

CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION 1842.

**REPORT by LEONARD STEWART,
ESQ., M.D., on the Employment of
Children and Young Persons in the Coal
Mines of North Somersetshire, and on the
actual State, Condition, and Treatment of
such Children and Young Persons.**

Edited by Ian Winstanley

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Ian Winstanley.
83, Greenfields Crescent,
Ashton-in-Makerfield,
Wigan. WN4 8QY.
Lancashire. England

Tel & Fax:- (01942) 723675.
Mobile:- (0798) 9624461
E-mail:- ian.winstanley@blueyomder.co.uk
Web site:- <http://www.cmhrc.pwp.blueyomder.co.uk>

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COMMISSION

(UNDER THE GREAT SEAL)

FOR INQUIRING INTO THE EMPLOYMENT AND CONDITION OF CHILDREN IN MINES AND MANUFACTORIES.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith: To Our trusty and well beloved Thomas Tooke, Esquire, Thomas Southwood Smith, Esquire, Doctor in Medicine, together with Leonard Horner and Robert John Saunders, Esquires, two of Our Inspectors of Factories, Greeting:- WHEREAS, an humble Address was presented unto to Us by Knights, Citizens and Burgesses and Commissioners of Shires and Burghs in Parliament assembled, humbly beseeching Us that We should be graciously pleased to direct an Inquiry to be made into the Employment of the Children of the Poorer Classes in Mines and Collieries and the various branches of Trade and Manufactures in which numbers of Children work together, not being included in the provisions of the Acts for regulating Employment of Children and Young Persons in Mills and Factories and to collect information as to the time allowed each day for meals and as to the actual state, condition and treatment of such Children and as to the effects of such Employment, both with regard to their morals and their bodily health; NOW KNOW YE, THAT WE, reposing great trust and confidence in your ability and discretion, have nominated, constituted and appointed and do by these presentiments nominate, constitute and appoint you the said, Thomas Tooke, Thomas Southwood Smith, together with, Leonard Horner and Robert John Saunders, to be Our Commissioners for the purposes aforesaid and We do hereby enjoin you to obey all directions touching the premises which shall from time to time be given you, and any two or more of you, by one of our principle Secretaries of State and for the better discovery of the truth in the premises, we do, by these presentiments, give and grant to you, or any two or more of you, full power and authority to call before you such persons as you will judge necessary, by whom you may be the better informed of the truth in the premises, and to inquire of the premises and every part thereof, by all other lawful way and means whatsoever and We do hereby also give and grant unto you, or any two or more of you, full power and authority when the same shall appear to be requisite, to administer an oath or oaths to any person or persons whatsoever, to be examined before you, or two or more of you, touching or concerning the premises and Our further will and pleasure is, that you Our said Commissioners, or any three of you, do, with as little delay as may be consistent with a due discharge of the duties hereby imposed upon you, Certify to Us, under your hands and seals, or under the hands and seals of any three of you, your several proceedings in the premises; And We further will and command, and by these presents ordained, that this Our Commission shall continue in full force and virtue, and that you, Our said Commissioners, or any two or more of you, shall and may from time to time proceed in the execution thereof, and of every matter and thing therein contained, although the same be not continued, from time to time by adjournment: AND WE HEREBY COMMAND all and singular Our Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Mayors, Bailiffs, Constables, Officers, Ministers, and all other of Our loving Subjects whatsoever, as will within Liberties as without, that they may be assistant to you and each of you in the execution of these presentiments. And for your assistance in the due execution of this Commission, We have made choice of Our trusty and well beloved Joseph Fletcher, Esquire, to be the Secretary of this Our Commission, whose services we require you to use from time to time, as occasion may require. In witness thereof, We have caused these Letters to be made Patent. Witness Ourselves at Westminster, the Twentieth day of October, in the Fourth Year of Our Reign.

By Writ of Privy Seal,

EDMUNDS.

**LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS EXTENDING THE TERMS OF THE COMMISSION TO
“YOUNG PERSONS”**

Whitehall, February 11th, 1841.

GENTLEMEN,

THE QUEEN having been pleased to comply with the prayer of an humble Address presented to Her Majesty, in pursuance of a Resolution of the House of Commons, dated 4th. of February, 1841, ‘That Her Majesty will be graciously pleased to direct that the Commission appointees in answer to an Address of this House, on August 4, 1840, for the investigation of certain branches of Infant Labour, do include within its inquiry the Labour also of Young Persons designated as such by the provisions of the Factory Act’ I am delighted by the Marquis of Normanby to desire that you will include within your inquiry the Labour of Young Persons designated as such by the provisions of the Factory Act accordingly.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your Obedient Servant,
(Signed) F. MAULE.

*The Commissioners for inquiring into the Condition
of Children employed in Mines, &c.*

Acknowledgement

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I.G.W.

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Children's Employment Commission.

REPORT by LEONARD STEWART, ESQ., M.D., on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Coal Mines of North Somersetshire, and on the actual State, Condition, and Treatment of such Children and Young Persons.

