

345. They were indicative really of a coal-dust explosion?—Yes.

346. Have you heard of the Blackwell and Albion Mines explosions at Home?—I have read of the Albion.

347. Do you agree with the conclusions come to by the Commissioners in that case?—Yes.

348. With regard to there being no evidence of any tools being found at the blown-out hole, would not a drilling-machine be the only tool necessary?—Yes.

349. Supposing the hole had been previously drilled, no tools would have been required?—Nothing, except a little tamping and fuse.

350. The slit referred to by Mr. Joyce was covered by coal-dust, was it not?—Yes, and charring.

351. *Sir J. Hector.*] Do you think you could from memory mark the limits to which the flame extended down the slit to which you refer? Was there any evidence of the flame having scorched the timbers, or where the mine was scorched rather than blackened?—There has been some charring in No. 2. From the blown-out shot it extended to No. 2, and up that to a point opposite the pump. Then it extended down from the blow-out to the third incline and the sump-level, along the sump-level and up Nos. 2 and 1.

352. I am talking of the scorching. How far do you think the men were burnt?—The men were burnt in No. 5 incline. We found the bodies there burnt. The men had all left their places with the exception of one or two, and we also found that the clothing of the majority was scorched, and in the places on the west side, in No. 5 incline above the middle level, the clothing on the men was scorched. There has been flame in Nos. 5 and 6, and it has gone away towards No. 7. Beyond that point there has been no flame, because the bodies showed no signs of burning. The explosion seemed to have spent itself in No. 2.

353. Have you heard of them using water and salt in the vicinity of the shot-holes?—Yes.

354. Have you any opinion as to the wisdom of doing that?—It would be a preventative.

355. You have seen the hand-grenades filled with chloride-of-ammonium solution used for fire extinguishing. Do you think the chloride of ammonium would be better for use in the mines than common salt?—Yes.

356. Would it be possible to have a solution of that chemical prepared for use in case of any doubtful place where the deputy thought it might be required? Or would it be better to sweep out the whole mine and water it?—The salt would be a preventative.

357. Would it not be an advantage in all fiery mines that are inflammable to have some arrangement for distributing or throwing chloride of ammonium over the fire to prevent its spreading. I am talking of the engine-house and engines?—It would be an improvement to require that to be done.

358. Do you know on what date the English Act was amended to require the watering of dusty mines?—In 1887. I do not recollect any previous clause in the old Act of 1872.

359. There was some question of finding a fuse that had been burnt or expended. I presume you refer to the burnt piece of fuse?—It had been expended; there was no powder in it.

360. *Mr. Skellon.*] Regarding the blown-out shot, you found some lumps of coal on the rails near to the shot-hole. Was not the coal in the face shattered?—Yes.

361. Could not a previous shot have brought some coal down and shattered the face prior to the shot-hole being fired, even supposing the hole had been fired that morning?—In driving the bord some coal would be knocked down, but in this particular instance the road had been relaid along the rib-side and the coal is left on the side.

362. Might it not have come down as the result of the concussion arising from the explosion? We want to find out whether this shot-hole was put in some time ago when the bord was made, or on the morning of the explosion?—My belief is that it was put in that morning.

363. Could it have been put in previously, and the coal having been shattered around the hole the force of the explosion brought these lumps down?—These lumps of coal are lying on the rails close in by the rib-side, and I should imagine that when the bord was being driven the road would be left in the middle of it.

364. It is evident that the tram was put in when that pillar was being stripped?—Yes.

365. And the shot-hole may have been put in when the tramway was worked previously?—I do not see how they could use it, because the tub could not be taken past that point. There are some projecting pieces of coal which prevent the tub going past.

366. When they were driving the bord, might not that hole have been put in?—It might.

367. And the concussion from the explosion might have brought those lumps down?—How would you account for the presence of the fuse lying in a direct line?

368. That has been fired, no doubt, for some time?—It is charred.

369. But is it not possible for it to have been fired previously?—It is possible, but I hardly think probable.

370. *Mr. Proud.*] Were men put in at that bord to get coal?—We do not know what the orders were from the overman or deputy.

371. *Mr. Skellon.*] Is the floor of the bord fairly slippery?—Yes.

372. Have you ever seen a man fire a shot when there has been a slippery parting on the floor without holing it?—Yes; but it is burnt right into the rib.

373. Do you think the concussion of the air from the shot started these men running?—I think so.

374. How far was the farthest man away from the blown-out shot?—I could not tell the distance, but you could get it on the plan.

375. Do you know the distance?—About half a mile.

376. Is it a rare experience for a shot to be blown out?—No.

377. Have you ever known men to rush out of a mine simply through the report of a blown-out shot?—No.