

ment on the lights formerly used. The chamber and main road leading from the shaft (which latter was driven through fireclay underneath the coal) showed signs of considerable pressure being thrown on the timber. This has been enlarged and retimbered with substantial kauri sets, properly secured. On the surface a shaking-screen, making four classes of coal, has been erected; this is equipped with a picking-belt for the house-coal, and is a great improvement on the previous method of hand-picking in the mine, the coal being sent to the market in better condition. At the Taupiri Reserve and Taupiri Extended Mines nothing of interest has taken place. In the former mine only two prospecting headings are being extended, the most of the men that were employed here having been transferred to the Extended Mine. The manager intends shortly to extend the dip northward in the Extended Mine, and will adopt the endless-rope-haulage system to draw the coal broken out from the company's freehold. The output of coal for the year was 95,556 tons, and the total number of men employed 171. The ventilation was good, and the work carried out in a safe and satisfactory manner.

The Union Collieries (Limited), (late Maramarua-Miranda), (W. Tattley, manager).—This mine is now being energetically worked and operations directed to that portion of the property near Foote's old workings, the coal here being of very good quality of its kind. To all appearances there is an unlimited quantity of coal on the property, and with better facilities for getting the coal from the mine to the railway than at present exist it would become a large producer. A contract has lately been entered into with the Waihi Company to supply a stipulated quantity of coal each week, which if continued will mean a considerable increase for the incoming year. The output of coal for the year was 6,570 tons, and the average number of men employed twenty.

There has been a considerable amount of prospecting done in the shape of boring for coal in the Waikato district during the year, and in some cases the operations have been of a satisfactory character, coal having been discovered on different properties which the owners consider will pay handsomely to work. Mr. R. R. Hunt, who had an option over the property known as Hooton's (situated about seven miles north of the Huntly Coal-mines and on the side of the railway-line), has done a good deal of boring, and the prospects met with have been sufficiently encouraging to enable the promoters to form a company for the purpose of raising capital to purchase a pumping and winding plant capable of contending against any water that may be met with and raising a large tonnage of coal from the mine when opened up. This work, I am informed, has been started and will be vigorously carried on. Should the coal be as good as it is said to be its favourable situation should leave no doubt as to its becoming a payable concern.

Papaaroha Coal-mine Company, Coromandel.—This company has now secured the rights over a large area of ground situated between Coromandel and Cabbage Bay, and about two miles inland from the coast. The operations carried on during the year have been confined to prospecting, no work of a permanent nature having as yet been undertaken. Small openings have been made in several places on the side of the spur of the hill, and what appears to be disturbed outcrops of coal met with. The coal formation varies from 2 ft. to 4 ft. thick, but this is mixed with bands of stone, and so far only a very limited amount of coal has been opened up. A parcel of 4 tons was packed out and sent to Auckland, which I am informed gave highly satisfactory results as a steaming-coal.

Prospecting is also being carried on in other parts of the district for coal—namely, near Whangarei, Bay of Islands, Ohinemuri, and Tairua.

The total output of coal from the mines in this district for the year amounted to 209,795 tons, an increase of 17,750 tons as compared with the previous year, made up as follows:—

	Output for 1902.	Output for 1903.
North of Auckland	92,761	101,519
South of Auckland	99,234	108,276
	192,045	209,795

ACCIDENTS.

The following are the names of persons injured in the mines north of Auckland who sent in claims to be placed on the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, the number of days they were absent from work, and the amount of money received: 19th January, H. Hutton, Northern Colliery, 14 days, £1 9s. 2d.; 26th February, James Sillick, Phoenix Colliery, 45 days, £4 13s. 9d.; 20th June, Arthur Callaghan, Panipo Colliery, 24 days, £2 10s.; 31st July, Robert Fife, Ngunguru Colliery, 27 days, £2 16s. 3d.; 17th August, Duncan McDonald, Ngunguru Colliery, 10 days, £1 0s. 10d.; 24th August, John Steel, Hikurangi Colliery, 18 days, £1 17s. 6d.; 31st August, Albert Thomas, Ngunguru Colliery, 23 days, £2 7s. 11d.; 28th October, James Allison, Ngunguru Colliery, 54 days, £5 12s. 6d.: making a total of 215 days, and of £22 7s. 9d.

On the 29th October Henry Holten met with an accident in the Hikurangi Colliery, and died on the 30th, the cause being the effects of the accident. The widow received the prescribed amount of money out of the fund, £25.

On the 15th October George Cooper was injured at the Mangapapa Colliery, Mokau, and was absent from work 152 days, during which he received £5 16s. 8d.

The Waikato Medical and Accident Society had forty-two accidents reported to them during the year. The total number of days the men were on the Relief Fund was 666, and the amount paid out was £69 7s. 6d., this not including that paid out of their own fund.

I know of nothing more that requires special mention.

I have, &c.,

JAMES COURTTS,

Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.