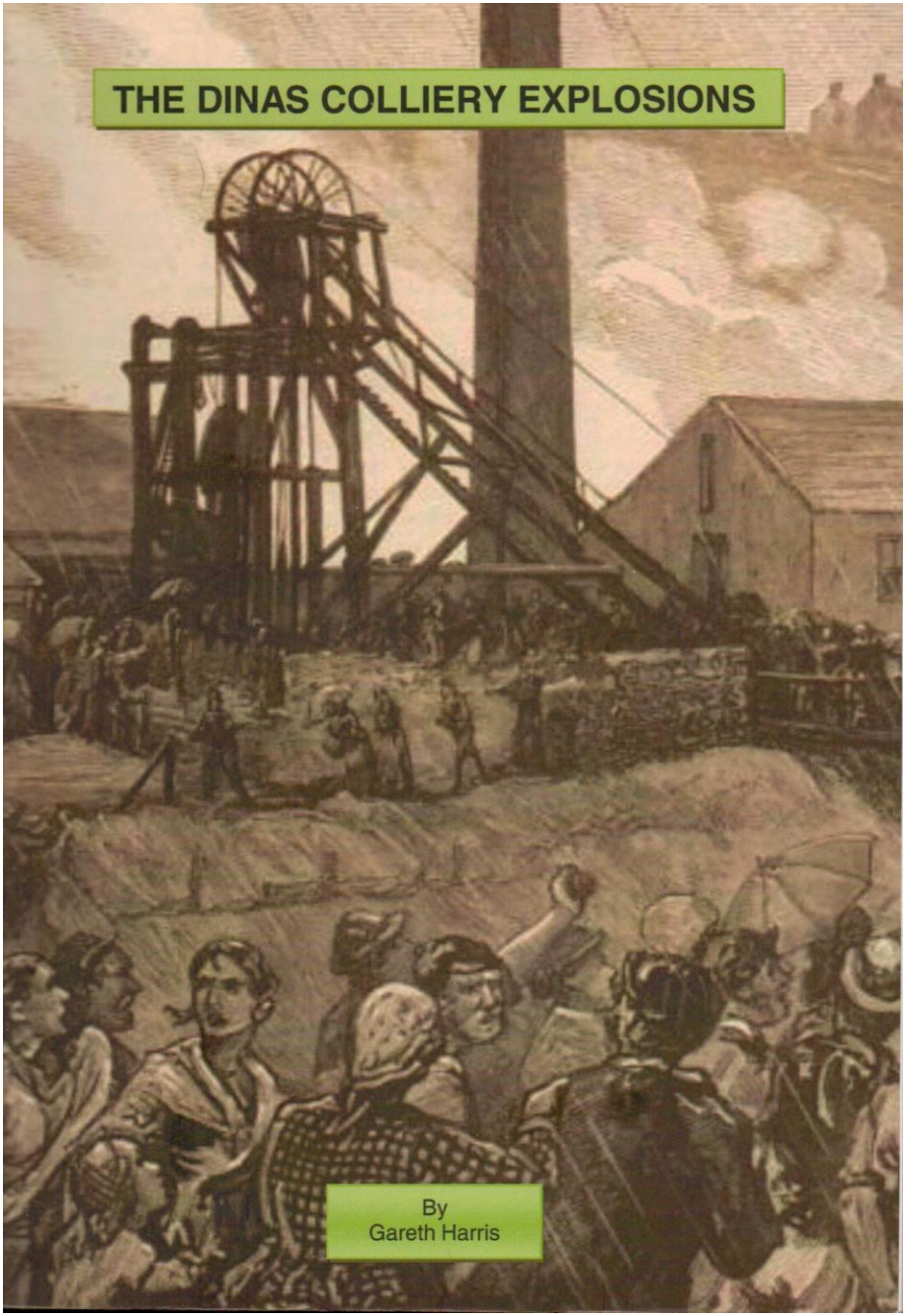
THE DINAS COLLIERY EXPLOSIONS
By
Gareth Harris

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and the heroics of Daniel Thomas

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FOREWORD

Between 1837 and 1927 over 3,500 miners lost their lives in 66 separate colliery disasters throughout Wales, the vast majority in the South Wales coalfield. Mining is an inherently dangerous occupation but when one looks at the details behind individual events in this tragic roll-call it becomes clear just what deadly risks coal miners faced on a daily basis.

It also becomes obvious how expendable the life of a miner was in 19th century Wales. Gareth Harris's new book on the Dinas Colliery disaster of 1879 makes and illustrates these points well. He has covered the ground before in books on the Great Western Colliery disaster of 1893 and the Albion Colliery explosion of 1894, but of the three books it is in his latest work which leaves the most deep-seated sense of frustration and anger at the sheer carelessness which led to the deaths of 63 men at Dinas.

Mismanagement, incompetence and a cavalier attitude to safety means that this was a disaster waiting to happen. Few in authority came out of the story well, from Colonel Hunt, the colliery's owner, to John Chubb, the ex-colliery manager who seems to have exercised control despite having his certificate of competency suspended.

The only people to emerge with credit are the rescuers – fellow miners – but even here leadership and direction were so lacking that it took almost six weeks to recover the first body and victims were still being found and recovered 3 years after the explosion. The disaster inquiry highlighted these failings but, once again, the lessons were ignored and the tragedies continued with horrific regularity.

Ironically, in 1912, the first local Mines Rescue Station was set up a short distance from the Dinas Colliery site. It's first major deployment was at the Senghenydd Collier explosion of October 1913 which killed 439 miners, the worst loss of life in a British mining disaster.

David Gwyer
Pontypridd Museum
October 2011

INTRODUCTION
By the author

Having written books about the Albion Colliery disaster at Cilfynydd and the Great Western Colliery disaster at Hopkinstown, I had no real intention of writing another book about coal mining. However, after reading a newspaper report of the Dinas Colliery explosion in 1879, I became very interested in the story.

Not only was it about a terrible explosion, but an equally enthralling story about the rescue attempts and the subsequent search for bodies.

I have tried not to be too technical in my descriptions of the underground workings and tried to limit the repetition, where possible, of the Coroner's inquest and subsequent inquiries that followed. Unfortunately, no maps of the Dinas Colliery survive to make the understanding of the complexity of the underground workings easier.

I also tell the story of two men, Daniel Thomas, a legend in his own lifetime and John Chubb, a man who was just as infamous in the Rhondda valley.

I have tried to include the early history of the Dinas Colliery, the first deep shaft colliery in the Rhondda, and the all the significant events that followed, up to and including the disaster and subsequent search for bodies that lasted years and eventually ended with five victims never being recovered.

For those unused to colliery terms a Glossary of Mining Terms appears on page 262.

Gareth Harris
October 2011

CHAPTER ONE
The Dinas Colliery prior to 1879

The Dinas Colliery was known as the largest and the oldest colliery in the Rhondda neighbourhood and was sunk by Messrs. Coffin & Co., at a time when the coal trade not only of Cardiff, but of South Wales, was in its infancy. It was he who mainly developed the mineral resources of Dinas, and the name of Coffin & Co. was for many decades generally associated with the Dinas Colliery. Coal had been worked there, first by baskets and then by carriages, off and on for almost a century by 1879. The place itself was situated a little more than halfway between the market town of Pontypridd and the Treherbert railway terminus and lay to the west of the hill-surrounded neighbourhood.

In 1791, Walter Coffin Senior, who had made a considerable fortune as a tanner at Bridgend, purchased several farmsteads in the parish of Llantrisant, including the area of Dinas Ucha Farm from William Humphries. Walter Coffin junior, getting bored with his father's successful tannery business at Bridgend, at the age of 24 set out in 1809 to prospect for coal at his father's farm land at Dinas and after terminating the tenancy of Lewis Robert Richard, proceeded, with the financial support of his father, to eventually drive at least five levels into the No. 1 and No. 2 seams, no one then knowing of the existence of more than two seams of coal in the Rhondda valley.

Both seams were cropping out of the earth, the first a short distance below the brow of the mountain on the south-western side of the valley, and other nearly level with river on the same side of the valley. In May 1810, he took a lease from Morgan David of all the coal under the farms of Graigddu and Waunddu (more commonly called Gwaunadda) for 99 years for a rent of £50 a year, 30 sacks of coal per annum (for the use of the farmhouse), and all the manure made in the colliery stables.

In 1811, Mr. Coffin, after discussions with Dr. Griffiths, constructed three miles of tramway, connecting Dinas with Dr. Griffith's tramway at Gyfeillon, and thus gained access to the canal at Treforest and for many years until the construction of the Taff Vale Railway to Eirw this was the only communicating link between the villages of the lower Rhondda and Newbridge (Pontypridd). It was a great convenience to the country folk and miners, and was the means of bringing much trade to Pontypridd. Up to that time, Llantrisant had been the chief market town within reach, but it was a long trek over the hills to return at night heavily laden, and the

colliers' wives welcomed the appearance of the tramway, which provided them with a lift home.

From the Dinas Pit to Pontypridd were six miles of tramway, and it was the custom of Coffin, to put on a special coal tram for himself, hardly more than a box with a seat, when he journeyed to Newbridge (Pontypridd). He was very jealous of his road, and would not allow anybody to travel that way except himself. One day a farmer on horseback found himself on the road and looking ahead saw Coffin coming. He at once turned the horse's head around allowing Coffin to overtake him, which he did in great excitement, roaring out at the rider to stop and get off. The farmer apologised, said he was sorry he had trespassed, and wouldn't do it again, and said that he would 'turn back.' Therefore, he turned around again and completed the journey he wanted to.

Walter Coffin's earliest problem was the supply of adequate manpower in the thinly populated valley. Between 1810 and 1830 all kinds of workmen flocked to Dinas to get employment. Incoming colliers and boys were herded at first into wooden sheds or barracks. The concrete houses or 'the Concretes' as they were nicknamed, replaced them later in the century. The workforce often came from the impoverished country villages of Wales and some of Britain's older industrial areas, the majority however, arrived from Llansamlet, Swansea, from where first the sinkers and then colliers travelled to work for Coffin.

The Rhondda No. 2 seam space was noted for the upheavals of the ground under it the moment the coal had been slackened. These upheavals, called "puckings," emitted noises like discharges of firearms. Old Dinas people in later years described how old friends, who long ago had stored their picks and shovels for the last time and gone the way of all flesh, had run for their lives from their stalls, being frightened by the noise of the "puckings" thinking that Old Nick and his dark crew were about to show their noses from the depths below!

In 1812 Walter Coffin opened the first deep mine in the Rhondda. He sank a shaft on the boundary between Graigddu and Tyn-y-cymmer estate and there struck the celebrated No. 3 Rhondda seam, the finest bituminous coal in South Wales, at 40 yards that was 2 foot 10 inches thick, and was worked northward at what was known as the Dinas Lower Colliery until they met a fault running in a north and south direction. This fault was found to lower the seam about 40 yards.

Because of this, after working the No. 3 seam at the Dinas Lower Colliery for some twenty years in 1832 under the guidance of Mr. Richard Jenkins, a noted self-taught geologist, whom Mr. Coffin promoted from being a miner to being his chief

manager, Mr. Coffin sank another shaft beyond where the fault was struck. That shaft, some 550 yards higher up the valley was called the Dinas Middle Colliery. The coal, the celebrated Rhondda No. 3 seam, was again struck at a depth of 80 yards below the level of the river. The shafts were 560 yards apart, and the coal, excellent for coking, was known as "Coffin's Celebrated Coal."

In 1831 a few of the Dinas miners had joined a union named the 'Friendly Association of Coal Miners' and in October or November that year came out on strike in support of other members at Merthyr. It did not last long, however, some saying it ended at Dinas through 'mutual agreement' between the men and Coffin, but there is evidence that indicates clearly that Coffin's relations with his men was not so pleasant as was usually assumed.

The real reason for the collapse was lack of support from Lancashire (where the Association originated) and Merthyr, and the unfavourable attitude of the Nonconformists, especially the Methodists, against the secret oaths in the formation of Union Clubs. *[1]

Indeed, a body of Dinas miners were members in the Methodist cause at Ebenezer, Dinas, and the Calvinistic Sasiswn (association) held at Tredegar on October 19th 1831 condemned the Union Clubs and decided that no unionist should be admitted to church membership.

The '*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*' of Sept. 18th 1847, reported that all Lower Rhondda colliers, except those working for Walter Coffin at Dinas – were members of a union.

In 1832 (wrote 'Morien' in the '*Western Mail*') the Dinas Middle Colliery presented complications in ventilation, lighting, winding, and, of course, water drainage. That year, after building a weir to dam the river, Coffin adopted the Water Balance Machine method of winding coal to the surface.

The Balance arrangement consisted of a wooden or iron frame erected over the shaft, and to it was fitted a large wheel over which ran a chain, and to this, two large wrought-iron tubs were suspended. These were supplied alternatively with water from a tank placed beneath the wheel, and each tub was fitted with rails on to which the coal the coal tram was run.

*[1] E. D. Lewis - Rhondda Valley. Pg 156

The mechanism was such that one water-filled tub would more than counter-balance the coal-loaded tub below. When the brake was released from the wheel, the water-filled tub, with an empty tram placed on it, descended the shaft and this, by its own weight, raised the other loaded tub to the surface. When the tub had reached the bottom of the shaft, a valve was automatically opened to allow the ballast of water to run into an adit or into the sump whence it was pumped to the surface. Small wheel carriages or trams were employed in the underground workings to convey the coal between the working place and the pit bottom, where the contents of five such trams were emptied into the larger tram, placed in the cage, and drawn to the surface. In this way considerable quantities of coal were raised daily at the Dinas Middle Colliery.

The next difficulty which presented itself, was to create a market for his coal. With indefatigable perseverance, he devoted himself to the business of introducing Welsh coal, hitherto almost unknown, to the notice of the consumer. His visits to the ports of the West of England and to Cork and Waterford, the experiments he made to prove the value of his coal; as the 'best in the kingdom for either coking, gas or smith's work'; his advocacy of Rhondda coke for us in steamers; the part he played in promoting the construction of a second dock at Cardiff – all are evidence of his unremitting efforts to develop the overseas markets for Rhondda coal. In 1830 Walter coffin stated: - "I ship almost all my coal to Ireland. Mostly to Waterford and Cork; some little to Dublin, but not a great deal. We have a small trade with Barnstaple and Bideford and some ports in Cornwall."

On October 6th 1836 four men died at an explosion at the Dinas Colliery and two in 1838. In February 1839 another melancholy accident occurred in the Dinas Colliery. A stone of great weight, at least 50 tons, fell on two unnamed men and a lad, and instantly terminated their lives. The roof was said to be one of the very best in the district; the stall was only about six yards wide, being newly turned, but a joint occurring just above the place where coal was removed, occasioned the tragic event.

In 1839, the West Bute Dock was opened in Cardiff, and although primarily for iron, it was also a boom for the expanding coal trade, now sinking deeper pits to the steam coal seams, to feed the ever increasing need of steam and railway engines. Now, in 1840 it dawned upon the mind of Mr. Walter Coffin that he had omitted to obtain in his lease from Mr. Morgan David way-leave to convey coal from other lands over Mr. David's land. He applied to Mr. David, obtained a lease of a meadow

situate between the two shafts, and it was called "Y Waun." There Mr. Coffin built many coke ovens, and it was his great place for stacking coal and coke. There, too, were erected the smithies and offices of the works. Mr. Coffin did not appear to dream that there were any seams of coal beneath the No. 3 seam, and in the lease of the meadow including way-leave he omitted to obtain permission to convey rubbish as well as coal over the Graigddu lands. No rubbish was brought out of the No. 3 workings; it being all disposed of in the old workings below and in what is called "gobbing," behind the men as they advanced in cutting away the seam. In 1841 Coffin gained a substantial contract for the supply of coke to the Great Western Railway Company.

In 1842 *"The first report of the commission of inquiry into employment of children and young persons in mines,"* was issued. Young lads of seven years of age started work as door-boys in these early shallow pits and their duties were vital to maintain the ventilation through the underground workings. At Dinas several of the 'door-boys' had suffered burns in pit fires from firedamp so severe, that disfigurement was very great and the boys' faces turned into 'ugly masks.' Walter Coffin was reported as the only coal owner locally in favour of an eight-year limit for young collier boys. Others were in favour of twelve years lowest age limit. The 1842 report of the government Commissioner of such young boys was severe on Coffin. Two extracts read: -

Phillip Davies, (age 10) a haulier: - *"I have been driving horses below ground three years and twelve months; before was at a trap door; when at the traps used frequently to fall asleep – worked 12 hours – night as well as day shift."*

Matthew Lewis (age 11) stated: - *"Began work at seven years old, work 12 hours daily sometimes longer; was burned by firedamp three years ago when at the air-door and laid aside 6 months – the pain was very great; several others were burned at the same time, one near to death; feels very sore at times from the new skin being very tender." Speaks a little Welsh. Does not understand a word of English and has no Scriptural knowledge.*

William Isaac (age 11) said: - *"Have to keep the air doors in the mine; goes down the shaft at four of five in the morning and returns at five or six at night. Works frequently at night. Been four years below ground; was burned by firedamp 20 months since and laid ill 18 months; only returned to pit two months since."*

The commissioners commented: - *"This witness was neglected, the whole of the face burned and he had a very disagreeable appearance. The eyes are much inflamed."*

At the time of the report 301 men and 113 boys were employed at Dinas; 81 were under 13 and 32 between 13 and 18 years of age. Apart from the occasional movement of the hauliers and their coal trams the young boys were on their own with just a miner's lamp and it almost amounted to solitary confinement. Coffin, however, apparently opened the Dinas Schools in 1830. The original Dinas schools were housed in the colliery storehouse, and later moved from there to the vestry of a Methodist chapel, and finally became permanent at Dinas, where they were known as the elementary schools.

They were maintained by government grants and contributions from the workmen who in 1881 were paying 2d per every pound of their wage. However, there were many children in Dinas, Penygraig and Williamstown who did not attend at all due to lack of money and early on some at 7 or 8 years of age were working down the mine. Eventually all the colliery schools were taken into the care of a newly formed Local School Board. During Coffin's ownership there was no hospital in the district, but a works doctor was appointed at Dinas whose salary was paid for by deductions from the miner's wages. Miners killed or injured in the pit did not receive compensation, but Coffin, like other lower Rhondda owners paid the burial expenses of the deceased.

In 1844 an explosion at the Dinas Colliery cost the lives of 12 men and boys. (See next Chapter). When the Taff Vale Railway was being built to Merthyr Mr. Coffin was one of its chief supporters, and with Sir John Guest and Mr. Christopher James, formed its first directorate, but when it was proposed that a branch should go up the Rhondda he opposed it, thinking that there was no prospect of profit, in which he was later proved very wrong.

In the early decades on the nineteenth century, the miners at Dinas were in the direct employ of the coal-owner, and as other collieries opened in the 1840s and 1850s the employment of miners was governed by a signed agreement known as the 'Yearly Contract.' This was signed in December by the miner in the presence of witnesses, and under its provisions he undertook to serve the master faithfully for a year in consideration for payment of wages in accordance with the terms specified.

This contract worked unfairly for the miner, for any breach of his contract (such as a strike) rendered him liable not only to civil damages, but also to imprisonment, and there are several cases of this actually happening.*[1]

*[1] E. D. Lewis - Rhondda Valley Pg 154

Despite the success of the Dinas Colliery others were slow to see the potential of mining the Rhondda valley. By the mid 1840's only a few small levels had been opened between Hafod and Newbridge (Pontypridd), but these were small concerns and never employed more than 50 people. However, the railway was to change all that.

The '*Daily News'* of 28th June 1849 commenting on the extensions made by the Taff Vale Railway wrote: - "Last June in travelling up the Rhondda Valley, a few collieries were observable either side of the river, as far as Cymmer; whence the valleys of Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach diverge. In the former, a mile or two westward of the confluence of both rivers, is situated the Dinas Colliery, known far and near for the peculiar superiority of its coking coal seam, and which belongs principally to Mr. Walter Coffin, the father of the coal trade in Glamorganshire.

The abundant produce of this colliery was then brought down along an old tram-road, and tipped into large wagons at Eirw village, on the Rhondda branch of the Taff Vale Railway; but how altered the face of things has since become; instead of overhanging woods, impenetrable thickets, and impending precipices, a noble line of railways has been formed into either Valley, and several new collieries are in active operation, daily using the lines as means of transit for their mineral measures to port. The agreeable metamorphoses is due to the Taff Vale Railway Company, who deserved credit for their spirit in opening so noble a field for the development of mining engineers."

Somewhere about 1850 Walter Coffin spent over £30,000 at Dinas in preparing a patent fuel works, which had to be abandoned through want of skill on the part of the patentees, and the money expended was so much capital wasted. In 1852 Coffin became an M. P. (see page 271) and transferred most of the mineral rights of the Dinas pits to William Ogle Hunt who was to act as trustee for Coffin. Subsequently all Coffin's mining interests in the Rhondda became the the property of W. O. Hunt and Co.

The works were then extended, and a downcast sunk to the Polka or four-feet seam, about three-quarters of a mile from the upcast, and about 1869 another shaft to the Middle Pit was sunk.

The colliery workings were three or four miles in length, and comprised three sections – the Higher pit, the Lower Pit, and the Middle Pit. The higher pit had been worked out by around 1870, and by 1879 was used mainly to ventilate an abutting level. From then on steam coal alone had been worked in the colliery.

This coal was remarkably good coal, but also very fiery. Colonel Edmund D'Arcy Hunt owned two other local collieries, but the Dinas Colliery was the most extensive of the three.

At the Dinas No. 1 pit, broad and heavy wooden staves were used to stem the water from the sides of the shaft. In the wider No. 2 shaft a cladding of bricks and mortar supplemented the wood casing at the lower levels. One of Guibal's large ventilating fans was obtained, and "caps" or "bonnets" placed over the top of the shaft directing the air into the space where the fan was kept working and this drew the impure air from the colliery. This fan would draw out of the colliery from 60,000 to 70,000 cubic feet of air a minute.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, rather than rely on natural ventilation which became less reliable as the collieries extend underground, furnaces were installed at the bottom of each upcast shaft to induce artificial ventilation. However, as it drew the air through the many airways, headings and stalls of the colliery, it picked up all the polluting gas, and as this passed over the furnace it sometimes flashed into sheets of flame, raising the the chance of an explosion, and this was eventually replaced by electric ventilating fans.

Hours of labour were exceedingly long and unregulated. Work for the average collier began at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning and continued for twelve or more hours, with an interval, perhaps, of half or an whole hour (spent underground) for a midday meal. In wintertime the miners rarely saw daylight, only on their day off on a Sunday could they take a rest and see the sun, but even then they were too exhausted to enjoy themselves, the insidious poisons of the mine defrauding them of their strength and health. Chronic diseases of the breathing organs, especially asthma and bronchitis were prevalent.*[1]

Many miners in Dinas were undoubtedly hardened by the long hours of heavy and dangerous work in the levels and pits, and by the general discomfort of their squalid living conditions. To these, the temptations to indulge in strong drink at the Boot Inn, Red Lion, or Prince of Orange public houses were great and numerous. But too much weight must not be attached to moralists like Jabez Thomas, manager of the Cymmer Colliery, who commented in the early 1840s, that there were 'always more people at the public houses than at chapel.'*[1]

*[1] E. D. Lewis - Rhondda Valley Pg 186

In any case, it was only natural that the miner should seek relaxation after his dull and monotonous occupation. Pleasures he had few, and with the notable exceptions of chapels, the Ebenezer and Soar, at Dinas (opened in the 1830s), there were no social centres apart from these public houses. The chief recreations of the Lower Rhondda colliers at this time were wrestling, hand-ball, wagering, cock-fighting and coursing. *[1]

The usual rent for a miner's cottage in the 1840s was about 2 shillings to 3 shillings a week, and since most people lived in houses erected and owned by the colliery companies, this rent was deducted from their monthly wage at the colliery office. But the great drawback to the tenancy of these company houses was the loss of one's job if one attempted to move, or indeed, if you lost your job you lost your home. In 1841, the principal house-owners at Dinas were Walter Coffin with 52 houses and Morgan David with 12.

The houses were mainly small, two-storied, four-room houses built of local sandstone. These cottages contained a kitchen, pantry, and perhaps a downstairs sleeping room, and two bedrooms upstairs, though the early ones built by coffin had two rooms only, 1 upstairs and 1 downstairs, and it was normal to have a minimum of three or more beds upstairs, and most houses had only one entrance. There was no toilet as there was no drainage system, only the local brook or river, and no running water, only what they could collect themselves from rainwater or local streams. However, as Dinas was still largely rural, they were mostly spared the fearful diseases that plagued crowded towns like Merthyr, such as cholera, smallpox and diphtheria.

The major expenditure of the collier, however, was food, the important meal of the day being in the afternoon, when the workmen returned from home, for what was

called 'tea.' The Dinas residents lived mostly on vegetables, bread and cheese, butter, and soup or broth. Most families took in lodgers to supplement their income, and if lucky enough, as some later residents, they might have a small garden to grow their own vegetables or even keep a small number of farm animals such as chickens or pigs.*[2]

*[1] E. D. Lewis - Rhondda Valley Pg 186 *[2] Pg 186.

Morgan Rowlands, was manager of the Dinas colliery for ten years between 1867 and 1877, and while there appointed John Chubb as an overman. On Morgan Rowlands leaving the colliery, John Chubb was appointed as his successor.

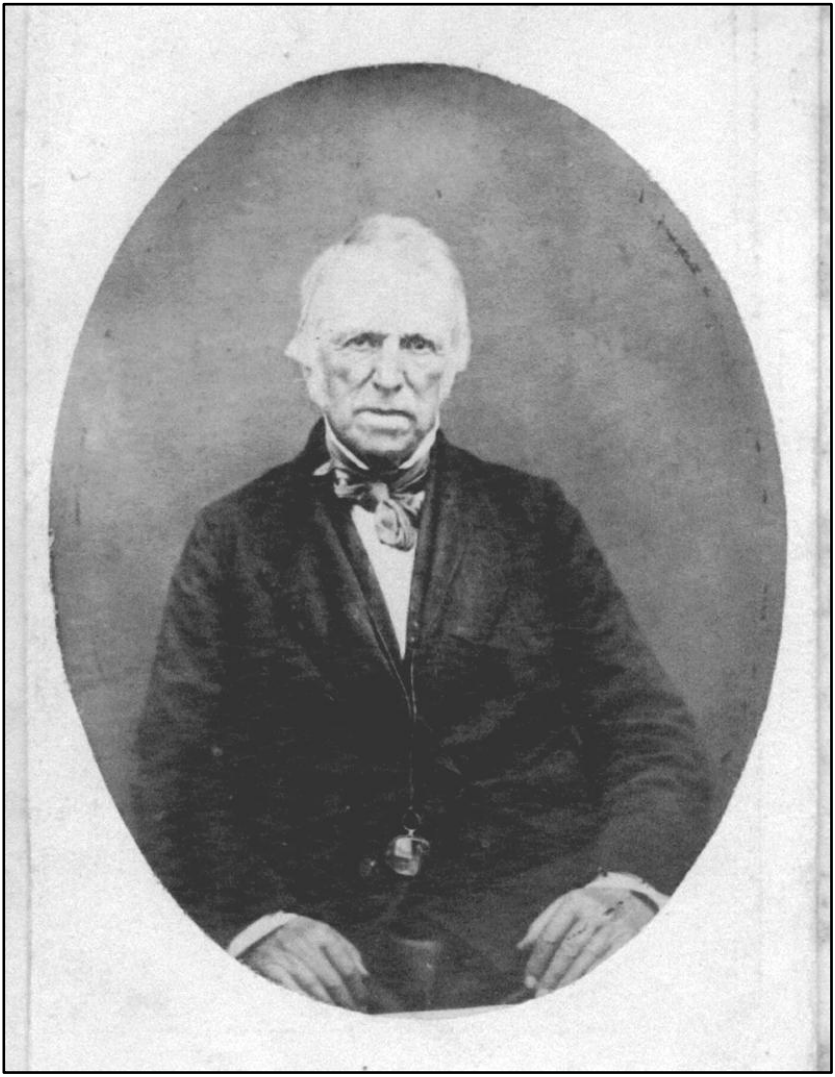
The Truck System and Tommy Shops

A factor probably contributing to the general discontent amongst some colliers in 1870, especially in Monmouthshire, was the 'Truck' system. Instead of using normal coin of the realm, some coal masters paid their workers in special coins or credit notes, known as "truck." These could only be exchanged at shops, known as 'Tommy Shops' which were owned by the coal or iron companies themselves, and also encouraged them to get into debt. Many of the workers objected to both the price and quality of the goods sold in these Company Shops. These "truck" shops were hated by the colliers but none existed in the Rhondda, and even being accused of running one was considered an insult by some. *[1] The '*Western Mail*' of October 3rd 1870 carried the following letter: -

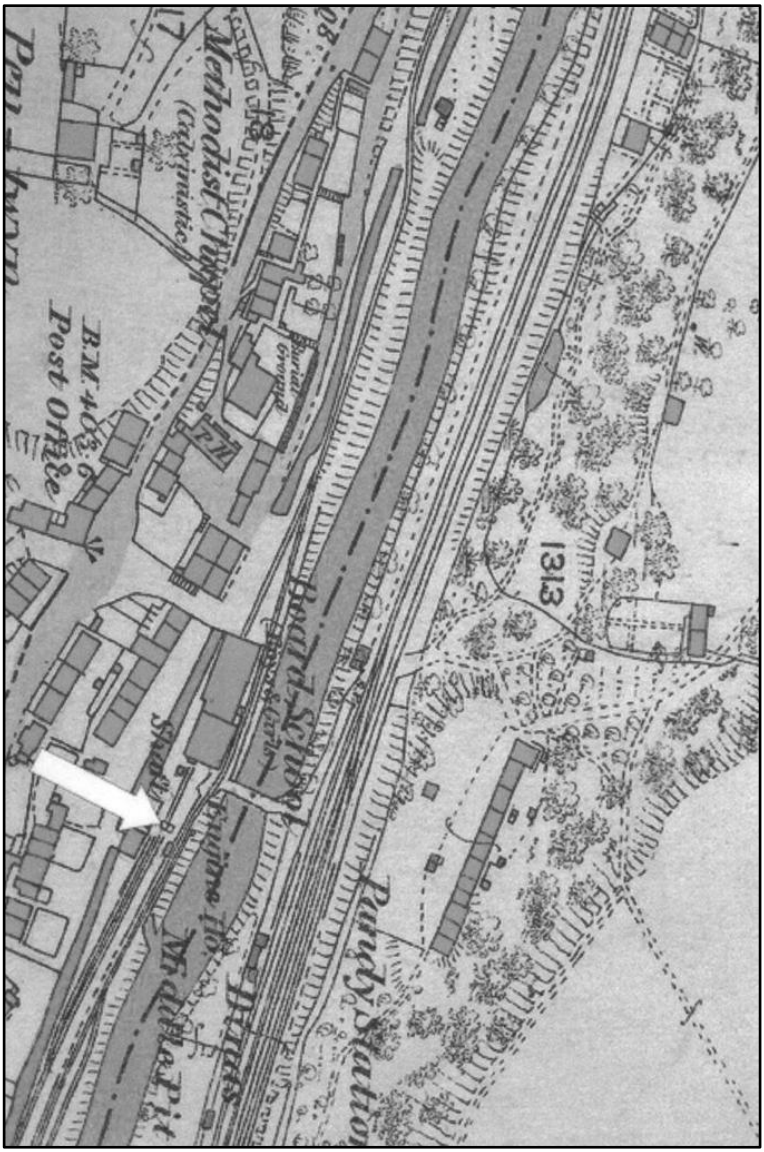
To the Editor of the '*Western Mail*.' - Dear Sir – I trust you may allow me space in your popular paper to correct a statement by Supt. Matthews, of the Newbridge district, before the Truck Commission at Cardiff, which appear in your newspaper on Sept. 27th inst; that "a Company's shop is kept at the Dinas Colliery by Morgan Rowland (not the '*gaffer*' whose name is similar)." I beg leave to say that the Dinas colliery has not a shop of any description in anyway connected with the works, and the statement made before the commissioners of inquiry is false. I am, sir, yours. &co.

Morgan Rowlands,
Manager, Dinas Colliery,
near Pontypridd,
Sept. 30th 1870.

*[1] E. D. Lewis - Rhondda Valley Pg 186



Walter Coffin (1784 – 1867) – Founder of the Dinas Collieries and M.P. for Cardiff 1852 - 57



Dinas c.1875 and the position of the Dinas Colliery upcast (Middle) shaft

CHAPTER TWO
Disastrous coal pit accident at Dinas Colliery – Loss of 12 lives

January 1st 1844

One of those melancholy catastrophes so frequently concomitant of mining operations in the collieries of south Wales, attended on this occasion, we regret to say, with the loss of 12 lives, took place on Monday Morning, January 1st 1844, at the Dinas Colliery, the property of Walter Coffin, Esq. This, to be sure, was an accident, but was not either unavoidable or uncontrollable, and cannot fail to be aggravated by the fact that common precaution might have prevented it. (Wrote a local newspaper). There are about 150 men employed at the Dinas Colliery, and it was a merciful indisposition of providence, that even though there was the most culpable neglect, the entirety of them were not buried in its ruins, and ultimately precipitated into eternity.

On Saturday night, it appears, on the men leaving off work, all was apparently safe. It is the practice of the overman to see that the air doors were properly secured at night, before anyone descends into the pit in the morning. To the neglect of this individual in not properly securing the door of the heading where the deceased were at work, the awful destruction of twelve human beings is attributable. A quantity of foul air was generated in the pit, and escaped in consequence above the heading. At the usual hour in the morning, the men went to work with their candles, when the choke-damp was suddenly ignited by the lights in this particular heading. The effect was directly fatal to the poor creatures there employed, and seven men and five boys fell victims.

The result was, a violent concussion, produced by the collision from the ignited gas meeting the current of fresh air. Two lads, we regret to say, were severely hurt; one had both his legs broken, and the other sustained a dislocation of his shoulder-blade. The parties employed in the other headings of the pit, alarmed at the violence of the concussion, scrambled tumultuously to the mouth of the pit, from which they were drawn up. Owing to the excellent ventilation in the other parts of the pit, no life was lost. The effect of the explosion at the mouth of the pit is, comparatively trifling – only a few slates on the roof of the shed which protects the works being dislodged. The bodies of the 12 persons who have perished had not on Thursday been taken out, the complication of the interior of the pit, and the quantity of foul air generated, rendering that impracticable without a fresh boring.

The rescuers at present are hard at work in the operation, and it is expected that this work of humanity will be carried on with vigour and perseverance until the poor victims are extricated. The exhaustion of the poor men who were drawn up,

from the frightened collisions within the interior of the pit, was so great, that several of them fainted away. At the moment of collision the humanity of those poor fellows was severely tested. Several of the strongest lingered behind to assist those up the pit whom fright or injury had incapacitated from getting away from what happened to be an imminent and inevitable destruction. Foremost among those on Monday, and while the pit was yet charged with deleterious matter, was Mr. Williams, the nephew of Mr. Coffin. He headed a gang of men in a search to find out and recover the bodies.

They had proceeded some distance into the heading when they were struck and nearly overpowered by fatal effluvia. Again and again they advanced in the work of humanity, and after each humane effort they retired almost overpowered by the pestilent atmosphere which surrounded them. In a last and desperate effort they succeeded in coiling a rope round a body which they drew a considerable way towards the mouth of the pit, but fairly overpowered by the foul air they relinquished their hold, and escaped up the mouth of the pit disappointed by their desperate but fruitless effort. The partition down the shaft was expected to be finished on Thursday night, when persons might with safety descend to take out the bodies.

The following are the named of the sufferers: - Thomas Rowland, aged 51; John Rowland, 14; David Rowland, 9; David John, 33; Thomas Morris, 48; William Morris, 17; Llewellyn Morris, 12; Edward Powell, 21; William Harry, 20; David Morgan, 14; David Phillips, 23; and Thomas Leyshon, 16.

It is, however, some consolation to know that the extent of the calamity is confined to the number above stated as having perished. No appearance of suffering is at present visible among the number who have escaped. The consternation and alarm in the neighbourhood, and, indeed, in this town, magnified by the undefined state of the accident, inevitably exaggerated the number of the suffering by this appalling accident. From 50 to 80 was generally believed to be the number of sufferers.

The agony and consternation of the wives and daughters of the employed, among whom the reports spread, may be easily conceived. Each, for the moment, lamented the death of a son, a brother, or a husband; and, until the exact number of the deceased was ascertained, the neighbourhood presented a scene of wailing and alarm, which bereavement under such circumstances is well calculated to create.

Bodies recovered

Ever since the occurrence of the accident, and when all hopes of recovering the men for the purpose of resuscitation were given up, the most strenuous exertions were made to clear away the rubbish and purify the pit so as to enable the colliers to get at the bodies. On Thursday, January 4th, the first body was discovered at the bottom of the pit, that of nine-year-old David Morgan.

On Saturday, January 6th 1844 the pit was sufficiently free from noxious air owing to the unstinted labours of the colliers, to enable them to get to the bodies. And by six o'clock in the afternoon the remaining eleven dead bodies were brought from the district headings and stalls, where they met their fate, to the mouth of the pit. Owing to the length of time they had lay surrounded by the putrid exaltations of that part of the pit where the foul air overpowered them, decomposition had rapidly set in. The features of some were distorted and convulsed, others exhibited a placid appearance, despite the insipient ravages of the worm, but in no one instance was there visible that tranquil expression "that first last look by death revealed," which so frequently marks the countenances of persons whom death has gradually released from their suffering. Coffins were therefore let down into the pit, and the remains of the poor sufferers were deposited in them.

They were then brought to the chapel of the establishment, a small building, the interior of which was in strict keeping with the local people who frequent it. The coffins, as they lay in a row on trestles, nearly filled the centre of the chapel. They were plain and substantial, with the initials and age of the unfortunate on the lid. It was here that the long pent up feelings of the friends and relatives of the deceased found vent, and were permitted to flow unrestrained. They crowded around the coffins, on which they gazed with the mute but expressive agony which a wife or mother can only feel, and then desperately flung themselves on them, and embraced them with frantic fervour of the most passionate grief. It was a pitiful sight

The men too, some of them brothers and fathers, and all the fellow labourers of the deceased, sobbed and cried like very children. The big tears rolled plenteously down their wan and haggard cheeks to which the sufferings of the late calamitous explosion had given a subdued and astute expression of recent pain and apprehension.

The scene of the suffering, however, was not without its alleviation. Ever since the fatal accident, Mr. Coffin, with that prompt and considerate humanity which has so endeared him to the population of Dinas, and which had invariably distinguished himself in his frequent intercourse with these poor people, had been engaged in soothing the sorrows of the families of the deceased, and in suggesting and

directing the most prompt and efficacious means for recovering the bodies. The latter effort was a work of much danger, but which at the utmost risk to life was borne by the exploring parties.

The Inquest on David Morgan

On Saturday, January 6th 1844, an inquest was held on the body of the boy David Morgan was held in the interim, before Lewis Reece Esq., Coroner, at the Dinas School House. A jury of the colliers, with Mr. Fisher as the foreman, having been sworn, and the following evidence was adduced: -

David Lloyd stated that he saw the deceased at 7 o'clock on the Monday morning previous to the accident. He was then going to his work. Did not see him again until he was brought out of the pit, a corpse, on Thursday night.

James John, the engineer who was in charge of the machinery, stated that he lived close to the pit. On the morning of the accident he heard a violent explosion that shook the houses where he lived. It occurred to him that it was an explosion of foul air, and he ran directly to the mouth of the pit. As soon as the machinery, which was greatly disordered by the concussion, had been partially arranged, he descended to bring up the men.

At the bottom of the pit he found about fifty men waiting to be drawn up. He brought up William Llewellyn, Thomas Evans, and William Williams, who had his leg broken. The other parties were got up as speedily as the damaged state of the machinery permitted, and by 12 o'clock the whole were brought to the surface. The deceased among others was missing, but until the partition was fit for carrying the air down the shaft, and which was damaged by the accident was completed, they could not descend.

That being completed they went in search of the deceased, and found him on Thursday night about 7 o'clock. He was quite dead, and bore evident marks on his person of the effect of the concussion. He was found at the bottom of the pit, completely covered with the rubbish and bricks detached from the partition. Witness had no doubt that the concussion was occasioned by the ignition of inflammable air in the pit, which he believes caused the death of the deceased. David Llewellyn found the body, and witness brought him up in his arms.

Griffith Williams, of the Dinas works, said – "I am one of the overmen in the works. It is my business to go into every stall of each heading to see that all is safe before

the men go down into the pit. The pit is divided into two parts, I go on one side of the pit, and the other overman, named Morgan Morgan, goes on the other side. We go down into the pit between three and four o'clock in the morning, and we are each of us accompanied by a boy. On Monday morning last I went down the pit as usual, about 4 o'clock, accompanied by a boy, named Edmund Llewellyn.

We first went into Thomas Rowland's heading, which was the nearest to the bottom of the pit. I then sent Llewellyn to John Harry's heading, to examine the stalls there, and while he was there I went to the further end of Rowland's heading, and walked through every stall, and I found the air better than usual. I and Llewellyn took our safety lamps with us, but we found the air so good that we used candles."

Edmund Llewellyn, son of Daniel Llewellyn, manager of the colliery, aged 14, stated that the last witness desired him on entering the pit to go into John Harry's heading while he went into Rowland's heading. Having been told by Griffiths to examine the doors of the stalls, he did so, and found the doors of Powell's and Harry's headings fastened. The only other stall was David Job's which had no door to it, and that being the last stall in the heading a door was unnecessary, as the air is conveyed into that through the stall of John Johns' which is also in the heading. This being deemed sufficient evidence touching the death of Daniel Morgan, the coroner summed the evidence to the jury**. The verdict – "Accidental death, by an explosion occasioned by the ignition of inflammable air."**

The inquest on the other eleven

After the further 11 bodies were discovered on Friday and Saturday, an inquest was held at the office of Mr. Coffin Saturday afternoon, where the following evidence was given: -

Daniel Llewellyn, manager of the Dinas works, said – "When I was descending the upper pit, about 8 o'clock on Monday morning last, I heard a loud noise like thunder, which I knew was occasioned by foul air being ignited somewhere in the pit. David Morgan (the deceased) and Thomas Evans were going down with me. David Morgan was instantly buried under a large quantity of bricks which fell upon him. Thomas Evans was blown against a tram-wagon and broke his leg. A large body of men had collected together at the bottom of the pit, and after

examination, not finding any of the deceased amongst them, I concluded that they had perished.

It was impossible to get at any of the bodies until the partition wall in the pit was repaired. It had been knocked down by the explosion. The wall was completed by Thursday night, and same night the body of David Morgan was found. I afterwards found David Job and William Harry lying dead in John Harry's heading. We found David Phillips, Thomas Leyshon, and Lewis Morris, and today we found Edward Powell, Thomas Rowland, John Rowland, David Rowland, Thomas Morris and William Morris.

It was the duty of the overman Griffith Williams, to go to each heading, and into every stall himself. None of the men were burnt but David Job, and he not much. All the others, I believe, died from suffocation by choke-damp. I am of the opinion, from the observations I have been able to make that the ignition took place in John Harry's heading, by David Job meeting the foul air in going to his stall with a lighted candle. The foul air might have been collected in the heading by any defective place about the frames of either of the air-doors, not withstanding the doors being shut.

If the overman had gone up to the end of John Harry's heading, instead of sending the boy there, who only partially explored it, he must have discovered the danger. Had he carried the safety lamp he might have met, and braved the foul air with impunity. The Coroner submitted the evidence to the jury, who recorded a verdict of ***"accidental death by an explosion occasioned by the ignition of inflammable air."***

The overman condemned

When the jury had returned the above verdict, the Coroner spoke in terms of strong reprehension of the conduct of the overman Griffith Williams, through whose neglect the fatal accident had occurred. He then put it to the jury to say, whether, in their opinion, the conduct of this man was as to render him amenable to a charge of manslaughter? It appeared, however, that this was the first fatal accident (from a similar cause) that had ever occurred in the works, and it would serve as a memorable warning. The jury intimated that enough mischief had been done, and that they had no desire to countenance such a charge against the unfortunate man; and the proceedings of a day that will be long remembered at

Dinas, terminated. A certificate, for the immediate internment of the bodies, was then granted by the Coroner, and the remains of these unfortunate victims, to the great neglect of one man, were committed to the grave.

A newspaper verdict

A South Wales newspaper commented: - "From the evidence adduced, it appears that the disaster occurred through the negligence of the overman. It was his business to go into the pit every morning at 3 o'clock to examine the headings and stalls, and to see if they were in a fit state to resume operations. He went down on the Monday morning in question, accompanied by a little boy, to whom he imprudently entrusted the task of exploring a particular stall. This the poor little fellow but partially explored, and it was in this particular stall in that the foul air had generated, and which was the cause of the melancholy loss of life.

Even the common precaution of wiring the safety lamp was neglected, for the absence of anything like a serious accident in this colliery had made the parties over confident and careless. Half an hour later in the day, when all the men would have been in work, the loss of life and destruction of property would have been truly awful. After a lengthened investigation of the case, a verdict of accidental death was returned, from an explosion occasioned by the ignition of inflammable air."

The awful sacrifice of life at the Dinas Colliery - Shocking revelation

The verdict of the inquest jury was not well received and the following letter, which was one of several, appeared in the 'Letters to the editor' column of the *Merthyr Guardian* the following week: -

Sir – It appears to me that trial by jury, as well as investigations by juries, are fast becoming mere farces in my native county of Glamorgan – to wit: The recent case at the assizes for murder by poisoning - the inquest upon the old woman who kept a turnpike gate and who was shot by the Rebeccaites – and then to the equally questionable decision in the case now before us.

If the agent, whose duties were to examine the purity of the air, neglected those duties, surely he is answerable, and ought to answer, for the consequences; if he did not neglect his duties, I wish to know on what fair principles of justice he is not discharged, and, in all probability, himself and family thrown out of bread. I know nothing of the Dinas Colliery's agents or proprietors, but I am given to understand, that a near relative of Mr. Coffin and who acted as manager, served as foreman of

the jury on the inquest. Upon a matter of such moment, common decency alone should have kept every individual, in the slightest manner connected with the works, from serving as jurymen – and the Coroner ought to have set all those aside who he may have been able to recognize as such, when called upon to serve. Pray go on with your exertions to ameliorate the condition of the working classes. The press is a powerful engine, when used in the course of humanity and Justice.

'Magna Charta,' Abergavenny, January 18th 1844.

The *'Merthyr Guardian*' replied: - Not withstanding the astonishment of the editor of the '*Mining Journal*, ' it is quite true that Mr. Fisher, the manager of the colliery acted as foreman of the jury on the melancholy occasion of the inquest on the bodies, and we willingly bare our testimony to the frankness and explicitness of his evidence. There was neither evasion no artifice resorted to, to suppress the truth, the entire of which we are perfectly satisfied was elicited by his truthfulness and industry. People are therefore at a loss to know why the assistance of an upright and intelligent man should be repudiated. – The editor

The £40 benefit

The '*Merthyr Guardian*' of January 20th 1844 carried the following letter: *To the Editor: In your last week's paper a paragraph was inserted respecting the accident at Dinas Colliery, in which it is stated, "that it is gratifying to observe that the widows of the sufferers have received the magnificent sum of £40 from the Oddfellows of Merthyr, which with a donation from the Widow and Orphans' Fund, belonging to the same admirable order, will be some alleviation to the suffering of the survivors." I beg to observe, on behalf of the widows that the above paragraph is incorrect. It is true that £40 was received from the Merthyr district, by the officers of the Glan-Rhondda Lodge, held at Cymmer, that lodge being in the said district. There being a funeral fund in the district, every lodge in the district contributes its share towards the fund, and when a member belonging to any lodge in the district dies, notice is sent to the Funeral secretary of such a death, and, as soon as convenient, the secretary remits the amount to the officers of the lodge where such death takes place.*

Now in this instance four of the poor men who were killed by the late explosion were members of the above lodge, and soon as it was known that they were among those killed, notice was sent, to Merthyr, by Mr. James Arnott, the landlord of the house where the lodge is held, to the secretary, and the money was given him, and

by him delivered to the officers of the lodge, who paid it over to the relatives of the deceased men, as follows: - £10 to relatives of William Harry; £10 to the parents of Edward Powell; £10 to the widowed mother of David Williams; and the remaining £10 to the widow of David Rowlands, who had been left a family with three young children, and on the eve of confinement. Should any benevolent individual wish to contribute towards the necessities of the bereaved, then leave such contributions at your office, to be given to Mr. Fisher, the able superintendent of these works, who will divide any money given to him between the families. I am, &Co. - ***One of the colliers that sat on the inquest. January 16th 1844***

Dinas Colliery, however, would return to the history books when another catastrophe would occur some 35 years later and this caused the '*Western Mail*' of Friday, January 17th 1879, to reflect on the 1844 explosion at Dinas and commented: - Not since the memorable first week of 1844, when the first great explosion in South Wales took place in this shaft, and when twelve men and boys were hurled to eternity, has Dinas presented so gloomy an appearance as it has done this week.

Naturally enough the incidents of the explosion are frequently discussed during these sad days by old inhabitants still in the land of the living. Dinas was then a small, scattered village. The greatest part of the Rhondda Valley was in the same condition as it had been from time immemorial, with only a few farmhouses dotting the slopes of the rugged hills. The farmers dwelling in the neighbourhood of the towns now called Llwynypia, Tonypandy, Heolfach, Ton Pentre, Treorchy, and Treherbert, where hundreds of thousands of tons are now raised annually, actually sent pack horses to Dinas for coal.

The manager of the Dinas collieries then, and an able manager he was, was the late Mr. Daniel Thomas, father of Mr. Edmund Thomas, Maindy-hall, Ystrad, and Mr. Daniel Thomas, to whom an Albert Medal was awarded for valour at Tynewydd. The only "master" known and recognised by the then inhabitants of Dinas was the late Mr. Walter Coffin, of Llandaff. He was a small potentate at Dinas, and his decisions were implicitly obeyed as if he had been one of Her Majesty's judges.

If ever a man quarrelled with his wife, she went to the office to complain to the "master" the moment she heard he had come to the place. In fact, all disputes, whether between man or woman, were submitted to the judgement of Mr. Coffin, and the consequence was, that in his old age he came to be recognised as the patriarch of the tribe of Dinas. *Old times are changed, old manners gone, a stranger fills the Dinas throne*. It must be admitted, however, that he is a stranger that everybody liked. (In the first half of the 19th century Richard Hopkins

commented that Walter Coffin owned everything at Dinas 'except the souls of men.')

But to revert to the explosion of 1844. It was on a Monday, and the first morning of a new year. All the inhabitants were known to each other, and the miners going to their work saluted their friends with the jovial greeting, "Blwyddyn newydd dda i chi!" *(Happy new year to you!).* Shortly after their descent into the shaft the village of Storehouse was startled by a terrific roar, such as no one in the quiet hamlet had ever heard before. It was also heard at Tai and Ffrwdamos, and all the inhabitants left on the surface, both men and women and children, ran towards the Dinas Pit, and the first thing that met their gaze was the roofless top of the building over the shaft, the roof having been blown away, and the broken tiles scattered all round.

As soon as possible men descended the pit, when it was found that Mr. Thomas, the manager, had escaped, having been blown from the carriage upon which he had just descended the shaft to the opposite side of the shaft from where the gas had ignited. Gallant explorers (amongst them Samuel Edmunds, who displayed great bravery, and who was killed in the great explosion at Cymmer in 1856) entered the fatal district known as "Heading Shōni Harri." They went so far as a certain door, and on the other side of it they heard a voice in earnest prayer. But the deadly fume was too powerful for them, and they had to turn back and run for their lives to the bottom of the shaft. One of the party fell exhausted during the retreat, but he was carried to a place of safety.

Many days afterwards, when the ventilation had been restored, on going beyond the door referred to, a dead body on its knees, in an attitude of supplication, was found. It was the body of Thomas Rowlands, Deacon with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists at Dinas, and his three sons, quite dead, were found lying near him. Eight more lifeless bodies, one of them of David John, fearfully burnt, were brought to bank.

Disaster at the Tynewydd Colliery 1877

On April 11th 1877, at about 4 p.m., the Tynewydd Pit of the Troedyrhiw Colliery, not far from the Dinas Colliery, became inundated with water. At the time of the disaster the pit employed 100 men, but when the accident occurred only 14 men were underground. The accident was caused by a breakthrough from the mine's workings through to the abandoned and flooded workings of the old Cymmer Pit. Immediately rescue attempts were begun to find the fourteen missing miners.

Five survivors were found when a knocking was heard, and rescuers cutting through a 12 yard thick pillar of coal reached them the following morning.

Unfortunately the force of the compressed air released when the first small hole was cut to the pocket where the men were, led to one of the survivors (William Morgan) being crushed to death. It was assumed the remaining nine men had been drowned in the flooded mine. However further knocking was heard coming from the stall of Thomas Morgan, which was below the level of the floodwater, leading rescuers to assume that some survivors had been trapped in an air pocket. An unusual rescue attempt using two divers from London was attempted, but the amount of debris in the mine made it impossible. As such, the only means of reaching the trapped miners was to cut through over 38 yards of coal.

Working day and night it took the rescuers ten days to reach the five trapped men, during which time the plight of the miners captured the attention of the world's press with even Queen Victoria sending telegraphs asking for the latest news. At 2.30 on Friday, April 20th the rescue team finally reached the five trapped men, who had been without food and had only the filthy flood waters to drink for ten days.

The miners were all found to be suffering the 'the bends' due to rapid decompression and spent 18 days in hospital, but otherwise made full recoveries from their ordeal. Afterwards Queen Victoria awarded twenty-four first and second class Albert medals to the rescuers. Amongst those receiving a first class medal was Daniel Thomas, proprietor of the Brithweunydd Colliery, who would later play a big part in the history of the Dinas Colliery.

Narrow escape at Dinas Colliery 1878

For nearly 25 years the Dinas Colliery grew and appeared to run with little more than the normal death rate for the time. But the ventilation seemed to be an ever present problem and in attempting to rectify this sometimes the actions of the officers seem very dangerous. The '*Western Mail*' of Wednesday, June 12th 1878 reported: -

It is reported in the Rhondda valley that a few days ago the miners employed by Colonel Hunt & Co. had a very narrow escape when the colliery authorities were making certain experiments with a view to improve the ventilation of the two pits. It seems that there is a Lower Pit, which is half-a-mile from the other pit, and known as the downcast, through which the air descends to the colliery, while at the top of the pit is an immense fan, whirling with great velocity day and night, to suck the air up the upcast. Two seams are worked below, viz; the "Polka" and the "Two-feet-nine" seams. The ventilation in the Polka seam being rather defective, an experiment was tried with a view to improve it; wooden pipes were laid along the airway in the direction of the upcast, and a fire was lighted in the interior of the Polka seam, at the mouth of the pipes. But no sooner was this done than the fire

shot through the wooden pipes with a rapidity of lightning, setting fire to the pipes themselves.

A scene of wild confusion ensued as several men attempted to extinguish the flames. What added to the anxiety felt was that the pipes had been laid through regions where only Davy lamps were allowed. However, before this region was reached it was extinguished, and the men came out safely. Two days later there were still accumulations of gas when William Galloway arrived for an inspection which was to lead to prosecutions of the colliery officials. The newspapers on August 8th 1878 reported: -

For breeches of the Mines Regulation Act 1872, fines were, on Wednesday, inflicted by the Pontypridd Stipendiary on John Chubb, manager of the Dinas Collieries, £10 and costs; on Morris, fireman, of 20 shillings, and costs; and David Lewis, under-overman, of 40 shillings and costs. Mr. Galloway, Assistant Inspector of Mines, in stating the case out of which the allegations arose, said that in visiting the Dinas Colliery on 14th of June he discovered two accumulations of gas there, one of which was at an "explosive point." However, this was not the end of it. Questions were asked in the House of Commons when the colliery manager, John Chubb, was brought before a Board of Trade inquiry on August 19th 1878 over his conduct:-

Gross negligence at the Dinas Colliery
Suspension of Manager's certificate

The court was composed of Mr. Henry Cadogan Rotherby, the Wreckage Commissioner, with Mr. Thomas Cadman, Inspector of Mines for the South West District, as assessor, and proceeded under section 32 of the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1872. In describing the working of the colliery the Commissioner said that the colliery contained two pits, the downcast and the upcast. The downcast, 315 feet deep, passed through the 2 ft. 9 in. seam down to the Polka, or 4 ft. seam. The upcast pit, 406 yards deep, passes through both of these seams, and goes down to the 6 ft. At the top of the upcast pit was a fan, which, by drawing the air out, caused it to circulate the colliery and its workings.

Mr. Chubb had been under-manager of the colliery, but on his appointment, November 1877, to be manager, conceiving that the ventilation, by reason of the air having to pass along the 2 ft. 9 in. seam for 500 yards, and then down the little pit 20 yards deep before it got into the 4 ft. seam, was defective, he suggested lowering the downcast to the Polka level, and carrying a roadway through that level to the bottom of the 20 yard pit. That was the proper thing to do. The downcast pit was lowered, and a heading was driven on the 4 ft. level from both ends – the

bottom of the downcast, and the bottom of the 20 yards. At the time of the events which led to the inquiry the two headings had not met.

There was a solid face of 100 yards between them, and 'till they met so as to complete the roadway they would naturally be out of the course of ventilation. Special arrangements were accordingly made to ventilate the heading working from the downcast. There were two pipes a foot square, starting within the entrance of the 2 ft. 9 in. seam, descending the shaft to the 4 ft. seam, passing along the heading in that seam for 227 yards, and terminating just beyond a canvas screen which was stretched across the roadway.

The object of these square pipes was to carry off foul air from the space behind the screen. The fresh-air would come down the downcast and drive the foul air before it. From the bottom of the downcast to the canvas screen was 220 yards. Beyond this, however, to the face of the heading, there was a distance of 120 or 130 yards, and, in order to convey the air to the men who were working at that face, a fan was placed outside the screen, with a pipe extending from it through the screen to the face of the heading.

The effectiveness of this arrangement would obviously depend on the amount and quality of pure air which would thus be forced through the 120 or 130 yards to the face of the heading. An experiment showed the object sought was not attained. Last June Mr. Galloway, the Assistant Inspector of Mines for South Wales, went down the mine with Mr. Chubb. They descended the downcast as far as the entrance to the 2 ft. 9 in. seam, and along that to what was called Moore's heading. There Mr. Galloway observed in a cavity in the roof a small accumulation of explosive gas. In a larger cavity ahead a still larger quantity was found.

The height of the workings here was 5 foot to 6 foot; but as it was a road along which wagons and men passed continually, the result would be that gas would be disturbed and brought down, and if it came in contact with a light an explosion might result. When they came to the canvas screen, Mr. Chubb told the assistant-inspector to put out the Clanny lamp and take a Davy lamp. They passed the screen, and met a haulier without a light, and Mr. Galloway was told by Mr. Chubb that it would not be safe to trust the man with a light.

They proceeded 120 to 130 yards beyond the screen to the face of the heading, where they found two or three men at work. John Chubb told the assistant-inspector to keep his light low, and Galloway could see the whole of the space between the canvas screen and the face of the heading was evidently charged with gas. On arriving at the end, the assistant-inspector determined not to repeat his perilous journey. Having satisfied himself of the explosive nature of the air, he

immediately ordered all the lights to be put out, and they groped their way back in the dark until they passed the canvas screen. Mr. Chubb then said the gas had given him a great deal of trouble, and Mr. Galloway suggested a very simple remedy.

The Court came to the conclusion that the air in the heading behind the canvas screen had been in a dangerously explosive state for a very considerable time and that Mr. Chubb knew it. He ought to have prevented the gas from accumulating in the cavity in the thin seam, where its dangerous presence was noted by Mr. Galloway, but it was in regard to the mass of foul air in the Polka seam between the canvas screen and the face of the heading, for a length of 120 to 130 yards, that they held Mr. Chubb chiefly to blame.

That the air there was in a dangerously explosive state the Court had no doubt whatever. They had it on the authority of Mr. Wales and Mr. Galloway that if such a mass of foul air had exploded, not only would it have destroyed the whole of the machinery in the down-cast and the buildings at the top, but it would have killed all the men in that part of the mine, and possibly many more in other parts of the workings. The Court had no doubt Mr. Chubb knew the state of the mine, and that the steps taken by him to clear it of gas, previous to Mr. Galloway's visit were utterly insufficient. In not adopting the simple means afterwards suggested by Mr. Galloway, he showed himself unfit, in the opinion of the Court, for his position as manager.

The court further inquired whether, knowing as he did that there were noxious vapours in this mine to a dangerous extent, Mr. Chubb took any means to suspend all operations in it, to remove all persons from it, and to prevent any persons from again entering in until the danger had been removed. Most certainly they found he did nothing of the kind. On the contrary, he allowed the operations to go on, and persons freely to enter, although he knew it was dangerous for them to do so.

The fact that the overman neglected his duty was no reason at all for Mr. Chubb to have neglected his. The onus was on him to show that he took all reasonable means to carry out the special rules, and he had not done so. Therefore, much as they regretted it, the Court felt bound to punish Mr. Chubb. But they did not visit him with costs. He had already been fined £10; he was a man who had risen from the ranks, a man with a family. The Commissioner observed that had it been the case of the owners of the colliery in which great neglect and disregard of the lives of their workmen had been shown, he would have no hesitation in condemning them in the costs.

The court found that John Chubb contravened the first general rule in the Act by not providing sufficient ventilation in the mine to dilute and render harmless the noxious gases. The court also found that the then certified manager had contravened the second rule of the Act by omitting to have proper books kept recording the ventilation, and had contravened the 60th special rule of the colliery by not suspending operations and removing workmen when the mine had become dangerous owing to noxious gasses.

The court therefore found the then certificated manager unfit to discharge his duty. In the reasons which accompanied the findings of the court, the commissioner and his assessor stated that the incompetency and gross negligence of the management at that time might have been attended with the most lamentable loss of life. Seeing, however, the very high character for attention to his duties which the manager had received from witnesses who came forward, his certificate was only suspended for six months. Mr. Chubb's neglect, according to Mr. Galloway, the assistant Inspector, who gave evidence at the investigation, was due partly to the want of knowledge, partly a desire to get through the work as cheaply as possibly.

The appointment of a new manager

That there was no doubt some practical difficulty in immediately filling the place rendered vacant by the suspension of John Chubb's certificate but there cannot be any question that the proprietor was acting within his right accorded under the 26th section of that statute literally speaking, in exercising the power of appointing a non-certificated temporary manager, under the circumstances in which the colliery was placed. In proof of this, the following letters passed between Messrs. Coffin & Co. and Mr. Wales: -

No. 1 **- Messrs Coffin & Co., Dinas Collieries, Pontypridd, to the Inspector of Mines Swansea: -**

Cardiff, November 20th 1878

Sir, the result of yesterday's inquiry into the conduct of our manager Mr. Chubb, has placed us in a difficulty as to which we trust we shall be in order troubling you. We were naturally anxious not to prejudice Mr. Chubb's case by making any change in the management before completion of the inquiry, but we are now taking every possible step to procure a new manager, and will immediately advise you when we have been able to procure a suitable man. In the meantime we have no suitable person at the colliery whom we can nominate for the temporary vacancy and we have to ask you whether under the peculiar circumstances of the case we should be warranted in leaving Mr. Chubb in charge until another manager has been appointed, the only alternative to this course appears to us to be the appointment of a far less competent person that Mr. Chubb. We hope you will excuse us if there is any

impropriety in our saying further, that we would esteem it a favour if you would name any certificated managers who are in want of employment and would be likely to suit our requirements. We are, Coffin & Co.,

(Signed) I. Wood

No. 2 **– Inspector of Mines, Swansea, to Messrs. Coffin & Co.**

Swansea, November 22nd 1878 *Dear Sirs - In reply to your letter of the 20th instant, I think the matter to which you refer is one on which your solicitor would be better able to advise you than I am. I do not know of any suitable person to fill the vacancy, but I think you will not have much difficulty in these times in finding one.*

Thomas E. Wales

No. 3 **– Messrs Coffin & Co., to the Inspector of Mines, Swansea.**

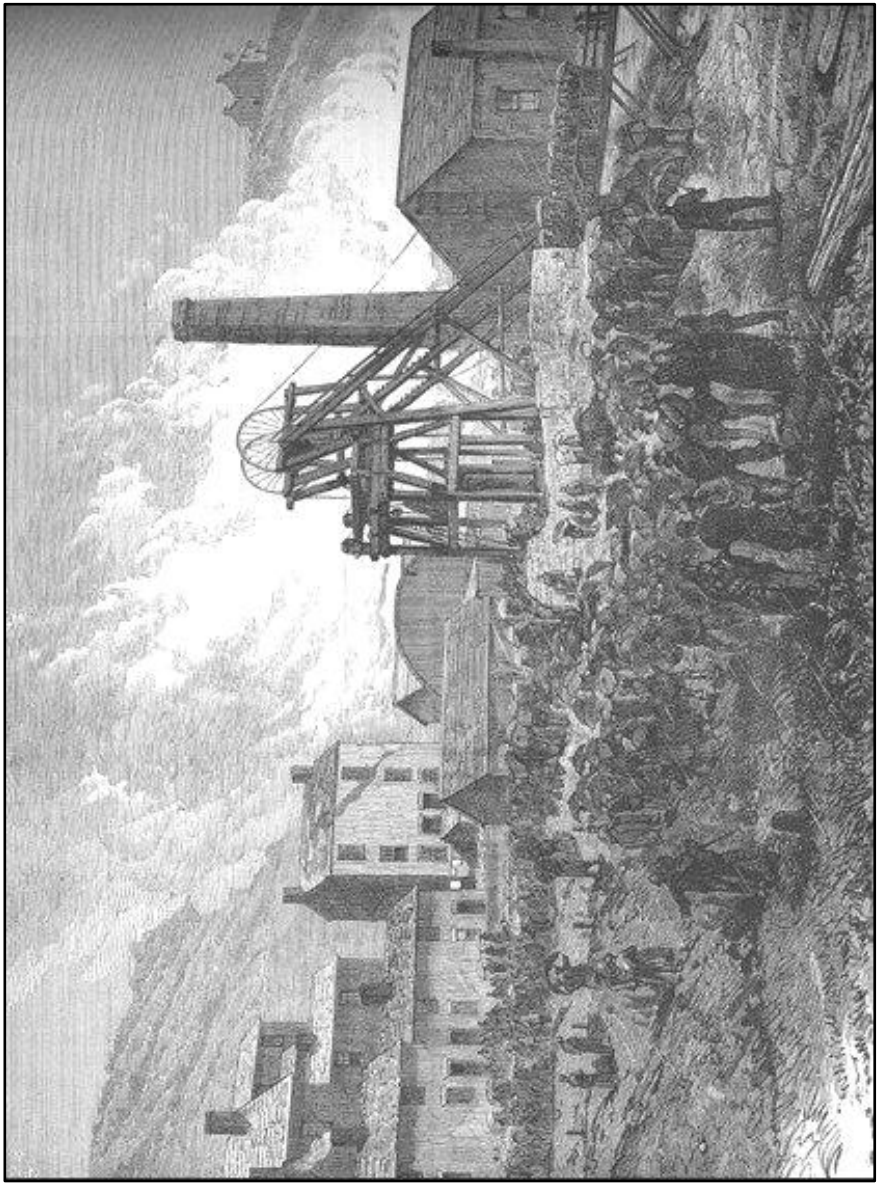
November 26th 1878 *Sir – We duly received your favour on the subject of the appointment of an interim manager for these collieries. Acting thereupon, we have consulted our solicitor, who advises us not to appoint Mr. Chubb even temporarily and we have accordingly appointed one of our overmen, Samuel Hughes, to act until we have been able to obtain a certificated manager, which kindly note. We are of course, sparing no effort to secure a permanent manager speedily, but we may add that we believe Hughes, who will try for a certificate on the next examination, is quite competent to fulfil the requirements of the post. We should be obliged if you would send your receipt of this letter to our Cardiff office.* ***We are, Coffin & Co., (Signed) I. Wood***

No. 4 **– Inspector of Mines to Coffin & Co.**

November 27th 1878 *Dear Sirs – I beg to acknowledge the receipt of yesterday, informing me that you have appointed Mr. Samuel Hughes to be the manager of your Dinas Collieries, in accordance with section 26 of the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1872.*

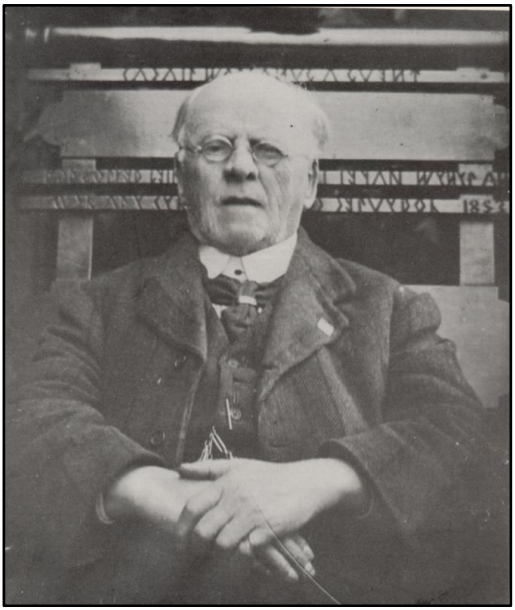
Thomas H. Wales

On September 11th 1878 268 men and boys were killed at the Abercarn Colliery in Monmouthshire. Many of the bodies were never recovered and one skeleton was recovered 27 years later, still in his working clothes. Unknown to everyone at this time the scene for the first major colliery disaster in the Rhondda valley was set. A few weeks later the 'Angel of death' would visit the Dinas Colliery.



Engraving of the Dinas Colliery disaster of 1879
(London Illustrated News)

The explosion of 1879 would occur in the four-foot seam at the Middle Pit. The upcast shaft was fixed at the Middle Pit, and the downcast shaft at the Lower Pit. Men went to work by the upcast shaft. The Middle Pit was around 430 yards deep, and about 80 yards from the bottom lay the Polka level. This seam was worked from the Lower Pit, and there was a connecting airway between it and the Middle Pit. The old, the middle, and the second pit employed between 400 and 500, and the amount being raised by 1879 on average was 500 tons of coal per day. In the Middle Pit about 300 men would be employed, and in the smaller pits 160. The day men were colliers, and the night men labourers engaged principally in repairing work. This is how the disaster was recorded in the newspapers of the time: -



Owen Morgan, better known as 'Morien' the famous '*Western Mail*' reporter who made his name covering such disasters as those at Dinas.

