

The scheme, which originated in the Miners' Phthisis Act, 1915, is administered by the Pensions Department, and the following summary of operations for the year ended 31st March, 1938, has been supplied by the Commissioner of Pensions:—

Payments made from 1st November, 1915, to 31st March,	£
1937	903,458
Payments 1937-38	88,167
	£991,625
Number of new grants for year 1937-38—	
Miners	76
Widows	33
	109
Annual value of new grants	£8,369
Number of pensions in force at 31st March, 1938—	
Miners	869
Widows	191
	1,060
Annual value of pensions in force at 31st March, 1938 ..	£86,537
Average pension per annum	£81 12s. 9d.
Number of pensions granted to 31st March, 1938 ..	2,767
Dissection of pensions in force at 31st March, 1938—	
Unmarried miners	243
Married miners	626
Miners' widows	191
	1,060

COAL-MINERS' RELIEF FUND.

The Coal-miners' Sick and Accident Funds having been abolished as from the 1st April, 1926, and incorporated in the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, all accident relief payments are now made from the latter fund, which is administered by the Public Trustee.

The rate of interest allowed on the fund was decreased from 4 per cent. to 3½ per cent. as from the 1st April, 1933.

The interest earned for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1938, was £930 16s. 11d., as against £911 0s. 9d. for the previous year, while for the same periods the receipts from the ½d. per ton contributions were £4,596 17s. 4d. and £4,373 8s. 2d. respectively.

The total expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1938, amounted to £5,300 18s. 1d., as against £4,307 19s. 3d. for the previous year.

The amount standing to the credit of the fund at the 31st March, 1938, was £26,828 14s. 10d., as against £26,601 18s. 8d. at the 31st March, 1937.

STATE AID TO MINING.

(a) MINES DEPARTMENT.

As in previous years, considerable use was made of the Government prospecting drills. They were hired by five parties, and a total of 14,029 ft. was drilled.

The sum of £16,390 was voted for expenditure for assistance towards prospecting. The balance of unexpended authorities at the 31st March, 1937, and those issued during the year, less cancellations, amounted to £9,712 16s. 10d. Of this amount, £4,329 14s. 4d. was expended by way of actual subsidies during the year, leaving a balance of £5,383 2s. 6d. authorized but not spent at the 31st March, 1938. The number of men given employment through the subsidies granted by the Mines Department was 82.

The increased amounts available during the past two years enabled the Department to arrange with the Labour Department to prospect areas in the Reefton and South Westland Districts. This prospecting is now being carried out by parties of men under skilled direction. The cost is being shared by the two Departments, and