

## **Disaster at the ('Welsh Mine') Stanford Merthyr Colliery, Kurri Kurri, New South Wales, 1905**

By **CLIVE BEAUCHAMP**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**O**n Sunday 29 October 1905, a massive fire and explosion occurred at the Stanford Merthyr coal mine Kurri Kurri (owned by the East Greta Coal Mining Company) resulting in the death of six men with others receiving serious injuries. The six fatalities made up 31.6 percent of the total deaths recorded in New South Wales coal and shale mines in 1905. The disaster had some unusual features: it occurred when no one was working underground; those killed were all 'officials' of the company and five out of the six deceased were Welsh immigrants. Additionally, there were rumours circulating in the town that the fire was the work of an arsonist.<sup>1</sup>

Stanford Merthyr was located in the South Maitland coalfield approximately 10 miles (16 km) from Cessnock. Other collieries in the East Greta Company's group were East Greta and Greta Heddon, and in close proximity to Stanford Merthyr was Pelaw Main to the west and Richmond Main to the south.<sup>2</sup>

### **Historical Background**

Early coal exploration and discovery in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, was conducted in 1801 by a party led by Lieut. Colonel Patterson. At various times other parties located a coal outcrop at a creek near Mount Vincent, and in a few years a mine was opened at Stoney Creek near Farley. A New South Wales Government survey undertaken by T.W. Edgeworth David described the Greta coal measures in August 1886 when he located an outcrop at Deep (Swamp) Creek near an area that became known as Abermain. David '... traced the whole outcrop of the Greta measures from Maitland to Cessnock'. He then submitted a positive report to the New South Wales Mines Department, which eventually stimulated the interest of some local investors to engage in mining activity. By 1891, through the efforts of a small group of Maitland entrepreneurs, the South Greta Tunnels were constructed but in a short time mining activity there was suspended.<sup>3</sup>

In August 1900 two separate coalmining companies independently made offers to the shareholders of the South Greta Tunnels Company to purchase their lease. With the offers accepted, the two companies decided to divide the lease into two: the eastern section (No. 1 Workings) comprising 1,500 acres was bought by the East Greta Coal Mining Co., and became known as the Stanford Merthyr colliery at Kurri Kurri; the J. and A. Brown Company acquired the remainder of the lease. The East Greta Company was acknowledged as the 'pioneer' of the development of the South Maitland coalfield. The Stanford Merthyr mine overlay both the Greta Top Seam and the Greta Lower Seam (known as Homeville), and the colliery worked the bottom (inclined) seam, which was 23 feet thick<sup>4</sup> at the outcrop. Coalmines in the South Maitland district exploited the

Greta coal measures at a time when the older Newcastle mines were becoming exhausted and proving uneconomic.<sup>5</sup>

The town of Kurri Kurri gradually developed around the Stanford Merthyr and Pelaw Main mines and was gazetted as a town in 1902. With the growth of the collieries by 1905 it boasted two hotels (the Kurri Kurri Hotel and the Empire Tavern), a School of Arts and a miner's brass band. A feature of the optimistic outlook of the local economy was that in 1903 blocks of land for housing were reaching £1,000 each, and miner's residences were transformed gradually from 'bag humpies' to small cottages. Kurri Kurri was one of the first towns in New South Wales to be laid out on town planning lines so that by 1905 it was being described as a 'lively young town'.<sup>6</sup>

### **Background to Operations**

In February 1901 the East Greta Company's General Manager, Welshman, Azariah Thomas, informed the New South Wales Mines Department that mining had commenced at Stanford Merthyr with Walter Jones as mine manager, although Vince Collins replaced him later in the year. The board of Directors in 1901 was Oliver Young (Chairman), Harvey J. Adams, George F. Earp, Ted Guest, Edward Fanning and Job Smith, the last three being Melbourne-based.<sup>7</sup>

Coal production began in 1901 and by 1905, the year of the disaster it had produced 630,054 tons and employed 369 men and boys with 206 of them working under-ground. The colliery had the reputation of producing superior quality coal suitable for gas, steam-making and for household purposes. According to some sources, '... Stanford Merthyr had the longest seam in Australia of 19ft. 3 inches. The mine was worked by the bord and pillar method of extraction; widely used in the coalfields of South Wales, in the United Kingdom. However, in terms of the mine's production it was exceeded by the largest pit in the area, Brown's Richmond Main, reputed to have been the State's greatest producer.'<sup>8</sup>

