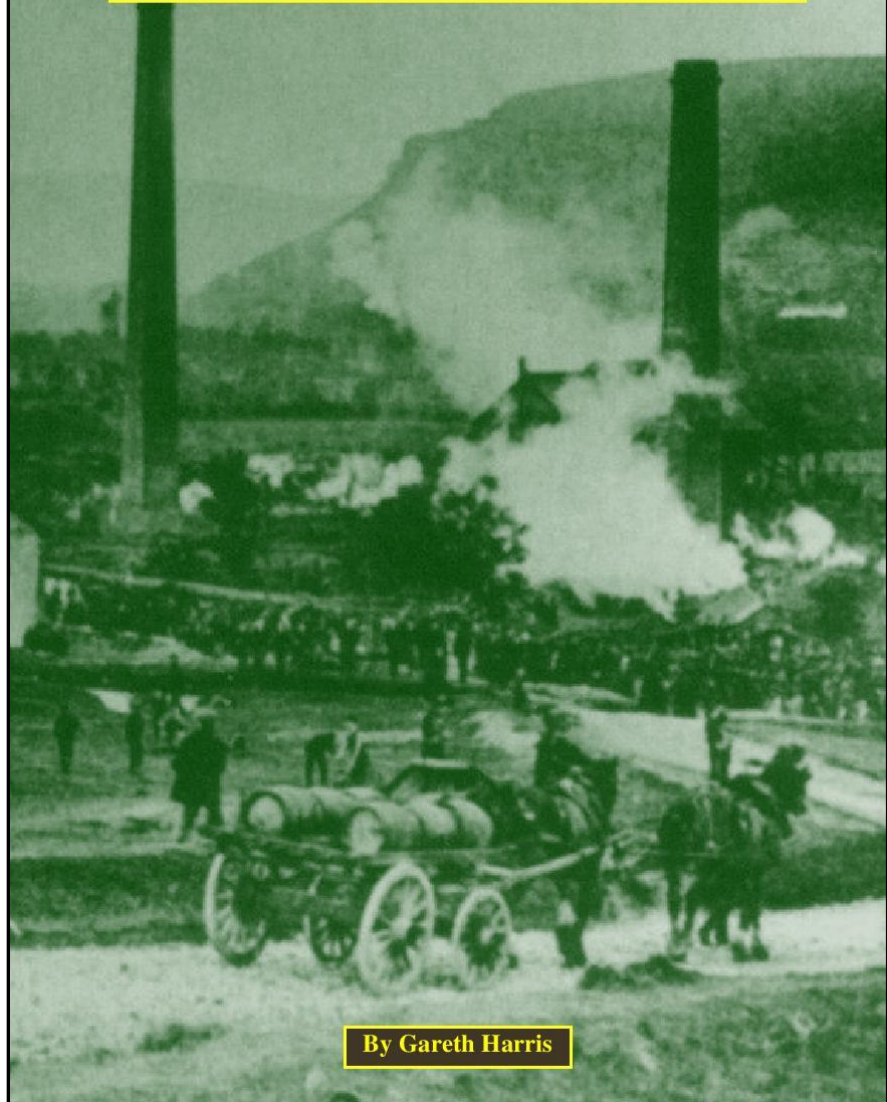


THE ALBION COLLIERY DISASTER

Cilfynydd - June 23rd 1894



By Gareth Harris



**Little I thought my time so short
In this world to remain
When from my home I went away
I thought to come again.**

The inscription on the gravestone of William Henry Lewis at the Llanfabon Cemetery. One of the 290 victims of the Albion Colliery Disaster in 1894. This is the horrifying story of that tragedy.

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Foreword

By

Vyvyan Phillip Jones

My father, Philip Jones, told me he was sitting at home with his father Philip John Jones, the then manager of the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, in their front room, on a glorious summer Saturday afternoon in 1894, when they felt a low rumble in the ground underneath the house followed by a muffled explosion. Living in a mining community most of their lives, they knew immediately what had happened, an under- ground explosion.

They both rushed out of the house and joined hundreds of others running to the Albion Colliery pithead where a cloud of dust overhung the pithead buildings and winding gear. I can only imagine what was going through my grandfather's mind. As the colliery manger his concern for the men below must have been overwhelming. He was desperate to organise a rescue team as quickly as possible and lead it down, and he had to be prepared to accept some responsibility. To that date it was the worst disaster in Welsh mining history.

This book by Gareth Harris a result of meticulous research into the disaster and the subsequent events. The long term effects of the disaster lasts unto this day, through the families of those who lost their lives over 100 years ago.

As I look at the miners lamp, engraved "Phillip Jones M. E." on my desk, I can only visualise what the faint glimmer of light from it showed, as my grandfather reached the bottom of the pit, at the head of the rescue team.

Vyvyan Phillip Jones November 2009

Introduction

by the Author

The writing about the disaster at the Albion Colliery was never going to be easy. The names and addresses of those that died and those were saved varied from newspaper report to newspaper report. Even the comparatively few colliers that were rescued alive was disputed, some saying fifteen, some sixteen, and other reports were giving the names of that did not appear in any of the other lists.

Nevertheless I have tried to cover the disaster from the newspaper accounts of what was happening firstly in the village and secondly in the colliery yard when the explosion occurred and the arrival of the relatives to await news of their loved ones underground. I then cover the initial rescue attempts and the exploration carried out by those going down soon after the event. This is followed by many accounts given by those very rescuers. I try and describe the grief that the death of so many men and boys caused in Cilfynydd and the surrounding district and, unlike another book about this disaster, go into fine detail about the many funerals that took place at Glyntaff and Llanfabon, and the despatch of other bodies to different parts of the country.

The inquest that followed trying to discover who was to blame for the disaster and reports by the various Inspectors that were given to the Home Secretary are covered as published, and though rather long and sometimes repetitive are of interest to those hoping to discover who was really to blame. The same might be said of the prosecution of officials that occurred several months later. Lastly, I cover the scandal of the £35,000 that was raised nationally and the unsuccessful attempt by the widows and orphans of Cilfynydd to get even the smallest benefit from that amount.

In writing this book I have tried to include the names of all that were mentioned in newspaper reports. Unfortunately, the majority were not mentioned, and even those on the official death list often had their names and address incorrect as well. Despite all this I hope the reader enjoys this glimpse into the past and an incident that was the worst mining disaster in Wales until the Senghenydd disaster a few years later.

Mr. Alan Caffrey has kindly done the Welsh - English interpretations for me in this book to the best of his ability but they are his personal interpretations and are done in the context of when or where they appear, but might be interpreted differently by others.

Gareth Harris

Preamble

Family life in mining communities such as Cilfynydd was dominated by the pit. The shift system, particularly in large households where many men were employed on different shifts, must have made it seem that miners were always going to or coming back from work. The 'working day' of the house was thus a very long one and it was also true that in many houses beds were never empty because of the shift system. The piecework system of wages meant that the amount of money coming into the houses were never predictable and of course there was always the dreaded fear of a husband or a son being brought home dead or injured. The houses were built of stone quarried locally by speculative builders who then rented them out to the miners. There were no baths, so once the miner returned from the pit his first task was to bathe in an old zinc tub, and if you were lucky the lady of the house had a couple of buckets of water on the fire. If more than one person returned together, they shared the water.

In most of the homes 'mam' was the dominant person, and invariably obsessed by the need for cleanliness in their houses. With dirt and dust always being brought into the home from the pit, it was a constant battle to keep up the standards. Being 'tidy' was even extended to the scrubbing of front door-steps and flagstones (if they were lucky enough to have any) in the backyard. Another major task in a house full of miners was washing - all done by hand and with filthy pit clothes to clean, terrific hard work. There were also meals to cook, bread to bake, clothes to make and mend so forth. 'Mam' not only reared the children of the large families that were common in 1893, but also took most of the responsibility over them including discipline.

Whilst the importance and the hard work of the typical 'mam' was part and parcel of valley life, not all women were tied to the home in the way that is sometimes suggested. Many women had jobs and even miners' wives would add to the family earnings by taking in washing, and wallpapering in other houses, for example. The food eaten at this time was basic. One hot meal, if they were lucky, would be eaten each day when the miner returned home from the pit. Welsh cawl (soup) was popular or otherwise a meat and potato dinner.

Most shopping was done in the village or the market town of nearby Pontypridd. Some of the early shops in Cilfynydd had been set up by wives converting their front rooms to sell goods, but mostly the shops were owned by businessmen who could see there was a thriving population waiting to be fed and clothed. Because of the poverty and hardship which might befall a miner as a result of an accident at work, the main method chosen by working people to guard against the poverty which might come because of an accident, illness, or was to join a 'Friendly Society.'

People paid a weekly subscription to these Societies and in return they would receive assistance during difficult times. There were three big national orders, the Oddfellows, Hearts of Oak, and the Ivorites. Not only were they a popular form of self-help, but the societies were also organisations which people joined for the enjoyment that was had on 'club nights' and on processions and marches that were held. However they did not pay very good benefits on the death of a member and by 1893 insurance companies such as the Prudential and special insurance funds for major accidents, (at Cilfynydd the miners contributed 3½ pence per week to what was known as the Permanent Relief Fund) were active throughout the valleys.

If a miner was not in work through illness, old age, unemployment etc., he and his family had no automatic right to social security benefits as we have today. Therefore, even in prosperous years there was always some real poverty. In such circumstances the poor would have to rely on help from their family and on 'tick' (credit) from shops. During periods of unemployment and strikes they often had to resort to picking coal from the tips (risking prosecution) and selling it, and soup kitchens where free meals were provided, often by local churches.

If help and charity were not enough the only alternative was to go 'on the Parish.' This meant applying to the Poor Law authorities for help. Each parish set aside some of the money raised from the rates for poor relief which was given out by the Guardians, who were elected by the ratepayers, and these set up 'workhouses.' Usually those who applied for poor relief had to go into these workhouses where conditions were harsh. Entering the workhouse was called receiving 'in-relief' and usually the authorities did not believe in giving 'out-relief' money or food to people outside the workhouse except in very rare cases. In the 1890's when there was lots of strikes and unemployment 'out-relief' could be given only if work was done in return. This work was often very hard.

With the high incidence of ill-health and accidents there was a great need for medical treatment. Such treatment cost money, however, and it was precisely those who were ill or injured who could least afford to pay. In such circumstances it is not surprising that wherever possible people tried to treat themselves. But the Albion Colliery had its own doctor, who was paid for either by the company or more likely by the miners themselves by deductions from their wages.

Many of the workmen worked in fear of the 'discharge note.' For many years the discharge note was a powerful weapon which the coal owners could use against people they did not like or someone that did something against the company. Through this system, no worker could leave one colliery and start at another unless he had been given a note by his previous employer stating that he was a good and reliable workman.

Although the general conditions and dangers in which the miners worked gradually improved as the 19th century went on they were always bad and South Wales was one of the most dangerous coalfields to work in because of its difficult geological conditions, and its gassy deep mines.

The coal hewer was down in the mine away from sunlight and fresh air sometimes in temperatures of up to 90 degrees, every moment of the day inhaling coal and shale dust, perspiring so abnormally as few men in other industries can realize; head throbbing with almost inhuman exertion; the roof perhaps, 18 inches low, perhaps, 20 feet high, ears constantly strained for movements in the strata on which his limbs or life is dependent, breathing noxious smells due to the absence of any kind of sanitation and subject at any moment to the terrible list of mining diseases, most common of which was the dreaded nystagmus,* which may, if neglected, lead to insanity; and liable always to wounds and death from falls of roof, and ever and over the sickening dread of an awful explosion.

* Nystagmus - A congenial or acquired persistent, rapid, involuntary, and oscillatory movement of the eyeball, usually from side to side. Often described by observers as jumping or dancing eye movements.

Without these special dangers mining was a job which lead to general ill-health. Blood poisoning (from working in filthy clothes), rheumatism (from working in water), constant headaches from the gas (a term normally used for firedamp, but could be any gas found in a mine), ruptures (from cramped working positions) and many other ailments were accepted by the collier as part of his way of life. Much less acceptable were the major mining disasters which occurred all too frequently in South Wales. These were usually caused by massive explosions of natural gas. Naturally these major disasters, with the awful effect they had on single communities, captured a great deal of public attention. However, major disasters were not the typical cause of death in the mines, which was much more likely to result from isolated incidents of roof-falls, the effect of gas, or journeys (a number of drams linked together) of drams running wild etc.

Non-fatal accidents, which sometimes would cripple or injure a man for life, were even more frequent. In 1892 for every fatal accident in South Wales there were 100 non-fatal accidents.

Coal dust was also a cause of disability and the early death of miners. However, it was a long time before the diseases caused by dust - Pneumoconiosis and Silicosis - were recognised as industrial diseases. The symptoms of Pneumoconiosis were - dyspnea (shortness of breath), a cough which was always present; and Sputum (phlegm), which as a rule was copious and black, and in its later stages there may be signs of heart failure or tuberculosis.

There was also the aforementioned nystagmus. This was caused by working in conditions where there was not enough light and got worse as the 19th century went on as, ironically, the safety-lamp gave far less light than the flame from a candle. It made the eyes go weak and eventually the sufferer would find it unsafe to work and lead eventually to his dismissal.

In British mines from 1868 to 1914, on average a miner was killed every six hours and seriously injured every two hours. This average would be much higher in South Wales which was the most dangerous coal-field in Britain to work in. It also, of course, takes no account of the deaths and permanent disability caused by the diseases described above.

It is against this backdrop that the story of the opening of the Albion Colliery and the major disaster that followed a few years later is set.



Colliery officials at the Albion Colliery taken in 1897. The majority had taken part in the rescue operations that had taken place at the terrible explosion that took place in 1893. The manager, Philip Jones, is pictured centre middle row with beard.

CHAPTER ONE

The beginnings of the coal industry in Cilfynydd

Today, the village of Cilfynydd, if you discard the A470 trunk road that runs along its lower end, where once the slower but equally important Glamorganshire Canal once ran, is comparatively quiet from its heyday. The heart of what was once the centre of village life is now gone, and there are few signs of the Albion Colliery that once dominated the surrounding area from 1887 to 1966.

However, there is still a spoil tip which hovers above the village, and even now during wet weather despite it having been ‘landscaped’ and apparently made safe, it sometimes causes concern to the older residents. On the site of where the colliery once stood, stands a modern school, the Pontypridd High School, and within its grounds stands two small memorials (over the upcast and downcast shafts) to the men and boys who once sacrificed their lives at a time when coal was the ‘black gold’ of Wales and the British Isles.

By the mid 1880's, there was a widespread search for new seams of coal to be exploited in south Wales, and the land between Pontypridd and Aberdare Junction (sometimes know as Navigation, and later as Abercynon) was almost virgin ground, though test boring holes had first been tried at what would become the village of Cilfynydd as early as the 1870's, but these attempts that took place above what is now Wood Street in the village, apparently were not successful, or considered not worth pursuing.

Before the 1880's, the small number of residents, living in what was called Ynyscaedudwg or Cilfynydd, were either employed on the local farms, on the canal, or labouring at local quarries, but with the whole district rapidly increasing in population due to the nearby coal trade, even Cilfynydd and nearby Pontshonorton was seeing an increase. On the 1881 census there were only 104 inhabitants in the village, mostly immigrants from other part of the United Kingdom, but soon there would be a huge explosion of ‘newcomers’ to Cilfynydd.

After more test bore holes, this time on the valley floor, a farm that had been around for over 200 years, known as Ynyscaedudwg, was eventually chosen by what would become known as the Albion Coal Company as a site that they were positive would prove to be a successful place to dig for the rich coals seams that were worked in the nearby Rhondda valley.

So confident were they of success that as soon as the shafts were begun (known as sinking), on the nearby mountainside, on what was formerly the Cilfynydd Farm, they began to build housing for the workmen they were sure they would

eventually need. At the end of 1884 the search for the coal seams began. However, slow progress was made in sinking and in March 1886 an accident struck at what the local newspapers were calling the 'Caedudwg' Colliery. The newspaper reported: -

Fatal accident at the Albion Colliery

A little after 7 o'clock on Wednesday morning, March 24th 1886, when about ten men were employed at a depth of 125 yards from the surface, at No.2 Albion shaft, Yscadudwg Colliery, a mile about Pontypridd, in the Taff Valley, a huge stone, weighing about two tons, fell from the side of the shaft, killing Joseph Jones (25), and Richard Jones, (20), on the spot, also so terribly injuring the legs of James Rowlands that it was found necessary to amputate one of them, which operation was performed by Dr. William Price, Pontypridd, the medical officer of the works, and Dr. Ivor Lewis, Cymmer. Little hope is entertained that the other leg can be saved. A man named Benjamin Hughes also was seriously injured. The circumstances of the accident are as follows: -

The pit is 240 yards in depth. At a height of 15 yards from the bottom is a seam of coal, and a passage has been cut through into the No.1 shaft. A platform has been erected over the shaft opposite this passage to enable men to widen it. Hanging above the side of the entrance into the said passage was a huge block of 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 of brick making, also used for the 'stemming' of shot-holes in mines), which on being exposed to the air, is as hard as rock. The men employed in the previous shift had endeavoured to shatter it by blasting, but it had remained apparently unshaken.

When the second turn commenced on Wednesday morning they adopted the usual mode of 'sounding' the block, with a view of ascertaining whether it remained solid or not, and they came to an affirmative conclusion. James Rowlands and Ben Hughes, proceeded to bore a fresh blasting hole in it, the last named turning the drill and the other hammering, while the two deceased were engaged in shoveling debris into the bowk (a large tub used for raising rubbish or workmen) to be drawn up to the surface. And the six others were similarly engaged, when, without a moment's warning, the huge block suddenly gave way, crushing the two Jones's in an awful manner, and injuring the others as described above.

Assistance was sent down from the surface, but so ponderous was the block lying on the two dead bodies that it was found necessary to pass around it a chain attached to a rope communicating with the engine on the surface before it could be removed. Joseph Jones, who was a single man, was a native of Coedpoeth, Denbighshire. Richard Jones, also single, was a native of Cardigan. James Rowlands was only recently married. The other shaft, No.2, is about 350 yards in

depth, and hitherto there has been complete immunity from any serious accidents. As the above deaths were ‘unnatural,’ an inquest into their deaths will be carried out. The ‘*Pontypridd Chronicle*’ of April 2nd 1886 reported: -

The sad fatality at Caedudwg Colliery

The inquest on the bodies of Richard Jones and Joseph Jones, killed at the Albion Colliery, on Wednesday, was formally opened on Friday, at the Cilfynydd Inn by Mr. Henry Llewelyn Grover, deputy - coroner and jury having viewed the bodies, and the usual preliminaries being gone through the coroner said: - “I shall simply take evidence as to the identity of the bodies and adjourn until next Thursday, at two o’clock in the afternoon.”

David Jones of Ponterwid, Cardiganshire, said: - “Richard Jones, deceased, was my brother. I identified the body seen by the jury as that of my brother. He was a sinker in the employ of the Albion Colliery Co. I heard in Cardiganshire of his death, and came up here. Deceased was 20 years of age last September.”

John Davies, sinker in the employ of the Albion Colliery Co., said Joseph Jones, deceased, lodged with him at the house of Albert Jenkins. Deceased was also a sinker and worked at the same colliery. He identified the body viewed by the jury at his lodgings as that of Joseph Jones. Deceased was 25 years of age last August, was a single man, and a native of Wrexham. This was all the evidence taken, the inquest was then adjourned.

It is satisfactory to find that the man whose last week condition was thought as almost hopeless, Rowlands - is progressing favourably under Dr. Price, the medical officer of the works. The outward marks of the crushing effects of the fall were more numerous and heavy on Rowlands than on the men who were killed. His recovery therefore is marvelous.

The Inquest resumed

The ‘*Pontypridd Chronicle*’ of April 9th 1886 reported: - On Thursday, before Mr. H. Llewelyn Grover, deputy-cornor, the inquest was resumed touching the death of the two men, Joseph Jones and Richard Jones who were killed at the Albion Colliery on Wednesday, 24 inst. by a fall of fire-clay. Mr. E. W. Randall, Her Majesty’s. Inspector of Mines for the South Wales District attended the inquiry.

Thomas Trevor Trevethan, foreman sinker, in the employ of the Albion Colliery Co., said he was foreman of the shift when Joseph and Richard Jones were killed. He went down with the men at six o’clock in the morning. He examined the place as soon as he got there. He did not know of any dangerous stone in the shaft. He

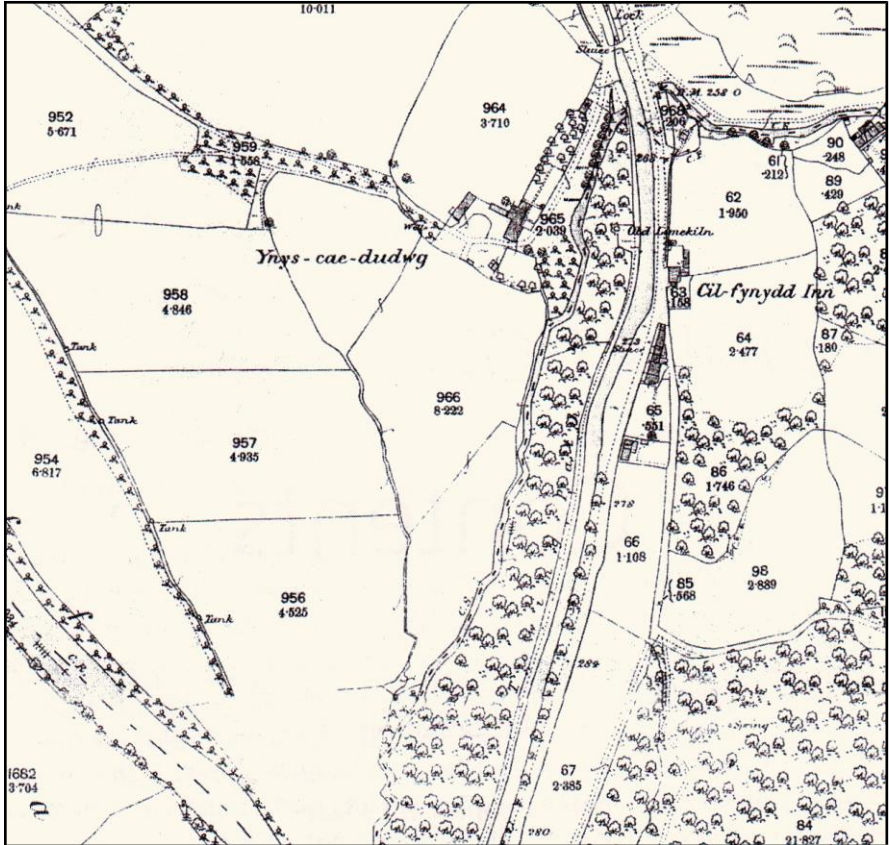
afterwards sent the men to bore holes. They were making a lodge-room part of the way down the shaft. This lodge-room was the connecting heading between the two shafts. When the men were boring the holes the stone fell out from the place where they were boring, and fell on the two men who were filling rubbish (anything not coal). One of them was standing on the stage, and the other was just in the entrance of the heading. Witness knew that the stone was there, and the holes were bored for the purpose of bringing it down. It was a large stone. The stone came down quite unexpectedly. He had 'sounded' the stone before the men went to work. He had taken every precaution which he thought was necessary. He thought that the stone would have to be 'brought' by blasting. That was why the holes were being bored. The men were killed instantaneously, and two others were injured. It took about half an hour to get the men out. Fire-clay was very hard to tell whether it was safe or not.

If the fire-clay had fallen on the stage, it would very likely have carried the stage away. It would have been much safer if a kerb had been put in under the first bed of fire-clay, and the pit walled and an archway turned where the lodge-room was intended. When they were sinking the pit pieces often dropped from this bed of fire-clay. It was well known that a pit being sunk through fire-clay pieces could fall if it was not walled in secure.

He received instructions from Mr. Jones, the head foreman, as to the manner in which the work was to be done and if the pit had been walled and the archway turned he would still have gone about the work the same way. Had seen headings started in the same way as that which was started many times before.

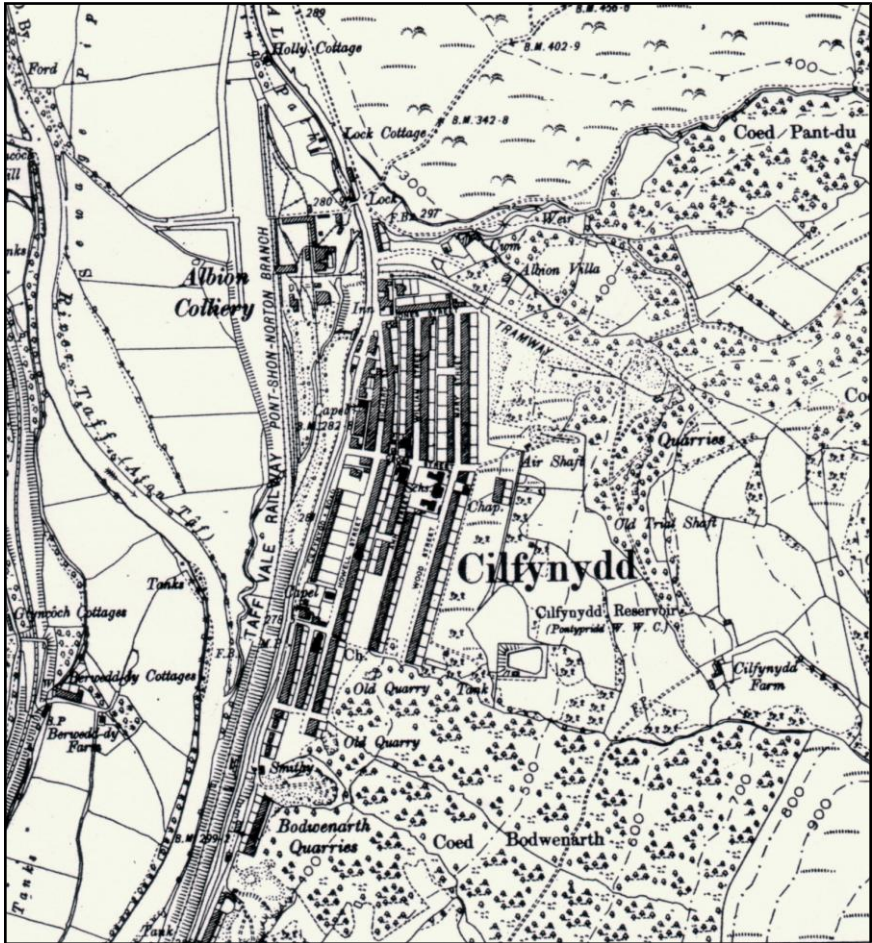
Edwin Wydham Randall, Inspector of Mines for the South Wales District, said he visited the Albion Colliery on the day of the accident, and went down the shaft. He thought that every bed of fire-clay of the thickness of that in the pit ought to be secured at the first available opportunity, as it was always dangerous, and the most treacherous ground for sinking. He did not think that the accident would have occurred if the pit had been walled from the rock under the fire-clay, and an arch being turned where the lodge-room was to be made, the coal had been worked off, and the fire-clay worked downwards from the coal.

He had known a place where the stage was carried away by the fire-clay falling. He did not know of a pit where every time that they came across fire-clay that they invariably walled. He thought that when they came to fire-clay of the thickness of that contained in that shaft it would have been prudent to have walled. There had been in his opinion not such a want of skill shown as to render any person criminally liable. The jury returned a verdict of 'accidental death.'



Ordnance survey map of Cilfynydd compiled in 1873

An old name for Cilfynydd was 'Cym-ael-deg' (The valley of the fair slope.) Though others think that Cym-hel-deg (the valley of good hunting) - is more correct. Another old name for Cilfynydd is 'Cwm cae Dudwg' (the valley of the field of Dudwg). - or Cwm Godidog (lovely valley).



Ordnance Survey map 1901 compiled c.1897

The Glamorganshire canal was in operation carrying flour, iron ore and general merchandise between Merthyr, Aberdare and Cardiff right until 1914, when a break occurred at quarry siding, making it impossible for boats to go any further than Pontypridd. In its heyday the canal was the scene of frantic races when ice glazed its surface in winter. Even fishermen had sporting moments there. When the village of Cilfynydd was taking shape the inhabitants had their furniture transported from Cardiff by horse-drawn barges, and many people travelled by canal for their picnics and outings to Taffs Well.

Perhaps the company would now be more careful whilst sinking the shafts, and though no blame had been attached to the management, it was soon proved that they had not learnt their lesson. Within a few months another accident would occur, and this time there would be four fatalities.

Another fatal colliery accident at Pontypridd

Four men killed and three injured

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of November 12th 1887 reported: - On Thursday last, November 4th, soon after we had gone to press, news reached Pontypridd that an alarming accident had happened at the Albion Colliery, and that in all probability, thirteen or fourteen men were killed. The rumour was exaggerated, but it contained a substratum of truth for, unfortunately, a number of men had been entombed, and although sixteen out of the twenty who were working in the pit were rescued, three of these were injured, and there were still four killed in the pit. The accident which happened may be described as a 'sinking accident.' Work was being carried out as usual on Thursday, and there appeared no sign of danger, so far as is known, before a terrific fall took place, extinguishing the lights, injuring several men, and completely entombing four of the workmen. Indeed, it is said that one of the men, now alive, was, not more than five minutes before the accident, up close to the walling, placing there a bag to hold the water dropping out, and he saw nothing to alarm him.

But it appears that the ground in which the sinking operations are carried on is somewhat loose, and, no doubt, owing to this the walling under the kerb at the bottom of the downcast shaft gave way for about ten yards, bringing the brick lining down with it, and completely filling up the bottom of the pit, covering up four men, who were killed, and partially covering three more, who were injured. Considering that there were twenty men forming Henry Morgan's shift, when in the downcast, it is a wonder that others were not buried alive under the debris.

There was at first some difficulty in communicating between the surface and the bottom owing to the stones and material having fallen upon the bowk. Subsequently communication was established by means of a heading leading from the down-cast to the up-cast (shafts). The bowk was got loose, and a number of men rushed into it, Mr. Lewis, the manager, and others, who had got down, finding some difficulty in keeping them in order so that all should ascend. The debris having been cleared away, it was discovered that the signal wire was entangled around the bowk, and in the attempt to start it some of the men were knocked about by this rope. However, the first lot were got up in about an hour, two or three of the injured men helping nobly to get others out. It was said that Henry Morgan, when actually buried himself, helped others onto the bowk.

The scene in the pit up to this time was beyond description, men praying and calling for help, one man calling upon his fellows to cut off his legs rather than leave him where he was, and a voice (supposed to be that of Evan Williams) coming up from beneath the rubbish praying, and asking to be buried at Llantwit. It is not certain whether the other three who were still lying with Williams were instantaneously killed or not, but, even if they were not, the four unfortunate men were, ere long, silenced in death by the action of the water, which naturally ascended from the bottom of the shaft at the rate of about two barrels an hour, and which now overwhelmed them.

The work of the rescue was carried on with extreme difficulty, because of the danger of more wall falling. However, in about four hours, the last two of those remaining alive, Henry Morgan and Rees Davies, were got up to the surface and taken home. Dr. Price, the medical officer of the works, was away at the Assizes, and his assistant, Dr. Dakes, had left the colliery only a short time before the accident occurred. Dr. Price's partner, Dr. Ivor Lewis, of Cymmer, was immediately sent for, and Dr. Dakes and Lyttle were also soon on the spot, and they attended to the injured, of whom they reported as follows: -

Henry Morgan, 48 years of age, who lives at Cilfynydd, and has a wife and four children, besides being injured, was blistered by the lime and water.

There were at the time of the accident eighteen men employed in the No.2 pit. These were not in any way injured, and helped in the rescue of the others. Those still entombed at the colliery were: -

Thomas Jones, Llanfabon, age 41, wife and six children.

David Griffiths, 90, Rickard St, Pontypridd, and formerly of Bethesda, Carnarvon, aged 38, wife and three children.

Evan Williams, of Llantwit Vardre, single, age 30.

Morris John, of Colwyn, Carnarvon, married, age 36.

On Thursday night, Mr. Henry Lewis, the consulting engineer of the colliery, and others, visited the place, and seeing that all hope of rescuing the remaining four was in vain, gave directions to proceed with getting out the water, and placing the pit in such order as would enable the workmen to carry on the work of repair and clearance with as little danger as possible. Later on another fall took place, but happily no one was injured. The work has gone on daily, but up to present the bodies have not been recovered, and it is said they will not be reached until next week.

We understand that during the present week several kind sympathisers have exerted themselves in soliciting pecuniary and other aid in Pontypridd and neighbourhood towards ameliorating the temporary sufferings of the bereaved families of the deceased men, with a result the most gratifying to the poor people who have thus been rendered destitute of their primary means of support.

The recovery of the bodies - opening of the inquest

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of Friday, November 19th 1887 reported: - The bodies of four men, Evan Williams, Thomas Jones, Morris Jones and David Griffiths, who were killed on the Nov. 4th inst., at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, near Pontypridd, were recovered on Sunday night. It was known that the bodies would probably be reached in the course of Sunday, and arrangements had been made for the coroner's jury to view the bodies as soon as they were brought to the surface.

Consequently a large crowd had gathered at the top of the pit. The bodies were not reached, however, until a late hour, and the jury had, therefore, to be dismissed until next morning. When the bodies were brought to bank (top of pit), it was found that the skin had been considerably burned off two of them by the action of the lime-water in which they had been submerged for so long a time. One was found sitting upright in his working-place, the arms of another had been broken by the fall of the debris.

But on the whole it was considered by Dr. Price, the medical officer, that the bodies were not, to say the least of it, in any worse state of preservation that might have been expected, considering the time which had elapsed since their entombment. The scene at the top of the pit on Sunday night was a sad and striking one. On Monday morning intimation was given to the jury that the bodies had been recovered, and brakes were forthwith obtained in order that they might proceed to Cilfynydd to view the deceased. They then returned to the Maltster's Hotel where they were met by the coroner, Mr. Rhys.

The jury

The following were the jury: - Messrs. James Edwards, Ceridwen Terrace, (foreman). E. Williams, R. Rogers, E. Phillips, F. Ashton, D. Cule, F. Harrison, E. Griffiths, J. Pring, C. Roberts, G. Griffiths, J. Coombes, R. H. Williams, and F. Pearce.

The coroner, in opening the proceedings, said: - "Before going into this case I wish to say a few words. We feel the deepest sympathy for everybody in any way affected by this very sad accident. I don't think I can say any more than that this is a very dreadful occurrence that these poor men should have gone to their work at the bottom of the pit, and have met their death in this manner, and all the relatives and others are deserving of every consideration and sympathy. I am sure you will agree with me in that expression. I don't propose to do more today than merely call formal evidence of identification, and then to adjourn the inquest in order to give an opportunity for the colliery officials to obtain evidence to bring before you, and also for the attendance of the Inspector of Mines, who will, I think, no doubt, make a point of attending this inquiry."

Evidence of identification

The first witness called was Thomas Morgan, Cilfynydd, who said he identified the body of Evan Williams, who worked as a sinker at the Albion colliery. He (the witness) was down in the pit working with him at the time of the accident. It was the afternoon shift. William Jones, Cilfynydd, identified the body of Thomas Jones and also that of Evan Williams.

John Williams, living at Crumlin, said that on Sunday night he saw the body supposed to be that of his brother, Evan Williams, but he did not recognise it as such. The deceased was 33 years of age, and a single man. Thomas Jones, Rickards Street, Pontypridd, said he saw the body of Morris Jones on Sunday night and Monday morning. Deceased was 36 years of age and a married man. Saw the body of David Griffiths, who left a wife and three children. The coroner then said that the inquest would now be adjourned till Friday at a quarter past eleven o'clock

The Funerals

The body of Thomas Jones was taken to Llanfabon and buried there on Monday; that of David Griffiths was removed home to Rickard's Street, Pontypridd, and on Tuesday buried at Glyntaff. Evan Williams was buried at Llantwit on Tuesday. Morris Jones was buried on Tuesday at Gelligaer. The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of November 26th 1887 reported: -

The evidence of the officials and workmen

Mr. R. T. Rhys, coroner, resumed on Friday at the Maltster's Hotel, Pontypridd, the inquest upon the bodies of Thomas Jones, Morris Jones, David Griffiths and Evan Williams, who were killed by the fall of rubbish and bricks upon them at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, near Pontypridd, last Thursday fortnight. The jury

were as before.

Mr. E. S. Hill, solicitor, Cardiff, watched the proceedings on behalf of the Albion Colliery Co., and Mr. W. R. Davies, solicitor, Pontypridd, appeared for the relatives of David Griffiths and Morris Jones. Mr. Martin and Mr. Randall, the Government Inspector of Mines, were present. Mr. Henry. Lewis, manager (supervising the sinking), was the first witness called. He produced the plans of the colliery, and gave details as to the depth and widths of the shafts etc.

Thomas Morgan, examined by Mr. Hill, said: - "I am in the employ of the Albion Steam Company as leader of a shift, and on the day of the accident I went down into the colliery about two o'clock in the afternoon. I have been a sinker for about 15 years and my duty as leader is to look after the shaft and examine the pit. The other leader of the shift is William Snooks. When I went down, I asked him how were things looking, and he said 'all right.'

The timber on the bottom of the pit was, so far as I could tell intact when I saw it on the day before the accident. The kerb was put down properly. It was one of the best I ever saw put down. I had no reason as an experienced sinker to expect a slip of the ground. The walling all round the pit was properly done. At the time of the accident I was standing on the top of the bowk, and was catching hold of the rope. The bowk was full."

"All at once we were all in the dark and we thought that a slip had come down. The earth knocked the bowk out of the steady. The nature of the earth was cliff, strong cliff. The foundation went away from underneath the kerb, and the kerb came down. The men were down at the bottom; some of them tried to get in the bowk, eleven clinging to it and one failing. I tried to signal to the surface, but found that the signal wire was broken, the falling earth having damaged it. We were shouting for about ten minutes. This was about ten minutes to two.

I can give you no idea of the quantity of material which fell down into the pit. It was about three-quarters of an hour before we were drawn to the surface. I went down the No.1 pit again with Thomas Clarke. Subsequently Clarke and I got two men up." "I went down again with Mr. Lewis (the manager), William Jones (the master sinker), Thomas Clarke and Hugh Pugh."

Mr. Hill: - "Was there any danger in you going down?"

Witness: - "Well, I do not know sir. We did not think of that then." Mr. Hill: - "Did you go up again with some timber?"

Witness: - "Yes, sir."

Mr. Hill: - "And it was then you discovered that you were injured yourself?"

Witness: - "Yes, it was then that I knew something about it."

Mr. Hill :- "I suppose it was the excitement that prevented you noticing it."

Witness: - "I suppose so, sir."

Mr. Hill: - "Can you judge at all where these men were who remained in the pit?"

Witness: - "I can tell where two of the last six were - Rees Davies and Henry Morgan. They were on the lower side of the pit. It is the practice of leaders of the shifts to make reports in writing. The width of the kerb was nine inches to a foot. A bench was made in the earth at the side, and upon that the kerb was built. The walling in some parts would be 18 inches. Before I became a sinker, I drove hard headings for nine or ten years."

Mr. Martin: - "You have been sinking for 15 years and driving headings for ten, - don't you think you began young?"

The coroner: - "Ask if he worked as a sinker when not driving hard headings."

Mr. Martin: - "What experience have you had in sinking?"

Witness: - "In the Cwtch, Cwpenner, Hafod (old pit), and Ynysybwll."

Mr. Martin: - "The ground that you have sunk through in those collieries was it similar to that which you have been sinking through at the Albion?"

Witness: - "No, sir, this is the worse ground that I have seen."

In reply to Mr. Martin, the witness said: - "I had examined the shaft the day before the accident, looking over it from the kerb down to the bottom. The shaft was 19 feet inside the brickwork. A box was used when we examined the sides. Could not say the thickness of the cast-iron kerb, but I should think it was about two inches. The walling was in eight pieces, or sections, and it was all filled up solid and wedged. I am sure there was no loose material put behind it. We used dynamite for blasting; we used five or six balls. I have charged bigger than that." Mr. Randall: - "Each ball weighs about two ounces."

Witness: - "I had no time to examine the pit on the day of the accident, but looked around after going down, and had just done so when the accident happened. We have had the sides of the pit 'dribbling' before, but nothing serious. They took greater precautions in walling - doing it oftener - at the Albion than at other pits I have been at."

Benjamin Morgan, examined by Mr. Hill: - "I am a sinker in the employ of the Albion Company. I was in Thomas Morgan's shift, and remember going down the shaft with him at two o'clock on the day of the accident. Have heard Thomas Morgan give his evidence, and so far as I know, he stated the facts correctly. I did not do any part of this walling in those two shifts. I was poorly, and worked on the surface. But I was down the pit at the time of the accident. I went up in the bowk to the heading and then up the No.2 pit. The balk of timber was across the pit. We were speaking about the safety of the pit a few minutes before, and we considered we were as safe as if we had been in the house. I did not examine the

pit the previous day. Two of those who were with me have been killed and one injured. There was no warning - nothing to lead me to believe it was coming down. I am 34 years of age. I have been brought up underground, and have worked at several pits, and at the Albion since the commencement. The usual course has been adopted here of walling and sinking. Usual and proper precautions were taken at the Albion.”

By Mr. W. R. Davies: - “There is no difference between the course of work here and at other pits. Have seen other pits just as bad for working - in Quaker’s Yard. I was perfectly satisfied with the safety of the pit. I have nothing whatsoever to do with the walling or the fixing of the kerb.”

William Jones, master sinker, said the first he knew about the accident was hearing people shouting. He went down and found the condition of the pit as described by the other witnesses. He considered that the walling was properly and efficiently done.

By Mr. W. R. Davies: - “Three-quarters of an hour may have elapsed before the men made themselves heard at the top, because they first had to signal by voice to the No.3 pump, and the signaling would have been continued. The reason why the timber was put at the bottom was in order to protect the kerb.”

By Mr. Martin: - “Had plenty of help to get the men up. The men who were killed were on the pit bottom, and on them would be a quantity of rubbish, ground, and bricks. The other two were held fast by the legs by bricks which had fallen on them. The second signal wire was from a pump 230 yards down. The engine men at these were in the habit of signaling to the top and hearing calls from the bottom, but there would, of course, be some noise in the engine house, and that might account for the delay in making themselves heard. The men were all shouting together so that you could not understand what they were saying. The men at the bottom were killed, not drowned. The width of the widest shaft he had sunk before going to the Albion was 17ft; the walling in such places would be 9 inch, and the spaces around would be filled with rubbish or ashes. The same principal was adopted here.” His object in putting the timbering at the bottom of the pit was to secure what he considered a weak place. The examination of the pit consisted in examining the sides. He did it from the bottom unless he considered that the ground was bad, but it was done every day - every shift - when the ground was considered bad, there was an examination made in a box. In this length they had not done it, however, oftener than two or three times a week.

The result of the concussion from the shot-firing would be to loosen a slip. The slip which came out was about three feet from the back of the kerb, and nine inches from the inside of the kerb. The shots would render it just as if by sinking

a few yards further, it had been cut bare. It is to that slip that I attribute the accident. The ground came away to eight or nine feet above the kerb. The cross-slip also went to about the same place. The brickwork came away for 32 feet in one portion of the pit, but three segments out of eight stood all the way up to the kerb. The stones were big above, and the foundation having come away the brickwork was too fresh to stand owing to the danger of the ground giving way, and the means that had to be taken to secure it. William Snooks, the leader of the shift preceding that of Thomas Morgan, said he made an examination of the ground during his shift. Examined the ground under the kerb about half-past-six in the morning. Went over the sides of the pit with his pick. Drew down what he thought bad - about three little buckets full. Took the box down and went round the sides of the pit. He had 15 years experience of Penygraig, Ynyshir, Coedcae, Pontshonorton and the National. Never saw the pit safer. The kerb was put down by him and was properly fixed. There was strong cliff under it. Tapped where the timbers were and heard no sound.

By Mr. Martin: - In 13 or 14 feet shafts 10 inch walling was customary. He thought the same thickness of walling was sufficient. Even in Ynysybwl they had it in some instances to put staging above the men's heads to put up the kerb bed. Always took the precaution to wall as soon as possible whenever they saw any sign of giving way. The coroner asked if the jury required the evidence of the mechanical engineer or the manager. The foreman thought it was not necessary. Mr. Ashton stated: - "We are quite satisfied this end of the table." The coroner then summed up pointing out that the evidence showed that extreme precaution had been observed in the management of the colliery. The Jury, after brief deliberation, returned a verdict of 'accidental death.'

A new manager

In August 1887 Mr. Phillip Jones took over as manager and coal was raised for the first time. The Albion Steam Coal Co. had a lease to search for coal over approximately 1,300 acres, and although while sinking they had met six seams, only one, the Four Foot seam, was worked in the early years, and varied in thickness between 5ft. 10ins to 6ft. 10ins. The village in the meantime had grown, with several shops, churches and a school. But in June 1888 the miners came out on a strike that would last three months. The owners were determined not to accept the workmen's definition of the vein being worked. The owners and management claimed it to be the Four-Foot Seam, while the workmen maintained that it was the Six-Foot Seam which differed about 3d a ton. The workmen of Ynysybwl were getting the Six-Foot price for the same vein, and eventually the matter was thrown to arbitration and the outcome, as usual, went in favour of the owners and the miners were forced to accept their terms.

The Albion Colliery near Pontypridd

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of Jan. 13th 1888 reported: - "One of the most important colliery undertakings recently opened up in South Wales is that of the Albion Steam Coal Co. The property, which is contiguous to some of the most celebrated and successful collieries in Glamorganshire, is situated about two miles from Pontypridd and fourteen from Cardiff, the port of shipment. There are two pits, each 19 feet in diameter in the clear, and they form, we believe, the largest pair in South Wales.

Sinking was commenced at the end of December, 1884, and completed in April of 1887, the total depth being 580 yards. For a portion of the distance the ground was very unfavourable for sinking, the large quantity of water met with, among other things, having given a great deal of trouble. At one time as much as 300 gallons per minute had to be dealt with. All this must, however, have been more than compensated for by the result, for the celebrated upper four-foot vein was duly won, and found to be in splendid condition. We understand that its thickness is 6 ft - 8 ins; and that the top is of such a nature as to enable the coal to be worked with a minimum of pit-wood, and, consequently, at a very low cost. The quality of the coal has been now thoroughly tested, and the proprietors claim that it has been proved to be equal to the very best coal produced from any of the South Wales collieries. It is evident that they intend to lose no time in giving the property the fullest possible development, for within two months from the date when the winding gear was completed and at work 500 tons of coal per day was being brought out. On Dec. 21st 1887, the extraordinary quantity of 1,038 tons 10 cwt. was raised at this colliery. At present one pit is used for winding coal, and the machinery and appliances are calculated to wind through this alone from 1,700 to 1,800 tons per day (one shift), and output which the company expect to reach in a very short time. When the second pit is fitted up in the same way, which is to be done as soon as the first is found incapable of dealing with all the coal that can be cut, the production will be further increased, and eventually doubled, so that the owners hope, at no very distant date, to bring little, if anything, short of a million tons per year to market.

The whole of the work has been carried out under the direction of Mr. Henry Lewis, mining engineer of Tyr'nant, near Cardiff, who also superintended the sinking and development of the well-known National Colliery, which was sold about three years ago to Messrs. Watts, Ward & Co.

"-Accommodation, in the shape of neat and substantial cottages, is being provided for the large number of workmen who will soon be employed, and already quite a little villages springing up on the hill-side, and what was three years ago a purely agricultural district has now begun to wear quite a populous and bustling aspect.

The School Board has provided schools for 600 children, and the inhabitants themselves, with regard for things religious which is so characteristic of the Welsh, have erected three mission-rooms for public worship.”

The Taff Vale Railway, meanwhile, had built a railway line to Cilfynydd to carry coal to the docks, but although there was a stop near the colliery for the delivery of goods, a station near the village for passengers was not opened until 1900

So by 1894 the Albion Colliery was considered a modern colliery and comparatively few deaths occurred after the colliery had opened but exactly two weeks before a terrible disaster would occur, a death occurred that tends to show that though there were many mine regulations, the implementation of them by the colliery officials was somewhat lax. The ‘*Glamorgan Free Press*’ of June 16th 1894, reported: -

Fatality at Cilfynydd

The inquest on the body of John Thomas, colliery, residing in Middle Street, Pontypridd - who was killed by a fall of a stone in the Albion Colliery on Saturday morning, June 9th 1894 - was held at the Maltster's Arms on Monday morning June 11th. Mr. E. B. Reece, coroner, heard the evidence, and Mr. Sims, assistant inspector was present. Mr. I. Kuner, was foreman of the jury. The first witness called was D. Thomas, who said: - “I live at Newtown, and am a collier. Deceased was my brother. He was thirty years of age, and was a collier working at the Albion Colliery. On Saturday morning his body was brought home to No.14, Upper-Middle Street. He leaves a widow and four children.”

David Griffiths, on his oath, said, he resided at Coedpenmaen. Witness was working

with the deceased on Saturday at the Albion Colliery. They commenced work about 6.30 a.m., they were working in a stall. He did not see the fireman's mark there when he went into his place; he did not look for it.

Mr. Philip Jones (manager of the colliery): - “He's only a boy.” The coroner: - “Oh! You did not look for it.”

Mr. Jones: - “He's only a boy, sir, working on wages.”

Coroner (sharply):- “Don't you interfere with me. I am asking the witness questions, not you. The witness is not too young to see.”

D. Thomas, essayed to make an observation, but the coroner interposed, and addressing Mr. Jones said: - “You ought to know better. You have been at a large number of inquests, and you know you cannot make remarks when I ask a witness some questions. Don't do it again, please, you ought to know better.” Mr. Jones apologized, and after a pause the examination proceeded.

Coroner: - "Did the fireman come there before the accident?" - "No." "Was the overman or anybody else there?" - "No."

"What were you doing when the accident happened?" - "I was holding the light behind the post."

"What was the deceased doing at the time?" - "He was putting a wedge in between the coal, and knocking it in with a sledge."

"To bring some coal down upon the butt?" - "Yes." "Was it in the face?" - "Yes, on top of the road." "You were behind the post?" - "Yes."

"The accident happened about 8.30?" - "Yes." "You were holding the lamp for him?" - "Yes."

"What happened?" - "He put a bar in behind the wedge."

"To force the coal out?" - "Yes, and then he told me to go by the dram out of the way. I went the other side of the dram. It was there ready to receive the coal."

"And the deceased?" - "He got behind the post. He was pulling at the bar. Deceased got behind the post to escape from the fall of the coal he hoped to bring down. He was pulling at the bar with his right hand when he slipped and fell on his back. He pulled the butt out. The stone from the top fell on his chest, and some coal came on his legs. The post gave way and fell."

"How far were you from the deceased?" - "Two or three yards. I was holding the light and could see all. I called for help, and a number of men came, and they rolled the stone off. Deceased never moved or spoke after the fall of the stone. I have been working with the deceased for three weeks. I have only been in a coal pit about six months. I am eighteen years of age. There was only one post on top of the road. There was timber just behind the stone. The post was put there on Thursday by the deceased. He knew there was a stone there, as he told me he intended to have it down before filling the dram."

Examined by Mr. Sims: - "I saw the deceased stamp on the post. He had his hand on the post while he pulled at the bar. It was a 6½ foot post. There were two sprags (temporary props) up there on the lower side. There was nothing to stop him standing on the upper side to avoid the slip. Some timber was lying on the road close at hand."

Alfred Matthews, collier, Cilfynydd, also gave evidence. William Davies, day fire- man, said he marked the spot as he considered it safe for working. He noticed the post and three sprags were there. Deceased was a good collier. Witness thought he should have wedged the piece of coal. The deceased took off one of the sprags in the morning. Mr. Sims said he had seen the place that morning. The coal which fell was 3 foot 8 inches long, four foot six inches high, and eighteen inches thick. The stone that fell on the deceased was 20 inches long, 10 inches wide, and 9 inches thick, and was very heavy.

If the collier could not work on the side, the coal should have been broken in two. This was one of the many accidents which occur in which men fill their coal first of all, and then make their place safe. The deceased certainly knew this stone was in the roof and was unsafe, and consequently, he should have taken it down first. The post was knocked out of its place from the top.

The coroner (to the manager): - "Do you give definite instructions to all the colliers that they should put their places safe first of all before they cut coal?"

Mr. Jones: - "Yes, sir." Coroner: - "Some fine should be imposed. It seems to be quite common for colliers to hurry up to fill the dram first and not only to risk their own lives, but of their colleagues nearby."

Several jurors asked if it was the fireman's place to instruct the colliers to see that the stalls were safe. The fireman was recalled, and said that he considered the place quite safe as long as the post stood in its position.

Juror: - "You should have given him orders to take out the stone first of all."

Several gentlemen assented and the coroner thought every collier was expected to know his work.

Coroner (to the inspector): - "I will put it to the inspector. I quite agree with your idea. Do you consider that fireman should give special instructions to the men?"

Mr. Sims: "Certainly should if he saw any danger. If he knew a spot was dangerous and did not give instructions about it, it would be a breach of his duty."

Juror: - "They say the firemen should have told the collier to see to that stone first." "How long have you been a fireman?" - Witness: - "Four and half years."

Juror: - "What age are you?" - "Thirty-one. And a certificated manager, first-class." After some parley as to the duties of fireman, the coroner summed up the evidence and a verdict of accidental death was returned. The jury decided to hand over their fees to the widow of the deceased. Shortly they would be contributing to a more substantial fund.

'*Morien*' the famous Welsh reporter in the '*Western Mail*' newspaper in June 1894 stated: - "The Albion colliery is in the southern end in the Graig Evan Leyshon Common, and within a hundred yards of the western side of the highway through the valley and the Glamorgan canal, which runs along its side. It is situated almost directly opposite the entrance to the Ynysybwl valley, which is to the west and across the Taff River from it, and it is midway between Aberdare Junction and Pontypridd. It is not more than ten years, if so many, since the coal was first struck here. Since then a considerable town has been built on the sloping, wooded hill flanking the eastern side of the highway and facing the valley."

"The town, which is called 'Cilfynydd,' signifying 'Mountain Nook' is remarkable for its long rows of substantially-built stone cottages of a superior order, and rising in terraces, one above the other, mountain-wards. There are



The pithead shortly after the disaster

several places of worship substantially built, board schools, and places of business in the place. Indeed, everything about the Albion Colliery betokened a high state of prosperity. The concern is under the management of Mr. Philip Jones, who has held the same position since the company had begun sending coal to the market. Chairman of the company is Mr. Matthew Cope, of St. Mellon's, near Cardiff; the secretary is Mr. D. Ellis, Pontypridd, and the agent Mr. D. Lewis. In round numbers, nearly 900 men and boys are employed underground in the day turn, and about 120 horses are lodged in the stables within the workings. An average of 12,000 tons of coal per week, or 2,000 tons per day, are turned out of the colliery."

"There are two shafts, 33 yards apart, centre to centre, each 19 feet in diameter and walled throughout with 9-inch brickwork, one being the downcast and winding shaft, and the other the upcast shaft, and are 580 yards deep. The shafts were said to be the finest pair in the country. The Ynysybwl (Lady Windsor) Colliery of the Ocean Co., is the same depth, so far as the downcast was concerned, but the upcast there was not so deep. The shafts of the Aberdare Junction (later renamed Abercynon) pits, being constructed, will be greater than these, but will not be opened for a considerable time. The seam, known as the Upper Foot itself is 548 yards from the surface, the remaining depth being what was known as the 'sump.' The distance from the pit bottom to the coal faces varies, and averages from 500 to 1200 yards. The colliery is worked on the 'long-wall*' system. There are over seventeen miles of roadway used for haulage and ventilation."

"The colliery is ventilated by a Schiele Fan** of splendid capacity, and of the 1,600 employed at the colliery, about 1,450 work underground. On a Saturday afternoon, a 'repairing shift' is at work. This repairing shift comprises of labourers, timbermen, hauliers, door boys, fitters and others employed either in repairing or clearing, and in this particular colliery, at any rate, are mostly Englishmen, Welshmen, as a rule, being colliers, and, therefore, not connected with the shift that usually went down at two o'clock in the afternoon and came up again at 8.00 p.m. Now, the fateful blasts which in these south Wales colliery districts which has at various times hurled various hundreds into eternity, has again swept to their doom at one stroke over 250 men and boys."

* See page 446

** See 'How a ventilating current is produced' in the reference section at rear of book.

CHAPTER TWO

DAY OF THE DISASTER

June 23rd 1894

Fifteen months had not elapsed since the terrible fire had occurred at the Great Western Colliery, involving the loss of 63 lives; then followed the terrible railway disaster at Treforest when 13 had been killed and 60 injured, but the Albion Colliery calamity which would occur at Cilfynydd, would throw Pontypridd and the immediate neighbourhood into even more woe and mourning, and create a profound and faithful sensation throughout the district, and would be the most terrible and disastrous yet recorded in the history - and gloomy as it was before - of the south Wales coalfield. The destroying angel that had claimed hundreds of men and boys working in the bowels of the earth as its victims, at its latest visitation was one which would never be forgotten by the families and friends of those who it so suddenly and in such a frightful manner deprived of life, so dear and precious to all.

Saturday, June 23rd 1894 was a thick, foggy day (commented the '*Western Mail*' newspaper), with a lowering atmosphere, and those with an intimate knowledge of the coal industry could not but think of the thousands of men and boys employed in the underground workings of the south Wales coalfield to whom a lowering atmosphere was a source of deadly peril, and required the greatest vigilance on the part of colliery authorities. But this type of weather was a regular occurrence and to those going down the pit, it was just another of the constant dangers they faced on a daily basis.

As was usual, the last shift of the week finished at two o'clock that afternoon, and most of the miners returned to their homes on the side of the hill. As the 900 or so miners left the colliery for the day, a large number of repairers - said to number about 260 to 270 men and boys, descended into the workings, they passing in while the others were passing out. Everything proceeded satisfactorily till a quarter to four o'clock in the afternoon, when suddenly a fearful roar, like the discharge of a heavy piece of ordnance, was heard in the direction of the shafts, and a dense mass of smoke enveloped them from view, and some say that sparks of fire were seen mixed with the smoke.

The two shafts, of 520 yards each in depth - one, the downcast airway, and the other the upcast - had served the same purpose to the exploded forces in the workings as the muzzles of that number of cannons do to explosive charges in them. However, it appears the detonation heard was not that of an intensity usually heard in colliery explosions, and the consequence was that the first report circulated respecting the extent of the disaster was that a boiler had exploded.

(Boilers at the bottom of the shaft being used to run steam engines for haulage purposes).

An unnamed pitman who was employed 150 yards from the pit-bank when the explosion occurred, stated that the first thing he heard was a loud report, like the sound of blasting in a quarry. In fact, he attributed the noise to that cause, but on looking up he saw the beams and planks at the pit-head and surrounding the winding apparatus, being hurled into the air.

He at once hurried to the shaft, and found the platform around the cage had been blown away. Part of the roof was also gone, as well as the planks on top of the framing. Immediately following the report a dense volume of smoke came up the shaft, but it only lasted a moment or two, it then being drawn into the fan. The latter did not cease working at all. The force of the explosion also heaved up the planks on the upcast shaft, but he immediately put this right, so that the air might take its proper course. Although the timber was thrown in all directions, fortunately no one was injured.

Mr. E. H. Battram, manager of the nearby joint sewerage farms of the Merthyr and Aberdare Local Boards, had the windows of his office shaken and caused the men to run from the outbuildings scared and frightened. When they got outside and looked towards the Albion Colliery they saw a dense cloud of black smoke arising from the mouth of the pit, and at once concluded that a general calamity had happened. "The vibration of the earth felt on the farm," said Mr. Battram, "was just as bad as if an earthquake had occurred."

Up in the village all was normal that day until the two loud reports were heard in the street, and this was the first indication that something had occurred at the colliery. Mrs. Williams of 67 William St. was greasing her workingmen's boots in the back yard of her home, when she too heard the loud report.

In an instant the residents were seized with terror, and rushing to their doorsteps, were soon streaming down towards the colliery fearing the worst, but hoping against hope that no one was injured. Mr. W. Watkins, Pharmaceutical chemist, Cilfynydd, who would render valuable assistance to the medical gentlemen in tending to burns and applying splints to the injured limbs, was sitting in his parlour when the explosion occurred. Although his shop was situated 400 or 500 yards away from the scene of the disaster, the explosion was so great that the windows of the house were violently rattled, and the whole ground seemed to tremble and he also thought that an earth-quake had occurred.

Abraham Lewis, and Tom Evans, having finished the morning shift were both bathing in their homes in Cilfynydd when they heard the explosion, and both

dressed and returned to the colliery to see what aid they could give. Evans would soon discover he had lost two brothers, Richard and John. The entire village population were soon at the scene of the explosion - men, women, and children - for well known is that sound in these districts where all have 'to toil and moil' to bring up the fuel with which to warm people and prepare food so many miles away, careless of the danger which the men have to undergo in these underground caves, and the 'Black Death' which may at any moment await them.

The greatest difficulty was found to get any idea of what had happened or the number of those who might be victims or in fear of death in the bowels of the earth. Were the men safe, or had they all fallen victims of a sudden horror? This question was in every mind, and no one could reply as they made their way to the small bridge that crossed the canal into the colliery, where soon women wept on husbands' shoulders, even if they had no friends below and children clung to their mothers' skirts, wondering why they cried, and why the men looked so pale and anxious.

They saw that the roof on the summit of the corrugated iron building on the top of the shaft was stripped like a paper and hurled with enormous force many yards away. Great beams which formed the platform and crossed the mouth of the downcast were driven bodily out of their sockets and bent like wire. The ventilating fan, one of the largest in South Wales, was cleaned of its covering, and for a moment the ventilation had been stopped. Happily it was possible to set it going again almost immediately, so that a draft of fresh air was sent down to those who might be among the awful fumes and the afterdamp.

The hour of four had barely been struck when the intelligence reached the nearby town of Pontypridd, and created great excitement. Inspector Macdonald and a large posse of police immediately drove to the colliery in order to render any assistance in their power to Captain Benjamin Evans of Cilfynydd and a few constables, and to endeavour to maintain order among the constantly increasingly excited crowd which thronged the colliery yard and the precincts of the upcast shaft, where attention was mainly centred as the rescue parties were being organised there.

For a moment the officials and others who had been brought there by the terrible news, which by this time had spread with lightening rapidity, were at a loss to what steps to take. Very quickly, however, they became reconciled to the stern reality of the disaster, and the first thought of all was to adopt measures to rescue the poor fellows who were down in the pit when the explosion occurred, and whose fate was then unknown. It was still confidently hoped that only a boiler explosion had occurred, whilst many a prayer was sent up for the safety of the men and that the worst had not happened. The pit mouth was quickly barricaded, and

Mr. Phillip Jones, an experienced miner, made arrangements to descend the shaft with the object of exploring the pit to rescue the men below. Fortunately, the pit gearing was in good working order, but it was evident from the havoc that had been made at the top of the shaft that the dreaded enemy of miners, a gas explosion, had been at its deadly and insidious work.

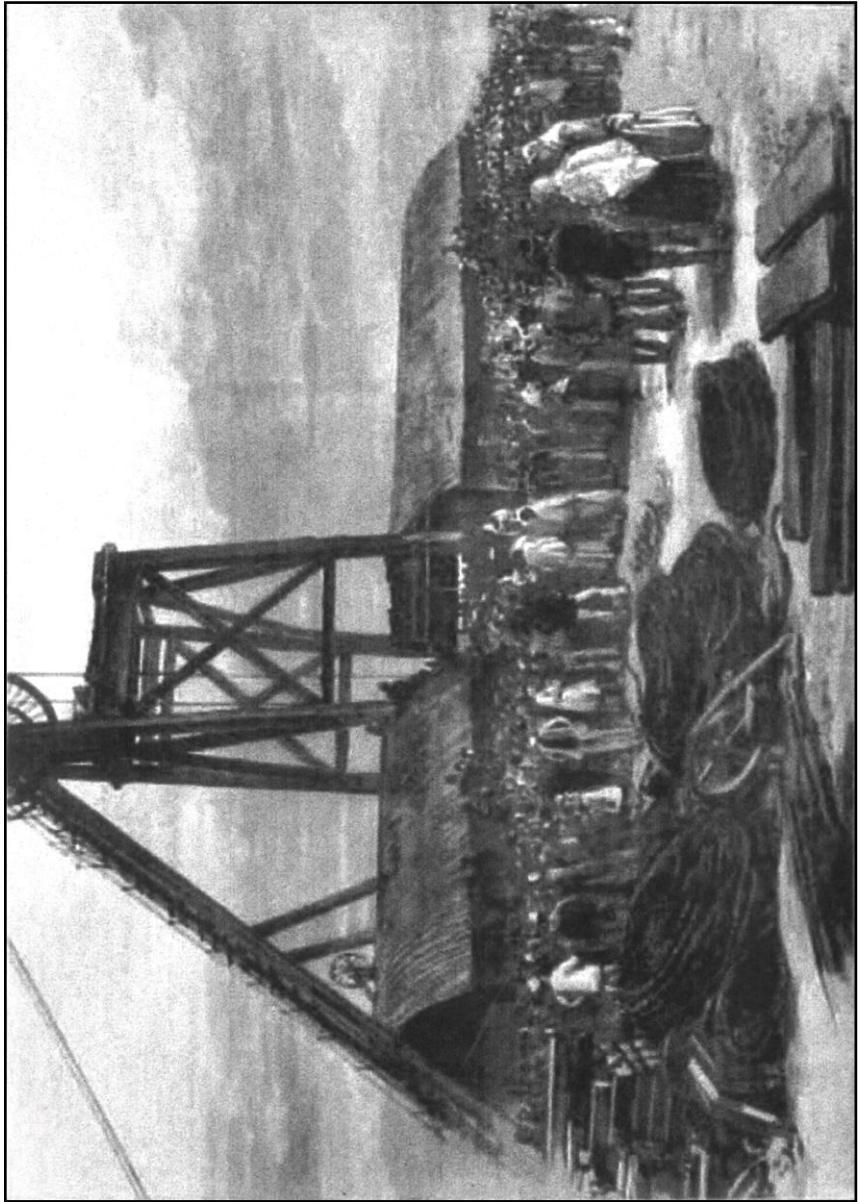
To the rescue

While the pit gearing was being tested, and sufficient clearing effected on the top of the downcast shaft to enable the first exploring parties to descend, men were employed in erecting barriers to keep back the spectators. Presently the cage was got ready, and the first rescue party went down the shaft very slowly, and in the meantime the carpenters had been very busy making brattice (a kind of plastic sheet) or canvas doors ready to be sent down as soon as the pit was in an accessible order.

The breathless way in which the proposed descent of the rescue party was watched was something to see; it showed how the hearts of Welsh miners cling to their fellows who have had to work and slave beneath the ground. At such times as these every moment seemed enlarged into an hour and for those who were waiting and watching it was a severe strain to know that they might soon see a relation or a friend brought lifeless from below.

The first exploring party consisted of Messrs. Phillip Jones, (manager); William Jones (acting under-manager); William Rees (day overman); William Garnett (night fireman, Grover's side), and William Davies and James Graves (two pitman). These first rescuers, and those that followed would witness things that would never be erased through circumstances or time. At this time it was impossible to give with any degree of accuracy the number of men below, and this only tended to intensify the excitement. They went down the shaft very shortly after four o'clock. It had been thought that the boiler had exploded, but hopes were soon blighted. Fearing the danger that may have been met during the descent the party did not reach the bottom of the pit until a considerable time had elapsed.

Hopes were entertained that the trail would not be flecked with the corpses of many colliers, but before long the gallant band of rescuers who descended saw from the debris lying about in promiscuous heaps consisting of horses, men, boys, drams and coal, that a terrible explosion had taken place. With no presage to herald its coming, the insidious gas, which lurked in the roadways, had flashed like a meteor through the darksome cloisters of the pit; walls of coal had crumbled as dust on its approach, baulk timber leaped and cracked like tinder in its grasp, and robust men were as weaklings in its clutches; promising lads of sixteen



An artist's impression of the pit head shortly after the disaster

summers bowed the knee to death; doors were rent, machinery was shriveled, and the mounds that rose on every road had spoken too eloquently of the ravages of the gasses.

Comrade lay beside comrade, locked in the arms of death; death had stalked in those catacombs, where about an hour before a miner might perchance have been humming some old favourite Welsh hymn. All things had been usurped in the twinkle of an eye!

In about half-an-hour a signal was given from the cage, and as the winding rope moved slowly over the sheaves, there was a perceptible stir in the vast, throng, who were hoping that a message would be brought from below. Very slowly indeed, was the ascent, and as voices were heard from the depths those immediately around the mouth peered anxiously down the chasm and hopes were entertained that they might be those of the men who had been rescued.

But as the carriage came into view only two persons were seen inside and a feeling of sad disappointment crept over the crowd when it was spread that no good tidings had been brought up. The carriage was half-full of rubbish, and as the two men stepped onto the surface every eye was turned towards them. The men were William Jones, the manager's son, who was the under-manager, and pitman Graves, both of whom were thickly covered with a clayey substance.

They were eagerly questioned for information, but all that could be elicited was that of the few men seen in the vicinity of the bottom some were dead and some alive. A similar message hurriedly written on a scrap of paper, was handed to Mr. W. Lewis, and this contained the grim request to - "Prepare the hayloft." - presumably for the reception of bodies. The suggestions were very promptly obeyed by those on the surface, and a temporary mortuary was prepared in the hayloft, while the fitter's shop was prepared for the reception of the injured as they might be brought up. The nature of the brief, but significant message, pregnant with meaning to those who knew anything about colliery explosions, was kept a secret from the excited throng who were still waiting anxiously for news from below as it was feared it would further increase the incredible suspense, and merely fan the already unbounded excitement, but as it gradually leaked out mixed feelings of joy and grief took possession of the spectators, who by now had increased to vast proportions. As soon as the carriage was emptied of the rubbish about a score of brave men jumped inside and formed the second rescue party, amongst them being Mr. Wales (engineer, and former general manager of the Great Western Colliery) Mr. Hugh Bramwell (agent of the same colliery), Dewi Dar, Morgan Dyer, Henry Hill, Charles Davies, William Davies, and others.

They carried with them all requisites for the relief of the injured including a large number of fire buckets with the object of throwing water upon any burning materials that might be encountered, whilst tin-jacks full of water were also taken for the use of the men who it was thought might be met in an unconscious state. It subsequently turned out that the water was badly needed, and helped to revive men who were found lying in a fainting condition. A huge quantity of brattice cloth was also taken and other materials for the construction of temporary stretchers. Rescuing parties, fired with sympathy, delved the innermost recesses, seeking the lost brothers, and no one lagged in the mission.

What the explorers saw

Amongst the second exploring party formed was Mr. Hugh Bramwell, agent of the Great Western Colliery, who was subsequently invited to describe his experiences. "Our descent," he said, "was very slowly accomplished, in consequence of one of the cages having been so seriously damaged that it would scarcely run. It took us about a quarter of an hour to get below, and even then we could not get the cage to the bottom, because of the accumulation of rubbish and drams thrown to the bottom of the shaft by the force of the explosion.

We had to climb from the cage by means of the ropes. We found that the timbers were blown about, several drams upset, and all things in general confusion. Immediately on getting below we turned our attention to the boilers inside the workings, and made an effort to extinguish the fires, for the steam was blowing off. The reason for this was that owing to the disturbance of the ventilation by the disaster - the blowing off of brattice doors and other matters - the current was being driven through the boilers. We raked the fire out as much as we could, and then finally extinguished it by pouring on water."

"We then filled up the holes in the separation doors as to carry the air into the workings and prevent its further escape up the downcast. Meanwhile, efforts were made by others of the party to restore the ventilation in that district. I, with several others, went up the Cilfynydd side of the pit, and when we had got in about 200 yards, we came across six or eight men who were alive. They were all unconscious, and some of them groaning. We at once sent word to the surface for the doctor and stretchers, and meanwhile did all we could to relieve their suffering. I noticed coal dust was caked on the boilers and on the timbers. We failed to go very far into the workings at that time on account of the afterdamp, which was so strong that Mr. W. Lewis and myself were forced to turn back. All the bodies we saw were more or less burned and shattered. One poor fellow had his head very badly crushed, another we noticed had lost his leg, and this within a few yards of the bottom of the shaft. It was evident from this that they had been exposed to the full force of the explosion. No, I have not formed the slightest idea

how the disaster happened. The bodies lay in all direction and in a variety of postures, and they had all been killed, I should imagine, by the force of the explosion.”

Mr. H. T. Wales was later heard to say: - “I heard of the explosion whilst in the shop of Mr. Key, chemist, Pontypridd, and proceeded to the colliery immediately. Mr. Hugh Bramwell and I went down together and found below Mr. Phillip Jones, the manager, hacking out the fires under the boilers. Mr. Jones had several officials with him. I examined the return to see if that was all safe back to the bottom of No. 2 pit, and then we saw about making good the bratticing and doors which had been blown away by the explosion. We then got the bottom of the pit clear so as to get the carriages to work for the purpose of getting up men alive. We penetrated about 300 yards. There were a few bodies lying about. They were very badly mutilated. We came across about half-a-dozen alive. Some of them were insensible, but others were talking. “Were all the falls from the roof?” - “Yes, on the other side.” It seems that there are two sides, one on the west and the other on the east of the bottom of the shaft. Mr. Wales hurried back, and again descended.

Prompt measures for relief

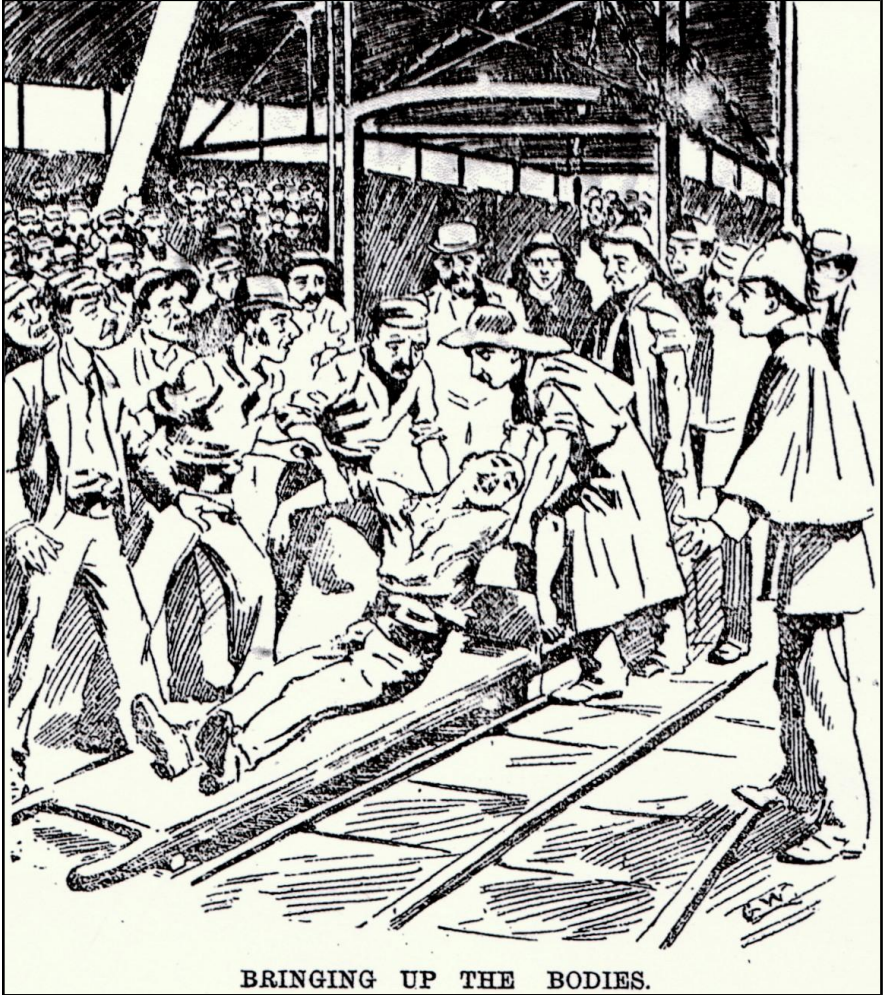
On the surface the excitement, which was rapidly rising to fever-heat, now assumed awkward tendencies, for the police were only few in number to keep in order the surging mass of people, who were all anxious to get a first glimpse of the rescued. There were scores, if not hundreds, who had relatives below, and the rush was certainly pardonable, although at times it created considerable inconvenience, because people got in the way of those working on the surface, and stood between the engineman and the pit-cages, and so obstructed his view. On the whole, however, splendid good temper was shown. Captain Lindsay, the chief constable of the county, arrived by the six o'clock train, and shortly after him Mr. Superintendent Jones, of Pontypridd, the deputy-chief constable, who at the time of the sad occurrence was at the Swansea Assizes.

It was inferred by some on the surface that the tidings from below were of the most terrible description, and officials seemed hesitant to make its extent fully known. Mr. Lewis, Ynysfeio Colliery, and Mr. Thomas Griffiths, Cymmer Colliery, had now arrived. One of those who were at the top in a short time of the explosion was Alderman W. H. Matthias, J. P., one of the directors of the company, who for a considerable time actively directed operations on the surface. A number of medical gentlemen then accompanied Mr. Lewis to the bottom, including Dr. Lyttle, the companies medical attendant, Dr. Cochrane, Pontypridd, and Dr. Williams, assistant to Dr. Lyttle.



RESCUERS DESCENDING THE PIT.

The first attempts at rescue



BRINGING UP THE BODIES.

Newspaper artist's drawing of the scene at the pit-head

When Dr. Williams, Cilfynydd, got to the bottom of the downcast shaft he, accompanied by Thomas Ashton, proceeded to a distance of about 100 yards from the bottom, up Cilfynydd Level and came across two men, who were alive, but badly burned, crying out for water. They were barely conscious, but after administering restoratives to them, he proceeded still further. One man he found sitting on the road, and on seeing him (Dr. Williams) he cried most piteously for water, and said "For God's sake, get me some water! Oh! Let me have some water." About ten yards further he found Thomas Winter, a haulier, lying under his horse. This poor fellow had both his arms fractured and his face burnt. Near this spot lay a large number of mangled bodies strewn all over the road. Cries for water could be heard from every quarter.

Wiped out by a sudden blast

Mr. Alfred Lewis, manager of the Ynysyfeio Colliery, went down about six o'clock, and saw the greater force of the explosion appeared to be on the Grover's side. There were many heavy falls there, and the mutilation of the bodies he saw around was terrible. Heads and limbs were scattered about in all directions, while those who were alive were most of them naked, their clothes having been torn off.

One man who was terribly burnt was absolutely naked, and crying pitifully for water. They had no water to give him, but Mr. Lewis took off his coat and covered him. Presently, however, Dr. Lyttle, working splendidly got him out alive. Some of the watches found on those who were killed were still going when they were found. The outer cases had been smashed, but the watches inside were still going. One had stopped at 5.30. The dramlines were blown up, the horses killed, and drams smashed. The remains of hauliers were scattered about, and bodies were lying under and around the drams. One little boy was driven in between the wall and a pair of timbers (wooden roof supports consisting of two arms and a collar) doubled up, and had all his clothes blown off. His death must have been instant. Some few men were alive within 500 yards of the pit bottom, and all were crying piteously for water.

Mr. Alfred Lewis when he later returned to the surface was then questioned by a reporter: - "Any hope for those in the pit?" - "No, none," was the sad reply. "Do you think they suffered, was there any agony?" - "No, there was one blast and they were all gone. Most of them were working in the main level, and not in the faces - and were blown to pieces at once. The engineman was blown down, but dropped through the beams, and was saved alive, though badly mutilated. Two men were killed with him. All were covered in a very thick coating of dust. The roadways are in a splendid condition - well - considering, with high roofs. This greatly assisted our mine menders, for, although we met with heavy falls, we got over them easily. But for the excellent state of the roadway, we should not have

been able to penetrate so far.”

The first of the rescued

The crowd on the main road, which commanded a full view of the colliery, became more and more dense and notwithstanding a continuous and steady downpour of rain, Inspector McDonald, who had been telegraphed by acting Sergeant Evans informing them of the disaster, and his officers, performed prodigies of work in restraining the eagerness of the excited crowd. Mr. Deputy-Chief Constable Jones, and Captain Lindsay (Chief Constable), were both in attendance, and superintended the arrangements for the preservation of order.

Cabs, brakes, and other vehicles brought people from Pontypridd and the Rhondda, from Ynysybwl, Aberdare and Merthyr valleys, to the scene during the evening, and amongst others a considerable number of other colliery managers, ready to render any assistance in their power, while gangs of workmen from the Albion and other collieries volunteered their services to descend the pit and render every assistance to save their doomed brethren in the pit. Within two hours of the explosion there were over 2,000 people at the pit head, and the humpbacked bridge over the canal which connected the village to the colliery was guarded by two policemen, who tried to stop people crossing, but it would be Sunday before the immediate area around the colliery was cleared of sightseers and relatives of those who had been caught in the tragedy.

At quarter-past seven the signal which came from below seemed to indicate that some of the rescued men were being brought up, and this proved to be the case, for when the cage appeared those surrounding the barricades at the top of the shaft saw two men lying on stretchers inside, having been rescued from the ‘jaws of death.’

In another instant they were raised with tender care by some of their fellow-workmen at the pit, and immediately taken into the fitters’ shop, the crowd making way for the

bearers, gazing with eagerness at the covered bodies, and then rushing after those who carried the stretchers upon which were lying the seemingly inanimate bodies of the men to the door of the shop, which, however, they were forbidden to enter by the constables who stood there. The bodies were covered with blankets, so that the air might not blister the skins of those who were burned.

The first to arrive in the shop, where a large table, covered with hay and sacks, had been prepared, was John Canning, engine-driver, from near the bottom of the downcast. He was carried on a stretcher into the carpenters’ shop, and laid on the hay. He moaned dreadfully. All his hair had been burnt off, and when the doctors

began to examine his frame it was ascertained that he had a dislocated ankle, and was otherwise seriously injured. He was partially conscious, but in answer to questions very gently put to him he said he remembered nothing as to what had happened.

The other rescued man was the stoker on the Grover's side of the pit Samuel Evans, of Tondu, who presented a pitiful appearance. He held up his naked arms and the flesh hung in rags about them, and there were burns across the dusty face, but less severe than those on the arms. He, however, had suffered agonies, and cried out in delirium. His groans were mingled with cries of "I'm in the middle of it, I'm smoth- ering!"

They were both promptly attended to by Dr. Alfred Evans, of Pontypridd. It should be stated that Dr. Lyttle, the colliery surgeon, and Dr. Leckie descended the shaft in order to render what assistance they could before the sufferers were brought to the surface, but it need scarcely be said that the appearance of two men alive, though suffering from the terrible effects of the explosion, kindled anew the excitement which prevailed when the first news of the explosion spread through the district.

When it became known that two men were alive the spectators were thrilled with joy, and hope was revived that only a few had fallen victims to the mighty and destructive blast. These hopes, alas, proved deceptive, for only sixteen men were to be rescued during the evening, and when the dreadful news was circulated that fears were entertained by colliery experts who were exploring the works that the remainder of the men, who were now believed to about 250, had all met with a fearfully sudden death, all hopes were abandoned by the deeply and profoundly agitated crowd. The carriage descended and ascended several times during the next hour, and the suspense of the crowd, which had now increased to very great proportions, was simply electrical.

Darkness was now setting in, and as the electric light had been stopped a few days previously in an accident, 'comet' lamps were resorted to and their flickering light at the pit-mouth and in the colliery yard made the scene an inexpressibly sad and mournful one especially when the dead were taken to the mortuary, each body being followed by an excited crowd, the relatives of those below showing a painful eagerness to have an opportunity to identify them.

At eight o'clock another cage full was brought up, containing Thomas Howells, of Howell St, Cilfynydd, and a man named Griffith Evans Bunford (apparently known to everyone as George Bunford). Howells, 47, of Cymynswyth, near Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, was in a semiconscious condition, and at that in a very weak state and was discovered in the mouth of an airway in close proximity

to many dead.

The last named was suffering so much that he had to be carried away on a stretcher, but his companion was able, with the assistance of friends, to walk home, although in a weak state, bodily and mentally, consequent upon the shock and the effects of the afterdamp. He must have crawled into a manhole (a refuge holes made in a roadway for the shelter of a person from shot-firing, or safety from a passing journey), and tried to cover his face with his hands, and waited there until help came.

By nine o'clock there were ten rescued. As the unfortunate men were slowly regaining consciousness their agonising cries were most distressing and heartrending, two especially, viz. John Lewis and Henry Haines, giving vent to most agonising cries and writhing in agony to such an extent that it was only with difficulty that they could be kept down. The spectacle at this time was most pitiful, and drew tears from almost every eye.

At ten minutes past nine three of the dead were brought to the surface, and very soon there came the pathetic story of the death of young Jones, the fitter, whose father was the master-sinker engaged at this colliery. Young Jones had only descended about an hour before the accident, in order to do some repairs in the shaft. His father, who is now the master-sinker of the Dowlais pits, was amongst the party of explorers who actually discovered the body of his son.

About 11 o'clock Samuel Bates, 10 Bassett Terrace, Norton Bridge, was sufficiently revived to be removed home, and shortly afterwards Morgan Lloyd, 15, Wood Street, a ripper, was also removed to his dwelling house. During the weary hours of waiting some of the scenes enacted in the carpenter's shop were distressing in the extreme, sons came in hope of identifying their parents amongst the living ones, wives to identify their husbands, and a sadder sight could hardly be imagined that the miserable look, which plainly told, without the accompaniment of the voice so full of tears, that practically the last hope was gone, it being then generally believed that no more would be brought out alive.

One unfortunate incident occurred during the evening. John Lewis was identified, and the bearers who took him home were informed he resided at the Royal Oak Inn, Norton Bridge, and they tenderly took the unfortunate person there, a distance of over a mile, only to find that he had removed from the Royal Oak a week ago, and was now living at 39, Wood St., Cilfynydd, and the unfortunate man had to be borne back the whole of the distance. After the sufferers had all been attended too, a newspaper representative sought a brief interview with Dr. Griffiths, who had all through the night had been practically in charge of the sufferers. He informed him that of course it was too soon to speak with any degree of

confidence as to the injuries received. Some of the burns, he said, were very bad, and had deeply burnt the men's necks and faces. Of course they had not had an opportunity to make more than a superficial examination of burns, and had at once covered them with oil, lint, and wadding, and sometimes mustard wraps before any degree of certainty as to the results. In the case of those who had suffered severely from after-damp it was also difficult to say whether the persons would be able to conquer the effects of the poisonous fumes or not. He furnished a list of those rescued alive, and there were to be no others rescued.

Thomas Howells, George (Griffith Evans) Bunford, Thomas Dobbs, Hugh Jenkins, George Parry, Henry Harris, John Mears, Williams Bates, Walter Osbourne, Richard Williams, John Evans, John Lewis, William Farrow, John Canning, Samuel Evans and Fred Saunders. Of these only five would survive.

Shortly after midnight Henry Harris, of 6, Cilfynydd Road, a single man, a native of Newton Abbott, and Richard Williams, 104, Cilfynydd Rd, a single young man 21 years of age, were also removed home, accompanied by some of the medical men. Soon after one o'clock one of the two who still lay in the shop utterly unconscious was identified as Fred Saunders, a single man, residing at Norton Bridge, but fortunately before he was removed it was asserted this was not so. Meanwhile from time to time news was brought in that the work of winding up the bodies of those who fallen victims to the terrible explosion, and the more terrible carbon dioxide, carburetted hydrogen, and marsh gas, generated by the explosion, was progressing, and that the bodies were being removed to the hayloft above the stables, and many of those who came into the carpenter's shop hoping to identify their friends and relatives among the living, sadly and tearfully wended their way to nothing which was more or less than a fearful Charnel House (a building or chamber in which bodies or bones are deposited), to look for their dear ones among the dead.

Dead men on every side

One of the rescuers, who returned to the surface about ten o'clock on Saturday night, stated, in answer to a '*Western Mail*' representative, that matters were very serious. The force of the explosion must have been terrific, for the drams at the bottom of the shafts were all thrown one on top of the other, and in some cases almost blocked the roadways. Dead bodies were lying covered with debris, and on a load of rubbish was found the boot of one poor fellow, who must have received the full force of the explosion.

The explosion appeared to have taken place on the Cilfynydd side, and as far as the rescue parties had proceeded the roadways were fairly free from obstruction in the shape of falls. Dead men were to be seen on every side, and he expressed

the opinion that nobody else would be brought up alive. The smell of the afterdamp was very oppressive, but up to that time he had not observed any ill effects on the rescue party. There was a good current of air down below, and the fan appeared to be working freely.

Corpses lying in a heap

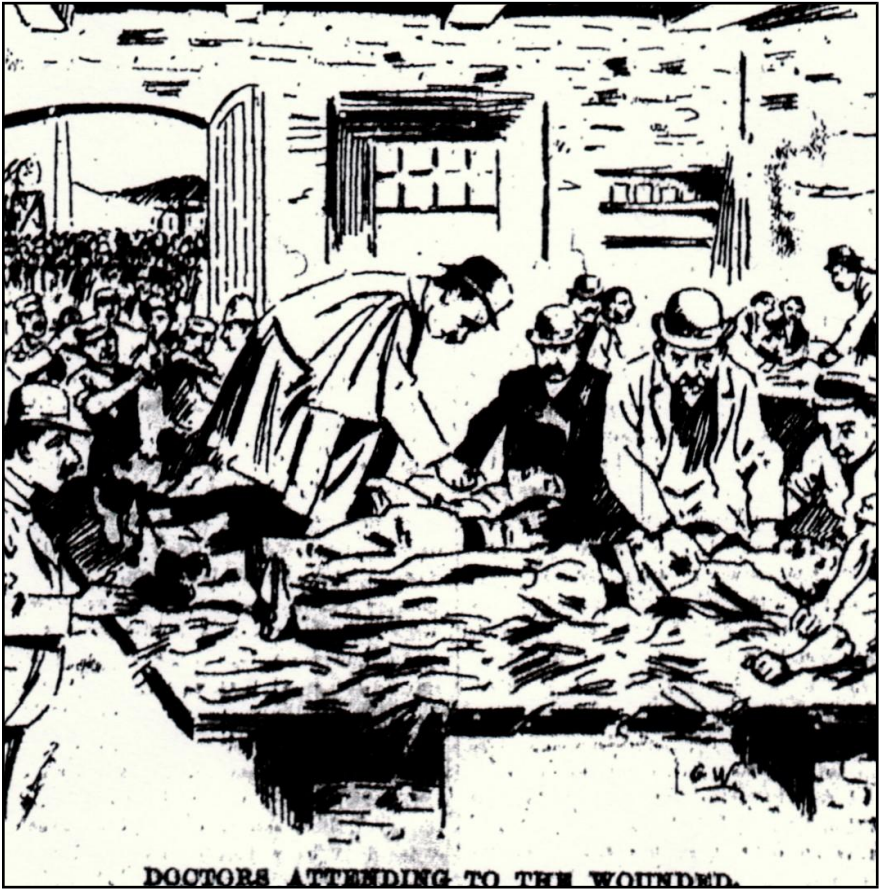
David Lewis, collier, who was one of the first 'band' of rescuers, on his return to the surface told how he, George Martin and William Llewellyn had gone into the workings a distance of 300 yards. They had an awful tale to tell. They had seen two great heaps of dead men. They appeared as if they had been running towards the bottom of the shaft - of course, in the dark, and that the foremost had stumbled and fallen, and one after the others had tumbled over them, and being unable to rise, had slept the sleep of death in the fumes of the afterdamp

Near one of the heaps they were startled by seeing a man standing upright and gazing at them with wondering eyes. They saw it was a man named Bunford, and Lewis asked, "Bunford, don't you know me?" He still gazed and gazed, and without saying a word, Lewis took hold of him, and the mesmeric condition in which he appeared to be seemed to leave him like magic, and, taking hold of Lewis's lamp, he held it up to Lewis's face, and mentioned his name. He then took a firm hold of Lewis's jacket, as if fearing that he would leave him behind. It is needless to state they conducted him to the bottom of the shaft, and, strange to say, while his friends had died as mentioned above, he was able to walk home with little assistance.

Up to this time the scenes at the pit-top had been devoid of any striking incidents, unless, indeed, the appearance of a volunteer rescuer whose years numbered five beyond the allotted 'three-score years and ten' be worthy of special note, for such a man did appear. Presently the cage came up, bringing a man and a boy, accompanied by an intrepid rescuer in the person of Mr. J. P. Gibbon, manager of the Treharris Colliery. The man just rescued was placed upon an ambulance stretcher, while Mr. Gibbon carried upon his back the lad he had just brought up with him. "Who is he?" he was asked, when Mr. Gibbon returned, after depositing his burden in the temporary hospital. "He is the son of poor Dobbs, the foreman, whose corpse is now at the bottom of the shaft," replied Mr. Gibbon.

Little Tommy Dobbs they found breathing among the half-a-dozen dead men, and close by was a dead horse. The explorers state that the harness of each dead horse they saw had been completely blown away - not even a bridle being left on one of them. They had found Thomas Howells mentioned above in the airway.

The explorers stated that they beheld several of the dead with pieces of sticks in



Artist's impression of the scene in the hayloft



Going to the hayloft to identify the dead

their hands. Doubtless, they had been used as feelers before them while they were groping their way in the dark in the direction of the bottom of the shaft, until they fell unconscious, to rise no more in this world. The boy had not recovered consciousness when he was carried home.

The scene at the pit's mouth

The next to arrive was that of Hugh Jenkins, a native of Hereford. He was semi-conscious and moaning, and the extent of his injuries were unknown. He could not recollect the name of the street where he lodged, and between his moans he would say, "I am so bad!" Someone asked him, "Did you see any fire?" "Fire!" said he, "What fire?" and he relapsed into moaning most pitifully. Eleven thus arrived in rapid succession. Three of that number could not be identified, and they, as well as others, were totally unconscious. By this time four had been carried home, and one of poor Hugh Jenkins' friends came and claimed him, and said he lodged at 48, Cilfynydd Road. The scene was now indescribably distressing. The agonising cries and moans of those lying on the table covered with hay and sacks were heard far beyond the building, and were enough to unnerve the strongest.

There was no difficulty in obtaining volunteers to undertake the arduous duty of exploration. Mr. W. H. Matthias remained at the pit bank throughout the night, and as the rescue parties ascended he called for other men to take their places. "Now, boys, four more are wanted," and in a chorus of responses at least a dozen men at once volunteered to clear the falls and bring the bodies of their unfortunate comrades to the surface.

Fearful sights

During the evening Mr. Robson, the Chief Inspector of Mines in the district, and Messrs. Sims, Gray, and Lewis (other inspectors of mines from other districts) arrived, and descended the shaft with a large number of colliery managers. In a very short time scores of bodies were found, and from the moment the 16 rescued were brought to the surface all signs of living men were missed by the exploring parties. Pathetic tales were related by some who said they had heard calls made by men beyond the falls, but as the afterdamp and falls prevented the possibility of getting farther in certain directions the rescue parties were recalled for safety. Wherever it was possible to go, exploring parties went, and the sights that met their gaze were horrifying. It was reported by the explorers that dead men and horses were to be found on every side, and in some instances as many as a dozen or more men were heaped together.

In one instance, a haulier's head had been blown away to a distance of 20 yards

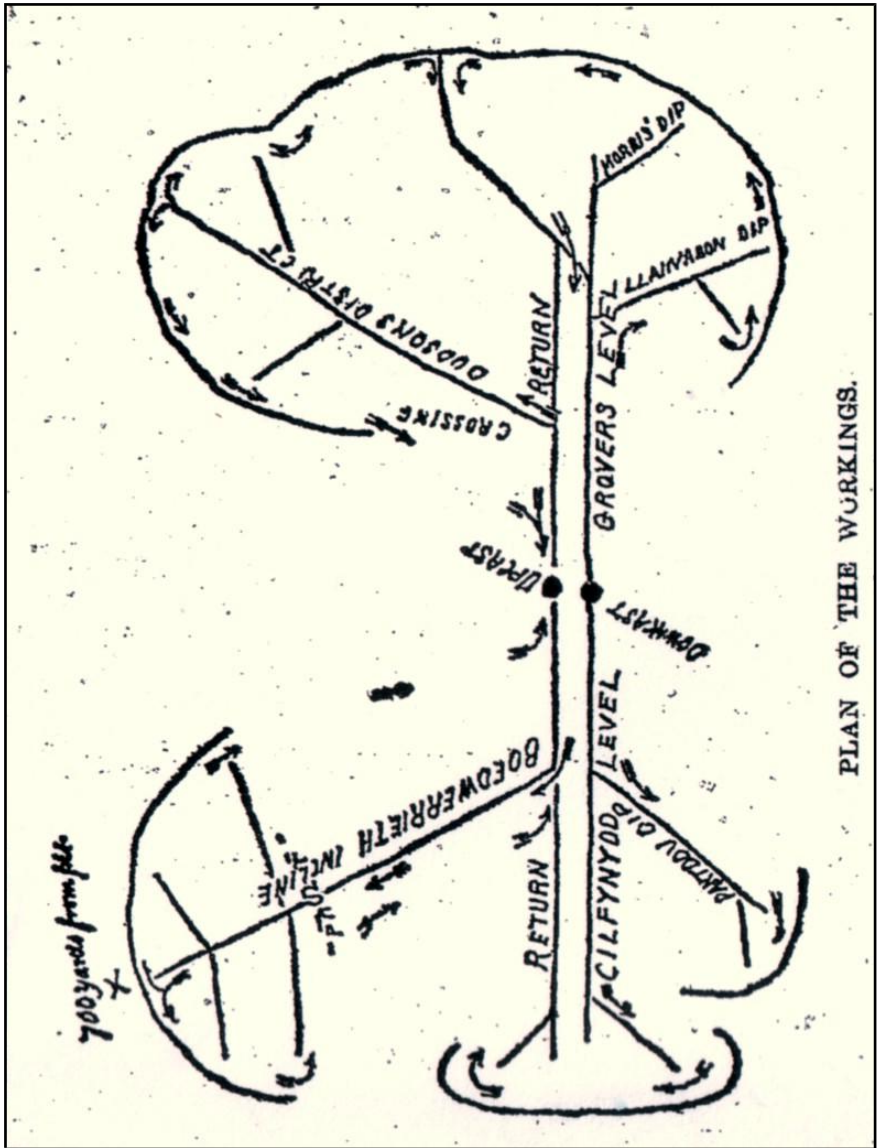
from the body; in another the top part of the head, from the mouth upwards, had been blown off, together with the back of the neck, and for some distance down the back the flesh torn off. Clothes had been stripped off the bodies by the blast, a little boy named Earne, lay without his boots and stockings, and arms and legs wrenched away and blown for a considerable distance, so they could not be found. The force of the explosion must have been terrific, but whether it was that was gas intermixed with coal-dust, or coal-dust only, experienced managers failed to agree - at any rate, up to the end of the first day.

What the government inspector says

Mr. Sims, Her Majesty's Inspector, of Penarth, who was early at the scene of the disaster and remained throughout the night, in reply to a '*Western Mail*' reporter stated that when he went down the pit he advanced as near to the face as possible. There were more marks of fire on the Grover side, but the greatest damage to the pit was on that of the Cilfynydd side. Heavy falls and dead bodies were the only things he saw underground. He could form no idea as to the cause of the explosion - at any rate, not at present. "Tomorrow morning," added Mr. Sims, "I may have some idea as to the cause. I expect to be back at the pit this Sunday afternoon."

'*Morien*' commented: - The scene in the loft where the dead bodies are laid out is ghastly, and yet fascinating, in the almost artistic effects of light and shade. Bodies lying in front of the windows are, of course, in full view, while those between the windows are in gloom, and in the half-closed eyes of an artist the promiscuous arms and legs might easily be fancied in fantastic attitude and movement. Unutterable pathos was added to the scene by the figures of women, with lanterns, moving in and out amid the dead, seeking, with fearful hearts and sorrow-filled eyes, to recognise amongst the poor, bruised burnt remains what was once the well-known form of husband, father, and son, and yet trusting with desperate hope that the fate of the loved one was not yet irrevocably decided.

A most bitter contrast was presented by one of these women, who, carrying a huge lamp in one hand and a young child on the other arm, moved with patient care amongst the remains, casting long ghastly shadows, the silence only broken by her sobs and chuckling of the laughing child, who all unconscious of the sad catastrophe, cooed for 'Dada' or 'Mama,' in a manner fit to break the already riven heart of mother and widow. A touch of natural chivalry on the part of a grimy, plebeian collier deserves record. One poor body which had been stripped of clothing in the terrible fiery rush lay uncovered in the long row, and, no other material being at hand, a comrade fetched from a further corner a quantity of hay, and, with inborn delicacy of feeling and tenderness of action, spread it over the disfigured corpse.



PLAN OF THE WORKINGS.

Plan of the workings as given to readers of the 'Western Mail' newspaper two days after the disaster. An official map appears on pages 447 & 448 of this publication.

The cause or causes of the disaster, are, so far as information goes, far to seek. No one with whom I conversed through the night would venture a positive opinion - indeed, everybody seemed to fight shy of that part of the inquiry. The Albion Colliery is one of the largest - it has, in fact, the largest output of any single-shaft colliery in South Wales, and admittedly it stands in the very forefront for the manner in which it has been sunk and the levels driven, together with the enlightened policy which has marked its management. Something has been said, by Mr. Bramwell amongst others, about the coal dust, and there is little doubt that the dust of that colliery is very bituminous - full of resin and 'fat.' But the statement of this fact does not indicate the cause.

There are a number of rumours current, one of which is that matches have been found in the pit, and this, together with the fact that the head of one man, a haulier, was lying dead beside the corpse, is made the foundation for the conjecture that a breach of the best-known rules of a collier, that against smoking underground, is again responsible for this enormous sacrifice of life.

Of course, this is conjecture. In the absence of authoritative statements on the part of those who probably know more than they will speak, and pending the searching inquiry which must ensue, nothing certain can be stated. At present the disaster is unexplained and unexplainable, except that -

“Human is human! Pits will fire, And fatal vapours lurk unknown, until, like an avalanche, in face of which the heart stands still, the lurid flash, the long, deep reverberation, with noisome odours, sweep men down by the hundred, and another fatal thread is warped in the miners' treacherous loom.”

During the long hours of the night many painful scenes were witnesses. By one o'clock 91 bodies lay in the improvised mortuary.

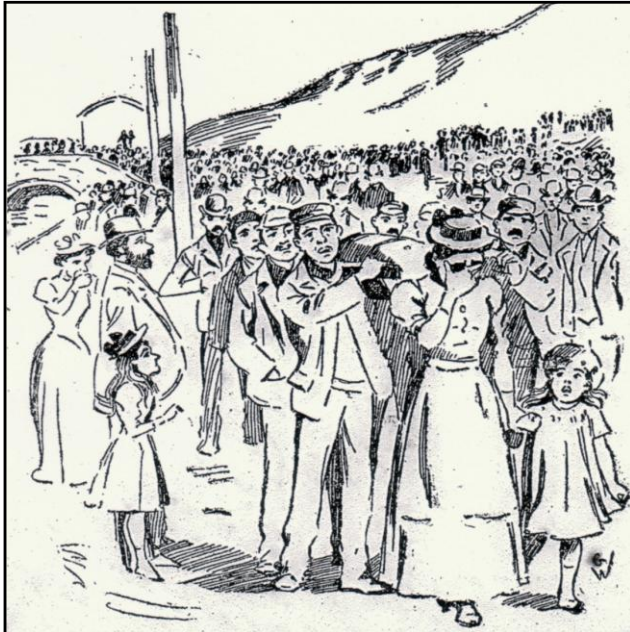
Fatal accident at Tymawr Colliery

Whilst working at Tymawr Colliery on Friday night, June 22nd 1894, a man named William Gould, Silhaul Cottage, near Treforest, met with a sudden death. It appears that the deceased was 'trying' the roof when a large stone fell upon him killing him instantly. The unfortunate man left a widow and five children. A singular circumstance in connection with this accident is that before its occurrence, two brothers of the deceased would have been working with the night shift men at the Albion Colliery on the ill-fated Saturday evening, possibly to share their doom.

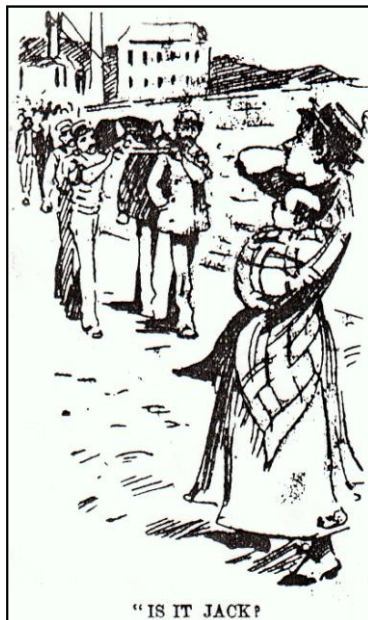


FRIENDS AND RELATIONS IDENTIFYING THE BODIES IN THE
HAY-LOVE.

The grim task of looking through the bodies



After identification the mournful cortege goes home



"IS IT JACK?"

The dreaded moment when a body comes toward a mother and child awaiting news of the man of the house.

CHAPTER THREE

More accounts from newspaper interviews

The manager, Mr. Philip Jones, who, as might be expected, was terribly upset by the disaster, especially as the pit had under his direction been brought into a high state of efficiency in respect of its interior arrangement and workings, was very reticent when questioned by representatives of the press. He had gone down the shaft with the first party. Referring to the possible cause of the disaster, Mr. Jones said it was quite impossible to say how it happened. "We found men burnt on both sides," he said - pointing to the Grover section - "and on this." - pointing to the Cilfynydd side.

Discovery of 24 bodies.

Mr. John Thomas, manager of the Standard Colliery, Ynyshir, gave the following graphic description of his experiences as a member of an exploring party: - "I went down with Henry Watkins, the fireman, about seven o'clock, and proceeded in the direction of the Cilfynydd side, right into the face of the district. We visited altogether fifty places. We found two live horses between two doors, standing up. The men who had been working in that place had gone back through the level, and by doing so had been suffocated. Probably, if they had remained where they were - there being two doors working - they would have escaped. I went along the level and the return, and found 24 bodies, all lying down, as if they had been overcome by the damp and fallen where they were. They carried their lamps with them, but a good many of them were broken. The workings were clear of gas when we reached there, and the roads were quite clear of falls. We carried three men out. We found them not far from the pit bottom. They were alive, and were sent up as soon as we could get them to the bottom of the shaft. Dr. Leckie and Dr. Lyttle were with us."

"Where we were the coal dust was not coked and the timber was not charred, so the explosion could not have occurred there. We went on to the straight level, and saw two bodies lying in an empty dram. They were lying on their backs, and I should think they had been thrown there by the force of the explosion. These were found in a space to the left of Morgan Dyer's district. Morgan Dyer had been with us part of the way, but he went on, and I did not see him afterwards. There were indications that the explosion had travelled towards the Cilfynydd side. There were no traces of burning on the 24 bodies we found."

Mr. Gray, one of the Government inspectors, said: - "We went into the Llanfabon Dip and rescued several bodies between the pit and there, but had to come out on account of the afterdamp being too strong, and now we had to wait to have the pit cleared before we could go on. We left the bodies where they were, as they were

quite safe. We could get at five of them. There were some very heavy falls, and, as I have said, the afterdamp was strong. We did not find the bodies in any particular position, or any incident we thought remarkable except the fact that in some places there were four or five bodies lying together, and in one instance as many as ten. Some of the men had evidently been working where we found them. We have not been able to ascertain where the explosion occurred.” Asked as to whether he agreed with captain Lewis’s version that the explosion was caused by coal dust, or, rather, that it was a coal dust explosion, he said he could not say.

Mr. John Valiant, Chief surveyor of the Great Western Colliery, in the course of an interview on Sunday, just as he was about to join another exploring gang, said that he went down the pit at 4.40 on Saturday afternoon and remained down there until 3 a.m. on Sunday morning. One of the most remarkable things he noticed at first - was that the place was exceedingly free from foul air immediately after the explosion. The ventilation was perfect. He went round and tested it with the manager. The falls seemed to be principally on the main road near the pit’s mouth. Inside the workings the faces were in perfect condition. While they were exploring they came across a man standing in the airway alive and uninjured, but ten men lay dead around him. It was difficult to say, but he thought they went in about 400 to 500 yards.

There was no doubt, he thought, that the officials did everything in their power, under the circumstances. This was one of those explosions that occasionally happens, and which no human foresight could anticipate. He had travelled a great deal in south America, and had never heard or known of any explosion so terrible as this. Nothing but the excellent state of the mine and the splendid condition of the roof could have preserved the pit becoming a total wreck. William Thomas, a collier employed at the pit, who descended with the shift at 8 o’clock stated that 12 bodies were found at the far end of Mike’s Level in Dunston’s district. None of them were burnt or disfigured, and they were lying in different positions, just as if the poor fellows were sleeping peacefully.

Bodies terribly mutilated

Mr. William James, Maesrhyddy, manager of the Great Western Colliery, said: - “The first intimation that I received of the disaster was by wire, Mr. Phillip Jones having telegraphed me asking for my assistance. This was about 4.30 or 4.35 on Saturday afternoon. As promptly as I could get together a group of men, including my fireman, we proceeded to the colliery by brake from Pontypridd. We descended the colliery about 5.40. The officials of the colliery had gone down earlier, but my gang was I believe, the first organised body (outside officials) to go down.

When we reached the bottom, we found that the place was in a state of great disorder. So great had been the force of the explosion that the drams had been blown into the sump. (where water drains at the bottom of the shaft). We set to work clearing the debris, and making a clear way for the work of rescue to be carried out unhampered. We had all taken appliances to bring out any men found alive in the pit. Those who escaped had been evidently knocked down by the force of the explosion. For a time they were insensible, but they gradually rallied and pathetically appealed to us to lift them up. Many of them were burnt severely, but the air was not very bad. There was a good current of air there. I stayed down until after midnight. Some of the bodies were terribly mutilated. I noticed one body without head or legs, a mere trunk, while another poor fellow had his two legs blown off. They also found one leg on the other side of the pit, and the work of removing the bodies was rapidly proceeded with. A gang of my night officials went down after we came up, and they remained down until 6 o'clock on Sunday morning. As far as we could see, there was no hope of any of those behind the falls being alive. We came across two horses alive. They were uninjured, but very nervous, and were much startled when we approached them."

Captain Lester Lewis, of the Ynysfeio Colliery, stated later: - "I heard about the explosion at Treherbert shortly after five o'clock, and came down on the 5.20 train, and reached the Albion in a cab a little after six. I immediately went down the shaft and joined the overman's party on the Grover's side in the work of exploration. In penetrating into the workings we came across five poor fellows who were alive. They were badly burnt and mutilated, and cried piteously for water. Unfortunately, we had no water at the moment, but their wants were soon attended to. Dr. Lyttle was with us, and really I cannot speak too highly of his conduct. I went into a turning off Grover's district, and there saw about 35 or 40 dead bodies. Most of them had been burnt, and others appeared to have died calmly. Others, again, had been violently thrown about and mutilated very much. Some were lying on their backs, but generally their bodies lay on their faces as if they had been overcome in their efforts to escape. Several of the poor fellows lay dead with their hands pressed against their face, as if they had tried to shield their features from the effects of the blast."

"At one spot we found the remains of shotman, Gwilym Roberts, the overman, and the fireman, lying within six yards of each other. The body of the overman (Evans), was in a sitting posture, with his face hanging over a bosh, and the fireman's body lay on his side. The shotman's watch was going when we discovered the body. I looked at the watch then, and found it to be 9.20 p.m. These three bodies were slightly singed at the back of the head, and they all appeared to have died from asphyxia. I really could not say whether the explosion originated in that district - it may have or it may not. The lamps of the men were lying about, and seemed to be all intact. The firemen that we saw alive were assisted to

the pit bottom, and sent to bank (up) expeditiously as possible. The majority of the bodies on the Grover's side appeared to have their clothes blown entirely off and the flesh burnt. All the horses I saw on the road were dead, and so were the hauliers. We found one small boy tightly wedged in between a dram wheel and a pair of timbers, and his clothes literally stripped off his body - not burnt off, but simply driven off by the force of the blast."

"The blast must have driven many of the bodies a distance of some 20 yards. In one dip the head of a collier had been thrown clear, and picked up at a spot some 25 yards beyond. We met large numbers of falls, and all the timbers were blown out. Undoubtedly, there must have been many bodies under these falls, and many days may elapse before they are recovered, for some of the falls are exceedingly heavy. The place appears to be wrecked from one end to the other, and the explosion must have been of a terrific nature. The enginemen close to the pit bottom were also injured and some killed, and to me this clearly indicates that it was an explosion of coal-dust."

On the body of Gwilym Roberts was found an interesting but painfully sad souvenir of the catastrophe. This consisted a number of notes, carefully written in Welsh on a slip of paper, apparently for the purpose of being used in a Sunday school lesson, or something of the kind, on the following day. The notes gave the scriptural references to and titles in everyday use of the following parables: - "The good shepherd; the parable of the ten virgins; the parable of the lost money; the wit and the tares; the unfruitful victory; the parable of the husband; the parable of the widow's prayer; the good and bad stewards; and the unmerciful servant." The paper was singed by the explosion, but the writing was quite readable. The pocket watch of the deceased was still going when it was found.

Saved from the jaws of death.

William Jones and James Loxton, who formed part of another exploring party led by James Smith, fireman, said: - "We went to the Grover's side far end and saw tremendous falls. We cannot say how many are killed there, but we picked up a lot on the side. Men and horses had appeared to make a rush, and there is no doubt that some of the men were drampled down by the horses, and afterwards suffocated with the after-damp."

"However, the horses broke loose, and rushed from the stables, and, with the men, managed to get to the falls, failed to proceed further, and died by the way. Others we noticed had the top of their heads cut off, and we picked up one poor fellow by the side of a dram, and his arm twenty yards away."

"The dead were lying in all positions, and every direction, and I counted sixteen

dead in one spot. Many of them appeared to have had a struggle for life, for the veins of their throats were swollen almost as big as their fingers in their endeavour to breathe. Very likely they heard the shock and ran in the direction of the pit mouth, and thus came right into the middle of the afterdamp. One poor haulier (Richard Owen) was found with his head under his horse and his right leg blown away 25 yards. We used to call him 'Mabon.' We could go no further, and it would take some days before many of the men are brought out."

Mr. Hammond and Mr. Bevan, of the Clydach Vale Colliery, stated in a joint interview, that the falls encountered by the explorers were very heavy, more specially in the Grover's district. The coal faces however, were in good order, and all the men whose bodies were found at the face must have died from afterdamp. The two men related an exciting incident that occurred to one of their rescue party. A man got wedged between some timbers in one of the falls, and it was only with very considerable difficulty that they were able to procure his release.

Harrowing scenes

Mr. D. E. Davies (Dewi Mabon), manager of the Cwmaman Colliery, gave a most graphic narrative. He descended the pit at 8.30 p.m. on Saturday, and accompanied by Dewi Dar, penetrated into the Llanfabon district. "On our way," said Mr. Davies, "we had to cross several falls, and in many places had to crawl on all fours. The falls were very heavy, some of them as much as 100 yards long, and at other times we had to creep over fallen drams and the bodies of men and horses. Many of the bodies had been conveyed to the pit bottom before we entered the district, but we came across several more. Most of the poor fellows were horribly burnt, their clothes being simply blown off, exposing the bodies to the fury of the flames."

"The last body that was found was the body of a haulier, his head had been blown clean off, and we found it at a spot 20 yards beyond the trunk. We sent four of our men forward to pick the head up and bring it back. The poor fellow's leg and arm had been blown off, and were afterwards picked up, but the legs were minus the feet, and these were yet still missing. The force of the explosion in the Llanfabon district must have been tremendous. It had travelled inwards we could see that. We were unable, owing to the afterdamp, to explore the whole of the Llanfabon district."

"The foul air forced us to retreat before we got 100 yards beyond. Before leaving we put up brattice doors as to clear the place of the foul air. No one was allowed down after this because of the bad conditions still in the mine, but several carriages returned to the service carrying back the rescuers." Amongst those killed was a man named Jenkins, of Coedpenmaen, formerly engaged in driving

out for the South Wales Confectionery Co. He had not been working down the Albion Colliery for more than a fortnight.

Straggled about in all directions

Others that took part in the early rescue attempts had little to add. Thomas Davy said when he got down he started clearing rubbish in the bottom. He found the remains of one corpse which had been blown to pieces and put them in a sack. There were two corpses in the sump. In the deep level the corpses were found 'straggled' about in all directions - there were ten or twelve in that spot. Two horses were alive in the face. "The night overman is dead," continued Davy. "I think it was the hitcher (a man at pit-bottom who operates the shaft signals which are heard by the winder and banks- man) who was found blown to pieces. We only went on one side, and that was enough for me too."

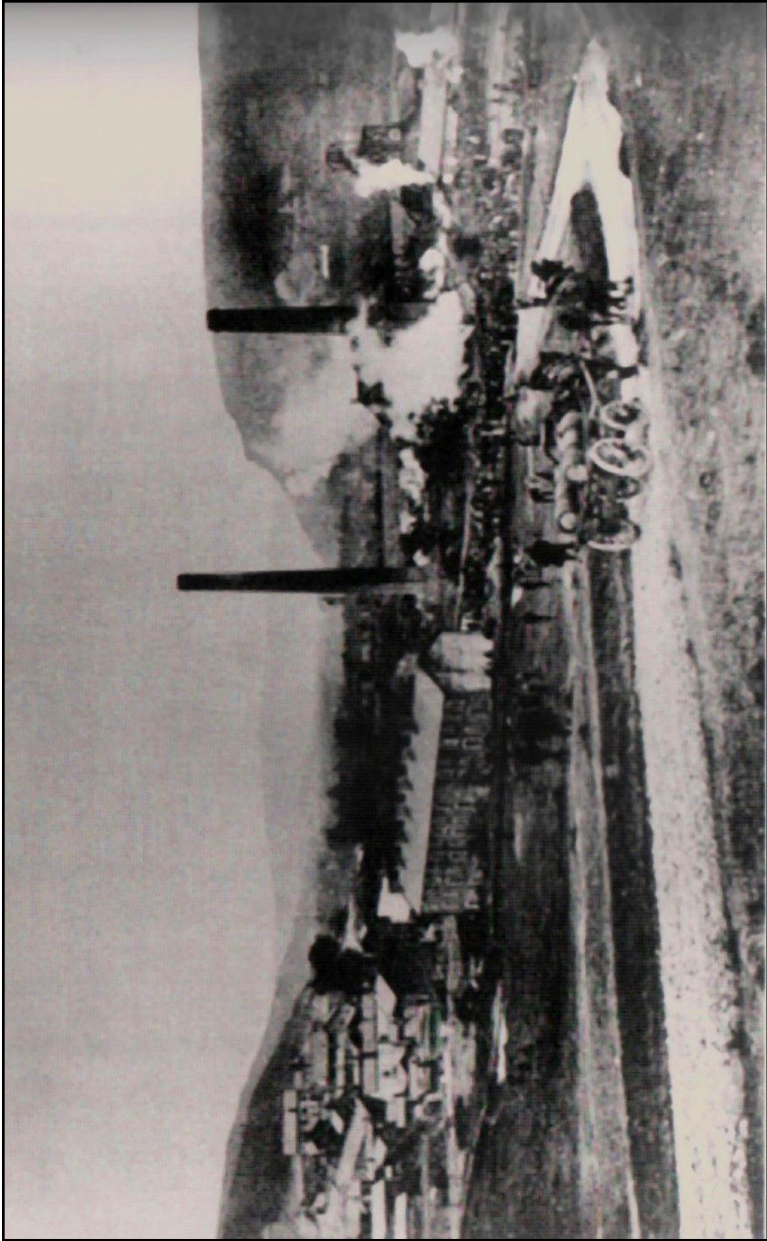
John Seal, another rescuer, said he went about 130 yards on the Grover side, and after passing several falls, came to the first living man. He was wrapped in canvas and carried out. Seven dead men were lying by him. William John Young, who came up about 11.30 p.m., said there was no hope that any more of those remaining in the pit were alive.

A strange occurrence - every split affected

Morgan Dyer, fireman at the Albion Colliery, who went down with the first band of explorers, and returned to surface about 2 a.m., in reply to a newspaper representative gave a graphic account of what he had observed below. A good deal of damage had, he said, been done in some portions of the mine, but at the far end on the Cilfynydd side it seemed as though scarcely more than the surface dust had been disturbed.

"One man named William Morris was found," Dyer continued, "lying in the middle of the way, choked by the afterdamp, but not injured or scorched, and his head of bushy hair un-singed. The men in the engine-deep (twenty-four in number) might have been saved if they had the sense - or taken the thought - to stay where they were, but on hearing the report of the explosion, they rushed towards the pits' mouth, and thus met their death from the after-damp. The horses in that deep, which stayed where they were, we found alive. The men, as I said, rushed to their death, but probably they only did what we should have done if we had been there."

"What was the cause of the explosion?" the reporters asked. - "I should not like to express an opinion," replied Mr. Dyer. "It is a very strange thing. If the effects



Refreshments arrive on carts for the 'spectators' at the public houses



Two dramatic scenes as portrayed by the south Wales newspapers



had been confined to one part of the mine we might have been able to explain it, but, seeing that every 'split' - the term used for describing the divisions in the circulation of fresh air to secure a separate supply for each set of men - "and every district of the mine - there are seven or eight splits altogether - is affected, it is exceedingly difficult to form an opinion."

Rescuer overcome

Mr. W. Hatton (Coedcae Colliery), who descended the pit with the first party, including Mr. Jones (overman), said they went first to the part of the workings called the 'Grover' side, where the explosion is supposed to have occurred. They penetrated as far as the 'Dewy' deep, but could not get any further. Jones was overcome by the noxious gas, but recovered. The doors were blown off by the force of the explosion, and the gas was filling the main. They put up brattices where the doors had been to regulate the air. Eventually they got into the main heading, but were unable to proceed any further.

About 9 o'clock on the surface on Saturday night a number of men were gazing intently on a dram which contained some of the rubbish from below. Darkness had now descended, and in flicking light men could be seen moving the stones and rubbish, and upon proceeding thither and making enquiries, it was found that a fleshy bone had been found a few minutes before, and that a search was made upon the rubbish to see whether anything else could be found there. It was said that the bone referred to was about six or seven inches long, and seemed to have come from the arm of a young lad. An old boot was also found, while there were several pieces of dirty, burnt clothing, which had evidently been stripped off one of the ill-fated victims of the blast.

Richard Griffiths, night timekeeper, went down the shaft on Saturday afternoon in company with John Evans, night fireman and his son Tommy. Griffiths returned about a quarter of an hour before the accident; his ill-fated companions remaining below, and are amongst the dead.

The scene at the pit's mouth was now heart-rending. All evening, and after midnight, the poor fellows were brought to the surface and conveyed away on stretchers. Covered over, so their features could not be recognised and the fact that heavy breathing - a gasping as if for dear life - was heard in only a few cases was sadly significant of the extent of the death-roll. Silently the poor fellows were removed - grief caused by a calamity such as this was too admit of articulate expression or emotional outbursts.

Those unmistakably dead were taken to the hay-loft above the colliery stables, while the remainder (injured more or less) and they were only sixteen out of a

total of 88 brought up - were accommodated in the fitting-shop - all except four or five, who were taken to their sorrow-stricken homes. The scenes in the fitting-shop were pitiful enough, but were less terrible than those witnessed in similar circumstances, after most of the great colliery disasters in Wales in recent years, inasmuch as the men treated by the doctors on this occasion were suffering mostly from afterdamp, and not from injury to limbs.

The fitters' shop, directly after the explosion, was converted into a receptacle for the injured, as much like a hospital as possible. Here the relatives whose loved ones were missing waited their turn to enter the hayloft, where the bodies lay on the hay-covered floors. It was dark save for the small windows and smaller lanterns, but better illumination might have caused a fire.

The bodies were huddled together in three rows, most of them unrecognisable except for height or stature, or peculiarity of clothing, and wives and sisters walked along among the corpses carrying lanterns searching for familiar faces. So mutilated were some of the bodies and so fearfully burned, that the process of identification was exceedingly difficult and in some cases absolutely impossible. The dread feeling of anxiety and fear that took possession of the relatives was quite electrical and contagious, and the cries of the poor mothers and fathers, and little ones who were fatherless because of the calamity, was simply heart-rending.

In one instance the body of a man was taken to Coedpenmaen, and the waiting family were informed that it was that of the husband and father. The features were unrecognisable, and even the lower limbs were mutilated so badly that identification by means of shoes or stockings so frequently resorted to - could not be carried out. The poor woman admitted that there was some resemblance in the body to what she would have expected her husband to be under the circumstances, but the waistcoat upon the corpse was not that worn by the husband when he left home that afternoon.

