

now being worked is from 80ft. to 100ft., having an average width of about 2ft., the direction of the lode being north-east and south-west.

There are three reefs in this ground, one of which dips in a northerly direction towards the Exchange. The average value of the whole of the stone taken from this mine is about £3 11s. 8d. per ton, and the tailings at the crushing plant, which is stacked, contains from 6dwt. to 18dwt. of gold per ton, according to several tests that have been made. This company is at present carrying on prospecting operations, with the view of cutting another block of stone.

BIG RIVER.

Big River Company.

This company holds a special claim of 38 acres. This claim is situated about six miles in a southerly direction from Merrijig's, and about nineteen miles from the Town of Reefton. There is a dray-road constructed for fifteen miles, and the remainder is a horse-track, constructed on dray-road grades. There has been 11,255 tons of stone crushed from this claim, which has yielded 17,150oz. gold, representing a value of £68,599, out of which dividends have been paid to the extent of £35,400, thus showing the average value of the stone crushed from this claim to be about £6 2s. 2d. per ton.

This present company is a reconstruction of a former company having a similar name. Up to the 31st August last the present company have only paid up its capital to the extent of 6d. per share on 24,000 shares, which is equal to £600, while dividends have been paid to the shareholders to the extent of £34,200.

This ground was worked to the surface from No. 1 adit-level, which is 200ft. under the crown of the hill. A shaft was then sunk, which cut this level at about 670ft. in from its mouth. This shaft is now sunk down to a depth of 780ft., and four other levels constructed from it. A good deal of gold was taken out from No. 1 level, but below this for some distance the lodes were greatly broken.

In No. 2 level a good block of stone was cut and followed down to No. 3 level, which is 540ft. below the surface. It is between this level and No. 5 where the present workings are being carried on. A winze has been sunk from the No. 3 level on a large block of stone to a depth of 110ft., which shows good gold, but at this depth the stone cut out. Wherever stone is got in this mine it is of good quality, but the country already passed through is greatly disturbed.

There is a great quantity of stone now in sight, which it is expected will take about fifteen months to work out, and this will produce a large quantity of gold, as the average return for the past fifteen months is equal to nearly 1½oz. gold to the ton, as the following statement will show:—

Date.			Tons.	Returns of Gold.			Value.			Expenses.			Dividends.		
				Oz.	dwt.	gr.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1894.															
April	12	...	250	401	18	0	1,627	13	10	579	19	2	900	0	0
May	8	...	200	219	17	0	887	12	10	558	4	10	600	0	0
June	7	...	160	153	13	0	617	17	0	925	14	6	...		
July	6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	549	13	6	...		
Aug.	8	...	110	79	11	12	309	12	5	443	11	5	...		
Sept.	7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	175	15	5	...		
Oct.	6	...	90	111	0	0	450	7	8	347	3	11	...		
Nov.	23	...	220	282	11	12	1,139	14	4	350	17	1	...		
Dec.	24	...	270	436	1	12	1,681	12	8	511	9	2	900	0	0
1895.															
Feb.	3	...	240	369	4	12	1,496	17	11	725	3	5	600	0	0
March	4	...	220	506	4	0	2,050	2	2	682	4	0	1,200	0	0
April	6	...	563	873	15	0	3,535	3	4	661	5	2	2,400	0	0
May	4	...	372	692	0	0	2,802	12	0	899	2	9	2,100	0	0
June	3	...	288	415	11	12	1,684	16	1	559	3	7	1,200	0	0
July	7	...	575	509	0	0	2,061	9	0	842	12	6	1,200	0	0
			3,458	5,050	7	12	20,345	11	3	8,812	0	5	11,100	0	0

This shows a net profit on the workings of £11,523 10s. 10d.

The elevation of this mine is about 2,200ft. above sea-level, and at certain times during the winter months work has to be suspended, as the water for winding and crushing gets frozen up. Hitherto, the winding has been done with a reversible water-wheel; but the company have purchased a portable steam-engine which is in course of transit to the mine, and will shortly be erected to take the place of the water-wheel. A good supply of water can be obtained from the Big River at a high elevation if required to work a large crushing-plant, and if other mines are opened out in this district the site of the present crushing-battery would be well suited for the erection of a central plant. The present water-supply has only a head of 45ft., which would be useless for a large battery; besides, the present plant is erected at too low a level to crush and treat the quartz economically. There is a good tailings-site, and about 8,000 tons of tailings are stacked on the ground, which will pay well for the workings, as the tests made show that these tailings contain about 10dwt. of gold to the ton.

In concluding my remarks on the Big River district, this is likely to be a place where rich blocks of auriferous stone will be found, but the country being broken and greatly twisted about,