

Mining Accident News No.0907

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Wednesday 25 February 2009

Death toll of north China coal mine accident rises to 77, one still missing

Extract from Xinhua, China

TAIYUAN, -- Three more bodies have been pulled from Tunlan Coal Mine in north China's Shanxi province on Wednesday, bringing the

death toll from the explosion to 77, rescue headquarters said.

They are still searching for one more person who they believe has a slim chance of survival.

Rescue headquarters announced it had found everyone Sunday evening but had mistakenly put the names of four miners on a list twice.

In all, there were 436 people working when an explosion ripped through a coal mine of the Shanxi Coking Coal Group in Gujiao City at around 2:20 a.m. Sunday. Gujiao is about 50 km away from Taiyuan, the provincial capital.

The bodies of the three workers were discovered around one a.m. Wednesday in the collapsed section of the mine.

A total of 358 people survived the blast, including 114 injured who remain in the hospital.

Three coal mine officials have been removed from their posts and the governor of Shanxi Province, Wang Jun, on Tuesday made an apology to victims and their families.

The State Council has set up an investigation team Tuesday to probe into the disaster.

BHP promises family help after rail death

Extract from ABC News

BHP Billiton will offer assistance to the family of a worker who was killed in a rail accident yesterday in Western Australia's north.

Bob Blake, 56, died about 75 kilometres south of Port Hedland early yesterday morning.

In a statement, the company has promised to help Mr Blake's family and says counselling services will be offered to all employees.

BHP says its rail operations remain suspended, but all port and mining operations will resume today.

The Department of Mines and Petroleum is investigating.

The Mayor of Port Hedland is confident the mining sector is doing everything it can to minimise workplace accidents, despite four people dying in the past seven months.

All four workers, including Mr Blake, were working at BHP Billiton Iron Ore sites.

Stan Martin says, while a single death is one too many, it is difficult to know what more can be done to prevent them.

"I believe that in the resource sector in Hedland, the unions, the workers and the management are working hard to try and get safety practices in place to prevent these things happening. It's unfortunate that it does keep occurring," he said.

Thursday 26 February 2009

3 arrested for SW China coalmine flood that killed 13

Extract from Xinhau, China

GUIYANG, -- Three people have been arrested in relation to a coalmine flooding accident that killed 13 miners in southwest China's Guizhou Province, local police said Thursday.

The detainees are Zhang Ping, legal representative of the Baiyanglin mine, Li Gaoguo, a deputy head in charge of production, and Zhang Wenbin, an official in charge of safety.

The flood occurred on Dec. 31, 2008 when 20 people were working underground. Seven escaped but 13 others were trapped. They were formally pronounced dead Feb. 20.

Preliminary investigations found the mine in Anshun City, with a capacity of 30,000 tonnes a year, was under renovation. It had no work safety certificate and the production permit had expired.

In September and December 2008, local authorities ordered the mine to stop production, but it continued operating.

Local police did not say when the arrests occurred or what the men will be charged with.

South Africa: Another 8 'illegal miners' found dead in Barberton gold mine

Extract from Creamer Media's Mining Weekly, Garden View, South Africa

JOHANNESBURG (miningweekly.com) – Another eight trespassing miners had been found dead underground in gold company Pan African's Consort gold mine in Barberton, taking the total number to 13 since the weekend, Pan African CEO Jan Nelson said on Thursday.

Nelson told **Mining Weekly Online** that that the eight, who were also assumed to have entered the mine illegally, were found on Wednesday, following the discovery of the first five at the weekend.

The trespassers, who are said to remain underground for long periods while conducting illegal mining activities, are understood to have lit a fire underground, which led to their deaths.

Although illegal mining in the area has been taking place for years, it has intensified recently with the surge in the gold price.

Nelson said that police were no longer prepared to go underground in pursuit of the illegal miners, as they had been shot at in the past.

The company had employed two security firms to tackle the problem and the company itself had to see to the removal of the dead bodies.

Management had sealed off the area and safety precautions had been taken.

The company said that no mine employees have been harmed, adding that the police and the Inspector of Mines had been informed of the incident.

Canada: Foul play ruled out in mine explosion

Extract from Winnipeg Free Press, Manitoba, Canada

An explosion deep underground killed a 53-year-old man working in Vale Inco's Thompson

nickel mine, also known as T1, RCMP confirmed Wednesday.

