



Mining Accident News No.0926

10 to 23 August 2009

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Monday 10 August 2009

Five killed in China coal mine derailment

Extract from Times of the Internet

LICHUAN, China, - Officials in China's Hubei Province say five workers were killed Sunday when a train derailed at a coal mine.

One person was injured and taken to a hospital near the Shiba mine in Lichuan City, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The cause of the mishap was under investigation.

Xinhua said Shiba is a private mine that employs 200 workers and produces 90,000 metric tons of coal per year. It was not known what effect the derailment would have on the mine's production.

Tuesday 11 August 2009

Twenty dead in Slovak mine disaster

Sourced from AFP

HANDLOVA, Slovakia — Twenty miners were killed in Slovakia's worst mine disaster on record after an explosion at a mine in Handlova, central Slovakia, a government minister said Tuesday.

"From now on, it is clear that no one could survive. It's an immense tragedy," Economy Minister Lubomir Jahnatek said Tuesday after 24 hours of rescue work.

"The rescuers found another body, which makes seven victims so far," mining company CEO Peter Cicmanec said at a press conference in Handlova, 190 kilometers (120 miles) from the capital Bratislava.

The government was due to meet Tuesday to declare a period of national mourning.

The explosion occurred at about 9:30 am (0730 GMT) on Monday as the miners were putting out a fire in the mine some 330 meters (1,100 feet) underground.

Officials had initially indicated 18 miners were missing in the blast at the 'brown coal' or lignite mine.

Nine miners who escaped the blast with minor injuries were treated in a hospital and released Monday.

The mining accident is the worst on record in Slovakia, a country of 5.4 million people that joined the European Union in 2004.

In November 2006 four miners were killed when a shaft caved-in at the central Slovak Novaky coal mine in what was Slovakia's largest mining accident until Monday.

With a work force of some 4,100, Hornonitrianske Banke Prievidza is Slovakia's

top brown coal producer, supplying fuel to the nearby Novaky heating plant.

The mine produces some 2.2 million tonnes of lignite per year and has plans to open new mines in the region after the discovery of deposits of some 7.2 million tonnes.

Quote of the week



“Behind every successful man stands a surprised mother-in-law.”

Francois-Marie Voltaire (French 1694-1778)

Tuesday 18 August 2009

USA: 2 Hospitalized after Accident at Local Mine

Extract from wtv9.com, USA

Dispatchers rushed an emergency squad to the Century Mine after getting a call of an accident in the mine.

Two workers were injured by a high-powered hose, according to emergency officials.

Both were transported to Wheeling Hospital for treatment. One of the injured workers had to be airlifted to Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown.

As of 11 p.m., both workers were still hospitalized, according to officials.

The mine is located at the Belmont-Monroe county line, near Beallsville, Ohio. Century Mine is a part of the Murray Energy Corporation.

According to the company's Web site, it's a longwall mine that has been one of the safest and most productive underground coal mines in

America. There are 450 people employed there.

Officials with Murray Energy tell us they are investigating exactly how the accident happened.

They also said that safety measures are paramount for Murray Energy Corporation.

This week in mining accident history

18 August 1908

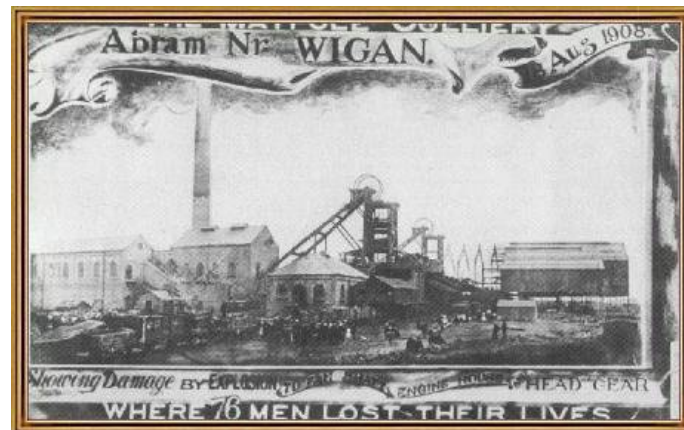
Maypole Colliery, Wigan, UK

Underground Coal Mine

Coal dust & gas explosion, 75 killed

Source: www.communigate.co.uk

THE MAYPOLE COLLIERY DISASTER



The Explosions

Just after 5 o'clock on a sultry August afternoon, Mr. Arthur Rushton, the manager of the Maypole Colliery in Ahram, returned home from a ten days' holiday. As he put the key in the lock, a dull rumble caused him to look over his shoulder. What he saw was the start of a nightmare that stayed with him for the rest of his life. A black cloud of smoke was pouring, with great force, out of the pit shaft. When he arrived at the pit head, he found the engine house was a tangle of roof timbers and bricks, the headgear blown away and the cage lying at the bottom of the shaft. Soot and debris were scattered over a

wide area. Buildings over a mile away had been shaken by the blast and a dense cloud of black smoke and poisonous vapours rose from the shaft for many hours.