The Stanford Merthyr colliery pit top and screens were located 7miles 18 chains [11.6 km] by rail from the junction with the New South Wales Government railways at East Greta, and 16 miles 40 chains [26.4km] distant by the Richmond Vale railway to the Government railway at Hexham. The mine was served by the South Maitland Railway, (an extensive network of privately owned colliery and passenger railway lines), originally laid by the East Greta Coal Mining Co. in 1893 as far as East Greta. In 1901 it was extended to Stanford Merthyr to meet the needs of the mine.<sup>9</sup> It utilised electric power generated by a powerhouse at the surface, for hauling, pumping and coal cutting. In the early days the mine was ventilated by natural means but in 1902 a steam-driven Waddle fan, 21 feet in diameter was installed. There were three tunnels in the mine: the Main tunnel used for hauling coal and as an air intake; the 'Little' or travelling tunnel used by employees and horses and also serving as an air intake; and the Fan tunnel (up-cast airway) used for drawing air out of the mine.

Scottish-type open oil lamps, attached to miner's caps, were used throughout the mine. Safety lamps were only used during the inspections made by mine deputies. Pit horses were used underground and brought to the surface each day.<sup>10</sup>

### **Stanford Merthyr a 'Welsh' Mine**

In the early 1900s Stanford Merthyr was recognised as a distinctively 'Welsh' mine. Some other mines in the coalfield were known as 'Geordie' (workmen migrating from the English counties of Durham and Northumberland) or as 'Scottish'. This was due to the patterns of labour recruitment from the 'old country'. It has been claimed that of the nearly 400 miners employed over time at Stanford Merthyr, the majority were Welsh. Some Welsh miners and their families had been attracted to the Northern coalfield in New South Wales from the 1840s, and most of the management, including the mine deputies, were originally from Wales. The general manager of the parent company East Greta was Welshman Azariah Thomas, appointed in 1893 from the United States with experience there in steep coal seams. It has been claimed that the mine manager Henry Morgan Williams 'gave preference in employment to his own nationals'. This led to the labour recruitment process known as 'chain migration'. The mine's name was derived from the local parish (Stanford) and from the highly productive coal and steel South Wales town of Merthyr Tydfil for a possible number of reasons. 'Merthyr' was associated with a high quality product and it is thought that it would both encourage capital investment from Britain as well as influence the export value and marketability of the South Maitland coal. In addition, it was thought that the use of the name would encourage and promote greater migration of skilled miners and their families from South Wales.<sup>11</sup>

Welsh miners and their families constituted a distinctive, homogenous minority in the context of the South Maitland coalfield. Because of their concentration in both the Kurri Kurri and Cessnock areas they made a significant contribution to both economic and social life, and in addition to their mining skills, they brought with them their specific cultural, linguistic and religious traditions. This was manifest in their support for non-conformist chapels/churches, trade unions, the emergent Australian Labor party, eisteddfods (singing festivals), the development of brass bands and co-operative retail societies.<sup>12</sup>

### **Fire and Explosions**

Work at the colliery had ceased at mid-day on Saturday 28 October and the men and boys had left the mine. On Saturday afternoon only a few deputies and shift men engaged in maintenance were working underground and they had left by 3pm. At the time of the fire and explosion no one was underground.<sup>13</sup>

William Robert Fenn, engine driver and watchman was on duty at the surface on his Saturday 11pm to Sunday 7am shift when at 1.45am he became aware the electric warning bells were ringing. He did nothing immediately and returned to the engine room with the bells still ringing, as he assumed that that no one was underground. Fenn admitted at the inquest that he thought someone on the surface was playing a trick on him. It was not until a few hours later when he noticed smoke emitting from the tunnels and realised that the mine was on fire that he raised the alarm. Fenn's behaviour was criticised later in the Coroner's report.<sup>14</sup>

