

WORKS AND INDUSTRIES: PROGRESS DURING THE YEAR.

As Inspector and Supervisor of Works I have frequently visited the whole of the prisons and reformatories where work is being carried on. I have again to report a distinct advance in the general management and methods employed. This is principally due to the fact that of late years the idea which so long obtained regarding the employment of prison labour has become revolutionized. Formerly it was thought unnecessary to provide anything in the way of labour-saving devices, those in authority at the time considering such ideas as being wasteful and quite uncalled-for. The more enlightened system now in operation whereby the industries of the Prisons Department are conducted on a similar plan to that employed by private employers is bearing good fruit. Take Auckland as an instance: at that prison the quarrying industry was formerly carried on in the old primitive style—hammer and drill for boring, blasting-powder for explosive purposes, a hand-winch for raising stone to the higher levels. Under this system a revenue of £2,000 for the year was considered very good indeed. Last year, however, owing to the installing of labour-saving appliances coupled with skilled supervision in the form of a qualified energetic quarry-manager, the receipts were in the vicinity of £12,000, and next year it is hoped to increase this.

A brief summary of the various works upon which the Department has been concentrating during the year will be found below. Owing to the shortage of funds and the necessity for economy generally, the Department's building operations were limited to the buildings already begun, and the erection of a small number of purely essential residences, farm-buildings, &c. Three cottages for prison officers were completed on the Mount Eden Prison Reserve, and also a shelter-shed for prisoners employed in the quarry, as well as an office for the quarry-manager. A new sentry-post was also built of stone. Quarrying operations were continued, and arrangements were made for the installing of a new crushing plant fitted with all modern improvements, including an additional crusher for providing materials suitable for concrete-road formation and building purposes. Storage-bins, loading-platforms, elevators, and screens, suitable for present-day grading requirements, are being added.

At Waikeria Reformatory quarters for single officers have been built and are now in occupation. Two new camps have been opened. This has been made possible by making use of two blocks of buildings formerly used for the housing of mental-hospital patients by converting them into temporary quarters for inmates of the reformatory, who during the past year have been employed on the work of clearing and bringing into cultivation several blocks of land on the Tokanui Mental Hospital Reserve. A bridge was built over the Mangatutu River, and the road connecting the reformatory with the main road widened and improved. A shed for concrete-block-making purposes has been built on the Mental Hospital property, and a tramway connecting this with the shingle deposits in the Puniu River laid down. Foundations for a boundary-wall have also been laid at the main reformatory building.

At Waikane roadmaking and sawmilling have been the chief industries. About four miles of road has been formed and many culverts built. A complete sawmill plant has been laid down, and an area of bush secured sufficient for several years. Timber for bridges is being cut for building purposes in connection with our various institutions, and for public-works undertakings. A large deposit of stone suitable for road-metalling purposes has been located, and a portable crusher is being brought into operation. About 12,000 silver-pine fencing-posts have been supplied to the Public Works Department for railway-construction work.

At Wi Tako, Trentham, the new Hoffman kiln has been completed, and bricks are now being supplied to various Government Departments requiring same. An additional cottage has been completed, and two more are in course of erection. The whole of these cottages have been built out of materials obtained from the Mount Cook Prison site from buildings demolished there. The work of clearing the swamp of manuka and draining and fencing has been continued.

At Wellington the work of levelling the Technical College site has been continued and is now nearing completion. A considerable amount of levelling has also been done for the Education Department in excavating and levelling the site surrounding the new infant school. During the year the tailors' shop attached to the Terrace Prison was removed to Auckland, where there was better workshop accommodation.

At Point Halswell Reformatory for Women an additional area has been brought in and enclosed for gardening purposes. A building consisting of seven rooms has been removed in sections from Mount Cook Prison, re-erected at Point Halswell, and is now occupied by the female staff. A milking-shed with holding-yard has been built, and water and electric light laid on. A return is now being derived from the sale of butter, pigs, and eggs. Improvements have also been carried out in the way of planting and levelling.

The construction of the second cell range at Paparua has materially progressed, the building being now almost ready for the roof. The kitchen block has been completed and is now in use. A septic tank has been built, and high-pressure water-supply from an overhead tank of 6,000-gallons capacity installed. Two additional cottages have been built, and the making of concrete blocks and roofing-tiles, also concrete flags for flooring purposes, has been continued. New piggeries have been built and several new roads formed.

At Lyttelton the work of pulling down the old prison has been gone on with. The action taken in this matter has been more than vindicated. Up to the present time material to the value of fully £1,500 has been obtained from the old buildings, and there is still more to come, of an estimated value of £1,000, making the sum of £2,500 altogether. It was therefore a fortunate circumstance that instead of abandoning this building, as was at first suggested, you decided to make use of the material as is now being done.