

3 or 4 chains back, and no force was apparent there, and even the canvas brattice was undisturbed.

406. Did you find any deposit of dust?—Yes. I had a very good example indeed in the afternoon of how the dust was lying there. Mr. Scott and I restored the ventilation by taking it down the full width of the dip instead of through the narrow passage shown here [indicated]. We decided that we would put the brattice up in this spot [indicated], so that we could keep the full width of the drive for the air passage. The air had never been driven that way up to that time, so that I had a very good opportunity of observing how the dust lay. It had never been disturbed, and there was a deposit of coal and slack and dust—one inch coal, then one inch slack, and one inch of dust.

407. *Sir J. Hector.*] Was the bottom of the three layers the finest?—No; it was the coarsest. I started at the top of the three layers and went down.

408. *Mr. Park.*] Was that charred dust?—It was charred.

409. The nearer it extended to the top you found it more charred?—Yes.

410. And the farther away there was less charring?—Yes.

411. Did the indications of the explosion get less as it travelled away from that particular point?—Yes. I think it was the moist ground that stopped the explosion from extending up the incline.

412. Was there moist ground up the incline?—It was dry when we went down, but on returning we noticed that water had been running down.

413. Where was that running from?—I suppose it came from the upper workings. I did not see it on the first occasion, because it was kept in its proper course in the regular channel.

414. Did you see this piece of charred paper which Mr. Cochrane produced this morning?—I saw it produced in Court.

415. Did you see anything like that in the mine?—In lots of places the coats were burnt.

416. Did you find any men who were burnt?—On the east side there were a few cases. The boy, Hill, had not a vestige of clothing on, while to my idea he did not seem burnt at all. He was not even crinkled. Whether he had his first skin taken off, I do not know; but the boy was clean. He was reddish coloured and had no clothes on. I do not know whether they were burnt or had been blown off him.

417. But was not that where the explosion had spent itself?—It was expending itself in that direction, although it had sufficient energy to have blown down a brick-stopping at this place.

418. Were not the men in the sump-level (No. 1) very much blackened?—Yes, Scott and McMinn were very much burnt.

419. Were their clothes burnt?—They were so black that I could not observe closely, and I did not examine them for that purpose.

420. Did you notice whether they were far from where they were supposed to be working?—These men were blown 2 or 3 chains from their working-places.

421. And had not they been able to run at all?—Those I saw had been simply knocked down.

422. There was a man found near the mouth of the tunnel. Did you see him picked up?—No; I was not there when he was found.

423. Was he simply killed by the foul air?—I think all of them were so on that side.

424. From what you have told us, do you think there was any other reason than a blown-out shot to cause this explosion?—No. I do not see where there could be any accumulation of gas.

425. And the fireman having gone round in the morning would be an indication that no gas was present?—He would have to go round in the morning the first thing to try for gas, and to report whether it was safe or not for the men to go to work. If he found the place not safe, I suppose he would make it safe before admitting the men, by removing the bad air preventing the work going on.

426. You know that a fireman has to go through the mine in the morning and make a report before the men go to work?—Yes; all the firemen were killed.

427. Is there any ground for the assumption that there was an outburst of gas?—Not to my knowledge. I do not see where it could come from; and I think had there been, we would have seen something of it when we were exploring the bords after the explosion.

428. Was there anything to indicate that the explosion was caused by coal-dust?—Everything points to it. For instance, if it had not been a dust-explosion the moisture dropping from the roof would not have made any difference to it. We have indications of this in No. 4 bord, where the whole of the direct force has been expended, while more distant—that is, in the lower west level—you can see where the brattice has not even been knocked down.

429. Did you find the force indicated equally in all directions?—Theoretically in a gas-explosion the force is supposed to be in all directions. I have seen half a dozen men in a coal-mine after an explosion very little disfigured; but then the explosion was confined to one place, not extended to several places, and it was the carbonic acid after-damp that killed them in that case, not the firedamp. There was some difficulty in getting to them then, on account of the carbonic-acid gas; but in the Brunner case we had carbonic oxide to contend with.

430. You do not think that these men were killed by the carbonic acid?—I do not think so. We did not find the appearances of it, because carbonic acid puts your lights out.

431. Did you test for it?—Repeatedly. We were testing the whole time, and while we were doing so our lamps were burning brightly.

432. *Mr. Beare.*] As a mine-manager yourself, you can say that this mine was well managed?—I am not a mine-manager at the present time. I am the mining-manager for the Westport Colliery Company.

433. But you have been a mine-manager?—Yes.