CHAPTER THREE

The Dinas Colliery explosion – Monday, January 13th 1879

Terrible explosion at Dinas Colliery – 59 lives lost
Unsuccessful attempts to explore the mine - Gallant conduct of explorers

On Monday morning, January 13th 1879, only 100 men went down the Dinas Colliery, as Monday was usually an idle day, and on the average a much smaller number of men went down than would be the case on other days. They, however, worked a larger number of hours than usual, not returning to the bank until 6 o'clock. The reason for this was that the colliers wished to attend the funeral of an old inhabitant of Porth, the widow of one of the old colliers in the neighbourhood, who died on January 5th, in her 77th year. The colliers desired to cut a larger quantity of coal on Monday to enable them to leave the colliery early on Wednesday.

The usual compliment of night men, with the two hitchers, descended the pit on Monday night around six o'clock. The day men then ascended it. Lamps were as usual, given to the night men, and these lamps were presumably duly examined at the lamp station. The banksmen at the top sent timber down as usual, and the hitchers below received it and sent it off to the repairers. The latter were scattered along the workings. Some were engaged as timbermen, and other as hauliers, together with labourers to do the heavy work of keeping the pit in what is understood to be efficient working order. The entire party was under the orders of William Lloyd, a shrewd, practical man, familiar with every part of the pit.

Some of the workers were near the bottom, others were two miles or so ahead. After about ten minutes or quarter past seven another timber load was sent down the shaft by carriage, which was capped with iron to prevent accidents. The timber had been half unloaded by the hitchers when about twenty minutes to eleven there was a tremendous crash, and the carriage cab was sent flying up against the pit mouth rafters. The din was terrific, and the banksman, terribly frightened, took to his heels. The volumes of smoke and showers of coal dust were then seen to ascend, and with the cessation of the sullen subterranean rumbling noise, all was still.

The shock of the explosion shook the cottages adjacent, and the echoes were heard miles away. The Cymmer Pit is adjacent, and there the men who are in the employ of Mr. Insole say they felt the concussion of the explosion with such force as to

force them at once to form the conjecture that some dreadful accident had happened to their neighbours, from which no-one would escape.

The inhabitants of the district came rushing down to the mouth of the pit, some only half clad and others scarcely clad at all, just as they had tumbled out of bed. Everybody was calling out as they went towards the pit, "An explosion – an appalling explosion has taken place." On learning what had happened they became frantic with grief and the scene was truly heartrending. Women and children shrieked with terror, and many wives and mothers were carried away in a fainting condition. Another of those terrible mining disasters which in this era have given such unhappy notoriety to the Rhondda Valley district had occurred again.

At the pit bank

It was found impossible to approach the mouth of the pit for a time owing to the dense smoke and the horrible smell of sulphur that prevailed there. Gradually this cleared away sufficiently to enable people to examine the machinery and the framing at the top of the shaft, when it was discovered that portions of the framing had been blown away, and that one of the two iron caps, each weighing about half a ton, and employed to seal the mouth of the shafts for the purpose of ventilation, had been blown up into the framing, where it was hanging suspended over the mouth of the shaft.

The signal wires of the pit were broken, and the men below could not consequently, if alive, communicate with those above, but no hopes were entertained of their safety, as they would, it is believed, have shouted for help if they had not succumbed, and their shouts would probably have been heard. Plenty of brave men, however, were still prepared to descend into the shaft to make an attempt at rescuing the poor fellows below, known to number about sixty, but owing to the suspended iron cap this was too dangerous. Attempts were made to remove the iron cap, and when the experienced men were deliberating, a voice was heard below. This was followed by one of the men on the surface, looking into the abyss and crying "Hoi!" There was a response. It was the voice of William Morgan, employed in working a pumping engine in the abandoned No. 3 seam.

The full depth of the pit is 420 yards, and William Morgan worked alone in this opening in the side of the shaft, eighty yards below the surface. No one, however, dared to descend the shaft, owing to the suspended iron, which was momentarily expected to fall. Measures were as soon as possible adopted to secure this iron and this having been done the engineers, after placing beams across the opening and fastening the chain to them, detached it from the drum. They were then able

to work the second carriage, attached to the other end of the chain, from the surface.

Volunteer explorers

John Webb, David Williams, Thomas Griffiths (Cymmer), and John Ace, then volunteered to descend, and their descent, which took place a little after two o'clock in the morning, was watched with intense interest by the hundreds of men and women who had gathered at the pit's mouth. Dense smoke and sulphur continued to ascend from the shaft, but the brave band continued to descend the dreadful hole, each carrying a Davy lamp.

Baffled by the after-damp

They passed the opening where William Morgan was, but when at 300 yards down, David Williams, one of the rescuers, fell into the arms of one of his companions in an insensible condition. His companions were also in such a state from the affects of the after-damp that they hurriedly signalled to be drawn up, and after this was done, the party stopped at the opening above to bring up William Morgan with them. They had been far enough down to discover that there was no chance to enter the colliery that way in consequence of the gas and the debris which filled the bottom. Attention was then directed to the other pit – the downcast shaft, 300 yards lower in the valley.

There were many men working here when the explosion took place, and they were blown about like feathers by the force of the blast, but owing to an extraordinary occurrence escaped without serious injury. The occurrence referred to is explained as follows: - There are two shafts – the one in which the explosion took place, and the downcast. In the interior between the two shafts, is another shaft, the bottom of which is level with the bottom of the upcast shaft.

The air passed through this small shaft of 80 yards from the downcast, and through the workings, and then up the upcast. Now, the downcast is to the south of the upcast, and the explosion must have taken place in the south-west district. The terrible blast rushed in the direction of the upcast, but the force was so great that the small shaft of 80 yards in the interior was rent to pieces, and the consequence of this was that the men working in the downcast district escaped, for the little pit was closed up by the rubbish, and the timber which fell in it.

After midnight, every attempt to descend the upcast shaft was baffled by the terrible foulness of the vapour ascending. They then went down the other shaft, through which the air is taken in and proceeded along the airway towards the

deeper pit, which was closed as far as the point at which the air is taken through the "staple*," across the measures into the lower seams. There they discovered a tremendous fall, which completely blocked up the "staple," and the air, instead of going down below, was passing straight along and through the doorway into the upcast, and so out into the open air." *A staple shaft is a vertical shaft underground, i.e. between two seams, more often found in hard rock mines, or horizon mines in steep coal seams.

The rescuing party found it impossible to penetrate through the rubbish, and all attempts to reach the men in that direction had to be abandoned. Those who made brave efforts to penetrate in this direction were Mr. Daniel Thomas (Albert medallist of the first class), John Chubb, Samuel Hughes (managers), William Samuel (overman), and Morgan Morris.

Never a single man burnt here

Years ago there was a gas explosion at the Lower Pit, but there has been no explosion in recent years. "I have been here six years," remarked one responsible colliery official to a reporter when questioned on this point, "but I have never seen a single man burnt here yet. There have been many falls of coal from the roof, but we have always managed to steer clear of accidents." This statement is borne out by the general testimony of the men. The colliery has formed the leading industrial support of Dinas. Trade depression withstanding, it has worked regularly, and turned out an average 600 tons of coal per day. The colliery works with safety lamps; but it is rumoured that hitchers sometimes used naked lights. There is a day overman and a night overman for the pit, and other routine officials.

Narrative of an explorer

One miner in Dinas, who was unwilling that his name should appear, informed a reporter that he was in bed in Pandy village at the time of the explosion. He was awakened out of his sleep by the heavy cannon-like report, and, jumping hastily out of bed and putting a few things on, he was amongst the first to arrive at the pit's mouth. All was confusion and terror for a few minutes, but the full meaning of the disaster making itself plain on the spot, efforts were made to reach the bottom, but this was found to be impossible, for the winding engine would not act, owing, it was supposed, to the cage having been broken and becoming entangled.

The engine-man did all that he could to liberate the cage, and at last, about midnight, succeeded. The first use made of the cage was to bring up William Morgan from the No. 3 seam, and then an attempt was made to get to the bottom

of the shaft, but the sulphurous smell told the explorers that they must be cautious. After several ineffectual trials, it was found that the way was absolutely blocked, about 35 yards from the bottom. When this information reached the bank, it caused a great feeling of depression, but there was still hope that the men would be reached through the upcast shaft, but as the morning broke it became plain that a similar difficulty presented itself by the downcast.

It was then plain that the accident had happened about the centre of the workings. This explorer, on being asked for a theory explaining the explosion, gave it firmly as his view that the explosion had not been caused by the incautious use of a naked light. That, he thought, was improbable. He supposed an unusually great fall of coal had occurred, liberating an unusually large quantity of gas, and that a lamp had given way, the flame of which had caught the liberated gas, and caused the catastrophe. He thought then, when the centre of the workings had been explored, that immense damage would have found to have been caused by the explosion.

Individually, he thought there might be a chance of at least some of the men being saved. Practically speaking, he said the workings were in three great branches. If the explosion occurred in No 1. there was no hope; but the if the scene was in No. 2 or No. 3; he imagined there was hope for many of the sixty entombed. In answer to further inquiries, he said the timbermen, hauliers, and labourers, were good specimens of the men of that district in the sense of being steady, prudent men. He spoke well of the general care of which the work was carried on.

Tuesday January 14th 1879

Rain fell all day Tuesday, but this did not deter hundreds of men and women being present. Work was suspended in all the neighbouring collieries during the day. When the exact facts were realised, a feeling of despondency crept over the people in the village of Dinas, nearly every house was more or less affected by the catastrophe. The early trains on Tuesday brought large numbers of miners from neighbouring villages, and as the day wore on female relatives of the entombed reached Dinas in large numbers, but throughout the day all was quiet. The block at both ends, so to speak, effectually preventing any of the men being reached. Few at the colliery imagined that a single man was alive.

Further efforts at rescue

In the early morning of Tuesday engineers and managers from all the surrounding districts came to the pit to render what aid they could, and renewed efforts were made to penetrate the small shaft in the interior, but without success. Prominent of those taking an active interest in the proceedings were Mr. Wales, the Inspector of Mines for the South Wales District; Mr. Galloway, Deputy Inspector; Mr. S. Hughes, manager of the Dinas Colliery; and Mr. Wood, the Cardiff agent.

No hope of saving life

There was no hope that any of the poor fellows below could be alive, for not a breath of air entered the colliery. Some men, however, clung to the hope that if the explosion took place within a short distance of the bottom of the shaft a large quantity of air may have been imprisoned in the interior of the workings, where the men were employed, and that owing to the fact that both ends – the upcast and downcast are blocked, so as to prevent any air entering or leaving the colliery, some of the men may be alive. It was pointed out that the case is somewhat similar to that which took place at Tynewydd, about a mile away, when men were rescued after being imprisoned for ten days. It was feared, however, that this theory was not a probable one, and it was remarked that there was no gas at Tynewydd.

In connection with the management, it was observed that a few months before, Mr. Galloway, the Deputy Inspector of Mines, visited the colliery and detected an infringement of the Mines Regulation Act, for which the manager, Mr. Chubb, was prosecuted and fined £10, and also had his certificate suspended for six months. That inquiry was instituted in connection with some questions by Mr. McDonald M.P., in the House of Commons in reference to a paragraph referring to this colliery that appeared in the '*Western Mail*.'

In consequence the management of the pit was temporarily transferred to Mr. Hughes, the overman, under the sanction of Mr. Wales, Inspector for the district, and Mr. Chubb continued to act as overman of the colliery. There was a strong probability that these circumstances would largely influence the forthcoming inquiry into the cause of the accident. It was stated by several, however, that Mr. Chubb was still virtually the manager. There is a consulting engineer, Mr. C. H. James of Merthyr, but he had not held the appointment long.

As to the cause of the accident it may be stated that the barometrical readings on Monday had indicated a heavy atmospheric pressure. On Monday afternoon, and for the greater part of Tuesday a thick, murky cloud came over the mountaintops

overlooking the Rhondda valley, and the air had a stifling feeling about it, anything but agreeable, and very extraordinary, coming as it did so soon after the severe frost.

What the effect of the recent variations of temperature has had on the ventilation of the pit would no doubt incidentally form the subject of inquiry. The practical colliers around Dinas make a suggestion to the cause of the disaster, to the effect that whilst the timbermen were busy there might have been an unusually heavy fall of coal, which produces a "blower;" in other words, let free a large volume of gas. The heavy fall, they say, might have injured one of the men's lamps and the flame of the lamp might have parted the gas from the "blower," thereby producing an explosion.

Praiseworthy conduct of colliery managers

It should be mentioned that the Glamorgan Coal Company, as well as the owners of several collieries in the district, had placed everything within their power likely to be of service at the disposal of the Dinas Colliery authorities. Amongst the managers and engineers present are the following: - Mr. David Evans, Bodryngallt and Ferndale Collieries; Mr. Edmund Thomas, Gelli and Tynybedw Collieries; Mr. William Jenkins, The Ocean Steam Coal Company; Mr. Davies, Tylagoch; Mr. Curnew, Bute Collieries; Mr. Daniel Thomas, Brithwennydd and Dinas Ishaf Collieries; Mr. Moses Rowland and Mr. Morgan Rowland, Penygraig Collieries; Mr. J. Griffiths, Cymmer Colliery; Mr. Joshua Davies and Mr. William Davies, Coedcae Collieries; Mr. William Thomas, Resolven; Mr. James, Pentre; Mr. Davies, Pontypridd Colliery; Mr. Hood Jnr; Llwynypia; and Mr. Joshua Davies.

The following medical gentlemen were in attendance all day on Tuesday:- Mr. Henry Naunton Davies; Jones, Tonypandy; Parry, Ferndale; and Leckie, Pontypridd.

Narrative of William Morgan

The thick veil of mystery shrouding the origins of this terrible disaster still remained, and there is too good reason to believe that it will ever remain unknown. In all human probability, none of the poor fellows who went down in the deep workings of the colliery on Monday night were now alive. One man, and only one, who descended the pit that night has as yet reached its bank, and that person is the pumping-engineer, who was stationed in the No. 3 heading, upwards of 300 yards from the bottom of the main shaft. His name is William Morgan, and he, according to his own statement is new to colliery work. His account of the explosion in his own words were these: -

"I was taken to my work on Monday afternoon at quarter-past four o'clock, the engine under my care being situated in an old working 100 yards from the surface, along, fifteen or sixteen yards from the main shaft. Shortly after ten o'clock I oiled my engine by the light of my lamps, there being three burners in the shaft. About twenty-five minutes past ten I sat down on a box near one of the lamps, and was amusing myself by reading "*Young Folks*." – I generally take one or two papers or periodicals with me, as I have not much to do – when I heard a loud report. Almost immediately the two air-doors, between which I was placed, were blown down, and one of them fell upon me and knocked me several yards along the shaft. I fell upon some pipes, sustaining serious injury to my right leg.

I must have remained stupefied for some time. When I came round I scrambled up. I could feel no pain then, and groped about for my lamps, all of which had been extinguished. I could not find them, but I managed to get hold of the knocker, with which I signalled to the top for the cage. All this time, in fact, as long as I remained in the pit, there was a humming sound in my ears and shivering in the air, and besides this the shaft was filled with a thick cloud of dust, blown from the old workings, which I could taste and feel, though I could not see it.

I had no idea of the locality of the accident, but I had no doubt that a serious one had occurred. I was convinced that many lives must be lost, as no sound came from the hitchers at the bottom of the pit. I listened attentively, but could hear nothing but a distant rumbling, and from this I gathered there had been a heavy fall at the bottom. I was rescued between one and two o'clock in the morning. The delay occurring in relieving me from my position was owing to the cage having been caught in the gear at the top of the pit, and the men above being unable to get it to work.

I myself found one of the guides broken, so I had made up my mind I would be left some hours in the pit. I thought I was out of the reach of the after-damp, so that I was not uneasy. I do not know much about collieries, having only recently come from Australian mines; but I have always been used to working on the surface, and I shall stick to that in the future. I may tell you that it is not in accordance with the rules for an engine-driver to be at his work by himself, but the fact that no one was with me could not have possibly had anything to do with the accident."

Operations in the pit

It was feared that several days would elapse before any of the men could be reached. The task in which the explorers were engaged was an extremely hazardous one, owing to the blocks in the interior. Their only chance of reaching the block in the Little Pit is by means of the pipes that had now been sent down.

Shift after shift descended the downcast shaft, and worked with great determination to prepare for the introduction of those canvas pipes by which it was hoped that the foul air would be drawn off.

These pipes were in place for the purpose by 3 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, and it was hoped to have them fixed by Wednesday morning, though the latest accounts of the state of the air and of the obstruction met with in getting to the shaft leading to the working were discouraging. There were still 78 yards choked with gas to penetrate before the bottom workings could be reached by the main shaft.

Number in the workings

It transpired that the exact number of lamps served out to the men on the night-shift on Monday was 58, but the total number of men and boys incarcerated was officially stated to be 59, and of these 42 were married, five widowers, eight single men, and the remaining four boys. The number of children belonging to each family was not yet stated, but with so large a portion of married men, a very considerable number of women and children must have thus lost the chief bread-winner of the family, and the desolation is widespread.

In some cases the blow falls even more terribly on the little home circle. For instance, three brothers, William, David, and John Jenkins, who were employed in the pit, had all fallen, and all of them were married. In another case a father and son, Octavos and Charles Wheadon, had perished; and a man named River Jordon was lost, together with his son-in-law, Thomas Jenkins. Order was well kept on the pit bank throughout the day by a small body of police, under the direction of Superintendent Matthews. The final total death toll looked as if was to be 59 men and 44 horses.

What made the catastrophe the more appalling is the absence of any fund to meet it. The miners of South Wales were lately asked to form a Permanent Relief Fund, but through not understanding or appreciating the benefits promised by the scheme upwards of 20,000 out of 25,000 voted against the formation of such a fund. The consequence was, therefore, that for the numerous widows and orphans who were now destitute there was nothing but the parish. (The relief fund was turned down by the colliers because although they paid all the contributions, the fund was only regulated by the colliery managers, and there was justified mistrust on behalf of the workmen). There were many differing reports of the disaster, but this one from 'an occasional correspondent' was one of the best: -

Before the accident

Last night at six o'clock, the night shift, numbering 58 colliers and two hauliers prepared to descend. The night was gloomy to a degree. A dense fog hung around, and until the preparations for descent were complete, the men grouped around the fires on top smoking and chatting, with their lamps twinkling on every hand. The scene described by an eye witness who happened to be passing was a striking one, with the background of mountain land, and the gibbet-line pit work that towered above. It was like the eve of battle, with the soldiers surrounding the camp fire, waiting the call to arms, to death or glory. But, alas, from the collier's life must be scattered every synonym of the glorious. Hard fare and peril constitute the certainties, and a premature and hideous death only too surely accomplices. I leave to others the narrative of the accident and the technicalities of the occurrence. Mine shall simply be the filling in of the canvas.

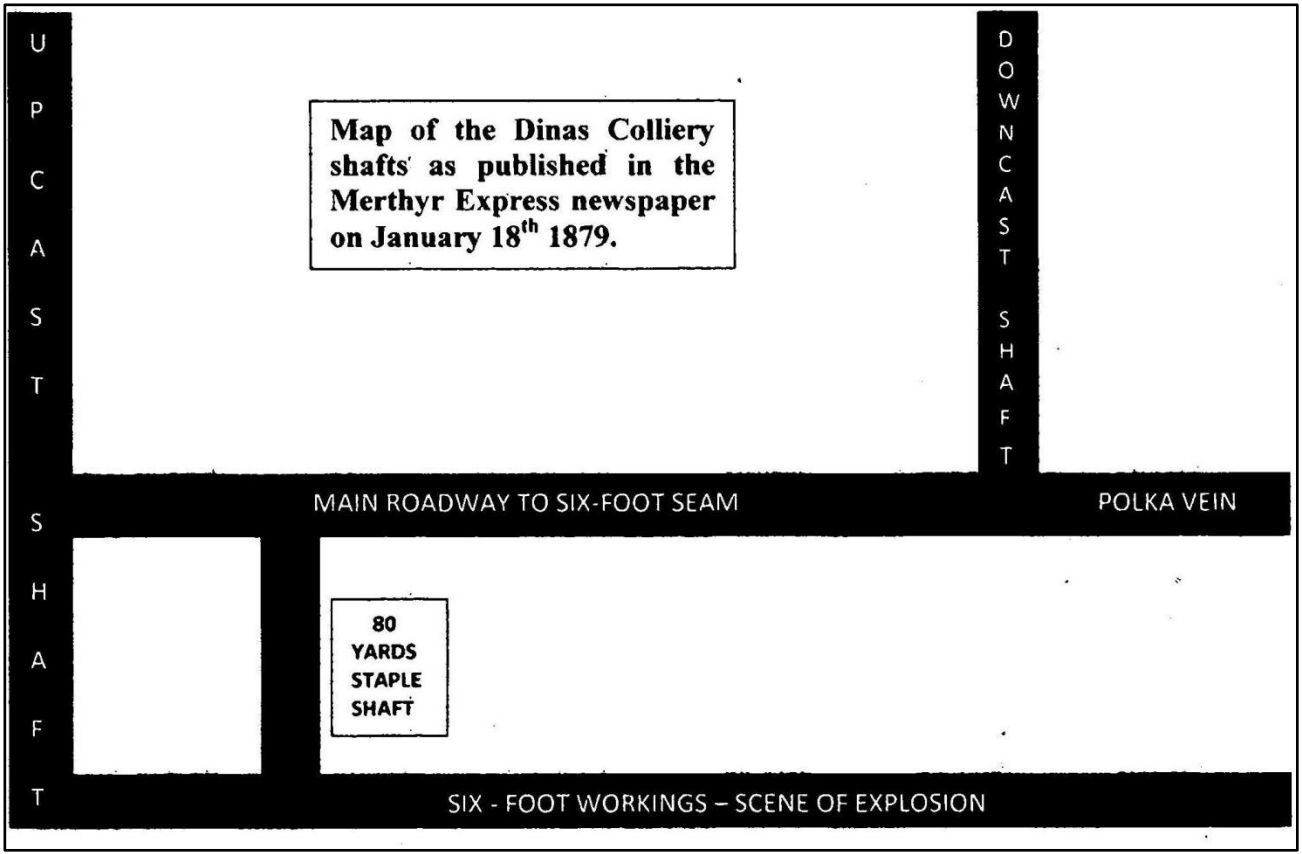
On my arrival there was a dense gathering thronging around every avenue to the pit, and in no respect were any of the usual characteristics of such scenes absent. There was no weeping or wailing; the crowd seemed paralysed – even the women appeared dumbfounded, and to be unable to realise the sudden blow by which, in a moment, the bread-winner had been hurled into eternity.

Thousands thronged just beyond the pit, fenced off by barriers guarded by policemen, keeping a grim silence, their eyes fixed on the slow movements of the wheel at the upcast frame, showing that the pit was working. Outside the fence there were so many studies. One woman in the crowd without a bonnet, and with a shawl thrown over her shoulders, her face dirty-white, with a red spot on each cheek-bone, stared rather than looked at the pit frame, and occasionally closed the weary eye-lids to open them with the same wild stare.

A little boy with his summer straw hat, with the brim half broken off, had clambered up the barrier, and there looked, wet through and sad of face, to "where father was." An old man, and old collier evidently, with sons in the pit, was there crushed up against the barrier, in his half-dotage way, and with trembling hands and limbs waited, waiting that hopeless wait which has been the feature of the day.

A thirsty crowd

Amongst young men the hardy spirits of our coal mines, to whom danger is unknown, and to whom the thought of death is indifferent, there was the usual busy chat, the constant smoking, and the by-play sometimes rough and ready, which are always visible. In the one public-house the scene was eminently striking.


UPCAST SHAFT
Map of the Dinas Colliery shafts as published in the Merthyr Express newspaper on January 18th 1879.
DOWNCAST SHAFT
MAIN ROADWAY TO SIX-FOOT SEAM
POLKA VEIN
80 YARDS STAPLE SHAFT
SIX - FOOT WORKINGS – SCENE OF EXPLOSION

Every room was filled upstairs and down. Beer ran like water, and little could be seen through the clouds of smoke. The landlord good-naturedly beckoned us into his best bedroom - the only place exempt, for the imperative duty of everyone seemed to be to crowd in and drink beer. The best bedroom was half-full of the best things of the house; the best tea service was on the bed; the china ornaments from the mantle-pieces occupied the same position. The rooms below had been literally denuded of ornaments, and everything pushed in there for safety.

Below, it was interesting to see the animation, and listen to the conversation and discussions. Old veterans fought their battles over again; here was one who was down in the Cymmer; here another who had escaped from Pentre; still another could tell all about Tynewydd. Thus amidst the clinking glass and the smoke, old tales and anecdotes were told, and all the while, when a newcomer from the pit showed his face, there was a hush of grave interest, the stoppage of all chat, and the earnest enquiry "Have they come to them? Is there anyone alive?"

No hope for the entombed

When I left the pit some of the ablest colliery managers of the valley were assisting. Canvas tubes had been abandoned as hopeless; brattices resorted to, but as one said, "the gas is now coming up steadily as from a bottle." It is now midday, and all hope must be given up for those who are descended there.

A suggestion was made on Tuesday by Mr. Galloway, the Assistant Inspector of Mines, to divide the upcast with brattice from the Polka seam to the bottom, so as to send a full current of air to the bottom, and then to guide it with the explorers as they went on. It was said that night, that is was likely, after all, that Mr. Galloway's suggestion was the best yet offered, and it would be adopted. The task of preparing to descend into the Little Pit was still proceeding under the control of Mr. Isaiah Thomas, who, however, was a stranger to the colliery until this explosion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Wednesday, January 15th 1879

The number of lives lost estimated at 62 - Gallant attempt to reach victims
The shaft blocked – Possible causes of the accidents

Today, this colliery village presented quite a different aspect from which it wore yesterday. There was not the excitement produced by the thousands that had been attracted to the ill-fated colliery which was so apparent yesterday. The excitement had subsided, giving the place a greater air of solemnity. In the morning the appearance indicated nothing unusual, if we consider not the small groups of workmen in the vicinity of the colliery; and a passer by, ignorant of the calamity, would have no conception that by a sudden but terrible accident, some sixty fellows had been launched into eternity. Truly, the scene had changed, but only to resume its previous appearance as the day wore on, and the up and down Taff Vale Company's trains stopped at Pandy station, and delivered those curious ones who had come to see the pit, and watched the operations for recovering the bodies of the unfortunate men.

The People, as on the previous day, surrounded the upcast shaft, and ever and anon. groups would shift off and traverse the incline, walking to the downcast shaft in order to obtain the slightest, but latest, information of what was going on below in the way of recovering the bodies. As is generally the case, this task was not easy of accomplishment, the force of explosions in mine workings being so great as to shatter the winding gear, shaft, and other appliances, preventing them from being put into operation, and so destroying the airways and workings below, as to make it absolutely impossible to penetrate far into the working. After all explosions that insidious enemy of colliers, after-damp, makes the work of rescuing the poor fellows, and of restoring the workings, one of extreme danger.

Before noon it was decided to attempt to descend to the bottom of the awful upcast, to within some twenty yards of which air-pipes had been placed, with a view to shoot air through them to the bottom. The gangs who accomplished this dangerous task were under the command of Mr. Davies (Tylacoch), assisted by Mr. Tallis (Ocean), Mr. John Chubb (Dinas), and Rees Reynolds (Cwmdare pit); all, however, under the direction of Mr. William Jenkins, chief manager of the Ocean Steam Coal Collieries.

At 12 o'clock the following gentlemen, heroes in the true sense of the term, stepped on the carriage to explore for the first time since the explosion took place: - Mr. William Davies (Coedcae); Mr. David Evans (Bodryngallt and Ferndale

Collieries), Mr. Henry Lewis (Ynysfeio); Mr. John Havard (Lower Dyffryn); and Mr. James (Dinas), engineer.

The shaft clear of gas

The descent was extremely difficult, owing to the fact that the four conducting rods, over which the carriage had to slide, were hanging loose, and the brave men while descending had to guide the carriage with one hand while carrying a Davy lamp in the other. They had to descend very slowly. Down, down, however, they went for about 408 yards, when they discovered that the pit, from that distance to the bottom, about 12 yards, had fallen in. The pit is walled, but the walling had given way with immense portions of the rock behind as well.

They, however, found the shaft itself free from gas, the pipes having done what was intended. But none of the explorers dared step on the fall, all round which were great slides into the abyss below. After an absence of an hour from the surface, they returned safely to bank, where they reported that the sides of the shaft near the bottom had fallen in the form of a triangle, making a considerable heap of debris between the lower workings (in which the miners were employed at the time of the explosion) and the shaft.

The operation of removing the rubbish in that direction must, therefore, be an extremely hazardous one, owing to the insecurity of the pit. From the downcast the explorers and miners have penetrated to the Polka seam, which is in communication with the upcast, but is separated from the bottom by a 'blind' pit, 80 yards in length. This blind pit is at the moment chocked with rubbish, and but slow progress can be made in timbering and clearing it. The work is considered of the greatest danger, as it is believed that the extensive cavities that exist are filled with compressed air and gas. Nothing as yet can be said of the time it will take to reach the bottom workings.

As is often the case in disasters of this description the number of victims on further investigation is even greater than was previously expected. No less than 62 souls perished. The number was originally given as 59, this aggregate being arrived at by the corresponding number of lamps which were handed out by the lampman on Monday night. But it is often customary for men to obtain their lamps on Sunday night, and then go home or somewhere else, instead of descending the pit to work, and it appears from further inquiries that three men adopted this plan last Sunday. They then went to work on the Monday, but of course no record of their having obtained their lamps would appear in the books for that day.

This detail was uncovered when a reporter was approached by a lady who wanted to know why her husband, Charles Mead's name did not appear on the list of the dead. It appeared that she had not gone to the calling office, so the clerk and the officials knew nothing of his being down the pit. The clerk immediately went to Mead's home, where it was verified that the 21 year-old father of one was indeed one of the entombed.

Others who had cause for thankfulness and congratulation were those men whose work was stopped by Colonel Hunt some few weeks before, a number of them being turned off for various reasons. A sad incident is the death of a lad, about 15 years of age, who went to work in the pit on Monday for the first time, little thinking that it would also prove his last.

One man, a middle-aged miner, had one of those escapes which on such occasions always seem to indicate the intervention of providence. He was not particularly well on Monday night, but did not think of staying away from the pit. His wife, however, though thinking her husband but slightly indisposed, was (one forcibly remarked), "dead set" against his going to work; and yielding to her persuasions he stayed at home. How much he has to be thankful for he himself now knows.

A rumour ran last night, like wildfire through the valleys that knocking had been heard below. This, I regret to state, was untrue. The silence of death prevails below. It is stated that water ought to have been poured down the Little Pit, for, in similar cases, when men have remained alive, water has had the effect of saving life. It is said, however, that plenty of water falls into the upcast from the sides of the pit and this could prove vital in this instance.

Alleged causes of the accident

There are many theories as to the cause of the accident. One is that the Little Pit in the interior, became filled by a fall of rubbish from above, and that the ventilation thereby completely stopped, and that gas rapidly accumulated as a consequence. But it is pointed out that had this been the case the men working in the Polka Seam in the downcast shaft would not have felt the effects of the explosion at all, for the blocking up of the Little Pit would have prevented any blast passing that way. And that it did not pass through the opening into the Polka workings from the upcast is indicated by the fact that the framing over the entrance into the Little Pit fell into it, whereas if the blast had come through the Polka workings it would have hurled the beams along the heading towards the downcast shaft instead. Experienced men – men thoroughly conversant with every nook in the colliery – fear that the real

blockage stopping the air current is to the west of the pit, within 100 yards of the bottom of the shaft, and not in the Little Pit.

The air, it seems, after the intricate ventilating arrangements were destroyed, would traverse a distance of 300 yards between the bottom of the Little Pit and the bottom of the upcast. The greater portion of this distance is through a solid airway. But the last 100 yards is through a place arched and timbered in consequence of the rottenness of the roof, and it is feared that the blast blew down both timber props and archway, and that it is here that the real block has taken place, and that the poor fellows, who may have run for their lives, if any survived the fiery hurricane, found their further egress stopped at this fall or falls, and that many of them, will be discovered here.

An ugly rumour

There is a serious question discussed today, especially among the workmen, which it is my duty to make public. It is stated that the late manager, Mr. Morgan Rowland, resigned his position as manager of this colliery in consequence of some question relating to the defective ventilation of the colliery, for which he would not be responsible, the defect being retained in defiance of solemn protests against it. He was the man who constructed the colliery; he had managed it for ten years or thereabouts without a single serious incident of any kind, and recently, when some mining engineers from the North of England inspected the colliery by order of the Court of Chancery pending a case to be shortly heard there, entitled Hunt v The Glamorgan Coal Company, the proprietor was highly complimented upon the admirable manner in which the interior of the colliery had been arranged.

In consequence of a serious accident which occurred here a short time ago, the Home Office ordered an inquiry at Cardiff, and the result was that the new manager who succeeded Mr. Rowland, and who was under-overman during Mr. Rowland's term of office, had his certificate suspended. It is now stated, but it is hardly credible, that the new manager was, after the suspension of the certificated manager, still retained as the actual manager, for he discharged workmen and went about as usual, whilst Samuel Hughes, an uncertified manager, was placed as nominal manager.

The late manager and the disaster

But worse is to follow, on the morning after the explosion, the old experienced manager, Mr. Morgan Rowland – who had constructed the workings, and, therefore, knew every roadway and heading in the pit, - volunteered his most valuable aid to reach the entombed men. He went to Mr. Wood, one of the

proprietor's chiefs, and tendered his services. But, will it be believed? – it is perfectly incredible – no response was made to his generous offer, and he concluded, therefore, that the offer was declined, and he, of all the managers in the valley, is the only man away from the horrible place at the present moment – whose aid would have been invaluable. With tears in his eyes, Mr. Rowland said, today, "although I fell out with the Colonel, I was most anxious to do all I could to aid him; but especially to aid his poor workmen at the present moment."

One naturally asks, where was Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines, that he did not exercise his authority to command the services of the best man at the present awful conjuncture, and stand between petty jealousy of officials, and the lives of the men in the pit? The question is now in the hands of a higher authority than of that of uncertificated managers who hoodwink the law, viz; that of the government.

Some consequences of the explosion

There are two stables in the colliery, one at the bottom of the shaft, and the other in the interior of the colliery, containing 44 valuable horses, all of which, there is no doubt, have perished. Among the certificated managers who have rendered valuable service are Mr. Addi Richards and Mr. Isaiah Thomas. Colonel Edmund D'Arcy Hunt, the proprietor of the colliery, was at the pit today. Much sympathy is felt for him. It is stated that the widow of Henry Williams (one of the men in the pit) and her five children were without food in the house. Other families are already in great distress, wages being so low that they lived, many of them, from hand to mouth.

An alarming fall took place in the upcast late this afternoon. Mr. William Davies, Coedcae Colliery, and four others, had been down again on the top of the great fall. They were ascending when many tons of the side of the shaft fell into the pit, just after they had passed the spot.

Help for the distressed

A telegram was received from Mr. Ellis Lever, Piccadilly, Manchester, saying that he gave ten pound towards the Widow and Orphans fund, and that he would contribute £50 towards the formation of a Miners' Permanent Fund for South Wales, to be affiliated to the National Miners' Fund.

Education of the orphans

On Wednesday, Mr. Charles Bassett, Pontypridd; Mr. Ishmael Williams, Dinas, and another gentleman, all members of the Dinas Explosion Relief Committee, waited upon the Pontypridd Board of Guardians to ask them to assisted the widows in paying the children's school fees, as they were now about £16 in arrears. The chairman advised that the widows should go forward and make application on their own behalf, as otherwise nothing could be done on the matter. Mr. Bassett said they must ask the Dinas School Committee to remit the arrears. The deputation then retired.

The entombed colliers

It is said tonight that at least 15 yards of the side of the pit will have to be walled before any attempt can be made to descend to the bottom. The men, it is hoped, will be reached in a few days through the Little Pit into the interior. The Penygraig Colliery Company placed their men and machinery at the disposal of the Dinas Colliery authorities.

On Wednesday evening one of the latest working parties reported that air free from gas had been discovered making its way from the bottom of the pit to the upcast. This would seem to give a big glimmer of hope that some of the unfortunate colliers in the lower workings may still be alive. Mr. Wales, Inspector of Mines, would not give an opinion on the subject, but contented himself with the truism, "whilst there is life there is hope."

A German firm who had a contract to supply 40,000 tons of coal to a French railway from the Dinas mine, one hour before receiving the news of the colliery explosion, learned of the loss of their vessel, which had been engaged in conveying coals from Wales to France.

No headway

A Pontypridd correspondent wrote: - Dinas, Wednesday evening – There is not the slightest indication that the explorers are making any headway in approaching the men. Indeed, they have not yet gone beyond the top of the pit in the interior of the downcast, and the top of the tremendous fall, which was ascertained this afternoon to be at the bottom of the upcast, through which the fury of the blazing tempest spent itself. It seems that after it was discovered, early on Tuesday morning, that it was impossible to approach the bottom of the shaft referred to, it was decided to place large pipes from the Polka seam opening, about 80 yards from the bottom of

the 6 ft. seam where the explosion took place, for the purpose of conveying air to the bottom through the Polka heading from the downcast.

This heading runs in a straight line from the downcast to the upcast, coming out into the latter about 80 yards from the bottom. The air-pit, called the 'Little Pit,' is 77 yards from the bottom of the upcast, and is 80 yards deep, to convey the air coming through the downcast shaft to the 6 ft seam, where after traversing the labyrinth – like workings, of about five miles in extent, it is sucked to the surface of the upcast by a large fan on the surface, beating incessantly with great velocity. Two parties of explorers have been incessantly at work, each party composed of several 'turns,' since Tuesday morning. One party was engaged until this afternoon, when the task was completed of laying down the pipes referred to, and the other in repairing the entrance into the Little Pit in the interior, which was blown to fragments by the blast.

It is stated that above the entrance into the Little Pit is a large hole in the roof of about 15 feet in height. Owing to the brittle nature of the roof, a ponderous framework had been erected there over the entrance to guard the pit from falling rubbish from the hole in question. This framing was blown away by the terrible blast that came up the Little Pit, and it fell back into the pit.

No one has yet ventured to descend into the Little Pit, which is the only way for the air to pass from the downcast pit to where the poor fellows are imprisoned, owing to the falls, which frequently take place from the hole above into the pit. It would be instant death were anyone to attempt it. Some daring spirits, just to reach their friends in the deadly mine, have already had narrow escapes. A large number of explorers are now engaged in constructing new framing instead of the one blown away, and until this is completed nothing can be done to reach the men from this direction.

Thursday, January 16th 1979

Preparations to reach the entombed men – a descent of the shaft

Hardly anything was done on Thursday to reach the 59 or 62 men in the mine. A practical man of great experience, who has been repeatedly down the two pits within the last few days, said that there was not a single head to lead explorers into the mine. There are many managers, and everyone makes suggestions and seems anxious to see them carried out. The consequence is that but very little indeed is done.

A descent into the pit

On this afternoon the following gentlemen descended into the upcast, 420 yards deep, through which the fiery hurricane passed: - Mr. Daniel Thomas, Mr. John Havard (Lower Dyffryn), Mr. Burns (Bryncethin), and Mr. John Chubb (Dinas). They actually stepped out of the carriage on the top of the immense cairn on the bottom. Some of their number then descended the terrible slopes of the Cairn for some distance and by the aid of Davy lamps peered into the abyss below. They hurled stones in the direction of the tunnel leading into the workings, and they had the satisfaction of hearing the stones rolling some distance away. They came up with the news, therefore, that the tunnel near the bottom of the shaft had not closed in. No more falls had taken place in the shaft, and it was, therefore, believed tonight that in a few hours explorers would be able to penetrate into the workings in this direction.

A message from the Queen

On Thursday night, Mr. Wales, Inspector of Mines for the district, who remained at Dinas, received a telegram from the Home Secretary stating that the Queen was much concerned at the unfortunate explosion at Dinas Colliery, and sympathised greatly with the bereaved families. Her Majesty requested that full particulars might be sent to her at once.

Mr. Wales at once replied as follows: - "*The Queen's gracious message will be made known to the miners families. We hope to penetrate into the workings tomorrow or Saturday. Will telegram on being able to do so*."

Yesterday, another message was received from the Home Secretary, as follows: - "*The Queen wishes to know the exact state of affairs at the Dinas colliery. Report at once to Home Office by telegram.*"

To this Mr. Wales sent the following answer: - "*In reply to your communication the bottom of both shafts communicating with the mine in which the men are entombed are closed. Every effort is being made to restore communication, but owing to the great difficulty it is impossible to state when this will be effected. As soon as this is done I shall telegraph*."

Copies of the Queen's telegram have been posted up at the colliery, and there was a general feeling of gratification among the poor people to know that Her Majesty feels a deep a sympathy for them.

Heroic explorers

Late on Thursday night another party, including Mr. Daniel Thomas, crawled along the side of the great slide, and penetrated five yards beyond the point reached by Mr. Burns (Bryncethin) and Mr. Havard (Dyffryn), earlier in the day. The point they reached was about 15 yards (wrote the '*Western Mail*') above the bottom of the shaft, over the side of a continuous heap of stones. No living man ever traversed a more horrible place. It was ten times more dangerous than had they been walking along the edge of the crater of Vesuvius or Etna, and so long as such men dwell in our valleys, we shall not lack true representatives of the Cymric race, who make the name "Britons," synonymous with hero.

He and his companions descended to a depth of over 420 yards, and looking up from that depth the mouth of the pit seemed to them about the size of a golden wedding ring. Water was falling on the band of men in a continuous shower from the sides of the shaft. The explorers stand on the top of the giant fall. All around them are intense slides extending to the dark abyss below. Above them and on every side is loosened rock hanging.

One of the devoted has gone between the top of the heap, and begins to descend in a stooping attitude, carrying a Davy lamp in one hand and balancing himself with his left hand. He disappears under the shaft into the general direction of the workings, and he is now under the roof from which fell the tens of thousands of tons of rock that lie under his feet; and at any moment hundreds of thousands more may give way and bury him. At reaching a point 45 feet from the shaft, he arrives above the place where the stable was, and the stench from the dead horses below is horrible. He sees nothing but a great continuous fall, and he returns with safety to his friends.

Those who sit at home at ease, warming themselves at their bright coal fires, seldom realise the dangers these miners incur, first in the delving and bringing out of the precious mineral which keeps going the countless wheels of the machinery of this great empire; and in the second place, in endeavouring to rescue their entombed companions after the fiery explosion has imprisoned them in its terrible effects in the dark caverns of the mine.

A plea for the miner

If an occasional miner, when he visits your towns, is a bit noisy now and again, bear with him; for he is not a delicate being whose youthful days were spent on carpets and in schools. He is the son of the storm, and poor, as a rule, has been his fare. Yet he is "a man and a brother," and in the hour of need is equal to a son of ancient

Sparta in intrepidity! The vast majority of Welsh miners are of cultured intelligence. It is they who have erected the thousands of chapels which dot the hillside and valleys of south Wales.

They are the great patrons of the Sabbath School, the eisteddfod, and the musical classes. They teach each other in the dinner hour, in the mine, the art of writing Welsh poetry, and they occasionally jot down with chalk original music of their own composition on their coal boxes. If rumour, however, speaks the truth, it is very few of this class of miners this fatal shaft contained of late, and it would seem by the abject poverty of most of their families that too many of the men spent their earnings upon that which is not bread, and that their families suffered in consequence.

Friday, January 17th 1879

The afternoon shift on Friday reported most favourably of the progress made since they descended. The difficult task of propping up the sides was all but accomplished. When they returned, Mr. Havard, of Mountain Ash, a most indefatigable worker, said in his opinion a drift might be driven through into the level workings, which they were able to see from the spot to which the timber had been completed, as the air was drawn in towards what is called the double-parting, and its advance was not impeded, by any obstacle. That fact gives rise to the belief that access might be made to at least some of the bodies.

A strange theory was current regarding some of the men viz; those engaged at or near the bottom of the upcast shaft. It is known that at the moment the explosion occurred that some of the poor fellows must have been engaged in unloading a quantity of timber that had just been let down to them, and there was no doubt whatever that the force of the explosion was up towards the surface, and from this it is believed that, in the words of one of the officials "the men were carried like feathers before the fire-blast up the pit, then falling to the bottom, together with the mass of debris in which they now lie embedded."

Although the air passing over the fall up the upcast appears to be the pure kind it is occasionally mixed with noxious gases which make it dangerous to those employed. Indeed, several of the brave fellows have been overpowered by the gas, and have not recovered consciousness for a considerable time. But this does not produce any discouraging effect upon any of them. They go about their dangerous work without even a sign of fear, although the pit guides are destroyed; and the occurrence of falls even while they are down the shattered shaft does not deter them from responding to the call at each shift.

A powerful crab (a machine similar to a crane) was, this evening, fixed on the top of the shaft, and by this a stage will be let down the pit on which masons will be supported for the purpose of walling the sides of the pit. Colonel Hunt arrives each day by the first train and watches keenly the progress of the operations. Superintendent Matthews and his men daily render useful service by preserving order in the neighbourhood of the pit, where there is a great demand for admittance inside the barricade.

There seemed to be progress in trying to retrieve what were now regarded as the bodies of the men trapped in the pit, but there were many dissenting voices that progress was not as fast as it ought to be. The '*Western Mail*' carried the following article from someone with that view: -

The late manager interviewed

This afternoon I called upon Mr. Morgan Rowland, the late manager. I found him at home reading the newspaper. It was evident, however, that he was suffering from great excitement, and one of the first questions he asked me was whether there was any news as to how the explorers were getting on, and their latest "plans." On my answering that it was reported that they were timbering a portion of the shaft, he said that they were taking the longest and most difficult route to reach the men.

"Did I not tell you the other day," said he, "that the Little Pit was not choked up? Did I not tell you that the Little Pit was not walled from the bottom to the top, and did not the authorities deny both?" I answered that I had heard both statements had been denied. He then struck the table with his clenched fist and, with indignation that was terrible to witness, said "and now they have discovered that what I said was true, and here they are still fiddling! Fiddling, indeed, while Rome is burning."

He then rapidly drew a sketch of the internal workings with a pencil. From this I understood that the interior is divided into two districts - west and south – and that the roads leading from both meet at a point some 200 yards from the bottom of the upcast shaft. At the junction a large number of props had been erected owing to the rottenness of the roof, and it was his opinion that those props had been blown down by the blast, and that the men, if any survived the storm, had not come out beyond this point, the roof having fallen and blocked their way.

He said also that he was of the opinion that the choke to the air-current passing through the Little Pit from the downcast was between the bottom of the Little Pit and the stable 15 yards away. He then reiterated his former statement to me that an opening ought to have been made from the bottom of the Little Pit, and

declared that it could be driven in fours to the flue within 12 yards of the upcast shaft. He scotched the idea that it was impossible to descend to the bottom of the Little Pit. "It has not been tried," he said. He still insisted that the only obstruction in the Little Pit was the framing which had been blown down from the top of it by the blast which had rushed up and through it.

Probable extent of the great fall

It was believed at the Pit on Friday night, however, that the fall at the bottom of the upcast reaches from that point to the slip of the fault 80 yards away, and that it will take months to clear it. A "cog" is now being placed in the upcast to hold up the most dangerous side of the pit, and as soon as this is completed, an attempt will be made to explore the great fall to its farthest limit with a view of going over it into the workings.

Should this prove impractical, there will be nothing done until the great fall is cleared, unless Mr. Rowland's suggestion is adopted to descend to the bottom of the Little Pit and explore from that direction, or cut an opening into the flue and send the air current round the semi-circular airway running round the downcast through the solid from a point near the flue opposite the Little Pit.

Probable cause of the explosion

There were serious rumours floating about the neighbourhood on Friday as to the probable cause of the accident, and the most generally accepted is that the explosion originated in a large vacuity created by a slip of some thousands of tons of rubbish a few weeks back. The fall occurred about some 80 yards from the upcast, and it is alleged that when the debris was removed, and the roof propped up, insufficient means were taken to clear the open space of gas, and that the latter, in all probability, was accidentally fired by one of the timbermen, who penetrated too far into the workings.

The cogging was finished in the upcast shaft about 10 o'clock on Friday night, and continuation of the air-piping over the fall was proceeded with. This work, however, received an unfortunate interruption in consequence of a fall upon the tubing causing it to burst, and calling for the occupation of some time for its repair.

Later Friday night it was said that the men were nearly into the double parting, an indication that some progress has been made of late, but of course it is not known what extent of fall may be beyond. If the air is free from gas, the prospects are stated to be extremely good.

The '*Western Mail*' of Friday, January 19th 1879 published this list of people who were entombed in the pit and the families that were left behind and those in desperate need of help:-

Thomas Roberts, (59), Balaclava, Dinas, wife and four daughter, and a grandson very destitute.

Samuel Prior, (38), Coedymeibion, wife and six children, the eldest 10 years, and the youngest three months; very destitute.

Robert Emery, Elm Terrace, Trealaw, wife and four children, the eldest 13 years, and the youngest a baby; very destitute.

Thomas Watkins, White Rock, Dinas, wife and five children, the eldest 13 years, and the youngest 12 months, and the wife near her confinement.

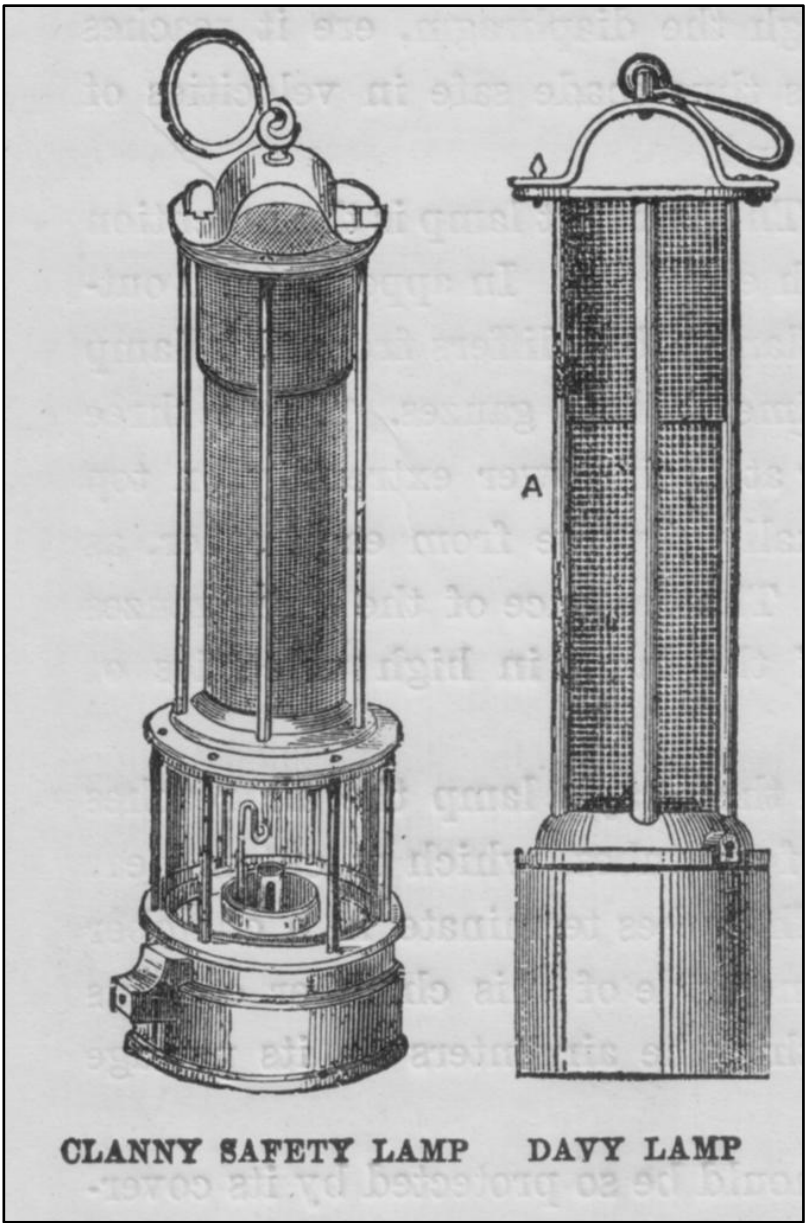
The Rev. E. Stephens, the Rev. Moses Lewis, and the Rev. T. George (Independent), and Mr. Ishmael Williams, made a house to house visitation on Friday. They found 47 widows and 120 children belonging to those in the pit requiring assistance.

*** A full list of those killed at the Dinas Explosion appears at the rear of this book.**

The '*Cardiff Times and South Wales Weekly News*' of Saturday, January 18th 1879 reported: - "At the upper pit, where the dead are lying, everything in now ready to commence cutting the proposed new roadway from a spot in the side of the shaft, forty yards from the bottom. Messrs Isaiah Thomas and Moses Rees have accepted the contract to open this roadway, which is intended to reach a portion of the interior of the west heading, where some of the dead are supposed to be.

Much hesitation, however, is felt about beginning the task of raising coal, owing to the mistaken impression this is likely to produce among the 46 widows, to the effect that the dead have been abandoned. On Friday Mr. Thomas proceeded from house to house explaining what was really going to be done. It is anticipated that on Monday the contractors will commence their task."

The feeling Isaiah Thomas gained from visited the homes must have been one of complete shock and revulsion from the local population to resume raising coal, and it would be another three months before the matter was raised again.



The Clanny safety lamp (Left) and the Davy lamp as used in the Dinas Colliery.

CHAPTER FIVE

Saturday, January 18th 1879

Colonel Hunt's generosity - A reporter descends the pit

The following notice was posted up at the colliery by Colonel Hunt, the proprietor of the colliery on Saturday:-

"The wages of the workmen in the Middle Pit workings at the time of the explosion will, should no member of the family be present at the pay out, be taken to the houses of the workmen by the clerk. The colliery clerk is also provided with funds, and instructed to furnish all necessary assistance to the families until some more permanent arrangement can be made."

Dinas, January 18th 1879 – E. D. Hunt

A reporter from the '*South Wales Daily News*' of this date commented:- At the commencement of operations, having for their object the recovery of the bodies of the unfortunate men, the work carried on at the downcast shaft was regarded of secondary importance, the greatest interest being manifest in the movements of those who are engaged upon what might be considered the more immediacy of the disaster.

Latterly, however, a difference of opinion has sprung up about the situation and how it would be best to effect the entrance into the six-feet seam, where the explosion occurred, and there has not been a lack of those that assert that the Little or Middle Pit, should form the basis of operations, in preference to a descent by way of the upcast shaft, both of the communications terminating in the same locality.

From the expressions of opinion vouchsafed by the explorers in the upcast shaft, it would seem a work of utter impossibility to anyway gauge the magnitude or extent of the intervening obstruction between their present scene of labour, and the locale of the explosion; which being the case, a visit to the farthest most possible point of the upcast could not be productive of any amount of useful information to an interested inquirer; but on the other hand, a descent into the downcast pit, affording the facility of penetrating into all the intricacies of the now notorious Polka vein, would prove, indeed, a most instructive journey.

I paid a visit to the lower shaft this afternoon, and regarding the division of opinion before alluded to, and, looking at the length of time, with little apparent result, occupied at the other shaft, I expressed a desire to take a peep at the mine myself. The expression of this inclination being immediately followed by an offer of its

gratification, I shortly found myself in the lamp-house undergoing that process of external metamorphosis which it is always wise on these occasions to submit to. Rigged out in a yellow canvas coat, with overalls to match, I might have passed unrecognised by the most important creditor, as with Davy lamp in hand, the lamp-room was left for the mouth of the pit.

Here was to be found Mr. J. Bussy, the distinguished correspondent of the '*Central News*,' and several representatives of the press, all of whom, however, declined to be of our party, which consisted of Mr. Moses Rees, Glamorgan Collieries; Mr. Isaiah Thomas, Brithwennydd; Mr. John, Llwynypia, and myself. The signal was given, the engine put in motion, and the bank slowly disappeared from view, as this cage, containing its human freight, descended into the dark abyss.

Clinging tightly to the ironwork, and maintaining a tacit silence, we sped on our way, experiencing, amongst other sensations, as the rapidity of the motion increased, that peculiar feeling in the ear, usually occasioned by atmospheric change. Arriving at the bottom, we at once turned into the Polka seam, which, in this locality, is of very spacious dimensions, being about ten feet high, and nine feet in width.

Thirty yards away from the bottom of the shaft a halt was called as Mr. Isaiah Thomas, who, by the way, is the brother of Mr. Daniel Thomas, of Tynewydd fame, and a trimming and locking of lamps at once took place, the responsible task being taken by Mr. Rees. Thus fortified we resumed the journey, our destination being, of course, the scene of the great fall, but at present everything retained its wonted aspect, no signs of a late explosion being discernable.

The light afforded by our lamps was all the illumination to be obtained, the sides of the roadway not being lit up after the manner adopted in some North Country mines, and as we got further into the workings, marching along in single file, first plunging up to the ankles in mud, then knocking against a coal truck, and next bringing one's head into uncomfortable contact with a piece of low roofing, the situation could scarcely be considered a pleasant one. Suddenly, far off in the impenetrable darkness, there was seen the dim flicker of a lamp, which grows larger with every approaching footstep; and we are next brought face to face with an outward bound collier in the person of Mr. Matthews, the fireman.

A few words pass between my companions and their friend, but he had no special news, excepting what might be contained in the remark that the windlass did not work very well. Passing through No. 1 door the silence is quite oppressive, especially as one notes the many places of abandonment, and reflects that but yesterday, as it were, the air rang with the sound of pick and shovel, while the walls

echoed with the shout of the “hitcher” boy, as in the language of his native hills, he urges forward the stumbling and exhausted mountain pony to an increasing speed.

Leaving the second door behind, men are discovered executing repairs, and cutting a few tram loads of coal for the purpose of consumption in the pit bank; and just before reaching the fourth door Mr. Thomas Price, of Clydach Vale Colliery, and Mr. Webb, assistant to Mr. James, consulting engineer, make their appearance. Arriving nearly at the facing, we turn off to the right, after scrambling sometimes upon hands and knees, over an ascent of about a dozen yards, we arrive at the intake, where a chain-ladder communicating with the two-foot seam is pointed out.

This ladder is 25 yards in length, and would prove most useful in the case of a sudden accident. Our line of route is strewn on each side with unfinished material and uncompleted work, while timber, elbow pipes, and other material is lying about in a manner which appears to mock the hope of future toil. We are not far off the Middle Pit, and as we gradually approach, still proceeding in single file, the way becomes more difficult, it being frequently necessary to assume an attitude scarcely compatible with comfort. But here we are at last, and, thank goodness, it is possible to stand upright. The scene is a busy one, and you could scarcely believe the amount of work that had been got through.

The tremendous fall at the top has given way to a very substantial arch, put in a manner likely to prove satisfactory to the most exacting mining engineer. The men have already got about 40 yards down the shaft; while a lamp was the other day suspended a further distance - somewhat considerable – before its descent received any obstacles. The pit is 80 yards deep, forming the difference in depth, between the two shafts; and as I had said before, many men are inclined to the belief that it would be better to get into the six-feet workings by this than by way of the upcast shaft.

Here we take a rest, and, sitting upon a lump of coal, I make a few notes of the surroundings. A windlass and crab are being worked, under the direction of Mr. William Samuel, as a man is being lowered into or raised from the shaft. The mouth is boarded over, leaving an aperture about the size of a stage trapdoor, and as a miner suddenly appears, drawn up with great rapidity, the idea of Harlequin at the pantomime - allowing of course for the difference of costume - at once suggests itself.

He comes up with a lamp around his neck, while with his hands; he lightly clutches the ropes attached to the small bucket used at the shaft. The work was progressing satisfactorily, and it may be that the inner workings will be reached by this means first. It is necessary, however, to exercise a considerable amount of care, in

consequence of the falls which sometimes take place – for instance, a large stone fell the other day, nearly striking a man engaged in work.

Turning off to the left, we climb through a hole into the airway leading on to the upcast shaft, being, of course, above the fall in that place of descent. The wind is most refreshing, but an attempt to 'cool the heated brow' by the removal of one's ordinary headgear, unfortunately leaves the head quite unprotected when coming in contact with stray beams of timber. It is necessary to crawl along on one's hands and knees in some places, occasionally to scramble through a jagged hole into a fresh turning, and in short, to submit to all sorts of inconveniences. We pass through the doors, now repaired, which were blown to pieces by the explosion, and then arrive within six yards of the upcast shaft, from which a splendid current of air is passing.

Upon entering a passageway, I found myself in momentary darkness, at the brink of a deep descent, not having taken the precaution to change the 'Davy' for a glass-faced lamp, through the gauze in the former of which the air passed and extinguished the flames. After a rest I joined Mr. A. Richards and a relieved shift, when we retraced our steps over the old ground, and arrived at bank after being absent for about an hour and a half.

It should be mentioned that there are three relays of men employed there, and that each body works no less than eight consecutive hours. Indeed, this seems the place where all the work is done, and, speaking of course with the advantage of technical knowledge, there are certainly indications that the concentration of effort at this point would be fruitful of more satisfactory results than it seems possible to obtain as the outcome of operations in the other shaft.

Sunday, January 19th 1879

Thousands of people of both sexes visited Dinas on Sunday, and the various public houses were doing a roaring trade, being the only places open to entertain strangers. The crowds, however, were well behaved. There were some instances of drunkenness, but they were very few in comparison to the large number of people present. One would wish, however, to see more evidence by the demeanour of the throng, that the awfulness of the calamity was felt by them. But these terrible disasters were now so frequent that people seemed to regard them as ordinary events, and as a matter of course.

Most of the miners themselves seemed to regard the loss of comrades in these fiery hurricanes that now and again sweep through their underground villages – for the miners regard their working places as their second homes, and take almost as

much interest in their stall and headings as they do their homes – as the veteran soldier does the loss of his comrades in the field of battle. The possibility, nay, the probability, of such a loss is ever present to the mind of each miner as he delves and delves by the light of his Davy lamp in his dark cave below.

One of the entombed men is William Lloyd, who acted as a guide for the representatives of the press in the Tynewydd Colliery, when they went in to witness the gallant attempt of the divers. He was one of those rewarded for his bravery at the Tynewydd catastrophe by the Lord Mayor of London on the Pontypridd Common.

Progress of the exploration

It was slowly that the explorers were progressing. They had fixed the "cog" they intended to hold up the wall in the shaft. But the foundation of the said "cog" seemed to be a very dangerous one, for it rested on the monster heap of stones lying at the bottom of the shaft, and should the pressure from above become great the "cog" would inevitably give way. On Sunday afternoon, Mr. Galloway, the assistant inspector of mines, descended and examined the bottom of the shaft. He reported that the explorers had penetrated to a distance of eight yards from the "cog" in the direction of the interior workings.

It seems rather strange that the inspectors (before the explosion) – but the fault may rest with the law – permitted this shaft to be worked without a proper outlet through another. To reach the other shaft – the downcast one – it is necessary to pass through a zig-zag shaft, 78 yards in depth - called the Little Pit, a place not provided with suitable machinery for lowering and lifting. But this question will no doubt be fully discussed at the forthcoming inquiry.

Narrow escape of explorers - Moments of excitement and peril

The explorers employed in the Little Pit had a most narrow escape on Sunday night. Two of their number were in the pit working in an arched elbow some 85 yards from the top with ropes from the windlass on the top attached to their bodies, when about two tons of the side of the shaft above suddenly fell, a portion striking them, and then it fell into the pit with a terrible roar. Had they happened not to be fast to the rope they would have inevitably fallen below, a distance of 45 yards.

The great fall on the bottom of the pit was believed to extend a distance of about 80 yards to the dip of the great fault. The explorers hoped, however, to reach the stable, 15 yards from the bottom of the shaft, and then pass through it to the

airway, which runs parallel with the roadway containing the fall into the interior of the workings. No one doubted that this airway is open.

More exploring perils

However, the main body of explorers were experiencing problems as well. Later that night those in the upcast shaft had a narrow escape. It will be remembered that at the bottom of the upcast rests a monster fall of 12 yards in depth. All round this fall the rubbish slopes in the shape of a bee-hive, and then a great fall extends over the tunnel as long as the eye can pierce the gloom.

No one knows how far the fall reaches, but it is supposed that it extends to the slip of the fault, some eighty yards from the shaft. Well, about midnight the exploring men, under the command of Mr. Price, Cymclydach, assisted by Mr. Burns, Bryncethin, Bridgend, who had been indefatigable since Wednesday, was busily engaged when a sudden movement of the fall in the tunnel was heard and felt. The men made a rush to the heap on the bottom of the shaft, and the next moment the long fall, as far as the lights the explorers to observe it, was seen descending something after the manner in which a large sheet of ice has been seen to sink into the water, its centre first.

But what followed constituted the danger to the explorers. It seems that when the fiery blast brought down the props, on the roadway leading into the shaft, the fall which followed did not descend to the roadway, but remained suspended six or seven feet above the ground, being held up by the sides of the roadway and the fallen timber. Now in this vacant space a large quantity of gas lodged.

The moment the fall sank into the vacant space, the gas rushed out. It was in an explosive state, and in a couple of seconds every Davy lamp carried by the explorers was filled with fire, and only the thickness of the gauze on each lamp was between the explorers and another explosion, in which every man would have been blown to fragments.

Had one of the lamps happened to fall from the hand of an explorer during the excitement, and the gauze to become damaged, the fiery blast would have been again let loose. Luckily, however, each of the gallant band remained calm – and only men favoured with nerves of the lion could have been calm on such an occasion – no accident happened, and the signal to be drawn up was given, each feeling when he reached the surface that he had escaped a violent death by the skin of his teeth.

On examining the shaft sometime later it was discovered that it was full of gas to the Polka heading, coming out into the shaft a distance of eighty yards from the bottom. By the action of the air sent down to the great fall through canvas pipes from the Polka heading, and the action of the 1,000 feet of air which it has been discovered traversed the Little Pit from the downcast, and then to the upcast, through, it is supposed, the stable, some fifteen yards from the bottom of the upcast over the fall, the gas was cleared by the time that daylight broke over the hills, and the explorers again descended to their dangerous task.

It was said on Monday afternoon that they had again reached the point at which they were engaged when the fall sank. So sudden was the sinking of the fall, that the tools needed by some of the men disappeared with the rubbish.

Monday, January 20th 1879

Preparations for receiving the bodies

A '*Western Mail*' reporter commented on Monday night: - The explorers are still busy at both pits, but very little real progress has been made. As a true exponent of public feeling in the place I must state that it is the general opinion that if the explorers had been from the first under the guidance of some of the old officials of the colliery – firemen and so forth – instead of strangers, much more progress would have been made towards reaching the bodies. I must, alas say bodies, for all hope of getting any out alive has been abandoned. There is a new building situated on the surface, midway between the two pits, and is now being fitting out for the reception of the dead bodies. A platform, resting on blocks a foot high runs all round the building. There is another place should this prove too small, where bodies will be conveyed, namely, the lamp-room loft, near the upcast shaft.

When the bodies may be reached

I regret to state that there is no truth in the statement that there is a probability that the bodies are about to be got at. The fall is so great that no one can say when its end will be reached. The only way, it is said, in which there is some hope that they will be found in two or three days, is through the stable, which runs across from the tunnel filled by the fall, and the airway running from the little pit. Should it be possible to pass through the stable to the airway, there is again the danger that the airway itself has fallen in.

In that case weeks would elapse before an entry into the inner workings could be effected. Moreover, the end of the fall in this tunnel is arrived at, it is exceedingly probable, according to the testimony of men acquainted with the colliery, that there is another immense fall at the junction of the two high roads from the two

interior districts – the south and west – some 200 yards from the bottom of the shaft. Indeed, the real spot where the men employed in the inner workings are likely to have found all chances of escape cut off is said to be at this place.

Had anyone escaped over this point, and if the great fall did not extend beyond the "parting," leading into the fine heading, which ran on their left through the solid, and round to the bottom of the shaft into the fine on the other side of the shaft, some would have undoubtedly escaped that way, and made their voices heard in the pit, if the monster fall on the bottom of the shaft prevented them from climbing the summit of it. I am told, however, that it amounts to almost a certainty that the bodies will be discovered beyond the fall 200 yards from bottom of the shaft.

Formation of a relief committee

On Monday morning a relief committee was formed, consisting of the following gentlemen:- Mr. Gwilym Williams (Stipendiary Magistrate), the Rev. J. P. Jones, (Llantrisant), Mr. Thomas Jones (Ynyshir), Mr. H. N. Davies (Cymmer), Rev. Moses Lewis (Cymmer), Rev. E. Stevens (Penygraig), Mr. Edmund Thomas (Maindy Hall), Mr. Moses Rowland, Rev. T. George (Dinas), and the Rev. H. W. Williams, Rev. J. R. Davies (Williams-town), Mr. William Williams (Grovener House), Dr. Charles James (Tonypandy), Mr. T. H. Jones (Dinas), Mr. J. Griffiths (Penygraig), Mr. L. Jones (Dinas), Mr. Ishmael Williams, and the Rev. D. T. Jones (Tonyrefail vicarage). The following were the secretaries: - The Revs. E. Philips and H. W. Hughes and Mr. Ishmael Williams.

The latter related the amount of distress existing in the families of those in the pit was very serious, and made it necessary that something should be done for them without delay. It was then decided to make an appeal to the public for subscriptions for their assistance. The following sums subscribed were announced in the room:-

The Lord Bishop of Llandaff, £5; Lady Aberdare, £5-5s; Dr. Davies, Cymmer £20; Mr. Thomas Jones, Ynyshir £5; the Rev. J. P. Jones, £5; Mr. Moses Rowland, Cymmer £5; Mr. Galloway, £5-5s; The Rev. H. W. Hughes, £1-1s; Mr. T. H. Jones, £1-1s; Mr. Ishmael Williams, £1-1s; Rev. T. D. Jones, Tonyrefail, £1. Mr. Gwilym Williams subscribed £20, and it was stated that Colonel Hunt had placed £50 in the hands of Mr. Jones, his clerk, to enable that gentlemen to extend immediate relief to those requiring it.

The postmaster at Penygraig was discovered today making a poor woman acquainted with the contents of a letter from a soldier in Warrington, and the

brother of her son-in-law who is lying in the mine. The soldier expressed his sympathy with his brother on account of an accident lately sustained in the pit, and implored him to give up underground work, and take to something safer. The postmaster replied by wire, acquainting the poor fellow with the death of his brother in the pit.

One week had passed at Dinas, and neither a survivor nor body had been recovered at Dinas, but surely some would be recovered soon?

