

81. *Mr. Guinness.*] You have been acting in the capacity of deputy in this mine for thirteen years?—Yes.

82. In November there was some change made, was there not?—When the change of company took place there was a single shift made.

83. Consequently, one of the deputies had to go off?—Yes, we only wanted one deputy for each shift, and the oldest deputy was kept.

84. Who was that?—Morris.

85. What work did you take up in the mine from November?—Preparing roads and going about all over the mine, on the evening shift coming off.

86. That was in any part where the shift had been at work?—Wherever the over-man found work was wanted I was sent to do it.

87. Would you have any man in the mine with you?—No one but my mate, William Sheard.

88. You continued to carry on in that capacity until you were ill?—Yes; I took sick, and went away for a rest in the month of January.

89. You returned and resumed your duties—when?—I had just been working eight days before the explosion took place.

90. Was Sheard your companion?—All the time; he has been my mate during all of this work, and through all the dip operations.

91. Who took your place in your absence?—No one.

92. Do you know why?—I could not say why. I asked leave from the over-man, and it was granted at once. This class of light work was given to him so that he might do it himself while I was away. In the daytime he was to do anything he could.

93. The last time you were in the mine was 6 o'clock on the 25th?—Yes; we came out at 6 o'clock. The day previous to the explosion was an idle day.

94. Nothing was doing?—On the Tuesday evening I asked the over-man if he could not give us anything to do. There was high flood in the river. He told me about this timbering in Nos. 6 and 7, and said we might do that. We went in at 10 o'clock in the morning, after we had had our sleep, and attended to this work; and came out between 2 and 4 o'clock.

95. Did you observe that tramway in No. 4 bord where the shot was put in?—I saw the road when I went to put up the brattice.

96. I am speaking of the time before the explosion. Do you remember noticing a tramway in any of your visits for the eight days prior to the explosion?—No; I had occasion to go down and work, and I came up by Moore's place; and I made a short cut up the dip to the second incline. I took no thought of any danger, and travelled through all the slips often with naked lights. I would have gone into any part of this ground with naked lights night or day.

97. You always considered it perfectly safe from gas or damp?—Yes; I would not have taken much liberty in going into the working places after hours, because it was not my place to go down; but behind all this area [indicated] I never for a moment thought anything about danger.

98. Did you know Roberts?—Thoroughly; he had been here all my time.

99. And you found him working in the mine when you took charge?—Yes.

100. What position did he occupy all the time he was in the mine?—He was deputy. I do not remember him getting coal out. He was appointed a deputy when we went through the back part into the rise workings.

101. What do you say with regard to Roberts's practical experience?—I looked upon him as a reliable, practical man. He was a very careful man, and very civil, and I always respected him.

102. *Mr. Beare.*] Seeing that you have spoken so well of Morris and Roberts, would you say from your knowledge of them, that in all probability they did examine all parts of the mine?—I never had a doubt of Roberts, the underviewer, examining his part of the workings.

103. You would say, in all probability they did examine the mine?—I would have no doubt about that. It was more directly the duty of the over-man to examine any places that were abandoned or fenced off.

104. Then all these years you have never had any cause to complain about the working of the mine, and you have never heard any complaints from other miners?—No.

105. In all probability, in your position, you would have heard had there been any serious complaints?—Yes, I would have heard of them.

106. Have you ever had any personal experience of explosions before?—No, not of this nature. I have had an experience of burning in a mine—an experience of a severe explosion. I refer to another colliery. It was more severe than this. It blew the trucks out of the mouth, a distance of 300 yards, but there were no men in the mine. They had been withdrawn. It was a strong feeder of gas that kindled.

107. You said you were quite satisfied to go round with the men in the lowest levels with a naked light?—In that back area. We travelled it, looking for materials for our work.

108. But were you in the lowest level when they were breaking out?—On the 24th we were in the bottom bord on the pony level.

109. Was there water in it then?—No, it was working then. On the 24th we fixed Denniston's flat sheet. We were sent to do this work for the two Geoghegans, to find a place for them, and to make it ready for them to start. We travelled down the second incline, and came along the level from No. 2 into No. 3. We were told it was No. 2 Flat Sheet, but, in order to make no mistake, we went up No. 2 incline, and came out there. At twelve o'clock on the 24th we came out. Everything at that time seemed in its usual state. There was no more work done there at that time until the morning of the explosion.

110. *Mr. Guinness.*] You went down and found several of the bodies?—Yes.

111. Did you find them pretty well where you expected to find them?—Yes, all where we expected to find them.