

A matter which is sometimes forgotten is that these statements refer to the average cost, and that individual patients cost more or less than the average. The newly admitted frequently cost more than the £1 1s. per week (which is the maximum maintenance rate which can be charged) on account of the extra care and attendance necessary.

The receipts for maintenance per head in 1909, calculated on the average number resident, were £8 9s. 6½d., against £7 17s. 9¾d. in 1908. I need hardly add that this is a very satisfactory refund, and speaks well not only for the relatives of the patients, but for the systematic work of the receivers. The fact that we are now paid the old-age pension in case of pensioners sent to mental hospitals must be given some credit for a share in the above.

The time of the clerks, who act as receivers of maintenance, and their assistants, in attending to correspondence, statutory notices, and books, requisitions, &c., checking of supplies, keeping tally of produce sold and consumed, of stores got and issued, &c., is very fully occupied, and with the increase of patients the increased work almost demands additional assistance. It is estimated that maintenance matters occupy about fourteen hours per week of the time of the Chief Clerk in each of the larger hospitals, and that if relieved of this labour the need for additional assistance would be warded off for some years at any rate. The procedure adopted in adjusting the maintenance charged to the various persons liable is as follows: On the admission of a patient inquiry is made concerning relatives liable under the Destitute Persons Act, and to them an information paper is forwarded by post, or through the police when the address is not known or the first-sent paper is ignored. When the information papers are returned to the receiver, he provisionally assesses the amount to be paid per week by each of the persons liable, issues accounts accordingly, and sends the papers to the Head Office. Here they are carefully revised, the provisional assessment being approved, reduced, or (very seldom) increased, according to circumstances elicited from the papers or further correspondence. The files are then returned to the local receiver. If at any time questions arise about any payment, the file has to be returned to the Head Office, and a matter involving perhaps only a few shillings has to be studied anew. However trifling the assessment, the file has to be gone into carefully in order to do justice both to the relative to whom a difference of, say, sixpence per week may mean everything, and to the Department which knows the value of an aggregate of small payments. Because of the following facts—namely, that the Head Office already has so much to do with this work, that it is inconvenient having files passing backward and forward, that clerks in the mental hospitals have their time fully occupied and ask for further assistance, that probably fourteen hours per week covers the assistance wanted, and that this is about the time estimated to be taken up with maintenance-work, I have to advocate in the interests of convenience and economy the addition of a clerk at the Head Office who would deal with all maintenance matters, keep the records, save much correspondence and much of my valuable time spent at present in perusing files the contents of which could be communicated in a few words and the gist of the subject disposed of by a question and an answer. I have brought this matter under your notice, and suggested that Mr. Wells, clerk at Mount View, who is well experienced in this class of work, would be a suitable man to occupy the position.

In the following table the farming operations during 1909 are valued, and the results bear testimony to the profitable management of the estates. The total increase in 1908 over 1907 was £84 6s. 8d., and the increase in 1909 over 1908, it will be seen, was £461 15s. 10d.

The value of the produce consumed is assessed at current rates, which can be largely checked by the price of the produce sold for cash.

	Produce sold for Cash.	Produce consumed in Mental Hospital.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Auckland	539 10 5	2,321 9 10	2,861 0 3
Christchurch	1,742 15 3	1,865 17 1	3,608 12 4
Seacliff	1,717 10 9	3,636 3 9	5,353 14 6
Hokitika	44 10 0	467 11 11	512 1 11
Nelson	195 9 8	778 2 7	973 12 3
Porirua	1,256 0 6	1,975 18 4	3,231 18 10
Wellington	194 14 4	492 11 0	687 5 4
Total	5,690 10 11	11,537 14 6	17,228 5 5
Total for 1908	5,770 5 2	10,996 4 5	16,766 9 7
Increase in 1909	...	541 10 1	461 15 10
Decrease in 1909	79 14 3	...	...

In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation of the good work being done in all our institutions, my thanks for the co-operation of Miss Maclean, the Assistant Inspector, of the Deputy Inspectors and Official Visitors, and my acknowledgment of the support received from yourself.

I have, &c.,

FRANK HAY.