

# **M**URDER by COAL MINING in YORKSHIRE (1400-1983)

## CHILD ABUSE OR UNWITTING IGNORANCE?

COAL is a primary energy source in the world. However, the process of Coal Mining and Coal Combustion creates airborne TOXIC POLLUTION that poses a serious public health concern. In spite of this concern, many poor working-class families in VICTORIAN ENGLAND were forced to send their young children to work in the COAL MINES to earn even a subsistence wage. The Family also LIVED in close proximity to the Coal Mines that provided work, income and DEATH.

The INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION got started in Great Britain during the second half of the 18th. Century. A great many workers were needed in the burgeoning industrial factories and in the COAL MINES that provided the fuel for the factory machinery.

Our ancestors growing up in the late 1700s would have been accustomed to working to help provide for the family – often with a widowed mother and several siblings, there was no other option. Many jobs were available, although working conditions were appalling.

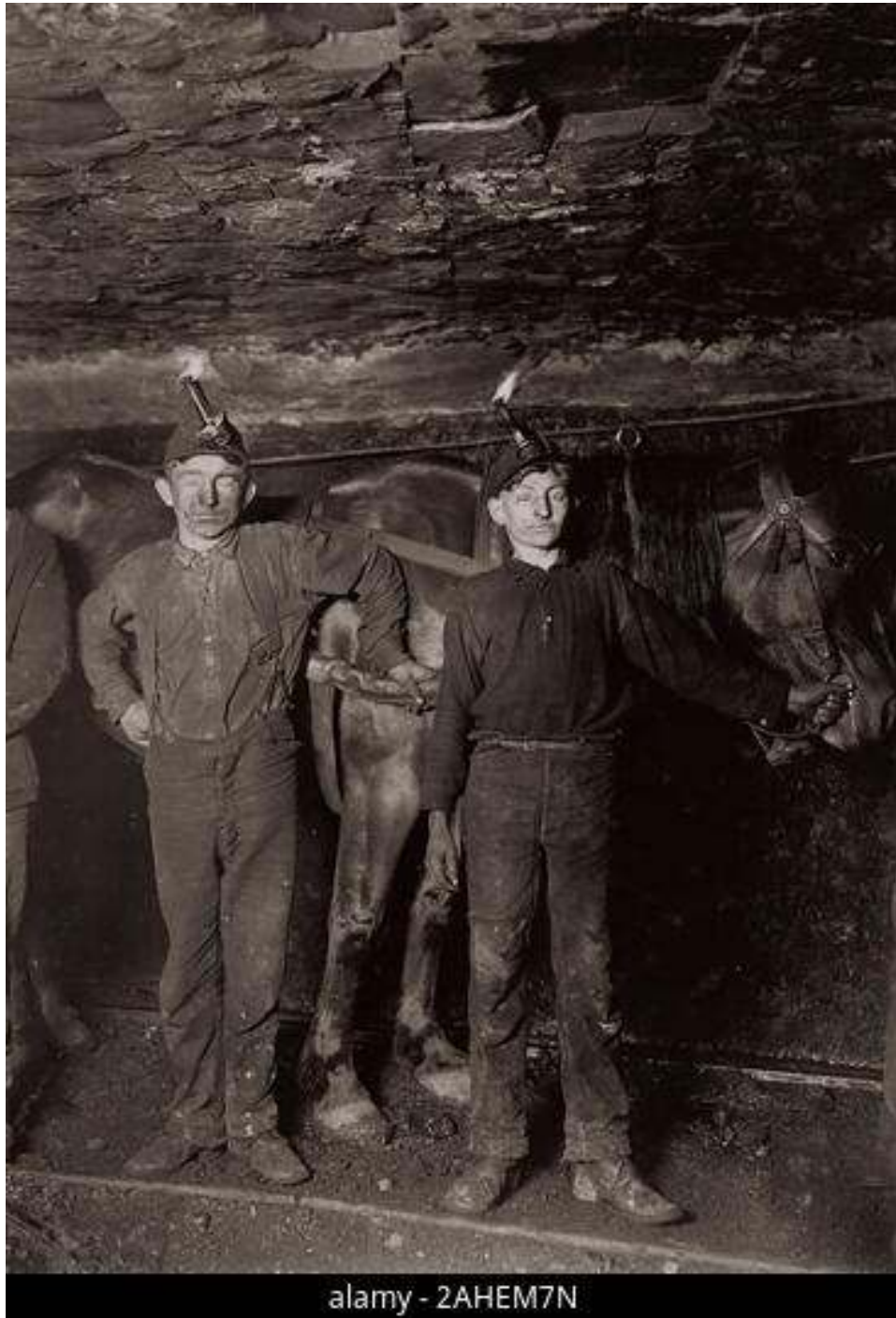
Working in a Coal Mine often meant long hours and poor conditions, which greatly affected all workers health, especially the children's health. Children as young as 6-years old could spend up to twelve hours underground, six days a week. In winter sometimes they would not see daylight from one day to the next. With only one day off a week on Sunday, they had little time to rest or play and could not go to school.

