

This shows a slight increase upon last year's return, and that the dividends exceed the calls by £9,431 2s. 6d.

There are 51 gold-mining leases in this district, of which 22 are situated at Boatman's, 18 at Murray Creek and Crushington, 2 at Larry's, and 9 at Soldier's and Rainy Creeks, and Antonio's. These leases have, with few exceptions, been properly connected by the Survey Department with trig. stations, which will prove of great value to the Courts, when adjusting cases of encroachment, and materially assist in the reduction of the costly litigation heretofore existing.

Five of the registered companies have taken advantage of the provisions of "The Mines Act 1877 Amendment Act, 1879," by obtaining protection for 12 months, thereby relieving the shareholders from the frequent calls which have been found excessively burdensome during the last two years.

The majority of the companies have secured the services of competent mining surveyors, a step likely to lead to good results and prevent encroachment and litigation.

There are about two hundred Europeans and two hundred and eighty Chinese employed in alluvial mining throughout the district, making fair average wages. There has been a considerable increase in the Chinese population, a good number having recently arrived, and others are expected. This is doubtless in consequence of the good reports from those who have long resided here, and it may fairly be presumed that they are satisfied that there is a large area of country lying idle which will enable them to earn fair wages, if not large piles. They have established two large stores in Reefton, one at Maori Gully, and they contemplate shortly opening another at Boatman's. They employ two pack-horses, which are constantly at work.

The proposed construction of the railway to connect the East and West Coasts *via* Reefton has naturally commanded considerable attention on the part of the people here, as it cannot fail to be of the greatest importance to the place. It is advisable that early steps should be taken to reserve the land along the proposed line until the question is settled.

During the past twelve months a pack-track, some seven or eight miles in length, has been constructed from Devil's Creek to the Big River by the County authorities, and subsidized by the Government to the extent of £300; but, as the District Engineer was unable to certify that the work was carried out in accordance with the specifications, the Warden's certificate has been withheld until the matter has been adjusted. This track has opened up a considerable area of alluvial ground, and provided remunerative employment for a number of miners, chiefly Chinese.

Another application has been made to the Government to subsidize the formation of a similar track from the Blackwater to the Big River, and it is anticipated that this will prove beneficial to the district and open up an extensive tract of payable ground in the back country.

The surveying of a line from the head of Boatman's to Lyell might be undertaken with advantage to the district, and would prove of great assistance to miners in prospecting for reefs, which are confidently believed to exist in that as yet unexplored country, and, if carried out, the whole of the country from Rainy Creek to Lyell, a distance of 30 miles, would be connected.

The statistical returns show that there are 130 water-races of an aggregate length of 116 miles, capable of carrying 443 heads of water, of the value of £20,360; 60 tail-races, value £3,695; and 73 dams, of a value of £2,599; which, together with the mining plant and machinery, estimated at £78,070, gives the total value of all mining plant at £104,724.

In conclusion, I may state that the district is in a sound condition, and I think it is a significant fact that there are no idle hands in the place. Hopes are entertained that the ensuing twelve months will be marked with greater success, and a larger output of gold than has been the case for the past two or three years, and I trust that these hopes will be fully realized.

I have &c.,

W. H. REVELL,  
Warden.

The Under-Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

## WESTLAND GOLD FIELDS.

(Including part of Nelson South-West Mining District.)

### No. 9.

Mr. Warden STRATFORD to the UNDER-SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Greymouth, 13th April, 1881.

I have the honor to forward herewith the statistical returns of the mining districts under my charge, except that of Kumara, which I have already sent in from that place, and to add a general report for the year ending the 31st March, 1881.

There are about 2,400 miners in my district north of Teremakau; of these 500 are Chinese. The principal mode of working is by sluicing and tunnelling; I am not aware of any quartz mining within my boundaries.

*Barry Town, or Seventeen-mile Beach.*—There are about 300 miners on this field, principally located in the immediate neighbourhood of the prospectors' claim. Quite recently several parties have set in to work at a place about six miles further north, and with moderate success, proving that the lead of gold continues in a northerly direction on a narrow strip of terrace which lies between the ranges and the ocean, stretching out at least twenty miles. The Seventeen-mile Flat is being prospected with boring-rods, but with no results up to the date of my report. The prospecting parties have only very recently commenced operations. This portion of my district is likely to become better known when made more accessible than at present, an event probable, as I understand the Government has agreed to subsidize the expenditure of £400 by the County Council in forming a new approach to the diggings through a well-known agricultural flat called Coal Creek. The advantage of this for