Pathetic scenes

Nor were pathetic scenes confined to the homes of the widows and orphans - there were instances of as many as three sons from one house being in the pit, and, as yet, unaccounted for. All through the night women and little ones could be heard bitterly sobbing, the condition of some of the wives and mothers whose nerves had been unstrung by the fearful fate of the lost ones who had now left them forever, and gone to the eternal home of bliss in unending or unspeakable agony, being pitiful to behold.

No effort was spared to mitigate the sufferings of the victims - the doctors were unremitting in their attendance - as tender as women were the volunteer helpers,

the colliers, friends of the injured, who propped up the heads of the sufferers and wiped away the great beads of perspiration from their brows, and the poisonous film from their mouths. Afterdamp produces appearances such as follow upon an overdose of chloroform. The whole frame is convulsed, and the unconscious patient lies groaning heavily, and with difficulty between the convulsive shocks that shake the body and cause all the limbs to twitch painfully. An emetic or other remedies being of no avail, all the doctors could do was to try to restore respiration by the artificial means of swaying the arms to and fro.

This treatment, in most of the cases, was so far effectual that the sufferers, before long, could be taken to their homes. A few of the more obstinate cases refused to yield to this treatment. They were only three, however, and two of the three patients for a considerable time could not be recognised, a fact which is not so strange as may at first appear, many of the colliers being young men who had left their parents a long distance away, and come as strangers to work at the Albion Colliery. One man above was believed to be Henry Harris, but it turned out it was not him after all, and none could recognise him.

Extraordinary efforts were made to revive consciousness, but they were not successful, and the man could not be removed until his slow course of recovery had been so far completed. The second of the three obstinate cases was that of a big, powerful fellow, who was at first taken to be John Lewis, but was afterwards recognised as John Evans, of Howell Street, Pontypridd. Evans was taken homewards, but he was attacked with fits, and had to be brought back. Four men had to hold him down, and when his violent paroxysms had ceased somewhat he was allowed to be taken away again.

Among the ministers present was the Rev. T. Stephenson, Pastor of the English Wesleyan Chapel at Norton Bridge, who told a '*Western Mail*' man that he recognised two or three of the sufferers, who were members of his congregation, and whom he had sent to their homes. "Who were they?" asked the reporter. "Osbourne is one," came the reply, "and another is called Walters. Two or three others are dead." The Rev. gentleman was trying to revive one of the three unrecovered patients, whom he took to be Henry Harris, a labourer. Another minister who showed great solicitude for the injured was the Rev. Morgan, of the South Wales Mission at Pontypridd, whose two brothers-in-law were in the explosion.

Dr. R. W. Jones (Penrhiwceiber), with his assistant (Dr. Hughes), Dr. Griffiths (Aberdare Junction), and other medical men left nothing undone to bring the men round and to soothe their sufferings. Dr. Hughes explained that most of the men who had been taken to their homes were suffering from afterdamp. Dr. Stechan (Pontypridd) was also most active in the world of medical superintendence.

Difficult recognition

A great number of the unfortunate ones were strangers and lodgers. It was stated with regret that in many cases with the lodgers the people with whom they had lodged refused to have anything to do with them when dead, and they had to be carried back to the hayloft. Another reason as to the impossibility of recognition was the battered and piecemeal remains of some who were found. They were a shocking and sickening sight, and affected large numbers of the spectators, while the burnt smell seemed to linger in dull dead deposits offensive to everyone with whom it came in contact.

As soon as a body was brought up and recognised it was at once moved home. In some cases where a body had been taken a distance, to the Graig say, the further end of Pontypridd from the colliery, the call for volunteers to take the dead home was not so eagerly responded to, and when the men who eventually volunteered to move this particular body reached Pontypridd they were exhausted. One of the bearers was a carpenter or mason, Jones. They met two men and asked them to relieve them by assisting to take the body home. It would scarcely be believed but both skulked into a urinal close-by and refused to render any assistance! It was scarcely creditable.

Between nine and ten o'clock on Saturday night rain began to fall heavily, so that the highway eventually became full of slush, and the pit yards were in a worse condition still. The rain ceased about midnight, but throughout the night throngs passed incessantly to and fro between Pontypridd and the colliery, and breaks and cabs, with blazing lamps, did a roaring trade. While Mr. Porcher (clerk to the Pontypridd magistrates), Mr. Morgan Morgan (secretary to the Pontypridd Waterworks), and other gentlemen were conversing at the entrance to the pit's mouth on Saturday evening, their attention was attracted to the touching exclamations of a bright-eyed little lad of between seven or eight years of age. He was waving his little cap and saying, "My father has come out alive. I have seen him and have been speaking to him. I am so glad he has been saved." 'Morien' in the '*Western Mail*' on Monday morning gave his personal account of the Cilfynydd tragedy: -

Heart-rending scenes at the pit

The periodic holocausts which overtake those who seek to rest from nature's custody the wealth of our fiery coal measures are occasions of inexpressible sadness even to those who most frequently have the melancholy duty of assisting in or recording the after-measures of rescue or relief - much more would those who, like myself, gained their first experiences in such disasters during the evening of Saturday and the morning of Sunday at the scene of the fearful

catastrophe at the Albion Colliery where over 250 men were in a moment literally blow out of existence, be moved by the almost unparalleled sacrifice of precious human life.

A colliery disaster attended by serious loss of life has power to touch the most callous, for it brings us face to face with those fearful dangers which beset the miner at every step in his work of supplying trade and commerce, manufacturers and the private citizen with the indispensable commodity of coal. The Albion Colliery explosion will take its place in the black record as involving the second largest - if not the largest - sacrifice of life in the long list of the southern half of the principality, and, singularly enough, the first reports of the occurrence largely understated its seriousness. Unusually in such events the tendency is towards overstatement, and only those who hope against hope for the safety of loved ones refuse to receive the larger rumour. Here, although the force of the explosion destroyed the covering of the upcast shaft, with a great portion of that of the downcast, and shook Cilfynydd as though from an earthquake, a statement that the disaster was limited to a boiler explosion steadily gained ground amongst outsiders, and was only abandoned when the most heartrending fact that nearly all the men in the pit were sacrificed became apparent.

The explosion occurred about 3.45. and when I reached Cilfynydd from Cardiff, about 6.30, the top of the pit was crowded with hundreds of anxious-visaged men and women, all under the influence of the most intense excitement. The small force of police then available found their hands quite full in securing even a moderate amount of freedom of movement for those directing and assisting in the work of rescue which was rapidly being organised.

The high wind and driving rain materially added to the discomfort of the surroundings, and, by causing the onlookers to crowd for shelter to the covering at the shaft top, increasing the inconvenience experienced by the rescue parties. The news of the explosion appears to have spread rapidly, and Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, was on the ground immediately. Indeed, the utmost promptitude was displayed in the matter, and, there being no break in the ventilation of the pit nor the winding gear, the first party of explorers descended the shaft within half an hour of the occurrence of the explosion.

Then ensued a long wait, and the tension was becoming very great when I arrived, the absence of news from the rescuers telling its own gloomy tale of the probable state of things below. At length, at 7.15, the first party returned to the top, and brought with them (Oh! Joy!) two comrades who had escaped death. The excitement which immediately ensued amongst the crowd may possibly be imagined - it cannot be described. Other parties followed rapidly, each bringing two survivors, the fourth party reaching the top at 8.50.

Twenty minutes later a dismal break occurred in the record for a cage arrived bearing three dead, sad confirmation of the suggestion made by the boots, bones, and pieces of flesh which lay in the drams sent up from the bottom of the pit before the first party of explorers returned.

So through the gloom of the dismal night, broken only by the fitful glare of the flaring oil lamps, the cages bearing their burdens of death rapidly succeeded each other, the melancholy work being only occasionally broken in its early portion by the upbringing of a few badly injured survivors, who made up the total of sixteen saved out of a total estimated at from 250 to 300.

The brave explorers continued to carry on the work of discovering the dead and clearing the falls with a spirit that never flagged, still hoping that in some parts of the workings, where perhaps the blast had not rushed its deadly freak work, they might find more of their fellow-workmen alive. They, however, for all their hopes, by the morning it was manifest to all who were experienced with explosions of this nature that all now remaining in the pit were dead.

Daylight found the same sad work still going on, but about 6 a.m. it was suspended to permit the fixing of a new cage. The crowd, which fell off during the night, increased again at daybreak, but the intense excitement and anxiety of the previous evening had given place to realisation and hopeless sorrow.

**Miner in a manhole
underground**



CHAPTER FOUR

Sunday, June 24th 1894

Over 20,000 visitors

The scene at the pit on Sunday was another day never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. Gradually day dawned, and by degrees the outline of the mountains, with their wooded slopes, and the green valleys came into view, the natural beauties of which, clothed in 'summer dyes' contrasted painfully with the scenes of unutterable woes which were now the portion of Cilfynydd.

By this time the magnitude of the disaster had come home to the comprehension of everybody. At the break of day the dead were brought up rapidly, and by noon on Sunday 103 dead bodies had been brought up on stretchers and carried to the hay-loft in the colliery yard. Sixteen had by that time been brought up alive - and as far as was known were still alive.

As soon as the post-office was opened on Sunday morning Mr. D. Ellis, the general secretary of the company, wired orders for 250 coffins, distributed as follows: - Mr.

J. Crockett, Pontypridd, 50; Mr. David Griffiths, Gelliwasted Road, Pontypridd, 100; Mr. W. James, Cilfynydd, 50; and Messrs. Stone & Co., Cardiff, 50. The Albion Company, as was usual in such cases, would bear the cost of the coffins.

The '*South Wales Daily News*' reported: - The task of temporarily repairing the mouth of the shaft was continued all the morning, planks being laid across where the timbers had been blown away by the force of the explosion. Mr. Lewis made every endeavour to direct operations with expedition and order, and thus ensure as soon as might be the smooth working of the shaft. The signaling apparatus having been destroyed, messages could be given from above only by means of loud sounding blows with a sledge hammer on the side of the cage. These were answered on the shaft signaling apparatus which could be worked from below. This massive bell tolled like a funeral knell each time before the cage made its appearance from the Stygian gloom beneath with its mutilated and disfigured burden.

From early morning and while daylight lasted a continuous stream of people and carriages of every conceivable description passed to and from Cilfynydd, and it is estimated that at the very least 20,000 persons visited the ill-fated village during the day. In the afternoon the road for quite a while was simply crowded with people, who gazed disconsolately at the colliery in the valley and talked of the terrible visitation which had fallen on the neighbourhood. Others took up their position on the higher ground above the road, and watched the work of

recovering the bodies, which went on throughout the day.

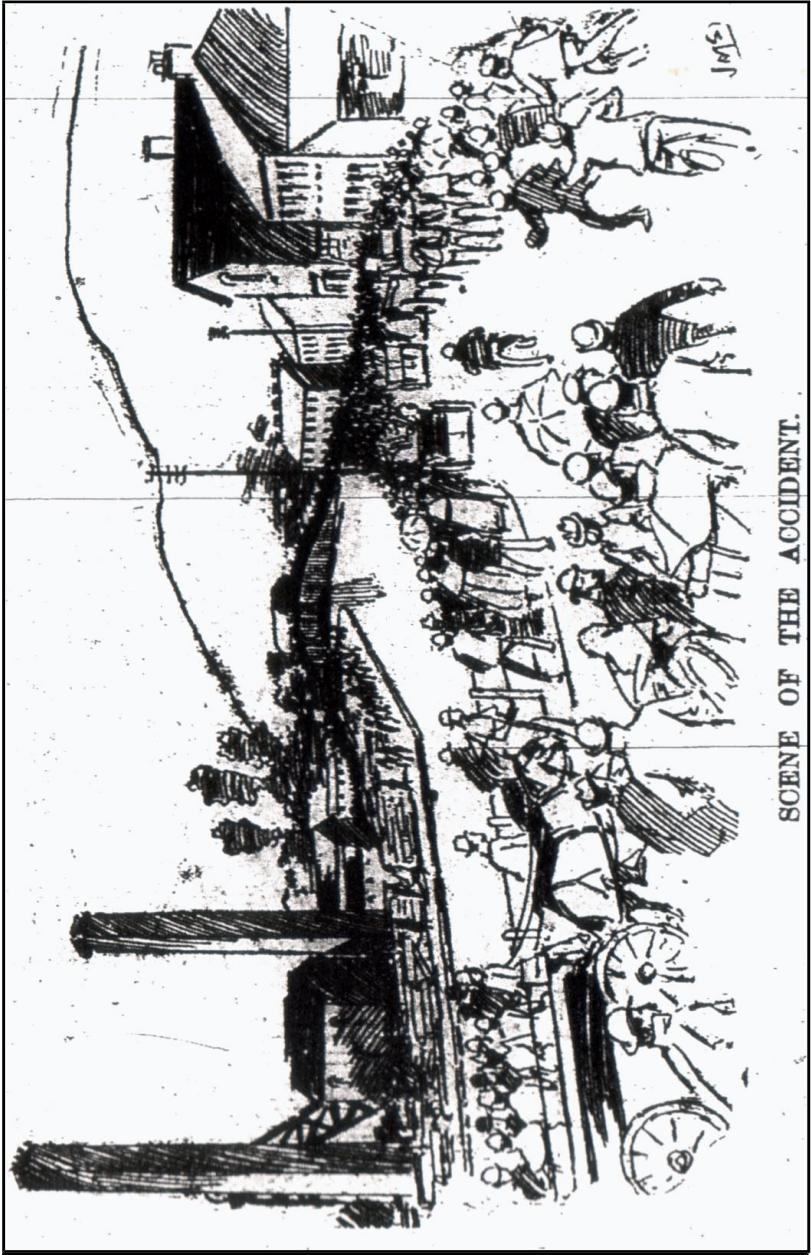
As the day wore on the crowds increased, and soon there was one continuous string along the highroad from Pontypridd of colliers and others engaged in mining operations, all being attired in their Sunday clothes. Happily, the weather was very favourable, in this respect the day being a marked improvement on Saturday.

It is true the sky was rather overcast, and the sun shone but pitifully, but there was no rain. This in a great measure explained the vast proportions of the crowd that hung around the colliery all day. Not a few in the vast throng came in from Cardiff, and all the intermediate stations between that town and Pontypridd, the train on the Taff vale Railway leaving Queen-Street at 8.43 having a sufficient complement of passengers to fill it well, while fresh contingents were taken in at all the stations *en route*. At Pontypridd the station and its approaches were fairly congested with the sudden additional traffic, and the usually quiet streets of the town on Sunday morning at any rate, were noisier and busier than they would be if a fair was being held. The destination of all, or nearly all, seemed to be the one place - the scene of the appalling disaster of the previous evening. Brakes and vehicles of all kinds were plying constantly between the town and Cilfynydd, and literally a roaring trade was being done by the proprietors of these conveyances, there being the most unblushing over loading and over driving.

Had it not been for the excellent police arrangements, this immense concourse of people would have swarmed into the colliery yard and made the operation there difficult, if not impossible, of accomplishment. Superintendent Jones, the deputy-chief-constable, had under his control about 60 constables, the local force being augmented by drafts from Merthyr, Canton and Llandaff. The Superintendent was ably seconded by Inspectors McDonald and Jones, and on Saturday night and Sunday Captain Lindsay, the Chief-Constable, paid visits to the pit.

Only the relatives of the deceased men and those who had business at the colliery were allowed to enter the yard, but the police, strong as they were, had great difficulty in keeping out others without using violence. On the whole the crowd was an orderly one, but it was sad to see that some of the rougher element appreciated the shocking character of the disaster so lightly as to become intoxicated.

The hay-loft presented a most awful scene. The hay was spread as bedding from end to end of the long loft, and stretched in all shapes on the hay were the above numbers of dead bodies. Most of them had their shirts in shreds about their mutilated frames. Everyone seemed to have a layer of fine dust sticking like lampblack to his skin. Some had holes in their chest, as if they had been struck by



SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT.

Sketch of the scene on the Cilfynydd road when the news spread

flying pieces of iron or wood. Many had the appearance of having fallen calmly asleep. Several men with arms uplifted over the back of their heads in the attitude sometimes assumed in the act of yawning and it was too harrowing to describe. Strings of people were admitted into the hay-loft to endeavour to identify the dead. When a body was identified bearers with a stretcher were admitted, and the body was quickly carried away through the thousands of people standing on the highway beyond the gates.

Thus, things continued throughout Sunday afternoon with awful monotony. The day continued very fine, and the numbers of visitors coming from all parts were enormous. Among the most pitiful cases of bereavement was that of W. H. Gronow, checkweigher at the colliery. He has lost three sons. The father was one of the very first to descend the shaft to search for his boys, but on Sunday morning not one of them had been found.

Early in the afternoon, so great was the desire of the inhabitants of the Rhondda Valleys to see the site of the explosion that the Taff Vale Railway Company's Sunday service was totally inadequate to meet the demand made upon it, and it became necessary to run three or four special trains. Those who walked or drove from Pontypridd witnessed many distressing scenes as they passed along the road to Cilfynydd. It was generally known by now that there was scarcely any hope that any more men in the pit would be brought out alive, and most of the houses had blinds drawn, either because some of the occupants had been killed, or out of respect to neighbours who had lost one or more of their loved ones.

Here and there women were sobbing piteously at their doorways, and, when their eyes were not dimmed with tears, gazing in the direction of the colliery. Ever anon. came a party of bearers, carrying on a roughly-made stretcher a victim of the explosion. The reception of the body at the home which it left full of life and vigour the day before, was in many cases sufficient to draw tears from the eyes of the onlookers.

Altogether about 60 stretchers had been hurriedly made out of brattice cloth, and most of these were in use during the day. As small processions marched along anxious enquiries were made as to the names of the deceased, and the reply often drew forth expressions of sorrow for those dependant upon him for their livelihood. The people inside the colliery yard who were watching for the bringing out of their dead relatives and friends were very subdued, considering the terrible nature of the catastrophe.

All hope had apparently been abandoned, they resigned themselves to their sad fate. Occasionally, however, a wife, sister, or mother of someone known to have been working at the pit, unable to put up with the suspense any longer, would

visit the yard, and in some of these cases the sobs and lamentations of the bereaved were heart rendering. One old woman came to inquire about her brother, and on being told that he was among the dead she had to be supported from the scene by a young companion, crying, "Oh, John anwyl; oh fy mrawd anwyl!" (Oh dear John; Oh, my dear, dear son). This was one of many incidents which occurred during the day.

In the meantime the exertions of the explorers in recovering the bodies went on without a halt, there being plenty of men to relieve those who had been down for the allotted time.

"Was there a young fellow named Perkins, who lodged at Pontshonorton, down the pit on Saturday afternoon?" asked an elderly gentleman, with anxiety marked on his face, as he entered the colliery offices near the pit-head on Sunday afternoon. The inquirer had evidently come from a distance, and was probably the father of the young fellow. No information could, however, be given him then, but he was advised to make enquiries at the temporary mortuary.

It was stated that amongst the victims was a ticket-of-leave convict, who regularly reported himself to the Pontypridd police. He seemed to have led a steady life during his stay at Cilfynydd, and, whatever his crime might have been for which he was sent to prison, his end came in a terribly unexpected manner, and he was hurled in a twinkling of an eye into the presence of his creator.

Some narrow escapes

Mr. William Evans, miner's agent, Ton Ystrad, narrated a case in which a man named Garnett met with a slight injury on the Tuesday evening previous. He did not feel disposed to go down on Saturday, not because he was unable to carry out his duties, but fearful that he would get worse, so he stayed away, otherwise he would have been killed.

Another case was that of a rider who was at work on the fateful day. In the afternoon the clutch of the engine broke, and the rider could not go in for another journey, so he left the pit, but before he reached his home the explosion occurred. One of the crowd of watchers on the pit-top on Sunday also related the circumstances under which he had escaped death. He had been to North Wales, and was to have commenced work on Saturday, but lost the train he intended returning on Friday, and did not reach Cilfynydd in time to descend with the Saturday afternoon shift.

"I never saw anything like it in my life," said Mr. Evans, after having been down with the explorers on Sunday. "drams had been hurled about with great force in

all directions, and were twisted into all sorts of shapes.”

William Jones, the son of Mr. Jones, managing sinker at the Dowlais-Cardiff pits, also had a miraculous escape. He had overslept himself this morning, and decided not to go to work that day. If he had awakened as usual he would have probably been added to the terrible death toll.

The agent’s description of the colliery

Mr. William Lewis, agent of the Albion Colliery Company, who was quickly at the scene of the disaster, and had directed the work of exploration, gave the press on Sunday afternoon a description of the workings.

“By reference to the plan we publish the description will be understood”

Llanfabon Deep - This has been explored to the face, and eight bodies found and got out. There are probably more bodies under the falls.

Grover’s Level - The explorers have gone to the face of the level and back to the pit. Turning off from the main road is a level called Asket’s, up which the explorers went for some distance. They had, however, to turn back before reaching the face, owing to large falls and noxious gases.

Dudson’s District - The explorers went right up to the face of this district and found no one alive. Several bodies were found and are being recovered. The explorers were confident that there was no one alive, and probably more dead bodies than those which were seen will be found under the falls.

“That completes the Grover’s side, and we will now take the sub-districts on the Cilfynydd side.”: -

Pantddu Deep - This district has been thoroughly explored. The force of the explosion does not seem to have effected this district very much, and two horses were found alive at the mouth of the heading. We are satisfied that there are no more in this districts, dead or alive.

Cilfynydd Main Level - the explorers went to the face and examined the deep workings. They found some bodies, which were brought out. They failed to explore the workings on the right side in consequence of the falls and afterdamp.

Bodwenarth District - This is divided into sub-districts East and West. The explorers did not go to the face of the main incline heading, but they were able to proceed to Taugue’s Heading. In these two sub-districts eighteen bodies were

found and brought to bank. If there are other men there they must be dead. That concludes the description of the colliery as it is at present.

“Is there anything to indicate the seat of the explosion?” - “I cannot say where the explosion took place, or advance any theory as to its origin.”

“How many horses were in the pit?” - “Sixty. Two only were brought on alive. Others were alive when found, but died during the night.”

Consultation of managers

About 1 o'clock on Sunday, Messrs. William Jenkins (Ocean), W. Lewis (Albion) E. Jones (Lady Windsor), E. M. Hann (Aberaman), T. H. Bailey (Plymouth), and her Majesty's Inspector (Mr. Robson) held a consultation at one of the colliery offices. Mr. W. Abraham (Mabon) M. P., was also present.

The object of the consultation was to decide what steps should be taken to restore ventilation in parts where there is now afterdamp. It was unanimously agreed by those who had been down the pit that there were no men alive, and this being the case, it was decided to commence systematically the removal of falls &co. The work of recovering the bodies was, however, carried on at the same time.

By now, Mr. James Davies, of the Nixon Collieries, a grave, earnest, and highly intelligent man, accompanied by some of his under agents, had explored many districts of the colliery and on arriving at the surface stated that on the east and west of the bottom of the shaft, the roadways are dotted with falls from the roof, some of them very large. A dead horse was found on top of one of the said falls, and it seemed as if the poor animal had climbed it in its effort to escape. At another point they found two horses alive and uninjured, feeding from a manger, while near them dead men were lying about.

It seemed that the explosion did not reach the place where they were employed at the moment it happened; that the men employed in the locality and the hauliers in charge of these animals had run for their lives, but had entered the afterdamp before the fan had resumed operations, and had perished. The horses must have leisurely followed and reached where they were discovered after the ventilation had been restored. The said two horses are the only ones alive out of 110 or 120 in the colliery, and at the present moment both are in full work assisting the explorers.

In one of the stables 31 horses were lying in heaps on top of each other. The stables are arched over with stones and mortar. The stalls had been blown in, but the fire had not touched the hair of one of the horses, and they had perished from the force of the concussion or from the effects of the afterdamp. It is probable,

from the position they were in, that the blast had first rolled them about and that the afterdamp had completed the work.

News was brought to bank that two groups of dead men and boys had been found. In one group were 37 and in another fifteen dead. In Dudson's district of the mine the explorers had come across a shocking sight. There, huddled together in all sorts of positions, were many dead bodies. The postures seem to indicate that the men had all run together when the explosion happened, and had fallen on their backs. But several were found in an attitude of prayer, both hands being uplifted as if supplicating heaven, proving that, notwithstanding their frames were shattered, they had retained sufficient consciousness to realise they were on the threshold of eternity. Endeavours were being made to bring these men to the surface.

Mr. Ellis, the general secretary of the Albion Colliery, announced that the number of men enrolled as members of the Permanent Relief Fund in the employ of the company in March last was 1,610. The following lying dead were surface-men, who had gone down to repair the engine, and were not in the said fund: - William Jones, Ben Skym, Albert Thomas, and John Evans. It was again stated that about 900 were in the day turn and 710 in the night shift. On all other days and nights of the week the above men would have been down the pit. It is uncertain how many of the day colliers had stayed behind to carry on duties during the time the repairers were at work.

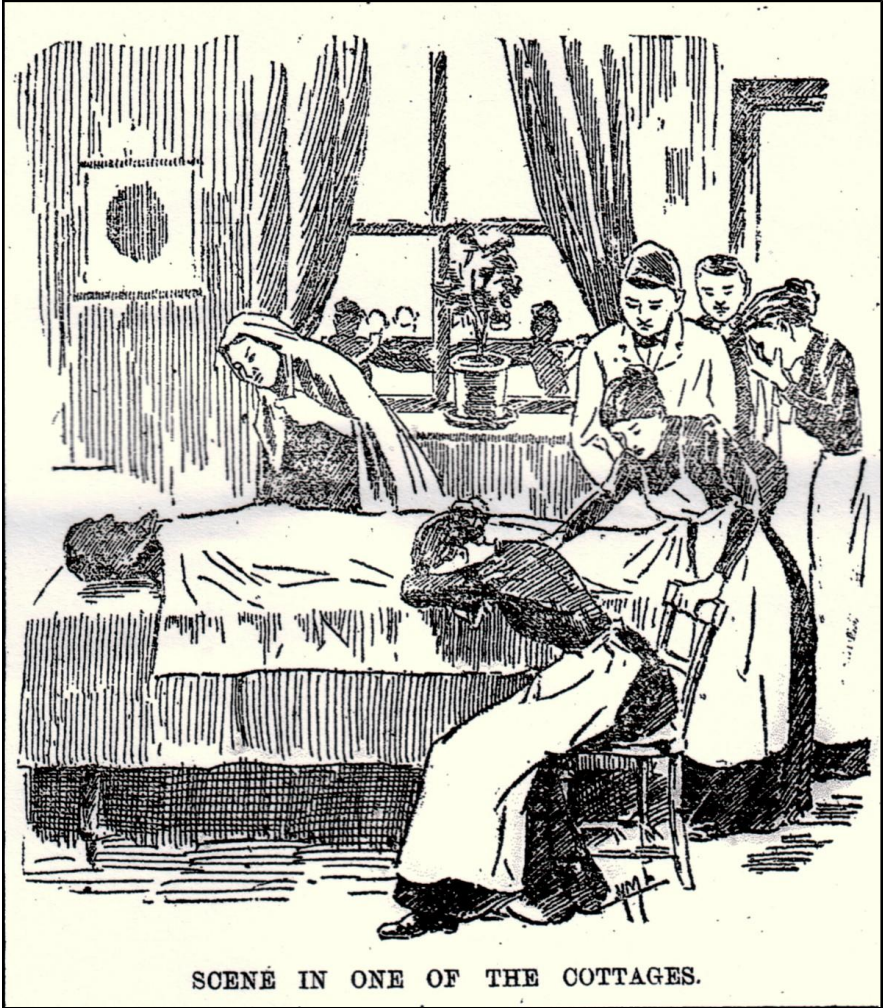
Interview with mine inspectors

Mr. Robson's opinion

Mr. J. T. Robson, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines, South Wales, arrived at the colliery on Sunday, and went down the pit to make an investigation. He was down some considerable time, and after reaching the surface was seen by a '*Western Mail*' reporter. Replying to questions, Mr. Robson said: -

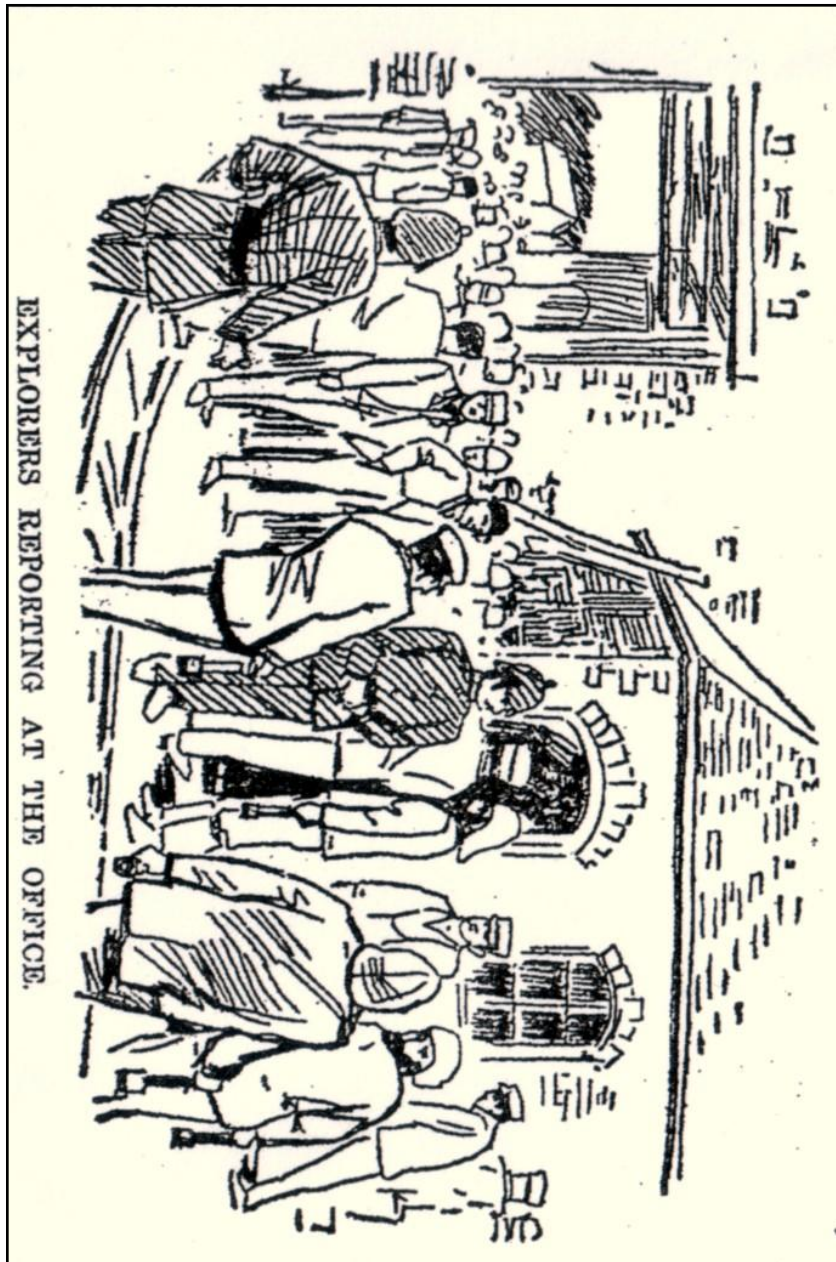
"The greater part of the roads are practically open, but there are several falls, some of which are rather large. There was, however, much difficulty in getting to points very near the face of every district. Afterdamp still prevailed in the far ends of each district more or less, but, with one or two exceptions. I think the whole workings have been explored."

"Is there much indication of force?" - "The faces where they have been seen are in good condition, showing no particular signs of force. The explosion, therefore, seems to have been confined entirely to the main roads and branch roads, where, unfortunately, nearly all the persons who were down the pit were engaged at the time."



SCENE IN ONE OF THE COTTAGES.

Artist's impression of the scene inside one of the houses where a victim lay.



EXPLORERS REPORTING AT THE OFFICE.

Volunteers waiting at the colliery office to give assistance

“Where do you think the explosion started?” - “I can form no idea,” continued Mr. Robson, “as to the starting point. There is evidence of force in varying directions; a circumstance which is conflicting, and it requires much further explanation and careful investigation in all the different parts before it would be safe to hazard an opinion as to the starting point.”

“And the cause Mr. Robson?”

“As to the cause, I have no idea. It has been a very violent explosion, and I have no present means of knowing the cause, but, probably, it will be found that coal dust played a most important part in it.”

Mr. Robson stated that of the coal dust experiments carried out by order of the Government the most fiery of all the specimens was the dust operated upon from the Albion Colliery; this is stated in the published report by himself and Mr. Hall, Her Majesty’s Inspector of Mines for the Liverpool and North Wales district. William Galloway, late inspector of mines, and now the agent of the Llanbradach Colliery, Caerphilly, arrived and it was recollected that he was the first to point out the dangerous element of inflammable coal dust in fiery mines.

Mr. Watkins, pharmaceutical chemist, Cilfynydd, who rendered valuable assistance to the medical gentlemen in attending to burns and applying splints to injured limbs, said he was sitting in his parlour on Saturday afternoon when the explosion occurred. Although his shop is situated 400 or 500 yards away from the scene of the disaster, the explosion was so great that the windows of the house violently rattled, and the whole ground appeared to tremble.

Throughout Saturday night and Sunday morning work below continued, and it was only later in the day that some of the rescuers on Sunday were able to relate their part in the exploration and rescue over the last 20-24 hours.

William Thomas, a collier employed at the pit, who descended with the shift at 8 o’clock in the morning, stated that 12 bodies were found at the far end of Mike’s level in Dudson’s district. None of them were burnt or disfigured, and they were lying in different positions, just as if the poor fellows were sleeping peacefully.

Mr. Gray, one of the assistant-inspectors who was seen at 1 p.m. on Sunday said: - “We went down again this morning between nine and ten o’clock. We went down the dip workings in the Cilfynydd district and into the face of the main Cilfynydd heading. That side had suffered a great deal less through falls than the other, and the colliery may well be said to have escaped wonderfully well. The roof is good; nevertheless, I was astonished to find that so little damage had been done. The explosion must have happened with great force, and everybody who lost their lives must have been killed almost instantaneously.”

Dr. Lyttle's story

Dr. Lyttle, of Cilfynydd, medical officer of the works, was among the first outside the colliery who understood the terrible rumbling and loud report. He rushed to his window, which overlooks the colliery yard, and saw a dense column of smoke, which, when it cleared, showed that part of the machinery on the top of the pit had been blown to atoms. He at once rushed to the spot, and was among the first lot to enter the pit, where he remained on and off until 2 o'clock on Sunday morning, doing what he could to rescue the injured. "But," said he "I had very little to do. The bodies were fearfully mangled, and few were found alive. One part of them were killed as a direct result of the explosion, and others from the result of after-damp. I only saw one or two bodies which showed signs of having been killed by the falls. The falls were numerous, and we had some difficulty in getting over them, but we went as far as we thought was wise, and the farthest point where any life could be expected."

"We came across eight or ten live men in the dip, and I attended to them below. I had some stimulants with me, and those who could drink had some. In the dip all I saw were affected by the afterdamp, and not one seemed to have broken any bones or been injured in any way, but on the other side there were many suffering from burns and injuries - some with broken limbs, one with two limbs gone, and others having dislocated them.

I directed the injured to be taken to the surface, and saw that they were sent as soon as possible. Other medical gentlemen rendered valuable assistance, and among those I saw were Dr. Leckie, Pontypridd (underground); Dr. Ivor Lewis, J. P; Cymmer; Dr. Leigh, Treharris; Dr. Jenkins, Pontypridd; Dr. Alfred Evans, Pontypridd; Dr. Jones, Penrhiwceiber, and Dr. Griffiths. I have been around all who have been injured since the explosion, and I find that out of the seventeen injured, all, with the exception of three, are doing well."

Groaning terribly

George Blizzard, one of the first batch of rescuers who entered the pit and returned up about seven o'clock, said that they had explored what is known as the Cilfynydd Dip. They saw a large number of dead bodies and noticed seven or eight men alive. These were groaning terribly, and appeared to be badly injured. At the time when this party returned owing to the numerous falls they were unable to bring the injured to the airway.

Mr. Edward Jones, the manager of the Ynysybwl Colliery, on being interviewed by a representative of the '*Western Mail*', said: - "We went down about 250 yards into the workings, but could not proceed further at the time owing to the large

number of overturned drams and terrible falls we had to overcome. From all appearances the greater damage seems to have taken place in the Cilfynydd side, where, it is believed, the explosion took place, but in the district we explored, though there are many who may be under the falls, we only saw two live men and five dead.”

Dr. Leckie’s story

Another reporter waited upon Dr. Leckie (who has occupied the position of colliery doctor at the Great Western Colliery for the last 24 years) at his residence at Pon- typridd on Sunday, for the purpose of obtaining a narrative of his experiences in connection with the disaster at the Albion Colliery. Dr. Leckie was resting after his exertions of the previous night, but readily consented to be interviewed.

“I was in Hopkinstown when the explosion occurred,” said the doctor, “and I came down as quickly as I could to Pontypridd and hastened towards Cilfynydd arriving at the latter place at about 7.15 p.m., in time to descend the pit with the rescue party.” “How long were you down?” - “About three hours.”

“And how far into the workings did you manage to penetrate?” - “About 300 to 400 yards.”

“Were there any other medical attendants about?”

“Yes, Dr. Lyttle, the medical gentleman connected with the colliery; Dr. Evans, and an assistant to Dr. Lyttle were down with me, while Dr. Jenkins, of Pontypridd, awaited the arrival of any injured at the mouth of the pit. Prior to my going down, four men were brought up, two badly burnt, and the others suffering from the effects of fire-damp. There were also eleven others brought up, mostly from the dip, and they were all more or less in a state of unconsciousness, except a lad, who was, to all appearances sleeping. We attended to all those who we found alive in the pit, while Dr. Jenkins attended those who has sustained fractured arms and legs. One of the men had his two arms fractured.”

The following gentlemen, representing the miners, were present at the pit top and rendered valuable services, namely, Mr. W. Abraham (Mabon), M. P; Mr. David Morgan, Aberdare; Mr. W. Evans, Ton Ystrad; Mr. Ben Davies, Welsh Federation Agent, and Mr. Morgan Thomas, the hauliers’ agent.

Interviews with the rescued - graphic details

On Sunday afternoon a reporter went round for the purpose of obtaining narratives. He called on Thomas Howells at 24 Howell Street, who had received severe burns on face and arms, and was very vague about what had happened. He was seated by the fireside, with his face completely swathed in oil bandages, but

he was able to tell the following story in Welsh: -

“I was working on the incline on the Cilfynydd side, and lost my light. I went to the lamp-station, which is situated on the level, and I don’t think I had got a light when there was all at once a blue flash around me and a terrible noise. I was blown off my feet against the side, and that is all I recollect of the explosion. I was unconscious. How long I lay there I do not know, but I at last came round and got up. I wandered a little way, but was crawling on my knees in some part of the pit when I saw some men. They came up, and I asked, ‘Did it explode?’ They said ‘yes,’ and then it dawned on me there had been a bad job. They helped me along, and I walked back with them. We came to some falls, over which they assisted me, and at last I arrived at the bottom of the pit and was sent up. There was nobody close to me at the time, and I don’t think I should have come out if I had not been that I was out of the road in the manhole waiting for a chance to get a light when the explosion happened.” Howells said that he had every reason to feel thankful at his miraculous escape, and would, he hoped, soon be right again. He was brought home unconscious between seven and eight o’clock Saturday night.

From what Samuel Evans, a young man of 26, of 17, Ann Street, who also had burns on the head and face, cried out in his delirium, his experience must have been rather trying. His groans were mingled with cries of “I’m in the middle of it, I’m smother- ing.” His father had been at the pumping station on the surface, and fortunately escaped with a slight cut on the side of the head, apparently from a brick.

John Lewis, an elderly man, of 39 Wood Street, was also delirious and there was no coherency in his cries. His wife was in great distress, as her son-in-law, Robert Spencer, who resided with them, was amongst the dead in the stable loft. Lewis was at work on Grover’s side with his ‘butty,’ a man named William Hughes, who is amongst those killed. “William bach, it’s safer here, William,” he kept repeating. His wife said “I expect that he was in a hole about up to his waist, because all his chest and head is very badly burned.”

Hugh Jenkins, a young man who was taken home affected by after-damp, was found by the reporter sitting on the rails in front of his house, 43 Cilfynydd Terrace, having just ate his dinner and telling his story to a group of friends. Then the reporter produced his notebook, and Jenkins started again: - “At the time of the explosion I was working in the deep, or Cilfynydd side, driving a pony and a dram. I and others were all busy, Joe Gray, a shackler, being engaged in filling. All at once the blast came.”

“I was getting some sprague for the rubbish dram, when all at once something

caught me, and I was thrown over the dram and pony, and I hit my head. That's how I got this black eye. Near where I fell was a manhole, and into this I crawled and covered my head and face with my arms. In the manhole I found young Dobbs (son of the fireman), and when it cleared away I started for the bottom of the shaft. Dobbs came with me, holding to my coat. I almost got half way from where I was working to the bottom of the shaft, and then my strength failed. Young Dobbs went on over a fall and got to the bottom. I was working in the deeps about 250 yards from the shaft and when I was found I was about 100 yards from the bottom. Dan Hughes, who worked on the Grovers side, lodged with us, and I expect he is still in the pit, as we have seen nothing of him."

Dobbs himself, was to tell his tale many times over the following years. He said: - "I was in a manhole not far from the pit bottom when suddenly there was a tremendous upheaval. A man named Hugh Jenkins was blown into the manhole in which I was sitting. Immediately the dust had subsided we decided to start for the bottom of the pit shaft. He told me to catch hold of his coat tails and follow him. It was pitch black. We struggled along and after a while Mr. Jenkins became exhausted and could go no further. He told me to carry on by myself and this I did until I came to the pit bottom. Here my progress was barred by a huge fall and I was compelled to stop. After what seemed an eternity, I saw the light of the rescuers coming over the top. When they realised I was alive, Mr. Gibbon, the agent of the collieries, placed me across his shoulders and carried me to the top, where I was received with tenderness and joy." He continued: - "But although I had the great fortune to be rescued it was a sad day for us at home because my father, who was a fireman at the colliery, lost his life in that terrible disaster."

Harry Haines, of 6 Cilfynydd Road, was just able to walk about on Sunday afternoon. He told the reporter that he did not remember much about what happened. "I was working in the deeps a long way from the bottom, and when the explosion occurred. I tried to get out. I suppose I failed, because I can't remember anything after I had walked some distance." John Canning, of 50, Mary Street, a married man, who was one of the first brought out alive, died from the effects of the suffocating gas late on Sunday evening. His head had been swollen to an abnormal size but had complained mainly about his throat. Dr. Lyttle, in making his visits to the rescued, found on Sunday evening that Walter Osbourne, a young man living at Norton Bridge, was in a dying condition. Osbourne was about to get married to a young lady of a very respectable family in the neighbourhood.

The lad, Thomas Dobbs, though unconscious when brought to the surface, had by Sunday afternoon regained his senses. Beyond a few scratches he bore no marks. He was seen in bed in an upstairs room immediately above where his father, now cold in death was lying. Dobbs, who is scarcely fifteen, has a hazy recollection of

what occurred. A young lodger in the same house, who according to neighbours was regarded as a son, was also in the pit, but his body had not been identified yet.

Death of a survivor

The man John Mears, who resided at Graig-yr-Helfa, never regained consciousness, and died about 3 o'clock on Sunday afternoon from gas poisoning. This, of course, reduced the number of survivors up to that time by one, and even then there seemed every probability that others of the men brought out alive might succumb to their injuries later on. Another of the worse cases was that of Thomas Winter, of 6 Bassett Terrace, who had his arms broken, his left leg shattered, and head, chest, and other parts of his body terribly burned. Winter's brother is amongst the killed. He has not shown much signs of life after being brought home, and he must have been a considerable time inhaling the after-damp. Another serious case of gas poisoning was that of William Bates, who, curiously enough, showed no mark whatever of the fire, and was unconscious on Sunday evening. Walter Osbourne, of Bassett Terrace, was also unconscious at the same time and the same cause. Richard Williams, 104 Cilfynydd Terrace, was in a very distressing state. He had several cuts on the head, chiefly about the mouth, and suffered from the effects of after-damp to such an extent that he was semiconscious. For a brief moment when he came to his senses he apparently remembered the horrors of the explosion so vividly that he became hysterical, and at times he had to be held down by three or four persons.

Telegram from the Queen

On Sunday the following telegram was received at the colliery from the Queen: -

Robson, her Majesty's Inspector of Mines, Cilfynydd

"The Queen is much shocked at the news of the terrible disaster at Cilfynydd and of the terrible loss of life. Her Majesty commands me to convey her deep sympathy to the families and relatives of those who have been lost. She has heard of the brave efforts to save life, and awaits with anxiety the result of further explorations".

"Asquith, Home Office."

Message from the Home Secretary

A telegram was dispatched to the Home Secretary (Mr. Asquith) late on Saturday night stating that a terrible explosion had occurred at the Albion Colliery, and that it was feared that the loss of life would be very heavy. On Sunday the following telegram was received from the Under Secretary of state: -

“Robson, Inspector of Mines, Cilfynydd, Glamorganshire”

“The Home Secretary hears with deep regret of the disaster at the Albion colliery and terrible loss of life. Please telegraph further particulars as soon as possible.”

“Under-Secretary of State, Home Office.”

Mr. Robson subsequently telegraphed as follows: - *“Secretary of State, Home Office, Whitehall, London.”*

Regret to report explosion at Albion Colliery, Pontypridd, has resulted in terrible loss of life. At least 260 men were down the pit at the time, only sixteen of whom were got out alive and are suffering from afterdamp. One hundred and seven dead bodies have been recovered. Explorations are proceeding, but it is extremely doubtful if any more men will be found alive. Plenty of willing hands to assist this work. -

Robson, Inspector of Mines.

Latest particulars Cilfynydd, Sunday, 9 p.m.

A reporter of the ‘*Western Mail*’ was to write: - The latest news from below is that 37 additional dead bodies are ready to be brought up. One hundred and forty dead bodies have already (it is now 9 o’clock) been brought to bank and laid out in the hayloft. Out of these, 108 have been identified, leaving 34 to be identified, but many, it is feared, are beyond recognition. It is now stated by the authorities that there are falls below extending over hundreds of yards of continuous length, and the dead have to be conveyed by the explorers over the top of these falls to the bottom of the shaft. Every official of the company below at the time of the explosion has perished. The exceptional loss of life here in proportion to the numbers below at the time of the disaster is accounted for by the fact that all below were repairers, and were, therefore, at the time engaged in the main

thoroughfares, and there received the full force of the blast of the fiery hurricane as it sped towards the shaft with lightening speed.

One of the sixteen men brought out alive, and named Farrow, died about seven o'clock tonight from the effect of his injuries. The others seem to be progressing favourably. Bunford, whose marvelous escape is recorded, having been found in the dark standing uninjured among many dead comrades, is a Welshman and a native of Llanidloes. I found him lying on his sofa, in his little parlour, dressed in his Sunday clothes. He was perfectly conscious and his recollection of other events seemed clear, but his mind seemed to be a blank about the explosion.

He stated he had a hazy recollection of working on a road parting underground with some people, but he could not recall to memory who his companions were. He had also had a hazy recollection of being among a group of men, but what became of them he could not say. On my telling him all the group except himself had fallen into that sleep from which is no awakening in this world, he sat up and there was a wildness of the eyes, but all he said was "Dear me." His ailing wife and her sister, from Portmadoc, were in the room and were weeping, and the sister said, "God took pity on our loneliness, far from our native place."

Just before eleven o'clock six additional bodies were brought to bank by the rescuing party to the surface. By midnight the pit and vicinity were, with the exception of the men working, practically deserted. The shifts had just been changed. Mr. J. S. Martin, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines for the south-western district, arrived about 11.30.

The nearest estimate which could be formed of the death-toll on Sunday evening was 255, made up thus: -

Estimated number of hands in the pit at the time of the explosion, 270; Brought up alive, 16; Remainder, of whose safety all hope has been abandoned, 254; and one of the men rescued alive, viz., William Farrow, of Cwmylda, who was brought up on Sunday morning, when it was thought he was likely to recover, even though he had been much burned, died about half-past six on Sunday evening at the Cilfynydd Coffee Tavern, making the present total estimate of death 255. Unfortunately, there seems little hope of the recovery of two other of the men rescued alive, viz., John Mears and Walter Osbourne. They were attended by Dr. Lyttle, and every attention has been paid to their case. Neither of those men nor Farrow was burnt, but they were unconscious from the first from the effects of suffocating gas.

List of rescuers

Amongst those who took part in the work of rescue, not normally mentioned in the newspaper reports were Messrs. John Jones, A Theyer, John Gittins, Thomas Roder- ick, Rowland Williams, William Jones, Thomas Loxton, D. Herbert P. Wilson, J. Hughes. J. James. J. Griffiths, F. Parkman, D. Humphreys, Thomas Evans, James Richards, Daniel Evans, Evan Davies, Henry Davies, William Bowles, D. Samuel, George Parfitt, W. M. Jones, E. Haman, E. J. Beavan, T. Roilton, T. Williams, D. Evans, H. A. Howells, Lewis Williams, Res Davies, L. Oliver, Ivor Williams, Thomas Williams, William Davies, William Pugh, Thomas Rees, J. Herdidge, H. Humphreys, R. Davies, T. Jones, J. Brown, J. Pearce, E. Smith, R. Davies, J. Dyer, John E. Evans, E. Ellis, D. Williams, George Jenkins, Rees Davies, John Usk, G. Lewis, W. Williams, A. Welsh, W. H. Williams, E. Williams, S. George, D. Bennett, T. Llewellyn, Thomas Mate, L. James, J. John, W. Williams, W. Pritchard, William Fletcher, J. Lewis, A. Ash, J. Hughes, P. Railey, J. Powell, J. Williams, J. Seal, D. Hamer, D. Prosser, D. Williams, E. J. Beavan, R. Jones, R. Hamer, D. Romery, F. Clements, T. Nash, A. Hedley, C. Dudson, A. Gordon, H. Jones, T. James, J. Jones, J. Evans, E. Morgan, W. Jones, W. Jones, H. Bennett, D. Prothero, E. Evans, J. Lewis, A. Marsden, John Jones, Job Jones, W. Gough, T. Rees, Dan Jones, A. Bartlett, Thomas Williams, Henry Jones, John Lewis, James Dubbs, Ivor Rees, John Roberts, John Pearce, Rowland Owen, John Owen, John Fry, James Fisher, Robert Jones, G. Hughes, Ed. Lewis, D. Birch, and D. Davies. Others wished to remain nameless.

Sunday reviewed

And so Sunday, the first full day after the disaster had come to an end. The local news papers, a week later gave this fascinating review of the weekend: - Throughout Saturday evening a drizzling rain fell, making the lot of the crowds most uncomfort- able, but the morning opened bright but fair, and the beauties of nature witnessed in the valley below were in striking contrast to the sad and sorrowful picture presented at the pit. The delightful weather, the rays of the sun as they shone upon the scene being tempered with a cooling breeze, drew a huge concourse of people from all parts of the Taff, Rhondda, Aberdare and other valleys where the news of the fateful disaster had spread with rapidity. From early morn to late in the evening the road leading from Pontypridd was one continuous line of cabs, carriages and vehicles of all sizes and descriptions, and each side was densely lined with people, so crowded indeed that the roads of traffic, both on foot and in vehicles was exceedingly incon- venient and dangerous, but fortunately no accidents occurred.

All Sunday the work of exploration continued, but hopes of rescuing the men or

any of them being alive had long been abandoned. Ventilation had been completely restored, and the removal of the falls had thus begun. To those who stood around the pit's mouth on Sunday morning, the awful sweep of the explosion was amply demonstrated to them when they brought up the mangled carcass of a horse. Its flesh was torn and lacerated as if it had been hacked and chopped by a hatchet. Dr. Williams, when doing his rounds on Sunday had one woman call his attention to the body of a victim lying in her front room. She said that it was her husband and that someone had stolen his watch and changed the whole of his wearing apparel. This stated he (Dr. Williams) would hardly credit, and had the matter looked into, with the result that it was found that it was a case of mistaken identity.

Bodies were being continually being brought up and the list of human victims continued to rise. Alexander Addis, aged 27, was frightfully mutilated and it was found impossible to remove him in the ordinary wood and brattice cloth ambulances at work, and his remains were accordingly places in a polished elm coffin with brass fittings - the first to be seen about the works - and carried to the residence of the deceased at Davies Street, Coedpenmaen.

Another victim whose remains were so fearfully mangled as to prevent the possibility of them being removed by the means of an 'ambulance' was Thomas Powell, ripper, of 63 William Street, Cilfynydd. Calling upon Mrs. Rees of 15 Wood Street, Cilfynydd, with reference to the mistake of the identification of one of her lodgers, a press representative elicited that her husband was employed at this pit, and that he was a member of the night shift, but he was not at work when the explosion occurred, as she had begged him not to go as 'she feared something terrible was going to happen.' Mrs. Rees did not see such a calamity as an explosion, but said that she had a thought of some trouble if her husband had left her on Saturday afternoon. Humphreys, who was amongst the killed, had only started at the pit on the Thursday.

Most pathetic and heart-rending scenes were witnessed during the day in and around the mortuary, some of the tear-bedimmed and sorrow-stricken women bitterly weep- ing upon finding the form of a beloved husband or son lying stiff and cold and horribly mutilated on the floor of the loft. Others again fainted, and seemed quite dazed and terrified when brought back to consciousness, and even then they could not reconcile themselves to the stern fact that husband, father, or son would never earn daily bread for them ever more or bring sunshine and happiness and plenty to homes which were now bereft of their presence and where woe and mourning and weeping reigned supreme.

Bodies of strong and stalwart men who were cut down in the prime of life were brought up and placed on stretchers and quite a rush would be made after it as far

as the entrance to the mortuary, which, however, they were prevented from entering by an officer of the law.

Each one entered in turn, and all day long heart-rending cries issued from the hayloft and touched the hearts of those lingering outside, whilst scarce an eye was dry as the relatives, whose surge had perhaps been successful, reappeared at the door. One of the most striking incidents in connection with the excitement which would prevail on Saturday and Sunday was the wording of a telegram flashed across the wires from Cilfynydd to a poor woman in a distant English home by two sons who worked at the Albion, but who were not in the fateful Saturday afternoon shift: - "Mother, we are safe."

Some of the sights in the workings were horrible in the extreme. Dead men and horses were everywhere seen, the former in many cases presenting a frightful aspect which struck momentary terror into the hearts of the explorers who pushed forward their noble work - forgetful of the perils which surrounded them on all sides - as speedily as possible, and all who will but ponder for a moment over their gallant services will not fail to express unstinted admiration. Many were found in a kneeling posture, as if they had fallen upon their knees and called their merciful Creator before they were hurled into his presence.

No services were held at the churches on Sunday, and great sympathy was evinced with the widows and orphans. Mr. Isaac Prothero, grocer, Pontypridd, had started a fund for the benefit of the distressed relatives.

At the pit a cordon of constables was drawn, nearly 50 members of the force had been drafted into the district, this number being formed into two relief parties, to do duty for twelve hours each. After being up all night the local police marched out on Sunday evening, a body of 42 tired men, to their headquarters, their services being no longer necessary.

Sunday saw many sightseers visit Cilfynydd and this was recorded in the '*Glamorgan Free Press*': - The influx of visitors to the village on Sunday and Monday was great and was a continuous mass of cabs, carriages, and brakes of all sizes and descriptions and were going from one side of the road to the other like a drunken man. It was not a morbid curiosity but a feeling of sympathy and condolence. But it is to be deplored that 'slaves of Bacchus' were to be met with at every turn: their coarse remarks and drunken ribaldry jarred on the ears of all passers by, and many Welshmen, whose bosom heaved with love of country, and who harboured any respect for this kindred, felt in his Celtic heart, ashamed of the nation his forefathers were wont to boast of. Men, who had well run on the trend of years, roamed the streets on Sunday night, from Inn to Inn, enshrined to the drunken revelry of the 'gates of hell' - and where prayer should ascend the

fulsome cries of debauches were all to be met with, no less than 38 being locked up for drunkenness. And this, in the much vaunted 'land of Bibles.'

Christians, who were most hypnotised with sympathy, felt ashamed of the community they resided in, yet they dare not speak to the medley throng, but it is our plea, sure to hear, that the 'fire of soul' the very vitals of eloquence, broke forth one might fling from the heart of Eglwysbach (the Rev, John Evans) on Monday last. Ever pulsating with a love of the people, he had been visiting the bereaved relatives, seeking to assuage their vows with words of comfort, and as the redeemer of his nation - for such he veritably is - paused on his way homeward, beneath the shadows of a public house. Here the din of the inebriated thralls was only to be heard the public houses were open every shape of drink was being swallowed, and by 12.30 on Sunday the Cilfynydd Inn had been drunk dry. The scenes enacted towards the evening were simply disgraceful and disgusting, and suggested how very little the religious agencies now in action announced with so much ostentation have effected, when face to face with death in its most repulsive form.

'Eglwysbach' conducts a solemn service

A large number of the victims were heroes of the South Wales Mission, services in connection with which were held in the Town Hall every Sunday by the Rev. John Evans (Eglwysbach) who delivered a funeral service on Sunday night, June 24th. A very large congregation had been attracted to attend the service, 1,200 persons, chiefly men, at least being present, amongst them being many mourners. The opening prayer was offered by the Rev. John Rees, who was 85 years of age, with great solemnity, and Eglwysbach subsequently delivered a most eloquent and impressive discourse upon the words found in the Bible. It was delivered in Welsh, and with great 'Hwyl.' The subject of the sermon was 'The voice of God in the recent calamity,' the two leading heads being (1) The characteristics of the voice, and (2) the purpose of the message.

The voice, he observed, was surrounded with mystery and darkness, and although it had spoken to the victims in a milder form before, on this occasion it was louder and more severe than ever. Dwelling upon the purposes of the message, he said that it was to reveal the majesty of God, to denote the sacredness of the moral law, to denounce the wickedness of the human heart, and lastly to attain the gracious purpose of God, and the end of all, to prepare the people to enter into a covenant with God to be settled in the promised land. The reverent gentleman also made fleeting references to the dead and endeavoured to console the living, and gave several pointed blessings to the benefit of the unconverted colliers.

The service, was throughout a most solemn one, and there were several

conversions at the close. The singing was led by the choir and full orchestra, while during the evening Sister Catherine gave a very effective rendering solo of a well-known Welsh hymn. The large congregation gave thrilling renderings of the hymns intended to be sung in the 'Gymafa Ganu,' which was to be held on the first Monday in September. The collection - the bulk of which was coppers, amounted to £10, which included a donation previously promised by the pastor, and this sum would be handed over to assist the bereaved families.



Underground double-parting or junction

CHAPTER FIVE

Monday, June 25th 1894

231 bodies recovered - Interviews with experts -Theories of the explosion

To those unacquainted with the idiosyncrasies of the Welsh collier (commentated the '*Western Mail*' on Tuesday, June 26th 1894) the scenes witnessed at Cilfynydd and Pontypridd since Saturday afternoon may have appeared exceedingly incongruous and very ill-befitting so sad an occasion. Since the first rumour of the explosion up to Monday night collier's wives, mothers, sisters, and children have crowded in thousands to Cilfynydd, and a large force of police has been necessary to keep the approaches to the Albion Colliery moderately clear of the ingress, egress, and regress of those who directly concerned in the work, first, of saving the living, and, next, of recovering the dead bodies.

The inconsiderate might call it curiosity - and warped curiosity at that. Perhaps something of that element does leaven the motives which prompt such demonstrations of popular interest, but it is by no means correct to regard it as the leading character- istic or to imagine that the crowd in the pit's mouth is another development of the latent savagery in humanity which is excited by blood and slaughter. The Rhondda collieries have in this case but followed the custom which pertains on the occasion of all such disasters, and dropped their work, apparently that they may be able to assist in the work of rescuing comrades in peril or recovering the bodies of those who may have lost their lives, and partly that by a suspense of their ordinary occupation they may testify in a manner which but is seldom obtained amongst any other class of the community their succour for the dead, their sympathy with the bereaved in their suffering.

The scene surrounding the colliery on Monday did not materially differ from that of Sunday and Saturday night, except that the great bulk of the spectators were kept outside the colliery premises, and the force of police kept the bridge closed over the canal leading to the roadway to the pit - yard. The crowd outside were eager to enter, and they expressed belated expostulation (disapproval) with the police.

Two, three, four corpses in the same house were common numbers, and in one case a house was pointed out where there were already two dead, and a poor old woman was standing on the doorstep waiting for others yet to be brought there. Tragedy such as this is repeated all through the district, on the Pontypridd side of Cilfynydd and on that towards Aberdare Junction. We met several parties bearing bodies to what was so lately their homes, and carts with piles of coffins followed us into the valley of death. At the Cilfynydd Inn was hung from one of the upper windows a black bannerette with the message in white letters, '*Ivorites, a brother*

dead.' Pathetic incidents abound, one of which I will mention here. About noon on Monday we saw one woman being led out of the pit-yard by friends in a condition of convulsed grief, and one of the bystanders informed us that the woman had been in the yard the whole time since the accident, watching, searching, awaiting, hoping, fearing, and now, alas! She was leaving, her quest was ended, she had found her dead.

An omnipresent gloom

It was no figure of speech or hackneyed journalistic phrase (commented the '*South Wales Daily News*') to say that Cilfynydd, Norton Bridge, and Pontypridd were under the cloud of an omnipresent gloom. Along the three miles of road between Pontypridd and the colliery the majority of the houses appeared to have their blinds and curtains drawn, while here and there were as many as four houses, one after the other, all with blinds drawn, and every sign of mourning about them. There were fewer brakes plying for hire along the roads, and altogether the appearance of the crowd was more serious and less seemingly merely curious than on the previous day. This, of course, is fully accounted for by the fact that the majority of the thousands who thronged Cilfynydd on Sunday on what, under normal circumstances would have been the day of rest, were on Monday following their ordinary occupations. But from an early hour in the morning and until long after dark the canal bank and the approaches to the colliery yard were thickly lined by people of all ages and stations in life. They had little to reward them for their patience, but they seemed to feel quite satisfied by witnessing the occasional passage of an empty coffin, or a corpse on stretcher, and some human remains so terribly mutilated as to be impossible of removal from the colliery on the stretchers in the ordinary way.

The weather was in keeping with the gloom of the occasion, the sky being steadily overcast all day, and a drizzling rain falling at intervals. In the village itself the streets were simply packed with surging crowds, while throughout the whole district groups of neighbours stood at the doors of the houses discussing the sad occurrence and eagerly awaiting what scraps of news of the progress of the exploration in the pit which the men returning from the colliery could give. In every street the windows were darkened, and the place was all too evidently one of mourning; albeit the grief's of the inhabitants were not displayed in passionate outbursts. As body after body and coffin after coffin were carried through the crowd, the spectators quietly opened ranks so as to allow their passage, and then close up again, a few questioning the bearers as to the name of the deceased on the stretcher or coffin, and then patiently resuming their watching.

The work of exploration was continued under great difficulties throughout Monday, but, the greater number of bodies having been recovered at an early

hour, the tension slackened and men were able to discuss the accident and its probable cause in freedom, which was not possible during the early hours when the slenderest hope remained that rescue of the living might be effected. In an interview with Mr. Henry Williams obtained by one of your representatives reference is made to the system of 'ripping the top,' by the use of dynamite which is followed at the Albion Colliery, and Mr. Williams expressed an opinion that it was a safer way of carrying out the work than the other method of knocking down the timbers with sledge hammers.

This opinion, I am bound to add, is not shared by others, and the fact that the overman, the fireman, and the shotman, were all found dead about ten yards from a heavy fall is believed to indicate that operations they were supposed to have in hand had a material connection with the explosion. Of course, this again is conjecture, and all conjectures on the point are hampered by the fact that, whatever theory is adopted, they are lacking indications which sustained that theory. One thing appears certain, that the gas having caught fire in one spot it rushed through the mine, gathering up itself all the jets of inflammable exudations which it met, and scattered death and destruction in all quarters of the mine.

The work of exploration

The work of clearing the roads of falls and recovering bodies (wrote another reporter) from the pit was carried on throughout Sunday night and Monday. Some of the colliery managers who had been down during the day state that the men were working steadily at the falls, and they believed that by Tuesday evening nearly all the bodies would be brought to the surface. There is still some gas in Dixon's District, and another part of the pit on Grover's main level, and, consequently, the explorers were not allowed to enter these portions of the colliery. The gas will probably be cleared during the night.

There were very few people at the pit during the night, but as the morning wore on anxious relatives and friends of the poor fellows whose bodies were still below, congregated in and around the colliery yard, and waited patiently the result of the operations below. Directly one or more bodies were brought out a rush was made for the dramway leading from the pit to the mortuary, and efforts were made to identify the men by their features of clothing. This task was made doubly difficult by the fact that many of the bodies were badly mutilated and disfigured, and during the trying task several women fainted. In some cases the dismembered parts were washed in order that any marks which might be found would leave someone to recover a relative.

At the further end from the entrance into the mortuary is a collection of clothing and charred remains of one or more victims. Anxious relatives are searching the

grue- some heap for clothing or other material which will assist them in the task of identification. A sad case was that of a young woman from Caerphilly who arrived at the colliery this morning to make enquiries with regard to her brother, Albert Thomas, who is employed there as a fitter. It appears that Thomas, who was a promising young man of 25, had left the colliery in the morning, washed and dressed, and was going out for a walk when he was sent for to assist in repairing an engine.

Almost as soon as he got to the bottom of the pit the explosion occurred. All that his sister, who wept bitterly, could find belonging to him this morning was a portion of his shirt, in the heap of rubbish already referred to. It is still possible, however, that the body, more or less mutilated, will be recovered. By 10 o'clock between 3,000 and 4,000 persons had assembled on the road, and the number was largely augmented in the afternoon. The crush was not nearly so great as on Sunday, but at least 10,000 visited the scene of the disaster during the day. Mr. Martin, H.M. Inspector for Monmouthshire, and Mr. Sims, sub-inspector for south Wales, worked indefatigably during the night and the greater part of Monday, going down the pit repeatedly. Many others, and notably Mr. Willie Lewis, have had very long hours, accompanied by a great amount of responsibility.

The death toll will probably reach 300

One local newspaper reported: - It is probable that the total number of deaths will not be far short of 300, if it does not exceed that figure. Bodies are still being slowly recovered, and up to 3.15 p.m. 202 corpses had been placed in the mortuary. The number of bodies remaining unidentified is about thirty, and many of them will probably have to be buried by the company, as there are many authentic cases in which the landladies of young lodgers were not troubled about claiming the bodies to avoid the expenses of the funeral.

The 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) who was on duty when the catastrophe happened had not up to this morning left his post, and had been on duty nearly sixty hours. Mr. George L. Cambell, (secretary of the Central Association of the Permanent Relief Fund for dealing with distress in mines) arrived at the colliery on Monday morning in order to assist Mr. Owen (the general secretary of the Monmouthshire & Glamorgan-shire Permanent Relief Fund). Mr. Cambell heard of the explosion on Sunday at Southport, and travelled all night in order to be on the scene of the disaster as early as possible.

A sad case

A sad case was related to a '*Western Mail*' reporter on Monday morning by the Rev. T. C. Phillips, curate-in-charge of the Welsh Church at Cardiff, who was at the scene of the disaster that morning. Among the killed was a man named Hugh Pugh, who had previously had several hair-breathed escapes. Many months ago he was in the sinking accident at Aberdare Junction, and his experience there gave him such a shock that he decided to give up mining, and he returned to north Wales, his native place, and worked as a quarryman. A short time ago, however, he changed his mind and, together with his son-in-law, came down to Cilfynydd to work in the Albion Colliery. Both men were down the pit at the time of the explosion and perished. The Rev. T. C. Phillips said he saw Mrs. Pugh at Towyn on Friday, and she then enquired after her husband.

Another miner named Watkins was saved through his son's conduct. The young man through some breach of the law had been taken to the lock up, and the father, instead of going to work on Saturday afternoon, proceeded to the Pontypridd police station to bail the lad out. Had this incident not occurred Watkins would most assuredly have been numbered among the slain

At the mortuary

As on Sunday, so during the early hours of Monday morning, the work of identification of the bodies slowly proceeded, other bodies arriving incessantly to take the place of those who were taken away by relatives and friends. The work of identification was, as on the previous day, exceedingly slow, owing to the fact that the hayloft where the whole of the bodies were laid out being full, so that only some four or five at a time could be allowed to come in. No sight could well be more painful than to see several hundreds of relatives standing in single file along the narrow ridge leading to the wooden steps of the loft. Here, huddled together, relieving the weary tedium in telling the extent of the disaster and reminiscences of their relatives and friends, many had thus to wait several hours before, in small batches, they could be allowed to enter, and it required all the firmness possible from Sergt. B. Evans and the posse of police officers under his charge to control the waiting multitude. This, however, they admirably did, and later on, when Sergt Evans had to leave to attend the inquest, P. C. Henry displayed the same firmness joined to the greatest kindness.

When at last a batch was let in there came the repetition of the terrible scenes which are enacted when parents, brothers, and sisters, who had waited patiently for hours in agony, witnessed in many cases scores of dead bodies carried past them to the mortuary. When it is remembered that 50 bodies were laid in three rows in that dimly-lighted room, the difficulties attending identification were

understandable.

Further mistakes of identification

Two more mistakes of identification were brought to light on Monday morning, the bodies claimed as those of Benjamin Tucker and James Rowe, being carried back to the hay-loft by bearers who stated that they were not the corpses of the man of whom they had been taken for. Rowe's body was subsequently identified by his relatives, and taken away in the evening.

On the official list of the injured there appeared the name of Morgan Lloyd, of 15 Wood Street. On going there a reporter discovered that a mistaken identity had been made in this case, a circumstance sadly too common on such occasions as the present. Morgan Lloyd was a lodger in this house with Mrs. John Rees. When brought out of the works the man taken to the lodgings was unconscious, and on arrival there it was ascertained that he was not Lloyd. Soon after being taken to the Coffee Tavern near the colliery yard, it was discovered that he was George Parry, of 23, Police Row, Pontshonorton, five men from this house were engaged at the colliery. Parry was not burnt, and in the afternoon was able to speak a little.

Another incident which brought the difficulty of identification to mind occurred early in the morning. A party of searchers found the name (Henry Hill) of the object of their quest on a lamp which one of the deceased had upon him, and naturally went to inform the wife of the fact of their having found her husband's body. There, however, a pleasing surprise awaited them, for the husband was at home hale and sound and it then transpired that he had some time ago lent his lamp to another miner (James Tickle), whose mortal remains were now at the mortuary. Another extremely painful incident occurred in the forenoon, when a brother of one of the victims came to institute a search. After a long and painfully weary inspection, he at last came upon the battered remains of the deceased, but they were in such a condition as to make identification impossible. However, as he knew his drawers, socks, and boots, he was enabled to do so, and the remains were reverently placed in a coffin.

Another affecting scene

A poor widow residing at Penygraig visited the mortuary in the afternoon to ascertain whether her son, John Allen, who left home some months ago, was among the dead. She learnt that such a name appeared in the list, and in a fainting condition she dragged herself, carrying a baby in arms, to the colliery office to obtain further information which she had in her terrible distress forgot to seek at the mortuary.

At the office door she met Mr. Evan Owen J. P., of Cardiff, the energetic secretary of the Miners' Permanent Fund, who, with his usual courtesy and kindness of heart, volunteered to ascertain from the officials how the body had been disposed of. He also ascertained from her that her son was 20 years of age. While Mr. Owen was making his inquiries the poor mother, utterly prostrated, burst into a violent fit of weeping. She was, however, soon relieved by the good news Mr. Owen brought her, that the John Allen who was numbered amongst the slain was not her son, but a man aged 35 years of age. Her sorrow being turned into joy, she at once left the yard, making the best of her way back to Penygraig.

Incidents at the pit-yard

Incidents at the pit-yard were not numerous during the day. There was the same monotonous regularity of the procession in and out of the dead-house, the ill-smelling precincts of which did not appear to in any way repress the eagerness of the throng to have a glimpse inside, though it was patent that many of those waiting their turn was prompted to go in mainly from feelings of morbid curiosity and a love of the contemplation of the revolting.

drams of timber, mortar, and other repairing materials were being drawn to the mouth of the pit all day long, while drams of rubbish brought up from below as the falls were cleared were drawn off and dumped at the tips. The constant demand for timber, pitwood, mortar and the like showed how vigorously the task of repairing the damaged workings was being prosecuted. Two wagon loads of coffins were brought up on a railway siding close to the colliery, and carried thence to the mortuary chamber, where they permitted a considerable number of the identified bodies being removed to the residences of the relatives in a more seemly fashion than on the ambulances of brattice cloth in use previously.

There were some complaints that men whose actual experience of mining work was very limited were permitted to join the exploring gangs or the shift of repairers, their presence in the pit being found to be of comparatively little value. This was, no doubt, to be accounted for rather by the willingness of all sorts of workmen to render their assistance than to carelessness or indifference on the part of those collecting the relief's together.

The force of police which Supt. Jones (the deputy chief constable) had on duty round the pit was not, of course, so large as on Sunday, the crowd being so orderly and so much smaller than on the preceding day, but the officers and men of the county posted at the colliery discharged their trying and responsible duties with admirable good temper and marked courtesy.

Interview with an explorer

A man who had been down with the an exploring gang on Monday morning informed a reporter that no attempt was being made to clear away the falls, the exploration parties concentrating all their efforts on the removal of bodies. Many of the corpses were found in the most awkward situations, and had to be carried over heaps of rubbish. "We found ten in a bunch when I was down," said the explorer, "and heaps of bodies are lying under heavy falls."

"Then, I take it, there will be no chance of having all the bodies removed this week?"

- "Oh, bless you, no. It will take a month to clear away the falls. I never saw anything like it in my life."

"How far have you been in?" - "We were in Grover's side, and got in about a mile and a half."

Looked as if they peacefully slept

William Thomas, a collier employed at the pit, who descended the shaft at 8 o'clock in the morning, stated to an interviewer that twelve bodies were found at the far end of Mike's Level in Dudson's district. None of them were burnt or disfigured, and they were lying in different positions, just as though the poor fellows were sleeping peacefully.

The body of one of the victims was lying at the house of Mrs. Thomas Thomas, Cilfynydd. Deceased lodged there, but the names and addresses of his relatives are unknown, as the young man had frequently refused to give them, remarking that if anything happened to him he would prefer his relatives knew nothing about it. At a special meeting of the Pontypridd Burial Board on Monday morning special arrangements were made to facilitate the interment of the bodies at Glyntaff cemetery.

Alderman William Jenkins, J. P; had on Monday evening to undertake a kind of 'Solomon's Judgment' with regard to the body of one of the dead colliers at the Albion. It seems that a young man lodging at Cilfynydd was killed, and that his body was lying at the mortuary. The rumour got about that the people at whose house he lodged refused to receive the body, but they on hearing what was said about them came to the colliery to claim the body, saying they were perfectly willing to take it. The authorities at the mortuary, however, refused them leave to take away the body, as they said it would be best to have it conveyed to the house of the deceased's uncle, who lived but a short distance away, at Norton Bridge. This course, the lodging-house people would not agree to, as they were afraid of the scandal already referred to. Mr. Jenkins decided that it would be best to allow body to be taken to the lodgings, and an order to this effect was made by Mr. D.

Ellis, secretary of the Albion Colliery Co.

What caused the accident?

Mr. Lewis Williams, mining engineer, Porth-y-glo, was a leader of the shift that descended at 8 a.m. on Monday, and in the course of an interview which one of our reporters had with him he said: - "Garnett, the fireman, (Dewi Dar), and I went down the shaft at 8 o'clock this morning, and travelled through the main level on Grover's side and to the north workings of the level. Having been down on Sunday, I knew what the conditions of things were on the day after the explosion, and I could see that some splendid work had been done since then."

"The ventilation in the place I mentioned had been practically restored. Then we travelled along the main return off Asket's heading, where we found six bodies. In passing over some portions of the falls on Sunday we had to be careful, as is usually the case unless we should disturb the sides of the roof, but the work of propping amongst the falls had been and was now being actively and very successfully carried out. The largest fall I saw was one over which I passed today. We had to creep over it for a distance of about sixty yards. The height of that fall of debris would be, on average, I think, about fifteen or sixteen foot."

"Of course, I did not go over anything like the whole of the colliery, for, you see, the exploring shifts have certain districts allotted to them, and after going over the district and directing what can be done as regards the removal of bodies, when they are found, the explorers report first of all to the officials who are with them in the same district, and afterwards they present a report to the colliery office. In this instance we gave a report to Mr. Gwilym Jones, of Cwmpenner, and his assistant, Mr. E. W. Creed who in due course directed the removal of the six bodies referred to. "

Questioned as to the cause of the explosion, Mr. Williams replied that he, like others, was puzzled how to account for it. When, on the other hand, a man thinks he has a clue, there are indications wanting so as to cause one to look again in some other direction for the signs of the force of the explosion, combined with the possible signs of the cause of it. "All I know," he said, "is that its effect are very generally spread over various parts of the colliery which I have visited."

"Have you heard that it was a practice in this colliery to 'rip the roof' by boring holes in the 'collars' of the timber, placing a charge of dynamite in each hole, and the blasting, so as to bring roof and timber down?"

"Yes, and I consider it a perfectly safe method of ribbing. In the other method -

that of knocking down the double timbers with a sledge - a great many lives were lost, as the men are so near to the falling roof, and often had no time to escape when it comes down."

The lamps used at the colliery

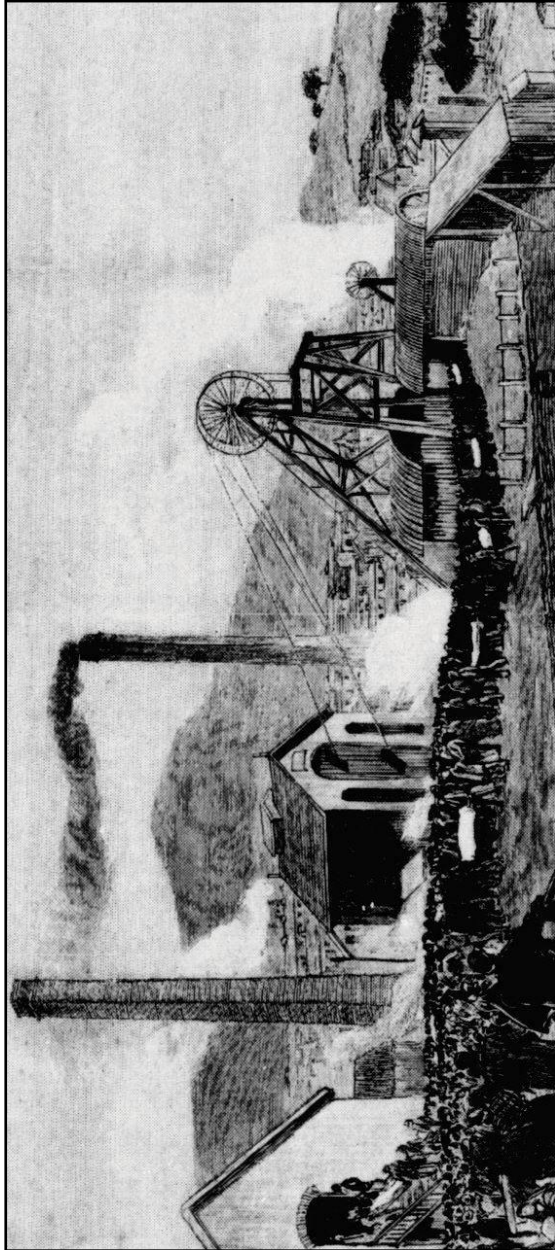
In an interview with a '*Western Mail*' reporter an expert stated that he had examined all the lamps used at the colliery, and found them to be on the 'screw - lock' principal. These lamps, though largely used in collieries, were condemned by Mr. J. Ignatius Williams, a stipendiary magistrate for the Pontypridd Division some time ago, after an examination, during an inquiry into a case of breach of colliery rules. "They are lamps which," said the expert, "can be opened by ingenious use of a nail or by other devices, although previously locked, and, therefore, it follows that every man entrusted with such a lamp carries an instrument for his own destruction in his hands. Whatever the cause of the disaster, it appears to me that colliery officials should more generally take advantage of a patent recently tested, which can be applied at a small cost to any ordinary safety lamp. By this patent it is rendered absolutely impossible for any miner to open his lamp without putting out the light."

One out of twelve

A Swansea lad, who worked at the colliery was one of twelve who generally 'chummed' together, particularly on Saturdays. His eleven 'butties,' as he called them, are dead, but he was not in the pit at the time of the explosion. This incident has made an impression on the lad, and he states that he will never enter a colliery again even if he has to beg for bread.

The relatives of Robert Smith, of Nelson, kept almost constant watch for the appearance of the body since Saturday afternoon, but it was not until nearly 8 o'clock on Monday night that it was brought to the surface. Then it had to be carried over the mountain for a distance of over two miles.

Amongst those who visited the colliery for the first time on Monday were Mr. James Barrow, C. E; Maesteg; Mr. W. Blakemore, C. E; Cardiff; Dr. H. Naunton Davies; Mr. Tudor Owen, Ash Hall; Mr. David Abraham, Cyfarthfa; Mr. W. W. Hood, Llwynypia; Mr. Rees, Coedcae; Mr. Brace, Miner's Federation; and Mr. Lewis Miles, one of the secretaries of the Sliding Scale Committee. Two or three of them went down and worked hard. Mr. Miles, of the National Collieries, was accidentally omitted from the list of those who were present on Sunday.



Carrying bodies to the mortuary and Pit Head
as drawn by the Illustrated London News

A hard fight for life

Mr. John Williams, checkweigher, Ynysybwl, in a conversation with a '*Western Mail*' representative, said he went down at 10 o'clock on Monday morning with a party of twenty, and reached the main 'face' in about an hour.

They found five dead lying in a heap, all showing signs of having had a hard struggle for existence. One of the men had soaked his cap in his tea and applied it to his nostrils, from which blood was oozing. Beyond them were the bodies of two firemen in a natural position. At that point the party had to return, there being a great accumulation of gas. The falls were heavy and continuous, and holes through which the explorers had to creep were no more than two-foot of three-foot in diameter. Amongst the dead which this party brought to the top was a haulier, whose name was not known, and a militiaman named Fred Carpenter, 25 years-of-age, who lived at Norton Bridge. It was evident from his position that he, too, had struggled hard for life. Mr. Williams added that he thought the explosion took place on the main level near the pit bottom, and its effects spread all around so that the party could not go twenty yards without meeting with falls.

Mr. J. T. Williams, Ynysybwl, also one of the explorers, said there were big falls in the Llanfabon section of the pit. The top of the levels where it remained intact was very good, and so were the roads for height and breadth. They had to walk over falls most of the way; in some cases the falls were two yards thick, but he could form no estimate of the number of tons weight in the largest. The force of the explosion was tremendous, and was felt all over the pit. One horse had his legs blown off and not even the stumps were left. The horses on the Cilfynydd side were lying on their heads towards the pit mouth. Those on the other side were thrown about in all shapes.

Opening of the inquest

Unseemly quarrel - touching remarks by the coroner

Shortly before five o'clock, Dr. Lyttle, accompanied by Dr. H. Naunton Davies, of Cymmer, visited the mortuary prior to the inquest. Instructions were given to the police not to allow any more bodies to be taken away until the inquest was held, and although, therefore, many of the bodies brought up between three and six o'clock were seen by their relatives and identified, their removal was deferred until later in the day. Meanwhile coffins were being brought up tier upon tier in the furthest end of the mortuary, for the purpose of being used later on.

On Monday afternoon, June 25th a great portion of local interest was transferred to the inquest proceedings, which were limited to formal evidence of identification and the issue of burial certificates. A great crowd of the bereaved was gathered

around the New Inn, Pontypridd, where the inquest was opened by Messrs. Reece and Rhys, and a large number found their way inside the hotel. Very little accommodation seems to have been provided them, and the great bulk of the poor people were being kept outside by the police. Considerable dissatisfaction arose, chiefly at the prospect of a long wait for the certificates, and some were heard threatening to return home and bury their dead without certificates. Matters were, however, pushed through as rapidly as possible, and the issue of the necessary documents followed. One or two incidents varied the calm proceedings. In the wait that occurred before Mr. E. B. Reece's arrived, those present were startled by a man named Gronow rising, and requesting permission to say a few words. Mr. Rhys, who was on hand, said he could not speak then, but on learning that Gronow was the father of two dead young men, and was anxious to obtain the certificates, he called him aside and spoke to him privately.

The jury

The following were sworn in on the jury: - Messrs. Hopkin Smith Davies, Samuel Shipton, John Price (Berw Rd.), James Edwards, (Boot-shop); J. F. McClune; Hopkin Morgan, (Baker); John Thomas, (Bunch of Grapes Inn); Richard Jones, (Newbridge Arms); Gwyngyll Hughes, (Mill St.); William Phillips, (Vestry Hall); R.

A. Lewis, (Bank manager); Isaac Williams, (Gwaelodygarth); Oliver William Davies, (Chemist); William Howell Watkins, (Chemist, Cilfynydd); Thomas Jones, (Assistant overseer); David Thomas, (Heolganol), and William Jones, (Waterworks manager). Mr. Hill, Solicitor, Cardiff, was present on behalf of the company.

A protest

Mr. Hopkin Smith Davies was selected foreman of the jury, who were then sworn, first by Mr. E. B. Reece and then Mr. R. J. Rhys. When it came to Mr. John Thomas's turn to be sworn, he objected to Mr. Davies acting as foreman, when there were on the jury men who had been ex-managers of mines. Mr. Reece: "It is too late now. I asked you if you were all agreed as Mr. Davies acting as your foreman, and if you had any objection you should have made it then." Mr. Thomas:- "I did not hear the question, I don't suppose Mr. Lewis has been down a colliery in his life."

Mr. Rhys:- "You will have the assistance of the experienced men. Mr. Davies will have no more power than you have." Mr. Rhys then proceeded to swear the jury in regarding the case in his district, and asked them to select a foreman. Mr. Thomas proposed James Edwards. Mr. Edwards declined, and said he had every confidence in Mr. Davies, whose was then elected.

Address by the coroner

Mr. Reece, in addressing the jury, said: "It seems only the other day that Mr. Reece, of Aberdare, and I met in this house with a jury, many of whom are here today, to hold an inquest upon the terrible accident at the Great Western Colliery. Here we are assembled today to commence and inquiry into a still more terrible disaster. It is perfectly appalling to read the list of the dead upon whose bodies we are proceeding to hold an inquest. I need not remind you that your duties will be exceedingly onerous, but I hope we shall be able by a full enquiry to arrive at the cause of this most terrible accident. The course which Mr. Rhys and I propose to adopt is much the same as in the case of the Great Western Colliery. We will proceed to view the bodies, and it is exceedingly necessary that they should be buried as soon as possible, certificates of death will be given. We will then adjourn to a time to be agreed on by us."

Mr. Rhys said: - "As it is late in the day, and our time is valuable, I do not intend to say more than has been said by my brother coroner. The feeling that is uppermost is one of the deepest sympathy, first with the relatives of those who have been so suddenly deprived of life. The men and boys who have been killed were all bread- winners, and by their death those dependant upon them have very little to look forward to. My feelings go out to them in the first place, and, secondly, to those who are interested in the colliery. It is a terrible thing to them to know on an occasion like this kind that they are responsible for the management."

Mr. Hill, on behalf of the company, assured the coroner and jury, that the directors and others interested in the colliery deeply deplored the sad calamity which had occurred. It would be their duty to give the jury all the information they could, and he promised that this should be done. He was anxious to know to what day the inquiry would be adjourned. Mr. Henry Lewis was, unfortunately, out of the country. An effort was being made to intercept him by telegraph, and it was hoped that he would return in the course of a short time. Under these circumstances, he hoped the inquest would be adjourned for a month. Mr. Reece stated that he and Mr. Rhys would consider the matter. The jury then left the New Inn in brakes to view the bodies of the deceased. On the return of the jury, evidence of identification was taken and certificates of death given. The enquiry was then adjourned till Wednesday.

Internment of the bodies

Arrangements have been made for the internments of a number of the bodies on Tuesday, and it is understood that some will be taken to Llanfabon, others to Eglwysilan, others to Glyntaff Cemetery, and some as far as Gelligaer. Fears are entertained that there may be difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of

bearers, for, strange to say, a difficulty in obtaining bearers has already been experienced. Those who have had experience in explosions have, we believe, seldom, if ever, witnessed the procession of only six or eight bearers taking a body in a coffin from their colliery to their home, but this was observed on Monday in several instances. Hence the fears with regard to the funerals.

A London paper in mourning

The ‘*London Daily Chronicle*’ on Monday morning appeared with the fourth and fifth pages of its issue in mourning. Referring to the cause of the accident, it states:- The experienced men on the spot do not appear to be in agreement upon the probable cause of the present disaster. They differ as to whether the blame must be attributed to coal-dust alone, or to the mixture of gas and coal-dust. It will be interesting to see whether adequate precautions have been taken against accidents against either of these two forms of danger. At the time of the Tondu explosion we took occasion to comment pointedly on the neglect of proper precautions against the perils of coal- dust; and that explosion ought to have enforced the lesson. A commission has been enquiring for several years into the best means available for reducing the attendant risk, but we still wait for their report. The present calamity, which is attributed, on its first aspects, to coal-dust in some form, may be expected to spur on the commission to a practical conclusion.

Press comments

Throughout the country the disaster at Cilfynydd was in the spotlight and many had theories of what was going on in south Wales.

The ‘*Daily News*’ says: - It is a terrible thing to know that fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons have been blown to atoms before they had time to know that death was near, but there is some comfort in the thought that they were spared the agony of suffering which death in its grimmest form can inflict. There are benevolent societies attending to immediate needs of widows and orphans, but their over used resources cannot go far, and it would not be straining the cords of charity unnecessarily if people who sympathised with the suffering of these poor miners would give off their plenty, and give quickly.

The ‘*Daily Telegraph*’ says: - The one feature in such calamities to which the miner can turn with any satisfaction is the unvarying heroism that accompanies them. There was no hesitation at all amongst the gallant men who risked their lives as soon as the fact of the explosion became manifest. Rescue parties were organised with the greatest promptitude, and by their means some sixteen other men underground were brought up to the bank alive. The work is one of extreme peril, as the deadly after-damp is liable to overpower anyone venturing into the

seams, and falls of rock after the occurrence of such subterranean accidents are very frequent.

At the mouth of the pit, too, there were waiting all through the slow hours of the night and well into Sunday morning a band of local doctors ready to do all that human skill could effect for mitigating the suffering of the injured. It is worthy of note that the atmosphere at the time when the explosion happened was in the condition which is supposed to be most likely to lead to disaster, and warnings to this effect were, as usual, issued to all mines in the kingdom. In the presence of so dire a calamity there can be but one feeling of profound sympathy, both for the victims themselves, and for those so suddenly bereft of their care and support. That universal sympathy could not have found more prompt and heartfelt expression than in the message of touching condolence which the Queen has conveyed to all the families of those who have been lost.

The '*Daily Graphic*' says: - Carelessness on the part of someone or other - usually on the part of some miner who neglects to take precautions which cost him a little inconvenience and trouble - is too often to have been the cause of the fatal explosions in our coal mines. But there are some accidents against which no precautions affords a guarantee, and, so far as the evidence at present at our disposal goes, the catastrophe seems to have been due to an accident of that nature.

The '*Western Daily Mercury*' says: - The prosperity of the entire community depends to a large extent on the working of our coal mines, and it is hardly too much to suggest that the state should contribute a substantial share towards the endowment of a permanent fund out of which the necessities created by such accidents as that of Saturday, may be provided for without calling for the collection of a special fund to meet each disaster as it occurs. At any rate, the thing is worth considering. But until the nation in its corporate capacity undertakes the work the call for charity is one that will always be liberally responded to by Englishmen, who in the past have never turned a deaf ear to the cry of the widow and the orphan.

The '*Liverpool Mercury*' says: - If, as it is supposed by some of the experts, that the tragedy is due to coal-dust and it is greatly to be hoped that the report of the Royal Commission on the subject will cause the prevention of these woeful holocausts, or at least to a diminution of their number

The '*Manchester Guardian*' says: - After each and every terrible calamity such as that which occurred on Saturday, public indignation is excited at the hardships of the miner's lot. But until great accidents involving the destruction of hundreds of lives are rendered impossible the science of mining engineering cannot, in the

public judgment, be said to have progressed very far.

The '*Leeds Mercury*' says: - With all the mine's legislation and inspection, and all the precautions enforced to reduce the risk of accidents, the record of reoccurring colliery explosions is still a very terrible one. No provision for the eight-hours working day or for the living wage will enable us to diminish some of the risks to which the miner is exposed, but as accidents of this kind cannot fail to impress the general public that the reasonableness of the demands put forward on his behalf for a fair days work and a fair days pay.

The '*St. James's Gazette*' says: - Against such disasters as that which took place in the Albion Colliery, near Pontypridd, on Saturday afternoon, science and skill seem to provide no protection. According to all accounts, the colliery was well managed and well ventilated, and yet in an instant an explosion of fire-damp fills it with a poisonous atmosphere fatal to almost every living thing in the workings. Everyone seems to have behaved well; the rescue parties, led by the manager, were early on the scene, but the number of those who escaped with their lives is very small. It is one of the very worst colliery disasters on record.

The '*Westminster Gazette*' says: - A few years ago these accidents, with their disastrous loss of life, would have been set down to causes which are in their nature unavoidable. There is now almost a certainty that, with due scientific precautions, they are strictly preventable. It will be one of the chief of Mr. Asquith's achievements if, before leaving the Home Office, he can see completed such a code for the Regulations of Mines as will make the reoccurrence of these disasters almost impossible, except on the assumption of great carelessness on the masters' part or of the miner's.

"It must have been," said an ex-colliery manager to one of our representatives, "from one of the simplest of causes. The day-shift men were going out. The other shift was going in. In the hurry of going out the tired colliers are never very particular. It was simply the leaving of a door open; then followed the collection of gas by the diversion of air. A shot was fired by men who had no idea but that everything was in its old and perfect order. They never knew that a door had been left open accidentally, that a fatal collection of gas was taking place, extending from a seam known to be very inflammable, and the explosion followed."

"Then you have to consider that the coal-dust of the Albion may have played a fatal part. Personally, I have never known coal-dust to cause an explosion, and I do not believe that it does cause explosions, but I think it very possible that it extends and increases the disaster. Now, here you have a picture of a calamity. The door is needlessly left open by the last collier, who little thinks that, as he goes on, thinking of wife and children, or dinner, and a quiet smoke at the door

afterwards, that he is leaving a death-trap for the rippers and repairers who are coming in. Then we have a couple of men firing, and, close at hand, sweeping up the dusty roadways, a little crowd of men who are similarly, innocently making preparation to extend the explosion. They have raised a dense cloud of highly gaseous coal-dust, there is a flame, a roar, the explosion is carried on all over the mine, and the destruction is complete.”

A telegram of Sympathy

Mr. Ellis, secretary of the Albion Colliery Co., has received the following telegram:

To the Directors of the Albion Colliery, Pontypridd. “Regret to hear of your calam- ity. You have our heartfelt sympathy in your trouble”

Chairman and directors of the United National Collieries.

Questions in Parliament - Mr. Asquith and the disaster

In the House of Commons on Monday Mr. Alfred Thomas rose and said “I wish to ask whether the Home Secretary has had any recent information as to the number of lives lost at the colliery explosion at the Albion Colliery at Cilfynydd. Mr. Asquith (Home Secretary): - “I regret that I am not in a position to give the house any further information beyond which is contained in the newspapers as to this deplorable catastrophe, which, I believe, exceeds in magnitude anything of which we have experienced in years past. Most careful investigations are being made by inspectors on the spot. The most gallant efforts have been made to save or preserve life, but there is the gravest reason to believe that the loss of life exceeds some 250 persons” (cries of shock). Mr. Keir Hardie (West Ham): -

“I wish to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether in moving the Address of which he has given notice relating to the assassination of President Carno, he will include a expression for the feeling of this House towards the relatives of those killed in the colliery explosion in south Wales” (hear, hear). Sir W. Harcourt, Chancellor of the Exchequer: - “I’m sure that this house will be only too happy to express sympathy with the sufferers from the recent explosion, but I do not think that an expression of sympathy should form part of the address of which I have given notice. The feeling of the House is unanimous on that subject to which the

Honourable member refers, and I'm sure that, without any delay, I, so far as I am able to do so, may now make myself the most sincere expression of sympathy of this House (cheers)."

The Press Association understands that when Sir William Harcourt moves the resolution for an Address today with reference to the Assassination of the President of the French Republic, Mr. J. Keir Hardie will move the following as an amendment: - 'And further, this house humbly prays Her Majesty to express to the surviving relatives of the victims of the colliery disaster in Wales its deep sympathy with them in their sorrow, and its detestation of the system responsible for these periodic sacrifices of human life in connection with our mining industry.'

Relief measures - No time to be lost - Sir W. T. Lewis at the colliery

The Albion Colliery Co.; have headed the relief list with £1,000

Sir William T. Lewis, who was in London on Sunday, hearing of the deplorable disaster, started at once for the scene of the disaster, arriving at 2.30 at Cardiff on Monday, and, through the kindness of Mr. Beasley (manager of the Taff Vale Railway), who had placed an engine at his disposal, proceeded to the colliery direct. Sir William, who spent some time inspecting the colliery plans learning the state of affairs from those in charge, left for Aberdare, but returned to the colliery again at 11.30 with the intention of going underground to give any assistance in his power, but, after a consultation with the several gentlemen in charge, he found that everything was being done that possibly could be done.

Subsequently a telegram was received from the Mayor of Cardiff, stating that he would open a subscription list at once. There is no doubt that Pontypridd and other towns will follow this example. Sir William had a conversation with Alderman Matthias, one of the directors of the company, and Mr. George L. Cambell, consultant secretary and Mr. Evan Owen, general secretary, of the Miner's Providence Society, on the best means to be taken to obtain assistance for those who have been left destitute by the awful accident.

It was felt that the catastrophe is of such a magnitude, and will make such an inroad upon the funds of the society, that the committee feels justified in seeking assistance from the public generally. With this end in view, Sir William Lewis and Mr. Cambell decided to wait upon the Mayor of Cardiff and the Lord Mayor of London as early as possible, and ask them to open funds for the relief of the bereaved families. Mr. Cambell confirmed Mr. Owens statement that the accident will cost the society between £60,000 and £70,000.

Clearing away the horses

The work of exploration was carried on until a comparatively late hour Monday night, but then it was decided to devote time during the night to clear away the carcasses of the horses. The work was really commenced at seven o'clock at night, and crowds of people went as near the dramways as they conveniently could, considering the odour arising from the carcasses, in order to witness the removal of the first batch to the tip on the mountainside. The carcasses were there buried in lime, and afterwards covered over with the rubbish of the tip.

Even as late as eleven o'clock on Monday night there were a score or thirty people practically engaged trying to identify relatives or friends amongst the dead lying in the mortuary. In the semi-darkness which prevailed, for only the glimmer of the collier's lamp could be utilised, the scene was a weird as well as a sad one. Decomposition is setting in very rapidly, and it is now difficult to carry on operations in the mortuary, the smell arising from the bodies, not only filling the room, but being very unpleasant to those who have been in the yard surrounding.

Three more bodies recovered

Telegraphing at 1.30 this morning our reporter says that at this hour three bodies were brought to bank, and one has been informally identified as that of Richard Gronow Dr. Lyttle reports that two of the rescued namely, John Lewis and Samuel Evans are in a critical condition.

Another rumour that gained currency on Monday night was that there yet remained some men in the pit who were alive, and this was elaborated by the further statement that knocking had been heard in some quarters of the mine, a statement which, unhappily, had no truth in it, for since 9 o'clock on Saturday night the mine, but for the presence of the intrepid explorers, has been a cavern of death.

Theory on cause of the explosion

As the second day after the disaster came to a close, the question that everyone was still asking was: "What caused the explosion?" 'Morien' in the '*Western Mail*' concluded: -

The keenest and most practical mining engineers have been seen about the colliery yard discussing the explosion and its cause. It is felt beyond doubt that coal dust has been the principal factor in the terrible calamity. It is well to point out that the coal dust throughout the colliery was allowed to accumulate on the

roadways from Monday to the Saturday following. On the afternoon of the explosion about 200 of the men, called 'repairers,' were engaged in shoveling the fine coaldust, extensively dry, into iron tubs standing to receive it. The quantity of air circulating in the mine was 237,000 cubic feet per minute. This was produced by a Schiele fan, 15ft. 6 ins. in diameter. The above will afford the reader an idea as to the almost tempest strength of fresh air that spreads through the mine.

Now, when the dust men were shoveling the dry dust its swiftest part of course would fly in dense clouds in the swift air-current. It also can be imagined that even a match fired would ignite this fine coaldust, which many months ago was tested carefully by H. M. Mines Inspectors, Messrs. Robson and Hall, with the result that it was ascertained that the coaldust was almost as inflammable as powder. Mr. Phillip Jones, the manager of the colliery, informs me that he travelled through the interior of the colliery at noon on Saturday, and that everything then appeared to be in clockwork order. At the time the ventilation was perfect. He was certain that no shot-firing had to be performed that afternoon, and he further told me that the dead body of the official who would have had to do the shot-firing - I think he said his name was Evans - had been found by himself and fellow explorers, and there was nothing where he was to indicate that shot-firing had been performed. Then, the question is, what could have fired the mine in the midst of such an overwhelming current of fresh air?

It seems to me that the general opinion of experts is that the explosion was produced by the coaldust being ignited, but how, it appears now impossible to discover. The question is asked, was it possible for the excessively fine coaldust that flew in the dense clouds in the air current to enter the ventilating arrangements of the shield and gauze of a Clanny safety lamp, and meet the flame at the top inside of the shield and to start the fire? It is stated by people who were in the colliery yard at the time that two explosions occurred, with an interval of about a minute between the first and the second report. This would indicate that an explosion on one side of the two ranges, one branching out east and the other west from the bottom of the shaft, had started on one side and communicated itself to the other side. This in itself indicates that the explosion was not due to gas accumulation, for had it been gas it would have fired all the seams, which were separated from each other by a wide interval. But the existence of any gas at all is deemed exceedingly improbable and, therefore, it is probable that the entire calamity was brought about by the clouds of dust being by some mysterious way being set on fire. The excellent condition of the roof of the workings is shown by the fact that by four o'clock on Monday afternoon 231 dead bodies were recovered and brought to bank

'*Morien*' ended the day with these words: - Monday was a day of prolonged woe

at the mountain hamlet of Cilfynydd. It seemed to be the enormous number of workmen who thronged the guarded approaches to the unfortunate colliery, and who for hundreds of yards lined the side of the highway beyond the canal dividing the said highway from the colliery yards, that all the collieries of mid-Glamorgan had suspended operations for the day, and that all the men and boys employed therein had been urged by intense sympathy to this valley of the shadow of death! It is clear enough that the country is terribly moved by this latest colliery catastrophe. In the midst of the awful scenes of breadwinners of Cilfynydd being conveyed on stretchers in unrecognisable heaps of burnt flesh and limbs in fragments, it is some consolation to know that every one of them was a member of the Miner's Permanent Relief Fund, and that the widows and orphans of the entire number will be decently provided for. It is earnestly to be hoped that the moneyed men and women of the United Kingdom will open their hearts in mercy and contribute what they can afford to assist the said fund to the heavy fresh demand which this terrible loss of life will make upon it.

Contributors to this fund can rest assured that every penny handed into it will go directly to relieve the weak in their need and profound affliction. Due demands already upon it as the result of former disasters are very heavy, and it would be a terrible thing in the history of south Wales, where countless thousands of pounds were paid annually by way of royalties to the fortunate owners of landed estates for minerals which the Creator, deposited there for the use of mankind, were the Permanent Relief Fund to be unequal to the strain upon it in its struggle to succour the widows and orphans of the coal-getters killed in the midst of their performance of colliery duties. Mysterious as these awful disasters are, in the way of Providence there is an eye that sees that each responsible individual, be rich or poor, discharges his duty towards his fellow man. There is nothing by way of news of exceptional interest in relation to the disaster to be recorded tonight. It is stated that many of the killed were natives of the lead ore districts of west and north Wales. They were practical men in dealing with what is called the 'hard' work of collieries, by which expression is meant that they were used to the cutting of the hard substances as contrasted with coal cutting.

Nearly all were associated with the Welsh and English religious denominations. In the pocket of a dead young man, named Hugh Roberts, was found on Sunday afternoon a soiled envelope with a series of Welsh entries on it, which contained the references to the parables of Jesus in the Gospels. I have handed the envelope to a fellow line-writer to convey it to the Cardiff office and it will be reproduced tomorrow. It will appear that Hugh Roberts was a keen Biblical student, and, for some unknown purpose, had taken the references with him into the mine. Doubtless, it was done for the purpose of solving some problems which come uppermost during the dinner hour or 'whiff underground.' Poor Hugh Roberts! He has passed into a clearer light than that of the sun, and where all theological

problems. Today has been devoted entirely to searching for the dead, and at the time of writing 231 dead bodies have been brought up to the colliery, and most of them have been identified and conveyed on stretchers through the weeping thousands to the their late comfortable home on the pretty hillside. I must not forget to mention the case of Mrs. Edwards and her six children. Two years ago her husband died, leaving her with the above number of young children, nearly all girls.

But the eldest was a boy named William D. Edwards, now eighteen years of age, and he was the sole support of the family. He was a haulier, and is among the dead. The cottage in which the family lived is so small that the only upstairs window had to be opened to pass the coffin through it with the poor boy's remains into the bedroom which he slept in for the last time on Friday night. The address of the poor distracted mother is 6, Cwm Cottages, Cilfynydd, Pontypridd. I would personally appeal to the charitable to assist the poor boy's mother. While I am writing I am informed that Lord Windsor has just telegraphed us to state he has contributed £100, and the Cambrian Miners' Association, £300 to the fund. There are still dozens of dead lying in the hay-loft that have not yet been identified. They present an awful appearance from burns, etc; one body has only the trunk remaining, and it is supposed to be that of William Jones, Traveler's Rest, Navigation. He was a father, and had only been down in the colliery about five minutes.

Sunday drunkenness

Thirty-six persons were brought up at an occasional court, held at Pontypridd on Monday, June 25th before Mr. W. Williams, J. P. The followings persons were all fined ten-shillings each for being drunk and disorderly at Cilfynydd on Sunday, viz - James Morgan, Edward Rowlands, John Williams, James Iswitt, Charles Perkins, John Jones, Charles Rowlands, Benjamin Pennallwrick, James Roberts, Thomas Owen, William Clement, Thomas Thomas, George Davies, Henry Harris, John Morgan, Lewis Davies, Alfred Elliott, Thomas Isaac, William Watkin, Thomas Green, James Elias, Frank Pennar, Henry Poke, William James, David Davies, William Parry, David Rees, Walter Bulfin, Henry Williams and Arthur Lloyd. Eliza James and Fred Harris were also fined a like amount for indecency.

Cambrian Miner's Association delegate meeting

The usual monthly meeting of the Cambrian Miners' Association delegates was held at the Windsor Hotel, Ton, on Monday June 25th. It is scarcely necessary to say that the terrible colliery explosion at the Albion Colliery with its fearful sacrifice of life produced a manifest feeling of depression on the delegates.

This must justly be said of the south Wales colliers, that however difficult it is to induce them to combine for promoting and protecting their interests as workmen, they were never found lacking in deep, hearty sympathy with sufferers of their class when a colliery disaster occurs, and reckon not their lives dear unto themselves if by any means they can aid in snatching fellow workmen from the jaws of death, or even in rescuing the dead from the abyss of a poisoned pit. Mr. Evans said: - "We have met this morning under the shadow of a very dark cloud, in the midst of extremely sad and painful circumstances, and I think we must all feel that our first duty is to pass a vote of condolence with the widows, orphans, and relatives of the hundreds of poor fellows who have so suddenly met with their death in the Albion Colliery. (Hear, hear). It is, without doubt, the worst disaster that has occurred in our district of south Wales. I was there yesterday all day and the scene witnessed were something that almost baffles description. It was dreadful to see how the poor fellows had been blown to pieces."

"The remains of many of them were mangled to a horrible extent - limbs blown off, even heads severed from bodies, scorched, burnt, in some cases the bones laid bare by the flesh being burnt off. It must have been a terrific force to have done such havoc, and to have produced such disfigurement. We have had an interval of freedom from explosions in this district for some time, but now in a large colliery we have a disaster which has produced more deaths than any before. Strict enquiry will of course have to be made with the view of endeavouring to find out the cause of the explosion. Science has done much to protect the lives of workmen in collieries, but it has not yet succeeded in pointing out how these disasters can be averted. I don't know whether it will ever be able to do so. We must hope it may, and the sooner the better. I should be most willing to propose a vote of sympathy myself, but I think it will come better from one of you, who are engaged in the pits."

Alderman Moses Moses, Penygraig, moved: - "That we deeply sympathize with the widows, orphans, and relatives of the unfortunate fellows who have lost their lives in the terrible explosion at the Albion Colliery, Pontypridd, and trust that a thorough enquiry will be made into the cause of this disaster, with the hope that some good will result from the enquiry as to prevent a repetition of these disastrous calamities. The way to prevent the reoccurrence of such calamities was to find out their cause, and no effort should be spared with the view to trying to do this." The Ynyshir delegate seconded the motion, and added that there was very little hope of disasters being prevented so long as the one thing thought of and one eager cry was for coal, coal, coal.

Mr. Tibbott, Ferndale, said some years ago a disaster occurred in a colliery in Yorkshire in which two brothers lost their lives. The Archbishop of York preaching on the subject said, "These things will happen in God's

providence.” “I don’t believe in that,” said Mr. Tibbott, continuing. “The Archbishop left the town in disgust because we did not believe what he said. I don’t believe that such things are ordained by God. I believe such things are owing due to the deficiency of man. If care were taken on both sides they would not happen so often as they do. They occur not because God ordains them, but because of the imperfections and faults of men. We, as workmen, ought always to be on the lookout for our deadly enemy that hides away in holes and crevices ever ready to steal forth to injure or destroy us. In the present case I have no doubt the blame will be laid upon workmen. It will be said that somebody had matches, or somebody must have been smoking, or something of that sort. That is always the way. I don’t profess to be able to account for it, but I don’t, and I won’t believe it was ordained by God, but was owing to the deficiency or neglect of man.”

The Albion delegate said: - “I can say for the Workmen’s Committee at the Albion that we have kept our eyes open for years with a view to guard against what has now happened. I can say only this much for the management, that if we find anything wrong and tell the manager of it, he looks to it directly, and sees that it is put right. The men that examined the colliery workings three weeks ago found no gas any- where. I myself was one of the examiners a few months ago, and did not find any gas. When the examination is made, it is made thoroughly.”

“Plenty of time is taken. If gas is found anywhere there examiners don’t leave the place until it is got rid of. They have a two-yard rod for the purpose of pushing the lamp up places that they cannot otherwise test for gas. There was a compliant made some time ago that some men did not take their lamps to pieces on the Thursdays, which are the days appointed for doing it. The manager, on being informed, arranged that every Thursday two men should be appointed to be present on the watch to see that every man does his duty in this respect. Nobody but the officials know which two men are appointed on any Thursday, and the men keep moving about, so that they are not known to be the watchers. I only mention these things to show what care is taken to have everything right”.

“I had only just got home and had my boots off when I heard the sound from the pit on Saturday afternoon. Going to the door, I at once saw what happened. Putting on my boots, I hurried to the pit, and went down. When I was first coming out I met John Evans, the overman, and another a night timbermen. Upon going below again, I found these two that I had been talking with only a quarter of an hour before both dead”

Evans was a good experienced overman. The regular fireman (Morris), who is also a man of good experience, met with an accident two or three days before. I cannot say, probably it will never be known, how it happened. There were nearly

200 dustmen at work, and in moving about the coal-dust there would be a good deal of gas. That is how I accounted for the great force of the explosion, and for its being so general. In reply to a delegate as to whether the roads were watered, the speaker said "Yes." He continued: - "As I was coming out they were watering the road, and the road was so wet that the man coming up along with me said that his boots leaked, and he must go to the side, or his feet would have been soaked. We have an abundance of water and pipes to convey it."

A delegate said he did not know that there was any truth in the statement, but a man who had worked in the pit told him on Saturday that the men dare not give a true report if there was anything wrong after examining the pit. The Albion delegate: - "That is not true." The manager had told him that if they did not tell him the exact state of things he would give them as far as the law would allow. He said, "Bear in mind, it is for my protection as well as your own, and therefore, I will give you all the punishment that the law will grant if you do not always tell the real state of things as you find them. If some of the examiners do not give a true report, it is their own fault. The examiners are appointed by the general meeting of workmen. If anyone is appointed whose experience and efficiency the committee have doubt, he is asked a lot of questions, and if his answers are not satisfactory he is not allowed to go."

A delegate said in the face of such a disaster as that at the Albion, with so many lives lost, and so many in consequence left destitute, they will have to do more than express sympathy. When they are asked to render pecuniary aid, he hoped they would not let cramp seize their hands, but that they would be willing to put their hands into their pockets and give liberally to help the widows and orphans of the workmen who had lost their lives. Mr. W. Evans said that they would come to that presently, but they had better pass the resolution of condolence first. After seeing the many proofs of the tremendous force of the explosion, and the horrible effects on the bodies of the dead workmen, to his mind it was hardly conceivable how it could have occurred if there had not been a large accumulation of gas.

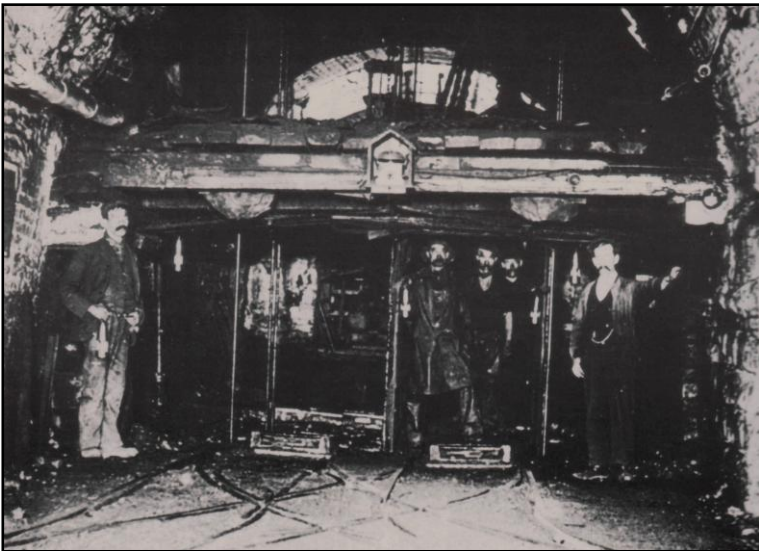
The motion of condolence was passed by all standing up in silence. Mr. W. Evans said now they were open to go a step further. He considered it must probably be that a meeting will be held to open a relief fund, but whether that be so or not, he thought they ought to vote a sum to hand over to any committee that might be appointed for the purpose. He would propose that they vote to £200 out of their funds for this purpose. The delegate of the Naval Colliery, Penygraig, seconded, and it was unanimously agreed. It was also proposed, seconded and unanimously carried, that Secretary should engage the services of Mr. S. T. Evans, M. P; to watch the proceedings at the inquest on behalf of the Albion workmen.



Miners hewing coal in normal times at an unnamed colliery



A haulier at work in normal circumstances in an unnamed colliery



At the bottom an unknown pit

CHAPTER SIX
Tuesday, June 26th 1894

Three days after the disaster rescue repair work still continued underground at the Albion Colliery, meanwhile in the village and surrounding areas thoughts were turning to the forthcoming funeral arrangements and as to whether everyone would receive a coffin in time. The '*Western Mail*' of Wednesday June 27th 1894 reported:

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THE GREAT DISASTER AT CILFYNYDD

Work of exploration - a terrible death toll - Further narratives and pathetic incidents

The prospects at Cilfynydd grow darker and yet more dark, the only hope now cherished is that the total loss of life at the Albion Colliery will not exceed 300. The toll of the dead rose quickly, the official original estimate has long been exceeded, and there are yet in the pit numbers of large falls which, no doubt, conceal other ghastly remains. On Tuesday morning a new horror was, for a time, added to the record, for in some way or other a terrible statement that another explosion had taken place in the mine had got abroad, and spread consternation in Cardiff, London, and other parts of the country. Nothing was lacking in the story, for it was circumstantially stated that a party of explorers, sixteen in number, had been overtaken and destroyed, and up to late afternoon telegrams of enquiry inundated the colliery officials, among the enquirers being Sir W. T. Lewis. Happily, there was not the slightest foundation for this statement, and the work of exploration has proceeded from the start without a hitch, but it is much to be desired that the author of the report should be discovered, and proper steps taken to mark such atrocious action in a proper manner.

The number of people present at Cilfynydd on Tuesday was not so great as on previous days, though the Pontypridd road appeared as thronged with vehicles and foot-passengers as ever. The sad work of burying the dead commenced on Tuesday afternoon, and this drew off some of the crowd, though, contrary to the usual custom, the funerals were not largely attended, and there was especially a lack of bearers. If this lack continued on Wednesday exceeding difficulty will be experienced in conveying the corpses to the graves, for the whole neighbourhood cannot provide hearses and shellibeirs sufficient to accommodate the large number which are to be buried today, notwithstanding the fact that the sad duties are arranged to commence as early as 7 a.m.

The Rev. John Evans (Eglwysbach), assisted by Sister Catherine and other members of the South Wales Wesleyan Mission, sought yesterday to turn the sad

events of the last few days to spiritual account, and held a prayer meeting on the mountainside, near the colliery, followed by an open-air service in the village. About ten families attached to the Wesleyan Mission at Cilfynydd have been robbed of husbands and fathers by the explosion. In one very sad case a widow and nine children are left, and a number of the latter have not reached a wage-earning age.

The reports which follow indicate the rapidity with which financial aid, so far that it is at present available, is being dealt out to relatives and friends of the deceased. A large number of the killed are Englishmen, and many a grief-stricken widow and weeping mother and sobbing father has had to make his or her way to Cilfynydd from long distances across the border.

A glance at the list of the dead will show the large preponderance of Saxon surnames, as compared with those familiar to residents in Wales. Sympathetic telegrams continue to pour in, one of the latest being from the boys of the Holy Trinity School, Guildford.

Other gentlemen connected with the Albion directorate arrived on Tuesday, amongst them being Mr. Matthew Cope, chairman of the company, and Mr. H. W. Lewis, of Tyr'nant, the managing director, who were on a trip abroad when they were intercepted at Antwerp on Monday. Both gentlemen were on their way to spend a holiday with their family on the Continent, and at 4.30 p.m. Monday evening, as they were steaming up the river at Antwerp, they were hailed by a boat and informed that the harbour master at Antwerp had received a telegram requesting him to let him know of the sad disaster in Wales. Both gentlemen immediately made arrangements to return, leaving their families to follow at their leisure, and arrived at Cardiff on Tuesday morning. A special train was chartered, by which Mr. Cope and Mr. Lewis reached Cilfynydd about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Lewis, after a short consultation with the officials, descended the pit.

Speculation as to the cause of the explosion continues rife, but nothing definite has yet transpired. I had a conversation yesterday with Mr. Martin, H. M. Inspector of Mines, but though he readily discussed general bearings of such explosions, he declined to commit himself to any definite opinion, and remarked that to start theories would not be fair to the public or those charged with the enquiry. Careful observation has been, and is being commented on the state of the mine and all indications bearing at the point in issue, and until those observations are completed no conclusions can be formed.

The continued story of Hugh Roberts

The fragment found in the pockets of poor Hugh Roberts, of whom 'Morien' referred in Monday's 'Western Mail,' furnishes a touching yet reassuring evidence of the bent of mind of at least one of the deceased. The following are the subjects referred to on Hugh Roberts's treasured scrap of paper: -

John, 10, 11 - The Good Shepherd; Matthew, 21, 28, 31, - The two sons; Matthew 25, 12 - The ten virgins; Luke 7, 41-42, The two debtors; Matthew 13, 24-30, Parable of the Tares; Luke 13, 6-9 - Parable of the Barren Fig; Matthew 20, 38, The Lord of the vineyard; Luke, 2, 1-8 Importunate widow; Luke 12, 2-14, - The good and bad stewards; Luke 14, 1-8, The unjust Steward; Matthew 17, 23-34, The unmerciful steward. In three of his references Hugh Roberts gives incorrect numbers, and the prophet figures are given between parenthesis.

Tuesday at the ill-fated colliery

The explorers that are so gallantly braving dangers and suffering all sorts of discom- forts in their efforts to secure the early removal of the bodies which are still lying in the depths of the Albion Colliery worked steadily and laboriously through the early hours of Tuesday morning, and for a considerable time concentrated their efforts upon the removal of the carcasses of the horses which had perished in the disaster. The task was a most disagreeable one, for the carcasses had commenced to decompose, and when they were brought to the surface the stench was almost overpowering. The carcasses were taken as soon as possible, by means of the incline, to the tip situated on the eastern side of the colliery and there buried.

The early morning trains brought large numbers of people to Pontypridd, and at midday the passenger traffic at Pontypridd railway station and the break and pedestrian traffic on the roadway to the colliery were again very large. There was, however, a diminution in the size of the crowd which besieged the approaches to the colliery as compared with other days, and the excitement of the people so noticeable on previous days have given place to grave feelings of gloomy resignation. In the mortuary there were again scenes of agony and grief during the process of identification, and the atmosphere around the loft had become so oppressive during the early morning that it was found necessary to knock holes in the roof of the building for the purpose of ventilation.

It appears that there was some delay in the delivery of coffins at the colliery during the day, and it is related that on one occasion, while a wagon load was passing along between the villages of Coedpenmaen and Cilfynydd, the relatives of some of the victims living en route insisted upon having them in their houses,

whether they were intended from them or not.

The announcement made from the colliery offices that Sir W. T. Lewis and those who formed the deputation to the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House had induced the chief civic dignitary of London to open a 'Mansion House Fund' was received with the utmost satisfaction, and the many telegrams of sympathy received from various parts of the country during the day created a good impression on the relatives of the victims of the disaster. One of the most cheering sites in connection with the terrible accident was witnessed in the morning, when a brake-load of workmen in their working clothes, and carrying safety lamps, arrived from Ynysybwl ready to offer their services in connection with exploration and clearance. The rapid speed in which the bodies were got up indicated the steady, systematic, and hard work carried on below ground, but the way in which the figures go up gives only too much cause for fear that the death toll when it comes to be finally counted up would be heavier than the largest estimate yet hazarded. In fact, it is highly probable that the number of victims will not be very far short of 300. There were only a few internments locally on Tuesday, although many bodies were taken away by train, but a large number of funerals were arranged for Wednesday. Mr. W. H. Matthias, was again present directing operations on the surface, and relief parties were organised at intervals, under the supervision of Mr. Philip Jones, the manager of the colliery; Mr. William Jones, Mountain Ash; Mr. Lewis Williams and others.

One of the parties on Tuesday morning discovered in Asket's heading the body of James Jones, the fireman, and also that of a number of others. Amongst the explorers on Tuesday were Messrs. Robson, Gray, Sims, Dyer, Lewis and Martin, the Inspectors of Mines; Mr. David Hannah (Ferndale Collieries) and Mr. A. Lawrence, M. E., Cardiff.

In the afternoon the ventilation fan was temporarily stopped by the officials of the colliery for the purpose of repairing the packing, which had been shattered by the explosion. The stopping of the fan for the purpose named was absolutely necessary, otherwise the machinery might have suffered. Dr. Howard Davis, of Pontypridd, and Dr. Ivor Davies of Cymmer, were in attendance at the colliery during the day, rendering what assistance they could.

Back at the pit

On Tuesday morning in the mortuary, one of the explorers entered with a battered lamp and a portion of clothing, which had been found on the Cilfynydd side. The body, however, had not been found. An error was made in the list of survivors that had died since the occurrence of the disaster. The name William Pharaoh should have been William Farrow. Farrow died on Sunday night. The stench in

the depth of the mine in the afternoon was so great that carbolic acid had to be taken down there in large quantities to sprinkle over the roadways.

A prominent figure among the crowd on Tuesday evening was Charlie North, the well-known exponent of 'the noble art,' who distributed water 'free, gratis, and for nothing.' Charlie is known as 'the colliers friend.'

Strange coincidence

Peculiar coincidence is pointed out between unfounded rumours and the true terrible facts. Twelve months last Saturday a rumour gained currency in the Aberdare valley, Ynysybwl, and other districts, that an explosion had occurred at the Albion Colliery, and hundreds of people made their way to Cilfynydd, and were only too pleased to find there was no truth in it. Now, however, an accident has actually happened, a year exactly after the rumour.

Mr. D. Ellis, secretary of the company, has asked us to contradict this statement. The work of exploration has been carried out without a single hitch. We understand that in consequence of the rumour the workmen at the Cymmer Colliery, refrained from working, and it is believed that the rumour had been purposefully set afloat by some malicious individual for some object not yet explained.