RCMP, along with Workplace Safety and Health inspectors and the provincial medical examiner, are still investigating what led to the explosion about 1200 metres below ground Tuesday morning in the mine's main shaft.

RCMP spokeswoman Sgt. Line Karpish said the investigation is ongoing and would only say the explosion "wasn't as a result of mining activity."

Foul play is not suspected.

Family and friends confirmed the victim as Bill Locke. Reached by phone in Thompson, Locke's son, Joey Locke, said his family is doing "as good as can be" under the circumstances. He politely declined further comment.

A search for the employee began Tuesday morning when he missed a regular check-in, according to RCMP. He was found dead at his worksite 1.2 kilometres underground shortly after 7 a.m., shutting down work at the mine until later that evening.

Mine employee Bob Good said he'd known Locke for years.

"You couldn't find a better guy than Bill," he said.

Good said Locke originally hailed from Newfoundland but guessed that he'd spent at least two decades in Manitoba, most of that time working at the mine.

David Markham, Vale Inco corporate affairs manager for Thompson, would not release information on the incident and said the company is not involved in the investigation. He said the company is co-operating with RCMP and Workplace Safety and Health.

The provincial spokesman for Workplace Safety and Health provided few details on the incident Wednesday, but confirmed the death was due to a blasting incident.

Vale Inco has offered counselling to mine workers, family and friends of the man.

BHP under attack from AWU for poor safety practises

THE Australian Workers Union (AWU) has criticised BHP Billiton for having poor safety practises following the fourth death of a person killed on a mine site owned by the miner in seven months.

The union says the company has a poor safety record and all of its operations should be investigated thoroughly by an independent auditor.

The group claims it has been urging an internal investigation since three workers on BHP sites were killed in five weeks from July 2008.

A BHP spokeswoman said that improving safety was the company's number one priority.

No-one to blame for Beaconsfield death, says coroner

Extract from ABC News Online

A Tasmanian coroner has criticised the mining company Beaconsfield Gold, but found it was not directly responsible for the 2006 disaster in which miner Larry Knight was killed.



Larry Knight: The coroner has ruled that no-one was directly to blame for his death (supplied by family)

The coroner, Rod Chandler, has handed down his findings in Launceston after a lengthy inquest last year.

Mr Chandler has ruled that the Anzac Day rockfall which killed Larry Knight and trapped Todd Russell and Brant Webb could not have been foreseen.

Mr Chandler told the court that a seismic event six months before the tragedy was a warning that more rock falls were likely and required a thorough risk assessment by the mining company, Beaconsfield Gold, which didn't happen.

The coroner also found that the resourcing of Tasmanian mine inspectors was inadequate and Tasmania's mining laws require urgent change.

Larry Knight's brother, Shane, said the findings have let the mine's management off the hook.

"I am a bit disappointed in the findings today. I know it was a very complex matter," Mr Knight said.

"I believe Larry and Brant and Todd should never have been sent into 925 level, knowing the conditions as they were," he said.

Beaconsfield Gold said it was pleased with the Coroner's findings but disappointed with his comments about the risk assessment.

In a statement read outside court, the Mine Manager at Beaconsfield, Richard Holder, said the Company strongly disagrees with the Coroner's finding that the mine didn't assess its ground support or change its mining method prior to the tragedy.

The Australian Workers Union's national secretary, Paul Howes, said the union was not satisfied with the outcome and would seek further legal advice.

"We'll have to talk to our lawyers about what further legal recourse there is," Mr Howes said.

"Obviously Beaconsfield's been a long saga. We're coming up to the third anniversary of the rockfall. I'm sure the Knight family wants to move on, the union wants to move on," he said.

"We want to move on to ensure the rest of our members aren't put into the situation that they've been put into so many times before."

Beaconsfield Gold rejects inquest findings

Extract from ABC News Online (www.abc.net.au)

Beaconsfield Gold has rejected the findings of a Tasmanian Coroner who says the company could have done more to prevent the death of one of its miners.

The Coroner has criticised management for failing to conduct a thorough risk assessment before the gold mine collapsed in 2006.

