

692. Have you ever had charge of shot-firing when safety-lamps have been used?—Yes.

693. Can you say what your instructions would be to the men?—My instructions were to undo the lamp. I fire the shot myself.

694. Have you ever refused to fire a shot yourself?—Yes, on one occasion.

695. Why?—I told the men not to make up the shot. When I went into the face I told them I would not fire it. I found more gas than when I went round at night. They came to me between 3 and 4 in the morning, when I was having my lunch.

696. *The Chairman.*] Do you generally have your lunch at 3 or 4 in the morning?—Yes, in the night shift. The fireman came to me to fire a shot. I examined the place, and also the place next to it, and found traces of gas in both places. I was quite satisfied that I should not fire the shot. I refused to do it. The men started grumbling. I told them they could go to my "boss," who was in the mine, for redress. Mr. Bishop happened to be in the mine surveying, and I referred them to him.

697. *Mr. Skellon.*] Supposing one of your mates went there to get the coal ready, would not he take his tools?—He might take what he was working with.

698. If he were going to fire that shot, where would he be likely to place his tools. Would he not put them in the slit?—I do not think a man would want any tools at all.

699. Would not he have taken his drills and pick with him?—I would.

700. When he was going to fire would not he most likely leave them in the upper slit?—I think so. I should, if they would be far enough away up there.

701. Then, if a man had fired that shot, very likely his tools would have been found there?—Yes.

702. The set-off on the pillar [indicated] is about 6ft. wide?—Yes, that is the full width. He was stripping that pillar along the rib.

703. Then, if that shot was put in, it would not be wider than the present face?—I do not know.

704. It would have made it more than 6ft.?—Yes.

705. You said there are crib stoppings, and brick as well?—There were brick stoppings behind the dynamo, and brattice stoppings on the main road. The only crib stopping was down the main dip.

706. What is the effect of dynamite on coal?—We tried it twenty-three years ago. We had pretty hard coal, and the explosion of the dynamite made a hole that you could have buried yourself in, and did not even pull the bottom down, but crushed the coal to bits all along the bord.

707. You say, if anything happened, you would trust to the officers to take you out by the return air-way. Do you not think the officers would make their way out without waiting for you?—I do not think that any officer could have got out after that explosion, not even the best they had. In an explosion like that they would soon have met the fresh air coming in quicker than the back draft was going out.

708. Did not you tell us the explosion went up the intake?—Certainly.

709. Is not there a better chance of getting through the return in case of accident?—The fan was travelling all the time, and before they could have got into the return the fan would have taken in all kinds of noxious gases. The only show was for any one to go out the intake, where they would meet the fresh air.

BRUNNERTON, FRIDAY, 15TH MAY, 1896.

ROBERT BARNETT examined.

1. *Mr. Joyce.*] What are you, Mr. Barnett?—I am a ganger on the Brunner Railway-line.

2. You had a son-in-law working in the sump-workings of the Brunner Mine killed by the explosion?—Yes.

3. He met with an accident a short time before the explosion, did he not?—Yes.

4. Can you tell the Commissioners the nature of that explosion?—He received a small blister upon his neck, caused by a burn.

5. What was it that produced it?—He told me it was a gas explosion in the roof. By the look of the blister, it was from a burn. As far as I can recollect it was about the 19th or 20th of March.

*The Chairman:* We cannot accept that as evidence.

*Mr. Joyce:* I thought your Honour would not stick closely to the rules of evidence in an inquiry of this kind.

*The Chairman:* We most certainly shall, Mr. Joyce.

*Mr. Joyce:* Then I shall not ask this witness any further questions.

6. *Mr. Guinness.*] Did you not give evidence before the Coroner's inquest?—Yes.

7. Do you remember what date you stated this burn or blister was noticed upon your son-in-law's neck?—To the best of my knowledge it was the date I have mentioned.

8. Was it not in the previous month—February—that you said it was?—No.

9. *Sir J. Hector.*] Was it an old blister?—No, it was freshly done.

10. *Mr. Proud.*] Do you think it was a burn received down the pit?—The deceased told me it was done in the pit.

*The Chairman:* We cannot receive as evidence what he told you.

11. *Mr. Proud.*] Not on the surface?—No; he told me he got it in the pit, from a pot-hole in the roof.

12. *Mr. Joyce.*] Brislane was his mate, was he not?—Yes.