

Liverpool Colliery, Rewanui.—On 11th August, 1938, notification was received that a fire had occurred in No. 1 east section, Morgan seam. An inspection was made the next day in company with the superintendent and mine-manager. The fire had been discovered at the head of No. 1 east bank near the goaf by the examining deputy during his inspection before the commencement of work. Temporary stoppings were erected to seal off the fire, and these were later enclosed within three concrete stoppings. On completion of the concrete stoppings a start was made to extract pillars in order to enlarge the goaf on the return side of the fire. Work was carried on for a period of two months, when the intake stopping showed signs of heating. Coal-production was suspended and a line of temporary wooden stoppings erected around the fire area. All stoppings were built of wood, which will later be reinforced with concrete.

Wallsend Colliery, Wallsend.—On 20th September, 1938, the mine-manager notified that owing to a heavy gas-feeder fouling the north-east corner of No. 1 panel the men were not permitted to enter the mine. The accumulation was not removed until approximately 9 a.m. on the morning of the 21st, and consequently the mine did not work on the 20th and 21st September.

Paparoa Colliery, Roa.—The mine-manager notified on the 28th September, 1938, that on the previous day, the day shift deputy had reported traces of fire-damp in the Aerial section. The manager was immediately instructed that no lamp or light other than a safety-lamp must be used in that section in future. Electric safety-lamps were installed, and the day shift deputy reported 40 cubic feet gas in the same place on the next day.

Wynndale Mine, Murchison.—On the 22nd October, 1938, the owner of this mine notified that he and the mine-manager had sustained slight burns to the face and arms as the result of an ignition of gas. Instructions were issued by telegram that no alteration must be made at the mine until the Inspector of Coal-mines had inspected the place and no light other than a safety-lamp must be used. When interviewed the next day the manager stated that on the 21st October, between 7.30 a.m. and 8 a.m., he examined the mine and found it in good order and free from gas. He then proceeded to the surface, made his report, and passed in the workmen. Shortly after 8 a.m. he and the owner entered the mine for the purpose of producing coal from No. 3 level. When they reached the working-face at approximately 8.20 a.m. with naked lights, which were in use at the mine, the ignition took place immediately. Instructions were therefore issued that only safety-lamps must be used in future and that a fan must be installed at the mine before operations recommenced. Safety-lamps are now used and a fan has been installed.

Wallsend Colliery, Wallsend.—On the 1st November, 1938, the mine-manager notified that the morning examining deputy had discovered an accumulation of gas in the top corner of No. 1 panel (the place where a former accumulation had occurred on 20th September). The workmen were not allowed to enter the mine. The gas was cleared during the day.

Dobson Colliery, Dobson.—On 8th November, 1938, notification was made that on the previous day a very strong feeder of gas was met with in the east side dip giving 2 per cent. of gas in the general body of the return air. All workmen were immediately withdrawn and the section fenced off.

Wallsend Colliery, Wallsend.—On 24th November, 1938, a notification was received that the examining deputy reported 200 ft. of gas in the top corner of No. 1 panel due to a screen being left open the previous shift when timber repairs were being done, and that the gas was clearing. Later the gas increased, and the workmen adjacent were withdrawn. The feeder was finally cleared at 8 p.m.

Hunter and Party's Mine, Rewanui.—On 2nd December, 1938, notification was received that an explosion had occurred and that the mine-manager had been severely burned. An inspection was immediately made when it was found that an ignition of gas had taken place at approximately 7.20 a.m. while the manager was making his morning inspection. A small quantity of gas appeared to have accumulated during the night and the manager evidently inspected the working-place with a naked light instead of a safety-lamp and ignited the gas. The working-place was very low, and this probably accounted for the severe burning received. Instructions were issued that only safety-lamps must be used in the mine in future. The manager was taken to the hospital suffering from shock and succumbed to his injuries on the 26th December. Safety-lamps are now in use at the mine.

Blackball Colliery, Blackball.—At the request of the manager, this mine was visited on the 12th December, 1938, for the purpose of making an inspection to ascertain whether coal-production could continue in safety. On the 6th December all workmen had been withdrawn from the mine by the manager on account of extraordinary crush on the small pillars and a definite creep developing, and, in addition, spontaneous heating was observed. Upon inspecting the mine it was apparent that should operations continue there was danger of serious accidents and the loss of valuable plant. The plant was then taken out of the mine. The manager agreed to erect eight stoppings in the main intake and return airways to seal off the heated area.

PROSECUTIONS UNDER THE COAL-MINES ACT, 1925.

Four informations were laid during the year. One was withdrawn, and three convictions were recorded as follows :—

A mine-owner was charged under section 81 (1) of the Coal-mines Act, 1925, with failure to furnish a half-yearly coal output return, together with number of men employed above and below ground. This information was withdrawn on receipt of the return.

An information was laid under section 128 (2) of the Coal-mines Act, 1925, against a mine-manager (being a fireman-deputy) for failure to make a full and accurate report of the inspection of the mine, he not having reported finding a quantity of inflammable gas in a working-place. He was convicted and fined £3 and costs.

A mine-owner was charged with failure to keep at the office of the mine a full and accurate plan of the workings of the mine showing the workings, boundaries, &c., as required by section 79 (1) of the Coal-mines Act, 1925, as amended by section 11 (1) of the Coal-mines Amendment Act, 1937. He was convicted and fined £2 and costs.

A mine-manager was charged with failure to provide an adequate signalling-appliance on a jig as required by section 121 (7) of the Coal-mines Act, 1925. He was convicted and fined £2 and costs. This prosecution arose out of circumstances regarding an accident at the mine causing serious injuries to a workman.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The interest in safety precautions has been fairly well maintained, but we feel that more could be done by underground officials to reduce the number of accidents in mines, by means of educating persons under their charge as to the causes and prevention of accidents. This information could be given to workmen by the officials during their visits to the roadways and working-faces, and same would tend to reduce the carelessness which is at times shown by workmen.

We are pleased to report that there has been a further increase in the use of "hard hats" by both truckers and miners, and we are again able to state that in several cases serious accidents have been prevented by the use of these hats.