

249. There could not be any accumulation?—It was not possible. I was sent up to shift the brattice in that place—to leave it as it had been at first. By doing so the place was left absolutely free of gas. There was a good current of air going into the face; in fact, we had not to put up any brattice. We had closed the incline up, which was open at the top. I should have put more air in, but the air we had was sufficient in that place—Brislane's. I ordered the men to leave the bratticing open at the top, and the air I put into Brislane's was sufficient to free every particle of gas out of it. Afterwards I travelled over this fall to the steepest part of the incline. There is a fall down here, and I found a little gas on the top of that fall. Possibly that might have been freed. I came on to the brow of No. 3 incline. There was a thick stopping across here [indicated]. We found water up to this flat-sheet. I know it was roofing down at the bottom level. I broke down this stopping, and gave it free vent from here. I know there was a big difference in the ventilation. As I was going home in the morning I did not examine it. There was a hole there, but not sufficient to give vent to the air. It had been cleared out to give more ventilation. I did not go back into the place after I was there. It would have a tendency to clear the gas, because there was more air travelling.

250. You mentioned that at that fall you thought there might be some gas?—I walked all over here with a naked light. I only found gas over the fall, and that led me to believe that if there had been an accumulation of gas this would be a likely place.

251. It was only an assumption on your part. You never found gas there?—I had no evidence to prove that gas existed there at the time of the explosion, except the fact that we found gas there previously. Finding gas there previously, I assumed there was a possibility of its accumulating if any disturbance had been made in the ventilation.

252. In the exploring dip did you use safety-lamps?—No.

253. How far were you below the old level?—The stone drive is fully 1,000ft., in breaks of 500ft. each. There would be 200ft. previous to this done by ourselves at the time we were driving the dip. We went 200ft. in, and when it was completed, there were two 500ft. contracts let, so that the whole thing would be about 1,200ft. long.

254. Was there any explosive used in driving?—We never saw gas there. There was one point about the fifth bord where we got gas, and gas along with water. We worked half a night with safety-lamps, and no blasting was allowed. That was the only point we found gas.

255. How long ago?—Three years since.

256. You mentioned that a shot that was cut into the solid in a drive uphill, if it blew out, might be the means of tapping some gas?—I would not think it had anything to do with gas. That bord was driven too much uphill. That is the cause of that shoulder being cast on.

257. Do you think the force of the explosion came up from these bottom places?—They were flooded with water. This part [indicated] was standing full of water up to the main level.

258. Do you think the force of the explosion came up that way?—No; it came up No. 2. The most severe part was from No. 4 bord upwards. There were some indications in Nos. 4 and 5 bords, and it seemed as if the forces had been generated from that point [indicated].

259. The last time you came out, did you find everything right?—The ventilation was working all right through the airway. I made a special point as deputy to see what quantity of air was going in, and that everything was in good order. On the 24th they worked Denniston's Flat sheet, and everything seemed to be in good order—clean and dry. We had done a big amount of work that day.

260. *Mr. Skellon.* Did the deputy travel all the roadways and airways, as well as the working-places, in the mornings?—Yes, he did that.

261. Can you tell why they laid the rails so close to the pillar in No. 4 bord?—They were laid under the fall. There was a hole in there to take the coal down.

262. It would be useless for a man to fire that shot if he could not get his tub there, would it not? Before he put such a shot in he would take this coal down first?—Yes; he would have to do so before he could get his truck along.

263. You mentioned that you thought that it had not been a fast shot?—Yes. It was fast in relation to the way they were going. It would not be so much the rise, but they would put it in that way to catch the coal to gain a face.

264. Would it not be better if they wanted to catch a face to put the shot in the opposite way?—Putting a shot in that way would make it as fast as the other.

265. I did not say that?—No; but, catching that corner out, either of them would be fast. Supposing the shot would be put in that way, the resisting power of the shot would be almost the same as shown there. If that is a correct copy on the plan of the line of resistance, then that shot to be there would be nearly the same. No miner would put a shot—at least, I would not put a shot—in off this side to blow that corner out. If I were going to put a shot in, I would put it in here [indicated] to blow the piece right off.

266. Then you would not gain your face?—No; that is the proper place to put a shot-hole in to gain a face under these circumstances.

267. Is it possible for a shot to do its work if bored in that direction? Would it bring the coal down?—Yes, the way it is standing.

268. It must be standing out in the bord to what it is in the plan. You said you did not understand the word "weathering." The meaning is that where the face is exposed for a long time to the air it gets flaky?—Yes, I understand the term.

269. Then, this face may have weathered, and the force from the explosion may have brought the coal down. It does not follow that it came from that shot?—I would not say that. The flaky coal here has a tendency to thicken as it goes down.

270. You say you never heard the miners in the Brunner Mine complain?—I never heard grumbling amongst them. There were never any serious complaints that I know of.