Tuesday, January 21st 1879

Scenes for facilitating exploration

A suggestion had been made by Mr. Galloway, the Assistant Inspector of Mines, to divide the upcast with brattice from the Polka seam to the bottom, so as to send a full current of air to the bottom, and then to guide it with the explorers as they went on. It was said on Tuesday night that it was likely, after all, that Mr. Galloway's suggestion was the best yet offered up and it would be adopted. The task of "preparing" to descend the Little Pit was still progressing under the superintendence of Mr. Addi Richards and Mr. Isaiah Thomas, who, however, were strangers to the colliery until this explosion. The '*Western Mail*' commented:-

The Little Pit shut up – Operations retarded by foul gas

Dinas, Tuesday evening - Hardly any progress has been made by the explorers since Monday owing to the gusts of wind that now and again come out of the workings. With the appearance of each gust the explorers ascend to the surface rapidly. There cannot be a doubt now that Mr. Galloway's suggestion on the first morning after the explosion, to brattice the shaft from the Polka to the bottom, a distance of 80 yards, so as to convert the shaft into a downcast and upcast, would have resulted in placing the bottom of the shaft in such a condition as to have enabled the explorers to make much more progress than they have done.

It is another illustration of the folly of opposing the plans of this experienced government official at colliery accidents. That factious opposition to his suggestions is offered whenever serious accidents occur in the district, is but too well known to those whose duty leads them to the scenes of colliery accidents. Some attribute the opposition with which he is usually met to a lack of tact in dealing with Welshmen. His position, however, is a difficult one, for he stands between the supreme authority of Mr. Wales, and the experienced men, managers, and colliery proprietors who usually generally rush to the scene of colliery disasters.

They will oppose him when Mr. Wales is absent when they would not dream of opposing that gentleman himself. I have just hinted at the above subject, because it is deemed important and the topic of general conversation among miners, who are deeply interested in securing the services of the best mining engineers that can be got.

Closing of the Little Pit

It was considered advisable early on Tuesday morning to abandon the Little Pit in the interior of the colliery through which the air passed from the downcast of the workings in which the explosion took place. The mouth of the little shaft was boarded over so as to prevent any air from descending into the colliery. The reason for this is as follows: -

The explorers at the bottom of the upcast found sudden rushes of explosive gas, accompanied by horrible effluvia, from the dead bodies, coming out of the workings, and they have concluded that both carried thither by the flow of fresh air in through the Little Pit, then through the airway, and over the falls to the upcast; and to prevent this, it was decided to board it over, so as to prevent any more air from passing, and to depend entirely for air for the explorers upon the pipes placed from the Polka opening to the bottom of the upcast.

Atmospheric phenomenon

I am told that it is the opinion of Mr. Galloway that these sudden rushes are due to the action of the atmosphere. With the fall of the barometer they recede into the the workings, with its rise they rush out. Now, this seems highly probable, for the air passing through the Little Pit comes to the explorers through the stable, 15 yards from the bottom of the shaft, and does not traverse the inner workings stalls.

“Don’t you think,” I asked one of the leading explorers today, “it would have been wiser to have followed the air current in trying to get at the men than to have gone into the upcast in the face of the gas flow for that purpose?” “No doubt,” said he, “that would have been the wiser plan had that been possible.

But had the explorers been able to follow the air current through the Little Pit there were no appliances there for lowering and lifting.” But Mr. Rowlands stated most distinctly, on the first day after the dreadful accident occurred, that an opening could be made in four hours from the bottom of the Little Pit into the flue of the upcast, which would have caused at least 30,000 feet of fresh air per minute to reach the spot where the explorers are now battling with the gas and effluvia.

The colliers and the inquiry

The leaders of the colliers were determined, as in the case of the Abercarn Colliery explosion inquiry (On September 11th 1878, 268 men had perished at an explosion at the Abercarn Colliery), to have professional assistance, and in order to raise the necessary funds, they, on Tuesday, issued a circular asking for contributions to employ a solicitor: -

To the Miners, all other Workmen and friends

Fellow workmen and friends - We hope and believe you will assist us in your bounden duty, and that you will agree that it is imperative that we shall, one and all, to the best of our endeavours have a full investigation into the cause of such awful loss of life that has so often taken place amongst us. Therefore we humbly solicit a contribution of 6d each towards defraying the expenses incurred by such investigation. The workmen at each colliery or section to use their own mode of collecting the contributions, and forward to the treasurer as early as possible. We are, yours faithfully.

William Abraham, John Prosser, John Lewis, Thomas Halliday, Samuel Davies. Secretaries: - J. W. Andrews, J. Price, Edward Williams (treasurer). Maltster's Arms, Pontypridd. P.S. As far as possible let every colliery in your neighbourhood have your circular.

Wednesday January 22nd 1879

The searchers and their work – Distress in the village

The last report from the bottom of the shaft on Wednesday evening was that the explorers, after having penetrated 14 yards over the slope of the monster fall, are now digging a perpendicular hole through the rubbish with the view of reaching the double-parting landing from the bottom of the pit to the interior.

This hole is now about ten foot deep, and it is reported that the last gang of explorers struck, just prior to finishing their turn, into the fallen wooden props by the road side with their pointed iron bars, so that there is a slight hope now that this stable heading into the airway, through which it is thought the explorers can penetrate into the inner workings, where the bodies are supposed to be, may be reached in a day or two. This, however, is simply conjectural, for the roof of the airway itself may have fallen. In that case weeks may elapse before the bodies will be reached.

Perilous work underground

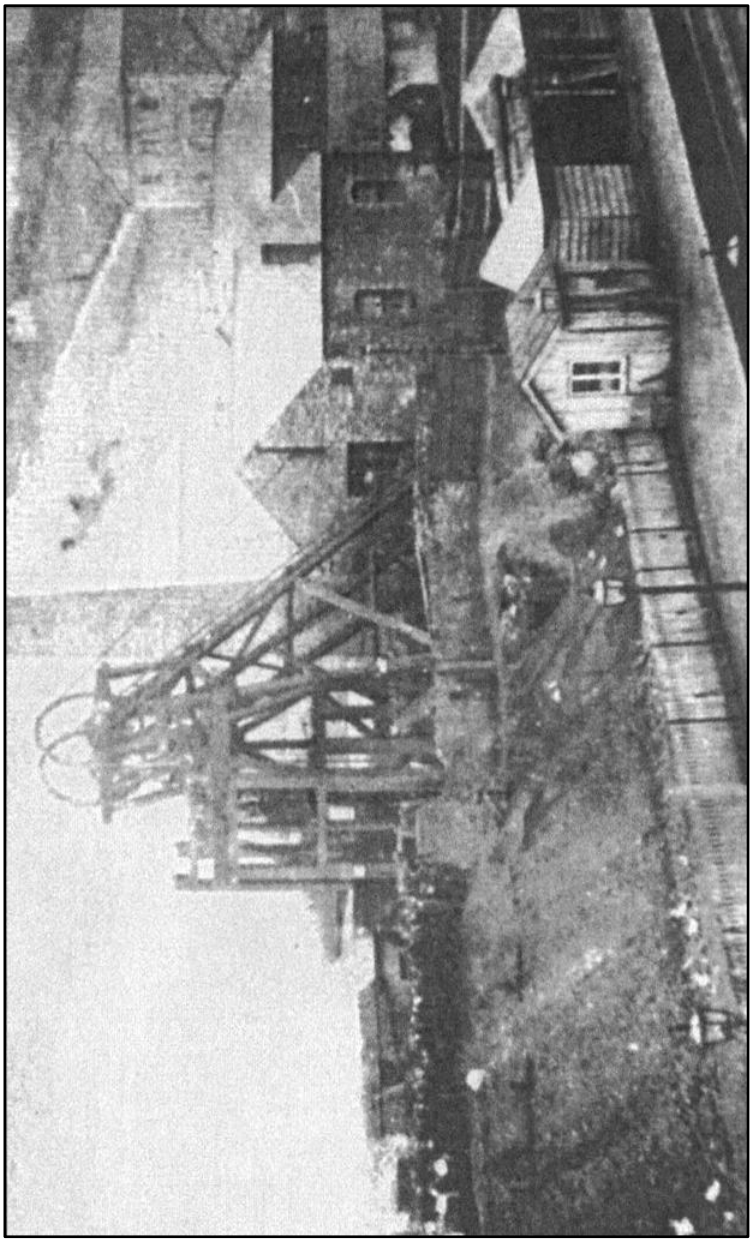
The explorers are exposed to terrible dangers. One of their number, speaking in Welsh, described this afternoon, the exciting scenes below. Some of their party are engaged underground in the hole referred to above, while others carry away the fragments of rock they fling from the hole, and other hold their Davy lamps to give the workers light. Mr. Burns, watches at the outlet of the canvas air-pipe to see that the pipe conveying air to the explorers are doing their work.

The slightest accident to any of these air-pipes, reaching from a distance of 80 yards through the shaft from the downcast Polka heading, would be a most serious matter. Several of them have burst from time to time, and the explorers have had instantly to escape to the carriage, and be conveyed to the surface without a moment's delay.

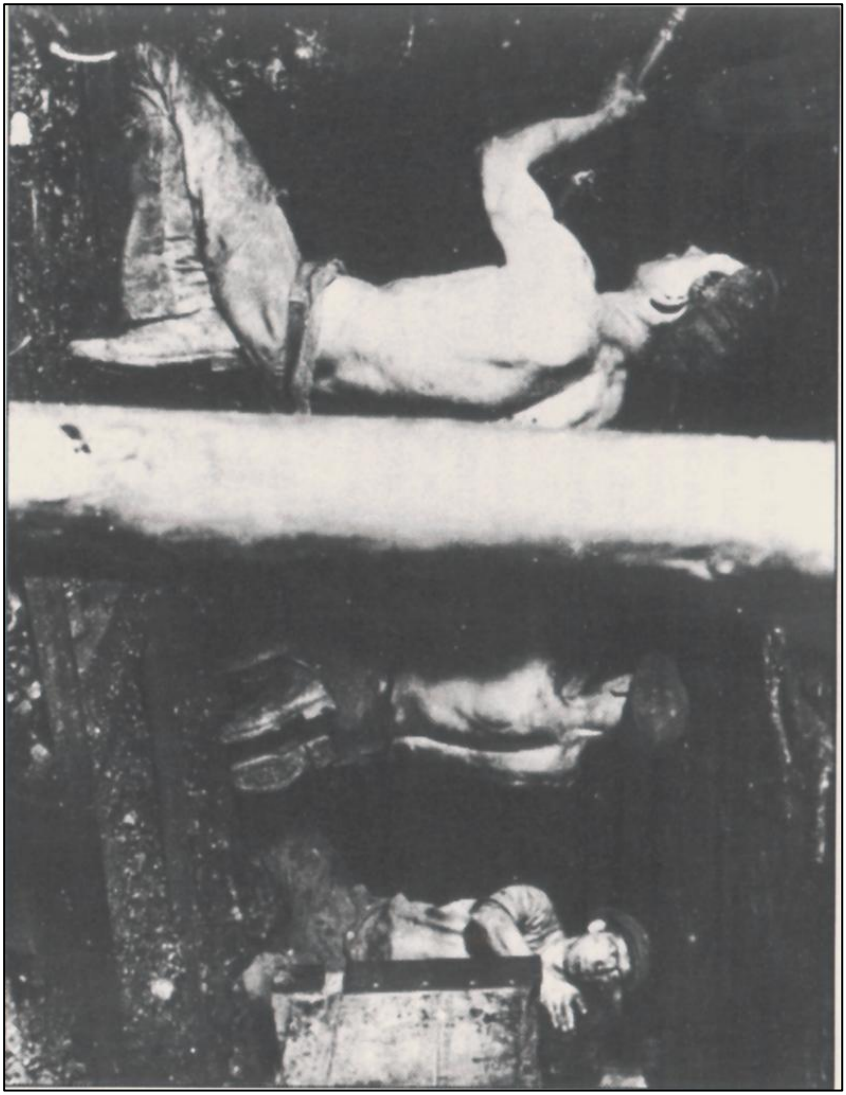
Mr. Burns, while watching the pipes, cries now and again, "All right, boys," as a signal to the men that they can continue working without danger from that direction. "But," said the explorer, "the next moment today after the cry of alright was uttered, the gas fired in our lamps, and in the lamp which one of us held on the floor of the carriage, and we had all to escape as quickly as we could." The lamp held by Mr. Burns was too near the air current, such as it was, to give any indication of the danger we were in at the moment." This illustrates the state of things below every day.

Working amidst foul smell and obnoxious gases

"Is the smell there very bad?" asks a reporter. "Smell!" he said; "Smell! Why, it is enough *I daro ceffy I lawr* (it is enough to knock a horse down). We are within three yards of the carcasses of seven dead horses, while immediately below our feet is supposed to be the carcass of the horse doing night duty at the time of the explosion. At a distance of 60 or 70 yards are the carcasses of 34 more that were in the stable."



The Dinas Colliery shortly after the 1879 explosion looking across the Pandy Railway Station. Possibly the only photograph of the disaster.



Unknown colliers working at the coal face

CHAPTER SIX

A source of possible danger

While standing today within a short distance of the whirling fan employed in sucking the air from below, a reporter was surprised to find himself labouring under a sickening sensation. For a moment he was unable to understand the cause, for ever since the accident occurred he had been daily in the smoke and the smell that usually pervades such places. But it suddenly dawned upon him that what had effected him so unusually came in a diluted state from the fan.

To satisfy himself he approached nearer to the fan, and he was instantly convinced. The smell there was horrible, and he beat a hasty retreat. The fan whirls the foul stench from the pit, and it is wafted by the breeze through the valley. The effect cannot be but very serious to those cottages who have the misfortune to dwell near the pit. The men employed below were supplied, it was understood, with disinfectants, and the cottagers, too, should have some. The next few days will be a very trying time for all dwelling in this part of the valley.

Great distress amongst the bereaved

Today the Rev. T. W. Williams, M.A., Fairfield, who did such signal service in connection with the Tynewydd disaster, visited Dinas, and informed the committee he would do all in his power to further the object of the committee. The working class cannot be but grateful to the Rev. gentleman for again coming forward, especially after the display of ingratitude with which his great services in connection with that disaster was met by certain parties. So far subscriptions had flowed in slowly. But probably this was due to the fact that the committee had not yet issued their appeal to the public. This, however, would be made on Thursday.

Were it possible for those having money to spare to view the scenes that have been witnessed today and yesterday, they would not forget the injunction of Great Nazarene to remember the poor.

Thinly clad little girls, whose fathers are lying cold, whose lips they touched for the last time as they left home for work in the pit on the evening the explosion took place, proceeding with “notes” for a few shillings granted them by the Relief Committee to the shops for a few articles of grocery for “mother,” no more will they, poor souls, be able to speak to “father.”

Thursday January 23rd 1879

The imprisoned miners' death warrant – A dismal foreboding

Dinas, Thursday evening, a newspaper reporter commented:– "I fear all hope of reaching any of the poor fellows alive must finally be abandoned," such was the melancholy remark made to me this afternoon, by Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for South Wales. This sad conclusion seems to be to two causes – the length of time that has elapsed since the explosion took place, and secondly, to the fact that is was today found necessary, after a lengthy deliberation, to abandon the mode of exploring which had been carried out from the beginning. The following gentlemen took part in the deliberation:- Mr. Wales, Mr. Galloway, Mr. Edmund Thomas, Mr. David Evans, Mr. W. Thomas, C. E. (Resolven), Mr. Henry Lewis, Mr. Burns, Mr. Curnew (Lady Margaret's Colliery), and some others.

New searching arrangements

The reader will not be surprised to learn that the new plan decided upon is the one urged in the '*Western Mail*' from the beginning, namely to proceed through the Little Pit in the interior, and follow the air current instead of entering into the flow of gas and the stench from the interior to the upcast.

It is now admitted by some of the managers themselves that the attempt to penetrate through the monster fall at the bottom of the upcast was a mad act – Ynfydrwydd (madness) was the word employed – for, independently of the difficulties in consequence of the flow of the gas and stench to the upcast arriving from the carcasses of 44 horses, the dangers from the loosened roof were appalling, and the wonder is that no one was killed in making the attempt.

The only object achieved by the attempt is that of proving to the world how much Welsh miners will dare in endeavouring to reach their unfortunate comrades entombed in their dark recesses of a mine. "Why was the attempt made to penetrate through the monster fall," I asked an explorer today, "instead of concentrating attention on the way through the Little Pit?" "We believed," was the reply, "that the shortest way would be through the fall."

The late manager's advice

Immediately after the accident I was fortunate enough to meet the late manager, and having requested him to sketch me a plan of the colliery, he obliged me, and also give me his views as to how the explorers should proceed. "Through the Little Pit, through the Little Pit, and that without delay," was his cry, and I gave it to the public. Why was not that done when there was some hope of reaching the poor

fellows, when some of them might be still alive? There is not a miner in the district - at any rate any of those to whom I have talked – and I have spoken to scores within the last week – who does not believe that the men would have been reached days ago had the plan about to be adopted been acted upon on the morning of last Tuesday week.

Why was it not adopted earlier? Why? Don't you know reader that there are two "parties" at Dinas? The "party" of the late manager and the "party" of the new one. Don't you know that Dinas is teaming with tattle, and that this tattle has bewildered some in authority? All I can say that it was full time to forget all "party" feeling when the lives of so many poor fellows were in jeopardy, and to think of them, and to adopt the most likely way to reach them without first consulting whether your rival had pointed that way before you had done so. What terrible responsibilities the Dinas partisans have at last incurred!

Why did they not remember that there would be plenty of time for talking and squabbling after the poor fellows had been brought out of the pit, and "agreed to differ," for once and call every aid available to reach them? Who was more able to plan a way to reach the men than the man who had opened the colliery? But what did I find? While strange managers were blundering, as is now admitted by themselves, I found the late manager reading the newspaper at home, and he having urged through me the adoption of a plan, the managers today came to the conclusion that it was the best.

I should also state that Mr. Edwards, another late manager at Dinas, met me nightly at the Pontypridd station on my return from the colliery, and each time, after learning what was being done, told me that from what he knew of the colliery the only way to reach the men speedily was through the Little Pit, and that it was sheer madness not to proceed in that direction as quickly as possible.

Preparations for descending the Little Pit

Mr. Wales informed me that a descent would be made into the Little Pit as soon as possible, but that probably a portion of the sides will have to be walled before that was done. The bodies, when found, will be brought up through this Little Pit. Meanwhile all work from the monster fall in the upcast will be abandoned, and preparations made to raise the rubbish to the surface, and clear the bottom of the shaft. This, he told me, will occupy three or four weeks. From the bottom of the Little Pit, should the airway to the workings be found blocked, an opening will be made to the arched flue at the bottom of the upcast. Over and over again, as the reader will remember, I have urged this, as the result of my conversation with Mr. Rowlands, upon the authorities.

It is exceedingly probable that as soon as the opening is made, the explorers will be able to enter into the interior of the workings, through the flue heading, running through the solid in the shape of a skew from the bottom of the upcast shaft to a spot on the level heading 40 yards from the bottom of the upcast shaft. Unless the great fall extends beyond the spot on the level heading where the flue heading "parting" is reached, the interior workings will be reached easily, provided there are no other falls to contend with in the interior. For a few days, however, nothing will be done but preparations.

So what had brought about this change of direction by those in charge of the exploration? A Central News telegram earlier that day explains what must have been the final straw in trying to get through the upcast: -

Narrow escape of explorers

An occurrence, which might have been attended with a very serious consequence has taken place at the upcast shaft at the Dinas Pit. A body of men, under the superintendence of Mr. Chubb, were engaged in penetrating the fall which obstructs the way to the scene of the explosion, when a slip took place which, had they not hastened out with great rapidity, would have completely cut off their retreat, and a repetition of the the incidents at the Tynewydd entombment might have followed.

Mr. Chubb was the last out, and it is said that a portion of the fall descended on him. In consequence of the dangers hindering the work at the upcast shaft, it has been decided to abandon it, and to resume operations at the Little Pit, which was closed only a day or two ago. Mr. Wales, Government Inspector, says it is possible, by this means, to reach the bodies in two or three days.

The Colliers – their dangers and sorrows

The '*Western Mail*' of January 23rd 1879 commented:- The colliers have our heartiest, our keenest sympathies. We know the arduous character of their employment; the hazard and peril constantly surrounding them. Even with their sorrows we are as familiar as with their dangers, and it has been from this intimate knowledge of their social life that we have been prompted, time after time, to entreat them at once to adopt the scheme of the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund. We have felt, also, with all who have urged the same course, that there was a limit to the practical sympathy of the public, and that generous donors would not continue, time after time, to give large sums whenever an explosion, a great

shipwreck, or some other terrible misfortune swept away a hearty band, and overwhelmed a community with grief.

The influence if interested persons giving advice to join the fund has so far been ignored, and we have to narrate, for the benefit of the colliers, what the public think of their refusal. In all, then, but the immediate district of the calamity, the general opinion is steadily against affording relief. One gentleman to whom the subject was mentioned thus expressed himself in the course of a letter forwarded to us for insertion: -

"It is necessary for the furtherance of this Permanent Fund, that the misery of a few shall ultimately be the benefit of the many, and keenly alive as I am to human suffering, yet I can see the widows and the orphans of Dinas begging for bread from door to door, or filling unions in order that the colliers generally may be roused to the foolishness of their refusal, and at last adopt the scheme."

This is hard. These are severely expressed views, but we assure the colliers that they are not surprising, and far more general than many of their number may imagine, so let there be no more delay. The widows and orphans of Dinas wail and lament. Had the husbands and sons of Dinas done their duty this would not be the case.

Friday, January 24th 1879

The exploring fiasco – strong feeling of discontent with the managers
Painful rumours – Grave charge against night fireman

The feeling of despair felt by the local colliers at the rescue operations described by the '*Western Mail*' on Thursday were not unfounded. The newspaper's Pontypridd correspondent reported the following day: -

The consequence of blundering and disunion

It is stated that the feeling of discontent among the workmen here in consequence of the late blundering, when there was still a chance to recover some of the men alive, is intense. As illustrating the want of intelligence displayed by the leaders, the manner the "cog" was erected in the upcast is pointed out. Thousands of tons of walling and rock had fallen in the shaft, and an incalculable quantity was in a condition that it was momentarily expected to follow, as a preventative, a pillar constructed of wood and stones was erected and tightened under the hanging rocks. The foundation of the pillar was placed on the loose stones below, and the

first real pressure from above was sure to crush it down. Much valuable time was wasted in constructing a pillar which was of no more use to resist the pressure from above that was the mop of the old Cardigan fish man's wife to keep the sea out of her dwelling.

I learnt today that the gallant explorers themselves now blame each other. "If so-and-so had placed the foundation of the pillar 'cog,' six feet deeper, there would have been a better chance of success," said one of the managers today. But I could write a column illustrating the incompetency displayed from the beginning. "If, if, if," are of little value now that the poor men have perished! It is awful to contemplate the fact that many of the poor imprisoned men were behind the stone barriers in their horrible prison house, listening to the hammerings in the shaft, and hoping for deliverance, when all the blundering was going on, in the face of protest of men better informed than those who were fiddling – for it deserves no better title. Who knows?

The poor fellows within the mine were probably holding a prayer meeting and singing the hymns of old Pantycelyn (William Williams, Methodist hymnist, writer) in the prospect of another deliverance from the murky mine, when the managers were blundering. For we saw at the Tynewydd disaster how the Welsh miners, most of them the sons of the Sunday Schools, spent what they believed to be their last moments on this side of the grave. By this time, in all probability, they have rolled in the dust, and with prayers on their lips for the little ones, they left behind them, they closed their eyes for ever.

Rumours of official neglect

There are terrible rumours in the neighbourhood, and if half of them be true it is the duty of the miners to speak out unflinchingly. Justice to the dead, and their own safety in the future demands this of them. I was informed this evening that one of the night firemen had only left a neighbouring public house twenty minutes before the explosion took place. It was his duty to examine the workings before the men entered. I give this rumour on the best of authority. The fireman in question is among the dead. It has been said that he had been drinking all day. I have heard other rumours which are of such a nature that I forbear to publish them. But they are likely to come out at the inquiry. Mr. Abraham, the miners' agent, is busily engaged in collecting evidence.

Work at the Little Pit

A large staff of men are now engaged in walling a portion of the Little Pit, and as soon as this is accomplished a descent will be made. Mr. John James, contractor,

Pentre, will commence clearing the monster fall in the upcast on Monday next. It is said that during the last eleven years not a single fall took place in the Little Pit, where as the blast knocked down 15 yards of the walling in the upcast. Very little of the sides of the Little Pit, which are not walled fell, at any rate, as far as the explorers have gone, a distance of about sixty yards. The upcast today is said to be full of gas.

The Rev. D. W. Williams, today received a telegram from the Lord Mayor of London that a 'Mansion House Fund' would be started on condition that an influential local committee be formed to distribute relief.

Saturday & Sunday, January 25th & 26th 1879

A telegram from Dinas, dated Saturday, says:- "The walling of the Little Pit on which a large number of men are engaged, progresses very satisfactory, and the operations free from the accumulations which interfered with work at the other shaft. It is expected that the scene of the explosion, where the bodies were supposed to be, will be reached in the course of Sunday or Monday.

However, on Sunday difficulties from falls and gas such as were experienced by the explorers at the upcast shaft were met with and frequent retirements to bank became necessary. Shortly after descending the pit at six o'clock on Sunday, a body of workers had to make a most precipitate retreat for fear of being overpowered by a very large accumulation of gas, and it was only deemed safe to return after a lapse of some considerable time.

Another point of view

The comments in the '*Western Mail*' about the disarray of the explorers were not universally agreed with, '*Observer*' in the '*Pontypridd and District Herald*' wrote: -

I have a duty to perform with regard to the expressions of opinion on the part of many competent mining engineers in connection with the course suggested to be taken to get at the poor fellows in the Dinas Pit during the recent unsatisfactory exploring movements that requires a word of two without delay.

It has been alleged that only one man was equal to the necessities of the hour, and that had his advice been taken the result would have been very different to what we find it now. This is so unjust and so outrageously at variance with fact, that it would be adding injustice to injustice already afflicted if nothing was said by way of defence. With respect to the mining engineers who worked so well, I know none of them; but this I am told on authority that cannot be gainsaid that the plan now

determined on had been discussed over and over again among the gentlemen who so freely offered their services.

The question, however, was, what were the most rapid and expeditious means to get at the entombed men, assuming that they were alive? This was the first and most potent of considerations. Everything was done that could be done to attain this end, and the dangers attending the exertions made, and which were undauntedly met, show fairly that this view was the one that most strongly prevailed. It is well to be wise after the event. But who knew what the obstructions and obstacles were when the attempts were first being made? It is the very fact of asserting that these difficulties were too formidable to be overcome, which necessitated the alterations in the plan of operations. The pushing forward of Morgan Rowland by the 'esteemed' newspaper must have unnecessarily added to the anguish of the bereaved relatives, while reflecting badly on the humanity of a fine body of men, engineers and miners, who were working heroically to carry out the dangerous exploration they had manfully resolved to discharge.

Monday January 27th 1879

Exploring prospects

The talk of preparing for the descent through the Little Pit was progressing satisfactory; all the gas in the six-foot seam - and it is believed that the whole of the five mile of workings in it are full of gas – finds an outlet in the upcast. None of it now comes out through the Little Pit, and the masons, therefore, proceed there with their walling uninterrupted. There are several statements as to the probable time that must elapse before an entrance can be made through the Little Pit into the inner workings where the bodies are lying.

They are all idle surmises, for no one can know when the explorers will be able to enter the workings until the conditions at the bottom of the Little Pit have been ascertained. Should the bottom of this pit be found blocked up with debris, which is not likely, as it has been ascertained beyond question that the air traverses through it, it will take some time to clear the debris. But it is supposed that very little impediment will be met with by the explorers at the bottom of the Little Pit, and that the real difficulty would be encountered between the bottom of the Little Pit and the stable, one end of which is 120 yards from the bottom of the Little Pit, and the end other 15 yards from the bottom of the upcast.

Those who know what the condition of the roof was above the space stated that is was so very brittle that almost every yard had to be held up by props, and that it is extremely probable that the whole of those props were blown down by the blast, followed by a tremendous fall of the roof, and that the air passing through the Little

Pit - which, by the way, is sufficient to prevent the gas from flowing in that direction to the downcast – passes over the top of the said fall to the stables, and then up the upcast to the surface.

Where the fresh air passes from the stable, it is met by the flow of gas from the inner workings into the upcast. But both the air passing that way and the air passing through canvas pipes from the Polka opening in the upcast is not sufficient to dilute the gas at the bottom of the upcast so as to make it non-inflammable. Should the airway in question be found to be impassable, an opening, it is said, will be made to the bottom of the upcast, as was suggested in the '*Western Mail*' more than a week ago. Indeed, the suggestions that have been made in these columns have so far proved correct, and a number of workmen were heard to say that the editor of that journal should have taken the lead in the attempt of exploration, for that he seemed to know more about it than anyone else.

Meeting of the Relief Committee

On Monday afternoon the Dinas Relief Committee met at the Dinas Literary Room, Storehouse, there was a full attendance. Until the arrival of Mr. Gwilym Williams, the vicar of Llantrisant, presided. The secretaries, the Rev. E. Stephens, H. W. Hughes, and Mr. Ishmael Williams, reported the amount of relief granted by them during the week, which was at the rate of 2s 6d to each widow, and 1s 6d for each child. It was now agreed to grant each widow 5s; and 1s 6d for each child, per week.

It was also decided to grant temporary relief to those families requiring it whose friends were in the pit, but had not depended absolutely upon their earnings for support. It was said that there were several aged parents left destitute, whose boys, now lying in the fateful shaft, had supported them. It was decided to grant to them the same scale as they granted to the widows.

It was mentioned that one young man, named Jenkins, now in the pit, was the sole support of his three sisters. It was agreed to grant to them the same relief as a widow with children would receive. A young man named Rees, whose parents reside at Llantwit Vardre, was referred to by the vicar of Llantrisant. It seems that the young man and his father (Thomas Rees) had been injured at a colliery in the Ogmore Valley. The son had just commenced working at Dinas when he was killed. His mother and father depended on him for support, the father not having recovered. The Vicar was requested to grant them relief.

The joint managers of the London and Provincial Bank were appointed treasurers to the fund. The Rev. D. W. Williams, Fairfield House, related the measurers he had

adopted to induce the Lord Mayor of London to start a Dinas Relief Fund at the Mansion House. The Lord Mayor had stipulated that the following gentlemen should take part in the disbursement of the relief: Lord Bute, Lord Aberdare, the Lord-Lieutenant of Glamorganshire, Mr. H. Vivian M. P., and Mr. Gwilym Williams, Miskin Manor.

Replies had been received by the Lord-Lieutenant, who had contributed £100 (cheers). Lord Aberdare, and Mr. H. Vivian both contributed £25 to the fund. (cheers). There had been no reply from Lord Bute as yet, but he did not receive the letter until Sunday, it was unlikely that he himself wrote letters on Sunday. It was said that the sum of £10,000 would be required.

A circular, drawn up by the vicar of Llantrisant for the purpose of sending to the large firms in the United Kingdom, soliciting subscriptions, was adopted. It was said that a portion of the Abercarn Mansion House Fund was likely to be handed over to the the Dinas Relief Fund.

Tuesday January 28th 1879

State of affairs at the pit

The task of walling the Little Pit and timbering the upcast is proceeding satisfactorily. But with this exception nothing else is being done; not a moment of time, however, is lost in preparing to descend to explore for bodies. The disaster and the many incidents in connection with the attempts to enter the workings is still the chief topic of conversation in the district. It is not expected than an entrance can be made to enter the working through the upcast in less than a month, and not until the monster fall on the bottom has been cleared away, and the sides of the shaft properly secured.

The Permanent Relief Fund question

Many people are surprised that the Welsh miners have met the proposals to establish a Welsh Miners' Permanent Relief Fund for south Wales with so little encouragement. Their apathy in the the face of a proposition so favourable apparently to their interests does appear quite extraordinary, and when it is remembered that the refusal to accede to it might appear to portray the miners in a very unfavourable position before the public, it is somewhat extraordinary that the leaders of the men, especially Mr. William Abraham (Mabon), whose intelligence and ardent desire to better their conditions is admitted on all hands, have not come forward to favour the public with the views of the miners in question.

They ought to do so in the interest of the miners themselves, for as long as they are silent the public naturally conclude that they have no reason to offer. But those who have attended the conference of miners and witnessed the parliament-like method and intelligence with which questions are brought forward and argued by the delegates, must feel convinced that the miners in their refusal were motivated by some tangible reasons in the course they thought it their duty to adopt. During the last few days I have inquired of some of the most intelligent men as to their reasons for up 'til now opposing the said fund. For the fact that they have done so might militate against the interest of the poor widows and those left destitute by the Dinas disaster.

Objections to the scheme

As far as I could judge, they advance three, if not four, reasons for their refusal. In the first instance they seem to labour under the impression as to the real promoters of the scheme being men who are are aiming to serving their own interests in establishing a miners' fund, rather than that of the miners.

There is hardly any doubt but that suspicion was the rock upon which the Amalgamation of Associated Miners for south Wales was wrecked. They seem to believe that some of the larger sums of money subscribed by them to that association were applied to doubtful purposes. Whether this suspicion led to the great outcry raised throughout the country against delegates, or there is another reason for it, I am unable to say. I simply point out that the suspicion was one of the instances which alienated thousands in south Wales from that association, and that it is still a considerable obstruction in the way of the promoters of the proposed permanent fund.

Secondly:- They seem to fear that the establishment of the said fund would be used by the masters in an argument against a Bill, which Mr. Archibald, M. P. is about to submit to Parliament to hold masters responsible to the families of those killed in a mine.

Thirdly:- It was felt that the provisions of the fund are not wide enough, they would wish it to be a kind of a benefit society to provide for all kinds of sickness in addition to providing for the families of those killed in colliery accidents.

Forthly: They seemed to fear that the existence of such a fund would make unprincipled masters less careful of the lives of their men.

It would be interesting were Mr. Abraham to state whether the above were some of the arguments employed by the delegates at their conference when the majority

decided against the Miners' Permanent Fund. For the public, alas, who are so frequently called upon to subscribe towards funds to provide bread for widows and orphans of miners in colliery disasters – are deeply interested in the question.

Wednesday, January 29th – February 1st 1879

An outline of the pit's history – Where the explosion probably occurred

Now while the workmen are obviously engaged placing the two shafts in a secure condition so as to enable the explorers to descend with less risk to search for the dead bodies, it may not be uninteresting to take a retrospective glance of the past history of Dinas, which in in the locality in which the Rhondda coalfield was first tapped.

Doctor Malkin, of Cowbridge, who transversed this valley in the year 1803 makes no mention of Dinas in his "*Scenery and antiquities of South Wales."* Describing the valley some two miles above where now stands the town of Pontypridd, but then had no existence, he says: -

"The vale is much confined, admitting only a road and a few fields on one side, and on the other the cliffs rise perpendicular from the water in all their naked grandeur, but are clothed on the top with some of the most majestic timber that Glamorgan produces."

Then, describing the valley higher up, he states: - "It may be necessary to observe that travellers in any sort of carriage are precluded from adopting this interesting route owing to the the road being almost impassable, and leading to some coal pits close by." These "pits" mentioned by Dr. Malkin refer apparently to the little levels that had been opened in this part of the valley to supply the farmers with coal. They came here from all parts of the valley with their pack horses for coal.

Not long ago there died at Dinas an old man named "Twme Pengelly," who, in his youth was a servant of Ynysfeio Farm, Treherbert, who frequently came with pack horses for coal from Dinas for his master and mistress. It says that the "coal merchant" then was Mr. Morgan David, the owner of the Gwaun Ddu estate, who was grandfather of Mrs. Williams, the wife of Ishmael Williams, the secretary of the Dinas Relief Fund.

It seems that, from time immemorial, the neighbourhood had been noted for its coal seams, two of which were "cropped" out into the surface, namely, No. 1 and No. 2 seams. The first-named was peeping out of the earth within a short distance of the brow of the hills to the south-west of the valley, and the last-named, on a level with the bed of the Rhondda River. The old names given to the old

farmhouses in the neighbourhood implies the proximity of the precious mineral – Graig Ddu (the Black Craig); Gwaun Adda (the Black Meadow); Lled-ar-Ddu (the space on black), &co.

The value of coal as an article of commerce was beginning to dawn upon South Wales at the period in question, and among others the mind of a young man named Walter Coffin, the son of a Bridgend Tanner, who had made money by that trade. It seems that Mr. Coffin, the elder, had a wholesale dread of banks, and that he kept his cash in a strong box at home. Indeed, it is said that he was seen now and again to take out his gold in an iron sieve which he shook well to prevent his gold from becoming "rusty."

Little the old gentleman thought to what might soon apply to the gold he so faithfully guarded, that it would open a coalfield which would ultimately give employment to tens of thousands of men, and prove that the Rhondda Valley is the richest valley in mineral wealth in the British Isles, if not in the world.

About 1800, Mr. Walter Coffin negotiated with Mr. Morgan David for leasing the the coal under his property. He also purchased the Dinas Farm, from which the locality derives its name. In 1810 he leased all the minerals under his property to Mr. Coffin for a term of 99 years, for £30 per annum and a few loads of coal, enough for the Gwaun-Ddu house grates.

Shortly after the above date found Mr. W. Coffin opening three levels on the level with the present road from Pandy Station to Ffrwd Amos. Scores of men, decaying farmers, farm hands, etc; gathered at Dinas to try their hand at coal minerals, and in a short time a little community nestled in this part of the valley. Among those who came from Bridgend to take part in the Coffin enterprise at Dinas was the late Mr. William David, the father of the greatly respected David Family of Shoppy Garreg, Ffrwd Amos, and all of whose children, except Mr. R. David, Heolfach, having passed away.

Mr. William David was, for some years, Mr. W. Coffin's right-hand man, but owing to some dispute they separated, never more to meet as friends. One of Mr. Coffin's first managers was the late Mr. Richard Jenkins, who, in his day, long before what geology became what Lyell, Murchison and others have made it, was celebrated in the district for his knowledge of the South Wales minerals, and it is stated that he was of great service to De La Beche in his celebrated survey of the Silurian coalfield.

One great early obstacle with which Mr. Coffin had to contend was the difficulty in the way of conveying the call to the Glamorgan Canal at the spot known now as

Treforest, but then called “The Duke,” a public house by the side of the highway between Cardiff and Merthyr, and named after the Duke of Bridgewater, where the coaches between the two places were changed.

Manbey, who visited this house in 1800, after having his appetite sharpened by the mountain air, described it as “a noted place for ham and eggs.” The ancient hostelry has for some years been a private dwelling, and needed as offices for the Llanover estate. Mr. Coffin constructed a tramway from Dinas to the canal at this place, - a distance of about 8 miles, through a most rugged district, and the coal was conveyed from Dinas to this place and then to Cardiff by the canal until the Taff Vale Railway and Rhondda branch to Hafod, then Eirw, were constructed in 1839 or 1840.

After that period most of the coal was “tipped” at Eirw, but some continued to be sent by the canal to Cardiff down to within the memory of middle-aged people now living. About fifty years ago Mr. Coffin began his first great venture under the guidance of Mr. Richard Jenkins by sinking for the lower seams, which, though unseen in any part of South Wales, were believed to exist, and in the course of time he had the satisfaction of striking the celebrated No. 3 seam of bituminous coal which soon made the Dinas coal famous throughout the world.

Mr. Walter Coffin had built two rows of cottages for his workmen within a short distance of Ffrwd Amos, with a shop between them. At the one end of one of the rows was and still is, a public house, and both shop and public house were named after a place in the town of Bridgend, called “Y Garreg” – the stone – hence Tavern-y-Garreg, and Shop-y-Garreg, at Dinas. Many were the jokes, in reference to the peculiar “stone” adjective the shop and the public house bore, the old people of the neighbourhood “cracked” among themselves. At the back of the Carreg Public House, was a flight of steps, and the original Dinas school.

Not a word of English was ever heard about the roads or in the cottages, but this upper chamber was sacred to the language of Hengist and Horsa. Here the “Welsh-not” went round, to the discomfort of each rustic swain in the school, to whom English was as nearly strange as “double-dutch” is to English boys and girls. This “Welsh not” was a small slip of wood, upon which the two words were sometimes carved, but generally written in ink, and the lad in whose possession this obnoxious piece of wood was found at the end of the day, was punished; for finding it upon him was regarded as proof positive that he had spoke Welsh during school hours.

The boy, who had been heard to let slip a word of his mother tongue in school received it as a kind of ticket for a thrashing in the evening. The poor lad then watched the other lads to see if one of them would transgress as he had done; for

the moment one was caught doing so, he was, by the rules, entitled to pass it on. The holder of the "Welsh not" sometimes had a little party who assisted him to entrap some other boy to commit a similar offence. More than one of the boys who attended this school are now magistrates at the Antipodes and to this day the little slip of wood cannot have been forgotten by them, for the hand which now "lays down the law" has occasionally smarted for it under the birching rod of the Dinas schoolmaster.

The above illustrates the mode in which the English language was enforced on the attention of the Welsh youth in the obscure hamlets of the Principality not so many years ago. Dinas continued to be an isolated community for years. It was a little world alone among the grand mountains, with the usual concomitants of loves, jealousies, friends, hates, and the scandals distinguishing larger communities.

Gradually Pontypridd grew in importance under the fostering influence of trade, and the market was removed here from Llantrisant, and was fixed to be held on Wednesdays to suit, it is supposed, the Dinas people, whose "pay" was on Tuesdays. The reader will understand that the community at Dinas, where 'good' wages were earned, soon became a place of considerable importance in the estimation of the rustics dwelling in the lonely mountainous hamlets at Ystradfodwg, and crowds of young men left agriculture in pursuit, and took up the mandril, pick, and shovel instead.

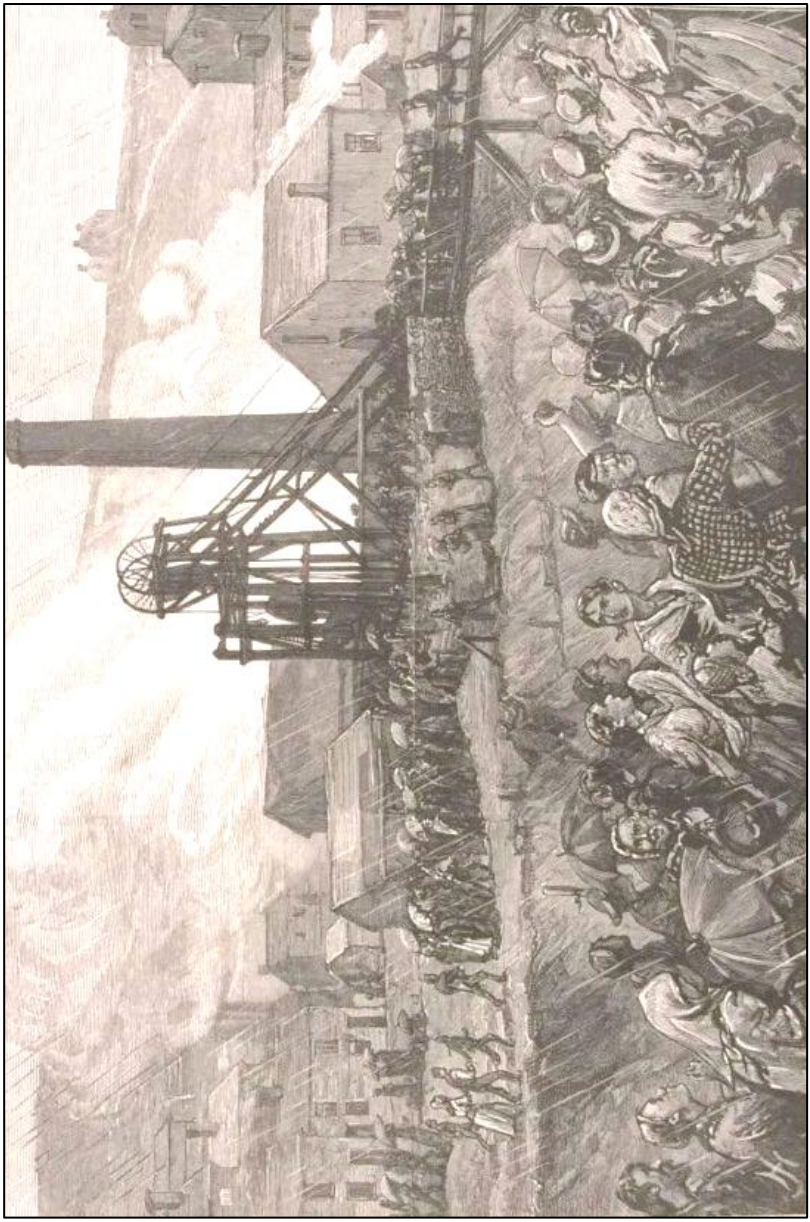
After working it for some years a great fault was struck above the spot where the Little Pit, which has been so often mentioned in connection with the recent Dinas disaster was struck. This necessitated the sinking of another shaft, which was done to a depth of eighty yards, when the large seam was struck on the other side of the fault, which was found to have thrown down the seam a distance of 40 yards. This is the shaft, at a depth of 340 yards below the No. 3 seam reached by Mr. Coffin, in which the recent explosion took place.

It seems that the slant in the fault is from South to West. It was reached 50 yards down to the South of the Dinas upcast. At a depth of 420 yards it is again reached 80 yards to West from the bottom of the upcast. Now the brittle nature of the roof, caused by the disturbance in the strata by the said fault, the space of 80 yards from the bottom of the upcast to the spot where the descending slant is reached, made it an exceedingly difficult, as the old manager informed me today, to preserve it from falling. The said space of 80 yards had to be thickly timbered, and in some places arched. Now, thousands of tons of debris have streamed down the slant to the workings from time to time, and have been cleared by the labourers. This left a tremendous hole in the roof, having its mouth towards the inner workings.

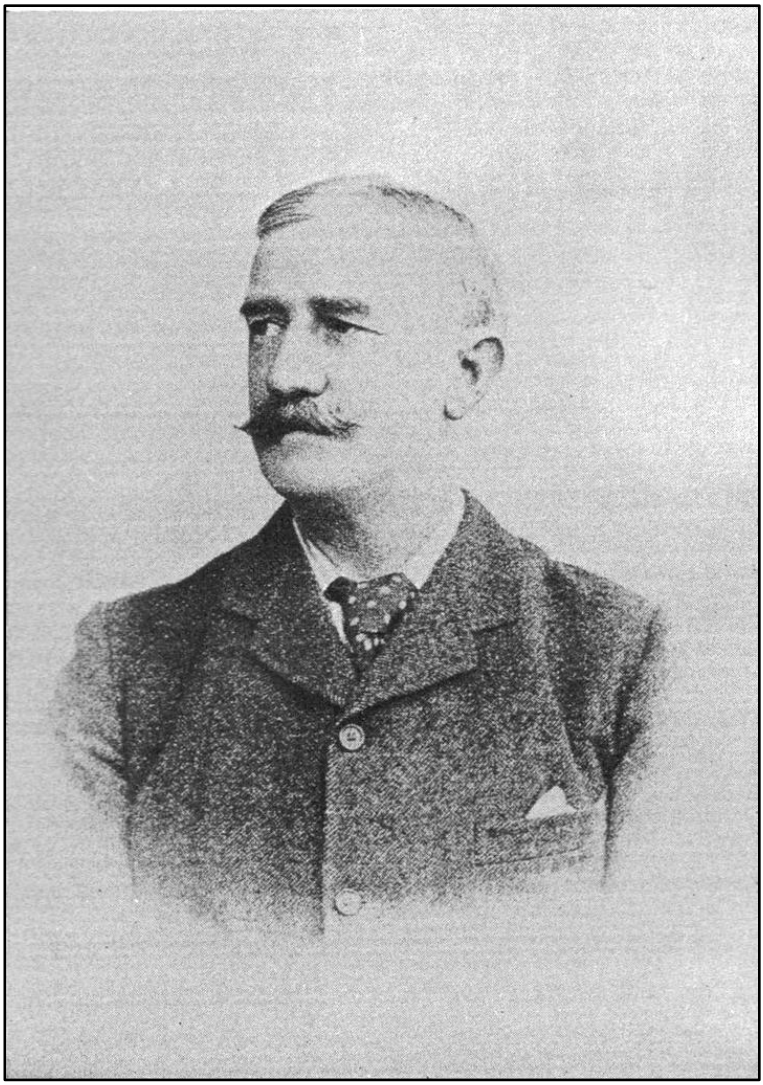
It is exceedingly probable, nay, almost certain, that the said cavity contains an immense accumulation of gas in it. Men on the night of the explosion were engaged in working, timbering, etc; near the said cavity, and it is the theory of some of them that it was here that the explosion took place, and that it forced the roof down by its explosive force.

But, on the other hand it is pointed out that had the explosion taken place here it would not have reached the inner workings, but would have spent its force in shooting up to the surface, and that the men would have come out as far as the fall and made their presence known by knocking. The probability is that the fiery hurricane traversing the level heading to the upcast fired also the gas in the cavity, and this accounted for the terrific violence of the storm.

Mr. Gwilym Williams (Stipendiary Magistrate) and Chairman of the Dinas Relief Committee. Later to become Judge Gwilym Williams. this statue of him now stands outside the Cardiff Law Courts.



Another print of the Dinas Colliery disaster of 1879



William Galloway – Deputy Inspector of Mines, and chief witness at the 1879 inquest, and later consulting engineer and assistant manager at the Dinas Colliery

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sunday, February 2nd 1879

Immense volumes of gas in the pit – Perilous work to be accomplished

The '*Pontypridd correspondent*' in the '*Western Mail*' reported:- I regret to say that the explorers, although doing all they possibly can, have not yet made much progress. The rushes of gas into the upcast are frequent, and the men engaged in timbering and bratticing there have to beat a hasty retreat to the surface many times a day. Operations, however, in the Little Pit are progressing satisfactorily, and it is expected that the bottom will be reached by Monday morning.

Then will follow a most exciting time, when the greatest fortitude that the human fibre can endure will have to be exhibited. It will be horrible enough to explore in the dark mine for the scores of dead bodies of the poor fellows lying there, and the 44 carcasses of dead horses in a state of decomposition.

But it makes one shudder when one thinks of the terrible dangers that the living braves will undergo during the exploration in a colliery every nook and crevice of which is impregnated with deadly gas in a space of five miles, quantity enough, were it by any accident fired, to produce an earthquake in the valley, and produce disastrous consequences in the Glamorgan Collieries at Llwynypia, into which, I am given to understand, there is a communication from one of the openings in the upcast.

It is stated that some men, standing on a double-parting in the Glamorgan workings on the night of the explosion in the Dinas Pit, felt its effect. Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the masons and others who laboured under the "comedy of errors" over in the upcast to build up a wall in the Little Pit. They have constructed it with marvellous rapidity.

It is now but plainly seen how mistaken the parties in charge of the exploring parties were in not following the advice given to concentrate their attention upon the Little Pit from the beginning. Some even blame the writer for having persistently urged this upon their attention - for urging what they themselves now admit to be the best. But, "ah," they say, "we knew as well as the old manager." In the name of all that is sacred then why didn't they do it, instead of smearing those who had no other purpose to serve than the interests of the sufferers? It is said on Sunday evening that little work has been done today owing to the gas rushing into the upcast.

Monday, February 3rd 1879

Steady progress of the workers – The bodies almost reached

The explorers are still hard at work in the Little Pit, in the interior of the working at the downcast pit, and it is reported tonight that they are in a short distance of the bottom. It is stated that you can hear the air roaring through the timber and rubbish at their feet, passing into the workings from which the explosion took place.

One of the explorers described the noise of the air passing through as to the rushing of water. It is expected that the bottom will be reached before Tuesday morning. In this Little Pit, in happier times, was a ladder reaching from the top to the bottom, and the miners frequently climbed it, a distance of about 75 yards.

It is believed that many of the poor fellows, if any of them survived the explosion, made their way through the intake airway towards the Little Pit, and that their bodies will be discovered in that neighbourhood. It is conjectured that but very little rubbish will be met with below where the explorers are now working, and that the obstruction still in the way is chiefly the timber composing the framing on the top of the Little Pit.

Above this framing was an immense hole, and when the blast flew up through the Little Pit the framing, it is believed, was blown up into the hole, and that it then fell into the pit, followed by the rubbish which had fallen upon it from time to time from the roof above the hole. The great attempt to enter the workings in this direction will be made, it is now believed, tomorrow (Tuesday). In the upcast a brattice is being laid from the Polka opening, 80 yards from the bottom to the monster fall lying on the bottom. Mr. William Galloway proposed this on the first morning after the explosion, but his advice was not adopted.

The manager carrying out Mr. Galloway's instructions is Mr. Burns, a gentlemen of great experience in colliery work, and who, moreover, is a certified manager. There are rumours in the neighbourhood that he is likely to be the future manager of the Dinas Collieries.

Tuesday February 4th 1879

The bottom of the Little Pit reached- Early recovery of bodies expected
More coffins requested

The Bottom of the Little Pit has been reached, and it was ascertained that 8,000 cubic feet of fresh air per minute passes along the intake into the workings. This air passes, it is supposed, as far as the stable, 100 yards away, and returns through it

into the return airway, 15 yards from the bottom of the upcast. As soon as an opening large enough is made, the intake will be entered. It is supposed that this current of air does not go beyond the stable, 100 yards distant from the Little Pit, and 15 yards from the bottom of the upcast, through which it escapes to the surface. None of it penetrates into the workings.

The effect of this current of air is that the gas escaping from the workings to the upcast is sufficiently diluted to enable the men working on the monster fall to do so in comparative safety, and rubbish from it has been sent rapidly to the surface on Tuesday. The 80 yards of brattice in the upcast is now useless, and all the expense incurred in placing it would have been saved had the Little Pit been opened earlier, as was urged in the '*Western Mail*' on the Wednesday following the night when the explosion took place. Unless falls are met with in the intake beyond the stable, it is expected that bodies will be reached on Wednesday.

The Mansion House Fund started by the Lord Mayor of London was struggling to raise a descent amount of money, meanwhile, the Dinas committee issued the following circular: -

Dinas Colliery Explosion Relief Fund

The explosion at Dinas Colliery, which happened on January 13th 1879, deprived 63 men of their lives, and 55 families of their breadwinners. These 55 families consist of 46 widows and 130 children.

An influential committee has been formed to receive and distribute relief among them; they have been visited at their houses, their cases have carefully been investigated, and it has been ascertained that most of them are so destitute that, apart from the proceeds of this fund, they have no prospect of support except from parish relief."

"It is estimated that if the same measure of relief be given as in previous occasions of the kind, the sum of £10,000 will be required. The distress in the district and the depression of trade is great, and it is hopeless to expect that funds sufficient to meet the emergency can be raised by local means. Under these circumstances, the committee has deputed us to bring the subject under your notice to appeal for your assistance on behalf of the sufferers from this disastrous calamity."

Gwilym Williams (Chairman of the committee); H. W. Hughes, E. Stephens, Ishmael Williams (Secretaries). The committee room Dinas, January 27th 1879.

On Tuesday, Mr. G. A. Stone, undertaker, Cardiff, forwarded, at the request of the local agent of the Dinas Colliery, 20 coffins from Cardiff to Dinas, it being anticipated that they would be shortly required. Fourty-three other coffins were already made, and would be sent on as soon as the necessary instructions were given.

Wednesday, February 5th 1879

Entrance of the workings – Discovery of another fall

The interest in the Dinas Colliery disaster seems to be revived considerably since Monday, owing, it is supposed, to the belief that the explorers are approaching the bodies of the unfortunate men. A startling rumour has been flying about that the explorers employed in the Little Pit had heard knocking in the interior of the workings, and that some of the men might have been kept alive by eating beans in the inner stable, some 200 yards from the bottom of the upcast. This rumour in question, I regret to state, is unfounded. The silence of death prevails below.

On Wednesday for the first time an entrance was effected to the workings. It will be remembered in my hurriedly pencilled report from the colliery late last night, I stated that a small opening had been made at the top of the tunnel leading into the workings from the top of the remaining heap of rubbish at the bottom of the Little Pit, and that a current of air was found passing through this opening into the tunnel.

Now, about 9 o'clock on Wednesday night Mr. Jones, Cymmer Level, Mr. Isaiah Thomas and Moses Rees widened the opening so as to admit the body of a man, and the three gentlemen, after that was done, slipped through into the tunnel below. They then advanced, but with great caution, along the roadway, each carrying a Davy lamp, with their faces directed towards the inner workings where the dead men are lying. After advancing about 22 yards, through a space, every inch of which bore unmistakable traces of a terrific fire storm which had rushed through it on its way to the Little Pit, they came to an immense fall in front of them.

They found it impossible to advance any further then; but instead of retreating, they stripped, and commenced digging a path over the side of the fall. All night they delved, and by 11 o'clock on Thursday they had reached the top of the fall, and had the satisfaction to discover that there was an opening along the top of the fall.

They were then joined by Mr. Burns, and Mr. William Samuel (under-foreman), and the party commenced to walk over the fall. But they soon discovered that walking over it was out of the question, and they had to go on their hands and knees, and

presently to crawl on their stomachs, the roof being so near the top of the fall, which, in some places, was estimated to be ten feet in thickness. After penetrating a distance of about 51 yards, they came to the other end of the fall, and they descended to the roadway. After advancing about ten yards along this road they came to the entrance of the stable, to which so many references have been made, and which is 15 yards from the bottom of the upcast.

They found the stable to be standing. There were six horses lying on the floor. They were horribly burnt. One of the explorers told me that every hair seemed to have been singed off the carcasses, and their hindquarters perfectly raw. The stench arising from them was unendurable.

A close search was, however, made for human bodies, but none were found. The party then advanced along the stable in the direction of the double parting leading into the upcast, and having advanced to the side of the double roadway, they found the place blocked up like a wall by the great fall, extending from the bottom of the upcast on the double roadway leading into the interior. They could distinctly hear the men working on the monster fall at the bottom of the upcast, and they shouted to them, but didn't succeed in making themselves heard.

In the stable a very important discovery was made. Mr. Jones, Cymmer Level, kicked against the door which had been on the entrance into the intake airway, over which they had come. It had been the theory of some that the explosion took place in the double-roadway leading into the interior from the upcast. Had it taken place there, it is pointed out that the door kicked by Mr. Jones would have been blown into the intake, and not into the stable; for the fiery blast would have had to pass through the stable to traverse the intake, and reach the Little Pit.

The position of the door, therefore, indicates that a portion of the fiery hurricane came along the intake from the interior, blew the door into the stable, and then flashed through it into the double-roadway, where it met the other current shooting along the main return from the interior, and spent its united force by passing through the upcast to the surface. The whole colliery must have been full of gas, or the horses in the stable near the bottom of the upcast would not have been burnt.

Whether the door leading into the stable from the intake had by some accident, given way, or was accidentally left open, is the question which will be inquired into, for had that taken place, no air whatever would have entered into the interior beyond that point; it would have passed, as it does at present, from the Little Pit along the intake, through the stable to the upcast, and the inner workings would

have been in a few minutes filled with the fiery fluid. The question was today discussed by some of the workmen.

The explorers found the air rushing violently through the stable, and making a great noise as it passed between the stones of the monster fall. From the stable they returned into the intake, and proceeding along it a distance of 61 yards beyond the stable, through water, they came to another fall, and gas was fired in their Davy lamps. They beat a hasty retreat to the neighbourhood of the stable, and eventually finding that nothing more could be then done, they returned over the great fall to the bottom of the Little Pit without having seen any human bodies during their extremely perilous journey.

It is supposed that the next party entering as far as the stable will repair the door on its entrance, and this will have the effect of sending the air current into the interior. It is supposed that, owing to the check the air current meets by the fall at the other end of the stable, it in small quantity "splits," and rushes along the airway, 61 yards of which, beyond the stable, was traversed by the explorers; but at the point reached by them it is met by gas from the interior in too large a quantity to dilute so as to make it non-inflammable.

The explorers tonight are engaged in securing the path traversed by the explorers today, and it is expected that a further advance into the interior will be made on Thursday. The opening into the inner workings, south and west, is about forty yards beyond the point reached today. The point reached today is about 80 yards beyond the bottom of the upcast.

Thursday, February 6th 1879

Further satisfactory progress – The bodies nearly reached

At around 7 p.m. on Thursday the explorers had just effected an opening from the stable to the upcast, and have passed through. The air, therefore, traverses freely from the Little Pit to the upcast, and the task that night was to widen the opening made, so as to increase the volume of air passing that way. When this has been done, a brattice will be placed on the entrance to the stable from the intake, so as to send an air current into the interior workings, where it is supposed dead bodies are lying.

Should the return airway from the interior prove sufficiently open to enable the air to pass, it will drive before it the stench and gas from the interior through the upcast to the surface. Mr. Burns discovered this morning that it was possible to pass through the top of the fall from the stable, and, displaying matchless intrepidity, he climbed from the stable to the top of it alone. He then found a deep

hollow the other side of the fall, and three trams loaded with coal standing in their proper place on the rails; but beyond the trams the place seemed chocked up.

He then made his way in the direction of the upcast, and found himself under that part of the slant of the monster fall, where the explorers a fortnight before had so narrow an escape, and where Mr. Chubb nearly lost his life. Mr. Burns then directed explorations to be made from the spot he had reached, and also from the slant of the monster fall in the upcast, with the happy result recorded above. The prospect tonight is much more hopeful than it has been from the beginning. Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for South Wales, has been here throughout the day.

Cardiff aid meeting

A meeting of the committee appointed at Cardiff to aid the Dinas Explosion Fund was held on Thursday afternoon at the Cardiff Town Hall, under the presidency of the Mayor (Alderman D. Lewis). His worship announced that he had received a subscription of £50 from Mr. Archibald Hood, acting on behalf of the Glamorgan Coal Company. Mr. Cartwright had also contributed the sum of £25. Some little discussion took place as the best way of raising sufficient subscriptions for the benefit of the large number of bereaved women and children now deprived of their breadwinner, and it was resolved than an appeal should be made to the public for help, by means of a circular.

Friday, February 7th 1879

Hope deferred

Another night and day nearly passed away without any advance into the vital workings being effected. Those, however, who made themselves familiar with the difficulties in the way in which the brave men engaged in the work of exploring conclude that no time has been lost since the plans presently pursued were adopted, with the exception, perhaps, of walling the Little Pit; that, I am told by competent men, was unnecessary, and was proceeded with to make "assurance doubly sure."

Had there been any chance of rescuing the poor men alive, that task would not have been undertaken, for it had been ascertained that there was no immediate danger to the explorers from the condition of the sides of the Little Pit.

Since the task of penetrating through the Little Pit was commenced it has been seen how correct they were who advocated an advance in that direction, instead of the upcast; for it has been seen that in a few days after the removal of the rubbish

in the lower section of the Little Pit was begun the explorers were able to advance into the workings 140 yards beyond the bottom of the Little Pit, whereas the managers and mining engineers from other collieries were engaged over a fortnight in pottering at the bottom of the upcast without accomplishing anything beyond proving that the suggestions urged in these columns were correct, and they themselves were wrong, and that at a moment of such extreme importance when there was a possibility – for ought was known to the contrary – of some of the poor men being alive!

There was another question, but, of course, of far less importance, namely, one of expense to the worthy proprietor of the collieries, whose pecuniary losses have been enormous owing to the disaster. The first attempt to reach the men were the least likely to succeed, and, moreover, were the most likely to entail expenditure of the largest amount to the proprietor.

There is no question that, had the suggestions made in these columns on the Wednesday following the disaster been adopted then, the bodies would have been recovered a fortnight ago, and many hundreds of pounds saved by Colonel Hunt. On the first morning after the calamity, I had a plan of the workings placed before me, and almost every yard of the various roadways, the nature of the roof, props, and so forth, explained to me by the late manager, but he had no idea that I would publish his remarks.

I, however, saw at a glance that his plan of procedure was the most feasible, and with all the power at my command urged it upon the authorities. With what result? A great hubbub in the neighbourhood, fermented by certain people who insinuated that personal motives actuated the writer. The result has justified the writer, and those who blundered have left the work of carrying out the plans suggested, and which have turned out successfully, to others. I was actuated by no other motive than my desire to do my duty, and if I may presume to say so, to do all in my power to assist the authorities.

Soon after the explorers passed through the hole they had made to the upcast, the hole closed again with rubbish that gave way from above. The explorers, therefore, had an exceedingly narrow escape from instant death. They had to leave the pit instantly owing to the rapid accumulation of gas that followed the obstruction to the air-current by the closing of the hole. The gas, however, cleared after a little while, and the men again descended, and succeeded in re-opening the hole and widening it considerably.

The air now passing from the Little Pit through the hole in the upcast is exceedingly strong, so strong that the men have their caps blown off, and it is only by sheltering

the Davy lamps that they manage to secure light for their work. It is intended to lay air pipes tomorrow, from the spot where the air enters from the intake into the stables, along the intake road towards the interior workings.

The explorers told me that the stench from the horses close to where they are working is horrible. The best disinfectant they have is said by them to be McDouglas's Patent Carbolic Disinfecting Powder. Some of the men complain that no refreshment is provided for them underground.

Saturday & Sunday, February 8th - 9th 1879

Further advance into the workings – The mine a perfect wreck

Another advance has been made along the intake airway beyond the stable, where the bodies of seven horses are lying. It will be remembered that the air from the downcast traverses the intake, passing through the stable, and that it then ascends through the upcast to the surface. Now, on Saturday the explorers having secured the opening made from the stable to the upcast, placed a brattice upon the entrance to the stable, so as to enable them to divert a portion of the air passing into the stable, and the intake beyond it.

They advanced 64 yards when they came to a fall, some of their number climbed over it to explore further on, and they proceeded a distance of nearly 100 yards beyond the fall to where an airbridge once stood. This bridge they found to have been blown to atoms by the explosion. The intake airway and the level heading on the downcast ran parallel with each other to this spot. Here there is a bend in the level heading passing to the south-west through the intake and its course is continued for some hundreds of yards.

The intake, however, continues its course in a straight line, passing over the south-west roadway by means of a bridge. The air current, after traversing several miles of workings in the interior, returns to the upcast over the south-west heading, and passes under the said bridge. It will be seen, therefore, that both in the passing into the workings and in the returning there from towards the upcast, the air current came in contact with the bridge referred to.

The explosion in shooting towards the shaft would necessarily come into contact with this bridge. It was very strong, and hope had been entertained that it had survived the terrific storm which rushed either through it or under it, or perhaps both ways at the same time. The consequence of its having been blown away is that a new one or a brattice substitute will have to be placed there before air can be sent into the interior and that part explored. It is true that air pipes could be

placed along the roadway to enable the explorers to advance, but that would be very tedious work, entailing, I am told, as much delay as constructing a new bridge.

It was hoped that the level-heading from the bridge to the upcast was sufficiently opened to allow the air current passing along the intake to return that way to the upcast, and that the result would be that 250 yards of roadway, from the stable round to the bottom of the upcast, would be free from immediate danger to the explorers from gas. This, however, is found to be blocked up completely somewhere between the bridge and the upcast, and that not a breath of air passes that way. An attempt was made on Sunday morning to penetrate over the fall from the upcast side of it in the direction of the bridge.

An open space was found – a kind of bridge in the continuous fall – some few yards from the stable, but beyond that point nothing but the fall was to be seen. It seems, as was conjectured at first, that the fall on the level heading extends from the bottom of the upcast to the slant of the fault, 80 yards in length, and that many months must elapse before it can be cleared away. Meanwhile the explorers are vigorously applying all their energies to advance through the intake, and as soon as the bridge – a tubular one - is constructed, another advance will be attempted.

I regret to state that so far as the explorers have penetrated it is seen but too evidently that the the storm was without its parallel in this part of the south Welsh coalfield, and that the whole mine is a perfect wreck. It must be astonishing that some of the old hands have not been called upon to assist in the exploration. Mr. Burns, who in the exploration is the "bravest of the brave," was never in the colliery until after the disaster, and yet he is the leader by whose orders everything is done. There are other explorers, over whose lack of experience the practical men make merry. The subject, I am told, is the topic of many a jest in the neighbourhood.

Monday & Tuesday, February 10th & 11th 1879

More unforeseen difficulties

Things at the Dinas colliery on Monday were as dark as they very well can be ever since the discovery was made that the airbridge was destroyed by the explosion. A combination of circumstances has produced nearly a deadlock, preventing the further progress of the explorers, and unless something unforeseen turns up it appears that no further advance can be made into the interior workings until the continuous fall, reaching from the bottom of the upcast along the level roadway to the airway, a distance of over 100 yards, is cleared.

Most of this immense fall will have to be carted away, then conveyed to the surface before the air current will be able to reach beyond the stable, between 15 and 20

yards from the bottom of the upcast. This fall completely blocks up the end of the airway through which, before the explosion took place, the air current made its exit through the colliery and up the upcast. Both intake and return airways, according to the plans of workings, run through the solid side by side, a dozen yards or so being between them, a distance of over 100 yards.

At the extreme end of the two lines on the intake was the airbridge. Had the roof above the return line held up, the air would have entered so far as the bridge through the intake line then returned to the upcast through the return airway uninfluenced by the position of the airbridge, which served only to shoot the air current into the inner workings, situated beyond the ends of the two lines. Now the return airway being completely sealed up, the air current will not go beyond the stable along the intake, nor can the gas and stench in the inner workings flow towards the upcast and thereby escape to the surface.

It is said, therefore, that the only thing for the explorers to do to enable them to advance to repair the airbridge with comparative safety is to divide the intake airway into two sections with brattices, so as to convert it into a return airway as well as an intake one. But the difficulties in the way are very great owing to the large fall 64 yards beyond the stable. And there is another important question to be considered before that is done, viz; would the intake section of the divided airway convey sufficient air to the neighbourhood of the airbridge to dilute the gas sufficiently to make it non-inflammable?

Some of the men seem to believe it would not, and the explorers would have to construct a new airbridge while the gauze of their Davy lamps was full of gas. But daring as the explorers are, none of them would be so bold as to work there under such conditions.

It has been suggested that an attempt should be made at once to open a hole from the bottom of the Little Pit to the flue situated some distance from the bottom of the upcast, and it is said that extending from the flue is what is known as the flue heading, running through the solid, round the bottom of the upcast and reaching out into the level heading some distance on the outside of the airbridge, and that this heading, being through solid, is likely to be standing, and that the return airway may be speedily restored in this direction.

In a stable some 300 yards beyond the airbridge were 37 large horses. Once the air passes in and out in that direction it will be difficult for anyone to remain in the mine. It is suggested that quicklime should be thrown on the carcases of the seven horses lying near to where the explorers are now working. One of the men, describing the effluvium rising from them said, “Smell! Why, you could almost cut it

with a knife." The consequence to the neighbourhood when the workings are opened cannot but be anything but very serious, for all the effluvium must pass up through the upcast to the surface. Quicklime should be applied to each carcass as soon as discovered.

