

should be very pleased to do so. I might add that the former apparatus is considered the most approved design for quick, cheap, and effective loading of large screw-colliers from 1,200 to 2,000 or 3,000 tons burthen. It is the plan adopted at a shipping port which ranks fourth or fifth among the large coal-shipping ports in England, where such large steamers frequently come in on one tide and proceed to sea the next tide fully loaded. There is no doubt of its being a system capable of doing an enormous lot of work at the smallest possible cost.

DAVID WILKIE, Contractor, examined.

2077. *The Chairman.*] Are you a member of the firm of Wilkie, Wilson, and Co., contractors of Westport?—Yes.

2078. Your firm are contractors for the Westport harbour-works?—Yes.

2079. It is a part of the business of this Committee to learn the progress made with the Westport harbour-works, the output of coal, and the condition of the coal-mining industry. As you have the principal contract there in connection with the harbour-works, you will be able to give the Committee information as to the terms of your contract—the progress you are making with the works. You will, if you please, confine yourself as much as you can to the matter of your contract. The first question I will ask you is, What quantity of stone you have to put out?—The quantity under our contract is 180,000 tons.

2080. Have you a copy of the contract?—Yes; here is a copy of the contract [produced].

2081. What are the terms of the contract?—We have to deliver at the rate of 20,000 tons of stone per month from October to March (both months inclusive), and 14,000 tons from April to September (both months inclusive).

2082. What date do you reckon from?—From one week after signing the contract.

2083. What date does it commence from?—It was signed on the 1st February.

2084. This year?—Yes; this year.

2085. When did the contract commence?—It was some time before the Board could put us in possession of the works.

2086. Was it about the middle of February?—Somewhere about the middle of February.

2087. What was the rate per ton that you were to receive?—We had different prices, according to the class of stone.

2088. Will you be good enough to state what they were?—For first-class stone—that is, from 10 tons to 20 tons and upwards—we were to receive 3s. 9d. a ton.

2089. *Mr. Turnbull.*] For the second class?—For the second class, 3s. 6d.—that is, for stone from 3 to 10 tons.

2090. And the others?—The third class would be smaller—that is, from 5cwt. to 3 tons—and the fourth class from $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. to 5cwt; this smaller stone was for filling in the body of the wall.

2091. The whole contract was for 180,000 tons?—Yes.

2092. Was it for an annual or a total amount?—The total amount we were to deposit.

2093. *Mr. Withy.*] It could be done in a year?—Yes.

2094. You only executed the contract this last year?—Yes.

2095. *The Chairman.*] When does your contract expire?—Eleven months from the time of commencing.

2096. Is there any penalty for short deposit after a certain date?—Yes; 6d. a ton.

2097. How is it ascertained?—They measure up every three months, and if we are short this penalty is charged.

2098. Then, practically, you divide it into four parts?—Yes; and if we are short of the quarter they impose the penalty according to the number of tons short.

2099. Is there any reference in your contract to “twelve months,” or a period specific?—You take it at the rate deposited per month.

2100. *Mr. Hutchison.*] How would that reckon out, taken from the middle of February?—Divide into four quarters; if there is any deficiency on the quarterly period it may be held over to the yearly period, when the whole is made up.

2101. *The Chairman.*] Have you any allowance made you if you deposit the quantity within the time of your contract?—No; no allowance.

2102. *Mr. Withy.*] Have you heard of any proposal to alter the direction of the east wall, so as to keep further out from the west wall?—No.

2103. Have you heard any suggestion of that kind?—No.

2104. What is their distance apart?—I have heard it is 700ft.

2105. At the point you have got to?—Yes.

2106. You have not measured it?—No.

2107. *The Chairman.*] The deduction, you say, was to be 6d. a ton?—Yes.

2108. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Starting from the middle of February, what was required to be deposited to the middle of May—this is, the first three months of the period?—In the month of March we would have 10,000 tons to put out—that is half the month. The rate for that month is 20,000; the rate for April would be 14,000.

2109. A quarter would be 45,000 tons?—From February to March we would have 20,000 tons to put out; then from the middle of March 14,000 to the end of March.

2110. What to the middle of May, the first three months of the period?—7,000.

2111. That would be 51,000 for the first three months?—We were short.

2112. How much?—I could not say how much: the next month, to the middle of June, we would put out 14,000, to the middle of July 14,000, and to the middle of August—this month—14,000.

2113. That is, for that three months' periods, 42,000, which with the other makes 93,000: what would be the output until now?—I wired for that, and have received the following telegram in reply:

11—I. 6.