TO HER MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONERS.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Coal Works which were visited by me are those in North Somerset situated near Bristol and Bath. They are not so considerable as those of Kingswood and Pucklechurch and thereabouts but I received particular instructions to confine myself to the south bank of the Avon, and these last are on the north and in Gloucestershire.

There were several collieries within my district which I could not visit, as my time was a good deal limited, and I had to make an examination into various other employments of children and young persons in the same region but as I took great care to obtain good information on the subject, and repeated my inquiries at every new point which I reached, I have no reason to think that I passed over anything of a peculiarly interesting kind.

I have to remark of the whole of this district, that no females are employed actually working or conveying the coal, or indeed in any operations underground. In this respect I believe these coal works differ essentially from those in the north and in Wales. I may say at once that the condition of the children described to me by experienced persons, who were acquainted with mines and collieries in various parts of the kingdom, as comparatively favourable but still I occasion to notice many circumstances connected with their occupation which called loudly for attention and interference.

There is more than an average demand for the labour of children and young of the male sex, and these first begin to be employed in the collieries at eight years old, and even earlier in a few cases. Their work however is not of the laborious kind. The youngest are generally employed in opening and closing the doors for ventilation but this requires only a limited number. The others assist, as 'pushers,' the youths or men who pull along the 'carriages' of coal or they help to turn the 'gug' wheel.

It may be stated as a general and indeed universal fact, as far as my examination extended, that the coal workers declared their decided preference for their occupation when put in comparison with others, such as agricultural labour and ordinary mechanical employments. This circumstance, which may surprise those who are aware of the dangerous and apparently disagreeable nature of their underground work, may be in some measure owing to their better pay and greater leisure. It is probable however that, in the case of the children and young persons it has its origin in their early initiation and their consequent want of opportunity to compare their employment with that of others.

When several years have been spent by them as 'coal-breakers,' it is stated that the men are not only indisposed but in some measure actually unfitted for ordinary day labour, as they are accustomed to stoop and even to lie down at their work (as the veins of coal are often very narrow), and thus consequently do not feel quite at their ease when standing erect as most other labourers do.

There is a decided amendment, as stated on every side, in the conduct of the labourers in collieries towards each other, and in their treatment of the children under them and there is a more strict investigation on the part of the proprietors and of their agents and bailiffs into the discipline and management of all the workpeople. This improvement, which has taken place in a great measure from dread exposure and anticipation of legislative interference, gives every hope that still greater good will be effected when these matters shall be fully before the public and proper regulations laid down.

The chapter of accidents is with them unhappily a very ample one but here, too, it appears that greater attention and foresight may be insisted upon and there is no doubt that these would be sufficient to protect the workpeople from many injuries which are now of frequent occurrence.

The colliers are with few exceptions a strong and robust set of men, and their children have such a trying ordeal to pass through that, on the Spartan principle, they must either sink under it or become hardy and enduring. They do not, however retain their full vigour, and they then exchange from 'coal-breaking' which is a severe kind of work, to the ordinary labour of clearing the 'ways' and propping the roofs of the galleries. In some mines where 'firedamp' prevails their health gets soon broken from the deleterious quality of the air.

I am afraid that the testimony as to the habits of drinking of the 'coal-breakers' is but too well established. This addiction to excess is not universal. Of late years, in particular, there are 'teetotallers' and moderate persons in this occupation as in others. They are said to be more particular about their food, and to have more opportunities than most 'operatives' for indulging in favourite articles of diet. Many of these remarks apply less to the children and young persons than to the benefits but it is necessary to have in view the whole of their lives, and their ultimate as well as present condition.

They are too commonly ignorant and careless about instruction. There is however of late years a great improvement in this respect. About Radstock, as I was informed, a new character has been gained quite recently by the children and as they have more time, so they have also the reputation of being better educated, than the surrounding peasantry. I was also assured that the superior wages and other advantages of the colliers kept up the standard of agricultural labour.

Upon the whole I am disposed to think that, with the exception of a general character for turbulence and rudeness, the colliers will not appear to great disadvantage when compared with other persons in humble life. They are not proverbially thieves nor particularly debauched, if their fondness for drink be not set down against them. The young people usually marry their own friends, and at what is considered an early period. They all live apart from other people. The children and young persons are stated to become sooner independent and from their scale of wages, to be earlier 'self-supported' than is common with people of corresponding ages in other ways of life.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

LEONARD STEWART.

28, Kepple-street, Russell-square.
July 24th, 1841.

EVIDENCE COLLECTED BY LEONARD STEWART, ESQ., M.D.

NORTH SOMERSETSHIRE COALFIELDS.

NAILSEA HEATH COAL WORKS.

No.1 Isaac Cox, Clerk to Messrs. White and Co. Examined April 5th.

