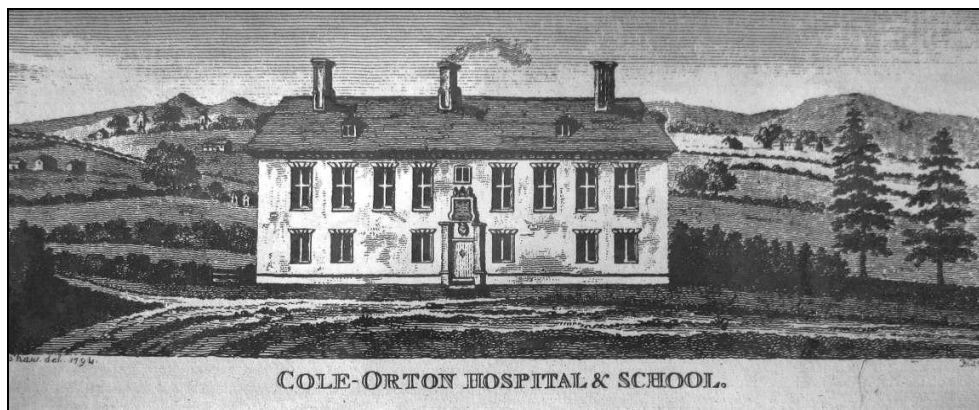
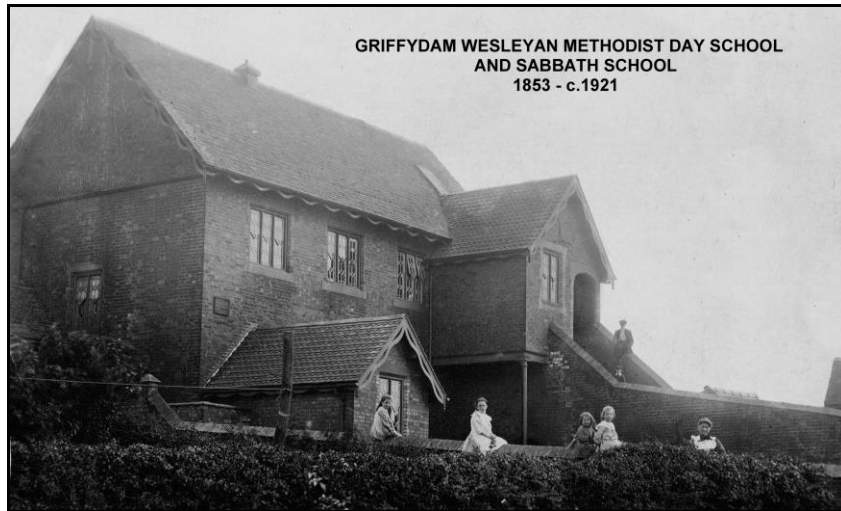


**IMPROVING THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN
THE COAL MINING DISTRICTS
1857 / 58 / 61**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2024

1857

EDUCATION IN THE MINING DISTRICTS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES. DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES.

The following 1857 report refers to district education awards made to the children of coal miners' who were in regular attendance at school at the time and who had been entered for certain examinations. Pupils who were entered from Coleorton and Griffydam would have attended the schools illustrated on the front cover and those who received prizes for successfully passing the examination are recorded later..

The following report is transcribed from the Leicester Journal dated Friday 14th August 1857:-

Several months ago an article appeared in the columns of the Journal, announcing the establishment of an association for the purpose of improving the state of education in the mining districts of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire, by offering prizes for regular attendance at school, and proficiency in the several branches of instruction which should be selected for examination. The association, which is formed on the model of others have been attended with great success in various parts of the country, owes its origin to the suggestion of H. S. Tremenhere, Esq., her Majesty's commissioner appointed to inquire into the state of the mining districts.

