



**Hartley Colliery**

No. 227 – George Jordan

Aged 12. Is a driver; has been down the pit 4 years and 2 months. Has often been strained from helping up, twice, and lay idle a day one time and two the other. Has thrown up his victuals, sometimes from the bad air. Had his arm burst about two years since by the corf jamming it. Many times had his head working from the bad air, and he came home out of the pit twice or thrice from it. Hurt his ankle and lamed himself at Whitley Pit. Can read easy words. Cannot write his name. Goes to Sunday school and chapel often.

**Cowpen Colliery**

No. 238 – Thomas Gladson

Aged 14. Was nearly blinded last week by the bad air. Was off work a day with it. [His eyes seem weak now.] The doctor said it was the air. They often get their thumps from the overmen and others. He hits them with a yard wand.

The putters and rolley-way men whiles strike them. Five boys have wrought double sift, of 24 hours respectively, the following number of times: - three times, seven times, twice, twice. Nine or ten times at Cramlington one wrought once three shifts following in this pit, and another boy two and a half shifts following once.

No. 239 - John Watson

Aged 17 next June. Has been down nearly 11 years down this pit (all but ten weeks). Went down at 6 years old. Kept a door for 14 days. Cleaned the way and drove for five years; helped-up for 14 days. Is leading water now. Goes down at half-past 3am and comes up at about 4pm. Makes 2s a day; paid by the shift. Has wrought three shifts following three times, driving rolleys, because lads were wanting. Was not forced to stay. Was very sleepy, and fell asleep very often in the third shift. There was a good few boys down' some working the whole three shifts. This was about three years ago, for that once. Felt very tired and weary. There was two or three lads lying idle lamed at that time, and that made others stop. These treble shifts were of 36 hours, or three

shifts of 12 hours each. Twice he has worked double shifts, - that is 24 hours each time. Never came up the pits at these times; not resting any length of time; not more than a few minutes at a time. He drove three corves at a time, and they drew up all three on one rope. Was strained two years ago by helping-up at a heavy bank, by his foot slipping from a stone, and he was off a day. One time he fell down the staple (small shaft) in the pit and was off a week. Has three times been sore lamed with the rolleys when he was driving, and was off two or three days at a time. The bad air had made him bad about six or seven weeks ago. They have changed the air now, but nobody could work in it then, and the pit was often idle two and three days together. Was never bad with the air much before this. Only knows his a, b, c; cannot write at all. Goes to no school at all now, but attends worship on Sundays pretty often. Was at school before he went down the pit for a year, and could read the Bible then; now he has forgotten everything. One boy, whose name is George Tunny, is now down the pit keeping a door, and is not more than seven years old. He has been down about a year and a half. His cousin, Thomas Tunny, was down this pit at six years old.

The agent, Mr Brown, stated to me the next morning that the mother of George Tunny says he is nine years old; and the agent adds, that he is only partially employed, as they have more trappers that required for the pit.

TRANSCRIPT OF FIRST REPORT  
OF CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT  
COMMISSIONERS (MINES),  
1842

REFERENCE: | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS1, KS2, KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | TOPIC AREAS:  
VICTORIANS, TECHNOLOGY, INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

In 1840 Parliament set up the Children's Employment Commission. The aim of the Commission was to investigate the working conditions of children under the age of 18. The first report included the commission's findings on the state of child employment in mines, the second in other industries, and the third in factories.

The commission was set up by Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury. He also

campaigned for improved conditions and education for children working in factories and for the banning of chimney sweeps.

The commission employed inspectors who were responsible for a region of the country. The inspectors gave out forms for owners to fill in about their employees (see Wylam Colliery form), but also talked to children and other adults involved in the industry.

GLOSSARY

Corf – basket made of woven sticks used to transport coal and stone. Could be 10-30 pecks (90-270 litres) – plural - corves

Driver – boy employed to manage the horses underground



Helping up – boys who helped the putters (see below) when rolleys got stuck in a dip in the mine shaft

Keep a door – the job of a trapper (see below)

Leading water – removing water from coal working. Mines were often under the water table and water had to be pumped or hand bailed

Putter – someone who moves the corves (see above) of coal from the coal face to where they can be transported out the mine

Rolley – waggon used to move corves (see above), these would be pulled by horses on tracks underground

Rolley-way man – man who oversaw the rolleys (see above). He made sure that full loads could be moved out and empty corves (see above) would be ready when needed

Trapper – a little boy employed to open a door in the mine – they would be sprung to keep them closed, but had to be opened to let waggons through

Victuals – food (also known as “bait” in Northumberland)

Work/working – to ache. For example: “his head was working” – he had a headache

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## OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

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British Library article on Children’s Employment Commission (includes scans of some of the pages including illustrations):

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/report-on-child-labour-1842>

The Victorian Web site, page with testimonies printed in report of Children’s Employment Commission:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/ashley.html>

Spartacus Educational website, page for Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury: <https://spartacus-educational.com/IRashley.htm>

Spartacus Educational website, page for coal mining 1600-1925, includes sub-section on Children’s Employment Commission:

<https://spartacus-educational.com/CoalIndustry.htm#section5>

Newcastle University Library education and outreach website, page on children mine workers:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/webtemplate/libraryassets/external/education-outreach-mining/>

Durham Mining Museum website, page for mining terminology: <http://www.dmm.org.uk/books/terms.htm>

Durham Mining Museum website, page for Cowpen Colliery: <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/c031.htm>

