

[Page 3 - Mine Explosion in New Waterford, 1917](#)ISSUE : [Issue 21](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1978/12/1

Henry MacKay: I don't think there are any other people living who were in it • not that I know of. That was 1917. I was 1'. I was working in the mines, working in No. 12, working driver. They had horses under? ground. The horse had shafts on, a bow on the back of them and there was a shackle on that • and you had to hook that on the box with a bolt. From the landing inward the men were loading coal • some places a mile, two miles, three miles in. You'd go in with the empty boxes. They loaded them and you'd bring them back. (And you were only 14?) Well, when I started I was only 10 years and 9 months old. That time the First War was on and there weren't enough men. (So there were a lot of young people in the mine then?) Oh, yes, a lot of us started when we were about 10. (This explosion happened July 25, 1917. Had there been any trouble in the mine before that?) Oh, there was gas. You know, the war was on then and the company was after coal as easy as they could get it. You know what I mean. They weren't looking after the mine. There was gas. They should have been keeping the air course open. So the air could go down. Well, they weren't looking after that • it used to fall in, block off the air. (They didn't take care of the air?) Oh no, they were after coal as cheap as they could get it. They had a mine • No. 15 mine • they took all the handy coal out. They didn't drive ahead. Then when all the handy coal was gone, they had to close the mine. The war was on and everybody was after coal and there were hardly any men • they were all gone. And miners couldn't change conditions. They had a union but it wasn't old enough. It was only new. (And you went to work knowing the mine wasn't good?) The older ones knew. I didn't realize. I was only a kid then. We went down one morning and there was 800 feet of gas, from the face out. Well, we had to come home. That was in our section. We had to come home. Well, they turned on the fans and they blew out all that gas. Then we came down next morning. My father was killed in the explosion. That's my father that's on the monument. John D. MacKay. He was blamed for firing the shot that set the explosion off • not through his fault. But the men who found him said it was impossible for him to fire a shot because he had his battery cable on his shoulder. But when you fire a shot you hook the two wires together • and that cable is 150 feet long or 200 feet long, to bring out. Well, after you fired the shot you coiled that cable up again to carry it to the next place. Well, he was found with his cable all wound, he had it on his shoulder. If he had fired that shot he wouldn't have had time to gather up his cable. (So he didn't fire that shot?) Well, that's what we say. But it came out at the trial that he fired the shot, but not through his fault. All he had when they found him was a couple of burns on him. There were other men with him there too • but they only had burns on them. But No. 7 landing • all the I Test drive this magnificent motoring event EUROCAR SERVICE LTD. Westmount, opposite Dobson Yacht Club 564-9721 Je offer Septic Tank Pumping Service Ken-Mac Plumbing & Heating Hione 929-2214 and if no answer 929-2326 Englishtown Tourist Brochures & Colour Printing A Specialty PRINTERS LIMITED 180 TOWNSEND STREET, SYDNEY, 9\*.S. TELEPHONE (902) 564-8245 AIR CANADA Ladies and Children's Wear SJERVING



CANADA COAST TO COAST THE UNITED STATES • UNITED KINGDOM • EUROPE •  
CARRIBEAN For information call your Travel Agent or AI R CANADA Vffi%