

No. 309. George Bentley.

Is eight years old. Has worked a year; drives between; has 1s. per day. He lives at South Normanton, and has a mile and a half to walk to the pit. He breakfasts before he leaves home. Goes down at half-past six to eight, one hour dinner; three-quarter days half-past six to seven; half days half-past six to half-past three or four, no dinner-hour allowed. He never works by night or Sunday. Has bread and fat for breakfast, bread, potatoes, and sometimes bacon for dinner, and bread and milk at night. He goes to the Ranters' Sunday-school at Normanton, learns a b, ab.

This boy appears half-starved: he, as well as three others, are B B. I visited their homes: it and the boys were the most wretched I witnessed.

George Bentley was an 8-year-old child who worked long, hard hours in a British coal mine. In addition to his workday, George walked 1.5 miles, each way, to the pit.

Before starting work, George would eat breakfast which usually consisted of "bread and fat." His lunches (referred to as "dinner") included "bread, potatoes, and sometimes bacon." For supper, he'd get bread and milk.

The child was "half-starved," according to the child-labor investigator. In addition, George (and his home) were among "the most wretched I witnessed."

This text, from the UK National Archives, is an excerpt from an 1842 investigation into the plight of child miners. [Anthony Ashley-Cooper](#) (then known as Lord Ashley, later known as the Earl of Shaftesbury) was a leader of this investigation.

Investigation reports, such as this, helped Britain's Parliament to determine that changes had to be made. Among other things:

- No women and girls were thereafter allowed to work in mines.
- No boys under the age of ten were allowed to work in mines.
- No male child miners were allowed to keep working 14-16 hours a day. Their hours were reduced to ... 10 hours ... per day.

Visit the [UK National Archives](#) for more information on these, and related, topics.

Credits:

Excerpt from 1842 investigation into the conditions of child labor headed by Anthony Ashley-Cooper.

PD

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/George-Bentley-8-Year-Old-Miner1>

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Media Stream

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George Bentley - 8-Year-Old Miner

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