

GOLD AND SILVER MINING

It is now possible to resume the publication of statistical data covering the production of gold and silver.

Below are tabulated figures for the year 1943, as well as for the years 1941 and 1942, when publication was suspended.

			1941.		1942.		1943.	
			Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
<i>Gold produced</i>								
			Oz.	£	Oz.	£	Oz.	£
Quartz-mining	..	..	68,214	713,999	65,486	678,169	57,870	595,592
Alluvial mining	..	..	12,383	109,463	9,674	77,134	6,759	64,932
Dredge mining	..	..	94,059	978,815	90,826	928,819	84,521	868,327
Totals	..	..	174,656	1,802,277	165,986	1,684,122	149,150	1,528,851
<i>Silver produced</i>								
Silver	..	..	378,331	49,580	311,360	43,028	280,786	38,763

Naturally, the decreased importance of gold-mining to the community during war has been responsible for man-power problems and difficulties in securing equipment, and the result has been lessened production and the discouragement of fresh enterprises. Under these circumstances it has been the prime concern of the Mines Department to assist established producers to maintain operations until such time as gold-mining may again take its place in the economic structure of the country.

During 1943 production has been mainly from the two quartz-mines, the Martha and the Black-water, and the sixteen dredges operating on the west coast and the two in the Southern District.

MINING PRIVILEGES

A total of 247 licenses for mining privileges was granted under the provisions of the Mining Act, an increase of 23 on the previous year. Of the licenses granted in 1943, 32 were licenses entitling the holders to mine for gold.

Altogether 45 mining privileges, including 4 claim licenses and 16 water-race licenses, were struck off the register under section 188 of the Mining Act.

PETROLEUM OIL

Prospecting and drilling operations in connection with the search for oil declined during 1943, and only one company is now actively engaged. Two wells were drilled in the Taranaki District during the year, but in each case the results were negative. Since the passing of the Petroleum Act, 1937 the following wells have been sunk: Totangi (Gisborne), 5,700 ft.; Morere (Gisborne), 6,643 ft.; Midhirst (Taranaki), 10,925 ft.; Devon No. 1 (Taranaki), 9,412 ft.; Devon No. 2 (Taranaki), 6,177 ft.; S.F.L. No. 1 (Kumara), 5,450 ft.; S.F.L. No. 2 (Kumara), 2,980 ft.; Stantiall (Marton), 6,877 ft.; Young (Mount Stewart), 3,395 ft.; Kawhaka No. 1 (Westland), 2,795 ft.; Uruti No. 1 (Taranaki), 1,173 ft.; Uruti No. 2 (Taranaki), 5,096 ft. All of the foregoing wells were dry. A further well is at present being drilled at Notown, near Greymouth, and has already reached a depth of more than 6,000 ft.

It must be admitted that the results of the intensive programme to explore our oil resources carried out by the three operating companies have been disappointing despite the adoption of the latest scientific technique. The fact must now be faced that oil-pools of the structural-trap nature, for the location of which search has so far been directed, appear difficult to find. However, during recent years search in the older oil-producing countries has been directed towards oil-pools of the stratigraphic-trap nature as an outcome of the completion of investigations of favourable structures. The possibility of the existence of oil-pools determined by stratigraphic traps in New Zealand cannot as yet be discounted, and, while the search for such is far from simple, I have no doubt that this approach to oil exploration will in time receive the attention it warrants. Much work still remains to be done in the exploration of the possible oil resources of New Zealand.

From the wells at Moturoa on Petroleum Prospecting License No. 7 held by New Zealand Petroleum Co., Ltd., 73,487 gallons of crude petroleum oil were obtained during 1943. The Dominion's total production of crude petroleum oil to 31st December, 1943, is estimated at 3,337,577 gallons.

COAL-MINING

There were 134 coal-mines operating in the Dominion in 1943. Fifty-four of these mines are situated on freehold property and produced 1,132,735 tons, or 41 per cent. of the total output. The remaining 80 mines are situated on Crown lands and produced 1,655,133 tons or 59 per cent. of the total output of 2,787,868 tons.