That gentleman having mentioned the subject to a meeting of the principal mining proprietors of the three midland counties, entered into the proposal with the greatest possible willingness, and £100 was jointly subscribed at once for the purpose of offering prizes. Other persons, on the scheme being brought under their notice, determined to patronise it, and the association now includes among its patrons and members the Dukes of Rutland and Newcastle, the Bishop of Litchfield, the Hon. G. H. Cavendish, M.P., Viscountess Palmerston, and other distinguished individuals. The committee are Messrs. Wm. Needham, the Grange, Alfreton.- George Vaughan, Snibstone colliery, and Alfred Barnes, Grass Moor Colliery, Chesterfield. Francis Wright, Esq., of Osmaston Manor, is the president.

One feature of the scheme as originally proposed was that the children who might present themselves for examination should be examined at Derby, as being the most central point of the district, and that afterwards the prizes should be delivered to the successful candidates at a public meeting at the same place.

The examination took place on Saturday, July 25th, by the Rev. J. J. Blandford, and Mr. Alderson, her Majesty's inspectors of National and British schools. Not less than 70 children presented themselves for examination, to 48 of whom prizes were adjudged. On Saturday last, the 8th instant, was the day fixed for the distribution of the prizes. The successful candidates were assembled in the magnificent school rooms attached to Trinity Church, Derby.

and a most interesting scene they presented. The ages appeared to vary from ten to fifteen or sixteen. All were clean, and tidily dressed; the countenances of many indicated the possession of a considerable amount of intelligence, and the behaviour of all was everything that could be desired.

The meeting had been announced to be public, and expectations were entertained that a large audience would have assembled, but these, from some cause or other, were disappointed, the attendance being extremely small. Among those present were the president of the association, Mr. Wright, the Rev. J. J. Blandford, Mr. Tremenhere, and several clergymen of the town. Most of the teachers of the schools which sent successful candidates were also present.

Mr. Wright, having taken the chair, said "he had been called to do so as president of the association, which met for the first time to-day, and truly happy he was being permitted to do so, being permitted to preside over a society in which he really believed so much of good to their people was involved. He could not help regretting the shortness of the numbers present, but he attributed that to the wetness of the weather, the want of knowledge of the objects of the meeting, and the distance from the districts immediately interested at which the meeting was held. The society had been established for the purpose of inducing parents in the mining district to keep their children longer at school, and to make them attend and also to hold out inducements to the children themselves to practise diligence and good behaviour while at school".

The town of Derby, not being in the mining districts, did not participate in the movement, but it had been selected for the meeting on account of its being accessible by railway. He thought perhaps however, on a future occasion they might choose some central spot within their own district; he would not say where, but it should be one of their largest schools, where they could have the attendance of the supporters of the association, and also the parents of the children, a very main part of the audience he should like to have had (hear, hear), that they might see what their children could do, and what the association was wishing to enable them to gain by their good conduct and diligence, thereby bringing them in a great degree to see the necessity of enforcing the regular attendance of their children at school. He could not help expressing his great thankfulness that they had been permitted to extend the work which had been going on in other mining districts in the midland counties.

They were principally indebted to Mr. Tremenhere and to Mr. Needham. Mr. Tremenhere would hopefully tell them the good effects which had resulted from the similar associations with South Wales. He really felt almost ashamed of his own ignorance of what had been going on; however, having been away from home till last night he had been unable to prepare himself by reading the reports. He hoped however, to have the opportunity of mentioning the subject at other meetings in the district. The great object they had in view was the improvement of the schools, and he would like just to say one word to the teachers of those schools, as well as to the children, before he gave the

