

Life in a shale village
Worksheet 3 - David's story

Read David's story and then answer the questions on the next sheet.

Hello, my name is David. I'm a fireman down at the Burngrange pits. Sounds like an exciting job doesn't it. Well I like it. I actually started as a pony driver when I was 14. That was hard work as I spent a lot of time underground and did the same job all day long. I liked working with the horses though. I didn't make much money so still lived at home and my wages went to my mum and dad to help with household bills. I started going to mining classes when I was 17 at Heriot Watt University. I qualified in mine rescue. That was very exciting as we got to go underground in oxygen masks and practice rescuing miners from accidents or mine collapses. This then gave me a silver badge as part of the fire service.

My job is not really putting out fires. It is more about keeping the place safe and making sure there is less chance of an accident. At the start of my shift I go round my areas to check for signs of methane or firedamp. I have to record my inspection on a sheet which is pinned up at the start of the pit to let the workers know it is safe. I'm really more of a safety man I guess. We used to have to go into the mines with an oil lamp. Now obviously a flame and methane gas is not a good mix! We then got oil flame safety lamps, called a Glenny lamp, which are much safer. Just a few months ago we got electric battery lamps which the firemen get to use. I still have my Glenny lamp just in case but the new lamps are much better for doing inspections. I'm quite glad there has not been any bad accidents or disasters at my work. My pal works over at Starlaw and there was a big disaster just a few weeks ago. Many men were injured and lost their lives due to a fire down the pit. My job is so important to try to make it less likely that a fire will start here.

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Read David's story. Use his story to help you answer these questions.

1. What was David's first job?

2. How did he become a fireman?

3. What are his responsibilities?

4. Compare his job as a fireman to a fireman now. Fill in each column with what they have to do as part of their job.

Fireman - Shale Oil	Fireman - Now

5. Why was it not safe to take a traditional oil lamp down the mine?

6. Why was an electric battery lamp safer?

7. Would you like to be a fireman in the shale oil industry? Explain your answer.