CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

VICTORIAN CHILD LABOUR

RESOURCES PACK

Yorkshire Mine Inquiry, 1838-1842

Documents, images, testimony and classroom resources for the Victorian Child Labour Inquiry, including the mine investigation, Black Horse Yard and the Mines and Collieries Act 1842.

Compiled resource pack

19 resources / 29 resource pages

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Victorian Child Labour - Resources Pack

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THE SHEFFIELD AND ROTHERHAM INDEPENDENT

SATURDAY, JULY 7, 1838. • PRICE FOURPENCE.

DEVASTATING STORM.

LOSS OF TWENTY-SIX LIVES AT HUSKAR COLLIERY.

A SUDDEN FLOOD.

On Wednesday afternoon, a most violent storm passed over Huskar Colliery. Rain fell in great quantity, and the nearby stream rose with alarming speed.

The fire beneath the winding-engine boiler was put out. The engine could no longer raise the workers by the usual shaft. About forty children set off towards a sloping passage known as the day-hole.

THE PASSAGE FILLS.

Water burst into the passage. The children were driven back against an air-door, which could not be opened against the force of the flood.

Fourteen children escaped and were later able to give evidence. At the inquest, witnesses agreed that the flood came suddenly, but important questions remained.

WITNESSES DISAGREE.

Some children said they did not understand why they had been told to leave. One believed there might be a fire.

Mine workers stated that the children would have been safe had they remained near the main shaft. They said the stream had never before flooded the passage in this way.

QUESTIONS REMAIN.

After hearing the evidence, the jury returned the verdict: ACCIDENTAL DEATH. They recommended steps to prevent water entering the mine again.

Yet who ordered the children to leave? Were the instructions clear? Could the danger have been foreseen? Were proper precautions in place? A fuller examination is surely required.

NAMES OF THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES.

George Birkinshaw — boy, aged 10
Joseph Birkinshaw — boy, aged 7
Isaac Wright — boy, aged 12
Abraham Wright — boy, aged 8
James Clarkson — boy, aged 16
Francis Hoyland — boy, aged 13
William Atick — boy, aged 12

Samuel Horne — boy, aged 10
Eli Hutchinson — boy, aged 9
George Garnett — boy, aged 9
John Simpson — boy, aged 9
George Lamb — boy, aged 8
William Womersley — boy, aged 8
James Turton — boy, aged 10

John Gothard — boy, aged 8
Catherine Garnett — girl, aged 11
Hannah Webster — girl, aged 13
Elizabeth Carr — girl, aged 13
Ann Moss — girl, aged 9
Elizabeth Hollings — girl, aged 15

Ellen Parker — girl, aged 15
Hannah Taylor — girl, aged 17
Mary Sellors — girl, aged 10
Elizabeth Clarkson — girl, aged 11
Sarah Newton — girl, aged 8
Sarah Jukes — girl, aged 10







Children's Employment Commission
London

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

October 1840

To whom it may concern,

The bearers of this letter are investigators appointed by the Children's Employment Commission, acting under the authority of Parliament and with the support of Lord Ashley, Member of Parliament.

They have been charged with examining working conditions at your mine, with particular attention to the employment of children underground. They are authorised to speak with workers and their families, to observe the premises where access is granted, and to review such records as you are willing to make available.

The Commission asks that you extend full cooperation to this investigation. Its findings will inform Parliamentary deliberation on matters of considerable public concern.

GREAT SEAL COMMISSION

Ashley

Children's Employment Commission
House of Commons, London

Return of deaths resulting from accidents and explosions in the coal mines of Yorkshire.

RETURN of DEATHS resulting from ACCIDENTS and EXPLOSIONS that have occurred within the last Three Years and Six Months in the Coal Mines of the Bradford and Halifax District.

