

Details are not available of the value of cream produced, but the totals must be well over £30,000.

In addition, the fattening of stock has been pursued, and likewise this has been very successful. In spite of the dry summer recently experienced, there were very few instances of stock having to be sold or sacrificed through a shortage of feed.

Taking the plains from end to end, the settlers have made very good progress, and the older-settled portions are now assuming the look of farms.

It is very pleasing to record the fact that a large area of the peat country is now being brought into good grass, and it is generally admitted that this country in future will be quite as valuable as any other.

The metalling of the roads that has been carried out during the last two years has revolutionized the whole appearance of the country, as well as improved the access to the plains.

During the next year the area to be thrown open will be very small, as it is unreasonable and unwise to place settlers on land of this class without the chance of a fair access-road within a short period of their taking up the land.

Details of each work are described under the different headings as at 31st March, 1915, and in most cases totals of the works that have been carried out since the inception of the scheme are appended.

PRIESTMAN DREDGERS.

Both dredgers No. 1 and No. 2 have been employed during the past year on various works between Kerepehi and Patetonga Landing, a total of 176,196 cubic yards being dredged and deposited on the banks along the side.

The total cost of this work was £1,962 16s. 3d., which gives an average cost per yard of 2·677d. This cost includes all wages, running-expenses, repairs, &c., but not depreciation.

The work carried out comprised the widening of the Piako River, improvements at Patetonga Landing, deepening of portion of the Waikaka Canal, and the commencement of the Ngarua Canal and also the Awaiti Canal. All these works are treated separately under the different headings.

No. 1 dredger excavated for the year 85,746 cubic yards, at a total cost of £970 14s. 6d. for the year, averaging 2·727d. per cubic yard; whilst No. 2 dredger excavated 90,450 cubic yards, at a total cost of £992 1s. 9d., averaging 2·63d. per cubic yard.

The dredgers are both in very good order, and the expenses during the coming year for maintenance should not be above the average.

During the greater part of last year's operations the coal had to be punted some distance, and in some cases transhipped, which necessitated a higher cost of working. This state of affairs will apply to both dredgers during the coming year, as at present both are dammed in so as to obviate the rise and fall due to tidal influences.

Both dredgemasters deserve great credit for the excellent manner in which their work has been carried out, as well as for the low running-costs.

PIAKO RIVER IMPROVEMENTS.

In 1912 a vote of £2,000 for two years was passed for improving both the Piako and the Waitoa Rivers. During the year ending 31st March, 1913, £465 was spent on these works; during the following year, £2,073 13s. 5d.; and this year the sum of £1,044 15s. 4d. was spent.

All this sum was expended in widening the Piako River between Kerepehi and the Waikaka Canal, a distance of nearly five miles. Throughout this distance the river has been widened, on an average, 20 ft., so that throughout it is at least 66 ft. wide. The effect of this dredging has been beneficial both to the drainage of the land and to some extent to the navigation of the river.

Although there has not been a fresh since the work was completed, I am certain that this is partly due to the fact of the cross-section of the river being improved. Of course, it is admitted that the past year has been remarkably dry, but during last March 10·67 in. of rain were recorded at Kerepehi, and in spite of the fact that practically all the rivers in the district were in fairly high flood the Piako only rose a few feet at Kerepehi.

During the coming year it is intended to dredge portion of the Waitoa River to the south of the junction with the Piako River, as in this particular locality there are several bars and banks that prevent the even flow of the river. In addition, the water-weeds have grown very prolifically, and need to be removed by the roots.

PATETONGA LANDING.

At this point in the Piako River launches and larger boats had great difficulty in lying alongside the wharf when the river was low. The berth, as well as the approaches to the berth, were dredged down to the level of the centre of the river, and there is consequently a decided improvement. In addition, a short cut of about 9 chains was excavated parallel to the approach to the wharf. This not only provided a turning-basin for the larger boats, but also provided spoil for the road-formation in the vicinity. In carrying out this work 12,730 cubic yards were excavated.

WAIKAKA CANAL.

The lower end of this canal was deepened for a short distance, as at this particular point there had been a bar left when the canal was originally dredged.

In this work 1,410 cubic yards were removed.