

# Local History Cafe



SJMF Heritage, Appleby Magna



## Bedlington Terrier

This breed of dog was popular as a rat catcher in mines



## Formation of Coal

How the black stuff was made  
Page 8



## Children of the Mines

How children were put to work.  
Page 10

## Close to the coal ...

Appleby Magna was home to many miners in the local coalfields

**A**ppleby is close to the traditional coal mining villages of north west Leicestershire, but there was not an actual mine there. The closest was at Measham, two miles down the road. Many mine workers lived in Appleby, but it has always been predominantly an agricultural village. Measham Collieries



Ltd was established in 1894 with the intention of working the Main Coal and other seams below such as the Woodfield and the Eureka. Now called Measham Main Colliery, it was linked by a tramway to a wharf on the Ashby de la Zouch Canal. Again, difficult working conditions were hampering progress and the main coal seam was abandoned in 1905. This had been preceded by the cessation of working in the Woodfield seam in 1902. In 1903 a total of 38,000 tons of coal were despatched by rail and canal.

1

### HISTORY MYSTERY

Last month's object was a cheese press found in Groby ...  
Page 9

2

### THE COALMAN

Memories of coal deliveries.  
Page 2

3

### HISTORY CAFE

Next Month's meeting is at 10.00am on 15th June

## Sixpence a day

From an account book of 1729

**A** coal account book in the Newdigate archives refers to the use of boys in the Griff Colliery in the early 18th century. The accounts list the earnings of several of them: '1 boy Cleansing the level 6d'; 'The Boy 1 Day 6d'; 'A boy 1 Day 10d.' Although the work must have been both hard and dirty, these wages would have been attractively higher than those for farm work at that time.

## A young lad's story ...

A personal account from 1841

**I** was 15 last Christmas. I was a weaver; but, trade being bad, I went down to the pit to run the rails. I liked it very well. I am much stronger, and have much more flesh on my bones. It agrees very well with my health. I get 2s 4d a day...All the boys are used very kindly, and we have nothing to complain of.

## Making ends meet ...

A Bedworth miner's take home pay

**D**r. Mitchell's report gave the accounts for Bill Johnson, a miner who had a wife and five children; his weekly income was supplemented by his 14 year old son earning 3s a week and his 9 year old daughter earning 1s 2d a week. The family's weekly expenditure was £1 0s 2d, so the children's income was clearly essential to the family's survival. Even so they subsisted on a poor diet and were forced to live on credit towards the end of the week.

## Down the coal hole ...

Marina remembers the days coal was delivered to her house



© Northfylde Photographis Soc.

**W**hen I was little, the coalman would hump a bag onto his back from his horse-drawn wagon and tip it down the open grating into our cellar at the front of the house. The noise was incredible as it fell into the dark depths of the coal hole.

Coal is still supplied to some of our neighbours today - often because they worked for the Coal Board. As part of their salary some miners were able to get free coal delivered to their houses in the 1950s and 1960s

In the 1950s people would get a load of coke from Nechells Gas Works, Birmingham with an old pram or a 4-wheeled cart. They just filled whatever container was presented to them. We didn't know those times would end abruptly.

NGW and the nearby works at Saltley were first setup to supply gas for the streetlights in Birmingham .

## History mystery ???

This month's History Mystery Object is a ceramic object that had a very specific job to do ...

The answer will be in our July Newsletter



# A chilling Ghost story ....

David Bell's account of a local trip to Cadeby that turned out very differently than was planned

## Become a newsletter contributor

We always welcome stories and memories to feature in our newsletter. Our topics for the next three months are: Being in Service, Summer Holidays and Back to School. We especially love your family stories and we value input from our readers.

We also invite comments and suggestions about our content and format.

Send your thoughts memories and stories to the Editor.

The email is:

[SJMFHeritage@post.com](mailto:SJMFHeritage@post.com)



Huge amounts of coal were needed and children as young as five worked at jobs that were dangerous and exhausting.

One day in August 1980, Joanna Dessau went on a coach trip with her friends to one of Teddy Boston's traction engine rallies at Cadeby. As you know, these were very popular occasions as Teddy was such a great enthusiast.

On this occasion, however, things worked out very differently.

It was a pleasant sunny day when they arrived, but for Joanna

Dessau the sky was suddenly gloomy, a chill wind had sprung up and she was

overshadowed by huge trees.

She was unconscious. Her friends were concerned – was she ill? Then it became alarming. She called out for a horse. She said she had to get to the top of the hill – and she was so insistent they had to restrain her. What on earth was going on? She missed the rally and remained unconscious for two hours.

