

The following is a description of fatal accidents in connection with coal-mining operations during 1917:—

Date.	Name and Situation of Mine.	Name, Age, and Occupation of Person killed.	Cause of Accident, Nature of Injuries, and Remarks.
14th Dec., 1916; died 13th July, 1917.	Taupiri Extended Colliery, Huntly	James Gibson (31), clipper	At the commencement of the morning shift he was unclipping coal-tubs from the endless haulage-rope at the winding-shaft. The space between the shaft and unclipping-point was full of standing full tubs, leaving deceased only a few feet in which to stand to unclip the tubs approaching him on the endless rope. If he had failed to unclip a tub it would have collided with the standing full ones, and pushed some of them into the shaft. For security deceased signalled to the engine-driver to stop the rope while he unclipped an approaching tub. The signal was obeyed, but while deceased was unclipping, the rope restarted, and he was severely crushed between the approaching tub and the standing full tub nearest to him. The engine-driver states that he received a signal to start, probably from some other point on the haulage-road. The system of signalling on haulage-roads renders it necessary that great caution shall be exercised by persons working thereon. In this case the rope should have been stopped until the congested space near the shaft-bottom was free from standing tubs. The deceased also took a risk in working between the tubs. He died of acute mania seven months after the accident.
28th July	Blackball Colliery, Blackball	William Graham (40), miner	With his mate he was working in No. 2 dip, No. 6 bank. After getting coal they ran it down from the face to near the jig, and were about to jig when a fall of timber occurred followed by a fall of coal which buried deceased, killing him. The timber which fell consisted of sets, above which was built chocks to a height of 6 ft. or 7 ft. to the roof. Complaints had been made and opinions had been expressed by the cross-mates of deceased and those working in the bord opposite that the timber was not safe. The deputy, D. Veitch, in evidence stated at the inquest that he considered the place safe. At a subsequent inquiry held upon the application of the Inspector of Mines (under section 7 of the Coal-mines Amendment Act, 1914) the manager and underviewer were exonerated from blame, but it was found by the assessors that the Inspector was justified in asking for the inquiry.
30th July	" "	John Henry Tipler (41), deputy; Thomas Lindsay Abbott (28), shiftman	At 6 a.m. the two deceased together entered the mine, which that day was idle. Tipler (deputy) first made an inspection of No. 17 section. An obstruction had been caused by a fall in No. 17 section waterway, three days previous, thus blocking water back for a depth of about 6 ft. and a length of about two chains. As the two men did not return to the surface in the afternoon, a search was made, and they were found drowned, with minor injuries to their bodies, near to where the waterway crossed the No. 17 heading rope-road below where the fall had damned back the water, which was found to have broken away. The manager of the mine, Mr. John Watson, in his evidence at the inquest, stated that it was the deputy's duty to examine No. 17 section, and that he gave him instructions not to interfere with the water which he reported had accumulated in consequence of the fall in the waterway. There was no evidence given at the inquest or at the subsequent inquiry held by the Warden and two assessors, at the application of the Inspector of Mines (under section 7 of the Coal-mines Amendment Act, 1914), to prove what the deceased were doing immediately prior to the breaking-away of the impounded water. There is probability that they were attempting to remove the obstruction when it gave way and overwhelmed them. The management was exonerated of blame. The assessors recommended a better system by colliery officials of reporting inspections than appeared to be observed in the Blackball Mine. It is, however, necessary to state that, in addition to there being no report of the fall in the waterway entered in any of the mine officials' books, there was no danger or caution board erected to warn persons of the danger existing. The water could have been safely removed by diverting the inflow from the waterway down the No. 17 haulage-road at their crossing above the fall, and thereby permitting the accumulated water below to percolate through the fall and flow down the waterway, or the accumulated water could have been siphoned over the fall. A Supreme Court action for damages was commenced by the widow of T. L. Abbott for neglect by the company whereby his death was caused; the company did not, however, contest the case, but forthwith paid £750 compensation, being £250 above the maximum provided by the Workers' Compensation Act for death by accident during occupation in or about a mine. With regard to this accident, the absence of conclusive evidence as to any instructions given to deceased leaves the matter in an unsatisfactory position.