

The number of offences reported in the district during the year ended the 31st December, 1919, was 3,085, as compared with 2,503 in 1918. The principal increases in the various classes of offences during the year were—Petty thefts, 63; houses and shop breaking, 37; houses and shop breaking attempted, 30; thefts from dwellings, 19; vagrancy, 35; breaches of the peace, 30; mischief, 18; failing to maintain wife and children, 107.

There were only 130 undetected offences during the year, and these chiefly consisted of thefts of bicycles. Considering the numerous duties that the police of both town and country are called upon to perform, especially for other Government Departments, it speaks highly in their favour that they have been so successful in coping with all classes of crime committed in the district during the year.

There were no serious crimes committed in the district calling for any special remarks.

Nine constables were fined for breaches of the Police Regulations during the year, otherwise the conduct of all ranks was highly satisfactory.

I would suggest that section 181 (1) of the Justices of the Peace Act, 1908, be amended so that summary offences committed outside the twelve months need not be sent to the Supreme Court for trial. As the law now stands, no matter how trivial the offence may be, if proceedings have not been commenced within the twelve months after the commission of the offence the offender must go for trial to the Supreme Court instead of being dealt with summarily. I would also suggest that section 51 (1), paragraph (i), of the Police Offences Act, 1908, be amended in the direction of making it an offence for any one to be found by night without lawful excuse in any unoccupied building whatever.

INSPECTOR HASTIE, TIMARU DISTRICT.

Timaru District was created and taken over in December, 1919, comprising 13 stations. The actual strength of the Force of all ranks on the 31st March was 34, the authorized strength being 38. My staff has for a considerable time been below the strength, and great difficulty has been experienced in coping with the work. At times it was not possible to have a man on day duty in the street all the time owing to complaints from other quarters having to be attended to. Now that Timaru is a head station I recommend the addition of at least two constables to the authorized strength, as all relieving duty for the district will have to be done from Timaru, and on account of being short-handed for about eighteen months the annual leave of members has accumulated. Apart from that, the town is gradually growing, and extra police are required to patrol parts that at present are rarely if ever visited. This is necessary to keep down complaints.

There have been no stations opened or closed. One temporary constable whose conduct was not satisfactory resigned.

As regards offences, there is no cause for comment. There have been no serious crimes, and the increase or decrease of any particular class of offence depends greatly on the amount of floating population. Drunkenness shows an increase of 110 for the year, no doubt partly due to the large number returning from overseas and the high wages ruling for labour causing increased expenditure.

The conduct of the Force as a whole has been good, one constable being fined for breaches of the regulations.

The population of Timaru and suburbs is 13,716, and is increasing, every house being occupied, and the district is very prosperous. Timaru itself is becoming more popular every year as a residential town and seaside resort, and large numbers of visitors flock here in the holiday season, which entails a great deal of extra work in inquiry and patrol duty, and requires the services of a full staff.

SUPERINTENDENT McGRATH, DUNEDIN DISTRICT.

On the 31st March, 1920, the authorized strength of the Force in this district was—1 Superintendent, 1 Sub-Inspector, 1 Senior Sergeant, 11 sergeants, 76 constables, 2 Senior Detectives, 1 detective-sergeant, 2 detectives, 2 matrons, and 1 surgeon. There was a decrease during the year of 1 Senior Sergeant and 10 constables owing to the transfer of Oamaru, Duntroon, Hampden, and Kurow Stations to the newly formed Timaru Police District.

I think it is very desirable to have a sergeant on duty in the watchhouse all night at the central station at Dunedin, and for this purpose an additional sergeant is required. An increase of two constables for ordinary duty is also required at the same station, as two are continuously employed looking after prisoners in the police-gaol. I recommend an increase of one constable at South Dunedin, where it is becoming increasingly necessary that a constable should be on duty in the watchhouse at night, and the present staff is too small to admit of this being done. South Dunedin is a large, thickly populated district, and at present there is no one at the station to attend to urgent calls during the night.

No stations were opened or closed during the year, but new stations were purchased at Mornington, Woodhaugh, and also a residence for the Superintendent at Dunedin. The scarcity of suitable houses for police purposes renders it the more necessary to acquire them as opportunity offers at all places where the police occupy rented stations which they may be required to vacate at any time.

During the year 4 constables were discharged on resignation and 1 detective was dismissed.

The offences return for the year ended 31st December, 1919, shows that the total number of offences reported was 1,426, being an increase of 62 over that of the preceding year. There were 1,382 prosecutions, leaving only 44 offences unaccounted for. The principal increases were—Mischief, 18; theft from dwellings, 14; obscene and profane language, 12; failing to maintain wife or children, 22. The chief decreases appear as follows: Theft (undescribed), 35; house and shop breaking, 2; drunkenness, 12. The latter offence has been steadily decreasing for