For his mother's sake

A pathetic story is being told about the poor fellow William Dobbs, whose life was sacrificed. He was a very hard-working man, and in addition to a large family supported an aged widowed mother, who resides in north Wales. When Dobbs was descending the pit on Saturday afternoon he was met by his butty, who remarked, "Why, Dobbs, are you going down again? You've earned a lot of money this week."

- "Yes," said the poor fellow, "and I want to earn more for I want to send my old mother as much as I can." He went down and his body was amongst the first batch recovered.

His brother, Eleazar Dobbs, was also employed at the ill-fated pit and would have been down the time of the explosion if he had not to have attended his club here. For the information of interested friends the funeral of William Dobbs, who lived for several years at Newbridge, (Monmouthshire) will be a public one, and will reach Tredegar Junction from Cilfynydd at 12.30 p.m. on Thursday, afterwards proceeding to New Bethel.

Eleven dead in one house

The surrounding circumstances of some of the cases are indescribable and pathetic. For instance, the checkweigher of the colliery lost three sturdy sons, whose respective age ranged between 22 and 30 years. Perhaps the saddest incident in connection with the whole affair was that of a family in which were the remains of a father, four sons, and six lodgers.

About 3 o'clock in the afternoon a woman of about forty years of age, with a sorrow-stricken face, leading a chubby baby boy, whose bright face and laughing eyes were evident that he did not realise his loss, stepped in and asked one of the clerks to read over the lists of those identified. She was vainly seeking her husband. "Oh, do let me know where he is, this waiting is awful. I should be satisfied if I knew the real fact." The clerk did his utmost, but could not find the missing man. Hardly had he finished that task when three girls who ages ran between 18 and 20 years, requested him find their brother, James, but here again his search did not meet with success, and a hopeless look crossed the face of each of the girls as they silently departed.

Two brothers, both popular Welsh bards, were also numbered among the victims. And so the sad incidents might be multiplied. The distress caused in the village with the terrible depletion of its wage earners may be imagined. One of the young victims named Howells was in Pontypridd on Friday evening, when he was asked by a cousin to spend Sunday with him near Caerphilly. He replied that he could not because his clothes were getting old, but he was going to buy a pair of trousers that night and work extra on Saturday afternoon to pay for it. This was done, but the next day the poor fellow's life was sacrificed. His body has still not yet been recovered.

Why not check the number of men?

A Pontypridd reporter wrote: - The uncertainty as to the number of men at work in a pit when an accident occurs is a matter which in connection with previous explosions has been often discussed, but in no case of recent years has the uncertainty led to such an anxiety on the part of relatives and friends at an instance than as on the present occasion. This is accounted for by the inclusion amongst the unfortunate victims of so many men brought together from different nationalities and different counties.

A shift at collieries such as the Albion, for instance, would more likely contain a large percentage of Welshmen, but the repairers, timbermen, and others are, many of them, natives of north Wales, or various parts of England, and all the counties of Cardigan and Pembroke. Most are small farmers and other workers, attracted

to the coalfields of Glamorganshire by the splendid earnings of a few years ago. Many of them are only lodgers, some have just come, and others belonging to the class of 'rolling- stones,' who never remain long in one place. As there is no accurate list to be had as to who descended the pit, considerable doubt prevails with regard to some of these as to whether they were down or not.

"Why," asked a Scotsman, of one of our reporters on Tuesday, "do the management of these large collieries not adopt a system of checking the names of the numbers of men who descend the shaft? It is all very well to say that it would entail trouble, but the best answer to that plea is that checks or tallies are issued in such huge concerns as Sir William Armstrong's shipbuilding works at Newcastle, and why cannot a similar system be adopted in the south Wales collieries? Let every man be given a brass check, bearing a given number, when descending, and be told to deliver it up when he comes up, and if he neglects to comply with the request fine him one-shilling or so."

Poverty-stricken homes

That a decision to appeal to the public for subscriptions has not come too soon, for the bodies of the deceased have been taken, in some instances, to poverty-stricken homes, where, now the breadwinner is gone, it is stated that the inmates would be on the verge of starvation if it were not for the kindness of neighbours. In one instance at Coedpenmaen a family recently removed from north Wales had only two chairs in their living room, a box for a table, a few bricks laid loosely on the floor instead of a fender, not even a pair of stockings by way of change of raiment for the dead husband when the body was brought home. At Trallwn gardens, where a wife and family of nine children mourned the loss of their husband and father, there was not a morsel of bread in the house on Tuesday morning, until kind neighbours helped them to stave off famine.

Burying the dead

In one instance on Tuesday only eight people escorted a coffin to the Glyntaff cemetery; in another case there were about seventy people present, but in the largest not more than 100. Fortunately, hearses had been secured where necessary, and no inconvenience arose. The funeral of Peter Kehoe, a young Irishman, was attended mainly by his fellow-countrymen, while the service was conducted by the Rev. Father Noonan and Father McManus, the remains of the deceased being interred in the Catholic portion of the cemetery. It appears that no more than 16 other members of the Catholic congregation at Treforest have been killed at the Albion Colliery, and these five will be interred at the cemetery today (Wednesday) while others will be taken for burial to Merthyr Vale and Dowlais.

The funeral of David Morris, of Cilfynydd, was, perhaps the largest attended of

the whole on Tuesday and the coffin, placed upon a bier (a frame for bearing dead to grave), was carried upon the shoulders of the deceased's fellow-workmen from Cilfynydd to the cemetery, about three distant miles. The usual preliminary service at the house was conducted by the Rev. Michael Williams, Pastor of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, of which the deceased was a member, and after the hymn 'Yn y dyfrodd mawr a'r tonau,' had been sung, the procession started.

There was no singing on the way, but the familiar dirge 'Bydd myrdd o ryfeddodau,' (there will be a multitude of wonders) was sung at the grave. The Rev. Thomas Williams of Penrhiwceiber, a cousin of Mrs. Morris, assisted the Rev. Williams in officiating at the cemetery. The mourners were the widow and four sons of the deceased. In addition the body of William Evans, was removed on Tuesday morning to Lampeter. The remains of Walter Searle and Joseph Sheppard, were taken to Bristol in the afternoon. Arrangements have already been made with the railway company to take some of the bodies to Machyllleth, Towyn, Llanidloes, Chippenham, Tiverton, Treorky and Ferndale.

The four interments of the victims of the Albion disaster took place at Glyntaff Cemetery on Tuesday were, viz; Thomas James Tickel, 49 David Street, Coedpen- maen, the Rev. W. Henry officiating; Cornelius Topp, 19 Foundry Place, Coedpen- maen, the Vicar of Glyntaff officiating; Patrick Kahon, 22, 3 Cymmer cottages, Cilfynydd, the Rev. Father Noonan, Catholic priest, officiating; and David Morris, 58 Mary St, Cilfynydd, the Rev. B. E. Williams, Independent Minister, Cilfynydd, conducting the funeral service. Mr. Morgan Rees, the sexton, was actively engaged in superintending the opening of the graves and arranging the times of arrival. Mr. W. Harris, a member of the Burial Board, was present in consultation with Mr. Rees during the day.

A sad spectacle at Cardiganshire

When travelling to Lampeter on Tuesday evening a reporter had an interview with Mr. Evan Davies, brother-in-law of William Evans, 29, timberman, one of the unfortunate victims of the recent explosion at Cilfynydd. Evans hails from Aberaeron. Here his widow and four children reside. Mr. Davies said he received a wire on Sunday morning that no hope was entertained of his brother's recovery, and, consequently he and Daniel Williams, the deceased first cousin, set out for Glamorganshire without delay. On reaching the scene of the terrible disaster they learnt that Evan Thomas, timberman, of the Great Western Pit, and others, had hauled the body of their relative to the surface, after an untiring search from 8 o'clock in the afternoon till 4 o'clock on the following morning, during which period of intense anxiety they neither slaked their thirst nor ate a morsel of food. Their comrade was found with his left hand clenched to his face and his right

hand extended, as if warding off a blow. He had died from the afterdamp.

On Tuesday Evans's mortal remains were conveyed by train to Lampeter, where a hearse was in readiness to convey the body to Aberaeron for internment on Wednesday at Llwyncelyn. There were two sights on the platform of the collegiate on Tuesday evening. One was the group of friends who had come from a distance to take part in a degree conferring ceremony at St. David's College this morning. The other spectacle was the hovering together of solemn people from the country, who with their tear-beaten cheeks awaited the removal of their dead relative. There will be a large public funeral at Llwyncelyn today, much sympathy being felt for the bereaved family.

Sir W. T. Lewis writes to the '*Times*'

The following letter appeared in the '*Times*' newspaper on Tuesday June 27th 1894: -

Sir - As chairman of the Board of Management of the Monmouthshire & South Wales Miners' Permanent Provident Fund, I have today visited the scene of this terrible disaster, and never during my forty years experience in mining have I known a case in which there is more urgent need of public help. The whole of the list of the death-toll being 253 were members of our society, and thus had made some provision for those depending upon them. The society was established 13 years ago, and is supported by contributions from workmen, employers, and from some of the land-lords. It has at present a membership of over 60,000 workmen, and since its formation it has paid above a quarter of a million to widows, children, and disabled members, of whom there are now on its funds, apart from the disaster, no less than 617 widows and 1,100 children, a very large portion being attributable to accidents causing only one or two deaths, of which the public never hear.

At the moment the number of those who by this explosion have lost their breadwinners cannot be ascertained, but most assuredly they will form a great addition to the burdens of our society. My plea is that an institution doing so excellent work will have a strong claim for help in its time of need, and I mention to express the hope that the appeal which we reluctantly made on its behalf will meet with a generous response, especially as in recent years, owing to the frequency of such disasters, the demands made upon its resources have exceeded all expectations and may, I fear, jeopardize its existence. I remain, yours most obedient servant.

W. Thomas Lewis

22a Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster, June 25th 1894

Relief measures - Mansion House fund to be opened

At the request of the Mayor of Cardiff the Lord Mayor of London received on Tuesday morning at the Mansion House a deputation consisting of Sir W. T. Lewis, chairman of the Board of Management of the Monmouthshire and South Wales Miners' Permanent Provident Society, and Mr. J. B. Cambell, and after expressing his deep sympathy with the sufferers his Lordship consented to open a Mansion House Fund and issue a public appeal.

At a meeting of the Cardiff Health Board Sanitary Committee on Tuesday morning the Mayor, Mr. W. J. Trounce, announced that Sir W. T. Lewis had waited upon the Lord Mayor, with the result that following a telegram from Sir William had just been handed to him:

“Glad to inform your worship that the Lord Mayor received us this morning and was most kind and sympathetic, and consented to open a fund to assist in the relieving of sufferers in the Albion Explosion.”

A similar telegram was also received from Sir W. T. Lewis by Mr. Matthias at the Albion Colliery on Tuesday morning and posted up. On Monday morning Mr. Pritchard Morgan, M. P; after consultation between Mr. Alfred Thomas, M. P; and himself, communicated with the Lord Mayor, with a view of opening a subscription and to call at the Mansion House on Tuesday morning, as intimated to the letter, they were pleased to find the Lord Mayor was ready to immediately start a national subscription in aid of the widows and orphans of the unfortunate men who lost their lives at Cilfynydd. Mr. Harvey Thomas, Mr. Pritchard Morgan were glad to find that Mayor of Cardiff and Sir William Thomas Lewis had also placed themselves in communication with the Mansion House.

The Lord Mayor's Appeal

The Lord Mayor of London on Tuesday issued the following appeal to the Press Association: - Sir - Precise figures are not yet obtained as to the loss of life and the numbers of widows and children deprived of their breadwinners after the terrible explosion took place on Saturday at the Albion Colliery, Pontypridd, but I am assured the number of men killed is not less than 260 and they have left at least 250 widows and 300 children. These statistics mean that the casualties are greater in every respect than any that has happened in Wales since 1878 (Abercarn 268 killed), or in England since 1866 (The Oaks, 371 killed)

All the deceased were members of the Monmouthshire and South Wales Miners Permanent Provident Society, and under whose rules widows and children are entitled 5/- a week, and 2/6d respectively. Troubled by this very modest sum I am

told that nearly £50,000 will be required and it must be remembered these permanent funds are of comparatively recent growth, and are imperilled by such a great and exceptional demand upon their resources. In the case of the South Wales fund for example there are on the books 600 widows and 1,100 children, the vast majority of whom have been rendered dependant by accidents caused by one or two deaths, of which the public never hear.

On a request from the Mayor of Cardiff I met a deputation from South Wales, and having satisfied myself, as I think should always be the case with regard to appeals from the Mansion House, that the local resources are inadequate, and that the application to supplement them is made by public authority, I have no hesitation in making an urgent appeal for help. The fund raised at the Mansion House will be really used to help those that have helped themselves, as far as they could, and whose endeavours in this direction are worthy of the highest commendation. Cheque's may be sent to me here or paid into the bank of England. - I am, Sir, Your obedient servant

George Rob Tyler, Lord Mayor.
The Mansion House, June 26th 1894

The value of the Permanent Fund

Mr. Evan Owen and his staff made the first payment from the Miners' Permanent Fund at 11 o'clock on Tuesday morning at the Albion Colliery. The sum of £1,000 was drawn from the Pontypridd branch of Lloyds Bank (the treasurers of the society) and distributed in sums of £5 to each widow or the relatives of the deceased members. The efficiency of the machinery of the Miners' Provident Fund is being admired on every hand, and the prompt manner with which the payment was made in such a limited time after the distress is highly praised.

A very strong feeling prevails that, having regard to the enormous burden which the explosion will add to the already large pulls upon the society, the contributions of the workmen who maintain excellent institutions will be very materially assisted by the public. Mr. Owen, in his work of distribution, was ably assisted by Mr. David Ellis, local secretary to the colliery, and Mr. Ben Williams, Coedcae Colliery, secretary to the Coedcae branch.

Subscriptions of the Welsh members of Parliament

A meeting of the Welsh members of Parliament was held on Tuesday afternoon in the committee rooms of the House of Commons to express sympathy with the relatives and friends of the deceased in the Cilfynydd Colliery explosion. Sir George Osbourne Morgan presided, and there was a good attendance. The

proceedings lasted but a few minutes - Mr. Alfred Thomas, after the meeting had been promptly opened by the Chamber of Commerce, proposed the following resolution, which was seconded by Mr. William Rathbone: -

“That this meeting desires to express its heartfelt sympathy with relatives and friends of those who have lost their lives by the lamentable disaster at Cilfynydd, and its admiration of the heroic efforts made by the rescue parties to save the victims of the calamity.”

Mr. Rathbone, the seconder, referred in very moving terms to the magnitude of the disaster and the heroism displayed by the rescuers. The resolution was unanimously passed, and members present showed their sympathy in a more practical form by subscribing on the spot £375.

An interview with a survivor - a strange enquiry

A reporter on Tuesday afternoon had a conversation with one of the survivors, Henry Harris, of 6 Cilfynydd Street, who had remained unconscious from the time he was taken out until Tuesday morning. The young man, who appeared in a dazed, semiconscious condition, asked when he came up to the ground what all the people were doing there. And if everybody was ‘on the spree.’ In reply to questions, he said he was in the engine deep, Cilfynydd side, and heard a report of a gun. He immediately became unconscious, and remembered nothing more. He believed he owed his escape to falling into the water.

Much of the credit for his recovery was due to his maternal care bestowed upon him by his landlady, Mrs. Margaret Lewis. Mrs. Lewis kept five lodgers, and four of them are given up as dead. They are Walter Burrige, Benjamin Eynon, Thomas Hyman, and William Walters. His statement was very brief, disconnected, and confused, and varied considerably from what his companions had preciously related. His ‘buttie,’ Harris said, was dead. He had been to see him. This was the only factor that Harris seemed fully conscious of.

Exciting experiences of explorers

Mr. Edward Jones, the manager of the Lady Windsor Colliery, Ynysybwl, related an interesting narrative to a ‘*Western Mail*’ reporter on his experiences with others in Asket’s heading on Tuesday afternoon: - “Mr. J. B. Gibbon, of Treharris, and myself organised a party of forty men (33 from Ynysybwl and seven from Treharris) and descended the pit for the purpose of exploring. We got to Asket’s heading about 3 o’clock in the afternoon, and found five bodies on the incline on this heading. The ventilating fan having been stopped to allow the packing to be attended to, we had some difficulty at the top of Asket’s heading and had to fight

for about an hour to hold our ground. The bodies we found were badly mutilated, and we saw a carcass of a horse with its stomach burst open.

One poor fellow had died lying across the rails, while we discovered the body of William Lewis, the timberman, in a peculiar attitude. He was on his knees against the side of the wall, with his hands up to his face. We went all along the face back from the tip to the Thomas Williams's heading and through Colwyn's heading, where we found everything to be in very fair condition. The explosion must have been terrible in Asket's heading, for we found the coal-dust reduced to cinders and clinging to the face. It was like coke."

Interview with an explorer

One newspaper representative had a conversation on Tuesday with William Hayward, one of the explorers who with others had been touring Grover's side.

"How far have you got in, two miles?" said the pressman. - "About that, I think," was the reply.

"There is a lot of rounding to be done, but we have explored all of the workings in Grover's district now."

"Did you discover many bodies?" - "We found eight bodies in one heading."

"How is the atmosphere in the pit?" - "The ventilation is quite satisfactory."

A chat with Dewi Dar

The reporter also interviewed Mr. D. Evans (Dewi Dar), the fireman, after seeing his ascent from the depths below at noon. "During my stay down there," said Mr. Evans, "we explored Williams's heading, Eli Helly's heading, and Asket's heading, and found in all five bodies which were not mutilated. The falls on the incline were exceedingly bad, and the place around was a complete wreck. We also found two horses dead, but not mutilated."

Condition of the injured -

A report by Doctor Lyttle on Tuesday evening stated that three of the survivors continued to be very ill. John Lewis, 39 Wood Road; Richard Williams, 104 Cilfynydd Rd, and George Parry, 25 Police Row. As regards Lewis, who suffered from burns, the doctor fears the worst. Williams is suffering from the effects of burns, and John Evans from the effects of asphyxia. Tommy Dobbs, Hugh Jenkins, Bum- ford, and Harries, are declared to have practically recovered.

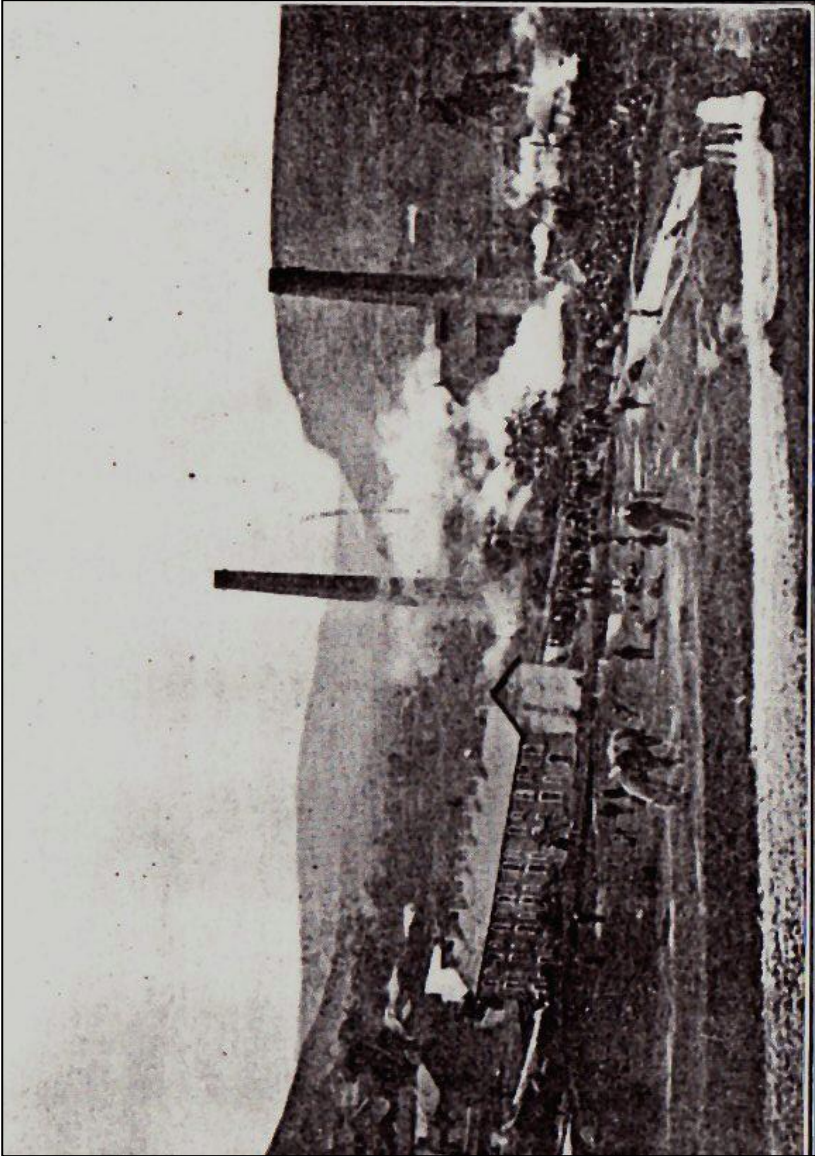
The total number of bodies recovered at half-past nine-o'clock on Tuesday night was 253 and of these 226 had been identified. The task of removing the carcasses of the horses and burying them with chloride of lime in the tip was still being actively carried on. It was impossible to state exactly how many funerals were to take place on Wednesday, but it was estimated that they would number upwards of 100. Dr. Lytton, the medical officer of the colliery, remarked to a reporter that he had, in the company of Dr. Ivor Ajax Lewis, Porth, who had rendered invaluable assistance, been examining the injuries of all bodies recovered preparatory to the coroner's inquest. Dr. Williams, of Porthcawl, had also rendered him great assistance in this respect.

The Pontypridd Fund

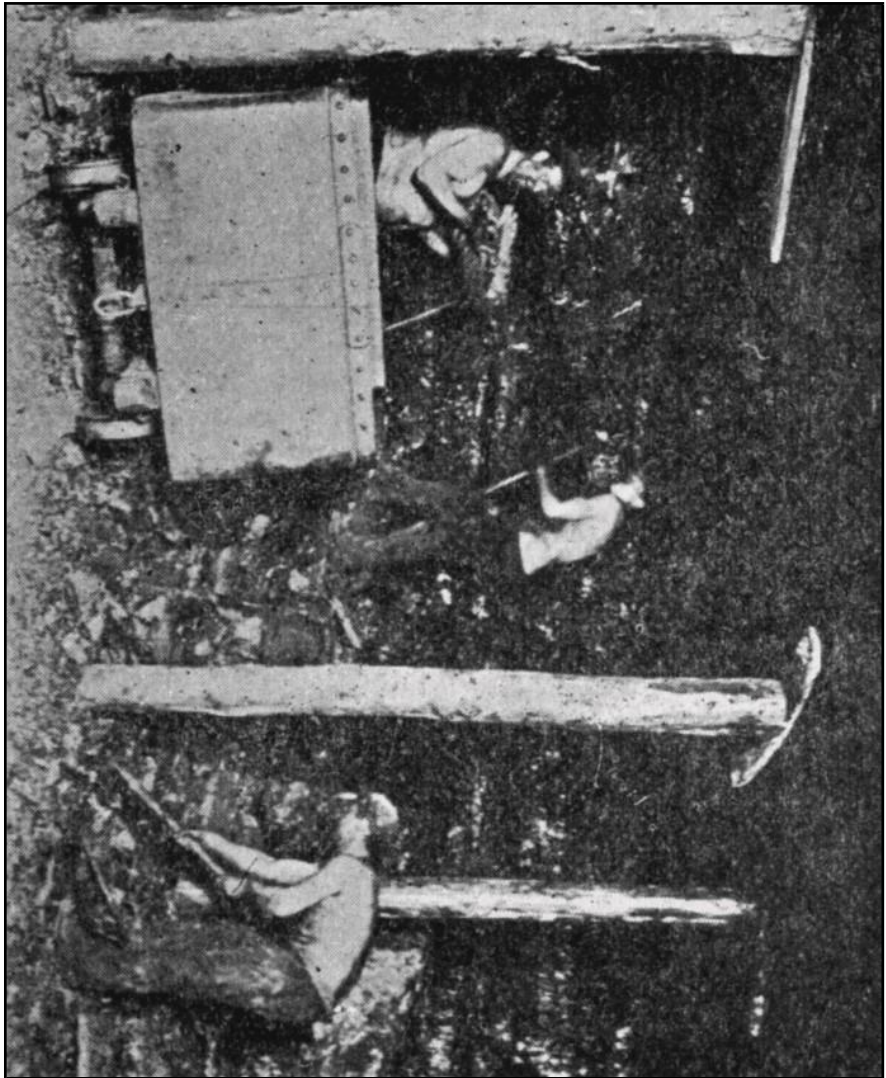
A general meeting of the Pontypridd Distress Fund committee was held on Tuesday night at the Parish Rooms, Pontypridd, under the presidency of Mr. David Leyshon, chairman of the local Board. The attendance was very large and included Mr. David Ellis, secretary of the Central Relief Fund, and Mr. Evan Owen, J. P., secretary of the Permanent Fund. Mr. D. Leyshon was appointed permanent chairman of the committee, and an executive was formed. Resolutions were adopted to issue circulars to all churches and chapels in the counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth soliciting contributions towards the fund, and the mayors of corporations and chairmen of Local Boards for assistance in obtaining contributions. A list of subscriptions already received was read.

Dr. Williams, of Porthcawl, who visited Cilfynydd subsequent to the disaster, related a sad incident to our Porthcawl correspondent. During his stay at the ill-fated village Dr. Williams visited a house where a young man was a survivor of the terrible disaster. The same man was being nursed by his sweetheart, a young woman from north Wales, who had come down on Thursday to prepare for the wedding that had been arranged. On the day intended for the nuptials, however, the bride elect was engaged in nursing her affianced back to life at a time when he appeared to be passing over to the 'great majority.'

Dr. Leckie has received a letter from Mrs. Gunn, Refreshment-rooms, Cardiff, stating that she would be most pleased to supply the whole of the sufferers with soup, jelly, fruit, or wine if required, free of charge. He had also received a letter from Messrs. Summers & Co., druggists, Liverpool, expressing their sympathy with the widows and orphans and enclosing a cheque for £2 to be handed to any fund got up for the relief of the sufferers.



The view from the hill overlooking the Albion Colliery the day after the disaster



A dram being loaded at the face of an unknown pit

CHAPTER SEVEN

Wednesday, June 27th 1894

The last sad scenes in the dreadful tragedy (so far as the dead are concerned) commenced at Cilfynydd on Wednesday and the shadow of death which had been hanging over the village for days took form in impressive funeral processions - the trappings of the sight of woe and grief plainly visible. Thousands of people travelled to the place from all parts of the country many comforting themselves as though on pleasure bent, but the bulk moved by genuine sorrow for comrades removed so suddenly and so terribly, and sympathy for the bereaved.

Roads to and from Cilfynydd were occupied by a continuous series of hearses, mourning coaches (wrote the '*Western Mail*'), and vehicles of all kinds, containing crowds of weeping women and children. Locomotion, particularly to and from Pontypridd, was exceedingly difficult, for passengers, foot and vehicular, had to pause at every few yards to allow another and yet another mourning cortege to pass. Scenes of unutterable pathos were witnessed throughout the whole course, one at Norton Bridge, where a little child, dressed in white draped with a black sash, toddled playfully round the bier which waited at the door, to convey to their last place the remains of the father within the house. And after all this mystery and 'mockery of life,' this 'carnage of war,' the sun shone brightly in calm, majestic splendour, thrown into strong contrast with the gloom below, and deeply emphasising the distracted query which must have weighed on every mind, 'Why? Why is that: -

'There is no chord in human life
Whose natural tone breathes not of woe?'

The sad duty of disposing of the dead bodies brought up from the pit will engage attention for the next day or two, and concurrently with this the search for any remaining in the mine will be continued and prosecuted to the end. Then will follow the larger matter of fully investigating all the circumstances of the catastrophe, and side by side with this the discussion of methods for preventing the recurrence of such disasters.

A terrible Blow

The '*South Wales Daily News*' reported: - One can hardly comprehend how some of the relatives of the dead have been stricken. Cases of families having been depleted of all their male members, and of parents bewailing the loss of all their children are continually brought to light, and it will not be until a couple of weeks hence that the awful effects of Saturday night's event can be properly realised. Amongst the saddest of these instances is the case of poor Mrs. David Llewellyn,

of Ann St, Cilfynydd, who counts a husband and two brothers among the dead. Her sister, Mrs. H. P. Morgan, is, with her husband, the chief lay workers connected with Eglwysbach's Mission at the Pontypridd Town Hall. Both Mr. and Mrs. Morgan have been constant in their attendance at the colliery yard, and despite their terrible grief have been incessant in their efforts to minister comfort and consolation to the stricken families of the district. In a conversation with our representative Mr. Morgan furnished some pathetic particulars of his lost relatives.

"My wife's brothers," he said, "were John and Morris Ashton, and they lived in Howell Street, Cilfynydd. Poor Morris was a married man, and leaves four children. He was a fireman in the colliery, and it was only on Friday night, a few hours before the catastrophe that he mentioned casually to his brother Edward, who is now alive, that he was often afraid in his heart to go down the pit. John Ashton, another of Mr. Morgan's brothers-in-law, was another man, and his remains will be conveyed for internment to his parish of Carno, Montgomeryshire."

"A brother of mine," continued Mr. Morgan, "was also in the pit shortly before the explosion. His name is T. H. Morgan. He went down with the morning shift, but did not return with them at 2 o'clock. He had decided to work overtime, and did so for some time. He told me that during the afternoon he fancied he heard some peculiar noises in the mine, which made him so uneasy that he decided to return to bank at once. He did so, and, escaped with his life, for in less than twenty minutes after he had come out the disaster took place."

Further recovery of bodies

Telegraphing from the pit's mouth at 8 am on Wednesday morning, a '*Western Mail*' reporter stated that the number of bodies brought out of the pit amounts to 257. The work of exploration was carried on during the night with monotonous regularity. As early as 6 o'clock the process of identification recommenced, among the first to appear on the scene was an old man of 75, named Joseph Jones, who regularly since Sunday morning has vainly searched for the remains of a son, David. The poor fellow, his face covered with wrinkles, and his hair like almond blossoms, presented a pitiful spectacle as, leaning on his staff, he went from corpse to corpse, and undid the coverings of brattice cloth, and carefully scrutinized each grimy visage, and eventually left the morgue bitterly disappointed and with great salt tears tracing their way down his rugged cheeks. At 8 o'clock the number of bodies identified was 233, the additions being carried to their homes in coffins.

The weather was beautifully fine on Wednesday, and this, perhaps, accounted for

the thousands who arrived at Cilfynydd from all the surrounding districts. The scene outside the colliery was very different from that within. Outside the people seemed to have made a picnic of the sad affair, and fruit and ice-cream merchants were very much in evidence, whilst inside the colliery yard there are the relatives of those still missing vainly seeking for their loved ones, and others, whose friends have been identified, were receiving the first payment from the Miners' Provident Fund. Many persons were at the colliery yard on Wednesday morning, some having travelled considerable distances for the purpose of trying to discover friends and relations who they believe were employed at the colliery. In most of these cases the anxious friends only surmise was that the persons they are looking for were at the pit at the time, and the suspense in nearly every instance is agonizing. It is heart-rending to witness the distress of some women who had scarcely left the top of the pit since the accident, and who paced up and down from the mortuary to the shaft wearily waiting for the body of a dear one, which will probably never be discovered. Up to this time eight more of the unfortunate fellows had been recognised by their relatives, and were placed in coffins ready for removal.

Death of another rescued worker

Richard Williams, a single man, 21 years of age, residing at 104 Cilfynydd Road, who was one of the rescued miners, died about half-past nine on Wednesday morning. This is the tenth of the rescued men who have succumbed to their injuries.

Resumption of the inquest

Messrs R. H. Rhys and E. B. Reece resumed their inquiry at Pontypridd on Wednesday for the purpose of identification and the issue of burial certificates. Up to Wednesday 176 certificates had been issued, and 20 bodies remained at the colliery unidentified. It is hoped that this number will be reduced to ten, in which case the remains are so mangled and burnt as to be beyond recognition. One sad woman came before the coroner giving evidence of identification concerning a lodger, said she recognised the body because the deceased was wearing her husband's shirt, adding, in a burst of grief, "My husband was killed in the explosion, and they have not got his body up yet." The inquiry was afterwards adjourned till Monday, July 16th.

Dead horses brought to the surface - Another body recovered

Several carcasses of horses were brought to bank between 12 and 2 o'clock, and many tons of rubbish were disposed of in a similar fashion. The men below were working at a very high pressure, and the clearance of the falls was being rapidly

affected.

Shortly after 2 o'clock another body was sent up, and, the news quickly spreading, a large crowd still seeking missing ones entered the colliery yard and thronged round the mortuary. Of all the number admitted no-one succeeded in naming the poor lad - he seemed to be a doorboy - and pitiful indeed was the keen disappointment deposited on the faces the men and women as they left the hay-loft when this harrowing test was completed. A lad from Landore with tears streaming down his face told one of our reporters that he believed a cousin of his was in the pit at the time of the catastrophe.

All the pits idle.

All the collieries in the Rhondda valley were at a standstill on this day, and about 30,000 miners were therefore idle. The great majority of the workmen left the valleys in the morning by special trains and breaks for Cilfynydd to attend the funeral of the victims.

The '*South Wales Daily News*' of this date reported: - A large number of watches were found upon the dead, and some of the watches belonging to the dead first brought up from the pit had not stopped. The watches in some cases helped identification, and the numbers upon the lamps lying near the bodies were another helpful means of establishing identity in cases where mutilation had been most pronounced. Peculiarity in the boots worn by the deceased was, however, found to be the best method of recognition when other means failed. Even in the face of crushing affliction there is room for minor troubles. Not a few widows seemed, in the midst even of their sad bereavement, to be greatly concerned with fears their mourning clothes could not be obtained in time for the funeral. The insurance agents at the colliery were constantly being asked by women, with tear-stained faces, when the money would be ready for the purchase of mourning garments.

Burying their dead - Pathetic scenes at the cemeteries

The green hillside, picturesque, ruggedness of mountain outlines, and green dales in the midst of which the stricken hamlet of Cilfynydd is situated presented on Wednesday a framework to one of the saddest scenes I ever witnessed, wrote '*Morien*' in the '*Western Mail*' The noonday sun shone in the midst of an almost cloudless sky, and revealed the almost unrivalled natural beauties of that district of the Taff valley where other verdant dales converge. Mountain rivulets, with crystal streams bounding from the heights, and making music as they flew over obstacles, seemed to sing the songs of gladsome nature when on their way to their homes in the Seven Seas. The feathered songsters of the adjacent woods on the sloping hills appeared like members of the great choral throng of the

summertime. But in the midst of all these charming scenes and vocal glee were bereaved homes, arranged in terraces one above the other at the wooded mountainside, with 241 coffins in them, and as many of that number of men and boys enclosed in them, ready to be conveyed to internment in the bosom of Mother Earth.

Fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, and the sweethearts of many a heartbroken maiden composed that mighty throng of the dead. When one regarded that multitude of dead sons of labour, most useful members of the community, slain as a sacrifice to Moloch (a Semitic God who children were sacrificed), it appeared as if Pluto had made a moment of triumph in that locality in the valley of the Taff.

But surely, the scenes before one were sufficiently touching to make 'from tears well forth from Pluto's eyes.' Perhaps it would hardly be believed, but it is perfectly true, I found grave men, men of a religious turn of mind, discussing in the Welsh language the mysterious problem as how to reconcile such a catastrophe and such scenes of woe as was with the Fatherhood of the Eternal.

I heard an old man telling another that at the presence of the horrible scenes "Yr wyf yn methu gweddio yr un gair!" (I am unable to pray a single word!). Another old man observed that the only glimpse of God's fatherhood he beheld these days was the fact that there is a limit to the amount of human consciousness of suffering, and that beyond that limit is a condition of insensibility.

Another seemed inclined to believe, like philosophers of old, that there are two mighty forces in the universe, one entailing suffering and the other happiness, and that in such catastrophes as these it is the enemy of mankind and all created things that is for the moment triumphant. These speculative theories are the result of the inquisitive instinct of Celtic minds. But the majority were silent, and like Aaron in the midst of their awful surroundings, and if prepared to sing at all, it would be Martin Luther's favourite psalm 130, viz., the De Profundis, - "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord."

It must be remembered that the silent Welsh masses who are the vast majority, apart from the noisy element, are profoundly influenced by the religious sentiment, especially in the face of a great sorrow like the present one, which has almost paralysed the entire neighbouring community by its awfulness. To illustrate this it would be unnecessary to do more than quote the last entry into the pocketbook of a young Welsh bard who was amongst the slain. The book is in my possession, and the last verse in it, written with pencil and with the hand, doubtless, covered with the black dust of the mine, is as follows: -

Os, dymunaf ddi lyn Iesu,
Rhiad Bodlonni Carie'r Groes;
fy ngwneuthyr megis baban;
fwyaf gamp fy oes;

If I choose to follow Jesus,
I must be willing to carry the cross; Rhaid
I must be made like a child (baby); Dyma
That is the greatest feat of my life

Yngyfi wyno Ify ngheidwad,
gwnaeth yntau fyw I'w dad;
ffordd I'r bywyd,
frynian Gwyn fyd,
mewk mwynhad!

May I live there for my saviour, Fel
As he live for his father; Dyma'r union
This is the true way to the life Yn y man, ar
Shortly, on the hills of paradise. Caf yngolli
I'll lose myself in ecstasy!

(Translation by Mr. Alan Caffery)

Then were the last beautiful lines of poor 'Moeldwynog,' Pen y gross, Caernarvon. The verse was the last which the bard of Arvon sang with the harp of his native north before he went down into the mine to die. For the benefit of those who do not know Welsh, I may say that the last two lines are to the following effect: -

'In the near future I shall, on the hills of paradise, be absorbed in eternal ecstasy.'

The pocketbook is full sublime sentiments and there are eight verses to a 'Mary' apparently of the days of his youth in Arvon, who died of consumption, which strongly reminds one of the Burns's lines to 'Mary in heaven.' And nothing higher than that can be said of any poetry the genius of man ever produced. Think of it, my reader, this 'Moeldwynog' was a hard-working man, who spends his day earning his bread in the darkest mines, and yet in his leisure moments he could frame charming ditties to the scared harp of Cambria! I saw his coffin today with a floral wreath upon its lid, an ancient Welsh emblem that the soul which has departed into the shine of eternal bloom, said by a Welsh priestess to be such that:

-

Dream snapshot pictures of a world so fair
Sorrow sad death, cannot enter there.

The attendance of people at Cilfynydd on Wednesday was enormous. The first thing that struck anyone coming in view of the mighty host, extending for two or three hundred yards along the highway opposite the colliery entrance into Graig Evan Leyshon common, where thousands sat on the grass, was the highly respectable appearance of the mighty throng. All, men, women and boys, were dressed in black, and the mass of black was relieved by the appearance of countless thousands of white shirt-fronts and collars. The cream of the population of Mid-Glamorgan were there, and to testify their sympathy for the bereaved and their deep respect for the memory of the departed. It was a striking thing to

observe that, although the day was sweltering hot, the public-houses were that day far less patronised than on the other days since the disaster. The aspect of the thousands was of deep solemnity and gravity of demeanour.

The slightest touching incident in reference to anyone who had died in the mine would bring a rush of tears into the eyes, which would be then brushed away with the back of the hand. The white blinds were drawn in most of the substantially built cottages throughout the terraces of Cilfynydd. The families of the departed were all clad in deep mourning, for, according to the popular Welsh sentiment, respectable mourning for the dead is regarded as a direct token of respect and affection for the memory of the departed.

It was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon when the first great procession of funerals started. It came down Jones's Street, and passed up the valley, and just beyond the bridge over the canal, called Pont lock Cadudwg, which leads to the colliery, the procession passed up along the right of a steep mountain road in the direction of Llanfabon Parish Church, some few miles away; the men, four or more abreast, and their appearance was most striking. Their faces bore a lowering expression, and, an unusual thing in a Welsh funeral, not a hymn was sung. There were eight coffins in this procession, and the carriers relieved each other silently and with striking monotony. Then, after short intervals, one after the other, 41 coffins were conveyed down the valley towards Glyntaff Cemetery, three miles below Cilfynydd. The majority were carried on biers, some of which were made of fresh wood recently nailed together, and unpainted. Others, owing to want of a sufficient numbers of biers, were conveyed on breaks. Most of the coffins displayed wreaths of flowers upon their lids. In this enormous procession also, there was a total absence of hymn singing, and all walked silently, with the exception of speaking to each other in low tones. In this order Glyntaff Cemetery was reached, and each funeral passed in, not only with decorum, but with every evidence of deepest sorrow. Here the clergy and the ministers of all denominations accompanied members of their respective flocks to the open graves allotted to the remains, and at each a short religious service was held.

There were 41 groups, with a coffin in the midst of each, and the brilliant rays of the sun reflected on their polished brass furniture. It was a most remarkable scene, which never can be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The yawning graves were mostly in the neighbourhood of tall bushes, where by and by the birds would sing a pure requiem for the departed. At one of the graves the Rev. John Evans, Eglwysbach, officiated, attended by Mrs. Evans and Sister Catherine and others who assisted in this 'Forward movement.' At the end of the short said service he half apologetically asked the people to sing a Welsh hymn with a view to 'rend the cloud,' which had hitherto made everybody dumb. He then gave out

the marvelous words of the Welsh dirge: - “Bydd myrdd e ryfeddodau,” which when translated reads: -

“There will be a multitude of wonders All robed in snowy garments,
When dawns the morning grey With new-born radiance shed,
And resurrection’s children Resembling their redeemer
Awake to endless day; When he comes back from the dead.”

Then the beautiful words were sung to ‘Aberystwyth.’ Men and women sang as only Welsh people can sing the songs of the sanctuary, and the volume of the sweetest melody ever penned by Dr. Parry reminded one of Scott’s lines describing Israel in the wilderness stages. Singing their evening hymn, in which description we find the words: -

“Then Israel’s daughters poured their lays,
With priests and warriors’ voice between.”

At another grave was being sung the equally beautiful Welsh hymn: -

Beth syddi mi yn y byd
Ond gofibryn mawr a hyd, &co.

Translation: - Dreams cannot picture a world so fair
Sorrow and death cannot enter there

This was sung to the tune named ‘Babel.’ The vast multitude then silently, many weeping bitterly, departed. On Thursday the funerals will be still more in number, concluded ‘*Morien*.’

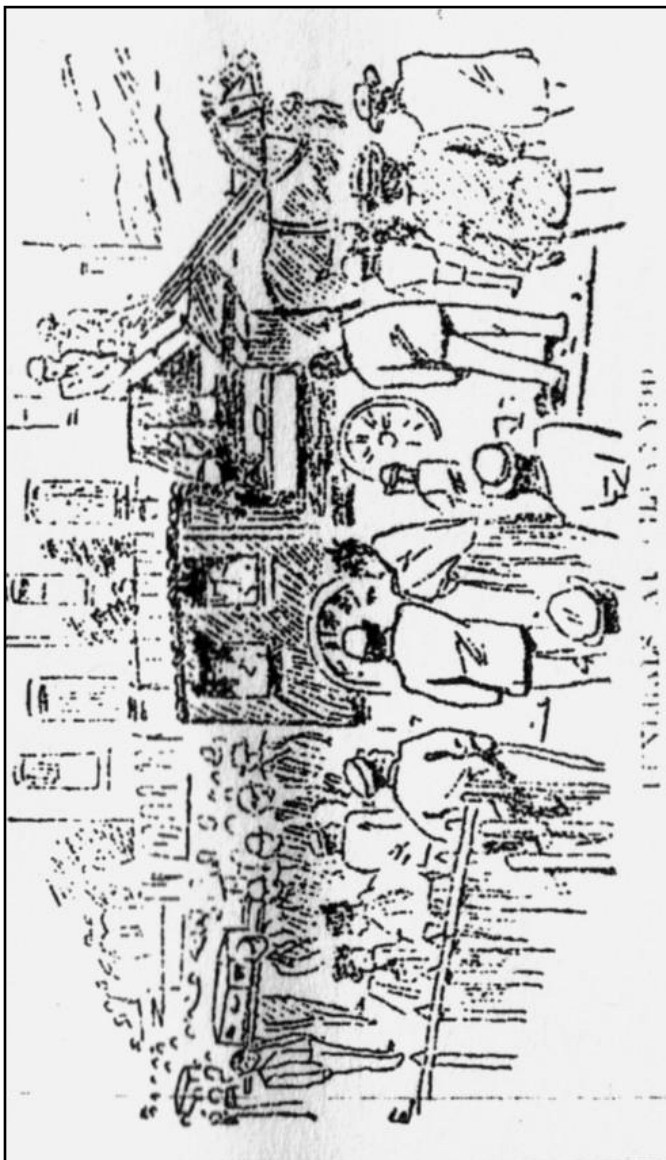
THE FUNERALS

A whole district in mourning - Great and solemn processions

The following is a list of Wednesday’s funerals: -

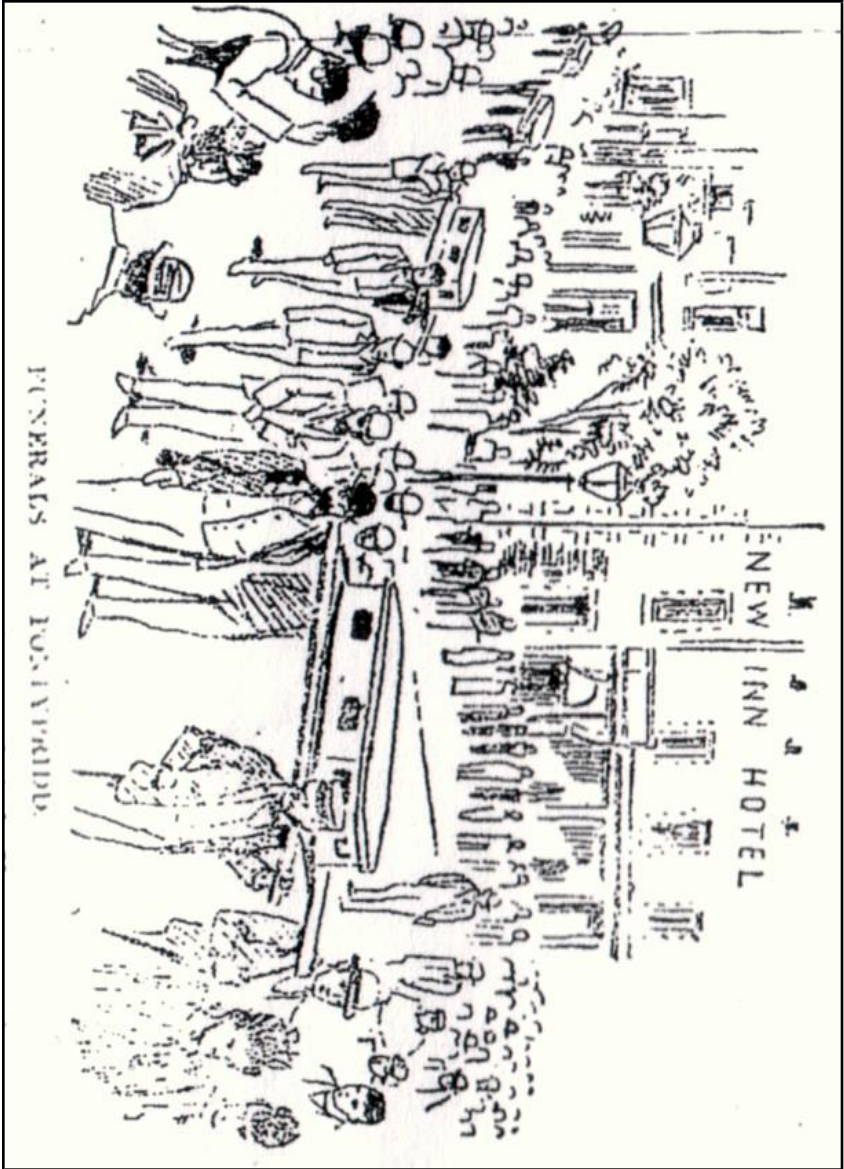
To Llanfabon Cemetery from Cilfynydd, Edward James Rees, Rees Jenkins, Arthur Timbs, Enoch Clarke, Evan Jones, Llewellyn Rees, Owen Hughes, Thomas Smith, Fred Saunders, John Cann, Thomas James, William Hopkins, Maurice Ashton, Robert Jones, William Jones, Thomas Jones, Rowland Jones, and William Edwards. From Norton Bridge and Coedpenmaen: David Pugh, James Hallam, and George Burford.

To Trealaw Cemetery: - Nathaniel Edwards, Hugh Jones, John Middle, Cilfynydd; Phillip Fletcher, John Charles Pugsley, George Pugeley, William



FUNERAL AT CILFYNYDD

One of the many funeral corteges leaving Cilfynydd
(*South Wales Daily News*)



Part of a funeral cortege passing through Pontypridd
(South Wales Daily News)

Henry Lewis, Richard Thomas, and Jim Quartley; and William Barr and Sidney Cox, Pontypridd.

To Mardy Cemetery: David Price Davies, Samuel Brains, and John Gregory.

To Treforest Cemetery: - William John Harding, William Jones, David Watkins, John Cole, David Llewellyn, Thomas Evans, Patsy Farrow, George H. Harper, John Morgan, James Hunt, George Hunt (Trallwn), Frank Topp, George Freeman, James Cullen, and James Mears.

To Pontypridd: - William Thomas.

To Nelson: - George Watkins, Edward Crocombe, John Cox, Arthur Jenkins, Isaac Comely, Albert Davies, Fred Carp, and Patrick O'Donnell.

The '*South Wales Echo*' reported: - In all the exciting and heart stirring episodes of this fearful disaster, there have been no scenes more distressing than those witnessed today, when a hundred or more of the mangled and mutilated bodies of the hapless victims were convey along miles of dusty roads, and beneath a scorching sun, to the various churchyards and cemeteries of the district for interment.

It is on the occasion of the funerals that the full effect of such disasters as these can be anything like realised. So it has been today; for gaze where one would, and walk where one might, the eye was surfeited by the same sad, solemn spectacle of endless processions of mourners, of coffins innumerable, and of the pitiful grief of the widows and fatherless. The lamentation, and the wail of the mourners, as it was today carried on the bosom of the breeze for miles around, will doubtless never be forgotten by those upon whose ears it fell.

Pontypridd, habituated as it is to enormous assemblages, has never witnessed such a crowd as that which streamed in from the district around. Every Colliery in the whole of the surrounding valleys was practically at a standstill, and the workmen, all dressed in somber black, arrived in their thousands at an early hour, and proceeded at once to Cilfynydd in readiness for the day's proceedings.

During the morning no fewer than 20,000 people visited the stricken village, and many hours before noon the roads leading thereto, from both sides of the valley, were blocked by an endless stream of humanity. Vehicles of every description plied unceasingly to-and-fro, bringing full freights of passengers, who, alighting, took up positions of vantage by the main road and on the high ground of the Coedpenmaen Common. Many came provided with provisions, and evidently meant to make a day's outing of the melancholy occasion. Most of the male portion of the district were present, and those who were not directly or indirectly

connected with the sufferers, were also abroad with woman and children, filling the main thoroughfare. The vast crowd, however, was exceedingly well-ordered, and a very small police patrol sufficed to direct the passage of vehicular traffic and funerals.

A large portion of those assembled might be regarded as sightseers simply, but the sadness of the surroundings, the oft - repeated examples of extreme mental anguish passing before them, the many evidences of a town in mourning, impressed upon the most thoughtless feelings of sympathy for the woes of their fellows, and if any of the 'Shoni Hoy' element was abroad, their boisterous spirit were too subdued by the solemnity of their environment for them to invince their natural characteristics. At noon the bell of the little church of St. Luke's commenced to toll for the dead, and shortly afterwards the mournful work of the day was in full operation.

At midday, the funeral processions became frequent. All the available hearses and carriages in the district had been requisitioned, but proved insufficient for the services, and most of the coffins were borne on biers which had been roughly constructed at the colliery in order to meet the demand. Mourners rode in four-wheeled cabs, traps, wagonettes, and any available vehicle which could be obtained, and not a few coffins were borne in breaks, together with the mourners.

Some of the scenes were excessively sad. As the corteges passed, those assembled had their sympathies keenly awakened, particularly in the case of the many young widows and little children, who were weeping bitterly, and in a few instances almost prostrate in their paroxysms of lamentation, requiring the support of their friends as they proceeded on the way to the cemeteries. Long trains of fellow-workmen followed the coffins in many cases; in others there were evidences that the deceased were not so well known, probably some of them newcomers into the district from north Wales, Somerset, and Devon, which parts of the country contributed largely to the rippers engaged in the colliery at the time of the explosion. Not a few of the departed were members of friendly societies, and the brethren of the Ivorites, in accordance with their custom, displayed in prominent parts of the Cilfynydd Road a sable bannerette, bearing in white letters on its sides the inscriptions, 'Ivorites; A brother dead,' and 'Iforiad brawd wedi mawr.'

Some streets had many dead, and Jones Street sent forth at one time a long line of mourners, in which figured four coffins, while many other bodies were borne from the streets adjacent in two's and three's. The direction generally taken was towards

Mountain Ash and Llanfabon, and for the space of two hours a long dark line was ascending by the sinuous path to the cemetery at the mountain top. Before the funerals started from the homes, prayers had been said in most cases by the ministers of the several religious denominations, and in the case of the larger combined corteges the ministers led the way. Singing, which is such a noticeable feature in connection with the burials of this character generally throughout Wales, was, however, not engaged in on the present occasion, except in the case of one or two funeral trains that went towards Treforest earlier in the day. The proceedings were carried out in impressive silence within the village.

The desolation which the disaster brought to some homes was painfully evidenced during the progress of the proceedings, for out of a few homes two, three, and even four coffins were brought. Indeed, at Coedpenmaen it was said that there was a house with no less than eleven corpses in it, six being the remains of lodgers. One fact that struck the observer was that the majority of the relatives and friends of the deceased, in the very short time that has elapsed since the death of their loved ones, have been able to acquire the black garments which custom imperiously pronounces an important means of doing honour to the dead. It gave rise to speculation amongst some of the assembly on the amount of hard work which must have devolved upon dressmakers and tailors in the last two or three days. By four o'clock the last of the sad processions had passed through Cilfynydd, and the crowd now began to lessen, having either followed the mourning parties to the cemeteries, or returned homeward. The thickest part of the throng was near the canal bridge, and despite the affecting nature of the occasion, like most crowds, it was not without its humours.

The sun shone brightly all day and had a severe effect upon all and the houses of refreshment were kept busy all the time for the quenching of thirst. And one Good Samaritan took his stand near the bridge, and from a bucket, frequently replenished, gave cups of water to those who required it. He was a rough-and-ready Good Samaritan, just such as one might be in his element at fairs, but his services were certainly appreciated, as they were deserving of appreciation, and seemed to be rendered disinterestedly.

Throughout the afternoon his valuable invitation to 'drink of the fountain of life,' was accepted by young and old of both sexes, and whilst ladling from the fountain he kept up a running fire of commentary on the lot of the collier, the benefits of water, and the want of sympathy between rich and poor, occasionally making passing reference to his experiences as a thirst-soother in the late coal strike, and thereon claiming for himself the appellation of 'champion giver of water, bar the Almighty,' with which honour he seemed perfectly repaid. It was after five when the mourning parties began to return to Cilfynydd, and their arrival continued intermittently until much later. Meanwhile the road became clearer of people, and

ultimately re-assured the appearance which it presented at an early hour in the day prior to the influx of visitors.

At Glyntaff Cemetery

Forty-one internments were arranged to take place on Wednesday at Glyntaff Cemetery, 27 of them were in the Nonconformists portion of the ground, three in the Catholic portion, and 11 in the Church of England portion. In nine of the last named instances, the vicar of Glyntaff (the Rev. Br. Jones), officiated, while the following ministers conducted services in other funerals. The Rev. E. Gronow, (Pontypridd), W. Henry (Pontypridd), Joshua Thomas (Coedpenmaen), R. E. Williams, Michael Williams, W. Lewis-Davies, Griffiths (Cilfynydd), E. Roberts (Pontypridd), Father Noonan, and the Rev. Stephenson, John Evans (Eglwysbach), John Cule, R. White-bread, W. J. Morris (Pontypridd) and W. Jones (Cilfynydd), and others.

The Glyntaff Cemetery is situated on a gentle slope in full view of the Taff vale, and is one of the most picturesque spots in the neighbourhood and where a little over twelve months ago a large number of the victims of the Great Western Disaster were buried. Excellent arrangements had been made for the unexpected demand, and the efforts of the superintendent, Mr. Morgan Rees, and his staff of assistants were taxed to the utmost.

During the day members of the Burial Board were present and gave valuable assistance to prevent confusion and leading each procession as it arrived at the cemetery. Amongst them were Mr. Richard Rogers (chairman), Messrs. W. Jones, W. Harries, James Roberts, James Coombes, P. Gowan, Morgan Jenkins and Mr. James Spickett (clerk).

The work of burial commenced as early as 8 o'clock, when the remains of Thomas Evans, of 3 Howell St., were brought to the cemetery by a cortege of 50 or 60 persons, the coffin, placed on a bier, being carried along the whole length of the three miles road between Cilfynydd and the cemetery. The graves in all cases were dug seven feet deep, and in the majority of cases in virgin ground, the number of graves to be re-opened being exceedingly small.

Mother and daughter bury their husbands

The funerals of Edward Jones and Edward Williams, of Trallwn, are deserving of special mention. They were father-in-law and son-in-law, living in the same house. The daughter of the old man had, with her husband, lived in Pontypridd for some years, and her father had come to lodge with her, both husband and father working at the Albion. The mother, who had remained at Llanidloes, came

to Pontypridd some weeks ago on a visit to nurse her daughter, and now mother and daughter together wept over their husbands. They were staunch Calvinistic Methodists, and the hymn given out by the Rev. W. Henry: -

Cofia F'eniad cyn I't dreulio
D'oriau gwarthfawr yn y byd

Remember my soul before you spend
Your valuable hours in the world.

was sung with fervour by a large number assembled around the grave of that desolate household. A procession which attracted attention was that which asserted W. Henry Lewis of Coedpenmaen, to his last home. On the top of the coffin with the wreaths placed there by loving hands was the curved horn of a Forester, to indicate the deceased's membership of the Court Albion Lodge of Foresters. The graves in the Nonconformist portion of the burial-ground were so near that the voices of the officiating ministers could be heard from one throng to the other, and as there were four or five services thus within a comparatively short distance, conducted by the Rev. John Evans (Eglwysbach), the Rev. W. I. John Morris (Pontypridd), the Rev. J. Williams (Hafod), and others, and the prayers in Welsh and English, intermingled in the still air, laden only with the sighs of the mourners or broken upon by the dull thud of gravedigger's picks.

The scene was sad and impressive in the extreme. By-and-bye there came a change, and at two or three of the grave sides the strains of the dirge: - 'Bydd myrdd o rhfeddodau' - were heard, swelling and increasing in volume and in intensity of spirit as the crowds caught up the victorious declamation of the Bard, whose words, so beautifully sung, proclaimed the Christian's hope of life in death. But when the separation came over Harding's grave, the mother of the young man burst out into wild acclamation - "Oh! William John, anwyl; Y mae yn wag hebddot ti; Oh, fy mab anwyl, anwyl, good-bye am byth." (Oh dear William John, it's empty without you; Oh, my dear, dear son, goodbye forever).

The outburst had a thrilling effect upon the assembled multitude, and when the grief-stricken mother turned her back upon the grave of her son, with the utterance of her last words - "Good-bye am byth" - there were scores of those around her shedding sympathetic tears.

Among other striking incidents of the afternoon were the burial of a landlord, John Morgan, and his lodger, Wilfred Humphreys. They had lived together, worked together, and they were now coupled together in the last scene on earth where they could be participants. Two brothers, named Pugsley, from Coedpenmaen, also found a resting place in a joint grave. The burial of two Irishmen, James Cullin and James McGrath, led to a most distressing scene. The women, in their excess of grief, became hysterical, and in their agony cried out, "Oh, Jim, I must have you back, Oh, Jim, I can't let you go, Oh, Jim, come back."

The two Jim's were buried in separate graves, but the burial service was a joint one. The last cortege arrived at the cemetery at 4.30 and was a mile long and contained seven bodies.

The burials at Llanfabon

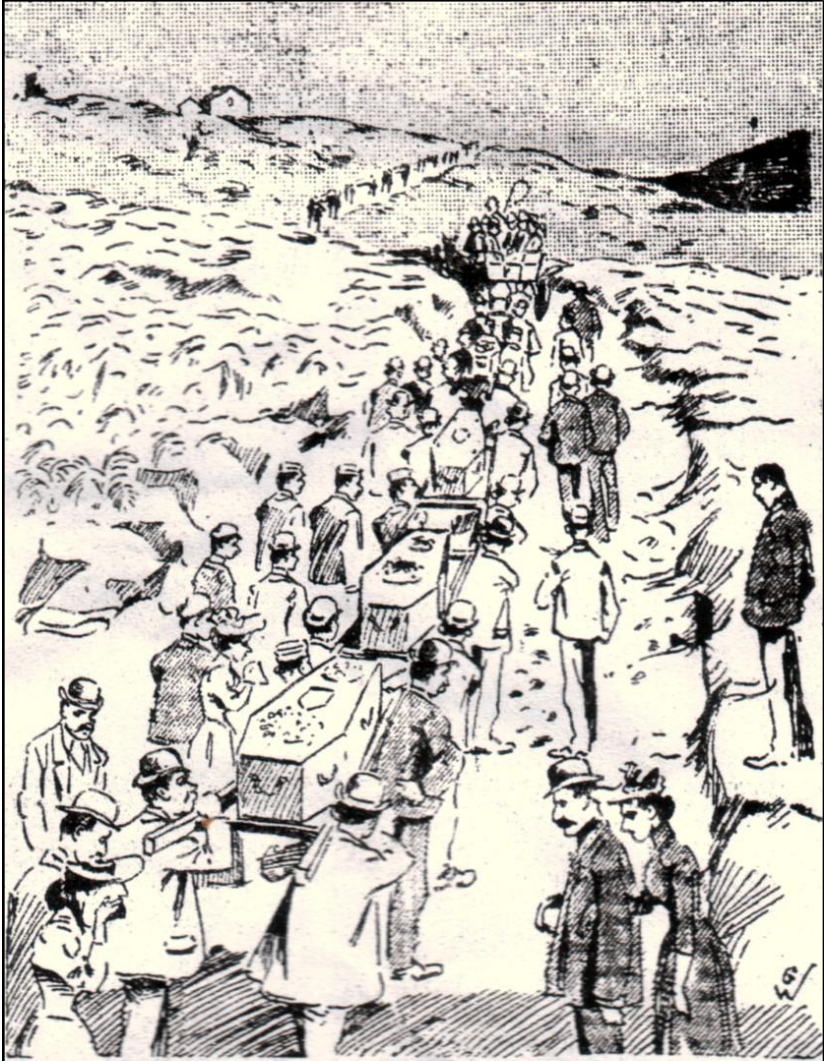
The summer sun shone brightly over Eastern Glamorganshire on Wednesday, and nature amongst the hills and valleys of rustic Llanfabon seemed in a most profound mood, but there were many in the funeral processions that trudged wearily over the mountainside from far-off Cilfynydd to the old parish cemetery at Llanfabon, who,

sick at heart and bowed down beneath the weight of inconsolable grief, had no eyes for the attractions of the open country, but were bound up in a dull brooding mood over the terrible bereavements which an awful colliery disaster had brought upon them.

The old burial grounds at Llanfabon have long ago been filled up with the remains of those who, having filled their allotted tasks in life, had passed quietly away, but, in order to meet the demands of the future, a large field was secured some years ago, on the other side of the road, opposite the church, for burial purposes.

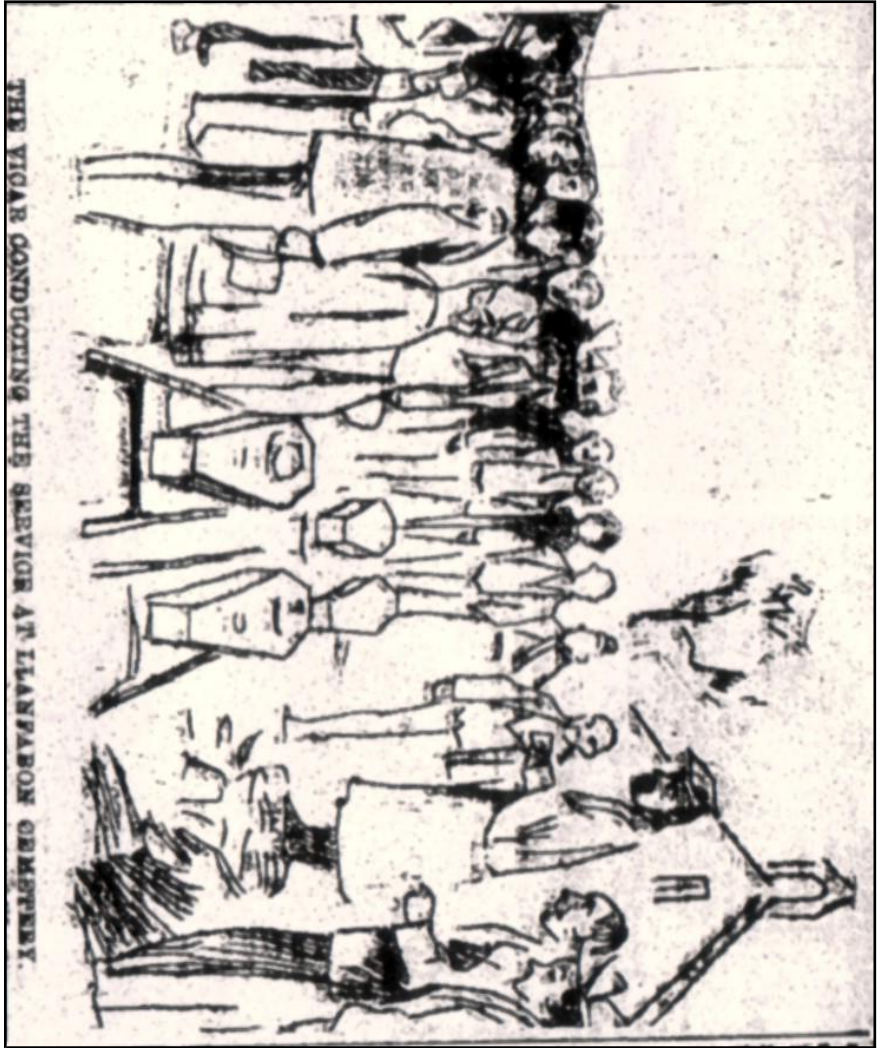
In this new graveyard - where previous to Wednesday only a few internments had taken place - forty men, sent up by Mr. W. M. Matthias, were engaged on Tuesday, and thirty on Wednesday, in the work of grave digging. The graves were dug parallel with and close to the walls of one half of the square, and up to Wednesday afternoon 37 had been made ready for the reception of bodies. Two graves in the old cemetery had to be reopened and it is in one of these that later on in the day were put rest the remains of William Jones, son of Mr. Jones, master sinker, of Aberdare Junction. The preparation of the graves was superintended by Mr. William Evans, the vestry clerk, who also carried out the internment engagements.

From noon onwards numerous numbers of people arrived at Llanfabon from Cilfynydd and other places for the purpose of witnessing the internments, and a little after 12 o'clock the funeral of Morris Ashton, of 44 Howell St, Cilfynydd, arrived, and was the first burial of the day. But a huge cortege, which was arranged to start from Cilfynydd at 3 o'clock, did not arrive at the cemetery till considerably after four o'clock. In all there were 21 coffins, and they formed one long mournful cortege, as they wended their way along the side of the hill. The day was a real June one, and the weather exceedingly warm and this rendered the labour of bearing very arduous indeed. Nevertheless, there were plenty of friends



THE FUNERALS STARTING ACROSS THE HILLS TO LLANFABON FROM CILFYNYDD.

The stiff march over the hills from Cilfynydd to the Llanfabon Churchyard



The scene at the Llanfabon churchyard

who willingly acted as bearers, and only those that witnessed the arrival of the procession can form any idea of how laborious this task was. Besides the large numbers of mourners, there was an attendance in the churchyard numbering some thousands, many of whom were lining the walls and sitting under hedges.

In the churchyard itself, the scene was unique. Many people were overcome by the long walk and great heat, they were lying full length on the grass between the gaping graves. Others were lying under the walls, and many found seats on the improvised biers upon which the coffins were borne from the deceased's homes. As the cemetery is in church property, these three clergymen officiated throughout. Other funerals arrived in quick succession, and there were thousands of people in and around the spacious burial ground.

It was sad and melancholy sight. Borne on the shoulders of willing bearers in the first portion of the procession were eight coffins, upon which had been placed simple wreaths of flowers. They were met at the gate by the Rev. Daniel Lee, vicar of the parish; the Rev. W. Jones, his curate; and the Rev. David, of Treharris. When all the bodies had been placed in the cemetery, a general service was held by the vicar, and subsequently the usual services for the burial of the dead were read at each graveside. Occasionally Welsh and English hymns were sung by those around the graves, and many heart-melting scenes were witnessed, widows breaking out into paroxysms of grief, and mothers and daughters wailing in the agony of despair. In all 21 bodies were interred, the names of the victims laid to rest in this quiet little spot being as follows: -

William Jones (fitter), Morris Ashton, Daniel W. Edwards, Charles Andrews, William Roberts, Llewellyn Rees, George Burford, D. O. Griffiths, Thomas Jones and Rowland Jones (brothers), Daniel W. Edwards, W. J. Hopkins, William Jones, Evan Jones, Owen Hughes, R. Jenkins, Thomas Hughes, Edward Rees, J. R. Cann, John Hearne and Thomas Jones.

By 5 o'clock the proceedings at the cemetery were over, and the mourners, after one last fond look at the oaken shells which enveloped all they loved best, sorrowfully took their departures.

Conveyed by train

There were no more than 13 bodies conveyed early Wednesday morning to Aberdare Junction Station, where they were entailed for various destinations. The remains of William Oliver, who had only worked at the colliery for three days before the disaster, were sent to Pontrhydfendhgrid, Cardiganshire, and those of Lewis Harries to Pontrhydygroes, in the same county. Two bodies were sent to Cwmystwyth, those of Richard Herbert and Thomas Hughes, whilst those for north Wales were the remains of William Jones, John Evans (Pwllheli), and

Joseph Hughes (Llanidloes). Hughes's widow, who had travelled from the north to find her husband, accompanied the remains on their journey.

The following were also conveyed by train: - Benjamin Skym to Treorky; Richard Roberts, William Griffiths, Thomas Morgan to North Wales; Timothy Jones to Brynaman; Benjamin Stubbs to Merthyr; Lewis Howells to Strata Florida, and John Pearce to Berthllwyd,

The funeral of Timothy Jones, aged 25, ripper, took place at Brynamman on Wednesday afternoon, at the Siloam Baptist Chapel burial ground. Deceased was a native of the town, where his parents still lived, having removed to Cilfynydd two years before. He was steady, and much respected by all the inhabitants of Brynamman. The body arrived at the Great Western Station by the 3.40 train, when a vast assemblage of friends and mourners had congregated, working operations being entirely suspended at the extensive Cwauncaegurwen Collieries. There was no singing on the way to the funeral, but the famous old Welsh hymn 'Bydd myrdd e ryfeddodau' was sung at the grave. Deceased leaves a widow and one child.

John Dimond and George Boyce were carried to Eglwysilan church. There were also two funerals of victims of the catastrophe within the district of the Merthyr Burial Board on Wednesday, William Farrow being interred at Beachgrove Cemetery, Treharris; and William Morgan, at Aberfan Cemetery, Merthyr Vale.

The interments at Mountain Ash

At Mountain Ash twelve of the victims were interred. The whole of the collieries were at a standstill, and all the trades people of the town suspended business at 2 o'clock. The funeral procession arrived at the cemetery at about 6 o'clock, and was marshaled by County Alderman J. W. Jones, Mountain Ash, and it is estimated to be about three miles long, walking from about three to eight abreast, there being at least from 5,000 to 6,000 people present. The funeral cortege included eight hearses and 74 other vehicles. Police-Sergeant Smith headed the procession from the lower end of the town and assisted in conducting the arrangements at the cemetery. The members of Court Perseverance, A. O. F; Miskin, also accompanied the funeral, several of the victims being members of that lodge.

As an indication of the extent of the procession, we may point out that several of the precisionists stated that although three bodies were carried all the way, they only had to carry once during the whole of the distance of six miles. The orderliness of the procession throughout was most remarkable.

However, when the funerals left Cilfynydd at 2 o'clock reached Aberdare Junction it was found that the body of William Morris, which was to be carried on a bier, was left behind. A brake was at once sent back for it, and Mr. Adam Clarke, of the Navigation Hotel, drove it up towards the Mountain Ash Cemetery for the bier to meet it. When the supplementary cortege caught up the procession the body was taken from the break and placed on the bier and carried with the other three up to the cemetery.

Although many of the precisionists, fatigued by the journey, did not walk up the steep hill into the cemetery, the procession took over thirty minutes to pass through the gates. The services at the graves were in all cases very brief, and consisted of only a few appropriate words by of the officiating minister, a short prayer, and the singing of a Welsh hymn. As the procession passed the Allen's Arms, Professor Harding had very thoughtfully provided several palefuls of clear water, which he distributed amongst the bereaved and others, a kindness which needless to add was greatly appreciated by the tired multitude.

At 5.45 the procession, which then numbered at least 8,000, reached the cemetery in the following order, the first four being carried all the way, the remainder being borne in hearses. The following also lists the ministers officiating: -

1. **John Canning** (39) 50 Mary St, Cilfynydd, the Rev. J. Edwards, Pontypridd.
2. **John Webb** (27), 19 Richard St, Cilfynydd; the Rev. J. W. Jack (W), Mountain Ash.
3. **Benjamin Eynon** (63), Cilfynydd Rd; the Rev. T. Anthony, Mountain Ash.
4. **Thomas Jenkins** (41), Wood Street, the Rev. J. Howell, (B), Mountain Ash.
5. **William Morris** (43), 16 Richard St, the Rev. J. Howell, (B), Mountain Ash.
6. **John Evans** (40), 47 Howell St, the Rev. W. Williams (B), Mountain Ash.
7. **Thomas Evans** (19), son of above, 47 Howell St, the Rev. W. Williams, Mountain Ash.
8. **Henry Lewis**, 1 Towyn Villas, the Rev. O. Jones, C, Mountain Ash.
9. **William Williams**, (43), 3 Cwm Cottages, the Rev. T. W. Moore B. A; Mountain Ash.
10. **Henry James** (38), 17 Mary St, the Rev. J. Howell (B), Mountain Ash.
11. **David Griffiths**, (38), 2 Towyn Villas, the Rev. C. Jones, Mountain Ash.
12. **Thomas Rees** (28), 30 Mary St, the Rev. J. Howell (B), Mountain Ash.

All the bodies were taken direct to the graves, which were opened in various parts of the cemetery, which lies on a gentle slope on the side of the Merthyr Mountain. Griffiths was for many years chapel-keeper at Bethania, and only left Mountain Ash some six months ago. He was presented on his departure by the Bethania Chapel with a handsome and valuable bookmarker as a mark of the very high esteem in which he was held by the church.

The Rev. John Edwards, Baptist minister, Pontypridd, officiated at the grave of John Canning, the engine-driver, who was one of the survivors, but who subsequently succumbed to the injuries which he received in the terrible holocaust.

The additional identifications

The following bodies were identified on Wednesday :- Joseph Thomas, doorboy; Steven Evans, ripper; Richard Reeves, labourer; Richard Evans, ripper; John Griffiths Roberts, ripper; David Davies, ripper; John Harris, haulier; Thomas Prout, ripper; Richard Griffith, haulier; Isaacher Williams, labourer; Henry John Ball, labourer; Richard Black, labourer; Thomas O'Leary, haulier; Richard Roberts, ripper; Frederick Emmett, doorkeeper; George Lennon, 33, ripper and Thomas Jenkins, assistant timberman.

Late on Wednesday evening the total number of bodies recovered was 258, of whom 245 had been identified. John Lewis, 43 years of age, of Cilfynydd, married, six children, another of the rescued, died this evening at a quarter to eight o'clock. This made the seventh death among those who were brought out alive, and brought up the total deaths at the present accounted for to 266.

There are, therefore, only nine alive, and of those Samuel Evans, the first man rescued, is feared to be dying. Dr. Williams reports that Dobbs is doing fairly well, but had a relapse this Wednesday morning. John Evans is in a precarious condition, and Richard Williams is also in a bad state, while Hugh Jenkins has practically recovered. Fifty-two explorers went down the pit at 6 o'clock this evening, and another party of Merthyr Vale and Dowlais men descended at midnight. Clearances have been effected in both the Cilfynydd and Grover's side of the pit along the main level. The Albion Colliery Fund's relief to the relatives of victims was paid out tonight at the Working Men's Hall, Cilfynydd, by Mr. Griffith Jones, the secretary.

Painful incident at the police court

Defendants' brother killed at the explosion

At the Pontypridd Police Court on Wednesday, Edward Morgan, butcher, Cilfynydd, was summoned for unlawfully having in his possession certain scales alleged to be unjust. D. C. Jones said that on the 21st inst. he was in the shop and found a 'Salter's balance scales.' Upon examining it he found it to be $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ounce on the second pound, one ounce on the fourth, and one ounce on the 7th against the purchaser. The defendant: "I never use it, sir."

D. C. Jones: "I saw indications of flesh having been on it, your worships." The

defendant: - "I have had it stamped for the last two years, sir. I am sure it is not an 8th of an ounce out in a pound." Magistrates clerk: - "Have you any witnesses to prove it?" Defendant: - "My brother would have done so, sir, but he was killed, and my father cannot come." On this the defendant burst into tears, and the incident caused a profound sensation. The Bench, however, said the case was proved and fined the defendant 15 shillings and the scales forfeited.

The death toll

Up to Wednesday evening the total number of bodies recovered was 261, of which 241 had been identified. It is surmised that there are other bodies in the pit, one of the officials - Mr. Lewis, the agent - placed the number at seven. Amongst the number the following are supposed to be: - Williams, (a fireman, perhaps better known as Quatridge), Jesse Parry, Alfred Millett, George Knight, and T. Murphy. Some of these men were in the workings on the morning shift, and stayed behind to work overtime. This number, together with the six that succumbed after being taken out alive and the 258 found dead in the mine, brings the total number of dead up to 261.

A pathetic incident is being related of a man from Tavistock. He came to Cilfynydd on Friday last, and started in the morning shift on Saturday. Staying behind to make a little overtime, he was caught in the holocaust, and his dead body has now been recovered. As the day passed the crowd at the pit-head largely dwindled, and at nightfall only those who had friends and relatives still on the missing list lingered at the colliery, their eyes gazing fixedly at the top of the shaft and eagerly searching the interior of each cage, intense hope being depicted when four bells were rung - the signal that men are ascending - and disappointment when it was found it was only a gang going off duty.

The sale of beer

Strong protests against the disorderly scenes

At a meeting of the East Glamorgan Welsh Baptist Association at Merthyr on Wednesday, upon the motion of the Rev. W. Rees (Rhondda), seconded by Mr. David Davies (Merthyr), the association passed the following resolution: - "That we condemn, in most unequivocal terms, the conduct of certain persons in sending dray-loads of beer to Cilfynydd late on Sunday last from the directions of Merthyr and Pontypridd, and also the licensing authorities for allowing opportunities to everyone to obtain beer at Cilfynydd on Sunday." Meanwhile the '*Western Mail*' of this date printed the following letter: -

Danger in the Rhondda valleys

To the editor of the '*Western Mail*'

Sir - The present movement with the Cilfynydd calamity riveting the attention of the British Isles, seems a suitable time to call attention to an important subject which has for some time seriously engaged the attention of scientific men, mining engineers and geologists. It is well-known that the immense number of collieries in the two Rhondda's, Ynysybwl valley, and additional neighbourhoods of Pontypridd have been during many years scooping out, as it were, the foundations of the mountainside and the valleys. Let anyone watch for only a single week the enormous trains of steam coal which depart for Cardiff and Barry from the places named and indicated above. All that coal is taken out from an area less than twenty miles every way, and the void is continually being increased in dimensions. It can be safely stated that the drop is no less than 30 feet in depth, and extending for a great many miles in all directions.

The result is that the tops of the mountains flanking the valley shows immense open fissures, reaching down to unknown depths, and that the surface of the valleys themselves are gradually sinking. It has been calculated the surface of mid-Rhondda at Cymmer has sunk four or five feet as the result of the scooping out process in that immediate locality, and there are breakages in the strata, and, therefore, an unevenness in the subsidence, workmen's cottages giving way. A short time ago a large chapel at Gyfeillion gave way as the result of operations carried out in the Great Western Collieries. That company stepped forward and honourably admitted that it was their liability, and gave the denomination with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, a cheque for £1,500, the value of the chapel.

It is well-known also that the fine hall at Ystrad, in which the local police court held its sittings, had become too dangerous to be occupied, and the court is now held elsewhere. The above instances are mentioned by way of illustrating what is gradually taking place throughout the entire Rhondda coal basin.

The inhabitants of the entire districts mentioned are frequently startled by subterranean noises, and it is known they are produced by enormous falls of roof in the mines of old workings in the bowels of the earth. But there is still a more fearful danger lurking in the above state of things, and may God avert the danger from becoming a dreadful reality. It is universally known that the steam coal seams are full of gas, and explosions of others hereto have been mainly local.

But imagine the miles of new area for its deadly operations which have been opened for its terrible volcanic force by the old workings of colliery after colliery, for, say, twenty miles, communicating with each other? Think if the awful fissures

in the sides of the mountains, and extend for miles and miles, like prepared craters of volcanoes!

It is dreadfully feared that at some future day the gas fired in one of the old workings will communicate itself to the miles of gas accumulated in the abandoned old workings of numerous other collieries, and find an outlet in those gaping fissures which extent from the surface to the said old workings. The green grass grew on Vesuvius, and vineyards flourished there, until the awful afternoon the subterranean mighty forces of accumulated gas locked in the immeasurable caverns below fired and burst forth with such violence that all were blown to atoms.

VULCAN, CYMMER.

Meeting at Pontypridd

Shall the money go through the Permanent Fund?

On Wednesday evening June 27th a public meeting which had been conveyed by David Leyshon, was held at the Town hall, Pontypridd. There was an enthusiastic but small attendance. The chairman remarked that it was the opinion of a few that subscriptions should be collected and handed over to the Permanent Fund which would be called upon to pay £60,000 to the relatives of the poor sufferers, and its resources would be thereby seriously crippled. If the fund were to break down, it would be a dreadful thing for the colliers of this large district.

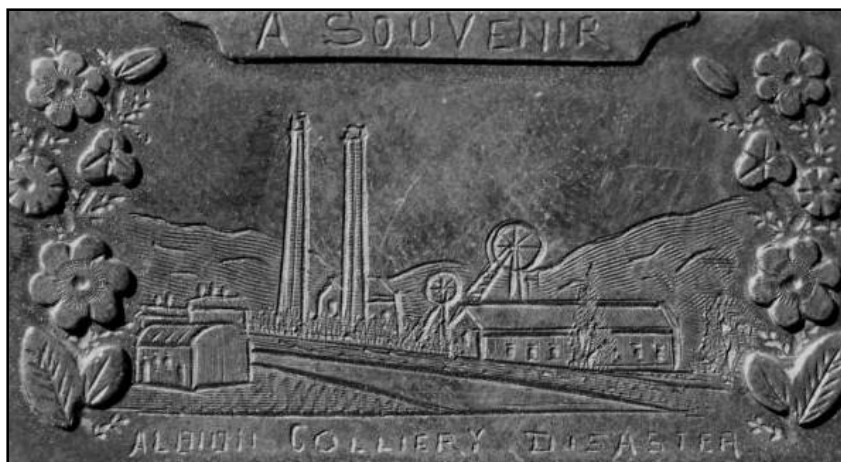
Proceeding, Mr. Leyshon said he had received telegrams containing expressions of regret at their inability to attend the meeting, and of sympathy with the afflicted from the following: - Lord Windsor, who subscribed £100; Mr. Shepperd, Neath; Mr. Godfrey Clarke, who subscribed £50; the High Sheriff, who subscribed £10-10s; Mr. Arthur Williams, M. P., Judge Gwilym Williams, Mr. Pritchard Morgan, M. P., Mr. L. Davies, Mr. W. T. Lewis, Lord Aberdare, and Lord Swansea.

Mr. Alfred Thomas, M. P., said he had been asked to propose the following motion:- "That the inhabitants of Pontypridd, in public meetings assembled, tender their hearty sympathy and condolence with the wives and orphans, relatives and friends, of those who lost their lives by the awful explosion at the Albion Colliery, and express sympathy with those who have been brought out alive, and hope that they will soon

recover, and wish to tender their appreciation to those brave men who volunteered to bring up those who might be alive.”

Continuing, the Hon. Member thought a national fund should be established to meet these cases. He understood that a levy upon the masters of ½d per ton on the coal raised would provide the necessaries of life to those whose bread-winners might be killed. The government should be asked to provide such legislation to meet the exigencies of such cases as these. Mr. Thomas said that with the help of his friends he had collected £1,150 in the House of Commons. (Cheers).

It was proposed by Mr. Ignatious Williams, and seconded by Mr. W. S. Cobb, that the money should go through the Permanent Fund. Councilor Morris, Pentre, said he had been asked to protest against the adoption of any resolution in the names of the working classes, in favour of putting that fund to be realised in connection with the Permanent Fund. A person in the hall supported Councilor Morris, but on its being put to the meeting only thirteen supported it. Therefore, the resolution to give the money through the Permanent Fund was carried.



A lead lapel brooch on sale in South Wales shortly after the Albion Colliery disaster

CHAPTER EIGHT

Thursday, June 28th 1894

CONTINUATION OF INTERMENTS

Thursday's funerals

Thursday was Cilfynydd's second Calvary, being the second day of the public funerals of the slain in last Saturday's disaster, wrote '*Morien*' in the '*Western Mail*' newspaper. The day was an exceedingly hot one and the attendance of the general public, though still large, was not so great as on Wednesday. The last few days of brilliant sunshine have brought out the flowers in all their bloom, and the entire green countryside, dotted with flowers, presented a most charming aspect. The new town of Cilfynydd has many pretty pots of flower gardens facing the noon day sun, and in those daisies, sweet William, and the royal roses, the red and white, were looking their best under the beaming smiles of Phoebus. It was impossible to refrain from contrasting thus the matchless beauties of the summertime and the blackened remains to be still seen in that horrible hay-loft in the colliery yard, where eleven dead bodies still remained unidentified. Bereaved relatives still viewed one after the other, but in those eleven instances they failed to identify their individual relatives. The reason for this was the horrible disfigurements each of the eleven bodies had undergone, and the further dissolution was developing rapidly. The consequence was that the colliery authorities and Superintendent Evan Jones decided to place each in a coffin and convey the eleven to Llanfabon Church, to be interred in God's Acre there.

An immense multitude accompanied these nameless eleven to their long home on the hill of St. Mabon. It seemed as if the entire community regarded each of the nameless eleven as the brother of all, and the vast throng acted accordingly, in accordance with a Welsh custom of venerable antiquity by accompanying the dead to the grave - of sorting those who returned no more to their last journey. To those acquainted with old Welsh ideas respecting death and the world to come, the funeral rights of the Welsh are extremely significant and interesting. I shall not dwell on these right now, but will simply state that the Welsh name for the English coffin - whatever that strange name originally signified - is Arch (Ark). The name conveys an idea of safety, and such was one of the ideas the ancient Britons associated with coffins, be it a kist (a large wooden chest) or a wooden box. The very name ark implied a certain hope in the midst of graves.

Other internments, besides these of the unrecognised eleven, took place at Llanfabon churchyard. It appears that the great majority of the men killed were Englishmen, who, being unskilled in coal-cutting, had engaged themselves as labourers. But in the graveyards the counties of north Wales are sadly represented.

It is the custom to place a stick vertically on each grave, with a paper containing the name of the tenant in a cleft of the said stick. It was with swimming eyes one read on the paper such names as Meirionedd, Caernarvon, Anglesey, Cardigan, & co.

There was something extremely touching in the reflection that those whose remains were interned below had wandered across all Wales to the south to seek employment to earn their bread. One thought, too, of the primitive old homes in many a vale and on many a rugged hillside - every one of which hillside is classic ground to the true Welshman - tenanted by the parents of those dead, and that in those simple, honest homes have these last few days been heard the bitterest cries of anguish for sons who are no more!

Early on Thursday morning the remains of the Bard 'Maeldwynog' were conveyed on the shoulders of loving friends, several of whom being pupils of his class in the Welsh Methodist Sunday School at Cilfynydd. The remains were conveyed by rail to Panygroes, Caernarvon. The late Bard's young widow, with their little son of ten, and the Bard's aged father, had come all the way 'to fetch the body of Maeldwynog home.' The following well-known Glamorgan Bard's walked with the cortege to Quaker's Yard as a token of affection for the departed, namely, 'Brynfab' (author of the lyric, "The old land of white gloves"); 'Ap Gwalia,' and 'Tefinfab,' Ynysybwl; 'Ap Rhydrach,' Llanharan; 'Carniljan,' Pontypridd. It appeared that 'Maeldwynog,' whose age was given on the plate of his coffin as 31 years old, had won for himself a deep regard from all that had known him, and it is certain that by losing him 'Avon' and Wales have lost one of their most gifted sons. Last week he was full of eager anticipations in connection with the approaching National Eisteddfod to be held next month in his county town, musical old Caernarvon. The scenes dwelt upon if the foregoing were enough in all consciousness, but those that succeeded were appalling, for they consisted of 53 funerals passing down the valley towards the Glyntaff Cemetery.

The awful processions with 53 coffins in their midst with their polished wood and their brass furniture producing by the sun's reflected rays, a kind of halo about each, seemed to strike all with a feeling of awe, and left one dumb with an amazed and undeniable sentiment. Nearly every coffin-lid had its wreaths of flowers brilliant in the sunshine. One part of the procession consisted of nine coffins, three of which contained all there was mortal of the three sons of Mr. William Gronow, checkweigher, Albion Colliery. It was in front of the pretty cottages occupied by the parents and children, and William, the eldest son and his wife, the procession converged. The awful bereavement this family has suffered - three sons being slain is the subject of deepest commiserations. Just after three bodies, heavily laden with more white flowers, appeared and a hymn was given out, and it was sung with indescribable pathos. While the singing was in progress

the father and the mothers, and young grown-up sisters, and the widow of William (senior) came out of the house on the side of the high bank facing the street.

It was evident that the dirge-like singing around the coffin biers in the roadway had the effect of intensifying the grief of the mother, the young widow, and the young sisters, and a hugely distressing scene followed. The female relatives appeared to be on the verge of being overcome themselves.

They then got into a break and in the midst of this wailing family, dressed in the richest mourning, the poor father sat like one stunned by a blow. As soon as the three were lifted on the shoulders of bearers, one after the other the journey commenced, one of the sisters called out frantically, pointing after the coffin with a finger: - "Look, look at them! Look at them! Look at them!" - the 'them' being alluded to being her three loving brothers, lost from the haunts of men forever more. The thousands wept in deep sympathy with the family, and walked slowly down the vale. I heard one poor distracted mother, in the midst of her own terrible grief, endeavouring to soothe the rest of the family by reminding them that they were not the only ones afflicted, and that they had a community of suffering sorrow.

The Welsh word *cyd-ddioddef* fo (shared endurance) conveys the poor weeping mother's meaning, and after a while the younger members of the family became calmer. The long procession travelled the distance of three miles in less than an hour, and, as in the processions of the day before, not a hymn was sung during the entire journey to the graveyard. The scenes witnessed at the grave sides baffle description. The wails were terrible. Many fainted, and from an extraordinary lack of seats in the cemetery, the poor fainting ones had to be held up in the arms of their friends, who, carried them to the shade of the large bushes, and utilised the biers to hold fainting, tender humanity. The vast multitudes then gradually departed, and in the midst of many of the groups of mourners were seen some figures distracted with the most awful grief.

On Friday, fifteen more funerals were to take place in the cemetery, which will complete 105 internments in three days. It would be endless were one to attempt to give the names of all the clergy and ministers of all denominations who have done all in their power to afford comfort to the deeply-distressed families.

Funerals at Glyntaff Cemetery

Those present at the melancholy proceedings at the Glyntaff Cemetery on Thursday witnessed the burial within a short afternoon of nearly one-fourth of the entire victims of the Albion holocaust. The attendance, if anything, was below that of the previous day. At any rate there was a crowd as large as that on

Wednesday, but as funerals came and went from an early hour until 5 o'clock in the afternoon almost without cessation, the attendance, were the actual numbers obtainable, would probably be found to amount to some tens of thousands of men, women, and children, whose appearance - dressed in the deepest mourning - eloquently testified to the widespread effects of this awful catastrophe.

Today, again, the heat was simply tropical, and the mourners, having trudged along a three-mile road whose arid dust flew in heavy white clouds from the dramp, dramp, dramp of the marching multitude, presented a piteous spectacle indeed when at last they arrived within the cemetery gates.

There was a drinking fountain close to the sexton's lodge at the entrance and around this from noon to eve congregated scores of thirsty mortals, eagerly waiting for the opportunity to partake of the crystal drink of nature to slake their burning thirst and otherwise refresh themselves after the weary walk. Mr. Morgan Rees, the superintendent of the cemetery, with admirable forethought and the instincts of a good Samaritan, had here provided a plentiful supply of cups, mugs, and tumblers, so that happily no inconvenience was felt on this score.

The burials altogether numbered 53, and were apportioned as follows: - Church of England, 12; Roman Catholic, 8, and Nonconformists 33. The arrangements made by the Burial Board were similar to that of the previous day - carriages were prevented from entering the Cemetery Road and children were, as far as possible, kept out of the cemetery grounds. A force of police, under the command of Inspector Jones, of Pentre, and Inspector McDonald, of Pontypridd, gave valuable help at the entrance in directing the processions and preventing the block which must otherwise have occurred.

It being the weekly holiday at Pontypridd, all the shops were closed, and so the town bore an air of stillness which corresponded completely with the funeral processions from Cilfynydd. Along the Pentrebach Road, from the town to the cemetery, many thousands of spectators lined the route, watching with sympathetic interest the progress of the funerals as one after another in endless succession they passed to the miners Macphela (rocky tomb) beyond.

From Pontypridd Common at one moment a long stretch of road lay in view completely filled with mourners, no fewer than fourteen coffins borne among them containing the remains of those who but a few hours before were the breadwinners for their households.

At one period in the afternoon as many as fifteen coffins, their burnished fittings glittering in the fierce light of the sun, could be seen at a glance, borne on biers on the shoulders of strong men along the short stretch of road that lies between the



Tombstone of William Henry Lewis at Glyntaff



A funeral cortege passing through Merthyr Road, Pontypridd



Gravestone of Edward Bennett at Llanfabon

Glyntaff Schools and the cemetery gates. The victims were carried, apparently with ease, despite their heavy burdens on the shoulders of their late comrades. From their homes to the brink of the graves the workmen of Fforchaman Colliery, Aberdare valley, came into the district *en masse* early in the morning and rendered in this direction assistance of inestimable value. It was worthy of record that the conduct of the crowds throughout the district generally was unimpeachable. There was all round an aspect of unutterable grief. Silence as of the grave prevailed as each mournful procession passed on and the sight which presented itself to the eye was that of a whole community bedewed in tears assembled to bury its beloved dead.

The following members of the Burial Board were present: - Mr. R. Rogers (chairman), Messrs. J. Roberts, J. Coombes, P. Gowan, W. Harries and Fred G. Edwards. Mr. J. E. Spickett, the clerk, and his assistant, Mr. McGregor, were busy with certificates. Mr. Morgan Rees, the sexton, superintended the burials, and the large staff in and around the grounds were materially aided by the police, who directed the necessary amount of traffic involved.

The first procession which arrived at 8 o'clock in the morning was that escorting the mortal remains of Walter Berridge, of 6 Cilfynydd Road, aged 21 years. There were forty or fifty people present, and the interment took place in the Church of England grounds, the Rev. W. Jones curate-in-charge, of Cilfynydd officiating. The coffin was carried on a bier from Cilfynydd to the cemetery. Slowly at first, and then more rapidly as the morning wore on, cortege after cortege came with almost regularity of clockwork, and the scene presented just outside the entrance to the cemetery was an extraordinary case.

Now the surpliced clergy of the Church of England leading the way while reciting the burial service, then an English Nonconformist minister advancing to the gate with a professional singing of 'the beautiful home over there'; here a silent cortege wandering its way towards a grave at which they were to meet the officiating minister, next, a Roman Catholic priest in his surplice and cassock, and presently a Salvationist funeral with captains and brass bands in front of the coffin, while last, but not least, the spectator would hear in the distance, coming along the road to the Golgotha (hill, Jerusalem, also called Calvary) of the district, the powerful and pathetic choral singing of a multitude deeply moved rendering the famous dirge which have made the Welsh funerals noted for their dirges.

Yet, one should scarcely call a Welsh funeral hymn a dirge, for intermingled with this solemnity of the minor key, music comes at intervals, the triumphant note of the spirit which proclaims its faith in the words "O grave, where is thy victory? Oh death, where is thy sting?"

Over the grave of Henry Charles Hooper, of Pentrebach Road, the Rev. W. Parry, of Pontypridd, fervently prayed for the relatives of those who had been 'taken away on wings of fire.' Here was the grief-stricken widow with four little boys clinging to her dress, all gazing down and dropping their tears into the cruel grave that was soon to hide forever from view the form of a loving husband and father. With a last affection- ate glance the little group dropped posies of sweet-smelling roses on the coffin below, and then slowly returned to the desolate home to face the dark future as best they may.

Right beside the open graves were headstones of those who had lost their lives in the Great Western Colliery disaster the previous year, and here and there was the brief intimation that others had met death in single accidents which united make up a death-roll largely exceeding even such a hecatomb (slaughter of many victims) as that of the Albion pit.

Whist this scene was being enacted at the Nonconformist ground the Roman Catholic priests - Father Noonan and McManus - were a few yards off reading the Burial Service, partly in Latin and partly in English, over the graves of four members of their flock, and, although to the majority of those around the Catholic rights of sprinkling holy water upon the coffin must have been a strange sight, there was nothing like surprise much less levity shown, and indeed, only the most solemn and respectful silence. Now in Welsh, and then in English, did the vicar of Glyntaff, recite the solemn words of the Prayer Book as he proceeded with the processions in the direction of the Church of England ground, where, past the long row of yawning graves, he led the weeping mourners, and when a halt was made the service, some- times in Welsh and others in English (according to the wishes of relatives and friends) was conducted either by the vicar or his son, assisted by the vicar of Eglwysilan and the Curate of Glyntaff.

Father, mother, and sister, mourned over David Owens, of Maritime Street, Pontypridd, whose funeral was attended by a large number of English Baptists, the Rev.

G. G. Cole, Pastor of the Temple, Pontypridd, officiating. Almost simultaneously, at no great distance, were the Rev. E. Gronow, Congregational minister, and the Rev. Joshua Thomas, Coedpenmaen (Baptists), conducting Welsh and English services respectively.

A striking sight was that of the three coffins of Henry T. Hall, James Robinson, and John Gregory, who were brought in one procession of hundreds of people, headed by Salvation Army officers in uniforms, and a Brass Band, drawn from various places such as Pontypridd, Trealaw, Pentre, and Mountain Ash. The men wore bands of white ribbon around the arm, while the Salvation lasses looked

exceedingly interest- ing in their quaint shovel bonnets with white sashes thrown from shoulder to waist. Captain Kent of Pontypridd, was the officer in charge and with him were Captain Mason, of Pentre, Adjutant Perkins of Cardiff, and number of youths dressed in the part of the army. At the grave Adjutant Perkins gave out the hymn 'Rock of Ages.'

The men had lived in the same Street, Middle Street, Trallwn Gardens - and with regard to one of them, of all events the grief-stricken father stated on Wednesday that the young man had always associated himself with the Salvation Army, and it was the desire of the family that he should go with the others.

The last of the family

In one grave in the Church of England ground were interred together the bodies of Robert and John Parry, father and son. No sight could be more deeply affecting than that of the widowed mother as, prostrated with grief, she dropped tears of bitter anguish into the reopened grave in which, not 14 months ago, she saw interred the remains of a loving daughter. Father, husband, daughter, and son have gone, and now alone she is left of the desolate hearth of what was once the happiest of homes. The service at the graveside was conducted in Welsh by the vicar of Glyntaff.

The funeral of young Walter Osbourne, a ripper, of Norton Bridge, was very largely attended, the Revs. R. Whitehead, S. W. Lawton (Pontypridd), and T. Stevenson (Norton Bridge), officiating. Walter Osbourne, was one of the men who had been rescued, and since died an agonising death. There was, even in the midst of this universal sadness, an exceptional tinge of tragedy in his death, for Walter was in the bloom of youth, and looked forward to an early day when he should, with joy and pride, lead the maiden he loved to the altar. That day had been fixed, and with prudence and forethought that is rare in mining districts, he had bought a house, and was busily arranging to furnish the little house for himself and his bride. But man proposes and God disposes.

He was not to lead her to the altar; for she, who was to have been his bride on this very day, in sable words and with a broken heart, followed what was left of him to that borne whence no traveler returns. Osbourne was a prominent worker in connection with the English Wesleyan Chapel at Pontypridd, and, during a gleam of consciousness in that terrible period that intervened between his rescue and his death, he expressed a hope that as many as of the Sunday-school children should escort his remains to the grave. His wish was more than gratified, for as far as could be judged the members of the church and the school, and the bible class, of which he was a member, joined the procession *en masse*, and between them shouldered the coffin, covered with a magnificent collection of wreaths,

from the house to the cemetery.

The young lad Evan Davies was the son of one of the deacons of Moriah Church, and was only fifteen years of age. His funeral started at the same time as that of David Owen Jones, one service being held at the graveside.

But, as might have been expected, it was when the Cilfynydd procession arrived at 4 o'clock that the greatest interest was aroused amongst the thousands who lined the route and who were standing in and around the cemetery. No fewer than nine coffins were borne by this immense cortege, and the fact that three of those contained the mortal remains of William, Richard, and Evan Gronow, the sons of Mr. Henry Gronow, checkweigher - was sufficient in itself to kindle the deepest sympathy with the mourners. The three coffins were covered with beautiful wreaths of white flowers, and as the procession wended its way to the cemetery the grief of the mourners was heart-rendering.

The chief mourners were Mr. and Mrs. Gronow (the parents), Mrs. Gronow (the widow of 'Willie,') and several brothers and sisters of the departed three. The two younger brothers were to be placed in one grave, the coffin in which were placed the remains of William being laid in an adjoining one. The three young men (and also two others carried in the same procession) were members of the Congregational Church at Cilfynydd - a church which has lost upwards of forty members through this calamity. The Gronow family, a numerous and highly respectable one, were naturally deeply affected, and poignant grief of the mother and her daughter-in-law, the wife of William Gronow, was heart-rendering.

While the Rev. J. Williams was conducting the service, which was in Welsh, the young wife fainted, and had to be removed some distance away by sympathetic friends, who applied restoratives. All the surroundings were calculated to impress even the most hardhearted, for, while the officiating minister was referring to the young men as friends he had met in the House of God - friends of whose graves, the graves of a household, so many had met to pay a last tribute of respect - a neighbour- ing cortege sang: - 'Bydd myrdd o ryfeddodau,' and no sooner had the last words died away in the echoes of the green hills on each side than another congregation began rendering; - 'Yn y dyfroedd mawr a'r tonau,' and those words were taken up by the assembled multitude standing around the open grave of the three brothers.

The time for taking the last fond look and the final farewell had come, and the stricken mother paused as, with streaming eyes in agonising countenance, she gazed into the silent grave where two of her sons were placed to rest, and she murmured in piteous tones, "Good-bye, fy mhalt I; y mae'n rhaid I mi fyned yn mheliach; y mae genyfun arall yma." (Goodbye my children, I have to go further

(life must go on); I have another one (baby) here. Then, turning to the adjoining grave where her married son lay, she burst into fresh grief, crying "Good-bye, good-bye, yr wyf yn gorfod gadael. Willie ar ol yn awr," (Good-bye, good-bye, I have to leave Willie behind now) and in her last paroxysm of grief she called, and called in vain, for her "Willie, Willie, anwyl."

At the grave of Morris the Rev. H. J. Jacobs officiated, whilst the Rev. D. Silyn Evans officiated over that of Rees. The ceremonies throughout were most impressive. Alas, what a heart rendering sight it is to see a mother parting forever with a beloved son as he is placed to rest in god's 'holly acre,' and few can really appreciate her agonies of soul unless they to have undergone a similar sad trial at the graveside. The two little boys of Mrs. W. Gronow gazed wonderingly into the grave as 'dad's' form was laid below, and from their questioning, innocent little faces it was evident they had not realised the significance to them of that day's sad event.

Every heart went out in sympathy towards the grief-stricken relatives of the dead, and cheeks were everywhere seen bedimmed with hot, burning tears of sorrow and floral wreaths, but in some cases there was a singular absence of flowers of any kind. The singing during the day was indescribably thrilling and had an electrical effect on the vast throng which had assembled within the walls of the cemetery. Some of the old Welsh hymns were sung with marvelous affection,

Other funerals

From Cilfynydd the dram of mourners passed shortly after dawn, when bodies were carried in breaks and biers, some to the nearest at Pontypridd, others to Quaker's Yard, there to entrain for various destinations. One of the saddest of these mourning spectacles was in charge of Edward Thomas, one of the roadmen. He, poor fellow, had lost three sons, one aged 29, the other 19, and a third 16, and now followed home their remains to Talygarn, in the quarry districts of Carnarvonshire, where his mother, with five young children, awaited their arrival.

At seven o'clock a large procession escorted to Aberdare Junction the bodies of four victims who are to be buried in their native parish of Abersoch, a fishing village at the extreme end of Carnarvonshire. The deceased were Richard Roberts, who leaves a widow and nine children; Ellis Jones, the widow's brother; Ellis Roberts and Hugh Roberts, Crennant. A local tradesman spoke highly of the Abersoch men, and pointed out that before leaving with the funeral, Ellis Jones's father went through the village and paid all debts due to tradesmen and others from his son, and from Robert's, his afflicted daughter's husband. By the same train also were conveyed to Montgomeryshire the remains of Henry Morgan, the chief mourner being the aged father, William Morgan, who lost his right leg in the very

pit from which he had now recovered the dead body of his son.

A very large funeral was that of James Jones, whose father, is the under-manager of the Albion Colliery. The deceased, who was a single man, was buried at Mountain Ash. Another two unfortunate victims were buried at the Aberdare cemetery, namely, David Morris and John Rees. The bodies were conveyed by rail from Aberdare Junction.

Internments at Llanfabon

Burying unidentified

The '*South Wales Daily News*' reported: - Llanfabon's quiet, peaceful height was on Thursday afternoon once more the point to which several hundreds from Cilfynydd made a toilsome march in the heat of the summer day's sun, bearing a score of bodies for interment in the parish churchyard. From early morn a number of men from the colliery had been plying pick and shovel in hollowing and shaping the graves which stood agape around two sides of the burial ground. Forty-one graves had been constructed altogether, sixteen of which were filled on the previous day, and although the gravediggers were not typical feeble old sextons, all their efforts had to be put forth to get the graves in readiness for the reception of the intended occupants on arrival.

The first of the dead to receive interment on the day in question was John Williams, of 61 William St., Cilfynydd, whose remains were brought to the burial ground about one o'clock. It was an hour later when the next mournful procession came in sight over the brow of the hill, and the coffin borne upon the bier provided contained the remains of Edwin Godwin, of Mary St., Cilfynydd. These funerals, attended by a few mourners and fellow-workmen of the deceased, were quietly conducted by the curate of Llanfabon, the Rev. H. Davies, the service in the first case being rendered in Welsh, and in the latter in English.

A slight mishap occurred in lowering the coffin of Godwin into the grave. Cords were provided for the purpose in lieu of the webbing usually used, and one of the slight ropes snapped beneath the weight, causing the coffin to slip suddenly to the bottom.

The incident was a rather painful to the grief-stricken relatives, but happily there was no repetition of the occurrence in the case of the other interments. An hour elapsed, and then a large party from Cilfynydd with four coffins arrived. Sad to relate, they were all from one house in Mary St., and contained earthly cerements of three brothers, Richard, Edward, and Owen Thomas, the eldest of whole was but eighteen years, and a young man, Richard Griffiths by name, who had lived with them, died with them, and now was to find a last resting place by their side.

The commencement of the service and the final rights was somewhat delayed by the emotion displayed by Mrs. Thomas, who cried in pitiful tones "Oh! bangan bash, anwyl," which she kept on repeating again and again, The rector (the Rev. Daniel Leigh) impressively read the service, which was in Welsh, and the lamentations of the bereaved mother was heartrending. Supported by two male relatives, she leant over the grave of her sons, and with great difficulty had to be restrained from falling upon the upmost coffin, and before the second hymn she was so overcome that she had to be quietly led away, although she appeared to be unwilling to leave the spot so hallowed to her by such endearing recollections.

The solemn rights had hardly been concluded in these cases when an advance band of young colliers heralded the coming of what proved to be the remainder of the dead who were to be buried at Llanfabon on this occasion. The cortege, which made its slow, steadfast way between the bright green hedgerows that border the lane leading up to Llanfabon, was probably half-a-mile in length, and the coffins, which were carried shoulder high above the moving train, were no less than twenty. These included, it was found, eleven of the unclaimed victims of the catastrophe, and the remains of Enoch Clarke, Robert Jones, Thomas Smith, John Hearne, David Pugh, David Owen Griffiths, John G. Roberts, Edward Bennett, and William Roberts. The scene which was presented on the arrival of these coffins, the attendant mourners, and the throng that followed into the churchyard was affecting to the utmost degree, and might have aroused emotion in a stoic (someone who shows no feelings). It is said that Pugh's wife was confined only last week, and that her condition since being acquainted with her husband's death gives reason to fear that her life is in jeopardy.

On the one side of the cemetery, arose the lamentation of women - widows, mothers, and sisters - who could not then be comforted. Even by the hopes of future happiness held out in the burial service, and whose dolor (state of great sorrow or distress) made them deaf to the kindling spiritual fervour of the hymns earnestly sung by the assembly, among which were 'Bydd myrdd o' ryfeddodau,' and 'Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah' etc.

Presently the eleven unnamed bodies, with several others were brought in one after the other, followed by about 500 people, the coffins of the unknown being placed side by side in a row. Some of them were perfectly plain, but the rest had plates affixed to the lids, though, of course, they bore no inscriptions. The service on the other side of the ground, where the poor fellows were disposed of two in a grave, was conducted both in Welsh and English, and, save for the singing of the usual hymns, with a quietude, unbroken by the sobs of mourners, as in the other instances, albeit there were probably dear friends and quondam (former) close companions standing around. The service over, the poor fellows were interrupted by an unfortunate mistake caused by the lowering of one of the coffins into a

private grave which stood open close to those who were allotted to the unidentified. The coffin, however, was speedily brought out and lowered into a duly-appointed grave, on which the service proceeded to its termination. This wholesale burial occupied a considerable time, and before it was quite at an end the earth was being replaced, an operation which the pronounced odour exhaled from the many coffins required should be promptly performed. With the 26 buried on Thursday, the total number of victims of the explosion interred at Llanfabon has been brought to 47.

Cardigan

On Thursday morning the body of Richard James, 20, of 75 Cilfynydd Road, a labourer, one of the victims of the explosion, arrived at Cardigan by the early morning mail train, where it was met by a number of relatives and friends. The circumstances are very distressing. The deceased, who was only twenty years of age, was the eldest of a family of twelve, living at Penpark, near Cardigan, his father being bedridden for some time, and young James only left home a fortnight on Wednesday in order to support those depending upon him. Owing to the earliness of the hour but few people were about as the mournful cortege passed through Cardigan, but the hearse was followed by a large number of vehicles containing relatives and friends - farmers and others of the district. His remains were interred at Ffynon Bedwr Independent Chapel, the Rev. H. Williams of Llecheyd officiating. The scene at the grave was a most affecting one, and the deepest sympathy is felt on all hands for the sorrowing family, so suddenly and cruelly bereft of almost their only support.

Merthyr

One of the victims of the disaster at Cilfynydd, was Isaacher Williams, 49, of 44 Cilfynydd Rd., originally from Merthyr, and the body of the deceased was conveyed by road to the Cefn Cemetery on Thursday. A large number of relatives and friends followed the body to the graveside, where a very impressive service was conducted by the Rev. J. Matthew Davies, Unitarian minister. The deceased was fifty years of age and had only worked a few weeks at the Albion Colliery having removed there from Merthyr Vale.

Latest particulars Cilfynydd Thursday

Another of the survivors died this morning, viz; Samuel Evans, the first man brought out alive so there are only eight survivors now. One more body was recovered last night, and two more this morning, making 268, of whom 245 have been identified. The bodies brought up this morning were identified as those of

Robert Jones, 40, ripper, married, five children, 9 Ann Street, Cilfynydd and Herbert Allard, 23 assistant timberman, single, 3 Councilor's Row, Norton Bridge. The body of Cornelius John Horrell, 22, assistant ripper, married, 32, Norton Bridge, has also been identified this morning.

Another body brought up

A reporter at Cilfynydd, telegraphing later said: - Up too about one o'clock on Thursday afternoon the crowd gathered near the colliery has been much smaller than on any previous day since the accident, and with the exception of some who are still seeking lost relatives, little or no interest is being taken in the proceedings. The clearing is being rapidly affected, dead horses and tons of stone, are being sent to bank continuously. Shortly after noon another body was recovered and brought to the surface and it was placed in the mortuary. The news spread very rapidly, and soon the hay-loft was thronged by persons trying to identify the remains.

Such a woman came forward and claimed the body as that of her husband John Lloyd. At about 2 o'clock the bodies still remaining unidentified, numbering eleven, were after being placed in coffins, conveyed to Llanfabon churchyard for interment, a large crowd following the melancholy procession. It is expected that other bodies will be brought to the top of the pit during the afternoon, and coffins are being kept in readiness to receive the remains.

A noteworthy coincidence

On Thursday morning a reporter was informed by Police-Sergeant Weeks, of Barry, of a curious coincidence with regard to the recent colliery disaster at Cilfynydd, Pontypridd. About two years ago, said the officer a saddler, named Griffiths, living in the Tylycelyn Road, Penygraig, came home one day after drinking heavily, and suffered from delirium tremors. Under the influence he informed several persons that an explosion had occurred at Cilfynydd Colliery, the fan and head-gearing of the downcast having been blow to pieces. The man was very explicit in his description of the rescue parties, the large number of visitors, the bringing up of the dead (stating that there was no one left alive in the pit), and other scenes connected to an explosion, several of which tallied precisely with the recent explosion at the Cilfynydd colliery.

The statements of Griffiths caused much excitement in Penygraig and the surrounding districts. Police-Sergeant Weeks (then acting-sergeant, stationed at Penygraig) saw the man, and heard the same story. He, therefore, made inquiries, and ascertained that the rumour was untrue.

Many persons, Police-Sergeant Weeks states, will remember the occurrence. Griffiths committed suicide at Cardiff a fortnight after making his remarkable statement.

Condition of the injured

One reporter was informed by Dr. Lyttle, the medical officer of the colliery, that one of the injured who still survived, Richard Williams, of Cilfynydd Road, is in a critical condition. George Parry is progressing favourably and the others are doing very well. Mr. Cullen, the clerk of the Miners' Provident Fund has distributed £1,250 in order to relieve 120 widows and 296 children. The funeral expenses of the victims were paid, but there are still several dependants not attending, the exact total of which cannot as yet be asserted.

During the afternoon Mr. J. T. Robson, H. M. Inspector of Mines for south Wales; Mr. Martin, Inspector of the South-Western District, and several mining engineers and colliery managers descended and examined the pit.

Other bodies recovered and claimed

Between four and five o'clock on Thursday a body was brought up to the surface from Grover's side, having been found under a fall in one of the headings. Within a couple of minutes the remains were identified as those of Charles Gulliford, aged 17, of 25, Danygraig Street, Pontypridd, and they were removed in a coffin. The excitement caused by this event soon subsided, and the hopes of those who had loved ones in the pit sent down to zero, only to be raised again a couple of hours later when another body from the same district was laid in the mortuary. Both bodies were badly mutilated, the latter having nearly all his limbs broken, and was, in addition, dreadfully swollen. His body was claimed as that of Charles Hughes, age 16, of Middle Street, Trallwn Gardens, Pontypridd. It is expected that other bodies will be brought up during the night.

Some anonymous lady or gentleman, who, to all appearances must be a lover of little children, sent on Thursday to the colliery several large boxes of bread and butter and cake to be distributed amongst the children left orphans by the explosion. The colliery authorities handed the food to Dr. Lyttle, who made good use of it, relieving those who were really in need. Still a quantity remained, which Dr. Lyttle would distribute in due course.

The death toll

Up to ten o'clock on Thursday evening 263 dead bodies have been brought out of the pit. In a conversation one of our reporters had with Mr. Hill, one of the

colliery engineers, who has been continually down the pit, and has worked incessantly, that gentleman stated that he believed that there were still five or six bodies underground.

“Have they been found?” queried the reporter. - “No,” said Mr. Hill, “but they have been smelled.”

“Perhaps the smell arose from the carcasses of the horses?” - “No; there is a great difference between the two.”

Death of another survivor

On Thursday, June 28th, John Evans, aged 30, of Howell St, Cilfynydd, who was brought up from the pit alive, succumbed to his injuries, making the ninth death amongst those rescued. As far as can be gleaned now the death-toll is made up as follows: - Brought up dead 263, rescued alive, but have still died, 9, supposed still in the pit, 6; Total: 278.

The funeral of William Dobbs, fireman, 50 year of age, took place on Thursday afternoon at the family grave at Mynyddislwyn. That evening the funeral of Roberts Smith, a haulier, 23 years-of-age, residing at Wern Crescent, Llancaiach, took place at Ebenezer Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Heolfawr.

The following public and private bodies have passed votes of condolence with the relatives of the victims: - Aberdare Conservative and Unionist Association; East Glamorgan Agriculture Society, Bedwellty Board of Guardians, and Carmarthenshire Calvinistic Methodist Association. Also, the Cleveland Miners, the Rhondda Cym- mrodeorios Society, Plymouth Workmens’ Committee, and many others.

Telegraphic work at Pontypridd

Mr. Castle, postmaster, and Mr. Harries, the chief clerk at the Pontypridd Post Office, deserves special mention for the splendid efforts they made and the excellence of the service afforded to the press and public in connection with the telegraphic works since the explosion. Some idea of the magnitude of the work dealt with may be judged from the following:

Comparisons of private and press telegrams sent from Pontypridd during five great events: -

	Private telegrams	Press telegrams	Words
G.W. Colliery disaster	800	159	70,000
Treforest Accident	400	20	60,000
Colliers strike	200	70	20,000
Nat. Eisteddfod	1,100	165	9,900
Albion Disaster	3,500	188	349,000

Questions in Parliament

In the House of Commons on Thursday Mr. Woods (Lancashire), asked the Secretary of State of the Home department whether he was aware that the shaft where the unfortunate explosion occurred in south Wales on Saturday last was only 10ft in diameter; whether such an area was in accordance with the provisions of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, or sufficient for adequate ventilation in a mine 580 yards deep and employing 1,600 men and boys, and whether the Home Office would send some competent person down to watch the enquiry on behalf of the crown.

Mr. Asquith (Home Secretary) replied that the shafts were 19ft in diameter, and 205,000 cubic feet of air was circulated through the mine per minute. There was not a larger pair of shafts in south Wales. Counsel would be employed to watch the course of the inquiry on behalf of the crown.

The fiery state of the district

In the House of Commons on Thursday evening Mr. Bridget Morgan (Merthyr Vale) asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, following the report of last year by Mr. Henry Hall, H. M Inspector of Mines for the Liverpool district, to the Home Secretary, in which he remarked that of the whole of the districts tested that of the Albion Colliery, Glamorgan, excelled all others in violence and sensitiveness to explosion, any special command was issued and, if so, what instruction were given by the Home Office to inspectors for the district with a view of minimising the danger to life in that particular colliery.

Asquith: - "I suppose the honourable member refers to a report of the year 1893 by Mr. Hall, and which was only received the 23rd May last, or little more than a month ago. As the honourable member is aware, the Royal Commission is sitting on the subject, and the report will be considered. Last year a new set of rules was promulgated for south Wales, but the colliery proprietors rejected them, and they proceeded at arbitration on the matter."

“Until the Royal Commission on coal-dust is reported, it is impossible to say what measures should be taken with regard to the south Wales collieries or if a fresh act of Parliament would be necessary.” Mr. Morgan asked why the effect of this report was not made known before, when it related to a district in which already 1,600 persons had lost their lives, and was one of the most dangerous mining districts in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Asquith: “It was laid before the commission.”

Mr. Morgan: “But why were not instructions given in regard to Mr. Hall’s

report?” Mr. Asquith: “The reason is that he is not an inspector connected with the south Wales district, but with the Liverpool district.”

A Dean Forest collier among the list

Amongst the dead there appears the name of Charles A. Jones, 57 Cilfynydd Road, aged 19, single, a labourer. The deceased was the eldest son of Mr. Albert Jones, formerly of the Duke of York Inn at Broadstone, but now occupying the Broadstone Farm at Staunton, near Coleford.

An important Masonic movement

At a meeting of the Merlin Lodge of Freemasons, Pontypridd, on Thursday evening a vote of condolence with the bereaved families was passed and a sum of 15 guineas voted towards the Relief Fund. It was resolved to communicate with the other lodges in the Province, and ask them to subscribe as well, so that a united Masonic Fund might be made from the Province, and the money placed at the disposal of the committee of the Miner’s Permanent Providence Society.

Handsome donation from a colliery

The Bwllfa Colliery, Aberdare, on Thursday sent the High-Constable of Aberdare 50 guineas in aid of the fund. The Aberdare Workmen’s Club have also voted 10 guineas to the same fund. Mr. B. Thomas, photographer, Aberdare, has issued 500 portraits of the colliery in two sizes, and 1/6d and 3/- each, and has promised to hand over the whole of the result of the sales to the fund.

Some questions to be answered

At a crowded meeting of workmen, assembled on Thursday night in the Lesser-Park Hall, Cardiff, under the banner of the Independent Labour Party, to hear an address from Mr. Tom Mann, the chairman (Mr. S. G. Hobson), in opening the proceedings in feeling terms, made allusion to the Albion Colliery disaster, and proposed the resolution expressing heartfelt sympathy with the unfortunate sufferers.

It was too early to examine the causes of the catastrophe, but he hoped, for the sake of the employees, that some questions that were being asked would be answered satisfactorily. He hoped, for instance, that the question to be asked in the House of Commons as to whether the shaft was 19ft. round, would be answered in a way which would remove suspicion. He hoped that another point would be conclusively answered. A blue book was launched by the Government from the pen of Mr. Hall, a man well known before the Royal Commission of 1891, wherein he told them in language which has become appallingly prophetic that of all the dusts tested that at the Albion Colliery excelled all others in violence and sensitiveness of explosion. The resolution was unanimously passed, all reverently standing.

A correction

To the editor of the 'Western Mail' :-

Dear Sir - In your issue of Monday last you describe Mr. Watkins of Cilfynydd, as a pharmaceutical chemist. I have to inform you that Watkins does not appear on the register of pharmaceutical chemists or chemist and druggists, and that by the use of the above title he would render himself to a penalty under the Pharmacy Act, 1868. Trusting you will cause a correction to appear in due course.