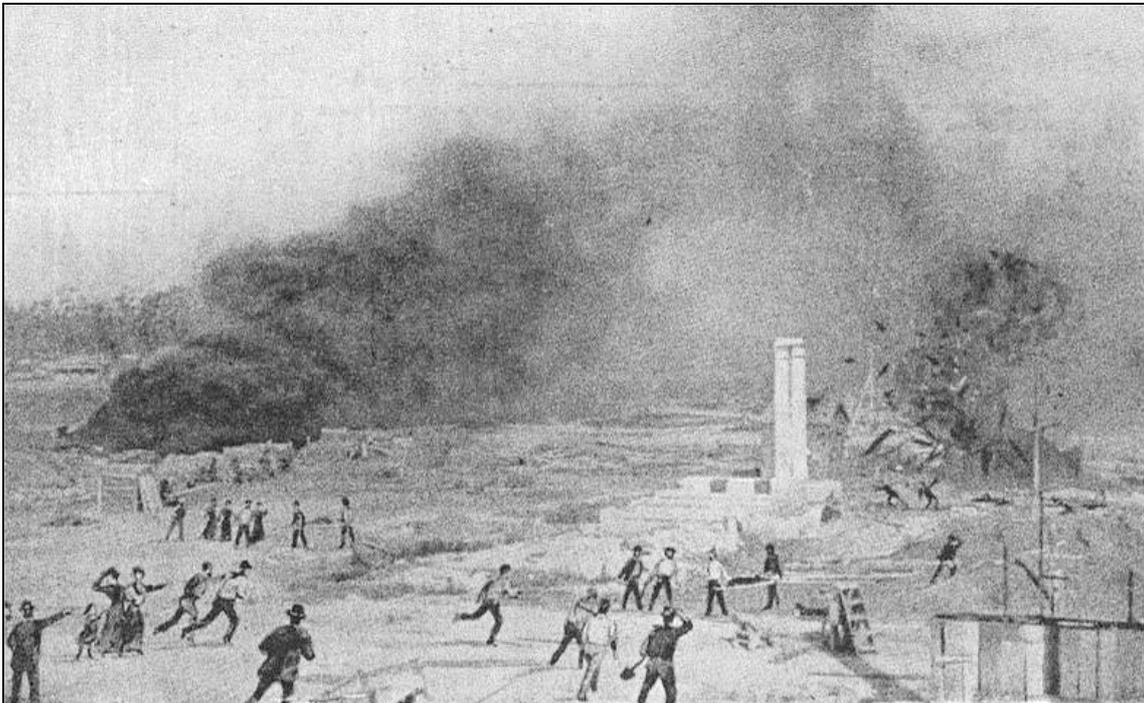
Responding to the alarm, and joined by a group of deputies, mine manager Henry Morgan Williams and under-manager William Williams arrived at the mouth of

the main tunnel. At 150 feet down the main tunnel, flames swept out to a height of 100 feet [30metres] and continued burning from 5am to 8am. Efforts were made to locate the seat of the fire. Finding a great volume of black smoke emitting from both tunnels they decided to seal off portions of the workings and create an airtight barrier. Cartloads of soil and clay were deposited and a crew of bricklayers started constructing a temporary brick stopping in the main tunnel.<sup>15</sup>

At 11.30am with the sealing continuing, and when it was thought that the fire had been controlled, the major explosion occurred. Without warning, twenty officials and other workmen who were either in or at the mouth of the main tunnel received the full force of the explosion. They were either killed or sustained serious injuries with some being 'greatly disfigured'. Azariah Thomas was blown out of the tunnel entrance, 'like a shot from cannon'. According to evidence given at the inquest, company director Mr. Henry J. Adams was standing near the tunnel mouth when he turned to Thomas and remarked; 'Thank God Thomas, no lives have been lost'. Just seconds later the explosion occurred and killed Adams together with five others. Another minor explosion occurred at 2pm. It damaged the fan chamber, (the fan remaining intact) but no one sustained injury.<sup>16</sup>

Volunteers together with members of the Kurri Kurri Fire Brigade and local police officers assisted in the task of rescue and recovery of the injured and deceased. Improvised stretchers were employed to convey them to the colliery office. Doctors were summoned and a special train ordered to transport the injured to West Maitland hospital.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 1:** *The explosion, Stanford Merthyr Colliery, 1905.*



**Source:** Postcard produced by A. Galloway to raise money for the families of victims.  
Courtesy Cessnock Library, Local Studies Collection.