He has been ten years connected with these works. There are 50 children and young persons under 18 employed. They are all males. The hours of work are on an average eight or nine hours a day. They go into the pit at half past five or six in the morning and take some food with them but after work they have always plenty of time for meals. The children are employed in taking the coal from the men and putting it into the cart or hudge. They work in a dark passage but it is lighted with candles which they hold. There is no firedamp in this mine. There has been no accident for seven years but about seven years ago there was a stone which fell upon a boy and killed him. They have holidays on Christmas Day, on Good Friday, and two holidays on club days at Whitsuntide. The workpeople are all hired by the master. The 'hewers' are all at 'piece work'. These are the men who dig the coal and they are paid 'so much money for so much coal.' Some other workmen are employed by the day, and are expected to do a certain quantity of work by the day. They are 'turned off' when they do not work but they are never punished by blows. This rule applies to the children and young persons. They are generally very healthy. They are not usually educated, but the younger ones attend the Sunday schools and some are 'fair scholars.' 'They are certainly addicted to drinking but seldom thieves or poachers. On comparing them with other operatives, they are better paid than usual. Some of the young persons getting 9s., some 12s., others 13s. a week. The children and young persons are commonly the children of the 'coal hewers' and work with them. The 'hewer' gets 15s., 17s. 6d., and 20s. a week, according to the 'number of turns,' and they have 'firing for their own houses and candles for the mine.'

BEDMINSTER COLLIERY, near BRISTOL.

No.2 Mr. Moses Reynolds. Examined April 8th.

He has been employed managing the underground work of the Bedminster collieries. For the last 20 years he has been the sole manager and bailiff. The smallest boys are usually eight or ten years old and are generally employed in shutting and opening doors to give various currents of air. They get 4d. a day. The 'hands' are all in from 10 to 12 hours a day, and the children remain in till the last cart of coals comes through. 12 hours are considered the full time for one days work. They usually begin at four in the morning and come out at three or four in the afternoon. They sit down while in the pit to eat something for half an hour in the middle of their work but do not come up into the open air. They are not more than 12 hours at work, and often much shorter time so that they have plenty of time for meals or for any other occupation. The youngest boys are attending doors and those 'a stage bigger' are employed as carriage boys and shove the coal along the level in carts or 'hudges.' They get so much money for the number of carts or hudges they deliver. It is piece work in general. The place for work is a low gallery which is occasionally very damp and cold. There is no employment of the safety lamp, they have common candles. The accidents have always happened from the men not propping the roof of the gallery in time but there have seldom been any very serious accidents. They have Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide for holidays but they work on Good Friday. They are all men and boys servants of the proprietor and all those are

on piece work who actually work the coal and receive so much money for so much coal but there are day labourers employed in securing the roads and in cutting the faults and these are quite distinct from the hewers of coal and those who attend upon them. The young persons are obliged to come to their work and are discharged if they do not come regularly but there is no corporal punishment or severity. Their neglect they pay for by their moneys being stopped to the amount of their deficiency. The hewers get 3s. 3d. a day, the carters or youths who fill the coal, 2s., the carriage boys can get 1s. to 1s. 2d. a day according to the work but it is all piece work. Their physical condition is generally good. There are colliers of 60 and 70 years of age now actually at work as hewers and many others, who were formerly hewers now working as day men at an advanced age. There are no girls or women at work in the coal pit. The colliers are generally uneducated, although they have plenty of time for instruction. Some of the children attend the Sunday schools, but there is a general neglect of education and improvement. There are 'teetotallers' among the workmen, and some very steady people but they drink a good deal, and particularly on Saturdays and Sundays. Their general condition as compared with that of other labourers is favourable as to wages and other advantages of fuel and hours of work and, as to the nature of work, the colliers, when once habituated to work underground, always prefer it to other occupations but they are less educated than is usual. They generally keep a good deal together, and marry among their own people having usually large families. The Bedminster collieries are conducted by Sir John Smith and Co.

No.3 John Gillard. Examined at the Marsh Pit, April 8th.

He is the under bailiff, and has been so for six years under Mr Reynolds, the bailiff to Sir John Smith and Co. Has been 52 years at work about the coal pits, and a number of years out of them as a hewer. The number of young persons employed about the coal pit has always been the same. There never have been any women or girls among them. The boys are never under about eight or nine years old. They begin generally as jobbers or job-boys. The hours of work are about 10 hours a day for men and boys, sometimes more, and sometimes less. He has never known the work continue for as much as 18 or 20 hours at a time. The hewers and those who work with them are all paid so much money for so much coal. The day men who put in the props and keep the roads high are paid 2s. 2d. for eight hours work. Has never known of any severe or improper punishment of the boys. He does not consider that the occupation hurts their health but they do not attend much to their education. There is not much to complain of in comparing this with other occupations, and there are very few who ever leave it without returning to it again.

No.4 John Wallace, aged 36. Examined at the Marsh Pit, April 8th.

He is a coal hewer, and began as a boy of seven years old to do odd jobs and has never found the work disagree with him. He has generally worked about ten hours a day and stops to eat something that he has taken down with him. He was never severely punished. He cannot read or write, and it is by no means common to do so among the colliers.

No.5 Charles Self, aged 26. Examined at the Marsh Pit. April 8th.

