

Taken from a letter to Sir George Grey from George Hinchcliffe, the Coroner for West Bromwich, who carried out the inquest into the deaths at the Colliery.

*"The Ground Bailiff, or Mine Surveyor, has many Pits to superintend, which he visits and inspects about once a week or oftener if he is required or requested to do so. The persons who have the working of the interior of the Mine and the control over and direction of the Colliers employed in it, and derive a great profit from their labour, are the Butty, who is the Contractor and Manager, and the Doggy who superintends under him. The Butty and the Doggy very often for their own advantage press on the work although the mine is in a dangerous state at the time. From the evidence before me on these enquiries it appeared that the state of the atmosphere has a great effect upon Sulphur in mines, sometimes causing it to accumulate and expand and at other times effecting a clearance of it in the Pit. It was proved before me that on the morning of the dreadful explosion in question viz. Tuesday the 17th Inst, the state of the Atmosphere had a great effect upon the sulphur in many of the Coal Pits in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr Parker, and in one instance it so diffused itself in the Pit during the previous night, that the Butty and Colliers in descending into it the next morning, found so much sulphur, that they did not find it prudent to work, and the Butty ordered every man out of the Pit. This state of the Pit continued till Saturday morning when the wind and atmosphere having undergone a change, the Pit cleared itself, and on the latter morning the Colliers went to work.*

*It was proved before me that on the Tuesday morning, very shortly before the explosion took place in Mr Parkers Pit, the Butty Job Holland had discovered a Body of Sulphur there in the immediate neighbourhood of the stalls at which the men were at work. It was the Duty of Holland to have ordered the Colliers out of the work immediately (the same as was done at the other Pit above alluded to) and to have proceeded to ascertain the causes of the accumulation of the Sulphur and to have given notice of it to the Ground Bailiff. The dreadful consequences of his not doing so very shortly followed, by which he and his Doggy and 19 other individuals lost their lives.*

*I respectfully submit to your consideration what I think would have a great effect in checking the reoccurrence of these explosions in this neighbourhood which would be to have Inspectors appointed for certain Districts who have no interest in the Mines or in the profits arising from the labour of the Colliers, to examine the Mines in the morning before the Colliers begin to work and particularly on those mornings when the state of the atmosphere may affect the sulphur and create Danger.*

*It is the Duty of the Butty and Doggy to do it, but they seldom do it effectually, being too anxious for their own benefit to keep the Colliers at work at all risks and this they will continue to do, unless some check is put upon them and more particularly at a time when the Coal Trade is in the flourishing state it now is."*