Friday, February 14th, 1879

The explorers by Friday had penetrated as far as the airbridge, but although the workings seemed open beyond that point they were unable to adopt any scheme to pass the air current beyond it. Men are now engaged in raising the rubbish from the bottom of the upcast. They have succeeded in a week in raising about two yards from the top of the monster fall which is 12 yards perpendicularly. From the bottom of this hole is a continuous fall of over 100 yards, as is believed, and it is said that at the rate the men are progressing they will not reach the dead bodies before Christmas next.

The explorers seem to be almost as far at this moment from reaching the dead bodies as they were a month ago. No one dreams of charging any of them for not doing anything according to their judgement to gain the desired end, but the feeling is almost universal in the district that the delay is due to incompetency more than the obstructions in the way. The result is a strong feeling of discontent among all classes in the district, which has been recently intensified by statements said to have been made by two men known in the district as "William, the saint," and "The Tinker," as to the condition of the colliery on the Saturday and Sunday preceding the disaster.

Great satisfaction is expressed in the announcement made today in the '*Western Mail*,' to the effect that Mr. MacDonald M. P.; will ask certain questions of the Home Secretary relating to this colliery. Not one of the miners has been heard to cast any reflections on the proprietor of the colliery, who is known to have been lavish with money with a view to have the colliery in a safe condition. No one seems to doubt that the active managers, Messrs. Samuel Hughes and John Chubb, have performed their duties as far they understood them.

But it appears that there is a widespread opinion that Dinas for many months had been under the influence of a cabal, and that the 63 men now festering in the dark confinements of the mine have lost their lives in consequence. Who the members of the alleged cabal are I am unable to say, but those who knew them, if they exist, should ruthlessly drag them out to the light of day. It is to be hoped that Mr. MacDonald will add to the list of questions of which he has given notice of the following: - "Was the certificate that was suspended in November by the

Government Commissioner at Cardiff originally granted after the due examination of the person applying for it; or, was it given through 'backstair' influence?"

Now, it seems that when Chubb's certificate was suspended in November, he had under him as an overman, a man named Samuel Hughes, who bears a high character for intelligence in the neighbourhood, but he was not a certificated manager. Immediately after the action of the Commission at Cardiff in suspending Chubb's certificate, this Hughes was appointed the nominal head manager, with Chubb as his under-overman, and this arrangement is said to have been approved by Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for South Wales.

In less than two months after the above arrangement was made the Rhondda valley was shaken by the explosion and 63 men, 45 of them being heads of families, were hurled to eternity. And the workmen in the district believe that no one can be held responsible for the disaster, because neither of the managers were certificated.

The answer of the Home Secretary to the questions of Mr. MacDonald will be watched with intense interest in the mining district of South Wales, for the miners wish to ascertain whether in the future lives are to be placed in jeopardy by legal quibble, and whether Mr. Cross will tolerate legal quibbles where the lives of the industrious toilers are concerned.

If the law is that an uncertificated manager can be placed for a time in charge of a colliery, the manager of which has had his certificate suspended by an officer of the crown owing to incompetency, the miners say that the sooner the law is amended the better.

Monday, February 17th 1879

The contractor and his men are making very slow progress in the upcast pit, and no further attempts have been made to penetrate the workings. The children's clothing provided by Colonel Hunt for the poor orphans of the men in the pit have been distributed amongst the 21 families by Mr. Williams, Gwaun Adda house, and Miss Jones, Graig Ddu; and the poor destitute widows received them with every token of gratitude to the kind donor.

It is said that a large number of the 131 children left fatherless by the calamity are in great need of clothing, and that any left off clothing that may be sent to the above named Mrs. Williams will be distributed by her to the most in need. The effluvium arising to the surface through the upcast is indescribable.

Tuesday, February 18th 1879

In the House of Commons on this date in reply to Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Cross stated that the previous manager of the Dinas Colliery, in the Rhondda valley, had been suspended, and the present manager had no certificate; but due notice of the fact had been given, and the law allowed a period of two months until the certificate could be obtained.

There was not the slightest foundation for the assertion that the owners of the colliery intended to close the mine, but, on the contrary, they were doing everything in their power to recover the bodies. The same day the following letter appeared in the '*Western Mail*' regarding one of those killed in the explosion: -

Sir – Kindly permit me a small space in your valuable newspaper to contradict some observations that appeared in your issue of January 25th in connection with the disaster.

***One** – It was said that the night fireman had only left a neighbouring public-house twenty minutes before the explosion took place.*

***Two** – That it was his duty to examine the workings before the night workmen commenced their work.*

***Three** – That the night-fireman had been drinking all day.*

Our reply

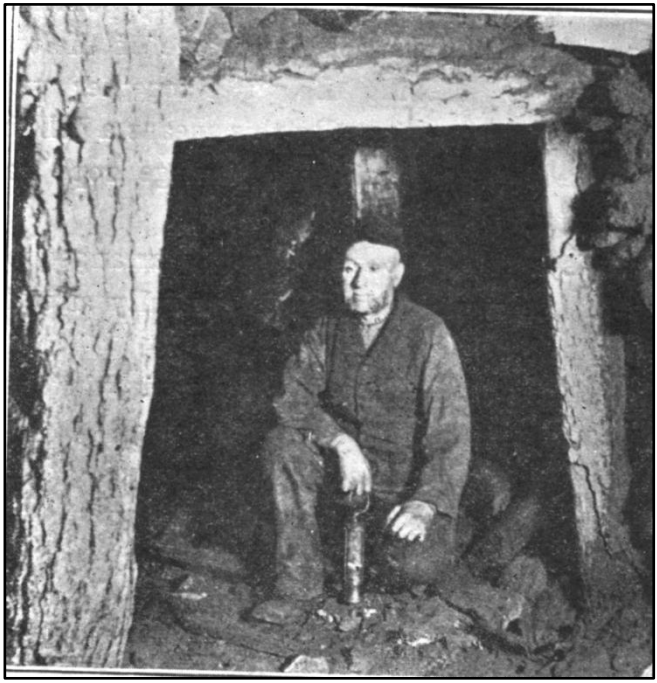
***One** - In the first place, we beg to say that he (the night-fireman) left his home at the usual time, and descended the pit at 10 or 5 minutes to six in the evening, and remained underground, and is, we regret to say, one of the unfortunate victims.*

***Two** – It is the duty of all firemen to examine the workings before work is resumed, and so it was the duty of the night-fireman at Dinas, which, no doubt, he performed. There is reason in everything, for had he not done so, would it be likely that the night colliers would descend the shaft and go on with their work without receiving any signal from the fireman as to the safety of the workings?*

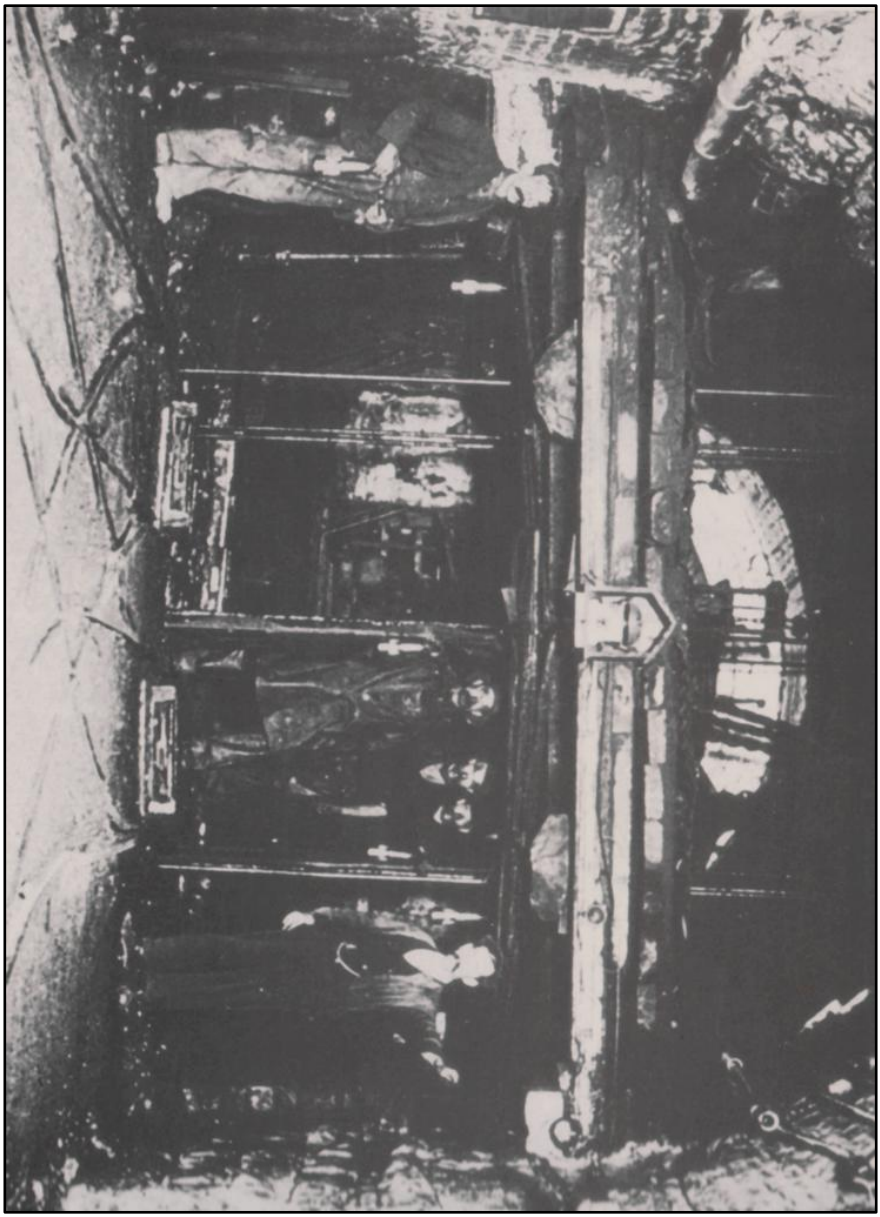
***Three** – On the morning before the explosion took place the night fireman ascended the pit after having completed a night's toil, he went home and remained at home until 9 o'clock a.m., and for the remainder of the day it can be proved that he had not been drinking, as was asserted, that "he had been drinking all day."*

He was at home at 1 p.m., and remained there until the time arrived for him to enter on his night duty. "Facts are stubborn," and we can prove that these observations we have made are facts and not facts founded on fiction, and which have cast such ill feeling throughout the country. The poor fellow is no more, so it must be very sad for his relatives to hear gross assertions made about him.

Williams Rees, Graig Ddu Inn,
David Morley, Colliers' Arms,
Dinas, February 12th 1879



A collier sheltering in a manhole, sometimes a lifesaver underground.



Colliers at the top of an unknown pit waiting to descend

CHAPTER EIGHT

Wednesday, February 19th 1879

Suffering amongst the bereaved – Another appeal for help

Previous appeals to the general public to donate to the Dinas Disaster Fund had largely fallen on deaf ears, and five weeks on from the disaster the '*Western Mail*' described in detail a few of the desperate cases now seen in the village: -

It is stated that never in the history of colliery disasters have the public seemed so reluctant to respond to an appeal made on behalf of the widows and orphans of the men killed as in the case of the calamity at Dinas. No doubt the prevailing distress throughout the country is one of the chief reasons why the large centres of population have not been as ready as usual to send in their contributions to succour another batch of poor widows and orphans at Dinas left in dire need, especially after the large sums contributed by a generous public quite recently to the sufferers from a similar disaster at Abercarn.

There is a growing conviction, however, that the apparent reluctance of the public to contribute to the Dinas fund is in some measure due to the action of the men in declining to agree to the formation of a permanent society for the relief of the families of men killed in mining disasters. But there is no evidence that the poor men now lying dead in the Dinas Colliery had anything to do with that refusal. And if there were evidence to the effect it would be unchristian, nay, it would be barbarous to hold the weeping widows and the lisping little ones of those men responsible for the blindness of those who declined to assist at the formation of a society intended to benefit their class. "*Let the guilty suffer and not the innocent.*"

It is stated that much distress prevails in the neighbourhood. Some of the men killed had, however, insured their lives for small amounts in the Prudential Society, while others were members of benefit societies, and their representatives have received the sums due to them. This indicates that some of the men whose lives have been sacrificed were alive to the importance of investing in a society intended to benefit after their death those who during life were dependent upon them for their bread. But I regret to state that the majority have left their families totally unprovided for, and unless contributions will come into the fund more rapidly than they have done hitherto there is nothing but the poor-house door open to many of the widows and orphans of the industrious delvers who have perished in this latest colliery disaster; for the sum collected is totally inadequate to meet what is required to enable the committee at Dinas to grant a small weekly allowance to each family.

It is most distressing to witness the suffering of the bereaved. Accompanied by a friend, I called at the home of William Lloyd, the fireman, whose dead body is still in the workings. I found the poor widow in an exceedingly weak condition, sitting near the fireplace, with her little ones about her knees, and near her sat a friend with a very young baby in her lap. "How old is the baby?" asked my friend. "It was born the day after William was killed by the explosion," replied the mother faintly. No tears came to her eyes, she had wept them all, but her face bore an expression of unutterable woe. After we left the house I was called back by the woman who nursed the baby, and upon re-entering the house she asked me whether I thought the committee could give her more than five-shillings a week, "for," she said, "I have had to keep a woman with me ever since the baby was born." There are several similar cases, objects of the tenderest pity of the benevolent.

Sunday, February 23rd 1879

On Sunday February 23rd it was reported that the explorers were now within three yards of the bottom of the upcast and it was expected that the body of the hitcher, employed in placing the tram on the "carriage" to be drawn to the surface at the time the explosion took place, would be found shortly. The hat of the poor fellow was found on Saturday in the rubbish, having no doubt been blown off his head up into the shaft by the explosion, and then fallen back with the rubbish to where it was found. The same weekend it was officially announced that the new manager of the Dinas Colliery was Thomas Burns.

However, the locals were still not happy with the apparent slow progress in recovering the bodies. The '*Western Mail*' of February 24th 1879 carried this following letter from William Abraham: -

Important proposal

To the editor

Sir. – Being cognisant of the anxiety prevailing in this neighbourhood for the speedy recovery of the bodies now lying in the Dinas Colliery, and which has greatly increased through the answers given by the Secretary of State to Mr. Alexander Macdonald M. P., I have taken occasion to converse upon the subject with some of the most expert colliery managers in the district, I may state that I have found among them a gentleman in the person of Mr. Idris Thomas, brother of Messrs. Edmund and Daniel Thomas, who is a certified manager, and who, from his experience in the Dinas Colliery, is willing to take upon himself the hazardous duties, and the responsibility of recovering all the bodies in the interior of the workings that are buried under falls.

He is also confident that this, with comparatively small expense, can be done in a fortnight's time. Be it strictly understood that these lines are not penned with the least intention to elicit the slightest feeling towards anyone in charge at present, nor to create the slightest suspicion that all that is being done at present is not being done with the best intentions. But being the representative of the men, and having this gentleman's proposition made known to me, and aware that it is approved by many others, I feel it my duty to make it public in order that steps may be taken to prevent the Dinas Colliery being made the graveyard of our fellow workmen, especially those (if Mr. Thomas's plan is practicable) who can be recovered in a little time and with reasonable expense.

I am given to understand also that Mr. Thomas's scheme will in no way impede the present mode of working at the colliery, and that both operations can be gone on with at the same time. Therefore it is to be hoped that due consideration will be given to the proposition, in order to mitigate the raw feelings of the relatives of the deceased, and to prove to the public at large that all that can be reasonably done will be accomplished. I am, &Co.

William Abraham, Miners Agent,
Pentre Ystrad, February 21st 1879

One body brought to bank – Renewed excitement
The early recovery of others anticipated

The *'Western Mail'* of Saturday, March 1st 1879 reported:- The Dinas neighbourhood was in a state of excitement from noon on Friday, where the explorers, returning from the bottom of the upcast shaft, announced that about 11 o'clock they had discovered a pair of human legs in an almost perpendicular position in the rubbish of the monster fall, which they were clearing away by means of a bawk. It was presently announced that the body itself had been reached, and that it was jammed between some trams, a number of which were found smashed one into the other beneath the cage. At 3 p.m. explorers came to the surface with the request for a coffin to be lowered into pit, and stating that the body had been extricated, but it was impossible to ascertain by the glimmer of the Davy lamps whose it was.

The news that the body was about to be raised to the surface spread with rapidity through the neighbourhood, and the top of the pit was once again the scene of excitement. The rush, however, was not great, and consisted apparently chiefly of the immediate relatives and friends of the two hitchers, for it was believed that the body which had been discovered was that of one of the two men employed at the time of the disaster at the bottom of the shaft. There were, however, standing

some 50 yards from the shaft, from 20 to 25 women, who gazed wistfully through their tears towards the fatal shaft.

Some of them leant against the sides of the empty trams moaning most piteously. They were the wives and daughters of the men in the pit, and each had come hoping, no doubt, that the body about to be brought up was that of a relative of her own. Presently every eye was turned towards an object wrapped in canvas, carried on men's shoulders from the direction of the carpentry towards the pit, and a wail of agony escaped from the lips of the poor women when they understood that the said object was a coffin.

It was the first coffin brought out of the Dinas coffin store, and it brought most impressively the horrors of the catastrophe home to the mind and heart of every one present. The coffin, enveloped still in canvass, was placed end-ways into the bawk, and strapped to the wire rope from which the bawk is suspended. A number of men then climbed over the edge of the bawk, and grasped the wire rope with their hands. The two doors over the mouth of the shaft were drawn open, the engine was set in motion, and the coffin, with brave fellows standing up around it on the edge of the bank, disappeared into the dark pit.

In about half an hour after the bottom had been reached the signal, "ready, pull up," was given from below, the depth being 420 yards. Slowly, at first, the wire rope was recoiled over the drum, the men below and the engineer on the surface understanding each other perfectly. Gradually the pace was increased, and eventually the coffin reappeared, now accompanied by a number of men. It was lifted out and placed on a bier under the charge of Sergeant Price. It was lifted onto the men's shoulders and they started, accompanied by a great throng, for the corn loft.

The loft having been reached, the coffin lid was taken off. Horror of horrors! The remains, in cold burnt garments are lying full length, and are an unrecognisable black mass, retaining the human form. "Who is it?" "John Griffiths' wife," said one present, "told me that her husband had brown cloth trousers under his canvas ones." The boots of the corpse were examined, then the trousers, but no-one could say what the was the composition of the latter.

A strap around the waste is examined, "It's Shôni!" said one. "No," said another, "it is Thomas Watkins, the fireman." Eventually a piece of the trouser was cut off with a knife, and then washed in a bucket of water, and it is discovered that the fabric is brown cloth, ribbed. It was the body of John Griffiths, who had come to the surface and gone down again half an hour before the explosion took place. The brawny arms were bare, one lying across the chest. It was known that the poor

fellow was engaged in lifting timber from the cage into a tram when the disaster occurred. Other bodies, it was believed, would be found in a day or two.

Another body discovered

On the same day (Saturday, March 1st 1879), the body of another man was brought to the surface from the bottom of the Dinas Pit. It was with great difficulty that the body was identified as that of William Jenkins, a hitcher, who leaves a widow and one child. His two brothers were still missing down in the pit. When the body was found in was seen that one of the hands was missing. A search was made, and at a short distance from the spot where the body lay the hand was found. The two men were interred on Sunday, March 3rd at St. John's Baptist Church, Tonyrefail, hundreds of people attending the funerals.

Opening of the inquest

On Saturday March 1st 1897 Mr. E. B. Reece, Coroner, opened an inquest at the Butchers' Arms Hotel, Ffrwd Amos, Penygraig, touching the death of John Griffiths, hitcher, whose body was discovered at the bottom of the Dinas upcast pit on Friday afternoon. The jurymen were: - Mr. David Jones, Graigddu House, foreman; Messrs. David Davies, William Williams, David W. Davies, Thomas Norton, Richard J. George, R. F. Richard, Thomas Richard, Thomas Williams, R. L. Smith, William Howells, Williams Rees, and the Rev. J. R. Jones (Llwynypia), Howell Llewelyn, Hopkin Knill, Richard Cook, and T. Quaill. It will be satisfactory to the miners of the district that the majority of the jury are practically acquainted with the workings of collieries.

The first witness called was John Price, who said that he lived at Tylacelyn, Penygraig, in the parish of Ystradfodwg. He was a collier, and he knew the deceased John Griffiths, he was a hitcher, and was employed at the time of the explosion at Dinas Colliery. He was 30 years of age, and was married, and had three children. He identified the body lying at the Dinas corn loft as the body of the said John Griffiths. He identified him by the clothes he wore. James Webber deposed that he was employed as banksman on top of the Dinas Pit, on the night of the explosion. He knew the deceased, John Griffiths. He saw him last alive about ten minutes before 10 o'clock on the night of the explosion (13th January). He had gone down at 7 o'clock, and he came up at the time named to ascertain how many empty trams were ready to be sent down. He stayed a minute or two, and then went down again. He (witness) lowered him. The explosion took place at twenty minutes before 11 o'clock.

It appears that Griffiths came to the surface while a haulier named Dunn was waiting below preparedly to entering the works with trams loaded with timber, Griffiths's object being to ascertain whether it would be necessary for Dunn to bring back with him the trams after unloading them in the interior where the timbermen were that night employed in "propping."

Richard Williams, Storehouse, Dinas, deposed that he was a collier, but was now employed clearing away the rubbish from the bottom of the upcast. He had been so employed during the last seventeen days. On Friday at noon he discovered a body about four feet from the bottom of the shaft. He supposed that the body had been blown up to where it was found by the force of the blast. Witness, correcting himself, said, that the feet were four feet from the bottom. The body was under the cage and lying in one of the trams beneath. The trams were much smashed.

Webber, recalled, said, in answer to the Coroner, that the cage loaded with timber had reached the bottom of the shaft about five minutes before the explosion took place. Williams, continuing his evidence, stated that he was unable to recognise the body.

Mr. William Abraham (Mabon), miner's agent, attended the inquest on behalf of the miners of the Rhondda valley. He asked the Coroner whether he would be allowed to cross-examine witness through the inquiry. The Coroner replied that he would be allowed to do so through him. Mr. Abraham thanked the Coroner, and the inquiry was then adjourned until April 1st.

The Coroner and jury then made their way to the Dinas Corn Loft, within 200 yards of the pit to view the body. It was identified by small gold rings in the ears of the body of William Jenkins, son of the late Tom Jenkins, the hitcher, one of the old inhabitants of Dinas. The deceased had been born and bread within a stone's throw of the pit. He was married and left a wife and two children. The remains were in a horrible state, literally having been burnt to a cinder. His death must have been instantaneous, for, in addition to the burns his skull was fractured across the forehead.

The fact that Jenkins was found burnt proves that the fire actually shot into the pit, for it is known that he was employed at the bottom of the shaft when the disaster occurred. The next body expected to be recovered is that of Dunn, the haulier. It is known that he was with Griffiths and Jenkins a few minutes before the explosion took place, and if he had left them on his inward journey with his horse dragging trams loaded with timber, he must have met the full blast of the fiery hurricane which would have inevitably have hurled him, with the horse and trams back towards the bottom of the shaft.

After the coroner and jurymen left the corn loft Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Griffiths, accompanied by a large crowd of weeping women, applied for permission to see the bodies. The agony and grief was terrible to witness, and men endeavoured to persuade them not to enter the room where the bodies were lying in coffins, but without success. Each was led in by their friends. The moment they saw the coffins they recoiled with horror and in the most distressing tones called in Welsh their names – "John anwyl" "William, anwyl" – there was not a dry eye in the place.

Today a parcel of women's clothing was received by Mrs. Williams, Gwaun Adda House, from the Lord Bishop's of Llandaff's lady, and the contents would be distributed on Monday to the most necessitous. I am requested to state that most of the poor orphans are barefooted and are unable in consequence to attend school. Should anyone be kind enough to send a supply of boots or clogs for the little ones, it will be received with profound gratitude by the poor mothers.

Monday March 10th 1897

The upcast had now been cleared, and on Monday night the task of placing the two cages and the guide rods in working order was complete, and rubbish from below was now being brought to bank in trams instead of a basket, as had been done hitherto. The work of clearing the roadway into the interior will now proceed rapidly. Explorers have been 60 yards towards the interior, over the top of the fall, without discovering where it ends. It is believed that at least two months must elapse before the bodies in the interior can be reached. It is, however, thought that, judging from certain indications, some bodies will be found under the rubbish some ten yards from the bottom of the shaft. At this point was a bench upon which labourers occasionally sat.

Friday, March 14th 1879

Two explorers injured

Despite optimism that more bodies would soon be found very slow progress was being made in clearing the rubbish in the tunnel leading from the bottom of the upcast owing to the brittle nature of the roof. The falls are of tremendous magnitude. The explorers have cleared a distance of 17 yards. The space from where they stand to the roof above is 18 feet, and the roof being brittle, it will be understood how extremely hazardous it is to work beneath. On Friday night two of the explorers were slightly injured by being struck by stones falling upon them from the roof. The utmost caution is necessary in advancing owing to the danger from both gas and roof.

The explorers at the Dinas Pits stopped work on Tuesday, March 18th in consequence of a monetary dispute, and operations were suspended for a short while. The '*Western Mail*' of Thursday March 20th 1879 reported: -

Complete stoppage of operations

The explorers at the Dinas Pit struck work on Thursday, and all operations have been suspended. It appears that the men have been receiving refreshments at the expense of the company, in addition to their regular wages. On Tuesday it was announced that refreshments would be discontinued, but in lieu of it threepence a day would be added to the wages of the explorers. This the men had declined to accept. The carcasses of seven horses in the stable, situated 20 yards from the bottom of the shaft were about to be brought up when the men struck work. It is expected that the contractor who has been engaged within the last few days will be able to bring them to the surface in a day or two. The hauliers employed at night in the Polka and the Two-feet Nine seam, in the downcast, have also struck work. It seems that it had been customary to pay these night hauliers wages for six turns for the five turns actually worked, the extra turn being allowed on account of the night work. The hauliers declined to work under the new conditions.

Saturday, March 22nd 1879

Explorers on strike – New manager and consulting engineer

As the weeks passed the explorers continued their work, but were again halted, this time by industrial action. The '*South Wales Daily News*' reported: - Those of the explorers who have not been on strike (the rest of the collieries also being on strike) which took place a day or two before succeeded in bringing to bank the carcasses of three horses on Friday, and it is expected that three more will be recovered today. It was first rumoured that Mr. Burns would succeed to the management of the colliery; but it is now reported that Mr. Isaiah Thomas is the new manager.

Tuesday, April 1st 1879
Inquest resumed

On Tuesday morning, April 1st 1879 Mr. Coroner Reece, opened an adjourned inquest, at the Butcher's Arms, Penygraig, as to the cause of the death of John Griffiths, one of the 63 men killed in the explosion. Mr. David Jones was foreman of the jury. After a brief consultation the inquest was adjourned until Tuesday, 22nd inst.

There also seemed to be a change of plan as regards to trying to recover the bodies. The '*South Wales News'* on Tuesday, April 1st 1879 reported: -

Mr. Isaiah Thomas is now the manager, with Mr. Galloway as consulting engineer. Mr. Chubb and Mr. Samuel Hughes are overmen. The explorers have cleared away the double-parting as far as the stable, from whence the bodies of six horses have been recovered. To facilitate the recovery of the bodies of the victims of the disaster, it has been resolved to drive a new heading into the workings, a distance of eighty yards.

This work has been let out by contract to Messrs. Moses Rees, M. Morris, and W. Samuel. In a little more than a weeks time they have cut through 48 yards, making a passage of six feet high and nine feet wide. There are three shifts upon the workmen engaged on the operation. It is believed that the interior of the workings will soon be reached, when the bodies, or most of them, will be at once recovered. Colonel Hunt manifests, it is said, considerable anxiety as to the work going on.

Friday, April 11th 1879

Early recovery of bodies expected

On Friday afternoon it was anticipated the dead bodies in the Dinas Pit will be recovered in the course of a few days. It will be remembered that there are two roadways running parallel with each other from the neighbourhood of the bottom of the upcast, a distance of about 100 yards into the interior of the works; that one of them is completely blocked up by the fallen roof, and that a third roadway is now being opened so as to obviate the necessity of clearing away the rubbish from the roadway blocked up.

As soon as the new road is completed it will be used as an intake airway, and what was used as an intake before the disaster occurred will now be used as a return airway. The cutters have penetrated a distance of about 70 yards through the solid, and have reached the fault, the slant of which is about 10 or 12 yards in thickness. It has been found almost impossible to cut through it due to the quality of stone, which is in some places is almost as hard as iron, indeed it is said that the slant is composed of a large quantity of iron-ore.

The Mines Regulation Act will not permit blasting powder used in such a place, and all the hard substance must, therefore, be cut through with picks only. Today it was decided to employ relays of men to cut from an opposite direction to meet those already engaged. A few days ago the old intake was divided by means of brattice so as to convert this into a return airway as well. Some of the old workmen suggested many weeks ago that this should be done, and it is now seen how wise the

suggestion was, for as soon as it was accomplished the explorers penetrated about 40 yards further into the workings than had been done before.

Here they discovered another fall, but not a very large one, and they ascended to the top of it. They ascertained beyond a doubt, by the horrible stench coming to meet them, that they were within a very short distance of the dead bodies. It was not thought safe to advance any further, and it will not be attempted before the new intake airway is completed. Some anticipated that one of the results of cutting a new roadway through the solid from the neighbourhood of the bottom of the upcast would be to weaken the roof to a dangerous extent. This anticipation, it is stated, has been unfortunately realised. For the "squeeze" from above is said very great, and scores of tram loads and blocks of granite have been sent below to be used as pillars to prop up the roof, which threatens to give way. It is rumoured that some further changing of the management are contemplated.

On Monday, April 13th it was announced that the cutters in the Dinas Pit had penetrated through the slant of the great fault ten yards in thickness. The air current will now be sent into the interior in the course of a day or two, and the bodies recovered, unless other falls be met with in the inner workings. Later that night it was rumoured that a large number of the dead lying in the pit had been found huddled together on a parting about 150 yards from the bottom of the shaft, but they cannot be removed before the roadway as been cleared of the heaps of rubbish lying there.

Friday April 18th 1879

It was anticipated that the dead bodies would be reached today, but it seems on Friday night to be a distant event. The explorers have been, yesterday and today, applying all their inventive powers to devise means of sending air into the inner workings, where the bodies are lying, but up 'till tonight not the slightest success has followed their efforts, and the place from a point about 100 yards beyond the bottom of the shaft is as full of gas as was the first day after the explosion took place.

Tuesday, April 22nd 1879

Resumption of Coroner's inquest

On Tuesday, the coroner's inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of the men who were killed in the Dinas Colliery on the 13th of last January was resumed before Mr. E. B. Reece. Mr. Wheelhouse, Q.C., MP; represented the Home Office, and among others present were – Mr. Simons, acting on behalf of the colliers; and Mr. Thomas Wales, Government Inspector of Mines for South Wales.

Nineteen jurymen were summoned of whom the following were present: David Jones (Foreman), David Davies, William Williams, David Richards, Edward Jenkins, Thomas Richards, Edward Meredith, Thomas Williams, Richard L. Smith, William Howells, William Rees, Rev. J. R. Jones, Howell Llewellyn, Hopkin Knill and Richard Cook. Jabez Matthews (Superintendent of Police, Pontypridd) and William Price (Sergeant of the same force) were also in attendance.

The first witness called was **Charles Henry James**, Secretary to the Board of Examiners of the South Wales Institute of Engineers. This gentleman was the consulting engineer at the colliery in question, and he now gave an elaborate description of the method in which the ventilation of the colliery was effected by means of a ventilating fan, and he described the state of the colliery on his last visit to the workings. He generally made an inspection once a week.

On one occasion it became necessary to stop the men who were working on account of a fall which took place, and in the hollow of which there was an accumulation gas. It was never understood that he was to inspect the workings four or five times a week. He considered the manager to have been as well qualified as anyone with a certificate of competency as many others who obtained certificates. John Chubb, former manager at the pit, and whose certificate had been suspended at a Board of Trade inquiry held at Cardiff, also gave evidence as to the state of the colliery as observed on several visits.

The witness had seen nothing more serious than a blower. On the day of the accident a blower was seen in one of the workings. The witness explained the nature of the report made by Mr. Galloway, which led to the suspension of his certificate, and at the conclusion of his evidence the inquiry was again adjourned until the following day.

Wednesday, April 23rd 1879

On Wednesday, at the Butcher's Arms, Ffrwd Amos, Dinas, Mr. E. B. Reece, Coroner, resumed the adjourned inquest. Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C; M.P; appeared on behalf of the home office; Mr. Simons, Merthyr, represent Colonel Hunt, the proprietor of Dinas Collieries; and Mr. W. Abraham attended on behalf of the miners of South Wales. Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Government Inspector of Mines for South Wales, and Mr. Galloway, late Deputy-Inspector of Mines, were also present.

Mr. **John Chubb**, late manager, but at the time of the disaster overman only, was re-called, and in answer to Mr. Wheelhouse said: "Supposing the shot of which I mentioned yesterday had not gone off the nearest working place would have been

40 yards off. If I did not inspect the whole of the workings they were all inspected by the firemen. The Middle Pit was divided into three districts, and for each district there was a separate fireman. I have seen the reports of the shift before the explosion occurred. I have seen a "blower" going continually for months, and the means generally adopted to deal with it is to put brattice up to throw the air towards it."

"I did not often leave the firemen to do my duties as overman, but I cannot say how often. The Little Pit through which the air passed was not walled from top to bottom. Occasionally the men passed up and down a ladder which hung over the side of the Little Pit. There was a windlass on the top of it, this was used sometimes. The lamps used were Clanys and Davys. I do not know in what proportion. The only open lights allowed were those at the bottom of the upcast by the hitchers, and the nearest working place would be 300 or 400 yards away – as near as I can say."

By Mr. Wheelhouse: - "When were you last through the Little Pit before the explosion occurred?" – "I do not recollect. I did not consider it my duty always to go through the Little Pit. I do not recollect whether I went through the Little Pit between the 11th and 13th of January."

By Mr. Abraham – "On the day of the explosion I had arranged with the manager that I should be absent that day. I left it to the manager to give the fireman notice of the fact. I cannot say from memory how many men were engaged in each district of the Middle Pit, but on referring to the book I find 266 to be the gross number working there day and night. The nearest large cavity spoken of yesterday was about 100 yards from where the naked lights were allowed to be used. One part of the main road between the cavity and the bottom of the shaft was arched."

By Mr. Simons: - "Naked lights were used at three lamps stations as well as at the bottom of the pit. One station was about 50 yards distant from the cavity."
By Mr. Wales: - "One lamp station was in the intake and two in the return."
By Mr. Simons: - "The proper men for examining the workings are the firemen according to the Mines Regulations Act. The machinery was examined every day by the mechanic, and the shaft once a week by the pitmen. I know the 58th rule, which I obeyed as far as possible."

By the jury: - "I do not remember having gone once through the Little Pit since I became overman last time (he was overman before he became manager). Did not understand it to be a part of my duty to examine it. A vacuum caused by a fall can be covered by arching as well as by timbering. Arching would be the best of the two. There are only two large falls, as far as I know, in the colliery, and both were

timbered. When the roof was 'bad' we usually arched, and filled up the space with rubbish. Some of the arching in the main road was taken down in Mr. Rowland's time, and timbering put up instead. I do not know why this was done. I inspected the top of the Little Pit on the 13th of January, and everything appeared to be in a safe condition. The pit was timbered."

By Mr. Wheelhouse: - "I do not know whose duty it was to examine the Little Pit. Had not seen anyone appointed to examine it. The ladder was placed there during my management."
By Mr. Abraham: - "On the Sunday night previous to the explosion no-one came to me with a message from William Lloyd, the fireman."

John Ace, fireman at the time of the explosion, stated that he had been fireman at Dinas nine years. His district was known as "California" and "Constantinople." The overman, John Chubb, gave him instructions. Examined the whole of his district on the morning of the explosion. Was through his district about 4 o'clock on 13th of January. Did not discover danger of any kind. Did not find gas or blower.

Did not see Chubb that day; but saw Samuel Hughes, the manager, measuring. If he (witness) discovered gas and was able to clear it he would not have made an entry of it in the book. Falls often occurred. Placed brattice cloth to aid the ventilation whenever there was gas. Could not say how many holes were in the roof in his district. A hole in the roof of John Morris's heading had been timbered. The big cavity at the great fault was timbered. Never saw gas at the great fault. Tried for it daily, but did not find any, nor in Morris's heading.

By the jury: - "Did not always enter my district by the same road. The top at Griffith's and Hall's heading was rock. Had seen weak parts, and the top in a dilapidated condition, but no falls. The roof in the 'Constantinople' was rock. He had no recollection of a great blower in either. In Morris's heading the roof was cliff."

By Mr. Abraham: - "I reported in the books that there was gas in Morris's heading from the 11th to the 28th of December. The ventilation was improved in this part by placing brattice across the heading and by putting another row of pipes. There were no men working beyond the place where the gas was. They were ordered not to enter that part of the workings as soon as possible after the gas was discovered. Mandrills were used to rip down the roof, and timbering was then done. Did not see Chubb on the day before the night the explosion occurred. He did not tell me that he would not go into the pit that day. Saw Hughes, the manager, measuring through my district that day."

By Mr. Abraham: - "There were no men working beyond where the gas was; we stopped them the morning we first saw the gas. We ripped the top towards the cavity with a mandrill. We timbered the place afterwards. Mr. Chubb did not give me notice on the day of the explosion, as far as I can remember, that he would not come in that day. I saw Mr. Hughes (the manager) that day, and he ought to have looked after the safety of colliery while measuring. He was that day in every part of the workings in witnesses district."

"There was no overman, as far as I knew, in the district that day. Chubb was the only overman. I thought it was the usual practice for the overman to see the place was safe whenever he went into the colliery. There were two old stalls that had been abandoned in the district in question, and into these rubbish was thrown – filling them up. They were forty of fifty yards in length. One of the stalls was about half full, but the rubbish in the other was not quite so much. Went into the two stalls daily. The rubbish in them had been put there during the last week or a fortnight before the explosion took place."

By Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C.: - "We placed the rubbish to the 'face' of the stalls, but kept the wind road on one side open. The usual thing is to fill the old stalls up to the roof when the filling came to within 15 yards or thereabouts to the main heading. Examined Morris's heading on the day of the explosion. No blasting took place there. It was Williams Lloyd's duty to examine Morris's heading before the night men went in. It was Thomas Watkins's duty to examine the remainder of my district during the same period. It took them about two hours to do their respective districts. Both are now dead in the colliery. Examined each district always before the men went down. Whenever gas was found cross-timbers were placed there as a signal of danger. When the place was safe I placed the date in chalk as a signal that the place was safe."

By Mr. Simons: - "There were many stalls in the colliery which had been abandoned and filled up, as the two stalls in question were in the progress of being filled." By the Coroner: - "I never met with gas in any of the other old stalls. If I did, it will be seen and mentioned in the books at the colliery. I never examined the cavity of the fall in the top of the great fall. Could not go beyond that because there was timber in the way. Never knew of 'shots' missing in my district to go off."

Thomas Miles, Dinas, deposed that he was fireman at Dinas Colliery. He had been so engaged for four months before the explosion occurred. His district was the west district, commonly called "the top of the fault district," in the Middle or Upcast pit. He was a day fireman. His duty was to inspect all places and all roads before the day men went down, and whenever he saw danger to report it to the manager. If he could remove the danger during the day he did not report it. He

placed cross timbers as a signal when there was danger. Made his reports every night. Entered his reports in a book. Was in his district the day of the explosion, and visited all of the actual workings. Finished about four o'clock. It took him about two hours to go round.

Was three times round during the day of the explosion. Discovered that morning a small 'blower' in Edward John's stall. Tightened the door, and placed canvas so as to send more air into the stall. This door was not always tight. It was left slack to allow air to enter the heading. "Tightening" meant re-arranging the brattice on each side of the door. This, however, was not effective in clearing away the 'blower.' He did not allow anyone to work in Edward John's stall that day. Reported the 'blower' in the colliery book that day. This 'blower' extended to the next stall – that of Benjamin Howell, who he also was prevented from working that day. By 'extending' he meant that the air current was not enough to sufficiently dilute the gas so as to make it non-inflammable.

With these exceptions his district was perfectly safe that morning. There was no large fall in the district, but there were frequent small falls. Timbered the holes made by the falls whenever that was required. Did not see Chubb, the overman, in the district that day. Saw the manager there that day. He accompanied him that morning to see the two stalls mentioned as dangerous. Witness here, contradicted his former statement, and said that Ben Howells was allowed to work that day.

Nothing was done, as far as he remembered, to clear the gas in John's stall that day. There was no accumulation of gas in John's stall, but it floated away with the air. Saw the manager again in the district that day about 3 o'clock. He told him that they were going to work later that day – until 5 o'clock. Usually he left on a Monday at 3 p.m. Believed it was simply on account of a funeral. It was not, however, in consequence of anything connected with the colliery. Chubb did not give him notice that he was not coming into the district that day.

By Mr. Abraham: - "I discovered when I went down the second time that Ben Howell's place was not in a dangerous condition, and I therefore allowed work in there. Remembered very well that on the 13th of December two "shots" had misfired. William Lloyd had told me that this had occurred during the night, and I requested him to be careful. Lloyd said he had sent to Chubb about it, and while conversing Chubb came to us. We then broke down the ground and took the powder out.

David Williams, the third fireman, said that he had been the fireman at Dinas Colliery for two years. His district was the south district of the Middle Pit. This witness's evidence was of a similar character as the evidence of his fellow firemen.

His district was, with the exception of an occasional 'blower,' free from gas. He remembered a fall 13 feet high occurring in his district four months before the explosion, and that gas accumulated in the cavity.

By the jury: - "Did not hear of any blasting having been arranged to be done on the night the explosion took place."

By Mr. Abraham: - "It was my duty to go over my district every Sunday, and I did so on the Sunday before the explosion took place. He did not see William Lloyd on that day. The works were never stopped for want of timber. Got it whenever it was wanted." The inquiry was then adjourned to Thursday morning.

Thursday, April 24th 1879

On Thursday, Mr. E. B. Reece, Coroner, resumed his inquiry at the Butchers Arms, Ffrwd Amos, Dinas, touching the explosion at Dinas Pit on January 13th. Mr. Wheelhouse, QC, M .P. appeared for the Home Office, Mr. Plews (Messrs Simons & Plews) appeared for Colonel Hunt; and Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for South Wales, and Mr. Galloway, Deputy-Inspector of Mines, were also present. Mr. Abraham, Miners' Agent for South Wales, appeared on behalf of the miners. There were a number of miners present, watching the proceedings with deep interest. Owing to certain rumours in the neighbourhood touching the condition under which Samuel Hughes, manager at the time the explosion took place, held his appointment in connection with Chubb, whose certificate of competency had been suspended, the evidence of Hughes was regarded with much curiosity and interest.

The first witness examined was **Samuel Hughes**, Dinas. He said:- "I was manager at the Dinas Colliery at the time of the explosion. I was appointed on November 26th, in 1878, and ceased to be manager about January 24th, in this year. I am now overman at the Lower Pit. I was appointed manager by Mr. James, consulting engineer, and Mr. Wood, Colonel Hunt's agent at Cardiff. I had no certificate as manager, but about a week before I was appointed had given notice of my intention to go before the board for an examination for it on January 28th."

"I did not go for the examination in consequence of the disaster, and I have not, therefore, gained a certificate. Mr. John Chubb had been manager before me. Mr. James and Mr. Wood informed me that my duties were to be as manager. Mr. James told me that I would be responsible for the safety of the mine according to the requirements of the Act of Parliament; and Mr. Wood said, as Chubb was an older man than me that I ought not to do anything without Chubb's advice. Nothing else was said."

By Mr. Wales: - "I understood by what Mr. Woods said that I had nothing to do with the working of the colliery except as to its safety, and that Chubb was responsible to Colonel Hunt as to the working of the colliery. Sometimes Chubb gave directions to the working of the colliery independent of me. He both engaged and discharged workmen, sometimes without consulting me. He was in the habit of ordering things to be done in the colliery without consulting me. I generally ascertained what he had ordered to be done by seeing it had been done. Sometimes he would inform me what he had ordered to be done.

I never had occasion to object to what he had ordered to be done. I would have countermanded any order given by Chubb, calculated, if in my opinion, to be dangerous. I had the power to do this. I went into the Middle Pit, where the explosion occurred, some part of every day. I inspected the firemen's books sometimes every day, and, sometimes on the following morning, after the entry had been made. I do not recollect ever having allowed more time than that to elapse before examining them. Whenever gas was reported by firemen I attended to them as soon as possible. There was no delay except when there was gas reported in two places at the same time." Coroner: - "What did you do then?" Witness: - "Went to one of them first." (laughter.)

Witness continued: - "I remember gas being reported on Dec. 11th last as being in John Morris's heading. The fireman reported to me before the men went to work. Ordered the fireman, John Ace, what to do, which was to put a brattice cloth in such a way as to throw the air up against the roof. Brattice cloth had already been put there by himself. I directed it to be placed higher. I stopped the men from working in the said heading that day. I am not sure whether I inspected the place on the day following. Gas was reported during many days after as being still in the heading.

I inspected the place frequently after the 11th of December. There was not much gas then. The men were never allowed to enter the place where the gas was, but on the 26th of December they were allowed to work in another heading close by known as David Powell's heading. On the 19th, Mr. James came there and requested me to put in another air-pipe, and the men were withdrawn from the locality, and they were not allowed again to enter David Powell's heading until the 26th, when the new piping had been completed. It was then perfectly safe for them to re-enter the place."

"Chubb did not go, to my knowledge, to the Middle Pit on the day of the explosion. He did not consult me that day as to where he was to go. He went to the Lower Pit that day. The overmen were not allowed to go where they wished without consulting me. The overman in the Lower Pit had made a mistake in the measuring

work done and Chubb felt it his duty to go there this time to measure. He informed me the night before, on going to chapel that he would go there on the morrow. I made no reply, as he told me that he was responsible to Colonel Hunt for the colliery expenses. I made no objection to his going wherever he pleased."

"I went down the Middle Pit on the 13th, at 7.30 a.m., and went down until 2 p.m. Went then to the Lower Pit, but returned to the Middle Pit at quarter past three, and was there until 5 o'clock. Was measuring the whole of the time. The fireman or myself measured each place as each place was visited to be measured. Heard about a blower being in Edward John's stall that day in Miles's district. Went down and examined it. There was not much gas there. It was a small blower."

"Could see from where the gas was coming; it was coming from the roof where a few stones had fallen. There was no hole. There was a fissure in the roof where the stones had fallen out from. I held the lamp under the fissure, and the light in the lamp was "capped" by the gas. Edward John was not allowed to work in the stall that day. More air was turned into the stall to dilute the gas coming from the blower. Visited the place sometime between 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning, but was not there later in the day."

"Ordered William Lloyd, one of the night firemen, to complete a walling that had been commenced in the stall that night, and pin it tight so as to direct the air to enter the stall with greater velocity. Did not order this to be done earlier in the day because 'things' were inconvenient to the place. It would have been necessary to take down rubbish &co; from other places.

It was more convenient to get the things required for the task in the night than in the day, and I did not think the place was dangerous. Was over the whole inner workings in the Little Pit, except the North district on the day of the explosion, and, with the exception of that in Edward John's heading, saw no gas. There was no one working in the North district. It was abandoned six or seven months ago. The coal had all been worked out in that district. The whole of the Middle Pit seemed to be perfectly safe. Left the colliery at 5.30 on the afternoon before the explosion took place."

"The explosion took place at 10.20 p.m. Was on the top of the pit at 10.55 p.m. One of the caps over the mouth of the Middle Pit had been blown up into the pit framing by the force of the explosion. There were 63 men and boys in the pit at the time, 61 of whom are still there." Witness here, at the request of the coroner, read the names of the 63 who perished.

Witness continuing, said that only the bodies of John Griffiths and William Jenkins, hitchers, had been recovered. One man named William Morgan, who was employed in the No. 3 seam, 80 yards from the surface of the Middle Pit, was brought out alive. He was the only one brought out alive. He was employed at a pump forcing the No. 3 water to the surface.

By Mr. Abraham: - "I was told by Mr. James and Mr. Wood about half past five on 26th November that I was appointed manager. I was at the colliery on the 20th of November in the position of overman, and remained so to the 26th. It was on the 26th I was appointed manager and endowed with full powers over the colliery. It was Chubb who first asked me to act as manager previous to my going to the office to see Mr. James and Mr. Wood about it. Mr. James told me at the office what I was to be responsible for – viz., the safety of the mine in accordance with the Coal Mines Regulation Act."

"After some words, which I do not recollect at present, Mr. Wood, said, 'that as Chubb was an older man than myself, that I ought not to do anything without Chubb's advice.' Chubb went over all the collieries. That was not his duty as overman. Sometimes he would consult me about going about, and sometimes he would not do so. Chubb took upon himself the responsibility to Colonel Hunt of all the working expenses incurred in the collieries. I was not at all responsible as far as expenses went."

"There was a notice terminating all contracts on the 31st of December. It was posted up on 28th of November. It was signed 'Coffin & Co.' All the men were not re-engaged on January 1st. I selected some of the men that were then engaged and Chubb the others. The last time I saw William Lloyd, the Fireman, was on the day of the explosion. He left the colliery at 10 o'clock on Sunday night. He had been in the colliery from 2.30 p.m. on Saturday afternoon until 10 o'clock on Sunday night. He had men with him timbering at the bottom of the Middle Pit. Had he been timbering at the bottom of the pit David Williams, the fireman, could not have failed to see him."

"It would not have been William Lloyd's duty to examine the colliery on that Sunday night. Neither would it have been his duty to do so Monday morning. David Thomas examined it on Sunday night instead of William Lloyd. David Thomas was foreman haulier. Colonel Hunt visited the colliery occasionally during my management. Once only he consulted me during those visits. I cannot say whether he consulted anyone else. I was appointed overman in the latter part of 1877."

By Mr. Wheelhouse, Q C;: - "It was the fireman's duty to see the ground cleared after the shots were fired. It was the fireman's duty to consult the overman, and

the the manager. The number of men employed with Lloyd in timbering was six. Both Chubb and myself understood, from what Mr. Wood said to us that Chubb, and not I, was responsible for the working expenses of the colliery. I cannot say whether Colonel Hunt gave further instructions in the matter. I understood that Chubb's responsibility and mine was a divided responsibility."

"I accepted my instructions from Chubb on the Sunday night before the explosion, as to what I was to do, and I followed his instructions. The colliery was worked by two shifts, night and day, of eight hours each, Mondays and Saturdays, and the other days of nine and a half hours each day. This system of working was long-wall, but with very few exceptions. The average length of stall was 50 yards. Most of the blowers I have seen in the colliery appeared in the hard core."

"Only the airway had been left open in the abandoned North district. The place was abandoned before I became manager. Had gas accumulated in the abandoned North workings it might have made its way into the return airway. The reason why I did not return to Edward John's stall was that I had to attend to the safety of other places, and the quantity of gas issuing from the fissure was so small that I did not apprehend any danger. It was after Chubb had done anything that he generally mention to me anything about it. When I was overman I always remained in my district and attended to it. But when Chubb became overman he did not stay in his district."

"From the 26th of December until January 13th only one heading was kept going, owing to there not being a sufficient current of air for both headings. I am 25 years of age, and have been employed in collieries since I was 12 years of age."

By Mr. Plews (appearing for the company): - "The two shots referred to failed to go off a month before the explosion took place. I was told distinctly that I was not to do anything about it 'without Chubb's advice.' This was said to me by Mr. Woods."

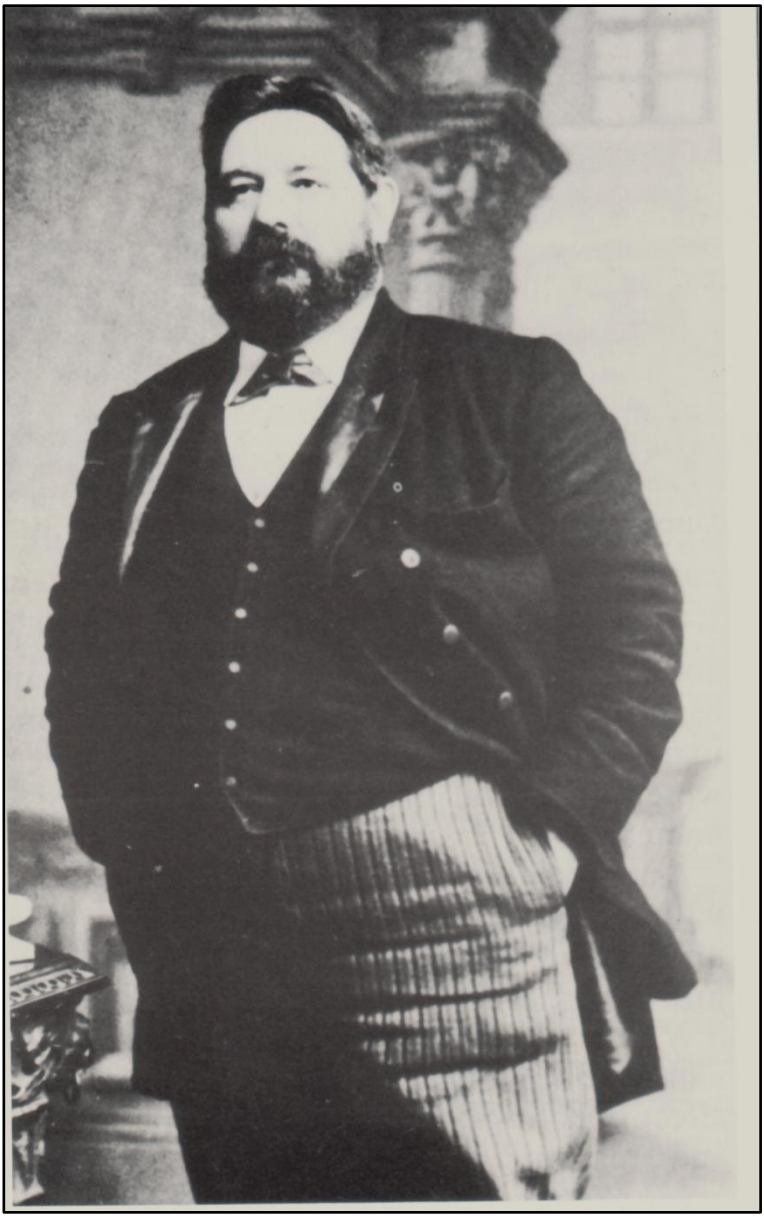
By the Coroner: - "Everything was done that could be calculated to promote the safety of the colliery, and nothing was left undone. I knew shots were to be fired on the night of the 13th.

By Mr. Abraham: - "It is quite possible for a blower to fill a heading with gas in a very short time. I have heard of a blower filling a great portion of a heading. It was in November, 1877 that took place."
By the foreman: - "There was too much air passing through John's heading for the gas coming from the blower to fill up the stall."

Lewis Jones, collier, said that he and another collier Thomas Llewelyn had, by the request of the other workmen, examined the whole of the Middle Pit workings on January 8th. Had examined with Phillip Wilde on December 3rd, and on both occasions went carefully through every part of the workings of the Middle Pit. Found everything safe on both occasions. The report produced and signed by me and my companions in the colliery book is a true account of the state of the colliery on both occasions. The reports were as follows: - "The shaft is in good condition; the levels free from gas; the return airway free from gas; the venting apparatus in good order; the old workings in good condition, and clear of gas." It took them seven or eight hours to examine the whole of the colliery.

By a juryman: - "I would not have been afraid of the manager to report gas had I met with any."
By Mr. Abraham: - "Always took a Davy lamp when examining, but worked by the light of a Clanny. Passed by half-a-dozen roadways without examining them in the 'California' district."
The Coroner: - "How is that? You told me just now that you examined all the whole of the workings."

Witness: - "I followed the man who walked before me, sir (laughter). That is the way 'they' used to do it, sir." He, however, explained that what he meant was that they did not inspect all the stall roadways, but had examined all the 'faces' or working places in the colliery. The Inquiry was again adjourned until Friday morning at 10 o'clock.



William Abraham M.P. (Mabon) who represented the colliers on the inquest into the Dinas Disaster

CHAPTER NINE
Friday, April 25th 1879
The late manager summoned to give evidence

The first witness examined on Friday was **Lewis Jones**, the last witness examined on Thursday afternoon. In answer to Mr. Abraham witness stated that "Each fireman accompanied me and my companion during our inspection through the respective districts. Sometimes we proceeded before the fireman and sometimes he went before us. We presented a written report as to the state of the workings to the committee of the workmen – it was put up on the lamp-room door. The paper was written each time by Mr. Jones, the clerk of the colliery, from what we told him. There is a secretary to the colliers' committee. Was never appointed inspector in any other colliery at any former period of my life. Have been employed at the Dinas colliery nine years – four years as a coal cutter - and in other districts previously in the same capacity."

Coroner: - "I do not see the object of asking these questions."
Mr. Abraham: - "The mode the reports were made here is contrary to the practice at other collieries."

Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C.: "I wish it were the practice in all other collieries, and I hope that in future the 30th section of the Mines Regulations Act 1872 will be rigidly observed." Mr. Abraham explained that what he meant was as to the mode the reports were made, and not any reference to the reports themselves. Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C.: - "I thoroughly understand what you mean, and I will attend to it."

By a juryman: - "I understand my duty as an examiner to be searching for gas, seeing that the doors and air-doors were right, and the top in a safe condition."

The juryman (Mr. Williams) here asked for the book in which the reports of the witness and his companion were written. After turning to the report in question, he said, "You are a Welshman like myself?" Witness: - "Yes." juryman: - "What do you mean by the words 'ventilating apparatus' in your report?" Witness; - (Shaking his head) – "I don't know indeed."

Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C.:- "It means the machinery for ventilating the colliery." Witness:- "Oh?" Other questions of this nature were asked, and similar answers given. It was understood that the juryman asked these questions in reference to the official written report, to test the witness's knowledge of the terms used by the clerk in writing out the report on behalf of the examiners.

The juryman: - "You say you examined the shaft. Did you go down the shaft rapidly?" Witness: - "Not so fast as when coal is raised, but we went down very rapidly. (Laughter.)

The Coroner: - "Then you did not examine the shaft properly. Why didn't you ask them to pull up?"
By Mr. Wheelhouse, Q.C.: - "Dinas Workmen's Committee is composed of twelve men. I did not find anything wrong during any of my visits around the colliery."

Mr. Wheelhouse: - "Don't you think it better were the committee of the workmen to keep a book of their own in which to enter the reports of the examiners?" Witness: - "I don't know indeed." Coroner: - "I think it would be a correct thing to do, for it would be a check upon the other book."

By Mr. Plews:- "The firemen did not interfere with us in the least. Did not stop us from going wherever we pleased. What I meant yesterday by stating that we did not go through all the roadways was that we visited the working places (the face) but not the roadways where active operations were then carried on, taking it for granted that those places – the roadways – where travelling was going on at the time, were perfectly safe. Examined every place in the colliery where we thought gas might be found."

By Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C.: - "Had we found gas in any part of the colliery we would report it to the overman."
By the Coroner: - "We had never had occasion to report the existence of gas in any part of the colliery."
By a juryman: - "Tested any cavities in the roof for gas."

Thomas Llewelyn (giving his evidence in Welsh) said that he accompanied the last witness around the colliery when they made the examination in respect to which he had given evidence. Worked in the top of the fault district, which was Thomas Miles's district as a fireman. This was the second examination of the colliery. Had been working at the colliery about eight or nine years hauling and cutting coal. Had been employed underground between twenty-two and twenty-three years. Did not understand all of what the last witness said in evidence. He and his companion examined the colliery as well as their ability enabled them to do so.

They visited every main heading, and then passed through the face of every stall branching off from the main heading. Never saw gas in the colliery, but had heard of its existence in the colliery. Heard on the day of the explosion of a place containing gas; it was a bit of a blower in Edward John's heading. The authorities stopped the man that was working there. Occasionally heard of dangers from "top"

and gas preventing people from working. Did not remember of hearing of men being cautioned about raising the lamps high for fear of gas. Told the clerk what to enter into the report, and he (witness) then signed it with his mark.

A juryman: - "Was the report translated to you into Welsh?" Witness: - "Lewis Jones, my partner, understood English, and told me in Welsh it was right."

Thomas Morgan said that he had worked underground sixteen years and down to the time of the explosion worked in the Dinas Middle Pit. Never saw gas there. Had no knowledge of anything being unsafe before the explosion. Coroner: - "Did you ever hear any of the colliers say that there was anything dangerous or unsafe?" Witness: - "Not in particular, sir. No, never, sir. "

Witness continued: - "Never heard anyone say that the management was reckless or dangerous. Worked in Thomas Miles's district as fireman. Thought him to be a competent man. He inspected his district before we entered the district and again twice during the day regularly. Chubb, during the time he was manager, frequently visited the place, and during the last fortnight before the explosion was there three or four times. Samuel Hughes visited the district about four times a week. He did so oftener than Chubb."

By Mr. Abraham: - Worked now at the Middle Pit, that is the downcast. Heard of Chubb's certificate being suspended in connection with gas in the Polka seam. Heard some of the men then blame Chubb, saying that he had done what he ought not to have done. It was only then he heard Chubb had been charged with reckless management.

By Dr. Wheelhouse Q.C.: - Commenced work in Dinas Pit fourteen months ago. Before that worked in Gilfach Goch. It was fourteen months ago he commenced working steam coal. Chubb was forcing the work on. He didn't do so as far as witness knew, unduly. By the Coroner: - "When Chubb's certificate was suspended, some were for him and some against him."

William Morgan deposed that he was now a stoker, but was an engine-driver by trade. On 13th January last attended to an engine at the entrance into the abandoned workings of the No. 3 seam in the Upcast Pit at Dinas. Entered upon his duties about quarter past four of that day. Remained at his duties until the explosion took place at 10.30 p.m. The night-men went down to the lower seam about two hours after he descended.

Heard a sudden loud report like the letting off of a cannon in the pit. There were two sets of folding doors between where he was and the pit, the outer one about

15 yards from where he was. They were blown away, and one of them struck him. Did not see any fire passing up through the pit. Had there been any he would have seen it. There was plenty of fresh air behind him, and when passing through the pit after this to the surface, did not find any damp there. Never heard anyone say that the Middle Pit was dangerous.

By Mr. Wheelhouse Q. C.: - "I was using a naked light, which is the rule, in the No. 3. Kept my light burning on the engine. It was about 17 yards from the shaft. The doors opened inwards from the pit. The blow had to pass me before it reached the light. It was not warm there. The air-current where I was changed its direction immediately after the explosion and the shattering of the doors. It then passed into the shaft and up the shaft."
By Mr. Plews: - "The No. 3 seam is 80 yards from the surface, and 360 yards from the bottom."

David Rowlands stated that he had worked at Dinas Pit – middle one – since November, 1877. Worked at the time of the explosion in the California district. Did not see any gas in that district. Never heard, as far as he remembered, any of the men saying that the place was dangerous. When Chubb lost his certificate, it was then rumoured that he had managed recklessly, and the men blamed him for allowing men to work when there was gas in the Lower Pit.

Chubb came about twice or three times a fortnight into the California district after his certificate had been suspended. Hughes visited the place three of four times a week, oftener than Chubb. On various occasions was told by all the firemen not to lift the lamp high, for fear of gas, there being a little gas, they said, near the roof. That was fifteen months ago. He allowed witness to work on the day. This happened two or three times. The quantity of gas was small; he did not, therefore consider it dangerous to continue working.

Did not hear men complain that they were not allowed to lift up their lamps; they simply referred to the fact. He did not remember being told to keep his lamp low when passing certain cavities above the main level from the pit. He never heard any of the colliers mentioning that they had been requested to keep their lamps low passing those places.

By Mr. Abraham:- "I remember a large blower breaking out in Coleman's heading about 15 months ago, and the hauliers were sent out by the master haulier. The master haulier was discharged from the colliery on the 1st of January last. William Jenkins, the master haulier in question, had said that he believed he was discharged in consequence of having sent the hauliers out on that occasion."

Samuel Hughes was here recalled, at the request of Mr. Wheelhouse. The learned council asked who discharged William Jenkins? Witness:- "I and Chubb, and --."
Mr. Wheelhouse:- "Answer the question. Who discharged William Jenkins?" Witness: - "I and Chubb between us." Mr. Wheelhouse: - "Why was he discharged?" Witness: - "It was in consequence of its being said that he carried tales to Mr. Morgan Rowland (the late manager), and that this caused great discontent in the colliery."

By Mr. Wheelhouse:- "I have no recollection that the fact that William Jenkins had sent out the hauliers was dismissed or referred to by Chubb and myself when we decided to discharge him."

By the Coroner:- "Chubb told me that Rowlands had told Colonel Hunt that the horses were working in a place too low for them, and that Rowlands had told Colonel Hunt that William Jenkins had informed him of it."

It was also said by Morgan Rowland that the roof was so low and loose in one place where the horses worked that two shots had to be fired before it could be removed. William Jenkins was charged with having said this also to Rowland. One horse had been killed by a stone falling on him. It was true two shots had to be fired in the low roof, but the statement that the roof was loose was untrue, or shots would not have been necessary to get it down."

By Mr. Plews: - "From twenty to twenty-five other workmen were discharged on January 1st."

By Mr. Abraham: - "The way that the men were discharged and not to be re-engaged was that Chubb told them all, except Jenkin Evans, who was discharged by witness. They were to bring out their tools. He (witness) did not order that none of the men in the Lower Pit were to be re-engaged."

David Rowland's examination was then resumed, and in answer to Mr. Plews he said that he had no recollection of Mr. Wales visiting the district in which the large blower had appeared, and that he had approved of what had been done to meet it. Mr. Rowland was manager when he (witness) was first engaged at the colliery.

Coroner here said that Colonel Hunt's solicitors had handed him a letter which Colonel Hunt had received from Mr. Morgan Rowland. The letter was as follows: -

Dinas, April 4th 1879

Sir - I have nothing to fall back upon but my character, and so far as insinuation can go you have done your utmost to ruin any prospects I might have had. I distinctly deny your charges against me with reference to articles in the 'Western Mail,' and the authorship of a heap of anonymous letters you spoke about to William Jenkins. In addition to this you charged me to my brother with having driven the headings from the Lower Pit crooked. I defy you or anyone to show that the first 40 yards, which is what I drove, was crooked. I cannot be held responsible for the failure of other people to understand my intentions.

You blame me for a deficiency of foresight. I had sufficient to see that the explosion was coming, and was well aware of the cause, and I am only too surprised you can be so indiscrete as to insinuate matters about my character when you know I concealed the matter all through. I cannot refrain from saying that you are neither fair to yourself nor just to me to give credence to every rumour that floats about concerning me.

Yours respectfully
Morgan Rowland

The Coroner here asked the jury whether they wished to have Mr. Morgan Rowland examined, and they expressed a wish in the affirmative, whereupon Sergeant Price was directed by the Coroner to go and request Mr. Rowland to attend. On his return the sergeant said that Mr. Rowland had not been seen by his wife since dinner time. (Laughter.) The Coroner then issued a summons commanding him to attend. One of Mr. Rowland's brothers sent to the Coroner to say he would get Mr. Morgan Rowland to attend, and that he had gone to look for him. He will appear this Saturday morning. The Coroner said that he saw Mr. Rowland when going to lunch, and he said to him "I think I shall want you." and Mr. Rowland said in reply, "It is so long since I was at the colliery that I know nothing about it."

Mr. Abraham called as witness Mr. **David Davies**, who said that he was a collier. Worked in the Lower Pit at Dinas down to January 1st, when he was discharged by Chubb. Had been appointed a delegate with another to examine the Lower Pit about nine days before he was discharged. Was to go round on the first of January. Had his lamp ready to go and examine the colliery, when Chubb came down and said that the lamp was not necessary; that he was discharged. That was at 8.30 a.m. He did not know why he was stopped.

Saturday April 26th 1879

Examination of late manager

John Gibbon, the last witness examined on Friday, was recalled, and in answer to a juryman, stated that he knew of no instance where vacant spaces had been left unfilled in the stalls and the entrance filled to the roof. Never knew of a lamp being opened in the colliery. Had heard it rumoured once or twice that tobacco smoke had been smelt in the colliery. Never saw anyone smoking in the colliery, and never did so himself. William Lloyd, who is now lying dead in the colliery, once told him that he had smelt tobacco smoke in the colliery. It occurred three or four years ago. Had not heard of anything of the kind lately. Remembered that the authorities, it was said, intended making a search for pipes and matches, but did not know whether it was done or not. Was under the impression that someone was fined for having pipe and matches in his possession.

By Mr. Plews: - There had been a change in the ownership of the colliery since he was first engaged at the colliery. With the change of ownership came a change of manager. Witness, in his evidence in chief had said, in reply to Mr. Wheelhouse, that the following managers had been engaged at the Dinas Colliery in succession: - Mr. Daniel Thomas, Mr. William Jenkins, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Morgan Rowland, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Morgan Rowland, Mr. John Chubb, Mr. Samuel Hughes, Mr. Burns, and now Mr. Isaiah Thomas, and he had said that he did not know why so many changes in the management had taken place.

Mr. Morgan Rowland: - "I live at Dinas. I am a colliery manager, and am now looking after one of my son-in-law's collieries at Pontypridd. I have been manager of Dinas Colliery. I was manager of Dinas Colliery ten years down to November 1877. Mr. Edwards became manager when I was ill. I succeeded Mr. Harrison. I was for three years an overman at the Dinas Level previous to my becoming manager. While I was manager, everything was, in my opinion, conducted in a safe manner.

John Chubb was overman at the Middle Pit during my management. He had been in the colliery nine years altogether; two years as general overman and seven years as night overman only. I appointed him. I have not entered the colliery since I left. I sent the letter produced to Colonel Hunt. I sent two other letters to the Colonel." - "You have not got them, have you?"

Coroner: - "No. The part of the letter we want to have an explanation about is the statement contained in it, that 'you had sufficient foresight that the explosion was coming, and was well aware of its cause.'"

Mr. Rowland: - “It is easy enough to understand that the letter refers to a conversation that I had with the Colonel, and that I had not mentioned anything as to the purport of that conversation. In that letter I appealed to him in reference to what I had said would inevitably take place by proceeding as they did in the colliery. I had a conversation with the Colonel since the explosion and before the explosion. When I left the Dinas Colliery, I told the Colonel that he knew the reason why I was leaving, and that unless he changed his course he would inevitably come to trouble.

