

On February 7, 1882, the "West Coast Times" noted that a small rush took place at Woodstock, some 20 men pegging out claims. Apparently this rush developed in a neighbourhood with the picturesque name of Sunday Gully, and on February 16, Dr. Bourke and his party were granted rights for a tunnel site in the gully. Advances from the area on the following day mentioned that several parties were setting in to work at a terrace close by Gaylor's store. In such a way did a gold rush develop.

On March 7 there was an account of a visit to Woodstock terrace, when many parties were working on payable gold. Their names are interesting not only to the older identities of the district, who probably knew some of the men, but to many of the actual descendants of these early pioneers who must still be living. There were Duncan and party, Hancock and party, Clements and party, Bourke and party, McKillop and party, McKenna and party, Ryan and Richardson's party, Heard, Duske and party, Pat Dowling, Logan and Hutchison and party. All these men were working tunnelling claims, and it is not hard to imagine the scene of animation and labour along the rich terrace. The newspaper tells that two shares changed hands in McKenna's claim for from £55 to £60. One party washed up

about £30 worth of gold on a Saturday. There is rather an amusing picture of anticipation in another extract. Jack Heam, Ansell, Boyd and White were sinking a shaft during the rush on the flat beyond the terrace. Surrounding them were 16 miners who had pegged out claims and were waiting anxiously to ascertain Heam's prospects. Heam and his men were apparently down 50 feet. "John the Greek," another man early on the scene, had "sunk some distance and come on a heavy boulder." Others there were Blundell and party, "Russian Charlie," and Charles Collier. Another picturesque name was that of "John the Frenchman." Later advice was that Heam and party had "bottomed" on payable "wash," while "John the Greek" (John Emanuele) had got down eight feet, erected a windlass and fly and was apparently making good progress.

Lively Scenes

It seems difficult to understand why the newspapers of the day, with perhaps a dozen large rushes to cover, should enter into such a great detail. On March 10, the Woodstock road was lively, miners and vehicles winding their way to the new field. For half a mile on each side of the road near the prospectors' claims business areas had been marked out and building had started. Some tents had been pitched by parties from the north—from the Seventeen Mile and Kumara. On March 15, the ground was dotted with tents, and a blacksmith, indispensable adjunct, was "getting to work." "Mr Hansen is in full swing with his temperance hotel or coffee house" (March 22); "Mr Levy has completed a fair-sized store, and Mr Linneman, ironmonger, is building a branch store." The following list was given of those taking up business sites, and includes names which are still held by some of the town's most prominent families: A. P. Hansen, C. J. E. Linnemann, H. Levy, G. Hatch, W. G. Johnston, W. Kenny, Thos. Paterson, H. L. Michel, A. W. Bock, R. Wilburn, J. Allen, G. A. Paterson, E. J. Lloyd, Mrs McKenzie, and Henry Dehn. By March 23 there were said to be 300 men at the rush.

Boy Prospectors

Every page of these newspapers of the gold-rush days is alive with colourful incident which would fill a dozen "thrillers." German Charley, a shareholder in the Greek's claim, sold his share for £15. The purchaser was offered £10 on his bargain, although the shaft was down only a few feet. A party of boys had started in. Their ages averaged 16 and their names—Emerson, Wilberg, Schaefer, and McDonald. These boys must have been the sons of some of the first diggers on the West Coast fields, and they showed the same enterprise and spirit of adventure which had brought their fathers across the seas. The boys had miners' rights and called themselves the Juvenile Amateur Prospectors.

"Woodstock. Another Golden Hole." So runs an old heading. Fifteen grains to four dishes was the return. A Mr Dehn was offered £50 for the site of his cowshed. Mr Steve Glossop was arranging for the erection of an hotel. Charles Chesterman and party had bottomed by March 31 and were getting two grains to the dish with three feet of wash.

Drink and Food

When six sections were auctioned the prices were £22, £20, £30, and £30 for three more. Mr Fitzsimmons, of Kumara, had a hotel building nearly completed and Mr Richard Jolly and Mrs Block, of Larrinkins, opened restaurants. At the

same time a letter was written to the newspaper about the furious driving of coaches to the new rush: accidents were predicted. On April 22 a Post Office was opened. On the 28th Mrs Block's restaurant was "in full swing, 30 sitting down to dinner; a substantial meal for 1s and board £1 a week." "Jolly Dick, at the Full and Plenty restaurant, was doing good business." Chinamen had reached the field and were expected to "bottom." On May 9 there were 1000 men digging and 250 on payable gold. A mile and a-half of country half-a-mile wide was being sunk on. "Wombay Jack's party is driving and cradling two penny-weights to the load; the Chaffcutters' shaft has been bottomed a duffer." Mr H. J. Hansen christened his place "The Pioneer" and broached a case of champagne.

A Literary Society

This great activity continued. As the field grew its amenities increased. Apparently its hotels prospered too. By September 27 the rush had official recognition as the Rimu rush. A movement was on foot to establish a Literary Society and an Amateur Christy Minstrel Club was being formed. "Mrs Piezzi had a good staff of the fair sex and is doing good business at the bar," the old newspaper says.

