

Exhibit G1]. This was dealt with and made perfectly safe. There were charred timbers at the place. The spot on the plan marked "Heating" is where it took place. The deputy found no trace of fire-stink in the morning at 8 o'clock, but found that there was fire-stink there in the afternoon. There would only be a few of such heaps about the mine. No case of heating was reported between the 26th August and 10th September. Some weeks previously there had been heating in old No. 6 by the south. No gas would be created by this heating unless coal was actually burning. I do not think any gas thrown off by heating would cause an explosion with a naked light. On the 11th July a letter was sent to me by Mr. Bennie, Inspector of Mines, complaining of the dry coaldust. Watering has been carried on regularly on the travelling-roads since the receipt of that letter, but not on the old workings, because I did not and do not consider them dusty. I put in copy of letter sent to Mr. Bennie [Exhibit I]. The Inspector has never requested that safety-lamps be used. On one occasion—the 25th August—he suggested that it might be necessary to insist on their use. [Letter put in—Exhibit J.] Each miner carries sufficient explosives for one day—not more than 5 lb. If any are left over it is left in their working-bord in a canister they carry it in. We send down for the use of the coal-cutting machines a case containing 25 lb.; very rarely more than this goes down at once. This is in charge of a man who takes it to the machines. It is kept in a specially constructed box. I do not think there is any chance of heating taking place at any of the working-faces. I cannot form any theory as to how this explosion occurred, as I have not been able to make a personal inspection of the mine. I believe the company carry their own insurance risks. Where the explosives were kept would be quite free from any effects of this disaster. I did not consider it necessary to use safety-lamps in this mine, and it has never been suggested to me that they should be used.

"By Mr. Macassey (for Mines Department): I thought the mine was a safe one and safety-lamps were not necessary. Safety-lamps are used in other mines where it is considered that the mines are not safe enough to do without them. We shall have to use safety-lamps in the future. The men would rather use a naked light than a safety-lamp. I could not express an opinion as to the cause of the explosion until I have made an examination. We watered the roads by scattering piping and flooding.

"Q. If it was properly watered can you say how the explosion occurred?—A. I cannot answer that without further examination.

"By Mr. Napier: I always considered this mine a safe mine in all respects.

"By Mr. Tunks: It is not correct for Mr. Bennie to say that 'little or nothing had been done since his letter of the 30th May.' Watering has been carried on more or less since I have been manager, but more particularly these last two months. A man has been appointed to do it regularly. More attention was given to it after the 30th May. I also authorized the deputies in charge of each section to see all shots fired, and appointed men to shoot for the coal-cutting machines. The letter of the 30th May followed the check inspectors' report of the 23rd May. The dust on each occasion was on the travelling-way. I took it that the report referred to the difficulty in travelling. I produce a letter from Mr. Bennie of the 30th May [Exhibit K]. Mr. Bennie inspected the mine again on the 21st and 22nd August. I went round the working-places with him, and over the travelling-roads. Mr. Bennie did not make any further comment on the dust on that occasion. I did not understand Mr. Bennie to refer to dust in the old workings in any of his letters. If the mine had wanted safety-lamps, in my opinion, I would have put them in. My experience of the last three years has not suggested to me that the inspection of the old workings should be more frequent than every week. The heat may show itself suddenly, but it has been latent and working up from the bottom. Testing with iron rods every week would be a sufficient means of testing to see if there was any heating. The directors have never restricted me in any way when I wanted any improvements in the mine. I have never heard of a jet of water being used behind a coal-cutting machine as requested in the letter of the 30th May. I have never received any complaints from any of the men working the coal-cutting machines as to dust.

"Re-examined: I understand now that the correct number of persons killed in the mine was forty-two, not forty-three. The mine is considered a cool mine. At No. 6 cabin on the main haulage-road the temperature is about 60°. At the return-air shaft the temperature is about 68°.

"No question by jury.

"It has been proved by investigation that where explosions have taken place in mines without the presence of firedamp the primary cause has been a blow-out shot. This is a shot that has had too much work to do or has been insufficiently tamped, and the force of the explosion has been expended outwards instead of upon the coal, causing a sheet of flame and raising a cloud of dust. Dry coaldust, very fine, becomes a highly explosive substance, and the flame from the shot explodes it.

"Recalled by jury: The company had no life-saving appliances at the time of the explosion. We had the usual ambulance outfit—that is, a stretcher on the surface, an ambulance-box below, and bandages and an ambulance on the top.

"By police: Life-saving appliances are only kept in New Zealand by the Waihi Gold-mining Company and the Grade Junction Company. As far as I have read, more lives have been lost by their use than they have saved. A Proto apparatus is at Waihi, given to them by the Government."

1. *The Chairman.*] Is there anything, Mr. Fletcher, which you would like to add to that statement before you are questioned any further?—No, sir.

2. *Mr. Wilford.*] Who did the watering of the roads?—Hugh Ransom, one of the victims of the explosion.

3. Was it done on the travelling-roads with a kerosene-tin and a wheelbarrow?—Yes, and by a pipe.