

worked. Two elevators were at work at the time of my last visit, and a third was being moved. Mr. Waigh has widened the sluice-boxes at the lower end so as to give a greater spread. He anticipates that this alteration will admit of more fine gold being saved. The returns are said to be keeping up fairly well, and all reasonable care appears to be taken to insure the safety of employes. Twenty-two men are employed. The company have taken up a large area of ground at Lake Onslow, which is being thoroughly prospected with a view to its being worked by electrically driven dredges.

A certain amount of ground-sluicing is carried on by small parties, and the Pleasant Valley Company's claim is worked by hydraulic sluicing and elevating.

Messrs. Stewart Brothers have started a hydraulic plant at Dismal Swamp, but I have not had an opportunity of visiting their claim.

Bald Hill Flat.

The accompanying sectional sketch will convey a very fair idea of the alluvial ground being worked here. It is considered by some that a layer of auriferous-quartz drift underlies the clays and sands below what is now the working-bottom, and in January last a borehole was commenced with a view of proving this. I have not heard anything definite as to the results obtained.

The claims at work are :—

Ewing's, which shows a face of some 12 ft. of drift, overlaid by 4 ft. to 6 ft. of soil, and underlain by a hard yellow clay. Area of claim, 18 acres; area worked, about 3 acres. This claim has been in operation about two years, and is worked by hydraulic sluicing and elevating. Seven men are employed on two shifts.

Wilkinson's Claim, which employs five men on one shift. Face is about 18 ft. deep, and bottoms partly on schist rock and partly on yellow clay. This is the nearest alluvial working to the base of the mountain-range, and is bounded by bluffs of schist rock, which restrict the working-area. Gold is coarse and easily caught; some very fine samples are got in the crevices of the rocky bottom. Sluicing only; no elevating.

Mitchell Brothers, at which two men are engaged ground-sluicing. The face shows some 18 ft. of drift, overlaid by 6 ft. to 10 ft. of soil. Gold is caught in a paved tail-race. The construction of the tail-race and the manner in which the working-face is kept are, without exception, the neatest I have yet seen.

Carroll and Lynch's Claim, where 14 ft. of drift, overlaid by 4 ft. to 6 ft. of soil, is worked. Bottom is yellow sand. The sluiced stuff is run through a 24 ft. length of boxes (on which most of the gold is caught) laid between the working-face and the elevator, the latter being also provided with the ordinary sluice-box with ripples, &c. Owing to water being rather scarce at my visit only four men were employed.

The *Last Chance Claim*, lately owned by Messrs. Simmons and Hesson, but now by the Last Chance Gold-mining Company, Mr. S. E. Brent, of Dunedin, being secretary. Additional ground has been acquired by the company on the Alexandra side of Speargrass Flat Hotel. Recent work has been at the N.E. side of the old claim, where wash 12 ft. thick, bottoming on yellow clay, has been operated on. Towards the road the clay takes a rise, and the wash tails out, but it is found that another layer of wash of quite a different character takes on. This company have commenced boring operations to test the deeper ground.

The *Bald Hill Flat Freehold Gold-mining Company* is a new venture here. Mr. Kemp's and other properties have been purchased, and I understand it is proposed to work them by dredging, instead of by hydraulic sluicing, &c. A considerable amount of newspaper controversy has emanated in respect to this, and when I was in the locality I heard opinions of a diametrically opposite character advanced.

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The various claims here appear to maintain good average returns, and there seems every prospect of the locality having a good long life as a centre of hydraulic and dredge mining. The latter is a new departure. One dredge, the "Klondike," has commenced work; another, the "Blue Duck," is building. Including Devonshire and Drybread Diggings, there are forty-six men engaged in hydraulic mining, also ten Chinese diggers.

St. Bathans and Cambrian's.

Scandinavian Claim, Surface Hill.—Since September last a considerable amount of work has been done on this company's claim. In October the elevator was deepened to 60 ft., but only a fortnight's work had been done when a huge slip occurred, which damaged the trestlework and destroyed nearly all of the elevating plant. A temporary elevator was put in, and this enabled all the clay to be removed to a depth of 52 ft. The extra 8 ft. was then sunk with a suction plant, and the trestlework repaired, and a new elevator again put in position. Since then work has been carried on continuously, with (during the greater part of the time) a good supply of water. About 140,000 cubic yards of material have been removed, and a return of 600 oz. is expected in May, when a cleaning-up will take place.

St. Bathans Water-race Claim.—During the last year the St. Bathans Water-race, which was purchased by the Scandinavian Company, has been cleaned out and put in thorough repair. It now delivers ten heads of water. An up-to-date elevating plant has been put on the claim which was purchased with the race. The deposit, which consists of quartz-drift, is elevated to a height of 42 ft. and emptied into Muddy Creek Channel by a tail-race 7 chains long, having a fall of $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. in 12 ft. Elevating was commenced on the 18th December, and carried on continuously till the 17th March, when, owing to the dry weather, the elevator was shut down, and the water being required for the Scandinavian elevator. During the time worked 42,000 cubic yards of material were removed, which is anticipated to yield 200 oz. of gold. Considerable difficulty has been