He is a carter, that is, one who takes the coal from the mine to the boy who shoves along the hudge or cart. Usually he works for ten hours, sometimes more and sometimes less, according as the coal runs. He began at eight years old, and was never severely punished or a ill-treated. He can read and write, but it is common for the workpeople to neglect their education.

No.6 George Raikes, aged 11. Examined at the Marsh Pit, April 8th.

He has worked about two years. There are other boys at work, one of seven or eight years old and some older. He begins at six in the morning generally and leaves at four or five. He is never struck or severely punished. He is a carriage boy and is employed in pushing along a carriage of coals. It is rather hard work and he gets tired sometimes. He is paid by the quantity of coal and generally gets 7d. a day. He has holidays at Christmas and at Whitsuntide. He has never suffered in his health from the work but has neglected his education. He has time for study if he chose.

COAL BARTON, near FROME.

No.7 Mr. William Brice, clerk and manager to Messrs. Fussell and Co., Coal Barton and Vobster Collieries. Examined April 20th.

He has been here for 16 years and succeeded his uncle as manager of these coal works. There are several boys who are usually brought by their parents into the works. There are never any girls here, nor in this neighbourhood. There are usually about 100 hands of all descriptions at Coal Barton, of whom about one half are under 18. There may be 20 under 10 and some seven and under. There are very few at work who are above 50 years of age and only one hewer who is 60. The work requires the full vigour of a man and they are apt at this place to get asthmatic from the gas and foul air. The miners are down in the coal pit by six o'clock. The men always go down before the boys and they are generally up again by half past three or four o'clock. During the winter they occasionally work two hours longer but this is optional and there might be more hands employed by the proprietors. In summer it is common for them to give up one day in the week and work only five out of seven. Their meals are usually taken out of the mine, except something they take with them and eat as they choose. The boys generally do without till they come up. The men and able bodied people dig the coal which the young persons haul along the passages. The children are employed in opening and shutting the doors, which direct the currents of air, and keeps the passages free of firedamp. The depth of the vein of coal varies from a foot to seven or eight feet high. The carriageway is made from 4½ feet to 10 feet high. There is a good deal of firedamp and about six months ago there were seven persons burnt in one day at Vobster works, and one of them died from the effects of this accident. About the same time, at Coal Barton, there were five persons injured in the same way, and one of them died. They always use the safety lamp when any danger is apprehended. Their holidays are very much at their own command and they always have Christmas and 'club-days.' The hours of work are never excessive. A collier's day is usually reckoned at eight hours, but it is laborious work while it lasts. The workpeople are all, except in a very few instances, the servants of the proprietor and are paid by the managers and hired by them. The children are paid by the company. The boys receive from 2s. 6d. to 3s. up to 8s. and 10s. and some 12s. a week. There is no particular punishment of the children and no brutal conduct common among the labourers. If the men are unruly they are dismissed, or application is made to the magistrate. They are commonly strong and healthy except when they use the lamp, and work near the firedamp, when they are afflicted with asthma, and commonly get broken in their health at about 40 or 45 years of age and they are not a long-lived race. There are few in these mines who cannot read, and these are the oldest men, and most can write. The children attend the Sunday schools, and have sufficient time for the night schools, which some of them attend. In comparing labouring people, it may be said that they have many advantages. They are better paid and employed during a shorter space of time, than most other labourers but the prevalence of asthma and tight breath, is against them. They seldom accommodate themselves to other kinds of labour, after having been accustomed to work underground. They cannot stand well at other kinds of work, as they are accustomed to stoop and sit down at their own. On the other hand, there are few persons who begin at all late in life to work in a coal mine. It requires early initiation.

No.8 Henry Tomkins. Examined April 20th.

He is bailiff, upon whose estate the coal works of Coal Barton and Vobster are situated. He has heard the foregoing account of Mr. Brice, and it is correct, and is willing to add his testimony to the same effect. In this neighbourhood, the labourers are more employed than about Radstock, but, taking the whole region there is a want of work for the colliers. The general circumstances and condition of the persons concerned in the coal works is very much the same throughout all the neighbourhood of this place, and Radstock, and also at Bedminster and all about Bristol.

RADSTOCK, Near BATH.

No.9 Mr. Charles Ashman. Examined April 23rd.