Coroner Rod Chandler has ruled that no one person or company was responsible for the death of Larry Knight in the Anzac Day rockfall, which trapped two other miners.

But he says there were "serious deficiencies in the mine's risk management" in the lead-up to the collapse.



[The Coroner has criticised management for failing to conduct a thorough risk assessment \(Getty Images: Ian Waldie, file photo\)](#)

Current mine manager Richard Holder is satisfied with the findings.

"The evidence did not permit him to find that any person or corporation directly contributed to the death of Larry Knight," he said.

But Beaconsfield Gold chief executive Bill Colvin says he strongly disagrees with the Coroner's finding that the mine did not assess its ground support or change its mining method before the rockfall.

One of the owners of the Beaconsfield Gold Mine has released a statement to the Stock Exchange, distancing itself from the operation of the mine at the time of the 2006 rockfall.

Beaconsfield Gold NL now owns the mine with one of its subsidiaries, Allstate Explorations NL.

But the company says in 2006 Allstate directly operated and managed the mine, with no input from the Beaconsfield Gold company.

Law changes

The Tasmanian Government has accepted criticism from the coroner in his findings.

The Coroner said the researching of Tasmania's mine inspectors was inadequate.

Workplace Relations Minister Lisa Singh agrees the state's mining laws need to be changed urgently.

"I'm looking forward to bringing that legislation forward in to the Parliament in the spring session," she said.

"The sooner I bring that leg forward the better I believe because that means with legislative change we will have the safest mining industry here in Tasmania and that's what I want."

Meanwhile one of the two miners who survived the rockfall, Brant Webb, says the findings will be hard for Mr Knight's family to accept.

"We put closure behind us a while ago, to get on with life, but I think today is a bit of a kick in the guts for Jacqui and Shane," he said.

Todd Russell, who also survived the rockfall, says the findings of the inquest come as a surprise.

"It just looked as though someone was going to be hung over it and then the decision that he's come out with today is no one's negligent which, it surprises me just going on that fact," he said.

'Preventable death'

Larry Knight's brother Shane says the inquest has not satisfied him or Mr Knight's wife, Jacqui.

"It's been very hard for Jacqui through this whole affair," he said.

"Yes, I think the fact that Larry's death could have been prevented was the hardest thing.

"What the inquest showed me and what I believe, the management never listened to the miners."

One of the lawyers representing the Australian Workers Union and the Knight family, Josh Bornstein, has criticised the time it has taken to reach this point.

"It's taken almost three years since the mine collapse and that delay I think has taken a great toll on the family of the deceased miner Larry Knight, and also the Tasmanian community and it's been an uphill process since the beginning in my view," he said.

Coroner Chandler has criticised the "grossly inadequate" resourcing of Tasmanian mine inspectors and recommended they be audited every year.

Quote of the week

An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all.

Oscar Wilde

Friday 27 February 2009

Beaconsfield family attacks mine safety watchdog

Extract from ABC News Online (www.abc.net.au)

The brother of the miner who died in the Beaconsfield rockfall has accused Tasmania's mine safety watchdog of failing in its duty of care.

The coroner yesterday handed down his findings into the death of miner Larry Knight in 2006.

Shane Knight said it was hard to accept the ruling by the Coroner, Rod Chandler, that his brother's death could have been prevented.



Shane Knight wants the mining industry to be a lot safer. (ABC News: Michael Brooks)

Mr Chandler didn't apportion blame but found that Workplace Standards was not sufficiently resourced to handle some issues of mine safety.

Mr Knight said there must be change.

"One thing that we did really want to come from this is to make the Tasmanian mining industry a lot safer than what it has been in the past," Mr Knight said.

Tasmania's Workplace Relations Minister Lisa Singh agrees.

"I accept criticism that has been made by the coroner and we have legislative changes still to make," Ms Singh said.

She plans to introduce new laws in the spring session of Parliament

Future fears

The Australian Workers Union fears a mine disaster like the one at Beaconsfield could happen again in another Australian mine

The Australian Workers' Union isn't satisfied the industry has improved its safety record in the last three years.

The union's federal secretary Paul Howes said other Australian mining companies must start listening to their workforce.

"I'm not comfortable that I could say that any single mine in Australia is 100 per cent safe," Mr Howes said.

The union says it will consider further legal action.

