

Beckford Coal-mine.—This is a thin seam 2 ft. thick, worked by tunnelling. The surface is very thin over the coal; chiefly sandstone.

Lankey's Gully Coal-mine.—(20/8/97): This mine is worked by Mr. Lamberton and one youth. The workings are chiefly from the Rise level, where the coal is harder and of better quality. The bords being driven narrow, with a coal roof, little timber is required, and the workings are safe.

Inkerman Coal-mine.—(10/2/98): The Inkerman Gold-mining Company employ two miners to supply coal for their rock-drill machinery at the low-level tunnel on Rainy Creek. The coal is worked from a dip-drive.

Waitakere Coal-mine.—(20/10/97): The thickness of this lignite seam is unknown, but 10 ft. is worked opencast, from which the residents of Charleston are supplied with a good house coal.

Blackball Colliery.—(30/7/97): Work was resumed after repairs were completed on aerial tramway, and operations have since continued. The principal workings are westerly from the main tunnel. They are divided by parallel levels into three sections, which form, in the aggregate, eighteen working-places, employing thirty-six miners. A layer of fireclay overlies the coal, which forms a bad roof, and more than ordinary care is necessary, as close-lathed timber is required in nearly every place. Timbering receives special attention, and good roads are kept. A circulating current of air, 15,000 cubic feet per minute, travels the workings. The cliff has been holed by a second heading, where a ventilating furnace is built. The upcast shaft, together with all exposed coal-surfaces, is lined with brick, and strong currents of air sweep the intervening passages, with the object of preventing spontaneous combustion. Work on the east side of the mine is confined to four working-places, employing eight miners. A wagon-driver named John Ryan, who was employed on the railway-siding, received a compound fracture of the skull by the tail-chain unhooking from its fastening.

Brunner Colliery.—(31/8/97): The output from this mine is chiefly confined to the extraction of pillars from the dip-workings. This mine is exclusively worked by lead rivet locked safety-lamps of the Marsaut type, and blasting operations are carried out by authorised officers at night after the ordinary day's work is over. In July, owing to continuous heavy rains percolating through the roof, pumping and baling were overpowered, and in consequence the bottom sections were abandoned, and allowed to fill up with water. The pillars being nearly finished at the time, little coal was lost. Pending this stoppage the middle sections were in readiness, and the miners were removed and employed without delay. The ventilation is carried on by splitting, and each district is supplied by separate currents of fresh air, the average volume measuring 16,000 cubic feet per minute. On each of my visits careful examinations were made, and the return airways tested with an alcohol-flame lamp, which showed no trace of gas. On the 20th December, 1897, I found gas on face of east level and over a large fall, but this gas was removed by ventilation at once. Stoppings, airways, and falls are daily examined and reported, and readings of the ventilation weekly recorded. Application was lodged by Robert Alison, general manager, for permission to remove a coal barrier left during the formation of the dip-workings by the late management, with the object to guard against water from the rise. After due consideration, the Hon. the Minister of Mines granted permission for its removal. David Dunbar, miner, had his hand crushed against the roof by his truck getting derailed, which resulted in the amputation of a finger.

Brunner Rise Mine.—(1/9/97): Working operations are continued by two shifts, employing 103 men underground, the total output being produced from the removal of pillars. From the bottom or west level back to No. 2 incline, extending along the line of thinning, the pillars are exhausted, and the men are removed to No. 1 incline. This thinning of the Brunner seam extends from the extreme dip of the field, and has been followed until it intersected the eastern boundary, which forms the cliff, thus cutting off all solid coal. A second outlet near the rise has been holed to the cliff, and a current of 10,000 cubic feet per minute travels the workings. (20/12/97): Work is chiefly confined from both sides of No. 1 incline. The coal is removed very successfully, and without loss. The only difficulty experienced is to get the roof to fall, although the timber is drawn regularly as the coal is taken out. The coal averages from 5 ft. to 6 ft., and, with steady work, a large area is soon exhausted. Workings and roads are kept in good repair. No gas reported. Manager and foreman report daily. Timber plentiful. No accidents reported.

Coal Creek, Point Elizabeth.—Work done on this lease has been chiefly of a prospecting character. Various outcrops have been opened out, and two bore-holes put down. The first bore-hole pierced a coal 15 ft. thick, at a depth of 144 ft. The second bore-hole passed through the same seam 9 ft. 6 in. thick, at a depth of 381 ft.

ACCIDENTS.

22nd July.—Blackball: A wagon-driver named John Ryan, employed on the railway-siding, received a compound fracture of the skull by the tail-chain unhooking from its fastening.

2nd October.—Brunner: A miner named David Dunbar had a finger amputated, his hand being crushed against the roof by his truck getting derailed.

3rd December.—Ironbridge: James Hamilton, a miner, had his knee-cap and ankle broken by a fall of coal rolling on his leg.

The provisions of the Act are carried out throughout this district.

GENERAL REMARKS.

No fatal accidents occurred during the year, and the ratio of minor accidents shows a decrease.

Naked lights are in use throughout the district with the exception of the Brunner old mine, and for coal-blasting the common explosive used is compressed powder. Clay tamping is provided and placed at convenient stations in the mines, and shot-firing is strictly carried out by authorised officers after working-hours, the workings being of a damp nature.