

Several of His Majesty's Australian ships and warships of Allied countries visited New Zealand, and hospitality was extended to officers and men of these vessels.

The reception and welfare of evacuees from Pacific island territories was also dealt with.

During the year several hospital ships arrived, and arrangements were made for the sick and wounded to be welcomed on their return.

A number of minesweepers were launched, and the launching ceremonies were arranged by this section.

XIV. RAFFLES AND ART-UNIONS.

One hundred and sixty-five licenses under the authority of section 42 of the Gaming Act, 1908, were issued during the year. Of these, 108 were for works of art, 44 for small amounts of alluvial gold, and 13 for alluvial gold to the value of £5,000 each.

The following table sets out the aggregate result of the £5,000 gold art-unions:—

						£	s.	d.
Gross sales	..	..	..	..	..	223,783	0	0
Commission on sales	..	..	..	..	..	33,567	9	3
Expenses	..	..	..	..	..	32,147	14	0
Prizes	..	..	..	..	..	65,000	0	0
Net proceeds	..	..	..	..	..	93,067	16	9
Lottery duty	..	..	..	..	..	22,378	6	0
Net profit	..	..	..	..	..	70,689	10	9

Of the net profit, £41,500 was distributed to the various Mayoral or other recognized central relief of distress funds and £28,250 to charitable and philanthropic organizations, including children's health camps.

XV. FIRE BRIGADES.

There are fifty-seven Fire Boards in operation. New fire districts were constituted in Patea and Lower Hutt City. The biennial appointment and election of members took place in the month of May. The estimates of all Fire Boards were considered and approved.

In August, 1941, a disastrous fire completely gutted the premises of Messrs. John Burns and Co., Ltd., of Auckland. A considerable amount of public criticism arose after this fire, as a result of which the Government decided to set up a Commission to investigate the foundation for such criticism and other matters concerned with fire-prevention. The Commission consisted of Mr. F. K. Hunt, of Auckland, and he duly reported, after holding an exhaustive investigation into the wide order of reference submitted to the Commission. His recommendations were duly forwarded to the Government and transmitted to the Governmental and other authorities concerned, and those recommendations requiring further action are being carefully considered by the authorities concerned. It is interesting to note that the Commission completely exonerated the Auckland Metropolitan Fire Board of the criticism directed at the handling of the fire by the Auckland Fire Brigade.

The annual report of the Inspector of Fire Brigades will, as usual, be published as a separate statement.

XVI. PASSPORTS AND EXIT PERMITS.

The following are the statistics with last year's figures shown in parentheses: New passports 478 (677); passport renewals, 115 (165); exit permits, 6,426 (11,000).

In sixteen cases where men gave undertakings to return within a specified time and failed to return at all, their bond-money was rendered forfeit. The total amount was £950.

XVII. FOREIGN CONSULS.

Twenty foreign countries have representation in New Zealand. Nine fresh appointments were gazetted. The Department arranged the departure of the Japanese representative after the declaration of war.

XVIII. CHANGE OF NAME.

Applications were dealt with as follows (last year's figures in parentheses): Approved, 64 (58); declined, 3 (11).

XIX. NATURALIZATION.

No certificates of naturalization were granted. Four certificates were revoked. Wives of two naturalized persons made declarations of desire to acquire British nationality. Thirty British-born wives of aliens made declarations to retain in New Zealand the rights of a British subject. One person renounced his British nationality by making a declaration of alienage.

XX. RACING.

Totalizator race meetings have been curtailed, the latest decision involving a reduction by half after Easter Monday. For the racing year ending 31st July, 1942, an assured reduction of 107 days is involved, with the possibility of some clubs not utilizing other days. Particulars of totalizator investments and taxation are published in the *Monthly Abstract of Statistics*.

XXI. WAR FUNDS, 1914-18.

The fifty-two patriotic societies still on the register under the War Funds Act, 1915, possess, according to the latest available reports, assets totalling £599,203 17s. 7d., a reduction of £21,227 16s. since the last returns. The annual reports received show that there are still many cases of 1914-18 ex-soldiers in need of assistance from these funds.

XXII. ADVERTISING OFFICE.

A slight decrease is shown in the work of this Office, due mainly to reduced newspaper advertising by the Army and Railways Departments. The total expenditure recorded for the year is £37,358 0s. 11d., as compared with £38,812 12s. 10d. for the previous year.

The press clippings supplied to Ministers and Departments approximate 2,200 weekly, the lessened supply of newsprint largely accounting for the decrease.