

that will increase the percentage of lump coal; the timbering required is varied to suit working-conditions, and unnecessary sets are replaced with props, thus reducing costs. There is, however, a decided tendency to remove only the more easily accessible coal that can be cheaply mined; this applies more particularly to the Reefton, Seddonville, and Nelson districts, where the leases are larger.

FATAL ACCIDENTS.

During the year six men lost their lives while employed in or about the coal-mines of the West Coast Inspection District.

James Berry, collier, died on the 1st February as a result of injuries received in the Millerton Mine on the 23rd December, 1927. A piece of stone falling from the pillar-edge broke his shovel-handle, driving the broken portion into his groin.

On the 28th June Robert Crawford, a shiftman, was killed by a fall of coal.

On the 2nd July James Melling, collier, was killed instantly by a fall of coal in the Cardiff Bridge Mine.

On the 25th July Thomas Middleton was smothered by loose coal in the Millerton Mine. He was working in a stope when the side of the bin gave way; falling through the side of the bin, he was covered by the sliding coal.

George Gardner, engine-driver, employed at the Liverpool State Colliery, died on the 14th October as a result of injuries received from the explosion of a boiler.

On the 13th November Harry Chilton, collier, was killed by a fall of roof-coal in the Blackball Mine.

SERIOUS NON-FATAL ACCIDENTS.

On the 15th April John Henry, deputy, employed in the Millerton Colliery, was caught by a fall of roof-coal and his left leg was broken in three places.

On the 16th April Thomas Floyd, collier, had his leg broken by a fall of coal in the Wareatea (Denniston) Mine.

On the 21st April James Reid had his collar-bone broken by a fall of coal in the Stockton Mine.

On the 7th July Michael Douthett was pinned under a brake-car on the Stockton loco-road. Both legs were broken.

On the 31st July Sidney Provis, collier, was caught by a fall in the pillar-workings of the Clele Mine. His pelvis was broken in two places.

On the 11th August Arthur Eager, collier, had his leg broken by a fall of coal in the Matchless Mine.

DAGEROUS OCCURRENCES.

(Regulation 82.)

On the 5th February the morning deputy employed in the old Cardiff (Dove's Mine) discovered smoke on the main drive; further examination proved that an old fire from an adjoining mine had broken through No. 4 fire-stopping. Gas-explosions drove the workmen from the mine. The main drive was then shot in and the mine abandoned.

On the 18th February smoke was found issuing from Calder's section, old Dip Mine, Millerton Colliery. The smoke was cleared by ventilation, and the fire was discovered on the goaf edge. Concrete stoppings were erected and the fire sealed off.

On the 21st April smoke was noticed coming from the old dip workings, Reefton Coal Co.'s Mine. A connection was made to the pump, and the fire extinguished with water.

On the 13th December an active fire was found to exist in Kruger's section of the Ironbridge Mine, Denniston. Attempts to put out the fire with water failed. Stoppings were then erected and the fire sealed off.

PROSECUTIONS.

Only one information was laid during the year. The case was dismissed.

SOCIAL AMENITIES.

At the larger mines facilities in the nature of clubs and libraries have been provided and are extensively patronized. At Runanga the residents possess a bowling-green, tennis-court, gymnasium, library, club, and swimming-baths. The Horticulture Society hold flower-shows throughout the year, and the picture entertainments are run by the local union in the union's hall. At Roa the tennis-court and library are well supported. At Blackball a combined library and club and swimming-baths provide recreation. At Denniston a full-sized bowling-green has now been completed. The tennis-court has, however, been allowed to fall into disrepair. The library and club are well fitted up with reading-room, book-room, billiard-room, &c. A small cottage hospital is situated midway between Burnett's Face and Denniston. At Millerton the tennis-courts are well kept and extensively used. A full-sized bowling-green is nearing completion. A large football-field and recreation-ground has been constructed by filling in a gully, carting soil, and sowing grass. At Granity the local Beautifying Society have filled in a swamp and formed small parks. The playing-field is now being improved. The library and reading-room is well patronized.

SOUTHERN INSPECTION DISTRICT (Mr. GEORGE DUGGAN, Inspector).

COAL-OUTPUT.

During the past year the total output from the coal-mines in the Southern Inspection District again shows a decrease. In 1927 it was 463,019 tons, whereas in 1928 it reached only 454,025 tons. From the Nightcaps and Ohai field only 216,463 tons were produced, against 240,678 tons in 1927. It is pleasing to note that the South Otago mines produced 18,523 tons more than during 1927, and those of North Otago show an increase of 902 tons. The output from the Kaitangata Coal Co.'s mines increased by 23,659 tons, from the Linton mines by 8,197 tons, and from the Mossbank Coal Co.'s mines by 7,291 tons. Labour disputes have been few, but the large number of miners unemployed, or working only part-time, is far from satisfactory, and it is to be hoped that further uses will soon be developed for our brown coals and lignite, otherwise the constantly extending use of electricity for heating and power purposes will throw many of our miners out of employment. The methods of mining slowly show improvement here, but there is still room for better mining methods, particularly in the lignite and low-grade brown-coal mines. In view of the increase in first cost, consequent upon the adoption of improved methods, and the gradually decreasing sale through the extended use of electrical appliances for heating and cooking, managers and owners are reluctant to alter their methods of work. Still, heavy losses have occurred through falls and fires, caused by the extraction, during the first working, of too high a percentage of coal from near the mine-entrance. The fire in the Whiterig Mine, which broke out early in 1928, and caused the abandonment of the mine, was, in my opinion, chiefly due to the small pillars which had been made within a few chains of the surface. Much harm can be done in this manner between an Inspector's visits, and, once done, there is no way of remedying the evil. For bord-and-pillar working the panel system is consistently recommended, and, as at the Wairaki and Linton Mines, an endeavour is being made by a few of the mine-managers to follow that system, but the old checkerboard method is hard to eradicate.

Mount Torlesse Mine.—This mine was abandoned in April, and the coal lease was determined in December.

Austin's Claystone Mine, Sheffield.—Two men have been employed during the past year on the few pillars remaining near the main dip. These will all be out within a few months.

Springfield Mine.—A few tons for local use were won from near the outcrop.