

## ".....the awful fall of coal and earth..."

### The Maypole Pit Disaster

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down the shaft. The roof of the fan house was blown off and sent flying in pieces.

Seventy-five men had died or were soon to die in the choked and poisoned galleries. Twenty-one of them came from St. Patrick's.



Postcard showing some pictures and names of victims. The full death-toll was actually 75 not 76. Over a quarter of the dead were St. Patrick's men as was one of the three survivors, Mr. Edward Farrell.

read. It commemorates that dreadful evening in August, 1908, when St. Patrick's parish suffered the most terrible blow in its history.

At a little after five on the evening of Tuesday, August 18th, witnesses at the Maypole Pit heard a sudden massive explosion from the Seven Foot Mine. The blast was so fierce that it was felt up to a mile away. Large sections of the pit-head gear were blown away. The cage was dislodged from its fixings and crashed

The grief of the bereaved was shared by all the parish. On the Sunday following the disaster, Canon Sommer sang a solemn Requiem Mass for the dead, which was attended by people from all the Catholic churches of Wigan. A choir picked from all the churches sang at the mass and Dr. O' Donaghue of St. Mary's preached the sermon.

In his sermon, Dr. O' Donaghue spoke of the voices of the dead crying out for prayers, a sound which

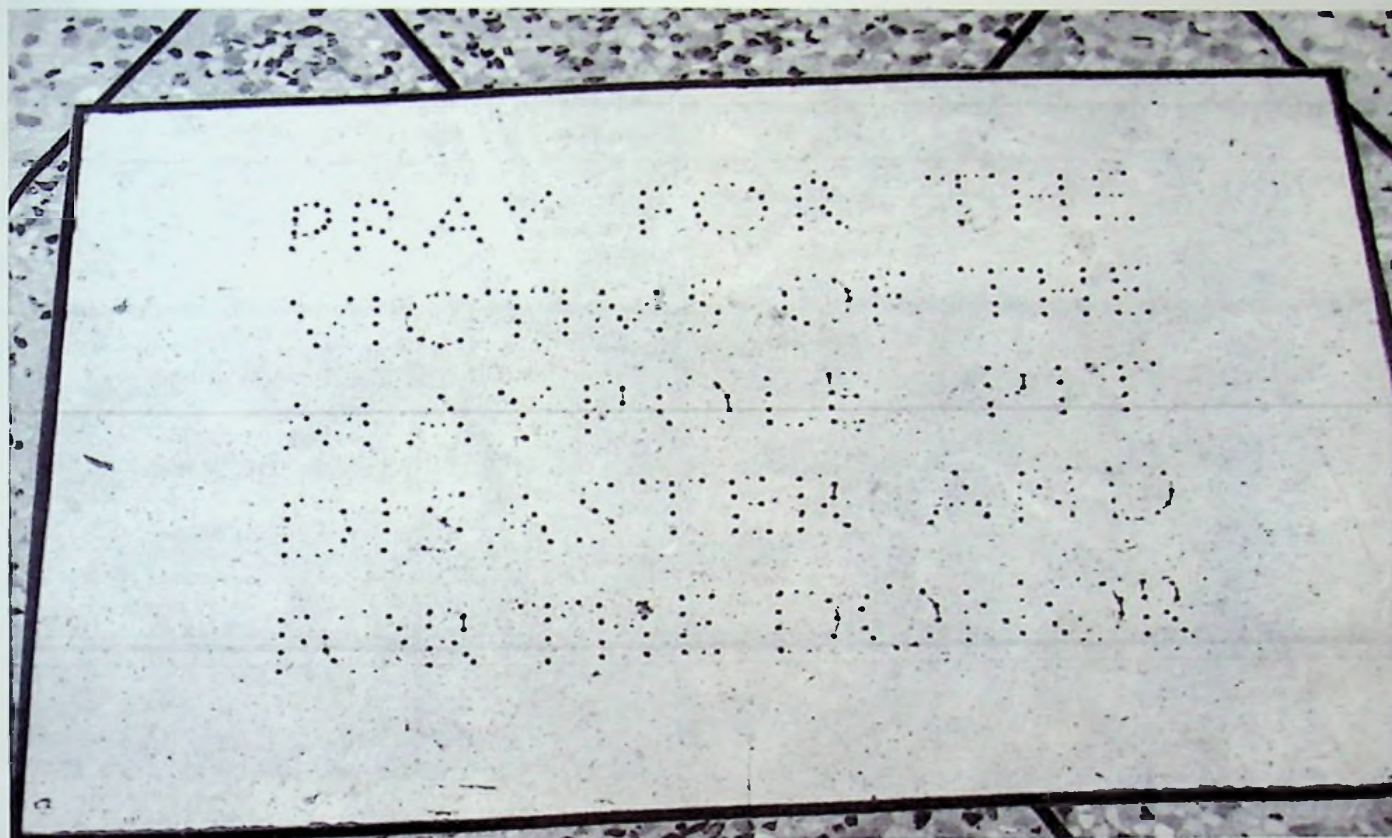
he said had travelled along the galleries and roads of the mine," ..... through the awful fall of coal and earth ... through fire and flame ... and up the reeking shaft....".

