

drained and dredged, at first by private enterprise, later under Government direction.

Hundreds of thousands of pounds went down the drains—the drains, miles long, that carried the water away to leave this reclaimed land capable of returning highest-quality produce. Thousands of acres of rich alluvial flats have been drained, roaded, fenced, and subdivided into farms and reserves. So well has the water been removed that in many cases it has been necessary to sink wells for household and farm use.

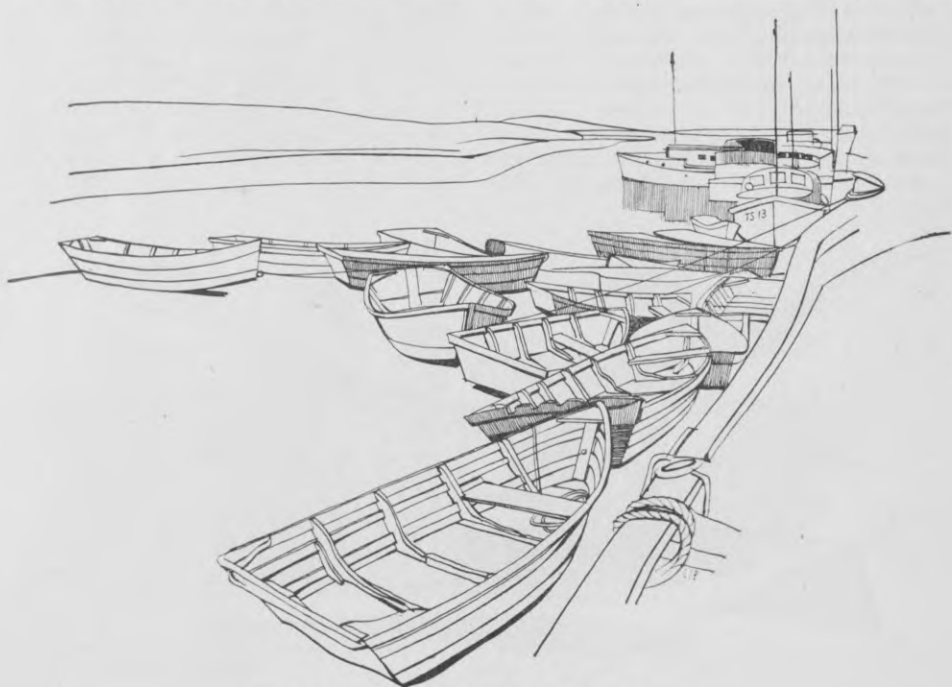
Gold bumped Thames on the map; the richness of the Hauraki Plains has kept it there, its value no less than that of the metal. And as the boom town of Thames was the natural outlet and centre of the seventies, so now is it the outlet and centre of these farm lands.

To-day, at least through most of the district, the sheets of water, the stout kahikatea and the white-starred manuka, the oozy wilderness of ferns and rushes and flax, have been replaced by white

dusty roads, fencing wire and rails, blue-gum trees, flocks and herds. Dairy and cheese factories are dotted over the plains, cream-cans stand at the farm gates. And those squat buildings clean in the morning sunshine are shearing-sheds, wool-stores. It's wonderful grazing—nothing could be better to fatten the cattle, nothing could be better for the horses.

Growing of fruit in the district is profitable because of the climate and the soil. All classes of fruit, including lemons and grapes. And apricots. It's a funny thing about apricots: Thames is the only place in the Auckland Province where the trees fruit successfully; in other districts, even at Coromandel which is only a few miles north on the same coast, the trees produce enormous growths of wood but very little else. Nobody quite understands the reason—must be something to do with the soil.

You wander slowly in the September sunshine of the Thames main street. Lots of people now, and they're not



*Fishing boats and dinghies lie in Thames river.*