



Mining Accident News No.1310

20 September to 17 October 2013

In this issue:

USA: PA Fatality is Third in Aggregates This Week	1
.....	1
MSHA Releases Investigation Report in Loveridge Mine Fatality	1
.....	1
Canada: Family has mixed feelings about Vale plea deal	2
.....	2
Quote of the week	3
.....	3
S. Africa: Atlatsa reports fatality at Bokoni	3
.....	3
Qld: Safety systems improved after fatal mining accident	3
.....	3
China: 4 killed, 7 trapped in mining accident	4
.....	4
3 miners missing after accident in Germany	4
.....	4
Nambia: Electrical accident injures three at Langer Heinrich	5
.....	5
Canada: Miners not getting enough sleep, Sudbury study says	5
.....	5
USA: Accident Claims Life of Veteran West Virginia Miner	6
.....	6
USA: Illinois man dies in White County mine accident	6
.....	6
USA: Dozer operator killed at Bridger Coal Mine	7
.....	7
China: Two miners saved after 10-day ordeal	7
.....	7
Qld Mines Minister blames industry accidents on 'stupidity'	8
.....	8
Canada: Craigmont Mine Accident - No Charges after Worker Drowned	9
.....	9
This week in mining accident history	9
.....	9
Canada: John Wilson Mining Accident - Daughters Angry Charges Weren't Laid	11
.....	11
Mining dictionary	12
.....	12

Saturday 21 September 2013

USA: PA Fatality is Third in Aggregates This Week

Reproduced with kind permission of Sharpe Media, LLC

A miner killed in a motor vehicle accident at a quarry in northeastern Pennsylvania is the third fatality in four days in the U.S. aggregate sub-sector.

Timothy Farr, 31, of Ulster was hauling containers of water uphill on a dirt road into

the quarry in "a military-type cargo truck" when the vehicle flipped backward onto its roof, trapping the victim inside, according to Bradford County Coroner Thomas M. Carman. Carman theorized the truck's gears may have played a role in the accident. The victim, who was not wearing a seat belt, died at the scene of traumatic asphyxia, Carman said.

The accident occurred at T. G. Mountain Stone's Northrup slate operation at about 2:15 p.m. Thursday.

T.G. Mountain Stone has operated the two-person intermittent quarry since 2008, according to MSHA's database. The mine has reported no non-fatal days lost injuries during this period.

MSHA has not inspected the quarry this year. Last year, the mine received \$100 in MSHA fines. In 2011, the amount was \$408.

On Monday, a miner was killed when his loaded haul truck went through a berm and over a highwall at a Missouri quarry. A miner died Wednesday in an engulfment accident at a limestone mine in Kentucky. Four other aggregate miners have died this year.

In all, 27 miners have died in 2013, the same number at this time a year ago. The breakdown by sector is 13 in metal/non-metal and 14 in coal.

MSHA Releases Investigation Report in Loveridge Mine Fatality

Extract from The State Journal, WV, USA

The Mine Safety and Health Administration has released its fatal accident report about an incident at the Loveridge Mine in Marion County that killed Glen L. Clutter, Jr., 51 of Baxter in February 2013.

NOTE: Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not associated with ANY organisation, individual or publication

Clutter, a 31 year mining veteran, was working at the Miracle Run end of the Loveridge No. 22 Mine owned by CONSOL on Feb. 12, 2013 when a slate bar struck him as he attempted to re-rail a supply car. The car shifted and a slate bar struck Clutter on the right side of his face and forehead, said a report from MSHA. Clutter was unconscious and flown by HealthNet to Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown. There, he was listed in critical condition and put on life support. Clutter later died from his injuries. Investigators determined the accident was caused by failing to secure the supply car before it was lifted. Investigators noted failing to maintain the track and failing to complete pre-shift examination also contributed to Clutter's injuries.

The mine accesses the Pittsburgh No. 8 coal seam and can be entered from three portals including the Sugar Run and Miracle Run portals located near Fairview and the Metz portal near Mannington.

