

bucket, and it is apparent that as soon as plant can be made available a start should be made with similar equipment in this district. The formidable water-weed known as *Poa aquatica* is spreading with alarming rapidity in many of the main outlets, and if not checked in the near future is going to greatly increase the cost of maintenance. The Department of Agriculture is conducting experiments in an attempt to discover a means of eradicating the weed, but so far the results point to a mechanical means of control as being the most economical.

The land-development blocks in this district have had a very good year. Except for those areas being prepared for the settlement of ex-servicemen, most of the work has been confined to essential maintenance of pastures, fences, and drains, the care of the 3,300 cattle and 7,900 sheep which are grazing on the areas, and the control of noxious weeds and swamp growth. On the areas being prepared for settlement good progress is also being made, though considerably hampered by shortages of materials and labour. It is hoped to have about six farms prepared for settlement next season. During the dry period experienced in January and February extensive peat fires broke out on the Pouarua Block, and some thousands of acres of swamp were swept by fire. This was mostly confined to the undeveloped areas, thanks to the efforts of the men and staff, who spent long hours fighting and controlling the fires. The fire did, however, penetrate in to some of the adjoining private land on the Kaihere Road, where it burned for many weeks in the dry peat and necessitated the employment of men for long periods on patrolling and subduing the fire.

The ferry service over the Piako River at Kaihere was maintained during the year. The ferry punt is now badly deteriorated, but a contract has been let for the construction of a new punt, which should be available in the near future; it is being built in Auckland, and when completed will be towed to Kerepeehi, where the final fittings of engine, gates, rails, &c., will be carried out.

The flaxmill established near Kerepeehi is still in operation, and during the year milled 1,943 tons of green leaf from natural and planted flax grown on Crown Land in the district. The royalties payable to the Crown amounted to £243.

The flood pumping station on the Kerepeehi Block was not required to operate extensively last winter, the total operating hours amounting to 239½. This station is required to remove accumulated rain-water from the stop-banked portion of the Kerepeehi Block during high levels of the Piako River when gravity discharge is not possible for long periods. The limited use made of the station last winter indicates an even spread of rainfall and freedom from prolonged river floods.

The principal works carried out on the Hauraki Plains during the year are listed hereunder:—

Schedule of Principal Work carried out on the Hauraki Plains for the Year ended 31st March, 1948

						Miles. ch.
Drains cleaned by manual labour	..	..	..	..	..	108 66
Drains widened and deepened by manual labour	..	..	..	..	..	11 21
Canals widened and deepened by machine	..	..	..	..	..	1 36
Drains widened and deepened by machine	..	..	..	..	..	1 35½
New drains constructed by machine	..	..	..	..	..	1 75
Canals cleaned of <i>Poa aquatica</i> growth by machine	..	..	..	..	..	6 45
						Acres.
Area harrowed by tractor	..	..	..	..	..	910
						Miles. ch.
Roads formed by tractor	..	..	..	..	..	1 2
Tracks formed by tractor	..	..	..	..	..	2 40
Roads graded by tractor	..	..	..	..	..	3 30
Roads graded by power grader	..	..	..	..	..	8 40
Raising stopbanks with dragline excavator	..	..	..	..	..	3 54