

50. What did you see?—I saw the place charred all round.

51. There is more charring there than in other places?—Yes. The next place below Pattinson's place shows the most severe burning I know of in the mine.

52. Were you in the mine before the floor got tramped on, and did you feel the crispness under your feet from the coking of ashes and stuff?—I believe I was in the bord the night we were in search of bodies. I saw all the bodies in this locality as they were lying, and I assisted to remove them.

53. What conclusion did you come to from seeing them?—Everybody I saw was lying just exactly where we would expect to find them—where they had been working.

54. What do you think was the cause of the explosion?—The greatest indications, to my mind, are taken from the appearance of the bord at this point. There is a point in the charring where the burning seemed to be most severe [indicated]. That is the point where it seems to be about equidistant from either side from the shot-hole. The charring goes back up the slit, and on the roof there is a marked line of burnt matter. From the appearances I saw, the opinion I came to is that there has been a conflict between two waves of flame on this side and on that side.

55. You saw indications of two flames?—Yes, one proceeding from either side. They had met at the place marked on the roof, as it is very well defined.

56. Did you find any coking on the side of the opposite wall?—Behind; a little more particularly on the high side.

57. Did you find coal on this tramway?—There is coal lying there between the rails.

58. Where did it come from?—From the shot-hole. I think most of it came from the shot-hole, although possibly a bit came from the roof.

59. Is this section something like it? It falls off apparently to nothing, and is higher immediately under the blow-out?—That is what drew my attention to the hole.

60. Some of the coal is lying on the rails?—Yes, it is crushed to a certain extent.

61. And is the tramway laid close alongside the pillar?—The tramway has been laid in a direct line to the face of coal. It would appear that it was laid too far off, and the over-man has thrown on about a couple of yards of coal. That might be when this coal was thrown on.

62. How long is it since the over-man refused to allow the work to proceed? Whose place was this?—It belonged to the Geoghegans.

63. And the over-man, in your opinion, compelled them to leave 2 yards?—I reported that this was going too much up-hill, because we were likely to tap gas.

64. That was the reason the bord was stopped?—The place was getting too wide for the roof. They were going beyond the width of the bord. This coal was thrown on the rails.

65. You say you were also afraid of getting gas if you proceeded?—Yes, on climbing up-hill.

66. This tram was being laid practically a few days before the explosion: what would it be laid in for?—I suppose to start the place at some time or another. I did not ask my mate when he got orders to lay the rails in, but I should think it was very likely he got orders to strip this pillar.

67. Who was your mate?—William Sheard.

68. Was there any sign of weathering along this pillar when you saw it last time?—From the slit here [indicated], the coal was completely roasted or charred. There is severe charring all over that point, and it tails back to the slit. From this point [indicated] it loses itself.

69. Supposing a flame came down this way [indicated] then this place would be rather sheltered, would it not?—No. [Witness showed on the plan the direction which, in his opinion, the flame took, and where it struck the pillar, as indicated by the severe burning.]

70. Do you think the blown-out shot had anything to do with the conflagration?—I could not say, even if there were a part of the hole left. Possibly there might have been a shot fired there that morning, but I could not say.

71. You examined the western workings on the right-hand side of the dip?—Yes, I have been working there all the time.

72. There were signs of a strong blast in Nos. 5 and 6 inclines?—No. 5 is very severely burnt, particularly on the pillar opposite the first bord, and the pillar there is very much charred. [Witness described on the plan the places and nature of the charring in the different inclines and bords.]

73. Where did the flame seem to die out?—It goes everywhere towards the west, and appears to die out in that direction. The indications are not so strong in No. 6, and although the flame has been very severe in No. 5 west—the props in that incline are scorched—but the inside prop, and the props next to the incline, are perfectly free from any coking. Behind that prop there is coking, and the same in No. 6.

74. That is to say, a flame passed to the western end of the workings?—Yes.

75. *Sir J. Hector.*] You mean the props are coked on the west side, and the same in regard to No. 6?—Yes.

76. How do you account for that?—The only thing is that the flame has possibly turned from the slit here by the force going into this bord. It went up and came back.

77. *Mr. Park.*] Did you know the men working in the sump-level personally?—Yes, I knew all the men in the mine.

78. Were they experienced and careful men?—They were all colliers.

79. What do you mean by that?—Men who have been brought up to nothing else. The only lads who did not have a great deal of practical experience were the Geoghegans. All the others were experienced men. Denniston and Hunter were possibly as practical men as we had in the establishment. Denniston was an old man, between fifty and sixty—a man who had done nothing in his life but get coal.

80. Did the machinery of the mine work well?—I never heard of anything wrong with the machinery. I never heard of the fan being out of gear, and never heard of any block in the ventilation through the fan.