

gasometer (which, considering we work with naked lights, is highly improbable), always ready to flow from every crevice whenever an opportunity occurs, and that it flowed in abundance from us into the old workings above, it would have been impossible for it to accumulate in a body, or even reach the part where gas was found, as along the main level was a series of stoppings which forced the scattered current into the extremity of the levels and returned by the boundary workings to the air-shaft in a confined body—the air-shaft being on the boundary line—so that gas given off from the dip workings would at once be swept up the return air-shaft, before being able to accumulate, which of itself is sufficient to prove the fallacy of such an absurd theory. And coming, too, from such an authority, to try to prove that the gas did not originate in the workings where found is simply making bad worse. There is abundance of proof to show that gas generated in the workings on either side, and why not in the centre, it being one and the same seam? As for the appearance of the gas again after the explosion, it must be borne in mind that ventilation has never been restored, and that, therefore, every opportunity has been offered for the collection of such. Hoping you will find space for this rather lengthy epistle.

I am, &c.,
W. M. SHORE.

Mr. Binns visited the mine as Government Coal Viewer on the 24th of January, and although upon his own statement to the jury and for the reasons then given, he did not make a thorough examination of the old workings, he still saw sufficient to induce him to warn the manager of the dangerous system of working, as the following extract (to which I desire to direct particular attention) from Mr. Binns' report to the Geological Department upon this subject will show:—

"Fige-damp exists in this mine, and every morning the working places (*but not the wastes*) are inspected by a fireman, who meets the men before they go into their working places, and informs them of the condition as regards gas. He does not, however, make any mark on the places, nor does he keep a report book. No regular system of ventilation exists to carry the air through the old workings, and I have informed Mr. Hodge that I consider the fact of a large waste of that description in a coal which is known to give off gas where naked lights are used constitutes an element of danger." Mr. Hodge, the manager, informs me, however, that gas has never been seen out by from the fault."

It will be observed, therefore, that although the manager was warned of danger by an experienced authority upon such matters (Mr. Binns having also, in the course of conversation, fully explained to him his views upon this subject), he does not appear to have been seized with due apprehension of the risk of continuing working under the conditions then existing.

Particular attention is also directed to a further extract from Mr. Binns' report of the 31st of January, contained in the Appendix, where it is stated that in consequence of what he saw at the Kaitangata mine, he predicted that unless the necessary precautions (of which it will be seen that he had informed the manager) were taken, fatal accidents must be expected, and that the mine was by no means unlikely to be the scene of such a disaster.

The following is the report of the evidence taken at the inquest, as published in the *Otago Daily Times* newspaper, of the 24th of February, and 4th and 11th of March, 1879:—

THE KAITANGATA CATASTROPHE.—THE INQUEST.

At 12:20 p.m., on Saturday, the Coroner's Court sat at the Bridge Hotel (where the bodies are lying), before the Coroner (Mr. E. H. Carew,) and a jury of sixteen, viz., Messrs. Alexander Mitchell, David Dunn (foreman), John Walker, William Bissett, William Carson, George Kidd, Hugh McFarlane, John Gordon, Allan Blackie, Charles Smail, Andrew Smail, Joseph Robertson, Alexander Bissett, P. F. Stoddart, James Muir, and Malcolm Morrison. Mr. Commissioner Weldon and Inspector Moore were present.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said: "Gentlemen, you are called together to inquire into the circumstances under which William Hodge and thirty-three others met their death. It is not possible to complete the inquest to-day, and it will be sufficient for you to identify the bodies, and then I can issue certificates for their burial."

The jury then viewed the bodies.

The Coroner remarked that he would only call evidence as to identification.

The bodies of the following men were then identified by Thomss Knowles, pit-head man:—Caleb Beardsmore, George Jarvie, James Beardsmore, jun., John McMillan, John Clarke, Daniel Lockheart, John Molloy, William Whinney, James Beardsmore, sen., Thomas Black, Thomas Frew, James Spiers, William Haly, Alfred Beardsmore, Daniel Buchanan, John Thomas Molloy, Charles McDonald, Edward Dunn, Thomas Smith, William Watson, Samuel Coulter, William S. Wilson, Joseph Beardsmore, William Hodge, John Clingin, Joseph Moulton, Barney McGee, John Ferguson. These men all went into the mine by the tunnel.

Joseph Robertson identified James Hall, his brother-in-law, a new arrival per the "Easterhill." David Dunn identified John Gage. John McDonald identified John Thomas Molloy and Edward Molloy.

The Coroner said all had now been identified except one of the Halls. That would be done at next sitting probably. The inquest was then adjourned till to-day at eleven a.m., and the witnesses were bound over in sureties of £100 each to re-appear.

THE ADJOURNED INQUEST.

The inquiry into the circumstances attending the colliery explosion at Kaitangata on the 21st ultimo, was resumed before Mr. Carew, R.M., of Milton, and a jury of sixteen, yesterday morning, at the Bridge Hotel, Kaitangata. Mr. Superintendent Weldon was also present.

Joseph Robertson added to his former evidence: I identify the body of William Parker Hall.

This completed the identification of the whole of the bodies.