Realising the grave situation of the men below ground, Mr. Rushton and other officials planned rapid and desperate attempts at rescue. Half a mile away was the headgear of the Wigan Junction Colliery and from there, underground, went a tunnel to the workings of the Maypole. The rescuers proceeded along this tunnel, penetrating the Maypole workings and brought out three men alive and uninjured. Advancing further, they met 'afterdamp', and exploration became very difficult. The roadways were filled with a mixture of smoke and afterdamp and although strenuous efforts were made to clear it, it resisted all their skill and bravery and stood like a wall, preventing further advance. In spite of the appalling conditions, seven bodies were located, and fourteen others seen, but in positions that made their removal impossible. The seven were taken along the tunnel to Wigan Junction and up to the surface 800 yards above. These men had survived the force of the explosion, but had succumbed to the effects of the afterdamp.

It was clear to the rescuers that the explosion had blocked the bottom of the upcast shaft and that somewhere, deep in the workings, a fire had broken out and the mixture of smoke and afterdamp was rushing into the maze of tunnels and workings deep in the southern area of the pit. Unceasing efforts were made to penetrate the workings, the men defying small explosions, intense heat and suffocating smoke coming from the workings. On the third night, an explosion of shattering force reversed the ventilation, the downcast shaft now becoming the upcast.

The rescuers narrowly escaped with their lives as they were pursued along the tunnels to the cage at Wigan Junction by an oily cloud of black smoke. After this it was clear that a large part of the mine was on fire, thick acrid fumes belching up out of the once downcast shaft. This put an

end to rescue attempts and a roll call showed that sixty-eight men remained half a mile below the surface of the earth and without question were already dead.

It soon became apparent that there was no hope of dealing with the fire except by flooding the pit. Representatives of the workmen, the owners and the Home Office agreed that this course should be adopted. Over 100 million gallons of water were poured down the shafts during the succeeding weeks. During this time violent explosions, some almost as great as the original one, were experienced.

The Inquest

The inquest on the seven bodies recovered opened on the evening of August 20th. Formal identification was made by a procession of widows, sons and mothers. The bodies had been laid out in the Abram Smallpox Hospital and relatives identified features of some, and clogs, clothes, watches of the ones whose features had been badly burned. Mr. Samuel Brighouse, the coroner, a man with much experience of the frequent smaller accidents in the area, let it be known that all responsible persons would have the opportunity to question and cross-examine the witnesses. He was very much in command of his court and showed concern for the relatives. "As the bodies are recovered," he said, "I shall convene the court and summon the jury at once, so that burial orders can be made without delay of any sort."

The Relief Fund

A fund was opened and an immediate donation of £100 arrived from His Majesty the King. Contributions came from near and far - the coppers of the unemployed and the gifts from the wealthy and from industrial concerns.

The Resumed Inquest

In September, a resumed inquest heard that, until the mine was cleared and the cause of the explosion determined, there could be only a formal identification of bodies but because it would be some months before this could be

done, the coroner decided to hear what evidence there was.

All the witnesses agreed that the tragedy was the result of an ignition of gas and His Majesty's Inspector of Mines, Mr. Hall, outlined the likeliest causes of this, the most obvious being a blown-out shot, or a defective lamp. It was suggested that the explosion was aggravated by coal dust in dirty roads and that pockets of gas in the cavities of old or abandoned workings were ignited by a shot penetrating these cavities, the shot-firer being unaware of their existence. Letters were received from throughout the country, some condemned owners for making men work in dangerous areas, others, condemned the Miners' Lodges for ignoring complaints allegedly made by men at the Maypole and several letters blamed the safety lamp - the Marsaut. "After some years," said one correspondent, "the threads in the base fitment wear, allowing gas to travel along the threads,". Corrosion of the pillars supporting the glass, and thus destroying the air-tight fit was also offered as a possible cause of failure.

Witnesses agreed that the so-called "permitted" explosives were only safe if used under certain specified conditions, but there was disagreement about the value of damping with water to keep down coal dust about the heat in certain working places and about the correctness of, and notice taken of, the firemen's report - it was clear from the evidence that the reports were rarely compared. The surviving firemen were questioned very closely and were found to hold differing views as to the quantities of gas found, especially in a large cavity in the roof caused by a fall some time earlier.