You can read MSHA's complete report at <http://www.msha.gov/FATALS/2013/FTL13c05.asp>.

Canada: Family has mixed feelings about Vale plea deal

Extract from NorthernLife.ca

The sister of one of two Vale miners killed on the job in 2011 said in some ways, she's glad lawyers representing the company and the Crown were able to come to a plea deal agreement for charges laid in the wake of the tragedy.

At least it saved her family the pain and stress of going through the full trial, Briana Fram said.

Vale pleaded guilty to three charges under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and was fined \$1,050,000 on Sept. 17 in the deaths of Briana's brother, Jordan Fram, as well as his co-worker, Jason Chenier.

The company originally faced nine charges, while supervisor Keith Birnie faced six.

The remaining charges against Vale were dropped as part of the plea deal. The charges against Birnie were dropped after the Crown received information as part of trial submissions, and felt there was no reasonable chance of conviction.

While in some ways she's glad not to have to go through a full trial, which was due to start in late October, Briana said she would have liked to see Vale held to account on all the charges.

"We are happy they pled guilty, but it's hard, because those charges were just so easily dropped," she said. "That's the way the judicial system is."

In terms of Birnie, Briana said it's also difficult for her to understand how the charges against him were also so easily dropped. She said the families weren't privy to the information which led to the Crown's decision to drop the charges against Birnie.

Vale was represented in court by Kelly Strong, the company's president of Ontario/UK operations. Hearing him say the word "guilty" was a bit of a relief, Briana said.

In a written statement released after the court appearance, Strong said Vale investigated the incident that led to the miners' deaths, and is making changes to its safety practices.

"We hope that with them pleading guilty ... in the future they'll be more conscious of mistakes and be more conscious of safety," Briana said.

"I know that they are making changes, and they're happy with that. But let's continue to make those changes and be proactive instead of being reactive."

She describes Sept. 17 as an emotional day for her family.

Briana was among the family and friends of the two miners who delivered victim impact

statements before the court, describing how much she misses her brother, friend and “guardian angel.”

“It brought back so many feelings,” she said. “It almost felt like it was the day that Jordan passed away again, going through everything, and that emotional timeframe. It was difficult.”

Jordan and Briana's mother, Wendy Fram, said she thought the victim impact statements drove home to Vale what the families are going through. “They don't understand it, because they haven't been in that situation,” she said.

In terms of the fine laid against Vale — an amount that's actually precedent-setting in Ontario and perhaps Canada — Briana said she can't say whether it was appropriate or not, as nothing would compensate her family's loss.

When asked if the Fram family plans on suing Vale, Briana said that's something they've never wanted to do. She said she's not sure about the Chenier family, as she's never discussed the matter with them.

It's also possible to lay criminal charges against companies responsible for the deaths or injuries of workers under the Westray Act, but that didn't happen in that case.

The union representing Vale miners, Steelworkers Local 6500, has spoken out against the lack of criminal charges laid in this case.

Briana said she'd like to see a judicial system that's more familiar with mining so they can “appropriately investigate and judge cases in this situation.”

The Fram family, along with Steelworkers Local 6500 and other community supporters, has been pushing for an inquiry into mining safety in Ontario.

Wendy said if Vale is really serious about improving safety, she'd like to have their

support for a mining inquiry as well. “Why wouldn't they want to support it?” she asks.

Quote of the week

“I don't necessarily agree with everything I say.”

(Herbert) Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)
Canadian philosopher of communication theory

Monday 23 September 2013

S. Africa: Atlatsa reports fatality at Bokoni

JOHANNESBURG – Triple-listed Atlatsa Resources has reported a fatality at its Bokoni platinum mine, following a fall-of-ground accident at the operation's Middelpunt Hill UG2 shaft section on Saturday.

The Department of Mineral Resources had since completed an inspection and issued a Section 54 safety stoppage notice for the shaft.