### **The victims**

Killed were:

- Henry J. Adams, 70 years, West Maitland, company director.
- John Evans, 38, deputy, Kurri Kurri married, 4 children.
- George Fewins, 34, deputy, Kurri Kurri, married (died in hospital).
- James Greener, 48, deputy, Kurri Kurri, married, 3 children.
- David Jones, 50, shift man, Stanford Merthyr, married, 2 children
- John W. Jones, 43, shift man, Kurri Kurri, married, 3 children.

Seriously injured were:

- Evan Evans, 41, deputy, married, jaw fractured, eye damage, scalp and burn wounds.
- Walter Jones, 46, deputy, married, broken arms and legs.
- George Leitch, deputy (Heddon Greta) married, arm fractured (amputated).
- Colin McKenzie, bricklayer, wound to arm and severe bruising.
- Henry Thomas, manager of East Greta Colliery, injuries to head and body.
- Henry Morgan Williams, manager Stanford Merthyr colliery, scorched head and broken arm.
- William Williams, under-manager, Stanford Merthyr colliery, injuries to head and feet.
- O.K. Young, merchant and chairman of the East Greta Company, fractured skull and leg.<sup>18</sup>

Soon after the disaster, various theories were propounded as to its cause. Some claimed that it was due to 'spontaneous combustion' whilst others argued that a lighted lamp had been left in the tunnel after work ceased. Another cause canvassed was that a shot that had failed to fire had exploded after workmen had left. Only hours after the dead were retrieved, Mines Inspector Humble told the press that he thought that the origin of the fire 'appears to be a mystery'. He also stated that '...until the mine is reopened-it is impossible to ascertain the cause'. Humble added that 'the fire appeared to have started only a 100feet in the main tunnel and worked downwards to the connecting road with No.2 tunnel'. The issue of the ignition of firedamp was raised as it had been occasionally found in the mine and in neighbouring collieries, and four months earlier, in August, a small pocket of the gas had been found in Stanford Merthyr. When the retrieval process was completed the manager ordered the mouth of the three tunnels to be sealed with tons of earth and clay, and 14 inch thick brick stoppings were erected.<sup>19</sup>

### **Miraculous Escape**

Bricklayer Colin Mackenzie (following discharge from hospital) gave a vivid account to the press of his fortuitous escape from serious injury during the disaster. He said:

I was working with my bricklayer mate in No.1 Tunnel and the two Williams' were standing up in the tunnel about 10 yards distant. I saw that the stopping which the deputies had put in was giving way and all of a sudden everything seemed to stand still. Then in a second I was blown right over the brick stopping

we were building. I managed to get to my feet and then I was immediately knocked down again. This was the first explosion. It was lucky for me that it was not the second.<sup>20</sup>

Asked by a jury member what it felt like, he responded:

It was like a huge rolling cloud until it got its vent and everything then seemed to pass down through tunnel at about 100 miles an hour carrying with it bricks, sticks and everything it could pick up. I fell second time and then crawled along the line and succeeded in getting to the mouth of the tunnel. They thought I was dead, and then I came to a bit.<sup>21</sup>

Mackenzie escaped with severe bruising to his legs and a wound in one arm.<sup>22</sup>

### Funeral

The local press described the funeral of five of the dead miners as 'impressive' with hundreds of workmen and the public from across the Hunter Valley attending. Following a service at the Congregational church, the cortege, led by the newly-formed local brass band, proceeded to the Kurri Kurri cemetery. The deceased were interred in a mass grave after a combined religious service at the graveside. A marble monument, funded by the local community was erected over the site. It bore the following epitaph in both English and Welsh: **HONOURED, BELOVED AND WEPT HERE OUR COMRADES LIE.**<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 2:** *Marble Monument erected at the gravesite, Kurri Kurri cemetery, for five of those killed in the Stanford Merthyr disaster, 1905.*



