

and stock bridges aggregating 105 ft. in length were constructed. Seventy acres were ploughed, 130 acres were sown in temporary pasture, 160 acres were sown in permanent pasture, and 120 acres were sown in crops.

Raetihi Scheme.—The work undertaken during the year comprised 90 acres of ploughing and the erection of a 12 ft. bridge.

Ohakune Scheme.—69 chains of old fencing were repaired and 98 chains of new fencing were erected. An area of 55 acres was ploughed and 154 acres were top-dressed. A total length of 1,315 ft. of water-pipe was laid, and 10 chains of drains were completed.

NAPIER DISTRICT.

Ahuriri Lagoon Reclamation. The Ahuriri Lagoon, formerly an extensive arm of the sea of some 7,500 acres in area, is now being drained and reclaimed by the Department on behalf of the Small-farms Board. The lagoon was partially drained by the uplift of the land which accompanied the disastrous earthquake of 1931, and this rendered its complete drainage possible and also desirable on account of the great prospective value of the land due to its proximity to the Town of Napier. This work was commenced in 1934, and the method adopted has been to build approximately 11 miles of stop-bank to protect the flats from inundation by flood-water from the adjoining hills.

The internal drainage of the areas thus protected has to be effected by pumping, on account of their being largely below sea-level. Two pumping-stations have been erected for this purpose.

One of the chief difficulties connected with the reclamation work is the removal from the soil of salt left there by the sea which once covered its surface. With a view to accomplishing this a special system, comprising some 350 miles of small drains, has been constructed. These drains have been dug in parallel lines 2 chains apart over the whole area of land. Their purpose is to carry off the salt in solution as it is leached out of the soil, and tests which have been carried out by the Department of Agriculture indicate that the amount of salt in the ground is being steadily decreased by this means.

An area of from 600 acres to 700 acres of the reclaimed land has been put down in rye-grass and barley, and the block, under the management of the Lands Department, is now carrying from seven thousand to eight thousand sheep, and approximately two hundred head of dry stock.

At the beginning of the year under review, the greater part of the block was still flooded from the disastrous storm of Anzac Day, 1938. As a consequence the first few months of the year were largely occupied in dewatering the land and repairing flood damage, and this, unfortunately, caused a delay of four to five months in the progress of the work, which, however, is now practically completed.

The principal items dealt with during the year have been the completion of the metalling of some 26 miles of access roads, the topping-up of 11 miles of stop-bank, and the completion of all drains. A water-supply over the whole block for stock-watering purposes has been designed and partly completed, and a further 25 miles of fencing have been erected.

Apart from drainage, pumping, and general maintenance of roads and drains, a small amount of topping-up of stop-banks, the completion of the water-supply, and the completion of fencing, yet remain to be done, and it is anticipated that this work will be completed during the next few months. One hundred and eighty men have been employed during the year.

IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL GROUNDS.

Throughout the year an extensive programme was continued in connection with the Government's scheme for improving the grounds of public schools. The preparation of proposals and the execution of the works were under the control of the Public Works Department, but finance was provided by the Education Department and the Labour Department, the latter Department's contribution being met from the Employment Promotion Fund. An important feature of the year's activities was the provision of adequate play areas in many localities where previously few, if any, facilities existed for physical and recreational exercise.

In addition to excavating, draining, levelling, and grading large playing-grounds, assembly areas were metalled and sealed, while at a number of schools basketball and tennis-courts were also constructed. The planting of ornamental trees and shrubs, the erection of fences, and the permanent surfacing of paths, &c., have vastly improved the school amenities in numerous localities.

In the interests of the physical welfare of pupils, several swimming-baths were constructed under a special-subsidy basis granted by the Minister of Education whereby School Committees, assisted by local residents, contributed towards the cost of materials.

These general improvements were carried out at several hundred schools throughout the Dominion, and the results are greatly appreciated by teachers, pupils, and parents.

HARBOUR-WORKS.

Awamui Harbour Dredging. As a result of the initial dredging carried out by the Department between August and December, 1937, vessels have been enabled to work the port without interruption, and the improved conditions have brought about an increase in trade. Regular sailings are of special importance in the export of butter, and to avert any risk of interruption a small amount of redredging was carried out in August, 1938, early in the export season. The annual revenue derived from a small harbour-improvement rate has exceeded the anticipated amount, and should prove more than sufficient to meet the full cost of any further dredging or other improvement to the port which may be needed in the future.