When she regained consciousness she said she had heard terrible sounds, of men shouting, of the clashing of swords and of men screaming and groaning. She had witnessed a battle.

Joanne Dessau had not known they were visiting Cadeby which is near the site of the Battle of Bosworth, or that there was any significance in the date of their visit. It was 22 August, the anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. She had been unconscious for over 2 hours and reports of the Battle say it lasted two hours.

Incredibly, she even told them the route they had taken to Leicester with Richard's body.

Some things cannot be explained.

*“Every time you warm yourself by a coal fire remember the miners that have sweated blood to bring it to the surface”*

Quote by Mary Anderson who lost her son and husband in a mine accident in 1877

# The Robins have flown ...

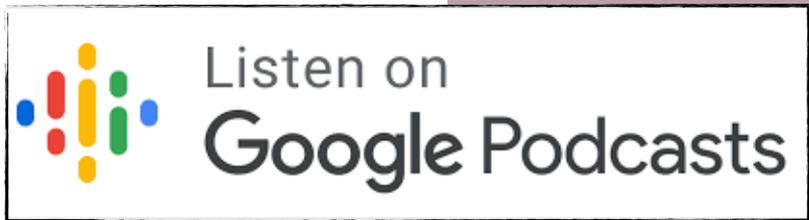
Duncan Saunders tells the story of an end of an era in Appleby Magna

**T**he end of an Era in Appleby Magna; the definition of 'Era' is rather vague but for the last 50 years there have been Reliant cars on Stoney lane.

They have been the favoured transport for the Wightman family and through those fifty years there have been examples ranging from the Regal and Robin three wheelers, various Kittens and then the Rebel.

For a few years there was also a Scimitar Coupe but the favourite was the Rebel, a four wheel estate type vehicle and much favoured by the owner; to improve fuel economy and increase the top speed it had larger diameter wheels fitted.

Because of the owner's illness the car had stood unused and seemingly unloved but very visible to people using Stoney Lane and the decision to try to sell the car was taken.

The first photograph was taken in 1995 and is typical of what could be seen, there are five Reliants to be seen.



The next shows efforts being made to start the car to make it driveable.



Here the car is waiting to be loaded onto a trailer.

Now you can hear all about it too ...

**W**e are so proud that our podcasts have been published on the Google Podcast site which means they are can be broadcast all around the World.

They are also available on Spotify and Breaker.

You can hear them when published on the link below:

<https://anchor.fm/andrew-moore754/episodes/Village-Memories-e1094cc/a-a5feep7>

If you or any member of your family or friends who have an interesting story to tell, do let us know on our email:

[SJMHeritage@post.com](mailto:SJMHeritage@post.com)

## Congratulations !!!

LHCE wins **Highly Commended** at The Leicestershire and Rutland Heritage Awards

**A**s you can imagine this years awards were very different from those of 2018, having to be held online rather than in person. Last year's awards were cancelled all together so 2021 saw a chance to celebrate two years work in very difficult circumstances.

## Last month's picture puzzle ...

Here are the answers taken from that 1964 picture puzzle

**T**he drawing with the deliberate mistakes was from the October 1964 edition of Treasure Magazine. This was aimed at children of around 8 years old.

Well done if you managed to spot all of them.



Dave Edwards, recently retired from BBC Radio Leicester, was host for the evening, complete with dodgy jokes and mishaps from a collection of school children errors made in History Exams.

We were entered in the *Volunteer Group of the Year* category, which was very competitive this year, with competition from 7 other groups.



We won a Highly Commended Award in this category, especially for our ability to keep the group informed and together with our Whats App Group, our online Zoom Meetings and our Newsletter. It was noted the group had supported one another brilliantly during lockdown and had developed new skills.

Well done all !!!

The trees and the smoke from the chimney are blowing in different directions

The chimney is on the side of the house not the roof

The umbrella has no cover

The little girl has different footwear on

There are no spokes on the bicycle's wheels

The bicycle's saddle is on backwards

There is a picture hanging on the outside wall of the house

The boy is pushing a girl's bike with no crossbar (*Yes that was an actual answer back in 1964*)

The boy pushing the bike has no reflection

The gate beside the boy has no hinges

The drain pipe on the roof goes up and not downwards.

The woman's handbag has no handle

So how did you do?

There will be more historic puzzles to come in future Newsletter editions.

## The history of coal ...

Marina Sketchley loves to explore topics and has condensed the history of coal production for us ...