After that, after Chubb lost his certificate I wrote to the Colonel directly, saying to him that the same thing had occurred as caused my leaving, and for which I had wanted to dismiss Chubb. I brought three charges against Chubb, and requested to be allowed to discharge him, but Colonel Hunt and Mr. Wood refused to allow me to do so, the three charges referred to were allowing men to work where there was gas. After I recovered from my illness I told the Colonel that I could not get Chubb to obey my instructions as he used to do before my illness. The Colonel then asked me for an explanation.

I said that men leaving the colliery 10 o’clock at night had told me there was gas in the face of the hard heading. I left my bed and proceeded into the colliery and into the hard heading, and found five men working – blasting – within 10 yards of the gas. I sent them out at once. This was four or five months before I gave up the management. I told the Colonel I could not manage with safety with such conduct. The Colonel said, ‘If anything happens again we will allow you to stop him.’ On the last Saturday in October 1877, I found that Chubb had left 40 cubic yards of gas to accumulate in an old stall and heading.

On Sunday morning I sent to Chubb that he must come with me and others to clear the gas. Chubb sent back to say ‘You are enough without me,’ and we did go without him and cleared the gas. One of the men who assisted is here today. On the following Tuesday Colonel Hunt came to the place and I mentioned everything to him, and he made some inquiries at the office. That night I went to the Colonel’s house and asked him what he was going to do, and that I would not go again into the colliery as long as Chubb was there. Colonel Hunt then said, ‘You can stop him.’

Next morning I did stop him, and went into the colliery until 1 o’clock, when I was told that the Colonel wanted to see me at 2.30 p.m. I went to him, and first thing he told me was he was going to reinstate Chubb. I said, in reply that ‘I will not stay one day longer. That I would be in danger.’ He (the Colonel) told me, ‘If you go you are going to leave I am free from you. I do not owe you anything and you do not owe me anything.’ I said in reply, ‘If you do take the management out of my hands you shall see trouble again.’

I have not been in the colliery since. This was on the 1st of November 1877. I am giving you an explanation now about the letter. After that, after Chubb had lost his certificate, I wrote to the Colonel twice and asked him what did he think of it now, and cautioned him to take care of himself. After the explosion I saw the Colonel privately at the office, and told him what had happened was only what was to be expected, and went over the past incidents.

I told him that by keeping a man who would allow men to work in gas he could not have expected anything different to what had happened. Colonel Hunt then asked me what I thought of the explosion. I replied there could not have been sufficient air in the colliery or it would not have happened, and I pointed to the fact that the above was not communicated to '*Western Mail*' as proving that it had nothing to do with the articles which had appeared in that paper. I looked upon my letter to the Colonel, now produced, as private and confidential, and cannot understand why he has made it public. What I meant by 'concealing things' was that I had not mentioned what I have said here today to anyone but Colonel Hunt and Mr. Wood."

By a juryman: "No one discharged me. One of the two was to be there – Chubb or myself; and I left because I was not allowed to discharge Chubb. I left of my own accord."

By a juryman: "I do not know whether Chubb carried out my system of ventilation. While I was there he was under my instructions. "

By another juryman: "By Mr. Wales's instructions the Little Pit was widened, and I also constructed a wall from the portion of it which was hard over the soft."

By another juryman: "The 40 yards of gas referred to was found in the upper part of David Morley's heading. At another time gas was found near the river. Gas accumulations were discovered three times. Gas the third time was found in the hard headings. Samuel Hughes was a working collier when I was manager." A juryman here asked Mr. Rowland whether he thought Samuel Hughes was, in his opinion, a competent man. The coroner ruled that the question could not be put. "There was a ladder in the Little Pit and a windlass on the top while I was manager. A fall taking place in the Little Pit would interfere with the ventilation of the middle, so would a fall on the heading."

By another juryman: "Two great falls occurred in the workings in the Middle Pit during my management. No fall ever took place during my time in the Little Pit. "
By the Coroner: "There were frequently small blowers seen in the Middle Pit during my time."

By Mr. Plews: - “I was manager at Marshall’s, in Monmouthshire, before I became manager at Dinas. I was fireman at Cymmer Pit in 1856. An accident occurred there. I was blamed for it, but I became free from it. I was committed for manslaughter, but was acquitted. I was reported nine days after I became manager of Dinas for an infraction of the Act of Parliament. The pit was short of ventilation, but I could not have been expected to improve it in nine days.”

“I have been connected with Dinas Colliery, off and on, fifty-five years. Chubb was in the Dinas Level cutting coal when I became manager, and I appointed him night overman. I did so in about two months, and the men stood out against his being appointed overman. I preferred him, but I do not know that he was the best man I could have got. The first large discovery of gas was made within nine months of my leaving. I had no trouble with Chubb until after my illness. I was taken ill in September 1875. The first time I went back to the colliery was in October 1876, Mr. Edwards was manager there then.”

“Mr. Edwards was manager for about three months of the time I was ill. Mr. Chubb carried on the management during the rest of the time, but he came to see me nightly for his instructions. I was at the colliery four or five times in October. I was again laid up three months. After I discovered gas in the colliery, I gave instructions to almost every workman to report to me personally whenever they saw gas in the mine. It was not three times only that I discovered gas, but they were the only instances mentioned to the Colonel.”

“I instructed my son to follow Chubb about the colliery. James Williams and Thomas Watkins were night-firemen and overmen at the time the gas was discovered. They would have reported it in the morning, but I went in the moment I heard of it. Had only one day overman. Saw both the night firemen in the colliery when I went in. I do not remember what I said to them. I cleared the gas that night, and did not, therefore, report it. I do believe that Thomas Watkins reported it to me. They did nothing to remove it until I came, but it is probable they would have cleared it themselves before the morning. What we have been talking about refers to the river side.”

“Went to the hard heading on another occasion, to give instructions to Chubb and Matthew Rees about a pipe, when I discovered five men working within 12 yards of gas. Went in because the night overman had sent for me. They knew of the existence of gas, and yet allowed the five men to continue working within distance of the gas. The overman had walked round between seven and eight o’clock, and the five men had gone in at ten o’clock. Another set of men had worked there from 2 p.m. until 10 p.m. Three shifts worked there. I blamed the chief overman.”

"It was two subordinate overmen that sent to me to ask what they had better do. The day-overman would leave the colliery about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I heard of this gas sometime after 10 o'clock at night. It was on a Sunday morning I went to Morley's heading in October 1877.

I cannot say whether or not I went to see whether the finding of the gas in question had been reported to me. James Williams reported to me personally. As a rule I regularly examined the book. James Williams was dismissed the same day I left, and he told me that he was dismissed because he had mentioned to me and not to Chubb about the gas. Mr. James can tell you all about it; he was there. Never heard it said that what I had said about the gas was untrue (indignantly)."

"This man (pointing to William James alias 'Will Magws') was one of the men clearing away the gas with me. The gas might have accumulated rapidly. This ought to make one more careful in watching over the ventilation. The day-overman (Chubb) had not come when I went to clear the gas with some men on Sunday morning. I sent for him, but the answer he sent was 'Go yourself.' James Williams was the man who should have made the report on Sunday morning."

By Mr. Wales: - "It was not customary to make reports as to the state of the colliery on Saturday nights. But on Monday morning a report would be made as to the state of the colliery on Saturday and Sunday. I do not know whether James Williams had reported in the book on Saturday as to the gas found. The day and the night-firemen were examined separately by Colonel Hunt and Mr. Wood as to the report about gas. I was there when Mr. James Williams entered. I then went away. I had no conversation with Thomas Watkins about the inquiry. I never heard that David Williams (the night-fireman at the time) denied to Colonel Hunt and Mr. Wood that the gas in question existed."

"I say everything on my oath. I never heard that Chubb denied the truth about the statement made about the gas. I do not know how Colonel Hunt and Mr. Wood came to the conclusion that there no truth in my statement. It was before the Colonel told me to dismiss Chubb that the inquiry took place. I say that seriously, for I am certain of it. It was an old stall, abandoned, in Morley's heading, in which the gas was."

"The stall was in the course of being filled. It was the only one left unfilled. About half of it contained rubbish, but it was in a slanting shape, and not up to the roof. A tram of rubbish was standing in the mouth of the stall at the time. The first letter I wrote to Colonel Hunt was after Chubb lost his certificate. I applied on the very day I left to Colonel Hunt for three months wages because the management was taken out of my hands."

Mrs. Plews: - "Did he pay you?" Witness: "Yes." Mr. Plews:" Willingly?" "Not so willingly and I threatened to go to you" (much laughter). The reason why I wrote to Colonel Hunt the letter produced was because he charged me, to my brother, with having had something to do with articles which had appeared in the '*Western Mail*.' The 'foresight' that an explosion was coming, referred to in the letter referred to a period before I left." Mr. Plews again referred to the articles which had appeared in the '*Western Mail*' about the explosion, to whom they referred, and upon whom they reflected and &co. The witness said at last, impatiently, that he had too much respect for the '*Western Mail*' to answer such questions.

A juror:- "Had you anything to do with the composition of the articles which had appeared in the '*Western Mail*' since the explosion?" Witness:- "I decline to answer the question in that form as I have already denied it to the Colonel."

Mr. C. J. James said that an inquiry was instigated by Colonel Hunt, Mr. Wood, and himself as to the allegations made by Mr. Rowland. They examined the firemen Chubb and Rowlands, and the books, and found that no gas had been reported in them, and that Mr. Rowland had taken no steps to remove the gas until Sunday, although James Williams and he alleged that the gas had been there some days. "Chubb and James Williams told us that they examined David Morley's heading during the alleged days, and that they failed to find any gas there. Knowing of the strong feeling that existed between the manager and the overman, and taking all the circumstances into consideration, we came to the conclusion that the allegations were untrue, and we gave James Williams, the fireman, a month's notice."

Mr. Wheelhouse QC.: -"Why didn't you give the far more responsible man, Morgan Rowland, notice to?" Witness: - "I did not know, I do believe I was in authority at the time." By Mr. Abraham:- "James Williams was re-engaged afterwards as a collier. I cannot say positively when the inquiry was held. It was either at the end of October or the beginning of November."

William Jenkins, collier, said in Welsh, that he was with Morgan Rowland on the Sunday in question clearing away the accumulation of the gas referred to. He was not allowed, however, to proceed with his voluntary statement. The inquiry was then adjourned to the 4th of June, at the same place.

Saturday and Sunday, April 26 & 27th 1879

More exploring difficulties – The mine a complete wreck

Over the weekend (reported the '*Western Mail*') the explorers in the Middle Pit succeeded in sending the air current into the inner workings, and it now returns along the old return airways to a point 140 yards from the bottom of the pit. It was believed that as soon as this was accomplished the explorers would be able to reach the remote interior, where the majority of the poor fellows, whose bodies are lying in the workings, were employed on the night of the explosion.

The explorers on Saturday proceeded towards the interior, but they had not gone far when they came upon an enormous fall. The most daring of their number, including Mr. Isaiah Thomas, the manager, and Mr. Chubb, the overman, climbed to the top of the fall, which they discovered to be about 14 feet in height. They then walked over its summit, a distance of 90 yards. From the point they reached the fall extended to an unknown distance in the interior. They then retraced their steps, and attempted to enter another heading. This also they found to be filled by another enormous fall.

They walked over the top of this also, and reached into the neighbourhood of the large stable, where are the carcasses of 31 horses. They again were to retreat without discovering the extent of this fall also. In fact the whole of the interior seemed to be a complete wreck, and a very large sum of money would have to be expended before even the bodies could be reached, and as for the amount that will have to be expended before coal-cutting can be resumed, competent men estimate it at many thousands of pounds.

Another change in management

Another change in management was about to take place (reported the '*Western Mail*' on Tuesday, April 29th). The new manager would be Mr. Needham, C. E., Newport, and Mr. Chubb was about to be made overman at the Dinas No. 3 Level. It was rumoured that Mr. Galloway's engagement as consulting engineer was only a temporary arrangement. Mr. Isaiah Thomas, the present manager, who was a practical mining engineer, is the son of the late Mr. Daniel Thomas, who, assisted by Mr. Jenkin Evans, now of Ferndale, managed the Dinas collieries during more than quarter of a century for the late Mr. Walter Coffin of Llandaff. After the departure of the present officers the Middle Pit would be managed by strangers, and for guidance in every step taken they would have to consult the office maps.

Wednesday, April 30th 1879

Finding of another body

Late on Wednesday evening, April 30th 1879, another body was found at the Dinas Pit. It appears that some 150 yards from the bottom of the shaft a great fall was reached, and the explorers climbed to the top of this and then walked over many other falls, extending a distance of 300 yards. Between two of the falls they came to a tram, and at the end furthest from them they discovered a horse lying on his side with the shaft fast to the tram. Lying between the shaft and the tram the body was found, with one leg over the iron of the shaft. A stone, about two feet long, rested on the side of the face.

Mr. John Chubb was with the explorers, and with his assistance the body was conveyed towards the pit. One of the explorers stated that the greatest difficulty was experienced in bringing out the body, the explorers being often obliged to crawl upon their stomachs through holes on the top of the falls, dragging the body of their dead comrade after them. It turned out to be the body of William Williams, night-haulier, and, judging by the position of the body, he was at the time of the explosion seated on the front of the tram, and proceeding into the interior.

The fire, it seems, had not touched his body, and the beard was entire. The deceased was married, and dwelt at Apple Tree village. He leaves a wife and three young children. The explorers give a most discouraging account of the state of the colliery, and it is feared that owing to the great falls that will have to be cleared no bodies will be reached for months.

The men proceeded some distance beyond where the body was found, and they state that the place beyond is completely blocked by immense falls. It is stated that some of the explorers engaged on Thursday night were terribly frightened by a tremendous report, which reverberated suddenly through the silent mine. But it was luckily not caused by an accident, but by blasting operations by another set of explorers. The men still complain bitterly that there were no stimulants granted them when bringing out the dead, although the stench in the return airway is something dreadful.

Thursday, May 8th 1879

Another explosion at Dinas Colliery – The widows at the pit's mouth

A little before 8 o'clock on Thursday night the whole neighbourhood of the whole Dinas Pit, which is the intake airway to the pit in which the 60 dead bodies are lying, was startled by three roars like the discharge of a cannon coming from the shaft into the air. This was followed by intense excitement among the night workmen,

who were waiting their turn to descend for the night. The rumour that another explosion had taken place in one of the pits – it was not known which – spread with great rapidity, and crowds of men, women, and children, were quickly seen hurrying to the scene.

It was but too true that another explosion had taken place, but luckily no one was injured by it. It appears that a number of men were descending, standing on one of the "carriages," and that one of them carried in his hand a flaming unprotected lamp, know as a "comet." The others carrying Clanny lamps, that is lamps with the flame encased in glass, and above this gauze similar to that of a Davy lamp.

The men were descending towards the bottom, a distance of 378 yards, and when they had gone a distance of 300 yards gas suddenly ignited from the "comet," and flashed upwards, like forked lightening, followed by three deafening roars. The poor fellows, who continued to descend rapidly, were breathless with terror, and well they might be, for they both saw and heard the enemy which had laid low 63 of their fellows but a short time ago.

The "comet" was instantly extinguished, and all the men reached the bottom in safety. The signal was at once given to the engineer at the top to pull them up again, and their return was watched above with intense anxiety by the crowds who had by this time gathered together, and great was the relief felt when it was discovered that no one had been injured.

It appears that a "blower" had existed in the side of the shaft ever since the pit was sunk. In former years the gas coming from it was conveyed to the surface by means of pipes, and these kept lighted for the use of night-workmen. Lately, however, fresh means of dealing with the "blower" were adopted, and some say that the gas which fired on this occasion came from that "blower;" others, say it was a fresh blower that had suddenly appeared, and that the gas from it had lodged in the side of the shaft next to the flaming Comet carried by one of the men.

That the accumulation of gas was great is evident from the fact that it fired in the shaft through which the volume of air passes that supplies the workings of the two collieries with ventilation.

One terrible danger incurred was the possibility of its communicating with the miles of gas in the other pit, where the bodies are lying, and where explorers are incessantly at work endeavouring to reach them. Had it not happened that work in this pit had been suspended during the night, the probability is that the whole of the Polka district would have been filled with gas before morning, and the consequence likely to have followed is terrible to contemplate, for the Polka district

is connected in two ways with the upcast shaft, in which the tremendous accumulation of gas exists.

Few workman have had the good fortune in an explosion to witness what the men descending on Thursday night saw, viz., the gas starting one way - up the shaft, and then another – down the shaft, which literally took place in this instance. The officials of the colliery were quickly on the spot, and Mr. Needham and Mr. John Chubb descended to the colliery. While they were down another official, I am told, appeared and requested the men to proceed to their work as usual. This the men indignantly refused to do, stating that they were too much afraid to do so.

The '*Western Mail*' reporter commented:- "What followed I am refrain from describing, but the result is that the place is in a ferment today, the men having (erroneously of course) come to the conclusion, it is said, that their lives were of little value by certain officials. The day men came to the pit's mouth this morning and after having being assured that the colliery was in a safe condition, prepared to descend. They were not the men who refused to descend on Thursday night, but they were peremptorily, it is said, told that they would not be allowed to descend, and they are, therefore, all idle today." One remarkable thing about the discontent prevails – and it is deep and general in consequence of other matters as well – is that a warm sympathy is expressed by the men for their master.

Plans to restart raising coal

The top of the pit in which the dead are lying was this afternoon the scene of great uproar and excitement, the wives and children and female friends of the men in the pit having been informed that Mr. Galloway, instead of directing his intention to bring out the dead bodies, was now engaged in preparing to raise coal from the pit. There were about a hundred women close to the pit, some crying, others gesticulating wildly towards Mr. Galloway and Mr. John Chubb. Threats were freely uttered against Mr. Galloway, and I heard one woman, with baby in arms and with tears of rage rolling over her face, declaring that she would throw into the pit the first man that dared to bring up a tram of coal before her husband's body was got out.

At a little distance from the women about 100 men stood sullenly. Matters wore a very threatening aspect until the arrival of the police. Soon after this Mr. Galloway walked away, and as he did so he was jeered by the women, and some of them darted after him, but he was not touched by them. I am authorised by Mr. Galloway to state that nothing will be left undone to recover the dead bodies as soon as possible. But as some of them are not likely to be recovered for seven or eight months, a portion of the colliery will be worked before then. I am requested by the

men to call attention to the fact that blasting with powder is being done daily in the pit, and that the exploding powder might at any moment fire the gas in the inner workings and destroy both the explorers and the colliery.

Saturday, May 10th 1879

Recovery of another body

On Saturday, May 10th 1879, between 10 and 10.30, the body of Charles Wheadon, was found. The poor fellow's two arms and feet were found a few yards from his body. This is the fourth body found; 59 remaining still in the pit. The body was found in a heading about 60 yards from the entrance. It is rumoured, that in consequence of a dispute with Mr. Galloway, John Chubb had resigned his position as overman.

It is stated that with the fragments of Charles Wheadon the foot of another body was discovered. It had been severed from the leg close to the boot. The explorers were busily engaged in searching for the other portions of the body. It appeared that the body recovered had been dashed to pieces against the sides of the heading. The condition of the remains recovered has added to the horror already felt. Mr. John Chubb had finally left the colliery. Mr. Samuel Hughes still remained as overman at the Lower Pit. Mr. Galloway's position was defined as "agent," and Mr. Needham as "manager."

Two more bodies recovered

On Tuesday, May 20th, 1879 the explorers at the Dinas Colliery discovered on the roadway close to the lamp-room, the remains of William Lloyd and Thomas Watkins, the firemen in charge at the time of the explosion. The bodies were found close to the lamp-room, about 40 yards from the bottom of the shaft, and were identified by their clothing and watches. It is supposed that they were resting in the lamp-room after examining the pit, and that when the gas was fired they started for the shaft but were imprisoned by the falling debris. Lloyd was one of the rescuers at the Tynewydd Pit disaster, and received an award for bravery. Both men were buried at St. John's Church, Tonyrefail two days later.

Wednesday, June 4th 1879

Resumption of inquest

On Wednesday, June 4th, the inquest into the Dinas Colliery explosion recommenced at the Butchers Arms, Ffrwd Amos, Dinas. Sergeant Price brought a message to the Coroner from Mr. Morgan Rowland asking if his attendance was necessary that day. The Coroner, turning to the jury, said that at the last meeting

they finished with the evidence of Mr. Morgan Rowland, which was given at great length.

He had not known, as Mr. Rowland proceeded with his evidence, where to stop him, for he (Mr. Rowland) wished to give a description of everything, and particularly as to the remarkable letter he had written to Colonel Hunt. They merely wanted an explanation of the letter, for in it he said he knew the cause of the explosion. He gave it, and said that what he meant was that an explosion might be expected, as the company continued to employ John Chubb. The Coroner and jury then came to the conclusion that it was unnecessary to call Mr. Rowland at this stage of the proceeding.

Doctor Dukes gave formal evidence to the cause of the death of the bodies already discovered. He said that they were in a horrible condition, "like heaps of shining black leather."

Mr. T. E. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for South Wales, was then examined. He said that full inspections of the colliery had been made by Mr. Galloway, by his instruction, between April and August 1878. During the inspection made in the Polka Seam on 13th of June, gas was found, and this being a violation of the Mines Regulation Act, Chubb, the then manager, was fined £10. Subsequent proceedings were taken against Chubb under the 32nd section of the Act, which resulted in the suspension of his certificate for six months from November 19th last.

An accumulation of gas was found in Coleman's heading on the 6th of August. He (witness) communicated with Mr. James (the agent) as to the desirability of increasing the quantity of air, so as to lessen the 'cap,' and reduce the temperature, which in some places was from 75 degrees to 76 degrees Fahrenheit. It was only fair, however, to state that this high temperature was due more to the great depth of covering above the workings, being 1,700 or 1,800 feet below the surface, than to the scarcity of air travelling through them.

Mr. James replied that the gas had been cleared from Coleman's heading, and that steps were being taken to increase the quantity of air throughout the colliery. Witness then referred to Ace, and the fireman's evidence. He had stated that there was gas in Morris's heading from the 11th to the 28th of December. The ventilation was improved in this part by placing brattice across the heading, and by putting another row of pipes. No blasting took place in Morris's heading. Samuel Hughes gave similar evidence.

Mr. Wales continued: - "On the morning of the 14th of January I heard of the explosion and immediately started from Newport (where I was engaged on the

Abercarn Colliery inquest) and reached the colliery about 11.30 a.m. On my arrival I found that both the 80 yards staple and up-cast shaft or Middle Pit had collapsed at the bottom, thus cutting off all communication with the 6 ft. workings. I then descended the Lower Pit and then proceeded along the Polka heading to the Middle Pit in company with several others.

At that time it was thought possible that the explosion might not have extended throughout the whole of the 6 ft. workings, and that some of the men might have been reached alive provided a communication could have been affected in the course of a few days. Witness then described the condition of the pit, and the large quantity of gas issuing from the interior of the colliery. On Thursday last he inspected a portion of the colliery, and came to a decided opinion that the explosion took place in Morris's heading, which was a cross measure drift leading from the 'six foot' to the 'four foot' seam.

It will be recollected that the air for the ventilation of this place was conveyed through three iron pipes, each pipe being 12 inches diameter. The force of the explosion had been so great here as to crush and twist these iron pipes into every conceivable shape and at a point about 70 yards from the entrance of, and in a straight line with, the cross-measure drift there were unmistakable indications of fire having been there. Mr. Wales stated: - "So far as my inspections have gone, no other portion of the colliery has been subjected to such force, nor were there any traces of fire to be found. I have carefully inspected the portion of the colliery which has been re-opened, and from the indications I saw during my inspection on Thursday last, I am decidedly of the opinion that the explosion took place in Morris' heading or cross-measures drift leading from the '6 ft.' to the '4 ft.'

This cross-measures drift was about 150 yards in length and rising at the rate of one in seven or one in eight, and it will be borne in mind that the air for the ventilation of the heading was conveyed through three iron pipes, being 12 inches diameter, giving an aggregate area of about 2½ ft., which, in my opinion, would be totally inadequate from the proper and safe ventilation of Morris' heading, where I believe gas, to a large extent, had accumulated.

As shot firing was strictly prohibited in Morris' heading, it is impossible to state with certainty how the gas was ignited or exploded, nor do I consider it of much importance, for if gas be allowed to remain in or near working places, even where

safety lamps are used, it will most certainly, sooner or later, be ignited by some means which, probably, will never be known."

"From the 14th to the 23rd of January every possible effort, without stint, either of men or materials, was made to reach the workings from the Middle Pit, but owing to the terrible wreck at the bottom of the shaft, and the large quantities of gas issuing from the interior of the colliery, it was quite impossible to do so. About noon on the 23rd a consultation of engineers was held, when it was decided to discontinue operations at the Middle Pit and begin to clear out the 80 yards staple and restore the ventilation in the usual way. Since that time the work of clearing the mine has been continued, but owing to the terrible destruction wrought by the explosion a very small portion of the colliery has yet been re-opened, and only 6 out of the 63 bodies recovered," he concluded.

By the jury: - He did not see any sign of a blower in Morris's heading. Was not aware than an objection was made to the pipes in Morris's heading by the assistant inspector to the engineer of the colliery. The last inspection took place on the 6th of August, and at that time the cross level drift (Morris's heading) had not nearly reached the coal, and consequently very little gas was given up.

By the Coroner: - He disapproved of the system of ventilating by pipes. Brattices should have been employed until a communication had been effected with the upcast shaft.

The Coroner: - "John Ace said that when he found gas in the heading on 11th of December, he and Samuel Hughes placed brattices there. They did then what was right?" Mr. Wales: - "Yes, as far as that went." Was of the opinion that a brattice ought to have been put up there from the commencement. His impression was that the gas at that time had become explosive from the entrance into the heading. A third pipe, which Mr. James put in on the 19th, also was insufficient. A longitudinal brattice ought to have been placed at the entrance into Morris's heading so as to increase the current of air entering the heading.

The Coroner: - "Samuel Hughes said that he knew that there were shots to be fired on the night the explosion took place. Were they so near as to make it possible that gas in Morris's heading might have been fired by them?"

Mr. Wales: - "Oh, dear, no. They were not near Morris's heading, and had they been fired in any part of the West district they would not have fired gas in Morris's heading." He did not consider it safe to fire shots in any fiery mines worked on the long-wall principal. This colliery was worked on that principal.

By Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C; M.P.: - “It was the duty of all officers connected with the colliery, from the agent down to the firemen, to see that the place was safe for men to work in. As soon as the manager found that there was gas in Morris’s heading he ought to have had the pipes removed and replaced by a brattice, such as he had described. The men ought to have been stopped working in that part of the colliery the moment gas was discovered there. The overman and the fireman ought to have stopped the men.”

He continued: “In all human probability the fireman would have been the first to discover the accumulation of gas. After stopping the men he ought to have consulted with the overman and manager, to arrange to get more air into the heading. The next step would have been to consult Mr. James, as agent under Colonel Hunt, if they found themselves unequal to the task of clearing the mine.

The indications visible on Thursday last plainly showed that there had been a very large accumulation of gas in Morris’s heading. It was such that it would have been apparent to everyone entering the heading. It was possible the gas in Morris’s heading had been accumulating for some weeks. It had certainly been accumulating for several days. It would have been most imprudent to have allowed things to continue in that condition. The men were working in or on the heading that night. Two dead bodies were found in that heading.”

By the Coroner: - He did not think that there was a sudden outburst of gas that night. Thought the accumulation was due to insufficiency of air. It was in few collieries that sudden rushes of gas took place; rarely in collieries open to the extent this had been opened.

William Morgan deposed that he was now employed as a fireman at the Dinas Colliery since the explosion. Found two bodies on different occasions. The body of a man named Wheadon was found in the hard heading, about halfway up.

By Mr. Wheelhouse: - The body was lying on its back, naked, across the heading. There was nothing to say the deceased had been running away. He had no chance, for he was, witness thought, killed on the spot by the force of the explosion. One foot was severed from the body, and lying near it. The other body he found was that of William Williams, in David Lewis’s heading.

By Mr. Simons: - “A shovel and a hatchet were found by Wheadon’s body. The hatchet belonged to William Jones, and the shovel, I believe to Wheadon.

Edward Beech stated that he was a collier residing in Tylacelyn. Had been engaged as an explorer since the explosion took place. Found the body of a man named William Jones on the 13th of May on the hard heading. It was about 100 yards from the bottom. It was lying on its back in the middle of the road. Had a portion of the clothes on the front of it. The two feet were lying a yard away from the body. He seemed to have been killed by the force of the explosion."

By Mr. Wheelhouse: - Worked on top of the fault before the explosion. Never saw gas there, nor did he hear complaints made about any. Did not hear the management condemned in any way.

By Mr. Simons: - Knew gas when he saw it in the lamps. He had heard of gas being in the pit. "Men took off their clothes, except their trousers and shirt. Sometimes the shirt was taken off, but when this was discovered by the manager he applied a stick to the naked one (laughter). He said it was not allowed. They took off their clothes because it was so warm in some places. I do not know whether working without their shirts was confined to the Staffordshire colliers employed at Dinas." Some others were examined as to the state of Morris's heading immediately preceding the explosion.

Mr. Ace, the fireman, was recalled, and in answer to the jury, said that the roof of the hard heading was mixed, and necessitated timbering. Searched the men occasionally for matches, fuses and contrivances to open the lamps. Had never found anyone with either, but had found some with pipes, and took them away from them. Never found anyone with his lamp open.

By Mr. Wheelhouse: - Each found with a pipe in his possession underground was fined 10 shillings under colliery rules. The last fine was inflicted two or three years ago.

By Mr. Wheelhouse: - "I should certainly like to know where Mr. Chubb is." Sergeant Price, after being sworn, stated that he had received a report from Chubb's wife. Saw him last at Ystrad station on Monday week. The inquest was then adjourned until Thursday morning.

Thursday June 5th 1879

Termination of Coroner's Inquest – Verdict of accidental death
The colliery authorities censured

On the resumption of the inquest at the Butcher's Arms on Thursday, June 5th, Mr. Abraham said that he found in the official correspondence that Mr. Wales had

stated in his letter to the Home Office, that in addition to Mr. Hughes being appointed manager, Mr. James, of Merthyr, was in the habit of examining the colliery once or twice a week as occasion required. Upon what was this information founded?

The Coroner: - "Mr. James himself says that he used to go to the colliery, as a rule, once a week, and that he then went underground, except when Colonel Hunt came there and required to see him on business. He said he generally went down once a week, but he did not remember when he went down before the 19th of December, nor what part of the colliery he then examined, nor whether he had examined the whole of the colliery since Hughes was appointed manager. That was plain enough.

The Coroner asked Mr. Abraham if he had Mr. Wales's letter, and he replied in the negative. Did Mr. Wales remember its content? That gentleman did not. However, he had it as far as he remembered, the words used by him in the letter in question were that Mr. Wood, Colonel Hunt's Cardiff agent, had used. The Coroner said that Mr. James was appointed agent under the Act of Parliament. Mr. Wood had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Abraham: - "If a person who has 'nothing to do with it' is allowed to interfere in the appointment of the manager, this would seem to be a rather important item, even more so still if he represents the colliery."

Mr. Simons: - "Who, then, is to be consulted about the appointment of a manager of a colliery if not the proprietor or his agent?"

Mr. Wales: - "Mr. James was no doubt responsible as agent, and Mr. Hughes as manager." Mr. Abraham said that under the circumstances he would ask no more questions.

Mrs. Chubb was then called forward for the purpose of being questioned as where her husband was. She was called at the request of Mr. Wheelhouse. Mr. Simons objected on the ground that it would be illegal to examine the wife on questions relating to her husband.

The objection was allowed, and Mrs. Chubb was not examined. Sergeant Price said that he had heard Chubb had gone to America, with a married local woman (this liaison having been the object of local scandal for some time) - no doubt concerned that he would be indicted for negligence and the foreman of the jury said that was the rumour in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Samuel Hughes was recalled by the Coroner, and he, by the request of the Coroner, pointed out where in Morris's heading the men were before 11th of December. Two men worked in one part of it, in William Richard's stall, Morris's heading. They were William Richards and Thomas Hughes, and there were two others working in Parry's stall. They were David Parry and Daniel Jones. There were two others working in Powell's heading, leading from Morris's stall. They were William Evans and David Powell.

There was no one working in the heading - Morris's heading - itself. Occasionally a labourer worked in the hard heading. Thomas Evans worked there on the 10th and 11th of December. When the gas was discovered in Morris's heading, on the 11th of December, the innermost men were stopped. They were Daniel Jones, William Richards, Thomas Hughes, and David Parry. They were sent to work in the six-foot seam instead.

David Powell and William Evans, working in Powell's heading, were not stopped. The gas was found on the 11th on the parting of D. Parry's stall, which was the second stall. The two men that were allowed to continue working were on the outside of the place where the gas was. When Mr. James was in Morris's heading, on the 19th of December, he requested witness to put down another air-pipe.

He understood he was bound to follow Mr. James's instructions, and that he was above him in the management of the colliery. It took them from the 19th of December until the 26th inclusive to put down the third row of pipes. Two men working in Powell's heading were then withdrawn. Did not think that anyone else worked in the hard heading when the pipes were being laid.

By Mr. Wheelhouse:- "The reason why the pipes were not put in from the 11th of December until the 19th in Morris's heading was that we were waiting for Mr. James to come to consult him about it. We did not write to him requesting him to come. He was then longer absent that usual. We were expecting him daily. He used to come to the top of the pit two or three times a week."

Mr. Wheelhouse: - "Mr. James did not say so. He said that it was once a week he visited the pit." – Witness: – "He came to the top of the pit two or three times a week, and called at the office."

Mr. Abraham:- "Mr. James examined the colliery while you were manager?" – Witness: - "I have no recollection when he examined it except on the 19th of December."

Mr. Abraham: - "What part did he then examine?" – Witness:- "Morris's heading and the hard heading, I believe, which was little more than one-third of the whole colliery. Waited for Mr. James to give general instructions."

Mr. Wheelhouse: - "Do you mean to say that Mr. James only examined the colliery on the 19th during your management?" Witness – "I cannot speak positively."

By Mr. Simons:- "The gas was lodged in a hole in the roof in Morris's heading, and we ripped along the heading to the hole that the fresh air might carry away the gas. The ripping had been concluded when Mr. James came, and he advised putting in the third pipe, in addition to the brattice which we had already put."

Mr. Wheelhouse:- "What do you mean 'we?' – Witness:- "Chubb and I."
Mr. Simons: - "Was the accumulation of gas such as to require a special visit by Mr. James?" Witness:- "No, sir."

Mr. Simons:- "Were you fully empowered to do everything for the safety of the colliery?" – Witness: - "Yes, sir, everything."
Mr. Simons:- "Who ordered the men in Morris's and Powell's headings to discontinue working?" – Witness:- "I did, sir."

The Coroner here said that that was all the evidence he intended to call now, and he asked the jury whether they wished to have another adjournment for a long or short period. Mr. Wales said, in answer to the foreman of the jury, that he did not think he would be able to give a better opinion as to the cause of the explosion.

The Coroner sums up and the verdict

After an adjournment of half an hour, to enable the jury to decide whether they desired a further adjournment, they came to the conclusion that no further adjournment was necessary, and the Coroner then proceeded to sum up the evidence. He said it appeared that for some years previous to November 1877, Morgan Rowlands was the manager of the Dinas Colliery, and for some time John Chubb was under him at the Middle Pit.

In October 1877, Rowlands reported Chubb for allowing accumulations of gas. Colonel Hunt and Mr. James consulted together about the charge which Rowlands had made against Chubb, and came to the conclusion that it was not true. In consequence Rowlands left the colliery, and Chubb was appointed manager, Samuel Hughes being appointed overman at the Middle Pit under Chubb.

There appeared to have been nothing wrong until June 1878, when an inspection was made by the then Assistant Government Inspector, and he found an accumulation of gas at the colliery. Chubb, the manager, was prosecuted for allowing this, and afterwards proceedings were taken against him, under section 32 of the Act, and his certificate was suspended for six months, from the 19th of November 1878.

The colliery was therefore left suddenly without a qualified certificated manager. Under the powers granted by the 26th section of the Act, Hughes was appointed temporary manager until a certified manager could be obtained – Hughes at the time having given notice of his intention to go up for examination. Chubb was then appointed overman at the Middle Pit. Their positions were therefore reversed. He would presently refer to the manner in which the appointment was made.

Matters went on without scarcely anything being especially wrong until the 11th of December inst., when gas was reported and reported daily until the 19th of December, when Mr. James visited the place and advised that another row of pipes should be put in, in order to give more ventilation. After this was completed, on the 26th of December, the gas, it was said, was got rid of, and the men allowed to return.

According to the evidence, in no case was gas seen in the pit after this until the 12th of January, when a blower was seen in the district belonging to Miles the fireman. The explosion happened soon after on the night of the 13th, but the manager had said that he had taken steps to have the gas removed. He thought it was unnecessary to inquire into the truth of the charges of Morgan Rowlands against Chubb, for they had nothing to do with the present case.

If Chubb were guilty of allowing gas to accumulate, it was 15 months before the present explosion, and could, therefore, have nothing to do with it. An explanation, however, of Morgan Rowland's letter to Colonel Hunt was deemed desirable, and by calling Rowlands the jury had an opportunity of hearing his explanation, which was that he thought there was bound to be an accident as Chubb had been kept on. Whether Chubb was or not guilty of negligence on this occasion, it was certain that in June 1878 he was guilty of negligence so gross that proceedings were taken against him, and it is was considered proper to suspend his certificate, a course which was adopted on the 19th of November.

Then steps were taken for the appointment of a new temporary manager. Mr. James stated that Hughes was appointed manager to consult with Chubb, and Hughes himself said he was appointed manager as far as the safety of the mine was concerned, but that Chubb was to be answerable for the working expenses. Now this, no doubt, was an unfortunate arrangement, and would have been infinitely better to have let Hughes have the entire management of the thing himself and to have left Chubb entirely out of the case. However, he supposed that they did what they considered best, they might have had confidence in Chubb's knowledge of the mine, but at all events this was the arrangement made.

It was entirely a matter for the jury to say whether or not Hughes was really appointed manager and had sufficient power as manager for the safety of the mine to the meet the requirements of the Act of Parliament, which was of course made to secure the safety of the mine, not to apply to the working expenses, and so on.

In order that the jury might judge of that, he referred to the evidence of Samuel Hughes. Hughes said that Mr. James told him he was to be responsible for the safety of the mine, according to the requirements of the Act, and that Mr. Wood, Colonel Hunt's manager, of the Cardiff office, told him that as Chubb was an older man he must not do anything without consulting Chubb.

At the same time Hughes expressed himself as being positive that he had full power to countermand anything dangerous which Chubb might order to be done. It was for the Jury to say whether or not full power had been placed in Hughes' hands. Hughes himself frankly acknowledged his responsibility, and admitted that the safety of the mine was dependent upon him. At the same time Hughes stated in evidence that Chubb did things without consulting him.

This would be an important point for the jury to consider, for if they were of the opinion that the Mines Regulation Act had not been complied with, both owners and the agent might be rendered criminally responsible, if the accident occurred in consequence of the non-appointment of a proper manager. If Hughes stated the truth there was no difference of opinion between Chubb and himself with regard to the gas being allowed to accumulate; so that if there was negligence they were both equally liable.

The next important point touched upon by the coroner was of the gas in Morris' heading on the 11th November. Hughes stated that the gas was discovered on the

11th by the fireman, John Ace, who found it in a parting in the roof by Parry's stall in Morris' heading. Ace made a similar statement. Ace and the manager said they put up brattices, and commenced ripping the roof, doing what, he supposed, they thought best to get rid of the gas.

Both witnesses said the gas had seemed to be got rid of, only being present in small quantities until the 19th December, when Mr. James visited the place. On that day Mr. James put up another brattice, and also ordered another row of pipes to be put in, and the witnesses all said that after this was done the gas was got rid of. Even on the day of the accident Hughes, who went over this part of the colliery, stated that he and Ace tried for gas but found none.

Turning now to the evidence of the Government Inspector, the Coroner pointed out that Mr. Wales was distinctly of the opinion that the explosion occurred in the hard heading of Morris's. The Government Inspector had said, the coroner reminded the jury, that the force of the explosion had been so great here as to crush and twist iron pipes into every shape, and that at a point about 70 yards distant from the entrance of, and in a straight line with, the cross-measures drift, there were unmistakable indication of fire.

Gas must have, in Mr. Wales' opinion, been accumulating there for some time, and he considered the three pipes inadequate for the proper ventilation of this part of the workings. Although he did not think the explosion was caused by a sudden exhalation of gas, it was, in his (Mr. Wales') opinion, possible that it might have been so.

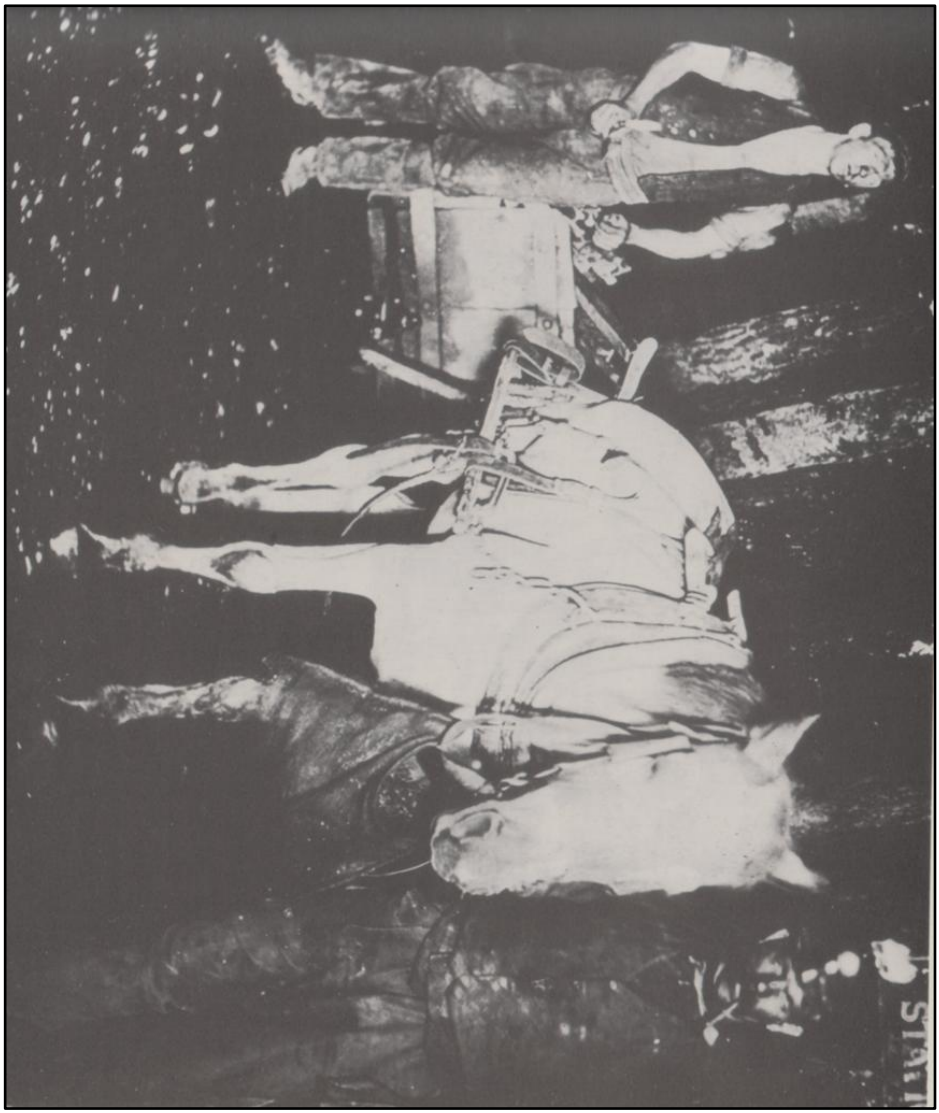
There could, the coroner proceeded, be no doubt that there was gas there. The question for them (the jury) was to decide were whether they thought it possible that the explosion occurred owing to a sudden outburst of gas, or whether the gas had been allowed to accumulate by defective ventilation and by the neglect of the manager Hughes, the overman Chubb, or the fireman Ace; if there had been recklessness at all these three were implicated.

Then again, there was another question as to how far Mr. Charles Henry James would be implicated in this matter, supposing they found that gas had accumulated. Mr. Wales was of the opinion that the three pipes which Mr. James thought sufficient, were not sufficient, and that in consequence the gas accumulated.

If that was so, then Mr. James had shown very great ignorance of his duties; if what Mr. James did was really insufficient, it was for the jury to consider how far he (Mr. James) was implicated with the other three persons in the blame of allowing the gas to accumulate, how far his ignorance (if they thus decided) was culpable, or, on the other hand, whether the system of ventilation was merely an error of judgement. The jury remained closeted for more than an hour. They returned the following verdict: -

"That the death of John Griffiths and William Jenkins occurred through an explosion of gas as the Dinas Colliery, and that the origin of the explosion was accidental, and that it is believed, on the evidence adduced, that it occurred through a sudden outburst of gas in or near Morris' heading. That the same time we strongly censure the course adopted by the colliery authorities in placing John Chubb nominally overman, but really as part manager, after his certificate had been suspended through incompetency in conducting the management of the said colliery." The coroner thanked the jury for their attendance, and the proceedings then terminated.

Dinas residents outside the Halfway Inn c.1902



Haulier with his horse and collier underground. Date and colliery unknown.

CHAPTER TEN
Friday, June 6th 1879
Chubb and the verdict condemned in the press

The editorial of the '*South Wales Daily News*' the day after the inquest ended commented: - After a patient inquiry, the coroner's jury which has been sitting in connection with the loss of life by the Dinas Colliery explosion, has brought in a verdict. The jury find that the origin of the explosion was accidental, and that it occurred through a sudden outburst of gas in, or near, Morris's heading. The terms of the finding are not as specific as could have been wished. In the broadest sense, all colliery explosions are accidental as distinguished from premeditated, but what we should have liked to have seen brought out clearly, was the question of responsibility.

If the catastrophe was caused by a sudden outburst of gas – i.e., a blower – the fair presumption would naturally be pure accident or circumstance had led to the disaster. Now, it seems to us that the mass of evidence adduced all pointed the other way. The jury evidently had that idea, more or less, in their minds, for they have attached a rider to their verdict, in which they say that the Dinas Colliery authorities are deserving of the strongest censure for having made Joseph Chubb nominal overman – but really as part manager – after his certificate had been suspended for incompetency. If this censure is well founded, Chubb presumably contributed to the atmospheric conditions which led to the explosion.

Yet that can hardly be so if the catastrophe was accidental, and caused by a sudden outburst of gas, for blowers are occasionally found in the best managed pits. There is thus a want of coherence in the jury's record which is to be deplored, especially after the verdict in the Abercarn inquiry – that there was no evidence to prove where the explosion originated. We take it that, in the whole mining records of the country, there never was a more conclusive case of carelessness and incompetence, than which the evidence against Chubb furnishes.

We hear first of a compliant against him for allowing accumulations of gas, as far back as November 1877; we after find him in June 1878, not only convicted of gross negligence, but clearly proved to have risked the lives of his fellow men by allowing them to work in the proximity to known accumulations of gas. Accepting as we do the evidence of Mr. Wales as decisive in reference to the causes of the explosion at Dinas, we think that the carelessness and incompetency were marked at every step on the part of Chubb, and, whoever may be morally or legally responsible, that those that suffered death at Dinas were practically murdered.

There is a rather insane theory abroad that for every colliery disaster a victim must be found, who should be sacrificed. We demure to that; and yet we have never read evidence more conclusive of manslaughter than which was granted before Coroner Reece and the jury empanelled at Dinas. The public naturally look to juries to give a common-sense verdict, and especially a verdict that should tend to make responsible parties in collieries more careful than they have been. No one, it appears, is especially to blame, no one is to be punished. If an ignorant or reckless collier lad is found smoking in a pit, or tampering with his lamp, he is sent to prison, and no one pities him – for whoever commits such rash acts imperilled the lives of their fellows. But no one is to be blamed and no one punished for the grossest neglect and the most deliberate violation of the Mines Regulation Act in the Dinas Pit!

The Coroner's jury, no doubt, acted for the best, but we fear they have erred grievously. The mixed verdict returned shows conclusively that a struggle between duty and the priorities must have occurred, in which a desire to make things fairly pleasant all round got the mastery. Something different was surely due to the poor men who were called so hastily to their last account – and something, too, is due to the living. The perils of the pit are great enough in ordinary times, but if men in responsible positions are to get off scot free after systematic neglect and carelessness, what is the use of making Acts of Parliament for the safety of the miner? In the case under review, the jury preferred their own haphazard view to the scientific deductions of the government inspector, and to this we attribute the mistaken verdict recorded. A lot of miners concurred with this view.

Mr. Wheelhouse Q. C., who represented the government at the inquest published the following report to Parliament in July 1879, and it sometimes quotes from the inquest, which the reader might already have previously read, but is still of interest. He reported: -

DINAS COLLIERY EXPLOSION

Report of Mr. Wheelhouse Q.C. on the inquest held in the above case with notes of the evidence taken at the inquest. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty July 1879.

1. I have the honour to place in your hands the following report upon the proceedings arising out of the inquest held at the Butcher's Arms Inn, Penygraig in the county of Glamorgan on the bodies of John Griffiths and William Jenkins who lost their lives in the explosion which occurred on the 13th of January last in the Dinas Colliery, which is situated in the Parish of Llantrisant, Glamorgan.

2. The inquest was most ably conducted by Mr. E. Bernard Reece, of Cardiff, one of the County Coroners for Glamorgan County.

3. At this enquiry Mr. Simons, solicitor of Merthyr Tydfil appeared for the owner of the colliery Colonel Hunt (who however carries on the business under the style of Coffin & Co); Mr. William Abraham of Pentre, Rhondda, was present on behalf of the friends of the deceased men and the Miner's Association of Wales; and I attended pursuant to instruction forwarded to me from the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

4. Mr. T. Wales, the Government Inspector of the district and Mr. Rhys the Assistant Inspector, who had recently been appointed on the resignation of that position of Mr. Galloway, the late Assistant Inspector, were also present throughout the proceedings.

5. Mr. Galloway himself was also in attendance and it may be desirable in this place to mention that Mr. Galloway after his resignation a few months ago, is understood to have taken office as the consulting engineer of the Dinas Colliery for Colonel Hunt, this, however, was only subsequent to the explosion.

6. On the first day of the inquest, on which I was not present, all that was done was to identify the bodies of the men, which were brought out of the pit, in order for the burial.

7. Two other bodies having been subsequently found, there was also I believe a formal identification of them, for the like purpose.

8. At the moment of the explosion (About 10.30 p.m.) there were according to the evidence of Samuel Hughes, 63 men and boys in the pit and of that large number up to this date only four bodies have been recovered, although one man named William Morgan, who was employed at a pump in the old workings of the No. 3 seam about 80 yards from the surface escaping the immediate effects of the blast, was most providentially saved.

9. The inquest was practically resumed on Tuesday the 22nd. of April last at the place above mentioned, and it was continued from day to day until the 26th April inclusive.

10. On that evening, all the evidence that was producible having been exhausted, an adjournment took place until Wednesday, June the 4th when the inquiry was again resumed and continued until the afternoon of the following day, when the proceedings were brought to a close, the jury finding the following verdict: "That the deaths of John Griffiths and William Jenkins occurred through an explosion of gas at the Dinas Colliery, and that the origin of the explosion was accidental and the jury believes from the evidence that it occurred through a sudden outburst of gas in or near Morris's heading."

    At the same time the jury strongly censures the course adopted by the colliery authorities in placing John Chubb nominally as overman, but really as part manager after his certificate was suspended through his incompetence in conducting the management of the said colliery.

11. To this finding, although I have inserted it for convenience, I shall have occasion thereafter more fully to refer for the purpose of this report.

12. The village of Dinas is situated about 20 miles from Cardiff up the Rhondda branch of the Taff Valley and the communication is direct by railway. Penygraig is the nearest available place where the inquest could be held being two miles still higher up the Rhondda Valley than the colliery at Dinas which is close to the Tonypandy Railway Station.

13. The population of the village of Dinas in common with that of most if not all the other villages in the district is nearly wholly composed of coal miners and their families, or of persons employed in one position or another in connection with the various collieries in the neighbourhood.

14. The coal which is now being won at the mine is that which is commonly known as steam coal, and it is but too well understood that it is not only in itself very explosive, but this colliery in common with most others of similar character, would I apprehend be classified and considered as being a fiery one; a fact indeed conclusively proved by evidence in this enquiry.

15. The lamps in use were partly “Clanny” and partly “Davy” lamps though no evidence of a reliable character could be obtained as to the proportion of numbers of each kind actually in the hands of the workmen at the time of the explosion.

16. According to the testimony given the use of naked lights was strictly prohibited throughout the pit, except at the three lamp stations, and at the bottom of the shaft which was stated to be at least some 300 or 400 yards distant from the nearest working place in which any of the men were employed.

17. At the time of the explosion, the plan of working was that known as the double shift and the system of operation was that of the long wall.

18. The ventilation of the mine was carried on by means of a large “Waddle” fan 40 feet in diameter and the air passing down was according to all evidence amply sufficient, if properly and judiciously distributed being at first on the average about 68,400 cubic feet per minute, which by some improvement made very recently before the explosion was increased to 72,750 cubic feet per minute as taken by the anemometer.

19. All the plant, going gear, machinery and appliances generally, appear to have been in good working order.

20. The practice of shot firing was in use in this as in many other of the collieries throughout the district.

21. The works comprise two separate shafts known respectively as the “Lower pit” and the “Middle Pit” about 240 yards from each other, the Lower pit being the downcast. This downcast is a circular shaft about ten feet in diameter, sunk some years back down to the four foot seam or “Polka” seam, the depth of which is about 330 yards from the surface. This shaft also passed through what is known as the “two feet nine” seam at a depth of 307 yards from the top, and at that point there is a coal landing for that seam.

22. The other or “Middle Pit” is the upcast and is in the shape of an oval 15 feet by 12 feet and is rather more than 400 (407) yards deep going down to what is

known as the six feet seam, and it is from this point that coal was being landed at the time of the calamity.

*A description of the air current routes included 23-27 inclusive.

28. There seem to have been no less than four separate inspections made on the part of the government by the then Assistant Inspector of the district, Mr. Galloway between the 13 April 1878 and the 6th August in that year.

29. Inspections were also made of the six feet workings on the 27th April as well as on the 13th of that month and the colliery was then reported all safe.

30. Another inspection took place, I understand, either by Mr. Wales's direction, or in the discharge of his own ordinary duty by Mr. Galloway on the 13th June 1878 and this inspection resulted in the discovery of gas in both the "two feet nine" and the "four feet" workings which gave rise to the institution of proceedings against the then manager John Chubb and to this matter it will also be my duty to refer again hereafter.

31. At the inspection made on the 6th August 1878 an accumulation of gas was found in Coleman's heading situated nearly on the extreme south of the workings in the six feet seam.

32. This led to the correspondence between the inspector (Mr. Wales) and the consulting engineer in the colliery (Mr. G. H. James) with a view to reduce the temperature which in some places was as high as 75 of 76˚Fahrenheit, as well as to the clearance of the gas.

33. This clearance was said to have not only been effected, but in consequence of the steps which were taken, the quantity of air passing through the works seems to have been enlarged.

34. In reference to this matter, I think it right to direct attention to a few words in Mr. Wales's evidence where he says "that it is fair to state that the high temperature was due more to the great depth of covering above the workings, they being 1,700 or 1,800 feet below the surface, than to the scarcity of air travelling through them."

35. I was happy to find that the 30th General Rule made under the provisions of the Mines Regulation Act 1872, was duly carried into the operation, as there is a periodical examination by two workmen delegated by a committee of themselves for the examination of the pit, and after finishing each monthly inspection, the result was not merely entered into a book kept at the office of the colliery for that purpose, but having been copied was placed either upon or close to the office door, so that it might be seen by anyone who felt any interest in it.

36. The discipline of the pit, so far as it effected the workmen seems to have been well maintained but when stating this, I am very anxious to be thoroughly understood as confining this observation strictly to those engaged in cutting coal or at all events to the minor officialism of the pit and my motive for such anxiety will I think be sufficiently apparent hereafter.

37. Subsequently to the date mentioned, there does not seem to have been any further record of accumulated gas until the 11th of December, about a month that is previous to the explosion.

38. The presence of this gas was reported in the daily report book till the 25th or 28th December, when in consequence of directions given by Mr. James the gas was or supposed to have been cleared off, the mine again rendered safe, and the workmen who had been directed to leave that particular location, namely a place known as John Morris's heading or cross measures drift, were sent back to their stalls on that heading, or some of them were so.

39. I think it just and right to say that all the books, papers, records of the mine and the establishment generally, appeared to have been most unusually well kept.

40. I have come now to that which to me was a very painful part of this inquiry.

41. As I have previously mentioned the owner of the mine was Colonel Hunt (E. D. Hunt) a gentleman whose address is 3, Onslow Gardens, South Kensington, who made periodical visits to the property and seems to have taken some, though only a slight, part in the direction of affairs of this colliery personally.

42. At the time of the explosion , Mr. George Henry John, mining engineer, carrying on business at Merthyr Tydfil, some 15 or 20 miles away, was the consulting engineer or agent of the colliery, though I understand he has since ceased to be so, having been replaced in that office by Mr. Galloway, who had previously been the assistant inspector (under Mr. Wales) of that district.

43. A young man "Samuel Hughes" at the age of 26 who had formerly been an overman in the same colliery, was as the date of the occurrence acting as temporary manager, under the provisions of clause 26 of the Coal Mines Regulations Act 1872, the person who had preceded him in that position being a man many years older than Hughes, named John Chubb.

44. It may perhaps be well for facility of reference that I should here quote the clause 26 of the above names act: "*The owner or agent of such mine may appoint any competent person not holding a certificate under the Act to be manager for such period not exceeding two months, or such longer period as may elapse before such a person has had the opportunity of obtaining, by examination, a certificate under this Act, and shall send to the Inspector of the district a written notice of the name and address of such manager, and the reason of his appointment.*"

45. The temporary appointment of Hughes was made in consequence of the suspension of John Chubb's certificate as such manager, for six months from the 19th November last, on a sentence pronounced by Mr. Rothery the Wreck Commissioner assisted by Mr. Cadman, and Inspector of Mines under the 32nd section of the Coal Mines Regulations Act 1872 for the negligent performance of his duty in the management of this very mine, and if it is desirable that I should quote a few words from the evidence given by Mr. Wales on that enquiry, as also from Mr. Rothery's observations previous to passing sentence. Mr. Wales says:-

"*I have heard the evidence of Mr. Galloway, and assuming his facts to be correct I consider that there would have been no difficulty in removing the gas. In such a state of things it was very dangerous for men to be at work. I have never known men permitted to work where there was such a large accumulation of gas, and I do not think they should have been allowed to do so in this case. Considering the surrounding circumstances the accumulation of*

gas must in my opinion have been of long standing and during the time the opening between the heading and the six feet seam was being made, there would not have been any difficulty in keeping the heading clear of gas.

Mr. Rothery in finding the charge proved when he passed sentence added: - "There is no refutation of the statement that if an explosion had taken place in the state in which the mine was found by the inspector not only would there probably have been a great destruction of property, but also the loss of many lives. Therefore the court cannot but conclude that Mr. Chubb has been guilty of a very serious offence.

According to the evidence of the two inspectors, the mine must have been in an unsafe state for some time and Mr. Chubb must have been aware of it, and as he has failed to see that a proper record of it was made by his subordinate he has undoubtedly violated the second rule also. As to the third charge, the fact that the overman had neglected his duty by not removing the men from the dangerous workings was no excuse for Mr. Chubb neglecting his duty and the court finding him guilty of each of the three charges, must order a suspension of his certificate for six months, the lightest possible punishment being inflicted in consideration of his good character."

46. I have quoted these two expressions of opinion, which I find recorded in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines for 1878, just published, on account of the strong significance with which they tell upon the circumstances surrounding this inquest.

47. There was no doubt some practical difficulty in immediately filling the place rendered vacant by the suspension of John Chubb's certificate is clear, and as the statement was more than once made at the inquest, it is but right to assume that "Messrs Coffin & Co." were looking for a new certified manager when the calamity happened.

48. Moreover, there cannot be any question that the proprietor was acting within his strict right accorded under the 26th section of the statute literally speaking, in exercising the power of appointing a non-certificated temporary manager, under the circumstances in which the colliery was placed.

49. In proof of this, I think it well to insert here copies of the following correspondence which passed between Messrs Coffin & Co. and Mr. Wales: - (See pages 34-36 of this book).

50. When, however, Samuel Hughes having been appointed as temporary manager and John Chubb's certificate so suspended, the owner and his advisors thought (as some of them apparently seem to have done, though their solicitors advised them not to appoint Mr. Chubb even temporarily) everything that duty required of them was efficiently fulfilled by a simple change in the relative positions previously occupied by Hughes and Chubb, especially when we are informed as Hughes in his testimony tells us, that on receiving his appointment, Mr. James and Mr. Wood told him particularly what his duties were to be. Mr. James saying that he was "To be responsible for the safety of the mine according to the act" and Mr. Wood adding "That as Chubb was an older man than me (Hughes) I ought not to do anything without first asking his advice" and when we find that from the very first moment when this arrangement was completed.

    Chubb was virtually and practically, as was abundantly proved by the evidence, acting very much as he pleased, often with little, perhaps not any reference to the new manager, and at all events going and coming pretty much where and when and as he chose, the view as to the position relatively occupied by each of the two men, expressed by the jury, will be very generally endorsed and there cannot be the slightest hesitation in saying that such a state of matters is one that must be regarded with the greatest possible regret.

51. In the view taken in reference to this subject by Mr. Wales in his evidence at the inquest, I have only to express my own full concurrence.

52. While carefully avoiding anything like inducement to take part in local views or partisan differences I must not, however, omit to call attention to the letter and evidence, called for by the jury of Mr. Morgan Rowlands, a former manager of the Dinas Colliery.

53. It appears that John Chubb immediately succeeded Rowlands as manager, in consequence, as the latter states of his declining to remain any longer in his then position, if Chubb was allowed to continue as overman, he (Rowlands)

coming to that decision (as he alleges) because the colliery was rendered positively unsafe by Chubb's want of care in performance of his duty, partly as to the accumulation of gas needlessly permitted to exist and partly in reference to his (Chubb's) insubordinate conduct towards himself (Rowlands) as manager.

54. An investigation by the owner in conjunction with Mr. James and Mr. Wood his coal agent, of one of these charges resulted in Rowlands leaving the service, apparently because his allegations were either wholly discredited or were thought to have been exaggerations and as I have stated on Rowlands leaving, Chubb was appointed to succeed him.

55. This led (admittedly, at any rate so far as Morgan Rowlands himself was concerned) to an angry feeling on his part, a feeling which seems to have been increased and culminated in a letter from him to Colonel Hunt, which Colonel Hunt's legal advisers thought it right to bring before the coroner and jury and which will be found on my transcript notes. In this letter Rowlands virtually says that he had foreseen and as I understand, foretold that the consequence of such defective management could only end in some such dreadful calamity as ultimately happened.

56. Without at all entering into the merits or demerits of this controversy, it becomes of importance to call attention to both the letter and Rowlands' evidence in regard to it which stand up to this moment, wholly un-contradicted; and if we are to accept it is true, or even partially true it must add greatly to the feeling of regret that the warning (if really given) was allowed to pass by nearly if not entirely unheeded.

57. Neither can I leave unnoticed the fact that there seems reason to believe that for nearly the whole of the last month prior to the explosion, Mr. James the consultant engineer had not been down to this part of the pit since ordering the insertion of an additional pipe for the purpose of dispersing an accumulation of gas, to which his attention was at that time (namely in December) called.

58. It is only just, both to Samuel Hughes the manager, as well as to John Ace, and the other firemen who were examined to say that they gave their testimony

apparently with great truthfulness whether it told for or against them, while on the other hand, the evidence given by Chubb was most unsatisfactory both as to matter and manner, his immediate purpose being to remove any responsibility he might have had from his own shoulders to those of other people.

59. John Chubb (as will be seen from the transcript of my notes) was examined on the first day of the adjourned inquest (22nd April) that is, before the second adjournment, and when the jury reassembled it was stated that he had left his name and indeed this country, under most discreditable circumstances.

60. There is but too much reason to fear that the reversal of positions carried into effect by the owner, as between Chubb and Hughes would necessarily, especially with the orders or directions rather given to the latter when his new office was conferred tend to impress him with the idea that he was, however erroneously to consider Chubb, who might on the expiration of the six months for anything he (Hughes) knew, be reinstalled in his former place as manager, as his equal or even superior officer, a view somewhat confirmed by Hughes' own expression that he "*was to be responsible for the safety of the mine and Chubb to be in charge of the expenses*."

61. With all respect for the jury I cannot agree with that part of their verdict which speaks of a sudden outburst of gas, the whole body of testimony proving, I think, most convincingly, that this explosion was attributable to an accumulation, as distinguished from any sudden outburst of gas in Morris's heading which was not only preventable to a large extent, if not wholly, but which was not sufficiently controlled or dealt with by those in charge of the mine.

62. While thus venturing, however to differ with the jury, I must say, in justice to every member of it that they attended to all proceedings most closely and carefully during the whole of this inquiry.

63. I doubt whether the "Clanny lamps" from their construction can be used with so much safety in a fiery mine like this as the older "Davy" since the latter, while it does not nor ever can afford so much light as the other, and being wholly made of wire gauze and iron, is not much liable to fracture by accident.

64. It is most desirable (if it were possible) to prohibit, except for the sole purpose of transmitting light to the workmen's lamps, the use of all open lights, whether at the bottom of the shaft or in the lamp stations, as they were called, in mines such as Dinas.

65. Shot-firing also is manifestly dangerous in such workings, as to call loudly for its absolute prohibition, if by any means the operation can be dispensed with.

66. Although, not being an engineer, I think I speak with some diffidence yet I must confess that I think the "long wall" system is, to say the least of it, not so safe, especially in mines like this, where there are much "soft" or "niesh" coal, some faults, and many "blowers" as the older method of "pillar and stall" working. All the more when we remember that the opening by long wall must in all probability, present, from its very character, so much larger unsupported space, when the working of the coal in any given heading or stall is becoming nearly exhausted.

67. Resort should never in my judgement be had where it is possible to avoid it, to the plan of carrying air for ventilation purpose through pipes or tubes as was the case in this instance, since while such tubes can scarcely ever be adequate to the purpose intended, they not only confine the space but leave room behind them for the accumulation of a large body of gas.

68. I am of the opinion that under the 63rd clause of the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1872, the time had elapsed, even before the first bodies were discovered and brought up from the mine within which any summary proceedings could successfully have been initiated against anyone in connection with this very lamentable occurrence.

69. Had it not been for the express finding of the coroner's jury that the explosion was accidental, I should have certainly thought that Samuel Hughes (the manager) John Chubb, and perhaps John Ace (the fireman) had respectively been guilty of such negligence as would have rendered them liable to an indictment for manslaughter but, after the verdict so found I fear that there would be much less probability of a conviction for that offence being obtained; although, no doubt a prosecution for it might be brought, though it is by no means so easy to say "maintained" if by maintenance a conviction is to be looked for as a matter of certainty.

Whilst, however, I say this, it might be well to consider whether (for the sake of example) it may not be desirable to institute such proceedings with reference to the result although I am bound to add that I, generally speaking, deprecate anything like abortive proceedings as usually doing more harm than good.

70. Beyond this, if any indictment were preferred, it admits of some doubt whether Mr. G. B. James the consulting engineer /agent of this colliery, ought not to be included in any such proceedings, seeing that it is almost absolutely certain indeed admitted that he never entered that part of the mine from the time he gave the order for placing the last pipe in its position till the occurrence of the explosion, that is very nearly a month, though even with regard to Mr. James and his duties, it is well to bear in mind that there does not appear to have been any stated time within which he was to make any periodical visit of supervision; nor that in the meantime any communication had been made to him calling especially for his attendance or attention at the colliery.

71. Nevertheless I think any act either by the owner or Mr. James would be so "remote" as, legally speaking, to render any indictment against him for manslaughter, abortive.

72. I look upon the act by which John Chubb was virtually placed by the owner, Mr. James and Mr. Wood as manager or "part manager" of the mine, notwithstanding the suspension of his certificate and notwithstanding also the nominal appointment of Hughes, as evasion of the spirit of the statute, but I doubted, and I confess I still doubt, whether a court or jury might not be induced under the strict interpretation always placed upon the language of a Penal Act of Parliament to consider that what was done was not again legally speaking an offence within the letter of it.

73. There would have been no difficulty as to this course at least under clause 61, had it not been for the restriction laid down in the clause I have previously quoted (N.B. Clause 63) but I fear any proceedings under the the clause 61 were actually legally barred by lapse of time even before the discovery of the body first brought out of the pit.

74. On the whole, therefore, disastrous as the calamity had been, looking at both the evidence and the finding of the jury, as well as going very carefully through every section of the Mines Regulation Act 1872 and bringing to bear my own view as a lawyer, of the enactments as to manslaughter in reference to this case. I do not think any criminal and penal proceedings would result in a verdict against the accused. In other words, I think they would possibly, indeed probably fail in that respect (although as I have said) they might be useful on account of the example.

75. Still I hope I am not wrong, or in any way exceeding my province of my duty, in suggesting that it might be desirable to obtain, if possible, the opinion of the law officers of the Crown in reference to the matter.

76. When forwarding this Report together with the plans appended hereto and the transcript of my notes, I cannot conclude without calling attention not only to the evidence given by Mr. Wales, but also referring to the most valuable assistance he rendered to me and to the jury throughout the whole of this very painful investigation.

W. St. James Wheelhouse
2 Crown Office Row
The Temple June 13th 1879

Hindsight

Looking back at the evidence all these years later a number of questions arise not entirely covered by the report of Mr. Wheelhouse. These are the relationships of various characters and the effect they had on one another and the eventual outcome of the disaster which claimed the lives of 63 men and boys (wrote Rhondda historian Dewi Evans many years later).

Colonel Hunt - Was the owner of the Dinas Collieries, but it remained "Coffin & Co." as Walter Coffin retained an interest. Mr. Wheelhouse Q. C. refers to Colonel Hunt as "A gentleman who makes periodical visits to the colliery and seems to have taken some, though possibly only a slight part, in the direction of the affairs of the colliery personally." This comment does not appear to be borne out by the evidence of Morgan Rowlands and others as he was no doubt kept fully informed by his agents and in full control of the events which occurred. The colliery owners

had some sort of invisibility when it came to law as they delegated all responsibility to their local agents and manager.

