

PRISONS AND PENAL INSTITUTIONS: EPITOME OF REPORTS OF CONTROLLING OFFICERS.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

(Superintendent, Mr. J. DICKISON.)

At the commencement of the year there were 439 males and 15 females in custody. During the year 1,594 males and 79 females were received, whilst 1,613 males and 77 females were discharged or otherwise disposed of, leaving in the prison on the night of 31st December, 1931, 420 males and 17 females. One prisoner absconded during the year and has not been recaptured.

I am pleased to be in the position to report that no executions were carried out during the year. There was one death during the twelve months, which occurred in the District Hospital.

The daily average on the sick muster was 9.6 males and 0.405 females, and as the daily average number of prisoners in custody throughout the period under review again reached the high figure of 466, it is particularly pleasing to record that there has been a marked absence of infection, and that the excellent standard of health shown in previous years has been maintained. Perhaps in no other institution in New Zealand does the type of recipient vary so much as at Auckland, and under such conditions it is to be expected that there are a number of inmates who require fairly constant medical attention throughout the full period of incarceration. Allowing for these cases, and also for the number of prisoners who, from time to time, are incapacitated for a few days as the result of petty injuries sustained on the works, it must be conceded that a daily average of ten on the sick muster of this institution speaks volumes for the excellent standard of health maintained by the prisoners as a whole.

I have again to express appreciation of the continued valued co-operation of the Medical Superintendent of the Auckland Mental Hospital, who so readily responds to requests for the examination of mentally defective prisoners, and thus enables the expeditious transfer of these unfortunate individuals to that institution.

The Prison School has continued to be controlled by L. Grice, M.A., and the excellent results of his tutorship during the year are amply evidenced by the annual-examination return already submitted. The average attendance during the twelve months was thirty, a sufficient tribute to the interest displayed by the inmates themselves. When one is in close touch with the prisoners who avail themselves of the opportunity of attending the school, a ready advancement in knowledge is noticeable, particularly in the case of the backward individual, and it is easy to appreciate the fact that the expenditure in maintaining the school is justly warranted.

One hundred and forty-six breaches of the regulations were dealt with by Visiting Justices during the year, whilst a number of minor offences were dealt with by myself. Quite a number of prisoners were dealt with on more than one occasion, and when allowance is made for the class of prisoner in this institution, and the fact that the daily average for the year was 466, it will be admitted that the conduct has on the whole been of a very satisfactory standard.

Evening drill has been continued three nights weekly under the instruction of Principal Warder Douglas, the twenty-five prisoners participating in the exercises benefiting considerably therefrom, particularly as they are employed indoors daily.

Work completed and in progress.—(1) The overhaul of the whole of the prison electrical system, which was in progress at the moment of presenting my last report, was completed in the early months of 1931, and satisfactorily answered all tests made in compliance with the Act.

(2) To further ensure the safe custody of prisoners exercising in the Solitary-division Yard, a protective covering of expanded metal was placed over this area. This innovation has obviated the previous necessity of having an officer in attendance on the prisoners whilst in this yard. The erection of a winch-house containing the quarry hauling-plant was completed in the last month of the year, and has met a very necessary need.

Alterations and Additions to Quarry Plant: Owing to the working-out of one of the quarry-faces, it became essential to commence extended operations, with the result that a rearrangement of the existing hauling facilities was found necessary. The double winch, previously in use, was separated by the Engineer into two distinct units, and an additional motor and switchboard were installed. This will enable all haulage throughout the quarry area to be handled expeditiously. No other expenditure outside of the cost of the usual maintenance replacements has proved requisite during the year, and the plant generally has been maintained in excellent running-order.

The whole of the requisite maintenance of the prison buildings has been effected during the year with prison labour, a good deal of the work being executed around the prison proper; whilst the upkeep of the prison officers' cottages has received adequate attention.

The garden continues to be a valuable asset, for, apart from a short period of the year, during which time the maturing crops were ravaged by the grass-grub, the whole of the institutional requirements of vegetables, with the exception of potatoes, were supplied from our own garden area.

Advantage is being taken of surplus labour, due to the shrinkage in the quarry output, to extend the prison garden by building up fresh areas from strippings.

Bootmaking: Under the control of Principal Warder Lauder, this branch of the prison's industrial activities has continued to furnish a very satisfactory return, and the orders placed by other Departments, as well as our own Departmental requirements, have been ably and expeditiously handled throughout the year.