Mr. T. Stokes

A Rare Posthumous Edward Medal (Mines) in Silver to T. Stokes, For His Heroic Attempt to Save the Lives of Five Miners Trapped by Fire at Cannock Chase Colliery, 14.12.1911

Edward Medal (Mines), G.V.R., 1st ‘coinage head’ type, Silver (Thomas Stokes), edge bruise, otherwise extremely fine, in fitted case of issue, with Home Office letter to the recipient’s widow, dated 20.4.1912, and signed ‘Frank Elliot’; and a photographic image of the recipient

£2,000-2,400

E.M. London Gazette 19.4.1912 Thomas Stokes, miner (in a joint citation with Henry Merritt, fireman)

‘An underground fire broke out, on the 14th December, 1911, in the intake airway of the No.9 Cannock Chase Colliery, which rendered necessary the withdrawal of all the workmen. Most of the men, including Merritt and Stokes, reached the shaft safely, but it was found that five were still in the pit. Merritt went with Stokes to their rescue, and penetrated 800 yards along the return airway, in spite of the smoke, which was rapidly increasing in density, and found the men. One of them got out by holding on to Merritt, but the other four were suffocated, and Stokes also lost his life. Merritt did not at first discover that the other men had not followed him, and when he became aware of this he made two further attempts to reach them, but was finally driven back by the smoke, and reached the surface in an exhausted condition.’

Mr. Thomas Stokes, E.M., born 1870, employed as a Stallman at Old Hednesford Pit, Cannock Chase Colliery; buried in Cannock Cemetery. For his gallantry his name was entered in the Carnegie Hero Registers, and the Carnegie Fund granted his wife, Sarah Stokes, an Annuity of £25. Only four posthumous Edward Medals in Silver have ever been awarded, two during the reign of Edward VII, and two during the reign of George V.

Note: One other man with the name of Thomas Stokes received a G.V.R. Edward Medal (Mines) in Silver, but for a later date.