

It will be observed that the position has improved to a remarkable extent since 1922–23, when the finances of the Department were subjected to a complete overhaul. At that time there was a substantial deficit, which, as the result of a careful financial policy, has been gradually overtaken, until the Department is now fully self-supporting. It should be noted, however, that provision will require to be made in the near future for the expenditure on a complete survey of the New Zealand coast, and this will fully absorb the small surplus which is being realized at present.

The principal features of this year's accounts are the decrease of about £2,000 in revenue and the increase of approximately £5,000 in expenditure. Light dues, which is the main source of revenue increased by nearly £3,000, but this was more than offset by the decrease in oyster sales and in the earnings of the lighthouse tender s.s. "Matai." The supply of rock oysters last season had to be restricted in order to conserve the beds, while the position in regard to the s.s. "Matai" is that during 1934–35 the vessel was hired for a voyage to the Cook Islands, with the result that this Department received a substantial credit in the way of hire charge. The vessel was not hired during 1935–36, but was engaged in her usual service throughout the year.

The rise in expenditure is accounted for largely by the partial restoration of cuts in wages and salaries combined with the increased cost of repairs to s.s. "Matai."

HARBOURS.

The general policy is that harbours shall be controlled by local boards set up as directed in the Harbours Act. Where the port is so small that a special Board is not warranted, control is frequently vested in County Councils, the Councils being clothed with the powers of the Harbours Act for this purpose. The only exceptions are in the cases of Picton and Westport Harbours.

At Picton the wharves are owned and worked by the Railways Department, while the harbour itself is in the care of the Marine Department.

Westport Harbour, since 1921, has been directly administered by the Marine Department.

The Department also takes care of the numerous minor harbours where local government is not possible.

Greymouth Harbour has for many years been subsidized out of the Consolidated Fund, and during this year the subsidy was £2,625, compared with £12,000 for the previous year. The reason for the decrease is that, following upon a close investigation of the Board's finances, the Greymouth Harbour Board Amendment Act, 1935, was passed, relieving the Board of its loan liability and cancelling the subsidy, which now disappears from this Department's vote.

Westport Harbour.—No further construction work was carried out during the year, but a survey is now in hand for the purpose of estimating the amount of dredging required to so increase the tidal compartment within the harbour that, by the additional scouring effects so obtained, the necessary depths will be maintained on the bar during the periods of low flow in the Buller River, and under conditions of unfavourable movement of sand on the coast.

The average working-depth on the bar at high water was 20 ft. 10 in., an increase of 10 in. on the previous year. The following table shows the number of days in each year during the past ten years on which the specified depths were maintained:—

Depth.	1926-27.	1927-28.	1928-29.	1929-30.	1930-31.	1931-32.	1932-33.	1933-34.	1934-35.	1935-36.
Over 14 ft.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	365	365	366
„ 16 ft.	..	..	365	365	365	..	365	360	357	361
„ 18 ft.	..	366	350	363	340	366	350	279	353	355
„ 20 ft.	365	351	249	345	208	360	287	152	263	263
„ 22 ft.	339	217	168	276	43	252	144	42	81	90
„ 24 ft.	227	102	107	99	..	53	14	..	15	6
„ 26 ft.	102	17	26	11	..	10	..	..	..	..
„ 28 ft.	32	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

The depths on the bar were, in general, adequate for the shipping using the port, except for a short time in February, 1936, when a sudden shoaling, due to an extremely low river and heavy sand movement along the coast reduced the depths by 3 ft. to 4 ft., and some vessels were unable to fully load.

In the fairway the average working-depth was 25 ft. 6 in. as against 24 ft. in 1934–35, and 24 ft. 10 in. in 1933–34, the decrease for the past year being due to shoaling.

Dredging operations were carried out by the suction dredge "Eileen Ward"; the bucket dredge "Maui" and the suction dredge "Rubi Seddon" being out of commission.

During the period 171,323 cubic yards were dredged from the bar, 97,277 cubic yards from the lower river, 76,453 cubic yards from the berthages, and 11,582 cubic yards from the floating basin—a total of 356,635 cubic yards, all of which was transported and deposited at sea.

The dredge worked on 127 days for an average cost of 8·01d., a higher rate than that for 1934–35 of 6·499d.

The rainfall recorded on the harbour gauge for the year was 73·33 in., rain falling on 178 days. For the three preceding years the figures were—1932–33, 66·99 in., 179 days; 1933–34, 81·27 in., 174 days; 1934–35, 79·57 in., 169 days.

The "Eileen Ward" was sent to Wellington for annual overhaul and was well maintained during the whole period.