

NEW ZEALAND DISASTER: BRUNNER MINE EXPLOSION

WRITTEN BY: RYAN DWYER

The Brunner mine disaster happened in the small coastal town of Taylorville. In the incident, almost 70 men and 3 pit ponies died. This disaster is to this day the worst industrial accident in New Zealand.

THE EVENT:

This incident happened on March the 26th 1896 at exactly 9:47 am. The explosion happened in the small coastal town of Taylorville where Sir Thomas Brunner had found a seam of high-quality coal (this seam of coal is the same seam of coal that was mined at Pike River mine). Almost straight away he decided to start mining this great seam of coal. The mine operated for about 5 years before the disaster happened.



This is Brunner Mine at its peak.

SOCIAL ACTION- WHAT'S BEING DONE:

After the explosion, many things changed, workers weren't forced to mine in the crappy conditions because many major political parties promised better conditions to work in. More checkups on the mines and a tighter set of rules to follow (one of these rules is to have a limit of 30 people in a mine at once). Even though these rules helped prevent disasters like this there have been 2 more mine explosions since the laws have come. These 2 are the Strongman mine explosion and the Pike River mine. But the number of incidents has been cut down quite a lot, people still need to be careful in jobs like this: one simple mistake can end up killing and injuring lots of people.



These are the graves of 33 men that were too distorted to recognise after the explosion.

THE EFFECT:

Probably, the worst effect was the loss of life. 65 men died in the explosion (33 of which were too burnt and distorted to recognise) this was half of Brunner's workforce. Getting the bodies out of the mine also had a great effect on the rescuers many of which passed out in the mine due to blackdamp(a miners name for a mix of methane and nitroxide) after 2 days all of the bodies were recovered from the mine. When most of the bodies were identified the funeral service was held. 33 of the men were buried in one grave because they were too mangled to be identified, almost 6000 people showed up and the service stretched half a kilometre. About a week after the explosion Sir Brunner evicted the families of the victims out of the mine houses so he could hire more men. There were about 42 women widowed and 122 children were left fatherless. To this day the Brunner mine explosion is the worst industrial disaster in New Zealand.

MY OPINION:

I think this disaster could have never happened. I do understand the people back then would have had little idea of the consequence but 65 people in a mine at once with a poor ventilation system with very little safety rules. I believe that is a recipe for disaster. If Sir Thomas Brunner cared about his workers and not the money he would have had them follow rules and check on the systems at least once a month. I know that today the chance of this happening is lower with the improvement of technology and safety and equipment but its all really up to the miners. As Isaac Newton said "For every action, there is an equal and negative reaction".

THE CAUSE:

Well, there is no known reason why the mine exploded but experts think that there was an issue with the ventilation which caused too much methane gas to build-up and explode. (when methane gas builds up it can explode) it often happens when mixed with the right amount of oxygen. Other triggers are small sparks or even the gas itself.

The owner of the mine Sir Thomas Brunner, however, blamed it on human error Brunner blamed it on a group of people detonating an explosive charge in an area of the mine where no one should have been mining.



This is the team of men that got the bodies of the deceased out of the mine after the explosion.

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Pictures

Pictures from google images