**Source:** The author.

In 1987 the grave was restored and re-dedicated in a civic ceremony, part of an initiative organised by the Northern District Miners' Federation and the New South Wales Joint Coal Board. Company director and local businessman, Henry J. Adams, had been buried in the family grave at West Maitland.<sup>24</sup>

### **A case of arson?**

For several days after the disaster, rumours circulated in the immediate area as to the possible cause of the fire, and as the result of statements being made publicly, the mine manager offered a £300 reward for information leading to a conviction for arson. In a sensational development (according to the local press) a labourer named Charles Libeck (also known as Landsback) was arrested and charged with '... maliciously setting fire to the seam at Stanford Merthyr'. Police questioned a number of witnesses including the daughter of Ed. Davies, the colliery engineer. It was alleged that the accused, in conversation with witnesses, had indicated that he had only left the mine at 2am on Sunday morning (when no one had the right to be underground, as all men had left the mine on Saturday). The case against Libeck did not proceed due to insufficient evidence. Local press accounts displayed certain xenophobia in labelling Libeck as a 'foreigner'.<sup>25</sup>

### **Coronial inquest**

The inquest was opened on 31 October to allow for the formal identification of the deceased and to permit early burial. It was held at the Kurri Kurri Courthouse before District Coroner Mr. A. Pryor and a jury. Representatives of the Crown Law office, Mr. A.A. Atkinson for the Mines Department, lawyers for the East Greta Company, Mr. James Curley (Mr. James Curley, on behalf of the Colliery Employees Federation 'the union', as well as NSW mines inspectors Messrs Humble and Tennant, were also present). As many of the prospective witnesses were still in hospital and some were 'absent in the country', the police applied for an adjournment until 16 January 1906. The Crown Solicitor agreed to the adjournment. Resuming in January the proceedings were eventually extended, which allowed the coroner and jury to visit the colliery workings following the unsealing of the tunnels. The jury re-assembled for two sittings and then the verdict was returned on 10 August 1906.<sup>26</sup>

A total of 27 individuals gave evidence and were cross-examined by the jury. They included former and existing employees, some of who had been injured in the disaster. Principal witnesses included mine manager Henry Morgan Williams, under-manager William Williams, deputies Evan Evans, Walter Jones and Thomas Jeffries, the latter being a former chair of the Stanford Merthyr Miners' Lodge. Several witnesses referred to the presence of boys smoking underground and dropping lighted matches. Some of the miners admitted smoking underground 'but only at crib time'. Others suggested that the fire was caused by a boy with a naked light attached to his cap riding a horse underground. Jury members raised the issue of the use of naked lamps and it was confirmed by the manager that the use of safety lamps was confined to the deputies' inspections.<sup>27</sup>

George Leitch a former mine manager and a deputy at Stanford Merthyr recalled a fire at the mine a 'few years previously in No. 2 tunnel'. A canvas door (a brattice) was burnt, charring the surrounding timber but apparently did not ignite the coal. Leitch informed the court that he had never detected the presence of gas in the mine and that such an incident had never been reported to him. Conversely, Arthur Griffith a former employee indicated that he saw gas in the workings 3 to 4 months before the disaster (when working with a naked light). He claimed that the gas '... flared-up a few times nearly every day of the week when I worked there'. It was also revealed that a small fire occurred in No.2 tunnel on 20 October but was not reported.<sup>28</sup>

Several jury members asked witnesses whether they thought that the fire was the result of faults in the electrical system. Mine under-manager William Williams rejected that notion and asserted that there was '... nothing amiss with the electrical plant'. He added: 'In my opinion, the fire originated probably 50 to 60 yards from the surface in the main tunnel when some flare light came in contact with burnable matter'. He dismissed the theory that the fire was due to spontaneous combustion.<sup>29</sup>

The manager Henry Morgan Williams recalled that when the alarm sounded, he, together with three deputies, directed operations with the view to sealing the mine starting with No.1 tunnel. He said that he 'heard cracking' and then saw flames emanating from No.1 tunnel. In response to a question from the jury, he said that initially they used safety lamps to inspect the tunnel but later, in order to 'get better illumination used naked lights'. Williams informed the court that his mining experience extended to 13 years in South Wales, UK and 19 years in New South Wales.<sup>30</sup>

