

Kamo Colliery Wangarei.—Previous to Mr. Binns's visit to this mine, it had been worked by a party of working men, but soon after, it passed into the hands of a private company, who have opened up the mine, and are working it in a systematic manner, which had not been previously the case. On my first visit, I found the ventilation very indifferent, and that no plan of the mine and workings was in existence; on my pointing out to Mr. Kerr, the manager, the necessity of improving the ventilation, he proposed to me a new scheme, by putting in a fresh drive, which would enable him to carry air through the whole of the workings; I also pointed out the necessity of having the ground surveyed, and a plan made. On my second visit with Mr. Cox, the ventilation was somewhat improved, although not so good as was necessary, the new air drive not being completed, but was being pushed on both night and day. This drive has since been connected with the workings, and acts well, giving a good and steady current of air, which by proper guidance, will allow a larger extension of operations. The mine has also been surveyed, and a good plan made, a copy of which has been furnished to me. The nature of the coal in this mine is very tender, but the manager seems fully alive to the danger of falls, and is evidently taking great care for the safety of the men, by securing the ground well with timber, and also in working the mine in accordance with the Act. The workings have hitherto been carried on by a level driven into the hill, but the manager is about to extend the workings by sinking a shaft on the flat at the base of the hill for the purpose of developing a seam which is known to exist at a lower level. This company have shown considerable energy in supplying the market, notwithstanding the great difficulty in getting the coal carted a distance of four miles to Wangarei, over a very inferior road. For this purpose they have purchased a road engine, but on account of the poverty of the Road Board, or County, were obliged to expend a considerable amount of money on the road to enable it to bear the traffic. From the lightness of the foundation of the road, I, however, fear that it will not stand the heavy traffic during the winter, and from the slow progress of the railway works a considerable time must elapse before it can become available for carriage.

Whau-Whau Colliery, Wangarei.—This mine is held on lease by Messrs. Love and Dunsmuir, but the amount of work done has been very limited. They have furnished me with a plan of the mine. The old workings are not in a safe condition, but the whole of the coal got during the past year has been from new workings. They are careful to comply with the regulations and provisions of the Act as far as they can. It would be much better if the whole of the old workings were walled off, but I do not consider there is any immediate danger, and to give such instructions would mean the closing and abandonment of the mine. The ventilation of the new workings is very good and only requires proper guidance for a further extension of the same.

Bridgewater Colliery, Miranda.—This is the only mine at which my instructions have not been complied with, but this does not seem to be from any wish to evade the Act, but through want of funds and an immediate intention on the owners' part to dispose of the mine to a company, which is most necessary, as without funds a mine of this description cannot be developed. On my visit in December last, I gave instructions in regard to a number of matters, which I find have been carried out on further inspection in March, with the exception of the two most important items, viz., timbering and having the ground surveyed and a plan of the mine and workings made, without which there is no means of forming a correct opinion as to the safety of the mine. The seam of coal in this mine is 53 feet in thickness, and in order to work such an extensive mass of coal, a carefully devised plan of operations should first be laid down, instead of working as at present appears to be the case under no rule by which a clear decision as to the safety of the men can be come to. The coal is worked on two different levels, leaving a band apparently from 3 to 6 feet between, forming the floor of the upper and the roof of the lower workings. The upper levels are excavated to a height of about 30 feet, forming great chambers or caverns, precluding the use of timber for supporting the roof should that be required, and there is no means of ascertaining the thickness of coal left for a roof to give an idea of its stability. The lowest levels are supposed to be opened under those above, but there is no certainty they are so, and it is quite possible they are driving under what constitutes the pillars in the upper levels, which would cause imminent danger, and until accurate plans and sections are made this cannot be determined. I am now, however, taking steps to enforce the plans being made.*

Taupiri Colliery, Huntley.—The coal in this mine is worked from a drive in the hill, and also from an incline sunk to drain the dip of the seam. The manager, Mr. Collins, has shown a desire to comply with my instructions, and has effected the better ventilation of the upper and older portion of the mine by opening communication with the surface. The ground overhead the workings of this mine consists of soft clay, and I found on my first visits several of the main workings to be dangerous through not having sufficient coal left to form a secure roof. I instructed immediate timbering, and in future that not less than 3 feet of coal be left unless they were prepared to close timber. These instructions have been carefully attended to by the manager. I also instructed him not to proceed with the drawing of pillars, on account of the danger, until he had given me due notice thereof that I might specially visit the mine. He did so, when I gave him general instructions, and on my subsequent visit I find he is drawing them successfully, and the upper part of the mine will therefore shortly be wrought out. A new incline from near the mouth of the present drive is being sunk in an easterly direction to work the seam of coal at a lower level than it has yet been opened; the length of this plane, when it reaches the workable coal, will be about 5 chains; for about 2 chains along its course the seam of coal is nearly crushed out, after which it opens out into a large seam over 30 feet in thickness, as has been ascertained by boring. To work this will necessitate sinking a new shaft for the purposes of drainage and ventilation, and in fact from the coal being crushed out for such a distance, the workings here may be considered an entirely new mine, and be separate and independent of the old workings.

† *Waikato Colliery, Huntley.*—The seam of coal in this mine is limited to a comparatively small area or basin, of which the crop has been reached all round, and they are proceeding with the drawing of pillars. When this is completed the mine will be wrought out. As this is the most dangerous operation

* See telegram of 11th June, following this report.—O. W. † See also letter of 31st May, following this report.—O. W.