

WARDENS' REPORTS.

Mr. Warden BUSH to the UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES, Wellington.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Thames, 1st March, 1902.

At the commencement of 1901 it was hoped that the year would disclose such an advancement in the Upper Thames portion of the goldfield as hitherto had not obtained during its history, but unfortunately the miners' dispute arose, which unsettled mining business all over the field, more especially at Waihi, where it originated. With the award of the Arbitration Court, however, the mining dispute gradually was lost sight of, and a better and more hopeful feeling prevailed over the whole district than was the case for months previously. Notwithstanding this dispute, the gold-return for this portion of the district for 1901 shows an increase over the previous year of £143,284. In 1895 the gold-return was £169,134, only about £25,000 more than the increase of this year's output, the total for which is £635,004.

The Waihi Company's return for February was £41,090 from 12,939 tons, making a total of £205,506 since the commencement.

The New Zealand Crown Mine Company's (Karangahake) return for February was £6,388 from 2,560 tons, making a total of £40,862 since commencement of crushing. The crushing-power in the latter case is limited to sixty head of stamps, while that of the Waihi Company is 290.

The Waihi Company have recently taken over the Waihi Union Company's properties; as this includes the Silverton battery, this company will no doubt utilise that to supplement their crushing-power. This company has been engaged as actively as in past years in its mining operations, meeting with fair success in discovering new lodes, as well as the continuance of those being already worked at deeper levels. The company's works are steadily increasing in magnitude both at Waihi and Waikino, where the main reduction-works are erected. These works give every indication of becoming one of the largest in the world. The company finds employment for some fifteen hundred men.

The Waihi Grand Junction Company have stuck pluckily to their development at great cost; something amounting to £100,000 has been spent without any return. The water has been one of its main difficulties, but from all appearances there seems some prospect of that being kept under now. Good prospects have been obtained at some places in this mine, and it is expected when the water difficulty is overcome the shareholders will receive some benefit for their patience and pluck.

The Waihi Extended, the Waihi Consols, the Waihi South and Consolidated are endeavouring to turn their properties into gold-mines, but find it very heart-breaking work, especially as it is so difficult to procure outside assistance in the shape of working capital, without which little or nothing can be done with this class of property in country of the nature where they are situated, where the reefs are several hundred feet below the surface.

Besides these, there are several other properties recently taken up which are under protection to enable the holders to raise capital to work with.

Nothing worthy of note has been done by the Waihi Beach Company on its properties so far. The claims taken up beyond Waihi, towards Katikati, have all been surrendered or abandoned.

OWHAROA.

The Rising Sun plucky owners are still working away on their claim with a reduced number of men. They have worked the ground for some years with no payable result so far, but I hope before long to be able to report that something remunerative has been discovered on this property, from which very good prospects have been obtained.

The Ohinemuri Syndicate have surrendered the bulk of their properties, and are working those retained with a reduced number of men. This company have obtained no gold worth mentioning for a considerable time, during which they have spent a considerable sum of money.

The Waihi Gladstone has been worked for some years with a lesser number of men, but so far nothing to remunerate the owners for their expenditure has been discovered.

KARANGAHAKE.

The New Zealand Crown Mines Company's property here may, I think, at the present time be called the premier mining property in this locality. This company last year took some ground on the opposite side of the Ohinemuri River to that on which the Crown Mine itself is situated, which it is intended to work from a shaft now some 300 ft. below the Ohinemuri River. A tunnel is now being driven through the Woodstock ground to enable this ground to be reached as quickly as possible. It is to be hoped that this venture of this company may meet with such a reward as persons laying out their money in such large prospecting-works deserve. Should these prospecting-works result in unearthing something fairly good, the future not only of Karangahake, but also of Paeroa and surrounding country, would be assured. An engine is being erected at the Crown Company's reduction-works to supplement the water-power during the dry season, the want of water at such season very much hampering its milling operations.

The Talisman Consolidated have completed their new battery of fifty stamps, which has been crushing for some months, but, unfortunately, they appear to have got into a poorer class of ore; I shall therefore not be surprised to hear that for a time they will require to shut down the battery, and carry on development-works only, with a view to discovering more payable and richer ore at lower depths. It seems to me there are two ore-zones in the Karangahake district, one which may be termed the "surface zone" and the other the "deep-level zone." The lodes in the surface zone appear to get very poor below 400 ft., but at 700 ft. and deeper become of greater