The work that children did in the Coal Mines was very dangerous and the fact that there were often few safety rules resulted in many serious injuries and deaths. Children's health was also affected by the constant damp, draughts and coal dust. Working Class people could afford only a limited diet, which mainly consisted of potatoes and bread. This resulted in malnutrition and hunger.

A TYPICAL YOUNG WORKER AT ROTHWELL COLLIERY



The heavy work can PERMANENTLY DAMAGE A GROWING CHILD'S BONES AND MUSCLES. Minerals mined are often hazardous and exposure to uranium and mercury can have profound health effects. Falling down open mine shafts, being trapped or injured by collapsing tunnels, and drowning while mining underwater are all serious threats.



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**BEATINGS** and **LONG HOURS** were common, with some child Coal Miners and Hurriers working from 4 a.m. until 5 p.m. Conditions were dangerous, with some children killed when they dozed off and fell into the path of the **CARTS**, while others died from **GAS EXPLOSIONS**. Many children developed **LUNG CANCER** and other diseases.

Although Coal Mining was hard work and dangerous, compared with other manual jobs working underground it was relatively well paid. Families would work together in a team and the amount of money they earned depended on how much coal they brought up to the surface.

The team's wages would be paid to the Collier who was 'HEWING' or CUTTING the Coal, who was often the father of the children he worked with. These wages were often essential for a family's survival.

#### **LEGISLATION.**

The Campaign against **CHILD LABOUR** culminated in two important pieces of legislation – the **FACTORY ACT (1833)** and the **MINES ACT (1842)**. The Factory Act prohibited the employment of children younger than 9-years of age and limited the hours that children between 9-years and 13-years could work.





The Lonely Trapper Boy.





**PIT PONY at ROTHWELL MINE**

## **HISTORY**

**MINING has been carried out in the Parish of ROTHWELL for over 600 YEARS.**

Before the Industrial Revolution the VILLAGE OF ROTHWELL was commercially more important than the City of LEEDS. Now Leeds is a major City of over 800,000 people and Rothwell has grown into a small town of around 21,000 inhabitants according to the 2001 England & Wales Census.

ROTHWELL was first named by the SAXONS for a rapid and copious WELL near where the Rothwell Parish Church presently stands. Soon after the Norman conquest in 1088 AD, Rothwell was given with the CASTLE OF PONTEFRACT to the Norman family, De Lacy of Calvados. They had a baronial residence here; some traces are still visible near the Church.

The majority of the working population of ROTHWELL were employed in AGRICULTURE, in the COLLIERIES, and in WOOLLEN CLOTH and HAIR SIEVE manufacturing. There were also establishments for the making of ROPE and TWINE.

The entire district abounded with COAL of EXCELLENT QUALITY and there were numerous MINES in operation in the surrounding area.

The early mines were probably BELL or BEE-HIVE PITS sunk to the coal seams very close to the surface, mere holes in the ground with no ventilation. The remains of some are in local woods. As the potential of each bell-pit became exhausted or impractical, perhaps because the roof became unsafe, the miners went on to dig another pit a few yards away.

This shallow type of mining continued until the beginning of the 1700's when pumping engines were invented. The water level could then be controlled. Before that time, the groundwater-table had determined the shaft depths.

