I have been collating comments for some previous Mining Disasters for what will be one of my last Public Submissions and these are from the 1900 Torbanlea Royal Commission.

Nothing has changed.

Senior Management comes from overseas and interstate.

The comments about methane and floor blowers could be transferred straight to Grosvenor Management (if they ever testified) and you would never know the difference.

***JAMES ROBERTSON, Mine -owner, examined :***

***By the Chairman : You are the owner of the Torbanlea Colliery ?***

***Yes; of Torbanlea. J. Robertson.***

***How long have you been connected with the colliery?***

***Well, I took up the land twenty -five years odd ago, but began to sink for coal in 1882.***

***And before that time, had you had any experience in coal mining?***

***Yes. I had, at home in Scotland, and my father and grandfather before me.***

***Where there was any large quantity of gas?***

***No; not in very fiery mines.***

***What system of working is usual in Scotland?***

***Stoop and room and long wall.***

***Was it usual to find the most gas in working the solid coal or working the pillars?***

***In the solid wall.***

***And the gas was swept away by the good system of ventilation?***

***Yes; by the ventilation, of course.***

***How long is it since gas was first known to occur in the Torbanlea Colliery?***

***I could not fix it exactly, but perhaps three or four years; in fact, there was so little that it was never thought of***

***Who was manager at the time when gas was first discovered?***

***I think Mr. Sharp.***

***That is the present manager?***

***Yes.***

***You, of course, have been thoroughly conversant with the general management of the mine? Yes.***

***You would always see the reports of the manager and overman?***

***Yes. I have always seen them and consulted over the reports.***

***Has Mr. Sharp, the manager, ever suggested to you the advisability of using safety lamps?***

***No, never -only as a check to examine the workings. We had safety lamps for that purpose.***

***The workings are always examined with a safety lamp?***

***I understand so.***

***And any precautions of that sort, taken for the safety of the miners, would be left entirely to the manager?***

***Yes, it would be left entirely to his opinion.***

***And, whatever he thought necessary would be carried out.***

***It should be carried out.***

***No obstacles were put in his way?***

***No obstacles at all. He was rather encouraged the other way to be careful and cautious.***

***Have you been in the habit of visiting the workings yourself?***

***Underground?***

***Underground?***

***Not for a considerable time. In the early times I was pretty often down, but not when the company was in existence.***

***When you went down, did you examine the working places yourself for gas?***

***No, I never did because I never considered there was gas.***

***Have you ever received any complaints from the manager as to the presence of gas?***

***No, I have not.***

***Nor from any of the men?***

***Nor from any of the men.***

***Not at any time? Not at any time.***

***And you had every confidence in Mr. Sharp, the manager?***

***Every confidence in him.***

***Do you consider that the mine has been properly managed as regards the safety of the men? Certainly; I am satisfied of that.***

***JOHN SHARP, Mining. Manager, examined:***

***By the Chairman : You are manager of the Torbanlea Colliery?***

***Yes.***

***How long have you been manager there?***

***About nine years.***

***Were you working in this district before that?***

***Yes.***

***For how long?***

***Five years before that.***

***That would be since 1886?***

***Yes.***

***Had you had any experience of coal- mining previously?***

***Yes.***

***Where did you gain your experience?***

***In Scotland.***

***In what part?***

***In Stirling, Fifeshire, Lanarkshire.***

***For how long were you working in coal mines in Scotland?***

***Fifteen years.***

***Have you worked in fiery mines in Scotland?***

***Yes.,***

***And in mines where it was absolutely necessary to use safety lamps in parts of the mines?***

***Yes.***

***Have you worked in mines where naked lamps were used?***

***Yes.***

***In any of those mines where naked lights were used, was gas ever seen?***

***Yes.***

***Gas was known to exist? Yes.***

***And yet naked lights were used?***

***Oh, yes.***

***Were they used when taking away the pillars?***

***Yes, naked lights.***

***Trusting to good ventilation to sweep the gas away?***

***Certainly.***

***Have you had any experience of sudden outbursts of gas?***

***Yes, on several occasions.***

***Would it be considered safe to work with naked lights in mines subject to sudden outbursts of gas?***

***We have always considered it so; provided there was a sufficient quantity of ventilation. It very much depends upon the quantity of air that is travelling.***