The evidence of Morgan Rowlands shows that Colonel Hunt had much more influence on the events as the reference to correspondence in the '*Western Mail*' illustrates. The relationship of the positions of John Chubb and Samuel Hughes was I suspect confirmed by the Colonel as I cannot see his agents Mr. Wood or Mr. James having the authority to appoint Samuel Hughes without his knowledge.

The colliery had a history of gas outbursts as the evidence shows in the repeated question of whether Dinas had a reputation of being a dangerous pit in which to work. Although T. Wales stated that they should not have a problem in finding a replacement manager for John Chubb it was obviously more difficult and probably the reputation of Dinas Colliery had some influence. It is interesting to note that although Colonel Hunt had a vital influence on the whole story he was never called to give evidence himself.

Morgan Rowlands (previous manager) – We shall never know why Morgan Rowlands had such a bitter hatred for John Chubb when he himself promoted him to the position of overman, and when he was initially ill it was Chubb who kept Morgan Rowlands informed of events. It was strange that in his endeavours to disparage John Chubb's management ability that Morgan Rowlands was not believed by the agents Mr. James and Wood and finally ended up with a bitter confrontation with Colonel Hunt.

Even after he had been dismissed the bitterness comes through in his evidence and one wonders whether he had some influence on the suspension of John Chubb's certificate. If John Chubb was as negligent as it seems it would appear that he either was being pressurised from above to cut corners, or that he had a self destruct wish.

It appears that although Morgan Rowlands says he did not enter the colliery after his dismissal, he continued to keep in contact with what went on. In Samuel Hughes's evidence when asked who discharged William Jenkins he replied "*Chubb and I did it between us. We had a consultation before discharging him. We agreed that William Jenkins was to be discharged because it was said that Jenkins was carrying tales to Morgan Rowlands, which caused great discontent at the colliery*."

Although the Mines Inspector T. Wales had ordered the deputy-inspector, Mr. Galloway, to carry out a number of inspections it begs the question why did he give such an order? The result was that John Chubb lost his certificate because of these inspections and it could have been instigated by others. Morgan Rowlands' previous history in which he was committed for trial for the explosion at the Cymmer Colliery in 1856, which he came away free from a charge of manslaughter, illustrates the precarious responsibility which the early colliery managers accepted. It could possibly have had some influence on his lax behaviour with regard to safety and in which he was backed up by the owner, Colonel Hunt.

John Chubb – Mr. Wheelhouse in his report states that John Chubb's evidence was most unsatisfactory both as to matter and manner, his immediate purpose being to remove any responsibility he might have to the shoulders of others. Hardly any of the witnesses had much good to say about John Chubb's management which appears to have been a series of negligent actions and Morgan Rowlands stated that his suspicions about his confidence in John Chubb had been vindicated. It makes one wonder why he was backed by Colonel Hunt and his agents even to the extent of allowing him to remain as part manager even when his certificate had been suspended from a number of proven charges of negligence, but given a light sentence of six months suspension because of his good character (?). He eventually left his home and reportedly left the country, only to return at the conclusion of the inquiry to take up work in another colliery and eventually met his fate in another colliery explosion at the Gelli on August 21st 1883.

Samuel Hughes – This 26 year old collier had been elevated to the position of manager which normally was a position of great responsibility but with the instruction to share his responsibilities with John Chubb. He was in effect the fall guy who accepted the legal responsibility for the owners and agents. If the agents did not have confidence in Samuel Hughes, why did they appoint him? Mr. Wales' comment "*If the manager and overman found that it was impossible for them to deal with the case, they should have consulted Mr. James, but I do not think in this particular instance that the matter was of such a nature that the manager was incompetent to deal with it.*" Mr. James had already been consulted and obviously Sam Hughes' lack of experience as a manager was apparent.

G. H. James – The mining consultant from Merthyr had attempted to rid Morris's heading of gas by the use of air pipes. According to T. Wales the mining inspector, this had been condemned for the purpose of ventilation and considered it to be a retrograde system of mining. Mr. James obviously had some standing in the mining

community, being secretary of the Board of Examiners and was due to examine Samuel Hughes for his manager's certificate. He said "*In my opinion Hughes was a man who could have a certificate of competency as readily as many others who had received it."*

He commenced his duties on November 1877 until March 1879, when he was superseded by Mr. Galloway, the Assistant Inspector of Mines. Mr. Wheelhouse Q. C. also had his opinion and suggested that should any blame be placed, Mr. James should bear some of it and if any indictment was preferred he should be included in the proceedings. This was because he neglected to enter the gaseous area for a month after he had ordered the pipes to be installed.

William Galloway – Galloway was not a witness but attended the inquest. He had a part to play in the events leading up to the disaster. It was his four inspections of the mine between April 1878 to August 1878, by order of his superior Mr. T. Wales, which led to the suspension of John Chubb's certificate and all that ensued. When Mr. James was dismissed as consulting engineer, Galloway left the position of Assistant Inspector to take up the position of consulting engineer subsequent to the explosion. In 1898 Galloway wrote – "The Annals of Coal Mining and the Coal Trade" and remained as a consulting mining engineer.

John Ace – The fireman of the district in which the explosion took place and where John Ace had found and recorded gas from the 11th to the 27th of December. From the 27th of December 1878 to the time of the explosion on 13th January inclusive, the place is reported as being safe. Mr. Wales reported "My opinion is that the volume of gas was so large that no fireman could have gone into the place without seeing it."

John Ace was from the evidence of other witnesses a very diligent and hard-working fireman who was obviously trusted and held in respect by those that worked under him. One of the witnesses, William Richards, a collier said: - "*John Ace came round those workings every day. He went round before we ourselves went there in the morning and most likely once or twice during the day afterwards. I always saw Ace's mark there before I began my work. I was working there the day of the explosion and I saw Ace's mark there."*

However, David Rowlands, another collier, stated that Ace had told him some 15 months earlier, on more than one occasion not to hold his lamp high (this would show any gas present) but he did not stop him working there. It appears that Dinas was a pit where gas outbursts were abundant and even the most diligent fireman such as Ace turned a blind eye.

William Morgan – He was working in the No. 3 seam on the day of the explosion operating a pump engine. He was 80 yards from the surface and was the only survivor. He said when questioned by Mr. Wheelhouse, *"I was using a naked light at the time of the explosion. I always used one, it being the rule in No. 3. The place where I hung my lamp and which had been used for the same purpose before my time, would be about 17 yards from the shaft."*

According to Mr. Wheelhouse in the testimony given, the use of naked lights was strictly prohibited throughout the pit, except at the three lamp stations and at the bottom of the shaft (which one was not stated) which was stated to be at least 300 to 400 yards distant from the nearest working places in which any of the men were employed. It is assumed that the naked light used by William Morgan did not contravene safety rules as no-one queried it at the enquiry.

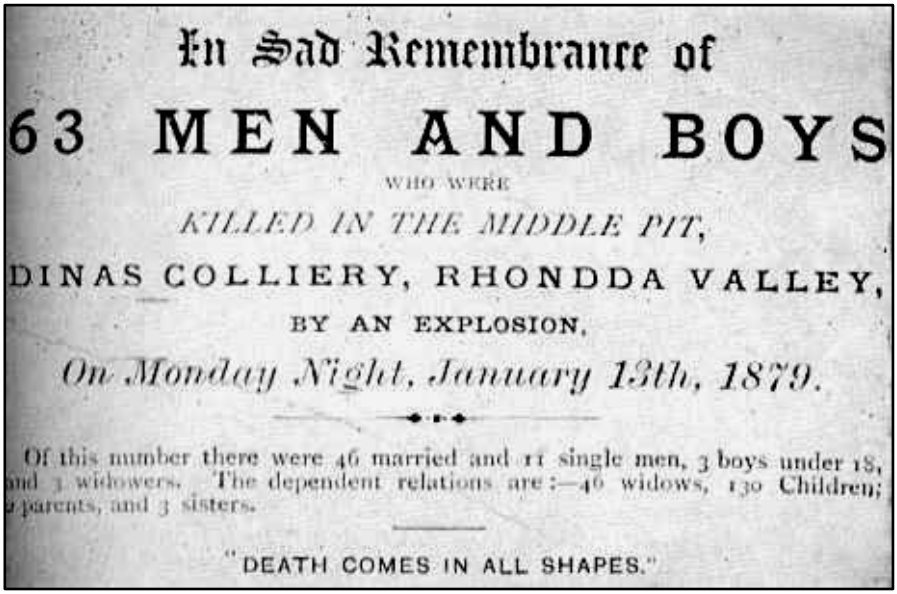
Thomas Wales – The Mines Inspector for the district of Glamorganshire. His report and assistance to the jury and to Mr. Wheelhouse Q. C. in his assessment was praised in Mr. Wheelhouse's report to Parliament. He obviously had a great responsibility and appears to have carried out his duties strictly to the rules. It would be interesting to know his reaction to the desertion of his assistant Mr. Galloway to the employ of Coffin & Co.

His (Mr. Wales) position in mining circles was one of great power and it would be interesting to find out why he promoted the four inspections of the Dinas Colliery in 1878 by his assistant-inspector Galloway. In the letter of "Coffin & Co." in their search for a new manager, he commented that they should not have any difficulty at that time. His judgement appeared to be faulty in this respect as Dinas did not seem to be an attractive workplace.

He was extremely critical of the continuation of John Chubb's employment as an overman (Coffin & Co's solicitor had advised that he should not be employed in any position). It would have been interesting to see his reaction, if their letter to Mr. Wales regarding the appointment of S. Hughes as manager, if they had also mentioned the continued appointment of Chubb as an overman and in effect part-manager. This was in effect collusion between G. H. James and Mr. Wood, the agents, and I wonder why they supported John Chubb in this way. It is also difficult to understand that Colonel Hunt was not aware of the appointments and rules by which they (Hughes & Chubb) operated.

Generally, there were many questions which were not asked and which begged answers, but it would appear that incompetence by the management and personality differences laid the foundation for the death of 63 men and boys. The lessons in the report were obviously not heeded as the Rhondda mines with their

gaseous seams claimed many more lives with many reports repeating the negligence and incompetence in the Dinas explosion.



In Sad Remembrance of

63 MEN AND BOYS

WHO WERE

KILLED IN THE MIDDLE PIT,

DINAS COLLIERY, RHONDDA VALLEY,

BY AN EXPLOSION,

On Monday Night, January 13th, 1879.

Of this number there were 46 married and 11 single men, 3 boys under 18, and 3 widowers. The dependent relations are:—46 widows, 130 Children; parents, and 3 sisters.

"DEATH COMES IN ALL SHAPES."

A memorial card on sale in the district shortly after the disaster

CHAPTER ELEVEN

With the inquest concluded, the search for the remaining bodies continued, a search that would take considerably longer than anyone could imagine and showed that the true extent of the explosion was much larger than anyone believed. These final two chapters tell of this search and the closure of the Dinas Collieries.

One issue brought up at the inquest was the question of the workmen's inspections. '*Mabon*' in the *'Western Mail'* explained why they were of little use: -

Inspection of mines on behalf of workmen

In connection with this privilege bestowed upon the workmen by the Mines Act of 1872, there are three or four customs practiced at various collieries that tend to defeat the object of the 30th general rule entirely: -

1. Giving 24 hours notice previous to making the inspection.

2. Allowing another or additional 24 hours' to clear gas from exceptional places, and reporting the morrow's condition as if that had been the true result of today's inspection.

3. Accepting part payment for the employers, for going towards, making the inspection.

Naming those usages is at once sufficient to show their tendency which is my direct objection. The unerring testimonies received from time to time of what takes place at several collieries during this 24 hours' notice are are ample and palpable proof that things are not as they should be, could be, or as they are wanted to be, by the officers themselves in the workmen's report.

Why, upon all these occasions, more than any other day of the week, or month, are the firemen to be seen carrying armfuls of canvas in various directions in the colliery? Why so many small, and supposed, trifling falls looked over and forgotten until notice has been given that the workmen's examiners are going to inspect the works on the morrow? And why are so many overmen so rigorously prosecuting their duties under the 59th special rule on these occasions more than any other period, and take extra precautions as to the quality of the coal sent to the furnaces more than some other time?

How many times in the year does it become one's painful duty to listen to friends, here and there, giving their reports, and stating that this and the other part of the colliery was perfectly free from gas, and in good working order, "only that there was a considerable blower in one heading and that the fireman had not found time to turn the air on and to dilute it, but was going to do so as soon as they had passed that way, and, undoubtedly, it would be found clear before the day was over."

"And, that a small accumulation of gas was found in another heading which the firemen could not explain; only that there was something extraordinary in connection with it; that he never saw it there before, or, at least, for some time. That if they came that way on the morrow he would guarantee that it would be quite clear."

How many times have these friends been heard to admit that they had postponed making their report until the morrow, and that on the morrow they had gone that way and because they had found it clear then, that they had reported, as the 'true' state of workings - and that the true result of their examination – the place to be free of gas on the previous day!

These men, doubtless, had no idea but that they were doing a kind and honest turn to the fireman, never thinking that at the same time they were, in the eyes of every intelligent observer that passed through this district, destroying the case in attempting to prove too much, and giving him commission and encouragement to neglect his duty and to evade the act. But, according to numerous appearances, had they re-examined the whole of his district, or perhaps added to it a portion of an adjacent one, they would find that the air that was utilised to clear the above-mentioned place was wanting in the proper ventilation of some other place.

This presumption has been verified over and over again. It is only a few weeks ago at the district magisterial court that a man's own report was brought to try and refute his evidence as to the condition of a certain colliery in the district at a certain period of its history; and the seeming inconsistency was explained in the proof he was able to give that a portion of the report was of re-examination of a certain part of the colliery on the following day to the examination proper, and, bad as it was the second day, the case would have been very much worse had the true state of that part, on the previous day, been reported.

That at once clearly demonstrated the entire uselessness of such reports as criterions of the true condition of a colliery at any given time. The reports are thus signed as if the inspection of the whole colliery had been made on a given day, the examiners knowing at the same time that it was not so, and on the other hand, for all they know to the contrary, the parts that they saw clear yesterday may be in as much need of being cleared today as the one that had been cleared yesterday.

This being so, of what avail is the expense and the trouble undertaken on this account? Indeed, friends, the inspection by the miners' representatives avail of nothing in the workmen's interest, in the manner it is now performed in the majority of places; where as if the examinations were allowed to be made without previous notice, and reports of the results of the first day's inspection recorded without the irregularities connected with the re-examinations of the second day, the privilege installed by the act would be of real value and a blessing indeed.

Tuesday July 1st 1879
The House of Commons

Mr. MacDonald gave notice that on Tuesday he would ask the Secretary of State (Mr. Cross) for the Home Department if his attention has been called to the paragraph in the '*Western Mail*' which would imply that further search for the bodies that yet remain in the Dinas Colliery had been abandoned or suspended; if he had ascertained that such a report is correct, whether considering the appeal had been made from a number of widows, complaining of the delay in the recovery of the bodies, he will impress upon the employer the desirability of recovering the remains of the lost, and whether, in view of the expression of the bereaved, he can give any hope that another inquest will be held, with the object of arriving at what seems to them a more just verdict on the case.

At the House of Commons on Friday, Mr. Cross said that he had received a letter from the Dinas Coal Company, stating the danger that would ensue if there were an immediate search for the bodies was gradually being reduced, and that the inspector was of the opinion that the bodies ought to be recovered.

Thursday, July 3rd 1879
Selection for burial plot

On Tuesday afternoon, July 3rd 1879 Mr. Daniel Thomas, the gentleman who now works the Dinas Colliery, applied to the Joint Burial Board, who were holding their meeting at the Porth Hotel, Porth, for space at the new cemetery at Lledarddu,

near Dinas, for the interment of the 56 bodies lying in Dinas Pit workings since the explosion there on the night of January 13th 1879. It was intimated that the bodies were about to be recovered.

It was further stated that Mr. Wood, Cardiff, the agent of Colonel Hunt, the proprietor of the colliery, had been communicated with that day with a view to solicit Colonel Hunt's instructions respecting the expense of the burials.

It was stated that Colonel Hunt would, in all probability, defray the expenses himself, and afterwards erect a monument over the remains. The Board granted Mr. Daniel Thomas's request, and a spot was selected.

Saturday July 12th 1879
Closing of the Mansion House Fund – Letter from the Lord Mayor

The Mayor of Cardiff, Mr. D. Lewis, has received the following letter from the Lord Mayor of London respecting the Dinas Colliery Relief Fund:-

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Lord Mayor to his worship the Mayor of Cardiff.
Mansion House, London 10th July 1879.

Mr. Lewis. On the occasion of the fatal and most distressing accident at the Dinas Colliery in January last, I had the satisfaction of appealing to the public for donations for the relief of widows, orphans and other sufferers by the calamity. I am sorry that, what with the bad times and other deterrent causes, the fund has not been such a success as the occasion would have justified, more than I wished. The total sum that has been received has been £928-13s-5d and the expenses of advertising donations, printing, stationery &Co. have amounted to £71-12s-3d, leaving a balance of £857-1s-2d. As you have a fund at Cardiff, I enclose you this sum to add to it for the relief of the sufferers, and the Mansion House Fund is now closed.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, Charles Westham, Mayor.

Tuesday, July 15th 1879

The '*Western Mail*' of this date reported: - The work of repairing the Dinas Pit goes on, and many hundreds of tram loads of stones and bricks have been sent down the

shaft. These have been formed into holes and arches in the neighbourhood of the bottom of the shaft, so as to secure a safe outlet. The work already accomplished under the superintendence of Mr. Galloway, the late Sub-Inspector of Mines, towards placing the colliery in a safe condition for future operations, is very great. Now that this is about, it is believed, to be accomplished, it is rumoured an attempt will be made shortly to reach the bodies lying in the interior of the colliery. The widows of those in the pit have still their blinds drawn over the windows.

July 21st 1879

At the Pentre Police Court on Monday, Mary Dunworth, Dinas, was charged with stealing a basket containing a Davy lamp, school bag, account book and bag, the property of James Thomas, Tonypandy, from Lewis's shop. The prisoner was the widow of one of the dead in the Dinas Pit.

Saturday August 16th 1879

A characteristic Welsh strike – Mr. Galloway and the workmen

'*Morien*' writing in the '*Western Mail*' in August 1879, commented on a dispute that had arisen at the Dinas Colliery: -

"One feels a peculiar interest in contemplating all questions relating to the affairs of the Dinas people. There are private reasons for this, in addition to public ones. The writer remembers gazing with infantile awe at the grand old Welshman, the late Mr. Walter Coffin, of Llandaff, the first owner of Dinas, when he periodically visited "his people," and gave a ear to every complaint. Like Guest, Crawshay, Hill, Blackmore, and Booker, the great pioneers of Welsh history, he knew almost every one of his workmen by name, and manifested lively interest in the welfare of themselves and their families.

One remembers the present proprietor before he was known as "the Colonel," and before he charged with the heroic six-hundred into the jaws of death at Balaclava, moving about the neighbourhood an English stripling, with a glazed cap, in whom everyone expressed with their Welsh tongues lively interest, for to them, he represented the rising son of Dinas affairs.

Ah! It is not soon *Morien* can forget the Dinas Sunday School, where he learnt, standing between the knees of his grandfather, a native of Ystradfellta, and descendent of Sir John Morgan, sometime Attorney General for south Wales, to trace the syllables of the Welsh bible. The writer therefore, submits that, in referring to Dinas affairs, he cannot be charged with being an intruding stranger.

On the contrary, he feels somewhat like Rob Roy, ready to strike his foot on the grass of Fforestygarth, and say 'my foot is on my native heath, and my name is *Morien*.' The above train of thoughts occurred to me talking to some of the old inhabitants yesterday, who like *Shylock*, were complaining, rightly or wrongly, about a certain official connected with the Dinas works, who according to their testimony, 'mocked our nation.'

I am here today to investigate the cause or causes of the strike at present existing, and to give publicity thereto, and I shall not only be discharging the task faithfully were I not to mention the above. Rightly or wrongly, Mr. Galloway, against who the strike is directed, is charged by the workmen with treating the Welsh workmen in particular, and the Welsh nation in general, with contempt.

This allegation has brought to the surface the Tartar element in the Welsh character, and the Welshmen to a man have thrown down their mandrills and shovels defiantly, declaring as long as this 'knicker-bockered native of Caledonia' is at the head of affairs that they will not brighten the galleries of the mine with their lamps, nor shall peace reign at Storehouse.

It appears that the discontent has been smouldering for a considerable period, and that its bursting into flame is due to certain events that took place within the last few weeks. To a stranger these events may seem harmless enough, but to a native, they only served, like texts of a holy writ; to verify the preceding doubts.

Now it is but too well known that there, lying in the dismal galleries of the Dinas mine are 57 fathers and sons of Dinas workmen. They have been mouldering there since 13th January last, and during the intervening seven months the white blinds of the cottages which they will see no more, and which they left that fatal afternoon, have been, like prepared winding-sheets, hanging over the windows of their once humble homes.

Behind those white curtains which passengers by railway over the Rhondda line see daily are sorrowful, aye, broken-hearted widows, and fatherless little ones; the fatherless wondering why "Dada" and John, their brother, was so long in returning, and the mothers wondering why in a great wealthy country, so full of gallant men, no effort is made to bring home the remains of men who fell as true to duty as any Prince Imperial of France. I am certainly echoing the sentiments expressed with suppressed rage.

The belief is universal that either through lack of skill, or some other causes, proper efforts have not being made to recover the dead bodies. This, added to the belief in the existence of active antipathy to everything Welsh on the part of the

manager, has created a feeling which is seldom witnessed in Welsh communities. A short time ago an event took place on one of the fields above the works, which was within an ace of producing serious consequences.

Some visitors from London were at the Colonel's, and it seems, feeling things rather dull and monotonous, they decided upon having a dance upon the green sward to the strings of a brass band. Among the guests were the unfortunate manager, not in "kilt and tartan plaid," it is true, but in Knickerbockers. Scotch reels and highland flings were freely indulged in, and it is stated that even the chief himself indulged slightly in the dancing, but treading the measure with the stately gait of a cavalry officer.

Peering over the neighbouring walls and hedges were indignant widows and angry men, and one who was within hearing distance of the lively strains actually said to me today that he thought at the time of, "Nero fiddling while Rome was burning." What made matters so bad was that the men knew that under the field where the dancing was going on were the very bodies of their dead comrades.

Its seems that the new manager, with a view to the pit's picturesque appearance, has sown the blacks tips with seeds, which in due time will induce a rich herbage for horses, as well as a pretty ball-like flower. This most people would have thought a commendable attempt to introduce into the south Wales coal district a delightful as well as useful innovation.

But the the walls about the colliery have been whitewashed, and the inhabitants are at the present moment liable to regard everything from a sombre point of view, and one of them actually said, sarcastically, "Don't you see? They are converting the surface of the works with flowers and whitewash into the appearance of a grave!" I believe enough is given above to illustrate the feelings in the neighbourhood, and if the facts are severe, may no one blame the writer; he only chronicles what is patent to everyone with a Welsh ear and tongue.

Now, as to the strike. It seems that last Monday week, being Bank Holiday, all the inhabitants were more inclined to play than to work. Many of the young men were inclined to visit the rustic sports at Dinas Ishaf; the greater portion were for attending the preaching meetings at the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel at Storehouse, and others for attending the many tea-parties connected with the various Sunday schools attended by most of the adults of the population as well as children, that were to take place in the neighbourhood, as counter attractions to the rustic sports.

The men and boys, however, went to the top of the pit, that morning, as usual, all feeling that they would be but too glad were something to turn up to afford sufficient excuse for them to absent themselves during the day. As it happened the doorboys having been persuaded - it is suspected mischievously by someone to play the truant - that their wages were to be reduced by more than 10%; the boys struck in consequence, and declined to descend to their duties. The boys, eight in number, held a 'meeting' and in the orthodox fashion resolved 'they would not have it.'

This was the signal for all to return home, and all went and enjoyed themselves. By the following morning the boys had discovered that they had been deceived, and offered to return to work, some of them cryingly. Mr. Galloway by this time 'would not have it,' and said that none of them should be employed there. An offer was made to the colliers to 'do the dooring,' and be paid for it.

This they declined, and at the meeting held subsequently they resolved with a remarkable unanimity to refuse to work as long as Mr. Galloway was manager. A few days ago Colonel Hunt and Mr. Galloway met the men, between 200 and 300, at the new place in the Dinas Colliery yard. A lengthy discussion took place as to those complaints against Mr. Galloway, and eventually Colonel Hunt asked all those that were opposed to Mr. Galloway to lift up their hands.

This was done I am informed, by everyone present. Colonel Hunt, however, declined the request of the workmen to discharge Mr. Galloway, and the consequence is that the men brought out their tools and the authorities their horses. It is right to state that the men also professed that they are afraid to enter the mine, owing to, as they allege, the way it is managed. The following notice has been issued by the workmen: -

The workmen of the Dinas Steam Coal Colliery hereby appeal to the different collieries in the various districts to assist us under these our trying circumstances. We have been thrown out of employment through a dispute arising between the doorboys and our employers. Also, under the present manager we are determined to resist the contract rules; the giving out of tenders for driving headways, so as to throw men out of employment and other grievances in connection with the system of working at the above colliery. So, under these circumstances, we are determined to resist to the upmost and not to return to work until the present system of management is changed.

Most of the widows have been engaged in harvest work on the farms connected with the works. On Thursday, the task was concluded, and on Friday, the widows were entertained at tea by Mr. Howell, the farm bailiff, at the Butchers' Arms hotel,

Ffrwyd Amos. A procession, composed of the widows and their female friends, was formed at Brithwennydd Farm, and, accompanied by Mr. Howell, who sat in a cart drawn by one horse, walked to the hotel.

The Dinas strike

A week later the '*Western Mail*' reported: - The men who returned to work on Tuesday last, about twenty in number, accompanied by a few strangers, have been the means of inducing an exhibition of bitter feelings on the part of those still out. They have been berated when returning home in the evening with loud cries of "Bas! Bas!" by the throngs of people and things being so threatening at length that it was necessary to call in the aid of the police, three of whom are now stationed at the pit guarding it. On Friday only eight colliers ventured to proceed, and it is stated in the neighbourhood that they are not likely to work any longer.

It seems that there was continuing unrest at the Dinas Colliery, the '*Western Mail*' of Wednesday, December 15th 1879 reported: -

Dispute at Dinas Colliery – Alleged arbitrary conduct of the lessee
Summonses against workmen

A dispute, that might result in serious consequences, had just arisen at the Dinas Colliery, of which Mr. John Havard is the manager, and Mr. Daniel Thomas is the lessee. It appears that within the last few weeks Mr. Thomas has been in the habit of fining some of his workmen at Dinas Colliery for filling "brass," with the coal into the trams, and later still inflicting summary fines for filling small coal, notwithstanding the fact that that small coal is not fair to the men but is deduced by the "Billy," and is sold by Mr. Thomas, as by all other steam coal owners at present, for a fair price.

There are also some other items of labour also deducted, and all these together form the basis of the dispute between Mr. Thomas and his workmen. On Friday last, the men, on receiving their pay-tickets, saw that several of them had been subjected, not to deductions in the ordinary way, but to "fines," which were distinctly marked upon the paper. After carrying home the body of their comrade who was that day killed at the bottom of the pit by the fall of a piece of rubbish from the tram, a meeting was held to consider the question of the propriety or impropriety of the fines, there also being a question of agreeing to the prices that should be henceforth paid for cutting and other items of labour in connection with the 6 ft. seam of coal.

It was considered necessary that the attention of all the workmen should be called to some of the points, lest by working without protesting against the innovations they should form a precedent by which in future they and others would be bound. It was agreed to adjourn the proceedings and meet again on the top of the pit at 9 o'clock the following morning, and notice to that effect was sent to Mr. Thomas on Friday evening.

Accordingly, on Saturday morning the workmen met Mr. Thomas, but it appears that they failed to come to a conclusive arrangement, so the matter was once more adjourned, and it was decided that work should again be suspended on Monday. Late on Monday night, however, no fewer than eight of the workmen were served with summonses, returnable at Llantrisant of Friday next, on a charge of breach of contract in leaving their work without the usual month's notice, the breach being in not working on Saturday.

The Inspectors of Mines Reports for 1879

The '*Western Mail'* reported:- The annual reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines are always read with interest by the inhabitants of south Wales, a large proportion of whom earn their daily bread by the "sweat of their brow" in arduous labour underground. It is, therefore, natural to suppose that special interest was attached to the official statements for the year 1879, as they do, at a time when the whole Principality – nay, the country at large – is lamenting an occurrence, terrible in its destruction of human life, and heart rendering in the extent of the distress it must must necessarily bring to so many hitherto happy homes.

In south Wales the total number of fatal accidents was 122, involving the loss of 195 lives, as against 111 accidents with a loss of 123 lives in 1878. The total number of persons employed was 47,964, viz; 40,344 underground, and 7,620 on the surface; the total quantity of minerals raised was 12,622,299 tons, giving an increase of 4,030 persons employed and 365,005 tons of minerals, as compared with the preceding year.

Of the fatal accidents, 70 were due to explosions of gas, 17 to falls of coal, 57 to falls of stone, 3 to suffocation, 25 to mishaps in shafts, and 23 to other causes. This does not complete the catalogue of tragedies, for in addition to the 122 fatal accidents, 487 non-fatal accidents occurred, injuring more or less severely 501 persons; 450 of these accidents, injuring 456 persons, were of a miscellaneous

character; thirty were explosions of gas, and two explosions of gunpowder, injuring 45 persons.

It is not easy to realise the amount of suffering which must have been occasioned by the great sacrifice of human life indicated in these reports, and we cannot but deplore the continued, though diminished, prevalence of accidents in the face of the numerous efforts which have been made to render coal getting a comparatively safe occupation. Politicians, scientists, practical engineers, and experience colliers have all "put their heads together" to devise means by which our subterranean workshops may be kept free from danger – improved systems of ventilation, new lamps, more strict periodical inspections, &Co; have been recommended, approved, and adopted, and yet every year we are presented with a long list of fatalities to which is appended the significant remark "Preventable"

For instance, the Inspector for the district of south Wales makes the following comment in the course of his report: - "*During the past year two serious calamities have occurred, involving the loss of no less than 69 lives; on the 13th of January 63 lives were lost by and explosion of gas in the Dinas Colliery, and on the 24th June 24 lives were lost by the brakeage of a wire rope in one of the Cymaman Pits. In my opinion (when I beg to state most emphatically) if proper care had been exercised by the responsible persons neither of these sad calamities would have occurred. If the law is not sufficient to meet such cases it ought to be made so, which would, I believe, prove to be the most effectual way of preventing their reoccurrence.*"

No doubt the Mines Regulation Act was a judicious measure, but it is evident that something more is required to be done, and we trust the legislature will not rest satisfied until the deaths occurring underground are reduced to a minimum, and to every fatal accident the inspectors are enabled to add the words "Not preventable."

The necessity of a further revision of the law relating to coalmines is obvious, and if proof be demanded it may be found in the official statements found here. Most, if not all, of the Inspectors, have suggestions to offer, and the comments made by Mr. Wales and Mr. Cadman ought to be read and studied by every colliery manager in the districts over which their supervision extends. By both Inspectors attention is called to the fiery nature of some of the seams of coal worked in this part of the Principality, and Mr. Cadman remarks that "*when mines are carefully inspected in the usual way with a safety lamp and no gas can be detected, considerable*

quantities may be lurking immediately overhead in the interstices in the broken ground which will not be carried away by the ventilating current passing below. When a thick seam, and sometimes two or more seams of coal, have been worked out, and the roof allowed to settle upon the gob, or packing behind, or to break down, the cracks and joints in the ground above get filled with gas, which may be very suddenly forced out upon the men below by a 'squeeze' or subsidence of strata above."

It is very evident that the colliery proprietors of the districts of south Wales and Monmouthshire have not yet attained perfection in the management of their important industries, and we trust they will give due consideration to the gratuitous advice offered to them by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines.

1880

An appeal to Abercarn

A meeting of the joint committee formed to raise funds for the relief of the sufferers from the explosion at the Dinas Colliery, was held at Cardiff on Thursday, March 11th 1880. Alderman Lewis, ex-mayor, presided. The object of the meeting was to appeal to the trustees of the Abercarn Explosion Fund for a portion of the surplus in their hands for the relief of the sufferers of the explosion at Dinas, as the amount received by the committee for the latter explosion did not amount to anything like what the sum required.

Dr. Taylor, one of the trustees for the Abercarn committee, attended, and gave some valuable information. Nearly £9,000 would remain in hand after paying out all claims. On the Dinas committee there were at present 42 widows who received 5/- per week, over 108 children receiving 2/6d per week, one dependent receiving 5/- weekly, and one receiving 3/-, and two receiving each 2/6d per week. A committee was appointed to draw up a memorial to the late Lord Mayor of London, Thomas Howell, and his court trustees, asking them to pay over a portion of their surplus fund to the Dinas committee. The statements of accounts for the Abercarn Explosion six months later showed that nothing was contributed to the Dinas Fund.

Explosion at Risca

On July 15th 1880 at 1.30 a.m. a gas explosion ripped through the Prince of Wales Colliery at Risca, Monmouthshire, killing 120 men and boys. Attempts at rescue

were thwarted by fires below surface, and the mine had to be flooded - but it still took eight weeks to extinguish the fire, and over 30 million gallons of water.

Education of the orphans

Times were tough for the widows and children left behind after the Dinas explosion and 20 months later they were still having to beg for help. The '*Western Mail*' of October 15th 1880 reported:-

On Wednesday, Mr. Charles Bassett, Pontypridd; Mr. Ishmael Williams, Dinas, and another gentleman, all members of the Dinas Explosion Relief Committee, waited upon the Pontypridd Board of Guardians to ask them to assist the widows in paying their children's school fees, as they were now about £16 in arrears.

The chairman advised that the widows go before the board and make application on their own behalf, as otherwise nothing could be done on the matter. Mr. Bassett said that they must ask the Dinas school committee to remit the arrears. The deputation then retired. On Tuesday, October 19th 1880 the body of **Samuel Pryor** was discovered and buried the following day at St. John's Church, Tonyrefail.

Friday December 10th 1880

The Penygraig Colliery Disaster - The death of 102 men and boys

On Friday, December 10th 1880, another of the appalling colliery disasters that were to afflict the Rhondda valley took place at Penygraig which saw the death of 102 men and boys. The colliery was situated several miles from the town of Pontypridd, and only about a mile from the scene of the great explosion at Dinas something less than two years before. It was in the Llantrisant Parish side of the valley, the downcast shaft being on the bank of the river Rhondda, while the upcast was a short distance away, in the entrance to the Ely Valley.

While most of the crowds surrounded the downcast shaft (known as the Rhondda Pit) a gallant band had descended to the upcast shaft at the entrance into the Ely Valley, three-quarters of a mile away. The greatest force of the fiery hurricane had been felt there. The fan building had been shot away, and a large portion of the roof. A large pipe was blown into the air, and portions of framing over the mouth of the shaft were blown into the air in splinters.

The gentlemen who ventured down here were Mr. Daniel Thomas, Dinas (Albert medallist of the first class), his brother, Mr. Edmund Thomas, one of the proprietors of Gelli, Tynybedw and Llwyncelyn collieries; Mr. William Galloway, late deputy-

Inspector of Mines for South Wales; Mr. J. Davies, manager underground at the Glamorgan Collieries; Mr. T. Griffiths, manager Cymmer Collieries, and Mr. John Havard, manager, Dinas; and Mr. William Jenkins, Penygraig.

The Associated Press reported: - The Rhondda Valley is not unused to the mournful experience of colliery explosions, and the memory of the terrible Dinas catastrophe in 1879 had not yet died out of the minds of the inhabitants. Widows of unrecovered husbands, and the orphans of fathers still buried in the Dinas Pit, abound in the valley. Not a very great distance from Penygraig, is situated the Dinas Pit, where 57 dead colliers still lie. There they have lay since the 13th of January 1879. Another disaster has to be chronicled today within a mile of the graves of the Dinas men. The Penygraig Colliery is almost the last opened in the valley, and the Dinas was, by a singular oppositeness, one of the first.

At the Dinas Colliery, the first of the Rhondda explosions occurred 37 years ago, when 14 lives were sacrificed. The colliery proprietors of the neighbourhood are closely connected, and it is so happens that the name of Rowlands, the proprietors of the Penygraig Pits, is not unconnected with the Dinas explosion, though the coincidence is purely accidental. The Penygraig Colliery is almost contiguous to the Dinas seams, and in consequence of the closing of the latter, several of those who escaped the disaster of January 1879, were employed in the Penygraig workings. The pit at where the latest accident has occurred was opened about 12 months ago by Messrs. Morgan Rowlands, &Co; and, like the Dinas, produced what is called naval steam coal.

The very coffins stored by the Dinas Company for the men who were never recovered are now being brought up on men's shoulders to meet the demands of the present case. The country roads between the numerous villages in the valley are thronged with men and women coming to the scene of the accident or returning home. This district, which is so widely renowned for the splendid quality of its steam coal, is very unfortunate. It was near Penygraig that the Tynewydd disaster occurred during recent years. So many accidents have happened to all the coal-mining districts of South Wales that there is hardly one the visitor may enter and not hear a sad story of the loss of some relative in an explosion.

Despite all efforts at rescue at Penygraig only four men were brought out alive, and the shock of the explosion causes a nervous reaction at the nearby Dinas Colliery: -

"The workmen employed at the Dinas Collieries have refused to work," reported the Welsh newspapers. On Wednesday evening, December 16th 1880, they held a meeting at the Dinas British School, Mr. David Davies presiding, when it was agreed to send a deputation on Thursday morning to Mr. Galloway and Mr. Havard, the managers, asking for a definite reply as to whether it was decided by the company to continue to widen the return roadway, which work was commenced on Tuesday last. The men state that the quantity of air which ascends into the Polka seam workings, from the workings in which 57 bodies are lying 80 yards lower down, is more than the present return airway can carry away and leave the workings safe for the employees.

The men state that one morning not long very long ago the Polka seam was so heavily charged with gas - the weather was foggy and heavy - that they declined to work and went home. The men, moreover, alleged that it was only after the catastrophe at Penygraig that widening the return airway was commenced, and that what they fear is that the work will be discontinued the moment they resume work. A few days later the following letter appeared in the same newspaper:-

"Sir – My attention has been drawn to the two paragraphs which appeared in your newspaper on the 16th inst; and, as a matter of justice, I thought a little investigation would not altogether be out of place; so in my ramblings I wended my way to the scene of the late disaster, and from there to the neighbourhood of the Dinas Colliery, to satisfy myself as to the correctness of the first paragraph, which states that the workmen refused to work, held a meeting, and resolved to send a deputation to wait upon Messrs. Galloway and Havard, the managers, asking for a definite reply to whether it was decided by the company to continue to widen the return air-road or not?

Now, the matter is simply this: Since the catastrophe in the above pit they must be aware that the pit must have been in a very confused state, so that every difficulty could not be surmounted at once.; but I am happy to state that under the careful management and far-sightedness of the manager the currency of ventilation has made that progress so as to enable anyone almost to carry a naked light through the pit.

The above meeting, in my estimation, was brought together quite uncalled for, as the widening of the air-roadway was in contemplation long before the accident at Penygraig; so it could not be said that Mr. Havard, out of any fear of danger, set the men to work to widen the airway, as he was merely taking the advantage of the stop caused by the Penygraig accident to adopt such a course.

And be it added here that Mr. Havard is known as one of the best and enabled and experienced managers in south Wales, although, comparatively speaking, young in years, and the fact that Messrs Galloway and Havard are managers at Dinas speaks for itself. So in future, employees should be very careful in calling meetings together, but if their cause is just, all well and good, yet how often has it been proved to be so? "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." All these matters should be well sifted and investigated first before they are placed in the mouthpiece of the public. Hoping you will publish this in extensor and thanking you for the same, I am yours, ***D. Lewis, Aberaman.***

P.S. The current of air in the intake was at the rate of 37,000 feet per minute last Friday."

The following letter appeared in the same newspaper a day later, December 17th, which shows that the colliers were in fact not on strike:-

To the Editor

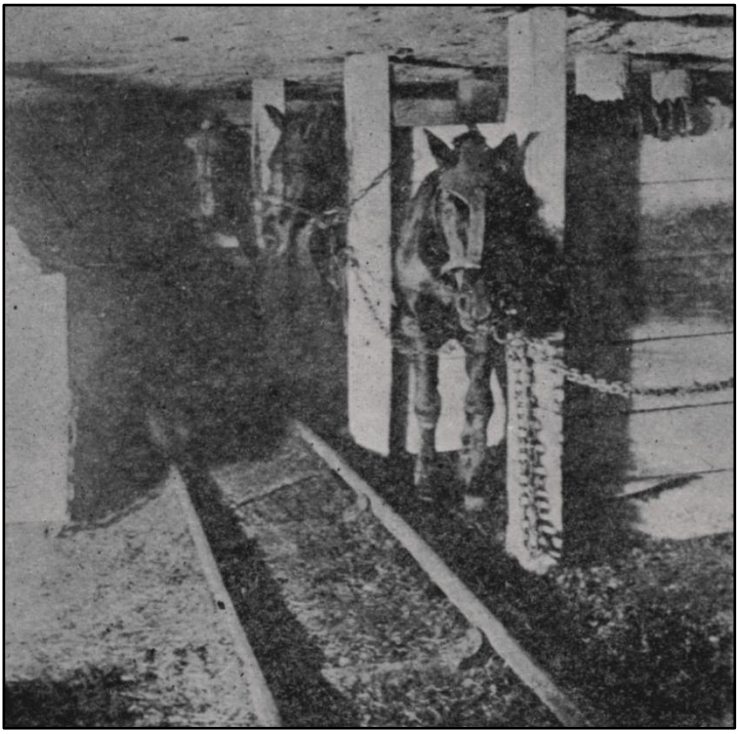
Sir – My attention today has been called a paragraph in the '*Western Mail*' this day, in which it is stated that the men employed at Dinas Colliery are on strike for certain reasons that are specified in the paragraph referred to. If the men are on strike I have not received any intimation of the fact except through your column.

Mr. Havard, manager, resolved to take advantage of the stoppage that followed the Penygraig accident, in order that he might carry out certain changes in the ventilation that had been long in contemplation. The necessary works, which includes the clearing out of an airway in the lower workings, have not yet been completed, and the men have not been allowed to return to work in consequence.

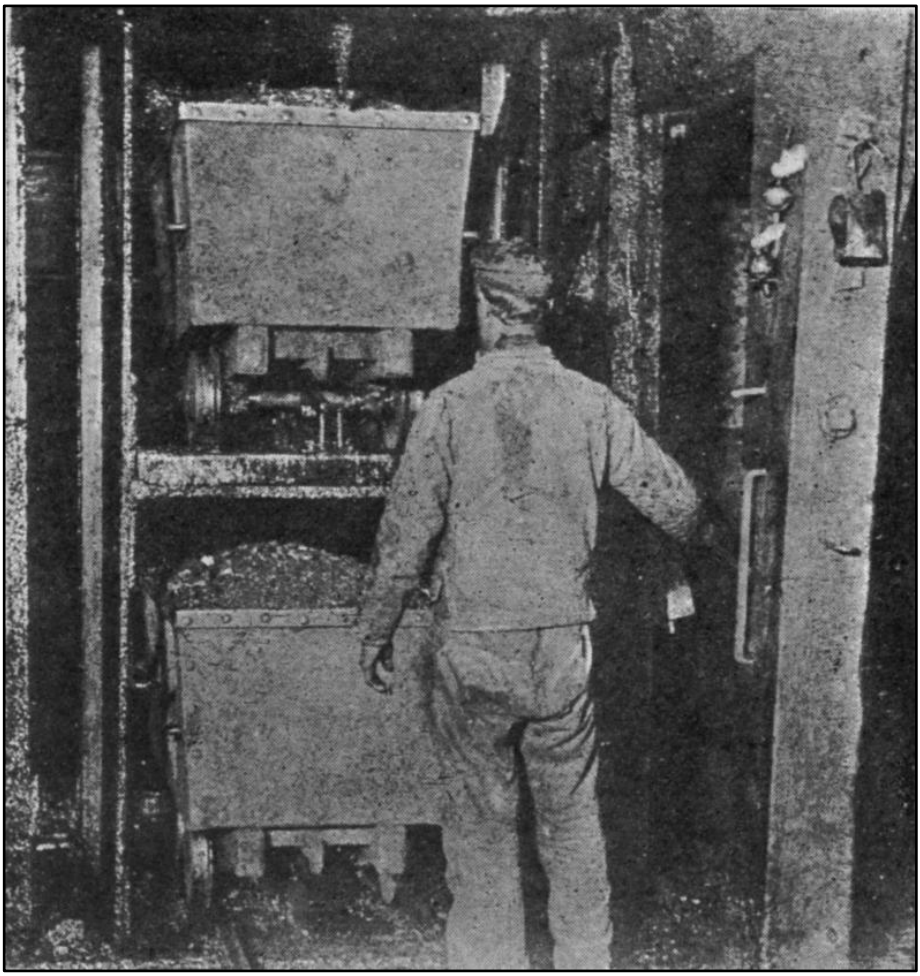
I ought to mention that the air from the workings in which the men are employed goes down into the old workings, after having passed through all the working places. It does, not, therefore, descend to the Polka workings heavily charged with gas, as your correspondent puts it, but proceeds directly to the upcast pit, after

having ventilated a portion of the lower workings where nobody is at work. On occasions like the present, however, it is considered desirable to reverse the course of the ventilating current when certain parts of the lower workings have to be visited, and to send the air through the lower workings first; but then the men are never, by any chance, allowed to work in the Polka so long as this change is in operation. It is impossible for me to conceive how the confusion of ideas has arisen which culminated in the note in the '*Western Mail*;' but as it has arisen I hope you will give me the opportunity of unravelling it as public manner as you can. I am & Co.

William Galloway, Dinas Collieries Dec. 16th 1880.



Underground stables at an unknown colliery



Sending up coal to bank at unknown colliery at a much later date

CHAPTER TWELVE

The fate of John Chubb

1881

As soon as the Dinas explosion inquest concluded John Chubb returned to the district. His early return to Dinas was no doubt partly due to the decision by the Home Office not to prosecute management as they were advised the action would probably fail due to the statute of time limitation. Within a short period he was contacted by Messrs. Thomas & Griffiths who engaged him, much to the workforce's shock, as manager of the Gelli House Coal Pit. The '*Western Mail*' of Friday, January 7th 1881 reported: -

Strike at Gelli Colliery

The colliers of Gelli Colliery, who this week signed their yearly contracts, unanimously refused to commence work on Wednesday morning, January 5th 1881, on finding that the new manager was Mr. John Chubb, who was manager of the Dinas Colliery when the explosion took place in January 1979. A meeting of the men subsequently took place and after a prolonged discussion it was resolved not to work again under Mr. Chubb in any official capacity. Summonses were subsequently issued by the company against several of the leaders of the strike. The men, in explanation, pleaded that the new manager was incompetent, and their lives would, under his direction, be in jeopardy.

On Monday, January 10th 1881 at the Pentre Police Court, when the charges preferred by Messrs Thomas and Griffiths against six of their workmen in connection with the late strike at Gelli came on for hearing, it was stated that the parties had settled the dispute, and that no evidence would be offered against the defendants. The case was, therefore, dismissed. It appears that Mr. Daniel Thomas (nephew of the famous Daniel Thomas), son of one of the proprietors, Mr. Edmund Thomas (brother of the famous Daniel Thomas), had been appointed chief manager of the colliery instead of Mr. Chubb, whom the proprietors had appointed to the office, and against whom the men stood out. The works were now back in full swing.

Six weeks prior to an explosion in this pit on 21st. August 1883, Chubb had been promoted to under-manager. He was severely burnt about his face and arms and died a painful death from his injuries one week later on August 28th, age 44, leaving a wife and six children. It was a dreadful sight to see him lying on the floor of his home at the Gelli Cottage with rags under him, his burnt face and hands covered

with linen steeped in oil. In the house were grapes which had been sent by some kind people to all the sufferers.

When the inquest was concluded on Friday, October 12th 1883, Mr. Wales, Government Inspector of Mines, attributed the explosion to the firing of gas which had exuded from the roof of the stalls, and he expressed the opinion that the ventilation was very defective in that part of the colliery. The jury returned a verdict of 'accidental death,' but at the same time expressed the opinion that the system of ventilation at the colliery was defective, and that considerable neglect was exhibited in connection to the management.

Mr. Thomas Williams, Coroner, referred pointedly to the fact that no record of the ventilation had been produced; where as the law demanded that the particulars of the ventilation in all parts of a colliery should be made at least once a month in the book. It was the duty of the under-manager (Chubb) to have done this, but he was dead, and as to whether he did this there was nothing to show.

Fire at Dinas Colliery fan

The neighbourhood of Dinas, was thrown into a state of great excitement and alarm about half-past 10 o'clock on Thursday night, January 27th 1881, by the sounding of the hooter. It appeared that the bearing of the fan had caught fire, and Police-Sergeant Rowe, and others, who were almost immediately on the spot, began to throw water on it. Water having done its work plenty of oil was applied to the bearing, and all danger was prevented. The fire was caused by the friction of the axle of the fan, and, no doubt, want of oil. Many of the women who arrived at the top of the pit screaming and weeping thought an explosion had occurred.

Prosecution at Dinas

In the first week of February 1881, Mr. Simons, on behalf of the Dinas Colliery Co; charged D. Evans and M. Philips with violating the 92nd Special Rule, by taking pipes with them into the pit, and beyond the lamp-station of the Dinas Colliery.

Important change of ownership at the Dinas Colliery

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of April 2nd 1881 reported: - We have been informed that the well-known Dinas Steam Coal Collieries are about to change hands. The present owners, Messrs Coffin &Co., have come to an arrangement with Mr. Daniel Thomas, Dinas Ishaf, to sell the whole of their property. Many will regret losing from the district such an employer as Colonel Hunt. On the other hand it is

gratifying to understand that the new owner is so well-known and respected by all that are acquainted with him. We may expect that Mr. Thomas, with his skill and knowledge of these collieries will prove a success to himself and all the neighbourhood.

The following week it was reported that notice had been posted up at the Dinas Steam Coal Colliery, stating that all contracts would be terminated at the end of April. It was understood in consequence of the above change. It was hoped that arrangements would be completed satisfactorily by the end of the month and that the colliery would be kept going for the benefit of all parties concerned.

But the '*Pontypridd District Herald*' of Saturday, April 23rd 1881 reported: - The Dinas Steam Coal Collieries are idle. The officials are busily engaged in taking stock of the colliery plant &co. It is rumoured that a public auction would take place at the end of this week to dispose of any of the colliery plant not required by Mr. Daniel Thomas, the future proprietor of these works. In all probability work will not be resumed until the 1st of May.

Daniel Thomas purchases Dinas Colliery

On the 1st May 1881, Mr. Daniel Thomas took the Dinas collieries under a lease from Col. Hunt. He engaged the current manager of great experience, namely, Mr. John Havard, Aberdare. It was soon made manifest that Mr. Thomas and his intrepid manager would restore the collieries to working order.

May 7th 1881

Mr. Wright's Home Office report

The report of Mr. R. S. Wright to the Home Office was issued on this date into the Penygraig Colliery explosion of December 10th 1880, when over 100 men and boys lost their lives it severely censured the management. Among other matters, it stated that the very dry and dangerous dust of the mine was neither removed nor watered. The managers of this colliery were reckless of the safety of other collieries as of their own.

Their downcast shaft happened to cut about 100 yards from the surface, one of the galleries of the adjoining Dinas Colliery. During the time when the downcast was still a separate pit, with one shaft and brattice ventilation, the managers knowingly allowed their foul return air to be partly drawn into the Dinas Colliery, and on directly to pass to the Dinas furnace, where it might at any time have exploded.

This abominable fraud was continued for about 12 months before it was discovered by the Dinas manager. On the other hand it is right to state that the colliery was so far well managed that very few small accidents causing injury or loss of life had occurred in it. It was suggested for consideration whether proceeding should not be taken again the manager and one or more of the proprietors of the Cymmer Colliery.

Settlement of the dispute at Dinas Colliery

With Daniel Thomas taking over the Dinas Pit there were many disputes over the pay rates. This is just one of them reported in the '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of May 14th 1881: - **"**The dispute between the colliers and their employer at the above colliery has been referred to arbitration on the basis that the matter will be settled by the scale of wages at the Great Western and Cymmer Collieries. The workmen resumed work on Tuesday, in prospect of a satisfactory settlement. It is supposed that a general list of prices will be drawn up. This will put an end to all future misunderstandings." This was was a forlorn hope however and the dispute was still raging in October, when the men gave a month's notice about coming out on strike.

Two weeks later the same newspaper reported: - At the Pontypridd Police Court on Wednesday, Mr. Gwilym Williams, Stipendiary Magistrate, gave his decision in the claim for wages brought against Messrs Coffin & Company, Dinas Colliery, by four of their workmen, Henry Davies, William Pike, John Jones and Watkin Jones. Mr. Walter H. Morgan, represented the men, and Mr. Price represent the company. At a previous court, these workmen, who are colliers, summoned the colliery owners for a month's wages in lieu of notice, they having, as they allege, been deprived of the work for which they had been contracted.

In the judgement that was given upon the case of Watkin Jones, as a leading case we presume, the Stipendiary remarked that the point to be decided was of such importance as to necessitate the devotion or a considerable amount of time and attention to its proper elucidation, in order that it might be a safe precedent for future guidance in dealing with cases of a kindred nature. It was, broadly, whether an employer has the right to remove a collier from his working-place into a seam whose characteristics it is considered are totally different. In this case they were told to go and work from the Rider seam to the Polka seam, and as they contended they would not be able to earn as much wages there, and the work would be harder and they declined to go, and the manager dismissed them.

The characteristics of the Rider seam differed so materially from the Polka seam as to raise a reasonable presumption in the mind of the plaintiff that his chances of earning the same wages there were less; therefore, he was justified in disobeying

the orders of the defendants; that the defendants in declining to find plaintiff any other working place committed a breach of contract; that, therefore, judgement must be for the plaintiff with costs. Defendant's solicitors asked for a case for a superior court. The Stipendiary said he would give every facility for the case.

Death of collier at Dinas

Mr. Grover held an inquest at the Graig Ddu Inn, touching the death of Thomas Davies, who met with his death at the Dinas Steam Coal Colliery on Monday, May 16th 1881. A verdict of "accidental death," was recorded.

An unfounded report of bodies

The '*Western Mail*' of Tuesday, July 19th 1881 reported: - We are requested by Mr. Daniel Thomas, proprietor of Dinas Colliery, to state that, unfortunately, the report that dead bodies had been found in the Dinas Pit is untrue. It is anticipated, however, that in about a month the remains of four, who were working in the Four-foot seam at the time of the explosion will be reached.

The previous report is thus contradicted, and which, by the way, did not come from our regular correspondent, produced much painful excitement in the neighbourhood. There is some prospect that in a short time measures will be adopted with a view to attempt to reach the 57 bodies still in the colliery, from a neighbouring colliery working the same seam.

On Tuesday night, August 30th 1881, about 9 o'clock, John Williams, a young man, a native of Dinas, met with a sad accident in the Middle Pit at the Dinas Colliery by falling under two loaded trams of coal. Dr. Davies, Cymmer, attended, when it was found that the poor fellow's legs were broken, as well as an arm, and that his head was severely cut.

1882

Collier in court

At the Pentre Police Court on Monday, January 23rd 1882, William Brown, labourer, employed at Dinas Colliery, was charged with having in his possession underground a key of a safety lamp in contravention of the 283rd rule. David Williams, fireman, proved finding the key in question on the defendant, who pleaded that he had picked it up near the pit and put in in his pocket. Defendant was fined 20/- and costs.

Monday July 10th 1882

The dead in Dinas Pit – finding of the bodies

By '*Morien*': - On Monday afternoon Mr. Daniel Thomas, lessee of Dinas Colliery, penetrated with a friend or two into the interior of the workings. In addition to the bodies known by certain indications to be under falls they passed over, they came across two dead bodies lying in the roadway. Strange to say they were not decomposed in the lightest degree. It seems from the appearance of their beards and moustaches, which were not even singed, that the bodies had not been burnt, and that death had resulted from suffocation.

There is, therefore, reason to suppose that the other bodies farther in the workings, and which have not yet been recovered, are in a similar state of preservation, so that it is more than probable there will be no difficulty in identifying them, although they have been in the pit since January 13th 1879. It is stated that the explorers have found the inner workings far less damaged than was anticipated. Mr. Daniel Thomas has incurred an enormous expense in penetrating through falls into these workings. All the bodies found this week will buried on Sunday at Lledarddu Cemetery.

Friday July 15th 1882

Bringing up the bodies

At ten o'clock at night on Friday, July 15th 1882 an event took place at the Dinas Colliery which has been waited for with eager interest by the whole mining population of the Rhondda valley, namely, the beginning to bring up the dead bodies from the Storehouse Pit. Owing to the very depressed condition of the atmosphere tonight, and the consequent renewed accumulation of gas in the shattered workings, the task of reaching the dead bodies has been an extremely hazardous one. The gas frequently fired in the lamps of the gallant explorers, and many hurried retreats to a place of comparative safety had to be made.

From 7 o'clock until 10 o'clock the efforts were continued by the following: - Mr. Daniel Thomas, proprietor; Mr John Havard, manager; Edward Watkin and David Jones, overmen; and William Jenkins and a number of workmen. After fresh ventilating arrangements had been adopted, one body was reached and conveyed in canvas by four men over the top of the falls to a spot where a coffin was waiting for its reception.

For a long time after this was accomplished it seemed as if the demon of the mine was reluctant to part with its prey, for the gas gathered in force, but by proceeding a considerable distance in total darkness, and beyond the place the other body was found, the explorers succeeded in reaching a second body.

The tidings soon reached the top of the pit, where, standing near the great fires in the pelting rain, were many men and women, most of who had lost friends in the shaft three years and a half ago, and whom hoped that those about to be brought up were their dead. It was a solemn sight when in the lurid light of the pit-bank, the coffins came in sight at the pit's mouth.

Every eye gazed at them, but not a sound was heard except the creaking of the machinery, the rush of the storm, and the pattering of the rain. The bodies were found to be those of William Cross, ripper, and Isaac Martin, ripper. The coffins for the night were placed in a hut near the top of the pit. The relatives were to be allowed to visit the remains the following morning. The funerals would take place on Monday. It was thought that several days would elapse before any more bodies would be recovered. Two lamps had been found in the workings.

Thursday, July 27th 1882

Dreadful accident at Dinas Colliery – Miraculous escapes

On Thursday, July 27th 1882 a shocking accident occurred at the Dinas Colliery. Two men named William Minors and John Davies were working together in a stall cutting coal. Behind them was a stout pillar constructed of pitwood, and technically called a 'cog' propping up the roof. Suddenly coal and stones fell, completely burying Minors, but Davies escaped with slight bruises.

The last named shouted for help, and his cries were heard in a neighbouring stall by a man named Whitely Harry, who ran to the spot. Here he and Davies applied themselves with all their might to extricate Minors. While they were so engaged another fall took place, burying Whitely Harry under it. But it was soon made manifest by Harry emerging from under the fall that he had escaped serious injury. The principal weight of the fall had struck against the pitwood pillar and he had thus escaped.

Minors was soon extricated, but it was found he had sustained dreadful injuries to his side and back. He was conveyed home, and attended by Dr. Henry Naunton Davies. A few days before, a boy named Noah Morgan, fourteen years of age, and

son of Illtydd Morgan, Llantrisant, had a marvellous escape from being killed at this colliery. The lad was with a number of men, including his own father, in the workings. With them was Mr. John Harvard, manager. Without a moments warning the roof fell with a thunderous roar, a portion of it just touching Mr. Havard's back. All, however, escaped, except the boy, who was out of sight under a ton and a half of stones and rubbish. His voice was heard, and he was heard saying in Welsh, "W'i'n Mawr, w'in mawr!" ("I'm dying, I am dying!"). The strong men were in tears, and the boy's father frantic. All the men, including the manager, applied themselves with the energy of despair to remove the fall from the poor lad. In about twenty minutes he was reached, and he seemed to be dead. He was placed on his back on the roadway, and after a little time recovered. It seems that stones formed a kind of arch over him, so that the weight of any portion of the fall did not rest upon him.

Tuesday, August 15th 1882

A fatal accident at Dinas Colliery

On Tuesday morning, August 15th 1882 a collier named John Hodges was killed, and a man named Edward Roberts dreadfully injured at Dinas Colliery, under the following circumstances: - Both were engaged in cutting coal, when suddenly two or three tons fell on Hodges, killing him on the spot. Roberts proceeded to extricate Hodges (a boy), and while so engaged another fall of coal took place, burying him also. His injuries, although very severe, were not, it was supposed, likely to terminate fatally.

Serious charge against a medical assistant in the Rhondda Valley

At the Ystrad Police Court on Monday, August 22nd 1883, before Mr. Marsden, deputy-stipendiary, Morris Morris, until lately an assistant to a local medical firm in the Rhondda Valley, was charged with obtaining a sovereign by false pretences from Mrs. Thomas, wife of Mr. Daniel Thomas, Dinas Colliery. Mrs. Thomas stated that the prisoner came to her residence, and said that he had fractured his arm some time ago at the Penygraig works, and had since then been to the infirmary, and was now almost cured. He had his arm bound up in splints and carried it in a sling.

He told witness that Miss Rowlands, the daughter of one of the owners of the Penygraig works, had sent him to apply to her for assistance. He said he was a carpenter by trade, was married, and had six children. He said his tools were in

pawn at Pontypridd. Mrs. Thomas sympathising with the prisoner, went upstairs and brought down a sovereign, telling him she would give him half a sovereign, but would have to send out to change a sovereign. He then said: - "I am a respectable man in this neighbourhood, and should not like the servant to know my condition. I will go out to change it, and bring you back the change."

She gave him the sovereign to change, and he took his departure but never returned. Mrs. Norman corroborated Mrs. Thomas's testimony as to the prisoner's identity. Police-Constable George Williams apprehended the prisoner at the Tylorstown Hotel, Rhondda Vach. Had seen prisoner previously at Ynyshir drunk. It was stated further that the prisoner told Mrs. Thomas that his name was Joseph Roberts. Now, a man of that name had recently sustained serious injury to one of his hands at Penygraig. Mrs. Thomas expressed he great regret at being obliged to appear against the prisoner.

Dr. Charles Jones, Tonypandy, stated that the prisoner had been his assistant. He always found him most straightforward. He bore a most excellent character where he had lived before he came to him. He had to discharge him three weeks ago due to drunkenness. Prisoner said he knew nothing whatever about the affair. He didn't even know where Mrs. Thomas lived, neither had he to his knowledge met Mrs. Thomas before that day in court.

Prisoner admitted to Police-Constable George Williams having been to Dinas on the day in question. The Superintendent stated that Miss Rowlands denied ever seeing the prisoner. The Deputy-Stipendiary stated that Morris had been guilty of the serious offence with which he was charged. But no doubt he was drunk at the time. He took that into consideration, and fined him £5 and costs. The money was paid by Dr. Charles Jones.

Finding another body

On August 31st 1882 another body was brought to bank, where it was placed in a shed. It was identified as Daniel Dunworth.

Thursday, October 5th 1882

Harrowing scenes – Finding five more dead bodies

On Thursday, October 5th 1882 the workmen engaged by Mr. Daniel Thomas, proprietor of Dinas Colliery, in exploring for the dead in that colliery found the Davy

lamp of one of the unfortunate men who lost their lives in the explosion. Some wearing apparel was discovered close by. It is expected the dead bodies will be found in a day or two.

On Tuesday, October 10th 1882 the 43 men employed in the colliery, in exploring for the dead killed in that colliery on the night of January 13th 1879, came upon three more bodies and a horse. The animal was lying on a body – it is supposed that of a haulier. Two of the bodies had been found on Monday, being that of Thomas Holmes and Henry Hayter, both Englishmen, and married. The bodies of the last two were identified by their boots and flannel drawers.

They were found under great stones, and when the explorers took hold of the arms, to remove the bodies, the limbs, to the horror of the men, came off. The three bodies last found were also under a great fall, which must have fallen on the poor fellows after they were killed, for their clothes had been burnt away, not a shred being left; in fact, the three were simply naked skeletons, only the boots remaining on the feet.

Covering the remains was a layer of mildew white as snow. The spot where these bodies were found is about 1,300 yards from the bottom of the shaft. It is anticipated that within the next three weeks 27 more bodies will be found, for the neighbourhood where the majority of the poor men were working on the night of the explosion has been reached. There are still in the works 45 bodies. The funeral of the bodies found will take place on Saturday afternoon at 3 o'clock at Lledarddu cemetery.

We regret to state that the fund for the relief of those made widows and orphans by this explosion would only last to April next. There are now left on the funds 15 widows and 46 orphans, and one dependent, whose son, was her sole support, who was killed. When the fund was established there were 46 widows, 123 children, and 8 other dependents. Mr. Ishmael Williams, Dinas, is the secretary, and to him all contributions should be sent.

Tuesday, October 31st 1882

Another dead body was found in the Dinas Pit, could not be indentified. The explorers had got into an accumulation of water in the workings, which impeded progress for a little while.

Friday, November 3rd 1882

The finding of more bodies at Dinas Colliery

The bringing to bank of 12 more of the dead bodies lying in the Dinas Pit has painfully stirred the centre of the Rhondda valley, wrote '*Morien*' in the '*Western Mail*.' It made one shudder and to be deeply impressed by the solicitude the public should feel for those men whose avocations are such as they leave them daily, for the purpose of earning their bread, into places where they hourly incur the awful risk of meeting a similar fate to that which befell the poor fellows whose mangled and burnt remains were lying before one.

When one approached the building a group of poor women were standing in the rain at the guarded door for their turn to enter the room for the purpose of endeavouring to indentify the bodies. The charred remains were lying in open coffins, arranged in two long rows. In a few instances the remains have been identified. Many of the bodies have unmistakable traces of the fire which destroyed the lives of the wearers. It is impossible to describe the appearance of the remains, but in every instance ghastly evidence of the horrible nature of the explosion was seen.

One body presented a most remarkable appearance. It was lying on its side, and was bent in the middle. The arms were twisted, and with the hands, resembled the legs and claws of some large bird. One of the hands rested on the forehead, having, it appeared, died with his forehead resting on his hand. This body was found fast in the embrace of another body, but the arms were simply bare bones. Only the following bodies have been identified down to Thursday night: -

William Griffiths, a widower, native of the neighbourhood of Llansamlet.
David Rees, White Rock Row. He has left a widow and two children.
(Buried at St. John's Church, Tonyrefail).
Henry Oliver Williams, Storehouse; Widow and four children.
John Romseville, Ffrwd Amos, Widow only.
Evan John, Widow and five children.

Those that have been identified had wadding placed over them. This was strewn with wildflowers. The twelve bodies were found in the "California" district of the

workings. There were working in that district the night of the explosion the following men:-

Charles Penny, David Rees, Thomas Roberts, William Williams, Evan John, Daniel Morley, William Roberts, Josiah Evans, Richard Howells, Lewis Williams, River Jordon, Octavious Wheaton, Daniel Smith, Thomas Richards, Elijah Upjohn, James Bowen, James Harris, Frank Moore, John Jenkins, John Romseville, Henry Williams, John Landragan and David Hughes.

It is thought this information may be of importance to the families of those that had lost their lives, now that efforts are being made to identify the remains. There are 30 more bodies in the pit. The funerals will take place at Lledarddu Cemetery on Sunday, when it is anticipated that a large number of workmen and their families will attend.

Sunday November 5th 1882

The funeral of the victims

Soon after noon on Sunday immense crowds were seen coming towards Dinas from all parts of the Rhondda for the purpose of attending the funerals of the 12 poor fellows who lost their lives on January 13th 1879, and whose mangled and burnt remains were brought to bank last week. Ten of the funerals were to proceed to the Lledarddu Cemetery, one to Soar, Ffrwd Amos, and the other two to the chapel of St. John the Baptist, Tonyrefail. The remains were in coffins in the engine house of the colliery, near the top of the shaft. By 2 o'clock the highway and by-lanes near the works were impassable, owing to the enormous throng of people. As coffins containing the remains of David Rees and James Bowen were seen conveyed up the highway the Rev. Thomas George, standing in a carriage, gave out in Welsh that well known Welsh hymn: - "In the deep and mighty waters &co."

Ten of the coffins, all covered with rings of flowers, were then brought into the midst of the throng, which then started down the valley, the people singing as they walked. Following the coffins were the widows, children, and other relatives of the departed. Soon after reaching Porth it began to rain, and this was accompanied by violent gusts of winds.

By the time the cemetery was reached it can safely be said there was not a dry back in the throng. The ten coffins were deposited in four open graves and a brief religious ceremony was gone through by the Rev. Thomas George. The drenched

people then hurried away. Both Mr. Daniel Thomas and Mr. Havard, the Dinas Colliery, were at the funeral. It is estimated that about 6,000 persons were present.

Shocking accident at Dinas Colliery

On Friday morning, December 15th 1882 a young man named John Weldon, hitcher, met his death in a horrible manner at the Dinas Pit. He had newly sent to the surface a tram of stones. The descending cage had just touched the bottom of the shaft, and he was in the act of withdrawing the empty tram when a small stone, which had slipped of the dram which had just reached the surface, through the pit, struck him on the head, literally splitting it open. Death was instantaneous. The unfortunate young fellow – as he was only 32 – lost his father in the 1880 Penygraig explosion, and ever since he had been supporting his widowed mother and brothers and sisters. He was was a most exemplary son, and tidings of his death seemed to have spread through the underground workings with great rapidity, for the men immediately began to ascend to the surface, and the body was accompanied to its late home at Ffrwd Amos (Penygraig) by a very large crowd of workmen, all in their working clothes. The arrival of the remains at Ffrwd Amos produced intense excitement among the inhabitants.

1883

The finding of 10 more bodies at Dinas Colliery – Funeral of the victims

It would be almost a year before any more bodies would be recovered. The '*Western Mail*,' of Monday, October 29th 1883 reported: - During the last week the remains of the ten poor fellows who lost their lives at Dinas were brought to bank and buried on Saturday and Sunday. Later the following were identified by the remains of their clothing: - Robert Chubb, Dinas (30), Thomas Rees, Dinas, (21) Steven Williams (Dinas), William Williams, James Edwards, (18); Joseph Evans, Brynmawr (19), W. W. Roberts, Thomas Richards, and John Jenkin and William Edwards. Their appearance was indescribably ghastly.