No.	Date.	Where.	Name.	Age.	VERDICT.
	1837				
1	Dec. 26 .	Saddleworth .	Mills, Richard .	..	Fell from a corve in ascending the shaft of a coal-pit. Deceased and another boy in the corve whist a collier, and was properly cautioned.
	1838				
2	Jan. 2 .	Brierley . .	Thorp, Joseph .	52	A bunkernan, fell down the shaft, in handing the corve had neglected to slip the catch.
3	Feb. 1 .	Lindley . .	Walker, George .	26	Fell off on the corve the shaft side. No neglect.
4	March 7 .	Bowling . .	Rout, Edward .	21	Fell from pit corve in descending. Supposed to have caught at something on the pit's side.
5	March 22	Holmfirth .	Hurst, Reoch .	10	Killed by a piece of coal falling from the corve. No blame; he might have got out of the way.
6	April 28 .	North Bierley	Sugden, Abraham .	10	Fall of ironstone from a corve. No blame or negligence.
7	May 2 .	Bradford Moor	Walker, William .	16	Thrown from a corve to the bottom of the shaft by the rope breaking—the engineer neglected to stop his rope in proper time; the boy coming up without notice, and contrary to the rules.
8	June 22 .	Wilsden . .	Binns, Abraham .	17	Fall of shale from a corve hitting against the ledges of the shaft.
9	July 1 .	Ditchowram .	Cromsley, John .	13	Died taking in consequenct of wet weather.
10	July 19 .	Norto. . .	Conolly, Abraham.	30	Accidestar.
11	Aug. 0 .	North Bierley	Hanah, Christopher.	17	Expiosio. Fell down a shaft, a " gin " corve. No blame.
12	Aug. 31 .	Halifax . .	Taylor, Francis .	11	Explosion. Fell down a shaft, a " gin " corve. No blame.
13	April 17 .	Ditto . .	Lumley, James .	7	Thrown into fire-damp. Neglect of John Crosley, his master, in not going for the lamp.
14	April 27 .	Ellinden . .	Craven, Joseph .	9	
15	Oct. 29 .	Northowram .	Oldfield, Thomas .	48	The like. With caution there is no need of safety-lamps in this district. Accidental fall in going down a shaft.
16	March 1 .	Southowram .	Gray, Joseph .	11	The like, in consequence of machinery being out of gear. No blame.
17	March 25	Alder. . .	Hardicker, John .	1	Accidental fall of a stone from the roof of a pit.
18	Mpril 18 .	Allerton . .	Scatchird, Joshua .	8	Accidental fall down a shaft. Deceased a cart-driver.
19	April 26 .	Tong. . .	Oates, Henry .	9	The like. Deceased not very sharp.
20	May 11 .	Bowling . .	Tewdelo, James .	11	Accidental fall down an old shaft. Afterwards filled up at request of jury.
21	Aug. 13 .	Kirkheaton .	Drake, William .	11	Fell from a corve in ascending a shaft.
22	Sept. 3 .	Holmfirth .	Barraclough, Joseph	11	Deceased trying to ascend the shaft by taking hold the axles of the corve, and letting go within a few yards of the top.
23	Oct. 4 .	North Bierley	West, Joshua .	9	Unexpected explosion of fire-damp.
24	Oct. 14 .	Northowram .	Jarninge, James .	14	Fall from a corve in ascending a shaft contrary to rules.
25	Nov. 19 .	Wilsden . .	Felloy, Benjamin .	14	Accidental fall down a shaft by attempting to ascend by tackling without corve.
26	Dec. 6 .	Bradford . .	Brook, Joseph .	9	Ditto. ditto of cart iron then roof or a pit by deceased driving corve against a prop.
27	1840. .	Bowling . .	Naylor, James .	9	Ditto ditto of stone from the roof of pit.
28	March 2 .	Wilsden . .	Manden, William .	12	Fall of dirt from a corve. The corve not properly fastened by deceased.
29	April 11 .	Bowling . .	Banninson, Roni .	2	Explosion of fire-damp, caused by deceased taking the top from his lamp.
30	April 28 .	Ellinden . .	Wilkinson, William.	18	Killed by coal-waggon. Deceased of 12, keep out of the way.
31	May 18 .	Southowram .	Cheetham, Charles	20	Accidental fall of earth from roof of pit.
32	June 1 .	Thornton. .	Fearnside, Thomas	12	Explosion of fire-damp, Isaac Green, his employer, neglecting to fill up an old hole.
33	June 15 .	Halifax . .	Sheard, William .	30	
34	June 15 .	Ditto . .	Sheard, Joseph .	..	Accidental fall from corve in descending the shaft.
					Explosion of fire-damp, deceased persisting in going into the pit, although warned at seeing the fire-damp as he went on.
34	June 15 .	Ditto . .	Sheard, Joseph .	..	Explosion of fire-damp. Deceased complied to go in by Wm. Sheard, his employer.
35	Aug. 15 .	Bralley . .	Haigh, Reuben .	12	Accidentally caught in a chain of a corve, and falling whilst drawing up.
36	Aug. 14 .	North Bierley	Sharp, Joseph .	33	Unexpected fall of coal from the roof of a pit.
37	Aug. 22 .	Lockwood .	Haigh, David .	..	Accidental explosion of fire-damp. Deceased aware of it, and fetching his tools contrary to orders.
38	.. .. .	Ditto . .	Jephson, Joshua .	15	The like.
39	Sept. 15 .	Holton . .	Fieldhouse, Thomas	15	Accidental fall down a shaft, deceased playing near the pit in the absence of the workpeople.
40	Sept. 23 .	North Bierley	Worsnip, Noah .	11	Killed in pit by a corve running over him, deceased going before instead of behind the corve.
41	Nov. 9 .	Northowram .	Woodhead, John .	20	Accidental fall from a corve in ascending the shaft.
42	Nov. 17 .	North Bierley	Smith, James .	13	Killed in pit by a corve falling on him.
43	Dec. 17 .	Ditto . .	Brook, Jonas .	13	Unexpected fall of earth from the roof of pit.
44	1841.			20	potto.
45	Jan. 21 .	Tong . .	Thomas, Benjamin	12	The like.
46	Feb. 2 .	Bowling . .	Hl, John . .	..	Explosion of gunpowder, deceased intending to secrete a portion.
47	April 28 .	Ditto . .	Sharp, Joseph .	15	Accidental fall down a shaft in binding a corve.
48	Feb. 28 .	Ditto . .	Sherry, Jocema .	12	Ditto.
49	April 10 .	Halifax . .	Sutcliffe, Jonathan.	..	Accidental and unexpected explosion of fire-damp.
		Northowram .	Smith, Mathew .	12	Fell down a shaft, deceased holding the chain-iron without giving notice to draw up shaft.
50	June 12 .	North Bierley	Kellett, David .	14	Fall down a shaft. Deceased drawn over the pulley by his uncle and grandfather.

The Descent into the Mine

Narration for Episode 3: Underground

The gate slams shut. There is hardly room to move. Shoulders press against shoulders. The lamps are held close. Above, there is still daylight, a bright square of sky at the top of the shaft.

Then, without warning, the cage drops.

There is a lurch in the stomach. Hands reach for the sides. Boots shift on the floor. The cage rattles and bangs as it gathers speed, the noise filling the narrow space. The walls of the shaft rush past only inches away, black rock, wet timber, darkness.

The square of daylight above is already getting smaller.

Smaller.

The cage keeps falling.

Water spits through the gaps and strikes faces and hands. The rope groans overhead. Metal scrapes against metal. Every jolt seems to come without warning, throwing everyone slightly off balance before the cage steadies and continues down.

No one can see how far there is still to go.

The daylight is now no bigger than a window.

Then a hand.

Then a coin.

Then it disappears.

For a moment there is nothing but darkness and noise.

The lamps tremble with the movement of the cage. Their flames give only a weak yellow glow, enough to catch a face, a hand gripping the rail, the shine of water on the shaft wall. Beyond that small circle of light there is nothing.

Down and down.

The ears strain for any change in the sound, anything that might mean the bottom is near. But the cage keeps moving. The rope creaks. Water falls. The wooden guides rush past.

And then, suddenly, it begins to slow.

The noise changes. The cage shudders, drops a little further, and stops with a heavy jolt.

Everything is still.

For a few seconds nobody moves.

There is no daylight now. No sky. No sense of the world above.

Only the small flames of the lamps.