Following the unsealing of the tunnels in 26 June 1906, the jury and officials, after an inspection to assess the damage, re-assembled and heard more testimony. During the proceedings, manager Henry Morgan Williams protested his recall and there was a robust exchange with the Mr. Irvine, barrister representing the Crown. Williams objected to the barrister's questions. Mr. John T. Tennant mines' inspector informed the inquiry that he had inspected the mine on 16 occasions over a 4-year period. Having tested for gas, he had never found it and insisted that he was unaware of any case of spontaneous combustion in Stanford Merthyr. He commented that as it was a 'fairly damp mine, it was unfavourable to spontaneous combustion'. Tennant claimed the '... the probable cause was a naked light' but stated that he could not be certain if the fire was attributable to malice or to an accident. Chief Mines Inspector Atkinson agreed with District Inspector Tennant and said that he was not certain where the fire originated.<sup>31</sup>

## **Verdict**

After the jury retired for four hours it returned the following verdict on 10 August:

We find that John William Jones on October 29 1905 met his death from injuries received from the effects of an explosion in Stanford Merthyr Colliery; that the explosion was caused by gas distilled or generated from fire in the mine coming in contact with a flame, but there was not sufficient evidence to show how the fire originated. We consider that the management took every reasonable precaution for the safety of the workmen under existing conditions.<sup>32</sup>

The jury added a rider to the verdict:

We consider that William Robert Fenn, who was the sole person in charge of the mine on the 29 October, committed a grave error of judgment in not reporting the continuous ringing of the bell to the colliery manager without delay. We also are of the opinion that when the ordinary operations cease in the mine there should be a competent person left in charge of the mine to patrol the workings.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 3:** *William Robert Fenn: The engine driver who was the only man on duty at the Stanford Merthyr Colliery on 29 October 1905. He gave the alarm at 3.40am of the outbreak of fire. The inquest censured him, the sole person in charge of the mine, for the error of judgment he made in not reporting the ringing of the bell to the colliery management without delay.*



**Source:** Coalfield's Heritage Group, *Centennial Chronology of Kurri Kurri 1902-2002*, Bookman Publications, Queensland, 2002, p. 13.

### **Chief Inspector's Report to the Honourable S.W. Moore, Secretary for Mines and Agriculture 1906**

After the coronial inquiry was completed Chief Mines Inspector, Mr. A.A. Atkinson, reported on the issue of the use of naked lights. He emphasised that where naked lights were in use in the mine, it was vital that mine deputies should inspect the workings with a locked safety lamp at the termination of each shift and day, to ascertain that no smouldering fires existed. Atkinson also recommended that: '...in a mine where there is sufficient water available (in terms of quantity and pressure) it is advisable to be prepared for a fire, with suitable arrangements, in order to apply it either on the surface or underground'. Nevertheless he conceded that '... the fire was too extensive to be dealt with by the application of water'. Considering the exhaustive nature of the inquest, he

did not think it necessary to recommend a prosecution and 'saw no purpose served by holding another inquiry'.<sup>34</sup>

### **Unsealing and Re-opening of the Mine**

The seals on the mine were finally broken on Tuesday 26 June 1906 after a period of 8 months. A large number of officials including the mine's management, coroner and jury, managers of neighbouring collieries and mine inspectors congregated to start the unsealing process. Crews of workmen attempted to break through the mass of solid brickwork which had been cemented into the mouth of the intake tunnel. With the tunnel entry opened the officials and workmen advanced and began the task of removing the debris including tons of soil, burnt timbers and the brick stopping from the tunnel. Numerous skips were utilised to remove the debris.<sup>35</sup>

