

The following works were carried out by day labour :—

|                                                       | M.  | oh. |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Deepening and widening road-drains and spreading soil | 16  | 55  |
| Clearing road-lines                                   | 3   | 40  |
| Road-formation                                        | 1   | 67  |
| Widening road-formation                               | 1   | 40  |
| Resanding roads                                       | 0   | 30  |
| Sanding roads                                         | 0   | 70  |
| Metalling roads                                       | 8   | 40  |
| Cleaning road-drains                                  | 44  | 77  |
| Outlets                                               | 0   | 50  |
| Deepening and widening outlets                        | 22  | 6   |
| Cleaning outlets                                      | 49  | 15  |
| Deepening stop-bank drain                             | 6   | 70  |
| Strengthening stop-banks                              | 2   | 50  |
| Cleaning stop-bank drains                             | 6   | 42  |
| Disking roads                                         | 16  | 0   |
| Distance covered                                      | 182 | 12  |

Spoil removed by dredgers, 146,085 cubic yards; artesian bores sunk, 19; construction of flood-gates, 2; construction of culverts, 11; construction of bridges, 5.

As is usual in this class of work, there was a large number of small services carried out too numerous to schedule.

#### FLOODS.

The rainfall for the year 1915, as recorded at Kerepeehi, was just 50 in., the heaviest fall since the works were undertaken.

March was the wettest month, but after a dry summer the Piako River rose very little.

The Waihou River rose exceptionally high and, overflowing its banks below Tirohia, soon flooded the Netherton Block. This block was flooded later in the year, and until such time as the Waihou River bank is completed this block will be liable to damage. On opening this block the Department disclaimed all liability for damage due to flooding.

During July and August very heavy rain was experienced in the Piako watershed, and during these months there were three separate floods. The Piako River rose very high, and damage was sustained in consequence by the sections opposite Kerepeehi, between the river and the Puhanga Canal. This provided an opportunity of deepening the Puhanga spillway, which it was always considered would be necessary before long. The deepening of this spillway, although not down to the bottom of the river, will allow the flood-waters to reach the sea much more quickly. However much it was desired to deepen the spillway to the present bottom of the river, this had to be decided against, owing to the liability of this country to slip as soon as spoil was placed along the banks of the spillway.

It is my opinion that in order to relieve the Kerepeehi lands from the danger of big floods it will probably be necessary to widen the Piako River southwards from just above Rawerawe. About this point the river becomes rapidly narrower, and this is what causes the congestion further back.

The Waitakaruru Stream, on the western boundary of the plains, caused damage to private settlers more than to Crown settlers. A rough outline of a scheme has been drawn up, but nothing definite has been arranged, as there are so many interested parties.

The Waitoa River is the most sluggish water on the plains, and this is due solely to the weeds and silt that have accumulated there. As soon as rain falls in the back country this river overflows its banks and floods the neighbouring country. A close inspection was made of this river in 1915, and a scheme of dredging was drawn up, but up to the present nothing has been able to be done, as a dredge was not available for this particular work.

#### FLAX AREAS.

During the year no flax has been sold, but it is quite probable that during the coming season the Crown will derive a small revenue from flax royalties. The mill at Patetonga has been working during the summer, deriving its supply from the settlers.

The only other mill on the plains, at Waitakaruru, is just commencing to be worked again as this is written. It is more than likely that if the demand keeps up the Department will be able to sell the flax on the reserve at Waitakaruru.

It is intended to consider the practicability of providing flax-growing areas.

#### FIRES.

In spite of a dry summer there were only two fires that caused damage to settlers' holdings, and in one case it was clearly an advantage, whilst in the other the damage sustained was not very extensive.

The first occurred at Ngarua, on Section 2, Block IX, Waihou Survey District, and spread eastwards into the Crown land, where an area of a grazing lease was burnt. The second fire was at Waitakaruru, where several sections on the Loan Block and on the Hauraki Plains were severely burnt.

These fires will occur always in the newly settled blocks, as the settlers must obtain a burn to get rid of the rubbish before it is possible to sow the seed.

In my opinion there are too many fires due both to carelessness and to thoughtlessness.

#### GRAZING LEASES.

In November 16,614 acres of land along and near the Piako River were thrown open by public tender as grazing-areas, under the year-to-year system, and were nearly all taken up. These areas were lying idle, and in a large number of cases were unsuitable for settlement. These areas can be resumed by giving short notice to the lessee, so that settlement will not be retarded through the leasing of the land.