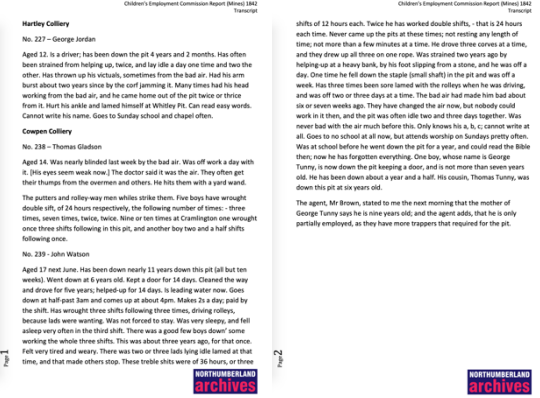
Durham Mining Museum website, page for Hartley Colliery (includes information Hartley Pit Disaster (1862)): <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/h018.htm>



# TRANSCRIPT OF FIRST REPORT OF CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSIONERS (MINES), 1842

TOPIC: VICTORIANS, TECHNOLOGY, INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

SUBJECT AREAS: HISTORY, LITERACY, SCIENCE, MUSIC



Background	Activity	Resources
<p>In 1840 Parliament set up the Children's Employment Commission. The aim of the Commission was to investigate the working conditions of children under the age of 18. The first report included the commission's findings on the state of child employment in mines, the second in other industries, and the third in factories.</p> <p>The commission was set up by Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury. He also campaigned for improved conditions and education for children working in factories and for the banning of chimney sweeps.</p>	<p><b>See:</b> When did Parliament set up the Children's Employment Commission?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What was the aim of the Children's Employment Commission?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What did the Children's Employment Commission investigate?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Who set up the Commission?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What did Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury campaign for?</p> <hr/> <p><b>Think:</b> Why was the Children's Employment Commission set up?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> Why did children under 18 work in mines?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What types of jobs did the children do in mines?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What types of conditions did the children work in?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What types of backgrounds do you think the children who worked in mines came from?</p>	<p><a href="https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/report-on-child-labour-1842">https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/report-on-child-labour-1842</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.victorianweb.org/history/ashley.html">http://www.victorianweb.org/history/ashley.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://spartacus-educational.com/CoalIndustry.htm#section5">https://spartacus-educational.com/CoalIndustry.htm#section5</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.ncl.ac.uk/webtemplate/library/assets/external/education-outreach-mining/">https://www.ncl.ac.uk/webtemplate/library/assets/external/education-outreach-mining/</a></p>



	<p><b>Think:</b> Do you think the children chose to go to work in the mines or do you think some may not have been given a choice?</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Create a comic strip using the words from the glossary to illustrate their definitions.</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Imagine what it might have been like for a child in the mine. Think about what they might have felt, what job they might have had to do, what they could see, smell, hear, taste and touch. Write a poem or a monologue from the perspective of a child mine worker.</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Create an interpretive piece of music to play while you perform your poem or monologue. This could be inspired by the sounds that the children may have heard in the mine.</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Perform your poem or monologue with your accompanying piece of music. You could do this in a darkened room with the group sitting under their desks with their eyes closed so that they can think about how it might have felt to be inside a mine.</p>	
<p>In 1840 Parliament set up the Children's Employment Commission. The aim of the Commission was to investigate the working conditions of children under the age of 18. The first report included the commission's findings on the state of child employment in mines, the second in other industries, and the third in factories.</p>	<p><b>See:</b> How long has George Jordan been working at Hartley Colliery?</p> <p><b>See:</b> How old was George when he began working?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What types of health issues is George described as having?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What caused Thomas Gladson to almost go blind?</p> <p><b>See:</b> How old was John Watson when he began working at Cowpen Colliery?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What types of jobs is John described as doing in the mine?</p>	<p><a href="https://www.livestrong.com/article/328220-the-average-height-and-weight-by-age/">https://www.livestrong.com/article/328220-the-average-height-and-weight-by-age/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.nursingtimes.net/clinical-archive/public-health-clinical-archive/occupational-skin-and-lung-disease-in-coalfield-communities-17-06-2019/">https://www.nursingtimes.net/clinical-archive/public-health-clinical-archive/occupational-skin-and-lung-disease-in-coalfield-communities-17-06-2019/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/benefits-sunlight#benefits">https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/benefits-sunlight#benefits</a></p>



**See:** What types of injuries has John had while working at Cowpen Colliery?

**See:** How long are John's shifts?

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**Think:** Why do you think parents let their children go to work knowing that it might harm their health?

**Think:** Were the risks to children working in coal mines different to the risks to children working in factories?

**Think:** Think about photosynthesis in plants. What happens to a plant when it is left in a dark cupboard? Think about the children working for 12 hours underground in the mine. Do you think the lack of fresh air and sunlight would have an effect on them?

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**Do:** What should the average healthy 12-year-old child be like today? Draw a figure of a typical healthy child and label/illustrate their qualities. You could think about height, weight, diet, health, access to education, amount of exercise and time spent outdoors.

**Do:** How does the average Victorian child mine worker compare to your labelled figure? Draw a figure of a Victorian child mine worker and label/illustrate their qualities. You could think about height, weight, diet, health, access to education, amount of exercise and time spent outdoors.

**Do:** What types of long-term health issues did miners suffer from? Create a health poster warning the children of these dangers. Think about the literacy levels of the children and how you would share this information with them.

**Do:** What were the short-term risks to child mine workers? Create a health poster warning the children of these dangers. Think about the

<http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/h018.htm>

	<p>literacy levels of the children had and how you would share this information with them.</p>	
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**Do:** Research the health risks of the body not getting enough sunlight. How do these health issues compare to the health issues mentioned by the child mine workers?