

Coghlan's Coal-mine, Boatman's.—(9/3/93): Not working.

Archer's Coal-mine.—(9/3/93): The most of the coal that is used at Boatman's appears to be now supplied by this mine; but there has not been much done since my last visit. Fairly well timbered, and so near the surface that the air is good.

Alexandra Coal-mine.—(22/4/93): This is a mine which has been opened to supply the dredge at Fern Flat, eight miles distant. The seam is very thin, being only 2ft. 4in. in thickness, including a 7in. band of stone. The level runs in some 200ft. The coal had been all worked, and far too much ground had been left standing on timber without filling in. As attention was drawn to this being required at the time of a hurried visit, some two months earlier, Mr. Phillips was informed that if any more work was done prior to filling in I would cancel the permit, and take further action. The legal manager was also notified. Two men were at once put on to fill in. Shortly afterwards Mr. Phillips sent me a well-made plan, showing ground worked, filling-in, coal face, &c. The charge of the mine also has been transferred to Mr. Rear, a practical coal-miner.

Blackball Colliery.—(18/12/93): The aerial tram-line to connect the mine with the Midland Railway has been completed, and is working smoothly and well. The trucks as they come out of the mine run under the main or stationary rope, to which they are attached by a hanger consisting of two travelling pulleys and skeleton frame for holding the body of the truck, which is lifted out of the carriage and wheels when the hanger is clipped on to haulage-rope. This is done by means of a short lever arc-clip fixed in each frame, which is closed on the travelling rope by the man whose duty it is to hang on the truck, which then moves forward across the tram-line, a distance of over three miles, without further attention. Arrived, it is automatically detached and counted, then run round to the screens and tipped by manual labour, on a specially-constructed tippler, into the bins, which hold 500 tons. The rate of travel is four miles per hour, and Mr. Lindop informs me that 400 tons can be taken across in eight hours.

At the mine, three shifts are working, employing thirty miners. Gas has not yet been seen in the workings, which are not dry and dusty. The roof is very soft, requiring a lot of timber, which is supplied, though of rather a small size, but perfectly safe for the present. Rules with names posted. Report and plan properly kept.

Coal-pit Heath Colliery.—(23/1/93): The lower workings were again drowned out. The water had risen several chains above the 9in. plunger-pump, but it was expected that with fine weather the 12in. pump being put in would be capable of draining the mine. Three shifts working, of thirty-two men each. Five men extra were employed down the dip taking out the bottom to make ready the seat for the new pump, and connecting the dip-heading with the back drift. Nothing but pillar-work was doing, and that in the top level. Coal soft, but plenty of timber. Air quite sufficient. (10/6/93): Report-book of 1st June shows that the men were withdrawn from the middle level on account of the influx of water, which is still rising. This mine was shortly afterwards abandoned, as the water could not be coped with. There was a comparatively small amount of coal lost, and many of the pillars would, even if the ordinary inflow of water had not increased, have had to be left for the protection of the miners. In last year's report I mentioned that this mine would probably be exhausted this year.

(Full particulars regarding the Grey Valley mines are given in the report by the Inspecting Engineer of Mines, Mining Geologist, and myself, which is already published.)

Brunner Colliery.—(24/1/93): Work now confined to fast places, all the available pillars above the water-level having been worked out. The present workings are from the dip-drive, the lower levels of which are under water, owing to the pump having been removed to Coal-pit Heath; but this district can be easily drained when desired. Bad roof at a few places. Spragging well observed. Good air-current. Three shifts of forty-six men each employed. A miner named William Maddox got burned on the 18th September by entering a place where there was a little fire-damp. A fall had occurred shortly before which had changed the direction of the air, but the fireman, Morris, had not put up a caution-board. I desired to prosecute, but, as Morris had freely confessed his fault when he could easily have screened himself by a lie, the prosecution was not gone on with.

This mine was inspected several other times during the year. Full details of its prospects will be found in the joint report already mentioned. The tramway to open up the rise coal, towards the construction of which a rebate of royalty has been given, is now nearly completed, and at the date of writing the coal is turning out better than Mr. Bishop expected. It is still uncertain whether the present company will give up their lease or not at the end of this year.

Coal Creek Coalfield, Greymouth.—An engineer, Mr. J. D. Gillies, has been appointed for this company, and, at the date of writing, tenders are being called for clearing bush and formation of over three-quarters of a mile of railway, so that there is every prospect of this mine now going ahead.

SICK AND ACCIDENT RELIEF FUNDS.

The regulations are being complied with in the administration of these funds, and the contributions are being duly paid by the mine-owners, except in the case of one or two of the smaller mines.

GENERAL.

Section 21 of "The Coal-mines Act, 1891," which provides that where less than six men are employed the acting-manager shall be the holder of a permit. This is a very satisfactory provision, and one in regard to the compliance with which there could be no conflict of evidence. If any of the smaller mines working, under new management, in an unsafe manner, I defer granting the permit till my next visit, and then only if managed in a thoroughly satisfactory way.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.

N. D. COCHRANE,
Inspector of Mines.