The company said in a statement that, following the incident, the Bokoni management team had started a mine-wide audit on safety and health practices at all its operating shafts to assess current risk levels and ensure adherence to mine safety standards.

The board of directors and management of the company and Bokoni extended their condolences to both the family and colleagues of the deceased employee.

Saturday 28 September 2013

Qld: Safety systems improved after fatal mining accident

Extract from The Daily Examiner, Qld

A CORONER found lessons had been learnt from the death of Michael Earle Auld, from Tin Can Bay, who was killed in a mining accident in North Queensland.

Mr Auld was working 375 metres underground at the BHP Billiton Cannington Mine when he was crushed between a LandCruiser and a working platform attached to a loader on January 17, 2008.

He died from multiple crush injuries to his chest and abdomen.

Mr Auld, who was working as part of a three-man crew, was standing at the rear of a Toyota utility with his back to an approaching loader operated by another crew member.

The plan was to transfer tools and other equipment into the basket on the loader.

A third crew member was directing the loader operator forward.

However, on signalling to stop, the loader continued and crushed Mr Auld between the loader basket and the tray of the utility.

Coroner Kevin Priestly found that while the mine operator had in place safe working procedures that addressed the potential for injury to pedestrians, those procedures did not descend to the level of detail to address persons working with, and in close proximity to, mobile equipment.

"While both organisations had reasonably effective safety management systems, they identified opportunities for improvement at a procedural and organisational level," Mr Priestly said.

"More detailed safe working procedures were developed and implemented imposing a 10 metre exclusion zone with specific safety precautions for those working within that zone.

"Furthermore, both organisations have implemented programs aimed at improving and maintaining safety awareness.

"I am satisfied that all lessons to be learnt were fully explored and all opportunities for improvement were fully identified and implemented."

Monday 30 September 2013

China: 4 killed, 7 trapped in mining accident

Extract from Xinhua Net

NANCHANG, -- Four people have died and another seven are trapped after a coal and gas outburst at a colliery in east China's Jiangxi Province, local authorities said on Monday.

The accident happened around 5:45 a.m., when miners were working underground at a coal mine owned by Jiangxi Coal Group Corporation in Qujiang County of Fengcheng City, the provincial coal mine safety supervision administration said.

Rescue work is ongoing and the cause of the accident is under investigation.

Tuesday 1 October 2013

3 miners missing after accident in Germany

Extract from 10TV.com

BERLIN — Three miners have been reported missing after a controlled detonation at a potassium mine in eastern Germany led to a gas leak there.

The German news agency dpa quoted an unidentified official at the mining company, K + S GmbH, as saying that carbon dioxide was released by the detonation Tuesday in the mine in Unterbreizbach in the state of Thuringia.

The official said two mines and the shaft installations above ground had to be evacuated, and that the gas leak led to a large release of dust inside the mine where the detonation occurred and above ground.

Dpa said seven miners were initially trapped but four of them quickly rescued without injuries. Rescue personnel were searching for

the three missing miners about 700 meters (about 2,300 feet) below ground.

UPDATE: Three miners were killed on Tuesday after breathing leaked carbon dioxide following a controlled explosion at a potash mine operated by K+S in the German state of Thuringia, the company said.

"A carbon dioxide leak occurred to an extent we did not expect after an explosion, and this led to the people dying," Rainer Gerling, manager of the mine, told a news conference.

Carbon dioxide occurs naturally in potash deposits that are mined using controlled explosions.

"After the explosions, we carry out checks to see how much carbon dioxide is in the mine. This was the actual job of these employees, and they were then surprised by the occurrence of CO₂ on the site," Gerling said.

Thursday 3 October 2013

Nambia: Electrical accident injures three at Langer Heinrich

Three miners have been injured at uranium producer Paladin Energy's Langer Heinrich mine, in Namibia, following a "serious electrical incident".

The miner said on Thursday that two of the workers received significant burns while a third worker suffered smoke inhalation. He has been discharged from hospital, but a more seriously injured colleague has been flown to South Africa for treatment.

