

No. 3.

Mr. ROBERT TENNENT, Inspector of Mines, Westport, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Mines Department, Wellington.

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines' Office, Westport, 28th March, 1906.

I have the honour, in compliance with section 75 of "The Coal-mines Act, 1905," to report as follows on the West Coast coal-mines for the year ending 31st December, 1905:—

Enner Glynn Coal-mine.—Further prospecting on this property has been practically abandoned.

Shakespeare Bay.—Further prospecting for coal has been abandoned during the year.

Terakohi Coal Syndicate, Motupipi (owners, Messrs. Nalder and Gilmer).—(22/11/1905): With the exception of driving a rise-heading and completing connection with a surface shaft for ventilating purposes, further extension of the main tunnel is practically abandoned. The drives, however, are securely timbered and in good order, but the difficulty of shipment in the Motupipi River seems to be the chief obstacle against further progress.

Golden Bay Coal-mine, Motupipi (A. G. French, general manager).—(10/9/1905): To win the coal-seam at a depth of about 20 ft., below tidal level a short incline dip crosscut was driven, and the level extended in coal eastward under the terrace land a distance of about 100 ft. The coal-seam (brown) is parted by a middle band stone, the roof requiring careful timbering. (22/11/1905): Pending the erection of lime-kilns and machinery applicable for the manufacture of Portland and other building cements, operations in connection with the coal-mine are suspended, and mine flooded. At time of writing, portion of the cement-making plant was delivered on the property.

Pakawau Coal-mine.—Mr. E. G. Pilcher, of Wellington, having recently acquired the legal and mining rights of this property formerly owned by Mr. Caldwell, of Ferntown, operations were recommenced in July last, Mr. P. McCaffrey being mine-manager. Under the new ownership the surface tram-line and loading-jetty have undergone a general overhaul, while attention was directed to unwater the dip workings and effect repairs necessary to restore ventilation, and extend further development. (20/11/1905): Haulage, effected by a double-cylinder steam-driven winch, was in full work, the dip-heading face being worked continuously with three shifts of two miners each, the coal in face showing an average thickness of 3 ft., parted with two thin stone bands. The workings were in good order and well ventilated, and, in all, nineteen men were employed. At time of writing, work was confined to keeping the dip working free of water, effecting repairs to No. 1 rise level, and cutting out a siding at head of dip. Fifteen men employed.

Puponga Colliery (owners, Puponga Coal and Gold Mining Company (Limited); Mr. Sidney George Hayward, attorney).—(20/11/1905): The mining operations continue to make steady progress northward to the dip of the coalfield, whilst favourable promise is maintained as developments extend towards the east, the output showing an increase of 7,727 tons, as compared with that of the previous year. Until lately some trouble was experienced in the west side workings (off main haulage-road), owing to the partial displacement of the upper section of the seam by the intrusion of a thickened middle band of fireclay. It is, however, worth noting that the geological features of the field show favourable change, whereby a still lower section of the seam (which formerly formed the floor of the main seam) is now thickening into a coal of excellent quality, which, together with the thinning of the band, will enable the two to be profitably worked. Thus a more pleasing aspect is reflected on this portion of the coalfield, and considerable saving in rock-drilling is effected. Had conditions continued to remain unchanged, rock-cutting was practically unavoidable, provided development was extended in that direction. As mentioned in my previous report, the Snow pump then installed has given satisfactory results, and enabled a further extension of the main dip heading to be made to a total depth of 600 ft., exposing a valuable area in the direction of the present working. In view of heading further dipward, and to provide ample power against probable increase of water at depth, the installation of a much larger type of pump, together with an additional 40-horse power boiler now under order, will, when completed, meet the present and anticipated requirements of the property for a considerable time, and command a large and valuable coal-bearing area. Throughout the whole working and disused areas ventilation is amply controlled by a fan of the Hayes type, which gives general satisfaction. Recent improvements in the screening and sorting plant enable the company to place a better class of household fuel on the market, while the new nut-washing plant and nut-storage bins have received considerable attention, with the result that the new plant not only provides a more perfect exclusion of small stone and pyritical matter, but the fine, coaly smudge is also more efficiently run off, thus insuring a larger and more uniform size of nut. Altogether, the developments of the coalfield show satisfactory promise, particularly in view of the recent thickening of good coal in the bottom seam. The provisions under the Coal-mines Act are strictly observed, and all reports duly recorded.

Mokihinui Colliery.—In the early part of the year the co-operative party was again reconstructed with a limited number of six shareholders, who during the two first quarterly periods produced 1,146 tons. Unhappily, with the continued soft character of the coal won and the keenly reduced selling-price obtained, the property was ultimately left as a standing memorial of absolute failure in winning coal on co-operative principles, and abandonment mutually declared. With the approval of the Hon. the Minister of Mines, possession was finally taken over by the management of the Seddonville State Colliery, when a general survey was made of the workings, all movable plant withdrawn, and all openings to the workings securely fenced off. There is little change to note regarding the burning mine.