The names of the dead were read out, "a sad and heart-rending experience" the Wigan Observer reports.

The number of St. Patrick's dead is given as eighteen but other reports say twenty-one. The official list only

just as devastating.

It was a dreadful reminder of why mining was considered the most dangerous occupation for a man outside of being on active service with the armed forces. It could be perhaps considered even more dangerous. A soldier even on active service was not generally in battle every day, but a miner risked his life every working day to bring the precious "black diamonds" from the bowels of the earth.



The plaque in St. Patrick's porch

reveals nineteen names with addresses inside St. Patrick's parish boundaries but the name of seventeen years old James Conway is on a brass plate in the church along with that of Michael Molloy. This implies that he attended St. Patrick's even if he lived beyond the boundaries. Perhaps the same applied to another victim.

Several of the St. Patrick's dead shared addresses. This along with remarks made by Dr. O'Donaghue in his sermon, suggests that several of them were not long over from Ireland and that they were in lodgings.

Eighteen, nineteen or twenty-one, the tragedy was

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The names and addresses of the nineteen men from within the parish and that of James Conway are given on page 117. No attempt has been made to guess the identity of the 21st. If anybody has more definite information, the writers would be happy to receive it.

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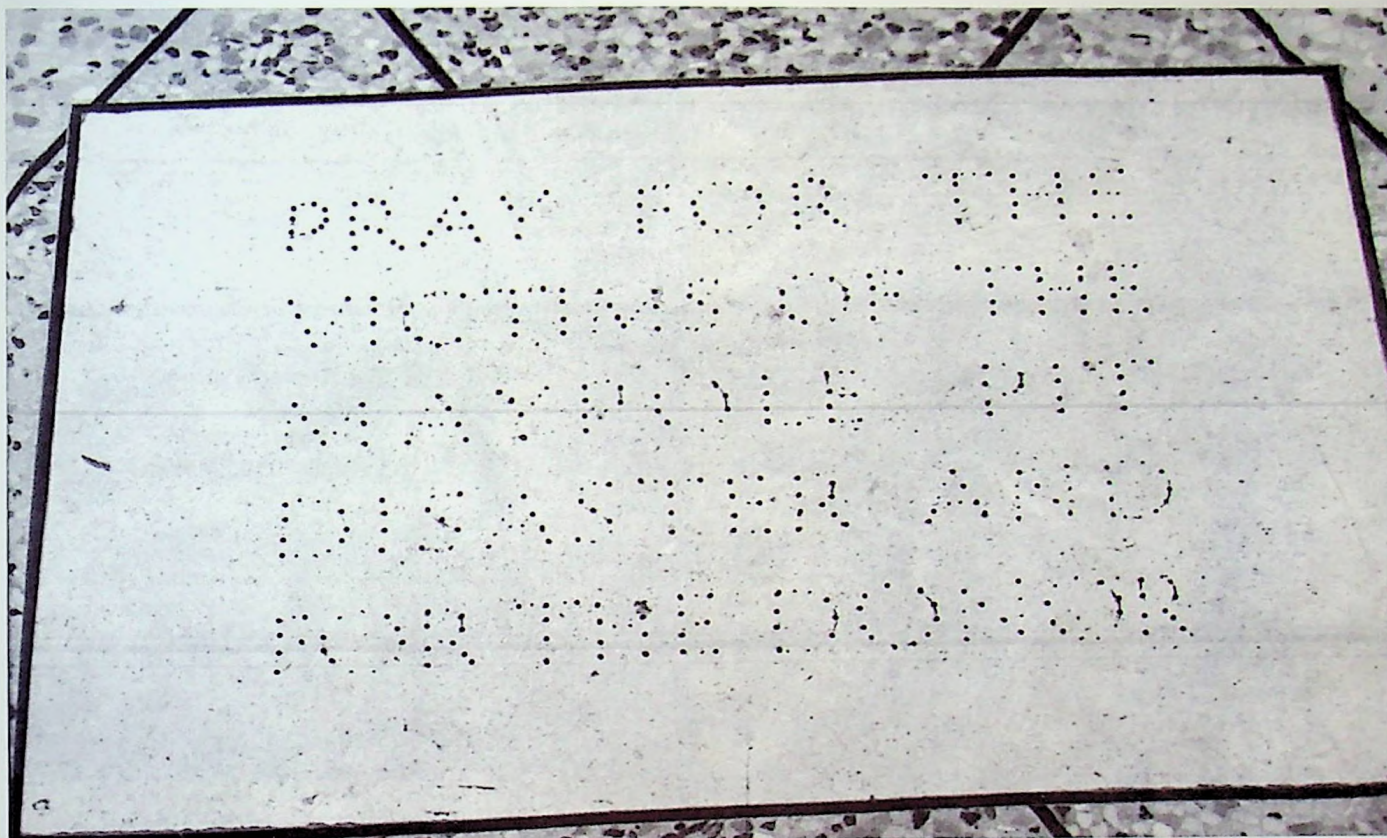
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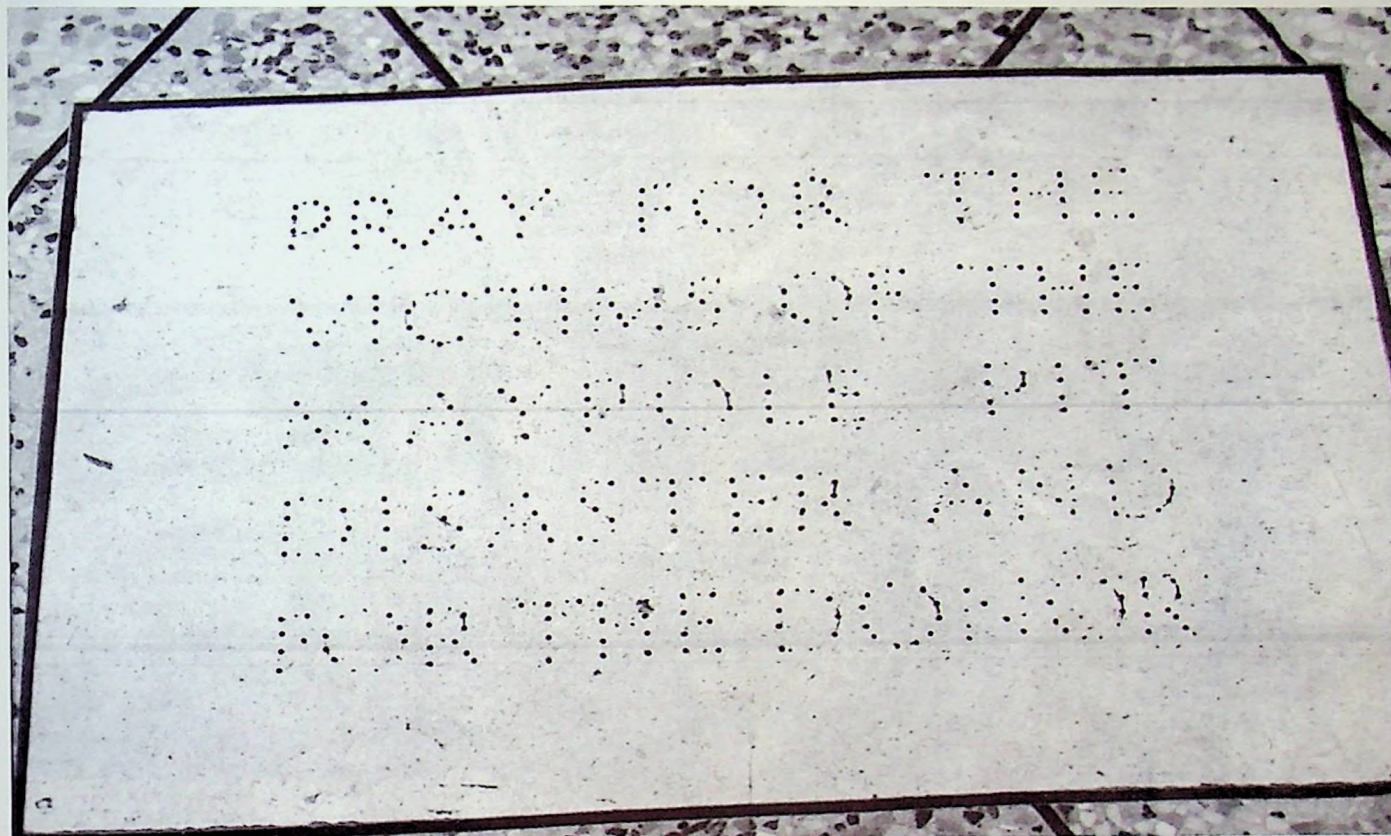
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## *The Maypole Victims*

