

QUICKSILVER-MINES.

Great British Mercury-mine, Puhipuhi (T. A. Black in charge).—Three men employed open-cutting, from which about 300 tons of ore now under treatment was won; some alterations were also made to the plant, but no mercury has been won during the year.

Mount Mitchell Cinnabar-mine, Puhipuhi.—Further prospecting has been done by Mitchell and party, but nothing of importance has been discovered.

OIL-WELLS.

Taranaki Oilfields, Ltd.—No. 1 well, Tarata, was sunk to a depth of 5,010 ft.; at several points gas was met with, but no oil. No. 2 well, Moturoa, sunk to a depth of 4,360 ft.; no gas or oil was met with below 2,300 ft.; full description of results met above this point in 1925 annual report. Waiapu No. 1 well, Ruatoroa, sunk to a depth of 2,540 ft.; result nil. Waiapu No. 2 well now in progress, situated in an elevated position on Mr. Jefford's farm, about nine miles from Tokomaru Bay; at 270 ft. the water has been shut off. Taranaki No. 3 well: Site chosen on the Piko Road, Waitara Survey District. The plant formerly in use at the Tarata well is being removed to this site, and the first oil-sand is expected at a depth of approximately 3,600 ft. In each case the abandoned wells are filled and plugged in accordance with the regulations.

During the year the old wells Nos. 3 and 5 at Moturoa, formerly belonging to the Taranaki Oil Co., produced 992 gallons of petroleum. The Blenheim oil-well also discharged some petroleum, which ran into the tanks, and no record was taken.

SULPHUR.

White Island Products, Ltd. (B. Basset, Manager).—This company recently took over the assets of the White Island and Agricultural Co., Ltd. During the first half of the year operations by the old company were confined mainly to construction work, such as landing-stages, buttress and slipway, laying down moorings, erecting engine-house and plant at Crater Bay, opening up quarry-face, laying tramways, prospecting, &c. Small shipments of fertilizer were first made in May, and up to the 31st December 1,783 tons had been shipped, of which 558 tons of raw material remain to be treated; the balance, 1,225 tons, have been crushed, and 865 tons sold. The value at the average net price of £3 10s. per ton ex works makes the total value of the product treated by the old and new companies £4,287 10s. An average of twelve men employed during the year.

ACCIDENTS.

One fatal accident occurred during the year, at the Waihi Mine. Leonard McClure, married man, aged thirty-six years, died in the local hospital on the 20th May, 1926, as the result of being struck on the head by a falling stone on the 18th May. Just prior to the accident deceased and his mate, W. Stansbury, were engaged barring down the loose ground after a shot in a stope on the Empire lode, between Nos. 9 and 10 levels (mine). When they had, as they considered, made it reasonably safe, deceased said to his mate, "I will go down and run the pass," which had hung up. Alongside of this pass is a travelling-road, which had not been used for this purpose for some time. They uncovered this travelling-road by lifting one slab, and with difficulty deceased got through, Stansbury remaining on top. The first stage in this travelling-way is down 24 ft. Deceased had reached this stage, and, with one foot on the ladder and his arm around the bearer carrying the stage, was about to push the bar through the cribbing to run the pass when a fall occurred in the stope: a piece of quartz weighing about 8 lb. rolled down the hill, grazing Stansbury's leg, and dropped into the pass, striking deceased on the head. His mate sang out, but got no reply; he then went down the pass and found deceased unconscious, with his arm around the bearer. Stansbury then got his head between deceased's legs and lifted him to release his hold, and in this way carried him down the ladder to the level 72 ft. below.

At an inquiry the jury returned the following verdict: "That the deceased Leonard McClure died at the Waihi Hospital on the 20th May, 1926, from pressure on the brain caused by a stone falling on his head while working in a stope in the Waihi Gold-mining Co.'s mine. The evidence showed the happening was purely accidental, no blame being attachable to any one." A rider was added as follows: "The jury wishes to commend and place on record the action of deceased's mate, Mr. W. Stansbury, in immediately going to his (the deceased's) assistance, and carrying him down the ladderway, a distance of 72 ft., to the level below, where he was attended to without delay."

WEST COAST INSPECTION DISTRICT (J. F. DOWNEY, Inspector of Mines).

QUARTZ-MINING.

Marlborough District.

Dominion Consolidated Mine.—Work was carried on steadily throughout the year by a syndicate which had taken this mine over from the liquidator. The No. 1 level, Golden Bar, was extended through the fault that separated the workings of that mine from the Empire City Mine, and in a few feet picked up the reef formerly worked in the latter some years back down to an intermediate level between Nos. 2 and 3 levels. The extension of No. 1 Golden Bar adit cut the reef about 40 ft. below this intermediate. When first met with in this adit the stone was about 8 ft. wide, but in a few feet of driving it widened to 18 ft. of solid quartz, which width is maintained for about 30 ft. A horse of mullock then came in, which in another 30 ft. of driving to the present face widened to 10 ft. in width, with reef 4 ft. wide on one wall and 7 ft. on the other. The footwall reef carries good gold, but the values in the hanging-wall reef are not so good, but are considered payable. This hanging-wall split was apparently not worked in the higher levels of the Empire City Mine. Work was confined mainly to extending the adit referred to and taking off a leading-stope. In carrying this out some 1,287 tons of quartz were mined, which on treatment yielded by amalgamation 651 oz. 17 dwt. of gold, valued at £2,411 1s. 3d. This return was equal to £1 19s. per ton, which is a considerably better recovery than any previously experienced in the history of the mine. For the whole period during which the mine had been worked prior to this the average yield was only worth about 13s. 1d. per ton in gold values, and the best year only gave a return equal to £1 7s. 9d. per ton. If the present values are maintained, the mine seems to have a future more encouraging than its past. The reef now being worked could be readily picked up from No. 2 Golden Bar adit, and it is possible that a still lower adit than the last-mentioned could be put in to reach it.

Reefton District.

Blackwater Mine.—During the year this mine continued active work with an average of 152 men. A good deal more development work was carried out than in 1925, the total footage being 2,115½ ft., of which 1,617 ft. was on reef averaging 13.58 dwt. over 23 in. Of this 1,617 ft., 1,241 ft. was on payable reef averaging 15.45 dwt. over 25.3 in. and 376 ft. on reef averaging 3.32 dwt. over 15 in. The remaining footage was off reef. The remainder of the development consisted of 247 ft. of rising, 244 ft. of winzing, and 22 ft. crosscutting. The following are the details of the work: No. 6 level north extended 286½ ft., all on reef averaging 15.65 dwt. over 22.7 in. No. 7 level north advanced 180½ ft., of which 159 ft. was on reef averaging 17.6 dwt. over 48 in. No. 7 level north (small branch) extended 9½ ft., all on reef averaging 17.6 dwt. over 40 in. No. 8 level north extended 120½ ft., 32½ ft. on reef averaging 18.2 dwt. over 16 in. No. 9 level north extended 290½ ft., 282½ ft. on reef averaging 7.65 dwt. over 18.4 in. No. 10 level north was advanced 345½ ft., 338½ ft. on reef averaging 10.47 dwt. over 19 in. No. 10 level south advanced 263½ ft., 19 ft. on reef averaging