

been provided on a service road which has been carried about four miles ahead, to and over the Whakapapanui Stream, where provision is being made for the erection of a stone bridge. At the time of writing a temporary camp has also been established on the banks of the last-named stream for the bridge-building and stone-dressing gang; while a number of "bankers" have been provided under cover, so that the work of preparing the stone can be proceeded with without intermission. A stone-crusher with the necessary engine and other appliances is now being established, and much other necessary work has been done. Owing to the climatic conditions prevailing on the elevated Waimarino Plains, operations often require to be suspended for some days; but, taking everything into account, including the class of prison labour employed (habituals), I think the record of work performed since the first party of five prisoners started at Roto Aira on the 14th May, 1914, is by no means discreditable. Progress during the present winter will necessarily be slow if the weather-conditions continue to be as unsatisfactory as they have been recently, but with the advent of summer a considerable move forward should be possible.

Waikeria.—A considerable amount of work of various kinds has been carried out at Waikeria during the year. Owing to delays caused by the non-receipt of material the main building has not progressed at the rate we anticipated, but the central cell range and the kitchen block are now well forward, and it should not be many months before this portion of the building is sufficiently advanced to permit of its occupation. The building of two officers' residences is now being proceeded with, and one of them is almost ready for occupation. Both are being built of hollow concrete blocks, of which large numbers are being made on the property for the construction of the main building.

A road, constructed according to the best Public Works standard, and including a moderate-sized bridge, has been built through a portion of the property to give settlers access to the main road. Clearing, draining, and bridging is also being carried out in preparation for the making of a well-graded road for the purpose of opening up the Mental Hospital and Prison properties.

Farming operations have been carried on to a greater extent than in previous years, while an additional area of the property has been brought into cultivation. Preparations have been made for the planting of an orchard.

Waipa.—Like Kaingaroa, this camp is maintained for the purpose of providing labour for tree-planting operations. From the Acting-Gaoler's report it appears that quite an appreciable part of the prisoners' time was occupied in constructing roads and tracks through the plantations. The daily average of prisoners employed was less than at Kaingaroa, and the cash credit received from the Forestry Department—£1,223 8s. 5d.—therefore bears a fair proportion to the sum received (£1,568 7s. 11d.) from the former place.

Wellington. Owing to the unsatisfactory situation of the Terrace Prison it has been somewhat difficult in former years to find suitable employment for all the inmates. The principal outlet was at the Mount Cook brickworks, and as a consequence more men were sent there than were required to keep up the output to its limit. During the past year, however, ample work has been found for all the prisoners—firstly, by carrying out extensive alterations at Mount Cook; and, secondly, by building an additional cell house at Point Halswell, and employing the men there at tree-planting and on the excavation that has now been commenced to provide a site for the new prison that is to be erected there. All this work has been carried out by prison labour and at the lowest possible cost. Practically the whole of the material required for the extensive walls with which Mount Cook Prison is now surrounded was obtained by demolishing old and useless buildings. The clearing of the site, the terracing of the slopes, and other work that is contemplated with a view to preparing the ground for other purposes, and making it a beauty-spot and not an eyesore, will no doubt provide employment for some years to come for all the prisoners who cannot be profitably employed in the brickyards. For the present, at all events, the prison-labour problem at Wellington is solved.

EDUCATION AND DRILL.

The evening classes at Auckland and Invercargill continue to be carried on with considerable success. The institution of these classes has drawn attention to the low standard of education that exists among the majority of the men and youths committed to our prisons. The statistics on the subject that have been published for many years do not reveal the true position. The figures given simply show the number of prisoners received in the gaols for different offences who are (1) of superior education, (2) able to read and write, (3) able to read only, (4) unable to read. Our experience at both the northern and southern institutions is that many of the men who are credited with being able to read and write have only a very rudimentary knowledge of the subjects. This is particularly noticeable at Invercargill, our juvenile prison, where the average age of the men and youths attending the school is much lower than at Auckland. One would naturally expect the younger prisoners, most of whom have been born, or at all events have lived the greater part of their lives, in New Zealand to possess an average Board-school education. Unfortunately, the schoolmaster finds this is not so—that, as a matter of fact, quite a number of his pupils find extreme difficulty at the commencement of their studies in coping with ordinary Second Standard work. Whether this has been brought about by low mental development, neglect of parents during the school age, or lack of educational facilities, could possibly be shown by special investigation, but, from a criminological view-point, the natural question to ask is whether it is a case of cause and effect. Pending further research there is ample room for conjecture.

Drill.—The instruction in Swedish drill, which has now been thoroughly established in Auckland and Invercargill, is having beneficial results. It will be extended to prisoners confined in the newer institutions as soon as circumstances permit.