

There were 65 shooting accidents reported during the year. In another 6 cases the Coroner, being unable to decide whether the fatality was accident or suicide, returned an open verdict.

Arms accidents since the 1st January, 1935, to date, total 724. Of this total 253 people lost their lives. It is felt that almost every case could have been avoided through proper handling of the weapon involved in the fatality. A great many cases are due to hidden dangers that lie in the mechanism of weapons such as the hammer gun and the bolt-action Lee Enfield rifle when they are uncocked. It is considered that the proper instruction in the handling of firearms is the best and most practical method of countering the cause of nearly every accident.

An analysis of the figures which were taken out this year show the following classifications: There were 65 shooting accidents of which 11 were fatal. The .22 calibre rifle was responsible for 36 (4 of which were fatal); the 12-gauge shot-gun for 21 (5 fatal); 410-gauge shot-gun for 1 (non-fatal); .303 rifle for 4 (1 fatal); pistols for 2 (1 fatal); air-pistol for 1 (non-fatal).

In several criminal cases, 4 homicidal and 2 attempted homicides, the Arms and Ballistics Officer was called upon to give evidence. This involved considerable travelling and a good deal of concentrated effort.

This Branch also furnished advisory reports on firearms being imported for sale under the Arms Act Amendment Act, 1934. One dangerous type of rifle was ruled out and the shipment was returned to London.

Another duty performed is the recovery of filed-out numbers and trade-marks from metal objects such as bicycles, motors, firearms, and tools, and this work was attended with success in that 4 offenders were convicted for being in possession of these identified items.

*Work for Other Government Departments.*—The volume of extra work arising out of the inquiries made by the police at the request of other Departments of State continues to be both heavy and varied, and much extra work has had to be undertaken by trained members of the Force competent to conduct these inquiries because of the shortage of experienced inquiry officers.

*Criminal Registration Branch.*—At Headquarters on the 31st March, 1950, the finger impressions of 77,028 persons were on record: 4,842 prints were received, classified, and indexed; 316 persons were identified as previous offenders who, had it not been for the finger-print system, would have passed as first offenders; 7,931 photographs were printed by the photographers attached to the Branch, the photographs of 4,391 persons (8,964 photographs) were received and dealt with, 992 photographs were reproduced in the *Police Gazette*; 14 wanted persons were located; and 6 unknown deceased persons identified by finger-prints.

The finger-prints left by offenders committing 41 crimes were identified as belonging to 34 persons, the most important being the finger-print left at the scene of a murder, which subsequently proved of great assistance in the solving of the case.

Finger-prints of 213 persons were received from other countries for inquiry, of which 11 were identified as those of persons previously convicted in New Zealand. The finger-prints of 607 New Zealand offenders were sent to overseas bureaux for inquiry and 144 were identified as having been previously convicted outside this Dominion.

The finger-prints of ship-deserters reveal that 73 (approximately 20 per cent.) have been convicted overseas.

The radio transmission of finger-prints again proved of value in presenting immediate information to the Court, resulting in the deportation of two English stow-aways with long criminal records overseas.

This year has again shown an appreciable rise in the number of finger-prints received and photographs taken, and the lack of trained staff is proving a big handicap in the efficient handling of this extra work.