Disaster survivor Brant Webb said the inquest brought his rescue saga to a close

"I think the inquiry itself is a good thing," Mr Webb said.

One of the lawyers who represented the Australian Workers Union and the Knight family, Kamal Farouque, agrees there are lessons to be learned from the coroner's findings.

"Mr Knight was denied the protection of an adequate ground support system, he was denied the protection of a comprehensive risk assessment process, he was denied a properly resourced workplace health and safety inspectorate, he was denied a proper system of workplace health and safety laws and those are in our view significant deficiencies," Mr Farouque said.

Saturday 28 February 2009

Four remain trapped in flooded coalmine for over 24 hours in Central China

Extract from www.chinaview.cn

WUHAN, -- Rescuers were still unable to find four miners who have been trapped in a flooded

coalmine in central China's Hubei Province for more than 24 hours as of 6:00 p.m. Saturday.

The accident happened about 11:30 a.m. Friday in Xiaojiacun Coal Mine, Xianning City, when 3,000 cubic meters of rainwater and silt from a nearby well flooded into the mine.

A total of 21 miners were underground when the accident happened, of whom 17 were saved.

Huang Jiaxun, deputy director of the Hubei Provincial Coal Mine Safety Bureau, said hundreds of rescuers have been pumping water out of the mine for 20 hours, but it was still flooded.

The surrounding area was soaked rain for 12 days and was still receiving drizzle on Saturday, which made rescue work extremely difficult.

The Xiaojiacun mine is a newly built mine and belongs to the foreign-owned Xianning Puqi Mining Co. Ltd. The name of the foreign investor is still unknown.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

Monday 2 March 2009

Tasmanian safety body defends its mining division

WORKPLACE Standards Tasmania has defended itself against allegations that its mining inspectorate division is failing the state and in need for reform.

The organisation came under attack when the Coroner for the Beaconsfield Mine case reported he found the division grossly under resourced before the rockfall which killed miner Larry Knight in 2006.

The Australian Workers Union backed the claim saying there was insufficient manpower to ensure miners were safe.

Workplace Standards say its mining inspectorate is now well placed to monitor

hundreds of sites around the state and adequately enforce mine safety.



Mt Lyall mine, Queenstown, Tasmania.

This week in mining accident history

Date Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)	Victim / Incident
27 Feb 1943 Smith Mine No.3 Bearcreek and Washoe Montana, USA Underground coal mine	74 miners died in an explosion. It was the worst coal-mining disaster in Montana history and 43 rd worst in USA. Three miners survived the methane explosion 8,000 feet below the surface. One rescuer died soon afterwards. The report from the United States Bureau of Mines states that 30 of the men were killed instantly by the explosion, and the remainder died either through injuries sustained in the explosion, or through suffocation from the carbon monoxide and methane gas in the mine.

Peru landslide kills at least 8 miners, 22 missing

Extract from Reuters, USA

LIMA - Peruvian rescue workers, looking for survivors, dug frantically on Monday in the rubble of a landslide that killed at least eight miners and trapped more than 20, government and mining officials said.

An avalanche of rock and mud, triggered by heavy seasonal rain, fell on a remote mining camp in the early morning hours in Carabaya province in the southern region of Puno.

It crushed some 50 homes, trapping workers of the small privately held Winchomayo gold mine. Eight bodies have been recovered so far.

"There are another 22 people missing and we do not know yet whether they are dead or alive," Carlos Martin Roncal, a Winchomayo mine manager, told Reuters.

Government officials said many roads in the area remained shut because of the rain, complicating efforts to get aid in.

Landslides are common in Peru during the rainy season, which runs from roughly November through April in the south.

A Brief History of Coal Mining Regulation in NSW

Source: NSW Department of Commerce, Archives

Regulation of coal mining in New South Wales officially commenced with the appointment on 28 December 1854 of William Keene as Examiner of Coal Fields and Mines under an Act for the Registration and Inspection of Coal Mines (18 Vic No.32). Keene and Inspectors authorised by him were to check plans of coal mines and were to record details of mine workings by the use of plans, sections and descriptions. This information was in the public interest and the aim of the Examiner and Inspectors' work was to prevent accidents.

