

The average yearly rainfall during the past eleven years is 45.55 in. The fall this year was the highest recorded during that period, but there were no excessive storms, and drainage conditions generally have been very satisfactory.

DREDGES.

The principal feature of the year's operations has been the progress made with the river-improvement works. Three dredges have been engaged on this work, and a total quantity of 116,495 cubic yards has been excavated in channel-enlargement and stop-bank construction on the Piako River. The beneficial effects of this work on the regimen of the stream has been apparent this year, which was characterized by the highest rainfall recorded since the commencement of reclamation operations on the plains.

The following table shows the quantities excavated by the dredges for the past seven years, and the average unit cost :—

Year.	Cubic Yards.	Cost per Cubic Yard.
1920-21	158,865	7.42d.
1921-22	246,022	7.29d.
1922-23	440,092	8.20d.
1923-24	508,654	7.27d.
1924-25	822,286	5.86d.
1925-26	856,653	6.32d.
1926-27	647,182	7.42d.

No. 1, Priestman dredge, has been engaged on the Piako River improvement works. The total quantity excavated by this dredge was 36,102 cubic yards, at a cost of 11.07d. per cubic yard.

No. 2, Priestman dredge, has been engaged on the construction of the Maukoro Canal and Railway Canal, in the Waitakaruru District. This dredge has been working two shifts during most of the year, and considering the unstable nature of the country the progress has been good. The output was 72,196 cubic yards, and the cost 6.62d. per cubic yard.

No. 6, Priestman dredge, which was overhauled, including the installation of a new boiler, has been engaged on channel-enlargement in the Piako River. The quantity excavated was 28,549 cubic yards, at a cost of 12.79d. per cubic yard. Tidal conditions increased the cost.

No. 11, Kingston dredge, was also reconditioned, and working on the Piako River and Ngarua Canal has excavated 50,481 cubic yards, at a cost of 10.04d. per cubic yard. Tidal conditions increased the cost.

No. 15, Bucyrus drag-line, has been constructing the Awaitei Canal and stop-banks. Some difficulties due to bank caving and prolonged flood conditions have been experienced, but the dredge has been working two shifts almost continuously, and has handled 73,486 cubic yards during the year, at a cost of 10.37d. per cubic yard.

No. 16, Bucyrus drag-line, has been constructing stop-banks on the Piako River, and also the Reservoir Canal, in the Kerepeehi Block. Working two shifts, the output was 107,503 cubic yards, and cost 7.51d.

No. 19, Michigan Walking dipper dredge, which has been excavating drains in the Awaitei district, was shipped to the Waihou River last December, on loan to the Public Works Department. Before removal, the machine excavated 47,203 cubic yards, at unit cost of 5.22d.

No. 20, Rood land dredge, has been constructing a large drain in the Kerepeehi Block, after completing a section of stop-bank on the western side of the Awaitei Canal. The dredge handled 84,612 cubic yards, at a cost of 7.29d. per cubic yard.

No. 24, American steam dipper dredge, after completing the straightening and enlargement of the Waitoa River between its junction with the Piako and the Ohine Stream, is now engaged on the construction of a canal along the southern boundary of the Kerepeehi Block. The year's excavation was 147,050 cubic yards, at a cost of 4.9d. per cubic yard.

CENTRAL DISTRICT.

The principal undertakings in the Central district, in addition to dredging, have been the construction of 886 chains of new drains, involving 33,882 cubic yards of excavation, road-formation and metalling, cleaning 1,883 chains of drains, widening and deepening drains 481 chains, and repairing and improving stop-banks.

A large road-embankment was constructed at the river end of the Reservoir Canal, and 4,346 cubic yards of clay carted for ballasting roads through peat areas.

A large staff is constantly employed coaling dredges, and receiving and distributing stores and material at the Kerepeehi Depot, and on minor undertakings, including the cutting and hauling of 204 white-pine piles, 909 fascines, and ringbarking and clearing willows on river-bank for a distance of 4 miles 22 chains.

Good progress has been made with the road and drainage of the Kerepeehi Block. About 250 chains of stop-banking has been completed to-date, and 430 chains of preliminary bank constructed. About 250 chains of embankment is still required to completely surround this block, and, owing to the fact that there is 3 ft. to 4 ft. of peat, some sections of the embankment will require to be enlarged as shrinkage occurs.