**T**he history of UK coal extraction goes back at least to Roman times. In the North-East and the Firth of Forth there was deep mining in the 1500s and in the 1600s in Durham and Northumberland. In the 1700s 40% of England's coal came from the North-east, developing rapidly during the 1700s to 1900s.

Britain once had mines in the North and South-West, Yorkshire, Scottish Central Belt, Lancashire, Cumbria, East Midlands (some on our own doorstep), West Midlands and Kent.

There are four grades of coal: Anthracite which is the cleanest, Bituminous, Sub-bituminous and Lignite - graded according to the amount of carbon they contain and the amount of heat energy they produce. So-called Metallurgical quality coal is vital for the manufacture of steel, iron alloy, carbon and other metals. These in turn are used for buildings, trains, cars, tools, cookware, cutlery, surgical tools and implants.

Among the numerous UK collieries now closed are the South Wales coalfields, which were one of the largest in the world. Barry was the largest coal exporting port in the world in 1913, Cardiff being the second largest. The 2nd Marquis of Bute owned extensive land in South Wales and he developed the coal and iron industries and docks in Glamorganshire.



Steam engines were crucial for winding and pumping and operating underground tramways and canals.

In 1920 UK output was 1,191,000 tonnes but by 2015 had dropped to 2,000 tonnes. 26 opencast mines still operated up to that time.

During the 1960s, we had nuclear power and North Sea Gas. Coal has now largely been replaced by natural gas, as fracking has made natural gas abundant and cheap. Natural gas burns more cleanly than coal or oil and produces less carbon dioxide per unit-energy released. For an equivalent amount of heat natural gas produces about 30% less carbon dioxide.

Output rapidly declined after the miners' strikes, the first unofficial one being in 1969.

In 1984-85 major industrial action was led by their union leader, Arthur Scargill, and the 3-day week was introduced to conserve supplies. The Coal Board had owned 307 collieries but colliery closures swiftly followed the strikes and the industry collapsed.

Our deepest mine at Kellingley, near Ferrybridge Power Station was the last to close in 2015.

The two largest open-cast collieries are in Wales, at Ffos y Fran, Merthyr (due to close 2022) and our last deep pit is in the neighbouring Cynan valley.

We now import coal mainly from Russia, although there are some current discussions to reopen some pits again.

# School Memories ...

Our many FaceBook friends have fond memories of the humble inkwell

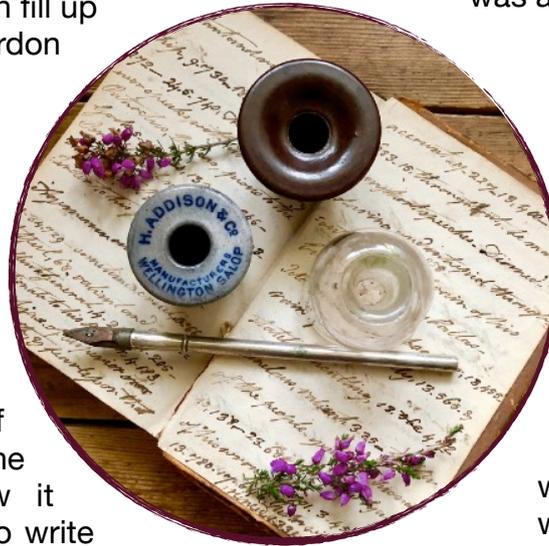
Yes! I was an ink monitor! At Sir John Moore's school. I had to mix up the powdered ink with water in a big enamel jug, then fill up the ink wells! All was well...pardon the pun....until I tripped and shot all the ink up the wall!

**Angela Pierce**

Oh yes in primary school, at the beginning of each term teacher would give out new sheets of blotting paper, I loved getting ink on the nib of the pen and shake it on the blotting paper to see how it would spread. It was hard to write with pens with nibs on the end.

My teacher used to say my writing was like a spider had crawled across the page always went home with inky hands!!

**Christine Glover**



My schools had ink monitors and one lad decided to water down the ink the way only little boys could. It was an eye opener for me.

**Pamela Strange**

I remember learning to write with fountain pens and being given a piece of blotting paper at the beginning of term with the teacher sternly telling us it should still look that white by the end of term or we would be in trouble! ....so what where we supposed to use it for?

