

# History: KS2

## Histories in the Headstones



**Edwin Walter Dukes: Died 18<sup>th</sup> March 1929 aged 25**  
**Joseph Chance: Died 18<sup>th</sup> March 1929 aged 66**

On 18<sup>th</sup> March 1929 a disaster struck the area. The Golden Orchard Colliery at Coombs Wood was one of many coal mines in the Black Country, but on this fateful day an awful tragedy hit the area and took many lives. Eight miners lost their lives – two of them being Lye men: Edwin Dukes who lived in Bromley Street and Joseph Chance of Brook Street.

The Golden Orchard Colliery, belonging to Messrs Hingley & Sons of Old Hill was thought of as one of the safest pits in the country. The men went down the pit at 7.30am as usual but on the bottom found a canvas sheet had set fire. The timber to which the sheet was attached then caught light and the men were trapped. The men were not overly concerned at this point as thought other workers would help them. One worker Jabez Edwards of Old Hill did not agree and managed to make his escape. He thought the men would be rescued eventually.

Some time passed before the fire was discovered and the alarm raised. Men tried to put out the fire from above ground but the pit was 800 feet deep and the fire 300 yards away from the pit bottom. The Fire Brigade arrived at mid-day and a rescue was attempted. Everyone thought the men would be found safe and well but this was not the case. On descending, all men were found to have died, either from smoke inhalation or carbon monoxide fumes.

Walter (Edwin) and Joseph were related by marriage and found close to each other in the pit. Their funerals were held on the same day with over 3000 people attending.

### Research Questions:

1. **How many coal mines were in The Black Country in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century?**

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2. **Which coal mine is most local to Lye?**

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3. **Read the notes above and the extracts from the County Express. Write an account of the accident at Golden Orchard Colliery.**