

There were two prosecutions during the year for the crime of arson.

In the first case a man and his wife and a male employee agreed to set fire to the rented house in which they lived at Waverley in order to secure the sum of £300 insurance moneys from the destruction of furniture. The male employee was convicted of the crime of arson, and the man and the woman were convicted of aiding and abetting the crime.

In the second case the occupier of the house had taken his family to the seaside for the day, and a youth, a part-time employee, entered the house and stole money and then set fire to the house for the purpose of hiding his crime of theft. The youth was later ordered to be detained in a Borstal institution.

The conduct of the police within the district has been very good, and extra work brought about by present conditions has been well and cheerfully performed.

Three constables were dealt with for breaches of Police Regulations.

INSPECTOR SCOTT, PALMERSTON NORTH DISTRICT.

The authorized strength of the Force in this district on the 31st March, 1941, was fifty-nine, an increase of one over the previous year due to the appointment of an additional constable at Marton Station, which has afforded much-needed assistance to the staff in that town.

The new police offices at Levin have been completed and are now ready for occupation. These offices, which are planned on modern lines, should prove comfortable and convenient for the staff and will fill a long-felt want in this rapidly expanding town.

The offences return for the year ending the 31st December, 1940, shows a total of 1,956 offences reported, against 2,377 for the previous year, a decrease of 421. Of the total number of offences reported, 1,832 were dealt with by arrest or summons.

The principal increases were in house and shop breaking, vagrancy, and possessing liquor at dance-halls. The principal decreases were in sexual offences, theft, breaches of the Gaming Acts, Licensing Acts, and failing to maintain wives and children. The most noticeable decrease was in breaches of the Motor-vehicles Act, no doubt the result of fewer vehicles being on the roads owing to petrol-restrictions.

During the year the following serious crimes were reported and dealt with :—

On the 11th October, 1940, at Tiakorea, a man attempted to murder his daughter by cutting her throat, and then committed suicide. The young woman completely recovered.

On the 20th October, 1940, the dead body of an infant was found on the Orona River Bridge in circumstances that indicated the commission of a serious crime. Post-mortem examination disclosed that the child had been born alive. As a result of co-ordinated effort between the detectives in Palmerston North, Wanganui, and New Plymouth districts, within five days a woman had been arrested at Hawera and a man at Ohakea. Both subsequently pleaded guilty to charges of procuring abortion and concealment of birth. When dealing with the female accused, His Honour the Chief Justice questioned the action of certain police officials and recommended that the matter be fully investigated by a competent tribunal. A Commission of Inquiry consisting of a Judge of the Supreme Court, the Solicitor-General, and the President of the Law Society was set up. After hearing the evidence of all the parties the Commission completely exonerated the members of the Force concerned and upheld the action taken.

On the 16th November, 1940, near Bulls, two men were killed by a motor-car which was being driven on the wrong side of the road. The driver was arrested and committed for trial, but acquitted at the Supreme Court.

Arising out of the death in Palmerston North Hospital of a young married woman as the result of an illegal operation, a man and a woman are now awaiting trial on a charge of manslaughter.

During the year three constables were dealt with for breaches of Police Regulations. One was dismissed and the other two fined.

Apart from these instances the conduct of all ranks has been very good and a high standard of efficiency maintained.

SUPERINTENDENT LOPDELL, WELLINGTON DISTRICT.

On the 31st March, 1941, the authorized strength of the district was 268 of all ranks, the actual strength 259.

During the year the closing of the Centennial Exhibition reduced our authorized strength by 31, but shortly afterwards an increase in strength of Wharf Police by one sergeant and twenty-four constables was authorized to cope with additional work arising from the war.

Further increase was authorized by the appointment of a sergeant to charge of Upper Hutt Station and an additional senior sergeant to Central Station.

To cope with further requirements of Shipping Emergency Regulations, I must recommend the addition of one sergeant and eight constables to the strength of the Wharf Police. Further, to ensure adequate police protection and patrol at Upper Hutt, I recommend the transfer there of an additional constable. Owing to proximity of Trentham Military Camp this is now a very busy centre.

On the 5th July, 1940, a new police-station was opened at Trentham to allow for closer supervision of Trentham Township and the military camp.

Offences reported during the year ended 31st December, 1940, numbered 8,700, of which 8,080 were dealt with by summons or arrest. Offences reported show an increase of 542 over the previous year's figures.

The chief increases were breaches of Motor-vehicles Act, theft, housebreaking, and mischief.

Substantial decrease was shown in the case of false pretences, drunkenness, and maintenance cases.

Only one case of serious crime occurred during the year, this being a charge of murder, the facts of which are as follows: Following a domestic quarrel, a man was admitted to the Wellington Public Hospital on the 2nd November, 1940, suffering from serious knife wounds, from which he died an hour later. Inquiries showed that he and his wife returned from Trentham Races at about 7.15 p.m. that day, both being under the influence of liquor. A few minutes later they were heard quarrelling, and shortly afterwards the wife informed a neighbour that she had stabbed her husband. She appeared at Wellington Supreme Court on 6th February, 1941, charged with murder, but was acquitted.

The conduct of members of the Force in the district has been good. A satisfactory standard of efficiency has been maintained by both branches of the Service.