He has been six years manager of the Radstock coal mines as well as those of Wellsway and Tymings which are all rented by the firm of James and Co., but are situated upon the estate of Lord Waldergrave. This is considered the most considerable group of coal mines in all North Somerset. There are near 700 workpeople of all ages employed by the company. There are no women or girls employed in these mines. The boys are taken into the coal works at about eight years old by their parents but not before this age, at all regularly. They are occasionally taken in, as a matter of curiosity when quite young but since he has had the management of the works, no child has been employed before eight years old. About half the whole number of workpeople are under 18 years of age. It is common for the miners to bring up all their male children to this occupation and the children as well as the parents are always eager about their commencing as all the children who live about the neighbourhood are so occupied. The usual working day turn of the colliers is eight hours. The men go down the pit about 4 or 5 o'clock a.m. and rather before the boys, as there is nothing for the boys to do until a certain quantity of coal is hewn and ready to be wheeled along in the carriages by the boys. They come down the mine at various times to the ease with which the coal is hewn from 12 to three or four o'clock. Some of the boys are at day work and some at 'tut work' or piece work. The bay boys are generally the first to leave work as soon as their turn is over but the tut workers are induced to stay by the desire to make up the quantity of coal which they wish to be paid for. For more than half the year it is common to work for only four or five days a week and at present they are only making five days a week. When out of the pit they are unwilling to labour at unaccustomed work. Their meals are usually taken at home but they carry bread and cheese and water and table beer to their place of work, and generally use them. They have plenty of time and are generally well fed and indeed, are particular about their food, and pay well for some delicacies. The youngest boys are employed in opening doors for ventilation. This is very easy work and requires them to sit ready for this duty, during the time the workmen are in the pit. The boys of 16 years and upwards are placed near the coal breakers or hewers and fill the sledges, which are then pulled on to the twin boys (a corruption of between boys), who are younger, from 9 to 16 years of age. These last then push the carriages which are filled from the sledges, on the tramways to the pit. None of the children are occupied as hewers as they do not have the requisite strength. They do not commonly act as hewers till about 20 years of age. The boys differ in size and constitution, but the usual age at which they push the carriages is 10 or 11 years of age. The place of work for the hewers or as they are here called the coal breakers, is frequently a narrow vein of coal of 14 inches in thickness, and the men lie at length, to dig the coal. A child is not fit for this part of the work, or is employed in it. The ways, or roads of communication, are four feet and a half high, and along them the boys push the carriages filled with coal. These passages, or ways, are commonly dry, though sometimes damp and cold but none of these pits are liable to firedamp. The accidents are never from firedamp. They have been from the falling in of the roof, or from the unexpected falling of the bell-moulds and are usually owing to the carelessness of the workmen. There have been so many accidents from the men crowding, too many of them, into the hudge, or basket, in which they are lifted up out of the pit. Their holidays they take very much as they choose. There are usually some days at Christmas, and a week at Whitsuntide, but they have in general more time to themselves than ordinary labourers. They are all the servants of the company, some being at piece work, and others hired by the day, but the former are the most numerous. The day labourers who cut the faults, and make the ways, are called deading men they are not common labourers, but are a distinct set of men from the coal breakers, or hewers. They have however generally acted in this capacity, at some period and are more accustomed to coal mines, being chiefly old men who are past acting as coal breakers. These day-men also work for eight hours, which is considered a days work. The deading work is chiefly done when the coal men are out of the pit. With respect to punishment, there is occasionally a strap or two given to the boys by the breakers, who apt to be kept waiting by them, but there is no undue severity or cruelty exercised towards the boys and young persons. It is not common to witness any ill-treatment of the children but on the contrary they are more independent than persons of their age usually are, being rather more in demand in this region than adults. The miners are generally a healthy and powerful set of people. They have here no asthma from gas or foul air. There are several instances of men who have continued for 50 years and more at this work. Their condition as to education is at present good, a great deal having been done of late at the Sunday school. The older race of labourers are generally uneducated, but

of late years there is a good deal improvement and of reformation in their manners and conduct. Compared with other labouring men, they are better paid and less occupied than is common. The high price the collier's labour influences the rate of farm labour in the vicinities of the pits. The poor rates are very low in this neighbourhood. The wages of children of eight or nine years old 4d. per turn. These are the boys who keep the doors. From 10 to 12 they get from 6d. to 8d. and 9d. On to 16, years of age they get 1s., 1s. 2d. and 1s. 4d. After this they usually cease to work as between boys, and pass to carting up the thin seams at 1s. 6d. a turn. They then get into the thick vein where they can earn the same more or less easily and in less time. The pay of able bodied coal breakers is from 2s. 3d. to 3s. a turn. The old men are a good deal employed about the works as day men.

CLANDOUN COAL WORKS, near RADSTOCK.

No.10 Mr. William Ashman. Examined April 23rd.

He has been manager of the Clandoun Coal works for 34 years. He is also the manager of the Smallcomb and the Paulton Engine Coke works. There are under him 420 workpeople of all ages about half of whom are under 18. The youngest boy now employed is 10 years old. The little boys keep the doors for ventilation and drive the horses of which there are several in one of these pits. There is no firedamp or noxious gas in these works. They employ no women or girls and have never done so. The miners and the lads who work with them are generally a healthy and powerful race of people. As to instruction, the rising generation is better off than the old hands and there is besides an improvement in their character and conduct of late years. Their general condition is very similar in all the various coal works in the neighbourhood of Radstock. There is a club established in connection with the Clandoun works and a great many benefit societies among the colliers. They are supported by them in case of sickness. The condition and circumstances of the coal breakers are very much better than those of other labourers and they are very unwilling to take any other kind of labour. They sometime hire labourers to cultivate their gardens although they have plenty of time for it if they chose to do it themselves. The boys are brought into the mines as soon as they are allowed by the proprietors. The women and girls of the colliers' families are rather in want of occupation. Their families are often large as they usually marry early among their own people. He has never known an instance of a collier going to the workhouse from the works managed by him.