The gate is pulled open.

Beyond it is darkness.

A lamp is raised, and slowly the bottom of the shaft begins to appear. Wet black walls. Timber supports. Iron rails shining in the lamplight. Loaded corves standing on small wheeled platforms. Passages opening away in different directions.

Then the darkness begins to move.

A horse emerges from one of the passages, its hooves striking the wet ground as it pulls a line of loaded corves towards the shaft. A man walks beside it, calling out as another worker moves quickly to clear the way. Empty corves rattle past in the opposite direction.

Near the shaft, men are working around the winding gear. A loaded basket swings slightly from a chain as it is fastened for the journey upwards. Someone shouts. A signal is given. The rope tightens, the basket rises, and within seconds it has disappeared into the darkness above.

For a moment the space is full of noise. Wheels clatter over the rails. Chains knock against iron. Hooves scrape on stone. Doors open and slam shut. Voices call from one passage to another. Somewhere further away, picks strike coal in a steady rhythm.

Figures appear and disappear in the lamplight. A miner passes carrying tools. A boy struggles beside a loaded corve. A girl ducks beneath a low timber and vanishes into a passage. Near one of the ventilation doors, a child sits perfectly still in the darkness, waiting for the next wagon to come through.

Then the horse moves on. The corves disappear into another passage. The voices fade.

For a few seconds the bottom of the shaft is quiet again.

Only the drip of water.

Only the lamps.

And beyond their light, passage after passage leading deeper into the mine.

Example 1: Letter to a close friend or family member

A personal account written after the inspectors' descent into the mine

October 1840

My dear William,

I scarcely know how to describe what happened today, but I feel I must try while the memory of it is still so clear.

We were lowered into the mine in a cage suspended over the shaft. I confess that when the gate first closed I felt more afraid than I wished the others to know. There was still daylight above us then, but as we descended it became smaller and smaller until it disappeared altogether. I shall never forget that moment. There we were, hanging beneath the earth with nothing around us but darkness and the weak yellow light of our lamps.

The noise was dreadful. The cage rattled and struck against its guides, the rope groaned above us and water fell continually through the shaft. Then, quite suddenly, we began to slow and everything became still. For a few seconds nobody spoke. After all that noise, the silence seemed almost worse.

When the gate opened at the bottom I could see almost nothing. Gradually, as our lamps were raised, pieces of the mine appeared out of the darkness: wet black walls, wooden supports, rails beneath our feet and passages leading away where the light could not reach.

Then the place seemed to come alive. A horse appeared, pulling loaded corves towards the shaft. Wheels clattered over the rails, chains struck against iron and men called to one another through the darkness. Figures seemed to appear for a moment in the light and then vanish again. I saw boys and girls working among them. One child sat alone beside a ventilation door, perfectly still, waiting in the darkness for the next wagon to come through.

I had known, of course, that children worked in mines. Knowing it and seeing it are quite different things.

I cannot stop thinking about that child sitting beside the door.

Your affectionate friend,

Edward

Example 2: Extract from an official report

A formal record of observations made during the inspection

Observations made during an inspection of the colliery, October 1840

The inspectors descended the principal shaft and entered the workings at the bottom of the mine.

The shaft and underground passages were wet in several places and illumination was limited. Artificial light was necessary throughout the workings. Timber supports were observed at intervals along the passages.

Considerable activity was taking place at the bottom of the shaft. Horses were being used to transport loaded corves along rails, while empty corves were returned to the workings. Workers were employed in moving loads, operating the winding equipment and transporting coal towards the shaft.

Noise from wagons, chains, horses and coal-working was considerable, although some passages away from the main shaft were notably quieter.

Children of both sexes were observed working underground. Their duties included moving coal and attending ventilation doors. Some appeared to be of a very young age.

Further enquiries should establish the ages of these children, their working hours, the nature of their employment and the conditions in which they are required to work.

JOBS DONE BY CHILDREN IN COAL MINES

EVIDENCE TO THE INQUIRY, 1841

Children work at a number of different jobs underground. The work given to them depends upon their age and strength and upon the customs of the district in which they live. The names used for these jobs also vary from one coalfield to another. The ages given below are approximate.

TRAPPER

Approximate age: 5 to 10 years

A trapper sits beside a ventilation door. The child opens the door whenever a worker or corve passes through and closes it again afterwards. These doors control the flow of air through the mine and must not be left open.

A trapper may remain beside the door for the whole of a shift, often alone and without a lamp. Some trappers begin this work at only five or six years of age.

HURRIER

Approximate age: 8 to 14 years

A hurrier pulls loaded corves from the coalface towards the shaft. A chain or harness passes around the child's body, across the chest or over the shoulder.

Where the passages are too low to stand upright, the child must crawl or crouch while pulling the load behind them.

THRUSTER

Approximate age: 8 to 14 years

A thruster pushes a loaded corve from behind while a hurrier pulls from the front. The underground passages are often low, rough, wet and slippery.

The hurrier and thruster must work together to keep the corve moving and prevent it from tipping or rolling backwards.

DRAWER

Approximate age: 10 to 16 years

A drawer pulls heavy loads of coal along the underground roadways. A chain is commonly fastened around the child's waist or body.

The work requires considerable strength and stamina and may continue for many hours during a shift.

GETTER

Approximate age: 14 years and above

A getter cuts coal from the seam at the coalface using a pickaxe. The work is skilled, exhausting and dangerous.

Most getters are adult men, although some strong older youths do this work. A getter requires a candle or safety lamp in order to see the seam and watch for loose rock. Younger children are not usually employed in this work.

TERMS USED IN THIS EVIDENCE

CORVE. A small wheeled tub or wagon used to carry coal. COALFACE. The place where coal is cut from the seam. SHAFT. The deep vertical passage connecting the underground workings with the surface. VENTILATION. The movement of fresh air through the underground workings.

The terminology and duties recorded here vary between districts; the age ranges are intended as an approximate guide.

“I have to trap without a light and I'm scared.”

Sarah Gooder, aged 8

“I would rather go to school, but I am forced to go into the pit.”

James Adams, aged 12

“I don't like it because it's dark.”

