

"Such work as the brigade personally was called upon to perform was carried out in a satisfactory manner. This remark also applies to the Fire Police, with the addition that a considerable improvement is manifest in their attendance and work when compared with previous inspections.

"I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

"Inspector of Fire Brigades."

As pointed out during the course of my inspection, the jumping-sheets require strengthening, and more grummet-holds working in.

The plant and appliances are maintained in good order and condition.

The chemical engine has proved a valuable addition to the equipment of the brigade, and owing to the scarcity of water most satisfactory results have attended its use, otherwise the fire loss during the past twelve months would have undoubtedly been very much greater in Hastings.

A site was purchased some little time ago, the plans for a new Central Fire-station prepared and approved, but considerable difficulty has been experienced by the Board in obtaining the necessary money on loan for the purpose of building the proposed new station. However, this difficulty has now been overcome, and the work is to be proceeded with at once.

During the year 8 fires have occurred in the Hastings Fire District, as against 11 for the previous year, a decrease of 3.

The loss by fire amounted to £530, as against £2,831, a decrease of £2,301.

The estimated cost of the brigade for the year 1911-12 is £1,096, as against £756 8s. 6d. for the year 1910-11, an increase of £339 11s. 6d. This comparatively large increase is due to providing for the quarterly repayment of the loan-money borrowed to build the new station, and to providing new equipment for the brigade in anticipation of the completion of the high-pressure water-supply system.

HAWERA.

Two inspections of the Hawera Fire Brigade and the Fire Police Corps with their equipment have been held—viz., 6th September, 1910, and 11th January, 1911. At the request of the Fire Board a special visit was made to Hawera on the 28th June for the purpose of consulting with and advising them in connection with brigade matters.

At the first inspection there were present—Fire Brigade: Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, 17 officers and firemen, and 2 messengers, with 2 on leave: this accounts for the full strength of 23 all told. Fire Police Corps: Captain, Lieutenant, and 4 constables, with 2 on leave, or 12 accounted for out of a total strength of 18: this attendance was very unsatisfactory.

The following interim report sent to the secretary of the Board covers the second inspection:—

"SIR,— "Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 11th January, 1911.

"An inspection of the Hawera Fire Brigade and Fire Police was held on 11th January, 1911.

"At the muster at 8.10 p.m. there were present—Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, 10 firemen, and 2 messengers, with 2 on duty at the Theatre, 5 on leave: authorized strength, 25 all told. Fire Police present—Captain, Lieutenant, 8 constables, and 1 messenger, with 2 on leave: authorized strength, 13.

"The Fire Brigade is at present 3 short of the authorized strength: this, with 5 on leave, out of the district, brings the available strength of the brigade down to 17 all told, and is not sufficient. An effort should be made to have not less than 20 all told at call. The attendance of the Fire Police was good.

"During the course of the subsequent drill I found that only two standpipes were available: one had been placed in the new out-station, and another was at the Theatre. Two new standpipes should be obtained immediately, also two branches, and a two-into-one breeching-piece.

"In a letter addressed to you, dated 10th February, 1910, I reported that the new set of coupling-ladders were defective in their construction, and recommended that the defects should be made good at the maker's expense. The steel bands have not been replaced by stronger ones, as pointed out to the Superintendent at the time of my visit should be done. As they are at present they will never be satisfactory.

"The relay shutter for working the electric-trembler bell has not yet been installed. A small box containing a few bandages, lint, carron-oil, friar's balsam, &c., should be supplied to the brigade for emergency cases.

"The new firebell is not giving satisfactory results. This is due to the ringing arrangement that, in my opinion, is entirely wrong in design. The hammer striking the bell externally and resting as it does must stop the vibrations; and the stroke, about 1 in., is quite too short. A comparison may be made by ringing the bell by means of its own tongue, taking care that the external hammer is not resting on the bell at the time, and comparing the sound produced by the different methods of ringing. Again, the bell is not rung very frequently, and it is more than likely that the lengthy sprocket-chain, some 100 ft. or more, will become rusted up. I consider the rocker system will be found much more effective.

"More reliable arrangements should be made so that the increased water-pressure may be available immediately an alarm of fire is given. I understand that at the late fire in Princes Street it was nearly half an hour before the greater pressure was obtained, and even then the pressure was so poor that at no time could more than three ineffective streams of water be employed.

"I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

"Inspector of Fire Brigades."