prizes. Those who knew him were aware that, as far as he had been able, he had endeavoured to see the establishment of good and efficient schools, and not only good schools, but good masters and mistresses. was not only the interest of our large proprietors of mines, whether of coal or iron, to train up the young ones who were to become their labourers and assist them mainly in the carrying out of their works, but a great obligation lay upon them to do so. Children must be educated, he proceeded to observe, so as to take notice of all that passed around them, and know how to apply it to good use but it was especially important that teachers should remember the great object they should seek was that the hearts of their children might be changed. They should be brought up to have the feeling "Thou God seest me" continually present in their minds. It wasn't sufficient merely to give them a certain amount of religious knowledge, but they must "knock into them" the idea that there was one above them whom they had to look to, to whom they were to trust, and without whom they could do nothing. That was the mainspring of successful teaching he did firmly believe. They should seek to elevate the moral and religious tone of their schools, and get the children to understand that the main object for which they were put into this world was to prepare for another state. Teachers often complained they did not see much fruit in their schools, but thought they should not expect always to see the fruit of the seed they sowed. They must leave to God to bring to light the seed which they sowed in faith in the children's hearts. It might be true indeed that when they saw no fruit, it was an indication that something was wrong, and teachers should seriously consider whether they were in everything acting according to the rules of God's word when this was the case. He went on to mention a fact related by a speaker at a recent meeting at Manchester, in the town of Aberdeen, Scotland, where educational agencies had been thoroughly worked, the governor of the gaol said he had only had two committals the past year, and no juvenile offender at all. And this in a town of 70,000 inhabitants. He concluded by urging the young persons present to set a good example, and endeavour to influence those around them for good.

The Rev. J. J. Blandford then read the following report:—

" I have the honour to present a short report of the examination held on Saturday, the 25th July, at the Holy Trinity School, Derby, by Mr. Alderson, Her Majesty's Inspector of British Schools, and myself, for the purpose of examining candidates for prizes offered, by the "Iron and Coal-masters' Association", to schools for the working classes, in the counties of Derby, Leicester, and Nottingham.

The conditions of the examination were as follows:—

1. Candidates to be boys or girls (not pupil-teachers) who have attended for a period of at least two years, elementary school for the working classes, approved of by some member of the association.
2. They must be at least ten years of age.
3. They will be required to produce a certificate, from their teacher, that they have attended the day-school at least 176 days during each of the twelve months ending the first of June preceding the examination.

4. Certificates will also be required of good character, and of satisfactory progress in religious knowledge, signed by their teacher, and countersigned by their clergyman or minister.

5. All candidates will be expected to read tolerably; to write fair round hand; to spell simple words correctly from dictation; and, in arithmetic, to have fair knowledge of the first four rules, simple and compound.

Those competing for the higher prizes will be examined in decimals and the higher rules of arithmetic, and grammar and geography. School-masters and School-mistresses are reminded, that as the principal object of the Association is to improve the education of children whose parents are connected with the Collieries and Iron Works, any children whose parents belong to other occupations will be expected to answer more difficult questions than those submitted to the first named class of children. Girls will be expected to possess skill in needlework, and should bring with them the requisite materials for cutting out and making some article of clothing.

Seventy candidates presented themselves, 54 boys, and 16 girls, from 12 schools, viz., Hugglescote, Coalville, Riddings, Ripley, Ironville, Coleorton, Eastwood, Claycross, Griffydam, Ravenstone, Measham, and Wingerworth.

The average age of the candidates was 12 years, two weeks. About one-third of these were children of pitmen or colliers. The candidates were required to bring with them certificates of good conduct, of their satisfactory progress in religious knowledge, and of their regular attendance at school.

They were then examined in reading, writing from dictation, arithmetic, grammar, and geography, and the girls in sewing. Of these 70 candidates, 48 were successful, and prizes, with the concurrence of the Committee, have been awarded to the amount of £83, which is purposed to distribute in the following proportions, each prize accompanied by a printed ticket :-

	£.	s.	d.
In £3 prizes	18	0	0
In £2 prizes	48	0	0
In £1 prizes	16	0	0
in 10s. prizes	1	0	0

	83	0	0

Continued over page

The following table shows the number of candidates, from each school, and the successful candidates:-

	No. of candidates	No. of successful candidates
Hugglescote	1	1
Coalville	2	2
Riddings	6	6
Ripley	5	4
Ironville	16	9
Coleorton	3	2
Eastwood	17	10
Claycross	7	4
Griffydam	5	3
Ravenstone	1	1
Measham	3	3
Wingerworth	4	3
	----	---
	70	48

I have to observe, in conclusion, that their conduct during the examination was orderly and good in every respect. No attempts were made, as far as we had opportunity of observing, at either giving or receiving assistance. Whatever was done was done fairly and honestly by each candidate, without any assistance from his neighbour.