Robert Drury, aged 10½

“I would rather be playing.”

Janet Allen, aged 8

“I do not like working in the pit, but I am obliged to get a living.”

Mary Barrett, aged 14

“I stop 12 hours in the pit; I never see daylight now, except on Sundays.”

John Saville, aged 7

“I sit by myself. I never get a light.”

Samuel Hirst, aged 9

“I hurry with my brother. He works beside me in the pit.”

Eliza Coats, aged 11

“I had rather set cards or do anything else than work in the pit.”

Susan Pitchforth, aged 15

“I was burned by firedamp… Several were burned and the horse…was killed.”

William Isaac, aged 11

“I find the work very hard, but I cannot get any other.”

Ann Thomas, aged 16

“I would like to be at school far better than in the pit.”

Sarah Gooder, aged 8

“Hurrying is very hard work. When I got home at night I was knocked up.”

Jonathan Clayton, aged 13½

“I never go out to play at night. I get my supper and go to bed.”

Daniel Drenchfield, aged nearly 10

“I would like to go to school, but I am too tired after the work.”

Jane Kerr, aged 19

“What made me cry when you came down was because Ibbotson had been braying me.”

Harriet Craven, aged 11

“The steward wouldn't let me be beaten if he knew, but I dare not tell him.”

Amos Robeyshaw, aged 14

“I sit all day long and never do anything except open and shut the door.”

Samuel Hirst, aged 9

“I would like not to work for so long, but my father bids me.”

Catherine Meiklejohn, aged 12

“My mother would not stay with my father, so I came into the pit to work with my sister for his support.”

Esther Craven, aged 14

“I would rather work in the daylight.”

John Thomas, aged 9

“I ran away from him because he used me so bad.”

Thomas Moorhouse, aged 14

“I have seen her cry many times.”

William Dyson, aged 14

“I would like work outside the pit, if I could earn good wages.”

Mary Day, aged 15

“I'm generally in the dark, and sit me down against the door.”

John Saville, aged 7

“My father and mother are both alive, but they are always sickly. Three of my sisters work in the pit as well.”

Mary Margerson, aged 16

“I should like to go to school and learn to read, but my mother will not let me.”

John Marsden, aged 8½

“The men don't ill-use me except we don't suit 'em; then they'll…punch us.”

Jonathan Clayton, aged 13½

“I would like to stay above ground. I do not like working in the dark.”

David Davies, aged 15

“I was taken below after my father's death. Mother needed me.”

Andrew Brown, aged 10

“They rap her in the face and knock her down.”

William Dyson, aged 14

“Sometimes I sing when I've light, but not in the dark; I dare not sing then.”

Sarah Gooder, aged 8

“The men…wallop me…when I don't hurry fast enough.”

William Jagger, aged 11

“I go at four and sometimes half past three in the morning.”

Sarah Gooder, aged 8

“It is very wet underground.”

Josiah Jenkins, aged 7

“My father is dead and my mother has six of us to support. My brothers and I all help to support the family.”

George Oswald, aged 16

“He used to hit me with the belt and maul and fling coals at me.”

Thomas Moorhouse, aged 14

“I have seen her thrashed many times when she does not please the men.”

William Dyson, aged 14

“When I left him, I used to sleep in the cabins upon the pit's bank and in the old pits.”

Thomas Moorhouse, aged 14

“I would rather go to school than be down here.”

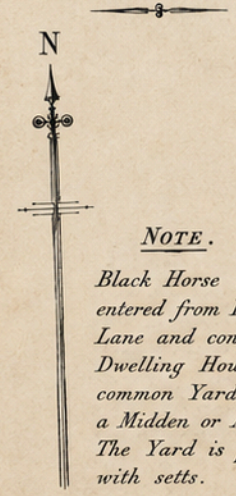
Samuel Hirst, aged 9

“I go down the shaft at four or five in the morning and return at five or six at night.”

William Isaac, aged 11

PLAN OF BLACK HORSE YARD, HALIFAX,

Surveyed for the Town Surveyor.

