

278. Do you know the depth?—About 640ft., I think.

279. What was the thickness of the seam?—About 16ft. The seam runs pretty regularly all through.

280. How do you explain their not getting the coal at the depth they expected?—I believe it was owing to their having passed over a fault in choosing the ground. The difficulties encountered caused the failure of the company, and the mine was sold by auction to a Dunedin syndicate.

281. What did they pay for it?—About £10,000 or £11,000. That syndicate ultimately sold, and another Dunedin company took it up—I think the Westport Coal Company—and it finally merged into the present Grey Valley Coal Company.

282. Who sunk the present shaft?—The Westport Colliery Company. About 1885, feeling sure that there was coal, and finding that the Westport Company had secured all the ground, I applied to them and obtained a special lease of seventy acres in the vicinity of the old Tyneside Mine.

283. You commenced to work that?—Yes; I got a lease of seventy acres.

284. How long did you work that?—I wrought it until I sold it on the 20th August, 1888, for the sum of £4,000, to the Grey Valley Coal Company.

285. Had you any steamers?—Yes; in order to work the mine I acquired a steamer. During the working of the mine for two years I found it profitable so long as the coal was level-free. When it went to the dip the cost was greatly increased. After the Grey Valley Company bought Mr. Kennedy out I was doing very well between the two companies, the Westport and Mr. Kennedy, as they were running against each other. They had large vessels coming here, and occasionally wanted ten or twelve trucks of coal to fill the vessel. My business was consequently going on well, independent of the small craft I had coming to me. I had a good town trade, and was selling at a very reasonable figure—9s. and 10s. when first I started, and the last month or so 11s. Then came the amalgamation, and I lost the trade of both companies. I was beginning to get the Tyneside Mine fairly opened. It had cost me a good deal of money, and some negotiations. I then got the "Oreti."

286. Did your work succeed?—Yes; until they bought me out.

287. You were competing with them?—Yes.

288. Had you any difficulty in obtaining railway plant?—I was nearly driven out of the place about it.

289. Can you tell us the circumstances?—A certain proportion of trucks were allowed to each mine, and as I was only just beginning I required very few, but when I began to get the coal I applied for more, and was informed that I could only be allowed five per diem.

290. Were they sufficient for your output?—No.

291. How many did you want?—I battled until I got fifteen, as I wanted increased numbers as I got my drives in.

292. Were fifteen sufficient?—No. Further on again I found I wanted thirty, and I went up to Wellington and saw Mr. Maxwell about it. I wanted them for loading the "Oreti," which was in and out frequently independent of other trade.

293. Did you get the thirty?—Yes.

294. There was no real obstruction then?—Yes, there was. I went up again to apply for another thirty, as my drives were still opening up, and output increasing. I did not get this other thirty. Just about this time the Grey Valley Coal Company, which had already bought Mr. Kennedy's Brunner Mine, seeing that I was getting along, made overtures to me, which I ultimately accepted, and sold out.

295. Did you also sell the "Oreti"?—Yes; I sold the "Oreti" for £4,500. I got a cheque for £9,000 for the two.

296. During your experience in shipping coal, have you found the condition of the river and bar a very great obstacle to regularity?—Yes; of course we used to feel the interruptions.

297. Do you think they have been materially reduced by the present harbour-works?—Yes; whatever may be the opinions of anybody, I say the harbour is very favourable now. I believe at present there is no great delay arising from insufficiency of tonnage for carrying coal. There was originally; that was one of the troubles we had to contend with; but of course, since the Union Company have got the business they have been able to keep it in full swing. Lately, at least to the best of my knowledge, they have regulated the trade to suit their own convenience.

298. Is the business in Greymouth which depends upon the export of coal as flourishing as it was previous to the amalgamation?—No; not by 40 or 50 per cent. I refer, of course, to the output of coal.

299. Have you any reason to believe that ships are kept waiting for coal owing to the absence of storage accommodation?—Yes, I have known ships waiting.

300. How long have they had to wait?—I have known sailing vessels to wait six weeks, but not recently.

301. Within the last twelve months?—No. The Union Company's steamers are never kept waiting on that account.

302. How do you account for that?—Well, being interested in the mines, they regulate their tonnage for their own convenience.

303. If there was much competition in shipping coal from the port by steamer, would storage be then necessary? I believe it would be. Another thing is that there are only two cranes for use now. If the Blackball and other mines were opened up there would be a regular jamb.

304. If the port was in full employment, then these cranes would not be sufficient for shipping coal?—No.

305. Would the rolling-stock be sufficient?—No. The Blackball would take it all.

306. Supposing the Blackball and Coal Creek Mines were opened up, in addition to the existing mines, would the present appliances be sufficient?—No; they would not.