The Chairman said he was sure the meeting would join with him in giving very hearty thanks to Mr. Tremenhere for bringing the subject before them. He wished to give him his sincere thanks, and he hoped the association would grow into something much larger and more influential.

Mr. Tremenhere said he really felt he was bound to return his most sincere thanks for the very kind manner in which the chairman had mentioned his name, and the still kinder manner in which it had been received. It was with very great gratification he had heard of the results of this first meeting of the association, both regarding the number of candidates, and the kind of examination they had passed through, as well as the manner in which they had conducted themselves. He thought himself justified in inferring that future year 3 would show results still more satisfactory to the members of the association, and if possible still more creditable to the children. He also felt bound to return his grateful thanks to the employers of labour and owners of mineral property who had so kindly seconded the proposition he ventured to bring before them a short time ago. He trusted each of their several districts would reap the benefit of diffusing sound education among their people. Coming among them as a stranger as he did, it might not once be apparent why he had taken so leading a part in the formation of an association of this kind and he thought it was right he should briefly refer to the causes why he had done so. It was probably known to all the gentlemen connected with the mining part of these three counties that he was officially connected with that district; but the public in general, to whose support he thought they might fairly look to in future years, might not be equally aware of the nature of his duties.

They dated, regarded these districts, from nearly twenty years ago. In 1839 he was called upon by the government to make inquiry into the causes of the great outbreak South Wales. A few years afterwards, in 1843, the government did him the honour of asking him to put into execution, an act of parliament passed for the benefit of the mining population, and also to make annual reports on the state of that population with view to their general improvement. It was apparent at that time that the condition of the mining districts was very unsatisfactory. There had been very serious combinations through the whole of them, to fetter labour, impede the operation of capital, and dictate to employers. It was thought by the government of the time there must be various and serious causes for such movement pervading so large a body of people, and that some useful results would follow if these causes were thoroughly investigated. Some causes were doubtless political, but in the course of the legislation over the last few years, those had been done away with. The social causes, arising from the relations between the workpeople and their employers, had been his business to investigate. It was clear that there were many causes for the uneasiness which prevailed throughout all these districts. The condition of the people had been very much overlooked, physically, as had the degree of comfort in which they lived, and their relations to their masters, but principally regarding to their education. He had endeavoured, as far as he could, to get to the bottom of these causes, and to represent them temperately to the masters, telling that he had a very responsible duty to perform to the labouring classes, but endeavouring so to perform it as not to produce impression on the masters that the investigation was conducted in a hostile spirit towards them. The employers, both individuals and companies, listened very kindly to what he had to say, and set about correcting the evils he had pointed out them, and a great deal had been done in the way of improved buildings, establishing better relations, and providing means of education. The results of these endeavours were to a great extent satisfactory. He thought he was safe in saying that throughout the mining districts of the country the children had not a mile to go before they could reach a good school. Schools had been built, and excellent masters and mistresses provided, when an unexpected phenomenon presented itself. It had been thought all that was necessary was to build good schools, and provide good masters and mistresses. Formerly, children remained at school till they were 13 or 14 years of age, and it was argued that if the schools were improved they would remain quite as long, and would carry away a vast deal more. It very soon however became apparent, that experience by no means came up to the theory. He had been very much struck with that in South Staffordshire, it was obvious that as the schools improved, the children learned in a very short time all that their parents required, they were in consequence removed the earlier. It was then suggested to the proprietors to offer prizes to groups of schools to be competed for by the whole of the children in those schools, the funds being provided by a general association for that purpose, and the prizes should be distributed at a public meeting, thus showing to parents teachers and children the real interest the employers took in this matter. After two or three years experience, the experiment was entirely successful.

