

606. Were you in No. 1 bord on the 18th March?—Yes.

607. Did you make a particular examination of No. 1 bord?—I had a safety-lamp with me—a Davy.

608. That is the lamp ordinarily used for testing?—Yes.

609. You found no sign of gas in the bord?—No.

610. Would you swear positively that there was no gas on the 18th when you tested?—Yes.

611. Have you ever had any experience of blown-out shots in the mine before?—Yes; we had a blown-out shot occasionally.

612. Do you think it is possible to avoid blown-out shots?—Yes; almost.

613. In what way?—If the shot or the coal is properly prepared for blasting—that is, properly undercut, and the shot is in proportion to the work to be done, and properly tamped, there ought to be no chance of a blown-out shot, or very little.

614. Then, there is a chance of you having blown-out shots?—Of course, there might be a possibility.

615. And I think the possibility of blow-out shots in the Brunner Mine is that you have had shots blown out when the holes were properly undercut?—Not always.

616. In some cases they were?—Well, there was something wrong, or else a shot would not have blown out.

617. In every case?—Yes.

618. You think if a shot were properly undercut and “holed” it would have no possible chance of blowing out?—A man might, with the very best of intentions, make a mistake; the tamping may not go home, and the charge might blow out, as that is, under such circumstances, inevitable. The cutting may be well done, and still it might blow out; but it must be due to some fault of some kind in the work.

619. I think you admit that the most careful men may have blown-out shots?—I admit that.

620. With reference to that blown-out shot bord, which the experts consider to have been the initial point of the explosion, do you think the man who fired that shot was guilty of carelessness or want of intelligence in not undercutting?—There is no evidence of undercutting, although I do not say that there was not some undercutting done on the small portion that has come off the face of the shot; but I do consider that even if the hole [indicated] had been well undercut up to the rib from the wall it must have resulted in a blown-out shot.

621. Why?—Because the hole is put in obliquely to the side of the pillar, instead of being in a line with it; therefore it goes into the solid. The enlarged plan shows that.

622. So, considering the line of force, you would say that it was a very carelessly put in shot?—I consider it was a great error of judgment to put in a hole in that form.

623. You were speaking about a fire having occurred in that bord. How long would it have burned, in your opinion?—Some little time before the explosion took place which resulted in the disaster.

624. A few minutes?—I should say it was a minute or two before the effect was produced that is shown there.

625. Apparently your version is correct, because there was a coking there, and every sign of fire?—That is what leads me to that conclusion.

626. You reckon that the coking could not have been made unless there was flame for a few minutes?—Yes.

627. We have had some evidence about the force of the explosion in the slit below No. 4 bord. Did you make an examination—a particular examination—of that slit?—Yes; I went all through it.

628. What would you say about it?—I do not think there has been any force in it, and the severe burning where it is charred does not indicate any very great force. I refer to the slit on the lower side of the bord, opposite the blow-out.

629. You think there was but very little force exerted in the slit?—I do not think there could have been much force to allow the great accumulation of soot there.

630. Your opinion is formed because there was an accumulation of soot?—That is one reason.

631. Any other reasons?—My opinion is supported by the fact that wherever we find the greatest force we have no burning.

632. Is it generally your experience, during your visit through the mine, that wherever you had the greatest force you had the least burning?—Yes; the severest force is in the main incline and the main dip, where there is very little burning.

633. Might not the soot in that slit have been deposited after the explosion by a rebound going up?—I do not see how the rebound could have come off. Of course, we are very much in the dark as to what might occur.

634. When you made your other examination with the experts, was there not a considerable amount of water in the lower workings?—I could wade for a considerable distance.

635. Still you could not get as far down as before the explosion?—I was in the lowest level.

636. But you could not examine it thoroughly?—No.

637. Therefore there might have been an explosion down there?—I do not see that there is any ground for supposing that an explosion took place there.

638. Do you think the direction of the blast seemed to be up from the lowest level?—I think from the incline it was upwards. My opinion is that it swept round from the bord to No. 3 incline, went along the level, and gathered force in No. 3 incline; it swept along the level, and up No. 2 incline, a portion going up the main dip, and a portion going up No. 3, a very small portion, however.

639. I understand that in Brislane's bord safety-lamps were being used?—There were two lamps there. Here are the two lamps in use in that bord. [Safety-lamps produced.] They are a