

Hikurangi Coal Company.—This company has successfully carried out the works that were in progress at the end of the previous year, and are now engaged in opening up a low level to the dip of the main adit. An incline has been sunk on the coal towards the Government railway, and a level is now being driven in a southerly direction, which will enable the company to procure a large quantity of coal at a reasonable cost, as there is very little water to contend with the distance that has been sunk. The coal that has been won from the mine has been of very fair quality, and has found a ready market. The mine was inspected twice during the year. The ventilation was good on each occasion, and the mine safe. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 32,973 tons, an increase of 2,310 tons compared with the previous year. Only one slight accident happened in this mine during the year.

Phoenix Mine.—The operations in this company's mine have been very limited. Six men were employed in the mine up till the 4th November, when it was closed down, the price of coal being so low that the money received for it was not sufficient to pay expenses. The output of coal for 1898 was 1,800 tons, being a decrease of 3,226 tons compared with the previous year.

West Bryan's Mine.—No work has been done in this mine during the year, with the exception of what was taken from the outcrop for Mr. Smith's own use.

Hikurangi Colliery.—The operations in this company's mine are being pushed on, but are still confined to opening up the seam of coal on the outcrop, near the top of the leading spur. The surface of the ground above the coal that is at present being worked is of a broken character, and wherever a depression appears on the surface the coal underneath those places, being near the surfaces, is affected either by faults, or the coal is softer than it is under the ridges that are of a uniform grade. The seam is from 6 ft. to 12 ft. in thickness, but in places there is a seam of fire-clay in the centre of the seam varying from 1 in. to 1 ft. 8 in. thick, which, in consequence, causes the top or bottom portion to be worked separately, and this gives considerable trouble in keeping the coal as it is broken out free from the fireclay getting mixed with it, which affects its appearance, and decreases its value in the market. The ventilation was good and the workings safe when last inspected. There were twenty-two men employed in and about the mine. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 11,937, being an increase of 7,453 tons over the previous year. No accidents.

WHANGAREI.

New Kamo Mine.—The work in this mine is still limited, being confined to taking out pillars in the 3 ft. or upper seam, near the outcrop. The coal that is at present being worked is much better than it was last time I visited the mine. The ventilation was good, and the workings safe, and carried on satisfactorily. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 968 tons, being a slight decrease of 69 tons compared with the previous year. Five men were employed. No accidents.

NGUNGURU.

Kiripaka Colliery.—The operations in this company's mine have during the year been more directed to opening up the mine to the dip, and they have succeeded in developing some very good coal. The seam in this section of the mine will average 6 ft. in thickness, from which a fair quantity of coal is being produced. In the upper workings several bords are in progress, but the seam of coal in most of the places is only from 3 ft. to 4 ft. in thickness. There are also some men employed in taking out pillars, which is being done very efficiently, without losing much coal. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 15,840 tons, being a slight decrease of 408 tons compared with the previous year. The total number employed above and below ground has been, on an average, forty-nine men. Two slight accidents occurred in the mine.

Callaghan's Mine.—John and William Callaghan and George Climo have commenced to open up a coal-mine on the Kiripaka Block (No. 3A). There has been a considerable amount of work done on this block of land in the shape of trenching, &c., to discover the extent and area of ground in which a fair thickness of coal exists, and the owners are satisfied with the prospects met with, being of opinion the seam of coal will pay handsomely to work. Operations have been commenced near the top of the hill, on the opposite side of the river from the Ngunguru Coal Company's mine. An opencast has been put in the side of the hill for a distance of 40 ft., and a drive at the end of the opencast is in 10 ft. At the end of the drive there is a seam of coal 6 ft. in thickness showing, and I am informed it increases in thickness as it dips into the hill. The face of the drive is on Crown land, but I am informed it is within a few feet of Callaghan's boundary, and that the Warden gave them permission to go in to work their mine at the place mentioned. Five men were employed in the construction of an incline tramway down the side of the hill from the mine to the river, a distance of 18 chains, which will be used for the purpose of conveying the coal down to the loading-ground.

WAIKATO.

Waikato Colliery Company.—This company has opened up during the year a section of coal in their mine on the eastern side of what may be termed the "old workings." This has been connected by a straight bord that has been driven from the main cross-cut and has given every facility for working the coal lying in this direction. The coal that has been opened up in this new block is of excellent quality, and several bords are now being pushed ahead into this block, which is considered to be intact for some distance. The pillars are also being operated upon according to the demand, and there appears to be no difficulty in supplying their customers. With the exception of one place, which was to be attended to, the ventilation was good and the mine safe. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 12,871 tons, being a slight decrease of 446 tons compared with the previous year. Nine men were employed above ground and twenty-one below, but the men have not been employed full time on account of the demand for the coal not being quite as good as the two previous years. Three slight accidents occurred in this company's mine.