

GRESFORD DISASTER



THE DISASTER

During the early hours of September 22nd 1934, an explosion in Gresford Colliery, near Wrexham, North Wales, killed 266 men and boys. Only 6 men made it out alive. It is one of Britain's worst ever mining disasters.

The colliery had lost money the previous year and so the new manager, William Bonsall, chose to bypass safety measures to save money. Safety regulations were not followed, the mine shafts were poorly ventilated, the tunnels were not well supported and there were insufficient escape routes.

After the explosion, families were distraught when the Mines Inspectorate stopped recovery teams from entering the mine to recover the bodies of their loved ones. This also meant that vital evidence about the cause of the blast remained buried.

Many of the miners had just been paid and were carrying their wages when they were killed. Deductions were even taken from surviving workers' wages for not completing their shifts on the day of the disaster. Families were never reimbursed and many had to rely on welfare and charity to survive.

Want to know more?
wrexhamminersproject.co.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

At the inquiry into the disaster, William Idris Cuffin, an assistant surveyor, admitted to recording false air measurements. He claimed William Bonsall had instructed him to stop measuring gas levels in June 1934 and had asked him to lie to the inquiry.

The colliery owners could afford premium legal representation. The miners and their families, on the other hand, only received legal representation because Sir Stafford Cripps MP agreed to provide his services free of charge.

The inquiry could not reach a conclusion because government officials and inspectors prevented a full examination of the mine shaft.

No-one was ever fully held to account for the miners' deaths. William Bonsall was only held liable for false record keeping, incurring a fine of £140.

WHY WE NEED HILLSBOROUGH LAW

"The impact of the Gresford Disaster—and the injustice and cover-ups that followed—still rings painfully true today. The strain placed on mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, and children was immense, made worse by the lack of compassion shown by the pit owners"

Michael Hett, Ex-Coal Miner and Trustee of Wrexham Miners Project

WINDRUSH SCANDAL



THE SCANDAL

Between 1948 and 1988, thousands of people from Commonwealth nations, former British colonies and the rest of the world came to the UK to rebuild the economy after World War Two. They became known as the "Windrush Generation".

Many were classed as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC), a new status introduced by the British Nationality Act 1948 entitling them to live and work in the UK as British subjects. The Immigration Act 1971 created the concept of 'right of abode' and those with settled status as of 1 January 1973, including those of the Windrush generation, were automatically granted indefinite leave to remain, requiring no further documentation.

In 1981, the British Nationality Act replaced CUKC with new citizenship categories and registration requirements. The Home Office's 'hostile environment' policies, introduced from 2012, required landlords, employers and NHS providers to check individuals' immigration status. The Windrush generation's lack of documentation was wrongly taken as evidence that they were in the UK illegally. As a result, people lost their jobs, homes, healthcare and were detained. At least 83 individuals who arrived before 1973 were unlawfully deported.

Want to know more?
liverpooladvocatesforwindrush.org

DID YOU KNOW?

The Home Office failed to keep proper records of those from the Windrush generation who were granted citizenship after 1948 and destroyed landing cards that could have proven lawful residence.

Many people were not informed that they had to apply for documentation to prove their status or re-register for citizenship.

Acknowledging its wrongdoing, in 2018 the government introduced a compensation scheme, but the process is complex and there is a huge backlog of claims. As a result, less than 6% of the Windrush Generation have accessed compensation.

WHY WE NEED HILLSBOROUGH LAW

"I feel let down; I feel terrible; I don't see how an organisation calling itself the Home Office can treat people like this; I don't understand how the government can treat people like this"

Hubert Howard, victim of the Windrush Scandal, The Guardian

"One man had been to UK schools, registered with a GP, held a National Insurance number, yet the Home Office said there was 'no trace' of him"

Wendy Williams, Windrush Lessons Learned, Independent Review, 2018