

Westland County.

Lawson's Flat Sluicing Claim (N. Lowther, Manager).—During the first two months of the year this claim was worked intermittently on tribute, but operations were finally discontinued. Since the commencement of operations this claim has produced 2,831 oz. 16 dwt. 23 gr. of gold, valued at £16,481 8s. 8d. Seven men were employed during the first two months of the year.

McIntosh, Hyndman and Party (S. Hyndman, Manager).—An average of five men was employed in sluicing operations at this claim at Back Creek, near Rimu. A new face has been opened up on the south-eastern side of the old Jerk Claim.

The total number of men engaged in alluvial mining in the Westland County was 161, and the gold production was 1,167 oz. 6 dwt. 1 gr., valued at £8,481 1s. 9d. These figures include the Lawson's Flat Claim and McIntosh, Hyndman, and Party's claim and all the small alluvial claims, but not the dredges.

MINERALS OTHER THAN GOLD.

Asbestos.—No asbestos was produced by the Hume Pipe Co. (Aust.), Ltd., from its mineral lease at Upper Takaka, and active prospecting operations were subordinated to the work of providing better access to the area. Five miles of road have now been completed, and this has alleviated the transport problem, caused formerly by many miles of circuitous pack track.

Iron-ore.—No iron-ore was produced during the year, but an intensive prospecting campaign was commenced at Onekaka by the State Iron and Steel Department, and was proceeding at the close of the year.

Mica.—A party commenced prospecting a pegmatitic formation containing mica in the Charleston district.

Petroleum.—No drilling was carried out during the year. The Kotuku field produced 1,269 gallons, valued at approximately £39 13s. 9d. from wells put down in former years.

Silver.—From the bullion recovered by four dredges in the West Coast district the total amount of silver returned was 533 oz., valued at £47.

Steatite.—A syndicate at Wainihinihi carried out prospecting operations on an occurrence of steatite in the Pounamu formation near the Taipo River; work was still proceeding at the end of the year. There was no production of this mineral during the year, but samples were obtainable for experimental purposes.

Tungsten.—The total weight of scheelite concentrates produced from the Wakamarina district was 1 ton 1 cwt. 3 gr., valued at £238 6s. 4d. The concentrates were obtained from the retreatment of tailings from the Golden Bar Mine. Two men were engaged on this work.

PROSPECTING.

During the past year the most important undertaking in this direction was the prospecting-work carried out on the Inangahua Goldfields under the joint control of the Mines and Labour Departments. The surface and underground search for ore-bodies in other areas of this district had been almost completed in the previous year, and all areas that did not measure up to the standard for profitable exploitation were abandoned. The prospecting of alluvial areas by dredging and other interests was actively continued throughout the year, a total of 621 holes being drilled on twenty-seven areas. Alluvial prospecting in 1938 and earlier years revealed further potential dredging properties at the current gold prices; three dredges commenced operations on new properties during the year. Two dredges were under construction at the end of the year, and the construction of at least two further dredges was scheduled to begin early in 1939.

FATAL ACCIDENTS.

There were two fatal accidents during the year; both fatalities were caused by falls of earthy material in small alluvial claims.

On the 21st March Alexander Frick (*alias* Brooker) was fatally crushed by a fall of clay while working in a tail-race at Capo Terrace, Kumara, during a period of exceptionally heavy rain.

On the 26th November Marshall John Forman was crushed by a fall of earth while working his alluvial claim at Mountain Camp, Wakamarina; he received injuries to the spinal column and dislocation of the neck, and died on the following day.

NON-FATAL ACCIDENTS.

There were six non-fatal accidents of a serious nature during the year.

On the 6th January, at the Mataki Dredge, Murchison, James Shields received injuries to the toes of his left foot when the screen-drive bearing fell during repair work. It was found necessary later to amputate one toe.

On the 11th January, at the Mataki Junction Dredge, Murchison, E. St. C. Swainston received severe scalp injuries when struck by the headline while replacing some timber dislodged from the top of the dam in front of the dredge.

On the 18th April, at the Workshop Dredge, Antonios, the engineer, Jack Muir, had his right wrist fractured when a back-fire occurred in the engine of the tractor used in connection with dredging operations.

On the 21st June, at the Grey River Dredge, Ikamatua, Alfred T. Olsen was struck by a windlass-handle and received a comminuted fracture of the left arm.

On the 14th September, while working in the new mill at the Blackwater Mine, Waiuta, Ernest Orr, carpenter, had the misfortune to fall from a stairway he was building and sustained three fractured ribs on the left side, one of which penetrated the left lung, causing empyema.

On the 24th September, at the Grey River Dredge, Ikamatua, Joseph Byrne fell while dismantling a staging round the new stacker-ladder after its erection on shore, and sustained two fractured ribs, laceration of the right knee, and minor cuts and bruises.

GENERAL REMARKS: MINING.

Gold won from alluvial mining (other than dredging) amounted to 8,064 oz. 1 dwt. 3 gr., valued at £60,987 15s. 2d., which represents a decrease of 3,357 oz. 6 dwt. 14 gr., valued at £23,816 4s. 6d. when compared with the preceding year's figures. The number of men in this branch of the industry decreased by 473 to 858.

Gold won by dredges amounted to 43,002 oz. 4 dwt. 7 gr., valued at £353,826 4s. 9d., which represents an increase of 2,342 oz. 17 dwt. 3 gr., valued at £28,854 8s. 11d. over last year's production. During the year three gold dredges commenced operations—namely, the Blackball Creek, Grey River, and Kanieri Dredges. The two latter dredges, however, did not commence operating until December, and as they were still passing through the running-in and opening-out periods at the end of the year they did not have an opportunity to influence greatly the gross return from dredge mining. The number of men engaged in active dredging operations was 320, an increase of 52 over the previous year. The number of men engaged on dredge-erection work was 210; in addition to this number there was an indeterminate number of men engaged in steel-fabrication work in workshops and foundries.

Gold won from quartz-mines during the year amounted to 22,853 oz. 19 dwt. 12 gr., valued at £188,941 6s. 5d. These figures show a decrease over those of the previous year of 983 oz. 9 dwt. 17 gr., valued at £2,866 0s. 6d., the disparity between the number of ounces and the value being accounted for by the increased value realized on gold sales during 1938, when the price was higher per ounce than that prevailing in 1937. The number of men employed in producing quartz-mines was 310, an increase of 15 over the previous year.