

Leicester Chronicle 16th September 1854

ADJOURNED INQUEST ON JOHN GILBERT

The adjourned inquest to enquire into the cause of the death of John Gilbert was re-opened at the Robin Hood Inn, Swannington, on Friday, the 9th September.

Mr T. Holdsworth, manager of the colliery at that place, produced a copy of the letter of notice sent to the Secretary of State's Office, dated the 6th of September, of the death of the deceased, and also an acknowledgment of the receipt thereof, dated the 7th instant.

Henry Shaw, a deputy-overlooker of the colliery, deposed at that the deceased was a miner employed at the Swannington pit. On the 18th of August, the deceased was employed in "heading," or forming a road as an air-course in the pit, for ventilation. He had bored under some coal that had to be removed, and introduced a quantity of gunpowder into the cavity, to which a train was laid, rolled up in paper, called a "German," to the outer end of which the wick end of a new candle is stuck obliquely, and lighted. It then burns slowly, till the fire comes in contact with the powder, which explodes, and the blast then takes place. Having made the necessary preparations, the deceased lighted the match or candle, and retired a few yards to be out of danger. The shot not going off so soon as he expected, he walked towards the place, but was warned by witness, and a fellow-workman named James Moulton, to give more time. Neglecting these cautions, he went up to the charge, and pulled the end he had lighted, when the explosion instantly took place. Deceased was blown several yards, and lay on the ground in a state of insensibility. He was quickly carried to the bottom of the shaft, drawn up, and conveyed to his own house.

Mr R. Orton, surgeon, stated that he was called in to attend the deceased ; found him much disfigured, cut, and burnt about the head and neck with the powder, one collarbone fractured, the arm and knee on that side much injured, the scalp severely lacerated, and the eyes swollen and livid. He, however, went on favourably till the Thursday before his death, when an unfavourable change took place. Inflammation of the membrane covering of the brain supervened. On Monday the deceased gradually sunk, and died on Thursday.

Mr Michael Parker, ground bailiff of the pit, produced a ground plan of that part of the roading near which the accident took place, for the inspection of the jury.

After a short recapitulation of the evidence by the coroner, the jury returned a verdict to the following effect .— " That the deceased, John Gilbert, was injured by an explosion of gunpowder, on the 18th of August, in the colliery at Swannington, he having incautiously approached the place, although warned of the danger of so doing, through which the deceased, by misfortune, did receive the mortal injury of which he died, on the 5th of September as aforesaid, and that no blame attaches to the owners or managers of the said colliery, or any other person, but the deceased himself, touching the aforesaid fatal accident which occasioned his death."