Paladin said that a full investigation into the incident was under way.

The uranium miner is currently looking for an investment partner in the Langer Heinrich operation, which produces at a rate of 5.2-million pounds a year.

Canada: Miners not getting enough sleep, Sudbury study says

Extract from CBCNews, Ca

Laurentian University report says lack of sleep could lead to workplace accidents

A new study from Laurentian University reveals that miners are less rested and are at a higher risk of experiencing a workplace accident than employees in other fields.

A former Vale shift worker said his work schedule took a toll on him — and his sleep suffered as a result.

"It gets to the point where, sometimes, you'll have such a hard shift that [when] you're driving home, it almost feels like you're kind of drunk," Ryan St. Georges explained. "That's how it can make you feel."

New data from Laurentian University suggests this experience is common.

The study says mining employees who regularly work the night shift only sleep an average of 5.5 hours after work — that's a full hour less than what the average person receives.

Risk of accidents 'significantly higher'

One of the authors of the study, who is also a sleep expert in the psychology department, said sleep deprivation can be dangerous.

"The biggest consequence for anyone who is sleep deprived is that the reaction time slows down," Dr. Glenn Legault said. "The chances of you having an accident are significantly higher."

He said this is especially problematic for those who work with heavy machinery.

"The issue is, if they're not getting good quality sleep before going in for the next night's shift, they're going to have problems with decision making and all sorts of other things associated with sleep deprivation."

St. Georges said most miners know the risk but, for some, working a normal shift isn't an option.

"People are a lot more stressed out to do a lot more work," he said. "There's a shortage of people to sometimes get the work done."

Legault will present the preliminary findings of his study this weekend at the Canadian Sleep Society in Halifax.

Sunday 6 October 2013

USA: Accident Claims Life of Veteran West Virginia Miner

A miner with a long career in the industry has been killed at an underground coal mine in West Virginia.

Roger R. King, 62, of Moundsville died in an incident shortly before 1 p.m. Friday at McElroy Coal Co.'s McElroy Mine in Marshall County, according to Lynn Seay, spokeswoman for Consol Energy, Inc., the controlling entity.

Based on preliminary information, King was struck in the head when a conveyor chain broke while a longwall machine was being moved to a new location. Leslie Fitzwater, spokeswoman for the state's mine safety office, said the victim died on the way to the hospital.

King was a senior longwall maintenance coordinator and long-time Consol employee who began working for the company in 1969, Seay said. His last 17 years of service were at McElroy.

The fatality is the sixth at the 964-employee union operation since 2002, according to MSHA's database. In October 2008, a 58-year-old rock dust motorman died in a pinning accident. In August 2004, a 57-year-old miner was killed in a rib roll incident. In January 2003, three contract workers perished and three others were injured when an explosion occurred during a vertical shaft sinking

operation. McElroy's non-fatal days lost rate has been below the national average every year since 2002.

The fatality is the sixth this year in the West Virginia coalfields and the 15th across the country. Thirteen Metal/Non-Metal (M/NM) miners have also died. At this time a year ago, 16 Coal miners and 14 M/NM miners had died on the job.

Monday 7 October 2013

USA: Illinois man dies in White County mine accident

Extract from www.kfvs12.com, USA

CARMI, IL (KFVS) - Authorities confirm a southern Illinois man died in a mine accident on Saturday.

According to White County Coroner Chris Marsh, the miner, Robert Smith, 47, of Norris City, worked with White County Coal in Carmi.

Marsh says Smith was driving a modified golf cart on the underground road, veered off to the left and hit the wall of the mine before the cart overturned on top of him.

The person behind Smith saw it happen and tried to lift the cart off him, but it was too heavy.

After calling for help, another person got there and they were able to lift the cart of Smith.

They started performing CPR on Smith and got him outside to the surface.

White County EMTs and a flight nurse were on hand, but Smith had died.

Marsh says an autopsy was performed on Sunday that showed massive blunt force trauma to the chest. The coroner is waiting on toxicology reports. It is not known if Smith had a medical condition.

