

A large amount of expenditure has been caused in repairing the damage done to drains and stop-banks by the stock from unfenced sections, but steps are now being taken to cope with this trouble. The trade to the plains is catered for by direct steamer from Auckland to Kerepehi, running two trips per week, and carrying goods, &c., to the value of over £900 per week. A considerable amount of trade is also done with the Thames by means of regular launch services.

AWAITI DISTRICT.

During the year, besides three new outlets to the Awaite Stream, a new drain on the east side of the Awaite-Netherton Road has been in course of construction, and is now nearly completed. The main and subsidiary drains have also been considerably improved. The Awaite-Netherton Road, which in flood-time used to be under water in many places, has been lifted with the spoil from drains for its entire length, in some places as much as 3 ft.

TAHUNA DISTRICT.

Only a small gang of men have been available in this block, but the work has been kept well in hand. The drains have all received attention and been kept in an efficient state, while a large amount of road maintenance, formation, and gravelling has been done, and every effort made to keep the main through road in good order for traffic.

PATETONGA DISTRICT.

A very large amount of work has been done in this district during the year, especially in improving the drainage system, which is now in good order. The completion of the Patetonga Canal by No. 2 dredge has effected a great improvement in the southern half of the district. Some of the new drains proved heavy undertakings owing to the large amount of timber encountered, necessitating a generous use of explosives.

The drainage of this district is rather more expensive than other settled parts of the Hauraki Plains area, owing to the long lines of outlet drains to the Piako River which have to be kept in order, and which pass through a considerable extent of unopened country. These drains, however, have done this country a wonderful amount of good, and a few thousand acres will be ready for throwing open for settlement in the near future.

The roads in this district have received much attention. Not only has a lot of shingle been procured from the Waikaka and Ngarua Streams and put on roads, but a very large amount of good clay spoil has also been put on and graded up. This will be a great benefit to the settlers, especially during the winter months, as in some places the road was worn right to the peat. The Patetonga tram-line, which last winter was almost unusable, has been lifted and relaid on new bed and sleepers, and 40 to 50 chains of track metalled. As the Department has purchased the rails on this line it is now in a position to take over the working of same, and this is now being arranged. Some time in the near future it will be desirable to place a locomotive on the line, and thus reduce the wear-and-tear to a minimum and provide more economical working.

CENTRAL DISTRICT.

This is the main block of the area, and the oldest and most closely settled portion of same. The principal work for the year has been the maintenance of existing drains and other works, and the renewal of same. Several of the wharves are badly in need of renewal, but, unfortunately, the amount of labour in this district has been altogether inadequate to cope with the large amount of work requiring attention.

WAITAKARURU DISTRICT.

The drainage of this district is now more efficient than it has ever been, and when the canal at present being excavated by No. 2 dredge is completed floods should be a thing of the past. A considerable amount of improvement has been made to the Mahuta Road, the low portions of which used to be under water in flood-time. The road has now been raised with substantial ballast, and shell on top, and will prove a great benefit to settlers, especially during the winter.

PRIESTMAN DREDGES.

During the year dredge No. 1 continued the excavation of the canal from the Piako to Waitoa Rivers; spoil excavated, 64,159 cubic yards. No. 2 dredge, after finishing the Patetonga Canal, was shifted to Waitakaruru, where it commenced the Waitakaruru Stream Canal; spoil excavated, 66,505 cubic yards. The total amount of spoil dredged and deposited on banks was 130,664 cubic yards, at a total cost of £1,377 12s. 8d., averaging 2·53d. per cubic yard.

The following table shows the amount of spoil dredged and cost per cubic yard for the past five years:—

						Cubic Yards.	Cost per Cubic Yard.
1913-14	..	..	..	..	..	147,740	3·20d.
1914-15	..	..	..	..	..	176,196	2·67d.
1915-16	..	..	..	..	..	146,905	3·35d.
1916-17	..	..	..	..	..	161,674	3·40d.
1917-18	..	..	..	..	..	130,664	2·53d.