

DETAILED REPORTS.

AUCKLAND.

An inspection of the Auckland Brigade and its equipment was made on the 27th and 28th May last, when all stations and equipments was found to be in good order and condition, and the various turnouts were carried out smartly and efficiently.

Following upon the inspection a report was submitted to the Board containing, amongst other matters, recommendations as to an improvement in the method of indicating the street fire-alarm call points (at present for various reasons the positions of the alarm-boxes are not at all easy to locate), also as to improvements in the first-aid equipment. In this last connection the Board are now calling tenders for the supply of a 40 gallons cylinder CO₂ chemical outfit to be carried on one of the motor hose-tenders.

The batteries of the electrically operated fire-ladder having worn out, and as there would be considerable difficulty at the present time in obtaining a new set of batteries, they have been taken out, the tractor motors disconnected, and a 30 horse-power petrol-engine fitted instead. The alteration has, if anything, improved the efficiency of the machine.

A feature of the year's working has been the excessive number of false alarms—viz., 130. Of that number 6 are classified as due to certain accidental causes, 3 as given with good intent, and 1 as malicious. Causes for the remaining 120 are not specified, therefore they must be set down as due to defects in the system. In addition to the very real danger incurred in every "turnout" when responding to an alarm of fire, false or otherwise, there is the wear-and-tear and expense to be considered, and which in this case must amount to a considerable sum. However, the Board have finally decided to install, throughout the city proper, the "Duplex" system of alarms in place of the old and defective system now in use, and have let a contract for that purpose.

During the past year there has been an increase of two in the number of fires, but a decrease of £15,327 in the fire loss as compared with 1916-17.

BALCLUTHA.

Balclutha was proclaimed a fire district on the 29th September, 1917, and my first inspection of the brigade and its equipment was made on the 17th April last. The inspection is covered by the following report forwarded to the Secretary of the Board :—

SIR,—

Office of the Inspector of Fire Brigades, 13th May, 1918.

An inspection of the Balclutha Fire Brigade and its equipment was made on the 17th ultimo, and in that connection I submit the following report for the consideration of your Board :—

At the inspection muster there was present the Superintendent, Deputy, and seven firemen; these, with one on theatre duty, accounted for only ten out of a strength of thirteen on the roll, not a satisfactory attendance, but I understand that through a mistake those absent had not been notified of the inspection. Certain drills were carried out which made it apparent that the members of the brigade require more drill and instruction, and attention should be paid to the general instruction and advice given at the time of my visit.

I find that the Superintendent, Foreman, and three firemen are employed at the freezing-works, distant some three miles from the town, therefore an effort should be made to maintain the brigade at its full authorized strength—viz., fifteen; this is particularly necessary seeing that the hose reel and other equipment has to be transported by hand-draught, a very exhausting process. Also the Deputy should be relieved of the duty of ringing up the Superintendent when an alarm occurs so to leave him free to proceed at once to the scene of the fire.

The water-supply for fire purposes is by means of 8 in., 5 in., 4 in., and 3 in. pipes, fairly well grid-ironed, with some parts of the town not yet reticulated. A test of the pressure on the 8 in. main in Clyde Street gave a head of 167 ft. = 72 lb., which pressure is quite adequate to local conditions and requirements; but the reticulation includes a considerable proportion of 3 in. pipes, and for many years past it has been generally recognized that the laying-down of that sized fire-main is a mistaken policy, both as regards efficiency and economy; and no mains of less than 4 in. diameter should ever be laid down for fire-extinction purposes.

The brigade possess only one standpipe; they should be provided with another one, as also with a hand-pump of the "London Fire Brigade" pattern. The nozzle outfit at present consists of three $\frac{5}{8}$ in., of which one is defective, one $\frac{7}{8}$ in., and two $\frac{3}{4}$ in. jet pieces, all of them quite unsuitable for either a first or second delivery; and they should be supplied with at least two new ones, one of $\frac{7}{8}$ in. diameter and the other $\frac{3}{4}$ in. diameter. When purchasing new standpipes, branches, couplings, and nozzles it should be stipulated that they must be strictly in accordance with the Government standard patterns. The necessity for the provision of this new equipment was fully explained to those members of your Board who were present at the inspection.

I noticed that some of the street hydrant indicators are partially hidden from sight owing to hedge overgrowth, which should be cleared away sufficiently to leave a clear view of the indicators.

I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

Wm. Carroll, Esq., Secretary to the Fire Board, Balclutha.

No fires have occurred in the borough since it was proclaimed a fire district.