A Good Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal in Silver to Mr. A.H. Stokes, H.M. Inspector of Mines, for Gallantry in Rescuing a Miner Who Had Been Imprisoned for Five Days and Nights, Without Food, in the Black Engine Mine, Eyam, July 1879; He Was Subsequently Awarded an Albert Medal in Gold For the Baddesley Colliery Disaster, 22.5.1882, Becoming the Only Living Person to Hold the Two Highest Awards For Saving Life:

Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal, 1st type, silver (Arthur H. Stokes, 1879), extremely fine, with original riband, in Wyon, London, fitted case of issue, together with a photographic image of the recipient

£1,800-2,200

A.M. London Gazette 12.1.1883 Mr. Arthur Henry Stokes, Inspector of Mines (in a joint citation with Mr. Reuben Smallman, Mining Engineer; Charles Day, Collier; and Charles Chetwynd, Collier [all awarded the Albert Medal for Land First Class], and Mr. Samuel Spruce, Mining Engineer; Mr. Frederick Samuel Marsh, Certified Colliery Manager; Mr. Thomas Harry Mottram, Certified Colliery Manager; William Morris, Collier; William Pickering, Collier; and Joseph Chetwynd, Collier [all awarded the Albert Medal for Land Second Class]).

‘For conspicuous gallantry displayed on the occasion of the Fire and Explosion at the Baddesley Colliery in May last.’

‘On 22nd May, 1882, a fire occurred in the underground workings at the Baddesley Colliery, Warwickshire, and Mr. Stokes was summoned by telegram in the night to render help. He arrived at the Colliery to find that only an hour of two before there had been an explosion and many men burnt. It was subsequently found that out of a rescue party of about 32 men, 23 were either killed or died shortly after. Mr. Stokes, with five others, descended the mine and succeeded in rescuing the owner and two others who were so badly burnt that they died shortly afterwards.’

Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal: ‘Arthur Stokes, Assistant Inspector of Mines, Greenhill, Derby (in a joint citation with Charles Matlby, Manager, Eyam Mining Company; John Hancock, Mine Manager for Lord Houghton, Troeswell by Sheffield; Thomas Davis, Skilled Miner, Bulls Heads, Foolow, Eyam; and John Davis, Skilled Miner, Shepherds Park, Eyam [all awarded the Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal in Bronze]).

‘For Rescuing one Dennis Bagshawe who had been imprisoned for five days and nights, without food, in the Black Engine Mine, Eyam, via Sheffield, on 8th July 1879, by a sudden fall of shale. The rescuers being in great danger themselves of being either buried also or killed from choke damp.’

Extract from the Chapter General Report, 1880: ‘These four men [Messrs Matlby, Hancock, T. Davis, and J. Davis] had been most conspicuous in their bravery in rescuing one of their comrades, Dennis Bagshawe, who had been for five days and nights imprisoned in the Black Engine Lead Mine, near Follow, on July 22nd 1879. A Medal was also awarded to Mr. Arthur H. Stokes, Assistant Inspector of Mines, who also exposed his life to the same danger, and through whose
ability and presence of mind the work of the rescue was greatly accelerated. The accident occurred on the 22nd of July last at the Black Engine Mine, which is 140 yards deep, with two drifts extending from the bottom of the shaft, 120 yards and 70 or 80 yards respectively. Dennis Bagshawe was working in the lowest and most distant part of the mine, when a portion of the roof fell, and his escape rendered almost hopeless. The ill tidings no sooner reached the bank that volunteers rushed eagerly to the rescue from all quarters, and worked in relays for many hours under the most dangerous conditions. The attention of Mr. Bagshaw, the part owner of the mine, was not called to the accident until the day after it had taken place. But on hearing of the accident he at once telegraphed Mr. A.H. Stokes, the Government Inspector of Mines for that district, and proceeding immediately to the scene of the disaster, at once perceived that the system hitherto adopted was faulty, and could not be successfully carried out. Heroic exertions had failed for want of proper organisation. At three o’clock on Friday Mr. Stokes entered the mine and devised a system of ventilation which cleared the mine of choke damp, enabling the men to recommence their labours.

On Friday the engine broke down, but the damage having been repaired the work went on unremittingly, under the personal supervision of Mr. Stokes, until eleven o’clock on Sunday forenoon when the rescue was affected. Dennis Bagshawe, the imprisoned miner, had been for five days and nights without food or light, overcome with the choke damp, and struggling between life and death. For five hours the signals between the imprisoned man and the rescuers had not been audible, when early on Sunday a fresh rap was heard. The rescuers increased their exertions, the barrier suddenly gave way, and they were close upon their comrade. A hole being opened, Mr. Stokes passed some milk to the imprisoned man, and at length Dennis Bagshawe was got out alive. The bravery of the men who accomplished this gallant deed should not be forgotten. Their conduct was a lesson of self-devotion and courage prompted by a sense of duty, and without any expectation of reward. No occurrence that had happened for many years in Derbyshire could equal in moral effect the noble conduct of these brave miners.

Mr. Arthur Henry Stokes, A.M., born Wednesbury, Staffordshire, March 1844; served as a bound apprentice to a firm of Mining Engineers in Staffordshire, 1858-63; appointed H.M. Inspector of Mines, and Assistant-Inspector in the Midland District, 1874; promoted Inspector in Charge of the Midland District, 1887; retired, May 1909; died, Derby, October 1910. Stokes was presented with his Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal at the Cutlers Hall, Sheffield, 21.1.1880. Following the award of the Albert Medal First Class to Mr. Stokes for his gallantry at the Baddesley Colliery Disaster it was stated that no other living person held the same two highest awards for saving life, namely the Albert Medal in gold, and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal in silver.

Only 34 silver and 18 bronze 1st type Order of St. John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medals awarded 1874-88.