



Durham Mining Disasters: c1700-1950s

Maureen Anderson, Kevin Keegan

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It is now over half a century since the last coalmining disaster to affect the lives and families of people living and working on what became known as the Great Northern Coalfield. This was the first area of Britain where mining developed on a large scale but at tremendous human cost. Mining was always a dangerous occupation, especially during the nineteenth century and in the years before nationalization in 1947. Safety was often secondary to profit. It was the disasters emanating from explosions of gas that caused the greatest loss of life, decimating local communities. In tight-knit mining settlements virtually every household might be affected by injury or loss of life, leaving widows and children with little or no means of support. At Haswell in 1844 95 men and boys perished; 164 died at Seaham in 1880 and 168 at West Stanley in 1909. This volume provides us with an account of these and all the other pit disasters in County Durham from the 1700s to the 1950s

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