

192. You also stated that in the reports Morris did not report gas, while the under-viewer did?—Yes.

193. That was accounted for by the fact that Morris only went to the working-faces?—I would account for it so.

194. When the under-viewer made his inspection of the mine would he have it finished before the explosion?—It depends entirely if there was no stoppage in the workings on the west side. While I was deputy the east side was accounted the most important part of the workings.

195. How long would it take the under-viewer to go round to make his inspection?—He generally inspected half a side in one part of the day, and took the other half the other part of the day. He never hurried himself in going over that ground.

196. Do you think one man was sufficient to make that inspection?—Perfectly.

197. Do you also think that all the faces should be examined every morning, before the miners are put in to work?—Certainly.

198. You think the principle of examining only working-faces is followed?—There is a possibility of that. In all cases it would depend entirely on the fireman, as he has to satisfy his own self on this point.

199. Do you not think he should be compelled to satisfy himself and the men that every place or incline, or working-face, is free from gas when the men go in to work?—He might be compelled. I can speak personally. I know while I was making the examination in the morning, I travelled every hole and corner I could find in connection with the workings. I was educated from the very beginning of my firemanship to do this.

200. Do you think that future firemen should be compelled to examine every face?—It would be much better that that should be done. That would lie in the hands of the Government Inspector, or the senior officer of the mine.

201. Do you think an Act should be made to that effect?—I think it should be enforced to a certain extent.

202. Have you any recommendation to make with regard to the firing of shots, coal-dust, or explosives?—I would make a recommendation. I have heard since this inquiry started that the deputies have to fire all shots. In my opinion that would to a certain extent diminish the danger, but not all. The great point in a deputy firing a shot is to see the shot put into the hole. There is nothing in the lighting of the fuse; but the great point with a view to lessening danger is to see the shot before it is put into the hole, because a fast hole is not the most dangerous hole we have to contend with. The most dangerous hole is when the cartridge is not put back to the back of the shot-hole, leaving a space behind the powder for the ensuing flame. It is absolutely necessary that the deputies, if they have to light the shots, should see the powder put into the shot-hole, and the quantity of powder.

203. Would you recommend that deputies should charge the shot as well as fire it?—I would not say charge it, but to see the powder put properly into the shot-hole.

204. Do you consider, as a practical miner, that there ought to be any watering done round the shot-hole?—That would depend a good deal on whether the place had been very dusty. If the place is bare of dust, I think there would be no necessity for anything of that kind. With regard to the danger of coal-dust, it is in the working faces where the greatest amount of danger would be—where everything is of a loose nature, and where we find the dust is mixed up with the atmosphere the men are actually working in.

205. Do you remember a very large amount of dust in the No. 4 bord, where the shot was?—In any bord standing in the Brunner Mine for possibly nine or ten months there is a coating of damp dust on the caps and on the surfaces. It would exist there as it would do in any other part of the mine.

206. Do you believe it did exist?—I cannot doubt it.

207. In that case was there no risk of danger in the fourth bord?—I could not say. I am simply giving the facts.

208. Your experience shows it was a damp place?—That is in the workings all over the mine.

209. I think there was a big flood in the river on the morning of the explosion?—A heavy flood.

210. Would that flood tend to generate gas?—It would depend on how the barometer read—upon the atmospheric depression.

211. You do not know whether there was any connection?—Colliers have to guard against that. If there was a depression you would naturally expect an easier flow of gas.

212. Have you any recommendations to make as to what should be done in mines when there is a depression in the atmosphere?—Put a few more revolutions on the fan.

213. Did you always keep your fan going uniformly?—I have known it slack. That was chiefly through the engine-driver. When deputy, I used to go into the mouth of the tunnel to see what amount of ventilation was coming in, and if I thought it was slack I would go back to the man in charge and tell him to put it a little harder. That did not occur often.

214. Did you ever have any facilities for testing the amount of air?—Yes; the anemometers used by the over-men. We sometimes measured the air with them.

215. Have you been a manager at Home at any time?—I left a situation of the kind when I left Home. I was seven years in one place before I came to the colony, and I hold a certificate of competency under the English Mining Act. I passed the examination in Edinburgh in 1875.

216. What kind of tamping did you use in the Brunner Mine?—Damp tamping; generally clay picked up off the roadway, if they can find it; not dry stuff.

217. The fact that the day previous to the explosion was an idle day would tend to generate gas, or allow some accumulation to take place, would it not?—I should think that would not have much to do with the accumulation of gas. Provision was made for the inspection of the mine when it was idle.