

BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

DARJEELING

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Plywood was made during the war of 1939-45 in small private factories at Siliguri.

Although the production of electric power is only on a small scale engaging very few persons except in the supply systems

Electric Power. for the towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong,

Darjeeling District is remarkable for its possession of abundant easily developable water-power. Despite that fact and although it claims to have the first hydro-electric undertaking in India (the original plant at Sidrapong was set to work on 10th November 1897) these resources have remained practically undeveloped up to the time of writing.

Hydro-electric Development to date is summarised as follows:—

	Operating agency.	
	Darjeeling Municipality.	Kurseong Hydro-electric Company (Managing Agents Messrs. Goenka and Co., Kurseong).
Installed capacity (kilowatts) ..	1,960	400
Minimum continuous power, April (kilowatts) ..	680	30
Peak loads so far handled (kilowatts)	1,506	140
Total units sold, 1943-44 ..	3,246,000	202,764
Ditto 1944-45 ..	5,191,000	..
Non-industrial units sold, 1943-44	2,148,000	163,524
Ditto 1944-45	3,431,000	..
Population, 1943-44 ..	50,000	15,000
Net rates charged, annas per unit :—		
Lighting (including tax) ..	4	6
Heating (1st 100 units per month)	·75	·75
Heating (over 100 units) ..	·50	·50
Power average	·875	..

(The Darjeeling Municipality grant a monsoon rebate of ·25 annas per unit on all heating consumption.)

In addition to the hydro-electric plant at Darjeeling, the Municipality has a peak load and standby diesel electric generating station of 200 kilowatts near Leborg.

The receipts and expenditure of the Darjeeling municipal installation are mentioned in Chapter XIV dealing with Local Self-Government. The cost of the Kurseong installation was Rs. 3½ lakhs.

Water-power, after careful investigation, was rejected as a means of generating electric power at Kalimpong and oil driven generating machinery was installed in 1938 by the Kalimpong Electric Supply Co., Ltd. (Managing Agents Messrs. H. K. Banerjea & Sons, Narayanganj) with an issued and subscribed capital of Rs. 3 lakhs. Originally the power unit consisted of two 40 kilowatt sets but these were found insufficient and in 1943 a third generator of 140 kilowatt capacity was installed. The installation is expected to cope with normal expansion of the town for the next few years. War conditions

During the war 100 additional hands were engaged to cope with extra work.

(2) At Siliguri and Darjeeling only running shed work is carried out.

There are two public Ropeways in the District which employ only a small number of persons. The motor transport industry does not employ any appreciable amount of labour even if garages and repair establishments are included.

There are 5 rice mills in Siliguri town, one rice mill at Naxalbari and one at Matigara. A small engineering workshop with a foundry at Siliguri employs about 40 persons and repairs machinery and vehicles.

The building industry and road maintenance give casual employment to a certain number of persons mostly unskilled.

Important bridging has been undertaken in the District from time to time but the construction work can hardly be considered a local industry or manufacture as materials and skilled personnel are usually entirely imported.

Coal occurs in the band of Gondwana rocks running from near Pankhabari to Dalingkot. The beds usually dip at high angles to the north-northwest and are much contorted and faulted.

Mining.

The coal is badly crushed and is of a friable nature, probably only fit for coking, making into briquettes or burning in brick kilns. An attempt to work coal on a commercial basis was made from 1896 to 1900 during which period 7,231 tons were raised before the attempt was abandoned.

The above extraction was made from exposures about 4 miles north of Bagrakot railway station where the Lish and Churanti rivers approach one another in the forest just south of khas mahal land. In 1943 prospecting was undertaken in the same neighbourhood where seams of some thickness are exposed. The coal suffers from the defects mentioned above and ash content is as much as 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. It is hoped that coal with a lower ash content can be found in workable quantities and that transport and labour will make it possible to mine profitably. Transportation down the Lish valley is extremely arduous even in the winter and mining cannot be profitable unless a road is built usable at all times of year. In 1944 coal was extracted and sold locally: the result has induced the prospector to attempt more permanent operations. A labour force of not more than 50 persons was then employed on extraction of this coal.

No other mining or quarrying takes place in the District on any appreciable scale but the Baikantapur Estate realises about Rs. 10,000 per annum royalty for the removal of sand and stone from the bed of the river Mahanadi near Siliguri town. The Khas Mahal realises