

Arahura Dredge (Gold Mines (N.Z.), Ltd.), Arahura.—The following figures relative to Arahura dredging operations for the first two months of the year indicate the loss to the mining industry through the mishap of the dredge on 5th March. Instead of nearly 10,000 oz. gold as produced during the previous year, the yield did not reach 2,000 oz. during 1949:—

Area of ground dredged (acres)	..	..	..	..	2·047
Possible dredging-hours	..	..	..	..	1,288
Actual dredging-time (hours)	..	..	..	..	842
Percentage running-time	..	..	..	..	65·37
Yardage treated	..	..	..	..	441,253
Bullion recovered (ounces)	..	..	..	..	1,841·8
Recovery (grains per cubic yard)	..	..	..	..	2·00
Average depth (feet)	..	..	..	..	131

It is not yet known what caused the wreck of the dredge and the loss of an employees' life, and probably the mystery will not be solved until the dredge is completely dismantled. At the end of the year no decision had been reached by the insurance company as to what action would be taken either to settle the claim or undertake the salvaging of the dredge.

ALLUVIAL MINING

Inangahua County

Waitahu Sluicing Claim, Waitahu, Reefton.—This claim was operated during the year by a working party, who anticipated that they would have exhausted all the payable ground before the end of the year. A considerable amount of the operators' time was spent in shifting the pipe-lines in order to work the best parts of the claim, whose faces are now advanced within a few chains of the end of the gully. Devaluation of the New Zealand pound gave a fresh lease of life to the claim, and there appears to be now enough ground left to keep the plant operating for from twelve to eighteen months. From an unstated yardage 93 oz. gold were won. The Waitahu races and pipe-lines were kept in first-class order, and the operators are men who have had wide experience in sluicing claims of varying types.

With the foregoing exception there were no other sluicing claims operating in the West Coast Inspection District during 1949. The Golden Sands, Barrytown, and Addisons Flat Claim, Westport, are worked out, and in the case of the Moonlight Sluicing Claim, Blackball, although the ground is not exhausted, the company has gone into liquidation. In Mariborough and Collingwood Counties the only producers are a few individuals who win a few ounces of gold from old diggings.

MINERALS OTHER THAN GOLD AND SILVER

Iron-ore.—At Onekaka 408 tons, valued at £408, were quarried and ground and the product sold chiefly to gas companies for refining purposes.

Arsenic.—From roasting concentrates the Blackwater Gold Mining Co.'s treatment plant recovered 19 tons 2 cwt. 1 qr. 6 lb., which realized £343 10s. 5d.

Talc and Quartz Magnesite.—Lime and Marble, Ltd., quarried 559 tons from the mineral lease situated at Upper Takaka, and the product was valued at £391 6s. before treatment. After being processed at the company's works at Mapua the product is chiefly used for agricultural purposes.

Dolomite.—From the Mount Burnett Dolomite-quarry near Collingwood 4,210 tons of rock were recovered, valued at £2,105 on the quarry floor. The demand for dolomite by fertilizer-manufacturers in the North Island was greater in the past year than the supply.

NON-METALLIC MINERALS

Clays.—K. A. Polglaze won from his clay-pit situated at Kaka 515 tons of feldspathic clay, valued at £836 17s. 6d. at the pit mouth. The clay was used by pottery-works chiefly for the manufacture of insulators.

Westport Brick and Pipe Co. produced 200 tons of clay for the production of earthenware pipes and fittings. This was valued at £46 13s. 4d. on the quarry floor.

Greymouth Brick and Tile Works produced 1,120 tons of clay for brickmaking, valued at £980 on the quarry floor.

Nelson Brick and Pipe Works produced from the clay-pits at Nelson and Moutere 620 tons of clay, valued at £124 on the quarry floor. It is used for the manufacture of bricks and pipes.

GENERAL REMARKS

The output of gold from dredges and sluicing claims receded to a low level, and up to the time when New Zealand currency was depreciated the outlook for continuation of gold-production appeared to be hopeless. With a nearly 50 per cent. increase in price in the concluding months of 1949 a more optimistic outlook prevailed, and if normal conditions prevail the 1950 yield will show a considerable increase over the preceding year.

The total loss of Arahura Dredge after two months of production, and for nearly five months the Ngahere Dredge was a non-producer, accounted for a large drop in the total yield.

The Ngahere Gold Dredging Co. continued prospecting operations in the Grey Valley and bored forty-two holes, aggregating 2,521 ft. in depth. A special dredging claim has been applied for, and if the application is successful the dredge will be worked from its present position to the new claim, probably in 1950.