***Is there anymore danger from these sudden outbursts than from a regular emission of gas? Oh, yes.***

***The regular emission of gas can be met, as a rule, by ventilation?***

***Yes.***

***When you first took the managership of Torbanlea, to your knowledge, had gas been found to exist in the mine?***

***Oh, yes ; we have had small quantities of gas there before that time.***

***Gas had been known to exist in small quantities?***

***Only in the main level, and in very small quantities.***

***That is the level we went into yesterday?***

***Yes.***

***Had there been any accident from gas in the mine before you took over the management of Torbanlea?***

***Yes ; there was a slight accident through burning when John Thomas was manager, about ten or eleven years ago.***

***Were you in the mine at the time?***

***Yes.***

***Do you remember who was concerned in that accident and who was in charge?***

***Yes, it happened to a man named John Madders, who got slightly burnt. There was a small quantity of gas which ignited but I do not remember the man being away from work through it. He went home the day he was burnt, but I believe he was there at work the next day.***

***It was not a serious accident?***

***It was hardly worth calling a burning, as far as I could see.***

***Do you think it possible that it could have come from the floor -from the seam below?***

***The bottom coal generally contains’ most gas, ‘I think.***

***That is the coal 2 feet below the floor?***

***Yes. There is very little gas in the top coal; it generally came from the bottom coal. Down the dip the bottom coal is not good, so that there is a great possibility that the’ gas may have come from the bottom floor, owing to the bottom being burst up by the weight of the roof’on the top.***

***Sharp.***

***Did that upheaval of the floor take place at the time of the accident?***

***I could not say, but I did not notice it before the accident.***

***When did you first notice that upheaval of the floor?***

***In going over there to examine the place just after the accident, when I was down with those four men. That was the first time I noticed it, and I then saw the place was swelled or burst up about a foot or so.***

***Then do you disagree with the pavement theory?***

***Oh,I do not know. The bottom coal has always been the coal that contained the gas.***

***But the gas would make its way to the top?***

***But in the dip we never cut down to the bottom coal. The bottom coal is left on because the stone gets too thick to work.***

***Is it your opinion that the gas which caused the explosion in this accident came out of the bottom coal?***

***I would not like to say anything about the matter at all ; it is a mystery to me ; I cannot say where it came from.***

***But is it your opinion that there is sufficient gas lodging in the bottom coal and pavement to give off sufficient gas to cause an explosion such as that which recently-took place?***

***Yes ; I believe so, unless it could get drained off otherwise. Judging from what I have seen in driving levels, the greater part of the gas comes from the bottom coal, and -unless it can get off some other way there was sufficient gas in the bottom coal to rise and burn those men as it did.***

***But do you not think that the pressure that has been on that part of the mine where the pillars have been taken out and the cutting of the bottom coal at the top of the dip would have caused that gas to have drained out prior to the accident?***

***No ; I do not think so. The bottom coal is not a clean coal. It is not a free coal. There is not such a thing as a skin in it. There are no pores in it, and it will not let water through, so that any gas that might be in it would not get very readily out of the coal.***

***But is not the floor itself sufficiently porous to admit of the emission of the gas?***

***No. We had to shoot that stone with dynamite. There is a big iron band in the centre of it, and sometimes we could not shoot it with powder.***

***Then do you really believe that the explosion arose from that source?***

***Well, I have no real belief. I could not say the gas came from a certain part. It might have come from the 100 -yards level, or from the upheaval of the bottom.***

***Do you not think that the amount of ventilation you had there, the gas having to come from the bottom coal, and the ventilation being largely confined to the bottom and not to the top, would be sufficient to prevent the gas from rising?***

***That is certainly one of the things which goes against the theory of the gas coming from the bottom coal. At the same time it is a very wide space there and the air was spread over a large space. Until you get to the bottom of the pillar the air was not confined to any small area.***

<https://www.qldminingcrisis.com.au/2021/04/16/comments-from-1990-torbanlea-royal-commission-about-management-of-mines-methane-floor-blowers/>

<https://www.qldminingcrisis.com.au/2021/04/28/grosvenor-mine-inquiry-submission-methane-regulation-amendments-that-came-into-force-6th-january-2020/>