

SECTION 2 - COAL

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Barbers Colliery

by Terence D. Hughes

In 1955 a visit was paid to a coal prospect being developed by Mr. E. Barber of Fingal and a report was prepared thereon. This prospect was situated on the northern slope of the range of hills south of the road between Fingal and St. Marys and about midway between these two towns.

At the time, Mr. Barber had put in a small heading of 80 feet, but development was held up because of his inability to obtain an access road through private property. However, timber interests have now put in a road which runs within a few chains of the one-time prospect and Mr. Barber has commenced production.

At present, four men are employed full time and two part time, and coal is supplied to the Goliath Portland Cement Works at Railton at the rate of about 150 to 200 tons per month. The Railton people are said to be very satisfied with the quality of the coal and are desirous of increasing their order.

Geology.

The typical north-eastern coal measures, the Felspathic Sandstone of the Triassic and its associated shales outcrop over a wide area in this locality, and are little disturbed by faulting. They occupy the main northern slope of a prominent range of hills to the south of the Fingal-St. Marys Road adjacent to its crossing of Break O' Day Rivulet. The average slope of this portion of the range is about 10° and it is well dissected by creeks and gullies. The general dip of the Felspathic Sandstone is in a north-easterly direction and readings of from 2° to 7° have been observed. The lower portion of the hill is occupied by the Triassic Ross Sandstone which is barren of coal seams. The top of the Felspathic Sandstone forms a fairly level plateau covered by dolerite talus and above this plateau the steeply-rising top of the range is formed of solid dolerite. About 20 chains west of the workings, a fault brings solid dolerite in lateral contact with the Felspathic Sandstone.

The Coal Seams.

Apart from the work on the productive seam, little development or prospecting has taken place in this area. Ninety-five feet below the main heading a small adit has been put in on a seam of mixed coal and shale. Other outcrops and smudges may be seen in various creek beds and it would appear that there are five and possibly six seams occurring here. The general dip of the country is very slight to the north-east, but minor faulting and rolling may occur and it is difficult to correlate the seams in one creek with those in the next. However, it seems probable that the seam exposed in the creek east of Cardiff Creek on a small cliff corresponds with the seam in the adit below the productive seam at the Cardiff Mine.

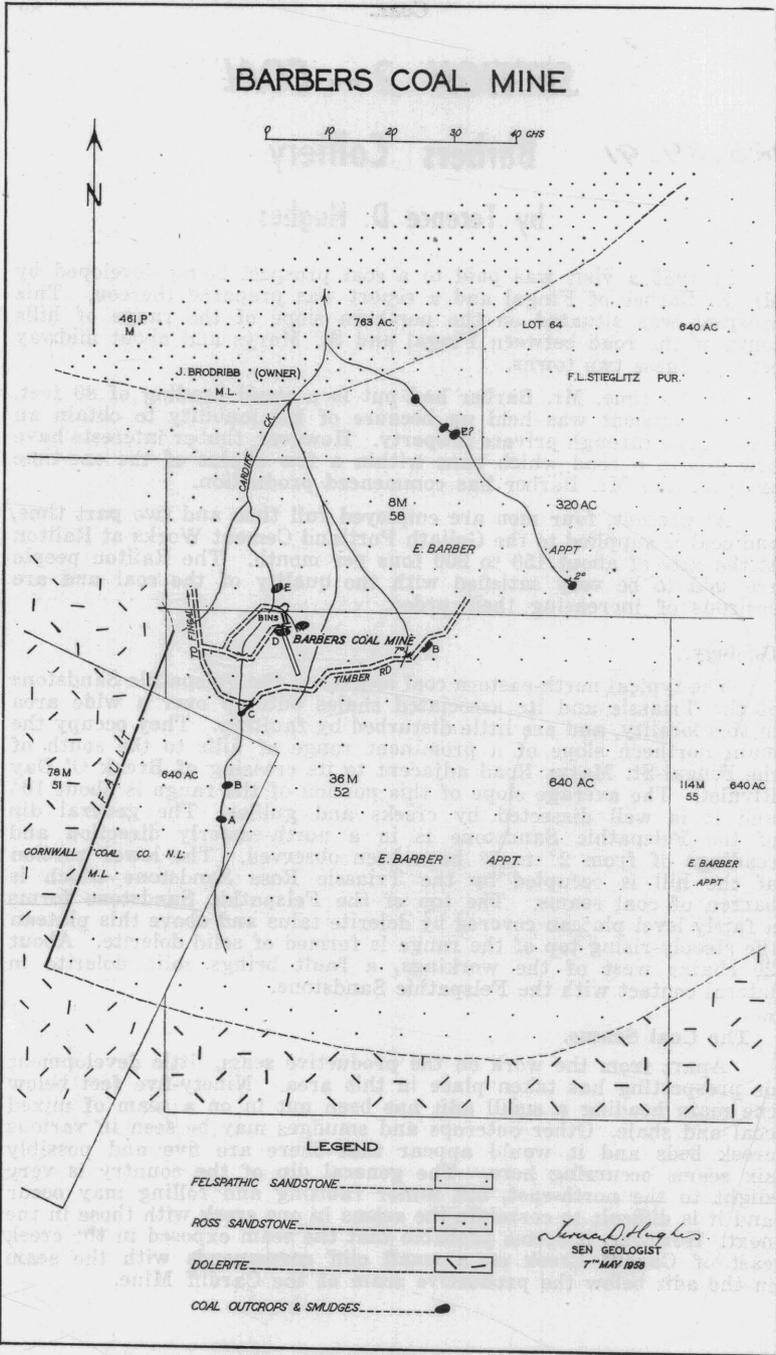
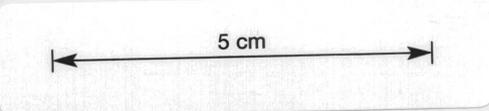


