

5. I am pleased to be able to say that the war has not curtailed the advances made or increased the rate of interest charged. The total amount advanced during the year was £1,068,232, of which £143,264 was to local bodies, and the interest-rate, which was fixed more than twelve months before the outbreak of the war, has remained the same—viz., $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. to local bodies and $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in other cases.

6. I have made special provisions for placing the services of the Office at the disposal of soldiers. A member of the legal staff has attended regularly at the camp to prepare wills free of cost. The Public Trustee acts as attorney or agent for men who enlist, and the charge is nominal. The estates of deceased soldiers are administered at specially reduced rates. In short, I have directed the Office to do everything in its power to protect the financial interests of the men, and it is with very great pleasure that I recognize the heartiness with which the staff has co-operated.

7. The staff has been very hard-pressed during this year. The business has grown steadily, and apart from the normal increase a very great deal of extra work has been imposed by the war in dealing with the estates of soldiers and the business concerns of enemy traders. Moreover, fifty members have gone to the front, and twenty-eight have enlisted and will go in due course. It is with great pleasure that I recognize the zeal shown by those who remain in coping with the work under these difficulties.

8. The Office accounts for the year will be laid before Parliament in due course.

J. G. WARD,
Minister of Finance.

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