

DREDGE MINING Inangahua County

Slab Hut Dredge, Mawheraiti.—This dredge, after working out all the ground at the upper end of claim, turned and crossed the river at the junction of Slab Hut and Little Grey Streams with the intention of dredging some virgin ground and working downstream towards Hinau if satisfactory arrangements could be made with Associated Gold Dredges to work a claim which that company had prospected with the intention of dredging a substantial area, but that plan never came into fulfilment on account of financial difficulties arising partly due to the outbreak of war. Following the dismissal of an employee for negligence and refusal of dredgemaster to reinstate him, the dredge was tied up and no further work was done and the services of 10 men were dispensed with. Several months later an agreement was reached with Associated Gold Dredges to work its ground, and plans were put in hand to make some substantial alterations to the dredge, but when the price of gold dropped the company's directors decided to go into liquidation. Before shutting down, the company dredged 121,400 cubic yards for a return of 161 oz. of fine gold, which realised £1,639 15s. 9d.

Snowy River Dredge, Ikamatus.—This dredge operated on east side of valley and worked upstream on a wide cut in ground varying from 10 ft. to 22 ft. in depth. In the shallow depth 3 ft. of bottom had to be lifted, but notwithstanding this disadvantage nearly 950,000 cubic yards of ground were dredged for a return of 3,639 oz. fine gold, which realised £35,213 12s. 1d. Dividends amounting to £6,805 4s. 11d. were paid, bringing the total amount distributed to shareholders since commencement of operations to £108,305 4s. 11d.

Grey River Dredge, Ikamatus.—During the year this electrically-operated dredge was in continuous operation, with results shown by the following figures:—

Working-days	..	..	..	..	..	312
Working-hours	..	..	..	..	..	7,488
Hours digging	..	..	..	..	..	6,146
Percentage time digging	..	..	..	..	..	82.1
Area dug, in acres	..	..	..	..	..	73.536
Average depth, in feet	..	..	..	..	..	29.5
Cubic yards handled	..	..	..	..	..	3,495,647
Cubic yards handled per day	..	..	..	..	..	11,204
Cubic yards handled per digging-hour	..	..	..	..	..	569
Ounces bullion produced (crude ounces)	..	..	..	..	..	7,588.49

Dredging operations were normal throughout the year. Considerable inconvenience was suffered on account of high cost and protracted deliveries of spare parts.

Premier Gold Dredge, Big River.—This dredge, previously known as the Nemona, has been dismantled and will be re-erected on the special dredging claim adjoining the licence held by Grey River Dredging Co. It is expected that the plant will be in operation by May or June, 1949.

Grey County

Ataran Dredge (Associated Gold Dredges, Ltd.), Moonlight Creek, Ataran.—In March the dredge turned downstream to take the last cut between the terrace and previous workings. On the terrace side of cut the ground was very shallow and it was necessary to take up 8 ft. of bottom to recover the overlying gravels. A 10-chain face was worked in order to take all the ground available, and while the shallow ground persisted on one side of the cut it averaged 25 ft. deep over the rest of the face. The digging of 1,338,588 cubic yards in 5,956 hours, being 81.7 per cent. of possible dredging-time, was carried out during the year from ground averaging 21 ft. 3 in. in depth, an area of 27 acres being dug. Grains recovered per cubic yard amounted to 0.701, and the total gold recovered was 2,317 fine oz., which realised £21,927 2s. 1d., at a cost of 4.313d. per cubic yard (excluding boring). Twelve men were employed.

Marsden Dredge (Associated Gold Dredges, Ltd.), New River, Marsden.—This dredge operated for the first four months of the year in ground of an average depth of 34 ft. Before closing down it had dug 563,086 cubic yards and recovered 536 fine oz. gold, which realised £5,444 19s. 5d. The recovery in grains per cubic yard was 0.485 and the cost of recovery was 3.271d. (excluding boring). Hours worked amounted to 2,262.55, being 79.1 per cent. of possible working-time. A proposition to work the dredge from the Marsden claim down the New River into the Bundi special dredging claim was given serious consideration by both parties concerned, but up to the end of the year no agreement had been reached regarding the conditions under which the Marsden dredge could operate on the Bundi lease; consequently 12 employees were discharged.

Nyahere Dredge, Nyahere.—During the year this dredge worked 5,236½ hours, being a total of 71.63 per cent. of the possible working-time. Time lost during the year was due to extra repair work having to be carried out, including installation of a new top tumbler. In spite of the hard digging conditions, nearly 2,000,000 cubic yards were treated, and bullion produced amounted to 5,860.19ozs. The average recovery was 1.37 grains per cubic yard and the average number of men employed was 25, this complement being short of the required number to run a large dredge. Difficult dredging conditions are indicated by the bucket efficiency of 43.73 per cent., which gave a yield of 381 cubic yards per hour, a striking contrast with the output from the Grey River dredge, where digging condition are more favourable.