

"*Clause 26, Subsection (23).*—Cages have not been provided with suitable appliances to prevent their sudden fall down the shaft, also to prevent their coming in contact with the poppet-heads.

"*Clause 26, Subsection (26).*—In portion of the shaft ladders are fixed in a vertical position.

"*Clause 26, Subsection (24).*—Spring-catches or automatic self-acting doors or tumblers have not been fixed on the skids or guides below the poppet-heads to prevent the cage from falling down the shaft when detached by the rope or chain over-winding.

"*Clause 26, Subsection (45).*—Inflammable gas being found in the mine. No barometer or thermometer has been fixed near the shaft on the surface, the readings of which should be daily recorded.

"*Clause 26, Subsection (48).*—No copy of the Act kept at office.

"If you read over the Act you will find other clauses that have not been complied with. It is my duty to lay information against you for failing to comply with these clauses of the Act; but I have only done so in four cases, where there is immediate danger to men's lives through your neglect; and I trust this will be sufficient to cause you in future to act up to not only the letter but the spirit of the Act.

"I have, &c.,

"JAMES M. McLAREN, Inspector of Mines.

"Joseph Geary, Esq., Manager, Kamo Colliery."

These cases were tried on the 19th February by Mr. Clendon, Resident Magistrate, at Whangarei. Mr. Geary pleaded guilty in each case. Being the first cases under the new Act I did not press for heavy penalties, my aim being to show mine-managers that they must conform to the law. A light penalty was therefore inflicted in each case, carrying, of course, solicitors' fees and all expenses. In regard to the state of the mine at the date of my visit (14th February), the ventilation was exceedingly bad—in fact, the air was perfectly dead in the mine. The upcast did not seem to be acting at all, although on the day of my visit the weather was more favourable for ventilation than it had been for some weeks. The state of the mine in this respect is shown by the fact that, within three days after I had laid the information, the men had all to be drawn from the mine. Their candles would not burn; and it is a well-known law that where a candle will not burn a miner cannot live. I several times inquired of Mr. Geary what had been done to destroy the ventilation. His reply was, "That it was the same as it always was." But I knew there must be some cause, so I visited by myself the two surface levels to the rise of the old workings, which had been specially left open to draw the foul air from the mine. I found these closed, and the air stagnant. After patient inquiry and investigation I found these old workings had fired some time ago, and that both levels or drifts had been regularly built across, in order to stifle the fire. This explained the matter. The two main exit airways had been closed up, and no new openings provided. The only other upcast open is a small shaft 5ft. by 2½ft. The area of the downcast shaft is 90 square feet, and the total area of this upcast to ventilate the two levels or seams of coal, containing some miles of workings, is only 12½ square feet; and no furnace, fanners, water-blast, or other artificial means being tried to force it. When I left, on the 21st instant, the manager was trying to fix a water-blast, which had formerly been in, but had been removed. If he succeeded in fixing it, it cannot have acted well, as I hear the mine was again idle for two days last week on account of foul air through want of ventilation. As regards the winding ropes in the main shaft, which is 240ft. deep, I found one of them ripped, and both very much frayed and worn. Mr. Geary himself acknowledged in Court that these ropes were condemned, and yet he had never even taken the simple precaution required by clause 26, subsection (20), of the Act to test the ropes to double the weight they had to carry. If any accident had occurred through these ropes breaking while men were being raised or lowered Mr. Geary would, to a certainty, be tried for manslaughter; and it is to be hoped that my action will cause him to attend to his duties in future, and thus prevent such a grave charge ever being laid against him. In the working in the No. 2 or lower seam the creep has set in, and as this seam gets opened out and worked I expect serious difficulties will have to be encountered. While in the Whangarei District I accidentally learned that about December two separate accidents occurred in this mine, whereby one miner named Cadman had his arm broken and another called Ferguson was crushed about the body through a truck accident. Neither of these cases were reported, as required by clause 50 of the Coal Mines Act. The output from this mine for the year ending the 31st December, 1886, was 21,944 tons, the average number of men employed being sixty-seven.

3. *Whauwhau or Whangarei Mine, near Whangarei.*—Since my last report till the beginning of the present year the whole of the work has been done to the rise; but since, the coal has been opened to the dip-workings, which had been standing for some time. The dip of the coal, as mentioned in my last report, still continues to the north, and from surrounding indications it would appear as if the seam would ultimately join the Kamo workings, which are only about a mile distant. At the date of my last visit I found the manager, Mr. Love, had had some difficulty in regard to ventilation, and had just completed an additional 20ft. to the height of his upcast or ventilation chimney, making it a total height of 70ft. from the furnace. This furnace is only used in sultry weather, when the air is sluggish. The furnace was not lighted while I was in the mine, and, though the coal towards the dip was giving off gas freely, yet, though I examined carefully, it did not seem to lodge anywhere, the ventilation being sufficient to dispel it. In August last Mr. Love reported to me that a roadsman named Edward McGlashin had his ankle broken on the self-acting incline tramway in the mine. It appears he signalled the empty trucks up, but he thoughtlessly got in the way of the full ones when they came down, with the result mentioned. The output for the year from this mine is 9,003 tons, and on the average fifteen men are employed.

WAIKATO DISTRICT.

4. *Waikato Mine.*—With the exception of a great fire that broke out in the old workings near the north-eastern boundary, there is nothing special to report in regard to this mine since my last report.