

east coast shortly thereafter commenced and intensified, and well over 100,000 tons per annum is now so despatched. During this past year it was some 129,000 tons, with 159,000 tons the previous year.

Timber shipments were 1,092,438 superficial feet, compared with 1,262,000 superficial feet for the previous year.

During the year, 208 (247) vessels aggregating 152,789 (185,046) tons net register departed from the port, the figures in parentheses being those corresponding for the previous year. "In and out" totals for the year were 418 (491) vessels aggregating 307,340 (357,355) tons net register.

The second factor earlier mentioned may be noted in the reduced shipping returns just indicated, but there is immediate and increasing improvement available here as a result of valuable strengthening by the Union Steam Ship Co. of the company's collier fleet with new vessels designed to suit the west coast bar conditions of to-day. One such vessel, the "Kaitangata," has for some months past been in commission in the trade, and another has arrived in New Zealand and will shortly join in the service to North Island ports. During the ensuing year the service will be supplemented by two more such vessels.

Apart from the period from 3rd May to 18th July, when the vessel was undergoing slip survey and overhaul, and the greater part of the month of November, when extensive adjustments to pumps were necessary, the suction dredger "Eileen Ward" worked consistently throughout the year, removing 296,700 cubic yards from the bar, 96,360 cubic yards from the river fairway, and 15,200 from the berthage area. Heavy dredging was necessary in the lower reaches of the river between the lower end of the training-walls and the signal-station, where extensive shoaling had been caused by a series of moderate to strong freshes in the river opposed by sea conditions of similar intensity.

The ladder dredger "Maui" ceased working at Castlecliff on 17th April, and after slip repairs at Wellington returned to Westport on 23rd May, resuming dredging on 9th June.

Apart from a further period in Wellington for slip survey and overhaul from 18th August to 24th October, this dredger has worked as sea and weather conditions permitted. During the year she has lifted and dumped at sea 67,850 cubic yards of spoil from the floating-basin area.

Port equipment and property has been maintained in satisfactory condition throughout the year, and some valuable additions have been made to port facilities.

In addition to the provision of ship-to-shore electric-power connection for all shipping using the crane wharf, mention of which was omitted from the report for the previous year, a powerful radio-telephone station has been established at the signal-station, and this latter facility has already proved itself to be of inestimable value with routine shipping movements, and particularly in cases of emergency.

The harbour flotilla continues to be maintained in good working-order. Bar dredger "Eileen Ward" has now been in operation for over thirty-eight years, and the ladder dredger "Maui" is of the same age. Upkeep costs are heavy, but these two machines do very good work, considering the age factor. The suction dredger "Rubi Seddon" was laid up indefinitely early in 1948 and has done no dredging during the year under review. The vessel is forty-four years old and is not now an economic proposition to retain in commission.

Both working dredgers and the tug "James O'Brien" have been fitted with radio-telephone equipment, and at the close of the year echo-sounding equipment is being installed in the tug.

As last year, again during this year the availability of the tug has averted a serious shipping casualty. On 20th February the Holm Shipping Co's. collier s.s. "Holmlea" was in a sinking condition north of Westport. The tug went out under very adverse weather conditions and took the vessel in tow, bringing her into Westport.