

The old servicemen's cemeteries at Waikumete (Auckland) and Hamilton were converted during the year to semi-lawn types. Hitherto the graves in these two cemeteries were covered with concrete, which over the years had fallen into considerable disrepair. In their converted state these two cemeteries now present a pleasing appearance.

An improved standard type of grave overtop for graves of servicemen buried in public cemeteries was introduced during the year. The new type is very neat and dispenses with concrete walls and the use of white pebbles, both of which promoted accumulation of weed and dirt.

Inspections

Officers of the New Zealand War Graves Division made inspections of most servicemen's cemeteries during the year, when generally they met representatives of the local branches of the Returned Services' Association and local bodies and discussed with them matters affecting the future of such cemeteries. A number of historical cemeteries were also inspected, and expenditure was authorized for the purpose of renovating and generally tidying up those which were urgently in need of attention.

Headstones and Plaques

Considerable improvement was made during the year in reducing the number of headstone orders which were in arrears due to the recent war.

Branches of the New Zealand Returned Services' Association and relatives purchased an increasing number of headstones and plaques for those graves of ex-servicemen who died not as a result of war service, and in doing so they obviously took advantage of the Government's concession, which enables purchase of these items at less 25 per cent. of the actual cost to the Government.

Maintenance

Consequent upon the increasing number of servicemen's cemeteries completed during the past two years, annual maintenance costs have now risen to approximately £2,200. This figure would be much higher if it were not for the fact that many local bodies or branches of the Returned Services' Association are able to arrange a measure of maintenance without requiring monetary assistance from the Government. The actions of such local bodies and branches of the Returned Services' Association are obviously inspired by patriotic motives. The Department acknowledges and fully appreciates such gestures.

B. OVERSEAS GRAVES

Cemetery Register Forms

The task of sending these forms by the New Zealand War Graves Division for and on behalf of the Imperial War Graves Commission, London, to next-of-kin of all those New Zealanders who, during service, lost their lives or were missing overseas or in New Zealand is now nearing completion, although there is still considerable work ahead to compile commemoration lists by theatres of war. The Imperial War Graves Commission is anxious to receive these lists as soon as possible. During the year cemetery register forms relating to 8,000 overseas deceased ex-servicemen of the New Zealand Forces of the Second World War were despatched to the Imperial War Graves Commission. Unfortunately, no final decisions have yet been received by the Department in connection with approximately 500 casualties. These are cases where search for the bodies and graves has not yet been completed.