Increased mining activity and general dissatisfaction with the administration of mining by the Department of Lands led to the establishment of the Department of Mines on 1 May 1874. As a result, the Examiner of Coal Fields, John Mackenzie, and the Inspector of Collieries, Thomas Lewis, were transferred from the Department of Lands to the Department of Mines.

Although it is unclear when the Coalfields Branch of the Department of Mines was

formerly established, the Branch was in operation by 1894. In 1894, the Coal-fields (later Coalfields) Branch consisted of John Mackenzie as Examiner of Coal-fields, four Inspectors of Collieries, a Clerk and Office-keeper, and six Temporary Mining Surveyors. The Examiner of Coal-fields was in charge of the Branch.

In 1935, the Coalfields Branch consisted of the Chief Inspector of Mines, the Senior Inspector of Collieries, four Inspectors of Collieries, an Electrical Inspector of Collieries, one Clerk (who was also Secretary to the Board for Appointing Examiners under the Coal Mines Regulation Act), and two Shorthand-writers and Typists.

In 1962, the structure of the Chief Inspectorate of Coal Mines and Shale Mines changed with the appointment for the first time of a Deputy Chief Inspector. In August 1963, the Chief Inspector of Coal Mines as head of the Coalfields Branch was responsible for the Coal Mines Regulation Act and the Mines Rescue Act. The Coalfields Branch consisted of Inspectors of Collieries, Electrical Inspectors of Collieries, a Safety Officer and Dust Samplers, and an Inspector of Mechanical Engineering was to be added to the Branch's staff.

Inspectors of Coal Mines were to promote and enforce the uniform observance of the legal obligations cast upon owners and managers of coal and shale mines and upon all persons employed in them. They were to advise and assist mine management in cases of mine fires and other serious incidents and investigate matters associated with lease applications and compliance with lease conditions. In 1963, Inspectors were stationed at Cessnock, Lithgow, Newcastle, and Wollongong. Dust Samplers collected samples of mine roadway dust for analysis to ascertain whether the provisions of the Act requiring the dust to be non-explosive were being observed. Dust Samplers were located at Newcastle and Wollongong.

In 1963, the Coalfields Branch was also responsible for organising the holding of examinations for mine managers, mine surveyors, under managers, mine electricians and deputies. In 1965, the Coalfields Branch was one of several Branches of the Mines Department re-organised to provide better services to the public and mining industry.

The Mining Act 1973 and the Coal Mining Act 1973 further separated the provisions governing the mining of minerals and coal and repealed the Mining Act 1906.

By the late 1970s, the Coalfields Branch along with the Coal Development Branch and the Coal Geology Branch reported to the Assistant Under Secretary for Coal Strategy. The functions of the Coalfields Branch were unchanged from the 1960s while the Coal Geology Branch was responsible for exploration, geological mapping, and the assessment of coal resources. The Coal Development Branch consisted of the Coal Registrar and Deputy Registrars and was responsible for coal applications, coal titles and mapping.

On 4 November 1981 the Coalfields Branch (and the Mines Inspection Branch) was transferred from the Department of Mineral Resources to the Department of Industrial Relations due to continued unrest in the mining industry.

Under the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1982 (No.67, 1982), the following inspectors could be appointed: a Chief Inspector of coal mines, a Deputy Chief Inspector of coal mines, Senior Inspectors of coal mines, Inspectors of coal mines, a Senior Inspector of electrical engineering, Inspectors of electrical engineering, a Senior Inspector of mechanical engineering, and Inspectors of mechanical engineering.

As part of the Government's initiatives to establish a "one-stop-shop" for the mining industry, the Coalfields Branch and the Mines Inspection Branch were transferred back to the

Department of Mineral Resources in April 1988. By now the Coalfields Branch was titled the Coalfields Inspection Branch and retained responsibility for the administration of the Coal Mining Act 1973, Coal Mines Regulation Act 1982 and the Mines Rescue Act 1925. By 1989 the Coalfields Inspection Branch was titled the Coal Mining Inspectorate and Engineering Branch.

In 1989, the Coal Mining Inspectorate and Engineering Branch was located in the Coal Division of the Department of Minerals and Energy, along with the Coal Resources Branch and the Coal Geology Branch. These Branches reported to the Director of the Coal Division, who in turn reported to the Deputy Director-General (Minerals). After the Department's restructure in 1996, the Coal Mining Inspectorate and Engineering Branch became part of the Mine Safety and Environment Division.

