

UR 1957/189-191

DB/1

23rd September, 1957

MEMORANDUM:BEDFORD'S QUARRY, TAROONA

In company with the Assistant Chief Inspector Mr. Johnstone, I visited the stone quarry on Mr. Bloomer's Estate at Taroona on Thursday the 12th instant.

The quarry and plant was worked and operated by Mr. J. Bedford upon lease from Mr. Bloomer.

When we arrived at the site at about 10 a.m. the woodwork at the storage bins was burning, and a shed about thirty or forty feet away had been burnt to the ground.

The storage bins were constructed upon concrete foundations about fifty feet long by about eighteen feet wide and about twenty feet high, the framework being of steel construction and laced woodwork for the sides and floor of the three sections. Most of the woodwork had burnt out leaving the non-inflammable foundations and framework still standing.

The primary 21 inch jaw crusher and the electric driving motor were lying on the ground a few feet away from their original position on the East side of the bins. Broken parts of the machines were scattered over a wide area.

The secondary crusher and electric motor were also badly damaged, but remained in the vicinity of their original positions near the elevating gear on the East side of the bins.

A long piece of spent fuse was found leading into the secondary crusher and another long piece of spent fuse was found leading into the concrete foundations under the primary crusher. Evidence of blast was observed on the surrounding wooden structure in the vicinity of this latter spent fuse, where pieces of broken rock had struck the wooden posts, some of the uprights being badly cracked as a consequence.

At the West side of the bins it was found that an air compressor and electric motor and also the room housing this equipment were badly damaged. Evidence was found that charges of explosive had been exploded on top of the air compressor and the electric motor, and at the side of the crankcase of the compressor. The charge at the side of the crankcase had apparently been tied to the machine by means of rope as some pieces of rope remained on the machine. The other charges had been laid on top of the machines.

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The brick side walls of the building were badly cracked and leaned outwards, and the door at the entrance had been blown outwards from its hinges, parts of the damaged door were found several feet away. The concrete roof was resting precariously upon the damaged side walls.

Pieces of spent fuse were lying on the floor inside this building. The presence of this fuse and also that at other parts of the plant was clear evidence that the plant had been damaged by several charges of explosive which had been placed there and ignited by some person.

It is not possible to say what amount of explosive was used nor how many charges were exploded, but there was clear evidence of six charges at least having been fired.

The operator of the quarry Mr. Bedford, was issued with a Shotfirers Permit by Inspector Olds on the 6th June, 1957, and was the only person authorised to fire shots, and could be regarded as being in sole charge of the magazine which was approved for the storage of up to 50 lbs. of explosive. The magazine was situated well away from the quarry site.

Charles Davis Ltd. records show the following sales to J. Bedford:-

<u>Date</u>	<u>Explosives</u>	<u>Detonators</u>	<u>Fuse</u>
4.2.57	3 cases		
21.2.57	3 "		
25.3.57	3 "		
13.5.57	2 "		
21.5.57	1 "	100	
29.5.57	1 "	100	
11.6.57	1 "		
14.6.57	1 "		
25.6.57	1 "		
4.7.57		200	30 coils
8.8.57		200	30 "
Total	16 cases		

About six cases of gelignite returned to Giblin Street quarry on the 12th September, 1957.

The door of the magazine was fitted with an ordinary Rim Lock having a brass knob on the outside for the opening of the latch. When we visited the magazine the door was shut but unlocked and I was able to open the door without the aid of a key, as the locking mechanism was not engaged. Some marks upon the door frame in the vicinity of the lock indicated that the door had been forced open at some time, but it was not possible to say whether the marks were of recent origin. No steel tool was found in the vicinity which would indicate that the door had been forced open recently.

A quantity equal to about six cases of gelignite was stored in single cartridges upon the shelf at the back of the magazine. The cartridges had been taken out of the packets and placed side by side on the shelf. The condition of some of the cartridges indicated that they were old cartridges and had been kept for some time. The explosive was removed from the magazine upon instructions while we were at the site.

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No fuse or detonators were found at the site, and it was stated that the last piece of fuse and the last detonator had been used a few days previously and that a new supply was required before any more shots could be fired in the quarry.

As the magazine contained more than 50 lbs. of explosive and no Licence to Store had been issued for the Storage of Explosive it is clear that a breach of Rule 20, 1, Part 11 of the Mines and Works Regulation Act was committed, but, as the breach had no apparent bearing upon the cause of the destruction it is not recommended that any legal action be taken.

(D. Besford)

INSPECTOR OF MINES & EXPLOSIVES

The Director of Mines,  
Department of Mines,  
HOBART.