The following day Mr. Azariah Thomas, Manager, East Greta Coal Mining Co. declared that he was satisfied with the progress made. By 4pm the work parties had penetrated 55yards [50metres] to the spot where the fire had previously been burning. He announced that work would continue 'day and night'. For the workmen's safety, three 12 inch [30cm] pipes connected to the fan were used to convey air into the tunnel. Before penetrating further into the tunnel, the workmen had to clear away an extensive fall. According to one source it measured 'about 6 feet high, 15 yards long and extended right across the tunnel some 12 feet'. It was found that the heavy timbers supporting the tunnel were completely burnt and that parts of the roof had fallen in. In the evening the work parties were able to traverse the fall, but the poor light of their safety lamps prevented them from proceeding further. On 29 June the *Kurri Kurri Times* announced that No 1 tunnel had been completely unsealed and that the mine would be re-opened. The local newspaper editorialised that, given the long period of unemployment endured by so many miners, it sounded an optimistic note in 'hoping for brighter days ahead'. At the same time it offered a salutary warning, 'trusting that there should be an absence of boom-time extravagance'. It also maintained that the only consolation stemming from the disaster was that the fire occurred when no one was actually working in the mine and that the community had been spared 'another Bulli'.<sup>36</sup>

### **Post-disaster**

The late 1920s and the 1930s were a turbulent period for the mines of the Northern coalfield. Stanford Merthyr along with other large mines in the region was closed due to a serious industrial dispute referred to as the 'Lockout'. Initially closed for 15 months from March 1929 until June 1930, it followed the employers' demand for a 12½ per cent reduction in wages. Together with other economic factors, this contributed to the steady decline of the mines in the Greta coalfield, and they were never able to regain their prominence. In March 1931, J. and A. Brown Ltd. amalgamated with Abermain-Seaham Co. to form the JABAS group., which led directly to the takeover by the group of all of the assets of the East Greta Coal Mining Co., including that of Stanford Merthyr. It was renamed Stanford Main No.1 Colliery and eventually ceased operations on 24 May 1957.<sup>37</sup>

It was significant that a photograph featured in a local newspaper in 1924 reporting the Kurri Kurri May Day parade contained a group of young miners carrying a Stanford Merthyr Mine banner. It bore the following message: **Don't Argue We Want Rescue Stations.**

According to the accompanying press report every one of the men in question was Welsh-born. The local miner's lodge actively lobbied their federation for the introduction of mines rescue stations in the northern coalfield. Eventually the Mines Rescue Act (NSW) incorporating this was passed in 1925.<sup>38</sup> Another important development occurred in 1927 when electric safety lamps were introduced into Stanford Merthyr.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Various theories were put forward as possible causes of the fire although in some respect, as one mines inspector put it, '...it remains a mystery'.<sup>40</sup> At the coronial inquest certain 'risk' factors were both identified and canvassed. Undoubtedly the regular practice of smoking underground and the carrying of matches constituted serious risks. Additionally, open flame lamps could have been the source of ignition as pockets of gas had been occasionally observed. There was criticism levelled at engine driver William Fenn for not reacting earlier to the ringing of the signal bells. It could be argued that prompt action might have initially limited the intensity of the fire. Nevertheless it is doubtful if such measures could have contained it.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1905; NSW Department of Mines, *Annual Report 1905*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> J. Delaney, 'Stanford Merthyr', <http://hostingcollectionaustralian.net/newcastle/greta/stme>; accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>3</sup> D. Branagan, *T.W. Edgeworth David: A Life*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2005, pp. 39-45; E. Davies and E. E. Tonks. *The Development of the Greta Coal Measures of NSW*, AustMM centenary conference, Adelaide, 30 March-4 April 1993, pp. 353-366; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1921.

<sup>4</sup> The following conversion units can be used to convert: measurements used in this paper: 1 inch = 2.54cm; 1 foot = 0.3048metres; 1 yard = 0.9144metres; 1 mile = 1.609344km; 1 acre = 0.404686 hectares; 1 ton = 0.90718474 tonnes.

<sup>5</sup> Delaney, 'Stanford Merthyr Colliery'.

<sup>6</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 18 February 1987.

<sup>7</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 October 1921; Delaney 'Stanford Merthyr Colliery', p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> NSW Department of Mines, *Annual Report, 1905*, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nswrail.net/library/smp>, accessed 19 February 2013.

