

bottom level. We saw trucks knocked into the end of that level. It had gone up slightly, this being a wet section with two dams up here [indicated]. It seemed to have died out in this section, and when it came up the main incline to have entered the mid-level. At the first stenton to the rise there would seem to have been a blast come down to meet it. We traced this, and saw it had come from the cabin down through the pillars, and then to have rushed up the pillar workings and right along the level.

122. You mean it perforated the pillars?—It went between the pillars, we could see that by the props being knocked down in every direction; for instance, in this place [indicated] we could see the props knocked down, and the same with the brattice.

123. Did you see any evidence of where the explosion might have originated?—Yes. At first it was a difficult matter to account for where it originated, but on going along the fourth bord from the sump-level we came on a place that was more charred than any other in the mine; the coal was coked and friable, and the small coal on the floor was like broken ice under our feet—crisp. And after noting that, we found a shot-hole put into where a strip had been in course of being taken off a pillar and up to which the rails were laid. This shot was evidently a blown-out one. There were cracks in the coal extending down that face, and there were “droppers” of the carbonaceous matter from the roof some 3 in. long—that is, distilled bituminous matter. There was a slight corner behind this strip which was being taken off and a few feet ahead. There was no coking behind. The direction of the force seemed to have been away from this shot-hole—both ways in the bord, both in and out. In a fall near to No. 3 incline the cracks between the stones were filled up with heavy coked dust. These cracks would be a few inches in thickness, and were quite filled up with this coked dust. In the line of the shot-hole they projected downwards; there was a piece of “run” fuse—fuse that had been fired—found about seven yards away from the shot-hole. A prop in the line of the shot-hole had blistered coal sticking against the bottom of it, and a prop that had been lying down end on had small coal driven into the end of the wood. The place itself had not been holed or undercut. There was no holing done—practically none—nor had it been properly prepared. From the evidence I saw I had no doubt there had been a blown-out shot.

124. *Mr. Skellon.*] Do you know what they use for tamping?—Generally the fireclay.

125. *The Chairman.*] But there was no indication that a shot had blown out from the face?—Yes. Here is a plan I have had prepared showing the scene of the explosion [Exhibit No. 7].

126. *Sir J. Hector.*] Did you see the position of this shot-mark?—Yes [indicated].

127. That is to say on the lower side along the pillar that was being stripped?—Yes.

128. That is the working face from the incline?—Yes.

129. *Mr. Skellon.*] Did you find out who were working at that pillar?—There were no tools there, and nobody was found there, so far as is known. We will put in a full plan showing everything in regard to that, as soon as it is prepared.

130. Would the men not naturally carry their tools away before firing that shot?—Yes. I should imagine that any man who would fire such a shot would carry them away.

131. Who was the nearest man found to that place, “No. 4 bord”?—That I cannot tell you, but Mr. Bishop will speak as to the position of the bodies.

132. *The Chairman.*] Where would the men retreat to?—It depends upon where they are working. Supposing they were putting in a blast here [indicated] the men would have retreated to here [indicated].

133. *Sir J. Hector.*] Are you aware how long these pillars have been standing, and if this bord—No. 4—remained unvisited before they commenced operations for stripping this pillar?—I cannot tell you. We see the cracks running down, showing that it was a blown-out shot which had not done its work. I was satisfied from the direction of the forces as to the point of origin.

134. *Mr. Proud.*] Was there much coal-dust lying about the face?—There was more or less throughout the mine, but there was a lot of crisp coal under our feet which was gradually trampled into muck.

135. *Mr. Skellon.*] Was there any man found with his coat on?—Not that I saw. The only body I saw recovered was Worthley. I did not examine his body as I might have done, on account of being wanted to carry the stretcher.

136. *Mr. Proud.*] Was the mine very much damaged in that part?—I do not think the mine would be considered very much damaged, although there were signs of fire-coking of coal on pillars, knocked down brattice, trucks knocked about, and props down in places. Falls had taken place in the roof. In many mines the effect would have been greater; the roof would have been down so that we could not have got in for weeks. In this mine the roof appeared to have stood well. It is a good roof.

137. *Mr. Skellon.*] What is used for bratticing?—Brattice-cloth is used in leading the air round the faces.

138. Timber stoppings?—No; either the “crib-log” or brattice-cloth. I think these are just as efficient as the wood stoppings because the wood gets cracked.

139. Do you not use any stopping of timber filled in with slack?—You mean deal boards.

140. Yes?—No, I did not see any of that sort, the stoppings up the back incline are cribs filled in with rubbish. These were thrown right across the back incline.

141. Was there a barometer kept in the mine?—There was one at the outer office, which is a better place than at the mine.

142. Then the underviewer and fireman would have to go about 2 chains from the pit-head into the office to see it?—The outer office is open to any one wanting to go into it. The door is always standing open.

143. *Mr. Proud.*] Did you form any opinion as to how the explosion was caused?—The origin seemed to be from that pillar [indicated]. The flame would then rush down, start the dust, and the main force of the explosion would go on in succeeding throbs or explosions, as instanced by the authorities on coal-dust questions.