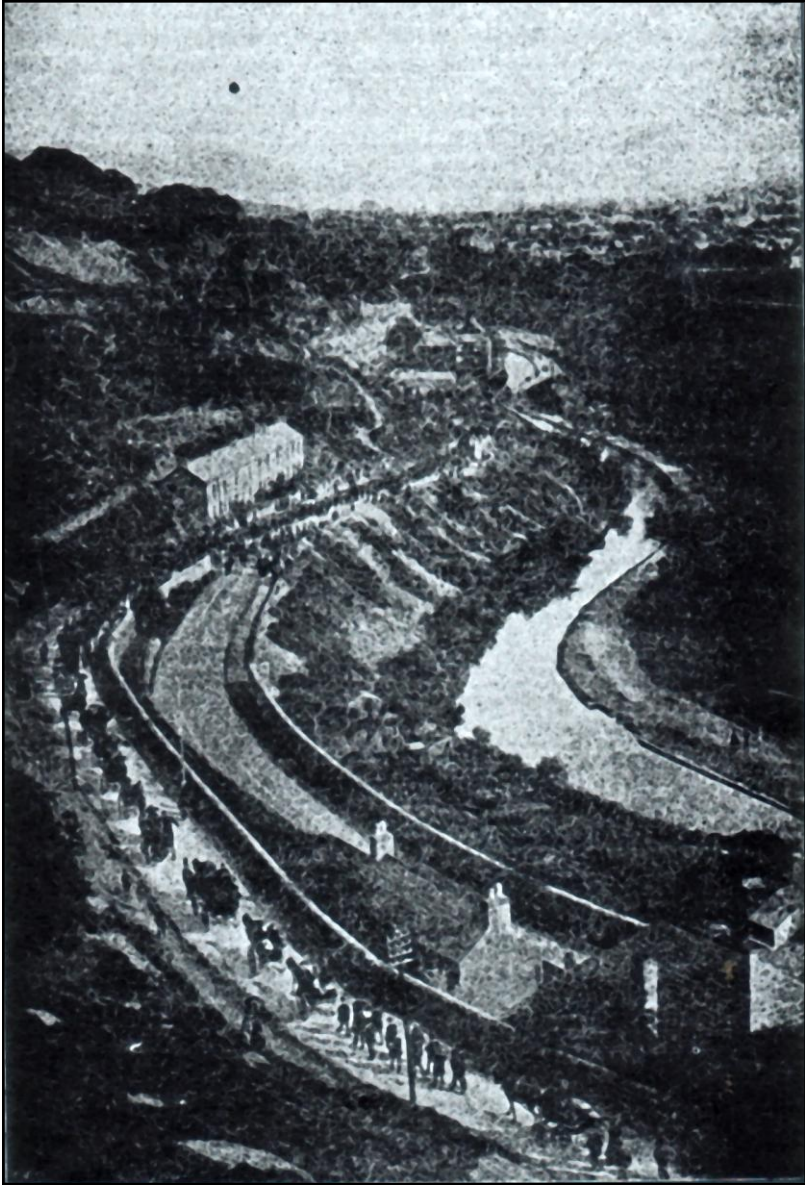
*Richard Bremridge,
Registrar*

As if there was not enough sorrow in the village another event would even deepen the gloom: -

Child drowned at Cilfynydd

A little boy named John Gwyn Thomas, aged three years and ten months, the son of Mr. John Thomas, grocer, Hong Kong Stores, Cilfynydd, fell into the Glamorgan Canal, opposite the Post Office, at Cilfynydd on Thursday, June 28th. He was taken out in about 10 minutes, and Dr. Lyttle attended and endeavoured to restore life, but failed. Another little boy about the same age was standing somewhere near and saw the lad fall in and gave the alarm. A search was immediately made, and the body was found under a wooden landing stage which is placed on the side of the canal for the purpose of storing the materials conveyed there by the boats.

The inquest was held at the Albion Hotel, Cilfynydd, the following day, by Mr. E. B. Reece, Coroner. Mr. W. H. Watkin was foreman of the jury. From the



Funeral cortege travelling down Pentrebach Road towards the Glyntaff Cemetery

evidence it appeared that the little boy was throwing an old boot into the canal over his head when he fell backwards into it. The alarm was given by another little boy, but as the body could not be seen, it was thought it an idle rumour. After a time a crowd gathered and the boy was discovered by Job Davies. The jury returned a verdict of 'accidental drowning,' and pointed out the dangerous nature of the spot to the Coroner.

In consequence of the calamity at the colliery, several local events of importance at Pontypridd this week had naturally been indefinitely postponed. A general holiday had been arranged in the town on Thursday, on the occasion of the annual picnic of the local tradesmen and their assistants to Porthcawl, but at a meeting of the Pon- typridd Grocers' Association early in the week it decided to abandon the trip, and open their establishments as usual.

CHAPTER NINE

Friday, June 29th 1894

Very little interest has centred around the colliery on Friday morning, and the excitement caused by the sad catastrophe had, to a considerable extent subsided. Up to this time two more bodies have been brought to the surface. Both were found under falls in Grover's side, and were badly mutilated. In fact the one brought up just after 11 o'clock this morning consisted only of mangled remains - the left side and the leg. The body was recognised by a patch on the clothes as that of David Evans, fireman, 16 Howell Street, who leaves a widow and four children. The other body was also identified, the name given being that of William Ware, haulier, 35, of Evan's houses, Norton bridge, who was married and had four children. There are about 100 men in the pit clearing away, the main roads being very nearly free of obstruction. Alderman Matthias J. P; was again at the pit head, and amongst others down were Messrs. J. T. Robson, Martin, Sims, Gray (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines), Hannah (of Fern- dale), and Jenkins (of the Ocean collieries).

Condition of injured

Dr. Lyttle and Dr. Williams visited the survivors several times on Friday, and found all but Richard Williams were progressing favourably, although some were still much affected by the afterdamp. The death toll with the two bodies recovered on Friday was as follows: - Brought up dead 265, rescued alive but since dead, 9, supposed to be still in the pit, 4; Total 278.

More funerals

Heartrending incidents

Friday saw at total absence of spectators. The roads en route to Glyntaff were clear, and but for the mourners and those being part of the processions, the cemetery was practically deserted. The novelty even of wholesale burial had passed away, and the sensation-hunting section of the public had grown weary of these sad and monotonous marches to what has been aptly described as the local Aeldeme (field of blood). There was, however, present one old inhabitant of Treforest, who, though unconnected with the day's proceedings, watched, with streaming eyes, from a seat on a tombstone at the top of a slope, the weird and solemn ceremonies of the day. He had witnessed many similar scenes in the days that have gone, and with a quivering voice he held forth to those who would listen to him the vicissitudes of the past, quoting copiously the while from the elegiac (lament for the dead) poems of the bards of Wales. Nothing could have been more touching than his application of the words of the Vicar Pritchard, the author of 'Canwyll y Cymry,' to the fate of the men whose burials went on all around -

‘Heddyyw’n gawr, y for y’n gelian - Dyma Gwflwr dyn ai ddamwain.’ (Today, a giant, tomorrow, a corpse - here is a man’s state (condition) with his accident).

Although the interments at Glyntaff Cemetery on Friday were not so numerous as on the previous day, and the number of people brought together by the sad work was not so great, there were scenes witnessed connected with the burials which are not likely soon to fade away from the memories of those assembled. There were altogether 16 burials, 9 being in the Non-conformist ground, 6 in the Church of England portion, and one in the section reserved for Catholics. The first funeral that arrived at 1 o’clock was that of Herbert Allard, 22 years of age, of Norton Bridge. It was met at the gate by the Rev. S. R. Jones, Vicar of Glyntaff. At 1.30 there came another cortege bringing the body of Charles Counsell, of Cilfynydd Road. The deceased’s father, brother, and sister were present, but not his wife, who was that morning travelling from Taunton to be present. However, she had not arrived when the interment took place. After a quarter of an hour after the relatives had driven away a young woman, of about 22, dressed in deep mourning, arrived, and, meeting some of the friends who were returning from the funeral, she was accompanied by them towards the grave to take a last look at the coffin of her husband. To her dismay, she discovered that the grave had already been partially filled in, and her grief for a time overwhelmed her. Presently she was led away from the scene, and the pitiful scene terminated.

When the body of John Lloyd arrived at the gate, accompanied by eight people, including the driver of the break in which the coffin was brought, there was no minister with the funeral. The cemetery staff immediately sent for the nearest minister, the Rev. Josiah H. Roberts (Welsh Baptist), who instantly complied, and, finding the widow, accompanied by a lady friend, quietly sitting on one of the benches near the cemetery entrance, asked her questions as to the possible cause of the hitch in the arrangements. The widow explained that she and her husband had been separated for ten years, he having deserted her, but, having heard he was killed by the explosion, she had come to collect the body and bury it. She had identified the remains by the fact that the deceased’s nose was broken many years ago when in a tussle with gamekeepers.

The only Catholic funeral on Friday was that of Thomas O’Leary, of Aberdare Junction, a haulier, 18 years of age, and the circumstances connected with this are worthy of note. It seems that the deceased’s father lives in London, and, as his address was not known, he was not aware until Wednesday that his son was a victim of the explosion. On hearing it, however, he travelled all Wednesday night to Aberdare Junction in order to be present at his lad’s funeral. The Rev. Father Noonan officiated.

Another of the funerals that arrived at 2 o’clock was that of William Hurrell, 37

Middle Street, Trallwn Gardens. Again the Salvation Army came in grave numbers to escort the remains of one of their comrades - whose cap and jersey were placed, military fashion, upon the lid of the coffin. The procession was this time without the band, being headed only by an officer bearing aloft a huge 'banner of the cross.' The precisionists all wore white sashes, while the bearers were attired in jerseys of flaming red.

Next came the remains of George and Thomas Winter, two brothers, from Norton Bridge, and Thomas Jenkins, of Llantwit Vardre (they had lived together and died together). Thomas Winter, a married man with two children, was rescued alive from the mine, but subsequently succumbed to his injuries.

Along with the same procession came the remains of John James, of Cilfynydd, followed by a widow and two children and a large concourse of mourners. John Gould and John Bryant of 4 Davies Street, Coedpenmaen, who were also fellow lodgers and 'butties' in the colliery, were buried in the same grave. So far as could be asserted, there was only one other victim of the Albion disaster to be buried at Glyntaff on Saturday.

At Llanfabon only a couple of funerals took place on Friday and there was a large number of friends and relatives following each cortege, which were carried from Cilfynydd over the mountain to the churchyard, a considerable distance. The processions were watched with considerable interest, and a great reverence was shown

At 1 o'clock on Friday the body of Joseph Thomas, collier, which was recovered on Wednesday night, travelled to Aberdare by road. The hearse and mourning coaches were provided by Mr. James Morgan, Monk Street. After a short stay the body was taken on to Briton Ferry, where the internment took place at the New Bethel Welsh Congregational Chapel, Pentwynmawr.

The bodies of Robert Roberts and Robert Jones, of Cilfynydd, were conveyed, the former on Thursday and the latter on Friday, to Abersoch, North Wales, where they were to be interred.

Action of the government

Question in Parliament

In the House of Commons on Friday afternoon Sir William Harcourt (Chancellor of the Exchequer), in answer to Mr. Kier Hardie (West Ham), said the lamentable position of widows and orphans of those who have been killed in the Albion Colliery explosion in Wales was being carefully considered. It was too early to say whether the government would devote any money for those left destitute until

the facts of the case were more fully ascertained.

Disinfecting the district Precautionary measures taken

An inquiry was made at a meeting of the Pontypridd Board of Health on Friday as to whether the dead horses and the houses where the victims had lain had been disinfected, and the surveyor explained that four men had been employed by the board for the past four days to look after the burial of the horses and to visit all the houses which required to be disinfected, and he understood from the inspectors that this work had been satisfactorily been done. Mr. Hopkin Morgan asked if it was known if all the dead had been buried. The chairman remarked that there were but a few bodies left. Mr. Hopkin Morgan pointed out that in one house in Coedpenmaen there were two bodies than had lain there since Tuesday, and no-one seemed to have taken notice of them. He believed they were lodgers, and there was some dispute regarding the payment for burial. The board resolved that orders be given to the medical officer and the inspectors that nobody should be allowed to become a nuisance in any locality.

Saturday June 30th The Western Mail Relief Fund

The '*Western Mail*' of June 30th reported: - In making another appeal to the generous instincts of a public acquainted with the suffering which must attend the loss of life of 278 breadwinners in a colliery district, unless means are forthcoming to avert it, we consider one word of explanation due. When the time came to deal with the money placed in our hands after the Park Slip and Great Western Colliery disasters, we decided not to throw it into the common fund, but to distribute it amongst the families. An investigation into the effective distribution demonstrated the desirableness of such a departure, and the results, we believe, justified it. In some cases we supplement the allowances made by the Provident and other funds; in others gave sorely needed help that committees by necessary rules and regulations could not do.

We refer to the parting order to make plain our present intentions. We propose dealing with whatever money that is entrusted to us independently of any common fund or society. An extended experience satisfies us the more good can be done in this way than by merely adding it to the multiplicity of funds destined to be ultimately swept together. It is desirable that the facts should be stated at the outset to prevent misunderstanding. In the absence of a specific instruction to forward it to the Provident Fund, merge it in a common fund, or apply it in some stated way, we shall assume that our contributors wish the money to be used as was in the Tondy and Great Western funds.

An appeal by the Bishop of Llandaff

The Bishop of Llandaff addressed the following letter to the clergy of the diocese: - "Rev. and Dear brothers. The terrible colliery disaster at Cilfynydd, the most awful probably which has cast a gloom over the Welsh coalfield during the last half century, has already resulted in the loss of upwards of 250 lives. Many of the poor fellows who have been suddenly launched into eternity were married men, who have left widows and large families behind them, for the supply of whose wants it is estimated that £60,000 to £70,000 will be required. Under these circumstances, I venture to express a very earnest hope that you will, on the earliest convenient Sunday, bring the case of these poor sufferers before your people, and afford them an opportunity of which I am sure they will gladly avail themselves, of contributing towards their relief. Believe me, dear Rev. and dear brothers, affectionately yours &co."

R. Llandaff Grosvenor Club, Bond St, London

The row over the composition of the inquest jury caused much consternation locally and the '*Glamorgan Free Press*' of June 30th carried the following letter that showed the general opinion locally :-

The sting in the tail of the Cilfynydd calamity

Sir - When viewing the attendant ghastly spectacle which was to be seen in the streets of Cilfynydd after the recent terrible holocaust, my heart was instilled with faith, courage, and above all, hope, that the body of practical men, conversant with colliery workings in this district, would have been selected as a jury, so as to make a most searching inquiry into the cause of the explosion. Further, I believe every father, mother, son or daughter, who had their respective relatives torn away from them at a moment's warning, looked forward to the same thing, but, alas for them, and for me, our hopes have been blighted in this direction, and we have a dreary prospect of another bunged-up inquiry, which is damning to all our practices of civilisation. It is enough to make one's blood run red in his veins when reading the names of the jurymen, and the class wherefrom they have been selected in this case. No-one can rise, after its perusal - if he be a true man - without feeling more determined than ever to battle without ceasing for an amelioration of existing evils in this direction. If the jury wishes to do justice in a mining case, they cannot do so through lack of knowledge. Fancy explaining to innkeepers, a baker, a banker, or an auctioneer, who are on the present jury, the different modes of stowing (filling) rubbish, blasting rock, or the new custom of blasting timbers.

Yet here it is not excruciatingly funny, leave alone the insult tended to such men as Edwards and Price, who are ex-colliery managers, by asking them to sit

amongst such a body of ‘nincompoops’ who claim to say ‘that a man who has not entered a mine, and gained no practical experience of same, is quite as good as the man who has spent twenty or thirty years of his life in the mine.’ One of them went as far as to say that they will be astonished at the amount of knowledge possessed by so and so on mining dangers. Is there any need to be astonished at all, when upon their admission they lack the full practical knowledge, and there are scores upon scores of men, who have the right qualifications, to be had for the mere trouble of searching the district. If we could bring ourselves to believe for a fact that the present condition of things were unilateral, we might believe life as we found it. I am of the candid opinion that they are subject to emendation and, my God, it is hard to think, much less to utter, that the workers of this district are today being throttled in the name of Justice and Equality.”

“When we look at the mutilated forms of our dear fellow-workers at the Albion Colliery, I know that we are hurrying on to the same place, and others will again follow unless we strike a telling blow at the foundation of all the cruel systems and practices carried out in coal mining, it is high time for us as workers to protest. The treatment all our pleadings in the past have received when brought before the authorities who are placed in position, where humanity should reign supreme, tells us to expect nothing; ears refuse to hear what the eyes will not see, the tongue is interpreter for hypocrite and this brings the unavoidable conflict of classes and masses nearer to the present day, which will probably mean a revolution. Discontent is not only swelling in the hearts of the masses, which some prefer to show by way of demonstrations; but in the hearts of the masses, though not so apparent, lies hidden thoughts and hateful plans, which will burst forth into action at what they will think the opportune time.”

“Is there no hope for the mining community of south Wales? Are they to have their lives and souls crushed out because, forsooth, some vested interests might suffer? Much may be done if we but set ourselves to work. Colliery workers of the district, aye, everyone, in fact, who is worth his salt, should unite in this question, if unity is possible on no other. The fatherless children and the widows created by this catastro- phe are crying to us for help in this case. We cannot hear them if we will not listen! Let the fathers and brothers of south Wales look to it that they do not cry in vain.”

Yours respectfully

D. Morgan, Tymawr, Pontypridd

Horrible experience of grave-diggers

The ‘*South Wales Daily News*’ of this date reported: - During Thursday and Friday several of the grave-diggers engaged in the gruesome operations of

burying the dead at Glyntaff, Treforest, were so overcome by the smell rising from the coffins when the soil was thrown upon them that they had to retire almost in a state of collapse. Yesterday (Friday), as each body was lowered into the grave the coffin was immediately plentifully sprinkled with chloride of lime.

The body of Charles Hughes, Haulier, 16 years old, of Middle Street, Trallwn gardens, was buried at Glyntaff on Saturday.

Sunday July 1st

Feared more bodies in pit - several men missing

The '*Western Mail*' of Monday, July 2nd 1894 reported: - The somber appearance of Cilfynydd this (Sunday) morning was very different from that which it presented on the previous Sunday. There were but few visitors, and now that the excitement has worn away, only a quiet sadness reigns on all sides. Prayer meetings instead of preaching services were held in all the Non-conformist chapels and the Congregationists, thinned by the devastation at the colliery, were generally small.

Recovery of the bodies

The work of clearance is still being regularly carried on in the pit, and during Friday night a body was brought to the bank at 10.35, two more at 12.55, and one at 4.40 on Saturday morning. The total number brought to bank is 260. One of those brought up during the night was identified as that of Thomas Lowe, a ripper, of 4 Ynysang- harad Road, Pontypridd, aged 42, married, with four children. The following bodies were recovered on Saturday morning and identified as follows: - Thomas Lowe, 4 Ynysangharad Rd, aged 42, married, four children, ripper; Samuel Morgan, aged 22, single, 24 Norton Bridge, assistant-ripper; David Evans, age 38, married, four children, 17 Howell St, Cilfynydd, fireman; John Rees, 38 Cilfynydd Rd, timberman. Evans' body was shattered most horribly. His leg, which was recovered on Friday, was found in Dudson's incline jammed up against the timber forming the roof. The portion recovered on Saturday consisted of the lower parts of the trunk, and this was found fifteen yards beyond the spot at which the leg was picked up. The head, it is said, is still missing.

These remains were screwed down in a coffin on Saturday, and conveyed for internment the following day at Merthyr Vale, the Rev. R. E. Williams officiating. The other bodies found on Saturday were found - two on Dudson's incline, and one in the Bodwenarth district. It was rumoured in the village that the remains of Thomas Leonard, haulier, had been recovered, but upon inquiry in the

colliery yard no confirmation was found. Samuel Evans, the engineman, who died after rescue, was interred on Saturday at Mountain Ash, by the Rev. R. E. Williams.

Remains unidentified.

There still remained in the mortuary a man's head and man's foot, neither of which had been identified. About half-a-dozen watches were picked up amongst the dead, and are in the possession of management, and will be returned to the relatives upon a proper description of them being furnished. Notwithstanding that there were only a few bodies left in the pit, a number of the relatives of missing men were constantly walking about the pit top expecting the recovery of those they had lost. Of course, it was possible that those whom they are looking for were buried among the unidentified. Mr. W. Lewis, the agent of the colliery, was of the opinion that there could not be more than one or two bodies now left in the pit. Mr. Gray and Mr. Simms, mines inspectors, would continue their examination of the colliery on Monday.

The dead horses

There were a number of dead horses still in the mine, and until the falls were all cleared they could not be moved. The odour rising from these carcasses rendered the carrying on of work very difficult, indeed, it was impossible to work longer than four to six hours, and only 65 men went down on Saturday. A large quantity of harnesses - a couple of dram loads, shattered and scorched, were brought to the surface on Saturday morning and buried in the tips. Fresh horses were now being rapidly drafted into the colliery.

As is very often the case after a disaster of this kind, numbers of people were leaving the neighbourhood, many of them vowing that they would never work underground again. In one instance, it is stated twenty young men, carrying their bundles under their arms or over their shoulders, left the place together. Children of the Board school of Cilfynydd have been given a month's holiday.

Sunday (later) some bodies unaccounted for

A notice was posted in the colliery yard on Friday to the effect, that if there was any man still missing, relatives should give information to the Cilfynydd police, and, as a consequence, acting Sergeant Evans, Cilfynydd, and Police-constables Nichols and Gilman received information which made it certain that there were several still lying underneath the workings.

Amongst those are supposed to be the following, about whom full particulars have been given to the officers named: - Edwin Williams, 31 Mary St, Cilfynydd, 36 years, ripper, married wife and three children; John Enos Jenkins, 6 Coedpenmaen Rd, labourer, married, wife and 2 children; Thomas Powell, 10 Beddoe Terr. 31 years, timberman; William Powell, Ynyshir, 51 years; Benjamin Tucker, 17 East Street, Trallwn Gardens, haulier, 20 years single; David Jones, 56 Mary St, Cilfynydd, shackler, 20 years, single; Edward Williams, 31 Mary St, Cilfynydd, ripper, 36 years, married, six children.

Protest against the jury

The workmen employed at the Cambrian collieries had passed a resolution strongly protesting at the selection of the jury empanelled to investigate the cause of the explosion, and appealed to members of Parliament to legislate in the matter, so as to secure the rights of the working community to appoint two-thirds of the jurymen on fatal accidents in coal mines.

A suggestion

A Cardiff tradesman calls our attention wrote the '*Western Mail*' to the fact that there are many people who would like to contribute towards our Relief Fund in aid of the Cilfynydd sufferers, but are not in a position to send large sums enough to make it worthwhile public acknowledgment. He suggests, therefore, that we should accept any sums, however small, and states that if we favourably consider the suggestion hundreds of people would gladly send in their shillings. In reply we have to state that we have placed no limit, either of a maximum or minimum to the subscriptions, and that all sums received, whether a shilling or a hundred guineas, will be welcomed and acknowledged. Subscribers need not give their own name unless they wish to do so. The relief fund distributed by the Miners' Provident Fund to the relatives of the sufferers up to Saturday evening amounted to £1,350. A like amount will be distributed this week again, and Mr. Evan Owen, the General Secretary of the society, anticipates that the requisite information to the number of children etc; will be forthcoming by the end of the week to enable him to commence the weekly payments to widows and children, which, will, of course, take effect from the day of the explosion. The assiduous manner in which Mr. Owen and his staff have applied themselves to the question of relieving the bereaved families and their promptness in bringing the machinery of the Providence Society into operation have met with universal praise and commendation.

References to the disaster were on Sunday made in most of the places of worship throughout the district. At Cilfynydd the Rev. R. E. Williams, the pastor, occupied the pulpit at the Moriah Independent Chapel, which had lost over forty of

its members in the disaster. His discourse was based on Ecclesiastes IX 12: - "*For man also knoweth his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them,*" and in the course of the sermon touching references were made to the sad events of the week. The text had been fully realised.

Man had he known the day of his dissolution for such knowledge could produce madness and misery all round. Had their friends but known that death awaited them in the mine on that fatal Saturday afternoon, not one of them would have descended. Thus has the text been verified; and its great lesson to all was that they should be prepared. Many of their homes had been shattered by a death; the plans of men had been torn to pieces; and grief had taken the place of some. Of many of the victims they could without doubt with confidence declare, "*Not lost, but gone before.*" It was difficult to explain the confusing ways of Providence, but if we understood or not, Providence understood us, and this was our only comfort of sore distress. He prayed God to prove a refuge to the widows and orphans.

The Rev. W. Lewis, pastor of Rehoboth Welsh Baptist Chapel, Cilfynydd, speaking at an united prayer meeting in that place of worship on Sunday, explained that owing to his indescribable experience of the week, he felt quite unable to preach. He reminded them of the only source of solace, "*God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in our trouble.*" They were all in so need of help. Their people, parents, widows, children - were in great trouble. They were in need of human help. The victims of the dreadful calamity had in a measure provided for themselves and families. All of them were interested in the accident fund, and many in Life Assurances. The provision made by the poor victims was as nothing to meet the circumstances the bereaved were now placed in, and they were glad to here how relief funds were being helped and contributed to.

But the wound which had been afflicted upon the hearts of their sorrow-stricken friends was such that no hand could heal it except the Almighty hand of God. May they prove him with their refuge and strength, and a very present help in this time of trouble.

The testimony of Eglwysbach

As to the poor morals and the bad manners of the Rhondda valley in general, and Pontypridd in particular, Eglwysbach, in one of his sermons stated that he had received corroboration of these facts from the following 'special notes,' which it is stated a publican in these parts has set up in a bar. The document runs: -

"A man is specially engaged and kept in the back yard to do all the shouting, cursing,

and swearing that is required at this establishment; a dog is also kept to do all the barking. Our fighter or chucker outer has won 75 prize fights, and is a splendid shot with a revolver. An undertaker calls every morning for orders."

A few more notices couched in these spirited terms must prove helpful to the 'Forward Movement,' in the Rhondda. We still live in hope that Pontypridd will wipe out the stigma that it stands nearer perdition than the cities of the plain.

Monday July 2nd

Another body was recovered in the course of Monday's explorations at the Albion Colliery, viz; that of Roderick Jenkins, 38, Haulier, Cilfynydd. The number of dead is therefore now brought up to 279.

Meeting of the Albion workmen

A general meeting of the workmen of the Albion Colliery was held on Monday at the Public Hall, Cilfynydd, Mr. W. E. Evans, agent of the Cambrian Miners' Association presiding. There were also present Mr. William Abraham M. P; Mr. Samuel Thomas, Mr. Joseph Bowen (checkweigher), and Mr. Evan Jones, secretary of the Workmen's Committee. After a considerable discussion as to the mode of procedure to be adopted, it was unanimously resolved that shifts should remain four hours each, and that no man should be employed in more than one shift during the 24 hours. A deputation, headed by 'Mabon' M. P; subsequently conveyed this information to the manager, who in reply asked that the shifts be six hours in places where the air was pure. Another meeting of the men has been conveyed for Tuesday to consider Mr. Philip Jones's reply when it was hoped every workman would attend. Mabon and Mr. Evans were carrying on investigations of their own in order to prepare evidence for the inquest, and for this purpose Mr. Evans was to meet the men at the Albion Hotel at 2 o'clock on Thursday.

Relief measures - The Forward Movement

The heads of the Wesleyan Forward Movement in Wales had been actively engaged in doing all they could to relieve the sufferings of the relatives of those that perished in the Albion Colliery explosion. The week following the calamity, the Rev. J. Evans (Eglwysbach) who was in charge of the movement at Pontypridd together with Mrs. Evans and Mr. Percy Thomas of Cardiff, made exhaustive enquiries as to the number of sufferers belonging to their denomination, and in many cases relieved immediate wants. An appeal to the charitable to assent on articles of clothing and money for the bereaved was made through the 'Times' by Mrs. Evans. Services were regularly being held at the

Mission Hall in Cilfynydd, and a special memorial service would be held at the Town Hall, Pontypridd, on Sunday evening next, at which Eglwysbach will preach.

A Sisters' recollections of the disaster

(Probably by Sister Catherine of the South Wales Wesleyan Mission)

“How little we dreamt as we rushed home from London on the afternoon of June 23rd, that some of our dear friends at the mission were passing through such an awful experience as the explosion at the Albion Colliery!

Circumstances detained us at Cardiff until Monday morning, when we reached Pontypridd at 9 a.m.; and with several of our staff we made straight for Cilfynydd to see what we could do to lend a helping hand to anyone who needed it. We left our cabs some distance before reaching the pit in order to call at several houses to hear the news - and oh! the terrible wail of anguish that met our ears at every threshold - mothers, wives, sisters, nieces in paroxysms of grief as they pointed to their dead.

Several homes had three or four corpses, and one had nine, another eleven, all inmates of the same house; in some cases the living and the dead had to be put together for want of room, and we would turn from the rigid form of some poor fellow to find close by another struggling for life, with convulsive throes trying to breathe through the fire-damp that permeated his body. We hoped to obtain a look of recognition, but could not be certain that we got it as the fire-damp seemed to produce almost the same symptoms that Chorea or St. Vitus' dance would produce in its victims, and the spasmodic twitching's of the body were most painful to witness.

One poor widow was hugging in her arms a fine little lad of about two years old, looking very flushed, and, noticing the reluctance to part with the boy, we enquired, and found the child was in the height of scarlet fever, but in the agony all around none seemed to think of the fear of contamination, death and misery reigned supreme. Like the disciples of old, we felt inclined to say, “Let us also go that we may die with him,” we seemed to be in such a wave of death. We had taken a little bag of restoratives with us, and found them most useful in many of the homes, where grief had closed the lips to food and scared hunger quite away; so in many cases exhaustion and hysteria

added much to the misery of the scene; and oh, how glad we were to do something if ever so little to help these poor women to live it out. How helpless we felt in the presence of such sorrow. We could only pray. As Willis says: -

“O when the heart is full; when bitter thoughts come crowding thickly up for

utterance, And the poor common words of courtesy are such a very mockery; How much the bursting heart may pour itself in prayer!"

And we *did* pray, and tried to lead these breaking hearts to *rest* upon God and not to struggle with the question, 'why?' which could only be answered in a private interview with God. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

After visiting numbers of the homes, we ventured to the pit's mouth, but hearing the cry on the bridge, which was kept in charge by the police, 'No females admitted,' we were obliged to let our two gentlemen to go without us, but suddenly remembering our title of 'Cymru Fydd' Sisters, we ventured to ask permission to pass, as we had restoratives for the fainting, and with their usual politeness, which never fails towards us, the police let us pass, and we found ourselves right in the vicinity of the pit's mouth.

This was crowded round with relatives of the dead, who were anxiously waiting in a long line from the shaft to the hayloft to catch a view of the bodies as they were brought up, and very melancholy was it to see some poor distracted looking woman dart out from the crowd as the bodies were borne passed on a rough bier, and seize hold of the boots on the dead hoping to recognize the remains of her poor husband or son.

The hayloft was entered by a sort of temporised gangway, at the bottom and top of which were stationed two policemen. So hoping to be of some use, we told them that we carried restoratives for the fainting, and they at once offered to let us pass into the presence of the unknown dead. With a prayer for strength, we accepted the offer, and ran up the gangway so as not to interrupt the ghastly business. At the door we met three coffins coming out, having had their occupants recognised. To make room for their exit, we were pushed into an office, where from the odours and surroundings we seemed to be treading on the remains of charred horses.

Here every business detail of the bodies taken away was noted down, and we were surprised as the splendid methods and good management on all hands. Directly a passage was cleared, we ventured to proceed into the presence of the dead, and I shall never forget the first impression of that sight. There lay in rows the fine forms of these noble fellows. The dim light, the easy posture, the bronzed features, and the absence of anything like bedding, seemed to transform the hayloft into a sort of monumental gallery, and I could not help thinking that many an artist would have given much to have chiseled models from the splendid proportions of some of these brawny arms and noble faces.

At the back of the hayloft, we encountered our superintendent of the mission, who looked very surprised to see us, wondering how we had obtained an entrance. The relatives going round seeking their dead were most unnaturally calm, in fact, the distress was too awful for emotion, and their business too urgent to give way to feeling, so we found no one needing our help.

Some of the sights we saw were too painful to describe, such as the various parts of the body being adjusted in the coffins; and as we could render no help, we beat a hasty retreat, and went to try to comfort some of the women outside, who were wringing their hands in despair. Try to comfort! What could we do? We could only look on in mute sympathy at the piteous sobbing wail of the young widow, crying, "He was such a good husband to me. Oh! Jack! Jack! I can't live without you!"

We met one man who was at the pit's mouth when the explosion happened, and he was blown bodily on to the embankment, and got up quite uninjured. We had a chat with many of those that had been brought out alive, but none of them seemed to know as much as we did about the whole affair; the gas and fire-damp had rendered them quite incapable of recollection; this makes us hope that the poor fellows who died were not conscious of much bodily sufferings, although we are told that shrieks and groans of the rescued when they were first brought up was most terrible to hear.

Before leaving Cilfynydd, we gathered around our Superintendent as he chose the worst spot in the town right opposite a gin palace, and, raising his hat, with a loud voice he cried to God to sanctify this calamity to the benefit of the survivors, and to convince all the drunkards of the necessity of 'preparing to meet their God.' We heard one woman near by say, "Oh! Its good to hear something of God at a time like this." But oh! What power the arch-fiend has, that in the face of such a solemn warning, still the men flocked into his palaces for drink, and drowned their manly feelings in the devil's water of Lethe." **C K E (Catherine K. Evans).**

Mr. Evan Owen of the Miners' Provident Society, was at the Albion Colliery on Monday and paid the claims of several relatives who from various causes were unable to attend during the week. Up to five o'clock on Monday afternoon Mr. Evan Owen ascertained that at least 135 widows and 320 children in addition to the number of dependant relatives, would have to be provided for. It was mentioned that a number of children named did not include those yet unborn. Mr. Evan Owen on Monday received a letter from Edward Carre, written from the Hotel Kulin in Switzerland: - "I saw in yesterday's '*Western Mail*' forwarded to me here the account of the terrible disaster which has overtaken the poor workhouse of the Albion Colliery, and make a donation of £60 to the relief fund."

The authorities of the Miners' Provident Society contemplated paying a further installment to the relatives of the single members who lost their lives in the explosion. The first weekly payment to the widows and children of the deceased members of the society would take place at the Public Hall, Cilfynydd, on Friday.

A Pontypridd tradesman's subscription list

Among the many subscription lists which have been opened that of a Pontypridd tradesman, Mr. Isaac Prothero, grocer and provisions dealer, Penuel Square, deserves special mention. Soon after the terrible explosion occurred Mr. Prothero wrote to the several manufacturers with whom he does business, and his appeal for help for the poor sufferers has been very generously responded to, £106 -10s having already been authorised. The list is headed by Messrs Edwards, Ringer, and Co; the well-known tobacco manufacturers, of Bristol, who subscribed £50. Then came Messrs. Reckitts & Sons, Ltd, Hull, with £25; Messrs Day & Martin, £10-10s; and Mr. Thomas Beecham, maker of the favourite pills, £10. Several subscriptions of £5 and £3 have been given by other manufacturers, and were it not for the fact that preference was given to funds that have been opened in London, Bristol, and everywhere else, there is no doubt that a very much larger amount would have been received by Mr. Prothero whose prompt action was much to be commended.

The South Wales newspapers were full of comments about the Albion Colliery disaster, directly and indirectly, and even poems lamenting the sad event. Here are just three: -

To the Editor of the 'Western Mail' : -

Sir - On the morning of the day that the lamentable affair occurred at the Albion Colliery, which has awakened sympathy of a benevolent public throughout the United Kingdom, a man name Gould, following his occupation as a miner at the Great Western Colliery, was instantly killed by a fall of roof. He leaves a widow and orphans behind, I believe, unprovided for. An inquest was held, and a verdict recorded, and the man buried and that is about all the general public will hear of the matter. Why, can any of your numerous readers point out any individual case connected with the Albion disaster more deserving of the sympathy of the benevolent than this one? The simple fact that this woman and her children were not among 200 or 300 cases of the kind does not, in my humble opinion make her case less deserving, and nothing being done for her.

I am etc; Parsons, Pontypridd.

To the editor of the 'Western Mail.'

Sir - If your writer of the article today on Temperance charities is not ashamed of himself, then he ought to be. He discloses the fact that some people who were willing to give a 'smoker,' (whatever that may mean), and others to attend it, when some generous persons would contribute largely to the Albion Fund, but all on one condition - drink must form a prominent feature of the programme. We are told that all the applicants are in the 'sulks,' and that there will be no concert, no extra drinking and smoking, and no contributions, and the cause of this must be laid at the door of the four magistrates who saw no reason why the great drink bill of this town should not receive an unnecessary addition to this unworthy matter. Well, if men are so called as 'drink slaves' that they cannot hold a concert without a drink, and they refuse to help the poor sufferers' relatives at Cilfynydd because the magistrate most probably acted in the interest of sobriety and order, then I say 'Let their money perish with them.' The Albion Fund will not suffer for their churlishness, depend upon it; and they will have the satisfaction of knowing that the public will cry 'shame!' upon all men whose generosity is conditional upon their being permitted to gratify their desire for intoxicating drink."

*I am & Co.
1894*

G. Percy Thomas, Cardiff, June 30th

The first message from the pit

"Some are alive and some are dead;"
Came the message from below;
and they who heard the sad news read
even this were glad to know.

It helped to lesson their despair,
to hope most were alive,
To feel that those who had gone down there
to save would bravely survive

But Oh! How soon it was made clear
the living were but few,
That in that fearful blast's career
its breath some hundreds slew

The bee-hived pit wherein they worked
became the cavern of the dead,
Throughout its length no spot was shirked,

right on the demon sped.

Oh, with the living sufferers weep,
those who are plunged in woe,
whose agony of soul is deep,
whose tears in torrents flow.

Weep with the widow in her grief,
the orphan in his loss.
In sympathy send prompt relief
obey the mandates of the cross.

Odlwr Bychan (Western Mail July 2nd 1894)

The '*South Wales Daily News*' of Monday July 2nd reported: - On the experiments with the Albion Colliery coal-dust our Rhondda correspondent writes: - It would seem that only as late as twelve months ago, judging from reports and criticisms in the Press, it was discovered that coal-dust was explosive in the entire absence of fire-damp. In certain journals critics almost go as far as to attribute the cause of the Albion Colliery disaster to the late arrival at the Home Office of Mr. Hall's report of his experiments with coal-dust. It should, however, be generally known in all mining districts that Mr. Hall, Inspector of Mines for the Lancashire districts, conducted a series of experiments, on June 30th 1890, with coal-dust from various colliery seams in the country, and the tests clearly demonstrated that coal-dust in the entire absence of fire-damp was explosive. These experiments were carried out in a disused shaft. In his report of these tests Mr. Hall remarks, in reference to the experiment with one of the samples of coal-dust from Hindley Green, Arly Mine: - "*Dust was ignited, followed by a continuous roar and rush of flame completely filling the pit mouth and ascending sixty feet in the air. This was the most violent explosion since the commencements of the experiments.*"

It is difficult for anyone who did not witness this experiment to realise the extent of the explosion. The flame continued to issue from the pit for five or six seconds, followed by dense smoke. The violence carried out some of the woodwork 37 feet. above the pit mouth (only one cannon was fired). It should be stated that 6 cwt. of dust was used, and one and a half pound of gunpowder was in the cannon at the bottom of the shaft, the explosive being fired by an electric current. Six months afterwards, Mr. Henry Matthews, M. P; Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, issued a printed circular to all collier managers in the United Kingdom, calling the attention to the result of Mr. Hall's experiments. Mr. Matthews remarked in that circular: -

“Two disastrous explosions have occurred in the course of the present year - at the Llanerch Colliery and the Morfa Colliery - which have given fresh prominence to this question. Both of these explosions were made the subject of careful investigation by competent men; but though many theories were advanced in order to account for the origin and the cause of these terrible disasters by the presence of gas, those theories were not by any means conclusive, and there were many circumstances which led to the inference that some or both of the explanations were extended and assisted if they were not caused by coal-dust. The conclusion deduced by Mr. Hall from his experiments is that a blown-out shot, in the presence of coal-dust, and in the entire absence of fire-damp, caused explosions of great violence, often accompanied by volumes of rushing flames, travelling considerable distances, and possibly so far as the supply of coal-dust continues. I consider it to be my duty to lose no time in bringing before colliery owners, agents, and managers the results already obtained, and the serious dangers to which the presence of dry coal-dust may not improbably give rise.”

Three and a half years have elapsed since that document was issued to the colliery officials, and in that time numerous discussions have taken place at the different associations of mining engineers and officials. The South Wales Colliery Officials' Association has deliberated at great length upon the important question, and, in fact, the paper read upon the matter has been printed and copies circulated among the large number of members of the association. So it is evident that the generality of the officials of south Wales collieries have not been ignorant of the results of the tests made with coal-dust.

The Albion Colliery dust was described as the most explosive of the samples tried in the experiments; but it is questionable that had samples of the driest dust from other colliery seams in the district or from the Rhondda valley been experimented with, they would probably have been found quite as explosive. But it is but just to state that five years previously to 1890, the mining engineers and the head colliery officials of south Wales arrived at the conclusion that coal-dust played an important part in causing or propagating explosions in mines.

The evidence tendered by Mr. Jenkins, agent of the Ocean Collieries; the late Mr. David Evans, agent of the Ferndale Collieries, and other mining engineers, at the inquiry into the circumstances attending the deaths of the victims of the Mardy Colliery explosion, showed that they regarded the coal-dust theory as a sound one. It is important that these facts should be well-known from a political standpoint as many are now inclined to think that had Mr. Asquith received Mr. Hall's report of last year's experiments a few months earlier the Albion Colliery disaster might have been averted. The same newspaper carried the following comments: -

The Cilfynydd explosion by William Abraham M. P (Mabon)

From the '*Cardiff Times*' and '*South Wales Weekly News*'

The terrible catastrophe that occurred at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, would take its place in the black record as involving the second largest - if not the largest - sacrifice of life in the long list of explosions in the southern part of the Principality. Of this it can be said once more, that 'the mourners are again going about the streets, and sounds of lamentations and mourning are heard on every hand.' One begins to wonder whether it is inevitable that the periodical holocausts which overtake those who seek to earn their daily bread in the bowels of the earth should really happen, for they seem like a long lane to which there is no turning. The horror of these dire catastrophes make our pure human nature shudder and awe stricken. Awful as it is in the long term which the history of Welsh mining has to tell, there is, for more reasons than one, no fatality which appeals more strongly to our common humanity than this one at Cilfynydd. We are reminded, on the one hand, that had the disaster happened under the usual circumstances at the colliery, heaven only knows what would have been the result. That was the oft-repeated sentiment that one heard almost everywhere when on or about the pit bank on Sunday last.

And, on the other hand, a very practical question suggests itself to one's mind - How could, or at least, would such an occurrence as this take place under 'usual circumstances?' There are others besides ourselves that doubt it very much. Not that we for a moment would suggest in the slightest degree that upon this occasion the remotest blame is to be attributed to anybody.

But considering the circumstances for a moment, we will doubtless find not a few extra-ordinary instances. We are told that 'everything about this colliery betokened a high state of prosperity' - yes, and we may add a very high speed, until this fatal Saturday afternoon. That in round numbers there is nearly 900 men and boys employed underground on the day-shift, and about 120 horses were lodged in the stables within the workings. That, on the average, 12,000 tons of coal a week, or 2,000 tons per day, were turned out of the colliery.

But we are not told what number of men and boys were employed on the night-shift, nor that this amount of coal is produced by the means of working a double-shift, this colliery being the only one in the district at which a continuous and systematic double-shift is being worked.

This being so, we are also informed that the management are in the habit of utilising the time between two o'clock on Saturday afternoons and the starting of the day shift on the following morning, when the coal producers are absent from their stalls and headings, to perform the necessary repairs and renovations in the

underground roadways, and, we may add, doing their coal-dusting as well, which is to say, filling the relays of coal-dust that are deposited on the roadways into drums made for the purpose, and, we suppose, properly stowing it away or sending it to the pit-bank, as the case may be.

We are informed that Mr. Robson, the Chief Mines Inspector of the district, selected this colliery a little while ago as a typically dry and dusty colliery, from which he sent to Mr. Hall, another of Her Majesty's Inspectors, to be experimented with, some of the fine coal-dust deposited on the roadways there, with the result that the dust from the Albion Colliery was found to contain a greater combustive power, or, in other words, a great amount of inflammable mixture than any other in the United Kingdom.

Notwithstanding that the coal hewers, with the exception of some dozen or so that had lurked behind, had left the colliery at 2 o'clock, we are informed that the extraordinary number of close upon 300 men were in the pit at the time the explosion took place; that at least - some say more - two thirds of that number would be actually engaged in clearing the roads of this fine coal-dust. While this was going on the whole ventilation of the colliery could be heavily charged with this highly inflammable mixture, or, indeed, with this explosive dust.

Simultaneously with this coal-dusting, under these extraordinary dimensions, there would be a natural intermixing with those engaged in coal-dusting, relays of repairers actually engaged in doing the necessary repairs in the various roadways. Pursuant upon this work a great deal of blasting usually and necessarily takes place. It is reported that it is the practice of this colliery, and I dare say as it is at some others, that holes are bored in the most effective places, in the calcers of the timber as a rule, and in each of which charges of dynamite are put, and then blasted, so as to bring the roof and timber down.

In some cases this is considered safer for the men actually engaged in that kind of work than the method of knocking down the double-timbers by means of sledges. But that as it may, the blasting process of the double-timbers causes, by far the greatest dislodgement of the overhanging rubbish, and also gas if it lurks anywhere in the vicinity. Without any knowledge of what actually did take place upon this occasion, and only surmising that a shot of some kind or another was fired, produced a flame, causing a large dislodgement of rubbish, with a small dislodgement of gas accompanying it, into the already too highly inflammable mixture flying through the roadways, there would be found a sufficient cause for the calamity that occurred.

That this colliery hitherto was well managed goes without saying. That it was before the explosion in as good a condition of repair as circumstances warranted

is proved by its condition after the terrific blast it underwent from the explosion. What or who were the real and actual causes of the disaster is a matter of further investigation - if there be anyone left to tell the tale. And for the moment 'sufficient for the day would be the evil thereof.' But the double-shift that leaves no room for timely repairs, the high pressure that sets everything ablaze, the simultaneous road-dusting and repairing will stand, by science and experience, is forever condemned.

Tuesday July 3rd Another child drowned

A similar mishap as that which had happened five days before, again shocked Cilfynydd, when Ethel Ann Griffiths, the five-year-old daughter of Thomas Griffiths, sinker, 17 William Street, Cilfynydd, was playing with her little brother near the canal on Tuesday evening, and accidentally fell in. Her little brother, a child of three-and-a-half years, getting excited ran home to tell his mother, instead of raising an alarm upon the spot. The distressed mother quickly appeared on the spot and in another instant John Thomas, a teacher at the schools perceived the child in the water, courageously plunged in and brought her to the bank. Life was, however, extinct, and the grief of the poor mother quite overwhelmed her.

Wednesday July 4th

The death toll raised to 283

Another of the workmen brought out alive from the pit died at half-past-nine on Wed. Morning, viz; Richard Williams, a single man, 21 years of age, living at 104 Cilfynydd Rd. This is the tenth of the rescued men who have succumbed to their injuries. Three more bodies were discovered in workings on Wednesday and brought to the surface, and one was identified as a man who lived at Norton Bridge. This, therefore, brings the death-toll to 283.

Where are the eighteen?

The '*Western Mail*' of this date reported: - Last week a notice was posted at the colliery yard stating that if there were any of the workmen still missing relatives should give information to the police. As a result of this, Acting Sergeant Evans has prepared the following list of bodies which are still supposed to be in the pit. It is quite possible, however, that some of them might have been amongst the eleven who were buried unknown. The list is as follows: -

1.	Edwin Powell , Pontypridd	10.	John Enos Jenkins , Cilfynydd
2.	George Knight , Pontypridd	11.	Henry Evans , Cilfynydd
3.	George Numley , Cilfynydd	12.	Thomas Powell , Cilfynydd
4.	David Morgan , Cilfynydd	13.	Thomas Murphy , Cilfynydd
5.	William Harvey , Cilfynydd	14.	David Jones , Cilfynydd
6.	William Jones , Cilfynydd	15.	Thomas White , Cilfynydd
7.	Edwin Williams , Cilfynydd	16.	Morgan Lloyd , Cilfynydd
8.	Elias Davies , Cilfynydd	17.	Jason Perry , Norton Bridge
9.	Thomas James , Cilfynydd	18.	Evan Pearce Evans , Trallwn

In addition to the list given above, it is stated that a man named, Rees, of Coedpenmaen, is also missing. With regard to the search for Evan Pearce Evans, we understand that the widow has been constantly hovering around the pit-top anxiously waiting for the possible recovery of the body. She has washed the faces of upwards of twenty of the unfortunate victims of the disaster in her endeavour to identify her husband. The poor woman's grief is pitiful to behold.

Prof. Dixon, of the Royal Commission on Coal-dust in Mines, visited the colliery on Wednesday, to make an examination of the interior of the mine. A large number of men are employed in clearing away the debris, and fresh horses are daily lowered into the pit to replace those killed by the explosion. The '*Western Mail*' of this date also carried this report: -

The Parliamentary Relief Fund - Questions in the house of Commons

Out of the £1,230 which has been subscribed by members of Parliament for the sufferers by the Albion Colliery disaster, £420 has been given by the Welsh members. An analysis of this subscription list shows that four donations of £100 each were given by Messrs. Alfred Thomas, W. Wrathbone, F. Tresbarry and J. T. Brunner; six of £50 given by Messrs. Samuel Smith, Sir Francis Powell, Sir Julian Goldsmide, Baron Rothschild, R. W. Perks, and Lord Tweedmouth; five of £25, nine of £20, thirteen of £10 and the remainder in sums of £5 and under. Mr. Alfred Thomas is sanguine of being able to bring the subscriptions to £1,300, or even more. Every credit was due to him for the energetic manner in which he has carried the matter through, though he desires to say that the idea of the fund originated with Mr. Tresbarry, the conservative member for Windsor.

Mr. Pritchard Morgan, the junior member for Merthyr, had three questions on the paper this afternoon. The first related to the Albion Colliery. In this Mr. Morgan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the manuscript of the report of Mr. Henry Hall, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines, dated

20th August, 1893, on '*Explosions in Coaldust in Mines,*' or a copy thereof, was sent to or issued by the Home Office, or came to the knowledge of the Home Office before being sent to the printers; whether he was aware that a print of the report was circulated to the members, and was available to the public on 12th February last; why such printed report was not received by, or came to the knowledge of the home office until 26th May last; whether, when the report came to the knowledge of the Home Office, and special, or, indeed, any, instructions were given to the Inspector of Mines for Glamorganshire, calling the attention of the inspector to the facts that Mr. Hall reported that of all the dusts tested that from the Albion Colliery, the colliery in which so many men lost their lives, excelled all others in violence and sensitiveness to explosions, and that this seam has the worst history of any in the Kingdom - upwards of 1,600 persons have been killed in it by explosions since 1845; and where therefore, following such a report that steps were taken by the Home Office and the inspectors with a view of minimising the danger in this particular colliery; and whether such colliery will be allowed to resume work without considering Mr. Hall's report.

As the request of the Home Secretary, Mr. Morgan consented to postpone his inquiry until Thursday. It was reported that Mr. Asquith was very much concerned about the matter, and was making strict investigations. The second question partially arose out of this question. As, however, the first was not answered, Mr. Morgan decided to postpone this also. The question was as follows: - To ask the Chancellor of the exchequer whether, having regard to the frequent strikes and lock-outs of miners and to the explosions and loss of life continually taking place in coal mines, and to the doubt that exists as to the title of the crown to various mines and minerals, Her Majesty's Government will consider the advisability of creating a Department of Mines, to be presided over by a minister of the Crown.



William Abraham M. P. (Mabon)

CHAPTER TEN

Thursday July 5th

On Thursday July 5th the body of Richard Williams, 104 Cilfynydd Rd, who was one of the sixteen men rescued alive after the explosion, was interred at Llanfabon church. The remains of David Morgan, ripper, 12 Williams St. Cilfynydd, were also interred at the Treforest cemetery. The Rev. M. Williams, Calvinistic Methodist, Cilfynydd, officiated. The chief officials of the colliery, with inspectors Martin and Sims, daily descended the mine to make minute inspections to the cause of the terrible calamity. No bodies up to 8 o'clock p m had been recovered. The '*Western Mail*' of this date reported: -

Questions in Parliament

What became of Mr. Hall's report?

Great dissatisfaction prevails amongst the representatives of mining constituencies in the House of Commons over replies given by the Home Secretary to the questions put to him relative to the Cilfynydd disaster by the junior member for Merthyr, Mr. Pritchard Morgan. The report of Mr. Hall, H. M. Inspector of Mines for the Lanca- shire district, in which special references were made to the highly explosive character of the coal-dust tested from the Albion Colliery, to which the Hon. Gentleman draws attention, is dated August 20th 1893, and is available to the members of the House of Commons and to the public on the 12th February last. According to Mr. Asquith, it did not come to the knowledge of the Home Office until 26th May, about a month before the explosion. Supplementary questions were to be asked on this matter tomorrow, and if the answers are not satisfactory Mr. Pritchard Morgan will move the adjournment of the house and call attention to what he considers a great dereliction of duty on the part of the responsible officials at the Home Office.

Writing in the '*Yorkshire Post*,' in reply to an article on that paper on his questions in the house, and commenting upon what it is pleased to call 'A sad story of Home Office supineness,' Mr. Pritchard Morgan says: - "The mystery is why Mr. Hall's report, which reached the hands of members of the House of Commons on Feb. 12th last, does not appear to have reached the Home Office until nearly the end of May. Even then it does not seem to have been acted upon. It is possible that its gravity was not realised, as it would have necessarily have been if the mining of the country were under the control of a thoroughly experienced Mining Department, superintended by a member of the Crown who had himself mining knowledge, and who would be responsible to the house and to the country for the work of his department. At present British mining is controlled by four separate Government departments, and the way things are conducted leads to the

conclusion that not one of these departments is efficient nor has the necessary knowledge to supervise the work. For years I have advocated the appointment of a Minister of Mines, with a competent staff to advise and assist him.

The Miner's Federation and other representative mining and commercial bodies have likewise petitioned for the creation of such a department, but so far no more has been made in the desired direction, and it is only fair to ask how many more lives must be sacrificed to moloch of officialism before the payers of miners are heard and responded to."

Friday July 6th

Days of mourning and weeping

Gloomy desolate homes - Sympathy with the sufferers

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of this date commented: - A fortnight ago Cilfynydd presented the appearance of a busy and thriving mining village, no signs being evident of the terrible calamity which was soon to occur, while the inhabitants followed their daily toil with a serenity which betokened peace and prosperity; a week later evidence of mourning was perceptible in every street, deep, unutterable grief and weeping reigned in homes which had become so cruelly and unexpectedly desolate, and fond hearts were torn because loved ones had fallen victim to the destroying blast.

Today the scene is again changed, a depressingly gloomy cloud hanging over the little village, which will not be swept away for a long time. The violent agonizing grief of the widow and the fatherless has been replaced by that sad and silence grief which is nonetheless touching, and all that now remains to console them are the happy memories of the past, the bright hopes of meeting the lost ones on a happier shore, and the sympathy universally shown to them by those whose hearts have been touched and softened by the bitter grief which so suddenly overwhelmed them.

Time alone can heal the many wounded, lacerated hearts around us, but sympathy of a practical nature can do much to soften and to reduce the sorrow and the suffering which now prevails in many homes. In several instances the sole breadwinner of large families fell a victim to the destroying angel, leaving wife and children totally unprovided for to fight the difficult and stormy battles of life. But what, therefore, would the position of these poor unfortunates be if the human heart were not touched, and if hands were not stretched out to help them in their hour of distress? From all parts, however, comes the welcome news that help is forthcoming, and we trust that a very substantial fund will soon be established to aid and succour the distressed.

On Friday July 6th Mr. Evan Owen, General Secretary, and Mr. J. S. Cullen, chief accountant of the Miners' Provident Society distributed the second installment of funeral allowances and the first fortnightly payments of relief to the widows and children of those lost in the Cilfynydd disaster. The total amounted to nearly £1,100.

Number of internments at Glyntaff

It transpired at the meeting of the Burial Board, held on Friday, July 6th, that the number of persons buried at Glyntaff Cemetery during the month of June was 134, of that number 117 were victims of the Albion Disaster - £54-9-6d had been paid for extra labour in connection with grave diggers and & Co. Mr. James Coombes said that the Board should recognise the efficient services of their action, for the way in which he had met the extra tax upon him in connection with the disaster. He thought they should thank Mr. Morgan Rees for the way he had carried out the work. There was no doubt that there had been a heavy tax which caused him a large amount of anxiety and trouble. He was in favour of doing something practical for him, and proposed that they should show their appreciation of the way in which he did his work by allowing him two guineas.

The chairman said there was no doubt that Mr. Morgan Rees did his duty well, and deserved the warmest thanks for it. There was another man who worked hard; he came down from Treorky and rendered valuable assistance. Mr. Rees said it was Mr. W. Powell, the clerk of the Treorky Burial Board. The chairman, continuing, said Mr. Powell guided the funerals, and, although he received no pay, was of great assistance. Mr. Rees, the sexton, said Mr. Powell came down on the Wednesday and was of great assistance to him, because he could trust him with the list for Non-conformist grounds while he and others looked after the Church of England and the Roman Catholic. Mr. W. Jones seconded the motion. He thought they should recognise the services of employees on an occasion of that sort. The chairman thought they should give Mr. Morgan Rees a little extra holiday. It was seldom he took a holiday, and he was of the opinion that a few days at the seaside would set him up. The motion was carried.

Mr. Spickett was down at the cemetery for long hours giving out the notices, and he worked well. The chairman proposed a vote of sympathy with the bereaved widows, orphans, and friends of the deceased. He hoped they would never see such a time again. He was glad that such practical sympathy was being shown all over the country. Perhaps the people of Pontypridd did not come out so strong as was expected of them, but when they mentioned that the heads of families were removed and that a large number of them were in debt to the tradesmen in Pontypridd and Cilfynydd and he knew it was no good to look to the widows for that now, they could not expect our tradesmen to come out very strong.

He knew there were many tradesmen in Pontypridd and Cilfynydd who would lose some pounds. Some of them had come out well, and others would have to come out too, only for the great loss, independent of what they did. Mr. Coombes seconded. The vote was passed by all rising to their feet. The chairman said he could not help referring to the members of the Board, Mr. F. Gowan and R. V. Harries. They both went down and put their services at the disposal of the sexton. They said: - "Put us where you like." The papers said that everything was conducted to perfection. He attributed that to their friends and the police. The two members stayed there from the commencement to the end.

What the Albion Colliery Co. did

The story of Mr. Hall's report

The '*Western Mail*' of this date reported: - In the House of Commons on Thursday the Home Secretary, in answer to Mr. Pritchard Morgan's question, said there had been some confusion between Mr. Hall's report to the Home Office on coal mining in South Wales, and Mr. Hall's report of experiments to the Royal Commission on Coal Dust in Mines, both of which called attention to the explosive character of the dust in the Albion Colliery. Copies of the latter were sent to the owners of the Albion Colliery. The colliery was visited four times during the past year by Mr. Sims, who, in answer to special inquiries, was assured by the manager that blasting has only been permitted in the rock, and the dust was well watered in cases where the Mines Act required at the time shots were being fired; also, that, apart from shot-firing, the dustiest parts of the roadway were watered. After receiving a copy of Mr. Hall's report, on his experiments, the owners at once proceeded to adopt a system of pipes and sprays, as is done in some other collieries in the district.

At the time of the explosion about a mile of pipes had been laid, but sprays had not been fixed to them, and so the watering of the roadways by this means were not yet in operation. Whether or not the explosion was due to coal-dust is a matter now under investigation. Mr. Hall's report represents his individual opinion founded on the careful experiments made by him, but he informs me, and I agree with him, that it would have been premature to the Home Office to have recommended any particular mode of dealing with the danger pending the report of the Coal-dust Commissioners's. The matter is one upon which there is considerable difference of opinion amongst experts.

Mr. Morgan asked if he was to understand that no special instructions were sent to Her Majesty's Inspectors for South Wales from the home Office following Mr. Hall's report. The Home Secretary replied that Hon. Member to understand nothing of the kind. Mr. Hall's report was communicated to the owners of the

Albion Colliery, and they proceeded to adopt the system of pipes and sprays.

Mr. Dudley Pritchard Morgan was interviewed in the lobby of the House of Commons as to the reply to his questions, and, while expressing himself satisfied, so far as things went, they only tended to confirm him in his conviction that the Home Office was too slow and cumbersome, and there was urgent and crying need for the creation of a Ministry of Mines. "But," he said in conclusion, "this government are no more inclined to create a new department for the protection of labour and the regulation of the industry than the past was. The mining community will have to fight for further reform, just as other sections have. It seems to me that nothing is got in this country by fair words. The government, according to the Home Secretary's reply, are perfectly aware of the resolutions that have been passed by the Miners' Federation and most other mining bodies in the Kingdom, and are, at the same time, perfectly content to ignore these resolutions. Official liberism deprecates labour representation, and the official policy makes labour representation indispensable. However, I haven't finished with them. We shall have a Department of Mines yet."

Saturday July 7th

An extraordinary rumour gained currency in Pontypridd on Saturday July 7th to the effect that an unlocked safety lamp and a key had been found that morning near the body of a haulier. Various conjectures were immediately made as a result of the sensational rumour, but inquiries made at the colliery in the afternoon by the press elicited the fact that it was totally unfounded.

Sunday July 8th

All the victims of the terrible catastrophe at the Albion Colliery had still not been brought to the surface yet, although work was still being carried on with unabated vigour. About 10 o'clock on Sunday morning four more bodies were found, and were removed to the mortuary for identification. P. C. Nicholls stated that the bodies were fearfully mangled, and that three were found in Dudson's heading, in a part of the workings called the Grover's side. The other body was found in Llanfabon's dip. The unfortunate miners were lying down near a fall of debris, with their lamps by their sides. They were identified by their bereaved relatives as: - William Jones, assistant ripper, 15 Jones St. Cilfynydd, aged 28, married, two children; Elias Davies, timberman, 6 Brynderwen Terrace, Cilfynydd, age 36, married, four children; Benjamin Tucker, haulier, 17 East St. Trallwn Gardens, Pontypridd, age 17, single; James Rees, ripper, 2 Fletcher's Rd. Coedpenmaen, age 38, married, four children. Thus the death toll was brought up to 287.

The bodies were dreadfully mutilated and, as was to be expected, in an advanced state of decomposition. The remains of Elias Davies were sent by train on Monday to be interred at Llandyssul, where his wife and children lived, and the other victims will in all probability, be interred on Tuesday.

It is stated that 200 men were busily engaged in clearing the falls from the interior of the mine, and the progress being made was satisfactory. However, considerable time was thought to elapse before active mining operations could be made, and in any case, this could not be commenced until the inquest had been held, which was due soon to be opened at the New Inn, Pontypridd.

Carcasses of horses, however, were continually being discovered. Some parts of Cilfynydd present a forlorn appearance, numbers of the houses being vacant, and it is stated that many of the hands engaged at the ill-fated colliery before the explosion have left to seek employment elsewhere. Mr. D. Ellis, Secretary of the Albion Colliery directors sent the following to the local newspapers: -

“Sir - I should be much obliged by your kindly allowing me a small space to announce that my directors at their meeting this morning instructed me to express, through the medium of your journal, the deep obligation of thanks to the colliery proprietors of the district, the mining engineers, managers, and all others that so kindly rendered us valuable assistance in rescuing the injured persons, and also in exploring and bring out the bodies of our unfortunate workmen, who lost their lives in the calamitous explosion of the 23rd inst. “

Monday July 9th

The Albion workmen - Protest against the police

At a mass meeting, which comprised the workmen and tradesmen of Cilfynydd, held on Monday afternoon, July 9th, at the Workmen’s Hall, Mr. Evans Jones, check-weigher, presiding, a strong protest was made against the action of the police of taking proceedings against a workman employed at the Albion Colliery. It was stated that the workman in question, John Evans, with others, had been engaged with the rescuing party exploring and bringing out the bodies of the unfortunate workmen up to bank, when after the finish of his shift, and in proceeding home he called for refreshments at the Cilfynydd Inn, which is in close proximity to the pit. It was, alleged, 18 minutes after 11 when Sergt. Evans found him, with other workmen, at the above Inn. It was decided that a solicitor should be engaged on behalf of the workmen.

Tuesday July 10th

The work of clearing the falls at the Albion Colliery was being carried out in a satisfactory manner, and a very large quantity of debris was being brought to the surface daily, Mr. Robson, Chief Inspector of Mines, accompanied by Mr. Sims, Deputy-Inspector, again descended the shaft on Tuesday, and examined various parts of the workings for about three hours. Mr. Phillip Jones, the manager, was also daily in the workings. A number of lamps had been discovered, and all are kept in the lamp-room, and it is apparent in the way that many of them have been twisted and damaged, that the force of the blast must have been terrific. A number of horses are kept in the stables, ready to be taken down into the pit, whenever they are needed.

Near the pit's mouth Tuesday afternoon, was an aged miner named Williams, from Porth, making inquiries about his son Edwin, forty years of age, married, with three children, living in Mary St; Cilfynydd. His son's waistcoat was found a few days before hanging to a post in a workplace where he was engaged, and his watch was a few days previous discovered about twenty yards from that spot. One of the officials of the colliery told Williams that the body of his son Edwin must have been brought out of the pit and taken away with the number not identified. Williams, however, urged that his son was still down in the workings, and he would easily identify the body by means of the wearing apparel.

An appeal from the workmen

Mr. Evan Jones, secretary of the Albion Colliery Sick and Accidental Fund, 68 Mary St, Cilfynydd, wrote this appeal in the local newspapers: -

Sir - As it is a practice when a colliery disaster occurs for the public to open relief funds in aid of the persons dependent upon the victims, I wish to appeal for help in the present instances, and beg to inform the public that we have a Sick and Accidental Fund at the Albion Colliery, independent of the Permanent Fund. Prior to the calamity our Sick Fund was in a very prosperous condition, having reached the handsome total of £1,110 at our last audit, which was held on the day of the explosion; but, alas, the sad accident has thrown upon us such heavy liabilities that our funds are now exhausted. The death claims upon the 286 which have been recovered amount to £1,144, being at the rate of £4 per head. In addition to this they are to be paid the claims upon those who have not yet been recovered, the sick members previous to the accident, and those rescued alive but who are still ailing. Therefore I respectfully appeal to the generous public to assist us in our endeavours to alleviate the distress of those who have had the misfortune to lose their bread- winners. Subscriptions will thankfully be received by the treasurer, Mr. John Jones, under-manager, 5 Cilfynydd Road, Cilfynydd,

Pontypridd. I beg to acknowledge, on behalf of the Workmen's Committee the receipt of £8-3s-1d from the Roman Catholic Church at Treforest, per Father Noonan, and hope that many will follow the example.

Pontypridd Central Relief Fund

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the above fund was held at the Parish Room, Pontypridd, on Tuesday night, Mr. D. Leyshon presiding. A letter was received from the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, containing a message of condolence with the bereaved relatives, and also a subscription of 50 guineas from the corporation. It was decided not to make a house to house collection, in as much as the various chapels in the locality had promised to make collections and the public would contribute into the fund. Upon the request of the meeting, the chairman proposed to wait upon the committee of the Park-slip Fund, with a view to getting a portion of the surplus money, which was estimated to be a considerable amount, thrown into the Albion fund.

£3,000 from Park-slip Fund

At a meeting the following day at Bridgend of the Executive Committee dealing with the distress arising out of the Park-slip explosion of 1892, Colonel Turberville in the chair, a resolution was passed expressing sympathy with the sufferers of the recent terrible accident at the Albion Colliery, and directed and ascertained the sum of £3,000 in the Park-slip Fund should be paid to the Miner's Provident Society to assist in meeting the heavy strain upon its resources, care being taken to protect the interests of the Park-slip beneficiaries.

Wednesday July 11th The Albion men fined at Pontypridd

At the police court on Wednesday morning, July 11th, before councillor Richard Lewis and Mr. William Williams, John Williams, John Evans, George Martin, Sidney Pike and Jeremiah McAuliffe, were charged with being in the Cilfynydd Inn on the 30th June. Sergeant Ben Evans said: - "I entered the Cilfynydd Inn in company with P. C. Nicholls, about 18 past 11 on the night of the 30th inst.; a week after the explosion. In the bar I found John Williams, a shoemaker, of Cilfynydd, and the landlady in the act of supplying him with a glass of liquor. I drew the attention of the landlady to the time - that it was 11.18 and she said" - "Very well."

"Whilst I was in conversation with her, John Evans came in from the front taproom, where other workmen were. He was in his working clothes. He was again served with a quart of beer in a tinjack, for which he paid six-pence. I had

already told the landlady it was closing time. I again reminded her, and told her to 'Please stop the tap.' She replied, 'I have,' and I said no,' as her daughter was drawing beer for women who were standing in the passage at the time. I then went from there to the back taproom, and there saw George Martin, Sidney Pike and Jeremiah McAuliffe. The three were drinking. I told them it was about 11.20pm and they ought to be out. McAuliffe, who was the worse for drink, made some indecent remarks in reply. I took hold of him and I assisted him out of the house. In the mean time the workmen who were in the front taproom left the house. Martin and McAuliffe, who appeared (in court), were fined 10 shillings, while the other three defendants, Pike, Williams, and Evans, who did not appear, were ordered to pay 15 shillings, the magistrates being of the opinion that 11 o'clock was late enough for any public house to be open.

That afternoon, before Mr. T. P. Jenkins and other magistrates, William Jenkins, landlord of the Cilfynydd Inn, was charged with keeping his house open on the 30th June after 11 o'clock. Defendant pleaded guilty. Mr. James Phillips defending, said that having heard what transpired in court that morning he had instructed the defendant to plead 'not guilty.' About 15 to 11pm on the night of the 30th Inst. a relieving party from the Albion Colliery came to the house and were supplied with drinks. Nine were on the premises, but five only were summonsed and fined that morning. Their worships knew the state of affairs, and Mr. Phillips trusted that they would take a lenient view of the matter in view of the fact, and also that Mr. Jenkins was an old licenced victualler, having carried on the business at Cilfynydd for over ten years to the satisfaction of the police. Mr. T. P. Jenkins said the Bench took into consideration the excited state of the neighbourhood at the time, and believed there was a great deal of truth in the explanation extended by Mr. Phillips on behalf of the defendant. It was quite possible that he had forgotten himself under the extraordinary circumstances. If they thought the house had been kept open with a view to enhancing his own profit they would have taken a serious view of the case. However, the house was respectably kept, and in consideration of the circumstances, they believed that they were justified in dismissing the case on payment of costs of eight shillings.

Thursday July 12th & Friday July 13th

A general meeting of the workmen engaged at the Albion Colliery was held at Friday night, July 13th, at the Public Institute, the chair being occupied by one of the men. Mr. W. Evans, Sub-agent to the Cambrian Miners' Association, was present and gave a lucid address about the importance of organisation. It transpired that the workmen's examiners had not yet completed their inspection of the Albion Colliery, and, consequently they were unable to submit their report. The evidence of a number of workmen who were in the colliery on the day of the explosion was taken by Mr. J. Bowen Rowlands, from the offices of Messrs

Morgan, Rhys and Bruce, solicitors, Pontypridd; and Mr. W. Evans, which was sent to Mr. W. Abraham MP. (Mabon), and Mr. S. T. Evans, who had been retained to represent the men at the inquest.

Colliery explosions and coal-dust

Further facts - The great danger of dust

The '*South Wales Daily News*' of the same date reported: - As pointed out on previous occasions, the important part which coal-dust plays in colliery explosions is now generally admitted. The first thing that brought forward the coal-dust theory was the discovery by Mr. W. Galloway, mining engineer, of Cardiff, that a mixture of air and fire-damp, in which the proportion of fire-damp was so small that it could not be detected by ordinary means applied for the purpose, was inflammable when coal-dust was added. This experiment has been repeated by any number of others and proved correct, though, like most new ideas, was skeptically received at first. In a recent interview with one of our representatives, Mr. Galloway dealt with the subject in its general bearing, and in further conversation with one of our representatives, he quoted some striking evidence in support of the theory which he has established in connection with colliery explosions. Asked to what extent evidences of very high temperatures at points in the colliery after an explosion might be regarded as fixing the position at which the explosion originated, Mr. Galloway concluded to the contrary.

In instancing the case of the Penygraig Colliery explosion in 1880, he said there were eighteen places where there were indications of a very high temperature. In these cases there were really charred timbers and thick deposits of coked coal-dust, which indicated a very high temperature, but these evidences existed at many points, and as each of these could not be the point of origin of the explosion there was no reason for supporting that any particular one was. As to the statement that some of the bodies found at the Albion Colliery were in the attitude of prayer, Mr. Galloway, in replying to this point, again drew a practical and decisive lesson from his examination of the Penygraig Colliery after the explosion there, which threw a considerable amount of light on mining accidents of this nature.

He also referred to his observations on the subject which appeared in the 'proceedings' of the Royal Society in 1882, and partly quoted from these, as he proceeded, the basis of his conclusions. He stated: - "The flame of the explosion (at Penygraig) had passed through or penetrated into every part of the workings with the exception of one wet heading at the bottom of the downcast. The four or five men that escaped with their lives were in the wet heading at the time of the explosion. They saw the flash, but were not burnt. The fifth, who was working in a Cul-de-sac near the same place was slightly burnt, and remained unconscious

for many hours.”

“Five or six of the seventeen bodies found in the main heading of this colliery, coming from the upper pit, were in a kneeling posture, their mouths being covered with their hands, and their faces were pressed into the dust of the floor. One body in one of the roadways in the working of the lower shaft was in the same position. Another near him was lying on his side, with his coat drawn over his mouth and nose, and held tightly with one hand. A third was lying on the opposite side of the same road. He had his mouth pressed on the ground, his head having been twisted round to some extent so as to admit a of this.”

“I observed two of the first group and three constituting the third group had been burnt after they assumed these positions. These men, I have no hesitation, in saying, had kneeled down and pressed their hands on their mouths so as to try and prevent suffocation by the dust-cloud which travels in front of the flame, and were undoubt- edly scorched or burnt after they had knelt or thrown themselves down, and not beforehand.”

“There were deposits or crusts of coked coal-dust in every working place of the mine; that is to say, where the coal-dust was comparatively free of impurities and capable of adhering to the timber under the objects when thrown against them in a fluid of semi-fluid state. On the other hand, the same kind of deposits were very rare, and for the most part entirely absent in the main roadways through which the fire must necessarily have passed in travelling from one district to another; that is to say, where the coal-dust was largely mixed with shale-dust and other impurities, and conse- quently incapable of cohering when heated. I have observed the same absence of any traces of flame in all the cases of very great explosions I have examined. This used to be considered a mystery by those who were in the habit of examining into and writing about great colliery explosions, but I have no doubt the foregoing is a true explanation of the phenomena.” The three principal observations of Mr. Galloway in the case of the Penygraig explosion may be of special value now. It will be of the highest advantage to know if corresponding phenomena existed in the case of the Albion explosion.

Saturday, July 14th

Mr. Evan Owen, secretary of the Miners’ Provident Fund wrote in the ‘*Western Mail*’ of this date as follows: -

“I regret to see that some unscrupulous person has been soliciting subscriptions for the sufferers by the above accident by without being authorised to do so. He produced a book purporting to be signed by Messrs. David Leyshon and David Ellis. One gentlemen who knows Mr. Ellis’ handwriting questioned the

genuineness of the signatures, and it appears the man felt very uncomfortable, and quickly made his escape. I think the public should know that no such person has been authorised by Mr. Leyshon or Mr. Ellis for collecting subscriptions on behalf of the fund.”

Almost immediately after the publication in this letter in the ‘*Western Mail*’ an arrest took place. At Swansea Police Court the following Monday Job Benjamin, a returned convict (from Australia) who had been convicted for an exactly similar offence in respect of previous explosions, was brought before the magistrates and formerly remanded on a charge of obtaining five shillings from Rachel Phillips, of Bryntawe, Llangyfelach. P. C. Hopkins, Morriston, said he had apprehended the prisoner in the Nag’s Head, Goat St. on Saturday night, and had since found - in the Victoria Coffee Tavern, where the prisoner lodged on Friday night - some scraps of the paper which formed a subscription list. On the prisoner he found a blank book, corresponding, and three pencils of different colours, with which entries appeared to be made on the scraps of paper.

Albion Colliery Relief fund

The various subscriptions lists in aid of the Albion pit fund have made most satisfactory progress, and the total amount raised by the various local funds is now over £15,000, as the following figures will show: -

Pontypridd Central Fund	£8,000
Mayor of Cardiff’s Fund	£4,215-1s-6d
Mayor of Newport’s Fund	£1,363
Western Mail Fund	£1,063-10s South
Wales Daily News Fund	£713 Swansea
Local Fund	£103
Total	£15,447-11s-6d

Relief measures - Restoration of the workings

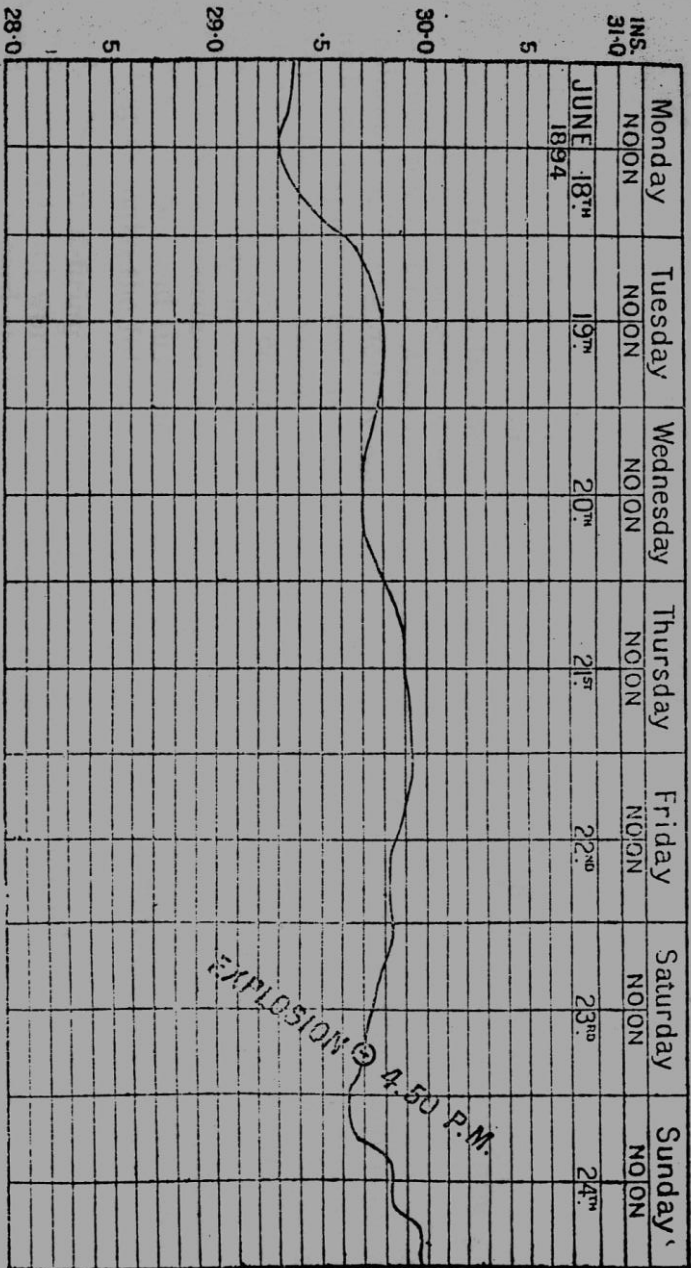
The ‘*South Wales Daily News*’ of this date reported: - The district of Cilfynydd still presents a gloomy and deserted aspect. On the way from Pontypridd to the mouth of the colliery I met a number of photographers with their apparatus slung over their shoulders, evidently returning from the pits, and also a number of Jews hawking framed pictures of the pits from door to door. On approaching the pits I noticed an aged woman, attired in mourning, walking slowly in the direction of Pontypridd. I asserted afterwards that her son was one of the victims of the calamity. There are still sad scenes to be seen in the locality. Then I noticed huddled together on the doorstep of a cottage on the roadside a number of little children who, I was told, had lost their fathers in the dreadful catastrophe. Of

course, there are scores of such instances in the neighbourhood. With the exception of a few surface workmen there were not a dozen persons on the colliery premises. There are, however, about 900 workmen employed daily in the mine clearing away the falls and restoring the damaged workings.

The working places or stalls where most of the miners were engaged are in good working order, except in a 'squeeze' in some of the places caused by the stoppage of work on the faces. It is said that all the bodies of the victims have been recovered and brought out of the pit. However, relatives of three victims are still disputing the official statement, and are alleging that three bodies have not been recovered. It is officially remarked that the body of Edwin Williams, 40 years of age, married, with three children, must have been recovered, because the remains of the haulier and the labourer who were engaged with him in the level have been recovered. It appears that eleven of the bodies were not identified, and that the remains of Edwin Williams must have been among them. The father of Edwin, however, still affirms positively that his son is still down in some part of the unexplored workings.

The '*Western Mail*' also reported: - The Inquest, and the proceedings of which are expected to continue throughout next week, will re-open at an early hour Monday morning at the New Inn, Pontypridd.

BAROGRAM from SELF-RECORDING ANEROID, taken at Albion Colliery, Pontypridd,
from June 18th to June 24th, 1894.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Monday July 16th

Re-opening of the inquest - a word for word account

An adjourned inquest on the victims of the terrible disaster at the Albion Colliery, was resumed on Monday morning July 16th at the New Inn Hotel, Pontypridd before Mr. E. B. Reece (Cardiff) and Mr. R. J. Rhys (Aberdare), coroners. Mr. Roskill, barrister, watched the inquiry for the Home Office. There was not a large attendance of the general public. The various parties to the inquiry were represented as follows: - The Albion Colliery Company and officials by Mr. Abel Thomas, Q. C; M. P. (Instructed by Mr. G. F. Hill, Cardiff); the relatives of the deceased men by Mr. S. T. Evans, M.P. (instructed by Messrs. Walter H. Morgan, Rhys, and Bruce, Pontypridd, for the Cambrian Association of Miners), for whom Mr. William Abraham (Mabon) M. P; and Mr. Bowen Rowlands, solicitor, appeared.

There were present Mr. J. T. Robson, Mr. Martin, Mines Inspector for the South Western District; Mr. F. Gray, and Mr. Sims, sub-inspectors; Mr. Evan Owen, J. P; of the Miners' Providence Society; Mr. W. Evans, agent of the Cambrian Association of Mines; Morgan Thomas, agent of the Hauliers' Association; Supt. Jones (Deputy- Chief - Constable), and Inspector McDonald. The Albion Colliery officials present were Mr. Henry Lewis, J. P; chairman of the directors; Mr. W. Lewis, agent; Mr. Philip Jones, manager; Mr. David Ellis, the secretary; Mr. Evans, commercial manager; Mr. H. G. Hill, surveyor, and others

The jury

The following were again on the jury: - Messrs. Hopkin Smith Davies, Samuel Shipton, John Price, Berw Rd; James Edwards, Boot-shop; J. F. McClune; Hopkin Morgan, baker; John Thomas, Bunch of Grapes Inn; Richard Jones, Newbridge Arms, Gwyngyll Hughes, Mill St; William Phillips, Vestry Hall; R. A. Lewis, bank manager; Isaac Williams, Gwaelodygarth; Oliver William Davies, chemist; William Howell Watkins, chemist, Cilfynydd; Thomas Jones, assistant overseer; David Thomas, Heolganol; William Jones, waterworks manager

Mr. Richard Evans, a timekeeper, was first called, and he gave further evidence as to the identification of bodies. Eleven of the bodies, he said, could not be identified. No one claimed them, and they were buried as unknown.

Comfort from the society

Mr. Evan Owen J. P. Secretary of the South Wales & Monmouthshire Provident Society, said he was requested by the board of management of that society, which comprises 56,000 workmen, and a large number of colliery owners as honorary members, to publicly convey to the relatives of the victims their deepest sympathy and condolence at the loss of life in this appalling disaster, which was unparalleled in the annals of the South Wales coalfield, while the number now left widows or orphans far exceeded that of any previous explosion. He was desired to state by the board of management that no effort should be spared by them and the members generally of the association to make the homes and surroundings of those so suddenly deprived of their bread-winners as comfortable as possible.

No wetting apparatus in order

Mr. Herbert Gerald Hill, the surveyor of the Albion Colliery, produced extensive plans of the workings. The dimensions of the pit, he said, were 19ft in diameter, the downcast being 545 yards deep to the four-foot landing, and 580 yards to the extreme bottom. There were three main roads on each side of the pit. On the west side was Dan's heading, Dudson's heading, and Grover's level; and on the East Cilfynydd level, Pantddu dip, and Bodwenarth incline heading. The places where the bodies were found were marked with red dots, which were numbered. The distance between the upcast and the downcast was 33 yards. The roads marked blue on the map were naturally wet roads. Witness continuing said: - "There were a lines of pipes running along Grover's level, the joints of which leaked. The level was kept wet by means of these pipes and by means of the tap allowed to run in order to supply water to the horses." He hadn't known the level to be dry for a long time, and could not give any approximate date as to when the level was dry.

Witness indicated the spot on the plan where the hand-pump pumped the water from the sump to the horse-pump. It did not necessarily follow that when the pumping did not go on that the tap was turned on. The tap filled the water for the horses, taking it to the stables, and for keeping the place wet. The other two dips were kept wet by a horse-pump. The Pantddu dip was pumped by a horse-pump, and allowed to run back across the road. He couldn't say whether there were pipes running along either of these dips. He did not notice on the last occasion when he visited Grover's level whether it was dry or wet.

The coroner: - "Are the pumps along Grover's level there for the purpose of getting rid of the water from the old workings?" - Witness : - "Yes." Cross-examined by Mr.

S. T. Evans, M. P. :- "The two pumps were there for other purposes, but were

used for taking away the water. There was no more reason for water in the Pantddu dip than the Cilfynydd level. It was equally necessary to water them all.”
Mr. Evans: - “Is there no artificial apparatus or system laid underground at all for the purpose of watering the workings?” Witness: - “There is nothing in actual working order.”

Mr. Evans: - “Is there any apparatus laid at all?” Witness: - “There is an application there, but it is not fit for working.”

Mr. Evans: - “Will you tell me when you first thought the apparatus to be there? Was it laid down before or after the accident?”

Witness: - “Before the accident.” - “How long before?” - “I cannot say.”

Mr. Evans: - “Have you known it to be there for years?” - “No.”

“But you must be able to give some appropriate idea.” - “I might say I have known it to be there for months.”

“Can you tell me why it was that the apparatus was not working?” - “I do not know.” “Have you made any inquiries?” - “It was not of my province.”

In reply to further questions witness said he fixed up the position of the bodies upon the information of the firemen of each district. Mr. Shipton: - “Is it not possible when making a survey you would know whether there were any old workings open or closed?”

Witness: - “I might have passed a rubbish hole, which I would take no notice of.”

“Did you see any rubbish holes open?” - “No.”

“As far as your observation went they were all stowed?” - “Certainly.”

The manager gives evidence

Philip Jones, certificated manager who was next called, stated that he had been the manager of the Albion Colliery since 1887, or for close upon seven years. He had 43 years’ experience of underground work, having worked in the mines from the age of seven. He had taken on the 20th June, three days before the disaster, the volume of air that circulated in each district of the colliery, and of these he now gave detailed particulars, and indicated on the plans the circuit taken by each current, and the several splits that supplied the gases. All the return airways were kept fully open, and were in proper order before the accident. Mr. Rhys: - “Have there been any big falls before the accident?” - “No; you could take a horse and dram even through these places (indicated on the map)”. Continuing, witness said that the return airways were travelled through every day by someone or other for the purpose of examination. He himself travelled every main return in the colliery twice a week.

Mr. Rhys: - “This explosion happened on a Saturday. Were there any falls in the returns reported to you on Saturday morning as having happened on the previous night?” - “No, none.”

“As far as the reports are concerned, may we take it that on the day of the

explosion they were all fully in order and clear?" - "Yes, I came through one of the main returns on Saturday morning."

Further questioned by Mr. Rhys witness said the colliery was working on the longwall system. The fan was driven by an engine 48 strokes a minute, and the total quantity of air he returned on the morning of the 20th June was 236,203 ft, excluding 10,000 ft that went to the boilers, making a total of 246,202. He measured the wind himself. The day shifts worked seven hours on Saturdays and Mondays, and ten hours on each of the other days of the week. Mr. Rhys: - "So that on Saturday and Monday the day shift went in at 7 a.m. and came out at 2, and on other days they were worked on from 7 to 5?" - "Yes."

"When does the night shift go in?" - "They go in at seven, except on Saturdays, when they go in between two and two-thirty."

"The day shift that goes in at 7 a.m. is it a coal-cutting shift?" - "Yes."

"Do they cut any coal during the night-shift?" - "Oh! Yes, some; they cut something like 400 tons. We have seventy to eighty places all through the colliery working nights; sometimes less, sometimes more."

"What about your average daily output?" - "About 1,600 tons, including day and night."

"From one seam?" - "Yes, from the upper four-feet."

"You are not working any other seams besides?" - "No, the thickness of that seam varies from 60.6 to 69.10. In some places we have rock top, and in others cleft, but generally we have a strong top all through the colliery. We work by the longwall system. We have been working the Nottingham system, but not now for two or three years. We rip our main roads for a thickness of about 12ft. before we have a good top."

"What timber do you put in?" - "Double-timbers, varying from 13ft. down to 6½ft. long."

"What do you do with the rubbish?" - "We pack as much as we can find room for inside and send the rest out."

"Mr. Hill has told us that all pink in the plan represents the four-feet seam that you've worked out. Is the whole of that packed up stowed with rubbish, or are there any vacant places which are not properly stowed?" - "There may be rubbish stowed in the course of filling, but there are no vacancies at all."

"I may take it that the vacancies left by working out the seams have been filled with rubbish?" - "Yes." Witness added that he had 24 men working in the returns and stowing up rubbish wherever they found a place for it. He had about 30 labourers in every district engaged in stowing at the faces, while the road cleaning and shifters all through the pit numbered about 131. The roads were also cleared by the rippers and assistant-timbermen. The rubbish was brought out along six main engine roads, the general average of the journeys being from 16 to 20 drams, with 30 journeys a day each side of the shaft, and they would travel at the

rate of about 5 miles per hour. The journeys would be entirely of coal, and they would be travelling against the wind.

“Would not that have a tendency to create a good deal of dust?” - “Yes, there was bound to be a lot of dust coming from journeys travelling like that.”

“What means do you take for clearing the dust away from your main roadway?” -

“Water-carts and pumps.”

“Don’t you shovel it into drams and clear it away?” - “Oh, yes, the men clear it and put it in drams.”

Continuing, witness said this work of clearing sides would be done as opportunity occurred during the week, but most of it would be done on Saturday and Sunday nights.

“So the shift that went in about 2 o’clock on Saturday, on the day of the explosion, would be to be some extent engaged in clearing up the dust?” - “Yes, some of them, but not all.”

“Was there any great accumulation of dust and rubbish at any time perhaps on Saturday, anything excessive?” - “We kept it clean right through every day, except, of course when pieces fall here and there on the side.”

“Were you along the main road on Saturday morning?” Witness replied that he went down the pit at 7.50 on the morning of the explosion, and came out again at 11.50. During the time he was down he went up Grover’s side as far as Asket’s heading, and to Bodwenarth and then back through the main road. He came up a little before twelve.

“What lamps do you use in the pit?” - “Clannies, some are bonneted and some shielded.” Asked whether there were any in the room witness added that he had brought none with him, but would see that some were brought for the examination of the court. The lamps were kept in the lamp-room, and the men had no right to take any home with them. They were examined every morning by the fireman, who locked them. In addition to this, they were also examined by the workmen, and, once a week, they were taken to pieces and overhauled. The locking places were marked on the plan, and no-one was supposed to pass these locking-places without having his lamp locked. If a man lost his light he would have to return to the locking-station, and there a light would be given him by a man appointed for that purpose. During the day there would be five places each side of the pit where lights could thus be given, but during the night there would be only two. In these places, of course, the men in charge could open their own lamps to give light.

Examined further by Mr. Rhys, the manager said that the explosives used in the colliery were dynamite and roburite. They used it to blast blocks that were too

dangerous to get out by any other way. The firing was done by the means of a touch paper alighted from the gauze of a lamp. The shot-firing was done by properly appointed shot-men, Edward Rees, Morgan Dyer, and David Griffiths (killed), the night overman, John Evans (killed), and William Rees, the day overman. No-one else was authorised to fire shots. The firing was done before the shifts, except on two occasions, when they drove a hard heading about four years ago, and afterwards some months ago, when they sunk a pit from one part of the mine to another to prove the core. On these two occasions they blasted during the shift. Asked by Mr. Rhys as to the time the explosion occurred, the witness said as near as he could say, it was 10 or 15 minutes to four.

The officials down in the colliery at the time were John Evans, the night overman; William Dobbs, fireman (Pantddu); and David Griffiths, fireman (Bodwenarth). They were all on the Cilfynydd side. Then on the Grover's side Morris Ashton was acting as fireman that night instead of Garnett, who had injured his wrist. There were also on that side when the explosion happened James Jones, David Evans, and Henry Lewis, all firemen. On Saturday afternoons the practice was for the day fireman to make an examination, then to come round and meet the night fireman at the bottom of the pit. John Evans attended to the shot-firing on the Grover's side, and David

Griffiths on the Cilfynydd side. Evans had the right to go anywhere. He (witness) then went on to describe the system adopted for blasting out timber.

Explaining the system of blasting out timber, witness said the practice was to bore a hole with an auger three-foot from the ground, and fill it with about 2 ounces of dynamite. Some times it was put in the collar just in the middle.

A juror: - "Did you ever put a shot to a collar?" - "Yes, in the middle of it." Witness said that the system of knocking out timber by shots had been evoked since the colliery was started. He had known it in vogue at the collieries for twenty years. All shots were fired between the shifts. It would be against the rules of the colliery to fire shots after the night shift had gone in. Written instructions were given to their firemen, and these were produced, showing that the shots were to be fired only between the shifts as required by the Coal Mines Regulations Act.

Before firing shots the shotmen would have to examine the place for gas, and water the place according to the Act. At this juncture a Mr. Abel Thomas pointed out that according to the act, if certain conditions were complied with, shots could be fired at any place in the mine and at any time without withdrawing the men. Mr. Roskill disagreed with this interpretation of the law, but pointed out that it was not the time to discuss the matter. Witness, continuing, said he heard on the Thursday afternoon after the explosion from the man Anstes that he received

orders from John Evans, the night overman, to prepare a shot on the double parting on the Cilfynydd side between the night and the day shifts on the day of the explosion. Witness believed he had been ordered to fire six shots, not in rock, but in timber. Anstes had charge of the explosives used during one shift. He found out also that some shots were put ready for firing.

By the coroner: - On the day of the explosion he noticed the timbers were going very low on the Grover's side, with a heavy piece of rock upon them, but did not notice they were going to be knocked out that afternoon. He left the repairing to the under-manager and the overman. If shots were to be fired then they would be taken by John Evans. William Roberts might not have been there. A man named Price Wilson drilled the holes by the lamp-station about half-past one. The fireman gave Price Wilson orders to drill and charge, and this would be reported to the night overman.

This was a place where it would be necessary to water the sides and roof. The men generally did this with buckets of water, using their shovels to splash it over the roof. They had no appliances in the colliery in actual operation specially for damping the dust beyond casks and buckets of water. They had special pipes laid, but they were not in work. They commenced to lay these pipes down some five or six months ago. They had laid about 2,000 yards of piping, but the sprays did not arrive from the manufacturer until just a week before the explosion, so they had not had time to fix them. The pipes were laid at Dan Hudson's and part of the Cilfynydd level.

They didn't settle to lay the pipes at Grover's heading as it was not necessary. They hadn't, however, definitely decided not to lay them. The road along there was fairly wet all the time.

Mr. Rhys: - "Has your attention been drawn to the fact that it was desirable that you should adopt some other method of watering?" - "I believe Mr. Sims spoke to me about it. I was in the act of putting the pipes in. I did not reckon it was a very dangerous way we had in use before. We laid the pipes similar as an extra precaution!"

Mr. Rhys: - "As a matter of fact, is there one single place in the pit where you could put a shot off without doing some watering to the sides?" - "No."

Continuing, witness said the books of the day and night firemen were kept at the bottom of the pit, and had been very much damaged. The firemen did not report the prevalence of gas in the morning. The books were submitted and examined by the coroner. Mr. Rhys: - "No gas has been reported since then?" - "Not in the last five or six months." Proceeding, the manager said that his son and himself were the first to go down into Grover's level after the explosion in company with

William Rees. Steam was generated in the pit itself, and was not conveyed in steam pipes down below. The boiler fires were below, and these were the fires they went to put out. When they got below, parts of the stage of the engine was on fire, and he called his son to help him in putting them out. A few flames were coming up from the engineers clothes. The engineer was dead, and had been blown from the engine four of five yards. The body of Thomas Evans was found at the bottom of Dudson's dip close by the lamp-station; he was employed as a shackler.

Further on they found the body of John Evans, the night overman. The latter's body was found about three yards down from the main road leading to the horse-pump. There were three or four other bodies. The bodies of Williams Roberts and Morris Ashton, were also found there. There were other bodies he did not recognise at the time. At ten minutes to four Mr. Reece said that he would take no further evidence that day. The foreman of the jury asked if an adjournment could be possibly made over Wednesday (market day in Pontypridd)). Mr. Reece said he was afraid that this could not be done, and that they must sit the inquiry out. He would, however, make Wednesday's proceedings as short as possible. The jury were then bound over, and were required to assemble at quarter past nine on Tuesday morning.

Tuesday July 17th Second day of the inquest

The inquiry into the circumstances attending the colliery explosion at Cilfynydd was resumed on Tuesday, July 17th at the New Inn, Pontypridd before coroners Mr. E. B. Reece (Cardiff) and Mr. R. H. Rhys (Aberdare). The various interested concerns were again represented.

William Rowlands, assistant night fireman in the Bodwenarth district of the colliery, said he was not down on the night of the explosion. There was no blasting on Friday in his district, but there had been that morning between the day and the night shifts on the main incline. This blasting was in rock. It was over a twelve-month since he had found gas in his district. Shots were always fired between shifts, and only after careful examination and watering. He had experience of fifty years in collieries. It was not safe in all places to fire shots in timber, though it was safer sometimes to those engaged in the work than to cut the timber out.

Charles Davies, assistant day-fireman on the Grover's side, said that on the day of the explosion he left at half-past one in the afternoon. He found no gas that day. Seven dead men were found in his district who seemed as though they were sleeping. There were traces of fire after the explosion. The timber in both main

levels was scorched or covered with coked coal-dust. Davies said that he had found no cases of 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). He had been a fireman ten months, and had never found gas in his district.

William Jones, under-manager of the colliery, said he chiefly had charge of the Cilfynydd side. On the morning of the explosion he went into the pit at seven o'clock, and he came up at two o'clock in the afternoon. He inspected all the main roads, finding them in good order. No gas was reported to him. There were preparations at the far end parting on the Cilfynydd level for shot-firing in two pairs of timbers. He did not know when these shots were fired. There were two shots also prepared in the rock of the Bodwenarth level. He saw the holes in the rock after the explosion. The charge had not been fired. When the custom was for one shift to come up at two and the other to go down at three, it was the rule to fire shots between the shifts.

Since the alteration in the shifts, fire weeks ago, this was the first time, to his knowledge, that timber was to be blown. Now there was about a quarter of an hour between shifts. Other shots might have been fired on the Grover's side without his knowledge. He had arranged that the shots in the Bodwenarth district should be fired on the Sunday morning which followed the explosion, if they were not fired on the previous night. He was never in the mine at night. He was aware that rule 44 says with reference to the duty of the under-managers: - "*He must see that every officer under him, and every person employed at the colliery, understands and fulfils his duty.*"

That applied to the officials of the night shifts as well as those of the day shift. He knew shots were to be fired in the timbers because the man came to him for powder. It was possible for timbers to be blown out without his knowledge, but he did not think it would be done. He was always consulted by the fireman, John Evans, as to shot-firing. He went down in the first cage after the explosion. From the horse-pump the explosion was directed towards the face.

He did not know when the shots in the timbers were put off. In his opinion a piece of timber produced was not shattered by a shot. He was aware on Saturday morning of 13 shots charged, but did not know when they were to be fired. He did not consider it an improper thing to charge shots and leave them during a shift if no-one was working within 150 yards of the place. Most of the men were cleared out too, although a few remained behind. He was prepared to say that more than four bands of men had come up by 2 o'clock on the day of the explosion.

Witness admitted that timbers were blasted on the Saturday previous to the date of the explosion. In reply to Mr. Abel Thomas, the witness said that John Evans, the overman, was about fifty years of age, with great experience of mines. He was a strict and careful man, and always carried out the rules. It was much more dangerous to cut the timber under a rock than anywhere else. Directly after the accident, when he descended the pit, he found the ventilation very strong. He descended the mine in the first band after the explosion, and from what he saw he formed the opinion that the force of the blast came from the Cilfynydd side.

The foreman: - "Did you go round with the workmen's examiners?" - "Yes, every time."

"Did you give them full liberty to go to every place?" - "Yes." "Did you stop them from going to any old workings?" - "No."

"Did you allow them to examine above the lagging?" (Timber 'slats' erected above and around sides of wooden 'Pairs of timbers' to ensure no stones could fall on a man passing by). - "Yes."

Proceeding, witness said they never fired if there were laggings. He gave no instructions to the banksman to stop the men coming down during the fifteen minutes they were firing. John Evans was so experienced an overman that he (witness), as under-manager, did not give him any instructions.

Levi Rees, collier, one of the examiners appointed by the men, was questioned as to his examination of the workings on the 7th October and 28th of May last with David Henry Harris and William Rees, overman. On these occasions he made a report and gave a copy to the secretary of the men's committee, leaving another in the colliery office (the report on the 29th May was read by Mr. Coroner Rhys, and certified that the mine throughout was in good order and condition, and that the old workings were clear from gas and well packed). Witness, further examined, said that on that occasion they had visited every place they could on Grover's side. They had seen every old road that was open. They could not say anything as to those which had been shut in. They had then no reason to think that any of those roads were not properly packed or stowed, and they could not tell unless they were told of it. Witness said he never saw any shot-firing in the mine. It was very dusty sometimes in the pit.

By Mr. Morgan Thomas: - When they, the examiners came to a place which they thought had been bashed up they might ask the fireman about it. He remembered speaking to the fireman about one such place and received the reply that it was all well filled. They would report blowers (an outburst of gas, usually methane, which issues from a crack in the floor, sides or roof, likely near a fault plane) under all circumstances; but if they could clear the blower before they left they would not report it in the official report. Witness was further examined as to reports he had made of blowers found in three different parts of the colliery. In

his report witness had stated that the colliery was free from gas, and in another report the blowers are mentioned. Mr. Roskill said if there was an accumulation of gas it should be reported to H. M. Inspector (Mr. Robson), and this matter had not been brought to his knowledge. This was a serious omission, and they would require further evidence of firemen. The next witness was **William Thomas**, collier, who was one of the workmen's examiners in the colliery on the 29th May last. On that occasion, he said, that they found gas in a stall at the right side of the Bodwenarth stalls. It seemed like a blower, but it soon cleared when a sheet was put up. This was all they found, and every opportunity was afforded them to examine every place. Examined by Mr. Martin, witness said that the appearance of a bashed-up stall would be the same, probably, as a place properly filled.

Mr. Martin: - "Would you be expected, in the course of your inspection, to pull down these walls to see whether they were bashed or filled?" - "I never pulled down a wall." Examined by Mr. Morgan Thomas, witness said they examined the mouth of every place for gas, whether it was filled or bashed. "And when you see a properly built wall you take it in good faith that it is properly chocked inside?" - "Yes." Continuing, he said the Pantddu was generally wet, and the far end, or Dyer's district, rather dry.

By Mr. Able Thomas: - He had been a member of the workmen's committee for twelve months, but he did not remember that Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, had more than once urged them to send examiners through the pit. When he saw a small quantity of gas in May he reported it to the committee, and it was the committee which was to decide whether it should be reported to the management. Mr. Morgan Thomas: - "Has the committee ever told you not to report anything which you found?" - "No."

The foreman: - "How was it you brought a book with you to the mine to examine if you did not know that you were to examine before you came up to the pit bank?" - "The checkweigher had been to my house that morning before I went out, and he told me."

The manager recalled

Mr. Philip Jones, manager of the colliery, was re-called. In reply to a question by Mr. Rhys, witness said that his son and himself were amongst the first who descended the pit after the explosion. He had since been all round the workings, but it was difficult to form an idea as to where the explosion started. He could only say it was somewhere about the pit. The engine driver he found had been blown from the Cilfynydd side, stage and all. In Grover's Level he found the stoker, Samuel Evans, close to the boiler place. Evans had since died. Proceeding, he found the first beam of the engine house snapped in two as though it had been forced upwards. The platform was blown away. The force on the Grover's side went inwards. The 12 inch beams were blown towards the pit. This

was by the engine-house in Grover's Level. One of the beams had been broken before. Now there were three broken. He found a horse right against the corner of the return, on the right-hand side. The legs were towards the pit, and his back against the corner in question. The doors were blown inwards. This was what he saw after the explosion and before the inspectors arrived. In Dudson's Heading a knocker, which stood at the entrance, was blown for its length. In Llanfabon Dip some of the timbers came towards the pit, and others were blown in a contrary direction. He could not speak with any certainty about it. Some of the timbers may have been squeezed in the falls, which were frequent. He found in Bodwenarth a horse and a dram and two men. The horse was blown into the dram and inwards. The men had been engaged in filling. One of the men was named Pugh, who died in witness's arms. His head was away from the pit, and he was on his back. The other man was in a crouching attitude and quite dead.

He found Thomas Howells alive at the locking place, at the entrance to the dip. Dobb's boy he also found alive close by. A locker was blown nine yards downwards. A dram partly full of rubbish had been blown clean over a horse near the same place. The horse was against the side of the dram. The force of the explosion was inwards. All this he saw as soon as it was possible to descend the pit after the explosion. The engine on top was not injured, and the fan continued to work. He was in his house on the side of the hill when the explosion occurred. There were two distinct reports, the first from the downcast and the second from the upcast. There was a cloud of black smoke, but no indications of fire. The first report was the loudest. He could not say when the last of the day shift came up, and the first of the night shift went down. Sometimes members of the day shift remained in the pit working with the night shift, but he only knew of one collier who did so on the day of the explosion. His name was William Morris. David Morris, the roadman, also continued working, but he could not speak of the others. He did not know where William Morris's body was found. He knew how many night men were in the pit at the time of the explosion, but he was not certain as to the number of day men.

Mr. Reece: "How many were in the night shift?" - "Two hundred and sixty-eight, including officials."

"That gives about twenty day men?" - "I am not quite certain; 286 bodies were recovered."

By Mr. Roskill: - "I cannot form an opinion as to the cause of the accident, or identify the spot where it started. All I know is that there was a very heavy rock top on the Cilfynydd side. There was a ten-foot cavity in the roof of the intake (the route taken by fresh air from the downcast shaft to the workings) where the solid rock was blown away."

"How long was the cavity?" - "I cannot say for certain. About five or six yards."

“What was the direction of the cavity?” - “From the engine-house towards Cilfyny-dd.” “Rising?” - “It was just the same height.”

“Between Llanfabon and the lamp station (place where a lamp could be re-lit) on Grover’s side you said certain timber had been charged. Have you examined the timbers near the horse pump?” - “Yes.”

“Have you come to any conclusion as to whether the timbers had been drilled and charged?” - “I can’t see there was any reason. The timber was quite rotten.”

“Have you examined the timber and found traces?” - No, I have not. I couldn’t satisfy myself.”

“Have you satisfied yourself whether the timber by the horse pump has been drilled or not?” - “I said it was not drilled in my opinion.”

“I suppose the timber has been brought to the surface?” - “Yes.” “And has it been marked for the purpose of identification?” - “Yes.” “And can it be brought here if required?” - “Yes.”

“Who is it marked by?” - “Mr. Sims. I shall ask the learned coroners bye and bye to give an opportunity of seeing the beams by the horse pump.”

“Is there any other position in Grover’s Level, in addition to that bit by Llanfabon, where timber has been drilled and charged?” - “Not so far as I know. Not to my knowledge.”

“I mean collars and arms - any timber?” - “Not to my knowledge.”

“Have you examined the timber in Grover’s Level?” - “Yes, the same time as the inspector.”

“Did you examine the holes in Grover’s Level?” - “Yes.”

“Are the buttresses blown some outwards and some inwards?” - “You find some like that.”

“Are there more blown inside than out?” - “I cannot say for certain.”

“You say you can form no opinion as to the cause of the accident?” - “Nothing but the fall.”

“But for the engine-house, the three sheaves, and the man, is there any indication that the force of the explosion was in any other direction than from the horse pump towards the pit?” - “No.”

“Is it not a fact that at Llanfabon the boy’s head was blown 25 yards inwards?”

“Yes.” “The doors were blown inwards?” - “Yes, everywhere there.”

“The force was up Dudson’s and Asket’s?” - “Yes.”

“And the same with Bodwenarth and Cilfynydd?” - “Yes, the force was everywhere in that direction.”

“Since 1887 you have not blasted with gunpowder?” - “No, only with dynamite and roberite.”

“Have any of the men damped with shale?” - “No; only with soft clay.” “Is that clay not mixed with coal-dust?” - “No.”

“Do you admit or not that this was a dry and dusty mine?” - “Without watering; oh, yes.”

“Have you ever found fault with your shotmen for tamping with coal-dust?” - “No; I never made a complaint.”

“Have they tampered with coal?” - “No.”

“You are aware that dynamite is not flameless?” - “I cannot say for certain. I never saw it. I have never exploded with dynamite myself.”

“Have you seen others?” - “Yes.”

“Did you ever see dynamite explode without a flame?” - “Well, there is a flash like lightening when the shot gives off.”

“Well, I call that flame; and it’s the same with roberite?” - “Yes.”

“Are you aware whether or not that on this particular Saturday the repairing shift went down at the very moment the day shift was coming up?” - “No, I am not aware of that.”

“In fact they crossed each other, without any interval?” - “I can’t say.”

“If the shot firing was going on before the day shift came up it would be against the rules?” - “It would be against our custom. Our blasting is between shifts.”

“And if there is no interval between the shifts, what then?” - “Well, we can’t blast.”

Mr. Abel Thomas: - “Is it not admitted that the explosion took place after half-past three? The change of shifts would then be completed and, under the circumstances, all this questioning is irrelevant.”

Mr. S. T. Evans: - “Does Mr. Thomas admit, then, that this explosion was caused by blasting?”

Mr. Abel Thomas: - “No, only if it is suggested on the other side it is quite clear that blasting at two o’clock would not cause an explosion at 3.45.”

Mr. Roskill (to witness): “It is perfectly clear that by 3.45 on Saturday all the repairing shift would be down, and that it would be against your instructions to blast at 3.45?” - “Yes, that is so.”

“Why did you blast timbers at all?” - “Because it would have been too dangerous for the timberman to cut it down under a rock top.”

“Do you say it is a proper practice to blast timbers in mines?” - “Yes, if it won’t come down without blasting, and if it is too dangerous to bring down the collars and arms otherwise.”

“You have blasted timber at this colliery for three or four years?” - “Yes.” “Did you ever tell the inspectors of this?” - “No, I never saw the need of it.”

“If rock bears heavily upon the timber does not that show there is a cavity above, and would you not, therefore, consider it dangerous to blast the timber?” - “Not more dangerous than blasting the rock itself.”

“Have you never found a loosening of gas after blasting timber in this mine - a blower?” - “No, never.”

“Are you aware that the coal dust in Grover’s Level has been an inch and a half thick?” - “No.”

“You are aware that the Albion dust has been much discussed and experiments made with it?” - “Yes.”

“Was Mr. Hall’s report of those experiments brought under your notice?” - “Yes.”

“The date of the report is August, 1893. When did you hear of it? I mean the report of the Royal Commission, not Mr. Hall’s annual report?” - “I saw it early this year - it might be three or four months ago.”

“Are you aware that Mr. Hall in his report says this: - *“Of the whole of the dust tested, that of the Albion Colliery, Glamorgan, Upper Four-foot seam excelled all others in violence and sensitiveness to explosion, and this seam has the worst history of any in the kingdom, upwards of 1,600 persons having been killed by explosions since 1845?”*

“Was it in consequence of Mr. Hall’s remarks in this report that you and the gentle- men who control this mine decided to do something for the watering?” - “We had taken extra precautions before that report came out.”

“Then Mr. Jones, did you know before that report came out that there was danger in this mine in the presence of coal-dust?” - “We saw in the papers every day that coal-dust was dangerous, so we went into the matter and took extra precautions.”

“You started the water pipes before the report came out?” - “Yes.”

“Am I right in saying that Grover’s Level is far thicker coated with coal-dust than the returns?” - “I won’t admit that.”

Further examined, witness described again the water pipes. One of the hand pipes, he said, was broken a week or fortnight before the explosion. The width of the main level was between 8ft. and 11ft. They had plenty of casks in Grover’s Level, and they were filled with accumulative water. It was the duty of David Edwards, one of the master hauliers (an official who organises the tasks of hauliers and checks the shifts of horses in his care), to fill the casks, and as they were carried along the water came out through the tap and watered the road, but not the sides. In his opinion this was a perfectly safe way of watering the roads. That was his opinion before the explosion at Carmock Colliery was caused, in the opinion of experts, by coal-dust. It was a fact that on the day of the explosion they found several men and two horses alive in Pantddu Level, and, therefore, the force of the explosion was not as great there as in Grover’s Level. In fact, it was much greater in the last-mentioned one.

By Mr. Rhys: - “The blast went down to Pantddu Dip, but its force was not great. It also went into Bodwenarth.”

Mr. Roskill: - “Could you walk on Grover’s Level on the morning of the explosion without getting your feet wet?” - “If I had shoes on, of course, I would not wet my feet. (Laughter.) It was, however, wet. As far as he could recollect not

a blower of gas had been reported to him during the last six months. Since the explosion he had had the cavity already spoken of and other parts of the mine examined for gas, but he had found none. The men had complained of hearing thuds in different parts of the colliery.”

By Mr. Robson: - “No movement had been perceptible in the strata previous to the explosion.”

After an interval of luncheon, the witness was re-examined by Mr. Roskill. He said he had not found many things in the colliery inconsistent with his theory as to the cause of the explosion and the point from which it started. There were very few unskilled labourers in the repairing shift on the Saturday afternoon. There were a few strangers clearing rubbish, but they took no part in the blasting. In four arms at the top of Llanfabon he found four unexploded charges. In only one collar at the same place he found an exploded charge.

He accepted the theory that shots had been fired at two o'clock on the day of the explosion - he said two o'clock because Anstes had told the fireman to get the shots ready for that hour at Cilfynydd. There were no shots after two o'clock.

It was suggested that there had been shots fired between the shifts, but that was not so. The body of a man and the horse were found near the spot, and he had evidently gone there to clean away the rubbish after the fall caused by the shot-firing at two o'clock. Firing in the Albion Colliery was permissible without removing all the men except ten, and it was the practice in the colliery. He had never heard of a shot-firer breaking the rules and the instructions of the Act of Parliament. Splashing the roof and the sides with water, in his opinion, was sufficient and safe within a radius of twenty yards. He had never used a water cartridge in a mine.

Cross-examined by Mr. S. T. Evans, witness mentioned other collieries in the district which also had a double shift like the Albion. The result of working a double shift was that ordinary repairing could only be done on Saturday and Sundays. Repairing was done while hauling was going on in the week. He never on any occasion went to see whether the regulations he had given to firemen were carried out. He did not know it was his duty to do it, never having received any complaints. The method of watering he had explained was not within his personal knowledge, and he had never seen timber blasted in this colliery. In his opinion it was not more dangerous to blast timber than it was to blast rock. He did not dispute that the presence of coal-dust was a danger, and admitted that there might be, in the case of timber, a greater accumulation of such dust. Splashing with the hand, if done properly, was sufficient watering before shot-firing. He had never had any complaint that men had to turn back after blasting on account of the smoke and dust.

Coal was not worked very rapidly in this colliery. As much coal was brought up at Penrhiwceiber. There were no headings 'bashed up' by Taylor's Heading. The headings had been examined by workmen after the explosion, and he had been down with them. They were examining yesterday. He stopped them this morning because he did not think it fair that men should take into the mine a piece of iron seven foot long, with a lamp at the end, because the colliery was not properly ventilated, and might be dangerous. There were three old roads on Grover's side all filled. He had heard the result of Saturday's inspection, and had been told they had seen a cavity ten yards long. This had been finished a long time ago. He noticed two or three wooden water barrels in the Grover side after the explosion, but he could not say how many were in the pit. Proceeding, witness said he had never heard there was gas in some of the stalls on the day of the accident.

In reply to the Coroner, Mr. Jones said he could not say how many lamps had been brought up after the explosion. Mr. Morgan Thomas, haulier's agent, asked if any of the day men remained down the pit while shot-firing was going on. The witness said that some may have stayed down between the shifts, but he could not give a definite answer.

In reply to questions by Mr. Abel Thomas, the witness said that the examiners appointed by the workmen had every opportunity to go through the whole of the workings, and it would have been one of their important duties to say if any bashing was done. They had never complained to him that any bashing was done, nor that there was any gas in a stall. The examiners kept a book, containing their report according to the Act, and these books would be produced. Complaints had been received that there was too much water at Pantddu and Bodwenarth. They were obliged to keep some old stalls open for the purpose of returns.

He had known rock roof falls blown down by gas blowers, but not so near the pit as in this case. It was less dangerous in some cases to have them out any other way, and had known deaths to have happened by using other arrangements. John Evans had been an official for fourteen years, and was a strict, careful man, and, in witnesses opinion, could be thoroughly depended upon.

Mr. H. S. Davies asked if any blasting had taken place near the Pantddu lamp station, a few days before the explosion. To which the witness said "No."

Mr. Davies then asked: "Is it customary in other collieries to allow old roads to be kept open for five or six weeks after they were finished?" - "Oh yes, in many cases they are kept open for two years or more. They are ventilated and examined by the fireman each day."

Proceeding, witness said he did not know whether Grover's Level had been watered on the day of the explosion. It was the duty of the day fireman to examine

the pit, and his report would be produced at the inquest. A 'bouncer' might have disturbed a rock and caused the expansion of the air and gas which, finally, resulted in the explosion. There were 1,008 men down on Saturday morning, and it would take about three-quarters of an hour to bring them all up, but on Saturday many would begin to leave at 11 o'clock. Nobody was appointed to see that all the men came out of the pit before blasting operations commenced.

Witness was then examined by Mr. Robson, with a view of ascertaining whether he did not concur with the views of the inspectors of the mine, that the general tendency of the force of the explosion in Grover's side was outward. Mr. Jones's reply was that he did not assent to this view or reject it, but expressed no opinion.

Mr. Robson said that Anstes in his presence brought out 23 pounds of dynamite which had been stored in the colliery, and which showed that a considerable amount of blasting went on. Mr. Abel Thomas put it to Mr. Jones that the dynamite used had not steadily decreased in five years from 5,800 lbs. in 1889 to 1,100 lbs. last year. Witness answered in the affirmative, and, also, in reply to Mr. Thomas, said Mr. Martin went with him after the explosion to the bottom of the pit, and, talking about the explosion asked, "Are you sure one of the boilers has not burst?" At a quarter-past five the inquiry adjourned until nine o'clock on Wednesday morning.

Wednesday July 18th

Third day of the inquest - Manager again in the box

Mr. Philip Jones, the manager of the colliery, was again, on Wednesday, July 18th, for the third day running, put in the box, when he was cross-examined by Mr. Robson. The witness said the instructions to the firemen had been that they should report every bit of gas. If gas only showed a 'cap,' however small, they were to report it, ensuring they cleared the gas away before they left the place. "Has your attention been called to a 'blower' lately in Bodwenarth on the Cilfynydd side?" - "No."

"Do you know if gas was reported there on 10th June?" - "No." "Your attention was not directed particularly to it?" - "No."

Witness, proceeding, said they had been very free from blowers for four or five years. He knew no instance of men being withdrawn from any places in the mine because of gas. Speaking of the lamps, witness said that gauze or the shield or bonnet were examined every day at the lamp-station by the fireman. A special weekly examination was also made in the same place, when lamps were pulled to pieces.

Mr. Robson: - "Is it not necessary to do that daily?" - "I don't think it is."

Discussing the duties of firemen, witness said that all the firemen were appointed by him. Morris Ashton was a spare fireman. There was no blasting in coal cutting, no was gunpowder used in the mine.

“Then why have you gunpowder in the magazine?” - “I don’t know. I believe it was left there since the sinking.”

Mr. Rhys: - “That would be on the surface?” - “Yes.”

Mr. Robson: - “If gunpowder was left in the magazine, would it not be likely to be taken into the mine?” - “No, my instructions were against it.”

“Ripping by blasting,” he said, “was only done in the Bodwenarth district. There was no blasting in the cliff only in the rock top. Gunpowder was not used in the pit.” “Is it a fact that a canister containing some pounds of it were found in a box with the dynamite in the pit at the time of the accident?” - “I don’t deny it.”

His instructions to the firemen were that no shots were to be fired in any place where gas had been a fortnight previously. Some shots were stopped like this about four years ago, when there was a blower in the Nottingham face. That was the last occasion gas interfered with shot firing. The hour for the Saturday night-shift to descend the mine was altered about two months ago from three o’clock to two o’clock. Before this alteration there was a interval between the shifts. The change had been made at the request of the workmen themselves, who wanted to finish the shift at eight instead of nine.

“Did you consider when you made the change as to what blasting might be required to be done during the interval?” - “I did not then consider it, for we had but very little blasting on Saturdays.”

“But when the day shift came out at two, and the night shift went down at two, there was really no interval?” - “Not in going through the pit, but there was an interval at the working places.”

“Are the water pipes from the Grover’s Level now in the same condition as they were before the explosion?” - “Yes.”

“No fresh holes made in them since then?” - “Certainly not.”

“And if any more holes had been made in these pipes since the explosion it would be without your knowledge?” - “Certainly.”

“Did you ever notice the roof wet there before the explosion?” - “Certainly; the water spurted from these holes and wetted the roof.”

Mr. Robson: - “I am forced to ask this question because of the condition of things there now are different from what they were the day after the explosion.”

Mr. E. B. Reece: - “That will come in your evidence, Mr. Robson.”

Mr. S. T. Evans: - “This is certainly the first we have heard about wetting the roof and sides, except by throwing the water up with hands and shovels.”

By Mr. Robson: - “They had many times driven fresh roads in the colliery through old gobs (A spaces left in a mine by the extraction of coal. The waste area

left behind the advancing coal face). It was just like driving a hard heading (A drivage through rock and coal at an angle to contact a seam for future production), for they found no cavities or vacancies anywhere in the gob, which would be quite firm and settled.”

The manager’s theory tested

Mr. Morgan: - “With your experience of the mine, do you consider the place where the fall occurred a likely place for gas?” - “I don’t know that it is the most likely.” “Would you not expect an outburst at the pit bottom just as soon as that place?” - “Well, yes, both are in the pillar (an area of solid coal and rock which in not allowed to be worked. This is around every pit shaft and applies to all the seams around and below the shafts). It is more likely, I may say, to get it there than in the pit bottom, for there we are beginning to open out at the end of the pillar.”

“Do you consider that this gas at this place as the most likely point for the explosion?”

- “From what I have seen of the force coming from there to the pit and from there on I cannot come to any other conclusion. I cannot account for the explosion by any other means.”

“If then that is the cause, do you consider that it will be safe or that it is safe to allow any comets at that place?” - “Now I do not consider it safe.”

“Would it be safe to allow any lamp stations inside the place?” - “I do not.”

“Do you consider that it will be safe to use any explosives at all, whether watered or not watered, in the mine with your experience of gas coming off so suddenly and causing an explosion?” - “I do not think it unsafe to use any explosives in any mine, for there is always the risk of a blower. We run the risk whenever we blast.”

“In this case, assuming that your theory is correct the blower has occurred in one of the most improbable places of the mine; and with that experience, and the loss of life that has taken place, will it be safe in your opinion to risk that again?” -

“As I said before, I consider we run a risk whenever we blast.”

“Do you know that there are many mines that do not allow any blasting underground?” - “I have heard of them.”

“Will it be safe to light the boiler fires any more?” - “Well, they are close to the pit bottom.”

“And so is the place where you considered the gas came out. Would you consider it safe for any pit in Wales to have boilers at the bottom of the pit, after the unexpected experience you have here?”

The Coroner: - “You might keep him (on the subject) of the Albion Colliery.”



The scene at the inquest in the New Inn, Pontypridd
(South Wales Daily News)

Mr. Roskill (to witness): - "Is it only since Friday last that you came to the conclusion that gas came off at this place?" - "I could not account for the explosion any other way." "That is your own theory?" - "Yes."

"Is the road on Grover's side in the same condition now as it was before the accident?"

- "Oh, no." "I mean as regards to the moisture, not as regards to coal-dust?" - "I cannot say; it might be either."

"Do you think there is much difference?" - "There may be some difference due to the coal driving backwards and forwards."

"How long would it take to dry supposing it was as wet as it is at present?" - "If you stopped the horse-pump the Llanfabon side would dry in 24 hours; that is unless water was poured over it."

"May I take it that if it was wet on Saturday night, on Monday morning it would be very dry?" - "Dust dry? I cannot say it would be dust dry, but it would be very dry." "You told us the holes were in the same conditions as they were before the explosion?"