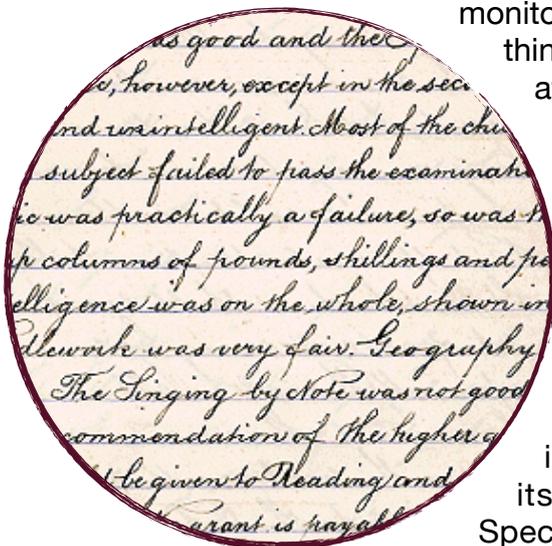
**Keith Dunmore**

Yes I was an ink monitor. Had to mix a black powder with water in a watering can and then pour into the ink wells. The ink stank!!

**Geraldine Syrett**

There was a monitor hierarchy when I was at school in Northumberland in the 50s. Ink monitor was top of the tree. I think bean bag monitor was at the bottom

**Dave Neville**



I can remember in the late 50s we had an earth tremor during a schoolday and my inkwell jumped up out of its holder in my desk.

Spectacular on my limited spectrum of unusual happenings at the time!

**Margaret Bond**

When my mum was sitting in class, the girl behind her dipped mum's plaits in her inkwell. When mum moved, the ink splashed all over mum's white blouse. She had another hiding when she got home!

**Lindy Hawes**

*Thank you for all your wonderful memories and contributions*

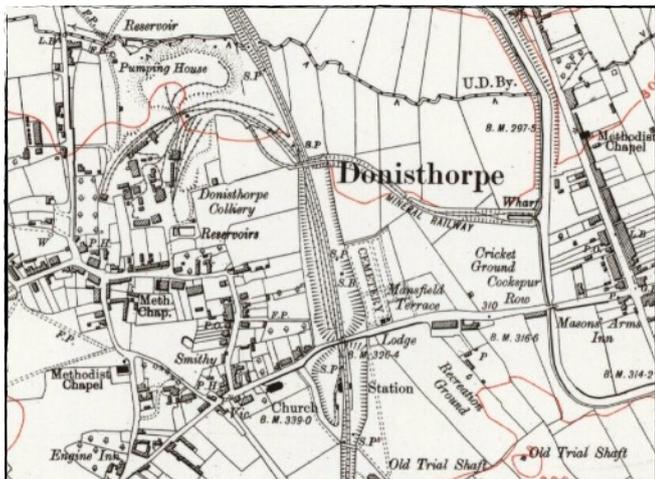
# Last pit standing ...

Bev Johncock has completed some research

**A**ppleby Magna has provided miners for several local pits, one of them being Donisthorpe number 1. The first shaft at Donisthorpe was commenced in March 1871 by the father and son partnership of G. Checkland and G.E. Checkland. Two shafts were sunk, each 14 feet diameter to the Main Coal seam at approximately 223 yards from the surface and intersecting the Little Coal seam at



approximately 159 yards. The Main seam was 14ft. 6in. thick at this location. Large areas of coal were purchased or leased, the areas including Donisthorpe itself, Overseal, Netherseal, Stretton-en-le-Field and Clifton Campville.



The original headgears were of timber and the No.1 shaft cage guides were of pitch pine. No.1 headgear was replaced in 1951 by a steel structure from the closed Netherseal Colliery. No.2 shaft also received a new steel headgear.

Transport of coal underground was entirely by conveyor belts by the early 1950's. Coal was fed by the conveyor system to a central loading

point near to the pit bottom where the coal was transferred to the mine cars for winding.

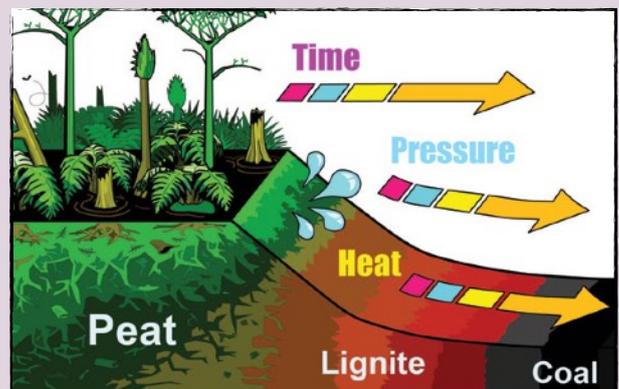


At the time of closure Donisthorpe was only one of two mines in Britain to still retain and use a steam winding engine and its final haul up No: 2 shaft was at midday on 12th April 1990.

