

Frankton Junction: For the reasons given in my previous reports, I beg to recommend the appointment of a sergeant to take charge of this station. The work is beyond the two constables now stationed at Frankton, and is not receiving the attention necessary. The business portion of Frankton also requires more constant patrol than the present staff can perform.

The conduct of members of the Force in this district has generally been good. The two or three exceptions have been adequately dealt with under the regulations.

The amount of sickness experienced by members of the Force has been above normal. Two constables were seriously injured in the execution of their duty. Constable Monson, while arresting a violent mental patient at Te Aroha, had his ankle broken. Constable Olsen, of Waihi, was shot in the abdomen when endeavouring to arrest Higgins, who had just murdered two school-children at Waikino Public School. Both officers were off duty for several months.

The administration of the Arms Act is now working so smoothly as to call for but passing notice. It is effectively answering the purpose for which it was passed.

The growth of population is being steadily maintained, except in the gold-mining districts. The closing-down, for the present at any rate, of the Grand Junction Gold-mine at Waihi has caused some two hundred men to seek work in other localities. About thirty miners were absorbed by the Waihi Gold-mining Company. A large temporary increase of some thousand men, who will be employed on the Arapuni electrical works, will require an increase of police in the Putaruru subdistrict.

The offences return for year ending 31st December last shows 2,036 offences reported, compared with 1,749 for previous twelve months, being an increase of 287. Of the offences reported 1,912, or 94 per cent., were accounted for by arrest or summons, leaving 124 offences undetected. 240 offenders were committed for trial, being 78 in excess of the previous year: 200 of the 240 were convicted.

On the 19th October, 1923, the community was shocked by the enactment of a terrible tragedy in the little mining township of Waikino, when John Christopher Higgins, a settler, visited the public school armed with an automatic pistol, dagger, and gelignite. After parleying with Mr. R. T. Reid, the headmaster, who courageously endeavoured to prevent Higgins attacking the school-children, Higgins shot Mr. Reid through the jaw, and then, visiting the class-rooms, fired rapidly at the terrified children. Two little boys, McLean and Stewart, were shot dead, and four other children were wounded by bullets. The local citizens surrounded the schoolhouse to endeavour to capture the murderer, but were kept at bay by Higgins, who fired from the master's window. Later the arrival of the police, also further civilian assistance with two rifles, induced Higgins to surrender. While besieged Higgins, firing through a door, shot and wounded Constable Olsen. He was tried on the two charges of murder at Auckland Supreme Court and convicted. Sentence of death was subsequently commuted by the Executive on grounds of Higgins's insanity.

INSPECTOR HUTTON, GISBORNE DISTRICT.

The authorized strength of the Police Force in the Gisborne District on the 31st March, 1924, was 33. No stations were opened or closed during the year, and there were no additions to the staff.

A constable is very much required at Kaiti, in the suburbs of Gisborne, and the inhabitants have been applying and pressing for such for some years. A constable is also required in the Taneatua Township, as the railway-works are progressing in that locality.

On account of the many demands made, an additional detective should be stationed at Gisborne. There is too much work for one man, as he is frequently away in other parts of the district engaged on important cases, and there is no one to fill the gap. The local police will not suffice to satisfy the settlers' demands, as nothing but a detective is wanted.

The conduct of the police, generally speaking, has been good during the year. Five monetary penalties were inflicted for breaches of the Police Regulations. Two constables recently voluntarily resigned—one at Gisborne, and one (temporary constable) at Whakatane to better his position. Few complaints were made by the public.

For the year ended 31st December, 1923, the total number of offences reported was 945, as against 807 for the previous year, an increase of 138. Arrests or summonses resulted in 932 cases, leaving 13 unaccounted-for. Of the cases dealt with, 47 were committed for trial and 41 resulted in convictions, 833 were summarily convicted and 52 discharged.

A serious crime of murder and outrage occurred at Makaraka, three miles from Gisborne, on the night of the 28th January, 1924, a girl aged eleven years being attacked in a lane at 8 p.m. when returning home from a message. The offender was subsequently arrested and tried at the Supreme Court, Gisborne, and found guilty, sentenced to death, and executed.

There has been little change in the population of the district during the year.

The railway-works between Awakeri and Taneatua, the opening-up of the roads in the Urewera country, and surveys have attracted a certain amount of labouring population of a migratory character.

INSPECTOR MATHIESON, NAPIER DISTRICT.

I took charge of the district on the 31st March, 1924.

The authorized strength of the Force on the 31st March was fifty-one, the actual strength on that date being the same as authorized. The strength has not been increased or decreased since last annual report. An extra constable is required at Port Ahuriri so that there may be more supervision at night.

One constable voluntarily resigned and two constables retired on superannuation during the year. Inspector Dew died on the 31st January, 1924.