

1947 NEW LOUNT COLLIERY EXPLOSION FOUR INJURED - NO FATALITIES

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As reported in the Leicester Evening Mail - Monday 18th August 1947



Two deputies and two coal cutter operators are in Leicester Royal Infirmary with superficial burns following a coal face explosion at New Lount Colliery, Coalville yesterday. The men are Mr. Arthur Else and Mr. Emlyn Davies of Pegg's Green (the deputies) and Mr. Fred Hall, of Cambridge Street, Shepshed and Mr. Joseph Moore, of Silver Street, Whitwick. They are all reported to be making satisfactory progress.

In a statement from the N.C.B. office at Coleorton, it is said that the coal face where the accident occurred is part of the "Roaster seam" and was inspected by H.M. Inspectors yesterday, who reported that normal working conditions were found.

A further examination is being made today and work in the part affected will be resumed tomorrow. The rest of the colliery is working as normal.

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Rescuers who went into the pit following the dramatic news received by pit telephone that there had been an underground explosion, met the four injured men making their way with blackened bodies and scorched clothing along a roadway to the bottom of the pit shaft.

When the communication was sent by one of the injured men from a communication telephone about 400 yards from the scene of the explosion, preparations were made to receive stretcher cases, and two deputies - Reg Bloor of Coleorton, and Jack Miller of Ashby were recalled from No.1. pit. for rescue operations on their way home.

Mr. Bloor told the evening mail, "we met the four men making their way along a main road. Their clothing was scorched and they were in pain, but they were cheerful."

By the time the men reached the surface, a doctor was present at the pit head and an ambulance arrived shortly afterwards. As they were taken from the colliery through Pegg's Green, the ambulance stopped at the homes of Mr. Davies and Mr. Else to give news of the accident.

At the infirmary today, the injured men told the evening mail of their experience. Mr. Moore whose nose and hands were burnt said "we had noticed that the lights were bad all morning" (This would have been from their safety lamps).

Then suddenly, everything went dark for a few seconds, following which there was a sudden rush of fire at the coal face, where we were working. "I staggered back, and was lucky not to be burned too badly."

The worst injuries were sustained by Mr. Hall, whose face was covered with burns. He said "I had just come down to the coal-face to fetch some timber. There was a horrible rush of flame, accompanied by an awful noise. It lasted about half a minute and afterwards, everything around us was red hot". Mr. Hall has been a miner for 37 years and has worked at the New Lount Colliery for 22.

Mr. Else declared, "my theory is that a pocket of gas caught alight through sparks flying from the cutter. How the gas could have accumulated I do not know, because an examination had been carried out only a short time before, and there was no trace of gas then."

Mr. Davies, who has spent over 30 years in Welsh mines without a mishap and who came to Leicestershire only a year ago was also burned on the face.

It is understood that when the explosion occurred, only 8 men were working in the whole pit. It is believed that absenteeism on Friday night resulted in a normal preparation for the weekend being incomplete, and that the four men who were burnt volunteered for a special Sunday morning task of completing the cutting on the lower "Roaster seam", the scene of the explosion.

The explosion was not extensive, suggesting that there was no accumulation of gas over any considerable area of the pit, where safety lamps are always in use. There was an instantaneous flash which burned all the coal-cutter crew but there was no tendency for the fire to spread, or any roof fall caused by the blast.

Gas explosions in the shallow Leicestershire pits are rare. Some miners believe that the recent hot weather has caused a tendency for gas pockets to accumulate in pit workings.