<sup>10</sup> M. Mahon, *The Stanford Merthyr Colliery Disaster of 1905 and Commemorative Service* Retired Mineworkers Association, (NSW), Cardiff Heights, NSW, 2005, pp 2-5; *Australian Town and Country Journal* (NSW), 1 November 1905, pp. 16, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Mahon, *Stanford Merthyr Colliery Disaster*, p. 4; Information on the possible origin of the name 'Stanford Merthyr' was provided by John W. Shoebridge, of Dora Creek, NSW, former manager of Bellbird Colliery, Cessnock, NSW. Henry Morgan Williams (with five others) was recruited in 1887 from the small Welsh mining community of Fochriw near Merthyr Tydfil. A lover of music, he founded a miners' brass band at Kurri Kurri and regularly conducted mass choirs at the local eisteddfods. David Jones, one of the early recruits from Fochriw was killed in the disaster. *Merthyr Express*, 10 February 1906. <http://www.Fochriwhistory.co.uk> accessed 22 January 2012.

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- <sup>12</sup> S. Hickey, The Welsh/Cymry of Stanford Merthyr on the South Maitland Coalfields, *Australian Folklore*, vol. 8, August 1993, pp. 77-87. It should be recognised that many of these cultural and economic institutions in the area were also supported by miners and their families from Durham and Northumberland ('Geordies').
- <sup>13</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 3 November 1905.
- <sup>14</sup> Coroner's Report reprinted in Mahon, *Stanford Merthyr Colliery Disaster*, pp. 6, 10: *The Annual Report* of the NSW Department of Mines 1906 records that later, in March 1906, engine driver William Fenn sustained serious burns to his arms and legs at the mine. He had been engaged in destroying wood shavings in the furnace.
- <sup>15</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 30 October 1905.
- <sup>16</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1905; *Singleton Argus* (NSW), 31 October 1905.
- <sup>17</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 30 October 1905.
- <sup>18</sup> *Australian Town and Country Journal* (NSW), 1 November 1905, pp. 16, 21; *Singleton Argus* (NSW), 31 October 1905.
- <sup>19</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 30 October 1905.
- <sup>20</sup> *Australian Town and Country Journal* (NSW), 1 November 1905, pp. 16, 21.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Kurri Kurri Times*, 17 August 1905.
- <sup>24</sup> Mahon, *Stanford Merthyr Colliery Disaster*, p. 8; *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 18 January 1906.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 November 1905; *Western Argus* (Kalgoorlie), 7 November 1905.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December and 18 January 1906; *Kurri Kurri Times*, 19 and 20 January 1906.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 January 1906.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 January 1906; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1906.
- <sup>29</sup> *Kurri Kurri Times*, 19 January 1906.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 January 1906, 10 August 1906.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1906. It was usual practice at coronial inquiries into multiple deaths (in coal and shale mines) for the final determination to be framed in the context of a single victim.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 August 1906; *Kurri Kurri Times*, 19 January 1906, 17 August 1906.
- <sup>34</sup> Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines (NSW) 1906 on 'Stanford Merthyr Disaster' reprinted in full in Mahon, *Stanford Merthyr Colliery Disaster*, p. 7.
- <sup>35</sup> *Kurri Kurri Times*, 19 January 1906, 29 June 1906.
- <sup>36</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 October 1905, refers to the Bulli Colliery disaster in the Southern Coalfield of New South Wales on 23 March 1887, when there were 81 fatalities. See Bulli Colliery Accident, Report of the Royal Commission, NSW Votes and Proceedings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, vol. 4, 1887, pp. 271-459.
- <sup>37</sup> J. Comerford, 'The Disasters', in W.S. Parkes, J. Comerford and M. Lake (eds), *Mines, Wines and People: a History of Greater Cessnock*, Council of Greater Cessnock, Cessnock, 1979, pp. 196-197.
- <sup>38</sup> Original article reprinted in *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 27 October 1980. For coverage of the state-wide campaign to establish mines rescue stations in New South Wales see: C. Beauchamp, 'The Bellbird Colliery Disaster, Cessnock NSW, 1923 and the Mines Rescue Act, NSW, 1925', *Journal of Australian Mining History*, vol. 9, September 2001, pp. 1-19.
- <sup>39</sup> New South Wales Department of Mines, Annual Report, 1927, p. 286.
- <sup>40</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 30 October 1905.