

The Mansfield Chronicle - Friday 29th March 1907

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Three Men Dashed to Pieces

A terrible disaster occurred at Shirebrook Colliery, very early on Tuesday morning, which was made all the more startling owing to the comparative immunity from accident enjoyed by the Shirebrook pit. Shortly before 6a.m. news of the misfortune was received in the village and hundreds of people congregated round the pit mouth.

Our representative ascertained that about 5.40 a party of day shift men, 14 in all, was descending the cage in No. 2 shaft, when one of the conductors broke, the cage being a little more than halfway down the shaft which is about 555 yards in depth. The cage was immediately unbalanced and tipped up, and the deflection was increased by the broken conductor, weighing several tons, falling upon the roof of the cage and wrapping round it. The occupants, clutched hold of the guards with which the cage was well equipped, but three of the unfortunate colliers were hurled out. They fell a distance of 200 yards, and were found, shockingly mangled and their bodies unrecognizable at the shaft bottom. The onsetter became aware that something was wrong, and at once stopped the descending cage. The sudden jerk hurled the violently one against the other, and though they were all more or less bruised, only two were badly injured. The cage remained suspended in darkness for two hours, there being some danger of the ascending one crashing into the injured one which was swinging in the shaft.

The men were rescued about 8 o'clock and Dr. Tomlin was quickly on the spot. He descended into the pit, and attended to the injured men there.

The colliers who were killed were:-

William Limb (stallman) of Warren Terrace, Shirebrook, who leaves a widow and large family. W. Phillips (day-man), a Scotchman, who only commenced work in the pit the previous day, and leaves a widow and four children. A. Burton, Shirebrook, who came from Bulwell a few weeks ago.

Injured

Richard Merriman (stallman), of Central Drive, Shirebrook, sustained a fractured thigh, and was conveyed to the hospital. Thos Widdowson, of Langwith Road, Shirebrook, after treatment for a bruised thigh, was able to proceed home. Mr. Hay, general manager of the colliery, Mr. Roberts, manager and Mr. Thornley, under manager, speedily descended to the scene of the disaster, and there was no lack of assistance. The dead and injured were conveyed to the open air by Number 1 shaft.

One of the eleven survivors who was fortunate enough to escape with shock and a bruised arm gave a matter-of-fact but graphic account of the accident. He said "We were going down the shaft about twenty to six, when the conductor gave way. The cage, which contained fourteen of us, began to swing in the shaft, and we were going at a pretty good rate. Some of our

companions were thrown out, but we could not tell who they were, as it was pitch dark. We saved ourselves by clinging to the guard. The on-setter was near where the men fell down and seeing there was something the matter he pulled the cage to a standstill.

We were about 200 yards from the bottom, and the shock knocked us all into a heap on top of one another. We could not see and dare not move and when we were gradually lowered to the bottom, one of the injured men was found with his head over the cage side. We were suspended in the shaft for two hours, and all gave ourselves up for lost. The accident is a curious one in several respects. It is very unusual for the conductors to break, and in view of the cage being well guarded it was surprising that the men could have been shot out. The three dead men were conveyed to the colliery offices for the convenience of the Coroner.

The pit resumed work on Wednesday and an inquest was fixed for Thursday morning.