

Westport District.

Britannia Mine.—A little further prospecting was carried out, and, I understand, an effort is now being made to form a small company to equip the mine with a battery.

DREDGES.

Rimu Flat Dredge.—This dredge continued to operate very successfully, and managed to get in 81 per cent. of actual digging-time. To increase the buoyancy of the main pontoon, two more small pontoons were bolted to it at the bows, one on each side. The main pontoon showed a slight tendency—common to wooden structures of the kind—to hog towards the ladder-well, but a truss and hog-rods have been provided, which will prevent any further movement in this direction. During the year 1,761,461 cubic yards of gravel was turned over for a recovery of 13,070 oz. gold, valued at £53,128, the year being thus the second-best in the company's history. This makes the total recoveries since the dredge started 55,563 oz. gold, valued at £238,383. During the past year dividends amounting to £6,566 were paid, making the total disbursements £19,698. Continuous testing by means of Keystone drilling ahead of the dredge shows that there is a considerable area of equally good ground still available. On an average fifty-eight men were employed.

New River Dredge.—This plant was not so successful during the year as might have been expected, due mainly to the working-parts of the dredge not being quite strong enough to stand up to the heavy ground encountered. There were quite a number of breakages in the bucket-line, with consequent serious delays. The values recovered from the ground turned over have, moreover, been rather low, only averaging 6·7d. per yard; but the dredge towards the end of the year was turned further down the flat, and in the direction of the prospecting-shafts, with the result that somewhat better values were got than in the higher ground. During the year 180,000 cubic yards of gravel was treated, for a return of 1,305 oz. gold, valued at £5,038 10s. 3d. It would appear that, if this dredge is to be a success, systematic boring of the area will be necessary, as will also the provision of a heavier digging-ladder and bucket-line. On an average fifteen men were employed.

ALLUVIAL MINING.

In this branch of mining a slight improvement showed itself, the recovery of gold being 2,712 oz. 0 dwt. 4 gr., valued at £10,406 0s. 6d., as against 2,643 oz. 15 dwt. 13 gr., valued at £9,996 15s., won last year. A few more men were regularly employed also during the period, the figures being 156, as against 142 in 1926. There was also a considerable number of men employed part-time at the work.

Mahakipawa.—The Mahakipawa Goldfields property work was practically at a standstill for the year. As it was found that the heavy water could not be coped with by means of the steam-driven pumps available, the directors of the company decided to procure up-to-date electrically-operated pumps for the work. These pumps had to be ordered from England, and they did not arrive at the mine until a few days before the end of the year. In the meantime all the work carried out was by way of dismantling part of the former steam plant and making the necessary provision for the installation of the electrical machinery as soon as it should arrive. The Marlborough Power Board is supplying the current required, and has practically completed the erection of the line in to the mine. It is now expected that a resumption of sinking will be made in the shaft early in February of the current year.

Howard Diggings.—The returns to hand show that ten men were employed, winning 157 oz. 15 dwt. 7 gr. gold, valued at £592 18s. 7d.

Murchison (including *Lyell, Matakitaki, Glenroy, Maruia, and Newton Flat*).—Twenty-four men were employed, winning 342 oz. 16 dwt. 13 gr. gold, valued at £1,304 17s. 11d.

Grey Valley (including *Ahaura, Nelson Creek, Blackball, Totara Flat, Brunner, Moonlight, Stillwater, Waipuna, and Maori Creek*).—Thirteen men were employed, winning 164 oz. 1 dwt. 7 gr. gold, valued at £660 1s. 7d.

Barrytown and Seven-mile.—Two men were employed, winning 32 oz. 17 dwt. 12 gr., valued at £128 19s.

Greymouth (including *Rutherglen, Cobden, and Dunjanville*).—Three men were employed, winning 75 oz. 9 dwt. 11 gr. gold, valued at £297 14s. 6d.

Collingwood (including *Slate River, Rockville, and Parapara*).—Fourteen men were employed, winning 204 oz. 1 dwt. 22 gr., valued at £757 13s. 10d.

Kumara (including *Stafford, Red Jacks, Greenstone, Cape Terrace, and Callaghans*).—On these various fields eighteen men were employed, winning 872 oz. 18 dwt. 18 gr., valued at £3,428 14s. 4d. The principal producers were Hohunu Sluicing Co. at Greenstone, with 380 oz. 11 dwt. 21 gr., valued at £1,493 16s. 8d., and Stubbs and Steel, at Maori Point, with 270 oz. 11 dwt. 3 gr., valued at £1,062.

Reefton (including *Merrijigs, Blackwater, Caplestone, Antonios, and Snowy Creek*).—Twelve men were employed, winning 140 oz. 16 dwt. 8 gr., valued at £512 5s. 1d.

Hokitika (including *Rimu, Seddon's Terrace, Arahura, Blue Spur, Kanieri Forks, Fox's, &c.*).—Nineteen men were employed, winning 286 oz. 19 dwt. 1 gr. gold, valued at £1,127 19s. 10d.

Ross (including *Waitaha and Mikonui*).—Eight men employed, winning 179 oz. 17 dwt. 10 gr. gold, valued at £711 4s. 1d.

Okarito (including *Matanui, Wataroa, Waiho, Gillespie's Beach, and Bruce Bay*).—Seven men were employed, winning 85 oz. 10 dwt. 5 gr. gold, valued at £303 6s. 5d.

Westport (including *Charleston, Waimangaroa, Fairdown, and Burnett's Face*).—Sixteen men were employed, winning 151 oz. 10 dwt. 16 gr. gold, valued at £583 13s. 4d.

MINERALS OTHER THAN GOLD.

Petroleum.—The Murchison Oil Co. continued the sinking of its well at the Mangles River, but was delayed a good deal waiting for casing, &c. For the year the bore was carried down a further 1,698 ft., making a total depth of 3,461 ft. At about 2,300 ft. gas came in freely, and from that depth down particles of white filtered oil were visible. On one occasion about 2 quarts of this was collected. There was no change of importance in the country passed through, the whole boring being in mudstone formation, of which some beds were harder than others. The 6 in. casing was stopped at 2,310 ft., the remainder of the bore being uncased. The necessary 5 in. casing has, however, arrived on the ground, and will be run in shortly. Some of the gas from the well was tested at Canterbury College, and is said to have shown helium. The white oil, analysed by Mr. A. J. Parker, F.C.S., of Auckland, gave 64·5 per cent. motor-spirit, 32 per cent. kerosene, and 3·5 per cent. heavy oil.

A new ball-wheel, as well as a brake-wheel and brake-band have been constructed and fixed in place for deeper drilling.

Iron.—Owing to difficulty in finding a steady local market for its output, the Onakaka Iron and Steel Co. was not able to smelt continuously throughout the year, but some 6,886 tons of crude ore was smelted for a production of 3,383 tons of pig iron, valued at £17,760 15s., about seventy men being employed. Further economies have been effected in the treatment costs, and this, combined with the promise of a more continuous market in the future, will, it is to be hoped, enable the company to keep its furnace in blast during the whole of the coming year.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Mining.—Alluvial gold-mining showed a slight improvement on the previous year, but in quartz-mining there was a further falling-off, only 21,551 oz. being recovered, as against 23,980 oz. in 1926. There was, however, a small increase in the number of men employed in this branch of the industry. The falling-off in output was attributable mainly to the collapse of the main shaft at the Wealth of Nations Mine bringing about a cessation of operations on that property in September, and to the working-out of the known payable ore-bodies in the New Big River Company's