HEWISH AND WRITHLINGTON COAL WORKS, near RADSTOCK.

No.11 Mr. John Smith, Acting Partner at these works, examined April 23rd.

There are 350 men and boys employed at these pits, of whom about one third are under 18 years of age. The boys do not commonly begin before 10, but there are some of only eight years of age. They are very independent of their parents, being self-supporting and in great demand in all this neighbourhood. It is not at all uncommon for a boy to live in lodgings, when his own home does not please him. The boys and young persons work with the men, who go down at four or five o'clock in the morning, and come out at twelve or one. When they stay longer it is optional, and done in order to complete the quantity of coal for their own advantage. They have plenty of time for their meals and take something down into the place of work with them and do not come up till the turn is completed, but when this is over they have their fancy as to their meals and are luxurious when compared with other persons of their class of life. The coal breakers who dig the coal, are attended by the carting boys, who haul it on sledges to the between boys, these haul it in little carts on the tram-ways to the pit. The youngest boys are set to open doors for ventilation, and some help to push the carriages. The place of work is occasionally a long gallery of four feet in height and width. The coal is actually dug from still narrower veins. The youngest children are never employed in these narrow veins. They would be quite inefficient as coal-breakers. There is

no firedamp and no accidents from gas or foul air. The injuries done to the workpeople are from the roof of the passages or ways falling in when not propped up in time. The hands have holidays at Christmas and on club days at Whitsuntide. They have always more time to themselves than is common among labouring people. They are all the servants of the company and the children are more independent of the superior workmen than is common. There are no instances of cruelty or improper severity exercised towards the children or young persons. Their physical condition is good, and they are not subject to asthma or any particular complaint. Their moral condition is decidedly better than that of the agricultural labourers. Theft and violent crimes are certainly not common among them. The children generally attend the Sunday schools. Their education is not under par. Their general condition, when compared with that of the clod-hoppers, as they call the agricultural labourers, is certainly superior, and it is common for other workpeople, after witnessing the advantages of the colliers' life, to be induced to work with them, while the collieries on the contrary, seldom for any time together, abandon their employment.

WRITHLINGTON, near RADSTOCK.

No.12 James Cottle, aged 31. Examined April 28th.

He is a hewer or coal breaker at the Writhlington Company's Coal works. He began as early as seven years old and worked as a 'tween boy at that age. There was only one other boy of that age who worked as a 'tween boy as the young boys were generally kept for opening doors. He worked next as a carting boy and began as a coal breaker at 17 years old. The work is now about eight hours a day for man and boy and this is more than it used to be. Twenty years ago he used to be struck and used severely by the carting boys, a class bigger than himself but never by any of the men, or very seldom. There is now a great improvement as to severity and harsh treatment but there is occasionally some punishment inflicted by the bailiff on the part of the master. The workmen are not however allowed to beat each other. He has had an accident from the duke way waggon running over him but was never injured by the top falling on him. He cannot read or write and has attended a Methodist meeting.

No.13 Daniel Wittosh, aged 19.

He is a carting boy at Writhlington. He began at nine years old to push with other 'tween boys bigger than himself. At this age it is common to be so employed with other boys but not alone. He began as a carting boy three years gone. He has met with a little accident from some stuff falling on his head but very little. He has been beaten by the bigger boys and occasionally by the men but not so much by them. But it is very seldom that it happens now, it is forbidden and they do tell the head when they do not do so what they ought to do. He cannot read or write. He has attended Sunday school before now but not long enough to learn. This is not for want of time but for want of will. He used to work 10 and occasionally 12 hours as a 'tween boy. The boys are generally longer in the finishing of their work than the men. They have to wheel away what the men do break. He used to suffer in his head from working in the pit but he has a better state of health at present. He has tried to work on the road before now but had rather be underground.

No.14 John Pratten, aged 16.

He works at the Writhlington Coal works as a twin or 'tween boy. He began at seven years old and pushed with his brother, who was 10 years older, and had the hardest work. About a month ago the stuff fell across his back and disabled him for a week. He has been very little struck or punished. He goes down at five in the morning and comes up at about three p.m. Generally he takes bread and cheese down with him, but sometimes they do not give the boys time to eat it. He cannot read or write. He used to attend a Sunday school when about six or seven years old, but does not now.

No.15 William Pratten, aged 26.

