

8. Is that probably due to the fact that they have been split or reduced in size?—Yes, there are too many drives carried through them, and that has consequently reduced them in size.

9. I suppose that is because the coal there is easily won?—I do not think any one would do it for that purpose. There must have been some other reason. I do not think they would rob the pillars for that purpose.

10. You say “rob” the shaft-pillars: is that a technical term. It seems rather gruesome to me?—Yes, that is a technical term.

11. You say, then, that the shaft-pillars in Ralph’s Mine have been robbed?—I do not know how they have done it, but I do consider they are too small.

12. You say they have been robbed?—The shaft-pillars are too small.

13. They have been robbed?—No, I do not say that. They have taken big drives through and round the pillars.

14. And that has weakened them? In your opinion, they are not as strong as they should be?—That is my opinion.

15. Do you not think they should be strenghtened at once?—I think steps should be taken at once in that direction

16. Should they be left a day?—They may certainly be left a day.

17. Is there a possibility of the whole thing collapsing?—No, I do not think there is any chance of that, but I would take precautions.

18. Would you take the responsibility of saying that there is no danger of their collapsing at present?—I am not going to say they will collapse at present. There would be a gradual settlement if such a thing took place.

19. Would you tell this Commission that in your opinion they are unsafe?—I cannot say that. There is a second outlet from this mine.

20. But this would be a very serious thing?—Yes, for everybody concerned. I think steps should be taken to strengthen them.

21. Do you know how long it has been in that condition?—No, I could not say.

22. In the course of your evidence at the inquest you said, I think, that a small quantity of gas would be sufficient to cause the explosion. Are you still of that opinion?—Yes, I think a small quantity of gas would be sufficient.

23. We may take it that a small quantity of gas was sufficient to start the explosion. Do you still think a small quantity of gas started the explosion?—Yes, there is one good reason for my conclusion, and that is that Martin’s body was in no way burnt—even the hair was not singed—and if there had been a large accumulation of gas there I think the indications of fire and of burning would have been very much greater.

24. Might not Martin’s body have been hurled back some distance?—It would have been surrounded by flame.

25. There was a fairly large piece of coal in his head?—Yes.

26. That either came there by the piece of coal being hurled with great force striking his head, or else Martin was himself hurled against the side?—Yes.

27. You still stick to your opinion that it does not follow that a large quantity of gas was ignited to cause such an explosion, though such a thing is possible, large or small?—Yes.

28. And there is no way to measure?—No; but if there had been an ignition of a large quantity of gas, I think it is only a common-sense conclusion that there would have been much more evidence of burning.

29. The clothes were stripped off him—there was nothing left on him but his boots?—Yes.

30. His coat was found to the south of him?—Yes, he was coming from that direction. [Plan AA discussed by Mr. Wilford and witness.]

31. I am right in saying that Martin’s coat was found to the south of his body?—Yes.

32. Is it not a fact that the coat was practically undamaged, although all the rest of the clothing was in pieces?—Yes, but he might have had his coat on his arm.

33. If his coat was further south than he was, is it not fair to presume that he was hurled north?—Yes, that is quite right.

34. He was nearer the door at the time of the explosion than his body was found?—Quite so.

35. I suppose you will admit that bords 4, 5, and 6 are dead ends?—That is quite true.

36. I mean that bords 4, 5, and 6 are cul-de-sacs?—If the door was closed.

37. If the door was closed at the south end of No. 6 bord then those three bords were cul-de-sacs or dead ends?—That is so.

38. Then they were gas-collectors if gas was there?—Yes, they would accumulate gas.

39. It was an ideal place for a gas-collection if there was gas exuding, because there was no current of air to take it away?—[Witness here pointed out to Mr. Wilford the course of the ventilation.]

40. You say that the ventilation comes in at the point marked “B,” No. 4 bord, continues along that bord, then through the crosscut into No. 5 bord, and then through the crosscut into No. 6 bord, which is a dead end?—As far as I know, that is so.

41. Do you know where the old fall is?—I do.

42. Have you got the longitudinal section of those bords?—This is the longitudinal section of the three bords Nos. 4, 5, and 6 [Exhibit BB].

43. I want to take No. 5 first—that is the middle one. You notice that the old fall cuts off practically the north end from the south end?—Yes.

44. This is a plan of the conditions since the explosion?—Yes.

45. Now take No. 6 bord: the fall does not cut off one end of the bord from the other. It would be possible to get over the new fall?—Yes, there is a walking-track over it. The plan as drawn is on an exaggerated scale.