The Rev. J. P. Norriss, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools for the district, was permitted to carry out the details of the plan, and he threw himself into it with so much zeal and intelligence, that he soon induced the employers of North Staffordshire, Shropshire, and the district of Staffordshire west of Dudley to form associations. All these associations were liberally supported by the owners of mineral property of all classes. After the success of the Staffordshire and Shropshire associations was established, he (the speaker) had less difficulty in causing others to be found elsewhere, and accordingly there were now similar associations in Northumberland and Durham, three for the mining districts of South Wales, and two for the mining portion of Yorkshire, all liberally supported by the employers and by the owners of mineral property.

Mr. Norris had stated in his last report:- To sum up the report, I may say very confidently, that thus far, the system of prizes now in its fifth year of trial, has been a successful experiment. It encouraging the teachers awakening a more general interest their work, and inducing a large number of parents to care more than heretofore about their children's schooling. For the children, it has done much more; it has retained many of them for a longer period under the wholesome discipline of school, and has stimulated their industry, it has given them a new pleasure, the pleasure of generous emulation, and it has taught them that life is a career in which honest and self reliant exertion is sure to bring success, and to win for them the respect of their fellow-men. He thought that this statement was quite sufficient to afford considerable encouragement to what they had undertaken in this district. Originally, it was intended that the children belonging to national schools should be formed into one group, and those belonging to British schools into another, prizes being offered to each by the persons who were the principal supporters of each class schools. Happily it had been found possible to unite both bodies, the subscriptions being contributed to a general fund, and the examinations conducted under the presidency, and by the aid of Her Majesty's Inspectors of National and British schools That took place in Staffordshire, but there was no religious examinations connected with it. It had been thought so difficult a matter that it had been omitted, and the best substitute was adopted, of making a condition that a child should not be allowed to compete unless his conduct at school was good and his progress in religious knowledge satisfactory. That certificate was to be signed by the master the school, and the clergyman or minister of the denomination to which he belonged. He was happy to say that great steps in advance of this had been made in the South Wales associations. At the suggestion of the **Rev. H. W Bellairs, and Mr. Bonstead**, Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools, they had proposed to the members of the association that a separate fund should be formed for the purpose of offering prizes for examination in religious knowledge, and that the questions should be set by the inspectors of National and British schools, and that those questions should consist partly of general questions from the Bible and partly from the catechism, and other doctrinal books of the Church and that the children should be invited to answer them if they chose. In the three associations of South Wales, these examinations were attended by nearly all the children; at Cardiff, by the whole. He here read the following extract from a report presented to the Cardiff meeting :- "One word upon a subject forming an

integral, and I think an inseparable part of all useful education, Religion". To avoid the difficulty of dealing with a subject upon which, on most matters of importance, people entertain different opinions, it was originally intended not to examine on subjects connected with religion but to take certificate from those who were responsible for the religious education of the children. Afterwards however, it was thought desirable to let such as wished it be examined in the Scriptures, or if they further wished in the formularies of the Church, the examination being an entirely voluntary one on their part, and the prizes given out of a fund quite distinct from the general funds of the association. At Cardiff, I am happy to say, every single child volunteered to be examined, and every child was accordingly examined in the Scriptures, and such as desired it in the Church Catechism and the Apostles' Creed. I was myself present at the examination, as was Mr. Bond, one of the Wesleyan ministers of this town, and I am sure he will bear me out in asserting that nothing could be fairer than this examination, such indeed as was to be expected from the high character of the examiners. He hoped that in future years, not only this association but others which would be formed, would be able to engraft this most important feature on their previous schemes. He had the greater hope that this would be the case, because, there was one thing more than another distinctly shown in the course of the years he had been officially connected with the mining districts, was that there had been a great increase in the sense of responsibility discoverable in the minds of the masters, not only with regard to providing intellectual instruction for the people, but also religious and moral guidance. The liberality shown in many districts building churches and supporting clergymen, and the care taken of religious instruction schools, proved that was only necessary that the plan should be brought before them and shown to be possible, with the valuable aid of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools. In order that they should adopt it, he said the valuable aid of Her Majesty's inspectors was necessary because nothing but the certainty of perfect fairness would conciliate persons of different opinions and allay jealousies on a topic upon which all persons were so sensitive. He therefore hoped the committee of council on education would continue to afford the valuable assistance of the inspectors conducting the details of these examinations. With regard to the prizes that day distributed, he hoped all the children who had been successful would bear in mind that through the kindness of their employers, a prize was offered to them in future years when they should have gone to work, which he hoped would be an inducement to them to keep up the small amount of knowledge they had gained through the day school, for the amount of knowledge that could be thus acquired was but small, and unless they made great effort, attending evening schools, or by study at home, they would soon forget what they had learned. He was glad to see so many girls present, and would urge upon the managers of female schools that they should endeavour to engraft something of an industrial training upon their schools, by which the elder girls might learn to keep a house clean, to cook with economy and every thing calculated to make home decent, comfortable, and respectable. He thought much of the slow progress made in education was to be attributed to the neglect of this, and until more attention was paid to it they would be like rowers rowing against the stream.

