

THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PREOLENNA COALFIELD

LOCATION

Preolenna lies 13 miles inland from Wynyard at an elevation of approximately 1,200 feet above sea-level.

ACCESS

The coal mine is connected by road to Wynyard, but the last few miles of this are in very bad order. The Government tramway from Flowerdale reaches to within 4 miles of the mine and is now being continued to the site of the mine workings.

THE GEOLOGY OF THE COAL MEASURES

The Preolenna coal seams occur in the Permo-Carboniferous system representing a fresh water phase of deposition between the lower and upper marine mudstones. They therefore correspond to the East Greta coal measures of New South Wales in which occur, incidentally, the kerosene shale deposits of that State. They are therefore on the same horizon also as the coal of the Mersey district and the Tasmanite shale deposits.

THE NUMBER AND THICKNESS OF THE COAL SEAMS

There are certainly four coal seams, and probably five in the Preolenna field, the best quality seams having a thickness up to two feet. The coal seams are generally 10 to 15 feet apart and there is evidence which indicates that in places two seams approach each other sufficiently to probably enable them to be mined as one seam.

QUANTITY OF COAL

As no boring has been carried out on the field an accurate estimate of the coal reserves is impossible. From the work carried out and the known outcrops, however, the coal available in the immediate vicinity of the main workings at Preolenna may be put down at approximately 5,000,000 tons.

QUALITY OF COAL

The Preolenna coal possesses qualities which differentiate it from all other coals in Tasmania and to some extent from any coal on the mainland. It belongs to the class of coals which have been termed "sapropelic" or by others "cannel" coals. Included amongst other varieties is a kerosene shale similar to that found in New South Wales.

The calorific value of the Preolenna coals is high varying from 12,000 to 14,000 B.T.U.

The coal is very high in volatile hydro-carbons, and is a high grade gas coal producing in tests from 11,500 to 12,000 cubic feet of gas per ton, the gas produced having an illuminating power of 20 candles. It makes an excellent coke.

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The sulphur content is appreciable ranging up to 5 per cent.

The whole of the Preolenna coals give oils on distillation. The greatest value of these coals undoubtedly lies in this direction and in gas making rather than in burning. The investigation of the exact value from the distillation point of view for oils is a subject for detailed investigation.

CONCLUSION

The unique character of the Preolenna coal deposits, namely, their character of producing oils on being subjected to distillation, and constituting as they do the only gas-making coal in Tasmania, combined with the fact that the Government are making them accessible by means of a tramway, justify the conclusion that to undertake the determination of the exact value in these directions is a matter for legitimate speculation.

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