

(21)

GEORGE TOWN

and

WATERHOUSEGOLDFIELDS.Commissioner's Report.

----- GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST

Hobart Town,
26th June, 1873.

Sir,

I have the honor, in accordance with your instructions, to report upon the conditions of the Gold Fields recently under my charge.

At Waterhouse mining has altogether ceased, and the whole of the quartz-crushing machinery erected there has been removed. The township is abandoned, and I have recommended the Government to discontinue the several Courts (Gold Commissioner's Court of Requests, and Police), in which I have presided, as now unnecessary. I am aware that gold exists through a large extent of country, in fact its presence has been ascertained in the whole area between George Town and the Mussle Roe River, but in such limited quantities that the appliances at present in use for extracting the metal from quartz render the operation too expensive to be remunerative. I have, however, no doubt whatever but that at some future time, when improvements in machinery shall have rendered the process less expensive, mining will become a flourishing industry in the District.

The hopes at one time entertained that gold in alluvial deposit at the Denison, near Bridport, would be found in remunerative quantities have not been realised, and the place is now abandoned.

At the Back Creek, which was once the scene of active operations and of considerable excitement, there is now a population of ten only, eight of whom are Chinese.

At the Nine Mile Springs, quartz crushing operations have ceased, but the alluvial miners, principally at the Excelsior Flat, appear to be most successful. The population is limited, at the present date under one hundred - exclusive of women and children - of whom sixty-five are Chinese. It is difficult to ascertain the exact quantity of gold procured, as the miners - especially the Chinese - exhibit extreme reluctance to let it be known; but, judging by the circumstances of the men, I think I am not over-estimating their earning since the beginning of this year at a total value of £5000. The value of the gold found in alluvial deposit during the year 1872 was £8000. The whole of the men appear to be well satisfied with the result of their labour, and there is at this moment more legitimate mining than at any other period since the discovery of gold in the District. The gold is of the richest description, - superior I believe to any found in other Colonies. There are innumerable gullies and flats in the neighbourhood of the Nine Mile Springs presenting indications of an auriferous character which have not yet been tested, owing principally to the fact that when under the leasing system there was a large number of miners in search of claims in the District, the land was locked up under the leasing system then in force. I have not since March, 1871, when the present Regulations came into force, permitted a lease to be applied for.

I would wish to point out to you the absolute necessity which exists for the continuance in the District of an officer holding the position and powers of a Gold Commissioner. As long as there are men employed in mining a Commissioner is indispensable, as disputes frequently arise, and none but a properly commissioned officer can decide them. My knowledge of the District and my experience of these duties lead me to suggest, now that all mining has ceased except in the immediate neighbourhood of George Town, that the office might readily be united with those of Stipendiary Magistrate and Health Officer.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

BERNARD SHAW,

Gold Commissioner.

The Hon. CHARLES MEREDITH, Esq.,
The Minister of Lands and Works.
