

funds there are here I do not think are touched at present. Funds are coming in from other sources outside the district.

1543. Other employes in employment are contributing out of their own pay?—Yes.

Mr. THOMAS ROBINSON sworn and examined.

1544. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A coal-miner.

1545. How long have you been at Brunnerton?—About four years.

1546. And before that where were you?—I was in Canterbury.

1547. At which mine?—Springfield.

1548. And before that?—I came from the Home-country—from the County of Durham.

1549. Have you been a coal-miner all your life?—Very nearly.

1550. Which of the mines have you been working in during the last four years?—Principally the Brunner.

1551. Which part of the mine—in the whole coal anywhere?—Yes; in the present block of coal that they are now working.

1552. Is there any solid work now in the Brunner?—No solid work at present. They are taking the pillars now in the Brunner. I have worked in the solid there between the faults.

1553. You have not worked any dip-coal in the Brunner?—No.

1554. Latterly you have only worked pillar-coal?—Yes.

1555. We have had a good deal of evidence showing that the work in the mine has been interrupted from various causes. I understand from Andrew that you were prepared to explain what remedies the miners have suggested or would like to suggest for these interruptions?—No; I do not think that has been allocated to me. I principally take up the averages.

1556. On what points would you like to give information to the Commissioners?—I have a brief statement here if you would like me to read it. It is as follows: The company has published an average wage made up on the earnings of miners in full employment, and is stated at 14s. 8d. per shift for coal-hewing. But on the same table is given the amount earned by coal-hewers at other work, which, being work incidental to coal-hewing, must be counted in the average. This will show the company's stated average to be 14s. 4d. per shift. The miners accept these figures with modifications on considerations not accounted for in the published statement of the company. First, the miners pay for their own tools and lights at a cost of 6d. per day. Second, loss of wages through accidents amounts to 3d. per day more. This will show an average wage of 13s. 7d. per day for almost exclusively pillar-work for that section of the men who have continuous employment. These do not average over four days a week, or £2 14s. 4d. in wages.

1557. How do you get the £2 14s. 4d. in wages?—We adopt the company's figures.

1558. You are referring to the previous period upon which the men have gone to work pending the result of this Commission?—That is during the two or three weeks. It was made some time within the last month at the Coal-pit Heath during this trouble. The following is a statement relating to the averages in the Coal-pit Heath Mine:—Pay ending the 6th September: Number of days, 293; total amount, £161 2s. 8d.; average per day, 10s. 11½d. Pay ending the 20th September, including fifty-one shift-work, £28 1s. 9d.; number of days, 397; total amount, £228 3s. 3d.; average per day, 11s. 5½d. Commenced the 5th April, ending with the 31st May. The company also makes a statement that this shift-work is incidental; it is an extra. The shift-work included in that statement is not done by separate men; it is charged against the time of the miner, and included in the price paid for the coal, and it ought to be included in the miner's average. It makes 4d. per day difference. I am quoting from the company's statement.

1559. Your position is, that in the company's published statement allowance is not made for certain drawbacks, which makes the wage appear higher than it really is?—Yes. I put in a return for the period 14th December, 1889, to 27th September, 1890, showing the names of persons who have met with accidents, and dates of same; also the time out of work in weeks and days, and the amount of benefit received from the society formed for that purpose [Exhibit No. 20]. The totals show that in the above period there were 211 weeks lost through accidents, and the total sum of benefit distributed is £283 19s. 4d.

1560. Is this benefit society one which is supported by the weekly payments of the men?—Yes.

1561. How much is the payment?—Sixpence per man per week.

1562. Is it one of the friendly societies registered?—Yes.

1563. Does the company pay anything towards the society?—No.

1564. In this return, how do you arrive at the 3d. per day to be deducted for accidents?—Well, 3d. was considered a fair average, as in some periods there are more accidents than at others. I wish to explain that this return shows 3½d., as it was considered that during this period the accidents were in excess. We are agreeable to make an average of 3d. per day on account of accidents.

1565. *Mr. Brown.*] Threepence per day was arrived at as something under what you were entitled to claim?—Yes.

1566. Have you any knowledge of how these benefit societies are regarded in other places: is the payment to the benefit society looked upon as a deduction from wages?—Well, I cannot say; I have not had any experience in that direction.

1567. I mean, in other places; in reckoning your wages at 7s., 8s., 10s., or 15s. per day, is the deduction for a benefit society taken into account?—I do not know; but I think it is only a fair deduction.

1568. *The Chairman.*] In the case of these accidents, would the company pay anything towards the accidents?—Not that I know of.

1569. In any case has the company ever paid for an accident?—I have not heard of any case.

1570. Is there anything else you wish to state under this heading?—There is another cause