During the year under review 316 (301) vessels aggregating 198,643 (211,449) tons net register worked the port, the figures in parentheses being those corresponding for the previous year. In all, the in and out vessels for the year totalled 633 (603) with total net register tonnage of 398,565 (426,162).

The trade of the port is essentially an export one, and in this direction the total of coal shipments was 385,300 tons, a slight decrease on that of 402,000 for the preceding year.

In the past bunker-coal trade in respect to overseas and intercolonial cargo-vessels was a feature of the port's activities, though this fell away very considerably after the entry of Japan into the late war, and last year there was no such trade whatever.

Timber, another product from the district, was shipped to the total of 1,500,000 super feet, as compared to 400,000 super feet in 1944–45.

The following records of some annual shipments of coal from the port, together with the corresponding annual means of high-water depths on the bar, might be of some interest :—

Year.	Mean of High Water Depths on Bar.	Total Quantity of Coal shipped.
	Ft. in.	Tons.
1931	20 2	513,500
1939	21 3	426,400
1942	21 9	487,500
1943	21 8	446,500
1944	20 8	401,300
1945	21 4	402,000
1946	20 8	385,300

During the years ended 31st March, 1931 and 1944, the working depths month by month were somewhat poorer than during the past year, yet, compared with the latter year, the total coal shipments fell to the extent of 16,000 tons and 128,000 tons as compared with 1931.

In my report presented last year I mentioned that the administration is by no means unconcerned in regard to the circumstances which, with increasing frequency, result in periods during which shoaling of the bar at the entrance to the port occur, with the consequent considerable handicap to shipping working the port and resultant disruptions in transport of coal to North Island ports.

With this in mind the Hon. Minister took steps during the year since to secure the services of two eminent British engineers to visit New Zealand and investigate at the port (and at Greymouth also) the circumstances and make recommendations as to works considered necessary to be carried out for purposes of ensuring permanent adequate depth of water at the entrance, and improvements generally necessary to restore the harbour to a condition suitable to ensure all possible efficiency in operation of the port to the maximum of ability in the years to come.

At time of indition of this report it is gratifying to be able to record that the Hon. Minister's efforts have been brought to fruition, in that such engineers, Mr. E. J. Buckton and Mr. A. J. Clark, senior members of the well-known and long-established engineering firm of Messrs. Rendel, Palmer, and Tritton, of Westminster, with a wide experience of harbour matters, and particularly bar harbours, have arrived in this country to carry out their investigations. For their preliminary information the Department's officers, also the Commissioner of Works' Office, assembled and collated much information relative to the establishment and progression of the harbour and subsequent circumstances and changes leading to the present position.

During the year, also, the Hon. Minister obtained appointment of a Harbour Advisory Committee, comprised of reputable men representing all interests of the district, the function of such Committee being to consider on the spot and refer and recommend to the Hon. Minister and the Department suggestions and proposals in general for improvements to the port and any other aspects which may be allied with the harbour as a whole.

It is pleasing to record that the members of the Committee have met on numerous regular occasions, and continue to do so, and have earnestly considered and referred many matters of nature relevant to betterment of the functioning of the port, and I have no doubt that by the time of my next annual report I will be able to specifically refer to definite and concrete achievements resultant from the Committee's activities.

EXAMINATION OF MARINE ENGINEERS

During the year 237 candidates were examined for Marine Engineers' Certificates of Competency at the various centres throughout the Dominion. Of these, 58 were examined for First- and Second-class Certificates of Imperial Validity, 58 were examined for Third-class Marine Certificates, and 20 were examined for First- and Second-class Coastal Motor Certificates of New Zealand Validity. Candidates sitting for First-class