

North Blackwater Mines (Limited).—During the year underground work on this mine has been at a standstill. Good progress was made with the erection of a more powerful plant. The boiler and engine erection is practically completed, and a large new compressor has arrived at Greymouth from America. Until all this plant is installed it will not be possible to resume underground operations. It is expected that during 1920 the mine will be in full work again, developing the various levels and getting ready for production.

Wealth of Nations and Energetic Mines.—There has been no crushing for the year. The work of replacing or repairing the plant destroyed by fire in 1918 has been pushed ahead, however, and is now practically complete. There will still be a lot of repair work to do in the shaft and on the levels, but this year should see the mine well on the way to the producing stage again.

Progress Mine.—An average of seventy men were employed, as against seventy-five last year. Slightly less quartz was crushed, the total being 15,980 tons, from which gold to the value of £20,748 was recovered. Very little development was done.

Ready Bullion Mine.—This mine was formerly known as the New Ulster. During the year a new company was formed to give it a further test, and a level is now being driven to intersect the reef-line about 250 ft. below any previous workings.

HOKITIKA AND ROSS.

Mount Greenland Company.—Work has progressed quietly. The crushing increased from 567 to 679 tons, but the total value of the gold won has only increased from £2,205 to £2,336. There has thus been apparently a fall-off in the average value of the quartz of 9s. per ton. No dividends have been paid.

Mount Greenland Extended Syndicate.—With the assistance of a Government subsidy a crosscut is being put in on this syndicate's prospecting-area to cut a reef at about 250 ft. below the outcrop. This crosscut is now in about 200 ft., and should soon meet the reef.

Jones Creek Syndicate.—After sinking two shafts on its property near Ross Township—one of them at Jones Creek to a depth of 410 ft., and the other on Bayley's Creek to about 130 ft.—this syndicate ceased work in May. Some driving was done from the latter shaft, but no reef was met with.

WESTPORT.

Bagley's Reward.—No work was done on this mine for the year.

STILLWATER.

Victory Mine.—A little development work was done, but results were negative. The battery was completed and 100 tons of ore crushed. The yield of gold was, however, only 12 oz. 16 dwt., valued at £49 5s. The large amount of stibnite in the ore made it difficult to save the gold.

GENERAL REMARKS ON QUARTZ-MINING.

Shortage of labour has undoubtedly very appreciably affected quartz-mining in this district. Practically all the working-mines have been and are still short-handed. One producing-mine only is employing two shifts. A number of companies have been formed in connection with the industry, the object of practically all of which is to give a further trial to a number of Reefton mines which are considered not to have been fairly tested in the past. Amongst these are the Millerton, New Discovery, New Ulster, Blackwater South, and New Big River properties. Some of these are perhaps deserving of further attention, but it is to be feared that the new companies will have great difficulty in securing suitable men for their work. Owing to the prevailing conditions it has not been possible to carry out development work to any extent in any of the working-mines, the Blackwater Mine having done by far the most.

Inspection of all mines has been systematically carried out, and it has been found generally that the provisions of the Act have been well observed.

A number of applications for assistance were received from men desirous of prospecting in different localities. In practically all cases subsidy was granted at the rate of £1 10s. per week per man, but no discoveries of any value have been reported.

Dredging.

The decline in the dredging industry noted last year has continued during this one, the number of hands employed shrinking from sixty-six to thirty-one, and the value of gold won from £15,848 18s. 2d. to £8,336 12s. 5d.

The Success dredge foundered and has not yet been raised, and the Hessey-Cameron, Slab Hut, Rimu No. 1, and Ahaura River dredges have all been out of commission.

The Worksop No. 2 dredge was removed from Antonio's to the Arahura River, where it was re-erected by the Westland Prospecting Syndicate under the name of "Chambers Reward." It started dredging there, but to the end of the year had not met with any great success. Very heavy ground was encountered, and parts of the machinery had to be replaced with stronger plant. Buried timber also caused great loss of time. The results so far have not been at all satisfactory, but further work will probably prove more encouraging.

The Kapitea dredge did fairly for the year.

Alluvial Mining.

MARLBOROUGH.

Practically nothing has been done for the year. Only one return came in, and this was only for 12 oz. of gold from old tailings at Wakamarina.