

The works now being carried out are of the type suited to hand-labour methods, and comprise drain construction and improvements, road-formation, ringbarking willows, eradication of noxious weeds, and the development of Crown land for future settlement.

It can be claimed with confidence that, owing to the truly constructive type of activity, the expenditure from Unemployment Board and other funds on these works is in the nature of a subsidy for widely distributed benefits to the workers, present and future settlers, and to the community as a whole. Pre-settlement development works alone offer wide scope for the useful employment of additional labour in this district and will do much to avoid the delay and hardship of pioneering new settlement in reclaimed swamp land. More effective work could be carried out if the uncertainty regarding the supply of labour could be removed. In the past the number of men in the works camps has frequently been 50 per cent. below strength, and in one case a camp for twenty-five men had to be closed without completing the work for which it had been established because the employment agencies were unable to send men. Under these conditions working plans for balanced development are difficult to carry out. I feel confident that this difficulty would be overcome if the reproductive value of the works now being carried out on the Hauraki Plains was fully realized. This is unemployment-relief work that is an aid to reconstruction.

DREDGES.

Limited funds and restrictions in the use of mechanical equipment in favour of hand labour have been responsible for the small volume of construction carried out by the dredges and excavating-plant. The total quantity of machine-excavated material was 52,517 cubic yards for the year.

The following table gives the total quantities excavated by the dredges each year during the past fifteen years:—

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.
1927-28	652,413	7.32d.
1928-29	619,911	6.54d.
1929-30	595,565	6.25d.
1930-31	536,692	8.32d.
1931-32	390,611	7.99d.
1932-33	200,954	8.00d.
1933-34	116,224	5.96d.
1934-35	52,517	10.02d.

During June, July, and August, 1934, the whole of the excavating-plant was idle with the exception of No. 16 Bucyrus excavator, which was in use as a crane on the Kerepeehi Block pumping-station building.

No. 1 Priestman dredge and No. 11 Kingston dredge have been laid up at Kerepeehi since July, 1932, and No. 2 Priestman dredge has been laid up at Waitakaruru since May, 1931.

No. 15 Bucyrus excavator was idle from July, 1932, until December, 1934, when it was transported by barge from Kaihere Landing to the Kerepeehi Block pumping-station, where it has been used intermittently as a building crane, excavator, and pile-driver.

No. 16 Bucyrus excavator was employed on similar work for eight months from April to November, 1934, when it was shipped to the Waikaka Canal in the Patetonga district, and during the last four months of the year the machine has been employed widening and deepening this canal. Operating with half-yard Page bucket and 50 ft. boom, this machine excavated 20,605 cubic yards from 80 chains of canal in eighty-six working-days. The average daily output was 240 cubic yards, and the unit cost 6.85d.

No. 19 dredge, after being laid up since July, 1932, was reconditioned in August, 1934. This machine was reconstructed on the works in 1929 and equipped with a 100 ft. boom and superstructure of Oregon, specially designed to carry out the river-channel improvement between the 6 mile peg and Kerepeehi Wharf (11 miles 10 chains) and between the 13 miles 5 chains peg and Kaihere Wharf (14 miles 45 chains). In these two reaches the required top width of the improved channel is 170 ft., the under-water bank slopes three horizontal to one vertical, and the berm width between the improved channel and river-side toe of the spoil bank not less than 50 ft. To meet these conditions a bank-delivery machine having a reach of 200 ft. was required, and this plant was designed for this duty. The enforced laying-up of this machine, for reasons of economy, for a period of over two years, when about ten months continued operation would have completed the work for which it was built was particularly unfortunate, because, owing to decay of the timber superstructure, extensive renewals were required before the plant could be recommissioned. After working five months it was found necessary to lay up the machine to renew a section of the boom, and no work was done during March. Using a Page bucket of 1 cubic-yard capacity the output