

## Book Review

### **Most Splendid of Men Life in a Mining Community 1917-25**

Harold Brown Blanford Press 1981

Most Splendid of Men is the autobiographical account of Harold Brown's life as a coal miner in North Staffordshire England in the period following World War I. He presents a detailed account of the mining process and the conditions in the English coal mines in the period 1917-25. These are vivid descriptions of his feelings about the people living and working about him.

Harold Brown was forced to quit school at age 14 and follow his father and brothers into the Silverdale Colliery to help support the large family into which he had been born. In some respects he was initially luckier than some others in that many boys went to work in the mines or local industry earlier than age 14.

During his eight years in the mine, Harold worked every underground job in the mine held by older men. His father was a minor official (shift supervisor) and expected more of his son than of anyone else. He was expected to perform jobs that older men hold, such as "ripper" and "hooker-up". Harold advanced to engineman by 1925, considered an excellent position in the mine, but always longed to leave the mine and continue his education.

During his tenure as a miner, Harold is witness to all the hazards faced by miners - fires, roof falls, runaway coal cars, firedamp. He describes what it is like to work from the light of a single Davy lamp, the back breaking, muscle straining effort needed daily to perform the physical labor of mining.

This book is a fascinating, superbly detailed look at the miner's life written by a man who actually lived it. You'll need to read the book to find out how Harold is able to get out of the mine and actually continue his education, eventually becoming a teacher.

Dave Johnson

## Patented Check Tag Holder

In the last Eureka, I described the Weaver and Hough patent for the miner's oil wick shield. I have identified another mining related patent by the same Leslie F. Weaver. On October 5, 1909, he received Patent No. 936,201 for a check holder for miners. The patent states that: "this invention relates to check holders [for] miners" (see opposite page).

The patent describes three objectives of Weaver's inventions. First, "to provide a novel holder for retaining checks, whereby the same cannot become accidentally lost." Second, "to indicate what checks are being used and consequently the number of men or women at work." Third, to "provide a simple and effective check holder that can be observed at a distance and used as a time board by a timekeeper, the holder indicating when certain checks are in or out."

In his patent, Weaver states that "it is the present practice to provide each miner upon entering a mine with an identification check containing the name of a miner and a number, and when the check is presented to the miner the time is recorded, and upon the miner leaving the mine the check is handed in and the time again recorded. Considerable trouble is experienced in connection with this system on account of certain defects, for instance, the checks becoming mixed, also on account of it being necessary for miners to appear and have their checks handed to them."

Weaver stated: "The lowered position of the disk indicates that the miner is within the mine, and the disk in an elevated position indicates that the miner is out of the mine or has ceased work, the replacing of the disk upon the pin having been recorded by the checker or timekeeper. It will be observed from the novel construction of the check holder, that it is possible for a checker or timekeeper to immediately determine just what workmen have been negligent in not obtaining checks when starting to work and replacing the checks when leaving work."

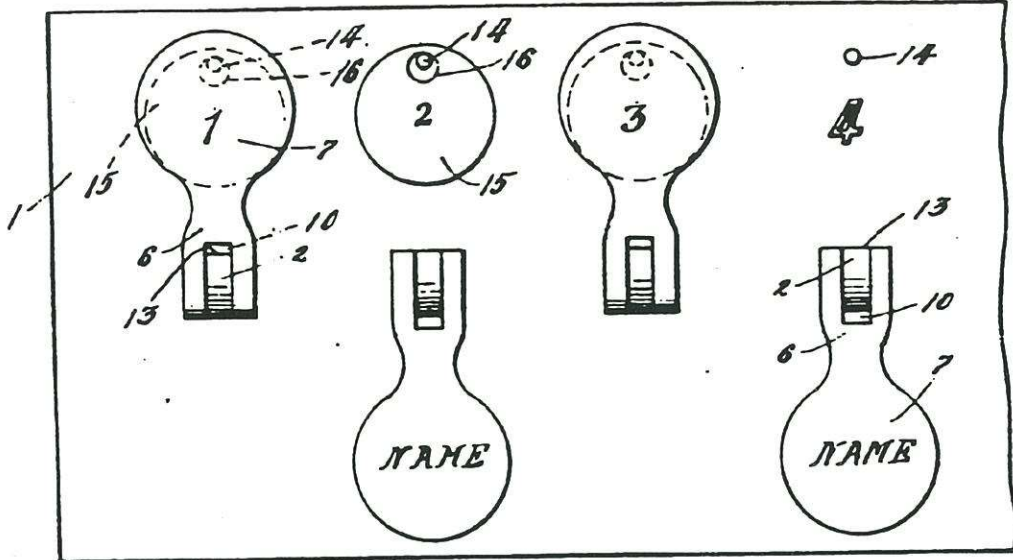
Dave Johnson

L. F. WEAVER.  
 CHECK HOLDER FOR MINES.  
 APPLICATION FILED APR. 27, 1909.

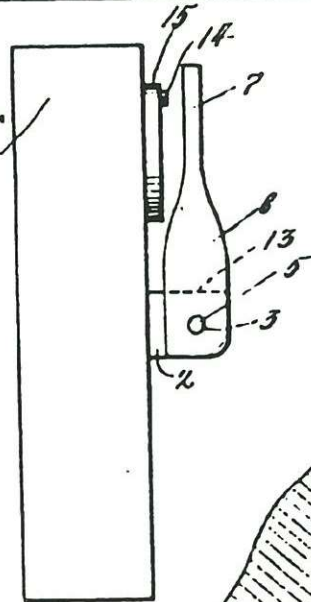
936,201.

Patented Oct. 5, 1909.

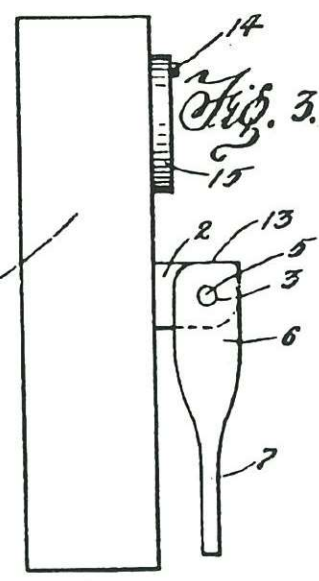
*Fig. 1.*



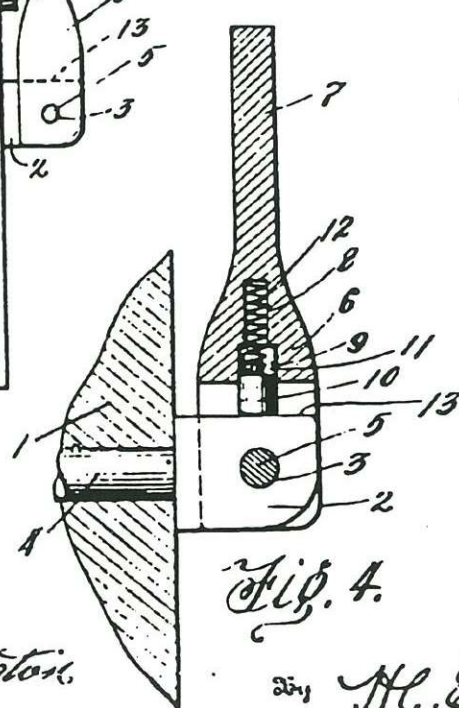
*Fig. 2.*



*Fig. 3.*



*Fig. 4.*



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Witnesses  
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