

Since my last report the Golden Gate Company has leased its water for a term of years to Messrs. Nicolson and party, who have pegged out a claim at Scrubby Gully, some two miles west of Springvale. A branch-race of considerable length has been cut, and all the necessary plant placed upon the ground for sluicing on a large scale, but it is feared that a start will not be able to be made until the spring, as the water at present is below a workable quantity. Messrs. Nicolson and party are thoroughly practical miners, and, it is believed, would not have gone to the heavy expenditure incurred unless the prospects fully warranted it; and, if such is the case, and the ground proves to be as valuable as anticipated, there are hundreds of acres of similar country in the locality open for application.

Several fresh claims have been taken up on the Clyde commonage, most of which are being worked by tunneling. Fortunately the ground does not require timbering, or probably it would not pay by this method. As it is, however, good wages are being made, and where water can be obtained in sufficient quantities to sluice the returns have been much greater.

At Springvale Messrs. Gartley Brothers are still profitably employed, and, being the possessors of a good water-right, they have incurred very little lost time during the past year.

MANORBURN.

About August last year some good prospects were obtained here almost accidentally by Messrs. Murray and McDonald, two strangers in the locality, and since then a considerable rush has set in, causing a large amount of prospecting to be done. The ground varies in depth from 8ft. to 60ft. and over, the gold-bearing wash being a half water-worn quartz gravel, generally called "granite." The lead starts from Messrs. Jackson and Campbell's claim, at Tucker Hill, and follows along parallel with the Manuherikia River until the Manorburn is reached, when it shoots off in the direction of Ida Valley. About thirty claims have been pegged off, several of which are being worked, and returning fair to good wages. There are a few fine colours through seams all the way down, but the best gold is found in the bottom layer, which in most places is 1½ft. to 2ft. in depth. The claims are being worked under considerable difficulties, the washdirt having to be carried to the Manorburn Creek, where a sufficient supply of water is obtainable for box-sluicing and cradling.

Jackson and party, with their limited supply of water, managed to get about seven months' sluicing during the year. The result, however, was very satisfactory, enabling them to place on the claim about 580ft. of additional iron piping. When water was not available this energetic party set their neighbours a commendable example by enlarging their dam, near Little Valley, which now, when full, covers an area of three-quarters of a mile in length by 10 chains in width, the wall being 25ft. deep; their race, which is seventeen miles and a half long, has also received a considerable amount of attention.

The Molyneux Hydraulic Company are still working in their claim just above the Town of Alexandra. In May last they shifted to the upper part of their ground, and this necessitated an expenditure of a little over £200 in extra plant. The removal, however, has acted beneficially, as the prospects are very much better. Although operations had to be suspended at the beginning of November last, through the high state of the river and breakages in the race, 147oz. were obtained during the year, which probably paid all expenses.

The banks of the Molyneux and the outside creeks and gullies are still being profitably worked, and, if there is any change since my last report, it is in the direction of more men being employed.

Dredging.

This method of winning the precious metal still occupies a premier position in this locality, and from the present outlook it is likely to for many years to come; more especially is this future guaranteed, as the tailings elevator, which has been spoken of so long, is now by experience an assured success. There are five steam and two current-wheel dredges at present working between Clyde and Butcher's Point, and two steam and one current-wheeler being built.

Hyde and party have had an exceptionally good year, one week alone returning them 127oz. Just before Christmas it was found that their tailings were blocking them, and steps were at once taken to procure and erect an elevator. This has now been completed, and is working very satisfactorily. The elevator consists of a wooden ladder, which is secured to the stern of the dredge, a train of boxes or trays running over tumblers at each end of the ladder, the upper one of which is driven by gearing and shafting connecting with the main engine. The ladder is constructed of timber, 12in. deep by 6in. wide and 34ft. long, having cross-pieces to stay it. There are two deck-beams of 10in. by 6in. bolted to the deck, to which the ladder is secured, the beams projecting over the stern to carry the lower tumbler. There are also two uprights, 8in. by 6in. and 18ft. long, bolted to the deck-beams, the ladder being stayed by two stays of 2½in. by ½in. iron running from the ladder to the top end of uprights, and from there to top of main tumbler frame, and also by two stays of ½in. round iron from top of ladder to deck. The shafting and gearing for driving the trays consist of a 2in. shaft, running in bearings along the deck to the stern, where it is connected with four mitre-wheels to cross-shaft, thence to an incline-shaft running up the ladder, on the top end of which there is a bevel-pinion driving on to a bevel-wheel, 36in. in diameter, which is keyed on to an intermediate shaft, 2½in. in diameter, across the ladder, on the other end of which is a pinion, 11in. in diameter, driving on to a spur-wheel, 36in. in diameter, on the top tumbler-shaft, the tumbler and intermediate shafts running in brasses, the remainder in hard cast-iron bearings, the whole being driven by a friction-clutch bolted on the fly-wheel of the main engine. The trays, of which there are forty-one in number, are made of ½in. steel plate, being coupled together with steel links riveted to the bottom, and steel pins and bushes. The lower tumbler is fitted with tension-screws for the purpose of taking up the slack as the pins and bushes wear. The trays are carried up by four rollers, running in hard cast-iron