Mr. Havard, manager, who had been indefatigable in his efforts to bring out the bodies, stated that the ten were found in the respective places where they were known to have been employed as repairers on the dreadful night when they met their horrible fate. Two of them were found under a fall from the roof, which, apparently, had been thrown down by the air concussion during the explosion.

Several seemed to have lived for some time after the explosion took place, for in several instances the skeleton had the right hand over the mouth, where, no doubt, during life, it had been placed in the effort to prevent the deadly after-damp from passing in.

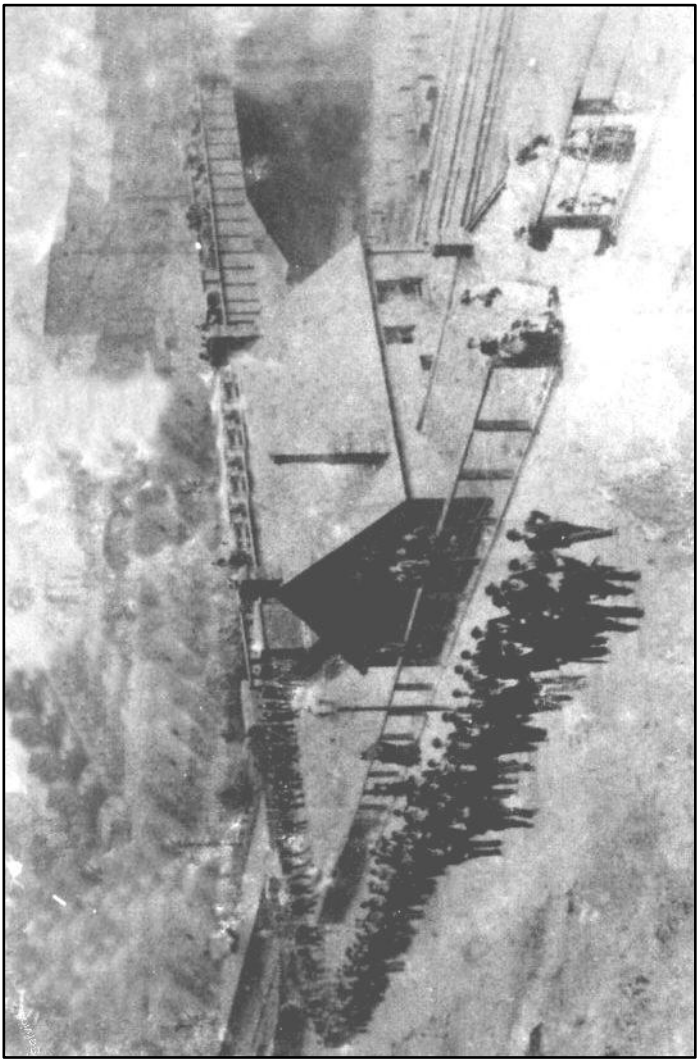
Chubb and Rees were linked hand in hand. They were brothers-in-law. The former was cousin to John Chubb, manager of the colliery at the time of the explosion, who died recently from injuries sustained at the Gelli explosion. Rees had only worked a week at this colliery. In one of his pockets his watch was found in a perfect condition. In many instances the jackets of the departed were found hanging where they had placed them before assuming operations for the night.

The ten remains were in coffins in the engine-room until Saturday November 3rd 1883. Canvas and white wadding had been placed over the remains, and on the wadding loving hands had strewn wild flowers. Female friends went into the engine-room during the day, and the scene as each bereaved little troupe of friends entered they were overwhelmed. In some instances the names of the departed were wailed forth in broken-hearted accents. An aged father and mother and a young sister entered to see the remains. The father carried in his hands a wreath of wild flowers and laid it on the wadding. The poor mother, large tears rolling down her face, repeated over and over again above the coffin her son's name; and the poor sister seemed overwhelmed with agony.

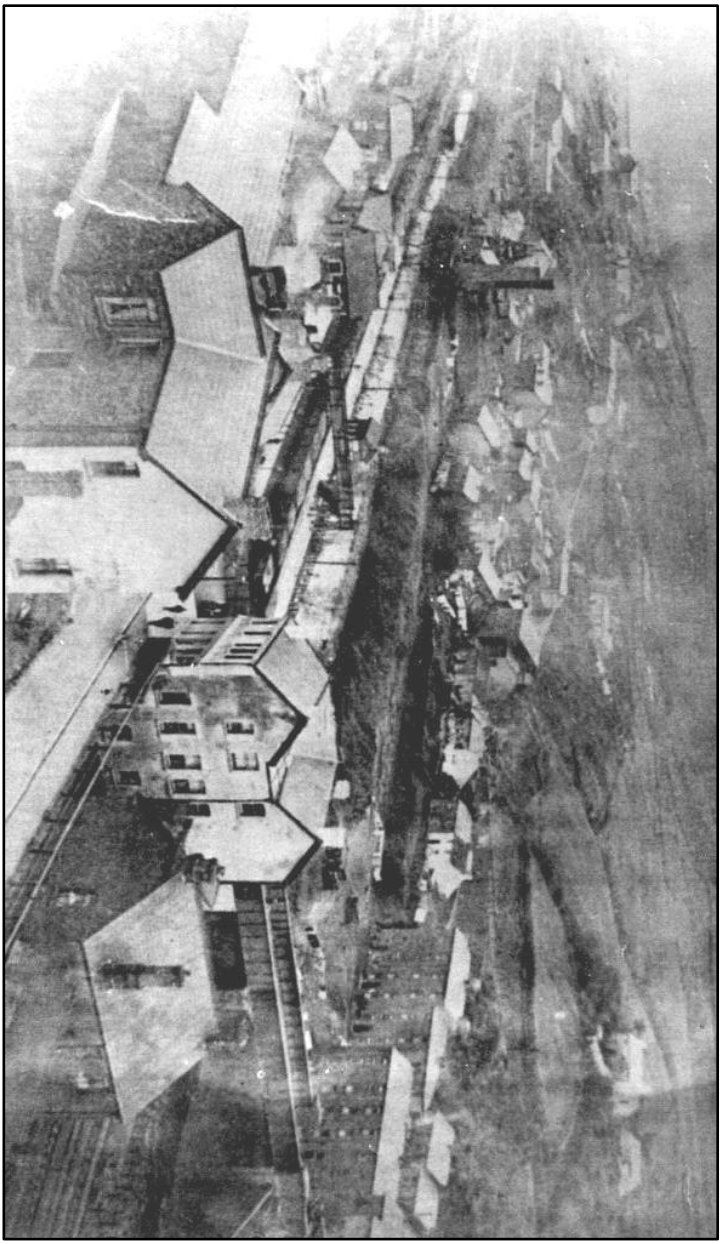
Later the funeral of eight of the ten bodies recovered took place when a large number of persons attended, and the sight was a very sorrowful one. The internment took place at the the Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery. The bodies were interred alongside each other in a particular part of the cemetery, the intention being to place a monument in memory of them. Steven Williams was buried at St. John's Church, Tonyrefail on Sunday.

Two more dead bodies were brought to bank from the Dinas Pit on November 7th 1883, but they were not identified. Two other bodies were brought from the pit on Thursday, December 13th 1883, one was identified as John Lewis, haulier. There were only seven more bodies believed to be in the pit.

However, an explosion at the nearby Penygraig colliery in the new year would see the death of Daniel Thomas, the Dinas Colliery manager, and the last chance of recovering all the bodies probably died with him.



Funeral cortege for victims of the Dinas Colliery explosion crossing the Dinas Bridge heading towards the Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery. Photo undated, possibly 1884. (Compliments of Terry Jones).



Dinas as seen from Trealaw. Date unknown. Dinas Colliery is seen towards top left-hand corner apparently idle, so photo probably taken after 1893 when the colliery closed.

Sunday, January 27th, 1884.

The explosion at the Penygraig Colliery - The Death of Daniel Thomas

Daniel Thomas, the owner of the Dinas Colliery was killed on January 27th 1884, while attempting to rescue men following the explosion at the adjacent Penygraig Colliery. The colliery was owned by Messrs. Rowlands and William Morgan. The '*Western Mail*' reported: -

A serious disaster occurred on Sunday at the Penygraig colliery with the loss of fourteen lives and a large number of horses were also killed. The explosion occurred at 4 a.m. when fortunately the four hundred men who worked in the mine were not at work as it was the custom at this and other collieries, to fire the shots that had been prepared on Saturday on Sunday when the risk was less, and it is thought that the explosion had been caused by the firing of these shots.

Twelve officials, five firemen and seven ostlers had descended to inspect the colliery and the latter to see to the horses. The sound of the explosion was heard at a great distance and very soon, despite the early hour there was an anxious crowd gathered at the pit mouth. Mr. Daniel Thomas, owner of the nearby Dinas Colliery, was one of the first to arrive at the scene and soon got a gallant party of volunteers to descend the pit. After going some distance, they found that the guides of the cage were damaged, and with great difficulty and risk to their lives, they got round that obstacle and eventually reached the bottom in safety.

By about 11 o'clock the bottom was reached, and some directions were shouted by those below. While those above were organising a fresh gang to descend, the first explorers were going on with the perilous task, which later proved fatal to three of them. Trusting to their Davy lamps and their own great experience they unhesitatingly passed the scene of confusion as wreckage was at the bottom – trams blown about, falls all around, and the evidence of the force of the explosion that had taken place – and directed their steps towards the working places.

The most appalling sights met their gaze in the shape of immense falls that seemed interminable. After most desperate efforts, the Mr. Daniel Thomas, Mr. Thomas Lewis, Morgan Howell, David Pascoe, and Edward Watkin reached the neighbourhood of the stables, which the first two persons named entered.

All the horses were dead, and under one horse the dead body of one of the ostlers was found, and another under a manger. Steps were immediately adopted to remove the two dead bodies to the bottom of the shaft. After this was done, some of the men, Mr. Daniel Thomas, Mr. Thomas Lewis, John Jones, Thomas Morgan, Edward Watkins, Morgan Howell, and David Pascoe, and one or two others proceeded forward in the direction of the interior, climbing over immense falls. John Jones, a powerful young man, whose father, David Jones, fireman, was among the dead, felt himself going faint through inhaling the deadly after-damp, and shouted that he was going back, he retraced his steps for a short distance.

Later a fresh party of explorers found him lying insensible in the roadway and dragged him to the bottom of the pit and then to the surface. He was taken home, and the narrative which he gave when he had somewhat recovered, was that all he knew of his comrades was that they had disappeared from his view going further into the workings, created the most profound anxiety for their welfare.

This anxiety deepened into fears for the worse, when, later on in the day, it was reported that Thomas Morgan had also been found lying insensible in the roadway, and that he, on recovering stated that he and Mr. Daniel Thomas had begun to return together, Mr. Thomas leaning on Morgan's arm, but that although Morgan felt Mr. Thomas letting go of his arm and dropping, he was too weak to do anything for him, and that Morgan himself shortly afterwards fell where he was found. Other members of the second party of explorers now returned to the surface exhausted, and the news of the probable fate of Mr. Daniel Thomas spread like wildfire through the valleys.

For the rest of the day it was considered too dangerous for further explorers to enter the pit and it was just before 10 o'clock on Monday morning that another rescue party descended the pit. The workings were entered, and, under the direction of Morgan Howell, overman, it was decided to cut through a gob wall at a point opposite to that where it was supposed Mr. Daniel Thomas and his two companions would be found.

At half-past two the communication with the other heading was made, the distance being eighty yards. Morgan Howell immediately proceeded along the newly reached heading, followed by the others. After proceeding about 20 yards along

the roadway he came upon the dead body of Mr. Daniel Thomas, lying sideways in the roadway, his lamp in hand.

Going on in a straight line for about 60 yards, the explorers found the body of the contractor, Davies, who appeared to have gone down in his evening clothes because he simply intended to inspect a few props put up a few days previously, and which were found a short distance from where the exploring party came across his dead body. Leaving Davies's body where it was for the time, the party now proceeded to convey to the bottom of the pit, and thence to the surface, the remains of Mr. Daniel Thomas.

The scene at the top of the pit was indescribable. Strong men wept when they saw that what they feared had actually taken place, and with the natural affection felt for Mr. Thomas, now mingled with feelings of admiration for his heroism that dared death in order to rescue others, and grief at the loss of one of whom hundreds present considered their friend. '*Morien*,' who for many years had been acquainted with Mr. Thomas, wrote:-

"Men, whose blue-scarred faces told of a lifetime spent in the Rhondda mines, wept like little children. A vast throng encircled the pit, and every vantage point, from which a view of the ascending cage could be obtained, was occupied by a deeply sympathetic multitude. On Sunday morning Mr. Thomas was seen surrounded by his men, standing full of energy on the centre of the same cage, carrying in one hand a short iron bar, and holding between his knees a massive iron sledge, implements that might be necessary below.

He and his brave companions were descending into the midst of the most terrible perils that it is possible for the mind of man to conceive. A few short hours before that the very shaft through which they were about to descend had emitted a most awful hurricane of smoke and fire, and the same same thing might happen at any moment, for it was evident by the dense smoke ascending through the upcast that smoulding fire burnt below. But the heroic men on the cage did not falter, and they descended into the 'jaws of death,' as literally as Britannia's immortal six-hundred on the field of Balaclava.

There is an old Welsh proverb which says 'Ynmhob gwlad meir glew' (Every country breeds brave men), and one can say that Penygraig and Dinas now, as on former

occasions proved that Cambria's sons retain still the ancient heroism of the Cymric race. Shortly after Mr. Daniel Thomas's remains were brought to bank, put on a bier and carried on the shoulders of willing men. The remains were placed in the dining room and the canvas was then opened. The features bore the expression of calm repose. Thick dust was in his beard, and his face was begrimed."

Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines, Mr. Wales, gave the following tribute to this man in his official report of this disaster: - "For many years I knew Thomas well and met him under trying and dangerous circumstances and were I to allow the present opportunity to pass without publicly recording my high appreciation of his sound judgement and unselfish acts of bravery on these occasions I would not be discharging my duty to the memory of one whose name will always be dear to me and to the mining population of South Wales." The '*Western Mail*' of Wednesday, January 30th 1884 carried this report: -

BIOGRAPHY OF MR. DANIEL THOMAS
[By Morien.]

Mr. Daniel Thomas was the third son of Mr. Daniel Thomas, who during about 23 years was chief manager under the late Mr. Walter Coffin, Llandaff, and Colonel Hunt, London, of Dinas Collieries. (Daniel Thomas Snr. & and unnamed son took part in the Cymmer Colliery Disaster attempted rescues in 1856). The subject of this sketch was born on January 15, 1849, and had, therefore, at the time of his death just passed his 35th year of his age. His father descended from a race of Welsh farmers in the parish of Llantwit Vardre. His mother, who is still living, was the daughter of Mr. Edmund James and Gwen his wife, Ffrwd Amos, whose house was the centre of all that was agreeable then in the society of the neighbourhood.

When a child the writer of this sketch heard at the fireside of these happy old people many an entertaining tale relating to Ystradyfodwg and the adjacent localities in the olden time. Mr. Daniel Thomas, senior, was a man of uncommon natural abilities, and ruled supreme at Dinas, but was greatly assisted in the management by Mr. Jenkin Evans, now of Ferndale, who, in his old age, has recently translated into Welsh, and published it at the offices of Daniel Owen and Co., the philosophic work of Mr. George Coombes, the phrenologist. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas now living are Mr. Edward Thomas, Brithwennydd; Mr. Idris Thomas, Trealaw Hotel; and Mrs. Watkins, Brithwennydd Hotel; and Mrs. Rees, Glamorgan Hotel, Williamstown.

Mr. Daniel Thomas, Jun., was educated by Mr. Lloyd, Merthyr, but now of Pontypridd, a gentleman who has trained for colliery management the like majority of the Glamorgan colliery managers. I have not been able to ascertain that Mr. Daniel Thomas, jun., gave during his youthful years any striking proof that he was endowed by nature with more than ordinary abilities. He, however, was always deemed a self-willed and resolute youth; one who could form an opinion for himself, and act upon it without consulting anyone. This quality became more strikingly apparent as he advanced in life. But this quality in him did not act as a repellent, for few men had more friends. Success in life often spoils some men. When a man with a weak head gets into a carriage of his own he grows giddy and pompous, and he is ever on the alert for tokens of submission from others. He is a most miserable individual, for he is constantly fancying he is snubbed by those greater than himself, or not treated with sufficient deference by his inferiors in worldly circumstances. Few men are more to be pitied than he.

The subject of this sketch was a very different man to men of the above class. He had the gift of retaining the force of all his faculties in the midst of prosperity and successful enterprises, and none feel his loss more keenly than the friends of his youth. I am far from saying he had not his faults; let him who is without any sin cast the first stone at his memory. At an early age he became assistant to his father in the management of Brithwennydd Colliery, of which his father became proprietor after he resigned his appointment as manager of the Dinas Collieries. Subsequently, his father opened another colliery, called Brithwennydd Drift. In 1870 his father fell ill, and continued in that condition until January 27, 1872, when he died.

During the illness of the father, the sole management of the collieries devolved on this son, and he had carried on affairs with so much satisfaction to the old man that when his father's will was opened it was found that the two collieries had been bequeathed to him, but making other bequests to the other children, giving to the young manager the lion's share. This fact indicates in what estimation the old-tried manager of collieries held his young son. Soon after the death of his father the great success in the coal trade set in, and it is no secret that young Daniel during that period reaped a rich harvest. In 1875 the Brithwennydd Pit had become un-remunerative. For some reason or other the miners employed there came out on strike. Mr. Thomas on Aug. 9, 1875, decided to abandon that colliery.

Shortly after this Mr. Thomas joined Mr. Hugh Begg (now of Van, Caerphilly) and others to sink for coal on Dinas Ishaf Farm, in the Ely Valley, Mr. Begg being acting manager. Great success followed the enterprise, splendid coal being struck. Early in January 1877, Mr. Thomas engaged with his fellow-partners to work the last-named colliery, he undertaking to pay each of them a certain percentage on the gross income of coal. The colliery has continued to work successfully under these terms

down to the time of his death, his manager being Mr. Howell John, Williamstown, one of his early friends. The number of men employed there at the present time is about 200. In August, 1879, the coal in the Brithwennydd Drift became exhausted, and the place was given up. Previous to this, he, in conjunction with Mr. James Thomas, had commenced sinking for steam coal at Ynyshir, the property of the Rev. D. W. Williams, M.A., Fairfield, and Mr. Whitting, Weston-super-Mare. After coal had been struck Mr. James Thomas paid Mr Daniel Thomas £18,000 for his share in the concern, and the last named retired.

After the disastrous explosion in the Dinas Steam Coal Collieries on the 13th of January, 1879, when so many poor fellows were entombed, it was for some time feared that, owing to the terrible nature of the falls which the explosion had caused in the workings, the colliery would have to be abandoned altogether. Several skilled managers endeavoured to restore things to something like order. But so little success crowned their efforts that only eight out of the 63 dead in the pit were brought out. Great sympathy was felt for the humane proprietor, Colonel Hunt, who, notwithstanding the great loss he had sustained by the explosion, incurred enormous outlay in endeavouring to recover the dead bodies of his poor workmen and opening the collieries. On the 1st May, 1881, Mr. Daniel Thomas took the collieries under a lease from Col. Hunt. He engaged a manager of great experience, namely, Mr. John Havard, Aberdare.

It was soon made manifest that Mr. Thomas and his intrepid manager would restore the collieries to working order. By degrees the dead bodies were brought to bank and interred, and lately the number of dead brought out by them was 49, leaving six still to be recovered (eight previously recovered). A fund had been opened and about £150 subscribed, with a view to present Mr. Thomas with a testimonial in recognition of his success in bringing out the dead. This and other money that may be received will now be applied to erect a monument over his grave in the burying ground of Cymmer Independent Chapel. The funeral will take place to-morrow (Thursday), about noon, when there is little doubt an enormous number of people will attend as a last token of respect for his memory.

So successful have been the efforts of Mr. Thomas and Mr. Havard in re-opening Dinas Collieries that between 700 and 800 tons of coal per day are brought to bank, and sent away by the Taff Vale Railway. A week ago Mr. Havard resigned his appointment, but on Monday Mr. Wood (Colonel Hunt's Cardiff agent), Mr. Edmund Thomas (brother of the deceased), and Mr. Galloway sent for Mr. Havard, and the result was that he agreed to again take the management of the collieries. He was on the top of Penygraig Pit on Sunday morning when Mr. Thomas and his party descended. He refused to accompany them on the ground that it was too soon after the explosion. Some years ago Mr. Thomas married Mrs. Troyers, widow

of Captain Troyers, Cardiff. She is the daughter of Mr. Timothy Hughes, farm bailiff, Llancaiach, Llanfabon. There are no children of the marriage.

Mr. Thomas greatly distinguished himself on several occasions by his heroic efforts after colliery disasters to save human lives. His valour at the Tynewydd entombment of miners was recognised by her Majesty the Queen, who, represented by the Right Hon. Lord Aberdare on the occasion, awarded him an Albert Medal of the first class. On the same occasion he received the rare medal of the Knights Templars of Jerusalem, also the medal of the Humane Society, the three being seen on his manly breast in the portrait, which is a copy of a photograph recently taken. Mr. Daniel Thomas paid in wages at the two collieries about £5,000 a month. He was, at the time of his death, negotiating for the purchase of a moiety of interest in the Penygraig Collieries, in which the explosion took place. He was also a shareholder in the Fforch Nest Colliery.

Some anxiety is felt as to the probable effect of his death upon the future of the works with which he was connected. It may be satisfactory to know that Mr. Daniel Thomas has left a will, which, I am told, is in the hands of Messrs. Corbett, Griffiths, and Evans, solicitors, Cardiff.

Another body recovered at Dinas Pit

A body, thought to be that of Jehu Hawkins, was brought out of Dinas Pit on Monday night, January 21st 1884. The only thing that could identify him was the fact that he still had his Wiltshire farmer's boots on when he died! This is to be the last body ever recovered from the Dinas Colliery, sadly leaving **five unnamed bodies in the pit.**

Thursday, January 31st 1884

The funeral of Mr. Daniel Thomas

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' February 2nd 1884 reported: - The funeral of the lamented proprietor of Dinas colliery, who so gallantly lost his life in seeking to rescue others from death, took place punctually at the hour fixed – half-past two o'clock on Thursday, January 31st 1884 at the the Independents' Chapel, Cymmer. The coffin was covered with wreaths of lovely white flowers. The procession reached for a distance of about a mile and a half, and it is computed that there were at least 2,000 persons present, including - besides relatives and personal friends – a great number of the colliery managers of the valley. Arriving at Dinas, the procession was then joined by Lord Aberdare, the Rev. D. W. Williams, of Fairfield, and G. Williams Esq., Miskin Manor.

As the coffin passed through the dense rows of spectators – lined with mostly women – it was easy to gather through the remarks made that Mr. Daniel Thomas was loved in life and deeply lamented in death. Some persons blame him for rashness on going so soon down; but there can be no doubt he calculated on being able to go far in searching for any who might still be alive before the after-damp would come down from the upper pit. But he miscalculated the chance, was overtaken, and so met with his death. His name needs to be preserved amongst the records of noble men who have lost their own life in seeking to save others.

The funeral of Mr. Daniel Thomas

On Thursday afternoon, January 31st 1884, the mortal remains of Mr. Daniel Thomas, Dinas, were interred at the Cymmer Independent burial ground in the presence of a large concourse of people. The day was an excessively wet one, rain falling in torrents without a moment's cessation from morning until evening. Yet this did not deter the Right Hon. Lord Aberdare from attending as a token of respect for the memorial of "Daniel Bach."

There were also present Mr. Gwilym Williams, Stipendiary Magistrate, Miskin Manor; The Rev. D. W. Williams, M.A.,. Fairfield; Mr. George Griffiths, Cardiff; Dr. Henry Naunton Davies; Mr. Moses Rowland and Mr. M. R. Rowland, Penygraig; Mr. Thomas Jones, Maindee House, Ynyshir; Mr. Williams Jenkins, Ystradfechan; Mr. Ivor Lewis, Cymmer; Mr. M. R. Williams, Pontypridd; Mr. James Thomas, Ynyshir, Mr. Mathias and Mr. Parker, Ynyshir; Mr. Idris Williams and Mr. John Griffiths, Porth; Mr. John Havard, manager, Dinas; and most of the other colliery managers throughout the valley.

No religious service was held at the house before starting, as is usual at Welsh funerals. But on the night before the various religious bodies held an united prayer meeting at the late home of the deceased, when the Rev. Mr. Rees (curate) and the Revs. Richards and T. George attended. The coffin of the deceased was in the drawing room on the ground floor of the residence, and on the lid were laid very beautiful floral wreaths.

One was from Colonel and Mrs. Davies, Romney Castle, and attached was a mourning card bearing the words, "He would dare to lead if others dared to follow," and beneath this the ancient Welsh motto, " A fyno Duw a fydd," in English this means, "What God wills will be," but the beautiful euphony of the original is lost in the translation. Another wreath, composed of frosted flowers with snowdrops, was from Mrs. Evans, ironmonger, Pontypridd. There was a wreath and

a fine floral cross from Mrs. Bellisario, 61 Lightburne Place, Cardiff, and a fine wreath from Mrs. Rees, Butchers' Arms.

At Cymmer Chapel Mr. Gwilym Williams, Miskin, placed on the coffin on behalf of Mrs. Williams and himself, a magnificent floral wreath. The workmen of all the neighbouring works went to work at 3 o'clock on Thursday morning, and left at 1 o'clock that afternoon for the purpose of attending the funeral. At half-past-two, the melancholy cortège departed. The coffin was of a polished oak, and was placed on a plain bier and carried on the shoulders of the workmen. There was not even a pall covering the coffin, but simply the magnificent wreaths arranged in the form of a cross.

The procession, not withstanding the continuous downpour, was nearly half-a-mile in length, and in it were many women and young girls. Next to the coffin were the brothers and nephews of the deceased. Then came the carriage conveying the widow of the departed and her friends. Other carriages followed, one containing the female relatives of the deceased. Then came a vast throng of working men, followed by Dr. Henry Naunton Davies's carriage, drawn by a pair of horses.

In a carriage rode the Right. Hon, Lord Aberdare, Mrs. Thomas (the aged mother), and Rev. D. W. Williams, Fairfield. Long before the bier reached Cymmer the throng had become largely augmented by people coming to meet the funeral from the lower parts of the valley. At Cymmer bridge the vast concourse walking in front divided into long lines on each side of the road, and through this the procession slowly passed. From this spot to the chapel the road was lined by deeply sympathetic people, the major portion being workmen. The relatives of the deceased were the first to be admitted to the large chapel. Then the general public, including Lord Aberdare and other gentlemen followed. The coffin was not taken into the chapel, but was left in the lobby. The Rev. T. George commenced the service by reading a portion of the 9th chapter of Ecclesiastics, after which the Rev. Evans, Bodryngallt, gave out the hymn: -

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah
Pilgrim through this barren land,
I am weak, but thou art mighty
Guide me with Thy Powerful Hand,
Bread of Heaven,
Feed me now and evermore.

This was sung with wonderful pathos by the huge congregation. The Rev. T. George then offered up a prayer in Welsh. This being over with the Rev. Mr. Evans commenced giving out another English hymn, presumably to enable Lord Aberdare to take part in the service. It was, however, hurriedly conveyed to Mr. Evans that his lordship preferred a Welsh hymn to be sung. This was publicly announced by the preacher, who gave out the magnificent Welsh funeral hymn: -

Bydd myrdd o rhyfeddodau	There'll be a myriad of wonders
Ar doriad boreu wawr	When dawns the morning grey
Pan ddelo plant y tonau	And resurrections children
Yn iach o'r cystudd mawr;	Awake to endless day
Holl yn ei gynau gwynion,	All robed in snowy garments
Ac ar eu newydd wedd,	With new-borne radiance shed,
Yn debyg i'dd en Harglwydd	Resembling their redeemer
Yn dod i'r lan o'r bedd	When he comes back from the dead.

(Translation Mr. D. Ellis, Albion Colliery 1894)

It is impossible to convey a proper idea of the touching pathos which this wonderful Welsh hymn was rendered by the congregation, composed principally of deliverers of coal, with their wives and daughters and many eyes, before the singing was over, wore unmistakable traces of deep emotion.

The Rev. Mr. Evans then took for his text, Book of Job, XXXVlll, 17., "Have the gates of death opened unto thee? Or has thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" After an eloquent sermon in reference to the hope of a future life, reference to the late Mr. Daniel Thomas, the preacher remarked that those present had lost a notable relation. Mr. Thomas must have been a noble man. He proved himself possessed of this characteristic by his valuable service, in common with colliers, at the Tynewydd accident; by his noble, generous, skilful, and successful efforts to get the mortal remains of his poor fellow creatures at the Dinas Collieries, and by his readiness and promptitude in descending on Sunday last into the Penygraig colliery.

He had gone beyond the gates through the doors of the shadow of death. Let them prepare to follow there. The Rev. Benjamin Davies of Treorchy, also addressed the congregation. He referred to the heroic self-sacrifice which had characterised the conduct of the departed, and intimated that probably a monument would be erected to commemorate his good qualities. The treasurer of the monument committee is Mr. William Roberts, Penygraig, and the secretary is Mr. L. Jones,

Dinas schools. After the usual ceremony at the grave, which was lined with brick, the vast throng separated. It has been made public that Mr. Daniel Thomas has bequeathed all his possessions to his widow absolutely. The will was executed in 1875. Mrs. Thomas has received a large number of letters; some from people of high position, expressing deep sympathy with her in her bereavement.

Friday, February 1st 1884

The funeral of Edward Watkins

On Friday afternoon, February 1st 1884, the funeral of Mr. Edward Watkins, (also known as 'Ned Aberdare Inn' after where he was born), overman at the Dinas Colliery, also killed bravely attempting rescue at the Penygraig Colliery, took place at Zoar Baptist Chapel, Ffrwd Amos. The coffin bore many beautiful wreaths of choice flowers. At the chapel the Revs Jones and T. George officiated. The chapel was crowded with friends and neighbours of the departed, proceedings, as might be expected, were of the most solemn description. All seemed awed in the presence of a terrible grief.

The deepest sympathy was felt for the widow and her seven little ones of the departed who were dressed in deep mourning. In the chapel burying ground an incident occurred of the most touching description. As pretty little daughter of the deceased, who is about 10 years of age, was led between friends to look down upon the grave and her father's coffin, she became terribly excited. The moment she saw it she fell back with an expression of terror in her countenance and uttered several agonising wails and said, "My father, my father." Strong men trembled with emotion, and there was not a dry eye in the house.

The bereaved family were taken to a cab, where in the midst of her little orphaned children, the poor mother fainted, as she had done previously in the chapel. This family deserve the special attentions of the benevolent. The address of Mrs. Watkins is Fymer, Dinas. Watkins had left the country for America after the Dinas explosion of 1879 some years ago, and returned about eighteen months since. Bred and born at a roadside Inn, near the Penygraig Colliery - in the Adare Inn – he and his family were well known in the district, his brother, Mr. Richard Watkins, being the landlord of the Greyhound Inn, Pontypridd. Operations recommenced at the Dinas Colliery on Saturday, February 2nd 1884.

Dreadful accident at Dinas Colliery

On Wednesday afternoon, February 6th 1884, a workman named John Jones, sinker, living at Penygraig, met with his death under the following circumstances at Dinas Pit. He was descending the shaft from the four-foot seam to the six-foot seam, a

distance of 39 yards, when the rope broke, and the poor fellow fell to the bottom and was killed on the spot. The rope was worked on a windlass by two men.

The following week at the Butchers' Arms in Penygraig before Mr. E. B. Reece, coroner, an inquiry into the death of John Jones, contractor, Dinas, was held. Mr. E. W. Randall deputy-inspector of mines, was present, and also Mr. W. Abraham (Mabon). Jones had met his death through the breakage of a carriage rope while he was descending the shaft in one of the Dinas Colliery veins. Evidence called showed that it was a ¾ inch rope; that had been given out by the late Mr. Daniel Thomas, and had been in use only very recently. It had been tested at Cardiff, but not did seem to have been examined at the colliery, a circumstance on which the Coroner commentated.

Mr. Randall stated that the rope appeared to be of good quality, though he considered it would have been better if it been a one inch or one and a quarter inch rope, considering the depth at which the trial shaft was being worked. Mr. Abraham inquired that was it not the duty of some colliery official to test the rope. Mr. Randall thought it was.

Mr. Havard, the manager, who had tested the portion of rope remaining unbroken, said that his examination had confirmed his view he previously held. Mr. E. Thomas concurred in that opinion. The jury returned a verdict "that the deceased died an accidental death, and the rope was defective."

Meanwhile, the tributes to Daniel Thomas continued and the following letter appeared in a local newspaper on February 9th 1884: -

The late Mr. Daniel Thomas

To the editor of the '*Pontypridd Chronicle*,'
February 9th 1884

Sir. – "Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him well," were the memorable words spoken by the immortal Prince of Denmark on beholding the skull of him who he had loved so dearly; such were the thoughts that came vividly to my mind on Thursday last as I gazed upon the cold and placid features of Daniel Thomas; brave unto death, bravest of the brave, the hero of heroes, the most determined of the determined,

one of the finest specimens of grand man that had ever graced or adorned the land of Llewellin, the last and noblest Prince of British blood.

It would be superfluous for me to attempt to emulate the many many deeds of valour and self-sacrifice displayed by the late "Daniel Bach," as he was familiarly styled. The only first-class Albert medallist colliery proprietor or manager I believe in Wales, if not in England. Beyond all human doubt there was a future of more greatness in store for him had he lived longer.

Although he died at the early age of 35 years, scarcely in his prime, he had accomplished enough to win for him the respect and everlasting gratitude of his fellow countrymen, beside recording an enviable and unprecedented name in the history of British coalfields. He had great force of character, quiet, unassuming, generally speaking in an undertone, invariably cool and collected.

Once he had formed a plan, like the great Napoleon, he was immensely determined to carry that plan out against hazards, risks, or opposition. He had a strong will, a will of his own; who formed his own opinions, and stuck with them with a striking tenacity. His energy was something marvellous, his courage was undaunted.

He was a good master, a keen and successful speculator, possessing a great capacity for managing and for selecting shrewd and comprehensive officials to assist him. He lies in the quite and unpretentious old churchyard in Cymmer, in the grave of his honoured father, "Hen Daniel o'r Dinas," respected founder of the house of Thomas.

Oh! Daniel, Daniel, the man, the brother;
And art thou gone, and gone for ever,
And hast thou crossed that unknown river,
Life's dreary bound
Like thee where shall I find another?
The world around? - Burns.

Yours sincerely
Thomas P. Jenkins, confectioner, Tonypandy.

The late Mr. Daniel Thomas – Letter from the Queen to Lord Aberdare

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*', of February 16th 1884 reported: - The following is a copy of a letter received by Lord Aberdare from the Queen's private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, K.C.B.: -

Dear Lord Aberdare *- I have laid your letter reporting the death of Daniel Thomas before the Queen. Her majesty expressed the warmest admiration for his gallant conduct and contempt of danger in trying to save the lives of others, as described by you. The Queen asks you to convey her sincere regret and sympathy to his relations in the death of so brave and worthy man.*

Yours very truly
Sir Henry Ponsonby

Lord Aberdare proposed that he paid for a portrait of Daniel Thomas to be painted and placed somewhere like the Pontypridd Town hall.

The Dinas Collieries sold

The '*Western Mail*' of the same date reported: - We understand that Mr. Edmund Thomas (Daniel's brother), one of the late firm of Thomas & Griffiths, formerly proprietors of the Globe Collieries, and Mr. Llewellin Wood, of the firm Coffin &Co. (Cardiff), have purchased from the widow of the late Daniel Thomas, the Dinas Collieries, and will take possession of such on Monday next, March 31st 1884.

As some workmen were repairing the Dinas Pit in late July 1884 a stone fell on David Lewis's shoulder injuring him so severely that several ribs were broken, and his arm had to be amputated at the shoulder.

Drunk at Dinas Colliery

On Monday, September 22nd 1884, the night engineman at the Dinas Pit left his post for a period and when he returned he was accompanied by Henry Isaac. Both were drunk. Isaac set the engine running and could not stop it. The cage came up and smashed the top. The cage fell back down, but luckily, not to the bottom, as it got caught on a broken guide. The defendants would have to pay £5 damages between them, and Rees in addition was fined £2 and costs, and Isaac 10/- and costs. Mr. Ignatious Williams, Stipendiary Magistrate said that he considered Rees by far the worse of the two, and he could only look upon it as though God's Providence that life was not lost.

The memorial to the late Daniel Thomas at Dinas
Unveiling ceremony by Lord and Lady Aberdare - By '*Morien'*

On Thursday afternoon, October 2nd 1884 the Right Honourable Lord Aberdare, accompanied by Lady Aberdare, unveiled the monument erected by public subscription in memory of the late Mr. Daniel Thomas, in the new cemetery at Lled-ar-ddu, near Dinas, and within the view of the house where the lamented Mr. Daniel Thomas was born. There were also present the Mayor of Cardiff (Mr. Bird), Mr. Lewis Williams, Cardiff; Mr. Edmund Thomas, Lamylai, Llantrisant; Mr. Isaiah Thomas and Mr. Idris Thomas (brothers of the departed), Dr. Henry N. Davies, Dr. Evan Davies, and Dr. Charles H. Jones (Tonypandy), Mr. Josiah Lewis, (Tyn-y-Cymmer), and Mr. Dunn; Williams Roberts, Moses R. Rowlands, Moses Morgan, Daniel Thomas (Nephew of the deceased), Moses Rees, Ishmael Williams, Mr. Havard (the deceased's colliery manager), &co. The members of the memorial committee were present. The late Mr. Moses Rowland was the original chairman. After his lamented death the Rev. H. W. Hughes, Preswylfe, Ffrwd-Amos, was appointed to the office; Mr. William Roberts, Frwyd-Amos, was the treasurer, and Mr. John Jones, Dinas Schools, secretary.

The monument is of Sicilian marble, and it is 10 foot in height, with a pedestal of Forest of Dean stone, which is five foot in diameter. The area in which the centre of the monument stands is 27 foot square, and it is enclosed by elaborate iron railings, which were supplied by Messrs. J. T. & A. W. Wood, Castle Foundry, Caerphilly. On the front of the monument is a medallion portrait of Mr. Daniel Thomas wearing the Albert Medal awarded to him by her Majesty the Queen and the medals of the Knights Templars and the Humane Society. On another panel is the following inscription:-

"This monument was erected by public subscription, as a tribute to the humanity and courage displayed by him on the following occasions. The inundation of the Tynewydd Colliery in April, 1877, by which nine men were entombed ten days. He received from her Majesty the Queen the Albert Medal of the first class; also the medal of the Knights Templars of Jerusalem, and of the Humane Society. Through his skill and valour he recovered during the years 1881 and 1883 the bodies of 49 miners out of 63 who lost their lives at the Dinas colliery explosion January 13 1879. He succumbed to the after-damp in his attempt to rescue the ten men who were in

the pit when the terrible explosion took place at the Naval Colliery, Penygraig, January 27, 1884."

Then the centre of another medallion, bordered by laurel leaves is the following inscription: *In memory of Daniel Thomas, Esq.; proprietor of the Dinas Collieries, born January 16, 1849. Died January 27, 1884, and was buried at the Independents' Chapel, Cymmer.*

The cost of the monument and its surroundings, when everything is completed, will be about £200. It should be stated the funds were the nucleus collected for a handsome testimonial intended to be presented to him for his humane conduct in recovering the dead, which had been abandoned, from Dinas Pit. It is well known in the district that he incurred great expense in this task.

After his death the committee decided to apply the funds to defray the expenses of a monument to perpetuate the memory of his disinterested valour and kindness of heart. One touching fact in relation to him should not be left unrecorded. The spot upon which the monument stands, and beneath which many remains found in Dinas Pit are interred, was selected by himself for their grave. He little thought then it would be the site of his own monument.

Throughout Thursday morning rain had been falling steadily, and the prospect of the meeting in the cemetery on the open mountain side was a dreary one. But about the time the train from Pontypridd with the visitors was due at Pandy station, above which the cemetery is situated, the sun came out, but a stiff breeze continued to blow along the hillside.

Lord and Lady Aberdare and the other visitors mentioned above were welcomed at Pandy station by a large crowd, who accompanied them up the rugged and slippery path in the direction of the cemetery. Everybody was most agreeably surprised to see that Lady Aberdare had braved the wind and rain "to do honour to Daniel Bach." I heard a collier remarking warmly in Welsh in reference to the visit of her Ladyship, "she is a Napier, and deeds of valour have a fascination for the heroic race from which her ladyship sprang."

The Rev. W. H. Hughes was elected to preside over the meeting. Chairs were placed within the enclosure, but everyone present seemed to be too much moved

to think of sitting in them. Mr. Hughes said that he now called upon his Lordship to to address the large throng surrounding the railings of the monument and unveil the monument. His Lordship stood bare-headed, and the wind played with his silver hair.

A fine view presented itself to his Lordship. The deep valleys above and below the spot where he stood were dotted with collieries. On each side rose the majestic mountains, the rugged sides of which bore the variegated tints of autumn. The large multitude listened with deep solemnity to the eloquent language of him who today is the principal medium of communication between Wales and the higher circles of English public life. His Lordship spoke with great deliberation and emphasis, and occasionally a quivering of the voice and a softening expression of the eyes spoke of a heart deeply moved.

Lord Aberdare then performed the ceremony, and said it was with feeling of very sad, but very sincere satisfaction that he took part in the proceedings of that day. It had been his privilege to attend the funeral of the excellent and brave man in whose honour the monument was erected, and a more impressive scene he never witnessed. It was grand, indicating as it did, that their sorrow was deep, sincere and manifest.

They were met that day to unveil a monument that was intended to perpetuate the name and the brave and noble work of the friend who had gone from them. He used the word perpetuate because it was the only one that occurred to him. But in this world they knew nothing was perpetual. The monuments erected to commemorate the deeds of honoured men decayed and crumbled, and the very names were forgotten of men who had filled a large space in the world's history. They could not, therefore, expect that the name of Daniel Thomas should be perpetuated in that sense of the word, but his (Lord Aberdare's) sincere belief was this, that although the name might perish the good influence of deeds like those of Mr. Thomas was perpetuated in the hearts of the people – they were handed down from father to son from generation to generation; and a good deed once perpetuated was like a wave of air, once moved it never ceased. (Hear, hear.)

It was right and just they should pay a tribute of respect to the the memory of a man who they mourned and whom in life they admired. The act, the daring act, in which Daniel Thomas lost his life was by no means the first – it was the crowning

deed of a brave life. Whatever danger was to be faced, wherever lives were to be saved, in a district, alas, in which dangers were but too often found, and lives but too often imperilled, there was Daniel Thomas to be found, and always in the front rank.

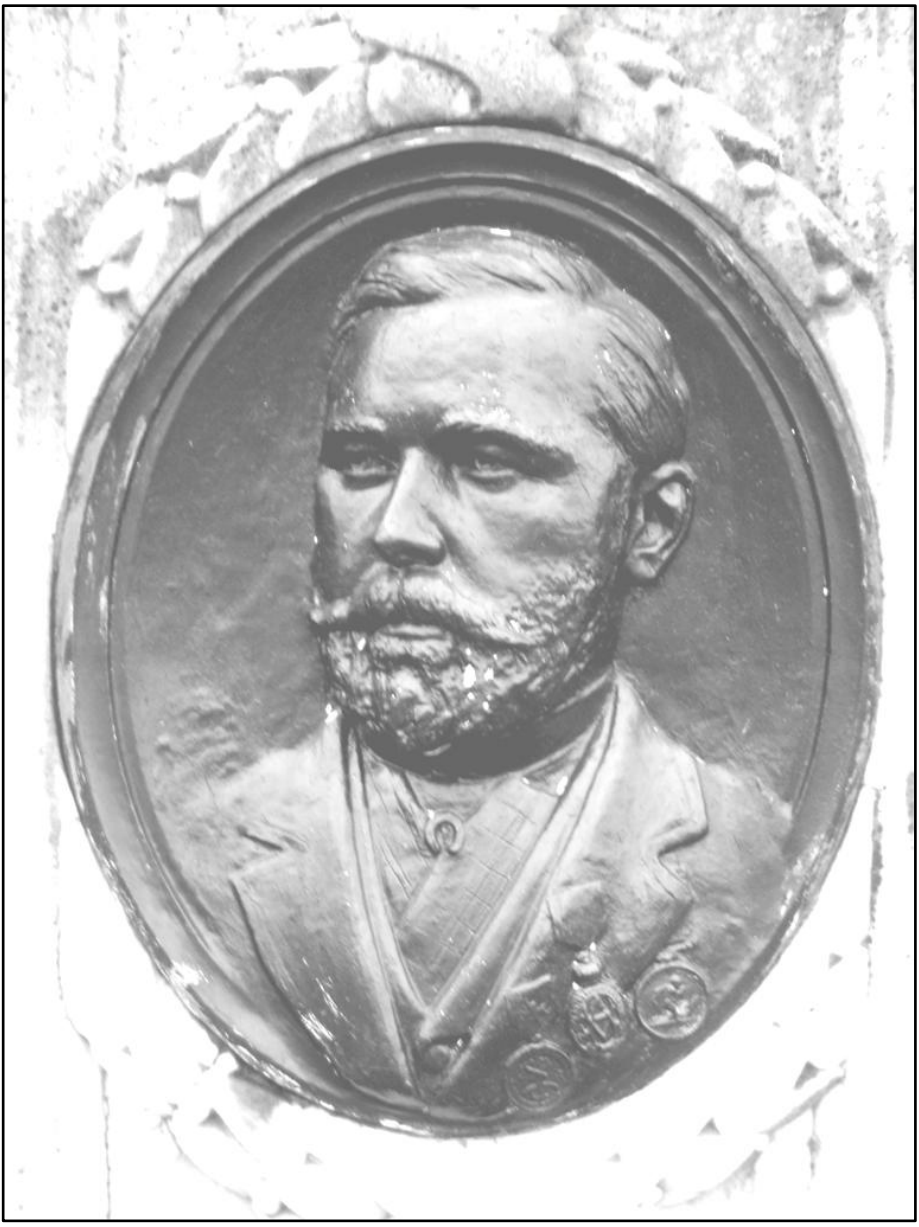
And he might say this with respect to those acts of valour committed down in the dark caverns of the earth – acts of valour usually committed in the open air, in the face of the sun, and before the enthusiastic admiration of thousands of lookers on; but the man who went down into the dark caverns of the earth to imperil his own life to save the lives of others did so knowing that in those dark and narrow ways which he traversed death might come at any moment, and with no applauding thousands to cheer him with their enthusiasm he risked his life with the sole desire of saving the life of those amongst whom he had lived and amongst whom he had worked.

He knew that there were among them many brave men ready to imperil their lives for their fellow-creatures. He had lived too long in that district not to know that whenever an accident happened by which lives were lost and others were supposed to be imperilled there were amongst them managers, agents, and others ready to go down to endeavour to rescue life. He knew that. But why was it that they were doing this special honour to Daniel Thomas? Not because he was the only one who had been ever ready, but because they thought he was, if not the bravest, one of the bravest among all the brave men. (Hear, hear.)

He and they remembered the long agony which they and the whole country endured when those nine colliers were shut up in the Tynewydd Colliery; and they would, probably, remember that it was his (the speaker's) privilege and duty, imposed upon him by the Queen, to inquire into the relative merits of those who had been instrumental is saving life on that occasion. They were happy to be able to distribute rewards to many, but he was of the opinion that two specially deserved the highest reward and one of those two was Daniel Thomas.

His reason was, not that Daniel Thomas was the bravest, but he was always foremost, and his spirit pervaded others – (Hear, hear.) – and he had a right to recognition as a leader of men. (Hear, hear.)

Monument to Daniel Thomas & unknown victims at Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery



Portrait of Daniel Thomas on his memorial at the Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery

It was not only at Tynewydd - not only at the colliery where he lost his life either - that he showed great courage, he showed equal courage and the depth of tenderness in his nature which was always united with courage, that sympathy for his fellow-countrymen in his actions in connection with his own colliery at Dinas. They knew that.

The result of that wretched accident, bringing wreck and ruin in its train, was that a large number of bodies were buried, and there was almost no hope of their recovery. When, some two years afterwards, Mr. Daniel Thomas undertook the conduct of the colliery, he, instead of working his heading forward as he might have done, leaving the bodies where they were, commenced, at considerable sacrifice, risk, and cost, to dig out what remained of the victims of that explosion, to give to their families and surviving friends the satisfaction of seeing those whom they loved honoured with a Christian burial.

They had the names of those, at all events, who were buried in this cemetery recorded on this monument. He (the noble Lord), must say he considered that it was a most fitting place that the monument should be erected over the grave of those whom he had recovered, and among those he had rescued in his gallant and self-sacrificing spirit. Acts like those had endeared the name of Daniel Thomas to the people of this country, and especially those of Cwm Rhondda. Such deeds deserved to be perpetuated. (Hear, hear.)

They hoped Daniel Thomas was elsewhere receiving a reward for good deeds done upon earth. It was right, not only from a sentiment of gratitude, but in the interest of mankind, that such deeds should be perpetuated. (Hear, hear.) He (the speaker) repeated that he felt sure the influence of Daniel Thomas and the honour they did his name would serve to create a desire in others to emulate the noble example of self-sacrifice he set, and that men would not be wanted in Cwm Rhondda or elsewhere inspired by the same bravery and the same true and genuine courage as that which distinguished Daniel Thomas. (Hear, hear.) In conclusion, he thanked those who had conducted this movement to a successful issue for inviting him to be present to express the genuine feelings of his heart for the man so good, so brave, and so honoured as Daniel Thomas (Hear, hear.)

The Mayor of Cardiff was next called upon to speak. His worship said in the course of his remarks that, looking upon the record upon the monument, he noticed that

Mr. Thomas was cut off very early in life. To all human appearances a noble life had prematurely been lost to the world. But life was not measured by years or days, but by noble deeds – by the good they could put into life while they had it.

Now, he could conceive of no man to have put truer deeds into a life so comparatively short than Mr. Daniel Thomas. He trusted, as the noble Lord had said, that the commemoration of the deeds of such in life would tend to inspire others to emulate the noble example, the spirit of self-denial and the self-sacrifice which had at last cost Mr. Thomas his life. As Lord Aberdare had said, they in this district were too conversant with scenes of loss of life, and they could only hope Mr. Daniel Thomas's memory would serve as an incentive to others to noble deeds in like circumstances. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Lewis Williams, Cardiff, who next spoke, said that he had been thinking, whilst looking upon that tablet, that Daniel Thomas's memory was engraved on something better than marble - on the hearts of the thousands of working men and women, and even the children of those Rhonddaites. (Hear, hear.)

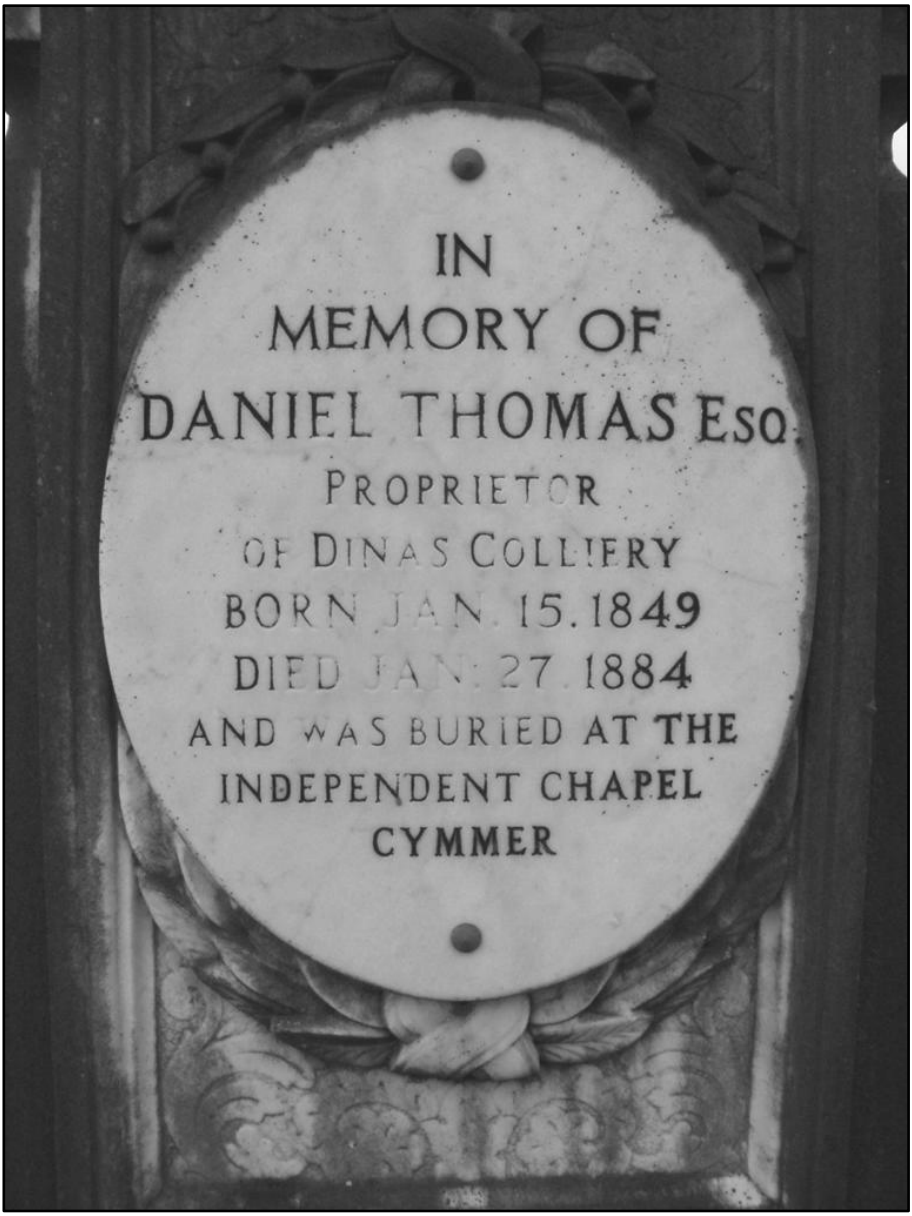
He believed "Daniel Bach," as he was familiarly called, lived a life of unselfishness. Often did he speak to him of the dangers he frequently incurred, but his reply was always, "How can I stand aside when the men are in danger?" (Hear, hear.) Such lives were a blessing wherever they were lived. He was glad to find that the employers were not all away from the district; some still lived amongst the men, striving like their friends there to uplift the welfare of the men.

The Rev. T. George, Dinas, proposed a vote of thanks to Lord and Lady Aberdare for attending, and to his Lordship especially in unveiling the monument and for his excellent address. In the course of a stirring Welsh speech, the Rev. Gentleman dwelt upon the fact that the money expended upon the monument was first collected for the purpose of presenting to Mr. Daniel Thomas a testimonial during his lifetime. When his life was, however, lost in his brave attempt to rescue his fellow men at Penygraig Colliery, after the explosion there, it was decided to erect a monument to him. The speaker most sincerely echoed the sentiments already expressed concerning Mr. Thomas's bravery and self-sacrifice. Mr. Evan Richards seconded the motion.

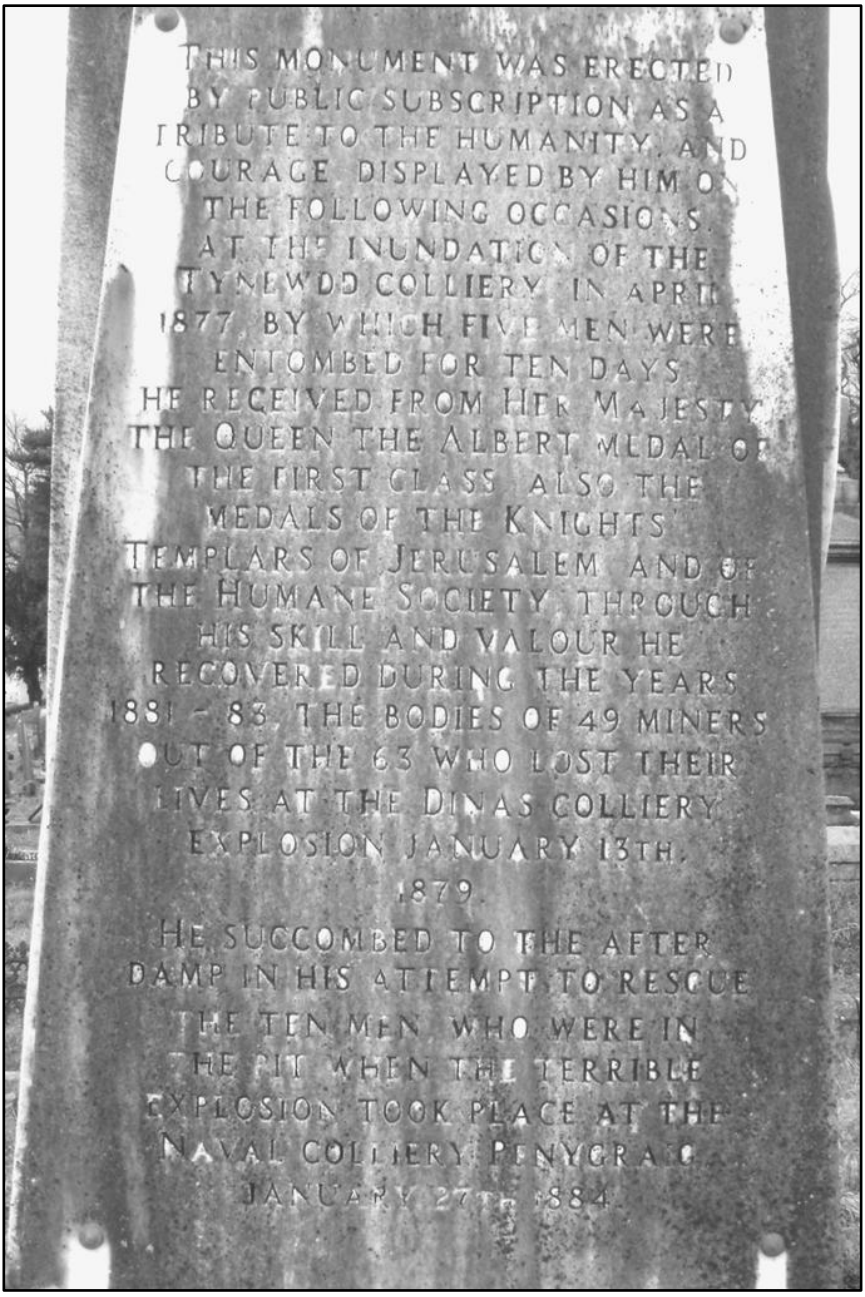
The resolution was put and carried in silence, the assembly simply lifting their hats. Lord Aberdare in replying said that Lady Aberdare had had the pleasure of making Mr. Daniel Thomas's acquaintance at Dyffryn shortly after the Tynewydd rescue, and was struck with his simple and modest demeanour, and she had followed his career after. She was as ready as he was to come that day. (Hear, hear.) The proceedings then concluded. The striking scene was, at the close, photographed by Mr. Thomas Forrest, Pontypridd.

In 2005/6, the body of Daniel Thomas was dug up and re-interred into a mass grave at the Cymmer Independent Chapel, due to the the new Porth bypass.

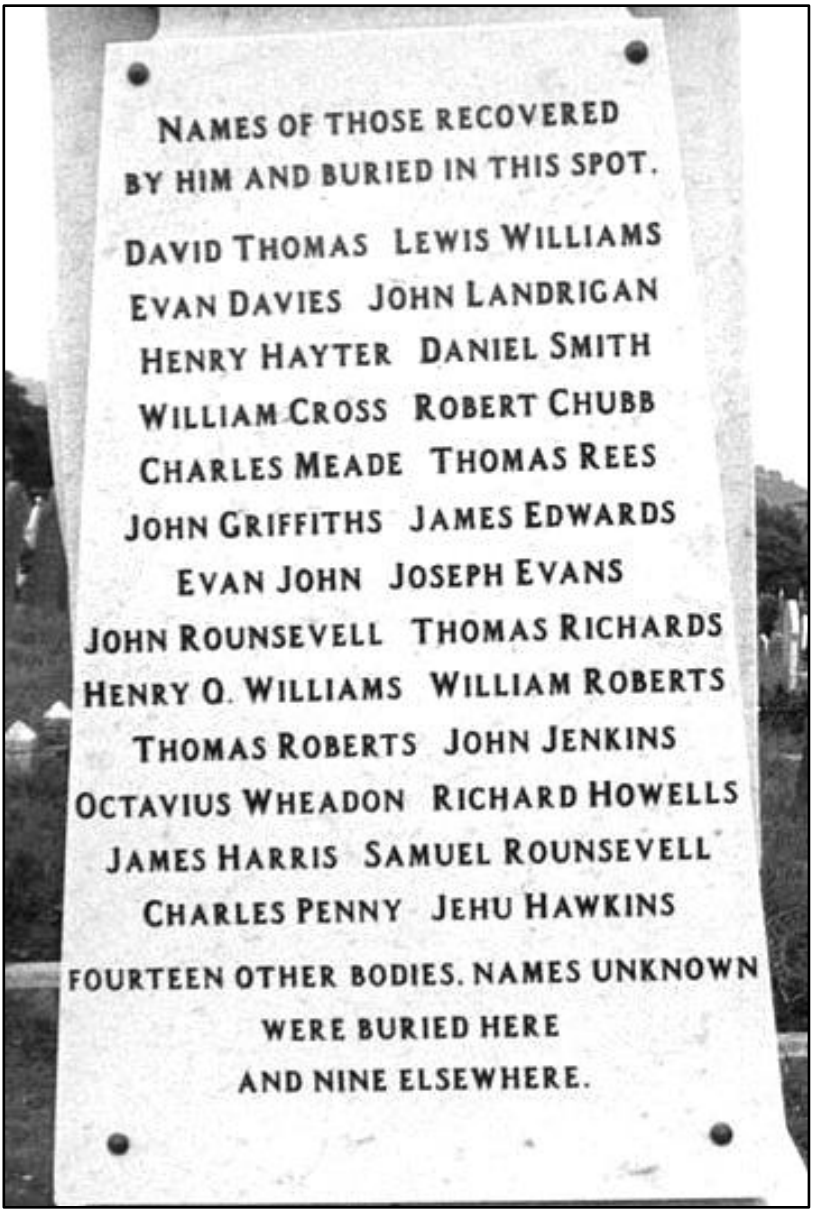
Daniel Thomas



Inscription at Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery on the memorial to Daniel Thomas and those who died at the Dinas Colliery disaster.



Inscription on the monument at Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery



A list of those buried underneath the Daniel Thomas memorial stone at the Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery (Trealaw).

Chapter Fourteen

Reported change of managers at Dinas Colliery

The '*Western Mail*,' of Thursday, November 13th 1884 reported: - A change in the management of this extensive colliery is said to be about to take place. It will be recollected that at the time of Mr. Daniel Thomas's untimely death, at Penygraig, he was in full possession of Dinas Colliery. And having by a great outlay, and with the invaluable assistance of Mr. Havard, the under-manager, re-opened the workings left in a state of chaos by the explosion, they were, at the time he was killed, able to turn out daily about 700 tons of coal.

Immediately after his death, his brother, namely, Mr. Edmund Thomas, Lanelay, Llantrisant, came to terms with Mr. Daniel Thomas's widow and assumed the control of the colliery. He then proceeded to form a company himself, his sons taking a one-third interest in the concern.

It is reported in the neighbourhood, and the report seems to be true, that the majority of the shareholders decided to take the management of the late Mr. Daniel Thomas's colliery out of the hands of the brother. The majority of the shareholders have only a short time been connected with the colliery. Several unsuccessful attempts had been made to re-open the colliery before the matter was taken in hand by heroic "Little Dan," as was he was familiarly called by his friends.

In 1887 Lieutenant Colonel Hunt (Dinas) and Mr. Wood, Colonel Hunt's agent at Cardiff; and a Mr. Gregson, were the chief members of the New Naval Colliery Company that purchased the Penygraig Collieries from the Naval Colliery Company, who themselves had suffered serious explosions in 1880 and 1884.

Miraculous escape of a boy at Dinas Colliery – a fall of ninety feet

On Saturday evening, February 4th 1889, a boy named John Morris, of 178, Concrete Houses, Dinas, fell down a 'drop-pit' in Dinas Colliery. The boy fell to the bottom, a distance of 30 yards. He was soon found and conveyed home. Mr. Evan Davies, surgeon, attended, and, after a careful examination found that not a single fracture had taken place, and, although the boy was badly shaken, good hopes are entertained of his recovery.

1890

Fatal accident at the Dinas Colliery - two lives lost

On Saturday afternoon, March 8th 1890, two lives were lost at the Dinas Colliery. It appears that as William Lewis, Dinas, and William Hughes, of Trealaw, were leaving the colliery a large fall of roof took place, completely burying the poor fellows. The mass of stuff by which they were covered was so great that the work of extrication occupied five hours. It needless to state that life was extinct in each case. The two men, who were said to have been experienced and trusted workmen, were engaged as repairers. They were both married and leave widow and large families.

Alarming inundation at Dinas Colliery – 350 men in peril

On Friday morning, June 27th 1890, an alarming incident occurred at the great steam collieries, Dinas, in the Rhondda Valley. The collieries consist of No. 3 (abandoned, the coal having been exhausted), Four-Feet, Six Feet and Nine-Feet seams. The No. 3 old workings, communicate with the Penygraig section of that seam, which, owing to a fault in the strata, has been thrown up a great many yards. Above that, again, is the No. 2 seam workings at Penygraig, and the natural water of the last named seam has been pouring into the abandoned No. 3 old workings, and from them into the Dinas No. 3 old workings.

It can safely be said that the two old workings at Penygraig and Dinas comprise 1,500 acres, and that they are full of water. The Dinas shafts pass down through all the measures into the great Nine-Feet seam, the depth of the shafts being about 500 yards. About 86 yards from the surface they pass the entrance into the old No. 3 workings. About 11 o'clock on Monday morning the vast accumulation of water in the Dinas and Penygraig working found an outlet into the great Dinas shafts, passing into the Four, Six, and Nine-Feet seams like a mill current down along the sides of the walling of the shafts.

There were in the interior of the workings in the Four, Six, and Nine-Feet seams at least 350 men and boys, and, naturally, the greatest anxiety was felt by the officials. Scenes of wild commotion ensued, but everybody reached the surface safely. The downpour of waters soon increased in volume, and at the time of writing the accumulation below gains on the powerful engines, which are pumping the water up with the upmost activity. Work, will, of course, be entirely suspended until all danger has been satisfactorily dealt with.

1891

This was a year that would see several court cases that went against the proprietors of the Dinas Collieries, which ended in them paying extra royalties for every tram of coal, and this, combined with the low price of coal generally, was sounding the death knell for this famous workplace.

Jones v Dinas Steam Colliery Company
Decision on tipping colliery rubbish

On Thursday, January 22nd 1891, at the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice, Justice Romer decided an important point of law to the actions brought by the plaintiffs to restrain the defendants company for tipping certain colliery rubbish upon the surface of certain lands demeaned under two leases of 1810 and 1840. The defendants contention was that the leases gave power to the defendants to work home and foreign coal and to deposit the rubbish, as they had been doing, on the land.

The plaintiffs, on the contrary, submitted that defendants were acting wrongly, and were committing damage by covering acres of land with rubbish. Under these circumstances the question came, and was argued by Mr. Ford for the plaintiffs and Mr. James for the defendants. Mr. Justice Romer held that by the construction of the leases no such power as that claimed by the defendants was given, and he accordingly decided the point of law against the defendants.

'*Morien*' in the '*Western Mail*' of Wednesday June 17th 1891 wrote:- Mr. Walter Coffin passed away, leaving his niece, Miss Williams, London, sister to Mr. Arthur Williams M.P; his principal heir. Lieutenant Colonel Hunt became the sub-lessee, and continued to work the collieries.

He was succeeded by the late Mr. Daniel Thomas Junior, who lost his life at the Penygraig explosion. He was succeeded by the present energetic Dinas Coal Company. During Colonel Hunt's immediate connections with the colliery, the great steam-coal measures were struck by sinking the old shaft to a depth of 400 yards. It is stated that Miss Williams, alone, derives £5,000 per annum as royalties from the collieries, a portion being derived from the coal under the Dinas farm and the other portion from coal under Graigddu and Waunddu Farms.

The late Mr. Morgan David left three grand-daughters, namely, Mrs. Ishmael Williams, Waunddu, (commonly called Gwaun Adda); Mrs. Thomas, Carnygelyn,

and the late Mrs. David Jones, Graigddu. All they had received and are receiving from the collieries is the original £50 and 30 sack loads of coal.

Naturally, the family had fretted at the unequal shares deriving from the coal under their lands. Some few years ago Mr. David Jones, Graigddu, prevented a certain water-course from running in a certain direction. Litigation was the result. He, luckily, went to Messrs. Walter, Morgan, Rhys. Mr. Morgan himself examined the deeds and saw there was no permission in the original contract between Mr. Walter Coffin and Mr. David Jones to convey the tip rubbish from other underground workings than those under Graigddu lands on to the surface of Graigddu lands.

Proceedings commenced in the higher courts and in some preliminary proceedings Mr. Justice Romer decided in favour of the Graigddu family. The case was fully to be heard on Tuesday. Meanwhile Miss Williams and Mr. Hunt's representatives came to the assistance of the Dinas Company, and, agreed to pay the Graigddu family some hundreds of pounds per annum from 1885 for way-leave and permission to tip rubbish on Graigddu lands.

Had the Dinas Company lost the trial, it is stated that all the men would have been discharged and the work stopped. It can hardly be believed that notwithstanding the thousands per annum by way of royalties which are received by the original lessees and who obtained a sub-lease from Mr. Walter Coffin, they have positively done nothing for the place.

Neither a cottage hospital, a place of worship, nor a reading room or library has been provided by these lessees. Heavy account will have to be settled some day for this excessive selfishness and want of consideration on account of those "who toil not, neither do they spin;" for the industrious thousands who create their wealth in hourly danger of death in its most awful form.

The late Mr. Walter Coffin and Miss Caroline Williams

Since the death of Walter Coffin, upwards of 20 years ago, Miss Caroline Williams, his niece, "has," I am informed, "received substantial royalties," but, "they are a mere trifle when compared with the vast income from royalties due mainly to Mr. Coffin's exertions in the Rhondda valley."

