard that there was a little gas in the left hand side of the flat the day before the accident. That was about 400 yards away from the stall in which he worked. All stalls were well and properly timbered. He always found marks every morning to show that his stall had been examined by the fireman before he went in. The mark was always left on the shovels. The stall was not worked during the night.

Hosea Marriott, engineman at the Winding Shaft at No. 4 Pit, said "I was at work on the night of the explosion from 6 p.m. on Tuesday until 25 minutes past two on the Wednesday morning when the explosion took place. I first heard a noise like thunder coming up the shaft which lasted about a second, it was followed by a rebound making a report similar to the first and then a flash of fire almost like lightning followed. It put the gas out in the engine house and the pitbank. The engine was standing at the time and the explosion severed one rope and the other pulled it round a turn or two and the second rope broke. I made for the front door but could not get out of this for the smoke and soot that proceeded out of the shaft. I made my way out of the back side of the engine house, went onto the bank to see what had happened and there found an old man waiting to go down. Within (?) spread the report and I went back into my engine house and stopped there till 6 o'clock in the morning."

William Bower, miner, Clay Cross, said " I was at work in the north level on the night of Tuesday the 2nd. of May about 250 yards from the pit bottom. I heard and felt the explosion. We felt the wind reverse then we heard the explosion. Our lights were put out. There was not much damage done on the level where we were. We found our way to the bottom of the shaft and learned where the explosion was and went to the stables and met the ostlers coming out. From there we went to the lamps office and made our way up the north incline and there struck a light. No. 2 Pit is connected with No. 4 so we can escape from one to the other. We escaped from No. 2 Pit. There was a very unpleasant smell on the south level between the pit bottom and the stables. None of the horses in the stables were injured."

John Hatton, miner, who was working with the last witness on the north level was called and gave corroborative evidence. William Brown, recalled, and in reply to the coroner said, "He was not aware that there was any sudden fall in the barometer the day before the accident. Such a sudden fall would affect the air in the pit making it less clear than at ordinary times."

John Smith, miner, Clay Cross, said he got down into the pit a little while after the explosion. He went with Mr. Brown down No. 2 Pit and went forward to No. 4 to the place where the explosion took place. In the engine place he found six bodies. When he came back he entered the pit bottom and at about nine o'clock they went off to find Fox and Lowe but before they could do so they had to put the cloths onto the levels to circulate the air properly. They then went and found the bodies in the place where the two men had been working on the first level.

Mr. Thomas Evans, Government Inspector of Mines, said "I have been down this pit on two occasions since the explosion and I have examined the workings up and down the incline plane and along the levels. I am quite satisfied that the explosion must have taken place down the engine bank and there is no damage done in the south level and the men were not injured in the north. First of all the two men Bamford and Currey who laid above the first flat were found with their faces towards the shaft. I saw the tub described by one of the witnesses and it showed evidence of the explosion having taken place against the wind. From the first flat all the sheets and doors appear to have been blown upwards to the rise and from the dip direction all the sheets appear to have been blown down showing the explosion must have come out of the first flat. In the second flat there is a stall with a crack or rent extending for many yards in the bottom near the face of the coal. I have examined the roof and could not discover any gas. I think the

gas must have come from the floor of the stall probably from the coal there some yards below it. If the gas did come from there, and I believe it did, it would in all probability fire from the naked light of Fox or Lowe the man with him. It must have fired at the lights of these two men or the lights of the two men at the bottom of the incline as they were the only four naked lights in the pit. I do not think that there is a large quantity of air in this colliery. Considerable improvement might be made as to the distribution of it. It would be difficult or almost impossible to direct such an unusual quantity of air into the workings as would have prevented such an explosion on account of the great quantity of gas emitted. It appears from the facts and observations communicated to me that blowers of gas are seldom heard of in Black Shale Coal. The general custom of the country is to work with naked lights. I think that as a matter of precaution, that in future, that these collieries which are subject to giving off these blowers should be worked with locked safety lamps."

By the Coroner: "The Rules do not require any safety lamps to be used in these workings. The special government rules do not required it except where ordered. I do not think that if there had been any gas in the second flat on the day before the explosion as referred to by one witness it would have affected this explosion as it is such a distance off. The blowers sometimes give off gas very rapidly without much warning, briefly without any. There has been a great deal of gas here evidently."

Mr. R. Stephens, surveyor, proved the plans and said that once a fortnight he tried the air in the deeps and found from 6000 to 7000 feet a minute passing.

The Coroner: "Is that a proper supply of air?"

Mr. Evans: "I do not think that it is enough. If it was kept to one side it might be but it has to go to the right side."

Witness: "There is about 18000 feet of air in the pit altogether and this air has an accession of fresh air before it goes to the right side of the workings."

Mr. Evans: "That does not alter the fact that the air from the left goes into the right workings and carries with it the gases from the left but I think there was in this case an unusual amount of gas even for good ventilations. The question of the distribution of air is hardly before us now."

This was the whole of the evidence and the coroner briefly addressed the Jury stating that the case although calamitous in its results did not involve any peculiar question regarding more consideration which was usually bestowed upon these such cases. He then called attention to the facts as stated in the evidence and the Jury, after a brief deliberation, found that the deceased were accidentally killed by an explosion of gas.

