

William Pickard, General Steward at Denby Mine

We used trappers till lately, and they used to go and begin as early as 6 years old. They come at 8 or 9 years old to hurry. The thinnest coal bed we are working is only 10 inches. We cut the gates 26 inches high. The youngest children go there.

The corf and coal together weigh 28 stone (174 kilograms). They will have 250 yards to hurry, on average. They hurry 16 a day.

The biggest part of the gates are dry. There is some places where the water is over their shoes; but very few. It is mostly very dry considering. I don't like to see the poor little children dabble in water.

I do not think now that children's work is hard work. They have generally play enough after their work is done.

It would be possible to cut the gates higher; but it would be a great expense.

I don't know how we are to do without girls; we cannot do without them ... they are far better hurriers and more attentive to their job.

Sarah Gooder, aged 8 years

I'm a trapper in the Gawber pit. It does not tire me, but I have to trap without a light and I'm scared. I go at four and sometimes half past three in the morning, and come out at five and half past. I never go to sleep. Sometimes I sing when I've light, but not in the dark; I dare not sing then. I don't like being in the pit.

James Wood. Percy Main Colliery

I am 8 years old. I have been down the pit six weeks. I keep a door. I go away from home before 3 o'clock. I go with my brother, who keeps the chains down the pit. My mother calls me. I get home about the same time as the other boys. I am not frightened. I'm never beaten. My brother [aged 9 years] took me down at first. I have never been to any school.

Joshua Stephenson. Heaton Colliery

I am aged 8 years. I have been down the pit two years and more. I went down the pit before I was six years old. I keep a switch and a door. I get up out of bed at 3 o'clock and go down the pit at 4 o'clock a.m. The pit looses at 4, and I get up and home about 5 o'clock; then I wash myself and get my dinner, meat and potatoes. After dinner I go to bed; I never play about first. I go down the pit in the cage. I take baits [food] down with me; mostly bread and cheese, sometimes beef; always as much as I want. I cannot read at all. I never was at any school in my life, day or Sunday school. I never go to any church or chapel.