

MINING FATALITY AT EGANSTOWN

TWO MINERS SUBMERGED

Daylesford Herald Friday May 24th

One of those accidents which seem to be inseparable from the mining industry, occurred at Eganstown, between midnight of Tuesday and two a.m. Wednesday. In all probability the exact time of the occurrence will never be known. The scene of the catastrophe, was at the Adelaide mine, situated about four miles due west of Daylesford and about a mile north from Eganstown. The Co. was inaugurated to work the reef opened up and followed by the Old Adelaide Co. about forty years ago. That company sank a shaft and stoped the reef from it, to a depth of about 400ft. the exact locality of the workings underground is not now known, not one of the miners who then worked in the mine now surviving. The new Co. commenced their workings at a point of about 200ft. south-west of the old shaft. The new shaft is 11ft. by 4ft. and has attained a depth of 305ft. On the surface is a double 10in. cylinder steam winch, hauling from the shaft over full sized poppet heads. There is an air of permanency about the world already accomplished most re-assuring. The manager is Mr. John Daniel, and from him our representative, on Wednesday, got the following particulars of the occurrence. I was not at the mine at the time, being at Eganstown. About 3 am on Wednesday, Braceman Ernest Delaland came for me. He said there had been an accident at the mine, but he could not say its exact nature. The night shift men, Henry Thompson, and Robert Robinson came on at midnight. They sharpened some drills before going below. After they went down they sent away three buckets of water. Then they did not ring away the tank any more. The braceman and the enginedriver T. Hams, considered the water was out, and that the men below had started drilling holes. After a time a vibration was noticed on the rope and the men on the surface concluded, the men below were shifting the bucket for the purpose of sending up more water. The flow of water is such that a bucket requires to be sent up every fifteen or twenty minutes. No signal was, however, received from below, and after waiting another fifteen or twenty minutes, the driver and braceman listened at the collar of the shaft to hear if the men were drilling. They could hear no sound whatever, and the driver thereupon sent the braceman down the ladderway, to ascertain if anything was amiss. There are ladders in the shaft, from stage to stage, down to 275ft. From that stage to the bottom of the shaft, there is a chain ladder. The braceman encountered water about 150ft. up the shaft. The shaft is 305ft in depth, and timbered throughout. The braceman came up the shaft and told the driver what he had found. The braceman left for Eganstown to acquaint the manager of the occurrence, and the enginedriver went over to the Corinella mine, some three or four hundred yards, to obtain assistance. From there he got two men. They went down the ladderway. When I (the manager) arrived, I also went down the ladders. I met the Corinella men coming up. They told me they had cut away the centres between the compartments at the water level to see if the men were floating on the surface. There was no sign of them. I went down again, taking a tape with me. I measured the height of the water. It was 150ft 4in from the surface. I then made preparations to commence bailing. We started at noon, and by 3 o'clock had reduced the water nine feet. Asked for his theory as to the cause of the flooding of the shaft, Mr. Daniel said he considers there must have been an accumulation of water in the old workings, which broke away into the shaft at a point above where the men were working. He was unaware that there was any water in the old workings.

Nothing could be seen of it from surface examination, and, considering that the ground was opened forty years ago, and was of a soft nature, it was inferred that any workings would long since have come together, and thus there would not be any body of water in them. The afternoon shaftmen were Uriah Jones and John Norris. They fired their holes about 11.30 pm and cleaned them up before being relieved by Thompson and Robinson. Then there was no sign of water in the shaft more than the usual flow.

When an attempt was made to bring away the caddy which was at the bottom of the shaft, the winch was unable to move it. This is taken to mean that there must be an accumulation on top of it. Perhaps shaft timber or silt from the old workings. As it was impossible thus to get the rope to the surface for the purpose of commencing bailing, preparations were made for getting another rope in position. One had to be uncoiled from the drum, and its weight hanging in the shaft picked up. It had also to be removed from the pithead pulley and swung over into the corner of the shaft, where it was secured. Another rope had to be coiled on the drum, and got over the pulley wheel, and a tank attached. A tank was borrowed from the Corinella mine, and bailing was commenced at noon. By three o'clock, the water had receded nine feet in the shaft, and yesterday morning an impression of fifty feet had been made on it. Messrs. Devy and Buchanan, two of the directors of the mine, who happened to be in Daylesford, went out and assisted as much as possible to facilitate matters. Seeing there would be a strong demand made on the boiler, they arranged with Mr. McSweeney, manager of the gas works, for a temporary supply of coal, whilst a telegram was sent to Melbourne, ordering full supplies, which came to hand on Wednesday night, and were carted to the mine yesterday.

Thompson is a man from 47 to 59 years of age, is married, and has a family of ten or eleven. Some of them are grown up. Robinson is also married, and has two children.

The water yesterday morning was down fifty feet, but we learned that during the afternoon the progress was much slower. In all probability it is not yet more than sixty feet.