

Talk041018

## The Landshipping Mining Disaster 1844 – Dr Robert Davies

A seam of high quality anthracite lies across South Pembrokeshire from Saundersfoot to Newgale. It was a resource that could make landowners wealthy. Mining started around 1612 and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many small mines across the County.

Landshipping had ten or so mines owned by Owen Family of Orielton. Mining offered work, even if it was in 12 hour shifts, and Landshipping had a population of around 1000, and 7 pubs to support them.

The Garden Pit at Landshipping was one of a number of the mines had been dug to get coal from under the River Cleddau. Some had tunnels that extended up to a quarter of a mile under the river. However they were quite deep and the Garden Pit was 67 yards depth below the river. It was liable to water ingress but pumps were used to control the water level in the pit.

On February 14<sup>th</sup> 1844 58 miners, men women and boys, were working underground when the ceiling of the mine collapsed and there was a catastrophic ingress of water. Four men and 14 boys were able to escape. The other 40 were either drowned or crushed by falling rock or clay. Many of these bodies were never recovered.

Sadly Parliament in 1842 had passed an Act forbidding the employment of women or boys under 10 years of age in pits. Health and Safety directions, and inspections did not travel so quickly in those days.