

*Images of the Past: Coal Mine Disasters in the Modern Era* by Brian Elliott.

Mining disasters attracted the attention of the public and the press during the twentieth century, just as they had done a few generations earlier. This interest was made even more immediate and certainly more graphic through the increasing use of photographic images and film; and the impact of broadcasting via radio and, eventually, television was immense.

The disasters also demonstrated and underlined the tremendous courage that miners had for their comrades, self-less heroism evident on countless occasions.

Although everyday fatalities in mines was far greater, it was the disasters that encouraged those in power to reform the way in which miners had to work underground, especially with regard to safety. And it would be no exaggeration to say that it was the disasters that greatly contributed to bringing the coal industry into national control.

Sadly, for bereaved individuals and families, nothing could really compensate for the loss of one or more of a loved one. The impact of the big disasters, where hundreds of men and boys – one or two generations – were lost, immediately, the impact was massive, and continued to be felt many years afterwards. New and restored disaster memorials bear testimony to the great respect that former mining communities continue to have for their 'lost miners'.

Using many previously unpublished images, and a carefully supportive text, the author provides a detailed overview of mining disasters in the modern era, from the early 1900s to the 1980s. It is the first book of its kind to attempt such a large project in pictorial form – with a Foreword by Ceri Thompson, curator of the Big Pit, the Welsh national mining museum. The book is published at a particularly poignant time, after the recent closure of Britain's last deep coal mine.

### **About Brian Elliott**

Brian Elliott was born in the village of Royston near Barnsley and spent his childhood in neighbouring pit village Carlton where his father worked as a miner. Leaving school early, Brian's first job was in professional football, then in local government before starting a career in teaching and Further Education. It was whilst at teacher-training college that he developed a passionate interest on local history, inspired by one of his tutors, who subsequently became a great friend, David Hey. Brian's B.Ed dissertation was on the Oaks Colliery, particularly the great disaster of 1866.

A freelance writer and editor for many years, Brian has published many books and articles on local and regional history, as well as initiating and developing series such as Aspects of Local History and Mining Heritage for the well-known Barnsley-based publisher Pen and Sword Books. He has also appeared on BBC Radio Sheffield on many occasions and has made contributions to BBC Radio 4, BBC and ITV local news programmes. He is a founder volunteer member and trustee of the recently opened Experience Barnsley people's museum and Discovery Centre.

Though now retired, Brian continues to research and write articles and books, for Pen

and Sword and Script Media especially relating to coalmining history and has recently developed an interest in the remarkable contribution of miners during the Great War.

Before Brian's father died he recorded an interview with him as part of the research for the book Yorkshire Mining Veterans. This and many other interviews with former miners are deposited in the National Mining Museum for England's oral history archive.

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