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MINING FATALITY.

RECENT WALLOON ACCIDENT.

Inquiry Yesterday.

At the Ipswich Court House yesterday, an inquiry was held into the circumstances surrounding the accident which occurred at the Caledonian Colliery, Walloon, on the 2nd May, whereby Hermann Argow and William Patterson were fatally injured. Assessors who sat with Mr. J. Stewart Berge (Mining Warden), were: Messrs J. Brown, J. Barrowman, R. White, and W. H. Jones. Mr. J. Stafford, appeared for the Department of Mines; Mr. C. Kilpatrick for the men, and Mr. W. E. Lawrie for the management.

Patrick McCreary, horse-driver, employed at the Caledonian Colliery, remembered an accident to Argow and Patterson on the 2nd May. Witness was on the pit bottom when the accident happened, and he heard Argow come out from the scene of the accident and mention his name. Argow told witness there was a gas explosion, and he and his mate (Patterson) had been burnt. A few yards down the road the manager was standing, and witness called out to him. Witness took Argow to the surface. On returning to pit bottom he saw the manager with Patterson, Argow appeared to be badly burned. Witness did not go into the place where the accident occurred.

To Mr. Kilpatrick: Argow was not treated below, but he understood he received first aid on the surface.

To Mr. Lawrie: Argow had no cov-

It was 16 years since the last serious accident occurred at the Caledonian. They had never had sufficient gas through the falls to necessitate the use of safety lamps in any section. They had three deputies at the Caledonian, and the total output was 120 tons. If the deputy started at 5 a.m. it would make no difference to witness.

To Mr. Stafford: They had never found a fall giving off sufficient gas to be of danger, and he did not think there was a possibility of such a fall occurring.

To the Warden: Patterson was able to converse when found. He said they had lit some gas, and asked how Argow was. Witness asked him if he was badly burnt, and Patterson asked him to get some things and wrap him up. On the surface he asked Argow how he felt, and he replied he thought he was badly burnt. Argow further said, "I was pushing a waggon of timber when I came to a dead end of the road. While getting round the waggon I must have lit the gas."

John Berghauser, deputy at the Caledonian colliery, said he went into the place after the accident occurred. On inspection he found gas on the "return side" of the accident. He had examined that place at 10 past 6 the same morning. There was no fire damp then. The men who were burnt were working on the level road. There were some old workings at the rise to the left of the road and witness inspected these places. The places were about 40 yards off the level road and it was in one of these workings that he found the gas. Since then he had made another inspection and found fire damp. In every place examined witness made a mark (the date and his initials). He had been at the places

could be heard in any part of mine.

Thomas Haley, mine deputy, said that after the accident he and Berghauser found gas off the main way. There was a waggon standing at the road end where the men had been working, and it was near here gas was found. They saw a screw just back from the scene of the accident. It was fastened up. Witness had found fire damp in No. 4 level wall, down the dip. There had been a report of the finding of fire damp on the 20th April. When the men Roberts reported there was gas in the room witness made an inspection with a safety lamp, and found no gas. Since the accident the deputies commenced their inspections earlier. Instructions had been issued for them to examine the dead ends between working places. The fan was always going when witness went down in the morning.

To Mr. Kilpatrick: Witness had very rarely found gas in the mine, always made an entry in the record book when gas was found. Roberts was a capable man, and likely to know gas when he saw it. The fact that witness did not find gas in Roberts's place wouldn't mean Roberts did not see it. Witness thought sufficient time was allowed him to make his inspections.

To Mr. Lawrie: He doubted whether Roberts lit fire damp. When witness went to Roberts's place a man was sitting on a bench and lit an open lamp. He had previously fired a shot. Witness had known the fumes from explosions burnt and thought this might have been the case at Roberts's place.

To the Warden: After the accident Berghauser said to witness, "There must have been a fall. Elsewhere

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and Mr. W. E. Lawrie for the management.

