

Hartley Colliery Tragedy

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Abstract

On the 16th January, 1862, tragedy struck the tiny colliery village of Hartley in Northumberland, England

The Beam of a pumping engine, poised over the pithead, and weighing 42 tons, suddenly snapped in two, half of it crashing down the shaft whereby 204 men and boys were entombed in the pit below. The disastrous extent of the accident, its unique character, the nation-wide concern, which it evoked, made the Hartley Disaster a memorable event in mining history.

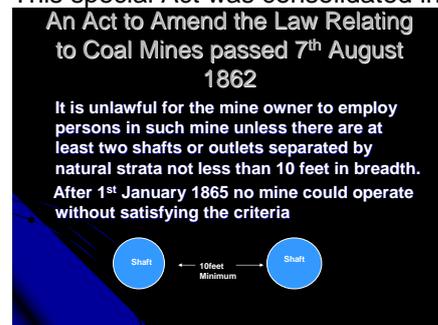
Lord Robens former Head of British Coal Industry was rightly quoted as saying s, “Two hundred and four men and boys paid with their lives for the hard lesson that a coal mine needs two shafts”.

As a result of this disaster, Parliament was compelled to change the law accordingly. The result of the tremendous pressure exerted by all parties had its affect on Government and an Act Amending the Law Relating to Coal Mines was passed on the 7th August 1862.

“It is unlawful for the mine owner to employ persons in such mine unless there are at least two shafts or outlets separated by natural strata not less than 10 feet in breadth”.

The shafts were required to provide distinct means of ingress and egress to persons employed in the mine and was applicable to all mines on January 1st 1865.

This special Act was consolidated in the coal Mines Regulations Act of 1872.



The paper looks at 8 main topics

- Historic Setting of the local area
- Hartley Colliery as it as at the time of the accident
- The Accident itself and what appeared to have happened.
- The Recovery of the survivors and the bodies.
- The Funeral and the horrendous personal tragedy
- The Inquiry
- Change to Legislation
- 150 Years Later as things are today.

The paper is fully illustrated with some 4 slides and can be delivered in 40 minutes