

Explosion at the Buttonwood Colliery.

An explosion of fire damp; causing the death of six men and seriously injuring six others; occurred at about 2 o'clock P. M., October 25, 1901, at the Buttonwood colliery of the Parrish Coal Company. At 1 P. M., as William Morris, who was driving the No. 4 Hillman seam plane extension, was unloading a set of cross-timbers from a car at the face, his laborer ignited some feeders with his naked light, which slightly burned two laborers in the face of the airway which is driven parallel with, and for the purpose of ventilating the plane. Morris and his laborers and August Weiss, the airway miner, thought they had extinguished the burning feeders and went home with the injured men.

When the report of the accident reached the foot of the shaft, the assistant foreman, Ebenezer D. Williams and Gomer Williams, taking with them a number of men, started up the plane, but were assured by Morris and Weiss, whom they met near the foot, that the fire had been extinguished, but that they had better make a thorough examination to satisfy themselves.

When they were near the head of the plane, a second explosion took place, instantly killing Ebenezer D. Williams, assistant foreman; Gomer Williams, assistant foreman; Thomas Guest, pipeman; Thomas Price, tracklayer, and William S. Phillips, company miner, and fatally injuring Daniel Davies, pulleyman, who died on the 27th; also seriously injuring Daniel Davies, mine foreman; Evan Evans, bratticeman; William Frey, tracklayer, and Patrick McHale, doorman.

The ventilation in this part of the mine, under normal conditions is very good, amounting to 30,000 cubic feet of air per minute at the face, but the gangway had met a fault in the coal, which gave off a large increase of gas, so that the feeders could be ignited anywhere from the face of the gangway along the rib for sixty feet down the airway. From the evidence presented at the coroner's inquest, it appeared that when the laborer ignited the feeders at the corner of the cross-heading in the gangway, the flame ran across the face of the gangway in one direction, and in the other, it went through the cross-heading and down along the left rib of the airway, doing but little damage excepting to burn the two laborers and disarrange the ventilation which permitted the accumulation that caused the second explosion. There is no doubt but that there was a small feeder left burning alongside the rib of the airway, and when the gas came in contact with it, the second explosion occurred.

The coroner's jury in its verdict recommended that in mines generating explosive gases, no other light save that of a locked safety lamp should be used; and that flameless powder be used exclusively in blasting.