

Generally the year concluded has seen a large amount of work done, especially in new drains. This, however, would have been considerably increased but for the influenza epidemic, which was very severe on the plains, and practically brought work to a standstill for the best part of two months. I am very sorry to record that some of the Department's workmen died from this cause.

The metalling of roads has not shown any increase over last year's figures, which is also due to the epidemic. It is proposed, however, to place tractors and metal-wagons on the roads to supplement the work done by tramway, and also to procure an efficient supply of crushed metal. Negotiations are now being made for tractors and a quarry.

AWAITI DISTRICT.

Since the last annual report a large amount of work has been done in the above district. The large new drain on the eastern side of the Awaitei-Netherton Road has been completed and linked up with the main drain on the western side by a concrete culvert. Another new drain was constructed along the Pukahu Road, from the Hauraki Plains boundary to the Waihou River. The formation of the Pukahu Road was completed for a width of 12 ft. to give access from the river to the Awaitei Road, and this width will be increased to 18 ft. next spring. All the drains are now in a very efficient state, having been levelled and regraded, and flooding, although very prevalent at one time, is now a thing of the past. Unfortunately, although every effort has been made, it was found impossible to procure metal for the Awaitei-Netherton Road, but there are prospects of a supply of same being available during the coming year. Many settlers in the district, as on the other parts of the plains, have not yet fenced their sections, and the Department's outlet drains have suffered considerably in consequence.

TAHUNA DISTRICT.

The roads in this district have received a lot of attention, and have received a liberal topping of sand spoil and been rounded up. The drains are now in first-class order. Some of the old narrow sill bridges have been taken up and replaced by concrete culverts and filled in.

PATETONGA DISTRICT.

Slav gangs have been employed continuously in this district. The Waikoura outlet has been completed, and a new drain constructed along the south side of the Ngarua Road from Ngarua Canal to the intersection of the Maukoro-Waitakaruru Canal. The central outlet between the Mangawhero and Ngarua Roads has also been extended through Lease No. 3 to the Waikaka Canal.

Most of the work has been in connection with the drainage of the adjacent lands, which will shortly be available for selection. Several teams have been engaged carting spoil for the Ngarua Road formation, and 130 chains have been completed, a thickness of from 2 ft. to 3 ft. of spoil being put down. The carting of spoil and formation on the Mangawhero Road has also been pushed on and is now nearly completed. The new wharf, which has a length of 120 ft. and a 40 ft. by 30 ft. shed, have been completed, and are a great improvement on the old structures. The tram-line was taken over by the Department during the year. A receiving-shed and agent's quarters were built at Patetonga, and the line is now being relaid and put in thorough order. It is proposed to put a petrol engine on this line shortly. The sum of £325 9s. 4d. was received during the year in payment of freights.

CENTRAL DISTRICT.

The securing of Jugo-Slav labour has been the means of not only enabling the Department to maintain the existing works, but also to undertake new work, especially in draining and preparing land for soldier settlement. Over 18 miles of large new drains were constructed during the year, and six new reinforced tide-gates were installed, replacing the old wooden ones, while twenty-one concrete culverts were constructed to take the place of the old sill bridges. A large new wharf and shed are under construction at Kerepehi and are nearly completed, while the construction of three more new wharves is being prepared for. The manufacture of Monier concrete pipes on the works is proving very successful, and a total length of 1,156 ft. of these pipes, ranging from 1 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. in diameter, have been laid on the plains. A plant is now being got ready for the manufacture of pipes 3 ft. 6 in. in diameter.

The blacksmith's shop has been kept in constant work, and has been fitted up with a lathe, radial drill, screwing-machine, emery wheel, &c., which will be the means of still further saving on the heavy expenses incurred in foundry-work. The carpenter's shop has turned out a large amount of work for the year, in addition to carrying out repairs to launches, punts, &c.

WAITAKARURU DISTRICT.

Several new concrete culverts have been installed in the above district, but the main portion of the work for the year has consisted of the maintenance of existing drains and stop-banks.

PRIESTMAN DREDGES.

The No. 1 dredge has been employed continuing the canal from the Piako River along the Waitoa River, and has completed 55 chains for the year, making a total length of 133 chains. Some trouble has been experienced on this canal owing to the difficult nature of country met with. In some places 4 ft. to 5 ft. of pumice sand was encountered on a bottom of very hard sandstone and clay. The cut behind the dredge will require to be gone over again in order to clear the sand deposited. Amount of spoil dredged was 55,031 cubic yards, at a cost of £1,394 1s. 6d.