

Important and extensive works are now undertaken, having for their object the working of ground which a few years ago was abandoned as worthless, and if labour were more easily obtainable at a reasonable rate, large areas of auriferous ground now lying idle, would without doubt be profitably worked.

Agriculture.—The district has this year produced a very large quantity of grain, which has been roughly estimated by competent persons as sufficient to supply its requirements, both as to internal consumption and export, for the next two years, while in the absence of a practicable outlet for grain or produce to the coast, prices are expected to be so low as to be unremunerative to the farmer. The wheat and barley grown in the Wakatipu is I believe equal, if not superior, to that grown in any other portion of New Zealand, and it undoubtedly will, on the completion of the Winton and Kingston line, form a very noticeable feature in the exports from this district. As it is, in the absence of an outlet to the sea board, produce vastly in excess of the quantity required here will be next to unsaleable, and thousands of acres of valuable agricultural land will in consequence be left unimproved.

The speedy completion of the Winton and Kingston Railway is of the very last importance to the progress of the district.

I have, &c.,

RICHMOND BEETHAM,
Warden.

The Under Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

No. 17.

Mr. Warden WOOD to the UNDER SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Switzer's, 22nd April, 1874.

In accordance with your instructions contained in your circular letter of January last, I have now the honor to forward statistical returns and reports on the district under my charge.

I have no change to record during the last year in the mining prospects within this division of the Otago gold fields. The quantity of gold has been greater, but the increase has, I believe, come from the outskirts, viz., Worm Creek, Gow's Creek, and Waikaka, where the mining population are nearly all Chinese. In this immediate neighbourhood farming is being more extensively entered into, all the land open for settlement having been taken up, and constant inquiries are made for a fresh block.

In the Orepuki district of the Southland gold field, during the last twelve months a gradual improvement has taken place, both as regards population and the prospects of the miners generally. The sludge-channel, which has been in course of construction for nearly four years, has been completed, enabling claims to get to work which previously could not get fall to carry away the tailings, and about ten extra heads of water have been brought on the field. At the Round Hill and Lake George, situate about half-way between Riverton and Orepuki, about thirty-five miners are at work, including Chinese. They have very little water—I should say not exceeding an average of twenty inches each party; but they are obtaining good wages say from £3 to £20 per week per man. If water could be brought on—which I believe is not practicable—at a remunerative price, this portion of the district would carry a large population, from the large extent of known auriferous country.

The whole population of the district is as follows:—

European Miners	...	...	...	...	...	145
Chinese Miners	...	...	...	...	...	25
Otherwise Employed	...	...	...	...	...	10
Women and Children	...	...	...	...	...	165
Total	...	...	...	...	...	345

I have, &c.,

JOHN NUGENT WOOD,
Warden.

The Under Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.