- "Yes." Re-examined by Mr. Roskill, witness said that the floor of the engine-house was perfectly closed to the arches.

In replying to the jury, Mr. Philip Jones said he considered that in shot-firing he had complied with these requirements of the Mines Act. He had seen Mr. Hall's report as to the dangerous nature of the Albion dust, but he did not remember that that report was brought officially to his notice. Before he saw the report, however, he had taken every precaution for watering the mine.

Mr. Hall's report he admitted, was issued in February, and his arrangements for watering the mines had not been fully completed, even at the date of the explosion.

Examined by Mr. Abel Thomas with reference to the recommendation of Mr. Chamberlain's Commission on Tuesday, witness stated that these recommendations had been carried out in the Albion Colliery a long time since.

Re-examined by Mr. Abel Thomas M. P; witness said there was a big fall of rock in the main road running towards Cilfynydd, and it was there, at the left-hand corner, that they put in some new arches in order to make stables. These alterations were just finished before the accident. The engine-house was a good deal higher up. The three boilers almost closed down the entrance, and, with a small iron door behind, nearly filled up the whole space. If the explosive force had gone up from the road to the boiler house it would have very little effect upon the iron door, because of the boilers being in front of it going down the return airway; the face of the door was in a large opening, so that if the force of the

explosion went down that way it would come against the door, so as to make it go towards the way in which it ought to open. Shot-firing was always a source of danger in a mine. He had known instances of gas exuding even in the shaft of a mine. It was not impossible to get blowers in the pit shaft itself even after years of working.

By Mr. Roskill: - He had never known a sudden exuding of gas so as to cause a flame. No man in his senses would have charged a certain piece of timber near the horse- pump. The timber was rotten. It was not dangerous to haul it out, as there were new timbers on each side of it. It was perfectly safe for a man to cut out any arm, whether it was sound or rotten timber. He considered it safe to cut away a rotten arm in any part of the mine if the circumstances were the same, even though it resulted in a fall of ten drams of rubbish.

By a juror: - He had not formed any opinion as to the reason why two pieces of road in Bodwenarth and Pantddu did not appear to have felt much of the explosion. As to the piece of road in Grover's Level, he thought it would only be natural that the explosion should have been felt more there - that is - supposing the explosion took place near the horse-pump. He was of the opinion that the place ought to have been more to pieces. With regard to shot-firing, he did not think it necessary to withdraw the men from the mine providing the provisions of the act were complied with in regard to watering.

Another juror: - "Why, in that case, should you not have shot-fired between shifts?"

- "Because I do not like to have shot-firing going on all over the colliery while there are men travelling backwards and forwards."

Another juror: - "I should clearly like to understand whether the law is that the men ought to have been withdrawn."

The Coroner (Mr. E. B. Reece) then read the clauses of the Mines Act dealing with shot firing, and witness declared that he had complied with them. He did not consider that when firing timber with rock top, all the men in the pit should be withdrawn.

Mr. W. Jones, a juryman, solicited from witness that he had seen in the Albion Colliery office a copy of Mr. Hall's report as to the dangerous nature of the Albion coal-dust. They had, however, even before seeing that report, taken extra precautions to keep the mine well-watered, and he had cautioned all the men to be as careful as possible.

Mr. W. Jones: - "I understand that Mr. Hall's report was issued in February, and still in June your apparatus for watering the mine was incomplete?"

Mr. Rhys: - "What he said was that 2,000 yards of piping had been laid down, but

that the sprays were ordered, but they came there a week before the explosion, and that they had no time to put them down.”

Mr. W. Jones: - “Have you received no official intimation to the results of Mr. Hall’s experiments?” - “No, only what we have been talking about. Mr. Lewis, the agent, and myself, in the office.”

Mr. Jones said all he was anxious to know was whether the authorities had taken steps to acquaint the manager of the colliery of the results of the experiments showing the dangerous nature of the Albion coal-dust. The coroner said that the inspectors would be called, and these questions could be put to them. The examination of the manager was then concluded.

Mr. Hill, the surveyor, was recalled and examined by Mr. Morgan Thomas, he said he had seen water issued from the pipes and run over the roads.

Testimony of the fireman

William Garnett, night fireman at the Albion Colliery, was next examined. He was last on duty before the explosion on the proceeding Wednesday night. His district was No. 1a, Grover’s side, from the bottom right along Grover’s Level to the face. When last on duty he did not find any gas anywhere. The last time he found gas was about 12 months ago in Nelson’s Heading, and he reported it at the time. On Wednesday night and Thursday morning before the explosion there was no shot-firing. There were two sets of timbers in Grover’s Level that had to come away. The timbers were getting rotten, and in his opinion it would be safe to cut them out with a hatchet.

Where a hatchet would be dangerous shot-firing was resorted to, the holes being bored in the arms and in the collar. Precautions were always taken before shot-firing to see that the place was well-watered and free from dust for a radius of 20 or 30 yards. The shots were always fired between the shifts. In his district there was no rock top to blast; they only fired timber, and then always fired their shots on Saturday nights. Since the change of shifts on Saturdays the custom was not to fire the shot between the morning and the night shift, but after the night shift was over, when John Evans and himself remained below to fire the shots.

Mr. Rees: - “But did you never fire shots as soon as you went in on Saturday?” - “Sometimes.”

“And how would you manage if the day shift were going up and the night shift coming down?” - “Evans and I would meet at the bottom of the pit before 2 o’clock and we would go straight to the holes and fire them before the night men came down. The day men at the pit bottom would have had time to go up before Evans and I would reach the holes.”

Continuing, he said that the road in Grover's Level was generally moist and damp from the water by the horse-pump and from the pipes. They could turn on the tap by the stables at any time. He had often seen water squirting up out of the horse-pump pipes. The holes were at irregular intervals. He was prevented from going down to work on Friday and Saturday because he had hurt his foot. He knew of no timbers in Grover's Level to be blasted on Saturday night. He descended the mine with the last witness in the first cage after the explosion. Proceeding, witness gave details as to the position of the bodies found that night by him in the colliery, after which the inquiry adjourned for luncheon.

During the adjournment for luncheon the jury examined the timber taken from near the Horse Dip on Grover's side, and on the resumption of the inquiry the witness Garnett gave further evidence as to the findings of the bodies in the mine, and further stated that from the results of his examination of the timber he was still of the opinion that there had been no blasting on the day of the explosion. He had seen no blasting between Llanfabon and the horse-pump. He had seen holes in the timbers near the lamp-station, but he did not think they had been blasted by the hand of man, but by the force of the explosion. He had examined the timbers between Llanfabon and the lamp-station. The holes were half a yard or two feet from the ground.

Mr. Roskill: - "For what purpose do you suggest that these three men, whose business it is to look after the blasting, were found in the Horse Dip?" - "They might have been together in consultation."

"Do you suggest that there had been no blasting at all there?" - "I should not think so from the position in which they were lying."

"Did you find any tools near them?" - "I did not."

"Then your explanation is that they might have been together there in consultation?"

- "Yes." Witness went on to say that the timbers near the men in the Horse Dip bore traces of hatchet marks. The timber was about thirty yards from the Horse Dip.

Mr. Roskill: - "Was it not perfectly safe if that timber had been blasted for the men to have gone in the Horse-dip?" - "Yes; but there was a safer place only a moment's walk away. They could have gone into the Horse-pump, and it is only natural to think that if there had been any blasting they would have done so."

"Is it conceivable that a shot might have been in the timber unknown to Llewellyn and the other men?" - "I don't think so."

"Then it is news to you to hear that timber was being blasted in the double-parting and near the Horse-dip?" - "It is news to me!"

Mr. Abel Thomas here submitted there had been nothing in the evidence to entitle Mr. Roskill to put this question in such a form as to suggest to the witness that there had been some timber blasted. Mr. Roskill contended he had a perfect right to put this question in this form, and proceeding, said to witness: - "If the timber was to be cut, could you not expect to have found tools there?" - "Yes, and I did find some tools there." Within his knowledge shot-firing had never happened on a Saturday before the night shift had gone down. He had never known an incident of tamping with shale and coal-dust. The charges in the double-parting in his view had gone off in the explosion. With regard to the timbers, on the inside of the double-parting the bodies of repairers and rippers were found. They were not there necessarily to remove rubbish after blasting. Only the body of one man was found near the timbers which were charged. He had not discovered any signs of blasting. In going his round after the explosion he found gas in two places turning to the left by Ned Howell's Dip.

Mr. Hall: - "Did you meet with any gas on the main intake?" - "No." To a further question by Mr. Roskill, witness said that to his knowledge shots were never fired, except between the shifts. They couldn't tell whether all the men had got out of the pit, and it was quite possible for shots to be fired while some of the men remained in the pit. Mr. Abel Thomas pointed out that even between shifts they could not be certain as to whether the men were all out.

Mr. Roskill asked witness whether he had seen any signs of the blower said to have been found on the Cilfynydd side. Witness said he had found no such signs. Mr. S. T. Evans next examined witness, and ascertained from him that he had formed no opinion as to the cause of the explosion. Assuming that there had been shot-firing near the horse-pump, then the Horse-pump Dip would be about the distance to which the shot-firers would retire. He found no article at all near the body of Williams Roberts except his watch.

"Did you find any detonators in his pockets?" - "No." "Was his can close by?" - "No."

Examined by Mr. Morgan Thomas, witness said that the body of William Thomas, a haulier, was found beyond a fall, with his horse and dram close by. He thought the fall on the double-parting was the result of shot-firing, fired, perhaps, by the explosion. He had never, when going to fire shots on Saturday evenings met any day-men on the inside of the workings. In reply to Mr. Robson, witness said that the piece of timber produced resembled in its fracture, timber that had been fired by shot-firing, but it also resembled quite as much timber fractured by a squeeze. Examined by Mr. Abel Thomas, witness said that the indications he saw in the pit pointed to the force of the explosion having travelled from Cilfynydd side to Grover's.

“Did you find any indications in the Grover’s side how the force was going?” - “I should think from the position of the arms of the double-timbers that they had been blown in from the pit.”

Mr. R. J. Rhys: - “Can you tell us where they were?” - “From Dudson’s Heading on towards the face.”

Mr. Abel Thomas: - “Do you remember seeing a dead horse on the corner near Dudson’s airway near the stables?” - “Yes, I do very well.”

“Which way do you think that was done?” - “All the indications show it was blown inwards.”

Mr. Roskill: - “Men were found alive at that very point.”

Mr. Reece: - “It is very curious. These are men severely injured, others, torn to pieces, and men close by comparatively uninjured. It does not follow that because this horse was killed there some men were not brought out alive. The court then rose, the inquiry being adjourned until 9 o’clock Thursday morning.

Thursday July 19th

The fourth day’s proceedings

William Rees, the day overman of Grover’s side of the Albion Colliery, was examined by Mr. Rhys, and said that he was on duty in the pit on the day of the explosion, and came out a few minutes before 2 o’clock. His round that day had been more particularly the main roads, including Grover’s Level, Dan’s Heading, Dudson’s Heading, and Llanfabon Dip. He noticed that in Grover’s Level, that the part from the horse-pump dip out was rather full of dust, but it was damp, and the air was clear of dust. The sides of the parting in the Llanfabon Dip were also rather full. As to watering, he saw a cask go up Tom William’s Heading, and he knew that a cask went up Asket’s Heading with the last journey. They had a man clearing on the road at Dudson’s Heading and in Dan’s Heading.

The greatest portion of the dust made during the week was cleared away on Saturday afternoon. He went around several of the faces and saw all his firemen, but no gas was reported to him. In the double-parting inside Llanfabon Dip, near the lamp-station, there were two pairs of timbers to come out that day, because they were too low, and the collars were squeezing down. The top there was bastard rock, very strong ground. It was a gradual squeeze, and the horses began to ‘roof’ there about Thursday. These timbers would be too dangerous to cut out, and they would be blasted. He had given orders for shot holes to be prepared in this timber. They would blast the forearms and one collar, and the other would discharge itself. These shots in the ordinary course would be fired between the morning and evening shift on Saturday.

“Would there be time between these shifts to fire them?” - “We reckon that there would.”

“Supposing there was no time to fire them in between these shifts, when would they be fired?” - “At the end of the evening shift.”

Proceeding, witness said that the clutch of the engine broke on Saturday morning, so that they could not get a full journey of coal out of the Llanfabon parting, and that journey was there when the explosion happened. He was at that spot about 7 o'clock on Saturday evening after the explosion happened. There was a fall at the very spot where the timbers were to have been blasted, and the journey was under the fall. He had seen the timbers since, and found unexploded shots in two of them. There were two other unexploded shots which he had not seen. There was a piece of timber left now standing in the colliery, and in that also an unexploded shot was found; and another piece was found out of which the shot had gone out.

One of the collars looked as if it had been broken by a shot. No-one would blast timbers knowing the fall would fall upon a journey of drams. About 30 yards below the Horse-pump on the main level there were two pairs of timbers low, and would be taken out. They would be cut out with a hatchet not blasting. It would be quite safe to cut them out with a hatchet, for the timber was blocked each side. It was very unlikely that a charge of dynamite was used to get out that timber. No shot could have been put off there between shifts on Saturday without his knowing of it; and, what was more, there was no need of a shot there. He (witness) had worked underground for 38 years, and had been overman for 5 years.

Asked by Mr. Rhys as to his opinion with reference to the origin of the explosion, witness said he thought it came from the Cilfynydd side. It seemed to him that the force came from that side and entered Grover's. He heard the explosion. There were two reports, one after the other, rapidly. He was positive of this. The workmen's examiners had been doing their round as usual; but had never received complaint of any gas in any old stalls that were not fully stowed. The watering in his district was, he considered, sufficient. Examined by Mr. S. T. Evans, witness said that the new water pipes were commenced to be laid some three months ago, but there was a delay through the sprays not arriving. He had been anxious that the new system of watering should be perfected. The place was dampened night and day.

He had heard before the explosion of the dangerous character of the Albion dust, and this made him all the more anxious to get the new water system completed. He denied there was any bashing in his district. He had gone with Jenkin Owen and the workmen on their examination on Saturday and Monday last. They did not show him a place that was bashed. What they saw was a stall road with a fall in the mouth of it. It was a stall road leading off Kent's level. Similar questions were put as to Campbell's Dip in Dudson. There was, he said, a cavity there of 56

yards, where the rails had been taken up; but that was no sign that they had finished work there. They would have relaid the rails again, for they were keeping that place for the return; and they had actually commenced to make room for a pony and a gang of men to go in. The work would have been finished long before now if it had not been for the explosion. Ashford's Dip in Dudson's Heading, was also to be the return. There were no other places in Grover's like these except those they had kept for their returns.

Mr. Evans: - "You are working double-shifts at the colliery?" - "Well, no." (laughter). "What is a double-shift?" - "Working the same amount of coal in both shifts."

"In your opinion was the clearing of the mains roads sufficient for the safety of the mine?" - "Yes."

"Would you be satisfied now if you were responsible?" - "I believe that the way we were carrying out was right enough for the future."

"You would not do any more for the clearing of the dust than you did before the accident?" - "Yes. I would clear it during the week."

"That is clearing it oftener than on Saturday?" - "Yes."

"I thought it would come to that. You will go on working coal in two shifts?" -

"Yes." "Is there any need in this colliery for working coal two shifts in the day?"

- "Yes, it is necessary to keep the headings open."

Witness continuing said he had often been present when shots were fired both near rock and coal. They always watered the place well beforehand. Part of the timber in which it was alleged a shot had been fired in was here produced, which witness, after examination, said it did not bear the appearance of a piece of timber which had been blasted. It was a piece of rotten timber. He considered that it was split abroad in the way it was through being on the ground, and on account of rottenness. It was only in the double-parting that they fired shots in long timber. They had never blasted timber except in double-partings. According to what he had seen he thought the explosion had originated on the Cilfynydd side. The evidence of the greatest force there was driving towards the pit.

Re-examined by Mr. Roskill, witness said that the aperture in the platform of the engine-house was not there before the explosion. It was all planked up. There was no hole on the floor between the engine-house and the road. He had formed the opinion that the course of the explosion was greater from the Cilfynydd Level than from the Grover's Level. He had never mentioned this to anyone before coming to this inquiry. He did not consider it was his duty to make any report on the matter, seeing that all the officials were there to see for themselves.

He had not discussed the question where the force was greatest with anyone. Mr. Jones did not, so far as he could remember, tell him before the inquiry what his

opinion was as to the force of the explosion and its direction. He had examined the timbers in Grovers' Level when he formed his opinion on the matter. He knew there was a sheave at the far end of Grover's Level, just at the bottom of Asket's Level, but had not examined it. John Evans had equal authority with him for firing shots, and he might fire shots without his (witness's) knowledge. On the Saturday morning - the day of the explosion - he saw Evans at the top of the pit. This was about 7 o'clock, before he went down the pit, and he saw him again at ten minutes to two, also at the top of the pit. He then told Evans that the engine had broken, and therefore they could not go on with the blasting. There was no conversation between himself and John Evans about blasting the two sets of timbers by the Horse Dip. He was not present when shots were withdrawn upon any occasion. The reason they never blasted timbers, except in the double-parting was because it was not necessary.

During his four years' experience as overman of the mine he had never known any blasting to have been going on, except in the double-partings. He could not say if there was an interval of twenty minutes between the last day-man coming up and the first night-man going down. He could not say whether there were fifty day-men below while the night-shift was going on. They had no means of checking in the mine. He could not say how many day-men were killed by the explosion.

By Mr. Robson: - He did not see any flame coming up from the upcast at the time of the explosion, but saw a big cloud of smoke. On the night of the explosion he remembered to having pointed out the two sets of timbers which had to come out from inside the Horse-pump. He also remembered pointing out where the bodies of the timbermen had been found. He did not remember Mr. Robson pointing out to him the same night the dusty condition of Grover's Level. The top of John Morris's Dip was narrow and confined. From the direction in which the drams had been blown, and from other appearances, he judged that the greatest force was in the Cilfynydd side.

By Mr. Hall: - The amount of dynamite to put into timber by blasting was according to the size of the timber. It might be half a ball. They were going to fire five charges in the double-parting. He could not give the weight of dynamite that would have to be used to charge these five shots. The shots were charged at half-past one in the afternoon of the explosion, as they were intended to be fired between the shifts. He could not say whether the Albion seam made more gas than any other colliery in the Aberdare valley. By Mr. Morgan Thomas: - He saw holes in timber charged in Grover's Level before the explosion.

Edward Rees, day fireman on Grover's side, Llanfabon District, deposed that he was in the mine on the morning of the day of the explosion. He went down at

five, and made his rounds to see that everything was alright. He signed his report - booked in the lodge. He found no gas and no falls to interfere with ventilation. In the double-parting between Llanfabon and John Morris's Dip were two pairs of timbers to be blasted that day, and witness passed when Price Williams was in the act of charging the timbers. No other shots were to be put off that day in his district.

A row of drams were standing there. At a quarter to two he heard the engine had been broken. Witness went out on Saturday before some of the men in his district. He did not know when the shots would have been put off if the journey of drams had not been standing there. They couldn't all leave the pit together. Some of the two shifts crossed. He couldn't answer the question whether it would be right to fire the shots between a quarter to 2 and 2 o'clock on the Saturday. On the morning of the explosion he reported in his report book (produced), "*No. 1 district - gas, none; ventila- tion good; state of the roof and sides are in good condition to pass and work therein; general safety, good condition.*"

Had not reported any gas for five weeks before the explosion. William Roberts had a cap box, with caps in his pocket. John Evans had no caps in his pocket. Roberts often carried caps in his pockets; he did not know it was the practice in the mine for chargers to go about with caps in their pockets. Roberts carried the box when he had several shots to fire. He did not believe any shots were fired near the Horse-Dip. He could not answer the question. What did Roberts have the caps for? Except to fire timbers? Firing only took place in the double-partings. He never saw any fuses about Roberts. On that day he came up at quarter to two, or about then. Roberts was the only one he knew to carry caps, and he was not aware he carried them until he saw the caps upon him. Witness had made about forty working places to look after. When he made his examination he also went into the rubbish stalls. In his district there were three of four rubbish stalls in the process of being filled up; and on Saturday morning he entered those stalls.

Replying to Mr. Walter Morgan, witness said the engine that had been broken was not repaired before the explosion. On July 14th he examined the place. There was a fall at the mouth of Kemp's Level, and a strong blower above the fall, the separation doors being down. There was a 'bit of a hole' at Colville's stall. It was in the same state before the explosion, so far as he knew. Returning to Kemp's Level, witness said a little gas had accumulated. He did not see a wall on the top of the fall there, but he was told a wall had been erected. The gas was so strong they were unable to take down the wall. He saw no stall bashed up. Mr. Rees: - "Are you quite sure?" - "Yes." "Do you understand the question?" - "Yes."

By Mr. Water Morgan: - It was thrown in out of the way. There was a cavity, but no accumulation of gas. It was an old place walled up. The men opened the

bashing at the mouth of the stall. Witness (hardily pressed) could not say whether there was gas in the cavity or not. These were old workings he had nothing to do with, and he could say nothing as to whether there was any ventilation there. He tried everywhere in his examinations. He had not tried this old stall before the explosion. He had never seen it. Further on, near the end of the old dip, he found a place walled up, and a cavity with an accumulation of gas - he did not know how much. He was in the habit of testing bashed up stalls to see if the old places had been properly filled.

By Mr. Robson: - "I commenced my examination on a morning at the mouth of Llanfabon Dip, at the Horse-pump. Nobody told me to do so. I have nothing to do with Grover's Level."

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - "The ventilation was not put right after the explosion; it was not right yet, and in many places where the men's examiners had since found gas the ventilation was perfectly right before the explosion".

By Mr. Robson: - "Some of the places bashed up were places he knew nothing at all about before the explosion. One place had been bashed since the explosion in order to get the air around the 'face.' If they were bashed up, that had been done before he entered upon his duties. If gas did accumulate there behind the parting and oozed out and into the intake it would, if not diluted, be carried on to the men".

On the resumption of the inquiry after luncheon, the Foreman of the jury said he had been requested to make an appeal to the parties concerned in the inquiry that they should endeavour to expedite business as fast as possible. The jurymen are all businessmen, and were there at great inconvenience, and they felt that the inquiry was dragging somewhat. He wished, therefore, to ask that those gentlemen concerned in asking questions not to repeat their questions.

Edward Rees, re-called, in reply to Mr. Morgan Thomas, said he had frequently been present when shot-firing had been carried on. His duty was to see that the place was safe, and to fire if necessary. He always sent men for rails to the double-parting, where rails were always to be got.

William Rees, recalled, in reply to a juror, said it was his duty to go round with any new firemen appointed and to show him his duties. He went round with Edward Rees in accordance with his duty. Occasionally it was Edward Rees's duty to go into the old workings. He never made reports of his visits unless he found something unusual. He had no report book. It was his duty to go over the return and the intake. If there was any gas in the old workings he drew the attention of the fireman to it. If Edward Rees said he did not know where the old workings were, that was not correct.

The coroner: - "Is there any road in the No.1 district which was so closed up that Edward Rees, the fireman, did not know of its existence, but still, one in which the examiners could get into?" - "No." Proceeding, witness said on the Saturday morning, the day of the explosion, he was coming out of the intake about ten o'clock. He was not supposed to go all around the main intakes and the returns before the men got to their work. It was quite impossible for any accumulation of gas to occur before the men went down to their work without their knowing of it.

David Evans, the day fireman, who was next examined, said he had charge of the No.1B district. He had visited all the working places, and had found every place free from gas. He had noticed the state of Grover's Level on the morning of the explosion. When he went down the pit that morning he saw the night fireman. There were no shots to be fired that morning. After the explosion he went along the Cilfynydd side, and waited there until the men had cleared the rubbish away. He then went on the Grover's side. He had not been around with any of the men to make an examination of that side. He had been fireman for four years, and had twenty-five years' experience underground. He had never found any gas in his district, and had never had occasion to report any during the four years he had been fireman. He used to make a search for gas in mornings. His face and roads were all open.

By Mr. Roskill: - Witness said he did not see the men lying in the horse-pit on the Grover's side. He was familiar with the state of dryness of Grover's Level. He left the pit at five minutes past two on the day of the explosion. At that time the middle of the road in Grover's Level was wet. The tap was running, but there were no holes in the pipes. He did not notice any timbers by the Llanfabon Dip that were charged. It was news to him to hear that William Roberts had been in the habit of going about the pit with caps for shot-firing in his pocket. The air reached his district by going up Dudson's Heading. In some of the stalls in his district it was impossible to enter for several days after the explosion due to the gas.

By Mr. Morgan: - "All the old stalls in his district were properly packed."

By Mr. Morgan Thomas: - "There were no men kept in his district to throw the dust to the sides."

By a juror: - It was customary for him to report all falls that interfered with the airway. He would not report a 'squeeze.' There had never been any heavy falls in the airway. He didn't report small falls that didn't interfere with the airway.

Eli Holley, collier, working in the same district as the last witness, said that on the day of the explosion he left the pit at twenty minutes to two. Asket's Level was not then dry and dusty. A cask was being discharged as he passed Grover's Level

which was damp as usual. He did not see any preparations for shot-firing at the double-parting. During the six years he had worked in the colliery he had never stopped a day through gas, neither had he seen gas on any occasion.

He had been employed 25 years in collieries, and had never seen a better ventilated pit than the Albion. Witness, who had been an examiner for the men, descended the pit immediately after the explosion. He got as far as the Horse-pump in Grover's side, and after finding Morris Ashton's body and other bodies, was forced by the afterdamp to retire. He continued as far as the top of Llanfabon Dip, passed two falls, one fifteen yards from the Horse-pump and the other, a much larger fall, right on the top of Llanfabon Dip. There were three bodies in the fall. Down Llanfabon Dip he found the man with his head blown off. There was a fall near the double parting. Witness was walking in the dip when two arms were found in the double-parting containing shots that had not gone off.

By Mr. Roskill: - He saw two arms charged, and two collars that had been exploded. The collars were broken when he found them under the fall. The two arms were in an upright position. Complaints about blasting timber had never been made to him as chairman of the Workmen's Committee. At the stable the force of the explosion diverged in opposite directions.

By Mr. Walter Morgan: - He would rather work the single shift than the double shift. It was more satisfactory and safer. He had waited upon the company to abolish the double-shift.

By Mr. Morgan Thomas: - A squeeze of the top roof sometimes screwed the timbers in the pit, and it might be the case here. Mr. Morgan Thomas wanted to examine the witness upon his statements of the good ventilation to the mine, but the coroners pointed out that witness was not responsible for the ventilation. In answer to Mr. Abel Thomas, witness said he was chosen by the men themselves to examine. He was appointed chairman of the examiners, and Mr. Morgan Thomas, as haulier's agent, represented some of the very men who had selected him (witness). The inquiry was then adjourned until nine o'clock on Friday morning.

Friday July 20th
Fifth day of the inquest

Early in the day Mr. Roskill asked, in view of the fact that the direction of the force was admitted on all hands, whether the question of bashing above stalls in one section of the colliery was material. The Coroners said under the circumstances they considered an inspection necessary. It was then arranged that the inspection should be made on Saturday, it being mentioned that if necessary

the inquiry should be adjourned for that purpose until Tuesday.

Evan Davies, Collier, day shift, said that colliers themselves raised rails in old places in order to re-lay them in their own working places. They did this without consultation with anybody, and when it came time to fill up those old places, the rails had to be re-laid. This could be done in a very short time. The vacancy left at the top was filled eventually by the squeeze, but meanwhile air would travel through it and there would be no chance for gas to accumulate.

Examined by Mr. S. T. Evans: - Colliers were not allowed to take up rails, but they did so. He had seen rails hid away almost as soon as a stall was finished. The men were always supplied with a sufficient number of rails when they asked for them, but of course there would be a delay in supplying them.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "Colliers preferred to have rails permanently at hand?" - "Yes." Mr. Shipton: - "It's a common thing, is it, for some colliers to 'steal' a pair of rails, as it is called, in order to get their drams to the face?" - "Yes." "There was no gas in your district before the explosion?" - "No."

Williams Davies, the fireman of Bodwenarth district, No.3a, said there was no blasting to be in his district on the night of the explosion. He had been there for a year and seven months, and there had been no blasting there in that time. His roads were not dusty, and were always wetted by a pump from the return, and by casks and water tanks.

John Jenkins, the day-fireman of the Bodwenarth District of the colliery, stated that his district was the Bodwenarth left-side. On the Saturday of the explosion he made an examination of his district, going round it three times. He did not discover any gas. He had not reported any for the last two years. He had not found any. He had been three-and-a-half years a fireman. His district was rather dry, but there were some damp places in it. The roads were watered on the morning of the explosion. Sometimes shots were fired in his district in the hard ground, and on Saturday two were to have been put off in John Roberts's Dip, but they were not exploded, although holes were bored in readiness.

He was not aware he left any day-men in the pit on Saturday. He preferred single shifts to double-shifts, but replying to Mr. Abel Thomas witness admitted that in a colliery like the Albion it was necessary to have a double-shift to run headings. Timber was blasted only in the double-partings.

Morgan Dyer, day-fireman in the Cilfynydd side, said that on the morning of the explosion he twice went round his district, but found no gas, and he had not discovered any on any occasion previously. Six shots were prepared in his district on the double-parting on the Saturday morning. The shots were in the

timber, and were in William Rees' heading. They had gone off, and the timbers were blown. It was David Griffiths' or John Evans' duty to fire the shots, but they were both killed.

Witness told Griffiths the shots were ready, but no-one could know when they were put off. Griffiths should not have fired before they were out of the mine. In his opinion, the shots were fired before the explosion. Timbers were blasted in the levels as well as the double-road. He had never kept men at the bottom of the shaft when he had been engaged in shot-firing. By Mr. S. T. Evans :- He had joined the deputations of the men to do away with the double-shift.

After luncheon, the witness was further examined by Mr. S. T. Evans with reference to the ventilation of the stalls. He said that he had led the workmen in their examination through the mine, and they had thanked him. Examined by Mr. Morgan Thomas, witness said that under the rock bastard roof they blasted timber, and under other roofs they cut the timber out with a hatchet.

Mr. Morgan Thomas: - "Then under a more dangerous roof you cut it out with hatchet, and under a safe roof blast it? That's how I take it." - Witness; - "Well, you may, we differ in opinion."

The Coroner: - "You must take the witness's answer, and must not comment on it." Mr. Morgan Thomas: - "You allowed Mr. Thomas to comment."

The Coroner: - "You must take the answer, and not comment, please."

By the jury: - He did not approve of blasting timber at all. He had been a member of a deputation to the Home Secretary, representing employers and men employed, with reference to shot-firing.

Mr. W. Jones: - "Were you of the opinion that shot-firing should not be abandoned?"

- "Not abandoned generally."

"That shot firing should not be totally abandoned?" - "Not with a proper system of watering." He had never seen timber blasted at any other colliery. This explosion had confirmed his opinion of the danger of blasting timbers.

Henry Watkins, the day-fireman of the Pantddu district, said he descended the mine and examined all the districts before 7.30 on the morning of the explosion. He had not found gas there for two years. It was a very wet district, the complaint always being of too much water. There were no shots to be fired in his district on the morning of the explosion. When he descended after the explosion he found no bodies at the faces. They were all in the 'swamp' - 38 of them altogether, but, he explained, eleven of the number were alive. They were all night-men, not a day-man amongst them, for all the day-men in his district were out. The bodies presented the appearance of having been suffocated. Of the eleven saved, Thomas Howells, Griffiths, and Bumford, were present that day ready to give evidence. There was a big fall of 130 to 140 tons at the entrance to the Pantddu Dip, all of

rock.

Mr. Coroner Rhys: - "Do you think that came down in consequence of the explosion?" - "Yes; sure to be, for it was well timbered before."
"What timber was it before?" - "Thirteen foot timber cut to fit."

Proceeding, witness said that this was the only fall throughout his district. Witness added he had not arrived at a conclusion as to where the explosion originated. He did not like to express an opinion on the matter. He had left that question for experts to decide.

It will be remembered that Mr. Philip Jones, in his examination, suggested that it was the fall caused the explosion; that after the fall the gas separated, and this was ignited by the comets in the immediate vicinity. Watkins was closely examined upon this point, and adhered to his opinion that the fall was really the result and not the cause of the explosion. They never wetted the sides and roofs at all. He came from the pit on Saturday about 1.55, and met the night fireman. The last time he found gas in his district was on the 9th or 10th of June, and that was in the second stall down in Teague's Heading. It was very small, and they cleared it away at once. This was the only time he had ever found gas in his district. There was not one old stall that he knew of bashed up in front and left hollow behind.

Proceeding, witness said that after the explosion he went down with the first load with the manager, and entered the Cilfynydd side. He described the bodies he saw, some of them being much mangled. By David Rees's Level were four bodies. One had lost its head and another its foot, and the others had their clothes partly burnt off. Replying to Mr. Rhys, Davies said he was 31 years of age, and had been four and a half years fireman. He had both a first and second-class certificate as manager. In reply to Mr. Roskill, he said the blast seemed to have blown both ways at the double-parting. Some things were bent inwards and others outwards. In one case two of the straps of the sheave had blown towards the pit, and one away from the pit. One of the drams was blown both ways.

Mr. Hall put several questions to witness, and ascertained from him that the direction in which the men's clothes were blown showed that the force of the explosion was inwards. There was nothing to indicate that the explosion had happened in his district.

In answer to Mr. S. T. Evans, witness said he was not in favour of the double-shift, except when that was necessary to keep a heading open. He would reserve the night shift for repairing and clearing only. In his experience, in a case of a heavy fall of rock, there was sometimes a liberation of gas from behind, even in old workings. The lamps he had examined since the explosion were all locked.

Thomas Howells, 94 Howell St., Cilfynydd, one of the survivors, stated that he was engaged as a ripper in the colliery when the explosion occurred. He worked on the Cilfynydd side. He lost his light just before the explosion occurred, and went back to the lamp-station near the bottom of the pit. He did not remember if he got to the station or not long before the explosion. He heard no noise, but saw a fire, and was at once rendered unconscious. So far as he could recollect, it was a blue flame. He had heard no shot-firing when he went down, and could not recollect when he lost his light. It was 2 o'clock when he went down into the pit. Soon after he went down his lamp was locked, and he proceeded to his work-place. He passed no place where there was preparation for blasting timber. The work he was engaged in was filling rubbish, which was dry, but there was not much dust. So far as he could realise the fire came with the air current.

By Mr. Hall: - Where he had been working there had for some time past been a remarkable freedom from gas.

By Mr. S. T. Evans : - He had never seen any watering done before blasting timber and no preparations for watering.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - He had not been present at blasting.

By Mr. Morgan Thomas: - He met William Roberts, the shotman, at the logging place when he went in, and did not see him again.

Richard Bunford, ripper, of 41 Ann St; Cilfynydd, another of the survivors was next called. He worked in the Pantddu district. He said he had seen shot-firing in the rock of the roof. Speaking of the explosion, he said he heard two claps like thunder which was followed by the banging of the doors between them and the double-parting in the Engine deep. The next minute the level was filled with dust. There were five other men with him, and as the dust came their lamps went out, and they threw them away.

Through the dust they could see the glare of the flame. It was rather blue, and it passed over their heads. He remained standing for a while, and then walked off into the Pantddu Dip, where he found the after-damp, and recollected no more until he recovered consciousness on the air bridge, with Dr. Lyttle and Henry Watkins attending to him. He was able to walk home when brought to the surface by Mr. Roskill.

The flame passed before they started and they saw no more flames. When they were going down the dip they could feel the dust. But except the dust, darkness and after-damp there was no sign of anything wrong in the dip. He heard Hugh Pugh, one of the men who was behind, say, "I can't go further, boys," and then he fell. When a shot was fired they stood never less than thirty yards off. Mr. Martin elicited from the witness that he had seen gas in the workings.

Mr. Martin: - "Have you seen any of these places bashed up?" - "Yes." "When

did you see them do it last?" - "I think it was a week before the explosion happened. "This dust that came after the explosion, was it very thick?" - "Yes." "Did it get into your nostrils and mouth?" - "No; I kept them shut." "Were you singed?" - "No, only my eyelashes."

Proceeding, he said what he thought was after-damp was travelling quickly on the top of the cloud of dust. It was that which 'doused' their lamps. The after-damp looked blue like a shade of fire.

By Mr. S. T. Evans: - He saw bashing done in the pit in about half-a-dozen places. So far as he recollected the only places where he had seen them firing in the timbers was in the double-parting, because it was too dangerous to cut them.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - There was bashing in a stall in Taylor's heading, on the Pantddu side. He did not know what it was bashed up for except that there might have been a little gas in it, or to shut it up before the examiners came round.

Mr. Rhys: - "To keep it out of sight?" - "That's what I thought."

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "But you know that was a wrong thing to do?" - "I know it was wrong."

"Did you tell your fireman?" - "No."

"Do you mean to say you allowed them to do this without informing your colliery manager?" - "I daresay that they knew that themselves."

In reply to further questions, witness said a fall which had come down in that stall was too big to be cleared to drive the stall on. They built a wall at the outside of it in time, leaving about seven yards between the fall and the entrance to the stall. Some 'muck' was thrown in between the wall and the fall. He would not say that they did not fill it up to the top.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "Then I put it to you that when they had put in the muck they built a wall close against the end of the muck, is that so?" - "Yes."

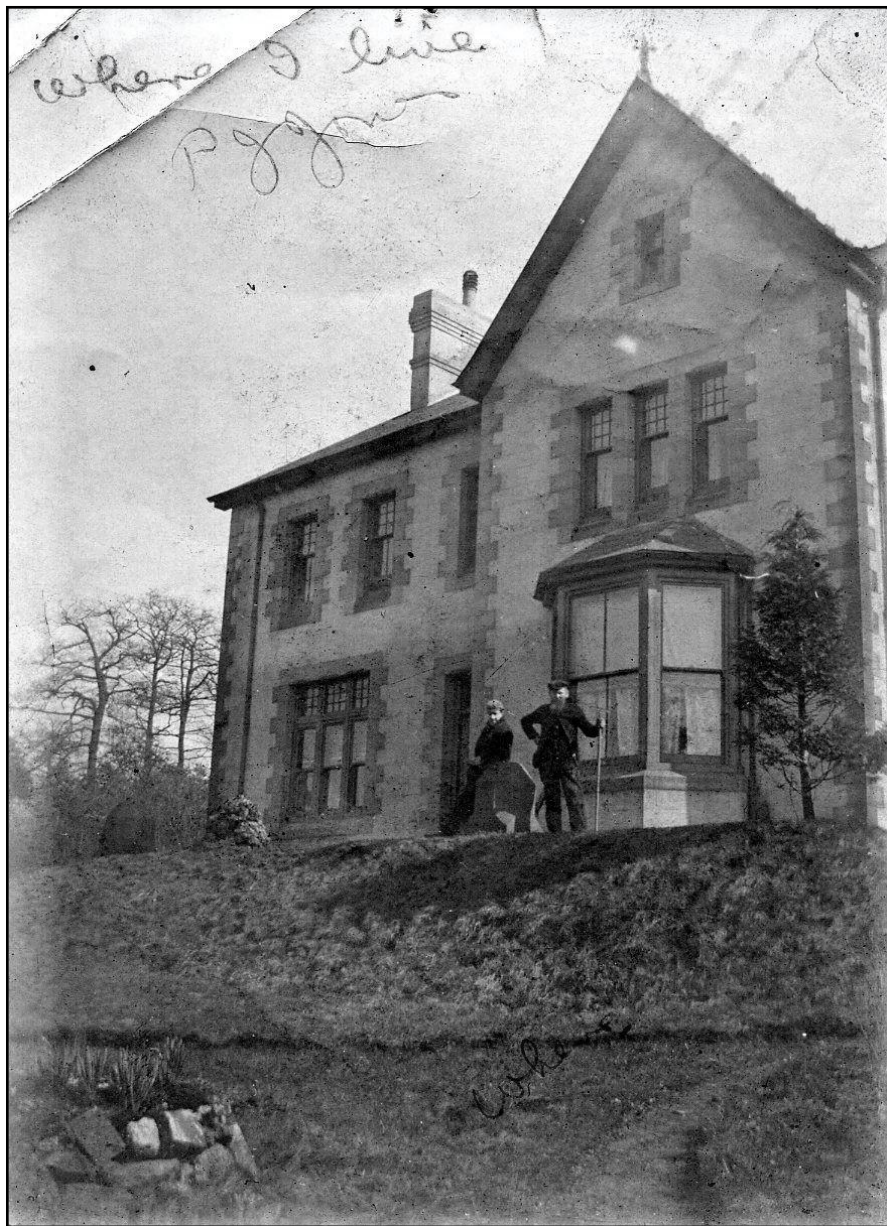
"And that is what you call bashing?" - "Yes." Further examined, witness said that the last time he saw bashing in the old workings was a week before the explosion. He did not inform the colliery managers of it. In the second stall of Taylor's Heading there was a fall. Muck was thrown at it, and a wall thrown around it.

James Graves, pitman, said that from what he saw below he considered the greatest force of the explosion was from the Cilfynydd side across the pit. In support of this theory he mentioned the positions in which he found the bodies of men and horses. The body of a man was blown to pieces, some parts being found in the sump. This was the last witness taken, and Mr. Abel Thomas asked if, before adjourning the inquiry, intimation would be given as to when the examination of the colliery was to be undertaken. Mr. Reece said that Mr. Robson required a written request to make the examination. Mr. Rhys observed that this

was a matter they would arrange. It would be an examination of the various parts of the colliery where this alleged blast was to have taken place. It would take some time to make the examination thorough- ly, and therefore they would allow the inspectors until Tuesday. They were very sorry for it in one way, but it might do good in another. Mr. Reece: - “It may shorten the inquiry.” The adjournment was then made to 9 o’clock on Tuesday morning.



Miners queuing for the wages at the Albion Colliery c.1901
(Courtesy of Mr. Vyvyan Philip Jones)



The colliery manager Phil Jones and probably grandson Philip outside their home in Cilfynydd c.1913. (Courtesy of Mr. Vyvyan Philip Jones)

CHAPTER TWELVE

Monday July 23rd

Another body recovered

Another body was recovered from the pit on Monday, between 2 and 3 a.m; the body being another of the unfortunate victims. The remains were found beneath a heavy fall on the Grover's side, where, it was stated, two or three more bodies had been seen. The body has been identified as that of William Harvey, 29, a miner, living at Danygraig Street, Pontypridd. The body was conveyed to the mortuary, and buried the following day at Glyntaff. Several carcasses of horses were also brought out. During Monday Mr. Robson and other Inspectors of Mines were in the pit preparing evidence for Tuesday's adjourned inquest.

Dispute at the colliery

A general meeting of the workmen employed at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, was held at the Institute on Monday afternoon. The chair was occupied by Mr. Thomas Kemp, and supporting him on the platform were Messrs. W. H. Gronow, checkweigh-er; Evans Jones, Sec; Morgan Thomas, Agent of the South Wales & Monmouthshire Hauliers' Union; and others. The object of the meeting was to consider a request made by the manager Mr. Philip Jones that the workmen should return to the system which was resolved before the explosion of shifts of ten hours. The re-arrangements of the shifts naturally took place after the disaster, the men declining to work so long. The question was considered at some length at the meeting, and it was eventually decided not to accept the proposal. A deputation subsequently conveyed the decision to the manager, but, as he was unable to recede from the position taken up, the negotiations fell through, and work was practically at a standstill.

Tuesday July 24th

Sixth day of the inquest

Richard Griffiths, timekeeper at the colliery, identified a body brought out of the pit on Sunday as that of William Harvey, 25, a labourer, single.

William Rowlands, assistant night fireman in the Bodwenarth district of the colliery, said he was not down on the night of the explosion. There was no blasting on Friday night in his district, but there had been that morning between the day and night shifts on the main incline. This blasting was done in rock. It was over a twelve-month since he last found gas in his district. Shots were always fired between shifts, and only after careful examination of watering.

By the jury: - He had experience of fifty years in the collieries. It was not safe in

all places to fire shots in timber, though it was safer sometimes to those engaged in the work than to cut the timber out.”

Charles Davies, assistant day-fireman on the Grover’s side, said that on the day of the explosion he left at 1.30 in the afternoon. He found no gas that day. Seven dead men were found in his district who seemed as if they were sleeping. There was traces of fire after the explosion. The timber in Boatman’s Level was scorched and bore coked coal-dust.

Mr. S. T. Evans examined the witness as to alleged cases of bashing. Davies replied that he had found no cases of bashing.

By a juror: - He had been fireman ten months and had never found gas in his district.

Under-manager’s evidence

William Jones, under-manager of the colliery, said he chiefly had charge of the Cilfynydd side. On the morning of the explosion he went into the pit at 7 o’clock, and he came up at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. He inspected all the main roads, finding them in good order. No gas was reported to him. There were preparations at the far end parting on the Cilfynydd Level for shot-firing in two pairs of timbers. He did not know when these shots were fired. There were two shots also prepared in the rock on the Bodwenarth Level. He saw these holes in the rock after the explosion. The charges had not been fired. When the custom was for one shift to come up at 2 and another to go down at 3, it was the rule to fire shots between shifts. Since the alteration in the shifts, about five weeks ago, this was the first time, to his knowledge, that timber was to be blown out. Now there was about a quarter of an hour between shifts. Other shots might have been fired on the Grover’s side without his knowledge. He had arranged that the shots in the Bodwenarth district should be fired on the Sunday morning which followed the explosion, if they were not fired on the previous night. He was never in the mine at night.

Mr. Rhys: - “Are you aware that rule 14 says with reference to the duty of the under-manager: *“He must see that every officer under him, and every other person employed at the colliery, understands and fulfils his duty?”* - Witness: - “Yes.”

“Do you think that applies to the officials on the night shift as well as those of the day shift?” - “Yes.”

“Have you ever, since your appointment as under-manager, been in the mine whilst the night shift was working?” - “No, but on the pit top every night before they go down.”

By Mr. Roskill: - He knew shots were to be fired in the timbers because the man

came to him for powder. It was possible for timbers to be blown out without his knowledge, but he did not think it would be done. He always was consulted by the fireman, John Evans, as to shot-firing. He went down in the first cage after the explosion. From the horse-pump the explosion was directed towards the face. He did not know when the shots in the timbers were put off. In his opinion a piece of timber (produced) was not shattered by a shot.

By Mr. Morgan Phillips: - He was aware on Saturday morning of thirteen shots charged, but did not know when they were to be fired.

By Mr. Evans: - He did not consider it an improper thing to charge shots and leave them during a shift if no-one was working within 150 yards of the place. Most of the men were cleared out at 2 o'clock, though a few remained behind. He was prepared to say that more than four bands of men had come up by 2 o'clock on the day of the explosion.

To Mr. S. T. Evans witness admitted timbers were blasted on the Saturday previous to the date of the explosion.

By Mr. Robson: - He found no gas on the Cilfynydd side after the accident, nor did they experience any trouble in going over the falls. The firemen were instructed to examine all the holes above the timber each day, but he did not know of any place above the laggings in the main roads where the gas may lurk. In reply to Mr. Abel Thomas, the witness said that John Evans, the overman, was about fifty years of age, with great experience of mines. He was a strict and careful man, and always carried out the rules. It was much more dangerous to cut the timber under a rock roof than anywhere else. Directly after the accident, when he descended the pit, he found the ventilation very strong. He descended the mine in the first band after the explosion, and from what he then saw he formed the opinion that the force of the blast came from the Cilfynydd side.

The foreman: - "Did you ever go round with the workmen's examiners?" - "Yes, every time."

"Did you give them full liberty to go to every place?" - "Yes." "Did you stop them from going to any old workings?" - "No." "You allowed them to examine above the laggings?" - "Yes."

Proceeding, witness said they never fired if there were laggings. He gave no instructions to the banksman to stop the men coming down during the fifteen minutes when they were firing. John Evans was so an experienced overman that he (witness) as under-manager, did not give him any instructions.

Mr. Samuel Shipton: - "Do you think John Evans would have fired a shot without consulting you?" - "I do not think he would."

The Foreman: - "Do you know whether any shots were fired on Saturday

afternoon before the men went down?" - "No, Sir; I do not."

Mr. Martin: - "Did you see any of the night men go down before you were up?" - "No."

"Do you mean to say that every post to be taken out of the main level would be brought under your notice?" - "Only double-timber from the double-parting."

How explosives are used

William Anstes, of 8, Common Rd, Pontypridd, a chargeman at the Albion, said he had worked in that capacity at the Albion for a little over two years. It was his duty to charge the shot-holes, and he had to decide what they were to be charged with. The explosives consisted of dynamite of different kinds, and gelatine, which were kept in the stores. Having obtained the explosives from the stores, he generally kept them in a box at the Cilfynydd double-parting. The box was locked, and the keys were hung up to the end of it. (Laughter). He drilled the holes in the timber with an auger. If a man chose he could go to the box and get the auger and the dynamite. He could not say why so much powder had been kept in the box. He knew very well that he was only allowed 5lbs.

The witness smiled at this stage, and was severely censured by Mr. Rhys, who remarked, "This is not a laughing matter. You know very well that you had four times the quantity of powder you were allowed, and yet you laugh."

Proceeding, witness said he had never fired a shot, but he knew how it was done. By Mr. A. B. Reece: - He also had some gelatine in the mine as well.

Replying to Mr. Roskill, the witness said he had the powder from John Jones, the storekeeper, but he never had from him more than 5lbs. per time. He had never had more than 5lbs. at a time before. He had not received instructions to fire more than the usual amount of shots that day. If shots were to have been fired in the Grover's side the fireman would fetch the explosives. Witness had known men to take explosives from the box without his knowledge. It was quite possible that explosives might have been taken from the box without his knowledge. In reply to Mr. S. T. Evans, witness said he had not heard of a dead man being found with a powder flask after the explosion. He could not say when this 23lbs. began to accumulate in the pit.

He generally received a tin full or a packet at a time. He had seen shots fired where the place was naturally damp, where the top was not watered. This was in the Pantddu Dip. He could not remember how many times such shots were fired during the past two months.

Price Wilson, another chargeman employed at the Albion, was also called. He was working on the Grover's side, and was down there on the morning of the day of the explosion. He had charged five holes for blasting timber on the double-

parting. He had been told to charge these holes by Edward Rees, the day fireman, but he could not say when they were to be let off.

By Mr. Roskill: - He did not know of any instructions to cut or blow out timber by the horse-pump.

By Mr. S. T. Evans: - The night men were firing the shots. He was not the only chargeman on Grover's side. William Anstes and William Roberts sometimes used to charge them whenever they were called.

By Mr. Rhys: - He had been chargeman for 2½ years.

Finding his son's body

William Jones, of Navigation, gave evidence to finding the body of his son on Grover's side a few hours after the explosion. The deceased was a fitter. His body was not much knocked about, but it was badly burned.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - From the position in which the body was lying the explosion must have come from the Cilfynydd side.

James Smith, William St., Cilfynydd, a timberman, said that he had worked on Grover's side of the colliery. He had been working there on the day of the explosion in the day shift. He had never seen timbers shot out although he had been engaged at the colliery for six years. He had heard of timbers being blasted in double-partings when the collars were long. He left the pit at quarter to two o'clock on the day of the explosion, but he had not found any men engaged in doing anything to the timbers by the horse-pump, nor had he noticed any holes charged in them.

The banksman's story

William Howells, banksman, was next called up, and said he winded 15 bands up after 3 o'clock - about the same number as he let down. When the explosion occurred the grit came out of the shaft and struck him in the eye. He had to close his eyes, and could see no more. He heard no sound.

Jeremiah Cavalry, master haulier, deposed that he went down to the bottom of Dudson's. He found a knocker that ought to have been in the far end inside a dram. The knocker was blown inwards, with a piece of wire still fast to it. He removed the knocker to the outside. In reply to Mr. Roskill, witness admitted that he had not mentioned to anybody about the removal of the knocker until Saturday last. There were two drams just inside the bottom of Dudson's, and they found the knocker inside the first dram. It had been thrown about eight or ten yards. He did not mention the matter and thought nothing of it until Eli Holley, one of the men with him, asked him how they found it. If it were afterwards found on the outer

side of the heading someone must have moved it.

The Colliery Agent's testimony

Mr. William Lewis, agent of the colliery, said he lived within a short distance of the pit. He had been agent of the works since the pits were opened. He was at the colliery generally every day. He had no reason to think that any of the officials were neglectful of their duties. He had absolute confidence in every one of them. With regard to the system of shot-firing practiced in the mine, he knew that there was blasting carried on there in the rock roof, and also in the timber under the rock top on the double-parting, but in no other parts of the mine. He had, however, never seen shots put off in timber. Shots should be put off between the shifts. That was one of the most stringent regulations of the colliery. These regulations were laid down when the collieries started, and had been observed, he believed, ever since.

When the colliery was new and the repairers went down at 3 o'clock, an interval occurred on Saturday afternoon; but that was afterwards changed from 3 o'clock to 2 o'clock on Saturdays. Through the alteration of the time it limited the interval much less, the change was effected in deference to the wishes of the men. Although the day shift normally ended at 2 o'clock on Saturday, the men came out very often earlier than that, so there would be a short time for shot-firing. He had heard the banksman's statement that the night shift had gone down when some of the day men were at the bottom of the pit. In those circumstances shots should not be fired. Shot-firing should then not be carried out until the night shift had gone out.

Dangerous dust

His attention was first attracted to the Albion colliery dust being particularly dangerous on reading the account of Mr. Hall's experiments, but the management had a consultation upon the question of the explosiveness of coal-dust before that, and had decided to adopt a system of spraying and pipes at the beginning of this year. The pipes had been laid, and the spray valves had been ordered. After receiving Mr. Hall's report, he issued further instructions to his subordinates requesting them to invariably water the tops and sides of the places thoroughly before firing shots. With regard to the direction of the blast, he noticed that the separation doors were blown towards the return, and one part of one of them blown into a dram.

The knocker of the engine-house had also been blown in that direction. The knocker was still attached to the wire, and he didn't think anyone had moved it before he had observed it, because there was plenty of room to pass. He first went

down to Dudson's Heading to make observations on the Wednesday after the explosion, accompanied by the inspectors, and everything had gone in-by. There were no indications from Dudson's to Llanfabon which would enable him to form an opinion as to which way it went, but there were indications of force on both sides. He could not give proportions of timbers affected, but manholes were nearly equally divided about the same number blown inwards and outwards.

Probable seat of the explosion

Mr. Rhys; - "Did you form any opinion as to the probable seat of the origin of the explosion?" - Mr. Lewis: - "I can only account for it by a large pocket of gas coming down from this fall."

Examined by Mr. S. T. Evans, witness said that gelatine and gelignite, if properly steamed would be almost flameless. The fall in the double-parting on the Cilfynydd side - 25 yards in length - was, in his opinion, the cause and not the effect of the explosion, because at that point the forces radiated in every direction. Pantddu was slightly better than Grover's, or Cilfynydd sides, and the effects of the explosion in Pantddu were less than in Grover's. This might possibly arise by the fact that Pantddu was the wetter place. He was perfectly satisfied that the precautions they had laid down were fulfilled by his subordinates. He believed it was perfectly safe to blast timber between shifts, and he did not believe that the rules they had before could be improved upon. Even after reading Mr. Hall's report as to the character of the coal-dust in the colliery, he was perfectly satisfied with the conditions under which they were working. They had decided to lay down water pipes - at a great convenience, and not because the old method of watering was considered insufficient. In his opinion the old system was adequate.

By Mr. Roskill: - He did not consider it absolutely necessary to water the roof if there was plenty of water on the roads, because the water would become diffused with the atmosphere. He had come to a conclusion as to the cause of the accident four or five days before the adjourned inquiry. That would be about the same time as the manager, but his opinion was formed independently of the manager's.

By Mr. S. T. Evans: - He had never superintended the watering before shot-firing, and he had never been present at shot-firing carried on under ordinary working conditions. They had a competent man who had to see to the watering. He did not know whether there was any interval between the shifts on the Saturday of the explosion. He did not consider it more dangerous under proper precautions to conduct shot-firing in timber than in rock. He did not think it likely that the 'comet' would have been put out by this great fall before the gas reached it. He had never seen a fall of rock bring down gas, but had heard it spoken of during

the inquiry. The colliery was cleared during the week and dusted on Saturdays, and this he considered sufficient. He was aware of no instances of bashing in the colliery, and had made inquiries, because each dram of rubbish brought up was a dram of coal lost, and he wanted the rubbish stowed. He believed that bashing was dangerous.

Mr. Evans: - "Then your anxiety was not because it was dangerous, but in order that you might raise a few more drams of coal?" - Witness: - "No, sir, my greatest anxiety was for the safety of the men, but that was one of the reasons."

Mr. Martin: - "Were you not for several days of the opinion that the force of the explosion was outwards from Dudson's, but were shown two steam pipes attached to the steam-chest of the engine which were blown outwards?" The witness, however, did not agree with that theory. He adhered to his theory that the explosion was caused by the bursting forth of gas from a cavity above the rock where the big fall occurred. In reply to Mr. Abel Thomas, witness said sprays had been placed in the colliery in order to moisten the atmosphere. The court, that had sat from 9 a.m. to nearly 8 p.m.; was adjourned to 9 a.m. Wednesday morning.

Wednesday July 25th Seventh day of the inquest

Remarkable evidence by the workmen -Allegations of shot-firing and bashing

The inquiry was resumed for the seventh day on Wednesday July 25th at the New Inn Pontypridd. Mr. **Williams Lewis**, the agent of the colliery, again entered the box, and, examined by the Foreman (Councilor H. S. Davies), said that Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, had full control of the mine without any interference from himself or any other directors.

Witness did not know that it was the special duty of anyone to watch Anstes, the chargeman, and see that he did not take more than 5lbs. of explosives at any time in the mine. The storekeeper would not give Anstes more than 5lb. at a time, so the 23lbs. which Anstes had down below must have been accumulating for some time. Witness admitted that it was desirable to minimise shot-firing in collieries as much as possible; but he could not agree that shot-firing in timber was under all circumstances dangerous. To Mr. Shipton witness said shot-places were always specially watered. He was still of the opinion, even having regard to Mr. Hall's report, that the old system of watering the mine was adequate, and he only adopted the newer spray system because it was more convenient. There had been a slight fall in barometer on the afternoon of the explosion, and this would have affected any gas that might be in the mine.

By Mr. W. Jones: - The Provision of Mines' Act did not forbid them taking more than 5lbs of explosives into the mine. They could take 100lbs. down the mine if

they liked, so long as no more than 5lbs. was stored or kept in one place.

Mr. Coroner Rhys: - "There is nothing in the Act to prevent quantities of 5lbs being stored in fifty places in the mine."

It was much cheaper, witness informed Mr. Hopkin Morgan, to stow rubbish under- ground than bring it up and throw it over the tip. Mr. Morgan Thomas asked whether a person would not unload 100 drams of rubbish over the tip for every ten drams he could stow below? Witness said that it depended upon what kind of tip they had. Of course it took more time to stow rubbish properly than merely to throw it over the tip.

Barometrical readings

Mr. Phillip Jones, the manager, in reply to Mr. Coroner Rhys, gave the Barometrical readings. On the day of the explosion it stood at 29.5 at 7 a. m; he could not say whether it fell during the day. The temperature on that day was 52. He left officials in charge of blasting, and, except under unusual circumstances, gave no directions as to when blasting was to be done in the mine. There were general instructions to the fireman based upon the colliery rules. He had been many times to inspect the quantity of explosives in the mine, but not lately. He did not know that the keys were hung by the boxes containing the explosives.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - When he heard the explosion he was looking towards the pit, and saw smoke come up the upcast shaft, and something seemed to come from the downcast.

By Mr. Coroner Rhys: - There were two reports and smoke came from both shafts. He believed most smoke came from the upcast. The Coroner pointed out that witness had in his evidence in chief stated that the most smoke came from the downcast. Witness now repeated his statement that the greater volume of smoke came from the upcast.

David Evans, fireman, recalled, in reply to Mr. Roskill, said that when he made an examination of the mine and found some accumulation of gas and cleared it, he would report 'no gas.' He believed this was the general practice.

By a juror: - He had read rule 69, which provided that after each inspection an accumulation of gas or blower found should be reported. If he found any gas the second time he would report it to the overman. He had only understood the rule to apply to his first inspection. **William Rowlands**, assistant fireman, was recalled, and gave similar evidence on the same point.

Evidence of the other side

James Davies, night-ripper, 68 Cilfynydd Rd., Cilfynydd, was called by Mr. S. T. Evans, and said he worked on 'A' district on the Grover's side. He had been ill for six weeks before the explosion, and therefore was not working on the day of the explosion. He had worked under the new arrangements of the shifts, and has seen shots fired all along Grover's Level, and had seen shots fired in collars of seven-foot and more. He had also seen shot-firing in timbers without collars at all. Shot-firing in cogs he had also seen, and instanced a case on the double-parting last year. He had spoken of it to John Evans, and said, "Do you think it right and safe to blast this timber?"

Evans replied: - "Well, indeed boy, what shall I do?" Witness proceeded to speak of firing timbers on the inside of the double-parting of Grover's about two months before the explosion on Saturday, between 3 and 4 o'clock, when the night-shift men were down. Men (witness included) were sent to stop men from approaching. Two shots were fired within forty yards of each other, and after a lapse of half-an-hour between. Before the change in shifts there was shot-firing between the shifts. The dusting and shot-firing was going on at the same time in the mine. He had seen several shots in arms which would not have been dangerous to cut out.

By Mr. Rhys: - They never put explosives on a collar without drilling a hole to receive it.

By Mr. Roskill: - William Garnett and Rowland Williams, who were present on the Saturday he referred to, were still alive. David Williams and David Owen were, he believed, present on the occasions of shot-firing.

Afraid of dismissal

Mr. Roskill: - "Do you never report the matter to anyone but John Evans?" - Witness:

- "No."

"Why was that?" - "Because if I made a complaint I might as well go away." "Do you mean that you were afraid of being dismissed?" - "Yes, exactly."

"Did you not think it your duty to yourself and other workmen to make this public?"

- "No doubt it was my duty."

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - He had been working in the colliery between four or five years, and knew the practices he had spoke of were dangerous. He did not think

he could report the matter to the Workmen's Committee with safety, for there were tale-bearers, and he was afraid. He had his family to think of. The shot-firing took place when the men were in the workings during the shifts. He was certain of that. To another jurymen witness said that he was afraid to complain to the manager, for he had heard of men being dismissed for making complaints. He had mentioned the matter to John Evans, who was his cousin, and an official, and told him he would like to see the blasting done away with.

Thomas Owen, rock-ripper, said that he had been working at the Albion Colliery for six years - night and day every other week. Fortunately he was working days on the Cilfynydd side, in Morgan Dyer's District, in the far end, when the explosion happened. Witness spoke of seeing shot-firing in timber in the double-parting on a Saturday about a fortnight before the explosion. This would be about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the men were in the workings. There was blasting almost every Saturday after the shift had gone in. He considered it quite safe to take timber out in the usual way, and in his opinion there could be no necessity for blasting, only that it could be done quicker. He had never in his experience on a single occasion seen the district watered for 20 yards around a shot-hole before firing. If a life was lost in a colliery from a slip, sometimes the place would be watered then for a day or two.

Mr. S. T. Evans: - "Does the inspector come to the colliery after a life is lost?" - "Yes." "Within a day or two?" - "Yes."

Mr. Coroner Reece: - "Why do they water then, water would not prevent a slip of coal?" - "I don't know, unless they did it because the inspectors were coming."

The Coroner: - "Have you ever drawn the attention of anyone to the dangers of blasting timber?" - "No, sir; if I opened my mouth to anyone about it I should not be wanted there afterwards." (Laughter.)

Mr. Roskill: - "And during the five years you were at the colliery you never thought it right to make a formal complaint?" - "I was afraid."

"Have you ever kept away from the mine because of the shot-firing?" - "No, but I have been afraid many times."

"Have you ever known of a man whom you say was 'not wanted' after he made a compliant?" - "Yes, John Kemp."

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "Surely this witness cannot possibly tell why Kemp left." "Was it in consequence of what you thought had happened to John Kemp that you did not make a compliant?" - "Yes."

Examined by Mr. Hall witness said he had seen gas in all stalls. He complained that they mostly filled the face end first. Mr. Abel Thomas cross-examined witness and elicited from him that he was not certain whether the shot-firing he saw on a Saturday was a fortnight before the explosion. All he would now state

was that it was a Saturday, but he could not say which.

“With reference to Kemp, will you say that he did not leave of his own accord, and was dismissed at all?” - “I can’t say. There was a lot of talk about it.”

Shot-firing in timber

John Evans, rock-ripper, said he had never noticed watering done on the levels when shots were fired. He had seen timber blasted several times without a watering on the far end level. Since he had seen and heard of the dangerous character of coal-dust he did not think it safe to blast in timber, nor did he think it safe to fire shots when dusting was going on. The last blasting in timber he saw was six months before.

Edward Lewis, day-ripper, working in Pantddu, was also called on the same points. Between 5 and 7 o’clock on one evening two months ago two shots were let off when men were working. On the Saturday before the explosion there were shots placed in Morgan Harries’s Heading, and gas was found there. He spoke of an instance when the shot-firing was carried out in a dry spot without previous watering. They made a wall at John Taylor’s Heading on the day the examiners went round. They were instructed to do so. This was bashing, and it was done so the workmen’s examiners would not be able to see if the place was empty inside or properly stowed. This was done with the instructions of the fireman and the place was not stowed. Very likely there was a space inside of 10 or 12 yards.

Coroner Reece: - “You joined with the firemen to deceive your own examiners?” Witness admitted it, and said he would be careful not to do it again.

By Mr. Abel Thomas - “They did not reopen and fill the place, so it was left hollow.” Mr. Abel Thomas: - “Why did you not go to your own trusted examiners next day and tell them their examination was not complete?” - “Why, if I made complaints about the work very likely they would not require me very long.” (Laughter).

At this stage an adjournment took place for luncheon.

On resuming, **Thomas Smith**, day-ripper, swore that he saw gas on the top of the gob in Bunford’s Heading, and that he was sent to bash an entrance in a stall where a fall had taken place. He was not certain of the stall, but he believed it was John Morgan’s stall. He did not tell the fireman that there was gas in the spot. In reply to Mr. Martin, he said he built the bottom part with stone, and filled the top with rubbish.

By Mr. Roskill: - He had never read the special rules of the colliery. He was never supplied with the rules of the colliery, and never asked for them. He was afraid to make a complaint to the manager and the officers, because he feared he

would lose his place. He seldom attended the committee of workmen, though he knew that there had been a great danger. He was also afraid to report matters to the committee because he feared they would 'mark' him.

David Rimery, collier, said he worked in Jenkin Thomas' Heading on the morning of the explosion, and they saw gas in the mouth of this parting. He had seen casks being taken to water the horses, but never noticed any for moistening the road. He had never seen the road in this district wet. He had heard shot-firing in the mine about two or three years ago when men were in the workings. When examining the mine he noticed three roads bashed up.

Charles Colville, a collier, said he had been working often on Saturday afternoons. He worked day shifts, and would come out as a rule about 1.30, though he came out sometimes at 3 o'clock. He had heard shot-firing in the pit on Saturday mornings. In reply to Mr. S. T. Evans, witness said that he had seen in the Llanfabon Dip, in about six months, one cask of water to moisten the roads. There was no system of watering the roads.

William Barrow Jones, a collier, having given further evidence of a similar character, Mr. Evans said he would not call more evidence of this description. There had been enough evidence of the point that men were in the mine during shot-firing.

Noah Gould, a rider, said that on Friday, a fortnight before the explosion he went along Grover's Level to Dudson's end. At a point between the Horse-pump Dip and Llanfabon Dip he noticed a bunch of timbers which were very low. There were shot-holes in four or five of the collars. On the night before the explosion he saw them again in the same condition, but on the Tuesday after the explosion, when he was there once more, he found a big fall there. He also noticed in the fall the very timbers which he had previously seen bored with holes.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - He did not think it part of his duty to ascertain if the holes were charged. He did not know whether the holes were augur holes bored simply to bring the timber down by weakening it.

By the Foreman of the jury: - He did not notice whether the timber was cut, or blasted, or broken by a 'squeeze.'

Roberts Philips, a young man, who worked in Davis's Heading, said he came out three or four minutes before the explosion. The hitcher would not let him come up at one o'clock, saying that they had to hitch a couple of drams first. It was then about

3.30. They sent ten or twelve drams up, and in the meantime witness sat in the sump. He saw John Evans and another man passing from the Cilfynydd side to the

Grover's side, running. They were panting for breath. Witness had been sitting down five or ten minutes then. The John Evans he meant was the overman. The man with him was not the shotman, but a man named Roberts.

By Mr. Roskill: - "I saw some smoke coming out of the little pit first. I did not see flame, but I saw dust coming out of the little pit. I saw nothing in the downcast. I was standing on the bank at the time, and ran over to the big pit. I could see both pits.

I heard a loud report coming from the big pit, and soon afterwards I heard it at the other pit."

Job Jones, timberman, Cilfynydd, who gave evidence in Welsh (P. S. Ben Evans interpreting), sworn, said he worked in Asket's Heading for the past three years. He had seen an occasional small cask of water taken down. He went down in the third band after the explosion to the Grover's side. He noticed the knocker in Grover's Level, near to the point that turns into Dudson's end. It had been moved on towards the pit about ten or twelve yards

Evidence of the managing director

Mr. Henry Lewis, of Tyr'nant, Walnut Tree, the managing director of the Albion Colliery, was next examined. He had, he said, been connected with the colliery from the start, and had exercised personal supervision, being in telephonic communication with the colliery daily. The system of shot-firing had been in vogue in the pit for six or seven years. He knew of it, and approved of it under the conditions specified by the manager in his evidence. He had no reason to believe it to have been carried on in any other way. Had he known it to have been carried on in the manner suggested by certain witnesses in that inquiry, he certainly would have interfered.

Mr. Rhys: - "Then assuming that it was carried on as described by Thomas Howells and Bunford, you have been living in a Fools Paradise?" - "Certainly, if what they say is correct. Our regulations are that shot-firing should be between the shifts. If the night-shift were down at the time of firing, it would clearly be a breach of our regulations." "You admit that?" - "Oh, clearly."

Proceeding, witness said he did not interpret Rule 42 to mean that the under-manager should be in the pit every night. The under-manager, he believed, could see that the night-overman fulfilled his duties without himself going down the pit every night. He (witness), had every confidence in the late John Evans, the night-overman, and regarded him as one of their most trustworthy under officials.

Invited to give his opinion as to the seat of the origin of the explosion, Mr. Lewis said he believed the explosion originated between the double doors and the lamp

station on the Cilfynydd side. His views on this point were in accordance with those of Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, and those of Mr. William Lewis, the agent, and he instanced the indications of force in the colliery which he regarded as confirmation of this theory.

Mr. Rhys: - "Assuming this to be so, how do you think the explosion came to happen that day?" - "I can only account for it by a large discharge of gas where the very large fall of rock came down. That is the only possible theory that will fit in with all the circumstances of the case."

"Is it likely that gas proceeded from a place that in such a volume that 177,000 cubic feet of air would not dilute it?" - "If 2,000 or 3,000 cubic feet of gas were projected on the lights at that point I think it would account for the whole mischief. If projected suddenly it would not have time to dilute. Proceeding, witness declared it was quite possible for this quantity of gas to have issued from that point."

Mr. Roskill: - "In all your experience of 27 years as a mining engineer, have you ever heard of a case corresponding to your theory, that over a rock-roof of admitted solidity you would get a blower of gas of the capacity of 2,000 or 3,000 cubic feet, which as you represent, caused this disaster?"

Witness pointed to his experience in the Rhondda Merthyr Colliery 20 years ago, when there was a large discharge of gas, and something like 100 tons of strong bastard rock came down. The gas in that case discharged such enormous quantities as to render the whole of the return inflammable.

"How do you suggest to the jury that 21 years ago coming from a bastard rock is in any way analogous from solid rock, which you never suspected of delicacy of any kind?" - "I leave you to draw the analogy."

Witness instances also his experience in the Penygraig Colliery, when they were seeking for a vein of coal behind a fall, and just as they struck the coal a portion of the mine was inundated with gas. He had often heard of sudden discharges of gas in mines, but they could not get two cases of that kind exactly on all fours. It was, however, universally acknowledged that the Pentre explosion was caused by an inrush of gas. The indications of the force in the Albion was absolutely inconsistent, in his judgement, with the theory that the centre of the explosion was in Grover's Level. He thought the fall he spoke of was the cause, and not the effect of the explosion.

An oversight admitted

It was quite impossible for the explosion to have taken place in Grover's side. All the indications to his mind were the other way, and he was surprised that anyone who knew anything about the work, like Mr. Martin and Mr. Robson, should hold

the contrary opinion. They gave way to the men when they altered the shift, but he never gave a moment's consideration to the difficulty in connection with shot-firing which the change occasioned. He simply overlooked the whole matter.

He did not think that the new arrangement was wholly inconsistent with the men's safety. It was not impossible to fire shots now between the shifts, for the men were often out of the mine by half-past one, particularly on Saturdays, and the other shift did not go down till two. He thought, however, it would be better to have a very large margin, and an hour would be a fair margin indeed. He could not approve of watering a roof except where there was blasting. He could not water a shale roof anywhere else.

Mr. Hall: - "Can you give any idea as to the pressure of gas which caused the rock to come down?" - "No, I cannot. It is quite possible it might be a high pressure of 200 lbs. or 300 lbs. per square inch."

"Would it not occupy a considerable space?" - "Yes, about 3,000 feet."

"Where would you suppose it to be?" - "It might be between the ramifications of the strata."

Proceeding, witness said that the men in the Pantddu Dip had been suffocated, probably because the flame did not reach that spot. It was the same in Dudson's level. By Mr. S. T. Evans: - He had not heard of timber being blasted in other collieries recently. He blasted timber at Ynyfeio ten years ago. He had no knowledge of its being carried on anywhere else, but he would not say it was not carried on.

By Mr. Martin: Witness admitted that he was unable to give the probable area of gas above the rock. It might have been a small space, and in a highly compressed state. The inquiry was then, at 7.40 p. m; again adjourned until 9 o'clock Thursday morning.

A mean theft at Cilfynydd

P. C. Harries' shrewdness

At the Pontypridd police court on Wednesday, July 25th before a full batch of magistrates, and the stipendiary Mr. Ignatious Williams, in the chair, William Banfield, 19, labourer, of Bristol, but residing at Llantrisant Rd, Pontypridd, was charged with stealing a safety lamp from the Albion Colliery, valued at seven shillings and sixpence from the lamp-room of the Albion Colliery on the 23rd June last (the night of the explosion), the property of David Morgan, doorboy, living at 15 John St; Cilfynydd. The evidence of the prosecutor went to show that after the explosion he placed his lamp in the lamp-room at the colliery.

On Sunday, at 10.30, witness went to get his lamp, and found that it was not there. He searched and failed to find it. Information was given by the lampman that it was missing. The one produced was that stolen, was numbered by the maker, 45. He did not find the lamp until the morning of the 25th at the Pontypridd police station. Henry Baldwin, collier, 54, residing at 24 Leyshon Street, Pontypridd, stated that on the 24th of last month the prisoner came to him and offered him a safety lamp for two shillings. Witness asked how he came possessor of it. The prisoner said he had had it for twelve months, and had given six shillings and sixpence for it.

P. C. Harries stated that whilst on plain clothes duty in Taff Street on Monday evening, he overheard a conversation relating to the lamp. He at once proceeded to 13 Llantrisant Road and apprehended the prisoner, who in reply to the charge said: - "I will tell the truth, I did steal it and sold it." Witness stated that a number of lamps had been missing from the colliery the week following the explosion. The bench reprimanded the prisoner who was sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment.

Notice by the manager

The following notice was displayed at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, on Wednesday morning: -

The six hour shift will not continue after tonight. The ordinary ten hour shift will continue on Monday morning. - **Philip Jones, Manager.**

Thursday July 26th Eighth day of the inquest

Managed director re-called - coal dust the devastating cause

The inquest on the bodies of the men killed at the colliery explosion at Cilfynydd was resumed on Thursday, July 26th at the New Inn, Pontypridd. Mr. **Henry Lewis**, of Tyr'nant, Walnut Tree, the managing director of the Colliery, continued his evidence, and, in reply to Mr. Morgan Thomas, re-iterated his statement that the large fall on the Cilfynydd side proceeded the explosion. He did not think the fall could come down without an enormous pressure behind it.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - He believed the pressure would be much more than 3000 lbs to the inch. He found the strata overlying the fall was very much crushed, and there was a large fissure which they had probed to the depth of five feet. It

extended about seven or eight feet along the top, and ran right over the roadway. He did not think an explosion of a large quantity of gas caused smoke. He had seen small explosions of gas underground, and never saw smoke raised. There was great smoke when the explosion was with coal-dust. The fact that considerable force came up the downcast shaft without smoke and a large volume of smoke came up the upcast shaft led him to the conclusion that there had been an explosion with a burning of coal-dust, and the most violent signs of burning are to be found near the spot where he located the explosion.

The bodies near the shaft were shockingly burnt, and one of the bodies was actually on fire. Witness proceeded to detail signs he discovered in support of his conclusions as to the cause of the explosion and the direction of force. They had considerably reduced the quantity of explosives used in the mine. Five years ago they had used 5,000 lbs. per annum, and now less than 1,000 lbs. They discouraged the use of explosives except where necessary. If they used explosives more, they might do the work with one-fourth of the expenses. Questioned by Mr. Roskill, witness accepted the suggestion that the flame might be carried forward by coal-dust, but he did not think the flame spoken of by witnesses would be fed by coal-dust at the same time, for they had spoken of a blue flame, and coal-dust would not give a blue flame.

By Mr. Hall: - The fact that burnings were more severe at the bottom of the pit went to show that there the explosion was fiercest, and in a gas explosion he should expect to find that near the point of origin. He did not think that an explosion was always more at the bottom of the pit than anywhere else. He should expect to find the burning severest at the point of the explosion. To burn timber in the pit there was not much importance to be attached, for ten per cent of their timber was burnt on the outside when they purchased it. In answer to Mr. Roskill on the character of explosives, he said he was doubtful whether high explosives would explode coal-dust.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - He never found a natural cavity in the coal measures, but there was plenty of limestone.

By the Foreman of the jury: - He had never found fault with the manager for not bringing out enough coal. He thought there would be very little diversion from the main current of the explosion.

By Mr. Shipton: - There were fissures in the rock which would be sufficient for gas to come down, without there being a cavity.

Fireman recalled

Henry Watkins, fireman, recalled, said that he found gas on his first round, and if it was cleared before the men came in he did not report it, and if during the day he found gas which he was able to clear himself he did not report it.

William Garnett, night fireman, recalled, said he was sure that no holes had been bored for shots in the timbers in the Horse-pump dip up to Thursday morning, when he left the pit about half-past-five. William Roberts or William Anstes used to bore the holes. When he went into the pit after the explosion he saw about ten bodies at the bottom of Dudson's very much mutilated, and he then felt it was impossible for any men to be alive.

Edward Rees, day-fireman, was recalled, and on being examined by Mr. R. H. Rhys, stated that he had been a night fireman for a year previous his being a day-fireman. If there had been any old workings in his district he would have known of them. He was engaged as a ripper before he was appointed fireman. He knew it was his duty as day-fireman to inspect all the old workings in his district, but in reply to a juror he stated "the old workings belonged nothing to me; they belonged to William Rees, overman." He did not know whether the old workings were visited or not, because he 'had nothing to do with them.' In reply to another juror, he said he had 'something to do with them.' He had inspected the return daily. He had invariably cleared all gas found by him on his rounds. His 'superiors' had instructed him to report all gas he discovered; but he had not reported gas which he had cleared, because "I didn't want anybody else to know about the matter." He did not consider it his duty to report firedamp if he cleared it. He understood the instructions from his superiors meant that he was to report only old gas he failed to clear. He had read all the special rules of the colliery, and he understood by them that he was to report all gas whether he cleared it or not.

Mr. Abraham, M. P.; - "This fireman holding this responsible position, says his reasons for not reporting the gas was because he didn't want anybody else to know besides himself."

Mr. Coroner Reece: - "Yes, he says so."

Mr. Abraham: - "He didn't want either the manager or the workmen to know of it." Mr. Coroner Reece: - "Will you ask a question?"

Mr. Abraham: - "Will you kindly explain to us what did you see in the morning, in respect to gas, I mean?"

Witness: - "A door might be open, or a sheet down, or a crack in the top."

Mr. Abraham: - "What was done?" - "The door left open would be closed and a sheet put up."

Mr. Abraham: - "What precautions were taken to prevent anything of the kind re-happening?" - "I used to warn all that travelled through the doorways to close the doors after them."

Mr. Coroner Rhys: - "They are supposed to shut the doors without being told."

Examined by Mr. Martin, witness repeated his statement that the reason he did not report the gas was because he did not think it necessary, seeing that he had cleared it himself.

A conflict of testimony

Robert Jenkins, the return fireman, of the No.4 district, Cilfynydd side, was next called with reference to the statement made by the witness Edward Lewis on the previous day - that on the Saturday before the explosion he (Jenkins) came to Morgan Harding's heading to prepare for firing shots; that he (Jenkins) put his lamp up above the timber that was to be fired; and that the gas there at once put out Jenkins' lamp. Jenkins was now examined on this point and stoutly declared Lewis's statement to have been untrue. He (Jenkins) was never in the Harding's heading at all that day, and his lamp had never been put out by gas in any part of the mine.

Rowland Williams spoke of an occasion earlier this year when he was present at shot-firing with John Evans, the night overman, when all the night-shift men were down in the works. This shot-firing took place on a Saturday afternoon between two and three o'clock.

William Rowlands, assistant fireman, was recalled, and said that about 18 months ago he remembered a very large fall of rock taking place fifty yards from the bottom of the shaft in the main intake and about sixty tons of rock fell. When the fall came down the gas struck the comet and a man was killed, but in ten minutes after that the gas had disappeared.

Mr. David Hannah's Testimony

Mr. David Hannah, agent of the Ferndale Collieries, gave it as his opinion that the explosion started between the separation doors and the stables on the Cilfynydd side. He gave the indications which led him to this conclusion. The signs tended to show that the explosion came from the fall towards the pit. If the explosion had come from Grover's Level it would have had the effect on the corner of Dudson's Heading in passing, but instead of this they found a knocker board driven up the heading. There was damage done to the corner of a heading not so acute as that of Dudson's in Bodwenarth.

The cause of the explosion, in his opinion, was a sudden outburst of gas. Whenever a fall took place suddenly in the neighbouring collieries the first thing they did was to search for gas, and in the fall was invariably found gas, although there would be no natural cavity. On the top of this fall he tried for gas but failed to find any. They found that in the left-hand side there was a rent in the strata. Below the bed they found a little shale, and came to the conclusion that a blower of gas brought down the roof and caused the explosion. At this the adjournment took place for luncheon.



The manager of the Albion Colliery at the time of the disaster, Philip Jones and his wife Mary c. 1913. (Courtesy of Mr. Vyvyan Philip Jones)

After the adjournment the first witness called was **John Clifton**, living at Norton Bridge, who said he was an assistant to the banksman. He was at the Albion colliery on the day of the explosion, and commenced duties at 7 o'clock in the morning. The explosion occurred at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He stood then about a yard from the cage of the No.1 pit. He first heard a rumbling noise and was blinded. Something came over his eyes. He was blown a few yards back and blinded, so that he could not see. He experienced a burning sensation, but the only signs of burning he found upon his face were the singeing of his lower eyelashes. Mr. Robson: - "Might a flame not have followed the dust that blinded you?" - "I cannot say for I could not see. It was fully five minutes," he added, "before I could open my eyes". Re-examined by Mr. Roskill, **Mr. Hannah** reiterated his assertion that the place where he said the explosion occurred was a likely kind of place for gas to have issued.

"Then the same thing might have happened in any colliery in the United Kingdom?"

- "Yes, so far as the in-rush of gas is concerned."

"And, in spite of the precautions provided by legislation, you think we are liable to a similar disaster at any mine?" - "Yes; the strata here was a very likely strata from which gas would issue."

"Then was not the existence of the 'comet' at this point in the Albion not a breach of rule 8, being close to a place where an explosion of inflammable gas might occur?" - "It may not have been a likely place looked at from below, but when you examine the strata after the fall you find it is a strata where gas might accumulate."

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "He now sees the upperside. Before we could only see the lower side." Mr. Roskill: - "The nature of the strata is always known to mining engineers?"

- "It is variable." "Would there be not premonitory of a bed of rock falling if there were timbers underneath?" - "Not always." Pressed to give an instance of a similar experience in any other colliery, witness said he could not mention an absolutely parallel case, but it was well known that where there was a large fall, gas was likely to come off with a fall. To prove his theory he (witness) showed the places where hangers had been blown towards the pit. Some had been blown severely and others slightly. He saw evidence of doors blown in and a post shifted about a foot in the top in that direction. He noticed a pump blown outwards. He saw two beams on the in-bye side of the engine-house. He could not say whether they were blown. Having regard to the statement that shots were fired in Grover's level, he should certainly expect to find very strong indications of the force of the explosion from the position the shots were fired if it was started there - effects that were seen in the Cilfynydd side.

Mr. Roskill: - "Is it not the case that where the explosion starts the force is not so great in a mine of this kind, which is dry and dusty? Naturally the explosion goes gradually further and further away from the centre, and increases?"

Witness: - "It entirely depends upon the kind of explosion."

Examined by Mr. Robson, witness said the props which leaned towards the shaft in Grover's side were not, in his opinion, inconsistent with his theory. Such a thing could often be seen in any colliery on any day in the case of arms, where the collars had been taken away. Mr. Robson tried to elicit from witness an admission that, had the explosion started from the fall, the direction of the blast towards the pit would have been otherwise, but Mr. Hannah entered into an elaborate explanation, showing where there was a sudden outburst of gas the explosive mixture would take the line of least resistance. Mr. Martin also tested the witness's theories at great length, with a view of showing that between Dudson's and the shaft the indications of force were outward.

Mr. Hannah declared, however, that between Dudson's and Llanfabon deep was a neutral zone as regards the direction of the force. Answering Mr. Abraham and other gentlemen, witness again expressed his opinion that it would not be essential for firemen to report gas he had found and cleared, and held to his belief that the present system was the most conducive to rapid clearing of the gas. He was also examined by the jury as to the track of the explosion, and repeated his previous statement as to its probable seat of origin and cause. By Mr. Martin: - He was not aware that a fireman was liable to imprisonment for three months for not reporting any find of gas, whether he cleared it or not.

A Cardiff Engineer's testimony

Mr. **Treharne Rees**, mining engineer, Cardiff, said for a time he was a Government Inspector of Mines in South Wales. He had been down many times into the Albion Pit, and agreed with previous witnesses as to the spot at which the explosion was initiated. In his opinion it came originally from the explosion of gas. He had heard of an explosion of gas in an intake whereby men were burnt, and one man lost his life. That was within fifty yards of the bottom of the pit. He did not consider the state of the manholes was the most important indication of the centre of the explosion. If he had found gas coming from the fall after the explosion it would have strengthened his opinion as to the spot where the accident originated. He went down the mine on the Saturday afternoon after the explosion, but he did not discover any gas there.

Mr. Roskill: - "I should like you to tell us what is your opinion. Do you think that was the only explosive agent?" Witness: "No, I think it had been extended by coal-dust." Mr. Roskill: - "What do you think has been the principal agent in the

explosion?" - "I should not like to say. It was extended by dust considerably, but gas, I think, was the primary agent. "Everybody agreed," he added, "that the blast had gone into Llan- fabon and Grover's side." He had not seen indications of the blast in the faces of the workings he had been into.

Mr. Hall: - "Assuming that the explosion happened near the face of the workings in any district, which way would the blast travel?" - "I think it would travel outward." "Which way did the blast appear to have travelled?" - "Inward." Witness added that outbursts of gas were certainly unforeseen, and that was the reason why he assumed locked lamps were used. He did not assume a particular place in a colliery, but unforeseen generally.

Mr. Hall: - "Do you think it would be fair to the men that all open lights should be taken out of pits of this character?" - He replied he didn't considerate it at all risky providing places were properly arched. He would compel people to arch the tops in places where naked lights were used.

By Mr. Morgan Thomas: - "There was more danger in the bottom of the workings that in the bottom of the shaft."

Important observations

Mr. **Henry Hall**, Her Majesty's Chief Mining Inspector of North Wales, was called, and read a lengthy report on his two investigations of the mine and the conclusions he had deduced. His first note in the pit was a heading in Dudson's with one side out towards the shaft. He held that the explosion originated somewhere on the main intake air-roads, the signs distinctly showing that the force passed inwards towards the face of the workings, where, divided up amongst the various working-places, it lost its energy. The explosion existed on both sides of the shaft, and was almost co-extensive with the main intake air-roads.

The worst cases of mutilation which evidenced great force were found at four different points wide apart, as much as a mile and a half separating them. He held that the agent which caused the explosion to devastate the whole mine was the coal-dust, which was elevated in immense quantities in spite of attempts at watering. The mine, with the exception of one spot, was dry, and the coal-dust of a decided character, and soft as velvet. He found coked coal-dust an inch thick in some of the timbers near the shaft and in other parts of the mine.

All the phenomena of the explosion were easily explicable if they took dust into account. The dust existed in all the intakes, and added to the form of the explosion, being taken up and increased as it advanced with the wind behind it like a prairie fire. If they attributed the explosion to fire-damp, and found that it

had passed over three or four miles of roadway, and the road of this colliery were unusually large, it meant that there must have been an immense accumulation of gas. Further than this, the force in each case would be outward, where as the evidences were quite the reverse.

As to the point where the explosion was initiated, it seemed to him that the coincidence of orders having been given to remove certain timbers from the pump-dip by blasting them and the fact that the bodies of the persons who had to do this blasting were found as if sheltering from a shot, he considered pointing this out as the starting place. He thought the explosion was started by several untamped dynamite shots being fired at the same moment in the timbers supporting the roof near the main intake airway. It was probable the flame from the shots ignited some accumulation of gas over the timbers, and this in turn ignited the dust. Nearly all the great colliery explosions had been due either to blasting or failure in the system of lighting.

Preventive measurers

Blasting was the cause of the Albion disaster, and to make a repetition from the same cause impossible the blasting operations should be confined to between shifts, when none but the firing staff were in the seam. The most approved system of explosives should be used, and a regular system of watering the main roads instituted. If these steps were not taken, he saw no reason why one of these days they might not be startled by a disaster even twice as terrible as the present. In reply to Mr. Roskill, Mr. Hall said he would recommend the most approved safety explosives for use in mines, and, upon being pressed, said these were sobarite and ammonite, properly tamped. These he considered to be best. By Mr. Reece: - Water cartridges were safe to a great extent, but they were considered to be rather troublesome.

By Mr. Roskill: - It was very likely that the primary cause of the explosion was an explosion of gas. To his mind, the signs of the blast were better evidenced to show that it had occurred on the Grover's side than on the other side. Asked by Mr. Thomas whether one day was enough of clearing and dusting the mine, witness replied if that was the day when no blasting was done, it would be a very good plan. Whether it would be sufficient or not would, however, depend on the amount of the water which had been used on the previous day. He considered that all the main roads of collieries of this description should be kept damped by some means or other, and all the dust that might be found logged anywhere should be damped.

By Mr. Abel Thomas: - He had never succeeded in communicating the flame of any high explosive except that one to coal-dust, so that he was unable to say

whether they could communicate flame to coal-dust with gelatine or gelignite. He had failed to do it with roberite. In this case, if the explosion happened at the Horse-pump Dip, it must have been fire-damp. He admitted that there might have been a small amount of fire-damp above the timber unknown to the shot-man. His opinion was that in this case gas was first ignited, and that the gas fired the coal-dust. If it were gelignite they were firing it would be less probable that it would have fired the dust directly without the intervention of gas. If gelignite only were used, it was more likely to have first fired gas.

He had nothing leading him to believe, he had no proof, that a cartridge, either of gelatine or gelignite, would directly fire the dust, but when he knew as in this case several holes were fired at same time, it made him doubt, because there would be several flames attacking the dust at different points. It was more a matter of ignition than of explosion. At this point the sitting having again lasted over ten hours, the inquiry was adjourned until Friday morning at 9 o'clock.

The '*South Wales Daily News*' of this date carried the following interesting article about their Albion Colliery Explosion Fund that before had raised over £400 :-

Disposal of the subscriptions - Prevalent misconceptions

We have received the following letter, and publish it as an example of several such communications that have reached us, all evidencing the prevalence of uncertainty as to the ultimate disposition of the funds that are being collected: -

To the editor

Sir, - A proposition was made in our lodge, the Rechabites, that a sum of money be given to the Albion Explosion Fund, but was lost for this reason: - It was said that the widows would be no better for it as the money would go into the Provident Fund, of which Sir T. W. Lewis is secretary, and for which he gets £100 a year, and that there is plenty of money in the above fund to provide for them. As other orders may be of the same opinion, perhaps you may be able to give the real facts. I am, &co; 'Cantonian.'

The facts are - that Sir W. T. Lewis is not secretary of the provident fund. He is president; but gets nothing in any way as salary. The office is honorary and Sir Williams devotes much of his time and effort to what is solely on his part a work of Philanthropy. As to the disposal of the subscriptions, it is clear that misconception is very general. The number of inquiries that have been made on this point show great unwillingness that the subscriptions should merely fortify the finances of the Permanent Fund, nearly every contribution from a

workman's organisation is accompanied by a request that it is to go to the widows and orphans direct.

Whatever may be the understanding with other funds, so far as the '*South Wales Daily News*' is concerned, it will be an absolute condition that the wives, children, and other dependants of the deceased miners in the Cilfynydd disaster shall have the benefit, and that the money will not be used simply to strengthen the Permanent Society. It is a correct apprehension that if the money is merely handed over to the permanent fund, the widows and orphans of the late disaster will derive no additional advantage. Subscribers should, therefore, be careful in seeing that their contributions are made with the distinct stipulation that they shall go to benefit the sufferers referred to, and not solely to help the finances of the fund.

The best method of disposal is undoubtedly that adopted in the case of former public collections - Park Slip and Llanerch for instance. In these, the whole of the money was vested in a separate body of trustees; and sums, *additional* to what the Permanent Fund had to pay them, were granted to the woman and children. Part of the amount goes to the permanent fund, which does the work of distribution, and the remainder goes to increase what the sufferers receive from that fund. The whole of the public subscriptions are in their hands, and therefore, under the control of the trustees; and one advantage of this arrangement is that, should any misfortune overtake the Permanent Fund (which all who know its good work must earnestly hope will not be the case), the outside contributions will remain intact, and will still be available for the relief of those for whom they were intended.



The actual lamp taken down the the Albion Colliery pit by the manager Mr. Philip Jones in the first rescue party after the the terrible disaster.
(Courtesy of Mr. Vyvyan Philip Jones)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Friday July 27th

Ninth day of the inquest Coroner's summing up - Verdict of the jury

The inquiry into the colliery explosion at Cilfynydd was continued on Friday, July 27th at the New Inn, Pontypridd, this being the ninth day of the inquiry. Mr. **Henry Hall**, H. M.'s Chief Inspector of Mines for north Wales and Cheshire, who conducted the now well known experiments with the Albion Colliery dust, again entered the box, and his cross-examination by Mr. Abel Thomas Q. C. was proceeded with. Asked whether the result of the explosion would not be that the whole of the atmosphere would be expanded to five times its previous volume if it had room to expand, witness said that it depended upon the heat generated. He agreed that there would be 80 per cent of nitrogen in the air, and that the nitrogen would be burned.

"All I need," he said, "for my coal-dust explosion is fresh air, and the more of it the more violent the explosion would be. The explosion would travel quicker and will be more violent when it goes in the same direction of the wind." Pantddu Dip at the time he saw it, was wet, and the evidence pointed to its being wet at the time of the explosion.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "Then, with your coal-dust theory, the fire would not go down Pantddu dip?" - "Not if there was sufficient water there."

"But was there sufficient water there?" - "It does not seem to me that fire went down Pantddu Dip at all."

Asked how he could then account for Bunford's declaration that he saw a blue flame going down Pantddu Dip, witness said that he could not account for it. The evidence of Bunford was read over, and Mr. Abel Thomas asked witness to account for the fact that Bunford saw the flame 700 yards below Pantddu Dip. Mr. Hall said if Bunford saw the flame no doubt the explosion extended into that point. If there was plenty of gas it might be gas.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "Yes, but that will exactly fit in with the theory of witnesses called by myself." Mr. Hall: - "I don't think that it would."

"Why not?" - "I think the state of the Pantddu Dip showing the least signs of gas makes it impossible to except your theory that there was 3,000 or 4,000 feet of gas going off in Pantddu Dip."

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "My theory was never more than 3,000, and if I remember right it was not I suggested that you kept to 3,000 feet." - Mr. Hall: - "But Mr. Lewis did." Mr. Thomas: - "What he said was it might have been 3,000 feet." Mr. Hall: - "Yes, but he also implied it might have been very much more."

Mr. Thomas: - "Because you suggested it, and he ran down to 1,000 feet if your theory is the whole secret of the explosion why was that blue flame seen?"

Mr. Hall: - "I have always expressed the opinion that it will take a very considerable amount of water to stop a coal-dust explosion."

Witness was closely examined at some length on the point by Mr. Thomas, and, admitted that the fact of the man Howells in the locking-station, who saw a blue flash, was more consistent with the gas theory, and repeated that the blue flame seen by Bunford made no difference, for he was at a point where the explosion was dying away. If a coal-dust explosion was well alight, it would take a very considerable quantity of water to stop its progress. If Mr. Thomas's theory was correct, Howells would not have been obliged to give his evidence. In Dudson's Heading there were signs of tremendous force. The signs of falls in the return were in the direction of the pit, but from the big fall on the separate doors there were hardly any signs at all.

Continuing his evidence, Mr. Hall said it was his opinion that there were two blasts in different directions, and probably of different degrees of force, one passing in the direction of the down return, and the other passing through the opening in the direction of the down-cast shaft. If the theory advanced by Mr. Abel Thomas was a correct one, then the devastation caused would have been far greater than it had been. He had never heard of such a practice of blasting timber as that carried out at this colliery, and in his opinion using high explosives in blasting timber was extremely dangerous where there was coal-dust and without damping. The damping at this colliery was of no earthly use.

Mr. Shipton: - "At the experiments in the Cymmer, a few years ago Roburite gave off a slight flame?" - "Roburite not tamped gives off a slight flame. But the companies will not sell it unless people use it with tamping."

Mr. Shipton: - "We want an expression of opinion from you as to the system of watering. Do you consider the system was adequate in its character?" - "I think I have shown that the watering, whatever amount of trouble was taken over it, did not prevent the mine from blowing up from an explosion of coal-dust." Replying to a jurymen, Mr. Hall said the character of the explosion proved that the system of watering was not sufficient to stop the explosion.

Evidence of Mr. J. T. Robson

Mr. J. T. Robson, H. M. Chief Inspector of Mines for the South Wales District, was next called. He said he had not visited the colliery for two years previous to the explosion, but his assistant, Mr. Sims, had made two visits to the Albion Colliery this year prior to the explosion. He did not remember noticing anything objectionable in the appearance of the mine when he visited it. The main roads

were damp, and especially the Grover Level. On the night of the accident between 11 and 12 o'clock, he visited the pit. He travelled along Grover's Level, which was dry from one end to the other. There were several falls in it. In his own mind he had no doubt that the explosion occurred at the point Mr. Hall mentioned - 37 yards inside the Horse-pump Dip. There was probably some gas in the roof above the timbers, but the explosion having been once ignited, the devastation was due to the ignition of coal-dust, and virtually it was a coal-dust explosion started by flame caused by shots. It may have been the second or third shot which ignited the gas mixed with coal-dust.

He did not know previously that blasting in timber was carried on in the mine or any other, and he disapproved of it entirely. Had he known, he would have endeavoured to stop it. Blasting anywhere was dangerous, and especially in a dry and dusty colliery. On the 21st of July, in company with two representatives of the men and two of the management, he went down the Grover's side. They found a place in Llan-fabon Dip stowed up to ten to twelve yards in, and outside that was partly stowed. They crawled over it, and there was no gas inside.

Alleged bashing - The Inspector's report

Mr. Reece: "Did you see anything was wrong anywhere?" - Mr. Robson: - "There had been one or two places bashed up." He added that did not think these particular bashings were creating any special danger. They were acting more as 'stoppings' to cause the air to circulate around the extreme rise of Grover's Level. It would have been much better to have stowed the stall.

Mr. Reece, asked if there was any obligation under the Act to stow every place, and suggested that in Yorkshire they did not stow there. Mr. Robson admitted that in some districts very little stowing was done; and, in reply to Mr. Rhys, said that the permission of this practice depended upon the proper observation of the rule as to ventilation. These stalls had been left partly open because it was intended to make an alteration in the ventilation, and they were left for rubbish which would be cleared out of the airway from time to time.

Inadequate watering

Mr. Reece: - "Do you think the watering was adequate or inadequate?" - "I am afraid it was inadequate."

"Do you condemn the comets and boiler fires as being in a dangerous position?" - "I know nothing of the comet being there. I think all naked lights are dangerous in a colliery, and I always do my best to get other people to come to the same conclusion, and do away with naked lights, even at the bottom of the downcast."

Mr. Rhys: - "Where would you have your lamp-station?" - "On the top of the

pit.” “What would the colliers do if their lights went out at the bottom?” - “Send another lamp down, as they do in some places.”

Mr. Robson, questioned again with reference to bashing, said he saw nothing wrong

- nothing but what would be found in any well regulated colliery. Witness further expressed his opinion that no gas had been exploded in the workings, and said that there could be no suggestion that anyone had opened a lamp or lighted a pipe. He had no doubt the conditions of shot-firing were all the more dangerous during dusting, because the atmosphere would be already saturated with fine coal-dust.

The system of watering was inadequate to prevent an explosion travelling over the whole width. During his visit to the colliery on Monday he found several places where bashed places had been opened. He was surprised to find that the agent, the manager, or under-manager, had not taken precautions to see that shot-firing was properly carried out. At the same time, the overman who was responsible for this mark was a responsible official. The colliery was well ventilated, and he believed there were no accumulations of gas which had been ignited by the explosion.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - “Might I take it that so far as you have seen this was a properly stowed mine?” - “I think so. There was but a small proportion of space in the Albion Colliery.”

“So it was a well stowed mine on the whole?” - “On the whole.”

“You have also said,” said Mr. Thomas, “that so far as you could judge there was no explosion of gas anywhere in the face of the mine?” - “Yes.”

“That would show that there was but very little gas so far as you could see in the mine. It was a safe mine as far as gas was concerned?” - “Safe from accumulations of gas. The mine produce gas, but the ventilation was good.”

After the adjournment for luncheon, **Dr. Lyttle**, the medical officer of the colliery, was called and examined at great length as to the state of the bodies found in the various districts of the mine, and the nature of the injuries they received.

Mr. Robson re-called

Mr. Robson was then re-called and examined by Mr. S. T. Evans. He said that when he went to see the alleged bashing the men told him that when they went round there first they saw there about eight yards of gas.

By the Foreman of the jury: - “The destructive force in all the large explosions which had happened had been chiefly caused by coal-dust. It was an improper

practice, and against the rules for firemen to neglect to report gas found before the men came into the mine to work.”

Examination of Mr. Martin

Mr. Joseph Samuel Martin, H. M. Chief Inspector of Mines for the south-western district, which includes Monmouthshire, was the next witness. He agreed with the two inspectors who had previously given evidence, generally, as to the starting point of the explosion and the part played by coal-dust.

A shot fired at the place indicated on Grover’s Level, between Llanfabon Dip and the double-parting, would account for the results.

Mr. Sims gives testimony

Mr. Joseph Mansel Sims, Assistant Inspector of Mines for this district, said that he had visited the pit twice this year and four times last year, and never had reason to complain of the management of the mine. It was very well ventilated. The floors of most of the main roads were damp, but the sides were dry and dusty, and in December last he advised the manager to adopt the sprays.

Mr. Sims then proceeded to give a description of the pit on the night of the explosion, and he said he agreed with Mr. Hall, Mr. Robson, and Mr. Martin as to the condition of the pit, and the seat and the cause of the explosion. He had never known blasting in timbers in his experience, except in the Albion Colliery.

Mr. Frederick Augustus Gray, Assistant Inspector to Mr. Robson, said he had been down the mine and had made a most careful investigation, and agreed generally with Mr. Hall, Mr. Robson, Mr. Martin, and Mr. Sims as to the cause and effect of the explosion - this exhausted the list of witnesses.

Termination of the inquiry

Verdict of the jury - Severe condemnation

The proceedings in connection with the inquiry into the cause of the explosion at the Albion Colliery, which had lasted for nine days, was concluded on Friday night, July 27th at the New Inn Hotel, Pontypridd: -

Summing up by the coroners

Mr. E. B. Reece addressing the jury, said: - “Gentlemen, I am glad that now that there is a prospect of your speedy release from your labours. I am sure you have given this most sad and important occasion your very best attention. I may say that my colleague and myself are most pleased to have had such an excellently

intelligent jury, and a jury with such a large gathering upon it who are thoroughly well acquainted with mining matters - being practical colliers. I believe there are no less than nine of you - I am informed by the Superintendent of police - who have a thorough knowledge of mining. No jury, therefore, could be better qualified to give a verdict in a case of the kind - a case of utmost gravity. We have never had in Wales an accident of such a dreadful nature before - an accident that has evoked such wide-spread sympathy throughout the country which has been shown by all classes of society. The evidence shows that on the afternoon of the 23rd June this explosion occurred.

The Albion Colliery belongs to the Albion Colliery Company, a limited company, of which Mr. Henry Lewis is managing director, Mr. William Lewis, agent, and Mr. Philip Jones, the manager. The explosion occurred at about a quarter or ten minutes to four o'clock."

"There were at the time nearly 300 men in the pit, of whom about 288 are dead. I say about that number because I suppose it is not absolutely certain that the last body has been brought up. One was only brought up the other day, 288 or thereabouts are dead, and only five survived. The pit is divided as you know into two districts - the Grover' side and the Cilfynydd side. Now, the evidence has been very voluminous, but I don't think I need trouble you with wallowing through the greatest portion of it. The evidence that we have had last night and today from the mining surveyors - the inspectors of mines I mean - disposes of a very great deal of that evidence that otherwise we should have been obliged to have gone into before you. But from the evidence of the mining inspectors, it would appear that the general condition of the colliery, in their opinion, prior to this accident - the general opinion as to the old workings and ventilation, and so forth, was satisfactory. So with regard to the evidence by the various colliers that have been called before you as to the bashing and proper ventilation in various systems of the mine - I don't propose to enter into that evidence at all."

"You, of course, can consider all you have before you. At all events, I intend to allude to it very slightly indeed. Mr. Martin, who visited the Cilfynydd side, said he found the bashing - leading out of the Pantddu dip in the district of Henry Watkins, the day fireman. We recalled Henry Watkins yesterday. A man named Smith had stated that there was a bashing in this particular stall, and that Henry Watkins had told him to fill the thing up on the very day that the inspectors - the men's inspectors, were expected there, and Smith alleged it was done for the purpose of deceiving their own inspectors. There had been very strong swearing in this case on both sides and it was for you to judge who is telling the truth. I confess that I am not able to in many cases. Watkins, when he was brought before you yesterday, said that he told Smith to fill the face up and that Smith had deceived him by merely bashing it up, it is for you to judge. My own idea is that

Watkins must have known that there was hardly time for Smith to have filled the whole place up in the time he said he did it. That was the impression that Watkins's evidence gave me. Further than that I do not propose to allude to this supposed bashing up. On the afternoon of the 23rd June, when the night shift went down, I think we might say there were three points of danger in the mine, viz; the three places where blasting was to have been done - where the management acknowledged where the blasting was to have been carried out."

I come, first of all, to the Cilfynydd side. There was blasting to be done on the main level, somewhere near the point where the postage stamp is fixed on the map. Timbers of the double parting were somewhere in that direction. There was also blasting up Bodwenarth incline in the solid rock. There was also blasting in the timbers on the double parting between - to the inner side of the Llanfabon dip.

So these were three points that might be said to be dangerous points because we have had evidence from the mining engineers and inspectors that blasting is a source of danger. Now we go to the Cilfynydd side - the blasting in the solid rock there at the Bodwenarth incline could not have caused this accident, because these shots were not discharged. The blasting of the timbers in the Cilfynydd main level had no doubt been done. The timbers were found with shots exploded, but inasmuch as there was a dram partly filled with rubbish just outside this fall, and the ripper, or the person who was filling the dram, was found lying dead outside it, and another poor fellow was found under the fall, it appears certain that these places had been fired, and that a fall had taken place there, and that they began to fill a dram with the rubbish caused by this fall. If that is so, the firing of these timbers could not have caused this explosion.

"Then let us go to Grover's side, and to the timbers that were to have been exploded by the inner part of the Llanfabon dip. It appears that on that day in the afternoon somewhere about 1 o'clock, or a little later, something had gone wrong with the engine. The drams are taken out of these levels by means of the engine that you heard so much about - the engine near the bottom of the pit. Something had gone wrong with the engine on Grover's side, and drams could not be hauled out. There happened to be at this time a journey of drams underneath those timbers - drams loaded with coal. These timbers were already bored and charged. Well, now, every man that was in the pit on the Grover's side is dead; therefore we can have no possible evidence as to what actually did take place. You will be obliged to come to a conclusion as to what did take place on that side, from appearances presented after the explosion. Well, now, what was found when people went down in this mine after the explosion on this particular side is to which your particular attention must be chiefly addressed. I will come straight to the point itself. There were a great many men found dead on the way up there; but when the explorers got to the horse-pump dip they found the bodies of Morris

Ashton and William Roberts.

Now William Roberts was the ammunition man, and he had in his pockets caps for exploding the shots. The body of John Evans was found a few yards down the horse-pump dip - the bodies of Ashton and Roberts, so the witnesses said, were found in the main level close by the edge of the dip. Just beyond - a little way beyond the dip - thirty yards or so, there were another lot of timbers standing, which are timbers in a narrower road, not the double parting. There were two sets of old timbers standing, and there were two new timbers that had been put in. Well these timbers were found thrown down by the fall, and the bodies of David Llewelyn, timberman, William Jones and Owen Hughes, rippers, were found somewhere not far from this fall on the inner side, and about the position of these bodies there is a discrepancy in the evidence, and the position of those bodies is important, no doubt, and you must decide between the different versions."

"One witness, Eli Helly, said that they (the bodies) were beyond the fall that was over the journey of drams in the Llanfabon dip, and there was corroborative evidence, and I think a collier, named Evan Davies, who was called two or three days ago, said that they were in a position also described by Garnett. So it is for you to say what you think about the position of these men. Well now, with regard to these timbers - you have had an opportunity of seeing them. They have been brought here, and I will just revert to Mr. Sims' evidence as to what he did with these timbers. We put it to Mr. Sims just now. Yesterday was the day I think - we had Noah Gould giving evidence. His evidence was very important, because if his evidence was true it would appear that no doubt they intended to blast these timbers - I call them the timbers - by the horse-pump."

"They intended to blast them because he swears positively that for a fortnight before this - Friday fortnight before this explosion, I think - he said he passed these timbers, and saw holes bored in all the collars. And he afterwards said that when the timbers were down on the ground he saw the word 'pump' written on them in chalk. It (the evidence) is very voluminous, and it is difficult to refer to the evidence, but you will probably remember that this is a correct statement of what he said.

Well, now, when Mr. Sims went down to this place, he marked these timbers with a broad arrow in chalk, and after it was suggested one day last week, that it would be well to have this timber here, he went down again, and saw these timbers, and when it was brought up to the top, his chalk mark was getting rubbed out. He wrote the word 'pump' on these timbers himself in chalk, and then they were brought here that day. Now, it is very curious that the word pump should have been written on these timbers in the pit after Noah Gould said he saw them several days before. And if Noah Gould is mistaken in that, he may very well be

mistaken about the holes that he said he saw in the collars.” Of course, we have not the slightest evidence of the condition of these timbers, except from the view that we have here now. There is one piece here which, I believe, is supposed to be the piece of an arm, and not a collar, and there is something in this arm which is supposed to be, an auger hole, the remains of an auger hole. The inspectors, I think, think it so, but there’s no collar, as far as Mr. Sims discovered, with an auger hole in it. In the course of arriving at their verdict in this case you can express an opinion as to what you think about the shot-firing in timbers.

“Well, and now, with regard to the time that the shot-firing in timbers was done in this mine. The manager, Mr. Philip Jones, states that his instructions were peremptory; that he said there was to be no shot firing at all of any kind, timbers or elsewhere. He admits they fired shots in double-partings, but his instructions were that there was to be no shot-firing at all except between shifts, and he brings a book here in which there are instructions written two or three years ago. Whether he had taken the trouble to see that these instructions were carried out or not is another matter.”

Mr. Reece: - “We are going to divide the labours here. My brother Coroner and myself. I am just recalling a few of the facts, and he is going to give you the law on the matter. We are both agreed as to what the law is I think. He produced this book, and he says he has given verbal instructions that there was to be no shot-firing except between shifts; but about five weeks before this accident there was a change made in the Saturday night shift, during which the shot-firing takes place.”

“The day shift used to finish at 2 o’clock in the afternoon, and the night shift used to begin at 3 o’clock. Now, since that period, the day shift comes up about 2 and the night-shift goes in immediately, so in reality, as Mr. Philip Jones was obliged to admit, there really is no space between the shifts at that time - between the day and night shift on Saturday evenings. There is no space between shifts, and there does not appear to have been any special instructions given as to shot-firing since this new arrangement was made. It was a very great mistake, there can be no doubt, not to have given special instructions when there was a change made in the times of shifts.”

“The only person I think who says anything on that point that might be considered satisfactory is Garnett, and he says that “If there was not time between the day and the night shift we would always put it off until the end of the night shift, and I and John Evans have often stayed in until eight or nine o’clock after the shift had gone out on Saturday night before firing the shots that had to be fired.” Whether that is a fact or not it is for you to judge. Go back to the day of the explosion. There is no doubt that the shots were fired in the timbers on the

Cilfynydd main level, and they must have been fired in the space that the manager would say was between the day and the night shift.”

“They did not wait here to fire it until after the night shift was over, because it was found exploded after the accident had happened - of course, before four o’clock. Morgan Dyer, the day fireman, says that he went to the pit on that day at five minutes past 2 o’clock, and there he met John Evans, who was to have fired this very shot. David Griffiths, I think, was to have fired these shots, and John Evans had supervision of them. They could not have got away here, and fired the shots until considerably past 2 - towards 3.”

“It is perfectly certain that he had fired it off while the men were at work, and Mr. Rhys, my colleague, will tell you there is no doubt there is a distinct breach of the law in doing that. As I pointed out it is clear the firing of this shot could have caused an accident, and of course there may be any number of breeches of the law, but unless they had resulted in an accident it has nothing to do with an inquiry of this kind, which is to find out the cause of the death of the poor fellows who have been killed in this explosion.”

“Well, now, as to the cause of the accident. I have already explained to you what the idea is on the part of the Mining Inspectors who have been called. The idea of the manager and the experts they have called is that the explosion occurred in an entirely different place, viz; on the big fall so often referred to on the Cilfynydd side of the pit; and there they had comets, and they had boiler fires near there.

They have given at very great length the particulars of this fall of solid rock, very many tons of stone; and they think that gas was liberated there, and went to the comet lights and caused the whole of the explosion.”

“The witnesses that they have called think that this is quite possible, and from the indications of the force they judge that it began there. The other side, they say that the indications point to the blast coming from the horse-pump level. That scientific evidence I don’t mean to go into with you. You have heard it so recently, and it is as fresh in your mind as it is in mine. You have to find where did the explosion originate, if you can come to any conclusion. The Mines Inspectors, and in fact, many or all of the witnesses called on the other side, the expert witnesses, think that this was a coal-dust explosion in a great measure. That, at all events, a small quantity, a comparatively small quantity of gas, might have been ignited at first, and that this set fire to the coal-dust and exploded the coal-dust and carried it all around the mine in the way the explosion evidently has gone; because you see that great force has been exhibited in each district of the mine. Right away across Cilfynydd there is a man found blown to pieces at the place where Mr. Hall put that stamp.”

“Right up to Bodwenarth a poor fellow was found with his head and foot blown off, at the top of Dudson’s. David Evans was found at the bottom of Sargent’s heading completely burnt to pieces. Down in the Llanfabon dip there was Richard Owen found with his head 20 or 25 yards from his body, and his thigh torn off. So there has been tremendous force exhibited at great distances apart, and the experts who are authorised on coal-dust, are of the opinion, Mr. Hall is of the opinion, that this was the result of coal-dust. The only part of the mine that seems to have escaped a considerable amount of violence is the Pantddu dip, and I think that they think that escaped better than the others on account of it being a damper place. With regard to the remark made by one of the jurymen as to damping portions of collieries in order to prevent coal-dust explosions spreading, I remember that a former Deputy-inspector of Mines in Glamorganshire, Mr. Galloway, whom you may have heard of - he made very interesting experiments with coal-dust, some of which I saw myself - he was fully of the opinion that coal-dust was a great factor in causing loss of life in all the explosions.”

“His opinion was that if there was an explosion of fire-damp that the loss of life would be confined to the place where the explosion occurred. Of course, if there was a small quantity the loss would not be so great as if there is a large quantity but it would be confined there, and one instance he gave of this was an explosion in a mine in Monmouthshire. It was a large colliery. I have forgotten the name, but I remember he instanced it at the last inquest I held on a serious explosion, and that was the explosion at Penygraig in 1881, I think it was, where there was a great number of men killed, and he stated that in this Monmouthshire mine there was a large district that was dry and dusty, and there was a large district separated from it by a road which was naturally wet - that roads, roofs and sides were wet for a considerable distance. The explosion occurred, no doubt in the dusty district, for the men were killed there, while not a soul was in the other district, and he instanced that as a conclusive proof that a thoroughly wet road would be a prevention of the terrible spreading effects of coal-dust explosions. I only instanced that as an example in reply to a question which one of the jurymen put to one of the Inspectors of Mines.”

“Well, now, gentlemen, I think these are the only points to which I shall call your attention. You must consider whether this explosion occurred at these timbers, or this spot where it is in the opinion of the Mines’ Inspectors that the timbers were fired, or whether it is more likely to have occurred at the place mentioned by the manager of the colliery as being a more likely spot still. You will remember that in reply to the learned council for the Company, Mr. Hall said that if the explosion had occurred where they alleged it to have occurred, that the effects, he thinks, would have been much the same, with the exception that if it had occurred where they say it did, he would have expected more damage would have been done in the Pantddu dip, which, of course, is close to the supposed

commencement of the explosion, if it did occur where the big fall in the rock was. Then, of course, you will remember, as I mentioned, Pantddu dip is very wet. Mr. Hall can't say really if there would have been much difference if the explosion had occurred there or here."

"Wherever it occurred I think there can be no doubt that the coal-dust was a most important factor in it. If it occurred here, I don't know any reason for it not raising up as much dust as if it occurred there. If it did, Mr. Hall's theory of the coal-dust being an important factor would still be carried out. Now, gentlemen, with these remarks I will finish my short address. You must consider all of the evidence and you must try to come to a conclusion as to where the explosion originated. Then for the purpose of necessary returns to be made by the Coroners, I will ask you to give me special verdicts in the case of poor fellows who deaths were proved by Dr. Lyttle. While my colleague is addressing you, I will write out those names and hand them into your foreman."

Mr. Coroner Rhys:- "I will not occupy you very long. My colleague, Mr. Reece, has touched briefly on the salient features of the case, and he has drawn your attention once more to all the points which have been spoken of day after day for nearly a fortnight, and which you should have, I should think, well imprinted in your memories. This explosion has happened, and the explosion has had most disastrous results, and after you decide, if you can decide, where the firing point of this explosion was, you will then have to decide whether anybody who is now living is responsible for it. And it is on that question of responsibility that I am going to address you entirely.

You have heard that the mine is managed by an Agent and a manager, and the manager has the usual staff under him. Mr. Henry Lewis, the managing director, takes an active part in the supervision of the mine, but it was a very general supervision, and he has told you he does not very often go down below. The Agent, Mr. William Lewis, says that he also does not regularly go underground. His duty to a great extent are confined to the commercial side of the business. They are more in the office and the counting house than in the mine itself, and the actual management of the details of the colliery works is in the hands of manager and the under-manager, and the various officials who are under them. Well, to make it quite plain I will read you what the Act says as to who is really responsible in the eye of the law for breaches of the Mines Regulations Act." This is subsection 3 of section 51 of the Act: -

"If any person who is bound to observe the special laws established for any mine, acts in contravention of or fails to comply with any of them, he shall be guilty of an offence against this Act; and also the owner, agent, and manager of such mines shall each be guilty of an offence against this Act unless he proves that he has taken all

reasonable means, by publishing and to the best of his ability enforcing the rules and regulations for the working of the mine so as to prevent such contravention or non compliance."

That is really the starting point from which we begin when we consider the question of responsibility. They are the words of the Mines Regulations Act, and the question is whether the principal of that really has been fairly and reasonably carried out by those who are responsible for the management of this mine. Under the Act of Parliament there are special rules which apply to every colliery in certain districts, and it appears to me that the rule that relates to the manager in the first place is the most important of them. Here is special law 2, which says: -

"He must strictly observe and fulfil the provisions of the Act and Special Rules, and must carry out and provide whatever is necessary for the safety of the colliery and all of its parts, and for rendering those provisions and rules effective; and he shall in person daily supervise the mine, or shall require the Under-manager in person daily to supervise the same."

The rule 44 applies to the under-manager, which we have had before. That goes a little further in one direction than the rules that governs the managers: -

"He must see that every officer under him and every other person employed at the colliery, understands and fulfils his duty; and he must take care that every banksman and hitcher, and every person in charge of the machinery at a place, understands the signals before he begins his duty, and shall examine each of them to satisfy himself that he knows his duty."

The important part of it are the first two lines: - *"He must see that every officer under him, and every person employed at the colliery, understands and fulfills his duty."*

These two rules apply to officers both of whom are now alive. The rule relating to the overman - of course, we are all sorry for his death, I mean John Evans, the night overman - Rule 51 would apply to him: -

"He shall take care that all officers under him and all other persons in the mine, strictly fulfills his respective duties."

"These are, so far as the purposes of this enquiry are concerned, really the laws which you have to bear in mind when you are considering where you should place the responsibility for this disaster. That a breach of the law was permitted on the afternoon of the explosion cannot be denied by anybody after hearing the evidence of the various witnesses. There can be no doubt that these shots, to

which Mr. Bernard Reece has referred, on the Cilfynydd level must have been fired after 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and after hearing the evidence of the day men that night men were at the bottom of the mine at the time, that it came within the provisions laid down in the Act. It was necessary for them to have no more than 10 persons in the mine when blasting was carried on.

Undoubtedly shot-firing at that time was a breach of the law, and they would be liable to be brought before the magistrates and very heavily fined. Possibly there might be other penalties, but I know they might be fined for that breach. Then you have all this evidence as to shot-firing which amounts to this, if it is true, that there was a general practice of shot-firing during the afternoon shift on Saturday. And really, to put it as shortly as possible, the question of responsibility comes to this - do you think that those who were on the surface, who are alive today, did everything that they should have done in compliance with the Act and the rules to supervise the work that was going on underground, and to see that it was carried out in compliance with the regulations laid down for blasting and so on?"

"We have heard that the manager would not be expected to go down, but he has an under-manager, and the rule says that he must see that the various officials did their duty. Well, you cannot see anything unless you go to see it, and I should be very much more pleased in this case, and very much easier in my mind, and I don't think the duty would be laid so heavily upon you, if that under-manager was able to tell us that he had on some occasions visited the mine at nights."

"He was an under-manager, however, only for about four months, having taken the place of someone who was ill. He had not been down the pit during the night-shift on Saturday. I mean the Saturday afternoon shift; it was called the night-shift. The under-manager said he had implicit confidence in John Evans, who had an excellent character as a trusty servant of the Company, and their confidence in John Evans might have led them to believe that nothing improper would have occurred in the management of the shift when he was overman. They may in this way have grounds for the confidence placed in him. But after hearing the evidence placed before you, I fear that you must come to the conclusion that these grounds of confidence had been misplaced, and that John Evans, instead of carrying out the regulations provided for in the colliery rules, really broke them. I do not like to say much about John Evans. He has paid the penalty for his position with his life, but there are occasions when we have to refer even to the conduct of dead men. He had the character of being a trusted servant, and a man in whom the most trusted confidence was placed. If, however, it has been proved that this confidence had been misplaced, you will believe the truth of the evidence you have heard, then you must arrive at the conclusion that he was not the trusted person it was believed he was."

“But this does not exonerate those who are still living. You have heard what has been said as to the firing points of the explosion. If you consider it originated in the large fall in the Cilfynydd intake, then the responsibility will not rest very much upon the living, because in the face of the evidence this fall may have come down in spite of any precaution which may have been taken. It has been described as an excellent roof, and required no timbers. Had this large fall come down in an ordinary way, and killed a haulier, evidence would have been taken, lasting, perhaps, an hour and a half, very little might have been said, and a verdict returned of ‘accidental death.’ But it is said that this fall is considered to be the starting point of the explosion, and if the explosion did arise there the responsibility on the part of the management is not a very heavy one.”