So Rimu had its birth and early growth. These tales recall days and happenings which to many seem vastly unreal and impossible. But there are still living men and women who saw them.

Story of the Rimu Dredge

ENTERPRISE ON HISTORIC FIELD

Nearly £800,000 Won in Gold in 13 Years

In all the history of the West Coast goldfields there are few more interesting tales of enterprise than that of the floating of the now famous Rimu gold dredge. The dredge has worked for 13 years on one of the most historic of all the fields in New Zealand. During that time it has won gold to the value of nearly £800,000, fulfilling the highest expectations and undoubtedly giving a lead to similar enterprise in other parts of the West Coast.

During those 13 years this dredge has played an important part in the general economy of the district. It provides light and power for the town of Hokitika and its permanent staff of more than 70 men is an important factor in the local labour market. Because of its continued successful operation over such a long period the undertaking has been a triumph for those who investigated the area and designed both the old and the new Rimu dredge.

The history of Hokitika from its early settlement to the celebration of its seventieth anniversary in 1934 has been closely associated with gold-mining. The town's remarkably rapid growth in size and population was due largely to the worldwide influx of pioneer prospectors and gold miners. Hardy veterans worked and lived in the goldfields surrounding Hokitika, from which

source all supplies and equipment were obtained, and through which channel large amounts of the golden metal passed on its way to the various mints for conversion into coin. The towns of Kumara, Goldsborough, Stafford, Kanieri, Rimu, Ross, and many others, were thriving settlements situated at the site of the gold diggings, but all contri-

buted their share to the support and prosperity of Hokitika. The early miners spread rapidly over the areas surrounding Hokitika, and all readily accessible and workable gravels were mined until gold production from the Hokitika area reached its peak. With the gradual exhaustion of gravel deposits workable by such means as were then available, the Hokitika gold production gradually decreased until during the years 1918 to 1920 it was at a very low figure.

Birth of Dredging

A new method of gold mining, known as dredging, was invented and successfully put into operation in the early days of New Zealand history, on the Clutha river in the South Island. By this method the yellow metal could be successfully extracted from the shallow river gravel deposits, many of which existed throughout the Southern goldfields. This method of gold mining rapidly spread until at one time there were more than 200 dredges in actual operation, several of these being near Hokitika. As the years went by, gold dredging took an increasingly prominent part in mining, not only throughout New Zealand, but also in other parts of the world. Dredge design was brought to perfection, so that during the years 1915 to 1920 powerful dredges were being constructed and operated of a size capable of handling large volumes of gravel under the severest digging conditions.

During the year 1919, a gravel area approximately three miles distant from the town of Hokitika was brought to the attention of a prominent dredge engineer. After making the necessary preliminary investigations, he commenced an intensive and systematic campaign of development by boring, this being ultimately followed by the erection of the Rimu dredge—named after Rimu Flat, upon which area the dredge was designed to operate. Rimu Flat, during the early mining boom days, was extensively worked at its upper end by driving and sluicing, while a dredge was erected and operated for a short period near the western end of the area. It soon became apparent, however, that the gravel being coarse, tight, and deep, conditions were beyond the digging capacities of the earlier design dredges. The first Rimu dredge, which commenced digging operations in September, 1921, was built of timber throughout, and was equipped with a 10 cu. ft. close connected bucket line, delivering gravel at the rate of 19 buckets a minute.

Dredging Processes

For those not actively acquainted with gold mining in its various forms the following will give a brief outline of the processes involved in dredging. The gravel is excavated or dug from the deposit by the buckets, and conveyed to the dump hopper, from which it passes into the revolving screen where it is washed and screened—the gold and fine sands passing through a distributor on to the washing tables, while the coarser material and stones are delivered to a conveyor belt at the stern of the dredge, and goes to waste. The gold extraction equipment is simple, consisting of steel tables or launders, the bottoms of which are covered with wooden riffles of the Hungarian type; these catch and hold the gold particles and black sand residues, the saving of the gold being aided by the use of mercury, which forms an amalgam, so that gold once caught by the riffles is held until wash-up time. Wash-ups are made at weekly intervals. All amalgam obtained is re-torted and the distilled mercury

saved, the retort or sponge being melted, refined, and cast into bricks, which are ultimately shipped to England.

The first Rimu dredge was in operation for a period of approximately 10 years, or a total of 72,264 hours, during which time it dug and treated 16,267,990 cubic yards of gravel, representing a superficial area of 237 acres. From this volume of material, gold to a total value of £457,294 was extracted.

Owing to the climatic conditions, it was found at the end of the ten-year period, that the wooden structural members of the dredge were rapidly deteriorating, and that this, in conjunction with the excessive strains and shocks produced by the digging of the extremely heavy and tight gravel encountered, would ultimately have resulted in serious damage to the dredge. Furthermore, it was ascertained from operating data that in order to handle the low grade gravel contained in the deposit at a profit commensurate with the investment, it would be necessary materially to increase the volume of gravel dug and treated. In view of this situation, the original dredge was replaced in the year 1931 by a powerful new all-steel structure of a design that would withstand the hard digging encountered. The capacity of the new unit being about 40 per cent. in excess of that of the old plant, thereby resulting in a decreased treatment cost, with increased profits.

