

APPENDIX.

No. 1.

INTERIM REPORT UPON INSPECTION OF COAL MINES, NORTH ISLAND DISTRICTS.

Mr. Inspector McLAREN to the UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES.

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines Office, Thames, 3rd December, 1881.

I have the honor to inform you that during last month I visited all the mines within my districts, and beg to forward report on same.

Kawakawa Colliery.—The workings and machinery in connection with this mine I found in good order, and every possible care taken by manager and underviewers for the safety of the mine and men. In some of the levels the timbers were inclined to crush through the “rising” of the floor, but in these cases fresh timbers had been put in. The ventilation is particularly good, and although the workings are now very extensive, yet, even at the furthest headings, the air seemed to be sweet and cool. It is particularly pleasing to note the gradual improvement that the manager, Mr. Moody, has been making in the mode of working and ventilating this mine. He deserves every credit. The new incline has been continued down (on the coal) for a long distance beyond the shaft. As the dip continues very regular, the bottom of incline is now considerably below the level of the bottom of the shaft, necessitating the water being raised to shaft-level by a Tangye pump; cross cuts may now be put in to prove the coal on each side of the incline, but it is not likely the incline itself will be continued any further. The prospecting will be done from the surface by the diamond rock drill which the company have recently purchased from the Government.

Kamo Colliery, Whangarei.—The manager, Mr. George Black, having left to take charge of one of the deep pumping mines (Queen of Beauty) at the Thames, this mine is again under the charge of its previous manager, Mr. George Kerr. In the lower seam there were two different places towards the rise where the slack was particularly inclined to heat. In one of these all the slack had been removed, but in the other about nine or ten tons had been left, this I found heating so violently that at any moment it might be expected to fire. I instantly instructed its removal from the mine, which was done before I left. I tried the slack in other quarters of the mine, but could not find any indications of heating. There is a wonderful difference and improvement in the ventilation and coolness of the whole of this level since my last visit. This is caused by the shaft that was sunk for this purpose (by Mr. Black the late manager) from the top of the hill to the rise of the coal, a depth of from ninety to 100 feet. This being the upcast, causes both entrances to be intakes. It would undoubtedly be a great improvement, and secure the mine from taking fire, if all the slack was removed, but the railway station is built immediately in front of the mine entrance, leaving little or no room for the deposit of slack, while the principal out-put level is too low to allow a bridge being carried across the station. In the upper, or four feet seam, work has been suspended for some months. A small shaft has been sunk in order to give a double opening to ventilate the mine near the entrance, and enable prospecting being carried further in. As the difference of level between the entrance drive and the top of shaft is not great, the results are only in proportion, though, of course, under the circumstances, these were not expected to be great. Before resuming work on this level, it will first be necessary to have an improved mode of ventilation to meet the requirements of the extended operations, and the manager has arranged to have this carried out before starting.

Whau Whau Colliery, Whangarei.—I found this mine in fair working order. The ventilation is also very fair, though there is no great current of air passing through the mine, yet it everywhere appeared to be good, and the mine quite cool. There has been no great out-put since my last visit, but a large amount of prospecting work has been done through very disturbed country.

Taupiri Colliery, Huntly.—The workings in this colliery I found in very fair order. As these are being extended, care is also taken to carry forward the ventilation, by driving the return air-course parallel with the main level, and from time to time cross-cutting between the two: the steam-pipe, down the incline, to supply the Tangye pump, is also now all jacketed, making the downcast quite cool, and greatly improving the ventilation. The men in general seemed to be taking every precaution to secure their own safety; but I found two, working together, who were exceedingly careless in this respect: in fact, acting as rashly as if they wished to commit suicide, by opening and undercutting without leaving a centre pillar, or putting in sprags. I showed them the foolishness of trusting to appearances, and pointed out that, though the place they were working appeared sound, yet, within a few yards (on the opposite side of the main level), the coal was full of sooty backs, and they knew not when they might come near one of these, and a fall take place on them, without the slightest warning. As they were newly out from Home, and had wives and families, the manager thought what I said to them would be sufficient, and would deter them from ever doing the like again. He has promised to keep a sharp look-out on them; and, as a warning to the others, at once dismiss them, should he find them trying it again. Should however any accident of this kind occur, I would be very much inclined to lay the blame on the parsimony of the directors. For, though, Mr. Collins does everything that it is possible for a man to do; yet, when he is manager, oversman, underviewer, clerk, carpenter, bookkeeper, paymaster, surveyor, and draughtsman, and also seeing to orders being sent off, preparing the tickets for the trucks,—in fact, everything rolled into one,—(and this, while the output this year will be nearly double what it was last), it is simply impossible that the underviewing, to look after the safety of the men, can be properly accomplished by him.

Waikato Mine, Huntly.—There has been no great output from this mine, and it had very much the same appearance as it had at my last visit,—everything to be in good order and safe. The ventilation was also good, though not strong.

Bridgewater Colliery.—I did not visit this mine, as I learned the pumping operations had now ceased, and it was full of water.

I have, &c.,

JAMES M. McLAREN,
Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary for Mines, Wellington.