

Captain J. Bollons, master of the s.s. "Hinemoa," who is also Inspector of Lighthouses, has inspected and reported on the various stations. I desire to place on record the great assistance I have at all times received from him in regard to lighthouse matters.

The following lightkeepers volunteered early in the war and have been on service at the front—viz., V. H. Rees, J. P. Smith, F. Sharrock, J. Robertson, P. C. T. Burns. Mr. Smith was invalided home after being wounded, and resumed duty in the lighthouse service. Keeper C. W. Davis also volunteered, but proved to be medically unfit for active service. Before the end of the war the Department had to appeal for the keepers who were called up for military service on account of the lighthouse staff becoming depleted, and in all cases the appeals were adjourned *sine die* so that the men might remain and carry on their lighthouse duties.

Appended is a report by the Marine Engineer on the works dealt with by him during the year.

The amount of light dues collected was £24,721 5s. 9d., as compared with £28,141 4s. 11d. during the previous year. Appended is a return showing the amount collected at each port.

The amount collected during the year ended 31st March, 1914, was £41,745 12s. 4d., and had it not been for the war there is no doubt that last year's amount would have been larger than that. In addition to there being a decrease on account of the decrease in shipping, there has been a further loss in consequence of dues not being payable on Government transports and chartered ships. Now the war is over the amount collected will no doubt soon come back to, if not exceed, what it was before the war.

Harbours.

This Department has the control of harbours for which Harbour Boards have not been constituted, and the buoys and beacons at these places have been overhauled, cleaned, and painted under the direction of Captain Bollons, of the s.s. "Hinemoa." He has also attended to the coastal buoys and beacons during the vessel's periodical lighthouse trips.

The beacon on D'Urville Rock, in the Hauraki Gulf, was washed away during a heavy gale, and, as it was found impossible to obtain a foundation for another beacon, a buoy has been laid down near the rock to mark its position.

A beacon has been erected on the Brothers Rock, in the Bay of Islands.

The Waikato River Board having constructed groynes in the Waikato River which proved to be injurious to navigation, the Board was called upon by the Department to remove a portion of them, but as it failed to do so legal proceedings have had to be taken against it for its failure.

A large number of plans of harbour-works, including wharves proposed to be constructed, has been submitted to and dealt with by the Department. Those which met the Department's requirements were approved by the Governor-General in Council in accordance with the provisions of the Harbours Act, 1908. A return of the Orders in Council giving the necessary approval is appended.

The sum of £982 5s. 7d. was collected for pilotage and port charges in respect of harbours under the control of the Department, as compared with £907 3s. 4d. in the previous year.

A return of the amounts collected at the various ports, including the amounts collected at ports under the control of Harbour Boards, is appended.

Cook Strait Currents.

During the year the Department had twenty-five disc floats made for the purpose of ascertaining the probable drift of any mines that might break away from the minefield laid by the German raider "Wolf" in the vicinity of Cape Farewell. These floats were put into the sea by the Union Steamship Company's steamers "Kamo," "Komata," "Kamona," "Kittawa," and "Kaituna," without any expense to the Department. Of those found, two came ashore near Farewell Spit Lighthouse, two at Pukerua, one on Kapiti Island, one at Paekakariki, one at Waikanae, one at Manakau, one at Levin, one at Ohau, one at Otaki, two near Rangitikei, one at Waitara, and three near Awakino.

Fisheries.

The Department continued the picking and sale of oysters last season—that is, between the 1st May and the 31st October. The quantity taken was 10,422 sacks, of which 10,393 sacks were sold and 29 were donated to soldiers' hospitals. Of the quantity sold, 1,191 sacks were sold in 10,114 parcels containing 4½ dozen each at 1s. a parcel, and in 2,965 parcels containing from 16 to 17 dozen each at 3s. 6d. a parcel, yielding £191 11s. 6d. more than would have been received if they had been sold by the sack, besides giving people an opportunity of getting oysters in small quantities as they required them. Of the quantity sold by the sack 300 sacks were disposed of at Russell, 7,720 at Auckland, 582 at Gisborne, 142 at Napier, 360 at New Plymouth, 11 at Wanganui, 37 at Wellington, 6 at Christchurch, 26 at Westport, 9 at Greymouth, and 2 at Hokitika. The amount realized from the sale was £7,516 13s. 6d., which gave a net profit of £694 4s. 8d.

A good deal of replanting of oysters has been done on depleted areas where overpicking destroyed the beds before the Department took over the picking and sale, and in view of the increasing demand for oysters I think that more replanting should be done in future. Owing to the very large demand this season, and to the poor spawning during the last few years, it appears probable that the season will have to be closed earlier than usual.

The oysters taken in Foveaux Strait last season were 1,500,420 dozen, valued at £12,503, of which 142,806 dozen, valued at £1,114, were exported to Australia. These oysters are taken by private persons by dredging, and, as showing the increased price which consumers have to pay, I may mention that in 1917 the price per sack put on the train at the Bluff was 8s., in 1918 10s., and in 1919 13s. 6d.; whereas in the case of the northern oysters, which are picked and sold by the Department, there has only been an increase of 6d. per sack in the price at which they are sold at the depot in Auckland since the beginning of the war.