



“Safety Harness”

‘Jack’

The South Celynen Colliery was situated near New-bridge. Because of the number of fatal accidents at ‘the South’, it became known as the ‘Blood-Tub.’

I was a fitter doing my City and Guilds and I needed some work experience, so I managed to get some work at South Celynen colliery. Not long after I was there a blacksmith, Mr Edmunds, died in an accident. He had been working on top of the cage and he slipped down the shaft.

I attended the inquest and heard the colliery owner say how ‘Edmunds’ not even giving him his full name ‘should have been wearing a safety harness. As he wasn’t, the accident was his fault’.

His widow received no money from the colliery, as his death was determined to be his error not the company’s negligence. The Fed, the Miners Federation, gave her £200.

Some time later I had to go and do some work on top of the cage. I said, “I’m not going up there till you give me a safety harness.” The under manager looked perplexed. “Safety harness? We don’t have any safety harnesses. The only person who has one is the guy who’s job it is to check out the shaft. We don’t have any for other workers.”

I refused to work without a harness. So they rigged up a net from ropes across the shaft, so that if we fell we’d be caught. But I’ve never forgotten what the mine owner said about Mr. Edmunds.’

