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ASBESTOS DEPOSIT BINDI BINDI - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

by

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ASBESTOS DEPOSIT BINDI BINDI - WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

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I examined the asbestos deposit near Bindi Bindi in company with Mr. R.S. Matheson of the State Geological Survey on 6th September. The deposit is situated 2½ miles northerly by road from Bindi Bindi railway siding at a point about ¼ mile west of the railway line. Bindi Bindi is 15 miles northerly by rail from Perth.

The asbestos deposit is situated in gently undulating country in which the dominant rock is granite gneiss.

The deposits have been developed only to a limited extent by small open cuts and shallow shafts to a maximum depth of not more than 20 feet.

Asbestos occurs both as slip-fibre and mass-fibre.

The former type is found in gently inclined but warped and somewhat irregular zones of a soapy rock which are believed to represent highly altered bands of amphibolite schist in acid granite gneiss. As it lies in place the fibrous nature of the mineral is not very apparent. It appears rather as a striated grey to very pale green rock with a faint sheen. However, the fibres may be readily teased out with the fingers. The asbestos rock occurs in lengths of several feet but jointing normal to the fibres determines the length of individual groups of fibre available. There would be no difficulty in selecting fibres between two and three inches long. This type of asbestos has been marketed for some time and is recognised as anthophyllite.

The mode of occurrence of the mass-fibre is not as clear as that of the slip-fibre, but the rock matrix in which it is found appears similar to that in which the slip-fibre occurs. A Melbourne firm which has handled samples of this asbestos recently considers it to be amosite. If this identification is confirmed it will probably be the first record of the occurrence of this mineral in Australia. It may be noted, however, that Dr. Simpson, in reporting on asbestos collected by T. Blatchford from this locality, remarked on its unusual tensile strength, whilst confirming its identity as anthophyllite by chemical analysis (see Annual Report, Mines Department, Western Australia, 1918 - page 76 and page 98). A sample of the fibre said to be amosite has been submitted to the Government Mineralogist, Mines Department, Perth, for determination.

Though, as pointed out, only a limited amount of development has been done, it appears probable that a considerable amount of slip fibre is available and that this could be obtained by simple mining methods and hand picking. If production of the mass fibre is to be undertaken, however, some machinery will be required to separate the fibres from the rock.

Minerals Resources Survey,
CANBERRA.
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Director.