

Mining disaster: Joseph Plant aged 15 years

extracted from document: http://www.cmhrc.co.uk/cms/document/1855_59.pdf
kindly supplied by Ian Stewart

OLD PARK. Dudley, Staffordshire. 20th. June, 1856.

The accident happened at the No.20 pit which was owned by Lord Wood when eight men were ascending in a skip and a link in the chain snapped. They fell twenty two fathoms to their deaths and six were killed outright and two others soon died from their injuries. The victims were found in what was described as a 'terrible huddle, bungled together and quite dead'.

Those who died were- Stephen Crewe aged 20 years, John Crewe aged 18 years, William Crewe aged 13 years, Jesse Hawsthorn aged 18 years, Henry Fletcher aged 14 years, J. Jones aged 20 years, Henry Glaze aged 13 years and [Joseph Plant aged 15 years](#).

The inquest was held at the White Swan Inn, New Dock, Dudley before Mr. W. Robinson, Coroner when the only point in question was what had caused the chain to break. There were two kinds of chain used in the pit an ordinary round and a single link chain and a flat chain which was made of three links. The advantage of the latter was that there were three links and it lay flat on the winding drum and was less liable to slip. The part of the chain that went round the drum was flat and the part that went down the shaft was round. It was a link in the round part that broke.

Charles Hill was employed to go round the collieries belonging to Lord Ward every week to examine the chains, adjust machinery and he kept a note book. He had found nothing wrong at the colliery on his last inspection but when he was shown some of the links by Mr. Brough, the Government Inspector he agreed that they were worn. Mr. Brough went on to say that the chains were very well made and that the iron was of excellent quality but the lower part of the chain was very worn and that it was required by the Special Colliery Rules that the chain should be examined link by link.

The jury consulted for about two hours and returned a verdict of 'Accidental Death' and expressed their disapproval of the conduct of the pit manager in not having carefully examined the chain and added their recommendation that flat chains should be used instead of round chains in all mines. A spokesman for the mine owners said that round chains would be discontinued.