

7. Four mines have been worked in the district—namely, the Brunner Mine and the Coal-pit Heath Mine—both of which are on the north side of the Grey River, and were in work at the time of the recent strike—and the Tyneside Mine and the Wallsend Mine, on the south side of the river, both of which have been closed since they were transferred to the Grey Valley Coal Company.

8. Moreover, through various causes, the coal available in the two first mines for working from the solid has been greatly restricted, and for some time recourse has been taken to working out the pillars, which, having been more or less crushed by the superincumbent weight, yield a smaller quantity of screened or marketable coal, and a larger quantity of slack or dross, part of which has been utilised in the manufacture of coke, but a large part of which, in the absence of demand, has been turned into the river as waste.

9. That the working in the Tyneside Mine has been abandoned since the formation of the Grey Valley Company already referred to, and that more recently the Wallsend Mine was completely closed—in August of this year—with the view of concentrating the company's operations in the Coal-pit Heath and Brunner Mines.

10. That up to the 8th March of this year the coal-hewers were paid by a tonnage-rate of 4s. for each ton of screened coal turned out, the daily quantity being ascertained by screening and weighing one skip or truck for each miner or party of miners, and adjusting the rest of their output for that day to that weight.

11. That this system of weighing seems to have been satisfactory to the miners, as no evidence has been tendered to the Commissioners of complaints against it having been made to the company.

12. That in the latter part of 1888 exception was, however, taken to the rate of remuneration for coal-hewing, and a demand was made upon the company for payment by a tonnage-rate on the output of coal unscreened as sent out by the miners, and that consequently the company, with the view of complying, appointed three referees to act with three appointed by the miners, and ascertain the tonnage-rate for unscreened coal at each mine which would be equivalent to 4s. per ton on screened coal.

13. That these referees reported on the 8th December, 1888—

1. That the gross output from the respective mines from the 3rd September to the 27th October, 1888, both inclusive, had been—

From the Brunner Mine	...	...	...	16,906 tons.
" Wallsend Mine	...	...	...	12,396 "
" Coal-pit Heath Mine	...	...	...	8,512 "

2. That the miners' weight for the same period was—

At the Brunner Mine	...	...	...	10,700 "
" Wallsend Mine	...	...	...	7,800 "
" Coal-pit Heath Mine...	...	...	...	5,716 "

3. That, had the gross-weight system been in force, the price per ton would have been—

At Brunner Mine, and Wallsend	...	...	...	2s. 6½d. per ton
At Coal-pit Heath Mine	...	...	...	2s. 8½d. "

4. And that "it is therefore our duty to report that the said prices shall be the hewing-prices at the respective mines under the gross-weight system in future."

14. That, whilst the company was willing to adopt the rates thus ascertained, the miners, at a conference amongst themselves, by a small majority decided to decline them, and no change was thereafter made till March, 1890.

15. That early in 1890 the question of tonnage-rate was again raised, and the coal-hewers demanded payment by a tonnage-rate on the unscreened coal, and, seeing that 2s. 10d. per ton was paid for hewing at Westport (as equivalent for 3s. 10d. on screened coal), this was claimed as being a "district rate," and the miners declined sundry modified offers of the company, and refused to work under that figure.

16. That the coal at Westport mines is being worked from the solid, and that at the Grey Valley mines, being from the pillars, the latter is obtained with comparatively little work, and the output at the former is marketable without being screened, whereas the slack of the Grey Valley mines is waste.

17. That no such district rate has hitherto been established as being common to the mines, nor has any test of the relative value of hewing in these