

During the course of the inspection drills it was very apparent that the members of the brigade had not received sufficient instructions and drills in the working of the newly acquired plant—viz., use of the motor as a hose-tender, working of the motor-pump equipment, working of the escape-ladder, &c. I was informed that wet weather had greatly interfered with the drills on the regular practice nights. This should have been met by calling extra musters even if the brigadenen had to be paid for attendance thereat. As matters are I have to strongly recommend that a half-day muster be called at once and the men put through a comprehensive drill by daylight; after that, for five or six weeks running there should be a night drill once every week.

The screwed portions of the couplings, as also of the branches and nozzles, require a little attention so as to make all parts interchangeable.

I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

L. M. Monteath, Esq., Secretary, Fire Board, New Plymouth.

The various stations, including the Fitzroy substation, and appliances were found to be in good order and condition.

As compared with 1916–17 there was, during the past year, a decrease of nine in the number of fires that occurred in the district, with a decrease of £5,483 in the fire loss. The attendance of the brigade at the fourteen calls averaged 13–14 members per call.

OAMARU.

An inspection of the Oamaru Brigade and its equipment was made on the 23rd October, and is covered by the following report forwarded to the Secretary of the Board:—

SIR,—

31st October, 1917.

An inspection of the Oamaru Fire Brigade with its equipment was made on the 23rd instant, and in that connection I beg to submit the following report for the consideration of your Board:—

At the inspection muster there was present the Superintendent and twelve firemen; of the remainder three were on duty and four on leave. I understand that it is the custom in Oamaru to have three firemen on duty at the one picture-theatre. This is unnecessarily reducing the strength of the brigade; no more than two men are necessary for such duty.

Dry hose drill was carried out, but, as was pointed out at the time, not in a satisfactory manner in respect to one portion of the operation. A call was given for a supposed fire at the old Star and Garter Hotel; the horse hose-cart was turned out and water shown in three minutes twelve seconds from the time the whistle was blown. There was some little delay in the shipping of the standpipe, and the time might be improved upon.

Some of the street hydrants are so far below the surface of the roads that certain of the brigade standpipes cannot be shipped in consequence. In the case of the hydrant in front of the North Otago Company's Co-operative building, for instance, the seat of the hydrant is 18 in. below the surface-level of the road.

In reference to the contemplated purchase of a wheeled fire escape or ladder I would point out that whilst there is some need for such a ladder there is a much greater need for the provision of a motor-machine to transport both men and appliances. The present horse is not equal to the work, for, by the time it has galloped, drawing the cart with its complement of men, from the station to the monument in Thames Street, it shows signs of distress; in fact, the hill work in Oamaru would severely task the strength of a pair of horses. If for financial reasons both motor machine and ladder cannot be purchased at once, then the ladder should be held over for the time being, and in that case a very serviceable telescope ladder for carrying on the motor can be procured at a moderate cost (under £4), as follows:—

The ladder now carried on the horse cart is too short and altogether too flimsy for fire-brigade work, but one of a similar design to reach a height of 28 ft. when extended, and further strengthened as to sides, rungs, clips, &c., by being built to the specifications of a similar 34 ft. ladder, should prove a suitable and useful appliance.

I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

One more fire, with an increase of £326 in the fire loss, occurred in the district during 1917–18 as compared with 1916–17. The attendance of the brigade at the six calls averaged 13·3 members per call.

PALMERSTON NORTH.

An inspection of the Palmerston North Brigade and its equipment was made on the 24th June last, when there was present at the inspection muster the Superintendent and fourteen firemen; these, with four on duty and four on leave, accounting for the full strength of the brigade. Certain drills were carried out in an efficient manner, and the stations and equipment were found to be in good order and condition.

To relieve the heavier motor-machine, which has now been in constant commission for five years and a half, of the longer runs a 34 horse-power chassis has been purchased and a body built thereon locally. The body is well designed to suit the machine as a hose-tender, but I have to recommend, as suggested in my last report, that the machine be fitted with a CO₂ first-aid outfit,