The Marquis site at Rawdon Colliery is now the site of the Conkers Discovery Centre, a family and visitor centre for the National Forest.

# Forming the black stuff ...

**T**he history of Coal goes back a very long way. Around four and a half billion years ago our fiery molten planet earth was hit by another planet or planets.



© zmescience.com

As the earth heaved and buckled from the impact, over unimaginable aeons of time it cooled and compacted layer upon layer of rocks, minerals and vegetation.

Over time the decayed vegetation was compressed into peat and, eventually, during the Carboniferous period, into coal.

## A pressing object ...

Last month's Mystery Object was a local artefact

**L**ast month's History Mystery was a Cheese press found in a back garden in Groby. The discoverer of the object said, "It would be nice to think that perhaps Red Leicester was produced here in Groby."

Red Leicester is a hard cheese, similar to Cheddar but much more moist, and crumblier with a milder flavour.

The history of Red Leicester dates back to the 17th century when farmers recognised the need to differentiate their cheeses from cheese made in other parts of the country. They decided that the colour of the cheese should denote its richness and creaminess. To set it apart from cheddar Red Leicester is coloured with a vegetable dye called annatto, though some producers may have used alternative colouring agents.

"A good Leicester cheese can be identified by a firm body and a close, flaky texture," says Cheese.com. "Though the cheese can be consumed young, to reach it's optimum flavour, it should be allowed to mature for six to nine months.



© The Courtyard Dairy

## When the Coal House is full ...

George W.  
Doneghy

When the nights are  
gittin' chilly and the  
leaves begin to  
fade,

An' the mercury's  
down to thirty,  
'stead o' ninety in  
the shade,

There's a happy  
kind o' feelin' takes  
possession o' the  
soul?

With the smoke  
house full o'  
middlin', and the  
coal house full o'  
coal!

When the wintry  
winds are whistlin'  
through the  
branches o' the  
trees,

An' the dead leaves  
are a-flyin' and a-  
rustlin' in the  
breeze,

You kin feel the vast  
contentment that  
over you will roll,

If the barn is full o'  
fodder, and the coal  
house full o' coal!



## Basil's bit ...

**H**i there folks! Do you like being in the dark with no lights on at all? I don't! It's very scary isn't it? I woke up one night and scurried into the school hall. Usually there is some moonlight or a street light from Top Street to show me the way across that shiny floor but this night it was pitch black.

It reminded me of a story that my great great great grand uncle told me of children working in coal mines about 150 years ago. Some were called Trappers and were often the youngest member of the family working underground.

Their job was simple: to open and close the wooden doors that allowed fresh air to flow through the mine. They would usually sit in total darkness for up to twelve hours at a time, waiting to let the coal tub through the door. If they fell asleep, the safety of the whole workings could be affected.



## The car's the star

Village walk in style. The next SJMF Heritage podcast ...

**L**ast month saw the recording of a new podcast for the SJMF Heritage Archives. The theme for the current series is Village Walks, however we could not miss the chance for a "drive" around the village in an 89 year old Lanchester car lovingly restored by History Cafe member, Duncan Saunders.



The podcast, number two in the current series, follows Duncan around Appleby to some of the lesser known points of interest.

Details of where you will be able to listen and download the podcast will be in our July newsletter.

## In this month

**1946** ... Television licences were issued in Britain for the first time; they cost £2.

**1838** ... Since early morning crowds had gathered along the route through London that Queen Victoria would take for her coronation in Westminster Abbey.

**1215** ... King John and his barons met on the banks of the River Thames at Runnymede to sign the Magna Carta.

## Children in mining

Children as young as four used to work in coal and iron ore mines

**T**hey are set to transporting the ore or coal loosened by the miner from its place to the horse-path or the main shaft, and to opening and shutting the doors (which separate the divisions of the mine and regulate its ventilation) for the passage of workers and material. For watching the doors the smallest children are usually employed, who thus pass twelve hours daily, in the dark, alone, sitting usually in damp passages without even having work enough to save them from the stupefying, brutalising tedium of doing nothing.



The transport of coal and iron-stone, on the other hand, is very hard labour, the stuff being shoved in large tubs, without wheels, over the uneven floor of the mine; often over moist clay, or through water, and frequently up steep inclines and through paths so low-roofed that the workers are forced to creep on hands and knees. For this more wearing labour, therefore, older children and half-grown girls employed. One man or two boys per tub are employed, according to circumstances; and, if two boys, one pushes and the other pulls.