Work of New Dredge

The new dredge began digging in October of 1931, and has been in continuous operation since that date, successfully fulfilling the expectations of the company. Under normal digging conditions the dredge excavates and treats gravel at an average rate of 11,000 cubic yards a day. To give some idea of the volume treated in a day we will assume that the gravel all had to be consigned by rail, and was loaded into six-ton railway trucks for the purpose—it would then require a train of 2455 waggons, six and a-half miles in length to transport the material.

The Rimu dredge has now completed 13 years of continuous operation, during which time it has produced gold bullion to a total value of £773,660. It is estimated that another 10 to 12 years will be required to exhaust the deposit.

The average gold content of the gravel treated during the above period was 5½d a ton, so that the six and a half mile train required to transport the gravel handled in one day would have a total value of only £337 11s 3d or 2s 9d a waggon.

The Rimu dredge is electrically operated throughout, requiring from 850 to 900 h.p. of electrical energy to carry on its digging and working operations. To provide this quantity of power, it was necessary for the company to erect and install its own power plants. The hydro. plant for the first Rimu dredge was at Kanieri Forks, but with the building of the new steel dredge, and the increased power requirements, this was augmented by the construction of a new 1800 h.p. hydro system at McKay's creek on the Kanieri river. The building of this system was carried on simultaneously with the construction of the new dredge. The Rimu Company, through its subsidiary, the Kanieri Electric, Limited, furnishes all the light and power for the borough of Hokitika.

The successive stages of the Rimu operations, together with those of its subsidiary power company, have, undoubtedly, been of material aid to the maintenance and general welfare of Hokitika. The normal dredge operations, including power plants and clerical forces, requires a staff of 72 permanent employees, which number has been greatly increased

during constructional periods. All employees live in and around Hokitika, so that the Rimu pay-rolls constitute a permanent source of revenue for the town. It may safely be said that the dredge operation represents an average annual expenditure of approximately £30,000 in Hokitika—this expenditure extending over a period of 25 years, the estimated life-time of the area. In addition to local expenditures, large amounts are spent annually in New Zealand for supplies, customs duties, gold export tax, and other incidentals.

In the palmiest days of the golden era of Westland the county probably had a population of 40,000. To-day the total population of the Westland land district is now approximately 17,000. There has been a slight but steady increase for the last 13 years.

BUSY DAYS ON THE WHARF

SHIPPING IN 1867

BARQUES, BRIGANTINES, AND SCHOONERS

In any comprehensive history of the West Coast the story of the shipping activities, which were attendant on the hectic rushes from one part of the coast to another, will deserve many an interesting chapter. Brigs, brigantines, clippers, schooners, steamers, cutters, and ketches hailing from all over the world, manned by cosmopolitan crews, sailed up the Hokitika river in unceasing activity during the early days of that rush. They brought men, women, and food. Usually they took away nothing but gold. The big vessels had to anchor outside the bar harbor to discharge cargo into lighters. Often the smaller vessels, once inside the port, never sailed again, for the then treacherous currents of the bar or the sudden floods caught them and piled them against the shingle. One early visitor to the port reported that he saw more than 12 wrecks along the banks of the river or on the beaches. But these were the risks associated with the hectic days of gold.

A correspondent has supplied "The Press" with an extract of shipping advice from the "West Coast Times" on September 16, 1867.

"The weather during the last few days has been gloriously fine, and yesterday the beach, the wharf, and the streets were thronged with people who seemed thoroughly to enjoy the delightful day. The roadstead is now clear of shipping, but the appearance of the wharf yesterday was singularly animated. No fewer than 41 vessels are alongside, in some places being

ranged three and four deep—and the day being Sunday, each vessel was gaily dressed with colours. Last night, too, was very beautiful—the moon at her full rose in an almost cloudless sky, and threw upon the surrounding landscape a silvery sheen which gave it the appearance of fairyland.

"The shipping intelligence gives the names of the vessels in port:—Barques: Alma, Harriet Nathan, Bella Vista, Glencoe; brig: Mary Grant; brigantines: Isabella, Hannah Newton, Anne Moore, Sarah and Mary, Mary, Seabird, Clara Union; schooners: Falcon, Iona, Star of Tasmania, Florence, Sea Ripple, Rambles, Canterbury, Storm Bird, Elizabeth Curle, J. B. Russell, William and Julia, Isabella Jackson, Matilda, Three Friends, Flying Cloud, Nile, Alice; cutters: Glimpse, Elizabeth, and Harry Bluff; ketches: Mary Anne, Brothers and Sisters, Cymraes, Enterprise; steamers: Challenge, Golden Sand, Yarra, Lioness, Bruce."