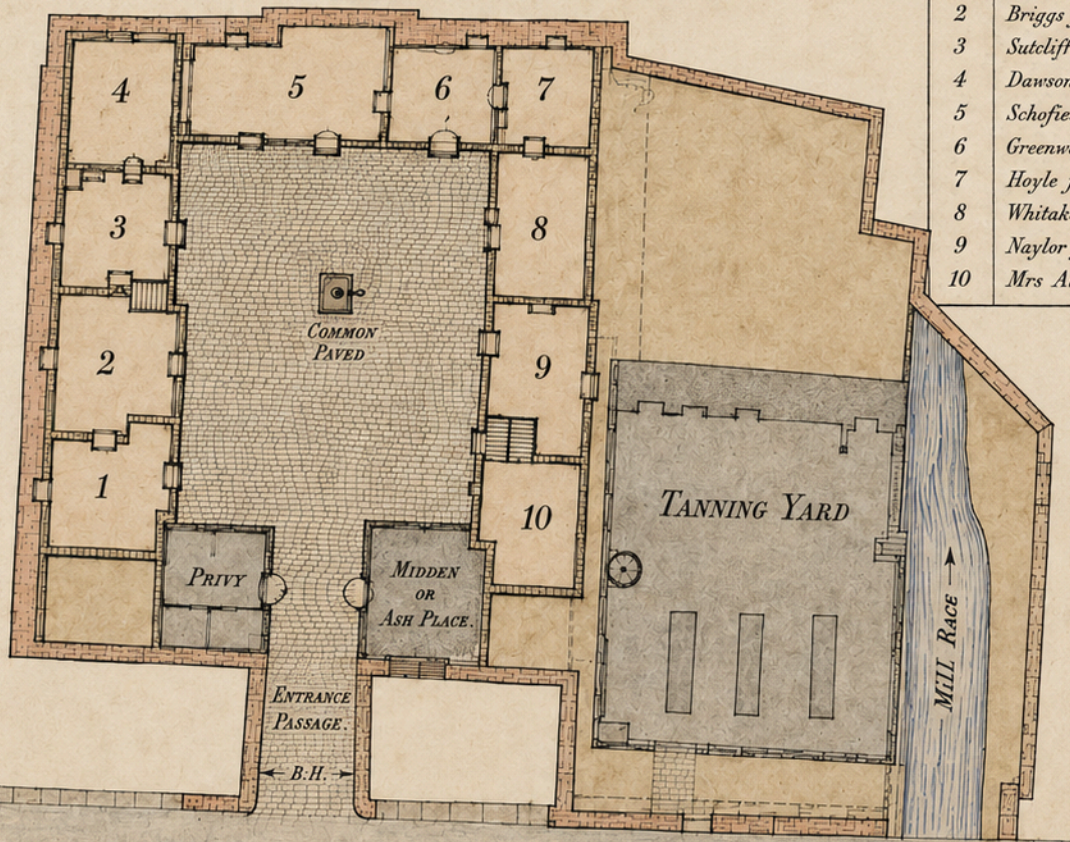


NOTE.

Black Horse Yard is entered from Black Horse Lane and consists in Dwelling Houses, a common Yard, Privy, a Midden or Ash Place. The Yard is paved with setts.

Black Horse Yard.

Owner : J. Liston Esq.



← *To Skircoat Green.*

I hereby certify that the above Plan was made by actual Survey on the 17th & 18th July 1840.

Geo. Carruther.
Surveyor.

Black Horse Lane.

(Public Highway.)

Occupancy Schedule & Key.

No.	*Occupier.*	*Employment / Connection.*	*Remarks.*
1	*Hargreaves family*	*Linked to the Mine*	—
2	*Briggs family*	*Employed at Listen's Mill*	—
3	*Sutcliffe family*	*Linked to the Mine*	—
4	*Dawson family*	*Linked to the Mine*	—
5	*Schofield family*	*Employed at Listen's Mill*	—
6	*Greenwood family*	*Linked to the Mine*	—
7	*Hoyle family*	*Employed at Listen's Mill*	—
8	*Whitaker family*	*Einked to the Mine*	—
9	*Naylor family*	*Employed at Listen's Mill*	—
10	*Mrs Alice Booth*	*Widow*	—

REFERENCE.

- *Buildings.*
- *Walls.*
- *Cobbled or Setted Yards & Passages.*
- *Pump.*
- *Privy.*
- *Midden or Ash Place.*

SCALE OF FEET.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

HALIFAX TOWN COUNCIL

Survey of Black Horse Yard, July 1840

Surveyor's Report

Black Horse Yard lies off Black Horse Lane, Halifax, and is entered by a narrow passage between the buildings facing the lane. Within is a paved court containing ten dwellings.

The houses do not appear to have been built at one time. Most of Houses 1–8 appear to have been added during the early years of the present century, as the town increased in size and accommodation was required for families employed in the mills, mines and workshops.

Most are small stone cottages consisting of one principal room on the ground floor and one room above.

No. 1 — occupied by the Hargreaves family: two rooms. One living and cooking room below and one sleeping room above. Seven persons reside here.

No. 2 — occupied by the Briggs family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Three persons reside here.

No. 3 — occupied by the Sutcliffe family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Four persons reside here.

No. 4 — occupied by the Dawson family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Nine persons reside here.

No. 5 — occupied by the Schofield family: four rooms. This is one of the larger dwellings in the Yard, having two rooms below and two above. Four persons reside here.

No. 6 — occupied by the Greenwood family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Five persons reside here.

No. 7 — occupied by the Hoyle family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Four persons reside here.

No. 8 — occupied by the Whitaker family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Four persons reside here.

No. 9 — occupied by the Naylor family: two rooms. One room below and one above. Three persons reside here.

No. 10 — occupied by Mrs Alice Booth: two rooms. One room below and one above. Mrs Booth resides here alone.

Houses 9 and 10 appear to form part of an older range of buildings than some of the other cottages in the Yard.

In the smaller dwellings, the lower room serves for several purposes. The household fire is kept there; meals are prepared and eaten there; and it forms the principal living space of the family. In more crowded households, members of the family may also sleep in this room.

The upper room is used principally for sleeping. Where households are large, beds are shared between children and several members of one family may occupy the same room. In some dwellings a curtain or hanging is used to divide the sleeping space.

The number of occupants bears little relation to the size of the dwelling. At No. 4, nine persons occupy two rooms, whereas at No. 10, two rooms are occupied by one person.

None of the dwellings has a supply of water within the house. Water is obtained from the common pump in the Yard and must be carried into the dwellings as required.

The inhabitants also make common use of the privy and of the midden or ash place shown upon the accompanying plan.

Immediately adjoining the Yard is a tanning yard, with the mill race passing along its eastern boundary.

The whole property is presently recorded as belonging to J. Liston Esq.

George Carruther.
Town Surveyor
Halifax, July 1840

1841 CENSUS RETURN.

HALIFAX.

Enumeration District No. 2 | Parish or Township of Halifax | Ecclesiastical District of Halifax

Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House: Black Horse Yard

Name of Enumerator: John Brook

No. of Schedule.	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in this House on the Night of the 6th of June 1841.	Age of Males.	Age of Females.	Profession, Trade, Employment, or of Independent Means.	Whether Born in Same County.
1	Samuel Hargreaves	35		Collier	Y
	Ellen Hargreaves		35		Y
	William Hargreaves	13		Collier Boy	Y
	Martha Hargreaves		10	Trapper	Y
	John Hargreaves	7			Y
	Jane Hargreaves		5		Y
	Sarah Hargreaves		2		Y
2	John Briggs	30		Mill Worker	Y
	Ann Briggs		30		Y
	Mary Briggs	12		Piecer	Y
3	Joseph Sutcliffe	40		Former Collier	Y
	Hannah Sutcliffe		35	Washerwoman	Y
	Thomas Sutcliffe	12		Hurrier	Y
	Anne Sutcliffe		8		Y
4	George Dawson	40		Collier	Y
	Sarah Dawson		40		Y
	Mary Dawson		17	Power Loom Weaver	Y
	Robert Dawson	15		Collier Boy	Y
	Hannah Dawson		13	Power Loom Weaver	Y
	Matthew Dawson	9			Y
	Eli Dawson	6			Y
	Ruth Dawson		4		Y
	Thomas Dawson	1			Y
5	Samuel Schofield	35		Mill Worker	Y
	Betty Schofield		35		Y
	Hannah Schofield		15	Power Loom Weaver	Y
	Joseph Schofield	6			Y
6	Mary Greenwood		30	Widow	Y
	Elizabeth Greenwood		14	Mill Worker	Y
	James Greenwood	11		Trapper	Y
	Sarah Ann Greenwood		3		Y
	Thomas Greenwood	1			Y
7	Isaac Hoyle	40		Mill Worker	Y
	Mary Hoyle		40		Y
	Eliza Hoyle		12	Piecer	Y
	Thomas Hoyle	5			Y
8	John Whitaker	35		Collier	Y
	Rebecca Whitaker		30		Y
	Sarah Whitaker		13	Hurrier	Y
	Edward Whitaker	9		Scholar	Y
9	Joseph Naylor	30		Mill Worker	Y
	Rachel Naylor		25		Y
	Robert Naylor	7		Scholar	Y
10	Alice Booth		65	Widow	S

Total of Persons on this Page 44

House 1 - Hargreaves family

7 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 4 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed
- Straw mattress
- Cradle

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 2 - Briggs family

3 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 3 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Small bed

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 3 - Sutcliffe family

4 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 3 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 4 - Dawson family

9 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 5 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed
- Bed
- Cradle

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 5 - Schofield family

4 people, 4 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 4 chairs
- Dresser
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed
- Small bed

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 6 - Greenwood family

5 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Small table
- 3 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed
- Straw mattress
- Cradle

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 7 - Hoyle family

4 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 4 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 8 - Whitaker family

4 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 4 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Bed
- School slate
- Schoolbook

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 9 - Naylor family

3 people, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Table
- 3 stools
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Small bed
- School slate

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

House 10 - Alice Booth

1 person, 2 rooms

- Hearth
- Small table
- Chair
- Wooden chest
- Washing tub
- Bed
- Small cupboard

Hearth = open cooking and heating fire.

The Hargreaves family - House 1

Samuel is direct and not unfriendly, but he does not see the investigation as his business. He has answered questions before - from the mine, from the church, from people who come asking and then go away again.

On William and Martha working underground

> "They earn. That's what I need from them. William's thirteen - he's not a child."

On whether the work is dangerous

> "Everything's dangerous if you're not careful. I was careful. My father was careful. You learn."

On what would happen if they stopped working

> "We'd manage less well than we do now. That's the plain answer."

On Ellen taking in washing

> "She does what she can. We all do."

Ellen, if the investigators address her rather than Samuel, is quieter and more considered. She worries more than Samuel says, and may let that show if they ask her directly rather than through him.

Use these notes as guidance, not as a script. Listen to the investigators and answer from inside the family's situation.

The Sutcliffe family - House 3

Joseph is in some physical discomfort and is not comfortable being seen to need help. He was a good worker and the injury has cost him something beyond wages.

On Thomas working underground

> "He shouldn't be carrying what he carries. He's twelve years old." [A pause.] "But there's no one else."

On the injury

> "I'm getting better." [Said with more conviction than evidence.]

On what would happen if Thomas stopped working

> "We'd have Hannah's washing. And whatever I can manage when I'm back on my feet."

If asked when that will be

> "Soon enough."

Hannah may answer more honestly if the investigators speak to her. She knows Joseph may not work underground again, though she does not say this in front of him.

"Thomas knows what he's doing down there. He learned from his father." [A pause.] "I'd rather he hadn't had to."

Use these notes as guidance, not as a script. Listen to the investigators and answer from inside the family's situation.

The Dawson family - House 4

The Dawson household is busy and loud and George is comfortable with the investigators in a way that the other families are not. He has nothing to hide because he does not think anything he is doing is wrong.

On the children working

> "Mary and Hannah are at the mill. Robert is at the mine. That's three wages coming in besides mine. That's how a large family manages."

On whether it concerns him that Robert works underground

> "Robert's fifteen. When I was fifteen I'd already been underground for years."

On the younger children

> "They'll work when they're old enough. That's how it goes."

Sarah Dawson, if the investigators address her, is warmer but essentially agrees with George. She has buried two children and has seven living. She is not sentimental, but she is not hard.

If asked about the children who died: "Two. Before they were old enough to walk." [She does not elaborate unless pressed.] "It happens. You keep going."

Use these notes as guidance, not as a script. Listen to the investigators and answer from inside the family's situation.

The Whitaker family - House 8

Rebecca is the most articulate of the parents in the yard and the most directly engaged with the question the investigators are asking. She has thought about this. She has an opinion.

On keeping Edward at school

> "He's nine years old. He should be learning to read. Not sitting in the dark opening a door."

On how the family manages without Edward's potential wage

> "We manage. Sarah earns. John earns. We manage."

On whether she ever doubts the decision

> [A pause.] "Every week when the rent is due."

John Whitaker, if the investigators address him, is less certain than Rebecca. He supports her decision but feels the weight of it differently.

"Rebecca's right. I'd rather he had something I haven't got." [A pause.] "I just hope we can keep it up."

Sarah Whitaker is not resentful, but she is aware of the cost of being the one who earns while Edward goes to school.

"I don't mind. He's my brother." [A pause.] "I just think about it sometimes."

Use these notes as guidance, not as a script. Listen to the investigators and answer from inside the family's situation.

Children's Employment
Commission
London

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

February 1842

My dear Investigators,

I have now read the account of your inquiry in Yorkshire, together with the notes, testimonies and other papers you collected there. I must thank you for the care and seriousness with which you have undertaken this duty.

Your findings are grave. The employment of young children underground, the length and hardship of their labour, the dangers from firedamp and accident, and the dependence of many families upon a child's wage, together present a matter of the deepest public concern.

I believe your report strengthens the case for reform. Yet there are those, including Sir Robert Peel, who fear that new laws may damage the coal trade and bring fresh hardship upon poor families. Before Parliament can be persuaded to act, your recommendations must be able to answer such objections.

