

With regard to the former, I may point out to you that, under section 60 of "The Coal-mines Act, 1886," the duty of an owner or manager of a coal-mine is to apply to the Mines Department for a form on which to make the return of output, &c., and then to forward the information to the Inspector on or before the 1st March. As I had no hope of this being done—as a matter of fact, only two managers applied—I forwarded to each mine on the 7th February a form of return, together with a circular copy of section 60, and an addressed envelope for a reply. In spite of all this trouble, there were on the 9th instant twenty mines from which no reply had been received. With regard to the table of accidents, it is hardly necessary to point out that it is of very disproportionate length as compared with past years. Following the usual custom, I give below remarks on the various mines:—

8. *Wallsend Colliery, Collingwood*.—Visited on the 8th November, 1887, when the daily and weekly reports were duly kept, but the Act far from perfectly observed. For instance, there was no safety-lamp at all, nor was a copy of the Act kept at the mine. The seam continues thin and variable, but the mine appeared in better order than usual. On the 29th November the usual admonitory letter was sent to the manager.

9. *Mokihinui Coal-mine, Mokihinui*.—Not visited; not at work yet.

10. *Coalbrookdale Colliery, Westport (formerly known as the Banbury Mine)*.—Since my last report this colliery has been visited in November, when the ventilation was still imperfect, but the Act in other respects generally observed. The coal is 20ft. thick in places, but the dip changes very capriciously. On the east side of the south branch of the Waimangaroa the thickness is 12ft., and the dip E. (magnetic) at 17°. In the old workings the pillars have been partially worked; but there is so much surface-water in the field that unless a district is capable of free drainage it is inadvisable to bring down the roof. The output has at last reached a point more consonant with the magnitude of the invested capital and the works carried out. In 1886 the total from the Koranui and this mine was 119,779 tons, and during 1887 the latter alone put out 115,942 tons. As the Koranui Mine was purchased by the Westport Coal Company and closed during 1887 the transaction is not, so far, beneficial to the coal-production of the district or colony; but, if we consider that for less than 4,000 tons more coal a large separate establishment of inclines, drives, officials, &c., had to be kept up, it is obvious that the coal in the field must have been of late much more cheaply produced. Though primarily beneficial to the shareholders, this result is of undoubtedly advantage to the whole colony.

11. *Murray Creek Coal-mine, Reefton*.—In July last a letter was addressed to Mr. Trennery, the owner of this mine, requesting his attention to General Rules 1 (ventilation) and 48 (copy of Act and report-book to be kept at mine), and section 30 (Act exhibited at mine); but when the colliery was visited on the 21st October these particulars were entirely disregarded. It appeared that Mr. Trennery had obtained a lamp, though not of an approved pattern. In my supplementary report of the 30th September last I pointed out that the occurrence of gas had been mentioned in Burke's Mine, at Boatman's, and that my former opinion as to the probability of finding firedamp in this field had received some support, if not actual confirmation. My opinion on this point is strengthened by Mr. Macilquhaum, some time manager of this mine, who states that on the 28th June last a miner named Dawson fired a shot, and that a feeder of gas ignited, flickering over the face of the coal for about a square yard. Mr. Trennery, the owner of the mine, disputes this view, on what ground I am not aware, as he was not present at the time, and is unacquainted with coal-mining, whereas Dawson's account is entirely corroborative. There is only one argument against the probability of finding gas, and that is, the surface-cover is so slight and open that the gas must have escaped. No doubt this may be advanced with a show of reason; but I am unaware of any rule governing these cases, and in August, 1881, in the Wellington Coal Company's mine a severe explosion occurred under a very light cover. The analysis of this Murray Creek coal approximates so closely to that of various fiery mines that I am confident it requires only a combination of unfavourable circumstances to produce fatal results. When these do eventuate the coal-workers of this neighbourhood will perhaps acknowledge that gas does exist. Mr. Macilquhaum, I may mention, is fully cognisant of the danger, and appears capable of dealing with it. I have written to Mr. Trennery, requiring his compliance with the law, and have received a notice that Mr. James Straker is now manager of the mine.

12. *Lankey's Gully Coal-mine, Reefton*.—Mr. Elliston, the late owner, had, at my last visit, sold the mine to Messrs. Aston and Lamberton, and passed on to them my letter of the 7th July. On the 22nd October, 1887, the condition of the mine was but little improved, consequently I again wrote to the owners.

13. *Archer's Coal-mine, Boatman's*, is merely a private mine, and was visited in June, 1887.

14. *Boatman's Coal-mine, Boatman's*.—Worked in the usual style of the district—no pillars, and the roof hanging on timber. I have written to Mr. Coghlan.

15. *Burke's Coal-mine, Boatman's*.—In October last the condition of this mine seemed a little improved. There was, however, no return, and the Act was entirely disregarded. The excuse was that Mr. Coghlan had been for some months very ill, and that therefore the mine and the last mentioned, both of which belonged to him, had not received attention.

16. *Phoenix Coal-mine, Reefton*.—Visited twice during 1887, the first visit having been already reported on. This mine is very carelessly worked, the main level being far too wide. My letter of the 7th July, mentioned in the last report, was apparently wasted, for on the 24th October there was no improvement, except in so far that the old level had been abandoned, and one of more reasonable dimensions was used in its stead. Consequently, on the 24th November I addressed a final warning to Mr. Williams, the owner, who replied on the 12th December that my suggestions should receive attention.

17. *Progress Coal-mine, Reefton (known some years ago as the Oriental)*.—Exceedingly badly worked, so much so that the solitary miner employed there expressed to me his apprehension of danger. There was no second outlet, consequently no return, no attempt at keeping the Act, and