“Then we have it that the firing point of this explosion is said to be at the place where the shots were fired on the day of the catastrophe; and if you can find that you have no reasonable doubt that the explosion did take place in close proximity to that spot, and thus caused the disaster, then the responsibility becomes a very serious one indeed, and you will have to consider whether the management complied with the regulations set forth in the section of the Act, which I read to you at the commencement, and taken reasonable precautions as reasonable businessmen for the protection of the workmen in their employ, and the due protection of their property. It is for you to say whether everything was done which reasonable men should do that had that object in view.”

“I hope you will not be led away by the magnitude of this disaster, nor take any vindictive view of the matter. You are not here in the capacity of a Court of Justice, or Court of Record. You are here in the position of a Grand Jury, but I hope you will not be influenced by the magnitude of this catastrophe, to deviate from the straight line of arriving at the cause of so many poor people having lost their lives, unless you can say some now living are to be blamed for it. I need not dwell any further on the evidence, but I should like to thank you for the attention you have given to the evidence, and the readiness with which you have taken up the principal points in its details. We will now leave the matter in your hands, and I must ask you to consider your verdict. You will be left in this room, and a tracing of the working plan of the colliery will be placed at your disposal to assist you in arriving at your decision.”

Waiting for the verdict

The room was then cleared, and at a quarter to six the jury commenced to consider their verdict. The door leading into the room was strictly guarded by Supt. Jones and Sergt. Evans. Those interested in the proceedings waited patiently for hours in the precincts of the hotel, and some of the more curious more than once ascended the stairs and endeavoured to peep through the stained door

window into the room, but the vigilant officers peremptorily ordered desist.

As the hours spread on, and there were no signs of a decision, the excitement of the constantly increasing crowd in the hotel became somewhat intense, and it was apparent from the expressions heard on all sides that the greatest excitement was centred on the verdict. The conflicting evidence which had been given was responsible for the various conjectures offered as to what the character of the verdict might be, hence it was not surprising that the tension became quite strained.

About half-past seven a rush was made towards the room where the jury was deliberating, the rumour having spread that a decision had been arrived at. The alarm was, however, a false one, and considerable merriment with a mixture of disappointment was caused. Shortly afterwards, however, Supt. Jones was informed by a juror that the presence of the Coroners was needed, and in another instant the learned gentlemen - who were patiently waiting in an adjoining room - complied with the request, but speedily re-appeared.

An intimation was passed round that the jury had disagreed, and it was subsequently transpired that this was the case, and that eleven of the jurors favoured one theory as to the location of the explosion while the other six failed to agree with it. They were, however, informed by the Coroners that unless they came to an agreement they would have to attend at the assizes to re-consider the case. This evidently produced the desired effect upon the jurors, for once again they plunged in to the evidence with a hope of arriving at a unanimous decision. By this time the atmosphere of the room had become somewhat stifling, so much so that one of the jurors - Mr. T. Jones, the rate-collector for the Eglwysilan parish - was overcome, and restoratives had to be provided.

Once or twice, also, another juror appeared at the door, and proceeded to an adjoining room in charge of Sergt. Evans. As 10 o'clock approached the atmosphere became quite electrical, and opinions were general that the decision would be speedily arrived at. These were soon verified, for a few minutes after it was announced that the verdict had been agreed upon, and the Coroners once again entered the room.

An expectant crowd gathered in the corridor outside, all waiting with greatest impatience for the sign to enter. For fully twenty minutes, however, the jurors were engaged in signing documents, and twenty minutes past ten the door was thrown open and a rush was made into the room, the police officers and a few pressmen who had remained faithfully at their posts leading the way.

The verdict

The jury were occupied in considering a verdict from about quarter to six o'clock until a quarter past ten, at which time the doors were again thrown open. Mr. Reece (addressing the foreman) said: "Will you kindly read your verdict, Mr. Foreman?"

Foreman: - "The jury have found that the deceased lost their lives through an explosion of gas that took place at the Albion Colliery on the 23rd June, 1894, which explosion was accelerated and extended by coal-dust, that the jury disagree as to the exact place at which the explosion had its origin. We are unanimously of the opinion that shot-firing was practiced in the colliery when the men were at work without sufficient precautions as to their safety and contrary to the rules. We are also of the opinion that the under-manager neglected his duty in not seeing that his subordinates in the night-shifts performed their duties in accordance with the rules; that the firemen were negligent in not reporting gas when found, and that there is not a proper system of water in this mine. The jury beg to make the following recommendations:

1. That shot-firing in timber should be absolutely prohibited.
2. That all old workings should be properly stowed or gobbed.
3. That a record should be kept of the number of men in the mine at all hours.
4. That thorough inspections should be more frequently made by H. M. Inspectors, because we consider the present examination by the workmen's representatives are worthless."

The jury were then discharged, Mr. Reece observing: "The recommendations of the jury shall be forwarded to the proper authorities."

Inquest snippets

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of July 27th commented: - One of the jurors did not make his appearance at the inquiry room one morning last week until nearly half-an-hour after the day's proceedings were commenced, when, however, he entered, there was quite a stir among his fellow jurors, who fully expected that a heavy penalty would be inflicted upon him. The Coroners, however, were merciful after his explanation, which was that he thought the proceedings would have commenced at half-past-nine, and told him that he had a narrow escape from being fined £20!

Mr. R. H. Rhys's hands were covered with a beautiful coating of coal-dust on Friday, July 20th, upon examining some firemen's report books which were handed over for inspection, and then he wanted to know why the books had not

been wiped before being put in.

A number of the witnesses at the Albion inquest gave their evidence in Welsh, and Sgt. Evans, Cilfynydd, made an excellent interpreter. One of the Coroners - Mr. Rhys, whose father, blunt of speech, but endowed with strong intellectual gifts, is unfortunately afflicted with blindness - more than once questioned them in their native tongue.

Shortly after the inquest was commenced last week, the Coroner, jurors, barristers, colliery officials, press men, and others in the room were annoyed by the noise that came from below, where the carpenters engaged on the new wing which is being added to the hotel were hammering away to their heart's content. Mr. Reece, at once asked one of the officers present to request the noise to be stopped, and no sooner had he popped his head through the window, and hurled his order at the peacebreakers, than deadly silence reigned.

Some fine additions were being made to the New Inn Hotel, and on Friday morning whilst a new flue was being tried a cloud of smoke leaked through the crevices of the wall at the back of the jurymen and made them cough desperately. For a time the question was debated whether the hotel was on fire, but an abrupt adjournment of the inquest was obviated by a reassuring explanation.

It was decided at Friday's sitting that an inspection of the mine should be made by H.M. Inspectors for a certain purpose. A jurymen suggested that the inspection should be made that day, but the inspectors were not disposed to assent to the suggestion in the absence of any promise on the part of the jurymen to provide them with new suits of clothing after their inspection of the colliery workings.

One of the best witnesses during the inquest was Mr. Hall, one of the miners' inspectors. To use a common phrase, he was 'as cool as a cucumber,' and all attempts to upset his equilibrium during the cross-examination proved futile. For hours was he put to the test, but the prompt, lucid and interesting way in which he gave his evidence solicited general admiration. Last week's inquest, was, it is true, solemn enough, but it was not so solemn as to utterly preclude merriment. Outbursts of laughter were repeatedly created either by the sparring of counsel, the pugnacity of some of the jurors, and the amusing replies of witnesses.

Mr. Shipton - the genial clerk of the Llanwonno School Board and one of the eight or nine practical miners sitting on the jury - was much in evidence during the proceedings, and put his questions to the witnesses in such a way as to convince all in court that he was well versed in the practice as well as the scientific aspect of mining. On Friday morning he asked Mr. Hall whether dry air was ninety per



A group of Albion Colliers 1905. In front row is John Rosser, who would die two years later of pleurisy

cent stronger than pure air to absorb water.

The inspector frankly admitted that he was not enough of a chemist to answer the question, and then Mr. Shipton asked him if, in effect, if he would deny it was so if Professor Tyndall said it was. Mr. Halls' eyes sparkled with fun as he humorously replied that he was prepared to accept anything from the eminent professor or his studious disciple - to wit, Mr. Shipton. So irresistible and delightfully refreshing was his reply that it was as good as something 'worth a guinea a box,' to the patient and attentive jurors, who were as demonstrative in their appreciation of the sally as anybody else.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Cambrian Miners Association's Protest

The editorial of a local newspaper a few days after the inquiry stated: - The members of the Cambrian Miners' Association are not the only persons dissatisfied with the findings of the jury in the enquiry into the cause of the explosion at the Albion Colliery, for we understand that the Albion Colliery Co. Ltd, are likely to write to the home secretary asking him to grant a fresh enquiry in accordance with the provisions of the Mines Regulations Act. A general feeling exists amongst miners and their leaders that such steps should be taken, as Mr. W. Abraham, M. P; has been instructed by the Association of which he is the agent to solicit the aid of his colleagues in Parliament to bring about such an inquiry, the action of the government in the matter will be awaited with considerable interest.

Cilfynydd explosion inquiry

The '*Glamorgan Free Press*' reported: - The long expected inquiry into the cause of the Cilfynydd catastrophe has been completed. There can be no question as to its thoroughness. The government did well in appointing a gentleman to conduct the investigations who was most painstaking in discharging his responsible commission, and who entered upon his duties with considerable experience in the work. The jury, also, must be commended for the careful attention which they bestowed on the delicate undertaking which, however distasteful the routine, they have been called upon to adjudicate. The Inspectors of Mines also gave valuable assistance to the coroners, and notably Hall and Martin, stood prominently to the front in the cross-examination of the witnesses. The weary and searching length of the inquiry was such as to engender the utmost confidence in the verdict arrived at by the jury. The two dominant parties interested in this sad tragedy - the employers and employees - were also conspicuously recommended, and respecting the machinery, we cannot but acknowledge that no feature, tending towards a thorough examination, was wanting.

The push, push, push, for coal, or the insatiable demand for output, is the first and responsible cause, such is the demand for that management is too frequently tempted to neglect essential precautions. The hurry for output is accountable for the blasting of timber; it is the source of the overlapping of shifts, and indeed we are bound also to condemn the laxity of the concession, which allowed the Saturday afternoon shift to begin an hour earlier, thus cutting the time for the dangerous and risky operation of blasting. The colliery was perpetually in a state of great and accelerating operations. There is the same fever of output excitement, more or less, everywhere. The resolution passed by the Cambrian Association meeting was an admission that the men are not free from the

influence of this same high pressure for coal. That a meeting of the men should call attention to the irregularities on the part of the workmen, who, in their impatience against normal arrangements, entered old workings to uplift the rails rather than wait the ordinary routine, points clearly to the fact the expressed speed for coal is an unhealthy and dangerous development.

The investigations of the jury did disclose the fact the finding of a ton of coal was the all observing consideration. The working of shifts with an interval must come under legislative treatment of great severity and penalty. Shot-firing in timber has been condemned, and the jury suggests its absolute prohibition.

It is the opinion of practical men that it is safe and expeditious only where the surroundings are free from gas and coal-dust of high ignitious capacity, but such conditions are not found in steam coal, and in that light we agree that the findings of the jury should form the subject of serious legislative change, and lead ultimately to its abolition in the fiery mines. The charging of shots also, without tamping should be considered. Blasting timber with un-tamped holes in roadways with clouds of coal-dust hanging around the timber, was an operation which could only bring human devastation in its trail. Mr. Hall remarked that he would not be surprised at any time to hear of similar calamities in mines where such practices are in vogue. That coal-dust increases the danger of explosions has been the verdict returned by the Royal Commission on coal-dust. This body arrived at certain definite conclusions on the dangerous nature of coal. Indeed, the conclusion of the Commission seems likely to have as great an effect, or even greater on the mining industry of the future, as the safety lamp has had in the past.

We are told by the Commission that the danger of explosions in mines where gas exists is greatly increased by coal-dust; that the presence of it intensifies explosions. It even went to the length of deciding that coal-dust alone, without the presence of gas at all, may cause a dangerous explosion if ignited by a blown-out shot or another violent inflammation. No dust in the mine is absolutely without risk. It is feared that workmen do not realise the gravity of the deadly exciting nature of coal-dust. Sir Frederick Able explained how a small explosion of fire-damp may originate a great explosion of coal-dust. The cleaning of the roads in Cilfynydd Colliery raised clouds of dust, and the prairie - fire description applied by Mr. Hall was an easily conceived picture.

The jury failed to decide on the seat of the explosion. It is the only feature in the verdict that has not given satisfaction, and the Cambrian Association asked, in consequence, for another inquiry. The experts disagreed to some extent, but there was no difficulty in knowing how the mostly independent witnesses expressed them- selves. The watering of the mines before the use of explosives will be

made a condition. The Commissioners appear to drift in that way. The science of watering has been carried out to a high point of efficiency in some of the Rhondda mines. The spray system was not applied at this particular colliery. The management took a contrary view into practice, and defended its action by guaranteeing that the method of watering adopted was sufficiently effective in saturating the volume of air in the main roadways. However, the Commissioners arrived at a different conclusion, and its report affirms the spray system as the only sufficient precaution hitherto suggested, and recommends it as a complete and satisfactory system of watering, though they do not see their way to make it a universal rule.

The workmen's system of examining mines came under grave censure during the investigation. The Cambrian meeting, already referred to, appears to think that the condemnation undeserved, and regret the findings of the jury on the matter. This protest that workmen neglect their duties is shocking if true. Are there not collieries in the district where no such examination takes place? It will be well for the miners organisation to make further inquiries. The men have a privilege, for the concession was one which took some years of agitation to realize, and to neglect such an advantage is nothing short of being criminal. We trust that this point will not be allowed to rest. Assertions need the support of facts. The '*South Wales Daily News*' of July 31st reported: -

The verdict

By our mining correspondent

Had the Albion colliery disaster occurred three or four hours earlier, it would have been the most appalling mining catastrophe ever known in the annals of the world. Probably a thousand lives would have been sacrificed, or, in all events, the roll-call would have been numbered hundreds more. The inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of the poor fellows has opened the eyes of thousands of experienced or practical colliers, and, indeed, of the agent of the miners, associations, and also the eyes of hundreds of experienced colliery officials, in regard to dangers they had never conceived of in coal mining operations.

It is reported by Mr. Robson, the Inspector of Mines, and the agents of the Cambrian Association of Miners, were not aware that there was such a thing as blasting in timbers carried on in coal mines. Mr. William Abraham, M. P; had never heard of such operations, and indeed not a word has ever been mentioned about such a dangerous practice at any of the meetings of the Association, although the Cilfynydd Colliery workmen were members of the organisation. It is very strange that the question never cropped up in any of the numerous discussions upon questions of safety in mines during the last year.

But in the immediate future the question of shot-firing in timbers will occupy the attention of the legislature with a view of prohibiting the blasting operations of the kind in all fiery mines in the country. It transpired that Mr. Robson, Inspector of Mines, had not visited the colliery for the past two years, and his deputy, Mr. Simms, had paid only two visits during this year, according to the evidence. We are told by Mr. Robson the mine was a safe one as far as fire-damp was concerned; that the mine was well stowed on the whole; that the ventilation was good. Actually what more could the Inspectors as regards precautions for safety when it is considered also that the lamps used by the miners were all shielded or bonneted, and that only the high explosives, dynamite and roberite, were used for blasting purposes, gunpowder having been entirely abandoned throughout the mine. Of course, we do not overlook the startling evidence of some of the men with regards to 'bashings' and the vacancies in abandoned or worked-out stalls in the mine.

It is startling evidence, to say the least of it, when we are told on oath by a workman in the presence of colliery officials and mining experts and Inspectors of Mines, that miners are afraid to tell the truth in regard to the condition of a colliery. It is really dreadful state of affairs, especially when it is considered that the workings are examined periodically by the men's own representatives. If we are to believe that workmen's statements are true in respect to most of the other collieries in south Wales, the sooner the system of inspecting the mines by the workman themselves be abolished the better, evidently in the interests of the proprietors and for the safety of the 100,000 miners engaged in the coalfield.

The jury, in their verdict, say: - "*We consider the present examinations by the workmen's representatives are worthless.*" In face of the fact there has been an agitation among the miners over the last few years - so far off back as thirty years ago

- for the appointment of working-men inspectors by the Government, it is evident that the recommendation of the jury in that important inquiry will have the most careful consideration and considerable weight in the minds of the members whenever the question of appointing working-men, as inspectors again rises in parliament. Obviously, the miners are better to have no report at all of the state of the mine than an account misrepresenting the whole condition of the dangerous parts of the workings.

As the so-called flameless explosives are not flameless, shot-firing should absolutely be prohibited during the shift, or, in other words, all the workmen should be withdrawn from the mine except those essentially necessary for carrying out the blasting operations. Attention has been called in our columns on many occasions to the fact that the results of experiments with the high explosives such as roberite, ammonite, tonite, carbonite, and bellite, demonstrated

clearly that they were all inflammable. Although none of these high explosives will ignite coal dust under most favourable conditions, yet they all ignited on an explosive mixture of fire-damp and air in tests made at the Cymmer Collieries, Rhondda valley, a few years ago. And even when stemmed or tamped, they are not absolutely flameless. Consequently, it is of the greatest importance that all the colliery officials who are entrusted with the supervision of the blasting operations should know that the so-called 'flameless' powders so extensively used in large fiery mines in south Wales and other mining districts in the country are inflammable.

Even the water cartridges are not reliable in the hands of careful officials, for we have a record of an explosion in a colliery in consequence of the cartridges being used without water. Another source of danger is the lighted comets here and there for a certain distance in the main level leading from the bottom of the shaft. The theory of the management of the Albion Colliery regarding the cause of the terrible disaster is that a heavy fall took place on the main level on the Cilfynydd side, bringing down with it some of the fire-damp supposed to have been discharged, and coming in contact with the light of the comet caused an explosion. This slight explosion of fire-damp then raised a cloud of thick coal dust instantaneously and fired it, and then the blast extended throughout the mine.

The Inspectors of Mines who carefully examined the colliery believed, however, that the location of the origin of the explosion was in the Grover's side, and that the disaster was caused otherwise.

Mr. Kirkhouse, the inventor of the 'Harbour of Refuge' in coal mines, and a gentleman of considerable experience as a mining engineer, replied that he thought there was no danger in using comets, providing the main level, where naked lights were used, was arched. So then we are to assume then that if the main level, where Mr. Kirkhouse and the other mining engineers locate the starting point of the explosion, were properly arched, no explosion of fire-damp and air would occur there. If Mr. Kirkhouse will recall to his mind evidence tendered by local mining engineers regarding the origin of the Mardy explosion he will find that that catastrophe was said to had its starting point in a place arched with stones not far from the downcast shaft. It appears that a mason was doing repairs there, and raised his lamp into a cavity above the arch and ignited the fire-damp said to have been there, and then a coal-dust explosion ensued. That was the theory advanced by them, and the jury returned a verdict in accordance with it. The verdict of the Pontypridd jury indicates clearly that there was practical men on it. The recommendation "*that a record be kept of the number of men at all hours*" was a most excellent one. Some system carrying out this suggestion will no doubt be legally enforced 'ere long.

Apparently the simplest system would be a proper arrangement of the lamps used by the workmen. The colliery proprietor should supply all the safety lamps used in the mines, and no workman should be permitted to take his lamp home. All the lamps should be carefully numbered, and the number of each lamp recorded in the official books opposite the names of the respective owners or the workmen receiving lamps. According to the present state of things, some of the lamps are owned by the men, and others are supplied by the company. The lamp-room should be as near as practical to the mouth of the pit, in order that a workmen may be more easily detected if he attempted to infringe the regulations. The lampman would be able to say almost at a glance how many workmen were in the mine, and by reference to the number on the account-book, find out the name of each. And we also endorse the views of the jury that *"thorough inspections should be made more frequently made by Her Majesty's Inspectors."* The question of Inspectors of Mines will have to be more seriously considered without delay by the legislature with a view of improving some of the provisions of the Mines Regulations Act respecting the matter.

It also ought to rouse the workmen themselves from their lethargy to have a better union after what has been said by one of the witnesses respecting the alleged victimising by colliery officials of men's examiners if they told the truth of what they had seen on their rounds. We do not believe that the generality of responsible officials of the mines would tolerate such a thing. But nevertheless it is an incontrovertible fact that colliery officials in the Rhondda valleys have been convicted and heavily fined for gross recklessness and wilfully misinterpreting the condition of the mine. And we also have incontrovertible facts in regard to the inspection of mines showing that the men's examiner's reports are often bogus in every sense of the term. Instances of this have been submitted to the Cambrian Association of Miners.

The Cilfynydd Colliery Inquiry by 'Mabon'

This most laborious, painstaking, and exhausting inquiry came to an end at a late hour on Friday night, 28th inst. The selection of the jury for this case was a matter of severe comment. It was alleged by some who ought to know better, and by others, that to find fault is the joy of their lives; that it had upon it not a single man that ever had any experience as a working miner. It turned out, however, that it had at least eight or nine men who had at one time in their lives had earned their living by honest work in the mines. This, moreover, was conclusively proved by the many practical and searching questions that were put by them. Indeed, one of them in this way clearly proved that he was able to cope with some of the scientific witnesses who had appeared before the court; and so satisfied are we and others of the miners representatives with the conduct of this inquiry and the

proof they gave of the practical grasp they had of the whole question, that we think it is only due from us to say that of all the previous inquiries of the kind that we have had the unpleasant duty of watching - and when we come to reckon them there have not been few, those that have happened even in this district, from the first Dinas explosion to this one - never has a jury ever done its work more thoroughly, ever shown a stronger capacity for the comprehensive work, and awareness to find out the real causes and circumstances of the explosion or accident than in the present one.

Notwithstanding all this, their finding, strong as it may be considered, has satisfied but a very few, if any. Let it not be thought for a moment that we find fault with them because of their findings; no, in view of the strong cross-swearing of the nine expert witnesses - four on the one side and five on the other - they could scarcely be expected to be unanimous on the vital object of the inquiry. Let us see what they did find against all parties concerned: -

(1.) That the deceased miners had lost their lives through an explosion of gas, which explosion was accelerated and extended by coal dust;

(2.) That shot-firing was practiced in the colliery when the men were at work without sufficient precautions as to their safety, and that such was contrary to rules;

(3.) That the under-manager neglected his duty in not seeing that his subordinates in the night shifts performed their duties in accordance with the rules;

(4.) That the firemen were negligent in not reporting gas when found;

(5.) That there was not a proper system of watering in the mine;

(6.) That the present examinations by the worker's representatives are worthless, hence their recommendations "that more frequent thorough inspections be made by Her Majesty's inspectors."

We will have a word to say about the last finding another time. Now, it is not often that any jury finds upon so many accounts against the officials of any company. Still, notwithstanding this strong indictment the finding is highly unsatisfactory because of their disagreement 'as to the exact place at which the explosion had its origin.' This is the kernel of the whole subject.

Failing on this point leaves the verdict as an open one and the principal point to be inquired into. Failing upon this point is paramount to finding and ascertaining the causes and circumstances of the explosion. Failing on this point is also to bring home the ordinary circumstances under which Saturday afternoon shifts were

worked, the direct causes of the explosion.

Conductive to this failure there were two valid reasons: -

(1) All the persons that knew the direct causes of the explosion were killed in the explosion itself.

(2.) The scientific and expert witness were divided in their opinion as to the locale.

Those of the experts and their friends that were interested in the matter located the explosion at a point where, if it occurred there, no culpability could be attached to the officials in consequence; whereas, those of them who were disinterested located the explosion at a point, where, if it took place there, would bring culpable negligence upon the heads of some of those in authority, and the company, in consequence, would be held liable for the disaster. If the starting point of the explosion is directly located by the experts on the employer's side, then the working of collieries is left surrounded with such terrible probabilities that it would be too appalling to contemplate; where as, if on the other hand, the place where the explosion had its origin if properly located by H. M. Inspectors, the whole disaster was the inevitable result of preventable causes. Hence the necessity of another inquiry, which will be presided over by a scientific gentleman, assisted by practical assessors, such as the Mines Act empowers the Home Secretary to constitute, and such as the Miner's representatives in the Sliding-scale Committee, as well as those of the Cambrian Association of Miners, now demand.

The Secretary of State has now power to appoint a special court (first provided for by Lord Cross's Repealed Act of 1886) for the formal investigation of any explosion or accident and of its causes and circumstances. Such a court is to consist of a competent person appointed by a Secretary of State to hold the investigation, and an assessor or assessors, possessing legal or special knowledge, may also be appointed to act in holding the same. The investigation is to be held in open court, in such manner under such conditions as the court may think most effective for ascertaining the cause and circumstances of the explosion or accident, and enabling it report thereon. The court has all the powers of a court of summary jurisdiction, and, in addition, the following powers:

(A.) The power to enter and inspect; (B.) Power to summons and examine all such persons as the court thinks fit, and to require answers or returns to such enquiries as the court thinks fit to make;

(C.) To require the production of all papers and documents; (D.) To administer oaths and require any person examined to make and sign a declaration of the truth of the statements made by him.

Witnesses' expenses are to be allowed, and, in case of dispute, they are to be certified by a master of one of the superior courts. The court is to report to the Secretary of State stating the causes of the explosion or accident, and its circumstances, with any additional observations which the court thinks it right to make.

All the expenses are to be part of the expenses of the Secretary of State in the execution of his duty. Any person failing to attend without reasonable excuse, which he must prove, or after having his expenses tendered, and failing to comply with any summons or request called or preventing or impeding the court in the execution of its duty, is to be liable to a fine not exceeding £10, and, if he fails to comply with the request for making any returns or producing any documents, he is liable to a fine not exceeding £10 for every day such failure continues. A Secretary of State may call any special report of an inspector, or any report of such court, to be made public at such time and in such manner as he may think fit. This inquiry - and this alone - will satisfy the reasonable request of both employers and workmen, who are closely identified with the unequalled disastrous explosion that so recently occurred at the Albion Colliery.

Fete and Gala

Collections for the Albion Relief Fund were still in progress, but the big event for locals was to be when Mr. Studt, who was the proprietor of a travelling carnival, offered his company's services (as he had for many other such events and charities) to the town, and the preparations had been ongoing for some weeks. The '*Glamorgan Free Press*' reported: -

The long-expected event was held in aid of the Albion Disaster Fund, on Monday, July 30th at the Ynysangharad Field, kindly lent for the occasion by Mr. Gordon Lenox. Special trains were run by the Taff Vale Railway Company from various parts, and before noon the streets were lined with holiday-makers, all anxious, we doubt not, to contribute their quota to alleviate the suffering and needs of the widows and orphans of the victims of the Albion disaster.

Queen's weather prevailed throughout the day, and the event was a huge success was guaranteed by indomitable energy of Mr. John Studt and his colleagues previous to the event. Most elaborate precautions had been made on the meadow to suit the case of all pleasure seekers, while the town was enlivened with selections by the Ferndale, Ynysybwl, Penrhiw, and Pontypridd Volunteer brass bands, who discoursed various marches during the day. Near the field Messrs William Spickett, Ack Llewelyn, and others disposed of tickets of admission, while a number of local gentlemen presided at the entrances, and assisted in every possible way to ensure the success of the affair.

The proceedings opened about 3.30 with a marvelous performance on the wire by Miss Nana Gilford, the 'female Blondin.' The lady walked across the rope in a sack, rested on it, and having thrown the balancing pole to the ground slid down to the net below, dangling for some time in mid-air and holding on to the slender rope with her teeth.

The Swansea Snowdrop Minstrels shortly afterwards convulsed the concourse with their funnyosties and 'yarn' Brothers Ryan and Sisters Leslie and Mr. Charles Taylor elicited rounds of applause by their feats. The town's people responded in a most magnanimous way to the appeal made by the local committee, and all the refresh- ments sold that day had been given gratis by a number of the tradesmen of the district. It is computed that about 18,000 people passed through the gates during the day, and the proceeds are now in the hands of the committee, and will be handed to the relief fund.

The chairman of the committee was Mr. L. Gordon Lenox, who, with his good lady and party of friends, were on the field, while the vice-chairman was Mr. George Evans. The secretaries, upon whom naturally devolve a large amount of labour, were Mr. Edward Williams, solicitor, and Mr. F. Gibson, architect, and the public generally gave them their sincerest thanks for the manner in which they fulfilled they honourous positions.

They were here, there, and everywhere, and, in company with Mr. Studt, prompted the success they have so worthily have been rewarded with. For Mr. Studt himself, no praise is needed from our hands, he is known through Wales as a benefactor, and the public have signified their appreciation of his actions by rallying round him now.

Earlier in the afternoon there was a procession of bands through the town. The procession, headed by the Treherbert Band, under the leadership of Sgt. B. Richards, started from the 'Tumble' about 3 o'clock. Next came the band of the Pontypridd Detachment of Volunteers, bandmaster David Williams. Next came the Ferndale Prize Band, under bandmaster Ryan.

The Ynysyawl Band followed, led by bandmaster Renfrey, and the Antediluvian Order of Buffalos, bringing up the rear. The G. U. O. of Oddfellows engaged the Penrhiw Brass Band under bandmaster Norton, and they paraded the town, including the Graig. Arriving at the field the bands took their places on the stand and gave selections in turns. Great praise is due to the various bands for their services, also to Sgt. Perkins, who had the control of the band arrangements, also to Mr. H. T. Crane and Lieutenant Leyshon, who saw that the bandsmen were properly refreshed.

Work resumed

The work of raising coal from the Albion Colliery, was commenced on Friday, August 3rd, 42 days after the disaster, this being the first occasion upon which the regular shift of miners has gone down the pit since the explosion. There was a certain amount of natural reluctance on the part of some of them to commence operations in the workings, but their objections were overcome.

More bodies discovered

On Saturday morning, August 4th the men engaged in clearing the last of the debris at 11 o'clock discovered the body of two more unfortunate men who had lost their lives in the explosion on June 23rd last. The bodies were removed to the mortuary for identification. One of the two bodies was thought to be that of Thomas Murphy, collier, Albion Terr. Cilfynydd, at first, but this proved to be a mistake and the two bodies were buried at the Glyntaff Cemetery, Treforest, on Tuesday morning Aug. 7th as 'unknown.'

The '*Pontypridd Chronicle*' of Aug. 7th reported: - The door-boys at the Albion colliery have had a rare old time of it lately. Last week they struck work because the management wanted to reduce their wages, and they went through the village in proper marching order, beating tin cans and playing tin whistles. They marched through Coedpenmaen in this fashion on Monday morning, and an old woman seeing one of the boys out of the ranks went to him, and after saying "You blackleg, why don't you join them?" And gave him a sound box on the ear. This was coercion with a vengeance!

Last victim recovered

On Saturday, August 11th the last body to be discovered in the workings was that of Arthur George Willett, 27 years of age. The deceased lodged at 43 Davies St., Coedpenmaen. The body was deposited in the colliery mortuary, and was buried at the Glyntaff Cemetery on Tuesday, August 14th. The relatives of the deceased lived at Portsmouth, and a message was telegraphed to them from Cilfynydd immediately after the body was identified on Saturday afternoon, but no reply had been received from them.

The '*South Wales Daily News*' of Wednesday, August 15th 1894 carried the following letter: -

Examination of mines by workmen

To the Editor- Sir, would you kindly give an old collier the privilege of expressing his views in

your widely circulated paper? I have refrained from giving my views previous for fear of corrupting the minds of any of the authorities that investigated the Albion disaster. The jury were of the opinion that the examinations by workmen were worthless.

*If they thought so on the grounds they were victimised for telling the truth and doing their duty, they are quite right, in my opinion. All old colliers know that there are none like practical workmen to examine, for they are always in the danger and can see it, and oft times have got to feel it. Allow me to suggest a remedy; that we employ a check-fireman, seeing that the firemen do not report gas or other dangers found by them. We are the sufferers; our fathers, brothers, and sons are gone to eternity without a moment's notice. It is full time that we as miners move in this all important question. Some ask, "who is to pay them?" I would say that we pay them the same as we pay our check-weighers. It would cost but a trifle per man, as it would not require a checker at every pit. Suppose that each check-firemen had three or four pits, that would be cheaper than the present system, and it would remove the fear of being boycotted. Another reason why we as workmen should pay him is that he would be under our control, so that we could discharge him for neglect of duty. If the Government pays him we lose all authority over him. Hoping that our leaders will take up this question for the protection of our lives - for the Government inspectors and experts and certified managers have all failed. I am etc. - **AN OLD COLLIER.***

It was now practically certain, reported the 'South Wales Daily News,' that there are no more bodies left in the Albion Colliery, the last of the ill-fated victims having been brought to bank, the total casualties was now returned as 290, and there were no other claims for missing persons. But this was not believed by all. The same newspaper of August 17th carried this report: -

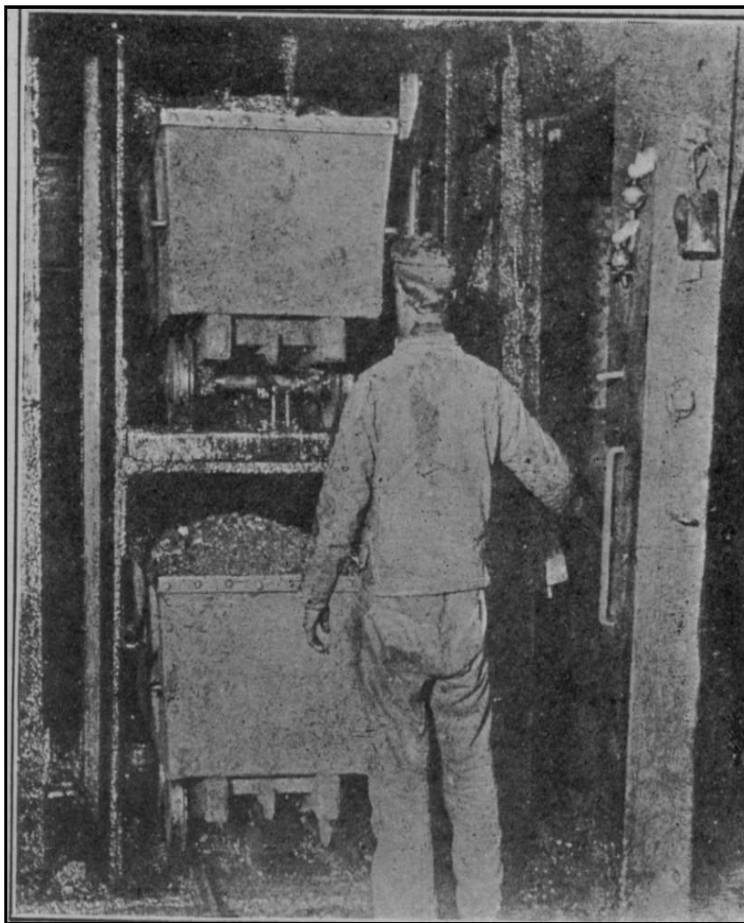
Are there bodies un-recovered?

To the Editor - Sir, In today's issue of your valuable paper it is reported that the whole of the bodies are now out, and that there are no further claims for missing ones. I have every reason to believe that at least there is one more to be accounted for - that of John Enos Jenkins, 5 Coedpenmaen Road, whose widowed mother, aged 74 years, may be daily seen wending her way to the colliery making enquiries for the remains of her only son. The natural answer that is given is that he must have been buried 'un-identified.' I am personally convinced that it is not so, having, with other relatives of the deceased minutely examined the eleven bodies that were un-identified, and I have no hesitation in saying that he was not one of those. Of the two that were buried last week, there was no difficulty in proving that he was not one of those, hence my conviction that the body is un-recovered; otherwise, someone has claimed the wrong body. The latter I am loathe to believe. From the firm following circumstances I am further convinced that the body is not discovered yet.

*A fortnight ago I received a note which ran as follows: - **"Incline side, Curley's Heading, between stall and heading, gobbled in with four pairs of timbers. Signed workmen."***

Who these persons are I know not, and the reason why they have not disclosed their names is not far to seek. Subsequent to my receiving the above note two bodies have been discovered at or near the spot mentioned. On Monday last I received another communication to the following effect: - "One of the survivors, Thomas Howells, just previous to the explosion, lost his light, and had borrowed deceased's lamp to go back for fire. Deceased was then in the gob between the stall and Curley's level, and if he remained in the same place until the explosion occurred he has not been discovered, as nothing has been done in that place, and it is very probable that nothing will be done there now. My experience is that when a person lends his lamp to another to fetch fire, he looks for a safe place to sit down, and remains there until his lamp is returned to him, and it is only reasonable to believe that the deceased's body is now in that very spot where he was when he lent his lamp." These communications have been sent to others, whom we fear that, either for want of sympathy or the power, has not interfered. I would most earnestly ask the authorities of the colliery to make an effort to have the place mentioned opened for the satisfaction of all.

I am & co. - William Jones, checkweigher,



Sending up coal at an unknown colliery

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The following three chapters give details of various reports to the secretary of state which are highly detailed and often repetitive. Those just interested in other details are requested to go straight to Chapter Eighteen on page 373

REPORT

TO

THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE

Disaster at Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, near Pontypridd on the 23rd June 1894

by J. Roskill, Esq;

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

On Saturday afternoon, June 23rd, 1894, between a quarter and ten minutes to four an explosion occurred at the Albion Colliery (upper four-foot seam), Cilfynydd. The night shift was then at work, though no record was taken of the number and names of the men who went down in the shift it is clear that nearly 300 men were in the mine. The morning shift on that day consisted of over 1,000 men.

The result of the explosion was appalling. It has caused the death of at least 288 men, of these 16 were brought out alive but have since died of the injuries they received, and one body was recovered and identified as late as July 22nd. Only six have survived, and two of them, Thomas Howells and Richard Bunford, gave evidence at the adjourned inquest.

The colliery, as appears from the accompanying plan, is one of considerable size. There are three main hauling roads on each side of the shaft; Grover's level, Pantddu Dip, and Bodwenarth incline on the Cilfynydd side. In Grover's level and Dudson's heading the rise is about an inch to the yard. Dan's heading rises about 2 inches to the yard. The Cilfynydd level rises about an inch to the yard up to the face. Pantddu dip is flat from the lamp station adjoining Cilfynydd level for a distance just beyond the red line marked on the plan across the dip; here there is a 'fault,' and from this point the dip rises 3 or 4 inches to the yard as far as the next lamp station, and thence to the face, 2 inches to the yard. Bodwenarth incline rises not more than an inch to the yard, and portions of it are level.

The depth of the downcast pit to the four-foot landing, which leads to the four-foot seam, is 545 yards. It is due north of the upcast pit; Grover and Pontypridd levels running north-west and south-east respectively. The whole of the pink portion of the plan indicates that coal has been worked out. The mine is divided into eight districts marked 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b on the plan.

The mine was dry and dusty - How it was watered

The mine was admitted to be dry and dusty, and it is therefore important to consider what means were adopted or available for watering it. The blue portions on the plan are supposed to indicate the wet places, but this applies to the ground only, and not to the sides or roof, and is, moreover, to be understood to show not so much that the places are naturally wet, but that water could there be let down the roads by means of taps, casks, or pipes. For instance, Grover's level is watered by a tap near the stables, or by means of holes punctured in pipes, laid along the ground on the north side, through which water in a 'fault' there is pumped out, by means of a horse pump to the shaft. A wooden plug is kept in each of these holes, and when withdrawn causes a small jet of water to come out with some force, which reaches the other *side of the road but not the roof*. There are about 20 of these holes between the horse pump dip and the lamp station towards the pit, a distance of 374 yards, and the manager Philip Jones said he relied more on the tap than upon these holes in the pipes, for watering this distance. The tap would be kept running for a quarter of an hour every day. Occasionally casks of *water are turned over on the road in Grover's level, but the sides and roof are not sprinkled*.

Pantddu dip is much wetter than Grover's level; there is a pump in the dip by David Thomas' level which discharges water into a large tank, placed in a hollow on the side of the road about 10 yards from the lamp station by Mordecai's level; from this tank pipes carry the water away to the pit, they are laid on the side of the road, and there is frequently an overflow of water from holes in them. The water remains stationary in the flat portion of the dip, creating a vapour that damps the roof and sides.

Bodwenarth incline, from the first level down to Cilfynydd level, is watered by means of a pump in the return, the water running over the roadway. The levels and dips above, nearer the faces, are watered from casks, but only the ground, and not the sides and roof, which are dry and dusty.

New method of watering by means of sprays

The wet places, indicated by the blue patches on the plan, in the far end of the Cilfynydd level are caused by water dropping from the roof. No other appliances, but those above specified, were in actual use at the time of explosion for the purpose of watering the mine, and laying the dust; but about six months before, 2,000 yards of pipes were laid along Dan's and Dudson's heading and Cilfynydd level, with the object of watering by means of sprays, intended to saturate the air and impregnate it with moisture. The sprays, however, although ordered as far back as 22nd January 1894, were only delivered a week before the explosion, and

were not fixed or in use. This plan of watering was decided upon by the managing director, Mr. Henry Lewis, the agent, Mr. William Lewis, and the manager, after consultation, and before, and not in consequence of the publication of Mr. Hall's report to the Royal Commission on Explosions from Coal Dust in mines, in which the dust from this colliery is stated to have excelled all others in violence and sensitiveness to explosion.

This report was issued on the 12th February 1894, and a copy was first received by them about the end of that month, whereas the pipes and sprays had been ordered in January. Still, the explosive nature of the dust was known to them, and it was for that reason, and by way of additional precaution, that they resolved to adopt this new method of watering. Moreover, in or about December last year, Mr. Sims, one of the assistant inspectors, spoke to the manager with regard to the use of better appliances for watering, and suggested the method of sprays. The mine is worked on the long wall system, and by double shifts.

Until within a few weeks of the explosion, the Saturday day shift was from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and the night shift began at 3 and ended at 8.30; there was a second night shift on Saturdays that went down at 10. At the request of the men a change was made on the Saturday night shifts, and it was decided to have only one night shift, *and that was to go down at 2 p.m.* There was thus no interval between the day and night shift on Saturdays.

No intervals between the day and night shift on Saturdays

Most of the clearing of dust and rubbish was done by the Saturday night shift, and when there was blasting it almost always took place on Saturdays, in the intervals between the shifts. This was itself dangerous, as stated by Mr. Robson, the chief inspector for the district, in his evidence, because the atmosphere of the mine would already be saturated with fine coal dust from the process of clearing and dusting.

Before the alteration in the Saturday night shift there were two intervals between the shifts; the first from 2 to 3 in the afternoon, and the second between the two night shifts. When the new arrangement was made, a difficulty and danger clearly arose with regard to the time when blasting was to take place, but no *new* regulations as to shot-firing were made, nor any warning given against its being carried on during the shifts.

The manager endeavoured to explain away this difficulty by alleging that an interval of half an hour would elapse between the shifts; because the day shift began to come out at 1.30, and in that half an hour, before the night shift went down, shots that had to be exploded would be fired. The agent, when the alteration in the Saturday night shift was made, said that there might still be a short interval between the shifts, and similar excuses were put forward by some of the officials of the mine.

The managing director, while not disavowing the above explanation of the

manager, admitted that he *overlooked* the whole question of shot-firing when the change in the night shift was decided on. He said, "I never thought of the difficulty of shot firing at the time we gave way; we were pressed by these people (meaning the representatives of the men) - the consequence never occurred to me at the time." It is, however, quite clear, from the evidence of the banksman W. J. Howell, that there was no interval whatever between the two shifts on Saturdays since the new arrangement. He said that the general practice was for the night men to go down in one cage, while that on the other side of the pit or shaft was bringing up the day men, and *after* two o'clock on the afternoon of the explosion he wound up 200 to 300 day men.

Timbers blasted in the mine since five years

For the last five years it has been usual in this mine to blast the timbers used as supports for the sides and roof in double partings, and probably also in other portions of the mine, which were required to be removed. That this was done was entirely unknown to the inspectors, who, before this explosion, had never heard of it either in this or any other colliery. There is nothing in the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887 (50 & 51 Vict. c.58), that, subject to the precautions prescribed by the Act being observed, renders blasting in timber illegal, or indeed specially deals with it, for it seems clear that such a practice never was or could have been contemplated.

The inspectors strongly disapprove of it, and Mr. Robson said that, had he been informed, he would have taken steps under section 42 of the Act, with the object of having this practice discontinued. The manager alleged that he had known of it in other collieries for over twenty years, and referred to Penrhiwceiber and Nixon's Collieries; but, when pressed, he could give no other instance than the former colliery, and that as far back as nine or ten years ago. Nor could the managing director give a more recent case of blasting timber in any other colliery than one ten years ago in the Ynysfeio mine, which was then under his own management.

Mr. Hannah, agent for the Ferndale Collieries, who was called on behalf of the proprietors, said that, having made enquiries since this explosion, he was told that they had recently blasted timber at Ferndale, but not in the four foot seam, and that he had given instructions to stop it. Mr. Bramwell, agent of the Great Western Colliery, another mining engineer, called as a witness on behalf of the owners, give it as his opinion that 'provided proper precautions are carried out as stated in the Act,' he did not consider it more dangerous to blast in timber than in rock; but, he said, timber was not blasted in the Great Western Colliery, where they have almost stopped blasting altogether. It will be necessary to discuss this practice, and the precautions alleged to have been taken in connection with it in some detail, in considering the evidence, for it is the opinion of the inspectors that the explosion was caused by blasting timber at a point on Grover's level, 35 to 40 yards on the in-by side (i.e; towards the face) of the horse pump dip; this point I have marked A on the plan. It is denied by the owners and officials of the mine that the timber at or near this point was blasted at all, and the theory put forward by them is that the explosion was caused by a sudden fall of roof rock at the point

which I have marked B, there being the pillar and the old workings on the Cilfynydd level adjoining, the fall being partly in the former and particularly in the latter, and its length about 24 yards. In their opinion an accumulation of gas was here pressing down upon the rock roof, both causing naked lights, that were placed between the lamp station inside that point and the shaft, was ignited, and caused the explosion. At least 117,000 cubic feet of air per minute passed the point B.

I would refer to two the points which I have marked C and D on the plan. At point C on the Cilfynydd double parting (where there is a double set of rails), just outside William Rees' heading, six holes in timbers were prepared and charged on that Saturday morning, and the evidence shows clearly, in my opinion, that these shots were fired *after* 2 o'clock and before the explosion.

The point D is on the in-by side of the lamp station on the double parting between Llanfabon dip and Asket's heading. Orders had been given by William Rees, the day overman, for shots to be prepared and fired here in two pairs of timbers 8 feet apart, that is, is four 'arms' and two 'collars' (a 'pair of timbers' consisting of two 'arms' and a collar; these two arms support the two sides, and the collar is placed across them at the top and supports the roof). These timbers had been 'squeezed' or pressed down by the roof. Five shots were prepared in each of them at half-past 1 on the Saturday of the explosion, one shot in each of the four arms and one at one of the collars, but they were not fired before the explosion. After the explosion the shots in the four arms were found unexploded, that in the collar having gone off. It seems clear that this last shot must have been put off by the explosion and that it was not fired in the ordinary way.

There are two engine-houses for hauling purposes in the mine - one on Grover's, and the other on the Cilfynydd side; they are built on platforms above the levels in each case, from which they are approached by ladders. The boilers are constructed between the levels and the return, as shown on the plan.

The clutch of the Grover's side engine broke and failed to act at about 1 o'clock p.m. on the day of the explosion, and no hauling could be proceeded with on that side in consequence. The boiler fires on the Cilfynydd side were extinguished by the man-ager as soon as he came down after the explosion.

The ventilation of the mine is very good; it is ventilated by a Schiele fan, 15½ feet in diameter, making 48 revolutions per minute; there are 11 'splits,' and the manager gave the figures showing the quality of air along each of them, as measured and recorded by him on June 20th last. The total quantity of air driven into the pit was 246,202 cubic feet per minute.

Extent of explosion due to coal dust

Apart from the magnitude of the disaster, the present inquiry has an added importance and interest from the light thrown by the evidence upon, and the ample and abounding confirmation it affords of the coal-dust theory in explosions. There can be no doubt, and indeed it was admitted by all the witnesses to whom the

question was put, that whatever the cause and initial source of the explosion, its extent and the intensity of its ravages were due to the coal dust in the mine. Leaving for the moment the controversy whether the origin of the explosion was at point A or B, this at least is clear, that on the in-by side of A (*i.e.*; the remote side of the shaft) the force and direction of the blast was inwards, towards the faces, following the direction of the airways, going up Asket's heading and down Llanfabon dip; further, outside the point A, going up Dudson's and Dan's headings towards the faces, similarly, on the in-by side of B going up Bodwenarth incline, Cilfynydd level and down Pantddu dip.

The gathering force and added violence of the blast as it went along these several places is shown more particularly by the awful mutilation of the bodies found at very long distances from the level between point A and B. Thus, 40 yards down Llanfabon dip (Grover's side) the body of Richard Owen, a haulier, was found (See No. 128 on the plan); his head was 20 to 30 yards further down the dip; and, three or four yards from his body, his leg was found literally torn off from above the knee.

There were two drams above him, but nearer the level, so that it is quite clear, in my opinion, that the terrible injuries he received were due, not to any violent collision with the drams, but solely to the force of the explosion.

In John Morris' dip (Grover's side) the body of a man fearfully disfigured and burnt, so that he could not be recognised, was found (No. 139 on the plan); his leg was missing, and was only found on July 17th. Again, at the bottom of Asket's heading (Grover's level), near the top of John Morris' dip (No. 110, &c; on the plan) six men were found dead and very much battered, and an arm was afterwards found there.

At the bottom of Sergeant's heading (Dudson's level, No. 122 on the plan) the body of David Evans was discovered, with limbs torn off, so that he could not be identified until his clothes were recognised by relatives. Going from this point of at least a mile and a half along the levels to the bottom of David Rees' level (the first on the left up Bodwenarth incline) the body of a man lay there (No. 42 on the plan), with head and foot knocked off. As these were found close to his body, it is possible that the blast, in this instance, forced the man up against some drams that were near, and that the mutilation was in part due to this. Again, at a point about 100 yards outside the point C (*i.e.*; toward the shaft) were three bodies, too much torn and injured to be recognised.

The above, except for two instances between points A. and B. to which reference will be made, are the only cases of mutilation disclosed by the evidence, thus illustrating, by the long distance between them, and by the fact that many other men were found suffocated in the levels and headings lying within the space bounded by these several points of excessive violence, that the explosion gathered and fed on the coal dust, the force of the blast increasing in intensity as it proceeded.

It is, moreover, remarkable that the indications of force in Pantddu dip are slight; the timbers there are not even injured, and showed no traces of the explosion. This is due to the fact that Pantddu is the wettest portion of the mine, so that there was hardly any dry coal dust to feed the blast. About 38 men were found in the wet portion of the dip, all suffocated but 11, were still living. Of these 11 men six are alive, the only survivors of the explosion; five or six men were brought up alive from Grover's side, but all these have since died. There were no bodies found between that portion of Pantddu and the faces; and, in the opinion of the day fireman of this district, Henry Watkins, if these 38 men had remained on Mordecai's level, where they were working, instead of coming into the dip, where the after-damp reached them, they would have been saved, for the horses in that level were all found alive. Thomas Howells and Richard Bunford, the two survivors who gave evidence, were able to reach the top of the dip, for they were found on Cilfynydd level, one in the lamp station, the other in a manhole just outside it.

Although the instances of mutilation described above are, from their positions and their distances from the centre of the explosion, whether that is to be placed at point A or point B, conclusive, in my opinion, to prove that the ravages caused by the explosion are due to coal dust, there are two other instances of mutilation between A and B, showing, apart from other indications, that the blast, along a portion of that distance, must have been of great violence. The pitman, James Graves, who went down the shaft with the first band after the explosion, speaks to finding a head and, he believes, portions of a body in the 'sump,' that is, the bottom of the downcast shaft.

These remains, in his opinion, were part of a body found on the Cilfynydd side which had been blown to pieces. No other witness directly confirms Graves upon this, but William Garnett (night fireman Grover's side), who also descended in the first cage after the explosion, mentions that they had to drapple on the limbs of some bodies close to the shaft. Neither the manager nor the under manager, who were also among the first to go down, spoke to finding these remains in the 'sump.' But though there may be some doubt as to this, it seems clear that, at the bottom of Dudson's heading on Grover's level (No. 137 on the plan), just by the lamp station there, a large number of bodies were found, and two of these, Thomas Winter and Thomas Evans, had received very great injuries, the former having both arms broken, and the latter having received violent blows on the head, and all the men there were burnt. Three, however, were found alive and have since died; and, although there were signs of a very great violence along Dudson's heading, as indicated by the fall there, there was no instance of mutilation as great as those outside the space between A and B, that have been described, and the condition of Dudson's heading after the explosion neither weakens nor indeed affects the conclusion that its excessive violence, at the points far distant from each other that have been specified, was due to coal dust and to nothing else. Between Dudson's heading and the horse-pump dip *no bodies* were found on Grover's level, and the plan is not correct as to this.

Fifty-four witnesses gave evidence at the adjourned inquest, and several were recalled in the course of the proceedings. Of these 33 (including the managing

director, agent, and manager) were officials or men engaged in and about the mine, whose evidence of the system adopted in working it, and of the results of the explosion, were mainly on behalf of the owners and of their theory to its cause, and four mining engineers were called in support of this theory. Eleven witnesses were called on behalf of the men, and, finally, Dr. Lyttle, the surgeon to the Albion Colliery workmen, and five inspectors who were present. In addition to the chief inspector of the district, Mr. J. Robson, and the two assistant inspectors, Mr. J. M. Sims and Mr. F. A. Gary, Mr. Henry Hall and Mr. J. S. Martin, the chief inspectors of the Liverpool and Western districts respectively, also gave evidence.

The colliery proprietors and officials were represented by counsel, and also the relatives of those of the deceased men who belonged to the Cambrian Association of Miners. The inquiry lasted nine days, the court frequently sitting for nearly 11 hours, and the whole of the evidence was followed with care and intelligence by the jury, many of whom had practical knowledge of mining.

Analysis of the evidence, its division under five headings

It will be convenient to divide the evidence under the following heads:

1. *Blasting in timber*, when and under what circumstances it was done, with what precautions as to tamping and watering, and with what explosives. Offences disclosed by this evidence.
2. *Indications of force in Grover's level*, having regard to the theory of the inspectors that the explosion originated at the point A, and evidence as to the alleged blasting of timbers at this point.
3. *Direction of force in the Cilfynydd level*, from the point B to the shaft; evidence in support of the theory of the owners, that the initial source of the explosion was at the point B.
4. *Conclusions as to the cause of the explosion and other questions arising on the evidence.*
5. *The question of negligence, and of offences against the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887.*

1. Blasting in timber

The reason given by the manager, among other witnesses, for blasting timbers, which he said was only done in double partings and under rock top, was that it was not safe for the men to hew them out when they had to be removed. According to his account, holes were bored with an auger in each arm, about two feet (but according to the day overman, William Rees, only a few inches) from the

ground, and in the middle of the collar against the top. Each charge would contain 2 to 2½ ounces of dynamite, and was fired with a touch paper by the firemen, which he lit by placing it against the gauze of his lamp, and then put to the fuse, which was thus ignited.

The holes, according to William Garnett (night fireman Grover's side, district 1a), would generally be charged *during the day shift*, and it seems to have been usual for holes to be charged then, and only fired some hours later. In Garnett's opinion this is safe 'if we can cover the fuse and no traffic is near-by;' and the under manager said he thought it right to leave shots charged throughout the shift, if no one was working within 150 yards. The holes were bored about 9 to 11 inches deep, *i.e.*; about three parts through the timber, as stated by the chargeman, Williams Anstes, and the charge takes up two to three inches in depth.

The manager insisted, in his evidence, that such shots were fired only between shifts, and in this he was confirmed by Garnett, the night fireman, and to some extent by the managing director and the agent; but as blasting in timber was mainly done on Saturdays, and there was no interval between the two Saturday shifts since the alteration in the night shift already stated I am of the opinion that the evidence of the manager, and of those who confirmed him upon this point, cannot be relied upon, so far as it deals with blasting in timber since the new arrangement in the night shift.

A certificate, dated 10th April 1892, was put by the manager, appointing Morgan Dyer and Edward Rees as shot firemen in these terms: '*The said work must be carried out by the said persons in accordance with the Mines Act, and no shots fired only **between** shifts.* David Griffiths having been appointed instead of Edward Rees, the certificate appointing him, dated 21st May 1894, states that '*he must carry out the above instructions*' (meaning those in the certificate, 21st May), the alteration in the Saturday night shift had already taken place, and nevertheless, no new or special precautions are contained in it against blasting at other times than between shifts. The matter was simply overlooked, and the result was that what might be expected, and there is abundant evidence that blasting on Saturdays took place during the night shift.

Both the survivors, Howells and Bunford, speak of this, and so do six of the witnesses called on behalf of the men. On the day of the explosion itself, this must have been the case with the timbers at the point marked C on the plan. On that Saturday morning Anstes, the chargeman, was instructed by the overman to charge six holes in timber in the Cilfynydd double parting at the point C, and two holes in the solid rock at Bodwenarth district, on John Roberts' dip; this he did, having himself drilled the holes in the timber with an auger.

The shots in the rock in Bodwenarth *were not fired*, and the charges were found there unexploded after the disaster. Anstes' duties, as chagemen, were confined to the Cilfynydd side, and he said that these timbers, at the point C; were the first he had charged since the alteration in the Saturday night shift, that would be since about five weeks.

Now the person whose duty it was to fire these charges was either John Evans (night overman), or most probably David Griffiths (night fireman). On this Saturday the day fireman, Morgan Dyer, came out of the pit at 2, or five minutes past, and, as he came up, the men of the night shift were going down, 'in the ordinary course,' as he says. At the top of the pit he met both John Evans and David Griffiths, and told the latter, as the man who would naturally fire them, of these six shots at the point C (the shots were in four arms and two collars); he did not tell John Evans. Now the distance of the point C from the bottom of the downcast pit is 36 chains (792 yards); moreover, before going to fire these timbers Griffiths had to lock the lamps at the lamp station on the Cilfynydd side, and this would take half an hour. *He could not then have reached these timbers at point C until twenty minutes to 3.*

The indications after the explosion at this point, as disclosed by the evidence, show clearly, in my opinion, that these shots in the timbers were fired by Griffiths, and not by the explosion. Just outside this point (*i.e.*; nearer the shaft) there was a dram filled with rubbish; the bodies of the haulier and timberman's 'butty,' or assistant, and of the horse, were close to the dram. Some hatchets were also found there. The fall at that point was not big, and one body was found under it. All this points to the dram having been loaded by these men after the fall had been caused by the firing of shots.

The body of David Griffiths was found in David Morgan's dip, about 190 yards from point C. This, and the evidence that the rubbish caused by the fall had been loaded on to the dram by the men is sufficient to show, apart from other indications, that at whatever time during the night these shots were in fact fired, they cannot have caused the explosion; but in any case I am of the opinion that on the day of the explosion the shots at point C were fired *during* the shift.

Charges in timber not properly tamped or stemmed

A matter of great importance in connection with the risks involved through blasting in timber as above described, is whether the charges are properly tamped or stemmed, so as to prevent the flame cause by firing the charge from blowing outwards. The evidence on this point is quite clear. Anstes, the chargeman, when asked how he stemmed the charges, said he took 'a little horse refuse or a bit of clay substance' and put it *on*, not *in*, the mouth of the hole. No shale or coal dust was used for tamping, but anything soft or moist that lay on the road.

It thus appears that only the mouth of the hole was covered; and in Mr. Hall's opinion, what was described as tamping is of '*no earthly use at all*,' he said there was, in effect, no tamping, because what was done did not prevent the shot discharging outwards. Tamping was defined by Mr. Hall to be: - '*sometimes rubble put on the charge and tamped under it for some considerable length, say 18 inches.*' Now it has already been mentioned that the depth of a hole bored in timber for the charge to be inserted, was not more than 9 to 11 inches; and it appears from the evidence of the manager and of the chargeman that the charge

in timber would weigh about two ounces. In the holes in rock on the Bodwenarth side that were charged by Anstes on the day of the explosion, the charge put in was not more than four of five ounces. It seems to follow that, although the charge in a hole in rock was greater than that used in timber, proper tamping of the charge in timber was nevertheless impossible, the depth of the hole being too shallow to admit it.

Contention of managers of only blasting at double partings

It was alleged by the manager and other witnesses that timber was only blasted in double partings, where the roads are wide, two sets of rails being there, and under rock roof; and if this were so, the contention that the timbers at the point A could never have been blasted at all, as they were on the level and under 'cliff' roof, would have considerable weight. But there is evidence that timbers have been blasted in the levels, and not only under rock roof, and some witnesses called on behalf of the men had no doubt that this was so. James Davies, a ripper, knew of shot-firing in timber in Grover's level, between the double parting and Tom Williams' heading, and also at the bottom of this heading; and had seen both 13 feet and 7 feet 'collars' blasted there two months before the explosion. He worked on the night shift, but had been ill for some weeks before the explosion and was not in the mine that afternoon.

Thomas Owen, rock ripper, said that short collars had been blasted on the main levels three or four months before the explosion, when there would have been no danger in cutting out the timbers, the sole reason for blasting them being that it was quicker to fire the timber than to hew it; and another rock ripper, J. R. Evans, said he had seen collars of all sizes blasted. George Colwill, a collier who was called on behalf of the men, who had passed Grover's level daily on his way to Tom William's heading, where he worked in the day shift, said that though he has not known timber to be blasted in that level before the end of the day shift, rock had been blasted on the parting at about half-past 1, before or as he was leaving his work; but he has not seen this done since last November.

Upon the point Mr. Hall's opinion was that if the men had been taught that it was not dangerous to fire shots on double partings, they would do so wherever it happened to be convenient to them.

Neither the manager nor the under manager ever saw a shot fired in timber, or personally superintended the blasting, or the arrangements for watering in connection with it, so that shots might have been fired on levels without their knowing it. Between these contrary statements by the witnesses, I think that, although it may have not been usual to blast timber except on double partings, there is some ground for supposing that it has been done in short collars, and on the levels, merely to save labour, and even where there was no rock top.

Again, upon the subject of the precautions with regard to watering, when shots were fired, the evidence is unsatisfactory. The manager said that the firemen used to splash water with their hands from a bucket, on the sides and roof for a distance

of 20 yards on each side of the hole, and in his opinion this was sufficient. According to the fireman, Garnett, the chargemen would water the place for the distance and in the manner spoken to by the manager. The day overman, William Rees, stated that the water was thus thrown about 'with buckets, shovels, or the hand, or anything of the kind.' The chargeman, Anstes, said he watered the places himself, but not always the roof where the place was damp, as, for instance, in Pantddu dip. The day fireman on the Cilfynydd side, Morgan Dyer, confirmed this, and so did the under manager, who, however, as already mentioned, was never himself present; and although he was responsible for proper precautions being taken in blasting timbers, he admitted to me that John Evans (the night overman) might have blasted them without his knowledge.

General watering insufficient to prevent explosion

On the other hand, seven witnesses stated that shots were fired without any precautions as to watering. Thomas Howells, a ripper working on the Cilfynydd side, one of the two survivors, never saw watering done, and the other survivor, Bunford, confirms this. To the same effect is the evidence of five witnesses called on behalf of the men. The conclusion I have come to upon this portion of the evidence is, that although the alleged precautions as to watering may have taken place occasionally, they were not adopted regularly as, in a matter involving such risk, they might and should have been; and further, that there was insufficient control with superintendence over those who had charge of the shot-firing in the mine. Owing to the dry and dusty nature, Mr. Robson said that the system adopted was inadequate to prevent an explosion travelling over the mine, and Mr. Hall stated that it was not sufficient that merely the ground should be watered, but that the whole of the dust lodging anywhere should be damped. The evidence of the day overman, William Rees, on this matter seems to indicate that, in his opinion also, the watering generally was not sufficient. It is clear from the manager's evidence that, having given instructions only to fire shots between shifts, no precautions were taken, after the alteration in the Sunday night shift, that the terms of *general rule 12, sub-rule 2 (2)* of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887, requiring all workmen, subject to the exceptions specified in the rule, to be removed from the seam where the shot is fired, were not complied with.

The only explosives used in the mine for some time prior to the disaster were gelatine and gelignite (containing respectively 80 and 60 per cent. of explosive material), and no gunpowder was in use. But with regard to the custody and control of the explosives there was great carelessness. William Anstes, the chargeman, had the custody of them; he got 'dynamite of different kinds and gelatine as well,' as he said, from the magazine, which was above ground, and kept these explosives in the mine in a box on the Cilfynydd level, between the lamp station and the point marked B. The box was kept locked, with the key hung up at the end of it. Fuses and caps were kept in another box 3 yards away, and the key to this box was kept with that of the other. It was thus open to anyone to unlock the box and help himself to the explosives, and Anstes admitted to me that he had known men to take them from the box without coming to him for them. The reason he gave for leaving the key by the box, and not keeping it in his possession, was that

he was afraid he would lose it.

After the explosion, no less than 23 lbs. of explosive material were found in this box, none of it having been exploded. The only excuse given by Anstes for having this excessive quantity kept below, a clear infringement of general rule 12, sub-rule (a) of the act of 1887, on the morning of the explosion, was that, in his own words, he had 'four shifts in front of him' before he could get any more explosives, because of Sunday intervening; he knew it was wrong, but said this was the first time he had had this large amount in the box below. But inasmuch as he had 'four shifts in front of him' every Saturday, his explanation is very unsatisfactory, and from his demeanour, and the way he gave evidence, I am not inclined to believe it. Moreover, the last time he had taken a canister prior to the explosion was a few days before, and then he only brought one 5 lb. canister, so that there must have been a considerable quantity stored in the box earlier in the week. No blame, in my opinion, attaches to the storekeeper, who supplied Anstes from the magazine with one 5 lb. canister at a time, and no more. See general rule 12, sub-rule (b).

The general manager did not know that this large quantity of explosive material was kept below, or that 'Anstes had more than the law allowed him to carry,' nor that the keys were kept by the box. The agent was also unaware of this, and added that he would stop it in the future. Some gunpowder was found in the magazine, and has been there for 11 or 12 years, but had not been used since they were sinking the pit. The above facts as to the storage of explosives below, and the ignorance of the manager and agent either of this or of the quantity taken from the store by Anstes, shows, it is submitted, a deplorable recklessness and indifference on the part of the chargeman, and insufficient control by the management.

The managing director said that the quantity of explosives now used in the mine was much less than formerly; five years ago they used as much as 5,000 lbs; and now they use 1,000 lbs. In recent years, he added. They had 'discouraged blasting as much as possible.'

Offences disclosed against general rule 12

I am of the opinion, upon a review of this portion of the evidence, that it discloses offences against general rule 12, sub-rules (a) and (l).

2. Indications of force in Grover's level, having regard to the theory of the in spectors that the explosion originated at the Point A, and evidence as to the alleged blasting of timbers at that point.

In Grover's level, in William Garnett's district (1a district, Grover's side), there was no blasting in rock, but only in timber, which was never fired except on Saturdays, and not necessarily - for this is the conclusion, in my opinion as stated above from the evidence on this point - in double partings only.

At the point A there were two pairs of timbers (i.e. four arms and two collars) 7 to 8

feet apart. Garnett stated that they were getting rotten, one (perhaps two or three) of the arms being broken, and a pair of new timbers had been placed by the repairer, under his supervision, a week or nine days before the explosion, on the side of each of the old pairs, and at a distance of about 18 inches from them. They were placed on the out-by and in-by side respectively of the old pairs, which were thus inside of and between new ones. The old ones, Garnett said, were to be removed 'by hatchet and bar,' and not to be blasted.

The day overman, William Rees, stated that the collars were getting low, having 'squeezed down,' and the horses 'roofed' or rubbed against them in passing. The length of the collars was about 7 feet, and the top there was cliff and not rock. William Rees instructed John Evans (the night overman) to have these old timbers removed; it was Evans' duty to see that the timbermen and repairers did the necessary work there.

At a quarter before 2 a.m. on the afternoon of the explosion, James Smith, a timber-man working in the day shift on Grover's side (district 1a), passed under these timbers on his way out, and noticed that 'they were closed in by fresh timbers on each side.' He did not notice any holes charged in the old timbers.

One of the witnesses called on behalf of the men, Noah Gould, said that as long ago as the Friday fortnight before the explosion he noticed that auger holes, for the purpose of blasting, had been bored in the collars of the two pairs of old timbers at this point, and were put in a dram by him and taken to the pit, having been marked with chalk for identification. If this man's evidence could be relied upon, it would be important, but I am of the opinion that it cannot, and for the following reasons.

On the Tuesday or Wednesday after the explosion, the rubbish caused by the fall at this point having been cleared away, certain timbers were shown to Mr. Sims, one of the assistant inspectors, by one of the officials of the mine. These timbers were pointed out to Mr. Sims as being the timbers that had been found under the fall, and they were placed on the side of the road. There were two collars and four arms, one collar was not broken, and therefore could not have been blasted; another collar had been cut in two by a hatchet, in clearing the fall in Mr. Sims' opinion.

Four arms were there, and he thinks all of them were broken; he did not notice any *decided* shot holes, and the only *one of these timbers that is suspicious, in his opinion, is one of the arms*. Now I have no reason to doubt that the timbers were found under or partly under the fall, although Mr. Sims was not present when they were discovered. If, consistently with the work of rescue and relief after the explosion, the clearing of this fall could have been delayed, or if Mr. Sims had been there when these timbers were found and moved, it would have been more satisfactory, for their identity with those shown to him is a matter of great importance.

But in a disaster of such magnitude this was impossible, and I do not consider that

by the clearing of the fall, the provisions of section 35 sub-section 2 of the Act of 1887 have in any way been infringed. This sub-section provides that '*where loss of life or serious personal injury has immediately resulted from an explosion or accident, the place where the explosion or accident occurred, shall be left as it is was immediately after the explosion of accident,*' until the expiration of at least three days after the sending of the notice of the accident required by section 35 sub-section 1 (ii), or compliance with this enactment would tend to increase a danger or would immediately they had notice of the explosion, they had been there before the three days mentioned in this sub-section, and those who cleared the fall at the point A were entitled to do so. Moreover, the words '*the place where the explosion or accident occurred*' in the above sub-section are difficult of application to a case like the present, where it was not clear in what place in the mine the explosion had occurred, and where its extent and that of the accident comprise in effect the whole of the colliery.

In any case, then, there is no reason to doubt, and no evidence to rebut the statement that the timbers shown to Mr. Sims were those two pairs of old timbers at the point A. Of these one collar was unbroken and there was no holes bored in it, so that Noah Gould is clearly mistaken as to one of the collars he spoke of. But there is another reason for doubting the accuracy or trustworthiness of his evidence. He said to me in cross-examination that the word 'pump' was written in chalk on the timbers at the time he removed them on the Wednesday after the explosion, whereas Mr. Sims only marked them in chalk in this way as late as Tuesday, July 27th, his mark upon them when they were shown him in the mine having been a broad arrow.

There is therefore no evidence, worthy of acceptance, that these timbers at the point 'A' had holes bored in them before the explosion, and it is therefore necessary to consider the statements of the witnesses of what they saw two or three hours *after* the explosion, between point A and the double parting on Grover's level near Llanfabon dip. Garnett's evidence is as follows: - The body of Morris Ashton (acting as night fireman for the time, in place of Garnett who had been unwell) was found on the main level *just outside the horse-pump dip*. William Roberts (the chargeman who did Anstes' work in the night shift) was found dead, near the 'mouth,' or top, of the horse-pump dip, on the level, but *just on the inside corner of the dip*; both were on the north side of the level, halfway between the sides and rails. The body of John Evans (night overman) was found in the dip 4 or 5 yards from that of William Roberts. These three bodies were only slightly burnt, and the deaths were due to suffocation from after-damp. Just below the horse-pump dip there was a fall, and the two pairs of old timbers at the point 'A', which, as stated above, James Smith had see standing at a quarter to 2 that afternoon were down, partly in and partly out of the fall. (The new timbers by the side of the old ones were apparently, still standing after the explosion).

On the level, within 2 yards of the timber, but just inside the fall, and about 30 yards from the horse-pump dip, was found the body of David Llewellyn, timberman, with his hatchet close by him, and a spade was there also; about two yards further inside lay across the road (their heads in the middle of the road) near

the bodies of William Jones, ripper, and Owen Hughes, ripper; no tools were found by them. The next body found was that of John Ashton, ripper, and was 40 yards further in, at the top of Llanfabon dip, and slightly burnt. Forty yards down this dip, as previously mentioned, were found the mutilated remains of Richard Owen, haulier. There was a fall near the lamp station by Asket's heading. Some arms of timbers here, at point D; were still standing nearly upright, but the collars were under this fall. Also underneath the fall was a part of one dram, and when the fall was cleared, *16 to 20 drams full of coal* were found there. This is Garnett's account of what he found between the points A and D.

Now it is a strange thing that the three men whose duties were specially concerned with blasting, should have been found together in or near the horse-pump dip, at that time, unless they had been engaged in it. His conclusion is strengthened by the fact that William Roberts (the chargeman) was found with detonators (caps) in his pockets. Edward Rees (day fireman) who was present when a box or tin containing these caps was found on Roberts, said he could not tell whether it would be in Roberts' possession for blasting purposes or not 'as he might have carried the box with him very often when he did not want it,' and he had known him sometimes to do this. Even if this were true, and I do not believe it, it does not explain the presence of these three men together, and in that place, except for some reason connected with blasting.

Garnett, when asked by me to account for this, said they might have been there 'for consultation' for he found no tools of any kind near them. He could give no other reason; but admitted that he himself, as night fireman, had never been in the horse-pump dip 'for consultation,' and that if there had been blasting near the timbers at point A, the horse-pump dip would have been the natural place for these men to go, after the shots had been fired.

I would now refer to the indications showing the direction of the force in Grover's level, having regard to the inspector's theory that the cause of the explosion was the blasting of the timber at point A. Between Dudson's heading and the horse-pump dip the indications point to the blast going in both directions inwards and outwards. There are not many indications either way along this distance of the level, but it will be convenient to state them in order, such as they are.

Manholes. - Some of the manholes have been thrown in both directions, sometimes the inner and sometimes the outer buttress having fallen. The manager said that there had been some heavy falls on the top of the man-holes, and much would depend on the way in and the direction from which these falls came. The managing director considers that the direction of force, as shown by the manholes, is inwards, because where the out-by pier was knocked down, the stones were found in the manhole, where the in-by pier had fallen the stones were on the in-by side. Mr. Treharne Rees, a mining engineer, and one of the witnesses called on behalf of the owners, was of the same opinion; the inspectors however, were not.

Timbers. - These are blown in both directions. Some witnesses thought that they

were blown mostly inwards. On the evening of the second day of the inquiry I went down the mine and had the timbers on this portion of the level pointed out to me by inspectors Martin and Sims, and came to the conclusion that more were blown *outwards* rather than inwards.

A horse was blown against the inside corner of the road leading to the small stable on Grover's level. Two beams on the in-by side of the Grover engine-house were blown *outwards*. There were four beams under the Grover engine-house, supporting the engine. The first beam, on the side towards the shaft, had been lifted by the force of the explosion and has apparently been raised by a force coming *from* the pit, because the three other beams are not disturbed.

A sheaf or pulley under one of the beams above mentioned, and attached by two arms, has been blown *inwards*. The body of the fitter in the Grover engine-house was found by his father, who gave evidence as to the finding, on the shaft of the reversing lever, in a position indicating that he had been thrown in a direction *inwards* from the shaft. An iron signal knocker, weighing nearly 1 cwt; on the north side of Grover's level, opposite Dudson's heading, was, according to one witness, blown *inwards* for about 8 or 10 yards; but according to another witness it was blown *outwards* 10 or 12 yards, towards the shaft.

Another signal knocker, at the bottom of, but in Dudson's heading and not on the level, was blown up the heading. The manager and agent regard this indication as showing force inwards from the shaft; the inspectors, as showing force outwards towards the shaft.

The above are the only indications of force in Grover's level between the pit and point A. Between the latter point and the top of Llanfabon dip there are no other indications of force than those previously mentioned, and it is admitted that from Llanfabon dip there are no other indications of force than those previously mentioned, and it is admitted that from Llanfabon dip the direction of the force is altogether inwards. It thus appears that Grover's level, for a distance of at least 400 yards from the point A. outwards, shows few if complex indications of force. On both sides of this distance the indications are more severe.

3. *Direction of force in Cilfynydd level from point B to the shaft; evidence in support of the theory of the owners that the initial source of the explosion was point B.*

The indications of force here are the following: -

A post with a sheaf or pulley attached was blown outwards; this post was 6 yards from the separation doors leading to the returns.

In the Cilfynydd engine-house a signal knocker was blown *outwards*; part of the staging was blown outwards, and one board was blown back against the grease-cock on the steam-chest, indicating force *outwards*; a strap for holding the catches was bent towards the face, indicating force *inwards*; the stage of the engine was

burning.

Three sheaves or pulleys holding the tail rope were *bent two outwards* towards the pit, and one inwards. The managing director thought that the one blown inwards was a loose pulley, and would swing, and the endeavoured to explain the direction in which it was bent.

A journey of 12 or 15 drams on the pit parting *was blown in both directions*.

A body of a man was found on the Cilfynydd side of the shaft, blown against the wall on the out-by side, indicating force outwards.

A horse and two drams were blown outwards from the Cilfynydd side into the 'sump,' or bottom of the shaft.

The rope-smith's tools, which were kept in a box in the engine-house on Cilfynydd side, were found in the sum, showing force *outwards*.

There is also evidence of force outwards from the position of a dram and rubbish in the cage. Just before the explosion happened, the banksman lowered a dram containing tools from the repairers and fitters. This was on that portion of the cage nearest the Cilfynydd side. Before any attempt to descend, after the explosion, could be made, this cage was brought up, and it was then found that the dram had been *shifted over the 'scotch'* (a piece of iron in the cage, worked with a pivot, and a contrivance for keeping the dram steady) *to the other (or Grover) side of the cage; and that part of the cage near the Cilfynydd side was found to be filled with rubbish*. This would show a strong force *outwards*, towards the pit from the Cilfynydd side.

To the above indications of force I would add that in the Cilfynydd return, near the bottom of the Bodwenarth incline, the body of a dram was found about 15 yards *outwards in the return* from the wheels, and must have been forced in this direction by the blast.

I have already mentioned that the masonry of the boilers on the Cilfynydd side was blown from the return to the intake, indicating that the force was *inwards* there; the managing director endeavoured to explain this as being really an indication of force outwards from the point B, by saying that the blast went first along the intake, and coming *afterwards* to the return, caused this masonry to be blown from that direction towards the intake.

The above summary of the indications as to the direction of the force between the point B and the shaft, shows that, although there is some complexity, traces of the blast being in both directions, *there is a preponderance of evidence that the direction of the force was outwards*.

Theory of owners that outburst of gas caused explosion

The fall at the point B, at which point according to the theory of the owners, the explosion must have originated, was about 24 yards in length; 13 yards of this was in the pit pillar, the remaining 11 yards being in the old workings marked pink on the plan. The roof is of solid rock, and a tracing of the section of the Cilfynydd level, showing the dimensions and extent of the fall, was produced. A copy of the tracing is sent with this report. The cavity caused by the fall was in part as high as 15 feet above the level. *There was no trace of gas in this cavity after the explosion.* At a height of about 4½ feet above the road, 7 or 8 'comets' (naked lights) were hung along the level between the Cilfynydd engine-house and the lamp station at the top pf Pantddu dip. One of these comets was inside the point B and all the others were between that point and the shaft. They were equally distributed along this distance, so that some were under the fall and others between that and the shaft. The theory that the initial source of the explosion was at the point B seems to have been propounded because, in the opinion of those who gave evidence in its support, it would account for those indications of force outwards towards the pit which have been enumerated above, and also for the inward direction of the blast on the in-by side of the point B.

None of the four witnesses called on this particular point - they were all mining engineers with a long experience - were able to give a single recorded instance of such a sudden fall, without any premonitory sign, having ever taken place in a rock top of this description and so near the shaft, or to name any mine where it had occurred. They admitted that if this theory be correct, a disaster as terrible as the one in this colliery might occur at any time without warning, and in spite of every precaution imposed by law or suggested by experience. Moreover, the possibility that their opinion is well founded, and that an outburst of gas at this point was ignited by the comets, would in itself be a matter of grave anxiety, inasmuch as the use of naked lights along this portion of the mine was not illegal (See general rule 8, sub-rule a), and would seem to render necessary a change in the law, absolutely prohibiting naked lights in any part of a colliery; otherwise a repetition of such a disaster as this might happen in any dry and dusty mine. A sudden fall in the Rhondda Merthyr Colliery, that occurred about 20 years ago, was mentioned by the managing director as supporting his theory. He said that about 100 tons of rock were brought down very suddenly there, and caused a discharge of a large volume of gas. But this proved not to be the case in point at all, for, from the cross-examination of William Rowlands, who many years ago, was overman there, and remembered this fall, and was recalled to speak of it, *the rock top there had shown signs of 'squeezing' and pressing down the timbers*, which had to be removed; whereas in the present case, there were absolutely no indications that the rock was giving way.

Now, it naturally suggests itself that this fall, coming down with such suddenness at the point B, would extinguish the comets before the gas could reach them. But there were several comets *outside* the fall, and it might be one of these that caused the explosion. When cross-examined whether the fall would not put out the lights before the gas could reach them, the agent gave it as his opinion that

the gas would be ignited by the comets first. Whether this is or is not correct, it is not, in my opinion, a refutation of, or an answer to the theory to say that the fall *must* have extinguished the comets, because the gas *might* have ignited some of those outside it.

I have already mentioned that 117,000 cubic feet of air per minute passed the point B, rendering an explosion at that point, from the cause suggested, all the more improbable. Indeed, one of the experts called in support of this theory, Mr. Bramwell, agent for the Great Western Colliery, thought it *possible but not probable* that the explosion was caused by an outburst of gas from that fall, which, in the opinion of the inspectors, was merely the result of the explosion at point A.

Noticed at the top of the shaft

The effects of the explosion *noticed at the top of the shaft*, disclosed by the evidence, are also relied upon by the owners, as showing that the origin of the explosion was at the point B. The banksman, W. J. Howells, said that he heard a loud report from the downcast pit, and was blown a few yards away; there was a tremendous quantity of dust, which he had no doubt was coal dust. The assistant banksman confirms this. Dr. Lyttle, however, whose house is about 200 yards from the pit, heard *two loud reports* and saw a column of smoke from the *upcast*, which at once spread out over both shafts to a height higher than the sheaves and gear over the downcast, and he saw no smoke from the downcast pit.

Dr. Lyttle's evidence is confirmed by Robert Phillips, haulier. Graves, the pitman, saw the planking over the downcast pit hurled into the air, and heard *two loud reports* in quick succession, and saw a volume of smoke come up the upcast; but noticed no flame, nor any smoke from the downcast. This is confirmed by William Rees, the day overman. Taking Dr. Lyttle's account as correct, the contention made against the inspectors' theory is that if the explosion originated at the point A, *the smoke and dust would have gone up the downcast pit*, and that the fact that they went up the upcast shows that the explosion must have originated on the Cilfynydd side. This evidence of the effects of the explosion noticed at the top of the shaft, does not, in the opinion of the inspectors, affect or refute either their theory or that of the owners.

I would now refer to the important evidence given by the two survivors, Thomas Howells and Richard Bunford, as to the *colour of the flame they saw*, and thus upon the question whether this was exclusively a coal-dust explosion, or one originally caused by gas. Thomas Howells said he was working in Curley's level, Bodwenarth district, when his lamp went out, and he came down the incline towards the lamp station on Cilfynydd level, which he reached, and where he was found after the explosion. He saw *blue flame*; he says, 'I saw it sufficient to blind me,' and remembers nothing more. Bunford, the other survivor, who was working in Mordecai's level, Pantddu district, heard *two sounds like two claps of thunder*, the level became filled with dust, and all the lamps went out. *Through the dust he thinks he saw a flame that was rather blue in colour*, going along the top, above their heads as they stood up. He cannot remember anything more except that he

flung away his lamp, and with the other men, all of whom succumbed to the after-damp, went into Pantddu dip. The flame did not burn him, but passed him with the dust, and he saw neither flame nor dust afterwards.

Now it seems clear that the *flame from fire-damp is blue*, whereas that from coal dust, in a state of high combustion, is orange. This evidence, therefore, indicates that the blue flame passing the lamp station at the top of the Pantddu dip, and seen down the pit by Mordecai's level, was caused by fire-damp, and, as already stated, Pantddu dip is the wettest portion of the mine, where there was hardly any coal dust. It is upon the above evidence that the owners rely in support of their theory that the initial source of the explosion was at the point B.

4. Conclusions as to the cause of the Explosion

The necessity then arises of reconciling the complex and diverse indications of force above enumerated and the blue colour of the flame seen by the survivors, with the theory that the initial source of the explosion is to be placed as the inspectors place it, at the point A. While admitting that the result of the explosion, meaning that the colliery would have been devastated in the same manner and to the same extent, would not have been different if its origin could be placed at the point B, Mr. Hall is still of the opinion that it commenced as the point A. His view is that the flame produced by the blasting at the point A, *ignited some accumulation of gas over the timbers there, and that this in turn set fire to the coal dust. In other words, that there was no direct communication of flame to the coal dust* from blasting.

Mr. Robson has 'no reasonable doubt' that the explosion originated at the point A, and that probably there was gas in the roof above the timbers and that *the flame from the shot ignited 'a mixture of gas and coal dust.'*

The other inspectors agree with the opinions, which were arrived at quite independently, of Mr. Robson and Mr. Hall. I have come to the conclusion that the theory of the owners, upon the evidence examined above, cannot be accepted as correct. Apart from the indications of force outwards from the point B, there is nothing in the evidence that really illustrates or confirms it, and it must be admitted, for the reasons mentioned above, that but for these indications its probability is very remote. But it is just these indications that require to be explained, if the inspectors are right in placing the origin of the explosion at point A.

Mr. Hall accounts for them thus; he says, "I think every sign, as far as I can judge on that ground, between the shaft and the separation doors shows that *the blast passed over the ground twice*, and I have no doubt but that it did," meaning that the force proceeding from Grover's side went through the return, and thence back again into the Cilfynydd level, producing these indications of force outwards from point B; and the other inspectors agree with this explanation. Now I am satisfied that all the evidence available or relevant, in connection with questions of *fact*, was tendered and heard at this inquiry, and nevertheless the jury were unable to agree where to place the source of the explosion, the majority, however, it is

stated, accepting the view of the inspectors. The matter is indeed entirely one of *inference* from the evidence, and is really for experts.

Professor Dixon in his report, already alluded to, deals with this very point, and says, the marks of violence toward the shaft, found near the entrance to the south-east (i.e. Cilfynydd) level are either due to a wave of air propagated backwards when the explosion had again gathered strength, or to one of the oscillations of the flame which are seen in laboratory experiments, and whose effects have often been observed in mines. While, upon the whole of the evidence as to what was seen on Grover's level on that Saturday evening, I feel bound to come to the conclusion that the theory of the inspectors is right, the indications of force outwards from the point B, and the other evidence relied upon by the owners are, in my opinion, in the absence of the clearest scientific explanation by experts, sufficient to render doubtful its unqualified acceptance by a jury. But to leave a matter of such gravity in doubt, where, moreover, prohibiting the use of naked lights anywhere in a mine would seem necessary, should, it is respectfully submitted, be avoided if at all possible. I do not feel justified in relying on the opinion of Professor Dixon for the purpose of this report, because it was given before and independently of this inquiry.

I therefore venture to suggest that the evidence given at the inquiry, as analysed in this report, should be put before him and other scientific men familiar with the subject, and if they are clearly of the opinion (a) that this evidence, and particularly that portion of it showing force outwards from the point B, is consistent with the theory of the inspectors; (b) that notwithstanding, and in spite of this evidence, the theory of the owners cannot possibly be accepted - then I should feel justified in advising that the burden of proving the inspectors' theory correct, and that the deaths were caused through negligence in allowing blasting during shifts, might be undertaken before a jury on a prosecution for manslaughter. In the absence of such an opinion from experts of high authority, I cannot advise that this course should be adopted, having regard to the complex and contradictory indications disclosed by the evidence as it now stands.

Other questions arising on the evidence

There are certain other questions arising on the evidence to which I would now briefly refer. Having regard to the opinion of the inspectors that the explosion was in the first instance caused by gas, and not by the direct ignition of coal dust, the question whether coal dust can be fired directly from explosives like gelatine and gelignite does not, perhaps, directly arise. But indirectly it does, and for this reason; Mr. Hall's report for the year 1893, to the Secretary of State (published on 26th May 1894), mentions, at page 12, that certain 'high explosives' are incapable of igniting or exploding coal dust, e.g; roburite and ammonite were fired by him in the course of his experiments without effect; but as soon as gunpowder was introduced its explosion was followed by violent dust explosions. This statement was relied upon, on behalf of the owners of the mine, as showing that whatever caused the disaster, it was not a direct ignition of coal dust by gelatine and gelignite. But this conclusion does not at all follow when Mr. Hall's report above

alluded to, and also his report to the Royal Commission on Explosions from Coal Dust in Mines, are carefully examined. In his experiments made by means of a wrought-iron canon, the tamping *occupied a space of 12 inches*; whereas in the blasting of timber in this mine, there was no real tamping at all. Now neither gelatine nor gelnite are flameless explosives; this was admitted by the agent, who added that properly tamped they would be fairly flameless. It thus follows that in the absence of tamping they would in all probability ignite coal dust. The best explosives, in his opinion, from this point of view, are ammonite and roburite, used, of course, with proper tamping.

Submission that blasting in timber be prohibited by law

There is, as already mentioned, nothing in the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887, that in terms prohibits blasting in timber, and the application of section 42 of the Act, providing for arbitration, in the event of the owner, agent, or manager of a mine objecting to carrying out the requisitions of an inspector, is not and cannot be made effective, in my opinion, for the purpose of preventing such blasting, because the inspector need not, as was unfortunately the case here, necessarily know or have been informed that such a practice exists in a mine. Moreover, the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Explosions from Coal Dust in Mines, in their recently published report do not specifically refer to, and were probably not intended to include, blasting in timber, which, as the evidence at this inquiry shows, from the impracticability of proper tamping, must invariably be a source of danger. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that it ought to be prohibited by law.

The under-manager, William Jones, admitted that since his appointment, three months before the explosion, he never went down the mine while the night shift was working, but said that he was on the top of the shaft every night before the men of the shift went below. Now rule 42 of the special rules of this colliery prescribes that the under-manager must see that every officer under him and every other person employed at the colliery understands and fulfils his duty. In Mr. Robson's opinion the presence of the under-manager during the night shift is more necessary than during the day. I agree with the finding of the jury on this point, that the under-manager neglected his duty in not seeing that his subordinates in the night shift performed their duties in accordance with the rules.

Then as to the 'comets' or naked lights, and also as to the boilers being below, Mr. Robson stated that he disagreed with both. Their presence constitutes an added source of danger in a fiery mine, and though not illegal (as to naked lights general rule 8 of the Act of 1887), he would advocate their exclusion.

The evidence of inspections of the mine on behalf of the men under general rule 38 was very unsatisfactory. Such inspections were rare and perfunctory; there were none made from the 6th October 1893 to the 29th May 1894. The report of the inspection on the latter date, it lasted from about 7.30 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon, stated that the old workings were 'clear of gas and well packed.'

It was admitted, however, by Levi Rees and William Thomas, who acted as examiners on behalf of the men, that they found gas on the 29th May. A 'blower' of gas was found in Dan's heading, and sheets were put up, and the gas 'cleared' in this way by means of ventilation; and their excuse for not reporting the gas was that it was the practice for the men's examiners only to report such accumulation of gas as they could not clear. William Thomas admitted that they were supposed to inspect every month or two months, but only do so three or four times a year. He said that he reported the gas found by him on May 29th verbally to the men's committee, and did not think it serious, or he would have entered it in his report.

Bashing or improper stowing and filling up old workings

Within the scope of these inspections on behalf of the men comes also the proper stowing or filling up of old workings. The men's examiners said they did not know whether there were many old places not filled up, and never pulled down the wall built at the entrance of old workings to see if it was properly packed, and filled with rubbish, or only 'bashed,' i.e; with a cavity left inside, where gas might accumulate. Bunford, one of the survivors, said he had seen 'bashing' done in a stall in Taylor's heading (David Thomas' level), and thought this done to *conceal the gas* before the examiners came round. Again, Thomas Smith, one of the witnesses called on behalf of the men, said that on the occasion of the men's inspection on the 29th May last, he saw gas in one of the stalls off Dan Rees' level (Cilfynydd side); it was in a small hole at the top of the gob. He said that he was told by Henry Watkins, the fireman, *to raise a wall across the end of the stall, i.e; bashing it, or leaving a cavity inside this wall, where the gas had accumulated, instead of properly filling it up.*

This work of 'bashing' was begun at 7 in the morning and was finished between 10 and 11, when the men's examiners arrived at the place, and they could not have seen whether the stall had been properly stowed or not. Watkins was recalled and denied Smith's story, that the bashing had been done by his instructions, saying that he had trusted him to do the work properly; but he admitted that there was a cavity there of 6 feet in length. With regard to the statements of Bunford and Smith that bashing had been done, these men (in so far as general rule 1 applies to bashing) have rendered themselves liable under special rule 274 for not reporting this breach of the Act to the manager or under manager. I do not, however, think that the instance they spoke of is a sufficiently clear breach of the provisions of the general rule 1, which prescribes that an adequate amount of ventilation shall dilute and render harmless any gas, &c; as to make their omission to report it the subject of a prosecution.

Moreover, as the previous general rule 38 with regard to the periodical inspections on behalf of the men are enabling and not compulsory, the fact that these inspections were neither sufficiently thorough nor frequent to be of any real or substantial use, would not create an offence against the Act. I agree with the finding of the jury, that upon the evidence these inspections were clearly of very little value. Numerous other instances of bashing, or improper stowing and packing of old workings, were alleged in the course of the inquiry; and the

proceedings were adjourned from Friday evening July 20th, to the following Tuesday morning, to enable the inspectors to examine those places, and the cavities in them, which had been disclosed since and in consequence of the explosion. As the result of this inspection, Mr. Robson said that although he took exception to the way in which some of the old working places were stowed, and that one or two places had been 'bashed,' in his opinion it had nothing to do with the cause of the explosion. The question as above stated seems to depend on the construction of general rule 1 (also special rule 63); and as prescribed by this general rule, there is apparently no obligation imposed to stow and fill up every disused stall, but, as Mr. Robson said, "it is good mining to do so."

Firemen do not always report gas found before shift

It appeared from the evidence of the firemen that they do not always report gas when they discover it on their inspection *before the commencement of each shift*, in accordance with general rule 4. The practice was only to report gas after the first inspection, i.e; before the morning shift, but not if gas was found subsequently and cleared. Some even do not report it when found in the first inspection, if they can clear it. Special rule 69 prescribes that the inspection required by the fourth general rule, shall be made within two hours and a half *before the commencement of each shift*; and the fireman shall, *after each inspection*, report any accumulation or blower of gas, and also report where the gas, if any, indicated by the condition of the flame of the lamp, and not diluted and rendered harmless in accordance with general rule 1, was found present in the mine.

According to the managing director, the system throughout South Wales is that a fireman simply reports in his book what gas he finds in making his rounds before the men come in. If he were to find gas in the daytime, or at any time after his visit to the faces, he would not report it if 'cleared.' He thought it would be better that the fireman should report it. I am of the opinion that it is rendered incumbent on the fireman, by virtue of special rule 69, to report any accumulation or blower of gas, whether cleared or not, and whether found on the first inspection or on the later one, and that an omission to do this has rendered them liable to prosecution for an offence against the Act of 1887. (See section 51, sub-section 3 of the Act). It is then clear, from the evidence, that this was the general practice of the firemen, and it is submitted that the provisions of special rule 69 ought to be strictly complied with.

5. *The question of Negligence, and of Offences against the Coal Mines Act.*

There are, upon the evidence, in my opinion, two, and only two, possible charges of negligence that could be said or suggested to have caused the deaths in this disaster. The first is the blasting of timber during shifts on Saturday; the second, the insufficient watering of the mine, owing to its dry and dusty nature, whereby the explosion was enabled to travel over and devastate practically the whole of it. I have already dealt with the first suggestion of negligence, and said that, while agreeing with the opinion of the inspectors that blasting timber at the point A

caused this explosion, in the absence of the clearest scientific confirmation by experts that the indications of force outwards from the point B are consistent with this theory, and that, in spite of these indications, the theory of the owners cannot possibly be accepted, I cannot advise a prosecution for manslaughter.

With regard to the second possible instance of negligence causing death, the insufficient watering of the mine generally, and the consequent ravages of the explosion, I am clearly of the opinion that the evidence upon this point is not strong enough to justify criminal proceedings.

The system of watering was about to be improved, 2,000 yards of pipes had been laid with that object, but the sprays, through no fault of the management, had only just been delivered, and were not yet in use, and I am satisfied that no jury would convict having regard to this evidence.

Should it be clear from the confirmations by experts, as suggested above, that the inspector's theory must be correct, then the question, on the part of what persons there has been negligence in permitting or taking part in blasting during the night shift on Saturday, June 23rd, whereby this great loss of life was caused, would become more material. If it were due to the negligence of several that the deaths in question have been occasioned, they would all be guilty of manslaughter, and it would be no defence for one who was negligent 'to say that another was negligent also, and thus to try and divide the negligence amongst them.' Those who took part in the blasting during the shift that afternoon are dead. Those who permitted it, and might ought to have prevented it, are, in my opinion, the managing director, the agent, and the manager.

The managing director, as he frankly admitted, 'overlooked' the question of blasting when he gave way to the men in allowing the alteration in the Saturday night shift. The fact that he made this concession at the request of the men is no defence in law. He knew that blasting was only or mainly done on Saturdays, and it was his duty to see that, as there was no interval between the day and night shift owing to this new arrangement, the instructions with regard to blasting should be revised, and every precaution taken that it should only be done *after* the night shift. This was not done, as has been seen; the instructions remained as they had been before. The same applies to the agent, having regard both to his position (as defined by section 75 of the Act of 1887) and also to his knowledge of the whole circumstances, as well as to the manager.

The Albion Colliery is owned by a company limited under the Companies Acts, and I am of the opinion that no criminal liability can be said to be attached to, and that the indictment for manslaughter would not lie against those directors who had no personal knowledge of, and took no part whatever in the superintendence or management of the colliery. In an action of common law, they would not be personally liable under the circumstances here disclosed. Even under the Employers Liability Act, 1880, in which the word 'employer,' by section 8, includes a '*body of persons corporate*,' it would be, strictly speaking, the company, and not the directors *personally*, which would be liable in an action; and where there is no

civil liability for negligence at common law, there would be in all probability, in the absence of express enactment, be none criminally.

With regard to the offences committed against the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1887 the 'owner' of a mine by section 75" means any person or body *corporate* who is the immediate proprietor or lessee of occupier thereof. In the present case, therefore, the company is the owner of the mine within the meaning of the Act, and liable to its penal provisions. If, having regard to all the circumstances, and moreover to the limitation of three months imposed by section 62, it is thought advisable to take proceedings for offences against the Act, I am of the opinion that prosecutions should be instituted in the manner prescribed by section 61 and 65 against –

(a.) William Anstes, the chargeman, for keeping explosives stored in the mine, contrary to, and in breach of, the provisions of general rule 12, sub-rule (a.)

(b.) The company, agent, and manager severally, under section 50 for the contravention of and non-compliance with general rule 12, sub-rule (l.)

(1) and (2), as appears from the evidence of the blasting at the point marked C on the plan, during the shift on that Saturday afternoon, and from the other evidence above referred to, for I am of opinion that they did not take 'all reasonable means' by 'to the best of their power enforcing' the said rule 'to prevent such contravention and non-compliance,' and it lies upon them under section 50, to prove that they did. In addition to the other evidence against them, their depositions before the coroners at this adjourned inquest would, in my opinion, be admissible. Under section 62 sub-section two persons charged with offences against the Act, *may, if they think fit, give evidence.*

With regard to the under manager and his statement that since his appointment, three months before the explosion, he never went down the mine while the night-shift was working, and to the neglect of duty breach of special rule 42 which this implies, I do not think it quite safe to prosecute him for an offence against the Act, because it is from his own evidence solely that the information was obtained; and, although admissible against him, on his own deposition alone, and without the independent testimony of others, the court might probably not convict.

I cannot advise that proceedings should be taken against the fireman for breach of special rule 69, in not reporting gas if cleared, for no specific or undisputed instance of its having occurred within the last three months is disclosed by the evidence.

J. ROSKILL (Signed)
6 Pump Court Middle Temple,
5th September 1894

List of the Witnesses called at the adjourned Inquest

1st Day

Richard Griffiths - Timekeeper at the Albion Colliery Herbert Gerald Hill - Surveyor of the Albion Colliery Philip Jones - Manager.

2nd Day

Philip Jones - Manager (continued).

3rd Day

Philip Jones - Manager (concluded)

H. G. Hill (recalled)

William Garnett - Night fireman Grover's side, District 1.

4th Day

William Rees - Day overman.

Edward Rees - Day fireman, Grover's side. William Rees (recalled)

David Evans - Day fireman, Grover's side District 1a. Eli Holley - Collier, Grover's side, District 1b.

5th Day

Evan Davies - Collier, day shift.

Henry Hill - Day fireman, Grover's side, District 2a and 2b. William Davies - Day fireman, Bodwenarth, District 3a.

John Jenkins - Day fireman, Bodwenarth district. Morgan Dyer - Day fireman, Cilfynydd side (far end). Henry Watkins - Day fireman, Pantddu District No.4.

Thomas Howells - Ripper, Cilfynydd, one of the survivors. George Bunford - Ripper, Pantddu district, one of the survivors. James Graves - Pitman.

Richard Griffiths (recalled).

William Rowlands - Assistant night fireman to David Griffiths, Bodwenarth district.

Charles Davies - Assistant day fireman, Grover's side, Dudson's district, under Henry Hill.

William Jones - Under manager.

Levi Rees - Collier, working place, District 1b, one of the men's examiners.

6th Day

William Thomas - Collier, Bodwenarth district, one of the men's examiners.

William Anstes - Chargeman, Cilfynydd side.

Price Wilson - Chargeman, Grover's side.

William Jones, - Speaks of finding his son in Grovers engine-house. James Smith

- Timberman, Grover's side.
William Howells - Banksman.
Jeremiah Cavalry - Master haulier, Grover's side. William Lewis - Agent of the
Albion Colliery
William Lewis - " " " (recalled)
Philip Jones - Manager (recalled). David Evans - Day fireman, Grover's side, 1b
district (recalled) William Rowlands Assistant night fireman (recalled)

7th Day

These eleven witnesses below were called on behalf of the men: - James Davies -
Night ripper, Grover's side, John Morris•end.

Thomas Owen - Rock ripper, Cilfynydd side.
John R. Evans - Rock ripper, Cilfynydd side, 1d district. Edward Lewis - Day
ripper, Pantddu dip. Thomas Smith - Day ripper, Cilfynydd side.
David Romery - Collier, Grover's side, Dudson's heading. George Colwill - Collier,
Grover's side.
Hugh barrow Jones - Collier, Pantddu district.
Noah Gould - Rider, Grover's side, Dudson's heading. Robert Philips - Haulier,
Grover's side, Dan's heading. Job Jones - Timberman. Grover's side, Asket's
heading. Henry Lewis - Managing director at the colliery.

8th Day

Henry Lewis (recalled) Henry Watkins (recalled) William Garnett (recalled) Edward
Rees (recalled)
Robert Jenkins (worker in the returns, Cilfynydd side.) Rowland Williams (Night
ripper, Grover's side).
William Rowlands (recalled)
David Hannah - Mining engineer, called on behalf of owners. John Clifton -
Assistant banksman on top of pit.
David Hannah (continued).
Hugh Bramwell Mining engineer, called on behalf of owners. Herbert Kirkhouse -
Mining engineer, called on behalf of owners. Treharne Rees - Mining engineer,
called on behalf of owners.
Henry Hall - Inspector of mines.

9th Day

Henry Hall (continued).
J. T. Robson - Inspector of Mines. Dr. Lyttle.
J. T. Robson (continued).
J. S. Martin - Inspector of Mines.
J. M. Sims - Assistant Inspector of Mines.
F. A. Gray - " " "



A timberman cutting arms and collars

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Inspector of Mines also sent a report to the Home Secretary, and their report, as thorough and complicated as Roskill's read as follows: -

REPORT ON

ALBION COLLIERY EXPLOSION BY

J. T. ROBSON - H.M. Inspector of Mines for the South Wales District;

HENRY HALL - H.M. Inspector of Mines for the Liverpool District; and

JOSEPH S. MARTIN - H.M. Inspector of Mines for the South-Western District.

About 3.50 on Saturday, 23rd June 1894, an explosion occurred at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, Pontypridd, by which no less than 290 persons lost their lives, and five others received injuries.

We have carefully examined the colliery, and attended the inquest which was held at Pontypridd on 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th July, and now we have the honour to report on the circumstances attending the explosion as follows:

The Albion Colliery is the property of the Albion Steam Coal Company Limited, whose registered address is 12, Bute Crescent, Cardiff. It is a comparatively new colliery, the sinking having been commenced in 1885, and completed in 1887. It is situated in the Taff Valley, in that portion of the South Wales coalfield lying between the synclinal on the north and the anticlinal on the south, which portion of coalfield was, until the opening of the colliery, virgin ground north of the Ocean Coal Company's Lady Windsor pits at Ynysybwl, and Harris' Deep Navigation Colliery, now belonging to the Ocean Coal Company, at Treharris. The area of minerals leased by the Albion Coal Company is about 1,300 statute acres.

There are two shafts, one being the downcast and the winding shaft, and the other the upcast shaft. They are 33 yards apart, centre to centre, each 19 feet in diameter, and walled throughout with 9-inch brickwork. In sinking the following seams were met with, viz. :-

		Ft. - Ins		
No.2 Rhondda	4	0	thick	at 128 yards
No.3 Rhondda	2	7	"	at 226 "
Two feet nine	6	0	"	at 517 "
Four feet	6	8	"	at 545 "
Six feet	6	0	"	at 552 "
Nine feet	9	0	"	at 580 "

The four feet, known locally as the 'Upper Four Feet,' is the only seam worked up to the present time. It is a first-class steam coal, slightly more bituminous than the steam coals in the collieries centred around Porth on the west, and in those in the neighbourhood of Mountain Ash and Aberdare on the north, and considerably more so than the same seams in the upper portion of the Rhondda Valley, lying further away to the north-west of Cilfynydd. The following is an analysis of the coal by Edward Riley, Esq;

F. C. S; analytical and consulting chemist, London: -

Carbon	89.84
Hydrogen	5.16
Nitrogen	0.46
Oxygen	2.65
Sulphur	0.51
Ash	1.38 (colour light buff)
Total	100.00

Mr. Riley adds that "dried at 212F. the sample gave: -

Volatile matter	15.19
Coke	84.81
Total	100.00

The calorific value, as determined by Thompson's calorimeter, is 8,270 units of heat, equal to an evaporative power of 15.4 lbs of water per pound of coal. It is a sample of the very best quality of steam coal.

The seam is a clean one, varying from about 5 ft. - 10 in. to 6 ft. - 10 in. in thickness. Immediately above the coal there is generally a strong cliff (shale) which attains a thickness of 11 feet, but in places a clod (argillaceous shale), from an inch up to 15 inches in thickness, intervenes. Occasionally both cliff and clod

are wanting, and a rock, which is invariably above the seam at a greater or less distance, forms the roof. The colliery is well equipped with modern machinery, and laid out for a large output.

Mode of Working

The workings are on the long-wall method. One portion, where the main roof approached within a few inches of the coal seam, has been worked on what is known in this district as the 'Nottingham system,' in which the stall roads are 50 to 60 yards apart, and the drams are taken along a temporary line of rails parallel, and close to the face, the road being moved forward laterally every 6 or 9 feet as the face advances. This system was discontinued upwards of a year ago. All the remaining workings have been conducted on the ordinary long-wall, as practiced in the district, have the stall roads about 12 yards apart.

In the long wall method, as the whole of the seam is removed in the forward working, all the roadways necessary for ventilation, and the haulage of the mineral have to be made and maintained through the 'gob,' and this is done by stowing: (1) Any clod or stone taken down by the colliers; (2) most of the small coal produced in the coal-getting; (3) stone ripped in the roadways back from the face; and (4) rubbish from falls of roof and the debris gathered off the roads and air-courses. In addition to the gob-walls formed of stowage, there are cogs of timber at the sides of roadways, and double timbers on the roadways for supporting the roof and sides where timbering is deemed necessary by the management.

The workings are divided into districts, and at the date of the explosion there were eight of these in course of working, viz. four on the west side of the shaft known as Grover's side, and four on the east side of the shaft known as Cilfynydd side. Reference to Plan No.1 accompanying this report, will best enable the position of the various workings and their approaches to be understood, but it may facilitate a proper appreciation of the extent of the roadways and the length of faces opened to give the same in figures as below.

On Grover's side: - The main level have been extended 1,135 yards from the shaft, but was not in the course of extension, the last 53 yards of its length having been stowed. On the right-hand side of this level, at a point 708 yards from the shaft, is Llanfabon dip; at a further distance of 118 yards is John Morris' dip, and a still further distance of 254 yards Ned Owen's dip, 1,080 yards from the shaft. The workings reached by these three dips formed a district, which for the purpose of this report will be called the No. 1 district. It contained 2,521 yards of roadways and 41 working places or stalls, which occupied a face 545 yards in length. The total length of face opened in this district was then 844 yards, a portion of which, however, had reached the boundary.

At a point 820 yards from the shaft along Grover's level is the entrance to Asket's heading; at a further distance of 112 yards is Tom Williams' heading, and 97 yards beyond this is Nelson's heading. The workings in these three headings formed another district, which will be described as No. 2 district. In it there were 3,260 yards of roadways and 41 working places in an unbroken line of an aggregate

length of 528 yards. In addition, there was a short length of 95 yards of face adjoining the main level not in operation, making a total of 623 yards of face in this district, all of which is to the rise of Grover's level.

Coming back towards the shaft, and within 185 yards of it, the entrance to Dudson's heading, which was extended a distance of 1,126 yards to the rise, the workings on both sides of which Wedging's heading forming No.3 district. This embraces 3,244 yards of roadway and 59 working places extending for a distance of 792 yards, all of which was in course of working.

The workings reached by Dan's heading, which branches off to the left 396 yards up Dudson's heading, were included in No. 4 district. This comprises of 12 working places of a length of 167 yards, but there was a further face of 286 yards not in course of working. The length of Dan's heading is 484 yards, and the aggregate length of branches and stall roads in operation is 875 yards.

On Cilfynydd side, branching off to the left at 194 yards from the shaft along Cilfynydd level, is the Pantddu dip, which has been driven 814 yards, passing Mordecai's level at 473, D. Thomas' level at 616, and Parker's level at 686 yards, respectively. The working places in this district, called No. 5, number 44, the length of continuous face at work being 594 yards. The total length of roadways in this district, all of which except one are to the right of Pantddu dip, is 2,590 yards.

Following the Cilfynydd level, William Rees' heading to the rise at a distance of 806 yards from the shaft, and David Rees' heading to the dip 180 yards further, are reached, and beyond are one short heading to the rise and another to the dip. The total length of the Cilfynydd main level is 1,100 yards. The number of working places in this, No. 6 district is 27, having a length of face opened of 338 yards. The total length of roadways off the main level is 1,720 yards.

Opposite the entrance to Pantddu dip is Bodwenarth incline, which is driven to the rise a total distance of 1,092 yards. On the left-hand side of this incline are David Rees' level at 608 yards, Boucher's level at 861 yards, and Matthew's level at 963 yards from the entrance, respectively. The workings in these levels form No. 7 district, and comprise 43 working places have a face 537 yards in length with only one break of 30 yards in the whole distance, and a total length of roadways amounting to 2,602 yards.

On the right-hand side of the same incline are Dobb's level at 711 yards and Curley's level at 824 yards, and all the workings on this side of the incline, including 42 workings places a total length of 540 yards without a break and 2,438 yards of roadways, are embraced in No. 8 district.

The above are all the districts on operation. There is a small district lying between the Cilfynydd level and a fault on the left-hand side of Bodwenarth incline, which was not in operation. At the date of the explosion there were altogether 4,041 yards of working face and 30,600 yards (over 17¼ miles) of roadways in use for the haulage and ventilation of the colliery.

Haulage

The principal haulage is by main and tail ropes, the motive power being two steam- engines, one on each side of the downcast shaft, fixed immediately over the main road, that on Grover's side being 42 yards and that on Cilfynydd side 28 yards from the shaft. These engines are supplied with steam from multitubular boilers placed in two separate galleries, one on each side of the shaft, between the main intake and main return, 33 and 37 yards from the downcast shaft, respectively. The engine- planes on Grover's side comprised that working to Asket's heading, with branches down Llanfabon and John Morris' dips, with another working on Dudson's heading to within 150 yards of the face, with a branch along Dan's heading 385 yards from its entrance off Dudson's heading.

On the Cilfynydd side of the shaft the engine plane extended to William Rees' heading on the main road. There was a branch down Pantddu dip 600 yards, and another up Bodwenarth incline 600 yards in length.

The total length of roadways worked by engine power was 4,543 yards. On all other roads this haulage was done by horses, the number employed being 121.

Ventilation

The ventilation of the colliery is produced by means of a Schiele fan 15½ feet in diameter, exhausting from the upcast shaft, the total quantity of air being about 235,000 cubic feet per minute. According to the last measurements, taken by Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, on 20th June, the quantities passing in the different splits were as follows: -

		<i>Cubic Feet per minute</i>
1	Grover's level and Llanfabon No.1 district	314802
2	Right hand of Dudson's, No.2 district	183363
3	Faces of Dudson's to Wedging's heading,	281204
4	Dan's district to rise 12,300 }	
5	Ditto to dip 0,360 } district	226606
6	Stables on Grover's side	111807
7	Pantddu dip, No.5 district	263708
8	Cilfynydd Level, No.6 district (including about 4,000 Lambert's through road in New Incline district (not working)	281149
9	Bodwenarth incline, left-hand side, No.7 dist.	2045010
10	Bodwenarth incline, right and side, No. 8 dist.	22.6411
11	Stables on Cilfynydd side	16040
	<u>To boilers</u>	<u>10,000</u>
	<u>Total</u>	<u>235,390</u>

The various splits were well arranged and the airways of ample sectional area. With two exceptions the air-crossings were made in the solid, a method which, although costly, is to be commended.

In common with steam coal collieries in South Wales the seams at the Albion colliery produce a considerable quantity of fire-damp in the course of working, and although these are collieries which give off more gas, it is undoubtedly one which should be classed as a fiery colliery.

It has had a rather singular immunity from strong 'blowers' and 'outbursts' of gas, notwithstanding the fact that it was rapidly opened in comparatively virgin field and could not have been drained of gas by the working of adjoining collieries. Gas was very seldom reported by the firemen who made the examinations required by the 4th General Rule of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887. It may here be stated, however, that some of these firemen admitted that if they found a little gas accumulated owing to a brattice sheet being down or from another accidental causes, they did not report such accumulations if they were able to clear the gas before the workmen entered the place.

During the 12 months previous to the explosion Mr. Sims, assistant inspector of mines, had made four underground inspections, and Mr. J. Dyer Lewis, assistant inspector, one such inspection, in none of which had any accumulation of gas been discovered. We believe that accumulations of gas were of rare occurrence, and that the mine was usually free of gas.

The return currents would no doubt contain a small proportion of fire-damp, but from time to time these had been examined for gas by the assistant inspectors and no decided 'cap' had ever been detected by them.

No complaint was ever made to Mr. Robson, inspector in charge of the district, of the existence of gas in the workings, either from any sudden outburst or other cause.

Lighting

Safety lamps of the Clanny type were in general use by the workmen in the colliery. This type of lamp had been found by experiments made in the district to be in accordance with the provisions of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887, which impose greater restrictions in the construction of safety lamps to be used than that existed previously.

There is an electric light installed at the colliery, but it was out of order and had been so for some weeks prior to the date of the explosion. Open 'comet' lights were substituted for the incandescent lamps formerly used at and near the bottom of the downcast shaft.

Naked lights were allowed at each of the lamp stations, of which there were seven in use during the day shift, but only two during the night shift, viz; one on the main

level at the entrance to Pantddu dip, and the other at the entrance to Dudson's heading. The position of all the lamp stations will be found marked on No.1 and 2 plans. The only other open lights allowed in the mine were the boiler fires on each side of the shaft already referred to.

Blasting

Explosives were not used in actual coal-getting, nor in the removal of the cliff (shale) immediately above the coal, but they were used for ripping the rock overlying the cliff where necessary in order to maintain sufficient height in the roadways. Explosives were also used for the purpose of removing timbers, which through subsidence of the roof had become too low. According to the statement of the officials this blasting of timbers was only resorted to when the timbers were supporting strong rock roof and in positions where the span was not less than 13 feet, as on a double parting, having two lines of rails. In any case, it was a most unusual proceeding in coal mining, as to which reference will be made later on in this report.

The explosives used were gelatine-dynamite and gelatine. Shots were fired by means of a fuse, the fireman and overmen being the persons authorised to fire shots. A man in each shift was appointed to take charge of the explosives, detonators, and fuse. The manager had, it appears, given instructions that shots were only to be fired in the interval between shifts, but this had not been adhered to, at any rate on the day of the explosion, as referred to later on.

Coal Dust and Watering

The seam produces a large quantity of coal dust in working, and much dust is deposited on the roadways, being shaken and blown from the drams in their passage between the faces and the shaft.

With the exception of a few stalls in number 1, 5, and 7 districts, which stalls are naturally damp, the whole of the working places are dry and dusty. In about 14 places on the roadways a little water percolates through the roof, but these places are of small extent and have no practical bearing on the general question of the dryness of the mine as a whole.

On Grover's side some water was pumped by a horse-pump from a short dip at a distance of 570 yards from the shaft through a line of pipes laid to the sump at the shaft. It was stated that some of this water was allowed to escape at the joints and through holes bored in the pipes for the purpose of dampening the floor of this main road.

About seven casks of water were filled every day in the Llanfabon dip, and this was put on the roads of Number 1 and 2 districts, with the object of laying the dust.

The water which collected in Number 5 district in the Pantddu dip, was pumped up to a tank fixed 418 yards from the entrance of this dip off Cilfynydd level, which

point is on the rise side of an upthrow fault, and just at a sufficient elevation for the water to run through a line of pipes outwards to Cilfynydd level. The roof of this dip had been ripped, and the road raised considerably on the shaft side of the fault, but still there was a 'swamp' or hollow in which water lay.

On the left-hand side of the Bodwenarth incline, a small quantity of water was pumped from the face on to the straight road, and allowed to find its way to the shaft. Where this road passes through faulty ground it is dead level, and this is wet on the floor for a distance of 160 yards, below which point on the incline it was only dampish, getting less nearer to the shaft.

As is the custom in large collieries, a supply of clean water was conveyed by means of pipes from the surface for the horses. This supply was, it is stated, also made use of to water some of the roadways by means of casks and tanks filled at a tap near the stables on Grover's side; and, by allowing the tap to run, water is said to have flowed at times along Grover's level, which it may here be observed, has a dip gradient of about four inches per yard from Dudson's heading to Llanfabon dip.

There is no doubt in our minds that the general condition of the roadways in the colliery was 'dry and dusty,' and that the attempts at watering only partially damped the floor, leaving the sides, roof, and timbers covered with deposits of the finest coal dust.

Official Staff

Mr. Henry Lewis, of Walnut Tree Junction, is the managing director of the Company, and acts on behalf of the owners. He is a mining engineer, with a large experience in steam coal collieries in South Wales. Mr. D. Ellis is secretary, and resides at Pontypridd. Mr. William Lewis, who holds a first-class certificate of competency as a colliery manager, is the resident agent, and Mr. Phillip Jones, the certificated colliery manager, having obtained his certificate by examination on 22nd July 1887.

At the time of the explosion, William Jones, son of the manager, was acting as certified under-manager in the absence through ill-health of John Jones, the regular under-manager. William Rees was the day overman, and John Evans, now deceased, was night overman. There were eight firemen by day and eight by night, as well as some assistant firemen and brattice men. Mr. Lewis, the managing director, also from time to time visited the underground workings, and was generally in daily communication with the officials.

Working Shifts and Persons employed Underground

Coal working was pursued both by day and night, and although the quantity of coal actually worked during the night formed only about 25 per cent. of the total quantity raised, the colliery may properly be considered as one working on the double-shift system, which is an unusual practice in South Wales.

The number of persons employed underground on the day shift was about 1,020, and in the night shift about 524. On the first five working days of the week there was an interval between the day shift ending at 5 p.m.; and the night shift beginning at 7 p.m. there was a similar interval between the night shift ending at 5 a.m.; and the day shift commencing at 7 a. m.

On Saturdays no coal was raised after 2 p.m; when the day shift ended, and the night shift immediately began to ascend, so that there was no interval at all between shifts on Saturdays. It may here be noticed that this arrangement had only been in operation for five or six weeks prior to the explosion, previous to which there had been an interval of one hour between the day shift ending and the night shift commencing on Saturday. The alteration had been made at the request of the workmen to enable them to finish work at 8 p.m; instead of 9 p.m; as formerly.

Road repairing and cleaning was carried on during the week in both shifts, but Saturday afternoon was specially devoted to clearing away the rubbish and dust from the main roads of the colliery. The rapid development of the colliery may be judged from an examination of the plan, bearing in mind that coal work was only begun in the latter half of 1887. Before the end of that year as much as 1,000 tons per day had been raised from the mine.

The output for the week ending 23rd June (the day of the explosion) was 9,542 tons of large coal, of which 7,170 tons (about 75 per cent.) were cut by day and 2,372 tons (about 25 per cent.) by night. As regards the quantity *raised* by the two shifts were more alike, for the total output of large coal, 5,237 tons (about 55 per cent.) were raised to the surface by day and 4,305 tons (about 45 per cent.) by night.

The gross output of large and small was about 11,500 tons per week, or fully 1,900 tons per day. A calculation from the plan of the workings shows that, altogether, 338 acres of the seams have been exhausted.

The Explosion

Shortly before 4 p.m; and within two hours after the dusting and repairing shift, those on the surface were startled by two large reports in quick succession, followed immediately by a rush of dust and smoke from the downcast and then from the upcast shafts. No flame appears to have been observed, at any rate by those close to the mouth of the shafts, but as these men were thrown backwards, and blinded for a few moments by the rush of dust, it is probable that some flame did actually reach the top of the downcast shaft. Those nearest to that shaft felt the hot blast, and one or two complained of their eyelashes having been scorched.

The first blast blew away some of the planking forming the stage round the downcast, and the second displaced the wooden covering from the top of the fan drift. Fortunately the fan itself was uninjured and continued to work.

After temporary repairs had been hurriedly made to the fan covering, the manager, under-manager, and others, including some of the day firemen, made a descent in one of the cages in the downcast shaft, and shortly afterwards these men were reinforced by other officials and workmen as well as by managers, officials, and workmen from neighbouring collieries, who, as usual in such emergencies, never fail in hurrying to the scene of disaster to offer their services in the rescue of their fellow man.

It was soon discovered that a most serious calamity had occurred, for dead bodies were found quite near the shaft. In a little time the explorers came upon some who were alive, but suffering from burns or after-damp, or both. These men were soon attended to by Dr. Lyttle, medical officer at the colliery, who had descended the mine with the first explorers. Only 16 were found alive and brought to the surface, 11 having been found on Cilfynydd side and 5 on Grover's side; but of the 16 only 5 have recovered, the others dying from their injuries within the following few days.

Ten of the eleven men brought out alive from Cilfynydd side were found between the entrance to Pantddu dip and the air-crossing 83 yards along this road. It is believed that all of them had travelled from the workings in Pantddu, or No. 5 district, after the explosion occurred. The eleventh man, who recovered and was able to give evidence at the inquest, states that he was in the lamp station when the explosion happened, having just come from the Bodwenarth incline to re-light his safety lamp. He describes having seen what appeared a blue flame come from the shaft side of him, but neither heard nor felt anything, and remembers absolutely nothing else. None of the five found alive on Grover's side, between the shaft and the entrance to Dudson's heading, have survived their injuries.

It was impossible to ascertain the exact number of persons in the mine when the explosion occurred. On that night, and for some days afterwards, all that was known was that 13 cage loads of 20 men each had descended at 2 p.m. or shortly afterwards, and two fitters a few minutes before the explosion. There were no means of knowing the number of men belonging to the day shift that had remained down, but it was soon ascertained that some had done so. As far as can now be ascertained, there were 295 persons in the mine when the explosion occurred. A list of the persons killed is appended.

John Evans, the night overman, Williams Roberts, the man in charge of the explosives in this shift, and six night firemen were amongst those in the mine, together with a large number of labourers, of whom some were not personally known to either the manager, under-manager, or day firemen.

