

had already given his decision. I had to put a plank in one of the levels where the water was rising. I called Mr. Cox's attention to how the bottom of the floor had risen in some parts 2ft. in seven days where the water was soaking.

79. What was that due to?—The water being allowed to be on the floor. I asked Mr. Cox to give an opinion as to the wisdom of letting the water in, and he said that, as Mr. Binns had already given his opinion that the mine should be stopped, he would not interfere with it, as he was only there once a year.

80. Was there this swelling of the floor while the mine was kept dry?—No.

81. Have you had any difficulty with the roof so long as it was kept clear of water?—No. There may have been a flake off the first part of the roof of a foot or two; not more than that.

82. As to the result of the flooding, will you describe to the Committee concisely and briefly the gradual effect of this flooding upon the mine?—About a month after the pumping had been stopped I made a careful inspection. I found that the water was touching the roof. As it rose up the incline shale and sandstone were coming away in large bodies, falling down in pieces of from 2 to 6 or 8 feet thick. I called Mr. Rich's attention to it.

83. Did you go frequently through the mine while the water was rising?—Yes.

84. What effect had it upon the floor?—The floor was swelling and lifting, and the roof and floor, in a manner of speaking, were coming together. About a month after, I again called Mr. Rich's attention to it—the falls were getting worse as the water rose and spread through the different workings—and again in June.

85. How far had the water come then?—About two chains up the mine.

86. What was the total distance to go?—Nearly seven. Mr. Rich then asked me to write to him officially. I told him that, even then, if we were allowed to pump the water out the damage might be stopped, because it was in the lower parts of the mine where the water had spread.

87. Do you know whether that letter was forwarded to the Government?—Yes. [Letters of 30th June (Williams to Rich) and 5th July (Rich to Minister of Mines), marked G and H, put in and read: *vide* Appendix.]

88. Did you observe anything after that with reference to the operation of water in the mine?—Whenever I saw Mr. Rich or wrote to him in Auckland I always called his attention to the increasing danger. The higher the water rose the more danger there was.

89. What was the danger you referred to?—Of the water breaking away the roof until it would break up to the sea and destroy my lower working. I could see that in a very short time, as the water rose, the roof would break and let the sea in, and it would then be impossible to work the lower seam.

90. You wrote that letter, and it was forwarded by Mr. Rich on the 5th July. What was the next step?—There was no alteration. This district still filled with water. The water still rose. Mr. Rich put in this application, and I understand it was refused. The water was still rising; and on the 20th August Mr. Binns inspected the mine and was down to the water-level, and I called his attention to the damage that was being done; and his answer to me was, "The sooner it is filled up the safer it will be." Mr. Denniston had been engaged by the company just before this to examine and report on the mine, and to give his opinion as to the damage being done by the water.

91. Did Mr. Binns give any reason for his statement that the sooner it was filled the safer it would be?—The old reason, that the water was a support to the roof, although he could see that the roof was coming down in large flakes.

92. When had he first advanced that reason?—In the beginning of the year, when he first spoke about stopping the workings.

93. Did anything further occur then?—This went on till February, 1884, till the water rose against the dams. The higher it rose up the incline the less space it had to cover, and it rose faster. I put in the dams, and they were inspected by Mr. Binns, and considered perfectly right.

94. At what stage did you put in the dams?—The dams were a long time putting in. I did not finish them until some time in October.

95. The water went on rising until what month in 1884?—February.

96. What occurred then?—The water rose against the dams, and the measures round the dams leaked so fast that the water was going down the shaft to the lower-seam workings. The dams were in themselves comparatively tight, but the water forced its way all round the dams and outside the concrete they were placed in. Mr. Binns came to the mine on the 11th February, went down the shaft, saw the quantity of water that was coming in, and came back and gave me an order to withdraw the whole of the men from the lower levels. He stopped the whole workings of the mine.

97. Was that order verbal or in writing?—Verbal first, and in writing before he left the mine.

98. You did not dispute the propriety of that order?—I did not dispute the order because I had pointed out to him twelve months previously that this would happen: that his action in forcing me to put the water in the submarine workings would eventually ruin the whole of the workings.

99. At the time he ordered you to withdraw all the men from the lower workings there was an actual necessity for that step?—Yes.

100. And it was in exact accordance with your own predictions, and what you had always argued to Mr. Binns would be the result?—Yes.

101. Have you anything further to state with regard to this incident of the final closing of the mine?—That stopped the whole of my operations.

102. Besides having been a mine manager, you have had something to do with surveys of mines, have you not?—I have done my own surveys at Kawakawa.

103. And you are familiar with the subject?—Yes.

104. This seam had been worked seaward for how many years before it was closed?—I started to work seaward in 1881. I started to prospect and to put down a drive to prove the coal. I did not largely open up and work the coal until 1882.