

SECTION III.—BRANCH OF THE QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL TO THE FORCES.

37. DRILL-HALLS, ORDERLY-ROOMS, STORES, AND OFFICES.

In view of a possible reorganization of the Defence Forces training scheme following upon the experience gained during the war, the erection of new buildings in the district commands has not been sanctioned, the only expenditure incurred being that deemed absolutely necessary to maintain the existing buildings in an efficient state of repair and guard them against deterioration. In training centres where the number of Territorials and Cadets would have warranted the favourable consideration of building proposals, private halls and other buildings have been hired for drill purposes during inclement weather, and when indoor instruction was necessary.

The organization of groups and areas to meet district requirements under the Military Service Acts—the creation of District Military Service and Medical Boards—largely increased the demand for office accommodation. To meet this need temporary arrangements have had to be made at places where departmental accommodation was not available.

38. DEFENCE VESSELS.

In Wellington the s.s. “Janie Seddon” has been most usefully employed in the transport of supplies, water, &c., to the Somes Island internment camp and the forts, as well as upon the usual Defence harbour services.

Full employment has been found for launches “W” and “A” at Port Chalmers, and “L” at Lyttelton.

At Auckland the s.s. “Lady Roberts” and the gift launch “Iawai” have been doing useful work. The latter, however, has been found to be rather too light for the class of work required, and cannot be taken alongside the wharves in rough weather without risk of hull-damage. The launch will therefore be laid up for the winter months at least, and it is believed that the “Lady Roberts,” which is being thoroughly overhauled and repaired, will be able to carry out efficiently all necessary services at Auckland, including the transport of supplies, &c., to the internment camp on Motuihi Island.

39. RAILWAY AND STEAMER TRANSPORT.

All ordinary demands in connection with the concentration of reinforcements and the distribution of returning drafts of invalided soldiers have been fully and satisfactorily met. Difficulties were naturally experienced during holiday periods in finding accommodation for troops on final leave prior to embarkation when travelling from and to camp, and during the mobilization of Reinforcement drafts, in addition to the extra demands of the general public. The Railway Department and shipping and transport companies were, however, most successful in handling the abnormally large number of passengers, and the results obtained under very difficult conditions were gratifying. The concessions granted by most of the steamship companies and coach-proprietors throughout the Dominion in connection with the transport of Reinforcements, and to men on final leave, were continued; consequently the Department was materially assisted in according passages to men visiting their homes.

The curtailment of the railway services has resulted in a reduction in the number of trains available to men on limited leave, but special facilities have been granted by the Railway Department which have to some extent minimized the effect of the altered time-table.

40. RIFLE RANGES.

As in the case of drill-halls, &c., the existing rifle ranges have been maintained and repaired to meet current training and safety requirements, but the construction of new ranges has not been undertaken, consequently the musketry practice of some local units has been carried out at annual training-camps, on adjacent rifle ranges, or on limited local miniature ranges.

41. SMALL-ARMS AMMUNITION.

The supply of small-arms ammunition for the Expeditionary and Defence Forces has been well maintained by the Colonial Ammunition Company, and despite the difficulties of obtaining material the quality has been well over the required standard.

An ample supply of Mark VII ammunition was received from England for the new-pattern rifles. This will tide over the period which must elapse until the Dominion factory is in a position to supply the special pattern required.

42. SMALL-ARMS.

During the year supplies of new-pattern rifles, bayonets, and scabbards complete, also sufficient up-to-date machine guns and trench mortars of various patterns, for training Reinforcements for the Expeditionary Force, were received. Although the supply of component parts is still very limited, training requirements have not suffered in consequence.

43. ARTILLERY.

There is but little change to report for the past year. Although certain supplies have been difficult to obtain, fair quantities of ordnance stores on order have been received. The artillery materiel generally is in good order and well kept.