

the South Head, and that two suitable lamps should be provided to be used as leading lights. It is proposed to make provision for the cost of these lights in the current year's estimates. The necessary buoys for Herekino Harbour were taken north by the "Hinemoa," but when she arrived off the place the sea was too rough for her boats to go in and lay them. They were therefore brought to Onehunga, and, as there is now no vessel trading to the port, it has been decided to defer laying them down until the necessity for them arises. Shipmasters having urged that the leading beacons at the entrance to Kaipara Harbour should be improved, and that leading lights should be established, it was decided that the Nautical Adviser should visit the place and report on what was required. After taking soundings and inspecting the present leading marks he reported that he could not recommend the alteration in the leading beacons that was desired, as it would lead vessels on to Tory Shoal, and that owing to the numerous and dangerous sandbanks, which undergo rapid changes, it would not be advisable to establish leading lights. Should it, however, be decided to erect such lights, a third-order light would be required to insure its being visible far enough seaward, and such a light would be expensive. He thought that the best way to improve the harbour would be to place a large can buoy painted black a little inside the North Spit end in about 7 fathoms water, and a large cone red buoy on the north-west side of Tory Shoal, in about 4 fathoms water. The question of making provision for these buoys will be considered when the estimates are prepared. The work of attending to the small buoys and conveying the Harbourmaster up the various branches of the harbour when necessary is still performed by the subsidised steamer, as the department has not yet seen its way to procure a steam- or oil-launch for the performance of the harbour service. The Harbourmaster at Manukau having reported changes in the banks and channels at the entrance to that harbour, the Nautical Adviser and the Harbourmaster made an examination of the entrance, and took soundings, with the result that it was found that a great change had taken place in the main channel, and that the main bank in the south channel was travelling towards the beach. There was not, however, considered to be any necessity to alter the beacons and other leading marks. Other changes have since been reported, and fresh soundings will be taken the first time a Government steamer is available for the work. Buoys have been laid down at Ngunguru for the guidance of vessels trading to the port. At Motueka Mr. H. L. Moffatt, the local Wharfinger, has been appointed Harbourmaster, so as to give him the necessary power to enforce the observance of the provisions of the Harbours Acts and regulations in the harbour.

Power was obtained by "The Harbours Act Amendment Act, 1894," to enable the Governor in Council to authorise a Harbour Board to divide its harbour rating district into electoral wards, and the New Plymouth Harbour Board, wishing to avail itself of this power, applied for an Order in Council to empower it to divide the New Plymouth Harbour rating district into six wards, so as to localise the representation on the Board. This has been done, and there is therefore one member for each of the six wards, instead of six members elected by one electorate. The Coromandel Council has been empowered to exercise the powers of a Harbour Board in Coromandel Harbour. The desirability of prescribing a general signal for use by vessels requiring a steam-tug at night has been under consideration, and the various Harbour Boards have been consulted as to the description of signal that would be suitable. The department hopes to be able to issue the necessary Order in Council at an early date.

A return showing the licenses issued for the occupation of foreshore and the authorities given for the erection of wharves is appended thereto.

A sum of £1,633 17s. 3d. was collected for pilotage and port charges during the year in respect of the harbours under the control of the department.

*Oyster-fisheries.*—When the question as to which beds in the northern districts should be opened this year was under consideration it was found that those in Whangarei Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf had not sufficiently recuperated to be in a fit state for picking. It was therefore decided to keep them closed for another year; but, as the beds in the district between the South Head of Whangaruru Harbour and the Waitangi River in the Bay of Islands, which had been closed for two years, were in good condition, that district was opened, and, as the district between the Waitangi River and the North Cape is still open, oysters may now be taken by licensed pickers anywhere between the North Cape and Whangaruru Harbour. The district between Tairua Harbour and Opotiki has been declared open, and the beds in Kaipara Harbour have also been opened. Most of the beds in Manukau Harbour have been leased in areas which are sufficiently large to be worth the lessees' while to cultivate and work them properly, and the leases are subject to such conditions as will prevent any person, company, or syndicate getting a monopoly of them. The department has been urged to lease the beds in the Hauraki Gulf, as being the only way to conserve the oysters, but it has not seen its way to do so, as such a course would shut out the licensed pickers. Mr. J. P. Bennett, of Waiheke Island, has been appointed an Inspector of Fisheries for the purpose of protecting the beds in the Hauraki Gulf, and his appointment has had a beneficial effect. He is paid only a small salary, but receives one-third of the fines recovered through his instrumentality.

The following convictions were obtained during the year for illegally taking oysters: J. McDonald, owner and master of the cutter "Antelope," was fined £5 and costs; his vessel, which was forfeited, was returned to him on payment of a further sum of £15. Messrs. Rolton and Humphries were fined £2 and costs. J. Anderson was fined £2 and costs; the boat which was used by him, and which was a hired one, was returned to its owner on payment of a further sum of £3 3s. J. Knox was fined 10s. and costs, and his boat was restored on payment of a further sum of £5. F. R. Davis and A. Arthur were fined—the former £4 and costs and the latter £7 and costs; the yacht used by them, which was a hired one, was returned to the owner on payment of a further amount of £12 1s. 3d. J. Clements and Humphries were each fined £3 and costs, and their boat was returned to them on payment of £5 8s. A. Arthur, F. R. Davis, and M. Garnaut were