

SEACLIFF HOSPITAL

Dr. BROWN reports :—

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ended 31st December, 1947.

During the year there were 1,203 persons (678 men and 525 women) under care. In that period 185 patients were admitted, 111 discharged, and 21 transferred to other hospitals.

In addition to these patients, 64 voluntary boarders were admitted and 62 were discharged.

The number of deaths was 53, and in 28 of these the cause of death was senile decay.

Early in the year the effects of the slipping ground, on which I commented in last year's report, on the buildings on the female side of the hospital became more obvious and frequent inspections were made, at my request, by officers of the Public Works Department. It eventually became necessary to make temporary safety measures for the day-room of F2 Ward and to proceed with the erection of a wooden structure to replace it. This work is advancing, and it is hoped to get the patients into it fairly soon. On the male side, which for a time seemed to be reasonably safe from the effects of the slip, there is now evidence that this is not the case, and that, in one part at least, there is cause for some apprehension. The trouble caused by the slipping ground is extensive and makes the satisfactory running of the hospital far from easy. The main sewer has broken on numerous occasions and, by the nature of the terrain through which it runs, repairs are difficult, involving arduous work, and are not always satisfactory. Breaks in the water-main from Double Hill Reservoir are an almost every-day occurrence. A second pump, electrically driven, at Evansdale is almost ready for use, and this should make the water-supply much more satisfactory.

Much maintenance work has been done, but difficulties with supplies and lack of staff have hindered the work and much remains to be done. The age of the hospital and its insecurity have made this work difficult, costly, and often unsatisfactory.

The farm has had a satisfactory year. In the early spring very heavy rains caused flooding, which ran through the vegetable-garden, washing away not only the planted crops, but also the topsoil, and the effects of this must necessarily limit the vegetable crops next year.

The effect of the modern forms of treatment is shown in the annual statistics. The number of admissions has not been less than average, but the number of patients discharged has shown an increase, an increase which has been cumulative over the last few years. This is shown by the fact that while in 1940 the average resident population was 1,014, in the year under review the number was 961. (Despite this decline in population, the hospital is still overcrowded by modern standards.) Mr. Murray Falconer, the Neuro-Surgeon at Dunedin Hospital, has performed leucotomy in a few more cases, and the results confirm my previous reports to you that successful results can be expected only in a limited number of cases. Electro convulsive therapy has undoubtedly played a large part in the increased discharge rate, but once again I would like to emphasize that none of these treatments in itself is sufficient. The care and attention which only a well-trained staff of psychiatric nurses can give is perhaps even more important than these mechanical aids to treatment.

Clinics conducted by the members of the medical staff were held in Invercargill, Gore, Balclutha, and Oamaru as well as in the Dunedin Public Hospital.

The problem of staffing the hospital is well known to you, and the remedy, if any, does not form part of this report. I can only put on record my appreciation of the members of the existing staff, who have worked long hours and done such a good job of work.