Mr. Robson and two of the assistant inspectors of mines, Messrs. F. A. Gray and J. Dyer Lewis, arrived from Swansea and Neath at 11 o'clock on the evening of the explosion, and after a short consultation at once descended the shaft, where they met Mr. William Lewis, the agent, Mr. Phillip Jones, the manager, and Mr. J. Mancel Sims, assistant inspector of mines.

By 3 a.m. on Sunday Mr. Robson and his assistants had penetrated as far as the double-parting on Grover's side on the outer side of Asket's heading and 90 yards down Llanfabon dip, at which points their advance was prevented by heavy falls of roof, which completely blocked the roads.

Previous to the descent of the inspectors some of the bodies found in the main levels and Pantddu dip had been removed, beyond which nothing had been done in the mine except what was necessary to restore the ventilation and rescue the men found alive; so that the inspectors were at an early period able to note matters very much as left by the explosion, as well as to examine the condition of the floor of the main levels as to their dryness.

On the forenoon of the same day (Sunday) they were also able to examine most of Cilfynydd level and Pantddu dip, and in the evening Mr. Martin arrived and made an examination of the underground roads and portions of the working faces.

On subsequent days the colliery was carefully examined by each of us, and also by Mr. Robson's three assistants. Everything was minutely examined which was likely to afford any clue to the extent of the explosion or its origin; all signs of force exhibited by drams, timbers, bodies of men and horses, as showing the direction of the blast were carefully noted, and special care was taken to ascertain whether coal dust or fire-damp had been the chief agent in the explosion.

Extent of the Explosion

It was soon apparent that, with the single exception of Pantddu dip, the explosion had passed along every main road in the mine, and into most of the branch roads. We are of the opinion that the blast reached a certain distance down the Pantddu dip, but did not extend throughout in consequence of the damp condition of the road and the absence of dry coal dust. Had the explosion been extended into the branch roads in No. 5 district, which is reached by Pantddu dip, in all probability none of the men in it would have been able to leave, as they undoubtedly did. Moreover, two horses were found alive and uninjured in this district - the only two which were saved. It is well known that horses readily succumb to the effects of after-damp, but these two had not apparently suffered at all.

One of the survivors, named George Bunford, said he was working with others on the double-paring on Mordecai's level, in No. 5 district, when the explosion occurred, and thus describes it: - "I heard a sound like thunder - the biggest I ever heard. I heard two sounds with scarcely any interval - each just the same noise. I thought it was an explosion and stood where I was. I heard the door between us and the engine-dip parting open and shut with a bang. The level directly after (less than a minute) was filled up with dust and our lamps went out. There were four of us together and two more inside. I think I saw a shade of flame in the dust of bluish colour. It was coming above us along near the roof. I was standing up. The place was about 7 feet high. We started off then to walk to Pantddu dip. We met after-damp in the parting near Pantddu dip. The flame and dust passed over us and we came out. In Pantddu dip the after-damp was strong, and I recollect no

more until I came to myself, when Dr. Lyttle and Henry Watkins were with me at the air-bridge. I heard someone say at home that it was about 8 o'clock when I got out. I was not singed by the flame, except my eyelashes a little. The light I saw among the dust was like a flash, and about a foot from the roof."

The explosion did not reach the working places in No.3 district, at the top of Dudson's heading, or if so, it must have been only to a limited extent, as nothing was disturbed in them. A further proof of this is that most of the men lost in this district had evidently escaped the blast, and had time to gather together in groups, and were suffocated by after-damp. In one of the groups there were no less than 37 bodies.

There were indications of force on Dudson's heading up to a point within 127 yards from the face, beyond which no signs whatever were observed. At the point referred to there had been considerable force, the body of one poor man, believed to be that of the fireman of the district, having been blown to pieces. With the exception of those found on the main heading outbye of this point, and on some of the adjacent branch roads, all in this, No.3, district had escaped burning and died from suffocation by after-damp.

In Number 1,2,4,6,7, and 8 districts there was abundant evidence that the explosion had reached and passed through most of the roads and working places. In these districts both men and horses were for the most part burned, but after-damp was probably the immediate cause of death in the majority of cases.

On all the main roads, except Pantddu dip, into No. 5 district, the bodies of men and horses were burned. In addition to the case referred to on Dudson's heading as showing great force, a haulier on Llanfabon dip was blown to pieces, and the head and limbs being completely severed from the trunk and the portions found 25 yards apart. Other bodies found at the top of John Morris's dip, and the body of a haulier down that dip, were much mutilated, as were also some found near the bottom of Dudson's heading.

On the opposite side of the shaft, one body found near William Rees's heading, on Cilfynydd level was much shattered, while another on Bodwenarth incline, near David Rees's heading, had the head and one foot blown off. These points are situated at a distance of 1,672 and 1,650 yards respectively from where the body of the haulier was found mutilated on John Morris's dip. There was evidence that the explosive force extended a short distance into some of the return headways and then died away.

Direction of Force

All the doors separating the intakes from the returns were found blown from the intake side to the return side. All other doors in the boiler gallery on Grover's side were found blown towards the face. The brick partitions and iron doors in the boiler gallery on Grover's side were found blown towards the return, but those in the boiler gallery on Cilfynydd side were found blown towards the intake.

The two air crossings which were not in the solid, viz; that at the stables on Grover's side and that on Dan's heading, at the entrance to No. 4 district, were both blown from the intake into the return.

From Llanfabon dip, on Grover's level, there was unmistakable evidence that the force was inwards towards the face in each direction.

On Dudson's heading it was apparent that the force was inwards towards the face and also on Dan's heading inwards towards the face.

On Cilfynydd side, from the stables inwards, there was conclusive evidence of the inward force on the level and an inward or upward force on the Bodwenarth incline.

From the above indications it will be seen that the origin of the explosion, must have been somewhere on the main level between Llanfabon dip, on Grover's side, and the entrance to the stables on Cilfynydd side, which points are situated 858 yards apart. Between these points there were indications in both directions, but after several most careful examinations we are decidedly of the opinion that a preponderance of evidence tended to show that the blast came outwards from the point near the horse-pump dip in Grover's side.

We are strengthened in this view by the fact that Mr. Robson and his assistants were satisfied on the night of the explosion that of the timbers displaced by the blast on this level more showed an outward than an inward force, and displaced by the blast on this level more showed an outward than an inward force, and Mr. Martin arrived at the same conclusion on the Saturday night following the explosion.

On the Cilfynydd level, between the shaft and the stables, some iron straps used to support pulleys carrying the haulage tail-rope, we found bent towards the shaft; these indications were noted by Mr. Robson and Mr. Gray on the Sunday following the explosion, and favour the contrary view, that the explosion passed outwards from the stables to the shaft on the Cilfynydd side. One of the day firemen, William Davies, gave a clear account of his observations on this point, and was distinctly of the opinion that one of the iron straps referred to was bent inwards, while drams on the shaft siding appeared to have been blown both inwards and outwards, and that the indications were, as he described them, 'complex.'

We think the conflicting evidence of force, in this neighbourhood, may be accounted for by the blast passing through the stables into the return, and then outwards through the return, dividing again at the separation doors, and then outwards to the shaft. It may here be observed that in nearly all large explosions there are some conflicting signs of force, and that it is often extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fix upon a point where an explosion originates, by an examination into the evidence afforded by indications of force alone

Coked Coal-dust and Charring

The principal places where timbers were found charred were near the top of Dudson's heading in No. 3 district, near the face of Cilfynydd level in No. 6 district, near the face in Tom Williams's heading in No. 2 district, and at a point 35 to 40 yards inbye of the horse-pump dip in Grover's level, where the largest amount of charring was observed on some collars.

Coked coal dust was found on some props and drams of coal at the face of No. 1 district, on several props and some drams of coal in Tom Williams's heading in No. 2 district, on a few props and one dram of coal in No. 4 district, all on Grover's side.

Coked dust was also found on a few props at and near the face in No. 6 district, also in number 7 and 8 districts, and in the small district not working, all on Cilfynydd side.

In each of the places mentioned, the deposits of coked coal-dust were of considerable extent, the thickest being observed in No. 2 district, where several props at the face were found thickly covered all round from top to bottom. In most of the other cases, the deposit was only on one side of the props. It was stated that coal dust was found on fire on the Cilfynydd side, within a short distance of the shaft, and the clothes of the engineman on that side of the shaft, as well as some of the woodwork of the engine, were also found burning when the first exploring party reached them.

Location of Explosion and its Cause

From what has already been stated in this Report, it will have been seen that in our view the explosion was initiated on Grover's side. This, however, was not the view expressed by some of the officials, and by the mining engineers called as experts on behalf of owners of the inquiry before the coroners and jury. Those gentlemen stated that in their opinion the disaster was caused by a sudden outburst of gas, and they fixed upon a spot where a large fall of roof had occurred near the entrance to the stables on the Cilfynydd side of the downcast shaft as the point of origin, the gas having been ignited at one of the open lights allowed at this place. They all admitted that they had found no indications of gas at the place, nor had they heard of any having been found there before or after the explosion; that it was a most unlikely place, in view of the experience in working the mine, the length of time the place had been open, and its distance from the face; and that with the large volume of air (118,754 cubic feet per minute) passing the place, such an occurrence was extraordinary if not unprecedented.

It was admitted by the officials that on the fatal Saturday timbers were to be taken out in three different places on the main engine plane, viz; on the double parting near William Rees's heading on the Cilfynydd main level; on the double parting near Asket's heading on Grover's level; and at a point about 40 yards inbye of the horse-pump dip on Grover's level. It was also admitted that at the two double

partings mentioned the timbers would be removed by blasting, but it was denied that the timbers in the third place would be blasted. These being only 9-foot timbers, and not under rock roofs, it was stated by the management that they would be taken out by hand in the usual way, i.e; by cutting through the arms, and drawing or knocking them out.

There can be no doubt that the timbers on the Cilfynydd side had been blasted, for there was evidence that shot-holes had been bored into them during the day shift; besides, the bodies of repairers and labourers, a horse, and a dram filled with stones, were found close to the spot, clearly proving that these men had been engaged clearing away the debris brought down by these shots.

The blasting of the timbers on the double parting on Grover's side had not been carried out before the explosion, as on the Wednesday following four unexploded charges of gelatine-dynamite were found by the men while clearing the heavy fall of roof which had occurred at the place. The charges were in the arms or uprights of the timbers which had to come out, and which were still standing; the collars were, of course, broken down under the large fall of roof, and in them at least one charge had exploded, probably by the flame from the explosion having ignited the fuse.

At the third place, referred to above, where timbers had to come out, there was a fall consisting of about eight drams of rubbish and old timbers. Both inside and outside of this point nothing was disturbed for about 90 yards, although the road here was closely timbered and lagged. On the inbye side of this fall there was a space of 6 ft. 4 ins. Up to the solid roof, of which 4 ft. 3 ins. were filled with lagging and debris from the roof and sides, leaving a cavity fully 2 feet high in the centre, but less on each side of the roadway. On the outbye side of the fall there was a height of only 2 ft. 11 ins. From the collar up to the roof, and, with the exception of a small cavity in the middle of the roadway, this space was filled with lagging and debris. The road dips slightly inbye, and this fact, together with the inequality in the height above the timbers, would favour the accumulation of any gas which might possibly be given off from the broken strata above the timbers. It is true there were 31,000 cubic feet of fresh air passing along this roadway, which was from 7 to 8 feet high, and from 7½ to 10½ feet wide inside the timbers. No gas had, it seems, been seen on it, but as the roof was all supported by closely-lagged timbers, with a covering of stones over the laggings, there was no opportunity for examining above the timbers, except by removing some of the lagging, which we do not think was ever done.

In our experience of similar places in such a condition, we think the cavity above the timbers was not an unlikely place for gas to lodge in, and we believe that there may have been an accumulation there. But we think the presence of gas is not a necessity to account for an explosion in a colliery so dusty as this, more especially on the face of the evidence of the Camerton explosion, and that afforded by Mr. Hall's experiments.

At the entrance to the horse-pump dip the bodies of Morris Ashton, fireman, and William Roberts, the man in charge of explosives, were found, and a few yards

down this dip the body of John Evans, the night overman, was found. Both fuse and detonators were found on Roberts. These three men were those whose duty it was to examine the place, prepare the charges, and fire the shots, if shots were to be fired in the vicinity. Inside of the fall referred to, the bodies of David Llewelyn, timberman, and William Jones and Owen Hughes, rippers, were found. Llewelyn was said to have been found two or three yards nearer the fall than Jones and Hughes, both of whom were found across the roadway with their feet in a manhole. This manhole is nine yards further in than the inner edge of the vacancy in the roof caused by the fall referred to.

The position of these bodies were described by William Evans, day overman, to Mr. Robson and two of his assistants on the night of the explosion, the bodies then having been moved.

It was attempted to be shown by the management that the fact of the repairer being found so near the fall was in itself evidence that no shots were fired in these timbers; but in our opinion this is by no means inconsistent with the firing of shots there, because it is quite possible, indeed probable, that the men would move some little distance after the explosion originated. We think the three men were in the manhole, sheltering from the shots when the explosion occurred, and that the position in which their bodies were found was compatible with experience in other cases where the force was comparatively small at the seat of the explosion.

This fall, near the horse-pump dip, which was fixed upon by the inspectors as the origin of the explosion, was cleared before it was discovered that any shots at all had been fired on this side of the pit; but some timbers supposed to have formed part of those cleared from the place were discovered and brought to the surface, with the view of the examination in daylight. One piece looked much like what a piece of timber would be if shattered by the explosion of a shot, and there were also indications not unlike that of a shot-hole bored by an auger.

Evidence was given by a haulier, named Robert Phillips, who said he came up the pit a few minutes before the explosion. He had been detained by the hitcher at the bottom while he sent up some drams, and saw John Evans, the overman, and another man unknown to him, hurry from Cilfynydd to Grover's side of the shaft at 10 or 15 minutes before he ascended the shaft.

Thus we have a chain of evidence bearing on the explosion and its cause. First, there is blasting in timbers admitted on both sides of the shaft; secondly, shots fired in timbers on Cilfynydd side some time before the explosion; thirdly, the overman who directed the blasting seen hurrying to Grover's side, and his body and that of the fireman and the explosives man found on one side of the fall, and the repairers on the other side of this fall - the place being one where timbers were to be removed that day. These facts appear to our mind conclusive that shots were being fired at this point in the colliery at the moment of the explosion.

This conclusion was arrived at after giving the matter our best attention and consideration, and we are convinced that the primary cause of this terrible

explosion was the firing of some gelignite-dynamite shots in timbers; that these shots either ignited fine coal-dust directly, or a small accumulation of gas over the timbers, which in its turn ignited the dust in the vicinity, and was carried forward by the continuous train of dust existing in the roadway; and that the disastrous and far-reaching effects of the explosion were entirely due to coal-dust.

Plan No 2. has been prepared to illustrate the force of the explosion and its effects. It is noteworthy that the falls of roof were for the most part confined to the intake airways. Nearly all the bodies found in the main and branch roads traversed by the blast presented a blackened appearance; this we think is strongly corroborative of the conclusion arrived at, that the explosion was almost entirely due to coal-dust and not gas, except, perhaps, at its inception. Messrs. H. Kirkhouse, Treharne Rees, D. Hannah, and H. Bramwell, mining engineers, as well as Mr. Henry Lewis, managing director, all expressed as their opinion that coal-dust had extended the explosion.

Although we do not think that meteorological conditions had any influence on the state of the mine or bearing on the explosion, we have thought it well to mention that the weather was rather dull during the day of the explosion, and to give the following chart showing the state of the barometer during the week. It will be seen that, following two days on which the barometer had been comparatively steady, it had been falling for about 15 hours when the explosion occurred.

Contravention of Act

It was conclusively shown that the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887, had been contravened in more than one respect.

The place where shots were fired on Cilfynydd side was on the engine plane or '*part of the main haulage road,*' and thus *both* the conditions mentioned in sub-head (h) of the General Rules 12 should have been observed. These conditions are: -

- (1.) Unless the place of firing, and all contiguous accessible places within a radius of twenty yards there from, are, at the time of firing, in a wet state from thorough watering, or other treatment equivalent to watering, in all parts where dust is lodged, whether roof, floor, or sides; or
- (2.) In the case of places in which watering would injure the roof of floor, unless the explosive is so used with water or other contrivance as to prevent it from inflaming gas or dust, or is of such a nature that it cannot inflame gas or dust:

We are of the opinion that the first of these conditions was not carried out so far as reasonably practicable, and that the second was entirely ignored, the shots being fired by ordinary fuse and without tamping.

General rule 12 (a) was also contravened, for 23 lbs. of gelatine-dynamite and gelignite were found to have been stored in the mine at the time of the explosion.

General rule 4 requires that '*a report specifying where noxious or inflammable gas, if any found present . . . shall be recorded without delay in a book by the person who made the inspection.*' This, as previously stated, was not strictly observed by the firemen generally.'

It is of the utmost importance that all gas, however small in quantity, should be recorded, and we are distinctly of the opinion that the law requires this to be done; but this is a matter which there is reason to believe is now more than ever likely to be omitted, for the following reason, viz; under General rule 12 (g) :

If in any mine, at either of the four inspections under rule 4 recorded last before a shot is to be fired, inflammable gas has been reported to be present in the ventilating district in which the shot is to be fired the shot shall not be fired: -

- (1) Unless a competent person, appointed aforesaid, has examined the place where gas had been so reported to be present, and has found that such gas has been cleared away, and that there is not at or near such sufficient gas is ensuing or accumulated to render it unsafe to fire the shot; or
- (2) Unless the explosive employed in firing the shot is so used with water or other contrivance as to prevent it from inflaming gas, or is of such a nature that it cannot inflame gas.

In our opinion the persons who are responsible for these contrivances of the Act are (1.) Mr. Henry Lewis, the managing director, (2.) Mr. William Lewis, the agent, and (3.) Mr. Philip Jones, the certificated manager.

The Inquest

After a most patient and exhaustive inquiry, occupying nine days, before Coroners E. B. Reece, Esq; of Cardiff, and R. J. Rhys, Esq; of Aberdare, and an intelligent jury of 17 gentlemen, the following verdict was arrived at: -

"The jury find that the deceased had lost their lives through an explosion of gas that took place at the Albion Colliery, on the 23rd of June 1894, which explosion was accelerated and extended by coal dust; but the jury disagree as to the exact place at which the explosion had its origin, and we are unanimously of the opinion that shot-firing was practiced at the colliery when the men were at work, without sufficient precautions as to their safety, and contrary to rules; we are also of the opinion that the under-manager neglected his duty in not seeing that his subordinates in the night shifts performed their duties in accordance with the rules; that the firemen were negligent in not reporting gas when found, and that there is not a proper system of watering this mine. The jury beg to make the following recommendations: -

1. That shot-firing in timber shall be absolutely prohibited.
2. That old workings shall be properly stowed or gobbed.
3. That a record shall be kept of the numbers of men in the mine at all hours.
4. That thorough inspections shall be more frequently made by Her Majesty's Inspectors, because we consider the present examinations by the workmen's representatives worthless.

It will be seen that the jury did not directly connect the explosion with shot-firing, though their first and strongest recommendation has reference to blasting. Possibly, the evidence of the officials and mining engineers, being in direct opposition to that tendered by ourselves and Messrs. Gray and Sims, assistant inspectors, gave rise to some uncertainty in their minds as to this matter. For the same reason, probably, they were unable to agree as to the place where the explosion started. In other respects the verdict is entirely in accord with our views. We think the omission by the owners' representative to arrange the blasting, when he sanctioned the alteration of hours on Saturdays, was a most serious oversight. With reference to some of the recommendations of the jury we desire to make the following observations: -

(1.) As to shot-firing in timbers, we concur in their recommendation that this should be absolutely prohibited. It is unnecessary to remove timbers by blasting as they can be removed in other ways, and, indeed, having recourse to explosives for this purpose is most unusual and contrary to good mining. Until this explosion happened we had never heard of such a thing attempted.

(2.) That all old workings shall be properly stowed or gobbed. This is desirable for safety in long-wall workings, but so long as old workings are adequately ventilated a mine is not necessarily unsafe by reason of old workings being left open. We are of the opinion that the proportion of old workings left open in this colliery was not excessive; moreover, that such as did exist had no influence in extending the explosion and thus increasing the loss of life.

(3.) That a record shall be kept of the number of men in the mine at all times. This also is a reasonable recommendation. In safety-lamp collieries it can be readily carried out provided each person on taking his safety lamp from the lamp room on the surface leaves in its place a token or tally with a number corresponding to that of his safety lamp.

(4.) We do not agree with the jury that the workmen's inspections are worthless; on the contrary we think that, when properly carried out, as they generally are in South Wales and Monmouthshire, they cannot fail to do much good.

In concluding this Report we take the opportunity of impressing on owners and managers of mines the urgent necessity that exists for dispensing with the use of explosives as far as possible, and that where used only the safest that can be obtained should be allowed or used.

We also recommend that all shots should be properly tamped with clay and fired

by electricity; and that blasting should only be carried on while not more than 10 person are in the mine.

It does not appear that gunpowder was used in the Albion Colliery. It is, however, largely used in many collieries in South Wales and in some other districts, even where the mines were fiery and worked with safety lamps, as well as being dry and dusty.

We think that blasting with gunpowder and other flaming explosives should be abolished altogether in the workings of such mines.

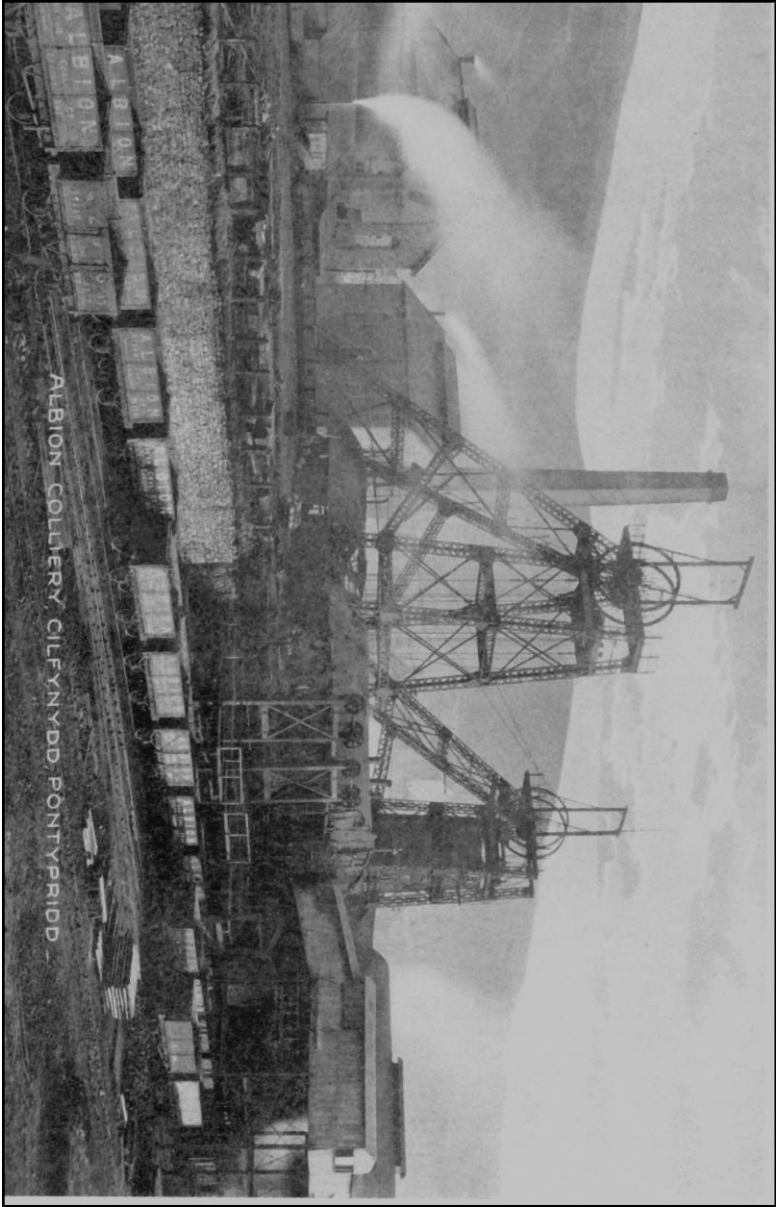
With regard to dealing with coal dust in mines we are of the opinion that all main roads should be systematically watered, and that dust thus damped should be frequently removed from the roads and sent out of the mine.

We also recommend that all safety lamps should be provided and maintained by the colliery owners, and not be, as at the Albion Colliery, the property of the workmen. In this matter of safety-lamp regulations there appears to have been considerable laxity on the part of the management, inasmuch as the manager stated that the rules of the colliery and his orders were that no lamp in use at the mine should be taken away from the premises, but this was not carried out, it being alleged that there was not sufficient provision for cleaning and trimming the number in use at the colliery.

We have, &c. (Signed) **J. T. Robson, Henry Hall Joseph S. Martin**
To the Right. Hon. H. H. Asquith, Q. C; M. P; Her Majesty's Principal
Secretary of State, Home Department, Whitehall.



Owen Morgan (Morien) Newspaper reporter



Another view of the Albion Colliery c.1910

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Meanwhile, back in the colliery the officials were finding themselves with other sorts of problems within and outside the colliery: -

The Cilfynydd tips

The '*Glamorgan Free Press*' of Saturday Sept. 15th reported: - In a recent issue of the '*Free Press*' attention was called to the nuisance caused by the above tips, and on Friday last Mr. L. Gordon Lenox, at the Local Board meeting, alluded to the nuisance at Cilfynydd caused by the smoking of the tips belonging to the colliery. In company with a stipendiary and Mr. T. P. Jenkins, he was driving that way that morning and they were almost suffocated. It was a public nuisance, and being so near to the houses it was an intolerable nuisance. It was poisonous sulphur, and was deleterious to the health of the children. Mr. Roberts said that people had written to the press upon the matter. The clerk said that he did not think that they could take proceedings against the Public Health Act; and apply for an injunction. Mr. Roberts suggested that a stream of water would put it out but Mr. Bramwell said he knew of places where water had been applied for six months with very little effect. In time it would put itself out. Mr. James Roberts proposed that they write to the colliery company asking them to abate the nuisance. Mr. Lenox seconded and it was carried.

Decision to prosecute

Home Secretary will take action

On Friday, September 21st 1894, the '*Standard*' newspaper announced that the Home Secretary had decided to institute a prosecution against some of the authorities of the Albion Colliery in respect of offences represented to have been committed on the day of the explosion in June last, by which many lives were lost. The charges formulated are in reference to shot-firing and other alleged non-compliance with the provisions of the Act. The colliers of the district are memorialising for a special inquiry.

Five summonses issued

We learn on the highest authority that Messrs Strick and Bellingham, solicitors, Swansea, have been instructed by the home Office to conduct a prosecution against the Albion Colliery Company, Pontypridd, and their officials, for alleged violations of the Mines Act on the 23rd June last, the day of the disaster, which involved the loss of 290 lives. Five summonses have accordingly been issued - one against the Albion Company, one against Mr. W. Lewis (the Agent), one against Mr. Philip Jones (the colliery manager), and one against Mr. William

Jones, in which they are each charged with several offences, the most important of which is perhaps of allowing shot-firing on the day of the explosion when more than ten men were in the pit. Another summons is against William Anstes, shotman, and he, it is understood, is charged with having carried into the pit a larger quantity of explosives than the Act allowed.

The prosecution case is instituted in the name of Mr. J. T. Robson, H. M.'s Mines Inspector for South Wales, and summonses will probably be served tomorrow (Saturday).

In view of the terrible loss of life at the Albion Colliery, and the evidence which was given up at the subsequent Coroner's Inquiry, it is suggestive to find the men at a neighbouring colliery have accepted a months notice to end contracts, rather than give precedence to high explosives over gunpowder. Experts generally admit that in blasting the flameless explosives have special value, but those most concerned appear the least sensitive to the fact.

The persistency of officials condemned

The same newspaper of Saturday Sept. 29th reported: - The question of the double- shift system was discussed at the monthly meeting of the Cambrian Miners Association on Monday last. Mr. William Evans, the sub-agent, in the course of an address to the delegates expressed his sorrow that matters were in a very unsatisfactory state at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, owing to the persistency of the officials in re- introducing the double-shift system.

It had recently been denied by one of the officials of the Albion, in the course of an interview with a representative that the system was in vogue there, but he, Mr. Evans, had heard from a reliable source that from 400 to 500 tons of coal were being raised at the Albion every night. He regretted having to report this, especially in view of the terrible calamity which had recently happened in that colliery. The workmen were certainly strongly of the opinion that the double-shift system was not conducive to the safety of a mine.

He (the speaker) had been asked to address a meeting of the night and day men at the Albion this week, and he sincerely trusted that some steps would be taken to put an end to the double-shift system, which was so bitterly opposed by the workmen. It was, he said, to be deplored that officials at this particular colliery clung to a system which was so bitterly opposed by the men.

Dispute at the Albion Colliery

The '*Glamorgan Free Press*' of Saturday Oct 13th reported: - The men employed

at the Albion Colliery were idle on Friday in consequence, it was stated, of a dispute about double-shift and the alleged 'sponging' in the collieries at night. A general meeting of the workmen was held in the afternoon in the Workmen's Hall in the locality to hear Mr. Ben Davies and Mr. W. Evans, agents of the miners. It was eventually decided the agents should interview Mr. Henry Lewis, agent of the colliery, respecting the grievances, we understand that the dispute has now been settled.

Prosecution of officials

On Wednesday, October 17th 1894 the charges instituted by the Home Secretary against the owners and officials of the Albion Colliery Co., Pontypridd, for alleged offences against the Mines Act on the day of the recent disastrous explosion at that colliery, came in for hearing at the Pontypridd Police Court at 11 a.m. Intense interest was evinced in the cases, and the precincts were crowded, a large number of miners having assembled from various parts of the district around.

The magistrates on the bench were Mr. Ignatius Williams (stipendiary), Mr. T. P. Jenkins, Mr. Richard Lewis, Mr. Evan John, and Capt. Williams, who later in the day were joined by Mr. Dunn and Mr. William Williams. Others present in court were Mr. J. T. Robson, H. M. Inspector of Mines for South Wales; Mr. Fred Gray, Mr. J. M. Sims and Mr. Frank Adams, Assistant-Inspectors of Mines; Mr. E. D. Reece, coroner; Capt. Lester Lewis, Ynysfeio; Mr. D. Hannah, M. E. agent of the Ferndale Collieries; Mr. T. Griffiths M. E. agent of the Cymmer Collieries, Mr. W. Evans, agent of the Cambrian Association of Miners; Mr. S. Shipton, foreman of the coroner's jury; and Mr. Ben Davies, Miners' Federation. Mr. Henry Lewis, Tyr'nant, the managing director of the company was accommodated with a seat at the solicitor's table, and so also was Mr. William Lewis, the agent, another of the defendants, while Mr. Philip Jones (the manager), Mr. William Jones (the under-manager) and Mr. William Anstes (the shotman), all of whom were defendants, sat in the body of the court.

The charges

There were three summonses - one each against the Albion Steam Coal Company Ltd., Mr. Williams Lewis (the agent of the company), and Mr. Philip Jones (the certified manager of the colliery), the charge in each case being: -

"That they, being owners, agent, and the manager of the colliery unlawfully did contravene and did not comply with rule 12, sub-rule 1, sub-heads 1 & 2 of the General Rules of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887 to be observed at the same mine by you, to wit, in allowing a shot to be fired in such mine in a dry and dusty place, part of a main haulage road or place contiguous thereto, and showing

dust adhering to the roof and sides, neither of the conditions mentioned in sub-head (B) 1 & 2 of such rule being observed, and all workmen not having been removed from the seam in which the shot was to be fired, and from all seams communicating with the shaft on the same level, except the men engaged in firing the shot, and such other persons not exceeding ten as were necessarily employed in attending to the ventilating, furnaces, steam boilers, engines, machinery, mending apparatus, signals, or horses, or inspecting the mine.”

There were other charges against William Jones, the under-manager, and Mr. William Anstes, the shotman, but it was agreed to take the first case against the owners. (Reported the ‘*Western Mail*’).

Case for the prosecution

Mr. Roskill, in opening, said the proceedings were instituted against the owners, manager, and agent under section 12, sub-rule 1, sub-heads 1 & 2 of the Coal Mines Regulation Act. On the 23rd June - the day of the explosion blasting took place in the mine during the shift, and as against the owners, agent, and manager, the framing of the summons was under section 50 of the Act, viz.: -

Every person who contravenes or does not comply with any of the general rules in this Act shall be guilty of an offence against the Act, and in the event of any contravention or non-compliance with any of the said general rules in the case of any mine to which this act applies, by any person whatsoever, the owner, agent, and manager shall each be guilty of an offence against this Act unless he proves that he had taken all reasonable precautions by publishing and to this best of his power enforcing the said rules and regulations for the working of the mine, to prevent such contravention or non-compliance.

The Stipendiary: - “Your contention is that they had allowed shot-firing and they had not taken every possible means to prevent an explosion?”

Mr. Roskill said that the substance of the charge, or this particular portion of it, was this - that on the 23rd of June shots were undoubtedly fired at the point marked ‘C’ on the plan, on the Cilfynydd side of the colliery, after the night shift had gone down. These prosecutions had been instituted by the direction of the Secretary of State, in consequence of what had transpired at the recent protracted inquiry into the appalling disaster at the colliery. It would be shown that about five weeks before the explosion a change was made in the hour as to which the night shift descended on Saturdays. Prior to that, the day shift on Saturdays ended at two o’clock and the night shift began at three, but after the change the hours were so altered that the night shift descended at two o’clock, so that there was no interval at all between the day shift and the night shift on Saturdays.

It was usual in this mine to do whatever blasting was necessary on Saturdays, and Morgan Dyer, the day fireman of the Cilfynydd side, would tell the court that on the day of the explosion he was instructed that certain shots were to be fired at point 'C' in six pieces of timber. The holes were bored by William Anstes, the chargeman, against whom a summons was issued for another offence. Dyer on this Saturday came to the pit top at 2.05 and there saw John Evans, the night overman, and David Griffiths, the fireman, both of whom were now dead. Before Griffiths and Evans went down, as John Howell, the banksman, would inform the Bench, the day men were coming out and the night men were going down, and crossed each other on the way; so that there was no interval whatever between the shifts. Griffiths, in the ordinary course of his duties, had first to lock the lamps at the lamp-station after he went down, and the earliest possible time at which he could have reached point 'C,' where blasting took place, was 2.40 p.m.; for this distance between the lamp-station and point 'C' was 792 yards 36 chains.

After the explosion these shots all seemed to be fired, and that they were fired by Griffiths would be proved in this way: - In the first place, it was his duty to fire them, and then there was a fall of roof at that point. Under that fall there was one dram partially filled with rubbish, and the timberman and his 'butty' were both found dead there, clearly showing that the work upon which they had been engaged was clearing the fall caused by the shots. The body of Griffiths himself was found 190 yards beyond that fall. He (Mr. Roskill) would not suggest that these shots caused the explosion.

It was proved at the coroner's inquiry that there was no interval between the shifts on Saturdays, and of all the officials of the mine, one only had the candour and the courage to say that he overlooked the question of the blasting when the night shift was altered, and that was Mr. Henry Lewis. The instructions to the firemen with regard to shot-firing was that they must fire shots only between shifts, and he would put in a certificate dated 10th of April 1892, in which Morgan Dyer and Edward Rees were appointed firemen, and in which the instructions were distinctly given - "No shot-firing except between shifts."

It would be proved in evidence that no fresh instructions were issued to the firemen after the change of shift was made, "that the necessary precautions had not been observed when the shot-firing took place, and that neither the manager nor the under-manager had ever been present on a single occasion when shots in timber were blasted in the mine."

Mr. Roskill argued that, so far as these facts were imposed or created liability against owners, agent, or manager, there was ample authority showing the nature and effect of section 50, and he need only refer to the case of *Wynne v Forester*, in which Lord Coleridge said: -

“It was intended to compel strict and constant attention by the heads of these establishments by making the agents as well as managers, personally liable unless they can show they have done their best to enforce the performance of the regulations by their subordinates. If they show this, they will be exempt from liability, but prima facie they are held to be responsible.”

Mr. Abel Thomas pointed out that this referred only to agent and manager, and had no reference to owners. The stipendiary: - “It is rather new, this. One can scarcely see how it comes against the owner.”

Mr. Abel Thomas: - “My friend will have to prove who the owners are.”

Mr. Roskill: - “I will deal with that point directly.” The case against the owners was then proceeded with.

Mr. J. T. Robson, H. M. Inspector of Mines, was then sworn, and then gave evidence proving the plan of the colliery now produced in court.

The day foreman

Morgan Dyer, the day foreman on the Cilfynydd side, stated that he was down the mine on the day of the explosion, 23rd June. He came out about four or five minutes past 2 o’clock. He had been at the point ‘C’ marked on the plan produced, where the timbers which had been prepared for shots stood. He saw David Griffiths, night foreman, on top of the pit. Griffiths was killed in the explosion. He saw timber down and a lot of rubbish, and he noticed as well that all the shots had been fired. He found the body of the haulier and the carcass of a horse and a part of another body and the body of a labourer there.

They found the timberman’s tools there, and his body was there, and his booty’s also. The body of David Griffiths, night fireman, was 190 yards away from where the timbers prepared for shots were. That part of the mine was naturally dry, but was kept moist by watering. Tanks and barrels were used for watering the mine. They splashed the sides and roof with their hands, and also with buckets. He had seen the place watered that day where the timbers were, about half-past 1 o’clock. It was possible to water the place satisfactorily in that manner. He was quite satisfied with the system of watering adopted in the mine.

Cross-examine by Mr. Abel Thomas: - A great number of falls had occurred in the main roadways. There were a number of falls where the timbers had stood. He had not examined the timbers. He had not seen any sign of any shots in the timbers that were down because he did not examine them particularly. He assumed that the shots had been fired. The right time to fire the shots according to the instructions he had received was between shifts. He did not know whether the

particular shots at point 'C' had been fired at all. The explosion might have fired them.

Mr. Robson recalled

Mr. Robson, Inspector of Mines, was recalled, and deposed that he had not the slightest doubt in his mind that shots had been fired. The stipendiary: - "We cannot accept that; you must give us your reason."

Witness (continuing) observed that the place where the timbers were was pointed out to him. There was a fall close by. By the side of the fan the body of a horse. The bodies of two men had been removed. Close by was a dram full of stones which had been clearly been filled by hand. The manager and three or four mining engineers were with him. It was apparent there that the shots, with one exception, had not been fired on Grover's side. The legs were standing. One shot out of five had no doubt been fired by the explosion. He did not see the timbers at point 'C' because there was still a large quantity of rubbish down there. The manager of the colliery had admitted to him that there had been shot-firing at point 'C.' Mr. Abel Thomas remarked that statement was very improper. They were trying a very different thing now to what they were trying at the inquest.

Cross-examined by Mr. Abel Thomas, witness said that there was no doubt Mr. William Lewis, the agent of the colliery, was a skilful mining engineer, and were he (witness) in a company he would not hesitate to appoint him agent. Mr. Philip Jones also, the manager, no doubt was a first-class man and a good practical miner. He (witness) went down the mine believing that these shots had been fired, and he repeated that the condition of the timber pointed to him that they had been fired. He could not see that there were any shots in the timber, but the collars were down and the arms were standing, and it was the identical place pointed out by the fireman as the place where the timbers had been charged.

Mr. Thomas: - "You went there with a preconceived opinion" The stipendiary: - "He has admitted that."

Witness, qualifying his previous statement, said that only some of the arms were standing on the left-hand side.

Mr. Thomas: - "If there had been shots in the arms the arms would not they have been left standing?" - "Very likely."

"Then the timbers were no indication to you of shots having been fired?" - "No, except that the collars were down."

"But I put it to you that it might have occurred in any fall. Was that not the very place you would expect to come down if an explosion happened?" - "Yes, one of the places."

Witness was closely cross-examined on this point, but adhered to his statement that the position of the horses, the repairers, and the drams showed to him clearly that those timbers had come out and the stones had fallen before the explosion, otherwise these things would not have been there. He was as sure as he could be without knowing it that there could have been no ripping top at this point. Re-examined, Mr. Robson gave it as his opinion that the system of watering at this mine, as described by Dyer, when shots were to be fired, was not a proper one.

To Mr. Abel Thomas, witness said that watering should be done according to the Act. Bottoms, sides, and top could not possibly have been sufficiently wetted by the system. Of his own knowledge he never knew gelignite or gelatine to explode gas. He had heard also that from experiments it had been found impossible to explode coal dust with either of these explosives. Mr. Abel Thomas quoted subsection 2 of section G. *“Unless the explosives employed in firing the shots is so used with water or other contrivance as to prevent it from inflaming gas or dust, or is of such a nature that it cannot inflame gas or dust.”*

The stipendiary: - “Do you suggest that watering is not required if that is done?” -

Mr. Thomas: - “No, sir; the watering is done, but if we use an explosive which won’t explode gas and we water, we are not in the wrong, sir.”

Mr. Robson said that experience had shown that these explosives were no better than gunpowder.

To Mr. Abel Thomas, he admitted that when the shot was properly tamped the liability to inflame would not be so great.

Evidence of the shotman

William Anstes, employed in charging shots, deposed that the charges were stemmed by horse refuse or damped clay. The shot-holes were about nine or ten inches deep. The cartridges were put down right to the bottom. Between the mouth of the hole and the top of the cartridge there was a space of about six inches, so the cartridge would fill in about three inches down in the bottom of the hole. About three or four inches of stemming would be put in on top of it. He had been stemming shots, for many years. He had never known shots fired between the shifts.

The managing owner

Mr. Henry Lewis, managing owner of the colliery, and one of the shareholders of the company, was next called. He stated that it was not necessary to give fresh instructions to the firemen respecting shot-firing when the alteration of the time of the night shift was made. Mr. Roskill: - “Did you say to me that you had overlooked the whole question of blasting?”

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "May I ask where was the conversation?"

Mr. Roskill to witness: - "Did you say at the inquiry that you had overlooked the whole question of blasting?"

Mr. Abel Thomas, interposing again, remarked that this was an astonishing way of trying to prove a case against 400 or 500 people.

Mr. Roskill: - "We can't have the whole of the 400 here."

The stipendiary: - "I should not think that the evidence against him would be against the others."

Mr. Thomas: - "I ask Mr. Lewis not to answer." Mr. Lewis: - "I shall follow the advice of my counsel."

The adjournment then took place for luncheon.

After the adjournment, Mr. Roskill asked whether the Bench agreed with him as to the construction of the rule as to tamping

The stipendiary remarked that the first thing to prove was that shot-firing actually took place. There seemed to be no doubt that there were men down in the pit at the time spoken of.

Mr. Roskill said that the difficulty in proving the shot-firing was that all the men engaged were dead.

The stipendiary: - "And if there is no evidence called we cannot convict."

Mr. Roskill was about calling Mr. T. J. Hughes, shorthand writer, to prove a statement made by Mr. Henry Lewis, the managing director at the inquest when Mr. Abel Thomas objected, and argued that a statement made by any member of a limited liability company could not be used as evidence against the company itself. That would not apply even to civil proceedings, still less would it apply to criminal proceedings. The stipendiary stated that Mr. Lewis was not the entity now prosecuted; he was merely a shareholder in the company.

Mr. Roskill replied that evidence against any one person constituting that entity would be admissible, and Mr. Lewis was a person constituting that statutory entity. Mr. Lewis, whether as owner or shareholder, was a managing director, and therefore an agent within the meaning of the Act. If there was any doubt, he would ask his worship now to grant a summons against Mr. Henry Lewis as an agent.

The stipendiary disapproved of such double-barrelled proceedings, and he very much doubted whether he could grant such a summons. In any event it would involve an adjournment, so that Mr. Lewis should not be prejudiced. Mr. Abel Thomas pointed out that, according to section 2, complaint must be made within three months of the date when complaint arose.

The stipendiary: - "Then it can't be done." Mr. Roskill further pressed his point

and asked the Bench to make a note of it. He submitted that the evidence of Mr. Lewis as director was evidence on proceedings under the Act against the owners as body corporate for an offence against the Act.

The stipendiary said that they could not disassociate Mr. Henry Lewis from the Albion Steam Colliery. The information was against the Albion Steam Colliery in its corporate capacity, and they either stood or fell together.

Mr. Abel Thomas said that the real question was whether a statement made by a director in other proceedings was evidence in this case.

Mr. Roskill said he did not propose calling additional evidence against the owners, and was about addressing the court, when Mr. Abel Thomas interposed and objected to such a proceeding as irregular.

The defence

Mr. Abel Thomas then addressed the Bench for the defence, and pointed out at the outset why he dwelt on the tamping question was that under sub-head 1 of subsection H of rule 12 under which the prosecution proceeded, if the company had properly watered, and had used an explosive, or used it in such a way that it would not cause gas to inflame, there was no offence. He (Mr. Thomas) would not, however, trouble the Bench with this, for he considered he had the complete answer to the charge outside this. With regard to the facts of the case, there were two answers which he considered conclusive. In the first place, he submitted that the prosecution had entirely failed to prove there had been any contravention of the Act. He had utterly failed to prove that there was any shot-firing that afternoon whilst there were persons employed in the mine. But assuming that there had been a contravention, then the owner, agent, and manager should be guilty of an offence against the Act, unless they could prove that they had taken all reasonable means by publishing and to the best of their power enforcing such rules and regulations for the working of the mine.

There was nothing, the learned barrister declared, that a limited liability company could do except to appoint properly qualified officers to carry on the work of the colliery, and Mr. Robson himself admitted that the agent and manager of the colliery were excellent officials. It was too farcical to suggest that by some means or other a man down in South-west Pembroke, who had a £5 share in the Albion Colliery Co.; should come up to the colliery and go down the pit to find out if they carried on the work properly. All the company could do was to appoint properly qualified officials. They had done this, and it was too ridiculous under the circumstances to suggest that they were now liable because somebody had committed an offence against the Act.

The company had also published the rules in a prominent place. He (the speaker) asked their worships to say upon these summonses it was perfectly clear a

prosecution never ought to have been brought, and that the company were not liable for the offence with which they were charged. Further, he submitted again that the prosecution had utterly failed to prove that there ever was a shot fired in this one place on the 23rd June, but whether there was, or whether there was not, it was absolutely certain the company, as owners, would not be liable. Of course, if their worships found that the prosecution had failed to prove shot firing, then he took it that they would affect not only the summons but also four other summonses, all of which must fall on one ground.

Undoubtedly an impression had got abroad that the shots were fired by David Griffiths some time on June 23rd, and before the explosion. No one knew better than their worships how impressions of that kind did get abroad, which were wholly without foundation simply because somebody thought there had been an arrangement for those shots to have taken place. Once a man had formed an opinion of that kind it was difficult for him to form an opinion with a free and open mind and to come to a true conclusion as to what had taken place.

It was clear that Mr. Robson, when he went down this unfortunate pit, had heard that the shots were fired, and he came to the conclusion that they had been fired. No doubt Mr. Robson believed now as strongly as he believed anything in the world that shot-firing took place there, but their worships would have to go upon the facts as they were proved before them. Morgan Dyer had evidently made up his mind about it. He told the counsel for the prosecution that he could point to the spot, within a yard or so, where the collars were, and Mr. Robson said he was not sure of the spot, but thought he had found the place.

This is exactly what would have happened, for in a long parting like this, where there were several falls, it could be very difficult indeed for a man to put his hand on the proper place where he saw a shot, and say if, as Mr. Robson alleged, he finally did point out the arms, then most certainly three shots were not fired, for the object of the shot would be to burst the arm asunder and to break it, and yet according to the evidence there were two of these very arms standing with three feet of them showing up above the fall, and showing that they had never been broken. Mr. Roskill said that the shots in those particular areas might have blown out.

Mr. Abel Thomas said it was absurd to suggest that the hole in timber loaded with a shot of dynamite stood the same chance of blowing out instead of bursting the stick itself, stemming or no stemming. The very fact that the arms were found there in the way described was the strongest argument in the world to show that they were not fired at all. One of the poor fellows was found under a fall at this spot. How did he get there? If the fall was caused by shot firing, then this man must have been standing there when the top fell down upon him. If the fall was

caused by the explosion, he very likely would have been standing there. Then, as to the dram. If these men had shot timber, the probability would be that the drams could not have been got close up. When properly looked at, every fact brought up by the prosecution was more consistent with the supposition that there was no shot firing rather than with the supposition that there had been.

It is now known that it would have been Griffiths's duty sometime that day to fire two shots in the Bodwenarth district. These shots were not fired. Why, then, should it be assumed that he had fired shots which were a bit lower down? The probability would be that he would have gone to the furthest part first, and then worked backwards. He strongly maintained that the prosecution had utterly failed to prove their case. Then, as to the certificates produced, there was, he argued, no necessity to change the instructions to the firemen, for even Morgan Dyer told them that there was no shot fired between the shifts since the Saturday shift had taken place.

Evidence of the company's secretary

Mr. David Ellis, the secretary of the Albion Steam Coal Company Ltd. said that copies of the special rules and of the general rules were hung up in prominent places in and about the mine. Cross-examined by Mr. Roskill witness said he had nothing to do with managing the mine. Mr. Roskill, dealing with the point of law raised by Mr. Abel Thomas, argued that the owners of the colliery must stand or fall with the responsibilities of negligence of those that they appoint.

The decision

The magistrates having consulted together, the stipendiary said: - "We all think there is not sufficient evidence to convict the company upon a criminal charge of this sort. There are facts that lead to the idea that the shots may have gone out, because active preparations were made for it and watering had taken place, and the man whose duty it was to do it had passed the spot where they intended to do it, but with this exception, the circumstances connected with the locality itself throw no light upon this at all. That being so, it really is a case of mere suspicion. I really think, too, that upon the point of law there is not a sufficient case against them as owners, and that they have done all that they could do." Mr. Roskill: - "You find for the company upon the facts?" - The stipendiary: - "Yes." The case against the Albion Colliery Company was then dismissed.

The case against the manager

The case against Mr. Philip Jones, manager of the colliery, was next proceeded with, the summons against him being identical with that against the company. Mr. Roskill, in his opening remarks, said he wished to put before their worships the admission made to him at the inquest by the manager - that the timbers had been blasted. Not only was there a strong suspicion that the timbers had been blasted at point 'C,' but, in the absence of the men who lost their lives there, no better evidence could be procured than what he would bring before their worships. There had not been a suggestion that the timbers had not been blasted.

The stipendiary: - "The object of charging the timbers with dynamite was to burst open the pillars or posts. Two pillars were standing, and was it likely that they had resisted the blasting?" Mr. Roskill said that Mr. Robson stated that dynamite with stemming in such holes would produce a blown-out shot and blown-out flame the same as gunpowder would.

A shorthand writer called

Mr. T. J. Hughes, shorthand writer, engaged by the Home Office at the inquest, was called to produce his notes of the evidence of Mr. Jones, manager of the colliery. Mr. Roskill produced a type-written transcript and read out the following extract: - Question to Mr. Jones at the inquest. - "You admit there has been blasting in Cilfynydd?" - "Yes, in Cilfynydd."

Mr. Roskill: - "Do you then accept my suggestion that sometime in the afternoon shots had been fired?" - "Yes, at 2 o'clock."

"Why do you say at 2 o'clock?" - "All I can say is that Anstes told me that John Evans had told him to put the holes down at 2 o'clock."

Roskill: - "These shots were in the Cilfynydd?" - Mr. Jones: - "In the Cilfynydd."

Other evidence

William Anstes was next examined. He said he had been ordered to bore holes and charge them at point 'C' by John Evans. But John Evans had not told him when they were to be fired. He left the pit about half-past one on the day of the explosion, but he did not know whether they would be fired in the ordinary course that afternoon. He had not told Jones that timbers had been blasted at two o'clock, but very likely he told him that he had been ordered by John Evans to bore and charge them. The charges of dynamite invariably split the timber. He had never known dynamite failing to do so. He had never known shots being fired during the shifts. He had known shots allowed to remain not fired from half-past one until 8 o'clock in the evening, but could not give a date.

The stipendiary: - "Assuming that Griffiths, the fireman who was killed, was found 190 yards from point 'C,' would you assume that he was going to Bodwenarth?" - Witness: - "I can't say."

The stipendiary: - "Have you ever known him firing shots in the locality of 'C' the same evening that he would fire in the Bodwenarth district?" - Witness: - "No."

Mr. Robson, Inspector of Mines, was next called. He said it was not safe to leave the shots unfired in a hole in the road. He had never heard before the explosion at the Albion Colliery that shot-firing was carried out in timber. He had not known shots being left unfired at the face of the coal. He considered that to leave shots unfired in haulage roads was most dangerous, because a malicious person might ignite the charges. The fuse attached to the charge was hanging out of the charging hole, and something might fall upon it causing an ignition. But there was nothing, as far as he could remember, in the rules of the colliery or Mines Regulations Act against leaving shots unfired. An abstract of the special rules was posted up at the colliery. Mr. Jones, manager of the colliery, was, in his opinion, a very competent man. And he thought the deceased, John Evans, overman, was an experienced collier. Witness then repeated his evidence in the previous case.

Morgan Dyer, day fireman on the day of the explosion, was next examined. When he was leaving his district to come out of the pit, he noticed six timbers charged with shots.

The stipendiary: - "I think you told us that Griffiths's body was found 192 yards from point 'C', and that distance would be about one-eighth of a mile or rather less. That distance was about two or three minutes' walk from point 'C'?" - "Yes." "Supposing Griffiths had exploded the charge just before he started to walk, would there have been time to bring a dram there and load the dram to such an extent as it was loaded in two or three minutes?" - "No, sir."

"What time was necessary?" - "Half-an-hour of threequarters of an hour."

Anstes, recalled, said he could not remember when it was he told Mr. Philip Jones the holes had been bored and charged.

The decision

The stipendiary then delivered judgment, as stated: - "We are of the opinion that there is not sufficient evidence to convict here. The prosecution labour under great difficulty. They are bound to call the employees of the company, but after all we go according to the evidence, and not upon anything else.

There is a difference from the other case in this; that there is supposed to have been a confession or an admission by Mr. Philip Jones, but when we came to test it, it amounts to nothing more than Mr. Philip Jones had heard something from

Anstes before he made the statement to Mr. Robson, which led him to come to the same conclusion; but he drew his conclusion such as it was from what is in evidence now. We had got Anstes' first-hand, and therefore it comes to very little."

"Then there is the further point that no doubt half or threequarters of an hour's work had been done in filling this dram after the timber came down. It is admitted that if it was done at all it was done by Griffiths, and the probability is that Griffiths had only passed that spot two or three minutes before, so that he could not have fired the shot in passing, because threequarters of an hours work had been done after the collar came down." The case against Mr. Philip Jones was dismissed.

Mr. Roskill: - "Your worship will see the position those who have instructed me are placed in. It is a position which clearly imposes the obligation upon the other side of clearing themselves from what is, in our opinion, a very strong presumption that there was something wrong at that point."

Summons withdrawn

Continuing, Mr. Roskill said: - "After what has fallen from your worships with regard to the management, I do not feel justified in going on with the summons against the agent, Mr. William Lewis, because the evidence against the agent is no stronger than that against the manager."

The stipendiary: - "Weaker, I should say, for in his case there is no admission. Further, section 58, to my mind, more materially protects the agent than it does the manager." The court then adjourned until 11 o'clock Thursday morning, when summonses would be heard against Mr. William Jones, the under-manager, for '*neglecting to see that the officials employed under him understood their duties,*' and against Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, and Mr. William Anstes, the shotman, for '*alleged illegal storing of explosives in the mine.*'

Further prosecutions

Alleged illegal storing of explosives - Charges against the under-manager

Further proceedings against officials of the Albion Colliery Company for alleged breaches of the Mines Act on the 23rd June last, the day of the explosion, were heard on Thursday, October 18th at the Pontypridd Police Court. Mr. Ignatius Williams (stipendiary) presided, and other magistrates on the Bench being Mr. Evan John, Mr. T. B. Jenkins, and Mr. Richard Lewis.

The charge against Anstes

Mr. Roskill said he would first proceed with a charge against William Anstes, the chargeman, who was charged with having on the 23rd June, *“he then being a charge- man, at the Albion Colliery unlawfully did contravene and did not comply with general rule 12 sub-head (a), of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887 to be observed at the said mine by you, as such chargeman, by storing or permitting or allowing to be stored in the mine a quantity of explosive substance - to wit, 23lbs. of gelatine dynamite and gelignite.”*

There was also a like charge against Mr. Philip Jones, the manager. Mr. Roskill said that Anstes as chargeman had the custody of the explosives for the purpose of charging the holes, and he said in his evidence before the Coroner that he got dynamite and different kinds of gelatine from the magazine, which was above ground, and kept them in a box on the double-parting on the Cilfynydd main level. The box was kept locked, with the key hanging at the end of it. Fuses and caps were kept in another box three yards away, and the key of this box was kept with that of the other. It was thus open to anyone to unlock the box and help themselves to the explosives. Anstes further admitted in his evidence that any man could go to the box without coming to him, and that the reason for keeping the key there was that he was afraid of losing it. That was no answer. After the explosion there was no less than 23lbs. of explosives found in this box. Happily, none of it had been exploded by the explosion.

The only excuse Anstes gave for having this excessive quantity of explosives kept below - a clear infringement of general rule 12, sub-head (a). was that he had four shifts in front of him before he could get more explosives, because of the Sunday intervening, the explosion having taken place on the Saturday. Anstes further said that he knew it was wrong, and said this was the first time he had kept a large amount of explosives in the box below. So far as that statement went the excuse was worthless, for he had four shifts in front of him every Saturday. The last time he had taken a canister of 5lb. prior to the explosion was a few days before the Saturday, and then he only took one tin, thus clearly showing that there must have been a considerable quantity stored in the box earlier in the week.

Mr. J. T. Hughes, a shorthand writer engaged by the Home Office, was called to produce his notes of Anstes's evidence at the inquest. Anstes was employed in the colliery as a chargeman on the day of the explosion. Mr. Roskill read out an extract of the evidence from the notes, the substance of which was that Anstes said he had been employed as a chargeman a little over two years in the colliery, and it was his duty to drill and charge the holes, and he got the explosives from the store. He had dynamite of different kinds, and gelatine explosive as well. He had no black or compressed powder. Having had the explosives from the stores,

he would take it down the pit, and keep it in boxes at the head of the double-parting on the Cilfynydd side. It was between the lamp-station and the stables the box was kept, and it was locked. The key of the box was hung up by the end, and it was not difficult to find it. He was in the colliery on the day of the explosion, and he charged shots that day at the far end of the double-parting.

He drilled the holes in the timber with an augur, which was kept in the box containing the explosives. If a man went to that box he would find the key, and could help himself to dynamite if he wished. He did not keep the fuse and blasting caps in the box containing the explosives, but they were kept in another box three yards further on. He had kept that quantity of explosives, namely, 23lbs; in the box because he had four shifts in front of him in consequence of it being Sunday the following day. That was the only reason he assigned for having the extra quantity. He knew he was allowed by law to keep only 5 pounds at one time in the mine. He had never fired a shot himself. Witness then described how the shots were fired.

He got the explosives from the storekeeper, John Jones, but Jones did not give him 23lbs. at a time. He took upon himself all the responsibility of keeping that extra quantity.

Mr. J. T. Robson, Inspector of Mines, was next witness. He stated that on the Thursday following the day of the explosion the box containing the explosives was pointed out to him by Anstes. The manager (Mr. Philip Jones) had told him before he (witness) had gone down the mine that the quantity of explosives had been discovered. The box had been shattered by the explosion. Having cleared away the rubbish on the spot, he took away the canisters one by one containing explosives. There were four tins - three containing 5lbs. each, and the fourth 8½lbs. The stipendiary remarked that this 8lb tin was also illegal. Mr. Roskill: - "It is certainly a startling piece of news for me."

Cross-examined by Mr. Abel Thomas, witness added he was sure this box was shattered when he found it.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "It is not a fact that 50 men could have taken 5lbs. each of the explosives down to the mine without infringing the law?" - Mr. Roskill objected to the question as being a question of law, and not of fact.

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "You know nothing of the law in the Mines Act, Mr. Robson." (Laughter.)

Mr. Roskill: - "I object to that also."

Mr. Abel Thomas then gave it to witness that it would be safer for explosives to be kept like this than for a dozen men, say, to carry 5lbs. each with them, and witness admitted that this would undoubtedly be so.

Mr. Thomas: - "You would agree with me, Mr. Robson, that it would be much

safer for a chargeman, who has other duties such as boring to perform, to put his 5lb. cartridges in this box than to put them in his pocket when working?" - "Certainly." Mr. Thomas: - "Do you know that it was at the suggestion of one of your inspectors, the late Mr. Randall, that these two boxes were placed where they were?" - "I should be very much astonished to hear it."

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "I don't say that he suggested the 23lbs should be put in, but was it not he that suggested, and indeed suggested it also in other collieries as well, that the best plan was to have some other place for explosives to be placed in while the man was doing his work underground?" - "Yes, I know that, and I know that it is done. Each man who uses explosives is provided with a box with a lock and key, so that if a canister containing three or four or five pounds of explosive is not used he may put it in so that no one else can get it."

Mr. Thomas; "Is that not storing?" - "Certainly not. It is kept there during the shift, but that would not be storing within the meaning of the Act."

Mr. Thomas: - "You yourself never heard of this dynamite being in the box until Mr. Philip Jones, the manager, came and told you?" - "Never."

"And it was Anstes, the unfortunate defendant in this case, who was the man who took you to the place?" - "Yes, he went with us."

"So that it was the two men who are charged here today that told you of it?" - "One of them did."

Mr. Abel Thomas then addressed the Bench for the defence. He admitted that the 23lbs of powder were found in his box, but he argued that the prosecution had issued their information under the wrong section, and that the offence charged against Anstes was not 'storing' within the meaning of sub-section (a): "*No explosive substance shall be stored in the mine. It shall not be taken into the mine except in cartridges in a secure case or canister containing no more than 5lbs.*" They must assume that the act was the act of reasonable beings, and really that there was some intention in those clauses. If the prosecution was right in their contention, then the ridiculous conclusion that one came to was that a dozen men in a colliery could have each of them taken a 5lb tin in on the same day to the colliery, and kept it there during the whole day - and there was nothing in the Act to prevent it, but if 5lbs 1oz. were found in a box then it became illegal.

He asked the Bench to decide that by storing - the Act meant storing in the ordinary acceptation - viz., that a mine owner shall not keep his store or magazine as it was called underground. Sub-section (b) read: - "*A workman shall not have in use at the time in any one place more than one of such cases or such canister*", and it seemed to him that if the Secretary of State had proceeded under the sub-section, he might have inculpated Mr. Anstes without any doubt. If the Bench found against him on this point then the learned counsel asked them to bear in

mind that it was Anstes himself who gave information in this case.

The decision

The stipendiary said: - “We are of the opinion that an offence was committed under section ‘A’ rule 12. We do not think that it comes under section (B), as suggested by Mr. Abel Thomas, and for this reason, that we have not the slightest evidence that more than 5lbs was taken down at the time, and therefore if information had been laid against that section the prosecution would have failed.

The question is, ‘*was this storing?*’ The evidence of Anstes was that it had been there some time, and that the last portion was taken down the previous week, when there was already considerable accumulation. Under these circumstances I think it must be considered that this powder was stored in the mine. What the inspector suggested was a perfectly different thing. That there would be temporary deposit while the stuff was in use during the course of one shift. In the opinion of all of us, this is a clear case of storing in the mine. That being so the offence is complete. We consider it rather a bad offence to accumulate a quantity of this sort, and we impose the full penalty of £2.”

Charge against the manager

The next case was then proceeded with, in which the manager, Mr. Philip Jones, was summonsed for allowing or permitting an extra quantity of explosives in the mine. Mr. Roskill, in his opening remarks, said that under sub-section (50) he ought to be held liable, because unless there was control by those in responsible positions, whose duty it was to superintend every detail in the mine like this, it would be impossible to tell what might happen, and that box containing the explosives might have been in the mine at the present time.

Williams Anstes, examined by Mr. Roskill, said that the explosives were given to Mr. Robson after they had been found. He could not say how long the box had been there. The box was in his charge. The place where the explosives were kept was outside the main haulage road. It was on a little way running up about ten yards from the side, or off the main heading. He had received instructions from Mr. Philip Jones as to the quantity of explosives to be kept in the mine, and was distinctly told not to take down at a time more than 5lb. He did not know whether Mr. Jones, the manager, knew he kept more than 5lb. The storekeeper kept an account of the amount sent out, but he had never received from the keeper more than 5lb. at a time.

Cross-examined by Mr. Abel Thomas: - The extra quantity of explosives in the box had gradually accumulated. He did not remember whether it was he that told

Mr. Philip Jones about the excessive quantity in the box.

Re-examined by Mr. Roskill: - Any man could go to the box if he wished. He had been told that explosives had been taken out of the box by persons who had no right to do so. He did not suggest that the manager of the colliery did not know the box was there. He did not remember ever having been to the box in company with the manager. He had never seen the manager at the box.

Mr. Robson examined

Mr. Robson, Inspector of Mines, admitted in cross-examination by Mr. Abel Thomas that it was Mr. Philip Jones who told him about the extra quantity of explosives stored in the mine.

Mr. Roskill; - "Did Mr. Jones when he took you down or when he found this number of canisters tell you that he was unaware of it?" - Mr. Robson: - "No, I naturally concluded - - -"

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "I don't want your natural conclusions."

The Stipendiary: - "Was this spot where the explosives were kept a place where Mr. Jones would go in the ordinary discharge of his duties?"

Witness: - "It was a spot where he could very easily go" - Mr. Abel Thomas; - "It was not his duty to go there."

Witness: - "It was his duty to go everywhere there."

Mr. Abel Thomas (to the Bench): - "I don't know whether you would ask whether Mr. Robson what he really means to say that the manager's duties are that he should go everywhere in the mine." - Mr. Roskill: - "He said so."

Mr. Robson: - "I did not say he should go to every place every day, but I certainly say, as strongly as I can, that the manager should go to every part of the mine."

Mr. Abel Thomas: - "Unless Mr. Robson found his answer upon some rule, or something - -."

The stipendiary: - "What is the ground for saying that? I quite agree with Mr. Thomas that you must have some ground for that."

Mr. Robson: - "The manager is bound to keep supervision, and unless he visits some parts of the mine or other frequently he cannot keep supervision."

Mr. Roskill; - "Special rule 2 states that he must strictly observe and must carry out and provide whatever is necessary for the safety of the colliery in all its parts."

Mr. Robson then, continuing his evidence, stated that any person passing the main haulage road could easily see the box containing the explosives.

Mr. Hughes, shorthand writer, was again called to verify the reading out of a portion of the evidence given by Mr. P. Jones at the inquest. The extract showed

that Mr. Jones was not aware the extra quantity was kept in the mine, and that he took the first opportunity of communicating the fact when discovered to Mr. Robson.

Mr. Abel Thomas, for the defence, asked that as a matter of law that the Bench should declare that no evidence whatever had been offered against Mr. Philip Jones of permitting or allowing the quantity of dynamite to be put in the pit. It was true that had he been charged under section 50 that probably would apply, and he might have been convicted. In a colliery where many hundred acres of the coal had been worked out it was impossible for the manager to know exactly what took place in each particular instance. He was not charged with giving wrong instruction to Anstes or anyone else; he was charged with storing or allowing to be stored this 23lbs. There was no evidence of that.

The Stipendiary: - "No, not unless it can be shown he has neglected to give instructions as to how the surplus explosives were to be disposed of. It is admitted that the chargeman might want more or less than 5lbs; and that being so, it may be suggested that Mr. Philip Jones ought to having given express directions as to where to put these balances; and that in not doing so he might be said to have permitted or allowed it."

Mr. Abel Thomas replied that Mr. Robson had himself said the manager came to him directly he found out about this box, so that it was evident Mr. Jones knew nothing of it until after the explosion, and when he found it there, like an honest man he at once told the inspector. Mr. Jones could not be said to have allowed the storing to take place, but because he called the attention of Mr. Robson to it immediately he was informed of it, it was clear Mr. Jones did not know of it up to that time.

Mr. Roskill suggested that if there was any irregularity in the summons, it could be amended, and he would ask their worships as to put it under section 50. The Stipendiary said this would be altering the charge altogether, but after a long discussion between counsel, the stipendiary said that they must have regard to section 50 in the construction of the clause under which these proceedings were taken against the manager. Mr. Abel Thomas said that Anstes had himself admitted that Mr. Jones had told him that he was not to take more than 5lbs down.

Mr. Philip Jones, the defendant, was then recalled, and deposed that the special rules had been published at the pit in the prescribed form, and he (witness) had taken every means to enforce them. He had ordered the boxes owing to a suggestion made to him by Mr. Randall, one of the Assistant Inspectors of Mines, a few years ago. Mr. Randall saw in the mine a box by the men's clothing, and

near the drams, containing 5lbs., and it was then he suggested two boxes, which he (witness), afterwards provided. Witness said he instructed Griffiths and Anstes to take no more than 5lb of powder down, and to keep it in the box while they were boring. If one tin should not be enough, they were to go up at dinnertime to fetch another. He told them not to keep more than 5lb in the box. It was he (witness) who had told Mr. Robson of the powder in the box. Had he known of it before he would certainly have prosecuted the man. He had often inspected the box in question, and had instructed the overman to do the same.

Cross-examined by Mr. Roskill, witness said that the box was about 4 ft 6 in. long, 2 ft. 6 ins. deep, and 18 ins. across, and he admitted that he knew before the explosion that the key was kept by the side of the box. He was not aware whether Mr. Randall had ever seen the boxes. "Do you know any other collieries where a large box is kept for storing?" - "Yes I do." Witness declined to state where he had seen them, and the stipendiary said he would not insist upon his answering the question. This closed the case for the defence, after which the magistrates retired to consider the verdict.

The verdict

The Stipendiary said that the Bench found that Mr. Philip Jones was guilty of a contravention of the general rule. It was quite clear that he did not personally store the explosives, but under section 50, if one of his men were found guilty of an offence, he also under the act was guilty of an offence, he also under the Act was held guilty unless he had taken all possible means of preventing the offence for which his subordinate had been guilty. The evidence of Anstes showed that this thing had been going on for some time, and that during the whole of the two years he had been there he had been in the habit of doing very much the same thing. No doubt Mr. Philip Jones did look into the box from time to time, and never found anything wrong in it. A light was thrown on the matter by the complete trust which Mr. Philip Jones had in Anstes, and the complete reliance he placed upon him. He (the stipendiary) had no doubt that Mr. Philip Jones had not the slightest suspicion that this stuff was kept there, but the question was whether he had taken all due precautions.

The Bench readily believed that the late Mr. Randall, when he found packages of dynamite lying about did suggest a box for the safe custody of those 5lb packages, but that was quite a different thing from setting up a box which was suitable as a store and which was placed in one part of the mine, and that would be very suitable for the purpose of any workman engaged in boring or charging. There was only this box for the whole of this one district of the mine. It looked far more like an additional store, whether Mr. Jones intended it as such or not, for the use of men who might fall short of stuff during the course of the day, and which

would do away with the necessity of going to the surface.

The Bench did not for one moment suppose that Mr. Jones suspected it was used for this purpose, but the question was whether he did all that was reasonably expected of him to prevent it. The Magistrates thought he did not. No one had an higher opinion of Mr. Jones than he (the stipendiary) had. No one was more vigilant than Mr. Philip Jones was in enforcing every possible observance of the rule, and no one was more frequently in that court consisting of the strict observation of all rules pertaining to colliery working. The Magistrates, however, felt that he had inadvertently in that case done less than the law required of him in preventing a violation of the rule, and, under the circumstances they will order him to pay a fine of £10. Replying to Mr. Abel Thomas, the Stipendiary said that the Bench found the defendant guilty upon the information which was founded upon general rule 12, and in the interpretation of that rule the Magistrates consider that it ought to be influence by section 50 of the general Act. Mr. Abel Thomas thereupon applied for a special case, which was granted, while his worship also agreed to make a note of the application which Mr. Roskill made to have the summons amended.

Case against the under-manager

Mr. Jones, the under-manager, was then charged with having neglected to see that *'every officer under him and every other person employed at the colliery understood and fulfilled his duty.'* This case eventually fell through on the ground that the defendant, at the time the offence was said to be committed, was not the under-manager of the colliery, but simply discharged the duties of the under-manager, who was then ill. Mr. Abel Thomas said he would prove that the defendant was not the under-manager; that there was another under-manager, viz. John Jones, who had been properly appointed under the Act. There was a way of appointing under-managers, and only one way, under section 21.

The stipendiary asked whether there was an obligation imposed by the company to appoint an under-manager during the illness of the real under-manager. Mr. Abel Thomas replied that there was not. The only way of appointing an under-manager under section 21 was by nomination in writing by the owner or the agent of the mine. Then sub-section 2 said, *'every person so nominated must hold a first-class or second-class certificate under the Act, and shall in the absence of the manager have the same responsibility, and be subject to the same liabilities as the manager under this Act, but the nomination of the under-manager shall not affect the personal responsibility of the manager under the Act.'* Consequently, Mr. Thomas argued, the only person that could be charged for the offence was the under-manager appointed under the Act, and the defendant did not come within this designation.

Mr. Roskill said that they had the defendant's own admission that he was under-manager, and consequently this was sufficient for his purpose. Supposing there had been a breach of the Act, and the defendant had not been properly appointed, still he was the under-manager.

The stipendiary: - "The summons is, that he, being under-manager, did so and so. The fact that he admitted to being under-manager is evidence that is admissible, but it is not conclusive, and if stronger evidence is called showing that he was not under-manager, then it is quashed." Mr. Roskill: - "The fact that he has not been properly appointed under-manager only shows there has been a breach of the Act, but that does not prevent his being under-manager."

David Ellis, secretary of the Albion Colliery, then went into the box and produced the colliery books, showing that the under-manager for the months of April, May, and June was John Jones, who died a week ago. John Jones was paid as under-manager during the whole of the time. William Jones, the defendant, was a day-fireman, and was paid as such during the whole of that time. Cross-examined by Mr. Roskill, witness could not say who acted as under-manager while John Jones was ill. Defendant might have called himself under-manager, but he was not recognised as such. He might have taken charge of John Jones's district during John Jones's illness. The Stipendiary observed that if it could be distinctly proved the defendant had not been nominated in writing by owner or agent, then he was not under-manager, because that was a condition precedent to his being under-manager.

Mr. Roskill: - "Then you hold that though a man maybe performing the duties of under-manager, yet, unless he is appointed under-manager according to all the formalities prescribed by the Act, he cannot be punished for any offence against the Act?" The stipendiary: - "He cannot be punished as under-manager if he is not one. He may be punished for exercising the duty of an under-manager without being properly appointed, but that is quite another thing."

Mr. Roskill said that his point was that an under-manager was a man who performed the duties of an under-manager. The liabilities of an under-manager could not be limited because there had not been an omission to appoint him according to the Act. If their worships were against him, then he must ask for a case.

The Stipendiary: - "We shall grant no case, because the case is too trivial; there is nothing in it."

Mr. Roskill: - "Then do you take it as perfectly clear that - - -"

The Stipendiary: - "No, because I think Mr. Thomas should call this man to say that he was not under-manager."

Mr. Roskill: - "It is of great importance to us that this point should be decided. We cannot, in endeavouring to do our duty in this matter of the kind, find out - there are no means of discovery - whether a man is properly appointed or not. I therefore do respectfully ask your worship - as the matter is one of great importance - to grant me a case."

The Stipendiary: - "I find it a fact that this man is not an under-manager. It is not a matter of law at all; so how can we grant you a case?"

Mr. Roskill: - "A man who acts as under-manager without being properly appointed is liable to penalties under the Act, and I ask your worship with great respect to bear with me, and grant me a case merely in the interest of the inspectors."

The Stipendiary: - "We shall grant no case at all." The summons against William Jones was then dismissed, and the court rose. In leaving the court Mr. Roskill informed the stipendiary of his intention to apply for a mandamus (a writ from a superior court to an inferior court commanding that a specific thing be done) compelling him to state a case. This, however, was never followed through.

The company inquiry

Report by engineers - Criticism by Professor Dixon

In November 1894 Professor Dixon, so well known with the coal-dust Commission, made some important remarks touching the Albion explosion (reported the '*Western Mail*'). He remarked that the disaster was in his opinion - arrived at after personal examination of the mine - due to the same cause as that which accounted at the Park Slip and other collieries, viz; the presence of coal-dust. Three mine inspectors deputed by the home office to inspect the colliery had come to that conclusion also, yet only a day or two ago he received a copy of a report made by six engineers on the cause of the disaster, and he found that they were unanimously of the opinion that it was caused by an outburst of firedamp.

The report was prepared, Professor Dixon said, for the colliery proprietors, and it contained this observation: - "**We have great satisfaction in stating that no blame in the matter can be attributed to any of your officials and employees.**" While he did not condemn the writers of this report, Professor Dixon held that it was the tendency of experts in all branches of knowledge to be biased in favour of a prevailing theory. But such action on their part could only tend to postpone the day when an ever-present danger should be practically grappled with.

It is now believed in the workmen's circles that the Rhondda miners' demand for a fresh inquiry by the Government into the cause of the Albion disaster will be conceded.



The Bennett family from Mary Street, Cilfynydd c. 1900. In the centre is Mary Bennett, dressmaker and midwife. Top right-hand corner is Edward Bennett, who was killed in the Albion Colliery disaster.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Albion funds dispute

Considerable excitement was caused in the vicinity of the Albion Colliery on Wednesday, October 24th 1894, by the discovery in the colliery yard of gauze of a safety lamp. The inference was that one of the miners in the pit was using a lamp without gauze, and the matter being reported to the manager, Mr. Philip Jones, orders were at once given that all the men should be brought to bank. This was done, and each lamp was examined as the bearer stepped from the cage. When almost all had been examined, a young collier stated that he had missed the gauze on his lamp before descending, but had procured another before going down. As a result of the incident the pit was practically idle on Wednesday, as the majority of the men did not descend again.

Warning to Cilfynydd people

At the Pontypridd Police Court on Friday, November 9th 1894, several persons from Cilfynydd were charged with stealing coal from the tips. It appears that previous to the explosion people were allowed to take coal, but the practice had since been prohibited by the company. P. S. Evans said he was instructed to prosecute, and proved the cases. Henry Herbert, Joseph Howells, and Morris Isaacs were fine 20 shillings each, and Elizabeth James and Elizabeth Isaacs were fined 10 shillings each.

The *South Wales Daily News*, of Friday, Oct. 26th 1894 gave the below information that would shock the majority of people in the village of Cilfynydd and indeed most of the mining community of south Wales, and it was this newspaper that was to champion the cause for the widows and orphans in the weeks and months that were to follow: -

Albion Funds taken - A game of grab

Seizing the orphans' property - the widow's rights

It was decided, at a meeting held in Cardiff on Wednesday, Oct. 24th 1894, to hand over to the Miners' Permanent Society the whole product of the money collected by the mayor of that town in respect of the Albion Colliery explosion, the capital fund to be rested in separate trustees, that the whole of the annual income to be paid over as stated. There is reason to believe - sufficient to make the matter almost a certainty - that the London and Pontypridd funds will be added to that of Cardiff, and that therefore the Permanent Society will appropriate nearly all the public subscriptions, leaving the widows and orphans not one penny

the better for the great outpouring of public benevolence. This is so serious a matter that we are bound to direct attention to the process by which, with due semblance of legality, so objectionable a result has been brought about. Although £35,000 has been subscribed by the charitable, the dependants of the men killed at the Albion Colliery will not receive the slightest benefit.

They are entitled, by reason of contributions which the deceased men made to the society, to receive from that society a sum of five shillings per week each widow and two-shillings and sixpence for each child; that is the legal liability resting upon the Permanent Society in respect of the subscriptions paid, and it has to pay that amount quite irrespective of anything but the contract to pay which it made with the men who lost their lives. Yet the society now bags the whole of the public money subscribed to help the women and children, and will not pay them one farthing beyond what it owes them, what it is obliged to pay them, and what they could compel it to pay if the public had not been appealed to.

The Miners' Permanent Provident Society

The Monmouthshire and South Wales Miners' Permanent Provident Society is an association to which funds both masters and men subscribe, the former adding £25 to each £100 contributed by the latter, who, by their payments, secure to themselves certain agreed upon benefits. At present, we are concerned only with the benefits paid to survivors upon the death of a member from colliery accidents - namely, that the widow is to receive 5/- per week, and 2/6d per week for each child up to a certain age. The benefit which employers receive in consideration of their contribution is the agreement of the men that the Employers' Liability Act shall not apply. The society is, for employers, a method of evading the liability which would otherwise be attached to them by law.

The 'Grab-all' Society

It has long been manifest that the Permanent Society is engaged in a game of 'grab.' As each great accident has awakened public sympathy and evoked generous subscriptions to aid the sufferers, the society's representatives have been alert to attain advantage by securing as large a proportion as possible of the money subscribed. But never till this week have they had the temerity to attempt to seize the whole of the funds, and never have they had so easy a task in any of their attempts. It would be interesting and profitable to learn exactly how Wednesday's meeting was called, and to get an idea of how many subscribers knew where and when it was to take place. 'Poked away in a corner,' as one of those present expressed the situation, the dream of gentlemen or so who did attend have fortified the Permanent Fund at the expense of the widows and

orphans of Cilfynydd. Here is a list of the amount stated at that meeting to have been subscribed. -

The public contributions

Cardiff funds	£10,449
Pontypridd Fund	£7,780
London Funds	£5,630
Newport Fund	£11,500
Aberdare Fund	£419
Merthyr Fund	£383
Swansea Fund	£417
Permanent Fund receipts	£6,255
Western Mail Fund	£2,000
South Wales Daily News Fund	£2,300
Parliamentary Fund	£1,300
Aberavon Fund	About £300
Total	£39,041

The total amounts as stated at the meeting was £34,612 - the difference in the total being chiefly due to the difference between the nominal account of the Cardiff Fund and the sum actually paid up. It was expressly stated that the amount was approximate, there being difficulty as yet in ascertaining the exact figures. For the purpose of this article we will take the figures of the meeting namely, £34,600, as the total. From this we deduct the newspaper funds and the Parliamentary Fund - £2,000, £2,300, and £1,300 a total of £5,600, and that leaves £29,600 or £30,000 in round numbers, plus £4,000 to £5,000 yet to come in.

What the society bags

This £30,000 is made up of three classes of contributions: - (1) Those given specifically to help the Permanent Society; (2) Those given with the express condition that they should not go to help that society; and (3) Those given unconditionally.

The first named class of contributions, amounted, so said the society's secretary, to between £14,000 and £15,000. There remains, excepting his statement, at least an equal amount which was not given to the society, and this is the amount the society endeavours to appropriate. The sum is really larger, exceeding £20,000, but we would take £15,000 as an amount admitted.

How the thing is done

When the dozen or score gentlemen settled down to the business of their meeting on Wednesday, they were presented with a scheme of appropriation which has been drawn up in advance, the effect of which was to secure solely for the Permanent Society the benefit of the public subscriptions. The secretary of the society put resolutions into the hands of the gentleman who spoke, with the request they should move them. Mr. Cambell, also on behalf of the society, was prepared to state that if the scheme of appropriation were adopted by that meeting, then the Lord Mayor's Fund would be added.

The whole business had evidently been prearranged, and it was carried through mainly upon the prearranged lines. It was stated also that the resolutions submitted had been drawn up by lawyers. Who instructed these lawyers? In regard to the Park Slip Fund, we assume that prearrangement has been made, the lawyers were instructed by the Permanent Society; we do not fear error in concluding that on the present occasion, also, the society gave the needful instructions - in its own interest.

What about the widows and orphans?

The whole of the money outside the first class belongs to the widows and orphans, and the Permanent Society is about obtaining possession of it legally, no doubt, but we are desirous of making it clear to those who subscribed the money that the persons they intended to help will by no degree benefited by it. The dead miners' wives and children get nothing from the public subscriptions. They are no better off than if nothing had been subscribed. Fifteen-thousand pound of it has been taken to bolster up an "Insurance Society" upon which they have legal claim, which is their debtor, and which is the instrument thereby they are debarred from taking advantage of the Employers' Liability Act.

The excuse

The excuse by this action is plausible. It is, that the Permanent Society, by reason of the very heavy drain made upon it by such great disasters as those of the last five years, might not be able to meet its liabilities; and that, therefore, to help the society is to benefit the widows and orphans, by securing to them payment of the weekly allowances; that moreover, the Albion money will be invested in several trustees, and not be liable to the risks of the society, which is to receive only the annual income. If the society is liable to be in difficulty, that is a very good reason for helping it. We do not oppose a proposal to help it; what we reprobate is the

taking of money which was subscribed for the women and children of Cilfynydd.

The value of the Permanent Society

It would be impossible to extol too highly the great and good work which the society is doing. We yield to them in appreciation of the invaluable assistance it renders to the mining community of this district. One fact alone, stated at Wednesday's meeting, is conclusive testimony to the advantages it confers upon Monmouthshire and South Wales. "There has not been," said Mr. Ellis, "any increase in the applications to the board of guardians for relief to people in Cilfynydd." That is to say, the hundreds of dependants upon the deceased men have been spared the deprivation of pauperism; their self-respect has been maintained; and they have an appropriation to the standard of comfort which was theirs before loss of the family breadwinner.

This is noble work to have accomplished. Every reader will unite in an encomium of such work, and will join with us in an expression of hope that the usefulness of the Permanent Fund may never be impaired by failure of its financial stability. More than in relation to the great mining disasters it affords relief in cases of single accidents, the persons so relieved outnumbering those affected by the great calamities.

The excuse invalid

But with full recognition of the value of the society, we have to object most strongly to the means adopted for strengthening its position. The excuse made is invalid. Appropriation of the product of the widows' £15,000 will not ensure the society's stability, while it will certainly deprive the women and children of what belongs to them. They are entitled to 5/- per woman and 2/6d per child from the society, and they are entitled, in addition, to such a weekly payment as the annual income of their money would produce. This supplementary allowance is taken from them by the appropriations of the income to the Permanent Society, and the society's permanence is not assured because - to name only one contingency, enactment of a Liability Bill which makes contracting out illegal would deprive the funds of 25% which the employers now pay to it. There are other contingencies; we need name only this one. Where will the fund be when the Masters' 25% is stopped?

The society should have something

The Permanent Society ought to be maintained - its business is admirably carried on - as the instrument of administering funds subscribed by the public, and it does the work of distribution in respect of Llanerch and other such funds, receiving

payment therefore. No objection could reasonably be taken to its receiving part of the income of the Albion capital as payment for distributing the rest. But the widows and orphans have a clear right to some allowance supplementary to what is due to them by the society, and it is a great wrong for the society to seize all the money and give the beneficiaries nothing beyond which it is legally liable to pay.

In the case of Llanerch, the public subscriptions were sufficient to give to each widow 5/- and each child 2'6d, but instead of giving this amount in addition to the equal amount which the society had to pay it, it was agreed by the Llanerch trustees that the society should retain half, and thus be, to that extent, helped in its finances. In respect of Llanerch, therefore, the society receives 5/- per woman and 2/6d each child from the trustees, and itself pays 2/3d, thus escaping half its liability. The woman, therefore, gets 7/6d and the child 3/9d each, the society is helped, and there is general satisfaction.

What can be done?

That is for the miners' leaders and the local trade unionists to say. The women and children are defenceless against a powerful institution having strong backers. Are they to be deprived of their rights solely because they are too weak to defend themselves? The '*South Wales Daily News Fund*' in accordance with the expressive declaration made repeatedly in these columns, our own fund will be used to supplement any allowance which the dependants of the Albion Colliery may receive from other sources.

Mass meeting of the Albion workmen - an indignant resolution

A general meeting of the workmen of the Albion Colliery, was held on Monday, October 29th at the Public Hall, when considerable indignation was expressed at the action of the Cardiff Committee in handing their fund over to the Permanent Fund. Mr. W. H. Gronow, one of the check-weighers, declared it to be high time that the miners of South Wales generally spoke out on the matter. The Cardiff meeting consisted only of colliery proprietors and the Permanent Fund officials, and they had the hardihood to transfer to the Permanent Fund a huge sum of money which had been subscribed solely for the relief of the Albion widows and orphans. He moved: -

“That this meeting of the workmen of the Albion Colliery emphatically protests against the action of the Permanent Fund officials and those connected with them, in appropriating the subscriptions expressly paid for the benefit of the widows, orphans, and sufferers from the Albion Colliery disaster and, while recording its censure of the action of the Cardiff Committee in this matter, expresses its hopes that the Pontypridd Committee of the Central Relief Fund will not commit a similar act of

prejudice."

Mr. Joseph Owen seconded, and pointed out that a generous response had been made by the public to the appeal of the Permanent Fund for support, but a much larger amount had been subscribed for the express benefit of the Albion widows, and this the Permanent Fund had no right to touch. (Loud cheering). - For it was meant to add a little to the allowance which the Permanent Society had to pay the widows and their orphans. By the action of the Cardiff Committee, however, the sufferers would not benefit to the extent of single farthing. (Shame). Such an unjust proceeding would serve to dry up the fountains of charity, so that future relief funds would assuredly suffer. The Chairman said it was enough to make one's blood run cold to witness such barefaced robbery - for what else could it be called? (Loud cheers). The secretary of the Permanent Fund, when the first relief was distributed in Cilfynydd, announced that when the relief funds were received a shilling a week extra would be paid in respect of each widow and each orphan, but so far this had not been done.

Mr. Gronow pointed out that some years ago the contributions to the Permanent Fund were increased, and the payments from it reduced, on the plea that £30,000 was wanted to form a reserve fund, and to make the society solvent. The society had now £140,000 in hand, and yet it was still not solvent - (Laughter) - so now they demanded this £20,000. It will never be solvent at this rate. Such a proceeding is simply robbery of the widows and orphans of Cilfynydd, (Loud cheers). Mr. Evan Jones heartily supported the motion, and urged the men of South Wales and Monmouth-shire to raise their voice as one man against the present proposal.

Another speaker said that although the Permanent Fund was called the Miners' Provident Society, it was controlled almost entirely by the employers. If it was really a Miners' Provident Society then let them have the control of it in their own hands independent of the employers. It was a shame that the Permanent Fund should have had the face to take this money. (Hear, hear). The resolution was carried unanimously, and it was also resolved to appoint a deputation to wait upon the committee of the Pontypridd Central Fund to protest against handing that fund again over to the Miners' Provident Society. The following resolution was also adopted: -

"That this meeting of the Albion Colliery workmen tenders the warmest thanks to the South Wales Daily News for the able service it has rendered the country in denouncing the action of the Permanent Fund in seeking to appropriate the subscriptions intended for the relief of the widows, orphans and dependants of the Albion victims." The 'South Wales Daily News,' of Tuesday Oct 30th 1894 reported: -

A Cilfynydd Widows appeal

To the editor

Sir - Will you kindly allow me, a poor widow, a little space in your valuable paper to protest against the unfair dealings with the money of the widows and orphans. I think I, as one, can claim a right to my share of money that has so kindly been given to us helpless widows and orphans at Cilfynydd. My husband lost his life in the Albion Colliery explosion, and he being such a good husband it has been a great loss to me and my family. I am now left with seven little children, all under ten years of age, and two of them are very delicate in health, and I now only have the little fund money to keep myself and children, which is not near enough. I had lived in hope of having more before very long, but now that they are trying to take it away from me, I shall be obliged to apply for help somewhere, as it is impossible for me to live on what I am having at present. I have three babies, the eldest of the three being only two years and six months old. Therefore, I appeal to you on my behalf to protest at their unfair doings. I think of all the money that has been paid towards the support of the widows and orphans we have the right to our share, and no one dare keep it from us. If they attempt to take this money from us, is there no one that can give us help to get it? We should be very much obliged to anyone that will do what he can on our behalf in getting this money for us as I am greatly in need of it, and am sure many more of my unfortunate sisters are the same.

I am, &c. Margaret Bevan
6, William Street, Cilfynydd.

On Tuesday, October 30th the Pontypridd Central Fund voted that in accordance with the resolution passed on 27th of June that all funds would be handed over to the Miners' Permanent Fund.

Indignation of the widows

The 'South Wales Daily News' of Wed Oct. 31st 1894 reported: - We are informed that the indignation of the widows who still reside at Cilfynydd at the turn of events have taken is beyond description. The poor women are in the depths of despair, for they had long looked forward to the distribution of the relief funds so as to augment in some degree the miserable pittance now doled out to them from the funds of the Miners' Provident Society. They find, however, that without the slightest compunction the huge sums subscribed for their relief are to be swallowed up by the society, and they were left to exist in semi-starvation on five-shillings per week. So strong is the indignation felt at this unjustified deprivation that the widows are arranging to meet in conference this afternoon, when it is presumed they will give voice to a vigorous protest against the

unrighteous proposals that are now afloat.

Already the widows feel keenly the pinch of poverty and their distress during the coming Winter, should no further assistance be forthcoming, must necessarily be great. It is recognised that Mrs. Bevan, in her letter on Tuesday, very fairly stated the case of herself and her bereaved sisters. House rents, for instance, in Cilfynydd, are abnormally high, ranging from twenty-two shillings and upwards per lunar month. Thus a woman with five children, receiving the Permanent Fund relief of Seventeen shilling and sixpence per week, would have only twelve-shillings to feed and cloth herself and her family. How acceptable in these cases - and there are scores of them - would be an addition two-shilling and sixpence per widow and one-shilling per orphan from the Relief Fund! The poor women are exceedingly wrath at the unjust treatment meted out to them, and it is expected that their indignation will in today's meeting be expressed within no measured terms.

How the local relief fund is distributed

It will be remembered that soon after the explosion the ministers and the clergy of Cilfynydd of all denominations, with tradesmen and others from the locality, formed themselves into a local relief committee and issued an appeal. To this the churches have responded liberally, so altogether no less a sum than £920 was thus obtained. The committee themselves undertook the task of distribution, and it is right to point out that, so far from the distribution being limited, it has been alleged to those residents in Cilfynydd itself, all relatives, wherever living, have participated in the benefits of the fund equally with those at home. The money was distributed once a month, 10/- being given to each widow and an addition of 2s/6d in respect of each child. In this way about £130 has been distributed once a month regularly ever since the explosion, and the sums thus obtained enabled the widows to provide the where-withal for the rent. There is but £300 now left undistributed, so that before the end of the year the fund, of which the Rev. R. E. Williams is treasurer, will be exhausted, and the widows left dependent solely upon the Permanent Fund - unless the game of 'grab' be stopped.

Cilfynydd widows in conference

The same newspaper on Thursday, November 1st 1894 reported the meeting thus: - The shameless attempts made to deprive them of funds subscribed to them by the charitable public for their relief has had the effect of rousing the unhappy widows of the Albion victims to make a bold stand in defence of their rights, and on Wednesday, October 31st, the crier was sent round summoning them to a conference at the Workmen's Hall, Cilfynydd, to consider the situation, and to confer together as to the best course to adopt.

Over sixty of the widows thus assembled, and the sight presented by such an unusual audience, many of them accompanied by the orphans, and several carrying babes in arms, was truly touching. The Rev. Michael Williams, (C.M.) Minister, chairman of the Cilfynydd Local Relief Fund, was voted to the chair. He explained that the object of the meeting, and strongly condemned the efforts made to appropriate for the Permanent Fund the moneys collected for the relief of the widows and the orphans of the Albion victims. It was highly improper that these people should take advantage of the sympathy that had been created.

Throughout the country the grief of the widows and the fatherless in Cilfynydd had been used by some in order to swell the coffers of the Permanent Fund and so far as he understood the position, it was not the intention of the Permanent Fund authorities to give widows and the orphans a penny piece in addition to the allowance they were legally entitled to in respect of the contributions they themselves had made to that fund. They would thus not receive the slightest benefit from the thousands of pounds that had been contributed to aid them. (Shame.) It was highly essential that the widows themselves should take prompt measures to enlighten the country on the question, and to secure their rights, and this was one of the objects of the gathering.

Mr. Williams Evans, sub-agent to the Cambrian Association of Miners, also spoke. He was, he said, truly grieved at the turn that events had taken. He was confident of the opinion that had it been known that the Cardiff and Pontypridd funds would have been handed over to the Permanent Fund, many thousands of pounds which had been secured would never have been subscribed. The action of the committee of the Permanent Fund was shabby and mean, and would have a most desultory effect upon further appeals.

The Cambrian Association of Miners had done all they could from the commencement to relieve their sufferings and the jury from the inquest gone far to support the contentions which they made. Even, however, had the responsibility for the catastrophe been brought home to the employers, the widows and orphans would have no claim whatever upon them, owing to the deceased men having been members of the Permanent Fund. Many of those that were present would have as much as they could possibly do to bring up their orphans upon the few shillings which the Permanent Society would grant them. That conference was a most timely one and would result, he hoped, in deterring other funds - such as the Lord Mayor's Fund - Mr. Alfred Thomas's Fund, and the Pontypridd (Studd's) Fete and Gala Fund - from being paid over to the Permanent Society authorities. If the Permanent Fund was in want of assistance, why, he asked, did not the colliery proprietors come to its aid, for the society after all was a society formed to protect them from liability for accidents?

The Great Western Colliery victims last year, were not members of the Permanent Fund; their relatives relied sorely for relief upon public charity; and yet those relatives, or at any rate the orphans, would receive from their Relief Fund a shilling per week more than the Permanent Fund paid to the Albion orphans. Thus the Albion widows and orphans, although their husbands and fathers had been provident, would actually be worse off than the widows and the orphans of those who had not made such provision. He still hoped the Permanent Fund having secured all the money, would grant a substantial increase in those weekly payments to the Albion widows and orphans. He was pleased to announce that Mr. Abraham (Mabon) had received a cheque for their relief amounting to £500 from Mr. Fox, of Cardiff, and this was to be sent to the Cilfynydd Local Relief Fund, so that the widows and orphans would thereby be directly benefited. It would be a scandalous shame if the Permanent Fund people would not increase their contributions. If not, then this matter would be taken up by the collieries, who will demand that the large subscriptions they sent in should be returned to them, in order that they might be sent to the Cilfynydd Local relief Fund. (Cheers).

Mrs. Mary Jane Hazel, of Norton Bridge, then moved, and Mrs. Bevan, Cilfynydd, seconded: - *“That this meeting of widows and other sufferers by the Albion Colliery disaster protest against the alienation of monies subscribed for their relief by the charitable public, and against its seizure by a society which is their debtor, being under legal obligation to pay them the weekly allowance contracted for.”*

The Rev. J. Humphreys, Wesleyan Minister supported the resolution, which was then carried, all present holding up their arms in its favour. Mrs. Bevan, Cilfynydd, moved, and Mrs. Morris seconded: - *“That a deputation of widows and children from this meeting be asked to wait upon Mr. Alfred Thomas, M P., at the Public Meeting at the New Town Hall, Pontypridd, tonight, to ask his aid and to enlist the active sympathy of those present in obtaining possession of our property.”*

The Rev. W. Jones, curate, in supporting the proposal (which was afterwards carried), heartily sympathised with the object of the meeting, and regretted that the huge sums of money collected in all parts of the country had not been forwarded to the Cilfynydd Local Relief Fund. Had this been done much irritation, grief, and blunders, would have been averted.

The chairman then asked the meeting to name a deputation to wait upon the honourable member and the following names were submitted: - Mrs. Bevan, Mrs. Gittins, Mrs. Bennett, Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Pugh, Mrs. Evans, Mrs. Hazel and Mrs. Llewellyn.

The question was asked whether anybody else would care to accompany the deputation, whereupon nearly all present rose to their feet to signify their readiness to proceed that evening to Pontypridd to interview Mr. Alfred Thomas, M. P., on the platform of the Pontypridd Town Hall. It was thereupon arranged that sufficient breaks be engaged to convey the whole party to Pontypridd and that the deputation should be accompanied by all, even ministers of the Gospel in Cilfynydd and the day check-weighers of the colliery.

Mr. W. Evans, Miner's agent at this juncture left the meeting, and was accorded a vote of thanks for his attending. Mrs. Ashton next moved: - *"That the meeting informs the Lord Mayor of London that the sufferers by the Albion explosion would get not one penny benefit from the Mansion House Fund if he hands it over to the Permanent Society, and beseeches him to preserve to the widows and orphans the monies subscribed for their benefit, and not to allow the fund to be appropriated by the Permanent Fund."* This was seconded by Mrs. Davies and supported by the Rev. R. Williams and carried.

The Rev. Gentleman in the course of his speech in Welsh, said the Lord Mayor's appeal was an appeal on behalf of the widows and orphans, and he suggested that a deputation be appointed to wait on their behalf upon his lordship to inform him of the true state of affairs, for, so far, the Lord Mayor had been told of only one side of the question. The speaker further pointed out that the local Relief Fund at Cilfynydd was not confined, as had been alleged, to those living in the locality. It distributed the fund impartially among the sufferers wherever they had resided.

Mrs. Gittins moved, Mrs. Evans seconded, and it was resolved: - *"That we appeal to the local committees at Pontypridd who had charge of the Studt's Fete and Gala, held in aid of the Albion widows and orphans to take such measures as would secure for those widows and orphans the full benefit of the £400 surplus which we understand they have to hand."* Mrs. Bevan there upon proposed and Mrs. Morris seconded, and it was resolved that: - *"The widows and orphans in this meeting tender their warmest thanks to the proprietors, the editor and their representatives of the 'South Wales Daily News' for their action in defending our interests, and for the deep interest they have manifested in our cause."*

It was subsequently resolved, on the motion of Mrs. Evans and seconded by Mrs. James: - *"That we appeal to the works committee of the Albion Colliery to appoint a deputation to wait upon the Lord Mayor of London, directing him not to transfer his fund to the Miners' Provident Society."* Subsequently the Rev. Harry Williams was thanked for convening the conference, and a similar compliment was paid to the chairman for presiding.

The bitter cries of widows-affecting scenes

On Wednesday night, October 31st about 40 of the widows of the Albion, accompanied by a large number of their children, many being babes in arms, drove to Pontypridd in order to beseech Mr. Alfred Thomas M.P., to take up their case and protect their rights. The Hon. Member was presiding over a public meeting at the New Town-hall, and soon after the proceedings had been opened, the widows were seen to enter into the hall in large numbers at the end farthest from the platform. The President (Mr. Thomas), who had evidently received an inkling of what was coming, announced that he would visit Cilfynydd on the following day, and would be able to tell them something then that he hoped would cheer them up. That night, however, he could make no announcement on the subject. The hon. member then proceeded with his opening speech, but in the meantime the deputation, who were evidently bent upon accomplishing their object, proceeded through Penuel Square and Taff Street to the market entrance, and soon assembled in large numbers on the stage opening onto the platform itself. It appears as if they would soon burst full upon the view of the audience, but the hon. member, being apprised of what had happened, at the conclusion of his speech vacated the chair, and met the deputation in one of the rooms below. Most of the poor women wept bitterly and the scene, as the unfortunate women, with children clinging to their dresses, crowded around the hon. member, was full of sadness and indescribable pathos.

The deputation, led by the Revs. Michael Williams (C.M.) R. E. Williams (L), and J. Humphreys (W) were introduced to Mr. Thomas and said, "We have come here tonight as a deputation appointed by a meeting which was held this afternoon of the widows and orphans of the men killed at the Albion Colliery explosion on June 23rd. We understand that there are people making an attempt to get the money which has been contributed to different funds for the relief of those widows and orphans - to take those funds indirectly from these widows and children, and they ask, sir, for your assistance to secure for them some of those funds which have not yet been transferred beyond their reach."

Mrs. Bevan, one of the widows present, next spoke, her speech broken with sobs, was often relieved by the audible 'prompting' of the widows surrounding her. Mrs. Bevan, the mother of seven children said, "Of course it is very hard for me to stand here and say anything. I think they are very unfair in what they are doing with our money, and that we ought to try and get it for ourselves. Where are we going to look for help to get the money that is coming to us? It is our money isn't it? If they take it all to the fund, we shall have nothing of it. It is impossible for me to live and to keep my seven little children on the Permanent Fund money, it is much too little. I cannot do it. One weeks pay every month goes to pay the rent, and what can we do to get the money? Why should they take our money from us

that has been given to us? Don't you think that we have a right to this money, and that it is our money?"

Mr. Alfred Thomas, who was visibly moved, said: - "Tomorrow evening, if all's well, I am going to be present at Cilfynydd, and there I am going to address my constituents, and, of course, the first thing I will speak about will be the awful calamity which has been the means of bringing you here this evening. My fellow members of parliament, I think, exhibited great generosity. It did not require any

appeal on my part. It was simply a question of taking down their subscriptions. I am going to speak at Cilfynydd tomorrow night. I am not going to speak more to you tonight, but I wanted anything to keep my heart right. I have witnessed many things in my life, but I have never witnessed such a scene as this - a scene that appeals so much to my heart. I can hardly restrain my feelings when I think of what you must have endured. You have not only friends in need, but friends in all that have subscribed. Lift up your hearts. I have something to tell you tomorrow night, which I may not tell you now. I only hope you will receive strength to bare your burden, and there is only one place where you can receive that strength. As regards money, it is our duty to help you, and, we are not going to neglect our duty."

Mrs. Bevan: - "Whatever money I get I can never get money to make up for what I have lost. I have lost a good husband and my children a good father. I only get two-shillings and sixpence a week for each of them, and that is not sufficient to bring up children as they ought to be brought up."

Mr. Thomas: - "I quite agree with you. I think it's a great sin that you should be put in the difficulty you are in to find the means of existence after you have lost your breadwinners. If I am spared, if nobody else will do it, I shall go in for making these matters national, and not local or provincial, as at present. I don't see any reason why a charge could not be put upon that every ton of coal loaded for such great calamities as these." Mr. Alfred Thomas having been thanked, the deputation withdrew, and were driven back home by a number of breaks.

Mr. Alfred Thomas M. P. at Cilfynydd

How his fund will be disposed of - Touching speech by widow

Mr. Alfred Thomas, M. P., on Thursday night, November 1st 1894, addressed a crowded meeting of his constituents at the Workmen's Hall, Cilfynydd. The audience included about 50 widows, who had assembled to hear from the honourable member how he proposed to deal with the fund he had raised for their relief. Mr. W.

H. Gronow presided, and explained that although the meeting had been convened

to hear an address on political questions from Mr. Alfred Thomas, the political proceed- ings would be much curtailed in order to allow the honourable member greater latitude to deal with the relief funds of the Albion widows and orphans, and see whether something could be done to stop the grabbing policy now pursued by the Permanent Fund authorities. (Loud cheers). Mr. Joseph Owen moved, and Mr. Boshier seconded, a vote of confidence in the Government, and this was carried amid acclimation.

Mr. Alfred Thomas, who was most warmly received, said that under ordinary circumstances he would have had to address them on the political questions of the hour, but having regard to the terrible calamity which befell them since his last visit, he would confine his remarks to questions arising out of that awful event. (Hear, hear.) It would be vain and out of place to dilate upon it, and he would just consider a few questions that had reference to making the lot of the sufferers - the widows and children of those who lost their lives in the mine - as comfortable as the means at their disposal as would admit. They were told that all the miners in the Albion Colliery were members of the Permanent Provident Society, and in consequence the widows and orphans have been in receipt of a certain sum per week - the usual allowance prescribed by the rules of the fund. In the meantime, a large sum of money had been subscribed by the public, and he himself had the responsibility of disposing of some £13,000, given by the members of the House of Commons. (Applause.) Added to that amount, given by members of parliament, must be added three sums from different sources. The first was an amount of £21-11s, subscribed by the petty officers, non-commissioned officers and the men of H. M. S. Edgar, and who said they made that contribution because of the ready response the miners made to the Victoria Fund. (Hear, hear and applause.) Since that time Capt. Henderson and his officers had subscribed.

When he acknowledged the receipt of the men of the first sum, he asked Captain Henderson for the names of the donors, and in reply that gentleman had promised to forward a photograph of the ship's crew. The petty officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of H. M. S. Ramilies had forwarded a sum £16, and the Rector of Wigton sent a sum of £11-9s-6d that was collected in his church. He had more pleasure in mentioning these sums than any he received, though every sum was given so readily and generously that he had the greatest pleasure in becoming their custodi- an. Now the question was how to dispose of the sum trusted to his care? This was the first difficulty he had in connection with the fund. When the officers of the Permanent Miners' Fund told the public that in consequence of the almost over- whelming call upon their resources - in consequence of the number coming upon the funds, it was necessary to ensure the amounts promised to augment the resources of the fund, many of us paused, and hoped that some plan could be devised that would help the fund without depriving the widows and children of the additional income that they might accrue from the public subscriptions.

After waiting up to the present - he had waited as long as he intended doing - he had not seen any scheme suggested that would justify him in handing the funds at his disposal to the Miners' Provident Fund - (Loud applause.) - but to see that it went directly to those whom the donors intended to benefit by their subscriptions. (Renewed applause). He would take the earliest opportunity of consulting with some friends who were practically acquainted with the work of making such distributions

- and possibly in order to save expense, join some other funds, such as that of the 'South Wales Daily News.' (Cheers.) Proceeding, Mr. Thomas remarked how greatly they were indebted to that journal for the public-spirited manner in which it had advocated the claims of the widows and children. (Hear, hear.) The 'South Wales Daily News' had many claims upon their gratitude, but he knew no more noble stand ever made for the widows and the fatherless than had been seen in its columns during the last few days. (Hear, hear.)

What the conductors of that journal recognised, and what was the one point its efforts appeared to be directed to was to hinder the benevolence from the object from which it had been intended, namely, the widows and orphans. He sincerely wished even now the great aim of the 'South Wales Daily News' might be reached, and that notwithstanding the votes of the Cardiff and Pontypridd meetings that the money subscribed by the public would be used and utilised to give the women and children of Cilfynydd some weekly allowance in addition to what was due to them from the society. With such a desirable result he should devote all effort; in any case, whatever might be done by others, the money entrusted to him by the Members of Parliament should be sacredly guarded as the widows' right, and paid over to no one but the dependants of the men who lost their lives in the Albion pit. (Loud applause.) The Rev. Michael Williams moved, the Rev. R. E. Williams seconded and it was resolved: "*That this meeting, representing the Albion Colliery workmen, and many widows and orphans of our fellow workmen who lost their lives in the recent disaster, hereby tenders its grateful thanks to those members of Parliament who so readily and generously responded to Mr. Alfred Thomas's appeal on behalf of the Albion widows' and the orphans' relief fund.*"

It was also resolved: - "*That we have heard with much gratitude of the noble action of Captain Henderson, officers and crew of H. M. S. Edgar, who so generously, and without solicitation, forwarded a subscription to Mr. Alfred Thomas's Relief Fund for the widows and orphans of the Albion disaster. We tender our thanks also to the officers and petty-officers of H. M. S. Ramilies for their prompt and sympathetic action in also contributing to the relief fund. That this meeting has heard with great satisfaction and pleasure that our esteemed member, Mr. Alfred Thomas, has determined that the amount collected by him towards the Albion Relief Fund, shall be handed direct to the widows and orphans.*"

Mr. J. W. John, Mr. Charles Morgan, Mr. Rees, and Mr. David Morgan having spoken, Mr. William Williams delivered a stirring address, condemning the Permanent Fund for their unfair treatment of the widows and orphans, and appealed to Mr. Alfred Thomas to help them to get a restitution of the funds that had already been captured by the Permanent Fund authorities. A vote of thanks to Mr. Thomas and of confidence in him was unanimously adopted. The honourable member then departed to catch his train, after which Mrs. Bevan, one of the widows present, read the following address: -

“Mr. Chairman and others, I have been asked by some of my miserable sisters, for miserable we are indeed, to say a little on behalf of those that cannot speak for themselves, but many of them find it too much to stand up and speak in public, as the trial of losing our dear husbands has been so great that we have not the strength to say what we would like to say. We think it is a pity people should not know something of the difficulties that we have to put up with.”

“There are several of us widows who have boys very weak and delicate. When they are thirteen years of age, we will lose their 2s/6d a week. What are we going to do with them then? They will not be able to get a living for themselves in any way, as they are not able to attend their school now as they should. This money the Permanent Fund are trying to take now would be a great help to us then when they have left us to get our living the best we can. Must we live to see these poor little things going down to the bottom of the pits where their poor fathers met with such an awful death? We have every faith in Mr. Alfred Thomas, M. P., and we know, if he will take our case in his hands, as he promised that he can do a great deal for us. I am sure, knowing what a good member he is, he will do what he can to assist us. It was a great comfort to us hear him speak so on our part when he met the deputation on Wednesday night at the Town Hall, Pontypridd, and we trust he will continue to do so until we get our rights, as we hope for nothing more than that. We sincerely hope that all those that intended us to have the money will stand up like men and get it for us, and that you will reclaim it as some of you have said you will, and send it direct to the Cilfynydd Local Relief Fund, as we have gentlemen here managing our local fund worthy of the name, and we feel satisfied we will get our rights at their hands. All they do they do free of charge, and may God reward them for it. We cannot find words to express our good feelings towards the ‘*South Wales Daily News*’ with their great efforts in helping us, trusting we shall still find many more helping hands to assist us in getting for their fellow-workmen’s widows what they would like to have had for their own.”

The following letter appeared the same day in the *South Wales Daily News*: -

To the Editor

Sir - The appropriation by the Miners' Provident Society of the funds collected in aid of the widows and orphans (as distinguished from the subscriptions given to aid the society) of the men who lost their lives at the Albion Colliery must appear to every right thinking person as most devious and unwarrantable, but since resolutions have been passed at Pontypridd and Cardiff for that purpose without giving the majority of subscribers an opportunity of expressing their views upon the subject, would it not be possible to induce the Lord Mayor to hold his fund until some more equitable arrangement has been made? And as you have been good enough to champion the cause of the widows and orphans, perhaps you would also join hands with him, so that those who were dependant on the deceased shall get some benefit from the funds collected ostensibly for that purpose. If some arrangement was made similar to that in the case of the Llanerch disaster, it would no doubt give general satisfaction, or if the income from the amount collected in aid of the fund was handed over to the society by a trust formed to give the whole of the fund.

The income of the remaining £20,000 to be distributed pro rata amongst the widows and orphans to eke out the payments made by the society. The principal of £15,000 to be eventually handed over to the society in installments of £1,000, each as and when it shall be found upon a proper investigation of the claims upon the fund shall decrease in value to that amount. The principal of £20,000 to remain intact, and the income to be used in the first instance to benefit the widows and orphans of the Albion explosion, and secondly to form a reserve fund for the relief of the sufferers of future calamities of a like nature, or, as an alternative, to be eventually handed over to the Miners' Provident Society in a similar manner as that suggested in relation to the £15,000, but not without making the provision for the claims of the Albion sufferers.

Should the whole of the funds be handed over to the Provident Society as with the Cardiff and Pontypridd meetings, without the widows and orphans getting any additional benefit, it will be found when a similar disaster occurs that the fountain of charity has dried up, and that people will hesitate before they will again be landed in such a dilemma.

I am etc. HUMANITY. Pontypridd Oct. 31st 1894

Discussion at the Pontypridd Local Board - Members sympathise with widows

An appeal to the Permanent Society

On Friday, November 2nd 1894, at a meeting of the Pontypridd Local Board (the

Pontypridd Council) held under the presidency of Mr. D. Leyshon (who is also the chairman of the Pontypridd Central Relief Fund), Mr. Hopkin Morgan said that as that board was the governing body of Cilfynydd, he considered they should pass a resolution expressing their hearty sympathy with the widows and orphans in the efforts which they now made to secure the money they had been subscribed for them throughout the country, and which was now being taken by the Permanent Fund. It was clear that most people never would have subscribed to the relief funds did they know that they were merely intended to aid the Permanent Society. They subscribed simply for the relief for the widows and orphans of Cilfynydd. The chairman considered it would be out of the province of the board to pass any resolution. They had no voice in the matter.

Mr. Snape: - "The Permanent Fund is a fund for widows and orphans."

Mr. Morgan: - "But the relief that the Cilfynydd widows will get from the Permanent Fund is not what they ought to get."

Mr. Lenox: - "About £36,000 has been collected. It would be ridiculous to divide

£36,000 among 150 widows and 200 orphans."

Mr. James Roberts asked why the Permanent Fund should arrogate to itself the right to say how the money should be divided? The public had subscribed most generously, and he failed to see how the Permanent Fund was allowed to step forward to decide how much of these subscription should go to the widows. The public had subscribed their money for these widows and orphans, and not for the maintenance of an insurance society.

Mr. Lenox: - "Exactly, but when the first public meeting was held in the Town Hall it was decided there and then to support the Permanent Fund."

Mr. James Roberts: - "Yes, but on this understanding, that the Permanent Fund was insolvent. But how can a fund be insolvent when last year it had a surplus income of £15,000?"

Mr. Lenox: - "I don't think that really matters. The question is one of strengthening the fund."

Mr. Roberts: - "And that is where the public have been misled."

Mr. Lenox: - "Supposing another accident came next day with another 300 men killed, then the Provident Fund would have gone into liquidation and these widows would have got about 1/- instead of 5/-. This was such a large claim that it was necessary to augment the funds of the society from public subscriptions, otherwise it would be no protection for colliers who might suffer hereafter."

Mr. Roberts: - "Nothing at all sir, was said at the public meeting as to the next accident. It was stated clearly unless these monies were collected and handed over the Permanent Fund could not meet its liabilities."

Mr. Lenox: - "I do not think that was the case. The fund has never been in that

position, but it was understood that this would be a very heavy strain upon its resources, and place it in a serious position. It was never said that the society would have to go into liquidation.”

Mr. Hopkin Morgan: - “Then you argue that the money was subscribed to save the Permanent Fund?” - Mr. Lenox: - “Yes.”

Mr. Hopkin Morgan: - “It was certainly never understood so. I propose: - *“That this meeting of the Pontypridd Local Board desires to express its hearty sympathy with the effort made by the Albion widows and orphans to prevent the absorption by the Miners’ Provident Society the funds subscribed throughout the country for their relief; and expresses hopes that in return for the large relief funds it has already secured the Miners’ Provident Society will respond to the righteous demands of widows and orphans for a substantial increase in the amount of the weekly allowance which the society is under legal obligation to contribute.”*

The chairman: - “It is a funny thing for a governing body like ours to pass a resolution like that. The first part of it goes against what the Central Fund committee have done. I cannot support that.”

Mr. Lenox: - “The resolution particularly means a vote of censure on the Cardiff committee, and a vote of censure on the Pontypridd committee.” Mr. Roberts disagreed. He could not blame the Pontypridd committee so much for what they had done, for the resolution in their case had been passed in the first instance because they had been distinctly led to believe that unless the money were handed over to the Permanent Fund it would not be solvent.

Mr. Snape: - “No, no.” Mr. Roberts: - “But it was so.” Mr. Snape: - “All this cry is got up for a purpose.”

Mr. Hopkin Morgan (indignantly): - “What do you mean sir?”

Mr. Snape: - “I think it is very unfair that you should make such a remark. It does not matter what anyone does at this board, everything, from you, is done for an election cry.”

Mr. Hopkin Morgan: - “I am sure I have never consulted anybody about it.” Mr. Roberts: - “I have never heard of the resolution before.”

Mr. Snape: - “I think all these subscriptions should be cancelled, and let everyone say how he wishes his subscriptions to go, whether to the widows or orphans or to the Permanent Fund. How can we dictate where this money should go? Colliers and everyone these days take upon themselves to dictate what is to be done with these subscriptions.”

Mr. Hopkin Morgan: - “There’s more than 80% of this money collected for the widows and orphans never intended for the Permanent Fund.” The chairman stated that moneys intended for widows and orphans had been sent elsewhere. The *‘South Wales Daily News’* had been stating that they intended to send up their money to the Central Fund unless subscription sent to them was accompanied

by a request that they should be used otherwise.

Mr. Gwilym Hughes, of the '*South Wales Daily News*': - "Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, the '*South Wales Daily News*' never said anything of the kind. Please read the announcement above the subscriptions list in each issue."

The chairman: - "Oh, that may be altered."

Mr. Gwilym Hughes: - "Then you can turn up our files if you wish. The '*South Wales Daily News*' has from the start announced how it would devote the fund."

The chairman then read the following extract from the '*South Wales Daily News*' subscription list: - "*In response to numerous enquiries we have to state that although our fund will, as usual, be handed over to the Central Relief Fund, it will be accompanied by the stipulation that the money shall be applied directly to the benefit of the widows and orphans in connection with the Cilfynydd disaster, and not be simply assistance to the finances of the Permanent Fund*"

Mr. Gwilym Hughes: - "It is on these terms only that the Central Fund can get the '*South Wales Daily News*' fund. If the Central Fund cares to form a trust and - ."

The chairman: - "Ah! There you are we have formed a trust."

Mr. Taylor said it was the wish of the meeting of subscribers held in Pontypridd on Tuesday that the Permanent Fund should increase its payments to the Albion widows and orphans. He thought they passed a resolution to that effect, but he was now informed that they had not.

Mr. Roberts: - "Then why object to passing of this resolution now? The chairman held that they had no right to pass such a resolution and appealed to the clerk.

The clerk (H. L. Grover): - "You can pass any resolution you like as a public body, but this question is outside your provenance, as a local board you cannot interfere with the fund."

Mr. Taylor: - "Then I move that the resolution shall lie on the table."

Mr. R. T. Richards: - "I see no harm in asking the Permanent Fund to give more to the widows and orphans. I will second the resolution. Do you object, Mr. Taylor, to give more to the widows?"

Mr. Taylor: - "No; I am quite as much in sympathy with them as you are. I don't believe you have subscribed half as much as I did." Mr. Richards: - "As a colliery proprietor you ought to, but individually I don't think you gave as much as I."

Mr. Roberts said he had subscribed, but had taken good care that his subscription should not go to the Permanent Fund.

Mr. Lenox considered that by subscription to the Permanent Fund that they could best help out the colliers. Mr. Gowan asked whether it was proposed by the trust that was formed, to pay anything more to the widows than was legally due to them? The chairman said "No,"

Mr. Lenox argued that as the resolution implies censure; he could not vote for it. It would cause a great deal of ill-feeling, and that was quite unnecessary. It was insinuated that those who had the management of these funds were doing what was not right.

Mr. Roberts: - "I don't believe the committee here would have done as they have if they had known as we do now that the Permanent Fund has a substantial fund."

Mr. Lenox appealed to Mr. Morgan to modify his resolution, but Mr. Morgan declined. The resolution was then put and carried, and those voting for it being Messrs. Morgan, Richards, Gowan, Rowlands and Roberts. Messrs. Lenox, Taylor, Snape and the chairman did not vote.

The widows rights - Newport Fund safe - £1,400 for the fatherless

The '*South Wales Daily News*' of Saturday, November 3rd 1894, reported: - The more the circumstances of the Albion funds questions are considered, more clear does it become that the Permanent Society has outraged public sentiment by its preconceived move for appropriation of public subscriptions. The society, which is doing so good a work, has materially damaged its reputation. The careful and systematic fashion in which its agents set foot the whole machinery of appropriation has aroused resentment even amongst well-wishers of the society. Today, however, we are concerned, not with the position of the fund or the doing of its agents, so much as the news that appears thereafter.

First, we are able to furnish the gratifying intelligence that the fund raised by the Mayor of Newport is safe; that it will not go to the Permanent Society, but will be available for the widows and orphans for whom it was contributed. Next, we give special attention to the letter of Mr. A. J. Williams, M. P., and in particular to the warning he gives treasurers and other responsible for dealing with moneys subscribed.

Newport Fund safe

It is not the intention on the part of the Mayor and treasurer of the Newport Fund raised for the sufferers by the Albion Colliery explosion to allow that fund, which now amounts to £1,800, to be appropriated by the Permanent Miners' Fund. The public meeting called for the purpose of obtaining money from them expressed the resolution that all sums received and especially devoted to the Permanent Fund should be paid to that fund, and that the remainder, the greater sum, should be paid into the central fund, to be donated, as was imagined, at the instance of the Pontypridd committee.

That committee had failed to call together the representatives of our funds, and in fact, they had, as is intended, rather ignobly got behind a resolution by which

they have passed the whole of the money received at Pontypridd to the Permanent Fund. There is about £300 or £400, contributed by local colliery owners, earmarked for the Permanent Fund out of the £1,800 raised in Newport, and this will be paid over in accordance with the wishes of the donors, but it is not intended to allow the remaining £1,400 to slip through to the same quarter. The Mayor and the treasurer will in the first instance await the action of any other towns or funds which will determine to deal with it direct, and will probably join hands with them in such disposal; or, in the last resort, they will issue circulars to all the donors inviting them to decide in what manner the money shall be distributed. The Newport authorities have had in connection with the Llanerch Fund prior experience of the game of 'grab' pursued by the Permanent Society, and are not disposed in any way to play into the hands of the Permanent Society.

The attitude of the Permanent Fund, too, is considered to be open to very serious criticism. If they succeed, as seems to be at present possible, in getting the bulk of the money, they will by that act be the means of hindering the flow of public generosity whenever another occasion arises, and with the mining industry in its present state, it is too much to hope that the end of the chapter of big disasters has been reached. It is felt that the Pontypridd committee yet have opportunity afforded them of rehabilitating themselves in the good opinion of the district, by taking the courageous course of inviting all the subscribers to their fund to say what they have done is in accordance with their wishes at the time the money was given; if not, in what way should the fund in their opinion be distributed. Such a constitutional appeal would override the ingeniously devised resolution by which, as they say, they are left without option and helpless.