Federal inspectors were on hand Saturday night along with state mining inspectors investigating the accident.

Funeral arrangements have been made with Campbell Funeral Home in Norris City.

USA: Dozer operator killed at Bridger Coal Mine

Extract from SFGate, CA, USA

ROCK SPRINGS, Wyo. — An accident involving a bulldozer that plunged off a 160-foot-high wall killed a worker at the Jim Bridger Coal Mine near Rock Springs.

Sweetwater County sheriff's officials say the bulldozer went over the mine's high wall around 2:30 a.m. Sunday. Dozer operator Mark Christopher Stassinis, 44, was ejected from the cab and killed.

Stassinis was the only person inside the bulldozer. He was a two-year employee of the mine. An autopsy was planned Tuesday.

Mine officials said operations have stopped while the accident is investigated.

The mine accident was the third causing a fatality in the U.S. in as many days. The last time three people were killed in the mining industry over three days was in 2002.

The accidents occur during a federal government shutdown that has kept more than half of the Mine Safety and Health Administration's employees off the job. Inspections largely are focused on mines with a documented history of problems.

Portland, Ore.-based utility PacifiCorp owns a two-thirds interest in the Bridger mine. The mine operator is Bridger Coal Company, a PacifiCorp joint venture with Idaho Power Company.

The mine provides the adjacent Jim Bridger Power Plant with a continuing fuel source for the four-unit, 2,100-megawatt generating station that produces electricity for PacifiCorp and Idaho Power customers in six Western states.

Wyoming is the top coal-producing state, supplying around 40 percent of the nation's

coal, and Wyoming is home to nine of the top 10 U.S. coal mines for production. Wyoming's biggest coal mines are in the Powder River Basin in the state's northeast corner.

The Bridger mine in southwest Wyoming is among the state's smaller mines. The mine has reserves of more than 120 million tons and produces approximately 6 million tons of coal per year.

Wednesday 9 October 2013

China: Two miners saved after 10-day ordeal

Extract from The Standard, Hong Kong

Two miners were rescued after 10 days of being trapped underground by flooding, in a rare success for the accident-prone industry.

A total of 42 workers were underground when water began pouring into the state-owned Zhengsheng coal mine on September 28, and although 30 escaped a dozen were stuck inside, Xinhua News Agency said.

Rescue efforts in Fenyang, in Shanxi province, have been continuing ever since and the two men were retrieved in the early hours of yesterday.

The search continues for the remaining 10 miners.

The survival of the two men is in stark contrast to the fate of hundreds of miners every year.

Mining accidents are common in the country. In 2012, 1,384 people were killed in coal mining accidents in the mainland, according to official figures, down from 1,973 in 2011.

Saturday 12 October 2013

Qld Mines Minister blames industry accidents on 'stupidity'

Extract from The Queensland Times, Qld, Aus

GREENSKIN or new workers in the mining industry have copped the blame for a spike in injuries in the past 12 months, with Mines Minister Andrew Cripps warning sometimes "you cannot account for stupidity".

He made the quip as the Opposition attempted to link safety statistics to a redundancy package given to a marketing worker in the department.

Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health Stewart Bell and Mr Cripps faced questions during a Department of Mining estimates hearing, which often centred on the Queensland Mines Inspectorate's annual report for the most recent financial year.

The report found in 2010-11, 851 workers across all sectors including quarries and gas projects suffered "lost time injuries and disabling injuries".

It increased by more than 23% to 1047 in 2011-12.

A key indicator in workplace health was judged on the amount of injuries per million hours worked.

In 2011-12, this was 6.8, up from 4.2 the year before.

"This is a large increase and a cause for serious concern," Commissioner Bell said.

The minister said one improvement in the figures was that these were less severe and the number of fatalities fell in 2012 from three to one.

The paper also found more workers and mines were reporting dangerous activity or near-misses which ensured more transparency.

