

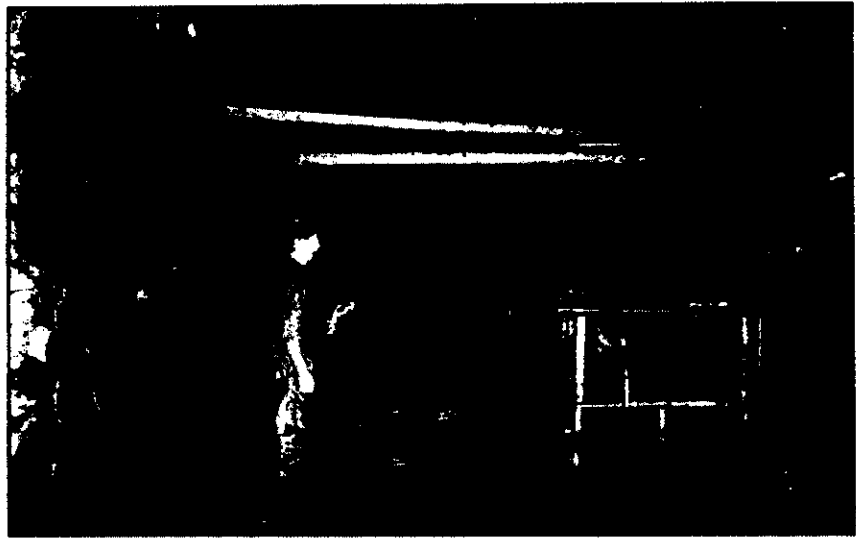
RALPH'S TAUPIRI COAL MINES.

One of the most remarkable coal seams in the North Island is that to be found at Taupiri, on the property known as Ralph's. It appears the Ralph family were the first settlers at Huntly, and the seam was discovered by the late Mr Anthony Ralph on a portion of his property. This was in the year 1865. Mr Ralph was engaged making a drain at the head of the gully to the east of the mine when he discovered the seam. The seam was sunk through and found to be 20ft in thickness. Operations on a small scale were commenced, the coal being used by the settlers and steam barges on the river. Subsequently, the property was leased to the Taupiri Extended Company, the royalty being 1 per ton, and this company, while working on the coal, paid dividends as high as 33 per cent. per annum, and created a reserve fund of £12,000. The Extended Company then purchased an adjoining property. Meanwhile Mr W. J. R. Ralph, son of Mr A. Ralph, made arrangements for the surrender of the balance of the lease of the original property, which he proceeded to work with his brother, Mr R. B. Ralph, as Ralph Bros., Taupiri Coal Mine. Further explorations by the Messrs Ralph proved the seam at deeper levels. Eventually Mr W. J. Ralph entered into an arrangement with the present Taupiri Extended Co. and the mine was shut down. A payment of £262 per annum was made for five years. The terms of the lease expired in the beginning of May last, and the present Ralph Company then entered into possession. The present company only took it over in the first week in May and vigorous steps were at once taken to get the water out of the workings. This water was an accumulation of some five years, during which period the workings were shut down. Energy and good management, however, had the desired result, and in the month of July the company were able to send to town an output of some 2000 tons. During the month of August 100 tons a day was being tared out of the mine, and with night shifts this can be increased. With the enormous quantity of coal in the mine the company can execute any sized order. A representative from this

paper recently visited the mine. The shaft is 173ft down to the intermediate level. On this level are three bords, No. 1 showing a seam of 70ft of solid coal. Men are engaged working in these bords, and each face contains great quantities of coal of beautiful quality. The main heading west is 35 chains under the Waikato River, and the men are there working on a big face of very fine coal. It is intended to continue the heading on under the west bank of the river, where the company possesses a mile frontage and 500 acres of virgin ground. This ground over the river has been bored 45 feet in two different holes, and no bottom was found at that depth. The bords were in coal when the boring was discontinued, so there is every reason to think that the big seam on which the company are now working under the