Patrick M'Greary, horse-driver, employed at, the Caledonian Colliery, remembered an accident to Argow and Patterson on the 2nd May. Witness was on the pit bottom when the accident happened, and he heard Argow come out from the scene of the accident and mention his name. Argow told witness there was a gas explosion, -and he and his mate (Patterson) had been burnt. A few yards down the road the manager was standing, and witness" called out to him. Witness took Argow to the surface. On returning to pit bottom he saw the manager with Patterson, Argow appeared to be badly burned. Witness did not go into the place where the accident occurred,

To Mr. Kilpatrick: Argow was not treated below, but he understood he received first aid on the surface.

To Mr. Lawrie: Argow had no coat. Several articles of his own clothing were taken to the surface.

The Warden: About 15 minutes elapsed from the time Argow called out till he reached the surface.

To ~'. Lawrie: Argow talked to witness all the way going up. From the manner in which he talked witness did not think he -was so seriously injured.'

To Mr. Stafford: He did not refer to the accident, save for stating there had been an explosion. "

At this stage Mr. Kilpatrick asked if it was proper for witnesses to be present.

The Warden answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Lawrie said the manager had a right to be present even though he was a witness. He had never before heard of the manager being excluded from the hearing.

Mr. Kilpatrick entered an objection to the presence of the manager.

The difficulty was overcome by the manager giving evidence before any further witnesses were heard.

Arthur Boughen, manager of the colliery, in the course of his evidence, stated he sent M'Greary to the surface with Argow who said "We've lit some gas up there boss: will I be all right?" Witness went to No. 2, south section, where he found Patterson in a sitting position. He got some clothes and wrapped up the injured man. Patterson appeared to have been more badly burnt than Argow. On the surface first aid was rendered by S. Davis (the clerk), and witnesses. The two men were later removed by the ambulance to the hospital, where they died. They were waiting half-an-hour on the surface before the ambulance arrived. Witness made an in,

specification of the place where the accident occurred, and found gas. This was about 30 yards back from where the men were actually working. The deceased were re-timbering an air way, and had been working there for four days previous to the accident. Witness only returned from his holidays the day of the accident. He had given the deputy instructions to have the work done. Prior to going on, witness made an inspection of the place, and found no fire-damp. Serghauser was deputy for this section, and he was supposed to examine these places. The deputy informed witness he had made an inspection on the morning in question. The following Monday witness made an inspection with Inspector Arbuckle. They got up to the face of two places. Witness noticed the marks indicating the date of the deputy's inspections, and one was the 2nd May. This may have been there on the day of the accident, but witness had not noticed it on previous inspections. The deputy went down at 5.30 a.m. and had 15 or 16 working places to inspect. The mine started operations at 7 o'clock. The deputy met the men at pit bottom about 1.16 a.m. Witness did not think sufficient time had been allowed the deputy to make careful inspection, as required by the regulations. Since the accident an additional half hour for inspections had been allowed. Three years ago fire damp had been detected in this quarter. A fall had evidently occurred since the 13th May (when witness made his inspection), and this would account for an accumulation of fire-damp after an absence of three years. Such a fall would prevent any circulation of air. He thought the fall had liberated the fire-damp, the air from that section ventilated other sections of the mine. During witness's holidays there were reports of fire-damp in that ventilating district. Berghauser had a certificate, and was a careful man. He had been deputy at the Caledonian for nine years. Witness had been manager for 25 years. There was always a probability of finding gas in falls of the roof at this colliery. Knowing this he thought the carrying of open lamps was not the wisest method.

