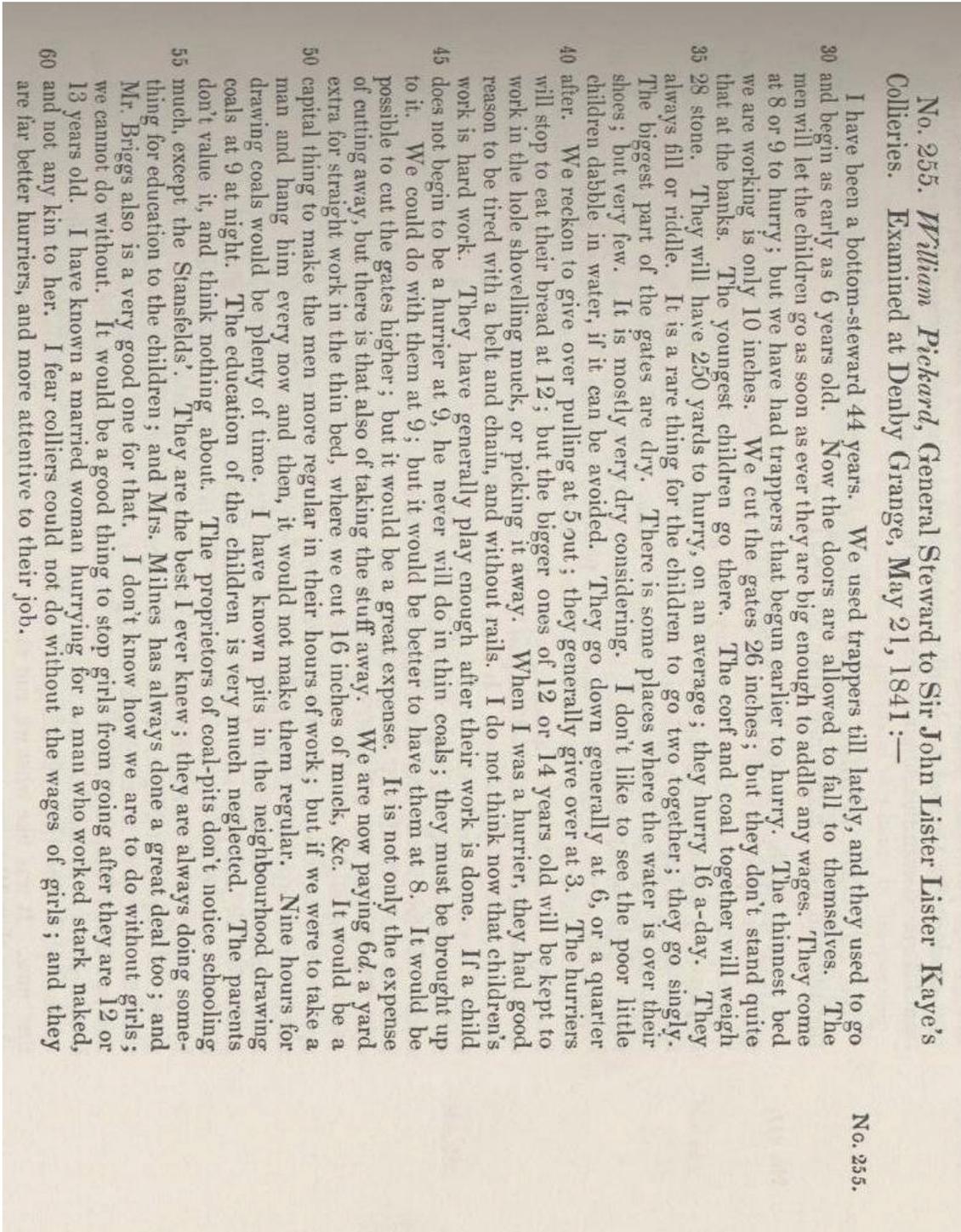


# Coal Mining and the Victorians

## Using Evidence: Example of a Quote



This extract has been taken from the report to the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children: Mines 1842 Volume 7, p289. William Pickard was interviewed by sub commissioner J.C. Symons.

## Transcript

No. 255. *William Pickard*, General Steward to Sir John Lister Kaye's Collieries.  
Examined at Denby Grange, May 21, 1841 :-

I have been a bottom-steward 44 years. We used trappers till lately, and they used to go and begin as early as 6 years old. Now the doors are allowed to fall themselves. The men will let the children go as soon as ever they are big enough to addle any wages. They come at 8 or 9 to hurry; but we have had trappers that begun earlier to hurry. The thinnest bed we are working is only 10 inches. We cut the gates 26 inches; but they don't stand quite that at the banks. The youngest children go there. The corf and coal together will weigh 28 stone. They will have 250 yards to hurry, on an average; they hurry 16 a-day. They always fill or riddle. It is a rare thing for the children to go two together; they go singly. The biggest part of the gates are dry. There is some places where the water is over their shoes; but very few. It is mostly very dry considering. I don't like to see the poor little children dabble in water, if it can be avoided. They go down generally at 6, or a quarter after. We reckon to give over pulling at 5 out; they generally give over at 3. The hurriers will stop to eat their bread at 12; but the bigger ones of 12 or 14 years old will be kept to work in the hole shovelling muck, or picking it away. When I was a hurrier, they had good reason to be tired with a belt and chain, and without rails. I do not think now that children's work is hard work. They have generally play enough after their work is done. If a child does not begin to be a hurrier at 9, he never will in thin coals; they must be brought up to it. We could do with them at 9; but it would be better to have them at 8. It would be possible to cut the gates higher; but it would be great expense. It is not only the expense of cutting away, but there is that also of taking the stuff away. We are now paying 6d a yard extra for straight work in the thin bed, where we cut 16 inches of much &c. It would be a capital thing to make the men more regular in their hours of work; but if we were to take a man and hang him every now and then, it would not make them regular. Nine hours for drawing coals would be plenty of time. I have known pits in the neighbourhood drawing coals at 9 at night. The education of the children is very much neglected. The parents don't value it, and think nothing about. The proprietors of coal-pits don't notice schooling much, except the Stanfelds'. They are the best I ever knew; they are always doing something for education to the children; and Mrs. Milnes has always done a great deal too; and Mr. Briggs is a very good one for that. I don't know how we are to do without girls; we cannot do without. It would be a good thing to stop girls from going after they are 12 or 13 years old. I have known a married woman hurrying for a man who worked stark naked, and not any kin to her. I fear colliers could not do without the wages of girls; and they are far better hurriers, and more attentive to their job.

### Questions

1. What jobs did children do?
2. What did they have for lunch?
3. What were the conditions like in this pit?
4. What were William Pickard's views on:
  - a. The ages of children working
  - b. The hours they worked
  - c. Girls working
  - d. Miners
5. Did the children have much education?

### Extension questions

6. Why was William Pickard being interviewed? Why did the pit employ young children?
7. Do you think that the information recorded is correct and accurate?