A Good Royal Humane Society Medal to R. Walmsley, Under Manager, Littleton Collieries, for Gallantry in Directing an Eleven-Hour Mine Rescue; He Later Lost His Own Life Whilst Involved in an ‘Edward Medal Action’ Rescue at the Same Colliery

Royal Humane Society, small silver medal, successful (Richard Walmsley 18th. Nov. 1922), silver (Hallmarks for Birmingham 1922), with integral top silver riband buckle, lacking buckle pin, suspension loose, extremely fine

£500-600

Royal Humane Society case no 46,688: ‘At 11:00am on the 18th November 1922, a fall of roof took place in the No.2 Pit, Littleton Collieries, Huntington, Stafford, the fall extending for over a length of 20 yards, bringing down many tons of rock and debris, pinning down a miner named Ronald Leckie under the mass. A rescue party was at once organised, directed by Richard Walmsley, Under Manager, but their work was rendered exceedingly difficult and dangerous by the continually falling roof and sides. It was found that Leckie, who was still alive, could be reached by crawling under the broken timbers, but it was impossible to reach him until a rad had been dug down from the top of the fall. While this was being done, Walmsley several times crawled in to where the man was, and gave him refreshment, and did his best to keep the debris from smothering him. Some thirty five to forty men were actually engaged in the work of rescue, under the direction and constant leadership of Walmsley, and eventually after eleven hours’ heroic work the man was brought out alive.’

Mr. Richard Walmsley, born Brownhills, Staffordshire, 1876; appointed Under Manager, Littleton Collieries, Huntington, Staffordshire, 1909; killed in a mining accident at the same colliery whilst attempting another rescue, 14.5.1937, and is buried at Cannock Cemetery.

For their gallantry in the rescue attempt in which Walmsley lost his life, brothers Noel and Samuel Booker were both awarded the Edward Medal (Mines) in Bronze.

E.M. London Gazette 4.2.1938 David Noel Booker and Samuel Booker

‘On the afternoon of the 14th May, 1937, three men were at work dismantling the plant at a conveyor face in a gate, at a distance of some 70-80 yards from the main level, in the Littleton Colliery, South Staffordshire. Firedamp appeared to be spreading in the gate, since, at about 8:00pm, a fireman set off from the level to see what the men were doing up the gate and found that his lamp was extinguished at about 20 yards from the level. Between this time and about midnight, when full rescue apparatus became available and the bodies were recovered, efforts at rescue were made by a succession of men, some of whom themselves collapsed and thereby added to the task of later rescuers: of these one, Mr. Walmsley, the Under-Manager, himself lost his life, thus bringing the death roll to four. In these operations the brothers Booker were outstanding. Each of them forced his way up the gate on four or five separate occasions, and they were jointly or severally responsible for extricating four earlier rescuers who had succumbed to the gas; all of these survived except Mr. Walmsley, the Under-Manager. On all of these occasions the brothers Booker, who seem to have been men of high resisting powers, displayed great courage, which is to be rated even more highly as it was reinforced by an almost equal measure of coolness and forethought.’