

HIGH LITTLETON MINING DEATHS

“... my father’s father **John CHIVERS** originally belonged to Kilmersdon but came to work as a Coal Bailiff at Heighgrove Coal Pit in High Littleton and was killed there very many years ago, leaving a widow and several children.” (*Settlement Examination of Thomas CHIVERS, 4 Oct 1844*).

John CHIVERS (died 17 April) was buried at High Littleton 18 Apr 1759. (*HL Burial Register*).

James CHIVERS, coalminer of High Littleton was killed at High Littleton (Papers with *Settlement Examinations of various members of the CHIVERS family*).

James CHIVERS was buried at High Littleton 1 Feb 1772. (*HL Burial Register*)

Heighgrove Fire

“Yesterday sennight an alarming fire happened at the coal pits at Highgrove near Timsbury, owing to the forgetfulness of a boy leaving a lighted candle against one of the timber props placed to support the roof of the pits and in a short time the pit was on fire. About forty loads of wood were supposed in the pit. On Sunday three men went down another pit, which had communications with that on fire but, the air shaft being intirely stop’t, the foul air being stagnated by the smoak, immediately suffocated them. By the greatest exertions two were drawn up, one totally dead and the other apparently so but by the assiduity of the surgeon he was brought to life but there are little hopes of his recovery. The others are totally lost. They have all left wives and children. The fire is still extending thro’ the works and it is fear’d it will communicate to other pits near it. The damage already done amounts to many thousands of pounds beside the loss of working the coals. It will be some months before the pits are able to work again.” (*Sarah Farley’s Bristol Journal 6th August 1796*).

James CARTER (41) of High Littleton and 6 others were killed at Conygre Colliery, Timsbury on 6 Feb 1895. He left a widow and 12 children (10 of whom not of an age to follow any employment). (*Western Daily Pres 9 Feb 1895*).

Coroner’s jury found that “James CARTER and six other men were killed on the night of February 6th last by an explosion caused by the firing of a shot by James CARTER in the through road. The nature of that explosion we are unable to explain. We wish to add that we consider the management to be free from blame. “ A rider was added recommending the use of roburite or one of the so called flameless explosives instead of gunpowder, on account of their greater safety.

James CARTER, High Littleton, aged 43, was buried at High Littleton 12 Feb 1895 (*HL Burial Register*).

“My uncle Thomas was killed at Tyning Coal Work in March 1796. (*Settlement Examination of Thomas CHIVERS 4 Oct 1844*).

Overseers’ Accounts for 1795/6 record the expenses of a jury on inquest on death of **Tho’s CHIVERS**.

Thomas CHIVERS was buried at High Littleton 10 March 1796. (*HL Burial Register*).

In Memory of **Charlie SAGE**, the son of Jonah & Mary SAGE of High Littleton, who departed this life December 17th 1808, aged 16 years. Dear Father and Mother for me don’t frown, Tho’ in my work I was cut down. Ordered by the Almighty. (*Inscription on memorial in the shape of a coal tub in Cameley Churchyard*).

The year 1815 saw three deaths at Mearns.

Overseers’ Accounts recorded on 1st Apr 1815 paid for laying out **James BRIMBLE**, killed at Mearns Coal Works 1/-. Bought 2 shrouds, 1 for James BRIMBLE the other for **Wm. TRAVERS [TRAVIS]**, both killed at Mearns Coal Works 9/-. Paid for 2 loaves 1/9d. 1 bit cheese 9d. 2 gallons. of beer 4/-, to bearers for carrying the 2 corps to church 6/6d. Samuel LANSDOWN, clerk, his fees for funeral of BRIMBLE and TRAVERS 10/. Mearns Coal Works subsequently reimbursed £1. 6. 6d. to the parish.

James BRIMBLE, High Littleton, aged 57, was buried at High Littleton 4 Apr 1815 (*HL Burial Register*).

William TRAVICE High Littleton, aged 16, was buried at High Littleton 4 Apr 1815. (*HL Burial Register*).

Overseers’ Accounts recorded on 12 Aug 1815 Expenses attending a coroner’s jury on body of **Tho’s BOWDITCH** killed at Mearns Coal Works. The cost was subsequently reimbursed to the parish by Mearns Coal Works.

Thomas BOWDICH (sic), High Littleton, aged 13, was buried at High Littleton 13 Aug 1815. (*HL Burial Register*).

Another fatality occurred in 1823:

Abel ROGERS, aged 14, killed at Mearns Coal Pit, was buried at Clutton 21 Dec 1823. (*Clutton Burial Register*).

[Mearns was closed by then and this probably refers to Woody Heighgrove]

Hayeswood Colliery Disaster

Awful Loss of Life at Timsbury.

"On Tuesday morning 4th February 1845 an occurrence of a most calamitous description took place at Hayeswood Mine, belonging to Messrs S.S.P. SAMBORNE and Company, in the Parish of Timsbury, about seven miles from Bath, the result of which, it is to be feared, has involved the lives of eleven individuals, who were working in the mine at the time when the lamentable accident took place.

It appears that the Hayeswood mine adjoins some works, which had been closed for many years, and have become filled with water. The night gang left their work about the usual hour in the morning and were succeeded by the day labourers, who numbered about 100, including men and boys. The overseer of the works, Mr EVANS, entered the mine about 5 o'clock and his attention was at once drawn to the unusual appearance of damp. In his opinion this appeared to be nothing more than what is, by the miners, technically termed the "bleeding of the coal", which is usually discoverable in the mineral and is often accompanied by a slight singing noise. This noise however was not heard on the present occasion, nor was the water observed in any quantity.