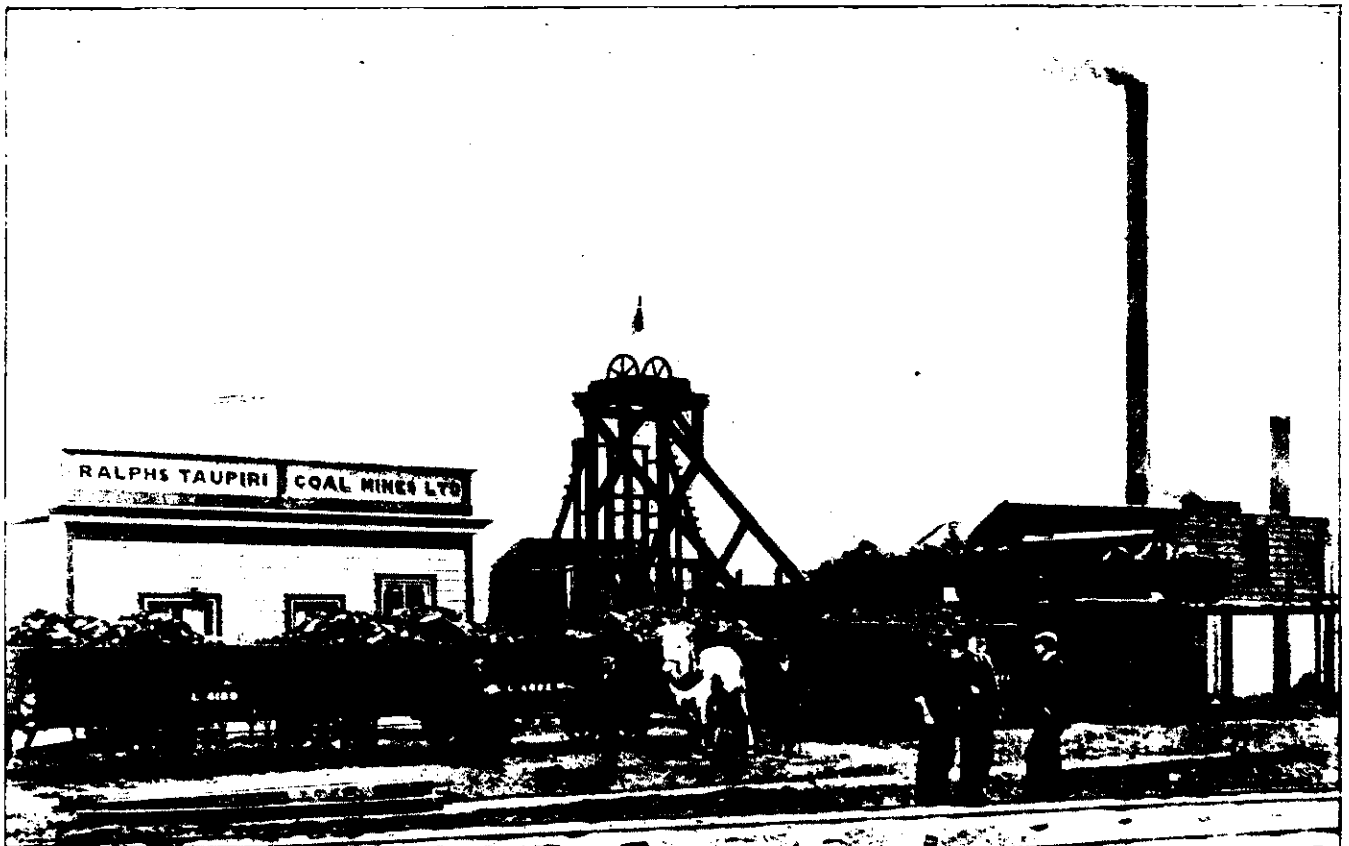
river will continue in this new ground. Under the river the coal is thickening and deepening as progress is being made, and this is a good sign. The seam is apparently dipping north and west. The strata which overlies the coal seam is estimated in some parts to be 60 feet thick and in other parts 100 feet. This strata is composed of hard sandstone and layers of white fire clay rock. A great feature about the coal is the even quality in all of the faces. It is of the brown order, and solid and clean. The faces vary from 8ft by 14ft to 14ft by 16ft and 18ft, and those faces are to be enlarged, for the coal stands well and makes splendid working pillars and roofs. The depth and width of the seam is said to be the largest this side of the line. An inspection of the coal after burning shows that it burns to a clean ash,

there being no 'clinker' or conglomeration left in the grate. On the score of safety to the miners nothing has been left undone. The men are working under most favourable conditions, for there is plenty of room, and the mine is particularly well ventilated, and nice and open. There is no foul gas in the mine, and it is free from water. Some forty vigorous young men are employed in the workings, all being on piece work, the hours of toil being from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. A few of the most expert men, it is stated, earn as much as £4 per week, and others £3. The baulage arrangements for getting the skips of coal from the workings to the bottom of the shaft are most complete, and everything in this connection works smoothly. Mr W. J. Ralph is general manager and Mr M. A. Phillips secretary of the mine.



Beattie and Sanderson Photo

TRUCKS COMING UP INCLINE.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE MINES.

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