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Saturday 20th. May 1865.

Page 3 Col. 3.

Mining Association of Great Britain.

The annual meeting of this Association was held last week at the Craven Hotel, Strand. The president, Nicholas Wood Esq, in the chair. There was a full attendance. Amongst those present being Mr. W.O. Foster M.P., Mr. Fereday Smith, Mr. Seeley, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Lancaster, Mr. Hewlett, Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Bean, Mr. Horton, Mr. Carr, Mr. Potter, Mr. Heathcote, Mr. Knowles, Mr. Pierce, Mr. W.W. Williams Jnr., Mr. Parkes (Parliamentary Agent), Mr. J.W. Dry (Secretary), Mr. Woodhouse (Treasurer) etc. etc. The treasurer read the yearly statement of accounts which were passed. Mr. Parkes (Parliamentary Agent) referred in detail to the measures before Parliament that would require the attention of the Association and pointed out how best this could be accomplished. Several Bills before the house or of which notice had been given were briefly discussed. A very cordial vote of thanks was passed to the secretary and president and after the acknowledgements the proceedings terminated.

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Saturday 20th. May 1865.

Page 3 Col. 4.

Wages Case.

John Wragg, of New Whittington, contractor, was summoned by Michael Fallon of the same place, collier, for non-payment of £1-0-6d. wages. Defendant said he did not owe it. Complainant said that he was engaged by defendant to load coal in the Springwell Colliery, Staveley at 3-9d. per day. He (Defendant) was in partnership with a man named Kevin(?) Biskill. Wragg paid him wages. He summoned Biskill at a recent petty sessions and Wragg then swore that he was the person who took the stall and Biskill was paid by him. At this hearing the case was dismissed against Biskill and the Bench told him to summon Wragg. Defendant said that Mr. Young (the deputy at the Colliery) had agreed to pay Fallon half of his wages and he (Defendant) the other half. This statement was denied. Ordered to pay wages and costs or in default fourteen days. Defendant: "Then I'll go to Derby".

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Saturday 20th. May 1865.

Page 3 Col. 7.

Inquest - The late Accident at Springwell Colliery.

An adjourned inquest was held on Thursday before Mr. Busby, Coroner, at the Springwell Colliery, on the body of Timothy Coffey, aged 24, who was killed on Sunday May 7th. It appeared from the evidence of Thomas Heywood, banksman at the colliery, that on Sunday night week at about a quarter to ten o'clock they were engaged in testing the ropes in the usual manner previous to the men going down the pit to work. A full tub weighing about 7 cwt. was placed in the chair and lowered to the bottom of the pit and then raised to about six inches above the props. This was higher than usual. The props were in their place. The top of the chair caught on the ropes and became fast. The engineman reversed his engine and the ropes slackened and fell on the chair about 12 or 14 yards. An effort was made to wind off the slack ropes. After thrice trying to move the chair the rope snapped at the drum and fell down the shaft killing the deceased. The other part of the rope was left on the drum shaft. The engineman had only been a week at the work. He was quite sober.

Thomas Hawkins, engineman, said that he had charge of winding engines for eighteen years. He had tried the ropes according to the rules of the colliery by lowering one full tub to the bottom and filling the empty chair to the top. He let it stand about six inches above the top of the props so another full tub could be put in. The signal was given to him to go down and try the other rope. He did so twice. After arresting the chair he set out a second time and this time the chair did not go down. The banksman and he examined the rope on the drum and not finding any slack rope thought that all was right. The engine was near the centre and therefore he was obliged to draw back a time or two. Whilst holding up the engine he perceived a snatch in the rope and it suddenly stopped the engine. The rope was broken. He had never seen the ropes go over the side of the drum.

Thomas Manion, labourer, heard two or three shouts to the engineman to hold on. He was standing talking to the deceased when he was struck. His last words were, "That man is not fit to let men up or down the pit". He did not hear any shouts to the men to keep out danger nor did he see anyone examine the rope outside with a lamp.

Samuel Gainham, miner, was waiting at the pitbank to go down. He saw them trying the cage the cover of which pulled just above the props. When the cage was loosed back and the cover caught on top of the ropes there fell about 2 or 3 yards of slack rope onto the cage. The banksman told the engineman to pull the slack rope up. He tightened the rope and tried to lift the cover off the props and in doing so pulled out some more rope. The witness thought the rope caught under one corner of the cage and so lifted the cage off the props. When he was reversing the engine the cage broke the rope which then fell to the bottom of the shaft. In the glimmering light it was impossible for any eye to see the rope strike the deceased. In reply to a Juror witness said that he did not hear any warnings to the men to move away lest there should be an accident.

David Middleton, carpenter, said the rope broke off about thirty yards from the cage. It was a good sound rope and is still so. Breaking strain is about 11 tons. The Coroner said it was evident the accident occurred whilst the men were taking proper steps to prevent accidents. There was no evidence to show negligence or the engineman was not sober.

The Government Inspector said the tubs ought to be drawn up each time above and clear of the cages. Mr. Campbell, engineer, promised that would be done in the future. The Coroner: "According to the rules."