

The finger-print system of identification was introduced in March, 1903, and the following table shows the increase in the finger-print collection in five-year periods from 1905 and for the year 1940 :

Year.	Number of Prints in Collection.	Increase on Previous Period.	Prisoners Traced as Previous Offenders.	Year.	Number of Prints in Collection.	Increase on Previous Period.	Prisoners Traced as Previous Offenders.
1909 ..	8,718	5,218	525	1929 ..	40,852	8,923	1,298
1914 ..	15,302	6,584	879	1934 ..	48,545	7,693	1,107
1919 ..	22,332	7,030	939	1939 ..	55,801	7,256	1,115
1924 ..	31,929	9,597	1,244	1940 ..	57,749	1,948	248

Auckland Branch. On 31st March, 1940, the finger-print collection in Auckland totalled 7,338 sets, being made up as follows : Males, 6,894 ; females, 400 ; and foreign, 44 sets.

During the year 1,097 sets of finger-prints were received from the Mount Eden Prison or taken at the Criminal Registration Branch, and were duly classified, searched, and filed.

The photographs of 282 prisoners were taken and 1,410 prints were made from the negatives, also a large number of photographs of scenes of crimes and motor accidents, &c., were taken, the total number of photographs produced by the Branch during the year being 2,235. Three volumes—i.e., 900 photos of New South Wales prisoners' photographs were received, card indexed, and the cards filed in order of finger-print classification.

The remanded-prisoner forms, together with the results of the cases inserted, for 547 prisoners were dealt with and returned to the Criminal Registration Branch at Wellington.

In five cases offenders who would not otherwise have been known as having been previously convicted were traced by their finger-prints, and in ten other cases finger-prints left by offenders when committing crimes were identified and the offenders duly arrested and dealt with by the Supreme Court, most of these pleaded guilty, and in some cases admitted numerous other offences ; only in one case was it necessary to call finger-print evidence in Court.

The "*modus operandi*" or "classification of crime" bureau is in good working-order, and forms the nucleus of what will at some future date be a great adjunct to the detection of crime.

ARMS BUREAU.

The Arms Bureau has been fully occupied during the year, the greater part of the work being in connection with shooting accidents and fatalities. In the majority of instances where Coroners inquests were held, a report on the actual mechanical condition of the weapon concerned was furnished after the weapon had been examined. These reports have occasionally assisted the police and Coroners to a decision as to whether an apparent suicide may have been an accidental happening, or *vice versa*. In a number of other instances it was shown that, although death was due to a deliberate act on the part of the deceased, the firearm itself was of a dangerous nature or in such a state as to be unsafe for further use.

For various reasons it was not found possible to give the usual lectures at the headquarters of police districts and certain provincial towns ; but trainees at the police Training Depot were given more than the usual amount of instruction in relation to firearms and the bearing of firearms and ammunition on their future work.

Considerably more time was spent this year in experimental work, particularly regarding the restoration of numbers, trade-marks, &c., that have been erased from metal articles such as firearms, and progress has been made in this direction. In several cases numbers have been restored on firearms sent in from different districts, and in one instance only the number could not be restored. As a result of the Commissioner's visit to Australia information on this and other subjects connected with the scientific identification of firearms and ammunition has been exchanged between this office and the States of the Commonwealth.

The Arms Bureau has been used in several cases that have been brought before the Courts, and expert evidence was given in three Supreme Court trials.

The causes of accidental shootings have been further investigated, and every possible step is being taken to bring about a better understanding of the hidden dangers of certain firearms and the elimination of unsafe types from this market. Arrangements are being made for a series of public lectures to be given as soon as conditions permit.

The following statistics in respect to accidents and fatalities with firearms show a very slight improvement over the previous year's figures. While the deaths were 2 less, the actual total of accidents was 49 this year, as against 47 last year : Fatal, 17 ; non-fatal, 32. Hammer shotguns, 15 (3 fatal) ; hammerless shotguns, 3 (1 fatal) ; .303 in. rifles, 3 (1 fatal) ; .22 in. rifles, 26 (11 fatal) ; pistols, 2 (1 fatal). The average age of the victims of these shooting accidents was twenty-six years and a half.

The following table shows the rate of accidents for each month of the year : April, 10 ; May, 11 ; June, 1 ; July, 5 ; August, 2 ; September, 2 ; October, Nil ; November, 2 ; December, 3 ; January, 3 ; February, 3 ; and March, 7. March, April, and May are indicated as the dangerous months of the year.

Attention is again drawn to the number of these accidents which are due to carrying loaded firearms in motor-vehicles. In this year's statistics 6 fatal and 5 non-fatal accidents are recorded through this dangerous practice.

Eleven accidents (4 fatal) were traced to the undesirable practice of leaving firearms and ammunition within the reach of children.