

SECTION III.—ACCIDENTS.

The following is a summary of coal-mining accidents during 1915, with their causes :—

	Fatal Accidents.		Serious Non-fatal Accidents.	
	Number of Separate Fatal Accidents.	Number of Deaths.	Number of Separate Non-fatal Accidents.	Number of Persons injured, including those injured by Accidents which proved Fatal to their Companions.
Explosions of fire-damp
Falls in mine ...	4	4	6	6
Explosives... ..	1	1	1	3
Haulage	2	2	3	3
Miscellaneous—Underground...	1	1	1	1
On surface ...	1	1	1	1
Totals	9	9	12	14

The deaths were in the proportion of 2·16 per 1,000 persons employed. With the exception of the fatal accidents to James Colligan and Patrick McAuly, at Westport-Stockton colliery, so far as is generally known all the fatal accidents were due either to inadvertence of the sufferer or were unpreventable—*i.e.*, accidents common to the hazardous occupation of mining which cannot be prevented by regulations or reasonable supervision. In the southern inspection district, under Inspector E. R. Green, for the second successive year there has been no fatal accident, an excellent record. In the northern inspection district, under Inspector B. Bennie, there was but one fatality.

The following is a brief description of fatal accidents at coal-mines during 1915 :—

Name of Person killed.	Date of Accident.	Name of Colliery.	Cause of Accident, and Remarks.
John Arthur Williams ..	15/1/15	Blackball ..	This accident occurred at 7 a.m. A hang-fire charge of gelignite had occurred at 8 p.m. the previous evening at a working-face. The deceased and his mate were informed of this before they commenced work by the previous shift, the position of the shothole being pointed out to them by a deputy. The deceased and his mate, Edwin J. Evans (the only witness of the accident who survived), the latter stated, were cleaning up loose coal when the hang-fired charge of eleven hours previous suddenly exploded, with fatal results to Williams. Evans in his evidence at the inquest stated that they had in no way interfered with the hole. It is difficult to believe that a charge should hang fire for eleven hours. The Coroner brought in a verdict that no blame was traceable to any one.
Patrick McAuly	19/4/15	Westport-Stockton	Deceased, an aged man, was sent into a large coal-storage bin by means of the shoot-door to shovel small coal which had ceased to flow through the shoot-door. About fifteen minutes later one of his mates called out to him, and, getting no reply, looked up through the shoot-door and saw deceased in a crouched attitude near the door. Upon investigation he was found to be dead. The Coroner's jury brought in a verdict that death was due to a shock caused by a slide of coal whilst he was shovelling in the bins; with a rider that suitable hand-holds should be placed in storage-bins. The case was taken by the widow to the Arbitration Court, and she was awarded £488 compensation, the Court believing that some mishap befell deceased rather than that he died suddenly from disease, as advanced by the owners of the mine.
James Colligan	1/6/15	Ditto ..	Two miners, the deceased and Andrew Hunter, were working in a main heading at the newly opened eastern section. The face of the heading was approaching a "roll" in the roof, and had been narrowed from 9 ft. to 6 ft. 6 in. and had been reduced in height. The timber supports to the roof had been discontinued for 6 or 8 yards back from the face. Between the sandstone "roll" and the coal roof a thin wedge-shaped shell of indurated clay intruded. A piece of this, in length 7 ft. or 8 ft., and distant about 2 ft. from the face, fell, striking deceased and inflicting wounds and shock, from which he died the following day. This fatality was the subject of a prosecution of the mine-manager by the Inspector in the Magistrate's Court, and an appeal against a conviction to the Supreme Court, the mine-manager being finally acquitted. The charges against him was that he did not cause the drive in which deceased was employed to be securely protected.