Mr Bell spent part of 2012 working as a commissioner on the Royal Commission into the Pike River mine disaster that killed 29 in late 2010.

He said he had seen the kind of "unbelievable" behaviour in Queensland mines that could deliver those horrors to our industry.

He said some miners disabled underground methane monitors by either turning them off or putting plastic bags over them and that was not all.

"We caught a person smoking underground in a coal mine which is something unheard of; it's almost unbelievable," he said.

"The concerns that I have is that these incidents could be a pre-cursor to a mine explosion."

Mr Bell said in his work on the Pike River Commission he saw examples of a similar behaviour and a consequence he did not want repeated in Queensland.

Both the commissioner and minister said less experience workers - which grew the industry from 39,000 in 2009 to 58,000 in 2012, sometimes struggled with safety rules.

"There's no doubt that the increase in new miners, or greenskins as they're known, is a factor here," Mr Bell said.

"A lot of these people don't know what they don't know - they don't realise the risks."

Both Mr Bell and Mr Cripps conceded the figures were a concern, with Mr Bell explaining staff from the mines inspectorate - which is a government arm focused on safety - had already met with resource firms to "express dissatisfaction".

Mr Cripps said Queensland still led the world in mine safety but vigilance was important to ensure workers came home safely to their families.

Sunday 13 October 2013

Canada: Craigmont Mine Accident - No Charges after Worker Drowned

Extract from Huffpost British Columbia, Ca

VICTORIA - British Columbia's Criminal Justice Branch says it will not approve charges against the operators of a mine where an employee drowned more than five years ago.

John Wilson died Feb. 28, 2008 at the Craigmont Mine near Merritt, B.C., when the excavator he was operating overturned in a sump filled with water.

Starting Oct. 30, 2009, the Criminal Justice Branch and police passed the file back and forth, and three senior prosecutors reviewed the documents.

The branch says that based on evidence submitted by the RCMP, prosecutors would be unable to prove a breach of duty, a wanton or reckless disregard for life or safety, or any breach contributed to Wilson's death.

As a result, it says there is not a substantial likelihood of conviction against the mine, a manger or a supervisor.

The branch says the Workers Compensation Act does not apply to mines, and the six-month time limit for charges under the Mines Act has expired.

This week in mining accident history

14 October 1913
Universal Coal Pit,
Senghenydd, Aber Valley, Wales, UK
Underground coal mine
Methane explosion
439 killed

Some events can scar a nation and without a doubt the Senghenydd disaster has left a deep

wound on the hearts and minds of the people of Wales.

A hundred years ago, on October 14, 1913 there was a large explosion at the Universal Coal Pit in the village of Senghenydd in the Aber Valley.

Four hundred and thirty nine miners were killed. The tragedy almost wiped out the village's entire male population; fathers, husbands and sons died.

"A century ago, on an October morning much like this one, everyone in Britain and beyond had heard of Senghenydd," says historian Dr Elin Jones who comes from nearby Ystrad Mynach.

"Hundreds of men were killed in the worst mining accident in UK history."

"It was only from their personal belongings – watches, tobacco boxes and so on, that they could identify the bodies," explains historian Professor Bill Jones from Cardiff University. Memories, as well as facts bring the history to life on Cofio Senghenydd.

"Dad would normally work on, but that morning he came up early," recalls the late Rhiannydd Jones from Senghenydd. "Instead of coming up at eight when the accident happened, he came up at six, so he was part of the rescue team. He and the other men heard the little boys down the shaft shouting 'Mammy'."

Someone else affected by the scale of this tragedy is radio presenter Roy Noble, who taught in the valley as a young man. The most important thing, Roy tells Dr Elin Jones as they sit in the remembrance garden on the site of the old colliery, is not to forget.

"It touches your soul and shakes your spirit, and every generation should acknowledge it and know what happened here. We must never ever forget."

Poet Myrddin ap Dafydd, author of the volume Senghenydd, also stresses the importance of remembering.

