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3. Coal near Chinchilla.

BY E. O. MARKS, B.A., B.E., ASSISTANT GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST.

(Memo. to Under Secretary for Mines, re application from the Chinchilla Colliery Company, Limited, for assistance in prospecting for coal.)

The Chinchilla Colliery Company and its predecessor (the Chinchilla Coal Syndicate) have sunk three shafts in the neighbourhood of that town. The first of these, in portion 13v, parish of Chinchilla, about 3 of a mile south-west of the railway station, was put down to a depth of 93 ft. From the bottom a jumper bore was put down a further 17 ft. At 7 ft. in the bore, or 100 ft. from the surface, a 10 in. seam of coal was cut, while at the bottom—at 107 ft. to 110 ft. from the surface—a seam estimated to be 3 ft. thick was met with. A heavy flow of water was also struck, and this water in the bottom of the shaft hindered the collection of the debris from the bore. What little was collected has, as is not unusual in such cases, been the prey of the curious shareholders and was not preserved for any useful purpose. A few chips still lying on the surface where the water was boiled out are a nice clean-looking cannel coal.

The records of this, as of the other shafts and wells mentioned below, are from information supplied by those who put them down, it not being possible to inspect personally any of the seams. The accuracy of the information, however, I see no reason to doubt, except in the case of the bores where the estimate of thickness is necessarily more or less a matter of judgment.

The second shaft was situated in portion 2v, parish of Colomba, 3 of a mile north of the railway, and over a mile north-west of the first shaft. In this, which was sunk to a depth of 104 ft., and by boring a further 34 ft., a coal seam 1 ft. in thickness was cut between 60 and 70 ft. from the surface.

Another shaft was then started near the railway line in portion 1,400 (subdivision 2), parish of Colomba, 3 of a mile west of Chinchilla Station. It was expected to cut a 3 ft. 6 in. seam at 80 ft. on this site, but there appears to be a complete absence of any grounds on which to base this expectation. At 24 ft. the water became troublesome, and operations ceased pending the purchase of a steam engine and pump. On resuming work, it was found the sides of the lower portions of the shaft had fallen in. A fresh start was then made about 100 yards to the south-west, and this shaft, 6 ft. x 4 ft., is timbered throughout to its depth of 65 ft. No coal or shale was met with.
Chinchilla.

Instant Government Geologist.

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As far as surface indications in the neighbourhood are concerned, the country is practically a blank, and no one would have expected the
first choice of a site for prospecting operations to have been, for preference, near the railway. Having been so fortunate as to discover
3 ft. of coal in the first shaft, it is difficult to understand why, especially when the limited resources of the company are taken into
consideration, an effort was not made to overcome the water and
continue the shaft on to this seam, and so cut a quantity of coal
sufficient to make a thorough test.

It was certainly a strange move
to recommence prospecting a mile away.

While the site of the last operations is a good one, had no work
previously been done, it appears to me that in the low financial con-
dition of the company it is unwise to continue further what is at best
a purely speculative work; but that, on the other hand, possessing a
boiler and pump which would be capable of coping with any water
likely to be met with, an endeavour should be made to continue the
first shaft the additional 17 ft. to the coal already discovered.

This, or, if it be found necessary, the sinking of another and
larger shaft near by, is not a very big undertaking, and if beyond
the means of the company, serves to show how incapable the latter
would be of further proving and developing the coal seam, if it be
found satisfactory in the shaft. Should it not be the expected size
and quality, the next search would preferably be made nearer the
railway, either by continuing the present shaft or by diamond drilling.

That there is a reasonable prospect of striking workable coal is
shown by the several bores and wells in the surrounding country—all,
however, at some distance from Chinchilla. The strata met with in
these wells and in the company's shafts appear to have a very slight
dip and to be otherwise undisturbed. The only difficulty likely to be
met with in mining would be the possibility of a bad roof, as most of
the sinking done so far has been through a soft aluminous sandstone,
which may prove to form a somewhat weak covering to the seams.

In reference to an inquiry from the Railway Department, conse-
quent on a communication from Mr. J. Gredden, of Roma, concern-
ing coal in the neighbourhood of Chinchilla, Mr. Gredden was written
to asking for details to enable me to make further inquiries about, or
it possible an examination of, the occurrences mentioned. Unfor-
tunately no reply was received from him, but the following informa-
tion probably includes the coal seams to which he referred.

Between portions 13 and 15, parish of McNulty, 3 miles from
Baking Board Siding and 11 miles west of Chinchilla, a well sunk by
the Lands Department passed through 10 ft. of coal with some
sandstone bands between the depths of 104 and 114 ft.
In portion 110, 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) miles north-east of Baking Board Siding and 5 miles from Chinchilla, in a well sunk by Mr. Warren, a coal seam varying from 3 to 8 in. in thickness was obtained at the bottom.

In portion 1596, 4 miles south-west of Chinchilla, coal—apparently not of great thickness—outcrops in the bed of Charley Creek.

In portion 93, parish of Columba, the Lands Department's Burnchith No. 1 Bore, 214 ft. deep, passed through shales, a 6 in. seam of coal at 152 ft., and a 14 ft. seam of bright black coal at 194 ft.

In portion 1518, parish of Earle, 2 miles west of Brigalow, and about a mile from the railway, Mr. Zeller states that 3 ft. 9 in. of coal, dipping slightly to the north-east, was met at a depth of 6 ft. in a gully near the Condamine, and in portion 8, \(\frac{1}{2}\) a mile nearer Brigalow, some bands of coal were cut in a bore 130 ft. deep.

In portion 60 (Kleidon's), north-east of Brigalow, about 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) miles from the station, a 5 ft. 8 in. seam of coal containing a few penny bands were met with in the bottom of a well 188 ft. deep.

In portion 34, Dr. Jack observed coal up to 1 ft. in thickness on the bank of the Condamine.

In a well at Warren, in portion 18v, parish of Thorn, the property of Mr. Burghardt, and also in a shaft some 400 yards distant, from which a quantity of the coal was obtained for test purposes, the following section was met with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Thickness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>2 ft. 10 ins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band</td>
<td>2 ft. 3 ins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>4 ft. 8 ins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandstone, shales, etc.</td>
<td>13 ft. 10 ins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>3 ft. 3 ins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lower seam is at a depth of 142 and 172 ft. in the two places, the latter of which is about \(\frac{3}{4}\) mile from the railway. Mr. Burghardt informed me the sizes of the seams did not vary by more than 2 inches in the two places.

Mr. Burghardt also told me that a test of this coal was made on the railway, but the Railway Department have advised us that they have no record of it. If unable to dispose of the property, it is, I understand, Mr. Burghardt's intention to work the coal himself.

It will be seen from the above list that coal of a workable thickness is reported from six separate localities, four of which are within 2 miles of the railway. Thus, even if the 3 ft. seam said to have been discovered at Chinchilla does not prove satisfactory, there is still a
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satisfactory, there is still a
good prospect for further search in the neighbourhood. I should, how-
ever, be disinclined to recommend the granting of any assistance from
the Mines Department to the Chinchilla Colliery Company, on the
grounds both of the character of the work already done and of the
financial inability of the company to develop the coal should it be
proved to exist.

The annual consumption of coal by the Railway Department at
and west of Chinchilla is 16,000 tons, and the opening of a coal mine
at this place would save haulage on the coal of 10 or 20 miles from
the Brigalow or Warra seams, or some 80 miles from the present
supply. The direct benefit to the Railway Department is obvious,
and under the circumstances might render it desirable for the Govern-
ment to assist at any rate in testing the 3 ft. seam reported.