

66. DRILL-HALLS, STORES, AND OFFICERS.

During the year the Department's drill-halls, contingent offices, regimental store, and orderly-rooms have been maintained, and repairs and minor additions, &c., effected where necessary.

Owing to the Department's energies necessarily being primarily devoted to the raising, training, equipment, and transport of the successive reinforcements of the Expeditionary Forces, and the establishment and improvement of the permanent training-camps; also owing to the necessity for exercising strict economy in the matter of providing new drill-halls and buildings involving extensive capital outlay, which, though recognized as being essential in many centres for the well-being of the Territorial Force, and which in these cases are becoming more and more an absolute necessity owing to the increase of the Territorial and Senior Cadets units, very little has been possible in the way of new buildings throughout the year.

The new drill-hall at Dunedin has been completed during the year and occupied by the local units, the old Garrison Hall being taken over as temporary postal premises. The orderly and store rooms required to complete the new drill-hall at Invercargill have also been finished.

The provision of drill-hall accommodation at Palmerston North, with contingent orderly and store room accommodation, and also district mobilization store accommodation; further, the relieving of the congestion at the central drill-halls of the large centres, particularly at Auckland and Wellington, together with the provision of regimental mobilization stores at Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, as indicated in last annual report, as well as the erection of smaller buildings in centres where no accommodation at present exists, are matters of paramount importance to the development and maintenance of our Citizen Army, and ones which must be faced when times reach a normal state again and the resources of the Department are not so heavily strained.

During the year new drill-hall sites have been reserved at Birkenhead, Te Awamutu, Dargaville, and Apiti. Ammunition-stores in connection with the local field batteries are being erected at Palmerston North and Napier. At Palmerston North a section adjoining the existing Defence site was acquired to provide for future building requirements. A building on the section has been converted at a nominal cost into suitable temporary offices for the District Headquarters Staff, eliminating the rental of premises previously occupied.

In the smaller centres, drill-halls previously undertaken have been completed at Morrinsville and Apiti, also new offices, &c., at Hamilton, and an orderly and store room at Hinds for the Canterbury Mounted Signal Troop.

67. DEFENCE VESSELS.

With the exception of the s.s. "Lady Roberts" at Auckland, all Defence vessels (s.s. "Janie Seddon" and launches A, L, and W) have been fully and advantageously employed during the year at the four defended ports.

At Auckland Mr. H. G. Seth-Smith, formerly of that city, very generously presented his fine launch "Iawai" to the Department, which enabled the s.s. "Lady Roberts," previously temporarily repaired for the examination service, to be again laid up.

Launch W has been transferred from Wellington to Port Chalmers, and with the smaller launch (A) previously on the station will enable all requirements being met.

At Lyttelton launch L, as hitherto, carries out all work in connection with the port defences, except in heavy weather.

The s.s. "Janie Seddon" at Wellington now carries out all transport of supplies, water, &c., to Somes Island internment camp, in addition to the usual transport services to the forts. The vessel is thus fully employed on Defence work.

68. TRAINING AND MANŒUVRE AREAS.

As in the previous year, the annual field training of the Territorial Force units has been carried out in regimental camps in their own military districts. It has thus not been necessary to provide large training and manœuvre areas for the more extensive training and manœuvres which will be required when it is possible to undertake large Territorial concentrations and more ambitious programmes of training. In this event the Manœuvre Act provided by the Legislature last session affords the opportunity of obtaining the temporary use of requisite areas in suitable localities, and gives the means for proclaiming such areas, regulating use and compensation or claims arising in that connection. This has been a long-felt want, and when conditions again reach a normal state will be of great importance in connection with the local field training of the Territorial Force. In the North Island the Department has a very valuable permanent training-area reserved in the Waimarino district, which will become a most important asset when facilities for transport and communication thereto have improved.

In connection with the Expeditionary Force reinforcement camps no difficulty has been experienced. At Trentham the reserve is of convenient size for camp and training purposes, and it has been possible to conveniently carry out any manœuvres further abroad. At Featherston, where the land for the permanent camp-site had to be acquired, it has been possible to lease under suitable terms and other conditions such additional land necessary for training purposes.

69. RAILWAY AND STEAMER TRANSPORT.

The continued requirements for railway and coastal-steamer transport in connection with the mobilization, &c., of the successive reinforcements has maintained the abnormal demands on the local railway and steamer services which have pertained since the outbreak of hostilities.

The additional services imposed on the Railway Department not only in connection with the transport of troops to and from camps, &c., on duty, concentration, or for training purposes, but also in connection with the provision of accommodation for members of reinforcements travelling