

three were kept going fully, but this was due to the strike of New South Wales coal-miners, and as soon as they returned to work the trade fell off. As showing the work done by the mine prior to the amalgamation, it may be mentioned that two days and a quarter for work was the average time made, and, as the other mines were not fully employed, the coal from Wallsend could have been supplied by them. In consequence of want of trade it was found necessary to close the Brunner Mine for a period in the beginning of 1889. It remained idle about four months, and has resumed in consequence of customers requiring this coal for special purposes. At the time of amalgamating the mines the connecting of the Wallsend shaft with the leases on the other side of the river was looked upon as a desirable thing; but, with recent developments, faults in the Wallsend, and extra water in the Coal-pit Heath, it has been deemed advisable to delay making such connection, and that meanwhile efforts should be directed to opening up the coal in Brunner and the working-out of Coal-pit Heath pillars as speedily as possible, this plan of drawing the output from the two mines being more likely to give a profitable return than would be possible by spreading it over the three mines. Before closing the Wallsend there was a joint report prepared by the engineer to the Westport Coal Company and myself. It was sent to the companies interested.

656. Is the coal interchangeable in the mines? Are they all of the same quality?—The iron-workers prefer the Brunner, and the gas companies prefer the Coal-pit Heath.

657. What is the character of the Wallsend?—I think the railway people took the largest quantity, but it is inferior to the others. It is rather stony coal.

658. In what form does this stone occur?—In nodules, not in bands.

659. What proportion do they form to the whole?—They form a considerable proportion. They come irregularly. You have patches of clean coal, and considerable patches containing these stones.

660. And you say the Coal-pit Heath is preferred for gas purposes?—Yes.

661. So that they are not altogether interchangeable?—No, not altogether. I put in a return of hands employed and rates of pay by the Grey Valley Coal Company. [Exhibit No. 9.]

662. Have your brick- and coke-works been affected by the strike?—Yes; the coke-works have.

663. From the want of supply of coal?—Yes. The brick-works were stopped during the first stoppage, but not this time.

664. Are these men engaged on coke- and brick-works all union men?—Yes; but they did not call out the brick-works men. We had to stop the coke-works by reason of want of coal. The men we have continued to employ throughout the strike have been engine-men, pump-tenders, and brickmakers.

665. All the others were called out?—Yes. I hand in pay-sheets from the 1st January to the 8th March, 1890. [Exhibit No. 10.] The next return is a return of slack used in making coke. [Exhibit No. 11.] Also a return of the earnings of the men before the 8th March and after the 8th March, 1890. [Exhibit No. 12.]

666. How does the alteration of places in the mines affect this last return?—That would tend to bring down the averages.

667. How many individuals were there sharing places?—We had 178 men at the time who were actually engaged in hewing—that is, individuals who went into the shift for a fortnight. It has affected the average, because they would not be looked upon as permanent wage-earners. I have two returns showing the coals produced from the mines from the 1st January to the 8th March, 1890, and from the 10th March to the 19th July, 1890. [Exhibit No. 13.]

668. If you have more miners than the place would employ regularly every day, how is the difficulty got over?—They shift work from week to week. There is a rule passed by their body that they will share the work during any period when there is a scarcity of work, and the men do not leave. We have, of course, no power to compel them to do so.

669. Why will they not leave for other places?—I cannot say that.

670. Were the company instrumental in bringing them here?—Well, the Westport Company did bring men down from Westport for the Wallsend Mine, and the Koranui Mine happened to be stopped at the time, and took them up.

671. Have you ever advertised for men?—We have, but not for years, until this week.

672. Have they freehold houses?—Yes; some of the idle men have freehold houses.

673. Have the company any houses?—No. I now hand in a statement showing the men who received the highest wages and those who received the lowest wages. [Exhibit No. 14.] Also a statement of the wages paid on account of coke and fireclay departments. [Exhibit No. 15.] Also statement of the valuation of plant. [Exhibit No. 16.]

674. Does the quantity of small coal cost anything for coke?—Yes; we pay the same as if it was big coal. We pay 2s. 10d. per ton for hewing it, and all other charges come against it the same as for screened coal. We do not pay royalty.

675. Since the change to paying on the gross coal, has it increased the amount upon which the company has to pay royalty?—I do not know that it has.

676. You still screen the coal, and you make the royalty returns on the screened coal?—Yes; the amount is given in that return that we pay royalty on.

677. You pay on everything but the slack?—Yes.

678. I wanted to know if there is a profit or loss upon the fireclay-works and the coke-works?—It may be said that when they are working there is a profit, but there was large expenditure on developing the trade and on plant, so that, in reality, there has been loss. We doubled the coke-plant not long ago, and we got no return for it: the demand from Broken Hill began to fall off.

679. You had a large market at Broken Hill, had you not?—It was seemingly a large one, but we never got hold of it.

680. What was the cause of the cessation of the demand at Broken Hill?—It ceased as far as we were concerned. I do not know whether it was due to any stoppage of the mines there.