Figure 21

The coal measures have a thickness of approximately one thousand feet in this area from 1050 to 2050 feet above sea level, and outcrops and smudges have been noted approximately 550 feet apart in vertical height. The coal measures extend for at least two miles to the east of the mine, but to the west they are cut off by dolerite.

The Productive Seam.

This may be called the Delta Seam as there appear to be three seams above it. The seam may be correlated with that at the Fingal Mine, which has been regarded as the Delta Seam. This mine is only a few miles distant, although separated from the Cardiff by a large dolerite intrusion. It is rather dangerous to correlate with the main delta seam on the Mt. Nicholas Range, although doubtless the coal was laid down at approximately the same time and under similar conditions.

The main characteristic of this delta seam at the Cardiff, and one that shows a decided advantage over those seams worked in the majority of Tasmanian collieries, is the fact that there are six feet of coal without stone bands of any sort. Occasionally, the grade of the coal falls off and it becomes rather shaley, but on the whole it is a good average quality from floor to roof and does not require any hand picking to avoid bands. Unfortunately, at the opening, the roof is not good, being formed of soft shale which easily falls. The quality of the roof may improve a little as the main heading advances. Ash analyses are done by the Cement Company on each consignment of coal and these show a large variation of from 15-25%. Although the quality of the coal does vary from place to place, it would appear that the higher ash analyses are due to the fact that portions of the roof are included in the coal consignment. Better and more careful methods of loading, plus an expected improvement in roof conditions should result in a product with a lower ash content than the average 20% sold today.

Workings.

The opening up of the coal seam had not at the time of my visit (1.4.58) progressed very far. The main heading had been put in for about 400 feet on a bearing of 170° ; that is almost directly into the hillside. From this, three short roads had been put out to the east and coal was being won from each of these. The first to the east was turned north to provide a return airway. The coal seam here is very flat but there is a slight downhill grade from the main heading to the face in each road.

Conclusion.

This appears to be a very favourable site for operations. The absence of bands in the seam make it particularly attractive. The coal measures extend a long way to the east without any apparent major faulting. Although some pumping is necessary, the contour of the country makes mining by adit quite favourable. Some trouble has been experienced in obtaining access but this has now been overcome by the building of a timber road. Although this means of access is not ideal and involves some otherwise unnecessary steep grades the distance by this route to the Fingal Railway Station is still within five miles. A good expanding market has apparently been obtained with a well known industry that is well satisfied with the product.