Miss Williams' royalties other than coal under Graigddu land is 6d. per ton for large coal, and 3½d. per ton for small coal, or a mean of 4½d. per ton. She is nothing to do with the management of the Dinas Collieries, but she has spent large amounts of money laying out and making roads for building sites on the Dinas estate at Williamstown, &c. On Tuesday last Miss Williams and her brother, Mr. Arthur Williams, M.P; spent the day at Dinas, in selecting a site on which to build a public hall for the use of the inhabitants. Not long ago Miss Williams gave £1,000 for the higher education of girls at the Aberdare Hall, Cardiff.

She has promised £200 towards the proposed School of Medicine and £100 towards the Intermediate School at Porth. And I may add here that among the members of the Iron and Steel Institute of Great Britain whom I accompanied last year on a visit to the United States, was Mr. Morgan Williams C. E; brother of Miss Williams. In his early life he spent much time at Dinas, and on the broad Atlantic he chatted to me about old inhabitants at Dinas most touchingly. "Did you know Daniel Thomas, my uncle's agent?" "Yes," was the reply. "Did you know Jenkin Evans, the chief clerk?" "Yes" again.

Then he mentioned incidents of long ago, the details of which were known to me, and he eventually turned to some of the distinguished voyagers and said: 'Bless my soul, Morien knows all about my late uncle Mr. Walter Coffin, and my dear old friends at Dinas.' The above is mentioned to show that, although the Coffin family are living far away their hearts beat warmly for Dinas.

Colliery accident at Dinas

Shortly after the steam coal miners employed in the Dinas colliery, Dinas, resumed operations on Monday morning, March 23rd 1891, two air-way workmen, named John Edwards, residing in the locality, and William Tallis, of Porth, went together into the 'return,' a short distance from the bottom of the shaft, to remove a fall of rubbish and stones from the roof. Two hours later another large fall occurred, a quantity of the debris crushing down and covering poor Tallis and pinning him quite fast.

Though the top was in a most dangerous state, Edwards ventured under it, in order to release his 'butty,' who was crying aloud for help, but whilst Edwards was shovelling away there was a further fall, which completely covered him. In this fearful predicament, the two men remained until about 9 o'clock at night, or twelve hours after the accident happened, and though under a big fall, they could talk to

each other and hear the rumbling of the trams, and the cages working up and down the shaft.

Frequently they shouted for help, but they were not heard by the workmen in the level leading from the bottom of the shaft, and about 4 o'clock operations were suspended, and hundreds of miners ascended the pit, and went home. Three more hours elapsed, and the nightshift entered the mine, but no one heard the voices of the poor fellows under the fall in the return airway.

About 9 o'clock, however, relatives of the injured men made enquiries as to why Tallis and Edwards were so late in the mine, and the night foreman and some workmen on searching the return airway, heard the cries of the unfortunate repairers, and soon found that they were under the huge fall.

They were released in about an hour, and some of the night men carried them home. Dr. H. N. Davies was at the mouth of the pit when they were brought out of the shaft, and subsequently attended them, but Edwards died at 5.30 on the following day, and Tallis lay in a precarious position for several days.

The Inquiry

On Thursday afternoon, March 26th 1891, Mr. E. B. Reece, coroner, held an inquiry at the Boot Hotel, Dinas, into the circumstances attending the death of John Edwards, a repairer, aged 59 years, who succumbed to injuries received at the Dinas Colliery on Monday. Mr. Robson, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines, and Mr. Randall, Deputy-Inspector, attended the inquest; whilst Mr. W. W. Hood was present to watch the proceedings on behalf of the company.

Thomas David Evans, stepson of the deceased, gave evidence of identification, and stated that the deceased had told him that he had been under the fall from 9 o'clock in the morning until released some 12 hours afterwards. Thomas Jones said that he was one of those who went in search of the deceased and his companion.

They got to the place where the accident occurred between 9 and 10 o'clock on Monday night. Tallis was held fast by some stones which had fallen from the roof upon his legs, whilst Edwards was completely covered by the rubbish. When reached he was found doubled up.

Dr. Davies, Dinas, stated that he examined the deceased the shortly after he was brought home, and found him suffering from contusions of the chest, abdomen, and legs, and compression of the chest and dislocation of the shoulder. Deceased

complained about pains in his knees. Tallis, who was being attended by Dr. H. N. Davies, was in a precarious condition. In answer to the coroner, the witness stated that Edwards's life might have been saved if he had been reached in a reasonable time after the accident.

Mr. Picton, the manager of the colliery, deposed that he had been ill for five weeks preceding the date of the accident. He had given definite instructions to the under-manager to visit every working place throughout the mine once a day. Mr. Picton was cross-examined at length to the arrangements made for the inspections of the returns, and ultimately the inquest was adjourned for a fortnight to enable Tallis to attend and give evidence. There was no follow-up report.

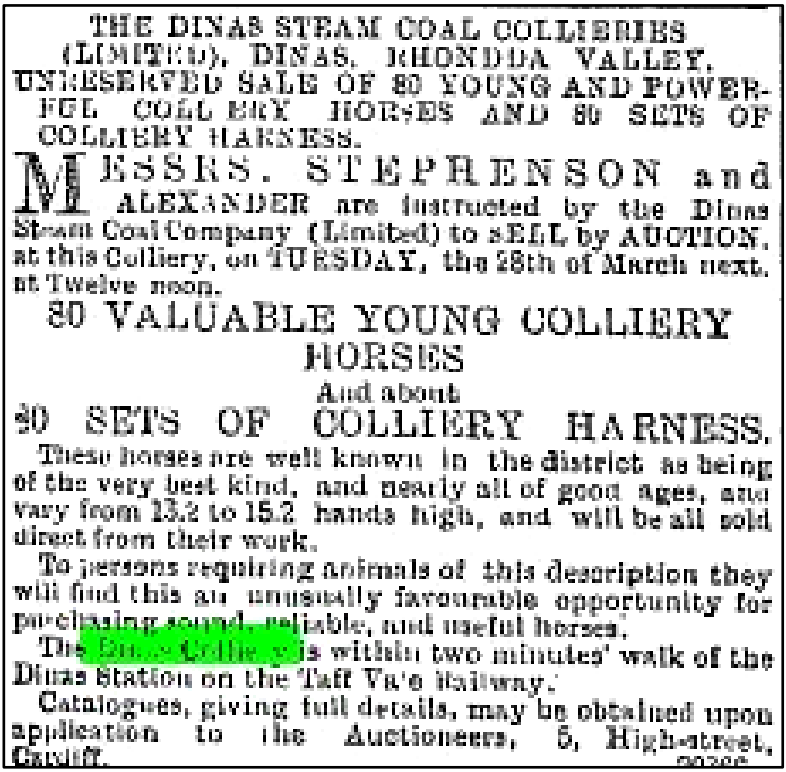
1892

Probable stoppage of another colliery

Unless trade improves it is extremely probable that the Dinas Colliery, Rhondda Valley, which employs 700 men will shortly be stopped, reported the '*Western Mail*' of Friday September 30th 1892. It continued: - After the close of this month the men employed, will be put on a day-to-day contract, and we fear that unless the coal trade improves very shortly the colliery will be stopped. The reason assigned for such a course is the low price of coal, which it is stated does not pay for its production, and the proprietors (The Dinas Steam Coal Co.), however anxious they may be to continue operations, cannot go on losing on every ton of coal which is brought to bank.

A colliery proprietor, who has had very many years experience of the coal trade in south Wales, informed a representative of the '*Western Mail*' on Thursday, that he never remembers the price being so low relatively to the cost of production. The cessation of work at the Dinas Colliery will mean the withdrawal from circulation in the district of about £1,100 per week.

So there you have it. Sometime between September 1892 and July 1893 the Dinas Colliery closed, hopefully not for good. Things had not been helped by a prolonged haulier's strike over the same period. But, suddenly, early in 1893, the machinery and all 'fittings and fixtures' were advertised for sale: -



THE DINAS STEAM COAL COLLIERIES (LIMITED), DINAS, RHONDDA VALLEY.

UNRESERVED SALE OF 80 YOUNG AND POWERFUL COLLIERY HORSES AND 80 SETS OF COLLIERY HARNESS.

MESSRS. STEPHENSON and ALEXANDER are instructed by the Dinas Steam Coal Company (Limited) to SELL by AUCTION, at this Colliery, on TUESDAY, the 28th of March next, at Twelve noon.

80 VALUABLE YOUNG COLLIERY HORSES

And about

80 SETS OF COLLIERY HARNESS.

These horses are well known in the district as being of the very best kind, and nearly all of good ages, and vary from 13.2 to 15.2 hands high, and will be all sold direct from their work.

To persons requiring animals of this description they will find this an unusually favourable opportunity for purchasing sound, reliable, and useful horses.

The Dinas Colliery is within two minutes' walk of the Dinas Station on the Taff Vale Railway.

Catalogues, giving full details, may be obtained upon application to the Auctioneers, 5, High-street, Cardiff.

Advertisement in the *Western Mail* newspaper of March 17th 1893, marking the beginning of the end of the Dinas Collieries

Sales by Auction.

THE DINAS STEAM COLLIERY COMPANY (LIMITED), DINAS, NEAR PONTYPRIDD.

MESSRS. STEPHENSON and ALEXANDER are instructed to SELL by AUCTION, at these Collieries, Commencing on TUESDAY, July 25th, 1893, and Continuing for the Three Following Days (and not on TUESDAY, July 4th, and following days, as previously advertised), the whole of the

VALUABLE COLLIERY PLANT AND MACHINERY

In and about Dinas Colliery, together with the

MOVABLE BUILDINGS, STORES, AND OTHER EFFECTS,

Including pair 30in. winding engines with two drums, by Brown, Lenox, and Co.; pair 27in. ditto, by Brown, Lenox and Co.; pair 12in. hauling engines, by Parfitt and Jenkins; pair 14in. ditto, by Llewellyn and Cubitt; pair 12in. ditto, by the Uakside Engineering Company; pair 9in. ditto with boiler, by Llewellyn and Cubitt; pair 7in. ditto, by Wild and Co., Manchester; single 8in. ditto; pair 8in. portable engines and boiler, by Clayton, Shuttleworth, and Co.; 7in. portable engine, by Robey and Co.; four-wheel coupled locomotive engine, 10in. cylinders, 18in. stroke, by The Hunslet Engineering Company, four-wheel coupled locomotive engine, by Manning, Wardle and Co.; do., by R. and W. Hawthorn, Newcastle-on-Tyne; locomotive engine, 4 wheels coupled, 5ft. driving and trailing wheels, and 3ft. leading wheels; pair 24in. air compressors by Walker Bros.; two pairs 12in. ditto by the Sandycroft Engineering Company; Schiele fan and duplicate engine, 26in. cylinder, by Llewellyn and Cubitt; four steam winches; 20in. Worthington pump; 15in. ditto; 21in., 12in., and other Tangye's pumps; three Cameron's donkey pumps; steam hammer, six Galloway, Lancashire, and egg-end boilers; egg-end water heater; six air receivers; 20-ton railway weighing machine by Pooley; ditto by Bamlett; two tram weighing machines; Billy Fairplay and balance; coal screens, punching machine, mortar mill and pan, saw benches, lathes, about 400 iron and wooden coal trams, pit framings and appliances, about 10,000 yards round and flat wire rope; several hundred tons of various piping from 2in. to 9in.; about 5,000 yards railway siding, with points, crossing sleepers, and fitting complete, as laid with rails (average weight 50lb. to the yard); about 100 tons rails, 30lb. and 45lb. to the yard; about 600 tons tram rails, 18lb., 20lb., and 22lb to the yard; several thousand tramway sleepers; the whole of the blacksmiths', fitters', colliers', and other tools; large quantity wrought and cast scrap. The contents of blacksmiths', fitters', and carpenters' shops; the whole of the stores, 5 colliery horses, and a very large and general assortment of colliery

PLANT AND MATERIALS,

Together with the movable buildings and fittings used in connection with one of the largest equipped collieries in the district.

Sale will commence each day punctually at Ten a.m.

Full Particulars will appear in Catalogues, which will shortly be ready, and may be obtained upon application to the Auctioneers, 5, High-street, Cardiff.

21462

Western Mail **Newspaper advertisement April 18th 1893**

1893

Good news for the Rhondda Valley - Probable re-opening of Dinas Colliery

The '*Western Mail*' of July 29th 1893 reported:- We are pleased to be able to announce that there is now every likelihood of the celebrated Dinas Steam Coal Colliery, one of the oldest and richest in the Rhondda Valley, but the workings of which have been idle for some time, being re-started and with increased activity at no distant date, for during the present week a wealthy local gentleman, viz; Alderman W. H. Mathias, J. P; of Greenmeadow, Porth, has purchased a large portion of the fixed plant and machinery at the colliery with a view, if possible, of resuming operations.

Mr. Mathias's intention, it is understood, is to endeavour to obtain the necessary powers from the ground landlord to penetrate to the lower measures and work those rich seams of coal which hitherto had been untouched. This gratifying intelligence must afford a great deal of satisfaction to the inhabitants of Dinas, who have for some time suffered considerably from local depression, consequent on the stoppage of the colliery, which was the pioneer undertaking of the kind in connection with the Rhondda coal trade.

A correspondent writes: - Considerable interest has been centred during the present week in the Rhondda Valley from the fact that the dispersion of the whole of the plant and machinery connected with the well-known Dinas Colliery has been effected. After passing through several hands the colliery came into the possession of the Dinas Steam Coal Company, consisting of the late Mr. Edmund Thomas and several gentlemen interested in business at Cardiff Docks. The concern was worked by the company for many years, but, unfortunately, with more or less disastrous results, and, after a considerable amount of money and pains had been expended upon further developments, the company decided on abandoning the undertaking and selling the whole by auction.

For this purpose the property was put in the hands of Messrs. Stephenson and Alexander, and the sale took place this week daily until Friday afternoon, resulting in a sum amounting to nearly £20,000. The sale was attended by gentlemen identified with colliery enterprises from Newcastle, Sheffield, Wigan, Manchester, Liverpool, the Midlands, Bristol, Swansea, Newport, Cardiff &co. Amongst the most extensive purchasers was Alderman Mathias, of Porth, and it was stated that it is his intention to endeavour to make arrangements with the ground landlord to mine to the lower veins. It is to be hoped that the negotiations will be successful and thus renew the commercial prosperity of the Dinas district.

The following day the same newspaper reported: - In reference to the report in yesterday's '*Western Mail*' to the effect that the Dinas Colliery in the Rhondda Valley would probably be re-opened at an early date, we are requested by W. H. Mathias J. P; Porth, to state that there are yet some difficulties to overcome. Alderman Mathias bought the greater portion of the plant, but the re-opening of the pit will depend upon a satisfactory settlement of some questions which have arisen in connection with the machinery.

Alderman W. H. Mathias J. P. had previously been involved in the coal industry and was already a director of the Dinas Steam Coal Co; plus other companies including Aber-Rhondda, Albion Steam Coal Co; Ely Rhondda, Diamond Llantwit and Ynyshir Standard. He was one of those given an Award of Merit for his part in the rescue at the Tynewydd Colliery Disaster in April 1877.

Whatever the cause, the Dinas Colliery was not to re-open. Perhaps because of no agreement between the land owners and those paying royalties, W. H. Mathias must have just sold all the machinery etc. that he had purchased. The sad end of the colliery left a bitterness around the immediate area of Dinas, and when a member of the Williams family successfully re-stood for Parliament he was reminded of such: -

1895

Mr. Arthur J. Williams M. P. at Cymmer, noisy meeting
Threatened legal proceedings against Mr. W. W. Hood

The open-air meeting which was held at Cymmer on Thursday night in support of the candidature of Mr. Arthur J. Williams (M.P. for South Glamorganshire) was of a very noisy character, reported the '*Western Mail*' of July 19th 1895. Mr. Williams was escorted to the field by the Cymmer Brass Band and a very large crowd, and during the course of his speech he referred at some length to what he described as the scandalous allegations which were being circulated against him by his opponents with reference to the stoppage of the Dinas Collieries, and which he felt sure would be repudiated by his genial and honourable opponent as soon as he became aware of the circumstances under which they were being circulated. He read some correspondence which had passed between himself and Mr. W. W. Hood, the agent of the Glamorgan Coal Co., who he accused of having made slanderous statements against him with reference to the colliery, and against whom he threatened legal proceedings.

Several voices were raised that Mr. Hood never mentioned Mr. Williams' name, but Mr. Williams pointed out that Mr. Hood in his letter had not the manliness to deny that he had made the statements referred to. While Mr. Williams was speaking about the royalty charged by his sister someone in the crowd interrupted him and elbowed his way to the platform, where he said he wished to ask Mr. Williams some questions about the way-leaves (The right of way over somebody else's property, for which payment is usually made.), stating that he (the speaker, who gave his name) was one of the shareholders of the Dinas Colliery Company.

A section of the crowd opposed to Mr. Williams then caused considerable disturbance and Mr. Williams reportedly appealed for fair play. His appeal was in vain, and then the vicar, the Rev. W. T. Thomas, ascended to the platform, and in the name of his parishioners asked for a fair hearing. His appeal, also was in vain, and then Mr. Williams' supporters moved in a body towards the disturbers, and unceremoniously swept them away, amid a scene of much excitement.

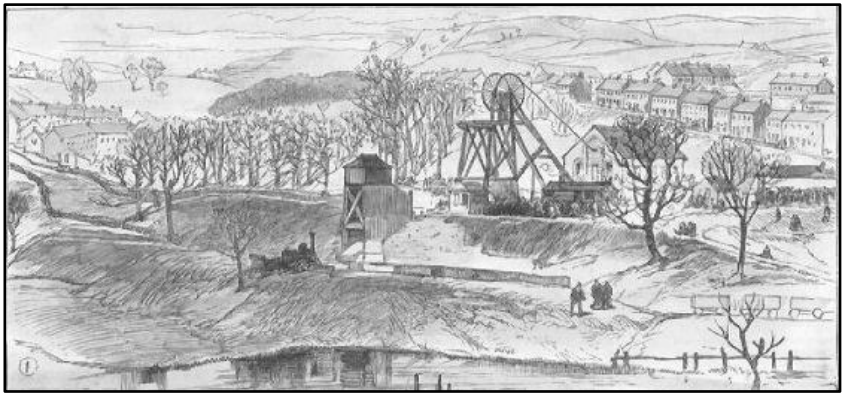
Mr. Williams then asked Councillor Thomas Griffiths, the manager of the Cymmer Collieries, if it was not true that there was no royalty in the district lower than 4½d. per ton, the amount charged by his sister. Mr. Griffiths ascended the platform, and he, to, appealed for a fair hearing for the candidate, and, upon being further asked by Mr. Williams to answer, Mr. Griffiths replied that he was sorry he was being challenged, and said that there were royalties in the Rhondda lower than 4½d. per ton. Mr. Williams asked where they were, and Mr. Griffiths, in reply, stated that the royalty of the Standard Colliery, Ynyshir, had been reduced from 4½d to 4d; and that Mr. Thomas Jones, of Hafod, had recently let several acres of mining property in that district at a royalty of 4d per ton. Mr. Williams replied that Mr. D. A. Thomas and his mining advisers had assured him that in reducing the royalty to 4½d his sister had reduced it to the lowest known figure in the Rhondda.

Mr. Griffiths subsequently announced that the owners of the royalty were now prepared to make a substantial reduction, in order that the Dinas Colliery should be re-opened, an announcement which was received with general satisfaction. Mr. Williams observed that he was very glad that there was some chance of a settlement being arrived at. A vote of confidence in Mr. Williams was subsequently carried, but not unanimously, and a very lively meeting was brought to a close.

With this, nothing further was heard of the famous Dinas Collieries. Apparently there were two men who were lowered down one of the shafts to tend water

pumps for several years, but not to clear the Dinas Collieries, which must have eventually flooded, but probably to protect the seams connected to the nearby Penygraig Naval Steam Coal Colliery.

It was the end of the first and most famous colliery in the Rhondda valleys, and very little remains of what was at one time the biggest enterprise in the district. The legend of Daniel Thomas has faded and is little known by the general public and only his memorial in the Lled-ar-ddu Cemetery- at Trealaw is there to remind us of his bravery and the esteem he was held in all those years ago.



A drawing of the Penygraig Naval Colliery the day after Daniel Thomas lost his life on January 27th 1884.

In the late 1960s while digging the foundation of the Pen Dinas flats, a tram was discovered, something that had not seen the light of day since at least 1893. What became of it is not known, though rumour has it that it is being kept by an individual to erect a monument at Dinas to all the colliers of the Rhondda Valleys.

On January 13th 2004 Thomas and Vivian Chubb, great-grandsons of Robert Chubb who died in the Dinas explosion of 1879 attended a memorial service at the Trealaw Cemetery. Thomas Chubb said, “when the rescue party recovered my great-grandfather’s body from the underground workings three years after the explosion, it was brought to the surface in a coal-tram and finally laid to rest.”

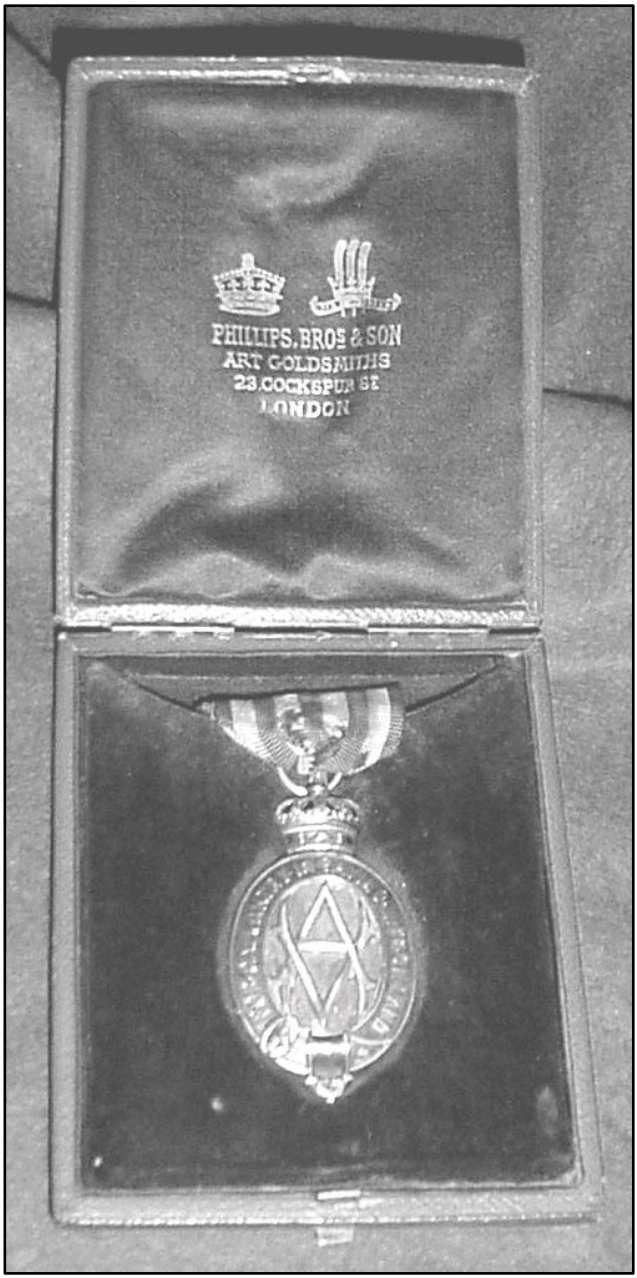
List of those killed in the 1897 Dinas Colliery Disaster			
1.	William Lloyd (36)	Fireman	Concrete Cottages, married, 2 children
2.	Thomas Watkins (34)	Night Fireman	White-rock row, 4 children
3.	Steven Williams (37)	Timberman	Concrete Cottages, 3 Children.
4.	William Cross (37)	"	" " 3 Children
5.	Charles Penny (31)	"	" " 4 Children
6.	William Jones (26)	"	" " 1 Child
7.	Robert Chubb (30)		White-rock row 4 Children
8.	Evan Jenkins (16)	Haulier	Tram-road-side, Dinas, Boy
9.	David Thomas (34)	"	Storehouse, single
10.	William Williams, (28)	"	Apple Tree, 4 Children
11.	Daniel Dunn (34)	"	Storehouse, 2 Children
12.	James Edwards (17)	"	Apple Tree, Single
13.	Edward Rees (19)	"	Balaclava Terrace, Single
14.	William Roberts (28)	Haulier	Storehouse, 4 children
15.	John Edwards (20)	"	Apple Tree, Single
16.	Daniel Morley (18)	"	Near Lower Pit, Single
17.	Joseph Evans (18)	"	Concrete Cottages, Single
18.	Lewis Williams, (33)	"	Tia Roden, Wife but no children.
19.	Edward Sullivan (30)	Cutting bottom and ripping top, Storehouse, 7 Children	
20.	Daniel Dunworth (30)	" " " 2 Children	
21.	Daniel Smith (49)	" " " 4 Children	
22.	Evan John (34)	" " Concrete Cottages, 5 Children	
23.	James Harris (35)	" " Near half-way Inn, 5 Children	
24	Thomas Richards (26)	" " Concrete Cottages, 1 Child	
25.	Thomas J. Holmes (40)	" " Brithwynydd-side, 6 Children	
26.	Henry Hayter (22)	" " Concrete Cottages, no children	
27.	William Jenkins (35)	Hitcher	Concrete Cottages, 2 Children
28.	John Griffiths (30)	"	Wauneryrgydd, 3 Children
29.	Thomas Rees (21)	Labourer/Repairer	White-Rock row, Single.
30.	Charles Westlake (25)	"	Tram-Road-Side, 2 Children
31.	John Romseville (39)	"	Ffrwdamos, Single
32.	Henry Taylor (30)	"	Concrete Cottages, Single
33.	David Hughes (34)	"	" " 2 Children.
34.	George Sutton (35)	"	" " Wife no Children
35.	David Rees (28)	"	White-Rock Row, 1 Child
36	Elisha Upjohn (51)	Labourer	Wauerw Dway, Widower
37.	Octavius Wheadon (40)	" Balaclava Terr., 4 Children, 3 working 1 grown up	
38.	River Jordon (51)	"	Concrete Cottages, wife, no children
39.	James Bowen (45)	"	Stonehouse, six children
40.	Jehu Hawkins (48)	"	Concrete Cottages, widower, 4 children
41.	John Landregan (26)	"	Near Halfway Inn, Single
42.	Samuel Pryor (39)	"	Coedymeibion, Married, 6 Children.

43.	John Lewis (49)	"	Near Graig Duw Inn, Married, 1 Child
44.	Evan Davies (52)	Lampstation	White-rock Row, Widower
45.	Thomas Roberts (56)	Labourer	Balaclava Terrace, 3 Children
46.	Frank Moore (26)	"	Tylacelyn, 2 Children
47.	Charles Wheadon (24)	"	Brithwynydd Side, 1 Child
48.	Samuel Romseville (37)	"	Ffrwdamos, 4 Children
49.	William Griffiths (50)	"	Storehouse, Widower
50.	Henry Williams (28)	"	Brithwynydd Side, 4 Children
51.	Edward Davies (20)	"	Balaclave Terrace, Single
52.	Robert Emery (29)	"	Hillman's Row, Trealaw, 4 Children
53.	David Jenkins (27)	"	Near Prince of Orange Inn, 1 Child
54.	John Jenkins (30)	"	Storehouse, 2 Children
55.	John Griffiths (21)	"	Wauneryrgydd, Single
56.	Richard Howells (31)	"	Tia Roden, 2 Children
57.	William Williams (22)	"	Near Post office, Married
58.	William Richards (18)	"	Storehouse, Single
59.	William Evans (27)	"	Balaclava Terrace, 1 Child.
60.	Thomas Hughes (30)	"	Storehouse, 3 Children
61.	James Rossin (26)	"	Miskin Road, Trealaw, 1 Child
62.	Charles Meade (22)	"	? Married, 1 Child
63.	Isaac Martin* (24)	Ripper	Single ?

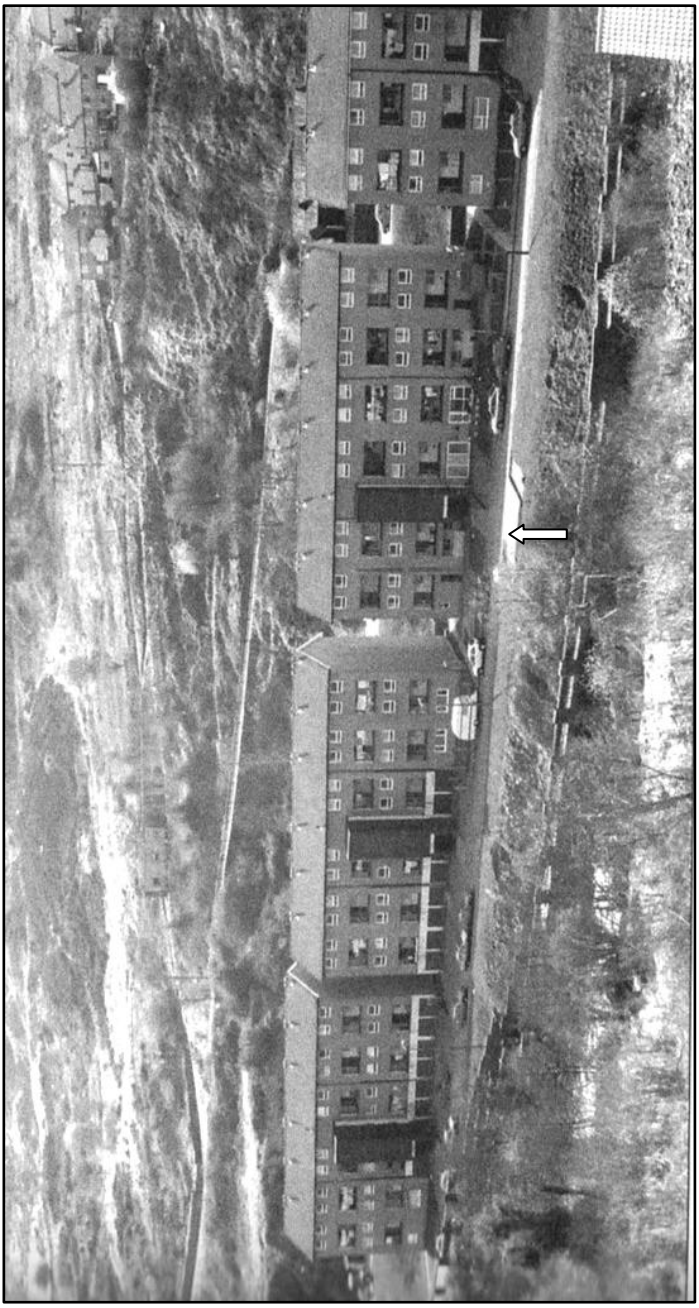
*No. 62 did not appear on the early lists as no-one knew he was down the pit at the time of the explosion until his wife asked reporters three days later why his name was not on the list of the deceased.

*No. 63 appeared on the first list, but was omitted, perhaps by mistake, on following lists.

Five unnamed bodies were not recovered.



The actual Albert Medal presented to Daniel Thomas for his part in the rescue at the Tynewydd Colliery



Site of the Dinas Lower Colliery. The capped shaft visible in front of the third block of flats.

The children's playground in the site of Walter Coffins' Dinas Lower

Glossary of Mining Terms

(Courtesy of the Cynon Valley Historical Society)

Auger - Tool used for drilling hole into arms or collars to place explosives.

Bank - The surface of a shaft, and at a level from which the pit cages are loaded or unloaded.

Banksman - The man in charge of the 'Bank' area at pit-top and of the cage upon raising, or lowering, at pit-top. He operates the signals to the winding engine-man and to pit-bottom, from the surface.

Bashing - A sealed off portion of the mine that had been worked out, but not stowed properly leaving a gap behind a wall and which was therefore a very dangerous and illegal practice that could allow an accumulation of gas and hence an explosion.

Bastard Rock - A strong mudstone, but not sandy enough to be called rock.

Block layer – Someone employed underground to construct the rail lines that carried the trams.

Blower - An outburst of gas, usually methane, which issues from a crack in the floor, sides or roof, likely near a fault plane.

Cage - The pit carriage for descending or ascending of a shaft.

Check-weigher - A man appointed to check weight of coal in a tram, and to record the tonnage for the collier who cuts that coal. He would also assess the weight of small coal, and possibly crop the collier; i.e. Deduct a sum from his wages.

Chock - Also known as a **cog. -** A roof support constructed of interlaced horizontal wooden pieces, laid from floor to roof.

Collar - A wooden roof support consisting of two arms, joined at the top by another piece of wood, know as a the collar.

Comet - A naked light used to illuminate main roadways below ground.

Davy - Safety lamp invented by Sir Humphrey Davy in 1815.

Dip - Working a seam to the 'Dip' means working down-hill, as opposed to working the 'rise', uphill.

District - The area in a colliery that is legally under the supervision of a mine deputy.

Double-parting - A roadway containing one tramway entering a section of wider roadway containing two set of tramways. It is a transfer area where a full 'journey' of coal is deposited and another 'journey' of empty trams is ready to be taken to the coal face.

Drivage - An advancing heading (tunnel) in a mine. It could be exploratory of for development.

Downcast - A ventilation shaft, where fresh air is drawn (or forced) into the workings

Face - The part of the mine where coal is actually mined from.

Fire-clay - A band of clay normally found adjacent to a coal seam and sometimes worked in addition to the coal, It becomes the main constituent pf brick making, also used for the 'stemming' of shot-holes in mines.

Fire-damp – chemically known as carburetted hydrogen or methane, has a specific gravity compared with air of ·559 and is therefore found near the roof. When fire-damp explodes, after-damp is formed, and consequently, nearly every death caused by colliery explosion may be attributed to gas poisoning.

Fireman - Local name for a deputy. Sometimes the man who looked after the ventilation was also known as a fireman.

Gas - A term normally used for firedamp, but could be any gas found in a mine

Goaf - the worked out ground of a coal mine

Hard heading - A drivage through rock and coal at an angle to contact a seam for future production.

Heading - A drivage in advance of any coal-face, driven to determine mining conditions ahead.

Haulier - A miner who drives a horse to the coal-face or stall with an empty tram and returns to the 'double parting' with a full tram of coal. He is in sole charge of his horse.

Haulage engine - A steam, compressed air, or electrical type of fixed engine, on surface of below ground. Used underground for taking in a district supplies for the face and returning with a full journey of coal.

Hitcher - A man at pit-bottom who operates the shaft signals which are heard by the winder and banksman.

Inbye - A word to describe the relative position of anyone in a mine e.g. "He has gone in-bye' means he has gone towards the coal-face.

Incline - Any inclined tram road underground, usually provided with a haulage engine taking men, stores etc; inbye and coal or rubbish outbye.

Intake - The route taken by fresh air from the downcast shaft to the workings.

Journey - A number of trams linked together.

Knocker - A signal box connected to a pair of signal wires, hung for the whole length of a haulage road and into the engine-house. A "rider" would signal to the engine-man to move or stop a journey of trams, on these low-current wire**s.**

Lagging - Timber 'slats' erected above and around sides of wooden 'Pairs of timbers' to ensure no stones could fall on a man passing by.

Lamp station - Place where a lamp could be re-lit.

Longwall - A method of mining coal with all the colliers of that district manning one lengthy coal-face. No pillars were left behind in a longwall face and the roof was allowed to 'cave in' behind the line of supports.

Master-haulier - An official who organises the tasks of hauliers and checks the shifts of horses in his care.

Manhole - Refuge holes made in a roadway for the shelter of a person from shotfiring, or safety from a passing journey.

Outbye - Towards the shaft or to the mouth of a level.

Packs - In long-wall faces, a wall of loose, available stones would be erected, and then packed tightly with loose debris. This would support roadways at the ends of the face and also direct ventilation efficiently.

Pair of timbers - Wooden roof supports consisting of two arms and a collar.

Repairer - A workman employed on outbye work, repairing and replacing damaged roof supports, and generally ensuring a good state of airways, etc.

Return - A ventilation term. The area of a mine through which travels the foul air and gases from the workings and coal faces, on the way to the upcast shaft.

Rider - A thinner piece of coal above the main seam (sometimes too thin to work). It is often of inferior quality. The tender clod probably means the muck between the main seam and the rider which is of a soft quality so that it often falls when the coal is removed.

Rubbish - A general term for any sort of debris, stone, dirt, etc, to be disposed of.

Safety lamp - see 'Davy.'

Seam - One of a number of beds of coal, normally found throughout a coalfield.

Shaft - The veridical sinking of a colliery to a required seam. Most shafts are circular in section, and designed to hold one or two cages.

Shotsman - A qualified official who fires shot-holes in a district.

Sinker - A specialist miner, employed for the sinking of a pit-shaft.

Sprag - A piece of wood tapered at each end and inserted between the spokes of a tram wheel to stop the tram or to prevent it running away when on an incline. Also refers to a temporary prop, erected to support a ripping lip until a permanent prop is stood.

Squeeze - The increasing pressure of a weak roof in mine workings, detected by the crushing of timber supports - sometimes accompanied by audible cracking of roof strata.

Stall - A working place at the coalface where the coal was extracted; in a coalface 100 yards long there would be as many as 20 of 30 stalls, each separated by a pillar of coal left to support the roof.

Stemming - Clay or other inert material, used to pack behind the explosives in a shot-hole.

Strata - One of several parallel lays of rock etc., arranged one on top of each other.

Sump - An extension downwards at the bottom of a pit-shaft to contain the water that seeps down the shaft. It would then be pumped to the surface.

Tamping - The pressing of rubble or horse manure onto the explosive substance inside the bored hole of an arm or collar to stop any flames reaching out and causing an explosion.

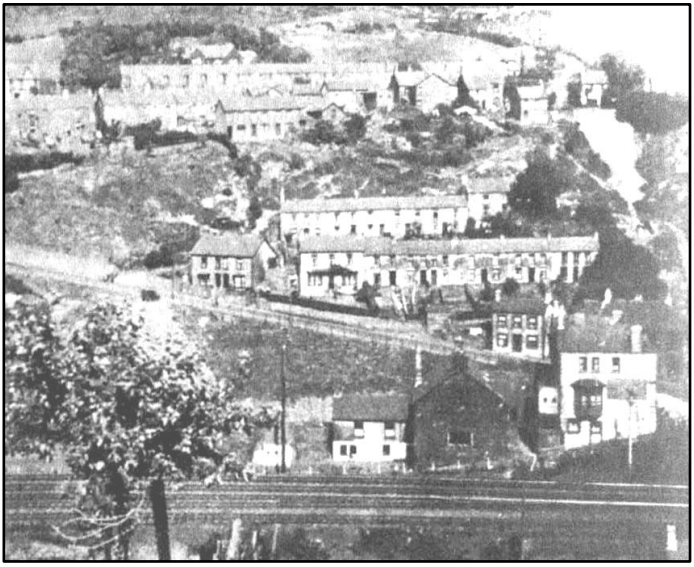
Timberman - A workman who would 'notch' and prepare wooden posts for the securing of the roof. A man employed for the re-timbering of the supports of an old roadway.

Top - Commonly used in mines to describe the roof of a seam, e. g. "The top needs extra supports."

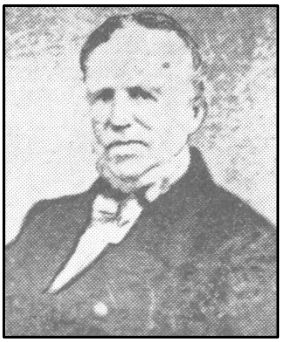
Under-manager - The qualified person in charge of the mine in the absence of the manager.

Upcast shaft - A secondary shaft that returns stale air to the surface. It normally contained a furnace fire at shaft bottom.

Cymmer road, Dinas C. 1910



Brithweunydd Workmen's Home (bottom right) Built in 1832 to house the sinkers of the Dinas Middle Colliery



Walter Coffin

A biography by Caroline Williams
From "A Welsh family from the beginning of the 18th century" (1893)

Walter Coffin Jnr. had been born at Bridgend on June 7th 1784. He was the second son of Walter Coffin and his second wife Anne Morgan. At the age of eight Coffin went to Cowbridge Grammar School and after remaining there for some eight years went on to a private nonconformist academy at Exeter run by the Revd Timothy Kenrlck, a leading Unitarian minister. The Coffin family were active Unitarians and did much to promote that cause.

It had been Walter Coffin's great wish to go to the Bar, but although he had wealth and talents peculiarly fitting him for such a career, such were the disadvantages under which Nonconformists then laboured, that he was excluded from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge by the necessity of signing the thirty-nine articles. For some years he superintended his father's large and lucrative tanning business, but the employment was uncongenial. The land property which his father possessed in the Ogmore and Rhondda valleys promised to give him wider interests. The success of the iron works at Merthyr Tydfil gave an impetus to mining speculation, and soon after his father's death Mr. Coffin's active and intellectual mind was drawn to the subject of the Welsh coalfields, and he determined that the business of his life should be to develop the mine reserves of the land he had inherited.

The task Mr. Coffin had set himself was a very hard one, demanding great sacrifices not only from himself but from his family. Even before his mother's death in 1822,

she had deplored his absorption in his colliery. "Walter has married a black wife" she would say.

The last years of Mr. Coffin's life were spent in London, at Prince's Gate. He had settled there for the sake of his brother William, whose death, however, occurred almost immediately afterwards, left him the last of the Coffin family. In the society of the younger people to whom he had been so kind, he enjoyed life, and took an interest in all that went on, to the very end. His house was a meeting place for the various members of the family, old and young. He was in his eighty-third year, when, after only a few days' illness, he died. Arthur Williams, the youngest of Mr. Williams' sons, who had lived with him, wrote the following sketch of his life, and of the history of Dinas, which was left by Mr. Coffin to Arthur Williams' eldest sister Caroline: -

When Mr. Coffin began sinking his first shaft, the measures of coal he was about to search for had never been proved, having only been worked for local purposes by levels where they cropped out. The only roads that existed were in a miserable state; skilled labour was of course not to be obtained; the few mechanical appliances in the shape of machinery then known, were strange to the district. With all the energy and determination which were so conspicuous in his character throughout his long and busy life, Mr. Coffin set to work in the face of all difficulties to carry out his purpose. Of a sanguine temperament, blended with a fine physical constitution, and backed by the substance of his father, he met and overcame, one by one, all the obstacles, physical and financial, which stood in his way. On the death of Walter Coffin (senior) on July 11th 1812, Walter Coffin (junior) gave up the family house at Nolton, Bridgend, and moved with his mother and two sisters to Llandaff Court, Cardiff, which he had purchased from another member of the family.

After many delays and disappointments, and at a great expense, he reached the No. 2 and No. 3 veins of coal, which subsequently became so well known as "Coffin's Coal." When he had got his colliery into working order, he made, mainly at his own expense, a tramway for carrying the produce to the Glamorgan Canal, which had been originated for the purpose of transporting iron from Merthyr to Cardiff, by Richard Crawshay, the founder of the Crawshay family, and had been completed in 1794.

The next difficulty which presented itself, was to create a market for his coal. With indefatigable perseverance, he devoted himself to the business of introducing

Welsh coal, hitherto almost unknown, to the notice of the consumer. The expeditions he made to all parts of the kingdom, the experiments he tried to prove its value as fuel, the efforts he made to open outlets for its sale, formed a most interesting part of the story of his life, which he liked to tell, and told so well, for he inherited from his mother the rare art of telling a story with admirable skill and humour. At last, though only gradually, and with the lapse of many anxious and laborious years, the South Wales Coal, especially 'Coffin's Coal' began to be sought after, and grew in demand. A report given by the Welsh Land Commission in 1893 stated: - "Walter Coffin almost single-handed fought the battles of free-trade in Glamorganshire."

As the coal trade developed, and the iron manufacture at Merthyr increased, the latter began almost to engross the accommodation offered by the Glamorgan Canal. With his usual sagacity, Walter Coffin had recognized the value of railways as a means of transport for heavy traffic, at a time when they were generally thought to be a delusion. In 1830, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, the first locomotive line, was opened and very soon afterwards he put forward a proposal for a railway from Merthyr to Cardiff. On every hand he was met by active or passive resistance. The Canal propriety, of course pooh-poohed the scheme, and his fellow colliery workers were most of them sceptical or faint-hearted.

But with untiring perseverance he went on, until having gained the support of some influential men who had confidence in him, he was able to bring in a Bill. After a long period of anxiety (for the Bill was opposed with the greatest determination in the Committee), it was passed in June 1836, and the Taff Vale Railway Company was formed, with the late Sir John Guest as its Chairman, and Mr. Coffin as one of its Directors.

With the greatest difficulty, its capital was subscribed, mainly through the personal influence and persuasion of these two gentlemen and the works were at last completed. But for several years after the line was opened in 1841, it paid no dividend, and there was dismay and discontent amongst the shareholders. One unlucky plasterer who, acting on Mr. Coffin's advice, had invested part of his savings in its shares, seriously threatened to shoot him. He lived, however, to be the recipient of nine per cent. dividend, and to express the greatest contrition for his want of faith. The confidence of Mr. Coffin in the undertaking never wavered. He knew, and he told the shareholders, that there lay on the other side of their line inexhaustible sources of traffic, which with a little patience and management would, before long, make it the most prosperous in the kingdom, and Cardiff, which he had remembered almost a village, a large and flourishing town. In a comparative few years these predictions were verified. He succeeded to the

Chairmanship, gradually the dividend rose from nothing to four and from four to seven per cent; under his prudent and conscientious supervision.

Fresh collieries were sunk, new iron works started, the whole district was opened up, branches were extended into the smaller valleys. With a capital of more than a million and a half the Taff Vale Railway now (1867) pays a dividend of more then ten per cent; and Cardiff has a population of 40,000 inhabitants. But it was not until 1841 that the tide of prosperity set in upon the undertaking, and Mr. Coffin reaped some, though a very inadequate reward for his enterprise and public spirit. "I dragged a dead horse by the tail for forty years" was his pithy description of his business career. In the year 1852 he retired from business altogether under an arrangement with his partner, Mr. William Ogle Hunt, who continued as the lessee (of the Dinas Colliery). In the same year he received a requisition from a large number of the Liberal electors of Cardiff, asking him to become a candidate for the borough.

Up to this time it had been a pocket borough of the Bute family, and the Marquis of Bute, succeeding to it as an inheritance, always nominated the Member. When, however, the Marquis devoted a large part of his fortune to the construction of the magnificent Docks, which bear his name, he was helping to bring about a result he never contemplated. Cardiff from an insignificant place grew to be an important seaport and town, with a large number of electors who held independent political views. Though grateful for all that enlightened self-interest had induced the Marquis to do for Cardiff, they felt that their gratitude did not justify the neglect of their own duties as electors. Holding Liberal views in politics, they were represented by the late Right Hon. John Nicholl, of different political opinions, and a nominee of the Bute Trustees. They were determined to vindicate their franchise, and Mr. Coffin conferred a last service upon Cardiff by coming forward to open the Borough. No one else could have done it.

He had justly earned the confidence of his fellow citizens by his consistent conduct as a politician. At a time when Liberal opinions were most un-popular in the country, he had fearlessly claimed the right of free worship, an extended franchise and free trade. With the humbler classes his popularity was unbounded, and he certainly deserved it. Beneath an apparent coldness of manner, which he put on from his dislike for all mere profession of feeling, there lay a wealth of genuine kindness and humanity. During more than forty years his sympathies had been strongly pronounced in favour of those who suffer. In the Justice Room, at the Board of Guardians, at Quarter Sessions, at his Works, the poor had always found him their true friend, merciful in judgment, their protector against oppression, their

counsellor in trouble, the peacemaker in their disputes. After a severe and close contest, Mr. Coffin was elected. It would answer no useful end to recall the bitter animosities which the contest caused. The arena of the House of Commons requires a training which no natural talent can supply, and Mr. Coffin, who entered it at 68, declined, with his usual good sense, to risk his reputation as a speaker. He had indeed all the natural endowments of an orator, — a fine person and presence, a retentive memory, a ready wit, and a voice of singular power and sweetness.

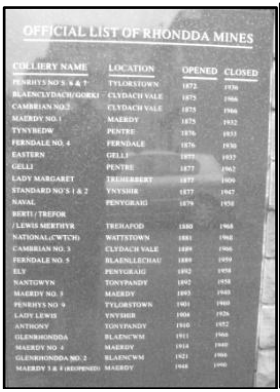
Never diffuse, and never at a loss for clear and forcible language, he went straight to the point, and though his speeches were never long they were always lucid and convincing. He possessed, too, brilliant powers of sarcasm, which, however, he rarely used, except when his contempt or indignation were roused by what was mean or unjust. Then he used them unsparingly, and they gave a wholesome sharpness both to his public speaking and his conversation.

During the great Corn Law agitation he came forward against the landlords and farmers, and almost single-handed fought the battles of free trade with a genial but searching raillery which did good service to the cause. " Always leave off when they ask you to go on" was his often repeated maxim on this subject. He was of course too much engaged in affairs to make his public speaking a matter of much study, yet Glamorganshire during his time had no more effective speaker. His influence in public affairs was rendered all the more weighty by his rare business capacity, his shrewd good sense and his imperturbable temper. He soon found the late sittings in the House of Commons very trying, and feeling that in opening the Borough he had fulfilled his mission, he resigned his seat in 1857.

The last years of his life he passed in England, that he might have the society and attention of some members of his family who were attached to him by feelings of gratitude and affection ; but to the last he retained the liveliest interest in his native country and all that went on there. Every autumn he spent two or three months on the Glamorganshire Coast, mostly at or near Southerndown, the scene of some of his earliest recollections. He died on February 15th 1867, at his residence at Prince's Gate, Hyde Park, from the mere physical decay of old age. That decay fell only upon the poor human tenement. To the last his clear intellect remained unclouded, and his kind heart was thoughtful for those around him."

Walter Coffin was buried at the Unitarian Church graveyard, Park Street, Bridgend. Neither he nor his siblings married and the family name died out with their deaths. In 1972 the church trustees of the Park Street Unitarian Church removed Coffin's gravestone and covered the graveyard with tarmac. Although Bridgend Council found no infringement of planning regulations, the actions caused local resentment to the destruction of "an important historical relic."

THE MEMORIAL ON THE SITE OF THE DINAS COLLIERY



OFFICIAL LIST OF RHONDDA MINES

COLLIERY NAME	LOCATION	OPENED	CLOSED
PENRHYS NO'S 5 & 7	TYLORSTOWN	1872	1926
BLAENCLYDACH/GORKI	CLYDACH VALE	1875	1966
CAMBRIAN NO.2	CLYDACH VALE	1875	1966
MAERDY NO.1	MAERDY	1875	1932
TYNYBEDW	PENTRE	1876	1933
FERNDALE NO. 4	FERNDALE	1876	1930
EASTERN	GELLI	1877	1937
GELLI	PENTRE	1877	1962
LADY MARGARET	TREHERBERT	1877	1926
STANDARD NO'S 1 & 2	YNYSHIR	1877	1947
NAVAL	PENYGRAIG	1879	1958
BERTI / TREFOR			
/ LEWIS MERTHYR	TREHAFOD	1880	1968
NATIONAL (CWTCH)	WATTSTOWN	1881	1968
CAMBRIAN NO. 3	CLYDACH VALE	1889	1966
FERNDALE NO. 5	BLAENLLECHAU	1889	1959
ELY	PENYGRAIG	1892	1958
NANTOWYN	TONYPANDY	1892	1958
MAERDY NO. 3	MAERDY	1893	1940
PENRHYS NO 9	TYLORSTOWN	1901	1960
LADY LEWIS	YNYSHIR	1904	1926
ANTHONY	TONYPANDY	1910	1952
GLENRHONDDA	BLAENCWM	1911	1966
MAERDY NO. 4	MAERDY	1914	1940
GLENRHONDDA NO. 2	BLAENCWM	1921	1966
MAERDY 1 & 5 (REOPENED)	MAERDY	1948	1990

Acknowledgements

My grateful thanks are due to especially David Gwyer, for his Foreword and support in checking (twice) my spelling in this book, also Brian Davies and Paul O'Brien, also of the Pontypridd Museum.

Thanks also goes to Hywel Matthews, reference librarian at the Pontypridd Library and the reference section of the Treorchy, Newport and Cardiff libraries; Ceri Thompson, Curator, Big Pit; Wales' National Coal Museum, and Reg Malpass for the use of his map photograph. I would like to thank anyone that I have inadvertently forgotten.

Gareth Harris

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Glamorganshire at the opening of the Twentieth Century (Glamorganshire Contemporary Biographies) Cardiff 1896 & 1907.

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The Coalminer

The miner descends light hearted and cheerful,
To the dark, gloomy mine, his lamp in his hand.
Though perils surround him, he's happy and joyful,
And tunes the sweet ditties of Gwalia his land.

He strips off his jacket, rolls up his shirt sleeves,
The burning sweat wiped with hand from his brow.
Unheeding the clouds of dust he doth break.
He never despairs, but at all times is hopeful,
Undaunted he tolls for his family's sake.

From gloomy recess of irksome profoundness
The precious black diamond he willingly sends.
And thus to all people, peace comfort and gladness,
And happiness also he constantly blends.

How scanty the money he gets for his labour,
Compared with the dangers, encircling his path,
All persons despise the hard-working miner,
And think his a person of scarce any worth.

The fruit of his labour to all is a blessing.
In cottage and palace, on land and on sea,
There's naught in the world like a bright fire burning,
To warm and cherish such creature as we.

He knows not the moment when death is approaching,
To tear him away from his children and wife,
And leave them in trouble and sorrow bewailing,
The loss of their most loving partner in life.

Yet, bravely he toils, though his life is imperilled,
With his dim safety lamp not much can he see.
If ever a hero in this world existed,
We frankly admit the miner is he.

Tom James – Life among the colliers (1892)

The following article was discovered after the first imprint of this book, but is too interesting, to leave out from a reprint. The '*Western Mail*' of Thursday, January 30th 1896 reported: -

Colliery disasters in the Rhondda – Details of the first explosion
Details of tragedy 50 years ago

As an old manuscript has been put into my hands giving particulars of the terrible explosion which occurred at the Dinas Colliery on January 1st 1844, which was the first that ever occurred in the Rhondda Valley, if not, indeed, in the coalfield of south Wales. It was written by an eye-witness at the scene. A few years before the beginning of the present century the Glamorgan Canal was finished and opened, the manuscript goes on to state, from Cardiff to Merthyr. Ponty-y-ty-Pridd as Pontypridd is now called, referred to a bridge for foot passengers across the Taff. The 'ty-Pridd,' or 'house of clodes,' was a hut in which a man received toll from those using the footbridge. In 1756 Edwards completed that marvellous one-arched bridge across the River Taff, which is still one of the principal architectural wonders of all Wales. In 1800 Pontypridd had a small straw-thatched cottage, used as a public-house, on the site of the present New Inn Hotel, and another across the river, and called The White Horse, near the lock of the Glamorgan Canal, on the east side of the river.
The White Horse, as the name indicates – being on the old Saxon coat-of-arms, before the nation stole the Welsh unicorn and lion – was built to accommodate the navies who were engaged in digging the canal. With the exception of the said two humble-looking Inns in the solitude, Ponty-y-ty-Pridd had no more than two or three labourers' cottages.

All the magisterial business of the western and south districts of mid-Glamorgan was transacted at Llantrisant, where also was the market for the sale of farm produce, and where the fairs were held for the sale of corn, cattle, horses, and coal. Occasionally a few Englishmen might be seen at those fairs, but few could converse with them. There were no newspapers in either Welsh or English in that part of the country, but the 'Cambrian,' a weekly newspaper, had just been started at Swansea at a high price. But few except the gentry could read English. The common people were anxious to follow the example of the uncommon ones, and when one of the former could say "Good morning," instead of "Boreu da," which everybody could utter, the "Good morning," man or woman began to be regarded as a bit of a swell or a 'bit' of a lady. They were dressmakers, who went about from house to house to make kirtles,* and were the earliest English students in inland Glamorgan since the humbler orders. How these Shauns, the Gwenies, the Peggies, and the Maries of the farm-yards envied Miss Griffiths, the Kirtle maker who could say, like Miss Richards, Llantrisant: - "It is a pleasant afternoon."

* **Kirtle -** a one-piece garment worn by men and women. The kirtle was typically worn over a chemise or smock which acted as a slip and under the formal outer garment or gown.

"In those days," the manuscript states, "where Mill Street, Pontypridd, passed through, the road on each side was lined with great oak trees, forming a fine avenue a hundred yards of length. A narrow old country road passed up the valley of the Rhondda from the junction of the Rhondda and Taff Rivers. The valley is about 15 or 16 miles in length, from Pontypridd to Blaenrhondda. The parish road did not run in regular order along the flat of the valley, but in somewhat irregular fashion along the ridges overlooking the Rhondda River, so as to serve

the farmhouses, few and far between, along the sides of the mountains. The opening of the Glamorgan Canal to Cardiff suggested to the minds of a few the possibility of sending over it coal to the sea and outer world. A Doctor Griffiths began to search for coal near a place called Eirw, which now (1860) is called Hafod, and also Coedcae.

Passing up the valley, we come to Cymmer. Here a chapel has been built by the Independents, and near it was a small Public-house and half-a-dozen cottages. In 1808 a Bridgend man, named Walter Coffin, a descendent of the Prices of Ty'ntos, Llangeinor, came into the valley on a prospecting expedition. He found that a Mr. Morgan David, the owner of a few hundred odd acres in the South-West of the valley, had opened a small level, at which coal was sold to farmers at so much per sack. These sacks were carried on pack-horses to their farmhouse, situate far and near, on the hillsides. Thus coal was carried to the top of the valley, and to Tonyrefail, Llantrisant &c. In the year 1808 Mr. Walter Coffin obtained a lease of the Said Mr. Morgan David for 99 years, authorising him to work any coal he might find under the Graig-Ddu and Gwaun-Ddu farms, his property.

Mr. Walter Coffin bought, or had bought, and adjoining farm, called Dinas Uchaf. Another farm, lower in the adjoining Ely Valley, was, and is still, called Dinas Isaf. The "royalty" which Mr. Walter Coffin agreed to pay Mr. Morgan David, was 30 sackfulls of coal per annum and a small monetary consideration. That lease is still in force.

The first place where Mr. W. Coffin entered upon mining operations was in a small ravine near the junction of the Graig-ddu and Ty'n-y-Cymmer properties and some distance above the level of the Rhondda River. His manager was Mr. William David "Y Garreg" so called after the name of his former residence at Bridgend. Its seems "Y Garreg," or "The Stone," was the name in which the farmers frequenting the town gave to the stone mount from which their wives and daughters mounted their brisk ponies on leaving for home on the evenings of Market Day.

Mr. Walter Coffin soon found another rich seam of coal, running almost level with the bed of the river. He now decided to construct a tramroad from those levels to the Glamorgan Canal at Treforest, then called "The Duke," in reference to the Duke of Bridgewater, the owner of the lands in the locality. The tramroad was 8 miles in length, and was regarded in those days as the wonderful evidence of enterprise and engineering skill. Teams of horses were employed to drag the coal trams down to the canal, and then take back the empty trams.
Mr. Walter Coffin decided to sink a shaft, so as to discover what the earth below contained. He struck the afterwards celebrated Dinas No. 3 Seam at a depth of 85 yards from the seam which was almost level with the bed of the river. Then he came across a fault in the coal stratum. He drove through it, at great cost, a distance of half-a-mile up the valley, where the coal was again struck. Here he decided to sink a fresh pit, and so bring the coal to the surface through the new shaft instead of taking it down to the old shaft, at a distance of half-a-mile. This is the shaft in which the earliest explosion took place in the Rhondda Valley, on New Years morning in 1884.

By this time Dinas contained a population of about 400 all told, two chapels, one belonging to the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and called "Ebenezer," or "Stone of help," and another belonging to the Welsh Baptists, and called "Zoar," had been built. These two chapels were

the centres of local mental activity. The Sunday School at Ebenezer under the guidance of the first Moses Rowland and Thomas Rowland, two brothers, descendants of the same family as the celebrated Daniel Rowland, Llangeitho, became very noteworthy for its able welsh readers and its theological students.

The last day of the year 1843 happened to be on a Sunday. In the Sunday Schools and in the regular services of that Sunday many allusions were made to the flight of time and duty of all to conduct themselves well and to "the glory of God," during the ensuing year. At the Ebenezer poor Thomas Rowland, whose appearance was like one of the old Puritans of the Roundhead fraternity, was more than usually solemn in exhorting the Sunday School that Sunday morning. He was the man who had, years before, started a Sunday School for the first time at Ystradfodwg Parish Church.

That Monday morning most of the male population proceeded down the fields and from their pretty cottages amongst the woods towards the Dinas shaft. On their way they greeted each other with the old kindly expression: - "Blwyddyn Newydd Dda I Chwi', or literally, "A good New Year to you." The one so greeted said "Dioch! Felly I chwitmau," (Thanks, so be it with you). Those cheerful greetings that memorable morning were long afterwards remembered by the inhabitants, for twelve of those who had been among them full of lusty life were at breakfast time among the spirits of the departed. Among them are the spirits the devout and highly intellectual Thomas Rowland and his three sons. At 8 o'clock on that Monday morning a small child walked in the hand of his father, and when about 100 yards nearer Penygraig than Grovefield, the present residence of Dr. Evan Davies, he saw a horse coming at full gallop up and round the bend of the slanting road, coming from the direction of the colliery shaft. On its back was a young lad in an excited condition. He cried as he galloped by, "The colliery has fired! The men are down! I am going to Dinas Ucha stables for the horse of the "whim," and away he went. A "whim" is the name of a large round machine turning horizontally on a beam. Around the whim – from the Welsh "chwin," – ran the flaxen rope used on special occasions to let a man down or lift him him from a colliery shaft.

*__Whim__ - A vertical horse-powered drum used as a hoist in a mine.

That child was lifted on his father's back, and down the road the father ran. On arriving in view of the shaft the slates of the roof over the pit-house were seen to be lying in every direction, and the woodwork of the roof was bare. Men were busily engaged in fixing 85 yards of flaxen rope around the "whim," and, this having been bound, its end was inserted through a hole in the gable end of the pit-house, and that end was seen by the child dangling over the yawning mouth of the pit.

A small seat attached to two side chains, and fastened by the chains to the end of the rope, was now fixed. All the inhabitants of small locality were assembled. All were in tears, and poor Mary Job sent sent this by her wailings, "O, Dafydd Anwyl!" was her cry. Hitherto no-one knew the state of things below. The appliances were of the most primitive description, but they were best known in those days. "Where, Oh! Was the whim horse?" were the cries, the gallant dark fawn with flowing mane, was seen coming down the road as if the speed of thought were in his limbs. His flowing mane was whitey-brown, and his tail was of the same colour. It was said he understood the working of the "whim" thoroughly. He proceeded at

full gallop to the "whim" as if knowing. He backed of his own accord into the shaft fastened to a vertical pole attached to the whim. A gallant young man mounted into the seat dangling over the mouth of the shaft. "Away" cried the haulier to the whim horse. He instantly obeyed, and, with belly belly nearly touching the ground by the effort he made to go fast, he went round and round with incredible speed.

The weeping women stood round the track and called the horse by name, and blessed him for his speed. An explosion had never been heard of by them before, and now the gallant horse sped their daring passenger to the dark regions below, where their husbands, brothers, &c. might be struggling for dear life. The horse seemed to know perfectly well the number of "rounds" he and the whim had to go to enable the rope to reach the bottom. He suddenly stopped, panting for breath. The messenger had reached the bottom of the shaft, and the animal knew it.

Presently a loud cry from below boomed through the shaft. Instantly the whim-horse was again spinning his rounds by the speed of a racehorse. Oh! How eagerly the faces of both sexes gazed at the rapidly ascending flaxen rope! It brought the first message from the living tombstone what had happened. Was anyone alive down below? Suddenly there whim-horse stopped, and at the same instance the heroic young man who ventured down reappeared. He brought with him awful tidings. The bottom of the shaft, which was divided from bottom to top by brattice, as to form a downcast and an upcast airway, was shattered in all directions. He had heard dreadful cries in the darkness below. In a short time heroic men went down, one after the other, by the rope as the first had done, the horse at the whim never complaining, but as if in thorough sympathy with the occasion.

Among those gallant men who thus descended was Sam Edmunds, who was exceedingly well known for the way he encouraged the youth of the locality to cultivate their minds. He and one of his sons lost their lives in the Cymmer explosion, June 15th 1856, when 114 perished. An hour or so later Sam Edmunds returned to the open air dreadfully exhausted. When he was able to speak he said he had gone in the direction Thomas Rowland and his sons were working. He had heard Thomas on the other side of a door praying, but he, nearly perishing himself, totally lacked sufficient strength to open the door. The many severely wounded were brought to bank, one after the other, sitting on the lap of a man, who sat on a flat piece of iron, 4 inches wide, attached to the small chain fastened to the rope as already described. Other gallant attempts besides that made by Sam Edmunds were made, and many were thus saved, but the death-roll was 12, which in those days was regarded as most terrible.

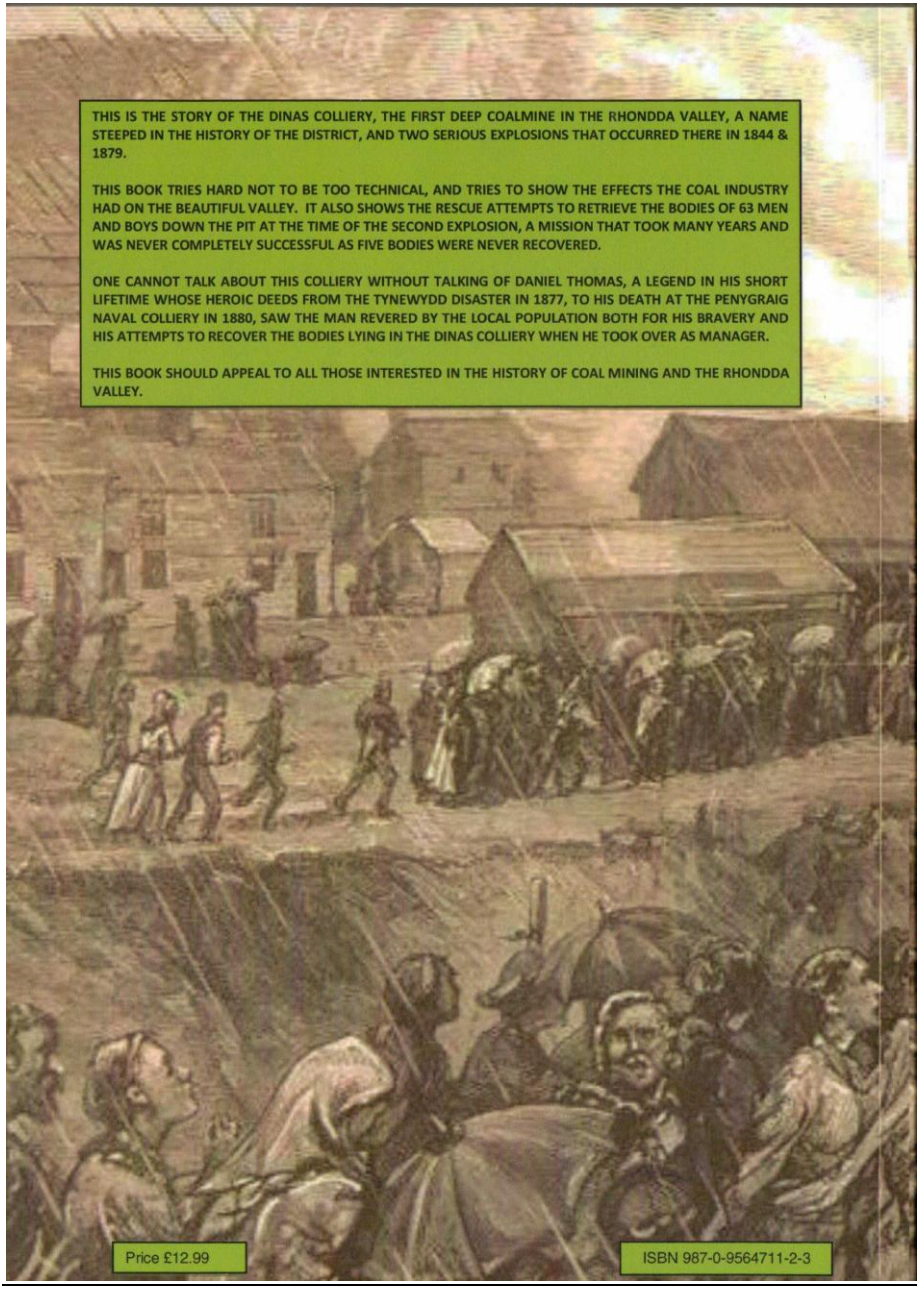
Death of an Octogenarian

The '*Western Mail*,' of Saturday May 9th 1874, gave another interesting story: - On Thursday morning a great regret was expressed by all classes throughout the Dinas district at the death of "Twm Morgan, Pengelli." The deceased was over 83 years of age, and had always lived in the valley, his younger days having been spent at Ynsyfaio Farm, in the part of the valley known now as Treherbert, but which was then known as Blaencwm.

He was the last – the very last – of the men who upwards of sixty years ago came to Dinas to be employed by the late Mr. Walter Coffin, of Llandaff, in opening the old Dinas level, the first colliery worked in the valley, the coal from which was conveyed in small trams to the Glamorgan Canal at Treforest, a distance of about eight miles. He was heard to say a little time before his death that upwards of 70 years ago he frequently came with pack horses from Ynysfaio to Dinas for coal, which was then sold to farmers by the late Morgan Dafydd, Gwaunadda Farm, from a seam cropped up between Pengelli and Pandy station.

The old man was a constant worker at Dinas Colliery, the property of Colonel Hunt, up to within the last few years, when the growing infirmities of age compelled him to lay down the mandril for ever. He was remarkable for his witty sayings, and was a great favourite with all who knew him. It is said of him that soon after the Taff Vale Railway was completed from Cardiff to Merthyr he and some of his old friends went to Pontypridd to see the "new wonder," a passenger train. Having seen the train, the friends felt a wish to try the new "machine" and having paid their fare they were soon on their way towards Cardiff "at the tail" of the new machine, as "Twmi" expressed it. The friends were extremely nervous, for, as they described it afterwards, the very fields were seen to wheel about in a fantastic fashion.

They had passed Llandaff station when "Twmi," in subdued tones, quivering with emotion, reminded his friends that the deep sea was in front of them. After a short time, finding the "machine" still going at a furious rate, being unable to suppress his feelings any longer, called excitedly in his native Welsh, "Jawl! Byth y sprag a nw hi; ni fyddwn yn y mor bob un!" ("Jawl (curse word), they will never be able to sprag it; we will be in the sea every one of us!") He was buried at Zoar Baptist Chapel, where he had been a member for many years. "Heddwich iw lwch." (Rest in peace).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