

Prospecting.—Prospecting parties have been conducting operations in several parts of the district. A syndicate for some time past has been at work near Kennedy Bay, and at Driving Creek three parties have done a considerable amount of work. Several parties receiving aid from the Mines Department are on the Tokatea Range, and have carried out useful work, but nothing of importance or even of an encouraging nature has been discovered to give an impetus to the industry in Coromandel. The Big Blow Prospecting Syndicate has ceased operations, the ore proving to be of very low grade, and impossible to treat with a margin of profit.

KUAOTUNU.

Waiataia Mine.—Two men have been employed throughout the year keeping the mine open and in repairs. Some time back the mine was closed down and protection granted, to enable the company to raise sufficient capital to put in a new low level, the ore in the upper level having become exhausted. The values of the ore in the floor of the present drive are said to be good, and that the construction of a lower level (water-free) would result in thousands of tons of ore of good quality being mined. A great quantity of ore has been won from the different mines in this district, and it is surprising that no steps are being taken to test the ores at a greater depth, when it is positively known that in some of the other mines the ore-bodies have been proved to improve in value and increase in width with the increase in depth. When some comprehensive scheme is entered into, and conducted in a systematic manner, the consequence may be a revelation to many who held back from the idea of deep levels, instead of coming forward and helping to restore mining activity.

Handsworth Mine.—An adit level has been driven for some considerable distance, and a fair amount of success met with. Assistance was granted by the Mines Department to enable the owners to continue the drive and prove the value of the lode.

Great Mercury Mine.—The owners have for some time been prospecting, and at considerable cost put in a long low level, with the object of testing the ore-values. A considerable amount of driving has been done, but the values were in every case disappointing, and, so far, nothing of an encouraging character has been discovered, although the reef has been prospected in length, height, and width.

Otama Mine.—Some considerable amount of prospecting was done on the lode, but the ore proving unpayable, the mine was abandoned. This course must have been very disagreeable to the owner. In the event of discovering payable ore, the cost of treatment would not have been much per ton, as the mine was in the neighbourhood of a public battery.

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND.

Barrier Reefs Mine.—The owners of this property have done a considerable amount of work, meeting with varying results. Rich ore was struck, and the company was induced to erect a battery. A few thousand tons of ore was treated, but for some reason or other the full values were not extracted in the first handling. Last year a great quantity of tailings was treated by cyanide and gave high values, but throughout the whole of this year the plant has been idle. Work was mainly of a prospecting character. A crosscut about 700 ft. in length has been driven, with a view to discovering other ore-bodies. So far nothing of importance has been seen. Four men were employed for the year.

Sunbeam Mine.—The mine has been well developed, and the reef worked on by driving, rising, and stoping. 400 tons of ore was treated, for a yield of 923 oz. (mostly silver), valued at £646 9s. 5d. Three men were employed.

Ngatiawa Mine.—The company holds other claims besides this property—namely, Eliza, Aroha, and Huia—all of which have been well prospected, but I am not aware whether any ore-bodies of good values have been met with. Ten men were employed for the year.

MINERALS OTHER THAN GOLD.

Copper.

Ferguson's Syndicate (Limited).—Work for the year has been chiefly of a prospecting character. A prospecting-shaft was sunk to a depth of about 30 ft., and two adit levels were driven to connect with the shaft and to prove the width of the reef. In Knight's section a considerable amount of drifting has been done on the course of the lode. Communication has yet to be effected with the harbour before the ore can be shipped to Waioimo for treatment at the syndicate's smelting-works. Six men were employed.

The Hare-Ratjen Mine.—At the time of my visit the mine was closed down, but I am informed that negotiations were proceeding with a syndicate to take over the mine and further develop the ore encountered in the main tunnel.

The Northern Copper Company's Mines.—These mines are adjacent to the Ferguson Syndicate Mine. Several prospecting-drives have been driven. At No. 2 level an ore-body was intersected, the formation being about 60 ft. wide, and showing some fine copper-ore. At No. 3 level an ore-body 30 ft. wide was cut through, and the values are said to be good. A winze was sunk on the lode to a depth of 70 ft., and a shaft is also being sunk on the hanging-wall of the ore-body, with a view to working the property in a systematic manner. The roads leading to the company's property are not yet formed, nor are the creeks bridged, which means great difficulty is being experienced in the way of getting supplies and machinery on to the mine. Eight men were employed.

Maharahara Mine.—This mine is owned by an Auckland syndicate, who have spent close on £2,000 on opening up the adit level and extending it for some distance. At the point where the ore-body was cut through the lode is 32 ft. wide, and shows some fine copper-ore. In the early part of the year six men were employed, but this number has since been reduced to two men, owing to the fall in the price of copper and the company's lack of capital. The Mines Department has granted assistance towards the construction of a road to the mine.