

# Accident Investigators

An Act for Inspection of Coal Mines in Great Britain

14 August 1850: Extract

The 1842 Mines Act had not dealt specifically with safety in mines, and only one Inspector (H.S. Tremenheere) had been appointed as a result, with only limited powers under the Act. The 1850 Coal Mines Inspection Act was therefore introduced in response to growing public concern at the frequency of accidents in mines, many of which were reported nationally. The Act increased the number of inspectors to four and empowered them to make underground inspections. Inspectors were also tasked with producing reports of conditions and safety standards in mines and were placed under the supervision of the Home Office.

*“...it shall be lawful for One of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State from Time to Time to appoint any fit Person or Persons to be an Inspector or Inspectors of Coal mines, and from Time to Time to remove any such Inspector or Inspectors...*

*And be it enacted, That it shall be lawful for any such Inspector as aforesaid to enter, inspect, and examine any Coal Mine or Colliery, and the Works and Machinery belonging thereto, at all reasonable Times and Seasons, by Day or Night, but so as not to impede or obstruct the working of the said Coal Mine or Colliery, and to make Inquiry into and touching the State and Condition of such Coal Mine or Colliery, Works and Machinery, and the Ventilation of such Coal Mine or Colliery, and the Mode of lighting or using Lights in the same, and into all Matters and Things connected with or relating to the Safety of the Persons employed in or about the same; and the Owner or Agent of such Coal Mine or Colliery is hereby required to furnish the Means necessary for such Entry, Inspection, Examination, and Inquiry...*

*And be it enacted, That if and when Loss of Life to any Person employed in or about any Coal Mine or Colliery shall occur by reason of any Accident within such coal Mine or Colliery...the Owner or Agent of such Coal Mine or Colliery shall, within Twenty-four Hours next after such Loss of Life, send Notice of such Accident, under the Hand of such Owner or Agent, to One of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State...and shall specify in such Notice the probable Cause of such Accident...and every Owner or Agent who shall neglect to send or cause to be sent such Notice as aforesaid within the Time aforesaid shall for such Offence be liable to a Penalty of not less than Ten Pounds and not exceeding Twenty Pounds...*

*And be it enacted That every Coroner holding an Inquest upon the Body of any Person whose Death may have been caused by any such Accident...adjourn such Inquest, and by Letter sent Two Days at the least before holding such adjourned Inquest, through the Post Office, addressed to One of such Secretaries of State, give Notice to such Secretary of State of the Time and Place of holding the same...*

*And be it enacted, That every Owner or Agent of any Coal Mine or Colliery who shall refuse or neglect to furnish to any Inspector appointed under this Act the Means necessary for making an Entry, Inspection, Examination, or Inquiry under this Act, and every Person who shall wilfully obstruct any such Inspector in the Execution of this Act, shall for every such Offence be liable to a Penalty of not less than Five Pounds and not exceeding Ten Pounds.”*