Having examined the spot where the supposed danger existed, Mr EVANS proceeded to another part of the mine but had not gone far before the candle which he carried was nearly blown out by a current of air, and almost immediately he met a boy running without any light, his candle having, as he said, been extinguished by a rush of air.

The danger was now clearly imminent, as the fearful information reached the various labourers. The means of escape was eagerly sought. The rush of impure air speedily extinguished most of the lights, and many men were left in darkness to grope their way to the main road, which led to the entrance of the shaft.

On their way from the several spots at which they were labouring, various consultations were held as to the best roads to reach the point of safety. And., as they paused for consideration, they found the air becoming more and more impure and in some spots it was almost suffocating.

Mr EVANS calculated that from the time he became aware of the existence of danger, to his reaching the bottom of the shaft, half an hour must have elapsed, and he was then in an almost exhausted and fainting state.

As soon as it was ascertained that all who had escaped had reached the summit of the shaft, the muster roll was called and it was found that eleven individuals were unfortunately missing and yet remained in the mine. Only the faintest hopes being entertained of their preservation in some remote part of the works, which the water might not have reached.

Some days must elapse before the works will be so far clear as to allow of any search being made for the unhappy individuals, who have thus been deprived of existence; the probability of any of them surviving in the recesses of the mine being of the faintest description.

The names of the persons missing are as under:

John FLOWER, aged about 55, having left a wife and seven children.

George PALMER, aged 43, a single man.

John CARTER, a widower with two children.

Joseph GULLICK, three children, and his wife near her confinement.

Daniel PICKFORD, a wife and two children.

William CLEAVES, a wife and six children, two of whom worked in the mine.

James EVANS, a wife and two children.

Mark BRICE, George LEWIS, John COLLINS and William WALTERS; these were lads from fourteen to sixteen years of age.

The latter of them, WALTERS, in a most praiseworthy manner, proceeded to a part of the mine called the "Little Vein", gave notice of the approach of danger and was thus the means of saving the lives of three individuals.

The most unceasing exertions have been used by the proprietors and their agents, with a view of recovering the dead bodies or of extricating the sufferers from perilous situations, should they by any remote possibility yet survive. (*Felix Farley's Bristol Journal 8th February 1845, London Times 5 Feb 1845*).

Several of the bodies were not found until the following October. (*Bath Chronicle* 28 Oct 1845 and 30 Oct 1845).

John CARTER, High Littleton, aged 40 buried at High Littleton 4 Nov 1845 (*HL Burial Register*).

Daniel PICKFORD, Farmborough, aged 25, buried at High Littleton 18 Oct 1856 (*HL Burial Register*).

William CLEAVES, High Littleton, aged 48, buried at High Littleton 7 Nov 1845 (*HL Burial Register*).

James EVANS, High Littleton, aged 43, buried at High Littleton 29 Oct 1845 (*HL Burial Register*).

Mark BRICE, Farmborough, aged 17, buried at High Littleton 29 Oct 1845 (*HL Burial Register*).

Deaths at Greyfield Colliery

George LIPPIATT, aged 10, killed Greyfield Pit, 13 Feb 1845. (*Accident Report*)

George LIPPIATT, aged 10, was buried at Clutton 13 Feb 1845. (*Clutton Burial Register*).

Enoch JAMES, a stranger, aged 6, fell down Greyfield Pit 14 Oct 1853 (*Inspector of Mines Report*).

Enoch JAMES, aged 6, fell down Grayfield Pit, was buried at Clutton 18 Oct 1853. (*Clutton Burial Register*).

Mark CLEAVES, collier, suffocated by smoke and steam 4 (?26) Sep 1866 in the upcast shaft at Greyfield Pit. His widow and 6 children received £5 from "the fund." (*Inspector of Mines Report*).

Mark CLEAVES, High Littleton, aged 35, was buried at High Littleton 2 Oct 1866 (*HL Burial Register*).

Henry DANDO, collier, aged 45, killed at Greyfield Colliery 20 Jul 1885. (*Accident Report*).

Henry DANDO, High Littleton, aged 45, was buried at High Littleton 26 Jul 1885. (*HL Burial Register*).

Ambrose PARFREE [PALFREY], a collier, aged 30. Whilst working at Greyfield Colliery, Clutton, on 10 Jul 1888 a piece of stone crushed his thumbs. He died of lockjaw after a week. (*Inspector of Mines Report*).

Samuel DIX, aged 52, killed at Greyfield Pit 20 Jan 1889. (*Accident Report*).

Samuel DIX, Mearns, aged 54, was buried at High Littleton 14 Feb 1889. (*HL Burial Register*).

Elijah BLANNING, brancher, aged 39, who failed to get away after firing a shot, was killed at Greyfield 10 Oct 1900 (*Inspector of Mines Report*).

Elijah BLANNING, Mearns, aged 39, was buried at High Littleton 13 Oct 1900. (*HL Burial Register*).

Albert TURNER, aged 40, a miner at Greyfield Colliery in Clutton was underground working on the night shift. At 4 a.m. part of the roof collapsed and buried him under several tons of coal. He was quickly extricated but died immediately afterwards. He lived at Paulton in the district of the New Pit, where he was a local preacher for the Primitive Methodist Connexion. He left a widow and six little children. (*Bristol Observer* 25 Sep 1904).

Herbert John BRICE killed in Greyfield Pit 10 June 1905 (*Inspector of Mines Report*).

Herbert John BRICE, High Littleton, killed in Greyfield Pit, aged 19, buried at High Littleton 15 June 1905. (*HL Burial Register*).