

## Crime and Punishment in Victorian South Wales

As we learned in the workshop, life could be very hard for the people of Victorian South Wales. They were employed in dangerous industries, were paid very little and lived in terrible housing. As you might expect, a lot of desperate people turned to crime to help them survive these gruelling conditions.

### Resource Pack

Photograph of original entry to the Register of Criminals, south east Wales, 1869-1897.

Transcribed extract of 1878 entries to the Register of Criminals.

Short 2019 newspaper report on the Abercarn mining disaster.

### Suggested Activities

- Have a go at being a historian! What information can you read about Ellen Barry from the original entry into the Register of Criminals? Pupils can work in small groups to try to decipher details about Ellen Barry:

Name	Age	Height	Hair	Eyes	Complexion	Born	Occupation	Distinguishing marks	Address	Offence
Ellen Barry	40	5ft 5in	Light brown	Grey	Fresh	Merthyr Tydfil	Tramp	Pock-pitted and scar on forehead	Newport	Stealing empty bottles

Look at the transcription of entries to the Register for Criminals 1878.

- What do you think of the sentences? Fair or harsh? Do some seem harsher than others? How do they compare to the punishments you would expect for those crimes today?
- Who is the odd one out of these entries?
- Can you find any similarities between the entries? Mostly very young people, all guilty of stealing and they all live in, or within walking distance, of Abercarn. Why do you think these young people would have turned to stealing?
- Read through the newspaper report on the 1848 Abercarn mining disaster or do some independent research. How could this disaster have played a part in making people in the area turn to crime?
- Ask pupils to write a short analysis, drawing on evidence from the sources provided, about why theft would have been a big problem around Abercarn in 1878/9.

NAME and ALIASES.	DESCRIPTION.										Address at time of Apprehension.	OFFENCE FOR WHICH CONVICTED.
	Age.	Height.		Hair.	Eyes.	Complexion.	Where born.	M. or S.	Trade or Occupation.	Any other distinguishing mark.		
		Feet.	Inches.									
Ellen Barry.	40	5	5	Blk	Grey	Flesh	Mertbury	M	On Tramps	Fockpitted and Scar on forehead	Newport.	Stealing Empty Bottles
Fane Lewis.	21	4	11	Blk	Hazel	Pall	Pendaryn Mertbury	S	appears to be a prostitute.	Flat nose mole on right cheek	On Tramps	Stealing a shawl -
James Warren	31	5	3 3/4	Blk	Grey	Pall	Tredegar I. works	M	Iron Puddler.	nil.	Tredegar I. works	Stealing a Cash and 15 Gallons of Beer -
John Evans	39	5	2	Blk	Grey	Pall	Ellw. Vale	S	do.	nil	do.	do.
Elizabeth M <sup>rs</sup> Carthy	26	5	0	Blk	Blue	Light	Cork Ireland	M	Wife	nil	Ellw. Vale	Stealing a pair of Boots

# Entries from the Register of Criminals

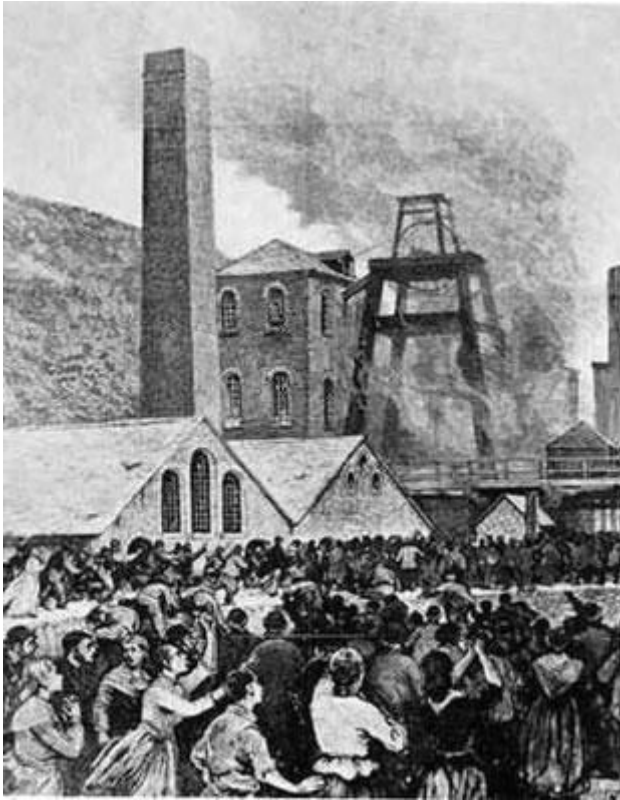
## South East Wales 1848

Name	Age	Height	Hair	Eyes	Complexion	Born	Occupation	Distinguishing marks	Address	Offence	Date of Conviction	Sentence
George Butts	17	5ft 3in	Light brown	Hazel	Fresh	Pontypool	Collier	Large pock scare in right cheek	Abercarn	Stealing a watch	October 16th 1878	12 months hard labour
Catherine A Williams	15	5ft	Long	Hazel	Fair	Abercarn	Worker in Tin Works	None	Abercarn	Stealing a pair of shoes	October 19th 1878	1 days hard labour
Henry Gavratt	14	4ft 6in	Light brown	Grey	Fresh	Risca	None	None	Risca	Stealing money from a shop	November 23rd 1878	3 years and 14 days Reformatory School
Walter Rowswoll	55	5ft 8in	Grey	Hazel	Dull	Somerset	Groom	Lost tip of left thumb	Risca	Stealing coal	December 7th 1878	14 days hard labour
William Johns	21	5ft 6in	Brown	Brown	Fresh	Abercarn	Collier	Scar on forehead from kick by horse	Abercarn	Stealing building materials	March 7th 1879	1 days imprisonment

## Marking more than 140 years since the Abercarn mining disaster

12th September 2019

By Dan Barnes, Multimedia Reporter



*An illustration showing the event in 1878*

YESTERDAY, September 11, marked the 141st anniversary of one of Britain's worst mining disasters.

An explosion ripped through the Prince of Wales Colliery at Abercarn, leaving 268 men and boys dead.

The disaster happened at around 12.15pm on September 11, 1878, when the area was shaken by an explosion.



(John Harris - who received a medal for his part in the rescue operation)

Rescue teams were confronted by smoke and fire as they were lowered into the pit, with the dangers proving too much.

Despite local opposition, the shaft was sealed and mine flooded with 35 gallons of water to put the fire out, with those who died being left underground.

A mines inspector's report later concluded that the explosion was probably caused by the ignition of gas by a safety lamp.