

FIRE BRIGADES ACT.

During the year one new fire district—Hikurangi—was constituted. As usual, fire-hose, escape-ladders, and other equipment not manufactured in the Dominion was indented through the High Commissioner's Office on direct requisition from the various Fire Boards and the United Fire Brigades Association. During the year more than the usual number of plans and specifications for erection of fire-stations in the various districts have been submitted for approval of the Minister. The usual inspections of fire brigades have been made by the Inspector of Fire Brigades. In accordance with requests received from various Government Departments and local bodies, numerous special inspections and reports in the matter of protection of buildings, water-supply and installations, purchase of fire appliances and machinery, &c., have been made. Attention has been drawn by means of public addresses to the excessive loss of property in New Zealand by fire.

RAFFLES.

During the year 305 licenses for raffles were issued, the articles comprising pictures, paintings, drawings, sculpture, or other works of art or literature, or mechanical models. With the discontinuance of alluvial gold raffles little difficulty has been experienced in obtaining compliance with the conditions of the licenses.

PASSPORTS.

The result of the year's work discloses a further increase, the figures for the past year being 4,282, as compared with 4,048 for the previous period. The renewals show a decrease, from 1,335 to 1,107. This is the natural result of the issue of passports which are valid for five years before renewal is necessary.

NATURALIZATION.

Naturalization was granted to 139 persons, including one minor and one Samoan. A number of certified copies of naturalization papers were also issued to replace originals lost.

SOLDIERS' AND HISTORICAL GRAVES.

Veterans' Graves.—Contracts were arranged for permanent work on eleven Maori War graves in Leamington Cemetery, Cambridge, this work including the provision of a large monument in Coromandel granite. A similar monument was erected in Lower Mauku Cemetery, wherein rest several men who fell in the engagement at Titi Hill on the 23rd October, 1863. The graves of two men who were killed in action at Horokiwi on the 6th August, 1846, have been finished in concrete with marble tablet suitably inscribed. A number of annual grants for maintenance of Maori War cemeteries and graves were made.

Great War Graves in New Zealand.—The number of notifications of deaths of returned soldiers to reach the Department during the year was 331, of which 115 were accepted as war graves, bringing the total to date to 2,223. The number of headstones ordered was 89, and the number of stones erected throughout the Dominion is 1,538. Temporary crosses to mark the graves until such time as the military headstones are prepared were placed on 138 graves. Tenders were invited for the erection of a Cross of Sacrifice in Featherston Soldiers' Cemetery, where 160 members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force are buried.

Great War Graves Abroad.—The Imperial War Graves Commission reported that the work remaining to be done is, with some minor exceptions, either in France or Belgium, where considerably more than half the dead are buried, or in the United Kingdom, where there are nearly eighty thousand graves. The latter present special difficulties, as the graves are scattered among some ten thousand cemeteries, and in dealing with these no administrative system of grouping can be devised to save time and labour as elsewhere. So far as New-Zealanders are concerned, there are 720 buried in 112 cemeteries; and, with the exception of Brookwood (148), City of London (2), Codford (66), Kensal Green (15), Tidworth (100), and Walton-on-Thames (19), permanent work has yet to be carried out. Free sets of photographs of graves in cemeteries in various theatres of war were delivered to the next-of-kin of 1,803 New-Zealanders, while 71 cemetery registers were sold. Great difficulty has been experienced in tracing next-of-kin who have failed to notify changes of address.

WAR FUNDS.

At the close of the year there were sixty-five registered war funds in the Dominion, holding assets as per latest returns as follows—

	£	s.	d.
Thirty incorporated societies	832,247	2	8
Nine Red Cross organizations	140,251	3	4
Three Blind Soldiers' and Veterans' Homes Fund	57,197	5	0
Eleven unincorporated societies	3,777	18	2
Three Memorial Funds	38	19	6
One Navy League Fund	5,739	11	3
Five Returned Soldiers' Clubs	21,754	1	1
Three Social Funds	2,188	16	1
	£1,063,194	17	1
National War Funds Council	£160,290	8	0