The movement of people and tubs could clear small pockets of gas away these were therefore not always reported because an hour later the gas was cleared. Some men assured the court that the gas was so strong near the workings face that their lamps had to be "put back" into a clearer area. Some men had their drawers, or helpers, "fanning" them with a shirt and others

claimed that they frequently went away to clear their heads in cleaner air. All these claims were denied by others. There were no records of complaints made at the Lodge meetings and no use was made of Rule 38, by which two men could be appointed to examine working conditions on the miners' behalf. The court had to decide - were some men working bad areas because the money was good, and ignoring safety rules? Some places were so easy to work that, as one man put it "You could kick the coal out with your clogs." The main complaint was that there were not enough empty tubs and since a man made his money on the amount he cut, waiting for tubs meant a loss of income. One witness said he made an average of £2.5s. (£2.25) a week, which was enough to keep a man and his family in reasonable comfort.

There were frequent brushes between the coroner and Mr. Walsh who represented the Miners' Lodge. He was rebuked many times for repeating questions which the coroner felt had been satisfactorily answered already, and for wasting the court's time. Mr. Walsh accused the coroner of deliberately silencing him.

The Mines' Inspector, gave the mine and its managers a good report. The reports he had seen from the firemen were adequate and he classed it as a clean, well-run pit, a bit "firey" but easy to work. He would not give an opinion as to the cause - no-one could until the pit was explored, and then the job would be difficult because of the flooding.

The Verdict

The inquest closed, on July 8th, 1909, after sitting for 23 sessions. The coroner took an hour to sum up and then the room was cleared whilst the jury, all local men, considered the questions put to them. They spent six hours in earnest deliberation, and when the public were again allowed in, announced that they were unanimous in all their findings, which were that:

1. The men died from an explosion caused by a mixture of coal dust and gas, fired by a shot

using a permitted explosive and into which too much trust was placed. The supervision during the manager's absence was slack.

2. It appears that due precaution had not previously been taken by some of the men whose lives had been lost.
3. That it was possible that some of the men may have been willing to work, in dangerous conditions in order to make 'easy' money.
4. Firemen should not be expected to fire shots as well, but there should always be a man doing the job exclusively.
5. There should be more mines' inspectors.
6. There should be a rule limiting the number of people down a pit when shots are fired.
7. Floors should be swept as well as watered to keep down the dust.

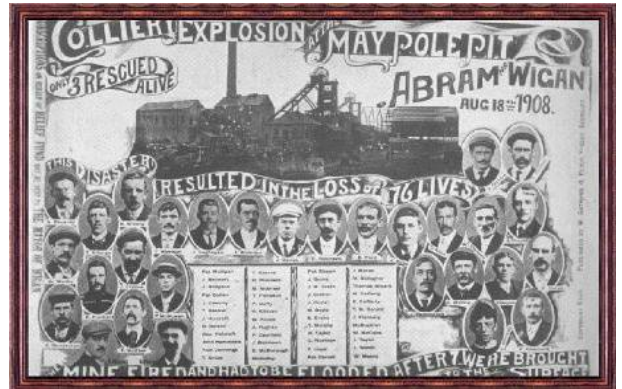
Conclusion

The coroner on dismissing the jury, recalled the tragic stories brought out by witnesses. Boys found clinging to fathers' legs, men with cloth over their faces and open tea cans as they vainly tried to combat the sulphurous fumes. Families in which all the men folk had been wiped out. The fearlessness of men who spoke out even though they feared it would blacklist them by either collier or Company. Above all, the shadow lasting longer than the fumes below, that lay over the whole community from the day, eleven months earlier when the Maypole "went up".

From "The History and Development of the Wigan Coalfield", Wigan Metropolitan Borough Museums Service, Wigan (exhibition brochure c1978?)