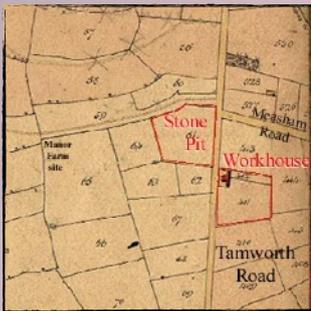


The loosening of the ore or coal, which is done by men or strong youths of sixteen years or more, is also very weary work. The usual working-day is eleven to twelve hours, often longer; in Scotland it reaches fourteen hours, and double time is frequent, when all the employees are at work below ground twenty-four, and even thirty-six hours at a stretch.

Set times for meals are almost unknown, so that these people eat when hunger and time permit.

## Peelings ..”

Legislation of 1723 allowed for the relief of the poor by permitting the construction of workhouses by individual, or groups of, parishes. Those applying for parish relief were obliged to enter the workhouse and, in return for being housed, clothed and fed, had to perform allocated work. This was to deter casual applications, a principle which was continued when Union Workhouses were created later.



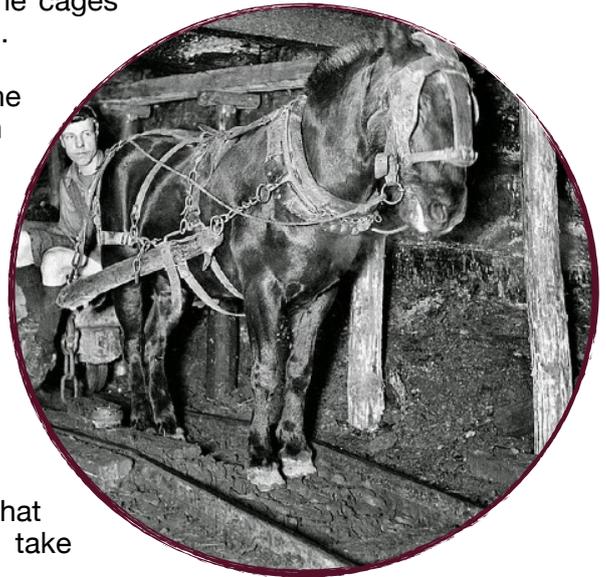
The Appleby parish map of 1832 shows the Appleby Workhouse situated well out of the village on the turnpike road from Measham to Tamworth, a short distance south-west of the junction with Measham Road

## The Pit Pony at the fair ...

A sobering story from the pit at Glascote near Tamworth

**J**im Clark, a miner, came to collect Clem, a pit pony, from the stables in the pit, harnessed him up and began to lead him out of the stables. Once out of the stables, Clem ran towards the pit bottom, clearly excited about something. He stood there, watching the cages of the shaft go up and down.

Jim later found out that the pony had recently been taken up to the surface by a miner and was cleaned up, groomed and taken to the village fair for the children to ride. While the village fair was on, Clem had spent the days surrounded by people and the nights in an open field with long grass.



Poor Clem had thought that this miner was coming to take him back to the village fair!

No. 7.—*John Saville*, 7 years old, collier's boy at the Soap Pit. Also 5  
examined January 19th:—

I've worked in the pit two weeks; I stand and open and shut the door; I'm generally in the dark, and sit me down against the door; I like it very well; it doesn't tire me; I stop 12 hours in the pit; I never see daylight now, except on Sundays; they don't illuse or beat me; I fell asleep one day, and a corve ran over my leg and made it smart; they'd squeeze me against the door if I fall to sleep again. When I go home I wash myself and get my drinking,\* and sit me down on the house-floor; I've tea and bread and butter to my drinking; I've sometimes dry bread, sometimes bread and cheese, and sometimes red herring and potatoes to my dinner in the pit; I've my breakfast before I go into the pit; I eat four times a day in the pit. I do'n't know my letters; I've never been to school at all; I go to Park Sunday-school, and they teach me writing, but they don't teach me my letters. I go to chapel every Sunday; I don't know who made the world; I never heard about God.

This boy cannot write or tell one letter.

From the National Archives in 1842. The Mines Commission were gathering information for their report on working conditions.



[www.sirjohnmoore.org.uk](http://www.sirjohnmoore.org.uk)



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### NEXT ISSUE

Upstairs  
Downstairs  
Being In Service

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