He is a carting boy at Writhlington Coal works and was first employed at nine years old in pushing with a bigger boy. The youngest children are commonly employed opening the doors but there is not employment for very many in this way. He has been severely punished, by being struck with a stick, and with an iron crook about a dozen years ago but this is altered very much of late. The master used not to know it so much formerly and the boys used to be afraid to tell of it for fear of being 'beeted' worse. They now complain to the head or bailiff, and he will do it instead of the bigger boys. It is not very seldom the men do strike the little boys. He cannot read or write and could never give his mind to it, but wishes he could. It is not for want of time, the colliers are not so much employed as most labourers. They are seldom at work six days in the week and the days work, or turn is generally from five in the morning to three in the afternoon. The coal-breakers begin at four a.m. or half past three, and come up at twelve or one o'clock or half past one, leaving some of the coal to be carted away by the carting boys and twin boys. He used to work in water once, and got chilled, and suffered from rheumatism. They have here occasionally tight breath, but this is not common. There are men 70 at work here as coal breakers.

No.16 William Ashman, aged 13.

He works at Writhlington Coal works, as a twin boy. He began three years ago as a pusher with a bigger boy. He has never been punished, either by the workmen or by the bailiff. He begins work at four a.m. and generally comes up at three or four in the afternoon. He gets tired sometimes, but has his health pretty well. He cannot read or write but used to go to school, but does not now. He can earn sometimes 5s. a week. Generally he goes to sleep at six o'clock in the evening, and has not time for study. It is common for the tween boys not to be able to read or write.

LUDLASS PIT, Radstock Coal Co. (deascribed as 'Mr. Charles Ashman's).

No.17. Azariah Pratten, aged 10.

He works for the Radstock Coal Company at the Middle Pit. and has done so for a year. He kept a door for half a year for 4d. a day. This is easier work than pushing but not so well paid. He now gets 5d. a day as a twin boy. He has never been struck or punished.. He met with an accident from the stuff falling upon his back. This laid him up for three weeks, and he could not work. He begins at six o'clock and earlier and comes up at one or two and sometimes four o'clock p.m. He can read but cannot write. Goes to the chapel Sunday school.

No.18 John Millward, aged 17.

Works for the Radstock Company at the Middle Pit. He is a twin boy. and goes by himself. He has no pusher with him. He began six years ago as a pusher himself but then he had a bigger boy to do the hard work. The carting boys used to beat him, but now they are not allowed to do it.

No.19 Sidney Smith, aged 12.

He works for the Radstock Company at the Ludlass Pit. He is a twin boy, but began as a pusher first, which is under the principal twin boy. He begins at 4 a.m. and comes up at one, two, and four o'clock p.m. He can read and write. When he comes up he goes to school. There are 30 and more of the boys who attend school.

No 20 John Beard, aged 9.

He works for the Radstock Coal Company at the Middle Pit. He began three-quarters of a year ago and hauls up the gug, or rather assists George Chapple, a man of 60, and his uncle. He begins work at four in the morning, and comes up generally from two to four p.m. He carries bread and cheese and stops to eat two or three times. He has never been struck or severely punished by men or boys. He met with an accident from his arm slipping and getting jammed. He can read the Bible, but cannot write. He used to go to Sunday school, but does not do so now.

No 21. George Parfad, aged 7.

He works at Ludlass Pit, Mr. Charles Ashman's, for the Radstock Company and keeps door to keep the air back. He has been at work six months. He goes down at four o'clock and comes up generally at 12, but has 'bided down,' till five or six when the work was not done before. There are only two boys of his own age in the pit. He takes bread and bacon down into the pit with him, and eats once or twice a day in the pit. He gets breakfast before he goes down, and dinner of bread and meat when he comes up. He lives with his mother and works in the same pit with his father. He sits at the door and opens it when he is told. There is nothing to tire him about it, but he sometimes goes to sleep. The place he sits in is the twin way of four foot high. It is not cold or damp. He is hired and paid by the bailiff and gets 5d. a day, whatever time he stays. He has never been struck or punished. He has his health quite well but cannot read much, or write, but is learning to read at the Chapel school. He does not know of any of the little boys telling lies or stealing. He does not like biding up long, but wishes to go underground.

No.22 Thomas Milsom, aged 10.

He works for the Radstock Company at Ludlass Pit. He began two months ago as a gug winder with a man who does the hardest part. There are several boys younger than himself but cannot tell how many. Goes down generally at four a.m. and very commonly bides time till four or five p.m. He is one of the last to come up. He does not consider his employment very hard work. He takes something to eat with him, and catches time to eat it two or three times while he is below. He goes to bed at eight or nine in the evening. His employment is helping to wind a wheel which pulls the carriage (of three and a half cwt.) up an inclined plane of 60 yards in length with a pitch of seven inches in a yard. The place of work is six feet high and is dry. He has never met with an accident. He is not regularly employed every day in the week.

No.23 George Gullick, aged 11.

He works for the Radstock Company at the Middle Pit. He has been down nearly three years and began pushing, with a bigger boy to pull. Then he kept a door and is now a twin boy. He goes down at five a.m., and comes up at one p.m. or thereabouts. He has stayed later, and once did so till six p.m., the men got so much coal. He eats his victuals above ground, but always takes something to eat below. His occupation is wheeling a carriage of three cwt. on a level. The place of work is a gallery of four or five feet high, but dry and comfortable. Has never had an accident from the stuff falling on him but has had one of the carriages run over his toe. He works some weeks for five days only and is the servant of the Company and not of any of the workmen. Has been beaten by the carting boys, but not often. He has been beaten since Christmas but has had no wheal since then. He has never suffered in his health from the occupation. He can read and write and do simple addition. He goes every night to school and pays 3d. a week. He has a brother in the pit and a father, and likes his work very well, and should not like to work above ground. He gets 8d a turn.