I therefore ask that you consider, with all possible care, what changes ought now to be made, and how those changes might be defended before Parliament.

I remain, your obedient servant,

GREAT SEAL COMMISSION

Ashley

Children's Employment Commission
House of Commons, London

Authority produced and examined

CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

SUMMARY OF THE TEAM'S INVESTIGATION

Yorkshire Mine Inquiry, 1841

Version A - Shorter reading

1. Young children work underground

What we know: Children as young as eight or nine work in the mine. They may be trappers, hurriers or thrusters.

Evidence: The Team saw children working underground. Sykes and the children told us about their work.

Still uncertain: We only visited one mine, so we do not know if every mine is the same.

Why it matters: Very young children are doing difficult work underground.

2. The work can be dangerous

What we know: Children may work for long hours in darkness. Some crawl through low passages and pull heavy corves. There are dangers from gas, falling rock, wagons and flooding.

Evidence: The Team saw the mine. The children and Sykes also described the dangers.

Still uncertain: Different children do different jobs, so their experiences are not all the same.

Why it matters: Children have little control over the risks they face.

3. Firedamp can kill

What we know: Firedamp is a gas that can explode if it meets a flame or spark. The accident record listed five deaths at Halifax caused by firedamp. Two of the dead were children aged nine and eleven.

Evidence: We have the accident record. Sykes also explained the danger from gas.

Still uncertain: We cannot prove that all five deaths happened at the mine we visited.

Why it matters: Keeping air moving and using lamps safely can save lives.

4. Families need children's wages

What we know: Many families need the money their children earn. Parents may hate the danger but still send children to work because they need money for food and rent.

Evidence: The census, the families in Black Horse Yard and their own words all show this.

Still uncertain: We do not know how families would replace the lost wages.

Why it matters: A law that protects children could still make a poor family poorer.

5. Some families live in very crowded homes

What we know: Some families in Black Horse Yard have seven, eight or nine people living in only two rooms. Liston owns the yard as well as the mine.

Evidence: The yard plan, census and family visits all support this.

Still uncertain: We found no proof that Liston uses the houses to threaten workers.

Why it matters: Some families depend on Liston for both their job and their home.

6. Liston does not see the mine for himself

What we know: Liston owns the mine, but he does not go underground. Sykes manages the underground workings.

Evidence: Both Liston and Sykes told us this.

Still uncertain: We do not know if other mine owners work in the same way.

Why it matters: An owner may make money from conditions he has never seen.

7. The problem is bigger than one person

What we know: Liston thinks he is a fair employer. Families need the wages. Sykes tries to manage the dangers. Yet children are still being harmed.

Evidence: We heard from Liston, Sykes, children and families.

Still uncertain: We cannot know exactly what everyone thinks or whether every mine is the same.

Why it matters: The law may need to protect children even when no one person believes they are doing wrong.

CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

SUMMARY OF THE TEAM'S INVESTIGATION

Yorkshire Mine Inquiry, 1841

Version B - Standard reading

1. Young children are working underground

What we know: Children as young as eight or nine work at the mine. They are employed as trappers, hurriers and thrusters. Older children may work closer to the coalface.

Evidence: The Team saw children underground. Sykes confirmed that young children work there. The children described their jobs and working days.

Still uncertain: We investigated only one mine. We cannot say that every mine employs children of the same ages or in the same jobs.

Why it matters: Very young children are doing work that helps keep the mine running, often in difficult conditions.

2. The work can be long, dark, exhausting and dangerous

What we know: Some children spend much of the day underground. Trappers may sit alone in darkness. Hurriers pull heavy corves through passages so low that they must crouch or crawl. Children face dangers from wagons, falling rock, flooding and gas.

Evidence: The Team observed the workings. Children's testimony described long hours, darkness, tiredness, fear and accidents. Sykes also explained the risks.

Still uncertain: Different jobs and different parts of the mine involve different conditions. Other mines may also be different.

Why it matters: Children have little control over the dangers they face.

3. Firedamp is a serious danger

What we know: Firedamp is methane gas. It can collect underground and explode if it meets a flame or spark. Five deaths recorded at Halifax involved firedamp explosions. Two of those killed were children aged nine and eleven.

Evidence: The accident return, Sykes's evidence and the Team's observations of ventilation and safety lamps support this.

Still uncertain: The accident return does not prove that all five deaths happened at the mine we investigated.

Why it matters: Ventilation, checking for gas and the safe use of lamps can have life-or-death consequences.

4. Families depend upon children's wages

What we know: Many mining families depend on several people earning money. Parents may fear the mine and still send a child underground because the family needs the wage for food, rent and other necessities.

Evidence: The census, household evidence from Black Horse Yard and the families' own testimony all support this.

Still uncertain: We do not know how these families could replace the wages if younger children were stopped from working.

Why it matters: Protecting children from the mine could create a new problem if their families lose money they need to survive.

5. Some mining families live in very difficult conditions

What we know: Several mine families live in small, crowded houses in Black Horse Yard. Some households have seven, eight or nine people sharing two rooms. Water and sanitation are shared. Liston owns the yard as well as the mine.

Evidence: The yard plan, survey, census and the Team's visits all support this.

Still uncertain: We found no evidence that Liston threatens tenants, charges unusually high rents or removes families who complain.

Why it matters: Some families depend on Liston for both wages and housing. This may leave them with fewer choices.

6. Liston does not know everything that happens underground

What we know: Liston owns the mine and benefits from its success, but he does not inspect the underground workings himself. He leaves day-to-day management to Sykes and could not answer several questions about children's daily work.

Evidence: Liston said this himself, and Sykes confirmed it.

Still uncertain: We do not know whether this is typical of other mine owners.

Why it matters: Serious problems may continue if owners never see the conditions underground for themselves.

7. The problem is larger than one person's intentions

What we know: Liston believes he is a respectable employer. He provides work, owns housing, gives to the church and says he helps families in hardship. Many families need children's wages. Sykes knows the dangers but sees them as part of the work he manages.

Evidence: The Team heard directly from Liston, Sykes, the children and the families.

