

*Seddonville Colliery* (New Zealand State mine; James Bishop, manager).—Details of working of this State coal-mine are published in Parliamentary Paper C.—3B.

*Millerton Colliery* (owners, Westport Coal Company (Limited); George Fletcher, mining-manager).—(23/12/1905): Mining operations have been somewhat depressed, owing exclusively to the restricted demands on the colliery as affected by trade requirements; on this account the management (in November last) deemed it advisable to shorten hands and keep the mine more fully employed on single shift, the output showing a marked decrease of 45,956 tons as compared with that of the previous year. The general equipment and working-conditions continue to maintain their former standard.

East Dip section: This partly exhausted pillared area gave further indications of heating, under conditions which necessitated the whole area being sealed off absolutely. In view of a contingency of this character ample provision was made for keeping an outbreak under control, the whole affected area being so arranged as to admit of being sealed by simply shutting two doors which were purposely left open for the purposes of free ventilation. These stoppings are now securely cast with Portland cement as an additional precaution against leakage, the escaped gases being swept directly into the main-return airway without annoying or interfering with any other part of the mine working. Suitable appliances are also securely built into the walls at regular intervals whereby the pent-up gases can be safely tested in the ordinary safety-lamp.

Mine Creek section: The gross output continues to be taken from this district, whilst the ordinary and progressive developments in connection with surface and underground operations are consistently maintained. In the main south heading district the aggregate drivings for the year comprise a total of 46 chains, intersecting coal of superior quality and hardness over an area extending to the Eastern boundary. No. 3 district west, employing twelve sets of miners, is showing very favourable promise, the coal being specially recommended for naval purposes; whilst No. 16 district pillars, receding from the eastern boundary, are being successfully removed, the hardness of seam and roof being favourable factors relative to safety and total extraction.

West section: In order to win the coal-seam and effect a direct connection between this section and the New Tunnel district, two crosscut headings were recently set off in a north-westerly course from a defined point in No. 6 winning heading at a distance of 26 chains from the Mine Creek haulage terminal. On completion of these drivings it is anticipated that a valuable and extensive addition to the present working-areas will be assured, and eventually supply a much-needed want towards maintaining the full capacity of the Big Brake haulage which connects with the loading-station on the Government Railway-line.

New Tunnel area: In continuation of my previous report, the extensive rock-drivings then in progress to win and exhaust the western division of the leasehold have reached the main coal-seam, and permanent connection has been made for ventilation, &c.; but, pending erection of the new hydraulic-brake installation, coal for commercial purposes was not run over the newly constructed endless-rope system until September last. The coal-seam is showing favourable promise as the drivings extend.

New works: Free drainage is now successfully completed, both from an engineering and drainage standpoint, while the connection effected from both sides reflects credit. Since holing, the usefulness of free drainage has been fully realised, and the cost of driving is already amply repaid, as the 6 ft. by 5 ft. water-channel was almost taxed to its full capacity owing to an excessive inflow of flood-water breaking through heavily fallen pillar and other weak ground.

At the power-station situate at the mine-mouth two air-compressors are newly installed, and the old vertical boilers formerly used are now replaced by one of the Babcock and Wilcox type, whilst at Mine Creek Station the power is unchanged. The electric-light installation now in use at the principal underground haulage terminals has only simplified traffic operations, and its general adoption is recommended. The screening plant was recently supplemented with two picking-belts which give fair results in cleaning and improving the quality of the coal. General repairs recently effected to enlarge and otherwise improve the main fan-drift increased the ventilation in the Mine Creek section alone from 70,000 to 100,000 cubic feet per minute—engine-speed unchanged. The provisions of the Coal-mines Act are strictly observed. Seven inspections were made, both sections of old workings being carefully examined with safety-lamp, and no indications of gas or heating found. No serious accidents reported. Temperatures are practically unchanged, the main return showing a constant 54°.

*Denniston Colliery* (owners, Westport Coal Company (Limited); J. Dixon, mining-manager).—This colliery raised, exclusively by single shift, the largest output yet recorded for any previous corresponding period, being an increase of 12,179 tons on the preceding year; whilst in point of production, development, and general equipment, the former standard of efficiency is well and consistently maintained.

Coalbrookdale Mine (19/12/1905): In making mention that the West Cascade section of working is approaching a geological limit (governed by a thinning of the coal-seam), it is also interesting to note that beyond the area of intervening barren ground, exploration has proved a coal-seam of equal quality and thickness extending westward, and including a considerable area of the Whareatea lease. Regarding the general working there is little of importance to note outside the ordinary routine of operations, while the removal of pillars continues to be very successfully effected, both with respect to the minimum of accidents and the high percentage of coal won.