

Receipts have increased from £31,412 in 1921-22 to £63,181 in 1926-27, and payments have decreased from £75,642 in 1921-22 to £46,907 in 1926-27, which means that there has been a net improvement of £60,504 in the six years the Department has had control of the port.

With regard to the Income and Expenditure Account the surplus for the year amounted to £10,207 1s. 4d., which sum was transferred to Harbour Maintenance Reserve. This is by far the best result achieved since the Department assumed control of the harbour. The year was an exceedingly good one from the revenue viewpoint, no stoppages of any consequence having occurred at the mines, and the coal output having shown a large increase.

The following statement shows the net tonnage of shipping entering the port, the tonnage of coal exported, and the financial result for each year since 1921-22 :—

Year.	Net Tonnage of Shipping entered.	Tonnage of Coal exported.	Financial Result.		
			£	s.	d.
1921-22	273,706	480,873	Deficiency	38,113	2 7
1922-23	332,401	573,487	„	12,038	9 4
1923-24	275,762	442,070	„	4,333	14 7
1924-25	334,827	556,669	Surplus	5,711	17 0
1925-26	386,669	552,949	„	5,630	8 0
1926-27	459,670	637,165	„	10,207	1 4

These figures are a clear indication of the satisfactory improvement in the finances of the Harbour under departmental control.

The large increase in tonnage of vessels entering the port during 1926-27 is accounted for by the substantial improvement in the bunkering trade, forty-four overseas vessels having called for bunkers as compared with twenty for the previous year.

The bucket dredge "Mawhera" was chartered from the Greymouth Harbour Board from the beginning of the year until the 16th December, 1926, during which period she was engaged on dredging the berthage and swinging-basin areas. The total quantity of material dredged from these areas was 175,173 cubic yards. On the return of the "Mawhera" to the Greymouth Harbour Board on the 16th December, 1926, the suction dredge "Eileen Ward" was commissioned for work on the bar. The total quantity of material dredged by this vessel was 178,210 cubic yards. The total quantity of material dredged during the year was therefore 353,383 cubic yards.

A good depth of water has been maintained on the bar throughout the year, the average depth at high water being 24 ft. 10 in. as compared with 24 ft. 1 in. for the previous year. The average depth in the river fairway at high water from the Crane Wharf to the bar was 26 ft. 8 in., the previous year's average being 26 ft. 9 in.

The year under review was marked by numerous floods at Westport, as may be gathered from the fact that the river was in flood on ninety-nine days of the year. Some of these floods were particularly heavy, that of the 5th November being the highest ever recorded in the history of Westport, and damaging so far as the Department's dredging operations were concerned. As a matter of fact, this flood had the effect of nullifying a great deal of the work carried out by the dredge "Mawhera" in the berthages during the previous nine months, and, furthermore, it has necessitated the Department embarking on an extensive and costly scheme of works. It has been decided to proceed with the dredging of the harbour to a greater depth and width in order to improve the swinging-basin, and generally to degrade the river-bed up to the Buller Bridge. With this end in view arrangements have been made to charter the bucket dredge "Maui" from the Gisborne Harbour Board.

The conversion of the navigation lights on the eastern side of the river from kerosene-burning to electric has been attended with excellent results. The lights are now much more powerful, and at the same time considerably less expensive to maintain.

The coal-handling appliances, which are under the control of the Railway Department, are being improved. One of the cranes was heightened some time ago, and another is being raised at present. The Railway Department is also calling for tenders for an up-to-date electric crane for the Coal Wharf. It is hoped that by the provision of these improvements the handling of coal will be facilitated. The most frequent cause of delay, however, is undoubtedly shortage in the supply of coal to ships when a greater number than usual are in port, and this factor is, of course, one over which the Department has no control.

During last session the following legislation affecting Westport Harbour was promoted and passed :—

- (a) The Westport Harbour Amendment Act, 1926, the object of which was to clear up a number of legal anomalies and to convert the wharfage of 9d. per ton on coal to special coal rate, thus amalgamating it with the 3d. per ton already being charged under the latter heading.
- (b) The Forests Amendment Act, 1926, in which provision was made to place timber areas in the Buller Coalfields Reserve under the administration of the Forestry Department. Previously these areas were under the sole control of the Warden's Court, which was an unsatisfactory arrangement from the viewpoint both of revenue and of skilled administration.