Still uncertain: We cannot know exactly what people think privately, and we cannot assume every mine is the same.

Why it matters: Children can be harmed even when no single person believes they are deliberately causing harm. This raises the question of whether the law should set rules that everyone must follow.

CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

SUMMARY OF THE TEAM'S INVESTIGATION

Yorkshire Mine Inquiry, 1841

Version C - Full reading

1. Young children are working underground

What we know: Children as young as eight or nine are employed at the mine. They work as trappers, hurriers and thrusters. Older children may work closer to the coalface.

Evidence: The Team saw children working underground. Sykes confirmed that young children are employed. The children themselves described their jobs and working days.

Still uncertain: We investigated only one mine. We cannot say from our investigation exactly how young children are at every colliery, or whether the same jobs and ages are found everywhere.

Why it matters: Very young children are carrying out work that helps keep the mine operating, often in conditions that adults would find difficult.

2. The work can be long, dark, exhausting and dangerous

What we know: Some children spend much of the day underground. Trappers may sit alone in darkness beside ventilation doors. Hurriers pull heavy corves through passages so low that they have to crouch or crawl. Children face dangers from moving wagons, falling rock, flooding and gas.

Evidence: The Team observed the workings directly. Children's testimony described long hours, darkness, fear, tiredness and accidents. Sykes also explained the risks underground.

Still uncertain: Conditions are not exactly the same for every child. Different jobs and different parts of the mine involve different conditions and risks. Other mines may also be different.

Why it matters: Children have little control over the risks they face, yet their work is important to the movement of coal and the ventilation of the mine.

3. Firedamp is a serious danger

What we know: Firedamp - methane gas - can collect underground. If it meets a naked flame or spark, it can explode. The accident return recorded five deaths at Halifax caused by firedamp explosions. Two of those killed were definitely children: one aged nine and another aged eleven.

Evidence: The accident return, Sykes's evidence and the Team's observations of ventilation and safety lamps all support this finding.

Still uncertain: The accident return does not prove that all five Halifax deaths happened at the particular mine we investigated. It also cannot tell us how often dangerous levels of gas occurred without causing an accident.

Why it matters: Ventilation, safety lamps, checking for gas and decisions made underground can have life-or-death consequences.

4. Families depend upon children's wages

What we know: Many mining families depend upon several people in the household earning wages. Parents may be frightened by the dangers of the mine and still send their children underground because the family needs the money for food, rent and other necessities. Without those wages, some families could face debt, hunger or the workhouse.

Evidence: The 1841 census, the evidence from households in Black Horse Yard and the families' own testimony all support this finding.

Still uncertain: We do not know how these families could replace the wages if younger children were prevented from working underground.

Why it matters: Stopping children from working underground may protect them from danger. But if nothing is done about family poverty, the same law could create a different kind of hardship.

5. Some mining families live in extremely difficult conditions

What we know: Several families connected with the mine live in small, crowded houses in Black Horse Yard. Some households have seven, eight or nine people sharing only two rooms. Water and sanitation are shared between households. Liston owns Black Horse Yard as well as the mine.

Evidence: The yard plan, the survey, the census and the Team's visit to the families all support this finding.

Still uncertain: We found no evidence that Liston deliberately uses his ownership of the houses to threaten workers. We also found no evidence that he charges unusually high rents or removes families who complain.

Why it matters: Some families depend upon Liston both for their wages and for their homes. Even without direct threats, this may leave them with fewer choices and make their position less secure.

6. Liston does not know everything that happens underground

What we know: Liston owns the mine and benefits from its success, but he does not personally inspect the underground workings. He leaves the day-to-day management of the mine to Sykes and the men working beneath him. Liston could not tell the Team the children's exact working hours, the age of the youngest worker or several other details about daily conditions underground.

Evidence: Liston told the Team this himself. Sykes also confirmed that Liston manages the business while he manages the underground workings.

Still uncertain: We do not know whether this is typical of mine owners elsewhere.

Why it matters: If owners do not see conditions underground for themselves, serious problems may continue without the people who own and profit from the mines fully understanding what is happening.

7. The problem is larger than one person's intentions

What we know: Liston does not believe he is treating his workers badly. He provides employment, owns housing, contributes to the church and says that he gives charitable help when families are in serious difficulty. He believes that children's work is normal, lawful and necessary to mining families. The families themselves do not all agree about child labour. Some accept it as normal. Some dislike it but believe they have no alternative. Others would stop their children working underground if they could afford to. Sykes understands the dangers underground but also regards them as part of the work he is responsible for managing.

Evidence: The Team heard directly from Liston, Sykes, the children and the families. Their accounts do not always agree, but together they show how complicated the problem is.

Still uncertain: We cannot know exactly what Liston or anyone else thinks privately. We also cannot assume that every mine owner, manager or mining family would give the same answers.

Why it matters: Children can be harmed even when no single person believes they are deliberately causing that harm. This raises an important question: can children's safety be left to custom, charity and individual conscience, or does the law need to set rules that everyone must follow?

The Mines and Collieries Act 1842

What the Act changed

The Act said that:

- **No woman or girl of any age could work underground** in a mine or colliery.
- **No boy under the age of ten could work underground.**
- Government inspectors could be appointed to check whether the law was being followed and to report on conditions in mines.
- Mine owners or others who continued to employ people banned by the Act could face legal penalties.

What the Act did not change

The Act was an important reform, but it did not solve every problem.

- **Boys aged ten and over could still work underground.**
- The Act did **not limit the number of hours** children could work.
- It did **not require children to attend school.**
- It did **not provide money to families** who lost the wages of women, girls or younger boys.
- It did **not require mine owners to compensate** workers or their families after an injury or death.
- It did **not remove the dangers of mining**, such as firedamp, roof falls, flooding and accidents.

What about inspection?

The Act allowed inspectors to be appointed, but enforcement was weak at first.

There were far too few inspectors to visit all the mines in Britain, and their powers were limited.

At first there was only one government inspector for all the mines in Britain, so regular inspection was impossible. A stronger system of mine inspection began in 1850, but it took many more years for inspectors' numbers and powers to increase.