

No. 2.

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

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

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines Office, Thames, 15th May, 1882.

I have the honor to forward yearly report, with statistics, for coal mines within my districts, Waikato and Bay of Islands, to 31st December, 1881. As I have since visited the mines, I bring it to 31st March, 1882.

It is very satisfactory to be again able to report, as I did last year also, that there has been no accidents, or casualties of any kind, within my districts.

The total output, from all the pits, for the year ending 31st December, 1881, is 5,610 tons 18 cwt. less than the previous year, being 90,734 tons 17 cwt., against 96,345 tons 10 cwt. in 1881; this is partly to be accounted for by the stoppage of one mine—the *Miranda*—but principally on account of the long continued smallpox scare, the Quarantine Regulations preventing the large Sydney steamers from calling at the Bay of Islands, but for this the return would undoubtedly have shown an increase.

Kawakawa Mine, Bay of Islands.—I visited this mine on the 22nd and 24th April, and found everything in very satisfactory order, and apparently every attention paid to the safety of the men by a plentiful and judicious use of timber; the ventilation continues good, but in one or two places, towards the faces, where the men were working, the air seemed sluggish and hot, and it may be necessary soon, if further extension at these places is made, that the air be directed towards them. Outside the ordinary workings, during the year, a large amount of prospecting work has been done, with the view to the further development of the mine, by sinking shafts and continuing the main incline tunnel, which has now been carried down, on the dip of the coal, for a distance of about 800 feet beyond the main, or pumping shaft, a Tangye pump being carried down as the work progressed to lift the water to the pumping shaft. As the distance from the shaft was beginning to make this a very expensive mode of prospecting, it was thought desirable to purchase the Government diamond rock drill then working at Wharangei; this has been placed 800 feet further ahead of the lowest point reached in the dip, or 1,600 feet beyond the shaft. The drill was working splendidly, and when I was there was at a depth of 500 feet from the surface, and in the “Shells,” which in the upper parts of the mine lie immediately over the coal. It is Mr. Moody’s intention, as soon as this bore is completed, to put down another, 800 feet still further ahead, at which place it is estimated, should the dip continue regular, the coal will be reached at from 700 to 800 feet deep.

Kamo Mine, Whangarei.—I visited this mine on the 29th of last month. Since my last visit a considerable amount of work has been done towards the rise, from the upper level of the old or bottom seam. At the head of the boards the air was very hot, and the ventilation insufficient. To cure this, the manager was starting a new and higher level from a point near the entrance of the present one. This, by directing the air, will cure the evil, and also very much shorten the distance for working the trucks. The ventilation of the other parts of the mine was very fair. The plan of the working was also plotted nearly up to date. From the lower or railway level of this seam an incline tunnel is being carried down on the dip of the coal. This, at the date of my visit, had reached a distance of 80 feet from the level, carrying good strong coal all the way. The manager, Mr. Kerr, intends to go a considerable distance further before he opens out. So far as they have gone, they have not had much water to contend with, a hand-pump being sufficient to keep them clear; but the winding engine and boiler are on the ground ready for erection; also the Tangye pump, pipes, &c. No further work has been done on the upper or four-feet seam. The roof of this mine is not good, and the coal is very tender and liable to falls, and every credit is due to the manager in having no casualties, by his plentifully supplying the men with timber, and seeing they kept it “close up.” The output of this mine has increased from 6,382½ tons in 1880 to 10,178 for 1881.

Whau Whau Mine, near Whangarei.—The output from this mine continues from year to year nearly the same, viz., a little over 2,000 tons. The ventilation for natural current was fair, and the mine cool, except in one place to the rise, where it was very hot. They had, however, just broken through for ventilation before I got there (29th April, 1882), and it was rapidly cooling down. The working parts of the mine are in very good order; but it would greatly improve the working of the long tunnel if the owners would spend a few days in levelling up and straightening the rails.

Taupiri Mine, Huntly.—In the old mine the drawing of the pillars has been continued with success. On this work four of the most experienced men in the mine are engaged, and they require to be so, the roof being bad and the ground all “settled” behind them close up to where they are working; but from the skill employed, and the care being taken, I do not apprehend any danger. The new or lower mine I found to be in good working order. The ventilation did not seem to be working so well as it did formerly. This, however, may be accounted for by the pumping-engine at the bottom of the upcast not being working, at the time of my visit (13th April, 1882), which would make a great difference in the up current. Mr. Collins was keeping the survey and plan of the mine well up to date. The output of this mine has increased from 14,817 tons in 1880, to 20,304 tons in 1881.

Waikato Company Mine, Kupakupa, near Huntly.—There has been no great output from this mine during the year (7,860 tons); and as there is a great height of coal, the extent of work done between my visits is hardly noticeable. The plan is not nearly up to date; but this I do not consider requisite, as the whole plan of the mine can easily be grasped without requiring to see it on paper. There is no attempt made to direct the air to the faces; yet, in all parts of the mine (and old workings), it seems to be good, and perfectly cool. This mine is still under the charge of Mr. McGlynn.

As the *Miranda Mine* still remains unworked and deserted, I did not consider it necessary to visit it.

I have, &c.,

JAMES M. McLAREN,
Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary for Mines, Wellington.