<b>J. McGrath</b>	<b>17 Wall Street (Scholes)</b>	left a wife and eight children
<b>M. Gallagher</b>	<b>17 Wall Street (Scholes)</b>	
<b>Pat Carroll</b>	<b>9 Teck Street</b>	
<b>Pat. Sloyan</b>	<b>9 Teck Street</b>	
<b>J. Moran</b>	<b>30 Cambridge Street</b>	
<b>T. Groark</b>	<b>20 Cambridge Street</b>	left a wife and child
<b>J. Geohegan</b>	<b>16 Rupert Street</b>	
<b>M. Guckein</b>	<b>18 Rupert Street</b>	
<b>Wm. McCabe</b>	<b>28 Stewart Street</b>	left a wife and child
<b>M. Cafferty</b>	<b>8 Upper Morris Street</b>	left a wife and child
<b>E. Cafferty</b>	<b>8 Upper Morris Street</b>	
<b>P. Duffy</b>	<b>8 Upper Morris Street</b>	
<b>M. House</b>	<b>33 St. Patrick Street</b>	
<b>M. Molloy</b>	<b>35 Vauxhall Road</b>	left a wife and child
<b>P. Mulligan</b>	<b>39 Anderton Street</b>	
<b>J. Bennett</b>	<b>15 Belvoir Street</b>	left a wife and seven children
<b>P. McGowan</b>	<b>15 Higham Street</b>	
<b>Pat Cullen</b>	<b>11 Holland Street</b>	
<b>J. Doyle</b>	<b>4 Warrington Lane</b>	
<b>James Conway</b>	<b>321 Warrington Road</b>	