

BURRUM COAL FIELD.

TORBANLEA COLLIERY.

The Torbanlea Colliery is situated about 14 miles in a north-easterly direction from Maryborough, and about 2 miles south-east of the Burrum River.

The main, or No. 3 Shaft, is situated nearly a mile west of the Maryborough-Bundaberg Railway Line, and is connected therewith by a private branch line.

The shaft is 350 feet in depth to the Torbanlea Seam of Coal.

The area of the property is 700 acres, and in addition to this 140 acres are leased on royalty from an adjoining proprietor. The sinking of No. 1 Shaft was commenced by Mr. James Robertson, the present owner, in the year 1882, and the first coal was sent away in March of the following year. The present No. 3 Shaft was sunk in the year 1886. Some twelve or thirteen years ago the mine was purchased by the Isis Investment Company, and was worked by them for several years, but on the 1st January last Mr. Robertson resumed possession from the liquidator of that Company.

The Burrum Seam was the first to be worked in No. 1 Shaft at a depth of 110 feet. This seam, however, was soon abandoned on account of its quality, for the Torbanlea or Lapham Seam, which was passed through in the shaft 30 feet higher up, and this bed of coal has been worked ever since. The seam is very similar to that in the Burrum Mine, but is on the average much thicker, sometimes going to 6 feet, but divided by a band of from 6 to 18 inches in thickness.

DESCRIPTION OF WORKINGS.—The workings where the explosion occurred are reached by a main level from the shaft at a depth of 350 feet, running in a north-westerly direction for a distance of about 700 yards. At this point a fault was met with which throws down the coal about 110 feet, and a stone-drift about 66 yards in length, was put in to cut the coal on the north-western side of this fault. On meeting with the coal again a pair of levels was driven from which the coal has been worked to the rise and to the dip.

The "dip" or inclined plane, which is 88 yards from the stone-drift, was driven for a distance of 220 yards when the fault was met with, which comes round, as shown on the Plan (Appendix No. IV.), thus unexpectedly limiting greatly the amount of coal that could be won from this part of the mine.

The coal has been worked out over an area of about 100 yards by 50 yards on the south-eastern or right-hand side of the "dip," but very little coal has been taken from the other side of the "dip," as it is of an inferior quality.

The system of working is that known as stoop and room, or pillar and stall. The rooms are 7 yards in width and 30 yards in length, leaving pillars between 14 yards in width, which are afterwards taken out. **At the time of the accident the last of the pillars were being taken out, and the Commission were informed that it was the intention of the management to close the mine in a few more days.**

EXAMINATION OF MINE.—It had been the custom ever since February, 1896, the date of the accidents to two miners named Ritchie and Keene, to have all the working places in the colliery examined by a fireman in the morning before the men were allowed to go to work. This examination was invariably made with a safety lamp, and a chalked mark, showing the date of the examination, was placed upon a shovel or on the face of the coal to show the miners that their working places had been duly examined.

The miners were kept at an appointed "station" until the fireman reported to them that the working places were safe. A report of the examination was entered daily in a book kept for that purpose in the office at the surface.

In addition to this the manager examined the mine at least two or three times a week, and once a week wrote a report as to the condition of the mine, machinery, and plant.