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BEN LOMOND COAL

Attention was recently directed to the Ben Lomond coal area by statements made to Mr. J. Allan Guy, M.H.R., by Mr. Robert Stevenson, of Evandale. Mr. Stevenson was one of a party which, in 1882, drove a short tunnel into a coal seam which crosses Story Creek about 2½ miles above Storey's Creek Mine.

The coal seam occurs at an altitude of about 4,000 feet above sea level in a remnant of Triassic strata elevated by movements associated with the intrusion of the Ben Lomond diabase (dolerite). The location is shown on a plan entitled "Mineral Sections, Ben Lomond" by A. Montgomery, 1892. On this plan it is described as "Coal 898M, 320 Ac., Jas. Lamont".

The tunnel is reached by an old foot track, now partly obscured, from Storey's Creek Mine. The track traverses rough country and rises 1,500 feet in less than 3 miles so that conditions of access are definitely unfavourable.

The coal-bearing remnant forms a relatively flat area at the base of precipitous cliffs which rise to the summit of Ben Lomond. Story Creek cuts through these cliffs in a gorge which flattens locally in the coal area and then becomes steep-sided again approaching the Storey's Creek Mine. The tunnel is driven into the eastern side of the gorge on a bearing of N.28°E. practically from the bed of the creek. The seam is exposed in the gorge in a bold well-defined outcrop, but in the surrounding area is obscured by overlying strata and by vast areas of diabase talus.

The tunnel, which appears to be about 70 feet long, has been driven on the full dip of 3½° and has about 4'6" of water at its end. It is approximately 6 feet by 3 feet in cross section with about 18 inches of the seam left in the roof. The section showing at the entrance is as follows:-

Felspathic sandstone	?
Coal	0'3"
Black stone	0'6"
Coal	1'2"
Clay band	0'3"
Coal	1'7"
Clay band	0'3½"
Stony coal	0'11"
Coal	1'1"
Stony coal	0'9"
Bright coal	0'6"
Clay band	0'0½"
Bright coal	0'3"
Sandy mudstone	?

As will be observed from the above, the seam is a banded one, and, in general make up, it does not compare favourably with the average coal seams of Triassic age being worked in Tasmania. There is from 9 inches to 15 inches of bright coal of good quality at the base. A selected sample from this section Reg. No. 35/45, assayed:-

Moisture at 105°C	1.48%
V.C.M.	35.92%
F.C.	51.42%
Ash	11.18%
Sulphur	0.75%
Calorific Value	12,910 B.T.U's

A whole seam sample, Reg. No. 692, omitting only those bands that would be excluded in normal mining practice, was taken some years ago by the Geological Survey with the following result:-

Moisture at 105°C	2.38%
V.C.M.	20.68%
F.C.	46.58%
Ash	30.36%
Sulphur	0.45%

The probable area of coal available is limited by the close proximity of the Ben Lomond diabase. It is possible that the coal measures extend under the escarpment to some extent but the elevated position of the seams, relatively to others of the same series in the area, definitely suggests that this is an isolated block resting on the diabase. There are, at least, two seams exposed below the one on which the tunnel is driven, but they are too thin to be of any importance.

Although no faults are showing in the tunnel two were observed in the immediate vicinity, and it is not likely that any appreciable area of coal, free from faulting, could exist under the prevailing circumstances.

To summarise - the following factors will militate against the development of this coal seam:-

1. Transport. - An expensive haulage system would be necessary to carry the coal 2½ miles to Storey's Creek Mine, which is 14 miles by mountain road from Avoca railway station.

2. Quality. - Although there is a good band at the base the average grade of the whole seam appears to be poor.

3. Quantity. - The prospective available area of the seam is not great and it is quite unproved beyond the few chains showing in the creek and tunnel.

4. Faulting. - It is very probable that faulting would seriously disrupt any workings.

5. Climate. - Climatic conditions would be very severe, particularly in winter, and there is no suitable site for houses close to the outcrop. Miners would have to live at Storey's Creek, and would undoubtedly be difficult to obtain for work under these conditions.

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