CHAPTER III.

Central Coal District.

Under this division we shall include I. The coal-field surrounding Ashby-de-la-Zouch, on the borders of Leicestershire and Staffordshire. II. That of Warwickshire. III. That of south Staffordshire or Dudley. IV. Indications of coal near the Lickey Hill. As these do not appear to form constituent parts of one whole, in the same manner with those connected with the Penine chain, we shall here so far depart from our former method, as to treat of the various formations accompanying each of these three coal-fields, in describing that individual field.

Section I.

THE ASHBY COAL-FIELD.

This district occupies an area of irregular figure, nearly in the centre of which, the town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch is situated. The longer diameter of this area, from north-west to south-east is about 10 miles; the shorter, from south-west to north-east, about eight miles.

The eastern extremity of this area approaches almost closely to the transition district of Charnwood forest. The coal-formations occupying it are much broken, and may perhaps when fully examined be found to constitute two small detached basins, rather than to belong to one continuous field. Of these portions, one ranges by Ashby Wold, about three miles on the west of Ashby; the other by Cole Orton, about the same distance on the east.

The former, or Ashby Wold portion, ranges from Swepston four miles south of Ashby, to Bretby in Derbyshire, about the same distance on the north-west; the outcrop of the beds sweeps in a curved line between these two places, the inclination of the strata being inwards, that is, towards Ashby: but between this outcrop and that town, another crop has been traced near Brothorpe, dipping in a contrary direction; a circumstance which has induced some of those practically acquainted with this district, to consider it as forming a long elliptical basin, of which the axis ranges from north-north-west to south-south-east, between the villages before mentioned of Bretby and Swepston. More than 20 coal works have been opened on this line. The