

- 1 As primary school children set out to school on this day in 1966, 116 of them would be killed in the South Wales mining town of Aberfan.
- 2 It was 9.15 in the morning, and the young children were settling down to the first lesson of the day. Suddenly the mountain behind their school - 2 million tons of wet coal slag - began to move as a wall of mud about 20 metres high and 100 metres wide. 10-year-old Ashley Coffey later said:
 - 3 *"We had swapped homework books, and were checking each other's sums. Suddenly the room caved in, and most of us were covered. Our teacher told me to run, but I looked down at my friend, David, and all his face was covered in blood. So I got him out and helped him up and dragged him out. The next thing I remember is being at home, and Grandpa was washing David's blood off me."*
- 4 Mothers who had seen their children off to school an hour earlier, dug with their hands, sinking waist-deep into the still-moving mud. Many had to be pulled away or they would have been trapped and killed themselves.
- 5 The collapse of the huge slag-heap was heard at the colliery a mile away. A thousand miners rushed over to dig their way into the school and neighbouring houses that were also engulfed. Every shovelful taken away was soon filled with more slime from the shifting mountain. Rescuers saw hundreds of tons of wet slag still breaking away 250 metres above them - the deadly waste was still moving.
- 6 Men worked for 3 days and 2 nights, digging for their children. A would-be rescuer said that they had discovered the body of the deputy headteacher, Mr Benyon, *"clutching 5 children in front of him, protecting them. They died holding each other."*
- 7 144 people were killed that morning at Aberfan, including 116 children aged between 5 and 11. Fewer than half of the students in the school survived.
- 8 Serious complaints had been made for years about the safety of the coal tip that towered over Aberfan. It had been built over a spring of water, sometimes causing flooding in the main street, and the tip was known to move.
- 9 At several of the funeral services, Psalm 23 was sung, and we use the words of that prayer from the Bible today:
 - 10 **Lord, you are like a shepherd to me, and so I have all that I need.**
 - 11 **You give me rest in meadows of green grass, and you lead me to water where I gain new life and strength. You guide me along the way that is best for me.**
 - 12 **Even when I walk in darkness and everything around seems like death, you are there, walking with me, and the promise of your love and faithfulness helps to conquer my fear.**
 - 13 **In the sight of those who do me down, you invite me to sit at table with you. There you offer me even more than I need, and you remind me that I am significant and special.**
 - 14 **You call me to goodness and kindness every day of my life, and your house will be my home my whole life long.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
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by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

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the prayer and education website
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