

Chester's Mine.—Operations during the year have been of an intermittent nature owing to lack of orders. To end of 1931 total output was 21,061 tons.

Westport-Stateville Party.—Work of a scattered nature has been continued. A small output has been obtained but the operations have been more of a prospecting nature. A total of 13,173 tons was produced to end of 1931.

St. Helen's Mine.—Development of this mine was commenced by driving a pair of headings in a south-east direction until a fault was ultimately encountered. All work carried out to the west of the main headings is in thin coal, and it would appear that mining operations have not been commenced at the most advantageous point, the better prospects of the property being situated more in the easterly portion of the lease. Total production to the 31st December, 1931, was 3,088 tons.

Charming Creek Mine.—Development was retarded during the year as a result of a dispute. The mine settled down to work about the middle of the year under the tribute system. The main easterly development headings were advanced a total distance of approximately 10 chains in coal when a downthrow fault was encountered. The inclination of the coal-seam is undulating, and would appear to be almost conformable with the surface contour. An attempt to convey the coal from the faces by means of 35-cwt.-capacity trucks appears to be a failure, owing to the gradients being unsuitable and the present practice of running two different-sized trucks in the mine is not to be commended for profitable working. A steam loco. was put into use on the section of the line from the mine to the timber-mill in place of a petrol tractor, this being a decided improvement. Work has proceeded in the No. 1 south panel in good-quality coal, approximately 12 ft. in thickness. Preparations are being made for the installation of a permanent ventilating-fan. To end of 1931 the total output was 18,442 tons.

Westportmain Mine.—Operations during the year have been confined to pillar-extraction and developing or prospecting any visible outcrop. The rate of progress of pillar-extraction has been slow owing to the mine working very intermittently as a result of the limited demand for this class of coal. It is proposed to carry out development in the outcrops below the jig head with a view to extending the life of the mine, as the quantity of coal at present in view is very limited. Total output to the 31st December, 1931, was 172,098 tons.

Westport-Cascade Mine.—Monyhan's section: Development of this section has been continued during the year in a northerly and westerly direction with reasonably satisfactory results. The output is sluiced directly from the working-face to the surface flume, all places being driven 8 ft. in width. The system of sluicing has proved so satisfactory as to warrant its extension to the Upper North section in which pillar-extraction is taking place. The practice of sluicing coal from the working-place, wherever practicable, would appear to be much safer than the ordinary method of filling by shovel, particularly during the extraction of pillars in high coal, as by this method the coal is washed away from points beyond the lip of the top coal without it being necessary for the miner to expose himself beyond that point, the pressure of water at the nozzle being sufficient to reach the fallen coal whilst the miner controlling the water-supply is in a place of safety. Total production to the 31st December, 1931, was 60,496 tons.

Dennistown Mine.—Ironbridge Mine: Development work has been carried out in Young's drive and Garing's dip section. The formation of large pillars by driving narrow places is almost completed. This area is directly underneath the old Kiwi workings, and it is proposed to isolate the latter section by means of extensive stoppings to guard against fire. Pillar-extraction will then be commenced. Garing's dip section: This is also a new section of work underlying the old Port Arthur workings. Arrangements are almost completed for the installation of permanent haulage arrangements. Wareatea Extended section: Almost the whole of operations in this section consist of pillar-extraction, from which a very high percentage of recovery is being obtained. In the old dip section remarkably good results have been obtained in pillar-extraction under very bad conditions by means of the adoption of the straight line method of retreating. Development of Wareatea has been confined to the Waterloo section, several sections having to be stopped meantime owing to the coal being very friable. This was particularly applicable to Forsyth's pillar section. Deep Creek section: Pillar-extraction has been completed in the 24-acre section, and eight pairs of miners are engaged in solid work at the extreme end of the area in the bottom seam. The development of the stone-drive section in Deep Creek has been disappointing, due to the appearance of stone bands in the coal. However, an improvement is now indicated. Cascade section: Pillar-extraction was continued in the No. 8 section. Towards the end of the year trained men made an examination of Wallace's section with the aid of the "Proto" apparatus. This section has been sealed off for fire for a number of years. Expectations that a portion of the area sealed off may be capable of recovery were justified, with the result that a valuable area of excellent-quality coal should now be won. Temporary stoppings, later followed by permanent stoppings, of concrete blocks, now isolate the area and a commencement has been made to clean up the roadways. This was an example of the utility of a self-contained breathing-apparatus in the hands of a trained body of men. Total output to the 31st December, 1931, was 10,106,876 tons.

Millerton Mine.—In the Mine Creek section operations throughout the year were mainly confined to pillar-extraction. In the Settlement section development work to the south-west was continued in a small area of thin coal adjacent to the Westportmain Colliery. The efficient working of the mine was severely handicapped by slackness of trade. During April a serious fire broke out in the Middle section (Mine Creek), spreading over an area of 25 acres before it could be controlled. Fires are gradually spreading into the mine workings in the second west, third west, Middle section, and No. 2 dip. It is essential that the pillars be removed before the advancing fires cause them to be lost. The position underground is gradually becoming more serious, several men having been injured, and lives lost in dealing with the fires. It is possible to more efficiently deal with the fires, increase the safety of the workmen, and reduce the loss of coal by adjusting the method of working to the market requirements. Total output to 31st December, 1931, was 8,143,313 tons.

Westport-Stockton Colliery.—The main section of development during the year was the new east area. Additional boring operations were carried out beyond the present workings in this area, the results being highly satisfactory and proving approximately 200 acres of coal-bearing country, the seam still maintaining its thickness of 16 ft. The above area is now in process of being formed into panels and is capable of providing a considerably increased output, the only difficulties being that the section is very wet and the roof friable. Pillar-extraction has been continued in the old east and west pillar areas on the straight-line practice. The benefits accruing from a more systematic method of pillar-extraction have been very evident, and would have been more pronounced had trade conditions allowed of a more rapid rate of retreat. General repairs have been effected at the bins, transmission-lines, loco-lines, and various outside buildings. Owing to the great distance of transportation of coal from the mine to the bins, and the several systems of haulages in use, the transportation upkeep costs at this mine are a heavy item. Total production to end of 1931 was 2,901,443 tons.

NELSON DISTRICT.

Puponga Mine.—Mining operations have been confined to the area lying to the west of the old Puponga workings, and present indications are that this coalfield will materially extend in this direction. Almost all rise pillars are extracted from the area at present being worked, and in future it will be necessary to extend mining operations to the dip and possibly beyond a 40 ft. downthrow fault which has been proved to run in a north-west direction from the higher portion of the old mine-workings. The installation of a modern power plant would assist considerably in developing this coalfield, which every indication points to being a valuable one. A more desirable method of mining is required to be adopted so as to more fully guard against the placing beyond reach of a valuable coalfield as is already the position with the dip section of the old mine. Total output to the 31st December, 1931, was 317,391 tons.