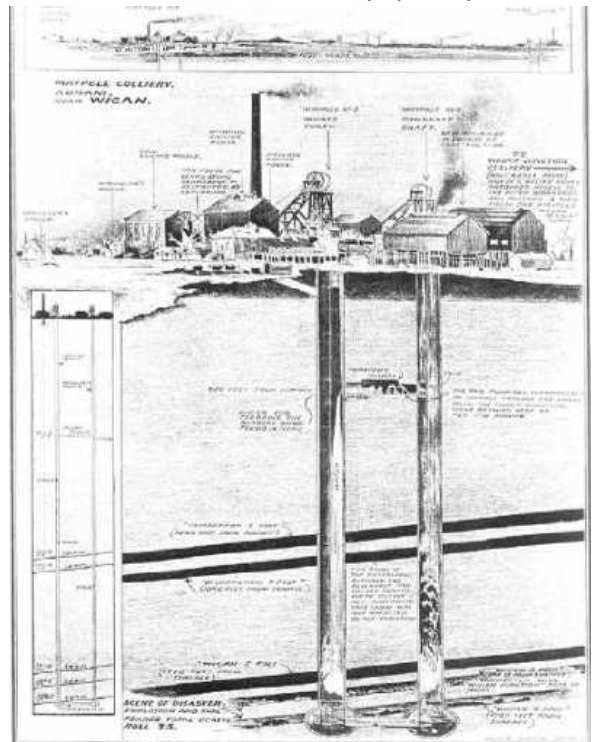
The Men Who lost Their Lives

Seventy five men and boys lost their lives in the disaster. The postcard published by W Gothard of Barnsley quotes 76 as the toll, but prints 77 names. Fortunately two of those listed had not been killed that day. Only seven bodies were recovered, the remains of the other 68 being still underground.



Explanation of the Disaster

As featured in a national newspaper report.



Thursday 20 August 2009

Congo Gem Mine Accident Kills 18 Workers, Union Says

Extract from Bloomberg.com

Up to 18 diamond miners died in a landslide in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the head of the Union of Artisanal Diamond Miners of Kasai, Jean-Marie Kabuya Mulamba, said.

The workers, who use shovels, picks and their hands to scratch diamonds out of tunnels, were crushed as underground galleries collapsed in a mine in Mbuji Mayi, the capital of Eastern Kasai

province, Kabuya Mulamba said today by phone from the region.

"There is no safety in these mines and the diggers have no other choice but to do this," he said.

Congo's independent miners, who account for most of the central African nation's mineral production, have suffered since global metal and diamond prices tumbled last year.

USA: Troy Mine, MSHA to face off over fine relating to fatality

Extract from The Missoulian, USA

TROY - It's been two years and more since the roof at Troy Mine caved in, killing a 55-year-old mechanic named Mike Ivins, but the final chapter in his story remains to be written.

On Monday, government regulators and mine management are set to square off in Spokane for four days in front of a judge to determine whether the mine should pay a \$60,000 federal fine.

However, officials at the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration said Wednesday they were negotiating with mine management in hopes of reaching a settlement before then.

The citation was levied by the agency after investigators determined Troy Mine management was negligent in Ivins' death.

The company, however, has contested the fine, forcing Monday's administrative hearing. The mine, said company president and CEO Jon Shanahan, will be represented by a Denver-based law firm.

Troy Mine has been hit by more than 350 federal citations since the accident, with fines totaling nearly \$1 million. Many alleged safety violations involve underground supports, which failed in the collapse that killed Ivins.

The company has contested many of the citations, particularly those that came with major fines, and has paid just \$50,000 of the \$1 million levied so far, or about 5 percent.

The most recent safety inspection - which was completed in April - resulted in 13 violations, including two that came with fines of \$27,900 and \$32,800, respectively. Both of those high-dollar fines were related to support failures.

A more recent safety audit, begun Aug. 3 and not yet complete, already has revealed 27 additional violations.

The \$60,000 fine at issue during next week's hearing was connected directly to the accident that killed Ivins, and is the first of the many contested fines to be adjudicated.

The results of the hearing, Shanahan said, "will have no bearing on subsequent contested citations, and we'll have to address those as we come across them."

Shanahan does not expect the judge to rule on the case next week, adding that it could be months before a decision is announced.

In addition to the MSHA citations, Ivins' family has initiated a civil suit against the mining company, and that matter is pending. Shanahan said the mine's insurance company recently agreed to take on that case, "which is good news for everyone, I think."

Troy Mine management has consistently rejected the findings of federal inspectors, who in the aftermath of the July 30, 2007 accident determined operators were negligent regarding worker safety.

MSHA reports indicate loose-rock conditions at the underground copper and silver operation had long been known to be dangerous, but that management ignored warnings. The agency noted that dangerous rock was "easily seen" and "obvious," concluding "the company engaged in aggravated conduct, constituting more than ordinary negligence, in that the potential ground hazards were known yet the company failed to ensure the area was safe for miners to work and to travel."

Mine bosses, in turn, have pointed to the operation's long-term safety record as proof of

their commitment to workers, and have roundly rejected MSHA accusations.

Following the initial inspections, company spokesman Carson Rife said the MSHA report "simply is not true," adding that "we will defend ourselves vigorously against those inaccuracies."

The government is expected to begin making its case Monday, with company rebuttal to follow later in the week.

