

Awatuna Extended Dredging Co. (D. Pettigrew, Dredgmaster).—Operations were commenced by this dredge during the early part of the year and continued until November, when it was shut down permanently owing to the extremely low returns obtained. Recoveries amounted to 170 oz. 15 dwt. of gold, with a value of £683. An average of ten men was employed for the year.

ALLUVIAL MINING.

Mahakipawa Goldfields, Ltd. (K. M. Barrance, Manager).—This company's mine operated continuously throughout the year, producing 4,000 cubic yards of wash, which, on treatment, gave a yield of 1,560 oz. 14 dwt. 1 gr. of gold, valued at £7,631 2s. 1d. Development work consisted of 1,248 ft. of driving and 18 ft. of rising, practically the whole part being on washdirt. A 6½ in. by 6½ in. by 7 in. Holman air-compressor was installed during the year. This was put down so as to permit the working of a power drill underground, hand labour having proved itself somewhat ineffective where progress in the harder levels was concerned. An average of twenty men was employed for the year. The total yield of gold since the commencement of operations amounts to 2,009 oz. 9 dwt., valued at £9,426 2s.

Collingwood (Rocky River, Takaka, Wangapeka, Tadmor, &c.).—Twenty men were employed, winning 303 oz. 0 dwt. 19 gr. of gold, valued at £1,203 7s.

Marlborough (Wakamarina, Waikakaho, and Cullensville).—Seven men were employed, winning 123 oz. 17 dwt. 11 gr. of gold, valued at £520 14s. 3d.

Murchison (Howard Diggings, Matakitaki, Maruia, and Lyell).—Forty-six men were employed, winning 721 oz. 7 dwt. of gold, valued at £3,009 15s. 2d.

Buller (Charleston, Birchfield, &c.).—Twenty-seven men were employed, winning 472 oz. 13 dwt. 13 gr. of gold, valued at £1,881 11s. 7d.

Reefton (including Merriggs, Blackwater, and Ikamatua).—Eleven men were employed, winning 190 oz. 13 dwt. 11 gr. of gold, valued at £795 13s. 7d.

Grey (Ahaura, Barrytown, Kumara, &c.).—Forty-nine men were employed, winning 1,030 oz. 2 dwt. 7 gr. of gold, valued at £4,285 8s.

Hokitika (Callaghans, Blue Spur, Ross, and South Westland).—Fifty men were employed, winning 1,150 oz. 16 dwt. 14 gr. of gold, valued at £4,954 1s. 4d.

Hohonu Sluicing Co.—J. A. Peever, Manager, and five men were employed. Sluicing operations at this claim were carried out for a total of 1,760 hours, and during this time 275,200 cubic yards of gravels (or an average quantity of 160 cubic yards per hour) were run through the sluice-boxes. The gold won from this work amounted to 267 oz. 5 dwt. 14 gr., valued at £1,419 2s. 6d., which works out at 1.24d. per cubic yard. Values continue to be poor, and have been cut out altogether on one portion of the face over a width of 3 chains. The losing of values referred to necessitated shifting the plant to a more suitable portion of the claim, hence the somewhat reduced productive period shown.

MINERALS OTHER THAN GOLD.

Onakaka Iron and Steel Co., Ltd. (J. A. Heskett, Manager).—The operations of these works were interrupted by the liquidation of the company on the 28th March, when its assets passed to debenture-holders, who appointed joint receivers to act on their behalf. After a lapse of four months the plant was leased to Mr. J. A. Heskett, and the production of pig-iron was then continued on behalf of the debenture-holders. Some 6,920 tons of iron ore treated during the year gave 3,460 tons of pig-iron, of which 960 tons were produced prior to liquidation. One hundred and twenty men were employed. The pipe-making plant was in operation for seven months altogether, and produced in this time 1,400 tons of cast-iron pipes, of sizes ranging from 4 in. up to 2 ft. in diameter, all of which were supplied to various New Zealand local bodies and gas companies. A trial of Onakaka pig-iron carried out during the year yielded the exceptionally good test of 35,000 lb., British Standard Specification showing a test at 28,000 lb.

Petroleum.—No work of any description has been carried out in the district as connected with examinations testing, and boring for oil.

PROSPECTING.

Very greatly increased activity has been shown in this branch of work. Continued prospecting operations on the Waitahu project, mentioned in last report, have since, it is claimed, proved same to contain such values that a company has been formed to work the area in question. Drilling at German Gully and on Gillespie's Beach has revealed the existence of what is stated to be payable values (from a dredging point of view) on these areas, and, companies having been formed in both cases, steps are being taken to install suitable plant thereon accordingly. Boring-work (still in progress) carried out on the Haast, or Okuru beach, seems promising. A considerable amount of field prospecting has taken place, and though outstanding discoveries therefrom have been nil to date, it would appear as if future operations are likely to yield more interesting information.

ACCIDENTS.

One fatal and two non-fatal accidents occurred in the district during the year. The first, in which a man named James Perryman was the victim, occurred in the Waitahu Mine on 21st July, and was brought about by the first hole in a round of three shots (being fired by the deceased and his mate in a stope at the time) not spitting with the first application of a light. This being noticed by the victim, he delayed long enough to light same and was then caught with flying debris from the explosion of the two holes first spitted, and as a result suffered almost instantaneous death. Two men (Harold Wynne and Patrick McCann) were the victims of the non-fatal accidents. They were both employed in connection with constructing the Mount David Sluicing Co.'s water-race. Wynne was injured on 30th January. He was struck by a tree which was felled by another workman, and suffered a fractured left arm. McCann was injured on 3rd June. He was engaged in erecting set timbers on a faulty section of the race, when a slip came down from some steep and adjacent country and struck him in its fall. His injuries consisted of a sprained right ankle and a fractured lower left leg. The occurrences described were of an accidental nature.

GENERAL REMARKS.—MINING.

Recoveries from alluvial mining showed a distinct gain when compared with the previous year, the value of the gold won being £25,700 15s. 6d. as against £6,237 10s. 9d. recorded in connection with the earlier period. The gold won from metalliferous mines also showed a gratifying increase, and amounted in all to 24,869 oz. 18 dwt., as against 19,624 oz. 1 dwt. 10 gr. for last year. The values likewise showed an increase, being £118,567 6s. 2d., as compared with £86,205 9s. 10d. for the previous year. Dredging also shows an increase in recoveries and values when compared with the previous year, the figures in this respect being 10,435 oz. 18 dwt. of gold, valued at £49,420 3s. 9d., and 10,270 oz. of gold, valued at £42,107, respectively. The all-round increase in gold won is no doubt due to the greater activity shown towards mining during the period under review. The activity referred to was much more pronounced at the latter end of the year, and same was undoubtedly brought about by virtue of the prevailing economic depression and by the increased price given for gold. Appearances indicate that the returns will be greater still for the coming period.