To Mr. Kilpatrick: The fall occurred in the mine at 5 o'clock. The fall referred to must have fallen on the morning of the accident. He did not know definitely, if this was the case. It did not appear to be a "convenient fall." Gas had been reported in this colliery at odd times. The Act provided that such findings should be placed in the record book. Gas had been found two or three times during

the past few years, and hlie thoughti these a lad been noled. He was noti "ware an entry had been made in the record book when Roberts said he found gas. The Mine Inspector's al-i tention was drawn to the reported finding of gas. The ambu:Lnce bear er at the mine was absent from work on the day of the accident. They hliad; i small ambulance kit at !it bot tom. There was plenty of room at and adjacent to pit bottom, where men i could be treated. He thought It would be a good idea if ambulance appliances were installed below.

To Mr. fawrle: 'Eachi deputly lhal n ipECIAL kit of appliances for u.ce it case of acticlDenl. On the surface there swas kept a large Supply of numateriln. It was 10 years since the last serious accident occurred at the Caledonlan. They had never had sufficient gao through the falls to necessitter the use of safety lamps in any section. They had three deputies at the Cale donian, and the total output was 120 tons. It the deputy started at 5 a.m. it would make no difference to wit ness.

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at the face. Before the accident it was hanging down. After the accident it was lifted. This had been done by the men on their own account. The fact that it had been lifted would account for an accumulation of air. Witness inspected over 20 places each morning. Up to the time of the accident witness went below at 6 o'clock, but since the occurrence he went down half-an-hour earlier. It was about 60% yards from the tunnel mouth to the farthest place inspected by witness. It was about 250 yards (6 where the accident took place. He spent about three minutes at each place and was always able to get back in time to meet the men at 7.15 a.m. The fan started at 5 o'clock and was always running when witness went down. Witness had been deputy at the colliery for 12 years, and he knew fire-damp had been reported there. Witnesses: - 1, 5'y when the abandoned place: fall occurred were worked found fire-damp there. ... a. was then caused from falls in the roof. There was a possibility of getting gas after any fall at the Caledonian. Mr. R. Lawrie was acting as manager on the day the men started to work. Witness did not tell Lawrie he was sending the men there. When a place was tested and found safe, witness would not give the men a safety lamp. The men should be provided with safety lamps when they were working in a place where there was likely to be a fall. He did not give them safety lamps on the occasion in question, because he did not anticipate a fall. Witness was expecting a fall if he did not re-timber. When men were doing such work in future he thought it would be wise to give them safety lamps. He did not think it was necessary to acquaint Mr. Lawrie with the fact that he had sent the men to the old road.

To Mr. Kilpatrick: Witness was 650 yards away when the accident took place. He did not know whether a fall had driven the gas on to the men's lamps. It would have been possible for the fall to have taken place between his morning inspection and the time of the accident. Witness thought it possible to inspect all the places in an hour and a half. Some of the men at the colliery had been complaining of insufficient air currents. -

To Mr. Lawrie: When witness found blowers of gas they were not of long duration. The fall was not there when he made his morning inspection. At a later stage Mr. Kilpatrick objected to Mr. Lawrie asking leading questions.

Sfr. Lawnrle: Sit downl. T didn't interfere with you, You tried to trick and trap tile witness and did not succeed.

The Warden advised "Mr. Lawrie not to ask leading questions when he was touching on a material point. Answering further questions witness said if the road were full of gas there would be an explosion, which could be heard in any part of the mine.

Thomas Haley, mine deputy, said that after the meoldest he and Berg hauser found gas off the main air way. There was a waggon standing at the road end where the men had been working, and It was near here the gas was found. They saw a screen Just back from the scene of the accident. It was festened up, Witness had found fire damp in No. 4 long wall, down the dip. There had been a report of the finding' of fige damp on the 20th April. When the man Roberts reported there was gas in his room witness made an inspection with a safety lamp, and found no gas. Since the accident the deputies commenced their inspections earlier, as Instructions had been lessued for them to examine the dead ends between working places. The fan was always going lwhen witness went down ~i the mning.

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To thle Warden: After the accident Bergihauser said to witness. "There must have been a fall. Else where did tihe gas come from." Witness did not see a fall, and could give no information about it.

The inquiry at this stage was adjourned till Monday next