Interview with County Councilor T. J. Hughes

In view of the 'grab' made by the Miners' Provident Society upon the Cilfynydd fund, one of our reporters called yesterday on County Councilor T. J. Hughes, Bridgend, with the object of asserting whether he could throw any light on the position. Mr. Hughes represents on the Glamorgan County Council the various districts adjacent to Park Slip, in which victims of that disaster lived, and he received the greatest number of votes at the election of the local executive under the trustees. "Certainly," said Mr. Hughes in answer to our inquiries, "I shall be happy to furnish you with and facts you may consider material. I consider the colliers of South Wales owe the '*South Wales Daily News*' a debt of gratitude for its bold stand against the attempt of the Miners' Fund people to repeat the questionable tactics resorted to in the case of the Park Slip Fund."

"What were those questionable tactics?" - "Why, from start to finish they set themselves to jockey the funds raised in 1892 for the Park Slip sufferers. I attended the local meetings at the time, and have subsequently the meeting of the

executive, and do not hesitate to say that from the outset there has been a steady and determined effort to annex - appropriate - call it what you will, I have a very short, expressive word for it, the moneys subscribed for the exclusive benefit for the sufferers by that terrible explosion. “

The Cilfynydd Fund

“Would you care to say something about the proposal as to the Cilfynydd Fund?” - “I can only say I am not at all surprised at it, and I have kept silent in the matter merely from my wish to not impede the flow of public money towards the various funds. I have glanced through the rules of the Permanent Fund Society, and find it to be an insurance society pure and simple. The rules are registered under the Friendly Societies Act, and the necessary returns have been made to the chief registrar, and rule 54 expressively gives the authority to re-insure risks.

The word ‘re-insure’ in itself is an admission that the society is an insurance society. Why should the money’s subscribed by the public for the comfort of the widows of the poor fellows who died at Cilfynydd swell their coffers, and in this connection look at rule 29, which states that allowances to widows shall continue as long as the recipient ‘*conducts herself with propriety to the satisfaction of the society,*’ and at rule 30, which gives the officials absolute right to commit all allowances.

Take again rule 38, which provides that any person convicted of felony shall forfeit all further claim to an allowance. Under this rule if one of the little orphan children be ordered a birching for stealing apples, his allowance would be taken away from him. I do not say that it would, but there is the power all the same. And there is rule 53, which states that the rules may be altered by a majority of members present at a General Meeting of members of the society (no outsiders). This and other rules make it abundantly clear the folly of handing over the Cilfynydd funds to the society. I can only hope that the spirited protest which you have made, which is being so well backed up by the men themselves, will open the eyes of the persons responsible, and that it is not too late even now to repair the folly and mischief which has been done.”

Interview with secretary of Permanent Fund

One of our representatives interviewed Mr. Evan Owen, Secretary of the Permanent Fund, yesterday in reference to the subject of ‘the widow’s rights’ and the Permanent Fund: -

Q. - “Would you agree to any funds specifically subscribed to the widows and

orphans being paid to them direct?" - "If any sums are subscribed specifically to supplement the payments from the Permanent Fund or any other fund, I do not see that anyone could reasonably object, but I fail to see the wisdom of applying public money to supplement the ordinary provision made in respect of colliery accidents to a comparatively few deprived of their breadwinners by great disasters, while the far greater number who are rendered destitute by single accidents have to rely entirely upon the provision made for them by the workmen through the Provident Society."

Q. - "It appears that the miners contribute 3½ pence per week, and the employers add 25%, to that sum. By what statistics did you base the amount the miners should contribute weekly?" - "Before the society was established Mr. F. G. B. Neison, of London, who is undoubtedly the greatest authority in the U. K. on mining statistics, presented a report based on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines, and also the statistics given by permanent relief societies in the kingdom, and it was calculated in this report that a subscription of 3d per week from workmen and an addition 25% from the employers would provide a payment of 5/- per widow, 2s/6d per child under thirteen years of age, and £20 funeral allowance to every unmarried member, and 8/- per week to every disabled member. When the first reports of the valuation of the society was prepared, it was found that the rate of colliery accidents greatly exceeded the calculations, consequently it was considered necessary to increase the subscriptions or diminish the benefits."

Q - "Mr. Neison based his calculations on the average number of accidents, and afterwards it was discovered that his basis was too low for the South Wales coalfield?"

- "Yes."

Q. - "Am I right in stating that there are scores of trivial accidents affecting the Permanent Fund annually not reported to the inspectors of mines?" - "Yes; only accidents of a serious character are generally reported. Such accidents as an injury to a finger are not reported, but scores of miners having sustained slight injuries have received aid from the fund. We have even placed in our fund widows and children whose breadwinners died from the effects of accidents which at the time they occurred were considered insignificant, but subsequently terminated in fatality. An injury to a finger, though very slight at first, might result in disabling the workman for weeks."

Q. - "Had it not been for the occasional influx of public subscriptions would the rate of the members' contributions have to be increased?" - "Yes, or benefits would have to be reduced. A considerable number of the members who have been disabled for

many years would probably remain on the fund for the remainder of their lives. The board of management have found suitable employment for many of the disabled, some being employed as lamp-men, others engaged in the offices, and in a large number of cases lump sums of money have been given to disabled members to enable them to set up in business. With regard to boys, the board of management have apprenticed a number of lads to various useful trades, and paid them weekly relief during the term of apprenticeship.”

Interview with a miners’ representative

One of our correspondents interviewed a miners’ representative in the Rhondda Valley yesterday (Nov. 2nd 1894) in regard to the question of the widows’ right and some matters pertaining to the management of the Permanent Fund. “Is not the fund merely controlled by the miners?” - “No,” he replied, “it is controlled by colliery officials chiefly, and by workmen selected by colliery officers. The majority of the representatives on the board of the management are supposed to be representatives of the workmen, but I can assure you they don’t represent the miners. The body of workmen have no voice in the matter at all.”

“In your opinion is it not a properly constituted board?” - “No, it is not. I should rather the colliery proprietors to keep their percentage they contribute to the fund. The men are prejudiced against the fund because the officials of various collieries are interfering so much in the matter, and in many collieries compelling the men indirectly to become members of the society. I think the men would agree to pay a larger weekly contribution to the fund if the society went entirely under their own control. The Permanent Fund will not be allowed by the men to collapse or become insolvent if the employers cease contributing to it. The 25% given by the employers is contributed towards working expenses. I think the society’s affairs should be managed much better if they were absolutely in the hands of the men.”

Permanent Society meeting

A meeting of the board of management of the above society was held at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff, on Saturday, November 3rd 1894. In the absence of Sir W. T. Lewis (chairman of the board), Mr. Louis Tylor (chairman of the finance committee) presided. He said that it would be expected as a matter of course, that he should make some reference to the action of the Permanent Society with regard to the funds publicly raised in connection with the Albion disaster. The position of the society was quite clear. Every appeal for help at the time of the disaster, including that of the Lord Mayor of London, recognised the forethought exercised by the workmen at this colliery in the provision they had made through the Permanent Fund, and pointed out the imperativeness of strengthening the fund, on which 750 widows and 1,500 children were now absolutely dependent.

The principal donors to the Albion fund had undoubtedly given their subscriptions either directly to the Permanent Society or with the intention that they should form a separate trust, securing in the first instance allowances made by the society, making it perfectly certain that there should be no failure in the payments.

The society sought no more public aid than it was fairly entitled to as an administrator of public benevolence. The chief aim of the organisation was to direct popular help into the most serviceable channel which would provide the miners of South Wales, 70,000 of whom relied upon the society in the event of accident to life or limb, and it was never contemplated when the society was formed that the provision made for single accidents should divert from its resources the stream of public sympathy aroused by great colliery disasters. There was nothing more gratifying than the announcement he was able to make that throughout the kingdom the help that had come to the society had been specifically given by people interested in the coal industry. Every opportunity had been given by the persons of objecting to the suggested arrangement of helping the payments of the society to give directions to the manner in which their subscriptions should be applied, and he was pleased to be able to state that as secretary of the fund organised by the Mayor of Cardiff there has not been a solitary instance in which donors had desired that their subscriptions should be diverted from the great object of making permanent the provision for the widows and orphans dependent on the society. He suggested that the board should, in the first place, thank the thousands of friends who had helped them in their emergency, and that then, after passing the resolutions suggested by the central fund, or their authorised officials, to accept responsibility of administering any funds placed at their disposal for the purpose of augmenting the relief granted under the society's rules.

In conclusion, Mr. Tylor said it had been alleged that their accumulation of funds was so large that the society had in hand an abundance of funds to cover all its responsibilities. The fact was that the claims of the 750 widows and 1,500 children far more than covered all the reserve funds available, and whatever help that they may get from the public sources would not be greater than the requirements of the dependants placed on this society by this greatest disaster to happen since 1866. He invited discussion on the whole question, on which, he said, he had a perfectly open mind, and it was eventually resolved on the motion of Mr. Edward Jones J. P., seconded by Henry Richards, that representatives of the funds not already allocated to the Permanent Relief Society be invited to meet the board of management at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff, on Saturday, 10th November, at 12 o'clock noon, with the object of discussing, and, if possible, determining a method whereby aid provided by the society may be supplemented. A number of special cases were then dealt with, and the meeting terminated with

the usual vote of thanks.

The Miners' Provident Society strongly condemned
Rhondda miners indignant

At special meeting of the Great Western Colliers and miners from the surrounding district, held on Monday, November 5th, 1894, at the Workmen's Hall, Hopkinstown, under the presidency of Mr. Fleming (checkweigher), Mr. David Morgan, one of the workmen at the Great Western Colliery, moved: - *"That this mass meeting of miners from the Great Western Colliery and surrounding districts condemns the actions of the Permanent Fund Society in appropriating to its own use the money collected at Pontypridd, Cardiff and Liverpool, on behalf of the Cilfynydd widows and orphans, and further pledges itself to use all legitimate means to compel the society to return the same moneys so that the widows and orphans may receive the money which the charitable public has given them."*

In moving this resolution Mr. Morgan condemned what he termed the 'grab all policy' of the Permanent Society. He thought the claims of the poor suffering widows and the orphans should have been sufficient to deter the people belonging to the Permanent Society from acting as they had done, and against their own interests. (Applause). It was high time the colliers of the district should do all in their power to stop the grabbing. (Hear, hear). The Permanent Society was endeavouring to seize something like £20,000 of the money intended directly for the widows and orphans - (Shame) - simply to strengthen the funds of their own society. If there was one doing that he was proud of as a Great Western Colliery workman, it was the fact that this unprincipled Permanent Society had never been able to set its foot in their collieries.

They had heard from the secretary (Mr. Evan Owen) that it was beneficial to the workmen to become members of the fund, and that it was a fund existing wholly and solely for the working men. He differed from Mr. Owen, as through personal experience he had found, despite what they might say to the contrary, that the Permanent Fund was a means whereby the employers of south Wales today were able to do things which they would not dare to do were this fund not in existence. There were some 60,000 miners belonging to the Permanent Society, out of 112,000 miners employed in the Welsh collieries. Were it not for the fact that half of these were members of the society they (the miners of Wales) would not lose so many of their cases under the Employers' Liability Act for injuries sustained. It was on account of this society that the masters were able to bring in expert witnesses to rebut the evidence of the workmen. (Shame). In the Rhondda valley men were working in unsheltered places and with defective machinery because the Permanent Fund had absolved the masters from all their responsibilities. (Shame).

The money collected which had been intended for the Permanent Society had been specially labeled when sent to various funds - (Hear, hear) - and the rest belongs solely to the widows and orphans. (Applause). The society might just as well try to grab the '*South Wales Daily News Fund*.' They would have had just as little right to it. (Applause). The only excuse the society had was that it was not strong enough to meet its liabilities. It was said that the masters would stop contributing their 25%, to the fund. He would, glory in such a thing, for the men could then carry on the fund themselves, and it would help them to fight the masters in bringing employers' liability cases to a successful issue. (Cheers). The 60,000 miners who were members of the fund were represented on the Board of Management of the Permanent Society by thirteen of their number, whilst the employers, who only numbered 100, had ten representatives on the Board of Management. Was that fair representation? (No, No, and cheers). It was said that in some collieries the men were voluntarily becoming members of the Permanent Fund, but he wished to point out that wherever they were not forced to join by the masters, the men's interest in the fund had speedily died out. (Cheers).

Mr. Williams (checkweigher at No.2 colliery) said he was pleased to think their employers had not attempted to force the fund upon them at the Great Western collieries. It had saved them a lot of trouble, for he did not think it would have succeeded had the masters attempted it. (Cheers). The Permanent Fund only helped the miners families when the breadwinner was killed. It gave him nothing when he was ill or hurt by accident, though they needed assistance at that time just as much. (Hear. Hear). The masters had created this fund simply to shirk their own liabilities. (Cheers). He considered no man with principals of a man in him could voluntarily become a member of this cursed society. (Cheers).

The chairman, in supporting the resolution, said he was sure that every honest man would say that the widows and orphans should have their rights. (Cheers). Of all people who were deserving of sympathy, and practical sympathy, it was those who had lost their breadwinners. (Cheers). His mind went back to the time of the Great Western disaster, when the question was raised that they should put their money into the hands of the Permanent Fund; but the Great Western Collieries employers said definitely that the money should not go to the Permanent Fund if it was against the wishes of the men. (Cheers). They showed that at the Great Western Collieries the master had at all events a little bit of respect for their workmen. (Cheers). He was not a fighting man, but he sometimes wished he was, and that the laws of the country would let him have his fling at some of those people who sat on the Pontypridd Local Board. (Cheers). He had noticed that at a recent meeting of that board the question had been raised of protesting against the action of the Permanent Fund, when one member sarcastically termed it as an 'election dodge.' Such an insinuation when a man was trying to do some good was contemptible. (Cheers).

Another member of the board had said, "Colliers were dictating where this money should go to," and that was a man who depended on the colliers' vote for his seat on the board. If the colliers gave him their votes next time, they were 'duffers.' (Cheers). He was living in a fools' paradise, and ought to get a rude awakening. The officials of this 'grab all' society were like the serpent in the Garden of Eden. They had a nice, gentle, harmless, and insinuating manner with them, and would come along with their resolutions, getting one man to propose this and another to propose something else, so that by the time the money was collected, everything was ready for it to go into their own coffers." (Shame).

The money subscribed by the public was intended as an extra consolation for the widows and orphans. (Cheers). He was glad to note that Mr. Arthur Williams, M. P., had spoken out on the matter in saying that treasurers would be held responsible for every penny they paid over to the Permanent Fund, and he hoped the public would just remember that - (Applause) - and endeavour to make them repay every penny and a little over. (Cheers). The resolution was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously. A hearty vote of thanks was then accorded to the proprietors, editor, and staff of the '*South Wales Daily News*' for having, as the chairman put it, "stood up manfully to expose the policy of the 'grab all' society."

Similar votes of thanks being passed to Mr. Alfred Thomas, M. P., for having spoken out like a man on the subject, and also to those members of the Pontypridd Local Board who had spoken against the action of the Permanent Society. The chairman drew attention to a sad case, which he said they were endeavouring to bring up under the notice of the committee of the Great Western Disaster Fund. It was in respect of the family of the late Enoch Thomas, a miner, who was killed at the Great Western Colliery through a horse and cart running away. The deceased had left behind him two sons, both paralysed, and a daughter also incapable of doing anything, and as it was an exceptional case he thought they might be allowed something towards their support from the Great Western funds. The meeting approved of the suggestion, and it was resolved that a deputation should wait upon the fund committee to lay the case before them. The proceedings then terminated.

Deputation to the Provident Society

The board of management of the Miners' Permanent Provident Society, presided over by Mr. Louis Taylor, received a large and important deputation of miners' leaders on Saturday, December 15th, 1894, at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff, with reference to the subject of the disposal of the funds subscribed for the relief of the widows and the orphans and dependent relatives of the victims of the Albion Colliery explosion. The deputation included Mr. William Abraham, M. P.,

(Mabon), Mr. David Morgan, Mr. W. Brace, Mr. T. Daronwy Isaac, Mr. Alfred Onions, Mr. T. Richards, Mr. Ben Davies, Mr. W. Evans, Mr. D. Beynon, Mr. Isaac Evans, and Mr. Lewis Miles (secretary). Mr. David Morgan introduced the deputation. He thanked the board of management for its courtesy in receiving them. The miners' leaders in attendance had been given plenary power by the widows and orphans at Cilfynydd to submit to the Permanent Society the proposition that each widow should be paid 7/6d per week, and each orphan 3/9d, and dependant relatives (*pro rata*), and that a deed should be drawn up to this effect.

The chairman said a trust had already been formed, which he hoped would act not only for this accident but all future colliery disasters in South Wales and Monmouthshire. This trust would take care of all moneys not expressly contributed to the Permanent Fund and should be vested in the hands of trustees for dealing with future accidents that might arise. The proposition submitted by Mr. David Morgan meant a very large additional sum. They were not there to discuss how the society was managed, but to talk over this proposal to increase the allowance to the widows and orphans by the Albion explosion. There was no question of principle before them.

His own belief was that the proposition made by Mr. Morgan on behalf of the deputation would be a very strong one to be entertained by the society as trustees for nearly 800 widows and 1,600 children.

Mabon said, in reference to the trust to which the chairman had spoken, he knew nothing of it. (Cries of "Hear, hear" from the deputation). They had not come to take any part whatever in a general trust, but to ask the board to deal in the most generous way possible with the Cilfynydd widows and orphans. This money would not have been gathered at all if it had not been for the Cilfynydd explosion. (Hear, hear). Most of it, however, had gone into the hands of the Permanent Society - (Secretary Owen: Hear, hear) - and the deputation could not take it from them. Probably they would if they could. (Laughter).

The chairman: - "We are not as bad as that." Mabon continuing added: "Unless the application of the deputation was granted, there would be a great danger that the credit and reputation of the society would be seriously damaged. It was not likely the miners of South Wales and Monmouthshire would forget that, although the poor fellows at Cilfynydd were members of the Permanent Society, their widows and orphans were receiving a less allowance than those by the Great Western Colliery fire, where the victims were not members. In other words, the dependant relatives of men who had made provision for themselves against accident were worse off than those of miners who had not made this provision." (Hear, hear).

Mr. T. Richards followed the honourable member for the Rhondda, urging the society to deal generously by the Cilfynydd widows and orphans. He pointed out that the deputation represented at least 90% of the members of the society which that board managed, and when he said the society ought to deal in a generous manner by the Albion widows and orphans, he was representing 90% of the people in his district (Hear, hear). The society's rules gave the management great power, but the board ought to hesitate before they used those powers against the wishes of the great majority of the members of the association. As for the trust which the chairman had told them was formed, those primary concerns knew nothing of it, they had never been consulted, and no trust could command the confidence of the public where the miners or their leaders had not been consulted with reference to it.

When an individual fatality occurred in a pit, there were generally collections made, benefits given, etc; to succour the widow and children. The Permanent Society never dreamt of taking away that money so raised; yet, what was it doing in this instance? The society was doing that which it did not in cases of individual fatalities, and, too, on a very considerable scale. It was the duty of the society to go to its constituents to find out what their views were, and he had no hesitation in saying that ninety per. cent of them would say that the present proposition was rather under than over what they considered the society ought to do.

The chairman mentioned, with regard to the trust, that it had been formed by the subscribers quite independently of the Permanent Society. Mr. W. Brace did not appear there in the capacity of a beggar on behalf of the Cilfynydd widows and orphans, but in the full belief that this money was contributed for the direct relief of the dependent relatives of the many victims, and they were entitled to it. He contended that the compromise contained in the proposition met the society in a very fair spirit indeed. As to the trust which they were told had been formed, no trust could command the confidence of the workmen upon which they were not represented. The chairman had told them that the trust was formed by gentlemen outside the Permanent Society, but was it not the fact that the resolution for the formation of the trust was drawn up by the officials of the society?

The chairman: - "It was drawn up by myself." Mr. Brace: - "Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I am very glad for your admission. That being so, the society could claim to be the initiators of the trust." The chairman: - "I was the secretary of the Mayor of Cardiff's Relief Fund." Mr. Brace, continuing, said: - "If the society acted fairly in the present instance it would be the means of putting itself right in the eyes of the workers, and of inducing many more miners to join it." He believed in the principal of a Permanent Fund, but if the board declined to compromise the matter, the miner's leaders in South Wales will be forced into a position which might be regrettable."

Mr. Alfred Onions deprecated anything being done by the society that would be calculated to alienate the sympathy of the public at a time of terrible disaster. He had not the slightest doubt that the large proportion of the money was subscribed in the belief, and with the intention, that it would find its way direct to the Cilfynydd widows and orphans, in addition to the legal payments of the Permanent Society. He was distinctly in favour of the principal underlying the Permanent Society, and he should be sorry to see any damage done to that principal. There was, however, no blinking the fact that a very large percentage of the workmen of South Wales and Monmouthshire were not in sympathy with the society as at present constituted; and if they wanted to increase, and not diminish, confidence in the society, they must deal fairly by the Cilfynydd widows and orphans.

Mr. Isaac Evans submitted that the proposition of the deputation was not impracticable. Indeed, he believed that if the suggested supplementary allowance was made, there would come into the funds of the society a handsome surplus.

Mr. D. Eynon submitted some figures bearing on the question at issue. He found that there were 135 widows and 350 orphans by the Albion explosion. By paying 2s/6d per week to each widow and 1s/6d per week per child, the sum of £16,782 would be absorbed in twelve years, he having reduced each payment each year by one-twelfth. The sum of £30,000 had been collected, and he collected 3 per cent interest, on £35,400. After paying 2s/6d and 1s/6d, he calculated there would remain to be taken over by the Permanent Society a sum of £18,618. If, however, the allowance was made for fourteen years, and neither widow nor child went off the fund during that time, the sum of £31,395, and there would still be a thousand or two left for the Permanent Society. The chairman said they had heard of these calculations before. There was one great calculation called the Liberator Building Society, but the calculations there were not sufficient to meet the liabilities, and the consequence was unfortunate shareholders had to suffer, and he was afraid that if they adopted calculations someone would have to suffer very seriously. However, they would have the exact figures, and would look carefully into them.

Mr. Henry Richards, vice-chairman of the board of management, said that when the Albion explosion took place the board, on the understanding that the society should not be losers, took upon itself an additional relief, which was estimated to absorb nearly £4,500 per annum, or nearly the whole amount of the outside funds. As soon as the board ascertained approximately what the amount of the relief fund would be they passed a resolution suggesting supplementary payments similar to those of Llanerch, although the public subscriptions only amounted to £109 per head in the Albion case as against £227 in the Llanerch case. From the

last quarterly return the board had ascertained that the payments this year to the widows and orphans had been £4,500, which would represent a liability of over £67,500 and to supplement these payments in the way suggested by the deputation would mean an additional £33,750. Meetings held at Cardiff and Pontypridd distinctly voted their funds to the Permanent Society; and the only funds that were available for them to deal with today for supplementary payments, except where they came from the society were the outside funds, amounting at the very most to £5,000.

The local colliery sick fund had been put on the same financial footing by the society as it was before the explosion. Replying to the interposition of Mr. David Morgan on this point, the secretary explained the position to be this: - "When the explosion occurred the local colliery sick fund had, say, £1,200. It had since been assisted to the tune of about £800, and there would be a £300 deficiency, which the Permanent Society proposed to make up." The chairman: - "And then you are also making special payments to the amount of how much?" - Secretary Evan Owen replied that four of the unfortunate victims were not members of the society, and on the behalf of the society he gave an undertaking that they should be placed on the same footing with regard to dependent relatives. The liability thus incurred would be about £4,000.

Mr. Richards, continuing his speech, said £28,558 was collected for the Llanerch explosion at £227 per head; £16,849 for the Park Slip, £490 per head; £17,776 for the Morfa, or £152 per head; and £23,445 for the Albion, or £109 per head. Mr. Richards added that money which had been definitely subscribed to assist the society and the strain that had been put upon it could not be dealt with to give supplementary payments. Mr. Isaac Evans: - "Do I understand that it is out of this £23,000, which you say has been subscribed directly to the Albion Fund, that you get your £109 per head?" The chairman: - "Yes." Mr. Evans: - "And not from the whole subscriptions?" Mr. Alfred Onions: - "You gave certain figures with reference to the Morfa, Park Slip and the Llanerch explosions, and you gave us in each case an amount per head.

Am I right in assuming that in each of these funds you had special help given you?" The chairman: - "Yes, not included in those sums." The secretary said that in each of these cases a certain amount was sent direct to the Provident Society. Mr. David Morgan: - "Will you give me the exact figures of the amount sent to the society in this case?" The chairman: - "All Mr. Richard's calculations are exclusive of the amount sent direct to the permanent fund." The secretary: - "The amount received up to date by the treasurer of the Miners' Fund is about £9,500, exclusive of the Marquis of Bute's £1,000, which has not yet been paid. This amount of £10,500, to include Lord Bute's subscription, does not include the moneys sent for the Provident Fund to the Pontypridd, the Mayor of Cardiff's, the

Lord Mayor's, and the various other funds in Aberdare and Merthyr.

The chairman: - "It is only the direct payments that have reached you?" The secretary: - "Reached the general treasurer of the Provident Fund. Adding those which we are certain were intended for the Provident Fund to the amount actually in hand, we bring up the total to something like £23,000 or £24,000. The chairman: - "In addition to the £9,000 subscribed direct?" The secretary: - "Yes." Mr. Abraham:

- "Among the funds which you know have been directly contributed to the Permanent Society do you include the Pontypridd Central Fund?" - The secretary: - "Yes. It is well to be clear. According to the resolution passed by the Pontypridd subscribers, the money was to go direct to the Provident Fund; but I am not taking that into the aggregate. I am only eluding to the individual subscribers which appear on the whole of the contribution lists of the various funds." The chairman: - "I don't follow that." The secretary: - "Taking the whole of the subscription lists, and setting forth the amounts which we know which were specifically intended to be given to the society, we get the total of £23,000 or £24,000." Mr. Abraham: - "In acting upon a certain resolution passed at the Pontypridd meeting, do you consider you are entitled to the use of that money specifically for your own purpose?" The chairman: - "Yes." The secretary: - "Yes."

Mr. Abraham: - "Independently of the object of those who contributed the money? I happen to know certain contributions which were sent to that fund with the intention of being directly distributed among the widows and orphans. Still, a resolution was passed afterwards by a certain committee giving you this money, and you told that consequently you have a right to it." The secretary: - "That's quite correct, but in my estimate of £23,000 or £24,000 I have not taken those sums; only the individuals we knew." Mr. Abraham: - "And you have all this money in addition?" The chairman thought the secretary was mistaken in reference to the question of Mr. Isaac Evans. The point raised was, were they calculating, in arriving at so much per head, the amount sent direct to the fund? - "They were not; they did not include those amounts. There had been sent direct to the Permanent Fund £9,500, and, in addition to that, there had been raised by public subscriptions the sum of £24,500, of which £5,400 had not been paid into the trust. All the rest had been paid into the trust, and specially allotted to the Miners' Fund, but they did not take this in regard to the payments made direct." At this stage an adjournment was made for luncheon.

Upon the board and the deputation reassembling after the adjournment the chairman stated that after the retirement of the deputation two resolutions were passed; these the secretary would read. Mr. Evan Owen then read the following: - Moved by Mr. John Jones, seconded by Mr. Henry Richards, and carried, *"that the*

board considered the representations made to them by the deputation in support of the request that the supplementary payments to the widows and orphans by the Albion Colliery explosion should be one-half of the regular payments, regrets that the funds at its disposal would be insufficient to meet so large a supplementary payment. The board has already decided to take on additional dependent relatives, and to make up colliery funds at a cost of over £4,000, and has recommended a similar weekly payment to those at Llanerch; but as the amounts not yet included in the Cardiff trust are only about £5,000, namely, : South Wales Daily News, £2,230; Newport, £1,400; Parliamentary £1,300; Aberavon £400; sum spoken of today estimated to bring in £600; and making a total of £6,000 it does not feel justified in departing from the proposals it has already made."

The chairman said that the conference which had taken place had been of a very pleasant nature, and they felt they had been meeting friends (Hear, hear). He was not going to enter into the difference of opinions, as they knew there must always be differences. The board concurred with him that as there was no great question of principal, the question being rather of ways and means, and as the deputation represented a very large number of persons in the Principality, they felt they ought to stretch compliance to the very furthest limits possible. It was, therefore, with a feeling that the next resolution was proposed and seconded, and supported by every member of the board. Mr. Evan Owen proceeded to read the following:

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Moved by Mr. W. H. Morgan, seconded by Mr. J. Davies, and carried, : - *"That the board regrets that the amounts contributed per head for the Albion disaster were very much less than for Llanerch, and under these circumstances the board considered that it would be advisable in all further appeals, should the occasion unfortunately arise, to adopt the scale of relief in operation under the Llanerch trust. In order to show its sense of the exceedingly friendly manner in which the deputation approached the board, and to put future public appeals on the broadest basis possible, the board is prepared to entertain some suggestion which would have the effect of making the Llanerch scale the standard for all future appeals, and if the suggestion is adopted to consider the advisability of applying the outside Albion subscriptions, as far as they will suffice, to afford supplementary relief, estimated at £6,000 on the scale proposed by the deputation, and when these funds have been exhausted to apply the Llanerch scale to the recipients."*

Mr. David Morgan said he did not see that the reference to the deputation's proposal was right in the first resolution. They made a request that fifty per cent might be added to the allowances made to the widows and the orphans, and the appeal to the relatives ought to have been the same ratio. The chairman: - "It is understood though it is not in the resolution. I will accept your correction."

Mr. David Morgan said while he appreciated the friendly spirit in which they had been received, he regretted that the board could not see their way to accede to the representations that had been made. There was nothing to be done now but for the deputation to meet in conference and discuss the situation, though he did not feel that they could do anything. The chairman: - "They came here with plenary powers." Mr. David Morgan: - "From the widows of Cilfynydd." The chairman;

- "That has nothing to do with it." Mr. Henry Thomas suggested that the deputation should retire, and discuss the matter amongst themselves. In answer to Mr. Abraham, the chairman said there was no condition made by the board as to what terms future appeals should be made, but it would be an understanding they could not impose conditions upon persons who were going to give money. But there might be an understanding that any appeal made in future would be on the basis of the relief under the Llanerch scheme. The funds had fallen off very much in amounts per head, the sum received for the Albion sufferers was only about one half of what it was in the case of Llanerch. They wanted to ensure that in the future there should be some supplementary relief. He suggested that the deputation should talk the matter over amongst themselves.

Mr. Isaac Evans said there was no likelihood of their coming back with any definite conclusion that they were going to accept this as satisfactory. If the Morfa Fund came as the medium per head in amount, but yet allowed of a larger sum being distributed, the Llanerch Fund could hardly be a fair basis to take for the future. The board had undertaken to pay the funds that were now outlying in accordance with the deputation's suggestions. Then according to the figures given that morning it would be a very short time before those funds were exhausted, if the figures given by the board were correct. But he thought they hardly could be, for a deputation calculation gave a very different result to that named by the board. If future appeals were made on the standard suggested, he feared that very poor support would be received from the general public. The deputation here withdrew, and were absent for about five minutes. Mr. David Morgan, on their return, said they had considered the proposals that had been made, and they were very disappointed with them. They must decline to accept the terms offered, and would consult their constituents again on the subject.

They thanked the board for the courtesy in which they had been received. The chairman said he was authorised to say that as there had been no immediate result from their negotiations the board would go on exactly as they had been. The sufferers were receiving supplementary payment at present out of local funds. If the deputation wished the supplementary payments to continue they could instruct their constituents to put the money in the hands of the board, and the latter would be happy to continue them. They would go on as long as money was forthcoming to pay the supplementary allowances, and then only the ordinary allowances from the society. The proceedings then terminated.

Miners' leaders form their own Central Relief Fund

On Saturday, January 5th, 1895, a meeting of miners' leaders and others was held at the Hotel Metropole, Cardiff, for the purpose of devising a scheme with the view of distributing money collected by the public towards the support of the

widows and orphans of the colliery disaster. The newspaper reporters were not admitted to the meeting, but at the close of the proceedings, which lasted over two hours, the following report was issued: -

A report was given of the interview with the Permanent Fund Society, held some weeks ago, and it was stated that the terms proposed there could not be accepted in any way by this meeting. After a lengthy discussion, the following resolution was submitted by Mr. Isaac Evans, seconded by Mr. B. Davies, and carried that *“the committee having failed hitherto to secure reasonable terms with the board of management of the Permanent Provident Society committee for the widows and orphans of Cilfynydd, we now recommend that the whole of the moneys subscribed for the purpose of widows and orphans should be gathered into one central fund, and that a trust deed be drafted for the paying out of the funds in the manner suggested by us, the members of the Round Table Conference, namely, two-shillings and sixpence per widow per week, and one shilling and sixpence per child respectfully; but we wish to state that we are yet prepared to meet the members or officials of the Permanent Provident Society, if they so desire, during the present month to see if they, with us, can arrive at some amicable arrangement.”*

It was also resolved that a copy of the resolution be forwarded to the Lord Mayor of London, and to the committee that had collected moneys towards the Cilfynydd disaster, and Messrs. Alfred Thomas M. P., and John Duncan, were appointed treasurers of the new trust fund. On the proposal of Mr. Alfred Onions, seconded by Mr. S. Mills, the following resolution was adopted; -

“That this meeting respectfully requests the various districts in south Wales and Monmouth-shire at their monthly meeting to consider the advisability of convening a general conference of miners’ representatives for the purpose of considering the Permanent Provident Society with a view to improving its constitution and decide upon the most effective method to adopt and take united action thereon.” Votes of thanks to the chairman and Mr. Alfred Thomas M. P., and Mr. John Duncan, J. P., (of the ‘*South Wales Daily News*’) concluded the proceedings.

The conclusion

And so this appears to be the end of the story. The new trust fund formed by the Miners’ leaders gave added payments to the widows and orphans of Cilfynydd, but there was no agreement made with the Permanent Fund. The Albion Steam Coal Company meanwhile commissioned their own enquiry into the disaster and when published in December 1894 unsurprisingly came to the conclusion that the company were not to blame: -

The Albion Steam Coal Company's Enquiry.

We beg to report that we have made a minute and searching investigation into the cause of the explosion which occurred at your Albion Colliery on

the 23rd of June last. We are unanimously of opinion that the disaster was caused by a sudden outburst of fire-damp accompanied by a large fall of rock roof in the main intake at a point some 156 yard on Cilfynydd side of the Downcast Shaft, and where at the time were passing 118,754 cubic feet of air per minute. Such an occurrence was extraordinary, and could not possibly have been anticipated by the management and we, therefore, have the greatest satisfaction in stating that no blame in the matter can be attributed to any of your officials or employees. The theory that this explosion originated by shot firing on the Grover side of the shaft is in our judgement inconsistent with the force indications observed by us, and also with certain force indications admittedly observed by H. M. Inspectors.

HERBERT KIRKHOUSE - Mining Engineer.

TREHARNE REES - Formerly H. M. Inspector of Mines for South Wales.

HUGH BRAMWELL - Agent to the Great Western Colliery Co. **DAVID**

HANNAH - Agent to Messrs. D. Davies & Sons. Ferndale. **HENRY T.**

WALES - Mining Engineer.

ALFRED LESTER LEWIS - Agent to Troedryhiw Coal Co. Treherbert.

The '*South Wales Daily News*' continued to run its Albion Colliery appeal well into 1895. But the winter of 1894-95 was very severe, the River Thames in London, for instance, was frozen over. Soup kitchens were opened throughout Great Britain, including Pontypridd, where the poor could get some warmth from hot food, and the '*South Wales Daily News*' and other newspapers began an appeal for contributions to aid the soup kitchens. Coupled to this were several strikes by the miners of South Wales. Times must have been hard in Cilfynydd especially for the widows and orphans, and some of the widows took one of the few ways out by re-marrying. The Permanent Fund continued to support many of the widows and orphans well into the twentieth century, including those of the six victims of an explosion on November 10th 1906, when Thomas Rosser, Richard Hughes, Abraham Lloyd, John Jones and Henry Hill met their fate.

Those unhappy with the Permanent Fund's methods opened their own their own charity the 'Albion Trust Fund' who invested money in stocks and shares and by 1896 held £17,000 in hand for the benefit of the relatives of the victims of the disaster. When the Albion Co. was taken over in 1928 the fund had received the previous year in investments just over £221, while it paid out over £268 to the remaining 13 widows and dependent relatives. When one widow died in 1927 the fund still held £4,206.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The great perils of the mine were again sadly demonstrated on Saturday, November 10th 1906, when another explosion occurred at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, which was almost an 'echo' of the 1894 disaster and proved that outbursts of gas *were* possible in the Albion Colliery and indeed, had the mine not been better watered now, and there had been coal-dust present in large quantities, another horrific tragedy might have occurred and over 50 men and boys might have lost their lives. The '*South Wales Daily News*' reported: -

Pit explosion at Albion Colliery

Five lives lost - rescuer's fatal effort - mysterious outburst

An explosion which has caused the loss of five lives occurred on Saturday night in the No.1 seam of the Albion Colliery, near Pontypridd. Three men were killed by the force of the blast, and the fourth lost his life in an heroic attempt to save his comrades, and one of two serious injured men has since died. The names of the victims are :-

Henry Hill (Overman), married, one son and two daughters, all married, of Cifynydd Road, Cilfynydd.

Thomas Prosser (Collier), married, no children, Alpha Place, Coedpenmaen.

John Jones, married, four children, Oakland Terrace, Cilfynydd.

Frank Strong, married, six children, Oakland Terrace, Cilfynydd.

Abraham Lloyd, 61 Police Row, Norton Bridge. (Died after removal to his home).

Richard Hughes, Wood St, Cilfynydd.

At the time of the explosion there were 53 day men, who were working overtime, engaged in the mine doing various kinds of repairing work. About 500 yards from the pit bottom the victims of the accident with the exception of Hill, the overman, were engaged in clearing a fall which had taken place earlier in the day. When removing the debris a second fall - not of great dimensions - occurred, and immediately afterwards there was an ignition of gas - the force of the blast killing Jones, Strong and Prosser outright, and severely injuring Lloyd and Hughes.

Singularly enough all the men escaped unscathed from the falling debris, and the theory advanced as to the cause of the explosion is that the fall of the roof dislodged a 'blower' of gas. How the gas was fired is a matter of surmise only, for all the men's lamps have been discovered intact. The most probably theory is that a spark created by the falling stones caused the explosion. The explosion was

most providentially confined to a very small area, and men working within a distance of 60 yards were unaware that anything untoward had happened as they heard no report whatsoever. They did, however, detect a slight check in the air current, but attributed this to a fall which might have happened in the interior and proceeded with their work. When they realised that what had happened the workmen hurried to the rescue.

Sacrificed his life

The first one who proceeded to the spot was Henry Hill, the overman, and in his anxiety for the well-being of his comrades he sacrificed his life, for while endeavouring to restore ventilation Hill must have been overcome by the deadly fumes of the afterdamp. He had penetrated into the workings alone, and was subsequently found leaning against the side of the roadway quite dead with his hands pressed against his mouth. This attitude indicated that he had vainly attempted to obviate his inhaling the fumes, and that overcome he leant against one of the posts and died in an heroic effort to render assistance to the other unfortunate men.

Rescuers' experiences

The rescuing parties summoned the general manager, Mr. Philip Jones, and under-manager, Mr. William Jones, who descended the pit and directed the operations. A singular circumstance is the rescue party did not encounter any after-damp. This confirms the view that the accident was one of a comparatively slight nature, for otherwise the ventilation would have been seriously interfered and the work of the rescuing party hampered. In the absence of any obstacle the band of explorers were soon able to reach the scene of the explosion, and they found that two of the men, Lloyd and Hughes, showed signs of life. A message was forthwith dispatched to Doctors Shaw Lytle, Cilfynydd, and B. M. Lewis, Pontypridd, who lost no time in descending the mine and attending to the injured men, who were subsequently conveyed to their homes.

Knowing the electrifying affect of the word 'explosion' upon the mining community, the management did not at once disclose the nature of the accident, and it was only after the bodies had been brought to bank that the tragic news spread. This secrecy prevented people thronging to the pit bank. All that was allowed to leak out was that a fall had taken place and these accidents being of almost daily occurrence in the coalfield, not great significance was attached to it, especially as it was accompanied by a report that there was no fatality.

Experts interviewed

On Sunday morning Henry Lewis, Tyr'nant (chairman of the directors), Mr. Willie Lewis (agent), Mr. Philip Jones (general manager), accompanied by Mr.

Trump (H. M. Inspector of Mines), inspected the workings where the explosion occurred. Upon their ascent from the mine they favoured newspaper representatives with interviews.

“The explosion was a very small thing indeed,” said Mr. Trump in response from queries, “and was confined to a very small area. There was no doubt that the fall occurred first, and, releasing some gas, caused the explosion. The gas was not ignited by any of the men’s lamps because all the lamps had been discovered intact.” Pressed upon a to his opinion on how the explosion took place, Mr. Trump courteously declined.

Mr. Philip Jones, the veteran general manager, prefaced his remarks by saying that the explosion was a mystery to him. The exact locale of the accident was about 500 yards from the pit bottom in the new seam, and the only men working within the range of the explosion was the gang of five men, three of whom were killed and two injured. Men who were working about 70 yards away from the spot where it occurred heard no report at all. They only felt a slight check in the air, as if a fall had occurred. The lamps - all of the latest Cambrian type - were found in perfect order. Possibly the explosion was caused by a spark being created by the fall. Such an incident was known to have occurred in a Rhondda colliery some years ago, an explosion taking place when there was absolutely no one in the mine. When the rescue party went down the ventilation was perfect, and they encountered no after-damp at all.

Mr. Willie Lewis, the agent, also thought the explosion might possibly have occurred through the friction caused by the fall of roof. Mr. Lewis feelingly referred to the death of their capable official, Henry Hill, whom, he said, sacrificed he life for the sake of others.

Experiences of the explosion

John Richards, 120 Norton Bridge Road, who was one of the men in the mine at the time of the explosion, said he heard the slight report, and at once went to see if his ‘butties’ were safe. He was engaged with several others, and to these he said, “Stop here ‘til I see that it is all right,” and then went off to make enquiries. He ascertained that something was wrong in the workings, and with a buttie (thought to be William Davies), tried to get into the workings, but was prevented by the dust and after-damp. John Whelan, while engaged some distance from where the accident occurred, felt a sudden gust of wind, and following this a quantity of grit and dust was blown into his face. Then the air stopped for about five or six seconds. He shouted to his fellow- workmen that something had happened, and rushed in the direction of the fall to see if anyone there was injured. He found everything alright until he tried to enter Russell’s level. After

going past two or three doors in the direction of the heading he was stopped by the dust and smoke, and had to return.

Death of one of the injured

Abraham Lloyd, 61 Pontshonorton Road, Cilfynydd, died on Sunday night from the injuries he sustained. Deceased was 20 years of age and was sole supporter of his widowed mother and young brothers. Richard Hughes, the other man who was injured, and who lives in Wood Street, Cilfynydd, still lies in a critical condition. Dr. Shaw Lyttle, Cilfynydd, said Hughes and Lloyd had been severely burnt about their faces and hands. The three men killed must have been closer to the blast, for they were severely burnt. Their death was instantaneous.

The hero overman

Henry Hill, whose heroic effort resulted in his death, was a native of Devonshire, and at an early age moved to Llantrisant, where he was engaged for many years at the Mwyndy Iron Ore Mine. Subsequently he went to Cilfynydd, and was one of the first workmen employed in the sinking of the Albion Colliery. He was regarded as one of the most experienced workmen at the colliery. He was one of the 'old school' of Methodists. When he came to Llantrisant the cause was carried on by Captain Chapel and the mine officials.

Deceased became actively associated with the work, and at that time was a regular attendant at the class meetings and often conducted prayer meetings in true Methodist style, going from house to house. When he came to Norton Bridge he devoted himself to the cause, and for many years was the society steward. Deceased leaves a wife and one son and two daughters. All the children are married, and live in the locality.

Frank Strong (Nelson) had only been employed at Cilfynydd during the last three days. John Jones was a native of Ebenezer, Carnarvonshire, and came to Cilfynydd from Lancashire some two and half years ago.

Great explosion recalled

Since the terrible catastrophe at the Albion Colliery, in June 1894, the greatest in the annals of the south Wales coalfields when 290 men perished, the pit has enjoyed immunity from serious accidents. The great explosion also occurred on a Saturday afternoon.

Saved by water

Mr. D. Watts Morgan and the Works Committee of the Albion Colliery, were granted facilities by the management on Sunday evening to inspect the scene of the accident. Their inspection confirms the facts set forth above. Mr. Morgan added that he would not like to offer an opinion as to the cause of the explosion, but he thought there could be no doubt that the fairly large accumulation of water which was present near the seat of the explosion effectually prevented its spread, and probably helped to confine the effects to the small area. Mr. Morgan has communicated with Mr. Tom Richards, M.P; and he will report to Mr. Ashton, secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain, the executive of which will in all probability before officially represented at the inquest.

Unfortunately there can be no direct personal evidence of how the outburst occurred, for the last of the six victims, Richard Hughes, master haulier, of Wood Street, Cilfynydd, died at 4.15 p.m. on Monday, November 12th. He had been very severely burnt, his case was practically hopeless from the first. It was stated that an electric battery was situate at the spot where the accident happened, but now that all the victims had succumbed it would be a matter of impossibility to ascertain whether any of the unfortunate men had anything to do with this instrument by way of re-lighting their lamps. It is interesting to note that the Albion Colliery is undoubtedly one of the best watered collieries in the kingdom, no less that seven miles of water pipes having been laid along the roadways and carried to within 30 yards of the coalface, and hoses used in laying down the dust. The well-watered state of the roads doubtless retarded the progress of the blast

As the lamps of the five men killed were all extinguished, but remained intact, it has been assumed that these lamps could not possibly have caused the explosion. This, however, is not absolutely certain. In a recent lecture to colliery officials Mr. Henry Davies, the Glamorgan County Council's mining lecturer, said that it had been shown that a fall of roof suddenly liberating fire-damp may cause a perfectly sound safety lamp of the Bonneted Clanny type - similar to those used in the Albion Colliery - to be suddenly filled with the gas, and the resulting explosion may carry the flame through the gauze without a moments interval, and without leaving any indication of over-heating on the gauze or glass, and only the extra cleanness of the gauze can prove that it failed. This is an important point which should not be lost sight of by colliery examiners.

One official stated that the workmen used the 'Williams Safety Lamp' which was locked and unlocked by magnet, and had but one gauze. The lamps were not opened or relit in the old-fashion way, but were lit by a battery. He said he did not know until after the explosion that the battery produced sparks, no-one having reported it to him. Had he known this he would not have placed it so near the

face.

At the inquest on Monday, November 26th, the jury having debated in private for some time, recorded the following verdict in view of the theory advanced by Mr. Lewis, the agent of the colliery, supported by H. M's Inspectors, that: - *“The explosion was probably caused by the emission of sparks from the electric battery. We are agreed on that theory, and that no fault or negligence can be attached to any person concerned.”*



Henry Hill (South Wales Daily News, Monday, November 12th, 1906). Recording his death at the Albion Colliery that week.

The unknown dead of 1894 remembered

On Monday, June 31st 1907, the Right Hon. William Abraham M. P. (Mabon), the famous miners' leader, visited the Llanfabon churchyard and unveiled a remarkable monument to the memory of the 11 unknown men who had been buried there. The monument, which was erected by public subscription, depicts a sorrowing angel, and is flanked on either side by the tombstones, each bearing the inscription *“Unknown. - Albion Colliery Explosion. 1894.”* A certain sum of money was provided at the time for keeping the sacred spot in clean and proper condition.

There was a large number of men present. The solemn service was very brief. Mr. D. Watts, Miner's Agent, Porth, conducted the proceedings, and amongst others present were Alderman W. H. Matthias, J. P.; Mr. H. T. Lewis, Director of the Albion Colliery; Mr. Philip Jones, General Manager; Alderman W. R. Davies, Dr. Lyttle and B. M. Lewis; Rev. Walter Davies, Rector of Llanfabon, and Rev. R. D. Phillips,

E. Jones, T. Jones, F. Turp, Messrs Nicholas, J. Bowden, secretary, and Lewis and Carnelian.

Mabon, after unveiling the memorial said he wished to express himself with mixed feelings. There was grief amongst the assembly and gladness. Grief being they were reminded of the sad catastrophe which caused the loss of life of their friends. Their gladness arose from the fact that though they were unidentified, they had not been forgotten. Alderman W. H. Matthias, J. P; Phillip Jones, Alderman W. R. Davies, Rev. R. D. Philips, also spoke and Mr. Tom Lewis read verses of poetry. Mrs. Watts Morgan announced the workmen had subscribed £50 towards the memorial, Sir W. T. Lewis, Bart, £10, and various other local gentlemen had also contributed.

The epitaph on the tombstone at Llanfabon was composed by the well known Pontypridd bard, Carnelian. It reads as follows:-

“Brawdol anian. Agyspryd haelionus.

A godai haeddoi serch - deyrnged weddus. I’w rhoi yn gofnad o’r gwyr anffodus.
Fwriwyd I weryd drwy’r

“Fflam” fradwrus: Ond hiraeth sy’ ‘hyderus -

fod “Gemau” Duw yn y Beddau ‘Andadnabyddus.!

Translation by Mr. Alan Caffery (2009): -

Brotherly nature and generous spirit

Raised, deserving love, an appropriate tribute, To be a memorial for the
unfortunate men

Cast into death / earth / soil through the treacherous flame But longing / yearning
is confident that God’s

Gems are in the unknown graves.

The following lines were recited by Tom Lewis on the occasion of the unveiling at the Llanfabon Church of the memorial to the “unknown” of the Cilfynydd disaster: -

Here in Llanfabon’s scared earth Without a record of their worth

The unknown miners long have laid Without the tribute to them paid;

No stone, no sign to mark the ground Where they were laid - but sunken’d mound
Though thirteen years have flown away, Since Dark Disaster’s awful day;

The unknown sons of toil laid here Were not forgotten in their sphere; See,
kindred hearts with homage bent To-day around their monument!

Unknown interred, and perhaps no tear Was shed o’er them when buried here;

Unknown to all - to all - save one; And yet each one some mother’s son.

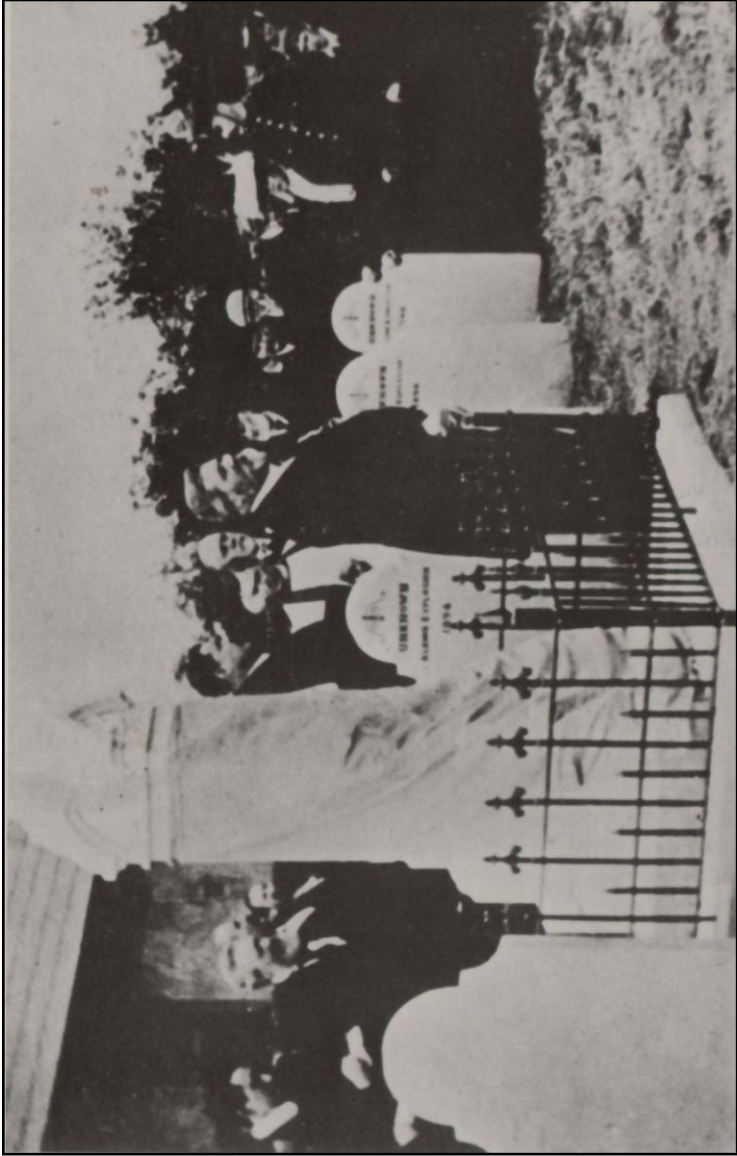
Who sure hath wept - though all in vain For them, they'd never see again; Never see! Earth's language frail;
A day will dawn when they will hail!
With heavenly joy their long mourned braves That rest beneath us in our graves.

The last two unknown victims, who were recovered after the above eleven had been interred, were buried with a tombstone at Glyntaff, but unfortunately this has now collapsed, hiding the inscription.

On April 7th 1966, the month originally scheduled by the National Coal Board, for the closure of the Albion Colliery, the eleven unknown victims were again honoured at the Llanfabon Cemetery. Amongst those present were Councilor Richard Evans, chairman of the local council, other dignitaries, officers of the Albion colliery lodge on the National Union of Mineworkers, and relatives of the dead. They had assembled at the Albion Colliery and proceeded to Llanfabon up the winding hillside by car and bus. Amongst the mourners were Mrs. Elizabeth Williams and her brother, Mr. Tom Powell, whose father was believed to be amongst the eleven unidentified victims. A short service of commemoration was conducted at the graveside by the Rev. Colin David, Rector of Llanfabon, who gave a reading over the graves. A hymn was rendered by the small group - the timeless hymn 'Abide with me.' Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Powell who found the ceremony extremely moving afterwards spoke very highly of the colliery workmen for preserving the memorial to the dead men. Councilor Richard Evans said he was glad the Albion Colliery lodge had invited him, as the chairman of the council, to attend the service.

The Albion Colliery workforce had grown to 1,735 by 1896, increasing to 2,589 by 1908. The following years saw a constant decline in the numbers of men employed at the pit and in 1928, the Albion Steam Coal Company went into liquidation. The Powell Dyffryn Steam Coal Company purchased its assets and it remained their property until the formation of the National Coal Board in 1947 at which time the workforce was just under 1,000. By the time the colliery closed in 1966 the numbers had almost halved.

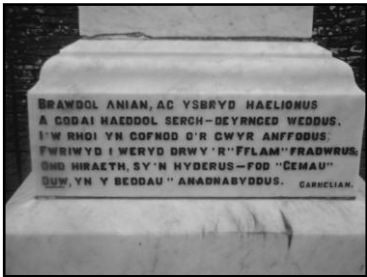
The National Coal Board informed the National Union of workmen in April 1966 that the Four-feet seam was unworkable due to washouts and faulting and proposed to transfer the men to the nearby Cwm or Nantgarw Collieries. The Albion Colliery had lost £135,000 in 1963-64 and £319,000 in 1964-65. The N.U.M. countered by claiming there were 41,200,000 tons of coal in the six seams that were workable and appealed against the complete closure of the colliery, but on 28 June 1966, they gave up the fight and the colliery was closed on September 3rd 1966 on the grounds that all its coal reserves had been exhausted.



**Mabon in 1906 at the unveiling of the memorial to the 11 unknown victims buried at Llanfabon
(Western Mail newspaper)**



The present day memorial at the Llanfabon churchyard erected in 1907.



BRAWOOL ANIAN, AC YSBRYD HAELIONUS
 A CODAI HAEDDOL SERCH—DEYRNOCED WEDDUS.
 I'W RHODI YN COFNOD O'R CWYR ANFFODUS.
 FWRIBYD I WERYD DRWY'R "FFLAM" FRADWRUS.
 OND HIRAETH, SY 'N HYDERUS—FOD "CEMAU"
 GUY, YN Y BEDDAU " ANADNABYDDUS. GARRELIAN.



THIS MONUMENT
 WAS ERECTED BY THE
 ALBION COLLIERY WORKMEN
 AS A TRIBUTE OF RESPECT
 TO THE MEMORY OF
 THE ELEVEN
 UNIDENTIFIED WORKMEN
 WHO LOST THEIR LIVES
 AT THE
 ALBION COLLIERY EXPLOSION
 JUNE 23RD 1894.

The following seams were closed on these dates: - 6ft -Seam, September 10th 1960; 5ft-Seam & Gellideg, May 20th 1961; 7ft. & Yard Seam, September 23rd 1961; 4ft. Seam, April 18th 1966; 9ft. Seam September 2nd 1966.

After the Albion Colliery had ceased to provide work for Cilfynydd's inhabitants the tips still towered menacingly over the village threatening a disaster similar to Aberfan. A two-phased scheme to reduce the steep gradient of the colliery spoil began in 1974 and was completed two years later. In 2003 the monument at Llanfabon was cleaned and repaired by the Caerphilly District Council.

Many years later

With the passing of time stories of that fateful day in Cilfynydd have been forgotten largely because eyewitness have all passed away. But in October 1955, 62 years after the disaster, 87-year-old Albert John Green of Danylan Road, Maesycloed, told his story in the '*Pontypridd Observer*': -

"I had been working the morning shift, and because I belong to the (colliery) cricket team the manager allowed me to finish work at noon that day. All the cricketers finished early because we were playing an away match at Mountain Ash in the afternoon. As we walked to Abercynon we passed the men going on the later shift - going to their deaths as later we were distressed to learn. The cricket team - of which Mr. Green was secretary - enjoyed their afternoon and won the match scoring 112 runs for four wickets after they had dismissed their opponents for 46 runs, then they set off home to Cilfynydd to spread the news of their victory."

"When we got to Penrhiwceiber (railway) station, there were crowds there," he continued. "I asked a policeman what was the matter, and he replied that it was rumoured that the Albion had 'gone up.' We got inside the station and saw some of our friends from Somerset in another train. They were relieved to see us, and we knew something awful had happened. When they reached Abercynon the cricketers could not get down the canal bank because the crowd was so thick. They walked over the Common road and eventually reached the colliery. Families were waiting there at the pit-head. They were wailing and moaning, it was a harrowing sight," recalled Mr. Green.

"I was 26 then, and my younger brother and I had come to work in Wales from Somerset. My brother was not working that afternoon, so we wired my father in Bristol to tell him we were safe. I was a lodger myself." added Mr. Green. "Right opposite our house was one with four men lying dead in the front room; they were lodgers too. We were living in Ann Street at the time, and a fellow-lodger escaped death as a result of staying at home because of hand injuries." Mr. Green

was a class-leader and local preacher at the Primitive Methodist Church in Howell, St., Cilfynydd, and when there were not enough ministers to officiate at the funerals the following week, he officiated at one. He and his brother attended four funerals in one day.

George Bunford, one of the few survivors would tell his story many times during the years after the disaster, and remarkably he 'remembered' more than he had immediately after the disaster. The '*Pontypridd Observer*' in March 1959 reported: -

Survivor's epic story of Albion Explosion

As if from the grave, comes the story of one of the survivors, Mr. Griffith Evans Bunford, late of Oakland Terrace, Cilfynydd, who, before he died in September 1928, dictated a vivid story of the Cilfynydd pit disaster for a magazine edition, dated March 12th 1910: -

There were five men beside Mr. Bunford cutting out old timber in the mine, and he and Mr. Hugh Pugh were working together. Neither of them had thought of any danger when there was a terrible clap like thunder, followed after a short interval by another. Instinctively Mr. Bunford, snatched up his lamp ready to run, and by its feeble light, could see Mr. Pugh's face transfixed with horror. "We stood there reading terror in each other's faces," said Mr. Bunford. "It was an explosion, we both knew - but where? Was it only a puff of little importance, or a great catastrophe? Was it between us and the pit bottom, or did it lie further afield?"

"Suddenly, there came a crash as the doors banged between us and the double parting in the engine-deep. Simultaneously, a roaring wind bore down upon us, driving before it tons of fine dust, which instantly extinguished our lights. The violence of the wind, which beat upon us like a tornado, left no doubt in either of our minds that a great explosion had occurred. The wind itself was harmless, but it would certainly be followed by a rush of flame, and woe beside us if it caught up with us."

"Dropping out useless lamps, we bend our heads to the blast, which cut like whip-cord, and struggled on closely together. Presently we were joined by four others, who had also lost their lights. I knew every inch of the Albion workings so well that I felt confident of finding the road to the shaft, by which alone we could escape, and the others willingly relied upon my leadership."

Queer blue light

“After making some headway, one of the party of workmen screamed hoarsely to the others: ‘Look, mates, look!’ In an agony of apprehension, the men saw that the velvety blackness of the mine had given place to a queer blue light, which grew every moment in intensity. The effect was weird, and would have seemed fantastically beautiful to the workmen, but for what they knew it heralded. It was firedamp, ignited by the explosion!”

“Irresistibly, it seemed to sweep through every passage in the mine. The workmen knew that within a few minutes it would be upon them roasting the skin off their living bodies. ‘God have mercy on us,’ cried one of the men. We were cooped up like rats in a trap,” said Mr. Bunford. “We stared at the approaching flames knowing that we were powerless to avoid them. Sometimes the blue flame travelled high, and sometimes low. What would it do this time? The answer to that question spelt like of death to us, and to scores of others too.”

Tortures of the damned

“Stuffing our caps into our mouths, or else pressing our palms against them, we threw ourselves prostrate on the ground and waited for our fate. I remember how I hunched my shoulders and tucked in my head to protect it from the searing flames. I remember that I held my breath until my lungs seemed bursting, and pressed my hands over my eyes and mouth. These things and the roasting heat which poured a great wave over me are graven on my memory. From head to heel, the sea of flame toasted me as it swept past, and the tortures of the damned wracked my limbs. Being naked to the waist, my back and arms felt the full force of the flames. How long the blazing gas took to pass over me, I cannot say, but as soon as it was gone, the instinct of self preservation brought me to my feet.”

“Run for your lives lads,” Mr. Bunford cried hoarsely to the other workmen, and heard the sounds of scrambling as the obeyed. He went on, “Close on the heels of the fire the deadly after-damp invariably follows, as every miner knows. There was not a moment to be wasted in discussing plans. Spurred on by terror, I raced forward, soon, however, to be pulled up short. Roof and walls had fallen in and further headway seemed impossible. If so, then death was certain. With frantic energy, I fell upon the barrier, and dragging away great blocks of coal and stone, tearing my nails and lacerating my fingers to the bone. Beside me worked Hugh Pugh, who with myself, was all left of the group of men who had originally stood together a short time previously. What had become of the others, I did not stop to think, but afterwards, the four charred bodies were discovered in the workings. Without a glimmer of light to guide us, we tugged at the barricade, and somehow managed to surmount it. Then, panting for breath, we ran on side by side.”

Crawled over bodies

As Griffiths and his companion made their way through galleries which had been ravaged by the full fury of the explosion, they crawled over bodies of workmates who had been killed outright by the first shock of the explosion, or mangled or maimed. They were conscious of the need for speed, that they were just keeping ahead of the life destroying after-damp fumes, which would rapidly asphyxiate them. "Presently we began to feel that the air was growing heavy with poisonous gases," said the Cilfynydd miner. "It took us four hours to travel four hundred yards."

For years afterwards Mr. Bunford was filled with a cold fear whenever he thought of that grim battle in the dark, with the deadly gases growing stronger every minute. "Whenever we stumbled or fell, we deeply inhaled fumes which clung to the floor. It was just as if we were being chloroformed," stressed Mr. Bunford. "Every minute a growing lethargy stole over us so that we could hardly draw one foot behind the other."

Hopeless!

"This is the end," Mr. Bunford thought as he fell heavily to the ground. Nevertheless, he somehow scrambled to his feet and staggered on. Then it was Hugh Pugh's turn. With a moan of despair he stumbled and lay still. "I cannot go any further," Hugh murmured. For a minute Mr. Bunford stood by him and made an effort to lift him to his feet, but he himself was as weak as a kitten, and it was hopeless. With a sob he left poor Hugh to his fate, and resumed his weary journey in solitude.

Mr. Bunford emphasized: - "Had I been a bachelor I should have given up the struggle and lay down beside Hugh Pugh. It needed enormous resolution to fight against that deadly weariness. It would have been so easy to lay down quietly and died, but for the sake of my family I determined to fight on while an ounce of my strength remained. Fortunately there were no more falls to be encountered for a time and I managed to drag myself so far as the air bridge. Then my strength gave out and I knew I could go no further."

He continued: "My strength was slipping from me; in a few moments I should be able to stand upright no longer. Then I should topple headlong as my booty had done and the deadly fumes would stifle me."

Collapsed unconscious

After scrambling on a little way Mr. Bunford collapsed unconscious, the result of

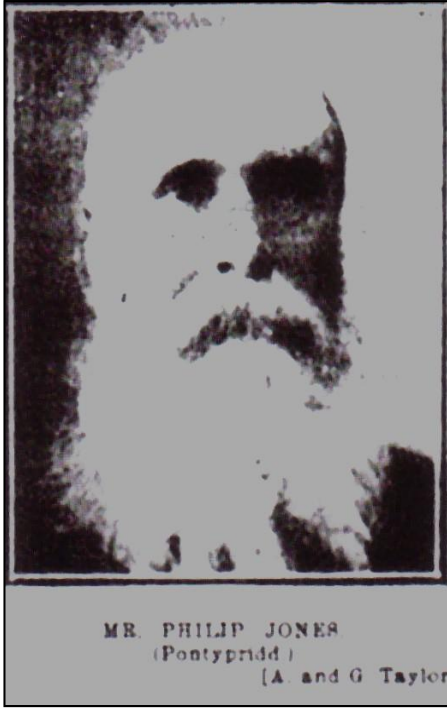
the after-damp fumes. But he was not to die because when rescuers descended the pit they found Mr. Bunford lying on his back upon a wall which he had managed to climb. He was taken up the pit and was able to walk home unaided.

“Never shall I forget that terrible time,” he emphasised, “thick black smoke poured in dense volume from the pit mouth and huge tongues of flame shot high in the sky. To those on the surface, who had looked down the pit shaft it had appeared impossible anybody could have lived through it.”

Yet miracles of which Mr. Bunford was a living testimony did happen sometimes in mining accidents. So much so that colliers wives were always slow to abandon hope and so they did at the Albion explosion. Never would Mr. Bunford forget the scene which met him at the pit head. “From every part of the Rhondda valley 30.000 miners had come pouring into Cilfynydd to do what they could to help. About the pit mouth cluster a group of anxious women hoping against hope each time the cage came up, that their dear ones had been found still surviving. The disaster seemed a blight on the countryside nearly 300 killed in one afternoon, enough to fill a churchyard.”

“Nearly 300 of my mates, men of my own age who I had grown up with me and young fellows who I had known since they were babies, never saw the light of day. They were gone in a moment, and nearly every house in the valley had lost a bread-winner.”

Mr. Bunford, who died at 73 years of age in September 1928 was buried at Glyntaff left behind an epic of human courage and endurance in the face of overwhelming horror which must rank with the most notable chapters in the history of coal mining.



Philip Jones 1913, eight years after retiring as manager of the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd

List of the victims

As published by the South Wales Daily News

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Sat.</u>
1	James Quartley	30	Jones' Houses, Coedpenmaen	Fitter	M
2	Frank Joyce	24	24 Danygraig St, Pontypridd	Labourer	M
3	John Evans	48	Howell St, Cilfynydd.	Overman	M3
4	James Cullan	49	Howell St, Cilfynydd.	A / Ripper	M
5	William Oliver	55	4 Ann St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
6	Arthur Jennings	21	21 Police Row, Pontshonorton	Labourer	S
7	Richard Herbert	48	41 Howell St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
8	Thomas Jones	28	7, Cwm Cottages, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
9	William Dobbs	50	87, Mary St; Cilfynydd	Fireman	M4
10	Gilbert Roff	16	15 Thorne Terr; Aberdare Junction	Doorboy	S
11	David Watkins`	26	83, Mary St; Cilfynydd	Haulier	M
12	Thomas B Jones	32	21 Howell St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
13	John Evans	25	50, Wood St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
14	Lewis Howells	32	4, Ann St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
15	John Hughes	17	12, Bedw Terr. Cilfynydd	Doorboy	S
16	William Parry	20	40, Merthyr Rd, Pontypridd	Labourer	S
17	Isaac Comely	22	Merthyr Rd, Pontshonorton. (Wife in family way).	Labourer	M
18	Hugh Pugh	27	22, Brynderwen Terr, Cilfynydd	Timbeman's Assistant	M3
19	William Jones	30	13, Jones St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
20	William Roberts	39	Opp. Post office, Norton B/dge	Ripper	M6
21	William Morris	42	16, Richard, St; Cilfynydd	Miner	M1
22	Richard Owen	20	6, Evan's Houses, Norton Bridge	Haulier	S

23	Benjamin Stubbs	17	61, Mary St; Cilfynydd	Doorboy	S
24	Arthur Timbs	30	13, Wood St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
25	Evan Davies	17	30, Wood St, Cilfynydd	Shackler	S
26	Morris Ashton	33	44, Howell St, Cilfynydd	Timberman	M4
27	Llewellyn Rees	43	79, Mary St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M5
28	George Watkins	18	25, Police Row, Norton Bridge	Doorboy	S
29	William Richards	19	54, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
30	George Provis	33	15, Norton Terr, Norton Bridge	Ripper	M
31	Charles Sanders	43	53, Ann St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M4
32	Walter Price	21	81, Coedpenmaen Rd	Haulier	M
33	Henry Morgan	18	28, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
34	William Hughes	25	Cwm Houses, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
35	Bill Williams	47	2, Cwm Cottages, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
36	John Ashton	27	44, Howell St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
37	John Stott	23	4, Brynderwen Terr, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
38	Bill Hopkins	21	23, Howell St, Cilfynydd	Haulier	M
39	Joseph Grey	30	15, Bassett Terr. Coedpenmaen	Shackler	M1
40	Thomas Evans	38	3, Howell St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M4
41	David Pugh-	27	29, Police row, Norton Bridge	Ripper	M1
42	John Webb	38	19, Richard St, Cilfynydd.	Ass T/man	M6
43	George William	35	54, Taff View, Coedpenmaen	Haulier	S
44	William Jones	26	52, Richard St, Cilfynydd	Fitter	M3
45	Thomas Haynes	17	Old dramroad, Treforest	Doorboy	S
46	David O. James	25	83, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Stoker	S
47	John Evans	48	27, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Fitter	M1
48	John Parfitt	45	41, dramroad-side, Treforest	Labourer	M7
49	Sidney Cox	22	38, Danygraig St, Pontypridd	Ass. Ripper	S

50	Hugh Pugh	32	47, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
51	James Stevens	36	22, Police Row, Norton Bridge	Labourer	M
52	Frank Topp	22	19, Foundry Plc, Coedpenmaen	Labourer	S
53	Thomas Smith	31	8, Ann St, Cilfynydd	Eng. driver	M5
54	Edmund Daniels	16	33, William St, Cilfynydd	Doorboy	S
55	John Herdidge	25	21, William St, Cilfynydd	Roadman	S
56	David Llewellyn	39	44, Howell St, Cilfynydd	Timberman	M5
57	Richard Thomas	47	78, Coedpenmaen Rd.	Collier	M5
58	Edwin Godwin	47	18, Mary St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	M7
59	James Burns	18	87 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Doorboy	S
69	Edward Bowden	14	Bassett Terrace, Norton B	Doorboy	S
70	Thomas Evans	19	48 Howell St, Cilfynydd (Son of No.3)	Rider	S
71	Robert Roberts	40	50, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	.Ripper	M
72	George Evans	30	16, Police Row, Norton Bridge	Collier	M
73	Evan Gronow	24	2, Brynteg Terr; Cilfynydd	Rider	S
74	Thomas Morgan	18	88, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Doorboy	S
75	Rees Jenkins	33	26 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Asst Ripper	M
76	Edward Jones	60	16, East St, Trallwn Gardens (5 grown up children)	Labourer	M
77	Philip Fletcher	18	Tyisha Farm, Coedpenmaen	Doorboy	S
78	John Thomas	29	9, Bodwenarth Terr; Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
79	Evan Morris	30	5, Evans St, Norton Bridge		M5
80	David P. Davies	32	5, Evans houses, Norton Bridge	Timberman	M
81	Henry C. Hooper	23	Glyntaff, nr Llanbradach Hotel	Haulier	M
82	Patrick Kahon	20	Cilfynydd Road.	Cogman	S
83	Robert Parry	40	40, Merthyr Rd, Pontypridd	Ripper	M

84	John Manders	40	Rockingstone Terr, Coedpenm. (Died after rescue)	Labourer	M
85	William Farrow	34	4, Cwm Eldeg Cottages Cilfyn.	Labourer	M
86	George Manders	32	Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Haulier	M2
87	Philip J. Guard	18	33, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
88	Benjamin Eynon	58	6, Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Shackler	W2
89	Morris Lennon1	24	3, Catherine St, Navigation	Haulier	S
90	Alexander Addis	27	Davies St, Coedpenmaen	Roadman	M2
91	Cornelius Gronow	36	Coedpenmaen Rd, C/ maen	Master Haulier	M4
92	John Coles	23	Ann St, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
93	Richard Jones,	60	Evans St.. Norton Bridge	Ripper	M
94	Edward Crocombe	50	22, Police Row, Pontshonorton	Labourer	M1
95	Thomas Powell	50	63, William St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	M3
96	John Williams	50	61, William St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
97	Richard James	20	75 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
98	William Jones	48	21, Wood St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
99	John Shaddock	23	43, Coedpenmaen Rd, C/Maen	Hitcher	M
100	Hugh Roberts	37	44 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M6
101	John McGrath	23	Graig, Pontypridd	Labourer	S
102	Levi Evans	45	16, Police Row, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
103	Robert Jones	25	Cwm Houses, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
104	Evan Edwards	19	Couch's House, Coedpenmaen	Labourer	S
105	Timothy Jones	26	48, Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
106	Richard Thomas	20	8, Mary St; Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
107	Frederick Leonard	35	58, Middle St, Trallwn	Shackler	M8
108	Samuel Taylor	30	11, Wood St, Cilfynydd	Ass. Ripper	S
109	James Colwill	21	3, Ann St; Cilfynydd	Haulier	S

110	Richard Bowden	18	Bassett Terr; Norton Bridge	Doorboy	S
111	John Bevan	31	6, William St; Cilfynydd	Timberman	M7
112	William Morgan	24	49, William St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
113	Thomas Jenkins	42	47, Wood St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
114	Walter Webb	20	81, Coedpenmaen Rd.	Ripper	S
115	John Pearce	40	Graig Berthllwyd	Ripper	M4
116	George Hunt	17	13 Upper Middle St, C/maen	Cogman	S
117	James Hunt	49	13 Upper Middle St	Cogman	M
118	George Boyce	17	1 Rockingstone Place, Pontypridd	Doorkeeper	S
119	Thomas Gittins	26	49 William St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
120	Enoch Clarke	16	22 Wood St, Cilfynydd	Doorkeeper	S
121	John Dimond	18	Graig yr Hefla, Glyntaff	Doorkeeper	S
122	Henry James	37	17 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M4
123	Edward Bennett	50	27 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M12
124	John Biddle	19	88 Merthyr Rd, Coedpen- maen	Collier	S
125	Daniel Jones	25	15 Bodwenarth Terrace, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
126	William Evans	28	Towyn Villas, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M3
127	William Jones	18	3 common Rd, Coedpenmaen	Collier	S
128	Patrick Burns	20	28 Albion Terrace, Cilfynydd	Labourer	
129	Walter Searle	20	30 East St, Trallwn	Labourer	
130	Joseph Hughes	29	56 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
131	Joseph Shepherd	24	30 East St, Trallwn	Labourer	S
132	Bill Humphreys	30	30 East St, Trallwn	Labourer	M2
133	Evan Jones	37	78 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M5
134	Edward Thomas	16	81 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Doorkeeper	S
135	William Jones	30	50 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Timberman	M3

136	Thomas Rees	33	52 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M3
137	John Jones	37	14 James St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
138	David King	20	10 Middle St; Trallwn	Doorkeeper	S
139	William Thomas	28	37 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M5
140	John Morgan	38	30 Up. East Street, Trallwn	Haulier	M
141	Thomas Powell	35	51 Catherine St, Aberdare	M/Haulier	M3
142	Adam Roberts	42	6 Taylor Terr; Coedpemaen	Labourer	S
143	William Price	29	29 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
144	William H. Lewis	26	4 Taff View; Coedpenmaen	Haulier	M
145	John Cox	32	22 Police Row, Pontshonorton	Labourer	S
146	William Griffiths	24	39 Howell St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
147	James Allen	35	18 Menthyr Rd, P/norton	Labourer	M
148	George Pugeley	22	Couches Houses, C/maen	Labourer	S
149	James Tickel	23	49 David St, Coedpenmaen	Labourer	S
150	George Freeman	17	52 Danygraig St; Pontypridd	Labourer	
151	William Gronow	33	7 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Mstr Haulier	M2
152	Albert E. Thomas	29	27 Cilfynydd rd, Cilfynydd	Fitter	S
153	William Barr	29	5 Lewis St; Pontypridd	Labourer	S
154	William Edwards	19	6 Cwm Cotts, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
155	Walter Berridge	21	6 Cilfynydd Rd; Cilfynydd	Timberman	S
156	William Thomas	30	50 Catherine St; Aberdare	Haulier	M1
157	Patrick Furlong	19	Midren Place, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
158	John Hearne	19	39 Anne St; Cilfynydd	Doorkeeper	S
159	Walter Real	21	65 Taff View, Coedpenmaen	Ripper	M
160	Steven Downes	22	90 Cilfynydd Rd; Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
161	Frederick Carp	25	Pontshonorton	Labourer	M
162	Samuel Brain	31	23 Middle St, Trallwn	Timberman	S
163	Walter Osbourne	26	Pontshonorton	Ripper	S

164	John Canning	39	50 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Engineman	M
165	William Bates	40	Pontshonorton	Labourer	M
166	Thomas Winter	30	Pontshonorton	Shackler	M
167	Thomas Harper	28	30 William St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
168	William George	21	Richard St, Cilfynydd	Ropeman	S
169	Daniel Davies	39	14 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	W
170	Charles Counsell	23	Albion Terrace, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
171	Benjamin Skym	23	4 Jones St, Cilfynydd	Fitter	S
172	Jonathan Rees	29	10 William St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
173	John Gregory	26	11 Middle St; Trallwn	Labourer	S
174	Patrick M'Donnell	21	Evans' Houses, P/Norton	Labourer	S
175	John Rees	38	19 Coedpenmaen Rd, C/maen	Labourer	S
176	Richard Roberts	18	7 William St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
177	Emanuel Gilfoye	34	10 Bodwenarth Terr; Cilf.	Labourer	S
178	Will Chamberlain	21	10 Bodwenarth Terr.	Labourer	S
179	John King	36	8 William St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
180	Sidney Hazel	32	2 Brynderwen Rd, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
181	Rowland Jones	39	Cwm Cottages, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
182	Lewis Jones	24	Wood St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	S
183	Frederick Saun- ders	21	5 Evan's Houses, Coedpenmaen	Ripper	S
184	John Bryans	24	Coedpenmaen	Labourer	S
185	William Rogers	23	Powell's House, P/norton	Haulier	S
186	William H. Frost	21	37 Ann St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	M
187	John C. Pugsley	25	Couches Houses, C/maen	Labourer	S
188	James Rowe	25	28 Coedpenmaen Rd, C/maen	Hitcher	M
189	James Toozer	37	16 Alpha Place, C/maen	Labourer	M
190	Edward Rees	19	48 Albion Terr, Cilfynydd	Miner	S
191	Robert Smith	23	19 Wern Terr, Nelson	Haulier	S

192	Thomas Hughes	48	24 Howell St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
193	David Owen	23	29 Maritime St, Pontypridd	Labourer	S
194	Samuel B. Vile	31	90 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
195	William Hurrell	38	37 Middle St, Trallwn	Labourer	S
196	Charles A. Jones	19	57 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
197	John E. Davies	26	29 Wood St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
198	Edward Williams	39	16 East St, Trallwn	Ripper	M3
199	John Gould	24	4 Davies St; Coedpenmaen	Labourer	S
200	James Cronin	28	10 Thomas St, Cilfynydd	Haulier	S
201	William Brown	17	30 Maritime St, Pontypridd	Labourer	S
202	Patrick Barrett	50	24 Catherine St, Aberdare	Labourer	M10
203	David O. Griffiths	17	12 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
204	John J. Pincombe	24	68 Taff View, Coedpenmaen	Ripper	S
205	Humphrey Jones	39	8 Bassett terr, Pontshonorton	Ripper	W
206	William Knott	53	Chainworks Row, Trallwn	Labourer	M4
207	Peter Smith	19	47 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Doorkeeper	S
208	Timothy Sullivan	47	36 Williams St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	M7
209	William Williams	23	9 William St, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
210	Albert J. Davies	17	Pontshonorton	Labourer	S
211	Eli Facey	36	2 Park St, Treforest	Labourer	S
212	Charles Jones	25	25 Police Row, P/norton	Labourer	M1
213	David Morris	44	Carnetown, Navigation.	Timberman	M1
214	William Williams	30	78 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
215	John James	30	15 William St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
216	James Jones	27	Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
217	Reuben Heyball	23	2 Park St; Treforest	Labourer	S
218	Richard Gronow	26	Pleasant View; Cilfynydd	M/ haulier	S
219	George Winter	31	6 Bassett Terr, P/norton	Haulier	S

220	Richard Davies	20	20 Waun Goch, C/maen	Haulier	S
221	Timothy Daley	17	10 Bodwenarth Terr. C/nydd	Ripper	S
222	William Pulsford	33	44 Mary st; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
223	David D. Hughes	19	48 Albion terrace, Cilfynydd	Miner	S
224	Owen Thomas	18	81 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
225	John Jones	17	2 Bryderwen Rd, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
226	Charles Spencer	25	39 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Woodman	M
227	Frederick Weeks	22	18 Bassett Terr; Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
228	John Pocknell	34	22 William St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
229	Henry Lewis	39	Towyn Villas; Cilfynydd	Fireman	M
230	Thomas Robinson	40	11 Middle St; Trallwn	Labourer	S
231	Walter J. Parkman	26	Coedpenmaen Rd.	Mast haulier	M
232	Henry Howe	43	44 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
233	William Evans	46	9 William St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M7
234	Joseph Thomas	17	Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
235	Steven Evans	28	16 Police Row, P/norton	Ripper	S
236	Richard Reeves	23	38 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
237	Richard Evans	28	16 Howell St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M2
238	John G. Roberts	39	47 Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Ripper	M4
239	David Davies	37	35 Ann St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
240	John Harris	34	35 Ann St; Cilfynydd	Haulier	M2
241	Thomas Prout	35	17 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M4
242	Henry John Bale	23	9 Middle St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	M
243	Richard Griffiths	26	81 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Haulier	M1
244	Isaacher Williams	49	44 Cilfynydd Rd; Cilfynydd	Labourer	S
245	Richard Bluck	28	5 Lewis St; Graig, P/pridd	Labourer	M2
246	Thomas O'Leary	17	6 Thorne Row, Navigation	Haulier	S
247	Frederick Emmott	19	33 William St; Cilfynydd	Doorkeeper	S

248	Richard Roberts	36	44 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M9
249	Thomas Jenkins	24	Church Village	Woodman	M
250	Robert Jones	40	9 Ann St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M5
251	John Lewis	40	39 Wood St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M7
252	George Lemon	33	68 Taff View, C/maen	Ripper	W
253	Herbert Allard	22	3 Councilors Rd; P/norton	Woodman	S
254	Cornelius J. Horace	22	Norton Bridge	Labourer	M
255	Samuel Evans	26	17 Ann St; Cilfynydd	Stoker	M1
256	John Evans	25	40 Howell St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M1
257	John Lloyd	47	9 Bodwenarth Terr. C/nyydd	Labourer	M4
258	James Jones	27	Cilfynydd Rd, Cilfynydd	Fireman	-
259	Charles Gulliford	17	25 Danygraig St, Pontypridd	Doorkeeper	S
260	Charles Hughes	16	Middle St, Trallwn	Haulier	S
261	William Ware	35	4 Evans' Houses, P/norton	Haulier	M5
262	John Rees	38	32 Catherine St, Aberdare	Woodman	M4
263	Samuel Morgan	23	24 Pontshonorton Rd.	Ripper	M
264	Thomas Lowe	42	4 Ynysangharad Rd, Trallwn	Ripper	M4
265	Thomas Lennon	18	6 Bethesda St, Merthyr	Haulier	S
266	David Evans	38	17 Howell St; Cilfynydd	Haulier	M 4
267	Roderick Jenkins	38	1 Richard St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	M
268	Richard Williams	25	104 Cilfynydd Rd; C/nyydd	Labourer	M
269	Edwin Powell	35	Pontshonorton Rd.	Haulier	M6
270	David Morgan	36	12 William St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
271	John Lumley	41	12 Bedw Terr. Cilfynydd	Ripper	M
272	Elias Davies	36	Brynderwen Terr. Cilfynydd	Timberman	M
273	William Jones	26	13 Jones St; Cilfynydd	Labourer	M2
274	James Rees	38	2 Fletcher's Rd. C/maen	Ripper	M4
275	William Harvey	25	18 Danygraig St; Pontypridd	Labourer	

276	Benjamin Tucker	20	17 East St, Trallwn	Haulier	M
277	Arthur G. Willett	27	43 Davies St. Coedpenmaen	Labourer	M
278	Thomas White	21		Labourer	
279	Edwin Williams	39	31 Mary St; Cilfynydd	Ripper	
280	David Jones	20	56 Mary St, Cilfynydd	Shackler	
281	Thomas James	33	Cilfynydd	Ripper	
282	Evan Pearce Evans	33		Ripper	
283	Henry Evans	30	Timberman		
284	John Enos Jenkins	35	6 Coedpenmaen Rd; C/maen	Labourer	
285	Morgan Lloyd	32		Ripper	
286	Thomas Powell	31	10 Bedw Terr. Cilfynydd	Timberman	
287	Jason Parry	23		Labourer	
288	Thomas Murphy	24		Labourer	
289	George Knight	30		Labourer	
290	John Jones	26		Labourer	
In right hand column. M = Married, S = Single, W = Widow. Numbers represent number of children					

The above list should not be taken as accurate because there were conflicting lists in different newspapers, with names misspelled and even names appearing on some lists but not on others. Even the official list issued in the Mine's Inspector Report contained mistakes. With so many bodies it might be that a correct list never appeared.



A dram on the present day site of the downcast shaft of the old Albion Colliery at the Pontypridd High School, Cilfynydd. (2009)



Present day memorial on the site of the upcast shaft at the Pontypridd High School, Cilfynydd (2009)

REFERENCE SECTION

From the 'Mining Reader'

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Steam coal - The steam coals are dull black in colour, ignite rather slowly, give off little smoke or flame, but intense heat. They do not fuse or cake together and hence are often called 'free-burning.' They are intermediate in comparison between bituminous and anthracite coal, and are mainly used, as their name implies, for the production of steam. The best steam coals in the world are found in South Wales - the celebrated Aberdare 'four-foot' seam having given the coals of this district a lasting introduction into the commercial markets of the world.

Rock - Any solid substance which forms a bed layer or mass as a part of the crust of the earth is called a *rock*. Hardness has nothing to do with the term; beds of soft clay, salt, coal, and yielding sand are rocks just as much as granite and slate.

Blasting - In order to remove rock rapidly, explosives of various kinds, like gunpowder, dynamite, and blasting gelatine, are used. The holes are prepared for the explosives by hand. The shots are fired by means of ordinary powder fuses, or electricity. Where the ordinary powder fuses are employed there is uncertainty of burning speed, dangers of miss-fires, hanging fire, and dense smoke in wet sinkings; but with electrical fuses and firing there is greater safety to the miner, fewer miss-fires, no flame, and no smoke from the fuse. Should a miss-fire occur, the borehole can be approached in safety when the exploder is disconnected from the cable.

Stables - At some collieries no horses are stabled underground, but in other cases many are taken underground never to see the daylight again. Provision should therefore be made in the latter cases for proper stabling in the mine. The stables should be placed in a position where they may be easily ventilated by fresh air; each stable should be large enough in deep collieries to provide for at least 25 horses, and properly floored. They should also be provided with pipes for the conveyance of fresh water.

Where the workings are at a considerable distance from the shaft, stables are often made in the interior of the mine, so as to avoid unnecessary travelling; but this arrangement is open to the objection that splits of fresh air must be taken from the main ventilating current which should supply the working places.

How a ventilating current is produced - To understand the methods adopted to ventilate mines, it should be borne in mind that air has weight; that it is invisible,

yet elastic; is capable of compression and rarefaction; and is a mechanical mixture principally of oxygen and nitrogen. It will be seen that some means are necessary to produce and circulate a current which will pass through all the roadways and working places of a mine where men are engaged, lights are used, and impurities given off by the strata.

To secure this current there must be two entrances to the mine, one for the pure ingoing air, called the 'downcast,' and the other for the return, polluted air, called the 'upcast.' These shafts or openings are connected by means of roadways called the intake and return roadways. In the roadways there are doors, regulators, air crossings and brattice sheets or pipes, to assist forward the air to the working places, and to apportion properly the quantity passing to the separate districts. To connect these roadways as they are driven forward, cross cuts are made.

The air current is sometimes produced by placing a ventilating machine, called a compressor, or forcer fan at the top of the downcast shaft. Generally, however, the more convenient plan of placing an exhaust fan at the top of the upcast is adopted. This machine acts in a contrary manner to the forcer, and draws, exhausts, or 'sweeps out' the air at the top of the upcast, so that there is a continual pressing forward of air in the mine to the shaft, and a current is thus established. Sometimes, too, a furnace, safely guarded from the explosive gases of the mine, is placed at the bottom of the upcast. The air in the shaft is thus heated and rarefied to such an extent, as to make the difference of pressure between the column of air in the downcast and upcast sufficient to produce a strong ventilating current which will pass into and through all the working places of the mine.

Coursing the air - The mere fact of sending into the mine a sufficient quantity of air to dilute the carbureted hydrogen, carbon dioxide, or other gasses present, does not alone suffice to prevent accumulations of gases. The air current must also be directed to all the parts where gas is disengaged, or men employed, great care being taken also to avoid its direct passage by short cuts from the downcast to the upcast. This is the most important point in mine ventilation, and one frequently neglected.

Owing to the natural inertia of the air, and the friction it receives when once in motion from the rough surface of the roadways, it will soon come to rest, unless greater pressure is applied to it on one side than the other. The resistance due to friction increases with the length of the roadways, the velocity of the current, and the contraction of the airways. To provide the workmen with a good supply of pure air, it become necessary, therefore, that the roadways should be as large, smooth, straight, and short as practically possible. The air current also should be split.

In the earlier days of mining, air splitting was unknown, and the air entering the downcast was taken in one current through all the various ramifications, increasing its burden of impurities as it travelled onward, until when it reached the last body of workmen, it was thoroughly foul and unfit for breathing purposes, or the dilution of gases. It would slowly pass out in this state at the mouth of the upcast, after having spent more time in the mine than the workmen. In 1901, however, engineers split the air into several different currents, allotting a quantity for each district according to its requirements.

The advantages of this plan are that the gases and impurities are not carried from one district of the mine to another, and a larger total quantity of air is secured; should an accident such as a fall of roof close the roadways of a part of the mine, the air supply is cut off from that district only.

Mechanical Ventilators - For many years mines were ventilated only by natural means, and the direction of the air current changed with the seasons, and sometimes with the change from day to night. As the current became sluggish, a flaming lamp or grate of fire was suspended by means of chains near the top of the upcast. Gradually these plans developed into huge furnaces placed at the bottom of the upcast. These furnaces were capable of producing large volumes of air, but owing to the dangers they introduced, they gradually gave way to safer means, and now ventilation is almost invariably produced by fans.

When these fans are used, the top of one of the shafts is covered over, and a drift terminating in a chimney, or at the blades of the revolving vanes of the fan, is made. The majority of ventilators at present at use are of the centrifugal type. They are all of similar construction in so far as they consist of a revolving shaft, carries a series of plain or curved vanes, held at a certain distance from the centre, either by means of arms, or discs.

When the shaft is made to revolve, the vanes are carried round in a circular path. The air occupying the spaces between them is driven in front, acquires centrifugal motion, and escapes at the periphery. A partial vacuum is thus produced in the interior of the wheel, and the spaces between the vanes; air is drawn inwards at the side and passes outwards continuously towards the periphery, and thus a continuous flow is established. Four of the best known fans in this country are the Guibal, Waddle, Schiele, and Capell.

The Schiele fan is a quick running fan from 5 to 15 feet in diameter, the moving parts being small and constructed wholly of wrought iron. The blades of the fan, from 10 to 12 in number, taper from the tip and widen towards the centre. The air enters on both sides of the fan and is delivered into a spiral chimney, thence to the atmosphere. Usually the fan is driven from the engine by belting or ropes.

How a mine is lighted - The work of the miner is carried on amidst such dangerous surroundings that a good light is absolutely necessary. Around the year 1815 Sir Humphrey Davy, Doctor Clanny, and Mr. George Stephenson, after many months of tedious work, and careful experiments, placed before engineers lamps of an entirely new design, calculated to so act even in the presence of large quantities of the deadly fire-damp, as to enable the miner to escape in safety, and for this reason the lamps gradually became known as 'Safety Lamps.' Sir Humphrey Davy found, early in his experiments on explosive mixtures of fire-damp and air, at a very high temperature - 1,202 degrees Fahrenheit - was necessary to bring about an explosion; mere red heat was not sufficient, even when the gas was at its most explosive point; and that it was possible to cool down the flame below the temperature required in order that combination should take place. Common iron-wire gauze such as Davy used in his lamp would not pass flame with the slow ventilating current then circulating in the mines. The iron wire radiated or gave off the heat it received so quickly as to remain totally cool itself, so cool, in fact, as to prevent the ignited mixture on the inside passing to the gaseous mixture on the outside, at a temperature high enough to explode it.

The Davy lamp in use at the present time differs but slightly from that made in 1817. It consists of oil-pot, pricker, gauze cylinder, standards, metal roof, and handle. The gauze is about 1½ inch in diameter, 6 inches high, and has 784 apertures to the square inch, formed by the crossing of 28 parallel wires about 1/50th inch in diameter.

In the Clanny lamp a portion of the Davy gauze is replaced by a glass cylinder, which surrounds the flame, and thus the light given off is materially increased. The feed air enters the lamp above the glass, and therefore gets mixed with the products of combustion before it reaches the flame. For this reason the light given off is not quite as good as might be expected. There are at present in use many types of safety lamps, most of them being modifications of the original Davy, Clanny or Stephenson. Amongst those generally adopted are the Mueseler, Marsaut, Morgan, Even Thomas's No.7, Cambrian Protector, Deflector, Hepplewhite Gray, and Ackroyd and Best.

The gases of coal mines - Mines yield different gases varying considerably in their nature, and the extent of danger they introduce. Coal mines give off carbureted hydrogen, (CH₄), Fire-damp or marsh damp; Carbon dioxide (CO₂), choke-damp, or black damp; sulphuretted hydrogen (SH₂); and carbon monoxide (CO), or white damp.

Fire-damp. - Fire-damp is produced naturally, and may be found sometimes in damp marshy ground bubbling up through water of stagnant pools, where decaying vegetation rests at the bottom. On these occasions it may be set on fire,

and because it is found plentifully in such situations, it is called marsh gas. It is given off more or less abundantly in all coal mines, although in some shallow mines it is absent, owing to its draining through the strata to the surface. Owing to its lightness, its specific gravity being .559, or about one half the weight of air, it is found lodging near the roofs of mines and old workings where the quantity of air is limited. It is found in the pores of cells of the coal, and sometimes it is given off at a pressure reaching from 500lbs. to 900lbs. to the square inch. It frequently bursts out in the form of 'blowers' into the workings or roadways.

In these cases it causes great damage, and makes the air of the mine very explosive. It is very light, colourless, tasteless gas, and can be reduced to a liquid when subjected to pressure or cold. In its pure state it will neither burn nor explode, neither will it support combustion or light, nor the respiration of men and animals. To burn or support combustion or respiration it must be mixed with certain proportions of air; it will then burn with a slightly luminous flame. Its explosive properties depend on the proportion of air present, and it exhibits different properties according to the amount of air mixed with it.

It is given off from the coal faces, roof, floor, and sides of working places and roadways, and from old workings. It is commonly found near faults, or where there is a change in the nature of the strata or the coal. It is also found issuing forth with a hissing sound from breaks in the roof or cracks in the floor, when there is an increased pressure thrown on the roadways.

We are also told that an increased quantity of fire-damp is given off in mines after a fall of the **barometer**, but as fire-damp is 22,000 times lighter than mercury, it is also much more sensitive to changes of atmospheric pressure, and therefore a fall of the barometer is more likely to follow an increased issue of gas than proceeds it, with this results from diminished atmospheric pressure.

How found - The fire-damp of mines is often diluted with other gases which have strong odour, so that experienced workmen conclude that it can be detected by its smell. The plan almost universally adopted to search for fire-damp is to take a **safety lamp** of the **Davy** type, and use its flame in the examination of the air to be tested. When a small quantity of fire-damp is present, it may be detected by an elongation and flickering of the flame, followed by a blue hallow. The lamp should be held perfectly vertical when making the test, and only the best oil should be used.

In order to produce a '**blue cap**' the fire-damp must be burnt by the flame and heat must be produced; but to see the blue cap, darkness is necessary, and the wick must be drawn down until only a small speck of light is left. It will thus be seen that skilful and experienced hands are necessary, when examining for small

quantities of fire-damp.

The length of the 'blue cap' varies according to the percentage of fire-damp present. Ordinary lamps, such as those used by miners and firemen, rarely show the presence of less than 2 per cent. of fire-damp, but it has been proved that 1 per cent. of fire-damp in air laden with fine dry coal-dust is explosive. The greatest care should therefore be exercised in searching for fire-damp, and only the best lamps used. Blasting in an atmosphere containing less gas than can be detected by the ordinary fireman's lamp, is still attended by considerable risk.

How to search for fire-damp. - In searching for fire-damp you should: -

1. Travel slowly with the air.
2. Carry your lamp steadily, with not too large a flame.
3. Introduce the lamp slowly and vertically into any cavity to be examined for gas.
4. If gas is found near the roof, lower the lamp and gauge the thickness of the gaseous strata.
5. Handle the flame carefully to prevent loss of light.

Carbon Monoxide - Carbon monoxide is known as carbonic oxide. Its chemical symbol is CO and its specific gravity is .97. Its presence in mines is much less frequent than that of black-damp, but is far more treacherous and poisonous than that gas.

As little as $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the air of the mine produces giddiness and faintness, while over 1 per cent. may cause death. Even $\frac{1}{16}$ per cent; if breathed for some time, may prove fatal. It is known by its sweet and delicate odour. Candles burn well in this gas, so that explorers have no guide as to its presence. It may be produced by imperfect combustion, and by explosions of fire-damp and air, or gun-powder.

Carbon dioxide, or carbonic acid gas, is known amongst miners as **choke damp**, black damp, and stythe. It has no colour, smell, or taste, neither does it burn nor support combustion. It is formed in mines by the decay of organic matter, by the breathing of men and animals, the burning of lamps, and blasting operations. It is an extremely heavy gas, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ times heavier than air, and for this reason is found on the lower part of roadways, swamps, and dip workings. It is removed by the circulation of brisk currents of air. It should always be suspected at the bottom of old wells, shafts and sumps. Lights quickly become extinguished in this gas, and its presence can thus be easily detected.

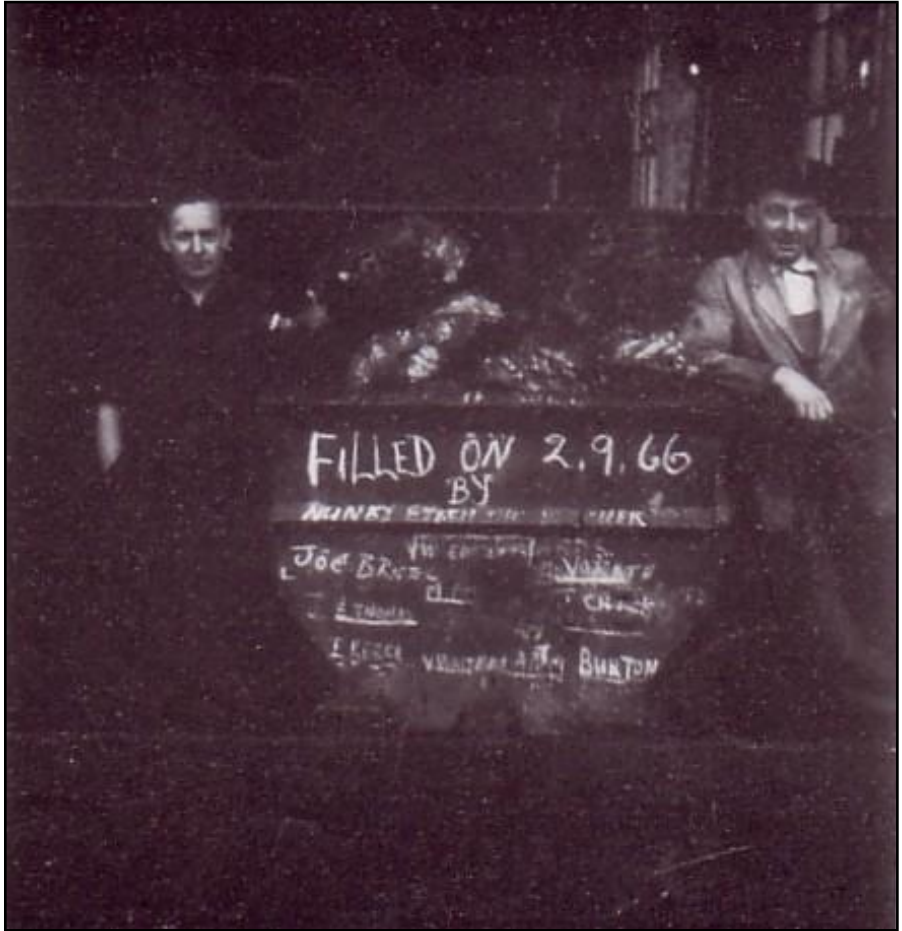
Explosions of fire-damp - The explosion of fire-damp may be caused in a

variety of ways, the most frequent being by a naked light coming into contact with the gas when it is at an explosive point : the naked light may be from a defective lamp gauze, an open lamp, a 'blown out' shot, a fall of hard stone from the roof, or sparks given off from a pick striking a stone or iron pyrites.

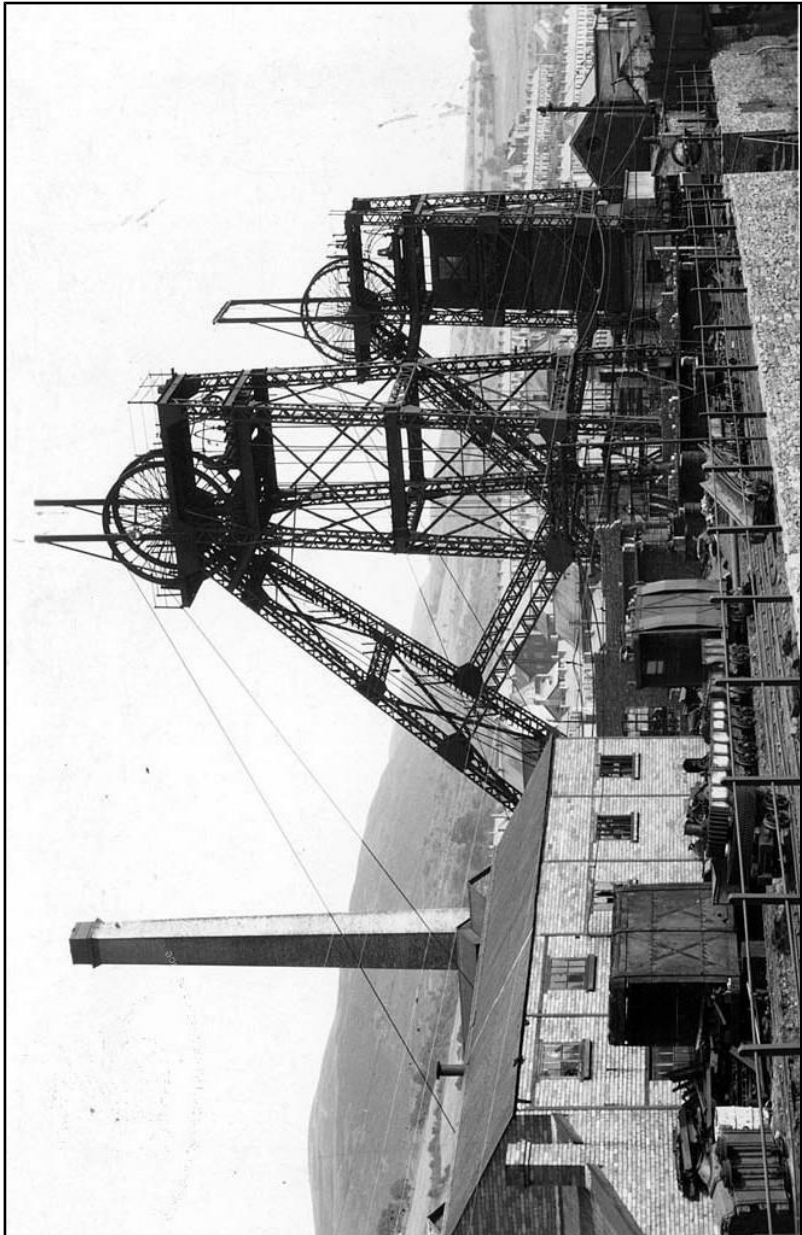
Blasting, or shot firing, produces a double effect, favouring the passing to a great distance of a **fire-damp** explosion. It puts into motion the fire-damp collected in the cavities, and draws it also from the roads, until it is brought into contact with the flame, and ignited amidst a cloud of dust blown into the air by the violence of the blast.

Coal-dust spreads and intensifies the effects of a fire-damp explosion, and, when flame is accompanied by a violent rush of air, may even originate an explosion, in the absence of collections of gas in such quantities as are necessary before they can be seen on a safety-lamp flame.

Pillar - An area of solid coal and rock which is not allowed to be worked. This is around every pit shaft and applies to all the seams around and below the shafts



The last dram raised at the Albion Colliery, Sept. 2nd 1966. Albert Owen & Vernon Davies are pictured. Some names decipherable on dram are Joe Breece, E. Thomas, L. Reece, V Walters, W. Edwards, J. Chick, Yorath & Burton. Photo taken by H. J. Morgan.



An image of a latter day Albion Colliery

Glossary of Mining Terms
from ‘Cynon Coal (a history of a Mining Valley)’
Published by the Cynon Valley Historical Society 2001 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.

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 dram, 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 dramway entering a section of wider roadway containing two set of dramways. It is a transfer area where a full 'journey' of coal is deposited and another 'Journey' of empty drams is ready to be taken to the coal face.

Drivage - An advancing heading (tunnel) in a mine. It could be exploratory or 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 of brick making, also used for the 'stemming' of shot-holes in mines.

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

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 dram and returns to the 'double parting' with a full dram of coal. He is in sole charge of his horse.

Haulage engine - A team, compressed air, or electrical type of fixed engine, on surface or 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 dram 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 drams 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 drams, on these low-current wires.

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 shotfir- ing, 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.

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 pokes of a dram wheel to stop the dram 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 or 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., arrange 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.

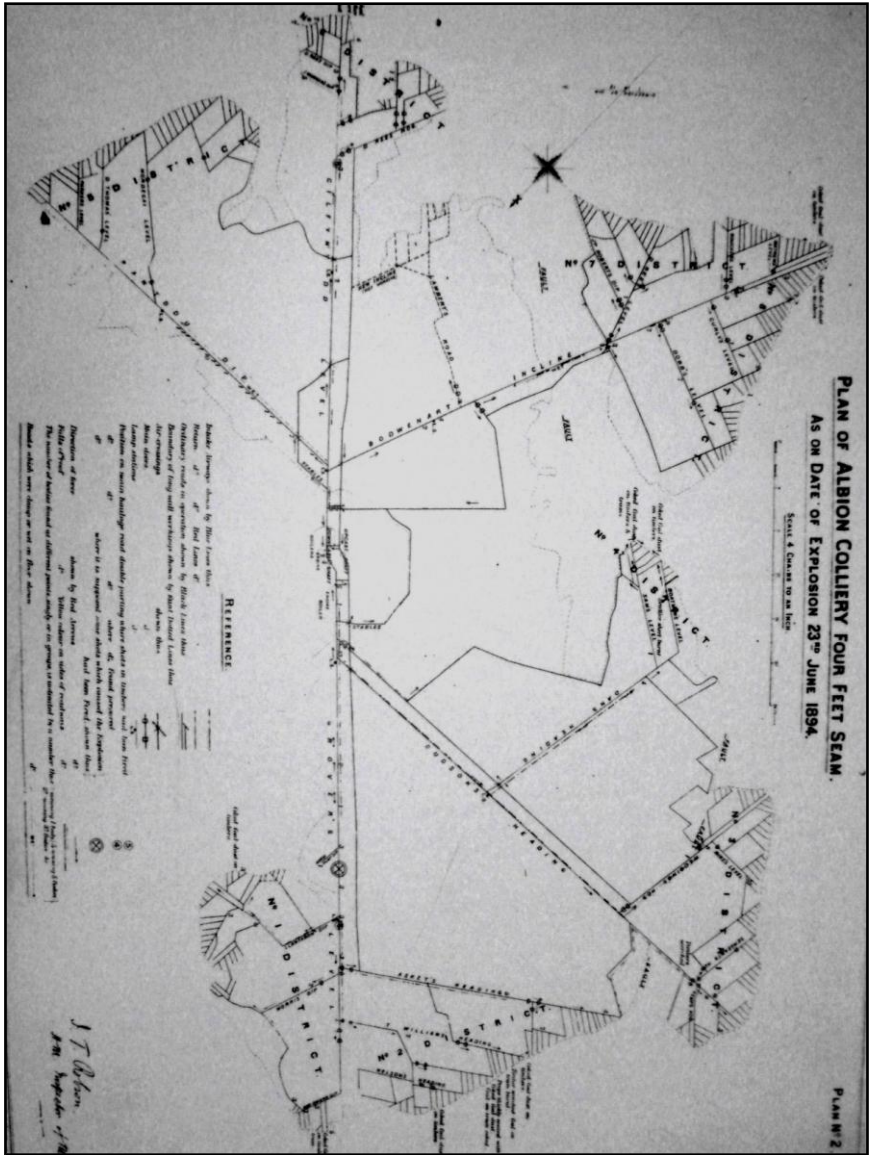
Top - Commonly used in mines to describe the roof of a seam, e. g. "The top

needs extra supports.”

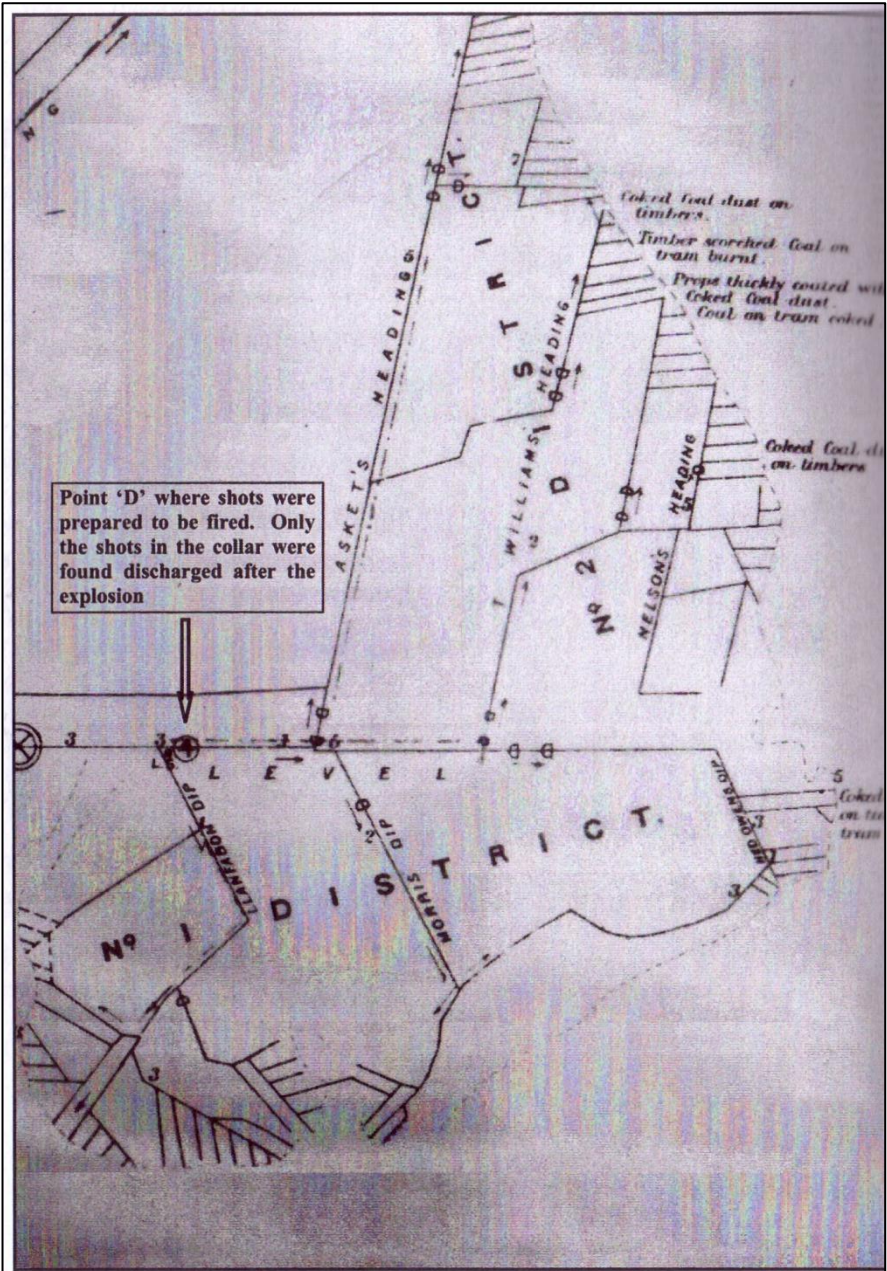
Under-manager - The qualified person in charge of the mine in the absence of the manager.

Upcast shaft - A secondary shaft that returns stale air to the surface. It normally contained a furnace fire at shaft bottom.

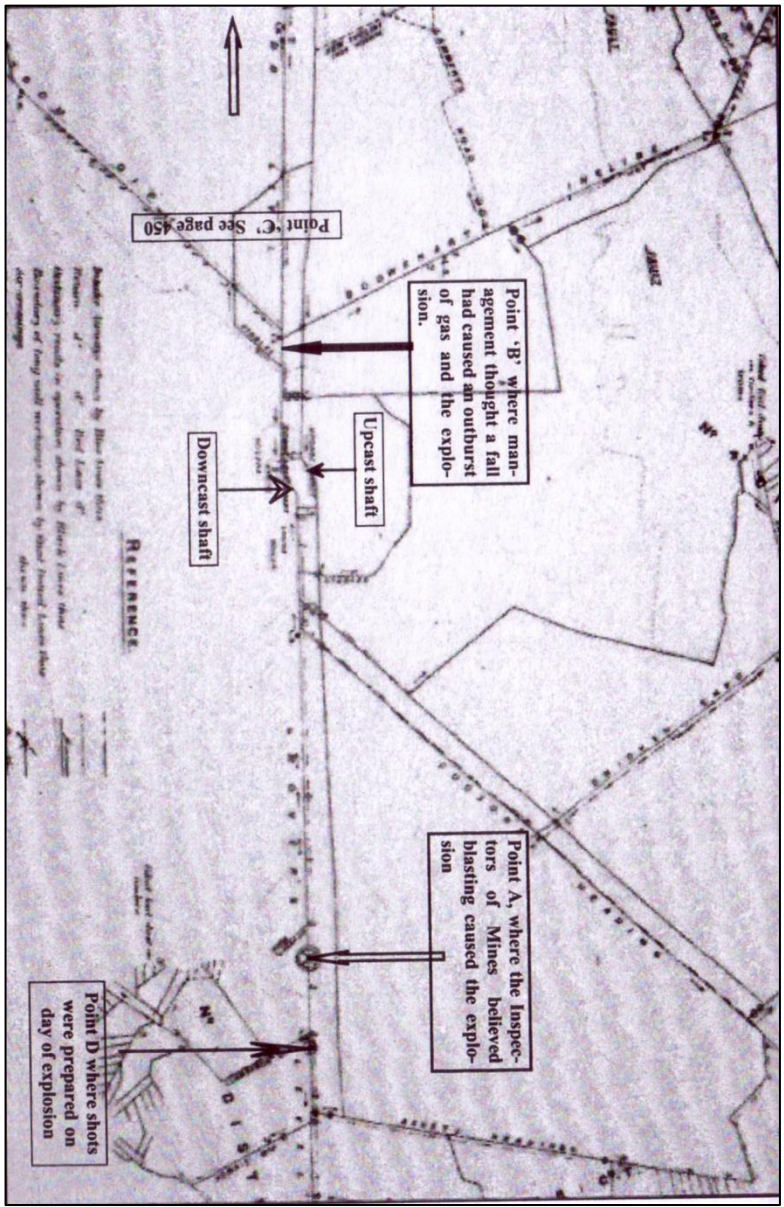
(Courtesy of Cynon Valley Historical Society)



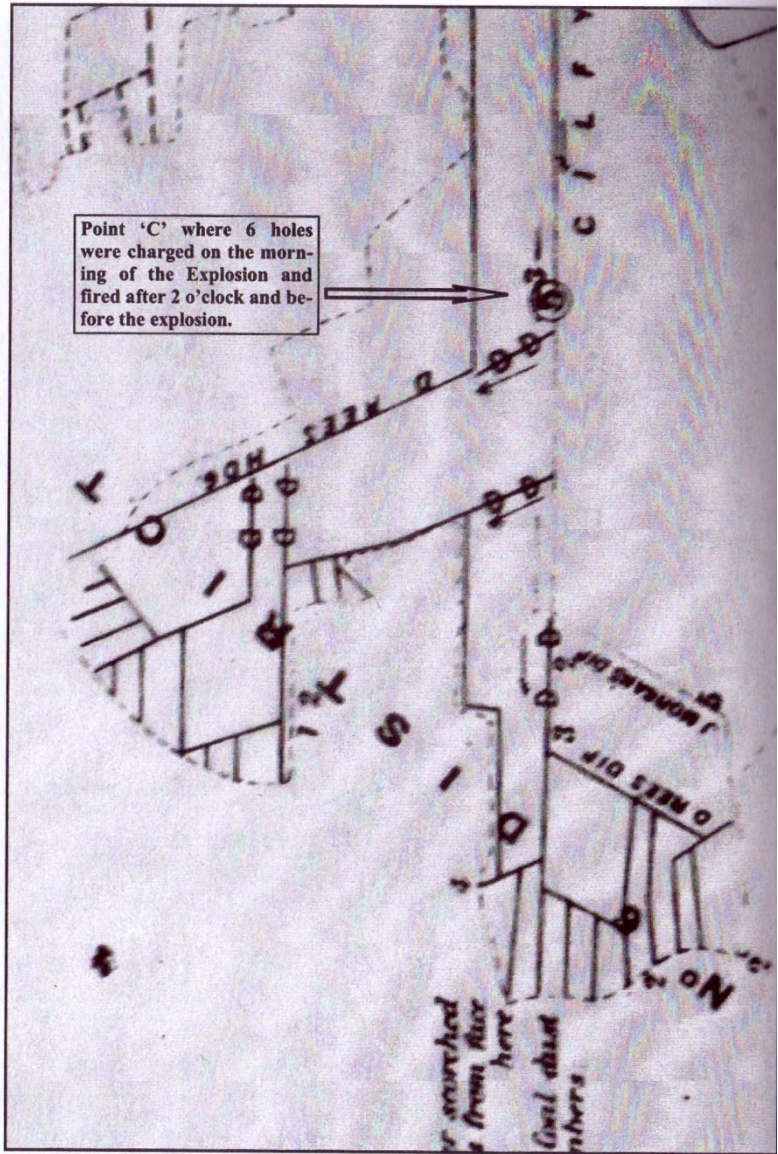
The Mines Inspector's map of the four feet seam as viewed after the 1894 disaster showing where deaths occurred and direction of explosion.



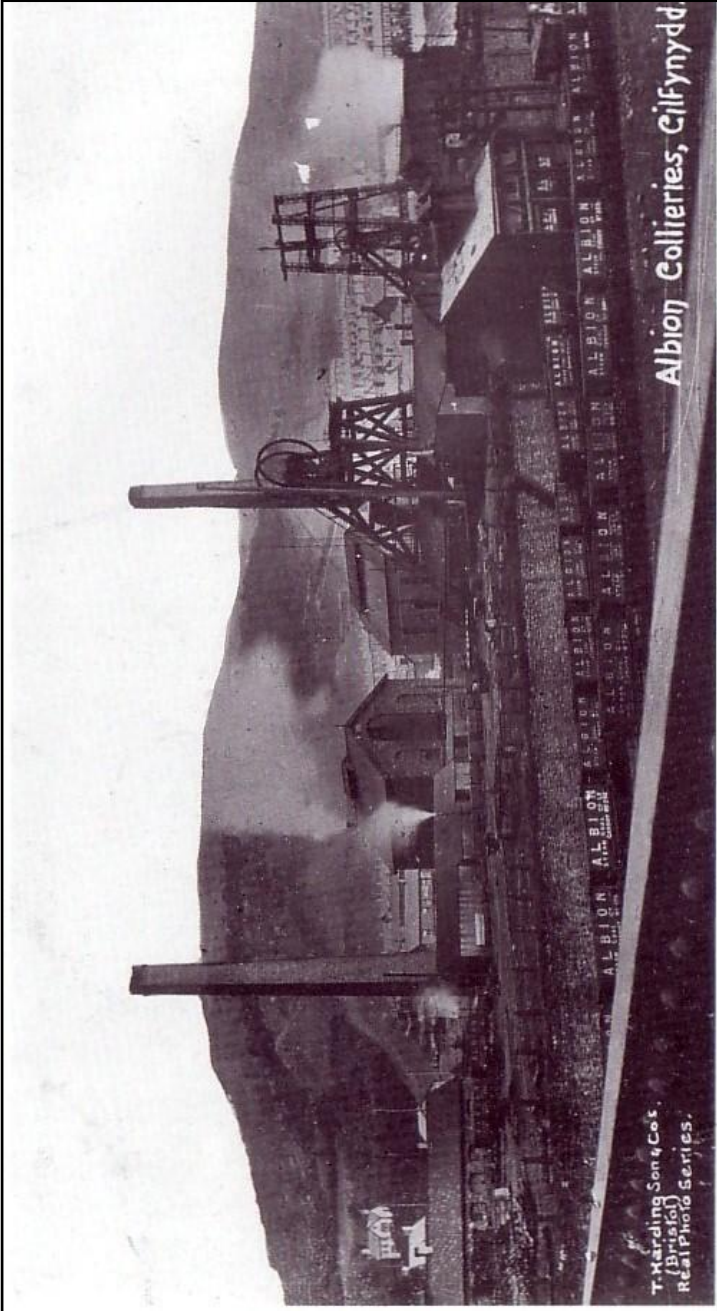
No.1 & No.2 Districts, Grovers side, including Asket's Heading, Llanfabon Dip, and Morris' Dip amongst others.



Some important positions on the underground map



District No. 6, including Cilfynydd Level



T. Harding Son & Co.
(Bristol)
Real Photo Series.

The seams worked at the Albion Colliery throughout the years

NAME OF SEAM	Depth & seam width
No2. Rhondda	128 yards (4ft)
No3. Rhondda	226 yards (2ft 7ins)
Two-Foot Nine	517 yards (6ft)
Four-Foot	545 yards (6ft 8ins)
Six Feet	552 yards (6ft 8ins)
Nine Feet	579 yards (9ft 10ins)
Bute	582 yards (2ft 3ins)
Amman Rider	590 yards (1ft 2ins)
Yard	606 yards (2ft 6ins)
Upper seven-feet	607 yards (3ft 6ins)
Lower seven-feet	612 yards (1ft 3ins)
Five-feet	627 yards (3ft)
Gellideg	628 yards (2ft)

