

BRITISH MINING No.3

MEMOIRS 1976



Gill, M.C. 1976
"An Account of the Accident at Wheal Agar"
British Mining No.3, pp.10-11

NB

This publication was originally issued in the 10 by 8 inch format then used by the society. It has now been digitised and reformatted at A5. This has changed the original pagination of articles, which is given in square brackets.

ISSN 0309-2199

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ACCIDENT AT WHEAL AGAR

Reproduced from R. Hunt's British Mining¹

M.C. Gill

On Wednesday, the 17th August 1883, thirteen men were being raised from the 195 fathom level to the surface. The cage in which they rode reached the landing deck and one man jumped off. The wire winding rope then failed and the cage fell to the shaft foot, killing the remaining twelve men.

At the inquest, the chief Agent stated that an imperfection was found in the ordinary whim rope normally used for drawing the cage. It was exchanged for the capstan rope. Immediately after this change a draw of eight men went to the surface and another went down. The next draw of men went up at about seven o'clock from the 195 fathom level. There were ten men inside and three on the top. On reaching the surface, Henry Carbines jumped out to safety and then the accident occurred.

The regulations in force at the mine permitted only eight men per draw. Shaftsmen were exempted, being allowed to ride on the cage to carry out shaft examinations etc.

The Engineer-Surveyor of the Board of trade stated that he considered the breakage was caused by the rope not being sound, several strands being very much corroded. He formed no opinion as to how long the rope had been unsafe, though he felt it was a considerable time.

It was disclosed that the rope had been subjected to eight of up to twenty tons, of which the inspector thought even a new rope should have lifted only five or six tons; adding "*he would not use a rope at [10] that strain for winding men.*" He attributed the accident to the corroded state of the rope coupled with the fact that it was used to lift twenty tons.

The Inspector of Mines said, "*he deprecated the use of grease and oil as lubricants for such ropes as they tend to hide defects.*" However at Wheal Agar, that part of the rope attached to the skip, because the loose portion of it dipped into copper water at the shaft foot, was protected by grease or tar.

The coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death as was the case at a similar inquest on an accident at Snailbeach Mine; here on March 6th 1895, seven men were killed in a cage at Old Shaft.²

ADDENDA

NCB colliery drum winding ropes are changed every 3 - 3½ years and are recapped every six months, unless there is an overwind, etc.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ACCIDENT AT WHEAL AGAR

At the turn of the century, a two-decked cage was employed at Carn Brea Mine, Cornwall. It was designed to carry 16 men and work in a shaft which was vertical for 120 fathoms and underlaid for a further 170 fathoms (100 - 300 to vertical) and the rope changed every four months.

SOURCES

1. Hunt, R. *British Mining*, 1884 Snailbeach Mine, Shropshire” *Memoirs of the Northern Cavern & Mine Research Society*,
2. Davis, R.V. “A Brief Account of the (January 1969), pp.52-62.
Geology, History and Mechanisation of the