

84, 85, and 86, were visited in the early part of 1880. They are now closed.
87 to 96.—All open-work.

SOUTHLAND DISTRICT.

97 to 99.—All open-work.

100. *Nightcaps Coal Mine, Otautau*.—Visited once, prior to my former report. Not in regular work; but there is a prospect of a considerable output from here.

101. *Preservation Inlet Coal Mine*.—Not visited, as no regular work has been carried on. I am indebted to Mr. W. Asher for the output given.

ACCIDENTS.

In the coal mines in the South Island districts during the year there have been nineteen accidents, two of which were unfortunately attended with loss of life. Twenty persons have been more or less seriously injured. Two explosions of fire-damp have occurred, causing, in the first case, one death, and injuries to one man; and, in the second, injuries to three men. One fatal accident was occasioned by a horse and set underground.

Explosions of Gas.

On the 3rd of March an explosion of fire-damp occurred in the Brunner Coal Mine, injuring two men—Robert Elliott, manager, and John Broadfoot, carpenter; the latter died on the day following, leaving a widow and a large family. At the time I was at the Nightcaps, about forty-five miles beyond Invercargill, but arrived at Greymouth (having attended an inquest *en route*) in time for the adjourned inquest on the 13th March. The facts of the case may be gathered from the following copy of depositions:—

Martin Kennedy, proprietor of the Brunner Coal Mine, being sworn, stated that he had viewed the body of the late John Broadfoot, and recognized the same. He was employed as a carpenter upon the works of the Brunner Mine; last saw him alive on Thursday, the 4th instant, at noon. He was suffering from burning. He informed me that he, in company with the manager, Mr. Elliott, went into the mine to set the turbine and fan in motion on Wednesday, the 3rd instant; that he had oiled the fan, and set it in motion; that Mr. Elliott and himself went to look at the pipes leading to the turbine, and also to examine the tanks from which the turbine takes its supply of water; in doing so, he turned back, for the purpose of taking the oil-feeder from the fan, and, in passing, the explosion took place, which caused the injuries he was then suffering from. The fan had been in motion about five minutes, and working at the rate of thirteen and a half revolutions per minute. He said he had been frequently there with a naked light, and did not apprehend any danger. He had been employed in the mine for about five years. The deceased erected the fan, and was aware for what purpose it was erected, which was to ventilate the stone-drift in the mine. I have seen Mr. Elliott, the manager, since the accident. He is too unwell to attend the inquest.

In reply to the foreman's question, whether the miners in the Brunner Mine are in the habit of carrying or using safety-lamps, stated that the only place that he was aware of where safety-lamps were used was in the stone-drift; naked lights being used everywhere else.

The foreman asked Mr. Kennedy if, in his opinion, the carrying of a safety-lamp, instead of a naked light, would not be additional security to the bearer of the lamp? Mr. Kennedy's reply was that he had no knowledge of mining, but he supposed it would be.

Richard Gregory asked Mr. Kennedy how long the fan had been stopped, prior to its being put into motion on the day of the accident. Mr. Kennedy was unable to answer the question definitely. In reply to Mr. Gregory, Mr. Kennedy stated that the face of the stone-drift is about 600 to 700 feet from the place. Mr. Elliott was aware that gas existed in the stone-drift.

Charles Morice, sworn: Stated that he is a legally-qualified medical man, and surgeon to the Greymouth Hospital. Received John Broadfoot on March 3rd into the hospital. He was suffering from extensive burns of the head, face, and trunk, and patches here and there about the extremities; the hands and arms extensively burnt. He died from the shock to the system about twenty hours after his admission. The burns are such as would be caused by an explosion of fire-damp.

Inquest adjourned until Saturday, the 13th day of March; to be held at the Court-house, Greymouth.

Saturday, the 13th of March, 1880.—The Jury met at the Court-house, at 11 o'clock a.m., on the application of the Inspector of Police, who stated that Mr. Elliott was unable to attend through sickness. The inquiry was adjourned to Brunnerton at 1 o'clock the same day, to Seaton's Hotel, Brunnerton.

Mr. George Jonathan Binns, Inspector of Mines, appeared on behalf of the Crown.

Martin Kennedy, recalled: Stated that the distance of the face of the fault drive is, from the place, about 1,000 feet, instead of 600 or 700 feet, previously stated. In company with Mr. Elliott, the manager, I went into the fan—this was about ten days prior to the accident. Mr. Elliott carried an oil lamp (a naked light), and I had a naked candle; we went in for the purpose of seeing the fan and turbine working; the fan was then going twelve revolutions by my own watch. Mr. Elliott then asked me to time it again to see how fast it could be driven; he moved the handle of the turbine, and, upon timing it again, I found it was going thirty-two revolutions. While it was going at that speed I went to the other side of the fan, and I held the candle in front of the wind of the fan, just to ascertain the force of the wind and to see if the wind would extinguish the candle; this I did for a couple of minutes. The fan was erected for the purpose of allowing the work to be continued in the stone-drift and removing the foul air from the workings in the stone-drift.

By Inspector Feast: After working some distance into the drift foul air was discovered, and the fan was erected to remove it. I believe the fan to be of an exhaustive nature to bring the foul air out. The working in the stone-drift had been discontinued for six months, pending the erection of the fan. When I went there it was for the purpose of testing how it would act; and when Elliott went there, on the occasion of the accident, it was for the purpose of setting it in permanent motion all night, so that the drift might be clear for working in the morning. The general arrangements for the working of the mine are under the sole control of the manager.

By Mr. Binns: I cannot say whether I objected to Special Rule 30 or not, but it is one which I would be likely to object to, as not necessary for the working of my mine. I am not aware that this rule has been adhered to. I recollect having a conversation with you about the mine, in Dr. Skae's office, about the middle of November. I remember your saying that you had written to Elliott, but I cannot say for certain that I saw the letter. I do not recollect your saying that my mine was the only one in New Zealand that gave you any uneasiness; but you said that the Brunner Mine was a cause of anxiety on account of the extent of the wastes. I do not recollect your saying that if I did not take care there would be a repetition of the Kaitangata affair. You said that you were anxious about the wastes, and I said that I would caution Mr. Elliott upon my return, which I did. Elliott replied that he examined the wastes weekly, and oftener, and that there was no trace of bad air in them; and in support of his statement he produced his weekly report book. After the manager's report, there did not appear to be any occasion for extra caution, as he reported everything was all right. [Ground plan of the working portion of the mine produced.] This plan shows all the workings of the mine up to the date of its compilation; but not those of the stone-drift. The plan bears date May 7th, 1879.

By Jurors: Am unable to state whether the regulations under "The Regulation of Mines Act, 1874," have been carried out in the Brunner mine. I believe they have as far as practicable. The manager has the sole employment of the men.

The jury adjourned to the private residence of Mr. Elliott.