He said: "We should all take our children to the Aber Valley, show them where the mining used to take place, tell them the story, because the Senghenydd tragedy is part of our history as a nation."

Extract from www.caerphillyobserver.co.uk

At 8.00am on Tuesday 14 October 1913 a huge explosion rocked the tiny town of Senghenydd, to the north of Caerphilly. It came from the coal mine belonging to the Universal Colliery, the most significant employer in the area, and before the hour was out it was clear to everyone, miners and their families alike, that what had happened was a disaster of major proportions.

The explosion, and subsequent release of poisonous gas, killed 439 miners, making the Senghenydd pit disaster the most lethal and tragic mining disaster in British history. On that morning nearly 950 men had been working below ground, and many of them were killed or injured before they even knew what was happening.

The Universal Steam Coal Company (a subsidiary of Lewis Merthyr Consolidated Collieries) had sunk the first shaft at Senghenydd in 1891, full production using two shafts - the Lancaster and York - beginning five years later. In the years leading up to World War One there was an unprecedented demand for Welsh coal, most of it being used to fuel the battleships of the Royal Navy. And the Universal, privately owned and privately run, like all of the other South Wales collieries, prospered.

The explosion that brought about the disaster was probably caused by an electrical spark from something like the electric signalling gear igniting methane gas, firedamp as it was known. As if that wasn't enough, the firedamp explosion caused coal dust lying on the floor of the mine to rise and this also caught fire and exploded in a gigantic roar. The shock wave promptly caused more coal dust to rise into the

air and this also then ignited. In effect, what happened was a series of self-fueling explosions.

The explosions were so violent that the cage of the Lancaster pit was even blown back up the shaft to wedge in the pithead winding gear. A banksman standing close by was decapitated by a piece of flying wood.

The fires spread through most of the underground workings, quickly followed by afterdamp. These were gasses formed by the explosion, waves of carbon monoxide, that ensured those miners who had escaped the explosion would be suffocated due to lack of oxygen unless they could quickly get to the surface.

Rescue teams from places such as Crumlin and Aberdare were rushed to the scene but attempts at getting the men out were hampered by fallen debris, by a series of roof falls and by raging fires. One of the rescuers was caught and killed in one of these roof falls but, regardless of the cost, the men worked on.

And they did manage to find men and boys still alive in the wreckage, the families of the Senghenydd miners greeting each successful escape with joy and with the belief that their own loved ones would soon be brought to the surface. However, as the days wore on, survivors grew fewer and the carrying out of bodies became the norm.

The rescue attempts lasted for three weeks although, by then, the chances of finding anyone alive had long since gone. Some of the bodies had been so badly mutilated in the explosion that they could only be identified by certain items of clothing they were wearing. One man was recognised by his new boots, worn for the first time that day; another - a young boy - by the patch his mother had sewn onto his jacket only a few days before.

It was estimated that over 1,000 people in the area were bereaved by the Senghenydd

disaster. Certainly nearly all of the families in the town were touched, in one way or another. And yet, despite the resulting enquiry finding numerous faults that could be laid at the door of the owners and managers, when compensation and fines were levied they came to a derisive £24 - in total! As one newspaper commented, that meant that miners lives were worth just '£0 1s 1 1/4d' - a sum that, these days, would equate to no more than six pence.

Universal Colliery was back in use by the end of November 1913 and full production was again achieved by 1916. The mine was not to last much longer, however, workmen and staff being given just one day's notice of closure in March 1928. Although the site was later acquired by Powell Duffryn in order to give extra ventilation to their Windsor Colliery, the Senghenydd shaft was finally filled in 1979.

There are several memorials to the men and boys who lost their lives at Senghenydd, one at Nant y Parc Primary School which now stands on the site of the mine. There is another at the local comprehensive.

But the real tragedy of Senghenydd does not lie in just the 1913 disaster. Proving that the old adage "lightning does not strike twice in the same place" is a mere fallacy, twelve years earlier, on Friday 24 May 1901, the same colliery had experienced its first disaster. At 5.00am on that day an explosion decimated the mine and killed 81 men. There was just one survivor pulled from the mine shaft.

