

Mr. R. MURRAY, Manager, Mount Ida Races, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES, Wellington.

SIR,—

Naseby, 20th May, 1903.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Mount Ida and Blackstone Hill Water-races for the year ending the 31st March, 1903 :—

MOUNT IDA WATER-RACE.

The total sales of water from this race during the year amounted to £1,521 16s. 7d., an increase of £311 1s. 7d. over that of last year. The expenditure on maintenance and repairs for the same period was £1,405 9s. 10d., an increase on that of last year of £8 14s. 1d. The total cash received was £1,525 0s. 9d. On account of payment in advance, free water to the value of £45 5s. was supplied. Free water to the value of £8 12s. 1d. was supplied to assist in opening up new claims, and free water for washing up was also supplied to the value of £136 5s. 1d. The total value of water supplied from this race during the year amounted to £1,711 18s. 9d. If the water distributed this year had been on the former charge of £1 10s. per head it would have been a record one since the construction of the race. The average number of miners supplied with water was 51.16, a decrease of 7.24 on that of last year. The approximate quantity of gold obtained by parties using water from this race was 2,501 oz., valued at £9,628 17s.

From the 1st April to the end of January the weather was extraordinarily boisterous and wintry; so much so that in every month there were several falls of snow on the range supplying the race—at Hill's Creek, on the morning of the 28th January, one of 6 in. On this account the season has been a very good one for water.

The miners were able to work on until the 12th July, the winter being a short one, starting again on the 27th August—forty-one days off, as compared with fifty-four the previous winter. A thaw set in on the 27th July, and I started the cleaning-out of the race on the 30th, but hard frost setting in again I was compelled to suspend the work on the 4th August. This continued until the 19th, when it started thawing, and by the 22nd I was able to make a start again, reaching the reservoir on the afternoon of the 26th. There being 54 ft. of water in the reservoir, the sluice-valves were opened, and the miners were at work on the 27th August. The thawing and freezing, with the heavy falls of snow between, made the cleaning-out very heavy and more expensive, especially on the high clayey gravel sidelings. By the time Ten-chain Creek was reached, in the middle of September, the weather became so rough (2 ft. of snow on the ground) that the men had to be knocked off. The upper-section man (Farquhar) was brought back on to the next section to assist Mr. Gordon in looking after it, as a lot of small slips or slides kept coming in, and in case of floods while there was such a large depth of snow along it. There has not been so much snow on the range since 1895.

During the winter the siphon in the main race across Wet Gully was replaced by new pipes, the old ones being so corroded that they could no longer stand the pressure; also several short flumes were repaired.

Four small breaks occurred in the race during the year, the outside of the race being very weak. Where one break occurred a short deviation was made, thus straightening the race. It was also necessary to extend the cleaning and widening of a short length of the Spec Gully branch race, to give Mr. F. Hore a suitable position for the head of his hydraulic-elevating pipes.

The number of days on which no water was supplied to the miners was winter forty-one, Christmas one, New Year one, Good Friday one—a total of forty-four, as compared with sixty-four last year.

Nineteen elevating claims have been at work in the district during the year, thirteen constantly. Nine of these are supplied by the Government race, and all I believe are doing fairly well. Of the other six it was found, after working for some time, that the ground did not pay. These claims were therefore abandoned. Four of them were supplied from the Government race.

There are six parties working in the "Maori bottom"; all of them are, I believe, making small wages, but the want of pressure is very much against them, as the ground is very tight.

During the year the Wedderburn siphon has been constructed, cutting off four miles and a half of very bad race and loss of water from percolation, also the dam in Home Gully, with the branch race leading from it. In the construction of the Wedderburn siphon the old telescope siphon (13 chains) near the head of the creek was utilised, a half being placed at each end of the new flanged pipes, thus relieving them of the heavy pressure, the iron in them being only 12 gauge.

BLACKSTONE HILL WATER-RACE.

The total sales of water from this race during the year amounted to £60 3s. 3d. The total cash received was £60 3s. 3d., a falling-off in sales and revenue on that of last year of £18 1s. 3d. This is accounted for by C. Rose ceasing to take water from the 1st May to the end of August, and the time the race was being cleaned out. The total cost of maintenance and repairs was £17 4s.

From the cleaning it has had this year very little should require to be done to it for the next two years.

There have been only two parties (the same number as last year), R. Johnston and C. Rose, using water from it. Like the Mount Ida Race, it had a plentiful supply during the year.

I have, &c.,

R. MURRAY, Manager.

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.