

Frederick Miller

Waranga Chronicle

20 and 27 August, 1874

On Tuesday morning, between six and seven a.m., a dreadful accident happened at the Schleswig Holstein mine, by which one of the tributors, named Frederick Miller, was killed, and, as is usual in many accidents that occur in mining, was attributable to no other cause than to the carelessness of the deceased. Here was a man who, after the many warnings he had received by the death of others under precisely similar circumstances, could be foolhardy enough to put his head over a charge that had only been lighted one minute, and in which there was a doubt whether the fuse had property lighted or not.

In this instance, poor fellow, the candles placed at the end of the fuse had done their work, and the explosion must have occurred immediately he discovered this fact, as was shown by the intense look of horror that was depicted on the features after death.

His untimely death may act as a warning to others for a time, but, like many more of the same kind, it will soon be forgotten. The injuries on his body were so palpable that there was no need for medical testimony. The entire face was smashed. The bones of the nose were broken into many fragments. The skull above the right eyebrow was fractured, and a large hole led backwards to the brain, which was exposed. This hole, in another direction, led behind the root of the nose, communicating with a gaping wound, underneath which the skull had also been driven in above the left eyelid, and destroying the bony orbit. The upper maxillary bones had been violently forced from their connections with the other portions of the skull, and could be rocked from side to side, with but slight pressure, the lower jaw was broken on the right side, and also separated at the line of junction opposite the chin. Altogether the sight was most unpleasant for other than medical eyes to contemplate.

Death must have been instantaneous.

Miller was a quiet steady man, and an old resilient on these diggings, and one of the most regular attendants at our Mechanics' Institute, and was liked by all who knew him. On its becoming known that he was in indigent circumstances, an amount was soon collected to defray the funeral expenses. He will be buried today at four o'clock. A full report of the inquiry is given in another column.

MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY.

A magisterial inquiry was hold at the Waranga Hotel, on Tuesday last, to ascertain the cause which led to the death of Frederick Miller, who was killed in the Schleswig Holstein mine on the same morning.

James McDonald deposed: I am a miner residing at Rushworth, and have known the deceased for many years; at the time of his death he was working with me in the Schleswig Holstein mine. I went down the mine with him to work last night at 12 o'clock. He was in good health at that time, we worked till about six this morning, at the 300 feet level. We were putting in the second shot in a drill hole, the first time it was fired it did no good, and he loaded it a second time. When ready to fire it, deceased told me to go on to the plat, and he would ignite the charge. I did so, and left the candle on the edge of the plat, so that he could see to get up the ladders. I saw him light the fuse and come up the foot wall ladders about twelve feet to towards the plat. He then went back again, this was about a minute from the time he lit the fuse. While going back he said something that I could not

understand, and while I turned round to fit another candle, I heard the shot go off. I then caught hold of the lighted candle and went down to the bottom and called out to the deceased, but not receiving any answer, and the candle having gone out, I lit a match and found out where he was. I then lit the candle, and thought that; he was dead. I then dragged him out of the well, and went to the surface and gave information of the accident. There is no mode of signalling from the bottom to the plat; since the whim was knocked down we have to go up about forty feet to the signal rope. W. Merrifield and C. Hansen then returned to the bottom of the mine, and brought the body to the surface, and then sent for the Dr. and the police, and reported the matter to the manager.

To the Foreman—We never found fault with the fuse, it is double tape. The shot before, in the same hole refused, and we had crib, and then picked it and put in the second charge.

To a juror—Deceased was an experienced miner. He must have thought this shot had missed also, and went back to see about it.

William Merrifield deposed: I am a miner residing at Old Ned's. I was on the Schleswig Holstein mine about 20 minutes to 7 on the morning of the 18th. At that time J. McDonald came to the hut close by the engine, and told us to get up, as his mate had been killed by a shot going off below. We dressed as soon as possible, went down, and then found Miller dead. We then took him to the surface. I examined the hole, and found that the shot had only blown the collar of the hole off. Deceased had the reputation of being sober and steady, and a careful miner.

Christian Hansen deposed: I am a miner. I have known the deceased fourteen years. He was a native of Hamburg, and about forty-two or forty-three years old. He had been a reefer for about seventeen years. Miller is not his proper name, I believe it is Hirsch, but was called Miller by his shopmates, and has retained that name ever since.

To the Foreman—There is no proper mining manager; Semmens was in charge of the pumps. We have to go to the plat to signal. There is no necessity for a signal at the bottom, as we do not wind from there; the dirt being raised by the windlass to the plat. The deceased has no property, as he sold all his things before last harvest, intending to go away.

The following verdict was returned— “That the deceased, Frederick Miller, was accidentally killed by the sudden going off of a shot, during his shift at the Schleswig Holstein mine, and that to his own rashness in not allowing a sufficient amount of time to elapse after the ignition of the fuse before his return to enquire the cause of its not lighting, is attributable entirely the sudden mode of his death”.

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The remains of Mr Miller, who was accidentally killed on the previous Tuesday, was conveyed to their last resting place on Thursday last. The funeral was attended by persons from all parts of the diggings, who were anxious to show respect to one who had been so generally liked when living. In the absence of a Church of England clergyman, the burial service was read by Mr Hicks.

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