

and goods between the Piako River and Auckland, exclusive of coal, shingle, timber, &c., amounted to 8,319 tons. Peat lands in the district have in the past produced some remarkable returns of flax, and there are indications that the suitability of certain classes of peat lands for flax-production is becoming more generally recognized. There are four flax-mills at present operating in the district, and the combined output of hemp for the year was 1,014 tons and 127 tons of tow.

A recent development of importance is the formation of the Horahia Drainage Board to control the area, comprising approximately 13,000 acres, lying to the east of the Piako River and north of Kerepechi. The work for the reclamation of swamp land such as the Hauraki Plains necessarily falls into two phases. The work first planned and constructed provides a degree of agricultural drainage and public utilities sufficient to permit settlers to obtain cheap land capable of being profitably worked, and with possibilities for future development. After a period of years during which closer settlement follows development of the land there comes a demand for a greater degree of agricultural drainage. This stage has been reached in the area handed over to the newly constructed Horahia Drainage Board on the 15th November last. The sale price of this land to the original selectors was £5 to £7 per acre free of capital charges for drainage and roading, and the future policy of the settlers in the district should be directed towards perfecting the improvements and so increasing the production of the land.

DREDGES.

The principal work done by the Drainage Branch during the year has been construction, enlarging, and deepening of canals, river-improvement works, and stop-bank construction with the dredges of the Department. The existing plant was strengthened by the addition of another large steam dipper dredge, which was assembled on an 80 ft. kauri pontoon constructed at Kerepechi, and commenced work during the year. The nine dredges operating during the year excavated 822,286 cubic yards of material at an average cost of 5·86d. per cubic yard, a very creditable output. The average daily output is nearly 3,000 cubic yards.

The following table shows the amount of spoil dredged and machine-excavated, and cost per cubic yard, for the past ten years :—

Year.	Cubic Yards.	Cost per Cubic Yard.	Year.	Cubic Yards.	Cost per Cubic Yard.
1915-16	146,905	3·35d.	1920-21	158,865	7·42d.
1916-17	161,674	3·40d.	1921-22	246,022	7·29d.
1917-18	130,664	2·53d.	1922-23	440,092	8·20d.
1918-19	125,196	4·87d.	1923-24	508,654	7·27d.
1919-20	138,310	6·90d.	1924-25	822,286	5·86d.

No. 1 Priestman dredge has been dismantled, and the pontoon repaired on the slipway recently completed at Kerepechi. When reconditioned this dredge, which has seen over fifteen years' service, will be a very efficient plant.

No. 2 Priestman dredge is operating in difficult country on the Maukoro Canal. Forward progress has been much delayed by the caving-in of the banks, and the dredge has been mainly engaged in enlarging the existing canal to allow time for consolidation at the face. A large timber dam with earth filling, constructed last year, carried away, and was reconstructed farther up-stream by the dredge crew. The dredge is working two shifts, and excavated 36,174 cubic yards for the year, at a unit cost of 10·47d.

No. 6 Priestman dredge was recommissioned early last year after complete overhaul and mechanical alterations, and has been enlarging the Piako River channel between Kerepechi and Ngatea. The work is tidal, and the dredge has been equipped with acetylene lights for night-work. The output for the year was 62,500 cubic yards, at a cost of 5·97d. per cubic yard.

No. 11 Kingston dredge was also engaged on river improvements between Kerepechi and Ngatea. An electric-lighting unit has been installed on this plant for night tidal work. The quantity excavated during the year was 80,300 cubic yards, and the cost 6·04d. per cubic yard.

No. 15 Bucyrus drag-line has completed the widening of the Puhanga Canal, and is now building embankment for road and flood protection on the Piako River between the Puhanga Canal and Kaihere Landing. Working two ten-hour shifts daily, this plant handled 105,480 cubic yards of spoil at a cost of 7·60d. per cubic yard.

No. 16 Bucyrus drag-line is widening the Awaitei Canal and building road-embankment with the spoil. This machine has also been equipped with electric light, and is now working two shifts. The output for the year was 84,816 cubic yards, at a cost of 6·39d. per cubic yard.

No. 19 Michigan walking dipper dredge has been constructing collecting-ditches on the Awaitei Canal. This machine has been strengthened structurally, and provided with new 45 ft. boom built on the works, and is now doing very good work. The total quantity excavated was 57,968 cubic yards, at a cost 7·40d. per cubic yard.

No. 20 Rood land dredge has been extending the Piako River stop-banks southwards from Kaihere, and is now constructing large ditches on the Kerepechi Block. The very creditable performance for the year was 88,888 cubic yards of excavations, at an average cost of 6·45d. per cubic yard.

No. 23 American steam dipper dredge has made remarkable progress on the Awaitei Canal. For a total period of 245 working-days of eight hours the average daily output was 859 cubic yards, and the total output for the year 210,450 cubic yards, at an average cost of 3·65d.

No. 24 American steam dipper dredge is a recent addition to the plant, and commenced work in September, but owing to a defective casting had to be partially dismantled after three weeks' work. Since resuming work in November the dredge has been removing sand deposits in the Waitoa Canal. The quantity excavated was 95,710 cubic yards, and unit cost 4·53d. per cubic yard.