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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU OF MINERAL RESOURCES
GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS**

RECORDS:

1945/62

Notes on Salt at Widgiemooltha,
Western Australia

by

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DEPARTMENT OF SUPPLY & SHIPPING.

Mineral Resources Survey Branch.

NOTES ON SALT AT WIDGIEMOOLTHA, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Report No. 1945/62.

Salt is harvested from the surface of Lake Cowan, approximately 8 miles east of Widgiemooltha, which is on the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway line, 52 miles south of Coolgardie.

The lake is irregular in shape and runs generally east-west in the area worked, which is really a western lobe of the lake, with an average width of about a mile, and a length, according to the operators, of at least 15 miles. The main lake is very extensive and stretches south as far as Norseman, 56 miles from Widgiemooltha.

When visited (July 28th) the lake was covered with water up to 3 feet deep. This evaporates by about October as a rule leaving a crust of very pure salt about an inch thick, which is scraped into heaps by means of a motor-grader, and carted by lorry to large dumps on the southern shore of the lake. The rate of harvesting is 3,000 to 4,000 tons per annum, but could be increased almost indefinitely as the portion worked is only a fraction of the salt-bearing area. Beneath the pure salt crust is several feet of brownish impure salt, which is sufficiently strong in the dry season to support motor transport. Underneath this again is mud or slurry.

In most years harvesting can be carried out if required for eight or nine months. The wet season, if any, is almost invariably during the winter months, from about June to August. Usually two to three months harvesting is sufficient to collect the years quota, which is governed by the amount that can be marketed.

At the time of inspection there were two dumps containing respectively about 1,500 and 1,200 tons. The salt, which is coarsely crystalline - $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch - is carted by lorry to a crushing plant owned by the Syndicate at Widgiemooltha. At Widgiemooltha it is put on trucks and railed to market. Selling prices quoted by a member of the Syndicate were crude £2 per ton, butcher's £2/3/6 per ton, fine £2/5/- per ton, f.o.r. Widgiemooltha.

CANBERRA, A.C.T.
21st August, 1945.


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