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Six Bells mining disaster statue is completed



Guardian pays tribute to the 45 men killed in the Six Bells disaster

A 20 metre tall statue to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Six Bells colliery disaster in Abertillery is now complete.

Guardian, the iconic landmark by artist Sebastien Boyesen, has been billed as Wales' Angel of the North.

The names, ages and home towns of the 45 men killed in the accident will be inscribed on the plinth.

The statue now includes its arms which were missing when the landmark was unveiled on the anniversary, 28 June.

A gas explosion 1,000ft (300m) below ground ripped through the Six Bells colliery near Abertillery at 10.45am on 28 June 1960.

All but three of the 48 men working at W district of the old coal seam were killed.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Six Bells Communities First secured the £200,000 funding for the statue from a variety of sources including the Welsh Assembly Government Heads of the Valleys Partnership.

Mair Sheen from Six Bells Communities First said: "It is fantastic to see the statue complete and an emotional day for all the families of those who lost their lives 50 years ago and those who have been working on this project for the past year."

The statue - which stands 12.6m tall on a 7.4m plinth - is part of an ongoing regeneration project within the Six Bells area.

There are plans to open a restaurant - Ty Ebbw Fach - in spring 2011 next to the statue to serve the local community and an anticipated increase in visitors to the area.

Jocelyn Davies, Wales' deputy minister for housing and regeneration, said: "This memorial statue will remember the disaster 50 years ago but also provide something iconic for the people of the valleys for the future.

"This statue will become the centrepiece of the Ebbw Fach Trail, linking areas of countryside with walkways, bridle paths and cycle routes, and will help our overall regeneration programme for the region."



The sculpture has been created using fabricated ribbons of steel

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Communities First will be offering tours of the site and inviting people to sign the memorial books this Saturday 31 July and next Monday to Friday from 1000 to 1600 BST.

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