

153. In several of your reports you refer to coaldust, and I think you elaborated your answer somewhat more here than at the inquest. May we understand from what you say to-day that when you refer to coaldust you do not mean that proportion of the dust which is so very fine and so combustible?—That is so. I did not necessarily refer to the whole of this dust as “this fine explosive dust.”

154. What we may term “explosive dust” is the dust of the character described by Professor Dixon?—Yes, there may be a small percentage of it in the mine.

155. You are not always referring to that explosive dust: you are referring to the general dust in the mine?—Yes.

156. Was the 22nd August the last day on which you visited the mine prior to the accident?—Yes.

157. And on that date you found, according to your report, that the ventilation was good and all was in order?—On the 21st August I referred to the finding of gas where Kelly was burned, and also in No. 7 level behind the haulage-winch and near Dooley’s dip. I found gas there. My report goes on to say, “The travelling-roads have and are being watered. The dust nuisance is much abated, especially on the foot-tracks, but there is dust along the sides of the travelling-ways. The new air-shaft is brick-lined up for a distance of 20 ft.”

158. You were satisfied with the condition of the mine on that date?—With those two small quantities of gas as exceptions.

159. It was in good working-order?—The mine generally was in good working-order.

160. *Mr. Tunks.*] I think Conn and Wilcox were both injured in the Extended Mine?—Yes.

161. Is there any connection between the two mines?—No, sir. There is a barrier as shown on the plan, 2 chains wide.

162. Do you know as a matter of fact whether Ruston was burnt at all?—No, not as a matter of fact. Mr. Fletcher told me that he had gone in and got slightly burnt, and he showed me the place.

163. He made no claim on the fund?—Of that I could not be positive, but I do not think so.

164. Now, have you ever asked that the haulage-way be watered?—Not specially the haulage-road—that is, the main haulage-road.

165. No copy of your letter to the Department was ever sent to Mr. Fletcher?—No.

166. That was entirely a departmental matter?—Yes.

167. He was never informed that you even contemplated a prosecution?—No.

168. These manifestations of gas which have been spoken of—on the 1st, 2nd, 9th, and 14th July: the one on the 1st was in the stone drive, Dooley’s end: was that where Kelly was burnt?—Yes.

169. Were the exudations of gas found on the 1st and 9th July in the same place?—Yes.

170. And those on the 2nd and 14th were also in the same place, No. 7 level in the old workings?—Those of the 1st, 9th, and 14th were in the same place.

171. And the other one was in the old workings?—Yes.

172. The exudations found on the 1st, 9th, and 14th were all found in working-places?—Yes, it was a working-place.

173. *Mr. Brown.*] On three different dates you found gas at this particular place?—Yes.

174. *Mr. Tunks.*] I would like a copy of your memo. in Mr. Fletcher’s report-book, dated the 2nd July, 1914, to go into the evidence. Will you read it please?—[Witness reads report, as follows.] “To-day, with the underviewer, Mr. Gowans, first-class certificated mine-manager, I have between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. examined several sections of the old workings, where it was reported CH<sub>4</sub> gas had been found, and found as follows: No. 7 level, south side road leading to Bond’s dip, and about 6 chains distant from the road, I found CH<sub>4</sub> gas in a fall over a fall of coal and rock. The gas was very strong, 9 per cent. The area filled would be 60 cubic feet of gas. The place is not a public travelling-road, and is fenced off. No. 7 level, north side of the main haulage-road, in the old workings behind the pump off the horse-haulage of the main haulage-road and in the third bord (old workings), we found CH<sub>4</sub> gas in the roof over the back of the drive. The area of the fall would be 144 square feet filled to a height of 4 ft., equalling 576 cubic feet of gas. Little dip, old workings, winch level: Three old bords examined where the back of those places were falling up to a thin seam of coal. Fireman and Deputy D. Wear reported that he found CH<sub>4</sub> gas in those places on his examination on the 22nd and 29th April ultimo. However, no gas was found by me to-day in the places. The falls left cavities (a) 576 cubic feet, (b) 1,000 cubic feet, (c) 1,400 cubic feet. It should be noted that the 22nd and 29th are both Wednesdays. It has been stated to me that the mine-ventilating fan is not run continuously during Sundays. It is clear that on the dates referred to, 22nd and 29th April, the ventilation could not be affected by the fan stopping on the Sundays. Crossing through the old workings we reached the damaged pillar area (below the Waikato River), No. 2 north section, and we carefully examined that area. There appears to be no further noticeable damage to the pillars since my previous visit. The whole of the old workings are examined once a week by two certificated firemen and deputies. Coaldust in the travelling-roads has not been attended to as might have been expected. I left a memo. in the manager’s report-book requesting that the dry coaldust in the No. 6 level south, Taupiri West travelling-road, and No. 6 haulage-road, together with sections of the main dip travelling-road, be removed or efficiently watered.—B. BENNIE.”

175. Did you again visit those places where gas was found later on?—I have no reference to testing on that occasion. My visit was to examine the place where Kelly was burnt, to enable me to report to the Under-Secretary. On the 21st August I visited No. 7 level south, behind the haulage-winch, in what is known as Dooley’s dip, with Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Gowans. We found no traces of gas there, additional brattice having been erected since my previous visit.