

ROCK OYSTERS

The 1945 rock-oyster season yielded 5,476 sacks of oysters. This was a decline of 910 sacks on last year's total of 6,386 sacks, which was the highest since 1926. The drop was accounted for by shortage of skilled pickers at Bay of Islands and Kaipara. A heavy storm at the end of May aggravated the shortage of oysters by doing considerable damage to the Department's plant at Kaipara and Coromandel. Damage to the plant would have been much more serious but for the strenuous efforts of the Inspectors at both places.

Picking started on 14th May, the last oysters of the season being picked on 1st August.

The yield of oysters in sacks from each of the various areas was as follows: Bay of Islands, 2,003; Whangarei Harbour, 195; Kaipara Harbour, 907; Coromandel, 650; Great Barrier Island, 242; Hauraki Gulf, 1,479.

The quantities from Hauraki Gulf were obtained from the following areas: Motutapu, 97; Waiheke, 719; Ponui, 408; Pahiki, 118; Rotoroa, 120; Pakatoa, 17.

Area. *Oyster-cultivation for the Year ended 31st March, 1946*

- I. Bay of Islands: 781,000 borers and 3,500 pupu destroyed, 214 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell, 1,130 square yards cleared of weed. Cost, £370 17s.
- II. Whangarei Harbour: 291,500 borers and 1,500 pupu destroyed, 314 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell, 295 square yards cleared of weed. Cost, £82 12s. 8d.
- IV. Takatu Point to Gull Point: 85,000 borers destroyed, 90 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell. No cost.
- VI. Coromandel: 1,471,610 borers and 4,977 pupu destroyed, 8,840 square yards cleared of weed. Cost, £52 16s. 8d.
- VIII. Rakino: 185,000 borers and 219 pupu destroyed. No cost.
- XIII. Waiheke: 498,000 borers and 91 pupu destroyed, 1,211 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell, 220 square yards cleared of weed. No cost.
- XIV. Ponui: 427,000 borers and 224 pupu destroyed, 316 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell. No cost.
- XV. Pahiki Island: 28,000 borers and 33 pupu destroyed. No cost.
- XVI. Great Barrier: 552,100 borers and 2,728 pupu destroyed, 251 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell. Cost, £65 17s. 8d.

Total for all areas: 4,319,210 borers and 13,272 pupu destroyed, 2,396 square yards of rock cleared of dead shell, 10,485 square yards cleared of weed. Cost, £572 4s.

With the cessation of hostilities, plans are being prepared for increased cultivation work, more particularly the formation of new beds in Kaipara Harbour.

The demand for rock oysters always exceeds the supply, so that the expenditure of funds on this type of work is fully justified.

DREDGE OYSTERS: FOVEAUX STRAIT, 1945

The 1945 season was much more successful than that of 1944, the catch increased from 63,949 sacks to 76,038. As stated in the 1944 report, a co-operative survey was undertaken during the 1945 season, the oystermen, merchants, and the Government each providing part of the requirements. The investigation was in charge of Captain E. F. Watson, of Dunedin, who completed an arduous task under conditions not suitable for normal marine survey work. The main point at issue was the existence or otherwise of large beds of oysters west of a line drawn from Barracouta Head to Gull Rock. Unfortunately, the survey did not reveal any large beds of oysters in this area, other than those known previously. The experience, however, was well worth while, both in the results obtained and in the knowledge gained as to the best method of conducting future surveys.