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DANDENONG INDUSTRIES.
Ordish Firebrick Company.

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If one sets out to "boast" up his town he is likely to be met with a query, "What industries have you got?" If the question can be answered satisfactorily, then he is in a fair way to be entitled to use the words "important industrial centre," as applied to his particular town.

We recognise that there are a number of flourishing industries in Dandenong and district, with the undoubted prospect of more to follow in the near future.

The operations of these establishments are probably on a larger and more extensive scale than most of our readers are aware of. It is, therefore, with a view to giving a little authentic information regarding the inner workings and general operations of these undertakings, that we have in this issue commenced a series of articles, in which we hope to ultimately deal with the whole of the primary and secondary industries in Dandenong and its immediate neighbourhood. We consider it the duty of a newspaper to advertise the resources of its town and district, and contend that this can be done in no better way than by enlightening the public as to the comprehensive and important nature of the various producing establishments in our midst. The first of these contributions we have decided to devote to one of our most valuable assets – The Ordish Firebrick Company.

A representative of this paper was shown over the large works of the above company, on Friday morning last, by the courteous manager, Mr J Stewart, who is not only a practical exponent of the art of firebrick making, but is a gentleman who apparently takes a pride in the works under his charge.

The property is situated on Stud Road, about a mile and a quarter from Dandenong railway station, and comprises an area of 52 acres, the proved deposit of fire clay covering 20 acres. The Ordish Firebrick Company, which took over these works from Mr W Ordish about four years ago, is a proprietary company, with a capital of £30,000, of which £20,000 is called up. The purchase price was £10,000. Employment is given on an average to 20 men, and the wages amount to about £100 per week.

The company is fortunate in possessing an immense supply of what has been pronounced to be the best firebrick making clay in the State. The face of the pit at present being worked is about 300 feet in length, over 20 feet high, and has been proved to a depth of 57 feet. Taking the area of fire clay deposits at 20 acres, with an average depth of 54 feet, it pans out at equal to two tons to the foot, or a total of two million tons.

When the bore was put down to a depth of 51 feet it was still in the same class of fire-clay, so that there is really no knowing how deep it may go. The State Geological Department claims that this is the largest known deposit of fireclay in the world. A Peculiarity of the clay formations on this property is that the fire clay is a pipe formation, and adjoining it on the same property is a pure building clay, from which bakers' oven bricks are made.

An inspection of the brick kilns and capacious drying shed at once convinced one of the magnitude of the output at these works. There are three down draught kilns of a capacity of 37,000, 27,000 and 10,000, and also a "Scotch" kiln that holds 33,000 bricks. In addition to these, another 25,000 down draught kiln is about to be started. At the time of our visit there were 105,000 bricks in the kilns, some burnt and others in the process of being burnt, and there were many thousands in the immense drying sheds, 165 feet by 145 feet and 60 feet by 66ft., giving a total drying space of about 27,900 square feet. The stock carried varies in value from £1300 to £2000. It may also be mentioned, for the information of those unacquainted with the process, that all fire bricks are moulded by hand, as machinery cannot be used to moulding fire bricks. A special line of bakers' oven bricks are being made from the clay in No.1 pit, and these are the best procurable. The many and varied shaped of bricks, tiles, etc. turned out by the Ordish Company may be realised when it is stated that there are fully 1000 shapes of bricks, tiles, and fire lumps in the yards. One of the most delicate pieces of work is the burning of shields to shape for electric light purposes, the shape being retained without buckling. An idea of the variety of firebricks made by this company may be gathered from the fact that one order received last week comprises no less than 16 different sizes and shapes of fire bricks. On account of not being able to use mortar in connection with fire brick furnaces, the brick is cut in its green stage into what is known as 1-inch and 1½-inch splits on the flat, and on the edge the

same way. The largest brick made at the works is 36in. x 12in. x 6in., and the smallest in 9in. x 3in. x 1in.

The machinery is driven by a 25 h.p. Hornsby engine, and electric power is used for lifting the water for the mush bins and to empty the pit in the event of flooding.

The Ordish Firebrick Co. is doing an extensive business throughout the Eastern States, and as far as Tasmania and Adelaide, but it is somewhat difficult to give the output of the works, as the proportion of fire bricks turned out is only about 40 per. cent. of the output, the remainder being in lumps and shapes. The ground fire clay is used instead of mortar, and this is sent to practically all the States, being highly valued in the setting and repairing of firebrick work. The company has been contractors for the Victorian Railways Department since its inception, taking over the contract from Mr Ordish.

The whole of the commodious buildings and up to-date plant has been erected since Mr Stewart took over the management of the works about 2½ years ago, and in view of increasing business, it seems that other additions will follow as the necessity for same arises. As a matter of fact, it is the intention of the manager to install a plant for making building bricks from No 1 pit.

The outstanding features of this valuable industry to Dandenong are – the unlimited deposits of the very best fire clay, and the easy manner in which it can be treated and turned into ideal fire bricks; the name which the Ordish stamped article has made for itself in Australia; and the local value of these expensive brick works in connection with the foreshadowed increase of factory buildings in Dandenong at no distant date.

The Ordish Company is now on a firm financial footing, and is looking forward with confidence to the future for a return for their expenditure and enterprise in building up one of Dandenong's most important industries.