The history of Wales and its industrial past is full of tragedy, human grief and loss. But none of the disasters that have befallen the country are worse than the Senghenydd mining disaster when tragedy struck the same village and the same community, not once but twice within the space of a dozen years.

Extract from
<http://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/abervalleyheritage/1913-pit-disaster>

Thursday 17 October 2013

Canada: John Wilson Mining Accident - Daughters Angry Charges Weren't Laid

Extract from Huffpost British Columbia, Ca

VANCOUVER - The daughter of a miner who drowned in an industrial accident says she won't give up her fight for justice, even though prosecutors have decided not to lay criminal charges in her father's death.

John Wilson, 61, died when the excavator he was operating overturned into a water-filled sump at the Craigmont Mine near Merritt, B.C., in February 2008.

"He was on the crest of his retirement, and to work so hard all of his life and to lose his life at work at that stage is a tragedy," Tammy Savinkoff said through tears Wednesday. "And to have grandchildren that will never get to really know him is so upsetting."

The province's Criminal Justice Branch announced earlier this month that charges wouldn't be laid in the case because there wasn't a likelihood of conviction against the mine, its manager or a supervisor.

The branch also announced the six-month time limit to lay charges under the Mines Act had expired.

"It outrages me, it really upsets all of us," said Savinkoff, one of Wilson's two daughters.

"It kind of brings it all up again to the forefront, where you've kind of been thinking OK, there's this outlet for justice for my dad, and now that door, in essence, has been closed as far as the Crown's concerned," she said, calling her father a fun-loving guy.

However, Savinkoff said there is still the chance of a private prosecution. Last week, the United Steelworkers union announced it is considering such a move.

Earlier Wednesday, Savinkoff and her sister, Tracy Wilson, said in a joint statement that the initial investigation was incomplete, inadequate and ineffective.

They also said the RCMP investigation was painfully slow and often interrupted, while the Crown's reasons for clearing the mining firm lacked facts including information from the inspector of mines.

Prosecution or not, Savinkoff said she'd like the six-month time limit for prosecution under the Mines Act increased and police given more training on investigating workplace accidents.

Neil MacKenzie, a spokesman for the Criminal Justice Branch, said in a statement the agency recognizes its decisions can be difficult for some to accept and understand. He said that's why it notifies the affected parties, and in appropriate cases issues a statement explaining its decision, which it has done in this case.

"The branch appreciates that Mr. Wilson's family has suffered a tragic loss, however, our decisions must be made on the basis of a careful review of the available evidence and a principled application of the relevant law to the circumstances of the individual case," he said.

According to an Oct. 4 statement by the Criminal Justice Branch, Wilson was operating an excavator in a low-lying area of the mine site when the accident occurred.

The excavator's cab had a single door, although there was a hatch on the roof of the cab and windows. On top of the cab, though, was a brush guard that protected it from falling objects.

The branch said a metal pin in the brush guard prevented the hatch from opening, and screens covered the windows.

As a result, the hatch on top of the cab couldn't be used because of the brush guard, it said.

"It is not clear, from the evidence as a whole, whether the loss of this means of egress factually contributed to Mr. Wilson's death, in whole or in part."

The branch said it could not prove the mine manager was aware of the roof hatch situation and did nothing to correct it. It said a training and safety committee operated at the mine, but a review of their records "shows no mention of the brush guard being formally raised or considered as a safety issue."

Union spokesman Richard Boyce has since challenged those statements, saying investigators didn't speak to workers who called for bars to be removed from the excavator's windows and roof, an issue that was raised at more than one safety meeting and would have allowed Wilson to escape.

Boyce said one worker even held onto Wilson's hand and felt it go limp after the excavator overturned.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

C

Chain conveyor A conveyor on which the material is moved along solid pans (troughs) by the action of scraper crossbars attached to powered chains.