

Blackball Colliery (owners, Blackball Coal Company (Limited); Walter Leitch, mining-manager).—(8/12/1905): Owing to restricted demands on the colliery, operations have been strictly confined to single shift, with the exception of urgent development in the new dip district. The gross tonnage raised, 64,713 tons, was a decrease of 20,815 tons, as compared with the previous year. Output has continued to be supplied from the extraction of pillars in the original rise working, but at time of writing pillar-work is limited to a few hands in the eastern district, the western district having become exhausted and sealed off with an effective series of thoroughly built stoppings. Happily, ample provision was in readiness to employ all hands in the new dip section of solid working, the coal-seam maintaining favourable promise both in quality and hardness. Spontaneous ignition has not failed to be a continued source of heavy expenditure and anxiety as the working of the pillared areas receded homeward, notwithstanding the careful and prompt measures taken to insure safety, the greatest difficulty experienced being the sudden emission of fire bursting through the crushed and broken coal forming the sides and roof. In many instances the whole surroundings would be found in the morning enveloped in a mass of flame, when to all practical knowledge the stoppings were left perfectly secure at night. It is worthy of note that in fighting these fires freedom from serious accident has been a marked feature.

The New Tunnel district continues to be developed, the drainage and haulage levels having now attained a total length of 800 yards, of which the last 300 yards show a decided improvement in quality and hardness of seam. As previously mentioned, the natural level course suddenly dipped at a point 25 chains west from the bottom of the rock crosscut, when, after considerable prospecting to determine true level, a deviation of 40° riseward was unavoidable. Fortunately the deviation stated has not seriously affected the line of working, and although minor displacements have been occasionally met with, varying from a few inches to 9 ft., the set course has been maintained without further change.

The drainage-tunnel driven from the bed of Ford's Creek was successfully connected with the lowest level of No. 2 tunnel working, at a driven distance of 1,304 ft. Thus, free drainage is permanently affected over the whole opened areas, and all pumps withdrawn. Endless-rope haulage was installed during the Christmas holidays and since has worked satisfactorily, the plant being up to date in all details. Mechanical ventilation by Capell fan was also effected during the year, but owing to local circumstances directly connected with the character of the mine as regards liability to spontaneous fires it was found necessary to utilise the fan as a blower instead of an exhauster as is usual. This inverted action of the fan has tended not only to keep back the poisonous fumes, but enabled several serious fires to be dealt with, which under furnace or exhaust-fan ventilation would have been practically impossible. In fact, the life of the rise-workings has been prolonged by the utility of the fan under the altered conditions. The aerial tram-line was furnished with a new haulage-rope, measuring $\frac{3}{4}$ in. diameter by 6.5 miles in length, and weighing about 12.5 tons.

Engines, boilers, and aerial tram-line, &c., are all in good order and condition, whilst absolute freedom from serious accident may be regarded as a feature worth noting.

Strict observance under the Coal-mines Act is duly enforced. At the Warden's Court, Grey-mouth, legal proceedings were instituted by me on two counts affecting three persons employed at this colliery for breach of Special Rule No. 36 under the Coal-mines Act. Fines, £1, and £2 costs.

Tyneside Proprietary Company (R. Alison, mining-manager).—(7/12/1905): As the result of mining operations being chiefly confined to single shift during the year, employment at the mine gave a more regular and uniform average of time worked. The tonnage raised (44,047 tons) was an increase of 5,641 tons as against the preceding year. With regard to development, further extension of the main dip haulage-road has not been made (the face standing at 20 chains from the winding-shaft as previously reported), attention being more actively directed to push forward the eastern section of working, as this section of the lease comprises the most important and extensive area, the quality of seam showing a marked improvement as development in the bottom winning levels advances. In extending the east face riseward several heavy feeders of water were tapped, much to the annoyance of the management, as the pumps then in use were nearly taxed to their full capacity. However, to meet the present requirements in pumping, the erection of a new Hornsby boiler is actively pushed, and may shortly be expected operative. On completion of this additional steam-generator, it is anticipated the pumping-power will have a capacity equal to any probable increase. The roof in several places has for some time been somewhat changeable, necessitating the use of heavy timbering, and it may be stated that it was at these irregularities of the roof that the feeders occurred. Referring to the west side working there is little change to note, the output therefrom being confined to four pairs of miners, the coal continuing to maintain its previous good quality. The screening and sorting of the coal has received special attention by the addition of a travelling picking-belt, while the revolving nut-screening appliances have given satisfactory results. This class of (nut) fuel for steaming and household purposes is largely in demand, the nuts being considered more free from earthy and pyritical impurities than the ordinary screened coal. Additional storage capacity is also under construction. The ventilating-fan, now actuated by a more powerful steam-engine, is capable of maintaining very effective results, whilst a section of the main intake (east), which intersects a large fault line, has been much enlarged. No serious accidents reported. Reports to date; and seven inspections made.

Brunner Mine (R. Alison, mining-manager).—(7/12/1905): Apart from the ordinary routine of work necessary to clear out, timber, and relay the old disused headings and levels to effect total extraction of the standing-pillar areas, there is nothing to note of any particular importance. It is nevertheless a fact, which seriously concerns the residential interests of this old-established mining district,