

tioned was in dangerous quantities or not. If we had considered it necessary to test for combustion with the iron bars we would have done so. The 14th August was the last day I inspected. I usually agreed with Mr. Wear in the opinion he formed of the inspection. We got on well together.

“Re-examined: George Hancock was one man who was going into the old workings, and Mr. Wear stopped him. I have found traces of men having been in the old workings on other occasions. I have seen their lights there. I would mention the matter to Mr. Wear. It was a common occurrence for men to go into the old workings instead of going into the lavatories. I have warned men from time to time. I have verbally reported it to Mr. Wear on occasions.

“By jury: I left the position with Mr. Wear through bad health. It was a case of slow poisoning due to carbonic acid and to air being polluted by men, horses, and shooting.

“By Mr. Dixon: I may have said to you before the explosion that there might be an explosion. I don't remember saying it, but I may have said it after discovering the two big accumulations of gas.”

1. Mr. Wilford.] Have you passed the gas test, Mr. Young?—Yes.

2. Under whom?—Under Mr. Frank Reed, the Government Inspecting Engineer of Mines. I have my certificate here if you wish to see it [certificate produced and read by witness as follows]:—“Department of Mines Court, 20th December, 1913.—This is to certify that Joseph Young, of Huntly, has proved his ability to distinguish with a miner's safety-lamp the correct percentage of methane (firedamp) present in mine-air.—FRANK REED, Inspecting Engineer of Mines.”

3. Mr. Wear has no certificate such as you have?—That is so.

4. As a matter of fact, did you leave that mine because you were in ill health, or because you feared a catastrophe?—I left the mine through bad health as the result of working in it. I have not a doctor's certificate to that effect, but I can get one if it is necessary, because I know the doctor is prepared to corroborate my statements. He told me I was suffering from slow poisoning by carbonic-acid gas in the mine.

5. You have been twenty-five years in mines?—Fully that. I was thirteen years of age when I first went into the mines.

6. Where was that?—Kaitangata.

7. Were not you really of opinion that there was trouble coming in Ralph's Mine because of the gas?—I did not like it. The accumulations were too large for me, but a man gets careless and is apt to take no notice.

8. Did not the fact that there was a possibility of an explosion down in the mine cause you a good deal of concern and worry?—I will admit that it did on two occasions.

9. What were those special occasions?—You will find them in the book—accumulations of gas in No. 7 south.

10. That was on the 23rd March, 1914?—I could not swear to the date, but it is in the book.

11. Is this the book [book produced]?—Yes.

12. The date is 23rd March. I understand you found a large accumulation of gas in No. 7 south?—There was a large accumulation of gas, but whether it was on that date I could not say.

13. That was the report quoted at the Coroner's inquest?—But as I say, I could not swear to the date.

14. What do you mean by “a large accumulation”?—I mean hundreds of thousands of cubic feet.

15. Do you mean hundreds or thousands?—I mean anything up to a hundred cubic feet.

16. As much as a hundred?—Yes.

17. More than that?—Yes. I will work out the amount of gas that was present on that occasion. [After figuring] I say there was over 30,000 cubic feet of gas—33,600 cubic feet, I make it.

18. Will you tell us how you arrive at that?—I reckon there were four bords, 14 ft. by 6 ft. high. I am allowing that you could not get within 100 ft. of the place.

19. Now, did you make any special report on that startling discovery?—Mr. Wear went for the underviewer on one occasion. I went myself on another occasion.

20. Did you make a special report?—It is there in the book.

21. He did not mention the quantities of gas there?—No, you never do.

22. Now, will you look at this report-book and the report in it dated 14/4/14 [book handed to witness]: is that your report?—That is my handwriting.

23. That is your report, is it not?—Yes. “I, the undersigned, have examined old workings and return airways in the above-named sections (Nos. 6 and 7 south sections); found gas in 5, 6, 7, and 8 bords; No. 7 south section ventilation bad; No. 6 section safe, no sign of heating, ventilation good.”

24. Did not these discoveries of gas recur—that is to say, did not you find them at intervals of a few weeks?—Yes, but not in such vast quantities.

25. You know which is No. 5 south, little winch level?—Yes.

26. Have you found gas in No. 5 south, little winch level?—I think that is a mistake. There is no winch in No. 5 south.

27. Is that not your signature [report produced]?—Yes. “We have found gas in No. 5, little winch level in the little dip section,” and so on. But that means they are all different places, and not that the little winch level is in No. 5. This report is quite correct.

28. In your opinion, unquestionably the gas was found in dangerous quantities because it is over 2 per cent.?—Yes, that is what I have said all along.

29. Now, on the 29th April, 1914, your book says, “No. 1 Limb's heading and little dip north section: I, the undersigned, have examined old workings and return airways in the above-named section; found gas in three fall little dip section. All rest of sections safe. No sign of heating. Ventilation good”?—Yes, that is right.