The prizes were then distributed by the President. Each candidate received along with the money, a beautifully ruminated card, bearing the following inscription :-

"Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire Association for awarding annual prizes to the elementary schools of the working classes. A prize of £--- ----- was this day adjudged by the Rev. J. J. Blandford, Her Majesty's Inspector Schools, for an examination in ——, his religious instruction, general conduct, and school attendance having been certified to be satisfactory. Signed, Francis Weight, Chairman. Dated this 8th day of August, 1857."

Local prize winners only

Coalville	William Elliott	£1
Coalville	Ann Wyatt	10s.
Hugglescote	Richard Tookey	£3
Coleorton	Joseph Lakin	£1
Coleorton	Henry Lakin	£1
Ravenstone	George Green	£1
Griffydam	John Harriss	£2
Griffydam	Joseph Pickard	£3
Griffydam	William Johnston	£2
Measham	Benjamin Priestland	£3
Measham	William Godfrey	£2
Measham	John Cooper	£1

The President was obliged to leave before the proceedings terminated, and Mr. Tremenhere and the Rev J J Blandford severally addressed the children, and the meeting was brought to a close.

None of the above Coleorton and Griffydam prize winners appear in the 1851 or 1861 censuses suggesting they lived elsewhere in the locality but attended these schools.

1858

EDUCATION IN THE MINING DISTRICTS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES. DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES.

The following 1858 report refers to district education awards made to the children of coal miners' who were in regular attendance at school at the time and who had been entered for certain examinations. Pupils who were entered from Coleorton and Griffydam would have attended the schools illustrated on the front cover and those who received prizes for successfully passing the examination are recorded later.

The report is part transcribed only from the Leicester Journal dated July 23rd 1858, as much of the information in this report is repeated from the 1857 preceding report:-

The second annual distribution of prizes to the successful candidates taught in the schools in this association, being the children only of miners or persons employed in connection with mines, took place last Saturday in the Trinity Church school room, Derby considerably lent by the Rev. E. M. Wade for that purpose.....Sixty six candidates (41 boys, 22 girls) presented themselves from the under mentioned schools:-

	Boys	Girls
Riddings	4	2
Ironville	11	11
Ilkeston	1	2
Coalville and Snibstone	1	1
Coleorton	2	
Claycross	6	8
Ravenstone	4	
Griffydam	1	
Eastwood	11	1
Total	41	25

.....the new regulations restricts that all candidates must be the children of parents being actually coal miners or workmen employed about such mines: the children, therefore, of farmers, tradesmen, artisans, and labourers not connected with the above mentioned works, were excluded from competing for the prizes. The average age of the boys was 11 years 6 months : that of the girls 12 years 1 month.

