

No. 18.

Mr. ALEXANDER AITKEN, Manager, Waimea-Kumara Water-race, to the UNDER-SECRETARY OF MINES, Wellington.

SIR,—

Kumara, 21st June, 1895.

I have the honour to forward the following report on the Waimea-Kumara Water-races for the year ending the 31st March, 1895 :—

WAIMEA WATER-RACE.

The total sales of water from this race during the year were £988 0s. 7d., and the expenditure on maintenance for the same period was £1,061 9s. 4d., leaving a debit balance of £73 8s. 9d. on the year's transactions. The average number of miners supplied with water from this race was sixty-eight, and the approximate amount of gold obtained was 2,475oz., valued at £9,652 10s. The sales of water are £59 4s. 11d. more than for the preceding year, and the yield of gold 423oz. more, valued at £1,649 14s.

The difference in the sales of water and the yield of gold between this year and the preceding year is not attributable to a greater number of men being employed, nor to any improvement in the yield of gold, but solely to the fact that less time was lost by the miners on account of breakages in the race and the quantity of water available during the past year was greater than during the preceding one. The increase in the quantity of gold obtained should even have been greater than it is had the supply of water for the year been up to the average of former years; but for a great part of the year, especially during the latter portion of it, the rainfall was exceptionally small, which not only prejudicially affected the sales of water, but also the gold-yield.

The expenditure for ordinary maintenance is greater than for the preceding year by £142. This increase in the ordinary expenditure was incurred in repairing the fluming in the Stafford and Waimea sections of the race, and in retimbering some of the tunnels. The whole of the fluming on the Waimea Race, with the exception of the high fluming at Kawhaka, is now in a good state of repair, and should require little or no expenditure for some years to come. Besides the sales of water, free water has been supplied during the year, to the value of £97 8s. 6d., to several of the claims the owners of which would have had to abandon them unless some assistance of this kind had been given them; and a considerable amount of waste water has been given away for prospecting at Gillam's Gully and other places with the view of endeavouring to open up new ground in the district.

Besides ordinary expenditure on maintenance, £115 17s. 7d. was spent in repairs to the high fluming at Kawhaka. Only repairs that were absolutely necessary to render it safe have been done during the year. A survey has been made from the pipe-line, starting from a point 45ft. lower than the present inlet end, to upper end of high fluming at Kawhaka, showing that the whole of the high fluming can be dispensed with by adopting a grade of 4ft. to the mile for a new race between the above points. The length of such new race would be 2 miles 69 chains, and the whole length of the race would be in earthwork with the exception of 17 chains, where either fluming or syphon would need to be constructed; but if fluming was adopted none of it would exceed 10ft. in height. An estimate of the expenditure necessary to construct this race has been furnished to the Inspecting Engineer.

BRANCH RACE TO CALLAGHAN'S.

The whole of the work on this race is now under contract, and during the year the sum of £660 16s. 5d. has been expended. A contract has been entered into for 1,700ft. of 26in. wrought-iron riveted pipes for the construction of the syphon for crossing the low ground near the Hokitika Road; and, when this syphon is completed, water can be supplied in Italian Gully and Callaghan's.

BRANCH RACE TOWARDS MIDDLE BRANCH OF WAIMEA CREEK.

No work has been done on this race during the year. An extension of about a mile will shortly be necessary to supply water to claims likely to be opened up in the Middle Branch of the Waimea Creek. A survey of an extension of this race has been made during the year (including the mile above referred to), the total length of which is about two miles and a half to its junction with the old Waimea Race, near the Big Dam.

KUMARA WATER-RACE.

The total sales of water from this race during the year amounted to £4,646 19s. 9d., and the expenditure for maintenance for the same period was £1,976 17s. 7d., leaving a credit balance of £2,670 2s. 2d. The average number of miners supplied with water from this race was 108, and the approximate yield of gold obtained by parties using water from the race was 6,961oz., valued at £27,147 18s. Besides the sales of water above referred to, water to the value of £1,054 12s. 8d. was supplied to assist claims having a succession of poor washings, and water to the value of £40 was supplied as the cost of deviations. In all cases where assistance was given to poor claims the gold obtained from and the expenditure of each was fully inquired into. The total value of water supplied from the race during the year was £5,741 12s. 5d., exclusive of water for flushing purposes in the sludge-channels, water for washing-down and fire purposes, leakage, and waste. For eleven working-days during the year no water was supplied from the race for sluicing, and for forty days there was no water for channels. Besides the above, the miners observed twenty holidays during the year.

One claim has been worked out during the year, using ten sluice-heads of water, and three claims have ceased work on account of poor washings, using thirty-three sluice-heads of water, making in all forty-three sluice-heads. During the same period three claims formerly abandoned as being too poor have recommenced work.