No.24 Samuel Latchun, aged 10.

He works at Ludlass Pit and began three years ago at running the gug, that is, pushing down the empty carriages when the full ones come up. He has been a twin boy two years and begins at four a.m. and bides till three p.m. usually. He has sometimes one day out, as they do not always work

six days in the week. The place of work is dry, and he makes no complaint of it. He has met with no accident. He is employed by the master and is not the servant of any of the workmen. He does not himself complain of ill treatment, but has seen boys of his own size beaten by the carting boys. The work has never injured his health. He can spell a little, but cannot read or write and goes to chapel Sunday school. He does not know that any of the boys are bad characters. They do not steal or misbehave particularly.

No.25 Simon Denning, aged 9.

He is at the Middle Pit and has kept a door for a year and now works as a pusher with another boy to pull. He goes down at half past five in the morning and leaves about two. The work has never disagreed with him. He cannot read or write and gets 8d. a turn.

No.26 David Gulliver, aged 10.

He works at the Middle Pit as a twin boy. He began two years and a half ago as a pusher with another boy. He goes down at four or five o'clock in the morning and stays till one or two p.m. He has time for meals and for sleep, but not when underground. The stuff fell on his toe once, but except this has not met with any accident. He has no punishment or cruelty to complain of and has had his health very well. He has never tried any other kind of work, nor wished quite satisfied with this. He can read a little, but cannot write. He goes to school on Sundays. He began at 5d. a day, and now gets 9d. a turn.

No.27 William Perry, aged 9.

He keeps a door at the Middle Pit for 4d. a day. He goes down at half past five and at two or half past **one** o'clock. It generally takes some time before all the workmen can get down and lip. Eleven or twelve boys can come up together, but of men and boys only about eight. He has met with no accident and has no ill-treatment to complain of. The work has agreed with him. He can read a little, and goes to Sunday school.

No.28 Stephen Box, aged 10.

He is a pusher at the Middle Pit, at 5d. a day. He goes down at half past five and comes out at one or two. He does not complain of any striking or other punishment. He can read, and goes to Sunday school.

No.29 Henry Tuckett, aged 10.

He is going on 10, and works as a pusher at Ludlass Pit. He has been there for 12 months, and gets 5d. a day. He has never met with an accident, or suffered from firedamp. He is just beginning to attend the chapel Sunday school, but cannot yet read or write.

No.30. James Pafitt, aged 14, George Box, aged 12, James Tucker, aged 11, George Chivers, aged 16.

Give the same testimony as to of the boys of the Middle Pit.

[Pafitt works single and gets 1s. 2d. a turn. Chivers do so also and gets 1s. 4d. a turn.]

No.31. Thomas Chivers, aged 51.

He is bailiff to the Middle Pit belonging to the Radstock Coal Company. He began at eight years of age. He has been at the same pit for 21 years. Within that time the nominal wages of the coal breakers are the same but the coal is measured different, and they don't get so much. The coal

breakers get 2s. or 2s. 3d. a turn of eight hours. The Radstock District is better than that of Coleford and Vobster but the Timsbury Coal works are very similar. There is no firedamp at Radstock or Timsbury. The little boys that used to be served out bad by the bigger ones are now protected by the master. There is also an improvement in their education of late years. The night school has existed about a year, but the children have not much mind to attend to their education when tired of their day's work. The young men marry commonly at 19 or 20 years of age, and among their own people. They generally keep to their occupation. There is one man of 65 years of age in this pit, but there are not a great many old men who are at work in the mines but as long as they can do a little they are employed.

HEWISH PIT (cont.)

No. 32. James Beacham, aged 30.

He works at Hewish Pit for the Hewish and Writhlington Company. He began at eight years old as a pusher at 4d a day and there was a puller at 5d. At 18 years of age was a carting boy at 1s. 6d. generally for a turn. He worked there as a coal breaker at 2s. 6d. a turn. Since then has worked at branching and powdering, which yields 2s. 4d. a turn. This is not so laborious as coal-breaking, but is more disagreeable, as they suffer from the smoke and foul air. They are worse off now than they used to be. The turn used to be six hours and now it is eight and the coals are measured on a different plan, by which the coal breakers lose. They are not paid half for the small coal as they used to be. But as far as the beating and punishment of the children and young persons goes, they are better off than formerly. There is also some improvement as to education but there is room for a great deal more, as there is plenty of time for it if they chose to pay more attention. Many of the miners suffer from tight breath, owing to the foul air but there is no fire-damp, as at Vobster and thereabouts. There is a great want of employment for the wives and daughters of the coal-breakers and miners. They rest entirely on the earnings of the fathers.