

In using this and similar tables the reader should bear in mind the note to the introduction, p. 2 above. Each mine or company is not indicated by the same letter throughout the tables—e.g., Mine A in one table may appear as Mine J in another. In some cases—e.g., where a company works two or more contiguous mines—a letter may refer to more than one mine, though such grouping is only occasionally made.

The average mining-cost per ton increased in every case except in the case of Mine A (the Point Elizabeth State Mine), where the cost fell 20 per cent., due to the fact that there was no development work to undertake, and the miners were mainly on pillar-work and with less travelling-distances, as the mine was nearing exhaustion. The lowest rate of increase, omitting Mine N, is 7½ per cent. (four-years' period only), and the highest 63·6 per cent. For those mines giving data for the whole period, including 1913, there is a wide range of change between the extreme limits of 8s. 3d. increase per ton and 2s. 3d. fall, equal to 10s. 6d. The rate of increase of the mine occupying the middle place is 50·2 per cent. The greatest increase is shown in the cost of producing brown coals.

The above table sets out the facts of mining-cost in respect of each mine or group of mines under one management, and indicates the nature and range of variation in each over the period, but it does not give a figure purporting to measure the increase in the cost of mining coal for the industry viewed as a whole. This may be calculated by weighting the average cost at each mine for each year by the output of the mine for the year, and so obtaining an average annual cost per ton for all mines. Calculation from the data available from the mines giving particulars of their costs over the whole period under review showed that the average cost of mining coal increased by over 37 per cent. comparing the years 1913 and 1918—i.e., from about 13s. 6d. to 18s. 7d. per ton. The cost in question, however, included the rail freight in the case of certain mines selling their coal f.o.b. at neighbouring ports. In order to arrive at the change in the true mining-cost these freight charges have been deducted, giving a result of 41-per-cent. increase in pure mining-cost, or from about 11s. 9d. per ton to about 16s. 7d. From these results and certain other evidence the Board is of opinion that *the total average cost of production per ton of coal at these mines has increased between 1913 and September, 1918, by about 40 per cent.* The cost of mining semi-bituminous coal has increased least, owing largely to the favourable position of the Point Elizabeth Mine, which is nearing exhaustion and working mainly on pillar coal, with shorter travelling-distances for the miners, and with little or no depreciation and taxation charges. The cost of mining both brown and bituminous coals has increased above the average rate of increase, the latter very slightly, the former very much above it. These mines are thoroughly representative of the industry as a whole during the period, except that their data gives an undue weight to increases in the cost of brown coal.

The largest proportionate increases in cost occurred during the two years 1916–17 and 1917–18. So far the comparison has been one of the cost of coals obtained from mines supplying cost data over the whole period 1913–18. *If we compare the costs of all coals for which exact particulars were available in each year, whether from collieries working over the whole period or not, the results are slightly different, though showing the same general character. On the average, judging from this data,* it cost about 31 per cent. more to mine coal in 1917–18 than in 1913, representing a change of from 11s. 9d. to 15s. 4d. per ton. This cost actually fell during 1913–16; in 1916–17 it rose 12 per cent. above that of 1913; and in 1917–18 it rose 31 per cent. more. One-third of the rise is due to increased labour-cost, as noted below. The cost of producing bituminous coal increased 40 per cent.; it did not rise till 1916–17, when it increased 17 per cent. The cost of mining semi-bituminous either decreased or remained much the same till 1917–18, when it rose 31 per cent. higher than in 1913. The cost of producing brown coal had risen 13 per cent. by 1916–17 and 25 per cent. by 1917–18. The total cost of production was highest throughout the period in the case of bituminous coal and lowest in the case of brown coal (except for one year). The labour-cost throughout was greatest in the case of brown coal; for three out of five years the labour-cost of producing bituminous coals was less than that of mining semi-bituminous coal.*

3. DIRECT LABOUR-COSTS.

Of the total cost a considerable percentage is represented by the wages of miners, truckers, other underground workers, and the surface workers about the mine. This cost may be referred to as the direct labour-cost. Table 17 gives the actual amounts paid per ton for such labour, and the percentage which such payment in each case is of the total cost of production. This is important as showing, among other things, how much of the value of a ton of coal goes as wages to manual labour employed directly in and about the mine.

TABLE 17.—TOTAL DIRECT LABOUR-COST PER TON OF COAL MINED, ALSO EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COST. (Total cost per ton for the purpose of this table does not include railway freights from mines to selling-point f.o.b. in this case, but includes all other costs, including administration, &c., for which companies have incurred actual charges.)

Mine.	1913.	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	Increase per Cent.	Increase.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.		s. d.
A	6 2·14	6 0·89	6 0·09	6 5·2	7 2·74	8 174	31·8	1 11·6
	47	44	45	51	43	40		
B	4 11	5 1·28	5 2·94	5 8·53	5 6·3	6 1·65	24·8	1 2·65
	38	37	40	41	33	30		
C	5 10·58	5 4	5 7·44	6 2·32	7 11	9 1·58	56	3 3
	59	61	62	61	65	69		
D	5 1·9	4 7·65	4 10·91	5 6·53	6 4·8	7 1·88	38·8	1 11·98
	52½	50	58	59	56	54		

* The defects in the data for 1913 are such as to raise unduly the figures of cost of that base year, and so diminish the number showing the percentage increase of cost over the period.