Concerns over the mining industry in the mid 1990s led to a Mine Safety Review and the Gretley Inquiry was launched to investigate the 1996 Gretley Colliery disaster near Newcastle. Recommendations from the Review and Inquiry led to amendments to the Mines Inspection Act 1901 and the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1982. The Mines Inspection Amendment Act 1998 (No.69, 1998) and the Mines Legislation Amendment (Mines Safety) Act 1998 (No.122, 1998) enabled the Department to build the administrative and managerial framework necessary to implement change.

From 1 January 1999 the Coal Mining Inspectorate and Engineering Branch was consolidated with the Mines Inspection Branch to form one Inspectorate known as Safety Operations. This was a significant change for both Branches as the inspection of coal and metalliferous mines had been kept separate since the appointment of the first Examiner of Coalfields and the first Inspector of Mines back in the mid 1800s.

NSW: Management of musculoskeletal disorders in mining

View at:

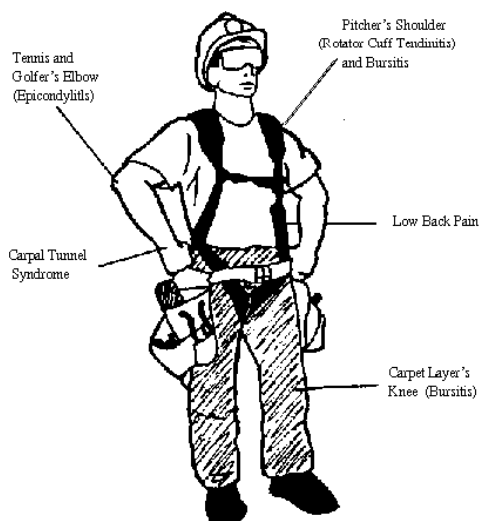
<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/consultation/musculoskeletal-disorders>

Industry comment

Industry comment is being sought by the Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) Working Party on the guidance document **The Management of Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Mining and Extractives Industry**.

The guidance document has been produced as a guide on MSD as an initiative of the NSW Mining Industry Health Working Party through the MSD Working Party. The NSW Mining Industry MSD PSG has been established by the NSW Mining Industry Health Working Party to address the very large percentage of musculoskeletal injuries occurring in NSW mines and quarries (40% of all total workers compensation claims).

The NSW Mining Industry MSD PSG has membership from Government agencies, employer and union representatives and an independent musculoskeletal disorder expert. Its members have worked closely together in the development of the document and it is seen as a focal point for the industry to make improvements in managing musculoskeletal disorder issues.



The benefits of the guide are that it:

- Facilitates sites taking planned preventative measures
- Uses the capacities that already exist
- Provides effective tools for sites to use.

The guidance document has the support of the industry stakeholder representatives on both Working Parties and they have initiated this wider consultation process as part of the development of the guidance. Following the public consultation process the draft will go to the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council, prior to its full public release.

If you would like to make a comment or submission, please do so by close of business 27 March 2009 via post or email to:

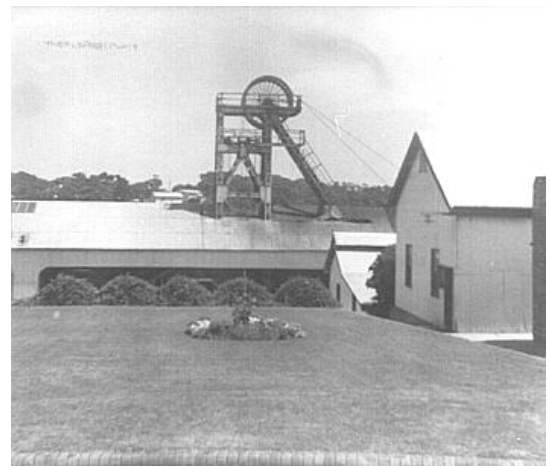
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Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

P

poppet head An iron, steel or timber structure of legs built over a shaft. It is equipped with pulleys over which the ropes or cables run that raise and lower the cages in the shaft.



Poppet head Burwood Colliery, circa 1950
Whitebridge, near Newcastle NSW

- Ed.