Their conduct during the whole of the examination was highly satisfactory, no attempts were made at copying, all were very neatly dressed, and their behaviour everything that could be desired. The appearance presented by the children was that of a number of candidates for pupil teacherships. Of these 66 candidates, 20 had obtained a prize in 1857.

They were examined in reading, writing from dictation, and in simple and compound rules: the girls were examined in needlework: those who competed for the higher prizes were expected to work sums in the higher rules of arithmetic, in grammar and in geography.

The prizes were distributed in the following proportions:-

Riddings	£8
Ironville	£25
Ilkeston	£1
Coalville	£1
Snibstone	£1
Coleorton	£1 10s.
Claycross	£13
Ravenstone	£1
Griffydam	£1
Eastwood	£16

.....**With the exception of Coleorton**, all the schools who have furnished candidates are under inspection, and have been for some time; we are therefore acquainted with their condition.....The successful candidates were then called up, and money prizes given to them, amounting in the aggregate of £75, together with a beautiful card (which no doubt will adorn many cottage home, and be pointed at with a feeling of pleasure and pride), signed by the Chairman. Thirteen smaller cards, certificates of merit, were also given out, the Chairman, in presenting them, saying he hoped they would be a prelude to success next year. The prizes were distributed as follows:-

Local Children Only

Coalville	Martha Massey	£1
Coleorton	Robert Lakin	£1
Coleorton	George Bacon	£1
Ravenstone	George Green	£1
Ravenstone	W. H. L. Lakin	£1
Griffydam	Abner Webster	£1

None of the Coleorton or Griffydam prize winners are recorded in the 1851 or 1861 censuses, suggesting they came from elsewhere in the locality but attended these schools.

1861

EDUCATION IN THE MINING DISTRICTS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES. DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES.

THE SCHOOLS OF THE MINING DISTRICT (A SYNOPSIS ONLY)

Transcribed from the Leicester Journal - Friday 12th July 1861:-

The annual gathering of schools of the mining districts of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, was held on Saturday last, in the Director's room at the Midland Railway Station, Derby. Francis Wright of Osbaston Manor, the president of the association, occupied the chair, and presented the annual prizes to the successful candidates, the examination having been conducted on the 22nd of June by the Rev. T. T. Blandford, one of her Majesty's inspectors of schools, in the Holy Trinity School at Derby. The business commenced at half-past one o'clock, when prayer was offered up. After some further advice to the children, the chairman called upon the **Rev. T. T. Blandford** to state the results of his examination.

The Rev. gentleman stated that the number of candidates who presented themselves was 129 - 82 boys and 47 girls - a considerable increase over that of the previous year. The average age was 12 years, whilst on the last occasion their ages averaged 11 and a half years. Seventeen schools were represented and the number who obtained prizes was 96, of whom 60 were boys and 36 were girls. The prizes to be distributed amounted to £112, namely:-

Local schools only

Coalville and Snibstone	7 pupils entered
Coleorton	4
Griffydam	2
Ravenstone	1
Whitwick	2

He was happy to report a general improvement in the education of the children.

The president then awarded, the following prizes, each successful candidate having his prize with a certificate of merit signed by the chairman.

Continued over page

Coalville and Snibston	John Howard	£1
	Joseph Hodgetts	£1
	James Patterson	£1
	Willis Rodway	£1
	Mary Ludlow	£1
Coleorton	George Bacon	£1
	Elizabeth Beresford	£1
	Hannah Lakin	£1
Griffydam	Robert Lakin	£2
	William Webster	£1
Ravenstone	John Wardle	£1
Whitwick	Thomas Beriston	£1
	Catherine Burton	£1

Votes of thanks having been awarded to the Inspector, and the Chairman, the meeting terminated.

The children then proceeded into the Arboretum, accompanied by their teachers, and returned to the station at half-past three o'clock to partake of tea.

None of the Coleorton or Griffydam prize winners are recorded in the 1861 census suggesting they came from elsewhere in the locality but attended these schools.

NOTE

This appeared to be the last year pupils were entered from Griffydam and Coleorton schools.