

Joseph GARDNER, Constable, Liverpool City Police 23rd July 1963

Edward MURPHY, Ambulance Driver, Liverpool.

An accident occurred in the extension of a ventilation shaft and it was reported that an injured man was lying at the bottom of the tunnel shaft, 150 feet from the surface, having fallen there from a moveable hanging wooden platform which was suspended 30 feet from the bottom of the shaft. Constable Gardner went to the scene and decided to descend the shaft by the quickest possible method. This was by means of a steel bucket 3 feet in diameter and four feet in depth, which was suspended over the centre of the shaft by a surface crane. Gardner was lowered to the bottom of the shaft. He found the injured man lying on two duck boards suspended across the sump which contained 18 inches of mud and water. Both his legs were fractured and his arms were dislocated and Gardner realised it would be very difficult to remove him to the surface. He called for assistance and Murphy came down in the bucket with special equipment. In view of the cramped conditions, both men stepped into the sump. Two boards were placed over the rim of the steel bucket but it was impossible to secure them to the bucket in any satisfactory way, and it was obvious that the injured man would have to be accompanied to the surface in order to steady this improvised stretcher, and also to negotiate it past the various obstructions. Gardner and Murphy therefore both climbed on to the bucket. As it ascended the bucket had a tendency to swing, being built on a hinge for tipping purposes and there was considerable danger of the three men being tipped out of the bucket to the bottom of the shaft. The surface was reached after about 30 minutes and the injured man conveyed to hospital.