

to that extent); 1 constable at South Dunedin, to enable a man to be on duty in the watchhouse continuously at night (there is a large population in that locality, and the time has arrived when it is necessary that a constable should always be available at night to answer telephone-calls; the sergeant lives next door to the station, but cannot be expected to answer such calls, as he is on duty all day); 1 sergeant at the Central Station, to enable a sergeant to be continuously on duty there all night. At present the only regular supervision over the station at night is that given by occasional visits from the sectional sergeants, consequently the responsibility of answering and dealing with night calls devolves upon the watchhouse-keeper, who is a constable. I think a responsible non-commissioned officer should always be on duty at the Central Station.

No stations have been opened or closed during the year.

No new buildings have been taken over since last report. A new station at Oamaru is just about completed and will soon be ready for occupation.

New stations and extensive repairs are required at a number of places in the district, the necessity for which has long existed, but owing to the strict economy that has been observed during the war the necessary expenditure has been allowed to stand over.

The only casualties during the year have been 10 resignations—viz., 4 regular and 5 temporary constables and 1 matron.

The offences return for 1918 shows that 1,427 offences were reported in that year, as compared with 1,784 in 1917—a net decrease of 357. Decreases appear under the headings of—Abusive language, 17; burglaries, 9; ship-desertion, 13; drunkenness, 224; failing to provide for families, 57; false pretences, 18; gaming offences, 19; indecent exposure, 9; obstructing police, 10; theft by servants, 13; vagrancy, 24. There has been no increase under any heading worth mentioning, and taken altogether the return shows that the district has been particularly free from crime of a serious nature, the only exception being that of the murder of a settler named Burke near Oamaru and the wounding of his two sisters by a man named Onslow Mayhew, who subsequently committed suicide. Of the total number of offences reported (1,427) 1,359 have been accounted for either by way of arrest or summons. Only 34 persons were committed for trial, as compared with 76 during the previous year, and 30 of these were subsequently convicted and sentenced at the Supreme Court.

There were 11 prosecutions for sly-grog selling during the year, resulting in 6 convictions with fines amounting to £170, as compared with 9 prosecutions and £200 in fines in 1917.

The conduct of all ranks of police during the year, with but few exceptions, has been exemplary, and although short-handed the work has been satisfactorily dealt with.

There are now 13 temporary constables doing duty in this district; they have afforded great assistance in carrying on the work.

Owing to the high wages offering outside the Force it has been extremely difficult to get suitable recruits, but it is to be hoped that the recent substantial increase of pay to constables will attract suitable men in the near future.

During the year the matrons have frequently visited places such as picture-theatres, parks, railway-station, &c., for the purpose of observing and protecting young women who go to these places, but in no instance have they had occasion to interfere.

INSPECTOR FOUHY, INVERCARGILL DISTRICT.

The strength of the Force in the Invercargill District on the 31st March, 1919, was as follows: 1 Inspector, 1 Senior Sergeant, 1 detective-sergeant, 4 sergeants, 34 constables (29 regular and 5 temporary). During the year the authorized strength of the district was increased by 1 constable, as assistant clerk. During the influenza epidemic 3 deaths occurred—viz., one Senior Sergeant and 2 constables. Three constables above the authorized strength of the district are required to carry out police duties at Invercargill Station; 2 for ordinary duties, especially for night duty; and 1 to assist the detective-sergeant in his work so that he could take over all criminal work proper. At present too many important inquiries have to be allotted to a plain-clothes constable, who has his hands full of ordinary police inquiries as well as those for other Departments, especially for Education, Railway, Mental Hospital, and Old-age Pension Departments.

A new station has been opened at Tokanui during the year, but, owing to the impossibility of securing a suitable residence for the constable, this station will be temporarily removed to Fortrose—seven miles distant from Tokanui. Owing to the increase in population, due principally to farming and sawmilling about Tuatapere, a constable is now required there.

The total number of offences reported during the year ended 31st December, 1918, was 532, as against 557 for the year 1917. There were increases in the following offences: Burglary, 14; disorderly conduct, 7; false pretences, 7; malicious injury to property, 6; mischief, 7; receiving stolen property, 6; theft from dwellings, 5. There have been decreases in the following offences: Deserting vessels, 5; disobeying orders of Court, 21; Fisheries Act, 12; stone-throwing, 7; theft, 11; theft by servant, 11. Of the total number of offences reported nearly 96 per cent. have been accounted for by arrest or summons.

On the whole, the conduct of all branches of the Force in this district has been good. Four of the constables at this station are temporary men. Some of them are very willing to pick up their duties, and I think need not be sent to the depot. In the others the want of depot training is very apparent, and on the whole the sooner the depot reopens the better for the Service.

No serious crimes requiring special comment were committed during the year.

It should be made a criminal offence for persons to remove other persons' property (motor-cars, bicycles, horses, &c.), without the consent of the owners, and then forsake them when done with. This practice is getting altogether too common.