Friday 21 August 2009

USA: Miner Dies In Wise County Underground Coal Mine Collapse

Extract from TriCities.com, USA as Reported by Daniel Gilbert, Bristol Herald Courier

A wall in a Wise County underground coal mine collapsed early Thursday, killing one worker in the state's first coal mining fatality this year.

A third-shift crew was scooping out coal deep inside the Big Laurel Mining Corp. No. 2 mine to install a feeder belt that would deliver coal to the surface. They placed timber supports between the floor and the ceiling as they burrowed their way into the coal and rock, just more than 2 miles from the mouth of the mine, according to a spokesman for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy.

Among the crew was repairman William Wayne Parrott, 58, of Big Stone Gap, Va. About 6:30 a.m., portions of the wall and roof caved and fell onto Parrott, a 33-year veteran of mines. Miners had to remove the material to free Parrott, who was transported by ambulance to the Lonesome Pine Hospital, where he was pronounced dead, the spokesman said.

No one else was injured in the collapse.

A spokesman for Cumberland Resources Corp., the parent company of mine operator Big Laurel Mining Corp., expressed condolences, but would not release details as state and federal teams investigate the accident.

"We're devastated by the accident and our thoughts and prayers are with [Parrott's] family," said Harry Childress, government affairs agent for Cumberland Resources. "We may make a statement a little bit later."

The Big Laurel No. 2 mine in July received three citations for falling short of federal safety standards for supporting mine roofs, faces and ribs, according to records of the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Inspectors found unsupported areas, including a section of roof, a rock brow and a rib in July. It was not clear whether these areas were near the location of Thursday's fatal accident.

Insufficient support for roofs and walls ranks as one of the most common violations in underground coal mines across the country, MSHA data shows. There were 3,392 such violations in underground coal mines in 2008, and 2,616 in 2007 – making it the fourth most common citation in each year.

The last fatal coal mining accident in Virginia was in July 2008, when a roof collapsed and killed a worker in Consolidation Coal Co.'s No. 1 mine in Buchanan County.

TAS: Bravery awards for Beaconsfield miners

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A Beaconsfield miner recognised for bravery in the 2006 mine rescue in northern Tasmania says many miners are still helping each other get over the disaster.

Patrick Ball was the underground manager when a rockfall killed miner Larry Knight and trapped Todd Russell and Brant Webb.

Mr Ball and miner Brett Creswell discovered the two trapped miners alive 900 metres underground.

They were awarded certificates today by the Police Commissioner for their courage in entering the collapsed tunnel to get food and drink to the trapped men.

Mr Ball says he is honoured to be recognised but says there are 280 people who were heroes during the rescue.

"It is good to be recognised it's a bit disappointing that more people won't be recognised lots of people risked their lives during the incident," he said.

"Some people are still struggling with it everybody I speak to," he said.

"I mean we're all a big club now that will be to the day we die and I speak to people quite often who do still struggle with it and always will.

"The biggest thing for me was when I finally said to myself 'okay it's as good as it's ever going to get'."

The mine manager Matthew Gill, who is now working in Western Australia, was recognised for his commitment to the safety of the rescuers.

Two police officers also received awards.

Sunday 23 August 2009

Eight dead in Ukraine mine blast

Extract from Washington Post

KIEV - A methane explosion at a pit in eastern Ukraine's Donbass coalfield, plagued by recurring accidents, killed eight miners and injured five on Sunday, industry officials were quoted as saying.

The coal industry's safety directorate, quoted by Interfax news agency, said the blast occurred late on Sunday afternoon at the Kirov mine in Makeyevka, outside Donetsk, the coalfield's main center.

It said 141 miners had been underground at the colliery at the time of the blast. Five were being treated in hospital for various injuries.

Explosions, many caused by a buildup of methane gas, are frequent occurrences in the Donbass coalfield's often aging and uneconomic collieries despite campaigns by authorities to improve safety.

20yo man dies at NT mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Northern Territory police are investigating the death of the 20-year-old man at McArthur River mine, 900 kilometres south-east of Darwin.

Police say they were notified just before 5:30pm CST on Friday by the mine's local health clinic that the Darwinian had died at the mine site.

The ABC understands the man was working near a workshop when he died.



The ABC understands the man died while working near a workshop at McArthur River mine. (ABC News)

Officers were on the scene yesterday and a file is being prepared for the coroner.

Territory WorkSafe is also investigating the incident and workplace inspectors are expected to visit the site either later today or tomorrow.

The ABC is seeking a response from the mine's operator, Xstrata.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

S

shaking (vibrating) screen A machine used to separate large from small pieces of ore, or in coal mining used to separate small coal before the larger coal moves on to the picking belt. Cylindrical screens are called trommels.



- Ed.