

3.6. National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area), Area 2 (Neath and Afan valleys), Silicosis / pneumoconiosis cases, 1933-46.

Note: The bureaucratic and legal requirements of the Workmen's Compensation legislation meant that employers and trade unions maintained careful and detailed compensations records relating to individual cases and to the overall compensation situation. The understanding of miners' chest disease, and its status within the system of Workmen's Compensation, developed during the 1920s and 1930s, so that silicosis in some industries was added to the list of compensatable diseases in 1918, was extended to some coalminers by a measure of 1928, was further extended to all underground workers in 1934. Such changes were also complicated by the emphasis placed within this compensation system on the geological character of the rock in which miners worked (i.e. the extent of the silica content) to prove eligibility for compensation rather than any clinical symptoms exhibited by the worker concerned. This was dropped in 1935 and the certification of miners as disabled was now based on medical examination alone. A Silicosis Medical Board, to which cases in the table below were submitted, certified or rejected claimants according to these various and changing criteria. Further research in the late 1930s and early 1940s found that coal dust was more often the cause of miners' chest disease than silica and 'coalminers' pneumoconiosis' was recognized and added to the list of diseases under the Workmen's Compensation legislation in 1943. These factors are crucial in any understanding of statistical trends over time in miners' chest diseases.

Year	No. of applications to Medical Board	Certificate refused	Issued Cert. of Susp.	Cert. of Total Incapacity	Fatal Cases	
					Issued	Refused
1933	16	6		7	3	
1934	14	5		9		
1935	24	9		14	1	
1936	38	22		16		
1937	28	16		12	1	1
1938	43	21	5	10	6	1
1939	62	27	20	12	2	1
1940	47	25	10	6	2	4
1941	36	13	6	13	3	1
1942	107	35	35	31	4	2
1943	222	87	95	21	11	8
1944	331	138	164	18	3	4 [and] 4 died before Exam
1945	548	230	279	19	10	7 [and] 3 died before Exam
1946	801	460	237	15	7	3 [and] 3 died before Exam; wa[i]ting 76
TOTAL	2,317	1,091	852	203	53	32

Source: South Wales Coalfield Collection, Swansea University, WCC/MNA/NUM/3/8/17(h), SWMF / NUM (South Wales) Area No.2 [Neath and Afan valleys], Correspondence and papers re. pneumoconiosis, 1934-1953.