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1986/09. The Richmond coalfield

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Abstract

The Richmond coalfield is situated on the banks of the Coal River, south-east of Richmond. A small mining venture commenced in 1840 but was unsuccessful. No subsequent mining has taken place in this area. The seam mined was thin, about 0.60 m thick, and of limited lateral extent. The coalfield is of minimal interest for future exploration.

LOCATION AND ACCESS

The Richmond coalfield is located south-east of Richmond, adjacent to and to the north of the mouth of the Coal River, which empties into a stretch of Frederick Henry Bay known as Pitt Water. Access is provided by a network of roads traversing the area.

GENERAL GEOLOGY

The coal-bearing strata near Richmond have been examined by Strzelecki (1845), Milligan (1849), Gould (1869), Johnston (1888), Nye (*in Hills et al.*, 1922), and more recently by Leaman (1971).

Coal crops out on the west bank of the Coal River, south of Richmond. The mouth of the Coal River empties into a part of Frederick Henry Bay known as Pitt Water, to the south of the outcrop of coal. An adit was driven into this outcrop in 1840. The coal is of Triassic age and is hosted in the lithic sandstone sequence (the youngest unit in the Upper Parmeener Super-Group).

The coalfield is covered by the 1:63 360 Geology of the Coal River Basin sheet (Leaman, 1971). A small block of Late Triassic lithic sandstone, in which the coal seams were found, is faulted against stratigraphically younger quartz sandstone to the east and covered by Tertiary sub-basalt silt and fine sand to the north and west.

A dolerite hill lies on the eastern margin of the coalfield, overlying the faulted contact between the lithic and quartz sandstones.

A hole was drilled in 1888 near to the old 1840 adit. Three thin seams of coal were intersected in this hole, the thickest being 0.68 m thick. The seam exposed in the river is 0.60 m thick and dips to the west at 15-20° (Nye, *in Hills et al.*, 1922).

PREVIOUS MINING HISTORY

Coal was discovered on the banks of the Coal River near Pitt Water between September 1803 and February 1804, during the very early days of the first settlement at Risdon Cove. No work was done in this area until 1840 when a Mr Bonney opened a small mine, which he tried unsuccessfully to sell. In 1841 Mr Bonney formed a company to raise and sell the coal, and approached the government of the day for financial assistance. Various items of equipment were loaned to the company (Booth, 1962). The government surveyor, Jones, visited the mine in 1844 and described the 'coal seam' into which an adit had been driven as "six inches (150 mm) of coal with 4' (1.2 m) of shale above" The adit, driven at an angle to the line of the dip of the seam, was full of water, and the mine had been

abandoned (CSO 8/108/2279, 15 January 1844).

Milligan (1849) visited the adit and also noted that a shaft had been sunk "a few yards from the margin of the river". The shaft was also abandoned. The outcrop of coal on the west bank of the Coal River, into which the adit was driven is described by Milligan (1849) as: ".... the crop of the seam exhibits a few inches of soft carbonaceous matter, but appears to have yielded 2' (0.60 m) of a consumable commodity when fairly opened into".

A drill hole was put down 30 m to the west of the old shaft in 1888 (Secretary of Mines Report, 1888-89). The log of this hole is given in Hills et al. (1922).

No further mining activity has eventuated in this field.

COAL QUALITY

No analyses are available from this coalfield.

FUTURE POTENTIAL

The Richmond coalfield has minimal interest as a target for future exploration.

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