There have been two major families in the Rothwell area responsible for over 250 deep pits. The first were the FENTONS whose mining interests started in 1632 and began to decline after the sale of ROTHWELL HAIGH PIT in 1820 to the CHARLESWORTH family.

The CHARLESWORTH FAMILY continued as owners until the British Government nationalized all COAL MINES in 1948. The Charlesworth family owned ROTHWELL COLLIERY and until 1948 the coal mine was known locally as FANNY PIT, named after one of the Charlesworth daughters. Two other pits, ROSE and JANE were also named after his daughters.

Before the days of mechanization, most of the heavy hauling was done by PIT PONIES and SHIRE HORSE. In 1922 there were 160 pit ponies stabled at Fanny Pit alone. These horses were used for hauling TUBS OF MATERIALS and TIMBER PROPS at this Colliery until 1972, when the last horse was brought up to spend his remaining days at a local farm.

ROTHWELL COLLIERY stopped producing Coal on DECEMBER 9, 1983. Over the next two years all the buildings were demolished, and the shafts capped.

## **W**ILLIAM WARD (1693-1742 AD)

WILLIAM WARD was a COAL MINER from ROTHWELL, a Township in Guiseley Parish, West Riding of Yorkshire; on the River Wharfe, 2½ miles southeast of Otley.

He was the son of RICHARD WARD (1636-1722) and ANN WARD (born MORNINGTON) (1650-1684) of Rothwell, Yorkshire.

For some 500 years, up to 1550, the PARISH of GUISELEY was historically, "WARD FAMILY TERRITORY" and the previous ancestors were typically Military men, such as Sir SIMON De La WARDE III and Captain SIMON De La WARDE IV who were dedicated to the service of the King or other Lords of the Realm.

However, in the mid-1500s AD, there had been a "religious" branch of the Family, treading in the Protestant footsteps of REVEREND JOHN M WARD, REVEREND SAMUEL WARD, REVEREND NATHANIEL WARD, RECTOR JOHN WARD and DEACON WILLIAM WARD.

Now in the 1600s and 1700s the emphasis of the life of the WARD FAMILY is on "COAL MINING" to provide income for themselves while meeting the growing needs of BRITISH INDUSTRY for steam power and electricity; the work is hard and dangerous and can result in an early death for those who work in the toxic proximity to COAL and LEAD and other CHEMICAL KILLERS (such as Cobalt, Chromium, Copper, Manganese, Zinc, Nickel, Iron, etc.)

■ On February 24, 1717, the 24-year old WILLIAM WARD (1693-1742) married 21-year old ANN Du BOIS (1696-1769) in **HOLY TRINITY CHURCH** in Rothwell, Yorkshire.



- WILLIAM WARD (1693-1742) and ANN Du BOIS (1696-1769) had 7 children (5-Sons & 2-Daughters):

1. Richard (1718-1795); born in Rothwell, Yorkshire;  
Married Ann Powell (1726-1800);
2. William (1720-1772); born in Rothwell, Yorkshire;  
Married Elizabeth Freeman on May 14, 1744;
3. Benjamin (1725-1730); born in Carlton, Yorkshire; (Died Young @ 5-Years Old)
4. Hannah (1727-1730); born in Carlton, Yorkshire; (Died @ 3-years Old)
5. David (1730-1730); born in Rothwell, Yorkshire; (Died Young >1-Year Old)
6. Benjamin (1731-1775); born in Rothwell, Yorkshire;  
Married Sarah Hall (1731-1795)
7. Jonathan (1732-1745); born in Rothwell, Yorkshire; (Died Young @ 13-years Old).
8. Sarah (1736-1810); born in Rothwell, Yorkshire;

The cause of these early deaths in the family was probably the combination of pollution from the mining operations such as TOXIC CHEMICALS, the persistent poverty which affected their food supply and the stress of the hard, dangerous life of COAL MINING.

- WILLIAM WARD died in the WORKHOUSE in ROTHWELL (or LEEDS?) in 1742 at the age of 49-years. His wife, Ann survived him by 27 years. His life was probably shortened by the pollution from his mining work...?
- ANN WARD (born Du Bois) died in Rothwell in 1769, at the age of 73-years.



**LEEDS WORKHOUSE and BOARD of GOVERNORS circa 1900**

