

860. In connection with this dam that has been referred to, was there plenty of room for the miners to get along there?—It was not a road the miners would have travelled in any case.

861. Was there a practicable road into the return other than that?—If they wanted to go from the lower district to get to that return they would have to go up the main dip, and into the return at the mid-level.

862. You say this aperture was only for the purpose of distributing the air?—Yes.

863. In this air-return there is a shaft, is there not?—Yes.

864. Something was said about the necessity for having signal-boards there and guide-boards. It was in connection with subsection 38 of section 33 of the Coal-mines Act, which is as follows: "Ladders, and, when necessary, convenient platforms connected therewith, shall be provided in each rise, upcast, or passage giving access to workings at a higher level in a mine, and a notice shall be posted at the foot of each such rise, upcast, or passage, stating the height of such rise, upcast, or passage, to the chamber or drive above."—I read that section to mean that if the men are compelled in going to and from their work to ascend or descend from one level to another that shall be done. This shaft cannot be treated as being a passage through which the workmen have to go to and from their work. Therefore, I do not consider it necessary to have that notice.

865. There were no workings there then?—No. The depth of the shaft is 29ft. 9in.; 6ft. diameter at the bottom and 7ft. at the top.

866. In connection with your theory of how the explosion occurred, how do you account for some of the men on the western side having run several yards?—I take it that the whole of the men on the western side escaped the blast. I think almost every man on the western side had time to move from his working-face, and that he was overpowered by the after-damp.

867. There was no sign of burning on them?—There was in one or two cases, in No. 5 and No. 6.

868. That was where the strongest blast was, on the western side?—Yes.

869. And there was also some flame up Nos. 5 and 6 inclines?—Yes; beyond that there had been no flame.

870. As you came out towards the dip there was some one found stripped of his clothing?—That was at the top of the main incline.

871. He had been in a blast of wind, not in a fire?—There would be heat, of course, but it was the rapidly moving blast that stripped him.

872. Can you account for the flame not being so strong in the western workings and lower down on the eastern side as in Nos. 2 and 3 inclines?—You mean from the appearance of the two sides?

873. Yes?—I think that is accounted for by the explosion having been initiated on the eastern side.

874. Then it was far stronger on the east?—Yes.

875. But there was evidence of its having travelled towards the west?—Yes.

876. Had the dampness of the western side anything to do in breaking the force of the flame?—It would meet some water in the main incline near the cabin which would probably kill the flame to some extent. It burst through the cabin but was checked there.

877. Have you ever seen an accumulation of water there?—There is water in the sump, lower down.

878. And in the level itself?—There was no water in the level itself the day after the explosion.

879. You heard the evidence yesterday of the miners who made an examination of the mine. They seemed to think that the blast had met a large volume of water in the level? What do you say to that?—There was no water in the level for it to meet.

880. And you did not see any water in it when you made the first examination?—The first time I attempted to go along it the water was up to my middle—3ft. deep.

881. How long would it take the water to rise that 3ft.?—Three or four days after the explosion.

882. In some mines the miners are paid for small coal. What was the custom in your mine?—We paid for it per gross weight—small and big.

883. *Mr. Beare.*] I think you said in your examination that gas had been found periodically in small quantities?—Yes.

884. And you also said that there were no bodies found near the blown-out shot?—No.

885. That would not be inconsistent with the fact of a shot having been fired there—that is to say, there would have been time had a shot been fired in the ordinary way for the workman to get some distance?—A man could have got to any working part of that district before the fuse went off.

886. *Mr. Joyce.*] *Mr. Bishop,* you said that there was no direct return for the men on the sump-side. If the dam had not been there could the men have got out?—I said clearly that there was a return, and a better road than going up the top of the dip and over the return. Instead of going up the air-course they would go up the main dip and join the return at the mid-level.

887. But that would only leave one road?—There is the intake at present; they go in this way and out that way [direction indicated on plan].

888. *Sir J. Hector.*] There was no sign of the explosion in the return air-way?—No; it never got into it.

889. You referred in your evidence to an upper seam, which you described as having some gas in it?—As liable to give off gas after an explosion.

890. Are you aware if any falls had occurred in the roof of the main seam prior to the explosion, or if any falls had laid bare that seam?—I do not know of any.