

The Marine Engineer recently examined Dog Island Lighthouse tower, and his examination showed that owing to the mortar coming out of the masonry extensive repairs will shortly be required.

Material for new houses for the keepers at Tiritiri has been procured, and I hope that the Department will be able to proceed with the erection during this year.

During the year I inspected the lighthouses at Castle Point, Portland Island, East Cape, Cuvier Island, Tiritiri, Ponui Passage, Channel Island, Mokohinou, Chickens, and Manukau, but owing to pressure of duties due to several of the staff being away with the Expeditionary Forces I have been unable to visit any others. The stations visited were found to be in good order and well kept. Two keepers have retired on superannuation, thirteen have resigned, and three have joined the Forces for the front. Ten new keepers have been appointed.

Harbours.

The buoys and beacons in the various harbours under the control of the Department have been overhauled and painted by Captain Bollous, of the s.s. "Hinemoa." A beacon for a light at the Narrows in Hokianga Harbour has been erected, and an automatic acetone-acetylene light has been obtained for it. This light will shortly be erected. A new house for the Harbourmaster at this port has been built at Rawene, and the boatman's house has been removed to that place from the Heads. Rawene being central, the Harbourmaster is better able to work the harbour properly from it than from the Heads. Mr. Rowe, signalman, has been retired on superannuation, and Captain Daniel has been appointed to succeed him.

Owing to the difficulty in getting the required material from England in consequence of the war, the contractors for the supply of a buoy to carry a light at Beacon Reach have not yet been able to complete their contract. Arrangements are being made to erect a beacon at Sail Point.

A good deal of gravel and sand continues to be taken from the beaches in the Hauraki Gulf under licenses issued by the Department. Proceedings were taken against persons caught taking the material without licenses to do so, and fines were inflicted in each case.

The sum of £1,227 4s. 1d. was collected for pilotage and port charges in respect of harbours under the control of the Department, as compared with £1,561 16s. 1d. during the previous year. A return of the amounts collected at the various ports, and also the amounts collected at ports under the control of Harbour Boards, is appended.

Fisheries.

The picking and sale of rock-oysters was continued by the Department last season, and owing to improvement in the beds the demand was fully met. The quantity picked and sold was 9,396 sacks, and the amount realized was £6,714 18s. 6d., with a net profit of £1,239 9s. 8d., a portion of which was used to replant depleted areas. Of the quantity mentioned 598 sacks were sold in parcels of about five dozen at 1s., and parcels of about sixteen dozen for 3s. Of the quantity sold, 8,640 sacks were sold in Auckland, 239 at Russell, 54 at Hokianga, 287 at New Plymouth, 252 at Gisborne, 93 at Napier, 24 at Hokitika, 3 at Greymouth, 23 at Westport, 1 at Wanganui, 64 at Wellington, and 9 at Christchurch. The price charged per sack at Auckland is 13s. 6d.

An inspection has been made by Mr. Ayson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, of the mangrove-oysters in the North of Auckland, which showed that the quantities of these oysters are not nearly so large as was thought.

In addition to replanting depleted areas in the Hauraki Gulf, a commencement has been made to replant in Whangaroa Harbour, where good beds formerly existed.

The oysters taken in Foveaux Strait last season were 32,839 sacks, valued at £16,123, of which 273,000 dozen, valued at £1,958, were exported to Australia.

In May, 1914, it was decided to discontinue the practice of seizing boats used in illegally taking oysters and fish, but it was made known at the same time that if fines imposed for breaches of the law were not a sufficient deterrent the question of reverting to the practice of seizure would be reconsidered. It soon became evident that without seizure of the boats used in poaching the beds would soon become very much depleted, and the former practice had to be reverted to in October, 1915, in the case of boats used in oyster-poaching.

Quinnat-salmon ova was again collected during the year, and hatched out on a tributary of the Hokitika River for the purpose of stocking that river, and Mr. Ayson is now collecting ova for the same purpose. The Department also collected brown-trout ova, and sold them eyed to acclimatization societies at 5s. a thousand.

A report by Mr. L. F. Ayson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, giving information regarding the fisheries of the Dominion, is appended.

A report received from Mr. G. M. Thomson, Chairman of the Portobello Marine Fish Hatchery Board, is also appended.

The Hon. the Minister of Marine, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE ALLPORT, Secretary.

The CHIEF INSPECTOR OF MACHINERY to the SECRETARY OF THE MARINE AND INSPECTION OF MACHINERY DEPARTMENT.

SIR,—

Head Office, Customhouse Buildings, Wellington, 10th May, 1916.

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report of the operations of the Inspectors of Machinery and the Surveyors of Ships during the twelve months which ended on the 31st March, 1916.